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DOSSIER

ART MOVES: PERFORMATIVITY IN TIME, SPACE AND FORM

by Mieke Bal

EL ARTE (SE) MUEVE: PERFORMATIVIDAD EN EL TIEMPO, EL ESPACIO Y LA FORMA

por Mieke Bal

DOSSIER

SHARING SPACE: DISCOURSES OF DISPLAY

ETHNOGRAPHIC IMAGE: IN AND OUT OF THE EXHIBITION SPACE

LA IMAGEN ETNOGRÁFICA: DENTRO Y FUERA DEL ESPACIO EXPOSITIVO

Elisa de Souza Martínez¹

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Abstract

In La Triennale 2012 - *Intense Proximité*, curator Okwui Enwezor describes his activity as that of ethnographer, combining «images of reality and models of examining reality». Thus, he proposes a journey that starts with the exhibited works and goes beyond the field of art. Among them is a set of drawings and photographs produced by Claude Levi-Strauss in the course of fieldwork in Brazil in 1935. The displacement proposed by the ethnographer's photographs documents in ethnological interpretations, direct one's gaze to distant lands, as well as ancient times. From the images, the ethnographer's presence relates to a book, *Tristes Tropiques*, in which displacement unfolds in references to his predecessor, Guido Boggiani, and his successor, Darcy Ribeiro. The duality of approximating-distancing, a central movement in curatorial discourse, opens a way to seeing the ethnographic image as framing both a subject and its viewer.

Keywords

Ethnographic image; curatorial discourse; La Triennale 2012; transtextuality

Resumen

En la Triennale 2012 - *Intense Proximité*, el comisario Okwui Enwezor describe su actividad como etnógrafo, combinado «imágenes de la realidad y modelos de examen de la realidad». Así, propone un viaje que se inicia con las obras expuestas y va más allá del campo del arte. Entre esas obras se encuentra un conjunto de dibujos y fotografías realizadas por Claude Levi-Strauss en el transcurso de su trabajo de campo en Brasil en 1935. El desplazamiento propuesto por las fotografías y documentos del etnógrafo en las interpretaciones etnológicas, dirigen la mirada a tierras distantes, así como a tiempos antiguos. A partir de las imágenes, la presencia del etnógrafo se relaciona con el libro *Tristes Tropiques*, en el cual el desplazamiento se despliega en referencias a su predecesor, Guido Boggiani, y a su sucesor, Darcy

1. Universidade de Brasília, Brazil (souzamartinez@gmail.com).

Ribeiro. La dualidad proximidad-distanciamiento, un movimiento fundamental dentro de su discurso expositivo, conforma una nueva manera de ver la imagen etnográfica que es tanto un marco del propio tema como un marco del espectador.

Palabras clave

Imagen etnográfica; discurso de conservación; La Triennale 2012; transtextualidad.

This perhaps, creates the anxiety of disturbing nearness, the intimacy of being under siege by outsiders whose values (including their symbolic and historical identities) are viewed to be at odds with the values of indigenes (including their symbolic and historical identities).

Okwui Enwezor (2012 b, 22)

THE IMAGE OF A GROUP of Indians cheerfully bathing in a river somewhere in the Americas may seem a glimpse of paradise.² No one knows what the vegetation was like in Eden, though it is presumed to have been plentiful and beautiful. To presume its beauty is to project onto the Edenic world a known typology, largely formed by the conviction that what is found in nature can be classified and become ordinary. Or that we only recognize the beauty of what we are familiar with. Diversity can be confronted in everyday life. But, how far can one move away from aesthetic biases?

The ordinary and the extraordinary are ways of being, and the shifting of images between them builds a network of interactions.³ Moreover, they are territories with blurred boundaries, whose characteristics are not pre-determined. Ordinary defines everything that belongs to a system of references whose complexity is so familiar that it goes unnoticed.

The shifting of an ethnographic object, which moves between the space of scientific study and the space of display of aesthetic qualities, requires detachment, or recognition that it is an element of «alien inheritance».⁴ A system of representation or exhibition is used to bring what is seen close to who sees it. Before an object of an ethnographic collection on display, one is confronted by the remnants of other «lives» to capture the expression of material reality of a culture (Ribeiro & Van Velthem, 1992, 103). The experience with the ethnographic object replaces another experience that is more complex and challenging: the direct confrontation with another world. Even though other senses, such as touch and smell, are mobilized in contact with exotic objects, the sense of sight and the way it organizes the information received predominates.

2. The research for this paper was developed with support from the National Scientific and Technological Development Council (CNPq) of Brazil, through the Productivity in Research Program.

3. The concept of shifter permeates this analysis, referring to Roman Jakobson's definition for «a word that shifts the discourse away from the point of enunciation by setting up an action, a time and a place different from these of the person who is speaking» (MARTIN & RINGHAM, 2006, 185). For the purpose of analyzing images, the concept of shifter is used to define different ways to approach qualities that characterize the presence of an enunciator/enunciatee in a visual discourse.

To analyze the definition of effective or desirable boundaries between private and public, Eric Landowski (1992, 85-86) develops a more general problem, i.e. he analyzes «the visibility regime of social actors in their different roles». Although in this text the theme is restricted to the modes of relationship between public and private in the field of political communication, we consider the contributions of Landowski's (1992, 90) approach to a reflection on the «visibility conditions» in which «the minimum relationship that constitutes seeing admits, at shallower levels, different modal specifications [...] designated as that which 'sees' and that which 'is seen' come into play.»

4. In analyzing the different functions of ethnographic collections, Berta G. Ribeiro and Lucia H. van Velthem (1992, 104) claim that «the systematic plunder of the cultural heritage of non-European peoples was a conquest of ownership, or a capturing of an alien heritage.» Also, «[l]argely, the value assigned to these objects was their ability to testify about the early stages of human culture, as well as a common past that confirmed European triumph and superiority.»

Generally, a drawing is identified based on the recognition of the materials used in producing an image. The perception of plastic qualities not only provides an understanding of the technical procedures used in creating the work, but also an understanding of the role that the author assigns to each decision and how this influences the perception of the work's meaning.⁵

SHIFTING AWAY FROM

The seemingly innocent desire to conquer a promised land, which the Tupinambá Indians from Brazil termed Land without Evil (*Terra sem Mal*), coexists with the carnal ambition to penetrate the forest and master it.⁶ In his *Essay on exoticism*, discussed here in detail by Ernst van Alphen, Victor Segalen (2002, 44) reproduced a fragment of a letter to Henry Manceron, written on 9/23/1911, in Tientsin, in which he describes the pleasure of contact with the exotic as something that mobilizes erotic fantasy and sexual energy in every possible sense:

I told you I had been happy in the tropics. This is violently true. During the two years I spent in Polynesia, I could hardly sleep for joy. [...] Only the gods-of-pleasure know to what extent the moment of waking heralds the coming of day and reveals the continual happiness which the day lavishes. I felt exhilaration flowing through my muscles.

The more attractive the ambiance of the scene, the more desirable it is. The majority of drawings and watercolors by travelers in expeditions throughout the Americas between the 16th and 19th centuries differ from the general characteristics of the image outlined above. The inventory of local wealth and wonders recorded by these artists contains landscapes, flora and fauna. Part of this documentation was made to order, during scientific expeditions such as that of naturalist Georg Heinrich von Langsdorff, from 1821 to 1829.⁷ However, the images stood out not for their documentary aspect but for the romantic tone that extended the dimensions of nature and minimized human presence, as if its author had never been there.

