Arlindo Machado's thought and a genealogy of video arts in Brazil
O pensamento de Arlindo Machado e uma genealogia das artes do vídeo no Brasil

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Abstract: The article deals with how Arlindo Machado's work establishes the main reading field of video arts in Brazil, specially in two articles, *A experiência do vídeo no Brasil* and *As linhas de força do vídeo brasileiro*, which, despite the importance of its contribution, has not yet been systematically discussed. To this end, a critical reading of Machado's thought is made, as it appears in his main books. Consequently, we conclude that Machado's work contributes to the formation of a research field that proposes a critical reading of technical images, which the author does in two complementary ways: by dismantling established languages and by mapping emerging languages.

Keywords: Arlindo Machado; video arts; Brazil; genealogy; thinking.

Introduction

Arlindo Machado's thought moves in two complementary directions, which are tensioned through a logic that crosses them transversally: the dismantling of established languages and the mapping of emerging languages arise in training scenarios, even though the author himself has rarely dedicated to the genealogies he signals. In the sharp curves of a text that communicates divergent thoughts in a direct and clear way, a comprehensive mosaic of issues emerges that renew or deepen debates on photography, cinema, television, video, computer graphics, media art and games. In general, these issues are invested with an effort to build exemplary repertoires of the areas he addresses, in texts in which he proposes dense critical interpretations of the phenomena he examines.

One of the directions of Machado's thinking operates the dismantling of traditional ways of looking at established languages, such as photography and cinema. He does not fail to think about cinema and photography, but he does fail to think about them from the best known angles, promoting interest in experimental or marginal experiences in the universe of technical images, or a refreshing look at cinematographic language. His interest in anamorphosis, Eisenstein or scientific cinema can be found there, but also his engagement with the problem of enunciation in audiovisual languages. When transiting through this universe, he thickens a set of concepts that establish new benchmarks for thinking about the problems posed, which happens in books such as *A ilusão especular* (1984), *Pré-cinemas e pós-cinemas* (1997) and *O sujeito na tela* (2007).

Another of Machado's directions of thought formulates systems that allow us to understand emerging languages, such as video arts, television and media art. In doing so, he adopts a procedure contrary to that in books on photography and cinema, as he seeks to map the territories through which the best of these languages travel, organizing repertoires that contribute to an understanding of their richness and breadth. This is where his efforts to synthesize the generations of video art in Brazil or the repertoire of shows that allow us to discover the most striking experiences of television appear, such as in *A experiência do vídeo no Brasil* (chapter of *Máquina e Imaginário*, 1996), *As linhas de força do vídeo brasileiro* (chapter of *Made in Brasil*, 2007) and *A televisão levada a sério* (2000).

This division is simplifying, as, in fact, these directions of thought also move Machado's books internally, causing both to become tense in each publication. Furthermore, Machado's thought is organized from the premise of long genealogies,

which challenge the assumption of naive innovation, formulated by so many authors who believe in the almost magical capacity of technologies to invent new languages. There are countless examples of this logic, which brings him closer to intellectuals who think the directions of languages against the grain, such as Benjamin, Dubois or Zielinski. This does not always appear as structured sets, as with the repertoires he maps, but it is a principle of thought organization. In the book *Arte e Mídia* (2010, p. 10-11), we have a good example, when the text signals the place of the player piano in the emergence of sound reproduction processes:

> The player piano, for example, was invented in the mid-19th century as an industrial device to automate musical performance and dispense with live performance. Thanks to a paper tape whose perforations "memorized" the positions and times of the keys pressed during a single performance, the mechanical piano could reproduce that same performance as many times as needed and without the need for an interpreter to intervene. The function of the mechanical apparatus was, therefore, to increase the productivity of music performed in public environments (cafes, restaurants, hotels) and to reduce costs, replacing the flesh-and-blood performer with his mechanical clone, more disciplined and economical. The perforations of a tape could still be copied to another tape and thus a single presentation multiplied into infinite others, starting the scale reproducibility project that, a little later, with the invention of the phonograph, would lead to the powerful phonographic industry.

Sometimes, this genealogical thought appears in a subtle way, as in the excerpt from *A ilusão especular* (1984), in which the author locates, in 17th century painting, lighting effects that anticipate the ways of organizing space through directional spotlights non-existent at the time (they would not appear until two centuries later). This is not about cause and consequence thinking, but about an ability to locate vectors of procedures and issues that spread throughout the history of languages[2].

