

The plastic thought of Pro-Posições covers^{1 2}

O pensamento plástico das capas de Pro-Posições^{3 4}

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Abstract:⁵

This article proposes a reading of the covers of the journal Pro-Posições from a methodological point of view provided by Pierre Francastel’s Historical Sociology of Art based on his key concept of plastic thought. The analysis considered the images, the fonts, and the colors present in the covers, as well as the social history of the agents involved in its elaboration, especially the plastic artists. As a conclusion it is noticed that, over time, the journal has lost its visual characteristics, given the contemporary editorial tendency according to which electronic platforms, such as Scielo, provide a standardized way to edit and publish scientific information. Within this on-line universe, covers seem to become outdated, which should be problematized. After all, does the notion of cover make sense in the present world of digital scientific journals?

Keywords: Pro-Posições; scientific journal covers; Sociology of Art; Cultural History; Plastic thought (Pensée plastique); Pierre Francastel.

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Resumo

Este artigo propõe uma leitura das capas da revista Pro-Posições a partir de um caminho metodológico oferecido pela sociologia histórica de arte de Pierre Francastel, com base em seu conceito-chave de pensamento plástico. A análise levou em conta as imagens, as fontes e as cores presentes nas capas, bem como a história social dos agentes envolvidos em sua elaboração, especialmente os artistas plásticos. Como conclusão, percebeu-se que, ao longo do tempo, a revista foi perdendo sua característica visual, atendendo à tendência contemporânea editorial, em que plataformas eletrônicas como a SciELO oferecem um modo padronizado de editar e publicar informações científicas. Nesse universo on-line, as capas parecem se tornar algo ultrapassado, o que convém ser problematizado. Afinal, faz sentido a noção de capa no mundo do periódico científico digital hoje?

Palavras-chave: Pro-Posições, capas de periódicos científicos, Sociologia da Arte, História cultural, pensamento plástico, Pierre Francastel.

Introduction: paths of plastic thought

In short, there is a plastic thought as there is a mathematical thought or a political thought, and this is a form of thought that has been poorly studied until nowadays.
(Pierre Francastel, 1993, p. 03, free translated)

“Don’t judge a book by its cover,” says the popular motto. Surely, we must not do this, if we assume that the essential is what is written, the information converted into words. However, how many times have we decided between one edition or another of the same book because of the images we see before even opening it? Moreover: how many times have we started reading a book bearing in mind the illustration of the cover, its colors and lines, its position in relation to the title, the typography fonts that, within their multiple possibilities, outweigh its most obvious function, which is giving a name to what we are about to read in a supposedly objective way, and which start adding meanings to reading? Naivety is believing that

all this visuality preceding the very acquisition of the printed material, whether it is a book or a magazine, does not interfere in the reading of the so-called verbal thought⁶ that fills it.

Images constitute a special category of language, a tool of humanity to inform the universe of its values – and such information cannot be found elsewhere; it is the figurative function, as we perceive in the *Sociology of Art* by Pierre Francastel:

[...] The figurative function is a category of thought as complete as others, and very susceptible to lead to the direct elaboration based on what is perceived in works that comprise its reality and meaning, its logic and structure, without the need for transference and relationships with verbal systems. The figurative function constitutes a category of operative thought or verbal thought, but complementary and generating objects of civilization that testify other aspects, otherwise inaccessible, of the life of current and past societies. (Francastel, 1993, pp. 67-68, free translated)

Our vision is never exempt from assumptions, everything we see refers to a previous reference, to values of culture: “Our understanding of what we see depends on our ability to perceive what is incorporated in the structure of an image, its concepts, its references – anyway, its dialogue – in order to perceive the depth of its implications.” (Menezes, 1997, p 26)

Similarly, in literacy, in which the learning process is gradual and “has no natural aspect” (Menezes, 1997, p 25), our way of seeing things also results from the successive accumulation of references. However, “it is not immediate the perception that, to the extent we learn to read, we must also learn to see” (Menezes, 1997, p 25).

According to Francastel, the epistemological relevance of figurative documents never equates to written documents as a research material, and this is an issue we must address. In most cases, written documents have absolute values, whereas figurative documents, whenever used, have the function of illustrating truths established by the former (Francastel, 1993, p. 01). Another issue is seeking the *raison d'être* of works of art beyond the works themselves (Francastel, 1993, p. 02) – something that would be the result of a careless *Sociology of Art*, which presupposes prior knowledge of social structures, making art a mere “ornament, an accessory, a social superstructure, instead of questioning and analyzing it as a fundamental function” (Francastel, 1990, p. 91), disregarding the idea that image can have its own meaning, irreducible to other languages (Francastel, 1970, p. 09). This is because it is a form of thought

⁶ Here, I understand “verbal thought” as every form of expression and forging of ideals coming from words, either spoken or written. We can consider the statement of VIGOTSKI (2008, p. 58), which defines verbal thought as the result of the intersection between thought and language, a point of intersection between both spheres.

that is not verbal, but visual, plastic, as announced by the epigraph of this article and with which I must agree. But we must be careful. As Jean-Claude Passeron (1991, p. 5) reminds us, of our senses, the sight perhaps is that which owes the most to culture and education. Therefore, it is imperative to learn to read the images, to understand possibilities of meanings suggested by them, in order to obtain elements to work with issues that instigate us from them.

At the beginning of the article I pointed out that the images of covers may influence the reading of the verbal information of a printed material. But, likewise, these images can assume different values based on the way they appear. John Berger warns us of this question:

The meaning of an image is changed according to what one sees immediately beside it by or what one sees immediately after it. Such authority as it retains, is distributed over the whole context in which it appears. (Berger, 1977, p. 29)

It is not the case to seek a hierarchy between these two forms of communication, since, as Foucault points out, the relationship between spoken language and images is infinite, being two things irreducible one in relation to the other, and “no matter how much you try to say what you see, what is seen is never comprised in what is said” (1981, p. 25, free translated).⁷

When we talk about covers of books or magazines, we should think of a combination of texts and images that necessarily generates a third product, a kind of synthesis that can be called “iconotext,” a concept created by Peter Wagner to analyze the engravings of the British painter William Hogarth (1697-1764). This artist, in his satiric works, combined texts and images in the same framework, creating something similar to what we now know as comic books (Wagner, 1997, p. 30).

Thus, while I conceive the images of the covers of the *Pro-Posições* journal as a constituent part of plastic thought, the iconotext concept assists in thinking of the meaning(s) that this thought assumes when associated with other contents of the journal, and I shall present this reading proposition next.

⁷ I discuss the question of the relationship between text and image in the sociological research in Trevisan, 2010.

