


ENGRAVING ON THE NET: DEMOCRATIZATION, CONTEMPORARY PRACTICES AND DISSEMINATION OF THE ART OF ENGRAVING <https://doi.org/10.56238/sevened2024.037-212>**Daniel Lucena da Hora Alves¹.****ABSTRACT**

The article addresses the extension project "Engraving on the Network", carried out by the Visual Arts course at the Federal University of Paraíba (UFPB), as an interdisciplinary proposal that articulates teaching, research and extension to democratize access to the artistic practice of engraving. Based on hybrid methodologies, the project promotes workshops and activities that resignify traditional engraving techniques by integrating contemporary and digital processes, consolidating itself as a space for artistic experimentation and social transformation. The results reveal the potential of engraving as a relational and critical language, capable of generating an impact both in academic training and in the communities served, evidencing the relevance of university extension in strengthening the bond between the university and society.

Keywords: Engraving. Contemporary Art. University Extension. Relational Practices. Social Transformation.

¹ Visual Artist, Designer and Teacher. Dr. student in design in the Graduate Program in Design at the Federal University of Pernambuco, (UFPE). Bachelor in Design and Master in Communication and Semiotics from the same institution. Professor at the Federal University of Paraíba (UFPB), he is coordinator of the Graphic Arts Laboratory, an academic space of the Department of Visual Arts at UFPB
E-mail: danieldahora@me.com
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7050-4269>
Lattes ID: <http://lattes.cnpq.br/4010111674034835>

INTRODUCTION

Engraving, as an artistic practice, occupies a unique place in the history of Brazilian art, crossing generations as a form of expression marked by technique, multiplicity and the democratization of access to art. From the beginning, when workshops such as those of the Lyceum of Arts and Crafts of Rio de Janeiro introduced engraving as an autonomous and powerful language at the beginning of the twentieth century, to the present day, this technique has asserted itself as a territory of experimentation that transits between tradition and contemporary languages. Its ability to reproduce images and, at the same time, preserve the singularity of the artistic gesture makes engraving a paradoxical medium, which reconciles the multiple and the unique, the artisanal and the technical, the local narrative and global flows. It is in this tension, between what is imprinted and what unfolds, that its strength lies as a pedagogical, artistic and political practice.

In a contemporary context marked by the centrality of images, the predominance of digital technologies and the emergence of new aesthetic paradigms, engraving continues to occupy a space of relevance by offering a counterpoint to the logic of immediate consumption and planned obsolescence. Walter Benjamin, in his famous reflection on technical reproducibility, already pointed out that engraving — as well as other forms of reproduction — dialogues profoundly with the social conditions of its production. However, in times when the "design" of human relations seems to be shaped more by virtuality than by physicality, engraving emerges as a practice that reinvents materiality. It not only registers a gesture, but creates bonds, engenders relationships and, frequently, questions the very means of its realization. This relational characteristic of engraving finds echoes in the reflections of Nicolas Bourriaud, for whom relational art is a space of exchange, a place where the work mediates encounters. Engraving, in its pedagogical and extension dimension, expands these encounters by proposing new forms of interaction between the public, the artist and the object.

The "Engraving on the Net" project is born from this spirit of intertwining. Carried out in the Visual Arts course at the Federal University of Paraíba (UFPB), and using the facilities of the Graphic Arts Laboratory (LAG) of the course, the project articulates teaching, research and extension in a proposal that is based on the democratization of artistic practice. Here, engraving is understood not only as a technique, but as a language of transformative potential, capable of crossing social, cultural and geographical barriers. The network that gives the project its name is both a metaphor and a reality: it symbolizes the connections woven between the participants — teachers, students, and communities — and is materialized in the digital format that enables the circulation and exchange of

knowledge. As Deleuze and Guattari point out, the rhizome is a structure without hierarchies, capable of multiplying without predefined limits; in an analogous way, "Engraving on the Network" proposes a pedagogical rhizome, in which learning takes place horizontally, intertwining traditional engraving techniques with contemporary technologies.

This project also responds to urgent challenges of our time. In a society marked by exclusion and inequality, university extension initiatives have the potential to make knowledge accessible, decentralizing the spaces of artistic production and including subjects who often do not have access to practices such as printmaking. It is in this perspective that "Engraving on the Net" is inserted: as an invitation to the encounter between the traditional and the contemporary, between the technical and the sensitive, between the university and society. More than a pedagogical activity, the project is a practice of resistance, reinforcing the role of public universities in the construction of a more democratic horizon for art.

