

Bárbara Wagner & Benjamin de Burca

9.9.–5.10.20

Bárbara Wagner and Benjamin de Burca are primarily active in film and photography. There are both documentary and fictional elements in their work. Popular music genres and the role these play for a variety of groups, defining their identity and styling their appearance, are frequent components in research by the artist duo. Videos by Wagner and de Burca use rhythm, lyrics and dance to address issues like visibility, prejudice and cultural phenomena which may seem marginal but are very important in the lives of the people portrayed.

Swinguerra, 2019, 21:00 min.

The film “Swinguerra” was developed together with dance groups from the outer districts of Recife, far from the centre of economic and political power in the north-east of Brazil. A diverse local pop music scene – ranging from the tradition of festive and religious African rituals to an assimilation of American pop influences – is depicted here through three types of music and dance: swingueira, brega funk and Passinho do Maloka.

In traditional “swingueira”, independent dance groups with up to 50 young members train hard on sports grounds to compete with each other in annual contests. Driven by a need for social integration, these competitions generate an experience of belonging. “Brega funk” evolved out of “swingueira”. The difference is that the dancers perform commercially in night clubs and at concerts with an MC. In “Passinho do Maloka” young people create choreographies for fun and for social media.

Amid the all-pervading political and social tensions around social justice and atonement for the past, this video observes local – but not isolated – conflicts with empathy. The Black male, female and transgender artists featured use dance as a form of resistance. In the country with the world’s highest murder rate for transvestites, transgender people and homosexuals, the protagonists have a chance to be themselves in front of the camera and when they are dancing. “Swinguerra” is a celebration of diversity and a play on two words: the dance movement

“swingueira” and the Portuguese word “guerra”, meaning war or struggle.

Biography

Bárbara Wagner (*1980, Brasília, Brazil) graduated in journalism at UFPE, Recife, Brazil, then took an MA in fine art at the Dutch Art Institute, Arnhem. Benjamin de Burca (*1975, Munich, Germany) studied fine art at the Glasgow School of Art before obtaining his MFA at Ulster University. The two artists have been working together since 2011. They have had numerous personal shows in museums and galleries, including Stedelijk, Amsterdam (2019), Art Gallery of York University, Toronto (2018) and Museo Jumex, Mexico City (2019); they have participated in major group exhibitions such as Manifesta 13, Marseille (2020); the 58th Biennale di Venezia (2019); Skulptur Projekte, Münster (2017); and the 32nd Bienal de São Paulo (2016). Their works have also been shown at the Berlinale (2019, 2018, 2017), the Locarno Film Festival (2019) and the International Documentary Film Festival in Tel Aviv (2017).