

**The First Annual
Symposium of
Latin American Art**

Vistas

Vistas 2

**The First Annual Symposium
of Latin American Art**

**Realisms: Politics, Art, and
Visual Culture in the Americas**

**Edited by
Sean Nesselrode Moncada**

The Annual Symposium of Latin American Art brings together graduate students, emerging scholars, and artists to share and discuss the multitude of perspectives that inform the artistic production and discourses of the region, as well as of US Latino art. This two-day series of panels also features prominent keynote speakers who are shaping the understanding of Latin American art today. Established by the Institute for Studies on Latin American Art (ISLAA) and The Institute of Fine Arts at New York University in 2016, the event takes place each spring and is organized and run by the graduate students at The Institute of Fine Arts and invited partner institutions such as The Graduate Center of The City University of New York and Columbia University.

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Foreword

Edward J. Sullivan

The second edition of *Vistas* offers the reader a series of essays based on papers delivered at the graduate student–organized conference on modern Latin American art held under the auspices of the Institute for Studies on Latin American Art (ISLAA) and The Institute of Fine Arts at New York University. The conference has become an integral part of the intellectual panorama of inquiry and analysis within a wide variety of topics related to the arts south of the US border and, further, the theme of Latinx art. Each conference is the result of approximately one year of work. Students fashion the overall themes, create a call for papers, choose from among the many submissions in three languages, and create a platform for welcoming emerging scholars and graduate students in the field of the arts of the Americas. Scholars from the New York City area and beyond attend the two-day-long event, and the immediate result is inevitably a series of lively discussions and interchanges of ideas that lead to collaboration, further projects, and a carrying forth of the discipline into realms that would not have been facilitated without the conference.

In *Vistas 2* we have several excellent papers from the symposium “Realisms: Art, Politics, and Visual Culture in the Americas.” Each essay deals with a very different form of discourse: from concerns with ecology to historicizing references to the Brazilian concept of “cannibalism” (*antropofagia*). But for their heterogeneity, they read as a definitively synergistic confluence of ideas and intellectual efforts. Very often conference papers are written with seriousness and enthusiasm but sometimes become lost if they are not recorded or published. The organizers of the conference (including me, the faculty coordinator) are most grateful to ISLAA for facilitating a memorialization of the symposium.

Preface

Sean Nesselrode Moncada

In 2015, the PhD candidates specializing in Latin American art history at The Institute of Fine Arts at New York University, including me, were given an extraordinary opportunity by our advisor, Edward Sullivan. With the support of the Institute for Studies on Latin American Art (ISLAA), our cohort was encouraged to formulate and organize a public event on a topic of our choosing. From the beginning, we determined to create an annual symposium for emerging scholars, which would serve as a platform for new research to be shared and new voices to be heard. In April of the following year, we were proud to present the inaugural Annual Symposium of Latin American Art, “Realisms: Politics, Art, and Visual Culture in the Americas.” At the time, Latin American and Latinx art had begun to enjoy canonical status as part of a recent global turn, just as the stakes of a geopolitical reordering were sharpening into focus. Responding to these profound shifts, we decided upon “realisms” as a theme. Realisms, in the plural, denoted not a style or an ideology but a commitment to an honest assessment of the political, economic, and social realities experienced throughout the Americas.

This issue of *Vistas* collects papers that were originally presented as part of this inaugural symposium, printed here in expanded or reworked forms. It is less a document of the proceedings of the conference than a revisiting. Several years removed from the “Realisms” symposium, we seem to have entered an altogether different reality, but the research presented here attests to the importance of memory, document, and, above all, visibility as a counter to occlusive narratives of order and stability. The four papers chosen for this issue consider work produced between 1973 and 1984, a period in which the promise of modernism began to fracture throughout South America under the weight of political and economic stress. They discuss material produced in response to repressive regimes, sustained violence, and developmentalist expansion.

In her essay on Eduardo Ramírez Villamizar's monument *Dieciséis torres*, constructed just outside Bogotá in 1973, Rachel Mohl attends to the union of abstraction and politics. Departing from a rehearsal of Ramírez Villamizar's shift to abstraction, Mohl offers a compelling analysis of the monument as both an embodiment of and reaction against the political violence of the era. She looks specifically to strategies of spatial and visual fracturing as indicative of the psychic dislocation produced by violence. Yet the solidity of the monument, along with Ramírez Villamizar's broader penchant for impenetrable, shield-like structures, constitutes a metaphorically protective force against the threat of bodily harm, speaking to the profound ambivalence generated by the simultaneous ubiquity and invisibility of violence in 1970s Colombia.

The following two papers examine work produced in Brazil in response to the policing of the body under military dictatorship. Gillian Sneed takes up Anna Maria Maiolino's Super 8 film *In-Out* (*Antropofagia*) as exemplary of the reclamation of *antropofagia*, or cultural cannibalism, several decades after the initial formulation of this theory in the 1920s. Following Suely Rolnik's analysis of the countercultural return of *antropofagia* in the 1960s as a strategy for resisting the authoritarian reification of identity, Sneed contends that Maiolino's "cannibal subjectivities" open spaces of flux that allow for nonnormative gender identities while foregrounding conditions of censorship and restriction. With its images of consumption, ingestion, and regurgitation, *In-Out* becomes instructive in the ability of nonnarrative film to scramble, and thereby undermine, fixed subjectivities as they are regulated by the state.

Tie Jojima similarly addresses the status of nonnormative identities in her research on the xerox art of Hudinilson Jr. and Eduardo Kac, who were both affiliated with the Movimento de Arte Pornô in early 1980s Brazil. In response to sexual restrictions put in place by the dictatorship, which reinforced patriarchal and heterosexual norms, both artists produced journals, billboards, and performances that depicted images and practices deemed obscene by the regime. The radicality of this work, Jojima argues, lies in the making visible of queer identity as well as in the structural possibilities afforded by the Xerox machine—as

Maiolino does with film, Hudinilson Jr. and Kac hijack the medium by deploying unsanctioned materials and practices, ultimately queering not just their subject matter but also the mechanics of its communication.

Finally, Michel Otayek considers Thea Segall's photographs of southern Venezuela that were commissioned for the curious 1984 book *Y Gallegos creó Canaima . . .*, published by Ferrominera del Orinoco on the occasion of novelist Rómulo Gallegos's centennial. At once a photographic document, a study of Gallegos's writing process, and a celebration of the nationalization of Venezuela's natural resources, the book betrays a remarkable set of assumptions embedded in its own production. In his essay, Otayek relates the troubled history of the project, nowhere more apparent than in the sidelining of Segall's photographs. The book, he suggests, simultaneously confirms the triumph of industrialization in Venezuela and freezes Canaima in a primitivist past—an adamant refusal to contend with history and reality, and an unwitting revelation of the blindness of the country's developmentalist push.

Together, these essays shed light on an impressive array of visual, material, and theoretical strategies that artists have marshaled as a means of articulating their own conditions of existence, often at great personal and professional risk. I would like to thank, first and foremost, the authors who have agreed to revisit their original papers, which constitute some of the most provocative new research on art and visuality in the Americas. Many thanks are also due to the Institute for Studies on Latin American Art, Edward Sullivan, and my former cohort at The Institute of Fine Arts—the genesis of the symposium was the result of a truly collaborative effort. Finally, I am especially grateful to Blanca Serrano, who has been vital in the organization of this edition of *Vistas*. It is my hope that this volume can intervene in a field that is no longer emergent but now fully established, and that it will prompt further recovery of those histories and subjectivities that continue to be obscured.

Displaced Order. Undercurrents of Violence in Eduardo Ramírez Villamizar's *Dieciséis torres*

Rachel G. Mohl

Overlooking the city of Bogotá, in the western hills of Parque Nacional, Eduardo Ramírez Villamizar placed his sixteen monumental towers in 1973 (figs. 1–2).¹ Each tower stands at twenty-two feet tall and consists of one continuous concrete line, rising and falling within the confines of a square area. Ramírez Villamizar situates the towers equidistantly while maintaining the shape of the square. By doing so, the artist preserves the established geometric order of the singular tower and allows the line to seemingly continue infinitely from afar. The integration of this methodical, clean grid in space and the interaction between the object and viewers fragment and displace the experience of the landscape. Indeed, the monument's hard right angles starkly contrast with the organic surroundings, causing a visual and physical disjunction between landscape and object. Seen from afar, the towers maintain an imposing air of verticality above the natural horizon line as a man-made object interjecting itself in nature. As viewers approach the towers, which mimic their own verticality, they become engulfed by the structures. This awe-inspiring monumentality produces a physical disorientation. Visitors, encouraged to penetrate the labyrinth, enter a space filled with volumes and voids that limit their movements and alter their perception. Walking through the sculpture, each viewer is enclosed by concrete but also given certain vistas of the natural surroundings, the city below, and the sky above. Thus, by giving only fragments of experience, Ramírez Villamizar removes the viewer from a totality of understanding, estranging viewers from their previous reality. At the same time, the artist guides viewers into a new reality through the protective shield² that these structures offer.

Dieciséis torres (Sixteen Towers) marked Ramírez Villamizar's permanent return to Colombia after living in New York City on and off since 1960. Upon his return, the artist found his native country in a volatile state of political and social turmoil, which had steadily increased since the eruption of the civil war

known as La Violencia (The Violence) in the late 1940s. Violent uprisings and bloody conflicts, which had previously been confined to rural, agricultural areas, began entering the country's urban centers.³ As a result, Ramírez Villamizar began to engage and manage his experience of Colombia's violence through a forceful sense of order, exemplified by the towers. While many scholars have focused on the artist's pure abstraction and emphasis on geometric perfection as a utopic creation,⁴ I would like to complicate the notion of order, rationality, and utopia in his work. I propose that he cut, spliced, and fractured geometric forms in his sculptures to disrupt and defamiliarize the viewer's space, which suggests a visual, physical, and structural connection with the violence occurring in Colombia at that time. His towers aggressively dislocate the viewer from a chaotic reality and armor the body to carefully construct an autocratic program in opposition to the violence. Indeed, the experience of confronting *Dieciséis torres* displaces the viewer through the violent force of forms acting on perception, movement, and sensation. Simultaneously, by creating a type of weapon that surrounds the viewer, Ramírez Villamizar ties his structured aesthetic to an authoritarian vision that evokes a nuanced version of the mechanically commodified body encouraged during wartime.

Setting the Scene

Ramírez Villamizar was just finishing his studies at La Escuela de Bellas Artes de la Universidad Nacional de Colombia when La Violencia began in 1946.⁵ This year marked the return to power of the Colombian Conservative Party after the sixteen-year rule of the Colombian Liberal Party. La Violencia took root in rural towns where authorities encouraged Conservative-supporting peasants to seize lands owned by Liberals. This provoked an outbreak of violence within the agricultural landscape of Colombia that spread to the capital in 1948, when Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, the presidential candidate for the Liberal Party, was assassinated in broad daylight. What followed was ten hours of rioting that resulted in the deaths of some five thousand people—an event known as El Bogotazo.⁶ The ten years that followed proved politically, economically, and socially turbulent, with the country experiencing two different military coups followed by periods of dictatorships,

approximately two hundred thousand deaths, and over one million people displaced from their homes.⁷ Most notable was the manner in which the killings, maimings, and dismemberings were done. Certain techniques became so commonplace that they had names, such as *bocachiquiar* and *picar para tamal*. The former consisted of puncturing victims hundreds of times and leaving them to bleed to death. The latter entailed cutting up the body of a living person, piece by piece.⁸

Not only did Ramírez Villamizar know of the atrocities occurring around him by reading about them day after day in the newspaper; he was also directly affected by El Bogotazo. At the time, his works were being exhibited alongside those of his friend and colleague Edgar Negret at La Sociedad de Ingenieros. One day, he received a call asking him to quickly come to the building to remove his works because they were in danger. The artist recalls leaving his house, even though the city was not safe and people were being killed in the streets. When he removed the paintings from the gallery, he noticed that the walls were hot—the building next door had caught fire. Both artists rescued their works, but the exhibition space burned down a short while later.⁹ Deeply affected by this situation, the artist began painting in an aggressive expressionist style to encapsulate the ambience of his surroundings. As he later noted, however, the violence that he depicted did not render a specific event; rather, his paintings of this time period, such as *Combate de caballos* (1949), give an overall sense of aggression.¹⁰ In this work, the artist employs thick, forceful brushstrokes to represent the tumult of two horses fighting. The action takes place on the surface of the canvas as one of the horses, outlined in bright red, rears on its hind legs. His head comes to a fierce, sharp point as another horse's similarly jagged head reaches around his neck with bared teeth. Both animals' eyes are vacant, as though so consumed with aggression and rage that they have lost all other senses. It is this loss of rationality in particular that caused Ramírez Villamizar to turn to abstraction. Indeed, in a 1985 interview, he stated that once he left Colombia, he "reacted against violence by showing the contrary. The contrary of violence is construction, order, civilization."¹¹

During the 1950s, the artist made two sojourns to Paris, the first between 1950 and 1952 and the other between 1954 and 1956. In Paris, he integrated himself within the contemporary

artistic circles, particularly Edgard Pillet and Jean Dewasne's Atelier d'Art Abstrait. This collective attracted many international artists, including the Venezuelan Disidentes and the Cuban Concretos, with its full program of workshops and conferences on geometric abstraction. There, Ramírez Villamizar was introduced to the major debates and figures within the avant-garde. The Colombian artist also frequented Galerie Denise René and befriended Victor Vasarely, who had a profound influence on him. The clarity, stability, and order embraced by these artists and intellectuals fit certain post-traumatic needs of reconstruction in the postwar era. Ramírez Villamizar adopted this visual rhetoric in order to understand the violence he had witnessed, but eventually moved away from that singular experience. Within this exploration of form and space, his works do not create the antithesis of chaos but, rather, an alternate reality in which form dominates and displaces.

The representation of the subtle violence of displacement through aggressive spatiality begins in Ramírez Villamizar's paintings of the late 1950s, developing into three-dimensional reliefs and sculptures by the 1960s. In the early abstract work *Pintura en rojos y negro* (Painting in Reds and Black) of 1958 (fig. 3), the artist organizes shapes in such a way that they splice into each other, giving the sensation that the bottom section is falling off of the picture plane. Using a foundation of an inverted hexagon, the artist places fragmented shapes inside its boundaries, with one orange form protruding from its side. This adds to the instability of the surface plane, making it seem as though the forms are moving. Obviously influenced by Vasarely, the Salon des Réalités Nouvelles, and the 1955 *Le mouvement* exhibition at Galerie Denise René, Ramírez Villamizar still maintains the sharpness of form exhibited in his *Combate de caballos*. Indeed, while Vasarely's work centers on overlapping shapes, the Colombian artist focuses more on cutting and splicing forms. In a review of an exhibition of these works in Colombia, art critic Marta Traba noted Ramírez Villamizar's "hard, sacrificed forms."¹² The artist's subtle and quiet violence of displacement demonstrates an interest in spatiality, in contrast to Vasarely's focus on optics, and foreshadows his progressive development into sculpture in the round.

