


Rethinking the museum from a decolonial perspective: the role of architecture in Amerindian art exhibitions

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Abstract. The text examines the intersection between Amerindian thought and Indigenous artistic creation in recent museological and curatorial practices in Brazil. It analyzes two exhibitions curated by Amerindian women: *Véxoa: Nós sabemos*, held at the Pinacoteca de São Paulo in 2020 and curated by Sandra Benítez, and *Viva Viva Escola Viva*, presented at the Casa França-Brasil Museum in Rio de Janeiro in 2024 and curated by Cristiane Takuá. The central objective of this research is to explore the design approaches developed in both cases, with particular attention to the forms of reconnection between body and territory in the processes of self-representation of Amerindian voices within the museological context. The study concludes that both exhibitions embody architectural and design strategies in which different logics converge—one of them being a historical reassessment of the museological relationship between body and object. These exhibitions actively engage in presenting narratives that foster a reparative movement of self-representation, where the spatial and relational experience between bodies and objects encourages reflection on Indigenous approaches to interspecies alliances. These alliances have long governed Indigenous histories and continue to shape contemporary society, offering valuable insights into alternative design possibilities.

Keywords. indigenous art; decoloniality; design; museums; exhibition spaces.

ESP Repensar el museo desde una perspectiva decolonial: el papel de la arquitectura en las exposiciones de arte amerindio

Resumen. El texto examina la intersección entre el pensamiento amerindio y la creación artística indígena en la reciente producción museística y curatorial en Brasil. Se analizan dos casos curados por mujeres amerindias: *Véxoa: Nós sabemos* en la Pinacoteca de São Paulo (2020), curada por Sandra Benítez, y *Viva Viva Escola Viva* en el museo Casa França-Brasil en Río de Janeiro (2024), curada por Cristiane Takuá. El objetivo central de esta investigación es profundizar en las propuestas de diseño elaboradas en ambos casos, poniendo especial atención en las formas de reconexión entre cuerpo-territorio en los procesos de autorrepresentación de voces amerindias en el contexto museológico. Se concluye que en ambas exposiciones existe una arquitectura y un diseño en los que convergen diferentes lógicas, una de las cuales es la revisión histórica en la relación cuerpo-objeto museológica. Estas exposiciones participan activamente en la presentación de narrativas que promueven un movimiento reparador de autorepresentación, de modo que la experiencia espacial y relacional entre cuerpos y objetos fomenta la reflexión sobre los enfoques indígenas respecto a la alianza interespecie que ha gobernado su historia y permea la sociedad actual, ofreciendo valiosas lecciones sobre otras formas posibles de diseño.

Palabras clave. arte indígena; decolonialidad; diseño; museos; espacios expositivos.

Sumario. 1. Introducción. 2. Perspectivas de pensamiento para construir zonas intermedias y coexistir en mundos compartidos. 3. Exposición *Véxoa: Nós Sabemos* (2020), curada por Naine Terena. 4. Exposición *Viva Viva Escola Viva* (2024), curada por Cristiane Takuá. 5. Discusión: Lecciones de las exposiciones amerindias: repensar los museos desde las alianzas afectivas. 6. Conclusiones. Referencias

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1. Introduction

“What ignorance of thought”, wrote Yanomami leader Davi Kopenawa (2015, p.427), in relation to the way objects and pieces from ancient Amerindian peoples are exhibited in historical and ethnographic museums around the world, stored and closed within acrylic boxes. The Amerindian peoples have historically been expelled from their lands and prevented from maintaining their ways of being in the world. In addition to facing the appropriation and exploitation of their natural resources, they have been affected by various forms of colonial extraction. These multiple forms of appropriation operate through the plundering of images, symbols, objects, historiographies, and representations, materializing through various protocols and spatial and/or architectural museum mechanisms.

This process of extraction of Amerindian objects established a series of procedures that involved removing, transporting, cataloging, storing, and exhibiting, following a choreography of movements designed by coloniality (Fonseca & Castro, 2022; Quijano, 2000; Mignolo, 2007). In this design, it was central to impose, delimit, and project places - such as museums, art collections, and exhibitions - as architectural devices to express the symbolic power of modernity (Quijano, 2000; Lobeto, 2021; Mignolo, 2007). In addition to the design of physical spaces, events were established that constituted symbolic power, such as awards, specialized magazines, criticism, exhibitions, and biennials, which shaped perceptions and generated a visual production and consumption that from the beginning formulated and territorialized colonial forms of symbolic domination (Lobeto, 2021).

In the construction of this cultural hegemony, selective tradition played a fundamental role in choosing values, norms, symbols, and objects that served to establish a specific narrative or historical construction, simultaneously including and excluding. In this process of selective tradition, Amerindian groups were impacted by the expropriation of their living objects and the precarization of their lives, becoming susceptible to slavery and exploitation within the political body, as described by visual culture theorist Ariella Aïsha Azoulay (2021). With the extraction of their objects and their meanings, they were denied a place as *world builders* (Azoulay, 2021, s.p.), even when their skills were exhaustively exploited in a variety of activities, such as ceramics, carving, carpentry, or even the design of territorial infrastructures.

