

# What's in a Landscape?

## Indigenous Art and the Coevalness of Colonial Expansion

Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.70733/8sk4nxv472sp>

Patricia Lorenzoni

### Abstract

Taking as a point of departure the ambiguity of notions of center and periphery, this article discusses the place of the landscape in contemporary Amazonian indigenous art. Jaider Esbell's gallery in Boa Vista, Brazilian state of Roraima, has since its opening in 2013 become a hub in a growing movement of indigenous art in Brazil. In a context where a mythology of racial miscegenation has symbolically placed indigenous people at the very heart of national formation, but where indigenous people became full citizens only in 1988, indigenous artists break through an imposed invisibility traditionally relegating them to a past doomed to disappear with the coming of modernity. Discussing the work of three artists – Carmézia Emiliano, Jaider Esbell and Amazoner Okaba – I argue that the coevalness of territorial colonial expansion in Brazil brings a special meaning to the ways in which indigenous art work with and through the landscape. Where there is no “post-” to colonialism, and where colonial territorial expansion is a dynamic shaping the present, representations of the landscape cannot escape its disputed character. Art, in this context, becomes a site of both healing and resistance, taking the form of a claim: “we are still here, and we are still indigenous”.



Carmezia Emiliano, Wazaka', 2016

## Introduction: Wazaka' / Monte Roraima



Carmézia Emiliano's painting *Wazaka'* (2016) depicts a huge tree, heavy with fruits of all shapes and colours, the ground around it also covered with fruit. The tree is the tree of all fruits, the world tree, or *Wazaka'*, a centre of the world for the Macuxi and other Carib-speaking people in the borderlands between Brazil, Venezuela and Guyana. In the painting, men and animals surround the tree's trunk. But while the animals are happily feeding from the fallen fruit, the men's gazes are turned towards the top, and in their hands they are holding axes. The moment depicted, immediately preceding the cutting down of *Wazaka'*, is a crucial one in indigenous narratives from the Monte Roraima area. Behind the tree in Emiliano's painting, which brings the very beginning of time together with the present, is the characteristic silhouette of Monte Roraima, the stump-like plateau mountain that will be the only thing left when the axes have done their job. We all seem to tell these stories of a fall from grace. It is a familiar topic, re-told in many versions throughout the world. Past and present are brought together in Emiliano's bright oils, but in addition a local tradition, firmly rooted in the particular landscape of Roraima, comes to resonate with stories that are told around the world.

Emiliano is part of a flourishing contemporary movement of indigenous art in Roraima, the northernmost of Brazil's twenty-six states. People living further south in the country will often see Roraima as marking the uttermost peripheries of Brazil. In this imagination, Monte Roraima itself, located at the intersecting borders of Brazil, Venezuela and Guyana, becomes a last national outpost. The indigenous art movement here is largely centred around Jaider Esbell's gallery for indigenous art in the state capital Boa Vista. Since its opening in 2013, Esbell's gallery has displayed works by artists such as Emiliano and Esbell himself, who are mostly self-taught, from indigenous communities throughout the state and from the *maloca grande*, the city. By exposing their work as *indigenous*, the artists in the gallery disrupt the invisibility imposed on them in a state that is demographically the most indigenous in Brazil, yet strikingly white in its political leadership and its official representations.



Jaider Esbell in his gallery. Photo: Patricia Lorenzoni

One thing that struck me on my first visit to the gallery in 2014 was the visual presence of the local landscape. Hanging like windows on the walls, the characteristic Roraima landmarks, as well as depictions of pastoral community life, invited a reflection on how place is represented and reclaimed in a land of colonial settling. Land in Roraima is always contested matter, deeply political, and in ways that subvert any effort to fix centre and periphery to specific geographical points. Roraima is not only the outermost periphery of the once European colonial, once independent imperial, and currently nation-state project that goes by the name of Brazil. Roraima is also a place in space and a moment in time in which modernity is confronted with its own inescapable coloniality. Thus, even if the political map shows us Roraima as marking the limits of Brazil, we should try to think about it rather as a centre of the world, where the modern/colonial finds itself. What can the world look like from the stump of the world tree?

## Colonial Imaginations and the Non-Pastness of the “Post”

I will, however, begin by looking at colonial practices of looking at Monte Roraima. Among Roraima’s landmarks, Monte Roraima is by far the most frequently reproduced. When you do an Internet image search on “Roraima”, the majority of the results will depict the plateau even though it is the name of the whole state. We find it also on book covers, local souvenirs, advertisement for eco-tourism, and promotion material from the state government. Further, Monte Roraima has a history as a well-used motif in modern/colonial imagination. It appears on the cover of the very first edition of German explorer and ethnographer Theodor Koch-Grünberg’s classic travel narrative *Von Roraima zum Orinoco* (1917). Moreover, the plateau is said to have been one of Arthur Conan Doyle’s inspirations for the novel *The Lost World* (1912). And even if not explicitly mentioned, it is at the very centre of Brazilian modernist literature, through the main character in Mário Andrade’s novel *Macuanima, o héroi sem nehum caráter* (1928).



