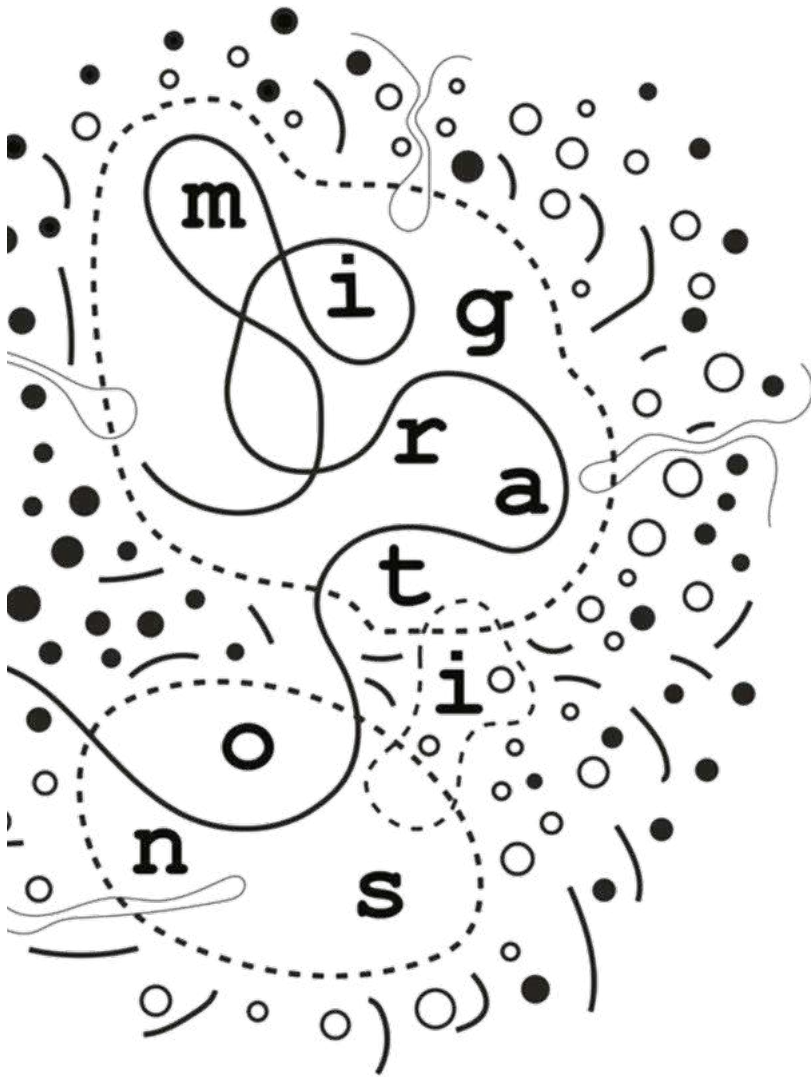


# Ecologies of Migration: Engaged Perspectives

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## Session 3



## Session 3

# Ecologies of Migration: Engaged Perspectives

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Taken together, ecology and migration form the dominant discourse of the contemporary, indisputably reshaping the self-conception of the humanities. It is evident that climate change and environmental catastrophe constitute, both historically and now, a major cause for migratory movement. Our panel focused on the interdependency of movements of migration, on the one hand, and ecological conditions, on the other. By bringing these discourses together, we explored the complexity and cultural potential of these timely perspectives.

We claim that art production *per se*, and artists explicitly, reflect on migration as a process that can be discussed in relation to a broad, relational model of ecology, but also in terms of specific responses to the environment. Our panel was focused on contemporary experiments in art and curation that engage with migration, yet also included a strong historical perspective.

We discussed human mobility as a paradigm that cannot be thought of without considering geographical spaces / settings / localizations. Indeed, humans are not unique in this regard; plants and seeds migrate as well. Inanimate objects like stones or non-human life forms are equally affected by migration as are abstract phenomena such as knowledge. We looked at processes that are deeply rooted in and interacting with environmental transformations, linking migration to geology, flora and fauna, and the

non-human world in general. Systems of acclimatization and transfers of materials might be looked at in a way that surpasses any nature/culture divide.

Our panel featured a wide range of contributions that examined a variety of perspectives and time frames in their exploration of the interplay between migration and ecology. To address the issue required including new models for understanding the interdependencies between migration and ecology (Burcu Dogramaci, *Migration und künstlerische Produktion*, 2013; Shinichi Nakazawa, *Art Anthropology*, 2006 and the concept of “symmetrical anthropology”; Ecofeminism; Queer Ecology), artistic and curatorial strategies that reflect on migration in terms of an interpretation of the world in flux (Pierre Restany, Sepp Baendereck and Frans Kracjberg, *Manifeste du Rio Negro ou du Naturalisme intégral*, 1978; Allan Sekula; documenta’s “platforms”, etc.), and migration and material culture (Arjun Appadurai, ed, *The Social Life of Things*, 1986). In addition to the iconography of “precarious life” (Judith Butler, *Precarious Life*, 2004), the reality and the imagination of migratory transit spaces (stops, camps, assembly places, borders), was incorporated. The panel also drew on attempts to describe how artworks integrate, on both the material and the semantic level, the ecology of global migration (Bruno Latour, *Facing Gaïa*, 2017), ecologies of knowledge transfers, adaptations in the modes of artistic nomadism and the cultural techniques of memory, imagination and appropriation, deconstructions of established concepts of homogenous site, and authentic and pure settings. By asking such questions, contributors suggested new categories and paradigms. What happens, for instance, to the old notion of “cultural heritage”? What are the implications of injecting an environmental dimension into this concept? Could we propose a “multi-sensual heritage,” including smells and sounds, as new approaches in Social Anthropology suggest? (Tim Ingold, *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description*, 2021; Christopher Tilley and Kate Cameron-Daum, *An Anthropology of Landscape*, 2017; Emily Eliza Scott and Kirsten Swenson, ed., *Critical Landscapes: Art, Space, Politics*, 2015).

Panelists looked at how this “eco-heritage” relates to and is transformed by the multiplicity of sites (departure, transfer, arrival) and of “artificial” localization (memory, imagination, re-creation) in terms of a

cultural reference system (Mary Louise Pratt, *Arts of the Contact Zone*, 1991; Lucy Lippard, *The Lure of the Local: Sense of Place in a Multicentered Society*, 1997; Homi Bhabha, “Third Space” in *The Location of Culture*, 1994). Contributions brought interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches into play. There was a large span of case studies on artistic works that engage with these questions, as well as methodological reflections, analyses of the canonical narrative of migrations (Bible, Frontier, Long Walk, etc.) as well as of the micro-narratives around the territories “intermédiaires” (Marc Augé, *Non-Lieux. Introduction à une anthropologie de la surmodernité*, 1992; Gilles Clément, *Manifeste du Tiers Paysage*, 2004). How do artists contribute to the reflection on the formation of new sites and how do they explore the ecologies of passage and arrival? Which typologies of the ephemeral, the transitive, and the provisional might be detected?

We strongly think that the integration of the artistic dimension that deals with the ecology of migration might contribute to the development of *modes of hospitality*, overcoming one-dimensional stereotypes of identity and flawed dichotomies such as “authentic place” versus “contamination.” At the same time, we want to liberate ecological discourse from its ideologically charged idea of preservation and the misconception of nature as a stable, ideal equilibrium.

In proposing the theme “Ecologies of Migration: Engaged Perspectives,” we did not want to minimize the ideological, political, and economic domination that explain the forced migration of so many, even entire peoples, by focusing on the relationship between climate change and the global phenomenon of migration. Quite the contrary. However, we hypothesize that the general phenomenon of migration profoundly affects not only the relations between human groups but also the relations between them and what they consider their natural environment, that is, the condition of human life. In the film *Don't Look Up* (2021) by Adam McKay, humanity meets its doom by refusing to look at the sword of Damocles above its head.

### **Awareness**

The art historians in our session shared the conviction that artists are working on the tools that allow us to observe, describe, and understand

phenomena that we perceive as symptoms of a crisis. They contribute to the development of true awareness and react first as “detectors.” Artists are observers who question the mutations, whose eyes and works reveal the flow of beings and things, the past that mingles with the present, the swarming of the seeds of the future.

Artists have delivered to the public images of refugees at sea and of the reality of fortified borders, transit camps, and gathering places constituting what Judith Butler has called an iconography of precarious life (*Precarious Life*, 2004). Some artists have taken up the idea of “TimeLandscape,” after the American artist Alan Sonfist who, in his 1978 manifesto “Natural Phenomena as Public Monuments” proposed the creation of art that keeps the environment of the previous generation “in front of our eyes” in order to combat what the American psychologist Peter H. Kahn called “environmental amnesia” in 1999. Each generation tends to consider the state of degradation it inherits from the previous generation as normal. In this sense, artists like Sammy Baloji (1978) demonstrate the potential of visual language. In his collages, he combines, without nostalgia, images of the Congo's landscape in the colonial era and the realities of its current total degradation due to over-exploitation. The idea of the artist as restorer and preserver of what might be called, in the model of “cultural heritage,” the “ecological heritage” is developing. It comprises ways of life, landscapes, smells, sounds.

Brazilian artist Clarissa Tossin reflects on the connection between ecology and migration. Her series called *Disorientation Towards Collapse* (2019-2020), woven entirely from cut-up Amazon.com delivery boxes, highlights the conspicuous circulation and consumption of goods in the contemporary world. She flattens the cardboard boxes, cuts them, and weaves them using Amazonian indigenous patterns. With that simple procedure, she asks important questions about the migration of words, cultures, media, and people. At the fourteenth Istanbul Biennial in 2015, during the centenary of the Armenian Genocide, Turkish artist Asli Çavuşoğlu presented *Red/Red* (2015), a drawing on paper painted with cochineal ink from Armenia and red from Turkey. The first two-thirds of the work depict intricate ornaments, ornaments that fade away as the eye moves down the sheet. This fading is halted by the appearance of pure, raw lines whose

patterns in red are, this time, geometric. The most traditional ornaments are made with Armenian cochineal ink. They are abruptly cut off by brighter red geometric ornaments made with Turkish red. They fade away because there is no cochineal to create the pigment, because the cochineal in Armenia has been heavily exploited for many years. On the other side of the border, in Turkey, cochineals are plentiful, but the know-how to produce the pigment has been lost since the genocide of 1915 and the forced emigration of the Armenians. This is why, in the design, the beautiful ornaments fade away and are replaced by a more banal design. Asli Çavuşoğlu calls for the reconciliation of Armenia and Turkey not only to reconcile peoples and memories but also for the protection of the ecosystem and artistic skills.

### **Acting**

Refusing to remain mere witnesses, artists have become actors in a form of eco-responsibility that they have integrated into practice. We could say that they want us to shift *our* position from observing to engaging. There is an expectation that art can contribute to the search for a better future.

Artists test and challenge our sensorial tools, and develop scenarios that work by drawing on a new “situational ethics” (Pascal Gielen 2014). Can art take a place amongst other political and social approaches working on solutions? Can art history collaborate with other disciplines, such as the earth sciences or the social sciences?

Perhaps our era will be marked by a shift: the consideration of the impact of any action on the planet as unexceptional. Artists who transmit an ecological message through their work will no doubt take more care. Two artists from the French collective *Art Orienté Objet* set out on an expedition in April 2010, on the Norwegian island of Spitzbergen, to fulfil an absurd goal: to bring a polar bear footprint back to France and exhibit it in its original snow at the Magasin de Grenoble. This Arctic expedition is documented by a video, *Polar trash, CO2 Time code*, made to accompany the work. In this ten-minute video, the time code scrolling down the left side of the screen uses the CO2 emitted during the artists' journey (from transport to heating the hotel) as a unit of time. In total, the carbon footprint of the project was just over eight tons of CO2.

To compensate for the carbon, the artists required the Magasin de Grenoble and the city to plant two hundred and ninety trees, which corresponds - if their calculations are correct - to the emissions of their endeavor. Paradoxically, it was easier to bring back a footprint in its original milieu: the artist Marion Laval-Jeantet said that planting trees was “the most difficult thing for the art center and the city. [...] Presenting a freezer is not a problem, but obliging an art center to have 290 trees planted for a work of art is not an easy thing.”

### **Complexity and methodological implication**

Most interesting are artistic projects and conceptual approaches that promote forms of hospitality and coexistence in host countries, breaking with a stereotypical notion of identity and the authenticity of place. Drawing on situationist theories of drifting and nomadic housing, artists such as the Mexican Abraham Cruzvillegas and the Citámbulos group or the Italian STALKER and French PEROU collectives create modes of integration in the interstices of host societies. In our session, a case of ecological urbanism integrating the migrations of people, plants, and cultural habits has been studied: The “Jardins d'Éole” in Paris.

The proposals and case studies all demonstrated an interest in the complexity of the relationship between migration and ecology, seen through a relational model. Migration has always been considered from a dialectical point of view, showing what it changes but also what it brings, defeating the dominant discourses of “purity,” “authenticity,” “preservation,” against “invasion,” “contamination,” “great replacement.”

We want to stress that the topics of our panel have implications for CIHA's self-conception as an international association, questioning its historical link to highly problematic institutional structures, national art histories, exclusions and normativities. (Think of the Congress in Melbourne, “Crossing Cultures: Conflicts, Migrations and Convergences”). That's why this section not only aimed at methodological reflection, but explicitly questioned ideologically charged paradigms linked to the discussion of relationships between environmental space, conceptions of stable localities, and conditions of purity, on the one hand, and movement, shifting identities,

and productive contaminations, on the other. How can we achieve the equal consideration of all acting agencies?

We deliberately included the phrase “engaged perspectives” in the session’s title. We wanted to stress that by “engaged perspectives” we do not only address artistic activism but, above all, an art historical shift from detached and distanced analysis to an attitude of engagement and the intention to take a stand, to get involved. The approaches were presented in the discussion of migration and ecology as key terms of crisis or as much more general figures of thought, as key terms for a new conceptualization of artistic strategies, as perspectives on relational models. Which formats do artists use to advance the issues of migration and ecology, or, more relevant, how do ecology and migration shape the mediality of the works? Which senses - beyond the gaze - are crucial? How does the institution’s exhibition system collide with these new dimensions? How does the evaluation criteria of the contemporary art system fall short? How can we analyze the performative, the temporal, and the spatial concepts at stake? And which formats do we, art historians or social anthropologists, think are appropriate to access the potentiality of culture in this context? The individual artistic biography? The anthropological perspective? How can we develop sensitivity towards the way artworks to incorporate the ecology of global migrations?

Our panel resisted any systematic approach or hierarchical order, but offered a fascinating sequence of case studies that all sharpened our understanding of the ecological space as a space of migration.



# Nature Shipping. Remarks on the Contemporary Ideas of Heritage

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## **ABSTRACT**

The ongoing ecological crisis does call for planetary awareness and the incorporation of non-human actors in academic debates about the Anthropocene. However, despite the call for a cultural coexistence of human and non-human actors, nature and culture, the impact of heritage-making is still underestimated. The paper engages with artistic and architectural landscape examples to explore practices of gardening as memorizing migration and motion of both human and non-human actors. It questions the need to transform heritage practices to create an encompassing ecology of practices.

## **KEYWORDS**

Maria Tereza Alves; Valango Wharf; Human-Non-Human Relations; Heritage; Migration; Plants.

In 2018 the Nomadic Biennale Manifesta 12 was executed in Palermo. The event borrowed the idea of the Planetary Garden by the French Philosopher Gilles Clément, who sees ecology and science-based research as the fundamental principles of today's landscape architecture.<sup>1</sup> In his understanding, every single garden encompasses a planetary scale. The world has to be understood as a garden curated by human and non-human agents within planetary boundaries determined by economic growth. The curators of the biennale, Bregtje van der Haak, Andrés Jaque, Ippolito Pestellini Laparelli, Mirjam Varadini, referred in their statement to the curatorial concept to Palermo's Orto Botanico, which inspired them "to look at the idea of the 'garden', to explore its capacity to aggregate difference and to compose life out of movement and migration."<sup>2</sup>

In that context, they also drew attention to the additional title of the event: "Cultivating Coexistence". Relating to the depicted lemon tree, olive tree, and eucalyptus in Francisco Lojacono's painting *Veduta di Palermo* from 1875, the curators demonstrate that even plants today are assumed as part of heritage are non-native plants by their origin, coming from distant parts of the world.

The concept of Manifesta, thus, is related to the very heart of ongoing debates about living in the Anthropocene and alternative terms emphasizing the entanglement of human and non-human actors such as the Plantationocene (Anna L Tsing 2015), the Chthulucene (Donna J. Haraway 2015), or the Capitalocene (Donna J. Haraway 2016, Timothy J. Demos 2017). They are all characterized by their focus on a new set of relationships between humans, history, heritage, and ecology. Within this transformation to alternative histories, the practices of gardening understood as an artistic and landscape-changing process, became relevant, I want to argue. Furthermore, assembling plants, cultures, soil, water, gardening and thus questioning the cultivating of coexistence of entangled cultures refers also to curating heritage in the sense of taking care, but also as an active practice of selecting, collecting, and attributing value – one aspect of researching comparative approaches of natural and cultural heritage practices.<sup>3</sup>

Based on examples from artistic practices and landscape architecture, I want to point out various degrees of cultivated coexistence, which I see as a relationship of humans with nature with human and non-human agents, focusing on the meaning of displaced or dislocated plants. I am referring, thus, to a growing interest in implementing plants and botany in framing an ecological art history to explore the intertwined dynamics of colonization, capitalism, forced migration, and environmental change. In doing so, I want to address several points concerning ongoing discussions on the Anthropocene and the implication of heritage in transformation. I assume that the impact of plant migration and movement, coincidental or forced, inevitably creates an expanded field of entanglements between cultures and ecologies, between nature and human history.

Nature shipping or the shipping of nature means, in this context, literally a transfer of plants from one continent to another or within one continent due to migration, diaspora, and economic exploitation. The planted barge in the harbor of Bristol is part of the ongoing project *Seeds of Change* (1999 to the present) by the Brazilian artist Maria Tereza Alves. An impulse for the project was given by the research done by Finish Botanist Heli Jutila, who, for the very first time, recovered seeds systematically from an area in Finland in which ship ballast had been dumped.<sup>4</sup>

So-called ballast flora is seeds transported in soil that was used as ballast to stabilize merchant sailing ships, a usual practice until the end of the 19th century. This way, seeds were collaterally distributed from ports in Africa, the Mediterranean, the Caribbean, or Asia to European and American landscapes. Triggered by the idea of botanical archaeology combined with a social history of plants, Alves started to localize similar places in European and North American ports to investigate and conceptualizes the global impact of the movements of seeds and plants' species (Marseille 1999–2000, Reposaari 2001, Liverpool 2004, Exeter and Topsham 2004, Dunkirk 2005, New York 2018).

Her approach is characterized by research on places where ballast was dumped and practices of gardening by taking soil samples and potting them to see whether some seeds would germinate and grow. In the next step,

she identified the plants with botanists and proposed a place for a garden where the ballast flora could grow—sometimes accompanied by an exhibition to present the documentation of the investigation on shipping routes, local history and botany, and eventually plants. Thus, plants are assumed as signs of displacement to tell other migration stories.

Also, in Bristol, a port that was one of the infamously important points in the Atlantic triangle slave trade route, Alves adopted this multilateral investigative mode before a floating garden was realized. Starting in 2006, she excavated the seeds from the river bed where the ballast was dumped over centuries. The history of ship routes and local history related to the plants were shown firstly as a result of this action in a group exhibition titled *Port City: On Exchange and Mobility* at the Arnolfini Gallery in Bristol in 2007. This time, the Bristol City Council was willing to execute the final step of this artistic undertaking and create a natural garden out of Alves' seeds. For this purpose, landscape architect Gitta Gschwendtner designed a garden on a disused barge.

As the barge cannot be entered from the land and is accessible only from the water – by ship – the idea of arrival and how the seeds arrived became an integral part of the garden. The (floating) place of the plants thus reveals a hidden chapter of place-making, dislocation/displacement within the fluid realm of global capitalism, colonization, and migration transmitted by the seas. Also, vegetation/flora shapes and alters landscapes with random dissemination. The marginal can thus become the most evident and widespread: plants that were mostly unnoticed part of a local flora can turn into agents of the history of a city as they reveal the tight historical connection between the city and the oversea plantages, colonial dominions, and global marketplaces. Thus, plants become living examples of sustainable witnesses of economic exchange and exploitation – as such, they can alter a place's identity and create a borderless history, as Alves called her approach.

Frequently such plants are called with value-laden botanical terms such as invasive, weed, useful or harmful, which sound very similar to the description of human migration to some extent. Furthermore, this hidden movement determines ecologies and landscapes worldwide - mainly to a

greater extent. Researching traveling plants also sheds light on the local disposition of the opposite side of the travel route.

That displaced plants, once non-native, build a native, indigenous flora and culture nowadays is also one of the starting points of a project by American landscape architect Sara Zewde. She proposed a design for a Transatlantik memory on the Valango Wharf in Rio de Janeiro.

