

# DWELLINGS, JABUTICABAS AND AFFECTIONS — TRAJECTORIES WITH SYLVIA CAIUBY NOVAES<sup>1</sup>

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1. The interview was carried out by several authors, all of Sylvia's advisees or former advisees, according to her suggestion. Although all of them participated at some point in the elaboration of the script or the conduct of the interview, we highlight below some activities that involved, in addition to the authors, interns and LISA employees. Transcription: Fernanda Caires de Moraes. Editing the interview (text): Bruna Triana, Francirosy Campos Barbosa, Mariana Flória Baumgaertner, Tatiana Lotierzo. Presentation of the interview (text): Francirosy Campos Barbosa, Kelly Koide, Rose Satiko G. Hikiji and Tatiana Lotierzo. Image editing: Jeferson Carvalho, Kelly Koide, Laila Zilber Kontic, Luis Felipe Kojima Hirano, Rafael Hupsel. Photography (Still): personal collection of Sylvia Caiuby Novaes, LISA-USP archives, Danilo Paiva Ramos, Kelwin Marques Garcia dos Santos, Laila Zilber Kontic, Rafael Hupsel. Drawings: Edgar Teodoro da Cunha, Jeferson Carvalho, Tatiana Lotierzo. Cameras, audio and editing: Maíra Bühler, Ricardo Dionisio and Iago Calmon Angeli.

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### ABSTRACT

Sylvia Caiuby Novaes is a Professor in the Department of Anthropology at the University of São Paulo (USP) and has been dedicated to research and teaching in anthropology for nearly 50 years. Among other accomplishments, she is one of the pioneers of visual anthropology in Brazil, is the founder of the *Laboratory of Image and Sound of Anthropology* (LISA) and the editor in charge of the *Gesture, Image and Sound. Journal of Anthropology* (GIS). In this interview, conducted by more than 30 advisees from different generations, Sylvia talks about her trajectory, projects, worldview, her various travels, her fascination with field research and the university. When telling about her academic and personal trajectory, Sylvia reflects on her relationship with photography and the production of images.

### KEYWORDS

Sylvia Caiuby Novaes; Interview; Trajectory; Visual anthropology; University.

This interview marks the trajectory of a researcher with almost 50 years of work at USP, 30 years at LISA — Laboratory of Image and Sound in Anthropology, and 26 years coordinating GRAVI — Group of Visual Anthropology. In the gardens of her home, we gathered some memories from so many years of dedication to the academic life, individual and collective production. A token of appreciation given by her advisees in 2010, when she became Full Professor of the Department of Anthropology at USP, the *jaboticaba* tree was the way we found to express to Sylvia that her tree had generated a fruitful offspring.

Aware of the fact that trees are constantly bearing new fruits, Sylvia refuses to be interviewed only by one generation of students, once her crops continue to be intense and new shoots should also be present. Gathering more than 30 people in the same place would not be feasible during the pandemic, so the interview was conducted remotely over two days.



A good part of her advisees and former advisees formed the mosaic of a digital platform while a small team of former advisees, worker and intern at LISA recorded and photographed Sylvia in her home's study. What you are about to read crisscrosses multiple stories that are not necessarily aligned with each other, but undoubtedly connected to this tree that makes everything bloom in her trajectory among the Bororo, images, trips, photographs, daughters, grandkids, advisees, multiple writings, presentations, and exhibitions that would never fit into one single interview, but which inhabit the various memories and forgetting of a lifetime.

Sylvia started at the university in 1968, a landmark both for Brazil's political history and the general transformation of youth, politics, and the role of intellectuals. The so-called 68 Generation at USP protagonized the Maria Antonia battle with Mackenzie University, a confrontation between left and right-wing students.

After her Scientific Initiation<sup>2</sup> research under the supervision of Thekla Hartmann, Sylvia becomes a Master's candidate in 1972. It is over this time that a new horizon is presented to her, in which the field research occupies a major role — and she starts studying indigenous societies. Sylvia spends two years among the Bororo in Mato Grosso, and two weeks among the Guarani and Kaingang in São Paulo. This is when her collection of photos of the Bororo, with approximately 2500 negatives, starts to come to life.

Her work at USP's faculty starts in March, 1974, when she is hired as an Assistant in the field of Anthropology by the Department of Social Sciences as a part-time worker. In 1976 she becomes a full-time professor, and in 1979 is fully dedicated to teaching and researching for the university. Her tenure as Professor of Anthropology is awarded in 1990, when the Department of Anthropology is finally separated from the former Department of Social Sciences.

By the end of 1979, a moment of democratic opening in the Brazilian scenario, the Center for Indigenist Work — CTI — is created: an entity she co-founded alongside a group of anthropologists, educators, and indigenists. At CTI, Sylvia has an important political role in defense of indigenous rights, for both the recognition of their territories and preservation of their cultures.

In 1980, she defends her Master's thesis: *Mulheres, homens e heróis: dinâmica e permanência através do cotidiano da vida Bororo* (Women, men, and heroes: dynamics and permanence through the daily lives of the Bororo), a study which, by looking at women, stands out from other

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2. Translator's Note: Scientific Initiation researches are junior research grants awarded to undergraduate students in Brazilian universities.

anthropological works produced at the time. The book with the same title is published in 1987 by the FFLCH-USP press. During her master's degree, conducted over eight years at a time when deadlines were very different from today, Sylvia also has two daughters, Laura and Isabel, who used to accompany their mother to the indigenous communities from a very early age. Her PhD dissertation is defended in 1990, entitled: *Jogos de espelhos — imagens da representação de si através dos outros*. The manuscript was published in Brazil by EDUSP (Universidade de São Paulo Press) in 1993; in English by the University of Texas Press in 1997, under the title: *The Play of Mirrors – the representation of self mirrored in the other*, and in Italian in 2018, by the Co-op Libreria Editrice Università di Padova, under the title: *Gioco di Specchi, Immagini della rappresentazione di sé attraverso gli altri*. At the time of her dissertation's defense, Sylvia is pregnant with her third daughter, Camila. Motherhood, her daughters, and academic life will be explored throughout the interview through the eyes of her advisees. In 1993, sponsored by FAPESP, Sylvia becomes a post-doctoral fellow at Granada Centre for Visual Anthropology at University of Manchester, in the United Kingdom, this time accompanied by her three daughters then aged 15, 13, and 2.

In 1991, Sylvia inaugurated the Laboratory of Image and Sound in Anthropology (LISA). In her Inaugural Professorial Lecture at USP, Sylvia described LISA as the result of a joint effort, a work environment filled with joy and a space for relationships without rigid hierarchical structures, where undergraduate students had the opportunity to take important decisions, employees could have an opinion on their academic work, and professors would also engage in manual labor. Sylvia also took care of LISA's gardens the same way she takes care of her own. In this conversation, Sylvia speaks about the lab — international reference in the field of research with image and sound in Anthropology — as her home, and underscores the accessibility ramps that she made sure to include in the place — fundamental to receive so many female graduate students and their baby strollers.

During her post-doctoral research in Manchester, Sylvia produced her first film *Al-Masoom, wonder women*. Shortly after that, she is invited to Pakistan, where she made her second film *A wedding in Pakistan*, which received an Honorable Mention at the Pierre Verger Award from the Brazilian Anthropology Congress, in 1998.

After her return from England in 1995, Sylvia established the Group of Visual Anthropology — GRAVI, and has the first thematic research project approved and sponsored by FAPESP, under the title *Image in focus in Social Sciences*. In four years, the project set up three video editing stations and the acquisition of equipment to record sound and image that started our

activities in audiovisual production at the lab. Besides the various theses and dissertations, scientific papers, videos, and exhibitions, this project also resulted in the publication of *Scriptures of the Image*, by EDUSP and FAPESP, in 2004.

Sylvia is again a post-doctoral fellow between 2001 and 2003, this time at the Centre for Indigenous American Studies and Exchange, at the University of Saint Andrews, in Scotland. At the time, Joanna Overing and Peter Gow become her americanist interlocutors.

Between 2003 and 2007, Sylvia coordinated a second thematic project sponsored by FAPESP, entitled *Alterity, cultural expressions of the sensitive world, and the construction of reality — old issues, new orientations*, and between 2010 and 2015, a third one *The experience of film in Anthropology*, whose results have been published in the edited volume *The experience of Image in ethnography* by Terceiro Nome editors in 2016.

Each one of these projects had dozens of researchers, from junior undergraduate advisees to post-doctoral fellows, and result in productions such as books, articles, films, photos, theses, dissertations, exhibitions, and national and international seminars that helped consolidate USP as an important hub for Visual Anthropology both at the national and international levels.

During this time, Sylvia defended her professorship thesis at USP in 2006, entitled *Ethnography and Image*, which gathered articles, photo essays, and videos. By the end of 2006, she is invited by Anne-Christine Taylor, director of the recently inaugurated Musée du quai Branly, to present her writings in the institution. She was the first invited lecturer at the Musée du quai Branly in the “Chercheurs invités” program at the Museum’s Department of Education and Research. From Paris, she goes to Oxford, where Elizabeth Ewart and Marcus Banks invite her to be a Visiting Honorary Research Fellow at the University of Oxford. Many of her advisees and former advisees were able to work in such a prestigious British institution due to the work previously done by Sylvia, be it during their post-doctoral fellowships (Andréa Barbosa, Edgar Teodoro da Cunha, Francirosy Campos Barbosa) or during their doctoral research (Victor Issa).

In 2010, Sylvia becomes Full Professor at the Department of Anthropology, a moment when some of us “planted” a jabuticaba tree (*Plinia cauliflora*) in her garden. Alongside such intense production as a researcher and leader of research projects, Sylvia also became Head of the Department three times: in 1999, 2001, and 2007, an activity that she highlights as extremely important, given the 10 new professor chairs and three vacancies for full professor, she was able to get for the Department, the “search for better

working, study, and research conditions”, and “the efforts to build an environment in which everybody felt equally responsible for the construction of common grounds”, words used in her Full Professorship memorial.