Cover of Theodor Koch-Grünberg, *Von Roraima zum Orinoco* (1917)

The case of *Macunaíma* is indeed symptomatic. For the Carib-speaking peoples of the area, Makunaima is a legendary hero, forefather, creator. Sometimes he is one, sometimes two or several. Some legends have it that Makunaima was the one(s) cutting down the world tree, others that Monte Roraima was his cradle. When writing his novel, Andrade was inspired by Macuxi narratives. However, these narratives had to be brought to him via the mediation of European ethnography, that is, through Koch-Grünberg's translations into German and the genre of ethnographic travel narrative. Through Andrade's pen, they were then translated into a Lusophone fiction that would place itself firmly in the Brazilian literary canon as *the* modernist novel and aesthetic exploration of Brazilianness. *Macunaíma* became "the hero of our people".<sup>1</sup> Through this character Andrade created an ironic national hero for modern Brazil; a protagonist who was nothing—"without any character"—and therefore could also become anything.<sup>2</sup>

Very different from Andrade's colonial, yet intensely hybrid imagination was the more "pure" Euro-colonial gaze of Arthur Conan Doyle. Doyle's *The Lost World* imagines the plateau as a space trapped in a brutal past of coevalness where dinosaurs coexist with ape-men. Doyle's is a fantasy of colonial exploration uncovering contemporary pasts that really should have been left at rest. As a nightmarish inversion of the posture that Mary Louis Pratt has called the "monarch-of-all-I-survey", after a poem by William Cowper, the heroes of *The Lost World* reach the highest spot in the landscape only to find themselves sinking down to the deepest of life's terrifying origins.<sup>3</sup>

The state of Roraima, where the plateau is located, has been and continues to be imagined as not only a periphery, but also as a virgin land and a last colonial frontier to conquer. Large parts of the state are covered in tropical forest, inhabited by numerous people officially classified as "isolated" or "in recent contact". Traumatizing violence is here fresh in the memories of those subject to colonisation. In its plan for regional and national development, the military regime initiated the construction of highway BR-174 between Manaus and Boa Vista in the early 1970s. It ran right through southern Roraima and the land of the Waimiri-Atroari, who were met with firearms and chemical warfare.<sup>4</sup> Further north in the state, the Yanomami suffered epidemics, mercury poisoning and massacres when a gold rush reached their land in the 1980s.<sup>5</sup> In the north-eastern part of the state, where Boa Vista and Monte Roraima are located and where the tropical forest gives way to the *lavrado* savannah, history of first contact goes further back, but colonisation is still expansive. Settlers in the shape of rural investors started to move here in the late-nineteenth century, and continued to come in ever greater numbers towards the end of the twentieth. They came with cattle and crop, and for the extraction of diamonds and gold. Land formerly used by indigenous communities was enclosed, cutting off the communities from their means of subsistence and from each other. Envisioned as empty land, Roraima has long had the function of a "safety valve", attracting not only big investors but also landless poor. Tensions around disputed land in north-eastern Brazil have been alleviated by the redirection of poor migrants towards lands held by indigenous communities in the north. Such conflicts have benefited an economic elite that to a considerable extent overlaps with a political one.<sup>6</sup>

In this context, colonisation is frequently presented as a much needed modernisation, an integration of the national territory, a granting of the presence of the state in each and every corner of Brazil. Indigenous land rights become an obstacle to this process. Colonial discourses keep depicting Roraima as open land, empty land, lacking a state, lacking society.<sup>7</sup> Let us consider the words of Paulo Quartiero, who has a Roraima political profile as typical as they come. With a background in agro-industrial rice farming, his political career was built around the militant and armed resistance to federal decisions on protection of indigenous land. From having

been mayor of the municipality of Pacaraima in northern Roraima, he went to the national congress in 2011 and returned to Roraima as vice governor in 2015.<sup>8</sup> Describing his own settling in Roraima in the 1970s, he stated in 2009:

We came invited to contribute to the population and development of the [...] territory. Now, after so much time, they call us invaders. How can you be an invader in a territory [...] which was and still is a demographic void? The [indigenous land ...] was made to appear afterwards, by people who came when the state had developed more and who did not pay the price that we paid to change this state with minimum conditions for human life.<sup>9</sup>

Life in Roraima prior to colonisation, we understand, was lacking, a void, providing only minimum human conditions. Following this logic, the indigenous are made more human, more living, through conquest; which is also to say, through displacement and forced labour. The personal case of another Roraima profile, as typical and unique as they come, might be illustrative here. Artist Carmézia Emiliano herself can tell about an upbringing in serfdom, as a domestic worker with no other “pay” than food and a roof and the privilege to work for her masters.<sup>10</sup> Indigenous dependence has been crucial for the development of agro-business. In an effort to help them break their dependence on the landlords, the Catholic missionaries initiated a cattle project among indigenous communities in the 1980s. So dangerous was the prospect of indigenous self-sufficiency, that landlords would send armed *jagunços* to burn sheds and pastures, and to set the cattle running.<sup>11</sup>

The dissonance between Quartiero’s confirmation of colonisation creating conditions for “human life”, and stories of displacement and serfdom such as Emiliano’s, invites us to ask whether and to what extent Brazil, although long independent, can be considered post colonial. The very prefix of the “post” risks reproducing the notion of territorial colonial conquest as a *fait accompli*, even when there is a declared consciousness about the need to address its legacies. But what if the very legacy consists in the reproduction of a sense of inevitability around ongoing colonial territorial expansion? From the perspective of indigenous Brazil, there is no “post” to colonialism.