However, this work goes beyond the transfer of technical knowledge. He seeks to reflect on the role of engraving in contemporary times, aligning himself with reflections on the "expanded field" of engraving, as proposed by authors such as Rosalind Krauss and Maria do Carmo Veneroso. Here, printmaking is not an end in itself, but a means of exploring new artistic and social territories. The project thus becomes a space for experimentation in which traditional printing practices are tensioned by hybrid and sustainable processes, which dialogue with the environmental and ethical demands of the 21st century.

"Engraving on the Net" is, therefore, a proposal that is inscribed in the field of visual arts as an action that transforms. It re-signifies the practice of engraving by integrating it into a collective, interdisciplinary and democratic project, reaffirming its role as a living and pulsating language. If, as Bourriaud states, relational art is defined by the creation of contexts of encounter, the project "Engraving on the Network" expands this concept by proposing an engraving that not only encounters, but also crosses, connects and transforms. It is in this movement of expansion, exchange and creation that its power as an artistic and extension practice resides.

CONTEXT AND THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

Far from a simple technical process, it has consolidated itself as a hybrid language, which unites the artisanal gesture and the possibility of reproduction, generating images capable of reaching wide and varied audiences. Its history, however, is marked by transformations and resignifications that highlight the multiple potentialities of this practice

in the Brazilian context, from the first academic experiments to the contemporary initiatives of collectives, workshops and regional studios.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, engraving was incorporated into artistic education in a systematic way by institutions such as the Liceu de Artes e Ofícios in Rio de Janeiro, under the guidance of artists such as Carlos Oswald. These early experiences established printmaking as a relevant field of artistic practice, while also highlighting the tensions between the artisanal and the industrial, the local and the global. However, it was from the 1940s onwards that engraving expanded its scope, both in teaching and in artistic production, especially with the creation of spaces dedicated to this language in different regions of Brazil. The Getúlio Vargas Foundation, for example, introduced, in 1946, a course in Advertising Design and Graphic Arts that combined a technical approach with a commitment to social issues, bringing together masters such as Axl Leskoschek and Tomás Santa Rosa, and training artists who would become national references, such as Fayga Ostrower and Edith Behring.

At the same time, collective movements such as the Engraving Clubs emerged in different regions of the country, highlighting the political and social power of this language. The Engraving Club of Porto Alegre (RS), created in 1950 by artists such as Carlos Scliar and Danúbio Gonçalves, exemplifies how engraving has become an instrument of denunciation and social transformation. Inspired by the ideals of socialist realism, these artists produced prints that portrayed the life of the worker and social inequalities, seeking to bring art to a wider audience. In dialogue with these experiences, in the Northeast, the Ateliê Coletivo do Recife (PE), founded by Abelardo da Hora in 1948, also assumed a central role in the training of artists and in the popularization of engraving as a means of social engagement and, thus, evidenced engraving as a practice interconnected to the issues of land and people.

Another significant example is found in the Guaianases Workshop, based in Olinda (PE), and frequented by artists who were the result of the Collective Atelier (João Câmara and Gilvan Samico), as well as a new generation (Delano, Tereza Costa Rêgo, Luciano Pinheiro, Gil Vicente). This initiative rescued engraving and, especially, lithography, as a fundamental artistic expression, while establishing a dialogue with contemporary movements. These artists combined the narrative of popular printmaking with modern influences, creating a synthesis that exalted tradition while projecting it to new horizons. This hybrid dimension of printmaking, which unites past and present, tradition and experimentation, remains one of its most striking characteristics.

In the theoretical sphere, engraving in Brazil has also been interpreted as part of an "expanded field", a concept developed by Rosalind Krauss to discuss how traditional artistic categories, such as sculpture, were reconfigured in the twentieth century. Applying this concept to engraving, authors such as Maria do Carmo Veneroso highlight that graphic practice is no longer limited to the matrix and paper, but it incorporates elements of photography, installation, performance and even the digital medium. Contemporary printmaking, in this sense, is inserted in a space of hybridization, where the boundaries between artistic languages are constantly challenged. These resignifications, far from weakening printmaking, reinforce its ability to adapt and dialogue with the demands of the present, something that becomes evident in projects such as "Printmaking on the Net".