More recently, Sylvia has developed projects with a smaller group. As she says in the interview, she “would rather drive a minivan” at this time in her career. Entitled “Photographs and Trajectories: Claudia Andujar, Lux Vidal, and Maureen Bisilliat”, her current project sponsored by FAPESP tackles the universe of these three photographers.

In the beginning of the 1970s, Sylvia was Claudia Andujar’s student in a Photography course at the Brazil’s Arts School. Going to that school has marked her life and relationship with images, especially with photography. Sylvia says that Claudia used to recommend that her students left without their cameras, making photos with their hands — a way to train their gaze. She is given her first camera by an uncle, Cleso, and learns how to use it with two friends — Paulo Cleto and Marcos Rufino. The joy of leaving her home to take pictures without an agenda also involves a process of reflection and thinking through walking.

In her first field trips with the Bororo, Guaranis and Kaingangs, she uses photography as a research medium. These experiences were conducted as part of an elective discipline: Introduction to Brazilian Ethnography, offered by Thekla Hartmann, in 1970. Photography then acquires a central role in Sylvia’s work as anthropologist and she has organized various exhibitions and also published some of these pictures making sure to preserve the relationships established with the images by the indigenous peoples. The three women that are part of her current project — Claudia, Lux, and Maureen — have a profound impact on Sylvia, who recognizes multiple similarities in their trajectories: independent women ahead of their own professional and personal lives.

Sylvia continues to renew and broaden the reach of Anthropology made through images. Various themes with which she works go through a careful examination of the notion of image and its implications. These are dreams, mirror reflections, projections, appearances, memories, ideas, metaphors, descriptions, drawings, paintings, among other images. All of them are dimensions of an extremely complex phenomenon, which Sylvia articulates through the production of photographs, videos, and texts. This way, she also opens up the possibility to make an Anthropology beyond the text — a universe that transforms the conditions of possibility to “know with” the others.

And it is no surprise that, even when she is invited for an interview, Sylvia decided to explore other possibilities of knowledge! By refusing

to be interviewed only by her older former advisees, making the participation of the younger generation a condition of her own, Sylvia poses a methodological problem (to say the least): how could we gather so many different generations and interests? How could we prepare an interview with 30 interviewers who were interested in an academic and educational trajectory of almost 5 decades? How could we come up with something exciting for our interviewee in pandemic times? Many of us, the interviewers, have met in the process of the interview. The most recent advisees heard some of the old stories, anecdotes, and emotional accounts on how Sylvia marked our academic and life trajectories. The older ones heard tips they did not know from the younger ones and Sylvia. So many images in an unusual play of mirrors, made possible in times of virtual meetings, instigated by our adviser-gardener.

### **FROM HOME TO THE COMMUNITY AND VICE-VERSA**

**Rose:** Sylvia, I have been re-reading *Indigeneous Dwellings* and, in the presentation of the book, you talk about the separation that we make between spaces in our society, distinguishing the work space from leisure space, socialization, and relationship between home and identity. This separation does not take place in indigenous communities. I had the privilege to inhabit your home, and under your coordination, the LISA is like a home to us. “Home”, because we bring in our children to the meetings, change diapers, and feed them there. Anyways, the LISA and your home are slightly different spaces from those we experiment in our society. I would like for you to speak a little bit about Sylvia’s dwellings.

**Sylvia:** (laughter) I think there is a characteristic of my own relationship with space, which is the fact that, from very early on, the spaces where I live were all collective. So, when I was three years old, I moved to a village on Pamplona Street. This small village has many houses, out of which five belonged to relatives of mine. I spent my childhood living with my cousins in this very safe space, where we could be the whole day outside, playing and having fun. My father never knew where we were, he would whistle to call us back, and we knew it was time to have lunch or dinner. Well, when I left the village, I moved in with my partner at the time, in a community in Morumbi. These were the *hippie* years. It was a community of five houses in two acres, an absolutely amazing place — where there is a jungle of stones today. There were cows, horses, many dogs, a garden, and many friends grew mushrooms... And we had a completely communal lifestyle. We threw huge parties, for 500 to 600 people, always very improvised, people had to take their own food and beverages. It was wonderful. When I left this place, two of my three daughters, Laura and Isabel, had already been born, and I started to live in Butantã. For the first time in my life, I was looking next door and did not know my neighbors. I felt so isolated, it was so different from everything I had ever lived. In



terms of research, the beginning of my academic life was entirely in the indigenous communities, which are communal spaces par excellence, so my whole life is marked by this way of living. Maybe that is what I took to LISA, this habit of living with many people together, collectively, and of hosting everybody here. These meetings, to me, were always extremely important. At LISA, all the doors have access ramps. We never had anyone on a wheel chair, but we had many students who were mothers pushing their baby strollers to get in. I remember a report for a thematic project in which we talked about our greatest feats. They were not publications, or articles, not even a book or a film: they were the kids that had been born throughout the project. And there were many of them! I always loved these meetings very much, the parties. This is one of the things I missed the most over the pandemic: traveling and partying. So, the space to me is a collective space, and I always think about how much space means power. The spaces we occupy, the spaces in the city, the spaces in the community are all related to the notion of power of each one of these spaces. The difference between the space of the indigenous community and the city is gigantic.

**Lilian:** Throughout your academic life, different spaces were inhabited by you at USP, since your education and the first years as a faculty member at the time in the Maria Antonia Street building, the Faculty of Philosophy, Letters, and Human Sciences in Butantã, and, more recently, at LISA. These spaces, added to your own research experiences, especially with the Bororo, and allowed you to experience other ways of living. How do the sensorial, imagetic, and architectonic experiences of these spaces affected and influenced your career as a professor, researcher, and photographer?

**Sylvia:** An interesting experience was when I was named the director of the Maria Antonia University Center. As soon as I set foot on the building as director, I immediately remembered what it was like to be a student there in 1968, the year I got into college. When walking up those marble stairs that have a flatness in the place where one steps, what I remembered most was all the students descending Maria Antônia's stairs. Well, 1968 was when it all happened. And it was the year I started Social Sciences. I am a typical Generation 68 student. People would gather in the huge lobby and, in one of the columns there was a magnificent man, a wonderful man that would invite everybody to join the protests with an absolutely inflammatory speech. That gorgeous man was José Dirceu — a “catch”, as we used to say back then. He was a gorgeous man and had a very contagious speech. I do not remember the classroom exactly, especially because we were occupying the streets most of the times, in demonstrations, in the lobbies, in the war against Mackenzie. But it was very interesting to have started my academic life in the Maria Antônia space, coming out of

Dante Alighieri, an absolutely conservative, backwards, and middle-class secular high school.

**Aristoteles:** Sylvia, going back to 1968, I have a specific question, which is part of this timeframe. You, as an undergraduate student at USP, had the chance to know something none of us did, which was the important Plínio Ayrosa collection, formed by your professors at the department. Could you tell us a little bit about your experience with this collection, about how it was to be in that room where all of those objects were kept?

**Sylvia:** It was a huge collection and the pieces had been collected by many different researchers. It started with Plínio Ayrosa, but the importance of Lux Vidal to this collection, for example, is huge. Both Mariana Vanzolini and Paula Morgado who had been undergraduate students in Social Sciences were hired to work there. They started their careers as part of USP's staff for Plínio Ayrosa's collection. I was not directly linked to Plínio Ayrosa, and the one who had been working a lot, besides Lux, was Dominique Gallois. But I recall often going to the collection and was absolutely stunned with Mariana Vanzolini's ability to think about packaging and ways of storing each one of the pieces. There was a specific way of packing arrows, bows, baskets, and everything was thoroughly catalogued by Paula and kept by Mariana. It was a prime collection. Afterwards, during the centralization of the museums, the collection was added to the collections from Museu Paulista and the Museum of Archeology and Ethnology (MAE). And we, at the Lab, kept the images that were also part of Plínio Ayrosa's collection. They were sent to us, as well as Mariana and Paula, two absolutely fundamental members for what the Laboratory is today.

**Danilo:** The interview reminded me of when we did field work together in Rio Negro. You told me a lot about your work with the Bororo there. I would like to hear you talk about what it was like to do field work amongst the Bororo alongside your young daughters. I remember once you saying: "Oh, as soon as they were out of the diapers, I could go to do field work". I would also like to know how you tell your grandchildren about the Bororo, or any other field work you have done. I remember a photographic trip during this field trip we took together, and how you had a very sensitive gaze towards the children, and the Hüpdah's plays. Mariana, my partner, was pregnant at the time. You used to say: "are you not going to talk to the women?" And it was hard for me to talk to them. Anyways, this was all part of a turn in my own research and gaze as an anthropologist.

**Sylvia:** [laughter] Out of the thousand things I have done in almost 50 years working at USP, the field work is certainly one of things that I love the most and, fundamentally, the field work at the communities. I have visited many indigenous communities and this is, until today, what I like

the most, though I have engaged in other works, and other researches, and supervised students who work in other fields. What amazes me is the community. The community gives me the feeling that people live the way they are supposed to live, that people relate to each other the way they are supposed to. There are certainly gossip, conflicts, quarrels, but it is a world of its own and the values, the space, the relationship with nature cannot be compared with anything else. One thing I find extremely important, which is important to indigenous peoples, is that we do not divide or compartmentalize. So, now I am a mother, now I am a researcher, now I am whatnot... I think this is a lacerating experience. I would have found it very difficult to be so long out on the field, doing my research, without my daughters, you know? On the other hand, the community is a wonderful space for children. As soon as Laura was out of diapers, she came along. It was a very long trip, because I took a bus and a car. Learning how to have children in the community is completely different, because I knew everything regarding the researcher, that they are supposed to exchange, reciprocity, etc... And I forgot that the child, in order to establish a relationship with the community, also needed reciprocity. So, when I saw Laura being isolated, I said: "Oh, I know what to do". We went to the city and bought a lot of toys. She was only 3, which is the typical age in which the child is constantly claiming ownership of everything "this is mine, this is mine, this is mine". She arrived at the community and distributed everything. From then on, she was invited by all the children to do absolutely everything. So, I learned a lot too. After Isabel, my second daughter, was born, I took both of them with me and it was wonderful, because Laura would play with Isabel, take care of Isabel, carry her around, it was absolutely amazing. And Camila, who was born 10 years later, my third and last child, also got along really well with the community. None of them was baptized and not a long time ago, I heard that my mother, before passing, took the three of them to be baptized in secret. But at the community, the three of them received names, went through naming rituals, it was always extremely wonderful. I think one of the most incredible experiences I have had, Danilo, was going with you to Rio Negro. I should have done that with all of my students, because it really does make a difference, even while supervising. The one who taught me that was Peter Gow, who went along to the field trips with all of his students. It was impossible to be there the whole time, of course, otherwise you would invade the field, but these ten days among the Hüpdahs with you were wonderful, and also a chance to help you get closed to the women, the children, something I noticed was lacking in your data. It was when I went there that you moved from a place outside the community, and started to live in the community. To me, it was wonderful and I think there were important gains for you too.



