

**Fernanda Fragateiro and editing processes:
sheet by sheet, block by block, step by step**

The exhibition *Fernanda Fragateiro: from archives to matter, to construction*, presented by MAAT - Museum of Art, Architecture and Technology in its Central 2 gallery, consists of a spatial intervention comprising various pieces produced over the course of her career as an artist, and others that have been specially constructed for the occasion, through which Fernanda Fragateiro (Montijo, 1962) designs and structures the exhibition space itself.

The intervention - to be understood, in the words of the artist, as "a window, opening and closing, to the processes of creating an artwork, themselves turned into an artwork" - reveals her thinking about spatial modelling, in which an umbilical relationship with architecture is evident, as well as references to construction and to editing in space.

But what does editing in space mean?

It is about creating reading possibilities, more or less encrypted associations, connections whose links may be clear or not, for matter exhibited in the two- or three-dimensional space. Both interventions in an exhibition space and physical or digital publications involve editing processes. And those processes, whether on the walls of the museum, or in the pages of a book, imply handling specific tools and materials, creating structures with entrances, route-throughs, and exits (or beginning, middle and end), arranging works, images and texts, introducing spaces to pause, rhythms and movements. As a result, although the mediums may be different - a sheet of paper or an exhibition room -, the editing processes are comparable.

To develop this answer further, we also need to show how Fragateiro appropriates the editing materials and processes common to disciplines involving the shaping of space: architecture and the visual arts. In this regard, it is important to clarify what brings the artist close to the architects she so often homages or references, and what distances her from the territory of architecture and ensures that her work remains rooted in the visual arts field. This link and this distance come from the fact that the two disciplines use space as one of their

principal working materials. Yet while architecture and architects shape space to make it habitable, the visual arts and artists are concerned with thinking about possible ways of representing it. Hence, Fragateiro doesn't so much work with architectural buildings themselves - "flesh and blood" or, rather, cement and concrete, brick and pier constructions - as turn to the books, printed matter and documents - in other words, editorial forms of representation - that refer to them. In this area of conceptual (re)elaboration, the two fields, architecture and the visual arts, are now on an equal footing within the field of thought and representation.

Isn't this what Fernanda Fragateiro highlights in her 2016 piece *Stones Against Diamonds*, included in this exhibition?

The work of Lina Bo Bardi (1914-1992), an Italian architect who, in 1946, adopted Brazil as her country, spanned architecture, design, teaching, curating and writing. The book *Stones Against Diamonds*, which gives substance to Fragateiro's piece, is a collection of the architect's essays and articles, published in English for the first time in this edition.¹ The collection of texts shows the importance editorial methods and languages had for Bo Bardi in her conception of space. They were the vehicle through which she rethought the ideas inherent to modernism, transforming them and proposing new parameters for architectural practice, such as a new tolerance for the ideas of "imperfection", roughness, etc.

Fernanda Fragateiro's focus on the conceptual and editorial component, which largely relates to architectural publications, encompassed works such as *Modern Architecture Without Architects*,² from 2011, *(Not) Reading Modern Latin American Architecture*,³ from 2013, and *Brazil Builds*,⁴ featured in this exhibition. These three works by Fragateiro, whose structure includes the books themselves, do not refer so much to the actual buildings documented on their pages or to their respective architects as to probably the three most iconic publications on modernist architecture. The use of publications as material for her work shows the artist's need for continued reflection on the field of architecture and construction through plastic means, taking the realm of publishing as a starting point.

Fragateiro's interest in books and the places that host them extends to works such as *Biblioteca*,⁵ from 2016-2017, which replicates the structure of the bookcases in the general reading room of Évora Public Library. Formally, this piece consists of several white-painted metal meshes, overlapping in places, as if alluding to the various layers and levels of knowledge preserved in the shelves and in the library used as reference. In addition to libraries, over the last decade printed pages taken from art and architecture publications (books and magazines) have become increasingly prominent in Fragateiro's work, where they are transformed into the "flesh" or the physical matter of her sculptural constructions, as in *Architecture, a place for women?* and *Elevation Study (Domus)*, both from 2016, or the sculpture *Built (looking at Lina Bo Bardi, MASP, S. Paulo 1957-1968)*, from 2011.

