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Putting on the Glasses: Cosmotechnics of Dressing in *Nordeste Futurista*

Colocando os Óculos: Apontamentos Sobre Cosmotécnica
do Vestir na Obra *Nordeste Futurista*

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This article analyses the first two tracks of the visual album *Nordeste Futurista* (Futuristic Northeast) by artist Luana Flores, exploring how clothing and art direction are fundamental elements in establishing the “futuristic” narrative that the work projects onto the territory, challenging stereotypical representations of the Brazilian Northeast. Through the lens of cosmotechnics (Hui, 2020), the study examines how Flores’ work aesthetically dissolves the supposed opposition between ancestral and contemporary technologies in dialogue with *quilombola* and Indigenous cultures of the region. The analysis focuses on clothing as an element in the construction of an aesthetic discourse that challenges colonial imaginaries of underdevelopment, also appropriating the futuristic imagery of classic science fiction cinema. In this investigation, clothing technology is thought

of as “cosmotronics”, a theory proposed by philosopher Yuk Hui (2020) that refers to technology manifested in different forms, as it always emerges and carries within itself specific cosmologies and contexts, questioning the vision of a single, universal technology that is more or less “advanced”. The article examines the use of wearable artefacts such as virtual reality glasses, woven straw hats and fabrics such as *chita* (floral printed cotton), demonstrating how these elements carry cultural and historical meanings while at the same time being re-signified in a “futuristic” context. Challenging the neutrality of coloniality of seeing (Barriendos, 2019), we present some visual representations of the Brazilian Northeast that have been historically distorted to legitimise practices of domination. By analysing the aesthetics of the visual album *Nordeste Futurista*, this study seeks to disrupt the standardised imagery of the Northeast region of Brazil, which dialogues with the underdeveloped imagery of Latin America, emphasising the local cultural potential and the importance of recognising Indigenous and *quilombola* cosmotronics in our daily lives and the construction of possible futures.

Keywords: *Nordeste Futurista*, clothing technology, cosmotronics, aesthetics

Colocando os Óculos: Apontamentos Sobre Cosmotécnica do Vestir na Obra Nordeste Futurista

O artigo analisa as duas primeiras faixas do álbum visual Nordeste Futurista da artista Luana Flores, explorando como a indumentária e a direção de arte são elementos fundamentais da instauração do “futurista” que a narrativa da obra projeta no território, desafiando representações estereotipadas do Nordeste brasileiro. Através da lente da cosmotécnica (Hui, 2020), o estudo examina como a obra de Flores dissolve esteticamente a suposta oposição entre as tecnologias ancestrais e contemporâneas, em diálogo com culturas quilombolas e indígenas da região. A análise concentra-se na indumentária para tal, como elemento na construção de um discurso estético que desafia imaginários coloniais de subdesenvolvimento, também se apropriando do imaginário futurista do cinema de ficção científica clássica. Nesta investigação, a tecnologia do vestir é pensada como “cosmotécnica”, teoria proposta pelo filósofo Yuk Hui (2020): que se refere à tecnologia manifesta de diferentes formas, pois sempre surge e carrega embutida em si cosmologias e contextos específicos, questionando a visão de uma tecnologia única e universal, mais ou menos “avançada”. O artigo perpassa o uso de artefatos vestíveis como, por exemplo, óculos de realidade virtual, chapéus de palha trançada e tecidos como a chita, demonstrando como estes elementos carregam significados culturais e históricos, ao mesmo tempo que são ressignificados em um contexto “futurista”. A partir da quebra da neutralidade da colonialidade do ver (Barriendos, 2019), trazemos algumas representações visuais do Nordeste brasileiro, que foram historicamente distorcidas para justificar práticas de dominação. Ao trazer a estética do álbum visual Nordeste Futurista para análise, buscamos provocar uma ruptura com o imaginário estandardizado sobre a região Nordeste do Brasil, que dialoga com o imaginário subdesenvolvido da América Latina, enfatizando a potencialidade cultural local e a importância

de reconhecermos cosmotécnicas indígenas e quilombolas no nosso cotidiano e na construção de futuros possíveis.

Palavras-chave: *Nordeste Futurista, tecnologia do vestir, cosmotécnica, estética*

Introduction

This article presents reflections that are part of the research for a dissertation in the Interdisciplinary Programme in Latin American Studies at the University of Latin American Integration. From an interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary perspective, concepts are driven by art as a producer of meanings and identities. In this way, the research intersects the field of fashion (Acom, 2023b) as a field of study that relates bodies and wearable artefacts that extend them, constructing a philosophy of technology in aesthetic and audiovisual analysis.

Thus, it highlights the visual album *Nordeste Futurista* (Futuristic Northeast; 2022) by multi-artist Luana Flores from the state of Paraíba in northeastern Brazil. Based on elements of art direction, with an emphasis on clothing, an aesthetic discourse is established that underscores the presence of different cosmotecnics (Hui, 2020). This allows a dialogue between the technological present in which traditional territories live and dream, linked to the imaginary of underdevelopment in the hegemonic media, with the Westernised imaginaries and iconographies of the high-tech present and future sold since colonial times or in the space race. The semiotic fusions presented in the work don't oppose these two imaginaries of technology but rather invite an expanded understanding of it.

