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### Publication Date

2023

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Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA  
SANTA CRUZ

**RECLAIMING REPRESENTATIONS:  
TRANSNATIONAL PHOTOGRAPHIC PRACTICES FROM  
BRAZIL AND THE CHALLENGING OF *MESTIÇAGEM* AND  
*BRANQUITUDE***

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction  
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

VISUAL STUDIES

by

**Tatiane Schilaro Santa Rosa de Souza Ramos**

June 2023

The Dissertation of Tatiane S.S.R.S.R is  
approved.

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Peter Biehl  
Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies



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2023

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## Abstract

### RECLAIMING REPRESENTATIONS: TRANSNATIONAL PHOTOGRAPHIC PRACTICES FROM BRAZIL AND THE CHALLENGING OF *MESTIÇAGEM* AND *BRANQUITUDE*

Tatiane Schilaro Santa Rosa de Souza Ramos

This dissertation examines how Brazilian-born artists, Maria Thereza Alves, Jonathas de Andrade, and Dalton Paula have used photographic techniques to represent racialized populations in Brazil. These three artists have long been committed to opposing the oppression of these populations through their practices. First, my goal is to investigate how these artists tackle or dialogue with hegemonic national discourses to claim the photographed subjects' spaces for recognition within a nation-state, in this case, Brazil. Second, I study how *mestiçagem* operates vis-à-vis whiteness and non-whiteness in Brazil, more specifically through the photographic. I examine how these three artists represent notions of Blackness and indigenous subjectivities. I contend that these artists work within an expanded field of photography; their practices are examples of the relationship between the production of images and the role of images for subaltern racialized communities.

Although the celebration of *mestiçagem* is a particular trope linked to modernity in Brazil and in Latin America, it emerged to address a colonial context in which the concept of race had been primarily used to enable a reorganization of labor, via slavery, that operated through the dehumanization of non-whiteness. My dissertation advocates

for a broader understanding of the visual discourse on racial miscegenation in Brazil, not to demonize *mestiçagem*, but to develop a critique of its celebratory “normative” cooption as a national narrative and its veiled (and not-so-veiled) associations with *branquitude*.

Through these artists’ practices one observes how *mestiçagem* operates as an ambivalent visual discourse vis-à-vis whiteness and non-whiteness in Brazil. I argue that these artists’ responses to this ambivalence takes place through an expanded field of photography: These artworks expand the image into pursuing reclamation for racialized communities. So that the portrait, the photographic document, and the photographic archive are expanded in that pursuit of visualizing and reclaiming the photographed subjects as part of a public sphere.

To understand the discursive coupling of *mestiçagem* with whiteness and reveal how it manifests through visibility is not to speak *only* about Brazil, but to examine how these artists either deploy or challenge discourses that are reminiscent of a modern ontological mandate based on racial difference. Thus, this dissertation serves local Brazilian scholarship regarding the representation of difference in visual culture and examine ideas of Blackness, whiteness, and indigenous subjectivities and their representation beyond the U.S. national scope, making a space for the recognition of itinerant and transnational visualities.

*For Rapha and Alan*

## Acknowledgements

This compilation of appreciation starts with a thank you to my advisor, Jennifer González, for her unwavering support, patience, and compassionate guidance over the past eight years. It is not an overstatement to say that without her encouragement, commitment to academic rigor, steadfastness as a mentor, and brilliance as a scholar, I would not have arrived at the end of this writing journey. I am fortunate to have met—in Santa Cruz and, thus, far from Brazil—one of the most important scholars to rethink racial relations in Brazil in contemporaneity: Patricia de Santana Pinho. She has been a guiding light; not only has her brilliant work profoundly influenced this dissertation, but her generosity and kindness have also helped me persevere. I want to thank Mauricio Barros de Castro for joining my committee in the final year and generously contributing with comments and resources from his vast knowledge on representation, visual studies, and contemporary arts and culture. I am indebted to the mentorship of Derek C. Murray, whose impeccable scholarship and dedicated advice have molded my research from its early stages.

I am grateful to the three artists whose works I discuss in this dissertation and deeply thankful for their support. Maria Thereza Alves truly has been a mentor, and Jonathas de Andrade and Dalton Paula have been partners and friends; their practices are not merely objects of study. They have been collaborators in this research and have offered their time and labor numerous times over more than eight years. Their talent, generosity, honesty, and openness inspired me to write about what they do.

I am thankful to the University of California Santa Cruz's Graduate Division, the Arts Division, and the History of Art and Visual Culture Department (HAVC) for the many years of support extended to me in the form of grants, fellowships, and teaching assistantships. I conducted interviews and field trip research with the support of departmental grants, and received immeasurable support me to keep writing and working on this project. The Graduate Division and the Arts Division supported this research via dissertation-completion grants and covered tuition and other fees when I attended the Whitney Museum Independent Studies Program from 2018 to 2019. The generosity of the Arts Division's deans, Celine Parreñas Shimizu and Susan Solt, also helped me thrive. Ruby Lipsenthal has been a fantastic ally who has helped me navigate the many struggles of being a non-citizen graduate student. I will be forever grateful for Ruby's tireless support.

I thank the brilliant faculty members in the HAVC department for their support, especially during the program's first years: Maria Evangelatou, Stacy Kamehiro, Boreth Ly, Albert Narath, Elisabeth Cameron, Carolyn Dean, and T.J. Demos were all incredibly supportive during my time in Santa Cruz. Thank you to Meredith Dyer, Audrey Vosseler, Jannet Ceja (STARS Program), Felicia Peck (Disability Resource Center), and the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute for their support. I am also thankful to colleagues in the LALS Department and to the Research Center for the Americas, which provided support for the Research Cluster organized by Patricia Pinho and Marina Segatti. My brief participation in the cluster and its events had a significant impact on the shaping of this dissertation.

Several colleagues, mentors, and friends have made these long years of writing feel less solitary. For their comradeship, time, and conversations that impacted this project, I am deeply grateful. Thank you to Nohora Arrieta Fernandez for her friendship and partnership: Nohora is a loyal and true friend, whose impeccable scholarship I admire and respect. Thank you to Fabiana Lopes, one of the brightest thinkers I have met, for the numerous exchanges. To both Nohora and Fabiana, thank you for sharing your resilience as fellow non-citizen scholars in the U.S. My deepest gratitude to my greatest supporters in the program, Alex Moore, Kate Korroch, and LuLing Osofsky—your friendship has been lifesaving. A special thank you to LuLing, with whom I have also shared my struggles as a graduate student parent in the past three years.

I am in admiration of Rachel Nelson, a dedicated friend, whose radical work has been a source of endless inspiration. A thank you to colleagues Candy Martinez, Mauricio Ramirez, Amber Hickey, Tara Field, Gaby Greenlee, Maureen McGuire, and Jordan Reznick, for the many contributions and camaraderie. I am very grateful for the years spent with the talented scholars in my cohort whom I miss very much: Kristin Timken, Michelle Yee, Kristen Laciste, and Maggie Wander.

I am fortunate to have the ongoing support of mentors and colleagues from other programs and geographies as well. David Levi Strauss, Dejan Lukic, and Cyriaco Lopes continue to rescue me when my writing stumbles. I am thankful to Anjali Arondekar, Claudia Calirman, Natalia Brizuela, Alex Alberro, and Ron Clark, whose works and mentoring have also shaped this research. I am grateful for my time

at the Whitney Museum's Independent Study Program and many New York friends whose works and conversation also influenced this dissertation: Sergio Bessa, Ayanna Dozier, Coleman Collins, Felipe Steinberg, Claire Mckown, Anna Parisi, John Arthur Peetz, Carlos Motta, Larissa Ferreira, Vivian Crockett, Raphaela Melsohn, Bel Falleiros, and Pedro França. A special thank you to Larissa Ferreira, founder of the AnnexB residency, for her trust and friendship.

Thank you to Carolyn Alexander, Daniel Rosler, and Marcos Gallon and their galleries' staff during these years of research. Thank you to Carolyn Alexander, Ben McGowan, Emanuel da Costa, and Renata Neves, for their generosity providing and assisting with research material for this project. Thank you to Sara Henry, Jason Chan, and Lindsey Dippold for their editing support.

Incredible women held my hand in difficult times to help me complete this project after a pandemic. I am thankful for these women and friends who helped with childcare, kept me sane, and had my back: Guiomar Milan Chidiac, Maria Fernanda Croce Bertagni, Mary Drew, Judith Roberts, Cindy Berrios, Lado Adlakha, Marilza Silva, Clarissa Hanna, Alison Steinberg, Emili Willet, and Elise Hughes. Judith Roberts and Cindy Berrios, in particular, have helped me with invaluable mental health care. My thanks go to Mary Drew for nurturing the most important person in my life while I wrote this manuscript. To my dearest friends, Jenny Cook and Rudy Vavra, Ziggy Randler-Bregman and Jesse Bregman, Karen Yamashita and Ronaldo Oliveira, thank you for your love: You are our American family.

To the women in my family, who supported this project directly and indirectly, this achievement is yours: Priscila, Selma, Simone, Soraia, Maria Teresa, Neusa, Déa, and Guiomar (in memoriam). To my parents, Nereide and Franciso, who give me unconditional love and determination, I owe this victory. To Nereide, Priscila, and Jenny, a special thank you for helping me carry this project to the end with researching and editing support. To Alan Anibal de Souza Ramos, for embarking with me on this journey of splendor and tears: Thank you for helping me become who I am today; thank you for your love, patience, and tireless cheering. And, last but not least, thank you to Rapha for the joy of making it all worth it.



## Preface

During my whole life in Brazil, I heard racist comments from white friends and family members about racialized people. When I was younger, I used to feel surprised to listen to these confessions;<sup>1</sup> still, I would not notice when I also would make a racist comment, a typical positionality within white culture. As a young light-skinned woman living in Brazil, I was not aware of the extent of racism's systemic roots. When I moved to the U.S. and lived here with my partner, a racialized Brazilian-born Latino, systemic racism became evident to me.

Living in the U.S. made me put some of the pieces of the racialization puzzle together: awareness came through our lived experiences as an immigrant interracial couple. Detailed accounts of prejudice and racism that my partner and I have lived here are for another time, another format. But in situating my voice as a writer, I attempt to move away from the neutral zone of academic writing to fight my participation in academia's history of enabling whiteness.

Witnessing the process of my partner's racialization unfold in the U.S. made me realize my complicity with whiteness as a Brazilian and the symbiotic racial

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<sup>1</sup> Regarding confessions and whiteness, Janet Mawhinney emphasizes how white (liberal) culture often uses storytelling to “normalize and recirculate white power and privilege despite the explicit goal of shifting these power relations.” Mawhinney looks at how white culture and white people are especially prone to confessing their own experiences of “discrimination,” while at the same time shutting down people of color’s experiences with all sorts of oppression. Mawhinney uses accounts of anti-racist workshops they participated in, in these liberal settings facilitators use the tactics of sharing experiences and/or storytelling to account for racism. As Mawhinney concludes, these workshops, having most white participants tend to be dominated by their voices and experiences that end up focusing on non-race discrimination and their supposedly “victim statuses.” Janet Mawhinney, “Giving up the Ghost, Disrupting the (Re)Production of White Privilege in Anti-Racist Pedagogy and Organizational Change” (University of Toronto, Canada, 1998), [http://www.collectionscanada.ca/obj/s4/f2/dsk2/tape15/PQDD\\_0008/MQ33991.pdf](http://www.collectionscanada.ca/obj/s4/f2/dsk2/tape15/PQDD_0008/MQ33991.pdf) <http://hdl.handle.net/1807/12096>, 16, 52.

relations that U.S. and Brazil hold.<sup>2</sup> It made me also realize that I also pass as white in the U.S., but only when it is convenient to white Americans and white Latinx people. Although I do not belong in white privileged American culture, I have been well-received by white Americans, especially when their acceptance comes as a comparison between my immigrant's lighter skin to my immigrant spouse's darker skin.

Although in the U.S., I am a Latina and non-citizen, whiteness is stamped on my face and body. I write to unlearn it. I write to understand why my “European appearance” is enabled while racialized bodies like my spouse’s become subaltern. I write to use the movements and positions that power has allowed me in this country to unravel *branquitude*, to make it visible and shameful.

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<sup>2</sup> See discussion in my Introduction.

# Introduction: Photography, Community and Representation in Contemporary Art Practices from Brazil

## Photography, the Photographic Quality, and Imagined Communities

Late modernity's ontological debates around photography centered on examining it as a candid result of a technical "writing in light," a medium controlled by both a camera and an author.<sup>3</sup> With postmodernity came the decentralization of Western modernity along with the uprooting of photography's discourses.<sup>4</sup> This decentering allowed thinkers to expose the persistent colonial deployment of photography in its constructed notions of racial, ethnic, and cultural differences. The study and perusal of photographic archives related to different fields of knowledge—and the abundance of these archives—also broadened the contemporary study of photography beyond the earlier focus on a photograph's authorship and the photograph as a unit or as a result.<sup>5</sup> Photography's reality effect, as Stuart Hall put it, came into

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<sup>3</sup> See the discussion in Ariella Aïsha Azoulay, "Chapter 1 - What Is Photography?," in *Civil Imagination: A Political Ontology of Photography* (London, UNITED KINGDOM: Verso Books, 2015), <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ucsc/detail.action?docID=6100181>.

<sup>4</sup> Stuart Hall calls this moment a "crisis of western modernity." Famously, he said, "Now that in postmodern age, you feel dispersed, I become centered. What I've thought of as dispersed and fragmented comes, paradoxically, to be representative of modern experience. It also makes me understand something about identity which has been puzzling me in the last three years. Black people in London are marginalized, fragmented, unfranchised, disadvantaged and dispersed. And yet, they look as if they own territory. Somehow, they too, in spite of everything are centered, in place: without much material support, but occupy a new kind of space at the center." Stuart Hall, "Minimal Selves," in *Identity: The Real Me*, ICA Documents 6 (London: Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1987).

<sup>5</sup> "Photographic archives that had been collecting dust for years in psychiatric hospitals, prisons, state and municipal institutions, hospitals, interrogation facilities, family collections or police files, unremarked upon by scholars of photography, as well as the notion and institution of the archive itself instantaneously became a privileged object for research and public exhibition." Ariella Aïsha Azoulay, "Chapter 1 - What Is Photography?," in *Civil Imagination: A Political Ontology of Photography* (London, UNITED KINGDOM: Verso Books, 2015), <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ucsc/detail.action?docID=6100181>, 23-24.

question for many postcolonial or anti-colonial artists and thinkers, not only as an urgent ontological debate, but because photography's reality effect enabled the formation of myriad oppressive discursive practices, from the ingraining of racial stereotypes to political propaganda used as regulatory or disciplining colonization techniques.

Due to its indexical quality,<sup>6</sup> photography became a very effective weapon for racial thinking, and historically contributed to countless chilling practices, from racial profiling to *cartes de visite* of enslaved peoples and postcards of lynching. From the 19th century on, photography became a technology for visualizing and regulating racial difference with specific methods of recording and presenting alterity. Furthermore, through photography, embryonic notions of racial difference already present in early modes of visualizing difference (i.e., colonial illustrations, or Casta paintings) achieved the status of so-called "evidence."

But, despite these forms of repression associated with photography, as Coco Fusco argues in *Only Skin Deep: Changing Visions of the American Self*, "racial thinking is not experienced or enforced through exclusively repressive means. Photography has not only produced pseudoscientific truths about race, but has a

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<sup>6</sup> Scholarly, one of the most studied examples of the link between raciology and photographic techniques were "pseudoscientific" practices, such as phrenology, which largely deployed photography to create false racial hierarchies, often explicitly challenging the humanity of non-white populations under colonial forms of domination. See Coco Fusco, *Only Skin Deep: Changing Visions of the American Self* (Harry N. Abrams, 2003). Coco Fusco, "The Other History of Intercultural Performance," *TDR (1988-)* 38, no. 1 (1994): 143, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1146361>. Brian Wallis, "Black Bodies, White Science: Louis Agassiz's Slave Daguerreotypes," in *Only Skin Deep: Changing Visions of the American Self*, ed. Coco Fusco (New York: International Center of Photography in association with Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, 2003). Steven D. Lavine, *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, 2nd Printing edition (Washington: Smithsonian Books, 1991).

fundamental role in the construction of racialized viewing as a positive, desirable, and pleasurable experience.”<sup>7</sup> In other words, if one considers the productive nature of images to generate discourse, one can consider numerous visual practices that have positively influenced the ways through which racial difference is made visible.<sup>8</sup> Images persist as powerful tools for moving the imagination and, consequently, shifting discursive practices and lived experiences. Photography has been deployed in defiance of colonization<sup>9</sup> and those living under oppressive power relations have also used it to create spaces for agency and self-recognition; I discuss such contemporary theories of the gaze further in this introduction.

This dissertation examines how three Brazilian-born artists, Maria Thereza Alves, Jonathas de Andrade, and Dalton Paula have used photographic techniques to represent racialized populations in Brazil. These three artists have long been committed to opposing the oppression of these populations through their practices. Jonathas de Andrade and Dalton Paula have risen to fame in the international art world recently, around the first decade of the 2000s. Maria Thereza Alves, on the other hand, is a more established artist who developed an international art profile first (based in the U.S., Mexico, Germany, and Italy) and only recently has shown her work in Brazil.

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<sup>7</sup> Coco Fusco, *Only Skin Deep: Changing Visions of the American Self* (Harry N. Abrams, 2003), 19.

<sup>8</sup> I am thinking here of fetishizing processes discussed by Post-Colonial scholars such as Frantz Fanon and Homi Bhabha. Homi K Bhabha, “The Other Question...,” *Screen* 24, no. 6 (November 1, 1983): 18–36, <https://doi.org/10.1093/screen/24.6.18>. Frantz Fanon and Charles Lam Markmann, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 1967.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Teju Cole, “When the Camera Was a Weapon of Imperialism. (And When It Still Is.) - The New York Times,” *The New York Times*, February 6, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/06/magazine/when-the-camera-was-a-weapon-of-imperialism-and-when-it-still-is.html>.

Instead of traditional photographic production, which has its own canonical debates,<sup>10</sup> I study how these three artistic practices use the *photographic quality* of images as a way of “being with others,”<sup>11</sup> to use Ariella Azoulay’s expression. I consider the photographic quality of an artwork as the artist’s deployment of photography as not only the result (a photograph) but also the medium of photography’s techniques, processes, and aesthetics. The photographic quality is everything that becomes visible through the taking (or making) of a photograph (i.e., all the camera registers through its capturing of light), but more importantly, an artist’s arrangement of certain iconographies or subgenres associated with photography, from the technical specificities of headshot or portrait photography to the diverse practices of social documentary photography.

I purposefully use *photographic quality* instead of “photography” in my discussion to incorporate art practices that do not necessarily result in photographs, such as the case of Dalton Paula’s series of painted portraits, which I examine in Chapter 3 from the perspective of the photographic. I am more interested in how these artists’ works *look like* photography but also behave like *something else*. I am attracted to how their practices extract the aesthetics of photographic genres only to evade such visual repertory. By borrowing photography’s aesthetic and processes, these artists are

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<sup>10</sup> Ariella Aïsha Azoulay, “Chapter 1 - What Is Photography?,” in *Civil Imagination: A Political Ontology of Photography* (London, UNITED KINGDOM: Verso Books, 2015), 23-24.

<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ucsc/detail.action?docID=6100181>.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

making particular statements about not only the significance but also the limitations and troubles of representing “race” in visual culture in Brazil.<sup>12</sup>

The very grouping of the terms “race,” “Brazil,” and “photography” may sound troubling to some Brazilians because race and racism are still “taboos”<sup>13</sup> not to be mentioned or discussed in casual conversations at home, at work in an office, or during a happy hour at a bar.<sup>14</sup> Most (white) Brazilians eschew talking about race: they run, walk away, or worse, whisper a vile joke, which has been part of Brazilians’ communion with the idea of cordiality or recreational racism, a term defined by scholars such as Adilson José Moreira.<sup>15</sup> As Patricia Pinho rightfully discussed most recently, however, white Brazilians have become more vocal and self-identified with *branquitude*,<sup>16</sup> especially to protest Black and Indigenous rights.<sup>17</sup>

What does it mean to look at the politics of photographic practices in relation to either representing or looking at “race” in Brazil? First, it means to write a manuscript in firm opposition to the national discourses on racial democracy in Brazil and its histories. It means to write a text that enters in conversation with the long invisible or overlooked epistemologies of Afro-Brazilian, Black, and Indigenous

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<sup>12</sup> I refer to Nicole Fleetwood’s discussion on how the Black body productively “troubles” the field of representation, especially when Black bodies do not attempt to create a mere positive or spectacular representation, but instead acknowledge this troubling effect. Nicole R. Fleetwood, *Troubling Vision: Performance, Visuality, and Blackness* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011).

<sup>13</sup> See Lilia Moritz Schwarcz, *Racismo no Brasil* (São Paulo, SP: Publifolha, 2001). Cleusa Turra, Gustavo Venturi, and Datafolha, *Racismo cordial: a mais completa análise sobre o preconceito de cor no Brasil* (São Paulo, SP: Editora Atica, 1995).

<sup>14</sup> See Daniela Vieira, Mariléa de Almeida, and Sueli Carneiro, “Between Left and Right, I Remain Black: Interview with Sueli Carneiro,” *Transition*, no. 130 (2020): 173–89, <https://doi.org/10.2979/transition.130.1.18>.

<sup>15</sup> See Adilson Moreira, *Racismo Recreativo*, 1ª edição (São Paulo: Editora Jandaíra, 2019).

<sup>16</sup> Throughout this dissertation, I use both the terms whiteness and *branquitude*. I use *branquitude* when I want to refer to features or discursive formations that are more particular to Brazilian notions of whiteness.

<sup>17</sup> See Patricia de Santana Pinho, “Whiteness Has Come Out of the Closet and Intensified Brazil’s Reactionary Wave,” in *Precarious Democracy: Ethnographies of Hope, Despair, and Resistance in Brazil*, ed. Benjamin Junge et al. (Rutgers University Press, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.36019/9781978825697>.

thinkers, artists, leaders, and activists from past and present. It means to debunk and displace white visual spaces and normative discourses hailing from colonial endeavors lingering in the present. It means to write about photography and its techniques, processes, and visibility as intrinsic to an imagined public sphere composed of agents such as the photographed subjects, makers, and spectators who exist outside the final photograph and whose positionalities, subjectivities, and lived experiences impact the understanding of the visual production or visual economy<sup>18</sup> about or around them.

I write about an expanded field of photography or the relationship between the production of images and their roles for communities' part of a public sphere. Images, especially old images such as icons or images associated with ancestors, were tangible extensions of traditions and knowledges with specific purposes in each culture. Although Western art history has pushed such links aside and labeled them “beliefs”—or irrational features of beautiful objects to be collected and exhibited—the social function of images is still alive in many autochthonous cultures across the world. I believe it has become central to grasp how photographic images are coupled—in their making, deployment, or use—with their imagined communities.<sup>19</sup>

By considering writings by Stuart Hall, such as “The Work of Representation” and “The Spectacle of the ‘Other,’” or bell hooks’s seminal “Oppositional Gaze,” I seek to understand the deployment of the photographic in the representation of racial

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<sup>18</sup> The term visual economy has been coined by Deborah Poole and considers how images circulate and “are appraised, interpreted, and assigned historical, scientific, and aesthetic worth.” Deborah Poole, *Vision, Race, and Modernity: A Visual Economy of the Andean World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 10.

<sup>19</sup> The term imagined communities refers to Benedict Anderson’s notion that the collective social bound in large communities, or nations, is imagined rather than experienced. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Revised edition (Verso, 2006).



difference in Brazil. I also borrowed part of my notion of the photographic from Hall's "The Spectacle of the 'Other'," in which he interweaves semiotic analysis and Foucauldian discursive formations to read images and examine representational practices associated with stereotyping to discern the politics of representation around certain products of visual culture.<sup>20</sup>

Hall acknowledges the messiness of dealing with the idea of racial difference when he says that representation "engages feelings, attitudes and emotions and it mobilizes fear and anxieties in the viewer, at deeper levels than we can explain in a simple common-sense way."<sup>21</sup> This complexity of feelings that is part of representation plays a crucial role in shaping the photographic quality of the practices I discuss in this dissertation. To understand image production in relation to the production of communities is to investigate how these images, especially regarding representation and "racial difference," mediate the desires and fears of white and nonwhite communities and subjects in Brazil. Moreover, I investigate how these seemingly individual feelings, desires, and fears have been constructed throughout history and around national and transnational discourses on otherness and difference.

In addition to Hall's theories, I develop the notion of photographic quality within an expanded field of photography and its relationship with communities in Brazil through Krista Thompson's *Shine: The Visual Economy of Light in African Diasporic Aesthetic Practice*. Thompson examines how African diasporic communities

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<sup>20</sup> Stuart Hall, "The Spectacle of the Other," in *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, 1st edition (London ; Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage Publications & Open University, 1997). 44.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 226.

have used the camera (video, still, and telephone) to create “new forms of participation in black public spheres.”<sup>22</sup> By looking at the visual economy of Afro-diasporic photographic practices, Thompson expands the ontology of photography by centering how the Black diasporic body interferes in and uses technologies of light, shine, and bling.<sup>23</sup> Thompson emphasizes how these subjects “use the camera in conjunction with other technologies to construct a complex set of relations to their local, transnational, and diasporic communities.”<sup>24</sup> For Thompson, practices such as performing for the camera, bling and hip-hop cultures, or skin bleaching as constructed for video are subversive repertoires of Blackness formed against the boundaries of postcolonial Afro-diasporic nation-states and their specific normative discourses.<sup>25</sup>

While Thompson casts her net beyond the “art world” to include popular visual culture from the African diaspora, I focus on practices displayed and labeled as

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<sup>22</sup> Krista A Thompson, *Shine: The Visual Economy of Light in African Diasporic Aesthetic Practice*, 2015, 10.

<sup>23</sup> About such ontology, Thompson writes about the forms she studies in the book, “Skin bleaching, video light, street photography, and the contemporary art that engages these complex practices all raise questions about what constitutes photography in these and other cultural and geographic contexts. In this way these expressions form part of “photography’s other histories.” This is Christopher Pinney and Nicolas Peterson’s prescient term for scholarly analyses of the medium that consider a range of photography is rethought across cultural contexts and over time. These practices expand notions of photography beyond understandings of the photograph as a “three-dimensional thing...[that] exist[s] materially in the world, as chemical deposits on paper,” as Elizabeth Edwards and Janice Hart describe it. While lens-centered African diasporic expressions at times take more conventional forms, these expressions also emphasize the moment of the photograph’s taking, the pose, the performance for the camera - ephemeral processes and effects that elude practices put pressure on assumptions about materiality and reproducibility that very much undergird most histories of photography. In this respect, they highlight what might be described as other ontologies of photography - photographic practices that precede and exceed the material forms conventionally associated with the medium. Perhaps the pose, the staging of the photographic event and its spectacular effects, and the body as photography complicate and refuse notions of the ontology of photography because the material image is often beside the point. What matters instead is how people use the camera in conjunction with other technologies to construct a complex set of relations to their local, transnational, and diasporic communities.” Krista A Thompson, *Shine: The Visual Economy of Light in African Diasporic Aesthetic Practice*, 2015, 23.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> “These African diasporic expressions often freeze, hinder, or prevent the conventional ways the vernacular photograph offers a likeness of something else, appears onto logically identical with what it depicts while detracting from its own sur-face and physical structure. These African diasporic practices prevent the photograph from turning to its referent (the person or thing represented in the image), which, according to one preeminent scholar of photography, Roland Barthes, defines what photography is and does.” Ibid.,17.

contemporary art inside and outside Brazil. The art practices I discuss in this dissertation are not exclusively created by or about Afro-diasporic makers or subjects so the notion of the public sphere I deploy here is not a Black or Native Brazilian public sphere. The works analyzed here articulate the conflicts and tensions arising from discursive formations that produce racialization in Brazil, especially in relation to racial miscegenation, which I discuss in the following section. The public sphere I address here is the imagined community where the clash around visual representation of “race” occurs; this clash is acknowledged and registered through the art practices I discuss in this dissertation.

Still considering a photograph “is much more than what is printed on photographic paper,”<sup>26</sup> I borrow from the work of Ariella Azoulay’s *The Civil Contract of Photography*. Azoulay proposes discourse on photography should expand well beyond aesthetic discussions and photography’s technical results. Regarding photographs of Palestine and Palestinians, for Azoulay, the Civil Contract of Photography is the anchoring of spectatorship in “civic duty toward the photographed persons who have not stopped being ‘there,’ toward dispossessed citizens who, in turn, enable the rethinking of the concept and practice of citizenship.”<sup>27</sup> Azoulay’s theory emphasizes the photographed subjects and their agency “as participant citizens” no matter their citizenship status inside or outside a nation-state.

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<sup>26</sup> Ariella Azoulay, “Introduction,” in *The Civil Contract of Photography*, 1st pbk. ed (New York : Cambridge, Mass: Zone Books ; Distributed by The MIT Press, 2008), 14.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

In the visual space of photography, the photographed subject *claims* their citizenship. Referring to Palestinians specifically, Azoulay argues, “they cease to appear as stateless or as enemies, the manners in which the sovereign regime strives to construct them. They call on me to recognize and restore their citizenship through my viewing.”<sup>28</sup> Through the photographed subject’s gaze and the reciprocal viewing of the photograph, photographed subjects and spectators establish a pact or a civic bond. This contract implicates viewers directly in the process of acknowledging—and necessarily acting upon—the photographed subject’s condition. Beyond Roland Barthes’s definition of photography’s essence as “a testimony . . . that ‘this something’ was there,” Azoulay advocates for the “watching of a photograph . . . to testify to the fact that the photographed people were there.”<sup>29</sup> By viewing them, Azoulay suggests, the spectator partakes in a civic duty regarding those photographed, which the author calls “a skill to be activated.”<sup>30</sup>

Azoulay links the three positions—photographer/author, photographed subject, and viewer—as agents in the civic sphere. The emphasis on looking at a photograph is not to necessarily label it by specific political positionalities, which can create a distance between the viewer and the photographed.<sup>31</sup> Azoulay understands photography as an arena for debate and participation by the photographed, photographers, and viewers alike, again emphasizing the usually undermined or

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<sup>28</sup> Azoulay, “Introduction,” in *The Civil Contract of Photography*, 16.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 24-26.

overlooked agency of the photographed.<sup>32</sup> Azoulay’s notion of the Civil Contract—although specifically developed with regard to the uprooting of Palestinians by the state of Israel—is valuable for this project because these three Brazilian-born artists use the photographic quality of the image to represent, imagine, or reach certain communities of viewers and photographed subjects. I am interested in that exact expansion of photography, or the production of images within the category of “art” in relation to an imagined idea of community.

The question of the relationship between photographed, photographer, and viewer in this dissertation is a question of civic participation addressing the urgency of unequal power dynamics constructed around the notion of racial difference. But, more importantly, this dissertation acknowledges this pact as *broken*, and therefore, I center on racialized agents’ *reclamation* of photography and its continued effects of coloniality on populations in Brazil.

Thus, there is a twofold movement in this dissertation. First, my goal is to investigate how these artists tackle or dialogue with hegemonic national discourses to claim the photographed subjects’ spaces for recognition within a nation-state—in this

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<sup>32</sup> See Azoulay’s mention of Susan Sontag’s *Regarding the Pain of Others*. Azoulay says, “Vis-à-vis such photographed persons it becomes patently insufficient to account for photography through a focus on photographers or spectators, as occurs in any discussion suited to the title *Regarding the Pain of Others* with which Susan Sontag christened her last book. Discussions such as these elide the gaze of the photographed subject, which can vary enormously between sharp, probing, passive, exhausted, furious, introverted, defensive, warning, aggressive, full of hatred, pleading, unbalanced, skeptical, cynical, indifferent, or demanding. The photographed person’s gaze seriously undermines the perception that practices of photography and watching photographs taken in disastrous conditions can be described and conceptualized as separate from the witnessed situation. When photographs or the work of particular photographers are characterized as “partisan,” “subversive,” or “critical,” the assumption is that the photographs show or perform something that is already over and done, foreclosing the option of watching photographs as a space of political relations.” Ariella Azoulay, “Introduction,” in *The Civil Contract of Photography*, 1st pbk. ed (New York : Cambridge, Mass: Zone Books ; Distributed by The MIT Press, 2008), 18-20.

case, Brazil. The second movement is to understand how *mestiçagem*, as an ambivalent visual discourse, operates vis-à-vis whiteness and non-whiteness in Brazil through the photographic. Through the study of *mestiçagem* as a buffering visual discourse to whiteness, I also examine how these three artists represent notions of Blackness and Indigenous subjectivities.

Through these artists' practices one observes how *mestiçagem* operates as an ambivalent visual discourse vis-à-vis whiteness and non-whiteness in Brazil. I argue that these artists' responses to this ambivalence takes place through an expanded field of photography: These artworks expand the image into pursuing reclamation for racialized communities. So that the portrait, the photographic document, and the photographic archive are expanded in that pursuit of visualizing and reclaiming the photographed subjects as part of a public sphere.

I focus on racial miscegenation because of its central yet overlooked role in the contemporary visual discourse around race in Brazil.<sup>33</sup> I am interested in the particular ways discursive formations around racial miscegenation mediate the relationships of visibility and invisibility of racialized bodies, not only in the photographic practices I study here in particular, but also in the specificities of *mestiçagem* as manifested in the

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<sup>33</sup> The predominant concept of *mestiçagem* regarding contemporary art still conflates culture with race and romanticizes the notion of cultural miscegenation, often conflating it with appropriation. Borsa Cattani writes, "In contemporary art, appropriations are recurrent; in the form of recreations but also revivals and even true copies. Regarding art made in Brazil, there is a significant feature: the appropriate signs and icons come from cultures given as dominant models. Originary cultures and originating elsewhere are transplanted to crossroads. Because Brazilian places are crossroads, intersections, corners; between various memories; among many traditions; among numerous models; between number of modalities. The mestizo-self crosses and is crossed by several others: from the tiny portions where the lines cross, new things are born. The places of miscegenation are not places merged into one: they are spaces of tension, in continuous coming into being, permanent opposition. From the resulting vibration, the new is born." See Introduction to the book *Mestiçagens Na Arte Contemporânea*. Iceleia Maria Borsa Cattani writes, ed., *Mestiçagens Na Arte Contemporânea* (UFGRS, 2007), 173. See also my discussion of the exhibition *Histórias mestiças* at the Museu de Arte de São Paulo later in this Introduction.

field of representation. If whiteness, as theorists have argued,<sup>34</sup> is an unmarked identity not evidently represented in visual culture but permeates it, how does *mestiçagem* as a visual discourse operate in relation to whiteness? Can artists refer to or represent *mestiçagem* within visual culture and still challenge whiteness? How do they use the photographic quality of the image to do so? Can new forms of Indigenous and Black subjectivities arise from the way artists create images while consciously acknowledging how *mestiçagem* operates as a normative discourse in Brazil?

With postmodernity, a rising discourse on ideas such as hybridity and opacity came to the forefront in the art world. Some of these ideas were particularly articulated by postcolonial U.S. and British Black theorists to redefine notions of Blackness away from nationalism. For example, in *Against Race*, Paul Gilroy advocated for the strategic abandonment of race as an analytic category. Gilroy argued “race” has been progressively constructed by white hegemonic systems of power and knowledge such as Eurocentric science and ethnography; to insist on using raciology to understand Blackness and culture only continues to benefit ultranationalist discourses and global capitalism in its appropriation of multicultural identities.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Regarding theories on whiteness and *branquitude* that are pertinent to this research, see Grada Kilomba, *Plantation Memories: Episodes of Everyday Racism*, North American edition (Toronto, Ontario: Between the Lines, 2021). Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, “Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor,” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1, no. 1 (2012). Richard Dyer, *White: Essays on Race and Culture*, 1st edition (London ; New York: Routledge, 1997). Patricia de Santana Pinho, “White but Not Quite: Tones and Overtones of Whiteness in Brazil,” *Small Axe* 13, no. 2 (2009): 39-56,231, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/195808257/abstract/AA1407884FBC458EPQ/1>. Patricia de Santana Pinho, “Whiteness Has Come Out of the Closet and Intensified Brazil’s Reactionary Wave,” in *Precarious Democracy: Ethnographies of Hope, Despair, and Resistance in Brazil*, ed. Benjamin Junge et al. (Rutgers University Press, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.36019/9781978825697>. Liv Rebecca Sovik, *Aqui Ninguém é Branco* (Rio de Janeiro: Aeroplano Editora, 2009).

<sup>35</sup> Gilroy’s ideas could be dangerously co-opted by a post-racialism, or as post-racism right wing discourses that misuses the notion of race as a construction to argue that it is an illusion. See, for example, Kathryn T. Gines, “A CRITIQUE OF POSTRACIALISM: Conserving Race and Complicating Blackness Beyond the Black-White Binary 1,” *Du Bois Review* 11, no. 1 (Spring 2014): 75–86, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1742058X1400006X>.

By advocating for the deployment of race as a diasporic and transnational logic, Gilroy opposed the dangerous nationalism and conservatism the world has witnessed in the first two decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.<sup>36</sup> For Gilroy, an example of the negative impact of race discourse on a global capitalist world is the reliance on definitions based on chromatic difference and epidermalization.<sup>37</sup> Although Gilroy's theory argues for the rejection of race as an analytic category, Gilroy was still adamant about the very real outcomes of racialization and how they persistently impact everyday lives.

A clear example of the celebratory way discursive formations on *mestiçagem* have been deployed in the art and visual culture of Brazil is the 2014 exhibition, *Histórias Mestiças*, at the Instituto Tomie Ohtake. Planned by two of the most famous Brazilian art curators, Adriano Pedrosa and Lilia Moritz Schwarcz, the exhibition featured artists from across different historical moments and generations. According to the curators, these artists contributed “to the construction of narratives that form the Brazilian identity.”<sup>38</sup> The *Histórias Mestiças* exhibition catalog, for example, brings together 400 artworks by artists such as Johann Moritz Rugendas (1802–1858), Tarsila do Amaral (1886–1973), Adriana Varejão, Candido Portinari (1903–1962), Jean-Baptiste Debret (1768–1848), Luiz Zerbini, and Ernesto Neto.

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<sup>36</sup> I am referring to the rise of Donald Trump in 2017 in the U.S. and other neo-fascist figures such as Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil and Marine Le Pen in France.

<sup>37</sup> Looking at how computers and new imaging technologies have “transformed bodies into codes and information,” Gilroy advances a notion of epidermalization, arguing that “[t]he boundaries of race have moved across the threshold of skin – they are cellular molecular, not dermal.” Paul Gilroy, *Against Race: Imagining Political Culture beyond the Color Line* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2000), 47.

<sup>38</sup> Adriano Pedrosa, Lilia Moritz Schwarcz, and Instituto Tomie Ohtake, eds., *Catálogo Histórias Mestiças* (Rio de Janeiro, RJ: São Paulo, SP: Cobogó; Instituto Tomie Ohtake, 2015).



The exhibition evoked cultural *mestiçagem* in the hybrid ways the show displayed these different artist generations and their styles, much like other Brazilian curatorial projects from the 1990s, such as the famous 24th edition of the São Paulo Biennial: *Antropofagia e Histórias de Canibalismo* (1998), organized by themes related to the notion of anthropophagy.<sup>39</sup> *Historias Mestiças* also sought to debunk certain colonial paradigms within Western art history by focusing on *mestiçagem* as a synonym for “subalternity” and “marginality.” In his curatorial essay, Pedrosa wrote,

Mestizo histories are marginal and subaltern, antropofagico and post-colonial, multiple and inconstant, fractured and transversal histories. They are histories of flow and reflux. full of segregation, prejudice, and discrimination. Insofar as we reestablish connections with other wellsprings of art and culture, we rewrite histories of the past an propose new histories for the future.<sup>40</sup>

As Pedrosa states, this exhibition’s curatorial concept focused on a rewriting of histories by associating Brazilian “mestizo histories” with postcolonial discourse.

Schwarcz continues,

Our histories are therefore *mestizo* and political, made up of joining and separations, dis-encounters and confrontations, by dialogue and by lack of communication. Fragmented and incomplete, they result from practices of racism and discriminatory regimes that are violent in both their origin and destiny.<sup>41</sup>

But are the cultural and racial miscegenation discursive formations around art *in Brazil* indeed marginal and subaltern, as the curators argue? In *Histórias Mestiças*, a

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<sup>39</sup> See Paulo Herkenhoff, *Fundacao Bienal de Sao Paulo XXIV bienal de Sao Paulo: nucleo historico antropofagia e historias de canibalismos, V.1* (Sao Paulo: A. Fundacao, 1998). About this exhibition see also, Lisette Lagnado and Bienal de São Paulo, eds., *Cultural Anthropophagy: The 24th Bienal de Sao Paulo 1998, Exhibition Histories* (London: Afterall Books [u.a.], 2015).

<sup>40</sup> Adriano Pedrosa, Lilia Moritz Schwarcz, and Instituto Tomie Ohtake, eds., *Catálogo Histórias Mestiças* (Rio de Janeiro, RJ : São Paulo, SP: Cobogó ; Instituto Tomie Ohtake, 2015), 38.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

romanticized idea around *mestiçagem* as formative for Brazilian national identity still lingered: the idea that *mestiçagem* magically articulates subalternity and therefore has the potential of challenging colonial thinking. This approach still seems attuned to Latin American modernity's notions on creolization and miscegenation, such as Mexican *mestizaje*'s association with nationalism through practices such as muralism.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, the curators' approach on "racial miscegenation" seems a bit aloof to the *lived* impact of *mestiçagem* on racialized populations in Brazil. In their curatorial essays, both Pedrosa and Schwarcz discuss the "perils" of discourses on racial miscegenation, but they do not address more thoroughly *mestiçagem*'s relationship to *branquitude* and its discursive feeding of oppression against Afro-Brazilians and Indigenous peoples. About the exhibition, Pedrosa said,

*Historias Mestiças* is not so much a history of *mestizaje* as it is a *mestizaje* of many histories. After all, the very notion of *mestizaje*, the mixing of races and cultures, can become a dangerous ideology by designating all individuals as *mestizos*, erasing differences, and masking racial prejudice, especially in a country marked by discriminations, like Brazil.<sup>43</sup>

Thus, although touching on the issue, the exhibition eschewed discussing the representation of racial miscegenation and its inherent role in the production of *miscegenated histories* or the notion of cultural miscegenation. In the exhibition catalog, however, the curators fully reproduced texts by Gilberto Freyre's *Masters*

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<sup>42</sup> See Mary K. Coffey, *How a Revolutionary Art Became Official Culture: Murals, Museums, and the Mexican State* (Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2012). Tatiana Flores, "Art, Revolution, and Indigenous Subjects," *The Routledge History of Latin American Culture*, 2017, 115, [https://www.academia.edu/35883205/Art\\_Revolution\\_and\\_Indigenous\\_Subjects](https://www.academia.edu/35883205/Art_Revolution_and_Indigenous_Subjects).

<sup>43</sup> Adriano Pedrosa, Lilia Moritz Schwarcz, and Instituto Tomie Ohtake, eds., *Catálogo Histórias Mestiças* (Rio de Janeiro, RJ : São Paulo, SP: Cobogó ; Instituto Tomie Ohtake, 2015), 35.

*and Slaves* as foundational to Brazilian identity—yet, scholarly critiques of Freyre’s work have been formed and discussed since the inception of his theories in the 1930s. On the one hand, the exhibition critiques Western art canons, but on the other, it upholds the celebratory belief that national identity founded on *mestiçagem* can produce a more *creative and diverse* country—yet the cultural production recognized is mainly a white elitist one. Critiquing the exhibition María Iñigo Clavo wrote,

*Histórias Mestiças* is highly representative of how many Brazilian intellectuals approach the colonial *otherness* of their country. Either they represent themselves as the Other or they represent the Indigenous/African other from either a romantic or folkloric position (sometimes a disturbingly nostalgic one) or a position of solidarity with the victims. Thus *Histórias Mestiças* is a record of the tradition of the representation of coloniality in Brazil. The exhibition catalogue contains just two curatorial texts and quotes make up the remainder: quotes, quotes and more quotes from prominent intellectuals of the history of Brazil. These were found on loose pages alongside photos taken from the exhibition. What *Histórias Mestiças* did not provide was a good portrayal of what is not visible in Brazil, that which is not taken into consideration, i.e. the agency of these groups without the mediation of anthropologists or contemporary artists or writers.<sup>44</sup>

That romanticized idea pays service to the erasure of racialized populations in Brazil, and furthermore, puts *branquitude* at the center of the artistic discourse—an outcome the curators seem to have subsequently realized in 2018 when they organized the now famous exhibition *Historias Afro-atlânticas*, which I discuss in Chapter 3.

The appeal of Brazil’s singular notion of cultural miscegenation is understandable. Brazilian culture is indeed rich, formed by myriad of regionalities

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<sup>44</sup> María Iñigo Clavo, “Is Brazil a Postcolonial Country?,” *Paragrana* 25, no. 2 (December 1, 2016): 63–79, <https://doi.org/10.1515/para-2016-0029>, 68.

and multiple types of artistic manifestations from different cultural roots.<sup>45</sup> From the perspective of power and discourse, it is also understandable *cultural mestiçagem* functions as a “positive discourse,”<sup>46</sup> luring and hailing participants while serving as a smokescreen for the subaltern condition of racialized populations. Thus, the relationship between racial and cultural *mestiçagem* in Brazil has a convoluted history needing constant articulation to either extricate these discourses from whiteness, or point to formations that cannot be disassociated at all from whiteness through visual culture and art.

### **National Discourses, *Branquitude* and Normative *Racial Mestiçagem***

In the late 19th century, when new modes of naturalizing difference emerged in the Western world, European countries and the U.S. either criminalized racial miscegenation or understood it as racial degeneration.<sup>47</sup> In 1888, after the end of slavery in Brazil, anthropological studies such as Gilberto Freyre’s *Masters and Slaves*

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<sup>45</sup> See, for example, Pedro Ernesto Freitas Lima, “‘Nordestinidade,’” *Revista Do Instituto de Estudos Brasileiros*, August 12, 2020, 34–49, <https://doi.org/10.11606/issn.2316-901X.v1i76p34-49>.

<sup>46</sup> I am referring to Foucault’s notion of “positive product of power.” About sexuality, he said, “‘Sexuality’ is far more of a positive product of power than power was ever repression of sexuality. I believe that it is precisely these positive mechanisms that need to be investigated, and here one must free oneself of the juridical schematism of all previous characterizations of the nature of power.” Michel Foucault and Colin Gordon, *Power/knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, 1st American ed (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 120. For him, madness and sexuality have first operated, respectively, as negative and positive, but then in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, “there came into being a vast technology of the psyche... which ... at once turned sex into the reality hidden behind rational consciousness and the sense to be decoded from madness, their common content, and hence that which made it possible to adopt the same modalities for dealing with both.” Michel Foucault and Colin Gordon, *Power/knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, 1st American ed (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 61-62. It is also important to note that discourses on cultural and racial *mestiçagem* in Brazil are also inherently bound to sexuality, an important link I do not fully explore in this dissertation.

<sup>47</sup> Lilia Moritz Schwarcz, *O Espetáculo das Raças* (The Spectacle of Races) (São Paulo, SP: Companhia das Letras, 1993).

progressively endorsed interracial sexual reproduction, while state-sponsored policies promoted the population's whitening via European immigration.<sup>48</sup>

Brazil embraced *mestiçagem* as a solution for what it deemed its “racial problem.” In theory, through *mestiçagem* neither whites nor Blacks would exist anymore, both having been replaced by a new race; within this process, racism would also be overcome.<sup>49</sup> Across the 20<sup>th</sup> century, such a “solution” would be conveyed through the popularization of another construction: the notion of Brazil as a racial democracy. Sociologist Antonio Guimarães argues this misleading idea can be defined as the “claim that whites and nonwhites can interact without restricting the rights and life chances of nonwhites.”<sup>50</sup> Such a myth, Guimarães argues, has been constructed by scholarship and disseminated as a popular belief, particularly during the period from the 1930s to 1950s.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> “Even before 1870 there had been some attempts to attract immigrants, especially Germans and Swiss, with the explicit intention of countering the disproportion between blacks and whites (Balán, 1974: 117-119). But it was only from 1867 on that the Brazilian government began to invest more markedly in its chosen immigration policy, almost doubling its expenditure on it. Although government expenditure on immigration fell appreciably between 1870 and 1872, it more than doubled after 1872 (Santos, 1997). The European immigrant's transportation costs, paid for by the Brazilian national government from 1851 to 1909 and by the government of São Paulo province (later, state) from 1881 to 1927 (Santos, 1997), was one obstacle that was overcome by administrative action to make this policy of importing farm labor practicable. Thus the makeup of the free labor market depended, even before the formal abolition of slavery, on a flow of immigrants from abroad (Kowarick, 1987: 88-89) subsidized by decisive intervention of the imperial and provincial governments.” Sales Augusto dos Santos and Laurence Hallewell, “Historical Roots of the ‘Whitening’ of Brazil,” *Latin American Perspectives* 29, no. 1 (2002): 61–82, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3185072>, 62.

<sup>49</sup> See Lilia Moritz Schwarcz, *O Espetáculo das Raças* (São Paulo, SP: Companhia das Letras, 1993) and Richard Miskolci, *O desejo da nação: masculinidade e branquitude no Brasil do XIX (The Nation's Desire: Masculinity and Whiteness in Brazil)* (São Paulo, SP: Annablume, 2012).

<sup>50</sup> Antonio Guimarães, “Sociology and Racial Inequality: Challenges and Approaches in Brazil,” 308.

<sup>51</sup> According to Antonio Guimarães, “From the mid-1930s to the early 1950s, Brazilian sociology was tethered to the dilemma of *mestiçagem* and was in close dialogue with structural-functionalism. Two new concepts that developed from this dialogue became central to this sociology: racial democracy and color. Even though they were not being strictly analytical, racial democracy and color became central to Brazilian social analysis. Both were introduced into academic discourse, together with the concepts of ethnicity and culture, with the explicit aim of superseding the concepts of race and whitening, which had been cultivated by the earlier generation of Brazilian social thinkers, such as Vianna ([1932] 1959),” *Ibid.*

For Guimarães, it is first around the concept of *mestiçagem* that racial democracy was introduced into sociology, to be further promoted by the government as a national motto. As Guimarães argues, *mestiçagem* became a structural discourse to guarantee the process of “Brazil’s democratization.” According to Guimarães, for one of the most famous advocates of *mestiçagem*, anthropologist Gilberto Freyre (1900–1987),<sup>52</sup> *mestiçagem* “would prevent the nation’s fragmentation into races [and] promote the social ascension of *mestiços*.”<sup>53</sup>

In his article, “Sociology and Racial Inequality: Challenges and Approaches in Brazil,” Guimarães demonstrates that both *mestiçagem* and the discourse of racial democracy have always been contradictory. In sociology, one of the problems with the concept, as it has developed in Brazil, is its claim that “black and white” races have been made extinct through mixing.<sup>54</sup> These dominant discourses have been so successfully accepted by Brazilian society that it is still common to hear racism<sup>55</sup> does

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<sup>52</sup> On the idea of the *mestiço* as “icon of Brazilian nation,” and a critique of Gilberto Freyre, author of *Casa Grande e Senzala* (Masters and Slaves) see, for example, Schwarcz, *Racismo no Brasil*, 27-30.

<sup>53</sup> Guimarães, “Sociology and Racial Inequality: Challenges and Approaches in Brazil,” 308.

<sup>54</sup> Schwarcz, *Racismo no Brasil*, 27-30.

<sup>55</sup> A now-famous research developed by Datafolha in the 1990s sought to define the particularities of racism in Brazil, or of what now has been commonly called “cordial racism.” The concept was first coined by scholar Florestan Fernandes and later by Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, who defined the “cordial man” as having characteristics such as “The frankness of treatment, hospitality, and generosity, [...] to the extent that the influence of the patterns of human conviviality, informed in the rural and patriarchal environment, remains active and fruitful” To “be polite,” for de Holanda, in this case, is to allude to an appearance, is actually to create a mechanism of defense in relation to society, he says “stands on the outside, epidermal part of the individual, and may even serve as [...] a piece of resistance.” Datafolha presents compelling statistics that seek to prove that such *cordialidade* acts as a buffer mechanism for the Brazilian population to avoid dealing directly with racism, and thus also to negate its existence altogether. Most famously discussed by Schwarcz and other scholars, Datafolha found out that 89% of the Brazilian population believed that there is racism in Brazil, while only 10% of the population admitted being racists. This numeric incongruency reveals the power of the discourse of cordiality in Brazil and, as scholars have argued: the fact that racism is always something *of the other*. Cleusa Turra, Gustavo Venturi, and Datafolha, *Racismo cordial: a mais completa análise sobre o preconceito de cor no Brasil* (São Paulo, SP: Editora Atica, 1995), 12. See more, Lilia Moritz Schwarcz, *Racismo no Brasil* (São Paulo, SP: Publifolha, 2001).

not exist in Brazil or that “race” does not *really* matter.<sup>56</sup> But as Guimarães demonstrates, *mestiçagem* also “presupposes (black and white races’) real and factual existence as natural phenomena,” overlooking both categories.<sup>57</sup>

In *Mama Africa: Reinventing Blackness in Bahia*, Patricia Pinho expands on these predicaments, focusing on how, in Bahia, *blocos afro* “created a specific black identity,” repurposing and “reinventing the meanings of Africa and Africanness as a basis for constructing new cultural and aesthetic symbols.”<sup>58</sup> While analyzing the subtleties of this reinvention of Blackness, Pinho demonstrates how *mestiçagem* has been used as a justification for arguments that, in Brazil, a Black particularity does not even exist.<sup>59</sup>

Intellectuals who defend racial *mestiçagem* believe in its inherent positive character and ability to erase the Black/white binary, thus overcoming both “race” and racism. About scholars who defend *mestiçagem*, Pinho explains they have “argued that the existence of multiple color categories is a sign of an ambiguity that dissipates conflict. However, this logic fails to recognize that the various color categories with which Brazilians define themselves are loaded with racial notions of Black inferiority and white superiority.”<sup>60</sup> *Mestiçagem* still requires, as Pinho says, “the mixture of races

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<sup>56</sup> I follow the views of scholars such as Paul Gilroy, Jennifer González, Derek C. Murray, Patricia Pinho, and Coco Fusco, among so many others who have argued for the risks of using the term “race,” and the necessity of putting it under scrutiny, for the ways it reduces entire groups to biological connotations. In a sense, I hope, this dissertation will also contribute to challenging such a category, even though I consider its importance for non-white activism against racism, on local and global scales.

<sup>57</sup> Guimarães, “Sociology and Racial Inequality: Challenges and Approaches in Brazil,” 308.

<sup>58</sup> *Blocos afro* are Carnival groups. Pinho explains how, in the 1970s (also during the military dictatorship), these groups responded to racial discrimination that excluded Blacks from participating of Carnival, a cultural manifestation inherently rooted in the many African heritages in Brazil. Patricia de Santana Pinho, *Mama Africa: Reinventing Blackness in Bahia* (Durham [NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 2.

<sup>59</sup> On this, see also Salum, Pinho, Guimarães.

<sup>60</sup> Pinho, *Mama Africa*, 18.

and thus does not overcome the very notion of race.”<sup>61</sup> In other words, *mestiçagem* may even create an ambiguity between “Black and white” but not one ultimately able to dismantle the notion of “race.”

Although narratives such as the “myth of racial democracy” have been continuously debunked by Black and Indigenous activists in Brazil, its power as a hegemonic discourse is still very much present. Throughout the 20th century, the illusion of racial democracy associated with *mestiçagem* sought to appease class and racial inequalities; and it did so by maintaining a belief in a homogeneous, unified, and pacified nation, thus helping secure the interests of authoritarian Brazilian elites.<sup>62</sup>

*Mestiçagem* became a synonym for Brazil’s formation as a nation, helping shape what philosopher Marilena Chauí categorized as Brazil’s foundational myth. She describes this myth in an anthropological sense as a “narrative that is an imaginary solution for tensions, conflicts, and contradictions that do not find ways of being resolved in the level of reality.”<sup>63</sup> Brazilian population’s non-white majority has been interpellated by *mestiçagem* as a way of subscribing to national hegemonic narratives.<sup>64</sup>

Thus, *mestiçagem*, when encountered as a normative discursive practice and as a celebratory, romanticized, or uncritical notion of cultural mixing, operates in support of *branquitude* in Brazil, offering no threat to *branquitude*’s discursive formations. Due

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<sup>61</sup> Pinho, *Mama Africa*, 18.

<sup>62</sup> Marilena de Souza Chauí, *Brasil: mito fundador e sociedade autoritária* (São Paulo, SP, Brasil: Editora Fundação Perseu Abramo, 2000).

<sup>63</sup> Marilena Chauí, *Brasil: Mito Fundador e Sociedade Autoritária (Brazil: Foundational Myth and Authoritarian Society)*, 9.

<sup>64</sup> In his famous primal scene, Frantz Fanon is hailed by a white boy and marked as “black,” thus racialized through the disavowal from an “outside,” from whiteness. Fanon uses the visceral account of the primal scene to demonstrate how race and skin color difference are produced and constructed through language—a process Althusser called interpellation. Frantz Fanon and Charles Lam Markmann, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 1967.



to discursive *mestiçagem*'s alliance to racial and ethnic ambiguity, *mestiçagem* and *branquitude* had fed from each other throughout history, making it harder for hailed subjects, or racialized subjects, to understand themselves as such. Considering Brazil is a country that, to this day, assassinates its non-white populations, belonging to Brazil as a nation often means to be *pardo*, *mestiça*, or somewhere in between Blackness, indigeneity, and whiteness, and where, socially and racially, *branquitude* can be more easily *attained*. As Pinho explains, there is discursive *mestiçagem* and *mestiçagem vivida* (or an experienced *mestiçagem*), which are the actual living experiences of racialized subjects understood or who self-identify as *mestiças*, and living the experience of racialization depending on specific aspects of their physiognomies or their skin color.

Richard Dyer characterized whiteness for its neutrality and its capacity to act as a disembodiment and be taken as a norm, or a type of universal subjectivity.<sup>65</sup> For scholars Liv Sovik and Patricia Pinho, who have investigated the status of whiteness—or *branquitude*—in Brazil, racial mixture actually “protects” the status of whiteness. In *Aqui Ninguém É Branco* (Here No One is White), Liv Sovik writes,

In Brazil, [...] the social practice of whiteness is permeated by discourses of affection, which seemingly reconnect unequal social sectors, but the racial hierarchy continues [...] The value of whiteness is realized in the hierarchy and in the devaluation of the black person, even when “race” is not mentioned. [...] The line of escape through miscegenation denies the existence of blacks and hides the existence of whites.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Richard Dyer, *White* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997).

<sup>66</sup> Liv Sovik, *Aqui Ninguém É Branco* (Here No One is White) (Aeroplano, 2010), 50. My translation from Portuguese.

In “White but Not Quite: Tones and Overtones of Whiteness in Brazil,” Patricia Pinho concludes that because of “the celebration of racial mixture,” whiteness in Brazil is “imprecise and amorphous,” yet also “spread out all over the place in the shape of a thin, permeable layer, waiting for those opportunities in which it erupts to the surface.”<sup>67</sup> *Mestiçagem* not only serves as a buffer mechanism for whiteness, but has also informed the molding of a national Brazilian culture and, therefore, its visual culture and art. As Pinho examines below, discussing Africanness,

The culturally constructed and continuously reinvented feature that we call Africanness does not necessarily define one’s degree of Blackness. Another complication is that one may partake in a hybrid culture, filled with Africanisms, without recognizing the African origin of certain cultural expressions.<sup>68</sup>

The problem is not *mestiçagem vivida* or *mestiçagem* as interracial sexual reproduction of the population, but how Black and Indigenous cultural particularities have progressively been subsumed into national discourse while racial discrimination persists.<sup>69</sup> My argument is that although uncritical celebrations of *mestiçagem* in Brazil often manifest as affection towards non-white peoples and their cultures, they also operate vis-à-vis Brazil’s foundational myth, preventing whiteness from being detected and problematized.

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<sup>67</sup> Patricia Pinho, “White but Not Quite: Tones and Overtones of Whiteness in Brazil,” *Small Axe* 29, (2009) 13 (2): 39-56.

<sup>68</sup> Pinho, *Mama Africa*, 21.

<sup>69</sup> On the inherent authoritarian character of Brazilian society, see, for example, Marilena de Souza Chauí, *Brasil: mito fundador e sociedade autoritária* (São Paulo, SP, Brasil: Editora Fundação Perseu Abramo, 2000). See also Richard Miskolci, *O Desejo Da Nação: Masculinidade e Branquitude No Brasil de Fins Do XIX*, 1a edição, Coleção Queer ([São Paulo, Brazil] : São Paulo, SP, Brasil: Fapesp ; Annablume, 2012).

## From Degeneration to Celebration: A Genealogy of Seeing Racial *Mestiçagem*

A Black woman opens her arms, raising her head in approval as if thanking the heavens, while a younger brown-skinned woman, possibly her daughter, holds a light-skinned baby on her lap (Figure 94). A white man leans against the doorframe, glancing at the baby. Historians have interpreted this male figure in *Ham's Redemption*, an 1895 painting by Modesto Brocos, as a metaphor for Brazil's longing for a whiter, Christianized, and male-oriented future. If the viewer thinks of the Brazilian national discourse on *mestiçagem*—or racial miscegenation—they can understand the Black grandmother as standing for the predominantly Black Brazilian population of the 19th century, which would have to progressively assimilate into the rest of society with the end of slavery. In *Ham's Redemption*, it is through the Black woman's grateful acceptance of her own sexual exploitation that this whiter future is conveyed.

During the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, around the time Brocos painted this piece,<sup>70</sup> Brazil had embraced *mestiçagem* as a solution for what it deemed its “racial problem.”<sup>71</sup> In theory, through *mestiçagem*, neither whites nor Blacks would exist anymore, both having been replaced by a new race; in this process, society would also

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<sup>70</sup> See Lilia Moritz Schwarcz and Tatiana H. P. Lotierzo, “Raça, gênero e projeto branqueador : ‘a redenção de Cam’, de modesto brocos,” *Artelogie. Recherche sur les arts, le patrimoine et la littérature de l’Amérique latine* 5 (June 2016), <http://cral.in2p3.fr/artelogie/spip.php?article254>.

<sup>71</sup> See Sales Augusto dos Santos and Laurence Hallewell, “Historical Roots of the ‘Whitening’ of Brazil,” *Latin American Perspectives* 29, no. 1 (2002): 61–82, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3185072>.

overcome racism. But as *Ham's Redemption* makes visible to us, the goal in elevating *mestiçagem* as a national discourse really sought to uphold the ideology of whiteness.<sup>72</sup>

One of the messages behind *Ham's Redemption* is that the infant's light skin might help the baby *escape* the oppression of racialization. But could they? Immediately after they were born, wouldn't either close or distant relatives whisper about or point to their curly hair, the color or shape of their eyes, or inspect them for darker or lighter areas of their body? Racialization never fails to burst out, here and there, eager to confirm whiteness as the norm. As I mentioned before, across history, a significant number of non-white populations in Brazil still self-identify as *pardos*, seeking to stretch that category to reach standards of whiteness.<sup>73</sup> With the persistence of Black activist movements in Brazil, identification with Blackness increased exponentially, but racism and colorism continue to be the norm in popular parlance.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Patricia de Santana Pinho says about Freyre, "It is important to remember that the ideal of miscegenation preached by Freyre was far from symmetrical, since it not only revolved around the white man, but also conceived him as the main beneficiary of the racial and cultural mixture." My translation from Portuguese: "É importante lembrar que ideal de *mestiçagem* pregado por Freyre nada tinha de simétrico, já que não apenas girava em torno do homem branco, mas também o concebia como o principal beneficiário da mistura racial e cultural." Patricia de Santana Pinho, "A Casa Grande Surta Quando a Senzala Aprende a Ler": Resistência Antirracista e o Desvendamento da Branquitude Injuriada no Brasil," *Confluente. Revista di Studi Iberoamericani* 13, no. 1 (June 15, 2021): 32–55, <https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.2036-0967/13085>, 47.

<sup>73</sup> In a 1970s' demographic census of the Brazilian population, the government asked respondents to self-define their race based on their skin color. The result was a list of 136 skin color tone classifications which led the state to argue that the diversity was such that there was no point in recording the category "race" of the Brazilian population; for the following years the term race/skin color was simply removed from censuses. Later on, subsequent state-sponsored censuses adopted the word "pardo" as an umbrella-term, used still now to categorize those who, supposedly, are not "black," "Indigenous," nor "yellow." It is not a coincidence that this decision took place during the military dictatorship, a period in which attacks against human rights were constant. About that specific census, see Lilia Moritz Schwarcz, *Racismo no Brasil* (Publifolha, 2001).

<sup>74</sup> See Josimar Gonçalves de Jesus and Rodolfo Hoffmann, "De norte a sul, de leste a oeste: mudança na identificação racial no Brasil," *Revista Brasileira de Estudos de População* 37 (November 30, 2020): e0132, <https://doi.org/10.20947/S0102-3098a0132>. Josimar Gonçalves de Jesus, "O aumento da autodeclaração de negros na população brasileira," *Nexo Jornal*, June 30, 2021, sec. Acadêmico, <https://www.nexojornal.com.br/academico/2021/06/30/O-aumento-da-autodeclara%C3%A7%C3%A3o-de-negros-na-popula%C3%A7%C3%A3o-brasileira>.

The iconographies of the *mestiça/a* have always been mediated by tales of degeneration and monstrosity. But the *mestiça* has also been depicted as a figure of mediation between whiteness and non-whiteness. In “Corpo Monstro: *Branquitude e Racialização*,” Thiago Florencio discusses a series of portraits by Dutch painter Albert Eckout, who seems to have been the first artist to include a new category in the traditional paintings of Brazilian ethnic couples during colonialism: the *mestiça/o*. For Florencio, all the non-white couples Eckout depicted followed an ambivalent visual representation structured by sexual voyeurism and aggressive surveillance of the body.<sup>75</sup>

In this gendered visual system of racial and ethnic categorization, Eckout represented the *mestiça* as sexually available, and the *mestiço* “seems to reproduce the desire of domination,” becoming a “colonizer’s ventriloquist, the small power that acts at the frontlines of colonial domination, controlling the enslaved bodies that dare deviate from a submission to the metropolis’ entrepreneurship.”<sup>76</sup>

According to Florencio, Eckout depicts the *mestiço* wearing the vests of a huntsman: he bears weapons and has available ammunition. And as this author reminded us, in the early moments of colonialism, many *mestiços* were hired to arrest runaway enslaved people. Some achieved social ascension through militarization and supported the oppression of Indigenous and African peoples on Brazilian soil.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Florencio cites Bhabha’s *The Other Question* here. Thiago Florencio, “Corpo-Monstro, Branquitude e Racialização. A Formação Do Olhar Colonial No Brasil Setecentista,” *Experiências Em Ensino, Pesquisa e Extensão Na Uni- Versidade: Caminhos e Perspectivas / Geranilde Costa e Silva (Org.)*. – Fortaleza: Imprece, 2020., January 1, 2020, 283.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 285. My translation.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.* My translation.

If the colonizer saw the *mestiça* and the *mestiço* for their resourcefulness in the colonial endeavor, Florencio also reminds us this visibility was limited and bound to their subaltern position. The *mestiço* appeared barefoot in Eckout's painting, which, for Florencio, was an indication of an inferior status concerning the white dominant classes. This *ambivalent position* of the *mestiço* is persistent throughout Western history and permeates Brazil's foundational myths since colonialism, constituting fertile ground for their maintenance.

Kabengele Munanga, in *Rediscutindo a Mestiçagem no Brasil — Identidade Nacional versus Identidade Negra*, develops a thorough outline of the discourses around *mestiçagem* shaped by European and Brazilians, beginning with thinkers such as Voltaire and Diderot and ending with Gilberto Freyre. He reminds us miscegenation is a universal phenomenon and the ambivalence around the concept of *mestiçagem* is governed by how various groups across time have ideologically manipulated—and invented—biological categories based mostly on differences that exist in the “field of the visible.”<sup>78</sup> He concludes, “In the vast reflection of Enlightenment philosophers on racial difference and on the alien, the mestizo is always treated as an ambivalent being, sometimes seen as the ‘same,’ sometimes as the ‘other’.”<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Munanga says, “However, these are, in fact, cognitive categories largely inherited from the history of colonization, despite our perception of the difference being situated in the field of the visible. It is through these cognitive categories, whose content is more ideological than biological, that we acquire the habit of thinking about our identities without realizing the manipulation of the biological by the ideological.” My translation from Portuguese: “No entanto, trata-se, de fato, de categorias cognitivas largamente herdadas da história da colonização, apesar da nossa percepção da diferença situar-se no campo do visível. É através dessas categorias cognitivas, cujo conteúdo é mais ideológico do que biológico, que adquirimos o hábito de pensar nossas identidades sem nos darmos conta da manipulação do biológico pelo ideológico.” Kabengele Munanga, *Rediscutindo a mestiçagem no Brasil - Nova Edição: Identidade nacional versus identidade negra*, 5ª edição (Autêntica, 2019), 21.

<sup>79</sup> “Na vasta reflexão dos filósofos das luzes sobre a diferença racial e sobre o alheio, o mestiço é sempre tratado como um ser ambivalente, visto ora como o “mesmo”, ora como o “outro.” Kabengele Munanga, *Rediscutindo a*

In *The Spectacle of the Races*, Lilia Moritz Schwarcz examines the discursive debate around the construction of “race” in different regions of Brazil, promoted by the scientific classes and institutional knowledge production from 1870 to 1930. Moritz Schwarcz discusses how Brazil shifts from a tropical paradise for colonialism’s naturalist travelers to becoming a *tropical laboratory* to explore the country’s particular “racial composition.” This shift put racial miscegenation at the core of the white elite’s project to mold Brazil’s burgeoning modern nation. At that time, the very identity of the *Brazilian man* was debatable—an embarrassment.<sup>80</sup>

To paraphrase Schwarcz, Brazilian “science men” sought to imagine the nation in biological terms, estimating how to achieve a “homogenous future,” but instead encountered a “*nação mestiça*” that presented a challenge to the preferred scientific determinism and other evolutionist models that served as the basis for such ideal of homogeneity. To synthesize Schwarcz’s argument, men of medicine and legislators entered a fierce debate with the nation’s future at stake.<sup>81</sup>

On one hand, scientists insisted Brazil’s intense racial miscegenation would lead to a significant level of degeneration and propagation of illnesses. On the other hand, legislators sought to create citizenship criteria and notions of equality that could fit the Brazilian Republic’s democratic project after the proclamation of the end of slavery. For that political project to materialize, *mestiçagem* was tolerated as long as a “good *mestiçagem*” were to be practiced in Brazil, or a *mestiçagem* that would lead to

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*mestiçagem no Brasil - Nova Edição: Identidade nacional versus identidade negra*, 5ª edição (Autêntica, 2019), 26.

<sup>80</sup> Lilia Moritz Schwarcz, *O espetáculo das raças*, 1ª edição (São Paulo, SP: Companhia das Letras, 1993), 314.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

whiteness centered on a desire to purge society's "'gangrenous part' and guarantee the future of the nation were to become 'white and western.'"<sup>82</sup>

Like other discursive formations, the visual representations of *mestiçagem* are ingrained in permanent volatility. When *mestiçagem* represented the danger of Blackness and non-whiteness to the nation, intellectual elites considered it a synonym to degeneration. When *mestiçagem* served as a sex- and gender-based controlling mechanism enabling either colonialism or whiteness, hegemonic formations tolerated, managed, and exploited it. Either way, in the origins of the Brazilian discourse around the *mestiça/a*, they consistently appear in a subaltern position but with a permanent desire to ascend to whiteness—so close, yet far away. Again, it is important to emphasize this subaltern place is built through the racist manipulation of gender normative sexual relationships to ensure the predominance of whiteness.<sup>83</sup>

In the early decades of the 20th century, that place of instability and degeneration started to give way to a cultural celebration of *mestiçagem* fitting white elites' desire for Brazil's modernization. This is when Gilberto Freyre develops his *Casa Grande & Senzala*<sup>84</sup> and opens the way to consolidating the notion of racial democracy. Progressively, the narratives on racial miscegenation, degeneration, and sexualization with colonial roots mingled with a celebration and romanticization that sustained an underlying yearning for the so-called "good miscegenation." This apparently naïve narrative celebrated the erasure of differences, replacing them with an

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 317.

<sup>83</sup> See hygienist ads on pregnancy exams discussed by Lilia Moritz Schwarcz in Lilia Moritz Schwarcz, *O espetáculo das raças*, 1ª edição (São Paulo, SP: Companhia das Letras, 1993).

<sup>84</sup> Gilberto Freyre, *Casa-Grande & Senzala*, Português edição (São Paulo: Global Editora, 2006).



amalgamation of “tropical” or “boreal colors,” as Freyre described in *Casa Grande & Senzala*’s opening poem:

I hear the voices; I see the colors; I feel the footsteps of another Brazil that comes here, more tropical, more fraternal, more Brazilian. Instead of the colors of the States, the map of this Brazil will have the colors of productions and works. Instead of the colors of the three races, the men of this Brazil will have the colors of the professions and regions. Brazilian women, instead of boreal colors, will have variously tropical colors.<sup>85</sup>

As Munanga, Schwarcz, and others discussed,<sup>86</sup> Freyre retraced the national discourse of *mestiçagem* from a biological axis to a cultural one, emphasizing the contributions of a triad—the Portuguese (representing the European), the Africans, and the Indians<sup>87</sup>—in Brazil’s formation during the 16th and 17th centuries. Freyre’s *Masters*

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<sup>85</sup> Gilberto Freyre, *Casa-Grande & Senzala*, Português edição (São Paulo: Global Editora, 2006).

<sup>86</sup> Mota, Guimarães, Skidmore. According to Henrique Cunha Junior, “In Brazilian university literature we can list at least four major critics of the book *Casa Grande e Senzala*. There are certainly several others, I’m just resuming the ones I consider the best known. Staying with just four major criticisms, we can mention Kabengele Munanga (2006), such as his book “Repensando a mestiçagem”; Dante Moreira Leite (1969) with “O caráter nacional brasileiro. História de uma ideologia”; Carlos Guilherme Mota (2008), “Ideologia da cultura brasileira”; and, also, the laborious recent work “Tempos de Casa-Grande (1930-1940)” by Silvia Cortez Silva (2010), which makes an important critique, also emphasizing the problems of anti-Semitism and other racisms contained in Freyrean production.” My translation from Portuguese: “Na literatura universitária brasileira podemos elencar pelo menos quatro grandes críticos do livro *Casa Grande e Senzala*. Certamente existem vários outros, estou apenas retomando os que considero os mais conhecidos. Ficando em apenas quatro grandes críticas podemos citar Kabengele Munanga (2006), como seu livro “Repensando a mestiçagem”; Dante Moreira Leite (1969) com “O caráter nacional brasileiro. História de uma ideologia”; Carlos Guilherme Mota (2008), “Ideologia da cultura brasileira”; e, ainda, o laborioso trabalho recente “Tempos de Casa-Grande (1930-1940)” de Silvia Cortez Silva (2010), que faz uma crítica importante ressaltando também os problemas do antissemitismo e outros racismos contidos na produção Freyreana.” Henrique Cunha Junior, “Críticas Ao Pensamento Das Senzalas e Casa Grande,” *Revista Espaço Acadêmico*, no. 150 (November 2013), 93.

<sup>87</sup> Munanga says, “It was then that the sociologist Gilberto Freyre appeared on the scene to meet this new demand. He resumes the racial theme until then considered not only as a key to understanding Brazil, but also to the entire discussion around the issue of national identity. However, he shifts the axis of the discussion, shifting the concept of ‘race’ to the concept of culture. As Renato Ortiz writes, this passage allows for a greater distance between the biological and the cultural, as well as eliminating a series of difficulties previously raised regarding the atavistic heritage of the mestizo.” My translation from Portuguese: “Foi então que o sociólogo Gilberto Freyre fez seu aparecimento no cenário para atender a essa nova demanda. Ele retoma a temática racial até então considerada não apenas como chave para a compreensão do Brasil, mas também para toda a discussão em torno da questão da identidade nacional. Porém, ele desloca o eixo da discussão, operando a passagem do conceito de “raça” ao conceito de cultura. Como escreve Renato Ortiz, essa passagem permite um maior distanciamento entre o biológico e o cultural, bem como elimina uma série de dificuldades colocadas anteriormente a respeito da herança atávica do mestiço.” Kabengele Munanga, *Rediscutindo a mestiçagem no Brasil - Nova Edição: Identidade nacional versus identidade negra*, 5ª edição (Autêntica, 2019), 77.

*and Slaves* is a historical narration of the relationships between these three races, focusing on Northeastern agrarian regions.

Freyre examined each racial group's role in the sugar plantation economy, giving predominance to an analysis of the patriarchal structure of the Northeastern family. This family unit, according to Freyre, was constituted through prohibited sexual relationships between white masters and enslaved Black and Indigenous women. According to Munanga, for Freyre, this *proximity* created a zone of *confraternization* between the races, enabled by the natural flexibility of Portuguese men in *accepting* colored women.<sup>88</sup> This is not to overstate Freyre's emphasis on gendered sexual relationships and his romanticization of a long history of violence against and exploitation of non-white women. That the transfiguration of Brazil's foundational myth traverses non-white women's bodies tells much of the appalling origins of modern Brazilian society.

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<sup>88</sup> As Munanga articulates, "In the classic *Casa Grande e Senzala*, Gilberto Freyre narrates a social history of the agrarian and slave-owning world of northeastern Brazil in the 16th and 17th centuries. In the context of a large-scale economy based on the monoculture of sugar cane, there is an imbalance between the sexes, characterized by a shortage of white women. Hence the need for sexual rapprochement between black and Indian slaves with white masters; an approximation that, despite the asymmetry and the power relationship between masters and slaves, did not prevent the creation of a zone of fraternization between both. This approximation was possible, according to Freyre, thanks to the natural flexibility of Portuguese. Thus, the historical origin of miscegenation is explained, which reduced the distance between the main house and the slave quarters, opposing the aristocratization resulting from the landlord and slaveholding monoculture." My translation from Portuguese: "No clássico *Casa grande e senzala*, Gilberto Freyre narra uma história social do mundo agrário e escravista do nordeste brasileiro nos séculos XVI e XVII. No quadro de uma economia latifundiária baseada na monocultura da cana-de-açúcar, nota-se um desequilíbrio entre sexos caracterizado pela escassez de mulheres brancas. Daí a necessidade de aproximação sexual entre escravas negras e índias com os senhores brancos; aproximação que, apesar da assimetria e da relação de poder entre senhores e escravos, não impediu a criação de uma zona de confraternização entre ambos. Essa aproximação foi possível, segundo Freyre, graças à flexibilidade natural do português. Assim, explica-se a origem histórica da miscigenação que veio diminuir a distância entre a casa grande e a senzala, contrariando a aristocratização resultante da monocultura latifundiária e escravocrata." Kabengele Munanga, *Rediscutindo a mestiçagem no Brasil - Nova Edição: Identidade nacional versus identidade negra*, 5ª edição (Autêntica, 2019), 77.

Freyre explained the success of colonialism in Brazil by recounting and idealizing a perverse history that recenters the normative miscegenated family at the core of a patriarchal agrarian society. About this, Munanga said,

From Gilberto Freyre's point of view, the patriarchal family in northeastern Brazil was the primary factor in colonization and the sole principle of authority, obedience, and cohesion. Seen from this angle, this family could harmoniously integrate Brazilian society, thus putting an end to the persistent anguish of racial heterogeneity and still offering relief from racial democracy.<sup>89</sup>

By describing the mix of Portuguese, Indian, and African cultural contributions in a positive light, Freyre associated racial miscegenation between these groups with a Brazilian social and cultural *advantage*—a double mixture (cultural and racial) that sowed the way toward asserting the notion of racial democracy at a national level.

Munanga concluded,

The myth of racial democracy, based on the dual biological and cultural miscegenation between the three original races, has an intense penetration in Brazilian society. It exalts the idea of harmonious coexistence between individuals from all social strata and ethnic groups, allowing the dominant elites to disguise inequalities and prevent non-white communities from being aware of the subtle mechanisms of exclusion they are victims of in society. In other words, it covers up racial conflicts, enabling everyone to recognize themselves as Brazilians and keeping subordinate communities aware of their cultural characteristics that would have contributed to the construction and expression of their own identity. These characteristics are 'expropriated,' 'dominated,' and 'converted' into national symbols by the ruling elites.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> My translation from Portuguese: "Do ponto de vista de Gilberto Freyre, a família patriarcal do nordeste do Brasil era o grande fator da colonização e o princípio único da autoridade, obediência e coesão. Vista por este ângulo, essa família podia integrar harmoniosamente a sociedade brasileira, pondo, assim, fim à persistente angústia da heterogeneidade racial, e ainda oferecer o alívio da democracia racial." Kabengele Munanga, *Rediscutindo a mestiçagem no Brasil - Nova Edição: Identidade nacional versus identidade negra*, 5ª edição (Autêntica, 2019), 77.