The manifestation of a distinction between two classes of people - those whose rights over objects, design, and knowledge to care for them are maintained, and those whose rights over objects are violated (Azoulay, 2021) - was designed through the architecture of museums, using devices and prostheses for the exhibition of these appropriated objects and goods. This has allowed “certain people, with the right to speak of themselves, to speak of others in their absence and make others appear absent when they are, in fact, present” (Azoulay, 2021, s.p.). Such objects were living objects in their communities, establishing close bonds and mediations between humans and non-humans, as Davi Kopenawa expresses, “one cannot mistreat goods linked to the *xapiris* and the image of *Omama!*” (2015, p.426).

The objects torn from their places of origin reached the ports of Europe and the United States, and were exhibited in art museums founded in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Confined by a design and architecture within the museums, the objects were condemned to exist separated from the communities that designed and produced them. This constitutive separation between people and their material cultures not only allowed for the looting of products of their creativity but also made it possible for these objects to be apprehended as remnants of a lost fictitious past. This colonial conception of art has caused not only the loss of specific worlds but also the destruction of the world as a shared place, and primarily, where communities have been “dissected through appropriable objects” (Azoulay, 2021, s.p.).

Faced with the architectural protocols inherited from colonialism that fragment the relationship between the body and the object, a first question arises: How can we, through design and architecture, review and repair this colonial symbolic violence and reactivate the notion of the world as a shared place? The possibility of adopting a decolonial epistemic framework that broadens the perspectives of design practices implies, as a first step, the inclusion of other manifestations, architectures, and spatialities. Starting from the 1970s, driven by debates and epistemic shifts, primarily from decolonial thought, the relationships between the body and the object in exhibitions and museums began to be reconsidered. Although there are still aspects to improve, several museums are including greater diversity of narratives and representations from different social segments, seeking to repair the connections with colonial spatiality, racism, and cultural stereotypes present in hegemonic narratives.

In the field of architecture, there is a quest to understand how to address an epistemic repair within our discipline. There is a growing interest in research from fields such as historiography, ecology, art, and anthropology, seeking to legitimize Amerindian spatial conceptions and practices through processes of self-representation. This involves observing their design techniques and intelligences, still alive but constantly threatened, which are expressed in collections and exhibitions of Amerindian artistic productions (da Silva, Massarani, Araujo, Ribeiro, 2024).

In Brazil, indigenous leaders and artists such as Ailton Krenak, Daira Tukano, Celia Xakriabá, Denilson Baniwa, Davi Kopenawa, Jaider Esbell, among others, are emerging to express the richness and continuity of their artistic practices. In recent years, several museums have been addressing political and social issues that were previously invisible, such as the genocide of indigenous peoples. In major cities, indigenous

curatorial projects and collaborative collections have been initiated to bring historically excluded audiences to the forefront of reflection¹ (Santos, 2021).

This article analyzes the exhibitions *Véxoa: Nós sabemos*, curated by Naine Terena at the Pinacoteca de São Paulo (2020-2021), and *Viva Viva Escola Viva*, curated by Cristine Takuá at the Casa França-Brasil Museum in Rio de Janeiro (2023-2024). Both exhibitions, curated by Indigenous women², explore alternatives to hegemonic exhibition design, opening pathways to expand curatorial methods around ecological, environmental, and climate-related issues. This study is based on documentary analysis, using photographs, texts, and videos gathered from various sources, primarily from the museums themselves and the curators. Additionally, a literature review was conducted on museographic coloniality, framed within the context of contemporary Amerindian thought. This investigation enables a theoretical discussion linked to the exhibitions, with the aim of understanding how these interventions contribute to the theoretical and practical fields of decoloniality and design. While acknowledging the impossibility of a direct translation between worlds, this research seeks to explore intermediary zones and promote the direct participation of Amerindian groups in thinking ways to confront the present, “we have to be accountable for the present, to be worthy of the present” (Braidotti, 2019, p. 466).

The central objective of this research is to deepen the analysis of the design proposals developed in both exhibitions, with special attention to the forms of reconnection between body-object-territory in the self-representation processes of Amerindian voices within museological contexts. The study also observes the effects of these exhibitions and artworks in their architectural translation. Complementarily, the procedural goal is to analyze the exhibition and circulation spaces of Amerindian art in Brazilian museums and exhibitions, considering their current role from an expanded decolonial perspective and their mobilizations within exhibition design.

The first part of the article, aligned with the main objective, addresses Amerindian strategies for critically revisiting the colonial entanglements of museums, drawing from Brazilian Amerindian thought (Esbell, 2018; Krenak, 2022a, 2022b; Kopenawa & Albert, 2015; Tukano, 2023; Xakriabá, 2020), as well as from theoretical sources across various fields (Azoulay, 2021; Cançado, 2019; de la Cadena & Krenak, 2021; Rolnik, 2018; Stengers, 2015; Viveiros de Castro, 2023), seeking articulations among multiple approaches as part of a collective construction of the world. In line with the second objective, the article then presents and analyzes two curatorial experiences led by Indigenous women, which operate from perspectives oriented toward the creation of shared worlds. This analysis reveals how these curatorial practices open up epistemological and spatial territories.

Finally, in the discussion section, theoretical debates are articulated with both exhibitions, highlighting their contributions to the decolonial field—particularly through the concepts of *body-territory* (Xakriabá, 2020), *ancestral future* (Krenak, 2022a), and *florestacity* (Krenak, 2022b). The article concludes with a reflection on the spatial lessons expressed in the analyzed Amerindian exhibitions, which offer insights for building spaces of affective alliances between species. Through new grammars and concepts, the article envisions possibilities for crafting shared worlds among humans and non-humans alike.