Ethnographic collections were formed out of such scientific expeditions. Their precursors are scattered in drawers of an Old World curio cabinet. Ironically, their

5. About the relationship between image and plastic expression, Algirdas Julien Greimas (2004, 82-83) comments on the method developed by Diderot to address, in an equitable manner, «an 'ideal' part», according to tradition, and a 'technical' part in which he exalts the artist's 'doing', endorsing it with the aid of a complex pictorial axiology». The duality of visions, which is amplified through contact with artists in their studios, reiterates, according to Greimas, the statement that «a semiotic object, rather than a given, is nothing but the result of a reading that builds it.» Moreover, it is necessary to consider the «epistemological break», which from the beginning of the 20th century has been creating objects that seem stripped from figurative traits.

6. According to Eduardo de Almeida Navarro (1995, 66), while the «Garden of Eden is governed by the will of God» and «disobeying it (or defying the power that governs it) brings on the punishment of losing paradise», in the Land without Evil «no higher power would limit the action of man». Yet, according to Cristina Pompa (1998, 44), the Land without Evil represents a «cosmogonic-apocalyptic system, preexistent to the arrival of the white people» that «predicts a future more or less close to a cosmic cataclysm from which one can escape by reaching heaven in life».

7. This was the scientific expedition organized by Baron von Langsdorff, consul general of Russia in Brazil, supported by Tsar Alexander I, which lasted from June 1821 to March 1829, and accompanied by artists Moritz Rugendas, Aimé-Adrien Taunay and Hercules Florence.

model is copied by many countries in the Americas. A Brazilian example to note is the National Museum (Museu Nacional), founded in Rio de Janeiro in 1808 by King D. João VI of Portugal, with «thousands of objects worthy of observation and study», a «catalogue of objects awaiting commodification». With these features, the museum, according to Jens Andermann (2015) «despite its modest means, symbolically maintained the fiction of a Portuguese-Brazilian empire» that, even after Independence, «remained [...] a stage to theatricalize the European ancestral bonds and 'imperial' extension of Brazil.»⁸

In this context, and in similar institutions in Brazil, the «ethnographic» designation is assigned to collections of objects both from distant regions, such as Africa or Asia, and from regions of the country, underlining their role as «icons of a remote and savage world, a global fringe of 'primitive peoples' opposed to the 'collecting nations' amongst which Brazil included itself» (Andermann, 2015).

Unlike art collections, ethnographic collections are organized with the unlimited accumulation of elements. Given that each object is a life testimony, in this type of collection, a quality is obtained when bringing together different classes of objects, representing aspects of the cultural life of different social groups. Moreover, in the museology context, their presence seems logical and appeases tensions with the art system, while simultaneously causing them to be «frozen in their timeless otherness», as claimed by Mieke Bal (1996, 174). For this reason, the first impression at an ethnographic exhibition is that it will be of little use in thinking about the history of art. The main criterion for setting it up is not artistic quality in a traditional sense. Instead, it rebuilds a material system, as the situational context in which all the elements collected are analyzed in varying degrees of interaction.⁹

Even though the museum visitor's curiosity to see the processes of art production in the studio might motivate the display of work tools, as in the Atelier Brancusi at the Centre Pompidou in Paris, eating habits are not the focus of the analysis on the evolution of the style of works of art in general. On the other hand, ethnographic collections show as much as possible. In addition to a large number of tools gathered to understand the way in which individuals turn natural resources into cultural goods, one also finds documentation of the meeting of the ethnographer with the material reality of a culture. This experience is documented in field diaries, photographs, reports, drawings, films and recorded statements.¹⁰

In addition to artifacts, which comprise the body of an ethnographic collection, documents on production methods allow one to understand their relevance and

8. The text is part of «Relics and Selves: Iconographies of the National in Argentina, Brazil and Chile, 1880-1890 (Andermann, 2015).» After its founding, with the name Royal Museum (Museu Real), it occupied a building in Campo de Sant'Anna Course in Rio de Janeiro, and was transferred in 1892 to the São Cristóvão Palace, former residence of the emperor deposed by the 1889 military coup, at Quinta da Boa Vista, where it has remained until this day.

9. Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira (2003) defines «material system» as a «complex interacting unit of behaviors, ideas and objects polarized around each individual element of a material culture; or, more precisely, a set of objects and ideas associated with them, among which there is a high, albeit varied, degree of interaction.»

10. In the approach of Berta G. Ribeiro and Lucia H. van Velthem (1992), this type of collection, in addition to being the product of knowledge, is an expression of the values that determine its formation. That is, each ethnographic collection is the testimony of a situation of capture.

relationship to a cultural system. Information on the way of life of the people that produced an object help place it geographically and historically. Sometimes, the absence of documentation on the cultural system of a social group makes way for the adoption, in the analysis, of categories that are external to the cultural system of origin. Thus, overlaps are created with a view to translating, i.e. overcoming the barrier provided by the unknown.

MOVING BETWEEN GALLERIES

Although the distinctive qualities of Western modern art, especially abstraction, may have been invented by primitive peoples, the mystery of their origin remains.¹¹ The approach enabled by the use of customary art history terms erases differences and builds a kind of monophonic intelligibility, in which the terms that could indicate the existence of other value systems are suppressed. Monophony is dictatorial to a certain degree. Could it be possible to name something without moving it away from its own identity?

Between September 16, 2013 and May 12, 2014, the exhibition *Feathered Walls - Hangings from Ancient Peru* (Fig. 1) was held at the Metropolitan Museum of Art of New York, showing feather panels made by Peruvian Indians, probably between the 6th and 11th centuries AD. Visitors do not leave their path at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York to go to Ancient Peru.

In the hallway between the wings «Arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas» and «Modern and Contemporary Art», a series of 12 «impressive feather panels» that «rank among the most luxurious and unusual works created by textile artists in Peru prior to the Spanish conquest in 1532» was accompanied by a text with information about their ancient origin and the technique employed in their execution.

On the museum's website, the exhibition is defined as an «installation», set up so that the objects «may be close to the way they were displayed in ancient times on special ceremonial occasions, covering the rough, gray stone walls of Wari structures, and imbuing them with elegance and luxuriousness.» One could hardly associate the space at the Met with the environment of rough gray stone walls of funerary constructions of the pre-Columbian Peru Wari people. Nor do we have elements to judge whether «elegance and luxuriousness» were valued in ancient Peru. Anyway, the set of panels displayed with museological zeal is imposing to the point of producing a different ambience from the spaces of common and ephemeral life. In the museum, the panels formed by alternating yellow and blue feather rectangles placed side by side, take on the status of works of art and become defined in terms that presume an educated look: «the minimalist design of the panels

11. To name the painting styles of the Paleolithic period, Arnold Hauser attributed terms like «impressionist» and «expressionist» to distinguish, respectively, the set of works located in southern France and northern Spain from those located in the north of this country.

