

# Casa encantada

*A Portrait of the Fight for Housing in Belo Horizonte*

Baruq



AV. CONTORNO

AV. AMAZONAS

OCUPAÇÕES  
SQUATS

CÓRREGO DO LEITÃO  
LEITÃO STREAM





CASA  
encantada

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BRUNO

*Somos los duendes que habitan en las casas abandonadas,  
La propiedad privada es un robo,  
y lo nuestro arte de magia.  
Una casa okupada es una casa encantada,  
Cuando haya un desalojo, aparecemos en otra.  
El hechizo está en hacerlo todo con tus propias manos,  
Convirtiendo cuatro muros en espacios liberados.*


*– Sin Dios  
Casa Okupada, Casa Encantada*

*Yo soy el error de la sociedad,  
soy el plan perfecto, que ha salido mal.*

*– Agarrate Catalina  
La Violencia*

# Presentation

## *An occupied house is an enchanted house*

 This book emerged as an idea within Kasa Invisível, an anti-capitalist occupied house and social center active since 2013 in Belo Horizonte, of which I am a member and resident. The idea of this booklet is to create a brief portrait of a particular moment in the struggle for housing in our city. This is just one effort, among many, that members of the Kasa Invisível collective and the community around it are involved in with other occupations in Belo Horizonte. These actions aim to promote solidarity between these spaces, inhabitants and the movements that work alongside them.

Looking for ways to document the moment when dozens of new occupied houses started to appear in our neighbourhood, I invited my photographer friend Cadu Passos to take a bike tour of almost 20 properties in the central area, photographing the buildings and some people who live in them.

Beyond any architectural fetish or mere appreciation for old houses, there is a desire to share the impressions, dramas and stories of people who come together to take action and fight for the basic right: a space to live in. People from different backgrounds dared to challenge the sacredness of private property and occupied these floors, walls and ceilings, inhabiting them and filling them with life. A life of desires, dreams and movement – with beauty, even if crooked and forgotten – like the facades of the houses we occupy and call home.

\* \* \*

\*\*\* Casa encantada \*\*\*

## Impossível e fora dos planos

*What is a city? It is the opposite of the forest. The opposite of nature. The city is an artificial, human territory. The city is a territory designed exclusively for humans. Humans have excluded all possibilities of other lives in the city. Any other life that tries to exist in a city is destroyed. If it exists, it is thanks to the force of the nature, not because humans want it.*

– Nego Bispo, *A terra dá, a terra quer*

*All cities are geological and one cannot take three steps without encountering ghosts, armed with all the prestige of their legends.*

*We evolve in a closed landscape whose landmarks constantly pull us towards the past. Certain moving angles, certain fleeting perspectives allow us to glimpse original conceptions of space, but this vision remains fragmentary. You have to look for it in the magical places of folklore tales and surrealist writings: castles, endless walls, small forgotten bars, the Mammoth cave, casino mirrors.*

– Gilles Ivain, *Formulário para um Novo Urbanismo (Internationale Situationniste nº 1, junho de 1958)*





elo Horizonte was the first planned modern city in Brazil<sup>1</sup>. Founded in 1897, its urban design expresses the ideals of the young Republic, established only 8 years earlier by a military coup that ousted the Empire. It featured wide, straight roads, rationally designed to facilitate circulation and hygiene, to prevent overcrowding, blockades, protests, and barricades. By overriding and straightening even the course of rivers, the new model contrasted with the narrow, winding stone streets of the former state capital, Ouro Preto. Ouro Preto was founded on the exploitation of slave labour used in the extraction of gold, silver, and other minerals and agricultural products.

The Contorno Avenue, originally called 17 de Setembro Avenue, encircled the entire project and marked the boundaries between urban and suburban areas. The main streets formed perfect squares: in one direction, those with names of the states of the federation, and in the other, streets with names of indigenous peoples exterminated or expelled from the territories upon which all cities in the Americas are built. Cutting diagonally are avenues named after political figures or “notables” such as those who planned the new capital of Minas Gerais such as Afonso Pena, Augusto de Lima, Olegário Maciel and Bias Fortes, among others.

From the early stages, the realisation of the new capital was marked by the abrupt destruction of habitats, obliterating anything or anyone in its path. In addition to the rich biome at the intersection of the Atlantic Forest and Cerrado, the construction of Belo Horizonte required the removal of the old settlement known as Curral del Rey along with its nearly fifteen hundred inhabitants. Many of them were evicted without prior notice or compensation. The most symbolic case is that of a woman who became one of the city’s first and most cherished legends: Maria Papuda<sup>2</sup> (a derogatory

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1 See: <https://www.caumg.gov.br/122-anos-da-primeira-cidade-planejada-do-brasil/>

2 On July 28, 2023, the MLB - Movement for Struggle in the Neighborhoods Villages and Favelas, organized an action with other movements in Belo Horizonte, such as MOB, Kasa Invisível, and MLP, which gave rise to the Maria do Arraial Occupation, at Rua da Bahia, 1065, named in honor of Dona Maria.

nickname due to her appearance caused by goiter), a poor black woman who, until 1894, lived in a modest wattle-and-daub shack, near where the Palácio da Liberdade, the headquarters of the government of the state of Minas Gerais until 2019, was erected. Dona Maria allegedly placed a curse on the future occupants of the palace after being forced to move from her shack without any reparations. The fact that in the following decade two governors died in the property only reinforced the legend, which also says that Maria Papuda's ghost still haunts the place.

The poor workers who built the city were not considered worthy to be potential inhabitants and were not provided with any space in the initial plan. Many of these people squatted on land near the city center, creating the first slums and settlements in the city (such as Vila Córrego do Leitão, established even before the city's official inauguration). When the City Hall issued decrees and sent the police to remove these houses in 1900, a continuous dispute began in which the government sought to permanently push the poor away from the city center. This ongoing dispute is a major part of Belo Horizonte's history.

The same processes persist today, 126 years later, when the urban sprawl has far exceeded the limits of its original plan and is unable to properly accommodate either its inhabitants, vegetation, or rivers. With only 3.9% of its surface still covered by vegetation, Belo Horizonte is the city with the lowest green coverage among the 10 largest capitals in the country. In 2019, the city had 56,000 families without their own homes<sup>3</sup> (renting or living with relatives). Additionally, 95,700 people live in inadequate housing, meaning without sewage, a roof, or water. The 2022 census data records that 5,300 people live on the streets, without a roof over their heads, while 108,000 properties remain vacant – a number 20 times greater than the homeless population<sup>4</sup>.

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3 PUC Minas, Number of homeless families grows in Belo Horizonte: <https://nosp.pucminas.br/index.php/2022/04/22/numero-de-familias-sem-casa-cresce-em-belo-horizonte-apesar-de-novos-empresendimentos-imobiliarios/>

4 Estado de Minas: The number of vacant properties in BH is 20 times the homeless population. [https://www.em.com.br/app/noticia/gerais/2023/07/05/interna\\_gerais,1516248/imoveis-vazios-equivalem-a-20-vezes-a-populacao-em-situacao-de-rua-em-bh.shtml](https://www.em.com.br/app/noticia/gerais/2023/07/05/interna_gerais,1516248/imoveis-vazios-equivalem-a-20-vezes-a-populacao-em-situacao-de-rua-em-bh.shtml)

When the Covid-19 pandemic reached Brazil in 2020, its impact made the woes affecting the poorest people even more glaring, deprived of access to the basics such as education, social security, or even getting identity documents or birth certificates<sup>5</sup>. Such contrasts became even sharper when the commandment “stay at home” was not applicable to those without a home. Nor for those who live crowded together with family members in shacks and precarious housing, at risk of collapse or without basic sanitation. Occupying empty properties becomes, in moments like these, an even more urgent issue for survival.

In 2020, a record number of around 100,000 people<sup>6</sup> lived in occupations in Belo Horizonte alone and the state of Minas Gerais had the second largest housing deficit in the country, with 500,000 homeless families<sup>7</sup>. In the city center, there was a visible increase of 22%<sup>8</sup> in the homeless population, newly arrived due to the economic crisis triggered by the pandemic and the federal government’s deadly policies.

Unlike established and more structured land and housing struggle movements, which outline organisation and planning prior to the emergence of a new occupation, newer movements such as MLP (Popular Liberation Movement) have emerged from the demand to organise and build solidarity with occupations that arise spontaneously from the self-organisation of homeless people. After an occupation, which is not necessarily planned by the movement, MLP militants and supporting collectives, such as Kasa Invisível, come together to create material, social, and legal support to ensure the occupation survives.

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5 Approximately 3 million Brazilians do not have any civil documents, not even a birth certificate, and are completely invisible to the state, unable to access basic services such as healthcare. See: <https://agenciabrasil.ebc.com.br/radioagencia-nacional/geral/audio/2021-11/3-milhoes-de-brasileiros-nao-tem-registro-civil-de-nascimento>

6 100,000 residents in squats in 2020: <https://www.otempo.com.br/cidades/ocupacoes-urbanas-de-bh-tem-recorde-de-100-mil-moradores-1.2351443>

7 500,000 homeless families in MG, the 2nd largest homeless population in Brazil: <https://www.otempo.com.br/cidades/com-cerca-de-500-mil-familias-sem-casa-mg-e-o-2-com-maior-deficit-no-brasil-1.2516703>.

8 Homeless population grows and reaches 11,000 in BH: <https://www.otempo.com.br/cidades/populacao-de-rua-em-belo-horizonte-cresce-e-chega-a-11-mil-pessoas-em-2022-1.2750126>

Historical houses, forgotten in legal limbo between speculation and abandonment, have become homes in a new wave of occupations that emerged to pressure and achieve housing and other basic rights that are not accessible without a roof over one's head. Spontaneous occupations, many arising impromptu overnight, without the support of large movements or social entities, have gradually organised and built networks over time, according to their needs. Others emerged as a result of the development of this form of organisation, housing a portion of the population with a history of homelessness, ex-prisoners, immigrants, precarious and excluded individuals.

These autonomous initiatives go against the tide of a decline in squatting and large-scale land occupations that marked the 2000s and 2010s. A transition from direct action to “action” in parliament was significant and produced consequences, as many housing movements were curtailed by movement leaders – who are already or become party leaders – who chose to join the wave of democratic restoration of their decade to “occupy” institutional politics, from offices to positions and budgets – a similar process seen to fail in Spain with Podemos and in Greece with Syriza<sup>9</sup>. This reflected in a weakening and a retreat from direct struggle and the opening of new occupations, at the same time that the demand for decent housing continued to increase.

As the old Spanish punk anthem goes, “an occupied house is an enchanted house.” Neither fascism nor the cowardice of reformist tendencies are capable of stopping the building of mutual support or the use of direct action to solve the problems of those who suffer the misery of capitalism. To continue fighting for a world where property is not worth more than life, we must continue to enchant and be enchanted by the hope of building new spaces and relationships – and not be seduced by the siren song that turns revolutionary spirits into professional militants, institutional political employees chasing party funds, positions and personal prestige.

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9 “From 15M to Podemos – The Regeneration of Spanish Democracy and the Maligned” <https://pt.crimethinc.com/2016/04/05/feature-from-15m-to-podemos-the-regeneration-of-spanish-democracy-and-the-maligned-promise-of-chaos>

It was as a result of this search for refuge amidst the political storm and the virulence (literal and metaphorical) of a government aligned with fascist conservatism and systematic death, that the occupations illustrated in this publication emerged. When the hegemonic strategy of the left was to “wait for fascism to melt away on its own,” expecting that elections would function as the vaccine for a pandemic, anti-fascists took to the streets and excluded individuals with different histories resorted to direct action, squatting houses and fighting for their rights. It is because we were there with other people who neither know nor can wait, that we tell these stories today.

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## Nosso lugar no mapa e no conflito social

*Without a shared language, there is never a possibility of sharing any wealth. The commonality of language is built only in the struggle and from the struggle.*

– Marcello Tari

*The globalization of capitalism had the effect of weakening, pauperizing and marginalizing large segments of the lower classes. In the face of 'local disorders' that result in violence, incivility and insecurity, public authorities put in place 'pacification' devices to which urbanism and architecture are called to contribute. The reconfiguration of public space must, at the same time, dissuade the new 'internal enemy' from taking action and facilitate repression, thus confirming the link between urbanism and the maintenance of social order.*

– Jean-Pierre Garnier, *Un espace indéfendable*



Kasa Invisível is a squat located at the intersection of Avenida Bias Fortes, Rua dos Guajajaras, and Rua Santa Catarina, forming a star-shaped junction dotted with historic buildings that included five occupied houses during the Covid-19 pandemic. Today, four of them still stand, in the last block of the Lourdes neighbourhood, considered “posh” and with some of the most expensive real estate in the city.

Avenida Bias Fortes is approximately two and a half kilometres long, starting at Praça da Liberdade, where the Palácio da Liberdade is located, crossing the iconic Raul Soares Square, and heading north towards Avenida do Contorno. There, Avenida Bias Fortes becomes Viaduto Helena Greco – formerly Viaduto Castelo Branco – and passes over both Avenida do Contorno and the train line, and continues towards the neighbourhoods of the northwest region.


The area around Raul Soares Square, of which Kasa Invisível is a part, was where the first land occupations by poor workers occurred, back in the early history of the city. Since the first removals carried out in the early 20th century, the elites have tried several times to sanitise and police Raul Soares Square and its surroundings. It has become a border between a bourgeois and gentrified Belo Horizonte and a popular, commercial zone traversed by informal workers and people experiencing homelessness – all bodies that the elites’ dreamed-of city seeks to make invisible or eliminate.

Our Kasa is situated, therefore, on the border between two worlds connected by a straight line of asphalt: at one end, an architectural complex and postcard of the city that includes the former palace headquarters of the government of the third largest state in the country – where decisions that directly affect our lives are made; and at the other end, a viaduct that serves as a shelter for people experiencing homelessness, surrounded by waste recycling points and crack dens. Where people excluded from society try to survive by rummaging through rubbish, eating what they find, warming themselves with cheap alcohol and other substances to forget what cannot be changed.

Images of a heaven and a hell that always remind us that we are geographically and socially much closer to those at the bottom than to those at the top.

This territorial opposition is not the only thing that goes unnoticed in this piece of land that we have been living in for a decade. In fact, the entire city is full of blind spots that we overlook in the automatic rhythm of routine in the city where the Urban is the Capital. On the path that connects the viaduct of the homeless to the palace of the rulers, we pass by chestnut and ipê trees that announce the arrival of spring. With some attention, it is also possible to see blackberry, avocado, guava, mango, and papaya trees among the lamp posts and street signs. If we climb the avenue towards Praça da Liberdade, we cross Rua São Paulo, which hides underneath the asphalt, buried alive between manholes and stones, the Leitão Stream that originates in the Santa Lúcia neighborhood and crosses streets and avenues until it reaches Avenida dos Andradas, where the Arrudas River is also partially covered. On days of intense summer rain, exacerbated by climate chaos, the rivers rebel against their forced invisibility, resurfacing and turning the adjacent streets into their tributaries, carrying everything in their path. Thus, São Paulo, Tupis, and Padre Belchior streets become waterways again – even if temporarily –, churning the ground, carrying mud and debris to the sophisticated streets of the Lourdes neighbourhood and downtown.

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 The scribbled records and stories written in this book are an attempt to overflow our paths, like the suffocated rivers of our metropolis or the weeds cracking the inert asphalt and concrete, to bring to the surface a life of conflict and struggle for existence. This is my humble contribution to the memory of the struggles we have fought, recorded through the eyes and voices of so many comrades. May this message spread through time, may our solidarity not respect borders, fences, walls or the cold letters of the law of international treaties of merely




symbolic rights, so that, like Dona Maria Papuda and all enslaved, exploited, excluded, and evicted peoples, we can continue to organise, retaliate, and take back what is ours. Let us haunt the dreams of those who proclaim themselves rulers and owners of these lands.