2. Perspectives of thought to build intermediate zones and coexist in shared worlds

“The Falling Sky” (2015) is the manifesto of Yanomami leader Davi Kopenawa, alongside anthropologist Bruce Albert, reflecting on non-indigenous perspectives. Kopenawa advocates for an indigenous approach in the exhibition spaces of Amerindian artistic productions, acknowledging the freedom of non-indigenous people to exhibit in museums, but emphasizing that they should not include artifacts obtained through violence. In his vision, “as long as we are alive, they can exhibit our images and objects in their cities everywhere, to explain to their children how we live and, thus, help protect our forest” (2015, p.428). He proposes that these exhibitions transcend the protection of forests and their inhabitants, highlighting the importance of an art that mobilizes alliances between the people of the *Forest and the people of the city*.

This idea intertwines with the perspective of anthropologist Marisol de la Cadena, who, in conversation with Ailton Krenak, points out that “alliances can be built from the non-common” (de la Cadena & Krenak, 2021, s.p.). That is, although forest care is a “common issue,” agents from the city and the forest may have different motivations. This suggests “making worlds without units” through art, thus fostering the construction of fractal worlds or shared worlds (Azoulay, 2021, s.p.). At the same time, there is recognition of the lack of a direct translation between worlds regarding the sense or meaning of artistic expressions. It is about observing how Amerindian art constructs intermediate places, which in the words of Suely Rolnik are conceptualized as spheres of insurrection. That is, these exhibitions would have the power to “*transduce* vital affect or emotion,

¹ One of the first Indigenous art exhibitions in Brazil was the *Mostra de Artes Visuais Contemporâneas dos Povos Indígenas ¡Mira!* held in Belo Horizonte (2013), Espaço do Conhecimento UFMG, which lacked Indigenous curatorship. In 2017, Dha Guata Porã, curated by Sandra Benites, was presented at the Rio Art Museum (MAR) in Rio de Janeiro. It is worth noting that these exhibitions did not occupy the museum's central spaces.

² Although the selection of these two case studies is related to the fact that they are among the first exhibitions curated by Indigenous women in Brazil, it is important to clarify that this text does not address a gender perspective. This decision stems from the understanding that Indigenous women construct their perspectives on gender based on their own paradigms. In the words of Cristine Takuá (2022, p.15): “When I think about the word ‘feminism’, first of all, I need to point out that it is a concept that originates from non-Indigenous societies. When we try to bring it into our understanding, from our perspective, and from the experiences that take place in the communities where we live—which are many—it becomes even more complex.” Due to the complexity and diversity of the debate, its treatment would require a specific approach, in a separate text, that allows for a deeper exploration of what a gender perspective entails from the multiple Amerindian viewpoints.

with its respective intensive qualities, into a sensitive experience [...] and that this is inscribed on the surface of the world, generating deviations from its current architecture" (Rolnik, 2018, p.61).

Daira Tukano, a leader, artist, and curator, actively constructs this crossroads or intermediate zone. She expresses uncertainty when engaging with hegemonic art exhibitions and galleries. In her own words, "the reason I got into this matter of showing my drawings was really to be able to carry forward a discussion, a debate, a dialogue about the importance of our cultures, about the importance of our thinking, of our worldviews" (2023, s.p.). Committed to debates surrounding indigenous art, Tukano problematizes the notion of contemporary indigenous art (Esbell, 2018) due to its temporal delimitation, although this notion was proposed by indigenous artist Jaider Esbell with this provocative aim. Although Tukano subscribes to this purpose, she qualifies that the existence of indigenous groups, their "perception of the world," and, therefore, their art, are continuous, and she would not establish a temporal division between traditional and "contemporary" (2023, s.p.).

Just as indigenous groups struggle for the demarcation of their physical territories, indigenous artists seek to establish a *territory of thought* where they can constitute their own concepts and meanings. According to Tukano, expressing this territoriality in all spheres is crucial to confront the transmitters of colonial values. For her, "counter-coloniality is affirming our identity" and practicing in spaces of visibility that challenge "all that theory that we do not exist" (2023, s.p.). Tukano confronts this symbolic dispute that challenges "the coloniality of being" (Maldonado-Torres, 2007, p.127), imposed as an ontological denial and an epistemic disqualification to which Amerindian peoples have survived.

In contrast to the coloniality of knowledge, which imposes structures of knowledge dominance and functions as an epistemic locus where a model of knowledge considered objective and rational is established, and from which its knowledge devices are designated as the only valid ones, leader Celia Xakriabà (2020) proposes other modalities of generating knowledge devices. For her, the construction of Amerindian knowledge is not limited to "the elaboration of thought that occurs in the mind" (Xakriabà, 2020, p.111) but to the production of devices where knowledge construction is constituted through the entire body. In her words, "every body is territory and is in motion, from the past to the future. It is there where indigenous intellectuality manifests" (Xakriabà, 2020, p.111).

In the context of the relationships established between art and territory by indigenous thinkers, which affects museum design strategies, Xakriabà provides another explanation of object production and the formation of subjectivities. Beyond being mere products, the objects produced by indigenous groups possess an immateriality, a subjectivity imbued with symbolic values. Each piece of clay, for example, carries with it part of the territory, not only as a dwelling place of the body but also as a sacred place that harbors the soul. In line with Tukano, Xakriabà appeals to the existence of an intergenerational Amerindian agenda of wisdom, sustained "through processes of resignification that will define our relationship with the memories of the body-territory in the future of those who are still to come" (Xakriabà, 2020, p.111).