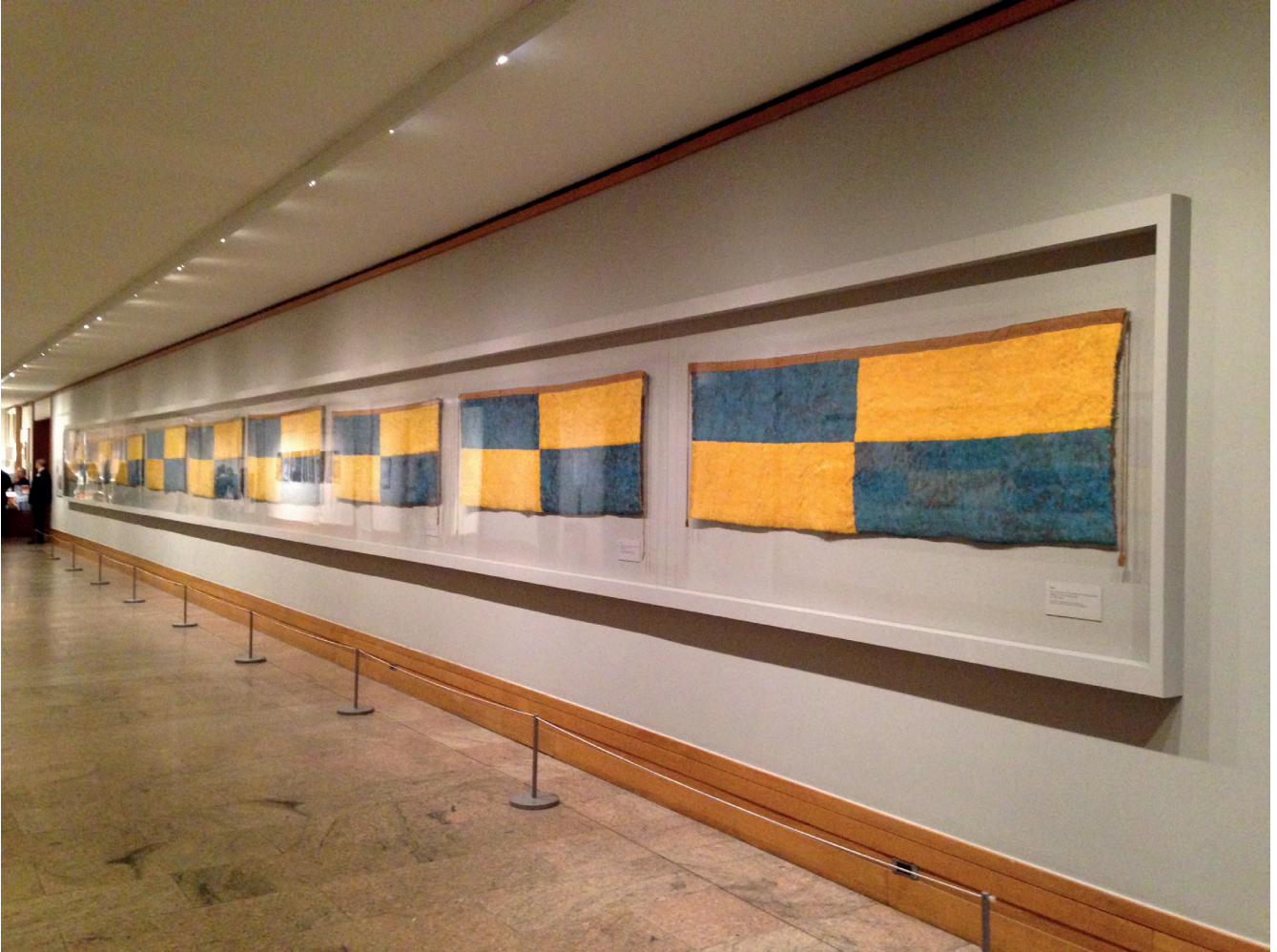


FIGURE 1 - FEATHERED WALLS - HANGINGS FROM ANCIENT PERU. The Metropolitan. Museum of Art, New York. Installation view.

creates a striking visual connection between the art of the ancient Americas and modernism.»

Thus, the visual experience brings us closer to the ecumenical Rothko Chapel and moves us away from the «original burial context» described in the institutional text. Although they were accompanied by information on the environment and the execution technique, the absence of data on their original meaning was filled by the assignment of a symbolic content: they would have been pieces of funerary art. The anxiety caused by the panels that do not resemble representations of deities or descriptive schemes of everyday life is appeased by two certainties: 1 – the works «rank among the most luxurious and unusual»; and 2 – while exhibiting «minimalist design», they are not primitive.¹²

12. These statements are available on the exhibition's webpage, at <<http://www.metmuseum.org/exhibitions/listings/2013/feathered-walls>>, accessed on December 15, 2015.

The Peruvian panels are neither «forms of ornamental and geometric art» nor «imitative and naturalistic expressions», which are, according to Arnold Hauser (1999, 1-2), the main projections of «autocratic and conservative or liberal and progressive views» of art historians and archaeologists into the arts of pre-historic times. In this author's approach, the way Paleolithic painting takes on an «increasingly pictorial, instantaneous and apparently spontaneous form» is impressionist, because it is an «optically organic picture.» Moreover, he claims that «we have to wait until modern impressionism to find any parallel in later art.»

MOVING OUT OF THE PRINT

In addition to the objects, documents that aid understanding of a material system are also called ethnographic. Their production usually accompanies the ethnographer's travels and, therefore, the means used to produce them are portable. Drawing and photography stand out as techniques for quick recording of impressions during travelling, whose simplest product is a printed image on a paper surface. Each of the techniques offers specific resources for the image produced to be considered true, and for the information it contains to be considered relevant to the understanding of a material system.

In comparing drawing and photography, the arguments for assigning different functions to each of these mediums are resumed. Although drawing and photography have alternated since the invention of this technique, from a procedure for sketching to a means of executing finished works, the horizontality of these functions does not lead to equitable attribution of credibility to the results. Drawing is always considered more subjective than photography, and its use in ethnography became more restricted with the expansion of photography resources. The breakdown of form produced by scientific illustration in order to aid understanding of an organic structure in time-space relationships is obtained with greater educational potential through moving film, which, in addition to displaying the parts, reveals the organism in operation. Drawing gradually became reserved for the recording of private, subjective impressions of the travelling ethnographer. Thus, the photograph is assigned the status of truth, and the drawing that of invention. These are not conditions determined by each of the means or technical processes, since there are photographic images that are not documents of reality, just as there are drawings that, complying with the rigors of a system of illusionist representation, seem mere mechanical recording of what is seen.