*We were street people. We were just professional revolutionaries, that's all we did. We had no jobs, we were not students, all we did was radical. Militancy. Like, complete. Morning to night, Everyday. We fed people freely, we had an apartment (we used to call them 'crashpads') where people could stay for free, we had clothing, so we did anything for free.*

– Ben Morea, *Up Against the Wall! Motherfuckers*, interviewed in 2018.

## About what was left out: the most part of land conflicts in Belo Horizonte

 The choice to portray the squats and their inhabitants with illustrations and photographs, accompanied by articles and interviews goes beyond a personal preference for drawing, graphics or architectural projects. As seen in the work of photographer Enrique Metinides, who captures accidents and crime scenes with an almost cinematic eye, a sensitive and subjective way of documenting everyday events has the potential to endure over time. Whilst newspapers and pamphlets will age and may lose their impact with time, becoming documents of interest only to researchers. Artistic work can however be a way to produce a timeless record. With drawing, I seek to look at and recreate what is portrayed and invite individuals to traverse these scribbled and written lines..

I got inspiration from other works such as the book “Antes que acabe” by João Galera, which illustrates dozens of old houses targeted by real estate speculation that constantly destroys and reconfigures the city of São Paulo. However, more important than the facades of historic houses, I think it’s important to investigate the life and stories of resistance that traverse these spaces.

Gathered together this collection of accounts and records of 20 squats in Belo Horizonte may seem, to an outsider or someone unfamiliar with the struggles for housing and land, like part of a larger trend or a predominant model of urban occupation in the region. In reality, they are of a particular time and a specific scenario, inserted in a much broader context. As already mentioned, over 100,000 people live in almost 80 occupied spaces, including buildings, houses, and land, just in the Metropolitan Region of Belo Horizonte<sup>1</sup> alone. When placed in that perspective, 20 old houses, with fewer than a hundred occupants, represent a very small portion—far less than

1%—of the number of people living in squatted spaces in our city. However they represent a rare and noteworthy event, for their strength and achievements given such an unfavourable context. However, it is important to emphasise that the scenario of land struggles in which we find ourselves is much larger and more complex than this book can hope to encompass.

When we chose to depict old abandoned residential houses that have become squats or community centers, we left out other equally important related occupations. Like the Luiz Estrela Common Space, named after an emblematic street artist who mysteriously died in June 2013. The space was occupied in 2013, in the heat of the uprisings that swept the country that year against transportation costs, turning an old military hospital and children’s sanatorium into a centre of anti-capitalist, anti-colonial culture and politics. It hosts a theater, a communal kitchen, a permacultural initiative, music, and much more. The Anita Santos occupation, started in 2018, when about 20 families occupied land owned by the state railway company. It was also organised by the MLP (Popular Liberation Movement), which runs actions with the Community Kitchen and distributes hundreds of free meals weekly in partnership with the Homeless Movement and the Street Pastoral. The MLP organises a dozen house and land occupations in Belo Horizonte and the surrounding region, including the 8-story squat called João e Maria in the municipality of Contagem. The Vicentão Occupation, which emerged in 2018 from the movements Brigadas Populares, Morada de Minas Gerais Association, the Association of Renters of Greater Belo Horizonte (Amabel), and the Intersindical, had 90 families. It was evicted in 2020, with the promise that residents would be entitled to assistance to pay rent; however, the agreement was never fulfilled, and many residents returned to the streets, joining those who occupied the houses depicted here, many of them organised with the MLP.

In the central region of the city, some large occupations stand out, such as Pátria Livre, which emerged in 2017 when 13 families from the Pedreira Prado Lopes, the oldest favela in BH, organised

with the Workers' Movement for Rights (MTD) to occupy and create a housing and cultural centre in a warehouse and land, which even includes a popular bakery. The Carolina Maria de Jesus Occupation, organised by the Movement for Struggle in the Neighborhoods Villages and Favelas (MLB), started in a former public building on Avenida Afonso Pena and now houses 200 families in a 15-story building on Rua Rio de Janeiro, in the heart of the city. The MLB also organises the Maria do Arraial Occupation, on Rua da Bahia, occupied in 2023.

It is important to emphasise, however, that the largest occupations in terms of territory and inhabitants are not the vertical occupations of buildings in the central region, but the horizontal occupations of idle land that are occupied and become true neighbourhoods of the city, where movements and residents are responsible for urbanisation, opening roads, and building structures for sewage and electrical networks.

At the turn of the decade from 2000 to 2010, there was a trend to decrease the occupation of buildings in central areas and focus instead on occupying peripheral lands to avoid repression, relying on self-construction of properties by occupants, and creating new popular territories. Examples include the Camilo Torres Occupation, in 2008, in the Barreiro neighbourhood, housing 140 families. The Dandara occupation emerged in the Céu Azul neighbourhood in 2009, with 150 families taking direct action in the same year that the PT government created the “Minha Casa Minha Vida” popular housing program. Today, approximately 2,500 families reside in the area.

The Eliana Silva occupation, which emerged in 2012, remains active with 350 families organised by the MLB as well. When the occupation began, it was besieged by Military Police vehicles that prevented people, supplies, and medical aid from entering. After an attempted eviction the families resumed occupation on other land nearby. The authorities' attitude was evident when they refused to authorise a water connection to the area, only relenting when residents organised and hijacked a COPASA water company truck. Another significant land occupation, organised by the MLB, is the

Paulo Freire Occupation, in the Barreiro neighbourhood. Occupied in 2015, it continues to house about 200 families. Near the central region, we should mention the Vila Fazendinha Occupation, initiated in 2019 by residents of Vila Esperança, a favela in the Calafate neighbourhood. About 30 families occupied unused state-owned land and quickly built houses, a garden, and space for horse breeding. Vila Fazendinha is organised with support from the Base Organization Movement (MOB-MG), a housing rights movement independent of political parties and other institutions. MOB has also been active since the beginning of the Guarani Kaiowá Occupation in 2013, in Contagem, very close to Belo Horizonte. It was another land occupation driven by the struggles of 2013.

Among other examples of occupations and land disputes in Belo Horizonte and the surrounding region, we end with the largest land conflict in the Americas: the occupation of the so-called Izidora Region, which also began in 2013, composed of the Esperança, Helena Grego, Rosa Leão, and Vitória occupations. Together, they consist of 8,000 families, totaling 28,000 people, spread over an area of about 10 square kilometres in the north of Belo Horizonte.

We cannot fail to mention the urban Quilombos (or Kilombos) (traditional communities of peoples descended from African slaves), which constitute an important area in the struggle for territory to live, practise their culture, and their way of life. Belo Horizonte officially has five urban Quilombos: Manzo Ngunzo, Souza, Luízes, Mangueiras, Kaiango, and the Irmandade Os Carolinos.

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The broad context of the struggle for housing, land, and territory in Brazil is as vast as the continental dimensions of the country and as old as the genocidal war that the Portuguese waged upon arriving on the Brazilian coast shaping the next 500 years of exclusion and extermination of indigenous and African peoples.

To focus solely on recent history, during the so-called “democratic” period, we note that the Landless Workers’ Movement (MST) is still considered one of the largest social movements in the world. Celebrating its 40th anniversary in 2024, the movement boasts around 1.3 million members and settlers in territories organised by the movement<sup>10</sup>.

The MST emerged at the end of the Brazilian Civil-Military Dictatorship (1964-1985) as part of a broad movement for democratisation and the guarantee of basic human rights. The right to housing was prominent in these movements. With the new Constitution of 1988, the “social function of property” was established by law, meaning its use for housing, food production, and the benefit of the community. Accumulating land for mere speculation became “a disrespect to the law,” and occupying land to provide social use for people without land or housing was recognised as a right by the courts. This openness allowed the struggle through direct action of occupation to also succeed in legal disputes. This has positive effects on the strategies of movements from the early days of the MST to the struggles of squatters today.

However, the sanctity of private property remains alive and well paramount for a large portion of judges and lawmakers. Especially for the propertied classes and their henchmen within and outside the police force. The struggle for land in Brazil is extremely violent and claims the lives of dozens of peasants, environmentalists, quilombolas, and indigenous people annually. State intelligence agencies, such as ABIN, military schools, and their doctrines, have remained the same since the Dictatorship, preaching that “the enemy of Brazil is internal,” meaning peasants, indigenous people, the homeless, and drug traffickers—if they are poor, black, and residents of the peripheries.

Thus, we celebrate this small documentation as a tiny part of a great struggle. Meanwhile, we will continue fighting, organising ourselves, building solidarity, and dreaming of an end to private property and its world order.

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10 See at : <https://www.brasildefato.com.br/2024/01/22/mst-completa-40-anos-e-se-torna-o-movimento-popular-campones-mais-longevo-da-historia-do-brasil>.

*Não existe alternativa — se quisermos mudanças fundamentais, temos que abolir a propriedade privada do capital. Isso não é apenas uma transformação econômica e política, mas também social e cultural. Ela não pode ser imposta de cima para baixo, mas deve ser implementada por uma massa crítica capaz de se defender.*

– Coletivo CrimethInc., *Trabalho*, 2011

# Preface

## The (in)visibilities of a city

*The ordinary practitioners of the city live “down below,” below the thresholds at which visibility begins.*

*– Michel de Certeau*



Every society operates within a certain “regime of visibility,” that is, a determined way of seeing and perceiving things. Some of these elements ensure the functioning of society may very well remain “invisible,” hidden by the imposed regime of visibility. In this way, society regulates what is visible and what is invisible. Walking in any city implies playing the visibility game: what is perceived and what remains hidden is a result of how each individual relates to the regime of visibility.

Six decades ago, an urban planner named Kevin Lynch wrote an important book: “The Image of the City.” In this piece, the American author described the ways in which people navigate cities and experience space through the mental images they create of the city. He noticed that there are some elements of cities that provide good landmarks for this mental construction for those who move and live within it. In other words, Lynch, although he does not employ this term, analyzes the urban visibility regimes: what matters (and consequently, what does not matter) when one reads the city.


*Some things are “more visible” than others.*



A planned city is, above all, where the regime of visibility is controlled by the State and by capital. This is the case of Belo Horizonte: the symbols of power are so visible that their (artificial) brightness dazzles one's vision and produces a blindness — turning a multitude of things, constructions, and people, into invisible elements.

It would not be wrong, therefore, to affirm, that in addition to the visible city of order and progress, there are many others, whose inhabitants, constructions, and rhythms, remain invisible.

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 At first glance, China Mieville's novel, "The City & the City," seems like just another detective novel with a detective trying to unravel a crime. However, Mieville's book invites its reader to go deeper. The plot unfolds in two cities, Beszel and Ul Qoma, which coexist in the same physical space. Rather than being a denial of the principle of the impenetrability of matter, it is a profound discussion on the boundaries of seeing and "unseeing." The inhabitants of each city are trained to "unsee" the aspects of the neighboring city to maintain the separation between them both and thus, sustain the necessary illusion that the two cities are completely distinct. The reader is invited, therefore, to imagine the everyday life that unfolds between seeing and "*unseeing*"

The strangeness provoked by "*unseeing*" is quickly replaced by a certain familiarity: isn't this much like the practice of "unseeing" that we are all constantly called upon to perform in our everyday lives?

Some things are kept invisible through this deliberate act of "*unseeing*", resulting from each individual's adherence to the imposed regime of visibility.

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In an imposed regime of visibility, many things are “unseen,” and thus remain invisible. But it is in this very movement, like a counterstrike, that allows one to escape from the dominant regime of visibility.

Certain invisible things may well remain invisible because the goal is not only to “appear” to the imposed regime of visibility but to destroy it and thus create a new one. Here is another advantage of being invisible: playing with one’s own invisibility. Using invisibility to interact with other invisibles. Uniting the invisibles and overthrowing the imposed regime of visibility.

The book that the reader now holds in their hands is one of these efforts. As Baruq wrote, the stories and portraits presented in this book appear on the visible surface as a result of this invisible force. The project conceived at the Kasa Invisível has this as its *raison d’être*: the possibility of using invisibility to establish another regime of visibility.

Invisibles of the world, unite (and put an end to it!)

*Thiago Canettieri*

*Belo Horizonte, February 2023*

*Squats*

## *1. Vida Nova Squat Rua Bernardo Guimarães, 1645*

Vida Nova Squat had been a spontaneous squat for over a decade, with a single permanent resident who lived at the property and took care of cars in the area. In 2022, during the Covid-19 pandemic, families from other squats organized by MLP joined to occupy and organize it. Today, it features a communal kitchen that prepares hundreds of meals every week to distribute freely to the homeless population.





## *2. Famílias Unidas Squat Rua Silva Jardim, 387*

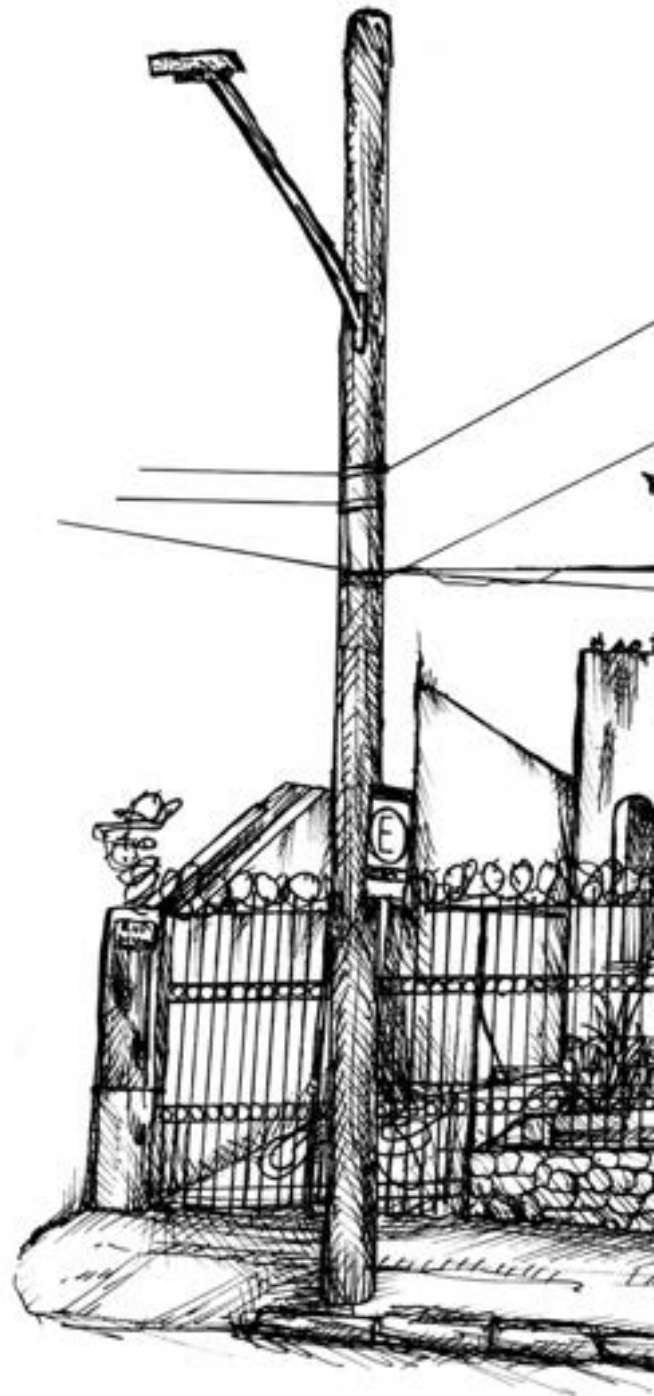
The Famílias Unidas Squat is located near the bustling and bohemian Sapucaí Street. Occupied in 2021, it houses at least five family units, including people who have lived in other houses organized by MLP.





