

MIRROR OF MEMORY: SYLVIA CAIUBY NOVAES THROUGH PHOTOGRAPHY

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We can conceive photography as something that is related to a physical-chemical effect, something connected to time in travels, to social issues, to the identification of people, things, and past events. And it is exactly this privileged relation between photography and reality that should bring it closer to Anthropology since the latter has made a great effort to register, document, and analyze social reality. The machine to photograph dreams has not been invented yet, even though a photo can evoke exactly the same magic and mystery of things we register with the camera, something that scientific texts can hardly do.

(Sylvia Caiuby Novaes)

An experienced event is finite, at any rate confined to one sphere of experience; a remembered event is infinite because it is only a key to everything that happened before it and after it.


(Walter Benjamin)

To enter Sylvia Caiuby Novaes's universe, we are invited to come aboard on a real journey. For someone who has photography as a central part of her personal and affective trajectory, there could not be a better way to enter it. There is not just one door or a great ceremony to do so — the invitation allows us to enter her photographs as if they were a car, a Kombi, a plane, a boat or a canoe. Once we are inside it, Sylvia takes us to Mato Grosso, Alto Rio Negro, Pakistan, Ethiopia, England, and Scotland; we go on stepping on beach sand, dancing in the carnival balls of her childhood, watching her unforgettable classes and seeing her daughters, grandsons, and granddaughter as they grow up. We walk in front of the house where she has lived as a child, we then look at many faces in portraits and self-portraits, we pet her dogs, and also visit her numerous friends. Each stop in this long journey is special: those are the people and the places that Sylvia has met, loved, and where she has built homes.

The visual essay that we present here is composed of photographs from her trajectory, and here we indicate its itinerary. At the beginning of this trip, we can go along with Sylvia in her first fieldwork travels in the 1970s, where she spends many months among the Bororo, in Mato Grosso, doing research, and making fieldwork with her young daughters, Laura and Isabel, in the 1980s. At this point, one can already notice that reciprocity, alliances, immersion, and photography are fundamental parts of her fieldwork method of research, but it also shows a way of being in the village and in the world. In a trip to Alto Rio Negro, Sylvia adds to these elements another passion: to advise her students' research. Then we go to Ethiopia, with her daughter Camila, where she has built memories that are as impressive as they are colorful.

The route takes us to the Laboratory of Image and Sound in Anthropology of USP, founded by Sylvia in 1991. Her enthusiasm during classes, her presence in daily life, her attention to the garden, and her knowledge over each item of LISA's immense collection are a real adventure. As she says in the interview published at *Gis*, LISA is housing for her, and in this sense, it reflects a collective life.

In a curve, Claudia Andujar, Lux Vidal and Maureen Bisilliat come aboard. This encounter leads us to visit the exhibition "The Yanomami Struggle", at Instituto Moreira Salles, in São Paulo, during the development of the project "Photographs and Trajectories: Claudia Andujar, Maureen Bisilliat and Lux Vidal", coordinated by Sylvia and financed by FAPESP. There, we



wander around the forest of images that Claudia has built among the Yanomami people, those Lux built among the Xikrin, and Maureen among the Xinguan people.

As we leave the forest, we fly over to Sylvia's house, in São Paulo, where more than 30 of her present and former students, from different generations, have interviewed her. Many questions were made, and the answers have led to unexpected paths. More than revealing herself, Sylvia allowed her students to know each other, sharing the interest of the interview with them all. It was an experience that caused displacements and allowed them to go to unknown zones, where a play of mirrors was set in place.