> It is curious that the <u>chiaroscuro</u> technique could have flourished in the 17th century – when electricity and artificial lighting were still far from being discovered – as it corresponds to a plastic landscape that could only be realized with the

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[2] In this context, the word history itself can be problematized. Certain authors replace it with such terms as genealogy and archeology. Machado's thinking operates this type of logic, but he does not formulate an explicit position on these issues, because his conceptual investment always appears as a result of the objects analyzed, rather than as a prior assumption to be set in motion.

> voltaic arcs and electric reflectors from the last century[3]. The light located through *spots* generating intense contrast effects between the illuminated and the obscure parts and projecting gigantic shadows on the shapes of things, all this configures exactly the modeling role that lighting plays in photography. (MACHADO, 1984, p. 127)

Rarely, genealogical thinking appears in a more structured way, as in the case of "Mallarmé's dream", a chapter of *Máquina e Imaginário* (1996). The text makes the concept of hypertext return to the imaginary book Mallarmé dreamed of, a "complete volume, a multiple book that already contained potentially all possible books; or perhaps a poetic machine, which made countless poems proliferate" (p. 165). This utopian book would anticipate the capabilities of the computer, working as "a generator of texts, driven by a movement of its own, in which words and phrases could emerge, coalesce, combine in precise arrangements, then undo, atomize in search of new combinations" (MACHADO, 1996, p. 165). In the text, this guiding thread leads to graphic (concrete poetry) and technological (holographic poetry) experiences that anticipate computer writing, which the text has also pursued since its beginnings in the permutational experiences of Max Bense and *Oulipo*.

> Contemporary machines seem destined to realize and widely disseminate the constructive project of the historical vanguards, this dream of being able to one day realize the representation of movement, the virtual, the simultaneous, the instantaneous and the eternally changing. (MACHADO, 1996, p. 167)

Machado has as one of the main guiding threads of his ideas the problem of ideology. In *A ilusão especular* (1984), Machado relies on Bakthinian semiotics to dismantle the idealist thoughts about ideology, which arise in the Marxist tradition, as a simplification of a problem never developed at length by Marx himself. Unlike thoughts that locate ideology in an abstract class consciousness that deforms reality, this way of thinking considers that "the sign is already marked by the class nature of the group that produces it: in a hierarchical and conflicting organization, the social production of signs condenses the needs, interests and intervention strategies of each social stratum" (MACHADO, 1984, p. 22). Although it does not appear explicitly in other texts, the theme never disappears, as it serves as a reason for the choices made throughout all of Machado's books. In a large scenario, it could be said that his work

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[3] Considering that the book is from 1984, last century refers to the 19th century.

proposes a broad mapping of what, in the universe of technical images, diverges from the dominant ideologies.

An example is the way in which anamorphosis will assume a central importance in his thought, which is explicit in A *quarta dimensão da imagem*. This chapter of the book *Pré-cinemas e pós-cinemas* (1997) synthesizes a persistent interest in editing modes that go beyond the conventional (the disruption of perspective in photography; qualitative editing in cinema; noise, deformations and superimpositions in video). His thinking about anamorphosis starts from the classic definitions in Baltrusaitis, but adds the dimension of time to the phenomenon, drawing from the thinking of Bakthin, the most present author in all of Machado's work.

> We are going to deal here with a specific modality of anamorphosis, not considered by Baltrusaitis, which we call chronotopic, as it refers to the "deformations" resulting from an inscription of time in the image. The term chronotope derives from Mikhail Bakhtin's theory (1981, p. 84 ff), in the context of literary analysis, and was in turn inspired by the idea expressed by physicist Albert Einstein of an indissolubility of the categories of time and space. As is well known, the theory of relativity views time as a fourth dimension of space, which implies a conception of time as something that can be materialized. […] This idea of a "privileged materialization of time in space" (1981, p. 250) seemed to Bakhtin extremely rich for an aesthetic approach, as it allowed us to face "time as a category that has a sensitive expression, which shows itself in significant matter and which can therefore be artistically shaped. In strictly semiotic terms, time then appears as a transforming element, capable of shaking the very structure of matter, of compressing it, expanding it, multiplying it, twisting it to the limit of transfiguration. (MACHADO, 1997, p. 96)

A *ilusão especular* (1984) develops in a broader way the dismantling of traditional ways of thinking about photography, especially by deconstructing what Machado will call the *mystique of automatic homology*. Assuming that the photographic logic was present in the Renaissance *camera obscura*, the text suggests that the appearance of chemical processes of image fixation are a mere replacement of the human gesture, in a process that already existed in the painting of an artist like Vermeer, for example. As the *camera obscura*, as well as the camera shutter, captures traces of reality to produce its images, a realistic myth emerges that masks the fact that perspective is a code of visual representation. The book will propose ways of looking at photographic language freed from the naive assumption of *ontological realism*, and mapping the photographic code in all its aspects. In doing this mapping, it also

brings together an exemplary repertoire of photographic language, submitted to a systematic and sophisticated critical reading.

