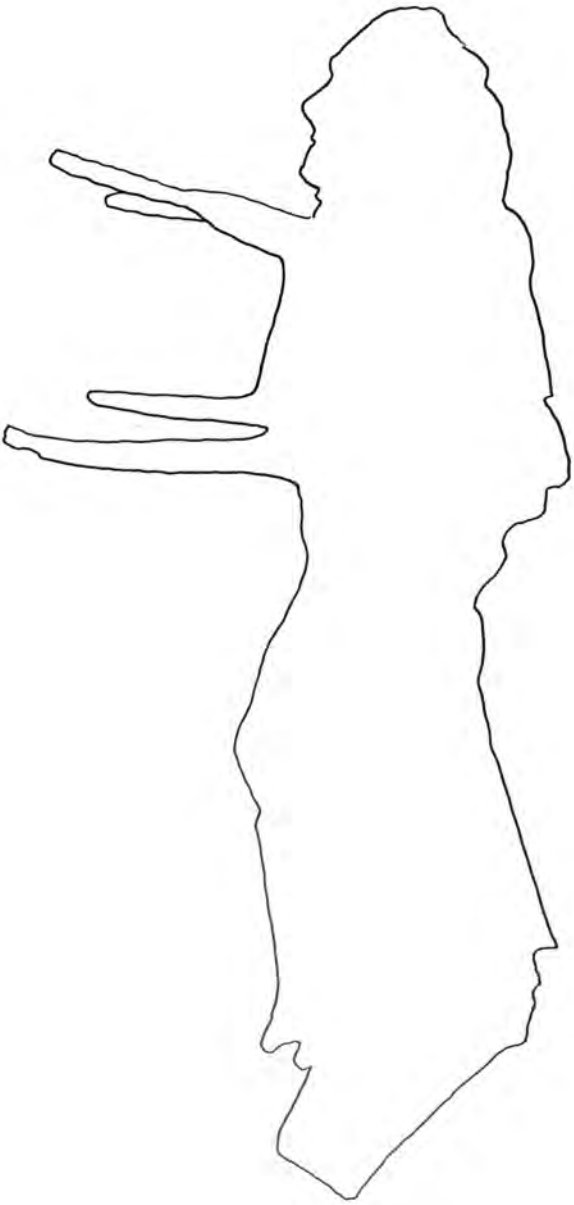
On Smuggling and Drawing. A Conversation in Blocks.
Juana Awad, Luisa Ungar



This Endeavor (Juana Awad)

When I was invited to provide a curatorial contribution for this publication I decided to collaborate with you, Luisa, as from my perspective your artistic practice is rooted in a deep suspiciousness of the given, of the apparent completeness and stability of models and concepts. It was my intention to take this opportunity, not to present an example of decolonial aesthetics, or a deconstruction of a colonial narrative, but rather to engage with you in a dialogue investigating roads toward a decolonization of aesthetics within our practices, you as artist, I as curator.[1]

In this endeavor, we have discussed at length your artistic concerns and creation processes. You are primarily interested in how social norms are constructed and institutionalized through language and, from there on, in unearthing underlying structures and assumptions embedded in everyday life and social relations. As part of your research, you engage in conversations from which you create scripts for performances, and you draw, putting line to paper in a way that does not fix meanings but that reveals contradictions and rests on the ambivalent. From my point of view, your questioning, and the poetic possibility of the traces in your processes, exemplify an impetus and a method to unlearn pervasive and ingrained principles of hierarchies and values, which have justified violence against so many others multitudes for hundreds of years.

Under this perspective, you were commissioned to intervene with new drawings in this publication, reflecting on and responding to the figures that appear in the texts, as well as on our own practices. The point of departure is collaboration: can we take this opportunity (dialoguing, drawing, writing, and constellating together) to find other ways in which to relate, to open fissures into the borders in which we are operating?

This Endeavor (Luisa Ungar)

Thank you, Juana, for this invitation and ongoing conversation! I feel that right from the start, the possibility of engaging in a common road, rather than presenting examples on relations between decoloniality and art, allowed us to review together our own position in that which we name as the decolonial. The question seemed to be: how do we engage in this process in a way in which we do not fall into the categories that we are, precisely, questioning? It became clear that we needed to look at the structure of the book from a malleable perspective; that is when the notion of "suspiciousness" that you talked about became for me more relevant.

