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(POST) COLONIAL ARCHIVES AND IMAGES: ANALYTICAL CONTRIBUTIONS ON TWO PHOTOGRAPHY COLLECTIONS¹

ABSTRACT

This text brings together the genres of ethnographic and documentary photography as a way to problematize how both traditions utilized prevailing discourses of “truth” and “real”, in each given historical period, to give their practices a sense of intelligibility and legitimation. For this purpose, I address the photography collections of Portuguese José Augusto da Cunha Moraes (1855–1933) and Mozambican Ricardo Rangel (1924–2009) in order to shed light on aesthetic and technical conventions incorporated into their photography at the moment of production. My main argument is that a belief in an exterior reality, prone to be fully captured, either for the ends of producing scientific knowledge or denouncing social issues, guided both practices.

keywords

Photographic genres;
Ethnographic gaze;
Photojournalism;
Colonialism; Archive.

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INTRODUCTION

Over their respective histories, photography and anthropology were interwoven due to their multiple colonial connections. The use of photography in classical ethnography (Haddon 1895, 1935; Tylor 1876; Malinowski 1976/1922; Evans-Pritchard 1937), either in the inscription of distinct truth systems or in the aesthetic display of social facts from field work, opened the possibility of affecting the reader with the very narrative that was intended to be transmitted. The photographic technique was thus one of the elements employed to reinforce the claim *I was there* from the ethnographic authority, widely criticized by post modern Anthropology (Clifford and Marcus 2010). This resource, when used in ethnographic works, was simultaneously considered able to extract the observed real itself as well as put under suspicion by the discipline, which perceived excesses (or failures) on the image that its own rhetoric could not control.

In which way did the conventions and discourses concerning the *true* and *real* in photography operate on the genre of *ethnographic gaze*, at the end of 19th century, and on photojournalistic/documentary tradition during the mid-20th century? What did the different practices prescribe as imagetically *real*, *liable* or *acceptable*?

Considering the idea that the images are framed inside discursive practices and structures, the intention is to compare how different views, in different historical moments, operated under similar epistemological notions that, however, had, in each one of them, opposite meanings. By presenting the ethnographic and documentary² genres on the same analytical plane, I lay in perspective the way how these two *traditions* work with the same notions – even though in different senses. I start from the assumption that technical and aesthetic conventions, as well as discursive systems, exist to limit the semantic opening of photography.³ On the other hand, it is also necessary to consider that the practices embrace in themselves many ways and formats – it is not possible to comprehend the ethnographic gaze from the end of the 19th century as a closed practice, producing images inside a mono-thematic frame.

2. There are distinctions between the photojournalism and documentary practices. Nevertheless, the goal of this essay is put both practices side by side, for the sake of comparison; from 1930 to 1970, these were very close practices, many times interchangeable. These practices included: technical conventions, the everyday subject outside the studio, the social and political elements, the agencies, magazines and galleries, etc. See Wells (2009).

3. The debate on the opening of senses related to photography is extensive, with diverse nuances and theoretical-methodological paths, which are outside of the scope of this essay. See, for example, Barthes (1984), Roth (2009), Sontag (2004) and Wells (2009).

To cover the range of this two-way road—the discourses and conventions of certain practices and their inherent diversity (the one that, in fact, is found inside this discursive field) — I propose to analyze the collections of two photographers: José Augusto da Cunha Moraes (1855–1933), Portuguese, owner of a photography studio, who lived and worked in Angola for most of his life; and Ricardo Rangel (1924–2009), *mestizo* (from mixed descent), Mozambican, the first non-white to work as a photojournalist in the country. Each one of them acted on different sides of the African continent and in opposing social positions. The temporal and spacial distance between them is an issue to be dealt with care. However, isn't transposing time and space, exactly, one of photography's qualities?

CONVENTIONS AND DISCOURSES: THE ETHNOGRAPHIC AND DOCUMENTARY GENRES

Before getting more deeply in the photographic practices denominated *ethnographic* and *documentary*, as well as analyzing the material by Cunha Moraes and Rangel, it is important to explain my understanding of discourses, practices and conventions, grasping the dispute surrounding these terms.

According to Foucault (2010), discourses are systems of thought (ideas, values) ordering the experience and legitimizing some assertions while at the same time marginalizing others. What I call *discourses of the ethnographic and documentary gaze in photography* refer, therefore, to beliefs in a way of capturing and producing photographic veracity, to be reached under certain precautions and according to pre-established rules. It covers assumptions related to what is acceptable, in a historical moment, in the process of producing images inside this discursive pattern of conventions, which constrains and restricts photographic practices.

Such discourses and their conventions are visible in the ways by which we talk about each genre, on how the photographers operate their cameras (following technical and aesthetic patterns) and in the expectations from which we see those images – after all, we look for these conventions and apply them in order to “read” the images. When taking a photograph, photographers work *with* and *within* the conventions they adopted, seeking to produce images that match what is expected from the specific genre they have chosen. A photojournalist, for instance, does not work inside a studio; if one were to do that, the resulting images would be neither *categorized* nor read by the public as photojournalism. In other words, an image to be captured and understood into the photojournalism genre should be taken in the streets, in the continuous flow of everyday life, without the photographer's intervention (who, in turn, should not provoke the action, much less intervene with the subjects and objects inside the framing for the sake of a more shocking or composed photo) and with specific technical regulations.