The project by Zewde aims to raise awareness of slavery and the black experience in America. Moreover, it intends to stress its impact on the urban landscape and diverse cultural practices of enslaved people. Although the harbor area, Porto Maravilha, was revitalized while preparing for the Olympic Games and Football World Cup in Brazil 2016 erecting, among other two museums, there was no concrete plan for the Valango Wharf.

In 2011 the intact Wharf was discovered by archaeologists who excavated the original stones of the site and found thousands of historical artefacts. In the 18th century, more than 20% of all enslaved people arrived America. Zewde was also part of a group claiming the nomination of the Valango Wharf to become a Unesco World Heritage site. In this context, Zewde was thinking about how to describe the requested "Outstanding universal value," which every site has to prove evidence.<sup>5</sup> In 2017, the Wharf was eventually accepted as a Unesco World heritage site. Calling it "the most powerful memorial of the African diaspora outside Africa."<sup>6</sup>

However, the report focuses mainly on the Wharf as a site and 'physical trace'. Zewde argued that the memorial could not be reduced to the exhibition of the site of the Wharf and the classical notion of a memorial fixing the event in the past. She shifted the focus to the related question of the importance of practices, traditions, and rituals related to enslaved people in today's culture and society.

Based on the investigation of the circuit of slavery in the area (hospital, cemetery, warehouses), she proposed a constellation of places interacting with the everyday life of the residents, like the history of slavery itself. For this purpose, she designed eight places. Each site would incorporate recognizable Afro-Brazilian cultural practices, plants, and forms. Zewde was thinking about the ficus, as a tree native to both continents, the African and South

American. She proposed, for instance, to create a place by a curved platform. Its form reminds of the Afro-Brazilian practice of wrapping a white cloth around the base of a Ficus tree to mark where the ancestors gather. In doing so, she wants to blur the line between the archaeological site and the city and between the distinction between Past, Present, and Future by taking up stories and rituals still relevant today. In this way, she demonstrated the relation between plants brought by slaves to Brazil or arrived by natural dispersion and then became part of the local flora and domestic culture. As Alves, she is interested in practices towards making public common space to care for and gather for each other. Plants are, in this context, agents of creating such a place and a subject of caretaking.

Another place was a pathway from the port to the city planted with Afro-Brazilian vegetation to mark the infrastructure of the slavery in the city and how the cultural practices of enslaved people found their way into the landscape and culture of America. One of the plants is, for example, the *Dracaena angolensis* (*Sansevieria cylindrica*), which is still used for rituals by members of AfroBrazilian religious groups like the Candomblé or the Umbanda. The plant is also known as Saint Bárbara sword in Brazil and is known today in Europe, at least thanks to the furnisher house Ikea since it builds an essential element of urban interior gardening.

Zewde wanted not at least to demonstrate with her site interventions that the city, the landscape itself, is the memory. She rejects a narrative of remembrance as enclosed in her project's past. Instead, her approach proposes considering the aftermath/impact of ongoing cultural practices and continuing transformations that shape a heritage sustainably. In doing so, heritage became diverse not only due to the effect of diverse cultures but furthermore embracing cultural practices, plants, and landscapes. However, by addressing the metaphor of 'being rooted', Zewde also shows how critically following the roots of plants may lead to recognizing plants and related practices as metaphorical carriers of past and ongoing history. Thus, the notion of cultivating nature, which has long determined natural and cultural history and often went hand in hand with human dominance over nature, is

converted into caretaking, understood as the cultivation of cultural practices for living together with diverse local flora.

In a certain way, Zewde's approach is comparable to the Diaspora Garden at the W. Michal Blumenthal Academy of the Jewish Museum in Berlin, situated in a rebuilt hall of the former flower market on the opposite side the Museum. The project of the Academy was delivered by Daniel Libeskind, who designed the interior with wooden cubes containing the entrance area, a library, and an auditorium. The cubes are supposed to recall wooden boxes containing a legacy that the Museum should preserve. In this context, Libeskind also was in favor of a Jewish-biblical garden. The landscape architects by Le Balto won the competition for the realization of the garden in 2013. They shifted – differently from the former idea expressed in the formal announcement of the competition the focus on the issue of diaspora and designed – four plateaus, each planted according to different topics: landscape, culture, nature, and academia. In this way, the Diaspora garden creates a particular space 'floating' over a wooden ground meant as a bridge between the elevated plantings and, thus, metaphorically between the place of origin and the place of arrival. The garden becomes a model of an all-encompassing reflection on the multiple connections of human and non-human journeys and their implications for contemporary landscapes and societies. These intertwined histories are made visible by the plants. Le Balto chose plants with unique connections to Jewish life, symbolizing the diaspora of Jewish culture and plants which grow in dispersion, thus addressing the question of a diaspora's related cultural and botanical history. By referring to plants familiar to Western cultures, like the cyclamen, also known as the Salomon Crown, Le Balto pointed to the common origins and roots of diverse environments. Concerning natural dispersion, it is also about the diaspora of the Jewish faith across the world and its impact on other cultures. Created inside the academy hall, it does not represent an ordinary garden. Instead, it addresses issues about the integration of plants into the museum context and the practice of curating, which raises further questions about overcoming the object character of plants. Together with the changeable exhibition display, plants are not to be understood as artifacts, but stand for the

processual, constantly changing. Above all, they promote a new approach to transmitting a living heritage that can only be achieved through constant questioning of the heritage's value for contemporary societies. Taking care of plants means also working on heritage.

Like Zewde's, Le Balto's design does not refer directly to the history of violence but, instead, to the botanical and cultural legacy which is part of nowadays culture in different parts of the world. Thus, plants appear as a common feature that can express identity and articulate the idea of culture as an assemblage. Moreover, like in the proposal by Sara Zewde, the French landscape architects included a possibility of participation in the garden by leaving one plateau to the Academy and offering a possibility for everyone to start planting and gardening to become familiar with the very complexities of cultural and natural heritage be doing.

Gardens and displaced plants turn insofar as figures of blurred, dynamic, and mobile environment; they oscillate between accommodation of the near and the far, the past and the present, and, as such, they embody the heterogeneity of culture. Furthermore, as symbols of inequality, they re-introduce a forgotten chapter of colonial and ecological heritage and bring it into social awareness. The quoted examples show a need for a re-definition of our understanding of art, historic gardens, and landscapes as heritage, not only as a notion of conservation. Incorporating non-human agents and understanding gardening as a practice allows us to critically evaluate the processes of the production of meanings upon conservation and preservation of natural and cultural objects, as it is often stuck in a tendency to recall the past. In sum, not the garden as a closed entity but rather the planetary gardening as a process could be an important focus for the future-oriented thinking of culture and ecology, aiming at creating an ecology of practices.

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# Plant Hunters and Their Valuable Booty

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## **ABSTRACT**

This text focuses on plant hunters and the relationship to their valuable booty: ornamental plants. Following Arjun Appadurai, in this context, ornamental plants can be considered *commodities*. Based on this, the first part of this text analyzes the trajectory of ornamental plants, especially tropical orchids in Latin America, including their social life and importance in the 19th century. The second part focuses on plant hunters and their activities, based on various documents, travel reports, correspondence, illustrations, biographies, and secondary sources. Finally, it explores the relationship between hunters and a valuable booty — ornamental plants. It investigates the narratives behind images and texts that justified an approach to the environment and ornamental plants, almost leading to the destruction and extinction of some varieties.

## **KEYWORDS**

19th Century; Ornamental Plants; Plant Hunters / Booty; Gathering / Collecting.

## **Introduction**

In the 19th century, there was a growing interest in tropical ornamental plants in Europe, especially in tropical orchids, which motivated sending commercial plant collectors or hunters to the places they came from<sup>1</sup>. They belonged to a commercial circuit of ornamental plants made up of different actors and institutions.

In this context, ornamental plants can be considered *commodities*, following Arjun Appadurai, who, in his book *The social life of things*, defines them primarily as objects of economic value<sup>2</sup>. Appadurai is interested in exploring the conditions under which economic objects circulate in different value regimes in space and time. He emphasizes that even if one thinks that things have no other meanings than those conferred by human transactions, attributions, and motivations, this view does not clarify things' specific and historical circulation. Therefore, things must be followed since their meanings are inscribed in their forms, uses, and trajectories. Only by analyzing these trajectories can one interpret the human transactions and calculations that enliven things. Thus, although from a theoretical point of view, human actors encode things with significance, from a methodological perspective, it is the things-in-motion that illuminate their social and human context<sup>3</sup>.

Following Appadurai, the first part of this text will analyze the trajectory of ornamental plants, especially tropical orchids in Latin America, their social life, and their value in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The second part will focus on one of the actors that codify the significance of things (ornamental plants): plant hunters and their activity, based on diverse texts and images, travel reports, correspondence, illustrations, biographies, and secondary sources. Finally, the hunters' relationship with their valuable booty, the ornamental plants, will be investigated.

## **The social life of ornamental plants and their value**

The trajectory of ornamental plants is linked to their value, or rather to the change in their value. As Appadurai emphasizes, for the sociologist Georg Simmel (*The Philosophy of Money*, 1907), value is never an inherent property

of objects. Still, it is a judgment made by subjects about them<sup>4</sup>, which, moreover, as Appadurai accentuates, arises from exchanges. The exchange is for Appadurai, a source of value<sup>5</sup>.

For botanists, gardeners, traders, adventurers, collectors, and gatherers, as well as for institutions such as botanical gardens and commercial nurseries, ornamental plants had a high value associated with their use.

Europe imported ornamental plants mainly for use in living collections: for decoration of stately gardens with a representative intent; to be cultivated and exhibited in botanical gardens and/or in a preserved form in herbaria in a scientific context; or to be collected and displayed for no apparent reason, for the pure pleasure of collecting related to botanical interest or that which confers prestige<sup>6</sup>.

Certain plants or specific species, such as orchids, were preferred and collected for their shapes, colors, exoticism, symbolic associations, and scarcity. It was collecting, which meant more than accumulating. As philosopher and biologist Nicole Karafyllis states, collecting always involves including and excluding objects in the collection. Gathering, specific collecting, always becomes a theme in the form of an ongoing reflection on what has been collected and what remains to be collected, similar to works of art. Collecting thus has at least an epistemic, technical, social, and economic dimension and, especially in the case of collecting living things, as is the case with most of the imported ornamental plants, also an ethical and moral dimension<sup>7</sup>.

The trajectory of ornamental plants, particularly orchids, begins in the trees where they grow and are found. Being there, the plants initially had little or other value to the natives, as the German collector Wilhelm Hennis (1856-?) describes in Ibagué, Colombia, in 1899:

As soon as it became known that I was collecting *Cattleya Trianae*, here called "Tulip," the natives brought me whole mountains of plants on mules and oxen, but what were they like! My heart ached when I saw the most beautiful and largest cattleyas completely broken, and when I then

told the people that the plants must be intact, they could not understand why and thought I could still make "ink" out of them. These people firmly imagined that I would prepare some kind of medicine with the orchids<sup>8</sup>.

Hennis added that when he explained their [commercial] value, they had begun to plant the plants on orange and guava trees and roofs<sup>9</sup>.

Continuing their trajectory, the ornamental plants were collected by the plant hunter and his helpers. The plants were uprooted from trees, or the entire tree was felled for easier reach for the orchids growing there. Similar or identical plants of the same species could have different trajectories, depending on their value: some were chosen to be transported and exported to Europe, and others were discarded<sup>10</sup>.

Those selected for export were packed in wooden boxes with tiny air holes to survive a long journey of several weeks, first from the collection site to the port to Europe and then to Europe. This was a live and delicate cargo that had to arrive alive. There was always a risk in transport within the country of collection and on the long transatlantic journey<sup>11</sup>. However, sometimes everything was lost when entire shipments were flooded, affected by frost or fire, or during shipwrecks, as in the case of a ship off the coast of Africa in which a part of the live plants collected by Alexander von Humboldt, more than 4500 plants unknown in Europe were lost<sup>12</sup>.

Once they arrived, the plants still valuable for the exchange were sent to different destinations after being received by a representative of the importer<sup>13</sup>. Those plants discarded at the collection sites or during transport had lost their value since they were no longer useful for exchange. This could occur either because they did not belong to the best specimens or the desired species or were considered "damaged." In this regard, the collector Hennis stated in 1899 that the success of orchid importation depended on the selection of the plants that were sent and added, "If you are there, you throw away all the less good and damaged plants and pack only those that are really worth transporting." In that sense, he also added that he had sent ca. 200 boxes of *Cattleya Trianae* from Tolima, Colombia, to Europe in 1883, having thrown away three times more, which had been damaged when felling the

trees to reach them or in transport. In addition, he said that he had once had to pay to help throw mountains of plants into the river because they were unacceptable for export<sup>14</sup>. Here it is evident how the high value assigned to the plants in the exchange could be quickly lost when they were considered damaged and how the disposal of those plants considered "not valuable" were massive.

### **Plant hunters and their activity**

Plant hunters played a decisive role in the social life of ornamental plants. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, they were mainly hired by commercial nurseries and gardeners, botanical gardens, and private European collectors, who commissioned specific species. There they met other more experienced hunters and learned the profession, which included acquiring knowledge of botany, collecting and packing the plants properly between the collection sites and Europe, and learning some of the languages they were going to work. In addition, some of them were trained as gardeners and even worked at the collection sites where they were sent. All this means that the plant hunters were mostly highly qualified and trained professionals<sup>15</sup>.

The plant hunters were sent to different tropical regions of the world, where they settled temporarily or permanently, traveled through many territories in search of plants, and, in some cases, recorded their itineraries. In the countries of arrival, the plant hunters often expressed their fascination for the tropical vegetation that overwhelmed and enchanted them, as the German collector and gardener Herrmann Wendland (1825-1903) said in 1857 when he observed the tropical nature of Costa Rica for the first time: "What a spectacle, what magnificence, what soft and fragrant forms, what green, what life in the vegetation, what magnificent nature!"<sup>16</sup>. However, they also experienced the environment as difficult, even hostile, somewhat maybe related to the tropical conditions they were not normally used to.

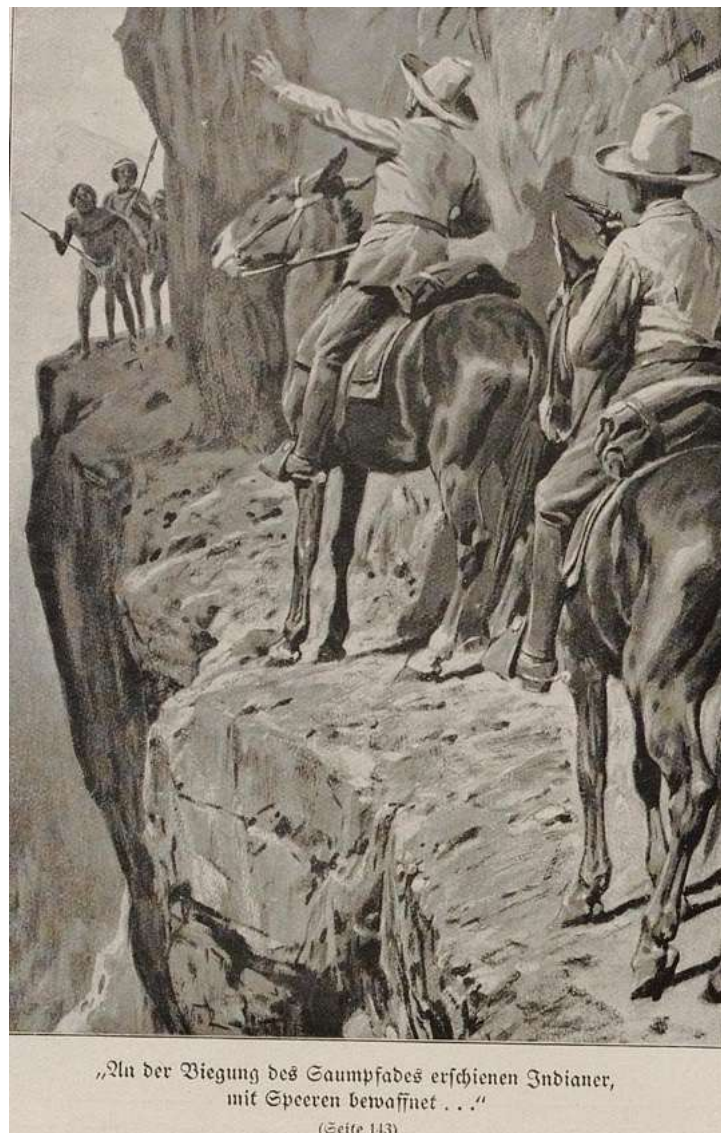
When the plant hunters reached their goal, they chose the site for their camp and recruited helpers and assistants, natives and foreigners, who would show them the way or help them with the location and acquisition of the plants<sup>17</sup>. Wendland recounted having hired in 1857 in San José, Costa Rica,

a companion, interpreter, and assistant, a German named Jäger, who was always ready to do whatever it took to get a plant<sup>18</sup>.

The importer gave the hunters drawings or indications of the plant to look for, and they communicated by correspondence<sup>19</sup>. In general, and depending on what was agreed, the hunters gave their assistants a fee for each specimen collected. Several times they returned to the camp to leave the plants until they had explored the whole area. To reach the plants in the treetops, the helpers almost always climbed up the trees, or else they would cut down the whole tree to uproot them. In addition, they freed entire paths in the jungle to access and transport them. As the German collector and gardener Wilhelm Kalbreyer (1847-1912) told from Colombia in 1899, they sometimes cut trees because they thought they found a valuable orchid. Then they realized it was only a "less valuable" one. In addition, he continued, it also happened that the felled trees were trapped with their tops on other trees, so these also had to be cut down to get the desired orchids.<sup>20</sup> This story of a plant hunter shows how plants considered valuable were acquired at any cost, regardless of destroying the rest of nature, which for them had no value.

Despite mostly having a specific mission, hunters sometimes also sent unknown plants, which were given to botanists to describe and name. When a species was recognized as new, the importer brought it to the market as a novelty, which increased its value. The descriptions of the new species, followed by recommendations for their care, were published in popular gardening magazines for the general public or in luxurious specialized volumes<sup>21</sup>. This information was accompanied by rich illustrations or detailed color plates of the plants, made by artists, illustrators, or botanists, and based on field sketches, short textual descriptions, live plants, or dried herbarium specimens. These illustrations contributed to increasing the value of the plants<sup>22</sup>.

**Fig 1.** This picture shows the encounter of the plant hunters with the “wild” Indians in Colombia. The caption says: “At the bend of the mule track appeared Indians armed with spears,” Ottmann, Victor. *Der Orchideenjäger – Erlebnisse und Abenteuer im tropischen Amerika.* Dresden: Verlag Deutsche Buchwerkstätten, 1922, 113.



Purely botanical, plant-focused descriptions were often supplemented by the plant hunters' accounts of their adventures, with the planter hunters themselves at the center of the story. The hunters described in their texts and images their positive and negative impressions of the people and the



environment of the territories they traveled. They often expressed a feeling of nostalgia for their place of origin, as in the case of Wendland, who stated in 1857, during his stay in Costa Rica, and after just a few months there, that he found the jungle and nature, its grandeur and splendor, monotonous and ordinary and would prefer the simplicity and freshness of a beech or oak forest<sup>23</sup>. In the plant hunters' reports, there is also information on other personal and general matters, such as the political situation in the countries where they were and how it hindered their search and collection work<sup>24</sup>. These written and visual documents are finally an interesting source on the political, social and cultural situation of the visited regions; that not only contain observations but also reflect fears and prejudices, for example, about supposed cannibals and "wild" indians<sup>25</sup>.

Plant hunters were generally characterized and depicted as brave and daring in texts and photographs with an often anecdotal and highly dramatic tone. It was a risky life: just as for high profit, there could be high risk. Plant hunting was not only difficult, but at times, it was also dangerous, as shown by the examples of several plant hunters who died in the field, such as William Arnold (1801-1851), who died of typhus, and Friedrich Carl Lehmann (1850-1903), who drowned in Colombia in 1903. In general, the health condition of many hunters often deteriorated in the tropics. Many became ill with malaria and yellow fever<sup>26</sup>, and several died from it, such as Gustav Wallis (1830-1878)<sup>27</sup>. In addition, some hunters were also robbed and abandoned in the jungle.

It is possible to characterize and establish an iconography of the plant hunters based on images and texts. Plant hunters had to be talented, energetic, determined, clever, adventurous, and reliable. They also had to be good stewards and attentive to plant lovers' interests, especially orchid lovers. The clothing worn by the hunters was mostly similar: they wore boots and hats; they also possessed a hunting knife and a revolver, as shown in photographs and illustrations: proudly outdoors, on foot or horseback; sometimes also depicted similarly to scientists with their attributes: devices alluding to their profession, sometimes with plants and their assistants or helpers near them or at their feet.