### *3. Santa Catarina or Casa Rosa Squat Rua Santa Catarina, 450*

It began in 2021, between Santa Catarina Street and Bias Fortes Avenue, at the same corner where the Casa Invisível Squat already existed and where the Anyki Lyra Squat later emerged. The property had been empty for years and was in excellent condition. In the backyard, a garage and a small room with a bathroom were also transformed into living spaces.







#### *4. Kasa Invisível Squat Av. Bias Fortes, 1034*

The Kasa Invisível Occupation emerged in 2013, materializing the spirit of rebellion, radicality, autonomy, direct action, and the search for self-management and liberation of territories. Over a decade of activity, the collective managed to clean, renovate, and structure the three properties built in 1938 and abandoned for almost 20 years, suffering various damages, rain infiltration, and theft of various structures. In partnership with students and professors from the Federal University of Minas Gerais and the Federal University of São João del-Rei, a survey was conducted that allowed the property to be listed as a cultural and historical heritage, preventing it from being demolished for any purpose. With exclusive support from the community through donations, food sales, and materials such as t-shirts, zines, and books, Kasa manages to sustain itself and improve the space every day, housing a library, silkscreen studio, print shop, cine club, and a vegan bar and hosting all kinds of cultural and political events.





## *5. Aniky Lima Squat* *Rua Santa Catarina, 455*

The Anyki Lyma Squat began in April 2021, at the intersection of Santa Catarina Street with Bias Fortes Avenue, as a demand for more space for families arriving at the Santa Catarina Squat. It was named in honor of Aniky Lima, a transvestite and activist for the rights of transvestites and transgender people, who passed away that year at the age of 65. In August of the same year, the car rental company Localiza, a financial supporter of Jair Bolsonaro's fascist campaign, filed for eviction. With the support of members of Kasa Invisível, MLP, and MLB, residents marched to the city hall, forcing a meeting to secure the right to Housing Assistance and lodging in a hostel while awaiting a place to go.





## *6. Casas Geminadas* *Av. Bias Fortes, 344*

Two semi-detached houses on Av. Bias Fortes, number 350, had been abandoned for at least a decade. When homeless people organized to occupy them at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic in May 2021, they were quickly approached by supposed owners who managed to illegally negotiate “a peaceful exit” for the occupants.

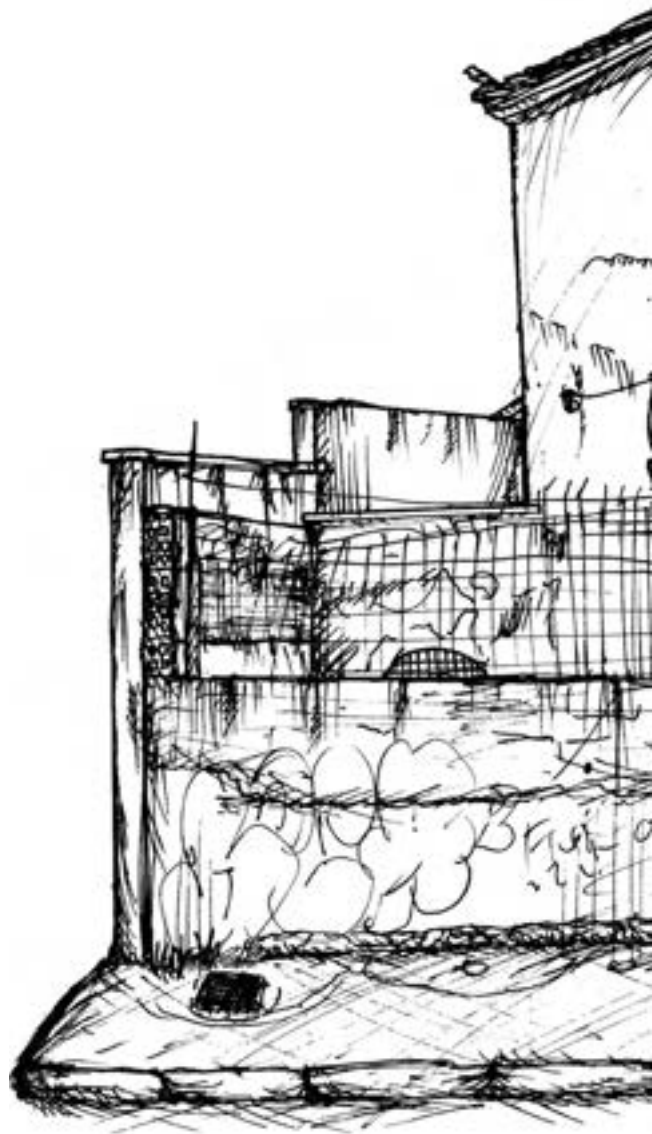




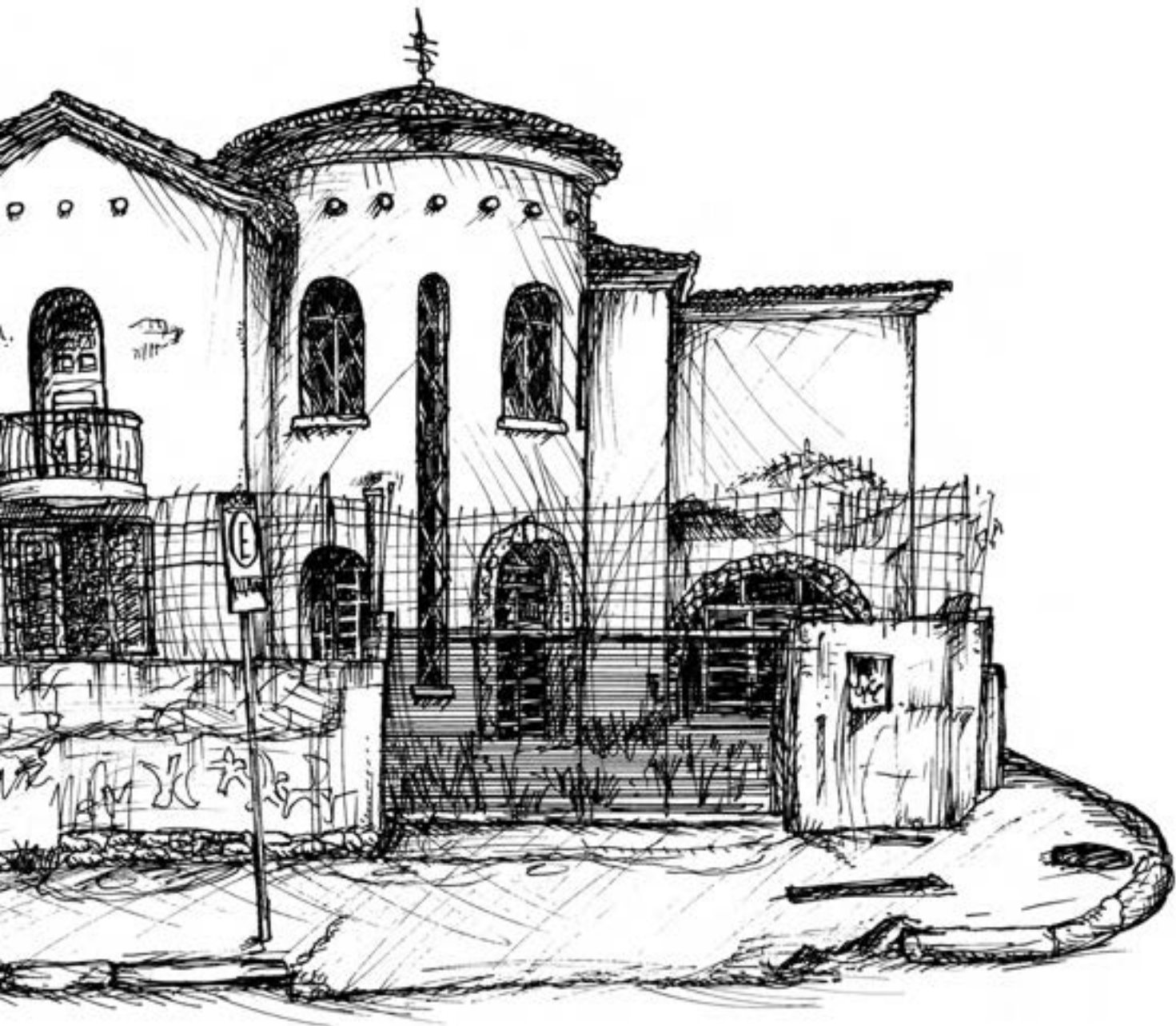


## *7. Casa Verde Squat or Castelinho Av. Olegário Maciel, 1247*

The green mansion on Av. Olegário Maciel, 1247, resembles a small castle and was abandoned for almost a decade until it was occupied by homeless people, collectors of recyclable materials, and people who only used the space to spend the night. In January 2021, it began to be organized with MLP members when it was named Casa Verde and nicknamed Castelinho. The company that owned the property tried to evict the occupants several times until an internal fight resulted in the murder of comrade Israel, known as Baiano. The incident drew attention and helped accelerate the eviction process, which took place at the end of 2021.



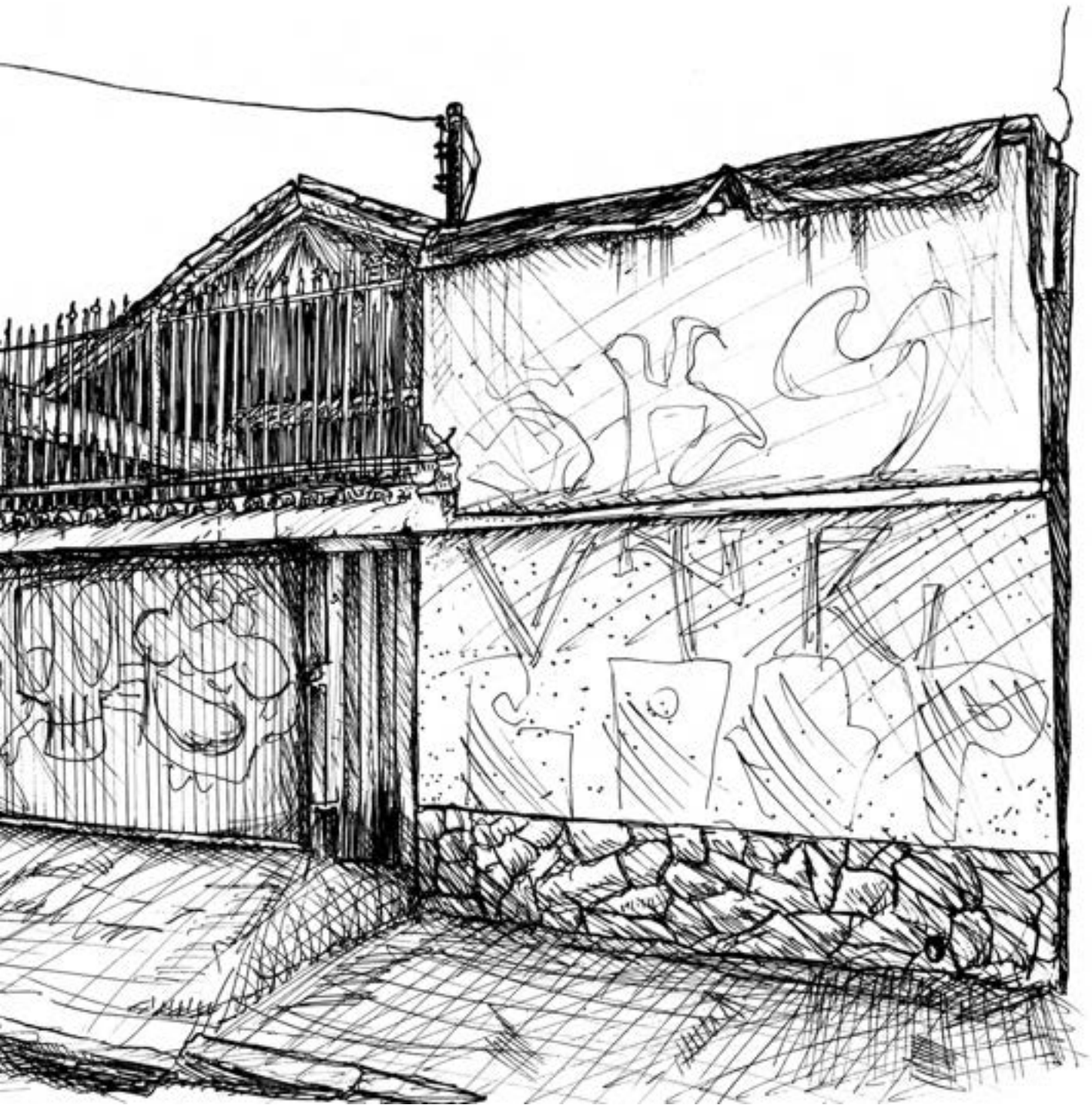




## *8. São Paulo Squat Rua São Paulo, 1480*

Occupied in 2019, the São Paulo Squat was the first occupation in the Center organized by the newly created MLP. It still stands today, even after intense turnover of residents, an eviction, a reoccupation, and much repression by the Military Police, who have often assaulted residents, invaded the premises, cut gas hoses to start fires - which were fortunately prevented - and broke down the gate with patrol cars.





*9. “Da Amazonas” Squat  
Av. Amazonas, 3415*

The “da Amazonas” Squat was born in 2022 and had a short life. It housed families evicted from the Anyky Lima and Casa Verde Occupations. Its eviction was negotiated without an eviction order in 2022.





*10. Amazonas Squat*  
*Av. Amazonas Sto Antonio, 1848*

The Amazonas Squat emerged in 2023, organized by MLP, accommodating several families and individuals with life trajectories on the streets. It was forcibly evicted without due process in June of that year. Some occupants found shelter at the Maria do Arraial Occupation, organized by MLB, the following month.







## *11. Tamoios Squat Rua Tamoios, 40*

The Tamoios Squat emerged at the end of 2020, occupying the second and third floors of a building on Tamoios Street, number 40, near the Santa Tereza Viaduct and the Municipal Park. The upper floors were empty and had independent access from the shops on the ground floor. It housed a dozen families organized with MLP. It did not withstand the infiltration and operation of the drug trade and was evicted in 2023.



