

Mecila Final Workshop 2023

# AESTHETICS OF EXTRACTIVISM

SÃO PAULO, 21-22 NOVEMBER



Foto: Lucas Bambozzi

The term "extractivism" commonly describes an economy that is based on the mining of raw materials, which, in the system of planetary division of labor, are then usually processed elsewhere and often sold back to the original territory with much higher prices. That which is extracted — commodities, energy, labor, especially that performed by Black or Indigenous bodies — has been and often still is thereby understood as a homogeneous and measurable resource that can be exploited until it is exhausted. The multiple relations - historical, aesthetical and cosmological - established between that which is extracted, those who extract and the territory are often destroyed, erased and/or forgotten.

The workshop aims to explore the aesthetics of extractivism, be it in innovative representation of extractivism in art, in recent critical studies about the presence of extractive industry in modern and contemporary literature, film, plays, or installations (José Miguel Wisnik), but also considering the concept of aesthetics understood from its root in the Greek word *aisthesis*: as sensuous perception or "Sensuous Cognition" (Baumgarten). We want to explore what sensual relation to the world underlies extractivism and how it shapes and generates that which is and can be perceived as "world." In the "Extractive Zones" in Latin America (Macarena Gómez-Barris) — often on indigenous land or land inhabited by quilombos — extractivism is experienced sensuously (Ailton Krenak), it changes or destroys sensual approaches to the world and the cosmologies that go along with them (Davi Kopenawa).

In turn, when resources are depleted, extractivism leaves behind altered landscapes and social fabrics that must confront the "trauma of deindustrialization" (Mary Dudley). The way extractivism shapes liveworlds historically has determined many aspects of conviviality in Latin America: The

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living together often takes places in environments strongly shaped by infrastructures designated to transport commodities elsewhere. Extractivism also produces blatant inequalities concerning health, security and live expectancy of humans and non-humans: The equipment of some models of life causes the damage or even destruction of others. Finally, we want to discuss to what extent artistic strategies can deal with the aesthetics of extractivism.

The concept of this Workshop was developed jointly between Tomaz Amorim and Jörn Etzold. Its structure as a whole is a result of discussions and collaborative research developed in the frame of the Maria Sibylla Merian Center Conviviality-Inequality in Latin America (Mecila). For further information on Mecila, see: <https://mecila.net>

## 21.11 (TUESDAY) - CEBRAP

### 13H - 13H30 OPENING

**Barbara Göbel** (Mecila German Director, Ibero Amerikanisches Institut)

**Rúrion Melo** (Mecila Principal Investigator, Universidade de São Paulo)

**Jörn Etzold** (Mecila Senior Fellow, Ruhr-Universität Bochum)

**Tomaz Amorim** (Mecila Academic Manager, Freie Universität Berlin)

### 13H30 - 16H30 PANEL I

**Jörn Etzold** (Mecila Senior Fellow, Ruhr-Universität Bochum)

**Remnants of Extractivism: The Ruhr Area**

**Fernanda Pitta** (Universidade de São Paulo)

**Práticas Extrativistas dentro e fora de Museus**

**Flavia Pinheiro Meireles** (Mecila Thematic Research Group, CEFET-Rio de Janeiro)

**Strengthening its Threads on Earth: Indigenous Artistic Practices**

**Astrid Ulloa** (Mecila Associated Investigator, Universidad Nacional de Colombia)

**Epistemologías Territoriales frente a las Estéticas de la Desposesión, La Guajira, Colombia [Online]**

Chair: **Tilmann Heil** (Mecila Postdoctoral Investigator, Universität zu Köln)

### 16H30 COFFEE BREAK

### 17H - 19H KEYNOTE CONFERENCE

**Macarena Gómez-Barris** (Brown University)

**Towards a Decolonial Media [Online]**

Comment: **Jörn Etzold** (Mecila Senior Fellow, Ruhr-Universität Bochum)



