

## BETWEEN IMAGES AND THE PROCESS OF MAKING SEE<sup>1</sup>: RESEARCH ON THE MEBENGOKRÉ- XIKRIN FIGURATIVE DRAWINGS FROM THE LUX VIDAL COLLECTION

DOI  
10.11606/issn.2525-3123.  
gis.2023.194543

ORCID  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5787-0299>

**MARIANA FLORIA BAUMGAERTNER**

Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo, SP, Brazil, 05508-010 –  
ppgas@usp.br

### ABSTRACT

The Mebengokré-Xikrin drawings, collected by the anthropologist Lux Vidal between the 1970s and 1980s, were made by different people of various ages, mostly men who had never drawn before. They are spontaneous productions that, continually (re)visited, evoke narratives that would not be possible otherwise. By investigating the formation process of this collection, which has 431 figurative drawings housed in the Laboratório de Imagem e Som em Antropologia (LISA-USP), it became clear how these drawings speak about the construction of the relationship between Lux Vidal and the Xikrin. These archives are permeated by the encounter, the defining characteristic of this collection. By highlighting the process of production, archiving and documentation of the drawings, the specificity of this collection is demonstrated. At the same time, the collection is related to the other archives in the Lux Vidal Collection.

### KEYWORDS

Anthropology; Drawing; Image; Collection;  
Mebengokré-Xikrin.

1. This article is the result of the scientific initiation research “Trace, memory and trajectory: research on the Mebengokré-Xikrin drawings from the Lux Vidal Collection” [originally: “Traço, memória e trajetória: pesquisa sobre os desenhos figurativos Mebengokré-Xikrin do Acervo Lux Vidal”], developed between 2019-2020, at the Department of Anthropology at FFLCH-USP, under the guidance of Prof. Dr. Sylvia Caiuby Novaes.

## IMAGES THAT SHARE MEMORIES

Photographs, images in general, tell us about other worlds, possible worlds, allowing displacements in time and space. A photograph can sometimes feel like a remembrance of something we have not even experienced. The present work arises from this specific sensation, after numerous immersions in the collection of images gathered by the anthropologist Lux Vidal. Specifically, this article deals with the process of formation and resumption of a selection of this collection, the Mebengokré-Xikrin figurative drawings, in an effort to ethnography the birth of an archive.

The mentioned drawings are part of the collection of the Laboratory of Image and Sound in Anthropology, LISA, linked to the Department of Anthropology at FFLCH-USP. They are part of a larger collection, called the Lux Vidal Collection, which includes, in addition to drawings, photographs, body painting boards and sound archives, by different authors, gathered by the anthropologist Lux Vidal during her work with the Mebengokré-Xikrin indigenous people, between 1969 and 1992.

In 2016, in my second year of graduation in Social Sciences, I joined as a scholarship holder for documentation of the audiovisual collection of LISA, through the Programa Unificado de Bolsas (PUB). For two years I had the opportunity to work closely with the Lux Vidal Collection, donated by the anthropologist in 1999. This collection has been continuously preserved and documented, always with the help of Lux<sup>2</sup>, with her remarkable patience, memory and willingness to organize the images.

One day, while looking for a photo in the LISA technical reserve, I came across a folder that I had not noticed until then, green, large, with the inscription “Xikrin Drawings”. The folder was on a different shelf from the rest of the Lux Vidal Collection, in a section of the technical reserve where materials that still need documentation are usually kept. Inside the folder were numerous drawings that I later discovered had been collected by Lux during her field research with the Xikrin. Unlike the other images in the collection, the drawings had not yet gone through the documentation and organization process. The donation of the Lux Vidal Collection to LISA was carried out at once, that is, there was a large volume of files, of different types, to be organized, sanitized, documented and incorporated into the LISA collection. At first, the priority was the conservation of materials, so all items were protected in polypropylene bags and folders, in order to avoid mold and other types of deterioration. For documentation and incorporation into the LISA database, priority was given to photographs, as they are the most numerous type of record in the collection. Special

---

2. Throughout the article, following the form used by her colleagues, friends, students and relatives, I will refer to Lux Vidal by her first name.

emphasis was given to the photographs on paper which, at that time, seemed to be “the guide” to understand the collection as a whole. In addition, photographs and body painting boards had greater circulation in exhibitions and publications, therefore, in a way, they represented the most significant part of the collection for Lux, which contributed to a faster documentation of the material. These factors, added to a reduced team for the extensive conservation work of the LISA collection, explain why the documentation of the drawings was being postponed. Thus, this collection was properly packaged, but it remained an unexplored part of the collection, lacking technical organization (numbering, separation, digitization) and contextualized information.

The collection of drawings has a total of 431 original figurative drawings<sup>3</sup>. In LISA’s technical reserve, initially, there were 360 items. The others came from Lux’s personal archive, who, upon hearing of my interest in this material, gave me an envelope with 71 more drawings, which were then incorporated into the LISA collection.

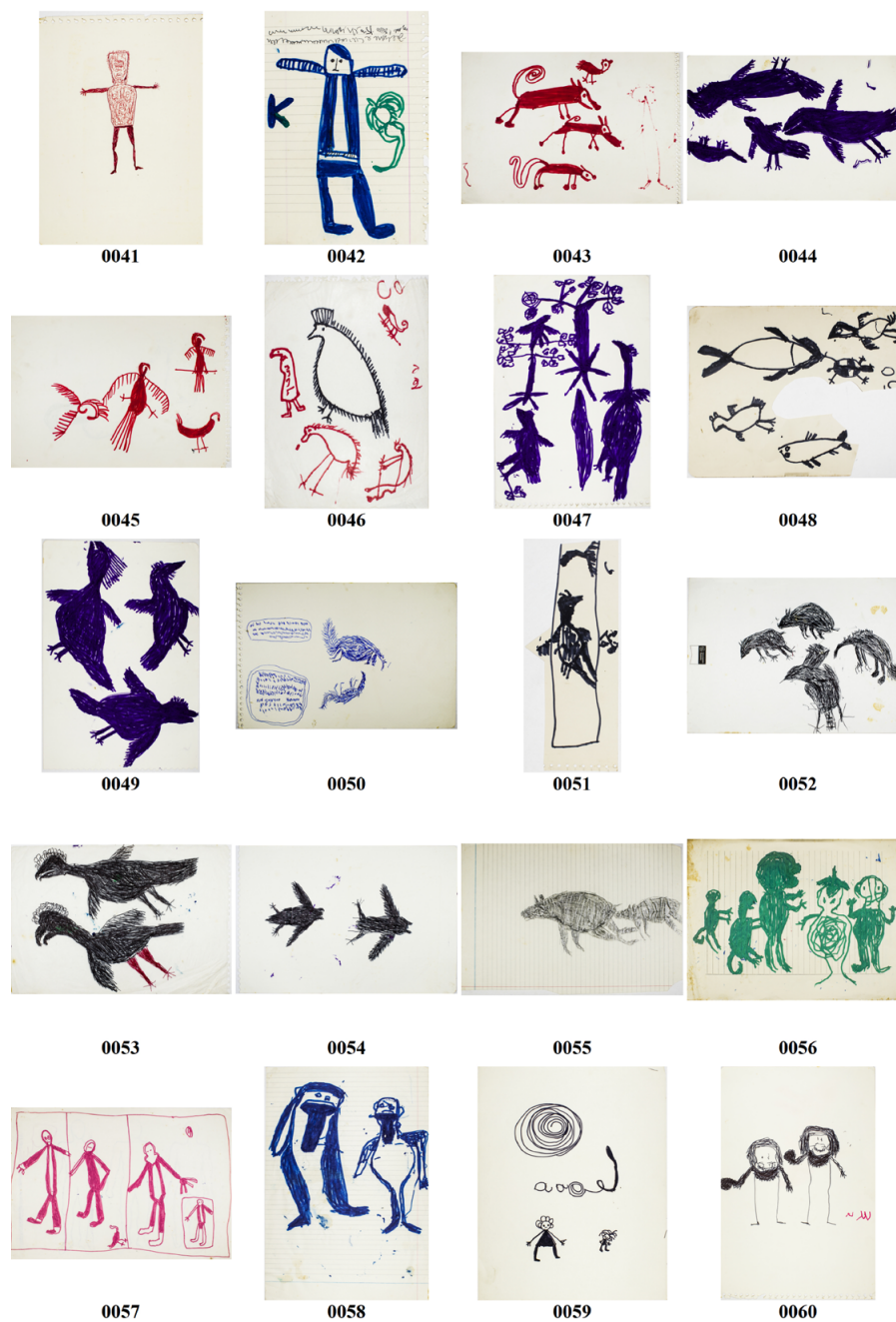
The first step to the process of documenting the collection was the numbering and digitization of the images. The numbers, from 0001 to 0431, were assigned following the order in which the drawings were in the folder. This methodology was guided by Paula Morgado, documentation technician and responsible for the LISA collection, since, at that time, it was not clear how the drawings would be incorporated into the collection (following their own numbering or following the numbering of the photographs?). In addition, the content of the collection was still unknown and it was not possible to predict whether there would be an edition of the material. A simple numbering would facilitate a later process of renaming the items, if necessary.