The vision of Ailton Krenak (2022a, 2022b) inspires research agendas in various fields, including architectural debate (Pinheiro Dias, 2022). Krenak expresses possible design forms to reconcile with plundered cultures and (re)learn grammars, break with obsolete conceptions, and "summon the forest to enter, to traverse the walls, to flourish in the city - *florestacity*" (Krenak, 2022b, p. 228). Forests reveal themselves as places that sustain designs of shared worlds (Azoulay, 2021) and show ways to restore the body-object relationship, towards an *ancestral future* (Krenak, 2022a). Indigenous peoples have produced their territories from a conception of *interspecies* design (Tsing, 2012) that can open doors to other forms of architectural relationship between humans and non-humans.

The Amerindian biocultural heritage broadens the concept of design, emphasizing dissent over consensus and showing how alliances can arise from the non-common. These knowledges influence architectural thinking by demonstrating how Amerindian cosmopolitics and practices are essential for conceiving design forms, even in the museum context, as they reveal sophisticated techniques of interspecies alliance invention (Cançado, 2019). Amerindian interspecies designs encompass resource management practices, geographic knowledge systems, agricultural techniques, governance systems, and cultural expressions, among other aspects. This design approach entails a wealth of protocols and intelligences that fade away when objects are stripped of their territorial context. Therefore, the question arises: How to exhibit Amerindian artistic production within a dynamic of forces and processes that transcends solely human perception?

Currently, studies in architecture point to the necessity of learning from Amerindian perspectives, both their thoughts and their designs, as evidenced by the Brazil Pavilion, Earth, winner of the Golden Lion at the XVIII Venice Biennale, curated by architects Gabriela de Matos and Paulo Tavares. Multidisciplinary Amerindian projects stand out on an international stage that has attentively listened to their ancestral voices, articulated from a decolonial perspective, which points to alternative conceptions of architecture, universal in their ability to shape planetary climatic futures. Recognizing Amerindian legacies in architectural discourse requires an interdisciplinary approach and a commitment to the biocultural and biological richness of the territory.

From Kopenawa's perspective to that of Ailton Krenak, through the research of Daira Tukano, an opportunity emerges to challenge dominant culture through indigenous creation and the construction of interspecies alliances for anti-colonial futures in design and architecture. This reparative approach does not seek to erase the colonial past but rather to confront the present by pointing towards a future where wounds, scars, and ruptures are acknowledged and addressed. It is not about going backward, but it is plausible to consider "experiencing an indigenous, local, and global becoming" (Danowski and Viveiros de Castro, 2017, p.163).

The conceptions of a design that establish affective alliances are reflected in contemporary artistic proposals, such as the works of Moara Brasil, Salissa Rosa, Emerson Uýra, Gustavo Caboco, and Glicéria Tupinambá, among others. These artists express a quest for dialogue between different worlds, creating intermediate zones where forest design forms can coexist with those of the dominant society. It is about *thinking together* in the words of Isabel Stengers, as “it is not about constructing a model, but about a practical experience. For it is not about conversion, but about repopulating the devastated desert of our imagination” (Stengers, 2015, p.127).

However, a question arises: How to inhabit intermediate zones between epistemes without assimilating hegemonic thought? Is it possible to acquire knowledge of non-indigenous codes and “think together” without invalidating ancestral knowledge? This dilemma is particularly relevant for indigenous populations, who face significant challenges. As Viveiros de Castro points out, “this new generation of indigenous peoples faces a very great challenge. What we see is how they are somehow balancing between two worlds” (Viveiros de Castro, 2023, s.p.). In this process of interconnecting and constituting common worlds, it is essential to respect what comes from another context, which implies another world, and allow each distinct world the same right to exist. It is about establishing a relationship with other worlds through art and architecture, which involves “knowing exactly how to combine these worlds and never dissolve one into the other” (Viveiros de Castro, 2023, s.p.).

3. *Véxoa: Nós Sabemos* exhibition (2020-2021), curated by Naine Terena

Located in the central region of São Paulo (SP, Brazil), the Pinacoteca is a visual arts museum dedicated to Brazilian production from the 19th century to the present day, always in dialogue with diverse cultures from around the world. Founded in 1905, the Pinacoteca is the oldest artistic institution in the city, and its building, designed by architect Ramos de Azevedo in 1887, was later renovated by Paulo Mendes da Rocha between 1993 and 1998.

The *Véxoa: Nós Sabemos* exhibition (2020-2021) marks a milestone in the institution, initiating a path towards Amerindian historiographic repair. It is important to highlight that it was in 2019 when the Pinacoteca incorporated, for the first time, artworks produced by indigenous Brazilian artists into its collection, thus recognizing the need to address a work of historical repair. According to the words of the museum’s general director, Jochen Volz, the Pinacoteca now “intends to tell and those [stories] that remained invisible” (McDowel & Pinheiro Dias, 2021, s.p.).