## Creating (In)Visibility

Anthropologist Alcida Ramos argues that in Brazil, indigenism—as a set of notions and ideas about indigenous people in relation to national society—has a role comparable to that which Edward Said attributed to Orientalism in the West. Indigenous people are a small part of the Brazilian population as a whole, less than one per cent. Yet, the figure of the *índio* is at the very centre of national self-understanding.<sup>12</sup>

Since early articulations of romantic Brazilian nationalism in the nineteenth century, the *índio* has been the unique element that distinguishes the Brazilian from the Portuguese. The *índio* appears frequently in poetry, fiction and art. But this *índio* of romantic nationalism is always located in the past, as a mythical ancestor surviving only as a bloodline in the new national people to be born. The most famous expression for this romanticism within the arts is Rodolfo Amoedo’s painting *O último tamoio* from 1883. As Antônio Paulo Graça points out, these indigenist narratives serve simultaneously to establish the uniqueness of Brazilianness, and to divert attention from ongoing colonial conquest with genocidal implications. Colonial conquest is presented as a *fait accompli*, safely contained in the past. An indigenism, Graça states, that rests on a “poetics of genocide”.<sup>13</sup>





Rodolfo Amoedo, O ultimo tamoió, 1883

The invisibility of the indigenous present is thus created precisely through making the *índio* visible as belonging to a glorious past. Scholars such as John Monteiro, João Pacheco de Oliveira and Alcida Ramos, among others, have pointed out how this pastness of indigenous Brazil is reproduced in the general consciousness as well as in academic history.<sup>14</sup> As Monteiro puts it:

... most historians treating indigenous subjects seem to cling to the belief that the best they can do is to add another chapter to what has amounted to a chronicle of extinction.<sup>15</sup>

While acknowledging the atrocious records of genocidal violence and displacement, Monteiro's critique points to how this sombre reduction also makes indigenous people in the present appear as anachronisms. Even in critical accounts of past conquests, a perceived incompatibility between the *índio* and the modern world is reproduced. The disappearance of indigenous social life comes to seem inevitable.

The ideological exclusion of the *índio* from any possible present, and thus from any possible future, is reflected in legislation, administration and demographic surveys. Prior to the current constitution, which was inaugurated in 1988, indigenous people were formally under the guardianship of the state. They could therefore be denied basic citizenship rights, such as travel documents or the right to vote. Demographic data of the indigenous population only recorded inhabitants of indigenous villages; if you moved to a city or a mixed community you ceased to count as indigenous.<sup>16</sup> With the adoption of the 1988 constitution, however, members of indigenous communities were recognised as full citizens *with* additional indigenous rights. But despite of this, the indigenist



legislation from 1973, regulating the state guardianship over *índios*, has remained in force. According to this, indigeneity is a transitory stage towards full integration into the “national communion”.<sup>17</sup>

The paradox of Roraima is that while the state is deeply marked by ongoing conflicts over land between indigenous people and settlers, the *índio* is fondly remembered by settler society as a figure inhabiting the past. I will briefly discuss two public monuments in Boa Vista that demonstrate this point. The state of Roraima was created as part of a plan of integration of the national territory, which also meant the integration of indigenous populations. The region was separated from the state of Amazonas as a “federal territory” in 1943, and a prominent urban planner, Darcy Derenusson, was assigned the task of transforming the sleepy town of Boa Vista into a modern capital. He used the Place Charles de Gaulle in Paris as his model, and designed a new city centre in the shape of a fan.

Two monuments dominate the cityscape of Boa Vista, one being the Monumento ao garimpeiro, the other the Monumento aos pioneiros. The seven-metre-high Monumento ao garimpeiro, representing a gold panner in the yellowish colour of Roraima’s golden clay, was inaugurated in the late 1960s in homage to the contribution of gold extractors in populating and developing Roraima. Its place in the centre of the fan is indeed one of honour, corresponding with the place of the Arc de Triomphe in Paris. *Garimpagem*, or gold extraction, has played an important role in the colonisation of Roraima, with devastating consequences for indigenous people. The *garimpeiro* in the city centre therefore is a controversial symbol of the state as well as a strong object of identification. With its idealisation of the common man and his pan of gold, it occludes the larger economic interests involved, and the profits made through the ownerships of machines and advanced equipment.<sup>18</sup>



