Demystifications of photography: Machado, Wolf and the photographer-editor

Desmistificações da fotografia: Machado, Wolf e o fotógrafo-montador

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Abstract: In this article, we will discuss Arlindo Machado's contributions to a new understanding not only of the photographic act, but of the photographer's own statute in contemporary times in relation to the work *Street View*, by German photographer Michael Wolf, with philosophical reflections on photography developed by Flusser, Benjamin and Didi-Huberman. For Machado, the historical notion of photography is expanding, and, in this context, the photographer's place is also being transformed. Thus, we suggest as a hypothesis that the photographer appears less as an "image hunter" and more as an archaeologist or an editor, a kind of critic-collector working from fragments, scraps, dreams' remains and images.

Keywords: photography theory; contemporary photography; hybridity; editing; Michael Wolf.

Resumo: Neste artigo, discutiremos as contribuições de Arlindo Machado para uma nova compreensão não só do ato fotográfico, mas do próprio estatuto do fotógrafo na contemporaneidade. Para tal, relacionaremos a obra Street View, do fotógrafo alemão Michael Wolf, com reflexões filosóficas sobre a fotografia desenvolvidas por Flusser, Benjamin e Didi-Huberman em diálogo com Machado. Para este autor, a noção histórica da fotografia está se expandindo e, nessa conjuntura, o lugar do fotógrafo também se transforma. Assim, sugerimos como hipótese que o fotógrafo aparece menos como um "caçador de imagens" e mais como um arqueólogo ou um montador, uma espécie de crítico-colecionador trabalhando a partir de fragmentos, retalhos, sobras de sonhos e imagens.

Palavras-chave: teoria da fotografia; fotografia contemporânea; hibridismo; montagem; Michael Wolf.

*Our challenge is not a society of gods or inspired artists,
but a society of players.*

Vilém Flusser

*What a true creator does, instead of simply submitting to
a certain number of possibilities imposed by the technical
apparatus, is to continually subvert the function of the
machine it uses, is to manage it in the opposite direction
of its programmed productivity.*

Arlindo Machado

Introduction

In a now famous quote, photographer and researcher László Moholy-Nagy (1989, p. 86) declared that "the illiterate of the future will be the person ignorant of the use of the camera as well as the pen". Written in the heroic times of modernism, the phrase was a premonition of the place that photography would occupy in contemporary society. In the 1970s, the American philosopher Susan Sontag (2004, p. 34) attests that photography "is the most mysterious of all objects", that "everything exists to end in a photograph" (2004, p. 8). And, more recently, Joan Fontcuberta (2016, p. 26) assures that "we live in photography" and that, nowadays, it has become more than an image. It is our scenery, a habitat, a home.

There is no doubt that we live in a photographic compulsion, that today everything tends towards photography. Every daily act, whether artistic, scientific or political, aims to be photographed or, in the words of Vilém Flusser (1985, p. 19), "eternalized in a technical image". However, more than questioning the foundations of this almost infinite iconic avalanche, the reasons and meanings that drive this desire for an image in contemporary times, we are interested here in discussing something perhaps more restricted and prosaic.

What we would like to emphasize is that the term photographing had, in the eyes of Moholy-Nagy, a much broader and more open sense than what was later conventionalized in the field of photographic practice and criticism. It ranged from the production of images without the use of a camera (so-called photograms), through the use of unconventional instruments (such as x-ray devices, telescopes and microscopes), for the construction of images from the appropriation and montage of already existing photographs (photomontage and photocollage), including in these processes any type of physical, chemical or mechanical manipulation of the image, whether in capture or in the laboratory. In *Vision in Motion* (1947), a book published

in the USA a few years after Bauhaus was transferred to Chicago, Moholy-Nagy tries to synthesize his conception of the photographic act:

> The enemy of photography is the convention, the fixed rules of the "how-to-do". The salvation of photography comes from the experiment. The experimenter has no preconceived idea about photography. He does not believe that photography is only as it is known today, the exact repetition and rendering of the customary vision. He does not think that the photographic mistakes should be avoided [...]. He dares to call "photography" all the results which can be achieved with photographic means with camera or without; all the reaction of the photo sensitive media to chemicals, to light, heat, cold, pressure, etc. (p. 197)