The exhibition opened on October 31, 2020, and was curated by indigenous researcher Naine Terena. Terena expressed that the exhibition primarily aimed to question the Amerindian void in Brazilian art history. In Terena’s words, coexisting traditional art from different peoples and their contemporary manifestations in the exhibition space is an affirmation of indigenous art produced today, which exists because there is a cultural root that resists despite everything (Terena, 2021). These statements align with the declarations and expressions of Daira Tukano (2023) and Celia Xakriabá (2020), who also emphasize the importance of recognizing and highlighting the cultural continuity of indigenous peoples today.

In this collective exhibition, artist Denilson Baniwa presents the artwork *Nada que é dourado permanece, hilo, amáka, terra preta de índio*, a performance installation consisting of cultivating various types of flowers and medicinal plants in the gaps between the cobblestones of the Pinacoteca’s parking lot. This action, carried out outside the building, is transmitted through security cameras to the interior of the museum. Baniwa, protected from the sun by a natural fiber hat and carrying a basket containing his tools, prepares the soil with fertile earth and his own tools to access the substrate between the cobblestones of the pavement (Fig. 1). After preparing the ground, he distributes the seeds and scatters them in the air to disperse them onto the soil, subsequently planting them in the earth. Finally, he waters the entire cultivated area with a hose.



Figure 1. Denilson Baniwa, *Nada que é dourado permanece*, 2020. Photo Isabella Matheus

This action unfolds in two distinct acts. In the first act, the artist carries out these actions with his own body, establishing an intimate relationship with ancestral objects and technologies, such as the hat, the basket, the seeds, the soil, the stones, the spatula, among others, in the very place of the exhibition for several days. The second act records these actions through the museum’s surveillance cameras, generating a video-

performance of the in-situ installation (Fig. 2). This action uniquely connects the contemporary relationship between the artist's body and the objects he uses for design, establishing an open relationship both with the city and with the architecture of the Pinacoteca, into which an incision is made.



Figure 2. Denilson Baniwa, *Nada que é dourado permanece*, 2020. Photo Isabella Matheus

Denilson Baniwa seeks to tension both forms of relationship between the body and objects by superimposing the display case containing jars with the ashes of kidnapped indigenous objects, now charred in the fire of the National Museum of Rio de Janeiro, onto the images of the garden cultivated in the parking area. This juxtaposition creates a narrative tension between the different ways of addressing Amerindian history through the relationship of the body and the object (Fig.3). The jars with the ashes provoke a series of alerts that traverse our time, a time of catastrophes (Stengers, 2015), but also a time of reconstruction. How can we reconstruct the meaning of museums and their architectures without reducing Amerindian art (and life) to simple acrylic boxes and a dissected discourse about a fictitious past? Is it possible to design intermediate zones through art and architecture to protect the forests, as proposed by Davi Kopenawa? How can museums respond to the repeated threats of destruction of shared worlds?

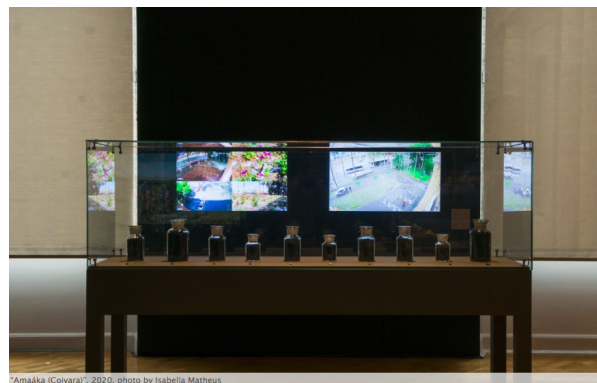


Figure 3. Denilson Baniwa, *Nada que é dourado permanece*, 2020. Photo Isabella Matheus

Baniwa's work does not offer answers but rather establishes mechanisms to open a dialogue between worlds, to think together (Stengers, 2015), to establish visual and architectural tensions and contradictions that lead us to crucial reflections in confronting a global climate emergency (Sztutman, 2023) (Fig. 4).



Figure 4. Denilson Baniwa, *Nada que é dourado permanece*, 2020. Photo Isabella Matheus

This work constructs a visual narrative that drives an architectural gesture that transmutes the exterior part of the Pinacoteca. From this perspective, Baniwa's design strategy is perceived as an articulation between worlds, where an architectural gesture manifests itself by impacting the building to cultivate other relationships and species, which penetrate the interior. As a result, a critical reflection on a spatial and projective practice is exposed that, in addition to having multiple meanings, entails its own projective strategy that translates into a museistic signification, offering images of living memories of other natures and other possible protocols for exhibiting cultures.

The artist, drawing from an ancestral tradition, by cultivating the garden, constructs a living record (a living memory) of culturally shared bodies and practices, inviting us to rethink how we can relate to the environment from other perspectives (Fig. 5). The insurgency of the garden expresses ways of relating to the soil and materializes the intrinsic qualities of the earth, such as its permeability and fertility. The garden-parking-installation is configured as an exhibition project and even architectural, in which the body relates to a spatially designed ecosystem. Through this architectural intervention, Baniwa materializes Ailton Krenak's provocation: we must 'call upon the forest to enter, to cross walls.' It is about understanding that this insurgent cultivation, as a *microsphere of insurrection*, will attract other pollinator beings that will ensure the continuity and dispersion of other possible ways of building space, as well as a pollinating contagion of the subjectivities that experience it (Rolnik, 2018).