As you mentioned, it is a main strategy in my work (and my life) to be suspicious of what is given; it came to me as a survival mechanism. The given was, in the context in which we grew up in Colombia,

1 *According to Walter Mignolo, decolonial aesthetics "indicates what is to come, what is being done," while decoloniality or decolonization of aesthetics "show[s] that, far from being a natural process (like saying rain or thunder), aesthetics emerged as a discipline (that is, as a form of control and formation of subjectivities) with the European bourgeoisie, influencing the ideology of imperial/global designs and the projects of regulation of subjectivities on the planet." Mignolo, Walter,* Arte y estética en la encrucijada descolonial, *edited by Zulma Palermo, Buenos Aires 2009, p. 13, translation Juana Awad.*

a perverse spectacle of a colonial hegemony (mindset). The insistence of exclusion in existing local pedagogical structures, for example, the permanent reappearance of models anchored in the segregation of all that appears different and nonbinary, the presence of a socially obscene exclusion system, combined with a personal history of trauma and loss of memory full of concealments and secrets, led me to work with archives and to look for strategies of porosity and suspicion in communication. I started to use language as a tool for unsettling official narratives, looking for strategies of dislocation of representation. Following this end, I normally research applying a specific system in which I "follow clues as signs for orientation" as symptoms of a specific malaise from a given social space in order to create new fables.[2] For this, I use conversations, and various archival materials, looking for the apparent contradictions that conform a given social space, as a way to expose fictions of modern colonial powers under which we exist.

In the case of this book, I first focused on survival strategies that appear frequently in the texts; the various forms in which artists manifested systems of life that manage to continue existing despite the structures that are imposed on them; ways in which actions such as resilience, resistance, and insistence appear, and how these actions frequently involve suspiciousness as a tactic for survival. I looked for key images that act as references to colonial and decolonial imaginaries, and experimented using ways to establish a critical conversation throughout the publication.

On the Importance of Process (JA)

These encounters and clashing of referents, which give rise to your drawings, are mirrored by the clashes and encounters in bringing them about in this book, which has required engaging in an intensive collaborative endeavor at all levels of the production process, across continents, and during a global pandemic. The curatorial endeavor emerges in the synchronicity and the friction of encounter. I would like to think about the process of bringing about and constellating your drawings within this publication as opening fissures, or smuggling a question mark into the relationships, procedures, and instances underlying this book's production. As a practice born out of the need to trespass and bypass controlled borders, smuggling involves resistance and resilience. It plants the seeds for the undoing and rearrangement of the systems it circumvents and opens up the possibilities of subterfuges and unexpected encounters. As a curator and cultural worker, embodying what it means to live *en la frontera* (on the border), I think of smuggling as a strategy with which

2 *I borrow this term* "malaise" *from Brazilian psychoanalyst Suely Rolnik: "What changes from one culture to another, or from one era to another, is the politics of the predominant desire … the way of responding to the experience of destabilization and its* malaise. *And this difference is not neutral, since its effects in reality depend on the perspectives that guide this action of desire … . If these two capacities are active, and if the subjectivity is sustained in the tension of its destabilization and listens to its* malaise, *the larval world that inhabits it will find a possibility of germination." Fernández Polanco, Aurora and Rolnik, Suely, "La hora de la micropolitica," https://www.goethe.de/ins/ar/es/kul/fok/dei/20790860.html (accessed April, 12, 2020), translation Luisa Ungar.*

to redo from within—or, perhaps, rather within/without—resting on Trinh T. Minh-ha's notion of the insider/outsider.[3]

On Borders (LU)

> Smuggling indeed creates new zones of fusion and encounter, and it has everything to do with borders, which is an important anchor in our search. I am thinking of what Gloria Anzaldúa proposes as border thinking when she describes the border as an area of debate on the identity resistance of individuals living on the borderlines of nations, where border language arises.[4] Your trajectory has been for me an example of critical border thinking: producing many times from the fringes and managing to traverse different geographical contexts because of having to leave specific territories. I see your curatorial proposals as directly linked with your life experiences—as somebody who has come across the ambivalent situation of both subalternity and having to exist on a kind of attentive hegemony; with a particular consciousness of this constant negotiation within a given structure when having to smuggle into various systems in order to survive. But also the way in which our collaboration resides on various levels and languages concurrently (from speech, to drawing, to writing, to constellating) also seems like a significant mirroring of this approach.