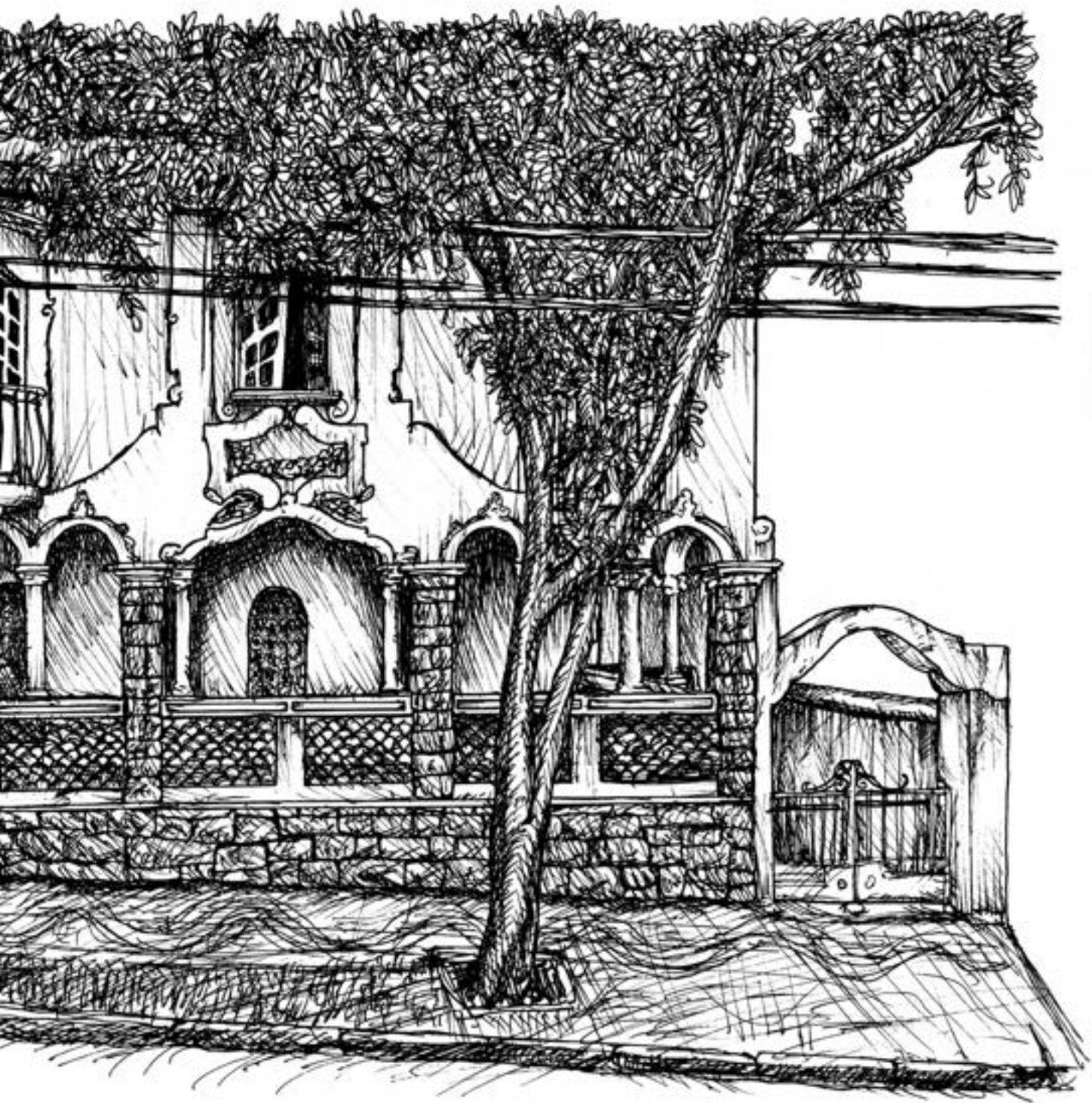




*12. Rio de Janeiro Squat  
Rua Rio de Janeiro, 2258*

Rio de Janeiro Squat also had a short existence. Autonomous in its organization, without direct support from any movement, it emerged and was evicted in 2022. Residents went to other occupations in the Center or returned to the streets..

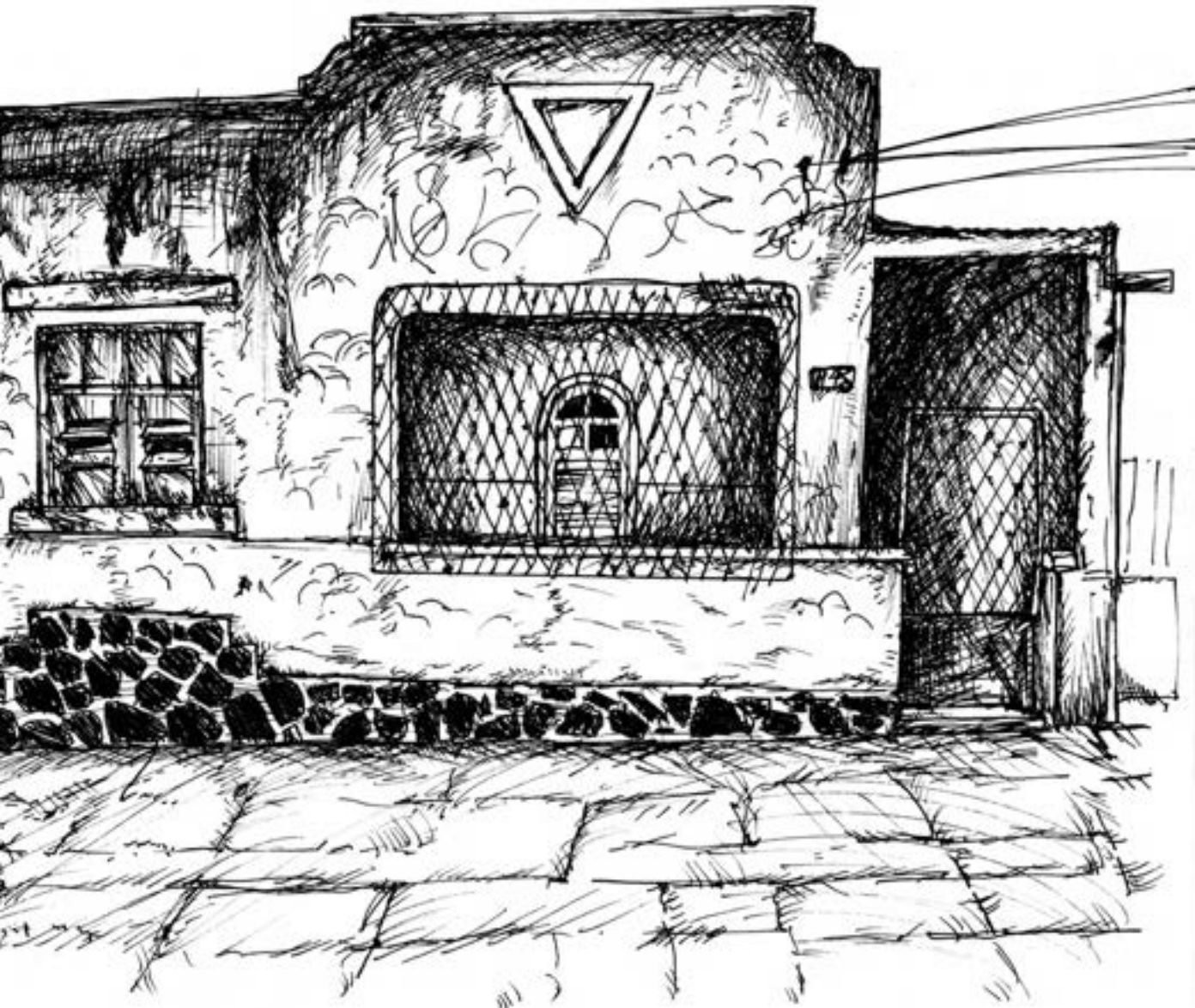




*13. Barbacena Squat  
Av. Barbacena, 445*

It was occupied by homeless people for years, but only in 2021 did it become organized with the support of MLP. It suffered a fire in May 2022 and remained occupied until June 2023 when it was irregularly evicted without notice on the eve of a meeting of the State Housing Department.

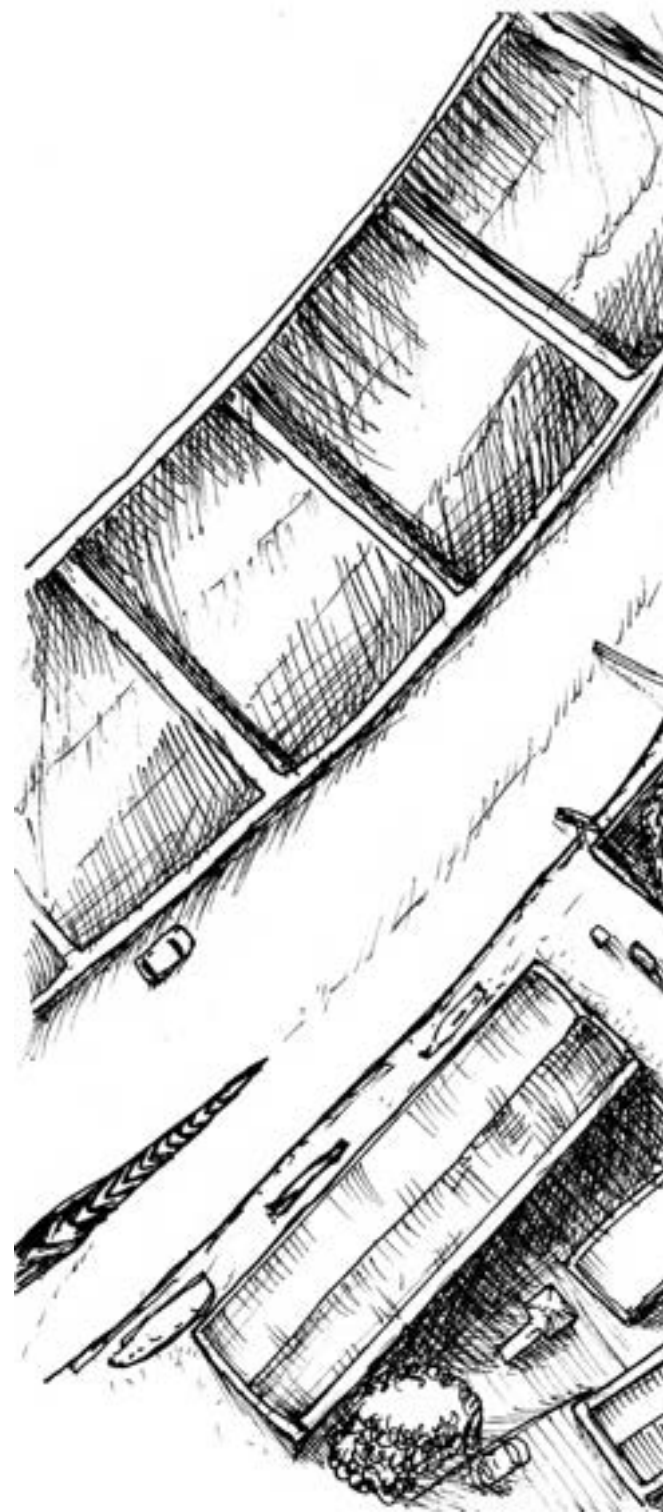


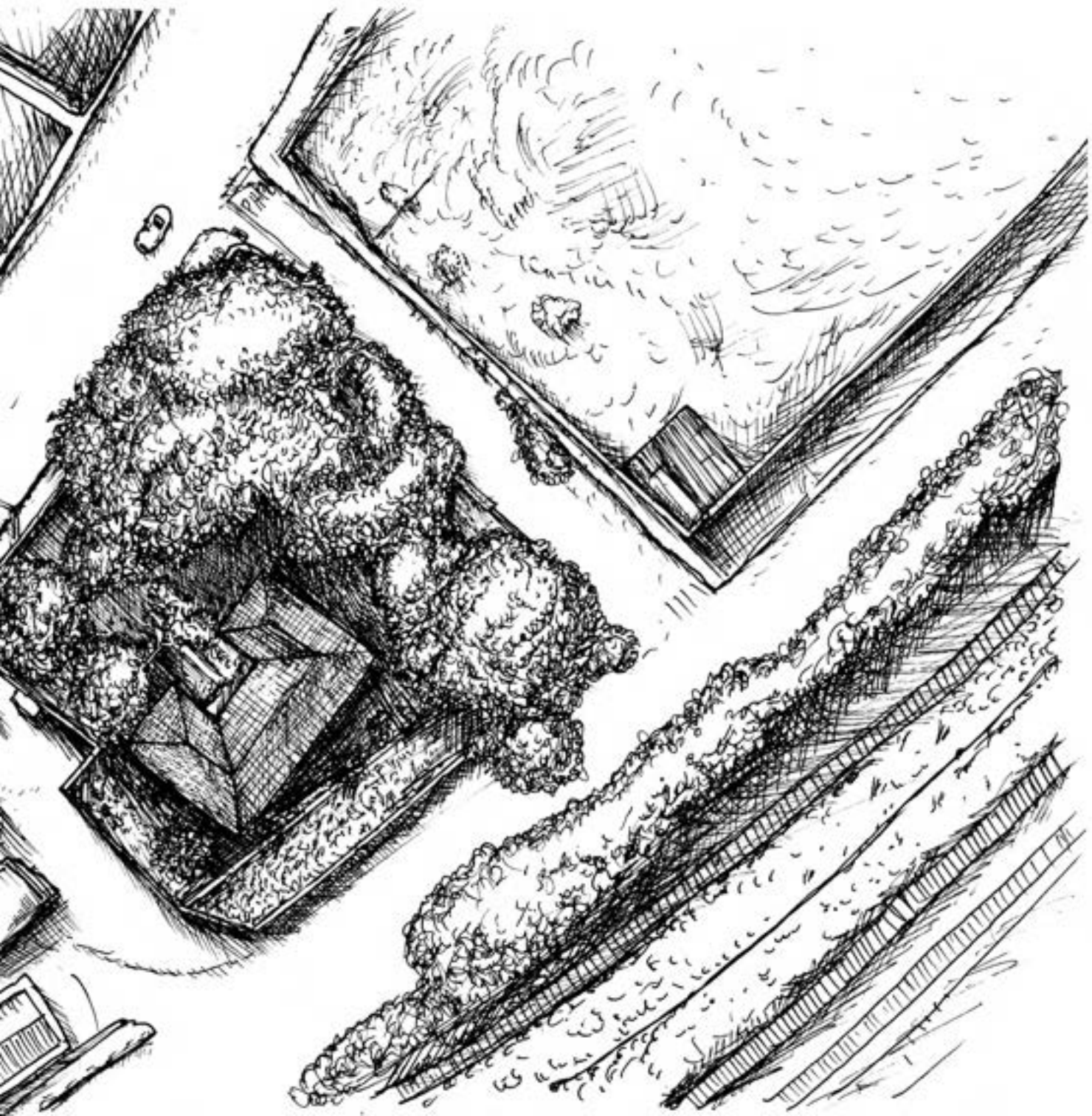




#### *14. Chácara Squat Rua Tombos, 129*

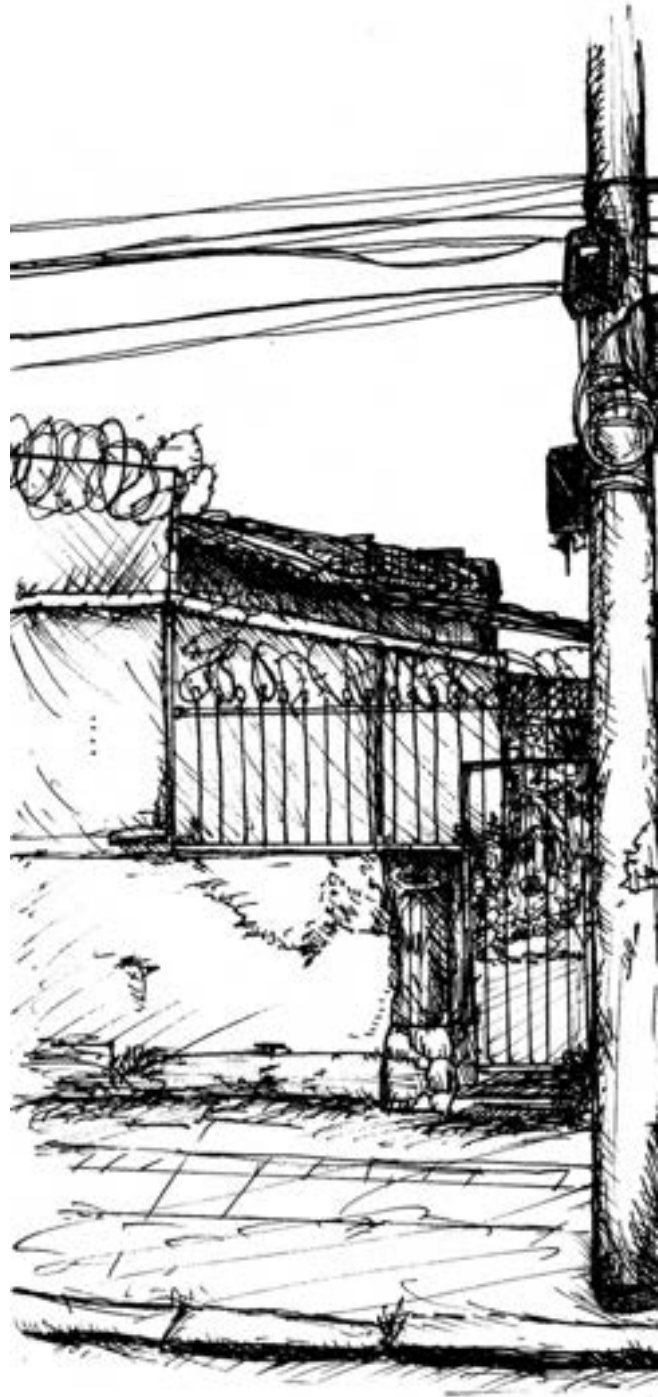
Chácara was a small wooded oasis at the intersection point of the only block of Rua Tombos with the bustling Av. Tereza Cristina, which connects the Center to the west region of Belo Horizonte. Occupied in 2019, it consisted only of an old one-story house, with a patio and a small masonry shed, surrounded by several fruit trees and a large garden. It housed more than 10 families who built makeshift tents. There was an attempt at eviction and an informal negotiation.