Figure 5. Denilson Baniwa. *Nada que e dourado permanence*, 2020. Photo Isabella Matheus

4. *Viva Viva Escola Viva* Exhibition (2023-2024), curated by Cristiane Takuá

Casa Francia-Brasil in Rio de Janeiro, designed by the French Artistic Mission architect Grandjean de Montigny and built in 1820, has witnessed various uses throughout its history until its restoration and conversion into a cultural center in 1990. Since 2008, this institution has redefined its institutional mission, focusing on curating to promote contemporary art and culture.

From December 2, 2023, to January 28, 2024, Casa Francia Brasil in Rio de Janeiro hosted an exhibition of artistic and medicinal productions organized by the Amerindian studies group called *Selvagem*. This museum exhibition, titled *Viva Viva Escola Viva*, marked the VI meeting of the group, in which artists, teachers, shamans, and masters from the so-called Living Schools located in five Indigenous Lands participated in the project for the recovery and transmission of knowledge: the Maxakali, Huni Kuí, Tukano, Guaraní, and Baniwa indigenous groups.

Ailton Krenak was the co-creator of the *Selvagem* project along with Editorial Dantes in 2018. The *Selvagem* collective articulates collaborative projects among various institutions, museums, universities, associations, and journals, thus contributing to the construction, invention, and design of what has been conceptualized as shared worlds and architectures where intermediate zones can be inhabited.

The curator of the *Viva Viva Escola Viva* exhibition (2023-2024), Cristiane Takuá, is an educator, midwife, mother, and Maxakali thinker. According to Takuá, the *Escolas Vivas* located in Indigenous Territories represent the living knowledge and memories that resonate in "the perceptions of ancestral technologies that were captured by the framing of knowledge transmission methods found in non-living schools" (Takuá, 2024, s.p.). The exhibition seeks to communicate to the non-Indigenous world the existence of other forms of resistance that are translated through the transmission of knowledge, where each space-territory shares its experiences and challenges, thus weaving alliances together.

The exhibition of artistic productions from the five Amerindian groups did not focus on the display of objects but on processes, specifically on the process of building exchanges between them of their own indigenous knowledge. The *Escolas Vivas* challenge the figure of the individual artist and present their artistic productions as a collective and intergenerational knowledge, where indigenous art assumes its temporal and continuous condition materially. The exhibition included different formats and expressions of their wisdom, such as Maxakali drawings, Baniwa watercolors, a panel of beads and weavings from Huni Kuí, basketry, wooden animals, and a map of the *Nheëry* (a large map of the Atlantic painted by young Guaraní people),

as well as an Amazonian Living Pharmacy organized by the Bahserikowi Medicine Center, which presented medicinal preparations from the Tukano and Desana peoples.

The spatial layout of the exhibition designed a circular and concentric 'garden' at the center, which relates to the spatiality of various rituals of the forest, where humans occupy an intertwined, rather than central, position around their relationships with other beings of the forest, animals, and plant species (Fig. 6). The design strategy of *breaking through the walls of the city*, as articulated by Ailton Krenak, is expressed within the museum in this exhibition. In the spatial proposal, one can observe how a small forest has literally entered as a collection of objects of indigenous artistic production, breaking through both physical and epistemic walls to bloom and also to tension the central space of the building.

