

ON MODES OF DOING ETHNOGRAPHY AND MODES OF MAKING WORLDS

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In organizing this dossier, we continue an itinerary that we have followed for some time now, linked on one hand to the intersections between art and politics, and on the other to the overlapping of different practices and modes of ethnographic and artistic making. Along with another anthropologist and maker of body art, Julia Ruiz di Giovanni, absent here but ever present in a dialogue maintained over recent years, our aim has been to potentialize this exchange, taking place both during academic discussions in congresses, seminars and courses, and during hybrid events with artists and researchers, not to mention less formal conversations that have criss-crossed the Atlantic Ocean countless times.

The question that unites us centres on the possibility of conceiving simultaneously inspirational and unsettling modalities of interweaving artistic practices, anthropology and political activism. We are all anthropologists with social and political concerns and commitments in the practice of the discipline and all, in some form or other, connected to artistic or aesthetic universes.

This dossier is intended as a further contribution to these discussions and problematic fields at a juncture when the production of academic knowledge has been widely debated and critiqued for its difficulty in

incorporating and dialoguing with other kinds of knowledge. In this regard, the artistic practices and aesthetic modes of thinking and acting over the world are, without doubt, places of effervescence and insurgency that, despite all the interdisciplinary barricades, permeate and have increasingly gained ground in the scientific debate.

Daniela Feriani's poignant article, weaving and unweaving threads that take us along the paths of her haunting ethnography on Alzheimer's disease and dementia, utilizes names, faces, scenes and images to show us, paraphrasing the author, the potential for dissolution and articulation of new forms of seeing and narrating the experience, frequently blurred, of other possibilities of life.

Fabiana Bruno presents us with the result of what she calls a "pact of double inquiry." She advances and dwells delightfully on Etienne Saimain's previously slumbering photographic archive on the Kamayurá indigenous people and, along the way, unveils it – the verb is not haphazard – through images and eloquent silences, stimulating heuristics and experimental visual processes and methodologies.

Experimentations are also realized in distinct forms by Heléna Elias and Francesca De Luca and by Carolina Maia. In the first case, the authors present texts and images that seek to demonstrate one possible mode of describing a site-specific installation, *ATLAS: MATRIX*, in the Belém Tropical Botanical Garden in Lisbon. This was an open device that combined the ethnographic research of Francesca De Luca on birthing practices and a set of ceramic works by the visual artist Heléna Elias that demanded further collaboration, enabling spectators to play and interfere with the elements, thereby also generating a reflection on processes of collaborative artistic behaviour.

In her article, Carolina Maia experiments by playing with epistolary language and – exploiting the seriousness of play, to cite Victor Turner's famous expression – mixes conceptual, political and personal daydreams. Anchored in the ancestrality of authors like Adrienne Rich and Gloria Anzaldúa, these present us with a deliciously challenging focus on convergences and divergences in the constitution of a politics based on lesbian *escrevivência* ('writexperience'), although the latter concept of Conceição Evaristo is not mobilized in the text.

Next we include the text by Eduardo Faria Santos, who returns to the discussion on LGBT social movements – via an ethnography of the *Revolta da Lâmpada* (Lamp Revolt) collective, to which one of the dossier's organizers belongs – in order to think about the new ways through which art and activism have become interwoven from a horizontal,

decentred and intersectional perspective that roots its political action in affectivity and the ‘free body.’

Mariana Gonçalves, for her part, discusses an amateur film production company, *Cineground*, founded in Portugal after the revolution of April 25, 1974. Authors writing on gender and sexuality and on visual anthropology both feature in her analysis, which, corroborating the ideas of the company’s founders, visual artist Óscar Alves and filmmaker João Paulo Ferreira, shows the expressly revolutionary nature of its production with Super-8 films containing dissident sexual-gender themes still criminalized during the period.

Films – or, more precisely, *filmações e representações* (*filmings and representations*) – are also the material analysed by Pâmilla Vilas Boas Costa Ribeiro. Taking a different but equally fecund approach, the author dialogues with the anthropology of performance in order to elucidate how aesthetic, social and ritual dramas overlap, in diverse manners, in the production of a film on Batuque de Ponto Chique and other neighbouring batuque groups connected by the São Francisco River.