Well, in his writings on photography, Arlindo Machado seems to be in line with this tradition of thought, to which we could also associate theorists such as Walter Benjamin, Siegfried Kracauer and Vilém Flusser. On the one hand, we find in these thinkers the same pragmatic or phenomenological perspective, that is, a look not turned to what photography *is* – for the search for a supposed essential or distinctive feature of the media, its "noema" or its "in itself", in Roland Barthes' (2015) terminology –, but to what the photographic device *can do*, for its different uses, practices and languages. In his books and essays, photography is always perceived as a moving media, a form of becoming (*gestaltung*). Photography, therefore, as an expanding concept, a field that reinvents and reconstructs itself with each new work.

On the other hand, we can see in these authors the same appeal to insubordination, to a restless and experimental attitude on the part of photographers and artists. Their task would be, above all, to promote new uses, to twist what would be given, as a limitation of actions. Following this lineage, Arlindo Machado will defend that the challenge of the photographer-creator – the one who, in Gilles Deleuze's (2007, p. 96) beautiful formulation, strives to "extract a true image from the clichés", who seeks to escape the predictable and programmed representations that flood the telematic networks, producing an immense standardization of the visible, a robotization of consciousness and of sensitivity – is to rise up against the machine, is to reinvent its uses and purposes, making "a new fertility blossom in photography" (MACHADO, 1993, p. 1), other ways of seeing and dealing with the media.

As Vilém Flusser teaches us, however, – visionary thinker that the Nazi persecution in World War II brought to Brazil in 1940, and who here produced one of the most consistent theories about the photographic device and about technical images – devices are everywhere and are occupied with programming life, with organizing a

field of possibilities. "The photographic device", affirms the Brazilian Czech-born philosopher, "is the source of the robotization of life in all its aspects, from the externalized gestures to the most intimate thoughts, desires and feelings" (FLUSSER, 1985, p. 51). Seeking to pierce the program and subvert the ordering of seeing would be, therefore, a strategy of not only an aesthetic order, but also an ethical and political one. Here is a sore point of this debate, here is an aspect that deserves to be highlighted, since, for Flusser, as well as for Machado, crossing the limits of the machine, to push the photographer's gesture beyond the programmed game of technologies, is to put the problem of freedom back into a world that is increasingly "equipped", marked by generalized automatism, by the blind repetition of clichés and programs.

In our view, it is against this background that Arlindo Machado's photographic thinking should be placed. His appeal to a subversive and experimental attitude on the part of photographers is linked to the belief in the photography ability to act in life, to generate variations and displacements that disturb ordered places, that redistribute aesthetic and political expectations, pointing to an expansion of the possible. For the Brazilian researcher, thus, distorting the device, playing against its programmed productivity, would not only allow the expansion of the media potential, but it would have an impact on what Flusser (1985) called the "exercise of freedom", that is, on the liberation of ways of living, of programs that capture and robotize life. For, as the media philosopher has already noted, "photography is the result of looking at the world, and simultaneously a change in the world: something of a new kind" (FLUSSER, 1994, p. 105). In other words, it is produced in the confrontation with the world, and, in this confrontation, it promotes interferences and transformations, establishes quarrels and variations – new ways of seeing and, consequently, of being-in-the-world.

For this reason, Flusser (1985, p. 58) will attribute to photographers the responsibility to point out the path to freedom in contemporaneity, to indicate "the possibilities of living freely in a world programmed by devices". And, in this context, the role of the philosophy of photography is to raise awareness of this photographic praxis, revealing that it is through the very gesture of photographing – as a way that thinks, as a sensitive event – that we can open gaps in experiences, produce cracks and variations in programs, in order to establish new possibilities.

Rethinking the photographic act

Since his first study of the photographic device, the classic A Ilusão Especular (1984), Arlindo Machado insists that we need to rethink the

photographic act, expand our understanding of the media since, throughout its history, whether in the field of theory or in the universe of practice, it was often reduced to a documental or registration dimension (ROUILLÉ, 2009). For Machado, it was essential to take photography as a process to be reopened, to operate a more direct and traumatic intervention on the photographic code, in order to reveal the countless historical, aesthetic and social conventions that constitute it and to be able to reopen, thus, new possibilities of the photographic still repressed by the dominant pictorial preference – preference based on a specular conception of photography, on a vision of the media as "art of capturing", as an image-document (ROUILLÉ, 2009).

