



Figure 9.2 *Teta Lírica* (Marie Carangi) at Hangar, Lisbon (2019) during the artist's open day. Photo by Aírto Lopez.

Noise body, limit body by Paula Garcia

A present, exposed, close, concrete-real body, ready to be deciphered. A body that, in itself, is the essence of the piece, both subject and object (or maybe medium), constituting an aesthetic experience. And how do we, the observers, the audience, stand with our own bodies, before this other body that almost invades us? It was this question that could not leave my head when I first met Paula Garcia's work in 2010. At that time I was immersed in my doctoral research that had a central theme of the contradictions in the aestheticization of noise in music. And even before I knew the name of Garcia's piece—*Noise Body*—somehow, even without realizing it, I already felt the noisy dimension of what she did in her performances. My intention in my PhD was to investigate the passage from noise as a disruptive element to music. This relationship was directed toward an understanding of how noise has become a destabilizing element, establishing

a tension between its rejection and acceptance as a musical element.³⁵ Garcia's work led me to reconsider this dialectical process in which noise loses its noisiness when it is incorporated into art, since her performances were in fact noisy.

Paula Garcia (1975–) is an artist from São Paulo³⁶ who started in drama, but it was only during her late graduation (2002) in visual arts that she got to know what would become her main interest, performance art. Even before that, the viscosity of the presence of the body was already a part of her life. As the artist puts it, knowledge does not come from theory only, “it comes from experience, from the body, from listening.”³⁷ It was after a brief passage through Teatro Oficina that her inclination for a striking and visceral performance action would emerge. This is not only due to coincidence: the Oficina promoted a true experimental revolution in the 1960s and still represents a space for renovation and experimentation in Brazilian dramaturgy.

Most of Garcia's works start from the limits of her own body, which is subjected to strenuous action through mental and physical propositions developed in front of an audience. These constructions are especially challenging, putting her body at a crossroads, having to resist all that is implied in the proposed action. As the artist herself reports: “It's like going to a production line. You have to do one thing, and you do that. The action and what is intrinsic to the action. You have to deal with thoughts and physical effort all the time. The experience brings to me the idea of another body, that this piece takes me to places that I have never been.”³⁸

Two performances by Garcia, which in fact seem like a development of the same idea, caught my attention. The first was a set of pieces that came together in the series *Corpo-ruído* (Noise Body) (2008–2014) in which the artist used her own body, magnets, and iron. This series unfolded into a longer duration performance—*Corpo-ruído* (Crumbling Body) (2015)—in which she performed for eight hours a day, six days a week, for two months inside a magnetized box in the exhibition space, where she flung pieces of iron on the walls and ceiling. In either case, everything happened on and from her body. In *Noise Body* the artist would line her body with magnets onto which pieces of iron were flung, while *Crumbling Body*, the action was reversed: the artist herself threw pieces of metal onto the magnetic surfaces of the performance room.

The series *Noise Body* (2008–2014) consisted of several works in various formats, such as photography, video, and performance, in which the artist worked with neodymium magnets and pieces of iron collected from the metalworking industry. In *Noise Body #2* (2010), a performative version of the piece, Garcia wore a custom-made outfit with strong magnets and created a situation in which her own body was partially paralyzed due to the weight of the iron pieces that were attracted to or thrown onto it. The magnetic clothing covered her whole body, including her head, and the performance consisted of some collaborators throwing pieces of iron, one by one, up to the limit supported by the performer's body and by the magnetism of the magnets. The performance also had a microphone positioned near the body of the artist, in order to capture and amplify the sounds of the metallic pieces plummeting from her body. Garcia supported the weight of the iron pieces and passively resisted the violence of the countless nails, plates, and all type of scrap metal being thrown against her magnetized body.