

HISTORY TEACHING IN A MUSEOLOGICAL SPACE: AN EXPERIENCE AT THE RIO GRANDE DO SUL MEMORIAL, BRAZIL

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Abstract

This paper aims to discuss issues concerning the teaching of History in museological spaces, based on the narrative of an experience at the Rio Grande do Sul Memorial, a place that generated the teaching-learning process of students who visited this space. We start from the narrative of the mediated educational action on the itinerant exhibition “Monuments and art: the history of the city at risk”, which exposed a series of monuments and public statues taken from the streets of Porto Alegre. By means of these pieces, the mediation sought to reflect on the silenced stories behind those sculptures, aiming to perceive other actors and groups silenced by the patrimonialization process. From a theoretical point of view, it drew on Vygotsky (2010) and Bakhtin (1992), with regard to interactive mediation; Siman (2013), with regard to teaching History through reading the city; and Ramos (2016), on the concept of generator object. Finally, it is believed that the students took possession of plural historical narratives about the city, through the narratives exposed and silenced by the urban historical heritage.

Keywords: History Teaching, Patrimonial Education, Pedagogical Mediation.

Introduction

Breaking down the walls of the classroom to take advantage of other non-formal teaching spaces is a very fruitful alternative with regard to science teaching/learning. And this can happen with the History class, which can take advantage of places of memory in the city, putting students in interaction with historical-cultural artifacts, products of our life in society⁴. Among the different possible learning scenarios, museological spaces – museums, memorials, archives – are important places where visiting students can come into contact with documents, objects and educational actions developed by the institutions themselves, which become generators of processes of teaching-learning.

The objects of material culture displayed in the museum space can be used to build reflections on sociocultural and ethnic-racial relations, historicizing them for their understanding over time. In this way, it excels at building a critical dialogue with the past and its re-signification by individuals in the present. When understood only as a place where ancient objects are contemplated, the museological space misses the opportunity to compose, through educational practices, a critical argument, historicizing the representations of the past in dialogue with the social reality of visitors in the present. The “displacement of the history class” is characterized as an opportunity, together with the students, to articulate “the teaching of History, Heritage Education and criticism of coloniality” (Gil, Pacievitch & Perussatto, 2022, p. 57), in order to expose the plurality of narratives that make up the history and cultural identity of a society.

In this dialogical process, in museums, the mediator acts as an intermediary between the exhibited objects and the critical reflection that aims to come from the students, in a perspective that involves and sensitizes the public to think critically about history through objects of material culture. Bearing in mind that mediation occurs through dialogue between the speaker and the receiver, based on participatory mediation (Bakhtin, 1992), challenges and possibilities arise in this non-formal teaching space, in which knowledge construction is by the students in interaction with the exhibition and the mediator, in a teaching-learning process (Vigotski, 2010).

In this scope, this article has the general aim of discussing issues concerning the teaching of History from the museological space, having the *Rio Grande do Sul Memorial* as the generating place of the teaching-learning process with school groups. Among the many exhibitions held at the Memorial, we opted for the exhibition *Monuments and Art: the history of the City at Risk*, which exhibited a series of public monuments related to the history of the city of Porto Alegre and the state of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil. From this perspective, the following problem arises: how is it possible to reflect on the histories of the city and the region by means of the pieces present in the exhibition?

⁴ This text is inspired by an article published by the author, in Portuguese, in the journal *Temporalidades* 12 (1), from the Federal University of Minas Gerais, under the title “From the streets to the memorial: monuments, silencing and the teaching of History”, 2020.

With this question in mind, we developed an educational action about the exhibition, which is narrated throughout this paper. The elaboration of this educational proposal was made by the author of this text, guided by Professor Caroline Pacievitch, in the context of his training as a professor of History at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul [UFRGS], in 2019.

From the works on display, we seek to trigger reflection, along with the students, on the sociocultural processes in the patrimonialization of public objects. Furthermore, we seek to examine how other individuals/social groups – who are not representatives of the white, patriarchal, colonial, and Eurocentric logic – are represented or not in the statuary heritage of Porto Alegre. We start from the teaching possibilities generated by the exposed objects, in the light of Régis Lopes (2004), regarding the teaching of the History of objects, but also that generated through these artefacts of material culture.

In order to stimulate the students' reflection, as well as the debate between them, it was proposed as a final activity that they create a new title for the exhibition, writing it on a poster that had been made available by the mediator. Thus, the proposed final activity was used as the mediator's evaluative object, with the purpose of reflecting on how teaching-learning occurred in the proposed mediation, as well as the pedagogical result in this proposal for teaching History.

Contextualizing the institution, the exhibition, and the monuments of Porto Alegre

The teaching experience narrated in this paper took place at the Rio Grande do Sul Memorial, a space that hosted the exhibition in which the work of pedagogical mediation in the teaching of History was carried out. The Memorial is a large public institution, characterized as a cultural center that houses a museum space of History, Anthropology, in addition to the Historical Archive of Rio Grande do Sul (AHRS). Inaugurated during the year 2000, the Memorial emerged as (Bertin, Endres & Rocho, 2012):

[...] a cultural institution designed to act as a true showcase of the state of Rio Grande do Sul, a place of memory and dissemination of history and culture from Rio Grande do Sul. In this sense, the house opened up to society with an interactive exhibition aimed at information, research and education through mediation activities and educational action. (p. 639).