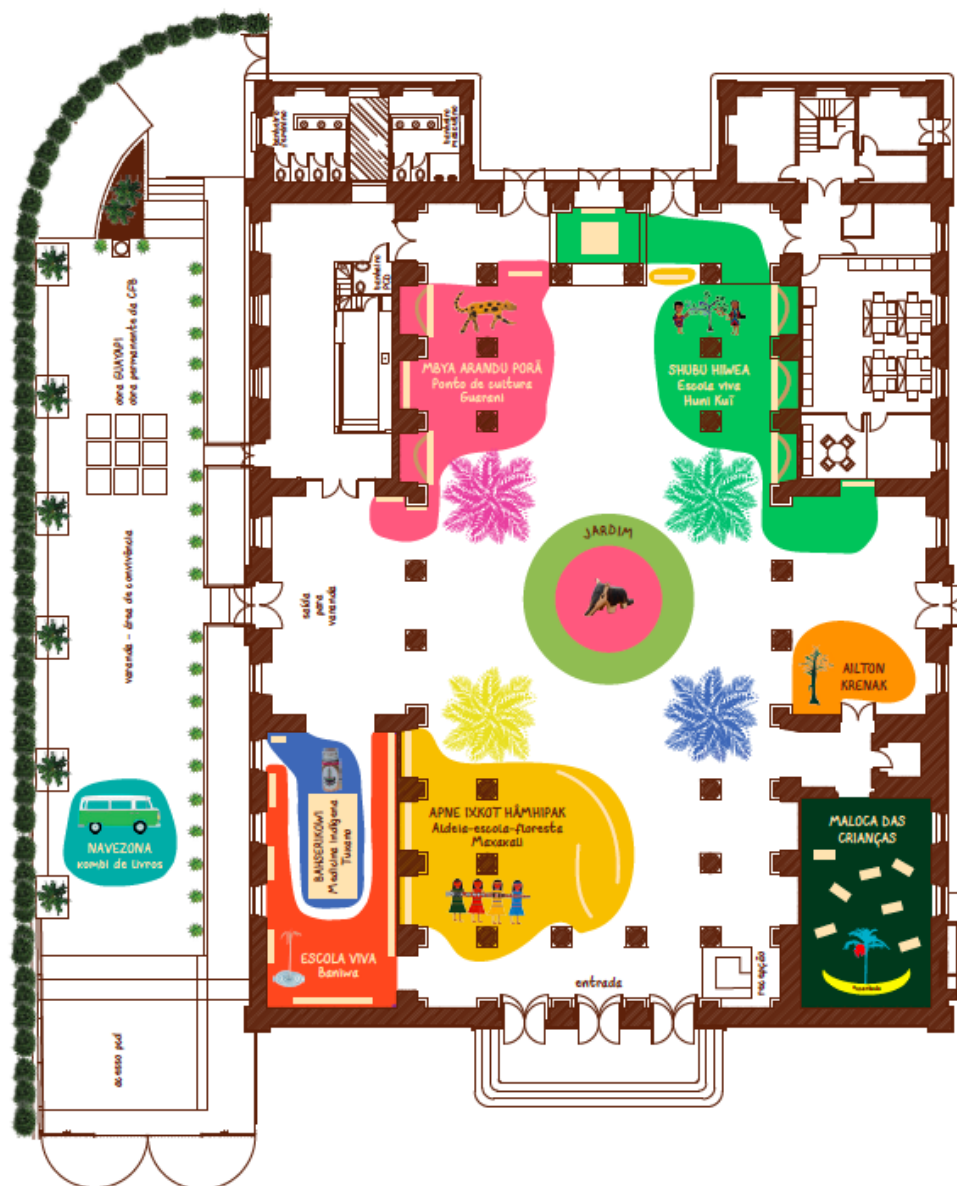


Figure 6. Floor plan of *Viva Viva Escola Viva* exhibition, 2023

This plant garden (Fig. 7) is composed of a collection of plant species cultivated in the Rio de Janeiro Botanical Garden, under the care of the Thematic Collection of Medicinal Plants and the Living Collection. It reflects the collaboration between public institutions to preserve and care for the interconnected Amerindian worlds with non-human existences and knowledge. Plants such as tobacco, cotton, caapi, carajuru, guaraná, urucum, jenipapo, pepper, and brazilwood, among others, are essential elements of their cultural identity, and their central location in the museum space invites us to reflect on the urgency of protecting the territorial designs and biomes that sustain the protocols and spatial practices for building biodiversity. The artistic installation also narrates, in a format of living memory, the history of biomes such as the Amazon, highlighting the interaction, rather than domestication (Cunha, 2023), of a projected architecture between plants and indigenous communities (Neves, 2006). In the garden space, the importance of strengthening oral traditions and living forest management practices is emphasized, designing intermediate meeting zones that have been projected and are led by various indigenous communities with their own voice in the main space (Fig. 8).



Figure 7. *Viva Viva Escola Viva*, Central garden space with plants, 2023. Photo Clara Almeida



Figure 8. *Viva Viva Escola Viva*, Garden space with the leaders of the Escolas Vivas, 2023. Photo: Clara Almeida

In the center of the 'garden', nestled among plants and humans on a clay soil, sixty-six wooden "bugs" carved from nheery tree wood are protected by the plant collection. These sculptures, created by artist Thiago Wera Benitez (2023), serve as mechanisms for transmitting stories to Amerindian children, encouraging them to learn wood carving and share their stories of alliance between species (Fig. 9). In the process of learning carving, Guarani knowledge about alliances with forest animals is transmitted, demonstrating formulas and protocols for learning and transferring political practices, as explained by Celia Xakriabà. It represents other possible modalities of knowledge generation. The carving of the bugs is a knowledge production device where knowledge construction occurs through the entire body.



Figure 9. 66 *bichinhos*, of Thiago Wera Benites, 2023. Photo Clara Almeida

This work manifests how relationships between the observer's and the artist's place are constructed and undone, where humans are part of, and not just the center of a multispecies cosmology. This intervention in the main space does not aspire to define centralities but to connect worlds and relationships, often invisible from our Western epistemologies, in an ecosystem of narratives where art, without any hierarchical preference, also plays a part. Somewhere in this garden, a profuse scheme of *spheres of insurrection* and crossroads traverses the museum, forming an intermediate zone of encounter between bodies and objects that have blurred their spectator-producer relationship (Fig. 10).



Figure 10. *Viva Viva Escola Viva*, central space of the exhibition, 2023. Photo Clara Almeida

In this sense, this exhibition actively engages in presenting narratives that promote a reparative movement of self-representation, so that the spatial and relational experience between bodies and objects encourages reflection on indigenous approaches to multispecies alliances that have governed their history and permeate current society, offering valuable lessons on other possible forms of design.

5. Lessons from Amerindian exhibitions: rethinking museums through affective alliances

Art is the conversation of souls because it moves from the individual toward communitarianism, as it is something shared.
—Antonio Bispo dos Santos, 2023, p.23

After analyzing both exhibitions of Brazilian Amerindian art, we return to the literature discussed to understand their contributions to the theoretical and practical fields of decoloniality and design. These contributions deepen and materialize Amerindian conceptions around key concepts of contemporary Indigenous thought: *ancestral future* (Krenak, 2022a), *florescity* (Krenak, 2022b), and *body-territory* (Xakriabá, 2020). Thus, the aim is to delve into how these notions translate into concrete forms of spatial and architectural design, adding depth and nuances to the architectural implications of the decolonial debate.

