

VIRTUALIA

MAGAZINE

CRYPTORASTAS
KATIA SUZUÊ

BLOCKCHAIN: THE DIGITAL REVOLUTION
RESHAPING HIGHER EDUCATION

PROF. DR. RODRIGO CID

ARTISTS, BUSINESSMEN, GAMBLERS, AND
DREAMERS, WHICH ONE ARE YOU?

VANESSA AMENEYRO

20 YEARS OF THE FÓRUM DAS LETRAS

PROFA. DRA. GUIOMAR DE GRAMMONT



NOVEMBER 28TH, 2025

VOL. 2, N. 4, 2025

ISSN: 3085-8364

DOI: 10.5281/ZENODO.17743473



Virtualia Magazine [electronic resource].

- vol. 2, n. 4, 2025. -

Ouro Preto: Federal University of Ouro
Preto, Philosophy Department, 2025-
1 online resource: il.

Quarterly

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.17743473

ISSN:3085-8364

Extension Project "Virtualia Magazine
- art, technology, and philosophy."

1. Metaverse. 2. Web3. 3. Philosophy -
University Extension Project 4. Cryptoart.
I. Federal University of Ouro Preto,
Philosophy Department. II. Title.

CDD 006.8

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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION



Waves and Seeds: Life in the Digital and the Digital in Life

If you opened this issue expecting just news of a bullish market or a technical manual, prepare for a surprise. The texts that make up this edition of Virtualia paint a much richer and more complex picture: that of a moment of profound maturation. The speculative frenzy has given way to a more essential question: what is all this technology for? The answer, as we discover, lies not only in price charts, but in literature, in the rhythm of reggae, in the classroom, and in the offline silence. "Built for Red Conditions" by Jetski, perfectly captures the spirit of the moment. After the sharp market downturn, what remains is not a void, but space for the builders. The text reminds us that true innovation isn't built for the bull run, but for the long run. It is in this scenario that projects like Elephant seek to replace speculation with proof – proof of action, of authorship, of trust. This search for meaning beyond the noise echoes in Vanessa Ameneiro's powerful article, which maps the archetypes inhabiting the digital ecosystem. She invites us to reflect: in the vast field of NFTs and Web3 culture, are you an artist, businessperson, trader, gambler, or dreamer? The author argues, sagaciously, that survival and lasting impact depend on understanding these roles and, most importantly, on learning to build value, not just trade prices. But Virtualia has always been more than crypto. It's about culture. And it is with a deep sense of legacy that we present the text by Prof. Dr. Guiomar de Grammont on the 20 years of the Fórum das Letras of Ouro Preto. In a moving account, she shows us that resilience, courage, and a commitment to a plurality of voices are the foundation of any lasting cultural endeavor, whether on stone-paved slopes or on the blockchain. It is a timeless reminder that technology serves culture, and not the other way around.

It is precisely this symbiosis that Marcus (Digitaldubs) and the Cryptorastas – as told us by Katia Suzue – personify. In a revealing interview, we see how reggae, a culture of resistance and community, found in the blockchain a tool to scale its philosophy. The Cryptorastas are not just NFTs; they are a social experiment, a proposal for how technology can be used to strengthen identities and create tangible bonds, even on city walls through graffiti. In the sphere of education, Prof. Dr. Rodrigo Cid outlines a transformative future for universities. He argues that blockchain can be the backbone of a new academic infrastructure, combating diploma fraud, protecting intellectual property, and bringing transparency to research funding. It is a vision where technology does not replace academia but strengthens it, freeing it from age-old bureaucracies. However, amidst all this digital acceleration, the poem by Gustavo Henrique, "life happens offline", emerges as a vital and necessary counterpoint. It is a sensory manifesto against the dictatorship of algorithms, a call to remember that life, in its richest texture – the embrace, the laughter, the landscape – happens in the analog world. It is the warning that we must not intoxicate our hearts "with cell phone aluminum." And, finally, we present you, through Vessy Mink's interview with Robbi Kumalo, the power of music and human narrative. The profile of Kumalo and the story behind the classic "You Can Call Me Al" show us that the most powerful technology is, and always will be, that of human connection. Bakithi's journey from a garage in South Africa to studios in New York is a testament to how art can transcend barriers and create miracles.

What unites these texts? They show us that the digital is not an end, but a means. A means to build trust (Jetski, Cid), to express culture (Ameneyro, Cryptorastas), to preserve legacies (Grammont) and, paradoxically, to reconnect us with what is genuinely human (Gustavo Henrique, Robbi Kumalo). We are in the era of seeds. The seeds of fairer infrastructures, of more meaningful communities, and of a healthier relationship between the screen and the soul. Virtualia is the place where we water these seeds.

Happy reading.

20 YEARS OF THE FÓRUM DAS LETRAS



Guiomar Le Grammont

The Fórum das Letras of Ouro Preto, celebrating its 20th edition in 2025, has established itself as one of Brazil's most important and combative literary gatherings.

Since 2005, the Fórum das Letras has promoted in-depth debates on literature, publishing, criticism, translation, reader development, and the entire book production chain, bringing to light major Brazilian and international issues within the context of culture and citizenship. Leading figures from the national and international scene have actively participated, including Adélia Prado, Conceição Evaristo, Ferreira Gullar, Nélide Piñon, Marina Colasanti, Laerte, Emicida, Elisa Lucinda, and among the international guests, Roger Chartier, François Dosse, Lídia Jorge, Mia Couto, Rui Tavares, and many others, enriching the dialogue between authors, the public, artists, and academics.

Over these two decades, running the Forum has demanded from us, the coordinators, immense capacity for adaptation and resilience, whether during times of political crisis, such as the impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff in 2016, or under the impact of disasters like the Mariana dam collapse in 2015, which became topics addressed in the event's panel discussions. The Forum has survived municipal instabilities, budget cuts, changes in cultural policies, and did not cease to happen even during the COVID-19 pandemic, reinventing itself with virtual and hybrid editions and through partnerships.

The Fórum das Letrinhas, the event's branch dedicated to fostering young readers, developed various pedagogical activities, meetings with authors, and training seminars for teachers from public schools in the region. One of our main concerns is the democratization of books and reading, facing challenges often provoked by a lack of incentives and reduced access to culture.

The Fórum das Letras has always upheld a plurality of voices, promoting identity, diversity, and cooperation among literatures from Lusophone countries, expanding the dialogue to contemporary themes such as gender, race, heritage, urbanity, and human rights. This plural character is only possible thanks to the determination of my fellow female organizers to keep the event's flame alive in the face of adversity.