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## 22.11 (WEDNESDAY) - USP

9H30 - 10H OPENING

10H - 12H30 PANEL II

**Denilson Lopes** (Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro)

*Against Nature*

**Gloria Chicote** (Mecila Principal Investigator, Universidad Nacional de La Plata)

*¿Cuándo Empieza el Antropoceno? Algunas Observaciones sobre la Modernidad Temprana y el Colonialismo*

**Tomaz Amorim** (Mecila Academic Manager, Freie Universität Berlin)

*Extractivism and Modernism in South America: Underground Relations*

**Berit Callsen** (Mecila Thematic Research Group, Universität Osnabrück)

*After Extractivism – Reflections on Material Aesthetics of Watery Healing*

Chair: **Melanie Strasser** (Mecila Junior Fellow)

12H30 - 14H30 LUNCH BREAK

14H30-16H30 KEYNOTE CONFERENCE

**José Miguel Wisnik** (Universidade de São Paulo)

*Drummond e Guimarães Rosa frente à Devastação: Contracantos*

Comment: **Tomaz Amorim** (Mecila Academic Manager, Freie Universität )

16H30 COFFEE BREAK

17H - 17H30 CLOSING REMARKS

21.11

**Location:** Centro Brasileiro de Análise e Planejamento  
Auditório Elza Berquó  
Rua Morgado de Mateus, 615 | Vila Mariana

22.11

**Location:** Universidade de São Paulo  
Sala 14, Conjunto de Filosofia e Ciências Sociais (FFLCH)  
Av. Prof. Luciano Gualberto, 315 | Cidade Universitária

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## ABSTRACTS AND BIOGRAPHIES

**Astrid Ulloa:** Epistemologías Territoriales frente a las Estéticas de la Desposesión, La Guajira, Colombia

Las demandas globales-nacionales de descarbonización y transición energética han generado nuevos escenarios económicos de transnacionalización y mercantilización de la naturaleza, tornándose en extractivismo verde que se localiza en una zona extractiva renovable (ZER). Una ZER opera bajo un régimen estético, que se sustenta en narrativas de poder en torno a futuros tecnológicos, mercantilizan la naturaleza, alimentan las cadenas de consumo-compensación, y se materializan en infraestructuras que garantizan la inversión. Una ZER de proyectos de energías renovables (verdes y azules) se ha emplazado en el territorio wayuu transformando sus dinámicas territoriales, ambientales y culturales. El pueblo wayúu demanda el reconocimiento de sus derechos ancestrales y derechos legales sobre sus territorios, con lo cual redefinen la justicia ambiental, al posicionar su epistemología relacional. Esto implica repensar y resignificar no solo la justicia ambiental y sino también confrontar el extractivismo verde por medio de la defensa de la vida.

\*Astrid Ulloa es profesora titular del departamento de geografía de la Universidad Nacional de Colombia. Su trayectoria de investigación se relaciona con movimientos ambientales y pueblos indígenas, género y feminismos indígenas, feminismos territoriales, ecología política feminista, territorios indígenas y extractivismos verdes. Sus publicaciones más recientes son: Territorios sin agua en el sur de La Guajira (2020), Mujeres defensoras de la vida y el territorio en América Latina (2023), Aesthetics of green dispossession: From coal to wind extraction in La Guajira, Colombia (2023), Transformaciones radicales socioambientales frente a la destrucción renovada y verde, La Guajira, Colombia (2021).

**Jörn Etzold:** Remnants of Extractivism: The Ruhr Area

Extractivism destroys and generates landscapes and life-worlds. My contribution will deal with its remnants in a European region, aiming at a comparison with Latin America. The Ruhr region in West Germany once was one of the largest coal mining regions in the world. Since the 1950s, partly driven by the creation of a new oil-based energy infrastructure promoted by the "Marshall Plan", haulage declined and the whole social fabric of the region changed. What remained were not only the now useless gigantic machine halls, blast furnaces, coke ovens and hoist frames, but also sunken land, burning waste dumps, rerouted rivers and a new flora adapted to the sour soil. Since the "International Building Exhibition Emscher Park" (1989-1999), many of the industrial buildings have been "reprogrammed" to become centers of art, theatre or design, such as the Zeche Zollverein in Essen according to a plan by Rem Koolhaas. In examining the aesthetics of the remnants of an extractivism that has moved on, the lecture will try to decipher what Cornelis Castoriadis would have called its "social imaginary" – the drive that generated it.