**Sylvia:** it's one of Edgar's prints.

**Edgar:** It's a drawing, a print's sketch [laughter].

**Sylvia:** It's a feather's tip.

**Edgar:** I thought about this drawing as a question-dispositif, to bring in some sensitive elements to our conversation. It is a parody of *photovoice* — a method to use photography to stimulate memory, a “drawing voice” [laughter]. The idea is to surface a shared experience, your experience in the community, my own, the one we had together, even if it was very short. The central element of the drawing is a *bái*, the main house. Rose mentioned being hosted at your home, and so was I. I actually know this house before you even lived there, when it was Thekla Hartmann's. In fact, I keep thinking of this house almost as a community house. So, I would like to think a little bit about how multiple we all are. This was something very important I learned from the Bororo, but also here. When I evoke your home, I think about how multiple it has been. I would like to hear a little bit from you, on such multiplicities that life experiences bring us through our work, from relationships.

**Sylvia:** I think I can talk about it thinking that LISA has turned 30. This is a long time! Many many years. And Franci wanted to do an interview with me so much, so she said: “all of us, Edgar, André, Rose...” and I said: “oh, an interview is boring, so square. And only with my older students, when I have supervised so many others” — look! Jardel, Jefferson... So, I said: “No, I do not want an interview only with my first students”. To me,

**FIGURA 1**  
Bái, central house  
Bororo, Edgar  
Teodoro da Cunha,  
2021

talking about multiples is also talking about the multiplicity of students I have worked with, for instance. You are all linked to things I like, are all in the most diverse fields. I certainly could never have done all of these things, everything you do. It would be simply unfeasible. So, I love this multiplicity. We, throughout our lives, have different interests, different roles, and I think having new perspectives is always very interesting. With some of you, I have had very interesting joint works. Works with Rose, the research in Tiradentes, the *Fabrik Funk* film. The exhibition at Sesc Vila Mariana, *Amerindian Encounters*, of which Aristoteles is the curator and which I coordinated, that I started thinking about in Maria Antônia. Since 2015, I had been thinking about this exhibit and we finally made it. With Kelly, Laila, Mariana and Bia, I have a project today, which is the project about Claudia Andujar, Lux Vidal, and Maureen Bisilliat. So, I think this opportunity to have shared activities is extremely rich and deals with such multiplicities, such array of interests.

**Priscilla:** You talked about this experience with Danilo and your house that hosts everyone... In fact, there is a mirror there, right? I learned to take care of my babies in the community, with the Broad Belt women in 1981. But it was at your home, in 2005, that we had my baby shower. My question is about that, about the generations and multiplicity of affections. This is something that nurtures you a lot, which is working with many generations. You talk about your young granddaughter, but also dives into a movie on Lux Vidal. You get excited when, besides this group of researchers who have been with you for so long, you also see the new students that bring in freshness to life, right? You go through all of these generations and all of these languages and allow all of that to happen. They have proposed that I sing a song I composed, called *The Grandmothers of my Voice* [Avós da minha Voz]. I think it will fill out the rest of my question:

*The faith, girl, the faith  
my grandma used to sing  
washing the clothes  
leading life  
simply  
with warm lips  
and us by her feet  
playing of once being a woman*

**Sylvia:** I think I am one who pays a great deal of attention to time. I do not know why, whoever works with photography deals with time. Photography gives us the feeling of stopping time, freezing time. André Bazin says that photography embalms time. So, I have a strong connection to time and also to generations. If you walk through my house there are many things that used to belong to my grandmothers, my aunts. I like to think about



time as something that carries continuity and change. It cannot be just continuity or just change. And I am deeply attracted to the new. I love my new students, new projects. So, the new is like a blood that feeds you, and having continuity is also interesting. But I think of generations both in terms of family — I absolutely adore my four grandkids — and in terms of my different advisees from different times. I think this is incredible, isn't it? To be able to follow such different phases, different generations.

**Kelly:** My question has two interrelated parts. It is about memory and the constitution of your gaze. Some photographers believe we repeat, unconsciously, variations of the same photos we have once taken. Some writers also say that they keep making versions of their first works throughout their entire lives, as if they ended up going back to the same story. Having such inevitable repetition in mind in the creative realm, what were the visual experiences or photographic experiences that marked you the most? Your researches have been very diverse, but what if these important experiences, or echoes from these experiences, keep reappearing in these new researches and photographs, as a kind of repetition? Once you told me that you got your first camera from your uncle at the age of 6. What/ In what circumstances did you like to take pictures back then, and which perhaps continue to be with you until today? Another related question is: what do Claudia Andujar, Lux Vidal, and Maureen Bisilliat have that is familiar to you? Can you see anything in them that reminds you of other people in your life, or even yourself?

**Sylvia:** This camera is actually in my living room. It is a PLIK camera that I got when I was 6 from my uncle Cleso, married to Sylvia — which is why I was named Sylvia, but he was my father's brother. Two things I still like a lot to this day: I like to observe people and to study people. I do not like to research archives. I like to observe things and people. I remember when I was about 6, 7, or 8 years old, how I used to lie down on the floor to watch the ants, the paths that they took, the way they walked, and I think this is fascinating. To this day I keep looking at my garden, almost as if my state of mind is altered, looking at the plants, the leaves, and so on. Claudia, Lux, and Maureen are admirable women, because they were the masters of their lives, and incredibly autonomous at 91, each of them with a very active life. I think feminism is extremely important. We, women, would not be able to vote if it wasn't for the suffragettes. And some women in Anthropology were indeed silenced. Vilma Chiara, who lived on the shadows of Harald Schultz, Pia Maybury-Lewis, who lived on the shadows of David Maybury-Lewis, Dina Dreyfus, who lived on the shadows of the great master who was Lévi-Strauss. All of them complained about being invisible women, silenced women. But Lux, Maureen, and Claudia lived in many countries. Claudia had all of her paternal relatives murdered in concentration camps in Auschwitz, Dachau. These are absolutely



incredible women until today, great protagonists, which is what I love the most about them. As for what I like to photograph, I like to photograph people, to study people. I'm not interested in photo-denunciation. Last time I visited the Bororo community, I was devastated and unable to take many pictures, because nothing I could see there made me happy. It was very hard. Any picture I took seemed like a photo-denunciation; it was not what I meant to do. I think with this relationship between photography and memory, we also tend to remember what we photograph. So I have a very vivid memory of everything I have photographed, and I recognize when a photo is my own, even after a very long time.

**Francirosy:** When thinking about my question, it came to me that you never really said “I am a feminist, I discuss gender”. This was never really your claim, though the title of your thesis was *Women, men, and heroes: dynamics and permanence through the daily lives of the Bororo*. That does not mean you did not look at women and men, to questions of gender, but you look at them in a different way. I kept thinking that when I decided to study the Islam, you let me borrow three books from Fatima Mernissi, Lila Abu-Lughod, and Leila Ahmed. The question I am going to ask is: did you know these women were Islamic feminists? Another question has to do with the time in which you were in Pakistan. You kept saying that you could hear the Bororo, and this idea of making such a different field work and at the same time hearing the Indigenous group you are most familiar with is very interesting. I wanted to understand a little bit about that, and how much the homosocial relationships affected you, and if the homosocial relationships you saw in Pakistan were similar to those you saw among the Bororo. Finally, is your current work, studying three photographers, three women, a way of revisiting yourself as an academic, as a woman, as a photographer, and ethnographer?

**Sylvia:** I knew for sure that Fatima Mernissi is an Islamic feminist, and I had read her work. The feminists have an absolutely fundamental role. Before going to Pakistan, I did research with a group of feminist Muslim women in Manchester. Some of them used to wear the burka, were extremely sensual, had many different interests for everything that was going on, and their great struggle was against the rapes in Bosnia, against what was happening in Manchester. And they sought to pressure their congressmen to act in defense of Pakistani women and immigrants in England. It was through these feminist women that I started working in Manchester on my post-doctoral fellowship. When I went to Pakistan, I was absolutely amazed with everything I saw there. And why did I hear the Bororo in Pakistan? They spoke urdu, which is the official language of Pakistan, and I heard Bororo. Because the Bororo is my reference of a different world, and Pakistan was a different world to me. It was this association of a completely different world from where I live my daily

life, to the point that I could hear many things in Bororo. But that is it. It is because this was the reference of total alterity. I have two important references of alterity in my life: the Bororo and Pakistan. Now about Lux, Claudia, and Maureen. Once they were leaving the movie theater on Augusta Street, and I saw them walking side by side. I said: "I have to make a project about these women". Then I found out they had much in common. They were all born in the 1930s (two of them in 1930, one in 1931), they are European, displaced, cosmopolitan, multilingual, protagonists of their professional careers, women who were very successful as women, and who engaged in defense of indigenous peoples, the peoples with whom they worked. They have a great deal in common. We sometimes find out even more. This is why I decided to do this project.

