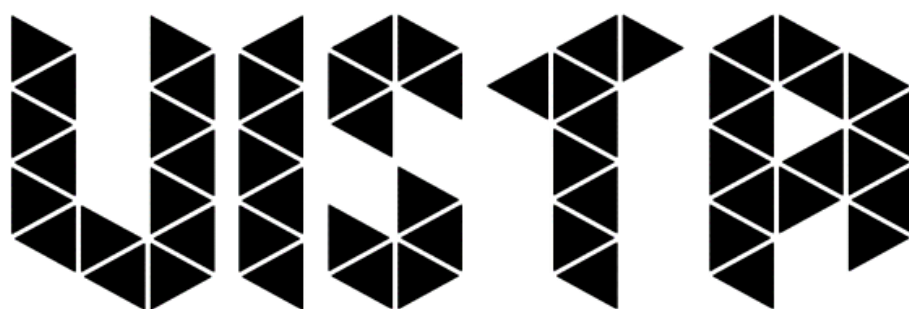




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INTRODUCTORY NOTE: CONSTELLATIONS OF THE SENSIBLE, *AESTHESIS* AND CULTURAL FRICTIONS

NOTA INTRODUTÓRIA: CONSTELAÇÕES DO SENSÍVEL, AIESTHESIS E FRICÇÕES CULTURAIS

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“Just as living itself, creating is an existential process” (Ostrower, 1977/2022, p. 56). Building on this idea, Fayga Ostrower, a Polish-born visual artist and educator based in Brazil, conceives the creative process not as an activity detached from personal and collective life, but as a fundamental dimension of human existence. In this sense, creating and expressing oneself translates into *sensing*, *perceiving* and *experiencing* the world, giving form to these experiences through multiple languages and materialities.

The emphasis on sensibility as a way of inhabiting the world is not new. In Ancient Greece, the notion of *aisthesis* referred to the process of perception and sensation common to all living organisms with sensory faculties, including humans. Later, in the 18th century, the German philosopher Alexander Baumgarten would narrow and transform the term’s scope by establishing a disciplinary field — *Aesthetics* — which Hegel (1834/2003) described as a science of sensory cognition. Continuing this theoretical lineage, Immanuel Kant (1970/2017) proposed a conjunction between sensory perception and highly specialised mental faculties such as imagination and cognition, giving rise to the notion of judgement of taste, widely discussed in his *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (The Critique of Judgement).

Aesthetics thus became consolidated as *Aesthetics*, transmuting the idea of *aisthesis* — linked to a universal biological phenomenon — into a disciplinary field grounded in theory. It is this conception of Aesthetics (with a capital A) that has underpinned and guided, for example, the writing and construction of an art history oriented towards European aesthetic standards. As a result, sensibility was no longer understood as a central dimension of human existence, becoming the domain of specialists, philosophers and art critics, and being confined to debates on art and beauty. At the same time that a European and Global North aesthetic standard was established as a universal reference, numerous other forms of sensory experience and creative expression were delegitimised

and marginalised within historical discourse. Cultural plurality and its diverse ways of perceiving, feeling and producing visualities were systematically devalued and subalternised in a process of continuous “erosion of lived experience and of noise” (Krenak, 2020, p. 55).

However, the debate on images and visualities is not exclusively epistemological. Considering the “splendour of images” (Martins, 2011, p. 77) in a world increasingly shaped by the representations we produce and circulate, this debate also becomes political. While Bourdieu (1989/2001) already warned of this dimension when discussing symbolic production as an instrument of social domination, Rancière (2000/2009) reinforces it through his theory of the distribution of the sensible — namely, regimes of perception arising from a system of sensory evidence that simultaneously reveals the existence of a shared world and the boundaries that define social hierarchies. Such hierarchies have historically crystallised on a colonial premise that, as Krenak (2019) describes, rests on the belief in an asymmetrical distribution of power and value between a supposedly enlightened humanity (the “White Europeans”) and “an obscured humanity” (p. 11). This is also how dominant narratives in Western societies are configured, insofar as hegemonic discourses tend to associate human agency with domination over other cultures, territorial expansion and control over nature (Cabecinhas, 2025), guided by an alleged progressive logic that promotes emancipation, historical protagonism and economic development.

Such efforts to keep these other humanities in the shadows of *History* almost obscure the fact that, as Mombaça and Mattiuzzi (2023) remind us, “strength, when it exceeds a channel and spreads, expands or disappears” (p. 21), and that “to disappear does not mean to vanish in a necropolitical sense” (p. 21). It is this strength that enables existence and resistance in the interstices of the visible, remaining organic, resilient and potent, capable of fostering important debates and transformations in the ways images are made, seen and discussed.

