

Lisa Ullmann Travelling Scholarship Fund - Final Report

Dear LUTSF,

Firstly, many thanks to you and the LUTSF Committee for generously supporting my study of Mamulengo.

Dates: 10th-27th of November 2013

Place: Rio, Permanbuco and Sao Paolo, Brazil.

How far the purpose of your project was achieved;

Highlights of travels;

1. Training and sharing skills with Mestre Lopez, Mestre Calu and Jose Edvan Ferreira de Lima
2. Gaining a deeper understanding of Mamulengo and Maracatu Rural and the impact it can have on audiences
3. Attending performances in Gloria do Goita and Vicenza
4. Teaching

Suggestions, which could help future Awardees;

- ♥ Plan your trip well in advance. If you do not speak the language, try to collaborate with other artists who do to have good lines of communication.
- ♥ Be clear about what you want to achieve and how it can impact your work at home ·
- ♥ Establish contacts that can lead to future collaborations.

How I have shared and will continue to share information with others;

February 2014:

I am currently writing a mini series of articles for Animation Online on:

Part one – introducing Mamulengo as an art form and its history

Part two – the interview with the puppet master

Part three – more detail about the trip, experience, findings and reflections

Autumn/ Winter 2014:

There are also discussions of running a series of indepth master classes in conjunction with Familiadiarte on movement, object manipulation and shadow puppetry

Longer term view: There are talks about possible collaborations with various artists encountered on the trip

Introduction:

This project is a long standing and steadily developing deep passion and interest of mine of researching into the rich traditions afro-brazilian folkloric dances in combination with Mamulengo, a form of movement based puppetry.

Mamulengo is the most traditional and popular kind of puppet theater in Brazil.

Rio:

My first destination on the trip was Rio.

Here is the base of some of the people I wanted to meet on the trip. One of them is Dawn Fleming, an actress and movement artist who would interpret for me on the trip.

The next person to meet was Adriana Schneider Alcure. She is a professor in theatre at the Institute of Dramatic arts and has written her PHD on: "A ZONA DA MATA É RICA DE CANA E BRINCADEIRA" UMA ETNOGRAFIA DO MAMULENGO. This was a first chance for me to get a better understanding of this art form and have a conversation on the subject. She also in advance to my trip provided me with all the contact in the Zona da Mata, in which most of the Mamunlengieros are based in.

She was able explain all open questions I had on the technique and background of this form of puppetry.

Orlinda

Orlinda is a historic city in the state of Pernambuco located in the country's North East. Its well known for carnival, very similar to traditional Portuguese carnivals, with the addition of African influenced dances. It also is the only carnival that has a procession of large Mamulengo puppets as an integral part. Orlinda also hosts a Mamulengo Museum and research centre. I spend a couple of days researching here the art form, designs and traditions.



Imaginary beings such as Devils, Vampires, and Papa Figo (who eats the liver of disobedient children) are some characters of the performance.

Mamulengo is equivalent to Turkey's: 'Karagoz', Britain's: 'Punch and Judy', France's Guignol, Italy's Pulcinella a.o. Mamulengo expresses "the hardness of the life of the people of North-East Brazil". The themes of social and political discrimination, family, relationships, power struggles, violence, street life are being explored by the puppeteer. Traditionally the comments and responses of the audience are taken to develop the plot. The puppeteer improvises and also a satirical outlook in an integral part of mamulengo. Magic and poetry are also tools that the puppeteer uses to create tension, add depth or humor to the tragic/comic- performance.



Cabolinhos is a popular event in North East Brazil originating in the oldest, indigenous dances of Brazil. Part of Mamulengo Performances.



Mateus: who functions as an intermediary between the puppets and the public usually played by an actor

Gloria de Goita-

We arrive early afternoon in Gloria de Goita. A small town after going for an hour passed some sugar cane plantations. Permanbuco is a part of the North East that has historically been regarded as a poor region especially in its plain inland with times of draughts demaging crops in a very acriculture laden landscape.

Gloria is the home to the Associação Cultural de Mamulengueiros e Artesãos de Glória, a museum and home to quite a few Mamulingieros.

When we arrive a rodeo takes place in town and lots of men on horses, music and a certain amount of drunkenness are greeting us.

We were invited to stay in the house of Bila. He is a young Mamulengiero. His story was a story I heard many times repeat. He used to come to play football on a field nearby the house of Mestre Lopes. He always was curious watching what was going on. At that time there was a small house that functioned as a community meeting point as well as a theatre, just next to the field. Young Bila age than nine decided that he wanted to become a Mamulengiero. He gave up school and learnt helped and watched the masters, copied their moves, learnt the stories and slowly went on his journey of a Mamulengiero.