On Smuggling (JA)

As a model for the curatorial, smuggling constitutes the space in which critique could move "away from representation … [aiming for] possibilities for larger agendas … [and an] emphasis on the trajectory."[5] Smuggling is also the image used by Verónica Gago when she states that, in her catalogue-book *Principio Potosí Reverso*, Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui "smuggle[d] herself into"[6] one of the drawings in the *Primer Nueva Coronica y Buen Gobierno* by Waman Puma de Ayala,[7] "overprinting it anachronistically."[8]

3 *See Trinh T., Minh-ha, "Not You/Like You: Post-Colonial Women and the Interlocking Questions of Identity and Difference," https://culturalstudies.ucsc.edu/inscriptions/volume-34/trinh-t-minh-ha/ (accessed August 9, 2020).* **4** *Anzaldúa, Gloria,* Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza, *San Francisco 1987, p. 105.* **5** *Bismarck, Beatrice and Rogoff, Irit, "Curating/Curatorial: A Conversation between Irit Rogoff and Beatrice von Bismarck," in Bismarck, Beatrice, Schafaff, Jörn, Weski, Thomas, eds.,* Cultures of the Curatorial, *Berlin 2012, pp. 21–40, p. 22.* **6** *Gago, Verónica, "Contra el colonialismo interno," http://revistaanfibia.com/ensayo/contra-el-colonialismo-interno/ (accessed May 5, 2020), translation Juana Awad.* **7** *"Written around 1615 and addressed to King Philip III of Spain, Guamán Poma's 'The First New Chronicle and Good Government' consists of nearly 800 pages of text in Spanish accompanied by many Quechua phrases and nearly 400 line drawings. Guamán Poma skillfully combines local histories, Spanish chronicles of conquest, Catholic moral and philosophical discourses (including those of Bartolomé de las Casas), various eyewitness accounts (including his own), and oral reports in multiple indigenous languages, to build a powerful case for maximum Indian autonomy given the ongoing history of abuse by Spanish conquerors, priests, and government officials." Stehn, Alexander V., "Latin American Philosophy,"* The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, *https://www.iep.utm.edu/latin-am/ (accessed May 10, 2020).* **8** *Gago (note 6).*

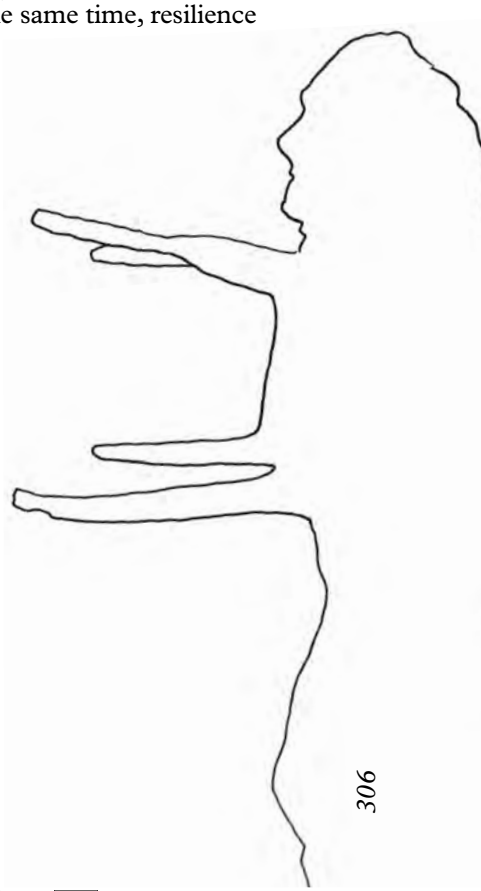
The image of Rivera Cusicanqui smuggling herself into the work of a seventeenth-century theoretician of the colonial system is another springboard from which to smuggle our own experiences into this edition, in a circular process of reading, talking, drawing and writing.

