

PPGARTES-UERJ COLLECTION
CONTEMPORARY ART AND CULTURE

2

OVER_FLOWING
HORIZONS

BETWEEN
ARTS

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COLLECTION EDITORS
Luciana Lyra
Paloma Carvalho Santos

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ART, IMAGE
AND WRITING

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EDITOR
Paloma Carvalho Santos

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NAU
EDITORA

OVER_FLOWING HORIZONS PPGARTES-UERJ COLLECTION ON CONTEMPORARY ART AND CULTURE

Luciana Lyra
Paloma Carvalho Santos
editors

The Postgraduate Program in Arts at the Arts Institute of the State University of Rio de Janeiro (PPGArtes-UERJ) has been impacting the national academic landscape with depictions situated between critical reflection and the updating of paradoxes involved in creation, fruition and research when it comes to the artistic phenomenon. Zealously questioning matters such as art's disciplinary borders, its historical value and repercussions in the social sphere, the program has been dedicated to passionate reflection that generated an extensive bibliographic production since 2005, delivered by its docents and students individually or in small groups.

For the first collective action in the editorial topos, PPGArtes-UERJ released in 2019 the book *Arte e Cultura – Ensaios* [Art and Culture – Essays], published by Editora Cobogó (Rio de Janeiro), gathering important articles written by the docents at the program. Following that track, emerged the idea of questioning our times through the creation of this collection, to be distributed in e-book format by NAU Editora. With this publication, available for free, we advance and expand access to the program's collective collection – authored by docents and students – and celebrate a new communal action in the bibliographic arena, emphasizing the political dimension of resistance of this enterprise in the fragile national context of harsh dystopias.

The PPGArtes-UERJ collection, entitled *Over_Flowing Horizons*, assembles five digital volumes related to the lines of

research in the program, prioritizing the focus on “Art and Contemporary Culture” and the means of resistance for art research in the current scenario of the pandemic, post-pandemic and dismantled policies in Brazilian universities. In this collection, the contemporary element is approached via aesthetical practices, the new ways of existing and feeling that engender renewed categorizations of places, times and other ways of visibility, especially during this phase of intense destructure in art creation and reflection on this important field of action. Readers interested in art, its creational field and political dimension are the target audience of this collection.

In book 1, entitled *ESREVNI-INVERSE*, which follows the “Art, experience and language” line, artists-researchers present their works in free format as a result of their artistic processes: interlocutions between the textual and sensorial weaving plasticities and discourses, committed to autonomous research that is not subjected to preexisting methodologies. The productions emphasize language experimentation in its different resources, media and sensorial dimensions, in addition to its poetic, theoretical, critical and institutional articulations.

Book 2, *Between Arts*, presents historical and visual essays centering on investigations that navigate between art and its poetics, art history and theory. They are works by researchers in the “Art, image and writing” line, which aims to develop and affirm new practices for writing art by overcoming any dichotomies between expression and reflection, theorizing/historicizing and the artistic act itself. These investigative practices of historical and poetical concepts are devoted to the power of the image and body, its constitution and political uses in the interaction with experience.

In book 3, *Body Webs – Performative Resonance and Resistance*, following the “Art, thought and performativity” line, we have chapters associated with the concept of

performativity in contemporary art, involving theoretical-critical-experimental matters related to forms of action constructed by the body as a whole, which implies multiple evaluations of acts of speech, acts of thought, acts of scene and acts of culture, focused on the expansion of poetic, artistic and political composition in the sphere of sensitivity.

Book 4, *Hypotheses – Essays on Art and Culture*, structured according to the “Art, reception and alterity” line, offers essays on historiographical and historical experimentation that investigates the artistic phenomenon from the viewpoint of its relation with culture in a twofold approach: by addressing the issue of the reception and transit of objects, practices, theories and artistic traditions within the new art geo-history; and by dealing with the incorporation of the alterity issue into a critical and historiographical discourse, especially from the standpoint of objects, themes and matters usually associated with the anthropological field, such as artistic and ethnographic objects, art and ritual, art and life, among others.

In consonance with the “Art, subject and city” line, in book 5 of this collection, entitled *Cities, Inscriptions, Crossings*, the art pertaining to the works presented is not only the production of artifacts and events but, mainly, the praxis defining ways of being and inhabiting the city. Yet it is not a generic city, it is each time this city, the city that tattoos on the bodies of those inhabiting it its wounds, its silencing, absence and purge. A city where art is said to be, in turn, a gesture that leaves back its mark as a powerhouse for the creation of times and spaces of life and self-assembly, for the experimentation of subjective ways and the production of presence as an individual albeit always collective *autopoiesis*.

Finally, as we edit this collection, we attempt to design different, new, often utopian landscapes, navigating the oceanic losses we have faced in the last couple of years in order to

create new, colorful horizons offshore and beyond, following the senses, confident about the relevance of our research so we can invent renewed worlds, woven with the strong and fertile threads of art.

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BETWEEN THE LINES: ARTS

Paloma Carvalho Santos

We present here the works of docents and students in the line Art, image and writing, a research set that brings together the artistic process and the practices of critical, historical and theoretical writing, which are articulated and fed with testimonies of such processes, in close proximity with artworks and artists.

We start the book with “Exhausting the Backyard”, by Ana Emerich, a visual essay featuring a hyperlink to a soundtrack. An artist studying for her doctoral degree, Emerich assembles in her work visual and auricular images. To the artist, sound is a spatial indiscipline and an element that cannot be completely captured. Field recordings and archive materials are addressed as the framing of memories, vestiges of bodies in specific contexts and temporalities under layers and filters that are not neutral. In this field, the artist dialogs with the research and the questions raised by her thesis advisor Luiz Cláudio da Costa.

Leila Danziger’s research involves archives (personal, familial, national, transnational), libraries and editions. It attempts to locate, in topics from the author’s personal history, possibilities for constructing what is common to all of us. Following the intense relationship between words and images, her productions explore different media such as print, photograph, video, artist books and installations. In “Remembering Through Light”, Leila Danziger tells us about vestiges, names and transmission. The idea of providing a testimony permeates her essay, whose title is extracted from Yehuda Amichai’s poem about daylight and backyard light, the great memory and the small one. How one responds to a window flickering in the night or two anonymous notebooks filled with lost hopes?

Luiz Cláudio da Costa researches the relations between memory, archive and history, focusing on the political condition of art. The art images are not regarded as expressions evidencing or

signifying problems of public life but rather as expressions open to feelings, symptoms and marks. The precarious representation shows its incompleteness resulting from material and temporal processes and contingencies linked to the contact with the other. “The Reunion with Precarity: the Self, the Other, the We” is a study on the precarious condition of art since the changes that occurred in artistic production during the 1960s and 1970s. The essay brings a reflection on the uncertainty regarding artistic forms, the decentering of the subject of expression, the use of cheap materials, the importance of process and appropriation, and the contextual displacements when it comes to the presentation of work.

Marisa Flório Cesar is a critic, curator and researcher in this line. “The Specular Window: TV and Art” takes the works of Brazilian artists on the impact of TV in our lives and examines the double condition of the televising screen as a window (through which the world reaches us) and a mirror (which offers us a reflex that authorizes the behaviors it reflects). The essay also examines the interference of TV in subjectivization, the course of history, perceptions of space and time, control of individual and collective rhythms of existence and mixed-up fact and fiction. Moreover, since the 20th century, the television screen has become an opening to the increasing flow of images and information, reconfiguring the power of what is visible and causing spectacle to erupt in daily life.

Mayra Martins Redin, who concluded her doctoral studies in the Postgraduate Program in Arts at the Arts Institute of the State University of Rio de Janeiro (PPGArtes-UERJ) with advisor Leila Danziger, carries out artistic research that emphasizes writing, listening and transmission. Her writings share something precious: her heritage. It is a daily exercise of the imagination. In “We Are Still Dreaming”, she teaches us to learn from our dreams, a practice “transmitted by her father,” repeated throughout her childhood and then re-dimensioned as a collective listening in networks for exchange. From there, she returns to familial roles, now those of her son.

Paloma Carvalho Santos, artist-researcher integrating this line with her Poetics of color research, prioritizes the color materiality as a stimulus that precedes form: sensations, emotions and images. She seeks the color historicity, the stance of not having the knowledge of knowing, the images triggered by color. In “Color and Dynamism: Life *in* Things”, she explores different dimensions of feeling, intimacy and audience in distinct moments of her creative process. In two of her visual artworks, we see her decisions being guided during the manipulation of materials – a constructive method of dialoguing with matters of art history and colorists – and at times under the impact of the stories of places, bodies and territories, which occurs more often in the *rhythm* of the assembly when there is the need for thought in *action*.

In “Black Art: Brazil-Dakar”, Sheila Cabo Geraldo develops a segment of her research on “Memory politics: studies on colonialism and postcolonialism in Latin America,” in which she introduces the negritude and Pan-Africanism conceptions present at the 1st World Festival of Black Arts (FESMAN), which was launched in 1966 in Dakar, Senegal. It gathered Africans and descendants against the colonial system, being updated in the 1990s as the Dakar Biennial show and in 2010 as the 3rd World Festival of Black Arts. In these events, Brazil had a relevant participation with its artists as well as intellectuals involved in international debates on the concepts of negritude, syncretism, authenticity and exotism. The essay points out other significant theoretical productions, building a history for such concepts as well as inquiring about their updates in contemporary societies, through a dialog with black artistic works.

Tadeu Ribeiro Rodrigues, under the supervision of advisor Sheila Cabo Geraldo for his doctoral degree, explores in “Hunger for Alterity” artistic and literary productions and the devices their authors use to guide the senses and indicate discursive and imaging structures that give a dimension to the

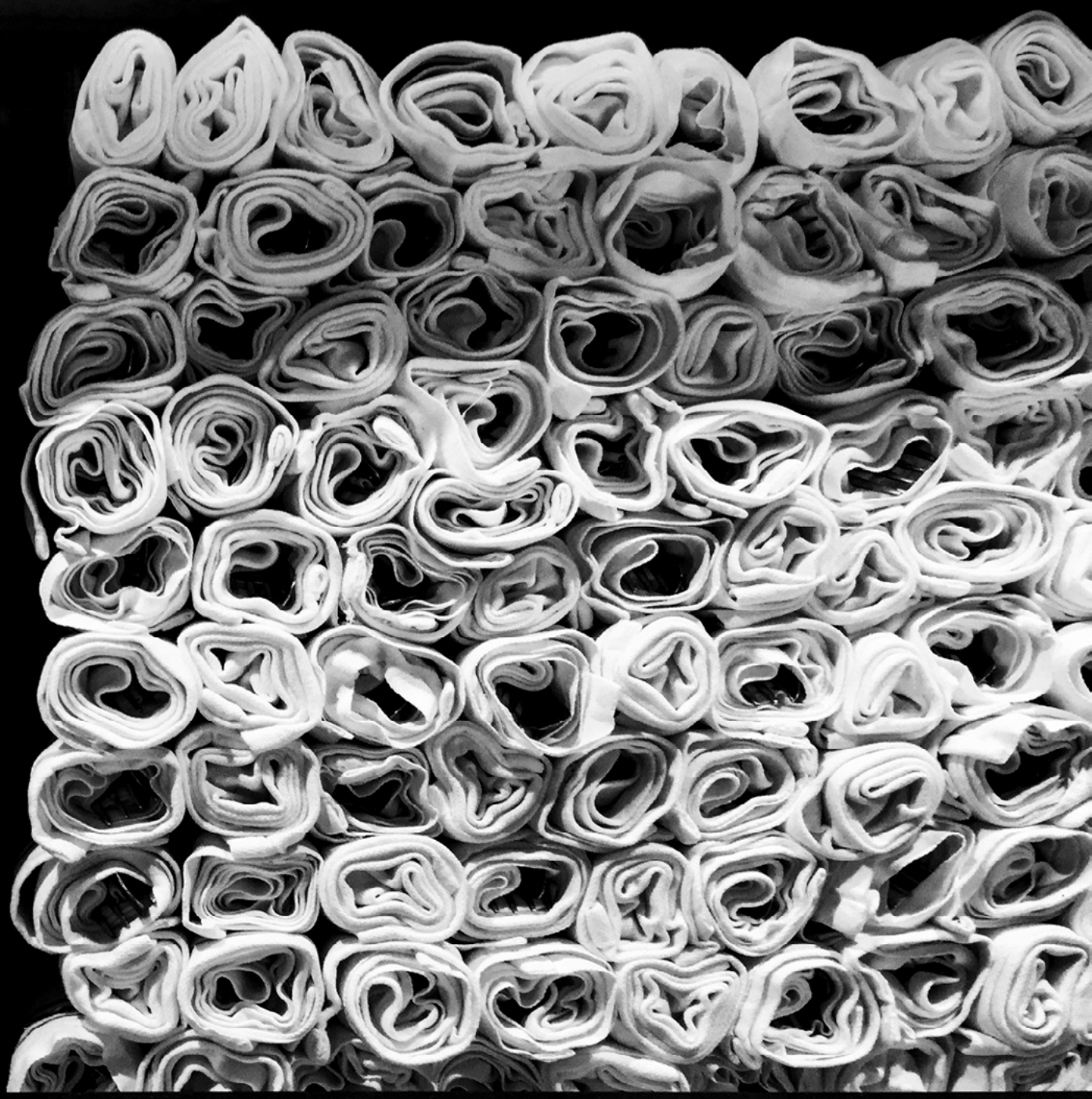
violence of the clash between civilizations in the colonization process, contrasting different forms of perception, impulses and desires.

Putting this book together posed a challenge as it was built remotely during the pandemic – mingling the prosaic and the sacred, between the kitchen, the backyard and work materials, the TV, computer, books and canvases. Our works are here, at last, to continue the movements of those who are gone, to set our bodies and productions in motion. We know it is necessary to travel through thought and affinities. This is a digital edition, an intellectual vapor: we hope it is carried away by the wind, moving through minute cracks to fertilize unimaginable soils.

EXHAUSTING THE BACKYARD

Ana Paula Emerich





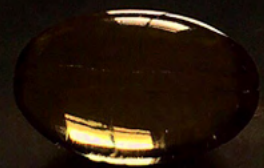












the cloths in the house are like new
and my hands are as they can be
I count pesticides at each drop of saliva
fire, mining, and an ox climbed up to the roof
I hear the horn of a ship
(freedom offends)
exhausting the backyard
twisting the genre
I practice¹

1. *Exaurir o Quintal* [Exhausting the Backyard]. Ana Paula Emerich, 2022. Audio with passages of *Um sopro de vida* [A Breath of Life], by Clarice Lispector. <https://www.anapaulaemerich.com/exaurir-o-quintal>





REMEMBERING THROUGH LIGHT

Leila Danziger

*Forgetting someone is like
forgetting to turn off the light in the backyard
so it stays lit all the next day
but then it is the light
that makes you remember.*

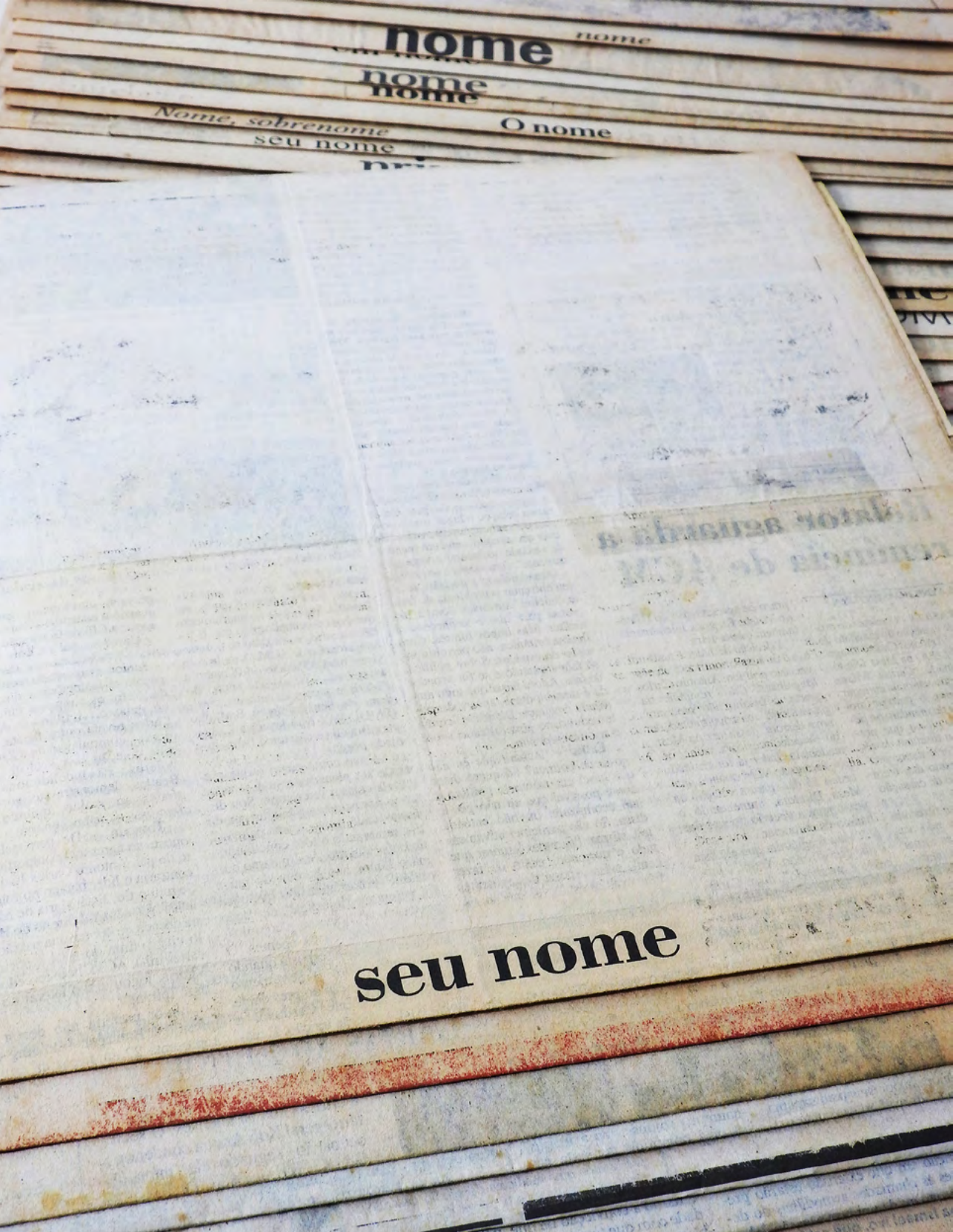
Yehuda Amichai

1

This writing would begin in a different way if, as night fell on October 27 of 2021, light did not start flickering in a window opposite my building at the foot of Cantagalo hill, in Copacabana. At first I thought someone was asking for help in a coded message, switching the light on and off as a last resort. Was it a fantasy or a far-fetched supposition? Maybe. It was certainly marked by what I had read, many years before, about the death of Hélio Oiticica:

Fallen on the floor amidst his works, wounded, immobilized and voiceless, but still with lapses of lucidity, he would hear the bell ringing, friends calling or slipping notes under the door, unable to do anything. On the fourth day, worried about his “disappearance,” his friend Lygia Pape decided to enter the apartment through an open window.¹

1. Hélio Oiticica: o último romântico de uma vanguarda radical [Hélio Oiticica: the last romantic of a radical vanguard]. *O Globo* newspaper, Mar. 25 1980.



It was March of 1980.

Perhaps my imagination was triggered by nearly two years of social distancing and relationships stretched thin during the pandemic and its trail of destruction. What I know for sure is that, as the light flickered, I called the porter in my building, I don't even recall exactly what I asked him, but he said the light had been flickering for a long time. I assumed it was flickering in the daytime and became visible only at night.

For a few hours I forgot about the window and a presumed plea for help. However, when I saw it again, it was late at night and it flickered, it still flickered, increasingly vehement and lonely as all windows around it went dark. I then decided to photograph it, to film it as a light vigil of sorts. I adjusted the camera on the tripod at an angle that seemed the most favorable. Starting the camera in filming mode, I felt like a witness to a grand event: a light flickers in the opposite apartment.²

Would that be a bedroom or a living room? It was hard to distinguish the function of that room solely by the window amidst the insipid architecture, but I imagined a room with little furniture. At that moment, I understood that it wasn't someone asking for help but a plea from the space itself. I realized what connected me to that room: it flickered to the rhythm of a heartbeat, a rapid heartbeat. We pulsed together. And then I recalled "The Heart Archive," the thousands of heartbeats gathered by Christian Boltanski on an island in Japan. In that lighthouse-bedroom in Copacabana, on a winding street that traces a possible path from the lagoon to the sea, I saw Boltanski, whose heart had stopped beating three months earlier.

2

This writing would go in a different direction if one of my most beloved artists had not suddenly disappeared.

2. A brief record of the window is available: https://www.instagram.com/tv/CVhNli-ODywn/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link.



After the death of Boltanski, on July 14 of 2021, I returned to his books and interviews with renewed intensity and emotion. As a way of saying goodbye to the artist whose production had taught me so much about the work of memory, I listened to his voice as a melody for days as I worked. I think I watched all his videos and listened to all his audio available on the internet, and I still revisit them. He tells the same presumed memories with slight variations. He repeats that he was a “silly child” with an erratic and loose education, a fact graciously accepted by his parents – the father a Jew, the mother a Catholic – who were both doctors and had been deeply impacted by World War II. Boltanski says he likes to chat, although that is not always obvious. His tone is curious, invested with humor and irony, and endowed with a clear affectionate appeal. The artist knows he repeats himself. His interviewers know that too, but the repetitions have an undeniable freshness as if everything were being told for the first time. They are a conscious way of building an “exemplary life,” as artist Catherine Grenier puts it. “What we do in those interviews is build an exemplary life. It’s a way of transmission that doesn’t go through the object but through history. Since I don’t write, a portion of my exemplary life goes through speech, it’s about anecdotes” (BOLTANSKI; GRENIER, 2010, p. 253).

In his *Faire son Temps* retrospective exhibition at the Centre Georges Pompidou, which was shortened by a few days due to the pandemic, there was a projection on a side hallway, a secondary and inaccessible space, in which it was possible to detect images as if they were seen from the window of a moving train. It was a black & white film that we would see at a glance, somehow distractedly, on our way to other artworks. The images cast doubt over their statute (did they or did they not integrate the exhibition? how could we get to them?). I think I watched them within the same distance and with the same interest as I watch (I still watch) the lighthouse-window beating like a heart in Copacabana.



To me, the window-event had the force of something that, in the visible sphere, demands to become an image, or actually an “imagining operation,” as Marie-José Mondzain would say. An image is something constantly escaping us and which doesn’t cause mutism or blabbering but the desire to find the right words before such an event of the visible.

Writing about the light flickering in the window is part of the imperative of trying to *make images*, for in truth the video and photos I made provide very little of what was lived. They need to be edited, linked, pieced together, framed and also narrated so that perhaps – perhaps – they make sense.

When I see the window images once again, I noticed that the night surroundings it is more intense in my memory. The videos and photos give me back a clear night, with the building’s shape sharply drawn against a sky that is so vulgar as the construction serving as a backdrop for the window. Maybe the flickering light doesn’t bother anyone since we live obfuscated by an excess of demands, alerts, notifications and the brightness of screens and displays that, more than ever, connect us to the world. Relieved, I read the oracle in my cell phone planner, which announces in my happiest mornings:

No notification

or alert

in the future

Then I think of Marguerite Duras as she negotiated an invitation to write a daily chronicle in the *Libération*, newspaper during the summer of 1980, stating that she feared to commit herself and miss the open nature of the days: “I experienced fear, always the same panic of not having my days completely open, about nothing” (DURAS, 2008, p. 7). I agree:



for me, nothing seems more precious than having unscheduled time, free of demands, with no alerts and notifications, a time-space protected from the media excesses and uninterrupted “chronophagy,” which devours even sleep and commercializes dreams. That doesn’t imply, in any way, time at odds with the responsibility of literally getting up for urgent matters; it implies the search for a place between solitude and community as Kafka once wrote in his diary.

3

This writing would have a different beginning and feature the title *Nome = Poïesis*,³ if the light hadn’t flicked like a heart beating fast that night.

Nome = Poïesis is a project that started in 2001 and is still active as a question mark and a wish, underlying all of my readings. For years, I’ve been collecting – with no particular method or rigor – sentences and verses containing the noun *name*. I’ve already mentioned this in other writings. I’ve already produced some series of works with proper nouns. Boltanski, of course, did it before I did. And many others did it before Boltanski, like the very Jewish liturgy centered on the recitation of the names of the dead. And many will continue working with proper nouns, picking them up and opening them like flowers, as Barthes used to say.

Like Christian Boltanski, I also repeat myself albeit in writing, for there are always remains of the unsaid in whatever was said or written. Then we must go back and write it

3. The *Nome =* project was selected in the 7th RioArte Sponsorship Program organized by Rio de Janeiro’s City Hall in 2002. Its title is inspired by Vilém Flusser: “Proper nouns are removed from the come-to-be chaos in order to be placed here (hergestellt), that is, to be placed inside the intellect. The act of removing in order to place here is called *poiein* in Greek. The one removing in order to propose, the one ‘producing’ is hence the *poietés*. The activity of calling, the activity resulting in proper nouns is, therefore, the activity of poetic intuition [...] Proper nouns are the product of poetry” (FLUSSER, 1999, p. 65).



again, say it again, with the force of breath going through the lungs each day.