<sup>90</sup> My translation from Portuguese: "O mito de democracia racial, baseado na dupla *mestiçagem* biológica e cultural entre as três raças originárias, tem uma penetração muito profunda na sociedade brasileira: exalta a ideia de convivência harmoniosa entre os indivíduos de todas as camadas sociais e grupos étnicos, permitindo às elites

Through Freyre's theories, the anxiety of the white elite, caused by racial miscegenation and which figured across the fields of knowledge during the 18th and 19th centuries, gave way to the celebration of what Freyre and others called *cultural syncretism* or *hybridity*. Throughout the Brazil of the 20th century, these narratives helped the white elites drive the country into the illusion of a cohesive<sup>91</sup> notion of nation-state via industrialization and modernization. Due to his international recognition, Freyre's ideas also molded the transnational imaginary about Brazil in Europe and the U.S. For example, the Unesco project, discussed in Chapter 2 ("Race and Class in Rural Brazil"), is just one result, depending in part on the acceptance of Freyre's viewpoints in U.S. academia.<sup>92</sup>

In literature and arts of the early 20th century, the celebration of *mestiça/o* characters rises. One can consider famous examples such as Mario de Andrade's *Macunaíma* and Monteiro Lobato's *Jeca Tatu*.<sup>93</sup> Freyre's theories either directly or

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dominantes dissimular as desigualdades e impedindo os membros das comunidades não brancas de terem consciência dos sutis mecanismos de exclusão da qual são vítimas na sociedade. Ou seja, encobre os conflitos raciais, possibilitando a todos se reconhecerem como brasileiros e afastando das comunidades subalternas a tomada de consciência de suas características culturais que teriam contribuído para a construção e expressão de uma identidade própria. Essas características são "expropriadas", "dominadas" e "convertidas" em símbolos nacionais pelas elites dirigentes. Munanga, *Rediscutindo a mestiçagem*, 152.

<sup>91</sup> Considering that this cohesion was many in one. About this Munanga says, "Freyre consolidates the original myth of Brazilian society configured in a triangle whose vertices are the black, white and Indian races. This is how the mixes came about. The three races also brought their cultural heritages along with racial crossings, which gave rise to another miscegenation in the cultural field. From the idea of this double mixture, the myth of racial democracy slowly sprouted; "we are a democracy because the mixture generated a people without barriers, without prejudice." My translation from Portuguese. "Freyre consolida o mito originário da sociedade brasileira configurada num triângulo cujos vértices são as raças negra, branca e índia. Foi assim que surgiram as misturas. As três raças trouxeram também suas heranças culturais paralelamente aos cruzamentos raciais, o que deu origem a uma outra *mestiçagem* no campo cultural. Da ideia dessa dupla mistura, brotou lentamente o mito de democracia racial; "somos uma democracia porque a mistura gerou um povo sem barreira, sem preconceito". Munanga, *Rediscutindo a mestiçagem*, 151.

<sup>92</sup> See my discussion in Chapter 2.

<sup>93</sup> Note here that while both de Andrade and Lobato deployed *mestiçagem* in their works, these two authors come from opposite sides of the political spectrum. Lobato's racist and conservative writings cannot be compared to

indirectly influenced modernist narratives associated with literary and artistic vanguards such as the Anthropophagic Manifesto. The manifesto was famously penned by a group of artists who helped organize the Modern Art Week in 1922 and sought to challenge the São Paulo coffee elites' traditional views about the arts. Although many of the participants of the Modern Art Week were leftists, most were also part of a white elite.<sup>94</sup>

From Tarsila do Amaral to Candido Portinari and Di Cavalcanti, numerous early modern painters populated the field of representation with figures of the *mestiço/a*. *O Mestiço*, a famous 1934 painting by Portinari, for example, shows a portrait of a Black farmworker against a tropical/farmland background, perhaps a coffee plantation. The man's body and features, such as his arms and fingers, are rounded and thick to emphasize and idealize his physical skills and proximity with manual labor: the legacies of slavery for non-white populations now depicted through a romanticized lens by white artists.<sup>95</sup>

The cultural history around the Anthropophagic Manifesto has been widely discussed in art historical scholarship, both in Brazil and outside of it.<sup>96</sup> Though

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Mario de Andrade's rich contribution to the advancement of culture, arts, and education in Brazil. About Mario de Andrade also see Zita Nunes, *Cannibal Democracy: Race and Representation in the Literature of the Americas*, Critical American Studies Series (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008).

<sup>94</sup> See recent discussions and revisions on the role of Modern Art Week due to its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2022. Giulia Garcia, "Os vários 22 e a guerra de narrativas no Brasil," *ARTE!Brasileiros* (blog), April 20, 2022, <https://artebrasileiros.com.br/arte/exposicoes/varios-22-arte132/>. Marcia Camargos, *Semana de 22: Entre Vaías e Aplausos*, 1a. ed, Paulicéia (São Paulo, SP: Boitempo, 2002).

<sup>95</sup> See my discussion in Chapter 3 of Divino Sobral, "Dalton Paula and the Tasks of Revising History and Filling the Void of the Unrepresented," in *Dalton Paula: Retratos Brasileiros*, ed. Adriano Pedrosa, Glauce Helena de Britto, and Lilia Schwarcz (Museu de Arte de São Paulo, 2022).

<sup>96</sup> Bibliography about the Anthropophagic Manifesto includes Zita Nunes, "United by Anthropophagism," in *Cannibal Democracy: Race and Representation in the Literature of the Americas*, Critical American Studies Series (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 25–57. Lisette Lagnado and Bienal de São Paulo, eds., *Cultural Anthropophagy: The 24th Bienal de Sao Paulo 1998*, Exhibition Histories (London: Afterall Books [u.a.], 2015). Pedro Neves Marques, *The Forest & the School; Where to Sit at the Dinner Table?* (Archive Books and

Freyre's thoughts remain influential and still permeate the Brazilian popular and intellectual imaginaries, his peers have always criticized his work. Throughout the 20th century, his so-called contributions toward Black and Indigenous peoples in Brazil have been highly questioned in anthropology and sociology.<sup>97</sup> Brazilian artists and U.S. critics have highlighted the lack of discussion surrounding the representations of Black and Indigenous peoples in the Anthropophagic Movement. In one publication discussing the context of this retrospective, artist Rosana Paulino, one of the most important Brazilian artists of contemporaneity, asserts:

[t]he problem with Anthropofagia in relation to black individuals is that it devours other cultures, including ours, and does not give us back something useful or even the real recognition of this swallowed black culture. We are only devoured. ... Afro-Brazilian art, up until now, has been at the margin of a hegemonic system, while Anthropofagia is one of the narratives created by an urban elite in São Paulo. The place of blacks in this narrative is that of object of study, not that of partners in the construction of a common narrative.<sup>98</sup>

As Paulino articulates, the hypervisibility affecting representations of Indigenous or Black people throughout periods of Brazilian art history has been asymmetrically attributed to the recognition, or so-called protagonism,<sup>99</sup> of the non-white population in the art field.

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The Academy of Arts of the World in Cologne, 2015). Paulo Herkenhoff, *Fundacao Bienal de Sao Paulo XXIV bienal de Sao Paulo: nucleo historico antropofagia e historias de canibalismos, V.1* (Sao Paulo: A. Fundacao, 1998). Sara Roffino, "Is Brazil's Most Famous Art Movement Built on Racial Inequality? A New Generation Argues 'Yes,'" *Artnet News*, March 13, 2018, <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/tarsila-part-ii-1238654>.

<sup>97</sup> For a summary see Henrique Cunha Junior, "Críticas Ao Pensamento Das Senzalas e Casa Grande," *Revista Espaço Acadêmico*, no. 150 (November 2013).

<sup>98</sup> Sara Roffino, "Is Brazil's Most Famous Art Movement Built on Racial Inequality? A New Generation Argues 'Yes,'" *Artnet News*, March 13, 2018, <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/tarsila-part-ii-1238654>.

<sup>99</sup> In Brazil, the word protagonism is often used in place of recognition. A more in-depth investigation should point to the ways protagonism have been used by social movements in Brazil. For now, perhaps suffice to say that protagonismo in Portuguese sounds stronger than "recognition," in Portuguese "reconhecimento" because it implies that these social actors are protagonists of their own destinies and lives.

## *Mestiçagem* and Brazil in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

The concept of cultural *mestiçagem*—powered by the idea of racial democracy—has served as endorsement for white cultural producers to freely use *epidermalized*<sup>100</sup> elements of Afro-Brazilian and Native Brazilian cultures in their work.<sup>101</sup> Cultural *mestiçagem* camouflaged the idea of racial difference, not to erase difference as the modern discourses on *mestiçagem* advocated for, but to render invisible the systemic racism that has impoverished racialized populations and continuously enabled cultural appropriation of their artistic production. An easily identifiable result of this ongoing, non-consensual *juxtaposing* of “culture and race” has been the present discrepancy between the number of white artists and self-identified Black and Indigenous artists represented in galleries and curating institutional exhibitions throughout Brazilian art history.

Moreover, terms such as hybridity and syncretism and myriad art categories (e.g., naif art) emerged in the 20<sup>th</sup> century to define cross-cultural features of art

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<sup>100</sup> Taking Gilroy’s discussion into the realms of art and visual culture, in *Subject to Display: Reframing Race in Contemporary Installation Art*, Jennifer A. González discusses the ways in which installation art and art objects have been often racialized by art institutions. González explains, for example, that the epidermalization of “artifacts” points to ways of understanding and challenging subject formation. The notion of epidermalization extends visual signs of race and skin color onto objects, not only in the ways through which they become commodities, but through the ways in which these objects help produce subjects. These objects are epidermalized through the ways in which they participate in networks of signs that refer to race or ethnicity, such as African masks, or Pre-Columbian artifacts that have often received different treatment when displayed in art institutions, still commonly categorized as “primitive,” or circumscribed in how institutions evaluate their “authenticity.” Jennifer A. González, *Subject to Display: Reframing Race in Contemporary Installation Art* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2008), 6.

<sup>101</sup> See, for example, note about the book Iceleia Maria Borsa Cattani, ed., *Mestiçagens Na Arte Contemporânea* (UFGRS, 2007).

production by Afro-Brazilians. Despite acknowledging the composite nature<sup>102</sup> of art made of African roots in Brazil, (white) scholars mostly transposed the same hierarchies from the national narratives of cultural miscegenation to these objects and its producers, celebrating the objects' resulting mixture while undermining or stereotyping the cultures and producers who made them. As a clear manifestation of whiteness in the field of art and cultural production, one of the consequences for racialized artists and producers in the 20<sup>th</sup> century was broad exclusion from the high-art milieu in Brazil.<sup>103</sup>

Throughout these eight years of research, much has changed. With the rise of neo-fascism and Bolsonarismo, discussion of *branquitude* finally got traction in the field of cultural production and in the art scene, which is deeply attentive to the global art world. Since 2013, art galleries and art museums have progressively organized exhibitions around Blackness and “contemporary Indigenous art,”<sup>104</sup> which activists and artists have advocated since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

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<sup>102</sup> See Hélio Menezes' discussion of many of these scholars' thoughts. I highlight here his writing on Valladares' linking of *mestiçagem* and syncretism. Menezes says, “Concerned with underlining the effects of “syncretism” and “acculturation” of black, and in highlighting the “prodigious miscegenation that we are”, Valladares ended up for offering an approach to Afro-Brazilian art based on the perspective of cultural integration and mixing, without paying attention to the effects of separation and violence social aspects that also cross and constitute it. In other words: although your analyzes have understood the black as an active producer, and not just as a theme of works or unconscious executor of canons and predetermined skills, the socio-racial constraints that make up this type of production escaped them. complete. Absence that would serve as the basis for the harsh criticisms that were destined for the time, especially on the part of Abdias Nascimento, for whom Valladares would be a “famous ‘white Bahian’ critic and aristocrat” ....” My translation from Portuguese. Hélio Santos Menezes Neto, “Entre o visível e o oculto: a construção do conceito de arte afro-brasileira” (Mestrado em Antropologia Social, São Paulo, Universidade de São Paulo, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.11606/D.8.2018.tde-07082018-164253>, 70.

<sup>103</sup> According to Marta Heloísa Leuba Salum, this exclusion refers to a certain “folklorism” and categories used to distinguish Afro-Brazilians' art from high art in Brazil. Marta Heloísa Leuba Salum, “Imaginários Negros: Negritude e Africanidade na arte plástica brasileira,” in *História do negro no Brasil*, by Kabengele Munanga and Fundação Cultural Palmares (Brazil) (Brasil[i]a: Fundação Cultural Palmares-MinC, 2004), 339.

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For example, Jaider Esbell rose during that time as an iconic Brazilian artist, coining not only the term *arte contemporânea indígena no Brasil*, but also putting life into it through his art practice and curating.<sup>105</sup> Museums such as the Museum of Art of São Paulo (MASP), Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo, and Museu de Arte do Rio de Janeiro (MAR) increased their exhibition programming addressing racial and social inequities. In 2016, the São Paulo Biennial’s curators, organizers, and participant artists protested Dilma Rousseff’s impeachment, a staged “soft coup” that led the way to the Bolsonaro administration.<sup>106</sup> The 2021 São Paulo Biennial featured Indigenous artists, such as Jaider Esbell, and finally addressed some of the national narratives supporting systemic racism.<sup>107</sup> Since 2014, several exhibitions organized by Adriano Pedrosa and the curatorial team at MASP directly tackled questions of race, class, and gender.<sup>108</sup>

As I mentioned earlier, one of the most famous iterations of these landmark exhibitions, *Histórias Afro-atlânticas*, was adapted by the National Gallery in Washington D.C., although the exhibition’s Brazilian origins have been subsided by the U.S. institution.<sup>109</sup> *Histórias Afro-atlânticas* also presented a highly necessary

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<sup>105</sup> Watch *Jaider Esbell - Moquém\_Surari: Arte Indígena Contemporânea*, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=arhgs0kJMzU>.

<sup>106</sup> Lyndon de Araújo Santos, Marcus Vinicius de Abreu Baccega, and Yuri Givago Alhadeff Sampaio Mateus, eds., *O Golpe de 2016 e o Futuro Da Democracia No Brasil* (São Luis: EDUFMA, 2021), [https://www.edufma.ufma.br/wp-content/uploads/woocommerce\\_uploads/2021/04/O-Golpe-de-2016-e-o-Futuro-da-Democracia-no-Brasil.pdf](https://www.edufma.ufma.br/wp-content/uploads/woocommerce_uploads/2021/04/O-Golpe-de-2016-e-o-Futuro-da-Democracia-no-Brasil.pdf).

<sup>107</sup> Camila Bechelany, “The 2021 São Paulo Bienal Showcases Artmaking as an Act of Resilience,” Artsy, September 23, 2021, <https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-art-force-perseverance-2021-sao-paulo-bienal>. Camila Bechelany, “The 2021 São Paulo Bienal Showcases Artmaking as an Act of Resilience,” Artsy, September 23, 2021, <https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-art-force-perseverance-2021-sao-paulo-bienal>.

<sup>108</sup> The museum organized a series of exhibitions such as *Histórias da Sexualidade* (2018), *Histórias afro-atlânticas* (2018) *Historias Feministas: artistas depois de 2000* (2019), *Historias Indigenas* (2021). Museu de Arte de São Paulo, “Exposições,” MASP, accessed April 6, 2023, <https://masp.org.br>.

<sup>109</sup> The National Gallery of Art website describes the exhibition as, “For centuries, artists have told and retold the complex histories of the African Diaspora. Explore this enduring legacy in the exhibition Afro-Atlantic Histories, which takes an in-depth look at the historical experiences and cultural formations of Black and African people

institutional shift to MASP, given that earlier shows such as *Historias Mestiças*, problematically did not address racial inequity in Brazil, which, as María Iñigo Clavo argues, reiterated the emphasis on white elite production as part of a postcolonial discourse.<sup>110</sup> Museums such as MASP and MAR also diversified their curatorial staff, bringing Black and Indigenous curators to leadership positions, but not without institutional limitations and polemics.<sup>111</sup>

This institutional shift, although long overdue, has shaken the field of art production in a considerable way, and Brazilian art galleries have generally followed the movement by diversifying their pool of represented artists and giving more visibility to exhibition topics on and by women, Afro-Brazilian, Indigenous and LGBTQ+ artists. But the art field in Brazil is still threatened by the effects of the Bolsonaro administration, which destroyed much of the advancements in culture and education built by Lula and Dilma in the span of 15 years of PT governments.<sup>112</sup> With

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since the 17th century. More than 130 powerful works of art, including paintings, sculpture, photographs, and time-based media by artists from Africa, Europe, the Americas, and the Caribbean, bring these narratives to life. This exhibition was initially presented as *Histórias Afro-Atlânticas* in 2018 by the Museu de Arte de São Paulo and the Instituto Tomie Ohtake in Brazil.” National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C., “Afro-Atlantic Histories,” National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C., accessed April 6, 2023, <https://www.nga.gov/exhibitions/2022/afro-atlantic-histories.html>.

<sup>110</sup> María Iñigo Clavo, “Is Brazil a Postcolonial Country?,” *Paragrana* 25, no. 2 (December 1, 2016): 63–79, <https://doi.org/10.1515/para-2016-0029>.

<sup>111</sup> In 2022, MASP administration decided to remove photographs and artworks representing the MST (Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra) from the exhibition *Histórias Brasileiras* (2022). The curators Sandra Benites and Clarissa Diniz (MASP employees) and artists included in the exhibition protested the decision by canceling the entire exhibition section “Retomadas.” Benites was hired by MASP in 2020 as the first “Indigenous curator” to occupy such position: a hire that was highly promoted by the museum in the national and international press. See Jill Langlois, “Brazil’s First Indigenous Curator: ‘We’re Not Afraid Anymore,’” *The New York Times*, May 22, 2020, sec. Arts, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/22/arts/design/sandra-benites-brazil-museum-curator.html>. Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Teto, “Curadoras de exposição cancelada no MASP lançam nota oficial,” *MST* (blog), May 16, 2022, <https://mst.org.br/2022/05/16/curadoras-de-exposicao-cancelada-no-masp-lancam-nota-oficial/>.

<sup>112</sup> Emir Sader, *Lula e Dilma: 10 Anos de Governos Pos-Neoliberais No Brasil* (São Paulo, SP : Rio de Janeiro/RJ: Boitempo, 2013).

Lula's return to presidency, destruction will likely be halted, but reconstructing networks of support and funding could take years.<sup>113</sup>

What is certain is that the study of *branquitude* in Brazil and how it impacts art production must continue. Artists, art professionals, and thinkers must not shy away from this topic: *branquitude* permeates professional relationships and institutional frameworks, and directly impacts racialized artists', curators', critics' and other producers' access to support. In the realm of the visual, the study of how art practices either empower or challenge *branquitude* is urgent. I am not referring to practices that only visually represent *branquitude*, but to the way artists who deal with representations of difference can still reproduce racial stereotypes—examples of which I discuss in Chapter 2.

Beyond an understanding of the visual discourse on *mestiçagem* in Brazilian art production, I hope to contribute to the study of what Denise Ferreira da Silva calls a *global idea of race*, which emerges from her excavations of “the unresolved ontological program that haunted modern philosophy”<sup>114</sup> or the construction of “man” through the deployment of “racial difference as a constitutive human attribute.”<sup>115</sup> To paraphrase Ferreira da Silva, the “prevailing constructions” of national subjects in Brazil and the U.S. (and, as she argues, throughout a global scope) emerge as “self-determined beings” through the immediate circumscription of the subaltern, which is comprised of

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<sup>113</sup> CartaCapital, “Margareth Menezes anuncia orçamento histórico para a Cultura no governo Lula,” *CartaCapital* (blog), December 26, 2022, <https://www.cartacapital.com.br/politica/margareth-menezes-anuncia-orcamento-historico-para-a-cultura-no-governo-lula/>.

<sup>114</sup> Denise Ferreira da Silva, “Preface,” in *Toward a Global Idea of Race*, First edition (Minneapolis: Univ Of Minnesota Press, 2007), xiii.

<sup>115</sup> Denise Ferreira da Silva, “Preface,” in *Toward a Global Idea of Race*, First edition (Minneapolis: Univ Of Minnesota Press, 2007), xiii.

“non-European members of the national polity.”<sup>116</sup> As the author contends, this intrinsic relationship formed through and around racial difference continues to linger “after a century of moral refutation” that governed and “unchallenged the contemporary global configuration.”<sup>117</sup> Thus, the significance of studying constructions around racial difference is not a mere nod to a new wave of “diversity and inclusion”<sup>118</sup> that has permeated academic and artistic circles in Brazil and the U.S.

The artists discussed in this dissertation do not only have in common the deployment of photography to tackle the representation of difference in Brazil. All the works I analyze here have traveled transnationally, especially between the U.S. and Brazil—evidence not only of discursive exchanges between the countries but also of a quasi-symbiotic transnational relationship involving the constant making and remaking of ideas on race and which very evidently occurs through the visual.

To understand the discursive coupling of *mestiçagem* with whiteness and reveal how it manifests through visibility is then, not to speak *only* about Brazil, but to examine how the discourses these artists either deploy or challenge are still reminiscent of a haunting modern ontological mandate based on racial difference that articulates

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid., xiv.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Just as an example of the impact of “DEI” in the field of arts: “Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) are increasingly referenced ideas in planning practice. There is considerable debate and uncertainty about how to plan for and implement these concepts in a time of increased scrutiny and rapid cultural and political change (Watson, 2013). There is momentum around these ideas and expectations that institutions of all types, including arts and culture, will address structural inequality related to race, ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientations, able-isms, and other forms of marginalization. DEI language increasingly appears in goals and values in newer comprehensive land use plans, but there is debate by practitioners about the depth of understanding of DEI concepts, the execution of these ideals, the motivation for including them, and the likelihood of their implementation at the local level (Loh & Kim, 2020). In this paper, we raise similar questions about how a particular planning subfield, arts and cultural planning, addresses DEI.” See Amanda J. Ashley et al., “Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Practices in Arts and Cultural Planning,” *Journal of Urban Affairs* 44, no. 4–5 (May 28, 2022): 727–47, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07352166.2020.1834405>, 727.

self-determination, as Ferreira da Silva puts it, while “disavow[ing] that which signifies ‘other’-wise, announcing its necessary elimination.”<sup>119</sup> In this dissertation, I aim to converse with and serve local Brazilian scholarship on the representation of difference in visual culture. Moreover, to examine ideas of Blackness, whiteness, and Native subjectivities and their representation beyond the U.S. national scope, I hope to make space for the recognition of those itinerant artists, artworks, and immigrant visualities that impact and change the U.S. from the inside out without enough scholarly attention yet.

## **Methods and Theories**

For each chapter, my methodology was the following: I first selected individual images from each artist’s series of artwork. While writing each chapter, I developed a semiotic analysis of each image and discussed possible significations and potential meanings they generate for viewers, considering viewers as part of a public sphere implicated in national narratives around the notion of “race.” Because each chapter deals with a specific artwork series and thus a set of images, I also developed a semiotic reading of the images as a group, addressing how the images function together or how their meanings change when understood as a group. For that, I created spreadsheets to consolidate information about each series and possible readings for each artwork within a series.

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<sup>119</sup> Denise Ferreira da Silva, “Preface,” in *Toward a Global Idea of Race*, First edition (Minneapolis: Univ Of Minnesota Press, 2007), xiv.

Second, I identified the discursive formations within racialist histories, national narratives, and other relevant sources these artists have dealt with. My goal was to study how the three artists have articulated these discourses throughout their careers. As primary sources, I used interviews obtained directly with the artists, either in person, via Zoom, or by telephone. I have been in conversation with these artists for eight to ten years before writing this dissertation and collected interviews, images, and other notes during that time. Additionally, I conducted at least two new interviews specifically focusing on this dissertation with the artists. I then combined findings from these primary sources with bibliographic and institutional archive research, mostly by consulting the archives of these artists' galleries: Alexander and Bonin (Dalton Paula and Jonathas de Andrade), Galeria Nara Roesler (Jonathas de Andrade), and Sé Galeria (Dalton Paula).

Regarding bibliographic research, in addition to publications about the three artists, I mainly developed interdisciplinary research in the fields of photography, art history, visual culture, cultural studies, social sciences, and anthropology. In addition, and although I do not always cite them directly throughout the chapters, postcolonial theories were key for my study, especially seminal authors such as Homi Bhabha, who examined the relationships between colonization and alterity.<sup>120</sup>

Native American studies and Latin American scholarship, especially regarding the notions of coloniality and decoloniality, were essential tools for

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<sup>120</sup> Homi K Bhabha, "The Other Question...", *Screen* 24, no. 6 (November 1, 1983): 18–36, <https://doi.org/10.1093/screen/24.6.18>. Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 2nd edition (London ; New York: Routledge, 2004).

analyzing certain aspects of the visual practices these artists have developed. As such, I discuss Anibal Quijano's notions of coloniality and decoloniality in relation to Maria Theresa Alves' works in Chapter 1. My discussion of decolonization and whiteness follows the thinking of Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Amy Lonetree, Jolene Rickard, and Eve Tuck, among others.<sup>121</sup> Their work has informed my understanding that decolonial work is first centered on retribution and reclaiming of Indigenous lands, rights, and sovereignty. To avoid the trap of generalizing the term "decolonial," I make a clear distinction about the term in each chapter and opt for labeling a work decolonial only when it directly puts Native peoples at the center of a practice, decision, or process.

Throughout this dissertation—and as I mentioned earlier when defining the notion of photographic quality—I follow Stuart Hall's theories of representation from media and cultural studies. Hall's writings are formative to understanding ideology and the role of discourse in visual culture. After an examination of Marx and Althusser, Hall explains how discourse takes on a "reality effect": it does not produce knowledge, but instead "a recognition of what is already known," helping to construct positions for subjects so that discourses "become true," or always seem to "make sense."<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Amy Lonetree, *Decolonizing Museums: Representing Native America in National and Tribal Museums*, First Peoples: New Directions in Indigenous Studies (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012). Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, Second edition (London: Zed Books, 2012). Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, "Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1, no. 1 (2012). Jolene Rickard, "Diversifying Sovereignty and the Reception of Indigenous Art," *Art Journal* 76, no. 2 (2017): 81–84, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/45142474>.

<sup>122</sup> Stuart Hall writes, "Visual discourse is peculiarly vulnerable in this way because the systems of visual recognition on which they depend are so widely available in any culture that they appear to involve no intervention of coding, selection or arrangement. They appear to reproduce the actual trace of reality in the images

As Hall explains, this “reality effect” at the core of ideology and discursive formations also structures visual discourse, such as media, from film to television. Most notably, Hall argued for the importance of examining visual discourse as a “naturalized” type of discourse, for “systems of visual recognition ... appear to involve no intervention of coding.”<sup>123</sup> In other words, visual discourse seems to be unmediated and solely grounded “in the evidence of one’s eyes.”<sup>124</sup> This apparent lack of mediation is natural to the way in which ideology operates, but when it comes to the visual it acquires exacerbated effects. This notion of a “window on the world,” particular to how media operates, helps disguise the complex processes of coding that go into the making of visual discourse.<sup>125</sup>

Although I used semiotics to read the denotative and connotative aspects of each image in this study to extract possible historical and cultural meanings, I used Hall’s discussions on media to analyze these artists’ photographic practices as part of visual discourses not immune to ideology and power. In fact, my method of reading these images sought to identify how ideology manifests through visual discourse, how discourses using images are naturalized, and how artists redeploy or reenact them.

If Hall offers me an understanding of media as bound to ideology, I also look to authors who have contributed more broadly to theories of photography. I consider

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they transmit. This, of course, is an illusion—the ‘naturalistic illusion’—since the combination of verbal and visual discourse which produces this effect of ‘reality’ requires the most skillful and elaborate procedures of coding: mounting, linking and stitching elements together, working them into a system of narration or exposition which ‘makes sense’.” Stuart Hall, “The Rediscovery of ‘Ideology’; Return of The Repressed In Media Studies,” *Culture, Society and the Media* (Routledge, 1982), 70-72.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 71.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.



photography theorists such as Walter Benjamin, John Berger, Villém Flusser, and David Levi Strauss. These authors have written about the social function of images and photography and discussed how the apparatus of the camera (and other vision technologies) has shaped the production of images.

Understanding image culture and photography as “a technology of seeing” is relevant for my dissertation, especially to better explain the relationships between painting and photography and how these two media have diverged and converged throughout history. However, some of these approaches offer limitations to the study of visual discourse and “racial difference.” Therefore, I leaned on scholarship challenging the canons of the history of photography, especially regarding “race.” I borrowed from theories of visual culture and photography that elaborate on the ambiguities of representing “race” and racialized bodies by following scholars such as bell hooks, Kobena Mercer, Coco Fusco, Jennifer González, Derek C. Murray, Nicole R. Fleetwood, Sarah Lewis, Krista Thompson, Deborah Willis, Henri Louis Gates, Gloria Anzaldúa, and Deborah Poole, among others.

In my dissertation, I considered these visual mechanisms of reenacting, subverting, or troubling hegemonic representations of “race”; however, I focused on the specificities of racial and visual discourses in the Brazilian context. Therefore, I interweaved scholarship on photography and “race” based in the United States with Brazilian and Latin American scholarship, addressing the differences and intersections among these fields.

Despite increasing visibility of the production of Black, Indigenous, and racialized scholarship in Brazil, I must admit I hit roadblocks regarding the amount of published scholarship on photography and “race” and racism in Brazil. The limitation placed on racialized researchers occurs both in terms of access to academia and access to opportunities for publication. Racism and academic divides in Brazilian universities have historically hindered the publication and production of racialized scholars, and, as I mentioned elsewhere, the question of “race” has been sparsely discussed, especially in the art historical field.

Therefore, my dissertation was not limited to theories or methods developed by Brazilian art history. I relied on other disciplines and fields of knowledge from Brazilian academia, such as sociology, philosophy, and anthropology. I can highlight the output of many authors whose works on racial difference and racism have shaped Brazilian scholarship, such as Abdias Nascimento, Ailton Krenak, Beatriz Nascimento, Denise Ferreira da Silva, Fabiana Lopes, Hélio Menezes, Kabengele Munanga, Lélia Gonzales, Mauricio Barros de Castro, Patricia de Santana Pinho, Sueli Carneiro, and Thiago Florencio, among many other authors.

These authors, emerging in the mid- to late 20th century, have developed important critiques of seminal modern scholarship in Brazil, such as that of Gilberto Freyre’s and others, which helped disseminate both popular and academic celebrations of *mestiçagem*. Abdias Nascimento, for example, has been an essential figure in my research because of his understanding of *mestiçagem* and its associations

with whiteness.<sup>126</sup> One of the most important voices in fighting racism in Brazil, Nascimento was also an artist and was interested in opposing Brazilian academic discourses that had undermined art made by Black Brazilians across history. Ailton Krenak has also been important to my project; his thinking and writings point to a challenging of whiteness in Brazil I have incorporated into my analysis of visual discourse regarding racism and Indigenous protagonism in Brazil.<sup>127</sup>

Although the celebration of *mestiçagem* is a particular trope linked to modernity in Brazil and in Latin America, it emerged particularly to address a “colonial context” in which the concept of race had been primarily used to enable a reorganization of colonial labor resulting in slavery and the dehumanization of non-whiteness. Ultimately, my dissertation advocates for a broader understanding of the discourse on racial miscegenation in Brazil, not to demonize or oppose *mestiçagem* but to develop a critique of its celebratory “normative” discursive co-option as a

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<sup>126</sup> Throughout his life, Abdias do Nascimento published an extensive quantity of books, articles, and papers. Many of these writings provided frameworks for his cultural activism, either when he self-exiled in the US or while he was still living in Brazil. For example, in the late 1960s, in support for his Museum of Black Art project, Nascimento published a series of articles in a magazine entitled *Galeria de Arte Moderna* (GAM – Gallery of Modern Art).<sup>126</sup> Later in the 1970s, already based in the US, Nascimento would write a series of papers he presented in congresses across Africa (Tanzania, Senegal, and Nigeria), but also in Europe and Latin America. He penned many of these writings as attacks against whitening ideologies of the military dictatorship, installed in Brazil since 1964. Nascimento was especially aware of how the Brazilian government’s international activities served to disguise racism and the oppressive tactics of the regime. I am interested in how Nascimento associates *mestiçagem* to *branquitude* (whiteness), especially when he discusses Afro-Brazilian artistic and cultural practices. Although Nascimento’s writings create a clear parallel between *mestiçagem* and the genocide of Blacks in Brazil, he also reminds us that *mestiçe populations* are deeply impacted by racism in Brazil, which translates into lack of representation, attacks on their rights, and an identification with whiteness. Yet even though Nascimento often identified the different power dynamics that have sought to produce *mestiçagem* in Brazil, in these writings at least, Nascimento mostly understood *mestiçagem* as an ideological and discursive by-product of *branquitude*, which, at this point, did not consider the ambiguity within *mestiçe(a)* subjectivities. See Mauricio Barros de Castro and Myrian Sepúlveda dos Santos, “Abdias do Nascimento e o Museu de Arte Negra,” *MODOS: Revista de História Da Arte* 3, no. 3 (2019): 174, [https://www.academia.edu/41398619/Abdias\\_do\\_Nascimento\\_e\\_o\\_Museu\\_de\\_Arte\\_Negra..](https://www.academia.edu/41398619/Abdias_do_Nascimento_e_o_Museu_de_Arte_Negra..)

<sup>127</sup> See note on the term protagonism. See Ailton Krenak, *Ideias Para Adiar o Fim do Mundo* (São Paulo, SP, 2019). And specifically, on *mestiçagem*, *O Truque Colonial Que Produz, o Pardo, o Mestiçe e Outras Categorias de Pobreza*, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dvijNR9Nbg0>.

national narrative and its veiled (and not-so-veiled) associations with *branquitude* in Brazil.

## Chapter Overviews

This dissertation has three chapters: Maria Thereza Alves (Chapter 1), Jonathas de Andrade (Chapter 2), and Dalton Paula (Chapter 3). For Maria Thereza Alves, I discuss how her 1983 photographic documentary, *Recipes for Survival*, predates decolonial artworks by avoiding stereotypical visual representations of ethnicity in favor of creating a new discourse for the subjects she documents. By refusing to apply the traditional ethnographer's gaze in her documentary, she binds image and text, complicating the power relationships that have been historically constructed through this photographic genre and between photographers and their subjects.

In Chapter 2, I discuss Jonathas de Andrade's *Eu, mestiço (Me, mestizo)* (2018). In contrast to Maria Thereza Alves, de Andrade's photographic documentary is fictionalized. The artist uses aesthetic formulas proper to this genre (such as subject posing and portraiture) to create a fictional work that mimics documentary formats. de Andrade directly engages with the history of visually representing "race," especially through those photographic methods associated with pseudoscientific practices that emerged in the 19th century.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> Paraphrasing John Berger, Stuart Hall writes about the conflation between science and photography: "As John Berger has pointed out, photography emerged (during the 1830s) at a time when the philosophy of positivism was also moving into its heyday, and the two developed alongside each other. In essence [...], positivism held that science and technology advanced our capacity to understand the physical and social world through the acquisition

While Alves avoids showing the images of Native Brazilians that documentary photography in Brazil abundantly presents,<sup>129</sup> de Andrade amply exploits the visibility of racialized bodies in his work. He sexualizes them, even replicating racial stereotypes in a perilous move that relies on ambiguity as part of his photographic constructions. Although both Alves and de Andrade seek to oppose the celebratory narratives around racial difference and miscegenation in Brazil, de Andrade's work is severely limited in its ability to offer an identificatory space for racialized subjects.

In Chapter 3, I discuss Dalton Paula's series of painted portraits representing Afro-Brazilian historical figures. Paula has chosen painting as his primary medium but has used photography as a foundation for his practice. The artist is interested in how photography allows him to alter, manipulate, or to fictionalize aspects of the real world. In his works, Paula uses photography to repopulate the field of representation with images of Black people. I discuss his portraits inspired by a vernacular method of altering photographs: the so-called *retratos pintados*, a practice combining painting and photography and used in the northeastern areas of Brazil since the late 20th century.

This practice involves popular artists in different cities across the country commissioned to produce photographic portraits and alter them as part of a post-production process. Initially, the method consisted of adding color to old black-and-

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of factual knowledge." Stuart Hall and Open University, *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (London; Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage in association with the Open University, 1997).

<sup>129</sup> Most famously, Sebastião Salgado and Claudia Andujar, *Claudia Andujar: The Yanomami Struggle*, Reprint edition (Paris: Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain, Paris, 2020).

white images, but progressively other aspects of portraits began to be altered upon the request of a client, such as adding a deceased family member into the composition or changing the outfit or accessories the portrayed originally used, with the intent of altering their social status.

Inspired by this vernacular photographic method, Paula developed a specific method that creates a convergence of past, present, and future world. To create his most recently painted portraits, Paula overlaps additional photographic methods: a combination of studio photography, oral stories, and community participation to create the final artworks. Paula visits Black and racialized communities, such as present-day *quilombos*, and photographs individuals to later juxtapose timeframes, stories, and physiognomies to create new likenesses for historical personages. By grounding his portraits in these photographic methods, Black communities see themselves while seeing how their ancestors *could have looked like*. Paula's use of a representational shift—from mechanical reproduction into painting—is a grounding on *quilombola* communities, a reading of these spaces as places of political and representational agency for Black and racialized people.

These three artists deal with racial miscegenation through the photographic quality of the image in particular ways. Maria Thereza Alves halts modes of visual representation, filling the painful gaps of hypervisibility with storytelling. Jonathas de Andrade exploits myriad visual tropes associated with raciology to challenge racial difference but eventually falls into the trap of reproducing stereotypes. Finally,

Dalton Paula acknowledges the deeply racially mixed history of Blackness in Brazil, reclaiming it through *saberes negros*.

## Chapter 1. Photography as Survival: Maria Thereza Alves

*There was a black horse that had not had his spirit broken yet. A young man on another horse was beating him hard with a stick to force him to move. He was a proud horse and tried not to be forced. But after three or four beatings, he would move a little. But every time the young man who was on the other horse went to beat the proud black one, his horse would move away and thus break some of the force of the beating. Later, the black horse was tied to a tree. He was trying to free himself from the reins. — Maria Thereza Alves<sup>130</sup>*

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<sup>130</sup> Maria Thereza Alves and Michael T. Taussig, *Recipes for Survival*, First edition (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2018), 167.



## 1.1 Photography as Survival

This chapter examines Maria Thereza Alves's documentary photography, *Recipes for Survival*, a book published in 2018 featuring 72 black and white photographs followed by a manuscript divided into three chapters. Alves took the photographs in 1983, in remote Brazilian villages and towns where her parents lived before immigrating to the United States when Alves was still a child. The photographs represent life in poor rural communities, their struggle for survival, and their battles with diverse social issues, from hunger to modern-day slavery. The documentary marks a seminal moment in Alves's early career, during which she also pursued a politically engaged understanding of her indigenous descent.

This chapter is divided into two parts. In the first part, I consider *Recipes for Survival* as a decolonial document, examining the limitations and potentialities of documentary photography's history and its roots in the colonial enterprise. In the second part of the chapter, I study the visuality of whiteness and *mestiçagem* throughout the documentary, while also tracing the visual history of representations of indigenous peoples by white groups in Brazil and how *Recipes for Survival* counters this history.

Maria Thereza Alves<sup>131</sup> has been recognized for her multidisciplinary and conceptual work, dating from the 1990s. Her famous works include a 1992 collaboration with Jimmie Durham and Alan Michelson, which gave origin to

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<sup>131</sup> Born in Sao Paulo, Brazil, 1961.

*Virginia/Veracruz – Veracruz/Virginia*'s performance.<sup>132</sup> This work took place in Madrid during the 500<sup>th</sup>-anniversary celebration of what the West has called the “discovery” of the Americas. The trio’s performance famously protested that so-called “celebration” by exposing what was the ethnocide of indigenous peoples, which started with the invasion of Abya Yala by Europeans. During the weeks throughout the exhibition, the three performers visited strategic public buildings and monuments in Madrid that memorialized Spanish colonization in the Americas. While wandering and posing for pictures in front of these locations, the performers wore masks that looked like muzzles, pointing to the silencing and killing of the indigenous populations those sites represented.

Alves’s more recent works have also received scholarly attention, particularly her project *Seeds of Change*,<sup>133</sup> for which she received the 2016–2018 Vera List Center Prize for Art and Politics, awarded by The New School in New York City. *Seeds of Change* is an ongoing site-specific installation Alves started in 1999; the project, which investigates ballast flora in European coastal cities, currently has around seven different iterations, which Alves has developed in various countries. The project involves extensive bibliographical and archival research and

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<sup>132</sup> See artist’s website: Maria Thereza Alves, “Maria Thereza Alves,” Personal Website, n.d., <http://www.mariatherezaalves.org>. Last access, January 2020.

<sup>133</sup> About Alves’ early iterations of *Seeds of Change*, Jean Fisher writes: “*Seeds of Change* is not an artwork in the conventional sense, nor does it possess an outcome that could be anticipated in advance; it is better described as an experimental, multidisciplinary collaboration by Alves with various environmental scientists, botanists, engineers, local authorities, and communities, in which Alves applies an artistic imagination to specific contexts in order to disclose hitherto concealed social cultural histories. The point of departure of the work was an observation that the ships that plied the trans-Atlantic colonial trade routes deposited ballast in their ports of call ... Ballast flora are of course “illegal immigrants”, and *Seeds of Change* presents an elegant allegory for complex human identities that expose Europe, not as a discrete set of monocultures but as the result of ongoing intercultural exchanges that undermine fantasies of national identity ...” Jean Fisher, “The Importance of Words and Actions,” in *Maria Thereza Alves* (Nantes: Ecole supérieure des beaux-arts, 2013), 8-9.

cartographical and geographical examination of sites to understand the “natural history of the place ... and at what moment seeds become native.”<sup>134</sup> Supported by this careful research, Alves discloses colonial intervention layers in so-called natural landscapes, challenging fields of knowledge such as contemporary science and geography through the afterlives of ballasts. Yet, Alves has not created other works that are solely documentary photography, like *Recipes for Survival*; rather, she has used images as secondary components in her research projects.<sup>135</sup>

Although scholarship has recognized Alves’s practice for combining art, activism, and politics—particularly within the context of postcolonial discourse—little has been done to contextualize this artist’s works concerning Brazilian art and the country’s national narratives. In addition to Alves’s taking advantage of the art world’s internationality, perhaps the gap in the understanding of her work has been due to Alves’s trajectory as an individual and artist.

As a child, Alves left Brazil with her parents in the late 1960s to live in the United States, where her mother was working.<sup>136</sup> During her teens, Alves decided she

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<sup>134</sup> See artist’s website: Maria Thereza Alves, “Maria Thereza Alves,” Personal Website, n.d., <http://www.mariatherezaalves.org>. Last access, January 2020.

<sup>135</sup> Alves’s work falls more into a history of conceptual art than into photography. Writing about her work, Jean Fisher argues, “With Alves’ work, we have to ask different questions about art’s purpose; we therefore have to abandon the notion of aesthetic objects and look to the productive effects of imagination, process and social or inter-subjective relations... such an art practice is bound to the political insofar as it is deeply implicated in the conditions of life...” Jean Fisher, “The Importance of Words and Actions,” in *Maria Thereza Alves* (Nantes: Ecole supérieure des beaux-arts, 2013), 7.

<sup>136</sup> According to Nicola Gray, “the artist’s mother moved to New York as a live-in maid, and her own family was able to follow when she had saved enough funds to be the guarantor for them for immigration purposes. Her father then found work in construction...” And in an interview with Richard William Hill, Alves says, “my mother who was dumped in the city of São Paulo by her mother, ... never wanted the husband she had or any of his children. My mother went to work as a cleaning child at the age of nine for room and board and would continue to clean houses until she no longer could work. And my father, who is proud to have worked all his life since his teenage years, except for three days when he was unemployed.” Nicola Gray, “Maria Thereza Alves’s ‘Recipes for Survival,’” *Third Text*, April 8, 2020, <http://thirdtext.org/gray-alvesrecipes>.

wanted to study film and won a scholarship to New York University Film School, but eventually went shortly to The New School. Buying a roll of film was too expensive at that time and she kept looking for a more accessible occupation. Because of The Cooper Union's free tuition, she decided to apply and was accepted.<sup>137</sup> There, she studied photography under Larry Fink<sup>138</sup> and Christine Osinski,<sup>139</sup> well-known American documentary photographers. Alves's first exhibition participation took place in 1982, at Group Material's show "*!Luchar! An Exhibition for the People of Central America.*"<sup>140</sup>

The Brazilian heritage of Alves's parents was a very salient aspect of her life; the family's ties with relatives in Brazil shaped her early activist aspirations. Her parents came from small villages in Brazil and descended from Afro-Brazilians, the Guarani/Kaigang indigenous group, and Europeans.<sup>141</sup> Knowing the harshness of the

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<sup>137</sup> Most of Alves's references consist of artists based in the United States, from Juan Sanchez and David Hammons to other names such as Transvanguardia, Enzo Cucchi, Francesco Clemente, Sandro Chia, DokuPil, Ana Mendieta, and Cindy Sherman. Maria Thereza Alves, Interview in English to the author, Zoom, June 2020.

<sup>138</sup> Larry Fink (b. 1941) is famous for his black and white photographic documentary *Social Graces* that was exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1979 and published as a book in 1984 by Aperture. *Social Graces* sought to expose the contrast between the quotidian life of wealthy New Yorkers and the working class living in Pennsylvania. See Larry Fink, "Larry Fink," Personal Website, n.d., <http://www.larryfinkphotography.com/bio--resume.html>.

<sup>139</sup> Using a large format camera, Christine Osinski (b. 1948) became known for documenting the working class of New York in the late 1970s and 1980s. Osinski was a 2005 Guggenheim Fellow and in 2015 she received a Pollock-Krasner Foundation grant. See Joseph Bellows Gallery, "Joseph Bellows Gallery's Christine Osinski Profile," Website, n.d., <https://www.josephbellows.com/artists/christine-osinski/biography>.

<sup>140</sup> Founded in New York, in 1979, Group Material was an influential art collective with a fluctuating number of members, among them were founding members Doug Ashford, Julie Ault, and Felix Gonzalez-Torres (1957-1996). About the group, scholar Alison Green writes, "Group Material began as a group of artists, all interested in social issues and in — that 1980s concept — the 'politics of representation'.<sup>3</sup> There were between ten and thirteen members at first, but during the second year this unwieldy number fell to three, and the group's size henceforth fluctuated between three and four.<sup>4</sup> Group Material — the name itself allowing for flexibility and signifying a 'materialist' approach — organised itself around several motivations, such as working as a collective against individual art practices, working against 'careerism' and reconnecting art's production and reception." Alison Green, "Citizen Artists: Group Material," *Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context and Enquiry* 26 (January 2011): 17, 17–25, <https://doi.org/10.1086/659292>.

<sup>141</sup> According to the website *Povos Indigenas do Brasil*, organized by the Instituto Socioambiental, "The guarani-kaiowa, as they are known in the Brazilian anthropological literature, according to Cadogan (1959), would readily accept the designation paĩ, a title used for the gods who inhabit paradise on speaking to them, but the name which

military dictatorship and the impact different modes of exploitation had on her family motivated Alves to advocate for Brazil's indigenous peoples.<sup>142</sup> Working as an international artist, Alves frequently returned to Brazil to develop projects revealing the primacy of colonial narratives. She has more recently created important projects alongside indigenous communities.<sup>143</sup>

Though not an example of Alves's most well-known practice, *Recipes for Survival* is an early work at the intersection of art and activism. The work is a photographic documentary accompanied by essays narrating the struggle of Alves's relatives and other villagers living in two of Brazil's poor rural areas. Alves has highlighted *Recipes* as one of her major works and a rare instance in which she has

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best corresponds to them is tavyterã or paĩ-tavyterã, which mean “inhabitant of the people [village] of the true future land” (távy-yvy-ete-rã). The ñandeva refer to these paĩ-kaiowa as tembekuára (lip orifice) due to their custom of perforating the lower lip of the younger men during the initiation ceremony when they insert a small plug made of resin in the hole. The name KAIOWA must derive from KA'A O GUA, that is, those who belong to the high, dense forest, which is indicated by the suffix “o” (large), referring to the present-day Kaiowa Guarani or paĩ-tavyterã. In this way, there would be a difference in relation to the term KA'A GUA, those from the forest without it necessarily being dense or tall, a category in which they would include the present-day Mbya Guarani. The Ñandeva constitute a Guarani subgroup which is also called Ava-Chiripa or Ava-Guarani (see Schaden, 1974; Nimuendaju, 1978) or even, ava-katu-ete (Bartolomé 1991).”[https://pib.socioambiental.org/en/Povo:Guarani\\_Kaiowá#Name](https://pib.socioambiental.org/en/Povo:Guarani_Kaiowá#Name) – Accessed June 14, 2020.

<sup>142</sup> About the importance of her family in Brazil in her activism, Alves also said, “A little while later, when my family was able to return for short visits to Brazil, politicized relatives there guided me. Padrinho Chinica, for example. He did not have enough money for a newspaper but had a relative who did, and he would pick up the newspaper after lunch. He then would go to the plaza to read it. After school let out, the youth who were interested in politics would find him there, and he would explain the events of the day and interpret what was going on. My cousin, Piu (Elpidio dos Santos, Jr.), a composer, taught me about music, culture, and resistance. Senhora Benedita, who sold coconuts and candy, and her mother, her husband, Senhor Pedro, who did backbreaking stonework on sidewalks, and their children Dolores, Marcio, Romulo, and Juliana were all militant activists against the dictatorship at every moment of living, and that was an important lesson. And my aunt Dioneia, who was a rural schoolteacher and would take me around the countryside where I learned to see the power structures that were used by the landowners to destroy the autonomy of those who were forced to work for them.” Maria Thereza Alves and Richard William Hill, “The Freedom to Develop What Is Necessary: Maria Thereza Alves Interviewed by Richard William Hill. Documenting a Cross-Cultural Politics and Aesthetics.,” *BOMB*, March 16, 2020, <https://bombmagazine.org/articles/the-freedom-to-develop-what-is-necessary-maria-thereza-alves-interviewed/>.

<sup>143</sup> Among these works are *A Possible Reversal of Missed Opportunities* (2016) and *Decolonizing Brazil / Descolonizando o Brasil.*, (2018).

allowed an autobiographical aspect to come through her practice.<sup>144</sup> *Recipes* is also a marker in Alves's career because she produced it while she was involved in the struggle for indigenous peoples' rights. During this phase, Alves also engaged into intense political activism.

In 1978, Alves joined the International Indian Treaty Council. A year later, she delivered a speech at the United Nations, protesting Brazil's ethnocide of indigenous peoples during military dictatorship; her goal was to found an indigenous organization in Brazil.<sup>145</sup> In the 1980s, Alves founded the Brazilian Information Center in New York to disseminate information about the political situation in Brazil; later in the same decade, she became a representative for Brazil's Worker's Party (*Partido dos Trabalhadores*) in the United States. *Recipes for Survival* is part of this context, but, as I explain, it is also one of Alves's first works to deploy a decolonial mode of representation. Importantly for this dissertation, it is a project that eschews power hierarchies between the photographer and the photographed in documentary photography.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Nicola Gray, "Maria Thereza Alves's 'Recipes for Survival,'" *Third Text* (blog), April 8, 2020, <http://thirdtext.org/gray-alvesrecipes>.

<sup>145</sup> Maria Thereza Alves explains to Richard William Hill, "In 1978, just shortly before I turned seventeen, I joined the International Indian Treaty Council to learn how to make a national Indigenous organization in Brazil, which did not exist at the time. There was much repression from the military dictatorship." Maria Thereza Alves and Richard William Hill, "The Freedom to Develop What Is Necessary: Maria Thereza Alves Interviewed by Richard William Hill. Documenting a Cross-Cultural Politics and Aesthetics.," *BOMB*, March 16, 2020, <https://bombmagazine.org/articles/the-freedom-to-develop-what-is-necessary-maria-thereza-alves-interviewed/>.

<sup>146</sup> I am referring to the ways in which subjects are made visible through power, and the ways in which systems of (in)visibility have been rooted in coloniality. I rely on a Foucauldian theory of power, but more specifically on Stuart Hall's reading of Foucault and Hall's discussion on "colonial spectacles." As I discuss in this dissertation, the history of photography, and of documentary photography, is linked to colonial systems of visibility in which non-white populations became ethnographic objects at the same time they were "made" visible in western society. Intrinsically to being made visible non-white populations were displayed as spectacle. As Hall says, these populations were objectified via spectacles, becoming "objects of the gaze." These systems are shaped by discourse, but those who portray and those who display individuals are inherently participating in these populations' violent racialization and othering, a practice that originated the power hierarchies I discuss

The first iteration of *Recipes* consisted of an installation of 50 black and white photographs shown in Cuernavaca, Mexico at a 1989 show titled “Narrativa.”<sup>147</sup> Throughout the years, Alves used the photographs as inspiration for other works.<sup>148</sup> In this chapter, however, I focus on the most recent iteration of this work, the 2018 book, *Recipes for Survival*, which presents 72 photographs each displayed on an individual page followed by a manuscript divided into three chapters. Each chapter consists of poems, recipes, and short essays Alves wrote after compiling the interviews and conversations she had while visiting the three communities and villages in Brazil where her parents had lived: a village in the state of Paraná, where her father’s family lived, and two small towns on the southern coast of Brazil, where her mother’s family lived.

These visits happened in 1983 and were the first time she returned to those villages for an extended period after her family moved to New York. During a 2019 talk, as part of the book launch for *Recipes*, Alves stated she decided to return at that time because it was a moment of increased flexibility during the military dictatorship, which would be dissolved a year later. She said it was uncertain whether state violence and living conditions in those villages would worsen or improve after the end of the dictatorship, so she decided it was the right time to visit. Alves was still

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concerning documentary photography. See Stuart Hall and Open University, *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (London; Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage in association with the Open University, 1997), p. 195.

<sup>147</sup> The exhibition *Narrativa* took place at the Instituto de Cultura des Estado de Morelos, Cuernavaca, Mexico, in 1989. Maria Thereza Alves, Interview in English to the author, Zoom, June 2020.

<sup>148</sup> In Maria Theresa Alves’s words, “The painting, *The Rains*, is a work inspired by the research for the book but is not part nor has been exhibited with the images from *Recipes*—I used two images from the book in the painting—throughout the years, I have used images from my archives. And Amatlan was an ephemeral site-specific installation in Amatlan in 1993 in Morelos, Mexico.” Email exchanged with the author, June 2020.

studying photography at Cooper Union at the time, and she felt it was her responsibility to document the struggles affecting the rural population in Brazil, mainly poverty and hunger. Though Alves was moved by the injustices her relatives and friends experienced, her main goal was always to show how they thrived and survived oppression. In her documentary, Alves sought ways of incorporating their perspectives on these difficult living conditions.

## **1.2. *Recipes for Survival*: A Document on Decoloniality**

*An old man sits out in the sun playing with pebbles and grass. He cannot walk. He just sits. He is retired and is taken care of by Diogo, one of the wealthier farmers in the area, who also fixes cars and tractors and fills butane lanterns.*

*Diogo is given all the old man's pension. It is said that no one in Diogo's house is allowed to eat until he gets home. All the cabinets are locked, and he is the only one with the keys. He even had the pots and pans locked up. The old man is fed a small plate of food and has to satisfy himself with that.*<sup>149</sup>

Two large corn leaves frame a picture of a man (Figure 1). He does not look into the lens, but to his left side, as if staring far away into the horizon. A few wrinkles escape from one of the corners of his eyes. He seems to be smiling with his eyes. Shade begins on his forehead and descends to reach his hand, closed in a fist. It is possible to see large pores on his hand's skin. His body leans to the left, while the two big corn leaves seem to follow him; plant and man are in dialogue. Alves took

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<sup>149</sup> Maria Thereza Alves and Michael T. Taussig, *Recipes for Survival*, First edition (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2018), 159.



the shot from bottom to top, kneeling in front of the man to place him in a heroic position. The composition has movement that comes from a framing decision, one that brings the textured effect of the shades on the leaves in the foreground into relation with the shape of the corn leaves further away in the background, behind the man. The sky is an empty gray, mottled by the graininess of the print.

In Alves's book, *Recipes for Survival*, words and images are never in direct dialogue. Poems, essays, and recipes appear at the end of book and the photographs are never accompanied by captions or other text. But Alves's texts too are filled with gaps, either because she decided to conceal individuals' names and identities, or she avoided naming certain actions in general. For example, in the epigraph above Alves suggested the existence of an abusive relationship between a wealthy farmer and an old man but she does not name the relationship. Perhaps Diogo and the old man are relatives, perhaps not. Yet, her narration reminds me of abusive relationships and even forms of slavery that persist throughout the country.

Some individuals who "work" for food can be locked away and abused. Because these occur in remote areas, often it takes an individual's entire life to break away from an abusive "work" relationship, or captivity.<sup>150</sup> Throughout her essays,

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<sup>150</sup> Contemporary slavery is still recurrent in Brazil and persists around the world. In Brazil, every year, around 1,000 people are freed from slavery: 82% of the rescued individuals are Black or brown. Since 1995, 52 thousand people have been rescued across Brazil, 70% worked in rural areas. See data published in Maria Fernanda Garcia, "82% Dos Resgatados de Trabalho Escravo No Brasil São Negros," *Observatório Do 3o Setor*, June 12, 2020, <https://observatorio3setor.org.br/noticias/82-dos-resgatados-de-trabalho-escravo-no-brasil-sao-negros/> and Repórter Brasil, "O Trabalho Escravo No Brasil," *Escravo Nem Pensar!* (blog), n.d., <https://escravonempensar.org.br/o-trabalho-escravo-no-brasil/>. About present-day slavery in Brazil, see also articles such as, Ricardo Resende Figueira, "A persistência da escravidão ilegal no Brasil.," in *Desafios aos direitos humanos no Brasil Contemporâneo* (Brasília, DF, Brasil: CAPES/Verbena, 2011), 49–63.

Alves mentioned that village farmworkers feared becoming slaves in nearby farms. But the “old man’s” story is different because there is no direct reference to slavery, which leads me to think that, for some reason, Alves could not unveil or categorize the type of abuse. I selected this passage because it tells us about the haunting ghost of slavery present and lurking in these rural spaces Alves represented.

Gaps of meaning, either between images and texts or within the essays, are a potent feature of *Recipes for Survival*. My chapter intrudes these gaps simply because I write and analyze them. This is the case with most academic writing; scholars create relay text<sup>151</sup> about artists’ works, unpacking artists’ practices by theorizing them. In this chapter, however, I also seek, at moments, to emulate some of Alves’s strategies by juxtaposing short excerpts of her writing with ekphrases I wrote about her photographs. The book excerpts I chose, however, do not contextualize the images I describe. By choosing this method, I intend to maintain a gap between my writing and Alves’s work.

I imagine the man in the picture smiling with his eyes to be the old man in the story, perhaps when he was younger, before he went on to work for Diogo, the wealthy farmer. For me, the way the leaves frame the farmworker’s head and their stance are reminiscent of Tina Modotti’s *Woman from Tehuantepec carrying*

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<sup>151</sup> I refer here to Barthes’ notion of *relay text* he discusses in the essay “Rhetoric of the Image,” in *Image, Music, Text*. Images are always *unreliable* albeit rich sources of meaning but, as Barthes argues in *the Rhetoric of the Image*, in contemporary times, images more than often require accompanying text to “fix the floating chain of signifieds” and thus help the viewer “identify purely and simply the elements of the scene and the scene itself . . .”. Barthes calls as anchorage this “most frequent” feature of the relationship between text and image: a relationship that is also ideological, for this type of text directs and controls the interpretation of the image. On the other hand, Barthes calls *relay* the text that is in complementary relationship to an image; when the linguistic message adds “meanings that are not to be found in the image itself.” Roland Barthes and Stephen Heath, *Image, Music, Text*, Nachdr. (New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 2009), 39-40.

*yecapixtle* (1929). Both Modotti's Mexican *campesina* and Alves' Brazilian farmworker show a heroic stance, looking towards an imaginary horizon. Contrasting bright and dark areas help compose these resilient facial expressions. Still, Modotti's *Woman* was photographed against a black scenographic background.<sup>152</sup> Modotti's *campesinos* images, such as *Woman from Tehuantepec* are staged and organized around juxtapositions between peasants and their working materials.

Because of the proximity with those portrayed, it is easier to notice that Alves's images are not heavily staged. Those depicted are usually relaxed or looking directly at the camera, very close to the photographer, and not at all seem intimidated or aloof. Most of these images eschew any extraordinary mood. There are only a few indoor dramatic chiaroscuros. Because most of the houses' interiors were dark and did not have electric lighting, Alves tried using flash during her visits. But she quickly gave up. She said to me in an interview:

I couldn't use flash because I used it once, like on the third day or the first week in a dark space—everything was always dark at night because there's no running water, there's no electricity—and everyone was terrified, terrified. I had caused angst, and I felt ashamed to cause angst. So, I've ... never used flash again.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> Writing about the work of Mexican photographer Nacho López (1923-1986), John Mraz discusses the role of exoticization in the photography about Mexico produced by foreign photographers, such as Tina Modotti and Edward Weston, in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. In this discussion, Mraz cites Modotti's preference for the photographic composition planning as opposed to the spontaneity of photojournalism. Mraz quotes Modotti, who said, "I know the material found on the streets is rich and wonderful, but my experience is that the way I am accustomed to work, slowly planning my composition, etc. is not suited for such work. By the time I have the composition or the expression right, the picture is gone." Tina Modotti, letter of 23 May 1930. Stark, "The Letters from Tina Modotti to Edward Weston," 74, in John Mraz, *Nacho Lopez, Mexican Photographer* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), <http://site.ebrary.com/id/10151217>, 19-20.

<sup>153</sup> Maria Thereza Alves, Interview in English to the author, Zoom, June 2020.

When there is play between light and shadow, it seems related to Alves's camera's adaptability to the people's conditions rather than to achieve a specific aesthetic result. There is almost nothing out of the ordinary in *Recipes*'s images. Yet, I am captivated by their unwavering sincerity.

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In *The Return of Quetzalcoatl*, curator Petro de Llano refutes simplistic categorizations of Alves' work as postcolonial but further emphasizes how her work, in de Llano's opinion, has been influenced by postcolonial discourse. de Llano writes,

The work of Maria Thereza Alves is usually described as 'postcolonial,' and while this may be true, it is by no means an exhaustive definition ... It would be more accurate to say that postcolonial discourses have heavily influenced her outlook, providing a frame of reference for creating a poetic representation of reality that aims to highlight and preserve ... fragments of languages, histories, gestures, visions, ideas, and sentiments that ... are still being lost today in colonial contexts ...<sup>154</sup>

The author concludes, "From this point of view, postcolonialism is not just a discourse of criticism, denouncement, and indignation in the face of countless past and present injustices, but also ... a coherent platform that allows [Alves] ... to broadcast her views on nature, culture, life and death."<sup>155</sup> Though Alves's practice has become known within the art world's reading of postcolonial theories, she has referred to the term "decolonial" in more recent works.<sup>156</sup> Within the decolonial

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<sup>154</sup> Petro de Llano, "The Return of Quetzalcoatl," in *El largo camino a Xico: Maria Theresa Alves 1991-2015 = The long road to Xico* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2017), 31.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> For example, Maria Thereza Alves recently titled one of her collaborative works *Descolonizando o Brasil / Decolonizing Brazil* (2018). About the work, Alves wrote: *Decolonizing Brazil* "is a result of a series of workshops held from July through August 2018 at the UFSCar Sorocaba Campus, at Flona (National Forest of Ipanema), the Guyra Pepo Reservation and Sesc Sorocaba. These encounters resulted in performative actions, an

scope, Alves has continuously investigated colonial thinking's active presence in the contemporary world and its troubling vestiges. One example of this investigation is her work, *A Possible Reversal of Missed Opportunities* (2016) that served as basis for a second iteration of the project, now called *Descolonizando o Brasil / Decolonizing Brazil* (2018) (Figure 2).<sup>157</sup>

For this piece, Alves held workshops with teachers and activists, who created fictitious conferences in which they would like to participate but to which they have never been invited due to racism against indigenous peoples. She organized conversations with them, in which all read translated articles by indigenous scholars, such as Richard Hill and Linda Tuhiwai Smith. These one-day workshops also acknowledged the indigenous presence in Brazilian art and academia and presented contemporary indigenous artists.

Alves produced three large posters with the conferences' topics, fictional titles and universities, and sponsors the students came up with; the posters were then disseminated in the biennial and in the cities where the actions took place. "I've asked myself many times, how do we decolonize imagination? That's how: through the exercise of fiction," the artist told me.<sup>158</sup> Alves decided not to focus on photographic documentation of the meetings, explaining, "I didn't want the ethnographic gaze in

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e-book, seven language magazines, 9 audio recordings, videos and theater pieces, which are available in the website and were exhibited at Sesc Sorocaba." See artist's website: Maria Thereza Alves, "Maria Thereza Alves," Personal Website, n.d., <http://www.mariatherezaalves.org>. Last access, February 2022.

<sup>157</sup> On Alves' *Descolonizando o Brasil / Decolonizing Brazil*, see footnote above.

<sup>158</sup> Maria Thereza Alves, Interview in São Paulo, Brazil, in Portuguese to the author, In person, 2016.

the work, so if the students wanted to photograph the meetings, they could, but I didn't."<sup>159</sup>

In a critique of an exhibition organized by nonindigenous curators in Brazil, Alves defined her notion of decolonization:

Decolonization results in the indigenous population having control over their land and lives. Therefore, it follows that a basic tenet of decolonization is that the colonized be the active agent of her own discourse and process of decolonization. In other words, the indigenous must come first in all discourse on decolonization in Brazil and therefore must be present for any discourse on decolonization.<sup>160</sup>

This view puts indigenous peoples at the center of decolonial discourse as speaking subjects, or protagonists of their discourses and practices. It also demands exhibitions, events, encounters, or other practices be organized by indigenous individuals or communities to receive the “decolonial” label.

This view differs, however, from the more general usage of the term “decolonial” in the art world of today, both in Brazil and the United States.

Decolonization has become a trendy term among artists, scholars, and art professionals.<sup>161</sup> Often used loosely by art professionals, this concept came to mean the disabling—and substitution of—Western hegemonic thinking and its systems of

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<sup>159</sup> Maria Thereza Alves, Interview in São Paulo, Brazil, in Portuguese to the author, In person, 2016.

<sup>160</sup> Maria Thereza Alves, *A Mão do Povo Brasileiro*, 2016. Unpublished. Word Document shared with the author.

<sup>161</sup> About such debate see, for example, *October* Journal’s compilation of art professionals’ statements about the diverse meanings of decolonization in the art world. Huey Copeland et al., “A Questionnaire on Decolonization,” *October* 174 (December 2020): 3–125, [https://doi.org/10.1162/octo\\_a\\_00410](https://doi.org/10.1162/octo_a_00410). Another source on this debate is the MTL Collective’s essay “From Institutional Critique to Institutional Liberation? A Decolonial Perspective on the Crises of Contemporary Art,” *October* 165 (August 2018): 192–227, [https://doi.org/10.1162/octo\\_a\\_00329](https://doi.org/10.1162/octo_a_00329).

oppression. Nonetheless, the form of such disabling has become a topic of dispute between several modes of thought and diverse kinds of activist leadership.<sup>162</sup>

Labels such as postcolonial art and decolonial art have been often interchangeably used by scholars and by Maria Thereza Alves to describe her work. I am interested in how the mainstream art world read postcolonial theories in the late 1990s and early 2000s and how these theories helped curators and art historians categorize art practices dealing with the world's margins, such as Alves's. My goal is to understand how Alves's early practice can be situated within decolonization and how her practice built its roots in the indigenous practices within Latin American territory.<sup>163</sup> I ask then, what does it mean to analyze Alves's earlier work concerning decolonial thinking? Is it possible to think of *Recipes for Survival* as a decolonial project? And, more importantly, from this situated standpoint I ask: What racial constructs does Alves's project expose within Brazilian hegemonic discourses? How does the artist articulate decoloniality in relation to the question of "race"?

I am thinking here of Alves's work in relation to "the decolonial" as an active verb within the concepts of coloniality and decoloniality that Peruvian sociologist

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<sup>162</sup> Also, see the fundamental work of scholars Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang on defining and reclaiming the term decolonization to indigenous peoples in Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, "Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1, no. 1 (2012).

<sup>163</sup> The term Abya Yala has been used by indigenous and non-indigenous groups throughout Latin America to counter the complex history of coloniality and naming in the continent. However, Maria Thereza Alves does not commonly use Abya Yala to describe Native territories in Brazil, neither originary peoples in Brazil use the term regularly. Although I commonly use the term in my writing, I chose here to omit it out of respect for the indigenous leadership and activists in Brazil. According to Catherine Walsh, "Abya Yala is the name that the Kuna-Tule people (of the lands now known as Panama and Colombia) gave to the 'Americas' before the colonial invasion. It signifies 'land in full maturity' or 'land of vital blood.'" Its present-day use began to take form in 1992 when Indigenous peoples from throughout the continent came together to counter the 'Discovery' celebrations, 'to reflect upon 500 years of the European invasion and to formulate alternatives for a better life, in harmony with Nature and Human Dignity.'" Walter D. Mignolo and Catherine E. Walsh, *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis* (Duke University Press, 2018), 21. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv11g9616>.

Anibal Quijano theorized in 1999.<sup>164</sup> Quijano argued that colonialism persists in present times. Colonialism implemented a “matrix of power” based on social discrimination and labor control, aspects Quijano associated with modernity and its later iteration, global capitalism. For him, that matrix of power is organized around two central axes.<sup>165</sup> The first axis is the colonial codification of difference, or the ways through which white invaders, or so-called conquerors, instituted the notion of “race” throughout colonialism. The second axis consists of the “control of labor and its resources and products,” which are then “articulated” through slavery and other systems.

According to Quijano, the idea of race and the construction of racial and cultural differences between colonizers and the colonized were essential for maintaining colonialism. Put simply, the concept of coloniality acknowledges how the rationale of colonialism and racism lingers on into modernity and finds capitalism as an enabler and ally. Coloniality then refers to a widespread *modus operandi* that has organized many social practices throughout colonized territories worldwide.

Quijano named decoloniality the praxis of resisting, opposing, or challenging coloniality. Explaining this author’s thinking, scholar Catherine Walsh said:

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<sup>164</sup> Anibal Quijano, “Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality,” *Cultural Studies* 21, no. 2–3 (March 2007): 168–78, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09502380601164353>.

<sup>165</sup> “As Anibal Quijano explained, coloniality developed around two central axes or patterns of power that came to be foundational to modernity and global capitalism. The first was “the codification of the difference between conquerors and conquered in the idea of ‘race’ . . . the constitutive, founding element of the relations of domination that the conquest imposed.” The second was “the constitution of a new structure of control of labor and its resources and products.” that articulated “slavery, serfdom, small independent commodity production, and reciprocity, together around and upon the basis of capital and the world market.” Walter D. Mignolo and Catherine E. Walsh, *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis* (Duke University Press, 2018), 23. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv11g9616>.



Decoloniality denotes modes of thinking, knowing, and being that often precede colonial invasion. Decoloniality is a form of struggle and survival practices by those who have been colonized responding against the colonial matrix of power.<sup>166</sup>

Walsh emphasized that decoloniality is not only a theory but a combination of theory and praxis that includes, for example, autochthone world views: modes of survival and living and knowing that remain in transformation to counter coloniality.<sup>167</sup> Other authors have named the early decolonial actions, responses, or resistance against coloniality as counter-narratives due to the often subtle ways through which they come to appear in hegemonic narratives.<sup>168</sup> Citing Margaret Kovach and Jo-Ann Archibald, Linda Tuhiwai Smith argued that “stories are connected to knowing” and they are a “central feature of indigenous research and knowledge methodologies.” Moreover, Tuhiwai Smith said stories educate “the heart, the mind, the body, and the spirit.”<sup>169</sup>

Alves’s project provided a counter-narration of sorts: it is a storytelling about peoples’ resilience, about the modes of living that have persisted in rural Brazil, even

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<sup>166</sup> Walter D. Mignolo and Catherine E. Walsh, *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis* (Duke University Press, 2018), 17. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv11g9616>.

<sup>167</sup> Walsh rightfully cites the Zapatistas from Chiapas, in Mexico, as one of the most fundamental and present-day examples of decoloniality. Walsh writes, “The public emergence of the Zapatistas in 1994 similarly made visible the historically invisibilized. Moreover, the Zapatistas’ call for an end to neo-liberal policies and for new visions of social and political participation and democracy in Chiapas and in Mexico as a whole, marked the beginning of a new political moment of decolonial resistance, resurgence, proposition, thought, shift, and movement that continues until today.” Walter D. Mignolo and Catherine E. Walsh, *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis* (Duke University Press, 2018), 25. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv11g9616>.

<sup>168</sup> I am referring to counter-narratives as a term Walter Mignolo uses in his essay “Epistemic Disobedience and the Decolonial Option: A Manifesto.” Mignolo does not define the term but deploys it in relation to the decolonial writings of Waman Puma de Ayala (or Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala) (1534-1615) and Ottobah Cugoano (1757-1791). Mignolo argues that coloniality produces decoloniality as “epistemic disobedience,” or on page 46, “an energy of discontent, of distrust, of release within those who react against imperial violence.” The practice of writing that counters hegemonic colonial discourses is the practice of decolonial counternarrative. Walter Mignolo, “Epistemic Disobedience and the Decolonial Option: A Manifesto,” *TRANSMODERNITY: Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World* 1, no. 2 (2011), <https://doi.org/10.5070/T412011807>.

<sup>169</sup> Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, Second edition (London: Zed Books, 2012), 146.

if threatened on all fronts, from authoritarianism and capitalism to the internalization of racism. *Recipes for Survival*'s format anticipates a type of decolonial project that would only become popular and "theorized," such as in Quijano's work, around the 1990s. The project defies a couple standards within the genre of documentary photography. Upon first analysis, the work may look like it is organized as a photographic documentary, but it actually fails to function as one. Instead, one finds a mode of storytelling that eschews typical photographic documentary norms.<sup>170</sup>

*Recipes for Survival* also serves as a counternarrative to the Brazilian government's official narratives of that time. These official narratives followed the colonial rationale and envisioned non-normative populations as problems to be solved; for indigenous peoples, that meant erasure through so-called integration, for example.<sup>171</sup> More importantly, though *Recipes* may expose its subjects through

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<sup>170</sup> In a review of *Recipes*, Nicola Gray writes, "On first glance, the book has the look of a photographic essay in the form of one of those large, expensive 'coffee-table books' of documentary-style photography by a well-known photographer, perhaps a member of the Magnum co-operative; maybe the work of a photographer who took themselves out of their known parameters to some distant part of the world and recorded the plight of its people. But that is not what *Recipes for Survival* is. It does potentially raise, however, some of those different questions Jean Fisher suggested should be asked in relation to Alves's work about 'art's purpose.' It is a book of photographs, of people at work and at home –and clearly people doing hard work and living hard lives –with notes and the names and stories of those people in its second section. But it is more than that. *Recipes for Survival* is the outcome of deep engagement and participation; it deploys photography, but it does so in tandem with an attentive listening and in conversation with its subjects."

<sup>171</sup> Loosely speaking, the military dictatorship saw indigenous peoples as "internal enemies" of the regime, and the government established various strategies to control them. The regime used a federal institution called Serviço de Proteção aos Índios (SPI) or Protection Services for Indians (present-day FUNAI (Fundação Nacional do Índio) to build outposts on indigenous lands throughout Brazil that were meant to promote the "pacification" and integration of indigenous peoples into so-called society. At these outposts, government agents could approach indigenous communities with the excuse of offering protection, assistance, and pacification. Pacification often meant the forced coercion of more remote indigenous communities into "society," but included a myriad of other integration tactics. Among these strategies were mandatory boarding schools for indigenous children and the presence of religious missions to convert indigenous peoples. About the regime's violent tactics, see publications such: Rubens Valente, *Os Fuzis e as Flechas: História de Sangue e Resistência Indígena Na Ditadura*, 1a ed., Coleção Arquivos Da Repressão No Brasil (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2017); Amanda Gabriela Rocha Oliveira, "O Relatório Figueiredo e suas contradições: A questão indígena em tempos de ditadura" (Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, 2017); Poliene Soares dos Santos Bicalho, "Protagonismo Indígena no Brasil: Movimento, Cidadania e Direitos (1970-2009)" (Brasília, DF, Brasil, Universidade de Brasília, 2010).

aestheticizing, they do not become fetishized western desire objects.<sup>172</sup> Instead, Alves's project highlights modes of survival in the face of coloniality-rooted genocide and racism, or what Linda Tuhiwai Smith has called *survivance*,<sup>173</sup> a concept I will return to later on in this chapter. *Recipes* also marks the beginning of what would become Alves's ongoing praxis: a project-based document that now serves as proof of her subjects' survival and resistance against slavery and exploitation. Aesthetics, though a preoccupation of the young artist at that time, became secondary. I argue the practical component of the photographs and manuscripts explains (and foreshadows) the decolonial quality of Alves's later works.

A practice that can be understood as a manifestation of coloniality—and one this dissertation deals with—is the naturalization of racial difference in visual discourse. As discussed in this dissertation's introduction, photography was one of the main tools of this process as it was used as “proof” that racial difference

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<sup>172</sup> About the aestheticization of suffering, David Levi Strauss wrote, “There was a critique of documentary photography that happened in the ‘70s and ‘80s that made it nearly impossible to talk about representations of suffering because it was an “aestheticization of suffering.” At the time, I wondered why the aesthetic was seen to be such a toxic thing. This book is an update of that, where I ask if such critiques are valid any more, and come to the conclusion that they aren't. The extension of that critique is that you cannot represent other people and their suffering, and I don't want to live in a world where that is not happening. One of the things that photography has always been able to do is to register a relationship between the person behind and in front of the camera. Even though that is not a straight line to empathy, solidarity, and political change, for a long time in photography it was part of that, and that didn't just go away. This relationship and our discussions of it have changed, partly because our communications environment has changed so much. The way documentary happens changed, and the way we receive images changed. A number of the photographers I talk about in the book are engaged in this and know the stakes involved are too high to abandon this urge. Making these kinds of images and getting them distributed has become harder for a lot of structural and economic reasons, but I think it's also become more important than ever.” David Levi Strauss and Jarrett Earnest, “David Levi Strauss with Jarrett Earnest,” *The Brooklyn Rail* (blog), January 7, 2014, <https://brooklynrail.org/2014/07/art/david-levi-strauss-with-jarrett-earnest>. Accessed May 29<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

<sup>173</sup> Smith writes about *survivance* as a combination of survival and resistance for indigenous peoples: “Celebrating Survival is a particular sort of approach. Non-indigenous research has been intent on documenting the demise and cultural assimilation of indigenous peoples. Instead, it is possible to celebrate Survival, or what Gerald Vizenor had called ‘survivance,’ Survival and resistance.” Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, Second edition (London: Zed Books, 2012), 146.

existed.<sup>174</sup> Understanding the role of visual discourse within coloniality then becomes of primary importance. As I argue in this chapter, to know how photography articulates whiteness through *mestiçagem* in small villages in Brazil means understanding how whiteness was mobilized by state power to help substitute—and erase—indigenous and Afro-diasporic modes of living. Alves’s images provide an entryway to the manifestation of these discourses of power during a specific moment in Brazilian history, the 1980s—the last decade of the military regime that began in the 1960s.

### 1.3. Disentangling Documentary Photography from Coloniality

In her famous 1981 essay “In, around, and afterthoughts (on documentary photography),” U.S. artist Martha Rosler developed a fierce critique of social documentary photography. Rosler attacked several practices, including those of Walker Evans and Diane Arbus, criticizing how this genre of documentary feels less like an effective criticism of human struggle and more like a testament to an author’s “bravery” to enter a “situation of physical danger” and show us “places we never hope to go.” Ultimately, Rosler questioned this genre as a reductive liberal practice, classifying this kind of photography as hopelessly compelled by a moralist desire of

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<sup>174</sup> See more about this discussion in the Introduction to this dissertation and in Chapter 2.

“rescuing” those deemed invisible in society by “imploring” on the ascendant classes’ sense of pity.<sup>175</sup>

In the 1980s, Alves too was largely trying to understand how to work with photography and with communities, but from a less objectifying perspective than those offered by the traditional documentary photography Rosler fiercely criticized. While Rosler advanced a postmodern critique informed by the politics of social class, Alves’s experimentations as a photography student threaded towards something the art world would later, and roughly, call “identity politics,” and the “situated knowledges” of feminist theories.<sup>176</sup> Alves was already interested in the politics of being indigenous—what it meant for her and for her family to be indigenous and non-white in the United States and in Brazil. In an interview to me, in June 2020, Alves said that it was the experience of facing racism in the U.S., when she was a child, that further triggered her interest in understanding her family ancestral ties with indigenous peoples in Brazil.<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>175</sup> Martha Rosler, “In, around, and Afterthoughts (on Documentary Photography),” in *The Contest of Meaning: Critical Histories of Photography*, 4. print (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1993), 88.

<sup>176</sup> Donna Haraway famously deployed the term “situated knowledges” in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991). “Situated knowledge occupies the middle ground between these two extremes: it is at once historically contingent, deeply subjective, aware of its own meaning-making capabilities and potentialities, and committed to a faithful, no-nonsense (as Haraway puts it) account of the real world. Rather than trying to systematize the world and parcel it up and represent it as a machine, situated knowledge conceives the world as an earth-wide network of active connections and partial truths. Fundamental to the notion of situated knowledge is the idea that the world is active: it is not simply there waiting to be mapped.” Ian Buchanan, “Situated Knowledge” (Oxford University Press, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.1093/acref/9780198794790.013.0789>.