**Fig 2.** German orchid hunters in Bogotá at the start of an expedition, Ottmann, *Der Orchideenjäger*, 49.

Also, the so-called "last of adventurers"<sup>28</sup>, the German Clarence K. Horich (1930-1994), active until the 1990s for the Berggarten in Hannover, reinforced this prototype of the plant hunter when he said in 1990 about his profession:

“I have experienced and survived things which seem to come from the cheapest adventure book! Three poisonous snake bites of the most dangerous kind. Broken arms in Honduras when I crashed to collect *Brassalova Digbyana*. Gunfights with bandits and Indians in South America, etc. Yes... this is probably all WITHIN the somewhat dangerous profession of a plant hunter in the tropics.”<sup>29</sup>

An article published in the same year on Horich reaffirms this prototype:

“Do you know him? Wide-brimmed hat, scuffed leather jacket, drum revolver in the waistband and cigarette casually in the corner of his mouth? It is Indiana Jones? You almost got it right. But only almost. Our man in the jungle is called Clarence Klaus Hörich, and instead of cash, he's chasing the real treasures of the jungle - the magnificent orchids”<sup>30</sup>.

### **The plant hunter and his booty**

The scientist Catherine Vadon expresses herself in her book *Mythos Orchideen* about plant hunters as brave and intelligent adventurers, close to the heroes of antiquity. Although she characterizes them specifically, she refers to them as characters, which could also have carried out another adventure-related activity. She says, "they could be looking for gold in California, for rubber in the Brazilian jungles, however, their destiny is to be looking for another jewel", alluding to plants. Vadon refers to the fact that plant hunters were looking for adventure and a quick profit, despite the risk, to then enjoy their hero status, with fame and appreciation<sup>31</sup>. Following this idea, we can allude to Karafyllis, who refers to a type of collector she calls the *adventurous explorer*, whose prototype would be Alexander von Humboldt. She states that in personal collecting and the research of collections, what inspires is not so much the objects collected as the collecting as an adventure in which the adventurous explorer takes great risks and finds himself between life and death<sup>32</sup>.

Despite the fact that the accounts and narratives of plant hunters give the impression that they were primarily concerned with adventure, in reality, it was a specific collection, to a certain extent ordered and, above all, selective, not casual. However, some also collected other living and dead objects apart from plants, such as animals and objects considered “exotic”<sup>33</sup>. The narratives and stylization of plant hunters as treasure hunters aim to increase the value of objects. The greater the effort, the higher the price.

Not only the plant hunters themselves were highly stylized. The descriptions and depictions of plants are also far from a purely factual and real representation. In texts and images, plants are referred to as valuable objects: as unattainable objects whose acquisition was associated with great effort, as miraculous and sacred objects, represented almost with a divine halo or linking them with constructions of nobility and purity to roses and blushing whites, as treasures, jewels, "green gold," exotic objects or relics, which were kept and exhibited in a kind of reliquary. Plants are also referred to and depicted as unique collectibles or part of many, as well as fragile but "dangerous" objects, in the sense of the risk of their attainment. Plants are also represented and referred to as yields, trophies, prey, and booty<sup>34</sup>, as objects to be hunted and collected, like animals, such as jaguars, whose hunting is also reported in various plant hunters' texts and images<sup>35</sup>.

**Fig. 3.** Cover of a book that shows the illustration of an orchid emerging from the mountains of Colombia with a sort of divine halo, Ottmann, *Der Orchideenjäger*, cover.



**Fig. 4.** Illustration of *Cattleya Mendeli*, that shows the flower as a fragil, delicate and nobel object, *Travels and Adventures*, 1.



**Fig. 5.** This image shows the dangerous life of the plant hunter and the risk of the attainment of the plants. The caption reads: "In the midst of a hesitant decision, the orchid hunter threw the white magic flowers into the stream" in this case to prevent his threatening opponent from getting it, Ottmann, *Der Orchideenjäger*, 2.



### Conclusions

According to sociologist Justin Stagl, hunting can be seen as a unique form of gathering, requiring more attention, energy, and risk<sup>36</sup>. Appadurai argues that "we call valuable those objects that resist against our desire to possess them." One's desire for an object is satiated by the sacrifice of some other object, which is the center of another individual's desire<sup>37</sup>. If one follows this thesis, it can be concluded that the conditions of the literal sacrifice in obtaining the plants increased their value. Was the sacrifice consciously or unconsciously exaggerated to increase the value? The same is true of the risk and danger of their procurement. Are these mere narratives of self-stylization? Or is there more to it? If we go back to the initial thesis: to understand the value and meaning of a thing, we must look at things in their form, use, and trajectory. Here we see the following:

Evidently, images and language allude to ornamental plants as booty. Despite being used primarily for decorative reasons, to be illustrated, and to be exhibited as an expensive commodity, the ornamental plants were also handled as a booty. In texts and images, a narrative is staged that justifies and legitimizes the extraction of ornamental plants, in many cases violent, sometimes arrogant, and derogatory tones.

Booty or Beute (in German) is a word also used by the actors involved. *Beute* is, as art historian Benedicte Savoy states, a strong term that shows the different variations and nuances in the attainment of works of art and objects and refers to colonial and colonialist conditions<sup>38</sup>. Orchids, ornamental plants, and works of art are undoubtedly different. But their use, value, position in society, presentation, and acquisition conditions make them comparable. Similar to works of art a more precise and critical look is also needed to reveal the interests and discourses related and behind to the procurement and representation of plants.

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## Endnotes

1. Catherine Vadon, *Mythos Orchideen- von leidenschaftlichen Sammlern, fernen Ländern und besonderen Sorten* (Munich: Callwey Verlag, 2015), 53.
2. Arjun Appadurai, *The social life of things – Commodities in cultural perspective* (Cambridge: University Press, 2003), 3.
3. Appadurai, *The social life of things*, 4-5.
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8. Wilhelm Hennis, "Vom Orchideen-Sammeln in Kolumbien," *Möller's Deutsche Gärtner-Zeitung*, no. 7 (February 11, 1899): 74. All quotations have been translated by Claudia Cendales Paredes.
9. Hennis, "Vom Orchideen-Sammeln," 74.
10. See report about it: Hennis, "Vom Orchideen-Sammeln," 74.
11. Vadon, *Mythos*, 63.
12. Vadon, *Mythos*, 28; Schlumpberger, "Reisen," 419.
13. Vadon, *Mythos*, 73.
14. Hennis, "Vom Orchideen-Sammeln," 74.
15. For more information on the characteristics and functions of plant collectors or hunters, see, among others: Tyler Whittle, *Pflanzenjäger – Die abenteuerliche Suche nach dem Grünen Gold* (Munich: Prestel-Verlag, 1971), 22. Toby Musgrave, Chris Gardner, Will Musgrave, *The plant hunters: two hundred years of adventure and discovery around the world* (London: Ward Lock, 1999), Carolyn Fry, *Pflanzenschätze: aus der Ferne in den Garten; von leidenschaftlichen Sammlern, fremden Ländern und exotischen Pflanzen* (Munich: Callwey, 2010), Schlumpberger, "Reisen," Vadon, *Mythos*; and many travel reports, correspondence and illustrations, that are preserved from and about plant hunters, some of them published in specialized gardening magazines, like *Gartenflora*, *Gardener's Chronicle*, *La Semaine Horticole*



y *Le Journal des Orchidées*. There are also many biographies and reports, between real and fictitious, which narrate their work and adventures, like Victor Ottmann, *Der Orchideenjäger – Erlebnisse und Abenteuer im tropischen Amerika* (Dresden: Verlag Deutsche Buchwerkstätten, 1922), Albert Millican, *Travels and Adventures of an Orchid Hunter* (London: Cassell & Company, 1891), Norman Mac Donald, *The Orchid Hunters – A Jungle Adventure* (New York / Toronto: Farrar & Rinehart, 1939) and Thomas Harper Goodspeed, *Plant Hunters in the Andes* (New York / Toronto: Farrar & Rinehart, 1941).

16. “Reisende,” *Botanische Zeitung*, (April 17, 1857): 278- 279.

17. Vadon, *Mythos*, 55-56.

18. “Reisenotizen des Hofgärtners H. Wendland in Central-Amerika,” *Hamburger Garten- und Blumenzeitung*, (1857): 362. Jäger means coincidentally a hunter in German.

19. Vadon, *Mythos*, 55.

20. Wilhelm Kalbreyer, “Kolumbianische Orchideen I,” *Möller’s Deutsche Gärtner-Zeitung*, no. 28 (July 8, 1899): 316.

21. Vadon, *Mythos*, 161-162. In the 19th century, several specialized gardening and horticultural magazines emerged, providing information on new technical horticultural and gardening discoveries, introductions, plant culture and care, biographies, expedition reports, and descriptions of collections. The journals were published by botanists, horticultural institutions, as well as nurseries and commercial gardeners, and some of them were published for almost a hundred years, such as the *Gardeners’ Chronicle* published from 1841 by Joseph Paxton and John Lindley.

22. Two of the most known and luxurious specialized volumes of the 19<sup>th</sup> century were *Reichenbachia: Orchids Illustrated and Described* and *Flore des Serres et des Jardins de l’Europe*. The first one was created by the German orchidologist Frederick Sander (1847-1920) and contains rich and life-size illustrations and descriptions of nearly two hundred orchids. *Flore des Serres* was founded by Louis van Houtte (1810-1876) and spanned 23 volumes and more than 2000 colored plates. Both contain German, English and French texts.

23. “Reisenotizen des Hofgärtners Herm. Wendland (Auszug aus den brieflichen Mittheilungen desselben in der H.Z. Schluß von Seite 516),” *Hamburger Garten- und Blumenzeitung*, (1857): 548.

24. Kalbreyer narrated about the political conditions in Colombia, Wilhelm Kalbreyer, “Kolumbianische Orchideen III,” *Möller’s Deutsche Gärtner-Zeitung*, no. 39 September, 1899): 450.

25. Vadon, *Mythos*, 103.

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31. Vadon, *Mythos*, 53.

32. Karafyllis, “Die Samenbank,” 95.

33. For example, Joseph Banks transported numerous living objects, mainly plants, to England, but most of the objects were already dead (or killed) when he collected them or did not survive the journey. The diversity of what he collected was divided between dead collections and living collections, e.g., herbarium and insect collections ended up in the British Museum, living plants in the RBG at Kew and in the Edinburgh Botanic Garden, Karafyllis, “Die Samenbank,” 90.

34. There are many texts in which the plants are referred like that. For example, the German Botanist and orchid specialist Rudolf Schlechter (1872-1925) expressed about the collection trip

from plant hunter Nicholas Funck in Venezuela: "Loaded with rich treasures Funck went from here across the Rio Zulia to Maracaibo and then started the journey home to Europe (...) The great and valuable yield, which he gathered during the next fifteen months, was unfortunately lost with the steamer from which it was to be shipped to Europe", Rudolf Schlechter, *Die Orchideenfloren der südamerikanischen Kordillerenstaaten – II. Colombia* (Berlin: Verlag des Repertoriums, 1920), 9.

35. See the reference and the illustrations of animal hunting, in particular jaguars, by Ottmann, *Der Orchideenjäger*, 81 and by Millican, *Travels and Adventures*, 186-187.

36. Justin Stagl, "Homo Collector: zur Anthropologie und Soziologie des Sammelns," in *Sammler – Bibliophile – Exzentriker*, ed. Aleida Assmann, Monika Gomille and Gabriele Rippl (Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 1998), 38.

37. Appadurai, *The social live of things*, 3-4.

38. Bénédicte Savoy and Robert Skwirbli, "„Beute“ – Anthologie und Bildatlas," interview by Katie Salié, *ZDF: Aspekte*, ZDF, May 13, 2021, video, 2:29, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RjoOTdxXmic>.

# Livia Flores, Landscapes and Cities Transformations

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## **ABSTRACT**

The article investigates the work of Livia Flores (Rio de Janeiro - Brazil, 1959) and its relation with cities' landscapes in their processes of transformation. Flores is an artist with an experimental poetics that is interested in the city and the relationship with margins. Operating through distinct territories and vocabularies, Livia Flores explores the relationship between margins and centers, proposing reverse landscapes by using mirrors or filming and photographing reflections of the city in the water, as we can see in works like "Inserção de retrovisão," 2002, "Livro Labirinto," 2007 and "Passa batido mas não despercebido/ Rastreamento do Rio Morto," 2004-2010. Displacements between different memory inscription regimes, such as dreams, texts, reused parquet flooring, books, and fabrics, point to changes in perspective and her engagement in showing the transitions in cities flows. She is interested in how landscapes move because of time and pollution processes, real estate speculation and economic exploitation, physical and social changes in and from urban settings, putting these images upside down or proposing different scales and angles.

## **KEYWORDS**

Livia Flores; Landscapes; Cities transformations; Contemporary Art; Brazilian Art.

Livia Flores (Rio de Janeiro, 1959) is a contemporary Brazilian artist who works as a professor and researcher. With consistent production since the 1980s, the artist has been participating in exhibitions in Brazil and abroad. She began her artistic training at the "Escolinha de Artes do Brasil" ("Brazil's Little Art School") and later attended the Escola Superior de Desenho Industrial ("Industrial Design Graduate School"), in Rio de Janeiro, the end of the 1970s, leaving for Germany in 1984, to which she traveled with a grant from the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, to enter the Düsseldorf Art Academy.

Her poetics is highly experimental and diverse, as the artist explores different media to address issues related to the contemporary city - regarding the relationship between the center and the margin - and their instabilities and precariousness. With works in drawing, installation, film, video, and photography, Flores activates different orders of vulnerabilities and focuses on the formation of the image, affirming her interest in the reverse and the negative. To confound the notion of a postcard, the artist uses mirrors, glass, and other strategies to deal with points of view that are not all obvious.

In her apprehension of the landscape as a composition, a framed construction, the French philosopher Anne Cauquelin thus defined this traditional pictorial genre as follows:

For the westerners that we are, the landscape is, in fact, precisely "of nature." The image, built on the illusion of perspective, is confused with what it would be the image of. Legitimate, the perspective is also called "artificial." Then, the transportation of the image to the original is legitimized, one matching the other. Even more: it would be the only possible image-reality. It would adhere perfectly to the concept of nature, with no distancing. The landscape is not a metaphor for nature, a way of evoking it; it is indeed nature itself. Here one could say: "How? If the landscape is not nature, what is it, then?" Therefore, speaking of a rhetorical construction (of an artifice, this time a linguistic one) about the landscape is a *lèse-majesté* crime. Nature-landscape: a single term, a single concept - to touch the landscape, shaping it or destroying it, is to touch nature itself. (Cauquelin, 2007, p.38-39).

For Cauquelin, the reduction to the limits of the frame allows the apprehension of nature as a painting project. Such a project is formed by a cultural arsenal that differentiates slightly between individuals and groups, while the elements (shapes of colored objects) and their syntax (symmetries and associations of elements) vary according to time and place (Cauquelin, Op. Cit. 2007, p. 26).

To researcher Maria Lúcia Bastos Kern, the urban landscape practiced in painting and photography:

it does not, in general, present the notion of amplitude or of total vision because the city spaces are multiple and fragmented and do not allow for the horizon line to be defined. In fact, they represent angles of view, in which there is an attempt to capture the speed and the processes of change that are established in it, without leaving aside formal questions. (Kern, 2011, p. 9).

It is in this sense that, distinguishing between the pictorial and photographic apprehension of the landscape, the author points out changes in the framing and gradation between the planes. The horizon line marks the natural and traditional landscape in its relationship with perspective and, consequently, with the succession of planes and the vanishing point. Photography, although it dialogues with painting through themes, compositions, and atmospheres of nature, differentiates itself through "the flattening of the planes and the definition of lines as structuring elements proper to its language" (Kern, Op. Cit. 2011, p. 2).

In works such as "Projeto Observador" ("Observer Project"), carried out in the city of Porto in 2001, and "Inserção em Retrovisão" ("Insertion of retro-vision"), carried out in Rio de Janeiro in 2002, Livia Flores stresses the idea of the landscape by offering other points of view, such as cutouts of the upside down city, originating from cracks, reflections, etc. In her works, mirrors reflect and project images but do not fixate or store them. In this way, they shuffle the relationship between the inside and the outside, in and out, near and far, center and periphery, presenting interesting distortions.

Following this direction, the artist explores overlapping images and unusual points of view.

The work "Inserção em retrovisão" from 2002 was selected for the 4th edition of the Prêmio Interferências Urbanas ("Urban Interventions Prize").<sup>1</sup> The proposal consisted of fifty rear mirrors stationed at different points in the Santa Teresa neighborhood in Rio de Janeiro to reflect landscape clippings "variable according to the point of view of the observer-passerby" (chronology in FLORES, 2012, p. 184). Slopes and staircases leading to the neighborhood have become privileged spaces for placing mirrors on the walls to make architecture and nature converge in their reflections. The pole that interrupts the view of the Pão de Açúcar ("Sugar Loaf") Mountain, the public lamp that occupies the centerpiece of the image, as well as the emphasis on the walls of the houses and the steps of the staircases, all of those underline the anti-monumental character of the city and the landscape listed by the artist.

Also of note is the exercise she proposes: instead of opting for satellite, technical, or high-resolution images, her interest is focused on a given precariousness that is a constituent part of the image - either because of the technology used or because of its non-fixation.

In cars, rearview mirrors help the driver's peripheral vision. By reducing blind spots, the driver can see areas behind and to the side of the vehicle, invisible to the naked eye. By bringing to passersby an instrument used by drivers in their cars, Flores welcomes different speeds and ways of traveling and perceiving the city. Despite choosing strategic points for the placement of the mirrors by the artist, the work "Inserção em retrovisão" ("Insertion of retro-vision") begins with the action of the spectator, who walks, wandering, going against the mirrors, which provides true "open-air cuts,"<sup>2</sup> and point out the vulnerability implied in the formation of this artwork.

In his book "Técnica, Espaço, Tempo" ("Technique, Space, Time"), the Brazilian geographer Milton Santos explains the differences in temporalities and rhythms that inhabit the city:

Can one speak of a single time for the city or a single regional time, as one would speak of a single universal time? Groups, institutions, and individuals live together but do not inhabit the same times. The territory is, in actuality, a superposition of engineering systems that have been dated differently, and are used, today according to different times. The different roads, streets, and public places are not traveled equally by all. The rhythms of each one – companies or people – are not the same. Perhaps it would be more correct to use the expression temporality here instead of the word *time*. (Santos, 1997, p. 45-46).

In the 2001 work, "Projeto Observador" ("Observer Project"), carried out during her artist residency at Ateliês da Lada<sup>3</sup>, in the city of Porto (Portugal), for three months, the artist transformed the studio space into a darkroom through the complete darkening of the environment. The residency was part of the "Squatters/Ocupações" project at the Serralves Museum, which took place in the same year. In the black vinyl glued to the windows, Flores made small openings, which allowed for inverted projections of the external landscape on the walls of the space. The number of holes, their diameter, and position determined the construction of the image, making it possible to perceive in real-time movements that took place outside: depending on the incidence of light on the landscape, the images projected on the walls of the studios varied in color and intensity, being visible only during the day.

On the occasion of the residency, the artist also made two films: "Douro" and "Ribeira." The first presents images of water flow from the Douro River, while the second captures images of the Ribeira neighborhood through cracks in windows, shop windows, and doors. The phrases "liquidation of all existence," "pass by," and "for sale," captured by Flores, point to the radical economic changes underway at that time in Portugal.

In the book cited above, Milton Santos addressed space, pointing to changes in the apprehension of this geographic category. According to the professor:

Space appears as a substrate that welcomes the new but resists change, keeping the vigor of the material and cultural heritage,

the strength of that which is created from within and resists, a quiet force that waits, vigilant, for the opportunity and possibility to rise. (Santos, Op. Cit., 1997, p. 37).

When approaching everyday life as the fifth dimension of space, the author stated that it is not enough to consider it as simple materiality or under the domain of necessity but as "an obligatory theater of action, that is, the domain of freedom" (Santos, Op. Cit., 1997, p. 39):

Space has gained a new dimension: the thickness, the depth of what happens, thanks to the enormous number and diversity of objects - that which is fixed -, of which that is formed today and also thanks to the exponential number of actions - that which flows across it. This is a new dimension of space, a true fifth dimension. (Santos, Op. Cit., 1997, p. 38).

Santos affirms space as something dynamic where materiality and human action come together: "a theater of flows with different levels, intensities, and orientations" (Santos Op. Cit., 1997, p. 53). From this perspective, space would be "the inseparable set of systems of natural or manufactured objects and systems of actions, deliberate or not" (Santos, Op.Cit., 1997, p. 49). At each epoch, new actions and objects modify space, both formally and substantially.

In this sense, Livia Flores' approach to the crucial moment Portugal was going through at the beginning of the 21st century is of interest. By recording the phrases that enunciate the availability of spaces for sale and lease in the Ribeira neighborhood in Porto, the artist addresses the economic, social, and spatial transformations of this region of the city.

Pointing in the same direction, Milton Santos points out how the landscape, as one of the components of space, is a palimpsest<sup>4</sup>. It is the "result of an accumulation, in which some constructions remain intact or modified, while others disappear to give way to new buildings. Through this process, that which is before us is always a landscape and a space, in the same way that the transformations of a language take place through a process of



suppression or exclusion, in which the substitutions correspond to the innovations" (Santos, Op. Cit., 1997, pp. 66-67).