In spite of discourses prescribing and ordering the photographic practices and experiences, the conventions exist to be challenged and transformed. Here, I am thinking of the work by anthropologist Roy Wagner (1981). In *The Invention of Culture*, Wagner explains the dialectic between *invention* and *convention* that guides distinct societies, applying this model also to the arts. Inventions become conventions, while the conventions are challenged and transformed by new inventions, in a dialectic that operates on all levels.

Identifying the orientation with the shared consistency of conventional associations, and the invention with the impinging contradiction of differentiating contrasts, we can conclude that the necessary interaction and interdependence between them is the most urgent and powerful necessity in human culture. *The necessity of invention is given by cultural convention, and the necessity of cultural convention is given by invention.* We invent so as to sustain and restore our conventional orientation; we adhere to this orientation so as to realize the power and gain that invention brings (Wagner 1981, 44).

Western societies operate under conventions—time, weather, kinship, nature and culture, for example, separated, organized and, supposedly, all predicted by the established conventions. Yet these societies are often surprised by events that do not obey certain presumptions (phenomena and *natural* disasters are emblematic examples of how nature does not behave as anticipated).

Applying similar logic to the object of this article, it is possible to state that the conventions of the ethnographic and documentary gaze are challenged and transformed by several factors, internal and external: the subject being photographed, available materials, technical discoveries, the photographers's will and position, among others. The invention is necessary so that the conventions keep guiding the practices.

Thinking about conventions and inventions, i.e., to reflect on the questioning and innovation of conventions, is another way of opening doors to different readings of the photographs.

Then, if the images are framed inside these discursive systems, inside these conventions, the invention allows 'counter readings'. Such readings against the grain, especially of the images by the ethnographic gaze from the end of the 19th century, are fundamental in providing agency, voice and visibility to those who, for so long, were silenced and made invisible by official narratives – and also in going beyond the readings about control, power relations and representation (Tagg 1993).

The idea of invention is, hence, a displacement in the way to approach such issues, confronted in different manners by authors like Edwards (2001), Poole (1997), Poignant (1992) and Lydon (2005), in the sense of revealing the agency and visibility of the subjects pictured; emphasizing the materiality and the social biography of the photographs, and considering the relationships and oscillations in the representational practices. What these studies show “is the possibility of excavating the dialogic space of photography and thus complicating the view of cross-cultural relations, indigenous agency, and the density of photographic inscription” (Edwards 2011b, 179). To that extent, these different ways of confronting the discourses and conventions against the grain demonstrate that photography is, indeed, a territory of dispute.

Then, why should we cross check the ethnographic and documentary genres stemming from the production of two artists? The comparison between practices and discourses seeks to work with the idea of “comparing the incomparable”, by Detienne (2010). It deals with putting in perspective the same set of questions to a different set of problems. The comparative effort pursues to problematize the senses of both terms under contrast, aiming to make explicit its differences. That does not mean launching from a common basis but opposing them exactly to underline their distances and misconceptions. Thus, how do the ethnographic and documentary gazes operate with the ideas of *real*, *truth* and *authentic*? How did Cunha Moraes and Rangel deal with the ambiguities and challenges raised by their respective conventions? In which way do the positions and subjectivities interfere in their practices and productions?

From these questionings, I examine the discourses of these two photographic practices, bearing in mind the different temporalities, spatialities and intentions in the works of these photographers. More than a chronological approach, the idea is to look closely and compare how the ethnographic photography practice, from the beginning of the colonial invasion in Africa,⁴ in the 19th century, and the documentary tradition from the end of such invasion, in the middle of 20th century, comprehend the notions of *real*, *truth* and *authenticity* in the photographic image.

The hegemony of photography as a privileged medium for turning the world visible and palpable coincides with the hegemony of colonialism in Africa. This relationship involved the production of a visual economy

4. European commercial contacts, bases and depots date from 15th century. However, it is in the 19th century that a more systematic invasion for the political dominance and economical exploitation of the continent starts. The definition of rules for Africa's division was set at The Berlin Conference (1884-1885), where Great Britain, France, Portugal and Belgium, among other countries, convened. See Silva (2003).

(Poole 1997), in which photography was an instrument (in the production of colonial scientific knowledge) and a constitutive element (in the circulation and consumption of diverse epistemological fields). Cunha Moraes was a key photographer of this visual economy in Portugal, producing many images of the environment and of the Angolan populations. He had his images published in magazines and awarded prizes in exhibitions and he produced and sold post cards.⁵ Seen as the first Portuguese photographer to portray Angola, he was always in syntony with the interests of the time, both from the metropolis as well as by the colonial sciences.

For his part, Rangel inserts himself in another discursive field, the documentary, which establishes itself strongly between the decades of 1930 to 1970. In his case, the political and ethic dimensions are inscribed into a practice that concerns capturing the social tensions, denouncing the injustices and registering the *extraordinary* in the small facts of life. Acting (and defining himself) as a photojournalist, Rangel published his work in newspapers, magazine and essays of Mozambique and Portugal, and took part in many exhibitions.⁶

In both cases, the photographic practice in which they are inserted are transnational; the discourses and photographs transgress national borders, as much in the production as in the circulation. The transnationality of the practice is what gives to the discursive field its wide feature, transforming it at the same time. In this way, it is necessary to say that touching the subject of discourses, practices and conventions is to touch what is called in the photography world (and also in the literature) *genre*. Approaching the genre issue is to make tangential the expectations that each of them carries, since genres embrace a set of ideologies, conventions, techniques and rules (the discourses) that organize ideas of beauty, reality and truth in the capture, use and circulation of the photographic image. The genres, therefore, are global practices, which operate from certain parameters regarded as founding, involving a diversity of themes, ways and mechanisms.