<sup>177</sup> In another interview, Alves describes some of these experiences to Richard William Hill, “For a while I tried to figure things out on my own after my family emigrated to the States. Racism and the resulting bullying, although I would not know to call it that, were my principal concerns at the time. I learned on my own how to deal with them around the age of ten. I would, myself, discover organizing as a tool. I had stumbled upon a book in the library, which I also independently discovered—my family did not know of the existence of such a wonderful place. I think it was after the “N” section. (I had been reading methodically from “A,” as I knew no other way to begin to enjoy a library.) It was a book of mean nursery rhymes. Some were quite funny. I chose two that expressed my anger at being bullied and humiliated daily at school. I had thought that the only way the non-white kids could avoid being bullied—especially during recess, when we were in the patio of the school and had no protection from

Although critiques such as Rosler's are still pertinent to documentary photography produced today, Alves's project goes beyond the politics of class to reach a politics of race and gender. The question that Alves's project asks is a question of how one exists and perseveres when one dwells in a non-normative body living in a vulnerable social condition. That is why the stakes of producing *Recipes* were high. One way of criticizing documentary photography, such as Rosler's famous essay does, looks into how this genre appeases liberal politics' need for the mitigation or amelioration of social issues. Another possible critique of the genre is to seek a critical reclaim of documentary photography, or, as I argue, to disentangle it from its roots in colonial history. The following examination seeks to understand if *Recipes* really achieve this disentangling. Before examining how *Recipes* project represents, or articulates, *mestiçagem* and whiteness both visually and discursively, in this section I seek to disentangle this specific documentary from the colonial roots of the genre. Without an understanding of how the methods of Alves's project disrupt colonial history, any additional analysis on the visuality of race would be incomplete.

To disentangle a documentary photography from the role it plays in the colonial endeavor one must break with, challenge, oppose, or at least create interruptions and put pressure onto some of its historical features. I believe that

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adults—was to unite. I organized all the kids who were not Irish or Italian. On the day that we stood our ground, we formed a circle around one of my main tormentors and sang the two nursery rhymes, which we had all practiced before. We also agreed that if one of us was being bullied whoever was nearby would come to help. We were soon no longer tormented.” Maria Thereza Alves and Richard William Hill, “The Freedom to Develop What Is Necessary: Maria Thereza Alves Interviewed by Richard William Hill. Documenting a Cross-Cultural Politics and Aesthetics.,” *BOMB*, March 16, 2020, <https://bombmagazine.org/articles/the-freedom-to-develop-what-is-necessary-maria-thereza-alves-interviewed/>.

*Recipes* creates these interruptions while still fitting into a genre embedded in coloniality. The following analysis explains two features of *Recipes for Survival* that serve as points of friction in documentary photography's colonial history.

The first feature of *Recipes* opposing coloniality is the book's graphic design and organization, or how the artist structured both the photographs and the manuscript to protect people's names and discourage readers from identifying places. This relates to how Alves's work establishes resistance between images and text, allowing gaps of meaning to circumvent the colonial history of documentary photography. The second feature is Alves's positionality and method as an artist and photographer coming to these villages in the 1980s. I discuss how a binary understanding of outsider/insider is not entirely adequate to understand her role as an author of this documentary.

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Julio was born in 1923; back then, his family had 30 acres of land. Today, he has half an acre, one bed, one bench, one new pair of underwear, one new pair of pants, one new shirt, work clothes, two cooking pots, a kettle, one spoon, one knife, one plate, and one cup.

Ana said that only recently has Julio begun to act like a human. “He resembles more the Moreira side of the family. They are Bugres. His older brother is lighter. He is nicer. They are no good. They lost all their land.” I reminded Ana that his family was similar to her own, which had also lost all their land.

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Julio said, “When God helps me, I’ll build a good house and buy corn, beans, and chicken to sell. I just need 100,000 cruzeiros. I’d also plant potatoes and manioc. If God doesn’t help me, I plan to sell my land, pigs, and corn. Then I’ll move to somebody else’s land and work for them. Or I will go to São Paulo and look for a job. Or you could find me a job in the USA. I’d sell everything, pay off the loan, and go with you. I wouldn’t have any worries.”

Maria said, “Why would the Americans want an old toothless Bugre?”

In Julio’s first-grade book, the servants and workers are never white.<sup>178</sup>

The first photograph of the book *Recipes for Survival* is a vertical black and white portrait of a man holding a framed illustration of the Christianized saint, Saint George, killing the dragon (Figure 3). He has it very close to his head, partially covering his face’s right side, as he looks out at the photographer from behind the picture mounting. The illustration is larger than his head, and he holds it high so the

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<sup>178</sup> Maria Thereza Alves and Michael T. Taussig, *Recipes for Survival*, First edition (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2018), 160-163.



top of the frame aligns with the top of his head. This proximity between the picture and its subject suggests the two characters in the photograph are somehow linked.

I cannot help but remember the way my grandmother liked to frame her religious images—without glass. She would pick any paper reproduction of a religious illustration of Jesus Christ or a beloved saint and put it under a cheap frame as if the saint were a dear family member to embrace and adorn. I keep one of those framed images I inherited from her after she passed away because she loved that image very much. It gave her strength. I wonder if that could also be a link between the man Alves portrayed and his picture. Why did he choose to be represented with this picture?

From my interview with Alves, I learned this man is a close relative of hers and someone she also loves. His hair is combed back, leaving his forehead unobstructed, and his eyes look right into the camera. His dark skin contrasts the white frame of the picture and Saint George's white horse. His hands show traces of hard farm work, which I learned to identify from looking at my grandmother's elderly hands. Both she and this man had rough nails that look like they go deep into their fingers' skin.

Alves said one of her uncles had to walk alongside her in her father's village so she could go to certain places because men could kidnap an unaccompanied single woman. She said despite being related, there was always a barrier between her and her father's family because she was college-educated and lived in the United States. She said only after she had dinner at her uncle's—who only had one spoon, one plate,

and one cup—others saw her less as an outsider. Her relatives were ashamed of their poverty. When they realized Alves had eaten her uncle’s cooking and liked it, other relatives in the village felt more comfortable approaching her about the photographs. They started to use her skills as a photographer to suggest stories or people whom Alves should interview or portray.<sup>179</sup>

I extracted this section’s opening excerpt from one of the stories of *Recipes* because it serves as an entry point for the image analysis that follows. This passage is also an excellent example of the flow of Alves’s writing and the “voice” she has throughout the book. *Recipes* was printed almost 35 years after Alves visited these villages and, as I mentioned above, the artist organized this iteration of the project around preserving people’s identities.

The pictures have no titles or captions. The absence of captions, labels, and other descriptive texts leaves the reader-viewer speculating which “characters” from the manuscripts are represented in which image. It is therefore difficult to know for certain at which village Alves took the images. In terms of the book’s graphic design, Alves chose to display each photograph on an entire page, with some followed by fully blank pages. Because Alves ordered specific photographs by similar subject matter (e.g., outdoor labor, harvesting), it is possible to notice Alves took two or three

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<sup>179</sup> About the participation of the community in her project, Alves has said, “So I went there and started to work with them. And for them, it was a bit strange because I was like them and I was not like them, because the daughter of there, but I’m not from there. So there were always, and I was educated, and there were so few people that had a university education at the time. And they weren’t used to how to deal with somebody that was from there and had this privilege of a college education. So, I said, ‘There are these things I can do. We just figure out what works.’ And then it took the community like a week or [...] days to figure out how to use [my skills as a photographer] well.” Maria Thereza Alves, Interview in English to the author, Zoom, June 2020.

images on the same occasion. It is also possible to recognize that some photos seem more significant to the artist than others based on the amount of white space around the image.

The three different manuscript sections do not explain or describe the photographs (Figure 4). Alves based these writings on conversations with relatives and villagers and the episodes she observed during her visits. Alves titled the short essays after the villagers' fictional names. Her writing narrates episodes in their lives, focusing on an individual, a couple, a family, relatives, or people whose stories intersect. Again, one can guess the photographs and essays follow a somewhat linear order, but that is not necessarily the case. The pictures Alves took at her father's village are grouped at the beginning of the book, followed by images made in two of the towns where her mother lived.

The essays that speak of these different villages follow that same order, but Alves does not indicate this anywhere in the book; one must go back and forth between images and texts to find that out. There are no main characters in these essays, but some names become more familiar as their stories appear more often than others. Having interviewed Alves about the book, I learned to identify when she refers to her relatives, but this identification is not desired by the artist and is also not necessary for comprehending the narrative. In this chapter, I follow the artist's decision of honoring her and her family's privacy by not disclosing real names and keeping Alves's specific kinship relationships confidential. My focus is not

biographical but on understanding *Recipes of Survival* as a quotation and example of much broader discourses.

There is always a gap of meaning when reading and viewing *Recipes for Survival*, an incompleteness that impedes reader-viewers from having a full picture. I propose these obstacles were created and part of Alves's current framework to downgrade the power hierarchies of documentary photography's history. Before discussing these elements further, a short discussion on the history of this genre is necessary to understand where one can situate Alves's project.

### **1.3.1. Breaking with the Insider/Outsider Binary: Documentary Photography as Subjective Interpretation**

Discourse, for Stuart Hall, does not produce knowledge; instead, it is based on "a recognition of what is already known," which helps construct positions for subjects so that discourses "become true" or always seem to "make sense."<sup>180</sup> As Hall explained, this "reality effect" at the core of ideology and discursive formations also structures visual discourse such as media, from film to television. Most notably, Hall argued the importance of examining visual discourse as a "naturalized" type of discourse, for "systems of visual recognition ... appear to involve no intervention of coding."<sup>181</sup> In other words, visual discourse seems to be unmediated and solely grounded "in the evidence of one's eyes." This apparent lack of mediation is natural to how ideology operates, but it acquires exacerbated effects when it comes to the

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<sup>180</sup> Stuart Hall, "The Rediscovery of 'Ideology': Return of The Repressed In Media Studies," *Culture, Society and the Media* (Routledge, 1982), 71.

<sup>181</sup> Stuart Hall, "The Rediscovery of 'Ideology': Return of The Repressed In Media Studies," *Culture, Society and the Media* (Routledge, 1982), 71-72.

visual field. This notion of a “window-to-the world” that is particular to how media operates helps disguise the complex processes of coding that go into the making of visual discourse.<sup>182</sup>

Writing about documentary photography, author Pater Hamilton says one has a combination of this “reality effect” and a “subjective interpretation.”<sup>183</sup>

Documentary, associated with the invention of the press and photojournalism of 1930s illustrated magazines, became a generalized form relying not only on photography as record—or “objectively grounded”—but also as a mode of interpreting reality through the eyes of a witness: the photographer. This notion of “bearing witness,” “giving testimony,” and providing a “voice” to potentially mute subjects permeates the culture of the documentary, which has a long complicated history of representing those deemed invisible.<sup>184</sup> As theorists, such as Stuart Hall, have shown in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, the concern with this form of visual narrative is that it supports the nefarious uses of photography for the colonial project and institutes a power dynamic between those represented and those doing the

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<sup>182</sup> Stuart Hall wrote, “Visual discourse is peculiarly vulnerable in this way because the systems of visual recognition on which they depend are so widely available in any culture that they appear to involve no intervention of coding, selection or arrangement. They appear to reproduce the actual trace of reality in the images they transmit. This, of course, is an illusion—the ‘naturalistic illusion’—since the combination of verbal and visual discourse which produces this effect of ‘reality’ requires the most skillful and elaborate procedures of coding: mounting, linking and stitching elements together, working them into a system of narration or exposition which ‘makes sense’.” Stuart Hall, “The Rediscovery of ‘Ideology’; Return of The Repressed In Media Studies,” *Culture, Society and the Media* (Routledge, 1982), 71-72.

<sup>183</sup> Peter Hamilton, “Representing the Social: France and Frenchness in Post-War Humanist Photography,” in *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, ed. Stuart Hall (London; Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage in association with the Open University, 1997), 83.

<sup>184</sup> Peter Hamilton, “Representing the Social: France and Frenchness in Post-War Humanist Photography,” in *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, ed. Stuart Hall (London; Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage in association with the Open University, 1997), 84.

representing.<sup>185</sup> Because images often need a textual component to explain them,<sup>186</sup> it is easier for documentary photography to enable stereotypes and modes of “othering” the represented populations. In Brazil and elsewhere, these power-related racial dynamics in documentary photography have continued to stereotype indigenous, Black, and Brown populations.

*Recipes* is inescapably embedded in the history of this genre. Though Alves explained this was an independent project at Cooper Union, she took lessons with Larry Fink and Christine Osinski, who have been recognized for their work in documentary photography. Equally significant is that Alves created the project as a response to the 1936 book by James Agee and Walker Evans, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, which was among the books she read while studying at Cooper Union.

Written by Agee and illustrated with Evans’ photographs, this famous documentary depicted the life of three white sharecropper families in Hale County, Alabama during the Great Depression. In an interview with the author, Alves said she was not satisfied with the type of documentary photography she learned about at college:

I would say [to professors], I don’t know what it is, but this isn’t working for me. I didn’t know the words to say it, but it wasn’t. Somebody suggested I read, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*. And so, I read it, and I said, this is an important document, but it’s written by

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<sup>185</sup> In some ways, documentary photography has been a doomed category: its origins and history are disturbed by the backfiring of moralist desire of “saving” those deemed invisible in society. Photographing poverty with the goal of melioration did (and does) not always provide dignity no matter one’s good intentions. Writing in the 1980s, Martha Rosler marked with a difference her conceptual approach and from the documentary photography earlier periods, asking, “What remains of documentary photography?”... In other words, can documentary photography be saved from ‘ideological ... State liberalism’? Martha Rosler, “In, around, and Afterthoughts (on Documentary Photography),” in *The Contest of Meaning: Critical Histories of Photography*, 4. print (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1993), 88.

<sup>186</sup> See note 22 about Roland Barthes’ notion of *anchorage* and *relay text*.

outside people. And when you read the book, you can see the exoticization of people's lives, and there's empathy, but no reality of what it means to be that poor. And I said, this is a nice attempt, but it's from outside people, and we need to do this from inside. [S]o that gave me the basis for thinking. And I had started to already question: "how do you do a project with the community, with photography?"<sup>187</sup>

In the early 1980s, the answers to that question were not readily available. The theories and debates that problematized documentary photography were still new or not yet wholly incorporated into an art college's curricula.<sup>188</sup> As I mentioned earlier regarding Martha Rosler's critique, several artists, activists, and art professionals from different backgrounds and working in photography and other media were looking for those same answers as the U.S. civil rights movements, followed by postmodernity, brought a sense of social urgency to not only the art field but also the world of cultural studies at large.<sup>189</sup> Without other theories on which to cling, Alves followed Latin American figures such as Brazilians Paulo Freire, whose ideas of education were directed at the liberation of the oppressed.<sup>190</sup>

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<sup>187</sup> Maria Thereza Alves, Interview in English to the author, Zoom, June 2020.

<sup>188</sup> According to Maria Thereza Alves, Interview in English to the author, Zoom, June 2020.

<sup>189</sup> About this moment, Stuart Hall famously wrote, "Now that in postmodern age, you all feel so dispersed, I become centered. What I've thought of as dispersed and fragmented comes, paradoxically, to be *the* representative of modern experience. . . . It also makes me understand something about identity which has been puzzling me in the last three years. Black people in London are marginalized, fragmented, unfranchised, disadvantaged and dispersed. And yet, they look as if they own territory. Somehow, they too, in spite of everything are centered, in place: without much material support, but occupy a new kind of space at the center." Stuart Hall, "Minimal Selves," in *Identity: The Real Me*, ICA Documents 6 (London: Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1987), 44.

<sup>190</sup> Fleeing from the persecution of the Brazilian military dictatorship in 1964, Paulo Freire spent twenty years in self-exile. During early exile years, he worked with his wife, Elza, on his theory of critical pedagogy, or liberation practice. In 1969, Freire published his seminal *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, which sold one million copies and was translated into twenty languages all over the world. Freire also taught in the U.S., at Harvard, from 1969 to 1970. The widespread influence of his work in the U.S. certainly made it easier for younger Brazilian-American educators and activists, like Alves, to take notice his theories' tenets. For Freire, students and instructors must learn together towards a common goal, in a less hierarchical relationship. This approach to community work may have influenced how Alves understood her work as a collaboration with the villagers rather than considering it a distanced photographic documentary. It is important to note, however, a more recent revision of Freire's work concerning his theory's complete dismissal of questions of race, gender, and ethnicity within the realm of education. In their *Decolonization is Not a Metaphor*, Eve Tuck and K.W. Yang develop a poignant critique of

Today, almost 40 years after Alves took those pictures, the artist remembers she did not have a plan for the documentary when she arrived in Brazil,<sup>191</sup> she only intended to make herself useful to the community. Beforehand, she did not know the issues affecting the communities, especially in the more remote area of Paraná, her father's former village.<sup>192</sup> Coming from the United States, Alves did not anticipate the threats hovering above the people. For example, many of the people Alves portrayed were in danger of being enslaved by greedy farm owners and companies exploiting the region.<sup>193</sup> This information was not available to her because the location of her father's village is so remote that there is simply no easy way to access communication such as the telephone, newspapers, or even the mail. The military dictatorship also increased the suppression and augmented the vulnerability of rural workers. About this, Alves said:

This time in Brazil, this was a military dictatorship. That kind of information was really, really difficult. What I knew because I did political work was, I knew that there were people that were not getting any .... They were not part of the unions. They couldn't be part of the unions because the unions were being destroyed. They earned very little. I knew about, especially the rubber workers, about the system where they took your money at the company store. About contemporary slavery, this I did not know about that. It would be later,

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Freire's main theory that is pertinent to indigenous peoples and their histories. They say, "Freire positions liberation as redemption, a freeing of both oppressor and oppressed through their humanity. Humans become 'subjects' who then proceed to work on the 'objects' of the world (animals, earth, water), and indeed read the word (critical consciousness) in order to write the world (exploit nature). For Freire, there are no Natives, no Settlers, and indeed no history, and the future is simply a rupture from the timeless present. Settler colonialism is absent from his discussion, implying either that it is an unimportant analytic or that it is an already completed project of the past (a past oppression perhaps)." Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, "Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1, no. 1 (2012), 20. For a biography on Paulo Freire, see the preface to *Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, 30th anniversary ed (New York: Continuum, 2000)* and Freire Institute, "Paulo Freire - A Brief Biography," Institutional Website, n.d., <https://www.freire.org/paulo-freire-biography>.

<sup>191</sup> Maria Thereza Alves, Interview in English to the author, Zoom, December 2020.

<sup>192</sup> Maria Thereza Alves, Interview in English to the author, Zoom, December 2020.

<sup>193</sup> See footnote 21 about modern-day slavery in Brazil.



when my mother would tell her stories, about when she began working from the age of nine as unpaid labor in homes for only room and board.<sup>194</sup>

In some cases, visibility meant a chance for survival. Photography could prove these people existed if their identification documents and worker's permits were taken by exploiting companies or other farmers. The photographer's presence in taking a picture was even more important than the resulting photographs. In some instances, Alves focused on picturing specific people from the community due to these threats. But slavery was more than a threat in the villages Alves visited; it reads as a haunting presence throughout the book, although readers cannot "see" it. For example, Alves included a short note titled "Slavery," in the book's second section, a "Village on the Coast of Southern Brazil." She wrote,

The grandmother of Cenilda was a slave. (Slaves in Brazil were emancipated only in 1888). Whenever her owner wanted her to get pregnant, he would tie her up to a tree so a male slave could rape her.<sup>195</sup>

That Alves acknowledges this horrific history shows the extent to which the question of racial difference was formative to *Recipes*, as a project that also deals with visuality. When talking about the context in which she took the pictures, Alves said the villagers often "used" her skills; they directed her to take photographs of certain events and people in the community based on those who were more vulnerable or in

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<sup>194</sup> Maria Thereza Alves, Interview in English to the author, Zoom, June 2020.

<sup>195</sup> In a 2013's Postscript, Alves says that areas of this specific village are also now recognized as belonging to Quilombo, a former slave community, part of UNESCO's Slave Route Project. Maria Thereza Alves and Michael T. Taussig, *Recipes for Survival*, First edition (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2018), 214.

danger. Many of those people had never had access to a photography camera. About this, during an interview, Alves said:

The[re was the] time [when] my uncle ... told me to come with them to the eucalyptus tree plantation. And he said, 'Take many photographs, because if they make us into slave[s], you have proof that we existed.' Because that's the thing, how do you prove you exist? If you're not rich, somebody can just disappear you and then it's just your word against what?' So, this was a very good use of me, a brilliant use. And this from people who had very little education, very little, where they only know the concept of a journalist. He said, "Tell them you're a journalist." Me. They only know this concept vaguely. They don't read newspapers. They don't buy newspapers. If they had newspapers, it's because somebody gave it to them ... I loved it very much because it showed the community how they resolve things in dynamic ways. Accepting what's out there and if it works for the community.<sup>196</sup>

That images guaranteed people's actual existence may partly explain why the number of portraits exceeds any other kind of photography in the published book. There are images of farmworkers at work, domestic interiors, and people's chores showing how they lived. Alves said it was vital for her to show how people accessed and prepared food and what their houses looked like, including the architecture styles and modes of construction.<sup>197</sup> After all, both cooking and sheltering are modes of knowing and surviving. Today, when Alves speaks about the project, she is often concerned with explaining how some people—especially those who were children back then—are now doing.<sup>198</sup>

These details demonstrate Alves was not merely coming to these villages with a distanced interrogative gaze. She asked people to guide her to the subjects, events,

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<sup>196</sup> Maria Thereza Alves, Interview in English to the author, Zoom, December 2020.

<sup>197</sup> Maria Thereza Alves, Interview in English to the author, Zoom, June 2020.

<sup>198</sup> Maria Thereza Alves, Interview in English to the author, Zoom, June and December 2020.

and scenes to be portrayed. Regarding how she discussed the project with the villagers, she has written the following:

When I returned home for this project and asked, ‘What do we want the world to know about us?’, the people whose stories are in this book generously responded. They told me their stories, suggested people to talk to and photographs to take, and gave me constant physical and mental support. My gratitude is deeply felt, and my respect is immense.<sup>199</sup>

Is Alves’s in-between (insider-outsider) status within this community enough to prevent the documentary from falling into the well-known power dynamics of visual representation? Perhaps not. The images, made by Alves, pictured those who do not have easy access to the same technology nor have participated in the same society (i.e., the United States). As discussed, power dynamics such as these are hard to completely break with, especially in film or photography documentary, in which an outsider comes in to portray a community.

Yet, I argue that Alves’s project pursues a dismantling of these hierarchies because, first, she was not performing the role of a white normative male coming into a community as a complete outsider, and second, because years after completing the project, Alves developed a framework in which the work could exist, one that directly deals with the aforementioned power dynamics inherited between the picture-maker and the pictured.

First, Alves’s age and gender defy the binary distinction of “insider/outsider” that is constructed behind visual representation. Alves was 23 years old at the time

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<sup>199</sup> Maria Thereza Alves and Michael T. Taussig, *Recipes for Survival*, First edition (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2018), 247.

she took the photographs. As a single, young, and college-educated woman, she radically clashed with the community's norm for her age and gender. Most women in the village did not have access to higher education and instead occupied traditional female roles, living under a patriarchal order and following internal rules established by male villagers.<sup>200</sup>

Though being an independent young woman made Alves an outsider in villagers' eyes, it also made her vulnerable to threatening behaviors from men in the communities, putting her body in danger. Again, Alves was not a photographer coming into these villages with the desire to depict the other. The book is not merely a document of an outsider coming into a community to provide people with visibility. Alves was also a young adult pursuing her kin, her relatives, and her family history, which, in this case, intersects with the struggle of indigenous peoples in Brazil.

Though Alves's models were 1930s American documentary photography, with *Recipes*'s humanistic focus, one cannot compare her images to state-sponsored images that sought to record vulnerable populations' misery. Neither is *Recipes* an ethnographer's collection of images used to support an academic argument. Alves's rejection of a more traditional documentary style or facticity not only is a strategy to protect the privacy of family and villagers, but also interrupts the prospect of an ethnographer's gaze or western desire to catalog, scrutinize, and represent indigenous

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<sup>200</sup> In an interview to me, Maria Thereza Alves mentions how her age and gender changed the way villagers interacted with her. And how it took a while for people to accept her. She said to me, "People thought it would be too dangerous if I walked by myself because I was an unmarried young woman. And the custom in this village is if a man wants you, he kidnaps you for one day and one night, and then you are his, if your family doesn't kill him first." Maria Thereza Alves, Interview in English to the author, Zoom, June 2020.

peoples.<sup>201</sup> Alves avoids both the autobiographical account and the objectifying eye that is traditional in fields such as anthropology.<sup>202</sup>

As I pointed out at the beginning of this section, Alves returned to her project almost 40 years later and created a framework to deactivate the power hierarchies outside the picture plane. If ethnographic or anthropological documents are primarily meant to provide a whole picture of a people's way of life so as to study and find its objective truth, Alves avoided such "truth" by eschewing documentary's expected structure. Instead, she organized conversations in a storytelling manner. Still, relying on storytelling is not enough as a strategy for disentangling colonial history.

Consider James Agee's and Walker Evans' framework for *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*,<sup>203</sup> to which *Recipes* is a response. At a first look, *Recipes*' organization is very similar to *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*: black and white photographs precede the manuscript and there are no captions or text around the images.<sup>204</sup> Like Alves, Evans and Agee considered images and text as complementary, and

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<sup>201</sup> I am referring here to the constructed western gaze over non-western peoples. A gaze that has entered the most varied fields of knowledge but also shaped by colonialism and disciplines such as anthropology and ethnography. Such "anthropological gaze," or "ethnographic gaze" has been always challenged by the non-West. But it is during the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century that academic production begins to more broadly acknowledge the need to challenge the power hierarchies built by anthropology regarding the othering and naturalizing of the non-west. Importantly, I am emphasizing the term gaze due to the visual economies anthropology and ethnography have created over non-white and non-western bodies. These visual economies are often ruled by epistemologies established by white western ethnographers whose gaze fetishizes and objectifies non-white and non-western bodies. Clearly, the claim for a reverse-gaze in anthropology, ethnography, and documentary photography has been based on the work of postcolonial and decolonial thinkers, such as Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, Homi Bhabha and Stuart Hall.

<sup>202</sup> Taussig stated in the foreword to *Recipes for Survival* that Alves is both an insider and an outsider "with an almost wicked eye for human frailty, hypocrisy, and the terrible, grinding injustice running through every damn thing big or small." Michael T. Taussig, "Foreword," in *Recipes for Survival*, First edition (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2018), iii.

<sup>203</sup> *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, for short.

<sup>204</sup> I am referring to a 1988-2001 edition published by Houghton Mifflin. James Agee and Walker Evans, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men: Three Tenant Families* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1988).

photographs were not intended as illustrations of Agee's text.<sup>205</sup> Still, the tone of Agee's writing and the distancing of Evans's lens from his subjects prevented their documentary from serving the community beyond an invitation for compassion or amelioration.<sup>206</sup>

Agee's exquisite writing nevertheless operates through the romanticization of characters. Agee wrote:

His clothes were deliberately cheap, not only because he was poor but because he wanted to be able to forget them. He would work a suit into fitting him perfectly by the simple method of not taking it off much. In due time the cloth would mold itself to his frame. Cleaning and pressing would have undone this beautiful process. I exaggerate, but it did seem sometimes that wind, rain, work, and mockery were his tailors.<sup>207</sup>

As the excerpt above shows, though *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* is not a fictional work, it reads like a novel.<sup>208</sup> Alves's texts are straightforward and do not romanticize the voices of those she portrayed. Although Agee's imaginative descriptions provide vivacity to the portrayed person or communities, they still fall into the trap of

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<sup>205</sup> Agee and Evans said, "The photographs are not illustrative. They, and the text, are coequal, mutually independent, and fully collaborative. By their fewness, and by the impotence of the reader's eye, this will be misunderstood by most of that minority which does not wholly ignore it. In the interests, however, of the history and future of photography, that risk seems irrelevant, and this flat statement necessary." James Agee and Walker Evans. *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men: Three Tenant Families*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. Kindle Edition.

<sup>206</sup> Agee wrote, "However that may be, this is a book about 'sharecroppers,' and is written for all those who have a soft place in their hearts for the laughter and tears inherent in poverty viewed at a distance, and especially for those who can afford the retail price; in the hope that the reader will be edified, and may feel kindly disposed toward any well-thought-out liberal efforts to rectify the unpleasant situation down South, and will somewhat better and more guiltily appreciate the next good meal he eats." James Agee and Walker Evans, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men: Three Tenant Families* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1988), 14.

<sup>207</sup> James Agee and Walker Evans, Foreword, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men: Three Tenant Families* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1988), V.

<sup>208</sup> Agee rejects defining *Let Us Now Praise* as art, or as a novel. To explain the difference between his work and a novel, he says, "In a novel, a house or person has his meaning, his existence, entirely through the writer. Here, a house or a person has only the most limited of his meaning through me: his true meaning is much huger." James Agee and Walker Evans, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men: Three Tenant Families* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1988), 9.

condescension. Alves's writing provides characterization but seldom reveals judgement or interpretation. There is no excess literary information like *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*'s stream of consciousness. Alves narrates what people said or did through the use of the first-person "I," but her voice is not constantly interfering the narration to disclose her thoughts or opinions.<sup>209</sup>

Evans's images are powerful and effective in transmitting their political message, which is to elicit viewers' compassion for the people portrayed. The images are unsettling in their display of poverty around every aspect of the sharecroppers' families. Some of the images have become iconic, such as the famous Allie Mae Burroughs Moore portrait, in which Burroughs Moore looks straight at the camera posing against a tarnished wooden backdrop. But when I look at those people's gaze into Evans's camera, I see in them a cold detachment, perhaps even discomfort. Most people's eyes in Evans's photos are dull and empty.

Of course, the authors carefully selected those specific images, which means there may be unpublished images that could refute my claim. But the detachment from Evans's gaze is present in every single image published in the book, which

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<sup>209</sup> An example of the use of the first person in *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* is this passage, "They came into the Coffee Shoppe while we were finishing breakfast, and Harmon introduced the other, whose name I forget, but which had a French sound. He was middle-sized and dark, beginning to grizzle, with the knotty, walnut kind of body and a deeply cut, not unkindly monkey's face. He wore dark trousers, a starched freshly laundered white collarless shirt, and a soft yellow straw hat with a band of flowered cloth. His shoes were old, freshly blacked, not polished; his suspenders were nearly new, blue, with gold lines at the edge. He was courteous, casual, and even friendly, without much showing the element of strain: Harmon let him do the talking and watched us from behind the reflecting lenses of his glasses. People in the street slowed as they passed and lingered their eyes upon us. Walker said it would be all right to make pictures, wouldn't it, and he said, Sure, of course, take all the snaps you're a mind to; that is, if you can keep the niggers from running off when they see a camera. When they saw the amount of equipment stowed in the back of our car, they showed that they felt they had been taken advantage of but said nothing of it." James Agee and Walker Evans, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men: Three Tenant Families* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1988), Book Two, 6.

makes me ask if part of the reason those images are unsettling relates not only to those people's suffering but also to the photographer's status as an outsider<sup>210</sup> exercising his authority over their representation, and therefore also resuscitating documentary photography's bond with the colonial gaze upon difference?<sup>211</sup>

Although Agee and Evans sought to dodge ethnography by relying on lyricism,<sup>212</sup> the book still describes "social types." The book lists persons and places, and Agee identifies people in the narrative by their age, gender, and physical traits. These statements include racist descriptions such as the one below, in which Agee recounts his encounter with an unnamed Black Haitian foreman:

They came into the Coffee Shoppe while we were finishing breakfast, and Harmon introduced the other, whose name I forget, but which had a French sound. He was middle-sized and dark, beginning to grizzle, with the knotty, walnut kind of body and a deeply cut, not unkindly monkey's face.<sup>213</sup>

Alves's narrative is not free from recounting instances of racism. As I will discuss in the second half of this chapter, instead of creating classifications about the people she encounters, Alves continually contests these moments. In this passage, for example, she pushes back against men bullying Miguel, a man of indigenous descent:

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<sup>210</sup> See quote above.

<sup>211</sup> One must also note that, as Rosler discussed in her article, the iconic images Evans published alongside Agee's text were carefully selected and edited. She compared Allie Mae Fields Burroughs' iconic portrait with a subsequent portrait taken at the same moment, in which Fields Burroughs slightly smiles at the camera. Although Fields Burroughs' portrait with a smile was published in other circumstances, Rosler implied the authors choose the Fields Burroughs' most neutral expression to print with the book, out of the four images Evans took. Perhaps the authors thought that Fields Burroughs' more neutral expression would evoke the sense of compassion and the idea of resilience or desolation associated with poverty expected by the upper classes. See Martha Rosler, "In, around, and Afterthoughts (on Documentary Photography)," in *The Contest of Meaning: Critical Histories of Photography*, print (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1993),

<sup>212</sup> See footnote 83.

<sup>213</sup> James Agee and Walker Evans, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men: Three Tenant Families* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1988), Book Two, 6.



A few days earlier when I was at Dorival's bar. I had met Miguel and he was very drunk. The men there asked me to take a photo of the Bugre and mail it to them so they could later taunt Miguel about how ugly he is. I did, but only because he is handsome.<sup>214</sup>

Although Alves's manuscripts operate as extended labels of the photographs, they do not describe or narrate the images. Instead, the manuscripts expand the photographs' pictorial space. The texts do not use peoples' lives as a case study or illustration of poverty. There is neither a lyric nor a didactic language, but instead a disjuncture between visual and written meanings that exacerbates the impossibility of thoroughly understanding the struggle of poverty. Alves made this book for the privileged to read. For this reason, Alves emphasized the gap between the reader and the people portrayed in the photographs by not completely fulfilling the elite's usual desires: romanticizing and domesticating poverty or picturing it as either merely beautiful or a distanced condition, and therefore inoffensive.

Still, Alves cannot simply prevent readers and viewers from looking at her photographs from a colonizing gaze; Alves is not oblivious to the limitations of documentary photography as a decolonial project. Since *Recipes*, she has changed the way she deals with portraiture in her practice, often avoiding the use of images of indigenous peoples. Specifically regarding the role of images in *Recipes*, Alves mentioned during an interview to me the importance of indigenous artists producing publications for outsiders without images while circulating editions with images exclusively among indigenous communities.

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<sup>214</sup> Maria Thereza Alves and Michael T. Taussig, *Recipes for Survival*, First edition (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2018), 157.

About documentary photography published by indigenous authors, Alves gave the example of Sámi artist Nils-Aslak Valkeapää<sup>215</sup> and his book, *Beaivi, áhčázan*, or *The Sun, My Father*.<sup>216</sup> She said, “He was a teacher, he was an artist, he was a poet. He did his own research stuff without knowing anybody doing this kind of stuff. He went into the archives in Norway and found photographs of his family and then took these photographs to the family, to his great-aunts.”<sup>217</sup> According to Alves, sharing images with the family began a healing process for the elderly, who talked about the abuse they suffered from photographers who asked some of them to take off their clothes to be photographed. Alves continued,

It was like taking back, in the words of the people that had to be photographed by these government types. ... But this [edition] is for

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<sup>215</sup> The Sámi are indigenous peoples living on the Arctic near European Nordic countries, an area that the Sámi call Sápmi, comprised of the Russian Kola Peninsula. Nils-Aslak Valkeapää (1943-2001) was one of the most well-known poets of the Sámi people. Valkeapää was also a composer, visual artist, writer, and activist for the 1970’s Sámi indigenous movement. Scholar Tina K. Ramnarine summarizes Valkeapää’s importance for their people by saying, “He was born in Enontekiö, in northern Finland, and lived in both Finland and Norway, crossing the nation-state borders that divide Sápmi. He was active in the World Council of Indigenous Peoples, composed music for the film *Ofelas* (Pathfinder, directed by Nils Gaup, 1987), and received several awards for his work. He is now an iconic figure in the Sámi artistic and political world. As Gaski observed in a commemoration in 2001: “Nils-Aslak’s accomplishments for his people were so great that he will come to be regarded by all posterity as a modern-day mythical being among the Sámi” (Gaski 2001). Valkeapää played an extraordinary role in fostering the joik revival movement from the late 1960s onwards. He engaged in musical experiments and collaborations that have resulted in shifting joik transmission and performance patterns.” According to Ramnarine, “Joiks are performed for animals and land as well as for people. Joik performance thus points to a complex set of relationships between music, environment, and the sacred, and contemporary joik practices provide a rich forum for exploring the intersections between acoustic epistemologies and indigenous politics.” Tina K. Ramnarine, “Acoustemology, Indigeneity, and Joik in Valkeapää’s Symphonic Activism: Views from Europe’s Arctic Fringes for Environmental Ethnomusicology,” *Ethnomusicology* 53, no. 2 (2009): 187–217.

<sup>216</sup> Valkeapää published *The Sun, My Father*, the book Alves mentioned in the interview, in 1998. As Alves discusses, there are two different versions of the book, one in English for the general public and one in Sámi published for the Sámi. The book combines poem, Joik music, and photographs. About *The Sun, My Father*, author Kathleen Osgood Dana writes, “*Beaivi, áhčázan* is an ambitious, multilayered work, with triple cycles of poetry—personal, seasonal, and mythical.” Osgood Dana continues, “The Sámi original is beautifully produced, with archival photos of the Sámi people, gleaned from museums and archives of Europe and personal photos of the landscape of Sápmi, the Lapland homeland of the Sámi people. These images are numbered consecutively along with the poems. In the accompanying audiotapes the poems are read with great care and precision by the author, while the photos are read in accompaniment with yoiks by the author and the incantatory music of Esa Kotilainen, a multitalented musician who has collaborated with Valkeapää on many projects in the past.” Kathleen Osgood Dana, “Reviewed Works: *The Sun, My Father* by Nils-Aslak Valkeapää, Ralph Salisbury, Lars Nordström, Harald Gaski; *Beaivi, Áhčázan* by Nils-Aslak Valkeapää,” *World Literature Today* 72, no. 4 (August 1998): 877–78.

<sup>217</sup> Maria Thereza Alves, Interview in English to the author, Zoom, December 2020.

Sámi people. And this [other edition] is the one for non-Sámis. There are no photographs in it. There are only the poems. Because otherwise, you're redoing it. Putting those images that were against the community back into circulation.<sup>218</sup>

In the example Alves gave, the images the Sámi kept away from circulation were those made by outsiders through abuse. This makes me think of the palpable role of visual systems in inflicting trauma and their power in reparations and healing too.<sup>219</sup>

In 2016, Alves went back to the villages where she took the images and looked for some of the people portrayed as children and who were still living. But Alves's gestures of giving back to the community and her family remain private, incorporated into the book through a few footnotes updating the reader on how life changed in these villages.

Images have the power to tell stories, and photographs have the power to make these stories look "real." The very role of photography in the colonial project must be continuously scrutinized. A photographer behind a visual narrative is not a neutral storyteller like the history of documentary genres has suggested. Alves did not wish for that objectifying neutrality: her current work has been known for evading the imaging of indigenous peoples and working with the stereotypes of colonialism and whiteness.<sup>220</sup> The remainder of this chapter is a discussion of how Alves's *Recipes for*

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<sup>218</sup> Interview in English with the author via Zoom, December, 2020.

<sup>219</sup> Decolonization, decoloniality, and healing practices are intertwined concepts, especially for indigenous peoples. For example, speaking about decolonizing museums, Amy Lonetree defines decolonizing art institutions as those that "assist [indigenous] communities in their efforts to address the legacies of historical unresolved grief by speaking the hard truths of colonialism and thereby creating spaces for healing and understanding." Amy Lonetree, *Decolonizing Museums: Representing Native America in National and Tribal Museums*, First Peoples: New Directions in Indigenous Studies (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 5.

<sup>220</sup> For example, see Alves' work *Tchám Krai Kytôm Pandã Grét (Male Display Among European Populations)*, 2008 in 2-minute video in which "A Krenak indigenous anthropologist from Brazil visits Europe to investigate

*Survival* further articulates the question of racialization within decoloniality by looking at some of the discourses traversing her project.

#### 1.4. Making Whiteness Visible in *Recipes for Survival*

Ana does not like Maria, José Antonio's wife, because she is dark [skinned] (about as dark [skinned] as Ana's husband. Ana calls her "Aquela Negra" (that Black woman). In Ana's sitting room, a framed photo hangs. It is of a Black woman, her husband's mother, while her husband himself was a Bugre, of indigenous descent. Ana's first mention to me of Maria was 'the woman that José Antonio married. She's Black, but she washes clothes really clean.' Maria is indigenous, but Ana would not dare insult her that much by referring to it. Maria said that the wife of the farm specialist was dark [skinned] but very nice and had taught them about compost.<sup>221</sup>

In *Recipes*, Alves depicted groups of men working outdoors (Figure 5) clearing off the land from weeds or other vegetation. A group (Figure 6) was shot while laughing and playing with a cat. Some movements are blurred, suggesting dynamism and spontaneity. The men are holding and displaying the animal to the camera. After I interviewed her, Alves told me she took these specific images near (Figures 5 and 6) her mother's town on the coast during a *mutirão*. In this area, *mutirão* is a community-led effort in which, each weekend, a group of neighbors "go to a different local farm to help harvest because people cannot afford to hire workers."<sup>222</sup>

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some European males' habit of touching their testicles ritualistically in public." Maria Thereza Alves, "Maria Thereza Alves," Personal Website, n.d., <http://www.mariatherezaalves.org>.

<sup>221</sup> Maria Thereza Alves and Michael T. Taussig, *Recipes for Survival*, First edition (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2018), 143.

<sup>222</sup> Email exchanged with the author, May 2023.

In another image, a man sits deep in a sugarcane field (Figure 7). He is far away from the camera, as if overtaken by the plantation. Still, he is aware of being photographed and looks at the camera from afar. Perhaps he is eating or taking a break from work. Another man carries a heavy load of bananas (Figure 8) around his neck and on his shoulders. He walks on a dirt path made in the woods. He is too busy carrying the heavy load to look at the photographer. Alves told me she photographed that man and his family because she was told they did not have enough to eat; the entire family had to carry the banana loads for miles on foot to receive money to buy food. Alves said she helped the family that day and the loads were painful to carry.

*Recipes for Survival* is a photographic documentary that portrays visible poverty in Brazil in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is about those marginalized by society and who live in wretched locations. Therefore, it is a documentary depicting a fragment of the life of rural and poor coastal Brazilian classes. However, my interest in this project is to understand how whiteness plays a role in these people's marginalization and how whiteness is manifested in visual terms throughout the documentary. For a very long time in Brazilian history, social class was given predominance over race.<sup>223</sup> But, as I argue, while capturing those people's struggle with poverty, Alves also captured erasure by emphasizing the images that *do not exist* of those racialized people.

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<sup>223</sup> About the argument of systemic racism in Brazil and its relationship to social class, see discussion I develop in this dissertation's Introduction.

In the book quote that opened this chapter section, Ana was married to a Black man of indigenous descent. Her son, José Antonio, was married to an indigenous woman, Maria. Ana shows disdain for Maria because she is dark-skinned. In the quote, Ana's transcribed voice tone may suggest that she used the expression "Black woman" in a racist manner because she associates skin color with a synonym for cleanliness. The photograph that hangs on Ana's wall is of another dark-skinned woman, Ana's mother-in-law. From looking at the picture Alves made of Ana, one would not be aware of this interaction.

The accounts in *Recipes* are full of these moments in which men and women are embarrassed by their poverty but completely deny having a nonwhite racial background. While poverty, or social class, unites different members of these communities, when it comes to skin color or racial markers, a wall stands between those who have been racialized in Brazil and those who have not. Darker skin becomes a reason for disdain, and indigenous ethnicity is too insulting to even be mentioned. Black and indigenous peoples are said "not to exist" in certain places in Brazil, such as these villages. Moreover, Black and indigenous peoples have been prevented from being authors of their narratives.

As the discussion I developed in my Introduction, I follow the scholarship produced by thinkers from the United States and Latin America to argue that, on the one hand, there is an erasure of self-representation of racialized populations in the hegemonic field of representation in Brazilian documentary photography. On the other hand, there is a constant hypervisibility and stereotyping of bodies of color.

This polarization of visual experience is the direct result of whiteness as a norm for authority and authorship in the production of images and the construction of visual narratives that shape documentary photography. The specificity in the Brazilian context is that the commodification and celebration of *mestiçagem* maintains the visibility of bodies of color in myriad cultural manifestations (e.g., Carnival, samba, popular feasts); at the same time, they are invisible as authors or protagonists of their cultures.<sup>224</sup> Although most (white and non-white) Brazilians and elites partake of this much-praised cultural miscegenation, identification<sup>225</sup> based on skin color and race is often treated as something of the “other.”<sup>226</sup>

*Recipes* is an example of such a predicament. Even though many of the villagers portrayed are descendants of indigenous peoples and Black populations,

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<sup>224</sup> In Brazil, the word protagonism is often used in place of recognition. A more in-depth investigation should point to the ways protagonism have been used by social movements in Brazil. For now, perhaps suffice to say that protagonismo in Portuguese sounds stronger than “recognition,” in Portuguese “reconhecimento” because it implies that these social actors are protagonists of their own destinies and lives.

<sup>225</sup> Although I use the term identification in relation to one’s understanding of their own skin color and racial features, I am referring to notions of identification and disidentification defined by feminist and queer theorists, such as Judith Butler and José Esteban Muñoz. Butler looked at the “trouble” of constructing gender through identification with, for example, heteronormativity. Muñoz expanded the notion of identification to discuss the universe of queers of color, looking at race, sexuality, and gender. Muñoz coined the term disidentification that operates as a field of multifaceted strategies used by queers of color in the US that do not merely reject the mainstream heteronormative field, but use “majoritarian culture as raw material to make a new world.” Muñoz focuses on examining disidentificatory practices which he associates with survival strategies of queers of color in the US: queers of color flip and turn capitalism inside out, they deploy spectacle and commodification but *not quite*, not entirely, not completely complying: they disidentify with hegemonic systems of representation. For Muñoz, queers of color assimilate, mimic, cite, white hegemonic culture, at the same time they become aware that complete identification with those same modalities leads to compromising their subjectivities. José Esteban Muñoz, *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 25. See also Jennifer González’s use of the term identification in *Subject to Display* citing Ludmilla Jordanova, “History, ‘Otherness’ and Display,” in *Cultural Encounters: Representing ‘Otherness,’* ed. Elizabeth Hallam and Brian V. Street (London: Routledge, 2000), 249–250.

<sup>226</sup> Here, I refer to Lilia Schwarcz’s book “Racismo no Brasil (Racism in Brazil),” specifically a discussion the authors developed in the section “Raça como Outro (Race as the Other).” Schwarcz contended the internalization of racial democracy in Brazil has resulted in the idea that racism is always a product of someone else’s doing, creating a distance between popular discourse and nonwhite population’s lived reality. I discuss more about this argument in this dissertation’s Introduction. See Lilia Moritz Schwarcz, *Racismo no Brasil* (São Paulo: Publifolha, 2001).

these individuals evade such categorizations. I contend that *Recipes* is a photographic documentary about “race” —among other topics—because it points to the ways through which whiteness has pervaded and organized the discourse on racial and cultural miscegenation of the Brazilian population. Compared to more famous documentaries of indigenous and Black peoples in Brazil, *Recipes* does not feed on racial and ethnic stereotypes.<sup>227</sup> Yet, like most documentaries, *Recipes* aestheticizes those whom it portrays. One must look at the friction between images and words to better understand this strategic aestheticization as part of Alves’s decolonial project.<sup>228</sup>

#### 1.4.1. Whiteness and the Visuality of Stereotypes

In a 1519 map of Brazil by Lopo Homem-Reinéis, a Portuguese cartographer, entitled *Letter to Brazil* (Figure 9),<sup>229</sup> indigenous peoples are depicted as scattered among animals and forests. A group of naked men and women appears bending to the ground and harvesting wood under the gaze of two or three indigenous men who seem to be supervising. The body language of the “working” men and their bodies’

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<sup>227</sup> I am thinking here of the work of Sebastião Salgado, or even other photojournalists active in Brazil in the 1960s, like Claudia Andujar. Although these photographers have way more prestige than Alves in the fine arts’ photographic world, their photo documentaries do not expressively indicate the participation of the indigenous communities they have visited and portrayed. Their beautiful images of life in indigenous villages often appear decontextualized, standing as fine art objects. Because of that lack of contextualization, these images are more likely to contribute to the stereotyping and romanticization of indigenous peoples.

<sup>228</sup> As mentioned earlier, I consider here notions such as Barthes’ understanding of words and images (see note 22). I am thinking of how Alves’ *Recipes* treats words as complimentary to images rather than working as direct descriptions of images.

<sup>229</sup> In Chapter 4 of *Art Systems: Brazil and the 1970s*, Elena Shtromberg points to the dehumanization of indigenous peoples as depicted in colonial maps, such as *Letter to Brazil* (1519). Shtromberg shows how the mapping of indigenous lands during Brazil’s Civil military dictatorship was rooted in the colonial practice. See Elena Shtromberg, *Art Systems: Brazil and the 1970s*, First edition, Latin American and Caribbean Arts and Culture Publication Initiative (Andrew W. Mellon Foundation) (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2016), 126.



horizontality contrast with the verticality of the “supervisor figures,” suggesting their subjugation and proximity to the beasts represented around them. A larger figure of an indigenous man appears on the bottom of the map, underneath a sign reading “*Terra Brasilis*.” On his knees, the man seems vulnerable; he looks beyond his shoulder while Portuguese ships approach the shore. As was typical in such colonial cartographies, the land appears fully mapped: the coast is divided into the names of its “available” resources. Here, not only is the indigenous people’s “animality” presented, but their representation is also conflated with the land’s; their bodies an extension of a territory to be conquered.

Throughout history, the visual representation of indigenous peoples has been a colonial endeavor. From illustrations such as the above example, published in cartography or “travelogues” produced by invaders, to present-day commercial photography, the indigenous has often been summoned and made visible as a subject to fulfill the white Western gaze’s fears and desires. The “indigenous” as a construction has often been caught between being demonized as cannibals or disdained as too naïve to have a culture. Manuela Carneiro Cunha has discussed early depictions of indigenous peoples, such as a famous engraving by French colonizer Jean de Léry as part of his “*Histoire d’un voyage fait en la terre du Bresil*,” published in 1580. According to Cunha, one can discern a fundamental contradiction in how white colonizers spoke of indigenous peoples.

Cunha said that in these early narratives by European invaders, indigenous peoples “lacked a law that would make them ... members of a civil society, [a law]

that would give them ‘reason,’ removing them from the roughness and bestiality in which they lived.”<sup>230</sup> According to Cunha, for the Portuguese explorer Gabriel Soares de Souza, indigenous peoples lacked faith, law, and rule. Failing to perceive that the concepts of justice, faith, and social rules among indigenous peoples were different from theirs, some Europeans believed a social organization did not exist and therefore indigenous peoples lived in barbaric conditions. Other Europeans looked at indigenous peoples as “noble savages.” When that was the case, Europeans spoke of these peoples as if they had fallen from heaven.<sup>231</sup>

As discussed by Brazilian scholars such as Maria Carneiro Cunha and Alcida Ramos,<sup>232</sup> the depiction of the noble savage is far from positive. The noble savage has been a historically constructed portrait of a passive object, a mirrored reflection of the colonizer. “[T]hey are like malleable clay, a clean slate, a blank page,” or “these are ‘bestial’ people to be tamed,”<sup>233</sup> Cunha reminded us by quoting the Portuguese colonizer Pero Vaz de Caminha, who associated indigenous people’s nudity with

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<sup>230</sup> Manuela Carneiro da Cunha, “Images of The Indians of Brazil,” in *The Forest & the School ; Where to Sit at the Dinner Table?* (Archive Books and The Academy of Arts of the World in Cologne, 2015), 83.

<sup>231</sup> Cunha discusses this fundamental ambivalence between Europeans’ imagined animality and the innocence of indigenous peoples by citing these almost contradictory writings by different authors. She cites a Frenchman, Pierre Ronsard’s expectation of encountering a “Golden Age America.” His writing suggests the Christian narrative of heaven, he says about this imagined place, “Where unknown people Wander innocently, all wild and all naked Who know not the names of virtue, nor of vice, Of Senate, nor of King, that live pleasurably, Carried by the appetite of their first desire.” Manuela Carneiro da Cunha, “Images of The Indians of Brazil,” in *The Forest & the School ; Where to Sit at the Dinner Table?* (Archive Books and The Academy of Arts of the World in Cologne, 2015), 83.

<sup>232</sup> In her study *Indigenism: Ethnic Politics in Brazil*, Brazilian anthropologist Alcida Ramos discusses the prophecy of the “generic Indian” that had emerged among Brazilian anthropologists during the dictatorship: the idea that indigenous peoples would be completely assimilated into the society, becoming a hollowed figure, “a hologram to be operated.” For those indigenous peoples who were not assimilated into white culture, there was another figuration in vogue among anthropologists, which Ramos calls the hyperreal Indian, or an “incorruptible Indian,” “the fabrication of the perfect Indian, whose virtues, suffering, and untiring stoicism have won him the right to be defended by the professionals of indigenous rights.” Alcida Rita Ramos, *Indigenism: Ethnic Politics in Brazil* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998), 276.

<sup>233</sup> Manuela Carneiro da Cunha, “Images of The Indians of Brazil,” in *The Forest & the School ; Where to Sit at the Dinner Table?* (Archive Books and The Academy of Arts of the World in Cologne, 2015), 83.

innocence. Of course, these figurations are discursive, but they exist in the real world as painful othering processes. They operate as fetishes do by generating various stereotypes across different modes of discourse, a process I will discuss in my second chapter about the work of artist Jonathas de Andrade.

Over the course of history, these stereotypes have helped control and prevent indigenous peoples from taking power over their representations. In “*Corpo Monstro, branquitude e racialização. A formação do olhar colonial no Brasil setecentista*,” (*Monster Body, Whiteness and Racialization. The formation of the colonial gaze in 18th century Brazil*), scholar Thiago Florencio studied Albert Eckhout’s famous ethnic portraits, which the Dutch artist painted during the 1640s in New Holland, the name given to the Brazilian territory the Dutch invaded and controlled between 1630 and 1654. Eckhout painted four ethnic couples: the Tarairius (Tapuias), the Tupis the Africans, and the *mestiços*.<sup>234</sup> According to Florencio, Eckhout was not only the first European to create oil paintings of Brazilian indigenous peoples, but also the first to insert the category “mestiçe” in the racial classification of Brazilian people.<sup>235</sup>

Similar to Jean de Lery’s early colonial engravings, all 16 of Eckhout’s paintings are vertical portraits of a female or male individual from one of the aforementioned ethnic groups posing against a natural landscape backdrop. The

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<sup>234</sup> Yobenj Aucardo Chicangana-Bayona’s *The Tupis and Tapuias of Eckhout: the Decline of the Renaissance Image of the Indian* discusses the ethnographic inconsistencies of Eckhout’s depictions of indigenous peoples in this series of paintings. For example, the individuals named “Tapuias” depicted by Eckhout were members of the Tarairiú people who, at that time, lived in the Northeastern arid areas of Brazil, or the *sertão*. Yobenj Aucardo Chicangana-Bayona, “Os Tupis e Os Tapuias de Eckhout: O Declínio Da Imagem Renascentista Do Índio,” *Varia Historia* 24, no. 40 (December 2008): 591–612, <https://doi.org/10.1590/S0104-87752008000200016>.

<sup>235</sup> Thiago Florêncio, “Corpo Monstro, Branquitude e Racialização. A Formação Do Olhar Colonial No Brasil Setecentista,” in *Experiências Em Ensino, Pesquisa e Extensão Na Uni- Versidade: Caminhos e Perspectivas* (Fortaleza: Imprece, 2020), 278.

portrayed individuals appear near fauna and flora iconographic elements, especially fruits and products, which Florencio considered gifts and which also held specific connotations for the Dutch invaders.<sup>236</sup> All the portrayed individuals are objectified through the juxtaposition of merchandise and the natural landscape, domesticated and commodified alike.<sup>237</sup> The paintings suggest the portrayed individuals willingly offer their products to the viewer, in this case the Dutch state.

Although the stereotyping process is similar for all the ethnic couples Eckhout depicted, Florencio rightly called attention to the fact that the indigenous individuals are the only ones represented in this Dutch system as completely animalized. The couples do not appear near any sign of civilization and the painter juxtaposed them with critters such as wild dogs, serpents, and spiders. This iconography recalls the persistent references to cannibalism from the 1500s colonial imagery I discussed earlier. Finally, Florencio contended that the white (Dutch) colonial gaze reproduces the indigenous body specifically as a monstrous body, a body that inhabits a space in which humanity cannot exist.<sup>238</sup> Florencio concluded:

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<sup>236</sup> For example, in the painting showing an African woman, Eckhout painted “intercontinental fruits: African bananas, coconut from the West Indies, European citric fruits, and passion fruit from the Americas.” The fruits are arranged in a basket, that Florencio interprets as a representation of the West Indies Company, which presents itself as the organizer of the woman’s commodification. Thiago Florêncio, “Corpo Monstro, Branquitude e Racialização. A Formação Do Olhar Colonial No Brasil Setecentista,” in *Experiências Em Ensino, Pesquisa e Extensão Na Uni- Versidade: Caminhos e Perspectivas* (Fortaleza: Imprece, 2020), 288.

<sup>237</sup> Florencio and other scholars, such as argued that Eckhout painted the couples according to a constructed order based on their “level of civility” having the Dutch as sovereign and point of reference. Initially intended to decorate the Mauricio de Nassau’s palace in Recife, according to Florencio, the paintings “must be thought of as objects whose joint arrangement in the palace seeks to meet a precise objective: to legitimize the presence of the Dutch State in the tropics and to facilitate the economic exchange relations of the West India Company in the Americas.” Thiago Florêncio, “Corpo Monstro, Branquitude e Racialização. A Formação Do Olhar Colonial No Brasil Setecentista,” in *Experiências Em Ensino, Pesquisa e Extensão Na Uni- Versidade: Caminhos e Perspectivas* (Fortaleza: Imprece, 2020), 282.

<sup>238</sup> Thiago Florêncio, “Corpo Monstro, Branquitude e Racialização. A Formação Do Olhar Colonial No Brasil Setecentista,” in *Experiências Em Ensino, Pesquisa e Extensão Na Uni- Versidade: Caminhos e Perspectivas* (Fortaleza: Imprece, 2020), 289.

The agglomeration of tapuias in the background reveals the place of the monster-body. The community body, without subjectivity, diluted in the collective, the body reduced to ritual, whether of anthropophagy or war. The body reduced to the place of venomous animals.<sup>239</sup>

In his analysis of French artist Jean Baptiste Debret's watercolors of the 1800s, such as *Sinal de retirada (Coroados - Bororos)* (Retreat Signal of Coroados – Bororos indigenous people) (from *Viagem 1834-39*), critic Rodrigo Naves also argued that indigenous peoples appear animalized in Debret's paintings, produced two hundred years after Eckhout's.<sup>240</sup> Debret copied images from masks and faces from an iconographic atlas and other colonial images, deploying fictional depictions as if they were objective documentation.<sup>241</sup> According to Naves, although the indigenous body was rendered as heroically neoclassical in these works, these representations also oscillate into the grotesque.<sup>242</sup> In *Botocudos, Puris, Patachos, e Machacalis* (from *Viagem 1834-39*), one of Debret's scenes of indigenous peoples,

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<sup>239</sup> My translation. Thiago Florêncio, "Corpo Monstro, Branquitude e Racialização. A Formação Do Olhar Colonial No Brasil Setecentista," in *Experiências Em Ensino, Pesquisa e Extensão Na Uni- Versidade: Caminhos e Perspectivas* (Fortaleza: Impreca, 2020), 289.

<sup>240</sup> "... não admira que os desenhos de Debret sobre os indígenas tomem uma outra direção, oscilando entre uma clara idealização e representações grotescas, em que os índios aparecem animalizados ..." In English: "... no wonder that Debret's drawings of indigenous people take another direction, oscillating between a clear idealization and grotesque representations, in which the indigenous people appear animalized..." My translation. Rodrigo Naves, *A forma difícil: ensaios sobre arte brasileira* (São Paulo, SP: Companhia das Letras, 2011), 104.

<sup>241</sup> According to Naves, Debret [c]opied indigenous masks and faces from the *Atlas of Spix and Martius*; he relied on Wied-Neuwied's *Journey to Brazil* to obtain [the] heads of savages; and sought iconographic material for several of his plates at the Imperial Museum in Rio de Janeiro." My translation. In Portuguese: "[c]opiou mascararas e faces indígenas do Atlas de Spix e Martius; apoiou-se na Viagem ao Brasil, de Wied-Neuwied, para obter cabeças dos selvagens; e buscou no Museu Imperial do Rio de Janeiro material iconográfico para várias de suas pranchas." Rodrigo Naves, *A forma difícil: ensaios sobre arte brasileira* (São Paulo, SP: Companhia das Letras, 2011), 104. It is also important to remember that Naves's writing uses stereotypes and racist terms as if they were natural, such as savages and bugres without challenging these narratives.

<sup>242</sup> Naves argues some of Debret's depictions of indigenous Brazilians and Afro-Brazilians were influenced by his training in French neoclassical aesthetic tenets, such as the fluidity and weightless of certain depicted bodies to influence influence. This is what Naves says about the lithograph *Retreat Signal of Coroados – Bororos indigenous people*, "... o chefe Coroado que conduz a retirada de seus bravos faria boa presença num quadro neoclassico." In English, "the Coroado chief who leads the retreat of his fighters would make a good appearance in a neoclassic painting." My translation. Rodrigo Naves, *A forma difícil: ensaios sobre arte brasileira* (São Paulo, SP: Companhia das Letras, 2011), 106.

different groups eating animals and flesh are shown surrounded by woods. A man at the top of the picture has a grotesque expression while he bites an animal's limb, emphasizing how Debret fashioned indigenous peoples' animality.

Later on, looking at paintings produced by Brazilian artists during romanticism and indigenism from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century on, one can see how other stereotypes have sought to illustrate the vulnerable or noble "indian" to support nationalism and imperialism. The painting *Moema* (1866), for example, shows an indigenous woman lying unconscious on a seashore. Moema was a fictional character in an epic poem entitled *Caramuru* (1781) by José de Santa Rita Durão (1722–1784), a Portuguese friar. In the story, Moema is abandoned by a Portuguese settler and finds no other destiny but to throw herself into the sea, swim after her lover's vessel, and finally die of exhaustion. The way her death is depicted suggests both an eroticization through her available nude body, coupled with the romanticizing of the indigenous female body.

*O Último Tamoio* (The Last Tamoio), a painting completed by Rodolfo Amoedo a few years later, in 1883, confirms the trope of vulnerability and death. Amoedo depicts an indigenous man as helpless as Moema but then fatally killed and dispossessed, thus also in need of rescue by a Jesuit priest. These paintings mark an artistic moment in Brazil's art history called Realism and Indigenism, in which heroic

and tragic narratives were linked to the national imaginary and painted by artists of the Imperial Academies of Fine Arts.<sup>243</sup>

Although the indigenous peoples populating these works appear beautifully and realistically depicted as if glorified, these indigenous women and men are passive; they are pure but reduced to exotic ornaments of the natural landscape, and again fictionalized and rendered in confections with nature and animality, outside of the realm of civilization.<sup>244</sup> These images also foreshadow a constant belief held throughout Brazilian history: indigenous peoples would progressively disappear.<sup>245</sup>

These binary depictions exist whenever indigenous peoples are represented by white culture, one more example of coloniality's pervasiveness. Indigenous peoples have had to face erasure caused by misrepresentation. The control of white western culture, rooted in coloniality, has sought to surveil and govern representations of indigenous peoples based on claims on the originality of their identity, or in other

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<sup>243</sup> See Lilia Moritz Schwarcz, "Romantismo Tropical," *Latin American Literary Review* 25, no. 50 (1997): 47–68, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20119753>.

<sup>244</sup> Broadly speaking, Indigenismo was an early 20<sup>th</sup> century-Pan-Latin American intellectual trend conceived by a primarily urban-mestizo/creole elite, who denounced the political and economic exploitation of the indigenous masses through literary, artistic, and social projects. Comparing Indigenismo's currents in Mexico, Peru, and Ecuador, Tatiana Flores quotes author Estelle Tarica who defines Indigenismo as a "critical response to the conquest and colonization of indigenous peoples ... that denounces the injustice to which Indians have been submitted." (p.116). Indigenismo is therefore born in a modern Latin American context but also associated with the rise of the left/revolutionary popular movements, at least in its beginnings. One of the main critiques that Flores develops further in her essay is the fact that Indigenismo was a system of representation in which indigenous peoples were depicted by Latin American artists and intellectuals who were not members of their cultures. Flores says, "In both countries (Mexico and Peru), then, regardless of political position and intent, most instances of indigenista representation ... were decidedly one-sided, 'in which the Indian is depicted from without by an observer who, however well versed in his subject, is not part of the culture.'" Tatiana Flores, "Art, Revolution, and Indigenous Subjects," in *The Routledge History of Latin American Culture*, ed. Carlos Manuel Salomon, The Routledge Histories (New York: Routledge, 2017), 123. See more of this discussion in the Introduction of this dissertation.

<sup>245</sup> In her study *Indigenism: Ethnic Politics in Brazil*, Brazilian anthropologist Alcida Ramos discusses the prophecy of the "generic Indian" that had emerged among Brazilian anthropologists during the dictatorship: the idea that indigenous peoples would be completely assimilated into the society, becoming a hollowed figure, "a hologram to be operated." Alcida Rita Ramos, *Indigenism: Ethnic Politics in Brazil* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998), 276.

words, their appearance, what they wear, or where they live. As I discuss in the Introduction, another predicament is that whiteness and the celebration or commodification of cultural miscegenation have, since early modernity in Brazil, worked hand in hand to suppress the question of “race” from public discourse.

It is precisely because racial and cultural miscegenation have been emphasized discursively—and fiercely supported by myriad cultural practices—that villagers seek to reject indigenous and Black subjectivities, no matter if they are themselves mixed race. One should respect these people’s identification, yet racialization is not a one-way street. As great names from Frantz Fanon to Lélia Gonzales have discussed, racialization comes from the outside (and is disorienting for that same reason) and is socially constructed through interpellation and hailing.<sup>246</sup> As much as *mestiçagem* has been used as a discursive “buffer” for racially ambiguous individuals to eschew racialization, colorism is very real in Brazilian society and is directly aimed at disenfranchising its subjects.<sup>247</sup>

Looking at the portraits in *Recipes*, one must consider such complex juxtapositions. Rather than demonizing Ana, one must understand her (and other villagers’) words as a mode of speaking the tongue of power. Or, to paraphrase Paulo

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<sup>246</sup> In his most famous primal scene, in the *Fact of Blackness*, Frantz Fanon is hailed by a white boy and marked as “black,” thus racialized through the disavowal from an “outside,” from whiteness. Fanon uses this visceral account of the primal scene to demonstrate how race and color difference are produced and constructed through language—a process Louis Pierre Althusser (1918–1990), called interpellation. Frantz Fanon and Charles Lam Markmann, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 1967.

<sup>247</sup> See discussion I develop in my introduction, based on the writings of authors Patricia Pinho, Liv Sovik, among others.



Freire's teachings: those who are oppressed want at any cost to resemble their oppressors.<sup>248</sup>

#### 1.4.2. To be a *Bugre*

Maria had asked me what I thought about Indians. Much later, she told me of a conversation she had with Ana, her mother-in-law, who tried to insult her by reminding Maria that her grandfather was *Bugre-puro*. (Native peoples are usually called *Bugres* in this region. The word means monsters, as in the Boogey Man. The word serves to de-tribalize indigenous peoples by removing specific identities. Those now called *Bugres* are originally from the Kaingang tribe.) Maria said, 'I told her it did not matter because you had said they are good people.' Ana got very quiet after that.<sup>249</sup>

A man with a dark beard and vivid eyes looks at us from the top of his horse. A straw hat rests on his head. There are no intense shadows, harsh light, or dark contrasts in this picture. The photograph's lower edge cuts the horse's muzzle, but his eye is also looking at the photographer. There is movement in this picture (Figure 10). The photograph is crooked, as if Alves had turned the camera 45 degrees to her right to take the shot. There is a wide plantation field in the background that continues towards the horizon as if it existed ad infinitum. The man looks back at the camera.

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<sup>248</sup> Rightfully, Freire has been criticized for putting a heteronormative white male perspective at the center of its universal subjectivity. Besides deploying Hegel's master/slave theory, Freire seems to have borrowed from Fanon to define his understanding of the symbiotic relationship between oppressor and oppressed. It is just after citing Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth*, that Freire argues "... at a certain point in their existential experience the oppressed feel an irresistible attraction towards the oppressors and their way of life. Sharing this way of life becomes an overpowering aspiration. In their alienation, the oppressed want at any cost to resemble the oppressors, to imitate them, to follow them. This phenomenon is especially prevalent in the middle-class oppressed, who yearn to be equal to the 'eminent' men and women of the upper class. Albert Memmi, in an exceptional analysis of the 'colonized mentality,' refers to the contempt he felt towards the colonizer, mixed with 'passionate' attraction towards him." Paulo Freire. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed : 30th Anniversary Edition*, Bloomsbury Academic & Professional, 2014. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ucsc/detail.action?docID=1745456>.

<sup>249</sup> Maria Thereza Alves and Michael T. Taussig, *Recipes for Survival*, First edition (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2018), 156.

For us viewers looking at him, it is as if we were longtime friends; it is as if we could trust each other. His dark eyes know the camera is about to snap a shot. His lips are closed, but it seems they were open a second earlier, as if he got caught being photographed just as he finished speaking a sentence. From the silence that exists between the photographed and the photographer, this picture was made.

Power interpellates<sup>250</sup> its subjects through complex forms. In discourse, racism is often disguised via the popularization of apparently harmless names. In Brazil, racist slurs for indigenous peoples vary from region to region and are often rooted in ancient colonial traditions. The term “Bugre,” which appears in conversations throughout Alves’s work, is one such example. The meaning of this word can be traced back to the European Medieval period<sup>251</sup> as segments of the Christian Church first used it to refer to a heretic sect. During Brazil’s colonial times, the Catholic Portuguese adopted the term and used it to refer to indigenous peoples, based on accusations of sodomy.<sup>252</sup>

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<sup>250</sup> See note 123.

<sup>251</sup> About the origins of the term Bugre, Guisard writes, “The term Bugre originated in a heretical movement, in Europe, during the Middle Ages, representing a force contrary to the precepts dictated by the orthodoxy of the Church. It appeared in the 9th century, in Bulgaria, having been baptized as bogomilismo, inspired by the name of the priest Bogomil, considered the founder of the heretical sect. which means the pure, and generically as Albigenses, to designate the heretics in general.” My translation. Luís Augusto De Mola Guisard, “O Bugre, Um João-Ninguém: Um Personagem Brasileiro,” *São Paulo Em Perspectiva* 13, no. 4 (December 1999): 92–99, <https://doi.org/10.1590/S0102-88391999000400010>.

<sup>252</sup> In *Casa Grande & Senzala*, Gilberto Freyre discusses the origins of the term bugre, “The denomination of Bugres given by the Portuguese to the indigenous people of Brazil in general and to a tribe of São Paulo in particular perhaps expresses the theological horror of Christians, barely out of the Middle Ages, about the nefarious sin, which they always associated with the great, the maximum of incredulity or heresy. ... For the medieval Christian it was the term Bugre that became impregnated with the same sticky idea of unclean sin. Anyone who was a heretic was immediately considered a sodomite; as if one damnation inevitably led to another.” My translation from Portuguese: “A denominação de Bugres dada pelos portugueses aos indígenas do Brasil em geral a uma tribo de São Paulo em particular talvez exprimisse o horror teológico de cristãos mal saídos da Idade Médiaao pecado nefando, por eles associado sempre ao grande,ao máximo de incredulidade ou heresia. ... para o cristão medieval foi o termo Bugre que ficou impregnado da mesma idéia pegajosa do pecado imundo. Quemfosse herege era logo havido por sodomita; como se uma danação arrastasse inevitavelmente à outra” Gilberto Freyre,

The term continues to be popular in modern times, especially in southern and southwestern Brazil, from Mato Grosso, Paraná, and Minas Gerais to Rio Grande do Sul. In addition to its persistent religious connotations, this term also exemplifies intersecting racism and class prejudice. According to Luis Augusto de Mola Guisard, deploying the word Bugre not only undermines subjects based on specific characteristics of their bodies and appearance, but also their social class. According to Guisard, the modern usage of the term emerged with white elites' need to address those who looked like indigenous peoples and had moved to urban areas. Speaking of his findings, Guisard wrote:

The term was used mainly in public spaces - especially about those who had specific characteristics linked to an indigenous tradition in the region - but it could also be used in more reserved areas. It is clear that the term is pejorative to identify those who have some specific physical traits - "arrow hair, smooth, flowing"; "Folded eyes, a nose slightly flattened"; "Dark skinned without being Black" - which are associated with cultural, social, psychic and economic aspects that are also specific: "the buggy is rustic, backward"; "The real buggy is from the bush, the one that is hidden, more aggressive and aloof"; "The buggy that is in the city is more docile, it can be a worker, but it is treacherous."<sup>253</sup>

According to Guisard, the term's modern usage has also been associated with indigenous people's "historical condition of subjection and slavery in the most varied

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*Casa grande & senzala: formação da família brasileira sob o regime da economia patriarcal*, 37. ed, Introdução à história da sociedade patriarcal no Brasil 1 (Rio de Janeiro: Record, 1999), 178.

<sup>253</sup> My translation from Portuguese: "O termo era usado principalmente nos espaços públicos – especialmente em referência àqueles que possuíam características específicas ligadas a uma tradição indígena da região – mas poderia ser usado também em espaços mais reservados. Fica claro que o termo é pejorativo, para identificar aqueles que apresentam alguns traços físicos específicos – "cabelo de flecha, liso, escorrido"; "olho rasgado, nariz meio achatado"; "escuro sem ser negro" – que estão associados a aspectos culturais, sociais, psíquicos e econômicos também específicos: "o Bugre é rústico, atrasado"; "o Bugre verdadeiro é do mato, aquele que está escondido, mais agressivo e arreado"; "o Bugre que está na cidade é mais dócil, pode ser trabalhador, mas é traiçoeiro." Luis Augusto De Mola Guisard, "O Bugre, Um João-Ninguém: Um Personagem Brasileiro," *São Paulo Em Perspectiva* 13, no. 4 (December 1999): 94, <https://doi.org/10.1590/S0102-88391999000400010>.

farm work and domestic services.”<sup>254</sup> These conditions are similar to those that affected Alves’s father’s village in Paraná, indicating an internalization of this term in popular parlance:

Otávio took Maria and me to visit Miguel, the Bugre who lives in a nearby village, an hour’s ride by horse and wagon. Miguel was not home when we arrived. Otávio set out to find him by following his tracks. An hour later, he came back with Miguel, who had been out hunting. Otávio said that at first, Miguel had not been willing to come back to his house and meet with me because he was too embarrassed by his poverty.

A few days earlier, when I was at Dorival’s bar. I had met Miguel, and he was very drunk. The men there asked me to take a photo of the Bugre and mail it to them so they could later taunt Miguel about how ugly he is. I did, but only because he is handsome.<sup>255</sup>

This population is racially and ethnically mixed: a mixture of Guarani/Kaingang, Black, and white Polish and Portuguese immigrants.<sup>256</sup> This racial mixture is apparent throughout the documentary’s images, in portraits and depictions of people going about their daily chores or pictured inside their homes. It is the communities’ internal hierarchies around that miscegenation that are veiled and kept away from the camera. If the embarrassment, shame, conflict, and doubt about identity do not appear in *Recipes for Survival’s* photographs, they are spread across Alves’s texts and interviews with friends and relatives. According to Alves, although many individuals have indigenous descent, only one or two people in the village self-identified as

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<sup>254</sup> Luís Augusto De Mola Guisard, “O Bugre, Um João-Ninguém: Um Personagem Brasileiro,” *São Paulo Em Perspectiva* 13, no. 4 (December 1999): 97, <https://doi.org/10.1590/S0102-88391999000400010>.

<sup>255</sup> Maria Thereza Alves and Michael T. Taussig, *Recipes for Survival*, First edition (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2018), 157.

<sup>256</sup> Maria Thereza Alves, Interview in English to the author, Zoom, June 2020.

“Bugres.” But the word was often used pejoratively in the community to describe individuals who bear indigenous appearance.<sup>257</sup>

Going back to the history of indigenous peoples’ images, the term Bugre fits the many inventions and fantasies deployed by white colonial endeavors to control, undermine, and decimate indigenous peoples. Initially a tool for religious domination, the term is an example of the othering and stereotyping practices dating back to colonial times I discussed earlier in this section. Not unlike those early accounts, maps, and paintings, the Bugre is treated as a vestige of the monstrous, the bestial, and the savage that exists in the eyes of the colonial invader.

In Thiago Florencio’s analysis of Albert Eckhout’s paintings, Florencio tracked down the “totalitarian presence of the sovereign figure,”<sup>258</sup> understanding it as a direct manifestation of whiteness during colonial times. Although often unseen or remaining outside the representational field of Eckhout’s paintings, Florencio argued the white subject is present in the works’ hierarchization and the disciplining and domestication of non-white bodies the paintings depict.<sup>259</sup>

Whiteness, or the white subject, as Florencio described, is that which situates, or classifies, non-white bodies as monstrous. In his words, indigenous people are rendered, “a monster-body,” by the unseen white subject; they become a “radical site of humanity’s absence, and for that reason the justification of a colonial (and sexual)

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<sup>257</sup> Maria Thereza Alves, Interview in English to the author, Zoom, June 2020.

<sup>258</sup> Thiago Florêncio, “Corpo Monstro, Branquitude e Racialização. A Formação Do Olhar Colonial No Brasil Setecentista,” in *Experiências Em Ensino, Pesquisa e Extensão Na Uni- Versidade: Caminhos e Perspectivas* (Fortaleza: Impreco, 2020), 289.

<sup>259</sup> Ibid.

violence over their bodies.”<sup>260</sup> Florencio refers to Grada Kilomba’s notion of whiteness, which, according to Kilomba insinuates itself as an identity at “the center of everything.”<sup>261</sup> To paraphrase Kilomba: whiteness fashions itself as a “human condition” and an identity that marks other identities, remaining itself unmarked.<sup>262</sup>

As I mentioned elsewhere in this chapter, Alves’s documentary addresses the erasure of certain bodies. *Recipes* embodies images that do not exist, the photographs that have not been taken of “monster-bodies” marginalized and dehumanized by discourse. Following these definitions of whiteness, I contend that the presence of whiteness in *Recipes* comes through the absence of certain images and the constant racialization of specific individuals throughout the narrative. But most importantly, this is not a process perpetuated exclusively by white individuals; it is a widespread discourse, organized as the norm through *branquitude*, and thus reproduced by mixed-race and nonwhite members of the community as such.

When *branquitude* names someone a Bugre, that naming is violence. The violence of naming is the violence of racialization; it may not kill the body, but it violates it by rendering that body inferior, making belonging arduous. Moreover, in its 20<sup>th</sup> century variations, one must consider this discourse as part of the context of racial and cultural miscegenation. The Bugre is not always the indigenous person who

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<sup>260</sup> Ibid.

<sup>261</sup> About whiteness, Kilomba writes, “[d]ifference is used as a mark for intrusion. Being touched, just like being questioned, is experienced as an intrusion, an infringement that for Alicia seems unimaginable: “I would never touch somebody’s hair.” Why should she touch the hair of someone she does not know? Why such an intrusion? Those who touch and/or ask mark Alicia, they however remain unmarked. A choreography that describes whiteness as both central and absent.” Grada Kilomba. *Plantation Memories : Episodes of Everyday Racism, Between the Lines*, 2021. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ucsc/detail.action?docID=6631177>.

<sup>262</sup> See discussion about whiteness and *branquitude* in the Introduction.

lives in indigenous lands, but most often, those of indigenous descent living in urban areas.

During her interviews, Alves discussed how being indigenous has shaped her and her family's identities. She also discussed the erasure of individuals of indigenous descent. She said, "There is a very hard discourse in my family. It's like a battle. It's always a big battle. This constant picking, this hierarchy in the family, this constant hierarchy in the family who is whiter than whom."<sup>263</sup> Bothered by how Alves looked like her indigenous father, her mother offered to give her, for her 15<sup>th</sup> birthday, an operation to get rid of her eye folds and to make her nose more European.<sup>264</sup> Alves said her mother would force her to use small shoes so her feet would look more European. As a child in Queens, she also struggled with other children in school bullying her for not being white.<sup>265</sup> When she returned to her father's village as an adult in the 1980s, Alves saw the othering of one's body and appearance exacerbated within her family:

So I go back to my father's village, and all of this stuff is there just as bad all the time, all day with everyone; it just goes on all the time. My aunt that I love, she's indigenous. She will not ever admit that; what she will at most admit is that she's Black. ...

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<sup>263</sup> Maria Thereza Alves, Interview in English to the author, Zoom, June 2020.

<sup>264</sup> Maria Thereza Alves, Interview in English to the author, Zoom, December 2020.