Beyond the expanded field, Nicolas Bourriaud's reflections on relational aesthetics offer another interpretative key to contemporary printmaking. According to Bourriaud, relational art is one that prioritizes human and social interactions, transforming the exhibition space into a place of meeting and exchange. In the context of "Engraving on the Network", this concept acquires a pedagogical dimension, since the project not only teaches engraving techniques, but also creates collaborative networks between artists, students and communities. This relational dimension of printmaking is amplified by the use of digital technologies, which allow the processes of teaching and creation to go beyond the physical limits of the studio/laboratory, connecting different territories and audiences.

The rhizomatic dimensions of engraving, as described by Deleuze and Guattari, are also present in collective experiences and extension projects. The rhizome, with its multiple entrances and connections, serves as a metaphor for engraving as a practice that crosses disciplines, geographies and temporalities. In the Brazilian case, initiatives such as "Engraving on the Net" update this potential by creating a rhizome of teaching, production and circulation that connects traditional knowledge to contemporary practices, and local spaces to global circuits.

In this way, the historical and theoretical context of printmaking in Brazil reveals a practice in constant expansion and reinvention, which responds to both local demands and global transformations. Projects such as "Engraving on the Net" represent a continuity of these traditions while proposing new paradigms for teaching and artistic practice. At the intersection of history, technique and experimentation, engraving reaffirms its role as a singular language, capable of connecting the sensitive and the political, the individual and the collective. It is in this space of intersection that the project is inserted, rescuing the legacy of Brazilian engraving while pointing to new horizons of creation and exchange.

THE ENGRAVING ON THE NET PROJECT

The "Engraving on the Net" project was born as a response to the complex demands of democratization and access to artistic practice, incorporating the principles of university extension that consolidate the role of public institutions as transforming agents of society. Implemented in the Visual Arts course at the Federal University of Paraíba, this project articulates teaching, research and extension in a proposal that transcends the mere technical learning of engraving. It is configured as a space for artistic experimentation and strengthening the bond between the university and the communities, while exploring the potential of a graphic language deeply rooted in Brazilian artistic traditions.

The central idea of the project is based on the construction of networks – both in the symbolic and practical sense. "Engraving on the Net" proposes to weave connections between the participants, promoting a horizontal dialogue between teachers, students and members of the communities served. The metaphor of the network is especially relevant, as it reflects a rhizomatic pedagogical practice, aligned with the concept of Deleuze and Guattari, in which there are no fixed hierarchies, but multiple entry points and possibilities of intersection. By positioning printmaking as a language of interaction, the project also becomes an exercise in relational aesthetics, in the sense of Nicolas Bourriaud, promoting encounters between different agents and practices in the artistic field.

