

Art and Politics: reflections about the inclusion of indigenous culture within the art theory domain

Letícia Larín

Universidade de Lisboa, Faculdade de Belas-Artes,

Centro de Investigação e de Estudos em Belas-Artes, Colaborator Member

E-mail: leticialarin@gmail.com

Abstract:

What is the pertinence of considering indigenous culture into art discussions? To think about this inquiry, some reflections take place around two different types of associations, an Amerindian and a modernist. The examples addressed are the nowadays Ashaninka community of Amônia River in Acre, and the SPAM, a pro modern art society headed by Lasar Segall in Sao Paulo in the 1930s. When put in relation, the initiatives enunciated evidence that, for art to be able to perform a substantial political attitude, it's urgent not only the transgression of traditional limits imposed by art theory, as the transformation of the values privileged by subjects.

Keywords: indigenism, political art, art theory, brazilian art, modernism, amerindian art.

1 - Introduction

Nowadays, the scope of contemporary art is being defied by the necessity of reflection about its own critical parameters. Due to the unmasking of the modern fiction that considered art as an autonomous and contemplative entity, the art field exercises its appreciation criteria to don't reply arbitrariness. In this context, contemporary artists pursue the liberty of settling the esthetical forms of their artworks, and also, of diagnosing the type of relation that the work must establish with social sphere – the audience. Thus, the permeability of the forms that can be considered «art» designates, to artistic praxis, the role of clarifying the pertinence between a form and an intention. In this conjuncture where artists can use “whatever” to work with, to think about “whatever”, the challenge becomes to detect connections in-between, that is, the political effectiveness of the forms.

This perspective is western centered, whereas according to it, artists – and artistic institution – appreciate the functioning of others disciplines and cultural expressions, to implement their own artistic trajectory – and the scope of contemporary art. But these mechanisms in operation aren't exempt of hybridization. While western art seeks to decolonize its own structures, narratives that remained hidden in the historical process, emerge and interact. The tendency of unification promoted by the globalization, takes part in this procedure, but as well is put forward, the cohabitation of diversity. As clarifies Stuart Hall (2016: 58):

Emerging cultures that feel threatened by the forces of globalization, diversity and hybridization or which have failed in the way in which the project of modernization is currently defined, may feel tempted to close down around their nationalist inscriptions and construct defensive walls against outside. The alternative is not to cling to closed,

unitary, homogenous models of “cultural belonging” but to begin to learn to embrace the wider processes – the play of similarity and difference – which is transforming culture world-wide. This is the path of “diaspora”, which is the pathway of a modern people and a modern culture.

In an effervescent social stage, surrounded by a multitude of struggles in favor of minorities' rights, reflections on «others» cultural forms – like activists or indigenous – necessarily need to be woven inside artistic lexicon. This kind of “imposed flexibility” is a counterpart of the utopian fulfillment concerned to the integration between art and life: while art production surpasses the artist's studio, mundane reality invades the artistic terrain. This instance is observed, for example, in the exhibition *Indigenous Brazil's Adornments: contemporary resistances*¹, occurred in 2017 at Sesc Pinheiros, Sao Paulo, and curated by Moacir dos Anjos. Together with contemporary artworks, the show incorporated indigenous artifacts and the video that records Ailton Krenak's political speech, during the Brazilian's constituent assembly of 1987. Although this action of Krenak is appreciated by the curator as a *performance*, in which an Indian uses corporal painting to affect dominant politics, Krenak didn't set out to create neither art nor *performance*.

The esthetical force of his action is based on an update of an ancient convention – corporal painting – to counteract amid Brazilian state policy. If contrasted with a political *performance* presented in an arbitrary museum, the artistic institution shows itself like an aseptic, safe and inoffensive, place to play with ideas. With it, the transgressive potency of the action depends, also, of the place where it occurs. So, although Krenak's speech isn't art, it mobilizes exemplary, aspects cardinals to art that's being engineered today. This capacity also raises questions around the limits of art as such, ponderations that are disseminated, too, by the juxtaposition of art and aboriginal artifacts.

It's certain that the way these patterns are put in relation, can reproduce or deconstruct, colonial mindset – even considering that this exposure occurs inside western schema, among its space, its theoretical reasoning, and so on. But in any case, to seek to embrace culture, in its broad way of manifestation, is an exercise of rebuilding notions of what art is and for what art is for. To experiment a little bit in this turbid territory, this article cross, an indigenous

initiative – very representative of Brazilian indigenism – with a Brazilian modern artistic association. This pair entangled in discussion is addressed to unveil relations between art and politics, reflecting about connections among culture and the autonomy of the public sphere. Thus, this text relates a counterpower led by Amerindians, with an artistic collective initiative that expanded artistic institution's boundaries into general audience. How and why to treat these occurrences into art theory's scope? With these inquiries, the present argument searches to amplify understandings about politics disruptions, caused in the artistic field by decolonizing effects.

The public art's niche is privileged for dealing with this matter. Politics isn't an issue exclusive of public art, since art gains a political dimension when connects with any audience. But according to Suzanne Lacy, the notion of «new genre public art» accrued from the complexification of the public's profile, what put in crisis universal postulates to defend certain artistic approaches. So, the massive recognition of a reality conformed by multiple idiosyncrasies, decentered the critical appreciation on art, and generated the need to consider who, the ones that should interact with the artwork, are.

Within art criticism, public art has challenged the illusion of a universal art and introduced discussions on the nature of public – its frames of reference, its location within various constructs of society, and its varied cultural identities. The introduction of multiple contexts for visual art presents a legitimate dilemma for critics: what forms of evaluation are appropriate when the sites of reception for the work, and the premise of “audience”, have virtually exploded? (Lacy, 1995: 172)

Therefore, to stress ponderations around this complex scenario, to try to detect ways to deal critically with an art produced in the context of the globe – and so, able to interact with multiples kinds of subjectivities –, this study thinks, under the term «association»: on *SPAM – Pro Modern Art Society*² –, instituted in Sao Paolo in 1932, and on practices related to *Apiwtxa – Amônia River's Ashaninka*³ *Association*⁴ –, created in 1991 and officially registered in 1993. The discussion intertwines some ideas on modernism goals and on the functioning of Ashaninka traditional behaviors, looking for to problematize, the political role of culture in society in general. The last

chapter essays a conclusion, capable of agglutinate the hybrid argumentation developed.

The whole project implemented by *Apiwtxa* hasn't been yet considered under artistic approaches, in despite of receiving great attention in environments like economy and sustainability. Still, indigenous traditional cultures aren't strictly accepted into western artistic sphere. Being difficult to ignore the esthetical potential of this Ashaninka agency, that interconnects culture, social function, activism and economic autonomy, the achievement of congruencies and incongruences in this situation shines as a sparkling mystery. The present reflection doesn't try to transform in art what is not, but to open perspectives on art definition considering its importance to humankind. Inasmuch as the world opens towards cultural diversity, art demands the acquisition of suitable conceptual tools to understand its transformations. By this way, these writings envision some causes of the recurrent interest that the branches of art have had in other scopes of articulation. And with it, it unveils some circumstances behind the actual permissiveness that characterizes the contemporary art.

Associations: SPAM and *Apiwtxa*

From 1932 to 1935, a group of Sao Paulo's modern artists, patrons and elite sectors interested on the national culture's renewal by exotics rereads of Brazilian origins (d'Horta Beccari, 1979: 131), managed a place to straighten and expand the community around modern art. The idea of this pro modern art society, the *SPAM*, started with joint reflections of intellectuals, being the artist Paulo Rossi Osir who invited to the reunions, the Lithuanian Lasar Segall. Flavio de Carvalho was, since the beginning, very heartwarming with the proposal, but due to the slowness caused by divergences on the project's ambition, he decided to leave the collective and to inaugurate the *CAM, Modern Artists' Club*⁵. Since the first meeting of *SPAM*, composed by a provisional executive committee in which Segall took part, the society was criticized by its alliance with the high bourgeoisie. The initials accusations came from *CAM*, revealing discordances with Segall's assertions as:

*(...) may we're being penalized by the presence, in our society, of people from Sao Paulo's high society... Indeed, it's necessary to ignore the environment in which we operate, to don't concede importance to theses preponderant factors of social progress. And I ask how, without such support, could any artists' group do anything?*⁶ (Segall apud d'Horta Beccari, 1979: 134)⁷

This problematic of being in a situation of dependence is also fundamental to *Apiwtxa*, an Ashaninka association in the Brazilian Amazon. With an historic of slavery and invasions, the consecutive generations that led to the actual indigenous community of the Amônia River – composed by approximately 800 people –, developed understandings about the functioning of the dominant power that conquered the globe, and also, about the importance of the sustainable development. With a desire of emancipation tying the successive generations, in 1989 they achieved to establish the *Ayôpare* («exchange» in *aruak*, their linguistic family), a cooperative for trading their cultural artifacts. Besides allowing them to obtain economic autonomy, it foment the protection and diffusion of their traditional values. *Ayôpare*, thus, enables an adjustment between the dominant system's impositions and their native culture.