Currently, the Institution is open to the public, schools, and universities, with permanent exhibitions and itinerant. Its exhibitions seek to promote reflections on the history and sociocultural identity of Rio Grande do Sul and Brazil, by means of the promotion of museological, artistic, and research activities.

In 2009, the Memorial hosted the special itinerant exhibition *Monuments and Art: the history of the City at Risk*, which was part of the Cultural Heritage Week of Porto Alegre that year. The exhibition exhibited a wide variety of works of art and public monuments from Porto Alegre, collected by the City Hall due to vandalism, partial theft of their pieces or fear that they would be targets of future depredations. According to its creator and curator, the exhibition

aimed to highlight the importance of public statuary and outdoor art pieces for the history and memory of Porto Alegre. In addition, it aimed to make society aware of the task of conserving and respecting the city's cultural heritage. It was in this exhibition that we carried out the teaching activities narrated in this paper.

Thus, about 25 monuments arrived at the Memorial, which represent and honor personalities and historical events of the city and region, elaborated from the end of the 19th century to the end of the 20th century, materialized in bronze, marble, and cement.

By means of the exhibition *Monuments and Art*, we reflect on the possibility of going through it with the school groups received by the Memorial, from a critical look at the exposed material culture, from an interactive experience of the students. From this, the opportunity arose to build a dialogue between historical science and art, promoted by mediation with students, in order to bring up reflections on social, historical, artistic, and cultural themes, such as gender issues and racism. From an artistic point of view, it was possible to observe with the students' formal aspects – material, colors, size – in the elaboration of the pieces on display, as well as stylistic aspects.

Without ignoring the objectives proposed by the curatorship of the exhibition, an attempt was made to elaborate an interdisciplinary educational action plan, which allowed visiting students to reflect on the history of the city of Porto Alegre and Rio Grande do Sul, through the mediation between the space, the historian, and the students, based on an interactive and dynamic experience.

We sought to show, during the educational action carried out, that the act of monumentalizing an individual is a choice, usually made by a socioeconomic elite fed by Eurocentric epistemological perspectives. In this way, many other stories and narratives that make up the history of the city are silenced, such as, for example, the perspectives of the black and indigenous populations. Erected in the name of remembering historical processes, events and characters that are related to the memory of the city and the state, as examples or commemoration of something that must be remembered, the public statuary reflects the very way in which the history of Porto Alegre and the collective memory of its inhabitants was represented by public statuary. For a long time, public monuments in cities around the world represented and told unique stories about their nations and societies. According to the Nigerian writer Chimamanda Adichie (2019), a unique story is dangerous because it is stigmatizing and dehumanizing, told by those who hold power. Combating this involves critically reflecting on these stories and disseminating other culturally diverse narratives and experiences, in dialogue with the multiple identities that constitute subjects and life in society.

It is understood that the students' contact with the exhibition pieces, together with the mediation, constituted an opportunity for a critical look and for reflection on the exposed monuments, as well as on the history of the city and its relationship with these sculptures. These monuments are from different eras and, as such, correspond to the values, intentions, and memories of the period in which they were designed and built. In view of this, a critical look at the history of Porto Alegre was sought, using these pieces as objects that generate reflection (Régis Lopes, 2016). If monuments tell a story, one must question what stories they are telling, and what it means to display and silence other narratives.

In the case of Porto Alegre, statuary art goes through some specific moments. In the final years of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, public art in the city was characterized by a style of European, specifically French, trends. Many Brazilian capitals experienced this trend, the result of a series of political, economic, and social (such as the passage from the Empire to the Republic) and, as a consequence, urbanistic transformations. The issue of urban improvements was on the agenda of rulers who sought to organize the city in a controlled and orderly plan of urban and social development, promoting the diversification of available sites for the implementation of monumental constructions, which would become useful for marking and spatial organization of the urban fabric (Marins, 1998). In this way, the squares are decorated with monuments and water fountains, surrounded by an orderly garden work, configuring a public space designed for a bourgeois urban society.

In the final years of the 19th century, Rio Grande do Sul saw the growth and strengthening of the Rio-Grandense Republican Party (PRR), whose rise, in part, came with the fall of the Empire and the Proclamation of the Republic. Having as great exponents the politicians Júlio de Castilhos and Borges de Medeiros, the PRR was responsible for accentuating the positivist ideology in the State, summarized in the movement of order and progress. Positivism, while strengthening the capitalist project of economic and urban modernization of the State, preached conservatism with regard to social changes (Khün, 2011).

In Porto Alegre positivist statuary, according to Doberstein (1995), “literate heroes” were celebrated, in formal attire, carrying a book in their hands or in oratory gestures. His political and intellectual accomplishments should serve as an example for society in Rio Grande do Sul. A great example is the monument in honor of Apolinário Porto Alegre (produced by Alfred Adloff in 1927) and which is part of the exhibition. The work represents the politician as an intellectual: while his left hand supports his chin (under the pose of a thinker), his right hand holds a book. His biography justifies the tribute by the positivist government of the period: a founding member of the PRR, he was a writer, poet, teacher, journalist, and historiographer.

After the 1930s, there is a shift in statuary art in Porto Alegre towards the so-called Gauchismo ideology. With the weakening of positivism and, consequently, the primacy of urban over rural, universal over regional (Doberstein, 1995), public monuments in the city are built with a strong thematic appeal to representations of gaúcho culture and the myths of regionalism.