1. Analysis of the covers

The history of the covers of the *Pro-Posições* journal can be divided into three great moments, marked by the establishment of a graphic and aesthetic pattern that remained over time. These three phases are marked as follows: 1) from issue 4 (v. 2 i. 1) to 22 (v. 8 i. 1), with covers and graphic arts by Carlos Clémen; 2) from issue 25 (v. 9 i. 1) to 68 (v. 23 i. 2), with covers by Milton José de Almeida; and 3) from issue 69 (v. 23 i. 3) onwards, until the present day, when the journal has no longer a printed version, and its covers are limited to thumbnails in the journal catalog of Unicamp – in the first issues of this phase, however, there were still printed versions of the journal. There was, in this history, experiments that were not developed, as we can see in the first three issues, in 1990, or between 1998 and 1999, in which two issues were published without images on the covers. But it is worth noting that there was a movement to create a visuality for the journal, with successful recipes that remained over the years, creating a visual identity for the journal, as we shall see in the following analyses.

1.1 - First phase (1990 – 1998)

The first three issues of the journal had covers designed from the same abstract image, with different colors throughout the three issues (Figure 1):



Figure 1: First covers of the journal, respectively v. 1 i. 1 (1), v. 1 i. 2 (2), v. 1 i. 3 (3).

Library Collection Professor Joel Martins (School of Education / Unicamp).

The covers were created by Carlos Clémen, and I shall discuss this artist, his work, and how much his work can be seen for almost ten years on the covers of the journal.

In its early years, *Pro-Posições* did not limit the use of images to their covers. Engravings, made by various artists, could be seen in its interior, either in the first pages (Figure 2), shortly after the masthead, either as a table of contents (Figure 4), or even inside the journal, between one article and another (Figure 5), indicating the importance that editors attributed to the visual aspect of the journal, in this sense, extrapolating the verbal thought and plunging into the possibilities of plastic or visual thought:

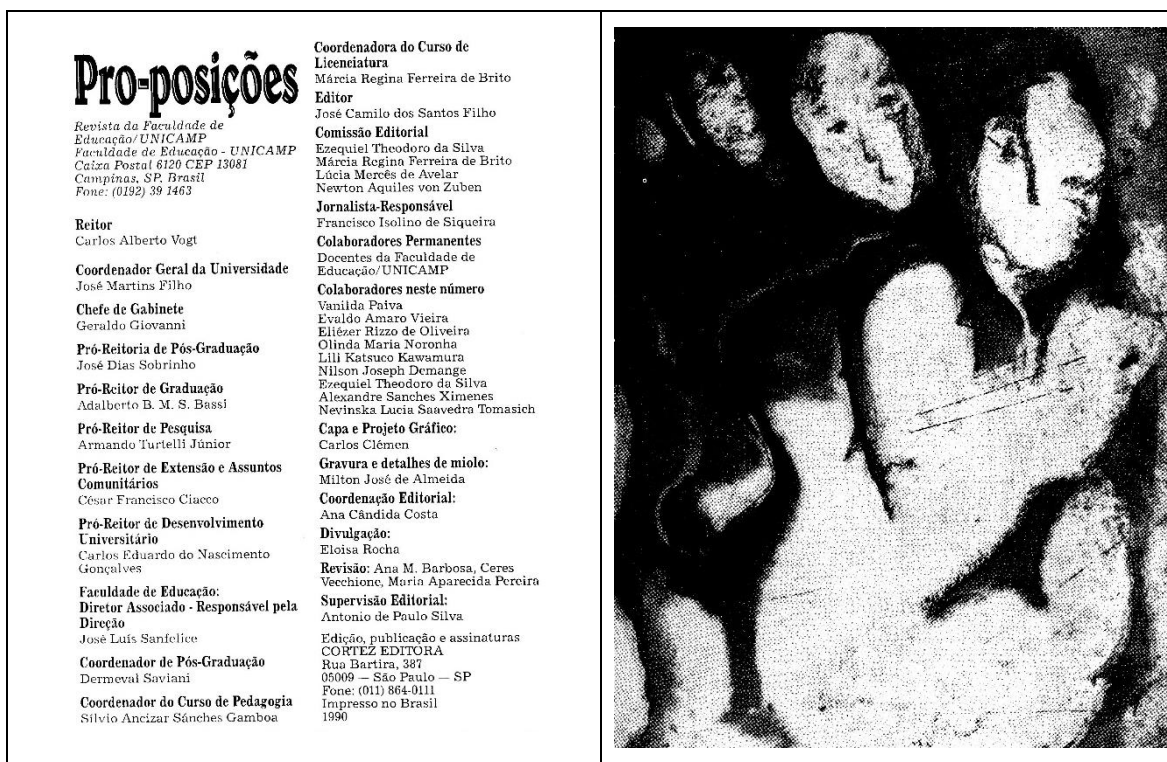


Figure 2: Example of an illustration inside the magazine, before the table of contents. Engraving by Milton Almeida.

Library Collection Professor Joel Martins (School of Education / Unicamp).

As for the covers, after this first trilogy, a new visual pattern emerged and remained for several years (from 1990 to 1998), being signed by Carlos Clémen.

A plastic artist from Buenos Aires who was born in 1942, Clémen studied drawing, engraving, painting, and sculpture from 1955 to 1963 at the Escuela Nacional de Bellas Artes, in the atelier of J. C. Castagnino, and at the Sociedad Estímulo de Bellas Artes. He was also pupil

of Raúl Sciarreta, with whom he conducted studies on art aesthetics and theory. He has been working in Brazil since the 1970s, working in newspapers and magazines in São Paulo as an illustrator, designer, and typographer,⁸ which explains his role in *Pro-Posições*.

His first exhibition in Brazil was in 1978, at the 15th Bienal de Arte de São Paulo [Biennial Art Exposition of São Paulo] (Clémen, 2012), and he designed the poster of this exposition's edition.⁹ Throughout his stay in the country, he performed considerable work on the covers of books, journals, and posters for events. From an aesthetic point of view, his works are basically abstract, dialoguing with figurative art in a cross-sectional way. We can observe that most of the works are created from geometric forms that are “simple, intuitive, without previous design. According to the artist, although a constructive intention guides the work, the surface, the stain, and the line are organized and reorganized within this irregular field.”¹⁰

Between 1974 and 2012, he created the *Comics*¹¹ series, which was exhibited in 2012 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, resulting from a work carried out during almost 40 years and encompassing the period in which the artist designed the cover and was responsible for the graphic work of *Pro-Posições*. According to the curator of the exhibition, Daniele Mattos, this series is composed of images that inspire us certain familiarity, perhaps for referring to the universe of comic books and, although in a non-linear way; it is as if such images tell us a story, which would be told based on our perception – i.e., there is a visual discourse (Mattos, 2012).

