# Myth of an urban narcissus: reflections on Hudinilson Jr. (1957–2013) and graphic memory in Brazil

Mito de um narciso urbano: reflexões sobre Hudinilson Jr. (1957–2013) e a memória gráfica no Brasil

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#### **ABSTRACT**

This article proposes a reflection on the works of artist Hudinilson Jr. (1957–2013) related to printed technical images. Our objective is to examine some of his works that engage with displacement, recording methods and image reproduction practices, highlighting the creative and conceptual process linked to the conception, idealization and production of generating matrices. Hudinilson Jr. built an extensive career with interests spanning the fields of research, archiving, and teaching. Guided by the concept of artmedia, by desire, and by the public and authorial nature provided by São Paulo art circuit, his research themes frequently highlighted the forms and visualities of the nude male body. In this context, the present study approaches, from a perspective grounded in the history and critique of art and design, works and processes related to woodcut, mail art and xerography, produced between the 1970s and 1980s. We analyze the technical and conceptual aspects of these procedures, emphasizing how they contribute to understanding and describing the artist's trajectory. Finaly, this research reaffirms the importance of unveiling new narratives about Brazilian artists and the potential of their approaches, highlighting their contributions to shaping design, contemporary art, and the country's graphic memory.

**Keywords:** Hudinilson Jr. Reference notebooks. Xerography. Technical image. Brazilian graphic memory.

#### RESUMO

Este artigo propõe uma reflexão sobre os trabalhos do artista Hudinilson Jr. (1957–2013) relacionados às imagens técnicas impressas. Nosso objetivo é pensar algumas de suas obras que dialogam com o deslocamento, os métodos de gravação e as práticas de reprodução de imagens, destacando os processos criativos e conceituais vinculados à concepção, idealização e produção de matrizes geradoras. Hudinilson Jr. construiu uma carreira extensa, com interesses que abrangeram os campos da pesquisa, do arquivo e da docência. Orientado pelo conceito artemídia, pelo desejo e pelo caráter público e autoral proporcionado pelo circuito artístico em São Paulo, seus temas de investigação frequentemente destacaram as formas e visualidades do corpo masculino nu. Nesse contexto, o presente estudo aborda, com base em uma perspectiva fundamentada na história e na crítica de arte e design, obras e processos relacionados à xilogravura, à arte postal e xerografia, produzidos entre as décadas de 1970 e 1980. Analisamos aspectos técnicos e conceituais desses procedimentos, enfatizando como eles contribuem para a compreensão e descrição da trajetória do artista. Por fim, esta pesquisa reafirma a importância de revelar novas narrativas sobre artistas brasileiros e as potencialidades de suas abordagens, destacando suas contribuições para imaginar o design, a arte contemporânea e a memória gráfica do país.

**Palavras-chave:** Hudinilson Jr. Cadernos de referências. Xerografia. Imagem técnica. Memória gráfica brasileira.

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#### **INTRODUCTION**

Storytelling, whether about a person or an artifact, serves as a means of encountering, observing, perceiving, selecting, collecting, and disseminating perspectives on a set of events and practices. With this framework in mind, the present article examines the work of artist Hudinilson Jr. (1957–2013) and offers a reflection on a selected body of his work.

It is possible to conceive of Hudinilson Jr. as a narrator of his time, as highlighting fragments of his trajectory evokes, through his visual collections, memories, and testimonies, not only his own artistic operations but also the cultural spaces, curators, and critics active during his lifetime. A multifaceted artist proficient in various techniques and methods, Hudinilson Jr. left a legacy that bridges distinct moments and practices. Accordingly, this study focuses on the processes of reproducibility of technical images present in his work, analyzing how gestures of appropriation and displacement, as well as recording and reproduction, are expressed in his woodcuts, mail art, and xerographic practices.

Throughout the text, particular attention is given to Hudinilson Jr.'s interest in images, with emphasis on the works featured in the exhibition *Do Detalhe ao Exercício* (*From Detail to Exercise* – 1981). The exhibition was structured around two main sections: *Detalhe do detalhe* (*Detail of Detail*) and *Exercício de Me Ver* (*Exercise of Seeing Myself*)<sup>1</sup>. In both segments, assemblages of copied printed images are presented, produced through direct interaction (performance) between the artist and the photocopying machine.

In essence, performance functions as a unifying thread between the two sections, as Hudinilson Jr. employs his own body as a matrix and, mediated by the photocopier, generates bodily impressions that result from this interaction. These works present compositions that emphasize the artist's pores, curves, and body hair, revealing a simultaneous desire both to see himself and to become an image. Consequently, on the photocopied pages, the contours of the body extend beyond the boundaries of the artistic field. At this juncture, when aligned with graphic design, such images not only underscore the increasing use of the photocopier but also provoke critical discussions about regimes of technical reproducibility and their significance within that historical context. Moreover, by foregrounding the male body on these blank sheets, the works invite reflection on modes of representation in circulation — bodies that are desired, consumed, and reproduced.

However, the significance of Hudinilson Jr.'s work extends beyond these aspects. His practice prompts critical inquiry into the use of technological devices, the recurrence of specific layouts and visual structures, and the impact of these formal strategies on the construction of visual narratives. Accordingly, before proceeding to the analysis of his works, it is essential to outline the premises that inform this article, including the acknowledgment of the breadth and complexity of his artistic production.

<sup>1</sup> We chose not to assign dates to the two series, as they were not dated by the artist. These are also visual investigations that were resumed and continued over the years, possibly both before and after the exhibition.

Over the course of nearly five decades, Hudinilson Jr. developed numerous series that predominantly explore self-image and xerography. This text focused specifically on the early stages of his career, a period during which certain visual and thematic strategies began to take shape. It is important to note that each of the artist's series is organized in a distinct manner, featuring unique compositions that often function as reproductions of his own body. The patterns analyzed here reveal identifiable recurrences within his work, without claiming to account for the entirety of his artistic practices.

Drawing on this excerpt and employing both discursive and semiotic perspectives, Hudinilson Jr.'s trajectory is approached as a site of research and an experimental graphic archive, in which the technical and aesthetic dimensions of images are inextricably linked. This approach is grounded in references from cultural studies, which regard the consumption of images as a cultural system composed of meanings, messages, and codes that can be identified, interpreted, and communicated. Within this framework, it becomes possible to underscore the artist's incorporation and critical engagement with graphic processes in his practice, culminating in a sensitive and multidisciplinary poetics.

