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CULTURAL ARCHIVE: THE HISTORICAL ALTERNATIVE IN THE PROCESS OF POST- CONCEPTUAL PAINTING

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The artistic world lives under a permanent diversity of forms of subjectivism. They are silent entities that share the same presence both in the processes of creation and artistic contemplation. They tend to be imperceptible, we barely notice them, but we know that the variety of subjectivation styles establishes relationships in each social constitution, historical creation and political value. Thus, they determine oppositions or agreements with the configurations of knowledge and power present in each era. Deleuze (2015) once again establishes the notion of memory as the “authentic” mark that remains through the passage of subjectivation, choosing, in a unique way, the third axis of Michel Foucault’s universe. When we talk about subjectivity, the first idea that comes to mind is that it deals with the figure of the subject. However, the approach is both individual and collective. The processes and modes of subjectivation are dependent on the relations of knowledge and power. For example, a spectator, placing himself in a superficial observation plane, can read through semiotics and transform his reading according to certain social connotations, trying to reach the characteristics of the artistic object, the codes and signs of visual communication, the plastic elements, the valuation criteria, the language of visual arts to be able to analyze the artistic work in its cultural, historical and ideological context. If the social observer, individual or collective, formulates critical analysis conjectures encompassing these notions, the modes of subjectivation can be delimited. The spectator’s place is in a different dimension from the space of the critic, the artist, the curator. However, there is no type of exercise of power if there is no knowledge. Natural and unnatural things have limits of powers and weaknesses. Analyzing various cultural manifestations implies a notion of communication, intertextuality,

technique, language, image and means that activate relationships for the exercise of power, whether in the context of creation or contemplation. Therefore, powers are activated through communication and work with these three concepts: technique, language and image. The primordial notion is an idea of a dimension of subjectivity that originates in knowledge and power but is autonomous in relation to them (Deleuze, 1998). Taking into consideration, the various issues involved, let us focus our analysis on approaching the notion of memory as the “authentic” mark that remains when subjectivation passes.

Hal Foster (2015) highlights five axes of thought in the multiplicity of production of artistic works. He calls them mimetic, objectual, post-critical, precarious and archival art, with the archive convulsively touching the world of art, mapping its presence in artistic devices. In addition to the fascination with this premise, Gilles Deleuze (1998: 19) elected Michel Foucault as a new archivist in the panorama of the archeology of knowledge and the genealogy of power. According to Boris Groys (2016), the demonstrations of the present, associated with phenomena that seem to belong to the world of fiction, call for a reconsideration of the way of thinking about art, society and politics. The existence of a “mutant restlessness of subjectivity” (...) “in the face of the chain of events that form our daily life” (Groys, 2015: 205), alters the jurisdiction of the notions of private/collective, intimate/public, essence/existence.

These binary relationships are assumptions of segmentarity, already clarified by Deleuze and Guattari (1980, 283) to understand the subject in their cultural, historical and ideological context. In other words, segmentarity is one of the three lines that identify subjectivation processes. Contemporary artists, Neo Rauch, Helen Marten, Luc Tuymans, Tacita Dean and Nazaré Alvares, among many possible

examples, develop bodies of work where archival assiduity takes a central place in the development of the artistic process. This way, this presence allows an irreducible dimension in the understanding and contemplation of artistic works, as the importance that Hal Foster (2015) attributed to the notion of archive contributed to a new structural axis in current artistic creation. Studies on art and archive are recent, but the brief existence of this research is notable for its ability to generate new specific relationships in the history of art, criticism and aesthetics. The archivist concept is an expansive encounter of exceptional scientific and technological development that provides new forms of integration and understanding. This way, it establishes novelties in theoretical approaches, modes of production, circuits, systems and artistic practices throughout the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century. Understanding the archival issue in art configures several meanings: it produces and uses informal archives, images, texts, objects, films, constructed and found materials. Therefore, the archive in the artistic process detaches itself from the difference between fact and fiction, private and public, historical and non-historical narrative. And it is the dissection of this notion that determines the inequalities of the archive that belong to a dusty space, considered an inert deposit of objects, historical artefacts in the context of a warehouse, collection or repository. This formulation of the various purposes of the archive in artistic devices defines a role, function and status as an active mechanism capable of establishing new temporal relationships between the past, present and future. According to Delfim Sardo (2017), the archive has the meaning of an experimental exercise of freedom, expansive, deep and intense. Therefore, in art, the archive has a different function of unifying, identifying and classifying and is based on assumptions and

statutes that are not represented in library archives and documentation. In the 20th century, from the 1990s onwards, there was an unexpected growth of archival genres in artistic practices, as interest in this specific relationship was triggered by the invasion of digital technologies and geopolitical and cultural changes. This way, in Europe and the United States of America, essays, investigations and articles of different research, genres and formats began to appear regularly (exhibitions, newspapers, independent associations of artists, researchers and curators).