5. According to Dias (1991), at the end of the 1870s, Cunha Moraes was already a well known photographer, having his pictures published by a popular magazine *O Occidente* (Portugal) and had won awards from the National Academy of Paris and in exhibits in Rio de Janeiro (1877) and Oporto (1882).

6. Essays: “Ricardo Rangel: Fotógrafo” (Rangel 2004a), “Pão Nosso de Cada Noite” (Rangel 2004b) and “História, Histórias... 50 Anos de Fotojornalismo em Moçambique” (Rangel 2008). Exhibitions: “Ricardo Rangel: 50 anos de fotojornalismo em Moçambique”, Maputo, 2008; “Revisitar Ricardo Rangel”, Maputo, 2010; “Ricardo Rangel e o jazz”, Maputo, 2011; “Iluminando vidas: fotografia moçambicana (1950-2001)”, Switzerland, in 2002, South Africa, in 2003, Portugal, 2003, and Maputo, in 2003. In addition to solo exhibitions, he participated in several others, mostly from the 1990s, in cities like New York, Bamako, Rome, Milan, Paris, etc.

For instance, take the case of the photographic collection of Cunha Moraes. The Portuguese photographer produced landscape views, photos of Europeans and Africans' encounters in expeditions, people in street markets, anthropometric and the so called *ethnographic types* portraits in studio (Figure 1). To label them *colonial* or *ethnographic* photography says very little about the collection and about the images themselves if one does not consider many other factors.⁷ Accordingly, what I call 19th century *ethnographic gaze* encompasses a myriad of styles and photographs that, when displayed on the same plane, offers us a question: After all, what unifies them?

figure 1

Photo collage by
Cunha Moraes.
Collection
Nationaal
Museum van
Wereldculturen.
Coll.no.1) RMV_
A045-0045; 2)
RMV_A045-0001; 3)
RMV_A045-0085; 4)
RMV_A274_042; 5)
RMV_A045-0039.



7. On *colonial photography*, see: photoclec.dmu.ac.uk/content/colonial-photographs. Accessed in: Oct. 17th, 2016.

What makes these images understandable under this alleged *ethnographic gaze*? Cunha Moraes was a member of geographical societies; he produced images commissioned for them and other researchers, having, moreover, published four albums about Angola's geographical and ethnographical features. Hence, he was aware of the scientific anthropological theories of the time. Would that be, then, his intention? Is intentionality enough to aggregate these images into a single discursive genre? The distinctions are overwhelming from the pose to the production process, to name only two elements. Then, the intentionality does not suffice to unite the images in the same index, even more so considering that, the photographer's intention, in spite of its importance, does not suppress the opening senses of the photographic image itself; neither restricts the ways how the photo will be used, interpreted or even archived, eventually. Beyond the intentionality, it is crucial to shed light on the technical and aesthetic conventions, the composition and settings, the subjects in the photos and the framings, and the conditions of production and consumption, circulation and archiving.

At this point, I return to the discussion of genres, conventions and inventions, related to the photograph as object and practice. There are certain established conventions in the documentary practice of humanist and social nature, like, for example, the use of the whole photographic negative, the non flash option, the normal focal distance, and the portrait of *everyday life*, without pose and outside the studio. However, such conventions are put in practice by different actors, in different places, materials and subjects. For example, the works from 1930 to 1950, by Henri Cartier-Bresson, in Paris, Spain and China; by Robert Doisneau, in Paris; and Ricardo Rangel, in Maputo, are made of photographs that inscribe themselves in the documentary tradition. They emphasize the human element and are concerned with social issues, composition and framing. They tried to capture different subjects/themes, in distinct times and spaces; yet, their heterogeneous productions are inserted in the same documentary tradition. The images from these disparate photographers, spaces and time periods imprint a perception of fundamental aesthetic and technical characteristics that unify them; the use of conventions fit them all in the same genre. Nevertheless, there are differences between styles and photographs concerning the intentions of the photographers, the use and the circulation of their works and the photographed subjects.

In addition, the conventions and genres transform themselves. The ethnographic gaze from the end of the 19th century is not practiced anymore. The discipline that demanded the most of such photos, i.e., Anthropology, changed, methodologically and epistemologically; and the photographs that start to emerge in the discipline in the decade of 1920 are

closer to a documentary gaze than to an ethnographic one, which previously was the prevailing. Observing the photographs utilized in the first *modern ethnography*, like Malinowski (1976/1922) and Evans-Pritchard (1937), and in the work by Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson (1942), one can see that there is a preoccupation with the daily routine, with the natural flow of life and culture, without pose or intervention with the real. It is a “style no style”, according to Edwards (2011b), that conceals itself as mediation and composition.⁸

From the 1930s to the 1970s and from there to the current period, much has changed in the conventions and practices of both genres. In the case of photojournalism/documentary, the challenges and the changes – internal and external, which include use of color, television, the internet impact on everyday life, as well as the end of the great illustrated magazines – resulted in the transformation of the journalistic practice itself. The documentary genre had to reinvent itself. The crisis of representation and of political and social engagement came to a head in the U.S and in Europe in the decade between 1970 and 1980, but did not reach other parts in the world the same way, like South Africa, which kept a strong and engaged documentary practice (Newbury 2009). Today, documentary photographers are considered artists – i.e. they operate in another discursive universe of production and consumption.⁹