The materials consulted for this study were drawn from key publications documenting the artist's life and work, including *Posição Amorosa* (*Love Position*) by Ricardo Resende (2016) and the exhibition catalog *Hudinilson Jr.: explícito* (*Hudinilson Jr.: Explicit*), organized by *Pinacoteca de São Paulo* (PINA) and curated by Ana Maria Maia (2020). Additionally, the temporal and geographic scope of the research was limited to works developed or completed during the 1970s and 1980s, within the city of São Paulo, where the artist lived and produced.

By foregrounding the work of Hudinilson Jr., this study aimed to contribute to the strengthening of narratives that emphasize the production of Brazilian visual artists, particularly those whose trajectories challenge normative interpretations of art and design history and criticism. By expanding the boundaries between these fields, the research sought to deepen the understanding of graphic memory in Brazil, providing a foundation for the study of technical images and reproductive processes as both expressive and political tools. Within this context, emphasis is placed on how artistic practices generate meanings, articulate desires, and shape patterns of symbolic consumption mediated by reproductive technologies and popular media.

## BRAZILIAN GRAPHIC MEMORY AND HUDINLSON JR.: DIALOGUES BETWEEN ART AND DESIGN AND SOME CONTRIBUTIONS TO A GROWING FIELD OF STUDIES

Researchers Marcos da Costa Braga and Priscila Lena Farias (2018) explain that the term graphic memory is particularly associated with debates developed in Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking countries in Latin America. This research perspective emphasizes the recovery and revaluation of visual artifacts, with particular focus on rapidly circulating printed materials situated within contexts of local meaning and identity. According to Braga and Farias (2018), within this emerging 21st-century trend<sup>2</sup>, such artifacts play a vital role in everyday life, serving as mediators of individual and collective experiences in urban environments and functioning as repositories of shared knowledge. The authors further note that the study of graphic memory contributes to the construction of plural narratives in both design and art practices linked to Latin America. Additionally, the concept of print culture offers a broader and more suitable framework for the analysis of printed materials, as it encompasses not only the variety of print forms but also their techniques, reproductive processes, modes of publication, circulation, and reception, thereby expanding the scope of inquiry.

In Brazil, researcher and designer Letícia Pedrizzi Fonseca (2021) observes that the concept of Brazilian graphic memory was introduced into academic discourse in 2005, initially in connection with a seminar focused on design research. The author emphasizes that the field remains under development, highlighting its multidisciplinary character and its growing relevance within design studies. In this context, Fonseca (2021, p. 11) notes that understanding this concept requires consideration of "the conceptual basis of much of the research on Brazilian Graphic Memory, which focuses on artifacts considered places of memory, since they are memorial traces of a practice and production in design." According to Fonseca, such artifacts constitute elements of material culture that embody social and political practices rooted in specific historical contexts. From this perspective, the study of Brazilian graphic memory plays a vital role in valuing, questioning, and disseminating Brazilian cultural heritage, incorporating key components in the construction of collective identities.

Building on these discussions, the focus now turns to Hudinilson Jr.'s work in the field of image reproduction. The artist engaged extensively with reproductive techniques, demonstrating a sustained interest in technical images. Presenting a segment of his trajectory and creative processes enables an understanding of how graphic practice, in dialogue with art, challenges the consumption and circulation of images, particularly those concerning representations of the male body. In this regard, the analysis of Hudinilson Jr.'s work offers an opportunity to situate him within the São Paulo art scene, especially during the 1970s and 1980s, highlighting his engagement with images and the cultural circuit of that period. Moreover, examining his practices and interpreting his body of work contributes to a broader and more collective understanding of the artistic processes and visual production dynamics that shaped his generation.

Hudinilson Urbano Junior was a visual artist, born on October 17, 1957, in São Paulo, Brazil, to Maria Apparecida Urbano and Hudinilson Urbano. Curator and art critic Ana Maria Maia (2020) notes that Hudinilson Jr. consistently

<sup>2</sup> Braga and Farias (2018) note that studies on memory began to be recognized as a specific field of research in the early 1990s, with investigations focused on graphic memory gaining greater prominence only from 2008 onward.

expressed a fascination with his own image and with the possibility of projecting that representation into the world. According to Maia, through his exploration of visuality, the artist operated as a designer, researcher, archivist, and educator, consistently driven by a pursuit of the public and authorial dimensions of art in São Paulo.

It is evident, therefore, that the authors' perspectives converge in the work of Hudinilson Jr., whose artistic practice not only engages in the appropriation, reproduction, and reconfiguration of images and graphic artifacts, but also in their production. His personal archive, comprising graphic publications, everyday clippings, photocopies, and various printed materials, emerges as a space where art and design intersect, and in which the body and urban experience permeate, support, and confer meaning upon the image.

### FIRST IMPRESSIONS: WOOD PRINTING, MAIL ART AND THE BODY AS A RESEARCH TOPIC

In a candid statement delivered at the *IV Seminar on Art, Culture, and Photography*<sup>3</sup>, Hudinilson Jr. (*apud* Geartfoto, 2009) remarked that while his enthusiasm for art had always been present, it was the field of images that most strongly captured his attention. He recounted that his initial contact with art occurred during early adolescence, as a result of evading Sunday mass, a family obligation imposed by his parents. This strategy emerged after reading his father's newspapers and discovering that the Lasar Segall Museum, located near his home in the Vila Mariana neighborhood, held weekly screenings of art and culture films every Sunday, coinciding with the time of the religious service. Motivated by curiosity and desire, and using the event as a convenient pretext, he succeeded in obtaining a pass that justified his absence from mass.

Hudinilson Jr. (apud Geartfoto, 2009) explains that his experience at the Lasar Segall Museum soon extended beyond Sundays and evolved into a daily practice. He notes that he attended and received training in the museum's free engraving studio, where he explored the possibilities of wood engraving. This period marked the beginning of his engagement with printed images and with models for serial production and reproduction.