Monumento aos pioneiros, Boa Vista. Photo: Patricia Lorenzoni



Monumento ao garimpeiro, Boa Vista. Photo: Patricia Lorenzoni

If the *garimpeiro* is one version of the colonial pioneer, a more clichéd kind is represented in the Monumento aos pioneiros, located in the old city, just south-east of the centre of the planned city. This monument was inaugurated in 1995 and reflects other sensibilities and anxieties. By the early 1990s an international campaign had forced then President Fernando Collor to demarcate Yanomami land, which meant a ban on gold extraction.<sup>19</sup> By the mid-1990s, the idealised gold panner had become problematic. The Monumento aos Pioneiros offers another kind of idealisation; that of a history of harmonious settling and mutual friendliness. The monument was designed by local artist Luiz Canará in homage to the supposedly first settlers, and inaugurated only seven years after Roraima attained complete statehood in 1988.

In the form of a stone relief, the monument depicts a group of pioneers entering from the left and moving to the right, being guided by a man on horseback. A woman carries a pharmaceutical manual, while a small boy carries a demarcation flag. The hand of the man on horseback almost touches the head of the first of six indigenous individuals to the right. Both the pioneers in their clothing and the *índios* in their nakedness are depicted stereotypically. While the sun is rising over the pioneers, the indigenous part of the scene is a dense wilderness of plants and animals. In the middle of the *índios* sits a huge bust of Makunaima himself, holding a blossom to his chest.<sup>20</sup> A trilingual information sign explains:

It represents the union of the natives, with their way, receiving the pioneers and tamers who arrived here. It is a homage to the first people who were willing to populate and develop this part of Brazil until then never explored. The display points to the Rio Branco River, focusing on the image of Macunaima first inhabitant of the Rio Branco's fields...

This information sign has, since my first visit in Roraima in 2009, fallen apart, and on my last visit in 2016 it had not been restored. What remained, then, was a shorter text, engraved in the stone itself:

Homage from the city of Boa Vista to the Pioneers who with courage and hope initiated the realisation of a Dream called Roraima.

A central place in indigenous geography and historical narrative is here rearticulated as a settler dream. This rearticulation, or replacement if you will, is also expressed in the colloquially used term for Roraima-born non-indigenous people: *Macuxi*. One of the names of the original children of Makunaima is appropriated and turned into a name for the children of settlers.

The Monumento aos pioneiros, as well as the information text accompanying it, firmly anchors settler expansion in the past, creating a narrative of a wilderness explored and developed with the help of demarcation flags and pharmaceutical knowledge. No armed conflict, no disputed land is visible in this representation. And if the land is at least recognised as *having once been* indigenous—as Makunaima is in fact mentioned as a “first inhabitant”—the settlers, nevertheless, remain the *first people*.

## Frontier

Colonisation in Roraima is of relevance far beyond Roraima. Sociologist José de Souza Martins’ argues that in Brazil, the coevalness of the colonial frontier of expansion not only has been, but continues to be constitutive for the Brazilian experience of the nation-state.<sup>21</sup> The reality of this frontier is, in certain places, very palpable. Brazil is still expanding on its territory, still integrating new territories and new populations into the “national communion”.<sup>22</sup> This peculiar situation is rarely addressed by theoretical reflection, yet its implications reach far beyond those communities directly affected. Simply put: Brazil claims a territory, internationally these claims are recognised, but national society does not coincide with the territory. For it continues to be inhabited by communities that have never been colonised, whose members are in a very radical meaning strangers to the nation, and who yet cannot be understood as either aliens or dissidents.

The state indigenist bureau, Funai (Fundação nacional do índio) has a register of reports of 107 non-colonised communities. Some of them are small groups of survivors, others are slightly bigger.<sup>23</sup> Estimations as to their numbers are inevitably imprecise, for these are populations that resist or escape demographic mapping. Officially they are labelled “isolated”, a terminology that seems to indicate that only colonial interactions carry social meaning.<sup>24</sup> Anthropologists and indigenist NGOs have, over the last few years, started to use the term “communities in voluntary isolation”, so as to stress the agency of those who have resisted colonisation. The catholic missionaries in the colonial contact zone sometimes simply call them “free”.<sup>25</sup>

How can Brazilian law be said to rule over populated land not colonised? Justifications for colonial conquest have differed within different historical contexts. In early modern colonial expansion, the question of faith and the place of the others in relation to Christian salvation was the crucial one. In later modern times, religious arguments would be replaced by concepts of civilisation, and distance or closeness to it, as well as racial hierarchies.<sup>26</sup> These justifications have today lost their general legitimacy. Yet, colonial expansion of capital continues unabated, in the form of gold extraction, logging, mining enterprises, dam building, agro-industrial investments and road projects. This expansion stands in complex relationships to the law and to the institutions of the nation-state—ranging across the state-administered, the private legal enterprise, the illegal and the extra-legal. Colonial expansion might function as an instrument of the state, be protected by the state, or be in



conflict with it.