Courage and Legacy

To keep literature alive on the slopes and in the Baroque mansions of Ouro Preto, a city with so many literary resonances, fostering critical debates and transversal encounters, we have needed great resilience, boldness, and commitment. Over these 20 years, we have faced a lack of resources, logistical difficulties, political changes, and various crises, but thanks to our effort, the Forum has earned a prominent position in the national calendar, defending culture as a space for resistance and social transformation.

In summary, reaching this point, the twentieth edition of the Fórum das Letras of Ouro Preto, is itself a tribute to the courage and resilience we had to summon from our hearts, to transform obstacles into opportunities, always with the aim of promoting, stimulating, and disseminating Brazilian literature, the democratization of access to reading, and plural cultural dialogue, celebrating the diversity of the Brazilian people!



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THE DIGITAL REVOLUTION RESHAPING HIGHER EDUCATION



Rodrigo Cid

The ivory towers of academia are undergoing a transformation unlike anything since the internet's arrival. At the heart of this shift is blockchain — a technology usually linked to cryptocurrencies, but whose reach extends deep into how universities operate, validate knowledge, and protect intellectual property.

Blockchain is deceptively simple yet powerful. Picture a digital ledger distributed across thousands of computers worldwide rather than stored in one location. Every transaction, every data point gets grouped into "blocks" that are cryptographically chained together. Once added, a block can't be altered or removed — creating a permanent, tamper-proof record.

This isn't just theoretical innovation. The technology represents a fundamental shift in how we think about trust, transparency, and authority in digital systems. By eliminating the need for central intermediaries, blockchain distributes power across a network of participants, each maintaining their own copy of the truth.

Decentralization is blockchain's most revolutionary feature. In a peer-to-peer network, there's no single point of failure, no central authority that can be corrupted or compromised. Every node in the network maintains a complete copy of the ledger, validating transactions through distributed consensus rather than relying on a trusted third party. Immutability provides the second pillar. Once data is written to the blockchain, it becomes part of a permanent historical record. This isn't just difficult to change — it's cryptographically impossible without detection. For academic institutions where the integrity of records is paramount, this feature alone is transformative. Transparency rounds out the trinity. While blockchain can preserve privacy through encryption, the structure itself is inherently transparent. Every transaction is visible and verifiable by network participants, creating an unprecedented level of accountability.

Perhaps the most exciting development built on blockchain is the smart contract—programs stored on the blockchain that execute automatically when predetermined conditions are met. Think of them as digital vending machines: you insert the right input, the output gets delivered automatically, no human intervention needed.

In academic settings, smart contracts could revolutionize everything from scholarship distribution to intellectual property licensing. Imagine a system where research funding is automatically released when specific milestones are verified, or where authors automatically receive royalties whenever their work is cited or downloaded.

The applications of blockchain in higher education are as diverse as they are impactful. Let's explore the most promising use cases:

- Every year, thousands of fraudulent academic credentials circulate globally, undermining trust and devaluing legitimate qualifications. Blockchain offers an elegant solution: universities could issue diplomas and certificates directly onto the blockchain, creating immutable, instantly verifiable records.
- Employers could verify credentials in seconds rather than weeks. International recognition of degrees would be seamless. The administrative burden of transcript requests would evaporate. And most importantly, fraudulent claims would become immediately detectable.
- Scientific research depends on data integrity. Yet research fraud, whether through data manipulation or plagiarism, remains a persistent problem. Blockchain provides a solution by creating timestamped, immutable records of research data, methodologies, and results.

Collaborative research projects could leverage blockchain to ensure all participants have access to verified, tamper-proof data. Peer review processes could become more transparent and auditable. The replication crisis in science could be addressed through better documentation and verification of research protocols. For academics, proving authorship and protecting intellectual property can be challenging, especially in the fast-moving digital age. Blockchain offers a decentralized registry for creative and scholarly works, providing indisputable proof of authorship and creation dates. Smart contracts could automate the licensing process, ensuring that creators receive fair compensation whenever their work is used. The blockchain record would show the complete history of a work—from initial creation through all subsequent versions and uses.



University finances are often opaque, leading to questions about how donations are used and research funds are allocated. Blockchain's transparency could revolutionize university financial management, allowing donors to track how their contributions are spent and ensuring that research grants are used appropriately. Microfinancing of research projects could become feasible, with blockchain enabling small contributions from many donors and automatic distribution of funds based on verified milestones. This democratization of research funding could open new avenues for innovative but unconventional research proposals.

Universities manage complex supply chains — from laboratory equipment to library acquisitions. Blockchain can provide end-to-end tracking of these items, ensuring authenticity, preventing fraud, and optimizing inventory management. Every piece of equipment could have a verifiable provenance, from manufacture through its entire lifecycle within the institution.

The Federal University of Ouro Preto (UFOP) in Brazil exemplifies how academic institutions are pioneering blockchain adoption. Through initiatives like the Kryptolab led by Prof. Carlos Frederico in the Computer Science Department, and the GIFLABS directed by Prof. Rodrigo Cid in the Philosophy Department focusing on technology applications in education, UFOP is actively exploring how blockchain can transform academic operations. These aren't just theoretical exercises. They represent real efforts to bridge the gap between cutting-edge technology and practical academic needs, positioning UFOP as a leader in educational innovation.

The adoption of blockchain in academia promises three fundamental improvements:

- **Enhanced Security:** Cryptographic protection and decentralization make academic records virtually immune to fraud, manipulation, and data breaches. Student data, research findings, and institutional records gain unprecedented protection.
- **Operational Efficiency:** Smart contracts and automation reduce bureaucracy, accelerate processes like enrollment and credential verification, and cut administrative costs. What once took weeks can now happen in minutes.
- **Trust and Transparency:** Public, verifiable records of academic achievements, research outputs, and financial transactions foster collaboration, enhance institutional credibility, and empower stakeholders with unprecedented visibility.



Despite its promise, blockchain implementation in higher education faces substantial hurdles:

- **Scalability and Performance:** Traditional blockchain networks like Bitcoin and Ethereum process transactions at a rate measured in dozens per second — far below what's needed for institutions serving thousands of students. During peak periods like registration, this limitation could create bottlenecks. Layer 2 solutions and alternative consensus mechanisms are being developed, but they're not yet mature.
- **Costs and Complexity:** Implementing blockchain requires significant upfront investment in infrastructure and technical expertise. Transaction costs — the "gas fees" in Ethereum, for example — can be prohibitively expensive. Energy consumption, particularly for Proof of Work systems, raises sustainability concerns. Ongoing maintenance and updates require specialized knowledge that many institutions lack.
- **Interoperability Issues:** Universities run on complex, interconnected systems developed over decades. Integrating blockchain with existing student information systems, learning management platforms, and administrative databases is technically challenging. Creating standards for cross-institutional blockchain networks adds another layer of complexity.
- **Regulatory Uncertainty:** The legal framework for blockchain in education remains underdeveloped. Questions about data privacy, particularly under regulations like GDPR, need clarification. Who owns data on a decentralized system? How do institutions comply with legal requirements for data deletion when blockchain is immutable? These questions await definitive answers.
- **Cultural Resistance:** Perhaps the most significant barrier is human, not technical. Universities are inherently conservative institutions, and faculty, administrators, and staff may resist technological change. Explaining blockchain's benefits, training users, and overcoming institutional inertia requires sustained effort and leadership commitment.