Ramírez Villamizar's transition into sculpture began with his large-scale mural-relief *El Dorado* (fig. 4), in which he

addresses the violence in Colombia in relation to conflict over economic power. Commissioned by Banco de Bogotá in 1958, the work fills the wall of the entryway to the bank with an enormous rhythmic force. The artist's forms lose the sharpness exhibited in his earlier paintings and, instead, overwhelming movement becomes the focus, as repetitive, round waves start, abruptly stop, and overlap. Paired with the title of the work, the contiguous forms and the use of gold suggest the continuity of the country's history in relation to its past and present economic situation. The title of the work, *El Dorado*, refers to a mythical city of gold, which enticed various conquistadores to embark upon perilous journeys to northern areas of Latin America. Familiar with this history, Ramírez Villamizar frequented Bogotá's Museo del Oro, which houses some of the finest examples of pre-Columbian gold artifacts. The artist also recalls drawing inspiration for this mural from the gold altarpieces that he saw in churches as a child.¹³ Both of these influences speak to the tumultuous and violent history of Latin America. Thus, he combines the contemporary conflict with pre-Columbian and colonial histories through the mural's title, the use of gold, and the lyric continuity of his forms.

The artist revives this legend specifically at Bogotá's central bank, the nexus of monetary power and the country's first skyscraper. Indeed, the building was praised by newspapers as the most modern in Colombia, symbolizing a way forward after La Violencia.¹⁴ This beacon of hope ushered in a new era of globalization and modernization,¹⁵ which represented the kind of rational order Ramírez Villamizar strove to uphold in the face of tumultuous chaos. As such, the mural's forms purposefully resemble the curvilinear shape and circular ornament often found on pre-Columbian breastplates. The floating contours look like defensive layers on the surface of the wall, producing a shield-like structure protecting the inside lobby of the building. Thus, *El Dorado* marks the beginning of the artist's direct engagement with Colombia's political, economic, and social context by employing forms as shields or weapons against the country's persistent violence. Indeed, while the various political factions continued to fight over economic resources even after La Violencia ended, the armored wall symbolically kept this outside of the bank's walls, symbolically safeguarding both its physical wealth and the global modernity to which the building aspired.

The Displaced Body

Standing atop a prominent hill in Bogotá, *Dieciséis torres*, Ramírez Villamizar's first sculptural project in Colombia,¹⁶ resembles a fortress guarding the city. Ramírez Villamizar had created smaller modules of this work while living in New York—the first, *Cuatro torres* (Four Towers), for the University of Vermont, on the occasion of the 1971 International Sculpture Symposium, and the second, *Columnata* (Colonnade), for New York's Fort Tryon Park in 1972.¹⁷ For his homecoming sculpture, the artist significantly increased the number of units from four to sixteen, thus multiplying the dense, overwhelming effect of the architectural mass. Ramírez Villamizar chose a symbolically significant site, where the rural met the urban and the threat of violence loomed over the city. By the beginning of the 1970s, the violence began infiltrating urban centers, especially following the elections of 1970, which left a number of agrarian and working-class groups disenfranchised. With the increased violence in the countryside, displaced farmers and laborers, having lost their homes, moved to the country's urban centers in search of a stable income.¹⁸ In this way, the conflict became more visible and its presence stronger within the larger segment of the Colombian population that lived in the country's major cities.

By marking this site with his sculpture, Ramírez Villamizar separated it from the rest of the landscape; it became, in Fredric Jameson's terms, an alien territory. As the critic and theorist notes, the experience of war is inherently nonnarrative and abstracted from totality. Therefore, to adequately represent the multiplicity of war and its institutions, according to Jameson, a work must create the feeling of defamiliarization through the production of place by setting the scene.¹⁹ Ramírez Villamizar's towers dislocate the viewer from the totality of the landscape in precisely this way, reproducing the abstracted experience of war. By denoting it as a space where no violence can occur, the artist also reclaims the site from warfare. Through this duality, Ramírez Villamizar builds a space that is sacred, yet also reenacts the displacement caused by the new reality of a war-torn Colombia. Traba reflects on this duality, describing the space as one of "confinement and freedom, of invading forms and decision of escape."²⁰ Indeed, through the enclosed,

protected spaces of the work, the viewer can understand fragments of nature—animal, plant, and human. At the same time, these spaces are confining, oppressive, and overwhelming, reflecting the experience of the Colombian conflict in an abstract way. In the face of violence, Ramírez Villamizar stated, “I became interested in reconstruction, constructivism . . . utopia, Greek temples, the search for perfection in contrast to violence, horror, and imperfection.”²¹ To this end, *Dieciséis torres* uses repetitive form to displace viewers, defamiliarizing them from their surroundings to allow them to understand the current reality and build toward a new one.

This process of bodily engagement has resonances in contemporaneous minimalist practices with which the artist came into contact during his stay in New York City in the mid-1960s. In particular, *Dieciséis torres* exemplified Minimalism’s unification and integration of three-dimensional objects as whole entities that engage with their surroundings and change in relation to the viewer’s position. This focus on the observer’s real space takes into account the work’s relationship with the human body, in that the viewer and the art object function on the same plane and interact autonomously. Ramírez Villamizar said of his works during this period that they were the result of his search for moving forms, which he would repeat, enlarge, or shrink to create a sense of displacement, primarily by emphasizing the physicality of his objects. In other words, he explained, he wanted to mold space to such an extent that it prevailed over form.²² Through his incorporation of Minimalism’s aggressive unity and bodily displacement, Ramírez Villamizar forces viewers to reassess the structure of their own form and existence, specifically as the artist constructs a protective entity in front of and surrounding the viewer’s body. Individually, the verticality of the structures parallels the powerful erectness of the male body, but when viewed as a whole, the towers appear as a battalion of soldiers guarding the site. While its large scale can seem overwhelming, the object’s unmoving rigidity as fastened to its particular site allows for it to be read as a protective military group, rather than a charging onslaught of soldiers. Indeed, the movement created by the sculpture originates from the position of the viewer. From the outside, the observer can control their physical relationship to the object so that the soldier-towers provide a barrier between the observer and rural violence. Upon

entering the towers, the observer has certain tactical advantages, such as being able to see various perspectives of the landscapes without being seen. In this way, the soldier formation becomes a shield, encasing the body in a protective layer.

The defense mechanism established by the sculpture enacts a psychic armoring of the viewer's body, which echoes Ramírez Villamizar's desire to rebuild Colombian society through order and perfection. When standing within the structure, the viewer's perception becomes fragmented, causing them to become defamiliarized with their surroundings. The only whole unit on which they then rely is their own body and the protective armor of the towers—an extension of the body, which transforms into a weapon and, by extension, a shield, in this new military-industrial order. This directly relates to Hal Foster's concept of the mechanically commodified body during World Wars I and II. According to Foster, the fascist trope strove to disavow any physical harm incurred during the wars by equating the male body with weapons and machines made for destruction. This technical rationality allowed for a suppressive and expressive violence toward others that was politically and culturally encouraged during wartime.²³ Within the context of the decades-long Colombian conflict, violence assumed different proportions in its emphasis on causing the utmost physical harm. Rather than using technological developments such as aerial tactics and machine guns to advance a national agenda, armoring of the body was needed to protect against the clash of political conflict. Ramírez Villamizar's sculpture offers protection in the form of Minimalism's unified system, underscoring the idea that a viable means forward can be achieved through one organized program instead of with various competing agendas. Indeed, the artist's choice to create sixteen towers relates to a proportional, geometric arrangement of form, but also embodies the sixteen years of the National Front government—the semi-dictatorial coalition between Colombia's two parties that encouraged suppressive violence and military force.²⁴ In this way, Ramírez Villamizar's insistence on rigid perfection intertwines with a fascist armoring of the body.

The psychic dimension of the transformation of the body into a protective shield takes root in Freud's idea of the ego. According to Freud, violence produces a damaged sense of self, and because the ego is dependent on the image of the body, the

narcissistic disturbance becomes physical. In Lacanian terms, the image of the body as a whole has been destroyed, and the victim views their body in pieces. In order to avert the Lacanian desire of the other,²⁵ Ramírez Villamizar's *Dieciséis torres* reverses the idea of the body in pieces by instead fragmenting and displacing the viewer's gaze. Since the external world remains in parts, the viewer must turn desire inward to establish a self-image, thus affirming the wholeness of one's body and ego. In addition to providing physical protection, the towers produce a psychic shield from violent fragmentation by allowing the viewer to return to one's vertical whole self. In this way, Ramírez Villamizar enacts an ordered violence on the viewer by establishing a scene in which the body is protected and can return to a psychic whole. This, in turn, produces an organized, controlled society—one to which the artist refers as utopic. It is exactly this duality that Traba encapsulates with her description of the towers as both confined and free, allowing for a recovery from the traumatic events that were taking place in Colombia at that time through the displacement of the viewer and the aggressive reordering of their space.

Dieciséis torres epitomizes Ramírez Villamizar's desire to instill and produce order and rationality in his chaotic surroundings. Through a protection and eventual mechanization of the body, the artist attempts to affirm the wholeness of a traumatized nation still undergoing a violent conflict. No sooner had the artist inaugurated his work than a group of motorcyclists overtook the hilly space for their daytime recreation, practicing their bike tricks and racing up and down the hill among the other visitors. According to reports, they did no harm to the sculpture, yet Ramírez Villamizar complained, stating that these motorcyclists took over the site "behind the government's back."²⁶ The group had disrupted the proscribed order the artist intended to impose upon his audience—one that disobeyed the regime in power. He had not anticipated that by reclaiming the landscape, it would be open to everyone's interpretation of order, not just his own.

1. I would like to thank Andrés Felipe Ortiz for his invaluable assistance with my research.
2. Hal Foster, "Armour Fou," in *Vision and Textuality*, eds. Stephen W. Melville and Bill Readings (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), 215–40.
3. Marco Palacios provides one of the most in-depth analyses of the rise of violence and its continued presence in Colombia. See Marcos Palacios, *Between Legitimacy and Violence: A History of Colombia*, trans. Richard Stoller (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006).
4. Early scholars such as Walter Engel and Frederico Morais lauded Ramírez Villamizar for the order and rationality of his sculptures. Walter Engel, "El arte absoluto de Ramírez Villamizar," *El espectador: magazine dominical*, September 13, 1964, 13F; Frederico Morais, "Utopía y forma en Ramírez Villamizar," in *Ramírez Villamizar* (Bogotá: Museo de Arte Moderno de Bogotá, 1984), 29–55. Recently, scholarship has focused on investigating his geometric abstraction through a transnational perspective. Ana María Franco, "Edgar Negret and Eduardo Ramírez Villamizar: Transnational Encounters and the Rise of Modernism in Colombian Art, 1944–1964" (PhD diss., New York University, 2012).
5. Marta Traba, "Un poder ordenador," in *Seis artistas contemporáneos colombianos* (Bogotá: Alberto Barco Editor, 1963).
6. Palacios, 48–50, 160–62.
7. Norman A. Bailey, "La Violencia en Colombia," *Journal of Inter-American Studies* 9, no. 4 (October 1967): 562–63.
8. Bailey, 561.
9. Eileen Patricia McKiernan González is one of the first and only scholars to address Ramírez Villamizar's work in relationship to La Violencia, focusing on the work he produced between 1948 and 1962 in her master's thesis, "Geometric Abstraction as a Critique of La Violencia in the Work of Eduardo Ramírez Villamizar" (master's thesis, The University of Texas at Austin, 1997).
10. Ana María Escallón, *El espacio en forma: Eduardo Ramírez Villamizar, exposición retrospectiva, 1945–1985* (Bogotá: Biblioteca Luis Ángel Arango, 1986), 10.
11. Escallón, 9 (translation mine).
12. Morais, 32 (translation mine).
13. In an exhibition catalog essay, the artist notes the confluence between pre-Columbian gold and the precious metal's use in cathedrals. Eduardo Ramírez Villamizar, "Homenaje a los artífices precolombinos," in *Ramírez Villamizar: homenaje a los artífices precolombinos*, exh. cat. (Bogotá: Op. Gráficas, 1989), 4–6.
14. "El más moderno y más alto edificio del país: El Banco de Bogotá," *El Tiempo*, October 9, 1959, 9.
15. For a discussion of the Ramírez Villamizar's *El Dorado* and the Banco de Bogotá building in the context of the International Style see Ana María Franco, "Modernidad y tradición en el arte colombiano de mediados del siglo XX: El Dorado de Eduardo Ramírez Villamizar," *Ensayos. Historia y teoría del arte* 1, no. 24 (2013): 26–44.
16. Nicolás Bonilla Maldonado, "Cronología," *Eduardo Ramírez Villamizar* (Bogotá: Ediciones Gamma, 2010), 257.
17. Bonilla Maldonado, 255.
18. For a complete and thorough analysis of the various factions, causes, and ramifications of violence in Colombia, see Frank Safford and Mark Palacios, *Colombia: Fragmented Land, Divided Society* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Marco Palacios, *Between Legitimacy and Violence*; Charles W. Bergquist, Ricardo Peñaranda, and Gonzalo

Sánchez, eds., *Violence in Colombia: The Contemporary Crisis in Historical Perspective* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources Books, 1992).

19. While Jameson refers to the ability of films to depict war, his theories on war and representation can be applied to the visual arts, especially in debates on figuration and abstraction in response to violence. Fredric Jameson, "War and Representation," in *The Antinomies of Realism* (London: Verso Books, 2013), 231–54.

20. Marta Traba, "Tótem en la cordillera," in *Ramírez Villamizar —escultor* (Bogotá: Museo de Arte Moderno de Bucaramanga, 1989), museum brochure (translation mine).

21. María Cristina Laverde Toscano and Álvaro Rojas de la Espriella, "El sueño del orden," in *Así hablan los artistas* (Bogotá: Universidad Central, 1986), 130 (translation mine).

22. Bonilla, 256–57.

23. Hal Foster compares the artistic production of war survivors, particularly that of Max Ernst, with public artworks meant to inspire war and violence. Foster, 215–240.

24. The two political parties, whose dispute had caused La Violencia, had come to a truce through the creation of the National Front, a power-sharing coalition. They devised a cooperative government in which every four years, for sixteen years, the ruling parties would alternate. Thus, while Colombian citizens voted for the president, they were only able to choose preselected candidates from either the Conservative or the Liberal camp. This, in turn, marginalized a large segment of the population that was unaffiliated with either party. See James D. Henderson, *Modernization in Colombia: The Laureano Gómez Years, 1889–1965* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001).

25. Jacques Lacan describes the mirror stage and the formation of the gaze in his *Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1998).

26. This statement was found in an archival note from 1974 in Ramírez Villamizar's journals, housed at the Biblioteca Luis Ángel Arango. A similar comment was published in *ArtNexus* 10 (September 1979): 4.