Suffice to look at the task and role of Funai to see the tensions that mark Brazilian state indigenism. As the state authority in charge of indigenist affairs, Funai has represented and continues to represent a colonial power towards indigenous people. Before the constitution of 1988 Funai functioned as the legal custodian of *índios*, and despite the fact that indigenous persons have been recognised as full citizens for three decades by now, not once has Funai had an indigenous president. In the rhetoric of agro-business, however, Funai is often accused of obstructing much needed development, and it has suffered severe cuts since the impeachment of elected president Dilma Rousseff in 2016 and her replacement by Michel Temer.<sup>27</sup>

Funai officially changed its approach to so-called “isolated” communities, abandoning the goal of successively integrating them into national society, in the late 1980s. Today, contact is supposed to happen *only if* the communities themselves so wish, and it is up to Funai to protect their territorial integrity.<sup>28</sup> But since Funai lacks the resources to monitor indigenous territories, communities themselves—whether defined as isolated or not—are left with the task to safeguard their land, and they do so in an uneven struggle against landlords and corporations that often do not hesitate to resort to violence.<sup>29</sup>

In regards non-colonised communities, two points should be made. Firstly, the situation of these communities is not due to colonisation not having reached them yet, but rather to their active avoidance. This avoidance is in itself a form of resistance. There is no room for fantasies of “virgin” land, or of people “untouched” by modernity.<sup>30</sup> Secondly, although the inhabitants of non-colonised communities are few in numbers, I argue that their existence is of crucial importance if we are to understand the place from which indigenous decolonial resistance in Brazil takes place today, even when articulated from long historical experience of direct colonisation. The non-colonised communities represent an alterity that cannot be understood in an Occidental vocabulary of the political. Symptomatically, their existence is relegated to the sphere of ethnography. Yet, their existence not only *is* political, but puts the modern nation-state and the political as such at stake. The non-colonised communities point directly to how the nation-state does not coincide with its own territory. If the process of colonial conquest is not completed, not a *fait accompli*, it can also be undone.

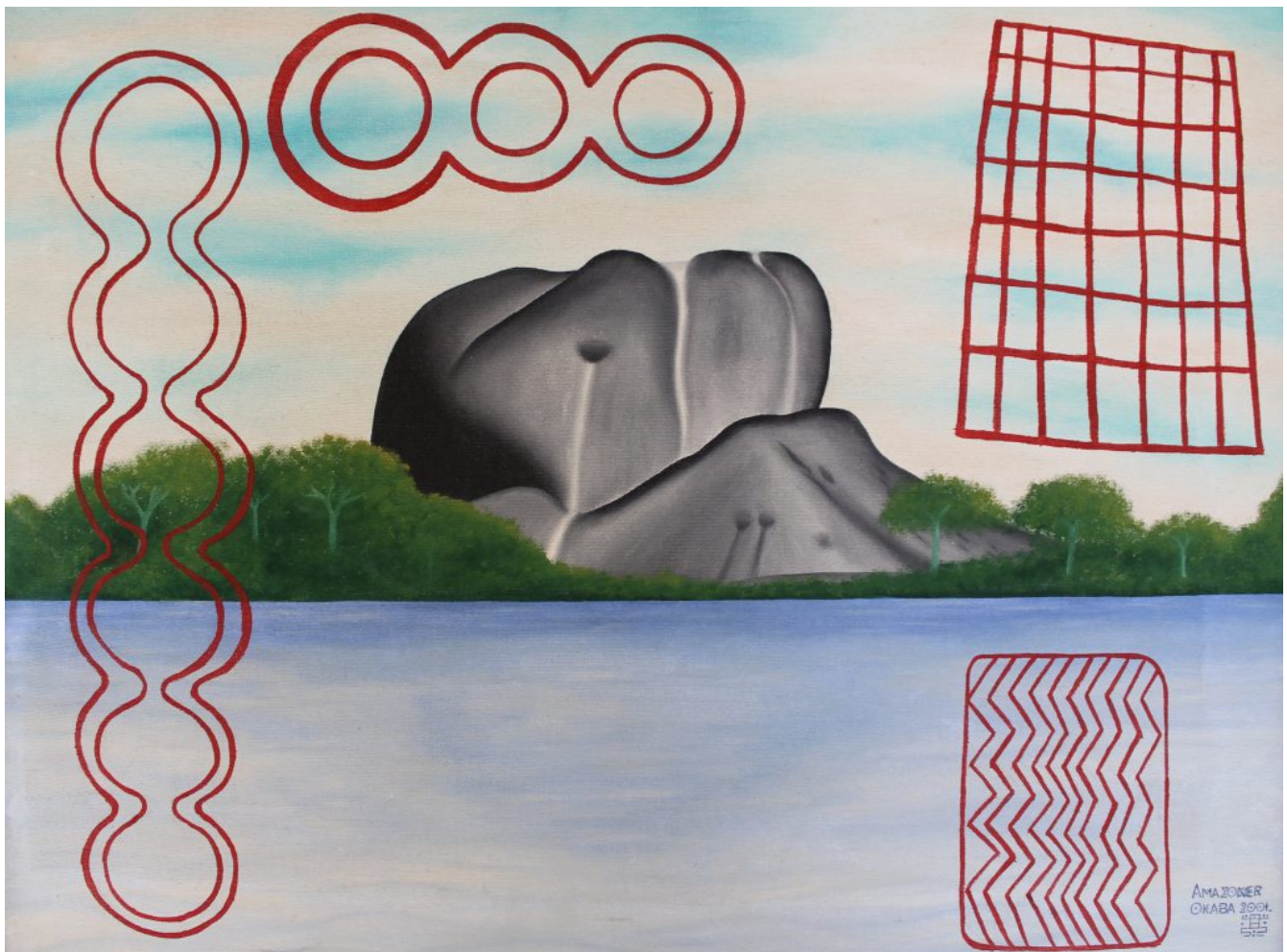
The frontier of expansion, therefore, is not reducible to a place that we can pin down on the map. While having its material reality, it is also an extended and intensified moment of national birth. Monteiro’s critique of a reductionist historiography can be amplified here, for the frontier does not only points towards the very possible death of those communities that are in the process of being colonised; it also points to the death of the nation itself. No wonder then, that no indigenous land can be demarcated in Brazil without allegations surging that the demarcation constitutes a threat towards national sovereignty.<sup>31</sup> The stubborn and defiant continuing life of the *índio* in the present undermines the very project of the nation-state, which since the Enlightenment has been the dominant ideological form for the political community in the Occident and its colonies.<sup>32</sup> This analysis brings an additional dimension to Antonio Carlos de Souza Lima’s perspective on modern Brazilian state formation as explicable through the history of indigenist policies, and also to Ramos’s insistence on indigenism as constitutive for past and present notions of “Brazilianness”.<sup>33</sup> While both Lima and Ramos look specifically at Brazil, the Brazilian case can help us understand how the very limits of the politically possible in modernity take shape.