### **GAZING, TRIPS, DREAMS, AND PHOTOGRAPHY**

**Andrea:** I would like to make a movement back home as well, but to another home which is the body. We say, or keep hearing, in Anthropology, of a certain anthropological gaze. The eye that observes, to draw, to photograph, to ethnograph, the eye that knows itself and its agency in the world, which is the gaze. You yourself have already problematized such prominence of the gaze in your own texts. And you are an extremely corporeal person. I know when you are teaching next door, because of how you walk, the rhythm of your footsteps. Their sounds are very characteristic. You have a strong voice and we know when you are speaking, your voice is unmistakable. You dance wonderfully, in your parties you are always inviting everyone to dance. I wanted to ask you how you insert or what links to your presence in a broader sense, in other words, to the corporeal experience in the world, you make with the anthropological practice. Do we look with our whole bodies? Do we think we our whole bodies? Do we make images, drawings, photographs, films, and Anthropology with our whole bodies?

**Sylvia:** I think so. I believe we exist with our whole bodies. I think we photograph with our whole bodies, film with our whole bodies, there is a corporeal feeling in the act of photographing, in the act of filming, and in the act of teaching as well. I think to be in a given situation is to be there in body and soul, as a whole. As a matter of fact, something I keep saying is that I learned to teach taking dance classes, with Ivaldo Bertazzo. I took classes with him for four years, and I have always loved to dance. Before that, when I was 13, I took classes at Madam Poças Leitão, a place none of you know, where one could learn foxtrot, samba, bolero, tango. Besides these classes, what I have enjoyed the most were the classes with Ivaldo Bertazzo. Ivaldo is an absolutely present person. The way he speaks, the way he moves his body, the way he relates to other people in his classes. I thought that was fascinating. And teaching from the computer is different. Because you move less, cannot walk, has less possibilities to perform,

and the classroom is a stage. I never doubted that the classroom is the teacher's stage and that, in order to really engage the students who are their audience, the teacher must be present as a whole. I believe in the body as a whole, the gaze is fundamental. And I like to walk and look and notice, anyway, this Tim Ingold thing — a typically British author who thinks while walking. I also like to think while walking.

**Bruna:** I would like to hear a little bit about the deep relationship between traveling, experience, and the anthropological gaze. It is moved by the relationship between your trips that involve some sort of visual production (you were invited to a Pakistani wedding, which became a film, then went to Ethiopia to visit some friends, and that became an essay, an article). So, I would like to know a little bit about these processes, this crisscrossing between the gaze, experience, Anthropology, and traveling.

**Sylvia:** I think traveling is what has always fascinated me, because it allows a single experience which, perhaps, is extremely important to anthropologists in general. Just like Caetano Veloso's LSD, "*caminhando contra o vento, sem Lenço, Sem Documento*",<sup>3</sup> I think traveling takes you out of your roots. It allows you to leave a certain social class behind, certain world view. Traveling takes that perception that others have about you, which already brings an expectation. People relate to you according to how they think you are. When you are traveling, if nobody knows you, this is wonderful because you get out of fixed categories. This is what fascinates me about traveling, this possibility of leaving all you are behind and take up new identities or others you have and which did not develop so much, or finding new horizons, new people, this possibility of being someone else. And it allows this experience of getting out of your roots that is so important to the gaze and the making of Anthropology.

**Jardel:** My question stems from one of our advising sessions. At the time, I explained one of the arguments I intended to explore for my prospectus and in my master's thesis. You carefully heard me and suggested an exercise which I did not do, but which made me think a lot. You said: "Try to draw what you are trying to explain to me." But you warned me not to look at the paper sheet while I was doing it. I was talking about your last article published at GIS, *Gaze Sensitivity - about the importance of photography in the academic training of the anthropologist* (2020). At some point in the text, you call attention to the fact that you attended a school of experimental art. I would like for you to comment a little bit on the importance of the aesthetic education you obtained in your youth for the Anthropology you have produced since then.

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3. Translator's note: Sylvia makes a reference to the play with words in Caetano Veloso's *Alegria, Alegria*. The song's opening lines in Portuguese, which would translate as "Walking upwind, no scarf, no documents" form the acronym LSD with the letters as marked in bold.

**Sylvia:** This is something I did at Brazil's Arts School<sup>4</sup>, which belonged to four architects—Frederico Nasser, Carlos Fajardo, José Resende, and Luiz Paulo Bravanelli, all of whom had been advised by the artist Wesley Duke Lee, who had been supervised by Marcel Duchamp, and which was so important to my training: drawing without looking at the sheet, without looking at your hands doing it<sup>5</sup>, because this gaze presents an absolutely destructive kind of criticism. You will end up thinking that the drawing you are working on is horrible, and will never be satisfied, while if you do not look, you will be able to get incredibly expressive results. I believe in the drawing. That is why I like to supervise Jeferson's work so much, a wonderful work that has everything to do with drawing. I think that, in order to work with Visual Anthropology, you have to have a solid foundation in the Arts. They teach you how to see, listen, and feel things. And modes of seeing, listening, and feeling are so diverse that it is important to have such repertoire. Knowing different painters, different artists. I do not know music, or literature, I ended up pursuing visual arts, but that is something I value a lot, and which I think values the importance of a sensitive gaze. Sensitive gaze is that which makes you see, as explained by many artists, such as Picasso and Paul Klee. But you learn to see. If you want to photograph, I think it is important that you see hundreds of photographers, so that you amplify your repertoire on the different forms of seeing, a different sensitivity through the gaze. You can work with something I have always been very interested in, which are dreams, which brings images through the unconscious, the pictorial, etc. Danilo is also interested in dreams as an element of strengthening language, cultural recovery, which is something fascinating. In fact, at some moment, I used to teach a course on mythology and symbolism, and then invited an important psychoanalyst, Tenório de Oliveira Lima, to speak about the relationship between the analysis of the myth and and the analysis of dreams. It is something very interesting, but I could never go down this road. So, whenever I have advisees who end up going in that direction, I get extremely pleased. And you, please, start drawing. [laughter]

**Luis Felipe:** You always talk about the importance of dreams in your classes. I would like to know the importance of dreams to your research, if you take note of your own nocturnal dreams, and how some dreams inspire your life. The other question is whether it would be possible to take a blind picture, just like a blind drawing. And if you take blind pictures.

**Sylvia:** My answers will be very disappointing. There is such a thing as blind photography. Evgen Bavcar is a blind photographer. What has not been invented yet, and which I think would be extremely interesting, is a camera that captures dreams. That would be amazing, can you imagine,

4. *Escola Brasil*: <https://enciclopedia.itaucultural.org.br/instituicao407326/escola-brasil>.

5. This form of drawing is known in the Arts as "blind drawing".



a camera that photographed dreams? I would love it, and you know why? Because I only remember my own dreams in therapy, or when I am traveling. But here in São Paulo, I do not recollect my own dreams. Fundamental moments for my research, and which I keep talking about to my students, are the great insights that come to you shortly before you sleep. You know when you are almost embarking on your sleep, and then something comes up, and it is absolutely amazing, and it ties everything together? Another time, which I also tell my students about, is when you are taking a shower, and then some insights that are wonderful come to you. But my dreams, I can barely remember them. Unfortunately, I would love to remember them more.

**Rafael:** My question is related to photography. As soon as we were in touch with each other, when I was still flirting with Anthropology, I had the chance to interview you for a project called “The representation of indigenous people in Brazilian photography”. The site was given the Marc Ferrez award, with you and Leonardo Wen, and I suggested that your photographic material on the Bororo be part of the project. So, I had the opportunity to see part of your archives on the Bororo, and, as a photographer, I was impressed by the quality of your work, by the quality of the images, which I think are nothing short of what photographic documentarists we have today are doing out there. I want to ask you how photography became part of your life, how it was developed in your career, and how you used it in your field work. Was it a natural process? How did it happen?

**Sylvia:** Lovely to hear such a compliment on my photography. A photographer talking about my photos. I learned to take pictures with two great friends of mine, one of whom has passed away, Marcos Rufino, and the other one is Paulo Cleto. We used to take a lot of pictures back then, and, at the time, it was all analog, with the development done in the bathroom. I thought it was fascinating to look at the image coming up on the paper, in the development bathroom, but the laboratory was never really my thing. As soon as I learned it, I took a one-year course, actually with Claudia Andujar, at *Brazil's School*. This school was absolutely important to my training, and the course I took with Claudia Andujar was fantastic. It was one year in which we kept looking at photographs on this gigantic table filled with great photographers, so we could have a repertoire. It was the time when Claudia was married to George Love. So there were pictures by George Love, but there were also pictures by Edward Weston, Alfred Stieglitz, Edward Steichen, Robert Doisneau, Robert Frank. It was very important to see and comment the pictures of such great photographers. That was the class. We would go out to photograph São Paulo with Claudia Andujar, but without the camera. We would look at things and use our hands to photograph them, making frames, so that we would



not get lost with technology, because technology could hinder the sensitivity of our gaze. The most important thing was that we learned to see, learned to cut, learned to frame, and not using the *high-tech* cameras that were being launched. For the research, I always used photography. Since I started doing research, in 1970, at the indigenous community, I took the camera and photographed. It was wonderful to be able to take back the pictures I would have enlarged in heavyweight paper, so that they could be handled in the community by those hands full of coal and annatto. It was also an extremely strategic resource in order to introduce a theme which you wanted to explore. The theme does not fall from the skies, you do not start talking about funerals out of nowhere. If you have the pictures of a funeral, the theme is unfolded and, because photography has this immense potential to surface things, people start talking about everything through the picture. So, as a research resource, photography is fantastic. And I have always used it. It was present in my master's, and in my doctorate. But it was only when I became Full Professor that I incorporated photography as a theme, and visual anthropology became the focus.

**Rafael:** Something that stood out in your material is that your photos of the Bororo are not merely records. And I think this is largely because of your background studying with Claudia Andujar. This is a provocation I have done before: have you ever thought about publishing a photo-book with these images?

**Sylvia:** [laughter] The difficulty to publish a selection of my images on the Bororo has to do with the image rights, a tricky matter these days. Even because the Bororo do not share the same concept as we have: who represents them? Who represents each community? It is something extremely complex. So, I do not really know how to do it. If somebody finds out the pathway to do that, I think it could be very interesting, because I have records from the Bororo since the 1970s, incredible images and in all communities. But I don't know how to do it.