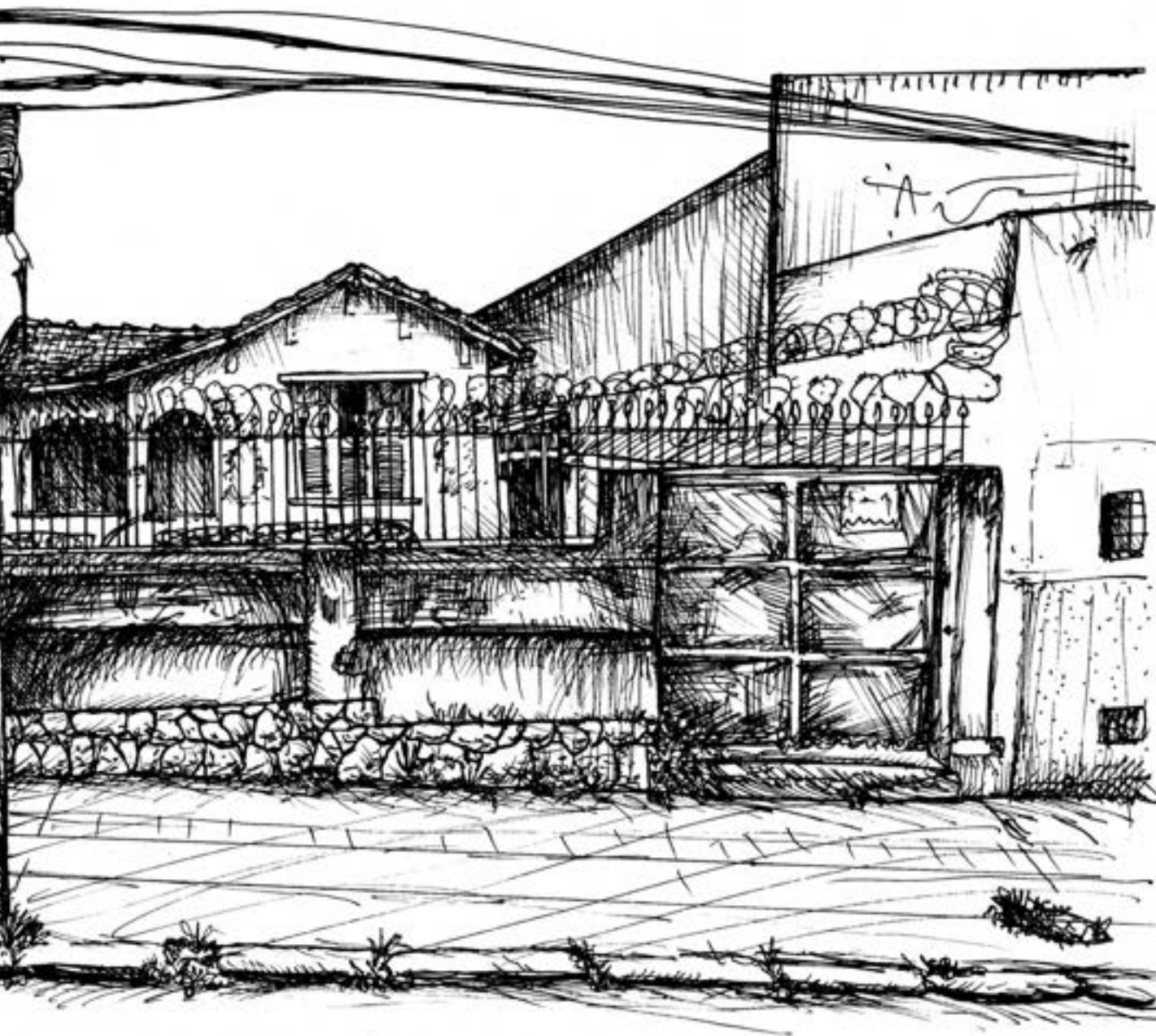


*15. Santa Efigênia Squat  
Rua Niquelina, 575*

The Santa Efigênia Squat emerged in 2021 and remains active to this day, housing families organized alongside the MLP, at the junction between the central and eastern regions of Belo Horizonte.







## *16. Ocupação Niquelina Rua Niquelina, 696*

This squat was located on Niquelina Street, just below the Santa Efigênia Occupation. Initiated in 2022, the occupation was one of the most tragic ones to conclude. The space housed families who were also fighting for housing rights after being evicted from the Vicentão Occupation. On February 16, 2023, Wellington Felix, one of the regulars at the space who was also experiencing homelessness, allegedly arrived under the influence of drugs and set fire to recyclable materials gathered on the site, as some residents relied on income from recycling. The fire spread, and the police arrived and shot Wellington, who died on the spot. After the tragedy, some residents continued to inhabit the debris until they were evicted months later. By late 2023, the house had been demolished.

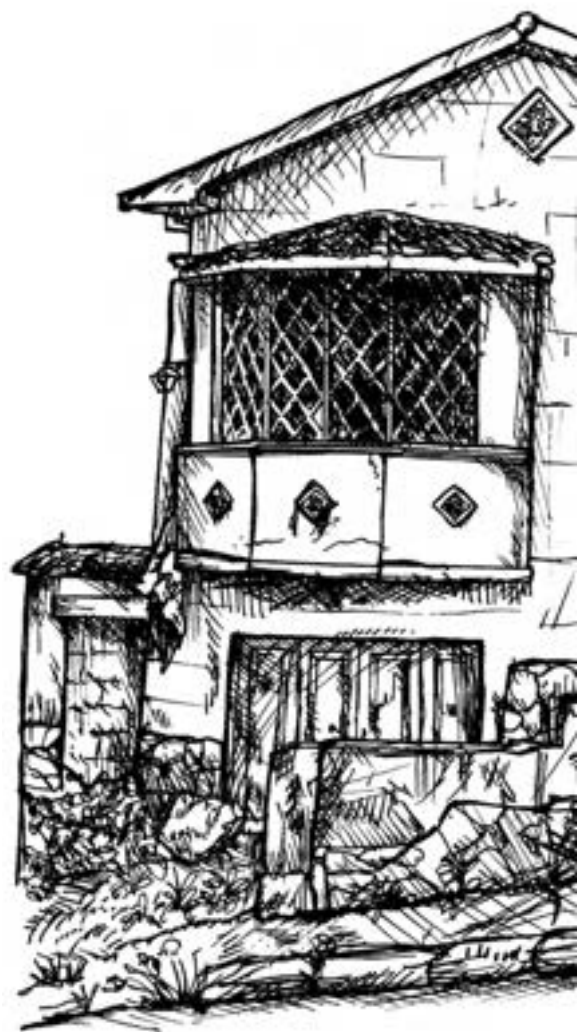


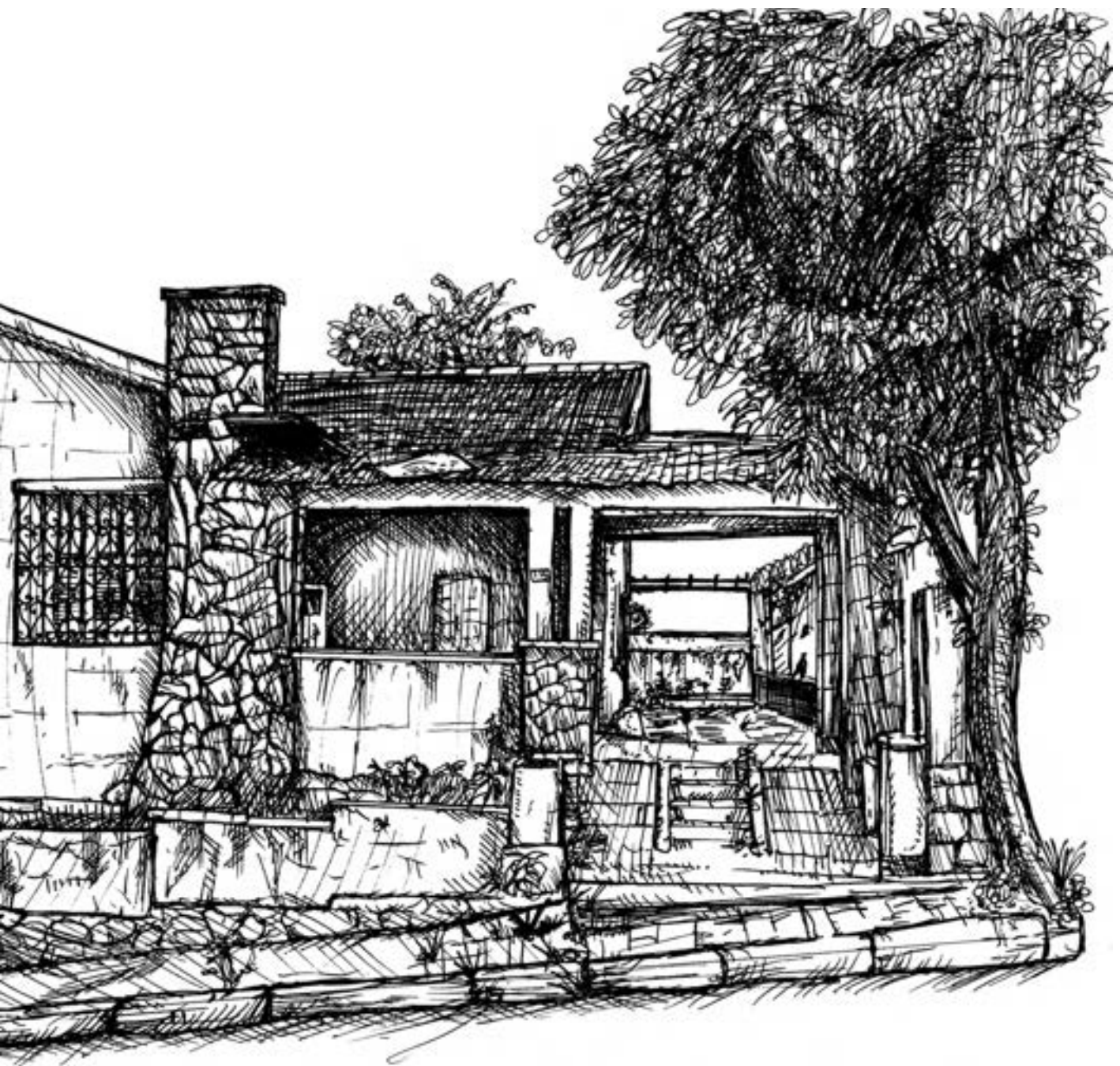


OCUPAÇÃO VICENTÃO 3  
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## *17. Ocupação Sem Nome* *Rua Quintiliano, 115*

The occupation of an old mansion that spanned the block on Quintiliano Street, located in the upscale neighborhood of Santo Antônio, lasted only a few years and was evicted in 2022. A couple consisting of a transgender woman and a man inhabited the space, which at the time of our visit, had no gate, doors, or locks. The house's space was expansive, featuring a large backyard and a veranda with a dilapidated pergola. It was filled with recycled materials separated for sale to generate income, as well as many items left by visitors who sporadically used the space in a predatory manner. The couple lived there with their pets and was not in contact with any housing movement or collective. The eviction occurred suddenly before we could connect them with any housing movement.

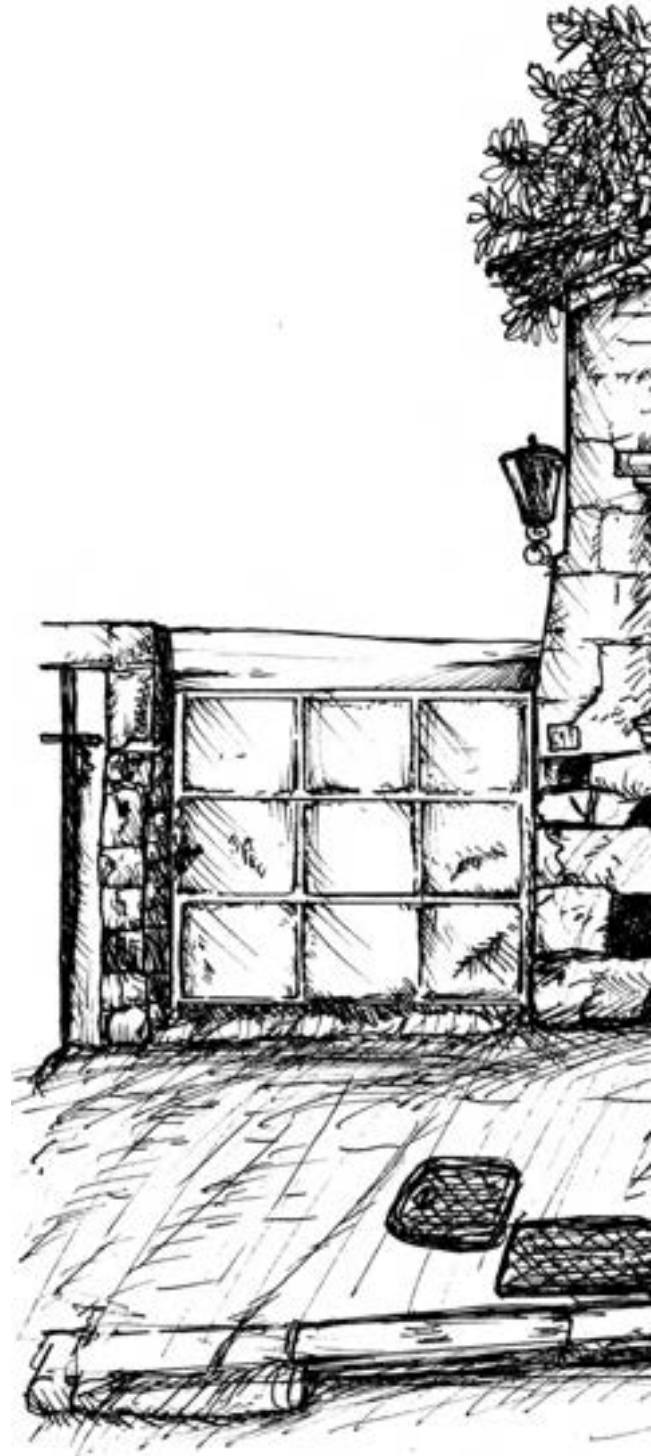






## *18. Casa Tina Martins Rua Paraíba, 641*

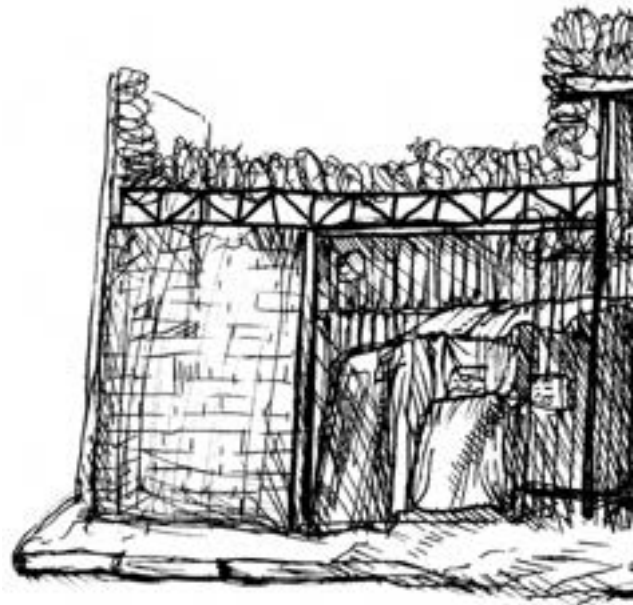
Casa Tina Martins is considered the first organized occupation for and by women in all of Latin America. Currently, it is located on Rua Paraíba, next to the School of Architecture at UFMG. Its initial address was a property occupied in 2016 by the Olga Benário Movement, on Rua Guaicurus, a region in the city center where many sex workers operate in various motels and brothels. The space's proposal was to engage in direct action to address issues related to private property, violence against women, and the invisibility of women, transgender individuals, and sex workers.