Importantly, the work that Rivera Cusicanqui undertakes in her analysis of the iconography of Waman Puma's chronicle reiterates the potential of drawing as theorization. In her essay "La universalidad de lo ch'ixi: miradas de Waman Puma" she argues "the need to consider nonalphabetic forms of Andean discourse as a path toward understanding colonial and postcolonial experience in the Andes."[9] Through various examples, Rivera Cusicanqui exposes how "the conceptual and moral framework from which it [the chronicle] is written and drawn are visible" in the drawings.[10] Waman Puma's drawings are not to be read as facsimiles of a historical moment; images have an interpretive potential. It is in this way, that the drawings depicting Atawallpa's death in 1533 and Tupaq Amaru's death in 1570 are almost identical, although it is known that Atawallpa was subjected to death by clubbing, not beheading: "[t]he similarity of both figures ... induces a 'flashback effect,' which allows us to see in them an interpretation and not a description of the facts. The indigenous society was decapitated."[11]

This inflicted violence informed for me one of the first images from which to start the drawing process: a body (human or societal) split by force, the horror of deliberate fragmentation; and at the same time, resilience and reconfiguration.

On Smuggling (The Need to Trespass) (LU)

The figure of a body split by force was a primary initial reference for the drawings. In the case of Colombian territory, splitting bodies has been a constant practice throughout the system of war that still rules the area. Body parts are used as marks to *delimit* territory occupied by paramilitaries, for example. The use of fragments of bodies scattered on the ground at a certain distance is part of the narrative of terror, in which "avoiding telling the whole story" fuels panic and control over the population. Signs of horror are left in these fragments. The narrative is completed in the spectacle of terror.[12] The



9 *Rivera Cusicanqui, Silvia, "La universalidad de lo ch'ixi: miradas de Waman Puma," https://hemisphericinstitute.org/en/emisferica-71/7-1-essays/la-universalidad-de-lo-chixi-miradas-de-waman-puma.html (accessed May 5, 2020), translation Juana Awad.* **10** *Rivera Cusicanqui (note 9).* **11** *Rivera Cusicanqui (note 9).* **12** *See Uribe, Maria Victoria,* Antropología de la inhumanidad: Un ensayo interpretativo sobre el Terror en Colombia, *Bogotá 2018. The author investigates the body dismemberment tactics used to impose terror in the Colombian armed conflict, starting with the period known as La Violencia in 1948.*

multiple strategies of terror, used to dehumanize the one to be controlled are well-known in our contemporary struggles, and are based on the same systems of dominance inherited since the first colonial times.

Interjection (JA)

The image of paramilitaries playing soccer with severed heads does also come to my mind when I think of the horror of the last one hundred years in the Colombian conflict—a conflict completely intertwined with colonial inequalities and their relationship to the soil.[13] The struggles for decolonization are neither abstract nor an intellectual exercise, even if the conundrum lies on the epistemic: the need for a common unlearning of a value system that deprives certain peoples of their humanity and certain forms of their worth.

On Smuggling (The Need to Trespass) Continued (LU)

Yes, it entails a multilayered process that could undo the various visual, epistemological, and fiction-making machineries that accompany the growth of modern/colonial capitalism—what Boaventura de Sousa calls "epistemicide."[14] One characteristic I find particularly interesting in the *Primer Nueva Coronica y Buen Gobierno that* you mention is that it offers stories and narratives where the official truth is evidently fed by multiple voices. How this is translated into drawings that act as storytellers of the narrative proposes ways to survive the epistemological violence that implied that period of colonization of the Andes. Your mention of this chronicle has inspired the drawing appearing on page 211. *Feast of the Yngas: wariqsa, dance; arawi, song of the Ynga. Sing with its red flame*, drawing 124 in the *Primer Nueva Coronica y Buen Gobierno*, is the blueprint for it.