Also, it is important to take in consideration other constitutive elements of a discursive field that is as much material as ideological. In the case of Cunha Moraes and Ricardo Rangel, it is possible to bound the images by intentionality and also by their uses and circulation. Additionally, the collections by both photographers are saved by institutions that again classify them. In this sense, the archival practice is a fundamental element in this process. Therefore, it is necessary to think how the archive itself impacts and elicits readings and access. To reflect on the photographs as traveling, material objects, by its portability and reproducibility, is also to reflect on the circulation and exchange processes undergone by the photographs – including the archive where they lay as a constitutive part of the process. Herein, very distinct archives confront each other: one in a *metropolis*, another in a former colony.

8. The use of photography in Anthropology continues to be displaced and problematized. In recent works of visual Anthropology, there are as many re-readings of colonial, ethnographic photos from the end of 19th century as there are new methodologies of use, production and circulation of images. See Edwards (2011b) and Caiuby Novaes (2008).

9. All this connects to changes in newspapers and other media, and to social, political and cultural contexts. However, the details of such changes as well as challenges and displacements that affected these practices will not be further discussed here. About the ethnographic gaze, see Edwards (2011b). About the documentary tradition, see Wells (2009) and Rouillé (2009).

The Cunha Moraes' collection is at the Museum Volkenkunde, in Leiden, the Netherlands, and is composed of two series acquired in 1882 and 1883, by the former Rijks Ethnographisch Museum – nowadays Museum Volkenkunde – created in 1837. It is remarkable that so many images by one of the main Portuguese photographers from the end of the 19th century are found in a foreign country, even more considering the fact that this country is also territorially small in the European continent – having colonized two main territories (Suriname and Indonesia) and viewed as colonial and imperial potency. Photographs are one of the central objects in the archives and museums that save the remains of the colonial experience of former metropolis. Museums and archives are an important aspect of the colonial past. Indeed, acquisition, archiving and forms of storage tell us a lot about how we study and access this past.

Rangel's collection is in Maputo, at the Centro de Documentação e Formação Fotográfica (CDFF), created in 1980 by the photographer himself. It is a private institution, focusing on professional training and being an image bank. Founded after the independence, this institution keeps, mainly, images from the end of the colonial period, the armed struggle and the post-Independence, with some pictures from the end of 19th and beginning of 20th centuries.

The differences of location, context and storing are many and should be taken in consideration, next to the analysis of the collections and photographers, since the archive, access and the exhibitions also have an impact on the genre. As stated by Edwards (2011a), the archive, in a material approach, turns into a manifestation of social relations in which photographs are active. Since it is safeguarded in a museum,¹⁰ in order to access the work by Cunha Moraes it is necessary to request, in advance, a visit to the collections. At the site, one has to leave bags and belongings in a locker; only laptops and pencils are allowed inside the room. The requested boxes will be found already on a desk, where there are disposable plastic gloves available; then, it is necessary to sign a document with the rules to be followed in order to handle the material. The photographs are protected inside plastic sheets, although some of them are loose without any protection – many are glued on paper sheets containing the author's information, date, local and date of acquisition, etc.

On the other hand, CDFF is an institution that allowed me access on the same day of my visit, in Maputo's center;¹¹ the room where the archive images are saved is the same where one accesses and handles the photographs; the boxes are piled up in shelves along the walls. The photographs of Rangel's

10. The visits to Museum Volkenkunde were held between July and November 2016.

11. The visits to CDFF were held in July and August 2015.

collection have been recently digitized in cooperation with the Italian embassy, and there are two computers in the room for the digital consultation. The thinner boxes with the photographs have inscriptions on the side separating them by themes. The negatives of many photographs are also found in boxes or folders inside the room. Without any formal rules to be signed, the CDFP's workers explain how things are organized and ask for common sense in the perusing of the images. These are important pieces of information. The visitors have plenty of freedom to access the receptacles with the photos, open them and spread the images on the big table at the center of the room. There is no written information indicating in which box each image is in, nor a catalog with the photographs that are stored in each container. The themes that organize the archive repeat themselves in different boxes, as well as the images (for example, more than one reproduction in different places). In this manner, it is common to find misplaced photos, either under the wrong theme or by another author. These *failures* in the filing process and in the controlling of the archive provide, in turn, some clues about how the other visitors accessed those photographs, combined and assembled them. Pursuing these previous visits is an interesting exercise to think about the current uses and appropriations of the photographs stored there.

The framings and styles applied by Cunha Moraes and Rangel are more or less disciplined by a conventional Western archival practice that reveals distinct concerns about how to preserve and think the colonial past. The archives at Museum Volkenkunde and at CDFP save connected pasts (distant in time and space, but colonial pasts of the same metropolis) in distinct ways. While the Dutch museum owns, mainly, objects of colonialism at the end of 19th century, the Mozambican center has images from the end of the colonial occupation and from the post colonial period. The first is an ethnographic museum; the other keeps collections of many photojournalists contemporaneous of Rangel, friends that donated their photos for the project of creating a school and a photographic archive of the country's history, since the decades of 1930-1940 until the post-Independence era. In this sense, the two places draw near to each other and distinguish themselves: by the material they preserve, by the ways how they were acquired and by the respective processes of archiving it.

