

Somewhere between cities and words, with ceramic and people, a link was created out of which came the idea to work with local populations themselves to complete these projects



Françoise Schein

Ceramic:

A tool for the diffusion of Human Rights
& Social Change

As an architect, urban planner and artist, I am interested in the territories of cities, in their unique cartographical designs, which express their political, socio-economic roots and the philosophies that emerge from these gigantic human constructions. I have come to see cities as living beings who tell stories about the lives that have crossed them, leaving indelible marks on the successive strata of the cities' foundations.

It was through working on the physical mapping of cities that I discovered how human rights principles were a geological bed on which societies

had, eventually, transformed into democracies: that is, the conception, expression and recognition of human rights was an integral component in defining the physical forms that cities, societies, and communities ultimately took.

From that moment on, I was determined to incorporate written expressions of fundamental human rights, such as the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Man, into my projects; thus emerged the urban inscription project that is the backbone work of the Association

Art&ArchitectureJournal 3

Art&ArchitectureJournal

NUMBER 68/69 AUTUMN 2009 ~ Public Art ~ Urbanism ~ Architecture — £10.00



1



2



3



4

MAIN IMAGE recent project in the city of Les Mureaux, visiteurs et fiers participants

1 Metro station Parvis de St Gilles, Brussels, Belgium

2 Grigri tiles metro Parque, Lisbon, Portugal

3 metro Parque, Lisbon, Portugal

4 Sumatra, panel detail, metro Parque, Lisbon, Portugal

Inscrire. By inscribing this and other fundamental expressions of the rights of man in artworks throughout the world, we leave behind indelible reminders to all who see them.

It was the feeling that we should never stop inscribing these texts that drove me into constructing, in a monumental scale, the text of the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Man at the Concorde subway station in Paris in 1989: the entire vault of the station is covered with ceramic tiles of letters but with no space between the words and no punctuation, producing a question related to the decipherability and understanding of this very text. In the viewers mind, ceramic then starts to be a great tool to play with letters, words and images.

Once the first project was launched, with *Association Inscrire*, we embarked into the utopian project of inscribing this text everywhere we could, in a variety of forms, and with all kinds of partners. Since 1989 we have contributed to eight monumental stations all dedicated to Human Rights; in Paris, Brussels, Lisbon, Haifa, Berlin, Stockholm, Bremen and Rio de Janeiro. But also in many shantytowns¹ of Rio de Janeiro and other underprivileged neighbourhoods and villages of Europe.

Aided by volunteers and others who share this vision, little by little, letter by letter, we have constructed walls of ideas that read like an open book, made of earth that lay beneath and within our communities. Ceramic had affirmed itself as an attractive tool for public projects. Somewhere between cities and words, with ceramic and people, a link was created

out of which came the idea to work with local populations themselves to complete these projects.

The Tile Workshop, was created in Rio de Janeiro in 2003, by our partner architect Laura Taves. The conception for the project was that the people from the underprivileged communities could come to write out the texts while learning about their own culture's history and the ancestral technique of painting onto azulejos². A large panel is then created, combining all the tiles, to become a permanent public art installation, and sited in each of their neighbourhoods. Not only do the people learn about the rights to which they are entitled and their personal education, but they also learn the ancestral azulejos painting techniques providing themselves with knowledge and a potential livelihood. This extension of the project lends both a pedagogical dimension and social purpose to *Inscrire*'s dissemination of human rights.

Simultaneously, in 2003 in Europe we started to work on a new body of workshops about the European citizenship and the Chart of the Fundamental Rights of the EU, with secondary schools. This teaching is based on the creative and innovative pedagogical methodology that *Inscrire* and their partner, The Tile Workshop, had created to approach the Human Rights with the underprivileged people in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro. Then, was born the next ceramic project: 'To Write Europe on the walls of cities'. It was an immediate success and has been reproduced more than thirty times in Portugal, Spain, France and Belgium. And by the end of 2010, with our new partner Generation Europe Foundation, we will

¹ Favela: is the brazilian name for these slums

² azulejos: is the Portuguese name for ceramic tile. It comes from arabic influence .