In *O sujeito na tela* (2007) this problem returns from the theme of enunciation, in the way it appeared in the theories of literature and cinema and in the way in which digital languages will reposition the problem. The subject's place in front of the image is the logical complement of the vanishing point that organizes the perspective. Both are intimately intertwined. *O sujeito na tela* proposes a mapping of the problem of enunciation in the way it moves towards an automation of processes (what Edmond Couchot will call *sujet-on*). The book is a mixture of Machado's ways of working, as it dismantles the traditional ways of thinking about enunciation in cinema (at the same time that it proposes a thought about enunciation in digital media), but it also formulates a repertoire to be covered with sophisticated critical readings of movies and games.

The book in which the problem of repertoire appears more explicitly in Arlindo Machado's thought is *A televisão levada a sério* (2000). The book brings together a survey of 200 television programs that allow us to study the vehicle from the very best of it. The motivation is to build a repertoire that allows quality training in Radio and TV courses, in the same way that film students are put in contact with the main films in history, throughout their studies. As a result of this engagement, a position on television emerges – which can be extrapolated to the media in general – that is more productive than pessimistic approaches, as it does not conform to the position that devices have static vocations:

> In my opinion, television is and will be what we make of it. Neither it nor any other medium is predestined to be anything fixed. By deciding what we are going to see or do on television, by choosing the experiences that will deserve our attention and our interpretation effort, by discussing, supporting or rejecting certain communication policies, we are actually contributing to the construction of a concept and a television practice. What this medium is or is not, therefore, is not a matter indifferent to our attitudes towards it. In this sense, many discourses about television seem to me to be somewhat stationary or conformist, as they neglect the transformative potential that is implicit in the positions we take towards it; and "we", here, encompasses everyone involved in the process: producers, consumers, critics, trainers, etc. (MACHADO, 2000, p. 12)

The book that has a more explicit genealogical organization is *Pré-cinemas e pós-cinemas* (1997), and its way of projecting itself into the past and the future at the same time as a way to avoid naive readings of emerging languages is also one of

the logics that articulate Machado's two directions of thought. *O sujeito na tela* also adopts this procedure in a more macro way, but this thought tensioned between the awareness of what has been produced in the history of languages and the directions in which culture points to permeates, more or less explicitly, practically all of the author's books.

> I have long been fueling the desire to bring together in a book materials produced at different times and which were the result of research carried out in two diametrically opposite and apparently contradictory directions. […] I soon realize that, in fact, when rehearsing a movement towards the past and the future simultaneously, the basic reference of my inquiries was cinema. But at the same time that I divided myself in these two directions, the concept of cinema was expanding in my head, in order to encompass both its previous magical forms and its contemporary technological forms. And, in fact, in the texts that follow, the reader will read more than once that many of the experiences before or after what we call cinema may actually be much more cinematographic (in the etymological sense of the term) than the regular practice of the art that bears that name. In other words, there can be a more eloquent representation of movement, duration, time-shaping work and audiovisual synchronism in pre- and post-cinematographic forms than in the "official" examples of cinematographic performance. (MACHADO, 1997, p. 8-9)

In his engagement with electronic languages, Arlindo Machado also proposes a repertoire of video art in Brazil, which takes place in two articles written 11 years apart. *A experiência do vídeo no Brasil* focuses on the phenomenon of independent video, with greater emphasis on the production of TVDO and Olhar Eletrônico. *As linhas de força do vídeo no Brasil* (2007) proposes the existence of three generations of video artists in Brazil, and surveys the main issues that arise across their works. This thought about video is one of the neuralgic points of Arlindo Machado's thinking, which thickens after *A arte do video* (1990).

> Around 1963, the young Korean Nam June Paik, who was studying electronic music with Stockhausen in Cologne, had the idea of inverting the circuits of a TV receiver, in order to disturb the constitution of the images. In so doing, he certainly could not imagine that he was not only setting the tone for the entire further development of video art, but also bringing about a reversal in the system of figurative expectations in the world of technical imagery. In fact, if we could summarize in one sentence the general trend that the so-called video art has pursued in Europe and America over the last twenty years, we

> would say that it is, above all, about distorting and disintegrating the old image of the figurative system, such as in fact had been happening for a long time in the field of plastic arts.