<sup>265</sup> "Racism and the resulting bullying, although I would not know to call it that, were my principal concerns at the time. I learned on my own how to deal with them around the age of ten. I would, myself, discover organizing as a tool. I had thought that the only way the nonwhite kids could avoid being bullied—especially during recess, when we were in the patio of the school and had no protection from adults—was to unite. I organized all the kids who were not Irish or Italian. On the day that we stood our ground, we formed a circle around one of my main tormentors and sang the two nursery rhymes, which we had all practiced before. We also agreed that if one of us was being bullied whoever was nearby would come to help. We were soon no longer tormented." Maria Thereza Alves and Richard William Hill, "The Freedom to Develop What Is Necessary: Maria Thereza Alves Interviewed by Richard William Hill. Documenting a Cross-Cultural Politics and Aesthetics.," *BOMB*, March 16, 2020, <https://bombmagazine.org/articles/the-freedom-to-develop-what-is-necessary-maria-thereza-alves-interviewed/>.

Then, my grandmother, I wanted to look at the family photos. She would always point to the white people in the family photo ... the missing nonwhite people. On the last visit just last year to my aunt, I was looking for the pictures of my great grandparents, which used to exist. And I asked her, "Where were they?" She goes, "Oh, I didn't want them in this house." Because they're not white, but none of this is said.<sup>266</sup>

These painful moments in Alves's history are not hers exclusively but part of a much larger narrative than her family's: the upholding of whiteness is so powerful that images of nonwhite family members are lost forever. In *Recipes*, on the one hand, a photograph can serve as proof of villagers' existence under threat of slavery. On the other hand, the narrative reveals that some people have never been "worthy" of representing. The trouble with image-making haunts Alves's project.

Alves mentioned others in the village would remember loved ones by looking at drawings or by keeping photographs of celebrities, due to the lack of cameras or images of themselves. Religious iconography dominates the pictures hanging on the walls of those people's homes. Prints with cutouts of the Pope and illustrations of the Virgin Mary are adorned by other smaller portraits and serve as decorations to these modest interiors. They are one indication of the extent to which Christianity has encroached upon Brazil's history in the colonial past and its persistence well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Alves photographed a woman healer in the community; as part of the healing, the woman had drawn portraits of those who sought a cure (Figure 11). These votive

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<sup>266</sup> Maria Thereza Alves, Interview in English to the author, Zoom, June 2020.



images present the faint traces of a man's and a woman's portraits. They are ghostly black and white drawings placed inside cornmeal bags due to the lack of plastic or glass frames.<sup>267</sup> But even these faces are "white." In another portrait Alves took, a woman appears with a picture of Elvis Presley hanging on a background wall (Figure 12). Alves asked the woman why she kept that picture. The woman replied the man reminded her of her son, who had enlisted in the military.<sup>268</sup>

I thought it was telling that the most prominent pictures in these interiors are of white men. This shows that, at least at that moment, the community was surrounded by a visual culture dominated by pictures of outsider whiteness. The image of the Pope serves as a metaphor for the patriarchy and the haunting authority of the Christian/Catholic Church, while the Elvis represents the omnipresence of Hollywood or U.S. popular culture's capital power even in a remote village in Brazil.

Nonwhite people appear in the village's image-universe through adult alphabetization books, Alves noted. In these books, the servers and workers are all nonwhite. These are also books that teach peasants discipline and are targeted at the working class. Mobral, the method used by the military, had been coopted from Paulo Freire's work but stripped of all its revolutionary social class politics.<sup>269</sup>

Although concealed, whiteness reigns in the faces of mixed-race people and the offspring of white European immigrants all around, both white and nonwhite. Whiteness is present in the pictures not taken and the ones carefully selected to

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<sup>267</sup> According to Maria Thereza Alves, Interview in English to the author, Zoom, June 2020.

<sup>268</sup> According to Maria Thereza Alves, Interview in English to the author, Zoom, June 2020..

<sup>269</sup> Maria Thereza Alves, Interview in English to the author, Zoom, June 2020.

occupy walls, be they Christian illustrations or votive imagery, from pictures of the Pope to those of Elvis. When marked by one's body or appearance, the vestiges of either blackness or indigenous descent are followed in people's speech by rejection and shame. For those racialized subjects, the insulting term Bugre is all that it is left.<sup>270</sup>

## 1.5. Conclusion

The Brazilian civil-military dictatorship (1964–1984) was one of the several periods in the country's history during which whiteness's hegemony was exacerbated. Financially and militarily backed by the United States, the regime coupled authoritarianism with a macro-developmental mindset to open the country for neoliberalism. That meant allowing the exploitation of the environment and welcoming the domination of United States and European corporations.<sup>271</sup> Land possession, especially in rural Brazilian areas, became highly disputed. As the

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<sup>270</sup> Maria Thereza said, "Every time the word Bugre comes up, it's an insult. Lazy, dirty, rarely is it used in any other sense. ... I went to see my aunt after so long, whom I love. And she was almost getting comfortable by the time I left with the idea that she would admit that it was okay to be Indian." Maria Thereza Alves, Interview in English to the author, Zoom, December 2020.

<sup>271</sup> See my discussion in the Introduction. Naomi Klein writes about U.S.'s interference into Latin American countries' governments with the emergence of the Cold War, "Under pressure from these corporate interests, a movement took hold in American and British foreign policy circles that attempted to pull developmentalist governments into the binary logic of the Cold War. Don't be fooled by the moderate, democratic veneer, these hawks warned: Third World nationalism was the first step on the road to totalitarian Communism and should be nipped in the bud. Two of the chief proponents of this theory were John Foster Dulles, Eisenhower's secretary of state, and his brother Allen Dulles, head of the newly created CIA." Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine the Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2009), 71. <http://toronto.lib.overdrive.com/226DBF69-79AF-48E2-B538-133D4FE16FE0/10/473/en/ContentDetails.htm?ID=B48B8C20-3A1F-4DE5-B95B-26B1858C810A>.

primary guardians and protectors of the natural environment, most indigenous peoples posed a threat to the regime's expansion.<sup>272</sup>

The full picture of the ethnocide caused by the dictatorship and the devastation brought about by the loss of indigenous peoples' livelihood is still being accounted for.<sup>273</sup> Among the military regime's strategies were the decimation of entire peoples and numerous tactics of assimilation. Even among allies—anthropologists and sociologists—indigenous peoples were believed to have no future. Concerned about this current of thought, Brazilian anthropologist Alcida Ramos discussed in her study, *Indigenism: Ethnic Politics in Brazil*, the prophecy of the “generic Indian” that had emerged among Brazilian anthropologists during the dictatorship, or the idea that indigenous peoples would be completely assimilated into the society, becoming a hollow figure, or “a hologram to be operated.”<sup>274</sup>

According to Ramos, this was a reinvention of the “noble Indian” borrowed from the 18<sup>th</sup> century's Romantic period in Brazil's history, during which, as I discussed earlier, literature and fine arts appropriated figurations of “Indianness” to form what intellectuals of the time called a national identity. This modern-day figuration, not unlike the term Bugre, had a minimal basis in reality, for it set an ethical precondition that could never be entirely fulfilled by actual individuals and

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<sup>272</sup> See my discussion in the Introduction and the work of Alcida Rita Ramos, *Indigenism: Ethnic Politics in Brazil* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998).

<sup>273</sup> See the report developed by Comissão da Verdade (National Truth Commission), created by President Dilma Rousseff in 2012, to investigate the Human Rights violations that took place between September 1946 and October 1988, during the late-20<sup>th</sup> century's rise of the right-wing dictatorship in the country. Governo do Brasil, “Comissão Nacional Da Verdade,” Institutional Website, n.d., <http://cnv.memoriasreveladas.gov.br/index.php>.

<sup>274</sup> Alcida Rita Ramos, *Indigenism: Ethnic Politics in Brazil* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998), 276.

filtered the idea of indigeneity through layers of either complete otherness or sameness; there was never space for recognition of difference.

These modern-day figurations of the “noble Indian” are markers of whiteness, making itself manifest through discourse. They are linked to a colonial matrix, but they are essentially based on a modern understanding of race and ethnicity. For indigenous peoples to become Brazilian citizens, they were forced to assimilate to white culture, and in that sense, that also meant being interpellated by whiteness. Moreover, in Brazil, this modern understanding of race and ethnicity has been intrinsic to authoritarianism. Richard Miskolci argued that the notion of progress for Brazilians has always been associated with the racial composition of its peoples. More importantly, Miskolci says, elites, in their ingrained racism, often blamed nonwhite populations as if they were standing in the way of progress.<sup>275</sup> This blame is still associated with indigenous peoples, persisting in the speech of the government and white elites through this day.<sup>276</sup>

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<sup>275</sup> In *O Desejo Da Nação: Masculinidade e Branquitude No Brasil de Fins Do XIX*, Richard Miskolci rightfully argues, “The desire of the nation of our politicians and intellectuals was historically constituted through a negative evaluation of our people and our past that, progressively, engendered ideals and political decisions that became concrete. For example, in the abolition of slavery without any incorporation policy of freedmen to the labor market, rather in a pro-European immigration policy, in the constitution of an authoritarian republican regime that always saw in the people an obstacle to be whitened, sanitized, civilized. This is already noticeable, at the beginning of the 20th century, in urban reforms and in expeditions sent to the interior of the country. The nation's desire was a desire for modernity understood as the need to reform the social order through strategically oriented intervention. A necessity that was imposed despite the divergent views on how to pursue the path of progress, leaving our colonial and slaveholding past behind.” My translation. Richard Miskolci, *O Desejo Da Nação: Masculinidade e Branquitude No Brasil de Fins Do XIX*, 1a edição, Coleção Queer ([São Paulo, Brazil] : São Paulo, SP, Brasil: Fapesp ; Annablume, 2012).

<sup>276</sup> President Jair Bolsonaro’s racist comments about indigenous peoples have been widely disseminated in the media. In 2020, for example, he said in an interview, “Com toda a certeza, o índio mudou, tá evoluindo. Cada vez mais o índio é um ser humano igual a nós. (“For sure, the Indian has changed, he is evolving. More and more, the Indian is a human being just like us.”) At another moment, he said, “Estamos perdendo toda a região Norte por pessoas que não querem se inteirar do risco que estamos tendo de ter presidentes índios com borduna nas mãos.” (“We are losing the entire North region to people who do not want to know about the risk we are having of having Indian presidents with a club in their hands.”). A long list of such statements can be found on: Survival Brasil, “O Que Jair Bolsonaro, Presidente-Eleito, Disse Sobre Os Povos Indígenas Do Brasil, (What Jair Bolsonaro,

The civil dictatorship, its association with Christian beliefs and capital, had an extensive role in the overall erasure of difference and establishment of a white heteronormativity.<sup>277</sup> When Alves visited her parents' villages in 1983, she witnessed this moment in history when indigenous peoples were again being forced into so-called norms of civilization. It was only "natural" that, for many community members, self-identifying as indigenous was not only unpopular but dangerous. It could expose an already vulnerable rural population to additional exploitation and violence.

*Recipes* registers the lingering aftermath of colonization. It is a document of a people who have internalized a *mestiça* identity, an identity that is embraced while invariably standing as a denial of indigenous ethnicities and traditions. In that sense, *Recipes* is a bitter register of how self-erasure, slavery, and poverty have threatened the existence of indigenous groups and their traditions in Brazil. The work shows the extent to which those of indigenous descent negotiate layers of stereotyping as survival strategies. Deploying the term "Bugre" is one of many such strategies. A way of locating differences outside of one's body, the term acknowledges one's

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President-Elect, Said About the Indigenous Peoples of Brazil" Institutional Website, n.d., <https://www.survivalbrasil.org/artigos/3543-Bolsonaro>. As another example, read one of the notes published by CIMI, in 2020, to denounce Bolsonaro's criminalization of indigenous peoples. CIMI, Conselho Indigenista Missionário – Cimi, "Nota Do Cimi: Bolsonaro Criminaliza Povos Indígenas Em Discurso Irreal e Delirante Na ONU," Institutional Website, n.d., <https://cimi.org.br/2020/09/nota-do-cimi-bolsonaro-criminaliza-povos-indigenas-discurso-irreal-delirante-onu/>.

<sup>277</sup> Although FUNAI (Fundação Nacional do Índio - National Indian Foundation) says it does not currently allow present-day missionaries to enter indigenous lands in Brazil, the number of indigenous peoples who self-identify as evangelicals has been rising, since 1998, according to data from the IBGE (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística - The Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics). In 2010, 25% of indigenous people identify as evangelicals, which is a higher percentile from the Brazilian population. In 2018, IBGE recorded that number as 32% of the indigenous populations. Julia Barboun and Ian Cheibub, "Evangelização de Índios Por Índios Se Alastra e Provoca Críticas de Entidades," Institutional Website, UOL Notícias, accessed March 26, 2022, <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/poder/2019/01/evangelizacao-de-indios-por-indios-se-alastra-e-provoca-criticas-de-entidades.shtml>.

racialization but makes it always of the “other”: the neighbor, the cousin, or the estranged relative.<sup>278</sup>

One’s survival also relates to the lack of images of those called “Bugres,” who, when pictured, become an interruption in a visual discourse in which whiteness predominates. In the hegemonic field of representation, in which the circulation of images perpetuated by whiteness governs, photographs of indigenous peoples in Brazil show them as naturalized populations. But in their villages, among nature, and by enacting traditional ceremonies and ways of living, the lives of the Bugres are forgotten. When the *Bugre* is part of the hegemonic narrative, the dialect is racism. *Recipes* was made for the Bugre.

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## 1.6 Maria’s House

Maricota’s house is small and carefully decorated inside out with pictures of saints, plants in gourds, and flowers made from cut metal and plastic. She was standing outside combing her granddaughter’s hair. Maricota requested a special photo of herself—inside her house with no kerchief on. She did not want foreigners to think she had white hair just because she was an old lady. As she arranged her hair, she proudly said, “I’m ninety-eight and I don’t have one white hair. It’s all Black. ... The People here think I’m Italian because of my black hair and fair skin, but I am Bugre, Bugre-pura. That’s why I don’t have white hair.”<sup>279</sup>

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<sup>278</sup> See note 103.

<sup>279</sup> Maria Thereza Alves and Michael T. Taussig, *Recipes for Survival*, First edition (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2018), 157.

Back in the 1980s, Maria (Maricota) was the only person in Alves's father's village who self-identified as Bugre. In the excerpt above, Alves explained how Maria reclaimed the term "Bugre" and reverted its derogatory connotation by using it proudly. In an interview, Alves said to me about Maria, "When you have a woman who admits she's Bugre, that's amazing. That's an amazingly courageous woman. Astounding. That's the only one, and she was the only one that would admit it."<sup>280</sup>

In a work Alves made for the Sydney 2020 Biennial, she printed a photograph of Maria standing in front of her house (Figure 13). Maria rests one of her arms over the tarnished but sturdy wooden fence surrounding her home. She wears dark clothes, a blouse, and a skirt; her hair is loose and, as she requested, with no kerchief on. Next to her other arm, a long axe leans on the property's fence. Alves's installation consisted of this small, framed photograph placed on a table next to hundreds of copies of a Guarani newspaper titled OIKOVYTERI ITEKO'A MÔĪNGUEVYA (Guarani Decolonization Continues) (Figure 14), which was made in collaboration with members of the Juaguapiru Reservation in Mato Grosso do Sul.

For Linda Tuhiwai Smith, survivance is the practice of celebrating survival despite the demise indigenous peoples have historically faced. The author says,

Survivance accentuates the degree to which indigenous peoples and communities have retained cultural and spiritual values and authenticity in resisting colonialism. The approach is reflected sometimes in story form, sometimes popular music and sometimes as an event in which artists and story tellers come together to celebrate collectively a sense of life and diversity and connectedness. Events and accounts which focus on the active resistance are important

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<sup>280</sup> Maria Thereza Alves, Interview in English to the author, Zoom, December 2020.

because they celebrate our being at an ordinary human level and affirm our identities as indigenous women and men.<sup>281</sup>

Both individual and collective, survivance is not an ordinary celebration or a concept the vocabularies of global capitalism have easily co-opted. And survivance's celebration is very different from the Brazilian national celebratory discourses that have enabled the myth of racial democracy and have sought to picture a false reconciliation between white elites and nonwhite poor populations. The celebration within survivance is intrinsic to resistance: it does not exist without justice and a desire for reckoning. Within the indigenous understanding of decolonization, survival is celebrated and learned from.

In binding Maria's image to the Guarani language, Alves offers Maria, who has already passed away, a postmortem link to reclaim her ancestors. To produce *Recipes* is to create an afterlife for the images of a group of people by retelling their narratives. In doing so, Alves acts over survivance; she uses the combination of photography and words to challenge Brazilian national discourses representing indigenous people as passive and bound to nature or dying and disappearing forever. Through the image Alves made of Maria and the purposeful reinstallation of the photo, a bond between artist and subject is fulfilled. Maria Thereza and Maria share a reclamation: the practicing of survival as a form of resistance and decolonial living.

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<sup>281</sup> Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, Second edition (London: Zed Books, 2012), 146.



## **Chapter 2. To Appease and Attack: Jonathas de Andrade's *Eu, mestiço***

### **2.1. Introduction**

*Peon-born, by Rondinele* (Figures 15-16) is one of the sets of portraits comprising Jonathas de Andrade's photographic installation *Eu, mestiço* (2017). These portraits are three cutout black-and-white photographs of a Black man, Rondinele, resting on a heavy-duty iron-made construction cart. At first glance, the man looks relaxed; his head rests on the cart's front and handles while he looks up to an imaginary ceiling. He wears a cap and his chest is bare. He wears striped sports shorts. Half of his body does not fit inside the cart; he is raising his knees and his bent legs protrude from the object. His legs are spread so his feet are placed on the cart's front wheel, near a large and thick tire. Part of his arms are inside the cart, hidden from viewers, and his hands are placed over the cart's sides, holding them with his fingers. White fabric is wrapped around one side of the cart; it looks like a rope. On the left side of the cart, striped fabric hangs from one of the handles; it seems to be a shirt or towel.

The three black-and-white images show different angles of the man in the same situation. The central image shows a frontal pose. In this image, the viewer first sees the man with his two legs spread apart. The cart and the man's body seem to merge; the cart's uneven tire and the man's legs form a "V" shape emphasizing the man's groin and shorts. By looking at the center of the man's body, the viewer's gaze

moves towards a partial view of his face: one sees his mouth, nose, and hat, but his eyes are hidden from view.

The two images to the right and left sides of the central photograph appear to be mirrored views, but they are not. In the right-side image, one of the man's feet falls away from the wheel, whereas in the other two images, the man's feet are placed steadily on the wheelbase. These slight differences matter because they are not accidental. Instead, they are conscious decisions by the artist: they demonstrate Jonathas de Andrade's meticulous construction of each set of photographs for *Eu, mestiço*.

Jonathas de Andrade is perhaps one of the most famous Brazilian-based contemporary artists to exhibit his works internationally.<sup>282</sup> Though his practice has dealt more broadly with representation of Brazilian national narratives, he has also constantly represented Brazilian racial miscegenation. It has been mainly through the image of the *mestiço* that the topic of race emerges in his works. Throughout the years, de Andrade has become famous for his projects centered on *nordestinos*, men who are native of in Brazil's northeastern areas, such as in the city of Recife, where the artist also is from. Although de Andrade has worked in a variety of media, he also constructs carefully planned installations. *Eu, mestiço* is a photographic installation

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<sup>282</sup> It is perhaps not an exaggeration to say that Jonathas de Andrade (b. 1982, Recife, Brazil) is one of the most famous contemporary Brazilian artists to have an international career. In 2022, he was selected to represent Brazil at the Venice Biennale and counts participations in the 2014 Gwangju Biennale, the 2015 edition of Performa, the 2016 Sao Paulo Biennial, the 2017 Sharjah Biennial, and the 2019 Istanbul Biennial. In 2012, de Andrade won a Future Generation Art Prize, which awards \$100,000 to an "emerging artist" under 35 years old. Jonathas de Andrade, "Jonathas de Andrade," Personal Website, n.d., <http://www.jonathasdeandrade.com.br/>.

with posters or cutout prints covering entire walls of the gallery spaces where they are exhibited.

The images in *Eu, mestiço's Peon Born* group seem to evoke labor as subject matter because of the association between Rondinele and the construction cart; this man could be a worker relaxing or taking a break. During a conversation at the Instituto Moreira Salles, Lilia Schwarcz discussed this specific photograph in the series. She argued that by depicting a laborer's moment of inaction (in her words, "the [picture's] cart [means] laziness, means rest.),<sup>283</sup> de Andrade's work inverts the normative reading of the artwork. In other words, instead of using the construction cart as a stand-in for a worker's tool of hard work, the man uses the cart to take a pause in their labor routine, which, as Schwarcz seemed to suggest, potentially subverts oppressive connotations of labor.

One can investigate these significations deeper by examining how de Andrade has continuously explored the male figure in his works. For example, in de Andrade's *Museum of the Northeastern Men*,<sup>284</sup> photographic posters show racialized men from the Northeast posing for the camera. Due to their class and skin color, they are often disenfranchised in Brazil. But when they appear in de Andrade's images, the men are

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<sup>283</sup> Tiago Nogueira, Lilia Moritz Schwarcz, and Jonathas de Andrade, *Lilia Schwarcz Fala Sobre "Eu, mestiço"*, de Jonathas de Andrade | *Conversas Na Galeria*, 2018, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wu36l2x7rug&list=RDCMUC\\_YLlyOlc9cyPNaC0JdNfmg&start\\_radio=1&v=Wu36l2x7rug&t=9](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wu36l2x7rug&list=RDCMUC_YLlyOlc9cyPNaC0JdNfmg&start_radio=1&v=Wu36l2x7rug&t=9).

<sup>284</sup> O Museu do Homem do Nordeste, Museum of the Northeastern Man in English, is a federal museum in Recife. The Museum was founded in 1979 to house the collections of Recife's Museum of Anthropology (1961-78), Museum of Sugar (1963-78), and the Museum of Popular Art (1955-78). In his work, *Museum of the Northeastern Men*, de Andrade created a parody of sorts of the same museum. Governo do Brasil, "Museu Do Homem Do Nordeste," Institutional Website, accessed April 4, 2022, <https://www.gov.br/fundaj/pt-br/composicao/dimeca-1/museu-do-homem-do-nordeste-1#>.

sexualized. With time, de Andrade has increasingly tweaked male portraits in his works to emphasize his subjects' eroticism. For this sexualizing of working men, the artist has also been fiercely criticized, as I will discuss further in this chapter.<sup>285</sup>

This set of *Eu, mestiço* also suggests eroticism. The horizontality of the semi-nude male body resting, laying, and lounging, and the emphasis on the man's groin suggest this could be a sexual pose. Suppose one agrees this body's vulnerability is at odds with the expected image of labor, as Schwarcz suggested. In that case, this ambiguity adds complexity to the image, evading viewers' quick interpretations.

Some other details of these three images are not only ambiguous but also unsettling. One can challenge the idea of Rondinele's peaceful rest by a closer read of the man's bodily representation. In the right-side image, a look at Rondinele's facial expression reveals tension, not relaxation. His eyes are wide open, staring at a ceiling or a sky that the viewer cannot assess. The man's mouth is closed and stressed.

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<sup>285</sup> *New York Times* critic Jason Farago argues, "The power, but also the danger, of "O Peixe" lies in the intimacy of this fictional ethnography—an intimacy that often turns prurient. The fishermen wear nothing but clingy mesh shorts, and Mr. de Andrade is not shy about filming their biceps, thighs, buttocks and abdominals, glistening with sweat and river water. Mr. de Andrade's own racial identity hardly invalidates the difficult questions around voyeurism and objectification that accompany depictions of the black male body, especially as art audiences in both the United States and Brazil remain all too monochromatic. Several sexy man-on-fish sequences in "O Peixe" recall the erotic character of much colonial photography, which allowed uptight Europeans to project sexual fantasies on the racial other. Mr. de Andrade knows this, of course. But I'm really not sure whether "O Peixe" succeeds in critiquing the ways black bodies are sexualized, or whether it ends up reaffirming them." Jason Farago, "When Predator and Prey Are One: A Brazilian Artist's Fish Tale," *The New York Times*, December 22, 2017, sec. Arts, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/26/arts/design/when-predator-and-prey-are-one-a-brazilian-artists-fish-tale.html>.

<sup>285</sup> In Kobena Mercer's famous discussion on Mapplethorpe's photographs in *Welcome to the Jungle*, Mercer argues that among the most disturbing outcomes of the pictures is the desire for the Black male spectator to look at those images but the impossibility of finding an image "we want to see." Instead, what Mercer finds only reaffirms the oppression stemming from objectification. In this first response, Mercer rightfully concludes that Mapplethorpe's images produce fetishes out of the exploitation of Black males, replicating racism and stereotypes. Regarding de Andrade, I will seek to understand how the stereotype of the Northeastern macho man is dismantled in his work, a context that American critics, such as Farago, may have overlooked. Kobena Mercer, *Welcome to the Jungle: New Positions in Black Cultural Studies* (New York: Routledge, 1994).

Rondinele's shoulders are also tense, as if he was constrained to fit inside the construction cart.

As I will discuss in this chapter, de Andrade's *Eu, mestiço* borrows and mixes myriad sources from the visual culture of representation, from ethnographic photography to commercial ad-like aesthetics. The construction of sets such as *Peon-born*, by Rondinele seems aligned to practices such as Kehinde Wiley's queering of European classical painting male portraiture. My reading of *Peon-born*, by Rondinele is inspired by Derek C. Murray's analysis of Wiley's *Femme Piquéé par un Serpent* (2008), a painting that revisits an eponymous 1847 sculpture by French artist, Auguste Clésinger. As Murray writes, Wiley's femme is "a 20-something black man in contemporary clothing ... [reclining] seductively on his back ... as he gazes dispassionately at the viewer." Murray says that Wiley's painting "conveys contrasting themes that rest uncomfortably between sexual suggestiveness and the slow agony of an untimely death."<sup>286</sup>

In de Andrade's image, too, there is a tension between death and sexual readiness. But while Wiley transforms his male subject into a femme, de Andrade's horizontal figure is disturbing. The man's eyes look empty and doll-like.<sup>287</sup> It may be that Rondinele was merely feeling constrained by having to fit into the small space of

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<sup>286</sup> Derek Conrad Murray, *Queering Post-Black Art: Artists Transforming African-American Identity after Civil Rights*, 2016, 108-9.

<sup>287</sup> Curator Thyago Nogueira has also offered a similar reading of this image: "What does a bricklayer do, sprawled on his cart: is him at work, resting, or is he dead?" My translation from original in Portuguese: "... o que faz um pedreiro esparramado em seu carrinho: trabalha, descansa, está morto?" Thyago Nogueira, Bárbara Wagner, and Instituto Moreira Salles, eds., *Corpo a corpo: a disputa das imagens, da fotografia à transmissão ao vivo = Body against body: the battle of images, from photography to live streaming* (São Paulo: IMS, Instituto Moreira Salles, 2017), 19.

the cart. But in the resulting image, it is as if the man is soulless and emptied of agency. His body's stiffness creates an artificiality that the cutout format emphasizes. The falcon board poster is a lightweight, relatively cheap material that does not add substance to the subject's personality. He is not only passive, vulnerable, or sexually available; he is so prostrate he looks barely alive.<sup>288</sup>

Implied physical labor, sexualization, and potential lifelessness all emphasize a narrative of objectification that has been historically part of hegemonic discourses serving to attack, control, and emasculate racialized Black and indigenous men. Scholars on both sides of the Black Atlantic have famously discussed how the Black male body has been subject to extremely controlling stereotypes.<sup>289</sup> By looking at de Andrade's piece, one learns little about the person portrayed. Who is Rondinele? Is the ambiguity in this image powerful enough to challenge the horrific upbringing of

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<sup>288</sup> Derek Conrad Murray, *Queering Post-Black Art: Artists Transforming African-American Identity after Civil Rights*, 2016, 108-9.

<sup>289</sup> A great number of scholars and writers have extensively theorized the history of stereotypes that affect Black people from the African diaspora in the U.S. and in the UK. Among them are Michelle Wallace, Patricia Hill Collins, bell hooks, Stuart Hall, Henry Louis Gates. In the art field, the writing of Thelma Golden, Derek C. Murray, and Kobena Mercer have been fundamental to understanding the visuality of these demeaning discursive formations. In general, what these authors argue is that the history of slavery created racialized modes of control and management of sexuality by inscribing specific stereotypes into African American communities. Although stereotypes have been transformed across time, they often oscillated between docile and threatening constructed notions of African American men and women: Aunt Jeminas, Uncle Toms, Jezebels, Bucks, and many others populated the universe of representation, dominated by whiteness, and often were internalized by African Americans. To counter the emasculation of African American men throughout history, the Black Nationalism and Black Power movements, as bell hooks argued "spoke through the body," producing a narcissistic masculinity that was aggressive and delimiting of the borders that define the category of the black male and how they should look like, act, and think. Analyzing figures such as Eldridge Cleaver, Michelle Wallace, in *Black Macho & SuperWoman*, argued that the ways through which the Black Power movement reacted against the emasculation of the black male remained constrained or inscribed by the expectations of stereotypes created by white hegemonic culture, as well as happened to clash against Black women and Black queer individuals, highly policing the category of blackness and black identity in the US. About this debate, see the famous work of Angela Davis, Patricia Hill Collins, Thelma Goldstein, Stuart Hall, and Kobena Mercer, among so many others.

racialist ethnographic images<sup>290</sup> or the stereotypical depictions of Black men in Brazil?

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In this chapter, I study Jonathas de Andrade's *Eu, mestiço* (2017), a photographic installation of 18 sets of portraits inspired by a 1950s U.S. study on racial relations in Brazil. I look at how de Andrade's work converses with the so-called Brazilian myth of racial democracy while also scrutinizing the U.S. gaze over

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<sup>290</sup> Sueli Carneiro's writing is a mandatory source for the discussion of the objectification of Black people in Brazil, with focus on understanding how this objectification impacts Black women. In the essay "Gênero e raça na sociedade brasileira," Carneiro explains how fictional constructions have sought to control the lives of Black women in Brazil with their roots on systemic colonial rape and the enslavement period. In the early history of those horrific constructions, Black enslaved women were also animalized, either exploited for their labor or reduced to sexual objects for the use and abuse of the white masters, their wives, and children. After the so-called abolition of slavery, those roles are maintained and become normalized. These figurations have with time transformed discursively, but Black women remain stereotyped in the Brazilian society either as sexual objects or as domestic workers such as "empregadas domésticas" or as "mãe-pretas," a stereotype akin to the US's Aunt Jemima. Akin to Wallace's conclusions about Black woman in the US, Carneiro points to the many racialized and gendered violences brought upon Black women in Brazil from white men and women and from Black men. About the impacts of historically stereotyping of Black women in Brazil, Carneiro concludes, "the images historically constructed about black women continue to produce forms of violence currently experienced by them, among which sex tourism and trafficking in women stand out, themes that present the racial cut as a fundamental marker, particularly in the North and Northeast regions. of the country, composed mostly by Afro-descendant populations or mixtures of indigenous peoples." My translation. Original in Portuguese, "... as imagens construídas historicamente sobre as mulheres negras continuam produzindo formas particulares de violências vividas presentemente por elas, dentre as quais destaca-se o turismo sexual e o tráfico de mulheres, temas que apresentam o corte racial como marcador fundamental particularmente nas regiões Norte e Nordeste do país, composta majoritariamente por populações afrodescendentes ou mesclas de indígenas. Sueli Carneiro, "Gênero e raça na sociedade brasileira," in *Escritos de uma vida*, ed. Djamila Ribeiro (São Paulo: Pólen Livros, 2019), 128.

Regarding Black male stereotypes in Brazil, scholars have urged to say that discussion is still very incipient. In "Lá Vem o Negão: Discursos e Estereótipos Sexuais Sobre Os Homens Negros," Henrique Restier da Costa Souza analyzes a popular 1990s hit song in Brazil, *Lá Vem o Negão* by the band Cravo e Canela, which circles around the stereotype of the Brazilian Black male. Restier da Costa Souza concludes that similar tropes discussed by US and British scholars' works impact Black masculinity in Brazil. In this popular song, the lyrics speak of the threats to white masculinity represented through sexually charged, animalized, "humorous" depiction of a Black male. The marked difference between US stereotypical narratives and the stereotype of the Black male in Brazil, who "steals" white women from white men, is that Brazilian popular culture also produces the stereotype also via recreational racism—through jokes and humorous comments that seek to maintain racial hierarchies. Henrique Restier da Costa Souza, "Lá Vem o Negão: Discursos e Estereótipos Sexuais Sobre Os Homens Negros." (1 Seminário Internacional Fazendo Gênero - 11 & 13th Women's Worlds Congress, Florianópolis, Brasil, 2017), [http://www.en.wwc2017.eventos.dype.com.br/resources/anais/1499020802\\_ARQUIVO\\_LAVEMONEGAOFINAL.pdf](http://www.en.wwc2017.eventos.dype.com.br/resources/anais/1499020802_ARQUIVO_LAVEMONEGAOFINAL.pdf). For more on this discussion see the work of Osmundo Arajo Pinho, "Relações raciais e sexualidade," in *Raças: novas perspectivas antropológicas*, 2008, <https://openresearchlibrary.org/content/d3ad0d48-80f8-4e45-bfd7-39e8246cf841>. Osmundo Arajo Pinho, "Qual é a identidade do homem negro?," *Democracia Viva* 22 (2004).

Brazil's racial formations. I investigate how *Eu, mestiço* challenges but also reaffirms societal norms by deploying racial stereotypes.

By examining the methods, aesthetic sources, and features de Andrade uses in *Eu, mestiço*, I discuss the work's visuality in relation to a genealogy of iconographies of *mestiçagem* in Brazil, a genealogy I develop in this dissertation's introduction. Ultimately, I argue de Andrade's *Eu, mestiço* creates a performative and didactic mise-en-scène in which whiteness—as an unnamed universal entity—is transferred to the position of the viewer. But who is the viewer de Andrade seeks to implicate? Because de Andrade has constructed his practice so it crosses borders, going beyond Brazil, it is also possible to consider the whiteness located in his work as a site of transnational exchange of privileges, prejudices, and exoticization. If, at first glance, de Andrade's *Eu, mestiço* seems to soothe international audiences eager to consume the racialized bodies depicted in the work, those being portrayed gaze back at their audience, seeking to make viewers and institutions complicit in the reproducing of whiteness.

de Andrade's work entered the international spotlight in the early 2000s with his participation in exhibitions such as "The Ungovernables," the 2011 New Museum Triennial in New York, and "Under the Same Sun: Art from Latin America Today." The last was a landmark exhibition on Latin American art curated by Pablo León de la Barra at the Guggenheim Museum, also in New York. de Andrade's rise is linked to a moment of global optimism in the contemporary art scene during the early 2000s,



when art institutions sought to exhibit and support representatives from diverse geographies.<sup>291</sup>

de Andrade develops many of his photo installations, like *Eu, mestiço*, through studio shots, interviews, and the participation of social groups ostracized by the Brazilian art circuit and mainstream society. The artist approaches these groups in different ways, sometimes even through anonymous newspaper ads. Writers such as Holland Cotter<sup>292</sup> noticed how de Andrade's practice, like Maria Thereza Alves's (Chapter 1), engages with the fields of ethnography and anthropology. However, while Alves's approach to these fields of knowledge is outspokenly contentious, de Andrade often emulates the role of the ethnographer/anthropologist, but not always with the intent of defying these functions. Most of all, de Andrade is not only interested in creating critical representations of certain Brazilian national narratives but also exports them to international audiences, becoming their mediator.

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<sup>291</sup> Okwui Enwezor famously called attention to the emergence of a "postcolonial constellation" of art practices coming from the Global South beginning in the late 1990s and early 2000s. For Enwezor this postcolonial constellation of practices was constituted of a hybrid relationship between the local aspects of a culture (i.e. ethnicity, artistic traditions and identities) and globalization: diaspora, cultural affinities and the art market and institutions. Enwezor described this scenario as formed by an assemblage of cultures. Within globalism, this assemblage translated as a world of nearness, but also as a clash between centers and margins, the local and global. It is exactly this context that allowed the rise of Jonathas de Andrade's work to the international arena, and the art market. Okwui Enwezor, "The Postcolonial Constellation: Contemporary Art in a State of Permanent Transition," in *Antinomies of Art and Culture: Modernity, Postmodernity, Contemporaneity*, ed. Terry Smith and Nancy Condee (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 2008), 208.

<sup>292</sup> Holland Cotter defined de Andrade's installation, *Posters for the Museum of the Northeastern Man* (2013), at the Guggenheim Museum, as mimicking an ethnographic museum. Cotter says, "Jonathas de Andrade, in a room-size installation called "Posters for the Museum of the Northeastern Man," parodies a specific 1970s ethnographic museum in northern Brazil. The museum sorts out a racial history of the region in terms of neat, and value-laden, strains of DNA: indigenous, African and European. The photographs of contemporary men from the region in Mr. de Andrade's 'promotional' posters simultaneously confound the idea of fixed ethnic identity and reinforce 'male' as a stereotype." Holland Cotter, "Arriving Late to the Party, but Dancing on All the Clichés 'Under the Same Sun,' Art From Latin America, at Guggenheim," *The New York Times*, June 12, 2014, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/13/arts/design/under-the-same-sun-art-from-latin-america-at-guggenheim.html>.

To look at de Andrade's work is to see images and learn about sociopolitical contexts that are specifically Brazilian, and at times, specifically Northeastern.

Writing in a catalog for de Andrade's 2019 solo exhibition "One to One" at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago (MCA), Julieta González says:

In an increasingly globalized and homogenized art world where the local progressively loses value, de Andrade masterfully intertwines a web of references through his work that draws attention to universal issues such as race, class, labor, and the nature of oppression, but that at the same time locates them clearly in the context of his native region of the Nordeste. These recent works, as well as the referential universe that surrounds them, bring us closer to an understanding of the persistence of these problems in Brazil but also in Latin America where modernity constantly reveals itself as the perpetuation of our colonial condition.<sup>293</sup>

Although I agree with the author that de Andrade's practice cunningly weaves together the so-called "local and the global" and many of the social issues the artist articulates in his works—racism, class, and labor struggles—are recurrent across the globe, I am wary it is the global art market that has welcomed de Andrade's work into its international roster of famous artists. One must investigate more carefully why de Andrade's work has become so appealing to international audiences beyond the work's ability to navigate the global art world seamlessly. Furthermore, how have Brazilian audiences attended to these local and global dynamics in their experience of the artwork? In other words, is the "local" only enacted or represented in de

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<sup>293</sup> Julieta González, "Visions of the Nordeste," in *Jonathas de Andrade: One to One*, ed. José Esparza Chong Cuy, Lisette Lagnado, and Museum of Contemporary Art (Chicago, Ill.), MCA Monographs (Chicago, IL : Munich ; New York: Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago ; DelMonico Books·Prestel, 2019), 25.

Andrade's practice for the eyes of the "global"? How differently from global audiences does the work articulate these social struggles to local ones?

José Esparza Chong Cuy reaches a similar conclusion to González about the appeal of de Andrade's work to international audiences in their essay for the same exhibition catalog by stating:

[T]he local specificity of (de Andrade's) insights, alongside his rootedness in Brazil's Nordeste, make his observations and commentaries connect with more people, contracting the one-on-one scale gap so that something about Brazil can speak to, say, something here in the United States and beyond.<sup>294</sup>

Esparza Chong Cuy, who curated de Andrade's solo exhibition at the MCA, also associates the capacity of this artist's work to narrate individual and local histories (what the curator calls "the one-on-one scale gap") with the artist's international success. But, again, a question of how de Andrade's practice achieves such internationalized appeal remains: What is this *something*, in Esparza Chong Cuy's words, that de Andrade's work speaks to for U.S. and European art audiences?

In this chapter, I contend de Andrade deploys a didactic aesthetic to represent racialized identities in a way that appeases Euro-American audiences and convinces them to gaze upon (and consume) racialized bodies from Brazil, such as Northeastern people, *os nordestinos*. de Andrade seizes racialized bodies,<sup>295</sup> putting them at the

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<sup>294</sup> José Esparza Chong Cuy, "Land, House, Body, Voice," in *Jonathas de Andrade: One to One*, ed. Julieta González, Lisette Lagnado, and Museum of Contemporary Art (Chicago, Ill.), MCA Monographs (Chicago, IL : Munich ; New York: Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago ; DelMonico Books·Prestel, 2019), 19.

<sup>295</sup> In my introduction, I will discuss the complex skin color classifications and racialization systems that involve *nordestinos* in Brazil. For example, in . . . Discusses how *nordestinos* have been "accepted" into the category whiteness especially in the cosmopolitan cities of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo because some of them have lighter skin color than Black people in Brazil. Although these groups of *nordestinos* are consider (and consider

center of his work's visual space. In his practice, these bodies are always situated vis-à-vis the national narratives Brazil has built to control and oppress them. In this sense, de Andrade also attracts and appeases white elites or white subjectivities hailing from Brazil.

These Brazilian foundational myths are critical in maintaining coloniality, but they have been rooted in Western narratives since their inception. The individual and local histories de Andrade brings to the art world appeal (and appease) present-day international audiences. These international audiences are fertile soil for the reception of coloniality's narratives. After all, international audiences and institutions still have a constitutive role in constructing idealizations of Brazil's Northeast.<sup>296</sup> These idealizations have been built over centuries of accumulating iconographies, from the fabricated images of Brazilian *cannibals* in colonial travelogues to the exoticization of the bodies of Brazilian women of color and the globalized sex tourism sustained by tropical Brazilian imaginaries.<sup>297</sup>

In his works, de Andrade recruits people, often of the so-called margins of Brazilian society, to enact characters. These characters come to the field of representation to play games of exoticization, eroticization, and consumption with the audience. These characters flirt, seduce, and invite viewers to learn about, discover,

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themselves white) they are still "less" white than white Brazilians who are part of the elite, belong to a higher social class, or have European background.

<sup>296</sup> In my introduction to this dissertation, I discuss how Brazil has been promoted as a tropical paradise worldwide. Brazil's North and Northeast have had a relevant presence in these tropical fantasies and figurations. For example, In *Mama Africa: Reinventing blackness in Bahia*, Patricia Pinho shows, by interviewing Black US tourists who visit Bahia, that an idealized Afro-Brazil still strongly figures in the imaginary of Black populations of the US. See Patricia de Santana Pinho, *Mama Africa: reinventing blackness in Bahia* (Durham [NC: Duke University Press, 2010).

<sup>297</sup> See my discussion in the Introduction.

and consume the “others” of Brazil. Though the aesthetics of the works appeal to its international viewers, de Andrade’s goal is to critique the relationship between the viewer and the viewed. His films and installations produce tensions between the privileged position of its viewers and the work’s focus on racialized characters who, because of their social class or skin color, are depicted as outliers to the art scene.

Though a large number of curators and critics, such as Esparza Chong Cuy and Adrienne Edwards, have praised de Andrade’s practice, others have been more critical of how the works deal with representation, especially because those represented look “underprivileged,” or, as I mentioned, they *look like* they are not part of the art world. Another common critique centers on how de Andrade uses the labor of racialized individuals in artwork sold for high prices in the international art market. In a recent article discussing the ethics of Brazilian artists collaborating with outlying communities, Fabio Cypriano says:

... to what extent are these people portrayed by Jonathas not being exploited as much as any worker who adds value to an object but does not actually participate in its profit and does not have control of their own image?<sup>298</sup>

Although Cypriano’s critique is sharp, I want to stress how Brazilian art critics and writers have often emphasized the working class struggle (a rightfully vital question

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<sup>298</sup> My translation. From Portuguese, “até que ponto essas pessoas retratadas por Jonathas não estão sendo tão exploradas quanto qualquer trabalhador que agrega valor a um objeto, mas não participa de fato de seu lucro, além de não terem controle de sua própria imagem. É importante ressaltar que a obra tem quase 10 anos, portanto não estava inserida no atual contexto de debates.” In this article, Cypriano discusses a series of other documentary practices (for example, Sebastião Salgado’s and Claudia Andjuar’s) by white artists representing non-white communities, but never really addresses that these “ethics” of representation are deeply rooted in a constructed racial hierarchy dynamic between the white who represent and the non-whites who are represented. Fabio Cypriano, “Arte Sem Luta de Classes é Apenas Decoração?,” (Art without Class Struggle. Is it only Decoration?) *Artebrasileiros.com.br* (online magazine), March 24, 2022, <https://artebrasileiros.com.br/opiniao/etica-arte/>.

about *collaborators* who do not profit over their own images) while not examining how de Andrade's works contribute to or oppose visual systems of racialization. To establish fair labor relations between artists and collaborators is fundamental to developing nonexploitative art projects, but would [white] writers be that categorically concerned about collaboration if the collaborators were white?

My guess is that one of the unspoken reasons for such distress around de Andrade's method is that the dynamics of collaboration in his works are not so different from most of the exploitative relationships white elites develop with poor and working class people of color in Brazil. Making these dynamics visible through art, however, becomes too uncomfortable for some critics to digest.

Would the actual dynamics of visual representation change if de Andrade had paid those people to create stereotyped images? Certainly not. Stereotypical images are still demeaning and painful, whether their subjects are paid or unpaid. There are certainly unequal dynamics of collaboration between the artist and those portrayed in de Andrade's practice, but the way critics often dismiss the racial dynamics of de Andrade's visual representation is as alarming as the issues with collaboration.

For example, in the essay, *The Strategy of Seducing and Confounding*, one of the most important Brazilian art critics and curators, Lisette Lagnado, slightly mentions the question of "race" in de Andrade's work. Lagnado writes an overview of de Andrade's practice, yet a discussion about the racial tensions raised by his works does not come to forefront. Talking about *40 nego bom é um real, 40 black candies for R\$ 1.00* (2013) and *Posters for the Museum of the Man of the Northeast*

(2013), two artworks that clearly address racism within rural labor economies,

Lagnado glances over the term “race.” The author says:

Throughout a decade in which de Andrade was invited regularly to exhibit his works, the artist is all the more scathing when he breaks with the authority of the archive and projects homoerotic subjectivity on archetypal images. The economy of tropical banana exports in Latin America and the rural producer’s social contract are foundational to the basic arguments of *40 nego bom é um real*, *40 black candies for R\$ 1.00* (2013) and *Posters for the Museum of the Man of the Northeast* (2013). These images are, however, insufficient to account for an unassailable message: the splendor of a virile and healthy body as a way of praising the worker, as per the ideology of the communist revolution. In such an ambiguous key, the artist produced a photographic essay, *Procurando Jesus (Seeking Jesus)* (2013-14), in which the aim to decolonize the Western Image of Christianity’s central figure does not conceal the artist’s voyeuristic hunt for well-endowed men. More recent debates add another layer of complication. As Cíntia Guedes has said, ‘Black bodies will never be detached from the sign of slavery. Likewise, white bodies will never be detached from the sign of slavery.’ De Andrade’s work acts as a catalyst of counter-narrative and counter-memory on the enduring themes of social theory: race, patriarchy, and regionalism.<sup>299</sup>

Here, Lagnado highlights the queering of labor relations by mentioning the “splendor of a virile and healthy body” from the communist revolution’s ideology and linking this glorification to de Andrade’s representation of homoerotic desires in *40 black candies for R\$ 1.00* (2013) and *Posters for the Museum*. Lagnado quotes another scholar to acknowledge “recent debates” about the understanding of slavery’s history as a marker for both Black and white bodies. Lagnado seems to suggest the racial tensions emerging from the representation of Black bodies in de Andrade’s work are

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<sup>299</sup> Lisette Lagnado, “The Strategy of Seducing and Confounding,” in *Jonathas de Andrade: One to One*, ed. José Esparza Chong Cuy, Julieta González, and Museum of Contemporary Art (Chicago, Ill.), MCA Monographs (Chicago, IL : Munich ; New York: Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago ; DelMonico Books·Prestel, 2019), 29-30.

for the reader to resolve. What happens when white and privileged homoerotic desires hover over Black workers' bodies in Brazilian society?

In addition to some critics' discomfort or evasion in visualizing white Brazilians' exploitative relationships with racialized people, I believe this common oversight is due to the country's wide-ranging discursive and strategic eschewal of "race" and racism, which I discussed in the introduction.<sup>300</sup> In the U.S., critics have approached de Andrade's work with caution but, at moments, have more directly examined how this artist's works deal with the intersection of race, gender, sexuality, and social class than Brazilian critics have. For example, this is how New York Times critic Jason Farago begins his review of the work *O Peixe* (The Fish) (2016) for a 2017 screening at the New Museum in New York City:

After Nigeria, the country with the largest population of people of African descent isn't in Africa at all. It's Brazil — where slaves vastly outnumbered Portuguese colonists, and where today just over half the population identifies as black or pardo (that is, of mixed racial origin). Unlike in the United States, where the legacy of slavery endures in our binary concepts of "black" and "white," Brazilians have a flexible and plural variety of racial categories, and matters of identity in the two most populous countries in the Americas don't always run in parallel. Yet enduring inequities between lighter- and darker-skinned Brazilians, and between the richer south of the country and the poorer north, have always contradicted Brazil's fantasy of racial concord.

Art by and about black Brazilians, as well as indigenous Brazilians, sat at the center of last year's Bienal de São Paulo, whose optimistic, at times naïve spiritualism was meant as a rebuke to Western rationality. Among the Bienal's standout works was "O Peixe" ("The Fish"), a seductive and technically accomplished film by the young artist Jonathas de Andrade, shot in the country's majority-black northeast

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<sup>300</sup> See Introduction.



and depicting fishermen who use a very uncommon technique to kill their catches.<sup>301</sup>

Though Farago addresses how de Andrade's *O Peixe* is also about the sexualization and queering of those fishermen's images later in their review, the review begins and ends with an emphasis on the artwork's racial dynamics. Still, whether outside or inside Brazil, the question of "race," although clearly present in de Andrade's practice, has been left mostly undertheorized in the writing of critics who have engaged with this artist's practice.<sup>302</sup>

An exception to this observation is Lilia Schwarcz's 2019 review of the previously mentioned show at the MCA. As one of the most important anthropologists and historians of racial relations in Brazil, Schwarcz directly contextualizes de Andrade's practice within the racialist narratives of Brazil she has inspected throughout her vast career. Schwarcz examines the works' visual representations and how they dialogue with Brazil's historical context. For example,

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<sup>301</sup> Jason Farago, "When Predator and Prey Are One: A Brazilian Artist's Fish Tale," *The New York Times*, January 26, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/13/arts/design/under-the-same-sun-art-from-latin-america-at-guggenheim.html>. I disagree with Farago when they state that "art by and about Black Brazilians, as well as indigenous Brazilians, sat at the center" of the 2016's São Paulo Bienal. When I reviewed that edition of the Biennial, I wrote this: "Even while noting the show's affectionate play between a revived eco-aesthetics and political-ethical knowledge, I wonder if 'Incerteza Viva' ever falls into the old trap of exoticism, especially when it comes to the unspecialized public that will visit the venue, specifically the Brazilian middle class. While my expectation is that young students from public schools will empathize with the diversity depicted in many works, and that upper classes' racial and ethnic prejudices can somehow be broken during the visit, I believe that this biennial partially contradicts some of the themes it so boldly aims to emit. How, for instance, are we to account for the fact that so few Brazilian indigenous artists have been selected? Or, how are we to address the lack of support or even racism by the art field in regards to indigenous artists in Brazil? In this year's edition of the Brazilian PIPA Prize—which launches many artists' international careers—two indigenous artists received a popular vote award: Jaider Esbell won and Arissana Pataxó took second place, but they are not included in the exhibition." Tatiane Schilaro Santa Rosa, "A São Paulo Biennial in Praise of Uncertainties," *ARTnews* (blog), September 13, 2016, <https://www.artnews.com/art-news/reviews/a-sao-paulo-biennial-in-praise-of-uncertainties-6941>.

<sup>302</sup> See note 11. I refer here to the writings in the catalog of de Andrade's solo exhibition, "One to One," at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, 2019.

this is what Schwarcz says about *Posters for the Museum of the Man of the Northeast* (2013):

In an effort to align the museum more closely with its postcolonial subjects, de Andrade placed small ads in local newspapers soliciting workers to pose for posters for the institution. The resulting *Cartazes para o Museu do Homem do Nordeste (Posters for the Museum of the Man of the Northeast, 2013)* vary in format depending on the nature of each encounter: some subjects sit for intimate portraits; others pose heroically, chests bared; others still are in repose, apparently enjoying the end of a long working day. There are many Northeastern Men here, forcing viewers to confront problematic stereotypes that traffic in ethnic exoticism. De Andrade's photographs carry an erotic charge that is highly ambivalent. Are these men being objectified by the museum, its patrons or the artist himself? By lending a human face to an anthropological display, the work prompts viewers to question their own relationship to all such institutions, and the living cultures they treat with false objectivity.<sup>303</sup>

While Schwarcz praises de Andrade for “bringing viewers to question” their complicity with the false objectification of “living cultures,” the review does not touch on the taboo of racism, explore which “living cultures” these are, nor which viewers are more likely to view living cultures with “false objectivity.”

The racial tensions in de Andrade's work elicit these conflicting reactions, or even embarrassments, which art scholars and writers seem to dodge. I contend it is around the representation of “race” and its intersection with gender and sexuality that a gap exists between the local and the global audiences' reception of de Andrade's work.

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<sup>303</sup> Lilia Moritz Schwarcz, “Jonathas de Andrade Gives Voice to the Dispossessed,” *Frieze* (online), June 2, 2019, <https://www.frieze.com/article/jonathas-de-andrade-gives-voice-dispossessed>.

As a white Latina who has lived in the U.S. for quite some time, I am both repelled by and attracted to *Eu, mestiço*. Over the years in which I have analyzed and experienced the work, I have changed my opinion about it multiple times. I have tried to understand these images because of the reasons I have outlined and how de Andrade carefully constructed them. Still, the more I study the work, the more I find it fraught and dangerous. Fraught because de Andrade does not seem to be entirely aware of the perils of representation the work carries, and dangerous because that naivety is not a privilege non-white people can afford.

On the contrary, naivety is one of the most potent weapons of whiteness. White naivety manifests across fields of knowledge and real world practices. To be unaware of the effects of whiteness is to uphold it. To be unaware of how whiteness operates is to be complicit with its systems of oppression.<sup>304</sup>

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<sup>304</sup> Here I refer to Eve Tuck's and K. W. Yang's articulation of what they call "settler moves to innocence" in "Decolonization is Not a Metaphor." They wrote, "Directly and indirectly benefitting from the erasure and assimilation of Indigenous peoples is a difficult reality for settlers to accept. The weight of this reality is uncomfortable; the misery of guilt makes one hurry toward any reprieve. In her 1998 Master's thesis, Janet Mawhinney analyzed the ways in which white people maintained and (re)produced white privilege in self-defined anti-racist settings and organizations. She examined the role of storytelling and self-confession - which serves to equate stories of personal exclusion with stories of structural racism and exclusion - and what she terms 'moves to innocence,' or "strategies to remove involvement in and culpability for systems of domination" (p. 17). Mawhinney builds upon Mary Louise Fellows and Sherene Razack's (1998) conceptualization of, 'the race to innocence', "the process through which a woman comes to believe her own claim of subordination is the most urgent, and that she is unimplicated in the subordination of other women" (p. 335)." Mawhinney's thesis theorizes the self-positioning of white people as simultaneously the oppressed and never an oppressor, and as having an absence of experience of oppressive power."

Citing Janet Mawhinney, Tuck and W. Yang speak more broadly about the settler state, and more specifically about how settler culture seeks to produce "easy" spaces of reconciliation with indigenous people that are, in fact, irreconcilable with decolonization. As these authors also argue, and as I point out in this dissertation, whiteness intersects with coloniality, or settler colonialism, to use Tuck and W. Yang's preferred term. White culture often insists in its inability to understand non-whites' experiences. Worst, as Mawhinney argues in the quote above, white people and white culture often deny being agents of, or complicit with "oppressive power." White people's failure "to understand" non-white people's cultures and lived experiences are most often true. But to insist on an innocence, naivety, or ignorance of how white culture executes oppressive power is to uphold whiteness. Tuck and W. Yang define settler moves to innocence as "those strategies or positionings that attempt to relieve the settler of feelings of guilt or responsibility without giving up land or power or privilege, without having to change much at

In 2015, I reviewed “Jonathas de Andrade: recent works,” a solo exhibition at the New York gallery Alexander and Bonin. I wrote about *Posters for the Museum of the Man of the Northeast* (2013) and *40 nego bom é um real, 40 black candies for R\$ 1.00* (2013), a much older group of artworks by de Andrade, saying:

de Andrade provided that group of workers with a temporary empowerment, which may have survived at least the span of a camera’s shutter release: the piece consolidates the artist’s attempt to break with stereotypes, even though one could question what happens with that subversion when an installation with portraits of minorities goes for sale in a gallery. The flip side of that question, though, is de Andrade’s continuing concern with labor and exploitation, which is part of a broader project on reviewing his own position as an artist: he stands on a contradictory threshold between being implicated within exploitation and enacting the role of a pseudo-anthropologist. And it is through humor and fiction that de Andrade sustains this contradiction, as when he adopts the supposedly friendly word “nego” to reveal prejudice. As a Brazilian myself, I am also interested in what we, as spectators, do when these stories pass on to our hands. To select the best portraits of the *Museum*, or to scavenge information among classified ads often makes us smile, but it may also make us think about the position we occupy: of those who exploit, of those who observe in silence, of those who commiserate, or of those who take action.<sup>305</sup>

Again, like Cypriano’s and other writers’ critiques of de Andrade’s work, I have remained deeply alarmed by these troubling power dynamics through which de Andrade develops his collaborations. I believe *Eu, mestiço*, created in 2017 after *Posters*, went a step further than de Andrade’s earlier pieces to account for whiteness

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all.” Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, “Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor,” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1, no. 1 (2012), 9-10.

<sup>305</sup> In this review, I mistakenly I used the term minorities, which I have avoided in more recent years. This term is misleadingly used to categorize non-white populations that are Brazil’s majority. The use of the term can be understood as another tactics of whiteness in the downgrading of non-white populations, a tactic that I was complicit with. Tatiane Santa Rosa, “Jonathas de Andrade: Subverting Cheap Labor and Racism in Brazil,” *Artcritical.Com* (online magazine), April 28, 2015, <https://artcritical.com/2015/04/28/tatiane-schilaro-on-jonathas-andrade/>.

while still making use of representational ambiguities. Still, to insist on reproducing ambiguity when the topic is whiteness is riskier because whiteness feeds off vagueness.<sup>306</sup> Moreover, whiteness has become increasingly visible in Brazil, as I address in my introduction when I discuss Patricia Pinho's work.

Pinho has coined the term *branquitude injuriada*, or injured whiteness, to explain how white culture in Brazil has become more vocal in recent years. This (re)surfacing of whiteness is a reaction against the “the social ascent of poor and Black people during the governments of the PT (Worker's Party) which represented, for the traditional Brazilian white middle class, a mistake, an injury.”<sup>307</sup> According to Pinho, PT's public policies increased Black and racialized people's access to social justice, which “affected the intersecting lines of class and race that preserved the superiority of [white people's] social status and the comfort of their racial neutrality.”<sup>308</sup> With the return of the neofascism and authoritarianism associated with whiteness in Brazil, it has become even more urgent to oppose whiteness clearly and vocally, too—a scenario in which ambiguity, naivety, and other forms of subtleties can be more harmful to non-white populations.

While the racialized dignified workers in de Andrade's photographs have compelled me to engage with the work, I am also reminded that my Italian and Portuguese ancestors, as I discuss in the prologue, came to Brazil (knowingly or

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<sup>306</sup> See my Introduction.

<sup>307</sup> Patricia de Santana Pinho, “‘A Casa Grande Surta Quando a Senzala Aprende a Ler’: Resistência Antirracista e o Desvendamento da Branquitude Injuriada no Brasil,” *Confluenze. Rivista di Studi Iberoamericani*, June 15, 2021, 32-55 Pages, <https://doi.org/10.6092/ISSN.2036-0967/13085>, 44.

<sup>308</sup> Patricia De Santana Pinho, “‘A Casa Grande Surta Quando a Senzala Aprende a Ler’: Resistência Antirracista e o Desvendamento da Branquitude Injuriada no Brasil,” *Confluenze. Rivista di Studi Iberoamericani*, June 15, 2021, 32-55 Pages, <https://doi.org/10.6092/ISSN.2036-0967/13085>, 44.

unknowingly) in the 20th century, albeit poor, to replace recently “freed” Black and indigenous peoples as a workforce due to the country’s policy of *branqueamento*.<sup>309</sup>

A couple of years after arriving in the state of São Paulo in the 1910s, my family acquired farm lots, which ensured they did not starve, and later owned property; at the same time, thousands of people across Brazil still do not own a piece of land.<sup>310</sup>

White Brazilians avoid acknowledging that history; a majority follow national narratives, subscribing to a discourse of self-pity and hardship associated with the arrival of white European immigrants to Brazil in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, which only upholds whiteness and its adjacent racisms.<sup>311</sup>

For these reasons, at the same time I analyze *Eu, mestiço*’s calling out of whiteness, I am also called to oppose how the artwork operates. I am called to expose how loosely it makes racialized people visible while still stereotyping them. I write this chapter within this entanglement because I believe to disentangle *Eu, mestiço* is also to point a finger at whiteness.

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<sup>309</sup> See full discussion in my Introduction. Writing about *branqueamento* (whitening) of the Brazilian population during the Imperial ruling, right after the proclamation of the end of slavery, Sales Augusto do Santos says, “In the 1870s, the concern to formulate a manpower policy to ‘supply agriculture’s need for field hands’ became a definite item on the political agenda of the government of the empire and those of several provinces, notably that of São Paulo, where the planter class was represented among holders of the highest public offices . . . . Thus it was that the coffee growers and the central and provincial governments decided that the institution of free labor would be introduced by means of immigration from Europe (Kowarick, 1987:100).” Dos Santos continues, “Opinions varied not only as to future management-worker relationships but also to what racial type should form Brazil’s working class, for the question of race was fundamental to any definition. Some of the conference participants advocated the use of ‘national labor’ after abolition . . . . Another, no less representative cohort of conference participants . . . insisted that the new type of worker and future citizen of Brazil had to be a foreigner. . . . Although the conference had been convoked to present solutions to the “manpower shortage crisis” . . . , it was the question of race that turned out to be the central point of discussion.” Sales Augusto Dos Santos and Laurence Hallewell, “Historical Roots of the” Whitening” of Brazil,” *Latin American Perspectives* 29, no. 1 (2002): 61–82, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3185072>.

<sup>310</sup> Movimento dos Sem-Terra

<sup>311</sup> See Fábio Koifman, *Imigrante Ideal: O Ministério Da Justiça e a Entrada de Estrangeiros No Brasil (1941-1945)*, 1a ed (Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2012).

## 2.2. *Eu, mestiço*: Setting the Stage

According to de Andrade, *Eu, mestiço* is a response to two previous pieces he developed in the U.S: the performance *A Study of Race and Class – Bahia >< New York* (2015) that was part of Performa 15 in New York City and a similar performance that took place at the exhibition Site Santa Fé. In these performances, de Andrade approached people on the streets of New York City and Santa Fé and asked about their experience with racism. de Andrade also photographed those who responded to his questions, later creating temporary wall installations with photos accumulated throughout the exhibitions. Although *Eu, mestiço* is a direct result of these two pieces,<sup>312</sup> the work stands on its own. Unlike *A Study of Race and Class*, *Eu, Mestiço* is not a performance but a permanent installation in which the only people portrayed are Brazilians.

*Eu, Mestiço*'s 18 sets of portraits were first exhibited together in 2017 at the Instituto Moreira Salles in São Paulo,<sup>313</sup> which commissioned the work, and a second time in 2018 at the Alexander and Bonin gallery in New York City (Figure 17), which

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<sup>312</sup> According to Jonathas de Andrade, during his talk with Adrienne Edwards at the Alexander & Bonin gallery in New York City, March 2018. De Andrade said, "This project (*A Study of Race and Class – Bahia >< New York* (2015) was the first moment of this research (*Eu, mestiço*)." 2'01". Jonathas de Andrade and Adrienne Edwards, *Jonathas de Andrade and Adrienne Edwards in Conversation* (Alexander and Bonin Gallery, New York City, 2018), <https://vimeo.com/260239587>.

<sup>313</sup> Instituto Moreira Salles, founded in 1992, is one of the most prestigious non-profit art institutions in Brazil with headquarters in Poços de Caldas (Minas Gerais), Rio de Janeiro, and São Paulo. The Institute organizes exhibitions, talks, events in the areas of literature, cinema, music, and contemporary art. Its collection has become the most important photography collections in Brazil, with around two million images that span from the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Instituto Moreira Salles, "Sobre o IMS," *Instituto Moreira Salles* (website), March 24, 2022, <https://ims.com.br/sobre-o-ims/>.

represents de Andrade in the U.S. The sets are often displayed on their own, but cover the entire expanse of a wall from top to bottom, reaching the ceiling when installed together. This arrangement seems to mimic illustrations displayed on the pages of a book, a set-up emphasized by text tags running along the entire photographic installation.

This “book page” effect is intentional. *Eu, mestiço* was inspired by the book *Race and Class in Rural Brazil*, an anthropological study published in 1952 by UNESCO and Columbia University. The study published the fieldwork findings of four anthropologists in the United States and their Brazilian assistants. It was conducted in four small towns in Bahia, Minas Gerais, and Amazonas.

*Race and Class in Rural Brazil* begins and ends with the problematic conclusion that “throughout [Brazil’s] enormous area of a half continent, race prejudice and discrimination are subdued as compared to the situation in many countries.”<sup>314</sup> The notion of Brazil as a racial democracy is reaffirmed throughout the book, based on the work of Brazilian authors from the early 20th century, such as Gilberto Freyre. For Charles Wagley, the main author, and the other scholars in the book, “Brazil has no ‘race problem,’” and the book’s goal is to study Brazil’s “race relations under rural conditions, but it is also a study [...] of the relationships between social classes in the rural scene.”<sup>315</sup>

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<sup>314</sup> Charles Wagley, ed., *Race and Class in Rural Brazil* (Paris, France: United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, 1952), 7.

<sup>315</sup> Charles Wagley, ed., *Race and Class in Rural Brazil* (Paris, France: United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, 1952), 7.



*Race and Class in Rural Brazil* is part of UNESCO's response to the rise of Nazism and the Holocaust in the 1940s.<sup>316</sup> In a 1950s general conference, UNESCO approved a study of Brazilian racial relations and a program against illiteracy the organization had previously sanctioned. The new project's goal was to study Afro-Brazilian and indigenous populations to best "integrate them" into a modern society.<sup>317</sup>

*Race and Class in Rural Brazil* is one of multiple studies on racial relations in Brazil sponsored by UNESCO throughout the 1950s. The *Projeto Unesco*, as scholars in Brazil have called it, was idealized by Brazilian Arthur Ramos, led by UNESCO's Alfred Métraux, and later developed by a large team of European, American, and Brazilian scholars. *Race and Class in Rural Brazil* was primarily planned by American anthropologists at Columbia University specializing in Brazil and Latin America. As I will discuss later, although these studies catalyzed knowledge production in Brazil, they also served to feed the Western gaze about Brazilian notions of "race."

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<sup>316</sup> Marcos Chor Maio, "O Projeto Unesco e a Agenda Das Ciências Sociais No Brasil Dos Anos 40 e 50," *Revista Brasileira de Ciências Sociais* 14, no. 41 (October 1999), <https://doi.org/10.1590/S0102-69091999000300009>, 116.

<sup>317</sup> Chor Maio cites Arthur Ramos by saying, "Arthur Ramos considered it necessary, together with the program against illiteracy already implemented by Unesco in collaboration with the Brazilian government, to pay special attention to the 'study of black and indigenous groups for the task of their integration into the modern world.'" My translation from Portuguese: "Arthur Ramos considerava ser necessária, junto com o programa contra o analfabetismo já implementado pela Unesco em colaboração com o governo brasileiro, uma atenção especial ao 'estudo dos grupos negro e indígena para a tarefa de sua integração ao mundo modern.'" Marcos Chor Maio, "O Projeto Unesco e a Agenda Das Ciências Sociais No Brasil Dos Anos 40 e 50," *Revista Brasileira de Ciências Sociais* 14, no. 41 (October 1999), <https://doi.org/10.1590/S0102-69091999000300009>, 142.

The study's main findings did not challenge the notion of racial democracy.<sup>318</sup>

On the contrary, the book's scholarly reception in and outside Brazil contributed to the popular assumption that race in Brazil is secondary to social class in determining racism within the society.<sup>319</sup> Even more problematic is how scholars devised the study's method, which consisted of presenting a pictorial test, or portraits of specific

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<sup>318</sup> As I discuss in this dissertation's Introduction, in Brazil, dominant discourses on racial miscegenation are associated with a false notion: the idea that the country is a fulfilled *racial democracy*, or the belief that whites and non-whites have had or achieved the same rights and standards of living. Sociologist Antonio Guimarães argues that this misleading idea can be defined as the "claim that whites and nonwhites can interact without restricting the rights and life chances of nonwhites." Such a myth, Guimarães states, has been constructed by scholarship and disseminated as a popular belief, particularly during the period from the 1930s to 1950s. For Guimarães, it is first around the concept of *mestiçagem* that racial democracy was introduced into sociology, to be further promoted by the government as a national motto. As Guimarães argues, *mestiçagem* became a structural discourse to guarantee the process of "Brazil's democratization." According to Guimarães, for one of the most famous advocates of *mestiçagem*, anthropologist Gilberto Freyre (1900-87), *mestiçagem* "would prevent the nation's fragmentation into races [and] promote the social ascension of mestiços." Antonio Sergio Guimaraes, "Sociology and Racial Inequality: Challenges and Approaches in Brazil," in *Comparative Perspectives on Afro-Latin America*, by Kwame Dixon and John Burdick (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2012), <http://public.eblib.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=906675>.

<sup>319</sup> See my full discussion in the Introduction. One of the most recent studies to challenge these popular claims is Silvio Romero's *Racismo Estrutural*, in which Romero discusses racism as part of a social structure's fabric—a set of systemic relationships manifested through ideology, politics, rights, and economy. Against the belief that racism in Brazil is based on a subject's social class, Romero argues, "In Brazil, the denial of racism and the ideology of racial democracy are supported by the discourse of meritocracy. If there is no racism, the blame for the condition itself lies with black people who, eventually, did not do everything they could. In an unequal country like Brazil, meritocracy endorses inequality, misery and violence, as it makes it difficult to take effective political positions against racial discrimination, especially on the part of state power. In the Brazilian context, the discourse of meritocracy is highly racist, since it promotes the ideological conformation of individuals to racial inequality." My translation. Portuguese Original: No Brasil, a negação do racismo e a ideologia da democracia racial sustentam-se pelo discurso da meritocracia. Se não há racismo, a culpa pela própria condição é das pessoas negras que, eventualmente, não fizeram tudo que estava a seu alcance. Em um país desigual como o Brasil, a meritocracia avaliza a desigualdade, a miséria e a violência, pois dificulta a tomada de posições políticas efetivas contra a discriminação racial, especialmente por parte do poder estatal. No contexto brasileiro, o discurso da meritocracia é altamente racista, uma vez que promove a conformação ideológica dos indivíduos à desigualdade racial." Silvio Almeida and Djamila Ribeiro, *Racismo Estrutural*, Feminismos Plurais (São Paulo: Sueli Carneiro : Pólen, 2019). Location 775.

More specifically about the *Race and Class* study, for example, in the chapter "Race Relations in an Amazon Community," Wagley uses the number of interracial marriages in the village of Itá as proof that segregation exists based on class rather than race. Although the scholar admits there were no marriages between Black and whites in their study, he writes about inter-racial marriages between whites and mestiços. He says, "These marriages between people of the same physical type or of approximately the same colour are not determined by any restrictions against inter-racial marriages. They result from the fact that people tend to marry roughly within the same social stratum. Since people of one stratum tend to be of similar physical type, marriage in one's own stratum means marriage between people roughly similar in physical type. That marriages between people of different physical types are not prohibited, not even discouraged, was attested by our Itá informants, who remembered numerous cases of branco men and caboclos marrying branco wives. Whatever segregations exists is based on class rather than race." Charles Wagley, ed., *Race and Class in Rural Brazil* (Paris, France: United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, 1952), 138.

“races,” to interviewees and asking them about the pictured individual’s physical traits (e.g., skin color, hair, facial features) and attributes, which were listed as “wealth, beauty, intelligence, religiousness, honesty, and ability to work.”<sup>320</sup>

Although the scholars argue they tried to choose what they considered neutral images, the method itself was racist in how it labeled the portrayed people, leading the interviewees to categorize the images by racial types and stereotypes using a list of categories in the interviewer’s questionnaire.

In *Eu, mestiço*, de Andrade reproduces the attributes and titles given to the different “types” from the book. After copying and scanning words directly from the book, de Andrade printed them on falcon board as singular rectangular tags. He displays these tags around the sets of portraits, often below or across the installed images. According to de Andrade, the book’s authors and editors did not include the original photographs used during the interviews conducted for the study. Instead, they replaced the original pictures with black and white images by famous French photographer Pierre Verger, whose images illustrate the book’s pages.<sup>321</sup>

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<sup>320</sup> Harry W. Hutchinson, author of Chapter 1, “Race Relations in a Rural Community of the Bahian Reconcavo,” says, “The concepts and fixed ideas which the people of Vila Reconcavo have of these racial types were also revealed in their responses to a pictorial questionnaire devised in the field. A series of eight photographs of people unknown to those answering the questionnaire was shown, consisting of a male and a female of each of the four major racial types, the caboclo, the preto, the mulato, and the branco. An attempt was made to use photographs giving no clue to the possible class position of the eight persons. However, the photographs which we were able to secure were not entirely satisfactory for our purposes in Vila Reconcavo. The picture of the caboclo male was a man of middle age, but a type considered in the local conception as having a strong personality, while the caboclo woman was older and certainly not simpática (pleasant) in the local view. The two pretos were both unmistakably pretos, an both young. The mulato male and female differed one from the other as the man was definitely a common mulato type, while the woman was almost a Morena mulata rather than a “pure mulata. She was young and considered much more simpático than any of the four women presented. The two whites were not distinguished in any way, and there was doubt in the minds of the people answering the questionnaire as to where these two were pure white or not. The questionnaires were given to 85 people.” Charles Wagley, ed., *Race and Class in Rural Brazil* (Paris, France: United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, 1952), 35.

<sup>321</sup> More research is necessary to prove this claim, but it does seem that Verger’s photographs were not used in the pictorial tests conducted by Wagley’s team, as I will discuss further.

For de Andrade, “the images used in the 1950s research induced participants to be biased and seeing the book with our eyes not only offers a violent portrayal of racism at that time but attests to how similarly it is expressed today, given that many of the expressions are still current.”<sup>322</sup> In *Eu, mestiço*, the artist decided to take the absence of the images that shaped the study’s resulting racial types as a starting point. He sought to reimagine the portraits deployed during the interviews.

It is telling that the “type images” Wagley’s team used are absent from the book. Although the reason for this replacement is unknown, I find it odd that images that served as a foundation for the data collected in three of the study’s four chapters are missing from the publication. They could have been included in addition to Verger’s photographs in an appendix or annex, but they were not.<sup>323</sup> It is also telling that, throughout the three chapters, the authors highlighted the limitations of the pictorial test they used. They called attention to what they named “problems” with the images but still used the photographs as “proof” of racial hierarchies and racisms they expected the interviewees to confirm after studying the communities.<sup>324</sup> One should

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<sup>322</sup> Jonathas de Andrade, “Jonathas de Andrade,” Personal Website, n.d., <http://www.jonathasdeandrade.com.br/>.

<sup>323</sup> See Figure 34. In a UNESCO Courier from 1952, a periodical publication that fully illustrates the findings and excerpts of the projects show different images from the book depicting one of the chapters. I believe these may be the missing images, but I need to do more research to confirm. Harry W. Hutchinson, “Shades of Colour and of Meaning,” *Courier: Publication of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization* V, no. 8–9 (September 1952).

<sup>324</sup> For example, in a discussion on Monte Serrat (Bahia), “For the purpose of the racial apperception test, informants were assigned to the three broad racial categories we have been using, on the basis of their approximate similarity to the standard racial types. This procedure is faulty inasmuch as it does not take into account the frequent social and psychological transmutation which objective racial characteristics are likely to undergo. It is difficult to determine what portion of the 32 individuals classified by the observer as physically similar to the photographs of the Negro actually considered themselves to be similar to the extent of being able to make an identification. Many of those classified as Negro laughed heartily when they examined the Negroes’ portraits: “Is this a man or an animal?” one jested. “How disgraceful! Look at the size of his lips!” exclaimed another. Since the society recognizes a continuum of racial form from most white to most Negro with a large array of intermediate types, the tendency is to flee from the crushing stigmata of the lowest type by taking advantage of either slight physical deviation or by emphasizing social rank achieved on the basis of non-racial criteria.” Charles

consider de Andrade's *Eu, mestiço* exists in and inhabits this gap, or the absence of these images.

### 2.3 A Well-Crafted Mise-En-Scene: Constructing *Eu, mestiço*

*Eu, mestiço* is composed of 18 sets of portraits, with each set including multiple photographs, from a three to 50 images each. According to de Andrade, the groups of images illustrate physical and moral attributes the authors of *Race and Class in Rural Brazil* used in ethnographic categorizations. The list of titles reads as follows:

“*Indomável por Zuleide* (Unmanageable by Zuleide),”

“*Branqueada por Faustina* (Whitened by Faustina),”

“*Nascido Peão por Rondinele* (Peon-Born by Rondinele),”

“*Calunia por Karinny* (Slander by Karinny),”

“*Malandro por Emanuel* (Trickster by Emanuel),”

“*Menosprezo por Oristes* (Belittle by Oristes),”

“*Sobrecarregado por Oristes* (Overcharged by Oristes),”

“*Desconfiado por Adriana* (Suspicious by Adriana),”

“*Pigmentação por Avelar* (Pigmentation by Avelar),”

“*Gritos por Santos* (Shouts by Santos),”

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Wagley, ed., *Race and Class in Rural Brazil* (Paris, France: United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, 1952), 35.

“*Triunfo por Shauanne e Yasmin* (Triumph by Shauanne and Yasmin),”  
“*Bobagem por Villarinho* (Nonsense by Villarinho),”  
“*Escandaloso por Barbara* (Scandalous by Barbara),”  
“*Apatia por Fernanda* (Unwillingness by Fernanda),”  
“*Posições por Monica* (Positions by Monica),”  
“*Opulencia por Mendes* (Opulence by Mendes),”  
“*Senhorio por Reginaldo* (Landlord by Reginaldo),” and  
“*Armadilha por Reylton* (Pitfalls by Reylton).”

Of the 18 sets, half of them are half-body portraits. The other bulk of image groups are full-body cutout portraits of people performing different actions, such as laying down, sitting, standing, or falling.

The portraits’ facial expressions and emotional states tend to illustrate the adjectives in the works’ titles. Similarly, full-body cutout photographs serve as depictions of the actions in their titles. However, as my earlier discussion about *Peon-born by Rondinele* suggests, the relationship between image and text (either title or tags) is not as straightforward as it appears. For example, the set *Scandalous by Barbara* (Figure 25-26) shows Barbara, a Black woman with eyes and mouth wide open, an expression that could be read as scandalous but also surprised or frightened.

In the version of the work available at Alexander and Bonin, there are English translations of the original Portuguese nouns and verbs that served as titles to each set. This combination of words and images shapes the way viewers interpret the

artwork; the titles can go unnoticed, but they still direct viewers to read the subjects of each image in specific ways. In addition to the labels, each set has words printed on the same type of falcon board as the photographs. These words go along with the images and can total up to 60 tags. They are either installed behind the pictures or as lines below them, depending on the installation space available (Figure 17). These tags contain both English and Portuguese words. The latter are italicized in the versions installed in the United States. The Portuguese expressions in the titles do not always translate well. Some of these words are not translated in the book—sometimes they are popular expressions or regionalisms that are hard to convert into English. These linguistic hiccups disclose the limitations of the scholarly gaze over an object of study or the U.S. gaze over Brazil as a racial laboratory for the Western world. By selecting these words, de Andrade emphasizes contradictions and failures within these transnational exchanges.

*Eu, mestiço*'s 18 sets have been installed altogether only twice so far. Installations such as de Andrade's solo exhibition at Alexander and Bonin show the image groups distributed all over the walls. For example, three or more sets occupy the same walls, installed above, next, or below each other (Figure 17). This crowded set-up reminds one of the pages of a book but can also evoke commercial advertising in urban spaces due to the size of each set.

In a talk with curator Adrienne Edwards, de Andrade explained he opted for the falcon board because it is a mass-produced material manufacturers can easily cut into various dimensions and shapes. It is also material that refers to the professions of

some individuals portrayed in the artwork.<sup>325</sup> According to de Andrade, he chose the falcon board for its cheap appearance, as cardboard is commonly used in street signage in Brazilian cities. For example, in large cities such as São Paulo, informal workers earn income by filling the gaps of municipal recycling efforts, which are usually sparse or faulty, by collecting and taking large quantities of cardboard to recycling companies. Moreover, curator Thyago Nogueira argues de Andrade's cutout choices could have been inspired by the cutout backgrounds of Albert Frisch (1840-c.1905), who removed the backgrounds of his ethnographic photographs to change the context of the indigenous peoples he portrayed.<sup>326</sup>

Within this work's framework, the falcon board can refer to the life of the poor and working class in Brazilian cities; but the process of producing the cutouts is highly specialized by using a laser cut. The cheap appearance and short durability have not kept private collectors and institutions from acquiring the work, which can simply be reprinted in case of damage.<sup>327</sup> In fact, blue-chip museums, such as the Museum of Modern Art in New York, have included *Eu, mestiço* sets in their collections.<sup>328</sup>

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<sup>325</sup> Jonathas de Andrade and Adrienne Edwards, *Jonathas de Andrade and Adrienne Edwards in Conversation* (Alexander and Bonin Gallery, New York City, 2018), <https://vimeo.com/260239587>.