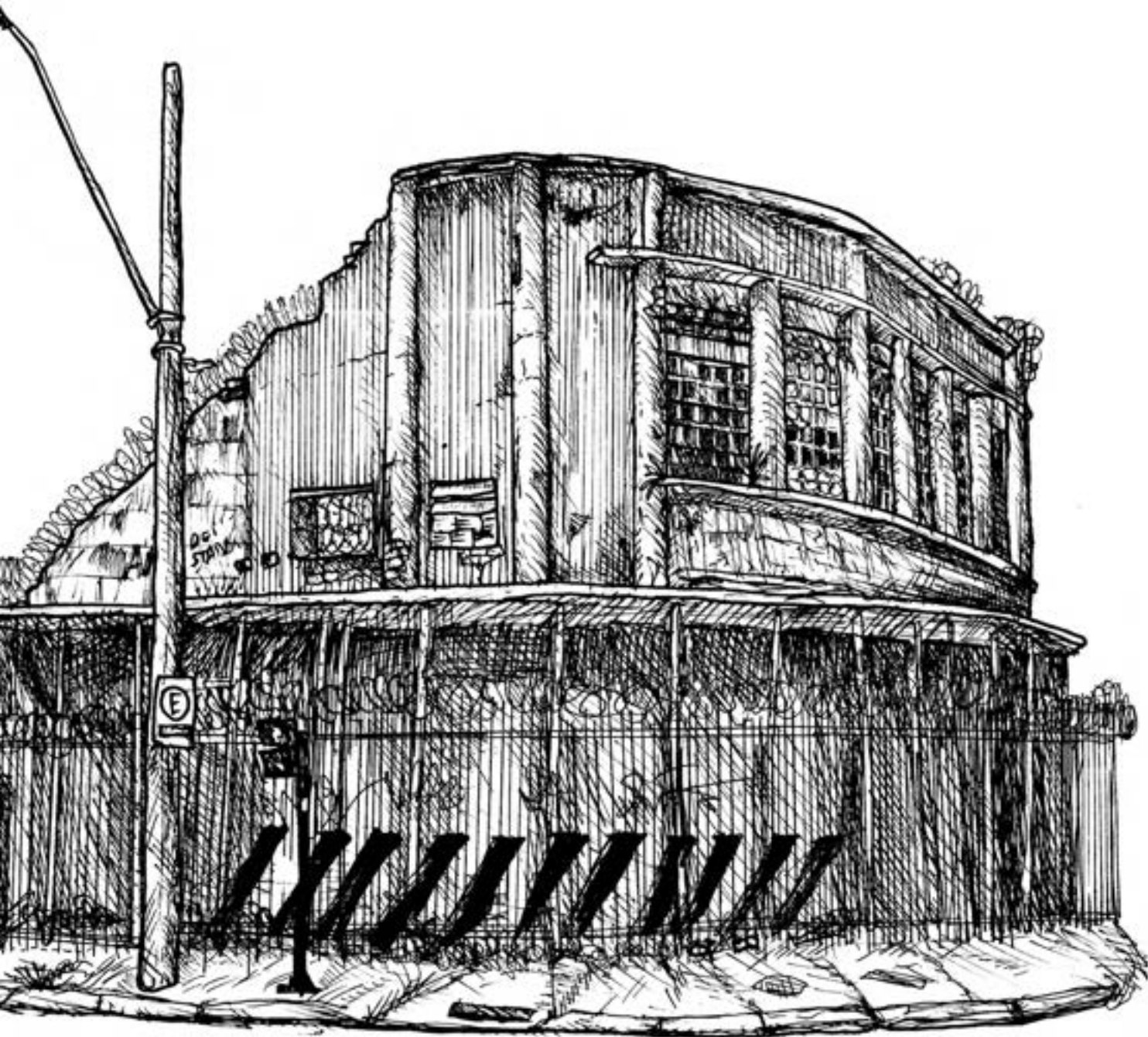


## *19. Cine Candelária Praça Raul Soares*

In 2021, the collective [conjunto vazio] squatted an abandoned old cinema in Raul Soares Square, situated between Rua dos Goitacazes and the block leading to Av. Bias Fortes, a few blocks away from the Kasa Invisível occupation. The collective occupied the old cinema's premises for months, preparing its courtyard to host the play *Anti-Antigone*, which reinforces the memory of the struggles and the dead from the uprisings of June 2013 in the city. In 2020, the owners of the Cine Candelária site reclaimed the property, prompting members of the collective to seek another vacant space between the east zone and the central region of BH, where the play premiered amid the intense rains of December that year.







## Interviews with Squatters



quatting is not just finding four walls and a roof. It's building a life where it's not welcome. Where merchandise and property have a right to exist and people do not. In peripheral countries like Brazil, those who work hard to build the wealth of cities and their owners do not receive the minimum necessary to survive, much less to buy or build a house for themselves and their family. Occupying land illegally and building with your own hands – when you are not working – is what constitutes the majority of housing in the country and what builds territories like favelas. It is often this dynamic that forces people to live at risk of eviction, environmental disasters such as floods, landslides and pollution.

Organizing movements to collectively occupy and conquer the right to housing is just another strategy in the fight for survival. From this tension emerge new forms of life forged in the struggle. Lives that don't fit into the lines drawn on paper, into photographs or even into the pages of a book. This is an example of the trajectory of Jorge Paulo, known as Carioca, one of the founders of the Popular Liberation Movement (MLP), which organizes the majority of houses portrayed in this publication.

Carioca arrived in Belo Horizonte in 2019, after living on the streets in various cities across Brazil for decades. At some point, already at an older age, he worked as a shoe shiner and street vendor. While sleeping at the city's bus station, a Prosecutor helped him contact militants from the People's Brigades movement and secure a place to live in the Anita Santos Occupation, near the city center. Inspired by the organization of housing movements that helped him off the streets, he decided to create a movement from scratch, with other homeless people. Their first action was the Leonel Brizola occupation, squatted in January 2020. "Within 45 days, we secured rent vouchers for 40 families! That's how the MLP started. Since then, there have been over two hundred vouchers."

The news of the success of the Leonel Brizola Occupation spread among homeless people, who realized that they should not wait for the government, risking death on the streets, when there are so many properties completely abandoned.

Next, it was the turn of the occupation at São Paulo Street, in 2020. With the arrival of the Covid-19 pandemic, evictions were suspended by law, and the homeless population began to squat empty houses in various neighborhoods of Belo Horizonte. Carioca was one of the organizers of these new occupants, with well-known housing movements and also with the collective of the squat Casa Invisível. The movement and the residents support each other, relocating people when there is an eviction or when someone needs or prefers to live in another house organized by the movement.

Currently, Carioca lives in his rented house and continues to organize and support the struggle for housing of many people. The fact that we are able to document so many occupied houses here, is largely due to his work and dedication.

His story is just one in a huge collection of life trajectories forged in the struggle for housing and dignity. Trying to unravel a bit of them, we came up with a conversation with inhabitants and militants in a three-question axis:

*Where do you live? Where have you lived? And where do you want to live?*

In the first part, there are the answers of 6 people living in 3 occupations: Vida Nova, Famílias Unidas, and Santa Catarina. The second part features 3 interviews with a resident and 2 participants from collectives or movements that occupied properties for different purposes: housing, social center, theater, and shelter for women and trans people. We hope these conversations capture and convey a bit of these voices and their stories in their own words.

## Part 3, Inhabitants

### *Regiane Rosa Sena, 41 years old.*

Member of the MLP and resident of the Vida Nova Squat



My name is Regiane Rosa Sena, I am a resident here at the Vida Nova Occupation and one of the coordinators of the MLP. Well, I used to live in Vila Ventosa until around 2015, here in Belo Horizonte (BH). I left because rent was tough, so I came here to the occupation. Until 2017, I was renting, and at the beginning of 2018, my journey into house occupations began.

The first one I went to, actually, was a land occupation there in Ventosa itself, one that didn't even have a name. After that occupation, the experience wasn't very good, so I went to the Vicentão Occupation. And until today, I'm still waiting for the result [which would entitle me to the Housing Grant, worth R\$500.00, paid by the City Hall to families evicted for various reasons such as construction works, repossession of occupied spaces, or calamities].

We didn't receive any feedback because the settlement I went to was in Ventosa itself. There was a lot of confusion, so I got out. Because I have children, right? And people were fighting with hoes, machetes, I'm afraid, you know?

Nowadays, I live here in the Vida Nova occupation, on Bernardo Guimarães Street with Espírito Santo Street, in the Funcionários neighborhood. Thank God, it's a peaceful, quiet place.

I was one of the first residents here. It was me who opened it. I helped open the house, I went to get the documents at the Public Defender's Office, at Human Rights, because I lived in a somewhat turbulent occupation too, right? And things weren't easy there, so I decided to take things into my own hands. I observed a lot of how other people squatted houses. So, in the last two occupations I was in, people opened them and I went to court. So, I learned how to do everything. And since the house I was in got really bad, I went to another one with the promise that it would get better. I lived in the Chácara Occupation, in Calafate. The place was a dream. Such a peaceful place. But it went bad there, and I moved to the occupation on Santa Catarina Street with the promise that it would be better. It turned out it wasn't, so I decided to sort something out for myself. To have some organization in the house that isn't a mess, because when there are a lot of people in charge, things go wrong. So I came here, and it's been two years since I've been at peace.

Here, we rescue... well, I won't say "rescue" because we don't go after them, right? They come looking. We welcome homeless people who want to change their situation. And most of the ones who come here and really want to change their situation, do. They really do. There have been about three or four here, they didn't stay for a year, and all four of them who left here are doing well now. Renting a place. The last one really impressed me. He got married and is working and came here just to thank us. He came to pick up his things, right? And he said, "I'm living with my wife. I'm working, I'm doing great."

One day, I want to live in my own house, and God willing, He'll help me. In my own home. I only want to go to an occupation to lend a hand, to help. But living there? No, I want to live in my own house. "My house, my life!" Haha. I want a place where there's no risk, where I can sleep peacefully, actually. Because in an occupation, you lie down, you hear the slightest noise, and you wake up thinking you're being evicted. Being evicted with children... there's no way to carry everything, right? So, living in an occupation is living with a risk. A daily risk.

I intend to have my own home and continue to help, visit occupations to assist, to support them. Share a bit of what I've experienced in occupations, you know? For those who are just arriving. Like I do now. When people arrive here, I tell them I've been through terrible places. Here is good! Compared to other places I've been, this place is heaven!

I want to live in a house and have my freedom, you know? To listen to my music, without a neighbor complaining, I want to bring my little dog along, I want my kids to shout, and no one comes to tell me, "Oh, your child is fighting!" So that's what I want. I want a house, I don't want to live in the city center because it's too noisy, and I don't like noise. I don't want to live in an apartment because it kind of suffocates us. So I want a little house. I'm also getting old, it's time for me to seek peace.

\* \* \*

*Warlem Cândido de Souza, years old.*

Resident of the Vida Nova Squat, currently living in the Famílias Unidas Occupation, Floresta



got involved in the housing issue through my family itself because I was born, witnessed, and within this struggle to have a place to live. When I was ten, I saw my mother buying a plot of land, and building; when I left home at twenty, the house wasn't ready yet..

The first squat I moved into when I left home at twenty to work and study in Belo Horizonte, without time to commute to the metropolitan area, was the Rosa Leão occupation. It was a struggle that needed support, it was facing eviction, and there was a mobilisation of some students. So I got

into that and ended up almost living there, not going out at all. I helped with various activities there, it was very good. The experience of the Isidora occupations, specifically Rosa Leão, where we stayed.

After that, I tried to reorganise my life because I stopped everything to help with the occupation, so I went looking for work, housing for myself again, and realised that I had this need. I didn't have a house, I was out of work. While I was working, I had a place to live because I paid rent, but when I became unemployed, this came again, and then I ended up in Vicentão, which was an squat in downtown Belo Horizonte. The Isidora occupations were territorial occupations, but Vicentão was a building. And there, I was indeed a resident, I also helped the movement, but it was out of necessity for housing.

There was no agreement for eviction, right? I'm also in line waiting for a response from the government. So, I kind of come from that struggle of Brazilians to find a place to stay. So I don't really have a place of origin. I have several places of origin. Just in the last ten years, I must have lived in about fifteen places. Half occupied and half rented because it depends on the phase I'm in, depending on the job I have. At this moment, I decided to stay in a squat even though I'm employed. Now I'm living in the Vida Nova Occupation until the negotiation agreed with the government is finalised.

Personally speaking, since I was a child, my dream has always been to have a house. I was a child who played house. I never wanted a car, none of that. My lifelong dream is to have a house. I used to gather chairs, put something together, and make a little hut, and play like that.

And I realise that as I studied the context of the occupation struggle, historically, as a black man, how the occupation of Brazilian territory was done and the distribution of land, bringing in immigrants for labour, there were government actions and public investment to whiten the workforce.

Now, to address the black labour force that had already been here for centuries generating wealth, nothing was done. On the contrary, they were marginalised without access to income, without access to dignified and paid work. Hence the emergence of favelas, occupation movements, and so on.

So man, I think that of all the struggles that represent the poor and working people of Brazil, this is one of the ones that carries the flag for everyone: the black woman, the mixed-race guy, the white woman who might be in a difficult financial situation and therefore has difficulty accessing housing, the young person who wants an education but has no home to study in. How can one have internet access, which after the pandemic, we know is fundamental for studies?

There is the issue of food, because hunger has returned in Brazil, but housing is another fundamental pillar for us to get the basics for the Brazilian population and for me as an individual too, understand? But I also see it much more as a group struggle, a mass struggle.

I confess that I would prefer to have a house in a region that is not so central, not so busy. Because I grew up like that, right? In the outskirts region, with a yard to have a guava tree, a mango tree, a dog, a bedroom and a bathroom. I have a project for my house, you don't understand (laughs). I want to build an industrial house, a big room, you know? And a little higher if I can look for alternative construction methods, I've already studied a little bit of Hyperadobe, permaculture, anyway.

Housing has always been a very strong thing for me because I saw my family fighting for a place to live and because I have already changed a lot since I was a child and so on. So I remember that when I started working and studying in Belo Horizonte, I wanted to have a house in the town and in that context, at that time, a twenty-year-old young man who had only lived in the metropolitan region and who just arrived in Belo Horizonte, a little scared by this whole movement, living was something not for this incarnation, maybe just In about four incarnations I could achieve it



(laughs). It's hard to imagine that through popular mobilisation we can achieve this. When will we be able to save money working to buy a house? Never! Earning minimum wage?