In addition to her interest in image formation processes (in this case, the camera obscura), Livia Flores focuses on the specific conditions of the neighborhood in which the Ateliês da Lada, the place of her artistic residency, is located. Milton Santos defined the *place* as "the union of men through cooperation in difference" (Santos, Op. Cit., 1997, p. 36) and as an "area of the solidarity happening" (Santos in Leite (org.), 2007, p. 163) in the sense of them being interdependent actions:

Define the place as the extension of the homogeneous happening or the solidary happening and that which is characterized by two types of constitution: one is the territorial configuration itself, the other is the norm, the organization, the regulatory regimes. The place, the region, is no longer the result of an organic solidarity, but of a regulated or organizational solidarity (Santos, Op. Cit., 1997, p. 36-37).

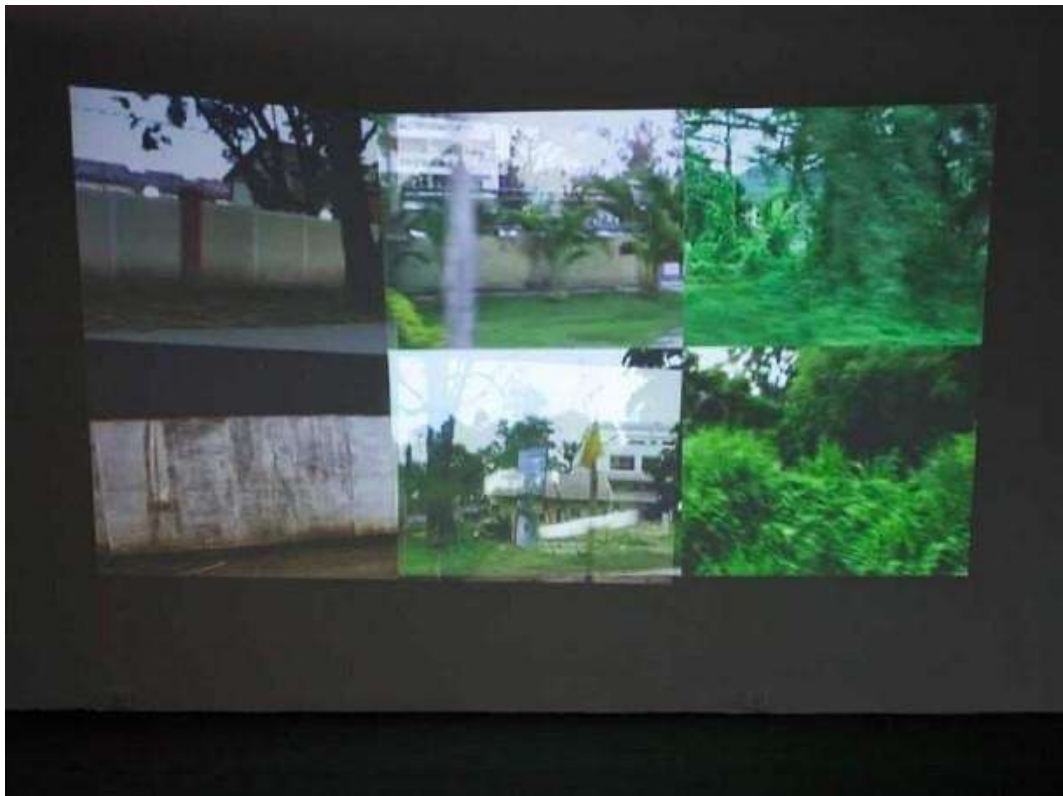
The place is the meeting between latent *possibilities* and preexisting or created *opportunities*. These limit the realization of occasions. (Santos, Op. Cit., 1997, p. 44).

In an interview with Revista Concinnitas (Concinnitas Journal), Livia Flores stressed her interest in horizontal displacements around the city, noting that:

in fact, the movements that I usually make, that I like to make, are horizontal displacements, and maybe they happen in search of a point of view that is kind of outside the city. Peripheral displacements. The Pão de Açúcar, a postcard, but only if it is inverted, only upside down. (Flores, 2019, p. 10).

From this perspective, another work that we are interested in discussing is entitled "Passa batido mas não despercebido" ("Passes Beaten But Not Unnoticed"), from 2004-2010. The artist carried out a kind of sweeping of the Rio Morto/ Dead River Road, in Vargem Grande, a neighborhood in the west zone of Rio de Janeiro, in a straightforward process

of transformation. Traveling along the route with two video cameras attached to the sides of the car, Flores tracked the road, providing two viewpoints: one facing the Rio Morto Canal and the other facing the buildings. Assembling the work in different windows, the artist exhibited it at the Tempo-Matéria ("Time-Matter") group show. Held at MAC/ Niterói in 2010, the video installation showed the round-trip routes along the length of the road over time. The title of the work comes from graffiti written on the path itself, which the artist also partially traversed on foot so that it would be possible to apprehend certain details.



**Fig. 1.** Passa batido mas não despercebido ("Passes Beaten But Not Unnoticed"), 2004-2010, Video Installation, 2010. Photo by Pat Kilgore. MAC/ Niterói.

In the exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art, the photographs were mounted on a long (5.90 meters) length in order to suggest a tracking shot, which the spectator will travel with his body. In addition, several small photos

were mounted to suggest a continuity/fluidity of the approached space. However, as the images were produced at different times and from different points of view, making them fit became arduous. The artist tries to level them with the horizon line as if putting together a puzzle from a fragment of her hometown.



**Fig. 2.** Passa batido mas não despercebido (“Passes Beaten But Not Unnoticed”), 2010. Photographic print, 22 x 590 cm, 2010. Photography by Pat Kilgore. MAC/ Niterói.

Nevertheless, while in traditional puzzles, we have tourist attractions or spectacular landscapes, Livia Flores confronts the landscape without giving it a magnanimous character. The two versions of "Puzzlepolis," which she created in partnership with the artist Clóvis Aparecido dos Santos<sup>5</sup> in 2002 and 2004, present a puzzle of the city based on different possibilities, configurations, and fittings. In both cases, the city appears as a mirage, a place of projection and reflection of images. The photographs of "Passa batido mas não despercebido" suggest continuity and a panoramic view over the long stretch of the Rio Morto Road. It is not, however, a panoramic, 180-degree photograph.

In her text "Notas sobre a (Fotografia das sombras ready-mades)" ("Notes on a (Photography of ready-made shadows)"), the artist defined photography as such: "unlike the manual trace, inscription-trail that separates the human from the mechanical" (FLORES, 2009, p. 20). This is how the proposed tracking ends up far from obvious. What the artist presents us with are versions of everyday paths, almost intimate relationships, and

inscriptions-traces of this road traveled at different times and from different points of view.

Maria Lúcia Bastos Kern introduced, in her text "História e Arte: as invenções da paisagem" ("History and Art: the inventions of the landscape"), the panorama containing illusionist representations of landscapes that tried to "introduce the countryside to the city" (Kern, Op. Cit. 2011, p. 6). In her words, the panoramas:

whose 360-degree circular screens provide the viewer with ample and infinite views of still images, until then impossible to enjoy. The viewer wanders like a flaneur, moving from one space to another in the landscape, contemplating it and discovering new phenomena or angles to be observed, but within a closed space that separates their gaze from the city. Unlike easel painting, in which the viewer penetrates the landscape at a glance, the panorama requires the displacement of the body in space. The large and elevated axes of circulation allow the wandering of the gaze from above (BEUVELET, 2008) over the landscape or over the representations of urban panoramas, without setting limits in any direction. (Kern, Op. Cit., 2011, p. 6).

The professor also points out that the car rescues the perception of the landscape from the front and in a panoramic way but does not allow a more detailed look. Here, we take up Livia Flores' option of combining different speeds: those of the route on foot and those by car. The artist scans the road by car and, through videos, she captures everything that enters the frame, as the cameras are fixed to the sides of the vehicle. From the windows that make up the work, however, there comes a type of monotony in the rhythm at which the vehicle traverses the landscape. In the videos, occasionally cyclists, cars, and buses cross the frame, but reliefs, green areas, some houses, and a few under-construction buildings prevail.

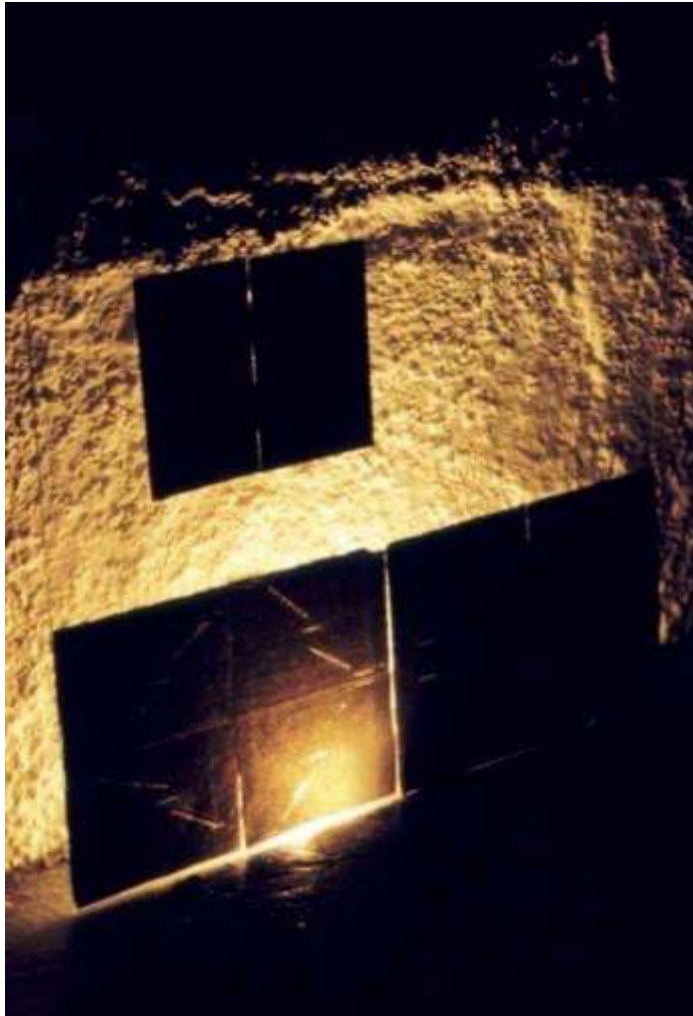
In the photographs, however, Flores captures that which catches her attention. According to her, there would be a kind of "observation training, so you walk and notice things" (FLORES, Op. Cit., 2019, p. 15). In her own words: "(...) time is important to allow time for repetitions to happen, for differences

to be perceived, I think this work is very emblematic of that. The same path and the differences, which is what interests me, the events, the micro-events on this same path" (Flores, Op. Cit., 2019, p. 15). In these photographs, we can see a dress hanging on the fence next to a tree, the location of a watchman, and other intensity marks.

In his previously mentioned book, Milton Santos addresses the differences in rhythms and mobility in the city:

Those who, in the city, have mobility – and can walk around and scrutinize it – end up seeing little of the city and the world. Their communion with images, often prefabricated, is their downfall. (...) The "slow" men, in turn, for whom these images are mirages, cannot be in sync for too long with this perverse imaginary and end up discovering the fables. (Santos, Op. Cit., 1997, p. 84).

In the carbon paper drawings from 2000, entitled "RODOVIÁRIA - RUA DO HOTEL SEM PASSADO – CENTRO" ("BUS STATION - STREET OF THE HOTEL WITHOUT A PAST-DOWNTOWN"), the artist presented a kind of dream-like cartography of the city. More than indications of precise neighborhoods, the three locations suggest desolate scenarios, melancholic images, and urban mirages. As fragments, the drawings provide clues for the reconstitution of a path. This fictional map, the theme for the artist's solo exhibition at the Espaço Agora-Capacete, in Rio de Janeiro in 2000, was mounted directly at floor level, between two sheets of glass. Illuminated by low-power lamps (7w), the carbon paper drawings were perforated by the impact of the typewriter and handwriting gestures, confirming their appearance in a fragile and precarious way, on the edge of (in)visibility. In the text for the aforementioned exhibition, entitled "Super," Ricardo Basbaum stated that it was "an investigation of the surroundings, the places Flores goes through, the landscape around her" (Basbaum in Flores, Op. Cit., 2012, p. 96).



**Fig. 3.** Rodoviária - Rua do Hotel sem passado - Centro ("Bus Station - Street of the Hotel without a Past - Downtown"), 2000. Drawings on carbon paper, glass and 7-watt bulb. Photography by Wilton Montenegro.

It is interesting to resume the approximation that Cauquelin and Kern make between the beginnings of landscaping and cartographic representations as modern phenomena. For the landscape made it possible for a man to "unveil space and suggest to him the feeling of greater control over his world, at a time when cartography and other advances in the field of science collaborate for the success of maritime expeditions and the discoveries of new territories" (KERN, Op. Cit., 2011, p. 1). Also Milton Santos, when thinking about the different cartographic representations, attests in an interview that

"the world map is lots [sic], but the world is one" (Santos in Leite(org.), 2007, p. 81).

Basbaum, when referring to the film works from the 2000 exhibition, used the terms "moving landscape" and "landscape-passage / passing," evoking the moving images produced by the artist, fruit of her displacements. And it is in this way that we can point out the friction undertaken by Livia Flores regarding the idea of a postcard since the presented clippings of the landscape are improbable and not at all obvious.



**Fig. 4.** 12.04.2008 ("04.12.2008"). Installation with light bulbs and cables. Approximately 25 x 1,5 M. Morro da Conceição, Rio de Janeiro. Photo by Wilton Montenegro.

The installation *12.04.2008* uses wires and light bulbs to say the phrase "Feliz Ano Novo" ("Happy New Year"). The work, exhibited at the event "Intervenções Artísticas no Morro da Conceição" ("Artistic Interventions on the Morro da Conceição") in 2008, remained lit throughout the weekend, announcing a party, or an extemporaneous renovation. Wilton Montenegro's

photo in plongé, with the city in the background (or maybe below?), highlights the idea of a belvedere with a privileged view of the city center, mixing temporalities and geographies. Despite the installation's length of 25 meters, what catches the eye is the lighting improvised workaround, achieved through the use of yellow light bulbs appropriated for domestic usage. The work suggests some sort of breakdown in the order of time or discourse, such as what is proposed by Hans Georg-Gadamer in his essay "The relevance of the beautiful. Art as play, symbol, and festival". In the aforementioned text, the German philosopher attested that the temporality of the party is of a different order since celebrating stops time. The non-pragmatic character of the party proposed by Livia Flores' extemporaneous celebration, thus, explores an out-of-order time.

In "Livro Labirinto" ("Labyrinth Book"), from 2007, the artist proposed a radical inversion of the point of view. Formed by a wooden structure with hinges, mirrors, and serigraphic printing, the book allows the viewer-reader to see himself in the reflection while their surroundings are simultaneously reflected. The mirrors contain impressions that suggest the floorplan of an apartment but end up acting as delimitations of the reflective surface: the space within the space, within the space.

In the photographs by Wilton Montenegro printed in the book "Livia Flores" (Flores, Op. Cit., 2012, p. 158), the mirrored surface of the book (both a reflection and a "bouncing"), is taken to stroll through the city, the same as in the records of the "Livro da Criação" ("Creation Book"), which Lygia Pape produced in 1959-1960. In both cases, the books leave the shelves or the collection of the libraries' environment to reach the world. Another relationship between these two artists can be established through their interests in urban spaces: Livia Flores welcomes the complexity of the world in her tracking and scanning, while Lygia Pape sees herself as a spider, weaving webs in the city with her car.

"Rio Morto" ("Dead River"), from 2000, starts from a mirror image: the film runs parallel to a watercourse on whose surface the image of the urban occupation that rises to its banks is mirrored, inverted. The Rio Morto Canal, located in Vargem Grande, Rio de Janeiro, acts as a surface that reflects,



upside down, the landscape of its surroundings. The tracking shot points out the artist's displacement as she travels the car's length and the variations of this landscape that is being transformed.



**Fig. 5.** Labyrinth Book, 2007. Silkscreen on mirror, wood and hinges, 20 x 30,5 x 1 cm. Photography by Wilton Montenegro.

As a professor, the artist develops "Desilha," - a research project on art and the city at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro. In the text she published with Michelle Sommer, a collaborator on the project, Flores defined it this way:

At the origin of the DESILHA project is the teaching practice along the line of research in Visual Languages of the Master and Doctorate Program in Visual Arts (UFRJ), aimed at the theoretical-practical training of contemporary artists. Considering that the insular paradigm deeply anchors the notion of work in art under the sign of the subject-author, the frame, and the white cube/black box, we propose to convoke artistic creation to the collective debate, placing it in the

spotlight in order to provoke a state of friction with its surroundings. During the courses taught since 2014 by Livia Flores and Ronald Duarte (...) and (...) from 2017, with the participation of (...) Michelle Sommer, we have gotten acquainted with the warehouse where we work, a mix of studio, classroom and exhibition hall, but also with the university, the island, and the city, through displacements between different positions and through the proposal of actions, transforming the word "desilha" into a verb and an invitation to move beyond the demarcated perimeters of art and its formal education (Flores & Sommer, 2019, p. 226).

Since 2014, the platform has been carrying out a series of actions, such as postgraduate courses, the organization of seminars and other academic meetings, exhibitions, and other interventions, in addition to the publication of "Cadernos Desilha" ("Desilha Notebooks"). It has also been carrying out what the authors call "crossings," whose investigative and artistic proposals have been moved to the territories of Maré, Vila Autódromo, Aldeia Maracanã, and the city center. Conceived starting from the university city, the "Fundão" Island, and its surroundings, the project has been spilling over to other neighborhoods in Rio de Janeiro, intervening poetically in varied spaces.

The actions proposed by the DESILHA platform discuss citizenship and activism, they encompass perceptions about multiculturalism and interculturality in the city and take the urban space as an impetus for the construction of narratives and actions, adding the place of the university to the immediate social context of the city. For, perhaps, new and other navigations, in a possible future, to come. (Flores & Sommer, Op. Cit., 2019, p. 232)

### **Final Considerations**

If we recover the definition proposed by the artist of photography as inscription-trail, we can relate it to her interest in engraving, present since the beginning of her artistic training at the Escolinha de Artes do Brasil. From this, we also emphasize her focus on other printing forms, including her

experiences with cinema (and originating from there also the inversions and mirrorings, as well as the relationships between positive and negative, light and darkness), present in the works discussed in this text. We were also interested in considering Livia Flores' focus on mobility, present in the referred works when she approached the different forms and rhythms with which the city is traversed and perceived.

This is how the variations in the images proposed by Flores point to subversions of given displacements, giving new meaning to the artist's pathways in her hometown and other places she passes through. Works like "Passa batido, mas não despercebido," "Rio Morto," and "Rodoviária – Hotel sem passado – Centro" invert obvious paths, establishing other maps. And it is in this way that, more than pathways, what Livia Flores' works suggest are detours, poetic crossings of spaces, times, subjects, and images.

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### Endnotes

1. [https://www.ufrgs.br/escultura/fsm/jornal/santa\\_teresa.htm](https://www.ufrgs.br/escultura/fsm/jornal/santa_teresa.htm)
2. Expression used by Tania Rivera in her text “O Belo e o ínfimo” (“The beautiful and the tiniest”), published in the book *Livia Flores* (RIVERA in FLORES, 2012, p. 51).
3. <https://inresidenceporto.pt/pt/espaco/polo-i-ateliers-da-lada-ateliers-da-lada/>
4. In the definition of the Aulete Digital dictionary, the palimpsest is understood as “Parchment or papyrus whose manuscript has been scraped to be replaced by a new text [Underneath this, it has sometimes been possible to make the previous characters reappear by means of special techniques]”. Available at: <https://www.aulete.com.br/palimpsesto>. Accessed on 11/01/22 at 13:20h
5. For a more in-depth analysis of Puzzleópolis, see the author’s text entitled “A precariedade das imagens: Clovis Aparecido dos Santos, Judith Butler e Livia Flores” (“The precariousness of images: Clovis Aparecido dos Santos, Judith Butler and Livia Flores”, available at: <http://www.cbha.art.br/coloquios/2020/anais/pdf/Fernanda%20Pequeno.pdf>

# The Ground Beneath our Feet: Soils, Souls, Seeds

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## **ABSTRACT**

The following text draws from several contributions to the TETI Press publication *Mobile Soils*, paying particular attention to the iterations of artistic research and how ‘research as practice’ can channel engaged formulations to negotiate the increasingly slippery grounds beneath our feet, reflecting on their capacity to mediate environmental issues, to channel *polyphonic* voices emanating from past and present grounds, as well as to participate and *to engage* in their future *sowings*. Furthermore, this specific case study offers an opportunity to reflect on an art historical development – artistic research – while considering its capacity to inspire art historical practices in their form and engagement with the world, past, and future.

## **KEYWORDS**

Mobile Soils; Artistic Research; Globalisation; Polyphony; Artist Publication.