The author himself gives some clues about the work he has accomplished:

In the COMICS Series I work with graphic/signic resources, universally used by designers, without referring to the sequence of stories. It's about drawings produced before the computer resources of effects. From the time of color printing. By isolating the graphic signs, structured in another configuration, we can establish a language in which unpublished scriptures reverberate. Color and design with material density and silent narrativity.¹²

Although what artists say about their work themselves is not something to be innocently used, because there is always a distance between what is said and what is done in artistic terms,¹³

⁸ <http://carlosclemen.blogspot.com/2012/08/vitae.html>, access on 09/12/2019.

⁹ <http://carlosclemen.blogspot.com/2012/08/vitae.html>, access on 09/12/2019.

¹⁰ <https://www.trapeziogaleria.com/artistas/a-d/carlos-clemen>, access on 09/12/2019.

¹¹ <http://carlosclemen.blogspot.com/2013/02/exposicao-comics.html>, access on 09/12/2019.

¹² <http://carlosclemen.blogspot.com/2013/02/exposicao-comics.html?view=magazine>, access on 09/12/2019.

¹³ According to Pierre Francastel, both the artist's project and what he actually accomplishes can be a matter for the Sociology of Art, since this allows highlighting the symbolic character of art (Francastel, 1993, p. 33).

it is worth realizing that there is an appreciation of the artisanal, the handmade, without the use of computer graphics resources, being inserted into a tradition of cartoonists. The images, somehow, express this simplicity, this freedom to narrate through lines and colors, without attaching themselves to figuration. This also emerges as a concept in *Pro-Posições* covers of the aforementioned period (from March to December 1992) (Figure 3):

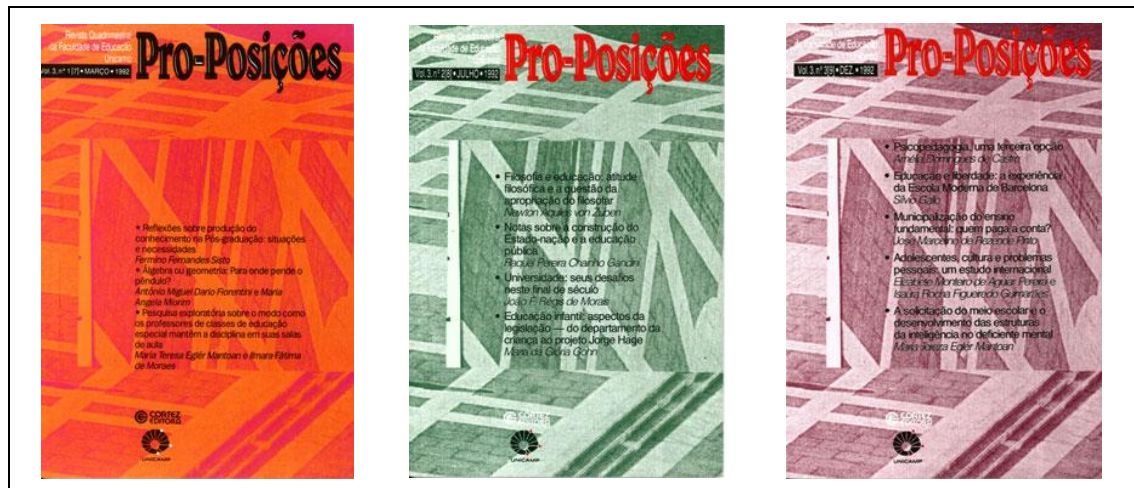


Figure 3: *Pro-Posições* covers, v. 3 i. 1 (7), v. 3 i. 2 (8), v. 3 i. 3 (9), respectively.

Library Collection Professor Joel Martins (School of Education / Unicamp).

Here we see examples of covers that were created at this phase. As we can observe, the conception is the same: a formal structure consisting of lines that intersect in several diagonals, with a frame in the center, which works as a screen where the titles of articles that can be found in the pages of the journal are inserted. What changes, at every issue, is the color used with its varied tones. This conception, which is widely used nowadays in scientific journals, at the same time it creates a visual identity, it avoids lacking focus of what is considered essential, which would be the articles available there. However, it is worth remembering that images, at that time, were not limited to the covers, but were part of the content of the journal, as aforementioned. Without intending to “steal” the space from the texts, they composed a picture in which texts and images mingled, as an iconotext, mentioning Peter Wagner’s term, which I presented in the introduction.

Annateresa Fabris points out that this interval between the project and the accomplishment is very important for the artistic reflection, to the extent in such interval would reside traces of both visual thought and the various phases of the creative process, which should be thought of based on a tension between the project and the concrete accomplishment (FABRIS, 2003, p. 24).



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Figure 4: Example of an engraving illustrating the table of contents, in 1993. Engraving by C ezar Landucci.

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Pro-Posições Vol. 3 Nº 3 [9] • dezembro de 1992

Resumo Constata-se a atual ampliação do campo da Psicopedagogia, como objeto de estudo e pesquisa. Verifica-se que esse termo representou, de início, uma posição subordinada da Pedagogia com relação à Psicologia, procurando-se hoje um estatuto de cooperação interdisciplinar entre ambas. Um pouco da história das duas áreas e do seu fecundo encontro destaca o potencial explicativo da Psicopedagogia. Discute-se a diferença entre a descrição e a explicação, distinguindo-se também a procura das causas e o estabelecimento de leis, como questões relevantes para o esclarecimento do problema da compreensão e da interpretação na pesquisa psicopedagógica. Promete-se, em um segundo artigo, a análise de exemplos brasileiros atuais.

Palavras-chaves: Psicopedagogia, pesquisa interdisciplinar, Pedagogia Experimental.

Abstract Today Psychopedagogy as a subject of study and research is widening its perspective. That concept, as it can be observed, reflected initially a subordinate position of Pedagogy to Psychology. Now there is an increasing interest in finding an interdisciplinary status of cooperative action between them. The history of the disciplines and some views of their productive merging can be of value to show the explanatory capacity of Psychopedagogy. This paper also presents the difference between description and explanation and discusses the search for causes and the establishment of laws. Such questions are relevant to throw some light on the problem of understanding and interpreting Psychopedagogy. The author promises, in a second paper, an analysis of recent Brazilian research on the field.

Descriptors: Psychopedagogy, interdisciplinary research, Experimental Pedagogy.