The Farroupilha Civil War became a subject of homage in some works, starting in 1935, the year that marked the centenary of the military conflict, seen as the moment when Rio Grande do Sul rose in arms against the Empire of Brazil, thus marking, the myth of the “gaucho hero”, always willing to fight against those who oppose his freedom. To a certain extent, these monuments composed a narrative for the fixation of the idealized figure of the gaucho in the social imaginary of Porto Alegre.

Cultural heritage and history teaching

According to the Instituto do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional [IPHAN] (2014), the historical-cultural heritage is conceived as a set of tangible and intangible assets – historic complexes, buildings, constructions, monuments, celebrations, artistic, and religious manifestations –, perceived individually or in its entirety. These sets integrate and are representative of the history, memory, culture, and identity of the different collectivities that form society. It should be noted that the action of considering and institutionalizing a cultural asset as heritage is permeated by social interests and power relations, which configure symbolic, political, and financial disputes between the actors involved in the listing process.

Linked to the preservation of heritage is the so-called heritage education, which is characterized as an educational process aimed at social learning, focusing on cultural heritage. This educational practice aims at ensuring that heritage is appropriated by society, as a resource for the socio-historical understanding of all manifestations that permeate the cultural references of different collectivities that form society (Florêncio et al., 2014). According to Tolentino (2016), cultural heritage is

[...] conceived as a social element inserted in the life spaces of the subjects, who appropriate it, it must be treated, in educational practices, taking into account its social, political and symbolic dimension. This implies that, in educational actions, cultural heritage cannot be treated as preconceived, in which its value is given a priori, and it is up to the individual to accept this valuation and recognize it as part of their cultural heritage. (p. 47).

With this, the author explains that, when carrying out educational actions on cultural heritage, one should start from a critical reflection on the reasons considered for the patrimonialization of a certain cultural asset, also taking into account its insertion in a certain historical time. In addition, the author points out that educational practices around heritage must recognize the game of forces existing in the process of selection and appropriation of heritage elements, highlighting the divergences and conflicts in this “struggle between memory and oblivion” (Tolentino, 2016, p. 47).

Bearing in mind the dichotomous relationship between memory and oblivion, the pieces displayed in the exhibition *Monuments and Art* made it possible to reflect with students on which elements, individuals, histories and memories of the city were (and are) being monumentalized and which are being silenced. Through this reflection, we tried to understand

how the monuments were used for the preservation of a certain memory that corresponds to the social portions of the urban elite. By means of the heritage education action plan - focusing on the diversity that forms the city's history -, the educational action designed for the exhibition aimed to (Tolentino, 2016):

[...] dialogical and democratic process of this educational practice, in a freirian perspective, which values otherness, respect for cultural diversity and the active participation of producers and heritage holders as socio-historical subjects. (p. 40).

It should be noted that the critical approach to the pieces was carried out taking into account the historical and social context in which they were produced, trying not to fall into an anachronistic interpretation of the monuments. From this, it reflected on the monuments that are being produced and occupy the urban space in the present time, the continuities and discontinuities of the aspects that guide the process of public monumentalization.

One of the objectives in relation to the proposed mediation plan for the Memorial was to permeate the history of Porto Alegre through the objects on display, putting students in direct contact with the pieces present there, and striving for reflection on the history of the city. By means of this contact, the sensitive of visitors is encouraged to observe the characteristics that materially form the monuments: the way they represent something/someone, the material they are made of, size, weight, damage suffered, and the paths taken along the way. time, until they reach the exhibition. In accordance with Régis Lopes (2004, p. 22), a “History of objects” was therefore sought, which presupposes the study of “History in objects”, that is, having objects – material culture – as a source reflection of society, since they are indications of cultural traits. In this sense, the pieces on display at the exhibition were used as a “generative object”, which aims to (Régis Lopes, 2004):

[...] motivate reflections on the plots between subject and object: to perceive the life of objects, understand and feel that objects express cultural traits, and that objects are creators and creatures of human beings. Now, such an exercise must start from everyday life itself, as this is how dialogue is established, knowledge of the new in lived experience: conversation between what is known and what is going to be known – reading objects as an act of seeking new readings. (p. 73).

Taking the material goods on display as generating objects, together with the mediation with the students, allowed us to reach broader layers of analysis, starting from the objects. This educational approach in the museological space enabled the integration between art and human sciences, especially historical science. From the students’ interaction with the monuments on display – that is, what was visible –, it was possible to reflect on what was invisible, silenced by the objects. In this sense, the students were asked, where are the statues that represent the women of our history? Where are the black, indigenous people? Is our history just a white and Eurocentric narrative? These questions about what was not represented generated reflections beyond the exhibition, contributing to a critical look at multiple aspects: artistic and historical

doing, national and cultural identity, the history of the city etc. In this way, we believe that the intersection between students, mediation, objects and the museum, allowed to reach other perspectives of learning and knowledge, beyond the traditional classroom of History.

That said, with regard to the educational action proposed for the exhibition, it turns to teaching-learning issues, since the function of the mediator in a museological space is to inquire, question, that is, to encourage reflection through those exposed objects. After all, the mediator's relationship with the students is an exchange of knowledge, given that they are in a dialogical relationship.

With regard to teaching-learning, Vygotsky (2010) explains that, in order to consider the development of the subject, it is necessary, concomitantly, to take into account the history of the society in which he is inserted. Therefore, the author argues that the way in which the educator tries to transmit his knowledge to his students affects the learning process of the students, since the subject is in an exchange relationship, through which he transmits his thoughts, experiences, culture etc.