In a photograph, scenes that seem to be more posed than others produce detachment, which seems desirable in the case of a scientific document. Or, in images that seem to have been taken from a family album, with people in spontaneous situations, the beholder moves towards a scene that mobilizes and disrupts his or her indifference. Taking the problem of distance and approximation produced by a realistic image to the field of art, it is important to remember that for Rudolf Arnheim (1999) visual perception and the development of concepts are in fact intertwined and can not be dismembered as if they were modalities of independent

activities, both for those who produce the image as for the beholder. In his approach, perception, to be considered as such, is not limited to the accumulation of visual data.¹³ Ironically, the author states that sight does not consist of «the faithful recording of images» and drawings can not be seen «like attempts to reproduce optically faithful percepts» but as «responses to properties extracted from nature.» As a result, Arnheim (1989, 18) states that images are not «mechanical imitation» to «testify to the much more intelligent feat of grasping the basic structure» of the objects they portray. Instead, they translate structure into the kind of shape pattern that can be obtained in a given artistic medium. Expectations of seeing in a drawing a faithful representation of objects, with less presence of traces of its making by human hands, are due, according to the author, to our own tradition that «is still under the influence of Renaissance naturalism.» This may explain why in spite of all the exploits of modern art, lifelike images are popular. In addition to the popularity that surrounds realistic images in the field of art, visual documents are useful to science. Paradoxically, the detachment of the scientific view is aimed at moving toward the object, starting from intimate contact with the uniqueness of its existence.¹⁴

In the Introduction of the catalogue for *La Triennale - Intense Proximité* - Orkui Enwezor (2012 a, 22) presents an overview in which «[i]t appears that our time is emblemized, and equally traumatized by the collapse of distance.»¹⁵ The argument is based on the claim that the «fieldwork» of the curator and of the ethnographer are similar, to the extent that each subject travels to discover the other beyond the borders of a territory inhabited by each one of them. In Enwezor's view (2012 a, 21), their wanderlust stems «from a series of detours, disorientations, and disarticulations of cultural geographies that are being remapped in the face of rapid global reconfigurations.» The cartographic disorientation described by Enwezor as a kind of anti-epistemology, draws on a general principle that I consider questionable.

Hostility and non-recognition in ethnographic documents may have different functions according to the view that produced them. In one of the rooms of the exhibition, a long inclined showcase displayed a set of 18 drawings and 37 photographs made by Claude Lévi-Strauss (Fig. 2) during his stay among the Kadiwéu Indians in Brazil, which manifest a style, optics, or poetics of observation that examines the different registers of cultural, social, and natural phenomena that, according to the curator, characterize a type of document format or genre.¹⁶

13. «Through processes worthy of the name go beyond mere computation. Inevitably, they rely on imagery, specially on vision. [...] The opposite is equally true. Vision involves thinking (ARNHEIM, 1989, 17).»

14. «Reproductions mostly involves interpretation, only when they clarify certain functional properties (ARNHEIM, 1989, 19).»

15. *La Triennale 2012 - Intense Proximité/Intense Proximity*, Palais de Tokyo, from 20 April to 26 August 2012, Paris. Two obvious references to Okwui Enwezor's project are the exhibitions *Primitivism in 20th-Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern* (Museum of Modern Art of New York, 1984) and *Magiciens de la terre* (Centre Georges Pompidou and the Grande Halle of the Parc de la Villette, Paris, 1989). Both events, as well as the criticism surrounding their unfolding, are discussed by Enwezor in *La Triennale's* catalogue.

16. In the same room with the drawings and photographs of Claude Lévi-Strauss, photographs of Marcel Griaule and Pierre Verger, as well as drawings by Geta Bratescu, were also displayed.



FIGURE 2 – LA TRIENNALE, PALAIS DE TOKYO, PARIS. Installation view. In the foreground: table with exhibition prints by Marcel Griaule, Mission Dakar-Djibouti – 1931-1933, Musée du quai Branly, Paris. In the background: window with photographs and facsimiles of drawings by Claude Lévi-Strauss, 1937, from the Collection de la Bibliothèque Nationale de France, département des Manuscrits, Paris. On the wall: exhibition prints, from photographs by Claude Lévi-Strauss, realized during research travels, Musée du quai Branly, Paris.

To define it, Enwezor (2012) uses the term «ethnographic form», distinguishing it from the «ethnographic poetics» present in the work of contemporary artists. In a way, it is still the same challenge faced by the National Museum of Rio de Janeiro. In 1882, with a scope that is decidedly «imperial» (Andermann, 2015), the Anthropological Exhibition was seen as «a ‘spectacular’ collection of ‘marvels’» and in this context, it is their singularity rather than their representativity which attracts the chronicler’s eye. In La Triennale, the ethnographic content was distributed, and somehow diluted, so that the web, or interdependence generated by the curatorial discourse, prevented opposition between artistic and ethnographic elements.

FORKING PATHS

Images may be produced for the purpose of seduction. Beautiful landscapes can lead us to dream of places where, free from obligations and physical decay that

the passing of time imposes on the body, we can live eternally in a state of joy. The characteristics of an image with that appeal, seductive and at the same time, magical, are not fixed. Each person needs to find in the image something of his or her own desire, expanded, for the seduction to be consummated. For some, it takes only a little bit of lavish and exuberant nature.¹⁷ For others, the landscape needs to be occupied by recognizable and, to a certain extent, domesticated beings. The possibilities are endless, as are the ways to create an ideal place. Most importantly, for desire to be always kept in suspension and thus be eternal, what one sees must not seem entirely familiar. Proximity neutralizes attraction.

The visual documentation of ethnographic expeditions to the Americas have an undeniable informative function. However, more than reproducing the reality that presents itself before the eyes of each traveler, images express ways of seeing.¹⁸ These images are not only the representation of an external referent, but rather the result of a «truth saying» which Greimas and Courtés (2013, 530) call veridiction. The use of graphic representation codes, in the case of drawing, and of a repertoire of formal framing and lighting principles, in the case of photography, produces an image that is seen as true or false, deceitful or secret. That is, the interpretation of an image as true is not determined by the use of veridiction devices and the transmission of truth, and depends solely on epistemic mechanisms set up on both ends of the communication chain, at the level of enunciator and enunciatee.¹⁹ Consequently, the tacit understanding between two more or less conscious accomplices, each equipped with a «believe-true», is defined as a veridiction contract. In this scheme, the enunciatee's role is to decide on the discourse's «to be» or «not to be» and make the veridiction interpretation. The «real seeming» and the «real being» establish the correspondence between how the object (in this case, the ethnographic image) presents itself to the world and the status that it takes on in the value system in which it is seen. Greimas defines it as the reification of meaning, illustrated by the way legal discourse seems to be based on a reality that is simply another discourse: the «implicit internal referent», or set of laws with which it has a transtextual relationship.²⁰

While a drawing shows explicit traces of the person who produced it, and subjectivity, an ethnographic photograph may illustrate a system, anthropometry, and presents to the curious Eurocentric viewers the anatomical characteristics of the documented people.²¹ It is considered accurate because its production reflects scientific intelligibility criteria to which a rational principle for distinguishing,

17. As in Victor Segalen's exoticism.

18. RIBEIRO & VAN VELTHEM (1992, 103) comment that, just as the collected objects, ethnographic documents portray «a part of the world and, concomitantly, the history and reality of those who collected them.»

19. The terms enunciator and enunciatee are used in semiotic theory to name the subject of a speech act (enunciation). They differ from the verbal simulacrum of the sender («I») and the fictional addressee for whom the discourse is supposedly written. Therefore, these terms do not define historical subjects, and are part of a conceptual model for interpreting the production of meaning as an interactive process (MARTIN & RINGHAM, 2006, 76-77).

20. On transtextuality modes, see G. GENETTE, *Paratexts - thresholds of interpretation*, Translated by Jane E. Lewin, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997.