**Maíra:** I was very impressed by how special you are to each one of your advisees, how much you marked the lives of each one and how much you marked my own life. What is this process of advising like to you? How do you feel about it? How do you live it? You have not just advised me on the things I wrote or researched about, but also on swimming, or walking, or on how to deal with life, because things are so much more complex than the work that has to be turned in to conclude a master's degree or a PhD. Life is a lot more complex. I think you had a role in everyone's life. So, I would like for you to speak a little bit on that, and, to wrap up, on this specific moment when we are all gathered.

**Sylvia:** I have recently discovered, and I think I found that out in the pandemic, that, besides the research work, the other thing I like the most is to advise. I did not know that. I always liked it, it is obvious. I have advisees since at least 1990. I have advisees today that I have not met in person yet. I have barely had any contact with Jardel, I have never seen Jeferson. I do not know how tall he is, can you imagine that? Because we only see each other through the screen of our computers. And, in the pandemic, this became very clear to me, because since I could not do my research, I had these advising activities and these meetings via *Google Meet*, be it for the research group, or my new advisees. This is something I love to do, but I like to follow them in person. With the pandemic, I found out that one of the things that gives me the most pleasure is to see my students. And I like to advise people who have their singularities. And some of my advisees, during orientation, have had difficult moments that affected their lives and which I tried to follow. I love people [laughter]. So, this advising is not something distant, unfamiliar. There are advisees I have been working with since their junior undergraduate research, then in their master's degree, then in their PhDs [laughter], to some of them I have to say: "No, go do your post-doc research somewhere else! You cannot be here with me all this time; you have to conquer the world!". I think I said that to Franci, for example. I said that to Edgar too. They had already done too much with me. They needed to leave and conquer the world. Now this is a wonderful meeting, especially because you are so many and so different and you did not know each other. What a chance!

**Francirosy:** I would like to add something to Maíra's question. In fact, I wanted to give a testimony that I think is extremely valuable. For those who do not know me, I think they do not know this story, and how generous Sylvia is for the lives of so many people. For my life in particular, Sylvia has touched on an extremely fundamental subject, she was not just being my advisor for the texts, theses, and works I wrote, but Sylvia was a decisive person in my doctorate, because I would never have been able to support myself financially, emotionally, and to keep on going with three small children and a life turned upside down. Sylvia was the advisor who sent me an email telling me all the reasons why I should stay doing my PhD and not give up. So, I owe my doctorate to Sylvia. Every time I thought about giving up, Sylvia would come and say that I had to resist, so I think this is one of these generousities we bring to our academic life, which is usually so hard, so full of vanities, competitions, and to have an advisor who believes in your work, who believes that you will make it somehow, I have no clue what she saw in me that told her I would be able to do it in the middle of that chaos, but this is what happened. Thank you, Sylvia.

**Sylvia:** But Franci, I have to say that you do not owe your doctorate to me, I did not write your doctorate. You owe it to yourself. It was you who wrote your dissertation, not me.

### **ENCOUNTERS: THE UNIVERSITY, ANTHROPOLOGY**

**Ana Lúcia:** I would like to invite another being to this conversation. It is this body I have here at home, of something that is always changing: this small viola vase with a few sprouts. I wanted to give you a flower in person, to give you a hug, but in the context of the pandemic, what we have is this little flower. I would actually like to think about this work of observation that is the relationship with other bodies. The debate on the non-human today proposes to think about the way we relate to the world, with plants, beings, with the various presences in the territories. How can we deal with expressive non-human forms? Have you dealt with this discussion before?

**Sylvia:** In this pandemic, I lost a cousin of mine who was like a younger sister, Fernanda, a cousin-sister with whom I lived in the Pamplona village. She was one of the first 100 people to die of Covid, something extremely difficult and sad. I have a brother and Fernanda, who is the cousin I have always considered as my sister. She died in April, 2020, right at the beginning of the pandemic. It was very sad, very sad, also because of the impossibility of having a service, a funeral, and a burial. Fernanda has a granddaughter called Olívia, the daughter of Julia, and, when Julia was packing the village house where Fernanda lived, she asked me to keep an olive tree. This olive tree, Fernanda and Robinson, her husband, planted on the day Olívia, their granddaughter, was born. And this olive tree was planted in this massive vase in front of Fernanda's house. Julia said: "Can you keep it for me? Because I cannot fit it in my apartment". So, I went there to get the olive tree, cleaned it up, removed the tall grass, because it had been almost one year since Fernanda had passed away. So, it came here, and I placed it right in front of the house, where there is sunlight in the morning. Yesterday, Julia came over with Olívia to have lunch here and I said: "I have to show you the olive tree". Ana, you just showed us the sprouts of your viola, and the olive tree is also full of sprouts and flowers, it is vigorous. I think the non-human beings are just like us. One of the passages by Lévi-Strauss that I enjoy the most is when he talks about compassion, in the text *Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Founder of the Sciences of Man*. He shows how much Rousseau did not look just at humans to perceive humanity, he establishes this notion of compassion, referring to any living being, be them animals, or plants, which takes place when you feel a certain compassion, when you see animals and plants being mistreated. I had the experience only once, of being in a situation of deforestation in the Teles Pires River. I had never been in a place of deforestation before. It is just awful, because you



can hear the chainsaw, a horrible sound, with decibels that are truly disturbing. When the chainsaw is finished, the tree moans, it moans [she mimes the sound] and falls on the ground. The smell in the woods is the smell of blood, which is sap from those colossal trees. You hear the tree dying, it is something very impressive. I think that, just as trees, as said by Marisol de la Cadena, there are the rivers, the rocks, and the mountains. For the Bororo, this is something very present, the way all of these entities are beings surrounding us.

**Carolina:** While I heard you speaking, I remembered when we visited Saint Catherine, the dead saint, in Bologna. Your conversation with a local nun that took care of the chapel was incredible. We approached her to talk and she said she had been cloistered for over 50 years. She saw our reaction and said: “but I am happy, this was my choice”. After that, we kept thinking “wow, she has been cloistered since before I was born”. This recollection came to mind while you talked about observation, the sensitivity of the gaze, the learning how to look. In other words, world experiences, trips, and so many other things. I thought about that cloistered woman who has not had less experiences, trips, transformations and processes of sensitivity than us just because of her choices. You mentioned learning to be a teacher taking dance classes, with the engagement of your whole body, the gestures, the presence, the gaze. The question I would like to ask is on the classroom space, the space of exchanges, the shared adventure: how do you think your experience as a teacher marked your way of living relationships, both in and outside the classroom? How have you been constituted and/or transformed by the experience of being a teacher?

**Sylvia:** I just remembered this nun. Since my childhood I used to hear of cloistered nuns, and this has marked my life. Suddenly, I was face to face with one of them. During my childhood and teenage years, I used to think that they abstained from the world, lost what I loved the most, which is living in this world. But that lady who we met in that chapel in Bologna showed us how it is possible to live the world outside the world, and how the world might prevent you from living the world, because our world dictates a rhythm that can be maddening, which can take away amazing things from you, including your chance to observe. I think that learning to look, when I think about Social Sciences in general, is absolutely fundamental. The training that the Social Sciences major offers is absolutely liberating! One can have classes and classes on the exploitation of capitalism, added value, minorities... and then you stumble on a homeless person on the street without acknowledging their presence. This is something that happens in the Social Sciences that have always bothered me very much. I love to read, love to write, but I think that if we limit ourselves to that, we lose what Social Sciences, and Anthropology in particular, have to offer. So, in every course I have offered, I have always

emphasized the importance of learning to look, to observe, and to write for an audience that is outside the university, because students, specifically in Social Sciences, end up writing in a way that is almost illegible. Indirect orders, gigantic sentences, and redundancy all distance any reader. So we end up producing a kind of knowledge that is not useful to anyone, it does not get to the places it should get. Visual Anthropology is a way of making this knowledge more accessible. But there is something else I love to do, which is to teach. With the pandemic, what I think we lost the most was this stage, this direct contact, face to face, with the students. You are all with your cameras open. This is a punishment to the teacher. I insist on that every class, because it is an extremely difficult contact, when the camera is off we lose connection. I do believe that one learns a lot when one designs and offers a class, because then you are forced to systematize the subject, the reading, the reasoning. I think this is an absolutely fundamental exercise, to learn how to teach, and that is an important component of post-doc fellowships. I always insist on that.

**Joon:** The first memory I have of you is you speaking of books. You did not have a Xerox folder and forced us to go to the library to see the authors' faces. So, I would like to ask you about this distanced gaze from someone who grew up in a completely analogical world. You grew up in a world that was even more analogical than for me. What do you think is the effect on academia, including the researches, as it is increasingly reduced to the "talking heads" you hate so much? Even here [at Google Meet], we are all a mosaic of "talking heads", mediated by apparatuses that reduce the world into a non-place. The discussion on non-places reached an unimaginable standard 20 years ago, and we are all here in a non-place while we are all in a specific place. What do you think happens to the academic space in this world highly mediated by non-places gadgets, which somehow also generate a generalized impoverishment of ways of seeing, listening, and speaking? With the cameras turned off, one cannot know whether the student is really there. This ends up creating an asymmetric relationship, in which one does not have feedback when, paradoxically, cybernetics is the science of feedback.

