

Brava Gente: Brasil Indígena

In “O Povo Brasileiro” (Companhia das Letras, 1995) the anthropologist Darcy Ribeiro says that “*The native woman’s child, generated by a white or black stranger, will ask who he was, if he wasn’t a native, white or black. [...] The child of a black slave, born in this land, racially pure or mestizo, knew he wasn’t African like the blacks that he saw arriving, nor native and their mestizos. [...] The “Brazilindian”, like the African-Brazilian, existed in a no-man’s land, ethnically speaking, and it’s from this essential needfulness, to get rid from his “nobodiness” of not-Indian, not-European and not-African, that they see themselves forced to create their own identity: Brazilian.*” In another point, the interpreter of Brazilian cultural formation says that “our most terrible heritage is to always carry with us the scar of torturers, printed on our souls and ready to explode in a racist and classist brutality”. The same can be said about the native art and the condescending exterior view that sees in native Brazilians and their art the ultimate “innocence” or the folkloric view, only full of gods, monsters and myths, among many other prejudices imposed on this original culture.

Part of the Afro Brasil Museum’s native art collection that is exhibited is composed by Rosa Gauditano’s (1955) photographs, a São Paulo-born woman that since 1989 established an intimacy with various native peoples. We also expose a small number of pieces with anthropological values. They are artworks that compose a rich universe of the artistic production of different groups of native Brazilians in their zoomorphic representations of cultural and artistic appeal. Their artistic culture, especially the ceramic works and basketry, today amply incorporated into the popular traditions of the north and northeast regions, exists on a separate and simultaneous track to the indigenous culture incorporated into the general culture of the country. We learned from them how to feed ourselves with cassava, corn, *guaraná*, *pamonha*, starch, peanuts, tapioca and innumerable other alimentary habits. The preparation of flour, the production of tobacco, as well as a series of hunt, fishery and agricultural techniques, allied to the entire tropical knowledge of the natives were essential for the Portuguese and, consequently, modeled a big part of the developing Brazilian culture. We have the formation of the folklore and the religiousness, the rich native heritage acquired from the tradition of the curative plants, from the *boldo* to the *catuaba*. We can also talk about the native influence on the Portuguese language spoken in Brazil, which is a true patrimony of our people. Not only the name of plants, places and animals, like *jacaré*, *sabiá*, *cutia*, Guaratinguetá, Tatuí, Araraquara, *abacaxi*, *capim* etc., but also terms of our everyday, such as: *pindaíba*, *mirim*, *toró*, *jururu* proudly make up our Brazilian identity. It is worth remembering that Tupi was the habitual language among the *Bandeirantes* since the XVI century. Years later, variants of this language were still commonly spoken in the countryside of São Paulo until the early XIX century, influencing the “*caipira* dialect”, where terms like “*milho*” (corn) and “*palha*” (straw) were transformed into “*mio*” and “*paia*”, and so forth.

Indigenous art resists! Its aesthetics, its way of life, its humanity. Brave Yanomami, Kaiapó, Pankararu, Xavante, Arara and Carajá people! Long live the Native

Cultures! Long live the Mahinaku people of Mato Grosso! Long live the Kuikuro, the Kamayurá, the peoples from the Xingu National Park and all native Brazilians! Native cultures are not dead! It survives in our veins, in our forests and our cities. Wherever native blood exists, it bravely resists the capitalist advance, the productive martyrdom, the greed for their lands and the terror provoked for so-called “progress”. Against all this there is blood, there is bravery, there is art.

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