We have other alternatives. There were some changes in Brazil and there is more access for young black people and those from the periphery to get into universities. So we can now get a job a little above the minimum, where our parents were. There was an improvement. I met collective struggle movements with the same objective, but instead of individually, everyone together, which is another very intelligent solution. Santa Luzia is a higher region, you can see all of Belo Horizonte. So, I remember when I climbed the tree and looked at the city, thinking “gosh, I wish I had a house there, I wish I had a house in BH”.

\* \* \*

*Maria das Dores Ferreira, 55 years old.*

Resident of the Vida Nova Squat



've lived in a bunch of places, you know? But I'll summarize it because the list is very long. Because when you rent, you move around a lot. I lived in the city of Ibitité. Then from there, I moved to the Vicentão Occupation. It didn't work out there, so we came downtown. Vicentão was the first occupation I moved to. From there, we moved to Granja de Freitas. I lived there for a year, and now I'm living here in Vida Nova.

I lived in the occupation in the Floresta neighborhood [Famílias Unidas Occupation] but it wasn't going very well, so I talked to Regiane about coming here. Then I stayed on the waiting list, and one day I got a room, and I came here. And I really like living here. There's no mess. There's no arguing. We get along with everyone, and the area is good, central, it's good for going to the doctor, those things, right? To have access to the public health system. I like it here, my room is big, it fits my boys, I have 3 grand daughters that I look after. I have two sons, but we get along very well together, so I stay here with the girls.

I came from the countryside many years ago. So any place is good for me to live in. But I prefer living in the countryside. I like living downtown because there are more options. If you don't have a job, you can go out and recycle. That's why I like staying here, because during the money shortage, I recycle with my girls. And there's Regis, who is my friend, right? It's been about 4 or 5 years already. Right? So, that's it.

\* \* \*

*Núbia Alves, 30 years old.*

Resident of the Famílias Unidas Squat




'm Núbia Alves, I'm thirty years old, and I used to rent a place, you know? I lived in the Taquaril neighborhood with my family. It was a very turbulent situation because living with relatives isn't easy. In 2019, I got to know the Vicentão Occupation right at the beginning. On the second day of the occupation, I had the opportunity to move there. There were about ninety families. We left because the state offered an agreement that wasn't fulfilled, so currently, I'm in the Famílias Unidas Occupation, in Floresta. I came here precisely because the agreement wasn't fulfilled with the Vicentão Occupation. After Vicentão, I spent some time at the Anita Santos Occupation on Tereza Cristina Avenue. But there was some trouble there, they didn't want to accept us. I stayed at Casa Verde for a while. Currently, I live here.

I really want, really want, to have my own house. Even if it's a collective house, as long as it's something permanent where we don't have the risk of being evicted, suddenly being caught off guard, facing reprisals from neighbours, you know?

\* \* \*

*Luiz Felipe, 61 years old.*

Resident of the Famílias Unidas Squat

 My name is Luiz Felipe. Eight years ago, I was living in Rio de Janeiro, but there were some problems there, and I had to come here. My family there was large, but I had to come. In Rio, I was with my daughter and my grandchildren. Since she got married there, I decided to separate. Here, I have a real family, my mother, sister. The extended family is not small, man. It's a big family.

I don't know if it's because of the time I spent away, my values changed, you know? When I came back, I was sure I had a house and a room. When I got here, I found out that everything had been sold; my mother now lives in a rented place, and that's why I don't go there much anymore. My mother is 94 years old. But I don't go there much because I fight a lot with my sister.

And that's it: I arrived here and went to the shelter [for the homeless], it didn't work out, and from there, I ended up on the street. In the transition from the shelter to the street, I ended up at the Casa Verde Occupation, on Olegário Maciel Avenue, you guys [from Casa Invisível] were there. I met Núbia, Jonathan. Since there were a lot of problems there, we decided to come here.

We entered this house. But we saw that someone was coming here to sleep, you know? Stay for like two, three days, just a little while. When we entered, we broke the little gate. We were here, chilling, and I was drunk, sleeping. We thought that when he woke up, we would steal everything.


After about an hour, I was already knocked out, the guys came through the big gate: "Everybody out!" There were cars parked there on the other side, another one in the middle, and another one up there. They said we were "trespassing", that we were raping women in here. But I was fine. After that, I think they came a couple more times. We had documents from the Public Defender's Office [from the Human Rights Office]. They started laughing at us.

I'm at a certain age now, where I want to live is complicated because the financial situation is a bit tough. I'm not working. I just want a place where they leave us alone, you know? It's not bad here. It's cool here, man, close to downtown. I just want my own house. Right downtown, it's all good.

\* \* \*

*Carine Anastácio, 38 anos.*

Resident of the Santa Catarina Squat

 My name is Karine Anastácio, I'm 38 years old. I'm married to Cristiano Anastácio, and I have three children who live with me: Felipe, Ane, and Alice, aged 16, 14, and 6, respectively. We used to live in Belo Horizonte, but my father-in-law got cancer, and my mother-in-law passed away. Due to my father-in-law's illness and my mother-in-law's death, we chose to move to the countryside, where they lived. We went to Santa Maria do Suaçuí, near Governador Valadares. We had a business here in Belo Horizonte, but we closed that business, a bakery and café. We sold everything we had and opened a bakery in the countryside, where we lived for four years..

However, during this period, in 2019, the pandemic came, and everything became very difficult. We had a car, we had a motorcycle, and incomes became very tight, very difficult. For this reason, we lost many things, and it reached a point where we didn't want to lose anymore. By that time, my father-in-law was already doing well and didn't need our help as much. So we decided to try to go to the United States. We tried to get a visa, but it was denied. So we had the courage to go with our family through Mexico. To enter Mexico legally and enter through the famous "cai-cai" ("falling") scheme which is to surrender yourself at the American immigration and make a sort of asylum request.

In fact, as we were broke, we were losing a lot, and we had lost a lot because of the pandemic. We were in a lot of debt because we struggled with the bakery being open for about three years. So we chose to turn things around, and we had this work opportunity there, right?

This decision was made at a time shortly before the start of the war between Ukraine and Russia. At that time, there were many deportations from the United States, and we were among those deported. We entered, but we were deported, my husband, my three children, and I. But since we got there and were deported, we had lost everything we had here. So we were deported with only the clothes on our backs and nothing else. We landed here at Confins airport with nothing. But, thank God, healthy and alive.

We didn't even go back to Valadares because we had nothing there, and we had nothing here either. For a while, we stayed in a support house called Casa de Tony for about two weeks. Shortly after, my husband found a job, and I put the children in school. I started looking for psychological help because my mind was very confused due to all the losses. I went to the CRAS (Center for Social Assistance) and started looking for things to do. I made sure the boys went to school regularly. But since we had just arrived and were totally unable, we had no furniture, nothing at all, we had the opportunity to live in an occupation. In the occupation on Santa Catarina Street, number 450. Our intention was to rebuild ourselves and stand firm to continue walking since we had lost everything.

Our goal is to have our own home, to be able to provide a better life for my children and for ourselves as well. To rebuild, to have opportunities. Just as opening some doors, going into projects, things opened doors and provided us with sources of income.

In the future, I want to be in my own home. I want to have my furniture properly, food on the table, conditions to take care of the family properly and living well, living with prosperity. Not with


abundance, but with prosperity. Because prosperity is the absence of need, and need is very painful, honestly. Financial need, right? The need for food, the need for housing, debts. It's difficult... And in the very near future, if God allows us, I don't want to have this need anymore.

\* \* \*

## Part 33, Collectives

*André Luiz, 37 years old.*

Resident of the Kasa Invisível Squat

 My name is André, and I've been involved in grassroots movements in Belo Horizonte since the 2000s. It's been crucial in my journey to have come from the outskirts, right? Living in the suburbs between Belo Horizonte and Contagem, coming from a suburban family as well, growing up in my grandmother's backyard, the experience of family houses and community. Growing up in the periphery, with a strong community experience, neighbouring the favelas, with street kids, and in the streets... This childhood experience was very communal. With various projects, organizing neighborhood festivals, street soccer tournaments, bands. Nowadays, I understand and have learned to value more this history of where I come from.

Throughout this journey, after I left my parents' house, I went through collective houses already within the logic of community building. Urban community, with people already connected to discussions about anti-authoritarianism, autonomy, communism. Along this path, I joined an urban land occupation, the Guarani Kaiowá Occupation, actually neighboring the area where I grew up. It was an occupation with hundreds of families. It was land managed by a general assembly, doing collective work to build houses, building community spaces, organizing festivals, film screenings, and trying to deal with the conflicts of the occupation and everything surrounding it.

I think these four elements are important: coming from the periphery, going through a neighborhood community movement, anti-capitalist movement, collective houses, and then the land occupation, right?



Today, I live here at Kasa Invisível, which is another collective house, an attempt to build a community. With its projects and its own dilemmas as well. With the challenges of doing this while also developing personal life and the responsibilities that an occupied house in the city center generates, right?

And with all the dilemmas that brings, being a house in downtown, right? We are on the edge of the center, but still in the center, right? We are in the center of the city, where the money of the city is, but we are not owners of that money. It's like living in the United States and being Latino, you are in the center but you are on its margins.

We are here with other experiences, involving other people and their peculiarities, right? In Guarani, the articulation was much more with a population even more precarious than us in Kasa Invisível.

And about where I want to live... I can't see my life detached from this kind of project, from the attempt to build collectivity, from the attempt to build community. I consider myself a bit lucky because, within the ups and downs in this journey, my life continues along this track. I want to continue living within this logic, that this logic can develop more and more. And to create more structure, to generate as much comfort, as much questioning and involvement as possible. But I've been feeling tired of the city. I increasingly feel the need to go to the countryside, maybe to a smaller town, away from the urban center. I think about ways to make this feasible and, even there, try to get into the logic of community building and seek constructions that are anti-capitalist and autonomous.

\* \* \*

### *Casa Tina Martins*

Conversation with the state coordination of the Women's  
Movement Olga Benário



The Tina Martins House is considered the first organized occupation by and for women in all of Latin America. Currently located on Paraíba Street, next to the Architecture School of UFMG, its initial address was squatted in 2016 by the Olga Benário Movement, on Guaicurus Street, a central region that brings together various sex workers operating in motels and brothels. The space's purpose was to address, through direct action, the issues of private property, violence against women, and the invisibility of women, transgender individuals, and sex workers. The name of the space pays homage to Espertirina Martins, an anarchist militant from the early 20th century who studied at a local Modern School inspired by the works of Catalan Francisco Ferrer y Guardia. She became famous for her explosive participation in the 1917 strikes in Porto Alegre. During the strikes, Espertirina attended the funeral and rally against the death of a worker, hiding a bomb in a bouquet of flowers. Her seemingly harmless appearance allowed her to throw the explosive bouquet at the approaching Military Brigade, killing several cops. As a result, the strike was victorious in achieving an 8-hour workday, ending child labour, and obtaining pensions and social security.

*1 - What is Casa Tina Martins and how and when did it emerge? What is its relationship with housing occupation movements, the struggle of women in Belo Horizonte?*

Casa Tina Martins began on March 8, 2016, organized by the Olga Benário Women's Movement and the MLB. The occupation was born from discussions in the feminist and housing movements about the inefficiency of public policies to combat violence against women, recognizing the essential role of a structure that enables dignified life.

Drawing from experiences in organizing urban occupations, predominantly led by women, the

Olga Benário Movement and MLB conceived a symbolic occupation of a building abandoned by the federal government. The initial plan was to stay for about three days, demanding 24/7 service from the Women's Protection Police Department and denouncing the quantity of empty properties in the downtown area. Three days turned into three months, and there was a realization that the work could continue and improve. Tina Martins provided assistance and support from its early hours. When the eviction order arrived, the movement insisted on negotiations with the federal and state governments, relocating from the corner of Espírito Santo with Guaicurus to Paraíba Street.

From then on, it became known as Casa Tina Martins, providing support for women victims of violence, offering psychological, legal, and social assistance, shelter when necessary, political education, and cultural events. Coordination is carried out by activists from the Olga Benário Women's Movement.

*2 - The current property, now provided by the city government, is much more structured. Do you think this achievement would have been reached so quickly without direct action, occupying, taking over the first house, and providing support to vulnerable women, sex workers, and others?*

We would not have been able to negotiate the concession of the property (which is owned by FAPEMIG – a State research institution –, empty for years before negotiations with the government) or its maintenance without direct action and the collaboration of other occupations and movements in the city. Even with the property granted, Casa Tina Martins is still at risk, being susceptible to eviction orders (as it has already experienced) at any moment.

*3 - There are several examples of women's shelters around the world with a strong tradition within the struggle of the working class (a good example is that of Italy in the 1970s). Were there other similar initiatives in Brazil or Latin America that served as inspiration for the creation of Espaço Tina Martins?*

We have studied women's support policies in Brazil and other countries, as well as initiatives by the working class. However, the greatest inspiration came from the housing rights movements, from their experiences in squatting properties and internal organization. We have observed that the majority of individuals building these spaces are women seeking their rights and dignity. A fundamental element of this struggle is housing.

Regarding similar initiatives, Casa Tina Martins was the first squat by women in Latin America. Currently, there are 20 women's occupations in the country, all carried out by the Olga Benário Women's Movement and sustained by the dedication of activists and an important network of solidarity with social movements.

In July 2023, we had the opportunity to talk to women from several countries in Latin America about their experiences of struggle, incorporating many of their principles and experiences, as well as sharing our own experiences with squatting. In this regard, we received a significant amount of material and were able to contribute to some extent. The struggles of indigenous Andean and Amazonian women, the Latin American and Caribbean Black movement, mobilisations for safe, legal, and free abortion, and the demand for memory, truth, and justice, to name a few examples, inspire the actions and principles of the movement and the organization of the houses.

*4 - How did the idea of honoring the radical fighter Espertirina Martins, active at the beginning of the 20th century in the Brazilian labor, socialist and anarchist movements, come about?*

We thought the occupation should be something like Espertirina's famous Molotov bouquet. And also that it would be important to highlight the history of workers' struggles in Brazil, which are references and inspirations for the overthrow of capitalism. The occupation would not exist if we did not have this perspective.

*5 - We recently saw the opening of yet another squat, Edinéia Ribeiro, focused on women in the União neighborhood, in Belo Horizonte. What is the perspective of struggle and action for the coming years and for the cause of women's rights and occupations?*

In the coming years, we will continue to welcome women, demanding public policies effectively committed to ending violence against women and denouncing the number of abandoned properties in Belo Horizonte. The place where the Ednéia Ribeiro Occupation is located was supposed to be the construction of the Casa da Mulher Brasileira, which is not expected to get off the ground.

The squat pays homage to a fellow member of the MLB and the Movement Olga Benário, a single mother squatter resident and victim of femicide. By claiming the place and showing that it could be a shelter for women victims of violence to be able to repair and revive themselves, we show that public authorities neglect this issue. In the federal state that kills the most women in Brazil, the promise of public policies is not trusted. Therefore, we will continue to occupy, welcome and demand. And show that if a group of women with anti-capitalist ideals and with resources coming only from solidarity between social movements can manage this, then a policy backed by resources should also do so; it does not do so because it benefits from this misery.

\* \* \*

## *Cine Candelária*

Conversation with the [conjunto vazio] Collective



In 2021, [conjunto vazio] Collective occupied an old abandoned cinema in Praça Raul Soares, located between Goitacazes Street and across the block from Avenida Bias Fortes, not far from the Kasa Invisível. This historic building from the 1950s had capacity for 2,000 people and in its last decade, was a porn cinema. It closed in 1995 and has been abandoned ever since. Then in 2004, fire struck the building and a large part of it collapsed. What was left of the space was paved and transformed into a parking lot, leaving only the two entrances, the projection room and the facade designed as a decadent miniature of a modern Coliseum, facing the square.