NEGOTIATING PRACTICES: THE CASES OF CUNHA MORAES AND RICARDO RANGEL

I examine, now, the collections by Cunha Moraes and Ricardo Rangel with regard to their photographic practices, periods and by the positions both photographers occupied. Therefore, I focus on the discourses and the conventions established in each period as well as on the different challenges provoked and faced by them.

José Augusto da Cunha Moraes (1855-1933) was born and died in Portugal. When he was eight years old, he moved with his family to Luanda, Angola. He lived there from 1863 until 1899, when he went back to the metropolis for good. In 1871, after his father's death, he inherited a photography studio, part of a family business that also included a clock repair shop (that was left to his brother). Cunha Moraes was a colonist in syntony with interests of the metropolis, both scientific as an explorer of the new territories, but also in the sense of exploiting them economically. As a member of Sociedade de Geografia de Lisboa (Geography Society of Lisbon), created in 1875, he joined a good number of the expeditions organized by the institution. Many of his photographs were, in fact, commissioned by the Society.

In addition to the one in Lisbon, he was a member of other similar geographical societies in France and England, and was also the co-founder of Sociedade de Geografia do Porto (Geographical Society of Oporto) and of Sociedade para Propagação de Conhecimento Geográfico de África (Society for the Dissemination of Geographic Knowledge of Africa), in Luanda. He was awarded prizes for his photographs in exhibitions in Oporto and Rio de Janeiro; participated in many other exhibitions around the world; published his images in academic journals and popular vehicles of great circulation in Portugal, like *O Occidente*. Considered the first Portuguese photographer to register and document the inhabitants of Angola, he traveled along the coast and the borderland of the country known today as the Democratic Republic of Congo, in many expeditions, and was already internationally recognized by the end of 1870s.¹² Mixing scientific and commercial interests, his work goes along with the European intellectual and sociopolitical lines and expectations from the 19th century. After all, Cunha Moraes was a colonizer enthusiastic about his work investigating and exploring other lands – he worked at a time when the public interest and the economical and territorial disputes were increasing.

My argument stands in opposition to the one by Maria do Carmo Serén (1997), who stated that Cunha Moraes' gaze did not reproduce the convention of his time, presenting a personal, neutral work. In another article (Serén 2004, 19) she agrees that the photographer's ethnographic representation conforms with the style of his time, but adds that "his images reply to the picturesque and sublime of the painting and ideas of the 16th century's illuminism, in which the man integrates himself to Nature as much as to the ideal of progress and civilization understood by the century that introduced the railroad in its colonies". What is problematic about this interpretation is the attempt to extricate Cunha Moraes from the colonial project, which he was part of, neutralizing his participation by labeling it as only a personal project. For her part, the Portuguese anthropologist Jill Dias (1991) understands Cunha Moraes as a photographer eager about the colonial project, asserting that

12. Information compiled from Pereira (2001) and Dias (1991).

his photographs are entangled in the European cultural and intellectual discourses. For the anthropologist, his work, therefore, is an example of the imagetic production of the ethnographic style by Europeans of the period, according to anthropological and scientific perspectives of the time (Dias 1991).

Beyond the aspects of ethnographic perspective and interpretation, Cunha Moraes may be seen as part of the issue in which the photographers of the time produced not only according to scientific interests but also following commercial demands. Cunha Moraes captured photos for expeditions and acted in the production of post cards and *cartes de visite* (small portraits the size of a business card), other studio portraits, landscape views, registers of trading posts and military deployments, anthropometric photos and the so called ethnographic types. Performing in studio and outdoors, he adapted poses and used photos of ethnographic types to academic as well as popular audiences (Figure 2). There was no purism, i.e. no restrictions in that some photos were dedicated exclusively to a specific audience.

figure 2

Same photograph, different mediums to different circulations. Collection Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen. Coll.no. RMV_A045-0049 and RMV_A274_076.



Many of these photographs were not for scientific research; moreover, such conventions were applied to the documentation and research as much as to the post cards and *cartes de visite*, which were popular and commanded a huge demand in the metropolis, above all from an avid public for the exotic Other. These photos became anthropological in circuits of consumption and negotiation, hovering between popular *voyeurism* and science (Edwards 2001). In other words, the ethnographic gaze from the end of the 19th century was not a practice exclusive of the research field, and the circulation of such photos among different mediums and audiences confirms Edwards's (2001) argument that, during this period, they were produced as anthropological data exactly for their circulation and consumption. If the photographs of the ethnographic type aimed to collect specific data about clothing and physical features of the photographs' subjects, they also constituted material of high popular and commercial values.

The conventions orienting the ethnographic gaze embrace a practice that connects the images not only by their common historical time but by their production and circulation conditions. The photographs were captured in expeditions as well as in studio; the majority of them posed and staged (it is needed to be said that the technology available at the time demanded a long exposure time). Regarding the photos of ethnographic types in the studio, for example, the manuals of the time used to recommend the best conditions and poses to observe the bodies: with neutral or painted backgrounds the subject should pose looking at the camera or in profile, centered on the framing. Many materials from the 19th century used to teach the technical conventions, the proportions and poses that should be followed in practice (Poole 2005). However, the juxtapositions and contingencies also impose themselves, even in the most controlled of environments. The following images challenge the idea of control, either by their direct and expressive look, or by the dissonant landscape in relation to the subjects, or even by the crossed arms in refusal (Figure 3).