Prof. Dr. Rodrigo Cid is a researcher at the Federal University of Ouro Preto (UFOP), where he directs GIFLABS, focusing on the application of emerging technologies in education. This article explores ongoing research into blockchain applications in academic settings.

Looking Forward: The Strategic Imperative

The question facing academic institutions isn't whether blockchain will transform higher education, but how quickly and how completely. Early adopters will shape the standards and practices that others follow. Institutions that wait risk finding themselves locked into systems designed by others, potentially at competitive disadvantage. For universities like UFOP and others worldwide, the strategic imperative is clear: engage with blockchain technology now, through research, pilot projects, and community dialogue. Build expertise, experiment with applications, learn from failures, and position the institution to lead rather than follow.

The transformation won't happen overnight. Blockchain adoption in academia will be gradual, measured, and iterative. But the direction is inevitable. Just as universities adapted to earlier technological revolutions — from the printing press to the internet — they will adapt to blockchain.

The academic community stands at an inflection point. Blockchain offers tools to address longstanding problems: credential fraud, research integrity, financial transparency, and administrative inefficiency. The technology is maturing, use cases are being proven, and the ecosystem is developing.

What's needed now is engagement — from faculty exploring research applications, from administrators investigating operational improvements, from students demanding more transparent and portable credentials, and from institutional leaders willing to invest in the future.

The question universities must ask themselves isn't whether blockchain will transform higher education. It's whether they'll be part of shaping that transformation, or merely responding to changes driven by others.

The digital revolution in academia has begun. The only question is: who will lead it?

**CRYPTORASTAS: REGGAE,
BLOCKCHAIN, AND COMMUNITY
AS A PHILOSOPHY OF THE FUTURE**



"We didn't just want to sell NFTs. We wanted to create a community that breathes reggae and decentralization."

- Marcus, Digitaldubs

Reggae as Root and Language: It is with great pleasure that I introduce Marcus, known as Digitaldubs, who has over 25 years of experience in the reggae music scene. A producer, graphic designer, and cultural agitator, he has lived through every phase of the music industry — from vinyl to streaming — and has always operated at the intersection of sound and image. A reference in sound system culture and a pioneer of street reggae in Brazil, Marcos kindly granted me this interview and shared his story with passion and deep affection for the movement he helped shape. "I've always been into technology. Since I was a kid, I played with sound equipment, computers, drawing. When I started Digitaldubs, I made the flyers, the posters. It was all very visual." For Marcos, reggae is more than music, it's a political, spiritual, and aesthetic language. And it was this language he sought to translate into the NFT universe, creating characters that carry the ancestry and diversity of Rastafarian culture.

NFT as a Tool, Not the Goal: His interest in NFTs emerged in 2021, during the media and market frenzy. But Marcus wasn't drawn to financial speculation, what captivated him was the possibility of creating digital art with symbolic and communal value, recognizing blockchain's potential to help entire communities in Jamaica sharing their music and Rastafari culture. At the same time, I began my own research and creative journey in the NFT space. When I came across this project, I was immediately intrigued. Later, I discovered that the mind behind it was Brazilian, and my interest only grew. Since then, I've followed its evolution and today I'm part of this community that doesn't just collect NFTs, we collect stories and friendships. "I was never interested in Bitcoin or investing. But when I saw NFTs, I saw a technology that could be used for art. For culture." Inspired by the Cryptopunks, Marcus began designing the first Cryptorastas pixel by pixel in Photoshop. What started as a collectible digital piece for Digitaldubs quickly took on a life of its own, guided by the community and artists from around the world who contribute to its ongoing growth. "I made the first one, then the second, and they started selling. That's when I realized it had potential. But it couldn't just be mine. It had to belong to the community. With around 50 characters drawn manually, Marcus realized the project needed to scale. His partnership with Yaak, the developer, was crucial. Together, they created a collection of 10,420 NFTs on the Ethereum blockchain. Today, Cryptorastas has a solid community and notable collectors. The project continues to evolve across multiple areas art, music, events, fashion, education, and technology, featuring unique artworks with visual and narrative layers rooted in Rastafari culture. "The difference is that the project was already connected to an existing culture. I have deep knowledge of that culture. So the characters have detail, consistency. They have stories." Each character has a name, origin, and a unique narrative, generated by an algorithm based on texts created by the team. Two hundred avatars were reserved for real reggae artists and released through auctions. The rest are fictional, but all carry the soul of Rastafarian culture.



Although 80% of the characters are Jamaican, Marcos made sure to include figures from other countries, Brazil, England, the United States, reflecting reggae's global reach. The collection launched in August 2021 and sold 4,000 NFTs on its first day. The community's Discord jumped from 30 to 10,000 members. Enthusiasts from around the world began collecting the NFTs. Even Snoop Dogg helped boost the project by using his Cryptorastas as his profile picture on social media. "It happened overnight. We realized it had a scale we hadn't imagined. So we built a team to run the project." The team handled social media, programming, support, and curation. But the challenges were many: lack of investment culture in Brazil, high labor costs, market volatility. Even with initial success, sustaining the project required ongoing effort. "It seems like a lot of money, but keeping a project like this going is a ton of work. And there's no model. To this day, no one really knows what an NFT collection is. Is it art? A business? A community?"

From the beginning, Marcus wanted Cryptorastas to have a visual language that extended beyond the digital. He invited graffiti artists to collaborate, and gradually the art began appearing on walls in various cities. "Some people wanted to join the community but didn't have the means. So they created graffiti and received an NFT. It became a form of access." Today, Cryptorastas graffiti can be found in Rio, São Paulo, Salvador, Bogotá, and even Jamaica, where the tradition is to paint murals in front of studios. The avatar of artist Sugar Minott, for example, was painted in his honor. "Graffiti culture became part of the community. It's an exchange. Urban art connected to digital art."