This point of view is directly linked to the interest in dismantling the perspective system, but it ends up resulting in a partial vision of video art. Undoubtedly, many of his experiences are related to the deconstruction of images, but there is also a whole set of works that explore the duration of the scenes and the relationships between the performance of the body and the camera, which marked these beginnings. Machado's understanding of video language has become more complex over the years (and the very diversification of video repertoires), as is clear in the article O *vídeo e sua linguagem*, published in Revista USP:

> Videographic discourse is impure by nature, it reprocesses forms of expression put into circulation by other cycles, attributing new values to them, and its "specificity", if any, is above all in the peculiar solution it gives to the problem of the synthesis of all these contributions. With the exception of certain pioneering and aging works of video art, which consisted only in the exploration of video feedback effects, and which today we might consider rare examples of pure video, electronic media operates on a frontier of intersecting languages, hence the obsolescence of any pretension to purity or homogeneity. (MACHADO, 1993, p. 8)

Interestingly, the thinking about video clashes with the ways of articulating the directions of Machado's thought. This is probably due to the fact that video languages and repertoires were formed and renewed over the years while he was writing his work. Unlike photography and cinema, already established when he dedicated himself to both, or hypertext and games, which were emerging languages, video matures as the articles cited follow the book A *arte do video* (1990). For this reason, the texts in question are more engaged in mapping the videographic field than in its genealogies, despite establishing a link between the generation of independent video and Glauber Rocha's TV experiences and the dismantling of perspective operated by the visual arts in early 20th century. More than that, the thinking about video is very marked by cuts that differentiate it from thinking about cinema, and even about television. Machado avoids a search for specificities that would return the examination of video language to the domains of *ontology*, which it precisely comes to dismantle. However, the adventure of forming a research field ends up leading to a thought that is contained within itself.

This is not to say that it is not possible to establish a genealogy of video, submitting this part of Machado's intellectual production to the tensioning of directions that marks most of his writings. His focus on mapping video art in Brazil, in the two articles cited (*A experiência do vídeo no Brasil*, 1996 and *As linhas de força do vídeo brasileiro*, 2007), serves as a stimulus to think about a genealogy of video in Brazil, which allows to submit Machado's thought to its own logic of organization, expanding the notes on the relationships between video and visual arts that punctuate *A arte do vídeo* (1990). This is also possible insofar as video languages and repertoires are already accommodated in a rich and complex tradition of thoughts, which is equalized, keeping due proportions due to the time of existence of each, to the diversity of thoughts focused on cinema. The second part of this text will be precisely an effort to think about this genealogy of video in Brazil. By analyzing the video art works that will make up this part of the article, the argument of the formal deficit in Brazilian art, formulated by Rodrigo Naves, in *A forma difícil* (2011) will be recovered. It is an exercise in connecting two of the main critics of the culture produced in the country, Machado and Naves.

Softening the complexity with which he denies inaugural gestures in his articles and books on photography, cinema, television, hypertext or games, in *As linhas de força do vídeo brasileiro* (2007), Machado identifies *M3x3* (1973), by Analívia Cordeiro, as the first work of video art in Brazil. He does so amid considerations on the difficulty of saying "when the history of video in Brazil begins" and ponders the absence of "an archaeological research to recompose the prehistory of our video and rescue other titles that may be lost or ignored" (MACHADO, 2007, p. 15). In *Cinemáticos* (2013), Andre Parente formulates a more productive position about the problem, locating the appearance of video in a generational scene in which it makes no sense to identify individual works and filmmakers. Machado's own text, by organizing the history of Brazilian video art into 3 generations, reiterates this thought that, in an individualizing lapse, he himself ignores when making his choice of an inaugural artist.

Stripped of this need to identify beginnings, this article will critically examine 2 works[4] that represent different generations of video in Brazil, to argue, however, in favor of an articulation of their ways of doing with the historical vanguards in the visual arts, pointing to a genealogy in which audiovisual thought can be linked with other plastic experiences that preceded them. This relationship will be extended to

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[4] The videos analyzed will be *M3x3*, by Analívia Cordeiro and *Non Plus Ultra*, by TVDO.

video art as a whole, through a comparative analysis of the beginnings of international video art and in Brazil. Not that Machado adopts this posture, but thinking about emerging manifestations is often associated with the assumption of radical ruptures that discontinue the transits of culture. With video, the need to assert an autonomous field leads to thoughts of this type, in the attempt to dissociate it from cinema and television, and to seek a language of its own.