21. This system, invented by Alphonse Bertillon in 1883, was used to associate physical characteristics to differences in levels of intelligence, civilizational development stages and criminal behaviors. The consequences of these

through measurements, different ethnic types, applies. By framing each person as a representative type of a social group, the photographic image corresponds to the expectations of those who believe that what they see is not a person, but rather a specimen. Initially, an ethnographic image focuses on particulars. The ethnographer's view approaches the object to be documented to grasp every detail and translate this experience into an image. Then this record, like any image, is integrated into a field of relationships with other images and experiences. Either by comparison or contrast, the image becomes an element of difference.²² Lastly, considering that the differential aspects of each image make it unique, as does its content, a view is obtained of the general type portrayed, as well as its internal heterogeneity.²³

In each case, the effect of a sense of truth is achieved through persuasion, in the photographic framing, and corresponds to a cognitive doing. What anthropometric photographs provide is not a knowing, or scientific knowledge about the documented people, but the translation of otherness, according to a set of familiar parameters. The *other* exists in relation to the *self*. The simulacrum of truth, which is presented regardless of the truth implicit in its content, is simultaneously linked to the axiological universes of the enunciator and the enunciate.²⁴ If these subjects do not recognize a kind of display of otherness in the way language is structured, the result could be seen as the overlapping of two codes: that of the portrait, which brings the image close to a universe of cultural references, and that of the scientific measurement of forms, which pushes it away. In a way, the ethnographic photograph contains a paradox: the eye comes close to the object to see it better and at the same time moves away from it to see more clearly.²⁵ Agreement between a format and the interpretation of its role in the production of meaning is, according to Greimas, defined by the persuasion's effectiveness.

In order to analyze the use of ethnographic images in exhibitions, the regimes of truth are considered, which, according to Ella Shohat and Robert Stam (2006, 44), are discourses encapsulated in institutional structures that exclude certain voices, aesthetics and representations. In introducing this expression, the authors cite the definition of colonial discourse formulated by Peter Hulme, namely, a set of linguistic practices united by a common vision of colonial relations.

applications were disastrous, especially when they were at the service of oppressive regimes, leading to their decline in the social sciences. Recently, however, anthropometry has been cited as a useful tool in online trade practices.

22. In analyzing the «systematic criticism of the ethnocentrism of classical philosophy» produced by Rousseau, Tzvetan Todorov (1994, 12) points out that: the «good universalism» «that does not deduce human identity from a principle, whatever it may be; rather, it starts by becoming thoroughly familiar with the particular, and then progresses by feeling its way.»

23. In the paper «Textual polyphony and discursive», José Luiz Fiorin (1999, 35) defines interdiscursivity as «inherent in the constitution of discourse», thus, it is social in that it «discourses with other discourses.»

24. Opening the essay, «The Precession of Simulacra», Jean Baudrillard (1983, 1) cites Ecclesiastes: «The simulacrum is never that which conceals the truth – it is the truth which conceals that there is none. The simulacrum is true.»

25. Rudolf Arnheim (1999: 20) considers that the production of an image is not, under any circumstance, a «mindless reproduction», and that its function is not restricted to «mere replicants of their physical appearances.»

What may seem cohesive and clear from a distance cannot be reduced to a Promethean vision that, according to Shohat and Stam (2006, 23), reflects the mode of action defined by Barbara Christian as «the Western arrogance of owning the invention of everything, including Evil». They propose, as a kind of antidote to the inertia of the colonial legacy, a reflexive and experimental ethnography that seems closer to Levi-Strauss's work than the anthropometric photograph. Their work, although rich in examples and broad in scope, focuses on the tropological operations of Eurocentrism and produces interpretations that, in their attempt to be cohesive, seem overly consistent. If the goal is to propose multidimensional methods that take into account the institutional set ups, the policies that dominate the use of language and the distribution of roles, the generic mediations and the cultural changes, the convergence in the interpretive process of each discourse may be considered excessive. By introducing the «problem of unity and diversity», Tzvetan Todorov (1994) describes it as equivalent to the problem of universality and relativity. In this sense, and to tackle the challenges of analyzing ethnographic images, a list of situations in which the Kadiwéu Indians of Brazil are characterized is presented.

MOVING INTO THE EXHIBITION, AGAIN

Three groups of objects can be identified in ethnographic collections. Each one expresses a way of living in relation to other cultures: isolated, in the process of integration and integrated. The objects that characterize one type of isolation, albeit relative and relevant only to define an unknown way of being, are produced with unknown means and processes, and their existence highlights the discontinuity of the global cultural system. In colonial discourse, with a global reach, it is claimed that the planet is «mapped» and that the only thing to do is to try to reach other planets.²⁶ If so, the ethnographic document is dispensable since it has ceased to play the role of mediator between cultural systems, or translator of otherness. The belief in a single global system generates a kind of monophonic discourse free from moral constraint. On the other hand, the «essentialistic» and «a-historical» model establishes a paradigm of truth that, in the case of ethnographic images, reflects a complex hierarchical system that the following examples reveal.²⁷

Back to La Triennale, we find the photos and drawings of Claude Lévi-Strauss, made during his eight-year stay in Brazil. Enwezor establishes a parallel between the visual documentation and the writing of *Tristes Tropiques*, in which the language ceases to be merely instrumental and the account purely scientific to express a position regarding the Kadiwéu tribe, as well as an «ethnographic imagination»

26. This statement was used by a French geographer during the Seminar «*Magiciens de la Terre*», *vingt-cinq ans après*, at the Bibliothèque Kandinsky of the Centre Pompidou in Paris, held from July 1 to 10, 2014, in which the author participated. Numerous sources can be consulted for information on indigenous groups that remain isolated, regardless of advances in their integration process.

27. Shohat & Stam (2006, 45) analyze racist thought as an ally and partial product of colonialism. It is a complex hierarchical thought, which is expressed through the seemingly anachronistic discourse that covers it. «They are all this way, and so will remain.»

through which the exotic remains mysterious.²⁸ The written text expresses the voice of a subject, his testimony of contact with the people he met on his expeditions. In addition, in the photographic documents there is a spontaneity that seems to attempt to neutralize the intrusive power of photography. Even when they are portraits, the poses are not as stiff as those of studio photographs. These images expose, above all, the humanity of the Kadiwéu. They are not dummies, submissive to the proper positioning of an object of study. The set shown in Fig. 3 presents a variety of framings that seem to meet different documentation requirements.