**Fig. 1.** Mobile Soils, TETI Press, 2021

Flat, uneven, rocky, rolling, sandy, mushy, asphalt and tar covered, the ground on which humanity treads upon, confides, anchors itself, departs from and abandons, shares and disputes with other living entities, is the object in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century of a renewed and anxious globalized attention: no mere plot of property, jealously guarded memories, the ground appears to be always mobile, traveling and touring with many passengers on board, and yet could depart for mutations unanticipated by its self-appointed pilots. In 2018, the TETI Group (for Textures and Experiences of Trans-Industriality) organized a series of workshops in Zurich, Switzerland, on the topic of soil, as part of an interdisciplinary artistic research agenda focusing on the changing representations of nature in an increasingly urbanized world. We were particularly interested in considering passages between the worlds of botany and the matrix of urban transformation that are construction sites, seen as receptacles of migrating plants, ephemeral bodies, and potential ideas. Our

discussions have come to fruition in the form of a publication entitled *Mobile Soils*, featuring texts by artists, gardeners, historians, art historians, architects, environmental scientists, and engineers.<sup>1</sup> In the following text, I want to draw from several contributions in *Mobile Soils*, paying particular attention to the iterations of artistic research and how ‘research as practice’ can channel engaged formulations to negotiate the increasingly slippery grounds beneath our feet, reflecting on their capacity to mediate environmental issues, to channel *polyphonic* voices emanating from past and present grounds, as well as to participate and *to engage* in their future *sowings*. Furthermore, this specific case study offers an opportunity to reflect on an art historical development – artistic research – while considering its capacity to inspire art historical practices in their form and engagement with the world, past, and future.

### 1. Mobile Soils

On the shores of lake Zurich at the school for applied science in Wädenswil (ZHAW),<sup>2</sup> an installation entitled *Erdreich, the treasure beneath our feet*, half pedagogical display, half earthwork, was recently added to the school’s public gardens (2018). The result of a collaboration between the artist Monica Ursina Jäger and scientists from the Zurcher Hochschule für Angewandete Wissenschaften, *Erdreich* brings visitors in direct visual contact with the ‘treasures beneath our feet’. As one descends into the tunnel-shaped structure, window panels open into the soil, where insects, water and worms, mushrooms, and roots mingle in the dark, usually unseen by human eyes. The display aims to showcase the preciousness of the earth’s soil as a natural resource, constituted over thousands of years and not easily replaceable.

In her discussion of *Erdreich* that opens the TETI Press *Mobile Soils* publication, Monica Ursina Jäger underlines four qualities she sees as being triggered by her piece: to make soil *visible*, the *politics* of soils, *caring* for soil, leading to *being* soil.<sup>3</sup>

The work can be seen in the art historical tradition of land and environmental art, with its corridor leading into the ground, immersing the visitor into the textures of living organisms that is the soil. It is a landscape to

tread on, displaying a temporality so often removed from the sight of our industrialized society – ‘the world we live from’ to refer to Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel’s evocation of the modern condition and conundrum in *Critical Zones. The science and politics of landing on earth*, as opposed to ‘the world we live in’, characterized by the illusionary entrapping into opaque surfaces of tar and concrete.<sup>4</sup> Caring for soil based on understanding it as a living ecosystem leads to a possible embrace of deep time, seen as a vector for a changed relationship with the earth.

Thus the work offers ‘visible evidence’, to refer to the eponymous conference on documentary practice and studies,<sup>5</sup> to open the eyes of the visitors to the rich and circulating diversity below the ground; it has a pedagogical dimension cast in an open-air museum. The museological aspect catches some of its interplay as an artwork, made in close relation with scientific actors and research: it can be seen as a prolific characteristic incorporation of scientific knowledge into an aesthetic experience, a route significantly at the heart of contemporary discussions regarding the modalities of establishing meaningful artistic research.<sup>6</sup> But it can also be seen the other way around, using artistic modes of iteration to make visible scientific discourses and knowledge obliterated by antagonist politics.

This sense of *revelation* and the role of aesthetics in the public sphere is a potent drive behind *Field to palette. Dialogues on soil and art in the Anthropocene* edited by Alexandra Toland, Jay Stratton Noller, and Gerd Wessolek.<sup>7</sup> The volume combines texts by scientists and artists exploring ‘boundary objects’, referring to a term coined by the Science Technology Society to describe “conceptual entities that bridge different understandings of information by different user groups.”<sup>8</sup> On that bridge, artistic practices are entrusted with the task of *translating* the scientifically sound *functions* of soils into vernacular parlance: biomass production means sustenance, habitat means home, storage function means receptacle, buffering and filtering means transformation, platform means stabilizer, bio infrastructure means communities.<sup>9</sup>

In the equally voluminous collective endeavor that is *Critical zones. The science and politics of landing on earth*, edited and masterminded by



Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel, the function of art in our time of increased environmental pressure is drawn from polymath Alexander van Humboldt,<sup>10</sup> who, in true nineteenth-century fashion, liked to sketch the occasional drawing. Our problems are entangled, the local fused with the global, and artistic practices have a role to play: “changes in cosmology cannot be registered without changes in *representation*.”<sup>11</sup> In a downbeat version of Marshall McLuhan’s prophetic assignments,<sup>12</sup> the artist’s mission in this bleak new world is to attune our senses: “today, much as in other earth-shaking periods, we need *aesthetics*, defined as what renders one sensitive to the existence of other ways of life. Just as politicians are supposed to hear voices previously unheard and scientists to become attuned to phenomena so far invisible, artists are challenged to render us sensitive to the shape of things to come.”<sup>13</sup>

Yet, besides this role as a mediator, the artist can also size the tools at his hands to exert *transformation*. This was one of the injunctions actively pursued by Joseph Beuys, working at the time of rising ecological activism and concerns regarding the impact of industrial societies on our earthly habitat, vocally phrased by the Club of Rome 1972 manifesto *Limits to growth*.<sup>14</sup> With regards to the art and science dialogue, his *Barraque D Dull Odde*, now permanently installed at the Krefeld Museum, Germany, subtitled *working place of a scientist/artist*, consists of shelves and a working desk as can be found in a back garden shed, where its occupant not solely plots, but hammers, casts, plants the world in flux.

At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the digital revolution that was in the making in the 1970s is booming into so many second lives, complexifying the set of tools necessary for the artist to take part in the cosmological conversation. Establishing a bridge between soil and screen can become critical; such connections as they pertain to the earth are explored by Laurie Dall’Ava, who combines in her series *Les terres élémentales* (2019) photographs of micro-organisms and volcano-sites, images from anthropological archives, with objects such as ‘ritual arches’.<sup>15</sup>



**Fig. 2.**  
Laurie  
Dall'Ava,  
*SYMBIOSIS*  
80x600cm,  
Inkjet print,  
2021

Similarly, in *De soufre et d'azote*, lists of volcanoes throughout the globe are juxtaposed with photographs of shamanic practices, both evocative as Victor Mazières comments, of an ancestral connection to immemorial times, human, and non-human, completed by rural objects such as a bull's nerve, a wooden tub, oxidized tools.<sup>16</sup> The artist conducted several archival research in South America, particularly in Brazil, Bolivia, and Peru, including at the Centro de la Imagen in Lima, from which many of the incantatory images come. They form a body of 'resistance' to modern erasure, outlining a possible resurgence and stabilization. Furthermore, if distant times are juxtaposed, remote spaces are also brought into connection. This is evident in the volcanic references, from Bayuda to Sao Tome, from la morne aux Diable to Ixtepeque, but also through the ready-made objects which come from the artist's own collection and her rural roots in southwestern France.

Additionally, besides photographs and objects, sound also plays an important role in many of Dall'Ava's display through, for example, the inclusion of archival recordings of shamanic incantations. The incanted polyphonic melodies stemming from the ground constitute a significant sensory route that artistic research can attune, channel, and embark upon.

## **2. Polyphonic Chora**

In the National Archaeology Museum of Ireland in Dublin, amongst the many findings excavated from the Hibernian peninsula, carved stones and golden hoards testifying to a network of exchange spread across the European continent and seas, a gallery speaks more forcefully to the resurgence, in these lands, of the trodden upon the earth: the so-called 'bog bodies'. These are human remains millennia-old – the Cashel Man is dated from 2000 BC – which have been preserved in the characteristic Irish peatlands, so praised nowadays for their capacity to entrap carbon. The bodies are incomplete – a head and torso, torso and arms – fragments of their former selves, dried steady, and of a plum and leather dark hue miraculously adorned by a hair or two. The Derry poet Seamus Heaney gave voice to these sacrificial bodies that refuse to let go and continue to speak beyond the grave. In the 1975 collection

*North*<sup>17</sup> – also compiled in the collection *Opened ground poems 1966-1996*,<sup>18</sup> Heaney conjures the vision of *the Grauballe Man*: “As if he had been poured/ in tar he lies/on a pillow of turf/ and seems to weep/ the black river of himself.”<sup>19</sup> Tellingly and fittingly perhaps, it is to a translation of the book six of the Aeneid, in which the Trojan prince descends under the earth to see his father Anchises, that Heaney was working at the time of his death, posthumously published in 2016. At the outset of the sixth book, Aeneas visits the Sybil of Cumae to be granted descent into the earth; she admonishes:

Talibus orabat dictis arasque tenebat,  
Cum sic orsa loqui vates : ‘ sate sanguine divum,  
Tros Anchisiade, facilis descensus Averno :  
Noctes atque dies patet atri ianua Ditis ;  
Sed revocare gradum superasque evadere ad auras,  
Hoc opus, hic labor est...’<sup>20</sup>

To visit the souls of the departed, to salute them once more, but also to bring back auspices, which in Virgil’s time as Augustus rose to power, including a celebration of Rome’s achievements to his days, depicted at the end of the sixth book as Anchises describes to his son “the future glory of the Trojan race, Descendants due to be born in Italia, Souls who in time will make our name illustrious – I speak of them to reveal your destiny to you.”<sup>201</sup>

In this vein, *Tunnels* and *Hades* were the main protagonists of the day study organized by TETI Group in September 2019 at Zürich Hochschule der Künste, which used another iconic Greco-Roman tale to reflect on the chorus of voices emanating from the ground: that of Orpheus and Eurydice, as narrated in Ovid’s *Metamorphosis*, and in which the musician descends to the underworld in a doomed attempt to retrieve his beloved wife. The convening took the Ovidian tale as a departing point, mixed with its revisitation by the Indian writer Salman Rushdie in his 1999 novel *The ground beneath her feet*. In Rushdie’s piece, the narrative is set in the second half of the Twentieth century, in the matrix of the popular music industry globally connecting Bombay to New York, London, and Mexico. The sound of the soil is plural and decentered on a spinning planet. Nevertheless, the urge to anchor our lives

and dead remains a strong incentive to make sense of such spiraling dizziness.

Hence, funeral rites that connect Ovid, Heaney, and Rushdie, are explored in *Mobile Soils* by Rafael Newman and Caroline Wiedmer in a critical and poetic text focusing on the *Spitz*, a small piece of land in Wiedmer's home village in the Emmental region in Switzerland, still owned by the family.<sup>21</sup> There, ashes of the deceased, human and non-human (the family pets), are buried – if in passing, for the economics of death in Switzerland only grant a temporary resting place before the necessary repurposing of the busy underground. The *Spitz* is a multilayered slice of soil, a material resting place rich of symbolic personal, and collective attachments tied to a fabric of identity evolving within the particular web of socio-political regulations inherited from Swiss history.

Artist Jan Van Oordt on the other hand, goes to meet in person the non-human inhabitants of the soil, in a twist on Lewis Carroll's tale entitled "the Hawhum panel".<sup>22</sup> At the outset, the narrator wakes up in a barn, which he has been refurbishing. To give some context to this opening, one should know that with some friends, van Oordt has bought a former auberge in the Swiss Jura, and recently set up an artist residency in a smaller summer house located up the hill. The tools of reconstruction are at the narrator's side, but the sound that woke him up, as the reader follows his stream of consciousness, is that of a mouse who calls out to him: isn't it time he realized the havoc he is creating out there? His new proposed library has demolished the mouse's favorite reading spot. There ensues a conversation, and a proper invitation to visit the tunnels brimming with life under the cottage: in fact a party is in preparation.

Such a conversation with the non-human inhabitants of the underground, parallels the artist's multimedia work, where the voicing of the unheard mirrors its enhanced visibility. It must also be understood within the collective project that is *La Dépendance*, which since 2018 welcomes artists who engage with rurality and socio-natures through the lenses of the Jura and the town of St-Imier. As such, the circular saw, the flat crowbar and the carpenter's hammer are material instruments in the same vein as the

residence. Samuel Bianchini in an essay entitled ‘towards organogenesis’ reflecting on the instrumental approach developed in artistic research as part of his Ensad lab in Paris, underlines the plural uses of the term, which encompasses both musical instruments – the Lyra of Orpheus – and the scientist laboratory tools.<sup>23</sup>



**Fig. 3.** Jan Van Oordt, diaprojection, *Wasser im Wasser*, in situ film screening at the SAE Greenhouse Lab, March 2022, as part of the first Mobile Soils Dinner – underground, surrounding installation by Manon Briod & Mathieu Pochon

As to the design of the instrument, in post-Duchampian ages the occasion will command the conception, a point casually underlined by David Antin in one of his talk piece featured in *What it means to be avant-garde*:

“and if you have to invent something new to do the work at hand you will but not if you have a ready-made that will work and is close at hand and you want to get on with the rest of the business”<sup>24</sup>

### 3. Hybrid sowing

Hence tools can help us channel and hear the voices in the ground that bind us consciously or unconsciously to the past, that might remind humanity of its animality, just as it morphes more resolutely than ever into a set of hybrid futures. In that respect, the ground can be considered in terms of its *potentiality*. Naturally, critical economic and political theories have long scrutinized the entrepreneurial perspective on the soil in terms of potential value-making, cast under the spell of the *plantationocene*,<sup>25</sup> or violently locked into a cycle of *implosion-explosion*.<sup>26</sup> To consider the shape of things, prospective architects, may use models. Models are not mere reductions, lesser entities of the structures to come, but also a matrix containing the future. In the garden, the gardener works with seeds, planning and anticipating the shape of things to come. The work involves a material basis, the generative presence of seeds, as well as the tools needed to accompany the growth of plants, at which point we see the storytelling, the narrative, order the trajectory of things to be. *Fiction* becomes an agent in world-making.

The state of in-between, the investment in the stage of potentiality, is captured in Jacques Abeille’s novel *Les jardins statuaries* (1982), which describes the visit of a traveler to the country of statuary gardens.<sup>27</sup> There, the land secretes anthropomorphic statues, which are looked after by gardeners, from embryonic nascent shoots to full bloom. The process is carefully supervised by the gardeners, who do not know of the particular nature of the growing statues, but monitor, select, trim, and guide their development. At the edge of this country, however, a domain left in semi-abandon has turned

into a monstrous site. There, the statues gone wild turn into dangerous untamed protuberances.

The speculative confrontation between organic lives, sculptural concretion, and the transitionality of building sites is at the heart of the series of sculptures, *Grands travaux urbains*, by Anne-Laure Franchette.

**Fig. 4**  
Anne-Laure Franchette, *Grands travaux urbains*, in situ installation in the garden of La Becque, Résidence d'artistes, La tour de Peilz, Switzerland, 2021, as part of *An Hommage to Derek Jarman III*, photo @ Manon Briod, La Becque)



The series of sculptures combine material attention to botanic circulation, with a symbolic representation of our modes of categorizing, ideas as much as people, and knowledge as much as living beings. The pieces



are made of dried plants cast in resin, which are positioned in metallic structures used typically as signalization structures on building sites.<sup>28</sup> The plants are collected on-site, where the pieces are to be shown, and the artist searches specifically for the *mauvaise herbes*, wild plants growing at the edge of the garden, in the cracks of concrete in the city, embracing an *éloge des vagabondes* to refer to the work of Gilles Clément.<sup>29</sup> The piece also juxtaposes the garden with the building site; on the one hand, building sites are particular spaces, posited for a time in an in-between, between things that were and things to come; in this suspended realm, Unkraüt and invasive species, botanical and animal, find a momentary harbor, a biodiversity which shies away from a polished monolithic future. On the other hand, the work suggests the garden as a building site, the art of the garden becomes the '*art du chantier*', to point to the 2018 exhibition at the *cit  de l'architecture* in Paris, which drew significant parallels between building sites and the artists' studios as spaces where things take shape.<sup>30</sup>

The works were on display in 2021 in the gardens of La Becque, *r sidence d'artistes*, in La Tour sur Peilz on lake Lemman in Switzerland, as part of Modern Nature III, curated by Elise Lammer, revisiting the garden and legacies of the late Derek Jarman.<sup>31</sup> In the 1980s, the filmmaker, retreated to a cottage on the southeastern coast of England, as he fought illness. His garden caught between raw nature and the shadows of the nearby nuclear station, espoused *modern nature*, also the title of his journal later published.<sup>32</sup> The third part of the program, designed at la Becque, looked in particular at the impact of the HIV crisis, additionally reflecting in the time of a global pandemic on questions of community and isolation in relation to health concerns and control.

The circulation of plants and seeds envisioned as a receptacle of temporal and spatial circulations, is also explored by artist Uriel Orlow in a number of research-based works that capture the power relations inherited from the extension of global routes and European colonial expansion, while suggesting alternate modes of apprehending and constructing our societies and environments. His residency at the Laboratoires d'Aubervilliers in France in 2017-2018 led to an enquiry into the daily lives of the '*mar chers*', the fruit

and vegetable sellers in the city, in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, binding local consumption and labour, with the not so distant French colonial dominions.<sup>33</sup> Similarly, his series *Theatrum botanicum* (2016-) puts plants at the center, agents of history in an exploration of colonial ties in South Africa, which has taken the form – amongst others – of an indigenous botanical dictionary, typically presented through a sound installation, to replace the overarching imposition of Latin nominations and European based botanical categorization.

Such an investigation of botanical transformation as informed by and shaping global encounters is also strikingly at play in Maria Thereza Alves's *Seeds of change* (1999-2007), a work that looks at ship ballasts, in their function as repositories of dormant seeds, capable of germinating years after their voyage. The piece offers a springboard to consider the present legacies and challenges of globally interconnected histories. The work was shown in a number of European ports, including Liverpool and Bristol, which were heavily connected to the triangular trade, as well as Antwerp and Marseille, France's so-called 'gateway to the orient'.

For the Mobile Soils Publication, Mexican Swiss-based artist Paloma Ayala wrote a text that combines these different layers of *potentialities*, symbolically and materially carried by *seeds*.<sup>34</sup> Its title, *Conversations between epizoochory* alludes to the "inadvertent carrying by animals of dispersal units" associated with seed dispersals. The texts take the form of a playwright or script. The scene takes place near Matamoros, by the US-Mexico border traced by the Rio Bravo, Rio Grande river, from which the artist originates. Three figures, Araceli, Cande, and Wina, are eating Guamuchil pods. Cande explains the purpose of the visit of three departing figures:

“they spoke about creating a publication... something like an infrastructure to make the changes that will happen in cities of the future, visible.”<sup>35</sup>

Progress is on its way, and the land has been assessed as valuable for modernization. In the discussion, though, the fictional account engages with

the material changes occurring to the soil beneath and around the speakers, and its mediation through a published format, ‘a zine as a place of infrastructure’. In reflection on the politics of urban metabolism, Nik Heynen, Maria Kaika, and Erik Swyngedouw outline the revolving pattern of urban transformation, whereby the material transformation of nature shapes the conditions of the world, within which discursive operations take place, which in turn model the modes of material extraction-transformation.<sup>36</sup> The epizoochory takes place when the three friends throw out the consummated pods behind their back, as well as, in this instance, in the iteration of the script in the *Mobile Soils* publication. Such a strategy embraces a form of transversality, which de Assis and d’Errico, in their introduction to “Artist research: charting a field in expansion (2019)”, see as indicating “an intellectual mobility across discipline boundaries and the concrete establishment of a continuum through theory, practice and action in the world.”<sup>37</sup>

Furthermore, Ayala, as Van Oordt discussed earlier, employ fiction as a path to connect seemingly extraneous elements. Van Oordt’s narrator’s visit below the cottage and encounter with its many non-human inhabitants reminds one of the territories that fiction can open, as discussed within an art historical context by Anne Lafont, Mark Ledbury, Krista Thompson, Pierre Wat, and Olivier Weller in “*L’histoire de l’art à l’aune de la fiction. Pour une extension du domaine de la recherche*”, in which fiction can be apprehended as a mode of uncovering that which has been or is silenced.<sup>38</sup>

In an exploration of the prolific edges of fictional landscapes, Jacques Rancière, in *Les bords de la fiction* (2017), dedicates a chapter entitled *Paysages de papier*,<sup>39</sup> to an analysis of W.G. Sebald’s *Rings of Saturn*.<sup>40</sup> In the novel, the narrator goes for a walk along the Eastern coast of England, which spirals through ‘elective affinities’ into a journey to the Netherlands, China, and the New Jerusalem, amongst others, as space is dilated. Rancière underlines the manner through which the labour of fiction toils to counter destruction, establish patterns of coexistence, and trace new uses and modes of knowledge, community, and common sense. The migration of ideas and objects, spirits and seeds of things to be, is ‘*exposed as*’ research in the spectrum of artistic investigations of soils discussed above, operating fluid

dialogues, borrowings, juxtaposition, displacements between disciplinary frameworks, tools and methods. The reference to Michael Schwab's theorization of 'expositionality' in artistic research stresses the active role of the artist equipped with the instruments of his trade as befit the occasion.<sup>41</sup> They are, in a sense, in *exposure* in the publication *Mobile Soils*, which denotes a passive state, yet as a whole, also *exposed as active*, in the conception of the publication as a mode itself of conducting research. *In other words, the publication Mobile Soils as practice as artistic research*. At this junction, the art historical joins the artistic research in its engagement towards making visible and activating the grounds beneath our feet as a mobile, circulating, and living space.