If not by logic of thought, something of this is left over in Machado's texts on video, insofar as they are prospective mappings. The researcher's enthusiasm for the object can sometimes speak louder than his most deep-rooted views. The analyses made below seek to make one of the directions of understanding video art more complex, making it refer to the pasts that inform it (and also recover its dialogues with the history of art, as Machado's thought in this aspect focuses especially on the dialogues of video art with television[5]). Through the profile of the chosen works, in addition to the general issue of proposing a genealogy, issues related to the dialogue between camera and body will be discussed, one of the vectors that Machado introduces between the *lines of force* of Brazilian video – and which is a central problem of criticism of video art, as it is possible to infer from texts such as *Video: The reflexive medium*, by Yvonne Spielmann (2010).

Considering the problem of the supposed rupture, a paradox arises in the beginnings of Brazilian video art as compared to international experiences. *M3x3*, by Analívia Cordeiro, is a choreography that unfolds the tradition of the body inserted in geometric spaces, of experiences such as the Bauhaus *triadic ballet*. Unlike a work such as *Global Groove*, in which the body appears corroded by the electronic weft, Cordeiro's work presents a whole body, in a choreography in which the shots and cuts do not propose discontinuities or ruptures, but tensioning the angles and directions of the gestures, movements and the dotted weft that serves as a backdrop for the dancers. Even so, it will be clear that in the two works there is a certain disassembly of the body's autonomy, in one case as a result of the radical practices of plastic montage, in the other as a result of the formal solution that unites foreground and background in a whole that brings body and setting closer.

It is possible to see, in this pair of works, those by Paik and Cordeiro, two distinct modes of exploring the language of video, one more linked to the plastic experience,

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[5] Machado indicates in a textual way the dialogue between video arts and visual arts and develops structural analogies between them, when comparing the mosaic that makes up the electronic image to the pointillist painting of a Seurat (MACHADO, 1990), but, in developing its mappings and repertoires, he focuses especially on audiovisual languages, such as cinema and television.

the other more linked to performativity in front of the camera[6]. Both share a common device for filming the body in the studio, but the results could not be more different. In *Global Groove*, there is a kaleidoscopic rhythm to the sequences and editing, as well as scene changes that promote a radical discontinuity of space and time. In *M3x3* there is a constant pace of filming and editing, as well as the extension of the proposed audiovisual situation, promoting a radical stretch of time, in a logically complex space. These are two areas of dismantling of the more conventional perspective, in Paik through the mosaic, in Cordeiro through the tension between body and geometry.

Figure 1: Scene from *Global Groove* by Nam June Paik
Source: YouTube Screenshot.

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[6] It must be taken into account that video, at the time these works were made, was a low-resolution device. This makes its formal configuration different from cinema, as discussed by Machado in *A arte do video* (1990). Among the factors that contribute to this low resolution of the first video technologies are the reticulated character of the electronic mosaic, its low lineage and its low exposure latitude, from which it follows that, if "in cinema the spectator has little possibility of resisting the fascination from the forms that already appear loaded with illusionist determination, in front of the video this same spectator can detach himself more easily, since the power of specular suggestion of the electronic image is much more precarious" (MACHADO, 1990, p. 58).

Figure 2: Scene from *Global Groove* by Nam June Paik
Source : Screenshot from YouTube.

Figure 3: *M3x3* scene, by Analivia Cordeiro
Source: YouTube Screenshot.

These different ways of working with space mimic, in a sense, the types of bodies at play in the works. *Global groove* ranges from rock to performance, exploring the types of human figures that, in the 1960s that preceded the work by a few years, promoted a revolution in the culture of the time's ways of dealing with sexuality and the body. *M3x3* explores a choreography organized by the tension between the organicity of the bodies' movement and the angularity of the dotted lines against which the bodies move. While Paik's work erodes the integrity of the bodies it presents, through the electronic noise generated by the radical superposition of layers, Cordeiro's work erodes the integrity of space through its dissolutions in a sparse environment in front of the camera. In Paik there is a deconstructed two-dimensionality in planes cut through image inlays, while Cordeiro explores a shifting three-dimensionality, which reconstructs itself as the camera changes planes.