In the case of mediation, when addressing figures from Porto Alegre society to the students, not only focusing on the figures exposed in the exhibition, bringing silenced stories behind those already brought, we tried to include the student in the history of their region, their society. And that, in the light of Vygotsky (2010), contributes, or is expected to contribute, to the development of those students. This is a way of bringing a silenced history of Porto Alegre: black, indigenous, seeking a plural and democratic history teaching, fleeing the problems brought by a unique and elitist history of the city.

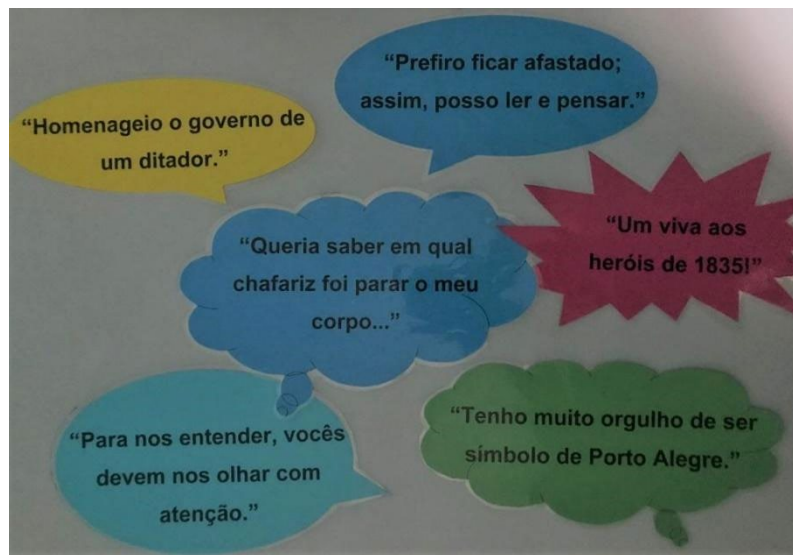
For Bakhtin (1992), mediation is seen as an interlocution between the mediator and the students, taking into account the context and class situation of each individual. Furthermore, mediation goes beyond exposing themes; it, in the light of Bakhtin (1992), seeks to build meanings and reflections between the exhibited objects and the public, in their interaction with the mediation of the Institution's educational action. In this way, the mediator (Régis Lopes, 2004):

[...] it should not expose the exhibition, but provoke, in visitors, the desire to see objects. In the case of school groups, work alternatives assume certain specificities. Instead of guiding the visit by giving explanations, the monitor can challenge the students through exercises that will be carried out from the contact with the exhibition. Now, this allows the student to discover that museums are sources of knowledge - it opens access routes to cognitive fruition, as he himself becomes responsible for the act of responding to the provocation posed. (p. 25).

Thus, for the present mediation to take place, based on the above postulates, an initial moment was developed with the students, through which it was possible for them to freely enter the exhibition, building their own initial perspectives.

To this end, at the beginning of the mediation, the students were divided into small groups, at which point each group received a plaque. These objects had a small caption, which represented a speech, or a feeling expressed by the monument. The use of the plates provided a very dynamic creative exercise on the part of the students, promoting their free interactions with the exposed objects. Figure 1 below shows the material used.

Figure 1. Signs prepared and used in the activity



Note. Author's photograph.

The objective was to mobilize the students to walk around the place, observe the exhibited pieces, allowing them to appropriate the exhibition space. It is believed that reflection on the phrases, in dialogue with the pieces, allowed an initial curiosity to be triggered about the exhibition, allowing the students' feelings to flourish about what was being seen by them. For the initial and final activities of the mediation, it was decided to use materials that encourage students to participate in the proposed dynamic. In this way, materials were used that, in a creative way, invited students to act (SIMON, 2012), in a space of history and memory that values the active participation of its visitors.

With the aim of illustrating the mediation and reflections arising from the students' visitation that took place in the exhibition, it is necessary to delve into some of the monuments that made up the exhibition. The guiding thread of the mediation ran through various moments in the city's history and through the ideas that guided both the urban plan of Porto Alegre and the relationship between the works and the socio-political context in which they were produced. The guided tour was structured so that students could observe chronologically the artistic and ideological differences that guided the making of the pieces, as well as the historical characters represented, within the historical context of the city of Porto Alegre. It should be noted that, in some exhibited pieces, it was not possible to obtain much information about their specificities, such as the request for manufacture, authorship or opening ceremony.

Thus, the journey began with pieces dating from the turn of the 19th to the 20th century, which were part of an urban process based on models of European capitals. Examining the works *Estátua do Rio dos Sinos* (imported from the region of Carrara, Italy) and *O Menino da Cornucópia* (manufactured by the Louis Thiriot foundry, in France), the students were invited to talk about the elements that made up the pieces. Among the speeches, they exposed themes from Greco-Roman mythology, as the Statue represents a nymph, while the Boy is, in fact, a triton (his legs give way to flippers), messenger of Poseidon, Greek deity of the seas and oceans. Originally, both pieces were part of sets that formed fountains in squares in Porto Alegre.