Cryptorasta #03629

On October 10–12, 2025, the first in-person Cryptorastas community gathering took place. Around 30 people from different parts of Brazil met in Rio de Janeiro to exchange ideas, share knowledge, and strengthen bonds. "It wasn't just about NFTs or reggae. There were many topics. People wanted to share knowledge. It was a really special experience." The event was held at Oasis, an art space in downtown Rio. Coincidentally, the owner was also a community member. The result? An invitation for Cryptorastas to have a permanent space there—a physical hub for meetings, creations, and exchanges. "We're going to have a community space in downtown Rio. Another benefit of being a Cryptorasta."

Marcos is blunt when talking about the traditional music industry: "The music industry is garbage. It's not made for artists. It's made for a few to profit." That's why he wants to create new models, using technology to empower artists and communities. Blockchain, he believes, can transform the relationship between creators and audiences. "An artist isn't just someone who receives applause. They're part of the community. And blockchain can change that relationship." The goal is to build an ecosystem where everyone benefits. Where NFTs aren't just products, but symbols of belonging. Where money is part of culture, but not its core. "There's no culture without business. Money is part of culture. But it shouldn't come first. It should come along."

One of the most profound points in the interview was the reflection on the symbolic value of digital assets. Marcus believes there's still a philosophical barrier to understanding what it means to "own" something digital. "Some people avoid technology thinking it's too capitalist. But it has possibilities. It can be used for the good of culture, of society." Despite this, the project attracts people outside the blockchain world. People who connect with its message, its aesthetics, its community. People who want to belong. "Some people have a Cryptorasta because it made sense to them. Because they wanted to be part of the community. They didn't join other NFT projects. They joined this one."

Cryptorastas is more than an NFT collection. It's a philosophical, aesthetic, and political proposal. It's an attempt to reinvent the relationship between art, technology, and community. It's reggae in code form. Resistance in pixel form. This text is the result of a joyful conversation with a multi-artist who loves what he does, who plays with beats, and who with love and wisdom is changing the music market and the ways we build thought through music and Rastafari culture. What struck me most was the sparkle in his eyes and the realization that his belief in revolution is rooted in the idea that the future and success lie in decentralization. "Sometimes I look around and think: wow, we've already done so many amazing things. But there's still so much to do."

And there truly is!

ARTISTS, BUSINESSMEN, GAMBLERS, AND DREAMERS, WHICH ONE ARE YOU?



As expected, the NFT space has taken shape and changed. Such an open space does not look for labels, however they are often unavoidable, as it is necessary for the space of digital art, cryptocurrencies, project exchanges and business to begin to lay the foundations for a long life as a revolutionary movement in the arts. In the beginning everything is a mixture of interests and actors that have found a window of opportunity but were not fully defined, now as time passes the new "entity" has spaces where each character that experiences it finds its niche.

So far, I see a clear definition of the place occupied by most relevant characters, as well as the community that has moved away from the initial emotion of profit - thanks to the bear market - to build an alternative of real visibility as creators, and I say creators because this no longer just for arts or fine arts in digital format, it is now a place for the creators of culture.

Here we are, artists, businessmen, merchants (traders), gamblers, dreamers and, in the future, the expectant witnesses who will learn from our mistakes to create something better. But at the moment many artists who have not found sales but stagnation have either left or taken reservations; many have had to give up full time as creators to do other things that allow them to have a stable income and are vulnerable to scammers as there is a desperation to be discovered as the artistic revelation of the moment, and to be accepted, because if you are not one of the favourites of the businessmen or patrons you will most likely have to struggle to gain visibility, remember it is never what you know but who you know.



A word of advice, my dear artists: something I have learnt recently is that they will pay you when you show your value. And no, gentlemen, I am not talking about talent — because businessmen who bet on digital creatives buy what has value, knowing that value will increase. A businessman is looking to invest, to build, and to create alliances; a businessman needs to be sold on value.

What better example of businessmen than the Medici group - Cozomo and his boys - as they have invested in outstanding artists to grow themselves and create platforms that invite others to be part of the movement. A businessman knows how to find opportunities even in leisure time, it is an innate behavior. All of us, especially artists, have to learn because we are illiterate business romantics, because nothing is done just for the love of art - unless, of course, all other needs, including the need for attention, are already taken care of.

A dealer, on the other hand, will acquire your piece to find a good bidder to make money and to see how they can negotiate a unique piece by a renowned artist at an affordable price, perhaps to make a name for himself as a trader (dealer?), but they will not give you the recognition that the businessman does because they are selling, not giving value.

Then there are the dreamers, those who, like the businessman, want to build, but the difference is that they have put more of themselves and their emotions into it than the businessmen; those who want to build out of conviction for the community and see for those who don't have the spotlight. Dreamers are independents who seek equality of opportunity. The value they place on artists comes from empathy, perhaps even from having been there before, so they bet heavily on the rebellious, anarchic, and different speech of each creator. The dreamers often put more at risk because the resources they use are their own, and their name goes with it; their credibility can easily be affected if they do not succeed. However, they recover because they have the appreciation of artists who understand the effort, considering themselves comrades in the struggle itself.

Finally, the gamblers and scammers — I can't help but smile ironically at the thought of them as despicable characters who detract from the seriousness of the movement. It's opportunism embodied in deft fingers that are increasingly ingenious in taking whatever they can: value, parts, reputation, money... Whatever they can. But also, like all of us, they have found a great opportunity where they can "work" unscrupulously. That's what happens when a space of this magnitude is created.

This is how the digital culture revolution has been fragmented in Web3 and NFTs, where change happens every 24 hours. Survival and adaptation come from an iron will to belong — a sense of belonging — because whatever niche you identify with, here you have found a space to see and to be seen. I am constantly reminded of Allen Ginsberg's poem *Howl*, a reading of the future to which we are susceptible every day.

So, if you are an artist, learn from the businessmen, build like the dreamers, support other artists, and learn to distinguish between gamblers and friends. But above all, live the dream of being in the digital revolution.



***BUILT FOR RED CONDITIONS:
PROJECT ELEPHANT AND
CRYPTO'S MATURITY TEST***



When Bitcoin broke under 100K and a quarter-trillion vanished overnight, the industry hit another turning point.

Traders were wiped out in hours. The fear index crashed. ETH followed. Altcoins tanked. X feeds drowned in panic and projection.

But in that same chaos, something else started moving quietly: the builders. The ones who've seen this before.

Because every reset strips the noise back to signal, and the real work begins where the charts end.

Project Elephant (code name for our platform) was born in that silence. A response to everything the space keeps recycling: false hype, copy paste projects, and the erosion of trust. It carries the same DNA as Long Wei Dragons (and soon it's transformation drop for holders), further evolved; built for red conditions, designed to function when everything else breaks.