Line (JA)

Throughout the whole series of drawings there is a focus on the movement of this one line: an ever-transforming one, which can

13 *Stratification in the territories clustered under the term Latin America goes back to a sociopolitical system put in place by the Spanish colonial administration to define legal and social privileges and obligations based on racial differentiation. In this hierarchy white Spanish colonists born on the Iberian Peninsula* (peninsulares) *held the highest position, followed by white Spaniards born in the Indies* (criollos), *both of whom were far above colonized populations* (indios) *and translocated African and African-descent populations* (negros). *There were up to sixteen mixed-race designations depending on combinations of the different categories—some distinctly derogative. Even though the system was officially abolished in the nineteenth century, race and ethnicity remain inextricably linked to social and economic stratification and inequality. For an example of an analysis of inequality in Latin America and the Caribbean and its intersections with race, ethnicity, gender, and territorialization, see Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), "The Social Inequality Matrix in Latin America," https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/40710/1/S1600945_en.pdf (accessed May 25, 2020).* **14** *de Sousa Santos, Boaventura,* Epistemologies of the South: Justice Against Epistemicide, *London 2014, p. 92.*

bend to recall dimensionality or extend to call attention to the flat surface. It is also a line that sometimes merges with the printed letters recalling the closeness between the acts of drawing and writing. And it is an eerie line that turns into a silhouette, which folds and changes with the movement of the pages.

Adfinitas (LU)

Yes, as the drawing process continued, I was interested in making the intermediate elements between one shape and the other intentionally absent, playing with the idea of the viewer's gaze as the one that completes the image. The way in which the drawings morph in a constant movement in which a form is never completely finished allowed me to play with notions such as smuggling, camouflage, appropriation. I wanted to make references to a colonial imaginary that is not clearly identifiable: coloniality has not ended and decolonial activism is never complete. The possibility of locating transition points involves finding affinities or connecting lines. I like this term—affinity—because of the difficulties it involves when we think of possibilities to disclose that which is familiar to us. How do we access the unfamiliar, when familiarity is supposedly always the starting point of our perception? Borders again: affinity—one that is close to the limit of another, the neighbor, the like.

Movement (JA)

This logic of finding affinities gives rise not only to the merging of disparate beings in what on the page appears as a filmstrip of sequenced single frames, but it is also what makes our written conversation possible. As this text develops in parallel with the drawings, it cannot analyze a finished artistic intervention into this book; rather it spirals through common transition points, pointing towards a curatorial endeavor, which wants to disclose its own trajectory—one which includes affinities and perhaps frictions. In the same way in which the drawings bear witness to their temporality, this text has moved in such a way as to become, at this point in time, two, with only one being printed here.[15] It is in the negotiations of the failed encounters that the how-to-find-possibilities-to-relate is more clearly enunciated.

A Dialogue of Hands (LU)

As the work developed, those figures centered on "merging between disparate beings," which you mention, became more present; I remember recalling the diversity of encounters between sentient beings that we might cultivate when we move away from a type of "pensamiento monocultivo" (in English: monocultural thought) embedded in power structures of our capitalist context. At

15 *A second text focusing on curatorial practice also developed out of these conversations. See "On Smuggling as Strategy and the Possibility of ecolonizing the Curatorial," in* On Decolonial Deferrals, *edited by Juana Awad, Maja Figge, Grit Köppen, and Katrin Köppert, https://evissen-derkuenste.de/texte/ausgabe8/ (accessed November 16, 2020).*

the same time, the image of the spiral resonates with the form of collaboration we envisioned, where we would be able to manifest not only what we wanted to say, but also its conversational mechanisms. You talked about how the emphasis on the trajectory is also a way to react towards representational strategies in connection to smuggling. The drawing appearing on pages 194–195 comes to my mind when thinking about those first moments when you mentioned the drawings' dance with the texts, their potentiality as possible nonpredictable connectors, as well as the collaborative endeavor we are engaging in. The drawing is based on Lygia Clark's *Diálogo de mãos* (Dialogue of hands, 1966). I first came to that reference through Rajkamal Kahlon's series *People of the Earth/Die Völker der Erde*.[16] This material drew me to look for connections with Lygia Clark´s image, specifically in how it negotiates both survival strategies and *connective lines* of colonial violence. In Clark´s work a Moebius strip made of a cloth band encircles the wrists of two participants. When thinking about ways to de-structure our notion of otherness, Clark's experiments are powerful referents.[17] I looked back at her first sculptural pieces (*Objects*) when we first started this process because of her approach to exoskeletal forms, which draw attention to empty spaces: the emphasis on the hinges that join the parts of the piece. As the drawings became more a type of mixture of organic forms and objects in ambivalent morphing, the transformative, participative nature of Clark's late work became also relevant. Clark's recalling of living creatures—or what André Lepecki calls the quasi-objects, or quasi-bodies—are all activated, and often constructed, by one participant or more.[18]