**Sylvia:** You know, I remember the time libraries stopped offering the service in which you walked up to the front desk and asked for the book on the counter, and started to work in an open collection format. Thus, the student, professor, or researcher would have to go to the stacks and look for a specific title placed according to a catalogue. It is about the opportunity to look at a book next to the one you were looking for —something that did not happen when someone picked up the title for you. I thought that had been a great revolution in the library services, because, in fact, that enhanced the research possibilities for the students. I always liked to look at the authors' faces. Have you ever seen Weber's face? I

was always very impressed realizing that students could only recognize Marx. I even live to know the person's voice when I am reading. What is the voice you hear when you are reading an author you have never heard speaking? I read Rita Castro's texts and know Rita's voice. I read your text and know your voice, and can hear your voice when I am reading. But I do not know Durkheim's voice, or Weber's, and I think that's a bit weird. Not knowing one's face then... This thing about the extent to which the apparatus may interfere, impoverish or hinder the gaze is something I learned very early on, at the Brazil's School, with Claudia Andujar. We did not hold a single camera during her course over one year. Until this date I have some technical difficulties with photography, because I never really dedicated myself to the technical part of it, the most important for me was the sensitivity of the gaze. I, in fact, do hate talking heads, and we are all talking heads now, but this is the online environment situation in the pandemic, there is no alternative. In Manchester, in the Visual Anthropology course I attended, we learned how to interview, where to position the camera, where to place the person speaking, where the person should look at, etc. However, the main thing was creating the characters, how to create a character so that it is not needed for someone to be there talking, explaining, something very easy for a social scientist, such as transposing a book. These films that focus on the native and the specialist's voice are not films, to me this is the radio, it is a radio show. It is very poor, lacking, boring, and just bad. You mentioned the non-place and it is true. This non-place does not favor connections, personal relationships, it does not favor what we, here, have that is so rich. I adore all of you, and I know all of you. You know something that bugs me in the world today aside from the non-place? The place of speech. So what is linked today is, on the one hand, the non-place, and on the other, such place of speech. So, you can only have women talking about women, black people talking about black people, Asians talking about Asians, gays talking about gays. To me this is something extremely harmful to Anthropology. I think that there is a very interesting political movement in the contemporary debate, which is diminishing the force of political parties, and, on its turn, the importance of social movements. This can be something very interesting, the power is more diffuse because in the contemporary political life, parties are no longer enough. On the other hand, we live in an absolutely segmented world, like small islands of identity that create their own place and position themselves as the only legitimate voice to speak of a certain group. I think this is poor and falls into a politics that can be a boring and impoverishing trap. And this is all very contemporary.

**Rita:** I got to Anthropology and USP when I was already a professor at UnB, but I had never experienced such a rich and instigating collective of exchange such as the one at LISA/GRAVI was to me. I am extremely

moved to see each one of you here, such diversity of researches; it is truly fascinating. I came from Drama and, suddenly, I arrived at LISA amidst such profusion. You are like a master figure, a shaman for this collective, which impresses me a lot. The strength and potency of LISA, with Paula Morgado there, Mariana Vanzolini, and, at the same time, your completely singular gaze, the way you listen, your individuality and close relationship with each one of us. When my father passed away and I could not be seated, you took me to walk in the parks, you advised me while walking, which is something I never forget. I would like to hear you talk about being an advisor with such richness and diversity of students along the way.

**Sylvia:** Rita, it's so nice to see you! I would like to take a moment to remind us of someone extremely important to the life in the Lab, which was Luciana Aguiar Bittencourt, who brought you to São Paulo and to me, and I thought that was wonderful. Up until that moment, I did not have any relationship to anyone from the field of Drama and Theater, and it was with you that I was able to build that relationship. You are living proof of how talented my students are. Very talented students look for me, people from Drama like you, people from Photography, such as Laila and Joon, people from Drawing, like Tati and Jeferson, and also people from Film. I think the Arts and Music end up attracting the most various expressive forms, which is extremely rich, and lucky me! [laughter]. I think it is only possible to advise from a relationship. Of course, there is a relationship with the research project itself, and your project was thrilling to me, with the question of how theater embodies Asian techniques, so there is a relationship with the project. But it is fundamentally a relationship with the person who is conducting the project. This is fundamental in any advising relationship. One cannot advise just a research project. I was talking about my students with my daughter and she said: "but mom, you do not have the relationship that most professors have with their students". And I said: "Well, I cannot speak of that, but I have to work like this. To me it has to be this way otherwise it will not work". This is why it is so hard to advise over the pandemic. I also do not like when my students finish their course work and move back to their home states and you do not see them anymore. This is very complicated. To me it does not really work like that, the relationship is fundamental.

**Laila:** Sylvia, my questions goes back to a memory I have of you, at the occasion I met you at the Anthropology III course. I had started my research and you invited me to give a presentation at LISA and, at the time, I declined because I was too shy and felt unable to speak in public. You looked at me and said: "Ok, the decision is yours to make, but you should take advantage of a trustworthy space to practice". I understood that response after attending LISA many times, so I would like for you

to comment on LISA, the researches that went through the lab and the lab's dynamics.

**Sylvia:** I think one of the things Social Scientists need to learn is how to speak. What do we do? We observe, we write, we read, and we speak. And the exercise of delivering is fundamental to learn how to speak. We have to see ourselves speaking and we have to listen to ourselves speaking so that we can lose some mannerisms. LISA is a space that favors a good coexistence. People who go to LISA are people who are linked to NAPEDRA, John Dawsey's Center of Anthropology, Performance, and Drama, which is linked to PAM, Rose Satiko's group of Researches in Musical Anthropology, which is linked to GRAVI, the Group of Visual Anthropology that I started before going to Manchester. GRAVI started out before LISA. GRAVI started off with the desire to discuss political films. There was one of Dominique Gallois' students, Roberto Morales, from Chile, who loved Politics. He wanted to start a forum so we began to watch many films together and discussing these films. And we also started with cinema, not photography. Then the group gradually increased, we found out that we wanted to do more things, and that we needed a space to do them. At the time, Manuela Carneiro da Cunha, who was linked to the Center of Indigenous History and Indigenism (NHII), asked the Provost for a space for NHII at the Hives, which had been occupied by the Departments of Languages, and I went there with her. She said GRAVI also needed a space, which was more "incipient" and I said: "not more incipient, but the most recent!". We were able to get those two wonderful combs, and it was amazing. And it was Manuela who donated LISA's first camera. Paula Morgado always worked in an impressive way, with the festivals and series she put together. She saw that Jean Rouch was coming to Brazil and she said: "We have to invite Jean Rouch for a seminar here, so that he can speak at LISA". I proposed that we filmed Jean Rouch and made a film about him, which was made by Paula Morgado, Edgar Teodoro da Cunha, Renato Sztutman, and Ana Lucia Ferraz. It was the first film made in the lab, on that filmmaker that most influenced everyone who worked there. I was able to get funding from FAPESP and with Mariana Vanzolini we started to remodel the space, which is the one we have today, including the editing stations. So, I think this trust that the space inspires comes from the pleasure that people have to work there, and I think it is, in fact, a quite different place. I am most proud of this Lab. It exists thanks to many people, one of whom is here, Paula, others are Rose, Mariana e all of you who go there. This partnership with Rose in the coordination is also absolutely fundamental.

**Paula:** Sylvia, I would like to add something to what you just said, because I think you speak from a tripod of research, of course, the classes, and the orientations, but you just brought up another side to you, which is

the entrepreneur. I have followed you for “just” 30 years, and you have taught me this entrepreneurial side and without it we would not have been able to work on our scientific dissemination, it is all connected. So, I would like to ask you to speak for those who are not following such enterprise, because I think LISA is a huge enterprise that is not meant for any researcher. You mentioned Jean Rouch, and I remember that we did not have an editing station then, did not know how to write a script, did not know anything, and you came up and said: “now you are going to make a film”. And I said: “What?” And you: “yes! It will be LISA’s first film”. We worked hard, wrote the project, spent one year watching films, and were able to get FAPESP’s first project sponsoring a film in Anthropology, thanks to your entrepreneurship. So, I would like for you to recall what it was like, for your peers in the Department, when you launched the idea. We have at LISA, a physical folder that tells the lab’s history, which precedes the 1990s, going back to the 1970s, when you already had the desire to make this Anthropology laboratory with some of your colleagues, and the idea kept changing. So I would like for you to speak about the challenges in this enterprise. If I am not mistaken, it is Brazil’s first Visual Anthropology lab. What are some of the most relevant achievements for the Department as LISA’s coordinator?

**Sylvia:** Other labs had been put together before LISA, such as UERJ’s. I think the entrepreneur side is also the housewife side, because these things are interconnected. Especially when you have a household with children, things have to work out. But to be a housewife at the university is very different, such entrepreneurship implies getting to know some of the hard paths. Also, the partnership with Mariana Vanzolini was fundamental. Mariana was the person who divided the world into the people she liked, the people she did not like and all of the key workers at the Hives, as well as a good part of the Faculty’s best staff members who were also part of those she liked. We were able to get, during a very long time, two people, and you were the other one, Paula, because all the relationships that were impossible with Mariana Vanzolini (deceased in 2016) were made through you, who was always a very kind person, who dealt very well with these relationships, with famous people, professors, researchers, and with the documents. I remember I always liked working with images and always liked to screen films in my classes. Doing that at our building was very hard. First one had to find a TV, then the cable, then the TV was awful, and so was the sound. I was so upset with all of that that I said we had to have a set up space, with all the possibilities for effectively using film in a single place. And that motivated me to set up LISA. We were able, at LISA, to achieve the feat of having all the equipment we needed and a high-definition screen, which is wonderful. Then it was decided that all the classrooms should be equipped in our building. The classrooms are equipped now, professors use the projectors for slide

shows, but the image is green, the quality of the projection in the Social Sciences and Philosophy's building is awful. Nothing really works well. When we organized the International Meeting of Visual Anthropology (EIAV), there was a wonderful film by Claudia Andujar that was going to be screened. We could not find a screen. It was really hard to get a decent screen to exhibit her film at EIAV's closing session. So it was also a huge challenge because people linked to Social Sciences in general, but also to Anthropology, do not give sound and image their proper value. They need good libraries. So, this was a huge challenge, and we would not have gotten the resources to do what we did at the lab if it was not for FAPESP. I think this is an absolutely fundamental space.

**Tatiana:** I see you and the relationship you have with your students and with the people who are close to you as a caring relationship. There is a fundamental and extremely important work for the university, for a general transformation of the very notion of university and the way the university is organized and experienced. You have a fundamental role for such transformation of the university into a space of caring through relationships of research, orientation, and friendship. In a way, it is as if you brought a little bit from these field works, we do, for example, with indigenous collectives, a little bit from these relationship orders that are totally different from those we usually find in academia. It is as if there was a tendency at the University to depersonalize and atomize people, which are trying to keep up with productivity metrics, and I feel like the spaces where you are involved are very different. I kept thinking whether you have some kind of reflection about that, about your role in the transformation of the university. I would like to know from you: who were the other people, throughout your history at the University, who also shared this kind of view and perception?