<sup>326</sup> I will discuss the issue with such an approach in the sections below. Nogueira says, "Some of Jonathas' figures had their background cut off, creating a visual approximation to the famous photographs of indigenous peoples produced by German Albet Frisch (1840-c.1905) around 1865. When he hid the background of his negatives to change the context of his characters, Frisch also constructed inhabitants of a devastated and empty world. The cardboard cuts of Jonathas reinforce the sculptural typification of figures at the same time they approximate them to the disposable clichés of publicity." Thyago Nogueira, Bárbara Wagner, and Instituto Moreira Salles, eds., *Corpo a corpo: a disputa das imagens, da fotografia à transmissão ao vivo = Body against body: the battle of images, from photography to live streaming* (São Paulo: IMS, Instituto Moreira Salles, 2017), 19-20.

<sup>327</sup> Email correspondence between author and Alexander and Bonin gallery, May 2022.

<sup>328</sup> New York's Museum of Modern Art acquired *Eu, mestiço* set *Opulência / Opulence* by Mendes. The Museum of Modern Art, "Jonathas de Andrade, *Opulência / Opulence* Por Mendes, 2017," *The Museum of Modern Art's Collection* (blog), March 24, 2022, <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/288414>.



de Andrade's photographs were staged and shot in a studio. Most of the images present a careful balance between highlights and shadows; there are many grays and neutral tones instead of dramatic chiaroscuros. de Andrade has constructed well-balanced contrast areas in which shadows cover a face or other parts of a body to emphasize facial expressions or features. As de Andrade has stated in interviews and writings about the work, he created this framework specifically to transpose the viewer to mid-20th century aesthetics, borrowing from *The Fairburn System of Visual Reference* and ethnographic iconography of that period, such as Pierre Verger's photography and Jean Rouch's films.<sup>329</sup> de Andrade makes reference to Verger and Rouch<sup>330</sup> because of their extensive influence in the fields of visual anthropology in Brazil.

Though the artist has deployed traditional photographic techniques to create *Eu, mestiço*'s photographs, the images have not been printed and displayed to *pose* as fine art. This avoidance of the fine art look has been a constant choice in the artist's practice. Instead of photography's more elitist technical supports (such as the extensive use of large formats, fine art printing processes and papers, and lightboxes), de Andrade has used polaroid images, found archival photography, deployed

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<sup>329</sup> According to Jonathas de Andrade in interview to Adrienne Edwards, *Jonathas de Andrade and Adrienne Edwards in Conversation* (Alexander and Bonin Gallery, New York City, 2018), <https://vimeo.com/260239587>.

<sup>330</sup> According to João Mendonça, Rouch visited Brazil many times from 1965 to 2003 and developed friendships with Brazilian cinematographers such as Jorge Bodansky and Alberto Cavalcanti. In 1979, Rouch started a partnership in Bahia, Ceará, and Paraíba to establish a filmmaking workshop for young people. Around the 1990s, scholarship in Brazil produced a great number of articles about and translations of Rouch's works. Several of those publications were produced by Brazilian scholars and researchers who had direct contact with Rouch's work, either by studying with Rouch in France or meeting him in Brazil. Many of these scholars and practitioners have since incorporated Rouch's cinema as a major reference in the burgeoning field of visual anthropology in Brazil. João Mendonça, "O Legado de Jean Rouch e a Antropologia Visual No Brasil: Algumas Notas Para Histórias Ainda Não Escritas," *Revista O Olho Da História* 23 (2016).

domestic printers, and made low-cost posters. The use of falcon board—although specific to *Eu, mestiço*—maintains this approach and juxtaposes an aesthetics of precariousness with an underlying consumerist production.<sup>331</sup>

Another critical element in the mise-en-scène structuring the work is the grid present in most *Eu, mestiço* sets. The grid has a loaded history within visual culture. In photography throughout the 18th century, for example, the white Western gaze systematically deployed the grid as an anthropometric tool. The grid became a mode of visual othering, a type of organization enabling the study of “racial difference” and the objectification of those who it racialized.<sup>332</sup>

The grid is a structuring element in one of the most extensive sets in *Eu, mestiço*. *Pigmentation by Avelar* (Figure 18-19) accounts for a 2.95-meter grid of 49 square portraits measuring 40 by 50 centimeters. The portraits depict multiple angles of Avelar’s head. Each row of seven photographs shows a similar progression: the pictures result from a camera rotated around Avelar’s left side profile, moving to their back, and then progressively rotating to their head’s right side.

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<sup>331</sup> Brazilian artists, across history, have deployed popular materials in their artworks to refer to an aesthetics of precariousness. One can think of Lygia Clark’s relational objects made with pebbles, plastic bags, or Helio Oiticica’s famous use of precarious materials such as jute, potatoes sacks, cardboard, straw in his performances and immersive installations. Contemporary Brazilian artists have continued to use these materials to refer to the aesthetics of the popular. For example, artist Mano Penalva deploys the same materials that street vendors commonly use in their daily routines to make bidimensional painterly works. Many of such materials are used in the architectural solutions in favelas or other modest housing spread out across Brazil. This aesthetics of the makeshift or “gambiarra” can be called precarious because of their ephemerality, but the goal of a generalized and creative use of cheap materials is to counter the lack of access to more sophisticated or high-quality ones. In this sense, by using the cardboard de Andrade borrows its “cheap” appearance while deploying a high-end laser-cut process to produce the images cutouts.

<sup>332</sup> A long history associates the use of the grid for measuring human bodies with racist thinking. See note 123 in which I discuss what other scholars have discussed regarding the relationship between anthropometry, photography, with focus on the work of Eadweard Muybridge (1830-1904).

Some images, such as the top left photograph, were taken from a lower angle toward Avelar's head. One never sees a frontal portrait of Avelar that shows their entire face. About five of the seven images in each row show the person's back, with a view of their Afro-textured hair. In all the photographs in which one can see areas of Avelar's face, they are smiling. Similar sequential movements are present in all sets of portraits, but this dynamism is amplified in *Pigmentation* due to the higher number of individual images in the composition.

de Andrade recommends exhibition venues install the line of tags with words for *Pigmentation by Avelar* in the space between the second-to-last and last rows, from bottom to top. Some of the terms associated with this set of portraits are: "again," "forth," "intellectuals," "colonists," "opportunities," "memory," "opinion," "pigmentation," "darker," "Yemanjá," "goddess," and "Rainha," among others. When all the words are installed in a single line, the set occupies 760 centimeters, including the empty spaces around the grid. In a traditional curatorial or spatial arrangement of artworks, each photograph has its own space and empty "breathing area" around it on the walls. In *Eu, mestiço*, however, de Andrade planned specific arrangements of the photographs in relation to the word tags, which controls the curatorial decisions of installing this work. The long lines of words delimit the empty spaces between the photographs of each set, much like how blocks of texts often structure the placement of images in the pages of a publication. That is why I believe the organization of these sets is reminiscent of a photobook or commercial ads on a city's streets. This

last impression certainly comes from de Andrade's use of *The Fairburn System of Representation* as a source for this project, which I will discuss later in this chapter.

*Eu, mestiço* is not an innocent photo album transplanted onto a gallery's walls. This photo album is full of references to the history of racial stereotyping of which *Race and Class in Rural Brazil* are a part. The experience is not as perturbing as browsing through an early ethnographic study, but the work still carries unsettling residues of this past.

In the following sections, I will analyze some of the indirect, direct, visual, and discursive sources de Andrade deployed in the making of *Eu, mestiço*. In **2.4. Jonathas de Andrade's Didactics of Display**, I discuss de Andrade's use of a didactic aesthetics to display or represent his subjects and content. I discuss the challenges de Andrade has faced and the critiques he has received in adopting such aesthetics. I also link de Andrade's didactic aesthetics to historical references to conceptual art of the 1960s and 1970s. In **2.5. Reimagining a 1950s' UNESCO Study**, I situate the work *Eu, mestiço* in relation to the book *Race and Class in Rural Brazil*, while analyzing de Andrade's main aesthetic sources: *The Fairburn System of Visual Reference* and the photographs of French anthropologist Pierre Verger. Finally, in **2.6. To Gaze at, to Consume, and to Learn from Racialized Bodies**, I examine some of the *Eu, mestiço* photographic sets and put them in conversation with de Andrade's didactics of display.

## 2.4. Jonathas de Andrade's Didactics of Display

The first artwork I saw by de Andrade was *Ressaca Tropical* (Tropical Hangover) (2009) (Figure 20) at the New Museum Triennial in 2012. This work was a series of printed short anecdotes extracted from an anonymous author's diary, the pages of which de Andrade's friend found in a trashcan on the streets of Recife, de Andrade's hometown. The artist printed the anecdotes in typewriter font and on small vertical notecards, which he placed on the walls unframed. The images accompanying the text were found photographs—some black and white—of Recife's landscapes and abandoned buildings and polaroid images of intimate indoor scenes.

The photos were also printed in smaller size and displayed next to each other in a layout that mimicked institutional archival imagery. After reading anecdote after anecdote, viewers get a sense of the author's daily routine, sexual and romantic life, and subtle instances of oppression related to living under military dictatorship. Though the diary's author never clearly addresses the dictatorship in their narrative, the regime seems to haunt the overall tone of the artwork in a clever—but subtle—reference to the practice of self-censorship common under autocracies.

Around 2010, de Andrade started to explore the notion of ethnographic types and created a documentary-like aesthetic for some of his most famous pieces, such as the *Museum of the Northeastern Men*. This aesthetic matched with a method of using archives, institutions, or books as points of departure to investigate specific instances

of broader social issues, from racism and xenophobia to homophobia and labor exploitation.<sup>333</sup>

Part of this method is to develop an often indirect critique of discursive materials, iconic figures, and institutions that have helped shape Brazilian hegemonic national narratives, such as the fraught book *Race and Class in Rural Brazil*. As I discuss below, Brazil's Museum of the Northeastern Man, along with its history and mission, is one institution de Andrade has reimagined, if not directly critiqued.

Other authors have called attention to de Andrade's didactic approach. In the essay "The Strategy of Seducing and Confounding," curator Lisette Lagnado puts this artist's practice in perspective with the struggle of the oppressed classes in Brazil. Lagnado sees de Andrade's works as "characterized by a visuality that flirts with critical reporting,"<sup>334</sup> emphasizing how de Andrade delves into surveys, maps, archives, and studies that become strata for his pieces. Lagnado sees these didactics as a response to colonialism by opposing the exclusion of oppressed classes.<sup>335</sup>

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<sup>333</sup> De Andrade avoids identifying these issues very directly in his works, allowing viewers some openness of interpretation. For example, the artist has no "artist statement" on his website. He refers to himself as an artist who "works with installations, videos and photoresearches." Jonathas de Andrade, "Jonathas de Andrade," Personal Website, n.d., <http://www.jonathasdeandrade.com.br/>.

<sup>334</sup> Lisette Lagnado, "The Strategy of Seducing and Confounding," in *Jonathas de Andrade: One to One*, ed. José Esparza Chong Cuy, Julieta González, and Museum of Contemporary Art (Chicago, Ill.), MCA Monographs (Chicago, IL : Munich ; New York: Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago ; DelMonico Books·Prestel, 2019), 29.

<sup>335</sup> Lagnado says, "De Andrade has thus faced unresolved dilemmas—notably, the legacy third-world politics established in the late 1950s to purge the culture of Portuguese colonial patrimonialism, but which are nevertheless still at work through the rural oligarchies. Colonialism never completely disappears, and maybe this can explain the stress put on presenting a didactic language as if the emancipation process has not yet been completed. De Andrade's interest is to draw closer to the life which throbs within those who constitute the undifferentiated mass of largely anonymous population, and to test a democracy still undelivered from state authoritarianism." Lisette Lagnado, "The Strategy of Seducing and Confounding," in *Jonathas de Andrade: One to One*, ed. José Esparza Chong Cuy, Julieta González, and Museum of Contemporary Art (Chicago, Ill.), MCA Monographs (Chicago, IL : Munich ; New York: Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago ; DelMonico Books·Prestel, 2019), 29.

About this didacticism, de Andrade said the following in an interview with Paulo Herkenhoff:

If my projects/works operate a pedagogy of counter-exclusion, I believe they seek to destabilize/disassemble all that oppressor and oppressed that exists within me and also in the other. Didacticism is of interest as a language pattern that tends to simplification, creating a comfort zone in the works that is an arena for the traps that summon the other and me to a game of destabilization. At that moment, a game of capoeira is established in which the other is fundamental, and only when it starts does the baggage of each one come to the fore, and that develops and defines itself as a fight, a dance, or a partnership.<sup>336</sup>

The artist explains that deploying an aesthetics of didacticism is a way of luring the viewer into learning about the subjects around which his work revolves. Here, de Andrade refers to how his use of mock documentaries, ads, diagrams, and surveys insinuates an authenticity of the content and data the artist articulates.<sup>337</sup> It is more than a strategy to enter into conversation with the viewer; however, as de Andrade mentions, didactics is a way of including himself within a dialectics of oppressor/oppressed, to reference Paulo Freire.<sup>338</sup> In many interviews, de Andrade

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<sup>336</sup> My translation. Paulo Herkenhoff and Jonathas de Andrade, "Paulo Herkenhoff entrevista Jonathas de Andrade," in *Prêmio CNI SESI Marcantonio Vilaça artes plásticas: 2011-12* (Brasília, DF, Brasil: Serviço Social da Indústria. Departamento Nacional. Prêmio CNI SESI Marcantonio Vilaça artes plásticas: 2011-12, 2012), 109, [https://static.portaldaindustria.com.br/media/filer\\_public/e1/32/e132c67b-e0a0-4b11-a7e8-066ba8ce6e52/4edicao.pdf](https://static.portaldaindustria.com.br/media/filer_public/e1/32/e132c67b-e0a0-4b11-a7e8-066ba8ce6e52/4edicao.pdf), 30.

<sup>337</sup> It is crucial to remember that de Andrade's work flourished in the early decade of the 2000s and a pre-post-truth era when social media and fake news were still not as prevalent as after 2015. These strategies of the aesthetics of knowledge production were more effective.

<sup>338</sup> To be sure, Freire points out the relationships that maintain the figure of the oppressor inside the oppressed, avoiding an easy binary distinction between these positionalities. Besides deploying Hegel's master/slave theory, Freire seems to have borrowed from Fanon to define his understanding of the symbiotic relationship between oppressor and oppressed. It is just after citing Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth*, that Freire argues "... at a certain point in their existential experience the oppressed feel an irresistible attraction towards the oppressors and their way of life. Sharing this way of life becomes an overpowering aspiration. In their alienation, the oppressed want at any cost to resemble the oppressors, to imitate them, to follow them. This phenomenon is especially prevalent in the middle-class oppressed, who yearn to be equal to the 'eminent' men and women of the upper class. Albert Memmi, in an exceptional analysis of the 'colonized mentality,' refers to the contempt he felt towards the colonizer, mixed with 'passionate' attraction towards him." Paulo Freire. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed: 30th*

addresses that question by recalling that he always considers how artwork might position him as an author, and that he often articulates a risky position (of oppressor) to provoke more intense reactions in his audience.<sup>339</sup>

#### 2.4.1. Posters for the *Museum of the Man of the Northeast* and *The Fish*

de Andrade's didactic display aesthetics, which *Eu, mestiço* shares, first appeared in works such as *Ressaca Tropical* (Tropical Hangover) (2009), which I discussed earlier, and *Education for Adults* (2010), in which the artist exhibits 60 educational posters (resembling word-image flashcards) produced in collaboration with illiterate women who participated in literacy workshops that de Andrade organized over a month.

However, the didactic aesthetics de Andrade deployed in *Eu, mestiço* seem more directly aligned with two previous works: *Posters for the Museum of the Man of the Northeast* (Figure 21) and *The Fish* (Figure 22), which I will discuss in the following pages. In reading these two works, my goal is to pinpoint the persistent elements—esthetic and historical—in de Andrade's performative didactics and the didactics of displaying race. de Andrade circles his practice around persuasive semi-fictional narratives and well-crafted pictorial space—based in photography—that rely on conceptual and visual ambiguities. This ambiguous mise-en-scène happens to be

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*Anniversary Edition*, Bloomsbury Academic & Professional, 2014. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ucsc/detail.action?docID=1745456>.

<sup>339</sup> Adrienne Edwards. Jonathas de Andrade and Adrienne Edwards, *Jonathas de Andrade and Adrienne Edwards in Conversation* (Alexander and Bonin Gallery, New York City, 2018), <https://vimeo.com/260239587>.



an integral part of the ideologies of visual discursive apparatuses, such as those that shape racial and cultural stereotypes.

In *Posters for the Museum of the Man*, de Andrade displayed staged color portraits of *nordestinos*, or Northeastern men, printed on equally-sized wooden posters; some hang from the ceiling and are suspended at the viewer's height by monofilament threads, others are simply mounted on walls. The installation has an ethnographic look, as if de Andrade were "studying" these men.

In the gallery room, de Andrade often reproduces newspaper sheets with classified ads. One reads, "I'm looking for a strong, brown-skinned man—ugly or handsome—for a photograph of the poster of the Museum of the Man of the Northeast."<sup>340</sup> Another says, "I'm looking for a man over thirty years old, who works with his hands and knows of local craftsmanship for a photograph poster of the Museum of the Man of the Northeast." The text on these labels shows de Andrade's approach to ambiguity. In 2012, de Andrade advertised in local newspapers and documented his encounters with men through photographs and notes. One can read these texts as an ad for a job, an ethnographic study, or a queer sex encounter.<sup>341</sup> However, according to the artist, he never used the photographs he took of the men who responded to the ads. Instead, he illustrated the Museum using his images from approaching people on the streets to take their portraits.<sup>342</sup>

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<sup>340</sup> I want to highlight here de Andrade's emphasis on "brown-skinned man" in his ads. In fact, most men represented in the posters have brown or dark skin. See note below and the discussion of *branquitude* specifically regarding *nordestinos*.

<sup>341</sup> Jonathas de Andrade, "Jonathas de Andrade," Personal Website, n.d., <http://www.jonathasdeandrade.com.br/>. Accessed March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2021.

<sup>342</sup> Jonathas de Andrade and Adrienne Edwards, *Jonathas de Andrade and Adrienne Edwards in Conversation* (Alexander and Bonin Gallery, New York City, 2018), <https://vimeo.com/260239587>.

The vague descriptions in the ads enact the different forms of interpellation de Andrade builds around the piece's fictional narrative. No matter what images were or were not used, however, there is a clear power dynamic. These images carry a homoerotic charge: a gaze exchanged between photographer and photographed that is also sexualized, with emphasis on physical attributes of the men de Andrade brought to his studio.

Critics have disapproved of de Andrade for sustaining this power dynamic. They are not convinced by the ambiguity of de Andrade's practice and point to how his approach reiterates a class divide.<sup>343</sup> Others, like Fabio Cypriano, were bothered by the fraught ethics of de Andrade's work making a profit from the men's labor.<sup>344</sup> These critics also point out how the coupling of sexualization and social class negatively impacts the artwork's reception.<sup>345</sup>

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<sup>343</sup> Elisa Wouk Almino, a Brazilian-born critic, editor at *Hyperallergic*, expressed skepticism about de Andrade's true intentions in representing those men. Wouk Almino argues, "The men in most of de Andrade's photographic portraits appear very much aware of being on display. Their poses are calculated, their expressions self-conscious. As a result, when viewing them for the first time, the works felt gimmicky to me, and, in searching for more, I resorted to written information. Though the messages behind the works are resonant and true, the literal and dependent relationship between the works' concepts and visuals cut my engagement short. In the back of my mind lingered John Berger's belief that art should be led by the imagination, for "truth," he writes, can only be "discovered in open space. ... I was reminded of what James Baldwin said in 1949 of the protest novel, that its stories of American black oppression resort to familiar narratives of destitution, violence, and ignorance. Baldwin accuses these novels of painting portraits of black Americans that lack dimension and of therefore being a "rejection of life, the human being." Baldwin's points are complex and beyond the scope of this review, but they aided my thinking about de Andrade's work. The irony is that while his images expose a form of hidden racism in Brazil, they also represent its stereotypes. The brown-skinned men do not transcend their working lives or poverty, and though this is, to an extent, the point — to reveal that the stereotype is darkly real — in the end, I could only hear de Andrade trying to tell me this, while the voices of his subjects were muffled or lost." Elisa Wouk Almino, "As Brazilian Art Trends, the Country's Racism Comes to the Fore," *Hyperallergic.Com*, April 9, 2015, <https://hyperallergic.com/197601/as-brazilian-art-trends-the-countrys-racism-comes-to-the-fore/>.

<sup>344</sup> *New York Times* critic Jason Farago argues, "The power, but also the danger, of "O Peixe" lies in the intimacy of this fictional ethnography—an intimacy that often turns prurient. The fishermen wear nothing but clingy mesh shorts, and Mr. de Andrade is not shy about filming their biceps, thighs, buttocks and abdominals, glistening with sweat and river water. Mr. de Andrade's own racial identity hardly invalidates the difficult questions around voyeurism and objectification that accompany depictions of the black male body, especially as art audiences in both the United States and Brazil remain all too monochromatic. Several sexy man-on-fish sequences in "O Peixe" recall the erotic character of much colonial photography, which allowed uptight Europeans to project sexual

I agree with critiques that de Andrade's project deploys images of *nordestinos* based on their position in Brazilian society; simply put, the men who replied to a temporary job ad in *Posters for the Museum* needed that money. Although the dynamics are different with men who de Andrade approached on the streets, I am not convinced that queer flirtation alleviates the power dynamics between photographer and photographed. The notion of a collaboration between the artist and the portrayed is too narrow if the artist is still the one proposing the shot and selecting people based on whose appearance he decides will fit in his project.

The work provides a questionably consensual hypervisibility because these mostly invisible *nordestino* workers are brought into the field of representation through sexualization. They strike poses and smile, and their bodies' features are emphasized as if they were part of a contest for the "hottest" or "sexiest" men of the Northeast. As Elisa Wouk Almino suggests,<sup>346</sup> the images can look "gimmicky" and empty of life. I partly object, however, as they also carry a humorous queerness that could be associated with kitsch or camp queer aesthetics.<sup>347</sup> If one cannot say these are all queer men, then the visual space de Andrade creates is a queer space. Perhaps, it is exactly the didacticism of display that exacerbates a visual space of exploitation.

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fantasies on the racial other. Mr. de Andrade knows this, of course. But I'm really not sure whether "O Peixe" succeeds in critiquing the ways black bodies are sexualized, or whether it ends up reaffirming them." Jason Farago, "When Predator and Prey Are One: A Brazilian Artist's Fish Tale," *The New York Times*, December 22, 2017, sec. Arts, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/26/arts/design/when-predator-and-prey-are-one-a-brazilian-artists-fish-tale.html>.

<sup>346</sup> See note 56.

<sup>347</sup> Camp is a term used to denote a humorous or exaggerated style of queer performance. With the rise of Queer theory, scholars have argued that camp style is often used by queer individuals to challenge normative readings of gender. About a queer camp aesthetics see, David Bergman, ed., *Camp Grounds: Style and Homosexuality* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993). Justyna Stepień, *Redefining Kitsch and Camp in Literature and Culture*, 2014.

It is a didacticism that creeps into the structure of the work and strips these men of life, as Wouk Almino puts it.

Queering popular and historical narratives around Brazil's Northeast has been one of the underlying references of de Andrade's practice, and which appear in several other works. *O Peixe* (The Fish) (2016) (Figure 22), de Andrade's mock film documentary, follows the same approach to *Posters for the Museum: men of color*<sup>348</sup> come to the camera to perform subjectivities (or characters) constructed by themselves and de Andrade. The narrative develops around a group of fishermen in a Brazilian Northeastern coastal community who perform a type of ritual: they embrace fish to kill them. Beautifully set in the Brazilian wetlands, the men romantically embrace the fish, caressing and lulling the animals to their last breath.

The performance of this ritual is enthralling and terrifying, sexually enticing and violent. Each shot shows a different fisherman going in the water to catch a fish. They then appear back in the boat to perform the act of suffocating the fish. Intermediate shots focus on the men's bodies. In the film, the camera is a persistent gaze that scans the men's half-naked bodies, hips, thighs, and lips. The men perform their sexuality, class, and skin color for the camera.

For *O Peixe*, de Andrade slightly changed his approach towards discussing the dynamics he established with the film's collaborators. These men are now presented as actors. Their names are listed in the work's credits and thank you notes. Still,

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<sup>348</sup> I am opting to use the term colored or racialized so as not to imply a specific racial identity onto the men de Andrade photographs.

sexualization through the juxtaposition of nature and the manual labor of working class men of color persists. Though de Andrade has continued to receive backlash among critics, *O Peixe* earned much acclaim in the U.S.<sup>349</sup> For example, writing for *ArtNexus*, Verónica Flom concluded about *O Peixe*,

Previous works by de Andrade feature video and media like photography and installation. In his works, he deals with socio-political issues connected to identity, the exoticization of the Other, and the realm of work. His artistic practice critiques preconceived ideas that humans develop about their relationship in and with the world, particularly in the Brazilian context. The *O Peixe* video, with its careful technical execution a great visual potency, can be understood as condensing different concerns that emerge from his previous work. It presents us not only with a hybrid of fiction and reality but also a romanticized image of what could be an ancestral community could be. The intense beauty of this work produces an audience captivated by the tenderness of the fictional ritual and, at the same time, sorrowful at the fragility of life.<sup>350</sup>

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<sup>349</sup> In a review of *O peixe* for Artforum, critic Janelle Zara wrote, “As in much of de Andrade’s work, there is an intellectual subtext here about the relationship between modern and precolonial Brazil. But that pales in comparison to the many contrasting visceral impulses he forces us to confront at once. This imagined shamanistic ritual in which a hypermasculine, exoticized, and sexualized figure cradles an alien body—the size of an infant, with strangely human lips—is violent and bizarrely romantic. *O peixe* evokes a shock further heightened by the sounds of labored breathing from both parties. As viewers, we get the sense that our emotions are being played with—much to our delight.” For the New Yorker, Vinson Cunningham wrote, “Andrade’s camerawork is calm and unaffected, his lens ever so grainy—the writing on the wall outside the screening room tells us that it is meant to mimic (and perhaps gently to mock) the placid, exoticizing style of ethnographic documentary, and that the intimate gesture between man and dying fish is an invention of the artist. This intellectual content notwithstanding, “O Peixe” felt to me like a refreshment. Its colors—blue and green, brown skin and rainbow-colored scales—are uncommunicatively pretty. And its noises—slight splashes, fish thrashing on the bottom of a boat—threatened, several times, to lull me to sleep.” Janelle Zara, “Jonathas de Andrade New Museum 235 Bowery January 25–April 9, 2017,” *Artforum*, 2017, <https://www.artforum.com/picks/jonathas-de-andrade-66470>. Vinson Cunningham, “Watching a Fish Gasp for Air in Jonathas de Andrade’s ‘O Peixe,’” *The New Yorker* (blog), March 22, 2017, <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/watching-a-fish-gasp-for-air-in-jonathas-de-andrades-o-peixe>.

<sup>350</sup> Verónica Fom, “Jonathas de Andrade New Museum,” *ArtNexus*, August 2017, <https://www.artnexus.com/en/magazines/article-magazine-artnexus/603020d1fdb3c9e17b606964/105/jonathas-de-andrade>.

I believe one of the triumphs of de Andrade's practice, through works such as *Posters* and *O Peixe*<sup>351</sup>, is building a queer transnational visual space that questions the norm of *nordestino macho*, or the macho Northeastern men (and Brazilian men for that matter).<sup>352</sup> These men are usually known for their raw *macho* conduct, to the point of

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<sup>351</sup> See also essay by Sol Costales Doulton, "Jonathas de Andrade's 'O Peixe': A Parable of Extinction," *Third Text* 105 (July 2021), <http://thirdtext.org/doulton-opeixe>.

<sup>352</sup> De Andrade has said he is not especially interested in advocating for a queer cause. To paraphrase the artist, instead he seeks to "twist around defined roles" and look at how different positionalities intersect within one's subjectivities—see below de Andrade's words during an interview, in response to Paulo Herkenhoff. Still, a work such as *Museum* has a clearer intent of challenging heteronormativity within the very ways the "official" Museum of Northeastern Man in Recife has been historically founded and organized. Therefore, even though de Andrade prefers to avoid subscribing to a queer aesthetics, he does use queer representations and signifieds in his work to challenge normative narratives. For example, this is what he says about his approach and intent in *Museum*, during a talk with Adrienne Edwards, "I started walking with the camera. And when I meet people [who are] in work situations—going to work or coming back from work—I would approach [them] and I would propose, "Look, I'm doing the posters for the Museu do Homem do Nordeste. Would you agree to participate? I can offer you the photograph back." ... Usually there was a matter of the men feeling proud of being on the poster ... . So I would try to catch this feeling of empowerment to the photograph, and of course, that would be also a lot about the body and a certain eroticism that would be established between the camera and the person—and also between me and the men. This is something very interesting because it is a way of talking about these issues (sexuality and homosexuality) through a certain homoeroticism, which is totally a taboo in this culture, but a very cynical taboo because it's totally part of the everyday exchange. So, I was fascinated how the unspoken was present. And how this could build an image of this museum. But I was interested in thinking how the museum itself could think it was a way of maculating their image somehow. I was curious to see how long would go until the museum itself would call me and say, "what is going on?" So, it was very important to me do [the work] parallel to the museum, instead of talking to them and asking permission. For me it was a way of entering into an historical conversation with them and Freyre." My transcription. Jonathas de Andrade and Adrienne Edwards, *Avant Museology: Jonathas de Andrade and Adrienne Edwards* (Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, 2016), <https://walkerart.org/magazine/avant-museology-jonathas-de-andrade-and-adrie>.

Still, de Andrade eschews the intention of adopting a queer aesthetics. In an interview, critic Paulo Herkenhoff, asks de Andrade if a gay artist's work should always be characterized (and ostracized) as part of a "gay aesthetics." Citing a Cornel West's statement, Herkenhoff asks, "should the artist whose sexual option is homosexuality take on the task of opposing the deplorable present of homophobia as a dimension of a 'multifaceted oppression'?" De Andrade replied that he is more interested in the relationships that enable oppression. He said, "(...) I like to think that there are forms of freedom within oppression and censorship, and that Brazil is 'smart' and has a tradition of treating the forbidden terrain as a catalyst for transformation. Of the instances of resistance, one of them is the direct struggle against oppression. (...) I feel more apt to seek to recognize the opposites in political dialectics, incite fields of suspension and trance, twist supposedly defined roles, and provoke blows to shuffle my place with, under and in front of the other. And this is true, whether for sexuality, for the class struggle, or for any other instance of power. Life happens through all of them together. (...) I don't see myself treating homosexuality as an issue, any more than heterosexuality is an issue. The works carry the full and plural exercise of what I live and how I live. My poetics does not need to be conquered, it is what it is, it is what it already is; it is a horse without a saddle, delirium and salvation, a powerful field of instability that, on the other hand, creates firm ground onto which to step and from which to jump." My translation. Paulo Herkenhoff and Jonathas de Andrade, "Paulo Herkenhoff entrevista Jonathas de Andrade," in *Prêmio CNI SESI Marcantonio Vilaça artes plásticas: 2011-12* (Brasília, DF, Brasil: Serviço Social da Indústria. Departamento Nacional. Prêmio CNI SESI Marcantonio Vilaça artes plásticas: 2011-12, 2012), 109, [https://static.portaldaindustria.com.br/media/filer\\_public/e1/32/e132c67b-e0a0-4b11-a7e8-066ba8ce6e52/4edicao.pdf](https://static.portaldaindustria.com.br/media/filer_public/e1/32/e132c67b-e0a0-4b11-a7e8-066ba8ce6e52/4edicao.pdf).

being misogynic and homophobic.<sup>353</sup> As a gay man, de Andrade seeks to deploy this latent sexualization that Brazilian authoritarian mechanisms have historically fiercely suppressed, even if his works' didacticism still serve as a visual buffer to this queer aesthetic.<sup>354</sup>

#### 2.4.2 Didacticism and Conceptual Art

I find most critiques of de Andrade's practice deficient. While Brazilian critics avoid delving deep into questions of racial representation in de Andrade's works, mainstream U.S.-based critics tend to glance over cultural-specific material in international artists' work, especially if these artists are from the so-called global South. I believe writers should develop more comprehensive examinations of how the U.S. gazes upon the bodies de Andrade sexualizes and makes visible. Here, I think mostly of how the white art market and U.S. art institutions perceive, read, and decodify these bodies for their audiences.

Moreover, what is the impact of de Andrade's didactics of display in the representation of others and the actual reception of his artworks? It is one thing to develop a counter-pedagogy—a term Paulo Herkenhorff used in reference to Andrade's practice<sup>355</sup>—concerning archival material and another to enable a gaze that captures specifically racialized bodies. I call this aesthetics a didactic display of

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<sup>353</sup> About the macho stereotype of nordestinos, see Albuquerque Jr and Durval Muniz de, *Nordestino: invenção do falo: uma história do gênero masculino (1920-1940)*, 2013. Aline Veras Morais Brilhante et al., "Construção Do Estereótipo Do 'Macho Nordestino' Nas Letras de Forró No Nordeste Brasileiro," *Interface - Comunicação, Saúde, Educação* 22, no. 64 (May 18, 2017): 13–28, <https://doi.org/10.1590/1807-57622016.0286>.

<sup>354</sup> See my discussion in the Introduction.

<sup>355</sup>

performing one's "identity." Within this didactic display—and especially in *Eu, mestiço*—subjects are invited to perform their race, skin color, and culture to the camera. de Andrade creates a mise-en-scène in which individuals perform "identities" in a theatrical manner.<sup>356</sup>

As I will discuss later in this chapter, theatricality and ambiguity are often how stereotypes are discursively formed. In de Andrade's *Eu, mestiço*, this performativity is ambiguous for a few reasons. Mostly, there is an ambiguity because the style of the photographs borrows from educational, didactic, and visual repertoires while also enacting an artificiality proper to the languages of consumerism.

For example, the artist overtly uses graphic design techniques to fashion his photographs. In works such as *Eu, mestiço* and *Posters for the Museum*, portraits are cropped, sharpened, and digitally polished in an aesthetic resembling pictures in didactic books, pamphlets, or other educational visual materials.<sup>357</sup> The portraits are accompanied by a bold sans-serif font mimicking the 1980s educational materials and didactic books of Brazilian schools (Figure 21).<sup>358</sup> And in de Andrade's installations, such as *Eu, mestiço*, wall text usage is intensified. In *Ressaca Tropical* (Figure 22), entire walls are covered by notecards with anecdotes that never serve as direct captions of images.

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<sup>356</sup> Jonathas de Andrade and Adrienne Edwards, *Jonathas de Andrade and Adrienne Edwards in Conversation* (Alexander and Bonin Gallery, New York City, 2018), <https://vimeo.com/260239587>, 12'45".

<sup>357</sup> De Andrade first deployed this aesthetics in early works such as *Educação Para Adultos* (Education for Adults) (2010) that refers to Paulo Freire's literacy method. This aesthetics is very familiar to me from didactic books I learned in school in the late 1980s and 1990s. It is also a style that emerged in the 1970s with the didactic materials designed by the military dictatorship. Jonathas de Andrade, "Jonathas de Andrade, Educação Para Adultos, 2010," Personal Website, n.d., <https://cargocollective.com/jonathasdeandrade/educacao-para-adultos>.

<sup>358</sup> Similar to the fonts de Andrade used in *Education for Adults* (2010).



In that sense, de Andrade's practice has been in dialogue with conceptual art that flourished throughout the world in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>359</sup> In the U.S., as in other countries, early conceptual artists largely explored the gap between image and text in concept-driven art from the 1960s to 1970s.<sup>360</sup> For example, in the famous work, *The Bowery in Two Inadequate Descriptive Systems* (1974/1975), Martha Rosler combined photographs and words to defy the history of demeaning photo documentaries representing the Bowery, a by-then marginalized New York City neighborhood. To counter the exoticization of traditional photo documentaries like many other conceptual artists at that time, Rosler created a gap between images and text: the work's captions read like short poems that do not describe or directly refer to the content in the photographs.<sup>361</sup>

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<sup>359</sup> De Andrade's works, specifically *Ressaca Tropical*, borrows from early conceptual art. However, later works like *Eu, mestiço* perhaps are less "serious" in their attention to the history of conceptual art, almost creating a certain parody of early conceptual art's known *dry looks*. Consider, for example, famous conceptual work by Hans Haacke, *Shapolsky et al. Manhattan Real Estate Holdings, a Real-Time Social System, as of May 1, 1971*. In this work, Haacke presents images and data as complementary: charts, diagrams, and data sheets are as important as photographs in revealing the action of slumlords in NYC in the 1970s. De Andrade's later work, like *Eu, mestiço*, eschews the dry, objective, appearance of early conceptual art by consciously deploying enticing photographs to compose the work. An "appealing aesthetics" was never the primary intent of early conceptual artists driven by effervescent political events of the 1960s and 1970s, as Lucy R. Lippard argues in "Escape Attempts," in *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

<sup>360</sup> Historicizing US and European conceptual art, Benjamin Buchloh locates at least three opposing approaches that branched from artists' readings of prior US art movements, such as Minimalism. Ultimately, Buchloh, argues, some conceptual artists, like Hans Haacke and Marcel Broodthaers, became more interested in "institutional critique", and on attacking the "visuality of art" in praise of language. In that sense, de Andrade's works are in conflict with the history of certain early conceptual art, because they do not seek to abandon the visual. Although de Andrade's practice's framework is conceptual, (one could say, even attentive to institutional critique, such as in *Posters for the Museum*), the artist has a highly plastic/visual interest in the final presentation of his works. Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962-1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions," *October* 55 (1990): 105, <https://doi.org/10.2307/778941>. About Conceptual Art, see also Lucy R. Lippard's more open-ended and seminal article, "Escape Attempts," in *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

<sup>361</sup> See Martha Rosler, "In, around, and Afterthoughts (on Documentary Photography)," in *The Contest of Meaning: Critical Histories of Photography*, 4. print (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1993).

Photography is essential for the success of de Andrade's didactic display. Another reason why de Andrade's didactic aesthetics are ambiguous relates to his mock-documentary photography. The artist cunningly deploys portraits. Although he constructs them to look as if they are part of more extensive documentaries, the documentaries are entirely fabricated, which is the case of de Andrade's *O Peixe* (The Fish) (Figure 22), as I discussed earlier. de Andrade constructed *O Peixe* to look and function like a film documentary. The difference is its narrative is entirely fictional: the men in the documentary are real fishermen but they do not perform the ritualistic catching and embracing of the fish as depicted in the film in real life. In *Eu, mestiço*, too, the qualities of a photographic documentary exist but only as a style; that is perhaps why the images look didactic, or extracted from the realm of education, but commercial at the same time.

This use of photography critically departs from the traditionally authorial or journalistic photographic documentaries that place the photographer as a witness to a yet-to-be-unveiled reality.<sup>362</sup> This studio-crafted artificiality could be compared to photographic practices such as Cindy Sherman's early work. de Andrade's images have been carefully fashioned so viewers believe the artist spontaneously took the photos.<sup>363</sup> De Andrade uses photography's truth effect to induce viewers into entering his constructed pictorial space. By adopting the photographic documentary style, de Andrade persuades the viewer the narrative around his photographs is real. In this

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<sup>362</sup> See my discussion in Chapter 1 of this dissertation, about Maria Thereza Alves's work.

<sup>363</sup> I am thinking here about the early works by Cindy Sherman, such as her portrait as *Untitled Film Still #21*, (1978) in which Sherman is depicted like a 1950s' and 60s' Hollywood actress. These early works were carefully constructed and have the artificial quality of the studio.

sense, de Andrade's work is more aligned with the works of conceptual artists such as Douglas Huebler or Vito Acconci than Sherman's early photographs.<sup>364</sup>

And perhaps more than Huebler's and Acconci's, de Andrade's aesthetic method speaks to an entire lineage of Latin American conceptual artists who used photography in their conceptualist works. From the late 1960s through the 1980s, several artists based across Latin America sought to challenge autocratic regimes and their hegemonic discourses. Artists such as Luis Camnitzer, Paulo Bruscky, Alfredo Jaar, and so many others recurrently used photographic portraits in conceptual pieces referring to military regimes' deployment of profiling as a surveillance strategy to control the population.

Examples are Alfredo Jaar's *Searching for K* (1984) and *Faces* (1982). Jaar extracted portraits of individuals who disappeared by Pinochet's regime from journalistic photographs published in the Chilean media. Jaar's pictures are cropped and arranged in a grid. While Jaar made these victims visible, he organized this visibility according to the controlling and categorizing gaze of the dictatorship; emptied of their surroundings, the portraits resemble shots from the surveillance cameras that could have enabled the victims' disappearance. These conceptual works also had a certain didactic appeal for how they used diagrams and tables. Jaar organized photographs as if they were part of state-sponsored surveillance programs.

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<sup>364</sup> I am referring here to Huebler's works such as *598 / Variable Piece #70 : 1971 (In Process) Global 1975* (1975) for which the artist claimed to have a project "of photographing everyone alive." As for Acconci, his famous *Following Piece* (1969) consisted of selecting and photographing randomly people on the streets of New York, pursuing them until they entered a building. Later, Acconci made a map with the routes he took in New York and created a collage with serial photographs resulting from the pursuits.

One can consider these historical references as essential to understanding de Andrade's work. Still, unlike early conceptualist photography<sup>365</sup> from Latin America, de Andrade's practice deals with a crucial transformation largely ignored by mainstream white Latin American artists. What sustains de Andrade's didactics is a (queer) gaze directed toward racialized subjects. As I will discuss further in this chapter, although the photographs' organization, arrangement, and method of display on gallery walls are based on the often aesthetically uninteresting formal devices of 1960s and 1970s conceptual art, de Andrade's photographs are constructed to look like ethnographic images or journalistic documentaries, historically known to be an area of racism. What do we have, then, when this combination of made-up ethnography and didactics meets the representation of ethnically diverse subjects?

## 2.5. Reimagining a 1950s UNESCO Study

Many of de Andrade's artworks quote, critique, or represent sociopolitical struggles often undercriticized in mainstream discourses and attacked by the country's white elites. To do that, de Andrade often looks at main narratives through an intersectional approach; in each work, the artist juggles a series of issues

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<sup>365</sup> For Latin American artists and scholars, the term *conceptualismo* was used to differentiate the type of conceptual art they were making from the EuroAmerican conceptual art. Mostly, *conceptualismo* was a conceptual art that opposed military rulings and had a more urgent political tone. For more on this debate, see: Luis Camnitzer, *Conceptualism in Latin American Art: Didactics of Liberation*, 1st ed, Joe R. and Teresa Lozano Long Series in Latin American and Latino Art and Culture (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007). Mari Carmen Ramírez, "Blueprint Circuits: Conceptual Art and Politics in Latin America," in *Latin American Artists of the Twentieth Century*, ed. Waldo Rasmussen et al. (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1993). Aimé Iglesias Lukin, "Contrabienal: Latin American Art, Politics and Identity in New York, 1969-1971," *Artl@s Bulletin* 3, no. 2 (2014), <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/artlas/vol3/iss2/5/>. Zanna Gilbert, "Ideological Conceptualism and Latin America: Politics, Neoprimativism and Consumption," ed. Michael Bowman and Stephen Moonie, *Re-bus*, no. 4 (2009), [https://www1.essex.ac.uk/arhistory/research/pdfs/rebus/rebus\\_issue\\_4.pdf](https://www1.essex.ac.uk/arhistory/research/pdfs/rebus/rebus_issue_4.pdf).

simultaneously to provoke viewers, but also invite them into the work. His interest in the politics of gender and the exploitation of working classes intersects with questions of race that have also been taboo in Brazilian society.<sup>366</sup> *Eu, mestiço* is not an outspoken critique of how racialization operates in Brazil, mostly because de Andrade leaves the work open—perhaps too open—to viewers’ interpretation. Nor is the work an homage to the myth of racial democracy, a narrative that has long wounded racialized populations.

To develop the photographic series *Eu, mestiço*, de Andrade traveled to different cities in northeastern and southeastern Brazil. Even though de Andrade did not perform research work in the same cities as in the *Race and Class* book, the artist sought to retrace some of the 1950s researchers’ steps by selecting cities somewhat based on the geographies covered by the original study.<sup>367</sup> For that, de Andrade

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<sup>366</sup> I am using here the term taboo in a loose way to refer to Brazilians’ deep refusal in discussing or admitting racism, both individually and largely as a society. In my Introduction, I more thoroughly discuss this “taboo.” I refer to famous research developed by Datafolha in the 1990s, which sought to define the particularities of racism in Brazil, or of what now has been commonly called “cordial racism.” The concept was first coined by scholar Florestan Fernandes and later by Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, who defined the “cordial man” as having characteristics such as “The frankness of treatment, hospitality, and generosity, ... to the extent that the influence of the patterns of human conviviality, informed in the rural and patriarchal environment, remains active and fruitful” To “be polite,” for de Holanda, in this case, is to allude to an appearance, is actually to create a mechanism of defense in relation to society, he says “stands on the outside, epidermal part of the individual, and may even serve as ... a piece of resistance.” Datafolha presents compelling statistics that seek to prove that such cordialidade acts as a buffer mechanism for the Brazilian population to avoid dealing directly with racism, and thus also to negate its existence altogether. Most famously discussed by Schwarcz and other scholars, Datafolha found out that 89% of the Brazilian population believed that there is racism in Brazil, while only 10% of population admitted being racists. This numeric incongruency reveals the power of the discourse of cordiality in Brazil and, as scholars have argued: the fact that racism is always something of the other. Cleusa Turra, Gustavo Venturi, and Datafolha, *Racismo cordial: a mais completa análise sobre o preconceito de cor no Brasil* (São Paulo, SP: Editora Atica, 1995), 12. See more, Lília Moritz Schwarcz, *Racismo no Brasil* (São Paulo, SP: Publifolha, 2001).

<sup>367</sup> De Andrade’s *Eu, mestiço* focused on three Northeastern Brazilian cities: Ilheus, Bahia; São Luiz, Maranhão, and Imperatriz, Maranhão. In this project, de Andrade also used portraits taken in São Paulo, one of Brazil’s largest cities, located in the Southeast. About the process of choosing the portrayed, de Andrade said to me in an interview: “I often approach people on the streets and invite them to be photographed. This has happened in several of my projects. And in fact, this (*Eu, mestiço*) was a project that had different methods: an approach with associations, of random people on the streets, and also direct invitations to friends and acquaintances. I photographed many more people than appeared in the final work. And I didn’t just want to photograph black

followed his usual method of performative interviews: he approached individuals on the streets, spoke about his project, and invited them for a photographic session in his studio.<sup>368</sup> To produce *Eu, mestiço*, de Andrade also visited the Associação Das Mulheres Quebradeiras de Coco Babaçu da Estrada do Arroz, an organization that assists coconut women farmworkers in the city of Imperatriz, Maranhão.<sup>369</sup>

In the 1950s, the study's researchers presented a pictorial test with images of racial and ethnic types and asked their interviewees to judge those portrayed and consider who was the "most effective worker," "the most beautiful," or "the wealthiest," among other descriptors. Interviewees' responses demonstrated the racisms of a society trained to attend to white norms.<sup>370</sup>

During the photographic sessions in his studio, de Andrade directed the 18 people portrayed in *Eu, mestiço* to play different characters.<sup>371</sup> At his studio, he spoke with his participants about the issues raised by the book. He was particularly

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people, but also white people who could play a role of contrast, trying to replicate the logic of the (Race and Class) study itself." My translation. Jonathas de Andrade, Interview in Portuguese with the author, Whatsapp, 2021.

<sup>368</sup> Jonathas de Andrade, Interview in Portuguese with the author, Whatsapp, 2021.

<sup>369</sup> According to the Movimento Interestadual das Quebradeiras de Coco Babaçu (MIQCB), coconut women workers from the states of Maranhão, Pará, Piauí e Tocantins organized their first assembly in 1991. Since then, these women have gotten together in an interstate movement to fight for rights to land and representation surrounding the harvesting and commercialization of babaçu (babassu) coconut. Movimento Interestadual das Quebradeiras de Coco Babaçu (MIQCB), "Quem Somos," Movimento Interestadual das Quebradeiras de Coco Babaçu (MIQCB), June 2, 2022, <https://www.miqcb.org/sobre-nos>.

<sup>370</sup> Freyre *mestiçagem*'s developed around whiteness, particularly around the figure of the white male. As Patricia Pinho argues, "It is important to remember that the ideal of miscegenation preached by Freyre was far from symmetrical, since it not only revolved around the white man, but also conceived him as the main beneficiary of racial and cultural mixing." My translation from original in Portuguese: "É importante lembrar que ideal de *mestiçagem* pregado por Freyre nada tinha de simétrico, já que não apenas girava em torno do homem branco, mas também o concebia como o principal beneficiário da mistura racial e cultural." Patricia de Santana Pinho, "'A Casa Grande Surta Quando a Senzala Aprende a Ler': Resistência Antirracista e o Desvendamento da *Branquitude* Injuriada no Brasil," *Confluente. Revista di Studi Iberoamericani*, June 15, 2021, 32-55 Pages, <https://doi.org/10.6092/ISSN.2036-0967/13085>.

<sup>371</sup> Jonathas de Andrade and Adrienne Edwards, *Jonathas de Andrade and Adrienne Edwards in Conversation* (Alexander and Bonin Gallery, New York City, 2018), <https://vimeo.com/260239587>.

interested in the topicality of the UNESCO study. de Andrade noticed the permanence of numerous racist slang terms still current in the popular parlance of northeastern areas, and probably across Brazil, in 2016.<sup>372</sup> When he asked people to pose for the camera, he intended to address the oppression caused by racism and confront the moral judgments associated with racialization; embodying a character consisted of performing the emotions or attributes extracted from the *Race and Class* book.<sup>373</sup>

The resulting images of these performances espouse a conflicting blend of different emotional registers, among them aggressiveness, apathy, laughter, defiance, and fear. When installed together, the combination of images seems to project on the walls a vision of the Brazilian population, not unlike the fraught attempt of the *Race and Class* study.

*Eu, mestiço* does not offer an updated *version* of this study, however, or even a revision. Rather, it exacerbates inevitable tensions latent in the hegemonic national narratives de Andrade explores. Consider, for example, the conciliatory cordial tone with which much of the Brazilian modernist vanguards deployed in images of mestiças/os, Blacks, and indigenous peoples, without allowing these groups to participate in self-representation. Consider, also, Freyre's romanticization of racial miscegenation via the downplaying of systemic white violence over non-white (women's) bodies.<sup>374</sup>

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<sup>372</sup> Jonathas de Andrade, Interview in Portuguese with the author, Whatsapp, 2021.

<sup>373</sup> Jonathas de Andrade, Interview in Portuguese with the author, Whatsapp, 2021.

<sup>374</sup> Topics I discuss in the Introduction.

These oft-suppressed tensions are ever-present in discourse but not always allowed to come to the forefront in hegemonic narratives controlled by white elites, and they configure the very core of *Eu, mestiço*. This fusion of contradictory emotions, exaggerated facial expressions, and gazes filled with defiance complicate the experience of viewing the non-white bodies in *Eu, mestiço*. Yet, not unlike the interviewees in the *Race and Class* book, the characters in de Andrade's "book" respond, react, and perform mainly for a white gaze—a gaze of coloniality and *branquitude*.

For racialized peoples, looking in return is a complex process full of pain and fueled by power, as bell hooks famously argued when she defined the "oppositional gaze." For hooks, this process of gazing back is an intersectional act of resistance; it articulates Black women's identification and enables their subjectivity out of a condition of permanent objectification of Black people through the camera.<sup>375</sup> It is critical to bear in mind that hooks associated the oppositional gaze with radical Black

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<sup>375</sup> As a project, *Black Looks* examines a time when African-Americans were already "integrated" into American society and the concept of Blackness was being transformed by mass media and TV. Hollywood, music, celebrities, and the spectacularized commodification of blackness was a new phenomenon that had to be constantly questioned especially because of debates on positive and negative images of blackness that emerged in the post-Civil Rights era: internalization and replication of stereotypes was damaging, hurting, and for black feminist writing it has been essential to investigate and situate problematic visual manifestations vis-à-vis both patriarchy and white supremacy, as well as to study and propose ways of questioning and galvanizing change. In *The Oppositional Gaze*, hooks examined practice of "looking back at" white Hollywood cinema productions. She begins the essay by exploring *looking back* and the agency of the gaze. Hooks discusses how, historically, enslaved people in the US were punished for acts of looking, arguing that the effects of that trauma remain in the following generations of African-Americans, black spectatorship that emerges already bound to associate gazing with denial and, as she argues, becomes an internalized behavior, acts of punishing each other for daring to look. Yet, recounting childhood memories and quoting Foucault, hooks understands that there are always moments of rupture, a trepidation in how power relations are established. Therefore, the gaze is always a tool open for a reorganization of the field of representation: there is power in looking and in looking back. For hooks, the field of representation is a site of struggle, marked by white hegemony that establishes norms and specific narratives of representation in which black people still appear debased, stereotyped, used as a backdrop for whiteness. bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1992).



female subjects challenging capitalism. This interrogatory Black gaze, for hooks, was marked by a political resistance very skeptical, if not entirely rejecting, of consumerism.

de Andrade has said in an interview he does not see the work as part of activism against racism, although he hopes the work helps raise this debate.<sup>376</sup> For this and other conceptual reasons, *Eu, mestiço* is not a work *of* or *for* Black empowerment. *Eu, mestiço* can also operate in opposition to Black empowerment or the empowerment of the racialized, at times embracing visual traditions compromised by their historical role in coloniality. The “looking back” the work provides to Black people is still constrained by a series of aesthetic frameworks acting as ideological traps for the audience; it is as if de Andrade aesthetically entices viewers into the work, hoping they will get entangled in the conceptual issues of historical violence the work implies.

I have already discussed how de Andrade deploys a didactic strategy for presenting racialized identities throughout his work. In *Eu, mestiço*, he uses the visual effect of book pages: portraits of characters are spread on white cube walls as if they comprise a photo book illustrating the demographic population of Brazil, or at least, of the Northeastern population. As I have discussed earlier, this composition responds to *Race and Class in Rural Brazil*, but is also part of a broader didactic approach de

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<sup>376</sup> Jonathas de Andrade and Adrienne Edwards, *Jonathas de Andrade and Adrienne Edwards in Conversation* (Alexander and Bonin Gallery, New York City, 2018), <https://vimeo.com/260239587>.

Andrade has deployed in previous works, such as *Posters for the Museum of the Northeastern Man*.

One should consider at least two further organizational mechanisms of these didactics in *Eu, mestiço*. First, the artist created serial portraits, which provide a cinematic quality to his photographic project. This seriality shares an opticality with the aesthetics of commercial promotions. de Andrade mainly borrows from the journalistic documentary iconography of the 1950s and 1960s to create sophisticated black-and-white portraits. Still, the pictorial seriality he uses refers to his interest in *The Fairburn System of Visual Reference*, a manual for commercial representation. Second, the artist organizes some serial photographs of facial profiles in an ethnographic grid, a known colonial dispositive of othering and controlling difference. These are the visual components I will discuss in the next subsections.

### 2.5.1 Tools of White Coloniality

de Andrade photographed most of his subjects using multiple cameras taking synced shots around them. Long before the photo booths of the social media era, which make 360-degree movies and pictures, British graphic artist Ted Fairburn used eight synced cameras to take simultaneous shots of his subjects for *The Fairburn System of Visual Reference*. This series of now-rare photographic reference manuals were first published in the 1970s and were primarily used by commercial artists to render people for ad storyboards and campaigns.<sup>377</sup> The book's pages are filled with

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<sup>377</sup> It is hard to find sources that discuss the Fairburn System of Visual Reference. I could only find a blog post about the books: <https://bookpatrol.net/books-for-posing/>. I also found the transcript of the "Foreword" for the Fairburn Children's manual's on a UK rare and out-of-print books print shop's website. The "Foreword" reads as

portraits and cutout photographs of hands, women falling, men laying on the floor, and all sorts of facial expressions. These poses and expressions often look overly theatrical, exaggerated to the extent that they appear artificial or mocking. Some series in *Eu, mestiço* mimic poses from the book and seem to be inspired by its theatricality and caricature.

*The Fairburn System of Visual Reference* borrows its cataloging and methodical obsession with capturing the human figure, however, from Western iconography from the early 19th and 20th centuries. The racial profiling that appears in ethnography and pseudoscience, such as phrenology, produced a proliferation of visual “types.” These practices often roamed throughout an individual’s entire appearance, seeking to capture different poses and parts of the body by violently stripping people of color of their dignity and humanity. These demeaning photographic practices flourished simultaneously with such practices as the widespread spectacles of human display of the 19th and 20th centuries.<sup>378</sup> Multiple

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follows, “These unique books have been produced for one reason only: to provide a vast amount of hitherto unavailable figure reference material in convenient manner. It is an essential piece of equipment for use by professional people and those in training who need to depict accurate graphic representations of human figures. Whilst every effort has been made to provide as much information as possible, it must be appreciated that any Publication dealing with the action and poses of the human figure can never be definitive in the full sense of the word. The system of photography we have employed, however, allows the user, not only to obtain whole or part figure reference, but to combine gags., such figures that have been photographed, a common viewpoint — thus increasing the reference material available by an enormous amount. Because of the rapid change in fashions we have deliberately avoided using clothes which are not normal, everyday styles. All the basic types of garment are shown however and are easily adaptable.” Arkive, “The Fairburn System of Visual References (3 Vols.),” Arkive, n.d., <https://www.theprintarkive.co.uk/products/the-fairburn-system-of-visual-references-3-vols?variant=38091593089201>. Jennifer Kennard, “Books for Posing,” *Book Patrol* (blog), August 17, 2012, <https://bookpatrol.net/books-for-posing/>.

<sup>378</sup> Human displays became central components of World Fairs and Great Expositions of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. These EuroAmerican endeavors were rooted in colonialism and sought to reaffirm colonial and imperial power while promoting industrialization. These racist spectacles, to quote Tony Bennet, followed an “exhibitionary” rationale, making use of “techniques of display that had been developed within the previous histories of museums, panoramas, (...) art galleries (...)” These expositions often exhibited and glorified industrial achievements by juxtaposing them to non-western *so-called* primitive nations. In these expositions, non-western and non-normative people became objects of ethnography, perversely displayed as oddities. For more on

trends of theatricality became strata for the construction and maintenance of racial difference, achieved through whites' exploitation and exposure of people of color for study and entertainment.<sup>379</sup>

One example is the origins of the photographic capturing of movement, or chronophotography, an ancestor of the cinema, famously developed by Eadweard Muybridge's 19th-century experiments.<sup>380</sup> To prove how motion worked, photographers often arranged sequential images in a grid: the contact sheet.

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the exhibitionary complex and human displays, see: Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*, 2013, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315002668>. Curtis M. Hinsley, "The World as a Marketplace," in *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, ed. Ivan Karp, Steven Lavine, and Rockefeller Foundation (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), 344–65. Coco Fusco, "The Other History of Intercultural Performance," *TDR (1988-)* 38, no. 1 (1994): 143, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1146361>.

<sup>379</sup> Brian Wallis defines the type as: "Formally, the type discourages style and composition, seeking to present information as plainly and straightforwardly and possible." Brian Wallis, "Black Bodies, White Science: Louis Agassiz's Slave Daguerreotypes," in *Only Skin Deep: Changing Visions of the American Self*, ed. Coco Fusco (New York: International Center of Photography in association with Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, 2003).

<sup>380</sup> It is important to note here a discussion about racism in relation to Muybridge's practice, therefore a discussion of racism within the very origins of cinematic representation. Some scholars, like Jeff Scheible have called attention to the fact that the presence of African Americans in Muybridge's chronophotographic experiments has been rendered invisible. Scheible says, "Indeed, Eadweard Muybridge's innovative 1877–78 experiments using photographic sequences to document motion are generally agreed to be key predecessors in the development of cinema. These images depicted jockeys riding race horses to determine for ex-governor of California Leland Stanford whether equines ever keep all four legs off the ground while running. The animals, named Occident and Sallie Gardner, have been so overwhelmingly the focus of discourses about these images that it has hardly ever been remarked that the jockeys riding them were African American. The names of the horses in the studies are remembered while the names of the Black men riding them are, revealingly, all but forgotten to history. Racetracks might have been one of the few public facilities not governed by Jim Crow segregation laws after American Reconstruction, yet by not documenting the names of the Black jockeys, broader racial hierarchies override details of this history's narrativization." Jeff Scheible, "Throwing Punches: The Athletic Aesthetics of Kevin Jerome Everson's Filmmaking," ed. Jason Fox, *World Records Journal* 3 (Winter 2020), <https://worldrecordsjournal.org/category/volume-3/>, 31. Others, like Elspeth H. Brown have attended to Muybridge's racist use of the grid to represent Black subjects he hired for the project. According to Brown, Muybridge first used an actual anthropometric grid to depict his subjects exactly as a backdrop for pictures he took of Ben Bailey, a Black man, who was photographed in 1887 during Muybridge's work at the University of Pennsylvania. About this fact, Brown argues, "With Ben Bailey, we have the introduction of the anthropometric grid into American photography; although the other ninety-four models were white, the anthropometric grid first appears behind the only model who was African American. It is as if the non-white 'other' cannot be understood, scientifically, without the anthropometric grid, a technology for mapping racial difference. The fact that Bailey was mixed-race raises the question of what role he may have played in addressing late nineteenth-century anthropological inquiries into racial hybridity and evolution. Once introduced, Muybridge retained the grid for all of the series after negative number 524, where Bailey was first introduced." Elspeth H. Brown, "Racialising the Virile Body: Eadweard Muybridge's Locomotion Studies 1883-1887," *Gender & History* 17, no. 3 (November 2005): 627–56, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0953-5233.2005.00399.x>, 637.

Combined with the seriality of photographs, the grid helped *rationalize*—or visually narrate—a motion sequence to the viewer, immediately making more readable the photographers’ desired relationships between shots in the same group.

But one can trace a genealogy of racial profiling and the use of a grid to an even earlier example: colonial engravings and Castas paintings. All across Latin America, Castas paintings and pictures often placed racialized and ethnic types side-by-side in a picture frame so as to create discernible (albeit constructed) comparisons between the depicted characters.<sup>381</sup> These didactics influenced judicial and scientific “type” images all over 1800s Europe and its colonies. Castas paintings and anthropometric photography are only two examples that combine the grid and the type as formats through which colored bodies forcefully came to visibility in the field of representation.

Serial portraiture is therefore linked to the history of type images, which associated the social assessment and control of colored individuals with the intersection of physical appearance and moral character. According to Brian Wallis,

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<sup>381</sup> *Castas* paintings is a genre of paintings that emerged in the eighteenth-century, in countries such as Mexico and Peru to illustrate colonial social conventions created to classify the racial mixing of colonial populations. For example, colonial Mexico socially separated Spaniards and indigenous peoples, each of these groups had its own political hierarchy with specific institutions and officials. Still, as Magalli M. Cabrera explains, despite the imagined binary social division created by the colonial system, the mixing of blood produced a tertiary, or “intermediate” people, who colonial ruling identified as *castas*, or castes. Therefore, castas were a group of people born out of racial mixing in colonial times. As Cabrera points out, as early as the 1540s, the Spanish Crown sought ways to classify the castas: ranks were created according to different degrees of people’s racial mixing. These ranks often varied from 14 to 20 distinct castas. As Cabrera notes, this system also “proscribed the physical and social mobility of castas.” For example, “Castas were not allowed to live in Indian neighborhoods, and legislation denied the use of specific types of clothing and jewelry to certain castas.” This same rigid organization was transposed to Casta paintings, which helped codify racial difference in visual terms. This rigidity is also reflected into the grid composition of the paintings which helped generate racist comparative interpretations of each constructed racial rank. For more on Castas paintings, Magali M. Carrera, “Locating Race in Late Colonial Mexico,” *Art Journal* 57, no. 3 (1998): 36, <https://doi.org/10.2307/777968>. And Maria Concepcion Garcia Saiz, *Las Castas Mexicanas; Un Genero Pictorico Americano* (Italy: Olivetti, 1989).

in “Black Bodies, White Science,” “[t]ypes represented the average example of a racial group, an abstraction, though not necessarily ideal, that defined the general form or character of individuals within a group.” Wallis continued, “[r]acial types involved not only the physical measurement of the body, but an assessment of the moral character, manner and social habits of each racial type.”<sup>382</sup>

While the Fairburn system’s style of profiling and portraying human figures draws from this outrageous visual history, the publication contributes to another mode of exclusion: the early erasure of colored people in commercial photography. While seven of the eight volumes in the *Fairburn System* depict white subjects, the series has only one volume in which “Ethnic” and “Character” types appear together. This different treatment is linked to a generalized exclusion of people of color from capitalist technologies of seeing. For example, that commercial photography and the camera’s regulations of brightness and darkness privileges light-skin complexion is, by now, a known fact.<sup>383</sup>

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<sup>382</sup> Brian Wallis, “Black Bodies, White Science: Louis Agassiz’s Slave Daguerreotypes,” in *Only Skin Deep: Changing Visions of the American Self*, ed. Coco Fusco (New York: International Center of Photography in association with Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, 2003).

<sup>383</sup> I am referring here to a light-skin bias, visual patterns (such as a white pixel or a test-strip card) that have been historically used to regulate photographic cameras and other screens. For example, as Lorna Roth discusses about photography, “‘Skin-colour balance’ in still photography printing refers historically to a process in which a norm reference card showing a “Caucasian” woman wearing a colourful, high-contrast dress is used as a basis for measuring and calibrating the skin tones on the photograph being printed. The light skin tones of these women—named “Shirley” by male industry users after the name of the first colour test-strip-card model—have been the recognized skin ideal standard for most North American analogue photo labs since the early part of the twentieth century and they continue to function as the dominant norm.” Lorna Roth, “Looking at Shirley, the Ultimate Norm: Colour Balance, Image Technologies, and Cognitive Equity,” *Canadian Journal of Communication* 34, no. 1 (March 30, 2009): 111–36, <https://doi.org/10.22230/cjc.2009v34n1a2196>. Read article by Sarah Lewis, “The Racial Bias Built Into Photography,” *The New York Times*, April 25, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/25/lens/sarah-lewis-racial-bias-photography.html>.

## 2.5.2 Pierre Verger and Jonathas de Andrade

Though the racism spurring the two primary sources from which de Andrade drew is clearly pronounced—even if both have been historically undercriticized—most viewers of *Eu, mestiço* may not be aware of the extent to which the artwork relies on these documents, in terms of both the artist’s chosen aesthetics and method. Installed together, even the shots showing more aggressive facial expressions look enticing, perhaps tempered by the overall didactics of the work’s book-page display.

In addition to a compelling use of the grid, *Eu, mestiço* imitates mid-20th-century aesthetics of documentary photography and filmmaking. In interviews, de Andrade cites the work of Jean Rouch as one of his aesthetic interests in filmmaking, but *Eu, mestiço* also establishes a relationship with Pierre Fatumbi Verger’s photographic documentaries. Both Verger and Rouch were born in Paris in the early 20th century. Although they never collaborated, the two men shared an interest in anthropology and ethnography, and both worked extensively on the African continent. Rouch is considered one of the founders of direct cinema and famously combined fiction and ethnography to create a documentary genre called ethnofiction, which, as the name suggests, combines ethnography and fictional narratives.<sup>384</sup>

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<sup>384</sup> See note 54. Jean Rouch was an Africanist filmmaker and anthropologist, whose work from the 1960s, coincided with the independence movements in African countries ruled by France, such as the Algerian war. Simply put, Rouch’s ethnofiction tested the boundaries between ethnographic documentaries and fictional narratives. Within this category, Rouch also deployed improvisation of the narrative and the collaboration of actors. This collaborative aspect of Rouch’s practice has probably inspired de Andrade to create his own ethnofictional works, such as *The Fish*. According to Justin Izzo, Rouch’s ethnofiction “grew directly out of fieldwork experiences in Niger and Ivory Coast where, ever the easygoing an-thropologist ready to follow a lead, he often prompted his research subjects (many of whom would go on to become his amateur actors) to determine the scope and stakes of a given project.” Justin Izzo, “The Director of Modern Life:: Jean Rouch’s Ethnofiction,” in *Experiments with Empire* (Duke University Press, 2019), 55–97, <https://doi.org/10.1215/9781478004622-003>, 55.

Verger moved to Brazil in 1946, where he lived for the rest of his life until his death in 1996. He traveled across the world as a photojournalist, though mostly back and forth between Bahia, Dahomey, and Nigeria. Hired by the Rio de Janeiro newspaper, *O Cruzeiro*, Verger visited numerous regions in Brazil, documenting popular cultures and the lives of the marginalized. According to Eunice Ribeiro dos Santos, his early photographs for *O Cruzeiro* were marked by spontaneity in both the situations captured and the poses of those he portrayed through his use of surprising angles.<sup>385</sup>

Verger became most famous for his photographs and photobooks on Afro-Brazilian religious ceremonies. Later in his life, he switched from a more traditional photojournalistic practice to a visual anthropology consisting of prolific research and writing production, in addition to making images. Initiated in Ketu, Dahomey as a Babalawo (an Ifá priest) in 1953, Verger made extensive contributions to the understanding of the affinities between the Yoruba culture on the African continent and diasporic Afro-Brazilian communities.<sup>386</sup> Verger was also friends with many

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<sup>385</sup> Ribeiro dos Santos writes about Verger, “Verger was technically able to contemplate the model, circle around them, allow himself to be seduced, own them through his eyes. This [method] produced a series of photographs whose most common characteristic is the spontaneity of the subject, who was often unaware they were being photographed. Verger’s interest was, through the broader angles, to capture the photographed person’s cultural context and, through this, to understand their world and, through the narrower angles, to extract feelings from the photographed person, which could be translated into the complicity of their gaze for the camera.” My translation. In Portuguese: “Verger tinha condições técnicas de contemplar o modelo, circular em torno dele, deixar-se seduzir, tê-lo através do olhar. Isso gerou uma série de fotografias cuja característica mais comum é a espontaneidade do fotografado, que, muitas vezes, não tinha consciência de que estava sendo focado na objetiva. O interesse de Verger era, nos ângulos mais amplos, captar o contexto da produção cultural de quem fotografava e, através disso, compreender seu mundo e, nos ângulos mais restritos, extrair sentimentos do fotografado, os quais podiam se traduzir na complicidade de um olhar para a câmera.” Eunice Ribeiro dos Santos, “Pierre Verger: O Fotógrafo Da Cultura Popular Influências Estéticas E Estilos,” *VI Enecult - Encontro de Estudos Multidisciplinares Em Cultura*, May 2010, <http://www.cult.ufba.br/wordpress/24795.pdf>, 3.

<sup>386</sup> The scope of Verger’s contributions to African and Afro-Brazilian Yoruba culture can be observed through the many books he published in life and posthumously: Pierre Verger, *Orixás: Deuses Iorubás Na Africa e No Novo Mundo*, Reedição (Salvador, Bahia, Brasil: Fundação Pierre Verger, 2018). Pierre Verger, *Notas sobre o culto aos*



anthropologists, such as Roger Bastide and Alfred Métraux, and collaborated with Gilberto Freyre on writing.<sup>387</sup> These connections were likely fundamental to Verger's participation as a photographer in *Race and Class in Rural Brazil*, which de Andrade used in his work. According to Barros de Castro and Sepúlveda, Verger's insider status in the Afro-Brazilian religions helped his acquaintances develop their anthropological research because he introduced them to the quotidian life in *terreiros*.<sup>388</sup>

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*orixás e voduns na Bahia de Todos os Santos, no Brasil, e na antiga costa dos escravos, na África* (São Paulo: EDUSP, 1999). Roger Bastide et al., *Diálogo entre filhos de Xangô: correspondência 1947-1974* (São Paulo, SP, Brasil: EDUSP, 2017). Also, see the work of Fundação Pierre Verger, "Fundação Pierre Verger," Fundação Pierre Verger, June 2, 2022, <https://www.pierreverger.org/en/>.

<sup>387</sup> About these collaborations, Souty writes, "Sociologist Gilberto Freyre drew directly from Verger's documentation in several of his works on the presence of Brazilian culture in Dahomey and Nigeria. In August 1951, without ever having gone to Dahomey, Freyre published five reports in *O Cruzeiro*, with photographs by Verger, about the 'Brazilians' of Dahomey and the Brazilian cultural influence in the region... ideas presented are fundamentally Verger's: he was the real author." My translation. In Portuguese, "O sociólogo Gilberto Freyre também se baseará diretamente na documentação de Verger em vários de seus trabalhos sobre a presença da cultura brasileira no Daomé e na Nigéria. Em Agosto de 1951, sem nunca ter ido ao Daomé, publicará cinco reportagens em *O Cruzeiro*, com fotografias de Verger, sobre os "brasileiros" do Daomé e a influencia cultural brasileira na região ... A iniciativa das reportagens, as informações coletadas e até as ideias apresentadas são fundamentalmente de Verger: ele foi o verdadeiro autor." Jérôme Souty, Michel Colin, and Jérôme Souty, *Pierre Fatumbi Verger: do olhar livre ao conhecimento iniciático* (São Paulo: Editora Terceiro Nome, 2011), 142. Angela Lühning also calls attention to the collaboration between Verger and Freyre, "Fatumbí made suggestions in five articles on the Brazilian presence in Nigeria and Benin which were published in August 1951 as a series entitled "They happen to be Bahian," under the byline of Gilberto Freyre. Freyre later re-published these articles as a chapter in his book, *Problemas brasileiros de antropologia* (Freyre 1959:263-313), and again in *Bahia e Bahianos* (Freyre 1990:91-134), in both cases unfortunately without the original photographs. In the books, Freyre added an introduction recognizing Fatumbí's importance in the research. The letters between them about the project make it clear that not only was the original idea Fatumbí's but that he also carried out nearly all of the research." Angela Lühning, "Pierre Fatumbi Verger: A View from Bahia," *Cahiers Du Brésil Contemporain* 38/39 (1999): 75-95, <http://www.revues.msh-paris.fr/vernumpub/05-Luhning.pdf>, 85.

<sup>388</sup> Citing Lühning, Barros de Castro and Sepúlveda wrote, "Two years after arriving in Salvador, Verger made his first trips to ancient Dahomey and Nigeria, in search of the 'sources' of candomblé in Bahia, whose research became his main focus. Between 1949 and 1960, Verger made thirteen crossings between Rio de Janeiro and Dakar, crossing the Atlantic up to twice a year (Lühning, 2002a). His knowledge of religious communities in Brazil and Africa became fundamental to his anthropological friends. In 1951, Bastide visited, together with Verger, some Candomblé terreiros, including Terreiro Ilê Axé Opô Afonjá. Bastide also made a long journey to Africa with Verger as his guide (Lühning, 2002a and Lühning, 2004)." My translation. From Portuguese, "Dois anos após chegar a Salvador, Verger realizou suas primeiras viagens para o antigo Daomé e a Nigéria, em busca das "fontes" do candomblé da Bahia, cuja pesquisa se tornou o seu principal foco. Entre 1949 e 1960, Verger fez treze travessias entre Rio de Janeiro e Dakar, chegando a cruzar o Atlântico até duas vezes por ano (Lühning, 2002a). Seu conhecimento sobre os cultos religiosos no Brasil e na África tornou-se fundamental para seus amigos antropólogos. Em 1951, Bastide visitou, junto com Verger, alguns terreiros de candomblé, entre eles, Terreiro Ilê Axé Opô Afonjá. Bastide também fez uma longa viagem à África tendo Verger como guia (Lühning, 2002a e Lühning, 2004)." Maurício Barros de Castro and Myrian Sepúlveda dos Santos, "UM VERGER, DOIS

Verger's images have the now rare appeal of the analogic camera, the Rolleiflex, and the 35mm film. According to experts on his photography, Verger was influenced by surrealism and Italian neorealism.<sup>389</sup> But mostly, he was interested in photography as an intuitive disposition, and his images are marked by the spontaneity of scenes and people's expressions. According to Jérôme Souty, Verger achieved this spontaneity with the help of the Rolleiflex.<sup>390</sup> Because of its two lenses, photographers who use a Rolleiflex do not need to look at the camera's viewfinder and can snap a shot without necessarily making it noticeable to those captured in it. This method may explain why some people in Verger's photographs look like they are caught in their actions or do not return the gaze.

Seven of Pierre Verger's photographs appear in *Race and Class in Rural Brazil*. According to de Andrade, these images are substitutes for the ones used in the study's pictorial test.<sup>391</sup> Four of these seven images are headshots; they are quasi-

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OLHARES: A Construção Da Africanidade Brasileira Por Um Estrangeiro," *Caderno CRH* 29, no. 76 (April 2016): 149–64, <https://doi.org/10.1590/S0103-49792016000100010>, 157.

<sup>389</sup> According to Ribeiro dos Santos, "Verger's work followed paths similar to neo-realism, approaching the street space and photographing simple people, without the glamour of the bourgeoisie, and [looking at] the people's relationship with religiosity. Verger subverts the way of portraying Black people whose photographs in the 19th century enclosed them in poses that linked them to slavery and labor. In the early 20th century, Black people were [more visible] frequently in police pages. Verger's photos allow us to see Black people in activities that constitute their identities, and showing civilizing processes of African and Afro-descendant culture, often ignored by scholars and journalists who wrote the texts that accompanied Verger's photographs in the magazine *O Cruzeiro*." My translation from Portuguese original: "O trabalho de Verger enveredou-se por caminhos semelhantes ao neo-realismo abordando o espaço da rua e fotografando as pessoas simples, sem o glamour da burguesia e a relação do povo com a religiosidade. Verger subverte a maneira de retratar os negros cujas fotografias no século XIX enclausuravam-nos em poses que os ligavam à escravidão e ao trabalho e no início século XX mostra-os mais frequentemente nas páginas policiais. As fotos de Verger permitem ver os negros em atividades constituintes de identidades que mostram processos civilizatórios da cultura africana e afro-descendente e, muitas vezes, ignorados por estudiosos e pelos jornalistas que escreviam os textos que acompanhavam as fotografias de Verger na revista *O Cruzeiro*." Eunice Ribeiro dos Santos, "Pierre Verger: O Fotógrafo Da Cultura Popular Influências Estéticas E Estilos," *VI Enecult - Encontro de Estudos Multidisciplinares Em Cultura*, May 2010, <http://www.cult.ufba.br/wordpress/24795.pdf>,

<sup>390</sup> Jérôme Souty, Michel Colin, and Jérôme Souty, *Pierre Fatumbi Verger: do olhar livre ao conhecimento iniciático* (São Paulo: Editora Terceiro Nome, 2011), 22-23.

<sup>391</sup> The authors of the Unesco study admit that the images were too much "embarrassing" to be published in the book and that is the main reason they replaced the images by Verger's. See note ... About this fact, de Andrade

types but could well escape this categorization if they were not contextualized with captions reinforcing the study's goals. Two other pictures show children working and playing. An additional image is a scene taken of a small-town street depicting typical *taipa* townhouse architecture, in front of which three people are loading cargo on two donkeys' backs.

The first two headshots are labeled "Mulatto cowboy of the interior of Bahia," and "Cabocla of the interior of Bahia." The first image is a portrait of an old man taken from a side angle. The man looks to the right as if glancing at the horizon. They are frowning and their eyes are almost closed due to bright sunlight, which gives them a severe or attentive look. The man's hair is gray and they have a white beard and mustache, indicating their older age. They wear a typical Northeastern cowboy hat and a white shirt. The entire image is in focus and there are only a few areas of shadow around their right cheek and under their chin.

The image of the "Cabocla" depicts an elderly woman in front of what appear to be curtains. Like the man in the first image, Verger also took this shot from an oblique angle. The woman, too, looks away from the camera as if beholding an imaginary horizon. The woman also has their eyes closed due to the sunlight and they wear a cloak enveloping their head and chest; one gets to see part of their right arm

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says, "The images used in the research of the 1950s induced participants to manifest prejudice, and seeing the book with the eyes of today not only offers a violent picture of racism at that time, but attests how much racism remains so similar up to today, with expressions of current use even today. As the original images were not included in the original publication, the first gesture of the project was to create images of today to approach that text of the 50's that seems to talk about today." Jonathas de Andrade, "Jonathas de Andrade," Personal Website, n.d., <http://www.jonathasdeandrade.com.br/>.

and hand leaning over the window's mound. Sunlight bathes their body, creating a few shaded areas contrasting the room's darkness in the background.