As the violent zone where everything is possible, the frontier bears strong resemblances with Giorgio Agamben’s notion of the *state of exception*.<sup>34</sup> The exception, in Agamben’s analysis, is a zone where law and fact coincide, and it is at once located at the heart of the political and marking its limits. Agamben draws on population management, border control and surveillance, but the paradigmatic example of such a zone is, in Agamben’s

thinking, the Nazi concentration camp. Taking the colonial side of modernity seriously, we should, however, ask what is pushed out of the margins when Agamben gives this priority to the very specific form of the Nazi camp.<sup>35</sup> Indeed, Agamben does mention—in passing—how in colonial wars a state of exception is extended to whole civil populations.<sup>36</sup> By not including the colonial outsides of modernity analytically, he does, however, confine the theoretical imagination to a Eurocentric conceptual landscape. The world appears closed and without any outsides. Again, colonial territorial conquest is not a *fait accompli*. If we look at the state of exception—not only from the perspective of it being *abandoned* by the law, as Agamben states, but also, in the violent but indeterminate moment of it being *included* in the law by means of its exclusion—can we be sure that the zone where everything is possible can only take on the terrifying meaning Agamben ascribes to it? Despite the violence of the contact zone, what it keeps showing us is that other worlds were, are, and will always be possible.

## What's in a Landscape?

When now returning to Jaider Esbell's gallery for indigenous art, I wish to repeat an argument and make a suggestion. The argument is that the existence of a very material frontier zone, where the expansion of colonial society encounters the irreducible alterity of non-colonised people, is of crucial importance for indigenous mobilisation in general in Brazil, even when it takes place in the *maloca grande* of Boa Vista—or in the federal capital Brasilia itself, the manifestation of frontier colonisation in the shape of modernist architecture. The suggestion I am making is that the prevalence of a living frontier makes the landscape itself deeply political.



Amazoner Okaba, Pedra pintada, 2004





Carmezia Emiliano, 2015

Amazoner Okaba, one of the artists exhibiting his artwork in the gallery, put it well: “In this state, to be an indigenous artist, to explicitly be an indigenous artist, is in itself a political statement.”<sup>37</sup> In his painting, Okaba evokes idealised Roraima nature—its mountains, rocks, animals and plants. They are familiar scenes of the sorts indigenous people have frequently been associated with, as *opposed* to culture.<sup>38</sup> We rarely see any humans in Okaba’s work, however, through patterns, and sometimes through objects, human activity—art, work, history, *presence*—is inscribed in the landscape. And this presence is unmistakably indigenous.

While human presence is hinted at rather than presented explicitly in much of Okaba’s work, the human (indigenous) presence is foregrounded in Carmezia Emiliano’s paintings; they show pastoral village situations, striking sites of nature inhabited by people and animals, scenes from Macuxi legend and history. Many paintings depict the preparation of foodstuff; women making *beiju*, pots of *damurida*, people fishing in the river. Everyday practices that with colonial conquest were transformed into a struggle: Emiliano depicts a village life she herself was largely denied. Through her work, she opens space for a longing that breaks with what Renato Rosaldo has called “imperialist nostalgia”.<sup>39</sup> This nostalgia is the colonial posture of mourning what you have yourself declared dead for being simply incompatible with the modern present. But Emiliano does not mourn: rather, she brings denied histories and realities into the present.