In 1992 their land, in Marechal Thaumaturgo city in the state of Acre, was demarcated, and in 1993 they founded *Apiwtxa* (*aruak* word that means «all together and united»). This association is responsible for developing the amount of projects they articulate today, that pass through practically all the issues they need to solve to have a lifestyle autonomous and convenient to ecological care. As mentioned by Benki Piyãko, political leader, shaman and coordinator of *Yorenka Âtame Center* (Fig. 1) – in charge of perpetuating the exchange of knowledge amongst whites and Indians, to promote environmental management –, “(...) when I was a child there wasn't much fruit in the village and there were fights' cause of it. Today, the abundance is so that there are no longer tree's owners”⁸ (Grupioni, Kahn, 2013: 48). The life's quality and independence these Ashaninka reached are inspirational, but are still, relative. They're constantly menaced by interests on extractivism, and their principal leaders are death sworn. Furthermore, they confer a serious importance to the role played by the support they receive.



Fig. 1 - Meeting at Yorenka ãtame Center's auditorium, Cruzeiro do Sul city, state of Acre. Font: <http://www.apiwtxa.org.br/centro-yorenka-atame/>

Some of the main leaderships of the Amônia River's people are from Piyãko family, because they are grandchildren of Samuel, the community's chief. Samuel's son, Antonio Piyãko, and Francisca – «Dame Piti» –, daughter of a white squatter, are their interethnic parents (Gavazzi, 2012: 42). Francisco Piyãko, their older son and Marechal Thaumaturgo's Secretary of Environment in 2004, explained that institutional support is fundamental to help them awakening to global worries with nature conservation, theme with which sustainable Indigenous lands can make interface. This aid, however, doesn't mean domain, whereas decisions are internals to community. Whence, they don't predicate a paternalistic adoption and perceive new partners – including government agencies like FUNAI, *Indian's National Foundation*⁹, which is being strongly weakened by the current government of Jair Bolsonaro – as temporaries.

Their parts¹⁰ will also pass and the community that will have to organize itself more and more, assuming more and more its role of starting to solve their problem, solving the problems, because they are many and will be appearing more everyday¹¹ (Francisco Piyãko, 2004 apud Gavazzi, 2012: 28-29).

So, while catalyzing every kind of help to improve their existence, they remain conscious that they are responsible for their own destiny, and maintain their life's axis upon a self-centered commitment to their life's meaning. It's likely that Segall had similar objectives when pondered about the alliance with bourgeoisie to constitute SPAM. Receiving the economic support required by the association's maintenance, all involved would gain: the elite could amplify their social prestige, the art modern's market would be expanded and the access to modern art, also, and artists would have more public, money

and status to create with freedom, transgressional propositions.

As written in the editorial *The life of Spam*¹², distributed at two o'clock in the morning of the first carnival ball offered by the association, in 1933:

*With this contribution and with the subsequent ones that we hope to receive from such high authority, we believe that long will be our life and exempt of stingy concerns, that so afflict those who need current currency, so necessary to modern life, as the water with the same name*¹³ (d'Horta Beccari, 1979: 140).

So, although hierarchy was being highlighted – in this quotation, with irony –, the initiative manifested a relevant

social feature. But a tie made on exchanges of what one wanted from the other, wasn't strong enough to keep the society together in a long-term. Some disagreements started to grow exponentially inside the group, which was fragmented under two labels, "Jews" and "magnates", leading to the dissolution of the association in 1934. Paulo Mendes de Almeida, an relevant writer enthusiastic of Brazilian modernism, register a discomfort of this type in a letter¹⁴ from 23th April, 1934, to Segall, expressing being

*(...) incapable of saying, in my personal name, "our best society", etc., things that are often repeated there, because I don't believe there is a better society, even though, in general, the "best" is the worst (...)*¹⁵ (Pinheiro Filho, 2004: 227).



Fig. 2 – Carnaval na Cidade de Spam, 1933. Font: Lasar Segall Museum's Archive, IPHAN, MinC, Sao Paulo.

Nevertheless, already in a letter¹⁶ from the beginnings of SPAM, the poet Guilherme de Almeida comments with Lasar Segall, the desire of creating a modern art center that gathers “our best society”¹⁷ (Pinheiro Filho, 2004: 215). Curiously, when this poet comes back to Sao Paulo from Europe, and rejoins SPAM, he tries to usurp the place of Segall, which had been naturally recognized as the SPAM idealizer because of the energy he uncompromisingly dedicated to it. In this same time, ladies of Sao Paulo high society became part of the SPAM’s social committee. D’Horta Beccari (1979: 146) elucidates the importance to distinguish between an illustrated upper-class, really engaged with the movement of art’s modernization, and a superficial group, that subscribed to the movement as a new fashion trend. Even so, as a result of this change of flow, “the spirit of the party falls and the pun comes to dominate”¹⁸ (d’ Horta Beccari, 1979: 146).

These conflicts of interests are verified even in apparently shallow structures, as those found at the carnival balls offered by the association. Despite being open to anyone who wanted to join and openly socialize, the schedules were organized around a rigid protocol that detached some personalities, revealing a hierarchical structure not compatible with that of Brazilian traditional carnivals. In the invitation¹⁹ of *Expedition to the Spamlan’s Virgins Forests*²⁰, the central scene is presented as: *The Prince of Carnival, elegant and popular inheritor of Your Majesty Momo’s crown, will be part of the expedition by a special invitation from Spam, being held in Spamor mount a historical meeting between Your Highness and the famed cannibals’ king Spaman-Ullah. It’ll take part in the very solemn ceremony the fine flower of the anthropophagous society. Go on spamarades! To conquest Spamlan’s mysteries!*²¹ (Pinheiro Filho, 2004: 222)



Fig. 3 – Lasar Segall, sketch for the invitation to the SPAM’s carnival ball Expedition to the Spamlan’s Virgins Forests, 1934. Sao Paulo. Font: Lasar Segall Museum’s Archive, IPHAN, MinC, Sao Paulo.

The public in general is called “spamarades”, and although they’re invited, like all, to conquest “Spamland” mysteries, they aren’t as notorious as the invited actor Procópio Ferreira, the prince (Pineiro Filho, 2004: 222). That is, an anonymous mass of figurants is driven by some highlighted figures (Pineiro Filho, 2004: 213-215). Thus, the mentioned discrepancies inside SPAM’s group were replicated in the relation established by the association with its public.

Although it can be considered that SPAM’s events in general, – parties, concerts, exhibitions, dancing teas, studio sessions, conferences, etc. – were successful, the installation of a SPAM’s local on August of 1933, at Republic Square 44, generated very high expenses. In this moment Segall attests, in a manuscript²², to be worried about SPAM’s future if the group doesn’t find more “art friends”, with souls desirous to uphold the project. At the same time these financial complications arose, Segall started to be persecuted. Jealous elite members started to implicate Lasar Segall and others Jews from SPAM, in problems, crystallizing two opponents groups (d’ Horta Beccari, 1979: 144-145).

In November of 1933, Segall explains in a letter²³ that he’s leaving the committee because of

*(...) unjustified and unjustifiable attacks by some of fellow SPAM members, who took for opportunity every society’s achievement, as well as all my words and all my acts, to foment, behind my back, penurious intrigues and at least unpleasant against myself*²⁴ (d’Horta Beccari, 1979: 147).

Meanwhile, he commits himself to keep working for SPAM until the surpassing of this precarious economic moment. Afterword, SPAM decides to organize a profitable carnival ball and the purpose selected was that one about *Spamland’s* jungle, by Segall. With this work, Lasar Segall won a fee, which he donated totally to SPAM.

Recurrent in this type of celebrations, in this carnival ball some people committed some excesses, but the repressive and disproportionate media response, unveils a wider political conflict infiltrated in the background of SPAM’s organization. Rather than defending a freedom to be and to express, SPAM’s board publicly apologized for what happened, feeling itself “(...) impelled to explain to Sao Paulo’s society that perfectly

deplorable facts were verified against their will”²⁵ (d’Horta Beccari, 1979: 150). In the article *The secrets ends of Spamland*²⁶, José Bonifácio de Souza Amaral raises a reactionary and fearless clamor against SPAM – that he calls as a hotbed of consuetudes dissolutions –, because he still believes in God, in Fatherland, in Family and in the supreme force of Christian morality. In other article he declares, about main SPAM’s founders, that some

*(...) are foreigners, of a somewhat uncertain nationality, others are neo-Brazilians, disaffected by our traditions, and others, although belonging to the oldest racial tree, popular conscience judges them with a better spirit of justice*²⁷ (d’Horta Beccari, 1979: 150-151).