ALL IN THE HISTORICAL PATTERNS

- 2018 was DeFi.
- 2021 was crypto art and PFPs.
- 2023–2024 was meme-coin mania, dopamine disguised as innovation, tokens moving faster than sense.
- 2025 was supposed to be the clean bull run.

Instead, NFT trading has fallen more than 90 percent since its peak, while tokenized real-world assets are quietly breaking records. According to The Defiant, the sector “has grown 260 percent from \$8.6 billion at the beginning of the year to over \$23 billion today,” with Ainvest reporting the same surge during the first half of 2025.

Visa, Mastercard, Stripe, and traditional financial players are all building the rails beneath the noise. What we’re seeing isn’t collapse; it’s compression, the sound of an industry sobering up.



FROM CASINO TO REAL INFRASTRUCTURE

The memes, the punks, the apes, the penguins, the overnight billionaires; every cycle needs its theater. But once the crowd leaves, the real work begins.

This next phase is about proof, not price. Proof that something happened. Proof that participation meant something. Proof that trust can exist without speculation.

That’s where Project Elephant sits. It turns actions into proofs. No gambling layer on top. No illusion of value. Just traceable interaction that’s long overdue.

When the market swings ten percent in a single day, proof is worth more than hype.

VOLATILITY PROVES THE POINT

- Bitcoin under 100K.
- A billion dollars liquidated in 24 hours.
- Miners squeezed. ETF outflows climbing.

It looks like chaos, but volatility is just the market's honesty test. If an idea only works when everything's green, it was never real to begin with.

Project Elephant was built for red conditions. It stemmed from Long Wei Dragons and its upcoming transformation as its baseline. The platform is designed from the ground up to address the recurring fractures of the space: trust, verification, originality, and source integrity. It's the shift many expected, but few could build.

The goal isn't to make people "go crypto." It's to make the technology disappear behind trust and function.

AFTER THE NOISE FADES

NFTs as a technology shouldn't be underestimated. If anything, this is the real beginning. The concept has outgrown slogans, Web3 hashtags, and speculative storytelling. Project Elephant is the shift. It was built for that, not for the next run, but for the next decade.

Crypto isn't dying. It's growing up. And this time, maybe we finally are too.

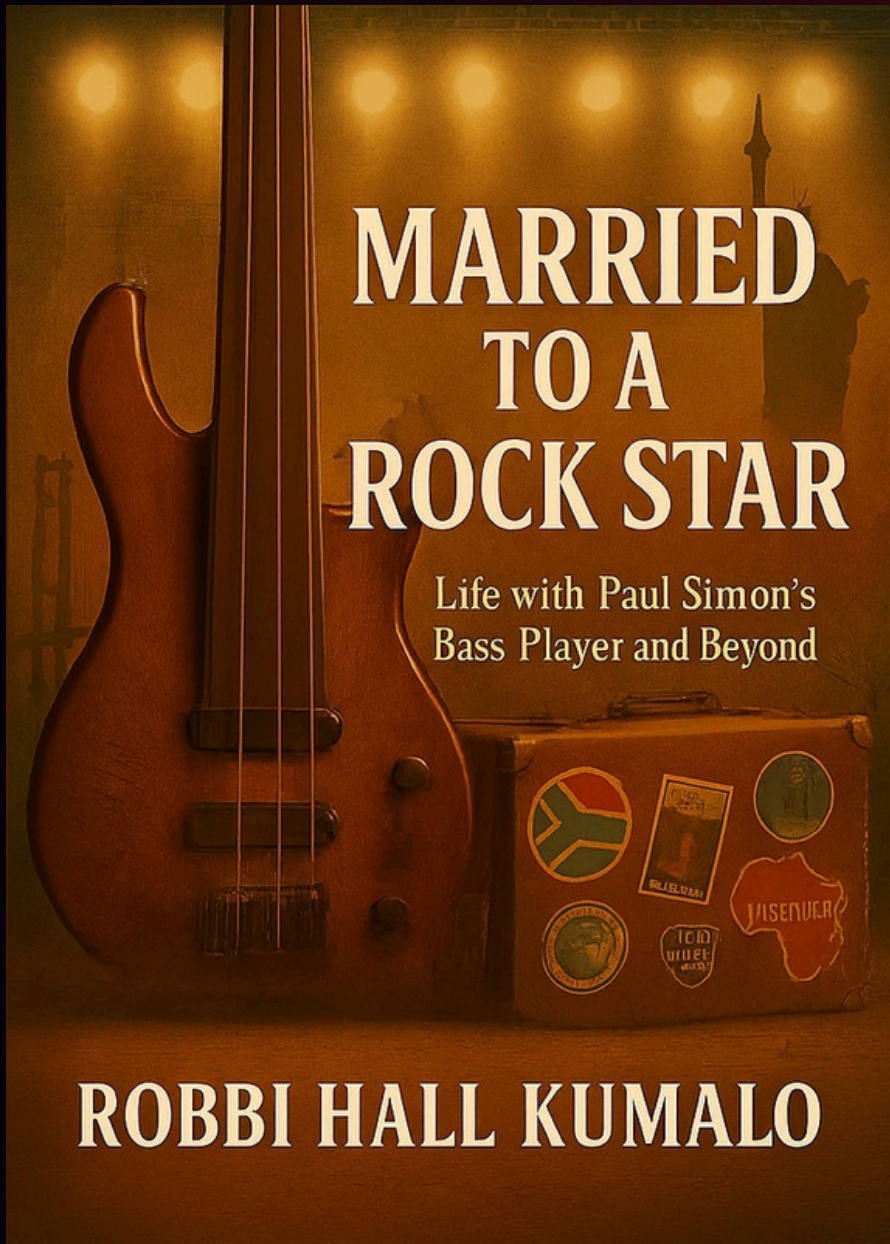
INTERVIEW WITH ROBBI KUMALO



Her name is ROBBI KUMALO and I had the great privilege of featuring her on MUSIC TRAIN a weekly live podcast show streaming via [YouTube](#)./Facebook /X. When she sings and strums I get chills. The blessing of her artistic essence with reverence unmatched is a gift that keeps reminding all the while encapsulating what it truly means to be a Teaching Artist.