Another significant aspect is the visible body and taken as an example of a group, in the *Global Groove* scene in which two young people dance wildly to rock music. The body takes on the sense of tribe, identifiable by the tight clothes, the articulated gestures, the garish colors of the clothes (which reverberate in the saturated treatment that the artist gives to the images). In *M3x3*, on the contrary, the body disappears like a graphic constructed of human articulations under the black clothing that makes the dancers anonymous. They are not individual bodies, but a collective body that is built through the fusion resulting from the approaches and overlaps that organize the choreography. The bodies come together, and blend into the background, contributing to the sensation of floating three-dimensionality.

These different ways of dealing with the body indicate two opposing plastic attitudes, and allow us to refer the beginnings of video art to the period of the historical vanguards, revealing continuities, discontinuities and asymmetries between Brazilian and international video art. Comparing the two works, the problem of access becomes evident. International artists produced in a climate of democratization of access to audiovisual media that made video cameras and electronic editing bays widely available. In Brazil, the works were carried out through institutional support. In the case of *M3x3*, it is a television show, with everything that this implies in terms of format and possibilities.

The stability of the frames and the placidity of the cuts, more than a decontextualized aesthetic option, is a typical TV image articulation mode. Thinking about its insertion in this context, *M3x3* is a work that, while expanding the field of relations between sound and moving image that television encompasses, remains within its field of possibilities. There are few camera angles, a general one more

open, with the camera straight, two or three slanted and more lateral angles, and a transverse angle with the camera almost overhead. The chosen framings re-signify the geometry in the background, making its angles vary. A work like Paik's deconstructs expectations of what is expected of small screens that received electronic audiovisual products in the 1970s. *M3x3*, on the other hand, unveils its possibilities in an ingenious but constructive way (in the two senses that the word can take, of building new possibilities on television and in the sense of dialogue with constructivist art).

This procedure makes the relationship between body and geometry of experiences, such as the Bauhaus triadic ballet, more complex. By using the resources of early 20th century art and changing its meaning, a work like *M3x3* establishes threads of continuity between the historical vanguards and video art. A defining element of the work is the dotted lines that appear on the floor and walls of the TV studio used to record the work. They act as a field of action for body movements. As in triadic ballet, there is a transformation of the body into geometry that dialogues with the geometric space made visible. The same kind of relationship can be established between *Global groove* and Dadaism, with its collages that disarticulate the two-dimensional space and deconstruct the body. In this sense, it is possible to think video art beyond the break with the past and establish its links of continuity[7].

Figure 4: Scene from *Triadic Ballet*
Source: https://bit.ly/3iA9QbM.

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[7] This relationship is suggested by Machado, in *A arte do vídeo*, but, as already mentioned, he did not develop the dialogue between video and plastic arts at greater length. Taking up an excerpt from the quotation that appears in full above: "In fact, if we could summarize in one sentence the general trend that the so-called video art has pursued in Europe and America over the last twenty years, we would say that it is, above all, about distorting and disintegrating the old image of the figurative system, as in fact it had been happening for a long time in the field of plastic arts" (MACHADO, 1990, p. 117).
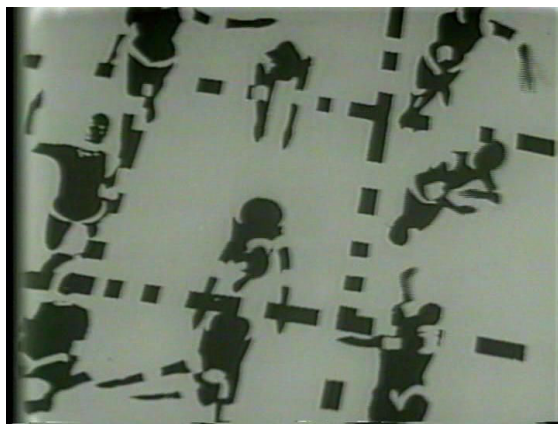
Figure 5: Scene from *M3x3*, by Analivia Cordeiro
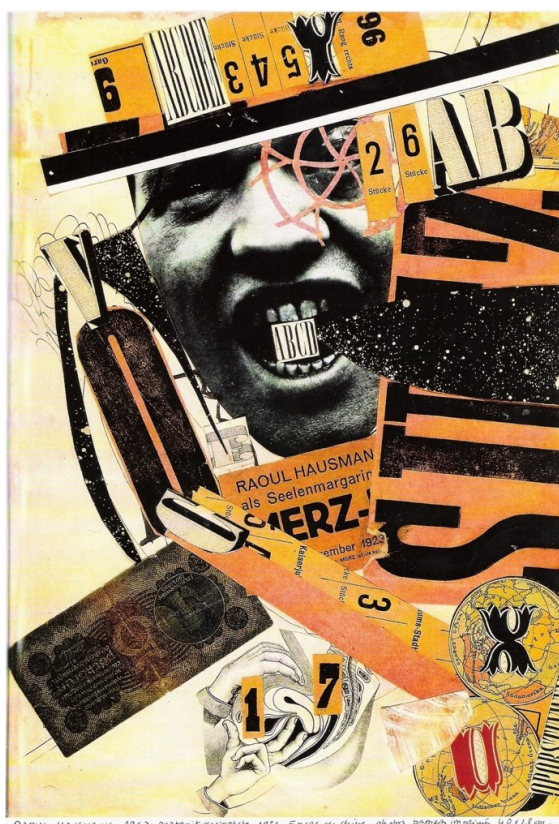Source: YouTube Screenshot.