To bring back ways of life has a very concrete meaning in the context of the struggles over land. These struggles



are strongly present in much of Jaider Esbell's community artwork. In 2017 he joined Macuxi teacher Wanildo Farias and a group of his young students to reclaim, with art, the "wall of discord", a wall that cuts through the landscape in Normandia in northern Roraima like a scar. The wall was built in the 1980s around the Guanabara farm established on indigenous land, enclosing the Macuxi community of Santa Cruz. The building of the wall was part of the last escalation of the conflict, which would end with the demarcation of the farm as indigenous land in 1987. When the wall was constructed, so was the *casa do jagunço*, the single-square-metre guardhouse where an armed *jagunço* would keep his eyes on the road. Locals can tell how no one was allowed to pass, indigenous or non-indigenous. But regarding *índios*, the order to the *jagunço* was: "shoot to kill".<sup>40</sup>



Carmezia Emiliano, 2015

In this contested and reclaimed spot, the wall of discord has stood as a reminder of the sacrifice necessary to liberate the land from agro-industrial invasion. In preparation for the celebration of thirty years since the liberation of Santa Cruz, the wall and the guardhouse were again reclaimed in 2017; Esbell and Farias organised its transformation into a collective canvas. On the inner wall of the *casa do jagunço* the following words were painted:

The wall of death

the house of the jagunço

is a sacred place

of art and life

we ask for the healing of this place

In a context where indigeneity continues to be frequently regarded as a transitory state, to *be* indigenous is in a sense already resistance. In the works of the indigenous artists of Roraima, it takes the form of an emphatic claim: “we are still here, and we are still *índios*”. When made from the perspective of the radical coevalness of colonialism, this claim has the force to twist the world radically open.

#### Notes:

1. De Andrade, Mário. *Macunaíma, o herói sem nenhum caráter*. Rio de Janeiro: Nova Fronteira. 2012 [1928]. p. 13.
2. On the relationship between Macunaíma of Andrade and Makunaim of Koch-Grünberg, see, for example Faria, Daniel. “Makunauma e Macunaíma: Entre a natureza e a história”. *Revista Brasileira de História*. Vol. 26. No. 51. pp. 263–280; and Sá, Lúcia. “Roraima and the Carib”. In *Rain Forest Literature: Amazonian Texts and Latin American Culture*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press. 2004.
3. Pratt, Mary Louise. *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. London & New York, NY: Routledge. 1992. p. 201.
4. Sabatini, Silviano. *Massacre*. Brasília: CIMI. 1998. See also Baines, Stephen. “O xamanismo como história: Censuras e memórias da pacificação Waimiri-Atroari”. In *Pacificando o branco: Cosmologias do contato no Norte-Amazônia*. Bruce Albert & Alcida Ramos (eds.) São Paulo: Unesp. 2002. pp. 311–346.
5. Kopenawa, Davi and Albert, Bruce. “Metal Smoke”. In *The Falling Sky: Words of a Yanomami Shaman*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. 2013.
6. Santilli, Paulo. *Pemongon Patá: Território Macuxi, rotas de conflito*. São Paulo: Editora Unesp. 2001; *Diocese de Roraima. Índios e brancos em Roraima*. Boa Vista: CIDR. 1990.
7. A good sample of these arguments was collected and presented by Supreme Federal Court magistrate Marco Aurélio Mello in his vote 2009 against the demarcation of indigenous land Raposa Serra do Sol. Mello, Marco Aurélio. *Voto-Vista. petição 3.388-4 Roraima*. 2009.
8. The municipality of Pacaraima was created by the Roraima legislative assembly in 1995—despite the fact that the large part of the municipality was on indigenous land—as a strategy against the demarcation process. See Santilli, pp. 121–122. See also Castilho, Alceu Luís. *Partido da Terra: Como os políticos conquistam o território brasileiro*. São Paulo: Editora Contexto. 2012.
9. “Entrevistado virtual – Paulo César Quartiero”, *Folha de Boa Vista*. 2 February 2009. Available online at

<http://www.folhabv.com.br/fbv/noticia.php?id=55285>. My italics.