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# Climate Change: Unpacking the Sociocultural Dynamics of Ex-Herdsmen in Southwestern Nigeria

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## **ABSTRACT**

The global call on climate change highlights the daunting consequences on flora and fauna and the need for a sustainable environment. One such effect is the depletion of forest resources. In Nigeria, where the Fulani are predominantly herdsmen, the quest for pasturage is not unconnected with increased desert encroachment and the disappearance of grazing land. This quest informs why the migration of these people is dovetailing to the Southern part of Nigeria, where lush vegetation is still available. Despite the abundance of vegetation in the southern part of the country, some herdsmen have reconsidered their enterprise and found settlements in their state of domicile. Against this backdrop, this study examines the sociocultural changes emanating from this diasporic status. In-depth interviews were conducted with 20 ex-herdsmen living in Lagos and Oyo State using a purposive sampling technique. Findings show that from marriage rites to food and dress, there is a growing cultural diffusion of the Hausa/Fulani-Yoruba cultural practices on many fronts. The paper concludes that the emerging sociocultural hybridity evident among the Hausa/Fulani in Lagos and Oyo States is informed by climate change that altered the temporality of their absence from home, from migrants to the diaspora.

## **KEYWORDS**

Climate Change; Ex-Herdsmen; Nomadism; Southwest Nigeria; Sociocultural Change

### **Introduction**

Now more than ever, global attention and discourses are focused on issues of the environment. This stems from the obvious climate change and consequent disasters that have continued to erupt across different spaces. From the depletion of flora visible in increasing desert encroachment to the loss of fauna evident in endangered and extinct species, the consequences bearing far-reaching effects have attracted diverse degrees of opprobrium, anger, sympathy, concerns, and bile, around the globe (Weiskopf *et al.* 2020). Manifested in tsunamis, hurricanes, heatwaves, tornadoes, windstorms, and cyclones, among others, weather conditions are increasingly becoming hostile to the earth and all that is within it. Be it migration, displacement, relocation, or evacuation, affected people have always moved away from the harsh climatic condition to ensure their survival (Askland *et al.* 2022; McLean, 2014). Alarmingly, climate change is among the highest generators of refugees and internally displaced persons. Regardless of the urgent actions to mitigate its effect, it is not enough to prevent the ongoing changes (Storlazzi *et al.* 2018).

Climate Change and its consequences around the globe are nuanced and of varying degrees. Experts say the consequences are unevenly distributed, with underdeveloped and developing countries being the worst hit by its impact (Askland *et al.*, 2022). As a matter of precision, communities that depend on natural resources are most vulnerable to the raging destruction of climate change (Kaján 2014). This disproportion is not unconnected to the lack of or insufficient resources to curb climate change disasters' effect. Invariably, developed or, better put, richer countries exercise their edge by deploying their resources to sufficiently quell the devastating effect of climate change in their country. While climate change consequences are reflected in diverse forms, victims are challenged mainly by rising food shortage/insecurity, disease outbreaks, severe medical conditions, crime, conflict, social and economic loss, and cultural diffusion (Nnaji *et al.*, 2022). Communities/societies/countries are not exonerated, especially those that depend largely on their natural resources for producing goods and rendering services for growth and development (Kaján 2014).

Kaján's position resonates with the situation of the Hausa/Fulani people in Northern Nigeria. By being predominantly nomads, their reliance on lush vegetation cannot be overemphasized. However, this enterprise has been greeted with many challenges informed by climate change. Loss of flora and fauna, increasing desert encroachment, drought, and depletion of forest reserves number among the plight of herders (Hoffmann et al. 2018). The long cycle of drought has led to the constant search for lush vegetation for cattle. This human and animal migration has set the tone for shades of events and interests ranging from the destruction of farmlands to kidnapping, rape, murder, and banditry Ikezue and Ezeah (2017), thereby causing insecurity and straining relations between herders and farmers and members of attacked communities (Chukwuma 2020). The Nigerian government proposed the Rural Grazing Area (RUGA) initiative as a reactive solution to these problems. RUGA settlements are proposed delineated, permanent grazing areas to be established in all the federation states to check and stave off cattle encroachment into farmlands (Ekpo and Tobi 2019). However, Nigeria's deeply entrenched socio-political mistrusts among the different ethnicities in the country came to the fore as the government was accused of showing inexplicable support to the socioeconomic interests of a particular section of the country over others (ibid).

The historical trajectory of the Fulani as nomads and the crimes of kidnapping, banditry, and killings alleged to have been perpetrated by them in recent times, especially in the rich vegetation southern part of the country, provided good stock for the rejection of the proposed initiative of the Federal Government. Speaking comparatively, the International Crisis Group (2019) gave a sense of how deadly these herdsman have become in a report, stating that more people have died and many more displaced six times more as a result of herders' attacks than the dreaded Boko Haram terrorist group. The government's gesture was widely interpreted as biased on the basis that the cattle-rearing business is not government-owned, and the government is not expected to compel states to cede lands to cattle owners who are engaged in their economic enterprises. While the initiative by the Nigerian government is informed by the continued shifting fault lines of climate change causing a



drastic alteration in the country's vegetation, the proposed RUGA initiative raised concerns and new forms of interest by different sections of the populace, particularly herders.

Therefore, this article aims to discuss how climate change impact has altered the enterprise choice of Nigerian herdsman who are highly dependent on the lushness of vegetation for their cattle feed. Following that, one can infer that the migration that characterizes nomadism is seasonal; that is, herdsman move to the South during the dry season only to return to base during the wet season when vegetation in their region would also benefit from the rains (Ayodeji 2020). The study thus focuses on how some herdsman, now ex-herdsman following their quitting of nomadism, have transited from being migrants to the diaspora. It then proceeds to examine the sociocultural dynamics practiced by ex-herdsman consequent upon their integration into the sociocultural norms of the host communities. In doing these, what factors influence migration patterns of herdsman in Nigeria, how have herdsman negotiated their sustenance in host communities, and what sociocultural dynamics are emanating from this migration were critical questions that maintained the study's focus.

### **Climate Change, Migration, and Sociocultural Dynamics**

Studies on migration help further understand how climate change interacts with society and the peoples' realities, lived experiences, and adaptation measures (Wafula *et al.* 2022, Askland *et al.* 2022, Guiteras 2009). Different circumstances inform people's migration, and climate change-induced migration produces a staggering number of refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (Salami and Tilakasiri, 2020). Askland *et al.* (2022) believe it creates a situation of two categories of people- who either do not want to leave a place they call home or are unable to leave. They argue that climate change-induced migration is place-based dispossession. However, McLean (2014) gives a milder representation of this dispossession as relocation from a harsh environment. With narratives of trauma and loss trailing the experiences of people and communities, the situation with pastoralists is multifaceted, especially because pastoralism is both a cultural and an

economic endeavor (Nyariki and Amwata 2019). The last three decades have been enormously challenging for Nigerian herdsmen, just like other herdsmen in the Sahel region, due to prolonged drought, depleting water and pasture resources, and desert encroachment located in the Sahel North of the country (Ayodeji 2020; Hoffmann et al. 2018). These have triggered the relentless search for pasturage and influenced many herders' decision to temporarily or permanently engage in other livelihoods, as shown in Nairobi City (Wafula *et al.* 2022). An earlier study on Burkina Faso and Chad revealed a similar trend that urban areas are increasingly becoming attractive for this human and animal migration because pastoralists are exposed to more and better opportunities that guarantee maximum profit for the sale of their cattle (Ancey *et al.* 2020). Migration is a survival strategy that has provided humanity with the much-needed safety from socioeconomic, natural, and artificial disasters (McLean (2014).

In 2011, McLeman and Brown acknowledged that depending on the magnitude of the disaster caused by climate change, individuals, households, or communities could be sacked, and the people move to settle elsewhere either temporarily or permanently. By so doing, the structure and living patterns are altered, leaving tremendous risks and hazards that tamper with the dynamics of a place Askland *et al.* (2022). This unexpected reality is believed to challenge people's sense of being and belonging (Farbotko 2019). The process of being and belonging transcends the individual's values to being receptive and accepted into the values and practices of the larger society. Whatever the circumstances underlying the migration, 'new settlement' appears to be the first step to cultural hybridization. Hybridity creates a sense of dualism where two cultures intersect and interact. Manifestation of the diffusion varies from mild, average to acute depending on internal and external factors (Eshalomi 2020; Poltera 2010; Shome and Hedge 2002). As the degree of hybridization vary, cultural practices of the home country/state become indisputably recessive.

In their study, Hassi and Storti (2012) identified channels through which cultural contacts happen, including wars, trade, migration, economic, political, social, and technological advancement. They invariably

posit that culture is mobile. As people move, many other physical and abstract phenomena move with them; and are greeted by different sociocultural practices in their host location (Idang 2015). E.B Tylor's profound definition of culture appears holistic in the very sense that he positions cultural practices as a product of the society (1871, reprinted 1958). By being a product of society, culture is procedural, and the process allows man to address the social, economic, aesthetics, political and religious challenges of living in the society (Bello 1991). In an attempt to define culture, Abbas (1997) advances the discourse by bringing to the fore the chameleonic and deceptive nature of culture. According to him, the elements, values, and practices of a culture that looks the same may already be different, and what is different may still look the same. Culture is a critical part of identity, and the inability of different definitions to holistically capture its complexities explains the term's malleability (Eshalomi 2020; Bello 1991).

### **Methodology**

An ethnography that conforms to qualitative research design was employed to answer the questions that guide this study. In-Depth Interviews were conducted with 20 participants living in Lagos and Oyo States. The interviews were conducted within the first half of 2019. These interviews were semi-structured to allow flexibility and clarity of ambiguous statements. Participants were purposively selected to ensure that they were ex-herdsmen. They fall within the age range of 25-60. This range was not intentional but appeared the most ideal for social and economic independence from their masters. Their ages significantly reflect the years they have spent as ex-herdsmen. Incidentally, the younger interviewees reconsidered their profession earlier than the older interviewees. In other words, younger participants spent lesser years herding than their older counterparts interviewed for this study. While questions on their demographics were asked, more central questions that addressed the focus of this study were primary. Critical among them include questions on why and when they quit herding and how they have navigated through the sociocultural differences in their states of domiciliation were asked. Lagos's choice was informed by its

vast and enduring socioeconomic advantage over other states in the country (Osho and Adishi 2019). Besides being the historical home of the Yoruba, Oyo is essentially an Islamic State, the religion of these herdsman. All participants were indifferent about their identity, so the study adopted pseudonyms for neutrality. Secondary data within the discipline of climate change, cultural studies, and nomadic studies were consulted in journal articles, books, newspapers, and conference papers, among others, to foreground the study. The data was transcribed and grouped under themes for onward analysis using explanatory and deductive styles.

### **Sociocultural Dynamics of Ex-herdsmen in Lagos and Oyo State**

In this section, responses from interviewees are engaged in unpacking the sociocultural dynamics of ex-herdsmen who are now diaspora albeit local exhibit. Their decisions have been largely blamed on climate change, making their search for pasturage increasingly cumbersome.

#### *Nature and the aggressive search for survival*

As a representative response for 12 other interviewees, Ahmed, a 43 years old ex-herdsman, triangulates climate change, empathy for hungry cattle, and conflict, especially those between herders and farmers. He captures it most explicitly as indented below:

"... herding before anything else is first and foremost our source of livelihood. We practically depend on it economically, and that is where our attachment to the flock stems from. The worry a parent exhibits when their child/ren is/are hungry is what we experience when we cannot find fresh vegetation for our cattle. That is one thing that climate change has caused for herders in the North. We feel the hunger on behalf of our cattle and are pushed to bring down any barrier just to get what we want. That is why you not only see us move from place to place in search of fresh grasses, but accounts for the violent conflict with farmers in areas with lush vegetation" (Interview, Oyo State, 2020).

This response is multifaceted, following its economic, psychological, conflict, and climate change strands woven together. Before the new millennium, the relationship between herders and sedentary farmers was amicable and cordial. Experts even revealed that after harvest, farmers looked forward to herders grazing on their farmlands because waste from the cattle fertilized their land (Gürsoy 2019). In some situations where cattle destroyed farmlands, community heads mediated between both parties, and herders were asked to compensate farmers for their loss. However, severe climate change has continued to deplete natural resources and raised tensions, making this strategy unsustainable. What used to be cordial has soon degenerated into violent conflicts across the country. By empathizing and putting themselves in the position of the cows, we are reminded of the unbearable pain of hunger capable of instigating injurious actions and the need to reduce cattle mortality. The sensation evident in the tone of this interviewee is remarkably frightening, especially as the International Crisis Group reported that more lives had been lost to the herders-farmers crisis than Boko Haram in the country (2019). Invariably, the global call for environmental sustainability is reiterated by how this respondent presents the trickle-down effect of climate change as unavoidably affecting other aspects of society.

*Drifting from Temporary to Permanent Resident*

Underpinning nomadism is the temporality that characterizes their mobility. Albeit, the situation captured by Abdul, a 38 years old ex-herdsman, underscores the dynamism that alters phenomena at different times and under different circumstances. Below, the interviewee displays his knowledge of the political and economic realities of the country and how his mobility status transited from temporal to permanent:

"I have always been a temporary visitor in Lagos who always returned to the North after the sales of my cattle. However, the suspension of the RUGA policy following the outcry of the southerners has made me reconsider my choice of business because, in this Nigeria, one has

to be proactive. Now, I buy from herders who bring cattle from the North". (Interview, Lagos State, 2021).

In his response, one can deduce that open grazing is not sustainable following different factors ranging from climate change, poor policies, and ethnic or regional sentiments, among others. The Federal Government's proposal of the Rural Grazing Area Policy (RUGA) was a reactive solution to the increasing problems of farmlands destruction by cattle, kidnapping, rape, murder, and banditry accompanying pastoralism in the country. The RUGA initiatives settlements are proposed delineated, permanent grazing areas to be established in all the federation states to check and stave off cattle encroachment into farmlands. However, Nigeria's deeply entrenched socio-political mistrusts among the different ethnic tribes in the country came to the fore as the government was accused of showing inexplicable support to the socioeconomic interests of a particular section of the country over others (Ademola 2020). The historical trajectory of the Fulani, and the crimes of kidnapping, banditry, and killings alleged to have been perpetrated by them in recent times, especially in the rich vegetation southern part of the country, provided good stock for the rejection of the proposed initiative of the Federal Government. The government's gesture is widely interpreted as biased on the basis that the cattle-rearing business is not government-owned, and the government is not expected to compel states to cede lands to cattle owners who are engaged in their economic enterprises. The situation creates a complex bifurcation where justice for one automatically precipitates injustice for the other. The rejection is further justified because an earlier suggestion for ranching, which would have provided justice for both sides, had been ignored by the government,

Additionally, Abdul's swift business change is critical to how his migratory status transitioned from a temporary migrant to a permanent resident in Lagos State. For more precision, Abdul does not fall short of being regarded as a diaspora having moved from being a 'flow' to a 'stock'. His sense of being proactive indicates the instability that characterizes the different sectors and structures of Nigerian society (Gürsoy 2019). Climate change

poses a threat to cattle rearing. It is responsible for the flexibility of migrant status, especially in a country divided along political, cultural, ethnic, and religious lines like Nigeria. Quitting herding indicates lurking health danger if the government does not take seriously the effect of climate change and the need for a sustainable alternative benefitting all stakeholders.

#### *Cultural Assimilation*

In the response below, Yassah, a 28 years old interviewee, recognizes the growing changes in his sociocultural life and subconsciously highlights the stages of cultural change. Moreover, he captures the evolution of culture in a most enthralling way:

I am unconsciously imbibing the Yoruba culture, and it is surprising how it played out the last time I visited my village. I practically craved *amala* so much so that I had to look for a restaurant in a faraway place to eat it. ...I appeared differently all through my stay because my dressing was a blend of both Yoruba and Hausa attire. Interestingly, my relatives back at home reached me when I returned to Ibadan, that they had made some of the clothes styles/patterns I took with me for themselves. I smiled! (Interview, Oyo State, 2020).

Across different disciplines, culture has been established to be pliable and subject to change. The changes go through 3 major stages- contact, interaction, and diffusion (Eshalomi 2020). One way cultures contact is through trade, a channel that resonates with Yassah's experience. As cultures diffuse or assimilate, the effect is not unilateral, as elements of both cultures are transposed consciously and unconsciously into interacting cultures. Food/Cuisine, dance, music, and attires are critical elements of cultural identity, and more than other core cultural practices and values, they are easily transferable. There is a sense in which Yassah's response allows us to understand the critical role of the diaspora in the evolution of culture. Diaspora commands respect and influence and has established their position as agents of sociocultural change (Akeson and Baaz 2015). As much as climate

change impacts the migration pattern among Northern herders in Nigeria, it is also tinkering with their patterned way of life in a way that results in cultural loss and/or gains.

*Home away from home*

To help take care of the fluidity of the concept of home, scholars categorize the concept into two, namely: physical and mental (Ullah and Kumpoh 2018). Lagos and Ibadan, the Oyo State capital, have become home to them as many have assimilated and adopted the cultural practices of their host community and vice versa. Mohammed, a 61 years old ex-herdsman whose response resonates with other interviewees, shares his achievement and how receptive he has become to the Yoruba culture:

I have now adopted Lagos as my home. I am almost done with my building project. I relocated my family to Lagos because of the recurring attacks in the North. Just last month, my daughter married a Yoruba man from Ogun State, and I must admit that the marriage rituals that were done that day were a blend of both Hausa and Yoruba. My wife dresses very often in Yoruba attire. I plan to take a Yoruba wife who will always cook *Amala* and *Ewedu* for me because that food is now one of my best food. (Interview, Lagos State, 2021)

My understanding of Mohammed's view of a home aligns with the concept of cosmopolitanism, where anywhere is home. However, this resolve is determined by the migrant, who, more often than not, has relaxed the sociocultural context he/she was originally exposed to for the adoption of the sociocultural practices of the host state/country. For this interviewee, sociocultural flexibility is at the foundation of a hitch-free stay in a host community. In a culturally heterogeneous country like Nigeria, sentiments, restrictions, and differences are debilitating challenges against inter-tribal marriages. Aside from being amenable to the sociocultural practices of his host location, this ex-herdsman has allowed the same for members of his family to the point of supporting the daughter's marriage to a Yoruba man.



His plan to marry a Yoruba woman will further consolidate his growing assimilation into the Yoruba sociocultural practices. At this point, one would understand climate change's far-reaching effect as an agent of cultural evolution and change. Rather than being condemned to instigating a miserable fate, climate change becomes a springboard for exploring other life's possibilities.

*Cultural Assimilation Accelerated by Religion*

Over the years, alliances have been formed among people who share similar ideologies that span political, cultural, economic, security, technology, and religion, among others. As Hamid, a 59 years old ex-herdsman, reiterates that no culture is sacrosanct, he ties the change to the indispensable place of religion:

The assimilation is mutual. Many Yoruba people have also imbibed some Hausa cultural practices because of their interaction with us. They are more in Hausa-dominated areas, though, but many of them are Muslims. (Interview, Lagos State, 2020)

Earlier in this study, the stages of cultural change have been identified. Hamid's opening sentence helps us understand that the status (dominant or minor) of the culture has little or no effect on its evolution. Put differently, interacting cultures draw upon their distinct elements for change. In the response above, Hamid shows the undeniable role of religion in cultural assimilation. While the Hausa/Fulani are largely Muslims, Yoruba are adherents of both Abrahamic Faiths. Their cultural diffusion is accelerated by their religious commonality, especially because the practice of Islam is barely different from adherents' cultural practices. Additionally, the interviewee highlights the role of proximity in the process of cultural diffusion. By crediting the cultural assimilation to the cohabitation of people from both cultures, Hamid corroborates existing literature that when cultures are close, there are transpositions of different practices from both cultures (Seabela 1990).

### Conclusion

Overall, this study examines the increasing consequences of climate change on pasturage in the Northern part of Nigeria. The article situates climate change at the very heart of cultural change and assimilation. By focusing on ex-herdsmen from Northern Nigeria, a region that has been severely affected by the unrelenting climate change, the study highlights sociocultural changes that are taking place following their quitting of pastoralism and subsequent adoption of their host communities (Lagos and the Oyo States) as home. From food to dress, music, and marriages, among others, Hausa/Fulani ex-herdsmen have continued to assimilate the Yoruba culture and vice versa. The ex-herdsmen confirmed that climate change and the government's inability to find a sustainable solution to the violent herders-farmers conflict across the country informed their decision to venture into other forms of enterprises in their new homes. The men have learned to draw upon their resilience and determination in creating and making meaning of their lives under these new yet unexpected conditions.