5

also have worked in Greece, Ireland, the Czech Republic and Romania. These ceramic workshops, aim to create a public urban art piece, and to inspire a strong pedagogical impact on the students who feel they are actively participating in the democratic life of their city.

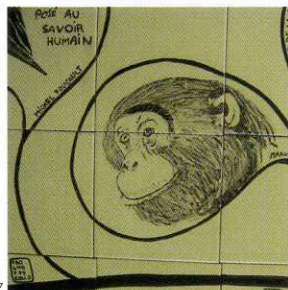
The fact that ceramic is the base material for these projects helps to locate the work in a human, accessible and traditional category, while being totally contemporary in its content and final format. The elemental reality that a tile is a small 15 x 15 cm piece of cooked earth makes it easy for anyone to handle. It's long history and accessibility through domestic and urban references, with cathedrals displaying the greatest examples, also allow a populist comprehension of pottery.

As an artist, I always thought that creating art with multiple minds and hands succeeded in creating very singular results that were particularly attractive for the public realm. Historically, art was not only created by solitary artists but by groups of craftspeople led by masters. The ability of ceramic to incorporate thousands of detailed contributions shows its versatility as a material for large-scale projects.

In the city of Les Mureaux, 40 kilometres West of Paris, a recent project, Les Murmures, involved the participation of the local population to create a huge map of the city that resembles a monumental tree, sited on the façade of the public library and media centre. Again, the use of ceramic made it possible to combine a large-scale professional design with the contribution of amateur participants. Over a period of a year, two hundred people painted unique leaves that included an image and a philosophical statement. The resulting variety of styles and ideas made this public artwork a real expression of the purpose of the building, creating an interface between the library and the people, the city and its representation.



6



7



8

5 Laeken Brussels, Belgium
public participation

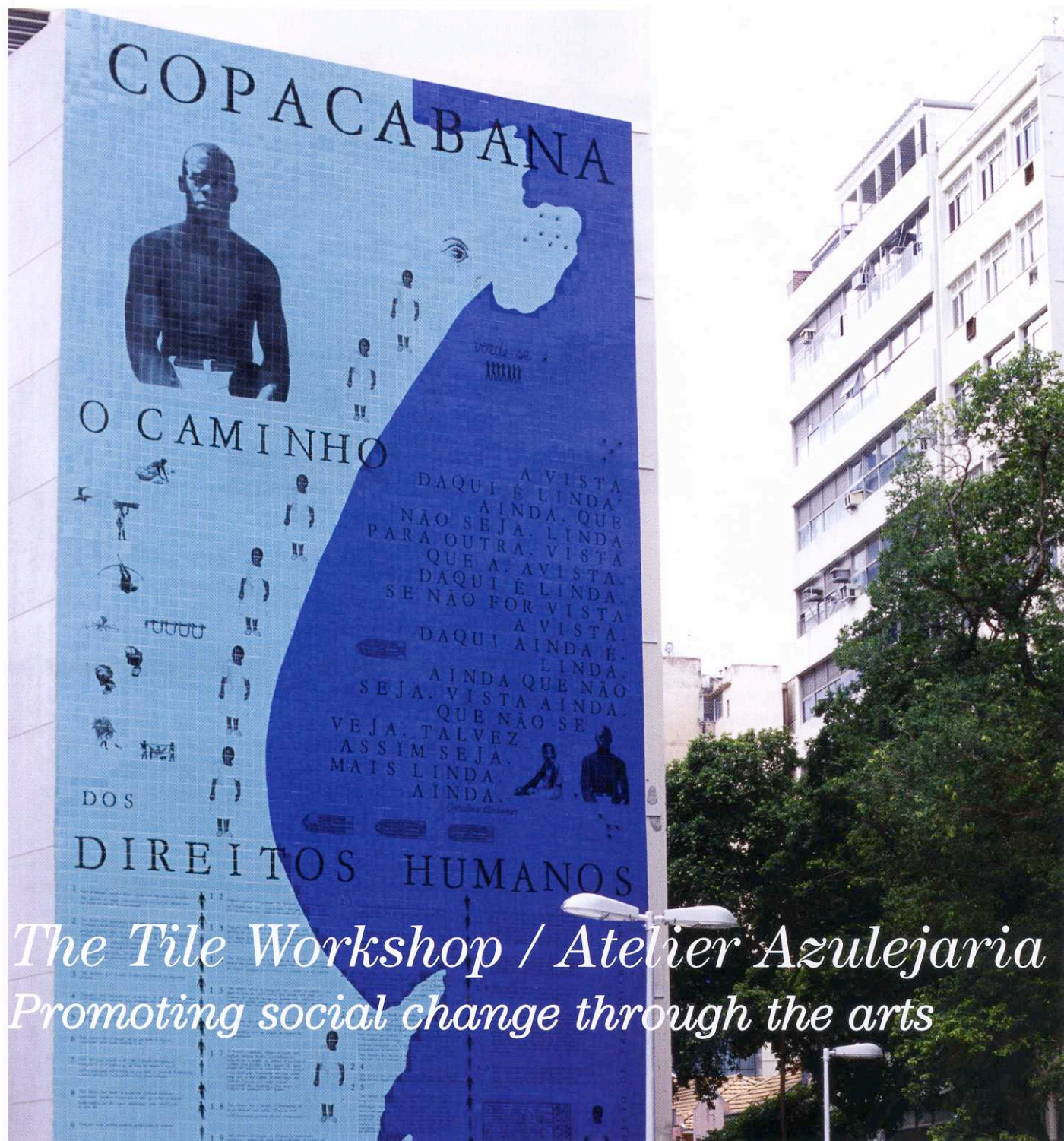
6-8 Murmures autour de la
Seine, Public Library,
(Médiathèque) for the city of
Les Mureaux, France