We first explore the museum. We are than shown by bila his puppet trunk. He has around 30 puppets that are his, altogether there are around 630 characters as part of various storylines in mamulengo. Its amazing to see the variety of characters and storylines that weave the basis of this art form. Also he shows us and lets us explore their movements and characteristics. We also talk, watch and start making a puppet. The wood that's being used is umburana and mulungu , a very light weight wood that is easy to carve. At the moment a new puppet booth with a puppet set is being build for one of the local colleges.

Bila tells us that it is hard to earn a living as a mamulingiero as performance opportunities are far and few in between. Therefore only the puppet master, who also are makers can make ends meet. In the old days the farm/landowners would invite the Mamulingieros onto their farms for them to perform. In those days shows would last for 5-8 hours until the late hours of the night.



Bila introducing his puppets to us and explaining the various characters to us

The next morning we set out to meet Ze Lopez.

The group of Zé Lopes is called 'Mamulengo Teatro Riso' (Theater of Laughter). He is a performer and maker like all Mamulengieros I met and also makes puppets for sale.

Talking and exploring his theatre was a joy as he shared songs and stories, gave the context to some of the characters and demonstrated how the figures are held and manipulated. He is wealth of oral storytelling and history.



Ze Lopes at his studio with his daughter



Various Mamulengo characters created by Ze Lopes

Vicenzia



Mestre Calu at his home in Vicenzia and at the school

After a two hour journey through sugar cane plantations we arrive at Vicenzia. A small town in the Zona de Mata that is surrounded by plantation. Here we invited to stay with Ze Calu an experienced Mamulengiero and his family. As soon as we arrive we are greeted with an enormous amount of hospitality, which is very humbling. Ze Calu takes his time to give us an account of his life and work. He also introduces a lot of his puppets to us all as well as the songs that accompany them. The next day we travel with him to a school in which he teaches. The bus takes us on long winding roads until we arrive at the 'Esculo Cultural de Carnival'. He teaches puppetry to the older students and as well as songs and dances. We learn from him at this workshop and than do some skill sharing at the end of the day.

Maracatu

It is black independence day and his teaching is part of the celebrations. There are also performance scheduled such as Maracatu.

Maracatu is one of the richest expressions of Brazilian folklore and one of the top attractions in the Carnival of Pernambuco, especially Zona da Mata. Maracatu applies not only to the music, but to the groups involved in this type of celebration and to the festivities as a whole.

One of many folk traditions with African and indigenous elements in Brazil, maracatu de baque solto has traits which set it apart from *maracatu de baque virado* or other festivities such as *congadas*. Among the traits of this celebration, which symbolically evokes the coronation of African kings, is the character known as *caboclo de lança* (spear-carrying caboclo), an extravagantly dressed man who holds a flower in his mouth.

Other elements of maracatu de baque solto you will see in these photos are the *calunga*, a doll representing dead queens of African ancestry; the flag opening the parade; and baianas. It is also very present in Mamulengo and there various characters who represent Maracatu dancers. (see above).

Sao Paolo

Working with Lucia Ghalbherti from Familiarate Arts Centre was a very successful collaboration.

We had a few skype meetings prior to me coming to set out what programme we could offer.

We concluded it would be best to offer in a family workshop puppet making and a performance element based on the knowledge we gathered on Mamulengo as an art form.

The teacher workshop would touch upon themes of community, art in the community, object theatre and shadows.

Upon arrival I was picked up the following day by Lucia and we ventured into Sao Paolo traffic to get all the materials I needed.

After five hours of endless traffic jams we were finally at the centre in Morambi where the workshops would take place the following day.

It was an ideal open space. Great for teaching workshop and creating art work. I worked on the sculpture frame after the creative team concluded that it would be great to work on a snake character. It symbolizes the magic element of Mamulengo and also we thought creating an animal would work well for the family workshop. We had around 30 people turn up despite terrantial rain. We gave the snake two layers of skin and decorated it. At the end of the afternoon the creation was processed around the building and outdoors accompanied by everyone and traditional songs and dances.



The masterclass on the Monday night was designed to work with teacher and artist. We had 12 participants. The theme was: Movement, Object Theatre and shadows.

We started the workshop of with brainstorming ideas around:

Storytelling and how to put it into a visual representation:

- ♥ personal stories
- ♥ Skillsets
- ♥ Platform/exposur
- ♥ Validation – breeds confidence

I also presented by practise in forms of slides and had a very interesting conversation of how to engage new audiences into puppetry/ theatre and how to engage young people.



Workshop participants for the materclass at Morambi, Sao Paolo

This project has been an amazing overall experience. I was met with openness and wonderful kindness everywhere. Thank you for giving me this opportunity.

Nina Gebauer