

7 Troping the “primitive” in Portuguese narratives of modernity and colonialism

Mariana Pinto dos Santos

Introduction – the “Demoiselle d’Avignon” trope

In 1967, the Portuguese painter António Areal did a series of six large format paintings, titled *O Fantasma de Avignon* [The Ghost of Avignon], that tell a visual story in sequence, as if in a comic strip, using a graphic colour-field pop vocabulary (Figures 7.1–7.6). From a red cube, with its front face black as if in the shadow, a square pops out, a sort of bidimensional drawer with a white frame, with two diagonal white stripes crossing from one corner of the square to the opposite, intersecting each other. In the first painting of the series, one of the stripes is partially black, and in the next one, it becomes increasingly black, and so forth. The progressive blackness of the stripes indicates the correct sequence of the paintings, the last one with a black X marking the spot. From the two-dimensional drawer, a head pops out only to hide again. It is the head of a “Demoiselle d’Avignon” from the 1907 Picasso painting, which, according to the canonical narrative, marks the inauguration of Cubism alongside the inauguration of African-inspired primitivism. The chosen Demoiselle head is the most iconic one from the painting, belonging to the female figure squatting on the left, represented on her back but facing the beholder while resting her head on the top of her hand, showing an impossible and deliberately disturbing contortion of the neck. Her head is a combination of African masks,¹ with uneven eyes, a dislocated small opening that stands for a mouth, and a striped nose in profile – the stripes being a synthetic technique to depict shade or darker skin. António Areal skips the original stripes and paints the nose black.

In a very concise and humorous way, Areal’s series displays a history of art that links Cubism to Abstractionism and both with primitivism. It is a canonical evolutionist history of art, but told with irony. A possible interpretation could be that the pop-up Demoiselle’s head has in fact turned *Pop* when painted as a *prop* that holds together the modernist narrative of abstract art – shown as a prelude for something more autonomous and evolved. On the other hand, abstract art, supposedly apolitical,² must obliterate the colonial context implicated in the visual revolution that primitivism offered to modern art. The Picassian mask emerges to remind us of the footprint of modern art, which is all but apolitical, but it hides right back again, crossed over by abstraction. This can also be read as a comment on the opposition between civilisation and primitive, or civilisation and barbarism, showing that the “more civilized” art of the twentieth century stands on the shoulders of its earlier experiments that piqued interest and prompted a market for an enormous amount of works by anonymous makers, often looted or acquired in inequitable situations, and that were considered “primitive”.

The narrative of the progress of Western modern art goes hand in hand with the narrative of the progress of civilisation. Indeed, art has often been seen as a sign of civilisation.

In 1930, in *Civilisation and its Discontents*, Sigmund Freud wrote “No feature seems to us to characterise civilisation better than the appreciation and cultivation of the higher mental