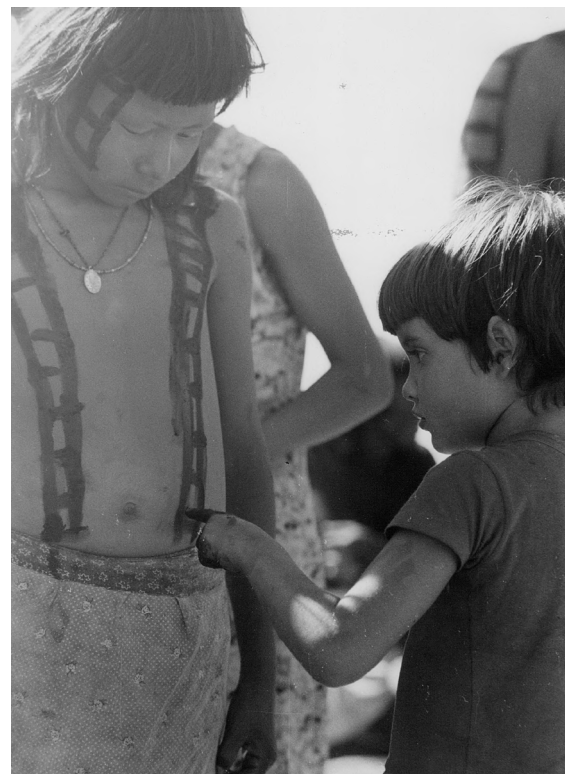
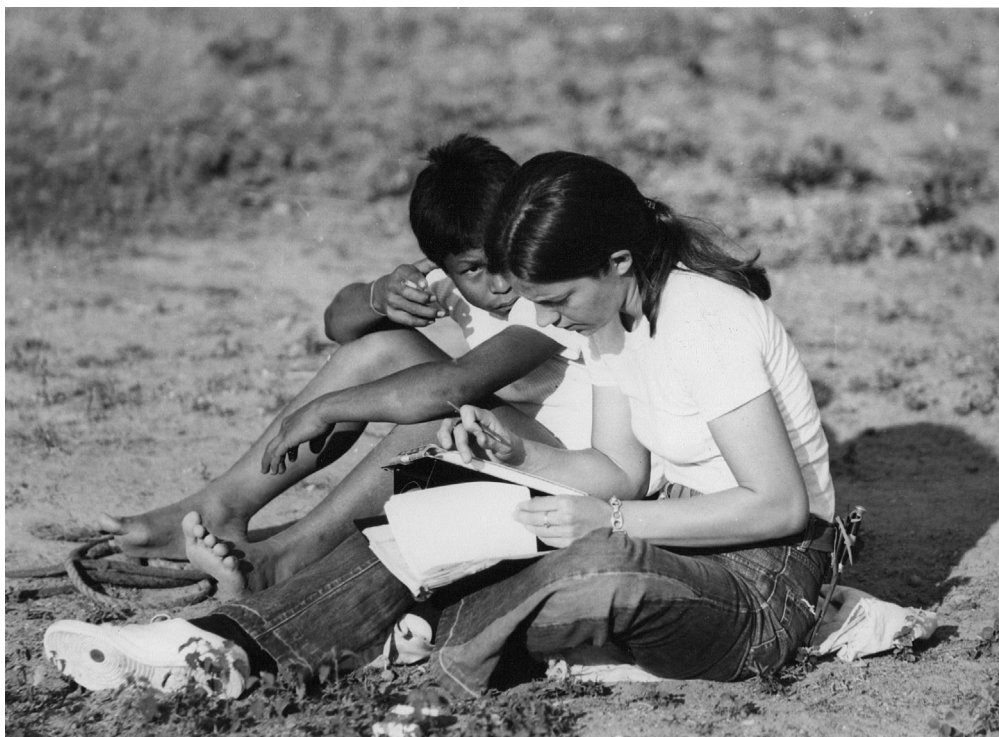
Back to the ground, Sylvia welcomes us to her house for some coffee and cake. There, we venture into the garden: the persimmon tree, the jabuticaba tree, the blackberry tree, the olive tree, the pitanga tree, congea, and begonia are characters in the house, full of stories. And then the journey becomes psychedelic if we allow image, magic, and imagination to blend. Inside the house, Sylvia opens boxes, albums, folders, and drawers, where memories exchange glances. All this is told with photographs, whose eloquent silence says a lot but not everything: as someone who can tell a good story, it is Sylvia's narrative that "wakes up" the photographs and reveals their secrets. Even in her memories, there is an open attitude towards surprises, which animate the images. As she questions: "How do we say the unspeakable, how can we make intelligible something that belongs, first and foremost, to the sensible domain?" (2005). It is this constant inquietude of the thought and the desire that reframe image and memory, where photographs are not the capture of moments. Instead, it is the movement of an active and creative gaze: among the lived and remembered events, there are also some small gaps and fingerprints which are typical of everything that is constantly being created.

Opening image: Sylvia's lines of life. **Drawing:** Luis Felipe Kojima Hirano, 2021.



THE FIELD























1. Sylvia doing fieldwork with notebooks and carrying her camera, Mato Grosso, Córrego Grande. The name that the Bororo attributed to her is *Kuogori Pijiwuda*, "The one that came from the hill where the yellow flowers of Paratudo grow". **Photo:** Sylvia Caiuby Novaes' personal collection, 1973.

2. Sylvia doing a genealogical survey in the indigenous community of Córrego Grande, in 1973, in dialogue with Kogenawo, a Bororo child. Laura and Isabel, her daughters, performing body paintings, 1983. **Photos:** Sylvia Caiuby Novaes' personal collection.