The end of the 19th century is marked by the positivist belief on objectivity and by theories that discussed the evolution and hierarchies based on racial concepts (Poole 2005). Photography and anthropology meet at this crossroads, being intrinsically linked to the colonial project of the time.¹³ In this direction, anthropology uses the supposed objectivity of photography to confirm its own scientific objectivity when *hierarchizing* the *Others* in the images. The belief that a photographic image was a mechanical inscription of the real, without mediation or subjectivity involved, made it so that such images were taken as empirical data for theories. That is to say, the photos themselves constituted the anthropological facts.

figure 3

Conventions and resistances. Collection Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen.

Coll.no. RMV_A274_087; RMV_A045-0038; and RMV_A274_046.



13. Analyses of how both fields have dealt with ideas of control, asymmetrical relations of power, race and hierarchy, vigil and production of exotic bodies are extensive and should be evaluated (Poole 2005, Tagg 1993).

The evidence, therefore, was produced by pose and interpretation. The ethnographic types, for example, were still photos, full or half body, in profile or frontal, on a neutral background, in order to contrast and highlight the bodies and clothing. The setting of movements and functions (the water carrier, the hunter), in turn, would produce information about behavior, rituals and habits. At this point, conventions and practices of the time did not perceive this kind of intervention, staging and pose as the opposite of *real* or *natural*; on the contrary, the pose was what imprinted legitimacy as much as allowed the fabrication of ethnographic data and the constitution of systems of truth. The pose and staging, then, were part of the evidence (ethnographic veracity) that was to be produced, part of the scientific process of demonstration and construction of an object.

Poole (2005, 163) reminds us that, in 1880, institutes like the Royal Anthropological Institute (RAI) tried to discipline the types of poses, framings and settings in which the subjects were shot: “By specifying uniform focal lengths, poses and backdrops, anthropologists sought to edit out the distracting ‘noise’ of the context, culture and the human countenance”. The pursued objectivity, at the time, above all by the social sciences, is found in the widespread objectivity of the photography. Beyond the utilization of photographs that also illustrated the post cards and the *carte de visite*, several anthropologists commissioned images from photographers in the colonies.¹⁴ The point to be questioned here is that, even though the orders on how to capture these images were amply detailed, such conventions encountered resistance on the part of the subjects, from the photographers themselves, and from the technologies and environments. The attempt to control the opening of the senses that photographs have – by the means of technical rules and poses – reveals that, although the photographers understood them as mechanical and objective inscriptions, the European anthropologists of the time already distrusted them and their ability to reveal/produce information according to their desired presumptions.

It is precisely this excess, the spark always escaping from control, that one can see in many of Cunha de Moraes’ photographs. It is this excess that bothers an anthropology and a social science wishful to control its objects, in the sense of epitomize and explain them. The defiant and secure look, a serious or serene expression, the crossed arms in refusal or in standby, these issues of intimacy, encounter and contingency are challenges to the conventions of a photographic practice that pursued precision, objectivity and coherence. The photographic transparency and impartiality needed, then, to be built, since the opening to the excess of meanings would stand as an obstacle.

14. Edwards (2001) analyzes a well known series of anthropometric photographs requested by Huxley – a failed project, in the conception and execution, by the challenges and resistances towards such a practice.

From the decade of 1920 onward, posing starts to be considered as non natural, not spontaneous and out of the regular flow of a culture – fundamental points for an anthropology that was willing to construct itself. At the same time, this non external intervention and the transparency go under rigorous parameters of control of the subjectivity. In the anterior practice (ethnographic and with pose), the goal was to assure the objectivity precisely by the pose and the parameters of how to pose. The pose and the reenacting, at the time, were part of the evidence that one was trying to produce, part of the scientific process of demonstration and building of an object; they were ways for controlling the excess of the images' meanings. And if they could not be controlled on the level of the inscription, then this should be done on the level of the discipline's rhetoric.

In the documentary tradition, in the middle of 1930s, there was a turn in the tendency towards a photographic production that combines documental value and poetic expressivity, of a humanistic aspect, from which the popular, everyday universe and the social element obtain the central role. In this practice, according to Rouillé (2009), prevails the exteriority in relation to the events, the capturing of the *decisive instant* – a synthesis of an event – and the transparency of the image – normal focal distance, without flash. These conventions also align with social and political issues. Many of the iconic photos of the documentary tradition bring the human aspect to the issue of social denunciation or political positioning.¹⁵ The documentary tradition believes in the power of the image as a means of pronouncing a position in the face of a reality by questioning it. It is in this field of the ethically and politically committed photographs that the production of Rangel inserts itself.

Ricardo Rangel was born in 1924, in Lourenço Marques (today Maputo). Mestizo,¹⁶ the son of a black mother and a white father, Rangel was raised by his maternal grandmother in Mafalala, a poor and peripheral neighborhood still today. He lived between the *cidade de caniço* (reed town), black, and the *cidade de cimento* (cement town), white. During his youth, he actively participated in the associative movement of Grêmio Africano (a political grouping), fighting against racial barriers and injustices to the *indigenous*

15. *Migrant Mother*, by Dorothea Lange, in the US, in 1936; the photo by Huynh Cong Ut, in Vietnã, in 1972, of a naked girl running after the napalm bombing, among other examples.

16. I opt for using this term here, even though I consider it problematic, bearing in mind the article by Thomaz (2005/2006) about the racial issue in Mozambique.