\* Jörn Etzold is professor for theatre studies at Ruhr University Bochum, Germany and Mecila senior fellow in 2023. He published on the Situationist International, Walter Benjamin and Friedrich Hölderlin, on layers of theatre history, figuration and chorus, political and anti-political theatre. His recent research interests are theatre and performance in post-industrial environments, aesthetics of infrastructure and the relations between theatre, performance and law. Etzold is speaker of the planned research group Infrastructure. Aesthetics and Supply and PI of the research training group The Documentary. Excess and Privation, both based at Ruhr University.

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Most recent publications include: Restructuring the Ruhr into a Work of Art. On Development and Maintenance of Social Infrastructures (2023), Special Issue: Ästhetik der Infrastruktur (Aesthetics of Infrastructure), Sprache und Literatur 51/1 (2023, as editor) and Prävention. Zum Immunisierung von Körpern und Gemeinwesen (Textem 2023). Forthcoming: Theatres of the Proto-Juridical. The Russell Tribunals on Extractivism and Ehtnocide in Latin America (Routledge 2025, contracted).

## **Flavia Meireles:** Strengthening its Threads on Earth: Indigenous Artistic Practices

Productive forces of capitalism have turned into destructive forces (Faustino 2022) by the people of merchandise (Kopenawa, Albert 2013), for a longer time than we usually acknowledge. I address the conjoint processes of imposing practices and logistics (Medrazza, Neilson 2017) of intensifying and amplifying predatory extraction by “the need to broaden the exploitation of value” (Faustino 2022: 89). From a different thread, I evoke the concept of body-territory (Benites 2023), problematizing the effects of the nature/culture divide and the commodification processes through indigeneity: recognizing full agency and knowledge production from non-humans in our web of interactions and considering spiritual interactions outside of the monotheist paradigm. It also means the articulation of antiracist and decolonial struggles with the protection of the environment (Ferdinand 2022). Both denouncing predatory extractivism and announcing a world connected to the body-territory, the art projects from Wapichana artist Gustavo Caboco and the Baniwa community at the Podaali Project (2021) reflect and deflect from the enduring predatory extractivism aiming at strengthening its threads to the Earth, through healing processes in several dimensions, dealing with time otherwise than the Western (reductive) linearity and enhancing the cycle of all lives (not only human).

\*Flavia Meireles is an artist and Professor in the Ethnic-racial Relations Graduate Program of the Federal Centre for Technological Education in Rio de Janeiro (Cefet/RJ). She holds a Ph.D. in Communication and Culture from the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ). She was a Visiting Researcher at the Centre for Transforming Sexuality and Gender at the University of Brighton in 2022. Her research interests include indigenous movements in Pindorama and Abya Yala; politics of race, gender, and sexuality in the arts; and counter-colonial and decolonial feminism. Recent publications: How (not) to tame decoloniality and decolonial feminism (2024, forthcoming, book organized by Susana de Castro and Carol Marim).

## **Fernanda Pitta:** Práticas Extrativistas dentro e fora de Museus

Extrativismo é um termo geralmente aplicado para formas econômicas da colonialidade que estabelecem uma relação de violência extrema contra a natureza e o meio ambiente. Há, entretanto, para além do extrativismo econômico, um extrativismo cultural que também fundamenta os modos de organização, operação e legitimação de instituições fundadas pela colonialidade, tais como os museus. A partir da discussão de projetos artísticos recentes – *\_kopheneue*, de Denilson Baniwa; *Solastalgia*, de Lucas Bambozzi e *Manto em Movimento*, de Glicéria Tupinambá, a comunicação propõe o pensar com artistas, a partir de trabalhos que vêm criando estratégias críticas para o debate de práticas extrativistas dentro e fora dos museus, propondo repensar algumas noções fundantes dessas práticas, tais como memória e patrimônio.