Robbi Kumalo's life is filled with raw emotion & attention to detail, song & story that stir the spirit into remembering from where it came. She has most recently authored & self published a book titled: "Married to a Rockstar". Robbi Hall Kumalo is a Grammy-nominated vocalist, award-winning storyteller, and teaching artist whose career has taken her from global concert stages to classrooms and community centers across the United States. A native New Yorker now based in Portland, Oregon, she has performed with legends including Aretha Franklin, Diana Ross, Rod Stewart, and Chaka Khan, while also inspiring over a million children and families through her interactive music and storytelling programs. Her memoir "Married to a Rockstar" explores the intersections of marriage, motherhood, the music industry, and her ongoing journey with multiple sclerosis, blending personal resilience with humor, faith, and creativity. Robbi is a proud Bahá'í artist whose work continues to highlight the power of music, the importance of community, and the joy of storytelling. Grammy-nominated singer and storyteller Robbi Hall Kumalo shares a life of music, faith, and resilience living with MS.





What role does resilience play in your life as an artist and author?

I feel no differently than I felt when I was just a songwriter or a performing artist. I'm honored that God wakes me up in the morning to do something creative. The willingness to be awake and alive is resilient to a great degree because there's so much that we don't know is coming our way that we're ready & prepared for stature for yet any more instant thing can disturb that consternation. That's resilience. Luckily things live on YouTube for hundreds of years or until electricity stops.

How did your involvement in Paul Simon's Graceland album shape your career?

When I heard it on the radio, it changed my relationship with pop music radio stations completely to hear world music on that platform. I was still living at home with my parents...

What draws you to children's storytelling as a Grammy-nominated musician?

Rhythm being passed down without apology like a marching band speaking google Disney Lululemon and the United Nations, this is the one thing that I would do if I wanted to make \$10,000 per gig this is something called the tip of the ice berg. Let me explain what you want to a whole bunch of people you've gone through in your life and Lessons you've learned could make these people's lives better. If anything like me you know that podcasts and gigs are amazing ways to reach all of these people. There is one style of content that cuts through the clutter and gets to these decision makers better than anything other and that is a TED X TALK. I experienced my first Ted X Talk when approached by a book agent (the same book agent as Deepak Chopra and Ella) and I started speaking at gigs like this in front of people in Portland in front of corporate audiences in Chicago, Boston & Miami. <https://www.robbikumalo.com/robby-k-s-40-shorty-re-kids-studio>

In what ways do you incorporate healing practices like Reiki into your creative process?

As a musician I've always been aware of my energy level. Sometimes my emotions are sad or nervous or frustrated but those are all forms of energy. By studying Reiki I learned where energy moves from. By learning more about my own body's energy and just the energy of everything that's moving in the world, I'm able to pace my own movements accordingly. I'm learning how to not let emotions change my energy or affect my vibe. That is hard work for all of humanity. One day we'll get it right and the world will feel peaceful every breath that we take.

Who are some of your biggest musical influences, and why?

I would say the biggest musical influences have been the people that I've had the chance to work with. Some of the names you know who I've worked with that have inspired me and taught me so much and others you'll never know who they are like Alvester Garnet, or Regina Carter for that matter you might know, but to know Regina and Alvester together is a whole different picture to understand. That is harmony. That is unison. That is keeping the beat. People that have been in love with their musical partner Diana Ross have been influential to Ashford and Simpson in New York City. Luther Vandross and Joan Armatrading, I didn't know them personally though but I felt like their music spoke to me on how to raise the bar on my own musicality with practice in prayer.

How has being a teaching artist changed the way you approach music and theater?

Becoming a teaching artist over the years I have evolved. Going on my 50th year of pursuing music but I no longer work with young audiences like I used to. I did see over 1 million children in the years that I was dedicating myself to young audiences and I'm glad about that. Possibly there are 1 million children out there that are keeping the beat with the saucy flavor that I gave them. Maybe they've grown up and forgotten. Probably not because music makes an indelible impression on the heart that words cannot explain.



What message do you hope readers take away from your book about love and family?

I hope that readers take away multiple messages. Of course, even if you have an illness chronically like multiple sclerosis you can still be pleasant, positive and helpful in the world. People that are pursuing music might understand how complicated it can be that you're almost stepping on your own feet sometimes to move ahead but in the process of it you will encounter people, places and things or nouns that make all the difference in your day. I hope that readers will take away the reality that marriage is better than divorce, that a family unit grows the children well and that time is on our side. Take your time on every little moment that you're experiencing because it might be your last moment. But seriously, live your life like it is your last moment. You'll lose all the fear, trepidation, anger and greed.

Describe a moment when music brought you peace during a challenging time.

Music has always bought me peace in challenging times. My personal life might have challenges and problems going on financially, marital, familial and social all kinds! Being a children's artist going to work always found me in the midst of children who are generally happy, joyous and willing to love first. When it became not a job but my purpose in life was when I began to receive all the blessings as they came. It wasn't always because I sang a perfect note or played a perfect run on the piano, it was about being a messenger of love and joy and yes that was always simultaneously with the challenges. Some days the challenges rung for me and I would listen to them intensely until I got bored, then I turn around and go back to music and it would always be there waiting for me to do the very least, to practice something that I needed to practice all by myself. It's an interesting way to get to know myself better.

How do you balance your roles as a musician, author, and voice coach?

I balance my roles as Musician author and vocal coach by keeping my attitude pleasant and happy. I take good care of my health, as best as I can with medication that I can't even pronounce the name of yet, I am persevering. My voice students are always a light of inspiration for me, walking in the door kind of curious about what's gonna happen next for them, being a musician puts me part of a group of incredibly talented and amazing people and I'm grateful for that for sure. Being an Author is new and I'm learning how I don't actually put my foot in my mouth when I speak but instead I say things that give people a different perspective of how they're living in that moment. I'd like to think that I'm able to help people change their mindset for a more positive direction when needed. So that's what being a musician has taught me how to be flexible keep timing and stay in the right key.

What unique lessons have you learned from your ancestors and heritage?

I've learned that my parents didn't talk about how difficult life was for them in the 1920s as parents. But they lived a life as an example of people that could strive to work hard and at the end of the day rest and relax. I'm still learning that part from my parents. Posthumous messages are priceless. They're always delivered by an angel that you don't expect to show up for you when they do.

How has the pandemic inspired your recent music compilations?

The pandemic had me arriving in the state of Oregon feeling lost and confused coming back from great experiences in Argentina as a storyteller. I wanted to tell stories in Spanish but they actually hired me to tell stories in English for the Spanish speakers learning English and it was an exciting challenge. It gave me the opportunity to talk everywhere else in Spanish, but when I went to work I told stories and sang songs in English, and they actually paid me to do that!

What advice would you give to aspiring teaching artists?

I would give aspiring teaching artist advice to learn how to work with classroom teachers and what their job is, what state and federal curriculum is, and then plan accordingly based on that knowledge. Most of the time people start projects but they don't have the artistic skills to enhance it so don't be afraid to add your artistic skills to enhance the lesson. If you don't know what those skills are, whatever the process is that you have for making art whether it's music visual arts Movement.. Use whatever talents and skills you have in that genre to build an enhancement for the lesson that the teacher is driving to achieve

How does storytelling connect with your work as a somatic healer?