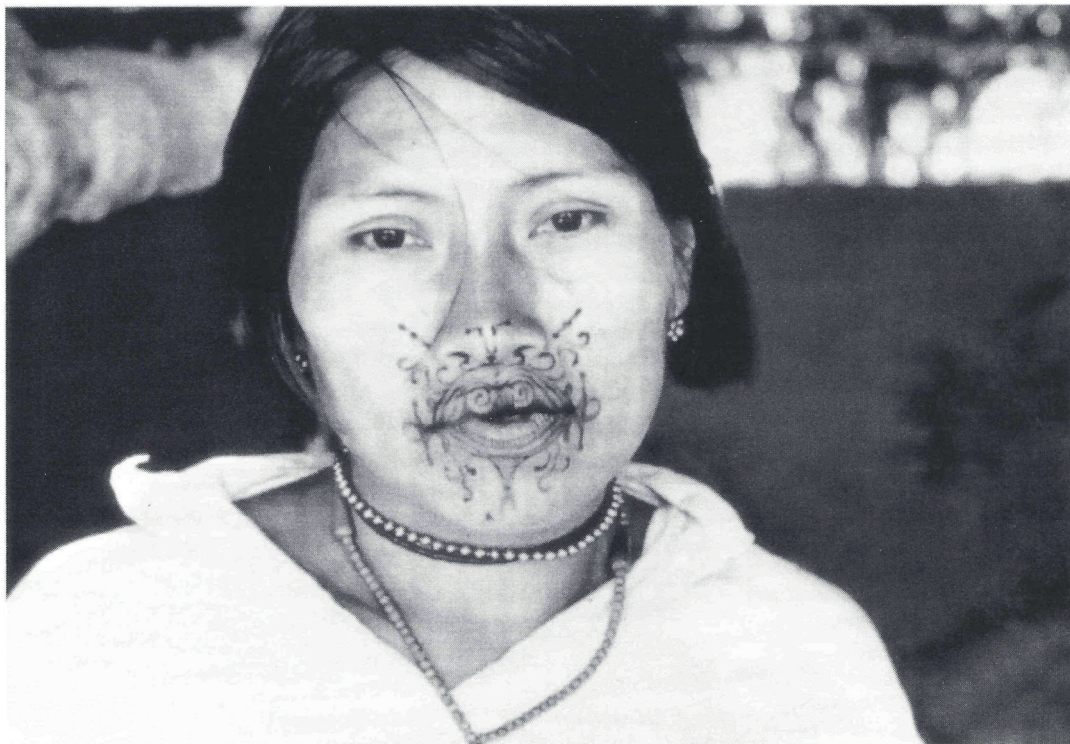


FIGURE 3 – CLAUDE LÉVI-STRAUSS. PHOTOGRAPHS TAKEN DURING RESEARCH TRAVELS. Exhibition prints, Musée du quai Branly, Paris. La Triennale, Palais de Tokyo, Paris. Detail of installation.

In the set shown above, the photograph of a «Kadiwéu woman» is one of those published in the latest Brazilian edition of *Tristes Tropiques* (Fig. 4).²⁹ In the book, the photographs are inserted in relation to the narrative course of the ethnographer's expeditions and are accompanied by drawings of utilitarian objects, as well as drawings collected among the Indians. From photographs to drawings on paper, Levi-Strauss (2014, 197) is interested in recording the «twisted asymmetrical

28. The relationship with the book *Tristes Tropiques* is developed in the Introduction of the exhibition catalog, written by Enwezor. It is assumed here that the curatorial discourse encompasses both situations, exhibition and printed catalog, and that it is in the context marked by the latter that the ethnographic poetics of Levi-Strauss is presented as a result of graphic procedures and writing, through which the ethnographer expresses himself.

29. Although a comparative analysis of the different editions of *Tristes Tropiques*, at least in Brazil and France, could have been very productive, this analysis refers to the Brazilian edition of 1996, printed in 2014.



4-5. *Mulheres cadiueu de rosto pintado.*

FIGURE 4 – CLAUDE LÉVI-STRAUSS. PHOTOGRAPHS TAKEN DURING RESEARCH TRAVELS, PUBLISHED IN *TRISTES TRÓPICOS* (*TRISTES TROPÍQUES*), BRAZILIAN EDITION, 1996, PP. 160-161. CAPTION: «CADIUEU WOMEN WITH PAINTED FACES.»

arabesques alternating with motifs of subtle geometry.» In the exhibition, body painting is presented in photographic documents that highlight their context, that is, the body on which they are made.³⁰

In *Tristes Tropiques*, in addition to visual documents collected by the book's author, a drawing made by Italian painter and ethnographer Guido Boggiani, who was among the Kadiwéu at the end of the 19th century, is reproduced. Boggiani's drawing (Fig. 6) is, for Levi-Strauss (2014, 197), a type of survival of traditional patterns that are due to the «exceptional importance of body paintings, and especially facial painting, in indigenous culture.»³¹



FIG. 83 — A cunhada de Joãozinho

FIGURE 5 – GUIDO BOGGIANI. DRAWING IN THE BRAZILIAN EDITION OF *OS CADUVEOS*, 1975, P. 191. CAPTION: «JOÃOZINHO'S SISTER-IN-LAW.»



6. Uma bela Cadiueu em 1895 (segundo Boggiani).

FIGURE 6 – DRAWING BY GUIDO BOGGIANI, REPRODUCED IN *TRISTES TRÓPICOS (TRISTES TROPQUES)*, BRAZILIAN EDITION, 1996, PP. 160-161. CAPTION: «A BEAUTIFUL CADIUEU IN 1895 (ACCORDING TO BOGGIANI).»

30. In *Tristes Tropiques*, Levi-Strauss (2014, 197) describes how the Kadiwéu women were asked to produce the drawings, and the women, without any inhibition, drew on blank paper «as they would on their own face». In the ethnographer assessment, the ease with which the women drew on a two-dimensional support the motifs that would cover their faces demonstrates that they were indifferent «to the natural architecture of the human face».

31. Perhaps here we have a disagreement. For Lévi-Strauss (2014, 197), the quality of the visual documentation made by Boggiani does not reside in its expressiveness, but its accuracy. In addition, the ethnographer's use of a drawing made forty years before his meeting with the Kadiwéu is intended to prove that despite contact with the colonizers, «the style, technique and inspiration» of the body painting of that people had remained unchanged.

In the introduction of the Brazilian edition of Boggiani's book, *Os caduveo*, anthropologist Herbert Baldus highlights the book's diary format, which preserves psychological details of the ethnographer's coexistence with the Indians.³²

In fact, Boggiani's presence in his account is inseparable from the material system he describes. In some situations, his ethnocentric voice does not hide the compassion he feels for those who have not yet reached a more advanced stage of socioeconomic development. His testimony is illustrated by a variety of records that demonstrate the roles that the author attributed to different means of visual representation: photography to record functional objects, technical drawing to represent the functions of tools and uses of objects and artistic drawing to represent landscapes and peoples. The drawing reproduced by Levi-Strauss belongs to the latter group. In Boggiani's book, this drawing is accompanied by a caption that makes the image unique. It is not the portrait of a Kadiwéu, but «Joãozinho's sister-in-law» (Fig. 5). The warmth of the caption is omitted by Levi-Strauss, who turns it into a historical document by pairing it with the following text: «A beautiful cadiveu in 1895 (according to Boggiani)» (Fig. 5). This detachment is consistent with the presentation of the other visual documents in *Tristes Tropiques*, and the people portrayed are anonymous elements that contribute to the composition of specimens.

While Boggiani restricts the use of photography to the documentation of functional objects, Levi-Strauss used this technique to record everyday situations. When it is apparent, warmth is recorded as a feature of intra-social relationships that do not involve the ethnographer.³³ If there were emotional ties as intense as those manifested by Boggiani during Levi-Strauss's expedition, it is hard to tell. The images are inserted in a style of writing that Enwezor describes as poetic, although the texts of the captions strictly describe tribal activities and none of the people portrayed are identified by name.