On the Curatorial (JA)

In his article "Decolonizing the Curatorial," André Lepecki highlights his interest in grappling with the difficulties of curating Lygia Clark's nonobjects in a museum setting—a difficulty that he describes as arising from the works' "aesthetic singularity ... their *thingness* ... their radical escape from regimes of display that subjugate and colonize the relational objects as being Clarks objects and the participants as being the new authors/artists of a Lygia Clark work."[19] Lepecki describes how for him "to decolonize the curatorial imagination is to end the ways systems of objects and subjects ... keep colonialist logic in place."[20] For this purpose, he proposes replacing the presentation of objects and experiences with "*things* and *vivéncias*,"[21] pointing toward an "alogical

16 *Kahlon, Rajkamal: "People of the Earth/Die Völker der Erde", in diesem Band S. 219-228* **17** *Following Oswald de Andrade's "Anthropophagite Manifesto" from 1928, Clark picked up to the notion of* Antropofagia *as a tool towards emancipation of the trauma of colonial contact in Brazil.* **18** *Lepecki, André, "Part 1: Affective Geometry, Immanent Acts: Lygia Clark and Performance," 2017, https://post.moma.org/part-1-affective-geometry-immanent-acts-lygia-clark-and-performance/ (accessed November 7, 2020). Lepecki credits the term nonobject as used by Ferreira Gullar in Gullar, Ferreira,* Experiencia Neoconcreta: Momento-limite da arte, *Sao Paulo 2007 [originally 1959], p. 90.* **19** *Lepecki, André, "Decolonizing the Curatorial," in* Theater, *vol. 47, no. 1, 2017, pp. 101–115, here p. 110.* **20** *Lepecki 2017 (note 17), p. 108.*

mode of curating"[22] that goes beyond "perform[ing] unquestioned institutional good intentions."[23]

My partly rhetorical question in this regard would be: can the inclusion of practices (such as Clark's) into the Western art historical canon, and in Western cultural centers of power (regardless of how difficult they are to display) help complicate the logic of aesthetics? And less rhetorically: are there ways in which the curatorial can work against the entrenched system of racist hierarchization, which arose hand in hand with the advent of the discipline of aesthetics in eighteenth-century European thought,[24] and that develops the criteria for a "canvas"[25] to be considered art but a ceramic object "craft"? With all my commitment to diversity in arts and culture, and well aware of the shortcomings of unreflected institutional good intentions, I fear that with a focus on the complexity of artworks, the cultural landscape is being enriched, but fundamental aesthetic categories are not being shaken. As Mazzurana, Köfeler, Single, and Schultheis point out in *Art Unlimited? Dynamics and Paradoxes of a Globalizing Art World*, it is necessary to ask whether "the existent intercultural and transnational diversity of artists and works of art does in fact reveal an all-round permeability of the former boundaries ... [or if] the continued existence of powerful monopoly positions of a few Western art institutions and art centers in the legitimate definition of art must be assumed."[26]

On Ambivalent Figures (LU)

There is so much to be done towards decolonization in the arts—connected to what you mention as the possibility of complicating the logic of aesthetics. The dynamics of the colonial apparatus still determines so much of how art circulates, its educational practices, its forms of research, collection, and exhibition. For example, the way in which the imaginary and artistic manifestations of non Western nations are presented in the centers of contemporary art, frequently