Woodcut, the technique through which Hudinilson Jr. first engaged directly with printed images, is a relief printing method typically carried out in three stages. First, the image is created by carving into a wooden block (matrix). Next, pigment is applied to the raised, uncarved surfaces of the matrix. Finally, the image is transferred by pressing the inked matrix onto the chosen support<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> Much of this article is based on the records of Hudinilson Jr.'s testimony at the 4th Seminar on Art, Culture, and Photography (Geartfoto, 2009), organized by Prof. Dr. Domingos Tadeu Chiarelli at the School of Communications and Arts of Universidade de São Paulo (ECA-USP), supported by the Art & Photography Study Group (Geartfoto).

<sup>4</sup> Woodcut printing is a process rich in nuances and experimentation possibilities. Here, we briefly explain the concept in order to provide context and aid in the general understanding of the text, but it is important to recognize that the technique is far more complex than this description suggests.

In Brazil, woodcut printing was introduced in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to meet the growing demand for illustrations in books, advertisements, and other printed materials. According to researcher Antonio Costella (2003), the technique gained popularity among artists, likely due to its low cost and ease of execution, and is now recognized as part of the country's cultural heritage. Researcher and professor Rafael Cardoso (2005) further notes that advancements in this and other techniques involving image transfer through matrices and presses had a direct impact on the production costs of printed materials from the 1840s onward. As a result, there was a significant increase in the volume of materials in circulation, accompanied by a rise in the number of readers.

In the field of illustration, Cardoso (2005) observes that advances in serial reproduction techniques also transformed the ways in which printed materials were consumed, introducing images into everyday life through large-scale production and reproduction. He emphasizes that, alongside the expansion of this type of content, there were notable improvements in the quality and finish of these artifacts, thereby broadening the possibilities for both visual perception and creative production. Cardoso (2005) argues that the development and industrialization of such techniques marked the emergence of the graphic industry during this period. He further notes that technological advances in the industrial production of printed materials gave rise, at that historical moment, to a new visual culture centered on illustrated print media.

An analysis of Hudinilson Jr.'s early woodcuts reveals compositions characterized by well-defined, economical lines and minimal detail. Employing high-contrast black-and-white imagery, the artist produced works, generally untitled and averaging thirty by thirty centimeters, that focused on figures and bodily details. The stylistic approach adhered to traditional parameters of the woodcut technique, without significant formal innovations. Nevertheless, Hudinilson Jr. demonstrated a clear command of the medium, consciously incorporating its visual language as a means of developing a distinct visual poetics. The uniqueness of these works lies primarily in their content, which conveys sensuality and provocation, expressed at times through the depiction of the phallus (Figure 1), and at others through suggestive curves and bodily gestures.

Critic and curator Ricardo Resende<sup>5</sup> (2016) notes that woodcuts marked the beginning of Hudinilson Jr.'s artistic trajectory, during which he became acquainted with forms, colors, and the sequential processes of engraving, printing, and reproduction. Resende highlights recurring motifs in the artist's work, such as the hat, the glass bottle, and the vase, visible in pieces like *Untitled* (1978) (Figure 2). According to Resende (2016), the presence of the hat may be interpreted as an allusion to the artist himself, as this object would later become a recognizable element of Hudinilson Jr.'s personal image.

<sup>5</sup> Resende (1962–) has directed important institutions such as Centro Cultural São Paulo. His research explores Brazilian contemporary art and the work of local artists. A close friend of Hudinilson Jr., he was entrusted with writing the book on the artist's biography and career.



Source: Resende (2016, p. 82).

Figure 1. *Untitled*, 1979. Woodcut on paper. Dimensions: 30x22,5 cm.



Source: Resende (2016, p. 77).

Figure 2. Untitled, 1978. Woodcut on paper. Dimensions: 30x30 cm.

In terms of content, many of Hudinilson Jr.'s woodcuts depict faceless figures, delineated by incisive lines that emphasize muscular forms. According to Resende (2016, p. 69), these images, characterized by their simplicity and sketch-like quality, function "as masculine signs. Graphic indices that correspond to homosexual masculinity." He identifies these works as the starting point of the artist's exploration of homoeroticism and pornography, themes that would persist throughout his career.

Nearly one hundred and fifty years after the introduction of woodcut printing in Brazil, Hudinilson Jr. revisited this classic technique to engage with and update fundamental debates. Although these works mark the beginning of his career, they underscore the artist's ongoing dialogue between the body and the technical reproducibility of images, demonstrating how visual artists can incorporate and blend technological advances as a critical strategy.

Learning to print also sparked Hudinilson Jr.'s interest in other graphic techniques based on the logic of matrix and reproduction. Within this context, he began experimenting with stamps, both industrial and handmade, that he created himself, engraving invented expressions, his name, or other recurring symbols onto them. The stamp's structure (engraving, inking, and printing) streamlined the reproduction process and was consequently incorporated into his visual language. This procedure was often combined with collages and photocopies, resulting in hybrid compositions characterized by their own unique visual rhythm and qualities (Resende, 2016).

Hudinilson Jr.'s interest in accessible and reproducible media led him to engage with mail art, a practice he became involved in during the 1970s<sup>6</sup>. Mail art utilized printed materials distributed through the postal system as a medium for artistic works with critical and political messages, serving as an alternative to official art circuits<sup>7</sup>. As Paulo Bruscky<sup>8</sup> (1976), an artist from Pernambuco, emphasized this form of expression was primarily associated with protest and social denunciation. Bruscky (1976) further noted that mail art integrated various media and practices, such as postcards, envelopes, stamps, telegrams, postmarks, collages, and photocopies, facilitating more accessible exchanges both nationally and internationally.

It is worth noting that the first postcard circulated in Brazil in 1880, created to address the demand for lower costs and simplification of traditional letters. To this day, standard postcards maintain a blank space on the back reserved for the sender's and recipient's addresses, postage stamps, postmarks, and optionally, a message, scribble, or dedication. The front side is typically reserved for an image,

<sup>6</sup> The first exhibition he participated in was *Arte Correo* (1976), in Mexico City. Other notable events include *Imagens Impressas* (1978), the *Mostra Internacional de Arte Postal* (1981), and the *Mail Art Section* of the 16th São Paulo Biennial (1981).