Released in 2022, the visual album *Nordeste Futurista* is an audiovisual narrative that, except for “Lampejo da Encruza” (Flash of Crossroads), spans five tracks from the EP of the same name from the previous year, a bonus track and a post-credits scene. A visual album is understood as a format that links a visual narrative to the songs of a musical album by the same author, with digital media as its main platforms, allowing audience interaction, working with intertextuality with references external to the work and unified by a sound and visual aesthetic proposal of the artist's identity (Harrison, 2014). In *Nordeste Futurista*, Luana Flores brings together a team of mostly women, such as art director Curva de Ryo (<https://www.instagram.com/curvaderyo/>). She makes the double gesture of presenting herself and her territory, invoking renowned artists from the cultural tradition of Paraíba, such as Vó Mera¹ and Mestra Ana do Coco², presenting different landscapes that represent Paraíba, united in the same aesthetic and narrative. This article aims to focus on the first two tracks that open the work: “Eu Vem” (I, Coming) and “O Que Vem Ver” (What Comes to See).

¹A singer and *cirandeira* (ciranda dancer) with one of the longest-running careers in the genre, she preserves and shares the popular culture of Paraíba and the Northeast in her Casa Cultural, serving as a living reference for coco and *ciranda*.

²*Quilombola*, poet and matriarch of the Coco de Roda Novo Quilombo group, she is one of the main *quilombola* leaders in Paraíba. With the coco group that unites Gurugi and Ipiranga *quilombos*, she passes on the tradition she learned from her mother, Mestra Lenita.

By bringing the word “technology” into the debate, many misconceptions often arise, which are the result of a power project. Technology is used to designate all the virtues, or all the evils, of a society, carrying with it a discourse of worldview. We draw on the propositions of Chinese philosopher Yuk Hui (2020), who, in dialogue with anthropologists and philosophers, defines technology as the “externalisation of memory and the extension of bodily organs” (p. 14) but not as something universal. For the author, technology is developed from particular cosmologies that vary in context, territory and cosmoperception. “Thus, there is no single technology, but a multiplicity of cosmotechnics” (Hui, 2020, p.14). This understanding of technological development as unified and progressive is thus challenged, highlighting the need to recognise and value different cosmotechnics: isn’t the straw hat, woven to protect the head from the sun, the result of a technological research process as complex as air conditioning?

A consequences of this false discourse of unified technology and development can be identified in the work of science fiction writer Ursula Le Guin (1989) and her reflection on “The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction”. In analysing a major work of science fiction cinema, *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), she looks at the scene in which the first artefact that enabled the evolution of primates into human beings is theoretically presented: the bone, used in the first murder. Would it not be more reasonable, the author asks, based on the position of some scholars, to propose that the first artefact manufactured by humanity was some kind of container, something that holds and welcomes the food that hunter-gatherers accumulated? When we take the first artefact used to kill as a technological symbol, we are also creating a discourse about humanity that has its founding myth in this cosmotechnics, maintained by generations in the classic heroic journeys. Humanity probably began by creating a carrier bag³, and this presents us with other narratives. Narratives that don't run in a straight line between the “underdeveloped” and the “developed” but follow different paths to reach other futures. These futures allow the existence of peoples historically marginalised from the idea of civilisation. In this way, the choice of how to represent an artefact also dialogues with cosmotechnics — the context of creation, worldview, and even understanding of nature (Hui, 2020) — which is intrinsic to it.

By analysing the costumes of *Nordeste Futurista*, we aim to highlight the representation of the present as a continuation and appropriation of knowledge accumulated by generations, where a straw hat takes on futuristic silver tones, cyborgs have faces made of *chita* fabric, cyberpunk glasses can be made from cassava sieves, *quilombolas* parade with their bio jewellery along the river and through time, and the futuristic Northeast is established. While the past or the future are mostly defined by technological “advances” and we give up this straight line, we celebrate the provocation of *Nordeste Futurista*, which, from the present, instead of producing a future, imagines other worlds (Krenak, 2022).

³There are Indigenous peoples in Latin America, such as the Ika, known as “Arhuacos,” in the Sierra Nevada region of Colombia, who weave spiral bags with geometric patterns that are studied by ethnomathematicians, identifying different fundamental expressions of their cosmoperceptions in this artefact that has existed for millennia (Aroca Araújo, 2009).