The investigations between the archive and art by authors such as Ana Maria Guasch, Charles Merewether, Okwui Enwezor, Simone Osthoff, and Ann Laura Stoler, confer, in a consensual way, a primary role on certain theorists. On a first level, the importance of the lines of thought of Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Hal Foster, Benjamin Buchloh and Walter Benjamin is convergent. These are unavoidable names in archival studies, joined by Paul Ricoeur, Charles Merewether, Nicolas Bourriaud. The study by Simone Osthoff (2009) promotes a theoretical discussion relating the idea of archive with the creative exploration of art and social media. In a sense, histories of collective communication must understand the topology of their performance through a histography.

They need a methodology to avoid settling in the places established by the canons of Western art history. Furthermore, Osthoff (2009) highlights the metaphorically organized art historical time with notions of performative topology and topological sense. She therefore introduces the concept of topological method and topological space to explain the fluid relationships between archives and artists' works. Specific relationships: techno-imagination, telepresence are integral elements in the construction of reflections to expand the standardization of the imperial historical

circuit. The topology allows us to verify the specific relationships between theory, research and artistic process and focuses on transdisciplinary devices, neoconcretism, concrete art, mail art, constructivism and conceptual art. And the discourse of topology covers topics of negative aesthetics, anti-heroic, body art, tele-art, copyart, for now, outside the reproduction circuits of traditional aesthetics that lead to questioning differences between fiction and fact. Thus, the size that the archive reaches allows it to identify intersubjective, topological relationships and new ways of perceiving art, criticism and history. The fundamental artistic works referred to in Osthoff's research (2009) belong to the bodies of work by Eduardo Kac, Lygia Clark and Hélio Oiticica. Simon Osthoff's thought, in flux, joins three relevant studies of Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repository* (2001), Ann Reynolds and the artwork of Robert Smithson: *Learning from New Jersey and Elsewhere* (2003) and Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (1995).

Ann Laura Stoler em *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (2010) uses an archival research method that converges concepts based on ethnography. The direction given to the anthropological and ethnographic archive has a political mode of activation. Stoler (2010) analyzes documents from the Dutch East India Company from the 19th century, tracing the identification of social epistemologies in detail. The services and practices of colonial governance, together with the experiences and correspondence of political actors, bring to light racial ontologies, government decisions and social behaviors that influence political content, using a methodology with a more critical, analytical and reflective sense. Simone Osthoff rejects the notion of archival work as a static, linear project, without lived space. Archivist production becomes an act resulting

from a field of forces, revealing the silence of archives and specific relationships outside the domain of historical canons.

In the second chapter, the pulse of the archive, (Stoler, 2010:45) establishes analytical differences between the character of the archive for historians and cultural theorists. The first group starts from a set of documents and institutions that make up the archive, the second establishes a metaphorical call to imply selective collections. However, to achieve these notions, Stoler (2010) uses the thought of Jacques Derrida (1995:9), understanding the archive as a memory designated as Arkhé, whether in its historical or physical sense, or in the equivalent of a primitive sense, or first. Arkhé designates two principles: that of the beginning and the commandment, consecrating a force of preservation, destruction, alignment and misalignment of what is known, unknown, thinkable and unthinkable. The archive, therefore, is associated with a cultural objective and the logic of a material memory system. The word archive comes from the Greek arkheion, designating a house, a domicile, an address, the residence of superior magistrates. Michel Foucault is identified in various studies as the mentor for the construction of the idea of archive.

Ann Laura Stoler, therefore, traces her theoretical path based on the thought of Jacques Derrida, letting the organization of ethnographic analysis be seduced by the structure of the analytical thinking model of psychoanalysis. Stoler (2010), in ethnographic research, demarcates itself from a standardized historiography, opening up to a dimension of the psychic. The geographic territory of the analysis of colonial documents embodies the Freudian model, that is, it reflects a more precise and representative context than a differentiator of the technological instruments used in archiving and documentation. The psychic formulates prosthetics or simulacra

of memory, while the archive of a bookstore is considered thematic, semantic, belonging to continuous, linear files, defined in homogeneous formats. This methodology, of the psychic, was identified in the mid-18th century, in the organization of secret archives, in Plassenburg Castle, in Bavaria, Germany by Phillip Ernst Spieb. It is a storage, in which the principle and origin must prioritize provenance more than meaning. Simone Osthoff, like Ann Maria Guasch, highlight the distinctions in the use of the archive in art, contrary to the sense of storage, an inert repository, where documents are stored under the conditions in which they were created (Guasch, 2011: 15).