These attacks echo a reactionary integralist thinking that was being spread through Sao Paulo in the 1930s – that culminated in the creation of the *Brazilian Integralist Action (AIB)*²⁸ in 1932, and in the occurrence of the *Battle of Sé Square*²⁹ in Sao Paulo’s downtown in 1934, a conflict between anti-fascists and integralists.

Thus, a disagreement of integralists and revolutionaries’ visions, disseminated into public opinion, was transferred to SPAM’s collective as a confrontation amid the “modern art defenders” and the “interested on social notability”. To avoid collisions of this nature, the Ashaninka of Amônia River work constantly and rigorously to maintain clear their vision and mission. To that effect, they seek to maintain the unity of the internal objectives, to stabilize their communal relation and direct their joint forces to a common good. They created a protocol to share their character with their community and with the world, like an instrument to strengthen its people. In it, they tell their history, showing how their values and principles are supported by it (Povo Ashaninka do Rio Amônia, 2016: 7). So, with community’s members sharing similar principles, a coherent society is woven by a common view (Fig. 2).

A lack of a common view is what fragmented SPAM’s group, leading it to its collapse. But this absence can be verified not only on the personal ideals, that created two oppositional fronts, but also into the dynamics of change that tied the interpersonal relations. How it was seen, some of SPAM’s members wanted to be recognized as sophisticated persons, and for it, needed



Fig. 4 – Ashaninka community elaborating an ethnomapping of Kampa indigenous land of Amônia River, 2012. Font: Gavazzi, 2012, p. 16.

the “intellectual air” of others. Meanwhile, “others” wanted to expand spaces to articulate modern art, and needed for it, the money and influence of some *SPAM*’s members. Therefore, the changes between *SPAM*’s associates were mobilized by individual’s wishes, being the changes constituted by different substances. Thinking on *Apiwtxa*’s members, it’s probable that each one is also mobilized by individual wishes. But being the wishes, coincident, they are, unless in the instance of changing interests, collaborating towards the same objectives. So, these exchanges translate themselves in mutual implementation of dimensions concerned to all and each own life. These changes between parts, with all parts looking for the same, promote an effective strengthen of collective force.

Despite the troubled termination of *SPAM*, this initiative fulfilled an important social role in the dissemination of modern art to a wider public – taking part in the process that led to the creation, in Sao Paulo, of a modern art museum in 1948, and of an international art biennial in 1951. In a general perspective, the utopia of blurring distinctions between high and low society was a hallmark of modernism, and Brazilian modernism wasn’t an exception. The avant-garde artists of *Modern Art Week*³⁰ – also called *Week of 22*³¹ – belonged generally to an economically privileged niche, but their self-reflection, for example about being marginalized when compared to European modernism, fomented in them autochthonous and social consciences. These artists aimed to overcome the Parnassian-academic cultural order, and with the

institution of a collective identity to overlap their bourgeois origin, they symbolically reached it (Pinheiro Filho, 2003: 11).

This self-criticism can be conferred in the poem *Ode to Bourgeois*³² (Andrade, 1987), published in the same year that the *Modern Art Week* occurred, in a book called *Pauliceia Desvairada*³³. The author is Mário de Andrade, one of the first friends of Segall in Brazil, and who introduced him in Sao Paulo's artistic scene:

*I insult the bourgeois! The nickel-bourgeois,
The bourgeois-bourgeois!
The Sao Paulo's well done digestion!
The bent-man! the buttocks-man!
The man who being French, Brazilian, Italian,
Is always a little by little cautious!*³⁴

While appropriating themselves from formal lexicons of European "isms", Brazilians modern artists viewed inside Brazilian culture, to obtain an «original» discourse. The «anthropophagy», conceptualized in a manifest by Oswald de Andrade from 1928, inspired to "swallow" foreigner innovations to "digest" them inside a Brazilian "organism". Therefore, this search of Brazilian cultural identity was, in fact, a search for one «logic» to translate what happened abroad, being the procedure, to use cosmopolitan influence to create a «higher» cosmopolitan culture. This feature distances Brazilian modernist reasons from the ones that mobilize *Apiwtxa* association. The «anthropophagic artists» were interested on the production of an art that could maybe surpass the, or at least present an equivalent, importance of that conferred to European impressionists, cubists, futurists, expressionists, surrealists, and so on. With this objective, eagers to be similar or better than dominating culture, they manifested a subordinated view, reproducing colonial schemes.

This is not the case of Kampa Indigenous Lands' community, because their effort addresses the maintenance of their ancestral habits. Their appropriations of foreigner logics, like the capitalists for example, represent survival strategies, not goals. It's true that the fact of being immersed in these processes, results in the incorporation of news knowledges that transform them, but these are consequences and not causes – the decisive

factor, here, is given by the hierarchical position, being the top of the pyramid, the overriding objectives, and not the secondary consequences. Their attitudes aren't guided by capitalist system, notwithstanding they manipulate it to pursue results that're driven by their ancient worldview, independent from western world. From their disadvantaged position in the global economic context, they're obligated to elaborate ways to keep themselves alive, and the closest possible to indigenous traditions.

As expressed in a Benki Piyãko's quotation,

*Awake and connect Man with the Nature. Pull the transformation into him. Awake to a world from who we are, to look at what we are doing to the others. From who we are, we can talk about how to change the world*³⁵ (Povo Ashaninka do Rio Amônia, 2016: 3).

The Ashaninka association of Amônia River is interested in thinking about whom they are, and them to look for global world, since their own point of view. They aren't interested in learning with dominating culture to contribute in its "superior" scenery, because they know – by experience – how much is farce in this dazzle. They just want to change the world so reality can accept their way to live – that's in fact, to turn the world a better place. They fight for their existence in their way, and not in another way. With this autonomous attitude, released from frigid, apathetic and prejudiced values, strongly infiltrated in western culture, they can share their knowledge and assist dominant culture to transform its system, now in crisis and evidencing its precariousness. Being this situation a fact, why should western art be an exception?

3. Reflections on art definition

Ashaninka of Amônia River works collectively to improve the community's quality of life. How this situation can to illuminate reflections, about suppositional roles and means that art can to develop, in contexts of this type? Albeit traditional Amerindians operations don't manage «art», yes they do culture, and so, thinking on them maybe prompts to prefigure, ways by which art can implement the social environment. Nowadays, the contemporary visual arts of Amerindians have won a great space in the artistic institution. Nevertheless, a representative part



Fig. 5 – Ashaninka wearing *kushma*, Kampa Indigenous Land, Acre. Font: <http://thaumaturgonews.blogspot.com/2017/05/>

of this production is more connected to the diffusion of traditional values, than with a worldview's substantial functioning. Thereby, in many cases, the ancestral relation with culture was superseded by western ways to produce and to appreciate, art. While Amazonian contemporary art manages itself, especially responding to western art paradigms, aboriginal modes of addressing culture become obsolescent.

In a folder of the exhibition *Look! Indigenous peoples' Contemporary Visual Arts*³⁶, the general motto is

«visionary aesthetic», and paintings of Benki and Moysés Piyãko are described as showing “(...) the invisible to eyes that don't know”³⁷ (Almeida, 2013). Observing for example *Tasôkãotsi* (*The mother earth's breath*³⁸) – (Fig. 3) –, it's possible to interpret that the vivid Ashaninka spirituality, which allows earth to breathe, is surrounded by a negative symbolism very widespread among Amônia River's people, associated to anaconda (“big snake”) and to the triad of water, white humans and death (Pimenta, 2015: 286). This narrative reading of a painting explicitly made

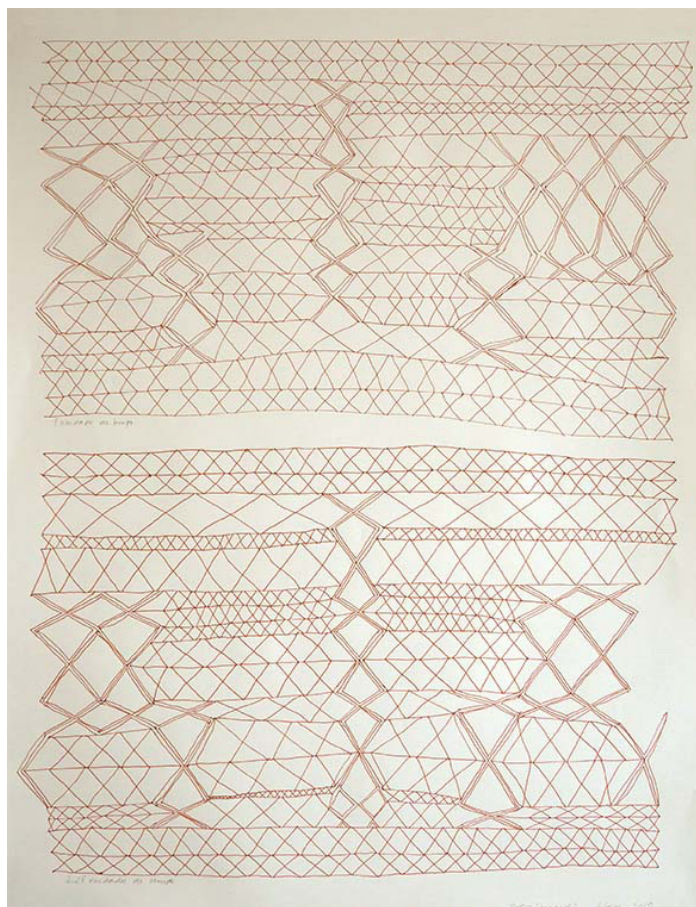


Fig. 6 – Letícia Larín, *Kempiro Motif 1*, 2019. Pen on paper, 65 x 50 cm. Font: personal.