If *Architecture, a place for women?* symbolically questions the place of women within a disciplinary territory (architecture) traditionally dominated by men, *Built (looking at Lina Bo Bardi, MASP, S. Paulo 1957-1968)*, produced five years earlier, had already drawn attention to the existence of an iconic work by one of the few women to participate in the construction of space in South America. It is a sculptural piece made of steel and paper, the latter taken from publications referring to the contents of the Museu de Arte de São Paulo (MASP), designed by Bo Bardi. Built according to the parameters of modernist architecture, this museum, like the sculpture, is raised spider-like from the ground on four pillars, which support the structure's central element in the air - in suspension. The void created by the elevation of this central element, as well as conferring transparency and permeability to the surrounding urban area, is frequently filled with large crowds of political protesters - bearing witness to the continued relevance of Bardi's architecture and designs.

A further two pieces can be included within this group of work, in which the pages and insides of publications become bricks, beams or architectural columns: *Having Words*, from 2016, and *Measuring E1027*, from 2011. The first work is a small sculptural group consisting of 11 copies of the publication that gives it its title: *Having Words*.⁶ This book is a collection of significant articles

and essays by the architect and planner Denise Scott Brown (b. 1931), the wife of Robert Venturi (b. 1925). Between 1980 and 2012 the couple were partners in the Venturi, Scott Brown and Associates practice, yet Scott Brown's role as an architect has still not been properly recognised - an issue to which Fernanda Fragateiro aims to draw attention. It should be remembered that the architect was the co-author of, and jointly responsible for, several Venturi, Scott Brown and Associates projects, yet when the Pritzker Prize - architecture's highest accolade - was awarded to her husband in 1991, Denise did not attend the ceremony, taking a stance against the lack of recognition for her work.

The second, *Measuring E1027*, is a piece through which Fernanda Fragateiro alludes to the modernist architect Eileen Gray (1878-1976), in an attempt to remedy an erasure from history. The erasure, surely not unrelated to the fact that she was a woman in a profession dominated by men, led to the neglect of the work of this Irish architect, particularly House E1027 (1926-1929), located on the shores of the Mediterranean, in Roquebrune-Cap-Martin, south of France. Le Corbusier (1887-1965) painted a series of colourful murals inside the building, which Gray vehemently disapproved of, believing they disrupted from the austere integrity of the house's design. The disagreement between Eileen Gray and Le Corbusier led to a number of misunderstandings and an exchange of correspondence between the two, which reveals that Le Corbusier claimed for himself the title of co-author⁷ of the project, overshadowing the house's true architect and relegating her to further obscurity.

Another piece from this series of works based on publications as a starting point is *Double Words*, from 2011, produced for the artist's second exhibition at the Arratia Beer gallery in Berlin. The work consists of two open publications, placed side by side on the wall, supported by steel structures. On one side is the book *Demo: Eine Bildgeschichte des Protests in der Bundesrepublik*,⁸ which the artist found during one of her searches at the Goethe-Institut library in Lisbon. The publication contains a group of references to twentieth-century German political and social demonstrations. Despite the artist's interest in the various records and matters contained within the publication, the cover of

Demo, reflected in the metal surface of *Double Words*, shows a group of demonstrators being violently attacked by water cannons during a protest against fare increases in Frankfurt in 1974. Alongside, in the work's other element, is a Donald Judd (1928-1994) catalogue whose distinctive orange cover matches the colour of the top worn by one of the demonstrators. Questioning the distance between art and human drama, the artist saw the image as a document portraying the process of becoming socially conscious: a process that undeniably involves the notion of citizens' power of representation and their demand for rights, particularly the right to disagree with the status quo.