Maybe what I'm really trying to do is locate, in the most despised and useless things, what's left of a proper noun.

4

the more I lose my name, the more people call me
of hard inconstancy your name is made
I hear your name, the only part of you that does not dissolve
there is no possible denial of your name
oh disloyal name shattering me
God's name is any name
my name causes me horror
he died uttering my name
which other name could he have uttered
if your name has two letters, two doors open your name
he never talks about her, never utters her name
only there you have entered completely the name that is yours
how can I ever know the name you gave me?
on Thursday I'll know it for they are still reunited in your name
he has never had a name and I don't remember how I met him
tell me your name there in the hellish darkness
the boy repeated to himself the name of each thing
note down the name and date in another world
did you write my name on the water?
maybe it would have been your name if you were lucky enough to have a name
all names, all names incinerated together
my head is a forest of proper nouns, hence my weariness
I always say your name, your name in me, as if you were indeed
I write your name in my memory, but in vain, but in vain
in the name, the spiritual essence of man communicates with God
but what would be his name only the dog knew, obscurely
the divergent shifts in the syllables of your name
for a name with so much belonging has never been seen



there is no hope in your name
a name that is name and renown
the good name master used to say
the choice of a name, that's all
What is the name called?
I've already lost the name I was calling
it's the name of a prince, I said
not your nudity but your name
what's the name of the immortal?
Hurbinek, who did not have a name
I gave you the name of Joseph, so to give you a name that would serve you
at the same time as a soul
if your name has three letters, three masts carry your name
the proper nouns amidst all these names and commonplaces
someone had called him by another name, an absolute name, from far away
in the name, the spiritual essence being communicated is language
at the height of despair, they had erased his own name
not even a line, a name, not even a flower
nine months were needed to find his name again
it whispers nameless shadows on the skin
the idea of two names on top of a rock
I have one sole memory, that of your name
the cat's name
your name and mine
open my name, open the book
the same name

5

After my father's passing, I kept his name – out of sheer laziness, I told myself – in the electricity bill of the apartment where he used to live, to which I had moved. For a few years, every month, Light (the electricity company) would send me his name. Can an electricity bill play the role of a monument? Without being too aware, every month, I remembered his name through the light.



“There was a literal message / a crystal-clear enunciation in which the light is the light is the light is the light / and in which departing is the same as unfolding in echoes / like only a father knows how to” (KAMENSZAIN, 2012, p. 53).

6

A few years ago, I casually bought two notebooks from a street secondhand bookseller. I purchased them without thinking, attracted by the even calligraphy and the irresistible price: any book for two *reais*. (And what about whatever was not yet a book? How much is a book-to-be?)

At home, both notebooks were forgotten, left in a pile slightly less chaotic than the overcrowded stand opposite the Carioca subway station, in downtown Rio, where I had found them. For one or two years, perhaps, they waited in my bookcase destined to the Unclassifiable.

Once more, I don't know what led me to leaf through them and catch a glimpse of what was at stake in the feminine calligraphy covering the two ruled notebooks from a Ferrarte brand. Their covers differ only by a more accentuated yellow hue in one of them, which also displays the author's indecipherable notes written with a pen (“completed a summer? radiates clarity and boils?”).

On both covers we see the modernist-style drawing of a school, some clouds, a hoisted fluttering flag, a fountain, a tree and paths – all that inside a sun outlined with meticulous geometry. And what about the title *Brilliant*, inserted diagonally with fancy typography, aiming to guide our gaze (upward? downward?).

The two notebooks contain the project of a poetry book conceived for a long period, which should have been titled “The Mousetrap”. I think the author passed on one of the notebooks to someone she admired. In it, there are precise comments, written in pencil, regarding the material. In the second notebook, the comments were implemented, the poems copied again, reordered and dated – from 1958 to 1961. As for the identity of the author, there



isn't a single clue. But she was friends with Sonia, Lilian, Celia and Berenice, judging by the poems including these names.

MYRIAM

Our little antitoxic discussions
in which we temper opinions
are doors and windows
where we set free
a colorful world of airplanes

We look once again for hope at the bottom of the bag
You comment on the lack of a bottom
I - the reality of the bag

And we keep on along corners
two crazy theorists
with Byzantine discussions

PIANISSIMO

Bererê my sister bird
a Debussy in you
quietly smiles

I don't know either the author's name or if the book was ever published. Judging by the poems, she was married, observed the world through the window blinds, listened to the sounds in the hallway of the building where she lived, read philosophy, had many female friends, a maid and also a certain awareness of deep social inequalities. I can't tell if she had children. Nothing that I'm writing here will ever reach her, but in an attempt to situate



this woman somewhere, I imagine her in a dialog with the Ana character in the short story entitled “Love” by Clarice Lispector, the character that had “the need for feeling the firm root of things” and was “expelled from her own days” when she saw a blind man chewing gum. Like Ana, the writer of the notebooks is also impressed by the image of a blind person, actually a “blind woman adorned with ribbons,” who “parades across the city // It is something from the darkness / that she never quits // and in vain we try / to blind our eyes in the light.” However, one of my favorite verses in her notebook is that expressing a dose of miniaturistic fantasy: “Certain love letters / should be written in a confetti”.

7

In October of 2021, I returned for the first time to the XV Square Fair during the pandemic and purchased a postcard set – as distractedly as I did with the notebooks of the unknown author. While the two Ferrarte notebooks were marked by the absence of a name, the postcards conversely contained too many names, an authorial excess, so to speak. One of the cards thanked the “excellent philological studies.” Another praised the book on Cecília Meireles.

As I arrived home, I realized with great surprise that I had bought, for two or three *reais* each, seven postcards belonging to philologist Leodegário Amarante de Azevedo Filho, a former professor at the same university where I teach, according to his Wikipedia entry, which offers a vertiginous list of his published works. Reading the listed titles, I noticed that I had in my library a book associated with his name: Leodegário is responsible for organizing the prose works of Cecília Meireles, a central writer in my collection of sentences and verses with proper nouns. “I write your name in my memory, / but in vain, but in vain, /

for it's your very hand that erases it, / your very hand that erases it."

Leodegário's postcards contain intellectual exchanges with Zdenek Hampl, a researcher from Prague who wrote flawlessly in Portuguese and read Cecília's chronicles with his students in those years. Had they read, perhaps, that the opposite of the world is once again the world? And that children knelt on the knees of their own images? (MEIRELES, 1998, p. 57).

The oldest postcard reveals clear vestiges of the silver that has formed our images in other times. With a partially mirrored surface fragmenting the view of São Paulo's República Square, it was sent to Leodegário by his godparents Mendes and Carolina.

On July 2 of 1972, Leodegário writes from Lisbon to his mother: "Don't tell anyone about my return."

I feel intense emotion with these trivial sentences, with the cliché images on the postcards, sure that now they do exist for me, for a few instants. What worries me with Leodegário's postcards is that, rather than reaching my hands, they should have been included in the archive of an institution devoted to literature or the memory of the editing process.

Which transmissions – or transmission failures – made these postcards end up in an image pile at that stand in our big memory market where I found them, amidst anonymous pictures of a trip to Egypt, more valued than the postcards exchanged by Leodegário? The fire devastating our museums is just the more spectacular and definitive side of a slow, insidious destruction that tenaciously shapes our archives.

The notebooks of the unknown author, as well as the postcards filled with names, dream of future projects with different natures and differentiated aspirations for justice. Inserted here, they acquire a certain reality. I'm not sure if they will be passed on, or if they will live under the condition

of possibility and promise, without ostentation, like little lights covered and protected from the violence of our tropical sun, which not only illuminates but also burns and erases.

Rio de Janeiro, summer of 2021-2022

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ABOUT THE IMAGES

All photographs were taken with a Nikon Coolpix P900 camera in 2021-2022, especially for this piece of writing, except for photo 4, which integrates the poem "Archive Gestures," published in *E-Lyra* magazine, n. 18, Dec. 2021.

THE REUNION WITH PRECARITY: THE SELF, THE OTHER, THE WE

Luiz Cláudio da Costa

The manifestation of precarity in art during the 1960s and 1970s was linked to the crisis of traditional means leading to the employment of non-artistic objects, discarded industrialized products, everyday materials and the culture of information and reproduction. Frederico Morais (1975, p. 25) addressed the problem by criticizing the notion of artwork: “the more art gets mixed with life and everyday routine, the more precarious the materials and media get, so the entire idea of artwork crumbles.” Lygia Clark, Hélio Oiticica, Artur Barrio, Anna Bella Geiger and Paulo Bruscky utilized plastic, xerox, postcards, photographs, letter paper and newsprint paper. Barrio (2001, p. 84) affirmed in 1975 that precarious materials were intended to be a rejection of the “difficulties imposed by a market or aesthetical thought linked to... GOOD TASTE OR BAD TASTE.” Lygia Clark (1966, p. 2), in turn, at the time of the *Opinião 66* exhibition, would associate precarity “with the regimen of presence inherent to the act, the here and now of an ephemeral action.” Indeed, the material precarity promoted a sense of ephemerality and impermanence that was crucial for the criticism of the art object associated with exchange value.

For the artist, the use of such banal resources implied getting involved in an unknown process. It meant apprehending that material object from the world, allowing the course of a given event to mature until it was removed from the network of habits, a move that often depended on other human and nonhuman agents. The artistic event was itself uncertain, imprecise and

faulty. Precarity hence became a symptom of the process, a mark of the body’s exposure to the other and language, and not just a characteristic of the material.

Acknowledging this fact was a political act in the culture, a paradigmatic change that made the artwork different and displaced from its essence, becoming something that it was not. The Other, others and the outside turned into art’s folds. Michel Poivert comments on this situation in the relation of conceptual practices with photography: “At the moment when, after Marcel Duchamp, everything can be art, photography would accomplish the mission of being precisely what art cannot be, ‘an Other of art’” (POIVERT, 2010, p. 12). It would be necessary to complete this reasoning: the Other of art integrates it. There were risks involved in confronting this other or others – photography, information, consumption, power, memory, history – and finding fulfillment in the fold that constituted its new sphere of action. When art acknowledges the dissimilarity that constitutes it, it finds once more its own vulnerability. It realizes it’s not protected, not even in its domain or in a specific language. How can it still be art when another practice, another discourse permeates it and differentiates it, if not by exposing its flaws, incorporating the small cracks, losses, damages and suspensions?

According to Judith Butler (2015, p. 15-16), precarity refers to a body “exposed to modeling and a social form.” From that time on, art became the practice of exposure to the other, the experience of acknowledging the being’s precarity. The artists exposed themselves to the images of the globalized world. They were invaded by consumption and information, but as they went to the streets with their actions and situations, they also plunged into the unknown, into the men and women in the city, the anonymous, the strange. Other centers and ties emerged in the public art scene. The “me” and the “us” were reimagined from the perspective of the intrinsic dissimilarity of art. The artwork’s immune space is questioned the moment the

artwork is hit by the other, a stranger who is its negative – the consumption, information, archive, history and memory. The immunity of the art territory, as well as the immunity of the body, individual, subject and community, is fragile like all territories and bodies are. We can no longer think of a “we” by setting ourselves apart from the other.

Artists from the second half of the 20th century faced wildly different poetics and processes, but criticizing identity and representation brought them together. Poetics reflects the uncertain nature of the artistic work, including suspensions, condensations and absences. Propositions, acts and objects present empty spaces and deficiencies, marks and symptoms that stem from the very artistic process. The work becomes an image of life’s vulnerability and also the condition of art permeated by dissimilarity, losses and oblivion.

PRECARITY: A NEW CONCEPT OF EXISTENCE

The body was central to the poetics of Neoconcretism and the new figuration of conceptualists. In the interactive propositions of Lygia Clark, Hélio Oiticica and Lygia Pape, bodily experiences enabled the elaboration of not only physical and material precarity but also existential precarity, which was associated with structuring subjectivity, the self and the identity permeated by the other. The contact with other bodies and the interaction with diverse subjects in *A Casa é o Corpo* (The House is the Body, 1968) by Lygia Clark, *Tropicália* (1969) by Hélio Oiticica and *Divisor* (1968) by Lygia Pape suggest relationality and interdependence as fundamental in the constitution of individual and collective subjects. The identity of “me” and “us” is questioned by the being’s precarity, exposure to the other and porosity to the world.

Lygia Pape regarded her strolls in the city as fundamental for implementing her experiences. When reflecting on the series

of works entitled *Espaços Imantados* (Magnetized Spaces), the artist suggests the street vendor as a sample of what she perceives in that social sphere. To Roberto Conduru (2009, p. 126), these works are also “traces of a few dialogs that Lygia Pape maintained with the urban cultural manifestations linked to popular masses.” The art historian highlights in this context Pape’s connections to the Afro-Brazilian sociocultural universe and analyzes the interactive installation *Roda dos Prazeres* (Pleasure Wheel). The artist’s dialog with this universe implies “porosity, appropriation, shock, Invention and irony,” but the Afro-Brazilian quality is not the only element observed in her work. Her poetics involves “appropriation as resignification” of Indian, urban and popular cultures (CONDURU, 2009, p. 126).

Other artists went through bodily experiences and acts in the urban space – Artur Barrio (*4 Dias e 4 Noites/4 Days and 4 Nights*, 1970), Anna Bella Geiger (*Passagens n. 1/Passages #1*) and Paulo Bruscky (*O que é Arte? Para que Serve?/What is Art? What is Its Purpose?*). The body and the art object manifest and distinguish themselves together in the silent interferences of urban processes, routes and circuits. In *Inserções em Circuitos Ideológicos, Projeto Coca-Cola* (Insertions in Ideological Circuits, the Coca-Cola Project, 1970) by Cildo Meirelles, porosity implies the appropriated object’s exposure to resignifications of its use before it is recast into the consumption circuit. Even an industrial object is not immune to the other. It suffers significant marks which transform it, becoming susceptible to a practice that suspends its “language” and ideological circuit.

In the experience with *Divisor* (1968), the huge white fabric – “the skin of all,” in the words of Caroline Soares de Souza (2013) – is not a common preexisting space. The skin does not isolate the common. It does not protect from the other. On the contrary, the fabric-skin makes all participants alike while diversifying them through its cracks and openings, through relations always being updated and filled with strangers, passersby and anonymous people present in the intervention’s public

space. The *Divisor* is a shared welcoming structure, but it depends on the differentiated occupation of the other who suggests exposure, contact, a space that “unites and simultaneously separates” as Guy Brett defines it (*apud* SOUZA, 2013, p. 155). As a participant, what one sees is the other, a stranger on whom the shared fabric depends.

In *Divisor* the community is not a fabric that isolates but one that rather welcomes difference. The fabric makes it possible to envision the community, the us, as the desire of the other, of the dissimilar. The space of the collective body is not protected from the other. Its vulnerability is inevitable and must be acknowledged. More explicit works – allegorically and politically – such as the fourteen *Trouxas Ensanguentadas* (Bloody Bundles, 1970) by Artur Barrio also had their content differentiated by the other’s presence. Not identified as art objects, being instead thrown at a riverbank in Belo Horizonte, lost in a non-artistic space, calling for and demanding the gaze of any passerby, *Trouxas Ensanguentadas* suggested the fluctuation of the image act, the impossibility of guiding artistic expression meanings to a given signification. *Trouxas Ensanguentadas* brought greater or lesser unrest and anguish, more or less estrangement and shock. They suggested death and violence, but the reasons for that oscillated between the arbitrary political situation and the historical-social conditions of the observer, according to his sexual, racial or class perspective, since they were exposed for anyone to see. *Trouxas Ensanguentadas* not only indicated transitoriness. Its non-artistic materiality wasn’t literal at all. *Trouxas Ensanguentadas* generated a precarious image of the seen thing because it had a constitutive incompleteness. They required the other’s willingness in the gaze and action co-activity, whose senses tended to be differentiated, depending on the particular social situation of the subject.

After a series of engravings known as “visceral,” in which lines and colors suggested organic shapes, Anna Bella

Geiger would produce *Circumambulatio* (1969) with photographic depictions of bodily practices, texts, media photographs, interviews and a Super 8 film. Once the body was in the center of these ephemeral and uncertain processes, the marks, vestiges and images appropriated from the world brought decentering and a differentiating contact. Appropriation, a critical practice for traditional media, serves as a practice for elaborating structures and material, social and cultural relationships involving the body and its experience with objects.

The series of *Bólides* (Bolides), called “transobjects” by Oiticica, indicates the permeation of the being by structures. The *Bólido* invites the spectator to create “perceptive-structural” elaborations that are particular to the spectator’s own experiences and position as a subject. With its structure “predisposed to be captured by the spirit,” the *Bólido* establishes a “dialog” between the subject and the object (OITICICA, 1986, p. 64). A *Bólido* implements processes with contents that are not defined in advance. It does not illustrate, imitate or signify themes and contents from the exterior or interior world. It manifests external relationships that are already interiorized.

The relationship between the body and the environment elaborated by the Parangolé elements of Hélio Oiticica’s flags, tents and capes reveals the body’s porosity to the territory and environmental language. The artist stated that in a slum’s architectural space “is implicit a Parangolé character,” that is, a surrounding local culture (OITICICA, 1986, p. 68). This is what Renata Gesomino (2014, p. LXXVIII) calls “a shared territory” with the adherence to postmodern cultural identities. The new identities thought to be ethnical and territorial differences, the subjectivities of minorities and marginal knowledge begin to emerge with art’s dependence on processes, non-artistic materials and encounters with private stories.

Between the second half of the 1960s and the 1970s, many works addressed popular culture: *Lindonéia, a Gioconda do subúrbio* (Lindonéia, the Suburban Gioconda, 1966) by Rubens Gerchman; the enamel painting on wood *Ônibus* (Bus, 1970) by Raymundo Colares; the photographic series *Bloco de Carnaval Cacique de Ramos* (Cacique de Ramos Street Carnival Group, 1972) by Carlos Vergara. Other works questioned the public sphere based on prohibition and exclusion. In the photomontage *Brasil Nativo/Brasil Alienígena* (Native Brazil/Alien Brazil, 1977), Anna Bella Geiger utilizes postcards and duplicates the bodily acts of Indians with the physical actions of family members to question exotic alterities, the national identity's other constructed by the visual discourse of tourist postcards. By mirroring the acts of both groups, the photomontage highlights similarity by contact and proximity, erasing any hierarchy between them. Geiger's series elaborates systems to represent the other and the other's place in the formation of the social subject. Her work ironizes the idea of representation that banishes from a community the unfamiliar, in this case, the Indians. A problem is proposed in regard to the constitution of "us," the community of belonging in which the senses fluctuate without a firm direction. After all, which group has constituted Native Brazil? Which set forms Alien Brazil? In the arts emerged the matter of decentering the subject from the perspective of cultural identities.

Acts and gestures tended to matter more than the artistic object by then. At the time, Lygia Clark (1998, p. 152) realized: "It is the act that engenders poetry." However, it was with one of her objects, *O Dentro é o Fora* (The Inside is the Outside), that the artist would articulate the fundamental characteristics of precarity. The gesture and the artistic object are acts of desire that imply the other, the relational nature of the subject, the continuity between interior and exterior, the contamination between before and after. Precarity meets once again a distant image of life. The artist used to say (CLARK, 1998, p. 165): "In the dialog with my work *O Dentro é o Fora*, the active subject finds once more their

own precarity." In another writing piece (CLARK et al., 1966), she summed up the problem when stating that precarity is "a new concept of existence".

Among other artistic gestures, the use of unpretentious techniques, the appropriation of prosaic everyday materials and the incorporation of consumption objects contributed to materializing the image of existential precarity. The lack of immunity of all bodies became concrete in relation to others, representation systems, power and the speech addressing us before we begin to speak. This was the meaning of precarity in artistic reasoning: to involve the spectator in the depth of the world, in the contact with the other and the relationship with the systems that constitute the spectator. The objects, situations, environments and propositions of the 1960s/1970s summoned the subject to see and participate in life, the world and social and cultural relations as something that brushes against the body and touches the emotional substance of aspirations, desires and passion as an activity of image, language and action.

ON PRECARITY AS DEPRIVATION

There was tension and dissent in the cultural scene at that time. In the early 1960s, a trend of political engagement emerged, aiming to create a national-popular art with similar convictions to those from the 1930s to the 1950s. The new political approach of art in the 1960s, adopted by the Popular Culture Centers (CCPs) and theorized by Ferreira Gullar, situated the problem surrounding the cultural industry. Nevertheless, according to Carlos Zílio (2009, p. 136), the basic premises remained the same as those of engaged Modernism: "imperialism as a phenomenon external to the 'nation' and the transfer of a political category to the cultural field." It's worth noting that the main political premises were social formation, work exploitation and class warfare. Following these principles, one single figure should concentrate and symbolize the national identity, the worker and the popular

man. Moreover, this unity could not be contaminated by the presence of a strange other – of difference. In the engaged art conception of CCPs, identity should be the preexisting common structure among those who were similar. The Popular Culture Centers, as stated by one of their main leaders, Carlos Estevam Martins, proposed using art to attain political awareness, which meant obedience to the one who knows. The knowledge authority could not be questioned. In the context of art, CCPs were interested in works representing class warfare educational content communicatively.

The paradigm was Modernism from the 1940s. Mário de Andrade had redefined art in its social function and “at the service of a set of ideas,” indicating an interest in the national-popular figure (AMARAL, 1987, p. 104). From the 1940s to the 1960s, the so-called “engaged” art conceived precarity as deprivation caused by work exploitation, with a great focus on the fight against oppression. *The Retirantes* (Migrants, 1944) series by Cândido Portinari was the paradigm of this line of thought. The 1944 painting received the same title as the series depicting the drought in the Northeastern region of Brazil with a migrant family. Battered, tired and hungry, the bodies – a thin mass of skeletons with bones nearly exposed – are structured in the chiaroscuro produced by the combination of lines and colors (ZÍLIO, 1987). Posing in the foreground, these bodies are the image of deprivation. They resemble rocks thrown onto the earth. They have turned into mere gravel.

The representation in this engaged painting synthesizes and unifies the qualities and strengths of their individualized, cadaverous shapes. As for the “Portinari style” that brings together influences from cubism, Mexican muralism, the School of Paris and the Quattrocento, Carlos Zílio warns (1987, p. 94): “It is a style mainly influenced by representativity, with the assumption that it is reproducing something real.” There is no reproduction of reality, though. The heterogeneous forces of the image are unified by an “encompassing” element, the horizon,

this sign of naturalism in cinema that synthesizes the qualities and strengths of the environment, according to Gilles Deleuze (1985, p. 179). This is true only until we see the eyes of the old man supported by a cane or the small baby in the *Retirantes* canvas. They are sheer holes of pure darkness that dispel the entire synthesis, stirring the whole representation and all the presumed evidence condensed in the figure of deprivation.

Portinari’s influence can be noticed in the engraving on plaster entitled *Enterro de Camponês* (Peasant Burial, 1953) by Abelardo da Hora, one of the representatives of Modernism in the city of Recife. Abelardo da Hora had joined social realism and was involved in the creation of the Modern Art Society of Recife (SAMR), remaining at the head of it for ten years. In 1962, he took part in the foundation of the city’s Popular Culture Movement. In the painting *Enterro de Camponês*, the group of figures carrying the deceased is displayed in the foreground, but with no encompassing and synthesizing horizon. The bodies are not separated from the background either. They receive from it the same hachures, the marks of wounds on the wood. The peasant’s death, however, refers to a generic life with no name or context. A death like that would not trigger emotions related to grief, those emotions claiming not only sadness but also fury and insubordination. Only Glauber Rocha, in his film *Terra em Transe* (Earth in Trance), would achieve this feat with the death of a laborer.

In the *Meninas de Fábrica* (Girls from the Factory, 1935) engraving by Lívio Abramo, there is no encompassing element unifying the space between the figures. Abramo by then embraced the social theme after leaving the Brazilian Communist Party. Sober, the *Meninas de Fábrica* engraving does not feature the monumental and dramatic expressionist quality of several works of that period. The bodies are permeable to the level of the black masses. The same porosity of the bodies is found in Kaethe Kollwitz’s engravings. In *Menino Abraçado à sua Mãe* (Boy Holding his Mother, 1952), the limits between the

bodies are blurred as if a primary opening turned one permeable to the other. Alternating between the background and the figure and the permeability between the figures, the modern pictorial space suggested a crisis in the perception of identity as individuation and separation.

The representation of the figure would no longer be fairly immune to the surroundings. Although situated in the restricted domain of shapes within the painting as a traditional media for art, the modernist painting seemed to intuit the identity crises conceived as individuation, which gathers what is similar and sets differences apart. Even in the best moments of realist art, the permeability of the figure to the background, which was the mere flat surface of the painting, promoted the involuntary body contact within that space. The flattening ended up suggesting a secret link between the humans, the surrounding pressure, the figure exposed to encountering difference and the background that pressured and differed. Precarity seemed to extrapolate the simple, obvious denunciation of deprivation.