Figure 6: ABCD, by Raoul Hausmann
Source: https://bit.ly/3gaFjzD.

Figure 7: Scene from *Global Groove* by Nam June Paik
Source: YouTube Screenshot.

Just as it is possible to relate *M3x3* with international historical vanguards, opening a more genealogical way of reading video art, it is also possible to think of its work in the context of Brazilian art, due to a proximity to Tarsila do Amaral. When comparing *M3x3* and *Global Groove*, the most striking creation in Paik's work is evident. This, so to speak, formal deficit that could be identified in Cordeiro's work recalls the argument formulated by Rodrigo Naves in relation to the genesis of Brazilian art in its relationship with the colonized environment and its subsequent developments. Before explaining how this connection happens, it is worth recapitulating Naves's argument, and also problematizing the question of form.

Naves formulates his argument comparing Brazilian and international modernisms, finding a relationship that also explains the dialogue between *M3x3* and *Global Groove*. "The first finding […] was the stubborn formal shyness of our artworks" (2011, p. 18). Naves states that "international modern production, needless to say, was characterized by a strong appearance, mainly owing to a significant reduction in the representative nature of its elements. He concludes that something "significantly different happens with Brazilian art" (2011, p. 18-19). He himself recognizes that the issue will become complex over the years, as contemporary art seeks formal minimalist solutions, with an opposite thrust to modernism. In addition, there are also experiences in international video that are more linked to the performance of the

body in front of the camera, as is the case with Cordeiro's work. Even so, in general terms, it is possible to sustain the argument of formal shyness in Brazilian art[8].

In developing his argument, Naves extends his thought to the developments of modern art, reaching artists such as Helio Oiticia and Eduardo Sued, but also returning to the beginnings of Brazilian art, in an artist such as Debret. He considers that this "formal difficulty permeates much of the best Brazilian art". This stems from a "reluctance to strongly structure the works, and thereby deliver them to a more positive and conflicted relationship with the world", which "leads them to an intimate and withdrawn movement, far from the prospective character of a considerable portion of modern art" (NAVES, 2011, p. 27).

However, in this argument there is a positive understanding of the concept of form, which is, due to its emphasis on shape, modern (in the sense of thought that dominates the Western way of seeing the world, from renaissance to modernism). Contemporary understanding also takes on a negative sense of form, equating the formal with any operation that shapes language. Even articulations that suggest a disappearance of plastic elements in favor of the semantic elements of an enunciation are also a type of form. With this, when talking about formal shyness, taking into account this contemporary bias, Naves would be referring to a plastic emphasis, a form that relies on syntactic arrangements with equal or greater weight than on semantic arrangements. The consequences of this more complex understanding of form do not change the essence of the arguments presented by the author or their possible relationship with video art, but allow to modulate somewhat the analysis of