After the numbering, the digitization of the drawings was essential to continue the research without necessarily having to be in LISA and, mainly, to manipulate the original copies. The digital copy was produced from the individual photographic record of all the papers. This method was chosen — as opposed to scanning — to produce a copy as faithful as possible to the original, preserving information such as texture, marks on the paper, and material overlaps (pen, pencil, marker). For that, a photographic player was used, in which the camera and two lamps are fixed for lighting, so that the paper is registered from a right angle and under uniform light intensity, avoiding distortions and variations. The backs of the drawings that contained some type of annotation (such as date or authorship) were

---

3. I refer to this collection as *figurative drawings* in an attempt to differentiate them from the drawings produced for the body, the body painting motifs, which are part of the construction of the Xikrin person, treated by Vidal (2000) as *graphics*. The aspects that differentiate these two ways of drawing will be revisited throughout the article.

photographed in order to corroborate the documentation of the material. Finally, the digital images were treated superficially, ensuring a view close to the original on paper.



**FIGURE 1**  
Contact sheet 3/22,  
with miniature  
reproductions of  
drawings (Source:  
Prepared by the  
author)

It is worth mentioning that the digitization of the drawings had the collaboration of Bruna Keese dos Santos, who at the time was developing



her master's research on the body painting boards from the Lux Vidal Collection. The original boards also lacked a digital copy<sup>4</sup>, which made it possible for both the drawings and the boards to be digitized at the same time. About this process, Bruna says that:

Although of a technical nature, this work constituted an essential step for the research, as it opened space for a daily and intense contact with the paintings. Thus, in addition to deepening my contact with the material, the survey and cataloging made it possible to organize a collection of extreme importance, both due to its size and its production context, reiterating its research value. (Keese dos Santos 2019, 24)

From the photographs of the drawings, I made small copies on bond paper, which allowed me to compose, (re)organize and observe, without compromising the original collection. Bruno (2018, 163) argues that “the challenges with images in the field of research in Human Sciences, particularly Anthropology, imply ‘acts’ and ‘movements’: looking, selecting, cutting, reframing, moving, associating, imagining, to assemble and arrange in such a way as to ‘make you see’”. Seeing the drawings then became my main activity: seeing each one and seeing them all; seeing drawings and photos; seeing alone and seeing with Lux. Seeing on paper, on the computer, in the technical reserve.

When looking at the drawings separately or with the photographs, the question remained: what was the common element that united such different images? It was never my aim to investigate the drawings individually, although this is a valid question. My interest was mainly in understanding how the drawings were related to the other items in the collection (especially the photographs), that is, what had brought these drawings to LISA and how were they integrated into the Lux Vidal Collection? Thus, the drawings only became intelligible to me from the conversations with Lux, from the process of seeing the drawings with her. The images, individually and together, were always accompanied by memories, narrated images that were added to the images on the paper. “After all, it is in contact with images made a long time ago, and that were kept, when they come into relationship with people, the evocation of

---

4. Body paint boards had a similar documentation process. When donating his collection, Lux delivered both the original boards and their respective photographic copies, which she often used in classes and publications. In the process of indexing the collection, photographic reproductions were registered instead of the original boards, due to the same mentioned aspects of prioritization of photos on paper. In her master's research, Bruna digitized the originals in order to produce more faithful content, that is, less digitally edited. Comparing the original boards with the photographic copies, it was found that not all of them had a photographic copy, that is, there were body painting boards that had not yet been incorporated into the collection.

narratives happens, this missing information completes the gap” (Bezzon 2018, 194). The gaps precisely allow the images to evoke: they are never completely filled.

This process of seeing the drawings with Lux had two types of approach, not necessarily separate, they happened concomitantly. The first approach consisted of dividing the drawings into categories. It is true that different criteria can group or ungroup the drawings in this collection, so the objective was not to produce a separation, but to rearrange the images to provoke a new process of seeing. The categories, proposed by Lux, referred to what was immediately visible in the drawings, a free association of groupings governed by what the image referred to. This is an illuminating categorization of the collection’s contents — for us, a vantage point to get in touch with the drawings. Thus, the categories were: 1) People; 2) Birds; 3) Aquatic animals; 4) Land animals; 5) Rituals; 6) Graphics; 7) Writing; 8) Village; 9) Author: Nhiakrekampin; 10) Other identified authors; 11) Children’s drawings; 12) Airplane; 13) Miscellaneous; 14) To be discarded. The category “to be discarded” comprises, mainly, papers stained with a sharpie, which were not properly drawn, but carry the shadow of other drawings. A category of this type is very illustrative of the very process of formation and institutionalization of this collection, which has never been selected or curated, as will be analyzed later.



**FIGURE 2**  
Categories of  
drawings (Source:  
Prepared by the  
author)

The second approach consisted in highlighting certain drawings from the set and then talking about them. In this case, seeing the set could be either in the copies of the drawings spread out on the table, or through the contact sheets. Lux chose the drawing that “calls attention”, either because it has an associated memory or to talk about what was drawn. This approach, carried out calmly in many steps, worked as a commented reading of the collection. As Lux often said, “this drawing alone would make a doctoral thesis!”. On these occasions, I learned about what was drawn, about the Xikrin and about Lux’s own trajectory as an anthropologist. Although the universe of analyzed drawings were always the same, at each interaction with the collection, new drawings called attention and evoked the look. The process of seeing, talking about the drawings is, therefore, crossed by memories and knowledge that are not always immediately visible, since “there are issues that cannot be inferred from the images themselves, but from the talk about them” (Barbosa 2016, 194). In this sense, this ethnography starts from an invitation to share memories, where “archives are not silent places (...), they are objects permeated by relationships and subjectivities, which (re)signify both images and documents and field research itself” (Triana 2020, 73). Drawings and photographs, from the relief provided by memory, begin to carry names, places, occasions. As Sylvia Caiuby Novaes (2012) argues, images (and here I include drawings and photographs) appear as a form of relationship, yielding conversations that would otherwise be impossible, forms of access to the past that cross the trajectory of Lux and the Xikrin.