21 Vivências *is "the term used by Lygia Clark and Hélio Oiticica to describe the lived experience of experimentation, always linked to both action and speech, the forces of matter and the forces of desire" Lepecki 2017 (note 17), p. 108.* **22** *Lepecki 2017 (note 17), p. 108.* **23** *Lepecki 2017 (note 17), p. 108.* **24** *"[F]rom this on, and it can be detected clearly in Kant's Observations on the* Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime *(1776, section IV), the more that European thought turns to the south and the east, and arrives to Asia, Africa and America, the less it seems to be—for this mode of thinking—the capacity of the non-European populations to feel the beautiful and the sublime." Mignolo continues to analyze the interplay between the rise of secular rationality and an aesthetics that necessitates that devaluation of the sensorial experience of other civilizations, pinpointing that "[so] appears the criteria that a 'canvas' is art, but that a ceramic object is 'craft' ... So is it explained that ... codices of the Aztec civilization are on display in a Museum of Natural History in Chicago." Mignolo 2009 (note 1), p. 10, translation Juana Awad.* **25** *Translation note: in the original Spanish text the word used is "tela," which can be translated into English as fabric, textile, or (painted) canvas. This gesture underlines the correlation between both objects—painted ceramic and painted fabric—further problematizing the differentiation between art and craft.* **26** *Schultheis, Franz, Single, Erwin, Köfeler, Raphaela and Mazzurana, Thomas,* Art Unlimited? Dynamics and Paradoxes of a Globalizing Art World, *Bielefeld 2016, p. 18.*

displaying a type of sacred local universe, still directly linked with the notion of nature as a "pristine" entity (thus still ready to be conquered). This exotization, however, is counteracted by the political reality, represented by the threat of
"the violent Indian," the one who puts the well-being of the colonial order at risk. As Daniela Ortiz points out, there is a cultural imaginary that reproduces the logics of racism through paternalism and criminalization.[27] There are multiple manifestations of such macabre machineries that sustain these distinctions. This is why narratives that give us tools to decolonize our bodies, gazes, and words are significant; the ones that break with binary approaches to nature and culture, offering us possibilities as sentient beings inserted in complex and diverse ecologies. I believe we need to learn from those approaches, in which territory and knowledge are not separated, looking for ways to care and respect our surroundings in a more balanced relationship. I n the words of Tomás Román, a member of the Huitoto Nation, who lives in Araracuara on the border between the Amazon and Caquetá regions in Colombia: "the territory, the knowledge, the thought, the word, and our existence are completely linked. We need to remember our deep bond with the territory; good health is nothing more than respect and care."[28]
I believe it is our job to look for epistemological complexity as a field of meaning when fighting any form of originality or purity tests, and to suspect the many ways in which one voice is still used to speak on behalf of others, manifesting power dynamics that sustain historical narratives.

Interjection (JA)

This concern is visible in your approach when, in your lines, you bring the animate and the inanimate into interdependencies. Moreover, how you navigate your references, taking freely from sources spanning widely in time, in space, and in terms of ideological positioning, to create a seemingly harmonious sequence, also speaks to the idea of epistemological impurity … Clark, Kahlon, Piper, Puma …

On Ambivalent Figures Continued (LU)

Another reference to add to the list is based on the anthropological gaze. The drawing on pages 158–159 is made using as a model a photograph that anthropologist Richard Evans Schultes made of two dancers of the Dance of the Chontaduro Fruit, a traditional dance practiced by the Yuruparí, in the Miritíand Apaporis region of the Colombian Amazon.[29] The photograph shows the local practices of the

27 *Ortiz, Daniela, "Mira quién habla Criollos, expolios y alianzas coloniales,"* Terremoto Magazine, *https://terremoto.mx/article/criollos-expolios-y-alianzas-coloniales/ (accessed July 4, 2020).* **28** *Román, Tomás, "Equilibrio y reciprocidad, el secreto de la salud del territorio,"* El Espectador, *https://www.elespectador.com/noticias/medio-ambiente/equilibrio-y-reciprocidad-el-secreto-de-la-salud-del-territorio/ (accessed August 9, 2020).*