\* Fernanda Pitta é professora Doutora da Divisão de Pesquisa em Arte, Teoria e Crítica do Museu de Arte Contemporânea da Universidade de São Paulo. Historiadora da arte, foi curadora sênior da Pinacoteca de São Paulo entre 2014 e 2022. É coordenadora da equipe Brasil do projeto de pesquisa *Decay without mourning, future thinking heritage practices* (Riksbankens Jubileumsfond GI21-0001, Pinacoteca e MAC-USP). Sua pesquisa recente se dedica a debater criticamente noções de memória e patrimônio relacionadas à arte indígena e à história da arte no Brasil. Membro do Comitê Brasileiro de História da Arte (CBHA).

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## **Macarena Gómez-Barris:** Towards a Decolonial Media

Macarena Gómez-Barris is a writer and scholar with a focus on the decolonial environmental humanities, authoritarianism and extractivism, queer Latinx epistemes, media environments, racial ecologies, cultural theory and artistic practice. She is author of four books including, *The Extractive Zone: Social Ecologies and Decolonial Perspectives* (Duke University Press, 2017) that examines five scenes of ruinous extractive capitalism. *Beyond the Pink Tide: Art and Political Undercurrents in the Américas* (UC Press 2018), a text of critical hope about the role of submerged art and solidarities in troubled times. She is also author of *Where Memory Dwells: Culture and State Violence in Chile* (2009), and co-editor with Herman Gray of *Towards a Sociology of a Trace* (2010). She is series editor with Diana Taylor of *Dissident Acts* at Duke University Press.

## **Denilson Lopes:** Against Nature

This is a part of an ongoing research project. This is about catastrophe. This is about a long end. This is about survivors of a time, survivors of themselves. On the contrary of the activists who dedicate themselves to avoid ambient collapses, the end of species, peoples, cultures, the end of the world that interests me isn't something to be avoided. In fact it has already happened, it makes part of Modernity. It was staged not by those who have power or don't have it but wish it but by those of who have lost it, who fail and/or don't want power, voice, visibility anymore, those who inhabit ruins of extractivism, desolate spaces. The crisis of gold and coffee at Minas Gerais and at the valley of Paraíba were reread and connected by a decadentist imaginary of XIX century that survives until today and has created a poetics of destruction.

\*Denilson Lopes is Professor at the School of Communication of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ) who writes essays about aesthetics of communication. XXth century culture and art, queer issues, cosmopolitanism, Modernism. He is CNPq and FAPERJ researcher and author of *Mário Peixoto antes e depois de Limite* (egaláxia, 2021), *Afetos, Experiências e Encontros com Filmes Brasileiros Contemporâneos* (Hucitec, 2016), *No Coração do Mundo: Paisagens Transculturais* (Rocco, 2012); *A Delicadeza: Estética, Experiência e Paisagens* (EdUnB, 2007); *O Homem que Amava Rapazes e Outros Ensaios* (Aeroplano, 2002); *Nós os Mortos: Melancolia e Neo-Barroco* (7Letras, 1999); editor of *O Cinema dos Anos 90* (Argos, 2005); coeditor of *Imagem e Diversidade Sexual* (Nojosa, 2004), with Andrea França of *Cinema, Globalização e Interculturalidade* (Argos, 2010), with Lucia Costigan of *Silviano Santiago y Los Estudios Latinoamericanos* (Iberoamericana, 2015). He also wrote *Inúteis, Frívolos e Distantes: À Procura dos Dândis* (Mauad, 2019) with André Antônio Barbosa, Pedro Pinheiro Neves e Ricardo Duarte Filho."

## **Gloria Chicote:** ¿Cuándo empieza el Antropoceno? Algunas Observaciones sobre la Modernidad Temprana y el Colonialismo

Si bien tanto el término como el concepto de Antropoceno se refieren a una problemática que atraviesa la actualidad global, esta ponencia tiene el propósito de interrogarse sobre sus orígenes y sus primeras manifestaciones desde una perspectiva diacrónica transdisciplinaria que conecta las ciencias naturales con las sociales y las humanidades.