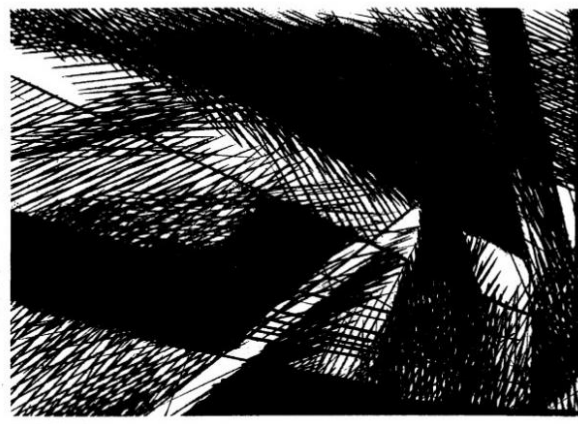


Figure 5: Example of an engraving placed at the end of an article, supposedly without the author's intention (1992).

Library Collection Professor Joel Martins (School of Education / Unicamp).

Hence, there were the covers and the graphic design of *Pro-Posições* from 1990 to 1998. At that time, Editora Cortez (a publisher company), which was responsible for the journal's production, ceased to provide this service, which was undertaken by the School of Education – Unicamp, institution that has been managing the journal since the beginning, but from then on has also been responsible for the editorial work.

In the first two issues of this phase, we see covers without any graphic element, only plain colors, which were designed by Luciana Rodrigues (Figure 6).

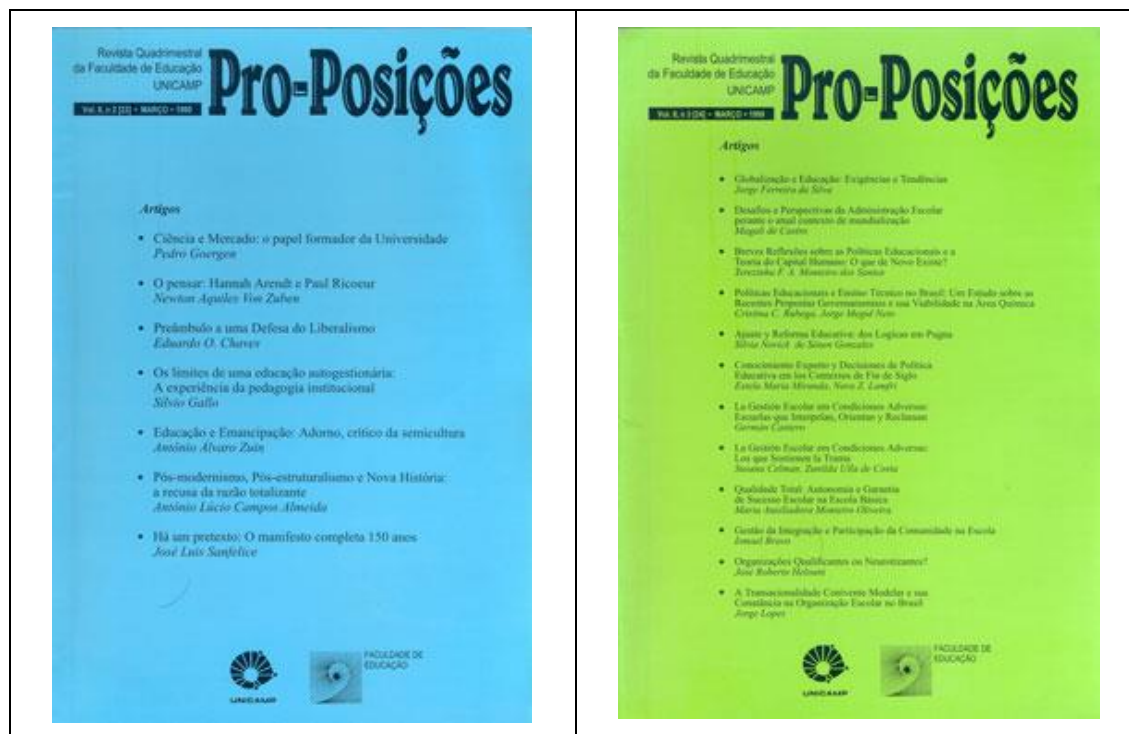


Figure 6: Covers with no graphic elements, issues 23 (v. 8 i. 2) and 24 (v. 8 i. 3) of the journal, in 1999.

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In fact, only in the next issues a new phase in the covers of the journal began, henceforth designed by Milton José de Almeida, professor at the School of Education – Unicamp. There were more than 40 issues edited in this period, from 1998 to 2012, when Milton was no longer alive.¹⁴

1.2 - Second phase (1998 – 2012)

Artists create, and by creating they think as much as the mathematician or the philosopher, but they use, in order to manifest conducts and the product of their intuition, instruments different than those of the others.
(Pierre Francastel, 1993, p. 05, free translated)

¹⁴ He passed away in October 2011. In 2012 there was the *Colóquio Imagens e Palavras*, a conference held in honor of Milton, with multiple activities (lectures, exhibitions of works of art, and dance presentations). The event was recorded in a book (organized by Faria; Rigotti Oliveira Jr., 2014b), which also contains a DVD room with the images and dance presentations.

In the analysis of the first phase of the journal's covers, we mentioned the success of a simple model to characterize the scientific journal, alternating colors on a visual basis of geometric shapes. The second phase will be marked by its opposite: the pattern would be precisely in bringing a different cover to each number, based on the work of the artist and professor Milton José de Almeida, a striking figure in the lives of students and colleagues and an imperative character in the history of *Pro-Posições*.

Professor of the School of Education – Unicamp and founder of the Olho – Laboratório de Estudos Audiovisuais [Laboratory of Audiovisual Studies], Milton believed that aesthetics allowed thinking of education, childhood, and life, always considering that all aesthetic choice is also a political choice (Faria; Rigotti Oliveira Jr., 2014a, pp. xii-xv). He did not like sociology, politics, or communications, but he was interested in all the arts as well as in philosophy and history (Bittencourt, 2014, p. 9). Within this realm, one of the authors who called his attention was Ernst Hans Gombrich (Bittencourt, 2014, p. 10), who also had his reservations about the approach of the Social Sciences concerning art.¹⁵ In this sense, images begin to occupy a privileged place in existence:

The choice of the universe of images and films as a field of study is justified by the fact that images, although imagined, are concrete. Films show lives experienced in a film, lives that can be lived in those 2 hours in the movie theater. (Bittencourt, 2014, p. 16)

However, Milton strongly refuted studies whose authors used images with mere illustrations (Soares, 2014, p. 63), approaching, in this sense, theorists of arts, such as the aforementioned Gombrich, but also Pierre Francastel, for whom the work of art did not substitute something else, a double in any other way, but rather “the product of one of the systems through which mankind conquers and communicates its wisdom at the same time it creates its works” (Francastel, 1993, p. 05). Artists, in these terms, are thinkers who think through the images they create.¹⁶ Milton conveyed his thoughts by words, but also by images. Initially, he did so in his works through a legacy nowadays preserved especially in the houses of

¹⁵ In this case, Gombrich specifically criticized the immediate relationship that authors, such as Arnold Hauser (1995), established between artistic creation and the material conditions of existence (Gombrich, 1999, pp 86-94).