The artist was so fascinated by the publication *Demo: Eine Bildgeschichte des Protests in der Bundesrepublik* that she used it as the basis for other works, such as the 2013 piece *Black Bloc*, included in this exhibition. The title of the piece is an explicit reference to anti-globalization and anti-capitalist movements and groups, whose members cover their bodies and faces in black during protest actions, both as a sign of mourning and as a metaphor for a process of the de-subjectification of individuals, characteristic of capitalist societies. Taking the form of a vertical column, the artwork consists of five elements: Moleskine notebooks with black covers, supported by acrylic structures linked together by elastic bands. Although the five notebooks face the wall, inside them one can see glimpses of some of the pages from *Demo* referring to the growing prevalence of women's liberation movements in the public space during the May 1968 demonstrations. At these protests, a group of women exposed their breasts, stripping off from the waist up - an action adopted in other demonstrations that rose to prominence in Germany, particularly in the 1980s. As well as forming a part of these works, the publication *Demo* also led to a recent body of work - with the title images are acts, from 2017 - shown at the artist's solo show at Arratia Beer, in Berlin, in 2017. According to Fragateiro, the process by which this body of work was constructed involved looking at images as a block or wall of people, movements of bodies, colours of clothing, building façades, advertising signs and symbols, and transposing them to a physical construction, consisting of monochromatic elements, capable of conveying the

dense, block-like experience of these political and social demonstrations. In this way, the artist once again reflects on the way that ideological demands and representations acquire substance and public visibility through the physical, spatial and editorial dimension. It is indeed necessary for citizens to represent and give form to their positions to bring them into existence in the public domain and consciousness.

With regard to the series of works by Fragateiro that are based on publications and that acquire sculptural form in space it could be said that what is most important is not the explicit and complete decoding of the contents of the publication, nor the physical buildings in themselves, but the referencing of the architectural field. Through this field, the sculpture engages in a constant redefining of the territory in which it operates. On this point, and for a better understanding of the definition of the field that encompasses the discipline of Sculpture, it is relevant to consider the titles with the prefix "não" (not) that the artist commonly gives to her work. *(Não) ler, (Não) ver, (Não) pensar* [*(Not) reading, (Not) looking, (Not) thinking*] are titles of works that allude to the modernist labels coined by Rosalind Krauss (b. 1941) in an attempt to define sculptural practice.⁹ For Krauss, sculptural practice from the 1960s onwards could be described as an expanded field no longer belonging precisely to architecture or landscape (*non-architecture* and *non-landscape*), but to a much larger field of activity, situated at the interstices of these two domains, concerned with spatial and three-dimensional representation. One might say that this broader territory, where definitions collapse and classifications become ineffectual, is also the realm in which Fernanda Fragateiro operates. In other words, it is not the impermeable territories of disciplines that she explores but the meanings (at the level of symbols and imagery) attributed to the use of materials, and the new attitudes and new ways of responding to the issues that arise during the construction of space. At this level, in which a rational, functional and scientific function is extracted from art, it is also important to maintain art's capacity to generate internal debate, confrontation, and to communicate alternative philosophical, representational and ideological models.

It might thus be said that, through heavily edited spaces, the exhibition *Fernanda Fragateiro: from archives to matter, to construction* creates an aesthetic, conceptual and tangible experience that offers new representational models. As if we were inside a house, moving from door to door, from corner to corner, from room to room, or imagining ourselves within a book, turning page after page: body and space merge and, in symbiosis, acquire a political presence.¹⁰

This political presence involves the re-making and representation of our body (female/male, individual/collective) in space and of our space of representation, which encompass being, inhabiting, imagining, projecting, having expectations, creating beauty, etc. By helping to bring about these realms of representation that, in turn, require processes of construction, deconstruction and reconstruction, Fernanda Fragateiro's work could be described as deeply political since it calls for an expansion of our field of movement, as well as representational alternatives. This field has nothing to do with the norm or with the usual forms of living. It is a form of thought and speculation where the characteristic divisions between disciplines collapse and where science and art, calculus and myth are no longer opposite sides of a contradiction but elements of an indivisible discourse on the possibilities of life, revealed through art. Here's what Fragateiro does through her works: reveal and claim new forms of living, of inhabiting and shaping the space in which we move. Frequently, as in this exhibition, this proposal, which is also ethical and moral, involves deconstructing pre-existing structures and norms, not to destroy or reject them, but to get to their elementary roots and rework them, making her work deeply current and contemporary. *Muro* [Wall], from 2017, created specifically for this exhibition, bears witness to this method of thinking and construction that is both contemporary and ancient, inherent in the roots of a city. It could be said that the wall is one of the first elements in the construction of the polis, which is what makes it symbolically so relevant in this exhibition. As the thinker Emanuele Coccia¹¹ states on the constitution of society:

The city remains, even today, a "thing of stone": an

ordered group of walls, a collection of lives enclosed among stones. And it is also stones - or things of stone - that establish the extent of our cities, that define the layout and direction of the streets, that separate private space from public space.