Phenomenology of the Portable

The costumes in the production interact with the sets. They can be interpreted in association with the translation of a thought that expands and unites the imaginaries of the past and future in the present. The wearable artefacts in the visual album attest to a relationship with popular culture in the Northeast, imbued with contemporary, perhaps even futuristic, technology. These elements accompany Hui's (2020) theory: a materialisation of memory that extends the body in its many functions. The virtual reality (VR) glasses worn by “Vó Mera” (Figure 1) present the viewer with another way of seeing. It is not necessarily these “lenses” that extend her perception. Still, the glasses somehow break the “fourth wall”, and we see Paraíba no longer as the sepia-toned *sertão* (hinterland) of hunger and precariousness but as an overflowing of a *ciranda*-infused communal culture that stretches time into a shared cosmoperception.



Figure 1: *Frame from the visual album Nordeste Futurista*

Source. Retrieved from *Luana Flores - NORDESTE FUTURISTA (Álbum Visual)* [Video], by Luana Flores, 2022, 00:00:03, YouTube. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SLLaGcjK6Q>)

Clothes and accessories are designed for their aesthetic and utilitarian functions, which we understand as belonging to the “being of fashion” (Acom, 2023b), defined as the entire relationship between a body and the artefacts that clothe it, whether it is the body that is seen naked in the absence of clothes or the clothes without bodies that are seen as empty. The art direction of Curva do Ryo established these “fashion beings” of the *Nordeste Futurista*. The wearable artefacts that make up a body, whether it be the belt that carries the machete, the glasses, hats or overalls, reveal how artificial objects affect the way we interact

with our surroundings. In this sense, the “phenomenology of the portable” (La Rocca, 2008) helps us investigate how the extension of the body through artefacts alters our everyday experience of perception and interaction with the world. Thus, carrying the set of things we carry (clothes, bags or smartphones) determines human nature, which is intrinsically clothed in different cosmotechnics.

It is possible to visualise the *Nordeste Futurista* in the Municipal Market of João Pessoa (capital of Paraíba) or the lyrics of the song “Eu Vem” when it states: “the body of my *zabumba* is made from *macaíba* wood”, placing itself as a drum — and in the editing, which compares electric fans and straw fans. However, it is in the bodies of the characters that wearable artefacts intersect and expand as a reflection and as a device that creates the atmosphere in that space. From the Stone Age to the digital age, the different paths of each people’s cosmotechnics, matter, and objects shape human societies as much as they shape them. For Bosak (2023), “clothing is always artifice, as cultural beings that we are, regardless of the needs that determine the use of clothing by humans, as the only species that decides to transform its appearance” (p. 187). This observation highlights the functional and aesthetic state in which clothing and accessories adorn the body, defining its ontology and survival. In *Nordeste Futurista*, we are presented with a universe where human needs have decided to merge elements that, in the hegemonic imagination, would be opposites.

When Le Guin (1989) introduces the carrier bag as a new proposal for a primary symbol of human technology, this is also a statement about how people interacted with the world at that time, when humans were more gatherers than hunters and lived according to these priorities. This way of thinking consists of wearable technology as cosmotechnics, something efficient and utilitarian, with an aesthetic function as well, since it composes appearance, and even the primitive bag is transformed into the bag of luxury fashion markets.

The philosopher Gilbert Simondon (1958), known as the “philosopher of technology”, also corroborates this analysis, as he conceives technology as a “mode of existence”. If primitive human needs determine man’s first relationship with clothing, whether for protection from the weather, aid in hunting or adornment, the advancement of Western civilisations, driven by technology, has brought about industrial revolutions, power dynamics and the fashion system, marked by changes in clothing and accessories. Thus, we think of the nature of these objects that complete the body as synonymous with the development of technologies. “If we can speak of human nature, we must say that it has been expanded, vectorially, with enormous intensity and in all directions; that it is an expanding nature, installed in which man projects himself to unlimited unreal horizons” (Marías, 1970, p. 156). Marías (1970) refers to technical devices as biographical artificial organs, as opposed to biological ones. Hui (2020) refers to overcoming dependence on organs, prompting reflection on how devices adapt to our somatic structure and how, according to him, they are also always embedded in the ontological and epistemological biases of each society. Artefacts and bodies have an inherent relationship, which makes clothing one of the most anthropomorphic

materials adhered to and thought of directly in relation to the human body.

The anthropology of objects (Gonçalves, 2007) investigates wearable artefacts as documentary evidence, based on the principle that these pieces materialise cultural conceptions and engender possibilities for understanding in different domains of culture and society. Clothing technology in the field of object anthropology deals with the relationships between people and things (Appadurai, 1986/2008; Kopytoff, 1986/2008). According to Merlini and La Rocca (2019), objects should be considered an anthropological constant, defining everyday life and accompanying human experience, conditioning our understanding of the world. From this perspective, we intend to list some of the wearable elements that establish the *Nordeste Futurista* to analyse how their presentation and eventual reinterpretation bring about a discourse that counters the hegemonic stereotypes linked to the region.