Separated from the other pieces in the exhibition, the students came across the bust in honor of Apolinário Porto Alegre (made in bronze by the German Alfred Adloff, in 1927). This piece can be characterized as a “booklet” of the positivist ideology widespread in the period. When briefly approaching positivism with the students, they were asked how this ideology approached the plastic language of the monument. Almost unanimously, the students highlighted the intellectual pose in which Apolinário was represented: while the chin is supported by one hand, the other holds a book, as if the character was reflecting on something he had just read.

Another piece is a bronze plaque, by Alfred Adloff (1928). It was dedicated to the then mayor of Porto Alegre, Otávio Rocha, in the context of the opening of Avenida Júlio de Castilhos. A double homage resides in this piece. In the left corner of the plate, there is a male figure, sitting on a phrase in French: *les grandes hommes / sont les phares / de humanite* (great men are the beacons of humanity). Visitors were asked about possible interpretations of this phrase, bearing in mind those honored in the play (both men and politicians) and the positivist ideology, for which history is a showcase for admiration of deeds and “great men”, “heroes” from the past.

Moving on to the monuments created after 1930, one can see the characteristics of a moment in which the positivist ideology in decline merged with the concept of regional art, called gauchismo. It was a period in which state and municipal personalities and exponents of the Farroupilha Civil War were monumentalized, due to the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the conflict, in 1935. The exhibition included a metal plaque from the Sírio-Libanês Obelisk, donated by the Syrian-Lebanese community in honor of the farroupilhas (Alfred Adloff, 1935), as well as the plaque on the monument to Bento Gonçalves (Antônio Caringi, 1935), dedicated to the soldiers who fought in the conflict. They are relatively simple pieces, plastically composed of a text, in hollow letters, on the metal piece.

Despite the visual simplicity of the pieces, they allowed us to reflect on the memory of the Farroupilha Civil War in the history of the region. This was one of the most interesting moments of the mediation, as the students’ brought questions based on prior knowledge about the conflict. A seventh-grade student asked about the reasons for commemorating, in Rio Grande do Sul, a war that, in fact, was lost by the State. Contextualizing the conflict opened up the

possibility of problematizing individuals who are monumentalized/honored to the detriment of other historical characters/collectives such as, for example, the body of Lanceiros Negros.

The last two monuments inserted in the mediation are, in fact, two representative models of their originals. The first, a bronze statue of the Laçador (Antônio Caringi, 1954); the second, Monument to the Açorianos, built with iron plates by Carlos Tenius, in 1973. Originally located next to Salgado Filho Airport, measuring more than 5 meters in height, the Laçador displayed in the exhibition results from a 3D print of approximately 2 meters. The scanning and printing work was carried out by the Materials Selection and Design Laboratory of the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul [LDSM/UFRGS]

The piece represents a male individual, serious physiognomy, strong, erect and haughty body. According to Alves (2005), the traditionalist movement wanted, for the city, a representative symbol of what they imagined as the gaucho identity, which Caringi sought to translate in his work. Since 2001, the monument is listed as historical heritage of Porto Alegre. At that moment of mediation, it was possible to reflect on the interaction between art, monumentalization and technology, due to the presence of the 3D model made by the LDSM. The exposed model allowed to expose together with the students how the areas of Design and Engineering can be used in favor of the preservation of the historical and cultural heritage, promoting the identification, conservation, as well as actions of exhibition and dissemination of the historical and cultural heritage. Thus, it was possible to conclude with the classes that the area of History and Historical Heritage does not only concern “old things”, in fact, maintaining a close interdisciplinary dialogue with technological and engineering areas.

Regarding the Monument to the Açorianos, the exhibition features the iron model used as a prototype of the original monument, which is located in Largo dos Açores, in Porto Alegre. Measuring approximately 2 meters in length by 1.5 meters in height, the model presents itself as a large sculpture, which retains the markings, in its structure, of the professionals who created it. With regard to its dimensions, its original is considered the largest public monument in the city, being inaugurated on the anniversary of Porto Alegre, in 1974. Through futuristic and abstract features, the plastic language of the monument was designed to represent the first couples who came from the Azores archipelago (Portugal), in the second half of the 18th century, with the aim of populating the region where it is currently located Porto Alegre. Therefore, it is a piece built to represent the “founding myth” of the city.

Even though the Laçador portrays only one individual and the Monument to the Açorianos represents a group of individuals, in both, there is a depersonalization of the honorees, using the expression of Marins (1998-1999). The Laçador is an individual who represents the gaucho collective, which should serve as an identification for all who share this identity, however “mythical” it may be. The Monument to the Açorianos, in turn, displays a series of individuals, without faces or clothing, who are guided by a winged figure that points to the other side of the Atlantic. The play conveys immigration, the horizon of expectations turned to the

beginning of a new life on Brazilian soil. The abstractionism of the piece allowed, on the part of the students, different interpretations about what is seen. While some saw the piece forming a caravel, others focused only on the winged being, identifying an angel or a bird. With this, the possibility arose for students to perceive one of the artistic functions of sculpture, which is to cause strangeness and allow a myriad of interpretations of its plastic language.

Thus, the students' contact with the pieces in the exhibition constituted an opportunity for reflection and reading of the exposed monuments and their relationship with the city's history, as they were made for the urban space and public appreciation. Monumentalizing a symbol or an individual presupposes an intention, in this way, those pieces are vestiges of social and cultural manifestations of a certain historical context of Porto Alegre. The statues can be seen as documents for the interpretation of the past, linked in a history-process perspective. (Alves, 2015).