As visual creative expressions became increasingly hierarchised, distinguishing what was deemed worthy of attention and appreciation from what was neglected and considered devoid of value (Freeland, 2012), more critical approaches intensified and opened new lines of thought. In the 1970s and 1980s, the rise of cultural studies and visual culture studies — strongly influenced by the pictorial turn — broadened the scope of debate and made evident that visual aesthetics are not separate from social hierarchies but rather reflect political disputes and structures of social and cultural power. Between the 1990s and 2000s, reflections and knowledge exchanges promoted by the Proyecto M/C collective, largely composed of researchers from South America, distinguished between the colonial project and its praxis, highlighting how coloniality persists in contemporary times and sustains asymmetrical power relations across multiple dimensions of life (Paiva, 2022).

Within this context of transformation, Walter D. Mignolo (2010, 2019), a member of Proyecto M/C, draws attention to the fact that coloniality is not only territorial and economic, but also aesthetic, insofar as it establishes canons and standards for ways of sensing, perceiving and relating to the world. Engaging with the collective, Mignolo conceptualises aesthetics — and here this includes images and the visualities they construct and sustain — as the critical turning point of the operation of the coloniality of *sensing*, producing

the devaluation and/or erasure of other worlds of sensing and meaning-making in favour of the displacement, exclusion, and negation of alternative forms of representation and experience (Vázquez Melken, 2020). In this context, the decolonial praxis proposed by Mignolo (2019) involves a shift in terminology when addressing such issues, as a way of “displacing, re-situating, and de-universalising key concepts” (p. 21).

Following this direction, the author proposes not only a return to the notion of *aisthesis* but a *decolonial aisthesis*: a refusal of the imposition of *Aesthetics* over sensibility and an affirmation of spaces in which multiple forms of sensible experience and epistemologies of sensing may (co)exist (Mignolo, 2010, 2019). This is already evident, for instance, in the field of art history, which has been revisited and re-examined by numerous scholars such as Danto (1994/2017), Posch (2024) and Santos (2024), among others, who highlight its political dimension and alternative modes of producing and conceptualising art that have been historically neglected. At the core of these reflections lies the reminder that art is, as Pereira (2026) argues, an “epistemological and political dispositif, capable of interrogating colonial legacies, destabilising dominant regimes of visibility, and reinscribing into the centre of discourse the bodies and events that have historically been rendered invisible” (p. 56).

Reviving the concept of *aisthesis* through a decolonial lens and centering the scientific debate on it offer fertile theoretical ground for thinking about sensibility, the languages through which it is expressed, and its reverberations in the social field. Manifesting itself in concrete practices, it becomes materiality and transformative potential, characterised by what Rolnik (2018) calls “spheres of insurrection”: micropolitics of the sensible that often operate silently, yet are deeply effective in reconfiguring perceptual ecologies. Whether in artistic practices, cultural productions, curatorial activities or other forms, these practices share a commitment to an “ethics of the gaze” — a way of seeing that recognises its own responsibility and implication.

It is precisely at this intersection between sensibility, existence, and social power dynamics, inscribed within the interstices of visual creative practices, that this thematic issue is situated. Taking *aisthesis* as its guiding thread, this issue brings together scientific investigations and reflections that seek to broaden the gaze and propose pathways for thinking beyond abstract reason, engaging instead with the body, affects, subjectivities and sensory experience.

As a result, this thematic issue of the 17th edition of *Vista – Revista de Cultura Visual* presents eight texts resulting from research on visual cultures and sensory experiences that challenge hegemonic worldviews, fostering dialogues among aesthetics, politics, and social practice. To address this complexity, the issue is organised into three main axes: moving images; still images and colonial legacies (including the tensioning of narratives and institutional erasures); and images beyond the screen, operating as supports for connection and social intervention.

In the first axis, dedicated to moving images, the plasticity and temporality of audiovisual media are mobilised as tools of contestation. In the article “Landscapes of Fabulation and Displacement: Cinema, Alterity and Cartography in *Chuva É Cantoria na*

Aldeia dos Mortos”, Júlia Vilhena Rodrigues mobilises Brah’s (2005) concept of “diasporic space” and Deleuze’s (1993/1997) notion of “fabulation” to demonstrate how cinema, through an immersive and collaborative process, opens the filmic form to epistemological alternatives. Her analysis focuses on *Chuva É Cantoria na Aldeia dos Mortos* (The Dead and the Others), by Renée Messora and João Salaviza, produced collaboratively with the Krahô Indigenous community in northeastern Brazil. In this context, the filmmaking process is understood as a practice of sensitive mapping and collective agency in which boundaries are constantly negotiated, transforming the displacement of production decisions into the very condition of a shared gaze. Attention to authorship and narrative control in visual storytelling is also central to “Forms of Self-Inscription in Contemporary African Cinema: The Case of Mozambican Cinema”, by Michelle Sales, which offers a historical reflection on Mozambican cinema. Freely inspired by Achille Mbembe’s (2011) essay “As Formas Africanas de Auto-Inscrição” (Forms of Self-Inscription in Contemporary African Cinema), Sales highlights how contemporary filmmakers redefine identities and contest the construction of new visual interpretations based on their own memories and notions of “nation”, free from colonial framing. In “‘Vida Loka Parte II’ by Racionais MC’s: The Music Video as an Audiovisual Narrative of Resistance to Racism”, Alessandra Nardini and Davide Gravato shift from cinema to short-form media, exploring the music video as a device of political resistance and identity affirmation. Drawing on social semiotics and netnography, their analysis reveals how the music video functions as a visual counter-aesthetic and a monument of cultural resistance that, through hybridisation of languages, reactivates sensory experiences of belonging and challenges structural racism in Brazil.