Imaginary of Underdevelopment and Coloniality of Seeing

Fuelled by canonical works of Brazilian literature such as Euclides da Cunha's *Os Sertões*, or films of the "cinema novo" and their aestheticisation of hunger, the precariousness projected onto the imaginary of the Northeast from the South-Southeast of Brazil is an intentional discourse with an economic and political bias that extends from the landscape to the representation of the bodies that inhabit it, marked by scarcity and violence, such as the "deformed" individuals that occupy the paintings of Candido Portinari (Costa, 2022). When analysing the ethical-aesthetic representation of *cangaceiros* (outlaws of the backlands) in Brazil, Acom (2023a) cites the "cinema novo"⁴ on the representation of the territory and media export of Brazilian anti-heroes since

the rural space of the *sertão* is no longer reduced to the bucolic backdrop of stories but increasingly becomes part of the narrative overflowing with socio-political symbolism. These characteristics compose an aesthetic based on reduced resources, resorting to the scarcity or emptiness of the *sertão* and transforming this into an expressive force for social themes of Brazilian reality. (p. 55)

In other words, the scarcity of the landscape reflects the hardening of the men who live there by nature, and this would result in rags and low-quality fabrics that barely cover the body. In this way, the exported image obscures all the clothing technology embedded in the hats, embroidery, buttons, medals, and rings that characterised these complex characters from Northeastern history

⁴ *Cinema novo* was a Brazilian film movement of the 1960s and 1970s, influenced by neorealism and the French new wave, which sought an aesthetic of social criticism and appreciation of popular culture. They denounced poverty and hunger in Brazil, often using the Brazilian Northeast as the main setting, as in *Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol* (God and the Devil in the Land of the Sun; Glauber Rocha, 1964) or *Vidas Secas* (Hard Lives; Nelson Pereira dos Santos, 1963).

(Acom, 2023a). In contrast to the sepia imagery with colours burnt by the heat of the *sertão*, the gangs that crossed this territory were, in fact, colourful and bright⁵ on purpose, affirming a status and, at the same time, a subversion of aesthetics⁶, a strategy used by other marginalised groups such as punks (Acom, 2023a), which can be understood from the perspective of cosmotechnics, since aesthetic action communicated political and ideological positions regardless of their verbalisation.

Although the traditional representations of this region also carry their own message of denunciation, and it is important not to dismiss them, it is in our interest to contextualise them (and their contemporary consequences) from the perspective of Barriendos' (2019) "coloniality of seeing". This perspective, which analyses the colonial process in the Americas, presents itself as one of the founding pillars of the colonial process, in which visual representation (iconographic, cartographic) creates a discourse of a land that yearns for civilisation and progress, where

the permanent exchange of racialising visual records produced after the "invention" of the "New World" (such as that inaugurated by the chroniclers of the Indies around cannibalism and the savage alien to capitalist trade) is constitutive of the hierarchical matrix of power from which the coloniality of seeing and epistemological racism currently operate. This is why we affirm that the coloniality of seeing, like the colonialities of power, being and knowledge, is also constitutive of modernity. (Barriendos, 2019, p. 42)

According to the author, this semiotic discourse is constructed from various anachronisms, all in favour of narratives that validate the commercial practices of the time, such as the trafficking of enslaved people. The discovery of the "new world" adds to the invention of unknown monstrosities that must be annihilated for the sake of civilisation (Barriendos, 2019). This discourse gradually becomes official and, like the entire colonial process, dangerously sold as neutral.

Returning to the VR glasses — a sign invoked to open the visual album and identify traditional technologies of the territory — we start from an object rooted in the main hegemonic high-tech imaginaries. When putting on the glasses, the view of reality is no longer one of neutrality; there is something between the eyes and everything that has always been there, a strangeness in recognising something familiar and highlighting its value. These constructions are then questioned by presenting a colourful hinterland, foregrounding women, moving away from heroic male narratives that relegated women to the role of resilient or migrant figures (Costa, 2022). The multiple cosmotechnics inherent in coexistence with the territory are highlighted, presenting the urban environment

⁵The series *Cangaço Novo* (New Banditry; 2023) does a beautiful job in this regard, reinterpreting the layers of information from the old *cangaceiros* in printed clothing, especially with neon colours in the contemporary *cangaceiros*.

⁶Lampião was known for carrying a small sewing machine among his belongings, with which he repaired his own clothes (Acom, 2023).

of the city of João Pessoa and the rural environment of the Gurugi and Ipiranga *quilombos*, both far removed from the classic imaginaries of the *sertão*, one for being urban and the other for being fertile and green. This view reframes the relationship with the *sertão*, subverting the narrative of underdevelopment and reaffirming practices of permanence that resist the cosmophobia imposed by modernity (A. Santos, 2023).

This is not a romantic revival or glorification of traditional images but a critical review that recognises the knowledge of the people of this territory. As Costa (2022) states, the *sertão* is much more than a place of deprivation; it is a living territory marked by practices and knowledge that challenge colonial impositions. In this sense, the work proposes an inter-epistemic gaze that dialogues with visual cultures racialised and hierarchised by modernity to construct a new transmodern visual agreement (Barriendos, 2019). The futuristic glasses, as a narrative device, enable a perspective grounded in embodiment and territoriality, dispensing with the illusory pursuit of neutrality that has always been the basis of colonial discourse.