> The insistence, on the part of many theories and practices still in vogue, in the supposedly indicative nature of photography, produced, as a result, a restriction of the creative possibilities, its reduction to a merely documentary destiny and, therefore, its impoverishment as a significant system, since a large part of the photographic process was eclipsed by the hypertrophy of the "decisive moment". (MACHADO, 2000, p. 15, our translation)

Therefore, a new generation of photographers – called by critics the generation 00 (CHIODETTO, 2013) – has sought to escape the mystique of the "decisive moment", a certain conception of photography as a feature-image (ROUILLÉ, 2009), a device essentially connected to the moment of the click, to the "magical" moment of the cut. Consequently, in the works of Eustáquio Neves, Kenji Otta, Cláudia Jaguaribe, Alexandre Sequeira, Letícia Lampert, Rodrigo Braga, Jonathan de Andrade, Luiz Baltar, Patrícia Gouvêa, among many others, photography no longer appears handcuffed to a single moment, nor it offers itself as a kind of "cutout of the real-world". More and more, it puts itself at the service of a concept, of an idea that hardly materializes in a single click. Paraphrasing Machado, we would say that photography is now presented as a work of writing, "a graphic, conceptual or, if you like, scriptural intervention: it presupposes an art of relation, of meaning and not simply of looking or of illusion" (2005, p. 249).

In other words, it no longer has mimesis as its guiding principle. It does not present itself as a revelation of the world, something that simply informs us or that is offered to contemplation (POIVERT, 2010). On the contrary, photography assumes its artificial character, of construction or of production of the visible, presenting itself as a figure of thought, a mediation effect, or even as a montage.

If we agree with the philosopher and art historian Georges Didi-Huberman (2015, p. 126), the image "is not the imitation of things, but the interval made visible, the fracture line between things". Also, according to the author, every image should be understood as the result of a montage operation, as something that results from a work of organizing discontinuous and heterogeneous elements and their subsequent structural recomposition. A few years ago, critic and curator Eder Chiodetto (2009) had already pointed out a broad tradition of photographers who, throughout history, began to think of the photographic image as it comes out of the camera as a raw material that would need interventions to adjust to the intended representation. And, more recently, Michel Poivert (2010) states that, in contemporary photography, the documentary record is just the starting point for the image construction, just a piece in the elaboration of a discourse or a visual narrative, and that it exercises in this set an often-allegorical function.

In contemporary times, therefore, photography is no longer seen as a concentrated exercise of the sight, an instrument capable of revealing and attesting to the existence of something in the world, and presents itself as a thought-form, a "text" to be "read" and deciphered by the viewer. This is not to say, as some postmodernist image theorists would have us believe, that current photography is indifferent to reality, but that access to the latter is now more mediated and less innocent. In fact, to attribute a perverse character to this new statute of the photographic image in contemporaneity or, even worse,

> […] to blame the latter with an alleged "derealization" of the visible world, as some philosophers of postmodernity do, it actually implies a return to a Platonic discourse on the image, a discourse that cannot think about the image outside its most elementary indexical function and that does not admit any other destination for images outside the narrow limits of mimesis. (MACHADO, 2005, p. 245, our translation)

As the photographer from Minas Gerais Eustáquio Neves once said, "to rip, fold or paint over an image that seems ready, you have to lose a certain modesty that traditional photography sometimes imposes" (NEVES apud PERSICHETTI, 2000, p. 98). And the shameless way in which most contemporary photographers manipulate, cut, tear and recompose the originals, it brings out the figure of an editor of worlds. No longer (or not just) an "image hunter" – that metaphor that for so many decades guided photographic theory and practice – but a creator or an editor.