But the most captivating image in the book is the fourth picture of a Black cowboy, who looks directly at the camera. Different from the other headshots, Verger more consciously constructed this image as a close-up shot, taking it from a narrow side view and at a lower angle. He was very close to his subject, and the shot enlarges and empowers the portrayed. The man wears a typical Northeastern cowboy hat, but smaller and more circular than the hat the elderly cowboy wears in the preceding image. The circular shape of the hat and the man's head organize the entire composition in an imaginary diagonal line. The man's Black skin is shown in its many tones, emerging from the darkness on the left side of their face under the hat's shadow, to be touched by the sunlight and again back into the shadows descending under their chin onto their neck. Because the man looks back at the camera, the sun does not blind them; their stare is focused and confident.

Verger's Black cowboy image is more staged than the others in the book, and the return of the gaze breaks with the objectification inherent in the history of type images, creating a link between viewed and viewer. Many specialists of Verger speak of the empathy he established with his subjects through the gaze.<sup>392</sup> Many different theories in the photographic field have tried to explain what makes an image a "good" image. Borrowing from bell hooks, I believe there is power in the unspoken

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<sup>392</sup> See note 140.

relationship in a returned gaze, whether of empathy, opposition, or any emotion in between.

de Andrade has mentioned some of the iconographies behind *Eu, mestiço* reference classic ethnographic shots, mostly of workers in action.<sup>393</sup> I also see convergences between his portraits and Verger's, such as "Black cowboy" from *Race and Class in Rural Brazil*. What is more, I contend one of de Andrade's goals in *Eu, mestiço* is to develop a mise-en-scène—an arena—of returned gazes in which the spectator is examined, ignored, or challenged.

I am putting *Eu, mestiço* in conversation with Verger's work, not only because of Verger's role in *Race and Class*, but because Verger had a particular approach to gazing at racialized bodies. He, too, was an insider/outsider figure—a white gay man whose gaze also pursued colored male bodies. Unsurprisingly, this interracial and sexual dynamic has been overlooked by most authors who have studied Verger's work. His photography is often described as "poetic" and "seductive," but the racial-sexual dynamics between the photographer and the photographed are rarely mentioned.<sup>394</sup> It is as if, through the luring aesthetics of his images, whiteness could

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<sup>393</sup> My translation. Jonathas de Andrade, Interview in Portuguese with the author, Whatsapp, 2021.

<sup>394</sup> This is how Ribeiro dos Santos describes the flirting relationship between Verger and his photographs' subjects: "However, unlike the 19th century, when the subject was at the photographer's disposal for the pose, Verger had the technical conditions to contemplate the model, circulate around him, let himself be seduced, have him through his eyes. This generated a series of photographs whose most common characteristic is the spontaneity of the person being photographed, who, many times, was not aware that he was being focused on the lens." My translation. Portuguese original, "Porém, ao contrário do século XIX, em que o fotografado ficava à disposição do fotógrafo para a pose, Verger tinha condições técnicas de contemplar o modelo, circular em torno dele, deixar-se seduzir, tê-lo através do olhar. Isso gerou uma série de fotografias cuja característica mais comum é a espontaneidade do fotografado, que, muitas vezes, não tinha consciência de que estava sendo focado na objetiva." Eunice Ribeiro dos Santos, "Pierre Verger: O Fotógrafo Da Cultura Popular Influências Estéticas E Estilos," *VI Enecult - Encontro de Estudos Multidisciplinares Em Cultura*, May 2010, <http://www.cult.ufba.br/wordpress/24795.pdf>, 3.

be somehow forgotten. What goes unmentioned are how affection and sexual desire also operate within processes of racialization and how the white gaze comes to signify control over racialized bodies, even more within disciplines such as ethnography and anthropology.<sup>395</sup>

This analysis is not an attack on Verger as an individual and his unquestionable contributions to the Afro-Brazilian culture. But, not surprisingly, white cultural producers' practices have gone unexamined in their complex forms of gazing at racialized bodies. Though de Andrade is a gay Northeastern man, building on these dynamics has increasingly pushed his understanding of how racialization occurs and how these processes are also part of transnational discourses. According to de Andrade, developing *Eu, mestiço* made him rethink how he has articulated intersectional questions in his works, such as commenting simultaneously on race, sexual orientation, and class.<sup>396</sup>

It is significant to notice the current malleability of racialization processes in Brazil and how there has been a push towards a self-identification with either whiteness or blackness. This discursive shift has to do with the increased participation of Brazil's Black and indigenous movements in social media, a factor de Andrade also mentions in his interview. But these renewed narratives on a subject's racial identification also relate to transnational exchange of discourses, of which *Eu, mestiço* is clearly a part. While the whiteness of Verger's gaze went mostly

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<sup>395</sup> The white gaze is a constant trope in Critical Race Theory since Frantz Fanon and Charles Lam Markmann, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 1967.

<sup>396</sup> Jonathas de Andrade, Interview in Portuguese with the author, Whatsapp, 2021.

unquestioned, de Andrade has been completely immersed in these debates, with his subjectivity(ies) being constantly questioned by others and by himself.

## 2.6. To Gaze at, to Consume, and to Learn from Racialized Bodies

While the 1950s visual anthropology appearance of *Eu, mestiço* entices and invites viewers into understanding a *character*, the neutral and sanitized look stemming from the Fairburn system translates these individuals into *commodities* to be scrutinized or gazed at. On the one hand, the portraits of *Eu, Mestiço* are organized within a didactic framework through the grid and the book page. On the other hand, the aesthetics of the photographs in the work oscillate between visual anthropology (like Verger's authorial practice) and the ad-like style of *The Fairburn System of Visual Reference*.

Visual reference systems like the Fairburn have influenced generations of ad campaigns and their aesthetics have been installed in our collective imaginaries. For example, consider the panoptic practice in photography of capturing all angles of a product via multiple synced shots from cameras oriented 360 degrees around the object. This practice produces a standardized view that prepares and makes an object ready and desirable for consumption with the intent of capturing the product's detailed features.

In *Eu, mestiço* this whole-picture desire of looking at the Other is crisscrossed by multiple questions ruled by desire and power. The desire to learn about the Other is part of the power of disciplining didactics and the colonial impulse to know things.

The desire to consume, make, or obtain a product out of the Other refers to the colonial urge to make the other *less*; it is this practice of monetizing cultural and ethnic differences that led to the extreme violence of enslavement and genocide. The desire to gaze upon the Other combines all other impulses: to know, to own, to control. If these impulses do exist in the work, how are they related to the discourses on *mestiçagem* I outlined in my introduction?

First, the title of the works refers to *mestiçagem*, or claiming the voice of a *mestiçe/a* subject.<sup>397</sup> Viewers are invited to glance at several individuals who, hypothetically, are *mestiçe/as*. Suppose viewers seek in the portraits any semblance of so-called racial miscegenation. In that case, they quickly find no easy pattern to follow. What the viewer sees are black-and-white photographs of subjects with different skin complexions.

At the core of the discursive *mestiçagem* in Brazil, as I mentioned elsewhere, is the idea of “good *mestiçagem*,” or a *mestiçagem* that would lead to *branquitude*. This system created fragmented modes of racialization in which colorism plays an essential role. The lighter the skin, the more chances a subject has of subscribing to whiteness and its adjacent social statuses. But in *Eu, mestiço*, if a viewer desires to compare and classify subjects based on different skin colors, they are slightly prevented from doing so by the artist’s use of black and white photographs, which muddles, albeit does not dismantle, these constructed differentiations.

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<sup>397</sup> According to Thyago Nogueira, the title of the work refers to E



Because various subjects' complexions are represented in the work, perhaps the artist wants to suggest that *mestiçagem* is a universal circumstance, which is true if one considers the genetic imprint of a society's multiple generations. In that case, one can suppose *Eu, mestiço* is intended as a compliment to *mestiçagem*. If so, it is still a faint one, for as previously mentioned, even celebratory discourses on *mestiçagem* have manufactured racial categories within the Black and white spectrums, reproducing the so-called hierarchies that marginalize and put darker-skinned individuals in positions of vulnerability and oppression.

An artwork's title may force viewers to consider this question, but it is still a very small factor in how viewers interpret the work. The work does not complicate the discourse on *mestiçagem* if one expects it to attend to more complex notions of Blackness, or non-whiteness, in Brazil. If *Eu, mestiço* falls short in that sense, I argue it does situate whiteness in relation to Brazil's national narratives.

First, the tropes the artwork references have been presented to the viewers in the language of the colonizer. These visual repertoires appeal to and invite white voyeurism, while supposedly repelling and sickening those who have directly suffered its oppression. The subjects personified in the artwork attack and confront the viewer's gaze, creating a space where, hypothetically, whiteness is faced with hostility. About his desire to create discomfort at *branquitude*, de Andrade has said:

What is left of the "Race and Class" book [in the work] are the keywords that I wished [to use] to cause a certain embarrassment regarding the *branquitude* perspective from Brazil. [W]hiteness is being very critically reviewed [in Brazil]. And I think the Black movement and all the discussions on blackness have matured a lot in the last five years. I believe they have achieved a voice and an echo in

the mass media, so nowadays there is much more debate, much more thinking and much more rethinking [about these issues]. [T]he channels are more attentive to denouncing and making racist practices intolerable, which they have always been, but I think that today there is more space for denunciation and less tolerance for these [racist] practices that are established both in the daily lives of Brazilians and Brazil. So, this embarrassment [of *branquitude*], I think, is a possible reading of my intention and in several of my projects. It's something I've been rethinking in my practice a bit through the heated new atmosphere of the past years.<sup>398</sup>

Here, de Andrade speaks of how his use of certain key terms could bring a sense of shame to those who subscribe to whiteness. But I go beyond his use of linguistic expressions to say that it is through the gaze exchange that the artwork can potentially force a viewer to self-identify with whiteness. This forced self-identification is not only achieved through these terms but in the visual narratives and themes in *Eu, mestiço*'s 18 portraits, often leaving out viewers who do not identify as white.

A first group of portraits attacks the viewers with aggressive, surprised, or frightened looks. A second group disdains the viewers by simply turning their backs to them, perhaps suggesting the viewers are unworthy of a return of the gaze. A third group confronts the viewers by looking directly at them, proposing different control relationships through the gaze.

Let us look at this first group of portraits. For example, *Ummanagable by Zuleide* (Figures 23-24) is a series of seven half-body portraits of a woman looking directly at the camera with a grimacing look, wielding a rolling pin pointed at the

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<sup>398</sup> My translation. Jonathas de Andrade, Interview in Portuguese with the author, Whatsapp, May 2021.

camera. Each portrait shows an angered Zuleide in a different frontal position. Their forehead shows beads of sweat. From left to right, the progression of shots shows Zuleide with variations of a frowned look and an open mouth.

In the second image, Zuleide appears closer to the camera, with a semi-opened mouth, suggesting they are in the middle of speaking, arguing, or even cursing. The portraits are cropped to hide Zuleide's arms. The wood stick Zuleide handles only appears in the visual field of the third to the sixth shots. Although the overall suggestion is this is an aggressive act, the way Zuleide wields the wood stick to the camera reminds me of stereotypical (and comical) images of women in Brazilian television *novelas* performing indignation during a passionate fight. The exact terms written on the captions below the images seek to reaffirm contradictions: "vigour," "uprising," "*patrão*," "servants," "exploits," "*qualidade*," "respect," "unreliability," "dignity," "distinguished," "unmanageable," "class-consciousness," "wealth," "extreme," "violent," "*gênio*," and "irritable," among others.

Some other images contribute to the theatrical performativity of *Eu, mestiço* characters, such as *Scandalous/Escandaloso*, by Bárbara (Figure 25-26). This set comprises four head-and-torso portraits of Barbara, a Black woman looking up with both eyes and mouth open as if surprised or frightened. A subtle light source touches Barbara's face and chest shining left to right, also delicately stressing areas of Barbara's left arm and right hand. The artist took the photographs with a camera positioned slightly below Barbara; we have a lower angle emphasizing Barbara's

arms, which are placed around their chest and breast as if protecting themselves from an off-frame threat.

Each of the four photographs presents a slightly different angle of the same pose: the first shows the front and the three subsequent are the result of the camera rotated to the right, so the fourth image captures Barbara's left side, mostly the arm, hand, and face. Though some may see fear in Barbara's reaction, a scandalous person in Brazil means the person theatricalizes anxiety, suggesting Barbara may be mocking something or someone. Whether one reads Barbara as someone who is afraid or whose distant gaze offers a sarcastic and "scandalous" reaction to something, one can imagine a white gaze that must be opposed either through horror or mockery.

A third set, *Shouts by Santos*, extrapolates this theatricality and more directly evokes violence. This series is composed of three full-body cut-out prints in which a Black woman appears falling on their back with mouth open and grinding their teeth. Their eyes are closed and their neck is tense, as if preventing their head from hitting the floor. Their legs and arms are up in the air, perhaps suggesting someone pushed the woman towards the ground. The words that go along with the set confirm suggestions of rape and gendered violence against women: "violently," "prejudice," "tensions," "*Morena*," "husband," "(protector)," "shouts," "*senhor*," "woman," "stupid," and "*Casa-Grande*." Even if this was not the artist's intention, there is the presence of an invisible perpetrator of violence lurking off-stage.

Is this invisibility not the *one* recognizable feature of whiteness? Returning to my discussion in Chapter 1, whiteness/*branquitude* is that which renders itself

universal and at the center, but also unmarked and invisible.<sup>399</sup> The invisible subject and reason for Zuleide's, Barbara's, and Santos's reactions may well be the white colonizer, the white male usurper, or coloniality itself manifest in whiteness. This is not to say men and women of color are not perpetrators of patriarchy, but that the absence of a visible perpetrator of violence in the work matches the status of whiteness in invisibility and omnipresence. If the work points at whiteness, it tries to locate it in the viewer.

But what becomes of the actual images of these women? I find these three images the hardest to digest in the entire work. Zuleide's and Barbara's portraits are caricatured but still show a chance for opposition. I understand, for example, de Andrade's desire to make visible a character like Zuleide, a powerful Northeastern woman. There are myriad popular narratives around "*mulheres nordestinas arretadas*,"<sup>400</sup> who raise their children without the help of their partners and who "take no insults home,"<sup>401</sup> as one says in Brazil. These connotations may appear in how Brazilians respond to the work, but I wonder if, when displayed abroad, these culturally-specific interpretations ever come to the forefront.

The white gaze is indeed violent: it destabilizes, belittles, and infantilizes nonwhite men and women. The artist felt so much discomfort after seeing *Shouts by Santos* images that he later decided to stop exhibiting it as an individual series. And indeed, it can be triggering to imagine Santos performing a reaction to sexual

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<sup>399</sup> See my discussion in Chapter 1, page 55.

<sup>400</sup> In English, something like "fierce Northeastern women."

<sup>401</sup> From colloquial Portuguese, "aquelas que não levam insultos pra dentro de casa."

violence for the camera. According to the artist, this was not the original intent of the pose: the idea was to represent a woman falling, inspired by several poses in *The Fairburn System of Visual Reference*. In an interview with the author, the artist spoke about feeling unsettled after creating such images.<sup>402</sup> He said:

Some series [of *Eu mestiço*] left me with a lot of doubt when the aspect of fiction was not so clear. And then some representations worried me. For example, the shots with one of the participants from São Luiz. A woman who staged a fall and after I saw the installation it worried me a lot. Already in the first montage, seeing the files separately, I noticed that her image could be seen as a kind of staging of violence. She is a woman lying on the floor. I have never had feedback from anyone who has read the image in this regard, but I was very concerned to think that I could be bringing up this subject. So I decided to later remove this series from being individually displayed. I thought: "Could I photograph with this possible reading? Or as a man, who's not Black?" Even though I am a gay man, do I have the right to cross this debate towards the representation of women and eventually domestic violence? But at the same time to discuss racism and domestic violence against black women is also an important issue. It is also a delicate place to be discussed. Especially considering that I haven't had a chance to talk about these topics with the photographed woman.<sup>403</sup>

Other groups of images respond differently to this projected white/colonial gaze. To ignore a gaze is also a form of rejecting and disabling it. de Andrade's 360-degree panorama provides a myriad of images in which the subjects turn their backs to the camera, as if canceling it. In some sets, this avoidance means the viewer can only see

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<sup>402</sup> It is important to note that this is a classical pose of European paintings' depictions of rape. See for example, Titian's *The Rape of Europa* (ca. 1560–1562). It is quite likely that de Andrade has used classical painting portraiture as references for his work. However, in this chapter, my goal is to look at, more broadly, at the aesthetic patterns and overall sources the artist uses than to write a comprehensive iconographic examination of each of *Eu, mestiço*'s set. Still, I find it hard to believe de Andrade did not notice the image evoked rape. I also find it curious that the aesthetic sources de Andrade *declares* to use are ethnographic and commercial.

<sup>403</sup> My translation. Jonathas de Andrade, Interview in Portuguese with the author, Whatsapp, 2021.

the back of an individual. In other groups, the subject hides or appears simply uninterested in the camera.

*Branqueada by Faustina* (Figures 27-28) is one set that suggests a repudiation of the camera. The set is composed of five images of Faustina's torso, seen only from the woman's back.<sup>404</sup> The progression shows three photos of a rear shot, in which Faustina's face is slightly tilted to the left. The fourth and fifth images disrupt the camera rotation developed in the first three shots. These two last images show Faustina in a semi-profile angle though the viewer still cannot see the woman's face. Because viewers only see their back, what becomes the image's subject matter is Faustina's white Afro-textured hair and white shirt with lacy ornament, which reveals their bare skin. All images are cropped to hide most of the woman's arms. Still, it is possible to recognize Faustina is posing as if holding their arms against their hips, perhaps in a sign of reprehension.

This method of rear-facing portraits appears also in *Pigmentation by Avelar* (Figures 18-19), the most extensive set of the entire work I discussed earlier in this chapter. Though the emphasis of the portraits becomes Avelar's Afro-textured hair, in a sign of its potential valorization, the subject's back also points to a similar concealment that eschews the white gaze.

In this hide-and-seek game, *Suspicious by Adriana* (Figures 29-30) is a unique case. This small set is composed of five images, in which Adriana appears to cover their face with their dark hair. The image in the center is a frontal shot, in which

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<sup>404</sup> See below my discussion of Lorna Simpson's work *Guarded Conditions* (1989).

Adriana appears with their head pointing to an imaginary ceiling. Their arms are bent upwards and crossed to their body's right side. With their hands, Adriana holds parts of their hair covering their eyes and forehead. This uncanny pose also makes me think of opposition or rejection of the viewer's gaze.

This hiding is repeated in other images and gets combined with different modes of confrontation. For example, *Belittle by Oristes* (Figures 31-32) suggests a rejection of the gaze, but also challenges it directly. This is a series of 17 headshots of Oristes, who is represented shirtless. The progression begins with four profile images of Oristes looking towards the picture frame's right side and rotating back to the viewer, then again back to profile pictures, finishing with three frontal headshots. Oristes's portrait resembles Pierre Verger's Black cowboy.

Oristes's gaze is focused and emphasized by a lower angle, which helps eschew the common representation of stigma among colored men when they are criminalized or infantilized. Oristes's confrontational gaze also complicates his semi-nudity. This is not simply about the viewer's sexualization of a colored body but also of Oristes's return of the gaze. The cinematic quality of Oristes's series of images makes it easy for the viewer to imagine a short film, or an animated portrait of Oristes. A camera quickly rotates around them in a disorienting and clashing manner.

Other images emphasize this trope of defiance. *Triumph by Shauanne and Yasmim* (Figures 33-34) is one of the most empowering sets in *Eu, mestiço*. The images in this group are composed of 24 cut-out portraits of two Black girls posing back-to-back and gazing directly at the camera. Curators can install the set in two



rows of 12 images or one long line of all 24 shots. The progression of camera angles around the two girls shifts twice, first showing one of the girls in a full-frontal position and slowly rotating around the other girl and then back again. As de Andrade has mentioned in one of his talks at Alexander and Bonin, throughout this cinematic progression of the portrait, the girls' stares also change, sometimes challenging the viewer and other times avoiding them.<sup>405</sup>

This tension is present, here and there, throughout the experience of looking at *Eu, mestiço*. I find this trap for the white gaze full of potential and respect the artist for taking risks and provoking the privileged audiences the work seeks to capture in its appeal. But the colonial visual rationales that *Eu, Mestiço* deploys are too prevailing in history. At the end of the day, the framing of racialized bodies through these narratives is insufficient to dismantle the celebration created around normative *mestiçagem* in Brazil.

## 2.7 Conclusion

*Guarded Conditions* (1989) by U.S. artist Lorna Simpson is a set of six full-body portraits of a Black woman photographed from their back in front of a white background. In all portraits, the woman stands over a wooden pedestal wearing black shoes and a white shirt down to her knees. Her arms are crossed around her back in a concerned or watchful pose. Although there are six portraits of the same pose, the

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<sup>405</sup> *Jonathas de Andrade and Adrienne Edwards in Conversation* (Alexander and Bonin Gallery, New York City, 2018), <https://vimeo.com/260239587>.

images look slightly different from one another. The portraits are composed of six vertical strips, each of them cut horizontally in three parts, making a grid of six columns by three rows or a total of 18 Polaroid photographs. The Polaroids have been individually framed; the whole set looks like it could be a part of a mix-and-match drawing game.

On each strip, Simpson positioned the cut-out parts slightly crooked so they do not align with each other. In addition, the woman's hands, fingers, and arms change subtly in each version of the portrait. More clearly, it is the right hand positioned under the left arm that differs from image to image; the woman raises one or two fingers while embracing their left arm, and as Huey Copeland describes, "[the] feet are shuffled about, hair gets ever so-slightly rearranged."<sup>406</sup> An important detail completes the series: Simpson presents three lines of words printed on engraved plastic plaques and installed at the bottom of the photographs, making an inverted pyramid of text. The following words are repeated in all caps: "SEX ATTACKS. SKIN ATTACKS."

Created almost 30 years apart, the visual similarities between Simpson's *Guarded Conditions* and de Andrade's *Eu, mestiço* are many. Simpson's Black woman is an *antiportrait*, according to Copeland.<sup>407</sup> The woman shows her back to the viewer, avoiding a gaze exchange. de Andrade deploys the same visual strategy in two of the *Eu, mestiço* sets: *Branqueada* and *Avelar*. Like in Simpson's *Guarded*

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<sup>406</sup> Huey Copeland, "'Bye, Bye Black Girl': Lorna Simpson's Figurative Retreat," *Art Journal* 64, no. 2 (July 1, 2005): 62, <https://doi.org/10.2307/20068384>, 63.

<sup>407</sup> Huey Copeland, "'Bye, Bye Black Girl': Lorna Simpson's Figurative Retreat," *Art Journal* 64, no. 2 (July 1, 2005): 62, <https://doi.org/10.2307/20068384>, 63.

*Conditions*, the woman in *Branqueada* turning their back to the camera also wears a white laced shirt, although we cannot see their entire body. Yet, neither the portraits in *Avelar* nor *Branqueada* cause tension in the viewer. When I look at *Guarded Conditions*, I am led to believe Simpson is speaking up against the everyday violence inflicted on Black women's bodies; the captions clearly say so. While the woman in de Andrade's *Avelar* proudly exhibits their Afro-textured hair in defiance against the white gaze, they are still encapsulated by a grid that stems from ethnographic-colonial aesthetics.

The woman in Simpson's work is also encapsulated by a grid: her body is even fragmented and slightly disturbed by it. The portraits are confined in what Copeland calls Simpson's proposed "endlessly expansive repetition ... as if to register the model's shifting relationship to herself."<sup>408</sup> But while de Andrade willingly deploys the ethnographic grid's minimalistic features (i.e., the white background, the seriality, the cut-out background), Simpson shows the cracks in the grid by breaking the alignment between the images, offering slight pose changes as if the portrayed could not be restrained by that rigid format. In Simpson's work, the cracks are in the structure of the grid itself; the aesthetics of the work break with the grid.

The stakes of Simpson's *Guarded Conditions* are high: Black women are physically and psychologically attacked every day in society because of their skin

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<sup>408</sup> Huey Copeland, "'Bye, Bye Black Girl': Lorna Simpson's Figurative Retreat," *Art Journal* 64, no. 2 (July 1, 2005): 62, <https://doi.org/10.2307/20068384>, 63.

color and gender. There is no ambiguity in that. Because of the slight changes in the woman's pose, the seriality in *Guarded Conditions* seems more aligned to the endurance and defiance of Black women's life experiences in face of the coloniality's visual regimes that still seek to inspect and control their bodies.

In his essay "The Spectacle of the Other," Stuart Hall discusses the encounter between Black people and the so-called "western culture" via the incursion of Europeans into West African kingdoms in the 16th century. He explains how colonization operated through several processes of codifying difference Europeans sought to construct and implement, such as naturalizing and othering, and via the association of Black and non-white peoples with nature<sup>409</sup>, or naturalization—a practice that walks together with the making of "race."

In early colonial visual discourse, the naturalizing of difference occurred through a myriad of western inventions, from type illustrations in travelogues to cartography. Later, "types" were reproduced through photography and its corresponding apparatuses.<sup>410</sup> As I discussed elsewhere in this chapter, photography became one of the most nefarious and more effective visual practices of white colonial cultures. Photographic production was often allied to the typification of

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<sup>409</sup> This is what Stuart Hall wrote about the naturalizing of difference, "... typical of this racialized regime of representation was the practice of reducing the cultures of black people to Nature, or naturalizing 'difference.' The logic behind naturalization is simple. If the differences between black and white people are 'cultural, 'then they are open to modification and change. But if they are natural...then they are beyond history, permanent and fixed." Stuart Hall and Open University, *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (London; Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage in association with the Open University, 1997).

<sup>410</sup> For more on the discussion of how viewing apparatuses and technologies of seeing have shaped the codification of difference in the U.S., see Coco Fusco and Brian Wallis, eds., *Only Skin Deep: Changing Visions of the American Self* (New York: International Center of Photography in association with Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, 2003).

humans and has led to the creation of racial and cultural stereotypes. As Hall explains, typification is merely another mode of *thingification*, or objectification, which anti-colonial Black theorists like Frantz Fanon famously confronted in the 1960s.<sup>411</sup> Becoming a thing or an object operates within processes of othering and racialization, or the construction of a discourse of cultural and racial opposition between white and non-white cultures that associates people's skin color and physical traits as markers of inferiority or even biological degeneration. The production of images during the late 18th and 19th centuries progressively and actively participated in these falsehoods.

But the stereotype is a specific category within the infamous machine that moves race discourse and racism. As scholars such as Homi Bhabha have famously presented, stereotypes are discursive categories within a broad colonial regime of truths replicated in popular culture and art, and examples of how power produces differences in visual systems of representation.

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<sup>411</sup> Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* has been credited as one of the foundational texts of postcolonial discourse. As early as the 1940s and 1950s, Fanon investigated the instances of internalized colonialism that undermined the struggles for independence in colonized territories such as the Caribbean and Africa. For Fanon, internalized colonialism manifested both socially and individually in the psychopathologies he identified in his patients. At the same time, he worked as a psychiatrist: colonialism, for its "forcing" of colonizer's culture and rationale onto populations caused social traumas and inferiority feelings. Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* often intermingled his views on psychoanalysis, Marxism, and existentialism, as well as his interest in the Franco-Caribbean Négritude movement; his interdisciplinary approach intersected an understanding of difference with how power functions. Fanon's famous description of the primal scene of racialization enacts the production of difference in its most banal everyday settings, such as the color encounter. In his most famous primal scene, in the Fact of Blackness, Fanon is hailed by a white boy and marked as "black," thus racialized through the disavowal from an "outside," from whiteness. Fanon uses the visceral account of the primal scene to demonstrate how race and color difference are produced and constructed through language—a process Althusser called interpellation—and how that utterance is then as if attached to his corporeal scheme: the white boy's hailing "changed" Fanon's body, the way he was paralyzed, felt amputated and split. The split Fanon feels, he argues, is maiming and divides him between a naming, his color, and body: he felt his existence being defined by an outside force. This experience of racialization, this "outside force" Foucault would identify as power/knowledge. It is the experience of being named (and thus produced) by a hegemonic discourse, in this case through a collision of whiteness and colonialism. Frantz Fanon and Charles Lam Markmann, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 1967.

As with other ways through which racism operates, racial and cultural stereotypes are associated with the visual in categorical ways.<sup>412</sup> In her book, *Subject to Display*, Jennifer González contends that race discourse is a type of technology and, in meaningful ways, a visual technology. González says:

... I would argue that elements of race discourse can be best understood as a *visual* technology comprising a complex web of intertextual mechanisms that tie the present to the past through familiar representational tropes. If the body is the site of disgust or affect because of its phenotype or color, this is also only because it is part of a broad iconographic history that serves as a reservoir of circulating signs for this purpose.<sup>413</sup>

This type of familiarity is both *visually* and historically produced by discourses on which stereotypes rely. Stereotypes work through emphatic repetition, layering a “troubling” difference as familiar and seeking to domesticate those racialized as

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<sup>412</sup> In *The Other Question*, Homi Bhabha famously sought to understand what the mechanisms in colonialism made it persistent. Bhabha argued that one of the discursive categories of colonialism, how it operates, producing and managing difference, occurs via the stereotype. In this famous essay, Bhabha argues that the stereotype can be understood as the fetish in the psychoanalytic theory of Freud and Lacan. For Bhabha, the colonial encounter causes both fear and anxiety in the colonizer and the colonized. That anxiety in the encounter with the other needs to be appeased. While the difference cannot be completely negated it is dealt with as a lack. Bhabha compares this condition with Lacan’s mirror stage where gender difference is produced via the lack, the fear of castration when the boy sees his mother in the mirror and acknowledges her lack of penis, internalizing that lack as fear of being himself castrated. For Bhabha, in Fanon’s primal scene of racialization, the gender difference is substituted by color. The stereotype, like the fetish, is the “object” produced to appease that ambivalent fear/anxiety, it is a barrier to the actual recognition of differences: the stereotype becomes a constructed image that disavows the other, so that otherness (of the other and within the self) can be “accepted.” For Bhabha, the stereotype works by rendering the other known, visible, but also and invisible. It either exacerbates or reduces the other to specific “already known” characteristics about them to appease anxiety and fear. The desire to own the other emerges in the self is another aspect of the ambivalent nature of the stereotype, when the other becomes an object of pleasure and fear, continuously oscillating. It is this mechanism of ambivalence that, according to Bhabha, enables the persistence of colonialism: power manifests positively in the productive qualities of the knowledge and the practices (ie. Literature, laws, art, science) that created the Other.

Bhabha’s work is vital for visual culture and contemporary art because it consolidated Fanon’s notion of how racialization operates and further explained the role of stereotypes in how Western discourses render their “others” known. Stereotypes are then discursive categories in the general construction of the regimes of truth of colonialism. Still, they also manifest visually, replicated in images in popular culture and art. In that sense, Bhabha’s text informs those theorists and scholars interested in how power produces difference in visual representation systems. Homi K Bhabha, “The Other Question...,” *Screen* 24, no. 6 (November 1, 1983): 18–36, <https://doi.org/10.1093/screen/24.6.18>.

<sup>413</sup> Jennifer A González, *Subject to Display: Reframing Race in Contemporary Installation Art* (Cambridge, Mass.; London: MIT, 2011).

“known” through simplification and exaggeration. That those racialized only become visible or rendered by power through stereotyping is, for scholars such as Bhabha and Fanon, one of the reasons why colonialism (or better, coloniality, to use the term coined by Aníbal Quijano)<sup>414</sup> has been so persistent as a form of domination.

Around the late 1980s and 1990s, several artists in the U.S. deployed stereotypes in their artworks to address the politics of representation in visual culture.<sup>415</sup> Within African American communities, some artists were in dialogue with the emergence of Black cultural studies. Theorists like bell hooks, Stuart Hall, Paul Gilroy, and Kobena Mercer sought to understand Blackness in a postcolonial context by investigating the fraught notions that had shaped Eurocentric culture as hegemonic.

This postmodern/postcolonial turn also came to challenge art history as a Western production. For Hall, this was a crisis of Western culture’s authority and its modes of thought that “brought the margins to the center,” decentering Eurocentric views to include the voices that had been marginalized. These subjectivities had been historically disavowed. To understand how ideology operates in visual discourse and how culture is crisscrossed by it, the question of performing one’s race and ethnicity became paramount to reimagine this decentering of Western authority.

In visual culture and arts, decentering meant many artists and visual culture practitioners scanned the field of representation to purge and counter negative

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<sup>414</sup> See Chapter 1.

<sup>415</sup> Jennifer A González, *Subject to Display: Reframing Race in Contemporary Installation Art* (Cambridge, Mass.; London: MIT, 2011).

representations impacting non-normative and non-white communities. More specifically, in the U.S., performing non-normative subjectivities meant, to use Muñoz's term, *disidentifying*<sup>416</sup> with societal norms or reclaiming these subjectivities from the hegemonic culture and in face of the conservatism of the right-wing politics of the Reagan era. Although many of these practices were seen as controversial and often received backlash from American formalist art historians, an entire field of scholars and writers have since emphasized the *political* significance of taking control of one's image as a mode of reclamation after centuries of living under the representational norms of Western dominant cultures.<sup>417</sup>

In the U.S., Black, indigenous, and Latinx artists deployed stereotypes in various types of practices, often reenacting the trauma of racialization and *thingification* that occurs in racial or cultural stereotyping. Works such as Lorna Simpson's *Guarded Conditions* fall into this moment in the U.S. cultural wars. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, Simpson produced many artworks focused on

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<sup>416</sup> For Muñoz, disidentification is a field of multifaceted strategies used by queers of color in the US that do not merely reject the mainstream heteronormative field but use "majoritarian culture as raw material to make a new world." Muñoz was mainly interested in queers of color's modes of existing—and thus also of performing—in the face of a normative world and as an alternative to white queerness in the US. José Esteban Muñoz, *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics*, Cultural Studies of the Americas, v. 2 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

<sup>417</sup> I refer, for example, to Hal Foster's "The Artist as Ethnographer" essay, or Foster's and Rosalind Krauss's famous attack on certain "politically inclined" practices in the late 1990s, published under Hal Foster et al., "The Politics of the Signifier: A Conversation on the Whitney Biennial," *October* 66 (1993). A number of art critics and writers, such as Foster, criticized practices that required them to map (and therefore to know) the structure of *nonwhite* cultures. Critics such as these quickly tagged works produced by people of color at that time as "identity work," and therefore dismissed as not engaging with art historical traditional forms. At the end of the day, as Jennifer González put it, these authors' difficulty was encountering "cultural difference only *through* a work of art," a fault on the part of the critic, not on the artist. González concludes, "The real burden in Foster's analysis seems to fall on the art critic, who might be required to delve into unfamiliar, or perhaps uncomfortable, cultural terrain to grasp the semiotic complexity of the work. While "The Artist as Ethnographer" is among the more intelligent critical responses to this art practice in the mid-1990s, it is also symptomatic of a general ambivalence toward an influx of new paradigms, cultural differences, and aesthetic vocabularies." Jennifer A. González, *Subject to Display: Reframing Race in Contemporary Installation Art* (Cambridge, Mass.; London: MIT, 2011), 11-14.



the figure of the Black woman, which caused several art critics in the U.S. to attack, as Huey Copeland discusses in his essay “‘Bye, Bye Black Girl’: Lorna Simpson’s Figurative Retreat.”<sup>418</sup>

Though Simpson’s deployment of the Black woman figure was enough to cause some critics to undermine her work, other artists were also vehement in the use of their own bodies, sometimes even replicating—and recreating—stereotypes. For example, consider Coco Fusco’s and Guillermo Gomez-Peña’s famous 1996 performance of “Couple in the Cage” that quite literally reenacted the history of displaying the Other by putting the two performers in a place of theatrical vulnerability. I could mention many other examples, such as Adrian Piper’s *Mythic Being*, a series of altered photographs, or Reneé Cox’s series of photographic collages, such as her *Rajé* series, in which the artist juxtaposes her self-portraits fashioned as a superhero with images from Aunt Jemima and Uncle Ben products.<sup>419</sup> Another famous example is artist James Luna, who exhibited his own prostrate body next to museum labels commenting on the stereotyping of indigenous men.<sup>420</sup>

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<sup>419</sup> Taking as one of her examples, Renee Cox’s works, Nicole Fleetwood theorizes the notion of “excess flesh” to discuss the ways through which Black women’s bodies appear in the field of representation. For her, Renee Cox’s work successfully deploys hypervisibility and sexualization of Black women’s bodies to destabilize Western art canons. Fleetwood says, “Cox’s work is a study in the relations between aberrance and idealization. The bodily forms at the center of her images are idealized black muscular bodies with assertive stances, poses, and gazes. Whether she is looking at the camera or away, the look is one of self-possession, and the physical presence is an articulation of embodiment. Nicole R. Fleetwood, *Troubling Vision: Performance, Visuality, and Blackness* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011), 117.

<sup>420</sup> Jennifer A González, *Subject to Display: Reframing Race in Contemporary Installation Art* (Cambridge, Mass.; London: MIT, 2011).

In Brazil, however, the uplift of Black and indigenous artists that took place in the U.S. in the 1980s and 1990s after the civil rights movements did not happen.<sup>421</sup> Brazil was emerging from more than 20 years under control of a military dictatorship, which meant any questions similar to those raised by, for example, the U.S. Black or Latino rights movements were constantly suppressed in Brazil. With the end of the dictatorship, important class and labor movements took precedence over identity-based movements, putting the struggles of Black, indigenous, queer, and female subjects in second place.<sup>422</sup> In the predominantly white and elitist Brazilian art scene, racism and prejudice never allowed these questions to fully take hold until recently.

Moreover, throughout the late 20th century, Brazilian artists were still grappling with the legacies of neoconcretism, making conceptual artwork like Cildo Meirelles or returning to abstract painting as a form of rejecting more “politically”-oriented art.<sup>423</sup> Practices revolving around questions of “race”—a very disputed

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<sup>421</sup> This is not to say that the US art scene has been blessed with equity. The ongoing fight for representation of Black, Latinx, Asian, LGBTQI, and Indigenous, and has been again amplified in the Trump era.

<sup>422</sup> About the repression of social movements during the military dictatorship in Brazil, sources include Félix Guattari and Suely Rolnik, *Molecular Revolution in Brazil*, New ed., Semiotext(e) Foreign Agents Series (Los Angeles, CA : Cambridge, Mass: Semiotext(e) ; Distributed by MIT Press, 2008), *As fronteiras da violência política: Movimentos sociais, militares e as representações sobre a ditadura militar (1970-1988)*. Lucas Pedretti, “As Fronteiras Da Violência Política: Movimentos Sociais, Militares e as Representações Sobre a Ditadura Militar (1970-1988)” (Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, 2022). And for more on the repression of Black movements in Brazil, Matti Steinitz, “Calling Out Around the World”: How Soul Music Transnationalized the African American Freedom Struggle in the Black Power Era (1965-1975),” in *Sonic Politics: Music and Social Movements in the Americas*, by Olaf Kaltmeier and Wilfried Raussert, 2021.

<sup>423</sup> Some artists who became famous in Brazil after the end of the dictatorship received the nickname “Geração 80,” or 1980s Generation. Art critics and scholars at the time both criticized and praised these younger artists for being depoliticized and even hedonist. Writing in 2014, Leonardo Bertolossi summarizes the rise of this artists generation in Brazil, referring to “years of leaden” as the worst years of the military dictatorship: “And then Generation 80 was invented. The group was stigmatized as depoliticized, reactionary, and narcissistic, but the hedonist label is perhaps the most accurate and relates to the socio-political situation of the country at the time. After the *years of leaden*, Brazilians shouted “Diretas Já”, in search of new hopes, affections and promises, during the political opening of the country, in a decade later stigmatized as “a lost decade” – with inflation, ‘Coca-Cola generation’, the Riocentro attack, but also the Sarney law, the emergence of Funarte, the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War, rock music, the beach, Pepe’s tent and “veneno da lata,” canned goods on TV, and even the HIV virus. All these ‘cultural shards’ were appropriated by artists who were around the age of 20 and who, between 1980 and 1985, were beginning their artistic research and experimenting with different poetics,

category in Brazil—were put aside and relegated to the margins of the so-called art scene, not to speak of the many vertexes of suppression impacting both Blackness and Afro-Brazilian artists in Brazil.<sup>424</sup>

Still, many Afro-Brazilian artists have dealt with questions of race and racism in their artworks, either directly or indirectly through the aesthetics or content they used in their pieces. Although the necessity of speaking about racism must not befall on the shoulders of Black artists only, one can think of the works of Abdias do Nascimento, Ayrson Heráclito, Rosana Paulino, Eustáquio Neves, and many others who have been working in the 20th and 21st centuries but whose practices have only now been put into the spotlight, the market, or art gallery circuit. Exploring questions

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especially the traditional language of painting.” My translation from Portuguese: “Estava inventada a Geração 80. O grupo foi estigmatizado como despolitizado, reacionário e narcísico, mas o rótulo de hedonista talvez seja o mais preciso e se relacione com a conjuntura sociopolítica do país na época. Passados os anos de chumbo, os brasileiros bradavam “Diretas Já”, em busca de novas esperanças, afetos e promessas, em plena abertura política do país, em uma década depois estigmatizada como Perdida – com inflação, ‘geração coca-cola’, bomba Riocentro, mas também lei Sarney, surgimento da Funarte, queda do Muro de Berlim e o fim da Guerra Fria, rock, praia, barraca do Pepê e ‘veneno’ da lata, enlatados na tevê, e ainda o vírus HIV. Todos esses ‘estilhaços culturais’ foram apropriados por artistas que gravitavam em torno dos 20 anos e que, entre 1980 e 1985, estavam iniciando suas pesquisas artísticas e experimentando diferentes poéticas, sobretudo a tradicional linguagem da pintura.” Leonardo Bertolossi, “Quem Foi Você, Geração 80?: Mercado de Arte, Pintura e Hedonismo Em Questão (,” *Ciência Hoje*, no. 321 (2014), 41-42. See also Tadeu Chiarelli, *No Calor Da Hora: Dossiê Jovens Artistas Paulistas: Década de 1980*, História & Arte (Belo Horizonte: Editora C/Arte : Centro Cultural São Paulo, 2012).

<sup>424</sup> Scholar Hélio Santos Menezes Neto has become one of the most important voices in Brazilian academia today discussing and theorizing Afro-Brazilian art. Santos Menezes’ thesis opens a very urgent revision about the rise of art production in Brazil since colonial times. Menezes argues that mainstream art historical narratives in the country have prioritized a colonial production of art. For example, mainstream discourse has always located the foundation of art in Brazil on the opening of the Academies of Fine Arts with their European traditions in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. But Santos Menezes defends the study of the African origins of art making in Brazil, specific traditions that came with the African enslaved populations and that those who lived in Brazil transformed. To make that historicizing move, Santos Menezes studies an extensive Afro-Brazilian art production, critically assessing a bibliography of critics and scholars on both sides of the spectrum: those who defended the study of African art traditions and those who undermined it. Santos Menezes’ Master’s Degree’s thesis is an important reading for the field: in which, Santos Menezes goes through a process of disentangling Afro-Brazilian art from its derogative labeling, interpretations, and racist readings throughout history, from the 1800s to the 200s. A note about terminology: Santos Menezes defends the use of the term “Afro-Brazilian art” to differentiate the Brazilian art production from the nomenclature used in the US, “Black art.” Hélio Santos Menezes Neto, “Entre o Visível e o Oculto: A Construção Do Conceito de Arte Afro-Brasileira” (São Paulo, SP, Brasil, Universidade de São Paulo, 2018), [http://www.collectionscanada.ca/obj/s4/f2/dsk2/tape15/PQDD\\_0008/MQ33991.pdf](http://www.collectionscanada.ca/obj/s4/f2/dsk2/tape15/PQDD_0008/MQ33991.pdf) <http://hdl.handle.net/1807/12096>, 14-19.

of race, or at least raising a public debate on race and ethnicity, is obviously not new. Still, its incorporation into mainstream narratives is very recent in the Brazilian art scene. Regarding this delay, Rosana Paulino said in an interview to

*NewCityBrazil.com*:

We are lagging way behind not only in this matter but also in issues of racism, gender... The fact that only now contemporary artists of color are being invited to have solo presentations in museums clearly shows this. This issue urgently needs a broader debate. Fortunately, there are some initiatives such as the Afro-Atlantic Histories exhibition last year at MASP and my retrospective now at the Pinacoteca. It took twenty-five years for my art to be recognized and shown in an institution such as this one.<sup>425</sup>

de Andrade's work has certainly been part of the more recent conversation Paulino discusses, even if he has not been consistently vocal about his positionality within racial debates. In some ways, de Andrade skipped the invisibility that fell upon older generations of Brazilian colleagues, achieving fame relatively fast as a young artist. Moreover, de Andrade navigated the U.S. museum trend of critical race theory in the 2000s, a few years before anti-racist debates took hold of the art scene in Bolsonaro's Brazil of the mid-2000s.

For example, let us compare de Andrade's practice to that of Rosana Paulino, one of the most famous Afro-Brazilian artists active since the 1990s. In her iconic work from 1997, *Bastidores* (Embroidery Hoops), she transferred head portraits of six

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<sup>425</sup> Rosana Paulino and Cynthia Garcia, "Artist of the Suture: How Rosana Paulino Became the First Woman of Color with a Retrospective at the Pinacoteca," Online Magazine, NewCityBrasil.com, n.d., <https://www.newcitybrazil.com/2019/01/15/artist-of-the-suture-how-rosana-paulino-became-the-first-woman-of-color-with-a-retrospective-at-the-pinacoteca/>.

Afro-Brazilian women onto fabric framed by six embroidery hoops. She then sewed a thick black thread over the women's eyes and mouth "with a stitching technique used in surgery known as suture."<sup>426</sup> The result looks as if the women had been silenced. The women's images came from her family's photography collection, and according to Fabiana Lopes, Paulino created the *Bastidores* series after conversations with her sister about domestic violence.<sup>427</sup>

Like Simpson's work, *Guarded Conditions*, Paulino's *Bastidores* does not hold an ambiguous relationship—either visual or conceptual—to the representation of Black women. Even though she does not openly discuss them in *Bastidores*, Paulino subtly weaves her personal narratives with the images of women from her family she brings into visibility. She purposely chooses the suture-like sewing technique and the embroidery hoop to refer to activities performed by her mother, who sewed for the family and took a job as an embroiderer during her life.<sup>428</sup> In doing so, Paulino shows us the experience of domestic violence lived by the women in her family is a systemic condition, especially for Black women in Brazil, and therefore takes a clear stance against racism and gendered violence. As the artist puts it, the work is about:

the silencing of and violence against our black population. With the needle and thread I highlight the irony in all of this because when people think about embroidery they usually imagine homey

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<sup>426</sup> Rosana Paulino and Cynthia Garcia, "Artist of the Suture: How Rosana Paulino Became the First Woman of Color with a Retrospective at the Pinacoteca," Online Magazine, NewCityBrasil.com, n.d., <https://www.newcitybrazil.com/2019/01/15/artist-of-the-suture-how-rosana-paulino-became-the-first-woman-of-color-with-a-retrospective-at-the-pinacoteca/>.

<sup>427</sup> Fabiana Lopes, "Rosana Paulino: o tempo do fazer e a prática do compartilhar," in *Rosana Paulino: a costura da memória* (São Paulo: Pinacoteca de São Paulo, 2018), 172.

<sup>428</sup> Rosana Paulino and Cynthia Garcia, "Artist of the Suture: How Rosana Paulino Became the First Woman of Color with a Retrospective at the Pinacoteca," Online Magazine, NewCityBrasil.com, n.d., <https://www.newcitybrazil.com/2019/01/15/artist-of-the-suture-how-rosana-paulino-became-the-first-woman-of-color-with-a-retrospective-at-the-pinacoteca/>.

environments, places that are protected and full of warmth. These works discuss the opposite, such as domestic violence and other issues. The irony is that the use of the embroidery hoop does not turn these works into embroideries.<sup>429</sup>

For Fabiana Lopes, it is the gesture of sewing that puts Paulino's work into the fold of Black feminist practice. Lopes says, "Deepened throughout her career, sewing metaphorically activates a field that contemplates the perspective of black women and brings their issues to the fore of the debate, something that had not been explicitly explored yet."<sup>430</sup> Paulino, in the late 1990s, was clearly dealing with questions of representation, race, and gender. Her practice did not need to be openly autobiographical to do so.

The way de Andrade provokes and *flirts* with his subjects and viewers—without being too autobiographical—permeates his entire practice. But when it comes to dismantling—or decolonizing—grand national narratives, it is necessary to go beyond *quoting* hegemonic discourses. To put *one's own body* at risk is very different than projecting coloniality's narratives onto bodies already overly marked by them.

I am not arguing for an art emptied of ambiguity, nor am I advocating for art that seeks to solely represent an artist's subjectivities. Instead, I am advocating for a politically-committed art that can subvert racist aesthetics, even if it still chooses to deploy it. What concerns me most about the ambiguity in *Eu, mestiço* is that it may

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<sup>429</sup> Rosana Paulino and Cynthia Garcia, "Artist of the Suture: How Rosana Paulino Became the First Woman of Color with a Retrospective at the Pinacoteca," Online Magazine, NewCityBrasil.com, n.d., <https://www.newcitybrazil.com/2019/01/15/artist-of-the-suture-how-rosana-paulino-became-the-first-woman-of-color-with-a-retrospective-at-the-pinacoteca/>.

<sup>430</sup> Fabiana Lopes, "Rosana Paulino: o tempo do fazer e a prática do compartilhar," in *Rosana Paulino: a costura da memória* (São Paulo: Pinacoteca de São Paulo, 2018).

result in a lack of urgency. The work freezes images of racialized men and women without entirely constructing a space where privileged viewers are faced with their complicity in the oppression of racialization.

Except for being named, Barbara, Rondinele, Avelar, Oristes, and other constructed characters have limited agency in gazing back at a white—or any—audience. This oppositional gaze puts whiteness in an uncomfortable position, but it does not dismantle it. Existing as images, Kalinni, Yasmin, and Rondinele continue to be inscribed within the visual systems their portraits were intended to dismantle.

Perhaps, the black-and-white photographs of *Eu, mestiço* seek to distinguish individuals between white and non-white, suggesting the category “*mestiçe/a*” is unimportant. But this is also the central narrative of racial division and its own history, with an extreme example being apartheid. Perhaps, the artwork seeks to propose that even white and Black individuals are *mestiçe/a/os*, referring to the racial miscegenation present in the genetic composition of each population, a position that also erases the lived experience of *mestiços*. Neither interpretation of the work may offer a dismantling of whiteness.

As I discussed in Chapter 1, a practice challenges *branquitude* when it also actively pursues decoloniality, breaking with the omnipresence of whiteness and its constructed norms, even if the results of this pursuit are partially achieved. After all, incompleteness and *ongoingness* are an integral part of living decoloniality. *Eu, mestiço* is significant in this history because the work risks, provokes, and pursues a dismantling of whiteness.

*Eu, mestiço* rehearses an attack on *branquitude*. The work situates *branquitude* within a transnational space of coloniality; it provokes the Brazilian white elites but also calls out the white Euro-American gaze over Brazil represented by the *Race and Class in Rural Brazil* study of the 1950s and exemplified by the present-day white privileged institutions of the so-called Global North. In the Euro-American art world, museums, collectors, curators are implicated in a white desire of glancing at the struggles of the so-called Global South from a relatively safe distance while boasting about Latin American artworks in their collections or exhibitions.

The work exposes some of the pages of that terrifying book—that most in Brazil do not want to read aloud. A book about Brazil's racist history ornamented with Gilberto Freyre's tropical colors, camouflaged by carnival and bossa-nova, and the reality of a criminal white elite society who has waged war against nonwhite people for centuries. But while Jonathas de Andrade's *Eu, Mestiço* seems to target that whiteness, it locates it somewhere in a vague horizon, still out of reach or off-stage in the *mise-en-scène* of racialization.



### Chapter 3. Dalton Paula: Black Ancestral Portraiture

*To have a portrait made that reflects who I am, my own qualities—  
that makes me very happy. —Sirilo Santos Rosa<sup>431</sup>*

*Existe uma linguagem do transe e a linguagem da memória, é neste  
momento que a matéria se distende e traz com muito mais intensidade  
a história, a memória, o desejo de não ter vivido em cativoiro.—  
Beatriz Nascimento<sup>432</sup>*

*Yet how does one recuperate lives entangled with and impossible to  
differentiate from the terrible utterances that condemned them to  
death, the account books that identified them as units of value, the  
invoices that claimed them as property, and the banal chronicles that  
stripped them of human features?—Saidiya Hartman<sup>433</sup>*

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<sup>431</sup> Sirilo Santos Rosa is one of the Quilombo Kalunga’s community leaders whose resemblance Paula depicted in his 2022 series of portraits. *Dalton Paula | Portraits for the Future* (Brazil: National Gallery of Art, 2022), <https://www.nga.gov/audio-video/video/dalton-paula-portraits-for-the-future.html>.

<sup>432</sup> From Portuguese: “There is a language of trance and the language of memory, it is at this moment that the matter is distended and brings with much more intensity the history, the memory, the desire not to have lived in captivity.” My translation. *Ori* (Brazil: Estelar Produções Cinematográficas e Culturais LTDA, 1989).

<sup>433</sup> Saidiya V. Hartman, “Venus in Two Acts,” *Cassandra Press*, 2021, 15.

### 3.1. Introduction

For the past ten years, Dalton Paula's practice has challenged the invisibilities of Black Brazilian subjects. Paula considers art-making as a curative space against the violent erasures Black and racialized people have faced in Brazil. A character that has emerged from Paula's practice is what he called *the silenced body*: the Black body that has been obliterated and misrepresented by Brazilian society, including within art history and visual culture. In a country that has denied the existence (and persistence) of systemic racism, in his works, Paula often deploys iconography referring to the African and Afro-Brazilian roots that have often gone co-opted, unacknowledged, or overlooked in Brazilian popular visual culture.

As this dissertation sets out to discuss, *mestiçagem* and whiteness, when favoring each other through visual practices,<sup>434</sup> have deeply shaped constructed notions of Brazilian cultural diversity and homogenized African and Afro-Brazilian traditions and *saberes*, or knowledges.<sup>435</sup> Paula's work has been instrumental to Black cultural practices that reclaim these visualities to Blackness. Across the years, Paula's work has brought visibility to diverse perspectives on Blackness in Brazil. Against the idea of a homogenized Brazilian (*mestiça*) population, which erases the diverse

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<sup>434</sup> See discussion in Introduction.

<sup>435</sup> In Brazilian scholarship of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the term syncretism (not unlike hybridity) has been used regarding culture and visual arts most often from African origins to describe the "mixing" or incorporation of other cultural sources. For many Brazilian scholars of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the term has been associated with cultural miscegenation although the two terms have not been used interchangeably. About this see Introduction and my discussion of the work of Hélio Santos Menezes Neto, "Entre o Visível e o Oculto: A Construção Do Conceito de Arte Afro-Brasileira" (São Paulo, SP, Brasil, Universidade de São Paulo, 2018), [http://www.collectionscanada.ca/obj/s4/f2/dsk2/tape15/PQDD\\_0008/MQ33991.pdf](http://www.collectionscanada.ca/obj/s4/f2/dsk2/tape15/PQDD_0008/MQ33991.pdf) <http://hdl.handle.net/1807/12096>.

experiences of Blackness,<sup>436</sup> Paula's works refer to Blackness as Black rural experiences and ways of living, which have been often whitewashed under celebratory and national or cultural movements such as regionalism and folklorist approaches.<sup>437</sup> Many of his works represent culturally mixed religious practices stemming from Native Brazilian, Afro-Indigenous, and other racialized *mestiça* identities and groups.

This chapter focuses primarily on Paula's series of portraits and investigates how photography and painting have laid a foundation for his body of work. I argue Paula's portraits occupy a space between these two genres where they intersect to address the archival erasures of Black people in Brazil. More than simply addressing a "lack of representation" for Black people in Brazil, I contend Paula creates a counter-archive of portraits that mediate the past, present, and future of Black communities, linking ancestral *saberes negros* (Black knowledges from Brazil) to the experiences and leadership practices of being Black in Brazil today.

Paula's portraits disrupt the visual narratives of power produced by normative *mestiçagem* and *branquitude* in Brazil<sup>438</sup> by focusing on a specific manifestation of coloniality: the archive. The colonial archive Paula tackles is the archive of slavery and racism in Brazil, which segments of Western white society have historically produced but refuse to acknowledge. This archive of coloniality is defined by its

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<sup>436</sup> See discussion in Introduction.

<sup>437</sup> See discussion in Introduction.

<sup>438</sup> See discussion in Introduction.

present-day ramifications,<sup>439</sup> persisting in the oppression of racialized groups and individuals in Brazil, especially Afro-Brazilian and Indigenous peoples.

To build a counter-archive of painted portraits, Paula overlaps several photographic methods, including the vernacular practice of *retratos-pintados*, which has been used across Brazil in popular culture. Although Paula's final portraits *are* paintings, the artist deploys photographic techniques hailing from *retratos-pintados* as both a method and an aesthetic for his recent series of artworks. Moreover, Paula deploys other photographic methods and a combination of studio photography, oral stories, and community participation to create the final portraits.

Several contemporary artists have become known for adopting this representational shift from photography to painting.<sup>440</sup> Paula's work, however, is grounded in a vernacular and regional photographic practice, which has not been historically understood as "art."<sup>441</sup> *Retratos pintados*, or *fotopinturas* (photopaintings), as a practice, has been historically placed outside the purview of "high art" norms in Brazil and elsewhere.<sup>442</sup> Paula also visits Black and racialized

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<sup>439</sup> See my discussion of Anibal Quijano in Chapter 1.

<sup>440</sup> Kehinde Wiley is perhaps one of the most famous contemporary artists to have combined portraiture photography and painting. About his work see Derek Conrad Murray, *Queering Post-Black Art: Artists Transforming African-American Identity after Civil Rights*, 2016.

<sup>441</sup> Brazilian *fotopinturas* have been collected and exhibited worldwide but western modes of display have persistently placed these practices on the margins of fine arts. For example, the names of the artists in the Titus Riedl collection (the most famous collection of this genre in Brazil) are omitted although it could have been quite possible to identify the collective studios the images come from. Historically, keeping authors "anonymous" is a recurrent practice of western art historical canons when excising nonwestern objects from their cultures. See Martin Parr and Titus Riedl, eds., *Retratos Pintados*, Parr/Nazraeli Edition of Ten, no. 5 (Portland, Or: Nazraeli Press, 2010).

<sup>442</sup> About *fotopinturas* in Brazil see vast bibliography: Déborah Rodrigues Borges, "Representação Como Tensão Na Fotografia: Pensando a Fotopintura," *Estudos* 38, no. 4 (Outubro/Dezembro 2011): 771–91. Eduardo Queiroga, "Fotopintura Contemporanea: A Pós-Produção No Trabalho de Mestre Júlio," *Cartema Revista Do Programa de Pós-Graduação Em Artes Visuais UFPE-UFPB*, Ano 6. Titus Riedl, "A Morte Transformada Em Vida: O Caso Da Foto-Pintura," *Angulo*, June 2007. Alexandre Heverton Maia Lima, "Do pincel granulado ao brush pixelizado:

communities, such as present-day *quilombos*, to photograph individuals and later juxtapose timeframes, stories, and physiognomies to create new likenesses for historical personages. By having these portraits grounded in these photographic methods, Black communities see themselves at the same time they see how their ancestors *could have looked like*. It is as if one could look back and return to a past they did not live while looking forward at the same time.<sup>443</sup> I contend Paula’s use of a representational shift—from mechanical reproduction to painting—is not a mere nod to contemporary artistic trends, but a grounding of *quilombola* communities: a reading of these spaces as places of political and representational agency for Black and racialized people.

Paula’s visual counter-archive is born, as he puts it, from “a place of desire,” a discursive space conveyed through fiction from which he interprets and reimagines Afro-Brazilian desires of liberation.<sup>444</sup> Paula captures those he portrays, but he is

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percursos da fotopintura” (Fortaleza, Universidade Federal do Ceará, 2013). Martin Parr and Titus Riedl, eds., *Retratos Pintados*, Parr/Nazraeli Edition of Ten, no. 5 (Portland, Or: Nazraeli Press, 2010).

<sup>443</sup> About the concept of Sankofa, used widely in Afro-Brazilian scholarship and activism, Elisa Larkin Nascimento writes the following, “The sankofa ideogram belongs to a set of graphic symbols of Akan origin called adinkra. Each ideogram, or adinkra, has a complex meaning, represented by sayings or fables that express philosophical concepts. According to Professor E. Ablade Glover, from the University of Ghana in Kumasi, capital of the Asante people, in a text published by the National Center of Culture (kindly provided by the Embassy of the Republic of Ghana in Brazil), the ideogram sankofa means “to return and gather again what was left behind”. Learning from the past, building on one’s foundations: “In other words, it means going back to your roots and building on them for the development, progress, and prosperity of your community, in all aspects of human achievement” (Glover, 1969).” My translation from original in Portuguese, “O ideograma sankofa pertence a um conjunto de símbolos gráficos de origem akan chamado adinkra. Cada ideograma, ou adinkra, tem um significado complexo, representado por ditames ou fábulas que expressam conceitos filosóficos. Segundo o professor E. Ablade Glover, da Universidade de Gana em Kumasi, capital do povo asante, em texto publicado pelo Centro Nacional de Cultura (gentilmente fornecido pela Embaixada da República de Gana no Brasil), o ideograma sankofa significa “voltar e apanhar de novo aquilo que ficou para trás”. Aprender do passado, construir sobre suas fundações: “Em outras palavras, significa voltar às suas raízes e construir sobre elas o desenvolvimento, o progresso e a prosperidade de sua comunidade, em todos os aspectos da realização humana” (Glover, 1969).” Elisa Larkin Nascimento, *A Matriz Africana No Mundo* (São Paulo: Summus Editorial Ltda, 2008), 31-32.

<sup>444</sup> Dalton Paula | *Portraits for the Future* (Brazil: National Gallery of Art, 2022), <https://www.nga.gov/audio-video/video/dalton-paula-portraits-for-the-future.html>.

interested in their spirits, their dreams, and their wishes, a pursuit also at the heart of popular culture's *retratos pintados*. The artist interlaces the lives of both historical and unknown Afro-Brazilian figures from the past, whose traces appear through the archive of slavery, with the likenesses of *quilombolas* living today.<sup>445</sup> Paula creates a “*what if*” version that counters the archive of slavery. But this counter-archive is not merely a revision or a replacement for absent stories lost in a void. More than that, by linking present-day and ancestral communities through his practice,<sup>446</sup> Paula's counter-archive tackles the persistent quality of the archive of slavery, and slavery as a formative matrix of power to coloniality today in and beyond Brazil's borders.

I contend it is through the overlapping of Black knowledges and photographic methods that Paula mediates ancestrality. It is through the converging of photographic methods and collective knowledges that Paula's portraits disrupt *branquitude* and its hegemonic national narratives. If normative *mestiçagem* and *branquitude* sought to destroy Black epistemologies and knowledges—and the slavery archive remains the proof and means of achieving that eradication—then Paula reclaims not only diverse visualities of Blackness, but also a visual space for ancestral continuity in the lives of those he portrays today. This chapter considers how Paula's work more specifically operates in the realms of visual culture; I seek to understand the in-betweenness of his

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<sup>445</sup> Quilombola can be translated as maroon in English, or fugitive enslaved person. Writer Yuko Miki adds that quilombola is also a noun denoting male-identified and female-identified maroons. A comparison between Brazilian quilombos and maroon settlements in the US can be found in Adam Bledsoe, “Marronage as a Past and Present Geography in the Americas,” *Southeastern Geographer* 57, no. 1 (2017): 30–50, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26367641>. Yuko Miki, “FLEEING INTO SLAVERY: The Insurgent Geographies of Brazilian Quilombolas (Maroons), 1880-1881,” *The Americas* 68, no. 4 (April 2012): 495–528, <https://doi.org/10.1353/tam.2012.0045>.

<sup>446</sup> Dalton Paula, Interview in English to the author, Zoom, January 24<sup>th</sup> 2023.

portraits, examining methods that position this specific series of paintings outside the (Western) traditions of portraiture.

This chapter is divided into six sections and a conclusion. In 3.2, I introduce Paula's practice and the recent bibliography of his portraits. In 3.3, I present his series of portraits, providing examples and situating the works in relation to Paula's practice in general. Next, in 3.4, I examine Paula's portraits in relation to *retratos pintados* as their main photographic foundation. In section 3.5, I discuss how Paula's practice functions as a counter-archive, putting it into conversation with the concept of critical fabulation by Saidiya Hartman, who has been rereading and rewriting the transatlantic archive of slavery through a combination of fiction and nonfiction.<sup>447</sup> Finally, in 3.6, I consider Paula's work as a mediation of *saberes negros*, using the notion of *aquilombamento*<sup>448</sup> stemming from the study of *quilombos* and ancestral modes of Black collectivity.

### 3.2. Dalton Paula, *Retratista*<sup>449</sup>

In the *Felipa Maria Aranha* (2022) (Figure 35) portrait, a woman has her eyes fixed straight on the viewer. Felipa (c. 1720-c.1780) was an enslaved woman who

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<sup>447</sup> Defining critical fabulation, Hartman writes: "Is it possible to exceed or negotiate the constitutive limits of the archive? By advancing a series of speculative arguments and exploiting the capacities of the subjunctive (a grammatical mood that expresses doubts, wishes, and possibilities), in fashioning a narrative, which is based upon archival research, and by that I mean a critical reading of the archive that mimes the figurative dimensions of history, I intended both to tell an impossible story and to amplify the impossibility of its telling. The conditional temporality of "what could have been," according to Lisa Lowe, "symbolizes aptly the space of a different kind of thinking, a space of productive attention to the scene of loss, a thinking with twofold attention that seeks to encompass at once the positive objects and methods of history and social science and the matters absent, entangled and unavailable by its methods." Saidiya V. Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," *Cassandra Press*, 2021, 33.

<sup>448</sup> See definition and discussion later in this chapter.

<sup>449</sup> From Portuguese: portraitist.

lived in Pará and was sold to a sugar cane plantation around 1740. In 1750, she fled the plantation with a group of enslaved people and later became the leader of *quilombo do Mola*, in Tocantins,<sup>450</sup> where she built an entire confederation of five *quilombos* in the region. She died in 1780, after 30 years of resistance against Portuguese and enslaver forces.<sup>451</sup> Paula molded Felipa's face, neck, and chest with dark browns and masses of paint. Felipa's outfit is olive green and ornamented with swirls and flourished lines; the green and the browns create a tonal uniformity to the entire portrait.

That homogeneity, however, is interrupted by contrasting white canvas spaces Paula left without any paint. These white lines and small areas shape Felipa's expression, which seems attentive and focused. The lines contour specific facial features, such as Felipa's eyes, eyebrows, and chin. Her lips seem relaxed. Probably using a masking method, Paula left several thin lip skin lines unpainted, which make

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<sup>450</sup> About Quilombo do Mola located in Tocantins, Pará, scholar Benedita Celeste de Moraes Pinto writes, "As an example of female leadership in some quilombos in the region and, later, in their remaining villages, the Black woman Maria Felipa Aranha must be mentioned, who led the Quilombo do Mola, a quilombo founded in the second half of the 18th century, made up of more than 300 black people, who, under this woman's leadership, lived there for several years without being 'threatened' by legal forces. Maria Luiza Piriá, successor of the mystical knowledge and leadership of Maria Felipa Aranha, also marked her passage in the Quilombo do Mola, organizing and leading religious rituals and managing the very lives of the Quilombolas who lived there. Maria Juvita was one of these women, who made their own history in Tocantins, who, after migrating from Mola, founded and led the village of Tomásia for many years, and after her death, her descendants replaced her in the leadership and leadership of the village." My translation from original in Portuguese, "Como exemplo de liderança feminina em alguns quilombos da região e, posteriormente, em seus povoados remanescentes, deve ser citada a Negra Maria Felipa Aranha, que liderou o quilombo do Mola, um quilombo fundado na segunda metade do século XVIII, constituído por mais de 300 negros, que, sob a liderança dessa mulher, viveram ali por vários anos sem serem „ameaçados“ pelas forças legais. Maria Luiza Piriá, sucessora dos saberes místicos e da liderança de Maria Felipa Aranha, também marcou sua passagem no quilombo do Mola, organizando e chefiando rituais religiosos e administrando a própria vida dos quilombolas que ali viveram. Maria Juvita foi mais uma dessas mulheres, que fizeram a sua própria história no Tocantins, que ao migrar do Mola, fundou e liderou por muitos anos o povoado de Tomásia, e após a sua morte, suas descendentes a substituíram na liderança e chefia do povoado." Benedita Celeste de Moraes Pinto, "Mulheres Negras Rurais: Resistência e Luta Por Sobrevivência Na Região Do Tocantins (PA)" (XXVI SIMPÓSIO NACIONAL DE HISTÓRIA, Anais do XXVI simpósio nacional da ANPUH - Associação Nacional de História, 2011), 1–16.

<sup>451</sup> Adriano Pedrosa et al., *Dalton Paula: Retratos Brasileiros*, ed. Adriano Pedrosa, Glauceca Helena de Britto, and Lilia Schwarcz (Museu de Arte de São Paulo, 2022), 253.



Felipa's lips look so detailed that her mouth comes off as part of a photograph (Figure 35). The same amount of detail is given to her golden hair, made with the application of gold leaves on the canvas. A large area on the left side of the portrait, on Felipa's hair, remains unfinished, revealing pencil strokes Paula used to sketch the composition before painting it.

Some elements of Paula's portraits retain the features of the headshots Paula used as the basis for each painting. The bi-dimensionality of his painted portraits is one such feature. Analyzing the portraits as a group, the figures consistently occupy similar ratios (i.e., the figure's dimensions versus unfilled canvas space) within the composition; all portraits are 61 x 45 cm. Most figures are cropped somewhere above their waistlines. Paula also positions the *personages* only a few centimeters below the top of the canvases, which configures a similar framing to headshots. In that sense, the images resemble identification photos, which is indicated too by the background's uniform color: often light blue, turquoise, or painted in green tones. These blue and green tonalities, as Paula explains, were borrowed directly from the practice of *retratos pintados*, a vernacular photographic practice I will discuss later in this chapter.<sup>452</sup>

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<sup>452</sup> Several authors in the exhibition catalog, *Retratos Brasileiros*, mention Paula's use of the blue background as the artist's reference to *retratos pintados*. For example, Schwarcz says, "Paula's portraits have another striking characteristic expressed in their blue background color. This contrast is what allows the figures to leap out and separate themselves from the background. For this reason, they are reminiscent of the popular colorized photos, always excessive in their hues, with their models donning fancy clothes, and presenting neat hair and proud expressions." Lilia Moritz Schwarcz, "Dalton Paula's Portraits of Afro-descendants: Bestowing New Life to the Deceased, Making Absence Present," in *Dalton Paula: Retratos Brasileiros*, ed. Adriano Pedrosa, Glauce Helena de Brito, and Lilia Schwarcz (Museu de Arte de São Paulo, 2022), 35.

In recent years, Paula became famous for portraits such as *Felipa Maria Aranha* and his project of depicting Black historical *personages*, as he calls them, which he started in 2018. Since then, Paula has painted around sixty portraits of historical figures whose likenesses have been erased or never existed in the field of representation. Paula, who was commissioned to paint the first portraits, has created these portraits from 2018 to 2022; this is an ongoing project.<sup>453</sup> Before his commissions, Paula's paintings rarely directly depicted Black people, though the Black body was always ubiquitous in his practice, a concept he called "the silenced body."<sup>454</sup> According to Paula, the "silenced body" is about Blackness and territoriality; it also appeared through Paula's use of his own body in photo-performances, in which he often appeared half-naked against painterly backgrounds performing symbolic healing gestures.<sup>455</sup>

In this chapter, I use a few of his artworks to study his portraiture practice. The sixty personages he portrayed lived in Brazil between the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Many of those depicted were community leaders, either for being actual leaders of revolts or *quilombos*, such as *Ambrósio* (18<sup>th</sup> century) (2020), or for having a wide-ranging leading role in Black communities of the past. These figures were healers,

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<sup>453</sup> See spreadsheet with full list of portraits attached.

<sup>454</sup> *The silenced body* first appeared in a series of photo-performances Paula produced right after he graduated in Visual Arts with a bachelor's degree from the Federal University of Goiás, in 2011.

<sup>455</sup> Aesthetically, Paula organized *Corpo Silenciado* series of performances outdoors in the urban spaces of Goiânia. A photographer took pictures of Paula, his chest was naked, in front of street walls of different tonalities. Paula performed minimal gestures to the camera, such as holding signboards or wearing different types of masks. Paula's pose determines the poetics of the image: when his face is visible, his eyes are often closed, and his facial expression is solemn. In other instances, his face is hidden to the viewer's gaze, either because his head is covered, or because he turned his back to the camera, facing the wall. This play with visibility and invisibility suggests that the head has a special significance in the entire series. In fact, the treatment of Paula's head appears as a visual link between this early series with the painted portraits I discuss in this chapter.

founders of *terreiros*, wet nurses, teachers, traders, sellers, politicians, sailors, and generals.

Some have only brief appearances in the official archives, such as *Dandara* (2020).<sup>456</sup> Others, like Zumbi and Ganga Zumba have more archival documentation available due to their direct defiance of colonial ruling.<sup>457</sup> Researchers found these individuals through mentions in public archives. The lives of these men and women were acknowledged through the often-adverse penning of masters, officers, priests, or journalists. Some of their names became evident to researchers and scholars because they earned their manumission, escaped enslavement, or had an extraordinary history in attaining their freedom. They came from all regions of Brazil; some were African, and some were born in Brazil or Afro-Brazilian.

Paula's two first commissioned portraits, *Zeferina* (Figure 36) and *João de Deus Nascimento* (Figure 37), have been so widely disseminated in the Brazilian art scene that the artist has been categorized as *retratista*, or a portraiture artist—a label he adopts with pride.<sup>458</sup> *Zeferina* was also featured as an illustration in a Holland Cotter review of the “Afro-Atlantic Histories” exhibition at MASP (2018),<sup>459</sup> which

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<sup>456</sup> According to Lilia Moritz Schwarcz and Felipe dos Santos Gomes, the narrative about Dandara (18<sup>th</sup> century) originates with the novel *Ganga Zuma* (1962) by João Felício dos Santos (1911-1989), which depicts her as a young warrior and Zumbi's wife. Adriano Pedrosa et al., *Dalton Paula: Retratos Brasileiros*, ed. Adriano Pedrosa, Glaúcea Helena de Britto, and Lilia Schwarcz (Museu de Arte de São Paulo, 2022), 177.

<sup>457</sup> Add short bios Zumbi and Zumba. Adriano Pedrosa et al., *Dalton Paula: Retratos Brasileiros*, ed. Adriano Pedrosa, Glaúcea Helena de Britto, and Lilia Schwarcz (Museu de Arte de São Paulo, 2022).

<sup>458</sup> National Gallery label and interview with Paula. *Dalton Paula | Portraits for the Future* (Brazil: National Gallery of Art, 2022), <https://www.nga.gov/audio-video/video/dalton-paula-portraits-for-the-future.html>.

<sup>459</sup> The exhibition “Histórias afro-atlânticas” took place at the Museu de Arte de São Paulo (MASP) from June to October, 2018. According to MASP's website, “Afro-Atlantic Histories presents a selection of 450 works by 214 artists, from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> century, around the “ebbs and flows” between Africa, the Americas, the Caribbean, and also Europe ... .” Museu de Arte de São Paulo, “Histórias afro-atlânticas,” n.d., <https://masp.org.br/exposicoes/historias-afro-atlanticas>.

was published in the *New York Times*. Since then, *Zeferina* has been reproduced multiple times on social media. Despite featuring Paula's work on an entire page of the newspaper, the famous New York art critic did not write a word about Paula's work; in fact, he only cited its title.<sup>460</sup>

Before late 2022, there were no books or scholarly articles published about Paula's practice. One found most of the bibliography about his production on the artist's website, through a few interviews, or through short mentions or reviews on Alexander and Bonin's gallery's website.<sup>461</sup> Brazilian art critic Silas Martí, in a rare review of Paula's work on *Folha de São Paulo*, one of the most important Brazilian newspapers, wrote, "[F]our years ago, when he debuted on the country's art scene, his past as a firefighter and his humble origins were always remembered by gallery owners and curators, who gave a pop and at the same time naive aura to the reading of his works.."<sup>462</sup> And in fact, Paula's early career was marked by instances of clear systemic racism. He had to advocate for himself in the art scene and against society's prejudices to finally occupy the prominent position he has earned today.<sup>463</sup>

One of the most avid advocates of Paula's work has been scholar Lilia Schwarcz, a constant collaborator and a co-author of a recent book with the artist,

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<sup>460</sup> Holland Cotter, "Brazil Enthralls With an Art Show of Afro-Atlantic History," *The New York Times*, October 12, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/12/arts/design/afro-atlantic-histories-sao-paulo-museum-of-art-tomie-ohake-institute.html>.

<sup>461</sup> "Dalton Paula," Art gallery, Alexander and Bonin, n.d., [https://www.alexanderandbonin.com/artist/Dalton\\_Paula/works/3474](https://www.alexanderandbonin.com/artist/Dalton_Paula/works/3474).

<sup>462</sup> "Há quatro anos, quando estreou no cenário artístico do país, seu passado de bombeiro e suas origens humildes eram sempre lembradas por galeristas e curadores, que deram uma aura pop e ao mesmo tempo naïf à leitura de suas obras." Silas Martí, "Ex-bombeiro, Dalton Paula expõe feridas de corpos silenciados," *Folha de S Paulo*, April 10, 2018.

<sup>463</sup> Dalton Paula, Interview in Portuguese to the author, February 2018.

titled *Dalton Paula: O sequestrador de almas* (2023). Schwarcz also co-authored the historical research for Paula's portraits; she wrote the labels accompanying his portraits in exhibitions in Brazil and the U.S.<sup>464</sup> Although Schwarcz wrote *O sequestrador de almas* in the first person, the two authors understood it as a collaboration as Paula participated in the revision of all texts included in the publication. Schwarcz also co-curated one of Paula's major solo exhibitions, *Retratos Brasileiros*, at MASP, São Paulo Museum of Modern Art, in 2022.

Beginning with an opening section in which Schwarcz introduces Paula's portraits, *Dalton Paula: O sequestrador de almas* is divided into five chapters, in which the authors discuss different periods of the artist's career in a non-linear way. In the chapter, "Retratos sobre outros heróis e heroínas silenciados pela história,"<sup>465</sup> Schwarcz contextualizes Paula's portraiture practice within a brief history of Brazilian visual culture. She uses the ill-famed 1895's *Ham's Redemption* painting by Modesto Brocos<sup>466</sup> as an example of whitewashing that, she argues, Paula's work confronts. She says,

Thus, in the body of Dalton Paula's work, a totally different reinterpretation of black bodies stands out. In his works, and especially in the series of portraits and ex-votos, the artist is not seeking to whiten (physically and culturally) the people represented; on the contrary, he highlights the richness of the black population residing in Brazil, with earthy colors as one of the symbolic marks of his art. He presents them in such a way as to restore their self-esteem or to present what the artist wants to imprint on his models.<sup>467</sup>

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<sup>464</sup> Dalton Paula and Lilia Schwarcz, *Dalton Paula: O Sequestrador de Almas* (Rio de Janeiro: Cobogó, 2023), 24.

<sup>465</sup> From Portuguese: "Portraits of other heroes and heroines silenced by history." My translation. Dalton Paula and Lilia Schwarcz, *Dalton Paula: O Sequestrador de Almas* (Rio de Janeiro: Cobogó, 2023).

<sup>466</sup> See discussion in Introduction.

<sup>467</sup> Dalton Paula and Lilia Schwarcz, *Dalton Paula: O Sequestrador de Almas* (Rio de Janeiro: Cobogó, 2023), 32.

Earlier in the chapter, Schwarcz explains that, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Brazilian academic painters would use the excuse of a lack of brown paint for representing non-white people in their works. Thus, Schwarcz emphasizes how Paula's practice's is distanced from *whitening*—physically or culturally, she adds—those he depicts. Schwarcz also highlights the importance of Paula's symbolic use of earth-like or brown tones.

In the book's conclusion, the author states that Paula's rich imaginaries dig “through colonial images, as picturesque as they are violent, and distills, filters and rereads what is stereotyped in them.” Schwarcz mentions bell hooks, arguing that Paula's casts an “oppositional look” at colonial works. She says,

if [colonial works] were created to produce subalternity, in the artist's works they become political and imaginary at the same time. For art can be defined as the space for the production of subjectivities; a place capable of dialoguing with the social and political life of a community. Visuality has the power to create real imaginary politics.<sup>468</sup>

Later, the author concludes, “[B]y taking the black person as a theme, Dalton challenges issues within the genre of pictorialism, opposing traditional colonial classifications, still very present in the history of art, which takes European production of universal, and works as naïve, popular or ingenuous the work of other peoples and social groups.”<sup>469</sup> And although Schwarcz draws from bell hooks, Grada Kilomba, and Saidyia Hartman's works to theorize some aspects of Paula's work as a challenge to the colonial archive, as she calls it (or the colonial rationale), Schwarcz does not thoroughly link these authors' arguments to Paula's work. Schwarcz's main

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<sup>468</sup> Dalton Paula and Lilia Schwarcz, *Dalton Paula: O Sequestrador de Almas* (Rio de Janeiro: Cobogó, 2023), 219.