Some Wearable Artefacts from *Nordeste Futurista*

Narrated by the voice of Vó Mera, the visual album begins with a precise summary of her aesthetic discourse. Putting on her futuristic glasses, to the sound of her own voice invoking her “granddaughter” Luana Flores, Vó Mera witnesses the alternation between the pattern of woven straw and the woven steel hat — a piece made by artist Julio do Norte (<https://www.instagram.com/juliodunorte/>; Figure 2). The artist moves naturally between these elements, as well as her inseparable VR glasses, embodying the fusion of the two spaces presented in the introduction: the urban and rural environments. The setting of the “Casa Cultural Vó Mera” brings together traditional instruments and objects made of straw, wood and fabric. At the same time, a small tube television shows activist Yakecan Potyguara wearing a feather headdress. From this environment, the narrative transports us to João Pessoa: public transport, painted staircases, fan and mobile phone repair shops, and stalls selling spices, herbs, pestles, baskets and straw fans. The city reveals itself on LED panels and faded advertisements painted directly on the walls. However, it also manifests itself in the market, a space where the urban and the rural intertwine. Between shots that contrast different technologies, wearable cosmotronics emerge as the synthesis of the futuristic Northeast.



Figure 2: *Collage from frames from the visual album Nordeste Futurista Credits.* Lara Sorbille

Joana Bosak (2023), when thinking of clothing as “portable museums”, beyond its phenomenology concerning the experience of dressing and interacting with the world, relates the type of aesthetic information linked to this “carrying” on the body. “Clothing constitutes a source for artistic and sociocultural analysis, as a portable museum, not only artistic but historical, of sensibilities and cultures” (Bosak, 2023, p. 189). From this, we open the analysis of some elements of the work.

Referring directly to Luana’s glasses as a counterpoint to the colonality of seeing⁷, it is possible to deepen our reflection on the number of different glasses she wears in the two tracks of the visual album. Some are more classic, such as round John Lennon-style glasses and ski goggles that cover half the face, among others. These glasses present a multiplicity of possible gazes, both from the viewer and from the ways in which the artist characterises herself within her universe (Figure 3). Finally, when Luana appears at a herb stall wearing glasses that evoke a cyberpunk imaginary, yet made from small cassava sieves woven from straw (Figure 4), the message is reinforced that what is imagined as the future can (and, why not, should) be built upon the ancestral knowledge of this territory.

⁷Virtual reality glasses are a powerful visual symbol of opening up new perspectives. The artist Novíssimo Edgar, who has a partnership with Luana, uses the same element in his music video “Bíblia, Boi, Bala” (Bible, Bull, and Bullet). The glasses float down the river alongside dead fish and blood, giving an Indigenous woman a glimpse of what will be caused by the arrival of the caravels (Novíssimo Edgar, 2022).



Figure 3: *Frame from the visual album Nordeste Futurista*
Source. Retrieved from *Luana Flores - NORDESTE FUTURISTA (Álbum Visual)* [Video], by Luana Flores, 2022, 00:01:50, YouTube. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SLLaGcjqK6Q>)



Figure 4: *Frame from the visual album Nordeste Futurista*
Source. Retrieved from *Luana Flores - NORDESTE FUTURISTA (Álbum Visual)* [Video], by Luana Flores, 2022, 00:02:10, YouTube. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SLLaGcjqK6Q>)

In the song “Eu Vem”, only Luana wears glasses, in contrast to the second track, “O Que Vem Ver”, where the young *quilombolas* of Gurugi and Ipiranga all wear silver glasses that reflect the sunlight amid their green land. It is as if, in a territory that always affirms its ancestral identity in the present, the futuristic Northeastern gaze is already much more assimilated, especially among the younger generation, those responsible for carrying on their ancestry (Figure 5).



Figure 5: *Frame from the visual album Nordeste Futurista*
 Source. Retrieved from *Luana Flores - NORDESTE FUTURISTA (Álbum Visual)* [Video], by Luana Flores, 2022, 00:04:22, YouTube. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SLLaGcjqK6Q>)

As Luana traverses these universes wearing and interacting with artefacts that synthesise her futuristic universe, she is accompanied in the market by two beings that seem to be a literal substrate of her fusion of imaginaries: “the Corpas Futuristas”⁸ (Futuristic Bod[ies]; Figure 6 and Figure 7). These playful beings interact with the landscape and with the people in the municipal market and embody various semiotic elements through their characterisation.

⁸From the visual album, an independent show was created: *O Corpa Futurista*. According to a post on the account (<https://instagram.com/corpafuturista/>) on November, 14, 2023: “it is a show that emerges from the connection between different traditions of Paraíba culture, such as *coco de roda*, *ciranda*, indigenous tribes and *cavalo marinho* (seahorse), intersecting with Afro-diasporic expressions from other countries, such as hip-hop culture, contemporary dance and somatic research. Weaving knowledge at a crossroads, *corpa* is structured as a circular work, built for the environment of the streets and squares, using the spectacular technologies of popular cultures and dialoguing with the universe of electronic music and urban culture. *Corpa Futurista* is built on the craftsmanship of traditional, urban and technological symbolic universes within *Nordeste Futurista (Futurist Northeast)*, a project conceived by artist Luana Flores”.