In the same passage in which he describes kadiwéu body painting, Levi-Strauss reports a recent discovery. It is the publication of the study by Brazilian ethnographer Darcy Ribeiro on the same indigenous group.³⁴ As Boggiani, Ribeiro dedicated a book to the vast material collected during his expedition.³⁵ It contains two types of visual documents: photographic records of the environment, of productive activities and of life in the village, and drawings of decorative patterns made by the

32. Darcy Ribeiro (1980, 17) mentions the following denominations for the Kadiwéu: *Cadigueèguos* ou *Catibebos* (Aguirre, 1898); *Cativegevodi* (F. Mendez, 1772); *Cadiueós* (Almeida Serra, 1850; e Diretoria de Índios, 1848); *Cadiehos* (Castelnau, 1850); *Caduveo* (Boggiani, 1895).

33. In the catalog of La Triennale, Enwezor comments on some of Lévi-Strauss's photographs among the Indians, which were not published in the *Tristes Tropiques* editions that were consulted, nor were they included in the exhibition.

34. The study conducted by Darcy Ribeiro was first published by *Revista Cultura*, of the Brazilian Ministry of Education and Culture in 1951. The book *Kadiwéu – Ensaios etnológicos sobre o saber, o azar e a beleza* (1980), is considered for this analysis, since it is the most complete compilation of the ethnologist's work on the Kadiwéu, covering art, religion and mythology.

35. Darcy Ribeiro conducted his fieldwork with the Kadiwéu from 1948 to 1950. At that time, his expedition was part of his activities as an official of the Indigenous Protection Service (SPI), a federal agency of the Brazilian Ministry of Justice that, years later, became the National Indigenous Foundation (FUNAI).

women of the hosting tribe. Perhaps the drawings reproduced with technical rigor and regularity in the Italian ethnographer's publication were translations of collected drawings, such as found in the publications of Lévi-Strauss and Ribeiro. Perhaps the Italian considered that their beauty should be valued by means of exquisite drawing, in order to convince European readers of their applications in graphic arts, and he would not have found among the natives anyone whom he considered able to follow his standards of regularity and harmony.³⁶ In his time, the use of exotic references was not an exception, always adapted to the tastes of audiences used to novelty. In his book, he inserts vignettes (Fig. 7) inspired by Kadiwéu patterns in the opening of the chapters and, in a way, he domesticates people and landscapes.

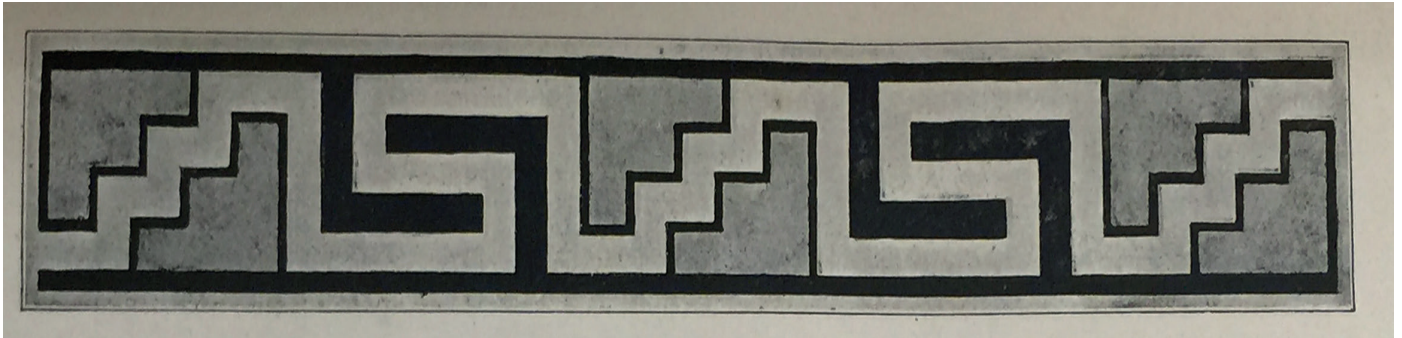


FIGURE 7 – VIGNETTE IN GUIDO BOGGIANI'S *I CADUVEI (MBAYÁ O GUAYCURÚ) VIAGGI D'UN ARTISTA NELL'AMERICA MERIDIONALE*, 1895.

On the other hand, for Darcy Ribeiro (1980, 7) it is important to portray the Kadiwéu as people «among us», whose tradition «survives precisely because it changes». This condition of present life, which is imposed on the collected documentation, distances it from the one suggesting ancient groups or tribes, i.e. the specimens studied by Boggiani and Levi-Strauss. He defines them as «a cultural island of indigenous origin, resistant to domination and assimilation», although he is able to identify in their most striking features the unmistakable traces of the process of integration with Brazilian society. To describe the concepts of art, artist and art object, considering their applications in the analysis of Kadiwéu culture, he claims that this group's universe of aesthetic values is guided by the «wish for beauty» that can be found in all human societies. However, if this general definition were to be taken in a strict sense, most of the works exhibited at La Triennale would be ignored. To measure the «wish for beauty» based on effort to create «perfect, new and beautiful» work is an extremely conservative and obsolete endeavor.

The images in Darcy Ribeiro's book can be classified in three sets. One of them is the reproduction of drawings made by European travelers who, since the 16th century, made contact with the groups that preceded the Kadiwéu. This documentation, which is not extensive, confirms the ancient nature of body painting practices, and

36. Ribeiro (1980, 281) quotes texts by Sánchez Labrador (*El Paraguay católico*. 3 vol, Buenos Aires, 1910-17) and Boggiani as sources to understand how the Kadiwéu standardized some paint templates and reproduced them mechanically on the body with the aid of leather molds or wooden stamps.

7. Jovem Kadiwéu, desenho de Guido Boggiani — 1892.



FIGURE 8 – GUIDO BOGGIANI'S DRAWING REPRODUCED IN DARCY RIBEIRO'S *KADIWÉU – ENSAIOS ETNOLÓGICOS SOBRE O SABER, O AZAR E A BELEZA*, 1980. CAPTION: «YOUNG KADIWÉU, DRAWING BY GUIDO BOGGIANI – 1892.»

culminates in the reproduction of a drawing by Guido Boggiani, different from the one inserted by Lévi-Strauss: a «young kadiwéu» (Fig. 8).

Next, there is a set of photographs and drawings. The photographs record scenes of everyday life and, as in Boggiani's, a variety of objects (jewelry, clothing, functional pottery and wood-carved objects).

In the photographs, all the people portrayed are identified by name.³⁷ They are not variations of a specimen, but characters and co-authors of the ethnographic study. Ribeiro's text describes these people's contribution to the construction of his study, as well as the way in which his analyzes are the product of a confrontation, not only of scientific observation. Although his testimony does not take the poetic form attributed to *Tristes Tropiques*, the study is open and leaves it up to the reader to continue the interpretation of the relationships between «art, religion and magic».³⁸ It also explains the relationship with earlier ethnographers by reproducing, in

Padrão de desenho dos Kadiwéu, documentado por
G. Boggiani (1892), C. Lévi-Strauss (1935) e D. Ribeiro (1950)