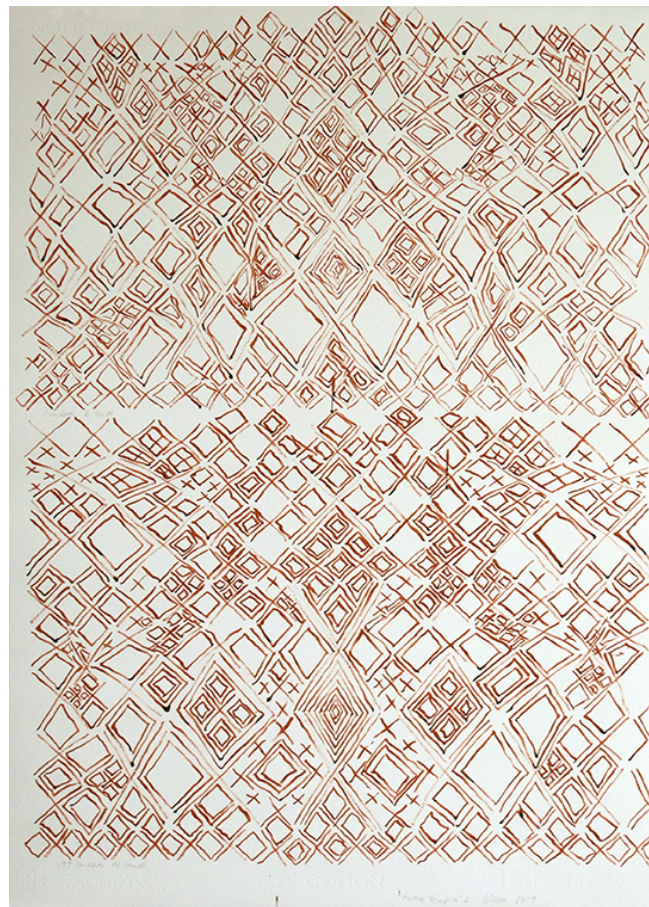


Fig. 7 – Letícia Larín, *Kempiro Motif 2*, 2019. Ink on paper, 70,7 x 49,8 cm. Font: personal.

to be contemplated, put forth a procedure that contrasts with the act of «using» cultural vehicles and symbols of identity (Gavazzi, 2012: 108).



Fig. 8 – Benki Piyāko, *Tasōkāotsi (The mother earth's breath)*, 2009. Acrylic on canvas, 64,5 x 98,5 x 3 cm.

Font: <https://projetomira.wordpress.com/galeria-obras-a-venda-2/>

The existence of an artwork of this type – an illustrative painting on canvas – indicates that the artist, Benki Piyāko, isn't an Indian disconnected – or isolated – from global reality, and so, that he and others individuals of his nation, are probably passing by the «natural» process of cultural transformation. According to Stuart Hall (2016: 48) terms, their “logics of cultural translation” are changing. As quoted by Iain Chambers,

(...) from this vantage point, we can never go home, return to the primal scene, to the forgotten moment of our beginnings and “authenticity” because there is always something else between. We cannot return to a bygone unity, for we can only know the past, memory, the unconscious, through their effects: that is, when

it is brought into language, and there embark on an interminable analysis. In front of the “forest of signs”, we find ourselves always at the crossroads. (Chambers apud Hall, 2016: 48).

Though be impossible for an outsider, really to grasp Amerindian worldview, that’s an effort to be done. Even if achieved with precariousness, this exercise of trying to understand the «other», promotes the definition of negotiation’s boundaries, amid sundries parameters. Beyond of getting closer of what the other is seeing – or even, used to see –, is maybe possible to conceive alternative ways of cultural functioning. So, to look to envision an “art” attached to indigenous ancestral mechanisms, to open possibilities of switching western traditional procedures, it’s necessary to focus on ancient Indians esthetical elements.

According to Amerindians traditions in general, aesthetics is perceived on moral and political expressions, functioning as a critical concept to apprehend sociability (Beysen, 2013: 227). The Ashaninka vest, for example, a cotton tunic called *kushma* or *kithaarentze* (Fig. 4), has as its model the «*kempiro*», “the most dangerous”³⁹ snake (Beysen, 2013: 234). There’s an Ashaninka myth in which *kempiro* changes its skin and gives it to an Ashaninka. Dressing this “snakeskin” – the *kithaarentze* –, the indigenous becomes more protected in diverse ways. When he stops to stink his odor, he avoids attracting predators; when he wears a *kushma* that’s dyed with mud, he camouflages himself; like the bites of snakes that defends and attacks, he can use arrows; and so on. Because of *kempiro*, Ashaninka could realize: “(...) ah, that’s how we do it”⁴⁰ (Beysen, 2013: 234).

This poisonous snake remains immortal by changing its skin, what arouses in Ashaninka a desire to be *kempiro*. “But isn’t snake, no, Ashaninka isn’t snake, no”⁴¹ (Jomanoria apud Beysen, 2013: 234). But Ashaninka can work to its own protection, for example, executing with quality a drawing of *kempiro*’s motif. When

(...) you do kempiro (...), when you don’t do rightly, so kempiro’ll bite you. He bites you. Yeah. He’ll get you because you didn’t hit his stripe (...). It’s dangerous. Whence we here don’t do ... because can mistake: then goes to the forest, comes kempiro and bite us. Have afraid

*to do*⁴² (Beysen, 2013: 234).

This speech is from an Ashaninka of Envira River, Jomanoria, who passed a day drawing a *kempiro*’s pattern on a sheet of paper. This endurance wasn’t required by the complexity of the drawing’s lines – called “stripe” by Jomanoria –, whereas its simplicity can be summed by a succession of “x”. The attention paid was necessary because of the risk involved in case of lacking precision (Beysen, 2013: 225). That’s why Jomanoria’s community doesn’t use to draw the *kempiro* motif, it’s a dangerous activity.

As a way of approaching a little bit of understandings about the characters put in play in this relation established with *kempiro*’s drawing, four patterns were draw with this motif (Figs. 5 and 6). The lines in the sheet’s upper halves were made with care, but in a very relaxed way, while underneath drawings received a supplementary focus to be produced with more attention. The rule was not to prop the pulse, considering it as a relevant ability when bodies are painted. As a result, the drawings that required more concentration took, more or less, twice of the time needed to produce those made with less commitment.

It’s impossible to feel afraid of being bitten by the dangerous snake, in case of creating a bad drawing, without really holding the Ashaninka worldview. But this brief plastic experience revealed that Ashaninka relation to *kempiro*’s drawing, requests a very high technical level from the author, which needs to attain an extreme state of control, patience and space acuity, to draw *kempiro* without putting himself at risk. It seems that, in this case, mythology works as a mechanism that led painters to deal intensely with what they’re doing, impelling them to strive for perfection. So, translating this structure to the realm of western art permits to conceive, that technical quality is a fundamental feature demanded from artists, which needs to relate with art with seriousness, control and discipline.

Furthermore, being the “x” composed by diagonal lines, the act of drawing it defies the stables directions horizontal and vertical. Thereupon, the trick to make a diagonal line is to preview its end point, and to draw it from start to finish with a gesture as quick and

straight as possible. This method can be compared with an attack of a snake. The animal ambushes the target, waits for the right moment, and goes very fast in its direction. This movement is weighted, speedy, objective and straight, manifesting the same characteristics required from the ideal gesture to draw *kempiro*. This reasoning seems to point out an empirical knowing that conceives human experience integrated with nature, where existent elements are recognized by their shared and common characteristics.

To be symbolically adorned with *kempiro*'s skin, manifests the overcoming of the fear of death (Beysen, 2013: 231). The ability of pursuing this "lethal beauty"⁴³ (Beysen, 2013: 244) depends on a balance between two thinking skills, one meditative and self-controlled and one visible and active. As referred by Benki Piyāko, only "(...) to think sometimes is fatal, it's also necessary to act to be able to survive"⁴⁴ (Beysen, 2013: 232). But this action, to be successful, must be performed with exactitude.

