

On the 11th of May, 2026, the first day of Kontornu Festival, a group of international professionals of dance and performing arts gathered in Cidade Velha to discuss and reflect about some crucial subjects in this field. The first talk, facilitated by Pedro Barreiro, was about “Curatorship, Power, and Political Responsibility”.

For this talk, the following questions were put on the table to be discussed by the participants:

- Who decides what is relevant, experimental, radical, universal, good or bad?
- And what about accessibility and structural asymmetries? Where lies the responsibility in this, and how to overcome it?
- Are hegemonic institutions using transgressive and dissent narratives to domesticate them, or is it just an honest willingness to add complexity and diversity, and include other discourses into the conversation?
- What would it mean to share or hand over power, from the position of traditional gatekeepers and decision makers?
- Does institutional neutrality really exist, or is it a biased privilege?
- Should artists and engaged players refuse or boycott institutions linked to colonial violence, censorship, or exploitation?
- Understanding the body as a political territory, who's allowed to address and to represent ideas such as trauma, ritual, violence, or tradition?
- What kinds of knowledge disappear when everything must be legible or fittable to international structures?
- Do institutions celebrate and invest in “political art” only when it remains safe?
- Does curatorship redistribute power, or simply reorganize it without changing the fundamental structures that keep on producing inequality?
- What strategies can be build to overcome problems of accessibility, diversity, colonialism, exotization, and tokenism?
- How curating can be more politically responsible and fair?

After collectively diving and discussing about this questions, the group ended up producing a short statement of 10 steps, as a way to tackle some of the approached issues:

- Change the teams.
- Change the language.

- Invent new spaces.
- Become more attentive and inventive.
- Be more open to new ways of doing art.
- Create spaces where curators feel less lonely and where professionals don't work in isolation.
- Listen to other people's urgencies.
- Go to other places.
- Question more.
- Find new vocabulary, as we need new words to create new thoughts and actions.

May 11th, 2026
Cidade Velha, Santiago Island, Cape Verde