<sup>7</sup> The Brazilian urban mail art circuit was significant, as noted by Resende (2016), with particular emphasis on the use of photomechanical and manual techniques such as xerography and offset printing. Among the artists mentioned by the author are Anna Bella Geiger, Cildo Meireles, Regina Silveira, and Rogério Nazari.

<sup>8</sup> Paulo Roberto Barbosa Brusky (1949–) is a Brazilian multimedia artist and poet. He has participated in numerous national and international exhibitions, such as the São Paulo Biennial, and his artistic career is notably marked by works associated with mail art and conceptual art.

illustration, or photograph. A distinctive characteristic of postcards is that all this information remains visible throughout their handling and transportation (Biblioteca Nacional, 2021).

In Hudinilson Jr.'s work, postcards transcended the conventional format (10x15 cm) and were often composed of magazine clippings, stamps, self-portraits, and references to the myth of Narcissus. Photocopies frequently appeared, particularly photographic reproductions of the artist's own face. Additionally, drawings, images of Greek statues, narcissus flowers, and representations of male bodies were commonly incorporated.

In the work *Narcissus Nárkissos Narcisse Narciso* (Figure 3), this approach is intensified through the juxtaposition of multiple photocopied images of the artist's face, which cover nearly the entire sheet of paper. A blank space reveals a stamp featuring variations of the name Narcisse, emphasizing the interplay between identity, repetition, and technique. The high-contrast images, reminiscent of woodcut effects, accentuate facial features through visual patterns and graphic blurs that oscillate between figuration and abstraction.

As noted by Resende (2016) and Maia (2020), the myth exerts a significant influence on Hudinilson Jr.'s work, recurring frequently and serving as a symbolic foundation for his investigations, particularly in relation to self-representation. According to these authors, the myth tells the story of a young man who, after a long and exhausting walk, encounters a lake and leans over its surface. Upon seeing his own reflection, he becomes enamored with the unattainable image and, unable to touch it, remains in contemplation until his exhausted body fades away, transforming into the flower that now bears his name.

Thus, it is evident that the visual choices in Hudinilson Jr.'s compositions do not negate the traditional postcard structure but rather create a productive tension with it. The artist transforms this functional medium, originally intended for the exchange of brief messages, into a critical platform for artistic circulation. The repeated presence of his body, combined with the use of stamps, challenges the boundaries of institutionalized art by relocating the work into everyday spaces where it can be encountered by diverse audiences beyond the museum, including mail carriers, doormen, and postal workers.

As Resende (2016, p. 71) observes, for artists like Hudinilson Jr., the creation of postal art "was configured as a message sent in the form of a postcard." The significance of this practice and medium lies in the act of sending, the potential to be perceived as a communicative product, its interactive or collective nature, and the circulation of ideas beyond the mediation of museums. In this sense, the progression between techniques such as woodcuts, stamps, and postcards does not represent a rupture but rather an organic extension of Hudinilson Jr.'s artistic practice.

By mastering the fundamentals of relief printing, Hudinilson Jr. expanded both his technical and conceptual repertoire, applying similar principles to new media while exploring diverse expressive possibilities. What began as a graphic exercise in the studio gradually evolved into a methodology for visual research: the acts of



Source: Maia (2020, p. 63).

Figure 3. *Narcissus Nárkissos Narcisse Narciso*, 1980s. Mail art. Xerography and stamp on paper. Dimensions: 33x21.5 cm. Collection of Galeria Sultana, Paris.

printing, stamping, cutting, and pasting became modes of investigation. Each technique imparted new insights to the artist, who, in this progression, infused his work with personal individuality. Consequently, within this integrated blend of technique,

artistic intent, and daily practice, the artist's material and technical choices reveal flexibility, adapting to the focus of his study and investigation: the body.

In this regard, in his text *Sex Gay Super*, Hudinilson Jr. (undated) offers a poetic explanation of part of his creative process:

SEX GAY SUPER
WITH THE RETINA, THROUGH PASSION FOR THE BODY
REMOVE/ISOLATE
MICRO DETAILS OF THE NAUGHTINESS/
BODY/IMAGE
BEAUTIFUL BODIES IN DIRTY SCENES<sup>9</sup>

Hudinilson Jr. describes the body and its magnetic appeal. Among the opening terms in his text, retina stands out, a word that denotes both the biological organ in the human eye and a technological concept related to graphic processes of image production and reproduction. Biologically, the retina functions by converting light into signals that the brain interprets as images. In the context of design and visual production, retina has come to signify resolution and the perception of image quality. Through this dual meaning, Hudinilson Jr. underscores his attraction to the body, affirming that visualities serve as modes of assimilation, interpretation, and knowledge. He explains that his artistic inquiry manifests in the gestures of cutting out, removing, and isolating representations, whether found in circulation or created by himself. Finally, he highlights his practice of displacement: his deliberate act of deviation removes, or as he puts it, *exposes* the beautiful body from a context deemed polluted.

Therefore, analyzing Hudinilson Jr.'s production enables a reflection on his desires and visual investigations surrounding masculinity, but above all, it sheds light on how such representations function within the collective field of images, expanding the possibilities for interpreting and challenging the regimes of visuality that shape our ways of seeing and consuming representations of the body.

#### XEROGRAPHY AND REPRODUCTIBILITY

To understand Hudinilson Jr.'s poetics and production, as well as his relationship with Brazilian graphic memory, we chose to emphasize his engagement with and study of photocopying machines during the 1970s and 1980s.

It is worth mentioning that the photocopying machine was invented by Chester Carlson (1906–1968) in 1938. Initially, the process involved recording and reproducing images through a special powder applied on a sheet of paper, supported by a laminated glass base with ink drawings and a zinc plate. However, the popularization of this technology only became possible due to investments by The Haloid Photographic Company (United States, 1906)<sup>10</sup>, under the leadership of Joseph

<sup>9</sup> The text was transcribed with all words in uppercase letters, exactly as they appear in the book *Posição Amorosa* by Ricardo Resende (2016, p. 121).

<sup>10</sup> A empresa de Nova York foi fundada em 1906 e produzia, principalmente, papel fotográfico. Neste sentido, percebemos um interesse inicial pelo campo das imagens, conectado ao envolvimento com a fotografia.