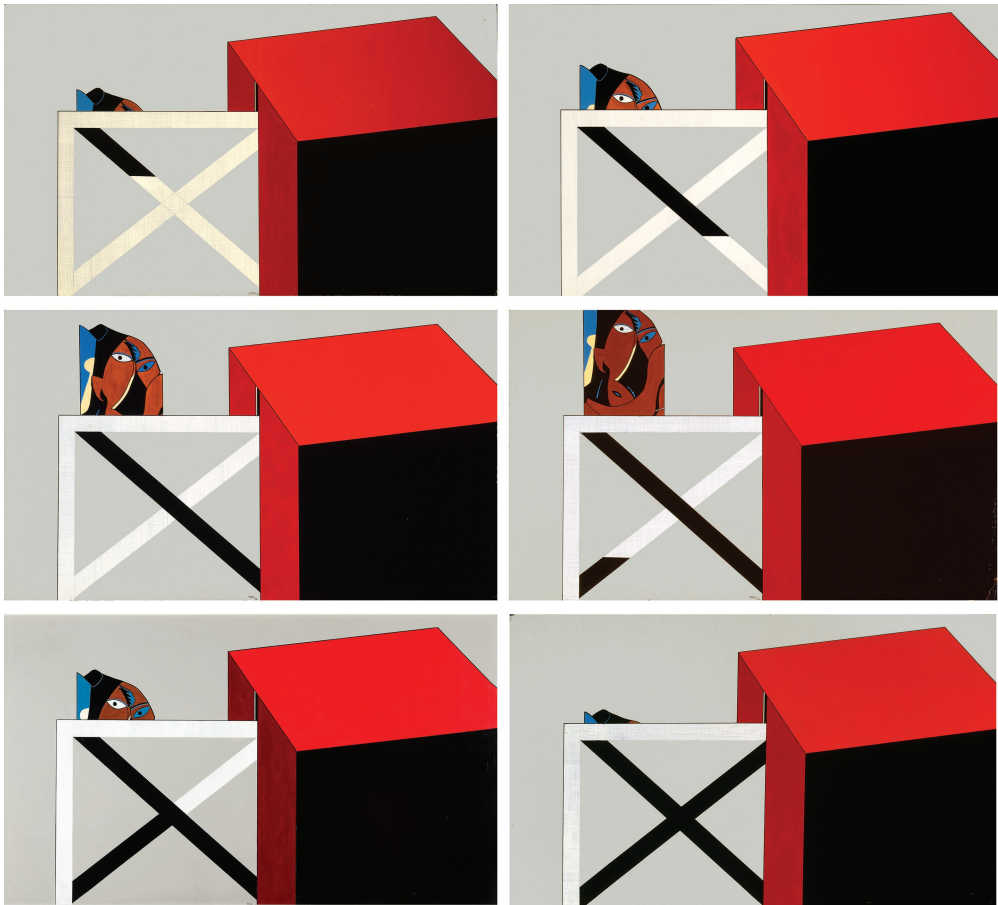


Figure 7.1–7.6 António Areal, *O fantasma de Avignon* I–VI, 1967. Enamel paint over platex, 170 x 100 cm (each). Inv. 79P833; 79P645; 79P646; 79P834; 79P644. Photographs by Mário Oliveira. Inv. 79P835. Photograph by Paulo Costa. CAM-Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, Lisbon. © Heirs António Areal.

activities, of intellectual, scientific and artistic achievements, and the leading role accorded to ideas in human life.”³ Freud links the discontents of civilisation, despite its benefits, to the restrictions it levies on the libido, aggressiveness, and happiness in general. It also implies the feeling of self-guilt. The reasons for the discontent of civilisation go back, Freud argues, to the

voyages of discovery [that] brought us into contact with primitive peoples and tribes. Owing to inadequate observation and the misinterpretation of their manners and customs, they appeared to the Europeans to lead a simple, happy life, involving few needs, which was beyond the reach of their culturally superior visitors.⁴

Pursuing ideas he had explored in *Totem and Taboo* (1913), Freud indicates that something of the past, the primitive, or the child, is “retained” in the unconscious. Neurosis (as well as intoxication) often activates it as a refusal of civilisation, or as a way of dealing with the suffering it causes. Therefore, he adds, neurosis is a way of responding to the basic need to avoid

pain and to fulfil a pleasure impulse that experience and the “reality principle”⁵ tend to correct, but that nevertheless lays in the human subconscious. It amounts to what Freud identifies as “an oceanic feeling”, a sense “of being indissolubly bound up with and belonging to the whole of the world outside oneself”,⁶ which links back to the sense of attachment between the infant and their mother, and therefore implicates both child and woman as carriers of that primitive realm where there is no self.⁷ As Marianna Torgovnick writes, “the mature ego is identified with the imperial city-state, which will colonise primitives quite literally and colonise (in the figurative sense) many feelings, including of free sexuality and oneness”.⁸ Civilisation is a mature ego; it is masculine, and it must control the “oceanic” or primitive – conquering the sense of self is to obtain rationality over the irrational, order over chaos.

In a nutshell, Freud presents all of the ‘primitive’ tropes: childhood, women, indigenous populations of “discovered” territories, the use of drugs or alcohol, sex and mental disease. They all relate to a primitive realm that acts as a counterpoint to an uneasiness with civilisation, which nevertheless is necessary to provide order, balance and control.

The primitive inspires attraction and repulsion; it is a threat and an object of desire. Hal Foster mentions that desire encompasses the will to master it and to surrender to it, to become primitive is to dominate the primitive, a promise of “subjective release as well as artistic innovation: it is a *regressive* realm that might be put to *transgressive* use”⁹ – an “exorcism”, a “weapon against spirits”, as Picasso famously said of his *Demoiselles d'Avignon* painting,¹⁰ using the primitive against the primitive, as an apotropaic fetish (from the Portuguese “feitiço”) to scare away male fragility and reinforce male authority.

In António Areal’s series, the underlying threat of the primitive in its sexual, irrational, female analogies, in its regressive and transgressive realm, is part and parcel of, as well as mastered by, the civilised abstractionism.