10. Personal communication, 2016.
11. Filhos de Makunaimi, Vida, historia, luta: Ou vai ou racha. Publicação dos professores indígenas da Região das Serras. Edições Loyola. 2004. pp. 42-44; Diocese de Roraima 1990, p. 47.
12. Ramos, Alcida Rita. *Indigenism: Ethnic Politics in Brazil*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press. 1998. p. 6.
13. Graça, Antônio Paulo. *Uma poética do genocídio*. Rio de Janeiro: Topbooks. 1998.
14. De Oliveira, João Pacheco. O nascimento do Brasil e outros ensaios: "Pacificação", regime tutelar e formação de alteridades. Rio de Janeiro: ContraCapa. 2016; Monteiro, John. "The Heathen Castes of Sixteenth-Century Portuguese America: Unity, Diversity, and the Invention of the Brazilian Indians", *Hispanic American Historical Review*. Vol. 80. No. 4. 2000. pp. 696-719; and Ramos, op. cit.
15. Monteiro, p. 718.
16. Ramos, Chapter 9: "Legal weapons of conquest".
17. Law 6.001/1973. A project for a new legislation has been stalled in congress since the mid-1990s, mainly due to resistance against any reform that would strengthen indigenous right to traditionally inhabited land.
18. Santili, pp. 98-111.
19. On the effects of gold extraction in Yanomami land, see Kopenawa & Albert, op. cit.
20. For a more detailed analysis of the monument, see Lorenzoni, Patricia. "To re-member the índio in Brasília and Boa Vista: A reflection on two urban monuments". *Anales: Nueva Época*. No. 13. 2010. pp. 207-235.
21. De Souza Martins, José. *Fronteira: A degradação do Outro no confins do humano*. São Paulo: Editora Contexto. 2009. p. 21.
22. Law 6.001/1973, Art. 1.
23. Funai, "Povos indígenas isolados e de recente contato." Available online at <http://www.funai.gov.br/index.php/nossas-acoas/povos-indigenas-isolados-e-de-recente-contato?limitstart=0#> (accessed 2018-08-22.)
24. For a discussion on the legal classification of indigenous communities, see Lorenzoni, Patricia and Da Silva, Cristhian Teófilo. "A moldura positivista do indigenismo: A propósito do Estatuto do Índio para a proteção de povos indígenas no Brasil". In *Pueblos indígenas, Estados nacionales y Fronteras: Tensiones y paradojas de los procesos de transición contemporáneos en America Latina*. Trincheros, Muñoz, Valverde (eds.) Buenos Aires: CLACSO. 2014.



25. CIMI. Outros 500: Construindo uma nova história. São Paulo: Editora Salesiana. 2001; IWGIA, Pueblos indígenas en aislamiento voluntario y contacto inicial. Copenhagen & Pamplona: IWGIA/IPES. 2012.
26. Mignolo, Walter. Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. 2000. p. 285; Wynter, Sylvia. "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation—an Argument". The New Centennial Review. Vol 3. No. 3. Fall 2003. pp. 257-337.
27. Esposito, Ivan Richard. "Funai muda o estatuto e extingue 347 cargos comissionados". UOL Notícias 27 March 2017. Available online at <https://noticias.uol.com.br/ultimas-noticias/agencia-brasil/2017/03/27/funai-muda-o-estatuto-e-extingue-347-cargos-comissionados.htm>(accessed 2018-08-22.)
28. Funai 2018. "Povos indígenas isolados e de recente contato." Available online at <http://www.funai.gov.br/index.php/nossas-acoes/povos-indigenas-isolados-e-de-recente-contato?limitstart=0#>(accessed 2018-08-22.)
29. For an overview of violence committed against indigenous people of Brazil, one of the best sources is the Catholic missionary organisation Cimís's yearly report Relatório: Violência contra os povos indígenas no Brasil. The reports can be found online at <https://cimi.org.br/observatorio-da-violencia/edicoes-antiores/>(accessed 2018-09-05.)
30. For a demystifying critique of such fantasies, see Milanez, Felipe and Shepard, Glenn. "Contato dos Xatanawa põe fim a resitência centenária". CartaCapital. 7 August 2014. Available online at <https://www.cartacapital.com.br/blogs/blog-do-milanez/esqueca-mitos-coloniais-o-contato-dos-xatanawa-no-acre-poe-fim-a-uma-resistencia-centenaria-8896.html>(accessed 2014-09-17.)
31. See for example Mello, op. cit.; and Rebelo, Aldo. Raposa-Serra do Sol: O índio e a questão nacional. Brasília: Thesaurus. 2010.
32. On the nation, the subject and sovereignty, see Agamben, Giorgio. Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998. p. 129.
33. De Souza Lima, Antonio Carlos. Um grande cerco de paz: Poder tutelar, indianidade e formação do Estado no Brasil. Petrópolis: Vozes. 1995. pp. 39-43.
34. Agamben, Giorgio. State of Exception. Chicago, The University of Chicago Press 2005.
35. For critique on this note, see Fiskesjö, Magnus. "Outlaws, barbarians, slaves: Critical reflections on Agamben's homo sacer". Journal of Ethnographic Theory. Vol. 2. No. 1. 2012; Weheliye, Alexander. Habeas Viscus: Racialising Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. 2014.
36. Agamben, pp. 166-167.
37. Personal communication, 2014.

38. For the association between indigenous people and nature in the Brazilian context, see for example Pimenta, José. "A história oculta da floresta: Imaginário, conquista e povos indígenas no Acre". *Linguagens Amazônicas*. No. 2. 2008. pp. 27-44.
39. Rosaldo, Renato. *Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press. 1989. pp. 69-70.
40. Beacon Press. 1989. pp. 69-70.

[40]An account for the conflict is to be found in Santilli, pp. 82-91.