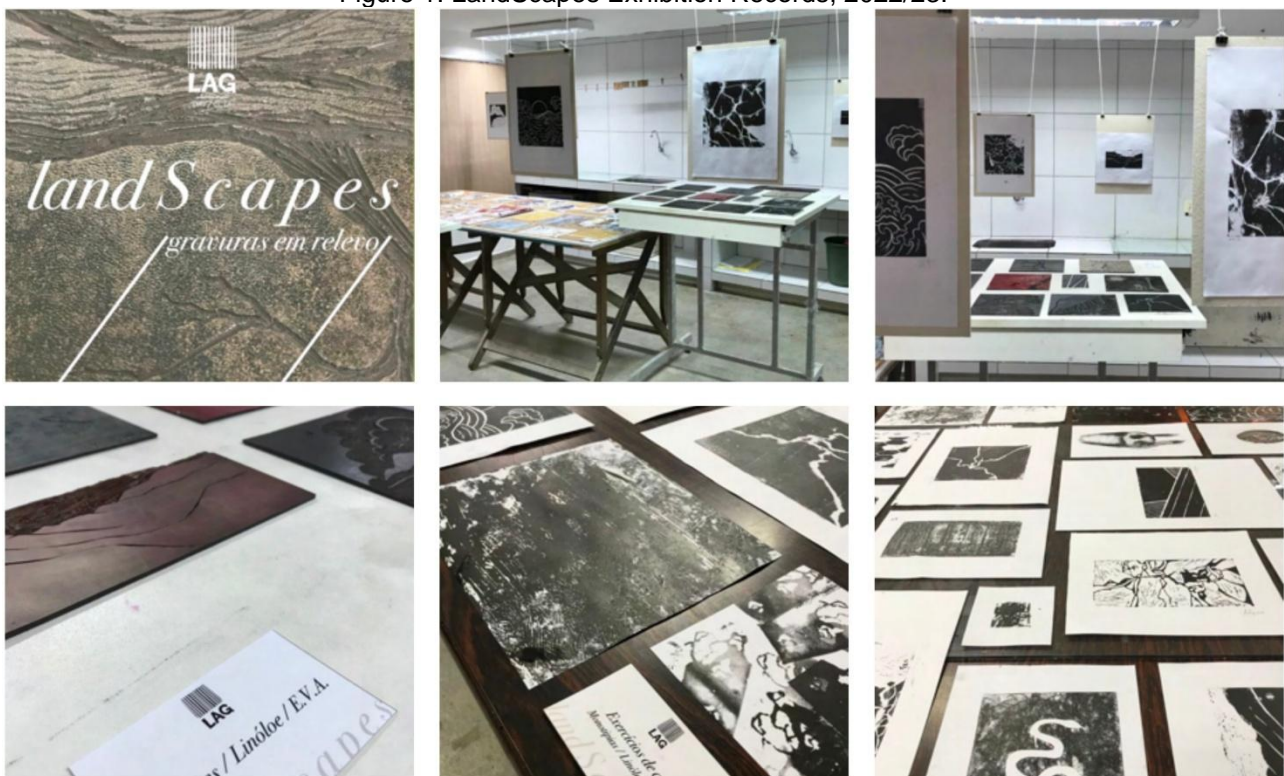
The objectives of "Gravura na Rede" go beyond technical education and involve the creation of an inclusive environment that favors collective learning and experimentation. In a scenario where social and economic barriers often hinder access to artistic practices, the project seeks to break these limitations through concrete actions that bring printmaking closer to an audience historically excluded from institutional cultural dynamics. In this sense, the workshops carried out by the project are premised on the use of accessible materials and sustainable methods, including the application of printing techniques that reduce environmental impact, such as the use of non-toxic matrices and hybrid processes that integrate experimental tools with the traditional one.

One of the most striking characteristics of the project is its methodological approach, which combines artistic practice with critical research. During classes and workshops, participants not only learn traditional techniques such as woodcut, monotype, and linocut, but are also invited to reflect on the historical and cultural meanings of these practices. The introduction of theoretical references, such as Krauss's concepts of expanded field and Veneroso's hybrid printmaking, enriches the discussions, broadening the understanding of printmaking as a field that goes beyond the studio and expands into social and digital

spaces. This methodology contributes to forming artists who not only master the technique, but also understand its potential as a critical and transformative tool.

The reach of the "Engraving on the Net" project can be observed in its ability to engage different audiences and territories. Since its implementation, the project has impacted diverse communities, connecting urban and rural realities in actions that promote the exchange of knowledge and experiences. The activities carried out range from practical workshops to exhibitions that exhibit the works produced by the participants, consolidating the role of engraving as a language that transits between the singular and the multiple. The exhibitions, in particular, serve as spaces for dialogue between artists and the public, challenging traditional contemplative logic and proposing more active interactions. In this sense, the very place of the UFPB Graphic Arts Laboratory (LAG) serves as an exhibition space; as well as the Lavandeira Gallery - equipment of the UFPB Arts Center. Here, relational engraving, in the exhibition space, as described by Bourriaud, manifests itself as an invitation to participation and the collective construction of the aesthetic experience.

Figure 1. LandScapes Exhibition Records, 2022/23.



Source: author.

One aspect that deserves to be highlighted is the social impact of the project, especially in communities that face economic and cultural vulnerabilities. By taking printmaking workshops to public schools, community centers and cultural spaces, "Printmaking on the Net" promotes access to an artistic practice that has historically been

restricted to institutional and elite spaces. In addition, professors, students and graduates of the LAG have also participated in the project's multiplication circuit, offering workshops, courses and making exhibitions in cultural spaces and equipment of the University (outside the Arts Center) and outside the university itself - such as the José Lins do Rêgo Cultural Space, the Archidy Picado Gallery, the Abelardo da Hora Memorial, The Cabo Branco Station, among others. This movement dialogues directly with historical initiatives, such as the Engraving Club of Porto Alegre and the Collective Atelier of Recife, which also sought to democratize access to engraving, using it as an instrument of social criticism and community empowerment.