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[8] It would be possible to ask to what extent this does not result from an environment of more restricted access to equipment, which was evident in the country in the beginnings of video art, in which military dictatorship and currency devaluation imposed difficulties in accessing equipment (unlike what happens in Europe, where the cost of electronic equipment results in a democratization of access). This difficulty remains. Most of the time, the most economically structured countries have privileged access to the means of production and the reconfigurations of globalized capitalism were not enough to change this aspect of the economy. Naves suggests, when analyzing Debret's work, that these particularities of the environment in which the artist produces are, in part, responsible for the results of his work. When dealing with the precariousness that takes over Rio de Janeiro as it becomes a colony that becomes the seat of the Empire, he says that the "inexistence of planning and current violence further accentuate the precariousness of the urban center". Therefore, more "than an anecdotal and perversely picturesque aspect, the rudimentary feature of Rio de Janeiro made it unfeasible for Debret and his companions to perform normally" (NAVES, 2011, p. 74). The interpretation of Debret's work is not restricted to an aspect of a more explicit relationship with the city and its limits, as Naves also proposes an intricate reading of the relationship between neoclassicism, classical cultures, their re-enactment in Europe and the difficulty of re-enacting them in slave colonies. However, in general terms, this aspect of the precariousness of the city's means can be thought of as something persistent in the experience of countries like Brazil, to the point that this becomes something that will be taken positively in certain ironic experiences around anthropophagy and the workaround. Even Naves reading does not presuppose a valuation. Rather, it seeks to understand the characteristics of Brazilian art and move the vectors that explain its shape, without putting it in an inferior position due to its formal shyness.

the next video that will be discussed, as this has more forceful plastic investments. In this sense, and recalling Naves's reference to minimalism as a modulator of his thought, the most recent steps in the history of art make the issue of formal shyness in Brazilian art more complex.

Non Plus Ultra, by TVDO, is a work that allows us to think about this complexity, as it combines the two ways of dealing with video present in *M3x3* and *Global Groove*. The work mixes ways of representing the body in front of the camera with forceful plastic experiences. This is not Cordeiro's choreographed body, but a multiplicity of bodies that fragmentarily draws theater, backstage (fictitious) cinema, journalism, music videos, synthetic images and performance nearer. This mosaic of languages unfolds before the camera like a dizzying kaleidoscope. For Machado, this is due to the fact that the "radical experience of the fragment is the response of new generations to the attempts at historical totalization and teleological synthesis of previous generations, obsessed by the very utopian project of building a *national identity*" (MACHADO, 1996, p. 261).

The multiplicity of bodies that make up the video refers to an ironic swallowing of the languages on which the work is based in a parodic way. As in *Global Groove*, there is an aesthetics of collage, but here the fragments are not superimposed in layers, but in sequences that make up a whole structured upside down, as in the Rousseaian definition of park, in which everything is in place except the set. Machado associates this disjointed succession with the zapping effect, the spectator's practice of changing channels very quickly and without stopping, which constitutes a "procedure that is, at the same time, something inherent to television, a fact of its fragmentary nature or the simultaneity of its wavebands, and also a means of resistance against the anesthetizing uniformity of televisual economy" (MACHADO, 1996, p. 261).

This disarticulation also occurs in the relationship between sounds and images, which often defy good television sense in favor of overlaps and dissociations in which there is no fit between what is seen and what is heard. *Non Plus Ultra* is a work in which form and content are in synergy, in an anarchy of articulations that are paradoxically very well woven. Careful neglect and planned anarchy emerge in this video in which rigor appears inverted, in a perfect craft of imperfections. In this sense, the video transforms the precarious, on which it relies as an aesthetic option consistent with the context of less access to the latest technologies, into a consistent solution. As in anthropophagic literature and tropicalist music, a Brazilian way of doing emerges capable of reversing the contingencies that lead to formal shyness in much of the country's visual arts.

Shapes, colors, textures and noise in the image are the body of the video. Thus, in this video of bodies that say or do the most unexpected things before the camera, the videographic body accompanies this choreography of divergences. As in intellectual montage, there is a nexus that resembles the constitution of the ideogram, but in this case it is a deconstructed ideogram, broken into pieces that are joined by physical proximity. This procedure refers to the way of thinking of concrete poetry, however contaminated by the chaos of Zé Celso's theater, who makes a long statement towards the end of the video. *Non Plus Ultra* unites these two opposite ends of the language experiences that preceded it, the constructivist rigor of concrete poetry and the Dionysian chaos of workshop theater. In this complexity lies the richness of his experience, and its ability to forge a shape that is at once inconstant and compact.

This recoil, which can be identified in the works of Cordeiro and TVDO, allows to sketch a genealogy of video in Brazil, which could become even more complex in future returns to the subject. Constructivism, Dadaism, Antropophagy and *Tropicália* appear as vectors that allow us to think about video art dissociated from the disruptive discourses normally associated with new languages. Arlindo Machado took this care in looking at languages, taking into account the threads that weave them from the past to the future. The two directions of his thought are, at bottom, a way of navigating the complexities with which languages entangle their repertoires. By carrying out the exercise of resuming the type of articulation made by the author when dealing with the beginnings of Brazilian video, this text seeks to unfold his thought, based on the powers that he himself suggests.

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