Figures

Rachel G. Mohl

Displaced Order. Undercurrents of Violence
in Eduardo Ramírez Villamizar's *Dieciséis torres*



Figure 1

Eduardo Ramírez Villamizar, *Dieciséis torres*, 1973.
Concrete, $274 \frac{13}{16} \times 274 \frac{13}{16} \times 274 \frac{13}{16}$ in. (700 × 700 × 700 cm).
Photograph by Óscar Monsalve.
Courtesy the Estate of Eduardo Ramírez Villamizar and Óscar Monsalve.



Figure 2

Eduardo Ramírez Villamizar, *Dieciséis torres*, 1973.

Photograph by Óscar Monsalve.

Courtesy the Estate of Eduardo Ramírez Villamizar and Óscar Monsalve

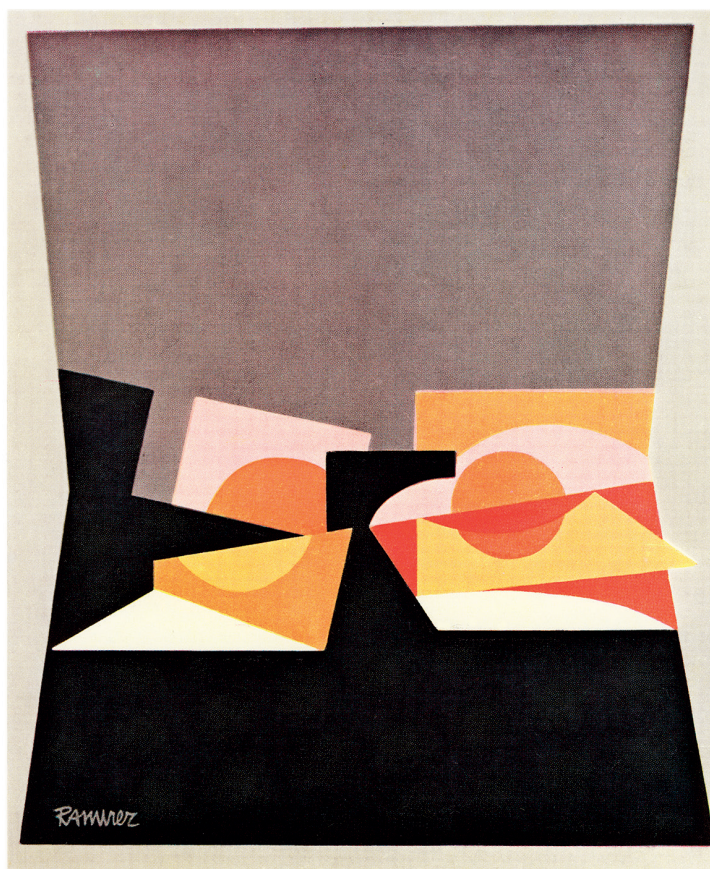


Figure 3

Eduardo Ramírez Villamizar, *Pintura en rojos y negro*, 1958.

Oil on canvas, 47 ¼ × 39 ¾ in. (120 × 100 cm).

Photograph by Hernán Díaz.

Courtesy the Estate of Eduardo Ramírez Villamizar and Archivo Hernán Díaz.



Figure 4

Eduardo Ramírez Villamizar, *El Dorado*, 1960.

Wooden relief covered in gold leaf, 294 × 1456 ¹³/₁₆ in. (746.76 × 3700 cm).

Photograph by Hernán Díaz.

Courtesy the Estate of Eduardo Ramírez Villamizar and Archivo Hernán Díaz.

Anthropophagic Subjectivities: Gender and Identity in Anna Maria Maiolino's *In-Out* (*Antropofagia*), 1973–1974

Gillian Sneed

In April 1974, at the First Super 8 Film Festival in Curitiba, the Italian-Brazilian artist Anna Maria Maiolino screened her first experimental film: a Super 8 film titled *In-Out* (*Antropofagia*) (1973–1974, fig. 1).¹ Before this time, she had worked in printmaking and relief sculpture, so the fact that her first foray into the moving image was awarded a prize at the festival was an indication of its innovative engagement with the medium. The approximately eight-minute color film opens with a close-up of a person's mouth that has been taped shut with two rectangular black bandages, one horizontal and one vertical, creating a sizable black cross. Accompanying this image are the strange high-pitched scratching sounds of an abstract soundtrack by experimental composer Laura Clayton de Souza. Next, the same mouth appears with a single horizontal black bandage across it. An eerie girlish voice intones something indecipherable before transforming into an echoing, vibrating sound, as a smiling female mouth (that of Maiolino) appears wearing lipstick, followed by a man's grimacing mouth.

Shots alternate between the man's mouth, anxiously contorting his lips and sticking out his tongue, and the woman's red lips, which first hug a white egg and then pucker up for a kiss. Low, masculine groans and guttural laughter transform into female grunting noises. The man's mouth reappears, his lips painted black, smacking as if he is chewing gum, then baring his teeth like a wild animal. The soundtrack trills with flutes, fading into what sounds like a bevy of female voices cackling like witches, as the woman's red lips clench and then chew up a single black string. This is followed by a close-up of the same mouth, its lips clamping multiple colored strings, whose ends dangle down. The mouth opens to reveal the strings as a wet, tangled mass, which is slowly pulled out from below, until just one single red string is left. Next, the man's black lips reappear, first speaking at a normal rate, then progressively speeding up, accompanied by the disjunctive sound of a low male voice played

at an ultraslow speed. Then the lower half of his face appears again, but now with beard stubble and pink lips. The shots oscillate between the woman's moving lips, now painted black, and the sped-up, moving lips of the stubble-faced man, played to the sounds of echoing rhythms and cacophonous music. A blurry shot then shows the man's mouth wearing lipstick, with smoke slowly wafting out from between his lips, accompanied by breathing sounds. Crashing and grunting sounds accompany a pair of nostrils flaring repeatedly as if trying, but unable, to breathe. Another face appears then, overexposed in natural, directional light, with its mouth slightly open, while the same labored breathing noises continue. The film's final shot returns to the image of a single black bandage covering the mouth again, and then closes with the words "In Out" appearing in white letters over the image.

Representations like this one, of the mouth and ingestion, gained particular currency in Brazilian films and videos of the mid-1970s. They were a response to the resurgence in the late 1960s and early 1970s of the postcolonial theory of *antropofagia* (cultural cannibalism), which had originally emerged in Brazil as a cultural strategy of decolonization in May 1928, when the poet and catalyst of Brazilian modernism Oswald de Andrade published his "Manifesto Antropófago" (Anthropophagous Manifesto, fig. 2).² De Andrade's interest in *antropofagia* was based on the cannibalistic rituals of the Tupinambá Indians, who inhabited Brazil at the time of the European conquests. He was fascinated by their practice of capturing and eating their prisoners, a ceremony that the Amerindians believed would enable them to absorb their enemies' strength and assimilate their identities. Building on this historical practice, de Andrade's "Manifesto Antropófago" asserted a new conception of *antropofagia*, in which Brazilian artists would "cannibalize" European cultural and artistic influences to make them authentically Brazilian, rather than derivative. In its first, modernist phase, then, *antropofagia* emerged as a tactic of the Brazilian avant-garde to adopt European artistic and literary styles while still asserting cultural agency in the face of pervasive European cultural hegemony. It also served as a nativist instrument for Brazilian artists to celebrate their own "authentic" *brasilidade* (Brazilian identity).

Antropofagia reemerged in the late 1960s, in tandem with the rise of the Brazilian military dictatorship (1964–1985). When

General Artur da Costa e Silva came to power in 1967, he took an iron-fisted approach to law and order, issuing the draconian Institutional Act Number Five (AI-5), a decree that dissolved Congress and state legislatures, suspended the constitution, institutionalized repression against dissidents, and imposed wide-ranging censorship. His successor, General Emílio Garrastazu Médici, executed the AI-5 in 1969, prompting increased oppression. Following the AI-5, it became illegal to publish anything that “offended morality and proper behavior,” such as depictions of nudity or sex, as well as any politically dissenting opinions, references to state-sponsored violence, or even allusions to censorship itself.³ The regime harassed, imprisoned, tortured, and executed dissidents, forcing many artists and intellectuals into exile. During this period, antropofagia resurfaced in a slightly different form from its modernist antecedent: it became an irreverent anti-authoritarian and anti-imperialist political strategy practiced by artists associated with the popular music and arts movement Tropicália (1967–1968).⁴ These artists drew on the concept to assert a form of *brasilidade* that resisted the dictatorship’s nationalism and critiqued US economic and cultural imperialism.⁵ They did this through the assimilation and transformation, or “cannibalization,” of cultural forms—achieved through parody and irony—to subvert them from within, in order to resist the oppression of military rule. They also challenged the influx of US capital and cultural influences, especially via mass media entities like the Globo Television Network, which was complicit with the regime and the United States.⁶

It was against this backdrop that Maiolino created *In-Out*. As such, it has been commonly interpreted as a metaphorical indictment of the dictatorship’s repression and censorship of speech.⁷ The artist herself has bolstered this reading by explaining that the mouth sealed by a black bandage in the opening shot references censorship and the impossibility of talking and that the last shot of the flaring nostrils references the “suffocation” (*sufofo*) period of the dictatorship.⁸ Its references to antropofagia have also been interpreted as resisting the regime’s repression of free speech. For instance, curator and former video artist Paulo Herkenhoff has argued that the film represents the search for language under the duress of oppression and the attempt to reconstitute other possible forms of expression.⁹

The artist herself has even explicitly stated that through the film, she wished to symbolically “eat the repressive organs of the dictatorship” as a form of resistance—not to eradicate them completely, but to incorporate them into her own body, in order to transform and subvert them.¹⁰

Though these are compelling readings, in this essay I would like to suggest that Maiolino’s film also presents other meanings, specifically ones rooted in discourse of gender and identity. In addition to violence and the repression of free speech, the Brazilian dictatorship also enforced strict identity protocols among its subjects, particularly regarding normative gender and sexuality.¹¹ As political scientist Sonia Alvarez has argued, by merging Catholic values with militaristic ones, the Brazilian dictatorship enshrined “traditional womanhood [as] a cornerstone of authoritarian ‘order and progress.’”¹² Its cult of motherhood insisted that women’s “natural” responsibilities were housework and childrearing; the pervasive influence of the Church reinforced women’s subordination. Gender-based oppression took various forms, from high rates of femicide in Brazilian society at large and the sexual abuse of imprisoned dissidents to the imposition of stereotypical gender roles, traditional sexualities, and standards of beauty for the broader female public, all reinforced by the Brazilian mass media.

So, while it is true that *In-Out* addresses censorship and free speech on one level, it can also be interpreted through the lens of gender, especially given its images invoking the gender binary and its historical sociopolitical context within the dictatorship’s conservative patriarchal and heteronormative ideologies. Drawing on Brazilian cultural critic Suely Rolnik’s theory of “anthropophagic subjectivity,” I argue that in addition to contesting censorship, *In-Out* also engages antropofagia to contest gender norms. To demonstrate how Maiolino accomplishes this, I first overview her artistic trajectory and political views vis-à-vis feminism and anti-authoritarianism. Then I address Rolnik’s theory, to demonstrate how Maiolino’s film engages modes of open subjectivation that resist the reification of identity categories and demonstrate an increased relationship with alterity. Finally, I consider how Maiolino’s film anticipated and influenced the anthropophagic themes appearing in later film and video works by other Brazilian artists of the 1970s.

Though Maiolino is better known today for her large-scale clay sculptures and installations of spaghetti-like tubes and coils (fig. 3), her interest in antropofagia dates back to 1966, with her figurative soft sculpture relief *Glu, Glu, Glu* (1966, fig. 4), depicting two conjoined rectangular picture planes. At the top is a recessed box containing an androgynous blue bust, devoid of facial features except for a wide-open mouth and a throat on which the words “glu glu glu” are written vertically in white lowercase letters. At the bottom are bulbous vinyl organs and entrails in red, yellow, and green, together forming the digestive tract of the figure. The titular onomatopoeia—“glu, glu, glu”—is the Brazilian sound for swallowing. At the time she made *Glu, Glu, Glu*, Maiolino was an emerging artist, having only arrived in Rio de Janeiro six years earlier at the age of eighteen. Coming from southern Italy (by way of Venezuela), she was a cultural nomad thrust into the burgeoning Neo-Concrete movement (1959–1961). By 1962, she had become involved in the Nova Figuração (Neo-Figuration) group in Rio through wood-engraving classes she took at the Escola Nacional de Belas Artes (National School of Fine Arts) with artist Rubens Gerchman, whom she later married at the age of twenty-one, in 1963. By the time Maiolino was twenty-five years old, her Pop-inflected prints and sculptural reliefs, like *Glu, Glu, Glu*, had appeared in two breakthrough exhibitions: *Opinião '66* (Opinion '66) in 1966 and *Nova Objetividade Brasileira* (Brazilian New Objectivity) in 1967, both held at the Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro.¹³

After becoming a Brazilian citizen the following year, she accompanied Gerchman, who had won a travel grant, to New York in 1968. While there, she spent three years tending to their two young children; this responsibility made it challenging for her to find the time to make art, but other Latin American artists living in New York, including Luis Camnitzer and Hélio Oiticica, encouraged her to return to artmaking.¹⁴ In 1971, she and her children left her husband and New York. When she returned to Brazil, she divorced him and raised her children, working in a textile factory to provide for them, while also making art.¹⁵

As a result of this trajectory, Maiolino's identities as an artist and a mother are deeply intertwined, and the dominant themes of her works of this period were her domestic roles. It was (and continues to be) precisely because of her strong sense of her identity as a mother that Maiolino did not identify as a

“feminist” artist at the time, as she felt that feminism excluded women who valued maternity. In a recent interview, she affirmed that she “knew that there was the feminist movement” and “read magazines about what was happening,” but that she enjoyed her role as a mother and found this to be at odds with feminism as she understood it.¹⁶ She also felt that feminism excluded and disparaged men.¹⁷ Her rejection of feminism was commonplace in Brazil at the time and rooted in her local context.¹⁸ However, she did claim to embrace “the political,” by which she meant resisting the dictatorship’s oppressions.¹⁹

Despite Maiolino’s hesitancy about feminism, I argue that *In-Out* is undeniably framed by gender. Even Maiolino herself describes the film’s alternating male and female mouths as “an attempt by a female mouth to . . . establish a dialogue with a male mouth.”²⁰ Through the speaking mouths (whose words we cannot hear or even lip-read), the film also represents thwarted attempts at communication between a variety of gendered subjects, including a bearded male mouth wearing lipstick, a sexualized female mouth wearing red lipstick, and an ambiguously gendered mouth wearing black lipstick. However, beyond the stereotyped trope of the “miscommunication between the sexes,” Maiolino’s film also addresses gender binaries in a more profound and anthropophagic sense.²¹

Writing on the reemergence of antropofagia in Brazil in the 1960s and 1970s as a response to both the dictatorship and the countercultural movements of the time, while collaborating closely with Félix Guattari in Paris (1970–1979), Suely Rolnik theorized a politics of subjectivation that countered identitarian approaches to difference.²² Rolnik explains that during this time, the Brazilian counterculture encouraged an increased relationality with alterity in opposition to the strict disciplinary rule of authoritarianism. She terms this “anthropophagic subjectivity” and defines it as a form of “flexible subjectivity [in which] . . . the figures of the subject and object dissolve,” giving rise to the possibility of the self’s merger with the Other, or in other words, the anthropophagic incorporation of the Other within the self.²³ Rolnik contends that the radical social and political implications of this kind of subjectivity were intolerable to the dictatorship because of their potential to undermine disciplinary norms. This, she explains, is because totalitarian regimes instate a “pathological rigidity of the identity principle.”²⁴ She argues that

such an “anthropophagic” approach to subjectivity can help resist the negative effects of totalitarian regimes as well as the mass media, which are both predicated on the reification of identity.²⁵

As many scholars have pointed out, authoritarianism depends on rigid constructions of masculinity and femininity, and the exaggerated masculinity of dictatorships is rooted in patriarchal domination, as well as in the values of hierarchy, discipline, obedience, and command.²⁶ In light of this, Rolnik privileges “subjectivity” over “identity,” explaining that identity is reifying and limiting, in contrast to the “plasticity” of subjectivity as a model of self-formation.²⁷ She advocates detaching subjectivity—the sense of a cohesive self—from representational and identity politics (which she terms “prêt-à-porter identities”) to embrace instead what Gilles Deleuze has described as “singularities,” or the specificities of the processes by which an individual is produced when they enter into a particular field of forces.²⁸ In another essay, Rolnik specifically addresses gender as a detrimental form of reified identity, arguing that “we must . . . wage a war against the reduction of subjectivities to genders, in favor of life and its mixtures.”²⁹ Although she acknowledges that, from a macropolitical perspective, forming coalitions around gender identity has been helpful for oppressed gender groups in the struggle for civil rights and dignity, she nonetheless concludes that from a micropolitical perspective, it has done more harm than good, because it has reduced subjectivity to a reified identity, ignoring flux, multiplicity, and hybridity, and thus preventing more profound political change.