Rodrigo Naves (1997, p. 197-223) describes the individuation and self-determination in the work of Lasar Segall – an artist with a Lithuanian and Jewish background – as attained “conquests,” not something concomitant or correlated to the body and figure. He states: “In Segall’s drawings, the figures conquered their place gradually, struggling to drive away an atmosphere that compresses them.” Naves suggests that the space in Segall’s drawings influences the bodies with a physical action that deeply marks them. “Contracted, ill at ease, his figures suffer injunctions from a space that unwillingly accepts them.” The deformation of the figures and their isolation result from the space constraining them. According to the critic, the figures and shapes “constantly suffer the environmental pressure” and “the space influences the traces.” The bodies are not refractory to their surroundings since a force or power acts over them and deeply marks them, paradoxically subjecting them while bringing them to the surface. The creatures are “permeable to reality” and freed from all solidity

capable of nullifying “the enormous availability to others and the environment.” The criticism of the pictorial figure’s autonomous individuation included the formal questioning of the Renaissance spatial system of representation as well as the operation of similarity that excludes difference.

SYSTEMS OF POWER AND THE CRITIQUE OF IDENTITY AND REPRESENTATION

While the engaged CCP side assumed a realistic representation tied to second-generation Modernism, the artists from the neoconcretist generation and the following decades learned different lessons from the modernist period. The body permeability and porosity were no longer linked to the flat plane language but rather to the being’s experience in the world, to discourses and systems. In 1973, Artur Barrio would produce a series of five photographs entitled *Des.Compressão* (De.Compression). The title varies according to different publications by the artist, being known also as *Des Compressão... compressãoDes*. In both versions, we notice the alternation between suffering pressure and exerting pressure, which are constitutive elements of image, figurability and action. In the photo-performance field – as it is conventionally called – the work unfolds presential actions. The artist executes acts against a window or door pane. We see in the photographic sequence his face, nose and mouth being deformed by pressure from the transparent material. The body acts on the environment but equally suffers its action. The force is not only something that compresses the body, oppressing it, but also something that constitutes it, undoing and transforming it. The body is not depicted as the victim of an external power but as a relation involving pressure and desire. When the figure decompresses and steps away from the pressing transparent material, it releases a strong emotion by gaping in a painful or rebellious scream.

Although not featuring a representation of the ongoing political oppression at that time – any element that would evidence the intolerant and arbitrary nature of the military dictatorship – the work is heavily political. The image in *Des.compressão* constitutes similarity as a mark of contact as well as of separation, the wound of violence that moves desire.

From the 1980s and 1990s on, identity problems and the relationship between memory and history, as well as social violence, entered the art field.¹ People realized that precarity, something shared by everyone, was also what differentiated beings through an unequal, politically induced distribution. In the words of Butler (2015, p. 46), the differentiated distribution of precarity is a political form of control and domination. A new way of engagement then emerged, renamed “artivism,” privileging themes and content to the detriment of the artistic act’s power. Conversely, the understanding of the differentiated distribution of precarity led many artists to divert from the synthesis or clear meaning of political issues and focus instead on the concrete aspect of uncertain processes, on the open gesture that claims for the act and desire of the other.

In 1980, Emmanuel Nassar produced *Recepcor* using metal plates painted in bright colors, bottle metal caps, threads, etc. Among other graphic elements, there was the letter E as a signature. Nassar described this object as “some sort of device” with “messages of works that I should do” in the future (*apud* CHIARELLI, n.d., p. 186). The solitary E would be combined with N in future works, signaling not only the artist’s initials but also a “new relation of cultural latitude/longitude,” according to Paulo Herkenhoff (2003, p. 29):

His works display his initials (E/N) in decorative, popular typography. N is no longer just Nassar but North, the position

of the Amazon Forest in Brazil, the same way E is not only Emmanuel but maybe East, the direction of the Amazon in the cartographic orientation.

The E/N distich referenced a name but also the position of the regional subject, the artist from the peripheral north in the Brazilian cultural geography. The colorful metal plates of *Recepcor*, hanging like small flags, could indicate a regional Brazil enclosed in its traditions if it weren’t for the bottle caps taken from the international consumer market. Therefore, the small flags of *Recepcor* referenced Alfredo Volpi’s modernist painting and Hélio Oiticica’s color-structure matters, both elaborated through the resignification of the relation between local and global. At the basis of Emmanuel Nassar’s production, according to Tadeu Chiarelli (n.d., p. 20), there would be two universes of imagery, one related to the visual culture of the Amazon Forest and the other to constructive tradition. Nassar sought to overcome the cultural exclusion of the Amazon Forest in the country. He confronted the ethnocentrism of the art system with a peculiar gaze. In the words of Paulo Herkenhoff (2003, p. 29-48), Emmanuel Nassar’s primary colors were linked to small axles, cranks and hacks that formed “machines functioning precariously.” To the critic and curator, Nassar’s machines withstand adversities and assume the “existence of the Being in the precarious”.

To this last interpretation, it must be added that the existence in precariousness does not express solely the being’s fate and the possibility of dying as a fatalistic element of adversity. It rather involves the body as a desiring machine and the possibility of action, creation and transformation. Nassar perceived the *Recepcor* as a device that contained messages of future desires, not a machine for signifying the regional subject. *Recepcor* is, first, the place of permeation and contamination originating from closer surroundings and more or less faraway spaces. *Bandeiras* (Flags, 1988), an installation built with city flags of the state of Pará,

1. On the problems concerning the relation between memory and history, see *A Gravidade da Imagem: Arte e Memória na Contemporaneidade* [The Gravity of Image: Art and Memory in Contemporaneity] (COSTA, 2014).

suggested a territory with broadened stories and desires too. There were not only regional icons but also images suffering the impact of the color-structure gesture, simultaneously internal and external. The actions and emotions of these hues were associated with memories, the lives of places, which were not exposed in the installation. In *Bandeiras*, absence is a robust presence, no less uncertain, shaky, unstable, vibrant and intense.

The problems linked to the particular position of the female body surfaced in the new millennium. According to Beatriz Lemos (2013, p. 19-30), since the 1980s Márcia X showed interest in social issues. In 1994, sexuality matters appeared in her *Lovely Babies* performance and *Os Kaminhas Sutrinas* [The Little Kama Sutrás], 28 toy beds with dolls. The kitsch materials of the dolls, jewelry and advertising photos published by the press are included in the artist's archive, whose pieces were collected for a 2013 exhibition at the Modern Art Museum (MAM-Rio). Among the objects utilized in the short-lived show, there are pieces of paper money, toothpaste, sugar, candles, henna, eggs, bananas, powder and bar soap, Moça condensed milk and Coca-Cola. Other objects, more symbolic, include dolls, phalluses and rosaries. The materials coded for consumption, along with the symbols, practices and discourses, seem to reach her body, brushing against it, sticking as a radiating being, dominating, acting and transforming from without.

For her performances in the 2000s, the substances used tended to soak into the artist's tunic, contaminating her body with a power that molds, models and sculpts. Problems related to this particular social-bodily experience – the female condition – are suggested, although the content suspension and what is not said or represented have equal significance. In *Pancake* (2001), the artist positions herself inside a washbasin and pours cans of Moça [Girl] condensed milk over her head, letting it run down her body and tunic. Next, she sprinkles



FIGURE 1
Márcia X. *Lavou a alma com Coca-Cola* [Soul Washed with Coca-Cola], 2003. Neon, Coca-Cola and tunic. Archive of the Modern Art Museum of Rio de Janeiro. Donation by Therezinha de Jesus Estellita Pinheiro de Oliveira, made possible with the award resources of Prêmio Procultura de Estímulo às Artes Visuais 2010 – FUNARTE. Performance presented at the Exhibiton: *Grande Orlândia – Artistas abaixo da Linha Vermelha* [Great Orlândia – Artists Below the Red Line] in Rio de Janeiro, 2003. Photo: Wilton Montenegro.

herself with packs of colorful candy. The work offers clues to the female world: the condensed milk brand as well as the title referencing makeup products (or the American breakfast staple). The English title suggests not only consumption and the industrial globalized culture but also permeability to language and the possibility of suspending this discourse that constitutes the body when the material employed is resignified. The clues are associated with the role reserved for women in the private sphere at home and female practices of beauty care, however, the meanings are suspended by the dislodged material and the movement of images, desires and passions.

In *Lavou a alma com Coca-Cola* (Soul Washed with Coca-Cola, 2003), the artist's body is displayed in a bathtub filled with soda. There are allusions to the world of information, consumption and the capitalism of large corporations. That inert body, soaked in stagnated liquid with a swollen tunic causes repulsion. The effect is of a shipwreck with a woman immersed in deteriorated, tar-colored liquid. Nonetheless, the liquid is Coca-Cola, a simple soda. And what about the "soul washed" title? Would it be a sort of outburst? What kind of energy would be erupting from that outburst? When the artist describes the work, she states that "*Lavou a Alma com Coca-Cola* superimposes a variety of cultural myths, spiritual baths, light baths and beauty baths".

Beauty and cosmetics seem to question the female body ideal and the necessity of ornaments and makeup. Many clues in the artist's trajectory lead us to associate her with that problematic, but this is not defined in her works. *Desenhando com Terços* (Drawing with Rosaries, 2000-2001) upturns sediments that have been consolidated by the colonial, Catholic and patriarchal culture. Two power symbols appear to be reversed: the rosary and the phallus, Christianity and the laws of imagination, the world of church and

masculine power. Dressed in her white tunic before the audience, the artist draws on the floor the male sexual organ. Using two rosaries, she obsessively repeats the drawing. In the version of this performance presented at the House of Petrópolis – Culture Institute in 2003, Márcia X used 500 rosaries in pairs, producing 250 drawings of the organ. Guided by the patriarchal nominative horizon, the artist creates an opening in the symbols and imagines another body for women.

Many nonwhite artists also express the desire to elaborate critical identities. Some follow the path of activism with clear significations. Others conceive identities that are not based on a fact verbalized or represented but rather on events supported by the force of images and emotional unawareness. Referencing their cultural matrixes, where the significations and formulations that were taught hold little or no relevance, many Afro-descendant artists prefer the subtlety of free associations. This is the case of Dalton Paula, who recovers the diaspora's social heritage in his performances, paintings and installations. The position of the African descendant is highlighted in them, but there is no direction or definition for their meanings.

In the installation entitled *Bamburrô* (2019), we see a bunch of objects similar to troughs, which are also employed in *Rota do Tabaco* (Tobacco Route, 2016). In both works, Paula paints a variety of elements in the pieces. In *Bamburrô*, besides troughs, the artist utilizes mining pans, recipients with a conical bottom used for washing off gold mining sand. Inside the objects, we see musical instruments, insects and flags. The yellowish color of the golden layer prevails amidst the oil paint hues. *Bamburrar and bamburro* are mining terms and refer to unexpected fortune. There is a variety of suggestions, and the senses tend to wander. The trough, a wooden bowl used in the Candomblé religion, common in markets in the city of Salvador,

FIGURE 2.

Dalton Paula.
Bamburrô (a detail
of the installation
measuring 10 x
23 feet). Oil and
golden plate on
40 mining pans
and 5 wooden and
metal troughs,
2019. Photo: Paulo
Rezende. Source:
<https://daltonpaula.com/portfolio/bamburro>.



suggests an Afro-descendant culture. The pan and the gold plate signal mining. The painted images hint at music. The Afro-descendant cultural field, religious rituals, musicality and mining social theme are all implicit in the images of the installation, but there is no synthesis to provide a given signification. We don't see a representation of the black body. In this absence, we feel its presence. The golden yellow vibrates, the still musical instruments reverberate, insects resonate and everything touches the spectator's body, resonating the stories of black people in Brazil, of the devalued laborer and social hierarchy. Yet nothing is displayed, nothing is represented.

In the video performance entitled *O Batedor de Bolsa* (The Pickbag, 2011), with his black torso naked and a blindfold, Dalton Paula seems to create a parody of the children's game played in Brazilian rural-style June parties, known as "pot-breaking." The title, in turn, is similar to the common Portuguese expression "pickpocket," a small-time thief

navigating the streets with dexterity. The performance suggests the racist treatment associated with black-skinned people, but the means used in other performances suggest injunctions linked to the artist's process, for example, the blindfold and the bare chest that appear in *Implantar Anamú* (Implanting Amamú, 2016) and *Unguento* (Balm, 2013).

In *Implantar Anamú*, the artist breaks clay pots, crushes the pieces in an iron mortar and then, using the crushed clay, plants a guinea henweed seedling, which is also known as "master tamer." The plant was used by slaves in colonial Brazil as a medicine but also as a means to intoxicate their masters. In *Unguento*, Dalton Paula macerates in the mortar the same herb and prepares a drink with a bottle of spirit, which he carries to the streets. The blindfold, guinea henweed and medicinal balm imply a return to the images and practices from the past, to the slaves, ancestors and ghosts. These apparitions, the specters of social violence, may emerge as Dalton Paula's works are experienced. The artist doesn't adopt explicit significations to address social precariousness, racial hierarchy and the Afro-descendant invention – music, dance, play and ritual. Dalton Paula's uncertain images disturb the gaze, dislodge desire and instigate the act, language and action.

In the second half of the 20th century, as art came in contact with what it was not, it turned precarious, similar to the vulnerability of life. Exposing itself to the other and the power systems that organize life, art displays fragility and uncertainty in its own expression. Due to the contact with the world, the archeological layers of the body, the artist and expression are displaced. Form hesitates. Language falters. What's left are only vestiges of significations, impressions and representations combining, grouping and condensing. Between flaws and gaps that cause the form and language to vacillate, images emerge along with emotions, passions, the desire to act, to do something and gesture. Whereas at

first the prosaic material was relevant to acknowledging existential precarity, later interactive propositions promoted contact with the other, with ties, with life in its dependence and the fabric constituting what is shared. The artistic thought is devoid of itself, insubordinate to form and representation, focused on the process and changes in events. It was no longer a matter of representing deprivation and poverty but rather a question of touching the other, triggering emotions, desires, passions and acts that propel the body. Since then, in the art practice, precarity refers to the power of flaw that moves desire, displacing representations and demanding from the other a gesture, action or act of the imagination. In this sense, aesthetical precarity reaches a political dimension.

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THE SPECULAR WINDOW: TV IN VISUAL ARTS

Marisa Flórido Cesar

Television has attacked us for a lifetime; now we can fight back.

Nam June Paik

The vibratile field of TV has shattered our arts, it's no use to pick up the pieces.

John Cage

The fundamental problem is therefore to produce the people. More exactly, it is to make the people produce itself (sic) continually as a national community. Or again, it is to produce the effect of unity by virtue of which the people will appear in everyone's eyes 'as a people', that is, as the basis and origin of political power.

Etienne Balibar, 1988/1995

The hidden level of [Hélio Oiticica's] Tropicália resides in the process by which one enters it and in the web of sensorial images that produce an intensely intimate confrontation, especially, perhaps, with the most intimate of images: the universal television device running in utter darkness.

Guy Brett, 2005, p. 38

Sitting at the table, the woman has beans for lunch and drinks *guaraná* soda. In the background, there's the window, this opening that exhibits the perspective of the external world, recurrent in pictorial tradition. Over the landscape, however, at the level of the vanishing point that should attract and disperse the horizon, a TV shows an American program, *Tarzan*, along with commercials. One window overlaps the other: *Tarzan* has been fictitiously set in Africa, filmed in Mexico and aired in Brazil. It is a superimposition of places and cultures: after all, the infinite of geographical distances, previously provided by perspective, is substituted by the infinite of images reaching us through the screen surface. At the end of the video, the beans are thrown at the camera, on the glass coating that should separate the exterior from the interior, the reality from fiction and the observer from the observed. The veil of beans hides the scene and exposes the trick of mediation. The screen, a mirror-window, becomes tarnished.

In Sonia Andrade's video (*S/T*, 1975), the artist herself is the protagonist of the scene. In it, the dialog with art history is explicit: you have there *The Atelier* of Vermeer (1665-66) and *Las Meninas* of Velázquez (1656). In both paintings, we don't know if we are observing or being observed. In Velázquez's painting, as stated in the famous analysis by Foucault, the representation play is articulated in an infinite, specular back-and-forth that shows and questions the very role of representation. It is a complex exchange and evasion network, causing an incessant fluctuation between the position of the observer and the observed, the illusory space of art, the space represented in art and the external space welcoming the spectator: we see the painter, who seems to look at the spectator looking at him, which leads the spectator to feel portrayed as the canvas features an invisible model that is unknown to the spectator and causes the spectator to get mixed with it. The mirror in the back of the room, amidst other canvases, is what makes us see who is being portrayed, who is, after all, the model for the painting: King Philip IV of Spain and his wife Mariana. The mirror hence restitutes

Sonia Andrade.
No title, 1975. Video.



“the place of each gaze: the painter’s, the model’s and the spectator’s” (FOUCAULT, 1987, p. 25).

Foucault would not emphasize the door beside the mirror in which we see the silhouette of a man (palace marshal José Nieto), who inserted a foreign gaze in that gaze play. The “model” was there in a projection, in a reflection of a reflection on the canvas. We have here a dubious state of exteriority and implication that uses perspective as a regulating and demonstrative device: while there was a place assigned to the subject, there was also a deviation that resorted to specular reflection, in other words, to a transformation in the geometrical sense.

Sonia’s video ends inverting the process as analyzed by Foucault in the case of Velázquez’s painting, in which the mirror reorganizes the position of each gaze. With the tarnished screen, the artist denounces that from now on TV becomes the regulator and mediation device, mixing up who is inside or outside the screen, who is a reflection and who is the original. Between the construction of what is real and the illusion of its models, the perception of a phenomenon and its representation, the self and the other looking at it, a hiatus scrambles it all. The hiatus makes it

clear that the one being figured is rather an absence exposing itself. It is an absence situated between the perception triggered by the eyes – the image through which others see them. The gaze is never innocent as it is permeated by forces that, interiorized, regulate and filter it.

The complex relations of art images with media images would also be addressed, in a structural and metalinguistic manner, in other works in which the artist interferes in the spectator’s dispersive, passive relation, in the temporal control exerted by TV and in the repetition of a programmatic prototype. In a video released in 1977, the artist stands before TV sets transmitting four broadcast channels and insistently repeats: “Turn off the TV!” It is an image inserted in another image that is repeated in a seven-video series entitled *A Morte do Horror* (The Death of Horror, 1981). In this series, each video-episode is emptied – materially and metaphorically – of its narrative content, as a soap opera played backward. The ferocity of the content is latent: in one of the videos, we see a TV showing fish in a tank until someone turns it off, causing a crack from which the water slowly leaks, and presumably life as well. The last episode of the series features countless

TVs, one within the other, which the artist entwines in a capture and escape trick, a *mise en abyme*.

THE MOST FAMILIAR AND UNIVERSAL IMAGE

For more than fifty years, television was omnipresent in our lives. Since its invention, the screen became the opening to an increasing flow of images and information, reconfiguring the powers of the visible and enabling the eruption of spectacle in daily life. A mediation device, it would be definitively incorporated into the family routine and cultural dynamics, into behavior and the paths of history, into spatial and temporal perceptions, into the control of individual and collective rhythms of existence, into audiovisual syntax, into the split and connection of images and words, sounds and gestures. TV came to change the economy and the sharing of what's visible (this fabric made of gazes and words), of love and hate, of the (political) distribution of the common.

Everywhere, every night, watching TV became a routine ritual. Through the window of artificial light, in the everyday distracted numbness and daily repetition of serialized programming, TV would reconstitute all "axiology of places and functions belonging to cultural practices, knowledge, imagination and creation" (A. RENAULT, *apud* MARTÍN-BARBERO, 2004, p. 19).

In our homes, TV would "familiarize" us with the strange, reducing its difference. Since it's watched in domestic environments, amidst private and close relationships, the attention demand is usually dispersive, simulating situations of recognition and proximity, numbing people's sensitivity and thought.

Like other mass communication media, one of its main artifices is building illusory transparency: it hides so "the spectator believes he or she has a direct relationship with the world" (CHAUÍ, 2004, p. 13; BUCCI; KEHL, 2004), which is

attained by forging intimacy as well as mobilizing collective affection. Monopolizing and regulating the commerce of what is visible, at times it exhausted image, making it servile to economic, political and religious "iconocracies," as Marie-José Mondzain would call them – from authoritarian states to advertising, from the visual production market to the idolatry of celebrities. Probably, images had never penetrated to this extent daily life, social life, our history and sensitivity as in the decades of television and its expansion to new digital technologies. Images are amidst us with their power and ghosts, their ambivalence and the uses we assign to them. Between the dream-images (which our imagination can produce) and the media (which appropriate those), between traces and specters, how does the art image responds to the machinations of the imagination hijacked by TV? In this article, we will discuss some works of Brazilian artists who have addressed the impact of this media in our lives.

Decisive in reconfiguring social ties and political directions as it entwined the sociability figures with audiovisual flows and communication networks, TV would play a crucial role in the processes related to subjectivization and the production of media communities: it would transform perception and memory, solo and collective rituals (from soap operas and games to collective celebrations), besides establishing cultural wars, image wars and imagination wars. It would form and modify jaundiced concepts as well as perpetuate preconceptions about the world. It would construct conciliatory discourses as well as manage collective fear and emotions.

A TV is not merely a translucent window through which the world reaches us but also the surface of a mirror offering a reflection. As it reflects, it mimics and authorizes the behaviors and barbarianism it mirrors. Man becomes the image and similarity of what is broadcast in the media, a ghostly reiteration of gods wearing makeup: celebrities, soap opera

stars, characters of a reality show or crime. A double mirror-window condition, this small here/there, the screen became the great crossroad in which are articulated the spectacle society and the loneliness of a gaze, in which man performs and reflects his own drama, the drama of an absent origin, a lost model and frustrated end. He performs his own drama so the lights shine on emptiness and distract him from the pain of this abandonment. Small daily catharses take place with quick, nervous zapping.

This window offers us a specular image, the world turned into TV and living among us, and in the counterflow we could say: everything that one day has defined the human experience seems to have migrated there – religion, art, politics, sexuality, language and the body-image were captured by this dimension that is ambiguously inside (at home) and outside, in complete exposure.

Television was born live and upset the references of time, space, scale and distance: the sight of what was far away would no longer be hidden by distances or offered by the old spatial geometry but by the arrival and endless getaway of images from elsewhere. If space is the infinite here of images, time is either the eternal now of “live” or regulated in the serialization of modernity and the delectable immediatism of consumption and spectacle. In its programming daily repetition, television would sew time lapses and orchestrate the rhythms of existence.

Thus everyday life is also inserted in the marketplace logic through time control via serialization and repetition. The series format, a discontinuous and fragmented presentation of TV programs in daily, weekly or monthly editions, introduces the time of rituals and everyday life – a repeated and fragmented time – in the productive time of industry and capital, which goes by and is measured (MARTÍN-BARBERO, 2001). The repetition aesthetics, in turn, operates with the variation of the identical yet reiterating the message and

stitching fragments together. As it organizes its programming by fragments and hybrid connections such as the collage technique, it sews time in repetition and circularity, capitalizing its inherent dispersion. The time of TV series mixes oral narrative and popular story formats with the audiovisual and advertising industry.

Latin American soap operas are an example of such industrial and commercial appropriation of the mythic structure: they reproduce the fragmented and serialized time of industrial modernity (inserting the daily ritual time into the productive time of the industry and capital) and also suture its lapses in a continuous temporality of extended narrative. It is an unusual combination of orality – the exemplary narrative around the fire with its organic, artisanal time – and the fragmented images of the audiovisual and advertising industry. Additionally, the sense of familiarity associated with an increasingly heterogeneous reception, linked to the quick channel zapping with the remote control, fragments narratives and blurs even further the distinction between reality and fiction. Television would become, among us, the most familiar and universal image.

In Brazilian households, it had a coalescing function: around it, every night, people would become mesmerized watching daily programs. Let's recall the year 1964 and *The Right to Birth*, the first television soap opera in Brazil, broadcast by Tupi TV: it was such a hit that its last chapter was presented at the Maracanã when an anxious crowd filled the stadium to watch it. On April 1st of the same year, thanks to a military coup, the National Congress declared that the presidency of Brazil was vacant. What followed was a twenty-year-long military dictatorship. A coincidence or not, this curious crossroad in history is revealing. Instrumentalized by the dictatorship and capital, television would play a crucial role in the construction of national identities, an “image” of Brazil and an “image” of the people. Furthermore, in a culturally complex

country, permeated by distinct and at times antagonistic worldviews, TV was a major machine for integration, diluting dissent and masking conflicts. “Brazil is the country of television” was the anecdotal saying...

Walter Benjamin, in “The Narrator” (1994, p. 197-221), would lament the changes caused by the industrial and capitalist production in the transmission of experiences and memories via oral narratives. Orality and the practice of telling defined the place of who spoke and who listened, the authenticity of the story, the sharing of knowledge and examples to follow or avoid. With its organic time, practical knowledge and moral teachings passed on from generation to generation, social ties were threaded in a community of hands and voices, words and labor. Such changes would result in the loss of narrative and its conversion into two modes of writing: journalism, which from then on would claim the monopoly of the factual truth of information for sale (which is exhausted the moment it is enunciated); and fiction in novels (the lonely hero who experiences the losses of the community, time, memory and meaning).