This "relations with multiple sociocosmic domains' organizing principles"⁴⁵ (Beysen, 2013: 224), connects the person that uses the own body as a cultural support, with a community that shares the same expressed meanings. "Thus, every being to whom a point of view is attributed would be a subject; or better, wherever there is a point of view there is a subject position" (Viveiros de Castro, 1998: 476). "This is to say Culture is the Subject's nature" (Viveiros de Castro, 1998: 477), because the "Amerindian *Bildung* happens in the body more than in the spirit: there is no 'spiritual' change which is not a bodily transformation, a redefinition of its affects and capacities" (Viveiros de Castro, 1998: 481).

These quotations of Viveiros de Castro must be taken under the terms discussed in this essay, because their strict meanings consider more complex concepts. What interests in the present context is the implication of subjectivity in two cases, in the one who turns over itself by creating a cultural element, and in other one who appreciates a cultural sign through the subjectivity imprinted it – of the producer, the one closest to who, for western society, would be an artist. So, if the «subject's nature» is exercised, transformed and shared, by culture,

culture operates subject's nature in social realm, that is, «culture is the subject's nature». And also, that «culture is the way to meddle in social realm», and so, that «the subject's nature is to meddle in social realm», that is, «subject's nature is social», and so, «the social depends on culture» - and vice versa. By this way, the spiritual transformation results of physical occurrences that change body's affects and capacities. Culture, being a physical occurrence, can to transform body's affects and capacities, and is able, so, to modify the spirit.

Under an expanded and summarized perspective, not focused on art and available to the world at large, it's possible to think that the act of reading a philosophic text, for example, while offering new views to the spirit, isn't enough to change it. Only when the individual activates the reality according to this new perspective, is possible to diagnose a spiritual transformation. This reasoning is useful to apprehend two kinds of behavior that culture can present, and that art, therefore, also can: one active and one passive. This conception that privileges "the performance rather than given character of the body," (Viveiros de Castro, 1998: 481) is connected to a specific type of metamorphose.

It is not so much that the body is a clothing but rather that clothing is a body. (..) To put on mask-clothing is not so much to conceal a human essence beneath an animal appearance, but rather to activate the powers of a different body. The animal clothes that shamans use to travel the cosmos are not fantasies but instruments: they are akin to diving equipment, or space suits, and not to carnival masks (Viveiros de Castro, 1998: 482).

Viveiros de Castro's impression "is that in Amerindian narratives which take as a theme animal 'clothing' the interest lies more in what these clothes do rather than what they hide" (Viveiros de Castro, 1998: 482). If we think about a carnival ball, for example, the masks and fantasies hide guests' social positions, allowing them to appear as similar. "That is, to be dressed as clown, pirate, pierrot, beggar, king of France or any fantasy previously registered as appropriate counts with an identical legitimization's degree"⁴⁶ (Pinheiro Filho, 2004: 217). These kinds of garments, so, lead "(...) to the

scrambling of legible signs”⁴⁷ (Pineiro Filho, 2004: 217).

As it becomes clear, carnival fantasies serve to cover the individual's social distinctions, while indigenous ornaments fit out to make to emerge potentialities in the one who uses it. The first hides individuality to propitiate fraternization exempt from traditional hierarchy, and the second functions as a challenge for the protagonist, being his endeavor exposed to and recognizable by, his peers. If the oppositions between these paths of «appearance and essence» are surpassed, it emerges a nexus among carnival fantasies and indigenous mask-clothing. Carnival masks allow people to recognize themselves as similar, paraphrasing a behavior essential to Viveiros de Castro's Amerindian perspectivism: “the objective permutability of bodies which is based in the subjective equivalent of souls” (Viveiros de Castro, 1998: 482). While Amerindian perspectivism permits to recognize souls in animal species like jaguars and vultures, carnival fantasies permits to consider souls in persons of different social strata.

These kinds of appreciation on indigenous worldviews haven't yet been developed on *SPAM*'s epoch, but the lack of communal feeling that lines up actual humankind in an unequal way, was already instituted. After ten years of artistic formation in Germany, elaborating around inputs from the expressionist avant-garde, Lasar Segall arrived in Sao Paulo on 1923. Like others European expressionists, Segall conferred on wild energy associated to a generic view of “primitives”, a possibility of European art's renovation. Glimpsing a Brazil that breathed exoticism and original purity, his migration was motivated by the opportunity of connecting with a land untouched by civilization's vices (Pineiro Filho, 2003: 5).

In 1924, Segall shared his aesthetics ideas in a lecture cycle at Villa Kyrial, a place where Sao Paulo's elite could strengthen ties with art and artistic discussions. To expose his understandings on art definition and art history, he “situates art's origin in the artist's desire for communion with other men and with the world”⁴⁸. To the Jewish artist, “(...) this desire is an inner necessity, whose sincerity must command the mastery of his expressive means beyond mere technical effect.”⁴⁹ This “(...) true art's condition (...) disallows the employ of an idea of progress

in art history”⁵⁰ (Pineiro Filho, 2003: 7-8), argument with which Segall activates an artistic appreciation of primitive aesthetics.

Before settling in Brazil, Segall visited this country on 1912 and 1913. Returning to Dresden, without to abdicate of a naturalist trace, he embraced the impulse promoted by the expressionist avant-garde. But two Germany expressionists' streams were separated by the first war. The first generation was

*(...) partisan of a universal art, that is, committed with the expression of a generic condition, and not of a particular condition, either in terms of class, race, or nation. By contrast, the post-war generation tends to political radicalization and extreme nationalism, with a racist bent, which aesthetically sets up in the idea that German spirit would fit to express the conflict between materialism and spirituality that dilacerate the modern man*⁵¹ (Pineiro Filho, 2003: 3).

Although Segall chronologically belongs to the second generation, his artistic project relates to the first. For the artist, ancient arts had already synthetized materialist and spiritualist poles, and persecuting the same integration, Segall embodied experiences common to mankind even when worked on Jewish themes (Pineiro Filho, 2003: 3). Apart from producing artworks about a “blunt but generic humanism”⁵² (Pineiro Filho, 2003: 4), personal attitudes how to refuse joining the Communist Party pushed him away from a militant approach. This reluctance in adopting a more defined political engagement contributed to a kind of isolation of Segall. Thus, in the years prior to his definitive installation in Brazil, the artist seemed “(...) displaced in time and in space, far from the kind of recognition he sought”⁵³ (Pineiro Filho, 2003: 4).

This brief observation on Segall life's context, functions as an insight about the motifs of his proactive actuation in *SPAM*. Being just one more cultural producer, he immediately was recognized as its main idealizer and influenced it in a behavioral framework. This association carried out the utopia of total art, integrating diverse kinds of art and constituting an atmosphere of collective labor. “In the painting of the panels that decorated the balls - requiring almost three months of continuous



Fig. 9 – Lasar Segall, Pogrom, 1937. Oil on canvas, 184 x 150 cm, Lasar Segall Museum, IPHAN, MinC, São Paulo. Photo by Romulo Fialdini. Font: Lasar Segall Museum's Archive, IPHAN, MinC, Sao Paulo.

work, on stairs, with brush in hand - the artists had, maybe how at no other time, an authentic experience of collective creation"⁵⁴ (d'Horta Beccari, 1979: 154). Flávio de Carvalho criticized *SPAM*'s carnival parties of being «just» mundane realizations (d'Horta Beccari, 1979: 154), but through these accessible format, Brazilian modern art was for the first time, accessible to the general public.

Despite Segall ideas had been used to the carnival balls, *SPAM*'s members could work together to produce events where the audience could act expressionistically. Gigantic panels, caricature representations with expressionist costumes, and presentation of pieces like the

exotic ballet choreographed by Chinita Ullmann⁵⁵, offered the experience of "to live" modernism (d'Horta Beccari, 1979: 154). This collective experience can be considered as a step towards expressionist ideals according to Lasar Segall. The artist considered the expressionism as "(...) the modern art par excellence because its value isn't exclusively aesthetic but spiritual, as a filtering of the local element towards the simply human"⁵⁶ (Pinheiro Filho, 2003: 10). That's why the "(...) expressionist expression mean doesn't issue from the desire of play with colors and forms; is a necessary mean to express his inner world which is the world of all"⁵⁷ (Segall apud Pinheiro Filho, 2003: 10).



Fig. 10 – *SPAM*, Ballroom decorated for the carnival Expedition to the Spamland's Virgins Forests, 1934. Sao Paulo. Font: Lasar Segall Museum's Archive, IPHAN, MinC, Sao Paulo.