Completing the textual part of our dossier we present the article by Luis Junior Saraiva and Pedro Olaia. Discussing an interactive drag performance by the latter, realized at three moments, the text aims to experiment and discuss – in a transdisciplinary intersection where theory dialogues with practice in extramural academic interactions – the need for experimentation that pervades both disciplinary fields (art, anthropology, performance, queer theory) and linguistic fields (auto-ethnography, images) as alternate possibilities for inhabiting and living gendered experience.

In the contributions to our section *Gestures, images and sounds*, the (auto) biographical dimension, combined with theoretical-conceptual discussion, also surfaces in Marcia Vaitsman’s short contribution, which hyperlinks to other visual essays by the artist-researcher. Setting out from an inquiry into a “possible ethics-aesthetics of foreignness, transition and impermanence,” she interrogates, between deliriums, sutras and images, lists of artists that are never just lists.

Otávio Raposo’s film leads us through the universe of images and sounds produced by b-boys and b-girls in the breakbeat scene, showing us bodies in movement, dance circles, clapping and kinetic dynamics tracked by the camera from unusual angles, inseparable from music and sound in the constitution of processes of resistance in which artistic *battles* – insofar as they jokingly engage in symbolic confrontations – also affirm their own existential places with singular codes, aesthetics and postures.

Finally, in the TER section, the dossier presents two contributions related to questions with which the anthropologist Arnd Schneider has worked. These comprise a review of his last book, *Alternative Art and Anthropology: Global Encounters*, and an interview with him conducted by Rose Satiko Hikiji Gitirana and Jasper Chalcraft. In both, the border zone of collaboration between art and anthropology, and the mutual exploration of fields of intersection and shared practices, remains latent.

In the dossier, therefore, between texts and images that demand reflection and experimentalism in the modes of ‘making ethnography’ and merge diverse modalities and practices originating from the artistic and academic fields, the emphasis is on the debate and dialogue between categories, concepts, gazes and poetical and political forms of ‘making worlds.’

The Cuban artist Tania Burguera, one of the people responsible for coining the term *arte útil* (useful art), not only proposed a new use for art but also argued, precisely, that it was capable of re-establishing aesthetics as a system of transformations (social, political, economic, cultural). Many of the contexts analysed here by anthropological and artistic gazes, multiple and at distinct levels of academic training and maturation, seek to give an account of precisely this commitment to processes of transformation on the part of artistic collectives, individual artists or diverse kinds of partnerships.

The aim here is not to launch into another discussion on whether art can change destiny, but to verify the existence of political projects that resort to aesthetic dimensions in order to make their protests and manifestos, or artistic proposals that demand a particularly significant political dimension and agency. This was one of the two axes explored here in this dossier and that we summarized in the call for papers as: an attempt to problematize and stitch together fields traditionally understood as art and politics, paying special attention to the questions involving the body and the political space in what has been conceived as the poetics and politics of the street.

On the other hand, there exist today stimulating challenges in methodological and creative terms, which arise, indeed, from a growing political awareness of scientific activity – whether we affirm or deny the overlapping of politics and academia – and from a reflexive disquiet concerning the ways of making science, which it is important to raise for discussion here. The majority of the presented texts contain reflections, discussions and reformulations of the general principles of making science.

Some texts, then, make visible the reflexivity and permeability of literary and academic discourses – not in itself a novel fact when we recall, back in the 1980s, the postmodern contributions of a set of authors epitomized in the famous work *Writing Culture*. In others, the dialogues between writing and artistic and academic practices are placed on similar levels.

In some cases, it is collaborative methodologies that are evoked, investing anthropological writing with native concepts and collaborative forms of thinking through research themes. In other cases, it is the forms of artistic textuality that literally invade the ethnographic text. Some contributions, on the other hand, maintaining an academic tradition of presenting the ‘results’ of investigation, seek to destabilize the discipline’s theoretical setting through a kind of indiscipline in moulding the analytic reference points with which they work.

Consequently, the second axis of this dossier also seeks to highlight the articulations between new modes of making ethnography, freed from the conception of anthropology as a word-based discipline. Here we promote texts that explore images and think of images and sonorities, in films and in film production collectives, always open to the possibilities of renewing what it means for us anthropologists to make anthropology.

TRANSLATION
David Allan Rogers

We hope you enjoy reading this volume!

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