



The top and the whole

By Pedro Cesarino

Potiguar artist João Njñ has formulated quite precisely what should be understood by the non-indigenous world but unfortunately it is not: “Indigenous people shouldn’t be at the top, but in the whole”. The top, insists João, should be strictly speaking destroyed – and before destroying the whole, it would be suitable to have it completed. In fact, a reflection like this brings, in a powerful and synthetic way, the challenge of receiving, interacting and understanding the experiences and thoughts transmitted by indigenous artists, and indigenous people in general, through the media in its different forms which has increasingly been reinventing itself. It’s like walking in reverse to global capitalism, away from the destructive voracity which, today or 500 years ago, devastates the indigenous peoples and threatens their very possibility of existence. Ancestral Jaider Esbell used to say, not by chance, that the contemporary indigenous art is not here to reaffirm the individuality from which the image of the cultural white politics is made, but rather to propagate multiplicity. This abundance has been for million years in charge of the weaving of the worlds learned by the white people as “indigenous” but that are actually made of other capacities of irreducible connections with the presumed idea of nature conceived as a resource to be explored.



Expropriated from their territories, the Mapuche people have been struggling with the Chilean state for centuries, which insists on not giving back the autonomy that was stolen from them. They fight, however, through the senses and the music. Evelyn González Seguel, director of ÜL KIMVN group, composes in honor of her great-grandma, a machi who lived in the region of Temuco. For the machis, the shamans of the Mapuche people, are precisely the “women of the land” able to produce and transmit the connections between the different ways of living which have been ignored and persecuted by the state. It's not distinct from the message brought by shaman Mapulu Kamayurá, who warned the white people about the risk of deforestation, fires and pollution. The forest is the house for the mamaé and its destruction will cause the wrath of these presences (understood by the white people as “spirits”) who are in charge of the healing and the balance of the world. By contrast with the Mapuche people, known for their expressive operation by female shamans, Mapulu had to convince her relatives (peers) and initiators, all male, that she could also intermediate the presences and spread benefits to her community. Now that her word circulates through the digital image, it can be added to others that, like Davi Kopenawa and Ailton Krenak, have contributed to producing the profound paradigm shift we need – not only to establish the late reparation brought by the colonial violence but also to deal with the relentless dynamics of extinction that is already showing its signs. Inhabiting adversity and resisting in dark scenarios, are conditions that have been imposed on the indigenous people for centuries, becoming also duties to be learned. It's been now propagated through theater and other forms of artistic creation that, strictly speaking, always belonged to them, although they had been denied by the colonial enterprise. That's why it's essential to



“contratheatricalize”, as Juão Nÿn once again says, that means to dismantle the Jesuit foundations of this practice that both restricts and opens up universes; make artistic expression a place for “construction of dignity” and other forms of poetic alliance. Then, actors and actresses will be rebaptized as “guards of souls, of words”, according to the translation-invention of the term made by Juão in partnership with the Guarani people. The potiguar artist prepares with them a new project, which we await with serenity.