Since everything in the world is vibrating and moving, learning somatic has taught me a lot. Related to the body, especially distinct from the mind. In order for an artist to create a work of art they have to focus and concentrate on the work of art. They're very aware of their bodies' science and chemistry and use our body parts as needed. As a storyteller I was always embracing movement and song as part of my artistic expression and each of those things require a different body part to be honed and fine-tuned. Combining it with storytelling is a great exercise for brain work and compassion towards others. There's only so much that you can multitask successfully so being an artist with amazing skills requires a lot of experimental leaps of faith.



What's one thought-provoking experience from your live performances?

A thought provoking experience might be the Oprah Winfrey show with Diana Ross a couple years ago... I was amazed that I was singing with Diana Ross to begin with but then when I found out that she was appearing on the Oprah Winfrey show with Brandie to promote their new movie, I was blown away and very excited! The only part that was tricky was that I had just given birth and needed to travel to Chicago to film the Oprah Winfrey show and leave my baby at home by herself or with a new nanny. I chose the new nanny and my eldest daughter who was about three years old stayed home while mom and dad went and did the Oprah Winfrey show. A wonderful gig for sure to be on television with Diana Ross on the Oprah Winfrey show was a highlight indeed, but my heart was breaking because I was a working mom that had to leave a newborn baby home alone so to speak without my breasts for nursing! I felt terrible as a mother While feeling thrilled and grateful that I was able to not only perform on the Oprah Winfrey show but I was with my husband and all of my Singer friends from the Lion King and other professional connections... We had recorded the album once before but then I had the baby and was traveling and working as a new mom with a toddler at home. I felt a lot of conflicts and questioned if I was doing the right thing to pursue music so hard. My ex-husband didn't care either way he thought I should've stayed home and not bothered to sing on the Oprah Winfrey show though, but I was the contractor on the session so... I was needed by Diana Ross's company! Better attention than a spouse at that moment as I recollect.

:-)

How has living in Portland, Oregon, influenced your artistic expression?

Living in Portland Oregon has given me an opportunity to coexist with nature. The more that I learn about the history of the state of Oregon I understand how it is built. Some things about the state like its history I'm not happy about however living here amongst the trees foliage And human beings makes for an interesting moment constantly. A lot of people here are just totally into nature and dress accordingly, we even have nude bike riders taking Sunday rides together! Not all the time but on the occasion words needed, clothes come off, bikes move forward, and the city of Portland is what is warmly known as weird. I would have to agree, which is why it fits in so easily.

What future projects are you most excited about?

I'm very excited about doing things online! Some of the future projects that I'm interested in working on have to do with Vessy Mink and Music Train and whatever other ideas that BK Han might also have to share with us westerners! Would I like to write another book? Absolutely! I have about five children's stories waiting to be published.

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If you could collaborate with any artist, living or passed, who would it be and why?

If I could collaborate with any artist living or not living it would be Stevie Wonder and Ella Fitzgerald! I'd love for the three of us to make a trio and write some new songs together. I'd also invite my older sister to come and sing some opera with us as well, she was great as a vocalist and older sister.



LIFE HAPPENS OFFLINE



Gustavo Henrique

As telas derretem a vida,
a vida adormecida dentro dos algoritmos
tudo é rápido.

Fugaz a vida passa pelo feed
só pode viver quem é visto,
a dor escancarada se ausenta,
se esconde...

O que se vende é um sorriso falso
a melancolia das redes anuncia
as tragédias,

As guerras transmitidas ao vivo e em cores
é só mais um evento.

Quantas visualizações uma lágrima é capaz de carregar ?
um pranto ameno fica descuidado
dentro de um dislike indiferente ?

Acaso o vento precisa de curtidas ?
e a boa natureza precisa de câmeras
vadias lhe comunicando sobre sua importância ?

Acaso um grito de alegria precisa de uma
câmara vazia para se ecoar no mundo ?

O sol precisa da permissão dos curtidores
para nascer ? Não nasceria o sol sem permissão nenhuma ?

Screens melt life away,
life dormant within algorithms,
everything is fast.

Life fleetingly passes through the feed
only those who are seen can live,
the pain laid bare is absent,
it hides...

What sells is a fake smile
the melancholy of social media announces
the tragedies,

Wars broadcast live and in color
are just another event.

How many views can a tear carry?
Is a gentle cry neglected
within an indifferent dislike?

Does the wind need likes?
And does good nature need cameras
to communicate its importance?

Does a cry of joy need an
empty camera to echo in the world?

Does the sun need the permission of likers
to rise? Wouldn't the sun rise without permission?

A vida clama pelo offline,
as folhas the leaves
flores flowers
amizades friendships
canções songs
cansaço tiredness
labuta toil
gargalhada de criança children's laughter
latido dos cachorros dogs barking
e o ronronar dos gatos and cats purring

Tudo isso precisa de gente
que tem sangue quente nas veias
all of this needs people
who have warm blood in their veins