(compulsory work, taxes) and to the *assimilated*.¹⁷ In 1940, he starts working as assistant in a photographic studio; from there he ascended to a position as a film process technician deepening his relations to photography. In 1952, he was hired by the newspaper *Notícias da Tarde* as a photojournalist, being the first non white to be employed in a newspaper in the country.

Although Rangel acted as a photojournalist until the 1990s, his most productive period was between 1950 and 1975, since after Independence he started working as the photography director of *Notícias da Tarde*, the newspaper with the largest circulation in the country. He produced images inside a dictatorial and authoritarian regime in Mozambique and Portugal, in which censorship was a common practice. This is why many of his photos were censored and even destroyed between 1950 and 1975. Only in *A Tribuna* (the newspaper in which he worked from 1962 to 1964) and *Tempo* (the magazine he founded with some friends, in 1970) some photos escaped censorship.

It is important to notice that Rangel transited between the two towns *reed* and *cement* performing different roles in these spheres – many times in conflict and contradiction. As a mestizo, he was able to attend some circles denied to blacks; in addition, he had several contacts with important people from *cimento* town. This helps us to understand his entry in the journalistic field of the time, fundamentally white, including having his first photographic exhibition in 1969, attended by representatives of the colonial administration. On the other hand, Rangel also was friends with many members of the Portuguese Communist Party (exiled in Mozambique after the coup d'état in 1926, that marked the beginning of *salazarismo*). He was active in the Grêmio Africano with José Craveirinha, Malangatana, Luís Bernardo Howana and other intellectuals, and had many contacts with FRELIMO (Frente de Libertação de Moçambique), the Mozambican liberation party, in spite of never being affiliated to the party. He was also invited to visit the training camp in Nachingwea, Tanzania, in 1974, and took the official portrait of Samora Machel (1975-1986) and Joaquim Chissano (1986-2005) as presidents of the country.

The documentary practice, associated with Western photography, is transformed and adapted in the local context in which Rangel was based. The tradition in which he is inserted (as Kok Nam, another great name of the Mozambican documentary photography) is part of a set of ideas

17. *Assimilated* was a legal category in the Portuguese colonial government. The indigenous (blacks) interested in the identification as assimilated needed to request it from the colonial board confirming their assimilation to the Portuguese civilization such as moral and habits. Having an identification as *assimilated* meant that they would be able to apply for a different set of jobs, like the lowest ranks of public service, and avoid the compulsory work (*chibalo*) as well as other penalties and duties imposed on the denominated *indigenous*. About the statute of assimilation in Mozambique and in the Portuguese colonialism, see Macagno (1996; 2001).

and practices that are, at the same time, international and Mozambican, transnational and local. For this reason, it is necessary to consider how colonialism molded the possibilities of photographic practice of the period, above all for the non white photographers, who were against the colonial order.¹⁸

Thus, his position as a mestizo, part of an intellectual, bohemian group, anticolonial activist, marks many of his photos. As a professional photo-journalist, Rangel carried his camera everywhere. Beyond the photographs he took for the newspaper, he produced images that were never published – either because they revealed a mix that should not occur or because they denounced the segregation that also could not exist after the abolition of *indigenato* and the laws of hierarchization of 1961 (Figures 4 and 5).

figure 4

"Public restrooms – where the black could only be a servant and only the white a man". Ricardo Rangel. Lourenço Marques (Maputo), 1957. Source: Rangel (2004a)

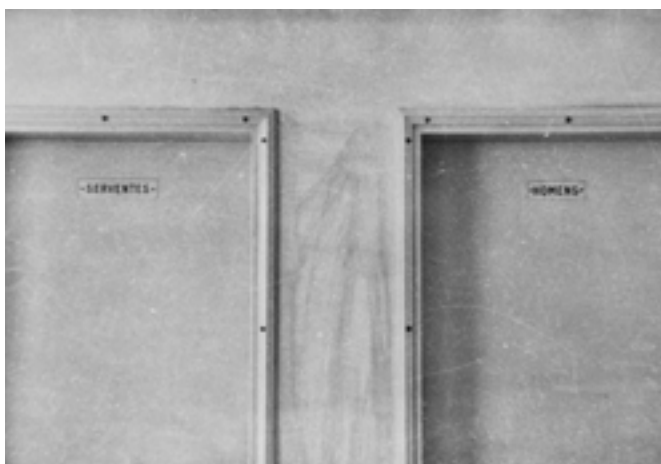


figure 5

"Two worlds: red light district". Ricardo Rangel. Lourenço Marques (Maputo), 1970. Source: Rangel (2004b)



18. This consideration is based on the work by Newbury (2009) in relation to the documentary practice in South Africa, during the apartheid regime.


Inserting himself in the photojournalism and documentary practices and assuming the position of an observer, who did not intervene in the reality he worked to capture, Rangel at the same time could capture realities with a clear political bias. This way he looked for, in the conventions of the documentary, to take photos of political and social tensions.