In his "Small History of Photography", Benjamin had already highlighted the creator figure as being central to a photographic art that wants to settle

between aesthetics and politics, which intends to place itself more at the service of knowledge than of sales value of its creations[3]. And Flusser, in the *Into the Universe of Technical Images*, describes a new era in which we are no longer content to read the surface of the world, but we learn to produce it with images. Because with the advent of technical images, especially electronic and digital ones formed by mini pixels, humanity would have acquired a new kind of freedom, breaking away from an alphabetical, historical, linear thought, from an excessively text-based and logocentric culture, towards a world where *Einbildungskraft*, that is, the creative imagination or fantasy, reigns.

In this world ruled by a "second-order imaginative capacity" (FLUSSER, 1985, p. 18), where chance (*zufall*) is no longer seen as an accident (*unfall*) but as a discovery (*einfall*), creators can speed up the dots that make up reality and shape the world like a building game. For here it is no longer a question of narrating, explaining or any type of alphabetic-linear thought. Rather, it is about synthesizing, producing, concretizing with images. In an interview given in 1988, in Germany, Flusser reiterates that photography should no longer be seen as a testimony of history, but in its "constructive" aspect, as an image that, in a certain sense, "produces" history, which poetically organizes and "builds" the real-world.

> I think now that is changing because the images do not represent the world anymore. These new images are now articulations of thought. They are not copies, but projections, models, therefore a new attitude towards the image is needed, and I think it is developing. Benjamin was one of the first thinkers who articulated this, and I believe we all belong to that tradition. (FLUSSER, 2010, p. 38, our translation)

In one of his last writings on the photographic device, *"Fotografia como expressão do conceito"*, Arlindo Machado corroborates Flusser's view and also reveals that the historical notion of photography is expanding and changing form. Machado assures that, in contemporary times, there is a new attitude towards the media, a change in the public's perceptual habits in relation to the ontology of the photographic image. The myth of photographic objectivity and veracity seems to be

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[3] "But if the real face of this photographic "creativity" is the advertisement or the association, its legitimate counterpart is the unmasking or the construction. Consequently, says Brecht, the situation "is complicated by the fact that less than ever the simple reproduction of reality manages to say something about reality. A photograph of the Krupp factories or the AEG says almost nothing about these institutions. True reality has become functional reality. Human relationships reified – in a factory, for example – no longer manifest themselves. It is therefore necessary to build something, something artificial, something manufactured" (BENJAMIN, 1987, p. 106, our translation).

disappearing from the collective ideology and being replaced by the much healthier perception of photography as a production of thought, as an expressive form or a visual discourse. If we still talk about looking, in this context, it is not something that is based only on the camera or on the mimetic of reality, but on a "looking project", that is, a "system of signs, a cosmovision, that tames chaos and the disorder of reality in an artistic vocabulary, a poetics of the imaginary" (MONTEJO NAVAS, 2017, p. 80).

Given this, Machado insists that we must think of photography as a broader and more comprehensive process, an event that involves not only the moment of the click, but a whole before and after. And, in this context, obviously, the statute and place of the photographer undergo a radical metamorphosis. For he appears here less as an "image hunter", a zen archer waiting for the right shot, looking for the "decisive moment" and, more like an alchemist, a kind of critic-collector working from fragments, scraps, dreams' remains and images, looking to create something unexpected, from the rereading, the bricolage, the playful combination of available pieces. It is in this sense that we will reflect on the *street view* photographic work by German photographer Michael Wolf, who plays *with* and *on* the Google platform, intuiting images.

The images in the folds

In 2008, due to his wife's new job, former Stern magazine photographer Michael Wolf (1954-2019) moves to Paris and starts to question how he could photograph a city intensely registered through the lenses of photographers like Eugène Atget, Henri Cartier-Bresson, Robert Doisneau and Willy Ronis. Wolf could only see an old Paris, which had not substantially changed its landscape in the last 100 years and, as he spent most of his time at home, he decided to get to know The City of Lights through the *Google street view* platform[4], which was on the air for a short time at that time.