Wilson. In 1949, the company launched the first industrial XeroX Copier. The machine became synonymous with photocopying and paper reproduction, solidifying the term "xerox" in many countries, including Brazil<sup>11</sup>.

According to researcher Amir Brito Cadôr (2024), from the 1970s onwards, artistic production in Brazil became increasingly associated with photocopiers, giving rise to what became known as xerox art, xerogravure, or xerography<sup>12</sup>. Unlike other graphic processes, the photocopier operates through a simplified mechanism and allows for the manual creation of matrices, offering a more dynamic and accessible approach. Another distinguishing feature was the speed of production and the low cost of copies. From that decade forward, photocopy machines played a fundamental role not only in art production but also in the printing of alternative publications, facilitating the wide circulation of materials — often experimental in nature — on both national and international scales. Beyond artworks, photocopiers were also utilized in producing exhibition publicity materials and in recording content.

Cadôr (2024) highlights that, during the 1980s alone, approximately fifty editions of artists' books were produced using xerography as the primary or exclusive technique. Photocopying represented not only an economical alternative but also an invitation to experiment with emerging media. Artists such as Hudinilson Jr., Alex Vallauri (1949–1987), and Paulo Bruscky (1949-) were pioneers in this field and became key references for this artistic language.

Regarding his approach to xerography, Hudinilson Jr. (1981 *apud* Hudinilson Jr., 2016, p. 198) reports that:

Xerography, or the technique of reproducing images through dry printing by a chemical-physical process, has existed in Brazil for 20 years, since the first multinational companies, such as *Xerox do Brasil S.A.*, were established here and introduced the first machines to the market. It was in the 1970s that the equipment became popular and artists gained access to the new technology — which brought new parameters for creating and reproducing images with quick results. The low-cost xerographic image was immediate and enabled artists to expand the concepts of graphic art.

In Brazil, this technique, used within the realm of the arts, especially visual arts, only emerged in the early 1970s (although, without the same impact, there are reports of similar and earlier manifestations in other countries, mainly the United States—where xerography was invented—and some European countries), always through concerned and active artists interested in contemporary technical possibilities and, as a rule, detached from the myth of the artwork, the elitist practice of this art, and the concept of a unique piece.

Hudinilson Jr. emphasizes that his connection with the photocopier was rooted in the device's capacity to provoke reflections through seriality and technical mediation. Xerox art became the primary medium through which he achieved greater

<sup>11</sup> The Haloid Company, an investor in imaging technology, founded the Xerox Palo Alto Research Center (PARC) in 1970, which became a landmark in technological advancements. The center drove inventions such as personal computers and graphical user interfaces for image creation.

<sup>12</sup> Cadôr (2024) explains that the term xerography refers to the technical printing process, while the product generated through this procedure is called a xerographic copy.

visibility among media outlets and museum institutions interested in exploring new artistic languages and contemporary expressions<sup>13</sup>.

According to Maia (2020), Hudinilson Jr. had his first contact with the photocopier while studying at Zoom School in the late 1970s. The author highlights the innovative use of the artist's own body as a printing matrix, skillfully balancing the act between the printed result and performative gesture. Hudinilson Jr. was able to explore this technique thanks to the availability of a photocopier at PINA, initially acquired for producing teaching materials and other reproductions. In this context, he worked as coordinator of a Xerographic Center, positioning himself as both a technical and artistic apprentice/researcher within Brazil's emerging photocopy art scene (Figure 4)<sup>14</sup>.









Source: Maia (2020, p. 7).

Figure 4. Xerography course taught by Hudinilson Jr. at the Pinacoteca of São Paulo (1980s).

<sup>13</sup> About xerography, Cadôr (2024, p. 14) notes that "critical recognition came years later, at the 20<sup>th</sup> São Paulo Biennial (1989), with a section called *Electrografias* showcasing works by Artur Matuck, Bernardo Krasnianski, Mario Ishikawa, Paulo Bruscky, Roberto Keppler, and Vera Chaves Barcellos."

<sup>14</sup> Resende (2016) reports that in 1980, the Pinacoteca de São Paulo installed a XeroX machine to boost artists' studies in this medium. In 1981, the Activity Bulletin was created, a monthly publication aimed at disseminating activities related to the space.

Resende (2016) reports that, over the eight years he worked at PINA, Hudinilson Jr. led several workshops, including those focused on xerography. In addition to his pedagogical role, he organized various exhibitions<sup>15</sup> and taught courses on graffiti and xerox art at both the São Paulo Museum of Art Assis Chateaubriand (*Museu de Arte de São Paulo Assis Chateaubriand* – MASP) and the Museum of Contemporary Art of Universidade de São Paulo (*Museu de Arte Contemporânea da Universidade de São Paulo* – MAC-USP). According to Resende (2016), Hudinilson Jr. developed a strong connection with PINA, which inspired him to expand his activities beyond the institution, throughout the interior of São Paulo and to other cities across Brazil, actively promoting xerographic language as both an educational and theoretical field of exploration.

Cadôr (2024) adds that Hudinilson Jr., in collaboration with Mario Ramiro and Rafael França (1957–1991), transformed a room at Universidade de São Paulo (USP) into a true laboratory for graphic experimentation. In this space, the artists explored the capabilities of a Dutch OCÈ photocopier, which featured a flash and was capable of capturing three-dimensional images with varying degrees of depth. The advanced technology of the device enabled the production of visual sequences that revealed subtle nuances of the body and movement, effectively linking the artists' performative gestures with the materiality of the printed image.

Regarding the art scene in São Paulo during the 1980s, researcher Arlindo Machado<sup>16</sup> (2010) contributed to the debate by introducing the concept of *media art*, referring to artistic expressions that appropriated various technological resources. According to Machado, artists involved in *media art* were committed to alternative and qualitative propositions that questioned conventional fields of knowledge and modes of consumption. Hudinilson Jr. exemplifies this group by using his own body as a matrix and employing technological mediation as a critical and investigative tool.