According to Price and Wells (2009, 43), “one of the central principles of the documentary aesthetic was that a photograph should be untouched, so that its veracity, its genuineness, might be maintained”. This belief in the connection with the real and of an accurate and authentic vision is validated by a structure as discursive as social and professional. To be documentary, the genre has to establish a relationship between the two contexts of capture and production and the subjects (photographers, photographed and viewers). In addition, documentary photography brings together information and composition. Cartier-Bresson (2015), in his famous text *The Decisive Instant*, states that the photographer, in order to capture this elusive and precise instant, owes more to the intuition, to ordinary knowledge and to the dexterity of the look, than properly to the technical details. For the French photographer, the composition, the framing and the angle are crucial elements for a good photograph; but these are elements already incrustated in the praxis of the photographer who, equipped with a camera, waiting or in a sudden way, triggers the button and captures the *decisive instant*, a synthesis of a moment. But here, too, the excess shows itself. The attempts to control the excess, inside the documentary tradition, is built by the non intervention, by the idea that the real is captured without manipulation, something authenticated by the photographer’s position and the cautions when shooting and developing the photograph.

figure 6

“Pier salon”.
Ricardo Rangel,
Lourenço Marques (Maputo),
1962. Source:
Rangel (2004a)





If in Cartier-Bresson one observes the images of little moments of everyday life as well as of the war's destruction, in Rangel, even in his photos of daily life, the political and social elements of colonialism are always factors to be considered (Figure 6). With his Pentax, the Mozambican searched the oppressed; but the subjects photographed do not appear as victims because Rangel plays with the photographic excess, including it in his practice as a way of forcing the limits of the visible – both inside the colonial regime and the documentary practice.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The comparative exercise in this essay proposed to problematize two photographic genres, having as a starting point the study of two photographic collections, uncovering some of the technical, aesthetic and also ideological differences that Cunha Moraes and Ricardo Rangel incorporate into their practices.

In the ethnographic gaze and documentary traditions there is something that approximates them: a belief in the authenticity and the ability to capture exterior real through the photographic image. This real, however, is conceived and serves diverse uses. In Western anthropology of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th, based on the conventions of pose or of the *style no style*, such images were used as much to produce anthropometric data or as to affirm an ethnographic veracity and authority. The documentary tradition that was shown as dynamic along the history, still follows defined technical and aesthetic conventions in order to value the non interference and the capture of the real daily routine.

As proposed by Foucault (2010), if there is a discursive field, there are ambiguities, resistances and diversities within it. The practice of the *ethnographic gaze* does not have a fixed definition; it is malleable precisely because it englobes several formats, themes, subjects, times and spaces, elements that they aim to control by the rhetorics of a discipline or of an archive.

In this sense, the *ethnographic gaze* of a photographer, such as Cunha Moraes, is in my view an interesting model to reflect on the disciplinary relations, the discursive fields and the archiving practices. Nevertheless, we must place this gaze in critical perspective, considering the problems and specificities of the photographic experiences of the colonial encounters inscribed into the images that such tradition tends to englobe. In the documentary tradition, in spite of a debate more or less cohesive around conventions, practices, and techniques that compose the genre, one needs to take into account the transnationality and location of its uses and circulations. The position and intersectionality of the photographers, the diffusion and circulation of practices and the works in the national and international scenes,

are important aspects not only to discuss issues of canon and consecration but the handling of conventions and engagements.

The issue of the pose and everyday life is a central point of differentiation between both practices – and of their intrinsic ambiguities. In the case of posing and reenacting in the ethnographic gaze, “while its intellectual rationale emerged from the techniques of laboratory science and the desire for the controlled and objective, it was also capable of articulating the opposite, the articulation of subjective desires and the site of intersecting histories” (Edwards 2001, 178). In turn, the documentary tradition, the insistence for a fidelity to the exterior world, to the ordinary flow of life, becomes a problem when in order to reach it, one has to engage with “particular conventions, technical processes and rhetorical forms in order to authenticate documentary.” This weakens the notion of objectivity and then “any claim of documentary could be any more truthful to appearances than others forms of representation” (Price 2009, 73).

If from one side, the ethnographic gaze pursued photographic objectivity by the means of a positivist and racist vision, employing the control of photography (pose), then, from another side, the documentary tradition interrogated objectivity by using the capture of the daily life without intervention. The belief in an exterior reality prone to be captured, be it for the ends of production of scientific knowledge or for social indictment, oriented both practices. It changed the meaning of what is to be considered real, true and authentic. However, the belief in a real to be learned, a truth to be revealed, and an authenticity to be objective was maintained.

Thinking how these genres operate with conventionalized ideas of real and true is, always, to think about the displacement of these meanings. The invention, inherent to every practice, is guided by convention, at the same time that extends it (Wagner 1981). Committed to an exterior reality but ruled by the conventions of each genre, the photographers transform the understanding of these categories into their practices.

My comparison of Cunha Moraes and Ricardo Rangel, two very distinct photographers, puts in perspective the strategies and visual practices from which their images were produced, viewed, circulated and archived. If, in a first moment, such enterprise seems disconnected, to collate their idiosyncrasies, approaching conventions, intentionality, ways and languages, allows the displacement of the gaze under genres and photographic archives. After all, it grants us to bring into the same analytical plane the past and the colonial experiences, which connect them and, at the same time, radically separate them.

translation

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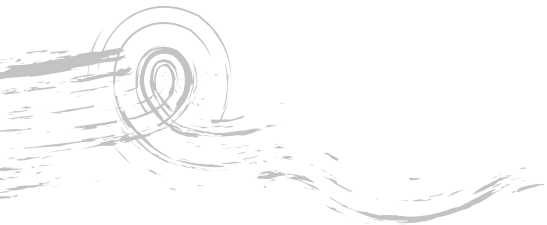
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