In front of the computer screen and with a medium format photographic equipment on the tripod, the German photographer visually toured the Parisian streets and paths, searching the automatic photos of the *Street View* cameras for

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[4] Currently, the photos available on the platform are taken by fifteen cameras – with GPS sensors for georeferencing – affixed to a kind of tripod located approximately two meters above the vehicle (car, motorcycle, boat, bicycles, snowmobiles, etc.). As the vehicles (or people) in charge of the company walk, the digital cameras take pictures automatically and at regular intervals, taking photos at angles of up to 290° vertically and 360° horizontally, which are then aligned and "stitched" by software that also smooths the transition between images and simulates the stereoscopic effect of three-dimensionality for display on the website and in the application.

unusual elements that called his attention. Not only did he compile pictures with curious snapshots made by *Google*, but he used the images made available on the site as raw material for his photographic production, bringing visibility to a visuality. To this end, the photographer would cut the images: after locating a photo that caught his attention, he would scan it[5], select fragments and details that interested him and, finally, release the shutter. In this inventive mining process, Wolf spent more than 600 hours in front of the computer screen, searching, unfolding and inventing unique images within the images themselves. His eyes became nomads through the virtual streets of Paris, and his gaze promoted sensitive happenings by cutting and editing scenes, playing with the arranged images and finding others.

In this series, generically named *street view* by the photographer, his photographs do not configure the mystique of automatic homology, as Machado would say, but refer to a reality abstracted in two-dimensionality, to images that unfold in a spiral into an abyss of other images. The shutter release operates as part of an intense mining process, triggering the opening of a portal, an imagery vortex. Images that are born from other images.

With one of the photos in the series, Wolf received an honorable mention in the 2011 World Press Photo Contest, suffering overwhelming criticism from purists who strongly disapproved the lack of link between photography and concrete reality. To the most hostile critics who did not even consider him a photographer, Wolf responded by saying that "it was part of a long history of artistic appropriation, which its detractors presumably didn't know about" (DYER, 2011, p. 112).
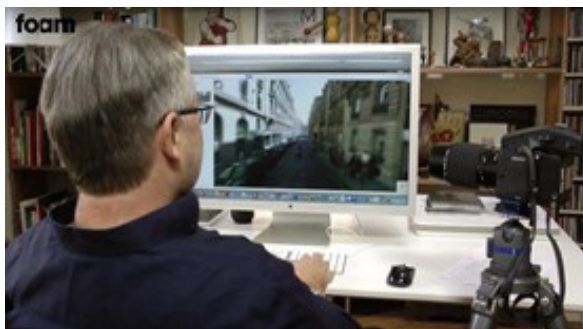

Figure 1: Michael Wolf searches *Google street view* for images.
Source: Peeping (Willem Aerts, 2012).

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[5] According to Flusser, "Whoever wants to 'deepen' the meaning and restore the abstracted dimensions, must allow his eyes to wander over the surface of the image. Such surface wandering is called scanning (FLUSSER, 2002, p. 7-8, our translation).

Figure 2: Michael Wolf searches *Google street view* for images.
Source: Peeping (Willem Aerts, 2012).

Figure 3: Photograph from the *Street view – unfortunate events* series, awarded at the World Press Photo 2011.
Source: photomichaelwolf.com. Accessed on: February 15th, 2021.

Wolf brings with him the DNA of avant-garde studies in the visual arts that he learned from Otto Steinert, one of his mentors. As well as Christian Boltanski, who re-photographs family photos, Éric Rondepierre, who photographs film frames, Wolf follows a certain artistic tradition of a *mis en abîme* look, which makes other images erupt by tearing the image in its superficiality (DIDI-HUBERMAN, 2013). From the large photographic tapestry of *Google street view*, the artist re-signifies ready and pasteurized images, bringing out an "imaginary, passionate or anarchic" dimension (MACHADO, 1996, p. 35) which is unforeseen in semiotic apparatus, as it rejects the industrial project and the embedded technological determinism that would lead to reproducible pre-ready sameness. Wolf acts as an artist in the media age, effectively as a creator, as he seeks a certain aesthetic renewal in what is taken for granted by the devices.

> They (the artists) are actually crossing the boundaries of semiotic machines and radically reinventing their programs and purposes. What makes, therefore, a true creator, instead of simply submitting to the determinations of the technical apparatus, it is to continually subvert the function of the machine or the program it uses, it is to manage them in the opposite direction of their programmed productivity. Perhaps it could even be said that one of the most important roles of art in a technocratic society is precisely the systematic refusal to submit to the logic of the working instruments, or to fulfill the industrial project of semiotic machines, reinventing, in turn, their functions and purposes. (MACHADO, 2002, p. 23, our translation)

Like the avant-garde, Wolf promotes a re-appropriation of elements from the broad and industrial media environment, recycling fragments and establishing a certain recycling poetics by proposing images within images, which are new statements of what circulates intensely in the mass media. According to Machado, such recycling establishes itself as "systematic and relentless investigation of the way in which forms of power are organized and reproduced in the contemporary world" (2002, p. 26).