¹⁶ The sociologist Paulo Menezes (1996, p. 91) states this in relation to filmmakers, but the same applies for any plastic artist.

his closest friends (Figure 7), who received his paintings as inheritance, but also in the works on covers of books and journals such as *Educação & Sociedade* and *Pro-Posições* (Figure 8).

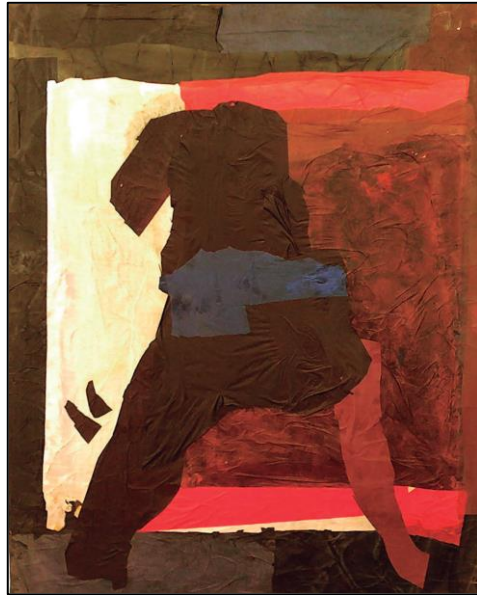


Figure 7: Photograph of the work of Milton José de Almeida, September 2011.

Available from the book *Imagens e palavras*, p. 12.

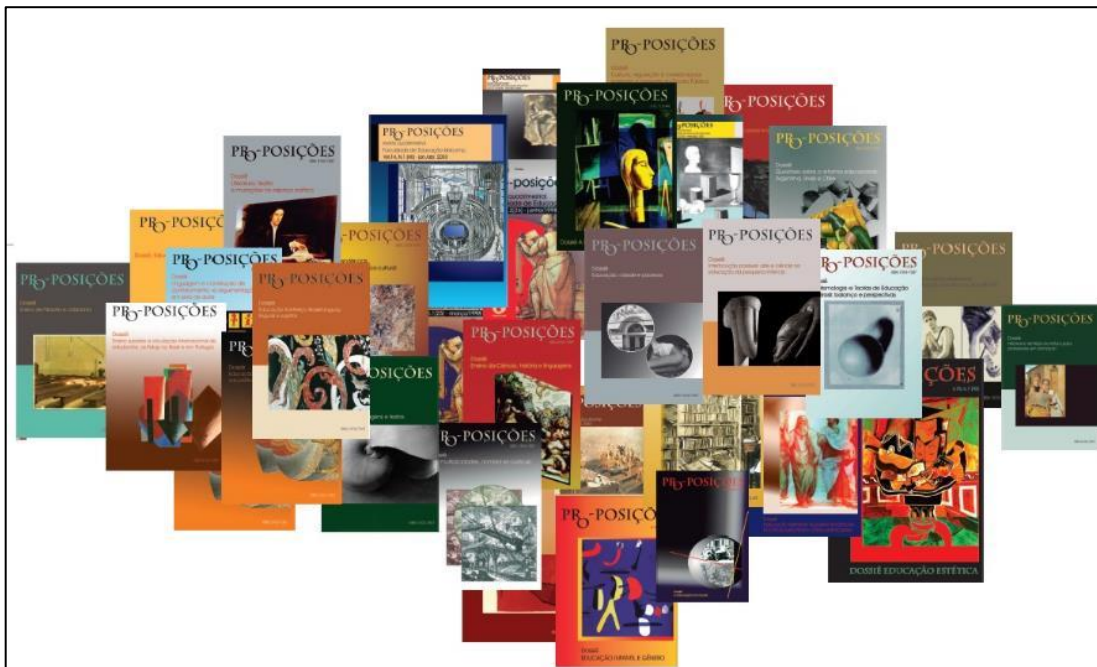


Figure 8: Sticker with works of covers designed by Milton José de Almeida for the *Pro-Posições* journal (detailed), designed for the *Colóquio Imagens e Palavras* event, which occurred on October 15 and 16, 2012.

Available from Faria et al. (organizers), 2014c.

Therefore, Milton accomplished his work, mostly, based on plastic or aesthetic thought. According to Pierre Francastel: “The aesthetic thought is, with no doubt, one of these great complexes of reflection and action in which a conduct is manifested, and such allows observing and expressing the universe in particularized acts or in a language”. (Francastel, 1993, p. 04, free translated)

The *proposition*, here, is to present some of this aesthetic thought present in the covers of *Pro-Posições* (which, in English, could be free translated to “Pro-positions”).

In 1998, here deemed the beginning of the second major phase of the journal’s covers, the first three issues featured the image of a person’s back who is drawing something we cannot see (Figure 9). It is, in fact, a Milton’s composition on the drawing of the Italian Mannerist artist Federico Zuccaro (1541 – 1609), *Taddeo in the Sistine Chapel Drawing Michelangelo’s Last Judgment* (c. 1595) (Figure 10).