For Siman (2013), the city is a text to be read through the objects that constitute it. The author argues that the understanding of history in the reading of the city-text goes through the observation of its words, signs, objects, and landscape of urbanity. It is through this reading of the elements that form the urban space that the possibility of a re-reading of the history of the city and the individuals who inhabit this space opens up, whether in the centers or on the margins. Thus, the author emphasizes the need to develop sensibilities for the historical observation of the city, that is, looking beyond what is seen. In addition, it requires curiosity from the observer “[...] for the layers of time that are declared and indicated in their materiality and symbology” (Siman, 2013, p. 5). In methodological terms, the great challenge in reading the city (Siman, 2013):

[...] it is to reveal what is hidden through an archeology of the text/fabric about the urban that seeks to expose what is not perceived in a territory always transformed by new buildings, new layouts, new social actors, and new uses. An archeology that can make use of documents that secrete traces and marks of what can no longer be seen. (p. 5).

In this sense, an attempt was made to characterize the exhibited pieces as documents of the city's past, reflecting together with the visiting students the histories of the city through the pieces. For example, when observing the statues of Rio dos Sinos and the Menino da Cornucópia (both from the 19th century), the Eurocentric influence is reflected in the context of urban improvements in the city of Porto Alegre. In addition, an attempt was made to bring to the group reflection that the passion for the urbanization of the city center was marked by a racist and hygienist urban plan, in a historical process of marginalization of the black communities that inhabited the city center. These pieces are the result of a context – which started at the end of the 19th century and continued into the 20th century – where the black population of former slaves was pushed to the outskirts of the city and away from the urban center of the capital of Rio Grande do Sul, a territory that historically identified this population. The same reflection was

proposed to the students when observing the bust of the positivist Apolinário Porto Alegre and Otávio Rocha, former mayor known as “the reformer”, due to the public works he carried out.

The absence of female personalities in statuary art was observed by students in the seventh year of Elementary School. These, when they appear, were identified with generic terms (the nymph, the statue of Rio dos Sinos), but never representing a real character, political and heroic personality of the city's history. Finally, the example of the most recent piece that was on display, the Monument to the Açorianos (1973), still fits. This piece portrays the arrival of couples from the Azores Island, in Portugal, in 1752, which is considered a founding feat of the current city of Porto Alegre. At this moment of mediation, the students were asked about the existence of other communities prior to the Azoreans and the reasons why they were not considered in the official history of the city. Such history does not consider the indigenous communities that inhabited this territory before the European arrival in the region. Seventh grade students pointed out the lack of monuments in honor of black or indigenous personalities, collectives.

Thus, in the “Monuments and Art” exhibition, the possibility of using objects as a source for reflection was seen, making use of the pieces to delve into the stories that have yet to be addressed. According to Knauss (2010), the critical argument about the artistic beauty of a piece can question not only the form, but the reading of the history carried out by the monument, that is, an interpretation of the past preserved there. Through this, the objective was to pluralize the history of Porto Alegre, reflecting on the different cultures and communities that form it (Siman, 2013):

There are parts and stretches of the city that are more visible and/or are the ones our eyes were trained to see. There is a city that is more visible than invisible, a city that exposes itself and imposes itself on the eyes of the city dweller: the monuments, the houses of power and the power of memory. Observing monuments as documents is a condition for understanding their perennial intentions. Monuments/documents built with solidity capable of defying the passage of time, the natural weather, allowing themselves to be touched and reinterpreted by successive generations, witnessing the speeches, power struggles and aesthetic taste that are reconstructed throughout history. (p. 8).

The mediation carried out also allowed the students to reflect on the function of public monuments and that the choice of themes, individuals and monumentalized facts is not neutral, but the result of collective choices of a certain social class.

(Re)creating the title of the exhibition

After walking through the monuments, it was proposed to the students, based on the reflections arising from the mediated educational action, that they recreate the title of the exhibition. It is highlighted, in the pages above, the need to reflect on which stories are being told by urban monuments. These were made to show presence and pay homage to people, symbols and deeds, but also reveal absences. At the end of the mediation, the students returned to the title of the exhibition – “The history of the city at risk” –, inviting them to a critical dialogue with it through the following questions: does the exhibition cover the entire history of city? Thinking about the history of Porto Alegre known to you, which figures are not represented here? The first intention was not to criticize the title of the exhibition, but to use it as a trigger for the resumption of the reflection carried out during the mediation.

When these questions were raised, it was possible to discuss with the students the ways in which it became monumental – considering the historical context in which those pieces were produced – and how this practice is carried out in contemporary times, triggering a reflection on how others individuals/social groups currently appear or not in the city's statutory heritage. From this, some students brought the example of the Museu de Percurso do Negro, which revealed the presence of black communities in the center of the capital through spaces and religious and cultural symbols of this population. In order to resume, perceive and document the students' learning, it was proposed that they recreate the title of the exhibition, bearing in mind the questions posed earlier and the reflections built during the mediation. For this, the students formed small groups to carry out the activity, for which cardboard and colored pens were made available for writing.

Below are some examples of the titles they created. It should be noted that, in each mediation, the groups created more than one title on each poster, because they changed it based on internal conversations in their group, as well as guiding questions from their teachers and the mediator. It should also be said that all titles are authored by the students, without the direct intervention of other people - teachers, mediator.