Hay una suerte de consenso que subraya que el ingreso al Antropoceno se habría dado con la Revolución industrial, es decir, con la invención de la máquina a vapor y con el ingreso a una era basada primero en el carbón y luego en los combustibles fósiles que produjeron una crisis ambiental sin precedentes. A esta primera fase, le

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seguiría una segunda llamada de "la Gran aceleración", que se iniciaría luego de 1945, caracterizada por una gran cantidad de indicadores de la actividad humana que van de la concentración atmosférica del carbono y del metano, hasta el número de represas, pasando por el ciclo del nitrógeno, del fósforo y la pérdida de biodiversidad.

En este contexto, se propone conectar estos orígenes con la historia americana, a partir de las etapas de la conquista y la colonia como el punto de partida de una política extractivista que concibió esta parte del planeta como una de las periferias que serían proveedoras de los cambios operados en los países coloniales de Europa.

\*Gloria Chicote es doctora en letras por la Universidad de Buenos Aires. Es profesora emérita de la Universidad Nacional de La Plata e Investigadora Superior del Conicet. Hasta julio de 2023 fue directora del Instituto de Investigaciones en Humanidades y Ciencias Sociales (CONICET-UNLP).

Se especializa en literatura de la modernidad temprana y en las manifestaciones populares de la literatura iberoamericana en conexión con la cultura letrada. Además de haber publicado numerosos artículos en revistas especializadas y colaboraciones en libros colectivos, entre sus libros se encuentran: Voces de tinta. Estudio preliminar y antología comentada de Folklore Argentino (1905) de Robert Lehmann-Nitsche, en coautoría con Miguel A. García, (2008), Romancero (2012), y Transiciones inciertas: archivos, conocimientos y transformación digital en América Latina, (2017, junto con Barbara Göbel).

Desarrolló becas, estancias de investigación y fue invitada a dar conferencias en Brasil, México, Colombia, Alemania, España, Francia, Italia, Inglaterra, Portugal, Israel, Polonia y Bosnia. Actualmente es investigadora principal del Centro internacional de investigaciones María Sybilla Merian dedicado al estudio de la convivialidad en sociedades desiguales y Presidenta de la Asociación Internacional de Hispanistas.

## **Tomaz Amorim:** Extractivism and Modernism in South America: Underground Relations

Many have described the mining and exploitation of natural resources as the destiny or curse of South America (Galeano). Destined to perpetually chase the modernization of the North, South America is compelled to sell its commodities – exporting its nature (Svampa) – at a meager price, only to buy them back later, transformed and more expensive. This is the economic aspect. However, there are other dimensions: epistemological, aesthetic, and ontological. Post-colonial thought attempts to simultaneously narrate the history of these processes and propose their interruption through strategies largely borrowed from indigenous peoples (Krenak; Kopenawa). The future needs to be in some way ancestral. But this conclusion was also reached a hundred years earlier by modern and modernist writers. We will focus on the literary analysis of the books "Pau-Brasil" (1925) by Oswald de Andrade and the fragments of "Amazônia – Um paraíso perdido" (1909) by Euclides da Cunha and seek to demonstrate how extractive economics are represented in literature, how it becomes an aesthetic model to be parodied or denounced, and how the very representation of Modernity in these authors is inseparable from its supposed reverse: the barbarity of exploited labor and the destruction of landscapes. The underground connections between extractivism and modernism (farms, mines, forests, and factories considered together) in the modernist literature of the Center end up surfacing in the avant-garde literature of the periphery, given its position in the global market. To light the modern lights in the Center, it is necessary to extract, purify, and burn dark coal in the factories of the rest of the world.

\*Tomaz Amorim is the Academic Manager of Mecila – the Maria Sibylla Merian Centre Conviviality-Inequality in Latin America. He holds a PhD in Literary Theory and Comparative Literature from the USP, with an exchange

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internship at Humboldt University. He completed post-doctoral internships at the Unicamp and at the FU Berlin (in the Excellence Cluster "Temporal Communities"). As a poet he published "Plástico pluma" (Urutau, 2018) and "Meia lua soco" (Primata, 2020). As literary critic he published "Arquipélago – Literatura contemporânea brasileira 2013-2013" (Ofícios terrestres, 2023). He currently develops a research on Extractivism and South-American Modernisms.