Rolnik’s ideas help us capture the ways in which Maiolino wanted to explore gender, situating her experiences and oppressions under the dictatorship from a gendered perspective while still avoiding affiliations with “feminism” or essentializing claims about “women,” which were easily co-opted by political interests. *In-Out* privileges alterity through the artist’s symbolic anthropophagic actions and representations of fluid gender identities. The male and female subjects in Maiolino’s film swallow and regurgitate string, inhale and exhale smoke, and as they attempt to communicate with each other, they gesture toward flux, transition, and a state of being that resists fixed identifications. Maiolino’s representations confuse neat gender binaries traditionally expressed through highly legible signifiers of male and female, such as beards as symbols of “masculinity”

or red lipstick as an indicator of “femininity.” These gender swaps undermine and destabilize heteronormative gender presentation, critiquing the ways that patriarchal societies in general, and the authoritarian regime in particular, categorize and manage gendered bodies.

Because of the naturally soft colors and inherent graininess of Super 8, as well as its associations with amateur filmmaking, Maiolino’s use of the medium helps underscore contingency, fluidity, emotion, and the sensorial, further reinforcing her engagement with these anthropophagic subjectivities.³⁰ Additionally, the structure and order of her montaged images are not linear but, as she explains, “combinatory,” intended to “construct a structure of meanings that express emotions” rather than narrative.³¹ In this way, the editing references, but undermines, the organizational logic of language, and all the more so when the theme is—at least in part—the hindering of linguistic communication.³² Because the Super 8 camera was domestic, portable, and easy to carry, it was a particularly useful cinematic medium for intimate close-ups conveying bodily proximity.³³ Maiolino’s camera comes right up next to her subjects’ faces, engendering a sense of closeness between her performers and viewers. The physiological effects that some of the actions might have on the viewer, such as triggering a gag reflex, exacerbate this physicality. The film is scarred with a grainy texture and displays lighting inconsistencies, an inherent aspect of the medium and her amateur use of it, as her first attempt at filmmaking. The sunlight, the warm hues, and the guttural sounds and whispers of de Souza’s audio track work together with the film’s material textures to exhibit a visceral materiality that underscores *vivência* (lived experience) and the body. As such, Maiolino’s anthropophagic subversion of phallogocentric language privileges emotional intensities and emphasizes bodily—though unfixed and fluid—gendered subjectivities that undermine normative identities.³⁴

Significantly, *In-Out* anticipated and influenced several later film and video performances by artists including Paulo Herkenhoff and Sonia Andrade, which confronted similar themes.³⁵ The most salient comparison, however, is Lygia Pape’s film *Eat Me: Gluttony or Lust?* (1975), made two years after Maiolino’s *In-Out*.³⁶

Pape's color 16mm film displays remarkably similar imagery, including alternating close-up shots of a female mouth (that of Pape) and two male mouths (those of artists Cláudio Sampaio and Artur Barrio), which are bearded but also wearing lipstick, while sucking on colorful jewels, inhaling and exhaling smoke, and eating and/or performing fellatio on hot dogs. These images invoke antropofagia, not just on the level of intentional influences, but in terms of presenting non-reified gender, revealing an impish engagement with both alterity and eroticism. Like Maiolino, Pape rejected feminist ideas and feminist interpretations of the film while also privileging unfixed, over-reified gender identities.³⁷ However, while *In-Out*'s warm, soft, and grainy Super 8 aesthetic emphasizes materiality and viscosity, evoking bodily ingestion, digestion, and expulsion, *Eat Me*'s higher-grade 16mm film stock boasts a richer color and a crisper image, underscoring its associations with color television and its equating of eroticism with advertising and consumerism.

Ultimately, it can be argued that Maiolino's *In-Out* (*Antropofagia*) was highly influential on the Brazilian film and video performances that came after it, especially as a form of artistic resistance rooted in gender. Though Maiolino valued her role as a mother, she also realized other dimensions of her gendered identity as an artist and a worker. By underscoring the radical incoherence of the subject—its anthropophagic subjectivity, rather than fixed gender categories—the anthropophagic actions presented in *In-Out* work to destabilize the standards of gender identity that the patriarchal and authoritarian regime mandated, contesting its normative discourses and women's roles as subjects of the state.

1. Maiolino later likely showed *In-Out* at the Festival International du Super 8 at l'Éspace Pierre Cardin (Paris, 1974) and at the *Mostra de arte experimental de filmes Super 8, audiovisual e videotape* at the Maison de France (Rio de Janeiro, 1975). It was also included in her solo exhibition at Petite Galerie (Rio de Janeiro, 1976). Fernando Cocchiarale, ed., *Filmes de artista, Brasil 1965–1980* (Rio de Janeiro: Contra Capa Livraria, 2007), 66.

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2. See Oswald de Andrade, “Manifesto Antropófago,” *Revista de Antropofagia* 1, no. 1 (May 1928): 3, 7.

3. Elena Shtromberg, *Art Systems: Brazil and the 1970s* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2016), 8, 42–44.

4. This point is also made by Michael Asbury in “Anna Maria Maiolino: Articulations and Translations of and in Anthropophagy,” in *Anna Maria Maiolino: Making Love Revolutionary*, eds. Trinidad Fombella and Lydia Yee (London: Whitechapel Gallery, 2019), 72. While the music album *Tropicália: ou Panis et Circensis* (1968) epitomized Tropicália, many consider Hélio Oiticica’s earlier installation, *Tropicália* (1967), the origin of the term. Cynthia Canejo, “The Resurgence of Anthropophagy: Tropicália, Tropicalismo, and Hélio Oiticica,” *Third Text* 18, no. 1 (2004): 61–68; and Christopher Dunn, *Brutality Garden:*

Tropicália and the Emergence of a Brazilian Counterculture (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 121.

5. The Brazilian dictatorship came to power via a US-backed military coup in March 1964. See Boris Fausto and Sergio Fausto, *A Concise History of Brazil* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 271.

6. The Globo Television Network was affiliated with US economic interests, such as the Time Life company. Joseph Straubhaar, “Brazil: The Role of the State in World Television,” in *Media and Globalization: Why the State Matters*, eds. Nancy Morris and Silvio Ricardo Waisbord (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2001), 140.

7. See, for instance, Michael Asbury, “Anna Maria Maiolino: Order and Subjectivity,” in *Anna Maria Maiolino: Order and Subjectivity*, eds. Michael Asbury and Garo Keheyan (Nicosia, Cyprus: Pharos Centre for Contemporary Art, 2009), 29; and Ivone Margulies, “Filminhos (Little Films), Close Up,” in *Anna Maria Maiolino*, ed. Helena Tatay (London: Koenig, 2011), 118.

8. Maiolino in Helena Tatay, ed., *Anna Maria Maiolino*, 111.

9. Herkenhoff further describes the film as a kind of linguistic cannibalism that is at odds with the negotiation of difference proposed by Oswald’s modernist antropofagia: Maiolino “cannibalizes” repressed speech by “eating her words,” creating a new prelingual form of expression. Paulo Herkenhoff, “Maiolino’s Trajectory: A Negotiation of Differences” in *Anna Maria Maiolino, Vida Afora / A Life Line*, ed. Catherine de Zegher (New York: Drawing Center, 2002), 334–35.

10. Maiolino, “A Conversation between Anna Maria Maiolino and Helena Tatay,” interview by Helena Tatay, Documenta 13, accessed

- January 15, 2019. <http://d13.documenta.de/research/assets/Uploads/A-Conversation-between-Anna-Maria-Maiolino-and-Helena-Tatay.pdf>. Michael Asbury characterizes Maiolino's adoption of antropofagia as a way of culturally identifying with Brazilian culture as an immigrant, and he notes that it is a particularly visceral reinterpretation of the concept. Asbury, "Anna Maria Maiolino: Articulations and Translations of and in Anthropophagy," 73, 75.
11. Josephine Fisher, *Out of the Shadows: Women, Resistance, and Politics in South America* (London: Latin American Bureau, 1993), 11.
12. Sonia E. Alvarez, *Engendering Democracy in Brazil: Women's Movements in Transition Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), 55.
13. Organized by Hélio Oiticica, *Nova Objetividade Brasileira* focused on artistic trends of the 1960s, including Neo-Concretism and New Figuration (Brazilian Pop art). Claudia Calirman, "Pop and Politics in Brazilian Art," in *International Pop*, eds. Darsie Alexander and Bartholomew Ryan (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 2015), 119–30.
14. Maiolino quoted in Helena Tatay, ed., *Anna Maria Maiolino* (Barcelona: Fundació Antoni Tàpies, 2010), 44–46. See also Gillian Sneed, "Nossos Homens em Nova Iorque: Brazilian Women Artists in New York circa 1970," in *Open Work in Latin America, New York, and Beyond*, ed. Harper Montgomery (New York: Hunter College, 2013), 26–29.
15. Gerchman remained in New York until 1973. Helen Molesworth, "Mother Knowledge," in *Anna Maria Maiolino*, eds. Helen Molesworth and Philippe Vergne (Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art, 2017), 166.
16. "Eu sei que existia a movimento feminista e eu li jornais, o que estava acontecendo." Anna Maria Maiolino, interview with the author, August 1, 2016, São Paulo. All translations by the author, unless otherwise noted.
17. Maiolino, interview with the author, August 1, 2016, São Paulo.
18. Until recently, feminism has been considered taboo in Brazil, especially in the visual arts. Though there was feminist agitation in Brazil in the 1970s, many Brazilian women (and even Brazilian feminists) initially rejected the term "feminism" because they associated it with US imperialism. See Cynthia Sarti, "The Panorama of Brazilian Feminism," *New Left Review*, 173 (1989): 75–90; Simone Osthoff, "De musas a autoras: mulheres, arte e tecnologia no Brasil," *Ars* 8, no. 15 (2010): 75–78; Heloísa Buarque de Hollanda, "Gender Studies: Rough Notes from a Very Local Perspective," *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies* 11, no. 3 (December 2002): 321–31; and Roberta Barros, *Elogio ao toque: ou como falar de arte feminista à brasileira* (Rio de Janeiro: Relacionarte Marketing e Produções Culturais, 2016).
19. Maiolino, interview with the author, August 1, 2016, São Paulo.
20. Maiolino, "A Conversation between Anna Maria Maiolino and Helena Tatay."
21. Apsara DiQuinzio, "Anna Maria Maiolino," Matrix 252 film program/ brochure, January 17–March 30, 2014, University of California, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, n.p.
22. See Suely Rolnik and Felix Guattari, "Molecular Revolution in Brazil" (1986), in *The Forest & the School; Where to Sit at the Dinner Table?*, ed. Pedro Neves Marques (Cologne: Archive Books, 2014), 243–44; and Rolnik, "Anthropofagic Subjectivity," in *XXIV Bienal, Arte contemporânea brasileira: um e/entre outro/s*, ed. Adriano Pedrosa (São Paulo: Fundação Bienal de São Paulo, 1998), 140.

23. Rolnik, "The Geopolitics of Pimping," trans. Brian Holmes, *eipcp* (European Institute for Progressive Cultural Policies) October 2006, accessed January 15, 2019, <https://transversal.at/transversal/1106/rolnik/en>.
24. Rolnik, "The Geopolitics of Pimping."
25. Jasbir Puar has proposed a similar theory that she terms "queer assemblage," which avoids the intersectional model of identity that forces "the messiness of identity into a formulaic grid" by considering identity markers as "events, actions, and encounters, between bodies." Puar, "Queer Times, Queer Assemblages," *Social Text* 23, no. 3–4 (2005): 127. Judith Butler has challenged the concept of "unfixed" gender binaries, citing critiques from the trans community, who argue that "unfixity" forecloses their identification with clear gender binaries. Butler, "Interview with Judith Butler," interview by Sara Ahmed, *Sexualities* 19 (2016): 490. I maintain that fluidity is still apt when considering the ways subject and identity formations were regulated and mandated by the Brazilian dictatorship.
26. Daniel Woodley, *Fascism and Political Theory: Critical Perspectives on Fascist Ideology* (London: Routledge, 2010), 212, 218–19; Nelly Richard, "Chile, Women and Dissidence," in *Beyond the Fantastic: Contemporary Art Criticism from Latin America*, ed. Gerardo Mosquera (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1996), 137–45; and Jessica Benjamin, *The Bonds of Love: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and the Problem of Domination* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988), 183–218.
27. Rolnik, "The Geopolitics of Pimping."
28. Rolnik, "Anthropofagic Subjectivity," 144. See also Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, ed. Constantin V. Boundas, trans. Mark Lester with Charles Stivale (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990 [1969]), 53.
29. "será preciso travar . . . uma guerra contra a redução das subjetividades a gêneros, a favor da vida e suas misturas." Suely Rolnik, "Guerra dos gêneros & guerra aos gêneros," *Item*, no. 4 (November 1996): 19.
30. Super 8 has a lower quality image than 16mm film, characterized by a soft graininess. Steven Ascher and Edward Pincus, *The Filmmaker's Handbook: A Comprehensive Guide for the Digital Age* (New York: Plume, 2013), 43–44.
31. Maiolino, "A Conversation between Anna Maria Maiolino and Helena Tatay."
32. Michael Asbury suggests that this refers to Maiolino's identity as an immigrant and the difficulty of communicating in a foreign language. Asbury, "Anna Maria Maiolino: Articulations and Translations of and in Anthropophagy," 75.
33. Casimiro de Mendonça, "Posibilidades del Super 8," *Artes Visuales* 7 (July–September 1975): 32–33.
34. The film has an eponymous photographic companion work, part of Maiolino's *Fotopoemação* (Photopoemaction) series, not analyzed here due to space constraints.
35. These include Herkenhoff's video *Estômago embrulhado/Jejum/Sobremesa* (Upset Stomach/Fast/Dessert, 1975), and Andrade's video *Feijão* (Beans, 1975), both of which I discuss elsewhere. See Sneed, "Gendered Subjectivity and Resistance: Brazilian Women's Performance-for-Camera, 1973–1982" (PhD diss., City University of New York, 2019), 115, 143–155.
36. Claudia Calirman also addresses both works in "'Epidermic' and Visceral

Works: Lygia Pape and Anna Maria Maiolino,” *Women’s Art Journal* (Fall/Winter 2014): 25–26. It is unclear whether Pape had seen Maiolino’s *In-Out* when she made *Eat Me*. They both participated in *Expo-Projeção 73* at Espaço Grife (São Paulo, 1973) and *Mostra de arte experimental de filmes Super 8, audiovisual e videotape* (Rio de Janeiro, 1975), but it is unclear whether *In-Out* was shown at either. When asked about Pape’s previous knowledge of *In-Out*, Maiolino responded that she does not know whether Pape saw it. Maiolino, interview with the author, August 1, 2016, São Paulo.