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# Extracting the Visual: Mobility, Migration, and Ecology seen through Nineteenth-Century Visual Representations of Colombian Mining

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## **ABSTRACT**

Different examples of watercolors, prints, and photographs made in Nineteenth-century Colombia and its relationship to mining and land can be found when searching archives and collections. In most images studied, actual extraction rarely occurs, an observation that allows for these gaps to become part of what is not being recorded. If we understand mining as the act of taking valuable or useful materials from the ground, we can look at these images and extract from them essential visual elements to confront them, alone or against each other, and understand how foreign and local actors produced specific visual approaches towards the relationship between man and land. By carefully looking at these images and the people and contexts that produced them, we can chart historical issues that currently threaten mining communities with ecological and social disasters, but that also allow these visual constructions to be understood as complex territories that destabilize notions of identity, nation, land, resource or territory. Comparative examples of these nineteenth-century productions with Contemporary Colombian Art and its concerns can also be spun through reflections of actors and places, both old and new, and how the mining narratives are being revisited and reappropriated.

## **KEYWORDS**

Mining; Miners; Landscape; Colombia; 19th-Century

### **Introduction**

Colombia's history of mining is initially associated with gold extraction through exquisitely crafted objects made by pre-Hispanic cultures, and also through the history of conquest and colonialism until today when mining conflicts and dialogues with development, progress, crime, human labor, human rights, and social and ecological disasters. Placer mining, or the sifting of valuable metals from sediments in river channels using simple pans, was established through colonial attitudes. In a few places during the 18th and 19th centuries, both open-surface and underground mines were exploited to extract minerals and precious stones such as gold, emeralds, coal, and ore. When the territory was part of the Spanish Empire, some of the mines were the property of Spain, while others were private and thus paid the Viceroyalty 20% of their earnings. Any history of mining must include the horrible story of harsh human labor. When indigenous populations diminished due to disease and mortality rates, Spain authorized sending enslaved Africans to work at specific mining regions for further exploitation. For 300 years, the current Colombian territory extracted mainly gold and sent approximately three to four metric tons a year to Spain, abusing enslaved people through terrible work conditions and damaging landscape through gunpowder. At the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Charles III sent to New Granada German engineers to further develop gold and silver mining and improve mining techniques and technology. Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, Colombia's mining industry has included the extraction of minerals such as gold, silver, platinum, coal, copper, iron ore, bauxite, and nickel; nonmetallic minerals such as salt, gypsum, talcum, and emeralds, and energy resources such as oil and natural gas.

This paper presents a first approximation to some of these images and ideas, engaging and problematizing some of these examples while at the same time trying to understand the role that representation or lack of representation is playing in the image. Through this first lens, some ideas about taking away, abstracting, and synthesizing may allow for further and deeper study of the urgent issues related to the mining industry. There are many artists and travelers of this nineteenth-century period studied here.

Still, due to the time limitation, this presentation will only include Englishman Joseph Brown, local and foreign artists of the Corographic Commission Carmelo Fernández, Henry Price and Manuel María Paz, diplomat Edward Wallhouse Mark, and Spanish adventurer José María Gutiérrez de Alba. We will first approach this topic and its primary, evident visual issues through a selection of images. A few examples of 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>-century artworks by Pedro Nel Gómez, Daniel Rodríguez, and Clemencia Echeverri will be briefly mentioned to create a dialogue and a continuity of how these problems are relevant in our modern and contemporary world. By looking at these images carefully, for example, one can easily see a tendency towards the representation of the human role in mining, as an example of genre drawing or *Costumbrismo* in the first half of the century. In contrast, the second half tends to give at least a little more importance to the landscape. Not just through the act of drawing but through photography examples, we can see the lens shift in intention and context.

### **19<sup>th</sup>-Century Examples**

Some of the first images related to mining that we can find in the early Nineteenth Century are those of Englishman Joseph Brown, who traveled widely and was in Colombia between 1825 and 1840 as an employee of the Colombian Mining Association, “the same enterprise that at different times went under the name of ‘Herring, Graham and Powles’, ‘Powles, Illingworth, and Co.’, ‘Powles, Illingworth, Wills, and Co.’”<sup>1</sup>. The company “... owned mines at Marmato, Santa Ana, and Bucaramanga and invested substantial sums. Though it consistently disappointed its stockholders by failing to pay dividends, it was successful enough to keep going...”<sup>2</sup> There are three drawings by Brown associated with the business that can be seen in the archives at the Royal Geographical Society in London, which are, according to historian Malcolm Deas, some of the first representations of this type. In the image, “*A native laborer from the Santa Ana mines arriving with a dispatch,*” the messenger bears a letter addressed to Powles, Illingworth, Wills, and Co... The emphasis in this image is the messenger’s typical attire of the tempered area of Tolima, where the mines of Santa Ana were located.

The messenger wears a dark *ruana*, knee-high pants, and a conical straw hat while standing barefoot with the letter in his hand with a generic landscape in the background. This image seems like an excuse to construct a stylized native type. It seems unimportant that the subject represented is working as an emissary to or from the mining company, or what the note even says, he is serving as a model of the type of humble peasant that casually traverses the landscape to hand in a message. The very thin and elongated figure show an unnamed, mixed-race man who passively completes his task and obliviously poses for Brown to create watercolor such as this one, that is part of “... the collection of an Englishman who wanted souvenirs for family and friends, and who also hoped to publish an album of types, scenes and customs...”<sup>2</sup> The landscape is completely undetailed and unspecified, the man stands on a barren mound of sand in the foreground, the dark medium ground could be a river. Although the Santa Ana mines were located near the small Murillo creek, the messenger could bring information from the mines to the larger town of Honda on the main branch of the Magdalena River. In the background, a faint mountain range suggests that little or nothing reflects on the bountiful exploitation of the gold mines at Santa Ana or of the rich and complex geography surrounding this area of the country. Attention here is placed on typified clothing, especially on the *ruana*.

The other two images made by Joseph Brown are one of the outside of the Santa Ana mine and another of the inside of one of the shafts. *Santa Ana Mine* differentiates working roles by pairs. In a clear colonial attitude of what was by the 1830s a Republican enterprise, two light-skinned men with golden locks are standing outside of the hut conversing, properly dressed in clean, light clothes. They are relaxed and comfortable as they seem to talk business. Next to them, under the narrow hut, two men sit on the floor in postures that would signify terrible back pain at the end of the day, working, hammering, and analyzing every bit of stone that is coming from the inside of the mine. The man on the left is barefoot, has darker skin, and sits directly on top of the gruelingly uncomfortable pieces of broken material. There is more work on the surroundings in this image, although it wouldn't necessarily be considered a landscape, as it shows built-in stairs, large, broken stones set



aside that manifest the intervention on the land, and a few examples of local vegetation, not necessarily specified but more as an idea of the sort of verdure to be found. We can definitely assert that because Brown was directly involved in the mining company, because he was a commercial traveler and because he was not necessarily an artist, his interest in these types of images was illustrative for the publication of possible future memoirs. When drawings like these are seen next to literary descriptions, the gap between looking at the landscape and focusing on the actual functioning of the mines is evident. Three decades earlier, at the end of 1801, Alexander von Humboldt described the landscape of the mines of Santa Ana in his *Diary*,

The small town, famous for its antique mining exploitation is located South of Mariquita. The road initially goes through part of a huge valley that extends itself between the cordilleras of Guaduas and the páramos (Herveo, Quindío) towards Neiva. That valley is divided into smaller valleys on the old river bed of the Magdalena, near Honda and Mariquita, and contains new sandstone formations that alternate with layers of both coarse (breccie) and fined-grained sandstone. The sandstone is exactly the same as the Cuban Stone, especially that of the Llano de Calabozo and to that of the valleys near the mission of Atures, Maipures and Turbaco... The road slowly crosses through a nearby forest towards the west, coming close to the cordillera. You must wade the rivers Lumbi, and close to Santa Ana, the Guamo. Between both you can already see the metamorphic rock gneiss. From Guamo a, 800 feet long sinkhole was built towards La Manta. From there you must climb, over bare gneiss, up to the small town where you enjoy a wonderful spectacle of the immense valley of the Magdalena and the snowcapped Ruiz volcano, towards the east in the mornings, and towards the west in the afternoons.<sup>4</sup>

As is usual when framing the 19th-century visual versus the written in travel narratives, text details and informs more realistically, whereas images select and abstract the essential for communicative purposes. We have much more information about the landscape from Humboldt's paragraph than from Brown's watercolor.



**Fig. 1.** Joseph Brown . *Illingworth's Shaft- Santa Ana Mine, Raising Ore*. ca. 1825-1840. Watercolor and ink. 25,7 x 25,8 cm. Royal Geographical Society, London.

The third and last image of Brown's authorship is *Illingworth's Shaft- Santa Ana Mine, Raising Ore*, which is, without a doubt, the most interesting of the three examples precisely because it ventures to represent what goes on inside the mine. An evident issue with this image is how Brown chose to illuminate a naturally dark scene. As spectators, we see a cross-section of the shaft as if we were lighting it up directly to see the inside workings. In any case, the illuminated elements are the miners who, in awkward attire, no pants, collared shirts, and no shoes, un-stressfully seem to do their job

without any difficulties. The lighting and the shadowing appear to be realistically off because the light source is unclear, and the shadows are also random. Using a pulley, the two racially undetermined, fit, and muscular-looking men raise ore from the bottom of the shaft in a wooden bucket. The similarity between both models is curious. They evidence that this was not an image done underground *in situ* by Brown. Actual mining work doesn't seem strenuous, as the workers look directly towards the viewer while not exerting too much force with either arms or legs in what appears to be a *pseudo-contrapposto*. The surroundings are again generic, with tones of browns, blacks, and greys used to create an underground context while perfectly framing the human act of excavating and raising the much-needed material for commercial and economic progress from the underground.

The Colombian Corographic Commission, an official survey project led by the Liberal governments of the 1850s, aspired to understand the rural regions by mapping and describing, both visually and textually, human geography, landscape, natural resources, possible trade options, handicrafts, indigenous findings and more. It also registered a small variety of images with mid-century mining. Because of its heterogeneous manner, the three main artists involved in representing the different voyages produced a diverse group of watercolors that were supposed to accompany the published texts, an objective that was never finalized.

The six examples that involve inquiries involving landscape, ecology, and human mobility all visualize the relationship to the mining enterprise through a human, commercial, and business transaction perspective. In this slide, we can see both the Venezuelan artist Carmelo Fernández and Henry Price, the British artist who accompanied the Commission in 1852, capturing some elements of the natural world involving extraction while maintaining a visual emphasis and composition on human interaction. If social interaction around mining must be represented in one image, the challenge is to include as much information on the actors involved in this business while making the image seem natural and organic. It is also indisputable that issues of race and social class representation are dialoguing in these images. Fernández titles his drawing *White Miners* and specifies the geographical region where they

operate. The man in the brown coat is the organizing element of how we should read this image, he is the boss and is dubiously listening to one of the workers who is not mining but could be one of the head workers as he dresses in the same manner as those in the background. Landscape acts as scenario and includes a minimum of elements to give space an identity associated with that specific province, the three men in the back who are working are lightly drawn, much as the trees, rocks, and barren mountains, the miners blend into the mid-ground and background whereas the human types are centered and sharp. Mining here is an excuse to understand how class, race, and land interact in a hierarchy. On the other hand, Henry Price brings to his drawing the next step in the mining industry when gold and silver have been quarried or panned. They are negotiated and traded in the urban scenario. Four human types appear to qualify the image as a synthesized mineral and gem trading idea. The title, *Miner and dealer*, gives us a clear hint of the main characters of this story. The miner is a big dark-skinned man who hands the fair-skinned dealer the merchandise he has brought to sell.

Meanwhile, the store owner and the woman in the foreground are completely passive. Still, they serve as elements of variety in the composition while allowing the viewer to see other examples of people and clothing through the optimization permitted by the image.

A second group of images of this Commission includes another image by Price and one drawn by Colombian artist Manuel María Paz. Price's scene of gold panning in the Guadalupe River in the great mining area of Antioquia shows five female figures, two of them have their torso and face covered by the pan they are using to sift sand in the river and find small nuggets of gold. Similar to what price did in *Miner and dealer*, he makes sure that there is an apparent, organic variety of human examples that can make the image credible while assuring clearness in the information conveyed. The three women dress the same, blue skirts and white shirts, difference lies in the frontal, side, and back positions they take concerning the viewer. Price, trained as a watercolorist in England, subtly details the rocks and river bank in the foreground. He deals with the different planes of the drawing through

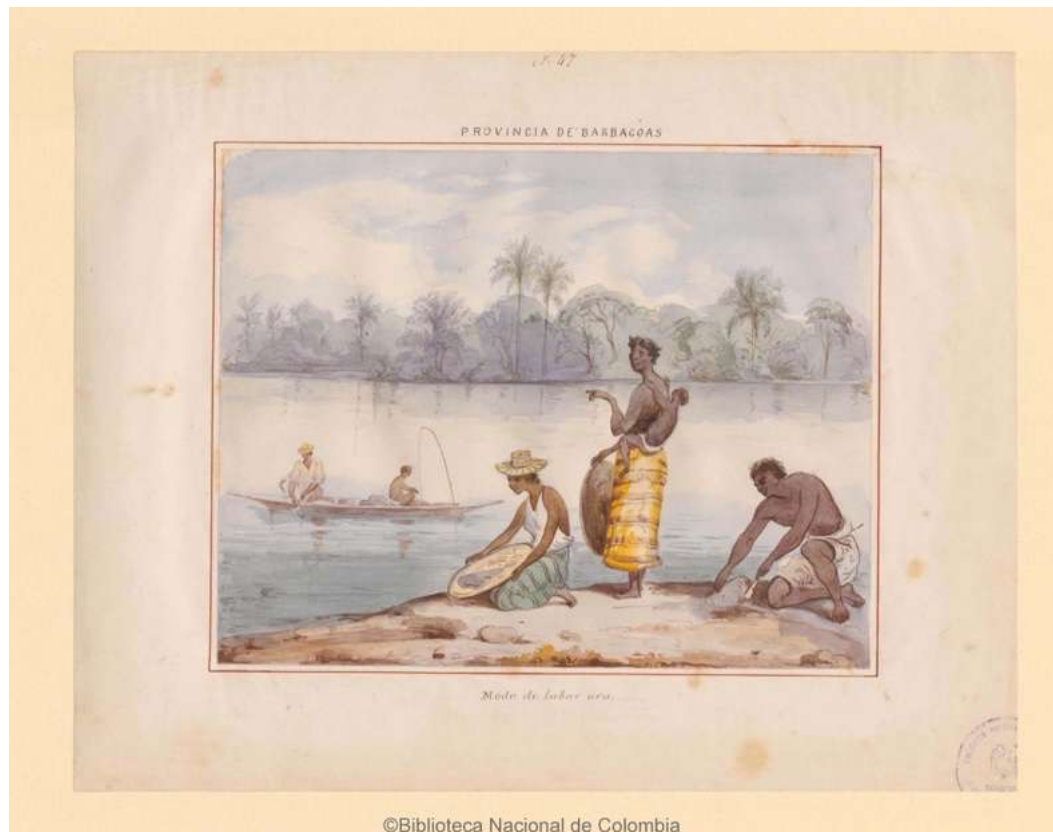
atmospheric perspective and, like Fernández in *White Miners*, dissolves the workers of the mine into the mid-ground. The two bright pink and white handkerchiefs on the women's hair visually convey attention to these central parts of the composition. The women's dark brown skin appears to camouflage with the river as if being there is part of this natural habitat. These images are meant to illustrate examples of regional life and economy. This is why they are posed and constructed as archetypes of the ideal union between the human and the natural.

Manuel María Paz, on the other hand, separated the human from the landscape more evidently. The three figures in the foreground show variety in terms of gender, role, skin color, and relationship to the viewer. The central figure is the woman that stands up and carries her baby on her back. She turns around, pauses, and looks at the viewer while pointing toward the men that glide through the river while fishing in their canoe. Two economic activities coexist on this river of the Cauca region in the South West gold panning and fishing. As is explained by historian Maria Elena Bedoya Hidalgo,

...gold, and everything that can be associated to it, becomes the pattern with which to measure richness, in the past and in the present, as well as the facilitator of different strategies: extractive, scientific, economic, and culturally-historic. This is why the imagined figure of the "Indians dressed in gold," of the mines filled with gold, and the richness of the golden territories are central points towards the understanding of the representation strategies of a nation's past, that shows wealth and constantly negotiates a present, based on the economic requirements and the political-diplomatic disputes about the territories.<sup>5</sup>

Landscape appears on the other river bank, across from the water, where palm trees and mountains softly stand. Both women, elongated and stylized, contrast with the man's muscular figure. They all seem part of this passive paradise where rivers and nature are bountiful with the gifts of fish and gold. The central figure wears a skirt-like-garment that emphasizes her relationship to gold as a precious material that is inevitably bound to her and

her social and economic role in extraction. Part of this Commission's purpose was to report the hidden potential of the country's different regions for economic progress and as part of the political campaign against a competing Conservative, Centralist government.



**Fig. 2.** Manuel María Paz. *Gold washing- Province of Barbaçoas*. 1853. Watercolor on paper. 24 x 31 cm. Biblioteca Nacional de Colombia.

Although there is great interest in the representation of the human in images related to mining in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Colombia, one can also find examples that appear to obliterate the human and focus on the landscape. This is the particular case of images of the emerald mines in Muzo, in Boyacá, approximately 113 miles North of Bogotá. The indigenous peoples of Muzo extracted emeralds from these mountains before the Spanish conquest. Colombia is known for its high-quality green emeralds extracted from this

region. A tropical forest surrounds the area of the town of Muzo at an altitude of 3000 feet above sea level, including very rich and varied vegetation. For decades, the constant extraction in these mountains, not just of emeralds but of minerals and rocks, like calcite, pyrite, dolomite, and quartz, eroded the cliffs and hillsides of the region, causing significant ecological damage.



**Fig. 3.** Edward Wallhouse Mark. *Emerald Mine, Muzo*. October 1846. 17,5 x 25 cm. Acuarela sobre papel. Museo de Arte Miguel Urrutia, Bogotá

This is what, consciously or not, is portrayed in the watercolors of the Muzo area by both the British diplomat Edward Wallhouse Mark and Henry Price. Both small drawings, probably made directly on site, lessen obvious human activity and captivate the viewer's eye through the barren rock. Mark's watercolor does leave a small hint of the mining camp, with two tiny groups of men climbing the cliff towards what looks like small constructions of the mining camp. Nevertheless, the natural elements dominate the image and, contrary to what mining does to the land, both Mark and price extract the

landscape, isolate it and allow it to stand on its own, like a piece of emerald found in the midst of the black stone.

Spaniard José María Gutiérrez de Alba spent, around the 1870s, fourteen years in Colombia as an agent for the Spanish government. He was a journalist and playwright interested in expanding his horizons. With his basic childhood drawing and coloring abilities, he produced thirteen volumes of handwritten and illustrated diaries, including original and copied watercolors of his authorship, drawings made by others, and an interesting collection of photographs. In Volume XII of *Impresiones de un viaje a América*, which he titles *Appendix: Wonders and Curiosities of Colombia*, he makes copies of many watercolors of the Corographic Commission that, at the time of his voyage, were already archived at the National Library. Amongst those copies are Price's *Gold Washers* and Paz's *Gold Washing* images. They are interesting to compare, as Gutiérrez de Alba, not trained as an artist, includes more light and dark contrast, and in the *Gold Washing* copy adventures to explore a more expressive sky.

Of his creations, Gutiérrez de Alba illustrates his handwritten memoirs that are interesting to see in the light of this mining imagining relationship with four drawings. They are dated with the exact dates he visited the Province of Mariquita. The same area includes the Santa Ana and Marmato gold and silver mines, and he visits specifically the Mines of Mal Paso and Bocaneme. Images made by Gutiérrez that are not copies seem to be simpler in terms of mimetic or naturalistic representation. He doesn't detail light and shade, contrast, or emphasis. They all relate to the main title of his diaries, *Impressions*, or quick jot-downs of what he sees in the different excursions he does through the main cordilleras. While in the Mariquita area, the Spaniard writes,

The first thing we visited was a recently opened sinkhole, where work was being carried out in a hole, following a seam, called del Caimán, I don't know for what reason. While we were there, I took in my album a note of the entrance to the sinkhole, and made a light portrait of an Englishman, notable for his rough forms and vigorous musculature, who was chief



of the workers. At the door of the pit there were large piles of the extracted mineral, and under a nearby shed several workers, men, and women, were busy breaking the stones with hammer blows until they reduced the pieces to the size of a fist, soon leading the, to the back of oxen, to the place where the crushing devices are found, in large leather bags arranged like saddlebags.<sup>6</sup>

What is intriguing about these images' actual reference to the workings of the mines, the shafts, the veins, the machinery, and even the accidents are intriguing. Landscape and vegetation here are again subdued to the actual intrinsic day-to-day workings of the land, including the portrait of Englishman William Scaddon, boss to the miners in Bocaneme. The drawings even have visual mistakes or evidence of Gutiérrez's lack of training, perspective, and proportion, as seen in the small wheelbarrow of the *Williamson Shaft* drawing or the anatomical inconsistencies visible in Scaddon's portrait. Trees all look the same shade of green, details in the vegetation are scarce, and coloring seems very primary as if only trying to capture the gist of the mining enterprise.