The second axis of this thematic issue focuses on still images and the re-elaboration of archives, addressing the urgency of revisiting what has been recorded through hegemonic lenses. This is reflected in the interview conducted by Lise Zurné, Charlotte Bruns and Sandra Khor Manickam with artists Dzifa Peters and Nurul Huda Rashid, published under the title “Reworking the Visual Legacies of Colonial Photographic Archives with and through the Self: A conversation with Dzifa Peters and Nurul Huda Rashid”. By emphasising the need to confront, recontextualise and fissure inherited colonial imagery, Peters and Rashid demonstrate how subjectivity — the “self” — functions as a critical mechanism that disrupts the presumed neutrality of official archives. The interview thus functions as a manifesto encapsulating the spirit of this thematic issue: reworking visual legacies is not merely a historical exercise, but a political urgency essential to a decolonial praxis of the gaze in the present. The question of how images operate not only through what they show but also through what they silence and erase is further developed in the work of Maria Gil de Pádua, Carolina Maria Soares Lima, and Ísis Detomi, entitled “Absent Bodies, Suspended Memories”. By examining photographs (and their exhibition) of a former changing room in the Morro Velho mine in Nova Lima, Brazil, the authors demonstrate how visual framings, captions and institutional curatorial choices operate within the administration of the sensible, naturalising the erasure of the bodies and lives that sustained gold extraction. What they offer are material traces of liminal spaces that function as ghostly presences, resisting museological framing and reopening the history

of mining in Minas Gerais through a critical engagement with photography — a political gesture of historical reinscription capable of challenging documentary neutrality and reactivating silenced tensions and lives within institutional memory. Both the agency of photographic self-representation and the critique of curatorial erasure converge in “Poetics and Politics of Self-Representation in Photography by Africans and People of African Descent in Portugal”, by Fernando Gonçalves. Through the exhibitions *Africa: See You, See Me!* and *Álbuns de Família*, as well as the artistic work of José Sérgio and Marta Pinto Machado, the author demonstrates how strategies of “self-representation” and “self-reparation” in contemporary photography can shape new collective perceptions and reclaim space for Black populations within Portuguese visual culture, transforming photographic practice into a manifesto of identity inscription.

The third axis, focusing on images beyond the screen, explores the potential of images as infrastructures of connection, affect and community-based activism in public space. In “Walking Together: Sense/Thinking Photowalks With Latin American Migrants in Japan”, Marita Ibañez Sandoval proposes an embodied and participatory methodology — the photowalks — as a means for Latin American migrant communities in Jōsō, Japan, to rework experiences of belonging and alterity. Here, the image is no longer an endpoint but a starting point and pretext for encounter, embedding the community at the centre of theoretical and visual reflection. This same urgency to dissolve boundaries between academic knowledge production and social action informs “Rethinking Knowledge Production on Portuguese Migrations by Bridging Arts and Academia: The Festival ‘A Arte de Ser Migrante’”, by Liliana Azevedo, Amandine Desille and Estelle Valente. The authors examine how an artistic and collaborative public intervention can reposition the debate on migration in Portugal, particularly by transforming the community itself into an active subject of aesthetic expression through the festival format. The article demonstrates that art and visual culture, when integrated into social practice, become crucial pedagogical and political tools for making visible life trajectories that are often erased by statistical representation, thereby showing artistic practice as a form of civic intervention.

In light of the breadth and diversity of the contributions presented here, we invite readers of *Vista* to engage closely with this thematic issue. Our expectation is that this issue will inspire critical reflection on how we perceive the world, which sensibilities are legitimised, cultivated and preserved (and which are silenced, devalued or erased), how these ways of sensing are expressed through images, visual practices and regimes of seeing, and how each contribution illuminates, in its own way, different aspects of the complex constellation that are visual cultures. More than a repository of knowledge, we hope this issue functions as a space of encounter and transformation, where diverse experiences and sensibilities resonate, generate productive frictions, and open or expand new possibilities for constellating the sensible in ways committed to aesthetic justice, historical reparation and the imagination of alternative futures.

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Science is rarely a solitary endeavour. More often than not, it is the result of the dedication and resilience of researchers who, even under adverse conditions or at times when other commitments demand much of their attention, trust in the importance of scientific knowledge and voluntarily dedicate part of their time, on a *pro bono* basis, to extending the horizons of understanding.

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