Fig. 11 – Lasar Segall, Sketch to a panel for the carnival ball *Expedition to the Spamland's Virgins Forests*, 1934. Sao Paulo. Font: Lasar Segall Museum's Archive, IPHAN, MinC, Sao Paulo..

Therefore, to Lasar Segall, the expressionism displayed a form suitable to speak with everybody. This desire of interpersonal communication was operated, also in the collective production of the balls and in the parties-happenings where art was enjoyed as a living entity. If Segall searched for a universal formal lexicon, capable to dialogue with mankind, maybe it's not so far-fetched to conceive that this functioning persecuted plays, in another ratio, a behavior similar to that of indigenous artefacts – that can be read by a community that share a similar worldview.

Traditional indigenous productions' meanings are submissive to a mythology, and represented by artifacts "already" defined, that're being constantly replicated. So, they function to perpetuate one and the same, worldview. Modern artists proposed themselves to create, to innovate by the contribution of «new» forms to interpret reality. Within this argument, Segall trajectory's constitution, in its drawings, engravings, paintings and others, can be compared with the Amerindian mythology, since both manifest a coherent worldview presented by a formal lexicon that suits it. In case of modern art – and so on –, about which the interpretation requires previous knowledges that aren't shared by community in its totality, institutional spaces owe to disseminate the symbolical meanings of expressions emerged from contextual senses.

This intention of to «normalize» modern art fruition, justified the enterprise of creating *SPAM*. While Amerindians in general use their cultural elements as transformative items, the collective experiences of producing the balls and enjoying it, instituted pedagogical formations on modern art, and so, tried to amplify the access to this type of art in the mundane world, that is, to infiltrate common reality with modern art ideals. But in a global context, culturally fragmented and diverse, how this utopic communication could be accomplished? Even indigenous artifacts, so easy to be coded inside its respective nations, pass to western world by being displayed in museums, accompanied by information that seeks to allow diverse types of minds, to establish with them, some kind of relationship. Two terrains, so, are put in evidence in this reflection: one about living culture inside a community, and other on cultural elements looking for to connect with global diversity – or to negotiate borders amid different social groups.

For creating art inside a community – with the aim of entailing dialogue with persons from its context –, is necessary to detect local parameters of interpretation. Due to the difficult of maintaining this level of acuity in a global context – chaotic, diverse and plural –, as pointed by Segall, a way out can be to deal with universal themes – timeless and natural, as possible. Is different, so, to

work on migration, even if based on specific situations with its objective causes implicit, and to work on a context of migration to explicitly to generate antibodies to a certain politics or nation. Both approaches can, still, lead to similar conclusions, but one is morally proselyte, and the other, universal. This dichotomy emulates that conferred in the two expressionist currents, pre and post first war. To choose between one strategy and the other, is necessary to consider the context where the artwork must to operate.

Inside a community as that Ashaninka of Amônia River is, for sure, easier to find a militant coherence, than in global society. So, regardless of whether they articulate, universal or partisans themes, the group addresses a common good and is interconnected by exchanges in a similar ideal. These today's Amerindians understand and participate in western politics, but their actual configuration is probably attached to that of their ancestors. Perhaps, this characteristic is one that allows the existence of a culture, which deals with plastic production and politics, in an integrated way. With it, it seems that the illusionary instance, of art as an autonomous entity, is required by a global cultural articulation. Under this logic, the cause of an emancipated art is the impotence of culture, when establishing political contact with the diversity spread around the world. When culture and politics reveals themselves as circumstantial, people are able to create its own purposes for what in being lived. When persons note that culture doesn't represent a universal true, and so, that's created by individuals, subjects can realize: ah, that's how we do it.

4. Conclusions: perspectives on art history

Under SPAM's endeavor laid the understanding that the contact with modern art could promote the transformation of human behavior, releasing people from moralistic rules that precluded then to fully concretize an existence connected with their deep individual needs and feelings. In general, modern artists attempted to find authentic esthetics styles, to inaugurate unviewed worldviews that could transgress the normal establishment. By this logic, a spectator that makes contact with a nouvelle view, while absorbing new

perspectives, relativizes his own viewpoints.

Curiously, this eagerness for originality ended up generating, in parallel, a total disconnection of art from reality, creating the modern art imperative motto, «art by art». But Jacques Rancière elucidates that this is one reading of this context, and not the only one. To consider not just “what makes art”, but also “what art makes”, he introduces the notion of «modernatism», paying attention to a social trajectory that art – and also, cultural elements – never stopped to perform. He conceives, simultaneously, “the autonomy of art and the identity of its forms with the forms that life uses to shape itself” (Rancière, 2011: 23). Therefore, to embrace one or another focus depends on the act of choosing between two regimes of historicity.

This acceptance of co-presents heterogeneous temporalities constitutes what the philosopher calls “the temporality specific to the aesthetics regime of the arts”. With it, the modernity's prominent conception becomes questionable, because it “tries to retain the forms of rupture, the iconoclastic gestures, etc., by separating them from the context that allows for their existence: history, interpretation, patrimony, the museum, the pervasiveness of reproduction...” Deconstructing an idea of modernity that projects “only one meaning and direction in history”, modernatism identifies “forms from the aesthetic regime of the arts with forms that accomplish a task or fulfil a destiny specific to modernity” (Rancière, 2011: 25-27). Therefore, to recognize this social function of art, is required just a change of the incident optics. This kind of appreciation, if the notion of art is expanded towards the dimension of cultural agency, permits to consider operations as diverse as modernist oeuvres and indigenous cultural elements.

For Ashaninka community of Amônia River, objects like «*txoshiki*» – great necklaces used on shoulder belt – or the garb *kushma*, only have value when used inside their social life. The artifacts they produce to sell rarely pass for this experience, being different from the “true” objects, made to take part in the process of collective significance. To fit the market, the pieces commercialized by the cooperative are retouched: some originals defects are suppressed and some ancestral procedures, like the use of natural threads and pigments, are reincorporated (Pimenta, 2006: 17). The value of these artifacts for those who buy it is to flaunt awareness with aboriginal cultures, to exhale a complex subjectivity soaked by the diversity that populates the globe. Therefore, to possess these

kinds of pieces signifies to establish a nostalgic contact with a foreign lifestyle, but not to practice some foreign manner.

This contemplative and insubstantial way to deal with esthetical works drives a regime of value very different from that articulated inside the indigenous community, and relates to modernism, not to modernatism. As Arjun Appadurai reminds, following a Georg Simmel's⁵⁸ definition, "exchange is the source of value and not vice versa" (Appadurai, 1986: 56). So, the exchange of artifacts inside the community must to convoke a kind of valuation very distinct of that articulated when an ethnic object is changed, by money, with a foreign person. These lively cultural elements, in possession of subjectivities extraneous of their original contexts, being transferred to another culture, lose their intrinsic value. But even so in unfavorable proportion, this "lost" engages reality with alternative modes of interpretation.

Hanna Arendt explains that western society monopolizes "'culture' for its own purposes, such as social position and status" (Arendt, 1961: 202). She reveals that in contemporary times, culture plays

an enormous role as one of the weapons, if not the best-suited one, to advance oneself socially, and to "educate oneself" out of the lower regions, where supposedly reality was located, up into the higher, non-real regions, where beauty and the spirit supposedly were at home. This escape from reality by means of art and culture (...) probably was the decisive factor in the rebellion of the artists against their newly found patrons; they smelled the danger of being expelled from reality into a sphere of refined talk where they did would lose all meaning (Arendt, 1961: 202).

This occurrence is symptomatic of a specific type of political behavior, because the specific value conferred to objects, creates specific flows of commodities, being politics what connect these two instances (Appadurai, 1986: 57). The politics that produces and shares, Ashaninka artifacts inside their community isn't similar to that which produces and shares, Ashaninka artifacts to capitalist market. *Ayôpare* cooperative is achieving to manage a coherent interface between capitalist and

aboriginal logics, putting ethical and ecological limits to its commercial production, while prioritizing their ancestral practices into community. This self-conscience protects the integrity of the Amerindian social body from an alienated schema that dominated western culture's fruition. While monetary value serves to maintain, the independence of Amônia River's community towards a capitalist planet, these Amerindians keep «privileging» other types of values – inside and outside the group. In other words, while their visions aren't blind by the power conferred by the money, they're able to concede value to cultural artifacts insofar as they're meaningful for social environment. This correspondence between value and situation of culture's consumption, shouldn't be neglected, because it possibly can serve to align artistic criticisms more concerned with the world's conditions than with splendid forms.

Arendt points out that western tradition of political thought began with a separation between thought and action, "when Plato discovered that it is somehow inherent in the philosophical experience to turn away from the common world of human affairs". This historical process ends with Marx, "when nothing was left of this experience but the opposition of thinking and acting, which, depriving thought of reality and action of sense, makes both meaningless" (Arendt, 1961: 25). Considering that the break with this "tradition is now an accomplished fact" (Arendt, 1961: 26), she diagnoses our epoch as flooded by entertainment industry, where authentic materials can't be offered as they are, because they "must be altered in order to become entertaining," they "must be prepared to be easily consumed" (Arendt, 1961: 206-207). For her, the result isn't disintegration, but decay.