Figure 6: *Frame from the visual album Nordeste Futurista*
 Source. Retrieved from *Luana Flores - NORDESTE FUTURISTA (Álbum Visual)* [Video], by Luana Flores, 2022, 00:02:23, YouTube. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SLLaGcjqK6Q>)



Figure 7: *Frame from the visual album Nordeste Futurista*
 Source. Retrieved from *Luana Flores - NORDESTE FUTURISTA (Álbum Visual)* [Video], by Luana Flores, 2022, 00:02:16, YouTube. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SLLaGcjqK6Q>)

The use of *chita*, a very popular and inexpensive printed cotton fabric, appears in the “Casa Cultural Vó Mera”, in the decoration or the skirts of the “Grupo Coco de Roda Novo Quilombo”, and is the face/mask that gives the Corpas Futuristas a playful and friendly tone (see Figure 7). This fabric, which is quite old and extremely traditional, originally came from India but arrived in Brazil during the colonial period and was brought by the Portuguese. Today, it is possible to map the “social use of this print in the Brazilian cultural scene, initially worn by enslaved people and later encompassing all levels of society” (Garcia et al., 2019, p. 3). Once *chita* was produced in Brazil, mainly by black and Indigenous people, it was later criminalised due to the economic policies of the colony, which resumed importing fabrics from India, making *chita* a symbol of resistance against the arbitrariness of the crown (Rocha & Queiroz, 2010). In fact, although the fabric has a reputation for being ordinary and cheap, it has gone from traditional to cult status⁹. In the 1970s, fashion designer Zuzu Angel¹⁰, by valuing elements of Brazilian identity in runway fashion, transformed *chita* and *chitão* into luxury items, which were consumed by the upper classes in the country. In 2005, *chita* floral textiles returned as a trend, being used in collections by various designers, such as Ronaldo Fraga and Lino Villaventura. “After becoming a reference in Brazilian fashion, *chita* became the theme of the Estácio de Sá carnival school (RJ) in 2009” (Garcia et al., 2019, p. 8). Even so, in the Corpas Futuristas of the album mentioned above, the use of *chita* seeks precisely to reclaim the popular perspective of the fabric, closely linked to dances and festive celebrations, which seem to take over the dancers. Subverted into masks that cover the entire face, producing a kind of “rural alien” whose anonymity and strangeness interact with the local people. In this case, the unusual and the ancestral make up the futuristic scenario imagined by Luana. In the absence of eyes, the familiar print adorned by straw hats and the irreverent attitude of these bodies subverts the logic of space and strangeness. When dancing, these strange beings become familiar and pleasing to the eye.

It is possible to compare this use to a political claim for the use of *chita*, as pointed out by F. Santos and Mendes (2023): the fabric appearing in the visuals of contemporary women of the Movimento das Trabalhadoras Rurais Sem Terra (Landless Rural Workers’ Movement), emerging to cover their faces or in table

⁹In Brazil, the expression that denotes something with “cult status” indicates that its standing has been transformed: when something from popular culture becomes revered by specific audiences, or even when the general public initially overlooks something and is later rediscovered, revisited, and becomes a trend among a group of admirers. One example is the cult surrounding B movies.

¹⁰Zuleika de Souza Netto, known as Zuzu Angel (1921–1976), was a Brazilian fashion designer and activist who gained prominence mainly for her fight against the military dictatorship in Brazil in the 1960s and 1970s. She gained notoriety in the Brazilian fashion scene for her creations that blended elements of Brazilian culture with international influences. Her story was marked by a personal tragedy that further drove her to become involved in political activism. Her son, Stuart Angel, was arrested, tortured and disappeared during the military regime in 1971. In her quest for justice and to denounce the regime’s abuses, Zuzu used her fame to draw attention to her son’s case, turning her own pain into a symbol of resistance. She died in 1976 in a car accident under mysterious circumstances, now considered an assassination by the military regime.

decorations and protest posters. “A symbol of struggle, visual representation and cultural identity of the actions promoted (...) the importance of *chita* for the identity of the peasant and popular feminist movement” (F. Santos & Mendes, 2023, p. 1).

Our perceptions of *Nordeste Futurista* are also fuelled by the futuristic fashion cliché of the 1960s, with silver clothes made of plastic, metal and PVC that André Courregès, Pierre Cardin and Paco Rabanne brought to ready-to-wear. However, when one of the *corpas* appears in a silver jumpsuit, NASA astronaut style, it becomes clear how much the other jumpsuits that appear in this work, including the orange ones worn by Luana and Mestra Ana (Figure 8) in the track “O Que Vem Ver” dialogue with the same reference.