Figure 2. Records of the Engraving and Drifting Exhibition, 2023.



Source: author.

In addition, the project is part of a contemporary perspective by exploring the potential of digital technologies in the practice of printmaking. Integration with technological tools allows participants to experiment with new creative processes, expanding the traditional field of printmaking. This approach not only updates artistic practice, but also makes it more inclusive, as it opens avenues for the participation of people who, for physical or geographical reasons, may not have had access to traditional techniques.

Another relevant point is the insertion of the project in the academic context, in which it works as a laboratory for the development of research on art teaching, participatory methodologies and sustainability in artistic practice. The results generated by the project —

whether in the form of works, theoretical reflections or new teaching methods — are systematically documented and shared, contributing to the consolidation of a repertoire of knowledge accessible and replicable in other institutions. With the fundamental support of two technicians who have passed public examinations and LAG employees, we have managed to have an environment of excellence for the development of what we propose. Finally, LAG's profile on the social network Instagram further expands the dissemination and dissemination of activities, results and practices in engraving, with the potential for worldwide reach. "Engraving on the Net" is, therefore, more than an extension project; It is a space of resistance and reinvention that affirms the importance of art as a collective and transformative practice. He rescues engraving as a language that connects the past to the present, the local to the global, the artisanal to the technological. By proposing an engraving that is not limited to paper, but expands into networks, spaces and relationships, the project positions itself as a model of pedagogical and artistic innovation, reaffirming the public university's commitment to building a more inclusive and creative future.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results achieved by the "Engraving on the Net" project stand out not only for the artistic production generated throughout its execution, but also for the profound social, pedagogical and aesthetic transformation promoted in the various contexts in which it was inserted. Engraving, as an artistic language with strong critical and democratic potential, has revealed itself as a powerful instrument to foster dialogues between the technical and the conceptual, the individual and the collective, the academic and the popular. The fruits of the project go beyond the works carried out; they are manifested in the expansion of knowledge networks, in the symbolic exchanges between participants and in the resignification of the role of university extension in the field of Visual Arts.

In the field of artistic production, "Gravura na Rede" has enabled the creation of a wide and diverse range of works that transit between traditional and contemporary languages. The participants, especially those from the communities served, were encouraged to experiment with techniques such as woodcut, linoleum and engraving with stamps, as well as experimental processes that incorporated collage elements, cutouts, hollow molds, Styrofoam, cardboard and carton packaging. Adjunct processes were also part of it, such as Cordel and Recycled Paper workshops. The hybridization of the methods allowed the works to reflect the complexity of the context in which they were produced, dialoguing with issues of identity, territory and memory. This plurality of results reinforces

the concept of engraving as an "expanded field", in which the traditional matrix expands to integrate new materialities and forms of expression, as argued by Veneroso (2012).

Figure 3. Records of the Exhibition Me in the World, 2024.