Kuschnir (2016, 10), when presenting the article “De l’objet intrinsèque à la pensée technique: le rôle médiateur du dessin en ethnographie maritime”<sup>5</sup>, by Christine Escallier, published in the *Anthropology and Drawing* dossier of the *Journal Cadernos de Arte e Antropologia*, says that “their experiences in the field show that photographs and drawings do not have intrinsic properties, but meanings constructed according to the different circumstances of production and reception of their contents”. Thus, at the same time that the drawings enchant, as if it were the first time, they also transport us through time, to people, places, moments. These images:

(...) are the result of visual sensations, which reach us as a whole. When presenting itself to our eyes, the image brings us the presence of what is represented in it and, in this sense, it is a mode of presence, as it associates the object or person represented with its presence in us who observe it, hence this process of familiarization that the image triggers. (Novaes 2014, 58)

---

5. Escallier, Christine. 2016. De l’objet intrinsèque à la pensée technique: le rôle médiateur du dessin en ethnographie maritime. *Cadernos de Arte e Antropologia*, vol. 5, n. 2: 49-73.

The exercise was not so much about “deciphering” what was drawn, but rather about enabling the flow of thoughts, memories and free associations from the experience of looking. As Andrea Barbosa says:

Fundamental in this reflection will be the care not to judge the veracity of the images, or their meaning, but to develop an analysis that pays attention to their potency in provoking an experience (looking, touching and imagining from the photo) from another who created it (looking, imagining, framing and producing the photo). (Barbosa 2016, 192)

This way of seeing is also closely linked to time. Looking and thinking about this set of drawings 50 years after their production provokes other types of elaboration on them. Meaning is not immediate, it is in the sequence of relationships. Images produce a certain moment, at the same time they are products of it. They create, mobilize memories and experiences that are not closed in the past, but in continuous elaboration. Lux Vidal expressed this movement when, at the bestowal ceremony for the title of professor emerita at USP, she said that “Reaching 80 years old obviously gives enough time to accumulate memories, experiences and teachings. It is the time of memory, always productive and transforming, of evaluations, nostalgia and a distant look”<sup>6</sup>.

## THE LOCKER

While researching the drawings, Lux asked me to organize a locker in the back of her house. Closed for nearly 20 years, the locker contains all of her files related to the work with the Xikrin, gathered over two decades or so. We started the organization not knowing for sure what we would find. As we go through the papers, we discover works that she used as a reference in her ethnographic analyses, correspondence exchanged with Funai agents<sup>7</sup> in the 1970s, files on the demarcation of indigenous lands, reports to funding agencies, newspapers about the Xikrin and other indigenous peoples, texts published by Lux, among many other files<sup>8</sup>. Field notebooks, notes, study sheets and demographic surveys, handwritten

6. See: Vidal, Lux. 2010. *Outorga do título de Professora Emérita*: parte 2. 03/12/10. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=16nfdqY6FVM> (acessado em 23/08/20).

7. Fundação Nacional do Índio.

8. To get an idea of the diversity of archives, the following categories were created: 1) Xikrin from Cateté: a) Manuscripts; b) Field notebooks; c) Kinship and demography; d) Territory and demarcation; e) Published texts; f) Catalogs and exhibitions; g) Correspondence; h) News; i) Reports and projects; j) Projeto de Manejo Florestal; k) Projeto Memória Xikrin. 2) Lux Vidal: a) Interviews; b) Reviews; c) Correspondence; d) Institutional USP; e) FUNAI documentation. 3) Kayapó: a) Manuscripts; b) Exhibitions and catalogs; c) Publications; d) News; e) Correspondence; f) Events. 4) Texts, reports, notes, news and expositions from the Jê peoples and other indigenous peoples.

in French, Portuguese and Mebengokré, are all kept and preserved. After working on the documentation of the collection deposited at LISA, seeing and organizing the contents of this locker allowed me to access a new dimension of Lux's trajectory, especially her work with the Xikrin. The act of seeing in order to organize the files, and here I refer to both the images of the collection and the documents in the locker, is always accompanied by memories, scenes that happened, interpretations, stories. People gain name, kinship, personality; places gain meaning; the objects accompany more or less everyday scenes; even the news gets behind the scenes, all of this intrinsically linked to Lux, who remembers and shares these memories. So, after some time organizing the closet, it became evident that Lux gave me this task so that I could understand that the images I want to know so much about are the result of long years of hard work, the result of the interaction between many people. Of course, the reorganization of these documents itself was also important to Lux. Even so, this activity offered me a privileged observation perspective regarding the unique process of constitution of the collection. The narratives provoked by the documents always emphasized relationships, whether with the Xikrin, with the government or with their peers in academia. She once told me, "you have to understand, there was a lot of work to be done". The locker files were as diverse as the fronts on which Lux worked, which also explains the fact that the anthropologist never worked specifically with the drawings. On several occasions, she expressed the desire to review all those documents and to reread the field notebooks, as they contain "precious information that I never had time to work with". Like Cunha (2004, 290) when researching Ruth Landes' personal collection, I realized that that archive offered me an almost sedimentary perspective to observe the personal and institutional efforts undertaken in Lux's personal and professional trajectory.

Like other scientific archives, those that bring together written, visual and iconographic documents collected, produced and/or collected by anthropologists during their professional and personal trajectory are characterized by their fragmentary, diversified and, paradoxically, extremely subjective structure. (Ibid, 295-296)

The archives preserved there, therefore, reveal the subjectivity of the collection. They are choices, selections, groupings of what was chosen to preserve. They indicate Lux's interests, intellectual affinities, concerns about the future and, above all, relationships. Traces of the history of the



Xikrin, the history of Lux and the history of this meeting, where there is a shuffling of what is personal and what is archive<sup>9</sup>.

### **LUX VIDAL AND THE XIKRIN**

Lux Vidal was born in 1930 in Germany. She spent most of her childhood and youth in Spain and France, where she studied Classical Literature. In 1951 she obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree from Sarah Lawrence College, in New York (USA), where she studied Anthropology, Literature and Theater. She was accepted into the graduate program at Columbia University, but returned to France before entering it. Lux arrived in São Paulo in 1955. After teaching at Aliança Francesa and Liceu Pasteur, encouraged by her friend, prof. Thekla Hartmann, she returned to study Anthropology in 1967. In 1969, Lux became a professor at the Department of Anthropology at USP, the same year she made her first trip to the Xikrin do Cateté, at the invitation of Father José Caron, a Dominican missionary of French origin who had been entrusted with the assistance of the Xikrin.

At that time, the Xikrin do Cateté, a Mebengokré-Kayapó group of the Jê linguistic family, were considered by many to be extinct, with less than 100 people. Inhabitants of southwestern Pará, were officially pacified in 1952 by the Serviço de Proteção ao Índio (SPI), at the Posto Las Casas, where the group had traveled in search of contact with the regionals. “There is no reliable population data for the first decade after the pacification of the group. It is known, however, that there was great death. Influenza, bronchopneumonia and other diseases reduced the group to less than a hundred” (Giannini 1993, 19).