According to the present reflection, this «decay» is relative to a disconnection between "art" – or cultural elements – and a conscience on its political activations, being that the perspective here disposed, isn't fatalist as that framed by Hannah Arendt. As indicated by modernatism, to regard art theory from a wider perspective permits to overview, the insistent connections between cultural functioning and political activity. With it, it appears that whilst Brazilian modernism, for example, was especially driven by the anxiety of being a metropole in

the cosmopolitan world, it incorporated in a certain way, the indigenous, the African and the half-breed, essence. So, in spite of colonization have caused a crash in the local contexts that used to exist, even though it drowned out the voice of these cultures, it launched a process of gradual openness to diversity.

(...) Our societies are composed not of one but of many peoples. Their origins are not singular but diverse. In our part of the Black Atlantic, indigenous peoples were decimated by hard labour and disease within a hundred years of colonization. The land cannot be “sacred” because it was violated: not empty but emptied. Everyone there once belonged somewhere else. Far from being continuous with our pasts, our histories are marked by violent, abrupt, ruptural breaks. Instead of the slowly-evolving pact of civil association, so central to the liberal discourse of western modernity and the nation, our “civil association” was inaugurated by a brutal act of imperial will. (Hall, 2016: 49-50)

To follow the present perspective, that looks not to revert what happened, but to imagine where to go, is important to ask what substantially changes to Amerindians worldview, when confronted with western optics. The indigenous traditions are articulated by the myth. Ironically, when the conception of art as art was formed, the aim that was enclosed was basically, that each individual could to create its own “myth”, establishing the personal parameters – gave by the individual artistic trajectory – from which audience could to interpret, each piece of artwork. But Roland Barthes reminds the limits imposed by the myth: the myth is an excessively justified speech, not being read as mobile but as a reason (Barthes, 1999: 121).

The overture towards global discrepancy leads, logically, to the incapacity of to envision a myth as a universal true. But even in the absence of myths, some basics humans issues remains the same. The connection between the recognition of multiple cultural voices, and the impregnation of art by ordinary existence, was therefore, foreseeable. According to Suzanne Lacy (1995: 174), the length from private to public, in art, is summarized by the actuation of the artist as experienter, reporter, analyst, and finally, activist. But even the more subjective elaboration – experienter – is political:

(...) one of the major contributions of feminist thought in the past two decades is that individual experience has profound social implications. (...) To make oneself a conduit for expression of a whole social group can be an act of profound empathy. When there is no quick fix for some of our most pressing social problems, there may be only our ability to feel and witness the reality taking place around us. This empathy is a service that artists offer to the world. (Lacy, 1995: 174-5)

So, what is here being defended isn't specifically «activist art», but to maintain an effort about being conscious on the political dimensions articulated by each artwork. This awareness permits to establish critical guides that privilege the value that the work of art weaves in the reality and not its marvelous technical achievement or its sagacious pun that leads to social discord – these properties can be of course evaluated, but the discernment of the social role it plays is necessary for a responsible actuation and consumption, in art realm and in human existence. The idea here presented, indeed, seeks to visualize a possibility of a planet ruled by all the multiplicity of types of subjects that exists, since that's diversity it's a true about humanity. But this punch tries to break out towards a context where the privileges are others, and so, its exchange value is still, very weak. Because, unfortunately, reality is still too attached to a

certain evolution of wealth, whose symptoms indicate sickness and exhaustion, leads to shame in oneself accompanied by petty hypocrisy. (...)

Such trickery has become the principal reason for living, working and suffering for those who lack the courage to condemn this mouldy society to revolutionary destruction. (Bataille, 1997: 175)

Acknowledgements

António Talhé for providing translation assistance, Benki Piyāko and Lasar Segall Museum for offering some images published in this article.

Footnotes

1 Author's free translation. The original name is "*Adornos do Brasil Indígena: Resistências Contemporâneas*".

2 Author's free translation. The original name is "*Sociedade Pró-Arte Moderna*".

3 The Ashankinka are natives of the territory that is known, today, as Peruvian Amazon, and the most part of then still lives in this place. At the end of the XIX century, pressed mainly by Peruvian cauceros – interested on the extraction of latex from trees called caucho –, a quota of Ashaninka migrated to the Brazilian lands of Alto Juruá, where they remain until today.

4 Author's free translation. The original name is "*Associação Ashaninka do Rio Amônia*".

5 Author's free translation. The original name is "*Clube dos Artistas Modernos*".

6 Author's free translation. On the original "(...) *podem acoiar-nos de haver, em nosso quadro social, pessoas da alta sociedade paulista... Realmente, é preciso desconhecer o meio em que atuamos, para não conceder importância a estes fatores preponderantes do progresso social. E pergunto como, sem tal apoio, poderia qualquer grupo de artistas fazer alguma coisa?*"

7 D'Horta Beccara just mentions that this quotation was found amid materials - newspaper clippings, SPAM's prints, invitations, catalogs and appointments by Segall and by his second wife Jenny Klabin - that belong especially to the SPAM album, from the Lasar Segall's Museum.

8 Author's free translation. On the original "(...) *quando era criança havia pouca fruta na aldeia e saía briga por isso. Hoje, a abundância é tanta que não existem mais os donos das árvores.*"

9 Author's free translation. The original name is "*Fundação Nacional do Índio*". FUNAI is the official indigenist organ of the Brazilian State, and was created on 1967 in the government of the President Castelo Branco. Until 2019, FUNAI was linked to the Ministry of Justice and Public Security. In 2019, the president Jair Bolsonaro transferred FUNAI to the Ministry of Woman, Family and Human Rights. Besides, the decisions about demarcations of

indigenous lands ceased to be a FUNAI's responsibility, being transferred to the Ministry of Agriculture.

10 In this context, «parts» refers to the diverse kinds of support they receive.

11 Author's free translation. On the original "*As partes deles também vão passar e a comunidade que vai ter que se organizar cada vez mais, assumindo cada vez mais o seu papel de começar a resolver o seu problema, resolvendo os problemas, porque são muitos e vão estar aparecendo cada dia mais.*"

12 Author's free translation. The original name is "*A vida de Spam*." This tabloid has four pages, is directed by Mário de Andrade, Antônio de Alcântara Machado and Sérgio Milliet, and illustrate by D. Jenny, and dated by February 16th, 1933.

13 Author's free translation. On the original "*Com esse auxílio e com os subseqüentes que esperamos receber de tão alta autoridade, acreditamos que longa será a nossa vida e isenta das preocupações mesquinhas, que tanto afligem os que necessitam da moeda corrente, tão necessária à vida moderna, como a água do mesmo nome.*"

14 Pinheiro Filho (2004: 227) indicates that this letter is from Lasar Segall Museum's Archive, IPHAN.

15 Author's free translation. On the original "(...) *incapaz de dizer, no meu nome pessoal, 'nossa melhor sociedade' etc., coisas que tantas vezes ali são repetidas, pois não acredito que haja sociedade melhor, mesmo porque, em geral, a 'melhor' é a pior (...).*"

16 According to Pinheiro Filho (2004: 215) this letter is from 9th February, 1931 and can be found at the Lasar Segall Museum's Archive, IPHAN.

17 Author's free translation. On the original "*nossa melhor sociedade*".

18 Author's free translation. On the original "*o espírito da festa cai e passa a imperar o trocadilho.*"

19 According to Pinheiro Filho (2004: 211), this invitation is in the Lasar Segall Museum's Archive, IPHAN.

20 Author's free translation. The original name is "*Expedição às Matas Virgens de Spamolândia*".

21 Author's free translation. On the original "*O Príncipe do Carnaval, elegante e popular herdeiro da coroa de Sua Majestade Momo, fará parte da expedição a convite especial da Spam, realizando-se no monte Spamor um encontro histórico entre Sua Alteza e o famigerado rei*"

dos canibais Spaman-Ullah. Tomará parte no soleníssimo cerimonial a fina flor da sociedade antropófaga.

Avante spamaradas!

Á conquista dos mistérios de Spamolândia!"

22 There's no evidence that indicates if the content of this document was shared with somebody. D'Horta Beccari (1979: 146) explains that this manuscript isn't dated, but that it must be from the end of 1933. She accessed it in the SPAM Album from Lasar Segall Museum.

23 D'Horta Beccari (1979: 147) encountered this letter's transcription at Paulo Mendes de Almeida, 1976, De Anita ao Museu, Perspectiva, São Paulo, p. 73.