Also according to this author, such recycling is one of the central axes of contemporary art that makes use of media elements, as seen in the work of Brazilian artist Waldemar Cordeiro, one of the pioneers in the aesthetic experimentalism of informational art. It is interesting here to reflect on the concept of recycling discussed by Machado in reference to Cordeiro's computer art and the way in which it also resonates with Vilém Flusser, fundamental author of the theoretical-conceptual basis of Arlindo Machado's photographic theory. Flusser writes in the *Comentário* magazine, in 1972:

> What we call the consumer society is precisely a society that cannot consume everything it produces, generating a large amount of garbage, debris [...] that are no longer nature – they are the result of its devouring – and they are not culture either, as they have already been used and discarded. (FLUSSER, 1972, p. 35, our translation)

Flusser broadly addresses the human incapacity to consume the totality of nature transformed into culture, whose remains form the "garbage kingdom". Despite not specifically analyzing the cultural image object in his text, the author urges us to think, for example, about the issue of imagery garbage that is formed by our inability to consume such images. The Brazilian Czech-born author states that there is a certain historical novelty in our incapacity for consumption, since "from the Paleolithic to the Second World War, the goods produced were never able to

meet the eagerness of demand" (FLUSSER, 1972 p. 35). In the belief of an endless consumption, the production rhythms are increased, culminating in a labyrinth full of products, through which men are busy in producing, transporting and desperate to consume everything they produced (FLUSSER, 1972). This configures the need for an exponential and disproportionate consumption (devourment) that does not aim at satiety, but which generates a greater need for production, justifying, even if falsely, the progressive urge to consume. In these labyrinthine pathways, however, inconsumable remains accumulate in the corners:

> Garbage is piling up in every corner of the labyrinth, that is, inconsumable waste. And it is this garbage that deserves closer attention because it tends to be the most determining part of the human condition. The garbage that is flooding the culture in the form of poorly digested and vomited products (material and ideal products), not only does it disturb the footsteps of men who roam the labyrinth, it cuts the soles of their feet with its shards, it infects their lungs and minds with the rot bacteria, but still attracts men with its shapeless slime softness. (FLUSSER, 1972, p. 36, our translation)

Poor digestion of what has not been completely consumed causes it to return, but not to the realm of nature or culture. These unconsumed and not fully metabolized remains form a third realm, that of garbage, which is the past of culture, an environment of repression. One of the possibilities, point out Flusser (1972) and Machado (2015a), with some differences, would be to assume this impotence for the total consumption of nature transformed into culture and then revisit what is not consumed. It would be an archeology amid the realm of garbage, which combines points and invents images, proposes a darning between them, giving new meaning to them, as Waldemar Cordeiro proceeds:

> Cordeiro worked with the pixelization system, which consisted of breaking the image into minimal units, called pixels (picture elements) in computer science. In fact, he did not use real pixels, but letters, numbers, graphic signs, simple or overlapping one another, to suggest different textures or shades of black, white and gray (in a few works, he even also used the basic colors). Although the appearance was sophisticated, based on a complex mathematical programming, the principle is archaeological, because it is based on the same principle as basketry, knitting, tapestry, all these techniques that use a structure of lines and dots to build images. (MACHADO, 2015a, p. 32, our translation)

These inventive processes of reassembly and re-signification of images renounce the predictability built into the device (in the case of Wolf's photography)

and the schematism of the Renaissance vanishing point in the visual arts, as Cordeiro does. This perspective of an inventive game is also analyzed by Machado (2000) in the work of Rosangela Rennó who, in her photographic works, used discarded images as raw material. Quoting the editor of the European Photography magazine, Andreas Müller-Pohle, who coined the term *expanded photography*, Machado states that he defines such a posture as an "information ecology, as it tries to intervene in the garbage (*abfall*) and reintroduce a new meaning in what the society of images has discarded" (MACHADO, 2000, p. 18, our translation).