How could we not suspect that radio and later television would replace the oral narrative around the fire and the production of a “community” especially in a country like Brazil? Yet it was done by absorbing the twofold development of the narrative into newspaper-novel/fact-fiction mentioned by Benjamin, with audiovisual traits of the spectacle industry transfigured into the duo TV news/soap opera.

How can we understand why Brazil is currently the second country in the world with the larger number of users connected to the internet, new technologies and social media, without understanding our relationship with the media images of TV and the words linking them? How can we perceive the influence of social media in the collective paths, redemptions and disasters that we live?

According to Martín-Barbero, Latin American urban populations did not enter modernity through “illustration” but through “secondary orality”: an orality whose grammar, rather than being formed by book and writing syntax, is formed by the audiovisual syntax of television, video clips and electronic games. Through secondary orality are articulated heteroclitic memories (personal and collective) and various narrational forms – technological audiovisual devices as well as epic narrative and modern drama. To Barbero “radio, connected to the cultural orality of those countries,” had a “crucial mediation role between the rural expressive-symbolic world and the urban techno-instrumental rationality” until the 1970s, when this role was “unsettled by television” (MARTÍN-BARBERO, 2004, p. 390).

In the market of the visible, the limits between the public and the private and between fact and fiction get mixed up in ambivalent games. The TV news program uses some strategies: it becomes the voice and face of the truth for a day, converts memory into merchandise and history into a spectacle, filtering what should be exposed and what should remain invisible, those entitled to images and words and those excluded from them. Therefore, soap operas become the everyday reality whereas news facts become ghostly, disposable realities; while soap operas bring daily life and its conflicts into fiction (perpetuating values, prejudices and customs albeit also discussing and transforming them), TV news programs acquire soap opera dramatic traits, capturing “the spectator through desire and emotion” as Eugênio Bucci (2004, p. 41) describes.

To the dispersive attention caused by the TV screen was added the computer interactive interface. The computer ended up influencing TV programming, which then incorporated the viewer’s participation and became fragmented, heterogeneous, fast and rhizomatic. The boundaries between the image producer and the image receiver are increasingly blurred, a fact accentuated by the profuse and easy access to new portable

technologies such as cell phones and digital video cameras. Not only the distinction between what is seen and lived is increasingly diffuse but what is shown and what is lived gets inevitably mixed up. Beings only exist if they are exposed to total and immediate visibility: the desire to see becomes a compulsion to self-display. From a passive attitude to the interactivity of reality shows or collaborative networks, from information bombardment to social and political life turned into a spectacle, from “tele-reality” to “tele-evangelization,” in the past decades our relationship with images has gained new contours and raised further questions.

TV IN VISUAL ARTS

As theoretical reflections on television raised distinct approaches (sociological, cultural, ethical, political, etc.), artists were challenged to respond to contemporary concerns and could not ignore the impact of this media and the new technologies. Settling down in the conventional boundaries of art was not enough to face the drastic changes in everyday life. In the dialog with TV, they would search for possible interlocutions and defy its imagery supremacy, clichés and stereotypes, instrumentalization and pretense transparency, concentration and power.

The art of the 20th century was influenced by the advent of television (and not only video art, in which this influence is more direct and evident) as much as television itself would be transformed by art (for example, the deconstructions by Nam June Paik and MTV). The emergence of the internet in the 1990s, in turn, dislodged the absolute, central position occupied by television, changing the direction and flow of images and information as well as the ways we relate to them. Artists like Wolf Vostell, Nam June Paik and Richard Serra, or collective initiatives such as *TV as a Creative Medium* (an exhibition featuring twelve artists in May of 1969 at Howard

Wise Gallery, which changed the way video art was perceived and produced) and the Gerry Shum TV-Gallery (*Fernsehgalerie Gerry Schum*, 1968) would be, among others, pioneers in various aspects of this dialog. The artists' attitude toward television would be either an open confrontation (for example, the slogan “Video is not television,” amplified and disseminated at *Documenta 6* in 1977) or a performative, enthralled approach: John Cage featured in popular programs between 1959 and 1960; Andy Warhol starred TV ads and series and created three shows for a cable TV channel; Chris Burden, in 1972, threatened to kill a program presenter if the broadcast was not live. From the 1970s on, the confrontation intensified as American collectives came along, among which Guerrilla TV, TVTV, Raindance and Artist's Television (some of them would create alternative TV channels).

In Brazil, the artistic production provides examples of the encounters and interrelation between visual arts and television: in 1956, Flávio de Carvalho was already showing his “future clothing/ Social Experience #3” in a talk show with actors Paulo Autran and Tônia Carrero (only photographic records of the interview remain). His street performances and experiences were already entering extended fields of previously specialized practices and discourses, and he was featured in newspapers and TV programs. “The city of the naked man” – of the anthropophagous – is a communicational city extending the street and the urban space to the invisible space of (counter)information and communication.

In 1967, Hélio Oiticica included in one of his penetrable works, *Tropicália*, a small TV set continuously showing television programs as part of the environment. That image, paradoxically intimate and universal, as described by Guy Brett in his analysis of *Tropicália*, evidenced how television affected our perception of the world. The Penetrable activated in an imagery web the body of the person walking

through it; it aimed at disturbing the hegemony of media images and their omnipresence among us in a manner that was “visual and sensorial: the WHOLE IMAGE,” as the artist would explain (OITICICA, 1992-1997, p. 179).

Artists who tried video art since the 1970s (such as Sonia Andrade, Letícia Parente, Anna Bella Geiger, Fernando Cocchiareale and Regina Vater, among others) as well as those working with other media (such as Ana Vitória Musisi) did not shy away from confronting TV media power, which invaded and molded people’s gaze, daily life and behavior in a particularly overwhelming way in a country like Brazil. These artists would question the complex relationships between the filmed body and image circulation, the framing of perception and its submission to consumption logic, the instrumentalization of TV by the military dictatorship, its models and strategies of numbing seduction and veiled violence, etc. Just like the availability of smaller and easier to operate equipment in the 1980s has contributed to the emergence of community TV (such as “The Spirit of TV” and the Video in Villages project, created in 1986 by Vicente Carelli and Virgínia Valadão, which facilitated for more than twenty years the encounter of Indian natives with their images and narratives, turning the video into a means of expression, reflection and diffusion of their worldviews, adapting secondary orality to television), the insertion of independent video makers in commercial TV programming propelled experimentation with electronic languages, making parodies of their clichés, investigating and intervening in the cultural function of television (like in the case of São Paulo’s groups TVDO and Olhar Eletrônico). The younger generation of artists that grew up sharing dispersive attention between the TV screen and the computer interactive interface will not abstain from posing new questions to this communication machine, that is, television, which tends to merge with the

computer. Computers ended up influencing TV programming, which incorporated the viewer’s participation.

In distinct manners, artists (besides the aforementioned ones, they include Barrão, Arthur Barrio, Laís Myrrha, João Castilho, Goto, Alexandre Vogler, Matheus Rocha Pitta, Sandra Kogut, A Revolução não Será Televisionada, Gustavo Prado, Paulo Vivacqua, Lula Wanderley and Mario Grisolli) will reflect the overlapping relations among methods of production, circulation, mediation and reception of visibilities. How does our relationship with images take place? How does our relationship with the world take place when mediated by images? How does our relationship with images mediated by technologies, media (such as television) and other exhibition devices (such as the art system) take place? And what about art images? Are they capable of resisting appropriation and co-opting? How can we reflect on the external conditions that determine the artwork conception, its exhibition modes and reception?

BETWEEN THE AIM AND THE GAZE

The video entitled *Bestiário* (Bestiary, 2005), by Laís Myrrha, overlaps seven editions of Globo TV’s news program *Jornal Nacional*. Amidst the superimposed sounds and images, the only words that can be heard in unison are those in the opening: “Coming now in *Jornal Nacional*...” The repetition of this phrase reproduces the nature of the compressed time of “now” on TV with television’s fragmented and serialized time (the daily ritual subsumed into the productive time of the industry and capital), the disposability of memory-merchandise, the fact-information exhausted in a day. Moreover, it catches the phrase in its deictic paradox and so-called monopoly of the news truth. Pronouns and figures of speech, deictic elements present something or someone while referencing the situational context and speech itself. However,

such pronouns – which index time (now, then), space (here, there), addressing someone (I, you, he, us) or something (this, that) – cannot be established without paradox, overlapping and indecisive crossings. Nothing can be named without ambiguity, like in the case of the swift “now,” capable only of representing the present in that given sentence. If the “now” is hence a “stupid lie” as described by Julio Cortázar (*The Devil’s Drive!*); “in *Jornal Nacional*” is the place without a place of the canvas’ surface with no thickness or touch, the ubiquity and atopy mentioned by Paul Virilio (1993). The indistinguishable presenters in the superimposed images forming ghosts, hybrid beings like monsters and beasts, and the confusion between fact and fiction are reinforced by the title: “bestiary” was a form of allegoric book, which described and illustrated real and fantastical creatures. Written during the Middle Ages, bestiaries promoted, like newspapers, a moralizing message.

The video installations of João Castilho expose the complicity between the aim and the eye in the images of violence turned into a spectacle in TV news programs. In *Emboscada* (Ambush, 2013), four TV sets fight a ghostly war in the arid hinterland with no guns or protagonists, we only hear and see gunshots and bombs. In *Erupção* (Eruption, 2013), six tube television sets show buses on fire in Brazilian cities during public manifestations in 2013. The act of setting them on fire, removed from the context of the TV news narrative, makes us question whether it is an act of vandalism or a rightful protest.

War, photography, cinema, television – many have already stated that they are indissociable. There is a close and long-standing link between technical images and war conflicts. If scenes from World War I and II had reached us through movies, soon the images of war, from Vietnam to September 11, would be transmitted via satellite TV. It is through this window that we watch at home visceral wars in the city of Rio de Janeiro, favela invasions at the deafening sound of artillery and the cornered, silent population. We are

here and not there, we may think with relief, even though “there” is in immediate proximity and the gunshots that we hear right here, around us, get mixed with those emitted by live TV. The mediation and brightness of media spotlights are blinding and numb this helplessness.

In *Bang*, by Ana Vitória Mussi, urban guerrilla scenes on Rio de Janeiro’s hills, linked to the occupation carried out by the Pacifier Police Units of Rio de Janeiro (broadcast live and photographed from the TV), are intercalated with scenes from seven World War II films and documentaries,¹ to the sound of the song “Bang Bang (My Baby Shot me Down),” included in the soundtrack of *Kill Bill I* (2003/2004), by Quentin Tarantino. Ana Vitória interrupts the narrative flows and temporal continuum of the cinema and television imagery with photography, editing them with singular associations: the Olympic athlete’s jump in the documentary by Leni Riefenstahl and the flight of combat airplanes (virtually gods and their falls); the complex game of gaze direction and triangulation (of individuals and the indistinct mass) with war and image machines (from binoculars to photography and cell phones); the tenderness and redemption of love in times of insane brutality. The media clichés are all there – love, life, death and the soundtrack that goes along – but rather to question how they are distributed through their images, what ruptures they establish, how such ruptures and distribution interfere in the flow of life and history.

Photographed by the artist from her TV set, the black-and-white images do not hide pixels, sweeps or *moiré patterns* (the superimposition of visible interference grids on the screen). On

1. The images mentioned in the work were taken from the following films: *Olympia* (director: Leni Riefenstahl, 1936), *Triumph of the Will* (director: Leni Riefenstahl, 1935), *Pearl Harbor* (director: Michael Bay, 2001), *Tora! Tora! Tora!* (director: Richard Fleischer, 1970), *The Longest Day* (directors: Darryl F. Zanuck, Ken Annakin, Andrew Marton and Bernhard Wicki, 1962), *The Final Shock* (Documentary War Collection: World War II), *The Desert Fox* (director: Henry Hathaway, 1951) and *Complexo do Alemão* frames (courtesy of Globo Comunicação e Participações S.A.).

Ana Vitória Mussi.
Bang, 2012. Installation featuring four simultaneous projections and a soundtrack. Duration: 3:45. Photograph: Ana Vitória Mussi.

the contrary, they make their source explicit. They are projected as a slideshow, a photomontage alluding to the 20th-century image repertoire associated with war. It is a photo cinema that reminds us of *La Jetée* (The Jetty, 1962) by Chris Marker or *Cosmococa* by Hélio Oiticica. Except that, in the *Bang* installation, we are not in the comfortable chairs of a movie theater screening room but amidst the bombarding of four projections on three walls that force us into a physical dance while we search or avoid the shots in the images and the next spot where they are going to appear. Not only does the eye/body of the photographer or cinematographer do the framing (in *Bang*, they are appropriately secondary), but the same happens with the body of the spectator that aims at and is the target of the images.

In one of the artist's previous works, *Boxe na TV* (Box on TV, 1975), our presence is detected by an electronic sensor and activates a Kodalite projector. The projection speed does not allow us to clearly distinguish the fights being shown, leading to tension and suspense. The sound of shots, the sublimated eroticism of bodies fighting, the frantic, hypnotic rhythm of the images and the proximity of our own body activating the mechanism submerge eroticism-violence-speed-image in a spiral of pure vertigo... Such is the true violence of images manipulated by identifier and fusional devices (explored to an extreme by ads making us believe that we want what we see): the screen is no longer a screen and becomes an instrument of fusional hallucination and de-realization that deprives the spectator of any distancing for preserving critical power, as Mondzain (2002) would say. It is not the image that is saturated but the desire that is getting paralyzed by the immediate gratification offered in the spectacle by the relentless bombarding of its delights. In this daily numbness, in the instant persuasion of TV, the pulsion to watch is amortized, the gaze surrenders to the monopolies with no resistance, thoughts and words are, at last, silenced. The idolatrous fusion, just like violence, abolishes separation and denies the alterity of every image.





In *Bang*, the installation's spatialized time is also the rhythm of the projections albeit as a singular rearrangement of circulating images and different eras, in which each fragment is charged with intensity and each association traverses and brings to the surface other times and pauses – while photographic or filmic images are memory residues and history hieroglyphs, they are also their interruption and dysrhythmia. If, on one hand, the photographic act is a blow to the illusory spatial-temporal continuity, isolating it from the context – and of which we cannot say much regarding its time, place and event – on the other hand, the montage and edition create heteroclitic concatenations, other links between images and the words required by them.

For that reason, *Bang* begins in complete silence, exposing only a choreography of gazes (and their prostheses) triggered by the projections. The silence is broken by the first word, a caption shining alone against the black background, and by the ensuing soundtrack. After all, the rhythm of the projections could only be dictated by the cadence and smoothness of a song. Performed by Nancy Sinatra, its lyrics (like a voiceover for *Bang*) are about childhood memories, cowboy games with a boy with whom she will later have a romance, the gunshot as a romantic rejection, the bells tolling as echoes of her grief – love, abandonment and death become equally blurred in a melancholic lament. For any personal story is also that of all humanity.

War technologies split homogeneous views: aerial weapons such as radar and satellite have violated the spatial *continuum*. If, on one hand, for the warman the function of a weapon is the function of the eye, as Paul Virilio (2005) warned, on the other hand, the function of the mechanical eye, the technical imagery machine, is also the function of the weapon: war machines have been developed in concomitance with and interdependence on the gazing machines. Thus, we can conclude that battlefields would become perception fields: the world is the target of the eye. War cannot be separated from the magical spectacle, since its main goal is producing a spectacle: defeating the adversary does

not entail just capturing him but captivating him and infringing the terror of death before death (VIRILIO, 2005). Since World War I, the new weapon system bears its power in the targeting device, camera and management of image and information. War will have an image cinematographic service, responsible for propaganda, and a military image service in charge of conflict representations and strategies. The logistics of World War II would be conceived at war rooms and propaganda studios with camera lenses and image games. Mussolini used to say that it is easier to convince a large mass than a single person. Joseph Goebbels (Hitler's minister of propaganda) dictated what should be visible and what should disappear into invisibility, like in the case of the holocaust and previous events foreshadowing it (making it harder for Jews to perceive its threat).

In the documentary *Triumph of the Will* (with frames inserted into *Bang*), by Leni Riefenstahl, the mass forms the Aryan nation's large collective body devoid of individuality, in which a sole head, face and voice dominate the scene: those of the deified dictator. As foreshadowed in Hollywood movies, the Twin Towers are destroyed by the enemy that condemns the image, spreading their spectacle of death – as an image – to the dazzled eyes of the world watching them on TV. The evangelical priest kicks the statue of a Catholic saint on the day of her celebration, execrating idolatry through the television image in his tele-evangelization program on national TV.

For that reason, in *Bang* the artist resorts to a variety of image archives. Other meanings may emerge in the relation between times displaced and crossed; between images, records and fictionalization; between visibility and invisibility modes and their enunciation modes.

Ana Vitória Mussi has a series of works entitled *On TV*. She has imposed on herself, from the start, the difficult task of photographing the interstice between what is seen and what remains veiled, the gaze and the thought, the opening and confinement of the perceptual field, the aim and the gaze. The task, in short, of

photographing the fissure and resistance to meaning: the veil itself in what it possesses as a surface for image insertion and protection, as a mediation screen and specular plane. To the artist, unsettling the games of hiding, revelation and reflectivity of media devices (newspaper, TV, cinema) would imply exposing the threshold between blindness and vision. An image summons the establishment of the gaze as well as its limits, which become visible here. In other words, (art) images invest the power of the gaze precisely through veiling strategies, which protect the indeterminateness of the senses and the desire of seeing so as to keep them open and free.

Transdisciplinary Collective Frente 3 de Fevereiro (February 3 Front) was formed after the death of Flávio Ferreira Sant' Ana on February 3 of 2004, who was murdered by the police in the state of São Paulo. The crime revealed the racist attitude of the police as it views black men as preferred suspects in any criminal activity. *This action*, reads the collective founding manifesto, *stems from a notion promoted in the sociocultural formation of Brazilian people, which encompasses from the etymological root of the word "black" and its negative connotations (person of the black race, black, dirty, filthy, very sad, grim, perverse, slave – Aurélio Dictionary) to the discriminatory effects that this notion has on the daily life of our society.*

The group would focus on the fallacy behind the discourses on the pacific coexistence of differences in Brazil; and on the symbols manipulated and turned into a spectacle in collective pacifying events and enjoyments, such as soccer and Carnival. The group would concentrate on tactic insertion in media such as television. During soccer games, members of the group would seat in strategic locations so to unfold gigantic flags before the TV cameras broadcasting the live event. Inserting themselves in the live TV transmission, under the aim-weapon of the cameras, their action's reach went beyond the stadium and the game. The flags feature writings such as "Brasil negro salve" (Hail Black Brasil / Save Black Brasil), "Where are the blacks?" and "Zumbi is us." The



Frente 3 de Fevereiro.
Flags, 2004-2007.
Video: 52' Photography: Frente 3 de Fevereiro collective's archive.

ambivalence of the message is not an accident: it attempts to separate itself from advertising and political propaganda (whose goal is, after all, selling a product or an idea). Zumbi is the hero of the *quilombo*, the hero of the resistance and the undead of Haiti. “Zumbi is us” represents, above all, an act of enunciation, the possibility of one enunciating oneself as “us.” The unfolded flag is a huge caption covering the crowd in the bleachers, covering their faces with no intention of erasing them into homogeneity, invisibility or silence but rather welcoming them and claiming the difference in the “communal figure” and the image of “people” sold on TV. It is an improper subjectivization that redesigns it, undoing it, for this displacement shatters the established inclusion codes as it redistributes the place and temporality of the bodies (previously excluded from that “communal image”), which revendicate the occupation of other places and rhythms that are different from those delimited for them (RANCIÈRE, 2005b). Like the black bodies. *Flags* reverse the aim and the weapon, question the power of the art imagery existing for us and trigger the manifestation of a world in the game of apparitions and disappearances. In order to do that, it was necessary to discover the veiling strategies, perceive the veil as a surface for revelation and a plane hiding forgotten faces and silenced voices. The veil – like flags – is the battleground for fighting potencies, such as tyrannies, empires and revolutions, submission and the freedom promised by images.

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WE ARE STILL DREAMING

Mayra Martins Redin



I was accompanied by a large group of people. We had to join forces for opening a path on the ground so the river water could reach us. We used spoons and our hands to excavate, and the water flowed as the path was created. Suddenly, I realized my friend had fainted. I approached and hugged her, then I proceeded to damp her back with water from the river, applying it with my hand as if it were medicine.

Eduardo Montelli's dream¹

1. A dream sent by Eduardo Montelli to the Artesania dos Dias [Daily Crafts] group during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

Everything brings profit, except dreaming – dreaming softens people and makes them inapt for daily work. It is hard being an artist and shutting the door to dreams.

Louise Bourgeois

“We are still dreaming” alludes to the sentence “I am still alive,” which artist On Kawara began telegramming to friends in the 1970s. As he used that support network for dealing with urgent matters, he brought to the scene his own survival and – why not – a resistance affirmed through words: “I am still alive.”

The sentence used in the title of this essay was created as a call for workshops carried out by Grupo Artesania dos Dias, a group in which I take part.²

The manifesto sentences “We are still dreaming” and “dreams don’t stop working,” among others, have been with us ever since, expressing our desire to work collectively in public spaces on the many insistent nocturn narratives that are written in social media and yet, at the same time, get lost amidst numerous daily images.

Artesania dos Dias was initially established as a group focused on listening to what had become a yearning in the face of the violence increase after the elections in 2018. In that sense, many nightmares were sent to us and straight away we realized that, besides collecting and reading them to reflect on the present, we were interested in taking each singular, intimate dream of a dreamer to be worked in a group (with their permission and anonymously if they so wished).

2. Currently, along with Alessandra da Costa Kasprczak, Gabriela Weber Itaquy and Luciana Knijnik.

The idea gravitates around three movements: looking into the images brought by a dream, predicting that they were also constructed in a social environment and hence could return to it and be worked on by it; turning this into a collective exercise, expanding the senses, experience and words around a dream that, otherwise, would remain in a private dimension; and transforming, reconstructing, disassembling and reassembling a dream by utilizing the montage technique and a dynamics in which the words in the narrative are experienced along with images from magazines, giving birth to a plurality of unexpected images for a shared experience to take place.

We start our essay with this brief description of Artesania dos Dias,³ to clarify that such writing emerges in exchange networks with Artesania and also an APPOA (Porto Alegre Psychoanalytic Association) group, which, through the supporting spaces for this exercise of authorship, have enabled me to reflect on the theme of dreams.

Moreover, narrating dreams is a practice that I have inherited from my father: a gesture repeated throughout my childhood at the breakfast table. Through this heritage, filtered and transformed, two years ago my son has developed the habit of taking partial notes of his dreams every morning on a sheet of paper, to which others are added as needed.⁴

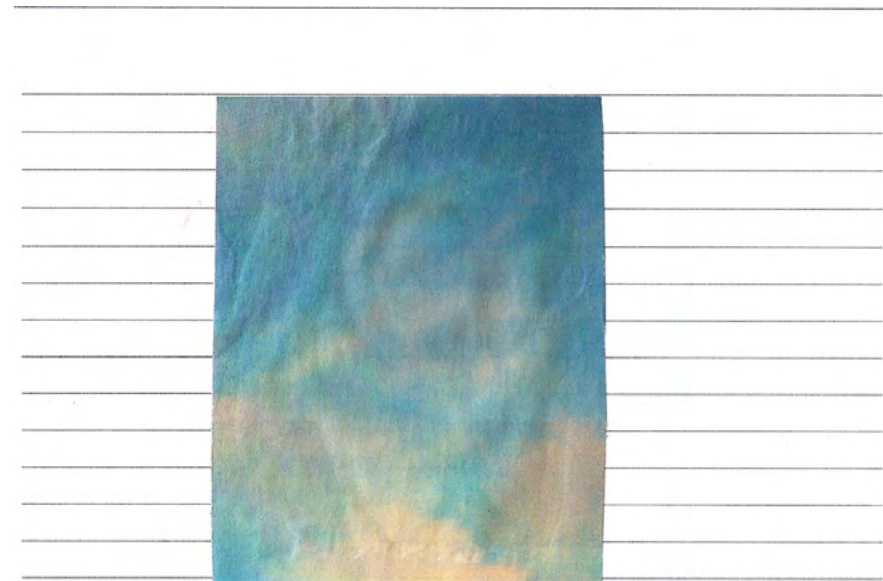
All these exchanges turn listening into an ethic that is supported and built as in artist Cecília Cavalieri's dream, sent to me in 2012: "I dreamed that I was contouring an

3. For further information on the Artesania dos Dias group, refer to the writings: "The Dream of Someone, Everyone and No One" (2020) and "For an Artesania dos Dias: Between Dreams and Hands" (2019). Also, refer to the group's Instagram account on: https://instagram.com/artesaniadosdias?utm_medium=copy_link.

4. *The Dream is a Lone Imagining*, 2021, in which I record Romeo telling about his drawings of dreams. Edited by Pedro Vasconcelos Costa e Silva, link: <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=7rP2xZG5rq8&feature=youtu.be>.

accident. However, instead of moving away from it, I surrounded it with a black-ink line." Thus, it is a listening practice that, through peers, creates questions for tracing contours.