3. Portrait of Sylvia by Jorge Eduardo Leal Medeiros. **Photo:** Sylvia Caiuby Novaes' personal collection, 1973.

4. Highlighted, Laura and Isabel, Sylvia's daughters, 1983. In the lower right corner, Sylvia and a Bororo child swimming in the São Lourenço River, 1970. **Photos:** Sylvia Caiuby Novaes' personal collection.

5. Hupd'ah children playing of building houses, Alto Rio Negro. **Photos:** Sylvia Caiuby Novaes, February 2012.

6. House built by Hupd'ah children. **Photo:** Sylvia Caiuby Novaes, February 2012.

7. At the top, a basket made by Hupd'ah women. At the bottom, the details of a fire pit and a hammock inside one of the houses at Alto Rio Negro. **Photos:** Sylvia Caiuby Novaes, 2012.

8. Alto Rio Negro; it takes two days of boat trip from São Gabriel da Cachoeira to the Hupd'ah indigenous community on the banks of Tiquié River. **Photos:** Sylvia Caiuby Novaes; portrait of Sylvia by Danilo Paiva Ramos, 2012.

9. On a trip to South Ethiopia, Sylvia tried to oppose her images, those that people have in mind when they think about this

country - images that were consolidated after a period of hunger between 1983-1985, when nearly one million people have died. The only African country that was not a colony, this multilingual country, with over 80 ethnolinguistic groups, presents lots of diversity and its culture is equally rich and impressive. The top photograph, which was presented in an exhibition, was shown, at first, without the woman on the right, since she seems to diverge from the other two, who are wearing adornments. On a second exhibition, Sylvia reflected on the photographs she had previously chosen and the way she had organized the exhibition, so she decided to present the photograph as it was originally. In the photograph below, a "wooden pillow": it is an object that most men carry with them and it is this "pillow" that we see in the hands of this man. **Photos:** Sylvia Caiuby Novaes, 2017.

10. Sylvia Caiuby Novaes and Camila, her daughter, in the field in Ethiopia. **Photo:** Sylvia Caiuby Novaes, 2017.

11. In Ethiopia, a group of people observe the vehicle where Sylvia and her friend Elizabeth Ewart, British anthropologist and professor at the University of Oxford, who is married to Tadesse Wolde, Ethiopian anthropologist who was, at the time, coordinator of the Christensen Fund - an entity that gives financial support to revalue culture at South Ethiopia. In that region, cars are like OVNI's, it becomes an event when they see one. At a second exhibition, the same picture was presented next to the original image, which shows the interior of the vehicle - that was, after all, what people were looking at. It shows a movement of looking and being looked at. **Photos:** Sylvia Caiuby Novaes, 2017.

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1. Sylvia with her students in LISA's auditorium. **Photo:** Bianca Vasconcellos, 2017.

2. During a meeting to look at the photos of the Xikrin collection gathered by Lux Vidal. Sitting at the table (from left to right), Sylvia Caiuby Novaes, Mariana Flória Baumgaertner, Lux Vidal and Isabella Finholdt. Standing in the background, Mihai Leaha. **Photo:** Paula Morgado, 2019.