If stone is the political "thing" par excellence and the raw material of our entire social existence, it is not merely because it allows our shared space to be divided and determined [...] [but because the] wall perfectly embodies the mechanism of inclusion and exclusion that seems to be the founding act of the entire political community. [Coccia, 2016: 30]

The community projects itself upon walls, it makes itself visible and speaks of itself through its surfaces. It could thus be said that walls "still represent today the public space par excellence, the surface upon which the city and the individual have registered and preserved their knowledge, their ways of life, their judgements" (Coccia, 2016: 30).

For all these reasons, constructing and destroying a wall, altering its structural or surface configuration, removing bricks from it, or giving it a rosy shade (the colour of flesh), as Fernanda Fragateiro does in this work, can be understood as an act of politically reconstructing the community, tracing the contours of its portrayal, one of the functions of the artist. Artists imagine other possible portrayals of the society in which they live and which they would like to inhabit.

Like the façade that serves as a reference (a BEST Products Co., Inc. showroom/warehouse),¹² this wall by Fernanda Fragateiro is an example of "de-architecturisation"¹³ that questions and produces the opposite effect to that of the corporate solidity, security and impressiveness characteristic of large corporations. Indeterminate Façade, designed in the 1970s for BEST, in Houston, by the SITE (Sculpture In the Environment)¹⁴ studio, specifically by its founder, the architect James Wines (b. 1932), known for transforming architecture into sculptural pieces,¹⁵ explores a fascination with the effects of demolition and ruin, thereby questioning the modernist aesthetics inherent to both architecture and to the most orthodox models of

display. This typically postmodern questioning is something that Fernanda Fragateiro also set out to consider in this exhibition. In her reconsideration of established models of "display" or exhibition "devices", it could be said that the artist - like James Wines, with whom she has exchanged ideas and correspondence - used a process that is also deconstructive or "de-architecturising" and absolutely characteristic of postmodernism. She worked with the exhibition structure itself, opening up cracks in the walls to create expansive views that cut between compartments (as if turning the exhibition into one piece or unifying intervention), or linking together existing walls with others recuperated from previous constructions, without repairing them or disguising their previous use. On the contrary, the artist embraced the reutilisation of materials and their histories, and these walls became both the support for and part of the works that they host. This political action on walls, on architectural structures, is also a reminder that:

It was on the space of a wall - vertical, solid, public, universally visible - that Power began to set out its Word and its Law; law began by being published on walls. [...] It was on walls that time, both solar and astronomical, became measurable, and it has also always been on walls that the memory of time lived and the names of the dead, their final words, have been preserved. [Coccia, 2016: 31]

If Coccia's words draw attention to the political dimension that has always - throughout history, in other words - been inscribed on walls, it could be said that the artist's intervention is imbued with a prospective ambition, that is, signalling or aspiring towards a future dimension. The desire to participate in shaping space and society involves etching onto walls, opening up on their surface another history and another future for the community, particularly the artistic community. Here it is salient to recall the artist's 2009 intervention on the façade of the Central Tejo building, on which she inscribed the phrase "A paisagem não tem dono".¹⁶ Anticipating what would happen some years later, Fernanda Fragateiro's work disappeared when the wall was

demolished to allow the new MAAT building to be constructed, which in turn opened up new views over the landscape, offering visitors another experience of shared space. This intervention demonstrates that by inscribing opinions on walls, by "tattooing" protest, rebellion or art graffiti on them, we transform our space into a place of projection (future) and not merely of retro-projection (past); a place of utopias, dreams and nightmares. Thus Fernanda Fragateiro's walls, and works of art in general, are political things par excellence, shared imaginary projections, the tangible thought of a community. Works of art, artistic interventions, like this exhibition, are part of a discourse that entails the construction of a community, a culture, a city. Art gives community and reality a voice.