**Fig. 4.** José María Gutiérrez de Alba. *Williamson Shaft, Alligator Vein*. In: José María Gutiérrez de Alba. *Impressions of a trip to America*. Volume X. June 2, 1874. Biblioteca Luis Ángel Arango, Bogotá.

The most intriguing images of mining found in Gutiérrez de Alba's volumes are the five anonymous photographs he includes in Volume VII, *Northern Expedition*, of the mines in Muzo. These images change the relationship that we had seen up to now in the drawings, except those of Muzo, by Price and Mark. A landscaping element in the barren cliffs surrounding these mines brings the photographer's, the artist's, and the viewer's attention toward the eroded walls and precipices. In the first two photographs, *Emerald Mines of Muzo, Forest that Surrounds the Enterprise* and *Emerald mines of Muzo, Jet for washing the landslides*, the human and the commercial have been blocked out by focusing only on the terrain that accompanies the mining industry, but that has been erased by only capturing the vegetation, just as Henry Price did in his watercolor of 1855. The traveler explicitly registers the supposedly non-mining elements and the human intervention and focuses on the vertical forest and also on the jet explicitly used to wash down the landslides, an element that adds to accentuate the erosion. In the other three photographs, *Pawns retiring from a day's work*, *Workers on the washed grounds at the bottom of the sinkhole*, and *Pawns working with the bar in the great sinkhole*, both images go back to emphasizing anonymous human labor, at the end of the day, including with explicit instructions of posing for the camera. Workers, similar to what was done by the Commission watercolors, blend in as part of the environment. They become elements of that landscape and help build it and construct it, both literally and metaphorically. So many more things can be said of these images.



**Fig. 5.** Anonymous. *Emerald mines of Muzo. Pawns retiring from a day's work.* 23,9 x 19 cm. In: Jose María Gutierrez de Alba. *Impressions of a trip to America.* Volume VII. February 9, 1872. Biblioteca Luis Ángel Arango, Bogotá.

### **A Few Modern and Contemporary Examples**

It is important to link the history of these images and to understand the issues underlying the social transformations, migrations, mobilities, ecologies, and other complexities of the modern mining industry with modern and contemporary aesthetic views. The problems that surround mining as an unsustainable industry in an ever-growing modern world seen through the eyes of the Anthropocene are much the same in late modernity but become more entangled and urgent during the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, or artists, independent from institutions, governments, and companies disentangle visual problems differently, engaging the audience with a critical view of the image constructed.

I briefly want to mention painter and muralist Pedro Nel Gómez, who, being born and raised in Anorí, a town located in the rich mining geographical Department of Antioquia, during the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, was deeply touched by miners and their activities. Interviewed for a monographic book on his work, Gómez narrated that,

In Anorí, during my childhood, I knew mining directly. Without livestock, without agriculture and without coffee, the mines were really the only collective heritage of the common people. What I have painted in my paintings and my frescoes I did not invent; I drank in reality. Barequeo and tunnel mining were people's piggy banks, where the poor man searched for his daily grain. The barequeros and barequeras went in brigades; you could count the regiments not by hundreds but by thousands. With their pans they looked for the gold of the currents, especially when the summer diminished the flows of rivers and streams. I saw work as a popular feat, the participation of women in civil life, tragedy and mystery in those early years.<sup>2</sup>

His views of mining are interwoven with the humanity of the labor he saw for decades. The social element is firmly present, as is an absence of time searching for small nuggets of gold. Art historian Carlos Arturo Fernández describes the *Barequeo*<sup>8</sup> fresco of 1836 and says,

The climate that creates the fresco is very strange, like it has stopped in time. On the one hand, it shows us the landscape in which the mining work is done, in the banks of a river where vegetation has been completely wiped out. The tree stumps make it clear that this same future awaits the vegetation seen at a distance, on the opposite river bank. In his work, Pedro Nel Gómez pays more attention to the human figure than to the details of the landscape, but, beyond the artist's intentions, the atmosphere of devastation that is insinuated, represents the conflict between exploitation economy and nature that leads to the present ecological crisis. Nevertheless, the climate created by the human figures is strange, with a total of thirteen, that give the feeling of being completely silent and frozen in time and space. Only one miner removes material from the bottom of the river, while two more work with their trays. The rest seem to be quietly reviewing what little they have found or, perhaps exhausted and sick, take refuge on the shore. They are generic figures, doubled over on themselves, distressed, static, without vitality. The only ones who seem attentive are the two characters with hats, patrons or foremen, who control the events from the right margin of the fresco. In short, this is not the frenetic atmosphere of the great crowds in the grip of the gold rush that the artist himself claimed to have known. Gold mining will be a haunting subject for Pedro Nel Gómez, who makes it the quintessential symbol of the nation's hopes for life and prosperity, but also of its problems and contradictions. But here, in 1936, mining is not a happy celebration of work. Rather, it is an elegy, a song that in its eloquent silence denounces the destruction of the human being, crushed by pain and suffering.<sup>9</sup>

Modern photographer and graphic reporter Daniel Rodríguez, student and assistant of well-known 20th-century photographer Luis Benito Ramos, worked for some of the main magazines and newspapers in the country. During the 30s and 40s, he made rich visual reports on different topics of the country's daily life. In *Niño minero* (Miner Boy)<sup>10</sup> he photographs the human. Still, more the social than just the human is deeply portrayed through the child miner whose forehead lamp is being accommodated by larger, adult hands. The child looks towards the floor as pressure is exerted on his head; he inevitably needs help with his gear before descending underground again. On

the one side, a young man observes him as if accustomed to child labor. On the other, he observes these very large hands that probably should not be part of the passiveness.

The thick mud on the older miner's hands, caked onto his skin, is all the viewer needs to seize the viewer's comprehension of the physical and emotional trauma that happens under the earth's surface.

Lastly, we need to understand that the problems that both the planet and human kind bear with mining are inexhaustible, and that both the land and the people involved under the layers and issues are passive victims of our modern society. Contemporary Colombian artist, Clemencia Echeverri creates the 11-minute video installation *Sin cielo*<sup>4</sup>. This moving piece is poetically described by well-known author Piedad Bonnett as follows,

In *Sin cielo* the artist records what happens in Marmato, Caldas, a town located on a mountain full of veins of gold, where mining has been going on for 400 years, first in local hands and more recently also through multinational companies. What the video records, again, is the river, but this time making us see what the mine's dumps bring: cyanide, mercury, everything that is a lethal poison for the people in return for the search for gold. While we see, between astonishment, indignation and pain, the level of atrocious contamination of the waters, we hear the incessant clatter of the miners against the stone, which reminds us of the presence of those humble men, sunk in the sinkholes, humbly earning their livelihood, perhaps ignorant of the tremendous environmental damage these mines cause. Clemencia Echeverri's camera also records the bleak panorama of a town that does not show any wealth: rather chaos and ugliness, nothing that seems to be the realization of a dream world to live with dignity. The title Without Heaven perhaps refers to the double condition of working underground and, more metaphorically, to the hopelessness of the whole situation.<sup>12</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Mining is a key topic through which many issues can be studied: landscape, ecology, natural resources and their exploitation, modernity and productivity, human exploitation, etc. Through further study and careful analysis of these

images and others, we can approximate the human-nature relationship and try to disentangle modern and contemporary attitudes to past Republican practices. Through a difficult global problem like mining, images can be studied in a deeper context to understand the role they have played in forming collective attitudes and activities that today reveal deeper problems. So many contemporary issues are deeply rooted in the past, especially in 19<sup>th</sup>-century approaches to land, nature, and capitalism. This brief study seeks to connect some of these initial late-modern drawings and photographs to more recent pieces that allow us to understand the urgency of the subject and the role that images play in our understanding of the complexity of the affectation on our visual and physical environment.

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## Endnotes

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# Rethinking Tupinambá Objects Beyond Restitution

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## **ABSTRACT**

This paper draws a comparison between two objects that have been designated as being *tupinambá* in different contexts: the *ibirapema*, a wooden club dating from the 16th century used by the Tupinambá in ritual killings, and the *bolsa menina*, a purse manufactured in the northern coast of contemporary Bahia employing a weaving technique known as *tupinambá*. By comparing these pieces' material elements and their role in the production of Tupinambá ethnicity, I question the notion of authenticity as a criterion for categorizing non-European artworks. Just like the *ibirapema* in the 16th century, the *bolsa menina* can be read as a key piece in the process of ethnogenesis that occurs in a constant struggle with the Other (in this case, the sprawling tourist economy in the coastal regions of northern Bahia). The self-designation of this contemporary group of artisans as *Tupinambá* actualizes the ontological temporality operated by the *ibirapema* in the 16th century not despite, but because of the incorporation of new elements into its reinvention. From this, I conclude that there may still be a future for western ethnographic museums and for a history of indigenous art that goes beyond the debate around restitution.

## **KEYWORDS**

Tupinambá Objects; Ethnographic Museums; Curatorial Practices; Museum Policies; Public and Participative Collections.

This paper presents a part of my research concerning the period between July 2017 and August 2018, when I, during my masters, had the opportunity to frequent the archives of the *Musée du Quai Branly* in Paris. My goal is to answer the following question, which is frequently posed by colleagues and artists when they come in contact with the collection of objects that I chose to study: “Are these contemporary works really *tupinambá*?”

To answer this question, I will share some thoughts from the comparative study that I made of two pieces: 1) the *ibirapema* – a *tupinambá* indigenous artifact which, in the 16th century, was brought to the cabinet of curiosities of the king of France and; 2) an object manufactured in contemporary Brazil employing a technique called ‘tupinambá,’ the *bolsa menina*.



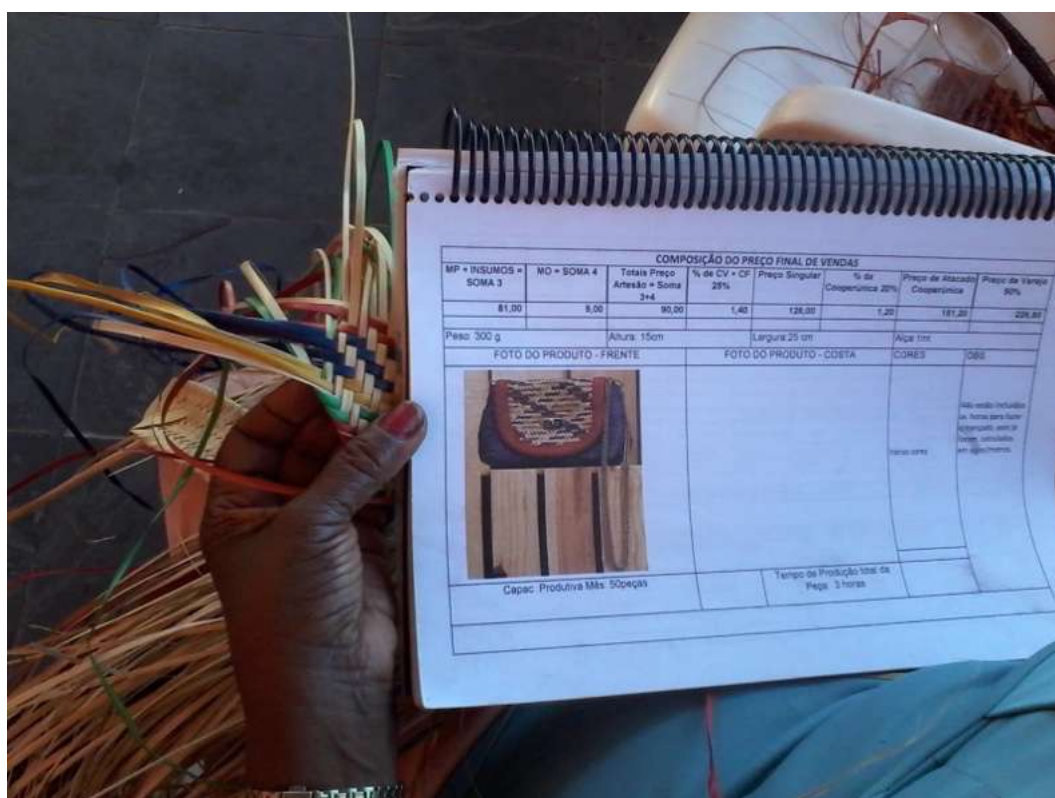
**Fig. 1.** Top view of the *ibirapema*. Textile structures manufactured in vegetable fibers are devoid of the feather art finishes. Technical reserve of the *Musée du Quai Branly*, 2018.

The *ibirapema* is a solid wooden club measuring about six feet and made of *pau brasil* (*Caesalpinia echinata*). The piece has the shape of a two-foot wide disc on one extremity, whereas the other extremity is a kind of flattened bat. This lower extremity is adorned with plant fibers and shows traces of feather tissues. (These plant fibers are of three distinct qualities, two of them being very similar to those used in the contemporary ‘tupinambá’ weaving technique: the ‘piaçava’ (*Attalea funifera*) and the ‘ouricuri’ (*Syagros coronada*)).



**Fig. 2.** Lower view of the ibirapema. Flattened surface manufactured in *Pau Brasil* wood with which the enemy's skull was smashed during the ritualized anthropophagic revenge in the terreiro (courtyard). Technical reserve of the *Musée du Quai Branly*, 2018.

The *bolsa menina*, on the other hand, is made of the *piaçava* fiber (*Attalea funifera*) and sewn with the ouricuri thread (*Syagros coronada*) utilizing a 3-D modeling technique belonging to the traditional indigenous tupinambá knowledge handed down in the northern coast of Bahia region over generations.



**Fig. 3.** Artisan crafting a *bolsa menina* during my fieldwork in Porto de Sauipe, the northern coast of Bahia, 2016.

Thus, this *corpus* of objects is composed of *tupinambá* indigenous artwork from the 16th century belonging to the collections of the most visited European ethnographic museums, such as the *Musée du Quai Branly* in Paris, and of another group of objects also called *tupinambá* in contemporary Brazil, of which the aforementioned *bolsa menina* is but one example. But, unfortunately, this latter set of objects is frequently neglected by art historians, maybe because, although their main raw materials are plants and

the technique evidently of indigenous tradition, they often incorporate artificial pigments and plastic and metal elements, or maybe because they were manufactured by rural populations in contemporary Brazil, some of which have not claimed their indigenous identity before the State.



**Fig. 4.** *Bolsa menina* in the catalogue *Talentos do Brasil*, 2009.

I will now attempt to show the point where the histories of these two objects intertwine. The *bolsa menina*, which is manufactured with the

contemporary *tupinambá* weaving technique, has material elements (such as the use of the ouricuri fiber) that go back to the *ibirapema* of the 16th century. Furthermore, according to Chakrabarty, as cited in Bueno (2018), when approaching colonial objects such as the *ibirapema*: “..the historian should remember that many of these objects remain symbolically active in living Brazilian cultures. Thus, they belong to what Chakrabarty calls the ontological now, which emphasizes the continuous relation between past and present practices, between modernity and all that preceded it.” In other words, to understand the relationship between these two objects in the contemporary world, it is necessary to try to grasp the material ties between them and the ontological sense of the *ibirapema* in colonial Brazil.

To this end, I will refer to the text “Vingança Tupinambá” by Manuela Carneiro da Cunha and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro (2009). Here, the authors connect the *ibirapema* to their theory of the “*tupinambá* temporality,” which, in turn, refers to a peculiar and intriguing social device, the *tupinambá* vengeance. Their text demonstrates how “the breaking of the skulls with the *ibirapema* was pursued more persistently [by the Tupinambás] than anthropophagy.” Cannibalism had an important but secondary role. Nonetheless, it was cannibalism that attracted the most fascination from the westerners, such as Brazilian modernist artists, who appropriated and popularized the term.

The fact of the matter is that both ritual practices operated the ontological definition of the Tupinambá. However, it was mainly the crushing of the enemy’s skull with the flattened end of the *ibirapema* that was determinant to distinguish the one who was, from the one who was not tupinambá in 16th century Brazil. Consequently, the *ibirapema* mediated the production of *the tupinambá* ethnicity, whereas cannibalism produced the limits of the Tupinambá ethnic group. The young and prestigious warrior that crushed the enemy’s skull with the *ibirapema*, and those who ate from the enemy’s flesh were Tupinambá. Consequently, the *ibirapema* may be considered an important socio-cultural artifact in Tupinambá cosmology since it produced this people’s historical continuity by mediating the production of the Tupinambá name.

Thus, in Brazil, before arriving at the European cabinets of curiosities in the early modern age, the *ibirapema* was the ritual and political object responsible for the historical process of producing Tupinambá ethnicity - just like the practice of anthropophagy was responsible for defining the limits of the ethnic group. In this sense, it is important to notice that Carneiro da Cunha and Viveiros de Castro do not use the analytical category 'identity.' The reason for this is that these anthropologists, as well as José Maurício Arruti, despite the differences concerning their theoretical approach, are proposing theories of 'ethnicity' as a historical process of production of ethnicity and recognition of internal limits that make out ethnicity as a group. Arruti (n.d.) construes 'identity' as a concept of recognition realized by people or institutions - such as the State - that are outside the group's internal limits. Thus, for them, 'ethnogenesis' is a process of self-recognition that precedes the process of recognizing the 'indigenous identity' granted by the State.

Therefore, it is clear that the category of 'authenticity' of a supposed indigenous identity is a category that is of interest only to the European canon of art history. It doesn't help us to understand the complexity of the material and immaterial culture produced by contemporary 'ethnic groups' or 'traditional peoples' who find themselves in constant cultural re-elaboration and legitimate objectification of their culture for political and economic reasons.

In agreement, by describing the ritualized *tupinambá* killings, Carneiro da Cunha and Viveiros de Castro (2009) intend to present the anthropophagic vengeance from the indigenous perspective of the Tupinambá. Through this narrative, these authors are defending the view that the notion of 'cold societies' used by Lévi-Strauss in the 1970s to understand African societies as 'non-historicisable' societies don't work for the study of South-American indigenous peoples such as the Tupinambá. According to them, the *tupinambá* temporality follows from the drive to avenge. And this vengeance, when emptied of the meanings imposed on it by an exoticizing western morality - from the Jesuits to the modernists - remains, in itself, simply as the *tupinambá* will to produce continuity for itself and the group.

Similarly, in the case of the *bolsa menina*, we must also try to apprehend the material ties between objects and their ontological sense in contemporary Brazil. By intertwining these theoretical notions of ‘*tupinambá* temporality’ and ‘ethnogenesis,’ it is possible to hypothesize that the self-recognition of the artisans in the northern coast of Bahia as an ethnic group arose on the limit where the indigenous weaving technique of *piçava* fibers met the visual and material culture of fashion when the latter – which is not *tupinambá* – advanced on their territory.

Just like with the *ibirapema*, in the case of the *bolsa menina*, the internal limits of the group are defined in the conflict with the other and can, thus, be considered an actualization of the temporal spiral of the ‘*tupinambá* temporality.’ It is only with the invasion of these territories by tourism that the name ‘Tupinambá’ resurfaces in this community, which organizes itself in a productive group formally known as *Cooperativa do Artefato Tupinambá* (Cooperative of the Tupinambá Artifact). Therefore, the self-designation as ‘Tupinambá,’ which is associated with this process of cultural reinvention of the dying and manufacturing techniques for the production of *piçava* fiber objects, suggests that the *bolsa menina*, by producing the Tupinambá name and historical continuity, are playing a role analogous to that of the *ibirapema* in the Tupinambá groups of the 16th century. The same goes for all other objects manufactured in Bahia's northern coast.

Unlike the population of the southern coast of Bahia, the group of extractivists and family farmers that produced the *bolsa menina* on the State's northern coast isn't a Tupinambá people recognized as indigenous by the Brazilian State. Nonetheless, the historical process of reinventing such objects associated with the production of indigenous ethnicity indicates that the self-designation of this group of artisans as ‘Tupinambá’ in the northern coast of Bahia in 2007 actualizes the *tupinambá* ontological temporality operated by the *ibirapema* in the 16th century. Furthermore, this shows that the agency of the *bolsa menina* equates the Tupinambá memory about the ways of extracting, preparing, and weaving the plant fibers of *piçava* and ouricuri not despite but because of the incorporation of new elements into its reinvention.



Therefore, the concern with ‘indigenous authenticity’ expressed in the recurring question mentioned at the beginning produces a noise that affects the meaning and the value of traditional indigenous works produced in contemporary Brazil when the European ethnographic museums receive these. The *bolsa menina* incorporated elements of cosmopolitan fashion's material and immaterial culture. Due to their ‘globalized’ appearance, it is not uncommon that, even today, a critical and learned audience still asks if products such as the *bolsa menina* are ‘really’ indigenous objects. Conservators and curators of ethnographic museums, and especially the art historians that now turn to arts of non-European traditions, should make an effort to abandon this false problem. Instead, they should focus on the concern with ‘indigenous alterity,’ a notion that may lead to going beyond the debates on restitution of objects and collections and which suggests that there may be a future for western ethnographic museums and a history of indigenous art if we are willing to enter a dialogue with these ethnic groups that resist and reinvent themselves in contemporary rural Brazil. Such groups, I would say, that face the conflict with invasive forms of globalized culture and modes of production are now more indigenous than ever. The future of these institutions can only lie to give agency to ‘indigenous alterity’ through new curatorial practices and museum policies, especially through the investment in public and participative ways of constituting collections and exhibitions.

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