37. Pape claimed that she did not intend *Eat Me* as a “feminist transaction” (*uma transação feminista*) because she had doubts about feminist positions. Lygia Pape, “Objetos de sedução: *Eat Me*,” in *Arte brasileira contemporânea: Lygia Pape* (Rio de Janeiro: Funarte, 1983), 47.

Figures

Gillian Sneed

Anthropophagic Subjectivities: Gender and Identity
in Anna Maria Maiolino's *In-Out (Antropofagia)*, 1973–1974



Figure 1

Anna Maria Maiolino, *In-Out (Antropofagia)*, 1973–74. Super 8 film,
transferred to video in 2000, 8:27 min., color, sound.
Cinematography: Sigmund Zehr, Music: Laura Clayton,
Actors: João Eduardo Osório and Anna Maria Maiolino, Editing: Anna Maria
Maiolino, Post-Production: Paulo Humberto Moreira, Track Master
Produções and Comércio Limitada.
Courtesy the artist.

MANIFESTO ANTROPOFAGO

Só a antropofagia nos une. Socialmente. Economicamente. Filosoficamente.

Única lei do mundo. Expressão mascarada de todos os individualismos, de todos os collectivismo. De todas as religiões. De todos os tratados de paz.

Tupy, or not tupy that is the question.

Contra toda as cathecheses. E contra a mãe dos Graecos.

Só me interessa o que não é meu. Lei do homem. Lei do antropofago.

Estamos fatigados de todos os maridos catholicos suspeitosos postos em drama. Freud acalhou com o enigma mulher e com outros sustos da psychologia impressa.

O que atropelava a verdade era a roupa, o impermeavel entre o mundo interior e o mundo exterior. A reacção contra o homem vestido. O cinema americano informará.

Filhos do sol, mãe dos viventes. Encontrados e amados ferocemente, com toda a hypocresia da saudade, pelos imigrados, pelos traficados e pelos touristes. No paiz da cobra grande.

Foi porque nunca tivemos grammaticas, nem colleções de velhos vegetaes. E nunca soubemos o que era urbano, suburban, fronteiro e continental. Preguiçosos no mappa mundi do Brasil.

Uma consciencia participante, uma rythmica religiosa.

Contra todos os importadores de consciencia enlatada. A existencia palpavel da vida. E a mentalidade prelogica para o Sr. Levy. Bruhl estudar.

Queremos a revolução Carahiba. Maior que a revolução Francesa. A unificação de todas as revoltas eficaizes na direcção do homem. Sem nós a Europa não teria sequer a sua

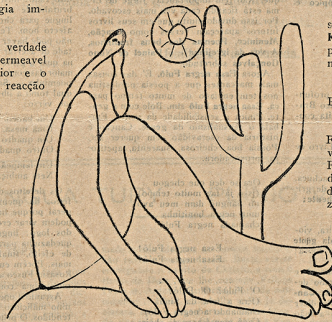
pobre declaração dos direitos do homem.

A idade de ouro annunciada pela America. A idade de ouro. E todas as girls.

Filiação. O contacto com o Brasil Carahiba. Oá Villeganhon print terre. Montaigne. O homem natural. Rousseau. Da Revolução Francesa ao Romantismo, a Revolução Bolchevista, a Revolução surrealista e ao barbaro technizado de Keyserling. Caminhamos.

Nunca fomos cathechizados. Vive-mos através de um directo somambul. Fizemos Christo nascer na Bahia. Ou em Belem do Pará.

Mas nunca admitimos o nascimento da logica entre nós.



Desenho de Tarsila 1928

De um quadro que figurará na sua proxima exposicao de Junho na galeria Perrier, em Paris.

Contra o Padre Vieira. Autor do nosso primeiro. emprestimo, para ganhar comissao. O rei analfabeto dissera-lhe: ponha isso no papel mas sem muita labia. Fez-se o emprestimo. Gravou-se o assucar brasileiro. Vieira deixou o dinheiro em Portugal e nos trouxe a labia.

O espirito recusa-se a conceber o espirito sem corpo. O antropomorfismo. Necessidade da vaccina antropologica. Para o equilibrio contra as religiões de meridiano. E as inquisições exteriores.

Só podemos attender ao mundo orecular.

Tinhamos a justiça codificação da vingança A sciencia codificação da Magia. Antropofagia. A transformação permanente do Tabú em totem.

Contra o mundo reversivel e as idéas objectivadas. Cadaverizadas. O stop do pensamento que é dynmico. O individuo victima do systema. Fonte das injustiças classicas. Das injustiças romanticas. E o esquecimento das conquistas interiores.

Roteiros. Roteiros. Roteiros. Roteiros. Roteiros. Roteiros. Roteiros.

O instinto Carahiba.

Morte e vida das hypotheses. Da equação eu parte do Kosmos ao axioma Kosmos parte do eu. Subsistencia. Conhecimento. Antropofagia.

Contra as elites vegetaes. Em communicação com o sólo.

Nunca fomos cathechizados. Fizemos foi Carnaval. O indio vestido de senador do Imperio. Fingindo de Pitt. Ou figurando nas operas de Alencar cheio de bons sentimentos portuguezes.

Já tinhamos o communismo. Já tinhamos a lingua surrealista. A idade de ouro. Catiti, Catiti, Imara Notia, Notia Imara, Ipejú.

A magia e a vida. Tinhamos a relação e a distribuição dos bens phisicos, dos bens moraes, dos bens dignarios. E sabiamos transpor o mysterio e a morte com o auxilio de algumas formas grammaticaes.

Perguntei a um homem o que era o Direito. Elle me respondeu que era a garantia do exercicio da possibilidade. Esse homem chamava-se Galli Mathias. Com-o

Só não ha determinismo - onde ha misterio. Mas que temos nós com isso?

Continua na Pagina 7

Figure 2

Drawing by Tarsila do Amaral for "Manifesto Antropófago," in Oswald de Andrade, Antônio de Alcântara Machado, Raul Bopp, Mário de Andrade, *Revista de Antropofagia* 1, no. 1, (May 1928). Closed: 13 x 9 3/4 x 1/8 in.

(33.2 x 24 x 3 cm.), open: 19 1/4 x 13 x 1/8 in. (49 x 24 x 3 cm). The Museum of Modern Art Library. Gift of Patricia Phelps de Cisneros through the Latin American and Caribbean Fund in honor of Paulo Herkenhoff.

The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY. Photograph: Digital Image © The Museum of Modern Art; licensed by SCALA/Art Resource, New York, NY.



Figure 3

Anna Maria Maiolino, *HIC ET NUNC*, from the series *Terra Modelada* (Modeled Earth), 1994/2017. Installation of 3.5 tons of clay molded in situ at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles.

Photograph: Brian Forrest. Courtesy the artist.



Figure 4

Anna Maria Maiolino, *Glu, Glu, Glu*, 1966
Acrylic on stuffed fabric and wood,
43 $\frac{3}{8}$ $\times$ 23 $\frac{1}{4}$ $\times$ 5 $\frac{1}{8}$ in. (110.5 $\times$ 59 $\times$ 13 cm).
Gilberto Chateaubriand MAM Rio Collection.

X-Rated: Hudinilson Jr. and Eduardo Kac's Arte Xerox and the Brazilian Porn Art Movement

Tie Jojima

In August 1982, artist Eduardo Kac (under the pseudonym Ezra Kac) celebrated the xerox artworks¹ of fellow artist and friend Hudinilson Jr. in an article published in the Brazilian erotic magazine *Adam*, whose readership was largely male and heterosexual. Kac illustrated the article with Hudinilson Jr.'s artworks—cropped and enlarged photocopies of his nude body pressed against the machine's glass, which emphasized the texture of his pores, skin folds, and body hair—to argue that Hudinilson Jr.'s use of the Xerox machine to reproduce intimate images of his body “invite[s] us to question the constraints to which our bodies and sexualities are subjected.”² While Hudinilson Jr.'s works address sexual and bodily normativity, Kac's article can also be understood as its own form of media art, challenging heteronormativity from within the systems that propagate it. By inserting photocopied images of Hudinilson Jr.'s body (including close-ups of his penis and buttocks) in the magazine, Kac intervenes in the space where erotic images are typically circulated, upsetting the expectations of its readers—presumably cisgender, heterosexual men—and implicating them as voyeurs and consumers of homoerotic imagery.

This essay investigates these and other xerox works by Hudinilson Jr., as well as works by Eduardo Kac and collaborations between the two from 1980 to 1983, created as part of the Brazilian Movimento de Arte Pornô (Porn Art Movement). I contend that both artists mobilize the potential of xerox art to embody their dissident sexualities and politics by disrupting the conventional uses of the Xerox machine with performance and utilizing materials that the machine was not meant to support.³ The artists appropriated and subverted commercially available heteronormative pornography in order to propose new sexual and artistic imaginaries centered on the body, while interrogating normative expressions of sexuality enforced by the repressive apparatus of the state, especially through censorship. Kac and Hudinilson Jr. created xerox works that engaged with performance,

the occupation of public space, and publications that circulated through mail art networks, all of which opened the traditionally private space of pornography to the public sphere, in keeping with the Porn Art Movement's aspirations.

The Porn Art Movement was initiated in Rio de Janeiro in February 1980 against the backdrop of Brazil's *abertura* (opening), a slow and gradual process of democratization that began in 1974 and concluded in 1985. The dictatorship lasted twenty-one years (from 1964 to 1985), throughout which the military government established a structure of political repression that persecuted, tortured, and murdered individuals who were considered threats to the regime. During this time, the regime's censorship apparatus sought to control the circulation of ideas in cinema, music, theater, television, and publications in an attempt to regulate ways of thinking and existing.⁴ A complex system of laws enforced this censorship, grounded in conservative and moralizing ideologies that sought to clear the country of communism, corruption, and moral degeneration.⁵ Censors rejected cultural content that threatened the Christian morals and values of the traditional Brazilian family. Even though the conservatism that grounded the dictatorship did not begin with the 1964 coup (conservative ideals had always been central in Brazilian society),⁶ the regime established the legal framework that consolidated those values and authorized actions against individuals that threatened this "conservative project of nation."⁷

The exposure of bodies and sexualities in pornographic and erotic materials particularly concerned the regime, which created distinctions between "normal" behaviors, practices, and bodies and those considered "subversive" or "degenerate" (such as homosexuality and all other nonnormative sexualities). The rules of censorship, however, were not clearly defined and were applied erratically throughout the regime. Censorship was a complex and broad form of regulation, applied based on censors' subjective perception of obscenity and implemented in varying and often contradictory ways, given the plurality of censorship agencies and laws in effect.⁸ One of the most evident cases of the apparent disjunction of the dictatorship's sexual politics was the state funding of films of the popular genre known as *pornochanchadas* (sex comedies) in the 1970s through Embrafilme, an agency that fostered national film production.⁹ If on the one hand the government supported *pornochanchadas*, on the other, they also

censored their production.¹⁰ The battle between producers and censors also defined erotic publications such as *Playboy*, which had to follow guidelines regarding the depiction of female bodies.¹¹ Censorship in film and print was based on the differentiation between the erotic (allowed) and the pornographic (forbidden), even though the limit between the two was not established by law.¹² Pornography transgresses the limits of social decorum by representing sex in a way that is considered obscene by rules of morality (which have varied throughout history), feeding off the system that differentiates between what is allowed and what is forbidden.¹³

The Porn Art Movement, on the other hand, rejected normative views of conventional pornography as obscene, with the understanding that rather than being subversive, it only reproduced conservative values, such as heteronormativity and machismo. To Porn Art Movement artists, what was truly obscene was the authoritarian government, not the human body in all its expressions (including sexual desire and physiological needs).¹⁴ Through publications and public actions, these artists explored the potential of pornography to create new narratives of sexuality. They sought to deconstruct the morality imposed by state censorship and to challenge a value system that categorized language, images, and body parts as being either appropriate or inappropriate for artistic use.¹⁵ The artists put the body and its desires at the center of artistic practice, cultivating a multiplicity of subject positions while denying a fixed sexual identity.¹⁶ The movement promoted a kind of sexual politics that anticipated what today is called “post-porn” or “queer porn,” understood here as transgressive sexual practices that deconstruct normative representations of bodies and sexuality and denounce oppressions and relations of power operating within them.¹⁷

The Porn Art Movement was articulated by Gang, an artist’s collective based in Rio de Janeiro and led by Eduardo Kac and Cairo Trindade, who organized the group’s weekly performances and publications.¹⁸ In its praxis, Gang expanded the possibilities of publishing to include public interventions such as graffiti, performances, and the alternative press, including artists’ books, anthologies, and zines, as well as stickers, ephemera, and other objects. The artists distributed these publications during performances in Rio and circulated them through mail art networks, allowing the Porn Art Movement to reach audiences

beyond the city and to foster creative exchanges between artists in different locations. Fellow porn artists would receive Gang's publications and respond by sending back porn poems and artworks, which the group would then compile, cutting and pasting the works they received to create new zines, which they would then distribute back to the network. In this way, the zine's creators allowed works by different artists and poets to share a space. A fundamental element of this more democratic form of production was the accessibility of Xerox machines and other commercially available forms of print media, such as mimeograph machines and offset printing. The affordability and immediacy of these print technologies enabled artists to easily enter the network of production and distribution of porn art. Xerox machines facilitated a DIY process of publication that allowed artists to bypass conventional systems of distribution of art and poetry, circumventing their often-conservative value systems and the limitations imposed by state censorship.