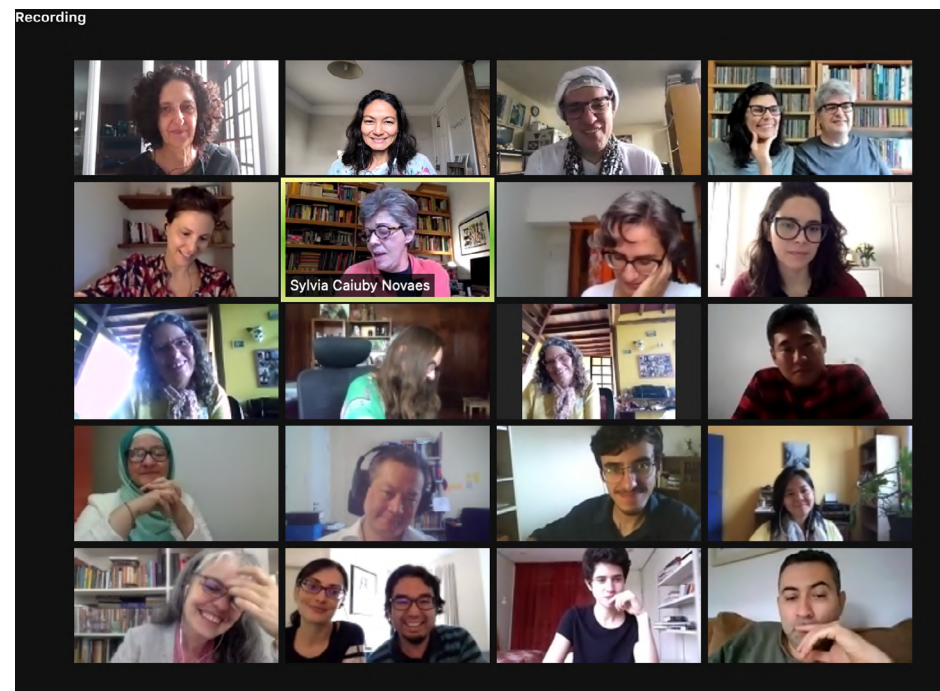
CLAUDIA ANDUJAR, LUX VIDAL AND MAUREEN BISILLIAT



1. On the left, Sylvia Caiuby Novaes, Claudia Andujar and Lux Vidal in the exhibition “The Yanomami Struggle”, at Instituto Moreira Salles - Paulista. **Photo:** Laila Kontic, 2018. On the right, Claudia Andujar and Maureen Bisilliat at the opening of Instituto Moreira Salles - Paulista. **Photo:** Sylvia Caiuby Novaes, 2017.

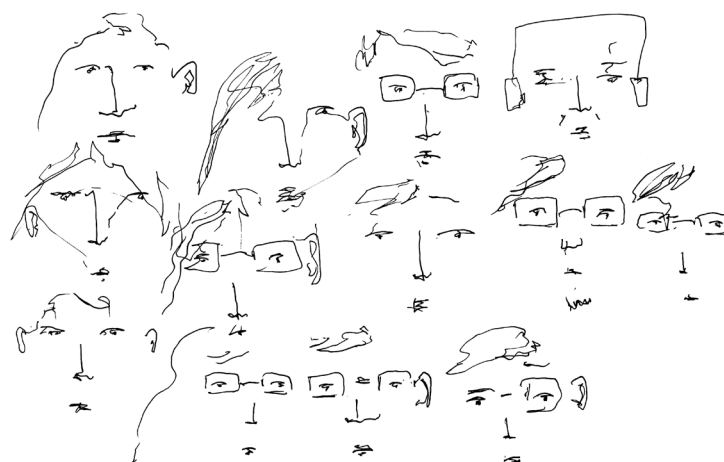
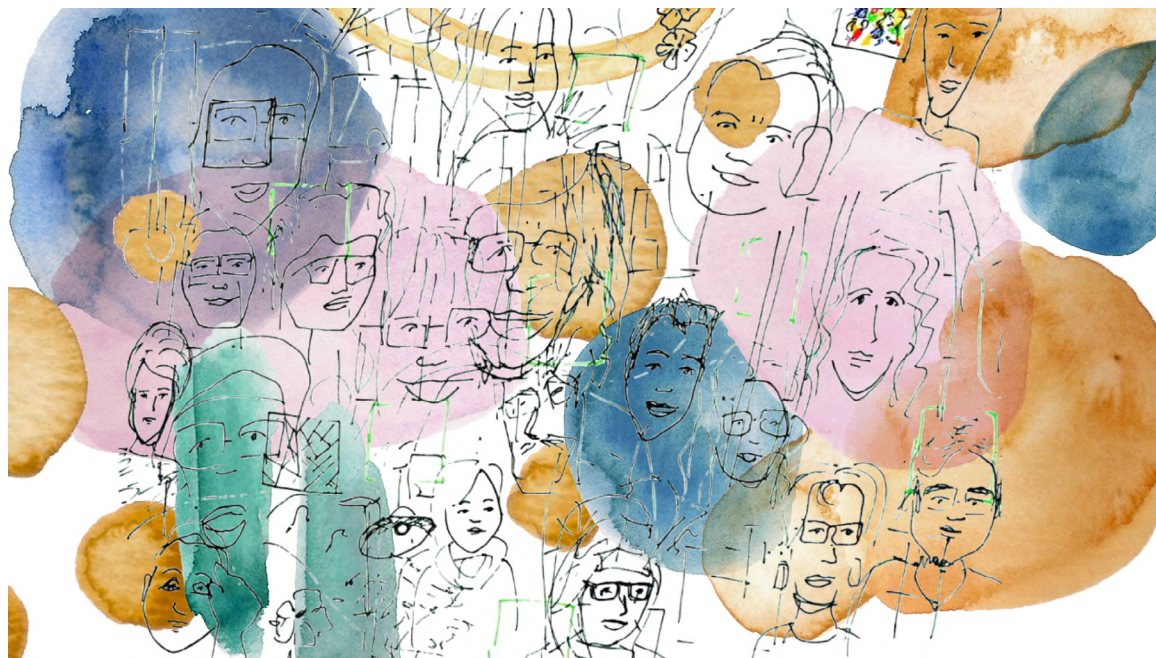
THE INTERVIEW











1. Sylvia in her office. **Photo:** Rafael Hupsel, 2021.

2. On the left, Sylvia in an interview with her advisees. On the right, a screenshot of Sylvia's computer during the interview.