In his book *Futuro Ancestral*, Krenak (2022a) establishes a direct dialogue with architecture and urbanism by posing the question: "How could the idea that life is wild affect the production of urban thought today?" (Krenak, 2022a, p.63). This proposal invites us to imagine a system of living relationships that connects humans with other species, suggesting ways of co-designing space in collaboration with them. In the exhibition *Viva Viva Escola Viva* (2023–2024), this wild life is called upon to *think together* at the center of the exhibition, through the co-design of an interspecies garden that occupies the central space of the museum. This action dismantles the traditional nature-culture opposition within the museum and proposes systems of alliance between beings. What emerges is a design of living bodies intertwined by affective alliances, challenging the architecture of the museum, historically a space of extraction of object-bodies. This botanical ensemble makes visible a network of living and thinking beings that have ancestrally co-designed together from their own agencies and agendas, expressing a significant contribution to the debate on other possible modes of museological architectural thought.

This exhibition design is not limited to representing cultures but materializes possibilities of reconciliation with historically plundered knowledge, inviting us to (re)learn grammars, to break with obsolete conceptions, and to summon other lives to *think with*. The presence of the garden in the middle of the museum opens imaginaries and paths to visualize the ancestral forest crossing institutional walls and to project, in Krenak's

(2022b, p.222) words, a “*florescity*”. The power of the ancestral future, visible in the interspecies garden, teaches us other matrices of relationship in shared worlds: forms of resistance built among ancestrally allied beings that traverse times and territories to speak to us of other possible museological futures.

This message invites us to ask: What would be the implications of *thinking together* with other species within museums? How could we narrate pasts, presents, and futures together in these shared worlds? In dialogue with these questions, the proposal of Egaña Rojas and Racco (2024, p.150) resonates, suggesting that “museums could be gardens”. From this perspective, the museum is conceived as a place of care and coexistence, where territories, bodies, and objects are not preserved statically but are expressed in relation and continuously regenerated. This view challenges colonial logics of capture and accumulation, proposing museums open to cosmological diversity and the construction of shared worlds, in dialogue with decolonial thought and contemporary ecological epistemologies.

On the other hand, the concept of *body-territory*, formulated by leader Célia Xakriabá (2020), proposes to make visible other epistemic conceptions, constituted by Indigenous practices in which the mediation between body and territory articulates the production of knowledge. This proposal of other cognitive accesses manifests, for example, in the performance by Denilson Baniwa (2020) *Nada que é dourado permanece, hilo, amáka, terra preta de índio*, where his body in action occupies the museum's territory, repairs it, nourishes it, cares for it, and links it to other possible ways of life through alternative learning practices. Denilson's body activates other entries to knowledge, showing formulas, protocols, processes, ways of doing, and ways of building affective alliances with the territory: with seeds, with the earth, cobblestones, pollution, temperature, architecture, among others. Ancestral mechanisms of alliances are revealed that have co-designed practices of cultivation, construction, and inhabiting.

Likewise, in the wooden sculptures by Thiago Werá (2023), *66 bichinhos*, bodily mechanisms of access to territorial knowledge are expressed through manual gestures, articulating alliance relationships that are learned from childhood. Each piece, hand-carved, appeals to an intergenerational Amerindian agenda that reiterates, in Xakriabá's (2020, p.111) words, that “every body is territory and is in motion, from the past to the future.” These artistic and cognitive practices propose that we learn to build affective alliances with other beings, traversing our own bodies.

^{ENG}aging with the concepts of Amerindian thought does not simply imply introducing unprecedented categories into the academic field but rather inquiring into other forms of relationship that allow us to face the museological challenges of the present from non-extractivist logics. While there is a certain urgency to propose new terms and grammars, conceptual invention does not always guarantee practical transformations. Therefore, it is not at all about reproducing concepts, as, due to excessive use, they could risk being emptied of content. As Egaña Rojas and Racco (2024) warn, many terms are being stripped of their political and transformative power to become mere topics of discussion.

Both exhibitions open paths and materialize other possibilities of museological design and even affect the debate on the design of our cities, where mutual care relationships with non-human beings should occupy a central place. As Davi Kopenawa teaches, we can establish affective alliances between different worlds, constituting more-than-human forms of relationship, and thinking together with rivers, mountains, crops, rains. Both exhibitions are an invitation to enter this network of affective alliances, where we are called and summoned from our cosmological differences to participate in this construction of shared worlds.

6. Conclusion

The exhibitions *Viva Viva Escola Viva* and *Vexoa: Nos Sabemos* challenge the conventional paradigms of hegemonic collecting, showing a profound awareness of the interconnection between humans and non-humans in the creation of shared worlds and artistic presentation. From the parking lot cultivated by Baniwa at the Pinacoteca to the garden of interconnected species at Casa Francia-Brasil, these exhibitions open opportunities to debate indigenous artistic creation as a way to question the idea of a homogeneous humanity, repair living memories, and build anti-colonial futures. More than a mere “return” of a fictitious past against coloniality, these indigenous artistic expressions offer architectural and spatial perspectives that transcend both the present and the human.

The architectural approaches presented in these exhibitions show how the fragmentation and disconnection of ways of life contribute to a history of epistemic violence, present in the colonial history of museum practices. In summary, these Amerindian exhibitions in Brazil, like others contemporary ones, offer valuable lessons on how to design spaces of alliance through affections and exchange zones, reconfiguring power infrastructures to create new modes of coexistence between humans and non-humans.

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