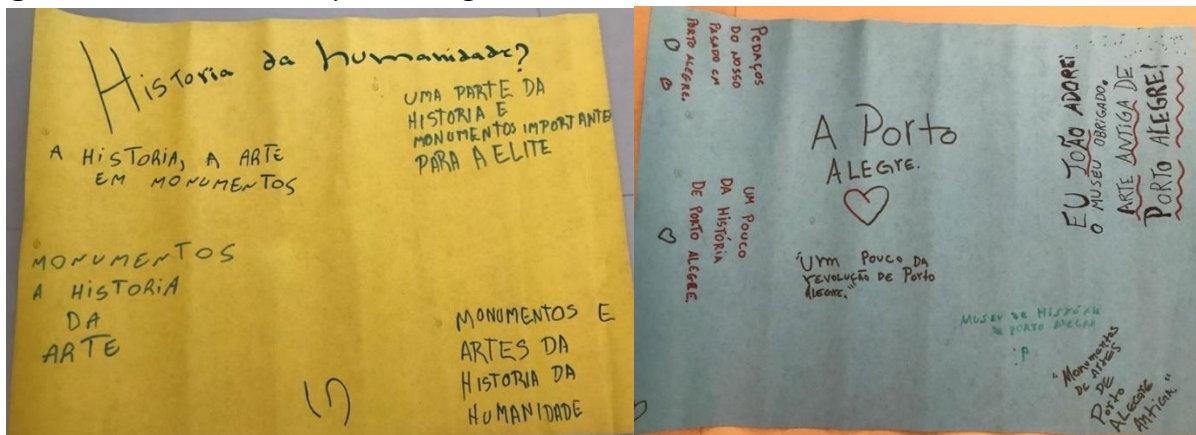
The first mediation took place on September 25, 2019, when a seventh-grade elementary school class was received. Despite being a small class (8 students), it needed a greater incentive to carry out the activity. The first title created by them was “Monuments and art: the history of mankind”, which continued in accordance with the original title of the exhibition.

From this, it was necessary to launch small questions for the group to reflect and develop a title that would account for what had been discussed in the mediation. Thus, the titles emerged (Figure 2): “A part of history and important monuments for the elite”; “A bit of the history of Porto Alegre”; and “Pieces of our past in Porto Alegre”. It was noted that the last titles are very different from the first, and words like “a little”, “a part”, and “pieces” explain that the students reflected and understood that those exposed monuments did not handle the plurality of narratives that form the history of the city, but only a part of it. In addition, by putting “important for the

elite” in a title, one of the groups exposed its understanding of the social group responsible for the monumentalization of some pieces, revealing the understanding that those symbols and individuals were not chosen in a neutral way for the statuary elaboration, being involved in social relations of power.

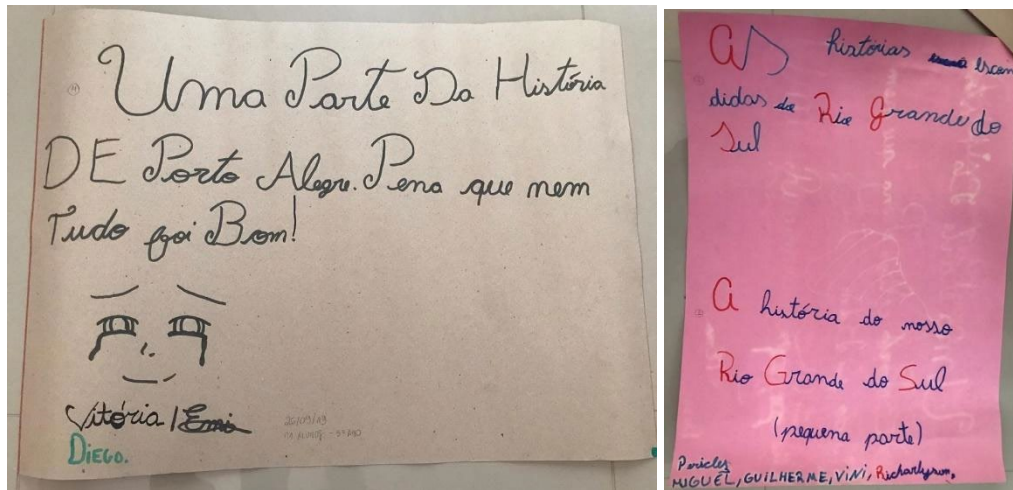
We also emphasize the permanence of the word “art” in the elaborated titles. When going through the exhibition, the artistic aspect that involved the elaboration of the monuments was highlighted, in an interdisciplinary learning between the disciplines of History and Art. Through the exposed statuary repertoire, it was possible to highlight aesthetic aspects to the students, as well as the transformation of these characteristics and artistic models over time.

Figure 2. Posters created by seventh grade students



Note. Author's photograph.