Such discovery of images (*einfall*) from the garbage (*abfall*) is evident in Wolf's work, who, using the street view platform, cuts and assembles new images – deliberately or accidentally – from other photos, emphasizing unique elements, enhancers and creators of other visual narratives. With metalanguage and within the media itself, the photographer tracks singularities and disobeys the standard and factory functionalism attributed to the apparatus. The camera, therefore, is operated like an archeological chisel, tearing the superficiality of the image and enabling the emergence of recondite traces that, combined, intuited and imagined, are arranged like other images.

The emergence of an imagery vortex triggered by Wolf's photographic-archeological act, in addition to enabling a myriad of images, fractalizes perspectives and creates developments within themselves. Thus, in the images, interstitial folds are wrapped, spaces that are shaped in spatialities (FERRARA, 2008), in fissures that allow the irruption of other images that come to light by the force of the imagination (*Einbildungskraft*) of the one who animates them with its gaze.

In addition to the hypertrophied and ubiquitous visuality of Google street view, it is interesting to note that, in its folds, fractal spatialities are created in which tracks nest that unfold into other images. It is precisely in this transit between space and spatiality, from the immanent visibility to an imagined visuality, that the process adopted by the photographer draws attention, because it corrupts, in a way, the "traditional" photographic act: it uses an instrument in order to unfold and imagine other images. In our view, it is about a "multidimensional and, therefore, labyrinthine gaze, to which a classical, Aristotelian logic does not correspond [...] inaugurates another type of space" (LEÃO, 2002, p. 102-103).

Wolf cheats the program, dribbles and expands the technique beyond its functionality, it dives into the labyrinthine ways of the image, tearing it in its immanent superficiality, unfolding spatialities and intuiting images. In this way, the photographer works imaginatively: the imagination operates as an archeology of

the image, unveiling tracks, playing with the images of fissures, unveiling palimpsests, discovering and inventing images over images.

His photography, to use Machado's expression, operates in the "link between symbolic forms and the world", revealing hidden truths and unveiling symbolisms, creating "a reality that does not exist outside it, nor before it, but precisely in it" (MACHADO, 2015b, p. 48).

Final considerations

"A photographic image", philosopher and art historian Georges Didi-Huberman recently told Zum magazine, "is never this or that, it is just what one wants to make of it, whether from the producer's point of view or from the viewer's point of view." (DIDI-HUBERMAN, 2017, p. 90). Here, in a nutshell, in a lapidary formula, is the pragmatic perspective that Arlindo Machado shares: he questions every ontology, every idea of essence or structure, adopting more historical approaches, attentive to the multiple uses, different contexts, practices and meanings of the media.

As Raymond Bellour (1990) has clearly shown, since the 1980s we have been witnessing a process of medias expansion that has caused them to contaminate each other and lose the sharpness of their borders. From the 2000s onwards, the consolidation of digital technologies that made image capture devices cheaper, expanding access and allowing new modes of production and circulation of visual forms only intensified this process of convergence. To such an extent that, today, according to Bellour, "it is no longer possible to continue saying as before: cinema, photography, painting" (BELLOUR et al. 1990, p. 6). Instead of thinking about the media individually, we should investigate the passages that operate between them: between photography, cinema, video, but also between painting, theater, performance, etc.

Machado was always a multiple and restless researcher, someone who never stopped moving between subjects, exploring the thresholds and intersections between the fields of knowledge and arts. Throughout his career, he opened up and multiplied objects of analysis, method requirements and interpretation paths. He wrote about "technical images", pre- and post-cinema, video in its multiple facets and dimensions, television, series and soap operas, music videos, the relationship between art and technology and, obviously, photography. He was a professor, a critic, a curator, he made experimental shorts, scientific films and multimedia works. Someone who has always set himself in motion, who has moved his body and his point of view countless times, without ever fearing the border guards, the lovers of the closed corpus.