Figure 8: *Frame from the visual album Nordeste Futurista*

Source. Retrieved from *Luana Flores - NORDESTE FUTURISTA (Álbum Visual)* [Video], by Luana Flores, 2022, 00:05:01, YouTube. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SLLaGcjqK6Q>)

The futuristic *corpas* also wear masks, but instead of modern helmets, they have complex straw hats, like the one that opens the visual album. These playful *corpas* are striking because they combine traditional clothing elements from the region with conventional elements of science fiction in an anthropophagy that embodies the futuristic Northeast.

Characterising the futuristic *corpas* with these jumpsuits directly refers to the image of the extraterrestrial who, despite similarities with the human form, has no eyes, nose or mouth, which could even make them intimidating. It is possible to investigate the origins of this futuristic imagery, which associates silver colours and work jumpsuits with an idea of the future since the space race.

Referring to the context of the Cold War, in the late 1940s and during the 1950s, the United States was leading a schizophrenic policy of fighting communism and the imminence of atomic Armageddon¹¹. At that time, popular culture, cinema, television, advertising, and even comic books valued the “American way of life” and highlighted the differences between the living standards of Americans and Soviets.

In 1949, the Soviet Union conducted its first atomic tests, breaking the enemy’s hegemony in the field of nuclear weapons. Thus, the United States entered the Cold War period in an atmosphere of tension and fear of a nuclear attack. In addition, the Cold War period between the United States and the Soviet Union was marked by the so-called “space race”: a competition between the two countries for leadership in space exploration technology. Cosmotronics developed at the time, science fiction stories and various themes related to space exploration became associated with modernity and were widely explored by the media. Film productions brought these new fears to the fore in different ways, always referring to the disastrous and unknown consequences of the use of nuclear energy and the possibility of alien invasion — the eternal American fear of otherness.

The costumes worn by astronauts in 1950s films denote creativity and influence in this imaginary world that was constructed through space exploration. After all, there were not many references, as NASA itself was only created in the late 1950s. In the film *Project Moon Base* (1953), for example, we can see some silver uniforms and bizarre caps, or even meaningless shorts and aeronautical-style jackets. In *Flight to Mars* (1951), the clothing design was more familiar to what we think of today: padded jumpsuits with traditional diving helmets, all very colourful, as each astronaut wore a different colour.

Sixties fashion, which anticipated the arrival of man on the moon (1969), was invaded by the metallic and space-age aspects of the period. In fact, the French film *Qui Êtes-Vous Polly Magoo?* (Who Are You, Polly Magoo?; 1966), by William Klein, satirises designers of the time, such as Courrèges and Paco Rabanne: the film features a fashion show of “futuristic costumes” in silver metal, which actually hurt the models. The space race permeated culture, the way the 1960s approached the future, appearing in theme parks such as Disney’s Epcot Centre, in the famous film *Barbarella* (1966), as well as in decorative objects and television series such as *Lost in Space* (1965–1968), *The Jetsons* (1962–1963) and several others, leaving a record of how the future was imagined at that time and what that says about those people.

¹¹The paranoia surrounding the nuclear threat can be exemplified by the United States Civil Defence propaganda in the 1951 short film “Duck and Cover” (<https://youtube.com/watch?v=IKqXu-5jw60>).

The *Quilombola* Cosmotechnics of Dress

In the Ipiranga and Gurugi *quilombos*¹², Luana invites Mestra Ana do Coco, who appears in her futuristic aesthetic, both of them sharing orange jumpsuits and futuristic glasses. The *quilombo* is characterised by vibrantly coloured fabrics hanging everywhere and people richly dressed in turbans, jewellery made from seeds and other elements from the *quilombo* itself, from the Biojoias Duá¹³ brand (see Figure 8), skirts and many layers of fabric. *Chita*, as already mentioned, is a dominant element because it is a specific clothing technology that characterises the Coco de Roda Novo Quilombo group.

It is worth emphasising here the homage paid to *quilombola* cosmotechnics through the costumes, which, in their richness of elements, claim cultural belonging, a vibrant identity and an evident memory that is not limited to the wounds of the period of slavery. As Beatriz Nascimento (2021) says, the *quilombola* tradition is “a historical heritage based on freedom, not captivity” (p. 115). Cultural practices such as *batuques* (drum beats), *capoeira*, or *coco de roda* are highly refined cosmotechnics for communication and the maintenance of ancestry, with aesthetic bias also being powerfully maintained through culture. Unlike the first track, “Eu Vem,” the track “O Que Vem Ver” features the *quilombo* residents themselves characterised within a futuristic Northeast, giving the impression that they are natives of this universe, unlike the role of the Corpas Futuristas in the municipal market of João Pessoa. In the *quilombo*, we do not need to convince anyone; it is a place where this aesthetic does not cause strangeness.