Eduardo Kac published his first book of porn poetry, *Nabunada não vaidinha?* (Nothing in the Ass?), in February 1981 (fig. 1). The book compiles poems the artist created during his involvement in the movement, some of which were presented in Gang's weekly performances at Cinelândia square in Rio de Janeiro.¹⁹ The porn poems, which were created by the artist to perform for an audience, typically involved double entendres, humor, sexually explicit language, and swear words. Wearing extravagant clothing, such as rubber diving boots, custom-made pajama pants, and a t-shirt featuring a porn poem, Kac prompted audience response and participation, encouraging viewers to laugh and shout out bawdy words. Conceived to be enjoyed collectively in public space (as opposed to an individual, silent reading from a book), the performances also subverted the experience of pornography, transforming a typically private, individual activity into a collective and public experience. Like many of Gang's other publications, the book was self-published—printed on a Xerox machine and distributed to audiences in performances and through the mail.²⁰ The book cover features a xerox work by Hudinilson Jr., with a low-contrast close-up of his penis occupying the full height of the page and the back cover showing part of his groin and details of his body hair. *Nabunada não vaidinha?* embodied the artist's desire to transform the sexual politics of the *abertura* through the

distribution of pornography that was nonnormative, both in form and in content.

Although Kac also used photography and typography in his porn artworks, the Xerox machine became a nexus for his performance practice and for the mobilization of the movement. Kac experimented with the possibilities of the medium in his works, moving objects over the glass bed of the Xerox machine to create distortions and printing on unconventional surfaces, such as toilet paper, tissue paper, and wrapping paper. The use of these materials and processes required intimate knowledge of the machine. For instance, toilet paper could easily rip or get stuck in the machine's drum. During these experiments, the artist tampered with the copier and opened it and fixed it when it jammed—a process that could involve intense physical interaction with the machine. In one such xerox work, titled *Vai comer agora ou quer que embrulhe?* (For Here or to Go?, fig. 2), Kac appropriates an image by graphic artist Carlos Zéfiro from a series of underground pornographic comics known as *revistinhas de sacanagem* (dirty comics).²¹ In it, the artist converts a single panel of the comic into an intricate composition that appears almost abstract at first glance. The original image depicts a man and a woman who are about to have intercourse. The woman wears a garter belt and her arms are wrapped around the man's neck while he, still clothed, holds his erect penis out of his trousers with one hand and embraces the woman with the other. Kac achieved a graphic effect in his copy of the image by moving the original panel over the Xerox machine's light bed in different positions, creating extended lines and distortions. He printed the work on a piece of pink patterned wrapping paper, adding color to the composition, since photocopy machines only printed in black and white at the time.²² The title of the work literally translates to "Are you going to eat it now, or do you want it wrapped?," playing with the verb *comer* (to eat), which means "to fuck" in Brazilian Portuguese slang. The title also addresses the material quality of the work (the wrapping paper, used to protect an object for later consumption), underscoring the imminence of the sexual act it depicts.

Given the complexity involved in their creation, most of Kac's xerox artworks were unique, a condition that countered the reproducibility of the photocopy. While he exhibited some of these works in alternative exhibition spaces, such as the Petite Galerie in Rio de Janeiro (a space where Gang also performed),²³ these

works did not circulate within the broader commercial gallery system in Brazil because there was no market for them. As curator and art historian Erin Aldana points out, many xerox artworks produced in the 1970s and 1980s challenged the status of the art object and had almost no economic value. The works mostly circulated among friends or were included in group publications or exhibitions, to which the artists would send the artworks with no expectation of getting them back.²⁴

Unlike Kac, Hudinilson Jr. created many of his xerox works with institutional support. In the early 1980s, several art institutions recognized and supported xerox art in Brazil, organizing exhibitions and roundtable discussions and even providing artists with unmediated access to Xerox machines to create artworks.²⁵ The Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo, for instance, created a xerox studio in 1980 where artists were allowed to experiment as they wished. Such support was crucial for Hudinilson Jr. in his later xerox art practice.²⁶ Only after he gained direct access to machines in different institutional settings was he able to create the works he is best known for today: photocopies of his own body.

In the work *Pinto não pode* (Cock Is Not Allowed, fig. 3), Hudinilson Jr. created a photocopied image of his penis, which he enlarged to the size of a piece of A4 paper to create a close-up, in the convention of pornographic representation, to which he added a stamp with an inscription of the titular phrase. In pornography, close-ups of genitalia allow the viewer to obtain as much visual information about the body as possible, bringing them closer to the scene and enabling them to draw pleasure from these images.²⁷ Hudinilson Jr.'s close-up, however, is cropped and enlarged so much that the graphic black-and-white image reproduces printing patterns and grainy textures that render the image almost abstract. The interplay between the naturalistic representation of the enlarged penis and the abstraction created by the machine underscores the relationship between the artist's subject position as a gay man and the censorship that regulated the circulation of images of the body and of nonnormative subjectivities: a dynamic between visibility and concealment. While homosexuality was not technically illegal under the regime, the police repressed gay and transgender social spaces and censored culture with gay or homoerotic content, with the justification that these expressions would degenerate and corrupt

youth.²⁸ In this context, *Pinto não pode* functions not only as pornography, but also as a reflection on the repression of gay people and the prohibition of images of homoerotic desire.

As early as 1981, Hudinilson Jr. began distributing the work *Pinto não pode* to art institutions and fellow artists through mail art networks.²⁹ This relatively controlled form of distribution, in which the artist sent the artwork to a specific audience, contrasts with his public art projects involving the same subject matter. In 1983, he participated in the public billboard exhibition *Arte na rua* (Art in the Streets), to which he submitted the image of his penis and part of his groin³⁰ that had previously appeared on the cover of Eduardo Kac's 1981 book *Nabunada não vaidinha?*, this time enlarged with the Xerox machine to the size of a billboard. Before the exhibition's opening, Aracy Amaral, the director of the Museu de Arte Contemporânea da Universidade de São Paulo (MAC USP), censored Hudinilson Jr.'s artwork and disallowed its installation, fearing retaliation from the military government. The artist found a solution to his design that Amaral ultimately accepted: he used the original image but added red bands to cover the portion featuring the head of the penis. Hence, the artist transformed the work into a performance of self-censorship. The red bands emphasized the pornographic content of the image even more, evidencing its subversive character as a forbidden homoerotic image. They also implicated passersby as viewers of a censored image who were being prevented access to a specific kind of sexual representation. Hudinilson Jr.'s interest in the dissemination of male erotic imagery, through both mail art and public art projects, was deeply connected to the Porn Art Movement's ethos of creating a form of public pornography that challenged the definition of obscenity.³¹

One of the main themes in these works is the Narcissus myth. Hudinilson Jr. identified with Narcissus, using the Xerox machine's glass bed as a mirror in which he could see himself through photocopied images of his own body. In 1981, Hudinilson Jr. created a performance work with the Xerox machine on the theme of Narcissus, titled *Narcisse: exercício de me ver* (Narcisse: An Exercise in Seeing Myself). In photographs of this performance, the artist is completely naked, lying over the machine's glass in five different positions.³² He is shown twisting in order to fit particular body parts over the machine's glass, which in turn reads them closely, making copies of them. The documentation of the

performance allows viewers to witness the creative process of his xerox works, in which he interacts with the machine in a way that he describes as a sexual act.³³ The main understanding of conventional pornography is that it represents sexual acts with the instrumental purpose of arousing viewers.³⁴ Hudinilson Jr.'s performance documentation subverts this logic by exploring the potentiality of pleasure in the relationship between humans and technology, thus creating new sexual imaginaries with (nonnormative) pornography that are beyond the cycle of arousal, masturbation, and climax.

The many physical positions Hudinilson Jr.'s body takes in relation to the machine in the creation of his works can be read alongside Eduardo Kac's 1982 xerox piece titled *2x3X*, a photocopy work printed on extremely thin blue tissue paper (fig. 4). The composition consists of four lines of text in the same font as the Xerox company logo, but with the letters in different combinations. The letters *E* and *R* are displayed both correctly and in mirrored form, as if reproducing the way in which the machine reads what is put over its glass. The first line, reading "EROX," can be understood as a variation of the word *Eros*, meaning love or desire. The second line, "EREX," can be interpreted as a variation of the word *ereto* (erect). The third line, "XEREX," references the word *xereca*, which is Brazilian Portuguese slang for female genitalia. When reading the combination of the words vertically, the word "XEXO," a variation of *sexo* (sex) occupies the central position. To the right of that appears "REX" (the Latin word for king). Together, they make up the expression "XEXO REX," or SEX KING. When flipping the artwork vertically, the viewer can read the composition as an image; when turned to the left, it appears as an erect phallic symbol (or the visual symbol for EREX); and turning it to the right, a vaginal image (or XEREX) appears.

Eduardo Kac's work explores issues of representation in different registers through a visual blend of text and image. It also disrupts the machine's functionality by printing on a paper it is not meant to support, problematizing the photocopier as an image maker. By doing so, he forces the viewer to see beyond the apparent objectivity of the image in order to critically assess the ideological codes embedded in their making. When further analyzing the written signs within the work, one can see six instances of the letter *X*, which results in the title of the artwork, *2x3X*, or "two times triple rated" (XXX), a censorship qualification for material

that is considered obscene. The X rating is another code that warns audiences of obscene material, establishing an age limitation for access to it and even forbidding its dissemination.

Eduardo Kac and Hudinilson Jr.'s xerox artworks embody nonnormative sexualities while calling attention to the structures of repression at play in the creation and reception of images. The Xerox machine allowed them to disseminate their artworks in the public space and was fundamental in the creation of porn art networks, all of which subverted the commodified and regulated system of conventional pornography. Decades before the internet radically changed the ways in which users create, distribute, and access pornography (now on a global level, with less regulation and less normativity), Eduardo Kac and Hudinilson Jr., with the Xerox machine, imagined a future in which individuals could create their own DIY porn, expanding the limits of the body and its pleasures and forging a joyful and open sexual politics in social practice.³⁵

1. In Brazil the word “xerox” became synonymous with photocopy or copy. This reflects the popularity of the Xerox Corporation’s machines in the country since the mid-1960s. In Brazil, artistic engagement with photocopying is known as *arte xerox* (xerox art). Erin Aldana, “The Artists Who Copied: Xerography and Brazilian Culture,” in *Xerografia: Copyart in Brazil, 1970–1990*, eds. Erin Aldana and Erin Sullivan Maynes (San Diego: University of San Diego, 2017), 19.

2. Ezra Kac, “A arte xerótica de Hudinilson Jr,” *Adam*, August 1982 (translation mine).

3. Sexual dissidence is used here to characterize the position of these artists against accepted hegemonic sexual identities and categories.

4. Carlos Fico, “Prefácio,” in *Ditadura e homossexualidades: repressão, resistência e a busca da verdade*, eds. James N. Green and Renan Quinalha (São Carlos: EdUFSCar, 2014), 14.

5. Rita de Cassia Colaço Rodrigues, “De Denner a Chrysóstomo: a repressão invisibilizada,” in *Ditadura e homossexualidades*, 202.

6. Renan Honório Quinalha, “Contra a moral e os bons costumes: a política sexual da ditadura brasileira (1964–1988)” (PhD diss., University of São Paulo, 2017), 24.

7. Rodrigues, 210.

8. Benjamin A. Cowan, *Securing Sex: Morality and Repression in the Making of Cold War Brazil* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 211–24.

9. For more on *pornochanchadas* see *E Pornô, Tem Pornô? A Panorama of Brazilian Porn*, ed. Mariana Baltar (Milan: Mimesis International, 2018).

10. By the early 1980s, even after the loosening of censorship laws, *pornochanchadas* were still subjected to censorship. Antônio Reis Junior and Caio Túlio Padula Lamas, “Film Industry, Pornography and Censorship

- in Brazil: The Case of *Coisas Eróticas*,” in *E Pornô, Tem Pornô?*, 37–62.
11. Manoel Risério, “Playboy vs. Censura: 1975–1980,” *Playboy*, August 2010.
 12. Quinalha, “Contra a moral e os bons costumes,” 96; and Reis Junior and Padula Lamas, 39.
 13. Rodrigo Gerace, *Cinema explícito: representações cinematográficas do sexo* (São Paulo: Perspectiva, 2015), 31.
 14. Eduardo Kac, “Porn Art Movement: A Brazilian Avant-Garde, 1980–1982,” in *OEI. Process/Poem (Poema Processo)*, eds. Jonas Magnusson, Cecilia Grönberg, and Tobi Maier (Stockholm: OEI Editor, 2014), 500.
 15. Sol Henaro and Fernanda Nogueira, “Overgoze,” in *Perder la forma humana. Una imagen sísmica de los años ochenta en América Latina* (Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, 2012), 201.
 16. Eduardo Kac, 499.
 17. The Porn Art Movement has been considered key in the genealogies of art and queerness in Brazil since the 2012 exhibition *Perder la forma humana. Una imagen sísmica de los años ochenta en América Latina* at the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía. Scholars like Fernanda Nogueira, Miguel Lopez, and Erica Sarnet have studied the Porn Art Movement within their academic, curatorial, and political projects of decolonizing the history of sexual narratives in Latin America. See Érica Sarnet, “Pós-pornô, dissidência sexual e a situação cuir-latino-americana: pontos de partida para o debate,” *Revista Periódicus* 1, no. 1 (May–October 2014), <https://portalseer.ufba.br/index.php/revistaperiodicus/article/view/10175>; and Miguel A. López and Fernanda Nogueira, “The Cuir Machine,” *Review: Literature and Arts of the Americas* 46, no. 1 (2013): 117–25.
 18. The members of Gang were Eduardo Kac, Cairo Trindade, Sandra Terra, Tereza Jardim, Ana Miranda, Cynthia Dornelles, and Denise Trindade.
 19. On Friday nights, Gang performed during the Feira de Poesia at Cinelândia, a weekly poetry event in which writers presented and sold publications. Dolores Rodrigues, “Poesia pornô: liberta, aberta e honesta,” *ArteManha* (January / February 1982): 8.
 20. The book was also printed with a mimeograph machine, depending on the edition and print run. Aldana, 17.
 21. Due to their pornographic content, these publications circulated in clandestine ways. They contained perverse depictions of the stereotypes of traditional families, heteronormative sexual relationships, and moral obsessions of the time. For more on Zéfiro’s production see Otacílio d’Assunção, *O quadrinho erótico de Carlos Zéfiro* (Rio de Janeiro: A Bela Arte, 1983).
 22. In the early 1980s, the Brazilian general public’s access to Xerox machines was restricted due to risk of counterfeiting. Artists who wanted access to the machines had to befriend a clerk at a copy shop, become a technician, use the machine in institutions, or obtain sponsorship by the Xerox Corporation, which fostered xerox art through exhibitions and in museums in Brazil during the 1970s and 1980s. Aldana, 19, 22.
 23. Eduardo Kac exhibited some of these works in the Semana de Arte Foderna held in December 1981, organized by independent art groups from Rio de Janeiro. The title of the event referenced the Semana de Arte Moderna (Modern Art Week), which occurred sixty years earlier, in 1922. The word “Foderna” is a play on the words *moderna* (modern) and *foder* (to fuck). *Semana de Arte de 82*, exh. cat. (Rio de Janeiro: Mamãe Produções Artísticas, 1981).
 24. Aldana, 28.