<sup>469</sup> Dalton Paula and Lilia Schwarcz, *Dalton Paula: O Sequestrador de Almas* (Rio de Janeiro: Cobogó, 2023).

argument is based on the pictorial qualities of Paula's work in representing Black bodies. In *Retratos Brasileiros* (2022), the first major exhibition catalogue published about Paula's work, Schwarcz, one of the exhibition's co-curators, makes a similar argument about Paula's portraits' capacity to avoid whitening. She says,

Giving dignity and pride to enslaved and forgotten protagonists, restoring visual memories, including black people as protagonists and not in secondary or subjugated positions, is what makes this gallery of portraits a unique case. Images are not bleached or tamed. On the contrary, they restore the humanity of those who were always there but were silenced in the Colonial Archives. For this reason, the gallery of portraits presents a touching and disturbing presence of absence.<sup>470</sup>

I agree Paula's practice is unique, but there are thousands of Black artists across the African diaspora who have faced the silences of the "Colonial Archives." To say his images are not whitewashed or tamed is not enough to explain why his practice is so significant. Why would one expect the images he paints to be inherently whitewashed or tamed? Why would one expect him to dehumanize those he portrays? While Schwarcz compliments Paula and emphasizes the importance of humanizing enslaved people, an appraisal with an undisclosed reference is underway.

Paula told me more than once in interviews how, before he became recognized in the art scene, artists and art critics in Brazil discriminated against him and his work and categorized it as not real painting.<sup>471</sup> Perhaps Schwarcz is referring to the general white culture's prejudice to which Black artists have been subjected

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<sup>470</sup> Lilia Moritz Schwarcz, "Dalton Paula's Portraits of Afro-descendants: Bestowing New Life to the Deceased, Making Absence Present," in *Dalton Paula: Retratos Brasileiros*, ed. Adriano Pedrosa, Glauceca Helena de Britto, and Lilia Schwarcz (Museu de Arte de São Paulo, 2022), 32.

<sup>471</sup> Dalton Paula, Interview in Portuguese to the author, February 2018.

historically and which continues to assume Black artists have no agency.<sup>472</sup> But how different is saying Paula does not whiten or tame his subjects from expecting he would have no agency as an artist? Is Paula being compared to painters from another era who contributed to stereotyping Black people? The context used for that comparison is left unsaid, and the emphasis on “choosing the Black person” or the “Black body” as a theme seems to be enough to inherently challenge the dogmas of western art history and push away whiteness.<sup>473</sup>

Although *The Kidnapper of Souls* is a comprehensive overview of Paula’s career it also leaves open questions as to how, more evidently, Paula’s portraits connect to Black communities beyond creating a new iconography for them. In that same final section, Schwarcz concludes:

Images act as visual and cosmological triggers. Ways of being in the world. They are also image repositories transformed into symptoms—symptoms of silencing, of supposed invisibility and of violence. Because Dalton is really a kidnapper of symptoms and souls, who with his artistic work makes light, potency, hope reverberate, even more so in dystopian times like ours.<sup>474</sup>

I concur with Schwarcz that Paula is creating a new visuality with the power to alter the poetics and the politics of the visual, but Paula’s works achieve that because they go beyond simply or automatically representing Black people. First, one must say it

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<sup>472</sup> Generations of Black artists before Paula, those called the *naif*, the self-taught, etc, were deemed incapable of agency. See the work by Helio Menezes, Fabiana Lopes and my writing on Maria Auxiliadora da Silva and on Abdias Nascimento.

<sup>473</sup> Throughout her recent writing about Paula, Schwarcz opens about her limitations and preconceived ideas about Paula’s work. Dalton Paula and Lilia Schwarcz, *Dalton Paula: O Sequestrador de Almas* (Rio de Janeiro: Cobogó, 2023), 20-21. Lilia Moritz Schwarcz, “Dalton Paula’s Portraits of Afro-descendants: Bestowing New Life to the Deceased, Making Absence Present,” in *Dalton Paula: Retratos Brasileiros*, ed. Adriano Pedrosa, Glauce Helena de Britto, and Lilia Schwarcz (Museu de Arte de São Paulo, 2022).

<sup>474</sup> Dalton Paula and Lilia Schwarcz, *Dalton Paula: O Sequestrador de Almas* (Rio de Janeiro: Cobogó, 2023), 222.



clearly: Paula's portraits *are not made* for white viewers. White viewers are part of his audience, but these viewers are not the *center* of his production, and therefore, his works could make them/us<sup>475</sup> feel out of place. While his portraits intervene in the core of Brazilian colonial history by changing its hegemonic discourses—and therefore bearing the name *Brazilian portraits*—the foundation for Paula's work is the collective Black communities and knowledges he weaves together.

That is the true discomfort to whiteness that Paula's practice presents and that Schwarcz may be trying to convey. As I will argue throughout this chapter, Paula recenters Blackness and contributes to ideas of Blackness in Brazil and elsewhere across the diaspora. His practice is more political than creating a disturbing “presence of absence” or pointing to these absences. The painful absences Schwarcz rightly mentions have been there for centuries and with which generations of Black artists before Paula have dealt; he is not the only one who excavated or discovered this pain.<sup>476</sup> However, he has been one of the artists who has uniquely linked past and present through healing and have centered, or to use Paula's terminology, *tem assentado*,<sup>477</sup> Afro-Brazilian and African ancestors in the field of representation. This chapter seeks to explain the intricate ways Paula uses ancestral Black knowledges as a foundation for his reworking of the archive of slavery.

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<sup>475</sup> I use “us” here to refer to my own interpellation as a white Brazilian woman, a light-skin Latina in the US.

<sup>476</sup> Schwarcz mentions how Paula's works “retains a deep religiosity” because of his use of ritual objects, and she does position his work at the verge between political activism and art, due to how his work “face the evils of slavery, recover memories, that were left out of the most official narratives, and pay homage to ancestry.” Dalton Paula and Lilia Schwarcz, *Dalton Paula: O Sequestrador de Almas* (Rio de Janeiro: Cobogó, 2023).

<sup>477</sup> Grounded, in English. Paula uses the term grounded beyond a metaphor but also referring to *assentamento* in cambomblé, which he practices.

Other writers in the catalogue *Retratos Brasileiros* emphasize the significance of Paula's portraits in the canon of Brazilian art history. In "Portraits of Black Lives of Excellence in Brazil," Vivian Braga dos Santos analyzes specific pictorial elements of Paula's portraits to argue the artist creates a "Black photo album" that could "compose a gallery of important Black figures alongside, for example, the Dutch seventeenth-century portraits, in light of the shrewd nimbleness that many of these Africans and their descendants demonstrated in the past (and continue to do today in transmuting being Black into being other, as a strategy of the present."<sup>478</sup> Braga dos Santos considers Paula's "systematic esthetic treatment" of "hair, noses, complexion, and clothing,"<sup>479</sup> comparing these details to those that appear in colonial imagery of African or Afro-Brazilian subjects in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The author discusses photographs in which subjects, because of their poses or the way they arrange their clothing, "challenge the camera," subverting the colonial gaze to produce an image of the self and escaping the control of the other (in this case, of the colonizer) or the photographer.<sup>480</sup> In other words, Braga dos Santos looks for elements of composite visual culture<sup>481</sup> (i.e., the mixture of European and non-

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<sup>478</sup> Vivian Braga dos Santos, "Portraits of Black Lives of Excellence in Brazil, from Ganga Zumba to the Present Day," in *Dalton Paula: Retratos Brasileiros*, ed. Adriano Pedrosa, Glauceca Helena de Britto, and Lilia Schwarcz (Museu de Arte de São Paulo, 2022), 55.

<sup>479</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>480</sup> *Ibid.*, 61-62.

<sup>481</sup> I borrow the term from Carolyn Dean, as she defines it regarding the hybridization of Inka outfits around colonial times, "[c]onsiderable attention has been devoted over the past two decades, especially by theorists of postcolonial discourse, to whether the cultural work of colonial elites is empowered or enfeebled by its inevitable hybridity or, as I call it, its composite nature. Although I am wary of essentializing generalizations, the specific case of midcolonial Inkas argues not for an "either/or" scenario but for a "both/and" situation in which the colonized simultaneously recognized their subordinate positions and resisted the totalizing claims of colonial authority. In addition, the dialectic concerning the submission to, versus the subversion of, dominant discourses has tended to focus only on the relationship between colonizing authorities and a certain elite sector of the colonized." Carolyn J. Dean, "Composite Inka," in *Inka Bodies and the Body of Christ: Corpus Christi in Colonial Cuzco, Peru* (Durham, UNITED STATES: Duke University Press, 1999),

European outfits or accessories) as an argument for the agency of those photographed in the troubling images of the colonial and slavery archives. After highlighting the agency of Black subjects in these archival photographs, Braga dos Santos states that Paula's portraits transfer some of these photographed subjects' features, which are part of composite visual culture, to his paintings. She says,

in addition to glorifying the hair, noses, and skin of his subjects, the artist chooses garments that do not necessarily reflect a desire for European clothing or mediocre dress-up on the part of the Black subjects. Worn by bodies with crowned hair and proud noses, these clothes speak of these subject's ability to perform. Like the diplomats and African kings portrayed by Albert Eckhout's ... paintbrush in the seventeenth century, in the full glory of their traditional clothing when passing through Recife ... Dalton Paula's Black lives of excellence imply, through their bodies and dress, the ability to modify oneself, to survive and continue to be Black in another world.<sup>482</sup>

The author thus makes the case for Paula's portraits to occupy a niche in art history, in which European colonial portraiture still reigns despite all the critiques against coloniality and the permanence of colonizers' art in museum collections worldwide.<sup>483</sup> As Braga dos Santos asserts, their gaze and pose, or the *performing*<sup>484</sup>

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<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ucsc/detail.action?docID=3007824>. See also Stacy Kamehiro's work on cross-cultural features of the Iolani Palace's architecture, Stacy Kamehiro, "Iolani Palace: Spaces of Kingship in Late Nineteenth-Century Hawaii | Pacific Studies," May 30, 2019, <http://lir.byuh.edu/index.php/pacific/article/view/901>.

<sup>482</sup> Vivian Braga dos Santos, "Portraits of Black Lives of Excellence in Brazil, from Ganga Zumba to the Present Day," in *Dalton Paula: Retratos Brasileiros*, ed. Adriano Pedrosa, Glauceca Helena de Britto, and Lilia Schwarcz (Museu de Arte de São Paulo, 2022), 67.

<sup>483</sup> I am referring to the on-going battle against the colonial foundations of art museums.

<sup>484</sup> Braga dos Santos explains that this "performing to the camera," which occurred through the choosing of an outfit or having a portrait made to oneself was a resource enslaved people had for agency. The author quotes Gisele Freund, *La fotografia como documento social*, to explain such performing, "having oneself portrayed in a portrait was one of those symbolic acts through which individuals of the ascendant social class could demonstrate that ascension, both in relation to themselves and to others, positioning themselves among those who relished social recognition." In Vivian Braga dos Santos, "Portraits of Black Lives of Excellence in Brazil, from Ganga Zumba to the Present Day," in *Dalton Paula: Retratos Brasileiros*, ed. Adriano Pedrosa, Glauceca Helena de Britto, and Lilia Schwarcz (Museu de Arte de São Paulo, 2022), 61.

Paula's subjects enact through portraiture, has the power to face colonial representations of Black people and thus interrupt this past.

But this author's essay also leaves a door open for explicating Paula's portraiture practice and its methods and processes. After all, it is not by coincidence Braga dos Santos uses photography to develop an analysis of Paula's *paintings*. Like this author states, and as I will discuss further in this chapter, Paula studies the colonial photography archive as a foundation from which to choose certain pictorial elements he paints in his portraits. Yet, photography is not only a source, I argue, but also a *method* for his practice. Therefore, it is not just the pictorial features borrowed from photography that constitute Paula's practice, but the strategic use of photography and, more specifically, the photographic practice of *retratos pintados*.

From the same catalogue, Divino Sobral's essay "Afro-descendants: Bestowing new life to the deceased, making absence present" provides more clues to Paula's deployment of photography. Divino Sobral discusses Paula's revisionist portraits in relation to Lasar Segall's *Bananal* (1927), an early modernist work.<sup>485</sup> Sobral critiques troubling Brazilian modernist appropriations of non-white culture by white artists, who exoticized Black people "following social norms that reflected structural racism."<sup>486</sup> Developing a critique of Brazilian modernism that is long overdue,<sup>487</sup> Sobral says,

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<sup>485</sup> Divino Sobral, "Dalton Paula and the Tasks of Revising History and Filling the Void of the Unrepresented," in *Dalton Paula: Retratos Brasileiros*, ed. Adriano Pedrosa, Glauceca Helena de Britto, and Lilia Schwarcz (Museu de Arte de São Paulo, 2022), p. 95.

<sup>486</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>487</sup> See my discussion in the Introduction.

Modernism took it upon itself to break with academic rules, but the ancient portrait genre was not abandoned by figurative artists, who gave it new definition and new affective and social purposes. Personalities were portrayed as tormented, ill, and melancholic, suffering physical and psycho-logical pain, or weakened and debilitated. Idealized beauty capitulated before the reality of the bodies of the Others, who previously had no right to be represented, such as Black people. But the rarity of representations that grant dignity to non-White People, removing them from the condition of types in order to reposition them in the condition of subjects, leads us to inquire about some forms of prejudice maintenance and uncritical appropriation of the image of these people within the art system, involving both artists and art theorists.<sup>488</sup>

Sobral argues that Segall's painting refuses to portray Olegário, the Black man depicted in the work, and transforms him into "an anonymous type."<sup>489</sup> The author concludes portraiture is therefore "a genre of exclusion par excellence," in which the few portraits of "Black people, enslaved or otherwise, or of indigenous people, or any other group of so-called minorities ... were usually conceived with a prejudice or impression of their subject's inferiority." In contrast, Sobral says, Paula's works "rescue the memories of Black men and women who are important for the revision of Brazilian history and who serve as an example for the empowerment of the Black population."<sup>490</sup>

Sobral points to two elements in Paula's portraits that show the importance of this artist's revisionism. The first aspect is that his works challenge the genre of portraiture. Sobral says "to portray is to represent someone as one sees them, to be

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<sup>488</sup> Divino Sobral, "Dalton Paula and the Tasks of Revising History and Filling the Void of the Unrepresented," in *Dalton Paula: Retratos Brasileiros*, ed. Adriano Pedrosa, Glauceia Helena de Britto, and Lilia Schwarcz (Museu de Arte de São Paulo, 2022), 97.

<sup>489</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>490</sup> *Ibid.*, 111.

faithful to the subject and to seek accuracy.”<sup>491</sup> Paula’s portraits instead “completely escape the principle of verisimilitude embed in that tradition because they are a fiction assembled by the artist from disparate elements, coming from different sources across the place and time.”<sup>492</sup> The second aspect is that Paula visits *quilombos* and depicts their members in creating his portraits. Sobral states these are:

places of Black resistance, with the purpose of thinking about his ancestry, to capture symbolic heritages by listening to the elders, to carry out exercises in affective archeology, to obtain physiognomies and analyze psychological aspects, in addition to photographically documenting men and women in gestures of pride, autonomy, and empowerment, with expressions of contentment and wisdom. In the fiction of the portrait, it is these people, recognized by Dalton Paula as Black authorities, who lend their physiognomies to the personalities of the past whose faces have not been registered, but rather erased by the massacring forces of power.<sup>493</sup>

These two topics, I contend, are crucial to understanding why Paula’s works go beyond portraiture and why an analysis of the pictorial qualities of his paintings is not enough to comprehend how his practice confronts and responds to the archive of slavery by using the *photographic*.

Both Santos Braga and Sobral’s essays explain how Paula’s portraiture challenges the canons of art history, Brazilian or colonial. They both do the critical work of positioning Paula’s work within the tradition of painting, a crucial move long overdue in Brazilian art history and art criticism. As Santos Braga posits in relation to

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<sup>491</sup> Divino Sobral, “Dalton Paula and the Tasks of Revising History and Filling the Void of the Unrepresented,” in *Dalton Paula: Retratos Brasileiros*, ed. Adriano Pedrosa, Glauceca Helena de Britto, and Lilia Schwarcz (Museu de Arte de São Paulo, 2022), 105.

<sup>492</sup> Ibid.

<sup>493</sup> Ibid., 107.

Dutch portraiture in Brazil and Sobral argues in relation to Brazilian modernist art, Paula's portraits clearly defy the visualities and iconographies created by European-inspired white culture in Brazil by intervening in these predominantly historically white visual spaces.

However, questions remain on how, more specifically, Paula's work *makes possible* the challenge to white visual culture *in the present*. If memorializing Black excellency, as Santos Braga suggests, is clearly a goal of his project, how does Paula achieve that goal beyond humanizing his subjects or glorifying their noses or hair? The careful depiction of physiognomy and physical features such as noses and hair have profound meanings to Black people in Brazil and across the Black diaspora.<sup>494</sup> I do not mean to diminish their importance while analyzing Paula's work. But I argue that, within these crucial aesthetic decisions, it is the ancestral quality of his portraits and how Paula visually and spiritually *enables* that ancestry that makes his practice so effective in occupying these spaces of power in the field of representation.

Another point to note in relation to the bibliography on Paula is that Brazilian writers have rarely used the term "archive of slavery" when discussing his work. For example, throughout the books *Kidnapper* and *Retratos*, Schwarcz emphasizes a broader use of "colonial archive." Of course, using such a term is not incorrect, but it may appease readers more than using the term "*arquivo da escravidão*." By putting

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<sup>494</sup> See Patricia de Santana Pinho, "Afro-Aesthetics in Brazil," in *Beautiful/Ugly: African and Diaspora Aesthetics*, ed. Nuttall Sarah (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007).

the term slavery aside, white readers are buffered from considering their roles in that horrendous past.<sup>495</sup>

Note here I am not defending an emphasis on Black people’s victimization or the history of suffering associated with the term slavery. Paula has also avoided using the term archive of slavery when discussing his work. But I want to rethink the ways Brazilian scholars, to use Amy Lonetree’s expression, eschew historical “hard truths”<sup>496</sup> and how we are also, in every move, implicated by the terminologies we use or avoid using.<sup>497</sup> Following Hartman, I adopt both “archive of slavery” and “*arquivo da escravidão*,” not to call attention to its pain but to make the strength of Paula’s counter-archive more evident. Stakes *are* that high. Therefore, in considering Paula’s work in relation to such an archive, even recent bibliography generally avoids the upfront challenge to whiteness and the white normative subject or viewer that was the archive’s subject and the omnipresent subject of Brazilian art history.

Despite Paula’s works being featured in two major U.S. museums since 2018 (The New Museum’s Triennial (*Songs of Sabotage*, 2018) and a recent collection display at New York’s Museum of Modern Art), the name Dalton Paula has only been mentioned here and there in short blurbs<sup>498</sup> and interviews in the U.S. art scene;

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<sup>495</sup> Consider, for example, the destruction of archival documents about slavery in Brazil decreed by Minister Ruy Barbosa on 14<sup>th</sup> December 1894. About this episode, see an analyses linking the archival destruction with erasure of Black people in Brazil. Evandro Piza Duarte, Menelick de Carvalho Neto, and Guilherme Scotti, “Ruy Barbosa e a Queima dos Arquivos: As Lutas pela Memória da Escravidão e os Discursos dos Juristas,” *Universitas Jus* 26, no. 2 (December 3, 2015), <https://doi.org/10.5102/unijus.v26i2.3553>.

<sup>496</sup> Amy Lonetree, “Introduction,” in *Decolonizing Museums: Representing Native America in National and Tribal Museums*, First Peoples : New Directions in Indigenous Studies (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012).

<sup>497</sup> See this dissertation’s preface.

<sup>498</sup> “Dalton Paula,” *The New Yorker*, accessed April 1, 2023, <https://www.newyorker.com/goings-on-about-town/art/dalton-paula>. “Dalton Paula: Brazilian Portraits,” *C& AMÉRICA LATINA*, accessed April 1, 2023, <https://amlatina.contemporaryand.com/editorial/dalton-paula-brazilian-portraits/>. Camila Belchior, “Dalton



no academic article or art criticism piece has been dedicated entirely to this artist so far.<sup>499</sup>

### 3.3. Photographic Foundations of Paula's Portraits

In 2018, Lilia Schwarcz commissioned Paula to paint a portrait of Lima Barreto, an important Afro-Brazilian political leader of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>500</sup> The painting illustrated the cover of Schwarcz's biographic book on this leader, *Lima Barreto: Triste Visionário*, published in 2019.<sup>501</sup> By then, Paula relied on archival photographs and historical paintings representing Afro-Brazilians to mold the likeness of the characters he portrayed. I witnessed Paula paint his first sketches of Lima Barreto's portrait (Figure 38) in a small studio room in Brooklyn in 2018 while Paula was an artist-in-residence at AnnexB, a residency program where I worked.<sup>502</sup>

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Paula's Portraits Piece Together an Afro-Brazilian History," *Frieze*, October 20, 2022, <https://www.frieze.com/article/dalton-paula-masp-review-2022>. "Dalton Paula at Alexander and Bonin – Art Viewer," November 1, 2020, <https://artviewer.org/dalton-paula-at-alexander-and-bonin/>. Victoria L. Valentine, "Brazilian Artist Dalton Paula Is Now Represented by Alexander and Bonin in New York City," *Culture Type* (blog), December 16, 2018, <https://www.culturetype.com/2018/12/15/brazilian-artist-dalton-paula-is-now-represented-by-alexander-and-bonin-in-new-york-city/>. "Dalton Paula," *Apollo Magazine*, July 20, 2022, <http://www.apollo-magazine.com/dalton-paula-brazilian-portraits/>. "The Museu de Arte de São Paulo Exhibits Portraits by Dalton Paula," accessed April 1, 2023, <http://www.mutualart.com/ExternalArticle/The-Museu-de-Arte-de-Sao-Paulo-Exhibits-/D090B23A074ACD63>.

<sup>499</sup> Dalton Paula's work *A Notícia* serves as illustrations (with no discussion) in the essay, Bénédicte Boisseron, "Neither White nor Black but Some Sort of Freegan," *Transition*, no. 130 (2020): 35–47, <https://doi.org/10.2979/transition.130.1.06>. Nohora Arrieta Fernández and Matheus Gato include Dalton Paula in their image dossier, explaining the many changes earned by Black activism in Brazil. Nohora Arrieta Fernández and Matheus Gato, "Radical Worlds: The Afro-Brazilian Experience," *Transition*, no. 130 (2020): 170–72, <https://doi.org/10.2979/transition.130.1.17>. Amanda Carneiro mentions Dalton Paula in her essay, Amanda Carneiro, "Time Will Tell," *Afterall* 50, no. 1 (2020): 32–49, <https://doi.org/10.1086/712845>. Paula is briefly cited in the following books: Andrei Fernández, João Paulo Siqueira Lopes, and Fernando Ticoulat, *20 em 2020: América Latina : os artistas da próxima década = the artists of the next decade = los artistas de la próxima década*, 1a impressão. (São Paulo: Art Consulting Tool, 2020).

<sup>500</sup> "Afonso Henriques de Lima Barreto, (1881--1922, Rio de Janeiro) was a journalist, novelist, and short-story writer born in the city of Rio de Janeiro, then Brazil's capital, on 13 May 1881. Lima Barreto was the grandson of slaves, and both his parents, João Henriques de Lima Barreto and Amália Augusta Barreto, were Black." Cristina Ferreira Pinto-Bailey, "Lima Barreto, Afonso Henriques De," in *Dictionary of Caribbean and Afro-Latin American Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2016), <https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/acref/9780199935796.001.0001/acref-9780199935796-e-1210>.

<sup>501</sup> Lilia Moritz Schwarcz, *Lima Barreto: Triste Visionário* (São Paulo, Brazil: Companhia das Letras, 2017).

<sup>502</sup> AnnexB is a residency for Brazilian artists founded by Larissa Ferreira in 2017 in Brooklyn, New York.

Paula painted several watercolors of Barreto's face based on photographs he found on the internet.

In the same year, the Museu de Arte de São Paulo commissioned Paula to create two portraits to be featured in one of the museum's landmark exhibitions, *Histórias afro-atlânticas*. That commission steered Paula's career in the direction of portraiture, as he painted *Zeferina* and *João de Deus Nascimento*, his most well-known portraits so far. But like in Paula's earlier series of paintings, he used a combination of photography and drawing to decide on the style of his portraits for MASP.<sup>503</sup>

*Zeferina* and *João de Deus Nascimento* look like amplified versions of Black characters who appeared in previous works by Paula, such as *Silenced Portraits* from 2014. As I will discuss further in this chapter, *Silenced Portraits*, an early series of paintings directly inspired by *retratos pintados* and *ex-votos*, votive portraits the artist started to study because of his interest in regional Black and popular Brazilian culture, and after a visit to a church in the city of Trindade, Goiás. When he painted *Zeferina* and *João de Deus*, his goal was to address the absence of Black figures in Brazilian visual history. In an audio clip shared with MoMA's curator Thomas Lax, Paula says,

These paintings portray Black leaders, who were silenced in Brazilian history. Blacks make up more than half of the population in Brazil, but power is dominated by white people. In 2018, when I made the first two portraits, what inspired me was the lack of historical images of Black

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<sup>503</sup> Dalton Paula | *Portraits for the Future* (Brazil: National Gallery of Art, 2022), <https://www.nga.gov/audio-video/video/dalton-paula-portraits-for-the-future.html>.

people. The only photos and paintings objectified blacks. In my portraits, I seek to create a new history.<sup>504</sup>

But if “a lack of images” moved Paula in 2018 to paint his first formal portraits, he used the pictorial quality of *ex-votos* in a new method he calls *retrato falado* (borrowing from the common expression in Portuguese)<sup>505</sup> when he opened his first solo exhibition in New York, at Alexander and Bonin gallery in 2020. His individual exhibition presented twenty-four portraits of Afro-Brazilian historical figures whose visual representations were either absent from history and archives or never existed, like his portraits of Zeferina and João de Deus Nascimento. If Paula’s intention in those first two portraits was to fulfill a void in the series of portraits first shown at Alexander and Bonin, he expanded his practice of portraiture to include community participation.

In 2020, MASP commissioned Paula to paint more portraits of Black personalities whose traces are only found in written documents of archives.<sup>506</sup> Paula had the task of depicting and honoring those unseen. Troubled by the archive’s violent images, which often dehumanized Black people, he had the idea of visiting several *quilombola* communities around Brazil and having them collaborate in creating the portraits he was commissioned to paint.<sup>507</sup> Paula wanted to depict people in different

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<sup>504</sup> Dalton Paula. *Liberata.2020*, Collection 1970s–Present, n.d., <https://www.moma.org/audio/4110>.

<sup>505</sup> The expression “retrato falado” in Portuguese mainly translates as the judiciary practice of forensic artists or the police creating composite pictures, but in this case, Paula refers to his making of a portrait while listening to the stories about the deceased or about those he portrays.

<sup>506</sup> As Saidya Hartman says, the challenge of critical fabulation when dealing with the violence of the slavery archive, is both to breathe life into archival traces of individuals often seen through the perspective of those who oppressed them, but also to deal with raw absence, with the threat of non-existence Hartman. Saidiya V. Hartman, “Venus in Two Acts,” *Cassandra Press*, 2021.

<sup>507</sup> Dalton Paula, Interview in Portuguese to the author, Zoom, January 24, 2023.

regions and *quilombos* across Brazil to capture the diversity of Black people in various regions of the country.<sup>508</sup>

Before and during the pandemic, Paula wrote to leaders in these communities, seeking to collaborate with them to paint the portraits. He established contacts with communities in Serra da Barriga, Alagoas, Tocantins, Oriximiná, Goiás, and Minas Gerais.<sup>509</sup> Each collaboration developed differently, Paula said, and involved active listening to understand what the communities needed. After asking a *quilombola* leader, Fátima Barros, what the community would like to have in return for allowing Paula to come visit and paint their portraits, he developed a new method. Paula told me Fátima said to him,

“Our elders, they don't have portraits, so you can make a portrait of the older ones and those who have passed away, they are very similar to the younger ones, and we'll tell you what they were like. And, then you also have the younger ones as a reference and then you create elder.” And I said, “That’s it, there I have the work’s methodology.”<sup>510</sup>

From these conversations, Paula developed a method that combined representing living community members with hearing about the stories of their ancestors and what they looked like and then merging the two (or three) “appearances” into a type of spoken portrait, or *retrato falado*. He juxtaposed the method of *retrato falados* with

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<sup>508</sup> Dalton Paula, Interview in Portuguese to the author, Zoom, October 21, 2021.

<sup>509</sup> Dalton Paula, Interview in Portuguese to the author, Zoom, October 21, 2021.

<sup>510</sup> “Os nossos mais velhos, eles não têm retrato, então você pode fazer o retrato dos mais velhos e os que já se foram, eles são muito parecidos com os mais novos e a gente vai te falando como eles eram. E aí você vai tendo também como referência os mais novos e aí você vai criando retratos mais velhos.” E eu disse “Taí pronta, a metodologia do trabalho.”<sup>510</sup> Dalton Paula, Interview in Portuguese to the author, Zoom, October 21, 2021.

the histories of Black personalities found in the archive of slavery, thus creating a new appearance.

Paula has so far painted around thirty works using this method, which have been recently featured in *Retratos Brasileiros*, his individual exhibition at the MASP in 2022. But unlike painters who invite their subjects to a photographic studio, shoot their portraits, and project the resulting image onto a canvas to paint a person's likeness, Paula uses a composite method, deploying photographic practices and different photographic documents and sources, in addition to studio photography.

### 3.3.1. Silenced Portraits and *Retrados Pintados*

Since 2018, Paula has progressively altered and refined the aesthetics of his portraits. His aesthetic method, I contend, roots his paintings in photography. Though *retratos pintados* have served as a model for his portraits since 2020, Paula has increasingly diversified the photographic foundations for these works. For example, in 2022, the skin color tones in Paula's portraits became richer. The stroke details in the faces of those portrayed became more intensive. For example, despite the continuous use of the uniform blue background and golden hair in *Ganga Zumba* (2020) (Figure 39) and *Assumano Mina do Brasil* (2022) (Figure 40), the two portraits received different aesthetic treatments. In *Assumano*, Paula increased the use of white canvas space so that a majority of Assumano's facial expression lines are white. As Paula described in interviews, he leaves these spaces to remind viewers of the constructed nature of the images and the unfinished quality of the portraits, interrupting assumed pristine notions of historical documentation.

Paula may have achieved some of these lines through the technique of masking: putting a paper mold over certain blank areas of the canvas while painting the uncovered ones. In *Assumano*, canvas areas left unpainted seem more organically distributed than in earlier portraits such as *Ganga Zumba*. When compared to his portraits from 2020, blank areas that seemed to be exceptions to the entire composition have been now deployed as framing devices that create a certain depth to faces, which was not as much evident in the portraits Paula made before 2022.

Comparing these two groups of portraits also shows they look much more like photographs than Paula's earlier works. The similarity to headshots remains; the personages are depicted mainly in a straight pose to the viewer. Because of that front pose and the ratio they occupy in relation to the size of the canvas and the uniform background, the portraits maintain the bi-dimensionality akin to photography portraiture, or headshots. Moreover, the addition of highly detailed lips seems to be a new feature of all the works Paula made in 2022. These impressive facial depictions are clearly borrowed from the photographic portraits of Black community members Paula took across his visits and collaborations. Thus, it is evident these works must be studied in their aesthetic ambivalence, as in Paula's borrowing from painting and photographic techniques.

This juxtaposition of painting and photography is not a new feature of Paula's practice. In many of his earlier paintings, such as in *Tobacco Route* (Figure 41), he extracted archival imagery and photographs as visual foundations for his paintings to

reinterpret those archives he mined.<sup>511</sup> Another example, *Silenced Portraits* (2014), is a series of nineteen oil portraits painted over encyclopedia covers. The portraits show individuals, couples, and families, with individuals represented with eyes closed. The coarse layers of oil paint used to delineate the characters emphasize their dark and brown skin tones; their closed eyes give the impression these were deceased members of an adored community. Paula painted these figures over a uniform colorful background with pastel tones of blue, green, and off-white colors that contrast the figures' skin tones.<sup>512</sup>

Paula created *Silenced Portraits* during his field trips to visit communities and landless peoples' settlements in the backlands of Goiás state, searching for themes he could "bring back to the studio" and address through his practice.<sup>513</sup> During his visits, he took his Zenit camera and made registers of what he encountered or caught his attention. In an interview, Paula told me he became especially interested in the *ex-votos* room of the *Basílica do Divino Pai Eterno*, a famous religious hub and church in the city of Trindade, Goiás.<sup>514</sup>

The ancient practice of *ex-votos* is practiced by followers of different religious practices across the world.<sup>515</sup> In Brazil, votive objects, or *ex-votos*, are objects of faith

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<sup>511</sup> To use Fred Wilson's famous expression, "mining the museum." Fred Wilson, *Mining the Museum: An Installation*, ed. Lisa Graziose Corrin, First Edition (Baltimore : New York: New Pr, 1994).

<sup>512</sup> Perhaps because of the minute size of the portraits, adjusted to fit the books' dimensions, the focus of this series is not on detailed appearance of the figures. The layers of oil paint that accumulate over the book covers capture more of a person's feeling, or mood, than their likeness. Their closed eyes create a visual uniformity and unity to the series of portraits, suggesting the viewer sees them as a collective, and not only as individual images.

<sup>513</sup> Dalton Paula, Interview in Portuguese to the author, Zoom, October 21, 2021.

<sup>514</sup> The room is called "Sala dos Milagres," or "Miracle Room." Dalton Paula, Interview in Portuguese to the author, Zoom, October 21, 2021.

<sup>515</sup> David Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response*, Repr. (Chicago, Ill.: Univ. of Chicago Pr, 2007), 136.

often deposited in a specific room of a church or a religious complex. *Ex-votos* are also connected to the notion of miracle; they are offerings to the divine and can be represented through objects resembling body parts, such as legs or hands. According to Paula, in the Divino Pai Eterno church's votive room, people offered not only body part objects, but also clothes, sculptures, paintings, and photographs. Looking at this iconographic universe of devotion, Paula was impressed by the pictorial aspects of the *ex-votos* and how the votive practice of Trindade involved a series of oral narratives around devotees and miracles or other achieved grace.<sup>516</sup>

Paula was also interested in a vernacular method of altering photographs closely associated with votive imagery:<sup>517</sup> *retratos pintados*, a practice combining painting and photography that has been used in northeastern areas of Brazil since the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, especially, but not exclusively, among the deprived. This practice involves popular artists in different cities across the country commissioned by individuals to produce photographic portraits and to painterly alter them as part of a post-production process.

This practice's most common method consisted of adding color to black-and-white pictures, but Brazilian artists began altering other aspects of portraits upon the request of their clients, such as the addition of a deceased family member into the composition or a change in the outfit or accessories the portrayed were originally wearing with the intent to alter their social status. One's understanding of social class

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<sup>516</sup> Dalton Paula, Interview in Portuguese to the author, Zoom, October 21, 2021.

<sup>517</sup> Dalton Paula, Interview in Portuguese to the author, Zoom, October 21, 2021.



often becomes apparent through these depictions via the presentation of specific signs, such as certain outfits, jewelry, and even poses.<sup>518</sup>

Paula has been interested in how this vernacular genre of photography recounts unseen or untold aspects of the real world. Although the traditional—whether journalistic or fine arts—use of photography often refers to its indexical quality or its “truth effect,” a photograph is in fact a carefully manipulated depiction of the physical world; it is a depiction mediated by both a photographer and an apparatus: the camera. For that reason, photography is never a *reliable* tool for depicting “reality.”<sup>519</sup>

In his *Silenced Portraits* works, Paula uses *painting as photography* to repopulate and resignify the field of representation with images of Black people as votive images to heal the erasures from the past. Many times, vernacular *retratos pintados*, or *foto-pinturas*, have curative potential for their makers or holders. Individuals often request artists to modify the picture’s composition to reflect their hopes for a physical cure to an ailment or to include images of saints and other divinities. These pictures become votive items the believer either keeps in a place of

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<sup>518</sup> About the social status of those portrayed in *foto-pinturas*, Deborah Rodrigues Borges says, “In photopainting, although there was a greater creative possibility on the part of the artist, the rigidity of the pose is maintained, even as a necessary strategy for the portrait to reach the status of a symbol of social distinction. Everything contributes to this: the pose, the seriousness, the formality of clothing and other attributes.” My translation from original in Portuguese: “Na fotopintura, embora houvesse uma maior possibilidade criativa por parte do artista, a rigidez da pose se mantém, até mesmo como estratégia necessária para que o re-trato alcançasse o status de um símbolo de distinção social. Tudo contribui para isso: a pose, a seriedade, a formalidade do vestuário e dos demais atributos.” Déborah Rodrigues Borges, “Representação Como Tensão Na Fotografia: Pensando a Fotopintura,” *Estudos* 38, no. 4 (Outubro/Dezembro 2011): 785.

<sup>519</sup> See discussion in the Introduction.

importance in a house, such as an altar or takes to temples of faith of different religious practices, from Afro-Brazilian to Catholic beliefs.<sup>520</sup>

About this practice and its relationship to his work, Paula said:

And then, entering this universe of the backlands, the interior of Goiás, then came an approach to the ex-votos room of the Basilica of the Divine Pai Eterno, in the municipality of Trindade and that always impressed me. And everything that related to [the area], such as popular festivals, devotion, manifestations of people's beliefs, requests for favors achieved and the various prose and narratives that were [present] through different types of objects, paintings, photographs, sculptures, clothes. Anyway, a lot really. And that interested me a lot. And then something about this pictorial taste, this taste for painting, photo-paintings began to draw my attention a lot. And that's when I went to Cariri to be closer to talk to photo-painters, and what was left of this type of way of making photo-painting.<sup>521</sup>

From this trip to Cariri, Paula remembers the conversations he had with photo-painters, often-invisible local artists who have the power to alter the appearance and the social status of those they portray. Moreover, *retratos pintados* as a votive

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<sup>520</sup> Wdson Cesar Freire de Melo writes, "From the analysis of ex-votos, we can see that these images represent not only the relationship of men and women with the sacred, but more than that – these ex-votos describe life, work, daily life, health, symptoms, illnesses, the wishes of real people who lived in the Goiás of yesterday, close and so far from us. Due to the lack of doctors and resources, the population resorted to nature, traditions, saints and religious imagery, the only elements available in rural communities, poor, isolated regions or in the small clusters that existed until then." My translation from original in Portuguese, "A partir da análise dos ex-votos, podemos constatar que essas imagens representam não só a relação de homens e mulheres com o sagrado, mas mais que isso – esses ex-votos descrevem a vida, o trabalho, o cotidiano, a saúde, os sintomas, as doenças, os desejos de pessoas reais que viveram no Goiás de ontem, perto e tão distante de nós. À falta de médicos e recursos, a população recorria à natureza, às tradições, aos santos e ao imaginário religioso, únicos elementos disponíveis nas comunidades rurais, regiões pobres, isoladas ou nos pequenos aglomerados existentes até então." Wdson Cesar Freire de Melo, "Devoção, ex-votos e moléstias(manuscrito): um estudo sobre a religiosidade popular em Goiás na primeira metade do século XX" (dissertation, Goiania - Brazil, PUC - Goiás, 2017).

<sup>521</sup> "E aí depois entrando nesse universo muito sertanejo do interior de Goiás então veio uma aproximação com a sala de ex-votos da Basílica do Divino Pai Eterno, no município de Trindade e aquilo sempre me impressionou. E tudo que se circundava como as festas populares, a devoção, as manifestações da crença das pessoas, dos pedidos das graças alcançadas e das várias prosas e narrativas que estavam ali por diferentes tipos de objetos, pinturas, fotografias, esculturas, roupas. Enfim, muita coisa mesmo. E isso me interessava muito. E aí uma coisa por esse gosto pictórico, esse gosto pela pintura começou a me chamar a atenção muito as fotos-pinturas. E aí é quando eu vou até o Cariri para estar mais próximo a conversar com esses foto-pintores, e o que ainda restava desse tipo de modo de fazer foto-pintura." Dalton Paula, Interview in Portuguese to the author, Zoom, October 21, 2021. My translation from Portuguese.

practice challenges the boundaries between life and death and present and past. Paula explains the job of these artists:

Sometimes, people who didn't have any possessions asked a photo-painter to portray them with belongings. There was a displacement of time, for example, a widow who only had a photo of her youngest husband and then they appeared to be mother and son (in the photo), but they were husband and wife. And from the photographs of dead people—it is quite common for people to photograph this moment and ask the photo-painter to portray the deceased alive. So, I was very interested in this way of operating and seeing that I could also use this to develop my work and bring in some [of those] narratives.<sup>522</sup>

In fact, not only do his *Silenced Portraits* retain the aesthetic appearance of *retratos pintados*, but also his more recent portraits. Because Paula painted the portraits of *Silenced Portraits* in oil and on encyclopedia covers, the format of the book also maintains the association with the standard ratio of family albums' photographs. Another similarity between Paula's paintings and the *retratos pintados* of this work is the closed eyes of some whom he portrays, a characteristic that appeared in Paula's early work and which he abandoned in recent portraits. In this example of *retrato pintado*,<sup>523</sup> that coalescing of timeframes is evident as the artist(s) represents, simultaneously, a couple in their younger and older age.

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<sup>522</sup> "... às vezes pessoas que não tinham posse pediam para o foto-pintor retratá-las com posse, tal. Aquele deslocamento de tempo, por exemplo, uma viúva que só tinha a foto do marido mais novo e aí pareciam ser mãe e filho (na foto) mas eram marido e mulher. E pelas próprias fotografias de pessoas mortas—que é bem comum as pessoas fotografarem esse momento e pedir para o foto-pintor retratá-las vivas. Então me interessava muito assim esse modo de operar e ver que eu poderia usar isso também para poder desenvolver meu trabalho e trazer algumas narrativas." Dalton Paula, Interview in Portuguese to the author, Zoom, October 21, 2021. My translation from Portuguese.

<sup>523</sup> According to his website, Mestre Júlio Santos (1944-, Fortaleza-CE,) is dedicated to the development, execution, and dissemination of photopainting, a fundamental technique in the construction of the visual memory of the Brazilian people. He currently uses Photoshop tools in a creative and experimental way to carry out photopainting digitally. ...Despite the notoriety that his name has received from art institutions and the media, Mestre Júlio continues to respond to requests for photopaintings commissioned by families across the country. "Mestre Júlio Santos," accessed April 1, 2023, <https://mestrejuliosantos.com.br/>. See: Rosely Nakagawa, *Júlio Santos: mestre da fotopintura* (Fortaleza: Tempo D'imagem, 2010).

*Silenced Portraits*' altar-like format is not entirely lost when Paula's portraits from 2018 to the present have been exhibited together. Mounted on the same wall, or as a group in an exhibition, Paula's portraits resemble an altar, a format referring to the arrangements of *retratos pintados* in places of faith such as the Basílica do Divino Pai Eterno or in the houses or private spaces of those who commission *retratos pintados*. Because they have been rarely displayed individually, the series evokes the family album. It is important to note that this feature of Paula's recent portraits is a remnant of his interest in *retratos pintados* and their votive function.

Thus, in *Silenced Portraits*, it is the first time Paula directly reinterprets the photographic practice of *retratos pintados*, using painting so he can more freely reimagine and resituate those he portrays. The use of paint creates a separation from the practice of *retratos pintados* popular under commission. Additionally, many of his series of paintings on encyclopedias from this same period refer to healing practices, either by making these practices visible or decoding healing practices through the pictorial elements he chooses to represent. Examples are *The Cure* (2016) (Figure 42), a series of eight painted books showing different scenes of Afro-Indigenous individuals' healing practices, and the work *Medical Saints* (2016) (Figure 43), which also depicts healing scenes.<sup>524</sup>

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Eduardo Queiroga, "Fotopintura Contemporânea: A Pós-Produção No Trabalho de Mestre Júlio," *Cartema Revista Do Programa de Pós-Graduação Em Artes Visuais UFPE-UFPA*, Ano 6 p.7-16.

<sup>524</sup> Many of Paula's video-performances also depict healing practices the artist develops in relation to sites he has visited. For example, the performance *Implantar Anamú* (2016) took place in Havana, Cuba, at the Fortaleza de San Carlos de la Cabaña after an invitation from the Instituto Superior del Arte. In this performance, Paula employs different Afro-diasporic uses of the Guiné herb (*Petiveria alliacea*) which, in Afro-Brazilian religions such as Candomblé and Umbanda, is used in healing traditions and for protection against *mau olhado* (evil eye). In Cuba, Paula noticed that the same herb is called Anamú and has different connotations in Santería: as a very powerful herb, Anamú is not always welcomed in specific contexts for it can scare away the ancestors. To repair

While Paula's recent portraits do not directly depict healing, he continues to consider these as a form of votive images.<sup>525</sup> A clear example of the attention to healing, as commonly discussed by other authors, is Paula's application of gold leaves distinguish the *ori* of each figure.<sup>526</sup> Another curative aspect, which is not as visible as the *ori*, and which I will discuss in the last section of this chapter, is how Paula offers in-between photography and paintings as a curative family album that *brings back* the deceased.

Thus, representation for Paula, either through painting or photography, is not bound to aesthetics but rather linked to Black collective knowledges of healing. This connection challenges the canons of modern Western art history, which has marked genuine art as devoid of direct function.<sup>527</sup> Moreover, following the logic of votive imagery, representation is powerful enough that it does not only *suggest* healing, but creates it. This mode of reorganizing and directing visuality to curative potential and honoring ancestors and elders goes back to the ancient knowledges of so many non-Western societies. The image that heals, the image that has protective function, and the use of power materials, medicine, and other types of *saberes*, cannot be viewed

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the colonial history of violence that haunts La Cabaña, Paula decided to "implant" Anamú at that site. But for (in)planting, Paula used as soil the broken pieces of ceramic vases, which represented objects Afro-diasporic populations still produce in the present. Through this gesture, Paula seeks healing for the past at the same time he binds the ancestral power of Anamú to a new soil made by the hands of Black people living today.

<sup>525</sup> Dalton Paula, Interview in Portuguese to the author, Zoom, October 21, 2021.

<sup>526</sup> "For the Yoruba, the head (Ori) is a deity just like the others revered in religions of African origin: Ogún, Omolu, Oya, etc. may have a good future, calm, peace etc. Therefore, while the Orisá have thousands of children, Ori only has one: that being who carries him physically and spiritually. From there, a different relationship is built between man and Ori. They are more intimate, closer and interconnected, not only in the spiritual scope but also and, above all, in the physical/physiological aspect." Márcio de Jagun, *Ori: A Cabeça Como Divindade: História, Cultura, Filosofia e Religiosidade Africana* (Rio de Janeiro, RJ: Litteris Edityora, 2015).

<sup>527</sup> Examples of such thinking are famously the critic Clement Greenberg's defense of abstraction, and Alfred Barr's MOMA diagram of abstractionism, in which Barr links the notion of "artistic evolution" with abstraction as an art for art's sake. Alfred Barr, *Cubism and Abstract Art* - (The Museum of Modern Art, 1936).

only from an aesthetic perspective because they link representation to specific functions often operating in different dimensions or pointing to non-Western epistemologies and ways of knowing the world.

*Retratos pintados* is only one of the photographic methods Paula uses to mediate vernacular knowledges to his audiences. As I will contend in the following sections, although the artist is interested in *retratos pintados* for their curative potential, it is his grounding it in methods hailing from specific anti-colonial Black Brazilian collective and oral traditions that makes his ancestral portraits part of *aquilombamento*.

### 3.4 Opposing the Archive of Slavery

Silence and scarcity of information: the normalized horror. The terror of the archive of slavery and the pain it carries, the words one cannot find to describe its terror—everything about it evokes an irreconcilability.<sup>528</sup> An irreconcilability with the mere historical fact of its existence, but also with the grasping or study of one of the most horrendous chapters of human history’s vestiges. Yet, scholars such as Saydia Hartman have faced the trauma of this archive, its evils, and its illnesses, not only to *give voice* to those who could not speak, but also write counter-stories of slavery that “reckon with loss.”<sup>529</sup> This reckoning, as Hartman describes, is intrinsic to writing

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<sup>528</sup> As interlocutors to Hartman on reimagining the archive, and the archive as an event, see Anjali Arondekar, “In the Absence of Reliable Ghosts: Sexuality, Historiography, South Asia,” *Differences* 25, no. 3 (December 1, 2014): 98–122, <https://doi.org/10.1215/10407391-2847964>. Suely Rolnik, *Suely Rolnik: Archive Mania: 100 Notes, 100 Thoughts: Documenta Series 022*, Bilingual edition (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2012). Okwui Enwezor, *Archive Fever: Uses of the Document in Contemporary Art*, First edition (Göttingen: Steidl/ICP, 2008).

<sup>529</sup> Saidiya V. Hartman, “Venus in Two Acts,” *Cassandra Press*, 2021, 20.

about Black people's present and future. Not only perusing the archive but also interfering in it—bearing all the death in the archive—is inextricable to a practice of imagination: to “imagine a free state” for the descendants of enslaved peoples across the Atlantic. It is also to honor the dead, the ancestors, and the unseen that Hartman intervenes in that vile archive to seek due retribution.

One of the first challenges of such research is facing the void: an immensurable loss of lives and the loss of discursive practices. One cannot simply replace words and images that do not exist, had never been made, or have been simply erased. If the scarcity of information permeates the archive, it is the voice of the enslaver—of the colonizers—that reverberates throughout its documents and vestiges. If most of the work on the archive has been to quantify its information and understand markets and relations, Hartman says these analyses do not extend to dealing with loss.<sup>530</sup> But writing stories, or what she defines as critical fabulation, tackles the epistemic violence the slavery archive represents.<sup>531</sup>

For Hartman, stories are not only a form of visibility given to those unseen, but one of the only possible reparations for the crime of slavery. In other words, the stakes are not only bound to the matter of representation, but also and more

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<sup>530</sup> “The loss of stories sharpens the hunger for them. So it is tempting to fill in the gaps and to provide closure where there is none. To create a space for mourning where it is prohibited. To fabricate a witness to a death not much noticed.” Saidiya V. Hartman, “Venus in Two Acts,” *Cassandra Press*, 2021, 25.

<sup>531</sup> Hartman writes, “The scarcity of African narratives of captivity and enslavement exacerbate the pressure and gravity of such questions. There is not one extant autobiographical narrative of a female captive who survived the Middle Passage. This silence in the archive in combination with the robustness of the fort or barracoon, not as a holding cell or space of confinement but as an episteme, has for the most part focused the historiography of the slave trade on quantitative matters and on issues of markets and trade relations. Loss gives rise to longing, and in these circumstances, it would not be far-fetched to consider stories as a form of compensation or even as reparations, perhaps the only kind we will ever receive.” Saidiya V. Hartman, “Venus in Two Acts,” *Cassandra Press*, 2021, 15.

substantially related to making repairs, alterations, and discursive interventions.

Reparation in Hartman's work occurs through critical fabulation, or the method of rearranging the narrative elements (i.e., events and characters) that constitute stories from the archive of slavery.<sup>532</sup>

This movement of writing and rewriting archival information, or the "re-presenting the sequence of events in divergent stories and from contested points of view,"<sup>533</sup> is the movement of the fabula of critical fabulation—of interrupting the authority of the archive through the use of the subjunctive mode, or as Hartman puts it, "to imagine what might have happened or might have been said or might have been done."<sup>534</sup> Critical fabulation is reparation that addresses the gaps, losses, and voids in the archive by collaging the past, present, and future through disruption of the primary narrative. Yet, Hartman's critical fabulation and its acknowledgment of loss is also a refusal to fill in gaps of the archive or "provide closure."<sup>535</sup> Instead, the

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<sup>532</sup> For example, in the section *Dead Book of Lose Your Mother*, Hartman recovers the story of an unnamed black girl who was tortured and killed in 1790s, aboard of the *Recovery*, a slave ship which had departed multiple locations in West Africa and was on its way to England. Hartman writes three fabulations of the girl's possible story. In the last version, Hartman imagines the archive from the girl's point of view and writes about the refusal to "react" against the terrible violence played upon her body, "Had her tongue not made speech impracticable, had it been possible for a corpse to speak, she would have said, 'Your are wrong. I am going to meet my friends.' All they could see was a girl slumped in a dirty puddle and not the one soaring on her way home." Saidiya V. Hartman, *Lose Your Mother: A Journey along the Atlantic Slave Route*, 1. ed (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007), 152.

<sup>533</sup> Saidiya V. Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," *Cassandra Press*, 2021, 33.

<sup>534</sup> "Is it possible to exceed or negotiate the constitutive limits of the archive? By advancing a series of speculative arguments and exploiting the capacities of the subjunctive (a gram-matical mood that expresses doubts, wishes, and possibilities), in fashioning a narrative, which is based upon archival research, and by that I mean a critical reading of the archive that mimes the figurative dimensions of history, I intended both to tell an impossible story and to amplify the impossibility of its telling. The conditional temporality of "what could have been," according to Lisa Lowe, "symbolizes aptly the space of a different kind of thinking, a space of productive attention to the scene of loss, a thinking with twofold attention that seeks to encompass at once the positive objects and methods of history and social science and the matters absent, entangled and unavailable by its methods." Saidiya V. Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," *Cassandra Press*, 2021, 33.

<sup>535</sup> Saidiya V. Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," *Cassandra Press*, 2021, 25.



method of rearranging or re-presenting events also accentuates the impossibility of fully recovering or telling those stories.

According to Paula, the use of the term fabulation in relation to his portraits started around 2020 after his works' inclusion in the Museum of Modern Art's collection. After this acquisition, Paula's portraits were featured in the collection display *214 Critical Fabulations*, which directly refers to Saidiya Hartman's eponymous theory.<sup>536</sup> Organized by Roxana Marcoci, Thomas J. Lax, and Gee Wesley, the exhibition is part of MoMA's recent revisionist approach to its collections and how they have been installed and presented to the public.<sup>537</sup> A short description about the exhibition says,

the title of this gallery is borrowed from Saidiya Hartman, a cultural historian who has written about the afterlife of slavery. Responding to the limits of official archives, she offers us “critical fabulation”—the use of storytelling and speculative narration as a means of redressing history's omissions, particularly those in the lives of enslaved people. This gallery brings together recently made art that evokes Hartman's method with a selection of early 20th-century photographs. Together they strive to tell what Hartman has described as “an impossible story.”<sup>538</sup>

Interestingly, the exhibition featured five painted portraits by Paula (the only non-U.S. artist in the show) alongside mostly photographs, including such works as Deana Lawson's *Assemblage* (2021), Arthur Jafa's *Untitled Notebook* (1990-2007), and a

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<sup>536</sup> The Museum of Modern Art, “214 Critical Fabulations,” The Museum of Modern Art, n.d., <https://www.moma.org/calendar/galleries/5378>.

<sup>537</sup> See Jason Farago, “The New MoMA Is Here. Get Ready for Change.,” *The New York Times*, October 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/03/arts/design/moma-renovation.html>.

<sup>538</sup> The Museum of Modern Art, “214 Critical Fabulations,” The Museum of Modern Art, n.d., <https://www.moma.org/calendar/galleries/5378>.

series of archival photographs. This curatorial combination of documentary photographs and mixed media works emphasizes the blurred lines between fiction and archive in conversation with Hartman's practice. This visual and conceptual liminality is also present in Paula's counter-archive of slavery. MoMA's curatorial positioning of Paula's work in relation to Hartman's work is a productive exercise because the artist deals with archival and representational voids and the responsibility of depicting Afro-diasporic individuals who have never been represented.

Yet, unlike the void in Hartman's work, Paula's void is not only composed of images never made *but also* of thousands of *deceitful* images craftily constructed by colonial power and raciology for centuries.<sup>539</sup> Paula deals with the archive of slavery's continuity in visual culture and the ongoing making and remaking of these images in the present day. In this chapter, I am more interested in the ways Paula associates this "fictional" counter-archive to Black collectives in Brazil than to specifically investigate each portrait's fictional assembling or Paula's detailed reinterpretation of each personage. Unlike fictions that come from an artist's imagination or reinterpretation of archives, I ponder if Paula's portraits cease to be fictional depictions when they are rooted in present-day communities and their experiences, as I will discuss further in this chapter.

When I use the term visual archive of slavery, I refer to paintings, photographs (archival or not), and other media that represent slavery or enslaved people in Brazil produced not only in the past but to this day. In that sense, this is a

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<sup>539</sup> See discussion in the Introduction.

massive archive still persistent in Brazilian visual culture, yet the pain this archive brings remains distressingly invisible for most of the Brazilian population.

Perhaps the most reproduced images of slavery in Brazil are engravings and watercolors, such as *Engenho Manual que Faz Caldo de Cana* (1822) by French artist Jean Baptiste Debret (1768-1848). Trained in the traditions of French neoclassicism, Debret arrived in Brazil with other artists of the French Mission.<sup>540</sup> In his study of Debret's work, famous Brazilian art critic Rodrigo Naves argues that a "difficulty" emerges which<sup>541</sup> is necessary to represent (and recognize) the black body. Whereas French neoclassicism sought to depict the idealized heroic male body of Greek and

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<sup>540</sup> The French Mission was an artistic mission comprised of artists hired by the Portuguese Crown to visit Brazil and open a school of "Science, Arts, and Crafts." The group of artists arrived in Rio de Janeiro on March 20<sup>th</sup> 1816. Maria Eduarda Castro Magalhães Marques et al., eds., *A Missão Artística Francesa no Brasil e seus discípulos* (Rio de Janeiro: Edicoes Pinakothek, 2016), 21. See also, Lilia Moritz Schwarcz, *O Sol Do Brasil: Nicolas-Antoine Taunay e as Desventuras Dos Artistas Franceses Na Corte de d. João* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2008).

<sup>541</sup> In "A Forma Difícil," Rodrigo Naves presents a paradox in Brazilian art; a certain reluctance in the formal solutions adopted by artists in Brazil; a certain archaism, a "formal shyness" when dealing with the modern repertoire that one commonly finds in the "international production." In his Introduction, he sets the stage for that investigation by discussing that although in modern art abroad artists sought an independency from the relationship of figure/plane, Brazilian artists, also interested in this rupture, do not often take the modern paradigms to their "fullest." The art Naves is interested in never fulfills modern expectations, be they found in the relation to the mechanistic aspects of capitalism (such as having a figurative interest in machine-ruled shapes or labor-related themes), be they in relation to the actual solution processes and materials used, such as in Amilcar de Castro's works. Naves says, "Em seu permanente cismar, essas obras poderiam sugerir um processo de gênese de formas, um tipo de preocupação presente em várias tendências modernas. No entanto, o movimento não se cumpre." This dubious movement towards modern art and against it seems to define what Naves calls "a forma difícil." Although he at first seems to present the concept as an aesthetic contradiction, his are not only formalist analyses of the artists selected. Underneath "forma difícil" a concern for the social is pungent; how do artists resist the forms of capitalism that have emerged from modernity? This question could be easily posed by Naves, although he does not directly articulate it; yet he does constantly mention the answers Brazilian artists found in avoiding the closure and rigidity that modernity elsewhere had evokes. In the works of Guignard, Volpi, and Castro, modern solutions are never "ideal," never free of "problems," "contradictions," full of resistance to the tenets of modern movements, such as constructivism for Volpi and Castro, or for the impressionist/expressionist trends that could have completely shaped Guignard's work. In Debret's case, it is the inadequacy of the French tenets in neoclassicism that can never be fulfilled in colonial Brazil, due to an oppressive context—slavery—that completely denies the principles of the French Revolution or Greco-Roman ideals of beauty. Rodrigo Naves, *A forma difícil: ensaios sobre arte brasileira* (São Paulo, SP: Companhia das Letras, 2011).

Roman art, Debret could not apply the same formal solutions to the Black bodies of slaves, which are not the same themes he had been trained to depict in France.<sup>542</sup>

Naves mentions that Debret returned to neoclassic depictions when he returned to Paris in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, which was indicative that in Brazil, Debret had to develop a new, yet *awkward*, form of depicting bodies and themes to deal with a reality that contradicted the tenets of the Imperial Fine Arts Academy. That is why, in Naves's opinion, there is always a clumsiness in Debret's work while in the country: a fraught, undeveloped way of dealing with his subjects even though, in the author's opinion, Debret "recognizes" them. I find Naves' argument problematic because he ultimately seems to fall into a racist logic, defending Debret's sympathy for enslaved people through the painter's clearly different treatment of their bodies. It is also difficult to know if Debret indeed "recognized" or commiserated with Black people through how he painted them.<sup>543</sup>

Present-day reproductions of Debret's works in the field of representation—the predominance or persistence of images of Africans and Afro-Brazilians who lived in the past—put ongoing emphasis on the oppression of Black people without

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<sup>542</sup> According to Naves, it is the acknowledgement of slavery—as the ultimate state of oppression and that negates the values espoused by the French Revolution—that conditions Debret's hesitant work. But in this hesitance, Naves argues, there is more room for the recognition of the lives of the slaves than in other painters' works. Debret depicts slaves in close proximity, they become the focus of his watercolors which are extremely detailed and show the intimacies and tensions between slave owners and slaves. Still, it is in the actual depiction of violence and of the "black matter" that Debret remains ambivalent; he does not subscribe to the "picturesque" but also seems to "attenuate" certain aspects of slaves' lives. Indeed, as Naves wrote, it is possible to note the difference between Debret's depictions of slaves and indigenous people in Brazil, which Naves argues, were more idealized, generic, and not based on actual observation. Rodrigo Naves, *A forma difícil: ensaios sobre arte brasileira* (São Paulo, SP: Companhia das Letras, 2011), 104, 105, 118.

<sup>543</sup> Citing a racist excerpt from Debret's *Voyage Pictoresque and Historique au Bresil* (1834-39), Naves says that Debret was not free from racial prejudices, but eventually concludes that, in the artist's drawings, "the dissolution of contours ... which removes the individuality of men ... crisscrosses the entire society and white people, too, are taken by that rough cutout that unites them to the environment in a sticky and rude way." Rodrigo Naves, *A forma difícil: ensaios sobre arte brasileira* (São Paulo, SP: Companhia das Letras, 2011), 112.

allowing space for counter-images that respond to slavery. Moreover, the question of representing the Black body has always been fraught in art history because, among other issues, whiteness has dictated aesthetic norms. Other Brazilian mainstream art movements, such as early modernism with Tarsila do Amaral's *La Negresse* (1922), maintained pejorative depictions of Black people in paintings while romanticizing their culture, as Divino Sobral argued in his essay on Lasar Segall's *Bananal* which I discussed earlier in this chapter.<sup>544</sup>

As for photography, the 2004 book *O negro na fotografia brasileira do século XIX*, by George Ermakoff, published dozens of archival photographs of African and Afro-Brazilian peoples reproduced from private collections and public institutions' archives in Brazil, the U.S., and Europe.<sup>545</sup> The design of the book in gold-like colors attempts to beautify painful images and soothe the viewer. The attempt backfires as browsing the book is a triggering event in many ways. The book's violence does not hail from showing instances of physical abuse against Black people; these images are absent. It is the violence of the camera or the photographer's gaze that causes the trigger (the photographic practice remains off frame), the desolate gaze of most of those portrayed.

Sandra Sofia Machado Koutsoukos published *Negros no estúdio do fotógrafo: Brasil, segunda metade do século XIX*, a result of her dissertation. In this book,

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<sup>544</sup> Divino Sobral, "Dalton Paula and the Tasks of Revising History and Filling the Void of the Unrepresented," in *Dalton Paula: Retratos Brasileiros*, ed. Adriano Pedrosa, Glaucea Helena de Britto, and Lilia Schwarcz (Museu de Arte de São Paulo, 2022).

<sup>545</sup> The author provides a comprehensive list of archives on page 272. George Ermakoff, *O negro na fotografia brasileira do século XIX* (Rio de Janeiro: G. Ermakoff Casa Editorial, 2004).

Machado Koutsoukos studies portraits of freed and enslaved Afro-Brazilians and their relationship to the photographic studios of Brazil's 19<sup>th</sup> century. The author also identified dozens of private and public collections with archival photographs depicting enslaved people.<sup>546</sup> Among the different categories Machado Koutsouko studied were photos of domestic enslaved people taken to the studios by their masters, photos made into "exotic souvenirs," and finally, the ethnographic documents used in pseudoscientific studies.<sup>547</sup>

Within that field of research and in the article, "Afro-Atlantic images: Transnational uses and circuits of photographs of Black people in colonialist times," Cibele Barbosa studies the images of *cartes de visite*<sup>548</sup> and postcards

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<sup>546</sup>To demonstrate the expansiveness of the slave archive with images pertaining Brazil, here's the full citation of Machado Koutsouko's list of sources: "Assim, pesquisei principalmente nas bibliotecas e no Arquivo Edgard Leuenroth, da Unicamp (em Campinas); no Arquivo Nacional, na Biblioteca Nacional, no IHGB, no Museu Histórico Nacional, na biblioteca da Academia Nacional de Medicina, no Real Gabinete Português de Leitura e no Instituto Moreira Salles (no Rio de Janeiro); na coleção de Militão Augusto de Azevedo, no Museu Paulista (em São Paulo); na Fundação Joaquim Nabuco de Pesquisas Sociais (no Recife); e nas bibliotecas da UMich (MI, EUA). Na cata às imagens, encontrei sutis diferenças entre as coleções. A Biblioteca Nacional possui algumas poucas fotografias avulsas; algumas de "typos de negros", incorporadas à Coleção Dona Theresa Christina. Ainda na Biblioteca Nacional, como já mencionado, encontram-se os álbuns da "Galeria de condenados". No Arquivo Nacional, as fotografias avulsas se constituem em 249 retratos no formato cartão-de-visitas (c. 6,5 x 10 cm) e 74 no formato carte-cabinet (c. 11 x 16,5 cm), além de alguns pequenos acervos privados doados por famílias abastadas, como os Werneck, os Afonso Pena, e outras. No IHGB vi uns poucos álbuns de celebridades, que eram colecionados por várias pessoas no período, contendo fotos que eram colocadas à venda nas casas fotográficas e livrarias, figurando a família imperial brasileira, entre outros monarcas e fidalgos estrangeiros, assim como artistas e padres. O Instituto Moreira Salles possui boa coleção de fotos "exóticas" e "etnográficas". No Museu Histórico Nacional encontra-se uma parte da série de fotos "de typos exóticos" feita por Christiano Júnior em meados da década de 1860. No Museu Paulista, a Coleção de 12.000 retratos, produzida e organizada por Militão Augusto de Azevedo, diz respeito aos clientes brancos e negros que freqüentavam o ateliê do fotógrafo – desse total, cerca de 30 a 35% é de fotos de pessoas negras.<sup>7</sup> Por fim, na Fundação Joaquim Nabuco, a Coleção Francisco Rodrigues é composta de 17.000 retratos, os quais originalmente encontravam-se dentro de álbuns de numerosas famílias brancas, amealhados durante anos pelo colecionador Francisco Rodrigues – do total de 17.000 retratos, cerca de apenas 5% deles é de pessoas negras, na maioria empregados e (vários ainda) escravos dos donos dos álbuns.<sup>8</sup> A Fundação Joaquim Nabuco preserva alguns daguerreótipos e ambrótipos, além dos citados álbuns; estes últimos, na esmagadora maioria já sem as fotos, por motivos de conservação." Sandra Sofia Machado Koutsoukos, "No estúdio do fotógrafo: representação e autorepresentação de negros livres, forros e escravos no Brasil da segunda metade do século XIX" (Campinas, SP, Brasil, UNICAMP, 2006), 9..

<sup>547</sup> Sofia Machado Koutsoukos, "No estúdio do fotógrafo: representação e autorepresentação de negros livres, forros e escravos no Brasil da segunda metade do século XIX" (Campinas, SP, Brasil, UNICAMP, 2006), 5.

<sup>548</sup> *Cartes de visite* were photographic portraits the size of a small visiting card first patented by André Disdéri in November 1854, who developed a way of revealing small prints. The genre was popularized in the between the late 1850s and the 1870s across Europe and the world. Elizabeth Anne McCauley, "Carte de Visite," in *The*

depicting Africans, Afro-Caribbeans, and Afro-Brazilians in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Barbosa is interested in how these images served colonial power through the visual economy of the gaze associated with raciology.

Barbosa concludes,

The ostensive circulation of images shaped by colonialist power relations and their racial spectrum left marks that dissipated across the Atlantic, affecting the hetero-representation and self-representation of African and Afro-descendant populations. These canons, which spread on a global scale, led to looks and appreciation of their bodies, deepening the contours of racism and the commerce of looks in the Atlantic.<sup>549</sup>

Barbosa defines *cartes de visite* and postcards as racist images in which objectification and commercialization coalesce onto Black bodies. To understand Paula's project, it is relevant to note that Barbosa also describes the slavery archive's ongoing status in history. If the "abolition of slavery" in Brazil dates from 1888, the visualities that constitute the archive of slavery continue to persistently mark Black bodies as commodities.<sup>550</sup>

If the archive of slavery solidifies pain and projects it into the present, this pain needs to be tackled constantly, as Hartman reminds us. These documents need to be rearranged to give space for Black peoples' futures. A visual reworking would

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*Oxford Companion to the Photograph* (Oxford University Press, 2005), <https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/acref/9780198662716.001.0001/acref-9780198662716-e-267>.

<sup>549</sup> My translation from Portuguese: "A circulação ostensiva de imagens moldadas por relações de poder colonialistas e seu espectro raciológico deixaram marcas que se dissiparam pelo Atlântico, afetando a hetero--representação e a autorrepresentação de populações africanas e afrodescendentes. Esses cânones, que se difundiram em escala global, conduziram olhares e apreciações sobre seus corpos adensando os contornos do racismo e o comércio dos olhares no Atlântico." Cibele Barbosa, "Imagens Afro-Atlânticas: Usos e Circuitos Transnacionais Da Fotografia de Populações Negras Nos Tempos Do Colonialismo," *Tempo* 27, no. 3 (December 2021): 557–60, <https://doi.org/10.1590/tem-1980-542x2021v2703>.

<sup>550</sup> See, for example, Adilson Moreira, *Racismo Recreativo*, 1<sup>a</sup> edição (São Paulo: Editora Jandaíra, 2019).

require targeting myriad racist iconographies, from portraits of enslaved women photographed alongside masters' families and children, to a collection of those enslaved who had been convicted by the Portuguese Crown, to the ethnographic images widespread across the world. Paula's portraits, I argue, make a clear move towards this rearranging through the ways in which he understands his counter-archive of portraits as a practice of *aquilombamento*.

### 3.5. Portraiture and *Aquilombamento*

#### 3.5.1. A Portrait for Zumbi

It was July 2020, after the world ended. I took my family to visit Paula's first individual exhibition in the U.S. at the Alexander and Bonin gallery in Lower Manhattan. I have a picture of me holding my infant son—the only living human in the room without a mask—who was searching for the gazes of maskless figures on the wall, probably enraptured by their eyes. The eyes in Paula's *Zumbi's* portrait (Figure 44) were two of those. During my visit, I thought this was the first time I was looking at Zumbi represented as a *person* and not as a distant monument or icon. The man pictured in the portrait set aside the other fictional images of Zumbi produced by Brazilian popular culture I had in my memory. In addition to the possibility of those individual encounters with the portraits, the gallery installed the works facing each other so that the people depicted seemed to be taking part in a conversation or a gathering (Figures 45-47).



Paula's portrait of Zumbi has glowing golden hair. Paula applied gold leaves to the canvas to paint his hair as if it were a crown, with a sacred golden layer to mark the *ori*. As with all of Paula's other portraits, the canvas is split in two, creating a line of physical space—a thin crevice or joint—disrupting the construction of the visual space but also bringing the two sides together. Across Zumbi's face, neck, and shirt, blank canvas spaces emerge from the masses of paint, but our eyes still seek Zumbi's gaze.

Zumbi's eyes, as dark brown as the rest of his skin color, seem to call our own eyes, *making us look* as if something was left unsaid. That suggestion of a missed opportunity or a stillness is confirmed by Zumbi's firmly closed lips, as if to keep a secret, a bit crooked to the right. Because of the front pose, it is as if Zumbi were right in front of the viewer. His slightly tilted pose suggests the existence of an offstage studio, as if he could have been present and waiting for the portrait to be completed, like a sitter in a photographer's studio. The white areas between his eyes, on his forehead, signal something about the portrait left unfinished, unsaid, or perhaps to be continued.

Of course, Zumbi could not have had his photograph taken, for he died in 1695, way before the invention of photography. According to archives,<sup>551</sup> Zumbi<sup>552</sup> was born in 1655 in the Serra da Barriga, Palmares, in Alagoas."<sup>553</sup> When he was still

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<sup>551</sup> Niyi Afolabi, "Zumbi Dos Palmares Relocating History, Film, and Print," in *Identities in Flux: Race, Migration, and Citizenship in Brazil* (Albany, UNITED STATES: State University of New York Press, 2021), <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ucsc/detail.action?docID=6466928>, 40.

<sup>552</sup> See Afolabi's discussion of the name Zumbi. *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>553</sup> *Ibid.*

a child, he was imprisoned and baptized with a Portuguese name, Francisco. After fleeing and returning to Palmares at 15 years old, he was promoted four years later to general of the *quilombo* and eventually became the most famous leader of *Ngola Djanga*, or Little Angola, or Quilombo Palmares as we know it today.<sup>554</sup> Zumbi held Palmares' war against the Crown and its expeditions from 1676 to 1695, when he was killed on November 20.<sup>555</sup>

Throughout history, Palmares, which was formed at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, became a national symbol of resistance against the Portuguese Crown and colonial ruling. Consequently, Zumbi, Palmares's most well-known leader, is often depicted in the Brazilian national imaginary as a hero, but more recently, has also been pictured as a villain to the country's conservative white elites.<sup>556</sup> In life, Zumbi was persecuted by many and ended up betrayed and killed by one of his own, although many expeditions had claimed the glory of having killed him before he was indeed assassinated.<sup>557</sup>

There have been many representations of Zumbi in Brazil's popular visual culture: movies, theater plays, monuments, and paintings, not to mention references in popular music and other arts.<sup>558</sup> In 1983, the leader of Rio de Janeiro's Movimento

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<sup>554</sup> Beatriz Nascimento, "Zumbi de Ngola Djanga ou de Angola Pequena ou do Quilombo dos Palmares," in *Uma história feita por mãos negras*, by Alceu Chiesorin Nunes, ed. Alex Ratts, 1<sup>a</sup> edição (Rio de Janeiro: Zahar, 2021), 96.

<sup>555</sup> *Ibid.*, 95 and 101.

<sup>556</sup> Jotabe Medeiros, "Bolsonaristas Voltam a Caçar Zumbi, Agora No Próprio Quilombo Dos Palmares," *Farofafá*, June 2021.

<sup>557</sup> Beatriz Nascimento, "Zumbi de Ngola Djanga ou de Angola Pequena ou do Quilombo dos Palmares," in *Uma história feita por mãos negras*, by Alceu Chiesorin Nunes, ed. Alex Ratts, 1<sup>a</sup> edição (Rio de Janeiro: Zahar, 2021), 100.

<sup>558</sup> See chapter by Niyi Afolabi, "Zumbi Dos Palmares Relocating History, Film, and Print," in *Identities in Flux: Race, Migration, and Citizenship in Brazil* (Albany, UNITED STATES: State University of New York Press, 2021), <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ucsc/detail.action?docID=6466928>.

Negro, deputy José Miguel,<sup>559</sup> requested a bill to build a monument to Zumbi on Aterro do Flamengo. In 1986, anthropologist Darcy Ribeiro sent his proposal for the statue as a replica of an Ife head at the British Museum.<sup>560</sup> Ribeiro wanted to pay homage to Zumbi by replicating a head associated with Yorubá rulers, called *ooni*, from Ife.<sup>561</sup>

An earlier, more famous depiction of Zumbi is a 1920s painting by Antonio Diogo da Silva Parreiras (1860-), a student of the Academia Imperial de Belas Artes in Rio de Janeiro.<sup>562</sup> Because Zumbi was still not as recognized as the national hero he is today, Marques and Luft, who studied the painting, argue Parreiras's neoclassical representation glorified Zumbi; it did not show Zumbi as a defeated leader but in the "monarchic pose" of a *bandeirante*.<sup>563</sup> *Bandeirantes* were Paulistas hired by the Crown to kill and make war against those who opposed the colonial regime.<sup>564</sup> I wonder how depicting Zumbi in the guise of his enemies could have brought him any glory.

According to Marques, many textbooks still reproduce this depiction of Zumbi. The painting shows Zumbi wearing a ragged pink blouse and rolled pants,

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<sup>559</sup> "Assembléia Legislativa: Zumbi," *O Fluminense*, April 13, 1983, Biblioteca Nacional, RJ, Brasil, [http://memoria.bn.br/docreader/DocReader.aspx?bib=100439\\_12&Pesq=zumbi&pagfis=29777](http://memoria.bn.br/docreader/DocReader.aspx?bib=100439_12&Pesq=zumbi&pagfis=29777).

<sup>560</sup> According to the British Museum, "[t]he head was purchased in Ife by Mr H.M.Bate, editor of the Nigerian Daily Times. It was subsequently bought for the British Museum by Sir (later Lord) Kenneth Clark, Director of the National Gallery, acting on behalf of the National Art Collections Fund, by whom it was presented to the British Museum." The British Museum, "Sculpture Object Number Af1939,34.1," The British Museum, n.d., [https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/E\\_Af1939-34-1](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/E_Af1939-34-1).

<sup>561</sup> Wunmonije Compound is near Ife, Nigeria.

<sup>562</sup> Ana Maria Marques, "Ensinando História e Estudando Gênero Através de Quadros Históricos de Moacyr Freitas e Antônio Parreiras," *OPSSIS* 15, no. 2 (December 19, 2015): 452, <https://doi.org/10.5216/o.v15i2.34051>, 462.

<sup>563</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>564</sup> Beatriz Nascimento, "Zumbi de Ngola Djanga ou de Angola Pequena ou do Quilombo dos Palmares," in *Uma história feita por mãos negras*, by Alceu Chiesorin Nunes, ed. Alex Ratts, 1ª edição (Rio de Janeiro: Zahar, 2021), 101.

holding the barrel part of a long rifle and looking at an imaginary horizon, as if supervising a territory. Parreiras places Zumbi against a natural background, a light blue rocky formation that almost overwhelms his depiction and all painted with adorning brushstrokes in the fashion of a late Impressionist work. Despite scholars' arguments that Parreira was forward-looking for depicting a Black hero in a glorifying pose, Zumbi seems to offer no resistance to the viewer. While he is indeed posing with a rifle, he grasps it more like a staff than a weapon. Following the general trend of regional and nationalistic painting across Latin America,<sup>565</sup> Zumbi is romanticized as a non-threatening historical figure to appease the viewer.

Paula's portrait of Zumbi diverges from the general representations in visual culture. Paula's Zumbi is neither romanticized nor glorified. Except for the gold leaves marking his head as an important feature of his physiognomy and historical role and an almost imperceptible necklace around his neck, Zumbi wears no accessories; his most powerful feature is his direct gaze. He wears a blouse buttoned way up his chest. There is no indication this man is a general or a leader, except for the title of the painting and its label.

While monuments have emphasized Zumbi's role as a hero and popular paintings have romanticized or diminished his warrior-like qualities, Paula paints Zumbi as a common man, eschewing predominant ideas of protagonism. The message behind Zumbi's portrait seems to be he could have been any Afro-Brazilian

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<sup>565</sup> About the romanticization of nonwhite subjects, especially indigenous peoples, in Latin American modernist art see Tatiana Flores, "Art, Revolution, and Indigenous Subjects," *The Routledge History of Latin American Culture*, 2017, 115, [https://www.academia.edu/35883205/Art\\_Revolution\\_and\\_Indigenous\\_Subjects](https://www.academia.edu/35883205/Art_Revolution_and_Indigenous_Subjects).

man. And in fact, as Beatriz Nascimento and other scholars have argued, one of the mythical qualities around Zumbi was his potential immortality, or the idea there have been so many *Zumbis* the Portuguese could not kill him.<sup>566</sup> Moreover, there is something about the unfinished quality of Paula's portrait; Zumbi's closed lips and direct gaze tells us this is not a subjugated or conciliatory figure like Antonio Parreira's.

In addition to this emphasis on Zumbi as being "every other Black man," which moves away from multiculturalist celebrations of Zumbi as a national hero when co-opted by white elites,<sup>567</sup> I want to call attention to the photographic quality of Zumbi's portrait. Paula does not intend to construct archival or realistic documents; instead, his portraits are *possible realities*. He retains the aesthetics of *retratos pintados* in a symbolic move, as if he could be in the presence of these figures in his studio. In doing so, he also positions these personalities in the present by mirroring them on the physiognomies of those who are alive now. This is why, I argue, the photographic quality of these paintings is crucial: it places these historical figures in a not-so-distant past, as if they could inhabit a visual space in-between the archival and the ancestral.

Authors have called attention to the "collective presence" as a feature of Paula's portraits. But, most recent bibliography on Paula's portraits has focused more

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<sup>566</sup> Beatriz Nascimento, "Zumbi de Ngola Djanga ou de Angola Pequena ou do Quilombo dos Palmares," in *Uma história feita por mãos negras*, by Alceu Chiesorin Nunes, ed. Alex Ratts, 1ª edição (Rio de Janeiro: Zahar, 2021), 100-101.