**Sylvia:** Tati, I just did the math on how long I have been teaching. I started at USP in 1974 and we are in 2021, so 47 years, a very long time. Throughout these 47 years, the university changed a whole lot. The transformation is really impressive. One of the greatest transformations of the university was that it became a university for the masses, with a gigantic number of students. When I was a student, I had classes in a room with 20 students. Now Rose has taught 70 students many times, and so have I. This transformation fundamentally changes the relationship between professors and students, because for many years, I was able to know all of my students by name, which I always tried to learn and was able to learn. Now this is impossible, extremely difficult, with the growth of the university. I think this is important, because the university has a role, it must reach more and more people, but the way of dealing with the burden of a larger institution is to form research groups, which did not exist in the same fashion they do today. Nowadays, there are at least 10

research groups only at the Department of Anthropology, where you live more closely with some of these students. I was part of a research group during my undergraduate years, but it was one of the very few in the Department, which was called “The Logics of the Primitive World”. The research group is fundamental for one’s formation, and so is the Scientific Initiation for undergraduate students. I insist with many students that they must develop a research project. It creates a stronger bond with the professor and the relationship with the major in general. What the student is able to articulate in different subjects is a lot more interesting after a junior research. This is the way, I think, that was found to deal with a university of the masses. There are people I admire a lot, who were very important throughout my formation. My advisor, Thekla Hartmann, already deceased, marked my career very much. She was someone who was completely different from me. She was a very Germanic person, with major mood changes, she either liked or disliked things. Her ethics and generosity were admirable. She worked at the Paulista Museum and one of the things I liked the most was to go to the Museum, because I had to walk on the roof of the Paulista Museum and could see the whole city to get to the room where Thekla used to work. Before walking into the room, we saluted Curt Numuendajú, because it was Thekla who gathered Nimuendajú’s bones, which were kept in a huge funeral urn in her office’s entrance, and she was the one who was able to bury his bones in her family’s grave. Another person who I have always admired a lot is Eunice Durham. I think Eunice has a passion for the university that very few people have, a unique dedication, and it never bothered me the fact that she greeted very few people, and would only come talk to you whenever she needed something. She looked at you and the eyes crossed you. I remember when she gave classes with Ruth Cardoso, and Ruth was extremely kind, but I liked Eunice better, because I thought she was incredibly authentic. Another person I love until today is Marilena Chauí, because I think she is admirable, with a huge talent for reflection, expression, and excellent oral skills. And certainly, the three protagonists of our project, Claudia Andujar, Lux Vidal, and Maureen Bisilliat. Lux advised pretty much all of my friends and I was the only one who was not advised by her. So, I have a distant relationship, which is also good so that I can conduct my research now. Alongside this research, I also have three Scientific Initiation students: Laila, who is studying Claudia, Mariana researching Lux, and Bia who is studying Maureen. This was something fantastic about this research project.

**Victor:** Sylvia, should (or must) Anthropology be seen as a Science today? How do you perceive, feel, and experience this field of knowledge? What took you to Anthropology?

**Joon:** May I add something? Is self-ethnography a tendency of contemporary Anthropology? What do you think is the impact of self-ethnography and engaged research for the status of Anthropology as a science?

**Sylvia:** Two very interconnected questions. I never had the need that many social scientists have, perhaps more in Sociology, but also in Anthropology, to characterize Anthropology as a science. I think Joon is concerned about that and I think it is admirable the way he conducts his research, with very clear scientific criteria. I do not have such worries, and always thought of Anthropology in a beautiful threshold between Arts and Sciences. I like thresholds a lot, I love door frames. I like these situations of passage, not here, not there. I think these are extremely rich spaces. Anthropology cannot be anything, it cannot be taken lightly, but to me the idea of the lab is interesting in regards to the experience. Anthropology has to experiment and experiment different approaches, different research possibilities. In the films and photo shoots, this experimentation is very visible, and I think Anthropology fundamentally relies on the researcher's experience, who has to be willing to have an experience effectively. I think this is what makes a good research, when you open yourself up to the imponderables. I think the engaged research in Anthropology is also extremely important. Both throughout the undergraduate years and after that, when we were leaving a dictatorship, there was a reorganization of the social movements. I was part of the establishment of the Center for Indigenist Work (CTI), of which I still am an active member. I was the president of CTI for many years, also the treasurer, developed projects, and the great thing was the engagement with the struggles for indigenous rights. I have always believed in the importance of that. CTI came into being in the end of the 1970s, alongside other indigenist organizations, such as the Pro-Indian Committee, and the National Association of Indians. All the CTI's work was done at the community, with indigenous peoples, making it possible, for instance, for a co-op to trade guarana berries amongst the Sateré Mawé. This was absolutely fundamental, the Sateré Mawé needed to have control over the whole process of manufacturing and selling the guarana. Also, regarding the Sateré, the Elf Aquitaine, a huge French Oil Company, exploited the oil in their territory using dynamite. It was something absurd and we decided to denounce that in France. For that, we brought in a wonderful French anthropologist, Simone Dreyfus-Gamelon, who did a whole research, visited the area with Sonia Lorenz, a great friend of mine, and also CTI's. When Simone came back with the report, Maurice Godelier said: "Simone, the Elf Aquitaine is the sponsor of the *Centre National de Recherche Scientifique* (CNRS). If you make these claims, you will take away the funding we have". Maurice Godelier! Incredible! And Simone took a stand, denounced the company, and we forwarded the full report to Fernando Henrique Cardoso, who was the president at the time, and he lectured Maurice Godelier. So, I think the engaged Anthropology

is absolutely fundamental. It is extremely important. We are the ones who, as anthropologists and researchers, have this closer contact with these populations who, in a country filled with disparities, are constantly ignored. This does not take anything away from Anthropology, and it should not, not its scientific element, nor its artistic aspect. These aspects do not exclude each other. Manuela Carneiro da Cunha's work in the 1988 Constitution was fundamental. Lux's work with the Xikrin, and even after that, with indigenous peoples from Uaçá, is absolutely fundamental. I think that the engagement itself is very important.

### **IMAGES, LINES E DRAWINGS**

**Luis Felipe:** I saw at Anpocs's website that you were the first member of the Image and Sound Committee. I would like for you to tell us a little bit about what it was like to insert films and photo shoots at Anpocs, and also of your role at the Brazilian Association of Anthropology (ABA). My other question is a question-dispositif. I remember that in the course Photographs and Trajectories that you offered, I suggested that the students drew the life lines of their interlocutors. I know you have said many times that you will not draw, but I would like to propose, inspired by Tim Ingold, and it does not have to be now, for you to draw your own life lines. What are the thicker lines, and the dotted ones, and the thin ones, and the short ones? If you are not up to doing it, maybe we can draw the lines of this interview. But this is the proposal-dispositif.

**Sylvia:** Very good! To draw the life lines, I can go through here [shows her hands]. These are my life lines. From the right to the left. One of the most important things that was done by my generation for Visual Anthropology was to allow the area and the results of this area (such as films, photo shoots, internet works, hypertexts, and now also podcasts) to be recognized, because one of the problems is that, if Anthropology only recognized texts and books, everything we did would not be worth anything. And if nothing is worth anything, there will not be funding. There are funding agencies which, amongst its funding possibilities, do not include anything related to audiovisual production, to the making of films and photographs. So, the first step was to take to debate forums of Anthropology, such as ABA and Anpocs, the discussion on what we were doing. This was not just me, but also Clarice Peixoto, Cornélia Eckert, Ana Luísa Rocha, Carmen Rial, and Renato Athias, among others. People who were fundamental. Out of the most important things, what was very difficult was the elaboration of the *Audiovisual Qualis*<sup>6</sup>, because Capes had designed *Qualis books*, *Qualis periodicals*, but how about the audiovisual production? It was a huge battle with Graduate programs that did not dedicate themselves to any kind of audiovisual production. They did not

6. Translator's Note: Brazilian research metrics of scientific productivity determined by CAPES.

want these products to be worth anything, an enormous challenge. Now, in this world, the recognition of what you do in the university comes from metrics, the index h, index h-10, *Qualis*, and so on... This is awful, but one cannot run away, because this is the model of university-enterprise that has been imposed on us. We have to make academic projects in which specific goals are set. And how will you gradually reach these goals? What is the company's goal? To produce X products, sell... Anyways, this is the world today, in which, as Marilena Chauí says, even the government has to work like a company. Politicians do not present themselves as politicians anymore, but as managers. They manage the government, they have goals to be achieved. It is a boring job, but there is no escape from it, otherwise we will be completely left aside. As for drawing my life, I leave that up to you.

**Ana Lucia:** I would like for you to talk about your time in Manchester, and how you appropriate all of these references to make your films your way, from your experience. Would it be possible to think, following Ingold's text *Knowing from the Inside*, that in order to make the film *A Wedding in Pakistan* you were living the universe and experimenting what it is like to be a Pakistani woman?