25. These included the Museu de Arte Contemporânea da Universidade de São Paulo, Centro Cultural São Paulo, Fundação Armando Alvares Penteado, and the Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo. Aldana, 79.
26. Hudinilson Jr. first began experimenting with the Xerox machine in 1977, to create mail art. Ricardo Resende, *Posição amorosa: Hudinilson Jr.* (São Paulo: WMF Martins Fontes, 2016), 194.
27. This is what Williams calls “the principle of maximum visibility,” which privileges an almost clinical and objectifying image of body parts. Linda Williams, *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the “Frenzy of the Visible”* (California: University of California Press, 1989), 49.
28. Rodrigues, 217–18. Police repression in these spaces was justified with other legal norms that forbade “obscene acts in the public space,” “vagrancy,” or the “violation of morals and good customs.” Quinalha, “Contra a moral e os bons costumes,” 25. As reported by the São Paulo Truth Commission (a commission created to investigate human rights violations during the dictatorship), homophobia intensified during the dictatorship. The regime equated homosexuality (and other forms of nonnormative sexualities) to leftists and subversive individuals, thus justifying state repression and violence toward these groups. “Ditadura e homossexualidades: iniciativas da Comissão da Verdade do Estado de São Paulo Rubens Paiva” in *Comissão da Verdade do Estado de São Paulo*, 2014, <http://comissaoдавerdade.al.sp.gov.br/relatorio/>.
29. Writer Glauco Mattoso mentions Hudinilson Jr.’s *Pinto não pode* in his 1981 publication about marginal poetry. Glauco Mattoso, *O que é poesia marginal* (São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1981), 37.
30. *Arte na rua* was organized by MAC USP, curated by Ana Maria Tavares and Mônica Nador. Aldana, 66; and Resende, 307.
31. Hudinilson Jr.’s interest in interventions in the public space is connected to his participation in the São Paulo artist group 3Nós3, alongside Rafael França and Mário Ramiro. 3Nós3 engaged in multimedia practices and took the space of the streets with actions that interfered with the normality of the public space. Mário Ramiro, “Grupo 3Nós3: The Outside Expands,” *Parachute*, no. 116 (October–December 2004): 41–53. See also Mário Ramiro, ed., *3Nós3: intervenções urbanas 1979–1982* (São Paulo: Ubu Editora, 2017).
32. The performance took place at Zoom school in São Paulo and was documented by Afonso Roperto. Resende, 271.
33. In an interview, Hudinilson Jr. stated that he “literally had sex with the machine.” He also defined his work as pornographic and identified himself as a pornographer. Hudinilson Jr. in Resende, 269, 308.
34. A neutral characterization of pornography would be the visual “representation of living moving bodies engaged in explicit, usually unsimulated, sexual acts with a primary intent of arousing viewers.” Williams, 30.
35. I would like to express my gratitude to Daniel Quiles, who encouraged me to pursue the ideas in this paper in a 2015 seminar, and to the organizers of the 2016 IFA-ISLAA symposium for the opportunity to present on this topic. Thanks to Eduardo Kac for sharing his time with me in conversations about the material and for granting access to his archive. Finally, I am very grateful to Sean Nesselrode Moncada, Anna Indych-López, Gillian Sneed, and Horacio Ramos Cerna for their feedback on this essay.

Figures

Tie Jojima

X-Rated: Hudinilson Jr. and Eduardo Kac's Arte Xerox
and the Brazilian Porn Art Movement



Figure 1

Eduardo Kac, *Nabunada não vaidinha?*, 1981.
Artist's book with cover by Hudinilson Jr.
Courtesy Eduardo Kac.



Figure 2

Eduardo Kac, *Vai comer agora ou quer que embrulhe?*, 1982.
Electrostatic print on wrapping paper, 15 $\frac{7}{16}$ x 11 $\frac{13}{16}$ in. (39.5 x 30 cm).
Courtesy Eduardo Kac.

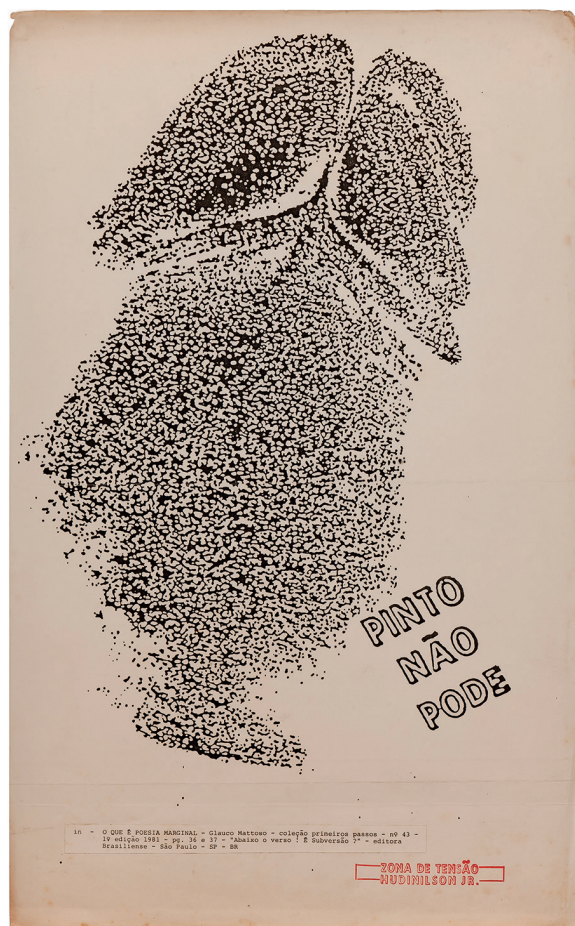


Figure 3

Hudinilson Jr., *Pinto não pode*, 1981.

Electrostatic print with stamp ink and collage, 13 5/8 x 8 1/4 in. (34.5 x 21 cm).

Courtesy the artist's family and Galeria Jaqueline Martins.



Figure 4

Eduardo Kac, 2x3X, 1982.

Electrostatic print on tissue paper over graph paper, mounted on cardboard,
11 ¹/₆ × 15 ¹/₄ in. (30 × 40 cm).

Courtesy Eduardo Kac.

Rómulo Gallegos, *Canaima*, and the Photobook That Never Was

Michel Otayek

In 1984, Venezuelan state institutions commemorated the centennial of the birth of celebrated novelist Rómulo Gallegos with numerous initiatives, ranging from conferences and public readings to special editions of postage stamps. Many books were published to mark the occasion as well, including reprints of some of Gallegos's novels—for example, a reedition of his 1929 masterpiece *Doña Bárbara*, published by Venezuela's state oil company and richly illustrated by the artist Alirio Palacios¹—as well as several books exploring Gallegos's life and work. Among the latter was *Y Gallegos creó Canaima . . .* (And Gallegos Created Canaima . . .),² a book that examines the journey of exploration taken by the novelist in 1931 before writing *Canaima*, a novel set in jungles, cattle ranches, and gold mines lying far beyond the southern shores of the Orinoco River (fig. 1). Published by Ferrominera del Orinoco, the book features text by the Venezuelan lawyer and journalist Manuel Alfredo Rodríguez and photographs by the Romanian-born Venezuelan photographer Thea Segall. In this essay, I discuss the puzzling structure and contents of this volume—a curious hybrid between a reference book and a photobook. In particular, I consider how certain production contingencies impacted the volume's final structure. I then reflect on the rather awkward relationship between photographic images and text throughout its pages. My inquiry into Segall's photographs in *Y Gallegos creó Canaima . . .* moves beyond the authorial, considering instead how their intended meaning was shaped by their entanglement with state discourse that sought to celebrate one of Gallegos's masterpieces without acknowledging the novel's implicit criticism of economies of extraction. Ultimately, I argue that as framed discursively, Segall's photographs challenge rather than support the book's *raison d'être*.

Gallegos's *Canaima*

Written from his self-imposed exile in Spain between 1932 and 1935—as Venezuela endured the final years of Juan Vicente Gómez's long dictatorship—Gallegos's *Canaima* is part of the writer's mission to craft a literary cartography of his country. By the time *Canaima* was published in 1935, shortly before the Venezuelan dictator's death in December of that year, Gallegos enjoyed considerable international recognition thanks to the critical triumph of his novel *Doña Bárbara* a few years earlier. Set in the flatlands of western Venezuela, *Doña Bárbara* is generally considered the pinnacle of his writing career. Centered on a love triangle between a beautiful and coarse peasant girl; a white, city-educated landowner; and the girl's mother—a ruthless woman relentlessly plotting to add to her landholdings through violence and corruption—the novel symbolizes the dichotomy between civilization and barbarism in which Gallegos was strongly invested as a writer and, in later years, as a politician.³ As critics have noted, the recurrent contrast between urban progress and rural backwardness in Gallegos's work is firmly rooted in a continental positivistic tradition dating back to the mid-nineteenth century writings of Domingo Faustino Sarmiento in Argentina.⁴ But whereas *Doña Bárbara* culminates with the victory of a cultured urbanite over a rural despot, *Canaima* falls short of celebrating civilization's triumph. Instead, the novel offers the reader an account of a man's journey of self-discovery that results in the demise of his ambitions of wealth, power, and social justice, and in his final solitary retreat to the depths of the rainforest.

Taking its title from an indigenous word signifying a spirit of evil dwelling in the jungle, *Canaima* narrates the transformation of Marcos Vargas from an adventurous teenager yearning to find his calling to a man driven to violence, madness, and withdrawal. In the novel, Vargas's fate is shaped by his experiences in a hostile environment with an oppressive tropical climate and rapacious local economies of gold mining and rubber harvesting. As Maya Schärer-Nussberger has observed, the protagonist's quest for self-realization throughout the novel is also a search for an essential place of origin.⁵ As Vargas wanders across Guayana (the name by which the territories south of the Orinoco River are commonly referred to), his encounters with a

motley cast of characters paint the portrait of a region whose modernizing is spoiled by feuding regional overlords, corrupt or incompetent local functionaries, and a primitive system of resource extractivism that keeps miners and harvesters all but enslaved to their overseers. In this harsh natural and social landscape, described to the reader by an omniscient narrator, Vargas's hasty rise as a shrewd entrepreneur and his slow subsequent descent into anguish, resignation, and idleness run parallel to the writer's indictment of a destructive economic system—one Gallegos had a chance to witness firsthand as he toured parts of Guayana for three weeks between mid-January and early February of 1931.

The publication of *Y Gallegos creó Canaima* . . . in 1984 coincided with the ten-year anniversary of the state's takeover of Venezuela's iron mining industry. Decreed in late 1974, just a few months into the first presidency of Carlos Andrés Pérez, the nationalization of iron mining—followed a year later by that of the oil industry—was one of the most ambitious economic decisions made by the populist president at the height of Venezuela's developmentalist rush and was emblematic of a then-prevailing political and economic paradigm of import substitutions and government intervention in the economy. One of Pérez's best-remembered speeches, which he delivered in the city of Cabimas on January 1, 1976, to mark the nationalization of the oil industry, exemplifies the grandiloquence of this political and economic discourse. As Pérez put it, "The Venezuelan people have decided to become masters of their own history. . . . In our hands, iron and oil demand that we assume the most pressing responsibilities in the path toward the economic liberation of the whole of Latin America. . . . In time, history will tell the story of a developing nation that, ruled by a system of constitutional democracy, took charge of its heavy industries . . . to reclaim its rights with prudence and creative intelligence."⁶ Implicit in Pérez's framing of this momentous event in the country's modern history is the central role of the state in spearheading modernization through the monopolistic management of natural resources, particularly oil. Fernando Coronil has described the Venezuelan state, as consolidated during this period, as an ensemble of practices, institutions, and ideologies deeply invested in the rhetorical mythification of progress. "The Venezuelan state has been constituted as a unifying force by

producing fantasies of collective integration into centralized political institutions,” Coronil notes. “By manufacturing dazzling development projects that engender collective fantasies of progress,” he adds, “it casts its spell over audiences and performers alike.”⁷

Critical to the success of such bold plans for Venezuela’s economic development was the creation of an entire repertoire of state enterprises responsible for the industrial exploitation of the extraordinary natural wealth of the sparsely populated region of Guayana, which encompasses the present-day states of Amazonas, Bolívar, and Delta Amacuro, and adds up to half of Venezuela’s entire territory. Dedicated to iron mining, Ferrominera del Orinoco was one such enterprise, established in 1975 through the fusion of two foreign-owned companies whose concessions had been revoked by the nationalization decree. And it was this state company, Ferrominera del Orinoco, that published *Y Gallegos creó Canaima* . . . on the occasion of the centennial of the writer’s birth and also in celebration of the ten-year anniversary of the iron industry’s nationalization.

It is within this broader context that we should consider the discursive politics of *Y Gallegos creó Canaima* . . . as a photographically illustrated volume—or, as I suggest with the title of this presentation, a photobook gone wrong. Totalling some 260 pages, the book contains several sections of text and 114 photographs by Segall meant to evoke the natural, social, and economic landscapes seen by Gallegos half a century earlier, during his 1931 Guayana expedition. By the time she became involved with the project, Segall enjoyed considerable recognition for her work as a field photographer, documenting rural and indigenous communities across the country as well as the undertakings of numerous state institutions, including several companies directly related to Guayana’s industrial development. Segall’s publications include several narrative photobooks describing processes of artisanal production with numerous images reproduced sequentially and with very little text.⁸ If one of Segall’s most important contributions to the development of modern and contemporary photography in Venezuela was her pioneering of this photo-sequence genre, as Sagrario Berti has argued,⁹ her work for *Y Gallegos creó Canaima* . . . —which does not fit in with the visual narrative structure of her celebrated photo sequences—belongs to a

different strand in her body of work. Indeed, *Y Gallegos creó Canaima* . . . is one of several books in which Segall's photographs retrace or evoke momentous expeditions in the country's history, such as Christopher Columbus's sailing along the Venezuelan coast in 1498 or the arrival of the Spanish conquistador Diego de Losada to the Valley of Caracas in the 1560s.¹⁰

The Photobook That Never Was

Segall's involvement with state-sponsored projects sets her apart from other contemporary practitioners, such as the Swiss-born Venezuelan photographer Bárbara Brändli. Like Segall, Brändli arrived in Venezuela in the late 1950s and spent years photographing indigenous cultures in the country's south, particularly the Ye'kuana and Sanemá peoples.¹¹ The concurrent participation of Segall and Brändli in a variety of ethnographic projects centered in Guayana during the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s reflects not only their personal interests in indigenous cultures but also the commitment of state agencies, universities, scientists, philanthropists, and cultural promoters in the creation and circulation of knowledge about the Venezuelan South, much of which remained unexplored at the time. But whereas, as already noted, Segall's photographs were published in numerous books published by state institutions, the print circulation of Brändli's images was closely related to the activities of certain networks of private philanthropy, most notably that of the Czech-Venezuelan Jewish industrialist Hans Neumann. If much of the political, economic, and academic discourse about Venezuela during this period was influenced by what Steve Ellner and Miguel Tinker Salas have described as a paradigm of Venezuelan exceptionalism,¹² I draw this distinction between both photographers simply to underscore that in Segall's case, it is important to think about the rhetorical entanglement of her images with state-sponsored discourse, particularly in publications such as *Y Gallegos creó Canaima* . . .