And yet, how is it possible to contour an accident? How can we frame so many excesses? Barthes (2005)



describes the gesture as "a scrap, a sliver of vision" (p. 103) rather than an action or something immediate. Such as fog? Such as a dream? I wonder.

In my psychoanalytical practice, I observe that dreams start integrating sessions when an element of resistance dissipates. Narrating and listening to a dream counterbalances our impetus as it imposes that even an analysis should be productive, linear and a source of immediate answers. That is also why, often, we hear feedback that in

therapy one experiences a different temporality, characterized by estrangement: “It feels like I talked for five hours,” “I’ve never thought of that before”.

What seems to happen when a patient decides to bring up a dream is precisely the sustenance of an uncertainty. Couldn’t we think that the navel of a dream, which Freud mentioned in order to focus on a dream’s impenetrable aspects, also emerges in therapy like the emergence of a dream in the subject’s discourse?

Edson Luiz André de Souza (2020) says about listening:

As a psychoanalyst, I have many times witnessed how much a word or image can shift a path when we are able to listen to it and welcome it in its “out of place” position. Our hurry to understand such words subtracts the very surprise at seeing what until then only existed in thoughts. Even the potent telescope that we acquire, every night, with our dreams, is quickly forgotten and often neglected. It is somehow a matter of cowardice in confronting a grammar that presents itself as obscure, lacunar and incomplete (p. 94).

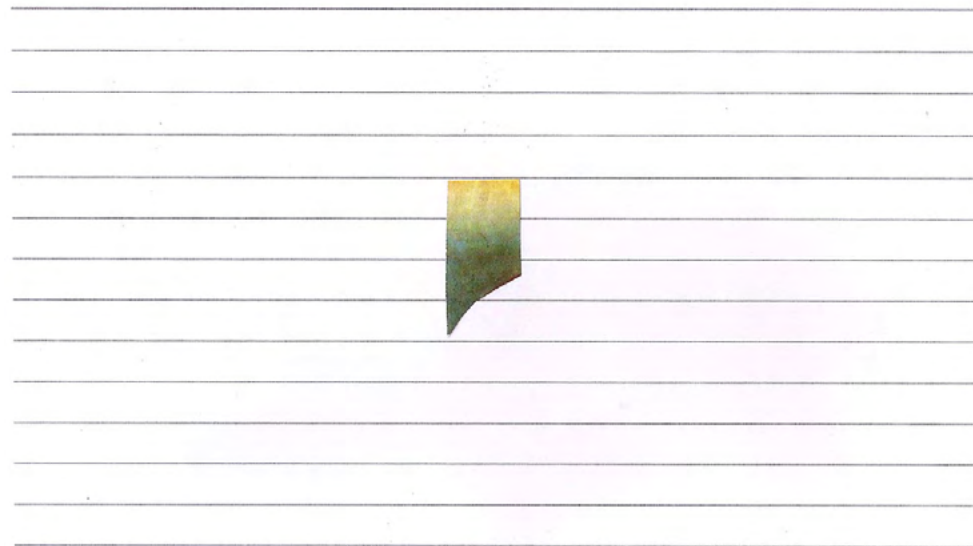
The way we listen to and receive the element that did not exist before is also what will enable imagining the future. The therapeutical space sustains that which has not been said yet and the attempts to say it, trying to go “from impotence to the impossible” as Bianca Dias (2021) stated when speaking of ethics.

Therefore, I also think that when dreams are narrated by many people, we may interpret that the culture is facing its own strangeness, in which laws created to assure and protect man from his helplessness are no longer apt to handle the tragic and absurd aspects derived from culture itself.

I wonder: would this action of addressing individual dreams be some sort of recovery of a space for conversation about what does not appear to make sense? Would it be a convocation that finds in the practice of writing dreams a way of reaching the other?

Freud (2019) insists on the potency of what we ignore and proposes that there may be a path for us to take if we follow the images we are gifted through dreams. With the idea of the “Dream navel,” he also points out that in dreams there are unfathomable points, in which they will be linked to the “unknown” (p. 143), indicating an impossible at which we arrive.

Sustaining this lacunar state, attested by the image of a navel that is the mark of what we don’t elaborate on completely, seems to be a task suitable for our time.



But which time is that?

Edson Luiz André de Souza (2020), moving in the same direction as Charlotte Beradt (2017), who secretly collected dreams from anonymous people in the Third Reich, stated that dreams are like a seismograph of sorts, which anticipates tremors in such a subtle way that someone needs to be present for interpreting them in the threshold between the device's indication of tremor and the external signals.

Currently, there are movements (among which I highlight *Inventário de Sonhos, Dreams Inventory*⁵ and the aforementioned *Artesania dos Dias*) building archives of what is being manifested publicly. Postponing the end of the world, to Ailton Krenak (2019, p. 27), means “to be always able to tell one more story,” and in poet Danielle Magalhães's words (2021, p. 194), “History is waiting / for the beginning / of the narrative,” which leads me to ask: if dreams continue to happen, wouldn't they be resisting to show us the paths to that which in our core wishes to be told?

Perhaps there is still resistance, albeit fragile, to “the loss of the symbolic density of words” (DIAS, 2021) in this gesture of writing and sending dreams into the virtual space as well as in the gesture of those reading them and listening beyond the excess of images being produced and consumed.

In listening (or reading) it is possible to hear something unheard of resonating or something that in its form of resistance still bears an insistence in telling. “It is forbidden to dream, but I dream” is the discourse recovered by Charlotte Beradt (2017, p. 34) in her research.

The eruptions of strangeness, which in their written form sustain lacunes and incoherences, are situated at this point where they witness that there is something ineffable permeating and constituting us. Finding ways to say something indicates the

5. The members of *Inventário de Sonhos* are: André Oliveira Costa, Caroline Mortagua, Denise Mamede, Edson Luiz André de Sousa, Joana Horst, Luciano Bregalanti and Paulo Cesar Endo.

wish to tell and also the necessity of creating spaces where one can be heard.

The dream produced by the subject in his composition with the world around him, when shared, returns to the social sphere, attesting to its liminal state between what is public and what is private. Here we detect a supposition of listening, I think, a bet that there is listening for the incomprehensible.

In a piece about *Inventário de Sonhos* [Dream Inventory], the authors (SOUZA; HORST; COSTA, 2021) refer to transfer, based on Lacan, as the element sustaining discourse. What one produces is produced to be heard. Danielle Magalhães (2021, p. 110, 111) writes in a poem:

nearly always
we try to learn
about stories
when there is no longer
people to tell them

(...)
today I tell my grandmother's story
and she doesn't even know it
she doesn't even know that her ear was the place
where my stories landed first
I told and she listened
being the source of my desire to tell

Through poetry, she witnesses and transmits a silenced story whose existence is rooted in listening: the narrative is born from an attentive, willing ear. Here, I think that maybe the production of dreams in our time is related to building a space for listening. Would there be dreams if we did not have someone for sharing them?

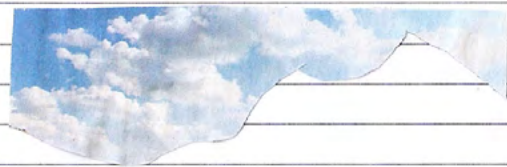
The psychoanalytical practice counts on the support of a slow space for untold words to come, and dreams are a venue

for the unconscious that manifests in images as Freud argued, and that convokes words through its lacunes.

The desire to tell them seems to play a poetic role too: it gives room to and opens up a space for the imagination, filled with unthinkable scenes and images, which in its written dimension forwarded to the social sphere causes noise, erasures in the discourse imposed by words and also images brimming with significance.

My son Romeo, a six-year-old at the time, had a profusion of dreams in the first months of the pandemic and concluded that “the dream is a lone imagining,” providing him with the place occupied by imagination and play during waking hours: the place of something unplanned that is accomplished precisely in the unexpected – the experience of the unconscious.

Even though we dream from remains of the previous day and marks of desire, as Freud suggested, the next day our waking hours will be composed of remains of the dream from



the previous night, animated by unimaginable images that are only possible because one has dreamed, conferring to the day the quality of an experience containing the future. The dream, with its unpredictable and imposing manner of taking the dreamer, seems to be dreamed in solitude, thus dodging the self's imposition that is charged with uncertainties.

I recall when a patient said: “My day was no longer the same after this dream.” Do we have here an experience only made possible by the influx of images that awakened precisely because they operate the subject's decentering, as proposed by Freud (JORGE, 2020)? Dreams deliver to the subject news about his lack of control, and the oneiric narratives we have been encountering announce that there is desire and it insists on being experienced – like a child playing even in adverse situations.

Bringing childhood to this essay reminds me now of a scene I have often witnessed: as I boarded the Trensurb train, a woman with two small children and a baby in her arms asked the passengers for money. The children helped her collect coins and the baby was often asleep. At times it had

its mouth on her chest, at times it nestled in her shoulder as she held it with one arm while using the other to steady herself and collect coins.

Sometimes, one of the baby's legs dangled out, but he always seemed to sleep peacefully, a deep sleep amidst the noise, the moving trains and the mother's voice as she introduced and justified herself before requesting money. The ability to sleep manifested by that infant, against all odds, tells us about the essential support needed for the body to recover from disturbances.

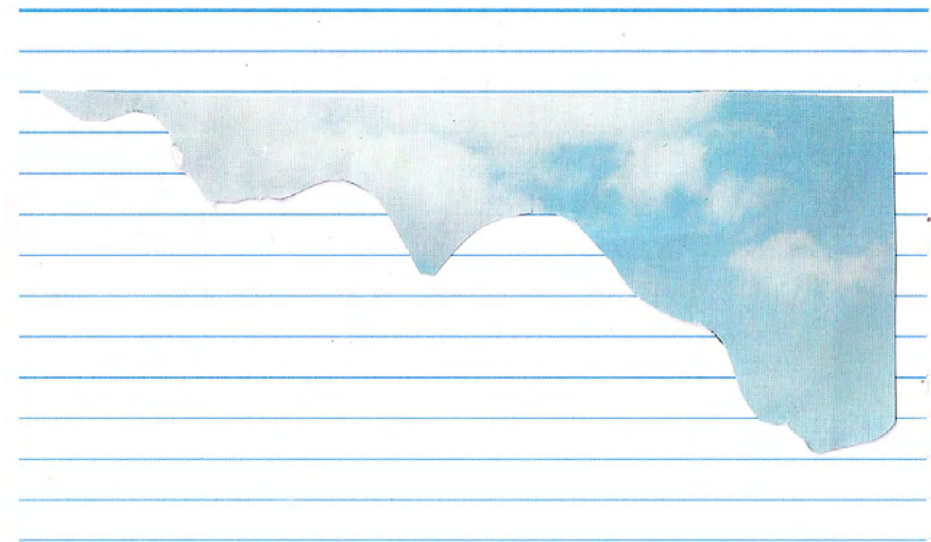
Marta Pedó (2020) revisits Freud as she states that the simplest desire contained in a dream is the desire for sleep: "we wish to keep sleeping and the dream protects this primary desire." The ability to wake up, and hence deconstruct established meanings, will depend on support, on sleep, of which dreams are a part.

Helplessness encircles us and speaks of a world in the process of bankruptcy, and if while asleep we are still able to dream, maybe that happens not only because dreams fulfill the role of physiologically protecting sleep but also because they fulfill the role of creating images to shape what permeates our body in helplessness.

Jonathan Crary's research (2016, p. 27) focuses on extreme policies developed by contemporary capitalism to eliminate the need for sleep – the "last obstacle" in this regime – and thus increase the subject's productivity.

He emphasizes (p. 30) that the vulnerability presented by sleep speaks of a fragile subject, dependent on the other to be constituted as a subject and stand socially. Along with Jean Luc-Nancy, he states that the opening of this individual state is disconnected from the collectivity that would provide the subject with "safeguard or protection" (p. 30).

Taking this direction along with Maria Rita Kehl (2009), we can conclude that the sharing encompassing contemporary subjects is not the same sharing in which we admit to



being vulnerable; it is rather the agreement that we can and should consume incessantly. And what we consume are abundant, complete and accessible images.

Socially, we don't feel the least bit protected to be able to get rid of our defenses for a while, yet dreams are still there, profusely, resisting and insisting. What do they want to tell us?

A dream, as Freud understood it (2019, p. 151, 152), is motivated by a desire, which presupposes something lacking, around which the subject moves. Citing poet Casé Lontra Marques (2017, p. 64), who said that "the desire is a form of delaying," we can interpret that through the dream a desire convokes not fulfillment but an experience containing delay.

Sleeping and dreaming, per se, already implies allowing oneself room for what "is useless." Telling our dreams is like talking about the weather: often, it only serves to start a conversation with no set purpose. Artist and teacher Raquel

Stolf once told me that she begins her classes by asking how many hours each student sleeps at night. My father, also a teacher for many years, told me he would never wake up a student asleep in his class, he even lowered his voice as he understood that the student felt safe enough to sleep right there. Such trust was a sign of support.

Choreographer Kazuo Ohno (2016) says that we don't grow up while moving and must rest and dream in order to grow up.

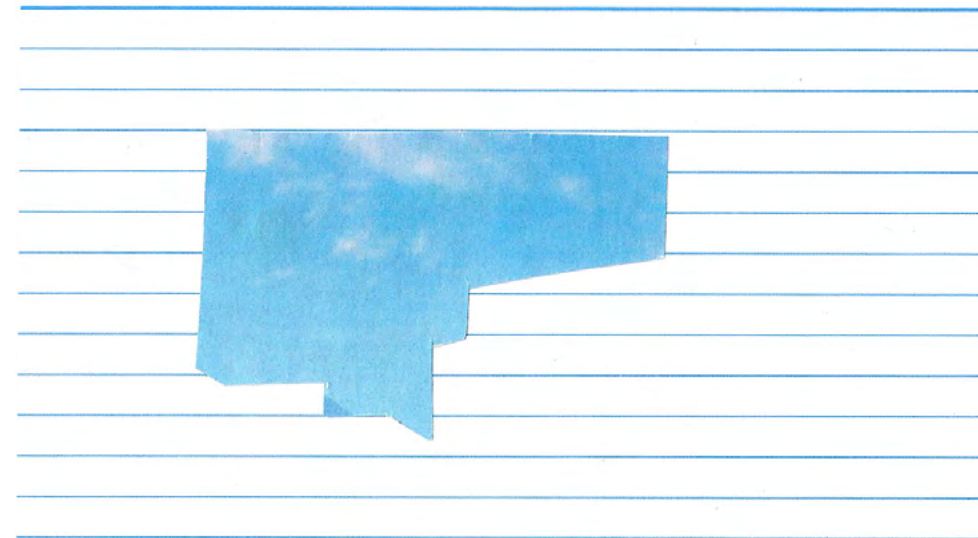
Dreams, sleep and boredom are somehow a political exercise of refusal, perhaps retreat or pause, the action of halting the continuous flux of images that captures us – our own images and the world's. With the aid of psychoanalysis, we may conclude that images – those we use to compose our daily life – will not allow us to rest from enjoyment, including the enjoyment deriving from perplexity in the face of deadly news.

We are subjects that consume but also create and produce images, as dreams show us. Hence we become responsible not only for the images somehow feeding the consumption machine but we can also take – or perhaps it's better to say approach – and examine those images that we unconsciously produce and which manifest through our dreams.

Following Freud's precepts, when we understand the mechanism of resistance with which dreams also deal, the fact that we dream further attests that we desire: that our desires are insistent and manifest, doing so with incredible concoctions in which images are composed, recomposed and proposed in a present time.

Dreaming does not appear to have much to do with a conscious choice. We are subdued when a dream awakes us or when we wake up as an oneiric memory dominates us during the day. Dreams, even some that we have as children, persist in our memory and throughout the day,

making us pause for a few moments, that is, they make us slow down in regard to the acceleration and order that rule us so we remain productive. We take our time with these persistent images brought by dreams. With them, we compose thoughts that were forgotten, that have not been formed yet or that are even stifled by the excess of ready images we handle.



In *A interpretação dos sonhos* [The Interpretation of Dreams], (2019), Freud insists on the importance of the “insignificant details” pertaining to a dream narrated by a patient of his. He says:

In interpreting dreams, we also found important each nuance of the language in which the dream was presented. And when we found that a text was absurd or insufficient – as if the effort of translating the dream

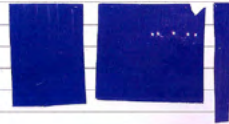
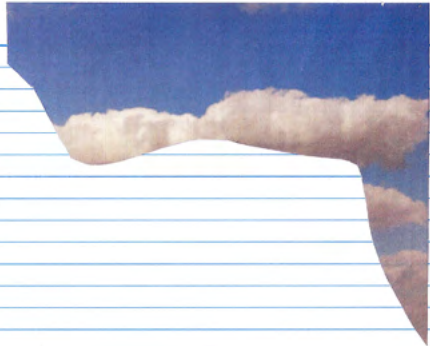
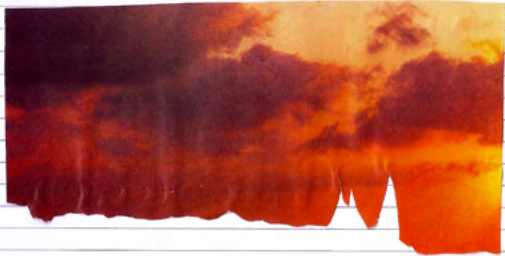
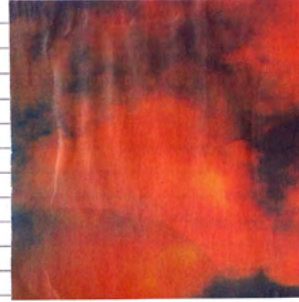
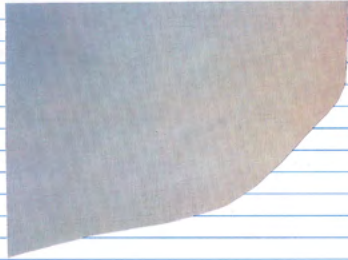
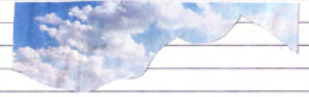
into the correct version had failed – we also respected such failures in expression. In short, we treated as a sacred scripture something that to other authors would be an arbitrary improvisation, gathered in a rush in the heat of the moment (p. 563).

In this passage, he sheds light on the way a subject brings up, through dreams, an entire language of which the subject is part, a language marked by the experience of his insertion in it, and in that sense the subject is talking about a given culture. Freud studies dreams as someone not willing to give them up or let go of what they can address to the subject. If a dream seems hard to grasp, “I ask the narrator to repeat it. He will seldom do it using the same words” (FREUD, 2019, p. 564). He persists in the words, attentive to the dreamer’s choices, and points out a possible “common ground” that may encompass dreams from the same night, several weeks or even months (p. 575), which provides us with news of a whole world beyond us and spite of us, which constitutes us.

Desire and dream meet here, in this request for us to learn to delay. It is not by accident that dreams are built in a complex manner, proposing to us another temporality for this path along the lack that constitutes and animates us. Reading dreams has also something to do with a certain slowness, I think. We dream of images that instigate us to narrate them. Here, images are joined by words, which indicates that they are pierced, inviting words into a composition, or maybe they are so powerful that they stir in the dreamer the desire to speak.

I recall an essay by Pascal Quignard (2018), in which he revisits the childhood experience of observing his mother and trying to find the word “on the tip of his tongue.” He identifies his need for writing in his departure from the mutism that had attested to his previous insertion in the language albeit on a threshold: he possesses the words but has lost them, which makes him want to speak from the standpoint of this place, the place of writing.

I foresee that dreamy images are close to this threshold mode in which, in poetry, words reveal themselves on the border where we are not separated from discourse, but where a cut tensions a construction that will take into consideration that very cut, the very limit, the very bankruptcy of words. As writer Manoel Ricardo de Lima says, “an image appears to be scant, very scant” (2014, p. 85). An “insufficient” image associates, in an unpredictable manner, with other images or words, and perhaps here lies the resistance and insistence of dreams in our time.



The images included in this essay are mine, produced during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020/2021, and they are a work in progress while the pandemic lasts. The collage series featuring fragments of the sky is a daily exercise, which composes an unfinished collection and serves as a day count. Such practice is accompanied by reflections and notes regarding the production and theme of dreams in a dialog with psychoanalysis, hence these images are also ways of taking notes and building the essay.

Peixe [Fish], series, collage on paper for binder, 2020-2021, a work in progress.

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COLOR AND DYNAMISM: LIFE /N THINGS

Paloma Carvalho Santos

*There is no world without a stage
and no one lives for not-appearing*

*Seeing of ears invites to speak
knowing of eyes invites to show*

*Notice also, silence sounds
listen to the voice of color*

*Semblance proves it can be truth
as every form has sense and meaning*

Josef Albers

Like light, we are vibrations. And with the other waves, we vibrate. We feel colors with our entire body, with our skin, especially when there are abrupt variations in the environment. Albers convokes us to listen to color and also to its absence, silence. In this sense, color would be performative rather than an added stable attribute or adjective. Goethe has already stated that “colors are the actions and passions of light” and “expressing the essence of something is a useless enterprise.” “Color” would then be something powerful that incites transformation, movement, interaction; it impacts, emotionally and physically, things

ILLUSTRATION 1.
Biohazard.
Máscaras [Masks]
series, Paloma
Carvalho Santos,
2021. Acrylic paint
on acetate (face
shield structure). 14
x 19 x 24 cm (5.5
x 7.4 x 9.5 inches).
Photo: by the
author.

and beings. Colors alter shapes and surfaces – like actors interacting onstage, for the dynamics of their relationships depends on the context, on the situation being established.

Becoming a colorist, therefore, would involve developing the ability to dynamically modulate different forces, different levels of energy emanated by colors, without the classicist focus on “harmony” (an idealized proportion) since absolute stability would mean death. We are interested in movement, in the challenge that is life; in unbalances and dissonances: we even incorporate violence and avoid judging asymmetries, *differences*. It is natural for certain things to stand out and repel each other in given moments, and also for them to retreat to their intimacy.

We focus on this dynamism, on drafted paths rather than on the idea of instantaneous, rigid Form. We avoid the notion of *image* as something stable, in the name of dance and horizontal, non-hierarchized dialog.

With my installations,¹ I intend to modify the space, not only activating it physically and objectively but also removing it from a neutral condition, so the artwork raises questions about the bodies and stories of that place. That way, even if my work is not implemented as a performance but rather as an environmental intervention (carried out with physical objects), the beings going through it will contribute to the fluidity of its meanings. Since the 1960s, with the emergence of spatial languages, we have been considering all bodies expressively, not only that of the proposing artist.

In this essay, I ponder two major sources for my research: constructive color, elaborated by artists from a more objective perspective, a tradition started in painting and influenced by physics and psychophysics; and color viewed from a cultural perspective, even though still

avoiding narrativity and literality, considering the representation limit. These are forces that alternate at distinct moments in my creative process, in decisions at times based on the manipulation of materials and the dialog with art history (at introspective moments); and at times made when I am impacted by the stories of places, bodies and territories, which happens more often during assembly when thought in action is required.

SCIENTIFIC COLOR AND ANTHROPOLOGICAL COLOR

A plane that reflects light: a “scientific” painting, as proposed by Georges Seurat when he took into consideration that color is composed in the reflection of light, altered by pigments directed to space and our bodies as they reach our retinæ. Van Gogh not only destabilized contours – the absolute identity of forms – as Seurat did, but he also saw all animated, organic and inorganic beings in action. Hence color gains preponderance and, since the painting is turned into an object interacting with the surroundings, many modern artists migrated from the color grid to monochrome, a single color now interacting with the environment beyond the frame.

However, taking into account Donald Judd’s body of work and his concepts of “installation” and “specific object,” we observe that these “constructed planes,” originating from painting, one day would be responsible for the history of the place, which makes us question their political and public aspects. What is the contribution of such installations? What do they distort, what do they emphasize? Do they simply cover and colorize? For whom was this building, this space, constructed, conceived and planned? How is this landscape perceived and framed? Who has visited it? What has previously happened here? What was experienced here? I resort to vanguard architectural theories when I design, and then I

1. Organized on: <https://palomacarvalhoart.wordpress.com/>.

implement the intervention in the actual space. After all, we are moved by luminous effects, by the spectacle of colors reflected in the environment and atmosphere. However, at one point, we must consider that the way we build meanings is also historically determined and we have to implement in a piece of work something that surpasses the record and imprint of such effects.

Along these decision-making processes, what was individually intuited is then challenged. In the installation, a certain place – which always bears its own story – gradually imposes itself and proposes ethical challenges. My work is thus consolidated in the assembly of an exhibition. This is when there is the real possibility of a public proposition for abandoning any literal, figural relation with the external reference, and it becomes a political or micropolitical affirmation to stimulate attention. My challenge is keeping meanings open as much and as long as possible to provide a direct experience to the senses.

Therefore, there is no prior meaning in colors. Dear romantic: the Absolute is renewed with each breath. The issue with the Universal is its scientific, atemporal, de-historicized pretension. I'm still moved by the association of Mondrian's color grid with the individual's value in social democracy, always in construction, always transforming, with no guarantees or lineages. Today, however, for art in its social relation, given the unavoidable presence of a *place*, there is no ideal solution. Each repetition will be inaugural, experimental and radical like a philosophical question. Moments will be unique, with no laws or rules, lived one by one. There will no longer be the belief in a transcendent revelation: dialog generates horizontal threads and temporary conclusions. Gradually, as I dialog with other colorists, my heroes and heroines, I believe I'm continuing their legacy and memorable moments. I must reaffirm the non-naturalist meaning of color to promote novelty and a critical

posture: we need to defy our sensorial conventionalism and comfortable views.