Evidence of the link between the history of cities and the people who live in them and the methodologies used by Fragateiro can be found in various pieces she has produced, such as *Construir é destruir é construir* [To build is to destroy is to build], from 2009, included in the exhibition. To install this work, a container filled with broken bricks, belonging to the EDP Foundation Art Collection,¹⁷ the artist retrieved three tonnes of brick fragments from demolitions and ruins, some of them coming from building works to restore the brick façade of the Central Tejo itself. This procedure is not, in fact, unusual for the artist, particularly in the creation of recent pieces, such as *Demolição, 2* [Demolition, 2], from 2017. Covering almost the entire wall at the entrance to the exhibition, where it is installed, the piece seems to announce the exhibition, suggesting the complex constructive and deconstructive processes concealed within. To create the work, the artist used pieces of masonry she found on the site of the restoration of a building in the Baixa district in Lisbon, taking fragments that did not have any archaeological value. In this way, employing used materials from urban structures, laden with memory and history, the artist anchors her work in the here and now of the city. It is a method of working that takes reality as a starting point, using it as the basis of action and thought, a laboratory for the collection of materials in which the artist acts like an archaeologist, transforming remains into sculptures and using them as a starting point for new stories.

The process of actual involvement with places is something that Fernanda Fragateiro has employed as a methodology from her very first works, in the early 1990s, and in pieces such as *Existe um substituto para a experiência?*, 2 [Is there a substitute for experience?, 2], from 2002.¹⁸ This floor sculpture, which belongs to the EDP Foundation Art Collection, is a stainless steel and mirror structure, 12 metres long, which reflects the space where it is installed, opening up a gulf on the floor equivalent to the height of the building that houses it. The use of reflective materials, namely mirror and polished stainless steel, also confirms the consistency of the artist's visual language, who decade by decade, series by series, and work by work, reinvents the plastic and symbolic value of materials - so that, over the years, the work she produces becomes unmistakably hers.

Further examples of the intrinsic relationship with place are the projects *(Não) ver*, created for the central nave of Alcobaca Monastery in 2008,¹⁹ and "In the vocabulary of profit, there is no word for 'pity'", from the same year, for the old fish market building in Portimão,²⁰ or her 2001 intervention in the former carpentry workshop of the Central Tejo building, *(Não) ligar* [(Not) connecting],²¹ a drawn-out process of which few records remain, where the artist separated, cleaned and (re)presented materials from the workshop, out of use for several years.

In these actions, we already see indications of methodologies that are today part of Fernanda Fragateiro's working practices: the gathering of materials, from various sources, and their (re)presentation under the title *Materials Lab*. Through these pieces, the artist exhibits studies for projects, drawings and significant notes for the development of her work, material samples, colour studies, etc., which are themselves "turned into an artwork". In the exhibition, these groups are given the specific name *Laboratório de Materiais*, 4 [Laboratory of materials, 4] and are presented sorted into boxes, as if in a laboratory or archive. This group of pieces offers unprecedented access to the artist's working methods, to her tests and materials of choice, to her visual vocabulary and to her work in a kind of raw state: sheet by sheet, block by block, step by step.

Materials Lab emerged from a seminar Fernanda Fragateiro gave at the Harvard Art Museums (Cambridge, USA), in 2015. In order to talk about her work with the students, the artist decided - instead of showing reproductions of the works - to present boxes with materials and to invite discussion not of the work in its final state, but of the work in the very process of conception, as if making her creative process visible and transparent to us. In this way, the pieces take on the quality of a research project and should not be read as a closed archive. As the artist suggests, these boxes, which reveal and hide, are also like miniatures of the exhibition, each of them resembling the model of a house or a book, the latter in turn can be thought of as a small building, emphasising the complementary nature of the relationship between the shaping of space and editing processes.

Thus, drawing on a multiplicity of materials sourced from her research and from the city, Fernanda Fragateiro increasingly distances herself from exclusively minimalist language - a language that her work is often associated with - and artists, in order to enter the broad and contaminable field of postmodern artistic practices in which reality invades the work and clearly manifests itself.

Demanding to be experienced as a whole, the exhibition is a single intervention, in which Fernanda Fragateiro felt compelled to demolish walls of the pre-existing exhibition structure, splitting and blocking off parts of it, and thereby demonstrating that, for the artist, the exhibition space is just another material to be edited. Through this blocking, spaces are unified and cinematographic perspectives created, with visitors circulating in accordance with the demands made by the differing scale of the pieces. Large works impose distance; other smaller ones seem to call for intimacy and privacy. Thus, in a back and forth between closeness and distance, the interior appears to be an exterior, and the exterior, in turn, a habitable interior: a house or a book in which the divisions/sections communicate and are discovered with each step or turn of the page, placing us, spectators, at the very heart of the editing process.