In 1962, the ethnologist Protásio Friel found the Xikrin in the Pukatingrö. The circular village is made up of eleven houses that housed one hundred and sixty-four people (...). In 1963, there was an internal split in the group, between those inclined to accept new ways of life and the more traditional ones. The younger ones, led by Bemoti [traditional chef], seek greater contact with the regionals. They leave for the Cateté mouth, where this river meets the Itacaiúnas. They live in shacks built linearly on the banks of the river, at the service of Brazil nut trees and fur traders. The group headed by Bep-Karoti [traditional chief] moves to Kamkrokro

9. In this sense, the anthropologist Luísa Valentini, when working with the documentation gathered by anthropologists, says that “In the weave woven between documental examination, coexistence and readings, as I worked in parallel the materials gathered by Lux Vidal, Pedro Agostinho and Rafael de Menezes Bastos, the notion of person that marks the meaning of ‘personal file’ thus presented itself more as an observation clipping than as a conceptualization” (Valentini 2020, 195).

village. In that same year, there was an outbreak of flu that did not cause any major harm because Frikel was watching them. (Vidal and Giannini 2020a, 38)

Then, between 1964 and 1970, the Xikrin regrouped in the Pukatingrö village, influenced by Father Caron, who aimed to improve the health of the indigenous people and the resumption of subsistence activities, such as hunting, fishing, gathering and agriculture. In 1969, in an attempt to stop the rapid demographic decline, Father Caron invited Lux to formulate a detailed *survey* of the Xikrin population, in order to plan health actions and cultural strengthening<sup>10</sup>. In December 1970, due to illness, Father Caron left Cateté. At that time, the Xikrin already had the Comitê de Apoio aos Xikrin, a support committee, articulated by Lux, by Dr. João Paulo Botelho Vieira Filho and Father Eduardo (Ibid, 41).

Starting in 1969, Lux visited the Xikrin annually, combining academic work with engagement in defense of indigenous rights. She worked in the demarcation of indigenous lands, in health actions, cultural valorization, in the formation of indigenous organizations, among others. In the field of research, in 1972, she completed her master's thesis, entitled “O me-rere-me, análise de uma cerimônia entre os Xikrin do Cateté”, the product of a historic moment for the Xikrin, in a phase of demographic recovery. It is important to note that the research and recovery of this people somehow went hand in hand, as her presence in the field stimulated the social and historical memory of the Xikrin, bringing to the surface mythical narratives, memories of what it was like in ancient times and ritual activities. Lux defended her doctoral thesis in 1973, entitled “Morte e Vida de Uma Sociedade Indígena Brasileira”<sup>11</sup>, an ethnography of Xikrin history, social and ritual organization. During her field research, Lux also carried out a large survey on Xikrin body painting, an aspect closely linked to the form of social organization of this people. She became known as the forerunner of ethnoesthetic studies in Brazil and trained a large number of researchers in this area. This work resulted in the book “Grafismo indígena: estudo de antropologia estética”<sup>12</sup>, which had its first edition published in 1992.

10. On December 12, 1969, Father Caron makes his first mention of Lux in his diary, *Curé d'Indiens*. He says that “At 2pm, Vasp will bring Ms. Lux Vidal and Vincent Carelli. Ms. Lux Vidal is a professor of anthropology at the University of São Paulo. She intends to do a doctoral thesis on the Chikri Indians: this is her first time in the field; will be followed by several others. Vincent Carelli is Mario's younger brother. He is a fan of Indians, he will make his dream come true” (Caron 1971, 299, my translation).

11. See: Vidal, Lux. 1977. *Morte e vida de uma sociedade indígena brasileira*. São Paulo: Hucitec/Edusp.

12. See: Vidal, Lux (org). 2000. *Grafismo indígena: estudo de antropologia estética*. 2 ed. São Paulo: Studio Nobel/FAPESP/Universidade de São Paulo.

The Lux Vidal Collection is the result of this period of work, in which Lux gathered objects, photographs, body painting boards and drawings related to the Xikrin. It is worth noting that the collection has records made both among the Xikrin do Cateté and the Xikrin do Bacajá<sup>13</sup>. The proportion is higher among the Xikrin of Cateté, as Lux lived and worked for a longer period of time in that locality. In relation to the collection of drawings, although there is no such record or memory, it is possible that there are also drawings made in Bacajá. However, the drawings of known authorship were made at Cateté. When talking about the constitution of this collection, Lux also always refers to Cateté.

The collection as it is known today is the result of an extensive period of work. For a long time, the records were held in Lux's own house, being used for exhibitions and, mainly, classes, conferences and seminars. As mentioned, the photographs, body painting boards and drawings were donated to LISA in 1999. The objects were donated to the Museu de Arqueologia e Etnologia (MAE-USP) in 2001.

In 1990, Lux started a new field of research with the indigenous people of the Oiapoque, in the north of Amapá, where she continues to work together with the Instituto de Pesquisa e Formação Indígena (Iepé), of which she is a founding partner. The contact with the Xikrin do Cateté was resumed in 2019, at the request of the Bep-Karoti Xikrin leadership. Bep-Karoti asked for the construction of a project that would retake the Lux Vidal Collection, from which to talk about the memory of the ancients and traditional Xikrin knowledge. This contact triggered a series of initiatives for cultural appreciation, grouped by the "Projeto Memória Xikrin" (2019-2022), coordinated by anthropologists Lux Vidal and Isabelle Vidal Giannini. The request came from the perception, on the part of traditional leaders, that some knowledge would be lost from one generation to another, either because of a devaluation of traditional knowledge in favor of non-indigenous knowledge, or because of the lack of registration and systematization of Xikrin knowledge. Thus came the desire to build a book with the speeches and images of the ancients, aiming to think about the future and the formation of the next generations. Not only the collection gathered by Lux and Isabelle, but also the anthropologists themselves as long-time collaborators of the Xikrin, constituted the means by which this resumption was possible. This initiative has already resulted in two

---

13. The Xikrin do Cateté are located between the Itacaiúnas and Cateté rivers, in the Terra Indígena Xikrin do Cateté, municipality of Parauapebas (PA). The Xikrin do Bacajá live on the left bank of the middle Bacajá River, a tributary of the right bank of the Xingu River, Terra Indígena Trincheira/Bacajá, municipality of Senador José Porfírio (PA).

publications<sup>14</sup>, with old images and current statements of the Xikrin about the collection, and an online platform, exclusively for the Xikrin, with a curatorship of old records, documented today by young researchers in dialogue with the elders. These initiatives, despite being recent, count with broad commitment from the Xikrin, who want to continue projects to value and research their traditional way of life.

## DRAWING PRODUCTION PROCESS

When she began her research, Lux did not speak the Mebengokré language. In 1969, on her first trip, she stayed at the house of Chief Bemoti and his wife Nhiok-pú. As far as possible, she participated in all village activities; began to learn the language and get to know the Xikrin. According to Lux, she had no material or adaptation problems, she enjoyed life with them. She said in an interview that “For me the university was a place of challenge, the village was not” (Vidal 2017, 28). Daily, she visited all the houses with her best passport for conversations, the book about the Kayapó do Xingu, written by Simone Dreyfus in 1963<sup>15</sup>. The Xikrin, especially the women, liked to look at the photographs and that was how Lux was able to know every house and every person in the village by name<sup>16</sup>.

Next to the mission shed, some young people made a small table for Lux, a place that became known as “her office”. While Lux wrote her field notebooks, the shaman Nhiakrekampin sat there, on a mat, and drew. He, over 70 years old and having never drawn before, liked the activity so much that, at a certain point, it lacked sheets and pens: either Lux wrote or Nhiakrekampin drew. Through these drawings, Lux learned about the Xikrin language and cosmology. It was also an opportunity for conversation, not only between her and the shaman, but also between Nhiakrekampin and Bemoti. Chief Bemoti liked being able to talk “informally” with Nhiakrekampin, in the office, about historical issues and more specific facts, which was not possible in the village, since they lived in different segments and their speeches obeyed other public rules, formal rules.

14. See: Vidal, Lux e Isabelle Vidal Giannini. 2020. *Benadjuro-tum: homenagem ao chefe Botiê e à história Xikrin*. São Roque: Isabelle Vidal Giannini. .