<sup>567</sup> Niyi Afolabi, *Identities in Flux: Race, Migration, and Citizenship in Brazil*, SUNY Series, Afro-Latinx Futures (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2021).

on Paula's aesthetic results than analyzing his methods. For example, this is how

Schwarcz writes about collectiveness in Paula's work:

The portraits also go through a production process that is at once collective and individualized. They leap from the wall together. First comes the figuration, then noses, mouths, and eyes. The coloring gains thickness, the brown tone gathers personality, and the final touch is given by the hair painted with gold dust. It is possible to say that the paintings talk to each other, like close friends, expressing their personalities, philosophies, and practices. They are the result of collectivity; just as ancestral teaching is collective. In smaller sets, they gain a bluish background color, each one in a shade that, seem altogether, become deceptively equal to the others. There are many shades of blue, as there are so many browns. This color that was banned by the academy becomes a dialect in Paula's work, such is the number of variations that fit in the artist's palette.<sup>568</sup>

Schwarcz associates Paula's aesthetic process with the collective when she says,

"They leap from the wall together. First comes the figuration, then noses, mouths, and eyes. The coloring gains thickness, the brown tone gathers personality, and the final touch is given by the hair painted with gold dust." Later, she briefly suggests that

"ancestral teaching is collective."<sup>569</sup> But whose ancestral teaching is collective?

Though Paula carefully reimagines each person he portrays, there is power when they come together to encounter their audience.

### 3.5.2 *Kilombos and Saberes Negros*

The success of Paula's portraits does not come *only* from his skills as a painter or his originality as an artist, but also his ability to articulate or even mediate *saberes*

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<sup>568</sup> Lilia Moritz Schwarcz, "Dalton Paula's Portraits of Afro-descendants: Bestowing New Life to the Deceased, Making Absence Present," in *Dalton Paula: Retratos Brasileiros*, ed. Adriano Pedrosa, Glauceca Helena de Britto, and Lilia Schwarcz (Museu de Arte de São Paulo, 2022), 33.

<sup>569</sup> *Ibid.*

*negros* bound to centuries of collective organization against coloniality. *Quilombos* are certainly one of the most known forms of Black communitarian organization in Brazil and across the African diaspora. According to Beatriz Nascimento, *quilombos* were large states formed during colonial times in Brazil by escaped African enslaved people and carried similar military and social organization from across the Atlantic.<sup>570</sup>

Lélia González and Beatriz Nascimento were two of Brazil's most important scholars and thinkers who studied *quilombos*. Comparing these two scholars' works, Débora Menezes Alcantara concludes both scholars expanded the understanding of *quilombos* beyond historical or geographic spaces and emphasized the political agency of these communities from past to present. Nascimento spent most of her academic career studying the potential historical continuity of *quilombos* as social systems. Writing in the 1980s, she argued *quilombos* were not a form of "survival" or "cultural resistance," but that despite "subordination, domination, and subservience," these communities historically persevered.<sup>571</sup>

Menezes Alcantara emphasizes Nascimento's theorization of *quilombos* as "territories of freedom" away from mere notions of "resistance,"<sup>572</sup> expanding their geographic limits to the idea of collective subjectivity. Menezes Alcantara explains that Nascimento "presents a sense of territory that crosses the geographic space and submits it to collective subjectivity, linking existence to full access to the territory,

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<sup>570</sup> Beatriz Nascimento, "Kilombo e memória comunitária: Um estudo de caso," in *Uma história feita por mãos negras*, by Alceu Chiesorin Nunes, ed. Alex Ratts, 1ª edição (Rio de Janeiro: Zahar, 2021), 138.

<sup>571</sup> *Ibid.*, 138-139.

<sup>572</sup> I borrow here from Nohora Arrieta Fernandez's critique of the term resistance when constantly associated with Black people's struggle. Arrieta Fernandez avoids the term because resistance has been used as an exceptionality rather than emphasizing widespread forms of Black resilience and practices within a given society, such as Brazil or the US.

which ranges from the body itself to the physical-spatial territoriality.”<sup>573</sup> In addition to considering the territory of *quilombos* as an extension of the body to the collective, as Menezes Alcantara defends, Nascimento’s study of the history of *quilombos* puts Black people as protagonists of the fight for freedom, or “historical subjects” in “the construction of the idea of freedom”<sup>574</sup> or a territory of freedom where knowledges different from European knowledges could persist.

Although Nascimento sought to find a historical continuity for *quilombos*,<sup>575</sup> the complexities of these territories and communities today are many, including issues revolving around land rights and national belonging and the ongoing struggle against systemic racism. The similarities with Indigenous lands and Indigenous rights are also important to highlight and although I associate the term *quilombo* with Blackness, as Beatriz Nascimento reminds us, these communities were (and have been) composed of different ethnicities: *mestiços*, Indigenous people, and white people lived with Africans and Afro-Brazilians in these independent states.<sup>576</sup>

This understanding of *quilombos* as a political category maybe best be understood through the term *aquilombamento*, or what scholar Luciene de Oliveira Dias defines as “a careful process of agglutinating belongings and strengthening

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<sup>573</sup> My translation from Portuguese, “apresenta um sentido de território que atravessa o espaço geográfico e o submete à subjetividade coletiva, atrelando a existência ao acesso pleno ao território, que vai do próprio corpo à territorialidade físico-espacial.” Débora Menezes Alcântara, “A Categoria Política Quilombola Na Encruzilhada: Um Olhar Possível Do Encontro Das Vertentes Epistêmicas Decolonial e Das Autoras Amefricanas Beatriz Do Nascimento e Lélia Gonzalez” (Fórum Universitário Merscosul, Universidade Federal da Bahia, 2017), 9.

<sup>574</sup> Ibid.

<sup>575</sup> In his introduction to the book *Eu sou atlântica*, Alex Ratts, Nascimento’s biographer calls attention to some aspects of Nascimento’s research that are now dated. Alex Ratts, Maria Beatriz Nascimento, and Sueli Carneiro, *Eu Sou Atlântica: Sobre a Trajetória de Vida de Beatriz Nascimento* (São Paulo: Instituto Kuanza : Imprensa Oficial do Estado de São Paulo, 2007).

<sup>576</sup> Beatriz Nascimento, “Quilombos: Mudança social ou conservantismo?,” in *Uma história feita por mãos negras*, by Alceu Chiesorin Nunes, ed. Alex Ratts, 1ª edição (Rio de Janeiro: Zahar, 2021), 135.



historical plots, presenting a point of view that, in most cases, was erased by official history and political hegemony.”<sup>577</sup> In this notion of *aquilombamento*, as de Oliveira Dias argues, there is also a coalescing of present and past, which occurs through the daily lives of *quilombolas*. She says,

*Quilombos*, then, are composed of historical subjects that exist here and now. *Quilombos* are represented every day by people who occupy lands that, by right, should be titled by the Brazilian State. The evocation of the past is important precisely because it constitutes a vigorous way of confirming the current existence of the collective that defines its social place.<sup>578</sup>

The author’s emphasis on the present-day of *quilombos*, or this “agglutination of historic weaving,” means a daily articulation of the past in the present. Paula’s portraits and his practice in general also articulate such a coalescing of times for his juxtaposition of physiognomies and stories.

Borrowing from Menezes Alcantara’s and Luciene de Oliveira Dias’s words, I reiterate the significance of Paula’s portraits as a counter-archive, as a family photo album, and as part of a practice of *aquilombamento*. Expanding the notion of *quilombo* to a political category, one can understand Paula’s portraits as providing links to communities and individuals who lived in different spatialities and timeframes. A counter-archive of ancestral portraiture challenges both the archival document (from white hands and voices) but also provides a space for

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<sup>577</sup> “um processo cuidadoso de aglutinar pertencimentos e fortalecer as tramas históricas, apresentando um ponto de vista que, na maioria dos casos, foi rasurado pela história oficial e pela hegemonia política.” Luciene de Oliveira Dias, *Aquilombamento* (CEGRAF - UFG Universidade Federal Goiás, 2022), 23.

<sup>578</sup> My translation from Portuguese: “Quilombos, então, são compostos por sujeitos históricos que existem aqui e agora. Quilombos são presentificados todos os dias por pessoas que ocupam terras que, por direito, devem ser tituladas pelo Estado brasileiro. A evocação ao passado é importante exatamente porque se constitui numa forma vigorosa de confirmar a existência atual do coletivo que define o seu lugar social.” Luciene de Oliveira Dias, *Aquilombamento* (CEGRAF - UFG Universidade Federal Goiás, 2022), 23.

*aquilombamento*, the transformation of *quilombola* knowledges, ways of thinking, and of leadership. In his portraits, the *archival* comes face to face with the *ancestral* that seeks due retribution.

### 3.5.3. *Memória Negra: Black Ancestral Portraits*

Throughout his career, Paula has visited and collaborated with different Black communities in Brazil and the African diaspora. For example, *Rota do Tabaco* (2016) (Figure 41) is composed of oil paintings on 51 ceramic bowls, a work created as an imaginary route from Cuba to Bahia to visit and study the many uses of the tobacco plant, from spiritual and ceremonial uses to manufacturing and commercialization. Across the state of Bahia, Paula met with the elderly in the communities (e.g., *benzedeiras, rezadeiras, mães de santo*), visited two *quilombos*, spoke with factory workers, and had access to institutional and public archives on the history of the tobacco production.<sup>579</sup> He bought ceramic bowls locally produced and used in religious ceremonies with the tobacco herb.<sup>580</sup> Later, he painted different

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<sup>579</sup> Paula wrote, “Access to the Public Collection of São Félix was essential to understand, through photographs and historical documents, the relevance of tobacco as a political-economic activity, as well as a symbol of wealth and power of a certain social group, as evidenced in the iconography of the packages, in the photos and in official publications, as well as in the register of employees at the Dannemann factory.” My translation from Portuguese: “O acesso ao Acervo Público de São Félix foi fundamental para compreender por meio de fotografias e documentos históricos a relevância do tabaco como atividade político-econômica, assim como símbolo de riqueza e poder de determinado grupo social, como evidenciado na iconografia das embalagens, nas fotos de família e nas publicações oficiais, bem como no cadastro de empregados da fábrica Dannemann.” Dalton Paula, “Pesquisa Rota Do Tabaco No Reconcavo Baiano,” 1.

<sup>580</sup> Paula wrote, “While watching the burning of pottery in Coqueiros/BA, I met Dona Cadu, a 96-year-old master potter from whom I learned a little more about the origins and ritualistic functions of the pieces in the context of that small community. In Maragogipinho, the city that houses the largest pottery in Latin America, I spoke with several master potters about the pieces and their making, their artistic practice that articulates with the mangrove, the predominant ecosystem in this region.” My translation from Portuguese, “Ao acompanhar a queima de louças em Coqueiros/BA, conheci Dona Cadu, uma mestra ceramista de 96 anos com quem aprendi um pouco mais sobre as origens e funções ritualísticas das peças no contexto daquela pequena comunidade. Em Maragogipinho, cidade que abriga a maior olaria da América Latina, conversei com vários mestres oleiros sobre as peças e seu fazer, sua prática artística que se articula com o mangue, ecossistema predominante nessa região.” Ibid.

iconographies on the bowls based on archival imagery and objects he found during his trips. About his findings, he said,

The visit to the Kaonge and Dendê quilombos allowed me to observe the coexistence of old mills (and the historical references of the black population as labor) with other forms of black re(existence) based on ancestral knowledge that is lived, transmitted, and re-elaborated in the daily lives of residents. Finally, I was also able, from the visit to the Dannemann Cigar Farm/Factory, to compare similarities and differences regarding the cultivation and production of tobacco here and in Cuba, thus concluding this imaginary route, which uses this plant, its properties, and meanings medicinal and ritualistic practices as an element to transit through spatialities, practices and knowledge that have in common a black-diasporic social forms.<sup>581</sup>

Note that Paula's method includes the oral stories and knowledges he learns during these visits, combined with archival research. The importance of Black communities and Black knowledges in his work is then weaved together and becomes inseparable.

After 2018, Paula realized he needed a new method to create the portraits so he did not always have to refer to the visual archive of slavery for reference. In 2020, Paula had the idea of creating his portraits by painting the “could-have-been-descendants” of those whose images are absent. This is how he described his new method:

these portraits come from this place of fiction, of a fabulation. The question of ancestry comes very strongly through listening when I'm going to do my research, when I'm in the *quilombos*, in the *terreiros*, along with these priests, these creole masters. Ancestrality is so

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<sup>581</sup> My translation from Portuguese: “A visita aos quilombos Kaonge e Dendê me permitiu observar a coexistência de antigos engenhos (e sua referência histórica da população negra como mão-de-obra) com outras formas de re(existência) negra baseadas em conhecimentos ancestrais que são vividos, transmitidos e reelaborados no cotidiano dos moradores. Por fim, também pude, a partir da visita à Fazenda/Fábrica de charutos Dannemann, comparar semelhanças e diferenças quanto ao cultivo e a produção do tabaco aqui e em Cuba, concluindo assim essa rota imaginária, que utiliza essa planta, suas propriedades e significados medicinais e ritualísticos como elemento para transitar por espacialidades, práticas e saberes que tem em comum uma forma social negro-diáspora.” Ibid.

powerful in the conviction that these characters from the future and the characters from the past still live today. They are in these people of the present. They are in several aspects, both in genetic terms but also in the terms of inheritance of behaviors, ways of thinking, ways of being, an inheritance also of the body, the way of being in the body. Finally, in several ways [they] deal with geography, with the earth, with plants.<sup>582</sup>

Paula keeps notebooks with photocopies of archival imagery of portraits and historical references for clothing, rings, necklaces, or other adornments. He then uses the same notebook to create several sketches of the final painted portrait. The notebook is just an entryway for the aesthetic decisions that will inform the final likenesses of Paula's paintings. Important to note from the quote above is that Paula's method employs listening to oral histories; these processes are not secondary to his work but central to his practice.

Paula strategically deploys photography in service of Black communities. This use of photography coalesces in aesthetic decisions that yield a painted portrait, but this is not the only result of this practice. As I mentioned before when discussing *Silenced Portraits*, this aspect of Paula's method borrows from *retratos pintados*. *Retratos pintados* artists' goals are to listen to the desires and aspirations of the

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<sup>582</sup> “Esse retrato que ele vem muito desse lugar da ficção, de uma fabulação, que é uma coisa rara a gente falar de pessoas negras que, mas a questão da ancestralidade, ela vem muito forte porque por acreditar e até mesmo esse lugar de muita escuta quando eu vou fazer minhas pesquisas e quando eu estou nos quilombos, nos terreiros, junto com esses sacerdotes, esses mestres crioulos e essa escuta, tanto que a ancestralidade é forte então uma convicção de que esses personagens do futuro e os personagens do passado ainda vivem hoje. Estão nessas pessoas do presente. Estão em vários aspectos, tanto dos mais, sei lá, termos genéticos mas também os termos de uma herança de um comportamento, de um modo de pensar, de uma forma de ser, de uma herança também do corpo, o modo de ser no corpo enfim em vários sentidos de lidar com a geografia, com a terra, com as plantas.” Interview with the artist. Dalton Paula, Interview in Portuguese to the author, Zoom, January 24, 2023. My translation from original in Portuguese.

families or individuals who commission painted photographs for their personal archives.

Paula performs his own archival research by visiting local libraries and browsing through local collections, but he has also partnered with Lilia Schwarcz and other historians whose wide-ranging research on the slavery archive of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries informs his choice of historic figures to portray. This mining of the archive outlines the origins of Paula's contribution to the counter-archive of slavery in Brazil. But, as Hartman suggests, to recount stories is not enough to counter violence. The seminal next step is for Paula to create possibility and potentiality out of visualities: a likeness, a face, a smile, or a pose that could have been possible.<sup>583</sup>

A final example is the work, *Principe Obá* (2022) (Figure 48), whose likeness resembles the leader Vilmar, from *quilombo* Kalunga.<sup>584</sup> According to Lilia Schwarcz, Prince Obá II, or Cândido da Fonseca Galvão, lived in Bahia in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He was a Black leader in the military and politics. Son of freed Africans who arrived in Brazil at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Cândido used to introduce himself to others as Dom or Prince Obá II, the grandson of the Obá Abiodun, a ruling king of the Oyó Empire.<sup>585</sup> Prince Obá was awarded for his military service in the

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<sup>583</sup> His is a visual response to Hartman's question: how to "rewrite the chronicle of a death foretold and anticipated, as a collective biography of dead subjects, as a counter-history of the human, as the practice of freedom?." Paula's response comes through a juxtaposition of lived experiences. Saidiya V. Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," *Cassandra Press*, 2021, 15.

<sup>584</sup> Quilombo Kalunga, in Central Brazil, is a community founded centuries ago by indigenous Brazilians and people fleeing enslavement. See short documentary organized by the National Gallery, *Dalton Paula | Portraits for the Future* (Brazil: National Gallery of Art, 2022), <https://www.nga.gov/audio-video/video/dalton-paula-portraits-for-the-future.html>.

<sup>585</sup> "Cândido da Fonseca Galvão's story begins in 1845, in Lençóis, in the interior of Bahia. He was the son of freed Africans. His father, of Yoruba origin from West Africa, would have arrived in Salvador as an enslaved man in the first decades of the 19th century. There, he was baptized with the Christian name Benvindo, and years later, when he was freed by manumission, he adopted the name of his former master Benvindo da Fonseca Galvão.

Brazilian Paraguayan war in 1865 and later moved to Rio de Janeiro, where he became a political leader and prolific writer.<sup>586</sup>

Paula's Prince Obá II (Figure 48) looks like an elder with small vivid eyes. The glowing golden hair marking *ori* is shaped among areas of hairlessness. Looking at photographs of Vilmar Kalunga, he seems younger than Prince Obá II, but many features remain: the round face, the shape of Vilmar's ears, nose, and lips. Paula ties Vilmar's and Prince Obá's stories so they inhabit a new time and space in his canvas. He borrows some physical features of Vilmar's likeness to create Prince Obá II, but also Vilmar's position as a prominent leader of his community and town. This is how Paula describes his decision to let Vilmar inspire his portrait of Prince Obá II:

For Prince Obá, the person who serves as the basis for making this portrait is Vilmar, who is today mayor of the municipality of Cavalcante: a municipality where the Quilombo Kalunga community is located . . . . And then, Vilmar, he has a beautiful story like that, because he is a *quilombola* living in the rural environment, of a geographic difficulty, and difficult access. So, for a while you could only get there by mule in some Kalunga communities, you know? In a very remote place. Depending on the time of year, you can't get there because everything is flooded. Several challenges like that, obstacles beyond the obstacles of life that we already know. And then there's Vilmar, he took a course at UNB which is a course aimed at people who have this contact with the land, with nature, with the rural environment. He studied. And then, there was his interest in politics, working towards understanding politics as a tool to improve [his community's] conditions. And Vilmar became the first quilombola mayor in Brazil.<sup>587</sup>

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After manumission, the African couple went to the backlands of Bahia—specifically in a region where gold and diamonds were mined—where Cândido Galvão was said to have been born. Thus, he inherited his free African father's surname.” Adriano Pedrosa et al., *Dalton Paula: Retratos Brasileiros*, ed. Adriano Pedrosa, Glaucea Helena de Britto, and Lilia Schwarcz (Museu de Arte de São Paulo, 2022), 359.

<sup>586</sup> Ibid.

<sup>587</sup> “Para o príncipe Obá, quem é o personagem e a pessoa que serve de base para fazer esse retrato é o Vilmar, que é hoje prefeito do município de Cavalcante. Num município que está a comunidade Kalunga e faz parte desse município e mais outros dois. E aí, o Vilmar, Ele tem uma história bonita assim, porque ele é um quilombola vivendo do meio rural, assim como de um lugar que tem uma, uma dificuldade geográfica mesmo, de acesso. Então, por um tempo se chegava só de mula em algumas comunidades de Kalungas, sabe? Num lugar muito afastado, dependendo da época do ano, você não chega porque está tudo alagado. Vários desafios assim,

Paula's decision to juxtapose Vilmar and Obá is not only an aesthetic one (they are two people who could have had similar physical features), but a choice that points to these figures' importance in their communities. This choice indicates Paula's deployment of "likeness" is not simply to match physiognomies but to bind and project these two figures' significance across time and space. This weaving of time and space through different generations informs Paula's politics of representation: a way of linking the struggles of ancestors to those of the living, as well as their resilience and modes of survivance. Paula's counter-archive does not seek to fill gaps by producing reliable archival images. Part of the aesthetics may be archival, but the collective process through which Paula created these works flips the violence that has been historically constructed around these modes of representation and implicated in raciology and colonialism.

Paula describes the process of juxtaposing or weaving these figures by explaining how he listens to those he portrays and lets visual elements that mark that person's life take place in his portrait's construction of the past:

But I am so taken by history and the present's strength that somehow [I know] that the past influenced people with that strength today. And then this [present] remains in the painting, yes. That which is the picture of what it was is a work that is done with very attentive listening and with a very great openness, of being open to let things in, going in and going in. And then I narrow them down. Then there's something that enters

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obstáculos para além dos obstáculos da vida, os obstáculos de acesso até esses obstáculos que a gente já conhece. E aí o Vilmar, ele fez um curso na UNB e esqueci o nome, depois eu te passo aqui de pegar, que é um curso voltado para as pessoas que tem esse contato com a terra, com a natureza, com o meio rural. Estudou. E aí, nesse interesse pela política tal, trabalhando no sentido de entendendo como uma ferramenta, a política, para melhorar as condições. E Vilmar se tornou o primeiro prefeito quilombola do Brasil. Interview with the artist." Dalton Paula, Interview in Portuguese to the author, Zoom, January 24, 2023. My translation from original in Portuguese.

with such a force that it will stay there [in the portrait] because of what was experienced through that person's story, you know? It's like that.<sup>588</sup>

What Paula talks about is a convergence of worlds: the elderly and the young, the ways of knowing from the past and the present, and the Black communities reunited from different regions across Brazil. In a sense, the portraits are new entities of a community, living beings in the present, from the past, and foretelling a future. When I ask Paula about that convergence, he recalled the importance of the reuniting of Black families in modern times and Candomblé's structure resembling a family structure. He replied,

I always say that this reference to the black body comes from the *quilombos*, it comes from the *terreiros*, it comes from parties, popular parties, like the *congada*, it comes from the suburbs, right? And it is impressive how this family reconfiguration is repeated. So, when families were separated, it was a very important issue, one would go to one side and other went to another side. And then this causes a lot of difficulty, a lot of tension, and then there was a huge void, a gap [for the Black population]. And how can we somehow fill this gap? So, for example, what *candomblé* does, right? There's a naming [in the religion]: like the *mãe* or *pai de santo*, right? And suddenly I realized that we were also in the middle of it: of this family. The family, and then we reconnect. And that happened in the opening of the exhibition [MASP, 2022]: several people, said “Wow, [this portrait] looks like my aunt, uncle, a cousin, [that portrait] looks like my grandmother.”<sup>589</sup>

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<sup>588</sup> “Mas eu sou tão tomado pela história e a força que está no presente que, de algum modo, esse passado influenciou até pessoas com essa força hoje. E aí, por exemplo, fica na pintura sim. Isso que a foto do que foi, então as coisas, é um trabalho que é feito com uma escuta muito atenta e com uma abertura muito grande, de estar aberto para ir deixando entrar as coisas, entrando e entrando. E depois a gente vai afunilando. Aí tem coisa que entra com uma força tão grande que ela vai ficar ali por conta daquilo do que foi vivido pela história daquela pessoa, sabe? É mais ou menos assim.” Dalton Paula, Interview in Portuguese to the author, Zoom, January 24, 2023. My translation from original in Portuguese.

<sup>589</sup> “Porque eu sempre falo que essa referência de corpo negro vem dos quilombos, vem dos terreiros, vem das festas, festas populares, como a *congada*, vem com o subúrbio, né? E é impressionante como tem a repetição dessa reconfiguração da família. Então, nesse momento que se teve que as famílias eram separadas e tinha as famílias, é uma questão muito cara na mãe, apelado pelo que o outro vai para o outro lado. E então teve um momento assim, de muita dificuldade, de muita tensão, e aí um vazio muito grande, uma lacuna. E como é que a gente pode preencher essa lacuna de algum modo? Então, por exemplo, o que o *candomblé* faz, né? E aí, inclusive dando nome a isso. Como a mãe de tanto o pai de santo, né? O filho, né? O pai pequeno, a mãe pequena. E aí o barco, por exemplo, que é onde que vai ter esse nascimento, nesse nascimento simbólico para a religião, mas é uma outra



The encounters between viewers and familiar figures reinforce the photographic quality of Paula's portraits, not that unlike the *retratos pintados*'s power to bring back the dead or become votive images between the living and the spirits.<sup>590</sup> What better counter-archive to the slavery archive than a family album that can produce new memories and healing? What better gift to the old and young, and to those yet to be born, to have a family album that transcends time and space? What better exercise of critical fabulation than to converge visualities so implicated in colonial epistemologies and racist iconographies into the format of a Black extended family album?

### 3.6. Conclusion

Art history has deemed non-Western, non-European healing or protective knowledges as undesirable, illogical, and in the best cases, “minor art.”<sup>591</sup> Popular knowledges in Brazil about healing and ancestralism have often been co-opted by discourses on *mestiçagem* and its celebration. Terms such as syncretism and hybridity have historically served to set aside art produced by Afro-Brazilians or to mark it as

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concepção, nasce um outro entendimento e novos laços que vão se criando assim. E inclusive, quando eu fui perceber que a gente também estava no meio disso. Que é uma família. A família assim, e aí a gente vai se reconectando. Quando aconteceu na exposição, na abertura da exposição e várias pessoas, nossa, mais parece com a tia fulano de tal f, com tio beltrano, com primo, parece com a minha avó.” Dalton Paula, Interview in Portuguese to the author, Zoom, January 24, 2023. My translation from original in Portuguese.

<sup>590</sup> This notion of extended family was also noted by MASP's curator, Glauceca Helena de Britto, who wrote: “This is an experience that, as complex and contradictory as it may seem, can be a shared social experience of identification for most of the Brazilian population: my grandfather's grandfather, his great-grandmother's mother, our first African ancestor who arrived in Brazil, and so on, could be among the subjects portrayed. They could be there amongst Paula's portraits, identified by name and embodied in gold, black, and blue to fight a last battle that honors their memory and can restore a considerable part of our history by creating strategies to face the challenges posed by a structurally racist system within the art world and its history.” Glauceca Helena de Britto, “The White Challenged in Gold, Black, and Blue,” in *Dalton Paula: Retratos Brasileiros*, ed. Adriano Pedrosa, Glauceca Helena de Britto, and Lilia Schwarcz (Museu de Arte de São Paulo, 2022), 49.

<sup>591</sup> See discussion in the Introduction.

minor compared to white artists' productions. The overall celebratory notion that all Brazilians shared in the cultural *mestiçagem* has prevented the recognition of Black people's artistic and intellectual production.

Paula's approach to portraiture not only combines several ways of knowing the world, but also ways of making images that hail from this deemed "*mestiça*" Brazilian popular culture, a culture that is, in fact, fundamentally Black and Native Brazilian.<sup>592</sup> Paula's portraits stand at the crossroads of vernacular photography, ancestral and oral knowledges, and the collective political space of the *quilombo*—*aquilombamento*—the conjunction of past, present, and future where a new image of Blackness is formed. In this "new image," the ancestral takes its due place and regains a lost image fertile with the reminiscences of those who live today and carry the spirits of the past. This intersection of knowledges, practices, and visualities join to shape a counter-archive of slavery. But beyond that, these images come alive to seek retribution: the due place of ancestral Black leadership in the visual field of representation.

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<sup>592</sup> See discussion in the Introduction.

## 4. Conclusion

In *Tropical Democracy*'s opening section, Denise Ferreira da Silva recounts Emperor Dom Pedro II's first visit to northern Brazil in 1848. Ferreira da Silva narrates the emperor's meticulous visual inspection of the population with his comments of surprise at the not "many dark faces" of the National Guard and his concerns with the complexions of the aristocratic families.<sup>593</sup> Ferreira da Silva studies the late 18th and 19th centuries' hegemonic narratives on miscegenation—the European travelers' opinions on the uncanniness of Brazil's "blending of Africa and Europe," which caused anxieties to the Portuguese Crown, for example. For Ferreira da Silva, it is the *rewriting* of miscegenation that "instituted the Brazilian subject" as "a democratic I."<sup>594</sup> To become a modern democratic nation, miscegenation was reinscribed as a foundation to Brazilian democracy through the discursive shift of what was deemed *uncanniness* and degeneration into *tropical joy*.<sup>595</sup>

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<sup>593</sup> "In 1848, Emperor Dom Pedro II went on his first and perhaps only trip to modern Brazil. Fresh memories of a few uncomfortable weeks spent at sea probably accounted for the grumpiness one senses in the journal entries written in the city of Salvador, in the northeastern state of Bahia. While there, the emperor divided his noble time between visits to unfinished construction sites and attendance at cultural events. Nevertheless, he still found time to observe the local faces. Surprised with the composition of the National Guard, he commented in his diary (1959): "I forgot to say that I have not met as many dark faces as I expected and the National Guard is not so black, yet one can always see at once in the windows the turbans of 3 or 4 Mina Negro women." (48). To be sure, his majesty showed much more concern with the physical appearance of the elites ... Most probably, when scrutinizing *Bahianos*' faces, D. Pedro II, the young heir of the Brazilian Empire, known for his high intellectual pursuits, had in his mind comments by his frequent European visitors about the danger of 'race-mixing.'" Denise Ferreira da Silva, "Tropical Democracy," in *Toward a Global Idea of Race*, First edition (Minneapolis: Univ Of Minnesota Press, 2007), 222.

<sup>594</sup> *Ibid.*, 223.

<sup>595</sup> *Ibid.*

This shift, according to Ferreira da Silva, “produced bodies that signify a continuity” of Europe while placing the nation in “transparency,”<sup>596</sup> a term the author uses to refer to the post-Enlightenment European understanding of “man” as an ontological subject. That shift was only possible through the “silencing of a racial underclass” in Brazil via the “eschatological meanings” associated with miscegenation and the production of racial subjection.<sup>597</sup>

In the present day, as Ferreira da Silva concludes, these “ever-‘vanishing’” others of Europe continue to have their labor exploited, now as “global subaltern subjects” engulfed by “disembodied, virtual strategies of power that hijack their futures ... without having to be held accountable for their past.”<sup>598</sup> What Ferreira da Silva argues for is the understanding of how the “analytics of raciality”<sup>599</sup> have governed the global condition—an understanding of how Brazil’s redeployment of discursive miscegenation stands at the core of this global configuration.

This dissertation shows that discursive normative *mestiçagem*, as I call it, continues to be articulated through visualities in contemporary photographic practices. Despite the critiques of Gilberto Freyre’s theories, or the acknowledgment of what constitutes cultural appropriation in Brazil, and the ongoing fight of Afro-Brazilians and Indigenous activists, discursive *mestiçagem* still haunts national discourses in its affiliations to whiteness. Discursive *mestiçagem* comes to the

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<sup>596</sup> Ibid, xvi.

<sup>597</sup> Ferreira da Silva, *Toward a Global*, 224-225.

<sup>598</sup> Ibid., 251.

<sup>599</sup> Ibid.

forefront in Maria Thereza Alves's *Recipes for Survival* (Chapter 1) through an absence of photographs and in the rural people's speech, such as the word *Bugre*, a term that hovered over them as they feared slavery and exploitation at the onset of democratization after the civil-military regime "ended" in the mid-1980s. In Maria Theresa Alves' work, photography is survival against authoritarianism and evidence of one's existence, although the constant racial inspection of *branquitude* and the desire for whiteness and its false promises of national belonging organizes this existence.

*Recipes for Survival*, as a chronicling of survival, shows that the photographed subject's reclamation—imagined or enacted via photography—is an incomplete but necessary exercise, limited in its construction of memory and mourning. At this intersection of memory, mourning, and survival, a community of photographed subjects requests viewers to recognize the complexities of their struggle in the face of the authoritarian pervasion of their daily lives.

Discursive *mestiçagem* entangles Jonathas de Andrade's *Eu, mestiço* (Chapter 2), which, in its provoking of whiteness, is unable to break with colonial visualities and encapsulates the racial subaltern in visual frameworks of the subjection it seeks to challenge, such as the stereotype, the Casta grid, the serial portraiture, and the *mise-en-scène* of raciology. The photographic quality of the image in *Eu, mestiço* appeases, entices, and invites the privileged (white) viewer once again to grasp the "other"-

wise<sup>600</sup> bodies that have been so embedded in the visual economy of coloniality. That invitation is a farce, a trap to implicate the viewer in their participation in raciology. In that sense, the work dares to threaten whiteness.

Nevertheless, the series of portraits in *Eu, mestiço* also become an echo of that visuality by not fully allowing the photographed subjects, as Azoulay would suggest, to reclaim their position as agents in the civil contract. Through the careful building of artificial photographic schemes based on the ambiguity of discourses on racial miscegenation, the work leaves few spaces for the lived experience of subaltern *mestiços* or racialized others. Although de Andrade closely works with subaltern communities, by including them in performing for the camera in *mise-en-scène*, the images still bend to visual discourses of power.

In Dalton Paula's series of painted portraits (Chapter 3) located at the crossroads of vernacular photography and ancestral and oral knowledges, *aquilombamento* becomes a visual strategy for the reclamation of the subject. The photograph never taken and the portrait never painted arise in a new image of collective subjectivity rooted in *fotopinturas* and *saberes negros*. *Fotopinturas* are part of a popular genre in which the photographic quality of the image moves farther from the "this something was there"<sup>601</sup> and closer to *this someone could have been there*. By deploying such a notion of the photographic, Paula constructs new appearances based on living subjects and the visuality he finds

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<sup>600</sup> Denise Ferreira da Silva, "Tropical Democracy," in *Toward a Global Idea of Race*, First edition (Minneapolis: Univ Of Minnesota Press, 2007).

<sup>601</sup> See my discussion in the Introduction of Barthes and Azoulay.

in archival and oral histories. The exercise of mining the archives of slavery and coloniality produces a counter-archive of images constituting a new community, an extension of the past into the present mirrored in the faces of today's Black leaders.

Paula's version of *aquilombamento*, evoking *saberes negros* and *um passado negro*<sup>602</sup> through the present, dismantles discursive *mestiçagem* that sought to homogenize while also hybridizing culture and knowledge, engulfing<sup>603</sup> them in national celebration. Moreover, historical *quilombos* were African-rooted spaces; they were racially and ethnically mixed political territorialities with liberation at their core. *Aquilombamento* today holds the seeds for dismantling *branquitude* and discursive *mestiçagem* because it holds centuries of knowledge on communitarian leadership grounded on abolition. The power of *aquilombamento* is also the power of the rebellion—the taking of arms and repossessing of lands. Visuality can enact and rehearse that retaking of power. White supremacy identifies that threat; one must never forget the neo-fascist ventriloquism of Jair Bolsonaro, who commented on the weight of *quilombolas* in a clear reiteration of a white master's speech.<sup>604</sup> By linking past and present, Paula mediates a visuality for collective subjectivities and leadership, bringing Black communities together through images of reclamation.

The haunting of *mestiçagem* as a celebratory normative discourse is still ingrained in Brazilian society, as the photographic quality of the image is still

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<sup>602</sup> From Portuguese: Black knowledges, Black past.

<sup>603</sup> Denise Ferreira da Silva, "Tropical Democracy," in *Toward a Global Idea of Race*, First edition (Minneapolis: Univ Of Minnesota Press, 2007).

<sup>604</sup> "Bolsonaro: 'Quilombola não serve nem para procriar,'" UOL Notícias, April 5, 2017, <https://congressoemfoco.uol.com.br/projeto-bula/reportagem/bolsonaro-quilombola-nao-serve-nem-para-procriar/>.

fundamental to reclaiming representation as a collective endeavor. To a rising generation of Brazilian-born artists, self-representation is survival and vengeance, empowerment, and memory-building. Throughout the 2000s, numerous contemporary Brazilian-born artists have used photographic techniques to represent communities in their socially engaged artistic practices.<sup>605</sup> The genres they used vary from photo performance, photographic documentary, photocollage, video, and film. This Brazilian social reclamation of representation associated with communities has traveled beyond borders and many of these artists have been recognized outside the country. Names such as Paulo Nazareth, Bárbara Wagner and Benjamin de Burca, Aline Motta, Virginia de Medeiros, and Castiel Vitorino Brasileiro, for example, have gained visibility not only in the U.S. but also in European countries.

Paulo Nazareth, a wanderer, has been noted for his walking of long distances, collecting objects, and documenting his performances. His wanderings, registered or not through the camera, are often transnational border crossing walks that generate ironic critiques on nationalisms while also connecting communities between countries in Latin America, Africa, and the U.S. Many of his photo-performances also touch on questions of racial and ethnic representation, such as *Projecto Cara de Indio* (2011)

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<sup>605</sup> An example of exhibition that captured the pervasiveness of these practices is *Corpo a Corpo*, organized in 2018 by Thyago Nogueira at the Instituto Moreira Salles in Rio de Janeiro. This show brought together artists working in photography, cinema and video. About the exhibition, Nogueira argues, “From the individual or collective portrait, the works show how the body can be used as an element of social representation and political agency, be it through its physical and symbolic presence in public spaces, be it as a site of identity expression that may approximate or separate individuals, be it as a conducting vehicle of a camera, with which sometimes it merges.” Thyago Nogueira, Bárbara Wagner, and Instituto Moreira Salles, eds., *Corpo a corpo: a disputa das imagens, da fotografia à transmissão ao vivo = Body against body: the battle of images, from photography to live streaming* (São Paulo: IMS, Instituto Moreira Salles, 2017), 3. My translation from Portuguese.



(Figure 88), in which he, a *mestiço*-looking man, poses for the camera next to people he encounters while walking in an ironic and futile gesture of racial inspection.<sup>606</sup>

Bárbara Wagner and Benjamin de Burca have collaborated many times to create multimedia documentaries that represent communities associated with popular music in Brazil, such as *brega-funk* groups. In the series of portraits, *A procura do 5o elemento* (2017) (Figure 89), Wagner photographed 300 teenage participants of a contest organized by a television production company seeking pop music talent. Like Jonathas de Andrade's *Eu, mestiço*, Wagner's collection features headshots taken from side angles. Nothing is extraordinary about the images beyond the photographed subjects' gaze and pose. As a collection, they become a document of the community of pop music performers in funk culture who most often share the realities of subalternity and racialization in Brazil. In *Swinguerra* (2019), a film installation featured in the exhibition *Bárbara Wagner and Benjamin de Burca: Five Times Brazil*, organized by curator Bernardo Mosqueira at the New Museum, queer racialized communities perform present-day pop dance styles to the camera in a captivating act.<sup>607</sup>

Castiel Vitorino Brasileiro has risen as a contemporary artist through the use of performance and the deployment of spirituality in an intersectional practice that

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<sup>606</sup> See Leandro De Souza Rocha, "Encruzilhadas e Narrativas Em Cadernos de África," *Revista Concinnitas* 23, no. 43 (September 26, 2022): 137–49, <https://doi.org/10.12957/concinnitas.2022.50725>. Rafael Pagatini, "Paulo Nazareth e Os Folhetos 'Aqui é Arte,'" *Revista Gama*, January 1, 2014, [https://www.academia.edu/44125841/Paulo\\_Nazareth\\_e\\_os\\_folhetos\\_Aqui\\_%C3%A9\\_arte](https://www.academia.edu/44125841/Paulo_Nazareth_e_os_folhetos_Aqui_%C3%A9_arte).

<sup>607</sup> The New Museum, "Bárbara Wagner and Benjamin de Burca: Five Times Brazil," The New Museum, accessed April 8, 2023, <http://www.newmuseum.org/exhibitions/view/barbara-wagner-benjamin-de-burca-five-times-brazil>.

reclaims Afro-Brazilian religions and queer subjectivity.<sup>608</sup> In her series of photo-performances, such as *Corpoflor* (2016) (Figure 90), *Os peitos que não terei com pertulan* (2019), or *Quando criei minha origem* (2019), Vitorino Brasileiro exposes her transgender racialized body to the camera in a self-portraiture style mixing selfies with Polaroids. In these self-portrait series, the artist often appears partially naked and performing Afro-Brazilian religious ceremonies, emphasizing features demonstrating her non-normative body. *Corpoflor* features dozens of self-portraits and portraits of Black people Vitorino Brasileiro invites to perform for the camera; they all use white body paint and wear colorful adornments. The images look raw and unedited. As a group, they form an imagined community of performers seeking to, as the artist suggests, dodge the violence of racialization.<sup>609</sup>

According to numerous scholars in the field,<sup>610</sup> Latin American art modernisms hijacked European and U.S. modernist tenets, such as these territories'

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<sup>608</sup> See "Castiel Vitorino Brasileiro: Eclipse," CCS Bard, accessed April 8, 2023, <https://ccs.bard.edu/museum/exhibitions/623-castiel-vitorino-brasileiro-eclipse>.

<sup>609</sup> About this work the artist writes, "For a long time, I believed that Corpoflor only referred to me, and during that time I built this Being, in a movement of resistance to the violence of racialization. I mean, because for a long time I also lived an absurd loneliness in my first place of residence, Vitória. The gender transition threw me into an even deeper layer of this loneliness, and Corpoflor accompanied such anguish. However, over these six years of work, I realized that some layers of my life had changed course, and Corpoflor became a nomenclature that more designates a species than a name that refers only to a single life. It was at this moment that I decided to bet on the indescribable, after numerous trips to and from Vitória Island. In other words, it was these various moments of moving from the island, and discovering other seas and continents, these were those trips, often forced, sad, and also happy, unforgettable, that made it possible for me to build a dream: to meet the other lives that make up this Corpoflor ontology. Finding these people has been exciting, because it is very beautiful to see how, even though they are modified by me, having their bodies modified by my desire, there are still some aesthetic and gestural particularities that prevail during the moment of incorporating corpoflora. Notice in the photos. This is amazing, this is freedom. Being able to transfigure the dark matter, and remembering that transfiguration is the only certainty, is the most powerful truth, because it alone has the power to end the history of racialization in our lives." My translation from Portuguese. Castiel Vitorino Brasileiro, "Corpoflor (2016)," castielvitorinobrasileiro, accessed April 8, 2023, [https://castielvitorinobrasileiro.com/foto\\_corpoflor](https://castielvitorinobrasileiro.com/foto_corpoflor).

<sup>610</sup> See, for example, Mari Carmen Ramírez and Héctor Olea, *Inverted Utopias: Avant-Garde Art in Latin America* (New Haven ; London: Yale University Press, 2004). Tatiana Flores, "Beyond Centre-Periphery: Modernism in Latin American Art," *The Modernist World*, Edited by Allana Lindgren and Stephen Ross, June 1, 2015, [https://www.academia.edu/13144613/Beyond\\_Centre\\_Periphery\\_Modernism\\_in\\_Latin\\_American\\_Art](https://www.academia.edu/13144613/Beyond_Centre_Periphery_Modernism_in_Latin_American_Art).

artistic movements' thorough attention to "formal innovation and self-reflexivity."<sup>611</sup> Tatiana Flores, for example, emphasizes the concern with colonialism and social justice as two core elements of Latin American modernism, which permeated the many philosophies and art practices that flourished in countries categorized as part of a Latin territory in the Americas. The desire to create what Latin American elites called "autochthonous" art and to digest European culture consumed their thinking. Thus, these movements produced alternative artistic currents to Europe and the U.S., rehearsing (and celebrating) the assumed liberation of their countries' other-wise bodies.<sup>612</sup> Yet, these elites left unspoiled the fundamental ontological modern mandate Denise Ferreira da Silva structures in *Tropical Democracy*. In their pursuit of social justice, Latin American modernist artists retained *other-wise* bodies—non-white bodies—as the locus of their critiques of European art while reproducing colonial power dynamics of representation.<sup>613</sup>

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Mari Carmen Ramírez, Tomas Ybarra-Frausto, and Héctor Olea, *Resisting Categories: Latin American and/or Latino?* (New Haven, UNITED STATES: Yale University Press, 2012), <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ucsc/detail.action?docID=3421133>. Sérgio B. Martins, *Constructing an Avant-Garde: Art in Brazil, 1949-1979* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2013). Andrea Giunta, "Strategies of Modernity in Latin America," in *Beyond the Fantastic: Contemporary Art Criticism from Latin America*, ed. Gerardo Mosquera and Institute of International Visual Arts, 1st MIT Press ed (London : Cambridge, Mass: The Institute of International Visual Arts ; The MIT Press, 1996).

<sup>611</sup> Tatiana Flores, "Beyond Centre-Periphery: Modernism in Latin American Art," *The Modernist World, Edited by Allana Lindgren and Stephen Ross*, June 1, 2015, [https://www.academia.edu/13144613/Beyond\\_Centre\\_Periphery\\_Modernism\\_in\\_Latin\\_American\\_Art](https://www.academia.edu/13144613/Beyond_Centre_Periphery_Modernism_in_Latin_American_Art), 426.

<sup>612</sup> "Modernist production in Latin America, often concerned with social justice and aware of the need to address - if not redress -centuries of inequality, frequently turned to the non-European as its subject and adopted an oppositional stance against European imperialism, including its cultural heritage. Establishing a regional or local collective identity distinct from that of the colonizers was fundamental to its dynamics." Ibid, 427.

<sup>613</sup> Beyond Brazil, consider the complex interweaving of revolution, "race" and ethnicity in the formation of the mestizo subject of the Mexican Revolution and theories such as the *Cosmic Race*. Mary K. Coffey, *How a Revolutionary Art Became Official Culture: Murals, Museums, and the Mexican State* (Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2012).

The reclamation of the photographic quality of the image, the focus on representation, and the body Brazilian-born artists have turned to in the 2000s respond to decades of modernist visual traditions that rehearsed but did not implement social justice. To this rising generation of artists, reclamation and representation walk together. These artists' adoption of photography may stand as a form of reclaiming the body and the knowledges it has conserved from the violence of racialization.

The question of representation when it comes to the epidermis and the body must be analyzed by what power dynamics are established between the photographed subject and the viewer, who *serves* whom, which pact is enacted, and which community or subject has control over the gaze. Although these relationships of power may always be in flux and open to significations and interpretation, some visual schemes, as I argue in this dissertation, are more successful than others in providing reclamation beyond the spectacularization of racialized bodies.

Although discursive *mestiçagem* and *branquitude* work together in the field of representation, artists have the power to challenge these visualities. The transnationality of the works discussed here attests to the global nature of the idea of race. The making of the ontological European *I*, as Denise Ferreira da Silva argues, at the cost of other-wise bodies continues to produce racialized spaces of subalternity and harmful hypervisibility. Although spaces of exclusion still exist, Brazilian contemporary artists reiterate that the reclaiming of the visualities around the

subaltern and racialized body is still one of the most potent paths to a reclamation that is political and collective.

## Figures

### Figures - Chapter 1



Figure 1. Maria Thereza Alves, *Untitled, Recipes for Survival*, 1983. Courtesy the artist.



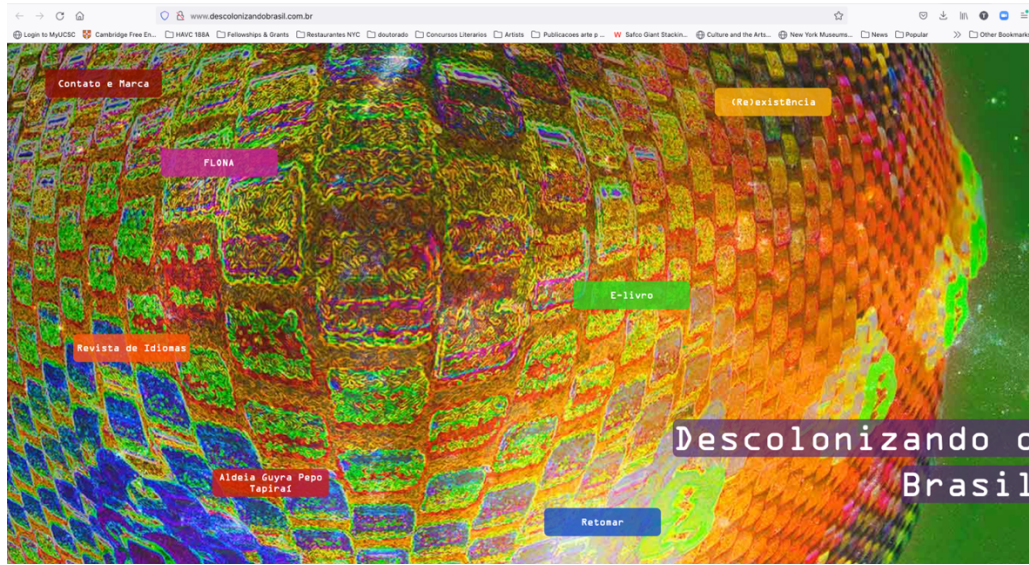


Figure 2. Maria Thereza Alves, *Descolonizando o Brasil / Decolonizing Brazil*, 2018. <http://www.descolonizandobrasil.com.br/>. Courtesy the artist.



Figure 3. Maria Thereza Alves, *Untitled, Recipes for Survival*, 1983. Courtesy the artist.



## Hills Bananas Boats

Thirteen families that grow bananas.  
Thirteen families that walk seventeen kilometers  
And five hills to go to the grocery store.

Many men that walk seventeen kilometers  
And five hills to enjoy themselves at the bar.  
Many women, young and old, who stay at home on  
Friday and Saturday with bad weather,  
With children screaming in the house,  
And no dry firewood for cooking.

The thirteen banana-growing families  
Sell to the truck that comes from  
A city close by.  
The boat carries the bananas to the truck.  
The bad weather comes and the boat does not go out.

The thirteen banana-growing families get sick very easily.  
The men, women, and children complain about  
The stabbing pain in the chest.

The teacher said it is tuberculosis.  
The teacher says that with any little sickness they fall.  
They are weak.  
(That is what the slave owners used to complain about  
with their indigenous slaves who became ill. They were  
much happier with their African slaves.)

The bad weather comes and the boat does not go out.  
The bad weather comes and more men, women,  
And children get sick.

Figure 4. Page 195 of *Recipes for Survival*. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2018), showing the poem *Hills Bananas Boats* by Maria Thereza Alves.



Figure 5. Maria Thereza Alves, *Untitled, Recipes for Survival*, 1983. Courtesy the artist.





Figure 6. Maria Thereza Alves, *Untitled, Recipes for Survival*, 1983. Courtesy the artist.



Figure 7. Maria Thereza Alves, *Untitled, Recipes for Survival*, 1983. Courtesy the artist.





Figure 8. Maria Thereza Alves, *Untitled, Recipes for Survival*, 1983. Courtesy the artist.





Figure 9. Antônio de Holanda, Approximately Illustrator, Lopo Homem, King of Portugal Manuel I, Jorge Reinel, and Pedro Reinel. *Nautical Atlas of the World, Folio 5 Recto, Southwestern Atlantic Ocean with Brazil*. [Place of Publication Not Identified: Publisher Not Identified, 1519] Map. World Digital Library. Source: <https://www.loc.gov/item/2021668719/>.



Figure 10. Maria Thereza Alves, *Untitled, Recipes for Survival*, 1983. Courtesy the artist.





Figure 11. Maria Thereza Alves, *Untitled, Recipes for Survival*, 1983. Courtesy the artist.



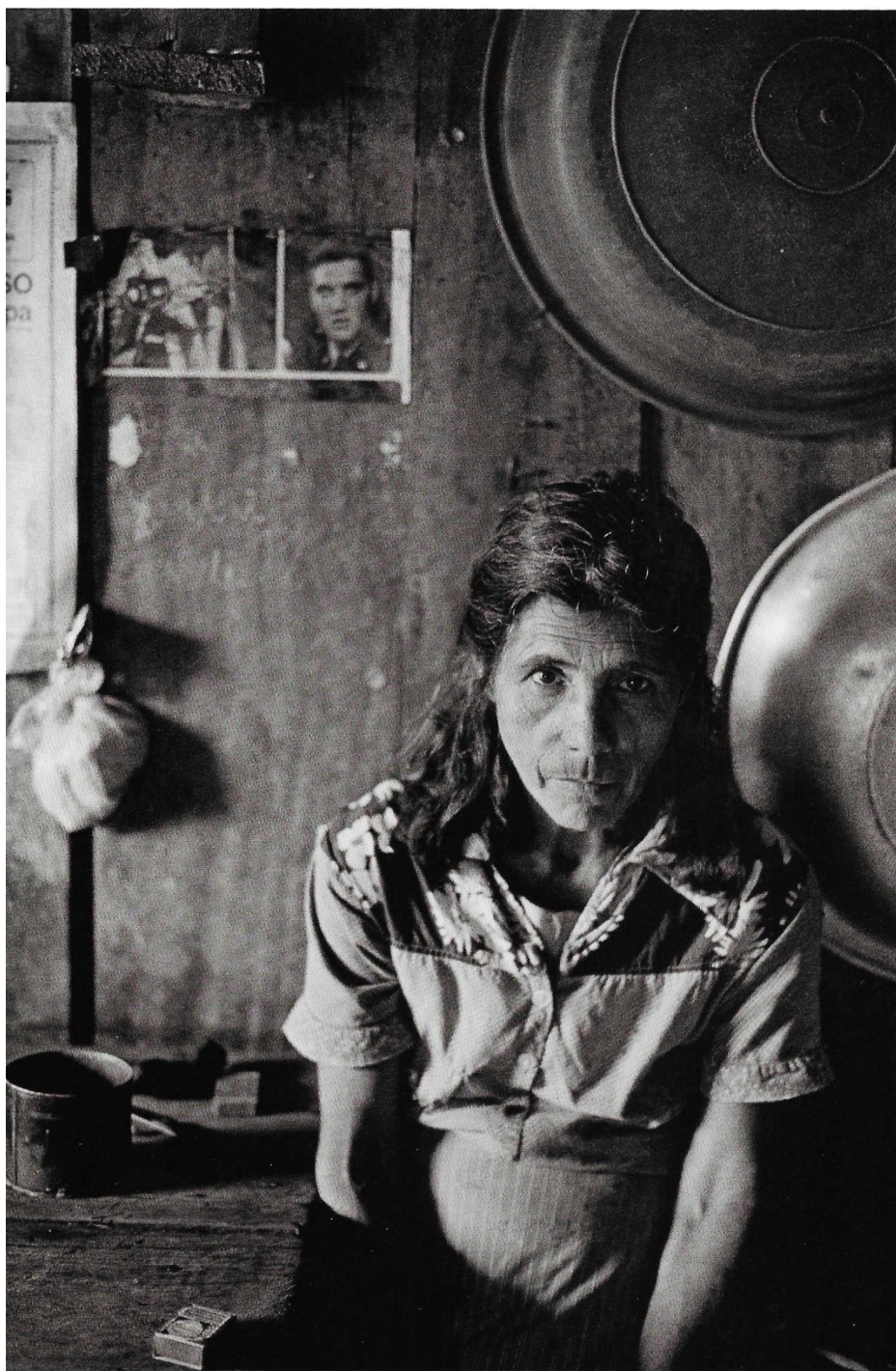


Figure 12. Maria Thereza Alves, *Untitled, Recipes for Survival*, 1983. Courtesy the artist.



Figure 13. Maria Thereza Alves, *A Casa da Maria* (Maria's House), 2020. Mixed media installation. Dimensions variable. Courtesy the artist.





## Figures - Chapter 2



Figure 15. Jonathas the Andrade, *Eu, mestiço, Nascido Peão por Rondinele* (Peon-Born by Rondinele), 2017. Courtesy the artist.



Figure 16. Jonathas the Andrade, *Eu, mestiço, Nascido Peão por Rondinele* (Peon-Born by Rondinele), 2017. Detail. Courtesy the artist.



Figure 17. Installation view: *Eu, mestiço*. March 3 – April 21, 2018. Alexander and Bonin, New York. Photo: Joerg Lohse. Courtesy of Alexander and Bonin, New York.





Figure 18. Jonathas the Andrade, *Eu, mestiço, Pigmentação por Avelar* (Pigmentation by Avelar), 2017. Courtesy the artist.



Figure 19. Jonathas the Andrade, *Eu, mestiço, Pigmentação por Avelar* (Pigmentation by Avelar), 2017. Detail. Courtesy the artist.



Figure 20. Installation view: *Ressaca Tropical* (Tropical Hangover), 2009. 12<sup>th</sup> Istanbul Biennial, 2018. Courtesy the artist.





Figure 21. Installation view: *Cartazes para o Museu do Homem do Nordeste* (Posters for the Museum of the Man of the Northeast), 2013. Kunsthalle Lissabon, 2013. Courtesy the artist.



Figure 22. Jonathas de Andrade, *O Peixe / The Fish*, 2016 (still). 16 mm film transferred to HD video, sound, color; 38 min. Courtesy the artist.



Figure 23. Jonathas de Andrade, *Eu, mestiço, Indomável por Zuleide* (Unmanageable by Zuleide), 2017. Courtesy the artist.



Figure 24. Jonathas de Andrade, *Eu, mestiço, Indomável por Zuleide* (Unmanageable by Zuleide), 2017. Detail. Courtesy the artist.



Figure 25. Jonathas de Andrade, *Eu, mestiço, Escandaloso por Barbara* (Scandalous by Barbara), 2017. Courtesy the artist.



Figure 26. Jonathas de Andrade, *Eu, mestiço, Escandaloso por Barbara* (Scandalous by Barbara), 2017. Detail. Courtesy the artist.

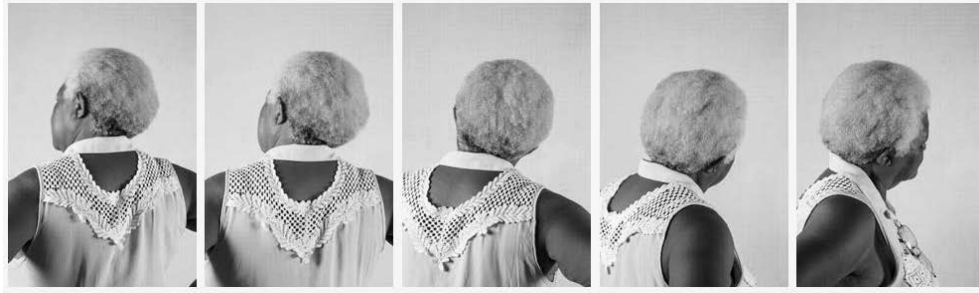


Figure 27. Jonathas de Andrade, *Eu, mestiço, Branqueada por Faustina* (Whitened by Faustina), 2017. Courtesy the artist.



Figure 28. Jonathas de Andrade, *Eu, mestiço, Branqueada por Faustina* (Whitened by Faustina), 2017. Detail. Courtesy the artist.





Figure 29. Jonathas the Andrade, *Eu, mestiço, Desconfiado por Adriana* (Suspicious by Adriana), 2017. Courtesy the artist.



Figure 30. Jonathas the Andrade, *Eu, mestiço, Desconfiado por Adriana* (Suspicious by Adriana), 2017. Detail. Courtesy the artist.

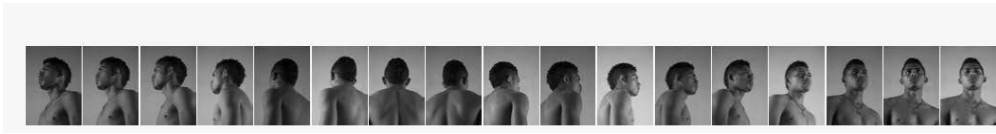


Figure 31. Jonathas the Andrade, *Eu, mestiço, Menosprezo por Oristes* (Belittle by Oristes), 2017. Courtesy the artist.



Figure 32. Jonathas the Andrade, *Eu, mestiço, Menosprezo por Oristes* (Belittle by Oristes), 2017. Detail. Courtesy the artist.

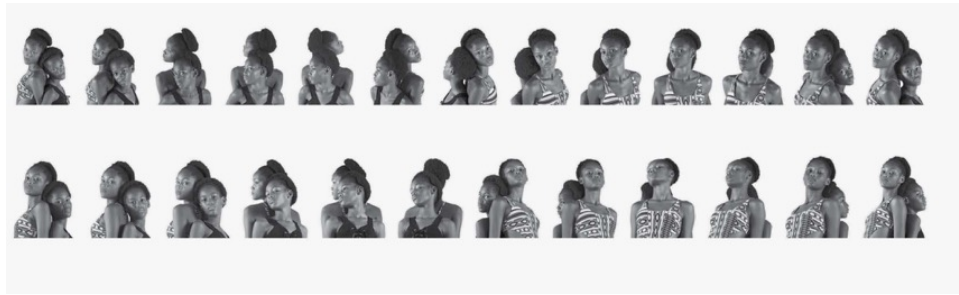


Figure 33. Jonathas the Andrade, *Eu, mestiço, Triunfo por Shauanne e Yasmin* (Triumph by Shauanne and Yasmin), 2017. Courtesy the artist.



Figure 34. Jonathas the Andrade, *Eu, mestiço, Triunfo por Shauanne e Yasmin* (Triumph by Shauanne and Yasmin), 2017. Detail. Courtesy the artist.



### Figures – Chapter 3

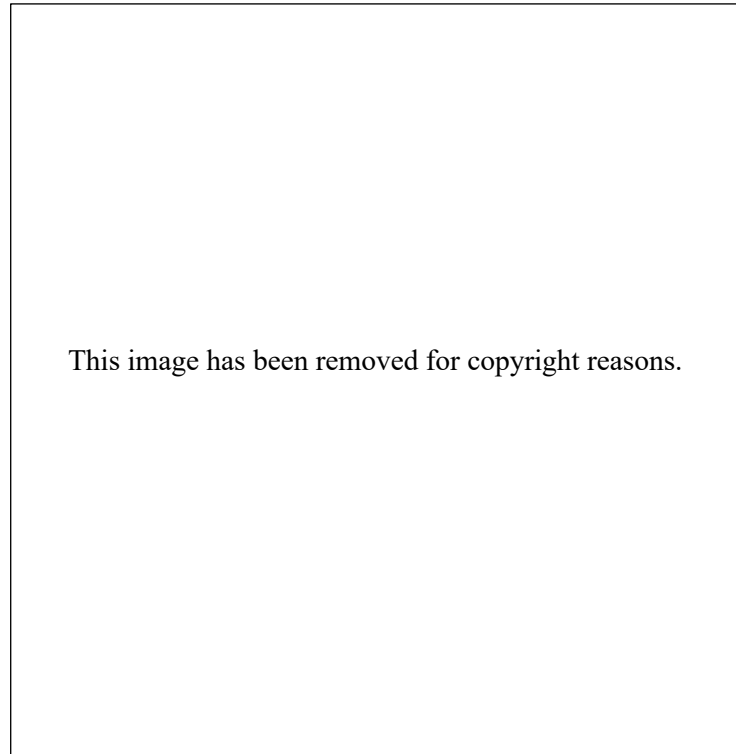


Figure 35. Dalton Paula, *Felipa Maria Aranha*, 2022. Oil and gold leaf on canvas in two parts. 24 x 17  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  in/61 x 45 x 4 cm. Museu de Arte de São Paulo Assis Chateaubriand.

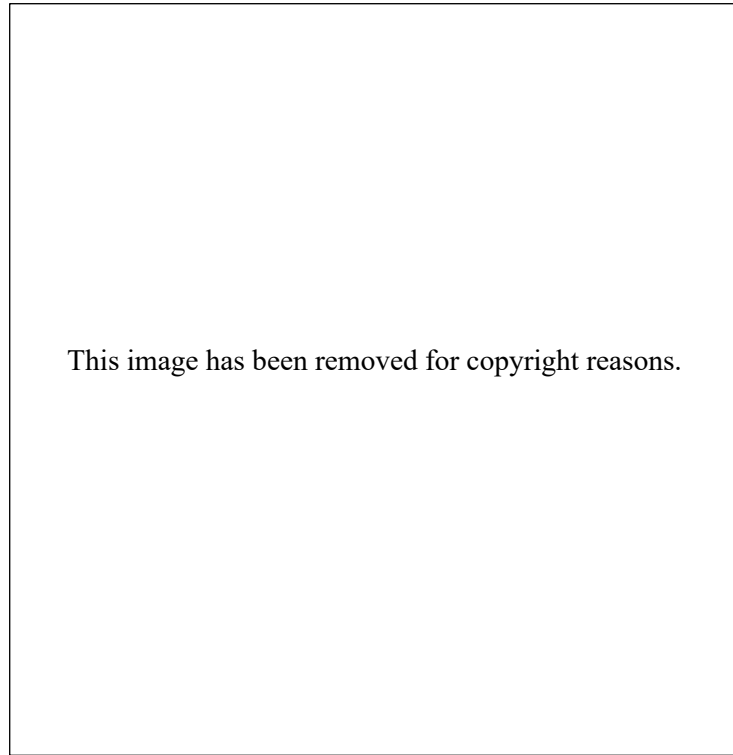


Figure 36. Dalton Paula, *Zeferina*, 2018. Oil on canvas. 59 x 44 cm. Museu de Arte de São Paulo Assis Chateaubriand.

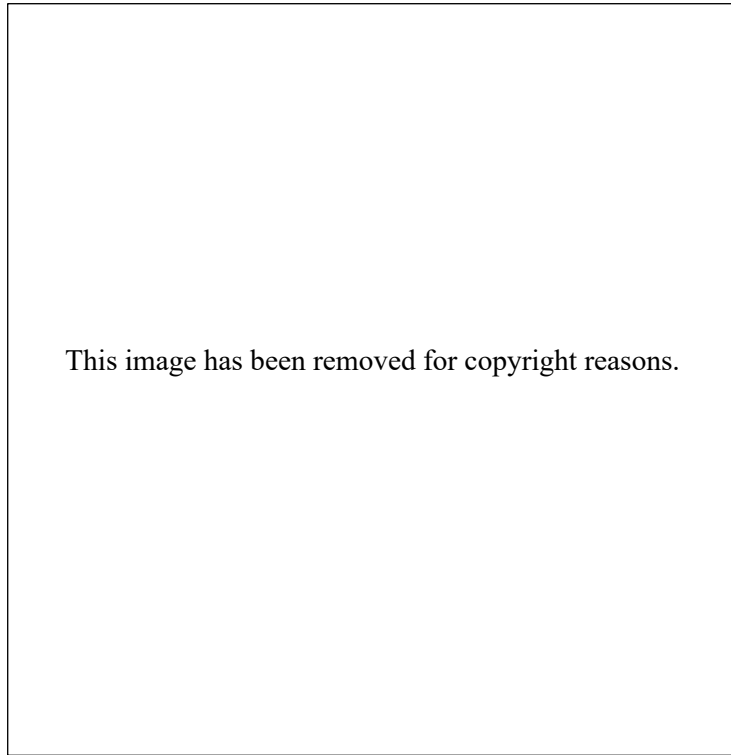


Figure 37. Dalton Paula, *João de Deus Nascimento*, 2018. Oil on canvas. 59.5 x 44 cm. Museu de Arte de São Paulo Assis Chateaubriand.

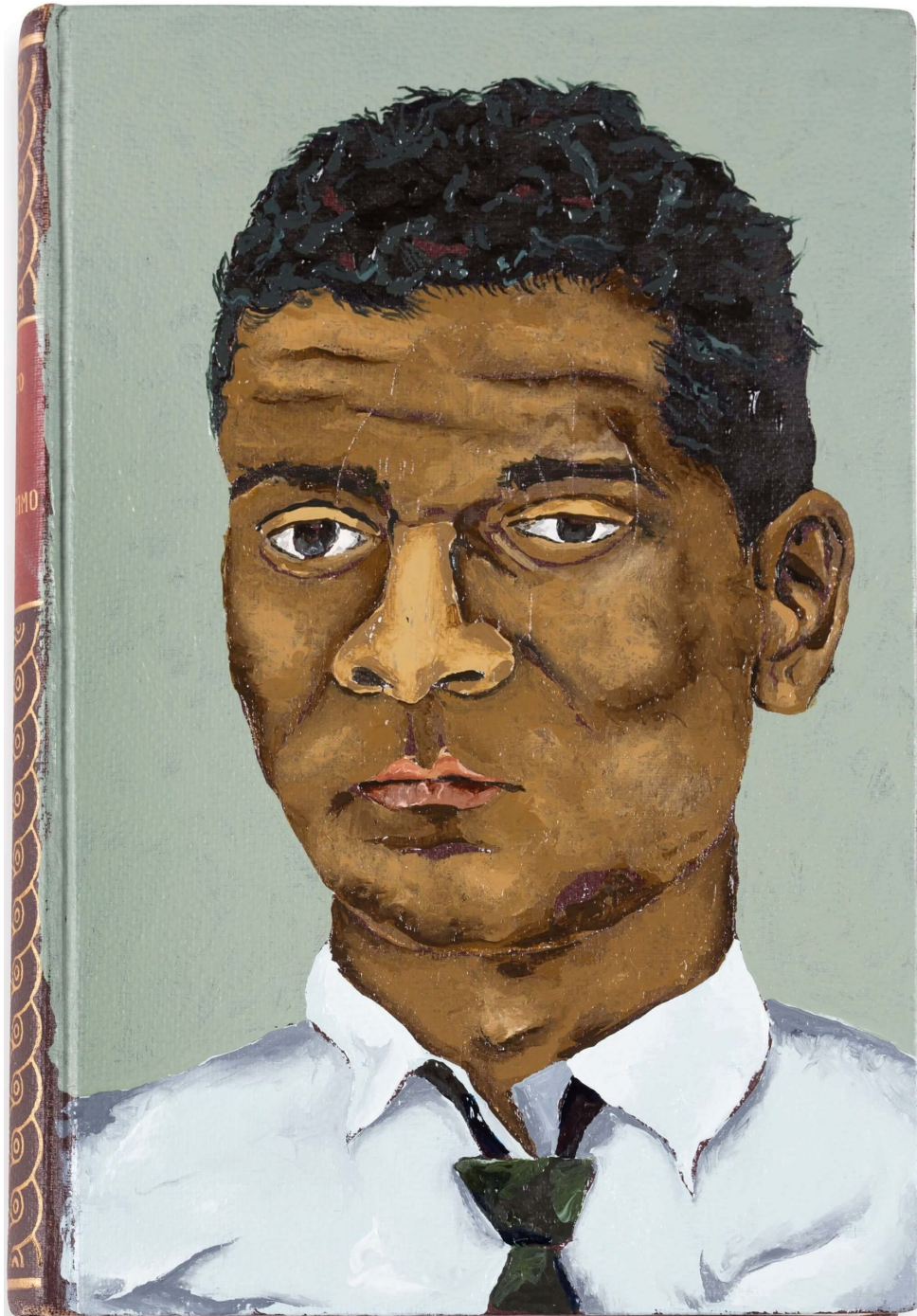


Figure 38. Dalton Paula, *Lima Barreto*, 2017. Oil on book. 22 x 15 cm. Collection of the artist. Photo: Paulo Rezende. Courtesy the artist.



Figure 39. Dalton Paula, *Ganga Zumba*, 2020. Oil and gold leaf on canvas in two parts. 24 x 17  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  in/61 x 45 x 4 cm. Photo: Jorge Lohse. Courtesy the artist and Alexander and Bonin, New York

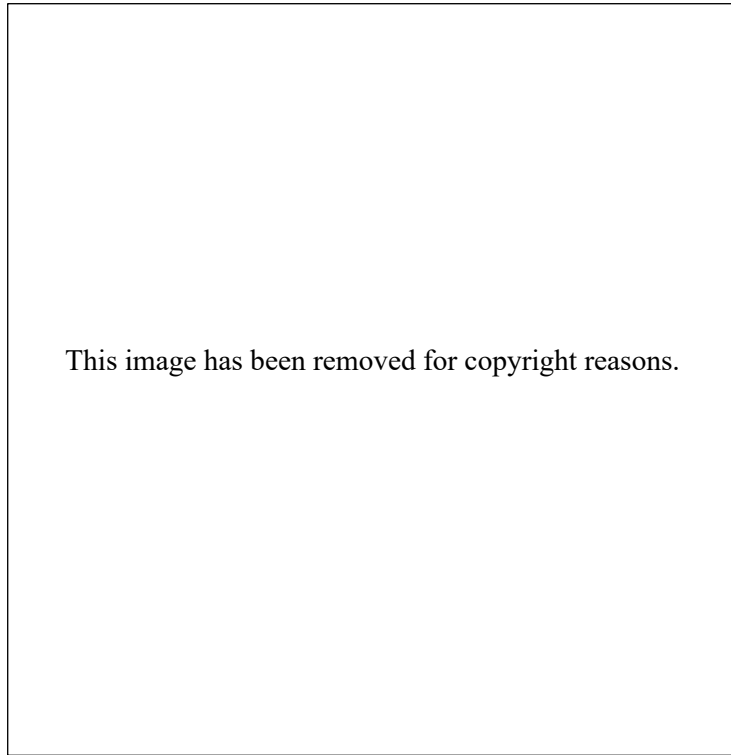


Figure 40. Dalton Paula, *Assumano Mina do Brasil*, 2022. Oil and gold leaf on canvas in two parts. 24 x 17  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  in/61 x 45 x 4 cm. Museu de Arte de São Paulo Assis Chateaubriand.

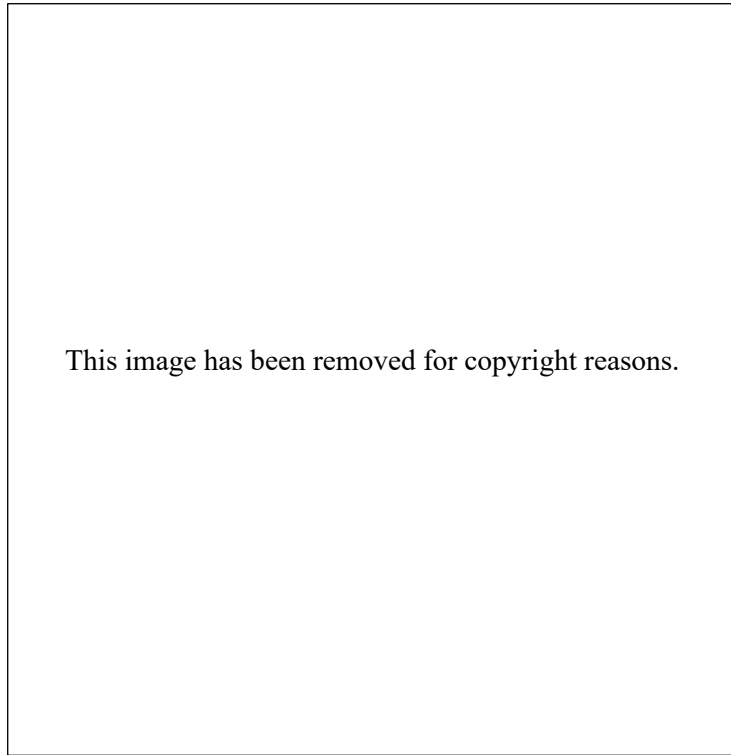


Figure 41. Dalton Paula, *Rota do Tabaco* (Tobacco Route), 2016. 51 parts. Oil, gold, and silver leaf on ceramic bowl. Private Collection.

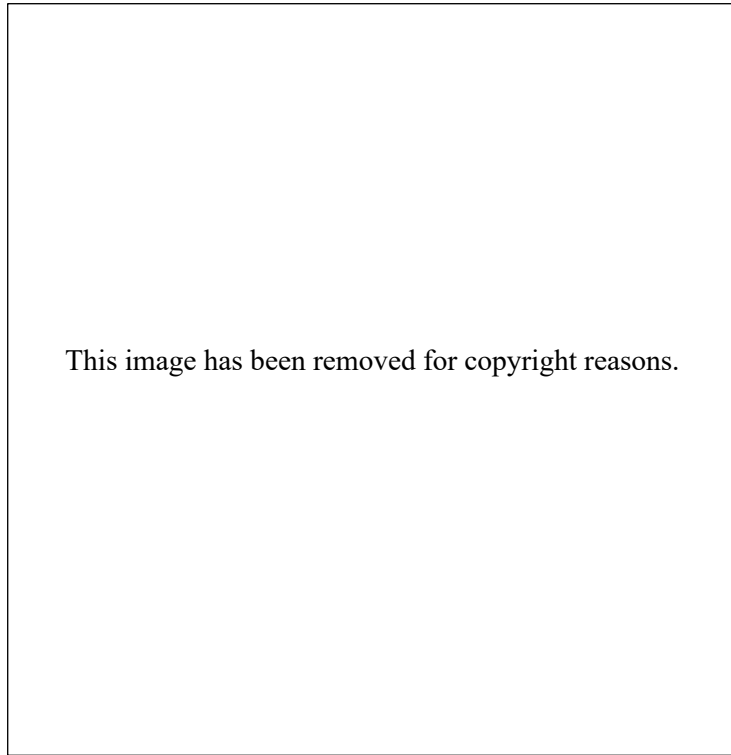


Figure 42. Dalton Paula, *A cura* (The Cure), 2016. Eight books. Oil on encyclopedias.  
Photo: Paulo Rezende. Courtesy the artist.



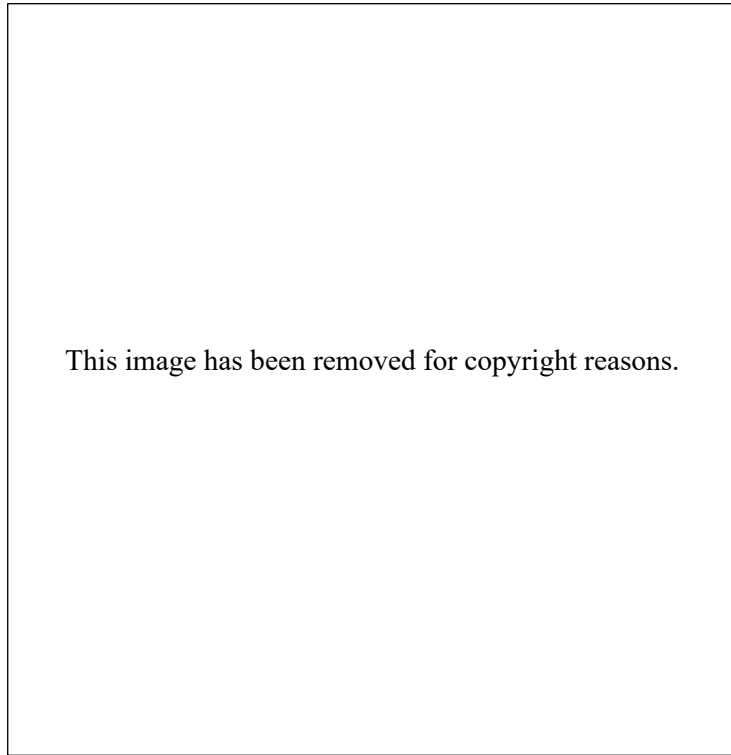


Figure 43. Dalton Paula, *Santos Médicos* (Medical Saints), 2016. Oil on seven books.  
Photo: Paulo Rezende.

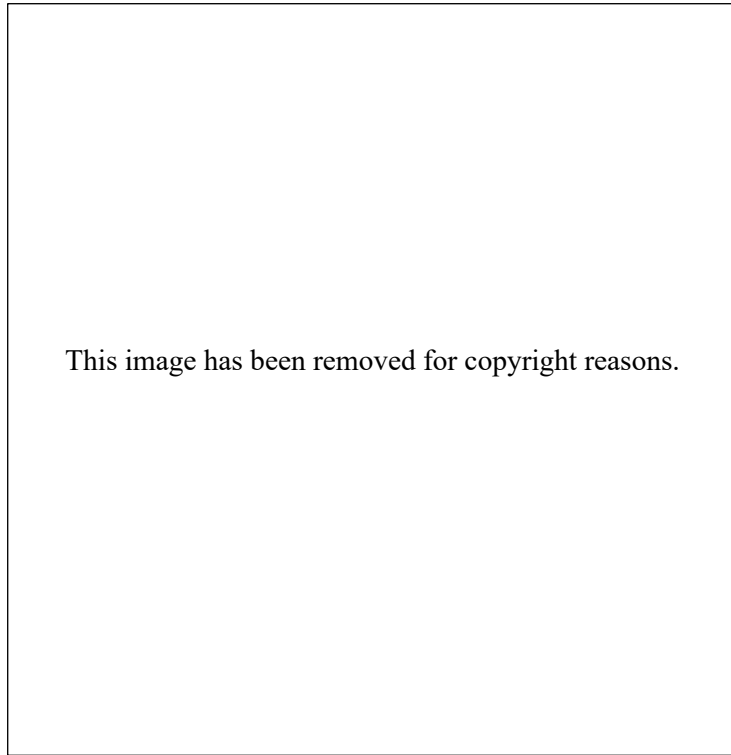


Figure 44. Dalton Paula, *Zumbi*, 2020. Oil and gold leaf on canvas in two parts. 24 x 17 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 1 1/2 in/61 x 45 x 4 cm. The Museum of Modern Art, New York.



Figure 45. Installation view: *A kidnapper of souls*. September 12 – October 24, 2020. Alexander and Bonin, New York. Photo: Jorge Lohse. Courtesy of Alexander and Bonin, New York.



Figure 46. Installation view: *A kidnapper of souls*. September 12 – October 24, 2020. Alexander and Bonin, New York. Photo: Jorge Lohse. Courtesy of Alexander and Bonin, New York.



Figure 47. Installation view: *A kidnapper of souls*. September 12 – October 24, 2020. Alexander and Bonin, New York. Photo: Jorge Lohse. Courtesy of Alexander and Bonin, New York.



Figure 48. Dalton Paula, *Principe Obá II*, 2022. Oil and gold leaf on canvas in two parts. 24 x 17  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  in/61 x 45 x 4 cm. Photo: Filipe Berndt. Courtesy the artist.



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