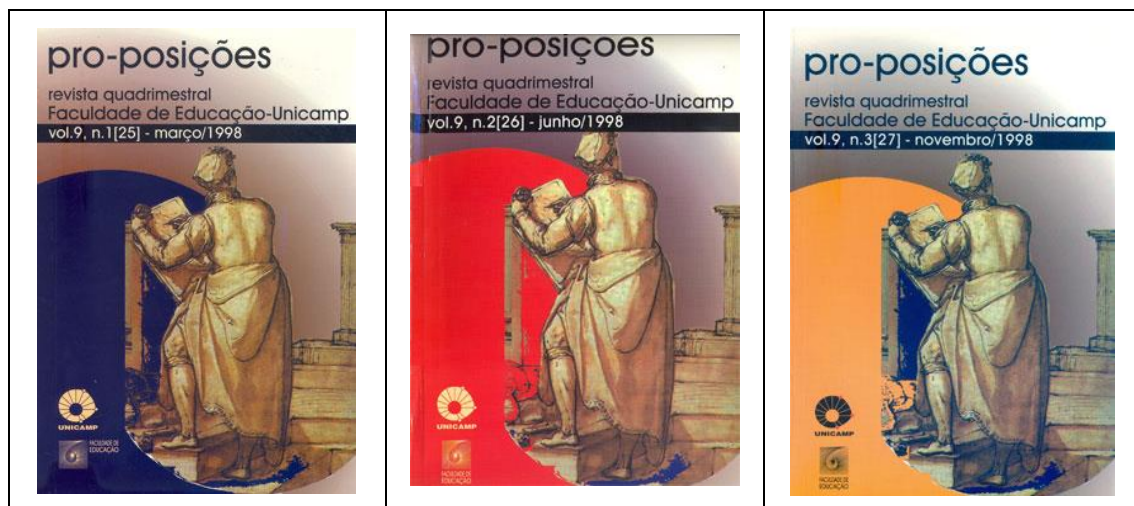


Figure 9: Covers of issues 25 (v. 9 i. 1), 26 (v. 9 i. 2), and 17 (v. 9 i. 3) of *Pro-Posições*: the same theme addressed with different colors.

Library Collection Professor Joel Martins (School of Education / Unicamp).

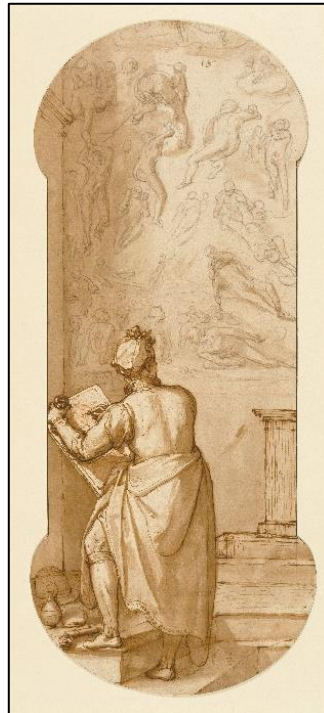


Figure 10: Federico Zuccaro. Taddeo in the Sistine Chapel Drawing Michelangelo's Last Judgment, c. 1595, 41.9 x 17.7 cm.

Source: Wikimedia¹⁷

The following two issues also worked with the same image, portraying a world map with several overlapped images, only changing the used colors. In these first five issues there was a considerable change in the used typographic font, without serifs¹⁸ and in lowercase letters.

Only from issue 31 [v. 11 i. 1, March 2000 (Figure 11)] onward the covers would always differ, not only regarding the colors, but the chosen images as well – overall, reworked photographs or paintings (by Milton or other artists). The font of the journal's title also changes, henceforth with all uppercase letters with the “O”, from “Pro”, outside the alignment of the rest of the words, as a subscript. Interestingly, this play with the letter “O” allows to read the word “*O-Posições*” [O-positions] as well, which does not cease to suggest a certain sense of problematization and questioning of reality and the status quo. However, here, this is merely a

¹⁷[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Federico_Zuccaro_\(Italian_-_Taddeo_in_the_Sistine_Chapel_Drawing_Michelangelo%27s_%27Last_Judgement%27_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Federico_Zuccaro_(Italian_-_Taddeo_in_the_Sistine_Chapel_Drawing_Michelangelo%27s_%27Last_Judgement%27_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg). Access on 09/12/2019.

¹⁸ “Any of the short lines stemming from and at an angle to the upper and lower ends of the strokes of a letter” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary Online, 2019. Available from: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/>, access on 09/26/2019).

conjecture solely motivated by my perspective and the sense I give to what I observe, guided, of course, by visual evidences.

This format would be maintained until issue 68, May 2012 (v. 23 i. 2), when all lowercase letters are adopted, similar to the experiment carried out between issues 25 (v. 9 i. 1) to 30 (v. 10 i. 3), but with serifs (Figure 12).



Figure 11: Covers of issues 31 (v. 11 i. 1), 32 (v. 11 i. 2), and 33 (v. 11 i. 3).
Library Collection Professor Joel Martins (School of Education / Unicamp).

	v. 1 i. 1 (1) – v. 8 i. 3 (24) (1990–1998/99)
	v. 9 i. 1 (25) – v. 10 i. 3 (30) (1998/1999)
	v. 11 i. 1 (31) – v. 23 i. 2 (68) (2000–2012)
	v. 23 i. 3 (69) up to the present day (2012–2019)

Figure 12: Different typographic fonts of *Pro-Posições* covers.

In his covers, Milton used photographs or paintings, whether his or not, from which he performed a new work, in which he seemed to seek a dialogue with the main theme discussed by the journal at each issue, as we see in the two examples next.

The edition of issue 46 (v. 16 i. 1, January/April 2005) features the *Dossiê Cultura escolar e cultura material escolar: entre arquivos e museus* [Dossier School culture and School material culture: between archives and museums]. To do so, Milton designs a cover based on the drawing of the painter Edgar Degas named *Bookshelves, Study for "Edmond Duranty,"* of 1879 (Figure 13).