The body is put to work, not as a personal gesture but rather *dis-organized* at the moment of the interaction between the artwork, the audience and the space: this is the body's living, existential environment that has transformed the status of the "audience," bestowing on it participation and authorship as proposed by Hélio Oiticica with his Parangolé and Penetrable works. I particularly hold dear the penetrable *Projeto Filtro – Para Vergara* [Filter Project – For Vergara] (1972/2019) as here the color experience is not exclusively visual or theoretical. And this is the proposal, influenced by the Bergsonian concept of "duration," that has determined the route – labyrinthic and long – in which color planes continuously structure the space as events, as *happenings*.

The term "filter" is also dear to me, due to the understanding that the perception of chromaticity occurs when there is unbalance or incompleteness in the wavelength composition at the moment of the reception through the eyes. In other words, for coloring a rich light source, named "white," it is necessary to subtract certain spectral bands. This action of *removal to transforming what was regarded as a given*, understood, already inviable and neutralized by cordiality, is precisely what can confer personality to an environment, modifying it minimally by highlighting what will be seen as a plastic element, selected from the world by simple emphasis, by a cut, and articulating the forces – of the *entanglements* we elect to be inserted in the system (relatively and temporarily circumscribed) that constitutes the piece of work.

Creation would then be an *act of looking* conducted by an interference that creates a dynamic, unstable, spatial composition; it is not designed to be just contemplated but rather crossed, lived and *used*. In this sense, *producing art* is rather the *modulation of attention* than the production of

objects. With the notion of an *installation*, the artwork structure establishes a connection with the non-object-related variability in the environment as a dialog proposition. It is less expressionist but no less thrilling: the audience, now a participant and immersed in the artwork, becomes crucial. I believe that in this Cézannian relational game we become attentive critics. Less so-called identities or essences – would that be a vestige of the classicist ideology of *permanence*? And more provisional constitutions, personalities stimulated by interactions. The profound cultural changes that took place in modernity have cast us in a liquid, fast, unstable environment, as we know, where we observe encounters of limited duration.

Such a condition of impermanence raises another question. If (almost) nothing is definitive, which forces attract and repel each other, managing movements? Why some are slower than others and what maintains contacts? What propels and determines direction and speed? Affinities, unstable affinities that we chose, not always rationally, as our poet used to say. An aspect *perceived*, or even better, *stimulated* by the projection of a gaze, the moment of discovery – a glimpse – that pushes us forward in a movement of approximation, a link. A revelation indeed – now with no religious meaning or institutions. So... even what seemed stable, if we take one step back, further away or closer, ends up displaying a certain *contrast*, different variations... Even granite, so solid, is made of particles, sinking or rising in a geological time, at an unusual distance, charged with energy. Everything moves, propelled by encounters, interests and desires. It is not the psychoanalytic, Freudian desire but rather the desire of a *schizo* body (DELEUZE; GUATTARI, 1996) that reconstitutes itself as it composes other forces that resonate and combine, increasing their potency in a stimulating and positive direction. And, as they add up, they trigger a dance, define a direction for movement, tuning into a shared rhythm.

I seek to promote such encounters and build dialogs as well as spaces of conflict, disputes and dissonances, for not every expression is harmonic. I go between surfaces, planes and colors: geometries constituting spaces for *freedom*, freedom of action, as defended by our dear Mário Pedrosa. Participating closely in the same concrete world where everything is potentially connected and constantly risks *becoming* and hence changing the state of *being*.

Opting for translucent media, I aim at the emergence of a relational/gravitational Field with the Place. I affirm the rejection of the object idealized by chassis or pedestal forms. With such relations, in my propositions for personal actions, I catch a glimpse of how everything considered as a given may enter this area of influence, be incorporated and dance with the light sources and reflections. The use of bodies, as discussed, is crucial for dynamizing perception and also deciding the assembly points and the geometry of distances.

My motivation is the chromatic phenomenon. I avoid the term “natural” since phenomena may originate from artificial, manipulated processes and still cause surprise with their vitality. I also avoid the term “chance” and the association with oneiric figures as work starts with a posture of *opening* to the world – beyond the dichotomy inside/outside – and immanent listening: a disposition for dialog and tolerance, problematizing ontologies of essence and structuralisms. In this experimental fashion, a result of the creative act would be the suppression of social masks as well as artifices based on the idea of stability of individual subjectivity. On the contrary: at the “constructive” creative moment, there would be an effort for us to get outside of ourselves, of the human being’s primacy. I create, hence, seeking to integrate myself into movements that permeate the surroundings – this life of things and in things – and allow for the recognition of *territories*.

This ontology-based question feeds colorists' poetics. Tim Ingold (quoting Merleau-Ponty) elaborates on the dubious nature of light: "light does not have a stable ontological foundation" and questions "whether light is a transmission vector or a constitutive element of the things we see around us" (INGOLD, 2022, p. 85; 87). Would "color" then possess *carnality* (MERLEAU-PONTY, 1971)? Would a "color" be a surface expressing itself, a *reaction* to incident light? And, in this return, would it be bodies influencing other bodies – reacting, acting, reacting? The color of a surface would then be like a body, functioning as skin and simultaneously, due to its luminous constitution, indicating immateriality and impermanence since it reaches us as a reflection.

Therefore, for us to perceive the colors of things – or, even better, the very things – we would need to set them in activity and recognize their present rhythms; we would need to place them under the influence of external stimuli, which in turn are also inconstant and relational. Each instance of being would then be momentaneous if we consider its dynamism. And here we also consider briefly the old academic debate involving *disegno* and *colore* (LICHTENSTEIN, 2006): if an outline differentiates the distance, suggesting conceptual stability, the vibrational exchanges between our bodies integrate and permeate us, revealing themselves as a result of interactions in provisional limits that establish self-regulating fields and planes, which are permeable to the surroundings.

STRUCTURE-COLOR: FROM CÉZANNE TO OITICICA

We will then circumscribe as "constructive color" the use originating from a method, the "modernist tabula rasa." This idea signals the liberation, by the artists, of the allusive color, the so-called "local color" (which was faithful to the intention of representing an external reference observed in the objects, which is characteristic of Western art's naturalist tradition

– which, nonetheless, is rather learned as an iconography than properly studied and observed in phenomena). John Ruskin had already pointed out the conceptual challenge that the direct experience imposes on the names attributed to colors, using as an example the grass designated as *green*, even though upon receiving direct sunlight it is yellow: "Very few people conceive that grass illuminated by the sun is yellow" (RUSKIN, 1883, p. 22). We are tied to traditional meanings and there is still little direct observation. This is why it is so important for us to insist on the experimental and experiential creative process (DEWEY, 2010) – and in a much-needed self-reeducation (or dis-education) of our gaze.

We know that, in traditional cultures, colors were identified with the rarity of materials, establishing forms of social distinction. This was something relativized by the modern chemical revolution, which gives ample access to the experience with saturated surfaces in objects designed for mass consumption. Specifically, abstract art freed artists for them to build new symbolisms and meanings while employing simple materials. In one of the most beautiful artworks in the Inhotim museum collection, *Ttéia*, by the great Lygia Pape, golden threads attained something nearly impossible: dissociating themselves from the traditional meanings linked to gold and dematerializing in light.

After Isaac Newton's seminal experiment, which demonstrated that the so-called "white" radiation is composed of a wave set with measurable wavelengths, color systems elaborated by scientists were consolidated. An example of this kind of color approach is the work published by chemist and director of Manufatura Gobelin, Michel Eugène Chevreul – *The Principles of Harmony and Contrast of Colors*. His research then stemmed from an objective tapestry problem and spread the concept of "complementary color" (or "opposed" in the chromatic circle); it eventually influenced a whole generation of impressionist and post-impressionist painters, who

employed high contrast to establish the vivacity of things on canvas.

These analyses from an objective perspective of the luminous specter – a structure in which every color has a position defined by its wavelength and it is possible to quantify the differences among colors – were added to discoveries in psychology (the variability of an experience and other illusions) and influenced great concretist artists from groups such as Cercle et Carré, Op Art and Arte Cinética, or such as Brazilian artist Abraham Palatnik and an entire generation of great South American artists: Venezuelans, Uruguayans and Argentinians (Jesus Soto, Carlos Cruz Diez and others). Their artistic languages emphasize light physics and an impersonal notion of nature, which we also notice in the recent works of Olafur Eliasson. The discovery of surprising effects of contrast, triggered by the eyesight's physical limitations (especially when associated with regular, geometrical shapes and saturated colors applied evenly to large areas), ended up being explored in these poetics of impersonality and thus affirmed the use of color in a constructive lineage. Goethe, in his doctrine (GOETHE; GIANNOTTI, 2014), questioned Newton's aforementioned seminal realization and, as a great poet, emphasized human physiology and also the symbolic aspect of perception. For artists, his Theory of Colors became an alternative to the excess of scientism.

These different approaches to color in Modernism manifest exemplarily in the contrast of two educational books by artist-teacher Wassily Kandinsky: *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* and *Point and Line to Plane*. Placed side by side, they demonstrate the conflict between these two lines of understanding: the mystical-symbolic potential of color and the scientific ideology of that time, which put Bauhaus artists-teachers in charge of finding stable, absolute values regarding certain visual shapes so as to solve

objective issues in the industry. Today, however, we can see that in *Point and Line to Plane* prevailed a structuralist ideology that aimed to “discover” (in reality, to define) the supposedly fundamental, stable elements of the Visual Form.

We will resort to a rare color historian, medievalist Michel Pastoreau – who, along with Simonnet, has been conducting work focused on cultural history (investigating color symbolism in different contexts) – in order to understand how the scientific emphasis on certain meanings is recent and modern, and how such perspective is resistant, conflicting with other ways of working with color that are adopted in contemporary artistic productions. From his *Le Petit Livre de Couleurs* [The Little Book of Colors], in which each chapter is dedicated to a specific color, we selected a passage on green to raise the debate on this (the book was written in a Q&A structure and the translation is ours):

Would this instability of green derive from the fact that it is a color “in between two,” the fruit of a blue and yellow blend? This is a recent idea! Prior to the 17th century, our ancestors would never think of making green with such a mix! They knew very well how to obtain it directly and, in the color scale, it was not between blue and yellow. The most common classification was that of Aristotle: white, yellow, red, green, blue, black... It was the discovery of the specter by Newton that gave us a new classification, and it was only in the 17th century that we really began mixing yellow and blue to make green (PASTOREAU, SIMONNET; 2005, p. 68-69).

The farther the historical time, the more we are surprised by such differences. Physic David Park also surveyed the different meanings of light and color: “In the Greek of Plato and later writers, the word *kyaneos* means

blue. Homer, writing in the archaic period, describes the sea as purple (*Iliad* 16.391), as white (*Odyssey* 10.94), as winelike (*oinops*; *Odyssey* 2.421 and many other instances), but never as blue“ (PARK, 1997, p. 33).

As for the issue with modernist scientism, Donald Judd, quite ironically, had already criticized Kandinsky’s form for attempting to establish fixed relations for emotions, shapes and colors:

As a child, I knew that certain colors were supposed to elicit certain feelings. I didn’t understand why a bull should be mad at red. Johannes Itten and Kandinsky taught in their important Bauhaus color courses that colors always elicit the same emotions, and also that colors always correspond to certain shapes, being both aspects in agreement with emotion. The idea that I like best is Kandinsky’s notion that a pentagon combines a square, which is red, with triangles, which are yellow, to make Orange. The idea should be sent to Washington so that the newly painted Pentagon could be the first to use color in war (SEROTA, 2004, p. 145-159).

Hence we see, from this cultural perspective, the historicity in the meanings attributed to colors; and how artistic practices, understood as visions of personal worlds and also historically determined, change along with contexts. After all, something may seem to have always existed if we don’t take historical research into account. Today, It would be unthinkable to us, for example, to dissociate green from the idea of “nature.”

MOVEMENT WITHOUT TIME

We then notice that, in the practices of contemporary artists, more poetic and free meanings are elaborated for colors. Hélio Oiticica is an example of the artist who, with his work in the late 1950s, sought to overcome such dichotomies and explore a great question of 20th-century physics – time, linking color to a philosophical/ontological discussion. Oiticica thus dissociates the color experience from a linear/spatial/chronological image of time:

We start with the very silence, hence the artwork is itself duration, and not a duration that comes along or that we intuit within the world of non-silence. [...] The metaphysical-color (color time) is essentially active in a direction from within to without, it is pre-eminently temporal. This new sense of color does not hold the customary relationships with the painting color of the past. It is radical in the amplest sense. It is completely stripped of its former relationships albeit not in the sense of a return to the prismatic color-light, a color abstraction, but rather of a purified reunion of its qualities in the active, temporal color-light. Therefore, when I reunite color in light, it is not with the intent of abstracting it but rather of stripping it of the senses, known for their intelligence, so it is pure like action, even metaphysics [...] (OITICICA, 1986, p. 16).

We know, contrary to what prevails in the scientific sphere, that great scientists actually avoid prescriptive formulas. In the 1980s, David Bohm, in a very special meeting, approached Krishnamurti for an honest discussion about the problem with time.

Krishnamurti clarifies that “where there is no ego, there is no problem, there is no conflict, time does not exist;” after a while, Bohm adds: “It’s not a matter of us remaining static but rather of, in a certain sense, not having a time order” (KRISHNAMURTI; BOHM, 1995, p. 13; 32).

Consequently, for navigating in intuition it would be important for us to detach from our thoughts and understand this psychological need, recognizing the *authorial* aspect of meanings. We don’t have to stop producing them but rather relativize their relevance, stability and pretension to universality, historicizing culture and understanding it as a healthy *game*.

Similar experiments started in the early 1960s, carried out by North American scientists exploring nature through mystery. James Turrell and Robert Irwin use color as light in the monumental scale of the landscape, where the influence of Eastern philosophies is noticeable; their notions of emptiness (and silence) were already employed in sound performances, for example, by John Cage (who in turn studied composition freedom in music with Schoenberg) and Peter Brook’s theater. In many of these environmental works, emptiness is utilized as a visual element and turned positive. For this reason, in such installations in space, color planes are preferably not gestural; in general they are industrial products or paints applied by mechanical processes so to build even monochromes or gradients. The idea of installation sustains an immaterial art, steering away from the production of saleable objects and not relinquishing the activation and participation of the audience. That way, the environmental color can engage, energize, seduce and incite participation; these are also concepts of great importance for the constructive trend in Brazil, in a broad variety of works by artists encompassing from Mira Schendel to Tomie Ohtake.

COLOR IN A RENEWED PERCEPTION: THE SERIES PRODUCED DURING THE PANDEMIC

We are now more sensitive. Leaving home is a true adventure, a relearning experience – after a period with so many changes. In two years, uncertainties and loneliness led us to deep self-questioning, making us rethink values and reorganize our priorities. The journal of slow dissipation of a pandemic: upon returning to the *life of external things*, to systems that are open to the risk of more variables, our perceptions become fresher. Everything seems new again, even what is familiar such as the leaves on trees.

I go for a walk, looking for vegetation. I look up at a tree, to its counter-lit crown, observing its leaves: on the tip of the branches they are much greener and younger, and receive direct sunlight. The ones closer to the trunk, in turn, are larger, casting shadows, darker subsets with greens in various densities. Such overlaps produce here and there a contour that subverts their typical shape. They are no longer leaves and, through my focus, recompose as expressive projections of my imagination, suggesting other forms. “Gradients,” such as the green layers of the sea that become bluer with depth, interest me. I select these moments and build a limited universe, a system that is determined by a theoretical cropping of personal interests, where colors multiply in the variations of light – for there is an *infinite* in the interval of a segment.

These considerations on the sensitive lead us to believe that nothing is absolutely solid, isolated or definitive. The variability offered to us by life constantly challenges concepts that are established for things, what would define their so-called “identities.” We live, thus, as actors on a stage, a theme that Mikel Dufrenne evokes in the opening of his treatise on aesthetics: “The work must offer itself to

perception: it must be performed in order to pass, as it were, from a potential to an actual existence” (DUFRENNE, 1973, p. 19).

I live my research: my inspiration comes from everyday experiences; from a gaze that is suddenly taken by surprise... by a variation in hue or density, observing the light change on its trajectory in space and interacting with physical supports that defy matter solidity and the stability of forms. The leaf that sprouts green and becomes yellow with the increase of carotenes. In each change, the entwining of unique variables, with results that are never alike. My interest resides in this *life* – in things themselves – and in the direct experience of the inconstant appearance of surfaces and their interconnected making: at times opaquer, at times transparent, translucent or even iridescent, shifting with the angles of light incidence and quality, warmer or somber or humid.

The recognition of a potency where previously there was only a mere supposition of simplicity, the surprise in subtleties is what motivates me to build a laboratorial – so to speak – environment, with a reflective creative method. It is not a reconstruction but a reinvention planned from the observation of something that I have witnessed and triggers a desire for actively intervening in physical processes, building a “situation,” a mechanism of emotions and meanings, variations of life moments. In production, which is a fast and intuitive decision-making process, I add other materials, positions in space and geometries that will host surfaces to be changed by light. With a few supports, I build a depth that slows down and modifies reflection. This interference questions the literality of what was previously there in order to inaugurate new physical facts.

How much of this is mimetic? I act: I paint without a gesture. I abstract the shapes but focus on the fleeting moment, on the unrepeatable moment of a luminous

event, in an attempt to eternize it. What I manage is to deal with a secret memory of an instant. This nourishes *invention* as an image gradually fades so that, with the participation of the other, in each direct and renewed experience, it is the current time – not image-like, illusory or narrational: the pure enchantment of planes that are lively, energized, with no past. Colors that render a soul to surfaces.

But how can I transform such a fleeting element like light into a visual element passible of expressivity? I use the green color for inspiration. A light green from my palette. In a series, I opt for the lightness of dyed silk with watered-down paint like a watercolor; the green, combined with orange, both very close in terms of luminosity and saturation, creates a harmonious, permeable partnership; a smooth, helpless rhythm in a low-contrast overlap. In another series, I opt for the brutality of plastic and a thick block of saturated, expansive, aggressive paint – like a helm that can offer protection.

THE “GREEN FLAG”

“Art is not only a form of action, it is a form of *social* action” (ROTHKO, 2004, p. 10). I use transparency taking into account what is behind it, especially in the case of public spaces, which are considered sites for exchanges; creation takes shape through listening and observation.

In the past two years of 2020 and 2021, though, when the pandemic took away from us all psychic security, it was necessary to abandon the idea of exclusively institutional art – thanks to the reclusion and a plunge into intimacy, into the processual, unfinished and hesitant – and proceed to the production of objects. I insist on the relationship between art and science, art not being subjected to an illustration of the latter but constantly

ILLUSTRATION 2.
Bandeira verde:
[Green Flag]:
a sequence of
the artwork in
movement. Paloma
Carvalho Santos,
2021. Acrylic paint
on silk. Two 190 x
68 cm (6.2 x 2.2
feet) plates. Photo
by the author.



tensioning the stability of theories and contributing to new episteme. With the possibility of institutional interference suspended and exhibitions canceled during the pandemic, I reduced the scale of my experiments to the point of reaching portability. The flag – the kind of flag used in processions and popular festivities – seemed to me the perfect inspiration for experimenting in the counter-light that evokes for me the freedom outside.

What if, now that the lockdown is over, we let the flags mingle freely with the city? The two layers become yellow, inspired by Cruz Diez’s “additive” blends and painted on silk, which is a natural microfiber made by insects: so light, almost *antimatter*... After the dying process, the weight of the dye helped with the challenge of de-identifying silk as something luxurious and transforming it into planes of color while preserving its lightness and receptivity to the wind – colors that act in the present without referring to anything external or transcendent, standing out for their intensity and saturation, for being a thicker entanglement, and not for an ontological difference in regard to the surroundings, as we have already seen that everything is light, is vibration. Silk’s base color is not white but rather yellowish, interfering quite a bit with the applied dye: both colors, orange and green, thus acquire more energy, ready to face the heavy heat outside. All that is needed is a small piece of wood in the middle to hang them and for them to guide us, incorporating themselves into the arms to make us free as flag-bearers.

THE “BIOHAZARD” MASK

My position as an educator leads me to prioritize institutional work as opposed to commercial work. I extrapolate this political decision to my creative process: the understanding of light aims to elevate consciousness and collective engagement. Recently, besides the insistence on questioning the

understanding of art as an object, I became interested in the suspension of human primacy, which is a criticism of the prevalence of anthropocentrism in arts and human discussions in general. Excessive importance is given to our species. However, the current fluidity of identities casts us in another experimental statute, forcing us artists into an extreme permeability as seen only in rituals. For that reason, in this phase of my research, resulting from the trauma of the 2020 pandemic, I feel the need to create more intense, even aggressive work, with a more explicit political posture, so I transform my own face into a medium.

The face-shield structure, in this sense, functions as a support for the user's eyesight as much as an item that problematizes facial recognition, a basic element in the Society of Control. It is something that is being increasingly imposed by authoritarian governments, which take advantage of new technologies in a global intransigence to human transit and migration. With these pieces of work, I place in suspension, still intuitively, my privilege that tends to abstraction. The *figural* surfaces, not as something to be *represented* but through a performative channel, since isolation had forced us to restructure ourselves. And in the very idea of a social game there is a *ritual* facet as now, they say, we have potentially become *biological* weapons: "The vision of the masked figure, as a purely aesthetical experience, transports us beyond everyday life to a world where something different from daylight reigns: the world of the savage, the child and the poet, the world of the game" (HUIZINGA, 2010, p. 30). Let's admit it: no one went through the global COVID-19 pandemic unharmed. The questioning of Identities, of the Being, now imposes itself on all. Refuting the demand for a definition, I bring into my intimacy the fluctuation of physiognomy and my desire of becoming paint: *toxic*. Now sculptural, color is mass. From the plane, it gains tridimensionality and density. Transparency is, in fact, less relational and more subjective, confined and interiorized. Space, now subjectivized, becomes



ILLUSTRATION 3.
Detail of *Bandeira Verde* [Green Flag].
Paloma Carvalho Santos, 2021.
Acrylic paint on silk. Two 190 × 68 cm (6.2 × 2.2 feet) plates. Photo by the author.

a permeable Field: a living surface for painting, a skin in continuity with the world, embodying color on Barnett Newman's footsteps: "attempting to go beyond the visible and the known world," a world increasingly ambiguous: real or fictitious, planned or sacred?

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PHOTO 1.

1st World Festival of Black Arts. Poster, 1966. IPEAFRO. Available on: <https://ipeafro.org.br/acervo-digital/documentos/fesman/1a->.



BLACK ART: BRAZIL-DAKAR¹

Sheila Cabo Geraldo

In 2016 was celebrated the 50th anniversary of the 1st World Festival of Black Arts (FESMAN), which took place in 1966 in Senegal. Originally conceived during the Congress of Black Writers and Artists in Rome and, hence, longed for since 1959, it proposed organizing in the African continent a regular festival of the black world. Sponsored by UNESCO and supported by *Présence Africaine* [African Presence] magazine², the festival constituted a key moment for developing the concept of negritude proposed by the then president of the Republic of Senegal, Léopold Sédar Senghor.

Celebrating in Africa the creativity and diversity of arts of the continent and its diasporas was a proposal concomitant with the decolonization process, which had begun with the independence movements of several former European colonies. Since his election as president of the Republic of Senegal, Senghor had started to

1. This writing is part of the research “Memory Policies: colonialism and the primitive in art,” which is supported by the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq) – Productivity – and the State University of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ/FAPERJ) – Pro-Science. It was partially presented at the 40th Colloquy of the Art History Brazilian Committee in November of 2020.

2. Created by Alioune Diop in 1947, under the auspices of African, American and European intellectuals such as Léopold Sédar Senghor, Richard Wright, Aimé Césaire and André Gide, the magazine made efforts to divulge and build the elements of a Third World transnational policy in the mid-1950s and even after 1960. In order to do that, however, it had to deal with the emergence of the State-Nation as a privileged propagator of enunciations and rules for the global and regional game of forces as well as with the contradiction between this configuration and the racial and/or continental paradigm inherited by movements such as Negritude and Pan-Africanism (REIS, 2020, p. 223).

design the festival, which aimed at political affirmation internally as well as the affirmation of the ethics and aesthetics of the black movement, thus bringing the emergence of Africa in the international scene. As he stated in his opening speech:

The Festival will be an illustration of Negritude (...) a positive contribution to building a Universal Civilization. To be honest, we will no longer be consumers and, at last, we will forever be civilization producers (FICQUET, 2008, p. 18, our translation).

Taking place from April 1 to 24 in 1966, the festival had an opening ceremony presided by Léopold Sédar Senghor, also a poet and theorist of the Negritude anticolonial and antiracist movement. The program required many diplomatic strategies, and to that end Senghor counted on the Association for the World Festival of Black Arts, specially created for the event and headed by prestigious Senegalese intellectual Alioune Diop, one of the founders of *Présence Africaine* magazine, which in the 1950s had united African intellectuals against the colonial system. The association was also joined by poet Aimé Césaire, one of the creators of the Negritude movement.