Vidal, Lux e Isabelle Vidal Giannini. 2020. *Mê-kukrodjo-tum: o conhecimento dos antigos*. São Roque: Isabelle Vidal Giannini.

15. Dreyfus, Simone. 1963. *Les Kayapós du Nord: contribution à l'étude des indiens Gé*. Paris: Mouton & Co.

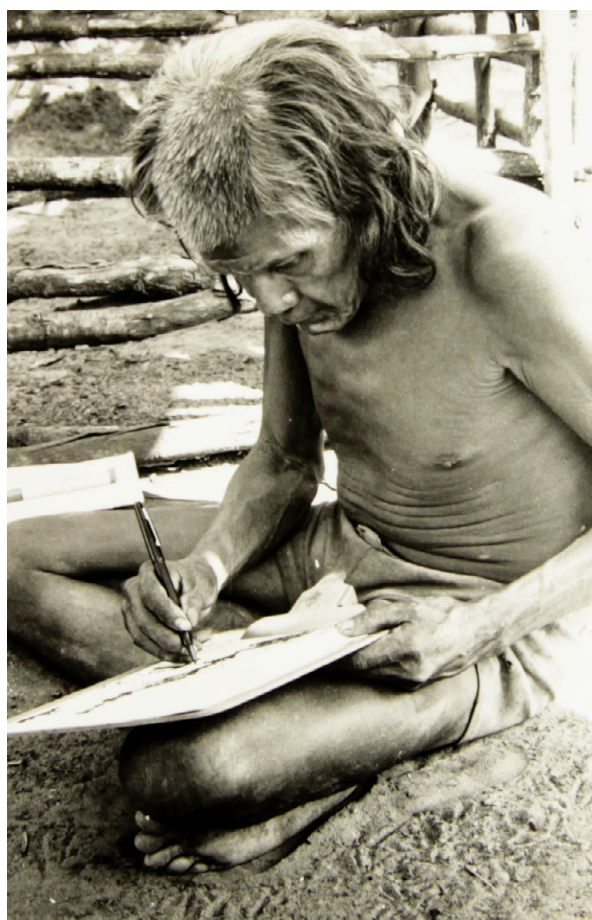
16. Xikrin's interest in photographs continued in subsequent years. When out in the field, Lux made several copies of the photos she took and distributed around the village. There was always a concern to take what was produced to the indigenous people, not only the photographs, but also what was written by Lux. The Xikrin were very fond of this practice and always asked for more copies.



**FIGURE 3**  
Lux Vidal's office  
(Source: Lux Vidal  
Collection)



**FIGURE 4**  
The shaman  
Nhiakrekampin  
drawing  
(Credit: Lux Vidal)

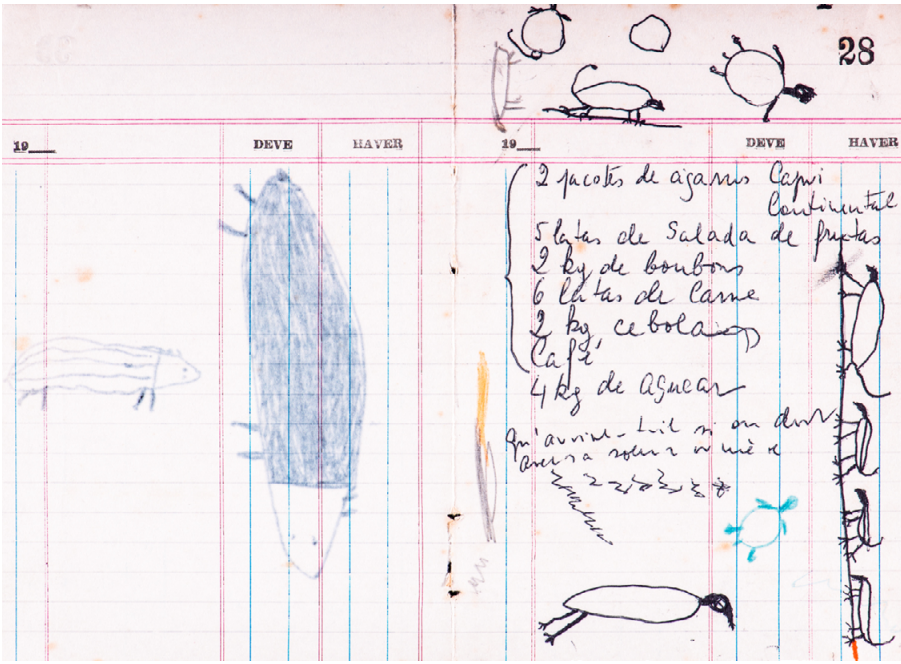




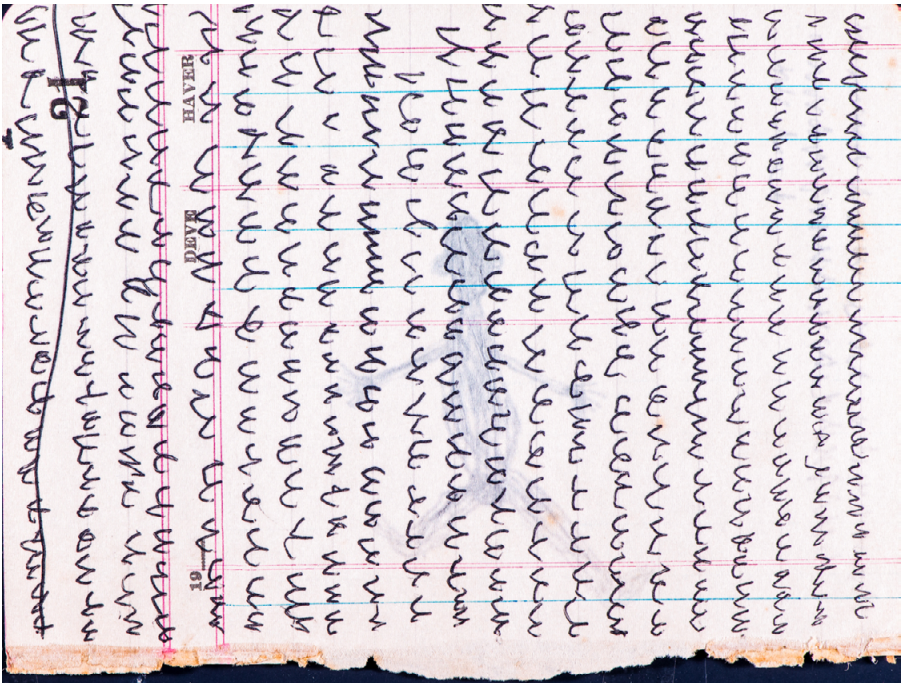
The beginning of the formation of the collection of drawings, as well as the beginning of the act of drawing itself, speaks, first of all, about the relationship that was established between Lux and the Xikrin, that is, about communication. The time of drawing execution was also the time of coexistence, of conversation, of learning. It is important to point out that there was no initial encouragement from the anthropologist for the Xikrin to start drawing. Unlike other collections (Cesarino 2013, Barcelos Neto 1999), this was a spontaneous and unplanned process, a defining characteristic of this specific collection. The drawings were produced using materials (paper, pens, pencils) taken to the field by Lux so that she could make her field notebook. This explains the diversity of papers in which the drawings were made, since there was no material investment for this practice. There are drawings on note cards, envelopes, notebooks, sheets used for the application of tests at USP — even the back of a cigarette package was used for drawing. The same diversity is found in the pens, pencils and markers used, where there are some colored designs, but most use only blue, red or black pens. There was, on the part of Lux, no research engagement regarding the drawings that were produced, so there was no systematic data collection. Few drawings have annotations with the author's name, a small caption or date, but most do not have this type of information recorded. Some productions, especially the drawings made by the shaman Nhiakrekampin, were very important and used in the works of Lux Vidal, but she never got to work specifically with drawings, as her main interest was in body painting performed by women.