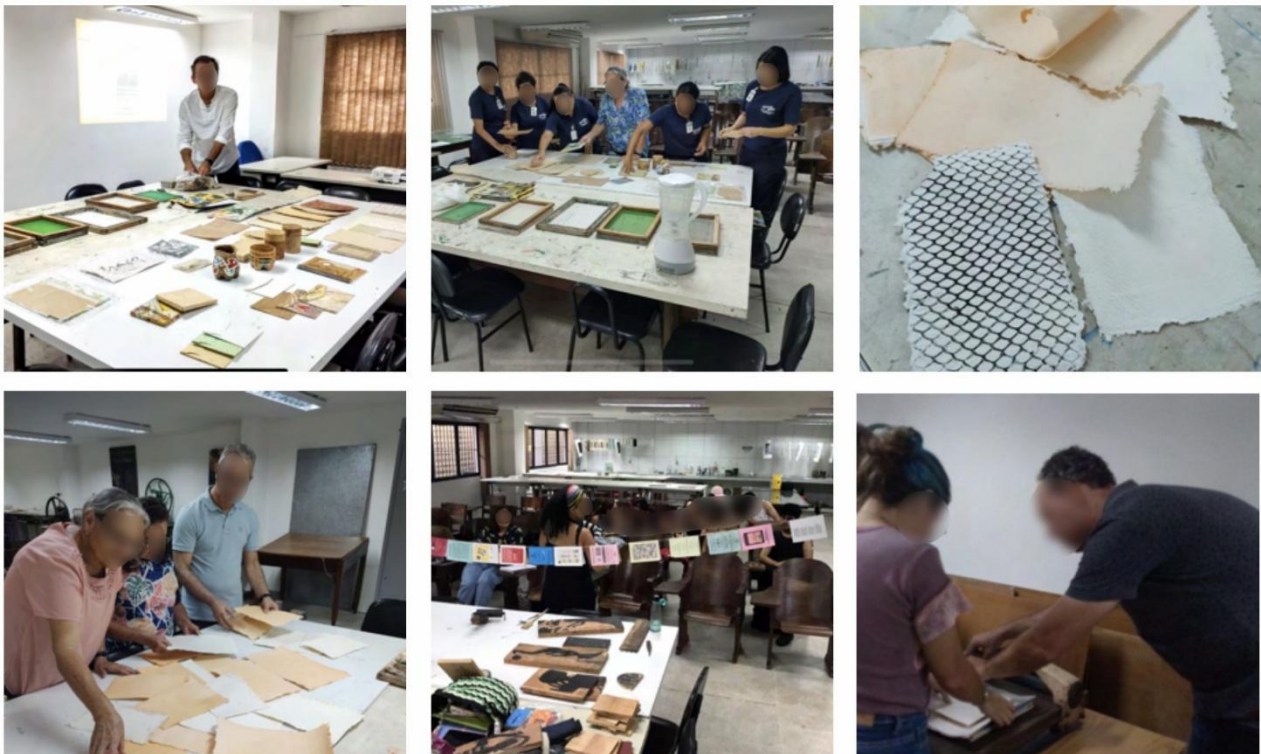
Source: author.

One of the most significant aspects of the workshops was the opportunity to explore printmaking as a relational practice. By abandoning the traditional logic of a work finished exclusively by the artist, many works began to incorporate interventions by the public, transforming themselves into collective narratives. Bourriaud (2009) argues that the relational work of art is constituted from the interactions it arouses, and this principle found resonance in the exhibitions held by the project. In one of the workshops held in a public school in João Pessoa, for example, engravings were purposely displayed without protective glass, allowing the public to complete them with drawings or inscriptions. The result was a lively dialogue between the participants and the works, which transcended passive contemplation and established a process of collective construction of meaning.

From a social point of view, the impact of the project was equally significant. Communities that traditionally have limited access to artistic practices have been able to not only experiment with printmaking, but also recognize themselves as part of the creative process. Often, the act of engraving the matrix has become a symbolic gesture of cultural and political appropriation, especially in contexts marked by exclusion. As pointed out by Freire (1987), education should be an act of liberation, and "Gravura na Rede" exemplified

this perspective by transforming artistic practice into a tool for empowerment. In communities (especially those beyond the students) served by the project, for example, participants created prints that depicted their daily struggles and local cultural practices. These works, later exhibited in exhibitions, served as a testament to the social dynamics at play and highlighted the role of printmaking as a means of resistance and expression.

Figure 4. LAG activity logs (ofinas).



Source: author.

The pedagogical dimension of the project also showed remarkable results. The Visual Arts students involved as workshop monitors reported significant learning that went beyond engraving techniques. They experienced the importance of intercultural dialogue, the need to adapt methodologies to different contexts, and the richness of symbolic exchanges between academic knowledge and local knowledge. The participation not only of the teacher and coordinator of the LAG, but also the engagement of the technical-administrative staff in the workshops and workshops was fundamental to expand the sense of belonging to the space. and his contributions, including as officials, were extremely salutary to the process. These experiences point to the relevance of university extension as a formative space not only for the communities served, but also for the students themselves, who develop critical, empathetic and reflective skills.

However, the results achieved were not without challenges. The implementation of the project faced logistical and structural difficulties, such as the lack of material resources

in some locations and the need to adapt the workshops to improvised spaces. These obstacles, although initially perceived as limitations, ended up stimulating the creativity of the organizers and the participants. The use of improvised matrices, such as acetate sheets and recycled wood, became a creative solution that, in addition to overcoming the obstacles, reinforced the project's commitment to sustainable practices. This adaptation reaffirms the innovative character of "Engraving on the Net", which not only proposed to teach engraving, but to reinvent it according to the contexts in which it was applied.