## **Berit Callsen:** After Extractivism – Reflections on Material Aesthetics of Watery Healing

There is no overcoming of extractivism, but there is a time and place for healing. Understanding acts of watery healing as a prospective dealing with the visible and invisible traces of extractivism that remain inscribed in water, this lecture analyzes the film "À Cura do Rio" (2018) by Mariana Fagundes paying attention to multiple forms of (re)connection between the human body and its watery surroundings. At this juncture, notions of immersion and submersion come into sight, forwarding submerged viewpoints (Gómez-Barris, 2017).

A hypothesis is that the acts of watery healing staged in the film constitute an aesthetics grounded in the materiality of water involving acoustic and haptic dimensions as well as a diffuse sight. By this, the primacy of visual perception in Western thinking and aesthetics is being questioned. Thus, in a self-reflexive manner, the film highlights other forms of relating to the world, not being connected to visuality in first place.

\* Berit Callsen holds a PhD in Romance Philology from Humboldt-Universität Berlin. She has been working as an Assistant Professor of Romance Cultural Studies at Universität Osnabrück, Germany since 2017. Her main research interests are constructions of corporality in contemporary Latin American literature and culture; subject cultures in Spanish modernity (19th/20th century); aesthetic figurations of nature in recent Latin American documentary film; visuality and poetics of sight in Spanish, Latin American and French literature and film (20th/21 century). Recent publications: *Cuerpos diversos. Estéticas de diversidad corporal en España y América Latina en los siglos XX y XXI* (forthcoming, 2023, ed. with Philipp Seidel).

## **José Miguel Wisnik:** Drummond e Guimarães Rosa frente à Devastação: Contracantos

\* José Migue Wisnik é ensaísta, compositor, pianista, cantor, professor universitário. Possui graduação em Letras / Português pela Universidade de São Paulo (1970), mestrado em Letras (Teoria Literária e Literatura Comparada) pela Universidade de São Paulo (1974), doutorado em Letras (Teoria Literária e Literatura Comparada) pela Universidade de São Paulo (1980) e livre docência em Letras (Literatura Brasileira) pela Universidade de São Paulo (2009). Atualmente é professor aposentado da Universidade de São Paulo. No fim da década de 1980, retoma a carreira musical. Compõe trilhas para teatro, dança e cinema, destacando-se as peças *As Boas*, de Jean Genet, em 1991, e *Mistérios Gozosos*, de Oswald de Andrade, em 1995, ambas com direção de Zé Celso Martinez Corrêa; os balés *Nazareth*, 1993, e *Parabelo*, 1997 (em parceria com Tom Zé), pelo Grupo Corpo; e os filmes *Terra Estrangeira*, 1994, de Walter Salles e Daniela Thomas, e *Janela da Alma*, 2001, de João Jardim e Walter Carvalho. Tem canções gravadas por importantes intérpretes da MPB, como Ná Ozzetti (*O Tapete*, *Pérolas aos Poucos*, *Ultrapássaro*), Maria Bethânia (*Cacilda*), Gal Costa (*Baião de Quatro Toques*), Zizi Possi (*Mundo Cruel*). Em 1992, lança o primeiro disco, *José Miguel Wisnik*, com participação de vários artistas, seguido de *São Paulo Rio*, 2000, e *Pérolas aos Poucos*, 2003. Como produtor, dirige o disco *Do Cócix ao Pescoço*, 2002, de Elza Soares, entre outros trabalhos. Publicou, entre outros livros, *O coro dos contrários: A música em torno da Semana de 22* (1977), *O som e o sentido: Uma outra história das músicas* (1988, 2017), *Sem receita: Ensaio e canções* (2004) e *Veneno remédio: O futebol e o Brasil* (2008), *Machado Maxixe: O Caso Pestana* (Publifolha, 2008) e *Maquiagem do Mundo: Drummond e a Mineração* (Companhia das Letras, 2018).