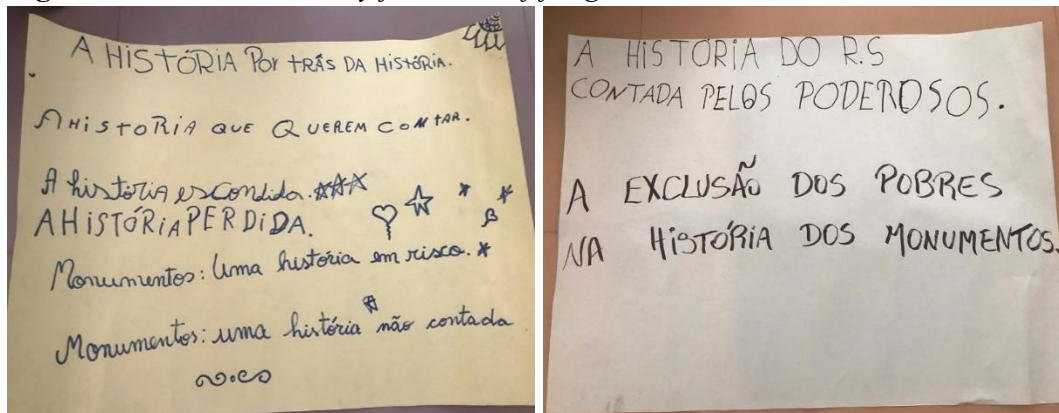
In the second mediation, there was the participation of 11 students from a fifth-grade elementary school class, on September 26th. Among the titles, two stand out, which are in line with the reflection proposed in the mediation (Figure 3): “The hidden stories of our Rio Grande do Sul” and “A part of the history of Porto Alegre. Too bad it wasn't all good.”. The first strongly brings the word “escondidas”, which concerns the stories beyond the monuments exhibited there, but which were triggered by those pieces. The second title, in turn, as in the first mediation, brings the expression “a part”, also showing that the exhibition brought only a piece of so many episodes and figures that make up the history of Porto Alegre. Still in this title, one can see almost a type of lamentation expressed by the students in the phrase “too bad that not everything was good”. It is believed that this occurred because the other stories, other than those of an urban bourgeois elite, are permeated by reports of resistance, social and cultural marginalization, struggle for rights, etc. During the mediation, these concepts were addressed and discussed with the students when the monuments were related to the aspects that led to the dispossession of the black community – enslaved and formerly enslaved – from the city center. We tried to exemplify this situation not only with the reality of Porto Alegre, but also showing that this type of government policy was – and continues to be – a reality in other Brazilian capitals, such as São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, for example.

Figure 3. Posters created by fifth grade students

Note. Author's photograph.

Finally, the third mediation took place on September 27, with 16 fourth- and fifth-year students, concomitantly. In this mediated visit, the most marked titles emerged regarding the intentionality of monumentalization. The following titles stand out (Figure 4): “The story they want to tell”; “The history of RS told by the powerful”; “The exclusion of the poor in the history of monuments”; and “Half of Rio Grande do Sul in its history”.

Throughout the mediated journey, an attempt was made to emphasize the intentionality in the creation of a monument, in view of its historical context. This was done with the intention of reflecting on the non-neutrality of monumentalization. The exhibited pieces were treated as document-monuments, that is, exposing the monument to historical analysis, criticism, reflection and showing students that that fact or individual, represented in stone, bronze, or iron, was chosen to be there. It was shown, therefore, that the silences, to a certain extent, are also intentional.

Figure 4. Posters created by fourth and fifth grade students

Note. Author's photograph.

These phrases elucidate the importance of reflection through the objects in the exhibition. It can be seen, in fact, that the pieces shown in the exhibition do not cover the entire history of Porto Alegre. This reflection is important for us to think about the discipline and the History class, in general, which must account for the plurality of narratives that form our history and our culture. Such possibilities have a direct impact on socially constructed cultural representations, as well as on our subjectivities, within which we build our individual and collective identities.

In addition, they reveal that there was a reflection on the part of the students about the intentionality of the act of monumentalizing, which was guided by the interests of a social and political elite – “the story they want to tell” –, passing through the “exclusion of the poor”.

Final considerations

The students' contact with the exhibited pieces, through the proposed reflections, can lead students to other questions about the urban space where they live, rethinking the symbols, personalities, events, cultures that were and are being chosen to remain in the collective memory of the city. After all, what do monuments say about us and our history? The reflections carried out by the students during the mediation also allowed thinking critically about the different narratives that dispute the symbolic space in the cultural heritage, in addition to the need to rethink the signs and symbols that are projected in Porto Alegre.

From the mediation carried out, it was found that the students took possession of a critical look at the exposed objects. An example of this observation was that of a student who, while observing the monuments in honor of the Farroupilha Civil War, asked the mediator why Rio Grande do Sul commemorated a war in which it had been defeated. Another example was the questioning about the lack of female characters in public statuary, an absence perceived as a result of a culturally patriarchal society. In these examples, it is evident that the students' criticality was fostered by contact with the monuments and by the mediation process.

Moving the history class to the space of the museum made it possible to streamline the teaching-learning process, through the approximation and interaction of students with the exhibited pieces. Learning was built together with the students, by means of an interactive experience with the exhibition. In addition, it was possible to work with interdisciplinary issues, such as: (i) the approximation between the disciplines of history and art, focusing both on the historicity of monuments and the formal and artistic aspects of their materiality – materials, colors, styles; (ii) the interaction between heritage, art and 3D technology used in the conservation and dissemination of historical and cultural heritage.

Through the titles created by the students, it is believed that the reflections proposed during the mediation allowed the students to take possession of a more plural history, which is permeated by a series of disputes and social inequalities. It is understood, therefore, that this meets the objectives that guide actions in Heritage Education, which aim at the socio-historical understanding of individuals through a social, plural and democratic learning of human

collectivities. With this, we hope that students have become aware of the ethnic-racial plurality that permeates our history, which cannot be reduced to a single narrative.

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