Another point of reflection concerns the need to consolidate the networks created by the project. If, on the one hand, the circulation of the works and the continuity of artistic interactions in traveling exhibitions demonstrated the long-range potential of the project, on the other hand, they also revealed the fragility of extension initiatives that depend on one-off funding. The institutionalization of projects such as "Engraving on the Net" thus emerges as an urgent issue to ensure the sustainability and replicability of the actions carried out.

Finally, it should be noted that the results of the project cannot be evaluated only by the tangible products generated — such as the works or exhibitions — but also by the immaterial processes that it triggered. The strengthening of the links between university and community, the expansion of the aesthetic and critical repertoire of the participants and the transformation of engraving into a space for meeting and dialogue are legacies that transcend the limits of the project. These results point to printmaking as a practice that continues to reinvent itself, reaffirming its relevance as a living and potent language in the contemporary scenario.

Thus, "Engraving on the Net" is inscribed not only as a successful extension project, but as a paradigmatic experience that reaffirms the transformative role of art. It resignifies printmaking by integrating it into collective and sustainable practices, broadening its technical and conceptual horizons while strengthening the relationships between the artistic, the pedagogical and the social. Engraving, in this context, becomes more than a means of expression; it becomes a field of interactions, a rhizome of meanings and a testimony to the possibilities that emerge when art is placed at the service of the collective.

Between 2022 and 2024 we had the following workshops and exhibitions held (both by students, employees, teachers or guest artists):

- Feelings Exhibition
- LandScapes Exhibition
- Libertas Exhibition
- Engraving and Drifting Exhibition
- Me in the World Exhibition

- Descaminhos Exhibition
- Workshop Artistic Expressions of Northeastern Popular Memory
- Artistic Stamp Workshop
- Workshop Experiments with Paper Paper
- Workshop Engraving with Tetra Pak Packages

Figure 5. LAG activity logs (ofinas).



Source: author.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The "Engraving on the Network" project transcended the initial expectation of being an extension initiative focused on the teaching and practice of engraving. It revealed itself as a space of transformation that combined the technical and artistic potential of engraving with the ethical and social commitment of the public university. Engraving, in its hybrid and plural essence, became the catalyst for collective processes that resignified artistic and pedagogical practices, promoting encounters between people, territories and knowledge that would otherwise remain disconnected.

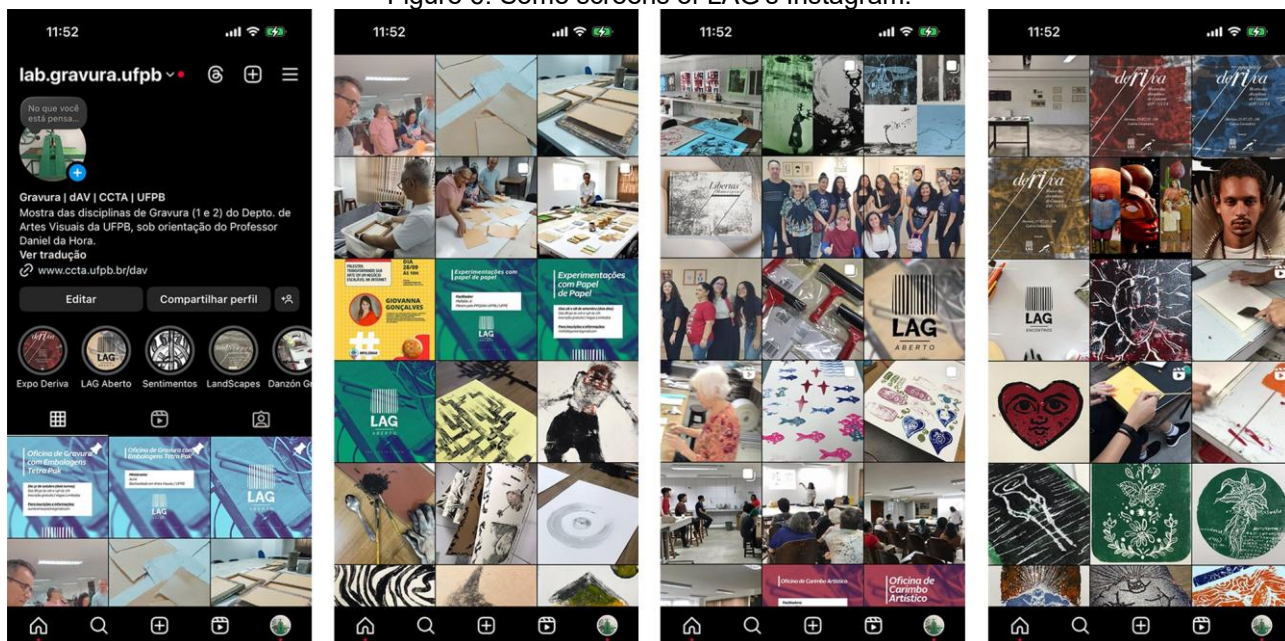
From the actions carried out, it was possible to reaffirm the importance of university extension as one of the fundamental pillars to consolidate art as a socially engaged practice. The results obtained, more than measurable, are experiential: they are in the gestures of the participants who transformed improvised matrices into meaningful works; in the learning networks that have been established between students, teachers and