Thus, it is pertinent to examine the xerographic production of Hudinilson Jr., an artist who demonstrated profound mastery of both the technique and the operation of the photocopier — a device employed not merely as a means of reproduction, but as a tool for poetic and political provocation. His practice, like that of other artists associated with xerox art, transcended technical limitations by incorporating interference, layering, and experimentation with various supports. Furthermore, his works were not restricted to the walls of museums; on the contrary, they circulated through the Post Office, took shape in books and other printed materials<sup>17</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> Among the exhibitions curated by Hudinilson Jr. featuring the works of his students, Resende (2016) highlights *Xerox Gráfica* in 1980 at the *Zoom School*, and *Xerografia Arte e Uso* in 1984 at the Pinacoteca de São Paulo.

<sup>16</sup> Arlindo Ribeiro Machado Neto (1949–2020) was a researcher and professor focused on studies in semiotics, cinema, radio, and television. He is a key reference in the field of technical images or images produced through technological mediation.

<sup>17</sup> Many of Hudinilson Jr.'s performances with the photocopier produced ephemeral outcomes, scattered on the floor and handed to the audience. The copies — fragments of the artist's own body — extended the artistic gesture as they were gathered, expanding the action across time and space.

#### DO DETALHE AO EXERCÍCIO

Do Detalhe ao Exercício<sup>18</sup> was an exhibition held by Hudinilson Jr. in 1981. We highlight it here due to its significance in the artist's career, despite the limited documentation available. As one of his first solo shows, it brought together key works that marked distinct moments in his artistic trajectory. Through research in materials archived by the artist himself, now part of the Visual Arts Library at the Documentation and Memory Center of PINA (Centro de Documentação e Memória da PINA – CEDOC of PINA)<sup>19</sup>, we were able to construct an overview that partially reconstructs the exhibition. This effort underscores the importance of preserving collections assembled by individuals and/or institutions as vital sources for art historical research.

According to a 1981 report published in *Folha da Tarde Ilustrada*, the exhibition took place from May 5 to 31 at PINA and featured 16 works, including seven artist books and nine panels. The curatorial proposal aimed to present a synthesis of Hudinilson Jr.'s production over the previous two years, with a particular focus on serial reproduction techniques executed in black and white. The article highlights that the works stemming from the artist's interaction with the photocopier were organized into two thematic axes. The first, titled *Exercício de Me Ver* (Figure 5), consisted of a study centered on a repeated print run of a specific body part, with the artist sharing his analytical processes and the overlapping compositions generated from these fragments. The second axis, *Detalhe do detalhe* (Figure 6), functioned as an extension of the first, delving deeper into body fragmentation through strategies of juxtaposition.

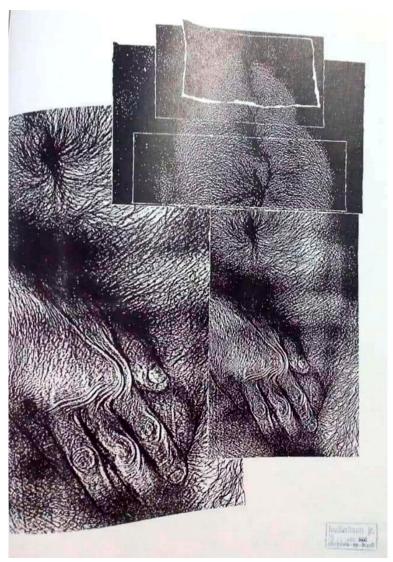
In another publication from the same month and year, the newspaper *O Estado de São Paulo*<sup>20</sup> (1981) reported that the artist's interests in the exhibition were directed toward exploring the potential of the body, both in the reproducibility of its fragments and in the possibility of materializing his reflections in an imagetic form. In Hudinilson Jr.'s own words, as cited in the article, the human body functioned as the matrix from which a special working relationship emerged, one grounded in the physical contact between conceptual intention and mechanical process.

Always attentive to the potential of serial reproduction, an examination of the records from the two sections that comprised the exhibition *Do Detalhe ao Exercício* reveals both similarities and differences across Hudinilson Jr.'s works. On one hand, there are recurring elements that clearly reflect his ongoing research with the xerographic machine; on the other, the artist employed diverse strategies for visual composition and the presentation of the pieces.

<sup>18</sup> In the document *Pinacoteca de São Paulo: 110 Years* (2015), published by the Documentation and Memory Center of the Pinacoteca de São Paulo, all exhibitions held at the venue are listed. However, despite including the exhibition title in question, Hudinilson Jr.'s name does not appear in the corresponding entry.

<sup>19</sup> The Documentation and Memory Center of the Pinacoteca de São Paulo, active since 2005, preserves archival collections and private holdings related to visual arts in Brazil. Access requires prior scheduling via email and an in-person visit to the location at Praça da Luz, São Paulo.

<sup>20</sup> This material was consulted in person at the Archive of the Documentation and Memory Center of the Pinacoteca de São Paulo (2022).

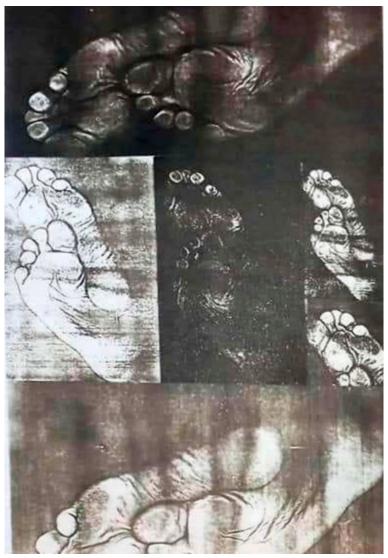


Source: Resende (2016, p. 255).

Figure 5. Exercise of seeing myself (1980s). Xerography on paper. Dimensions: 40x35cm.

In both cases, it is evident that Hudinilson Jr. (1986 apud Hudinilson Jr., 2016, p. 194), much like Narcisse, used the translucent glass surface of the photocopy machine as a kind of watery mirror to contemplate his own reflection. This interaction between artist and device resulted in images, fragments, and serial reproductions of his own body. Maia (2020, p. 17) notes that the artist "submitted his face, back, and limbs to the photocopying field. He shrank to fit within the frame, twisted himself to reveal particular angles, and repeated movements to evoke a speculative and procedural impulse." In the visual records of these works (Figure 7), Hudinilson Jr. can be seen leaning over the machine's glass, merging with and responding to the apparatus in various physical and compositional ways.