The act of drawing as one of the products of the construction of the relationship between Lux and the Xikrin can be exemplified by the number of drawings that refer to writing. “When she went to the village, Lux always took paper, pen and colored pencils to write in her field notebook. The Xikrin who were with her, mainly men and boys, liked to copy and draw what she was writing” (Vidal and Giannini 2020b, 224). That's exactly what Lux was doing while the Xikrins were drawing: writing. Therefore, many drawings simulate the act of writing, presenting what would be “the form of writing”. These drawings synthesize, in a way, the image of the anthropologist in the field, who devoted herself to this activity for many hours.

**FIGURE 5**  
On receipt paper, Lux Vidal's shopping list, sketched animals and an excerpt in French, copied from a book by a Xikrin (Source: Lux Vidal Collection)



**FIGURE 6**  
Writing drawings.  
Unknown authorship  
(Source: Lux Vidal Collection)





**FIGURE 7**

On the left, drawing of writing and animals. Despite the unknown authorship, it is inferred that it was made by an adult man.

On the right, body painting board, with *Ngô-toi-kango* painting, large water snake. The decorative motif is executed with the finger. The painting was made by Nhioké Xikrin, 1972 (Source: Lux Vidal Collection)



Regarding the authorship and content of the drawings, it is possible to characterize two large sets. The first brings together the drawings produced by the shaman Nhiakrekampin in the context mentioned above. These are about 24 drawings from the total collection, being the best documented part of the whole, both because they are more present in Lux's memory and because they were used in some of her works. Overall, these drawings depict mythical scenes and poetic visions of the shaman. The second — and larger set — is formed by drawings of different themes, different authors and little known information. They are representations of animals, people, body adornments and writing. Most of the drawings were produced by adult men, with a few copies made by boys and girls.

**FIGURE 8**

Drawings with little known information, probably made by men. From left to right, the first depicts a person; the second, tortoise hunting, traditionally carried out by the Xikrin; the third, an airplane (Source: Lux Vidal Collection)



In this sense, the drawings show a marked gender difference in relation to who draws. Xikrin women are excellent body painters and both the act of painting and the motives of body painting are feminine attributions. As children, the girls train graphics and painting techniques on dolls. Ornamentation and body painting, according to Vidal (2000, 143-144):

(...) express in a very formal and synthetic way, in fact in a strictly grammatical form, the understanding that these Indians have of their cosmology and social structure, of the biological manifestations and of the relations with nature, or rather, of the underlying principles of these different domains. Furthermore, they reveal to each one the multiple facets of their person in contrast to all other individuals, in time and space: a resource for the construction of identity and otherness.

Men, on the other hand, did not have a drawing tradition. It can be said that some of the works in the Lux Vidal Collection are the result of one of the first contacts with the practice of free drawing<sup>17</sup>. This contact was made spontaneously, by those who wanted to make it and also by those closest to Lux. This fact is exemplified by the anthropologist when she says that

When a Xikrin woman is asked to paint a fish, she always reproduces a geometric design, chosen from among the body painting motifs that conventionally represent the different fish. Subjected from childhood to a well-defined aesthetic tradition, it will never produce a figurative or individualized representation of the fish. Man, on the contrary, without a traditionally established standard of reference, spontaneously produces a wide variety of forms, from the most figurative to the most abstract, all possible (Vidal 2000, 185).

For this reason, it is possible to say that the collection of drawings gathered by Lux is mostly records made by adult men. There are a few drawings of child girls, easily identified by their shape. It is worth remembering that the collection of body painting boards, also housed at LISA, had a different formation process. As there was a research interest on the part of Lux in relation to Xikrin body graphics, there was an intentional and systematic collection of body painting motifs recorded on paper, made exclusively by adult women and children. This data is crucial to explain the differences between these two collections: unlike the collection of drawings, the collection of painting boards has a greater uniformity of

17. Contact quickly intensified when the children began attending formal school a few years later.



paper used; uniformity of technique (jenipapo and charcoal on paper); known diversity of authors and represented graphic motifs.

**FIGURE 9**

On the left, a drawing produced by a girl; on the right, a drawing produced by a boy (Source: Lux Vidal Collection)




**FIGURE 10**

On the left, a drawing produced by a girl and, on the right, a drawing produced by a boy, both at school. Records produced by the anthropologist Isabelle Vidal Giannini, during the period she worked with the Xikrin, between 1984 and 2008 (Credit: Isabelle Vidal Giannini)







Regarding the drawings produced by the shaman Nhiakrekampin, a different type of imagery composition is noted, specific to the shaman's perspective. "By drawing on paper, the shaman gave free rein to his imagination and reproduced with safe technique and a lot of force of expression scenes from everyday life and ritual life, past events and imaginary poetic visions" (Vidal 2000, 185-189).

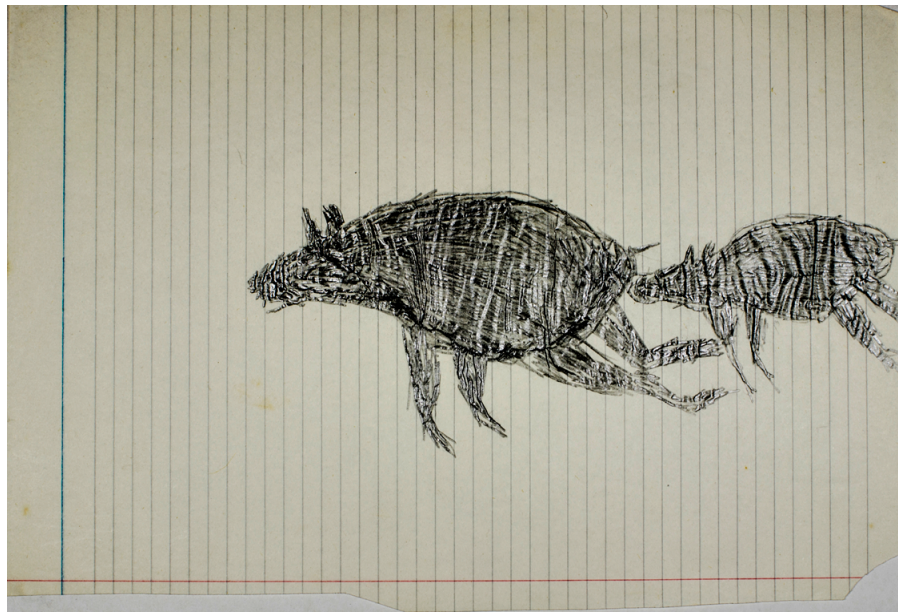
The works of Pedro Cesarino (2013), with the Marubo, and the drawings collected by Claudia Andujar, among the Yanomami in the 1970s, point to the specificities of drawings produced by shamans. When dealing with the production process of the Marubo drawing collection, Cesarino (2013, 437) says that:

At the beginning, I tried to get different segments of society to draw: children, young people, women, mature men and the elderly. As a rule, I received from the women several transpositions of kene graphic patterns on paper, and from the men, drawings of trees, animals and maps of the villages. No one felt qualified to put on paper themes other than what we immediately tend to call naturalistic. The exception was three older shamans who immediately set about creating diverse designs on the canson blocks I gave them. I began to focus on working with them, as well as women experts in kene patterns.