Unintended as this effect may have been, the foreword to *Y Gallegos creó Canaima* . . . prompts us to consider not only the book that it is but also, and perhaps more importantly as far as Segall's photographs are concerned, the one that it failed to become. Written by Leopoldo Sucre Figarella—a powerful figure

in regional politics, president of both the Corporación Venezolana de Guayana and Ferrominera del Orinoco—the book’s concise introduction suggests that what was originally conceived as a photobook retracing Gallegos’s 1931 journey became instead a reference volume for literature specialists as a result of the unforeseen discovery of the writer’s travel notepad. In Sucre Figarella’s own words, the reproduction of the novelist’s travel notes—timely and fortuitously discovered in the family archives as work on *Y Gallegos creó Canaima* . . . was already underway—exceeded the book’s original intention and “turned [the book] into a valuable reference tool for scholars of Gallegos’s narrative technique.”¹³ Such sudden transformation of this publishing project resulted in the relegation of Segall’s superb photographs to a documentary role of secondary importance and questionable effectiveness. The unearthing of Gallegos’s travel notepad led the book’s editors to reproduce it in its entirety as a facsimile and to add a section to the book in which the writer’s notes are typed, rearranged, and contrasted with the fragments of the novel to which they are relevant. In terms of reading experience, the result of these decisions is a volume that proves difficult to navigate, and whose precise genre is hard to ascertain.

When one first opens the book, it takes some effort to make sense of its seemingly disorderly structure. Sucre Figarella’s introduction is followed by the facsimile of Gallegos’s entire travel notepad. The following section is an essay by the lawyer and journalist Manuel Alfredo Rodríguez discussing details about Gallegos’s 1931 journey. Taking up more than two hundred pages (that is, nearly five-sixths of the volume’s entire length), the last section of *Y Gallegos creó Canaima* . . . is the most disconcerting in terms of structure and design. This final section is split into eighteen subdivisions, corresponding to all but one of the nineteen chapters in Gallegos’s novel. Each of these subdivisions begins with a typed reproduction of the travel notes by Gallegos relevant for his writing of that chapter. These are then followed by the corresponding passages in the novel’s chapter reproduced in a slightly smaller size of the same font—a design choice that makes these two categories of text quite difficult to distinguish from each other. Finally, a selection of Segall’s photographs is reproduced at the end of each subdivision to visually corroborate the documentary correspondence between travel notes and passages in the novel. As Sucre Figarella explains in his foreword,

Segall's photographs serve to show "the men and landscapes written about by Gallegos." Thus, for example, the photographs included at the end of the section dedicated to the novel's ninth chapter, whose actions take place in the legendary mining settlement of El Callao, depict the small town, the jungle that surrounds it, and the travails of a handful of impoverished miners. Taking advantage of abundant natural light, Segall's photographs in a double-spread showing a boy and a woman panning for gold on a riverside prompt the viewer to inspect the shape and surfaces of the pans they use for their task, thus calling attention to the simplicity of this preindustrial mining technique (fig. 2). Consequently, the reader is left to assume that little progress had come to El Callao's primitive mining economy in the fifty years separating Gallegos's notes and novel from Segall's photographs. Throughout the book, Segall's carefully composed photographs purposely refer the viewer to the region's preindustrial past. A number of them portray the ancestral customs of indigenous peoples; for example, a spread shows a young man navigating on a dugout canoe, to the left, and a small group sharing a meal in what appears to be their communal dwelling, to the right (fig. 3).

The Allure of Manuscript

Sucre Figarella's straightforward comments about the purpose of Segall's photographs in *Y Gallegos creó Canaima* . . . underscore the shortcomings of this peculiar book as a tool of official discourse. If photographs taken in 1984 could stand as reliable documents of Guayana's reality in 1931, what could be said about the Venezuelan state's track record of fulfilling its commitment to economic industrialization and cultural modernity in the country's south? In this book, the role of Segall's photographs rests on an assumption of timelessness that contradicts its rationale as a publication commemorating the ten-year anniversary of the nationalization of the iron industry. Consideration of the fifty-year span separating this volume from Gallegos's *Canaima* also problematizes its uncritical reshuffling of the novel's indictment of extractivism to fit in the economic discourse of the Venezuelan state in the late twentieth century. Indeed, by the early 1980s, as a consequence of a

mounting foreign debt crisis causing havoc across Latin America, the model of state economic interventionism was beginning to come undone—as was the exceptionalist paradigm fueling optimism about Venezuela’s imminent welcoming into the so-called first world.

With these remarks, I don’t mean to suggest that as a prolific photographer, Segall was uncritically aligned with state-sponsored developmentalist discourse. On the contrary, her nuanced understanding of some of the challenges implicit in Venezuela’s uneven process of modernization comes through in some of her most personal publications, particularly in her photo sequences about artisanal traditions at risk of disappearing. One can only wonder about the photobook that *Y Gallegos creó Canaima* . . . could have been had the writer’s travel notes never been found: one in which Segall’s splendid photographs would have invited the viewer to reflect on the passage of time and on some of the effects of Venezuela’s rush to modernization. In the shape that the book actually took, Segall’s pictures seem out of place—irrelevant, even, for the sort of manuscriptural inquiries the volume is declaredly made for. Whatever the original plans were for *Y Gallegos creó Canaima* . . . , in the face of such momentous archival discovery—the travel notes used by the writer to craft one of his most celebrated novels—resisting the allure of manuscript proved impossible. As Sergio Chejfec has eloquently put it, “manual writing has a distinctive way of prolonging itself in time. As if it never stopped being written . . . One feels an attraction toward manuscripts because next to serial or mediated writing . . . only handwriting is inscribed by the mark of hesitation.”¹⁴ What a peculiar achievement for this photographic book: to call our attention to Gallegos’s process as writer of *Canaima* by eliding the passage of time in Guayana. In this sense, perceptive readers could hardly be blamed for taking Segall’s photographs as refutation of the developmentalist ideology they were meant to support, reproduced as they were on the pages of a book sponsored by the Venezuelan state.

1. Rómulo Gallegos, *Doña Bárbara* (Caracas: Petróleos de Venezuela, 1984).
2. Manuel Antonio Rodríguez and Thea Segall, *Y Gallegos creó Canaima . . .* (Ciudad Guayana: Ferrominera del Orinoco, 1984).
3. Upon returning to Venezuela following Juan Vicente Gómez's death, Gallegos served as minister of public education, congress member, and mayor of Caracas. In 1947, he was elected to the country's presidency, which he held from February 17, 1948, until November 24, 1949, when he was deposed by a military coup.
4. For example, Raymond Leslie Williams, *The Twentieth-Century Spanish American Novel* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003), 59.
5. Maya Schärer-Nussberger, *Rómulo Gallegos: el mundo inconcluso* (Caracas: Monte Ávila Editores, 1979), 22.
6. Carlos Andrés Pérez, "La nacionalización del petróleo en Venezuela," reproduced in *Comercio exterior* 21, no. 6 (January 1976): 100–107, (translation mine).
7. Fernando Coronil, *The Magical State: Nature, Money, and Modernity in Venezuela* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997), 4.
8. For example, her trilogy *El casabe*, *La curiara*, and *El tambor* (Caracas: Contraloría General de la República, 1988), relating the artisanal production of cassava bread, dugout canoes, and drums, respectively.
9. Sagrario Berti, "Thea Segall," in *Maestros de la fotografía en Venezuela* (Caracas: Total Oil and Gas Venezuela, 2014), 360.
10. Respectively, and among several others, *Lo que vio el almirante* (Caracas: Fotoediciones, 1992), with text by Elizabeth Schön, and *La ruta de Losada* (Caracas: Gobernación del Distrito Federal, 1971), with text by José María Cruxent.
11. For an overview of Brändli's career, see Michel Otayek, "La Venezuela distante de Barbara Brändli," in *Barbara Brändli* (Madrid: La Fábrica, 2018).
12. Steve Ellner and Miguel Tinker Salas, "The Venezuelan Exceptionalism Thesis: Separating Myth from Reality," in *Venezuela: Hugo Chávez and the Decline of Venezuelan Exceptionalism* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2006), 3–15.
13. Leopoldo Sucre Figarella, foreword to *Y Gallegos creó Canaima . . .*, 5 (translation mine).
14. Sergio Chejfec, *Últimas noticias de la escritura* (Buenos Aires: Entropía, 2015), 93 (translation mine).

Figures

Michel Otayek

Rómulo Gallegos, *Canaima*, and the Photobook That Never Was

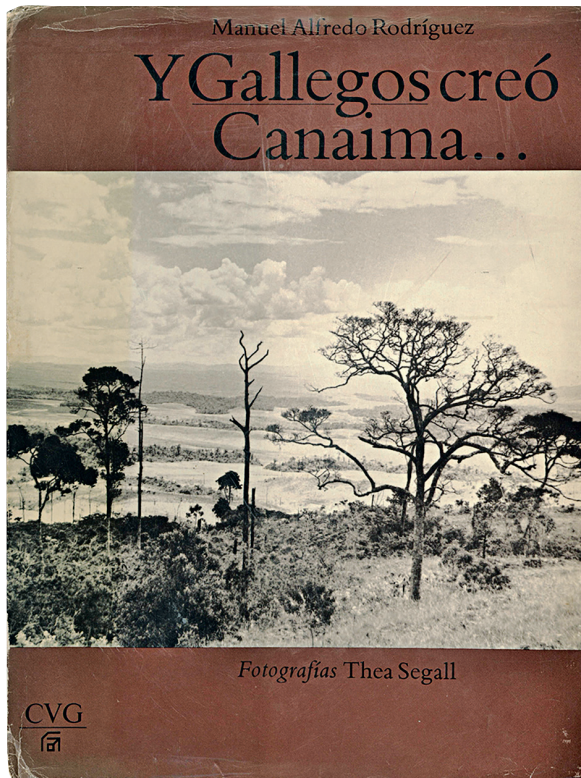


Figure 1

Cover of *Y Gallegos creó Canaima ...* (Ciudad Guayana: Ferrominera del Orinoco, 1984). Photograph by Thea Segall.

© Colección C&FE Caracas, Archivo Thea Segall.

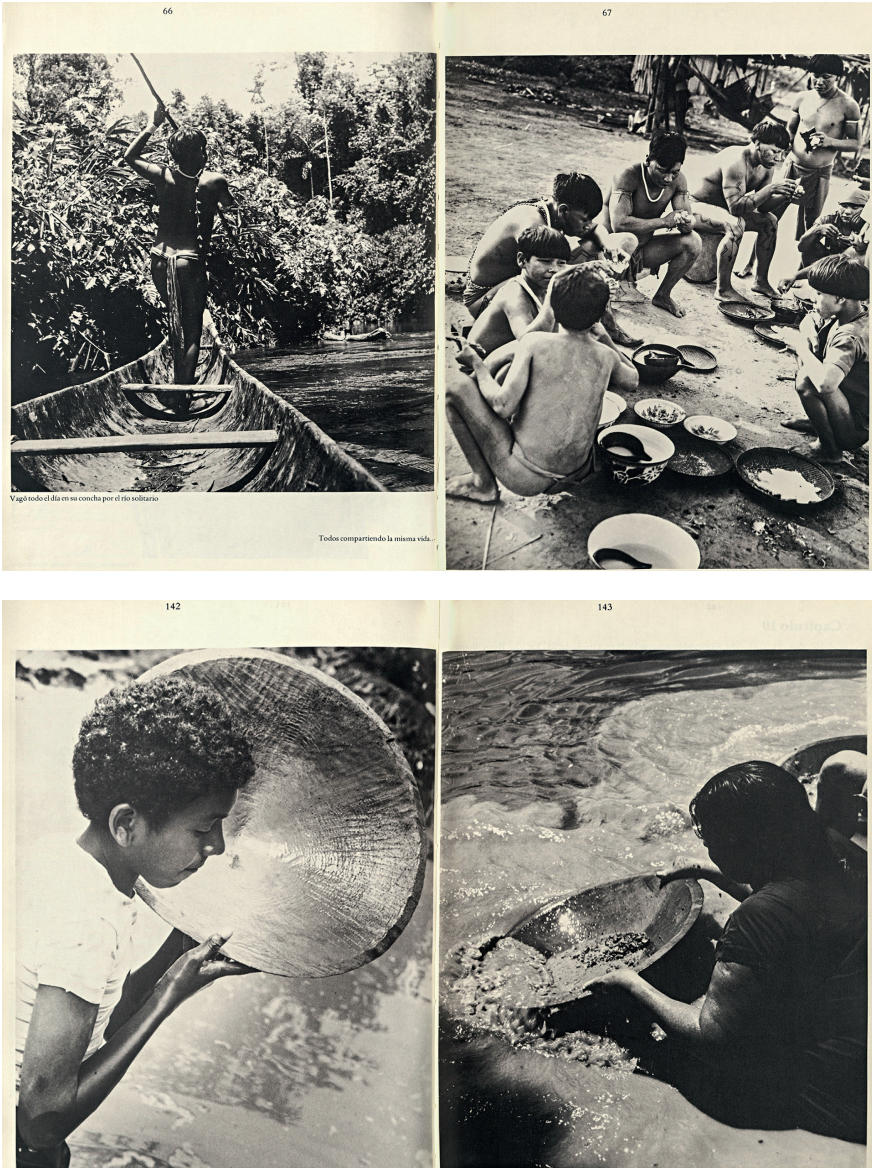


Figure 2 and Figure 3

Thea Segall, *Untitled (Indigenous Communities in Guayana)*, ca. 1984,
published in *Y Gallegos creó Canaima ...*
© Colección C&FE Caracas, Archivo Thea Segall.

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Critical Approaches to Modern and Contemporary
Latin American Art

Vistas: Critical Approaches to Modern and Contemporary Latin American Art is a platform for emerging and established scholars, curators, and graduate students working on Latin American art to share their research. The journal emerges from the context of the university but seeks a diverse readership. Its aim is to support the vitality of Latin American art and history, responding to ISLAA's mission to advance academic research in this area and to support future generations of experts in Latin American art.

The Institute for Studies on Latin American Art (ISLAA) was established in 2011 in order to increase the visibility of Latin American art on a global scale. Since its creation, ISLAA has played an international role in fostering advanced research in this field.