24 Author's free translation. On the original "(...) ataques injustificados e injustificáveis de alguns colegas sócios da SPAM, os quais tomavam por ensejo cada realização da sociedade, assim como todas as minhas palavras e todos os meus atos, para fomentar, atrás das minhas costas, intrigas mesquinhas e no mínimo desagradáveis contra a minha pessoa."

25 Author's free translation. On the original "(...) na obrigação de explicar à sociedade paulistana que fatos perfeitamente deploráveis se verificaram contra a sua vontade."

26 Author's free translation. The original name is *Os fins secretos da Spamolândia*. This article was published in the Popular Daily from February 21st, 1934.

27 Author's free translation. On the original "(...) são estrangeiros, de nacionalidade um pouco incerta, outros são neo-brasileiros, desafetos de nossas tradições, e outros, embora pertencentes ao tronco racial mais antigo, a consciência popular os julgue com melhor espírito de justiça."

28 Author's free translation. The original name is *Ação Integralista Brasileira (AIB)*.

29 Author's free translation. The original name is *Batalha da Praça da Sé*.

30 Author's free translation. The original name is *Semana de Arte Moderna*.

31 Author's free translation. The original name is *Semana de 22*.

32 Author's free translation. The original name is *Ode ao Burguês*.

33 «Pauliceia» is a noun that refers to São Paulo city and its most striking features, while «Desvairada» is an adjective that blends freneticism and folly.

34 Author's free translation. On the original "Eu insulto

o burguês! O burguês-níquel,/ O burguês-burguês!/ A digestão bem feita de São Paulo! / O homem-curva! o homem-nádegas!! O homem que sendo francês, brasileiro, italiano,/ É sempre um cauteloso pouco-a-pouco!"

35 Author's free translation. On the original "Despertar e conectar o Homem com a Natureza. Puxar a transformação para dentro dele. Despertar para o mundo a partir de quem somos nós, para olharmos para o que estamos fazendo para os outros. A partir de quem somos, nós podemos falar sobre como mudar o mundo."

36 Author's free translation. The original name is "Mira! Artes Visuais Contemporâneas dos Povos Indígenas."

37 Author's free translation. On the original "(...) o invisível para olhos que não conhecem."

38 Author's free translation. On the original "O sopro da mãe terra".

39 Author's free translation. On the original "mais perigosa de todas".

40 Author's free translation. On the original "(...) ah, é assim que a gente faz."

41 Author's free translation. On the original "Mas não é cobra, não, Ashaninka não é cobra, não."

42 Author's free translation. On the original "(...) tu faz kempiro (...), quando tu não faz direitinho, aí kempiro vai te morder. Ele te morde. É. Ele vai te pegar porque tu não acertou a lista dele (...). É perigoso. Por isso a gente aqui não faz (...), porque pode errar: depois vai para a mata, vem kempiro e morde a gente. Tem medo de fazer."

43 Author's free translation. On the original "beleza letal."

44 Author's free translation. On the original "(...) pensar às vezes é fatal, é preciso também agir para poder sobreviver."

45 Author's free translation. On the original "princípios organizadores das relações com múltiplos domínios sociocósmicos" (Beysen, 2013:224).

46 Author's free translation. On the original "Ou seja, vestir-se de clown, pirata, pierrô, mendigo, rei da França ou qualquer fantasia previamente registrada como cabível conta com idêntico grau de legitimação."

47 Author's free translation. On the original "(...) ao embaralhamento dos sinais legíveis."

48 Author's free translation. On the original "(...) situa a origem da arte no desejo de comunhão do artista com os outros homens e com o mundo."

49 Author's free translation. On the original "(...) tal desejo é uma necessidade interior, cuja sinceridade deve

comandar o domínio de seus meios expressivos para além do mero efeito técnico.”

50 Author's free translation. On the original “(...) *condição da arte verdadeira (...) desautoriza o emprego da ideia de progresso na história da arte.*”

51 Author's free translation. On the original “(...) *partidária de uma arte universal, ou seja, comprometida com a expressão de uma condição genérica, e não de uma condição particular, seja em termos de classe, raça, ou nação. Por contraste, a geração do pós-guerra tende à radicalização política e nacionalismo extremado, com pendor racista, que se configura esteticamente na ideia de que caberia ao espírito alemão exprimir o conflito entre materialismo e espiritualidade que dilacera o homem moderno.*”

52 Author's free translation. On the original “*humanismo contundente mas genérico.*”

53 Author's free translation. On the original “(...) *deslocado no tempo e no espaço, distante do tipo de reconhecimento que buscava.*”

54 Author's free translation. On the original “*Na pintura dos painéis que decoravam os bailes – exigindo quase três meses de trabalho contínuo, em cima de escadas, de pincel na mão – os artistas tiveram, como talvez em nenhum outro momento, uma autêntica experiência de criação coletiva.*”

55 The Porto Alegre's dancer Chinita Ullman was, in the 1920s, member of Mary Wigman's Dance School in Dresden.

56 Author's free translation. On the original “(...) *a arte moderna por excelência porque seu valor não é exclusivamente estético mas espiritual, como filtragem do elemento local em direção ao simplesmente humano.*”

57 Author's free translation. On the original “(...) *meio de expressão de um expressionista não provém do desejo de brincar com cores e formas; é um meio necessário para exprimir o seu mundo interior que é o mundo de todos.*”

According to Pinheiro Filho (2003: 10), this quotation is from a text entitled *Minhas Recordações*, included in *Lasar Segall – Textos, Depoimentos e Exposições*, 2003, Associação Cultural de Amigos do Museu Lasar Segall, São Paulo, p. 42.

58 Appadurai points out that this specific definition is developed by Georg Simmel in the first chapter of *The Philosophy of Money*.

References

- Almeida, M. I. de, (Coord.), 2013. ¡Mira! Artes Visuais Contemporâneas dos Povos Indígenas, Centro Cultural da Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais.
- Andrade, M. de, 1987. Ode ao Burguês, in: Poesias Completas, Itatiaia, Belo Horizonte, pp. 88-89.
- Appadurai, A., 1986. Introduction: commodities and the politics of value, in: The social life of things: commodities in cultural perspective, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 3-63.
- Arendt, H., 1961. Between Past and Future, The Viking Press, New York.
- Barthes, R., 1999 (1957). Mitologías, Siglo XXI Editores, Mexico City.
- Bataille, G., 1997. The Notion of Expenditure, in: The Bataille Reader, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, Malden, pp. 167-181.
- Beysen, P., 2013. Kempiro. A arte gráfica dos traços fortes entre os Ashaninka do Oeste Amazônico, in: Severi, C., Lagrou, E. (Orgs.), Quimeras em diálogo: grafismos e figuração nas artes indígenas, 1ª Ed., 7 Letras, Rio de Janeiro, pp. 223-245.
- Gavazzi, R. A. (Org.), 2012. Etnomapeamento da Terra Indígena Kampa do Rio Amônia: o mundo visto de cima, Apiwtxa, AMAAIAC e CPI/AC, Rio Branco (AC).
- Grupioni, L. D. B., Kahn, M. (Orgs.), 2013. Gestão territorial e ambiental em terras indígenas na Amazônia brasileira: os percursos da Rede de Cooperação Alternativa, Iepé, São Paulo.
- Hall, S., 2016. Diasporas, or the logics of cultural translation, MATRIZES, v. 10, nº 3, 47-58.
- d'Horta Beccari, V., 1979. A SPAM e a década de 30, Revista Discurso – Órgão oficial do Depto. de Filosofia – FFLCH – USP 11, 131-155.
- Lacy, S. (Ed.), 1995. Mapping the terrain: New Genre Public Art, Bay Press, Seattle.
- Pimenta, J., 2006. Reciprocidade, mercado e desigualdade social entre os ashaninka do Rio Amônia, Série Antropologia 396 – Departamento de Antropologia UnB, 34 p.
- Pimenta, J., 2015. “Alteridade contextualizada”: variações ashaninkas sobre o branco, Anuário Antropológico 2014 – Programa de Pós-Graduação em Antropologia Social

UnB, v. 40, nº 1, 279-306.

Pinheiro Filho, F. A., 2003. Lasar Segall, Mário de Andrade e o Expressionismo Paulista, XXVII Encontro Anual da ANPOCS, 31 p.

Pinheiro Filho, F. A., 2004. Lasar Segall e as festas da SPAM, Tempo Social – Revista de Sociologia da USP 16, 209-230.

Povo Ashaninka do Rio Amônia, 2016. Protocolo de Serviços Ambientais dos Ashaninka da Terra Indígena Kampa do Rio Amônia, Associação Apiwtxa e Iniciativa Comunidades da Forest Trends, Acre.

Rancière, J., 2011 (2000). The Politics of Aesthetics, Continuum, New York.

Viveiros de Castro, E., 1998. Cosmological deixis and Amerindian perspectivism, Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute, v. 4, nº 3, 469-488.