Through a sensitive, physical, and methodical engagement, Hudinilson Jr. turns his gaze inward, exploring angles and perspectives that select, crop, magnify, and emphasize specific details, transforming his own body into the matrix for generating a multitude of images. Maia (2020, p. 17) notes that these copies serve "to refute ideas of originality and uniqueness and to defend, in their place, works and identities



Source: Maia (2020, p. 36).

Figure 6. Untitled, (1980s). From the series Detalhe do Detalhe.

that are mirrored, multiplied, refracted, and contaminated by their surroundings." By deliberately adopting a technical process that produces no singular original but only copies, the artist questions traditional notions of authenticity in art and proposes alternative ways of understanding both artistic production and identity construction. As Maia further highlights, Hudinilson Jr.'s work underscores the extent to which image creation is mediated by machines and, by extension, by technology.

Regarding Hudinilson Jr.'s xerographic production, researcher Marcos Rizolli (1993, pp. 208–209) observes:

The artist's body is the referent — offered up for the machine's reading — and becomes part of the equipment's mechanism, revealing, in the act of copying, a sensual intimacy between referent and sign. A peculiar indexicality — an authentic art, free from mediations. The machine poetically captures the very agent of the action, the artist.

After undergoing a process of image capture, using his own body as the matrix and converting it into a series of printed reproductions, Hudinilson Jr.'s work advances



Source: Resende (2016, p. 273).

Figure 7. Performance documentation - *Exercício de me ver II Narcisse* (1982). Photographic print. Dimensions: 61x37 cm.

to the challenge of composition. Through juxtaposition, superimposition, cutting, pasting, and the reorganization of selected fragments, the artist constructs image diagrams that engage in visual dialogue with one another. Reflecting on this process and practice, Hudinilson Urbano Jr. (1985, p. 247) states: "I separated a square centimeter from each one, and below, in another sequence, there is a detail of the square centimeter enlarged ten times of the entire series. It is something hyper-abstract."

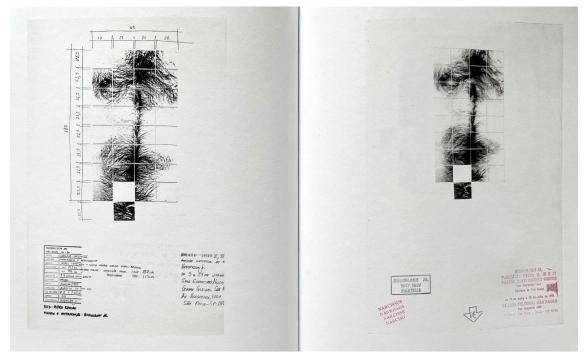
Finally, the last stage concerns the modes of presentation selected by Hudinilson Jr. for his xerographic compositions. These works are typically arranged in one of three formats: grouped within envelopes (intended for mailing), compiled into notebooks or artist's books, or framed and exhibited as murals or wall panels.

Although no additional images directly depicting the series exhibited and analyzed in this article were found, we have included documentation of *Exercício de me ver* (1980) (Figure 8), where the artist packages his compositions in an envelope, as well as a wall mounting scheme for the work *Narcisse – Act III* (1986) (Figure 9). These examples aim to facilitate the visualization of the envelope and panel presentation formats discussed above.



Source: Resende (2016, p. 252 and 253).

Figure 8. *Exercício de me ver* (1980s). Xerography on paper. Dimensions: 12x20 cm each. Polyptych of 15 pieces.



Source: Resende (2016, p. 236 and 237).

Figure 9. *Narcisse – Act III*. Assembly scheme. Xerographic panel on paper. Dimensions: 180x115 cm.

The artist's gesture of capturing, displacing, and recomposing transforms his body into a detail that becomes a fragment, a point of view, an image, and ultimately a detail of the detail of the gaze. The multiple impressions of parts of his body, produced on A4 sheets, resemble grids that, when assembled, offer a new way of seeing and imagining the body itself.

Through this collection of images and reports, it becomes clear that Hudinilson Jr. situates his work within a graphic context deeply connected to the

logic of technical reproducibility. His approach reveals a dual role, positioning him as both a visual and graphic artist, evident in how he conceives, organizes, and prints his compositions.

As shown in the montage scheme presented, the images do not arise merely from spontaneous performance gestures but result from a rigorous process of selection and structuring. The formal work materializes only after careful fragment selection and the establishment of a visual organization that engages with how the image is perceived. Thus, although some compositions may be interpreted as abstract, it is important to emphasize that their construction relies on precise technical procedures that acknowledge both the machine's capabilities and the reception of the printed image.

In the series *Detalhe do Detalhe*, copies originate from the same matrix and angle but exhibit variations in printing, particularly in size and image saturation. Although the scissors always select the same content, each copy bears unique characteristics (due to the photocopier's technical operation, which introduces subtle differences in contrast and light). Hudinilson Jr. utilizes the entire white sheet, arranging the fragments side by side to create a visual collage that invites viewers to engage with the images from multiple technical and perceptual perspectives.

Similar to *Detalhe do Detalhe*, the series *Exercício de Me Ver* (1981–1986) also reflects the artist's sustained interest in self-portraiture as an ongoing investigation<sup>21</sup>. However, unlike the former series, this body of work features copies marked by cutouts, either manual or with scissors, and enlargements that emphasize specific image areas. The compositions are created through overlapping elements that extend beyond the sheet margins, drawing attention to tonal variations and shifts in perspective caused by gestures of enlargement and cutting, as well as by different ways of viewing the same print fragment.

In both series, Hudinilson Jr. invites reflection on the multiplicity of the body's shapes and textures. At the same time, his approach of bringing the images closer together problematizes reproducibility, questioning whether all copies, despite being produced under the same technical conditions and derived from the same matrix, can truly be considered identical.

Through the records of the works presented in *Do Detalhe ao Exercício*, we observe that Hudinilson Jr. deliberately employs repetition as a key compositional strategy. The layouts appear designed specifically to emphasize this element, drawing attention to the singularities within each copy through direct visual comparison. In this way, the body represented in the exhibition exists in multiple versions, reflected, transformed, and reconstituted according to their placement on the blank sheets. Lacking any immunity from external influence, the artist's repetitions and compositions remain vulnerable to error and shaped by the surrounding visual

<sup>21</sup> Maia (2020) clarifies that the series *Exercício de me ver* unfolded into different compositions that arise from the direct contact between the artist and the photocopier. She highlights works such as *Espelha-me* (1980s) and the performances *Xerox Action* and *Narcisse* (1982).

culture. Yet, this raises important questions: why choose the body as a matrix, given its intrinsic individuality? And why reproduce it through a fragmented composition of cutouts?