The collective, responsible for other occupations and subversions of public space, such as the first Praia da Estação1 edition in 2010, occupied for months the land where the ruins of the old cinema lie and prepared its patio, to house the play *Anti-Antígone*, which tells the stories of the struggles and deaths of the June 2013 uprisings in the city.

In 2020, the owners of the Cine Candelária land took back the property and members of the collective left to take over another vacant space between the east zone and the central region of Belo Horizonte, where the play premiered amid the intense rains of December of that year.

***1 - What is the collective, what is its proposal and its relationship with occupations and anti-capitalist and countercultural movements in Belo Horizonte?***

The [conjunto vazio] Collective is an anti-capitalist and horizontal collective of anti-art, urban intervention, performance, theoretical masturbation and experiments in strategies for critical

quackery. Formed in 2006, we are the result of previous movements such as Carnaval Revolução, Mansão Libertina, Coletivo Cisma, Coletivo Renuncia, among others. All of these collectives posed the aesthetic issue (and its antagonism to Art) as a political issue. It was about using aesthetic elements as a form of action and practical denial of the capitalist system, the tedious and meaningless everyday life.

Our proposal consists of firstly delinking the aesthetic from Art, since we believe that the latter is just another commodity and, as such, must be destroyed. However, we believe that it is possible to take advantage of the modes of creation and emancipatory perspectives that emerged from artistic movements that aimed to change life and the world. The [conjunto vazio] holds within itself the contradiction and the delusional intention of contributing to the insurrection and destruction of Art while performing pranks and plays.

*2 - Why occupy a space, in this case, the ruins of Cine Candelária, very close to the Kasa Invisível squat, and not follow a “traditional” path for an artistic and theatrical intervention, in a space with a structure made for that purpose?*

We are driven by the boredom of living in Belo Horizonte and we always need to create ways to avoid getting caught up in it. Furthermore, we believe that all modes of shared creation hold the potential to create another way of life. The modes of production are not something minor as they inform, dialogue, tension and often diverge from aesthetic intentions. The [conjunto vazio] Collective has always been very interested in this and in the power of an action beyond Art. Occupying a space is betting on communal strength, dialogue and criticism of the city and, mainly, the disruptive power of direct (and criminal) actions.

When we invaded Cine Candelária, we aspired to give substance to claims made by Durruti, Benjamin and others, about the possibility of inhabiting the ruins. Being in this space of ruins,

full of memories, cleaning it, redoing its supports, fixing the gate, spending a long period of time rehearsing there, constituted a fundamental issue for the development of Anti-Antigone. As we say at a certain point in the show's text: "this world has been a slaughterhouse since the beginning/ with its factories, stadiums, parking lots and theaters." Belo Horizonte is a modern city that is already a ruin, demolishing its spaces to become parking lots, which will then become buildings, which will then be demolished to make room for larger buildings.

So for us, there is always a naive hope that our projects can envision something beyond everyday survival, where all that remains is work, fun weekends and no expectations for the future.

*3 - What is the play about? What is your relationship with the stories and images alluded to, the uprisings against public transport fares and the World Cup in 2013? Why bring up that memory 10 years later in a piece, on an occupied piece of land?*

The play is based on the myth of Antigone, daughter of Oedipus, who, upon burying her traitorous brother, is condemned to death by the powers that be for refusing to go back on her action. It is one of the most performed plays in the world, with different visions and versions. Our collective sought in "Anti-Antigone" to give contours that emphasize the failed insurrectionary gesture, reducing its heroic character in favor of a vision of a world without gods, heroes, redemption and mainly, where the horizon of revolutionary expectations is blocked.

We participated and were strongly influenced by June 2013, its possibilities, victories and failures brought issues in the political, aesthetic and social field that we are still dealing with. For us, the image of the two dead in June in Belo Horizonte, Douglas Henrique and Luiz Felipe, who fell from an overpass while fleeing police repression were important parts of the creation of the show. These deaths were somehow forgotten, left aside but continue to haunt us as one of the legacies of this insurrection.



There is also a strong presence in the show of the choir, which is called Brecht Bloc in the show, of which A- (as we call Antigone in the play) is also a part and stands out. In costumes like those of black bloc followers, something that captured the images of 2013, they carry out a series of performances, training and physical gags about the impossibility of revolution. The chorus, which is such an important part of Greek tragedy, here is weak and unable to perform its function of commenting and acting.

The space is a central element of the show because we wanted another type of relationship between the play and the spectators. It would be necessary to insert the public into the ruins and at a distance from what happens on stage. There is a kind of ghostly landscape in Anti-Antigone that seeks to evoke our own impossibility of creating new revolutionary moments.

*4 - It's been 13 years since the first Praia da Estação, in 2010, and it's already been a decade of activity for Kasa Invisível, heir and, at least in part, consequence of these struggles of the past decade, along with others such as Espaço Comum Luiz Estrela and various housing occupations. How do you see the future of struggles for urban space and basic rights such as housing in Belo Horizonte in the next decade?*

The Praia phenomenon is certainly our most successful action (few people know about its history) and at the same time it has shown several impasses. Even though it generated exaggerated descriptions such as “Praia da Estação was the rebirth of carnival and politics in Belo Horizonte”, there is in fact something powerful and disseminating in the practice of occupying public places. Even though this action was quickly cloistered in Culture, so much so that it began to be used as propaganda for City Hall. The same one we fought and fought against! This incorporation of Praia by the State can be seen in many housing movements that chose to enter institutional politics to the detriment of the radicalisation of struggle... this State temptation is certainly one of the biggest barriers!

The [conjunto vazio] takes seriously the motto that all empty space must be occupied and believes that the housing movement carries enormous potential to prefigure communism here and now, against and beyond the State and Capital. Belo Horizonte, as the first city in the country planned under the sign of “modern”, brings this small gap from which it would be possible to destroy and inhabit its own ruin... that is what we are betting on and want to participate in!


\* \* \*

From Fireflies and Ants: the flickering,  
collective, and obstinate power of occupied  
Belo Horizonte

Clarissa Campos

*Pisa ligeiro, pisa ligeiro!*

*Quem não pode com as formigas não assanha o formigueiro!*

 In one of his most well-known propositions, Henri Lefebvre—whose ideas about the Right to the City have historically been appropriated by urban occupation movements in Belo Horizonte and elsewhere—suggests an inescapable connection between the production of space and any possibility for real change in life and society. Assuming that this intimate correlation actually occurs, it does not make it simple to understand or identify. Where is such production of space in the everyday places of our time? How and by whom is it carried out? What makes it essential for changes in life and society? What are these changes, at what scale do they occur, and how can they be recognised?

Occupations are spatial practices because they have at their core a continuous and collective effort to appropriate, use, and transform previously abandoned spaces for various purposes. They are insurgent spatial practices because they occur in opposition to heteronomous forms of space production, traditionally institutionalised and controlled by dominant sectors, based on individual private property and exchange value. If these have resulted in the production of oppressive cities and socio-spatial injustice, the occupations seek to escape that logic in order to, in some way, alter it.

Therefore, if at first glance the questions raised here seem enigmatic, I argue that urban occupations experience in their present practices the possibilities and limits of the inevitable connection envisioned by Lefebvre in another time, for another place.


In “Survival of the Fireflies” Georges Didi-Huberman draws attention to certain forms of resistance, sometimes visible, sometimes invisible, occasionally perceptible only through traces and fragments, in fleeting and dimly lit flashes. Fireflies, in the author’s metaphor. Beings whose luminous power depends on a collective existence. Although the text does not refer to squats, the image of fireflies seems to fit well with their vital ability to articulate in a network, plural, mutable, and swift. It also recalls their often strategic characteristic of a “glimmering” existence, sometimes visible, sometimes invisible, as a condition of continuity.

In its own terms, the metaphor becomes more specific. The power of collective constructions is not new in the occupations of Belo Horizonte. As frequently chanted in their squats—as well as in other political, cultural, and artistic manifestations in Brazil—whoever can’t deal with the ants shouldn’t disturb the anthill. Although I couldn’t locate its original authorship, I was in the Vitória Squat<sup>1</sup> when I heard the slogan for the first time, sung by a group of local women leaders. As they explained, they are like ants: the working class, when their anthill is stepped on, they climb on the feet of whoever has trampled it. Beyond the gradual, daily, and collective nature of their lives, the ant is an allegory of obstinacy and daring in confronting obstacles and daily violence.

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1 Occupation of land for housing, in the Izidora region, between Belo Horizonte and Santa Luzia/MG, existing since 2013.

## *Squatted Belo Horizonte<sup>2</sup>*

 The phrase commonly used in reference to the squatter movements in Brazil, the movements of the homeless, accurately reflects the main cause of occupations, also in the case of Belo Horizonte: housing injustice. In this sense, it is not surprising that out of the 77 occupations identified in the Metropolitan Region of Belo Horizonte (RMBH) since the 1990s (with two cases predating this period), about 96% are for housing or include housing among their main objectives. Of the total identified, 77% of the occupations started in the last decade. Despite the scarcity of official data on the subject, collected reports indicate more than 20,000 self-built homes in urban occupations on land and buildings in the RMBH in the last ten years.

For the most part, urban occupations in the RMBH are located on abandoned land, of prolonged disuse, in peripheral regions of cities. They are predominantly composed of low-income people, often unemployed or in precarious and informal working conditions. In general, the act of occupying is related to their urgent need for shelter and security, so that, from the consolidation of their communities, they can continue to seek better living conditions.

Land occupations for self-construction represent about 58% of the total identified. They can accommodate from dozens to thousands of families in areas that do not offer adequate access to urban infrastructure, quality public services, culture, leisure, job opportunities, etc. Squats in abandoned buildings, on the other hand, represent a significant portion of 42% of the total. Unlike land occupations, with few exceptions, squatted buildings and houses in Belo Horizonte are located in central areas: areas that are well-served and economically privileged.

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2 Section based on research and survey data carried out by Campos (2020), which identified a total of 66 occupations in the RMBH. Some of this data was updated based on the subsequent identification and registration of 11 new occupations, in partnership with Baruq, resident of Kasa Invisível, an occupation located in the central region of Belo Horizonte, existing since 2013. CAMPOS, C. Squatting for more than Housing: Alternative Spaces and Struggles for The Right to the City in Three Urban Areas in Brazil, Spain, and the Basque Country. Doctoral thesis. Belo Horizonte, Federal University of Minas Gerais, 2020.

At least in part, the choice to occupy the downtown area is directly related to better infrastructure conditions and a greater abundance of services, which by itself does not guarantee access for occupants. Especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, around a dozen new squats were opened in the central region of Belo Horizonte. In addition to housing, squats have often included cultural aspects, support for various groups (such as women experiencing violence), and other political purposes, like providing space for meetings of different collectives, organising lectures, debates, events, parties, and other activities.

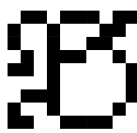
Notably, housing struggles are part of a broader dispute that includes access to the basics mentioned earlier, as well as the recognition of its actors as legitimate political agents, producers of culture and knowledge, with full participation in city life. In this sense, the prospect of a roof over their heads is just the first step in the struggle for the right to the city. It is worth noting that their activities are often supported by other social movements and collectives.

The collective efforts and self-managed practices enable the construction of basic infrastructure not provided by government agencies and local utilities, as occupations are considered illegal. To the extent of their needs, possibilities, and limitations, diverse actors contribute to the construction of networks of affinity and mutual aid, to name a few of the essential aspects of urban occupations in Belo Horizonte. The mentioned processes do not occur without obstacles and internal contradictions and although roughly 20% of the identified occupations have been evicted, others have been able to resist for years or even decades.<sup>3</sup>

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3 More details about the survey carried out can be found in Campos (2020).

## *Back to the initial argument*

 y leaving the realm of theory and producing real spaces, laden with their own contradictions and limitations, in their everyday practice, accomplishments, and challenges, the various actors in occupations effectively change the here and now. The production of space in occupations, largely inseparable from the collectivisation of everyday life and DIY practice, contributes to a better understanding of the obstacles and opportunities contained within these notions, which most of the time remain restricted to the theoretical realm. Thus, new knowledge is created in occupations to then be shared within networks.

Confronting their daily lives challenges forms of living based on individual private property and contributes to changes in how people relate to each other and their worldviews. Whether short or long-term, their actions can promote collective use of spaces instead of private exploitation, provide housing, contribute to the strengthening of other movements and collectives, and engage in networks of mutual care.

By expanding their actions, taking to the streets of cities in demonstrations, becoming present in other political forums, and publicising their actions, squatter movements also have the possibility of influencing larger scales. Combined, their actions can draw attention to the need to address various forms of socio-spatial injustice, while proposing fairer and more inclusive ways of living in cities.

I would venture to say that the mode of space production conducive to changes in life and society is not perfect or immutable, and it does not have a fixed scale. It is challenging and critical, collectively produced every day, in a state of permanent change and adaptation. Therefore, it is in dispute and occurs according to the needs, desires, possibilities, and limitations of those who appropriate it. On the one hand, occupations are one of the possible forms that allow

us to glimpse how changes can be made, and, on the other hand, they reveal the difficulties in consolidating these changes.

Still, the transformative power contained within these insurgent spatial practices does not cease to exist with the end of an occupation. Even if it only resists for a moment. Even if just in a glimpse. Whether oscillating like the delicate lights of fireflies or engaged in the constant, resilient, and combative construction of ants. Their struggles continue over time. In the next occupation. And to varying degrees, also in the minds and practices of those who experience them.



## Postscript: Not everything is enchantment

*The painter requires that the viewer not look too hard or too close; he forces him back to a certain distance to view from there; he is obliged to presuppose that a viewer is at a fixed distance from his picture; indeed, he must even assume an equally fixed amount of visual acuity in his viewer; he may on no account waver about such things. So anyone who wants to idealize his life must not desire to see it too closely, and must keep his sight back at a certain distance..*

– F. Nietzsche,

*Eu sei o que é miséria. Eu já a vivi.  
Tudo o que sei, devo-o ao desespero.*

– P. J. Proudhon



The choice of the name for this publication, inspired by the lyrics of the song ‘Casa Okupada, Casa Encantada’ by the Spanish punk band Sin Dios, comes from the desire to appropriate that feeling of enchantment and euphoria that we feel when creating events, gatherings, and celebrations in a territory that we occupy and construct collectively every day, despite not having a place to live equal and dignified opportunities for all people. This feeling is fundamental and serves as fuel to keep going. But it is important to remember that this joy we value arises from an abominable reality.

Unlike the punks with access to good education in the comfort of Western European social democracy who, after a good dose of reading and education, engage in direct action and occupy empty buildings, many of us occupying in Brazil and the Global South as a whole do so from a bitter struggle for survival, in a context of extreme poverty and police and paramilitary terror, facing the written and unwritten laws of one of the deadliest police forces in the world, which kills (by official numbers) 6 thousand people per year – 10 times more than the United States.

We celebrate our struggles and victories without romanticizing what leads us to occupy empty properties to survive. And we know that, even under the shelter of an occupied house or land, we can still be targets of violence and exclusion. Those who dare to challenge the law, whether by participating in illegal capitalism (drug trafficking and organized crime) or in social struggle against the logic of private property, can hardly rely on the law to ensure their safety against the actions of other agents who operate outside the law. Often, our bonds and our self-defense are all we have.

Therefore, I would like to dedicate this book to comrades who lost their lives in the difficult journey of fighting for housing and basic rights by occupying some of the houses depicted here. Whether due to internal conflicts, disasters, or at the hands of the murderous police.

Victory will be reserved for all of us who do not fear conflict or ruins.

*Carlos Roberto, Israel “Baiano” e Welington Felix, PRESENTE!*



***Renato Barua*** is an illustrator, writer and editor, member of the Kasa Invisível collective, in Belo Horizonte, Brazil.

***Cadu Passos*** is a street photographer, does documentary photography and photojournalism.









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