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1. Lina Bo Bardi, *Stones Against Diamonds*. Anthony Doyle, Pamela Johnstone. London: Architectural Association Publications, 2013;
2. *Architecture without Architects: A Short Introduction to Non-Pedigreed Architecture* is the publication that accompanied the exhibition of the same name held at MoMA - The Museum of Modern Art (New York), originally published by that museum in 1964. The book, by Bernard Rudofsky, the exhibition curator, deals with the richness of vernacular architecture, discussing its artistic, functional and cultural aspects.
3. *Latin American Architecture since 1945*, catalogue to the MoMA exhibition of the same name, is by Henry-Russell Hitchcock and was published by that museum in 1955.
4. *Brazil Builds - Architecture New and Old (1652-1942)*, catalogue to the MoMA exhibition of the same name, is by Philip L. Goodwin and was published by the museum in 1943. The book came about as the result of a desire for more knowledge of Brazilian architecture, particularly with respect to its solutions to issues of heat control and luminosity in large glass surfaces.
5. Included in the exhibition *The reserve of things in their latent state*, curated by Adam Budak, held at the Fórum Eugénio de Almeida (Fundação Eugénio de Almeida) in Évora from 21 January to 23 April 2017.
6. Denise Scott Brown, *Having Words*. London: Architectural Association Publications, 2009.
7. See: Beatriz Colomina, "Battle Lines: E.1027", in *Renaissance and Modern Studies* [Culture, Theory and Critique], Vol. 39, No. 1, Nottingham: University of Nottingham, 1996, pp. 95-105. [Accessible online: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14735789609366597>].
8. Nikolaus Jungwirth, *Demo: Eine Bildgeschichte des Protests in der Bundesrepublik*. Weinheim/Basel: Beltz, 1986.
9. See: Rosalind Krauss, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field", in *October*, Vol. 8 (Spring), Cambridge, MA/London: The MIT Press, 1979, pp. 30-44.
10. See: Beatriz Colomina (ed.), *Sexuality & Space*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1992.
11. Emanuele Coccia, *O Bem nas Coisas. A Publicidade como Discurso Moral*. Transl. Jorge Leandro Rosa. Lisbon: Documenta/Fundação Carmona e Costa, 2016.
12. See: Casabella, "SITE, Indeterminate Façade", No. 411 (March), Milan: Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, 1976, p. 42.
13. *Casabella*, op. cit., p. 43.
14. Margaret McCormick, "The Ironic Loss of the Postmodern Best Store Façades", in *Failed Architecture*, Amsterdam: Failed Architecture Foundation, 22 July 2014. [Available online: <https://www.failedarchitecture.com/the-ironic-loss-of-the-postmodern-best-store-facades/>].
15. Alyssum Skjeie, "James Wines: The Architect Who Turned Buildings into Art", in *Storyboard*, Pittsburgh: Carnegie Museum of Art, Jul 8, 2015. [Available online: <http://blog.cmoa.org/2015/07/james-wines-the-architect-who-turned-buildings-into-art/>].
16. Portuguese translation of Ralph Waldo Emerson's phrase "Landscape has no owner", cited by W. J. T. Mitchell in the book *Landscape and Power* (Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press, 1994). The intervention was part of the exhibition *Construir é destruir é construir*, curated by João Pinharanda, which was held in the Ashpit 8 gallery at the EDP Foundation's Museu da Electricidade, in Lisbon, between 16 May and 12 July 2009.
17. Work conceived specifically by the artist for the Ashpit 8 gallery and included in the exhibition of the same title (see preceding footnote).
18. Part of Projecto Capicua 2002, exhibited in the Foyer of the

Teatro Municipal do Porto - Rivoli.

19. Part of the group exhibition *7 Maravilhas EDP*, promoted by the EDP Foundation, which presented interventions by seven artists in seven national monuments.

20. Part of the group exhibition *Holidays in the Sun*, curated by João Fernandes for the ALLGARVE 08 Contemporary Art programme.

21. Part of the group exhibition *Apresentação*, curated by João Pinharanda.