In O corpo colado, Hudinilson Jr. (undated)<sup>22</sup>, says the following:

The particular differences of each medium; the texture and unique layout of the xerographic medium, the contrast to photographic images, and now the body, not necessarily mine, but exhausting the subject (body/matter/meaning) through extrapolation. The photograph of any body, manipulated within a new composition/idea/collage.

The human body, male/female, composed/pasted into this space and present in everyday life; the always tangible atmosphere (libidinous) of the erotic, the sensual contact of the nude body with any other unusual material/trash, or another body, or itself, a mirror/Narcissus, without identity yet recognizable within the shared universe of perceptions/assumptions/loving stance. The playful interplay of creation and consequent interpretation.

For Hudinilson Jr., the body acts as both a driving force and a point of departure for exploring subjectivity. The images produced through his interaction with the photocopier express not only the desire to see himself but also blur the line between being preserved and actively preserving. By assembling montages of fragments and creating new visual configurations, Hudinilson Jr. transforms individuality into a form of poetry. The once intimate body becomes a shared collective experience. Thus, beyond reinventing the body, the series challenges the traditional function of the photocopier, which emerges as an ally to his artistic gesture. In other words, the artist subverts the device's conventional purpose, reconfiguring it as a medium for artistic expression.

Hudinilson Jr. (1986 apud Hudinilson Jr., 2016, p. 193) warns in his agenda that:

I am no longer interested (or perhaps, truthfully, I never was) in xerography as a 'democratizing' vehicle for the work of art. I concern myself only with the medium and, with it, the myths: the medium and the subject matter. Technique as its own language, suited to my concerns within the field of imagery. In the revelation of time and graphic form. The result of ten years of coexistence/complicity. Trial and error. Refinement. The speed is contemporary. The contact is intimate. The immediate mirror of Narcissus.

Thus, what is considered here are the qualities of Hudinilson Jr. as a media artist, deeply engaged in exploring both his own body and the emerging media of his time, while challenging the visual outcomes of these interactions. In the field of image and memory studies, anthropologist and researcher Etienne Samain (2012, p. 23) observes that "every image is a memory of memories, a large garden of declaredly living archives." From this perspective, the images serve as documents that record Hudinilson Jr.'s mistakes, successes, and creative processes, with the photocopies functioning as archives of these experimental attempts. In other words, the

<sup>22</sup> The typewritten text, signed by the artist, is held at the Documentation and Memory Center of the Pinacoteca de São Paulo and was consulted in person.

artist's work reveals a continuous drive and curiosity for experimentation and the exploration of diverse practices.

Another recurring aspect of Hudinilson Jr.'s work involves the development of a printing matrix. Whether working with wood for woodcuts, rubber for stamps, graphite masks, or the xerographic body, a common thread among these materials is the artist's dedication and ongoing search for a medium capable of effectively imprinting or reproducing his concerns, objectives, and desires.

Thus, multifaceted and unconstrained by limiting classifications, Hudinilson Jr.'s trajectory stands as an invitation to recognize both the qualities and the vast field of possibilities inherent in methods of image recording and reproduction. Although his career is marked by a significant diversity of artistic languages, it is possible to observe that this network of intersections converges into a cohesive and conceptually coherent path, that evolves and strengthens over time and across different mediums.

Thus, multifaceted and unbound by limiting classifications, Hudinilson Jr.'s trajectory serves as an invitation to recognize both the qualities and the broad field of possibilities inherent in methods of image recording and reproduction. Despite the significant diversity of artistic languages present throughout his career, it is possible to discern that this network of intersections converges into a cohesive and conceptually consistent path, which connects and strengthens over time and across different mediums.

#### FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Hudinilson Jr. and his body of work are framed and discussed in this article as part of the construction of graphic memory and culture that, although rooted in individual experience, enables the mobilization of collective reflections on artistic processes, technical reproducibility, and visual representation. As Braga and Farias (2018, p. 16) suggest, research on "graphic memory often focuses on artifacts produced beyond the lifetime of potential witnesses, requiring procedures that make it possible to obtain stories from things." In this context, engaging with Hudinilson Jr.'s collection demands a form of sensitive listening to the impressions he left behind, which function as components of a possible narrative about the body, technique, and desire.

This study highlighted Hudinilson Jr.'s strategies for engaging with techniques of image reproduction and displacement, framing them as elements of an aesthetic and investigative repertoire that propelled his experimentation. The repeated use of matrices, copies, repetition, and montage is evident in several of the works analyzed and contributes to an expanded understanding of the modes of technical image production in Brazil during the 1970s and 1980s.

In this context, it is argued that although Hudinilson Jr. did not produce works that fit directly within the field of design — understood here as a communication practice guided by specific design methodologies —, his work maintains a dialogue with concepts such as seriality, assembly, and image appropriation. This dialogue

does not manifest through the development of graphic products for marketing purposes, but rather through a conceptual engagement with methods of image reproduction, particularly xerography, which the artist employed as an expressive tool.

The photocopier, more than a technical instrument, becomes an extension of the body in Hudinilson Jr.'s practice, serving both poetic and political investigation. As Cadôr (2024) observes, artists who employed photocopy art as a discursive strategy during the 1970s and 1980s represented a break from traditional editorial models. They established an independent, self-published approach that, in fact, continues to resonate in contemporary publications, even though these are now mediated by a wide array of different technological resources.

Although certain gaps remain in this research, they may be viewed as opportunities for future studies. It is important to reaffirm, however, that the work of Hudinilson Jr., along with that of other Brazilian artists who explored printmaking and technical images, reveals the richness of possibilities and the critical engagement these media provoke. Far from being closed or finalized practices, printmaking, montage, and xerography continue to represent open fields of experimentation. Ongoing research seeks to accompany and reflect the plurality of their contemporary developments.

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