**Sylvia:** Wow, this is an absolutely fantastic memory! This trip to England was fundamental for my life in numerous ways. I went there in August, 1993 and stayed there until February 1995, so it was a long time away, which professors can no longer get. Those were fundamental eighteen months. The leaves of absence given by the University today last up to six months, a very short time when you move to another country, because there is a whole adaptation period. In my case, I moved with three daughters of three, thirteen, and fifteen, Camila, Bel, and Laura. It was in a strategic moment because I had just separated from Jorge and since the newly separated life in São Paulo was very boring, moving to England meant to face new challenges, with three children in very different school ages. I must add that Jorge went there with me, and helped me. He was always and continues to be a wonderful ex-husband and an amazing father. It was an extremely rich period, both personally and professionally. I had a whole support system at the university, so it was very important for me to move there inserted in a professional environment. I owe Paul Henley absolutely everything, Paul and Olivia, his wife, who helped me find the two houses where I lived, bought me a car, then sold the car when I left, found the best neighborhood for me to live, because I would be close to the schools where Laura and Bel could study. They helped me find a day care... The neighbors would come to my house and say: "oh, your children are the same age as mine, we should get to know each other..." I find British sociability admirable. Manchester is a town with 300 days of grey skies. It is the worst climate in England, so everything is

indoors. That being said, sociability is vast. In professional terms, as there was no post-doctoral fellowship then, I did a master's degree in Visual Anthropology as if I were a student, but I was a *visiting scholar*, so I had all the prerogatives of a visiting researcher and all the access that the university's master's students had. Part of the degree included making a film. I started off thinking about a film on the street musicians, something absolutely impossible, because I had always worked with collectives and musicians were individuals in subway stations, in the streets, playing in front of their hats, and I have never researched a single person. And with the cold, they started to disappear from the streets, there was no musician left for me to study, until with Pnina Werbner, who was an anthropologist from the Department, I met the Pakistani women and was fascinated. I could see a collective environment among those women that I have always appreciated, just like in the indigenous communities, and made the first film, which is the *Al-Masoon Wonder Women*. What charmed me the most is the way those women, all covered up, could be absolutely sensual and erotic, something very impressive. And one of these women, who was part of the Feminist Association of Pakistani Women, invited me to attend her daughter's wedding. We stayed in the bride's grandmother's house and I went there with my three daughters. The wedding is an event that lasts a very long time, just like the Bororo funerals last a very long time. And the girls were fascinated because one of the wedding's activities was to buy the bride's trousseau, so imagine walking around with Laura, Isabel and Camila in all of those enormous Pakistani bazars in search of clothing and accessories, it was amazing. I walked with the grandmother, the bride's mother, and the bride who is a wonderful person, a physician, and she was from a high social standing in Pakistan. I, who had left England with houses without fences, suddenly felt as if I were back in Brazil in a way, because the houses in this place had very high walls with a security guard in front of the gates... I left England where everybody was somewhat the same, and went to an unequal Pakistan that I could recognize very well. I was in the house where everything happened, which is why the film is indeed a gaze from the inside. And I was able, on a day everybody had gone out, to be with the bride, in an interview in which she gave me the whole ethnography of the Pakistani wedding, which ended up structuring the film, where everything happens. It was from that moment on that I met everyone from Visual Anthropology in England, Paul Henley, Ana Grimshaw, Peter Crawford, David Turton... We were able to make a film from the series *Trajectories* on David MacDougall. Then we went up there, Lilian and Caio were part of this trip, it was them who made the movie, and it was incredible. I kept a close relationship with Paul Henley, we wrote, Edgar, Paul, and I two papers on the filmography and photos about the Bororo. I am once again with a paper with Paul, on Heinz Foerthmann. So, these

bonds remain strong and creating branches, reaching former advisees, advisees, children, and everything is mixed up.

**Jeferson:** Once while commenting on some of your experiences with drawing at Brazil's School, you said: "the observation drawing was almost an equivalent to the very experience of seeing: the hand that draws follows the eyes that see." Thinking about that, I would like for you to comment on how drawings have affected (whether they affected) your gaze, as a photographer and anthropologist, and as a way of making Anthropology.

**Sylvia:** I think drawing and photography have a very close intimate relationship. Henri Cartier-Bresson himself, for many years, was a photographer, known for being a photographer, but stopped taking pictures at some point and from then on, only drew. He used to say that photography was like a faster drawing, but you have to have the same kind of observation. So I do not agree with Tim Ingold's observations, who diminishes photography and technological apparatuses. Tati and Luis Felipe translated a wonderful paper, which I recommend to all of you, in *GIS 6*, by Anna Grimshaw and Amanda Ravetz, entitled *Drawing with a camera? Ethnographic film and transformative anthropology. (Desenhar com uma câmera? Filme etnográfico e antropologia transformadora)*. It is indeed possible to draw with a camera and with the body as a whole. Sometimes you are photographing, or filming, but you are so connected with what you are seeing that it is a bodily experience. There is a part of my film, *Al-Masoon*, in which the women are dancing by the end of the movie, but I remember that I was filming that and was almost dancing with them. It is something that is not even possible, as a matter of fact. It is difficult for the researcher to film, or photograph, because you keep looking for the focus, and, if you stop to interact, that damages the shooting. But I think there is a huge relationship between photography and drawing. Both of them are important to my gaze, for sure.

**Bruna:** I would like to know what your relationship is like with your own photo collection, how do you archive and organize them, your negatives, the amplifications, field notebooks, objects, and all of these things?

**Sylvia:** In the last visit that Fabiana Bruno and Eder Chiodetto did to Maureen Bisilliat's home, Maureen showed them her office, the entire photo collection that had been organized by a friend of hers. She said it used to be a mess. Mine is a little bit like that. My photo collection is here in negatives and suspended folders. Rafael and Maíra came over on Monday to shoot, looked at it and said: "Sylvia, you need a dehumidifier!", and I don't have one. I have my field notes stored in a large dog chow box, which Maíra put beside here. I thought it was interesting that she put this giant heavy box right next to my chair so I do not have to get out of this place,

so I do not disappear from the camera. So, this huge box here under my chair is where I keep a lot of my field notes, researches, etc. Everything is here. I also have folders for a digital collection, which are not very well organized. My text folders are good, but my *drive* is a mess. It is very hard to organize one's own material, and I think this is something Lux, Claudia, and Maureen do with the people who help them. Mariana Baumgaertner, from our project, who did a junior research with me, organized Lux's cabinets and collections. Claudia also has someone to help her. They are both 90 years old, and I am 70, but anyway, I think this external look for the organization of the collections is fundamental, because you keep producing, doing things and then add them the best way possible, which is certainly not the best way. I never really thought of my photos then, but I have photographs from a trip with Renée Castelo Branco, a great friend of mine, a journalist who made weekly documentaries for a TV show called *Sem Fronteiras* [Without Borders], and I sent a different researcher every week to follow Renée in the production of the documentary. It all started with her at the beach doing production, and it ended in the editing station. Many of my students had the chance to go, I think Rita was one, Edgar and Andrea, Maíra, and it was an amazing experience in order to learn a different rhythm of production. After all, our documentaries usually take years. So, at the time I attended the *Brazil's School*, I took a few trips to Colombia with Renée, and there are some incredible negatives. I also took a trip with her alongside some other friends in which we went up the São Francisco river by boat. It was a crossing that took six days, starting at Pirapora and finishing in Juazeiro/Petrolina, then I continued for another month. That was in 1971, hitchhiking with Lilia Valle, we would sleep in churches and in the homes of people we met along the way. There are photos from this trip too. But I do not even know how to look at them, I do not have a very specific gaze for them.

**Vi:** My questions go back to two situations, one that you have already brought up, that I experienced due to the EIAV. You mentioned Claudia's beautiful lecture and I had the pleasure, the privilege, and the honor to take Claudia back home. And the way she walked really moved me, especially near your house, in streets with a lot of trees, saying: "look at that tree's shape. So pretty". She paid attention to all the trees. And when we left your house, she kept making comments and saying: "I recognize this tree, we have already been here, right?" I thought it was very interesting, because we, living in the city, do that with other things, like houses, traffic signs, buildings, but we hardly look at the trees. So, I kept thinking about the way her gaze had been trained, by those many years of experience in photography, but also in the forest. So, I would like to go back to this theme of the gaze sensitivity that you have worked with. The second situation is when you accepted me as your advisee, before my transition. I had proposed to research BDSM, and you said: "I don't even

know what that is, I can't advise you on that", and I said: "so can we look for another research on *travestis* subjectivities?" Then you invited me over to your house, where a great deal of our conversation revolved around a photograph of your father wearing a dress, which you showed me right off the bat, and it served to start off our conversation. Somehow both of these situations make me think of the role of photography and image as a place of mediation for relationships, as well as a kind of objectification of social relationships. Could you comment a little bit on that, please?

**Sylvia:** It is no surprise to me that Claudia would pay that much attention to the trees. In fact, this is what she recognizes the most. Once I hosted Canajó for six months, a Bororo man who had come to São Paulo for a dental treatment. I would walk a lot around the city with Canajó, we would also go to USP, and he worked on the restoration of some pieces at the Plínio Ayrosa collection. We would walk around the city and Canajó's ability for observation was impressive. He observed the city from a completely new perspective that I had never seen before. He knew where the jaguar (the animal) was... There was a car dealer that had a jaguar, and I had never noticed it was jaguar. As soon as he got here, he asked me where the sun rose. So this ability to observe varies a lot from person to person. This photo of my father, I have it in my living room. It is a wonderful picture. My father was born in 1905, and his family had 10 siblings, five men and five women. My father was the fifth, but all of the boys at the time were dressed with dresses. It was truly a crossdressing experience. Because boys would only start wearing boy's clothes once they left the mother's nest, but until then, they would wear hair bows, dresses, something I thought was very peculiar. So, when you brought in this subject that I knew nothing about, the only think that sounded familiar within your topic was, in fact, my father's picture. And it was thanks to Francis's efforts and thanks to your "dressing up" of your own project into a Visual Anthropology project that I accepted to advise you, because I said: "but I don't even know what this BDSM thing is, I don't even remember the acronym, do not work with gender, have no clue about the topic". And it was extremely rich to be able to work with you and get to know you better. As for the image as a form of objectification of social relationships, I suggest that everybody read Ewelter Rocha's articles on painted portraits. From existing portraits, the artist would make new portraits in which they placed people who had never seen each other together. So, there is the grandmother and her granddaughter, but the grandmother had passed away before the granddaughter had been born, and when they produce the image of the grandmother and granddaughter, they place these two people together in a visible and objective way; the importance of the relationship between grandmother and granddaughter. Or the couple who had gotten married, but at the time of their wedding had no money to pay for wedding clothes, and could only do it ten years

later. So the artist makes a portrait of that couple. I think the image is a way of objectifying social relationships and the first person I know to have ever talked about it is Anthony Seeger, in a beautiful paper entitled *The Meaning of Body Ornaments*. He talks about objects used by the Suyá (Kisêdjê), such as lip ornaments, decorations of ear lobes, and the way they mean something very specific. I think that the image can be really thought through this article.

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