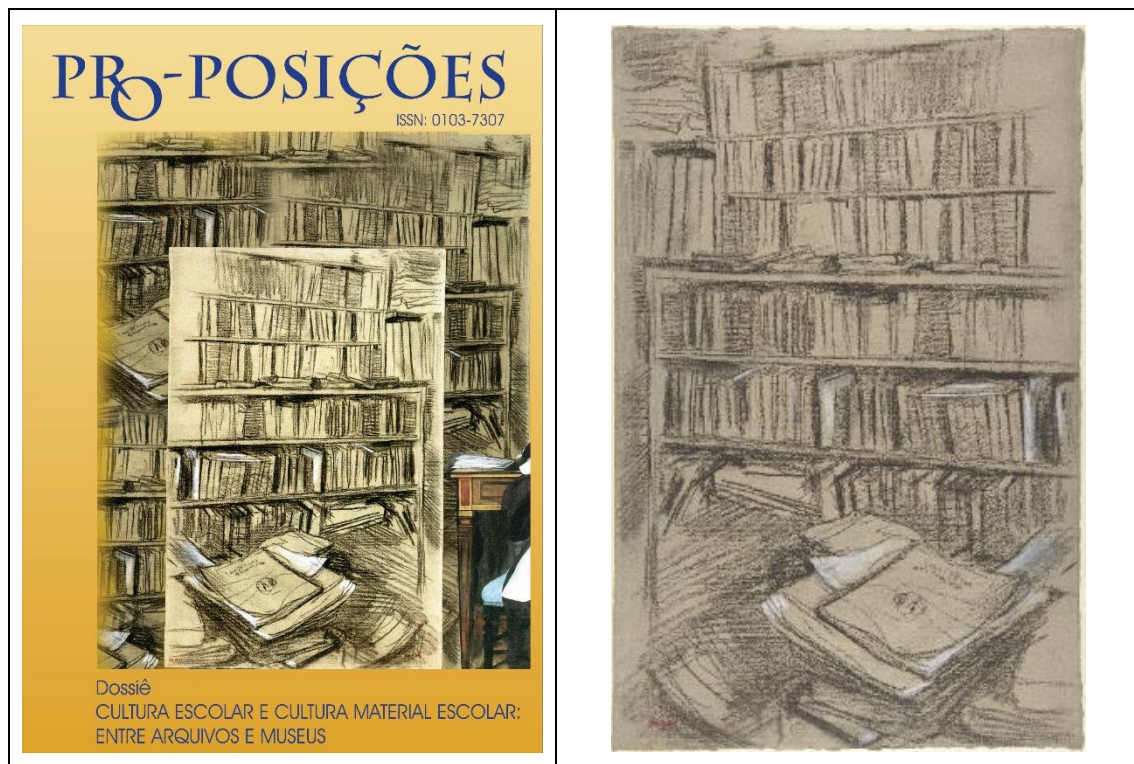


Figure 13: On the left, cover of issue 46 (v. 16 i. 1), Library Collection Professor Joel Martins (School of Education / Unicamp). On the right, reproduction of the original drawing by Edgar Degas, of 1879.

Source: Metmuseum¹⁹

We can easily perceive that the image of the French painter is only a raw material in Milton's hands, who creates something new and vibrant, attributing vitality that does not exist in the original drawing.

¹⁹ <https://images.metmuseum.org/CRDImages/dp/original/DP810340.jpg>, Access on 06/07/2019.

On the cover of issue 40, April 2003 (v. 14 i. 1), Milton brings an engraving of anonymous authorship named the *Leiden Anatomy Theater*, from the late XVII century. Although I have not managed to find the original engraving used in the cover, a more widespread version of the theme is dated 1610 and represents the theater built by the Dutch physician and botanist Petrus Pavius (1564–1617) (Figure 14). The images feature a space dedicated to the study of human anatomy and is emblematic of the European humanism and the consolidation of the scientific method of Francis Bacon or even René Descartes.

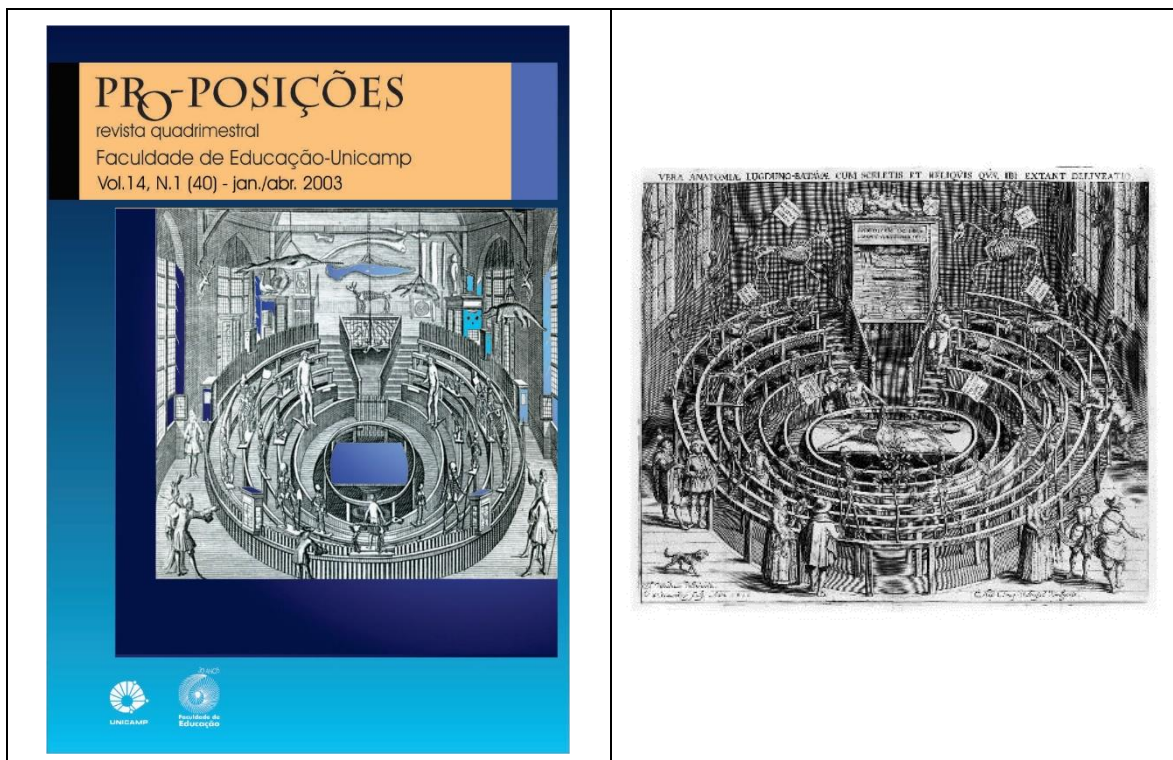


Figure 14: On the left, cover of issue 40 (v. 14 i. 1), Library Collection Professor Joel Martins (School of Education / Unicamp). On the right, engraving similar to that used in the cover of the journal, issue 40, representing the *Leiden Anatomy Theater*²⁰(anonymous authorship, 1610).

The subject of the dossier in question was knowledge and education in health, and the image chosen by Milton indicates his erudition and escape from common places – after all, he may have chosen a much better known painting on the subject, also of Dutch authorship, and

²⁰ Source: https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ficheiro:Anatomical_theatre_Leiden.jpg, Access on 06/07/2019.

also of the XVII century, which is *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp*, painted by Rembrandt (1606–1669) (Figure 15).



Figure 15: Rembrandt. *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp*, 1632, oil painting, 169.5 × 216.5 cm.

Font: Royal Picture Gallery Maurishuys, The Hague, Netherlands.

The choice for not being conventional and presenting the reader less known images points to a kind of aesthetic education employed by Milton in these works. Although reworked in the light of his own look (after all, as John Berger reminds us, “to look is an act of choice” [1977, p. 08]), the images of the covers are, at the same time, an invitation for readers to seek what they announce, but also to immerse in the journal’s visuality itself, in the lines and colors that already indicate what is about to be seen in the imminent act of flipping it. Walter Benjamin (1985, p. 224) says that the true image of the past swiftly passes by, but this past allows to be fixed, as an image that sparkles when it is acknowledged. In another context (1940) and concerned with the violence and barbarism that was spreading in Europe, Benjamin tells us of the importance of history and the urgency to learn from it. Maybe Milton is somehow addressing this by bringing images that are so old and almost forgotten to deal with a theme such as education and health, or so many others tackled by the journal. Hence, in this case, it is an update of this past to enlighten current issues – since, as the art historian Argan reminds us, “[the] works of art are always the same, but consciences change” (1993, p. 25).