Working in the field of pragmatics, Machado summons a thought that arises in the confrontation with the works, which is carried out in the head-to-head with its plastic material, proposing questions and theoretical-methodological paths in an effective dialogue with the images. In fact, we find in his works the bet on a way of writing and thinking that is built along the way, which is transformed and reconfigured, triggered by the imponderable of the encounter. A thought in action, therefore, that privileges the movement, the concepts in the process of being made.

In photography theory, there is a rich lineage formed by thinkers such as László Moholy-Nagy, Walter Benjamin, Siegfried Kracauer, Susan Sontag, Vilém Flusser, among others, who defends this essentially open and procedural way of thinking, thinking that welcomes drift and wandering, moving according to an adventurous impulse, an unsystematic impulse. In a famous note, present in *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, Benjamin (1984, p. 50) summarizes a little of this approach by stating that "method is a deviation, it is an indirect path". And the Brazilian Czech-born philosopher Vilém Flusser assures, in *Natural:mente*, that what is most interesting in the process of knowledge "is not the result, the confirmed or refuted hypothesis. What is interesting is what is shown throughout the experience undertaken" (1979, p. 138), that is, the unsuspected, unexpected aspects, the various findings that appear along the way. We could say it is a kind of anti-method, that also seems to move the German photographer Michael Wolf in the *street view* series.

In the series discussed, it is clear that it is precisely in the spaces between, in the fissures and in the scopophilic wanderings that the power of imagination (*Einbildungskraft*) erupts, enabling new images. Wolf plays with images and achieves the apparatus, establishing a certain pedagogy of the contemporary gaze, he seems to intuit the proposition that literacy in our time is configured by knowing how to deal with images and their apparatus. Thinking through and throughout images, so that we are not visually illiterate in the era of glittering visibility, as predicted by Moholy-Nagy and Vilém Flusser, both studied by Machado and fundamental in his photography theory.

As we have stated, Wolf scans the image, and in this exercise, he unleashes hidden visuals, images and tracks that nestled in its folds and depths. It is an imaginative and archaeological gaze that, more or less deliberately, prospects and glimpses traces and images in the images themselves. A gaze that surpasses automatic homology and transcends the mystique of the decisive moment and finds in dialogism

with other images and in archaeological combination processes a way of dribbling, questioning limits and blurring classification boundaries that are so usual in the field of technical image.

An archaeological feeling is shaped that operates at the level of transversality of the plots and has in frayed temporality one of its structures. Amid the ill-digested or unconsumed waste (the *Google Street View* images), Wolf drifts down labyrinthine paths stumbling, falling into images, operating the camera like a chisel, exploring the possibilities of the image not in the classical scope of the chronometric snapshot, but in the sphere of a frayed temporality, the duration. In the temporal dilation understood by expectancy, click and post-click, the surface of the image is torn, its glittering dimensions give way to crepuscular visualities. In the slow and artisanal time of the productive imagination, the image is lacerated and rubbed into other images, allowing the photographer to find (and be found) consciously and unconsciously through its symptoms. At the taste of the temporal amplitude that slowly drags on, other images are unfolded and invented.

The photographic series briefly discussed in this article in dialogue with the theory of Arlindo Machado and other authors mentioned reminds us that it is necessary to adjust the focus of interest less to photography and more to the image. In "A ilusão especular", "A fotografia como expressão de um conceito" and other texts that specifically address photography and other materialities such as cinema and computer-mediated art, Arlindo is not tied to the current technicalities and fetishisms of the times, but rather, it reminds us that photography supports the image, which in a fundamentally anthropological relationship with us is always fissured and in the transit between bodies and devices. Its supports (photography, cinema, holography, etc.) reveal symbolic constructions and power relations of their times, but they do not account for the complexity of the anthropological phenomenon of image and tend to eclipse cultural symbolic layers, such as the complex relationship woven between image, imagination and imaginary.

Paraphrasing Moholy-Nagy and Vilém Flusser when they similarly state that the "illiterate of the future will be the one who does not know how to photograph and read images", we venture to say that Machado raises us to combat a certain "functional illiteracy of images", which ends the image on its supports. Just like Wolf and his symptomatic images that swarm in the cracks, Machado approaches the image in traffic, in fissures and in between-places. Thinking about photography (we would also support the image) is thinking about the "link between symbolic forms and the world" (MACHADO, 2015b, p. 15).

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