When we get to the fashion movie (Chioccarello, 2022), which has a river as a catwalk, young *quilombolas* as models, and a wide variety of white clothes and necklaces (known as “guias de santo”) that refer to African-based religions adorned once again by Biojóias Duá, fashion and cosmotechnics are clearly evident hand in hand. Beyond the opposition to the image of drought, the river as a path to be trodden by bare feet refers to Antônio Bispo’s perspective of confluence:

I have no doubt that confluence is the energy that is moving us towards sharing, recognition and respect. A river does not cease to be a river because it flows into another river; on the contrary, it becomes itself and other rivers, and it becomes stronger. When we come together, we do not cease to be ourselves; we become ourselves and other people, and we yield. Confluence is a force that yields,

¹² *Quilombos* are territorial and resistance spaces, constitutionally recognized in Brazil for comprising communities formed by remnants and descendants of enslaved Africans, who preserve cultural, social practices and traditional ways of life associated with African ancestry. Originally, quilombos were formed in the Brazilian colonial period by runaway enslaved Africans, often joined by Indigenous peoples and other marginalized groups, with the goal of achieving freedom, autonomy, and cultural preservation. The quilombos called Ipiranga and Gurugi, mentioned here, are located in the state of Paraíba, in the Northeast region of Brazil.

¹³ Handcrafted bio-jewellery made from seeds native to Quilombo Ipiranga. (https://instagram.com/biojoias_dua/).

that increases, that expands. That is the benchmark. (A. Santos, 2023, p. 15)

Indigenous philosopher Ailton Krenak (2022) opens his book *Futuro Ancestral* with a salute to rivers, understanding bodies of water as the foundation around which all human civilisations have been structured and whose current state says much more about these civilisations than their urban buildings. The aerial rivers, in a consensus between Krenak (2022) and A. Santos (2023), only reaffirm the confluence of the paths of peoples who may be separated by distances but united in their respect for these greater ancestors.

The new generation then parades proudly of their roots (Figure 9), reaffirming in this accompaniment of generations the idea that “if there is a future to be considered, that future is ancestral” (Krenak, 2022, p. 11). With their glasses removed and their clothing presented directly to the camera, the *quilombolas* appear as bodies adorned with artefacts laden with symbolic meaning. This is what gives them a social group identity (Acom & Moraes, 2021) and, at the same time, challenges the hegemonic aesthetic and, once again, the imaginary of the present and the future. Mestra Ana is the only one who adds to her white clothes the traditional *chita* skirt and bathes in the light of a setting sun. She plays in the waters of this river path while her laughter echoes and mixes with waves of tuning interference.



Figure 9: *Frame from the visual album Nordeste Futurista*
 Source. Retrieved from *Luana Flores - NORDESTE FUTURISTA (Álbum Visual)* [Video], by Luana Flores, 2022, 00:05:59, YouTube. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SLLaGcjK6Q>)

Final Stitches

Broadening the understanding of technology through cosmotechnics is akin to putting on glasses and gaining clearer insight into the discourses and disputes embedded in the technology around us, including “clothing technology” (Acom & Moraes, 2021), conceived as “clothing cosmotechnics”. From this invitation to take a look that does not seek neutrality, putting on futuristic glasses is a true manifesto about the contemporary strength of Paraíba, Northeastern and Latin American culture and aesthetics, anthropophagising hegemonic patterns at will.

The construction of the art direction based on the wearable artefacts in “Nordeste Futurista” then proposes a rupture with conventional imaginaries about the Northeast as a territory, temporality and corporeality, challenging stereotypes that are constantly linked to aridity and deprivation. The characterisation of the characters allows the universe of the futuristic Northeast to be established, where the familiarity of everyday artefacts, whether the most high-tech or the most rustic, situate this futurism in the present time while at the same time reversing the position, placing the present time as the builder of the future. Working with indigenous and *quilombola* cosmotechnics is not a way of bringing something from the past into the present but rather a gesture of highlighting the contemporaneity of all and the impossibility of imagining a future if we continue only with Western cosmotechnics.

The presence of water, the living territory, and the *corpas* that carry the discourses themselves are the ancestries maintained in the passing of knowledge to the next generations (A. Santos, 2023) to, ultimately, as Krenak (2022) says, reach almost where our ancestors have already been. The prominence of clothing, bio-jewellery and ancestral accessories highlights the cosmotechnics of the different peoples of this region, whether urban, Indigenous or *quilombola*, where the act of dressing is an affirmation of identity, memory, historical continuity and technological autonomy.

This research emphasises the perspective of cosmotechnics in the Northeast region and Latin America, thus subverting the coloniality of seeing and highlighting the discourses present in clothing technology in different contexts. Whether in traditional festivals or contemporary reinterpretations, as well as in audiovisual contexts such as music videos, clothing is an important element in characterising these bodies in relation to the world, carrying within it the knowledge of different generations. This approach to visual studies opens up space for interdisciplinary dialogues that inhabit our daily lives, whether in teaching or the production of images. In this way, it is crucial to be attentive to the wide range of Latin American artistic productions that have been carried out in recent years, finding a different perspective on each one of them.

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