Françoise Schein is the Founder and Director of the non-governmental organization, Association INSCRIRE. Established in 1997, the organisation involves philosophers, sociologists, artists, architects and the public with the objective of disseminating the 1948 Declaration of Human Rights all over the world in as many ways as possible.

Working independently or with Association INSCRIRE she has produced a large number of monumental projects including: Concorde Metro station, Paris (1989-90); St Gilles subway station, Brussels (1992); Parque subway station, Lisbon (1994); Haifa, Israel (1993); Universitetet subway station, Stockholm (1996); Westhafen subway station, Berlin (2000); and Siqueira Campos subway station, Copacabana, Rio de Janeiro (2003); The Garden of the Human Rights at the Rhododendrons Park, Bremen (2001); The Time Zone Clock, Coventry (2005); Les Murmures, Les Mureaux (2009); and since 2003 she has worked in Rio de Janeiro with Laura Taves and The Tile Workshop to create sustainable artistic projects in the favelas. She always starts developing her works with the philosophical intention: "We the people..." are going to create this work.

Françoise Schein studied architecture and urban design at the Brussels School of Visual Arts and Architecture followed by an MA in Urban Design at Columbia University, New York. Currently Professor of Sculpture and Urban Architecture at the School of Fine Arts in Caen, Normandy she lives and works in Paris.

www.inscrire.com



The Tile Workshop / Atelier Azulejaria

Promoting social change through the arts

To know the city is to leave one's neighbourhood, to go to museums, to learn the iconography of the society, to learn an ability, to develop a skill, to become a professional, to earn an income, and to make all of it a field of social intervention.

MAIN IMAGE: Copacabana. Metro at Praça Siqueira Campos, 2003.

1- 4. *The Fish Workshop*, 2007

5-6 *O Rio passa por aqui*
(*Rio goes through this way*) 2007
Katia de Radigues

7-8 *The Aquarium*
Nova Iguaçu



The Fish Workshop was a two day workshop with 200 children who created a big aquarium, where each fish has the name of the child who painted it. Commissioned by Nova Iguaçu, a large town on the periphery of Rio

The Tile Workshop is a collective of artists and craftswomen, led by the Brazilian architect and urbanist Laura Taves, combining artistic production, training and social activism. Based in Rio de Janeiro since 2003, it is the only hand made tile (azulejos) production atelier in the city.