communities; and in the shared spaces of creation and reflection that generated not only engravings, but also bonds of belonging and mutual recognition. In this sense, the project confirmed Paulo Freire's (1987) view of the role of education as an act of liberation, demonstrating that the teaching of art can also be an exercise of autonomy and empowerment.

The multiple languages that make up printmaking — from its traditional matrices to digital possibilities — have reaffirmed its expansive character, as discussed by Rosalind Krauss and Maria do Carmo Veneroso. The expanded field of printmaking is not only a space for technical experimentation, but also a metaphor for art's ability to cross borders and build bridges between diverse cultural contexts. This rhizomatic quality, as described by Deleuze and Guattari, found in "Engraving on the Net" a paradigmatic example. The project was woven as a living network, whose connections not only remained active during its execution, but also extended beyond it, in developments that will continue to reverberate in time and space.

However, while the project proved to be a rich and meaningful experience, it also revealed the structural challenges that still limit the continuity and expansion of initiatives like this. The lack of resources and the fragmented nature of many extension projects in Brazil expose the fragility of institutional support at a time when the role of the public university is constantly questioned. Thus, it is essential to think of policies that ensure not only the execution, but the continuity of actions such as "Engraving on the Net". Valuing art as a transformative practice needs to be associated with the strengthening of funding and support networks, ensuring that extension projects can continue to play their role in a sustainable way.

Figure 6. Some screens of LAG's Instagram.



Source: author.

The academic contribution of the project cannot be neglected either. By integrating the practice of engraving with the field of research and critical reflection, "Engraving on the Net" has consolidated itself as a space for pedagogical innovation, generating new methods and knowledge that can be replicated in other contexts. In addition, he reaffirmed the potential of printmaking as a contemporary language, capable of dialoguing with urgent issues of the present, such as sustainability, accessibility and the democratization of access to culture. The project's resilience in articulating the local and the global, the traditional and the contemporary, the technical and the conceptual demonstrates that printmaking continues to be a pulsating and relevant language, adapting to the demands of a world in constant transformation.

In the artistic sphere, the project consolidated printmaking as a space of resistance and creation, capable of challenging hegemonic narratives and including marginalized voices in the creative process. The works produced by the participants, at once singular and collective, testify to the aesthetic richness and reflective depth that emerge when artistic practice is shared. More than artifacts, these engravings are testimonies of encounters, gestures and stories that reflect the transformative power of art as a language of the sensitive and the political.

It is concluded, therefore, that "Engraving on the Net" was not just a project, but a founding experience, which reaffirms the role of art and the public university as indispensable agents in the construction of a more inclusive, creative and democratic future. It does not end in itself, but leaves as a legacy a network of connections and possibilities that will continue to be explored by those who participated in its construction. In



this sense, the project fulfills not only its educational function, but also a poetic function, insofar as it invites us to imagine and build new ways of being in the world — forms in which art is not only a practice, but a mode of resistance, bonding, and transformation. The extension action "Engraving on the Net" remains active and is a project approved and in execution by the Department of Visual Arts at UFPB, under the guidance of Professor Daniel da Hora, who is also the coordinator of the LAG.

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