The author calls naturalistic drawings those that depict subjects such as animals, trees and maps of the village. The cosmological drawings would involve shamanistic knowledge transposed on paper. However, if in fact there is this separation between a "naturalist" and a "cosmological" expression, in the case of the Marubo people, it needs to be understood from the point of view of the distribution of the authority of knowledge among those who draw.

Common men did not feel authorized to put on paper certain knowledge related to shamanism and mythology, as if the paper constituted a fixed form of representation that could be disallowed by someone more qualified; as if they were, in this way, circumscribing their expressions to that domain of knowledge that belonged to them. Thus, they left the treatment of themes related to mythical narratives and cosmology to the shamans and dedicated themselves to drawing, above all, maps of villages, trees and forest remedies. (Ibid, 438)

For the Xikrin, this difference between the drawings of men and the shaman seems to be related to Nhiakrekampin's deep knowledge of Xikrin cosmology. The shaman in fact possesses a dimension of knowledge inaccessible to those who are not shamans. For the Xikrin, only shamans can speak and interact with animals, with tapirs, pigs and fish, depending on each one's specialty (Vidal and Giannini 2020b, 226). They therefore have perspectives that are not shared by everyone.



**FIGURE 11**  
Hunting wild  
pigs. Author:  
Nhiakrekampin Xikrin  
(Source: Lux Vidal  
Collection)

Nhiakrekampin was an expert in talking to tapirs and wild pigs, so he always accompanied these animals on hunting expeditions. “They say that in his dream, Nhiakrekampin made a movement with his foot on the ground, kicked and turned into a tapir. When he was transformed, he would go to the bush, to the village of tapirs, lie down and talk to them. Then it disappeared into the ground and appeared in the village again” (Ibid, 226).

Claudia Andujar, when she brought paper and colored pens to the Yanomami in the 1970s, collected many drawings produced by shamans (Nogueira 2019). Bruce Albert, when dealing with these drawings, warns that the images produced should not be treated as the shaman's inner visions; they are direct perceptions of another reality. There is, therefore, no representation, but a presentification of what cannot necessarily be seen by everyone (Albert 2011, 1 apud Santos 2014).

Nhiakrekampin portrays this transformation in the drawing entitled by Lux as “Village birds visiting the city of Marabá”. Onkrai Xikrin, when talking about this drawing during the Projeto Memória Xikrin workshop, says that “He [Nhiakrekampin] does not speak Portuguese, but I think he says this to you: ‘the shamans are turning into birds, so visiting’, it seems that he talk like this. Then he says, my father says, when a shaman visits a relative, he becomes a bird” (Vidal and Giannini 2020b, 233).



**FIGURE 12**

Birds from the village  
visiting the city of  
Marabá. Author:  
Nhiakrekampin Xikrin  
(Source: Lux Vidal  
Collection)


Nhiakrekampin was a great connoisseur of Xikrin history and memory, with great skill in transferring that knowledge to paper. In this sense, they are “(...) narrative and cosmographic structures are transposed to paper, from their articulation with the framework of poetic formulas and with the general disposition of memory involved in the processes of transmission of shamanistic knowledge” (Cesarino 2019, 437). As Lux Vidal once told me, “they are images of an old man who has memory”.



**FIGURE 13**  
Village courtyard,  
with a euphoric  
welcome to warriors  
who return from a  
successful incursion  
against an enemy  
village. Author:  
Nhiakrekampin  
(Source: Lux Vidal  
Collection)



It is interesting to mention that this collection of figurative drawings was presented to the Xikrin as part of the Projeto Memória Xikrin, especially during the workshops for the construction of the publications. If we compare it with the interest in photographs, body painting boards and objects, it is possible to say that there was no great curiosity about the drawings themselves. The drawing activity is seen as a school practice, where children draw. The drawings commented on with enthusiasm were



precisely those made by Nhiakrekampin, especially after Lux recounted the explanations given by the shaman for each drawing. In this sense, it is possible to affirm that the drawn images gained importance not only because of what was portrayed, but also because of their author. The great ability that Nhiakrekampin had to transfer his knowledge to paper was recognized, not only because of his skills with the pen, but also for being a great connoisseur of the traditional Xikrin way of life. The drawings became an access to the shaman and to traditional knowledge, reiterating the legitimacy of Nhiakrekampin as a shaman precisely because he had this knowledge.

### **KNOWING THE PAST TO THINK ABOUT THE FUTURE**

With the drawings, I sought to travel the path of memories that are accessible through paper and what they evoke. As Lux says, “knowing the past to think about the future”. What makes this collection unique are the circumstances of its formation plus the possibility of discussing it with Lux Vidal at least 50 years after the drawings were produced. I sought, through the memories raised by the images, to emphasize that the possible articulations of an archive in the present are the result of numerous factors, ranging from the circumstances that made it viable to the way of classifying the archives (Triana 2020, 75).

I would like to emphasize that the drawings were the motivators of the reflections presented here, that is, it is because of the permanence of this collection through time that this research was possible. This is an important factor as it reiterates the relevance of places like LISA and the conservation of their collections. LISA has a collection of great wealth and value for Anthropology, often little explored by researchers in general. In the specific case of the Lux Vidal Collection, institutionalizing the collection, that is, donating it to LISA, was a way of ensuring its conservation, in an organized manner, so that it would be accessible to new generations. The choice of LISA as a place of storage is linked to Lux’s own trajectory in the Department of Anthropology at USP, but also to the desire to have these materials in a public university, a space par excellence for the production of knowledge. The preservation and documentation of this material — and the collection in general — is an activity of great importance, as this is the only way to expand its possibilities for research and circulation, both for the academic community and for the Xikrin themselves. When dealing with the presence of photography in the Museum of Contemporary Art in the 1970s, Helouise Costa draws attention to the fact that:

(...) the work of conservation and dissemination of institutional collections cannot be considered a merely technical



activity. Conserving and disseminating must necessarily pass through the operation of giving meaning to a certain heritage. Only in this way can conservation and dissemination gain relevance and social justification. The absence of research on the set of photographs belonging to the collection of the Museum of Contemporary Art at USP has led to a systematic silence about its existence, even in the Museum's own exhibitions and publications produced in the last 30 years. Only an in-depth understanding of the constitution of this collection and the debate in which it is inserted will allow the transformation of this situation. (Costa 2008, 164)

Research and documentation are activities that go together and complement each other. A document exists for research if it can be located, only then can it enter new networks of coexistence (Valentini 2020, 197). At the same time, "a museum with a stopped collection (...) is a museum doomed to total inertia. It will stop communicating if it does not study the collections it has, especially if it does not study them in connection with other collections, always seeking to generate new interpretive possibilities" (Barcelos Neto 2016, 190). Managing a collection is not an objective activity; it is only possible through subjectivities. The archives' storage places are dynamic places, constituted from relationships between interlocutors, objects, users, researchers, who organize and who constituted the collection. They are entangled relationships between people and things. "The archive, therefore, does not only represent the space of reminiscences of the past, but is a living place, which is in movement and in relation, permeated by concerns with the past, the present time and the future" (Bezzon 2018, 194). ). Archives are the result of continuous processes of constituting and ordering knowledge, from its collection to its organization and uses.

The recent process of re-appropriation of the Lux Vidal Collection by the Xikrin intensifies the importance of its preservation, research and circulation. LISA is also a place of permanence for the Xikrin, who value the conservation of their collection in this institution. There is no desire to transport these files, for example, but rather to access them and produce new things from them. Thus, the storage places for the collection, in this case LISA, now have the collaboration not only of those who research in their collections, but also of those who are their heirs. "In this way, museums, and especially anthropological and/or ethnographic museums, have come to play a relevant role in an increasingly interconnected world whose knowledge can be shared by a large number of agents" (Maciel and Abreu 2019, 12).