Thus, from 1998 to 2012, the covers of *Pro-Posições* gathered the most varied images such as paintings, engravings, and photographs. Next, there is a list of the artists chosen by Milton for this “partnership” :

Amadeo Modigliani (1884–1920)
Angelo Morbelli (1853–1919)
Antonio Lega, (c.1888)
Auguste Rodin (1840–1917)
Carlo Carrà (twice) (1881–1966)
Edgar Degas (1834–1917)
Federico Zuccaro (1541–1609)
Francesco Morandini (c. 1544–1597)
George Bellows (1882–1925)
George Braque (1882–1963)
Giorgio De Chirico (1888–1978)
Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720–1778)
Giuseppe Pellizza da Volpedo (1868–1907)
Jacopo Zucchi (c. 1541– c. 1590)
Lewis Carrol (1832–1898)
Liubov Sergejevna Popova (1889–1924)
Lorenzo Lotto (1480–1556)
Luciano Bernardino da Costa (contemporary photographer, professor at the University of São Paulo and at the Pontifical Catholic University of Minas Gerais)
Malevich (twice) (1879–1935)
Max Klinger (1857–1920)
Miró (1893–1983)
Nicolai Filonov (1883–1941)
Odilon Redon (1840–1916)
Paul Signac (1863–1935)
Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1640)
Rafael Sanzio (1483–1520)

From former masters to modern ones, going through his own work, Milton seems to reveal his erudition from works that dialogued with the themes addressed in each issue of the journal. He also poses a difficulty for those who want to analyze him or frame him into some artistic movement or preference. Malevich and Carrá were chosen in two occasions, which already indicates some preference. The Italian masters also have expressive presence. However, there is no image of Giotto or Paul Klee, artists whom Milton had interest in, according to Carmen Lúcia Soares in her text dedicated to her former advisor (2014, pp. 55-57).

Milton died in 2011, but the journal still featured his covers until the following year, when it undergoes a new visual reformulation, adopting the style it has until today.

1.3 - Third phase (2012 to present days)

In its third phase, the *Pro-Posições* covers have adopted a more modern look, consisting of colorful geometric shapes, under a plain colored background, which varies each issue (Figure 16). The used type of font, as previously mentioned, retrieved the 1998/1999 lowercase letters, but now with serifs, being more similar to a classic style, that of a typewriter – as if it was a game between modernity and old times, after all, it is a 30-year-old journal that has a lot of stories to tell.

Since 2008 in Scielo (Scientific Electronic Library On-line), the journal is one of the most highest-ranked in its area, rating A1 in Qualis CAPES²¹ and which is nowadays exclusively published on-line, following the editorial trend that has become dominant in recent years. The high cost of printing and distribution, in addition to new reading habits (and gadgets), as well as the lack of space for printed materials in workspaces and residences help us understanding this option. Perhaps the image created by the painter Degas in the XIX century, which was used in the cover designed by Milton José de Almeida in the issue 46 of the journal, is an emblem of a time when reading and printed materials were synonyms. Today, reality has changed, and the digital world allows a whole reading universe to fit on the screen of a smartphone.



Figure 16: Current covers of the journal, Library Collection Professor Joel Martins (School of Education / Unicamp).

²¹ Education and Teaching areas, 2013–2016 quadrennium.

Although being available only in the digital version, covers of the journal are still designed for each issue, but this graphic art can only be visualized on the Unicamp portal of journals.²² However, we can only visualize the thumbnail (about 5 cm) – by clicking on the cover, you open a slightly larger image (about 10 cm), and we also have access to the contents of the journal. On this website we have no access to the full texts – a link leads to the articles already on the Scielo digital platform, which no longer features cover illustrations, only textual information and access to the articles, but maintaining the typographic fonts of the journal’s title (Figure 17).



Figure 17: Homepage (“cover”) of the journal on the Scielo website, access on 09/12/2019.

Therefore, those who access the journal directly on the Scielo platform do not visualize the original cover of the respective issue. Thus, the cover has been ceasing to be the visiting card of the journal, and is becoming a symbol of something that may have lost its relevance over time.

²² <https://periodicos.sbu.unicamp.br/ojs/index.php/proposic/issue/archive>, access on 06/07/2019.

Final considerations

By becoming exclusively on-line, Pro-Posições journal has demonstrated to be aware of contemporary editorial trends, and has proved, throughout the edited issues, that the quality and prestige of a scientific journal do not depend on it being printed. However, over the years, as we sought to point out, its covers, as well as illustrations not linked to the articles (which was common in the early years of its publication), had written a story that is not only literary or verbal, but also visual.

Whether in abstractions or figurations, the covers of Pro-Posições have always been outstanding, consisting in expressions of a plastic thought that had not only added visual value as an aesthetic education to the harsh world of science. It is more than that: they were also a source of information or communication – let us resume Francastel once again: “Whether it is music or figurative art, we must consider that the work constitutes by itself the means that makes communication possible” (Francastel, 1993, p. 05, free translated). We mention, for example, Milton de Almeida’s phase, when dozens of artworks from praised artists were taken to the journal’s audience, as a delicate invitation to the knowledge reserved to the internal pages. A pleasure for the eyes and a nourishment for the intellect.

In this article we did not analyze, and could have not, all the covers of the journal. Our proposal was to travel through the issues, to perceive in the covers the movement of history, of the taste, of the visual culture of each moment. We sought to highlight the importance of images as representations of a culture, as paths to understand certain particularities of the social world. According to Durkheim, “[.] a society does not simply consists of the mass of individuals that compose it, of their movements, but, first of all, of the idea it has about itself” (Durkheim, 1978, p. 226, free translated). And a fruitful way to meet this idea consists in representations and, as part of that, art. This reminds us again of Francastel, when he says that “[the] art informs us, in short, more about the ways of thinking of a social group than about events and the material frame of the life of artists and their environment. The work lies in the imaginary” (Francastel, 1993, p. 17, free translated).

Therefore, some questions remain: what is the meaning (and the future) of the covers of scientific journals within the world of digital platforms? How to go through its history and social imaginary from which it emerges without this synthetic and very rich interpretation visually accomplished by artists and typographers? This is not a matter of an intensive longing, but of a questioning about the place of images – or rather, of plastic thought – in the digital world of scientific journals.

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