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## abstract

Bobbin lace from *Morros da Mariana* has been gaining importance in Brazil. This survey takes into account the urban area in the state of Piauí and addresses the prospects for retaining this local craft as well as the risks it ran over the past 20 years of dying out in the community and how projects being carried out have helped to change this scenario.

With the findings from interviews conducted with lace makers, data is analysed showing the number of people willing to learn the technique and pass on the tradition.

## keywords

bobbin lace work, handcraft, fashion design, Morros da Mariana.

## Bobbin lace work in Morros da Mariana in the urban area of Piauí State: a case study

NAME	LEARNED WITH WHO?	LEARNED AT AGE?	SOMEONE IN THE FAMILY MAKING?	SONS KNOW HOW TO DO IT?	HAVE TEACHEA D?
Francisca da Chagas de Araújo Soares	Friend	7 years	Mother and foster daughter	Yes	No
Maria de Fátima Santos Souza	Neighbor		Grandmother, great aunt, mother	Yes	Yes
Maria José da Costa	Neighbor	7 years	Daughter	Yes	Yes
Maria do Socorro Reis Galeno	Mother	9 years	Grandgrandmother, grandmother, mother, sister, daughter	Yes	Yes
Roseane	Workshop	20 years	Grandmother		No
Francisca	Workshop	29 years	Daughter and sister in law	Yes	Yes
Beatriz	Grandmother	7 years	Grandmother and cousin		Yes
Clarissa	Sister	12 years	Mother, sister		
Maria Helena Castelo Branco Costa	Grandmother	10 years	Grandmother, aunt, daughter	Yes	Yes
Edinaira	Watching the makers	9 years	Grandmother and mother		Yes
Edinalva	Grandmother	7 years	Mother and grandmother	Yes	Yes
Clotilde Souza Gonçalves	Mrs. Zizi	22 years		No	No
Tatiana Rodrigues	Mrs. Delça	9 years	Cousin and grandmother		Yes
Laura	Mother	7 years	Mother and grandmother	Yes	Yes
Marlene	Mother		Mother and grandmother		No
Socorro	Mrs. Mazé	7 years	Daughter	Yes	Yes

Table 1: Passos, E. and Souza, I. (2013) Comparative chart with the results of the interviews conducted on *Morros da Mariana*.



Image 1: Passos, E. and Souza, I. (2013) Photos taken on *Morros da Mariana* as integral part of the scientific article made for the conclusion of the Criação de Imagem e Styling de Moda (Image creation and Fashion styling) post-graduation course from SENAC São Paulo.

Bobbin lace is a technique developed by braiding and twisting thread, manipulated on wooden bobbins. On a pillow made of cheap cotton and filled with rice husks cardboard is fixed with drawings marked by pin points which guide the thread. The lace patterns depict nature, usually cotton thread is used.

This type of craft is becoming increasingly rare in Brazil. We find lace makers usually organized in associations in coastal regions because historically it is an activity relating to the sea. In Brazil, states such as Piauí, Ceará, Rio Grande do Norte, Paraíba, Pernambuco and Santa Catarina, are traditional bobbin lace makers. In Piauí, it is found in *Morros da Mariana*, in Ilha Grande, a town located a few kilometres from the city of Parnaíba, the second largest in the state.

This research is a case study on the current situation and future transmission of the lacemaking activity among the dwellers of *Morros da Mariana*. It was done by means of field research (interviews) and bibliographical research from June to July 2013 at the Associação das Rendeiras do Morros da Mariana (Association of Lace Makers of Morros da Mariana). Lace makers not always work at the association because most of their work is done at home and delivered to the association; this makes direct contact with them difficult. We found 13 lace makers at the association and three were interviewed at their homes.

Oral interviews recorded on audio recorders enabled transcriptions and analyses from where we gained information on historic economic and social data relating to the kind of life, type of work and perpetuation of the technique among residents.

By means of pre-defined scripts used for the interviews, we obtained quantitative data which enabled building comparative tables, which are important to highlight crucial points of the survey.

The association was created in 1992, however the real change only came in the year 2000 with a project by São Paulo designer, Walter Rodrigues, who co-developed with lace makers a collection he would

present at the 2001-2002 Spring-Summer São Paulo Fashion Week.

It was not the designer's intention to change the style of drawings or the work format of the lace makers rather he recovered old patterns developed by mothers and grandmothers of lace makers. He was also responsible for introducing new materials and colours, because before only white was used in their work.

For Dona Socorro, one of the lace makers interviewed, new colours and new techniques played an important role in the evolution of their work developed at the association. She says: "[...] through Walter it grew, more work came, colour matching, we only worked with white before, then he went on mixing the colours, we looked for information and then he sent us magazines, it goes with this thread, this colour, it matches this other one, so we went on doing the combinations, now, today, we, lace makers, know how to match the colours, everything ]". (Socorro, 2013)

With this new knowledge, lace makers went on to consider lace, which was previously only produced for themselves either as a pastime, or an economic activity. In many cases, it is the only means of economic survival.

One of the partners in 2003, invited students from the Academy of Design in Eindhoven in the Netherlands to come to the municipality. The students introduced an innovative design, the drawing of a Camelia flower. With this new pattern, lace makers began to develop together with the students smaller items such as necklaces, ear rings and other accessories. This provided a higher economic return because the new items were commercially successful.

These projects developed at the Association created great interest and adhesion of lace makers. This fact can be seen in the increase in the numbers of lace makers in the association from 1993 to present day: "[we had about 50 associates... today, we have about

150, 130.]" (Maria do Socorro, 2013)

The work of stylist Walter Rodrigues and of the dutch students arrived at *Morros da Mariana* like a catalyser for big changes, it transformed the association, once stuck and with no perspectives, into a new one giving strength through design concepts and simple solutions to daily problems. Design and its transformative power were of extreme importance so the lacemakers could realize that the local lacemaking industry could go way beyond what they were used to. What before was no more than a hobby became a means of steady income for families that once lack basic needs at home.

Despite the big growth, the question asked is how and until when will this activity continue on *Morros da Mariana*. The answer is not concrete, since there is interest among the population and professional realization among the lacemakers, but they admit how difficult it is to pass the knowledge on. In one of the interviews we emphasize the speech of Ms. Maria do Socorro showing her concern on the topic: "[...] we cannot leave our jobs to teach because that is how we make a living, you see, if we get a project with funds to teach we teach and there are lots of people who want to learn.]" (Maria do Socorro, 2013)

## References

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