Our workforce come together aiming at broadening the knowledge/education of all the people involved, establishing a closer relationship to the city, its culture and its artistic expressions, by undertaking different activities and actions. As a result of a learning process, the best quality artistic ceramics are produced. We create landmarks, permanent urban installations, which are becoming part of the city's architectural heritage and part of the city's reinvention by its own inhabitants, contributing to a sustainable urban development.

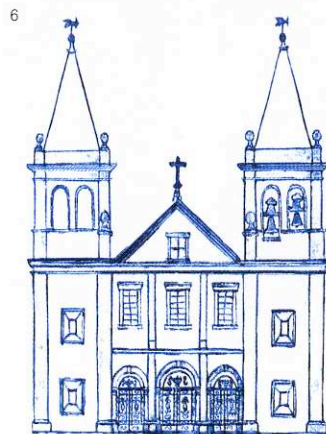
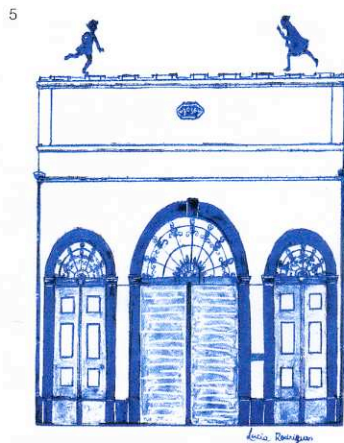
We create hand painted tiles and china, referencing subjects related to Brazilian culture, mainly about the city of Rio. We also create ceramic panels for private clients as well as for municipalities and organisations. We offer training workshops for new craftswomen and art workshops to people of all ages and backgrounds.

Origin - The Tile Workshop is rooted in The Way of the Human Rights, project conceived by the French based Association Inscire, directed by the artist Françoise Schein. Since 1999 the project has promoted a social transformation in the communities by creating an artistic awareness in the

local population. In partnership with ENDA Brasil, and the coordination of both Françoise Schein and Laura Taves, eight projects have been implemented in Rio. Over 300 residents in seven favelas (slum quarters) have participated in these projects. Some of these people, mostly women, are part of the regular team of The Tile Workshop.

Background - Rio de Janeiro is a city of 6.1 million inhabitants, where 20% live in more than 800 slums. The favelas are built by their residents, with little or no infrastructure provided by the city government. They lack a proper health or education system. The inhabitants are often victims of various types of violence, racism and prejudice. However, those living in slums participate of the city's life, working and establishing the most diverse relationships. Despite the inequality, there is social cohesion. But this interaction is not reflected in the urban space. If people who live in the slums usually know the "modern city", those who live in planned neighbourhoods, ignore the slums, feeding a cycle of stigma and mystification. The history of Rio's urban segregation goes back to the beginning of the twentieth century, when the favelas started to take form just after the abolition of the slavery in 1888, long before the more recent domination of the drug trade.

Recently the government has made progress in implementing new policies and supporting social initiatives. In 1993 the Municipality of the City of Rio de Janeiro designed the Favela-Bairro Program (Slum-to-Neighbourhood), in which it sought to integrate existing favelas into the



fabric of the city through infrastructure upgrading and service increases, but it was applied in a little over than 10% of the existing favelas. There is still a long way to go. There is very little coordinated or integrated policy encouraging the setting up of initiatives within the city's strategic development plan.

More combined efforts and actions are needed to enable everyone to enjoy access to education, health, justice, housing and culture without this being seen as a privilege. An urban democracy is a right in a society, which claims to be democratic. It is impossible to plan any future for the city of Rio without going seriously and deeply through the favelas and its complexity. The favelas are not exclusions but elements that compose our city. It is a reflection of the carioca (people who live in Rio) identity.

Our work - We do believe that our work at The Tile Workshop in fact contributes to a sustainable urban development, once we have managed to facilitate the access to the culture, for those who have little or none. The culture perceived in its many dimensions such as identity, symbolism, creativity, artistic and economic aspects through the relationship of the citizens and their own town, learning its history and its urban memory. To know the city is to leave one's neighbourhood, to go to museums, to learn the iconography of the society, to learn an ability, to develop a skill, to become a professional, to earn an income, and to make all of it a field of social intervention. Over the years this process has happened through the acquisition of a skill and the promotion of images in the city, either from our panels, products or workshops.