In the fields of art history, literature, photography, visual arts and cinema, archival practices tend to revolve around impulses of discontinuity and heterogeneity. We add, to the initial theoretical examples, the contributions of Aby Warburg, *Mnemosine* (1923 – 1929); Walter Benjamin by ``*Passagens*`` (1927 – 1940), Gerhard Richter, *Atlas* and by Jean-Luc Godard, ``*Histoires du cinema*`` (1988-1998).

Ann Maria Guasch in, ``*Arte y archivo, 1920-2010: Genealogías, tipologías y discontinuidades*`` (2011), given the complexity and multiplicity of artistic manifestations produced throughout the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century, it does not systematize in pure theory, but rather comprises the artistic episodes, the sporadic, discontinuous, paradoxical and even counter-discursive lines. It also uses Michel Foucault's line of thought, a fundamental element in the description of the notions of paradigm and archive, since the notion of paradigm for Foucault fixes an object of knowledge in the discursive modes, problematization and instruments of power over a general perception that is committed to understand all the procedures and effects of knowledge in a specific field, specific to a specific time. Thus,

Ann Maria Guash protects the art of the first avant-gardes in two paradigms: the first refers to a type of work that unifies the conception of execution, characterized by isms; neo-plasticism, fauvism, analytical cubism and constructivism. The essence of this paradigm lies in its formal rupture. However, the devices, for example, of collage and photography characterize the other paradigm. This is the prototype of the disparities and fissures of objects, of the destruction of traditional canons, to construct artistic objects, as we find in Dadaism and Surrealism. However, these two paradigms do not make up all proposals and topologies, there are artists and projects excluded from these fields that configure a third dominant paradigm, the archive paradigm, according to Guasch (2011).

The intrinsic motives and specific relationships of artistic devices, from the 80s and 90s of the 20th century, plus the processes of art creation at the beginning of the 21st century, establish, as Hal Foster (2015: 5;6) refers, the five patterns, or, specific relationships in procedures: mimicry, the post-conceptual, the objectual, the precarious and the archive. Foster (2015: 5) states that they are not paradigms, because some are closer to artists' dilemmas, while others are closer to strategies. The experimental paradigm exercise allows us to consider the four facts, which are not yet but could be potential paradigms, as happened for the archive in art.

The archive paradigm refers to the ritu du passage and focuses on the visual work of artists who use the archive to record, collect, store, create images, and consequently create inventories, atlases or albums. This way, artists use the archive as a bridge between fact and fiction. However, technological development, digital communication media and networks, establish political mechanisms and relationships that converge in the notion of biopolitics and geopolitics. Management

systems, backup copies, software updates, antivirus, firewall, file administration, reconfigure and evoke, once again, Michel Foucault's thoughts on technologies and biopower. We are facing new challenges for the lines of subjectivation, for the unity itself, for the artistic subject, namely, new perspectives are posed in the face of the expansion of the artistic universe in the axis of activist artists, as Boris Groys (2016) refers.

Digital mechanisms provide new relationships reaching other levels of production and less conventional artistic bodies, for example, the collaborative work of Philippe Parreno and Pierre Huyghe, *No Ghost Just a Shell* (1999-2002), promotes impulsive archiving and the indifference between fictional and historical narrative.

Alternative history as a counterpoint to the dominance of history protected by orthodox virility and a Euro-centrist vision deepened the importance of archives related to issues of race and gender to the detriment of social class. Gayatri Spivak (1989), due to the need to understand the post-colonial situation, contributed to the construction of the notion of

archive, causing the fall of social codes rooted in the political and not cultural economy. Archivist methods, used in artistic processes, can derive from notions as distinct as memory, combination, topological, ethnographic, poetic, imperial, social, geographic, post-colonial, liberal, among others. The study of the archive in art allowed us to expand the artistic process, transforming the archive into a conscious and active model. The archival method that artists tend to use is the collection of memories. They produce painted images with pre-existing images, appropriating images from Comics, Films, Photography, Cinema, Internet, Mobile Phones. The Works are driven by fragments, historical, political, social events and historical relationships between cultures. These interests combined with the specific motives of artists contained in visual, political and social culture reinforce the meaning and importance of the notion of archive in delimiting the subjectivation processes that occur in the elaboration and understanding of artistic devices.

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