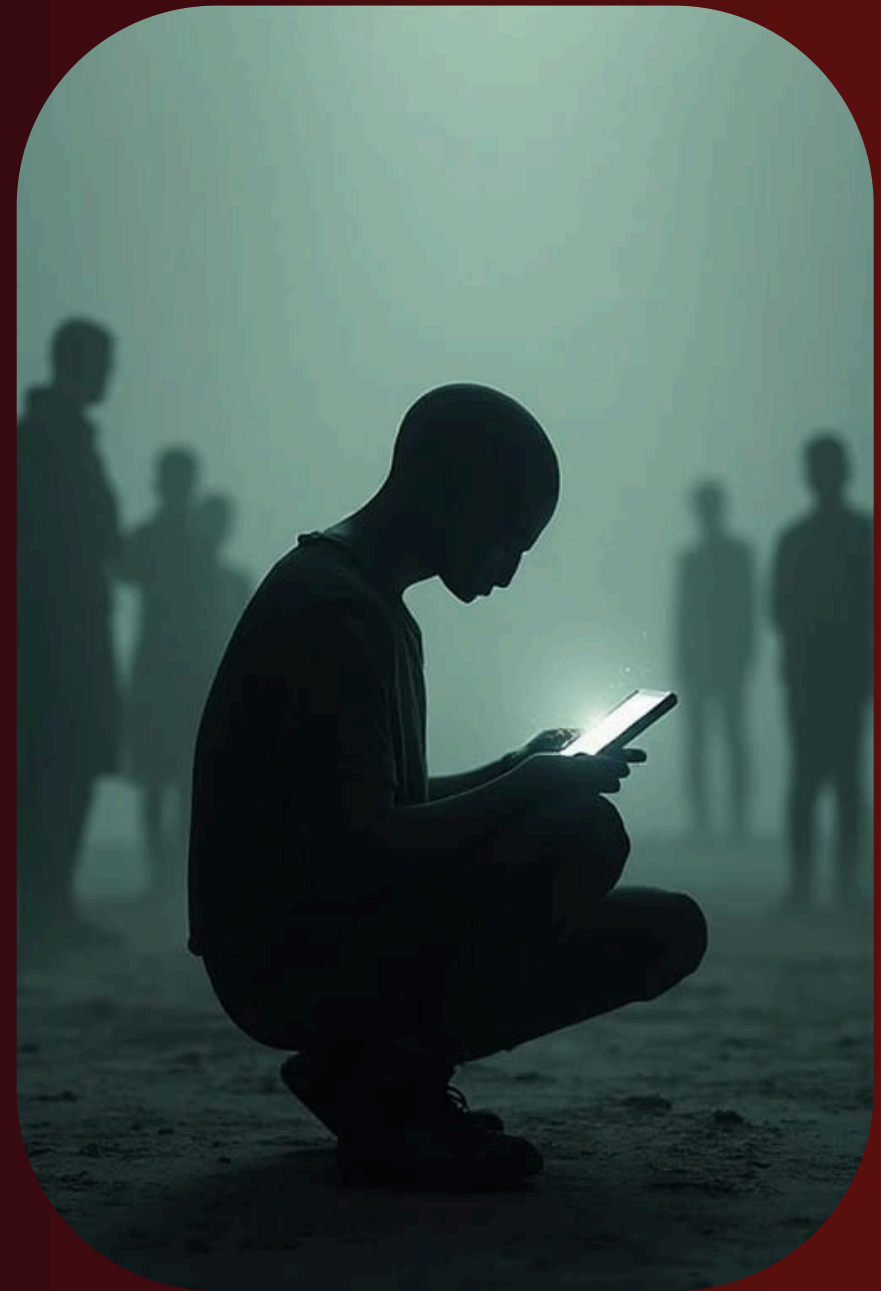
a vida se dá offline... life happens offline...

Com o olhar humano que se desmancha
nas solidões das montanhas
que cumprimenta os seus nas ruas...
Não podemos enforçar a vida com
os fios dos computadores,
Não podemos intoxicar o coração
com alumínio dos celulares...
With the human gaze that melts away
in the solitude of the mountains
that greets its own on the street...
We cannot focus on life with
computer wires,
We cannot intoxicate the heart
with cell phone aluminum...

A vida pede que estejamos offline Life demands offline

a vida é exigente demais para que nos
deixemos levar pelas ondas elétricas que
sequestram toda a nossa subjetividade.
life is too demanding for us to
let ourselves be carried away by the electric waves
that hijack all our subjectivity.

O mundo que se derrama
sobre os nossos corpos
deseja nos emocionar
The world that spills
over our bodies
that wants to move us





O mundo que se derrama
sobre os nossos corpos
deseja nos emocionar

Exige de nós
respirar profundo
viver profundamente
presentemente

As telas
meus caros, minhas caras
aspiram nossas vidas...

As mentiras espalhadas
fazem dos nobres sentimentos
valor monetário...

Diante do tribunal das redes
sociais, os erros tornam-se imperdoáveis,
nossa humanidade
diante deste mundo tecnológico
de guerra virtual - onde está a verdade ?

Nas mãos de quem paga mais
nas mãos dos insensíveis tecnocratas que
sem nenhum pudor transformam a vida em espetáculo

Transforma a natureza em propriedade
e faz do mundo um lugar inabitável.

Que a vida se derrame
abundante diante do mundo

Que possamos amar a nossa solitude
e nos debruçar sobre as nenhuma novidades..

Que tudo seja mais do que
o aparecer passageiro no instagram

Que nós sejamos genuínos como um pedaço
de pedra, que fica mole diante do universo...

The world that spills
over our bodies
that wants to move us

demands that we
breathe deeply
live deeply
in the present

The screens,
my dear friends,
suck our lives dry...

The lies spread
turn noble feelings
into monetary value...

Before the court of social media,
mistakes become unforgivable,
our humanity
before this technological world
of virtual warfare—where is the truth?

In the hands of those who pay the most
in the hands of insensitive technocrats
who shamelessly transform life into spectacle,

transform nature into property,
and make the world an uninhabitable place.

May life spill out
abundantly before the world...

May we love our solitude
and dwell on the lack of news...

May everything be more than
a fleeting appearance on Instagram,

may we be as genuine as a piece
of stone, which remains soft before the universe...

Espero que o ritmo da vida se transforme em poça suja parada
deixada pela jovem chuva de séculos passados...

Que não sejamos apenas uma peça
em uma máquina
máquinas não se emocionam,
e a vida é toda um emocionar-se...

A vida na sua ilogicidade não tolera
ser algoritmizável... as montanhas
lagos
penhascos
peixes
asfaltos
covardia, coragem, solidão,
um abraço de mãe
uma comemoração de uma conquista
incrível de uma pessoa amada
é coisa demais
que nenhum hardware é capaz de carregar
a vida é um bug insistentizável
e os dias insistem para que lhes possamos
colocar a roupa nobre da nossa autenticidade...

Que nós possamos aparecer como uma árvore
parada, toda linda, frondosa, extravagante
diante do mundo que no seu vai-vém
é irrecopiável...

Inteligência artificial é a violência
transcrita em linguagem lógica formal,
que quer desfigurar toda a nossa sensibilidade
e lhe deixar exposta cadavéricamente
em um perfil qualquer...



I hope that the rhythm of life turns into a dirty puddle
left behind by the young rain of centuries past...

May we not be just a cog
in a machine
machines do not feel emotion,
and life is all about feeling emotion...

Life, in its illogicality, does not tolerate
being algorithmized... mountains
lakes
cliffs
fish
asphalt
cowardice, courage, loneliness,
a mother's embrace
a celebration of an incredible achievement
by a loved one
are too much
for any hardware to carry
life is an unalgorithmizable bug
and the days insist that we
clothe them in the noble garments of our authenticity...

May we appear like a tree
standing still, beautiful, leafy, extravagant
before the world that, in its comings and goings,
is irreplaceable...

Artificial intelligence is violence
transcribed into formal, logical language
that wants to disfigure all our sensitivity
and leave it exposed, cadaverous,
in some random profile...

VIRTUALIA

MAGAZINE