The festival project aimed to not only strengthen the movement globally³, by debating black art, but also to promote the city of Dakar, opening it up to political and cultural integration on a global level. Since Senegal had been a French colony, becoming independent a few years earlier in the 1960s, the festival intended to be an affirmation of the decolonization process too.

During that first festival, Dakar was immersed in an inebriating rhythm of theatrical and dance shows,

3. Available on: <https://ipeafro.org.br/acervo-digital/documentos/fesman/1a-fesman/>. Access: Sept. 4 2020.

conferences and street parties. Works were selected by promoters of each country, but each session had a panel of judges for awarding rewards.

The festival included two art exhibitions: L'Art Nègre – Source, Evolution, Expansion and L'Art Nègre Contemporaine, featuring artists of the so-called black world or from African-descendant populations. Brazil sent painters Rubem Valentim and Heitor dos Prazeres, in addition to works of the then-deceased sculptor Agnaldo dos Santos, under the coordination of art critic Clarival do Prado Valladares (1918-1983), who also took part in the panel of judges for the contemporary exhibition.⁴

Even though it caused a great financial deficit, the festival results were quite valuable not only for the city of Dakar but also for the Negritude movement and national Senegalese memory. According to Souleymane Sidibé, the festival commissioner, “the whole world resonated and will keep resonating for a long time with the deep echoes of this encounter with Negritude” (FICQUET, 2008, p. 13). In the African scene, however, the Dakar festival stirred dissonant reactions and initiatives, like in the case of the Pan-African Cultural Festival⁵ released

4. See OLIVEIRA, Jul. 23-27 2018.

5. Pan-Africanism, preceding the Negritude movement, emerges in a relatively diffuse context, in mid-19th century, among black, Caribbean and North-American intellectuals and politicians such as Alexander Crummell, Edward Blyden and, later, William E. B. Dubois, being characterized by a register of political or academic discourse. It gains strength in the first half of the 20th century, in a version linked to international congresses and an accentuated international engagement, including questions permeating the future of European colonialism in Africa. Negritude, in turn, is a movement whose first exponents are usually tied to the group of Antillean and African students living in Paris in the 1920s and 1930s, an environment where the word itself was created. Léopold Sédar Senghor, Aimé Césaire and Léon Gontran Damas are among the main authors associated with this movement of appropriation and valorization of black identity – directly influenced by the North American tradition of Pan-Africanist racial thought as well as by the ethnological bibliography of Léo Frobenius and other European authors (REIS, 2020, p. 226).

three years later. Similar to the Dakar festival, it took place in Algeria and its organizers held positions that were more extreme than Senghor's, which they deemed to be excessively conciliatory. Inspired by Frantz Fanon's combative theories, they took a firmer stance in regard to the politicization of art and culture, defending that those should "open up to a unit of the revolutionary fights for freeing all oppressed people from north to south in Africa and beyond Africa" (FICQUET, 2008, p. 14).

The conception of Pan-Africanism and the union of the Independent States of Africa, in 1970, in Nigeria, kick-started the planning for the Art and Culture Festival (FESTAC), which would correspond to the second World Festival of Black Arts. The planning came to a halt due to political and social issues, and FESTAC would only be launched in 1977. In the 1980s, despite structural and financial problems, Senghor's successor, Abdou Diop, began a project for reissuing the 1966 festival in 1986, but that idea was abandoned in 1989 because of ideological frictions.

In the 1990s, the African art scene gained a new dynamism. The Biennial of Dakar was launched at that time, an independent initiative of curators who felt abandoned by the State, which leveraged and corresponded to a wish for resurrecting the 1966 festival's "golden age." Although structurally fragile, the Biennial of Dakar expressed the durable impact of Senghor's engaged cultural policy. After 2005, the Senegalese authorities, under the presidency of Abdoulaye Wade, revived the ambition of relaunching Senghor and Diop's festival. Without changing the 1966 name, they tried once again to rescue FESMAN, intending to find a youth that would support the comeback of projects of the 1960s, now under the African Renaissance theme. They wanted to establish a new international image for the continent.

The 3rd World Festival of Black Arts ran between December 10 and 31 of 2010, in Dakar, Saint Louis and the Island of

Gorée. Brazil was a guest of honor, given its rich artistic-cultural production and the recognition of its inclusive public policies regarding the black population at the time.⁶ The Palmares Cultural Foundation, as an organ of the Ministry of Culture of Brazil, was in charge of coordinating the participation of the country in the festival, along with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, through its Cultural Department and Brazilian Embassy in Senegal, in addition to the Special Office for the Promotion of Racial Equality Policies (SEPPIR).

The program of FESMAN III, which encompassed sixty countries, included a forum with six conferences, book and gastronomy fairs, a visual arts exhibition (drawing, photography, handcrafts and architecture), a musical presentation with thematic evenings, plus theatrical, dance and fashion shows.

Writer Conceição Evaristo, singer Margareth Menezes, singer and composer Mombaça, moviemakers Zózimo Bulbul and Joel Zito, and the Olodum band attended the festival, among many other actors, singers, dance and theater groups.⁷

ABOUT THE ORIGINAL FESMAN AND BEYOND

Brazilian art historian Clarival do Prado Valladares wrote in 1968 an article analyzing the 1966 festival and criticizing the negritude concept. According to him, it was nothing more than a demagogical construction of an African elite, which imposed racial severance by affirming black superiority. Regarding the movement as an aggravating factor for the polarization between blacks and whites, he defended cultural

6. In the opening ceremony, invited by president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, the minister of the Special Office for the Promotion of Racial Equality Policies, Eloi Ferreira de Araujo, represented the Brazilian government.

7. The Brazilian program is available on: <https://www.palmares.gov.br/?p=4936>. Access: Jan. 30 2022.

PHOTO 2.

Poster of the 3rd World Festival of Black Arts, Senegal, 2010. Palmares Cultural Foundation. Available on: <https://www.palmares.gov.br/?tag=iii-festival-mundial-das-artes-negras>.



syncretism and Brazilian miscegenation as a solution to what he deemed the issues of black culture in contemporary art. He started his article by evaluating not only the term motivating the festival but also the organization and the artistic level of the works displayed at the contemporary art exhibition, which seemed to him a case of absorption subjected to European post-WWII art standards. He defended the traditional art exhibition, which was “organized by Africanists, under scientific and aesthetical criteria” and “would be the highlight of the whole festival, the only chapter showing the universal values of the black world...” (VALLADARES, 1968, p. 8).

Having received a Brazilian education based on knowledge epistemologically determined by the European colonialist hierarchical culture, Clarival devotes himself to knowing the Afro-Brazilian culture but appears to deliberately ignore that the term *negritude* was created in 1939 by French-Martinican socialist Aimé Césaire (2012) in the poem “Cahier d’un Retour au Pays Natal” [Journal on a Return to the Homeland], recognized internationally. The term would have been created in response to the French pejorative word *nègre*, conferring to it a new, positive meaning of racial pride. Aimé Césaire, Alioune Diop and poet Léopold Senghor were the main promoters of the festival attacked by Valladares. Praising the traditional black art exhibition – and perhaps in response to the Open letter to the First Festival of Black Arts, by Abdias Nascimento, in 1966, which questions the selection of artists that excluded the Black Experimental Theater (TEN) – he vehemently criticizes what he calls the “assimilation” and “acculturation” displayed in the indication policy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (NASCIMENTO, 1966, p. 97).

Against what he considers an erroneous interference in the *negritude* concept in art and defending the Brazilian miscegenation, Valladares (1966, p. 13) elaborated

a criticism of the works by Agnaldo dos Santos, a self-taught sculptor from the state of Bahia, which, according to the critic, had:

these two characteristics: the archaic-African tie and the medieval Catholic one, belatedly manifested in Brazil. His works reveal the syncretism of both cultures – black and Iberian – which would constitute the main attribute of the Brazilian character. It is an example of black universality manifested and developed through a surprising ability for syncretization. And this seems to be the great path for negritude, quite the opposite of what was intended for revenge or a racial, anachronic and anodyne valorization.

The critique made by Clarival do Prado Valladares follows closely the historiographic line opened by Raymundo Nina Rodrigues and Arthur Ramos, concerning the adherence to the very objects of the African-rooted culture in Brazil as well as the notion of art as part of the universalist civilizational process, which in the case of Brazil would happen through miscegenation or syncretism, as he preferred. Although making an effort to understand the contemporary black African scene, which was going through a turbulent process of independence and affirmation, Clarival sticks to his modernist Western colonialist education, showing difficulty to configure the new panorama unfolding as a decolonization process. At the end of the article on Dakar, there is a photo of Heitor dos Prazeres painting a panel with the caption: “Heitor dos Prazeres, a Brazilian primitive painter and participant in the *Contemporary Exhibition of Black Arts*, Dakar, April of 1966, preparing the Rio de Janeiro themed decoration for the Brazilian Embassy” (VALLADARES, 1968, p. 15).

The image of a black artist described as primitive on his knees, in a striped shirt, painting a samba player in a striped

shirt for the Brazilian Embassy in Dakar, sums up the position of the Brazilian representation among the participants in the festival, which encouraged independence and freedom from racialized submission. Here, it is worth mentioning a passage of Praise for Whiteness, included in Abdias Nascimento’s Letter (1966, p. 99), when the TEN director warns against the “industry of the picturesque” among us, in which the use of the “vital joy of the black” is turned into an exotic product.

Clarival wrote in 1966 the piece “Primitivos, Genuínos e Arcaicos” [Primitive, Genuine and Archaic], in which he attempts to map what had been happening in Brazil for twenty years, when, according to the critic, there was supposedly an interest in primitive art production. As he discusses what leads an artist to be considered primitive, he emphasizes that it is neither a matter of being born in the poorest extract of society, such as Volpi, Djanira and Pancetti, nor a matter of skin color like in the case of sculptor Agnaldo Manoel dos Santos.

Agnaldo Manoel dos Santos himself, viewed as primitive thanks to his skin color, origin and social extract, was not a naïf but rather an artist who had broken free from all limitations of his precedence and poverty to affirm himself, in nine years of artistic work, at a respectable production level (VALLADARES, 1966, p. 42).

Seeking to define what would be our identity, or base culture, established in what he called an “archaic attribute, a natural form of authentic cultures,” Valladares then defends the Brazilian identity as a syncretic one, corresponding to an “aesthetical attitude of collective sentiment,” and devotes himself to artists bearing the “Brazilian archaic behavior,” whose origins would be African and European, something that he perceives in religious sculptures and objects left in churches by churchgoers, in fearful *carranca* masks and also in some artists of his time like the aforementioned Agnaldo Manoel do Santos.



Brazilian-Congolese anthropologist Kabengele Munanga (2018), an expert in Afro-Brazilian population anthropology, informs that several studies have been published in the first half of the 20th century, acknowledging the presence of African art among Brazilians. He particularly refers to researchers Raymundo Nina Rodrigues, from the turn of the century, and Arthur Ramos, from the first half of the 20th century. Nina Rodrigues (1862-1906), a doctor and anthropologist with a clear evolutionist interpretation of science and culture, was a decisive influence for psychoanalyst doctor and anthropologist Arthur Ramos (1903-1949) and, later, for Clarival himself. Emanuel Araújo

(2010, p. 105), in reference to Raymundo Nina Rodrigues, stresses how much his article “As Bellas-Artes nos Colonos Pretos do Brazil: A Escultura” [Fine Arts in Brazil’s Black Settlers: Sculpture] – published in *Kósmos, Revista Artística, Científica e Literária* [Kósmos, Artistic, Scientific and Literary Magazine], in 1904 – was pioneering in the analysis of objects used in Afro-Brazilian cults, as are known today the objects that Nina Rodrigues named black art. Even though he emphasized the evolutionist and scientific occurrence of criminal anthropology studies (RODRIGUES, 2008), with which the anthropologist from the state of Maranhão was associated during his stay in Salvador, Bahia – where he lived since 1888 – his studies on race and crime led him to pathological anthropology, from which derived his studies on race and culture, specifically on race, miscegenation and African culture.

In the article published in *Kósmos*, when focusing on a piece entitled *Cofre de Yêmanjá* [Yemanjá’s Safe] and analyzing its carved characters, in which he identifies phenomonic traits of a white man and a black woman, he deduces that the piece is an African-Brazilian religious object. Influenced by the descriptive ethnography of Maurice Delafosse – in charge of cataloging the works by African people at the Musée d’Ethnographie du Trocadéro – Nina Rodrigues elaborates sharp analyses of the objects he has gathered; despite showing the influence of his field works as a doctor-anthropologist and wishing to clarify the miscegenation in the sculptures (which he himself collected), he makes descriptions that prioritize formal and iconographic vestiges. It is notorious his description of the aforementioned *Cofre de Yêmanjá* found on a beach in Salvador, whose sculpted base narrates an alligator hunt, a description that Nina Rodrigues extends, comparing it to the throne of Behanzin, the king of Dahomey, which was brought to Paris thanks to French colonialism⁸, having been analyzed by Delafosse in *La Nature*

8. Cf. Beaujean-Baltzer, 2007.

PHOTO 3.
Sculptures by Agnaldo Manoel dos Santos at the *Afro-Atlantic Stories* exhibition, MASP, 2018. Available on: <http://jornalismojunior.com.br/exposicoes-masp-historias-afro-atlanticas-e-comodato-masp-b3/>.



PHOTO 4.
Cofre de Yemanjá,
[Yemanjá's Safe],
illustration of
"Fine Arts in
Brazil's Black
Settlers: Sculp-
ture," *Kósmos*,
1904. Available
on: <https://icaa.mfah.org/s/en/item/1110427#?c=&m=&s=&cv=-1&xywh=-241%2C0%-2C3930%2C2199>.

magazine in 1894. The French ethnographer had defined the African throne as a reference to the “art ethnographic school.” From the analysis of the throne, Nina Rodrigues understands *Cofre de Yêmanjá* as the “sacred throne,” a piece in which one could find the conditions of the art produced in Brazil, as a Gêge heritage of sorts, forming a mixed Brazilian production, that is, it would concentrate the “power of the imagination or ability to observe” inherent to art.

Eliane Nunes (2007, p. 110), by the way, mentions a certain sympathy manifested by the author when he looked at these objects, rendering his discourse on black art even contradictory with his theses about the inferiority of black and mixed races, which, according to his anthropological studies, were more vulnerable to certain types of diseases and more predisposed to crime. Reading the article, in which Nina Rodrigues gathers and gives titles to the objects of Brazilian blacks and mixed-race individuals as if composing the settlers’ fine arts,⁹ we certainly become curious and stimulated to immerse ourselves in this contradictory aspect, which manifests in the title and is also evident in the acknowledgment of the sculptures as black art in Brazil, even though the praise is concentrated in mixed-race artists, an aspect that will be present, according to what we read, in the critique by Clarival do Prado Valladares.

Going back to Kebengele Munanga, we feel it is necessary to look into the writings of doctor Arthur Ramos too. With a psychoanalytical background, the anthropologist from the state of Alagoas, adopts a peculiar approach for a country like Brazil in the first forty years of the century, combining his knowledge of anthropology and psychoanalysis to evaluate manifestations of black art and culture.

9. I thank professors Sonia Gomes Pereira and Roberto Conduru for their observations during the presentation

In the text “Arte Negra no Brazil” [Black Art in Brazil], published in 1949, featuring drawings by artist Santa Rosa, Arthur Ramos offers an overview of African-rooted art in Brazil. Analyzing African objects, he draws attention to the works of Leo Frobenius, a German ethnologist, anthropologist and Africanist as well as a self-taught collector, who was presumably the first scholar to notice the singularity of such objects. As Ramos wrote, Frobenius regarded African culture as being equivalent to European culture, which was unusual among scholars in his time. Ramos, however, warns that the intensity and richness of African culture are not present solely in Ife and Benin’s sculptures. He affirms that the music and dance with magical and religious inspiration were aspects of black art that would have exerted a stronger influence on the so-called New World. In the book *O folclore negro do Brasil: demopsicologia e psicanálise* [Black Folklore in Brazil: Demopsychology and Psychoanalysis], first published in 1935, he especially discusses survival, be it mythic-religious, be it in dances, music and popular stories, reaching what he called the survival of the “folkloric unconscious.” As Ligia F. Ferreira wrote in the preface of the 2007 edition, Arthur Ramos, engaged since the foundation of the Society of Ethnography and Folklore in 1936, investigated “black folklore” dating back to the African source as constitutive of a *paideuma*, a term that, as Ligia explains, he had borrowed from Frobenius to designate a “culture’s soul.” Having performed extensive data collection, and keeping in mind the criticism of the theory of “inferiority” regarding the Brazilian black culture and art, in the book’s closing he declares that, since their beliefs were oppressed, blacks would have taken advantage of “folkloric” institutions for channeling their “ancestral unconscious” and “primitive cyclic festivities – related to religion and magic, love, war, hunt and fishing.” Hence, he evaluates Carnival festivities in Rio de Janeiro, particularly those at XI Square, which according to Ramos receive an avalanche of collective catharsis. In the Carnival at the square, old images of the African continent

implanted in Brazil, like “the monarch of African jungles, kings, queen and ambassadors, totems, sorcerers and shamans, tiger-men, griots, minstrels and black bards, African priests, ancestors, grans priests and teenagers,” would come together in rituals of initiation (RAMOS, 2007, p. 229).

The structuring presence of black art and culture in Brazil, as seen in the studies of Nina Rodrigues, Arthur Ramos and Clarival do Prado Valladares as well as in the Brazilian representation at the 1st World Festival of Black Arts, in Dakar, was and still is a presence permeated by contradictions, like those in the heated debate between Clarival do Prado Valladares and Abdias Nascimento.

The discussion between Valladares’s institutionalized acknowledgment of black arts and Abdias’s revolutionary, anticolonial and antiracist activism to this day has repercussions on Brazilian society. Now, however, more than a few decades ago, racism is cruelly back to the level of slavery violence, when whipping a black slave was the right of enslavers, who owned their bodies and their labor exploited with no pay. Killing an African black or descendant in Brazil, especially in the past years, has become an everyday racist practice for all to see, as happened on January 24 of 2022, when a few men killed a Congolese refugee, who had sought exile in Brazil to escape the violence of his country in Africa and was precariously working at a kiosk on Barra da Tijuca beach.

Once again, and now more explicitly, the aggressors ignored the security cameras (for whose safety?) and beat kitchen helper Moïse Mugenyi Kabagambe in a xenophobic, authoritarian, racist and truculent demonstration.

In *Policies of Enmity*, Achille Mbembe (2020, p. 13) questions the possibility of the Other still being similar to the one. And he asks: “In what, precisely, lies my humanity and that of others?” According to the Cameroonian historian and philosopher, after the end of the 20th century, the human relationship circle is getting increasingly tight, and borders keep away

enemies, intruders and foreigners, “everyone who is not one of ours” (p. 14). In this case, like in Moïse’s situation, the territories of African refugees in the south of America are those of the daily asphyxiated, who survive immobilized by the xenophobic hate and racism, our enslaving heritage. In such territories, men and women often find their untimely end with a “lost” bullet or beating. The burning question is: why Moïse and his family sought refuge in Brazil? Among Brazilians, the “principle of equality is refuted by the origin and community law as well as by the fractioning and decomposition of citizenship” (p. 14). We live under “dismal passions,” we live “outside democracy,” which turns society into a “society of enmity,” in which we beat to death those whom we don’t view as human but rather as enemies.

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HUNGER FOR ALTERITY

Tadeu Ribeiro Rodrigues

During a trip to Mexico, an Italian couple notices a painting hanging on their Oaxaca hotel, which used to be an old convent: “quite rigid figures for a settecentist painting; a painting with a rustic flair typical of colonial art, but it transmitted a disturbing feeling, like the spasm of contained suffering” (CALVINO, 1995, p. 31). The experience of gazing at such a piece of art in the first pages of the short story “Under the Jaguar Sun,” by Italo Calvino,¹ already foreshadows the common threads guiding the characters’ perception of their contact with Latin America: the overlapping images, sonorities, colonial and indigenous flavors trigger a certain unease, which nevertheless affirms a “rustic charm.” Next, the narrator recalls a meal in Tepotztlán at a restaurant that, like the hotel in Oaxaca, is set in a location that used to be another colonial convent. The description of the *tamál de elote* dish brings together the mysteries of monastic religiousness and the sublime savagery of local flavors:

[...] a fine semolina of sweet corn with ground pork and very hot pepper, all steamed in corn husk; and then *chiles en nogada*, which were reddish brown, somewhat wrinkled little peppers, swimming in a walnut

1. Italo Calvino was born in Cuba, in 1923, the son of Italian scientists who had resided on the island for a short period. Still in his childhood, he returned to Italy and in his adulthood engaged in political organizations resisting fascism. *Sotto il Sole Giaguaro* [Under the Jaguar Sun] was published in his country in 1988, featuring three short stories that explore the realm of senses (smell, taste and hearing).

sauce whose harshness and bitter aftertaste were drowned in a creamy, sweetish surrender. [...]. After that, for us, the thought of nuns called up the flavors of an elaborate and bold cuisine, bent on making the flavors' highest notes vibrate, juxtaposing them in modulations, in chords, and especially in dissonances that would assert themselves as an incomparable experience, a point of no return, an absolute possession exercised on the receptivity of all senses (*ibidem*, p. 33).

The minute attention in the composition of the character's narrative, in its exuberant procession of textures, tastes and landscapes, takes off from gustatory apprehensions as an immediate unit of contact with the Mexican culture, since the vision of such sceneries was, according to the narrator, already cushioned and tamed by TV documentaries. Through taste, the couple recreated with curiosity the nuns' gastronomy work, permeated by nearly erotic ecstasies, cloistered impulses that seemed to connect Aztec sacrifices to the mystical dimension of Catholicism:

[...] the fantasies of sophisticated women, bright and introverted and complex, women who needed absolutes, whose reading told of ecstasies and transfigurations, martyrs and tortures, women with conflicting calls in their blood, genealogies in which the descendants of the conquistadores mingled with those of Indian princesses or slaves, women with childhood recollections of the fruits and fragrances of a succulent vegetation, thick with ferments, though growing on those sun-baked plateaus (*ibidem*, p. 34).

In the space of a plate, there is the poetic-fantastical reproduction elaborated by the Italian tourists' sensations before the Mexican colonial history: the disparity of

ingredients – sweet, bitter, sharp – creates a landscape where the ceremonial heart extraction in Indian sacrifices and the ritualistic ingestion of the body and blood of Christ in Hispanic masses temporarily establishes a point of equivalence. The fundamental anthropophagy: the hunger for alterity, the desire for the other within oneself, metabolized and assimilated. For them, the colonial Baroque, the scenery of such experiences, appears to incarnate “the presence of God identified in a meticulously calculated delirium of excessive and overflowing sensations, [...] a flaming ecstasy (*ibidem*, p. 35). The narrator concludes, hence, that in that place there is an ambivalent dispute between two civilizations: a transfiguring art splendor of the Aztec culture and the winding opulence of Spanish churches.

The gastronomy journal that constitutes part of the short story progressively exposes nuances in the couple's relationship. According to the narrator, the silence permeating the facial contractions of the wife, Olivia, points to an attempt to communicate through taste. By sharing meals, the couple seems to restore some sort of communication that had been stolen in verbal communication. The grammar of desire incarnated in these days of tasting establishes another dimension of contact in the relationship.

On a visit to the excavations in Monte Albán, enraptured by the Zapotec monumentality, the couple finds themselves before the stone engravings known as Los Danzantes [The Dancers].² Olivia asks their tour guide: “The loser in combat was sacrificed?” “No, the winner!” replies the guide: “To have your chest split open by the obsidian knife was an honor!” She is then taken by a pulsing interest to learn what happens to the innards of the sacrificed bodies; a question

2. The Monte Albán archeological site, situated in the Mexican state of Oaxaca, comprehends the territory of the old Zapotec capital. The enigmatic engravings known as Los Danzantes feature human figures performing movements frequently attributed to shamanic rituals and war captives.

whose answer is continuously dodged. The travelers notice that, underlying the guide's evasiveness, there is something he avoids telling them. Only at night, once they return to the hotel and meet their Mexican friend, Salustiano, can Olivia satisfy her curiosity.

Stressing that the fact is a mere supposition, Salustiano says the priests likely ingest parts of the bodies in ritual meals. Olivia continues questioning the friend, asking if there is a sacred method for preparing human food: strong spices – such as those used in the gastronomy that has them thrilled – and exclamatory tastes that could have originally served to mask the flavor of human flesh. The narrator observes his wife's interest and experiences it introspectively:

“You're not eating?” Olivia asked me. She seemed to concentrate only on savoring her dish, though she was very alert, as usual, while I had remained lost in thought, looking at her. It was the sensation of her teeth in my flesh that I was imagining, and I could feel her tongue lift me against the roof of her mouth, enfold me in saliva, then thrust me under the tips of the canines. I sat there facing her, but at the same time it was as if a part of me, or all of me, were contained in her mouth, crunched, torn shred by shred. The situation was not entirely passive, since while I was being chewed by her I felt also that I was acting on her, transmitting sensations that spread from the taste buds through her whole body. I was the one who aroused her every vibration: it was a reciprocal and complete relationship that involved us and overwhelmed us (*ibidem*, p. 51).