By participating in the process of retaking the Lux Vidal Collection by the Xikrin, through the Projeto Memória Xikrin, I could see that the archives that make up the collection deal not only with a collective memory, of the Xikrin people, but also with the memory of individuals, families, of places. The children photographed by Lux in the village are today the elders who transmit knowledge to the younger ones; Nhiakrekampin's speech is not only the speech of the shaman, but also the speech of the grandfather of some of the workshop participants. In a way, as a fellow at LISA and later a participant in this project, I had the privilege of learning to see this collection using borrowed lenses, first from Lux, then from Isabelle and, finally, from the Xikrin. These lenses, shaped by the narratives, by the stories evoked by the images, allowed the sharing of memories, almost like someone who sees the album of another family, told by its members. In the end, I believe that these lenses are the result of the encounter, the drawings and photographs are results, but also enablers of these relationships over time. Understanding how the Xikrin figurative drawing collection talks about the relationship between Lux and the Xikrin is, I believe, the first step towards a more in-depth study of the drawings.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

- Barbosa, Andrea. 2016. Fotografia, narrativa e experiência. In *A experiência da imagem na etnografia*, ed. Andrea Barbosa *et al*, 191-204. São Paulo: Terceiro Nome.
- Barcelos Neto, Aristóteles. 1999. *Arte, Estética e Cosmologia entre os Índios Waurá da Amazônia Meridional*. Dissertação de mestrado em Antropologia Social, Centro de Filosofia e Ciências Humanas, Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, Florianópolis.
- Barcelos Neto, Aristóteles. 2016. Aristóteles Barcelos Neto, antropólogo colecionador. Entrevista concedida a Daniel Revillion Dinato, Gabriela Aguillar Leite, José Cândido Lopes Ferreira e Paulo Victor Albertoni Lisboa. *PROA: Revista de Antropologia e Arte*, n. 6: 175-194.
- Bezzon, Rafael F. A. 2018. Encontros fotográficos e suas imagens, entre efeitos e afetos. In *Anais do II Seminário Imagem, Pesquisa e Antropologia (SIPA): imagens, grafias e suas múltiplas articulações na experiência Antropológica*, Campinas, 191-205. [https://www.sipa.ifch.unicamp.br/anais\\_do\\_evento](https://www.sipa.ifch.unicamp.br/anais_do_evento).
- Bruno, Fabiana. 2018. Entre aparições, enigmas e revelações: atos de olhar, escavar e narrar a imagem. In *Anais do II Seminário Imagem, Pesquisa e Antropologia (SIPA): Imagens, grafias e suas múltiplas articulações na experiência Antropológica*, 1., Campinas, 162-176. [https://www.sipa.ifch.unicamp.br/anais\\_do\\_evento](https://www.sipa.ifch.unicamp.br/anais_do_evento).
- Caiuby Novaes, Sylvia. 2012. A construção de imagens na pesquisa de campo em Antropologia. *Iluminuras*, vol. 13: 11-29. <http://seer.ufrgs.br/iluminuras/article/viewFile/36791/23802>.

- Caiuby Novaes, Sylvia. 2014. O silêncio eloquente das imagens e sua importância na etnografia. *Cadernos de Arte e Antropologia*, vol. 3, n. 2: 57-67. <https://cadernosaa.revues.org/245>.
- Caron, Père. 1971. *Curé d'Indiens*. Paris: Union Générale D'Éditions.
- Cesarino, Pedro de Niemeyer. 2013. Cartografias do cosmos: conhecimento, iconografia e artes verbais entre os Marubo. *Mana*, vol. 19, n. 3: 437-471.
- Giannini, Isabelle Vidal. 1993. Índios Kayapó: A vida dos Xicrin no sul do Pará. *Revista Horizonte Geográfico*, ano 6, n. 27: 16-25.
- Costa, Helouise. 2008. Da fotografia como arte à arte como fotografia: a experiência do Museu de Arte Contemporânea da USP na década de 1970. *Anais do Museu Paulista: História e Cultura Material*, vol. 16, n. 2: 131-173. <http://www.revistas.usp.br/anaismp/article/view/5495> (acessado em 27/07/18).
- Cunha, Olívia Maria Gomes da. 2004. Tempo imperfeito: uma etnografia do arquivo. *Mana*, vol. 10, n. 2: 287-322.
- Keese dos Santos, Bruna. 2019. *Corpo-papel*: um estudo imagético sobre o acervo Lux Vidal de pinturas kayapó-xikrin. Dissertação de mestrado em Design e Arquitetura, Faculdade de Arquitetura e Urbanismo, Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo.
- Kuschnir, Karina. 2016. A antropologia pelo desenho: experiências visuais e etnográficas. *Cadernos de Arte e Antropologia* [Online], vol. 5, n. 2. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/cadernosaa.1095>.
- Maciel, Maria Eunice; Regina Abreu. 2019. Antropologia dos museus: um campo de estudos em expansão. *Horizontes Antropológicos* [Online], vol. 53. <http://journals.openedition.org/horizontes/2846>.
- Nogueira, Thiago (org). 2019. *A luta Yanomami / Claudia Andujar*. Catálogo de exposição. 2. ed. São Paulo: IMS.
- Santos, Laymert Garcia dos. 2014. *Projeções da terra-floresta*: o desenho-imagem Yanomami, 22/07/2014. Pesquisa e formatação do conteúdo de Rafael Alves da Silva. <https://www.laymert.com.br/yanomami/>.
- Triana, Bruna Nunes da Costa. 2020. *Ensaio em preto e branco*: arquivo, memória e cidade nas fotografias de Ricardo Rangel. Tese de doutorado em Antropologia Social, Faculdade de Filosofia, Letras e Ciências Humanas, Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo.
- Valentini, Luísa. 2020. *Arquivos do futuro*: relações, caminhos e cuidados no arranjo preliminar da documentação pessoal de antropólogos. Tese de doutorado em Antropologia Social, Faculdade de Filosofia, Letras e Ciências Humanas, Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo.
- Vidal, Lux e Isabelle Vidal Giannini. 2020a. *Benadjuro-tum*: homenagem ao chefe Botiê e à história Xikrin. São Roque: Isabelle Vidal Giannini.
- Vidal, Lux e Isabelle Vidal Giannini. 2020b. *M -kukrodjo-tum*: o conhecimento dos antigos. São Roque: Isabelle Vidal Giannini.

Vidal, Lux. 2017. Lux Boelitz Vidal: colecionadora de culturas. Entrevista concedida à Maria Guimarães. *Revista Pesquisa FAPESP*, ano 18, n. 251: 26-33.

Vidal, Lux (org). 2000. *Grafismo indígena: estudo de antropologia estética*. 2 ed. São Paulo: Studio Nobel/FAPESP/Universidade de São Paulo.

**Mariana Flória Baumgaertner** is a Master's student at the Post-Graduation Program in Social Anthropology at the Universidade de São Paulo. She holds a degree in Social Sciences, also at USP. This article presents the results obtained in the Scientific Initiation research *Trace, memory and trajectory: research on the Mebengokré-Xikrin drawings from the Lux Vidal Collection*, developed between 2019-2020, at the Department of Anthropology of the Faculty of Philosophy, Letters and Human Sciences at USP. E-mail: mariana.baumgaertner@usp.br.

Use license. This article is licensed under the Creative Commons CC-BY License. With this license you can share, adapt, create for any purpose, as long as you attribute the authorship of the work.

Submitted: 01/31/2022  
Resubmitted: 06/21/2022  
Accepted: 07/14/2022