Photo: Rafael Hupsel, 2021.

3. Gestures and notes taken by Sylvia during the interview.

Photo: Rafael Hupsel, 2021.

4. Behind the scenes of the filming carried out by Ricardo Dionísio Fernandes, LISA's audiovisual technician; Maíra Bühler, filmmaker and Sylvia's former advisee; and Iago Calmon Angeli, LISA's audiovisual monitor. **Photo:** Rafael Hupsel, 2021.

5. Sylvia and the drawings made during the interview. **Photo:** Rafael Hupsel, 2021; **Drawing (top right):** Tatiana Lotierzo, 2021; **Drawing (bottom right):** Jeferson Carvalho, 2021.

THE HOUSE























1. Sylvia with her first camera, which was gifted to her when she was 6 years old. **Photos:** Rafael Hupsel, 2021; personal collection of Sylvia Caiuby Novaes, c. 1955.

2. In her houses' garden, among many fruit trees. Looking at the persimmon tree, loaded with the fruits still green, which will only be harvested in the winter (above). Sylvia also shows the olive tree that her cousin Fernanda planted when her granddaughter Olivia was born (below). **Top photo:** Laila Kontic, 2021. **Bottom photo:** Rafael Hupsel, 2021.

3. While petting Zara, she explains that the other dog, Maui, had recently undergone a surgery in his front paw, and needed to use an "Elizabethan collar" so as to not lick his stitches, which he pulled out frequently. **Photo:** Rafael Hupsel, 2021.

4. Memories from different temporalities coexist in the room. A crystal vase, gifted from her advisor, Thekla Hartmann, when she defended her doctoral thesis at USP. Detail of the Plik analog camera, produced in Brazil in the 1950s and 1960s (at the bottom). **Photos:** Rafael Hupsel, 2021.

5. As she handles the camera, Sylvia brings out memories and gestures from when she took photographs as a child. In the background, a colorized photo of Alice, her maternal grandmother (c. 1930). **Photos:** Rafael Hupsel, 2021.

6. The photographs are present in every room of the house. After preparing some coffee, Sylvia shows the kitchen door, designed by her to fix and make photo combinations with magnets, where several moments are close to each other, especially from her family history. **Top photo:** Laila Kontic, 2021. **Bottom photo:** Kelwin Marques, 2021.

7. Many albums and boxes containing photographs drive Sylvia's professional and personal trajectories, which merge as we see

her daughters during field research and her field interlocutors in moments of her everyday life. **Photos:** Rafael Hupsel, 2021.

8. Details of her trip to Pakistan in 1994, when she filmed and photographed the wedding of Sonia and Omar, whose celebrations typically last a month (top). The trip resulted in the movie "A wedding in Pakistan" (1994): <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q9dwdC4-3ncos>>. Laura's records in the Bororo village in the naming ritual (bottom). **Top left photo and right photo:** Rafael Hupsel, 2021. **Bottom left photo:** Kelwin Marques, 2021.

9. Notebooks and field diaries from her research among the Bororo. Detail of the standardized forms that, according to Sylvia, all Thekla Hartmann students should organize from the data collected in the field (top). **Photos:** Laila Kontic, 2021.

10. Drawers with thousands of negatives, from which many of the photographs were used in the montages for her Lecturer-Professor thesis at USP. **Photos:** Rafael Hupsel, 2021.

11. "Sylvia looking for research grants", photo at Estação da Luz, taken by her friend Miguel Pacheco Chaves, around the 2000s.

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ABSTRACT

To enter Sylvia Caiuby Novaes's universe, we are invited to come aboard on a real journey. For someone who has photography as a central part of her personal and affective trajectory, there could not be a better way to enter it. This visual essay, built with many hands is a composition of photographs from this trajectory, about which we indicate its itinerary. This montages result from long conversations, and research on Sylvia's archives and memories; they take us to meet people and places that this anthropologist has loved, and where she has built homes. In a play of mirrors, Sylvia revisits different moments of her trajectory, sewn in a weft where lived and remembered events reveal to us something typical of everything that is constantly being created.

KEYWORDS

Visual
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montage;
trajectory; Sylvia
Caiuby Novaes.

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