As the trip goes by, Olivia's interest increases in the hypothesis of reversibility between the sacrificer and the sacrificed, which, for her, seems to be the principle of those

people. Each of those Mesoamerican individuals was “potentially both sacrificer and victim” (*ibidem*, p. 53). The tastier flesh would then be precisely that of who ate other victims first. In the evening, at dinner, when presented with *gorditas pellizcadas con manteca*, the couple feels as if they were before somewhat anthropomorphic ingredients. The next morning, as they explore the Mayan temple in Palenque under the hot sun, the narrator experiences vertigo and feels like a sacrificed victim:

The world spun, I plunged down, my throat cut by the knife of the king-priest, down the high steps onto the forest of tourists with video cameras and usurped, broad-brimmed sombreros. The solar energy coursed along very fine networks of blood and chlorophyll; I was living and dying in all the fibers of what is chewed and digested and in all the fibers that absorb the sun, consuming and digesting (*ibidem*, p. 56).

The story ends here, while the narrator unveils, in the snakes engraved in stone, the rhythm and religious intensity of devouring and being devoured: the “universal cannibalism that leaves its imprint on every amorous relationship” (*idem*). It is with the nourishment conducted by the singular Mexican spices that the couple's nebulous affection fully incarnates. Anthropophagy is a mutual amorous act, the constitutive violence that would have given birth to those civilizations. For them, it is the manifestation of a predatory system at first distinct from that in which they were inserted, perceived with the same fascination and repulse that inspired Europeans in the 16th century to narrate with awe the Indian rituals; the sensorial survival of a sophisticated device that, to their eyes, seems to constitute a Latin American unconscious trait or, at most, something present in the opacity of the European gaze before nonwhite people.

In his writing “O Front Brasileiro na Guerra Verde: Vegetais, Colonialismo e Cultura” [The Brazilian Front in the Green War: Vegetables, Colonialism and Culture] (1996), Nicolau Sevcenko aims to investigate the relationships of visibility established between Brazil and Europe during colonization from the perspective of the gaze directed to the territory, its landscapes and natural resources. According to him, the expansionist process of territory control is marked by a “war declared against nature” (*ibidem*, p. 110): the exuberant vegetation of tropical regions – whose solar radiation promotes abundant flora and fauna, besides facilitating the culture of numerous foods – is inscribed in the European gaze dominated by predatory extractivism, a characteristic that seems to reproduce indefinitely.

In this sense we can, within the colonization process, evaluate two forms of perception more or less peculiar to Europeans, which are not in principle dissociated from each other but end up becoming specialized attitudes in the context of the colonizing process evolution: the first is the desiring impulse [...]; this sort of feeling particularly signaled in Jean de Léry’s example of voyeurism, which is the desire for the unknown, the wish to conquer and penetrate that which is virgin, inaccessible, untouched. And this is quite a sensual act, quite a sensorial act, so much as it is carried out by people that liberally abandon themselves to the game of the gaze and the senses, the game of those who like to take their time gazing, who feel the smells and touch the vegetation [...]. People, hence, who build exactly something that can be called landscape, and who see in this landscape the source of an act of adoration and the projection of an act of desire [...].

The other form of European perception is the practice, aggressive per se, of the colonizing act or intervention, implying direct, physical contact with this environment

– according to the extraction sought by the colonization act: the tropical vegetable or ore. In this sense, what the colonizer has before him is no longer the landscape, what he has before him is the jungle or *untamed* inland – and we emphasize the expression *untamed*, for taming is a true dignifying act to this individual. To tame, to rip the native virginity and aggressively impose his control and domain over nature. A nature that, in turn, appears here as the enemy to be conquered and despoiled (*ibidem*, p. 110-111).

Sevcenko identifies in this process the predominance of two fundamental colors: green and red. According to the author, in the eyes of the colonizer, green held potential danger – from the green forest emerge unknown beasts, venomous insects and hostile Indian warriors. Once settled on the sands of the New World, as they were a minority, the voluptuous vegetation meant, above all, a border that should be violated and exterminated. Red, in turn, referenced the use of fire and forces of destruction. Thus, a predatory and desiring sensitivity is developed in regard to nature in the tropics, based on the goal of conquest and occupation: in the following centuries, the diversity of American vegetation had to be subjected to another system, the monoculture logic. The clear ambivalence in this attitude – which swings between desire and annihilation – gradually extends, in the discourse and images produced by Europeans, to the nature of the Amerindian populations. On one hand, there are debates on the influence of the various American climates over indigenous bodies, the propensity of each group to work and reproduce, the hypothesis of whether they do or do not possess souls; on the other hand, this scientific European gaze, presumed neutral and distanced, is continuously permeated by an attraction that converts such racialized bodies in objects of fetish and violence.

Françoise Vergès, in his text “Bananes, Esclavage et Capitalisme Racial” [Bananas, Slavery and Racial Capitalism, 2018], proposes an articulation between the impact of colonial monoculture and the consolidation of racial dynamics in the globalized world, starting with bananas. The insults directed at black players in soccer games – in a grammar that associates bananas, monkeys, primitivism and animalization – are the key starting point for the author’s reflection on the geology of this equation in the contemporary imagination. According to Vergès, the history of the dissemination of banana cultivation (currently predominant in post-colonial territories) is mixed with the very history of colonization (and of slavery as the pillar in this process). Native to East Asia, the banana became the prime example of tropical fruit, even representing the Latin American territory in mass culture during the early 20th century – as in Carmen Miranda’s outfits and her exoticism for export: *yes, we have banana*. Similarly, the expression “banana republic” accurately synthesizes the role of banana cultivation in political and economic arrangements in the outskirts of the New World – regarding politically unstable Latin American republics whose economies are based on the export of tropical fruit to Europe and North America, it is worth noting the role of the United Fruit Company, with headquarters in the United States, in several coups d’état, especially in Central America.

The cultivation of bananas, along with that of other vegetable products sustaining the colonial project such as sugarcane, tobacco and coffee, established a new vegetable and human cartography on the planet, transferring species to different territories and bringing unprecedented human interference in the environment. In the process, the manipulation of food sources, aimed at production expansion, caused a diversity decrease for these species: like in the case of bananas, the corn variety sold in supermarkets is just one in many. In this sense, it is interesting to notice the umbilical

relationship between vegetable monoculture as the homogenization of diversity and the production of racialized subjectivities whose alterity is captured by a logic of exoticization, commodity, and devouring. That happens because the “optimization” of vegetables for export also causes an erasure of traditional knowledge and communal dynamics linked to the land. On one end, we have the native biodiversity reduced to monoculture for export; on the other, we have controlled spaces in the colonies, where diversity is valued exclusively as a collector’s item or fetish.

Between the years 2011 and 2012, Paulo Nazareth launches a project called *Notícias de América* [News of America], in which he proposes a journey across the American continent, setting off on foot to New York from his home in the state of Minas Gerais. During this period, the artist produces extensive visual records, exploring framings and montages from the perspective of a nomad, less concerned with the assembly of an encompassing inventory than with the activation of possible gazing games, migratory cartographies and ethnic contacts that have historically composed the Latin American territory.³ Photographing himself beside anonymous people he meets along the way, Nazareth explores a somehow familiar strangeness, common to a large portion of the Latin population, residues of centuries of erasures and interruptions in Indian, black and mixed family lineages. In some of these photographs, the artist holds signs that evoke – thanks to the material and typography used – the informal commerce, where we read: “My image of exotic man for sale” or “Vendo mi imagen de hombre exótico” (Figure 1). These images bear a visual connection with the universe of workers who negotiate their products (and, in certain tourist circuits, the performative aspect of this “exoticism” is part of the package) and, above all, with the

3. The digital contents is available on: <http://latinamericanotice.blogspot.com/>.

populational transits throughout the Americas in search of work or refuge (often from the south toward the north). It is, therefore, from the perspective of transit and border tensioning – defying the fixity of archives, collections and “pure races” – that the artist elaborates his work.

In Nazareth’s propositions it is recurrent the matter of his racial legibility, intertwining his historicity as a Latin American subject and the visuality of experiences that launch, through his body, archive-images⁴ of miscegenation and diasporas. The artist evokes in this movement the set of mixed-blood, Indian and black “characters” – highlighting their semantics of fetishization, infantilization, animalization, etc. – as he repeats the expression “exotic man” for instigation. While his mixed-blood looks raise serious implications of the miscegenation process, rape and the violence of colonial history in the Americas, he also creates points of contact that surpass State boundaries in the continent, allowing alternative approaches.

By reenacting transcontinental routes, the artist’s action also unveils the transit of news, letters, memories, products, languages and traditions, which despite the frequent precarity that characterizes such crossings, produce contamination and destabilize the striation of frontiers. Wearing a pair of simple sandals, Nazareth chooses to wash his feet only when he reaches the Hudson River in New York, thus carrying in his body, silently, the residues of his walk across Latin America. In a talk with Janaina Melo, Paulo Nazareth mentions his wish to cross the Mexico-United States border with a load of bananas:

4. The term *archive-imagens*, proposed by Mexican art historian Joaquín Barriendos, aims to “accentuate the condensing and catalyzing ability of certain images, in other words [...] highlight their semiotic function and porosity as depositories of other images and representations. Hence, *archive-images* are images composed of multiple representations sedimented one over another, shaping a certain hermeneutical integrity and iconic unity” (BARRIENDOS, 2019, p. 42).



PAULO – (...) I’d like to take bananas from here to Miami... but not now... I need a sanitary license... I feel like taking a Kombi van filled with them... (...)
 EU – (...) I liked very much how the bananas are arranged, it’s almost a sculptural experience, I was pleased with the image and the possibility of a sculpture that changes with time and rots!
 PAULO – I saw an old man selling banana seeds...
 EU – Bananas are everywhere in the Americas.
 PAULO – Here in Guatemala they are part of the *revolución*... the expropriation of the United Fruit Company was one of the reasons why the US supported the coup

FIGURE 1. Paulo Nazareth, *Notícias de América* [News of America], 2011. Courtesy of the artist and Mendes Wood DM São Paulo, Brussels, New York.

FIGURE 2.

Paulo Nazareth,
Banana Market/ Art Market, 2011.
Courtesy of the
artist and Mendes
Wood DM São
Paulo, Brussels,
New York.

d'etat and the dictatorship in the 60s, which prolonged violence until peace in 1996. It seems to be the place where more people were killed in the Americas... even more than in Pinochet's Chile (MELO *apud* NAZARETH, 2012).

In November of 2011, during his participation in the Art Basel Miami Beach fair in Florida, Nazareth exhibited a Kombi van filled with bananas that spilled out through the open side door, spreading on the ground. Marking a



mid-point between the south and the north of the Americas, the artist presented his work *Banana Market/ Art Market* (Figure 2) in a North American city known for having a strong Latin presence. The act of “parking” the Kombi (a popular vehicle in Latin America due to its low cost for transporting people and goods, for example, in traveling farmers’ markets), letting the bananas spill to the ground and, especially, leveling the “banana market” and the “art market,” situates Nazareth as a foreigner in the art circuit rather than a nomad in the Americas. Standing by the green and white 1978 Kombi, the artist also displays, once more, his “image of exotic man” for sale. Hence, Nazareth negotiates bananas, himself, the “contemporary art” category and, through the cracks, the so-called “news of America” – the informal narratives collected (or produced) in secluded corners of the continent.

A woman decided to protest and ate a banana, so I shouted: “I’m being robbed!” The police were called and wanted to kick me out, but then they understood what was going on and requested that the woman paid me. And I said: ‘This woman ate my art.’⁵

The relation between racialized bodies and consumption triggers, within the institutionalized circuits of contemporary art, a sort of colonial logic repositioning. In fact, the expropriation mechanism that generated the European modernity premises – with their latifundium racializing nature, in which nonwhite individuals are reduced to objects, tools for labor production and reproduction – seems to reappear with a different aspect in the current scenario. Once again, we have the inevitable relation between the

5. Account available on: <https://www.otempo.com.br/diversao/magazine/fantastico-vendedor-de-bananas-1.348166>. Access: Feb. 2021.

colonial monoculture structure and the production, circulation and consumption of subjectivities and poetics that highlight markers of difference. In that sense, the expression forged by Jota Mombaça, “cognitive plantation,” is of great importance for understanding such a diagram. Starting with the concept of a plantation,⁶ Mombaça attempts to reflect on this system as the core of the expropriation/appropriation system rather than a metaphor. The author draws attention to recent episodes of inclusion of subjects historically marginalized in the art circuit, like, for example, the International Literary Fair of Paraty (FLIP) in 2019, where black and Indian authors were the top sellers. Mombaça argues that

[...] from the standpoint of certain institutions, the explosion of black, anticolonial art and thought, which today seem to define the direction of art systems and production of knowledge on a global scale, is referred to as a fad, a market trend. Since the *commodification* of such perspectives – our perspectives – directly depends on a certain continuity between our artistic production and our sociohistorical position, perhaps it makes sense to affirm that the sale of our sounds, writings, ideas and images reenacts, as a historical trend, the regimes of acquisition of black bodies that have established the negritude problem-situation in the world we know (MOMBAÇA, 2020, p. 6).

6. The anglophone term *plantation* refers to an agricultural system that, during the colonial period in the Americas, used slave labor in vast territories for export monocultures, mainly of tropical foods. In spite of the formal slavery abolishment, this system’s logic still persists, predominantly in rural areas of politically unstable countries in Latin America

What is in the line, according to Mombaça, is the reinsertion of the black body – as much as the perspectives, knowledge and productions of other racialized groups – in the logic of expropriation of the labor value.⁷ Quoting Frantz Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks*, published in 1952, the author emphasizes that “negrophobia” and “negrophilia” are two sides of the same coin: “the black as an *a priori*, a piece of data.” “The black body is a time machine. Every time we are best sellers, we go back to the same problem-situation. In another position” (*ibidem*, p. 7). Mombaça’s provoking affirmations seem to offer tools for examining how the insertion of Paulo Nazareth’s Kombi loaded with bananas (as well as his body) in a contemporary art fair in the United States activates a certain recurring fetish for “marginal knowledge,” “black and Indian perspectives” in the core of a market and devouring logic.

The same hunger for alterity found in *Under the Jaguar Sun*, which guided the European couple’s tasting in Mexico (in their fantastical nostalgia in regard to human sacrifices) seems to unfold in the assimilation of non-European bodies in fairs, biennials and galleries. Mombaça thus suggests that within each post-colonial reorganization lies, latent, a reinsertion of the expropriation/appropriation logic. Going against the large sugarcane fields of the hereditary colonial districts and the eternal return of the Same, the poetic and epistemic productions of groups turned subaltern appear to fill the gaps of a broader crisis in the Eurocentric world: the environmental crisis, representation crisis, value crisis and modernity crisis. It is worth noting, however, Nazareth’s strategy of dissimulating a logic – when he assures his “exotic man for sale” character – that exposes the predatory

7. Mombaça supports her argument with the reasoning of Denise Ferreira da Silva, namely, from her work *A Dívida Impagável: Lendo Cenas de Valor Contra a Flecha do Tempo* [The Unpayable Debt: Reading Value Scenes Against the Time Arrow], published in 2017.

nature of the art system. If his presence at the Miami Art Basel holds some similarity with the predatory assimilation of nonwhite bodies (like in the case of Indians and blacks taken to Europe as exotic attractions during modernity), the artist frontally names this dynamics and takes upon himself the agency of his own sale.⁸

Two decades prior to that, during the celebrations of the fifth centenary of Christopher Columbus's arrival to the Americas (1492-1992), Cuban-North American artist Coco Fusco and Mexican/Chicano artist Guillermo Gómez-Peña made an itinerant performance that originated the video *The Couple in the Cage: Guatinaui Odyssey* (1993⁹). The performance was presented in North American and European cities between 1992 and 1994 (Figure 3), consisting in a golden cage in which the artists were displayed for tourists and passers-by at squares and museums. Inside the cage, Fusco and Gómez-Peña evoked characters whose fictionality gathered stereotypes attributed to indigenous Latin American people: the couple allegedly belonged to the Guatinaui ethnicity, original from an imaginary island in the Mexico Gulf, who were excessively exotic Amerindian individuals, the incarnation of the colonial Other.

Wearing accessories from a variety of references – straw skirts, All Star sneakers, makeup, shades, artificial flower bracelets, straw hats, metal collars inspired in the Mayan and Aztec civilizations, leopard-print war masks – the duo ironically played with the notion of authenticity

8. <https://www.cocofusco.com/the-couple-in-the-cage> and <https://www.artandeducation.net/classroom/video/244623/coco-fusco-and-guillermo-gomez-pea-the-couple-in-the-cage-two-undiscovered-amerindians-visit-the-west>.

9. The video *The Couple in the Cage: Guatinaui Odyssey*, produced by Coco Fusco and Salvadorean filmmaker Paula Heredia (1993, 31'), explores montages with scenes from the performance, the audience, writings and other audiovisual productions.

in an aesthetics close to kitsch. Placed with them inside the cage, several objects such as a TV connected to a videocassette player, a computer and voodoo dolls made sounds, questioning the authenticity and coherence of the two men, who despite being confined and displayed as savages, seemed to master “Western technologies.” Outside the cage, security agents and monitors maintained the institutional tone of the performance, organizing the dynamics related to expert information and money collection – for a few dollars, one could make them dance, perform tasks and occasionally erotic acts. The presentation aimed to extrapolate the web of colonial enunciations describing non-European subjects from the perspective of traits such as primitivism, animality, laziness, innocence and infantility. The mix of these definitions strengthened the opacity of the colonial European gaze in its demand for authenticity and difference: exotic beings frozen in a mythical past, imprisoned in a phase before the white civilization. In short, nonwhite subjects as commodities packed for consumption for a safe experience.

The duo's proposal utilizes as historical material the colonial tradition of displaying “savages” in European museums and shows. Since the first contact between Columbus's expedition and the Caribbean natives, the concern in taking native “specimens” to Europe inaugurated a complex display mechanism: in 1493, the year following the arrival of Columbus to the American continent, the Genovese transported with him Arawak individuals to be displayed at the Spanish royal court. Similarly, the navigator produced images of natives he had never seen, described as “cannibals born with tails” (TAYLOR, 1998, p. 161). A succession of other publications and events consolidated in Europe the discourse on the alterity of Indian people during colonial modernity, such as the illustrations of Hans Staden's published accounts and, in a more

controversial fashion, the “party” featuring Brazilian Indians in Rouen, France, in 1550.¹⁰

From all that derived issues such as, initially, the confirmation of the authenticity of discoveries and, later, an emerging field of knowledge peopled with European translators, scientists and ethnographers who proceeded to describe these groups according to the logic by which they positioned themselves as neutral observers examining, with no implications or interests, the alterity of those “savages.” In that sense, Diana Taylor (1998) argues that such dynamics are based on a notion of theatricality that frames the “primitive” bodies performing their authenticity for the European gaze. In this circuit, despite the inventorial intention of “making them be” and “making them speak,” the native subjects are regarded as passive, barbaric and slightly incomprehensible.

The “primitive” body, as an object, reaffirms the supremacy and cultural authority of the observing subject – the one seeing, interpreting and recording [...] who poses as a neutral observer, an authorized professional, uninterested and devoted to the discovery and analysis of societies in which the ethnographer is not included. The objectified body, “primitive,” exists in isolation and separation. “We,” the observers looking through the eyes of the explorer, are (like the explorer) positioned in safety outside the frame, free to define, theorize and debate their societies (never “ours”). The “encounters” with natives turn us into the audience the same way the violence of the definition

10. Brazilianist Ferdinand Denis recovers in his *A Brazilian Party Celebrated in Rouen in 1550*, published in 1850, the arrival event organized by king Henry II in the French city of Rouen, in which a presentation included tens of Indians, likely *tupinambás* from the Brazilian coast. In the occasion, Indians, local sailors and prostitutes reenacted a battle in a scenery attempting to represent the tropical landscape.

creates “them” – the primitive. The drama depends on the maintenance of a unilateral gaze and enacts the lack of reciprocity and mutual understanding inherent to a “discovery” (TAYLOR, 1998, p. 193, our translation).

Fusco and Gómez-Peña’s “tour” privileged countries and sites directly implicated in the Indian genocide caused by colonization such as Plaza de Colón (named in homage to Christopher Columbus) in Madrid. The duo’s proposition exaggerated de colonial mise-en-scène: it sought to reenact not only the display of subjects turned subalterns but also, above all, evidence the nature of the production of difference – in other words, the optical, expositive and epistemic framing, within which non-European bodies and cultures are historically accessed by the white audience. Such display of alterity is intimately connected to the invention of this other, triggering a discussion on the clearly arbitrary nature of the European collections – from the cabinets of curiosities to the foundation of the great European museums in the 18th and 19th centuries, with collections consisting mainly of items acquired thanks to colonial spoliation.

In its dynamics, the action points out the utter depersonalization of those subjects, inserted in a diagram analogous to an exhibition of artifacts. Similarly, they perform stereotypes that people the European imagination: the Latin macho man, the innocent nudity, the barbarian condition, the good savage, etc. However, despite this set of elements developed within the framing, what is effectively in the line is the opacity of the European gaze: the representation itself is activated by the cage and produces a multidirectional effect, highlighting the asymmetry between the internal and the external observers. The human-object circumscribed in this field (concrete and symbolic) offers itself to the gaze but also observes the observers. According to Fusco, the performance focused

less on what we were doing and more on the way people interacted with us and interpreted our actions. We tried to create an encounter marked by surprise or strangeness, in which the audience had to experience their own thought process (FUSCO *apud* TAYLOR, 1998, p. 166, our translation).

The work is hence a gaze play: the cage functions as a mediator between two observing positions. If at first the device summons the attention of the external observer to what is inside the cage, we soon realize that, from the perspective of the deriving video, the reaction and interaction of the audience are as crucial as the artists' performance. The enacting of the European gaze opacity by Fusco and Gómez-Peña aims at framing the gaze that usually frames without participating in the play. The scene points outside, unfolds the gaze and catches the voyeur in the act.

The Spectator now was not only in the frame but was also the main actor. One of the most interesting and complicated aspects of the performance in the cage was the fact that several performances were carried out simultaneously. While Fusco and Gómez-Peña moved around their cage as objects of the audience's gaze, an "expert" holding the sign "Ask me" explained the clothing, habits and background of the natives. Someone with a Polaroid took souvenir pictures of people from the audience posing with the caged couple. And, during the whole event, Fusco and Paula Heredia produced a video documenting the performances and the audience. Clips of films representing "natives" were intercalated with the artists' performances and interviews with the audience [...] While the observers were tourists, consumers or colonizers in one production, they were also actors in another [...] (TAYLOR, 1998, p. 166, our translation).

The invention of certain framings for non-European bodies – in their dimension of alterity, exoticism and exposure – is inherited from a narrative and imagery tradition that, while dating back to the descriptions of Pliny, the Elder, Homer and medieval bestiaries, can be synthesized by the book *The Travels of Sir Jean de Mandeville*, produced in the 14th century and whose authorship is still uncertain (PIQUEIRA, 2020, p. 155). Therefore, although these works were published before the contact with the Americas, the imaginary element that served as a basis for the European gaze in the production of the first accounts and images of people from the New World was permeated by the repertoire of chivalry novels and fantastical descriptions mixing Amazon lady warriors, zoo-anthropomorphic beings and monsters inhabiting a distant world. The project by Fusco and Gómez-Peña explores precisely the opacity of the European gaze before these other people, implementing a radicalization of the colonial optical-systemic mechanism and proposing other approaches for thinking about this relation. For that purpose, in addition to the cage action, the artists curated an exhibition at the Walker Art Center, in Minneapolis (*Guillermo Gómez-Peña and Coco Fusco: The Year of the White Bear*), in which they made a montage using the archive of popular and indigenous-themed works historically marked by an exoticizing vision. The term *white bear* was borrowed from a poem of the Paez people – originally from the Andean region of Colombia, in which the Spanish conquistadores are described as white bears (ROBLES-MORENO, 2018) – and offers a perspective often obliterated by colonial history.

We have proposed, in this sense, the identification of a colonial opacity common to the three works analyzed here – the short story "Under the Jaguar Sun" by Italo Calvino, the images and montages of *News of America* by Paulo Nazareth and *The Couple in the Cage* by Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gómez-Peña. While the optical and epistemic mechanisms of European modernity insist on notions of

transparency, legibility and light for accessing knowledge, in an impulse of rational categorization centered on vision as the predominant sense, we sought to highlight in these works the discursive and imaging structures that reveal such gaze plays. Starting from the European experience before nature and indigenous bodies of the New World under the aegis of devouring and consumption, we showed strategies that are present in Latin America's contemporary art, which tension the colonial gaze circuit. The central point in the works of Nazareth, Fusco and Gómez-Peña is a framing in which subjects turned subalterns were historically perceived (and invented) by the European scopic pulsion. The complex relation between the gaze, devouring and consumption interests us as a common thread for examining the modes of seeing and being seen produced by the colonial dynamics.

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