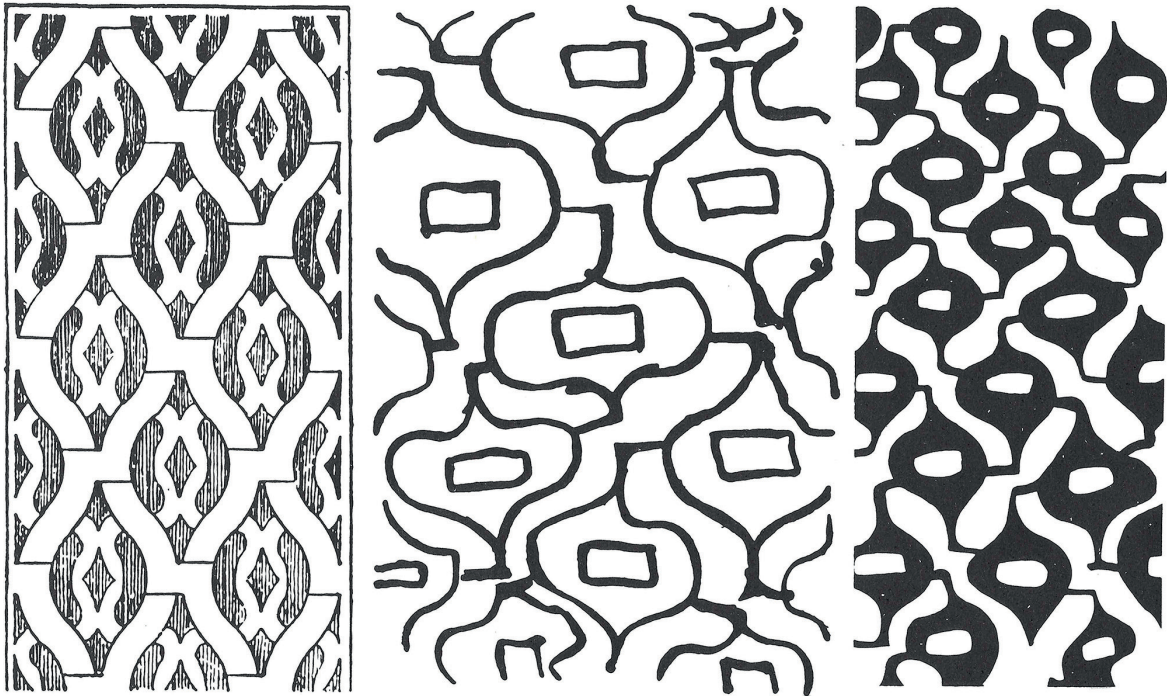


FIGURE 9 – ILLUSTRATION FROM *KADIWÉU – ENSAIOS ETNOLÓGICOS SOBRE O SABER, O AZAR E A BELEZA*, BY DARCY RIBEIRO, 1980, P. 34. CAPTION: «DRAWING PATTERN BY THE KADIWÉU, DOCUMENTED BY GUIDO BOGGIANI (1892), CLAUDE LÉVI-STRAUSS (1935) AND DARCY RIBEIRO (1950).»

the same illustration, a graphic kadiwéu pattern collected during the expeditions of Boggiani, Lévi-Strauss and his own (Fig. 9). In his book, the collected drawings

37. In *Tristes Tropiques*, the only caption that reveals a degree of proximity of the author with the object of study is the one describing a Bororo Indian: «The best informant of the author, in ceremonial attire.»

38. In describing the Kadiwéu drawing patterns in general, Ribeiro (1980, 313) states: «the drawings listed below were selected from a collection of about a thousand, obtained by the author in the course of field research.»



9. A noã, grande artista do povo Kadiwéu, autora da maioria das ilustrações desse livro.

FIGURE 10 - ANOÃ – PHOTOGRAPH IN THE BOOK *KADIWÉU – ENSAIOS ETNOLÓGICOS SOBRE O SABER, O AZAR E A BELEZA*, BY DARCY RIBEIRO, 1980, P. 44. CAPTION: «ANOÃ, GREAT ARTIST OF THE KADIWÉU PEOPLE, AUTHOR TO MOST OF THE ILLUSTRATIONS IN THIS BOOK.»

are reduced to a format and reproduced in 18 double pages, in which the patterns are grouped according to their application to different surfaces: body paint, painting on leather, painting on mats and pottery decoration. Rather than seeking the origin of the patterns, or establish creative singularity, Ribeiro considers the possibility of some patterns having resulted from assimilation processes.³⁹ Even so,

39. Ribeiro (1980, 271-272) quotes the work of authors who identified the influence of other cultures, American and European, in the creation of the Kadiwéu drawings. In his view, though such influences are «admissible», this is

the assimilation would have been selective and confined to drawings with «purely formal, non-symbolic or figurative» features.

In Darcy Ribeiro's book, the attention drawn to the 216 collected drawings goes beyond their number. Through various passages in the book, explicit mention is made to one of the authors: Anoã (Fig. 10).

Anoã looks toward the camera, at us. Unlike the anonymous women photographed by Lévi-Strauss, Anoã is introduced as author of part of the collected documentation. In the photograph, her face is not turned directly to the camera, and she looks intently towards the viewer. The capturing of a spontaneous expression, further from anthropometric analysis, places the addressee, i.e. the book's reader, before someone who has a voice. The uniqueness of Anoã's expression is present in each of the drawings, which are not subject to a regular repetition scheme, as in Boggiani's drawings. Thus, the individual's expression in the photograph also marks the apparently spontaneous way in which each drawing is made. In fact, of the three ethnographers, Ribeiro is the only one who is unable to sketch.

MOVING AWAY WITH

In La Triennale, it is the ethnographer's hand that stands out. By removing the photos from the context of *Tristes Tropiques*, framing them and then displaying them alongside handwritten notes of the author's fieldwork (Fig. 11), Enwezor highlights anachronism and universalism as qualities inherent to any ethnographic image. After all, before being ethnographic documents, they are a set of beautiful photographs and highly expressive drawings. In this case, what prevails is «its implication for our understanding of human nature» (ENWEZOR a, 2012, 32).

The distance that separates that kadiwéu tribe from the public that visits a contemporary art exhibition in Paris is still huge. While in the past their study was aimed at learning about «the early stages of human culture», the relevance of ethnographic visual documents is restricted to each ethnographer's study. Even though photographs of half-naked Indians who almost always seem to live in a state of innocence prevail in the exhibition, we know that this is not what Guido Boggiani found in the late 19th century.⁴⁰

Ethnographic images are built from displacement and, at the same time, they displace their addressee. To be considered true, they show the objects under study without the presence of those who study them, as if anyone and everyone could see them the same way. When it comes to images of Indians in the Americas, especially when the imagination does not allow turning them into «one of us», images become more seductive as they move away toward the Land Without Evil, this utopian space that has little to do with Christianity's earthly paradise. In this sense,

an issue that requires «more complex comparative studies» than the previous ones.

40. In Boggiani's times, the Kadiwéu already had very tense relations with Brazilian and Paraguayan populations.

the displacement produced by an ethnographic image and its invitation to leave what is known behind continues to challenge the image's supposed scientificity.

When leaving the pages of the book, *Tristes Tropiques*, to be displayed in the territory of objects that do not rely on scientific explanation, i.e. in La Triennale, images do not automatically become autonomous. Their value is historical and depends on the context of the fieldwork that resulted in one of the most influential studies in anthropology in the 20th century. At the same time, these images are the memory of their author. As objects of an ethnographic collection, a set of drawings and photographs by Claude Lévi-Strauss make up a specimen: the ethnographer. After all, is knowing in order to achieve «intense proximity», in fact, approximation? Where have the Kadiwéu gone?

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ESPACIO, TIEMPO Y FORMA

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