We also believe there is an intersection between the access to the culture and the access to the city as a practice of citizenship. Just as one of many ways to promote social change.

From the start we saw the project focusing on training people. Today the focus has become more business. The challenge is to make the business financially sustainable. This way the craftswomen can make a living and we can keep training people and developing projects.

Main Activities - Products and illustrations inspired by the city and its history: the first economic activity of the group. It has been a very good way to diffuse our work, participating on markets fairs and cultural events. It is also a tool to learn, to criticize and to discuss our society while producing images.

Projects: we have been creating panels of many different scales and in many different ways either for private clients or for municipalities, organizations and corporations. We have created panels associated with urban renovation projects, always including the local inhabitants to participate on the upgrading and regeneration of their urban environment.

Training and art workshops: based on an art-training program developed by our team over the last ten years, with ENDA Brasil, we offer workshops within social and educational programs linked to local governments and associations. Our workshop develops creative ways to help people to express themselves and create ceramic works as a result of a learning process.



9

9-10 The Fish Workshop, 2007



10

We also believe there is an intersection between the access to the culture and the access to the city as a practice of citizenship. Just as one of many ways to promote social change.

Main Achievements - Since 2001 The Tile Workshop has organized and hosted training workshops with over five hundred participants in partnership with various organizations including the State of Rio de Janeiro and the cities of Rio and Nova Iguaçu. In 2006 we won the first prize in the 44th Institute of Brazilian Architects Awards in a category awarding artistic and social projects.

We have built more than thirty decorative panels made of tiles installed in high visibility locations of these cities. And it is important to note that unlike other landmarks, none of our panels have been vandalised, perhaps because they have been made by the community and for their own inhabitants.

The Copacabana Metro at Praça Siqueira Campos, 2003 is located at Copacabana beach in the subway station entrance Siquiera Campos, is adjacent to several favelas with thousand of poor inhabitants and the most prestigious hotel of the city, the Copacabana Palace. The artwork, hand-painted with the participation of the local population, presents a map of the neighbourhood with images depicting slavery and the underprivileged. Three figures represent the concept of the project: 'Le Chemin des Droits Humains' (The Human Rights Way) A black man represents Brazilian labour; an old black lady who has known slavery; and a young girl who represents the country's hope in a better future. A poem by Arnaldo Antunes, a Sao Paulo poet, covers a large section of the mural and at street level the entire text of the 1948 Declaration of Human Rights is written by hand.

In 2007 the city of Nova Iguaçu invited The Tile Workshop to participate on an urban renovation project. We hosted a two day workshop with 200 children who created a big aquarium made of ceramic panels, where each fish has the name of the child who painted it, and this was installed in the main pedestrian tunnel in the city centre.

One of Rio's oldest newspapers, the Monitor Mercantil, supported a

project O Rio passa por aqui (Rio goes through this way), 2007, to renovate the Port area of the city. The area is rich in history, but in decline for the last 70 years, and located close to the business centre. Important local buildings were selected and the craftswomen of Azulejaria created illustrations, which were published, once a week, with a related article. At the end of the year the newspaper published a book with all the illustrations and texts.

Throughout this period The Tile Workshop has exhibited its work in Rio, Paris and Lisbon, as well as being invited to present its art-training project in national and international events. A catalogue with our work was published by the Museu Nacional de Azulejos de Lisboa (Lisbon's national museum of tiles).

Recently, the Metro of Sao Paulo has commissioned a major project for the Luz Station, in the heart of the city's cultural district. It will be a joint project together with Association Dannyann, based in São Paulo, the Association Inscire, The Tile Workshop and ENDA Brasil, and the long lasting partnership of Françoise Schein and Laura Taves.

Laura Taves, Founder and director of the Tile Workshop, Rio de Janeiro, is an architect and urbanist, and Executive Secretary of ENDA Brasil, international NGO based in Dakar. She has developed projects in partnership with the artist Françoise Schein of Association Inscire, in Paris. Co-author of the Projet Favelité.

www.thetileworkshop.com