Since quarantine began in Brazil, the cultural center IMS has been publishing on their website the series *IMS Convida*, with over 60 commissioned short works. On May 28, they released *República* (*Republic*), a 15-minute video written, directed, and performed by Grace Passô, an award-winning actor, playwright, and theater director who has appeared in films such as *Long Way Home* (*Temporada*, 2018), *In the Heart of the World* (*No Coração do Mundo*, 2019), and *Wandering Flesh* (*Vaga Carne*, 2018), an adaptation of her play of the same name co-directed for the screen with Ricardo Alves Júnior. This online conversation around (*the*) *Republic* connected New York and Rio de Janeiro, two of the places most impacted by Covid-19.

**Juliano Gomes**

*This might be one of the strongest short narrative works of the decade in Brazilian cinema*, but I'm not sure if it's the decade that's ending, or the one about to start.

**Fábio Andrade**

It was good until Grace Passô broke the fourth wall for the first time.

From then on, it became bigger than good.

**JG**

It's an active opacity, at the same time that it is very direct.
It accomplishes some of the opportunities wasted in the film version of *Wandering Flesh*. In that film, cinema seemed constrained by the reverence for the theater - which was ironic considering it's a text about a voice that travels through spaces, a concept that is perhaps more cinematic than theatrical in its physical malleability (race, gender, age, humanhood, etc). *Republic* seems more phantasmatic in its form, despite the circumstances being more concrete, which is also ironic because it was made in lockdown.

*JG*

It's a kind of home movie-*en-abyme*. In *Republic*, the house becomes a strange theater. It is the pandemic house, which has become the only space for all lived experiences. If you move from the bedroom to the bathroom, you may cross to another dimension of being, and the film highlights that by recording these transitions in a single long take. I like the expression you've brought, “phantasmatic form,” because the film feels very concrete, but its form seems abstract, unstable.
My experience of quarantine is defined by apparent contradictions.

"Social distance" has literalized communication itself as a form of paradox. Time passes like both a stream and a puddle at the same time. The film embraces that instability. *Republic* is about both the home and the country - it's the name of the neighborhood, but also the name of the social contract instantiated one year after the abolition of slavery in Brazil. The separation of the lockdown is broken when Passô first picks up the phone and hears that a Shaman has discovered Brazil is only a dream - a dream someone else dreamed that could end as soon as that person wakes up. I experience this kind of baffled disconnection often when reading Brazilian news from here, and the lockdown seems to have internalized this experience of belonging in expatriation. And dreams have become a rich space for experience during quarantine.

At the same time, "república" - literally, the public thing - alludes to making something public again - to republicize. This relates back to the "fourth wall": since Passô is in the film, you know she is not the one filming it. It's a film about social isolation being filmed by someone else (cinematographer Wilsa Esser) - someone we know is in the room even though she is supposed to disappear in the utterance. But halfway through that invisibility is broken, and Passô starts talking to Esser about the scene they just shot. It is another way that the film is making that private space public once again, because it was never really private to begin with.
JG
It renders the need, or the urgency, of an impossible collaboration. And, when Esser goes to the kitchen and brings the camera with her, leaving Passô alone in the off-screen space, the doorbell rings, and the other is... herself, played by the same Grace Passô.

FA
The image that recreates the fourth wall is a photograph of Passô's eyes - a double stare into the camera. It's a good translation of what you called "active opacity."

JG
The plot is about “social distance” in a very interesting way. There is a bond between the one who is inside and the one from the outside. Bolsonaro’s discourse fits so well in Brazil because the social tissue of the country is deeply fractured and this leads to a very unique sense of community in relation to the idea of a country. “Your Brazil has ended, and mine has never existed,” the character from the outside tells the character from inside. It concerns what is public, and how to truly make it public when someone still owns the walls. The minister of education said today that his money shouldn’t pay
for the education of future sociologists, anthropologists, or philosophers.

FA

The pandemics do not happen only outside the limits of these (four) walls, and neither does the political reality of the country - a combination that has been especially damaging in Brazil, and that hits different populations in disproportional ways. It's symptomatic that the Covid-19 first happened among the wealthier, because they are the ones who get to travel abroad more frequently, and then it spread in poorer areas with a higher lethality, because there are fewer resources available. Privacy implies commonality, and the convenient blurring of that line is the foundation of wealth and inequality in Brazil.

JG

There is something concerning ownership here that reminds of the conversation between Fred Moten, Theaster Gates, and Adrienne Brown, and the very notion of ownness as a conceptual tool of the slavery and its afterlife. Can we think Blackness as something that no one owns, outside the “owner-ship” model, outside the space of the slave ship? Maybe the Republic - the res publica - is also necessarily a practice, and not a property.