dance, which is crucial for the ecological sustainability of the territory, seen through the gaze of the explorer, in this case the ethnobotanist who gathers vast amounts of knowledge and concurrently turns a somehow iconic image into a symbol of the explorer of those territories. The image used as a referent portrays two members of the Yucuna group in costume, hiding their faces with masks. The Chontaduro Dance is performed to help bring equilibrium to the world. The masks are figures of jaguars, eagles, butterflies. Images of animals are used "as they are the true environmental authorities, because they are the ancestral owners of the territory and that is why we sing to the territory to ask permission for the coexistence there"—as explained to me by Tomás Román. The vast majority of members of his nation—the Huitoto—were abused, forced into slavery, and massacred due to the extraction of rubber, during the rubber ethnocide, which killed 90 percent of the population of the Amazon in thirty years (approximately 75,000 people), one hundred years ago. Along with gold, animal skins and feathers, marihuana, coltan mines, oil palm plantations, and cocaine laboratories (now called, in the region, the "new rubber shops"), rubber is one of the many forms in which local territories have been feeding the circuits that sustain the global economy through extractivism and forms of forced labor.

A Double Bind (JA)

The image of the anthropologist who explains and organizes the world of "far away peoples" for others reminds me of the image of the curator who contextualizes and historicizes "difficult," perhaps also "remote" art and mediates it for a "global" audience. It is the curator, more than any other figure in the art world, who defines and legitimizes what can be considered as art and what is not, by choosing, displaying, and theorizing objects and practices within hierarchies of knowledge. Danto describes the "difference between art and non-art as ...philosophical" rather than factual, "for there is no particular way in which art has to look."[30] As such, the curator has to rely on their particular knowledge to *create* this difference. This marks, for me, the conundrum of the mingling of the curatorial and the decolonial: a decolonial impetus in a curatorial practice necessarily exists in a double bind, as it puts into question the definitions that legitimate its existence.

How, then, to participate in unsettling the rationality that supports our practices, in and with our practices, instead of repeating gestures that enrich the cultural landscape while maintaining its logic? How to unlearn the hierarchy that stipulates the "different" as inferior, instead of raising its status within the hierarchy? When asked about undoing internal colonialism, Silvia Rivera

29 *Richard Evans Schultes was an American biologist who is considered the father of modern ethnobotany. He is known for his studies of the uses of plants by indigenous peoples, especially the indigenous peoples of the Americas. His book* The Plants of the Gods: Their Sacred, Healing, and Hallucinogenic Powers *(1979), co-authored with chemist Albert Hofmann, the discoverer of LSD, is considered his greatest popular work and has never been out of print.* **30** *Danto, Arthur,* Beyond the Brillo Box: The Visual Arts in Post-historical Perspective, *Berkeley 1992, p. 7.*

Cusicanqui proposes that "we need to deepen and radicalize difference: *in*, *with*, and *against* the subaltern."[31] Needless to say, underscoring and reveling in difference is exactly the opposite of conferring dissimilar value, as the "different" is not rationalized in hierarchical terms (i.e., superior vs. inferior.)[32] In order to engage with epistemological complexity, from the position of our practices, I believe that, along with remaining suspicious of guiding principles and disputing purity, we ought to smuggle radical difference into our (art) systems, well beyond the presentation of artworks; to focus on the mundane, structural, nonprestigious parts of institutions, on the parallel structures that diffuse the boundaries between so-called low and high art; and engage seriously with the role and the presence of the public/participant. Resting on ambivalences and honing critical conversations amongst precepts in collaboration can probably support us in the task: Rivera Cusicanqui reminds us that "no one can decolonize on their own (*solito*), because as Jim Morrison and also Foucault said, we carry the masters inside because of cowardice and laziness"[33]—but that is a conversation that will have to continue on a different page.

31 *Rivera Cusicanqui cited by Gago (note 6).* **32** *As Aníbal Quijano points out, "historical-cultural heterogeneity implie[s] the co-presence and the articulation of diverse historical 'logic[s].'" Quijano, Aníbal, "Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality," Cultural Studies, vol. 21, no. 2–3, pp. 168–178, here p. 177.* **33** *Rivera Cusicanqui cited by Gago (note 6), p. 3.*