The above-mentioned tropes, according to Torgovnick, form “the basic grammar and vocabulary of [...] primitivist discourse, a discourse fundamental to the West sense of self and the Other”.¹¹ Tropes are not only recurring figures of speech that become clichés, but they also act both as visual ideas and rhetoric devices to signify something: a fragmented feminine body on a Picasso canvas can stand for ‘primitive’, as much as the image of a person from a colonised territory, or the artefacts shown in the early twentieth century ethnographic museums, or folk art at a rural market, or brothels and uncompromised sex, or bodies of prostitutes distorted by syphilis.¹² At the same time the tropes share affinities and analogies by relating to a common concept. For instance, the altered states of conscience described in Baudelaire’s *Les Paradis Artificiels* (1860) can relate to Gauguin’s depicted experience in Tahiti, as expressions of the “oceanic feeling” (to use Freud’s terminology), connecting the idea of paradise with drugs, sex, women, colonisation, as much as with anti-academic/anti-naturalistic formal experiments in the visual arts. Furthermore, primitivism in its various tropes was an attack on the morals and politics of the dominant bourgeoisie, yet, as Patricia Leighton argues, there is a “failure of the politics” of modernism¹³; T.J. Clark similarly stated: the primitivist tropes (he calls them “sets of representations” instead) “contested bourgeois hegemony, but that hegemony was more powerful, because it was more differentiated, than anything modernism [could] come up with”.¹⁴

Leighton points out that these tropes had a malleability of meaning for different audiences, either positive or negative, while at the same time sharing common prejudices that were structurally embedded in white European privilege that came with colonialism.¹⁵ They were “operating in and against this world”,¹⁶ and the regression they implied was seen as both a desired return to a lost authenticity or, in contrast, as a degeneration.

All these tropes, either taken as positive or as negative, oppose the civilised to the uncivilised.

Primitivism in Portugal – the “belatedness” syndrome

The core ‘primitive’ trope in Portuguese narratives of the twentieth century is arguably folk art, discussed by both anthropologists and art historians, although not always acknowledged as an instance of “primitivism”.¹⁷

In an article about “Center and Periphery: Anthropological Theory and National Identity in Portuguese Ethnography”,¹⁸ the Portuguese anthropologist João Leal refers to two anthropological traditions in Western culture: *Völkerkunde* (the study of the others) and *Volkskunde* (the study of one’s own people and culture), which another anthropologist, Tomas Gerlhom, also calls “cosmopolitan anthropology” versus “local ethnology”. The first was developed in European empires, such as the British and the French and the second in countries with “nation-building” characteristics, that is, with recent autonomy or independence, or fragile borders. João Leal concludes it was the second, *Volkskunde*, or “local ethnography”, that prevailed in Portugal, despite it too being an empire and despite its borders being the most stable in Europe for centuries. Leal points to several reasons for this, which I can sum up as symptoms of what I have called the *belatedness* syndrome,¹⁹ expressed by several generations of intellectuals with some foreign experience (“*estrangeirados*”): that is, the complex of being late, as a periphery, in relation to European centres, which supposedly kept the right time – the time for modernity and progress.²⁰ The dominant ethnography would become official ethnography from the 1930s on, with ethnographic surveys feeding nationalist rhetoric about the “essence” of the country, and contributing to the “invention of tradition” that constructed the national image of the dictatorship running from 1926 to 1974.²¹ In parallel, and from within oppositional intellectual circles, there rose an interest in ethnography through the study of regional architecture, folk art and artists, and musical traditions.²²

João Leal also states that

the first signs of a consistent socio-anthropological interest in non-European cultures and societies only developed in the late 1950s, when the anthropologist Jorge Dias (1907–1973) – the most important Portuguese anthropologist of the twentieth century – conducted (together with his wife Margot Dias [1908–2001]) a thorough study of the Makonde of northern Mozambique.²³

Dias’s was, Leal writes, the first study about an African ethnic group undertaken in Portugal.

Notwithstanding, since the late nineteenth century, expeditions under scientific and ethnographic pretexts were being conducted in African territories by the Portuguese. With the scramble for Africa involving other European countries in the 1870s, the scientific argument, alongside the “civilising mission” argument, both also raised by Britain, France and Belgium,²⁴ emerged to justify expansionist orientations. The scientific argument gave rise to the Portuguese Geographical Society (1875), which would organise scientific expeditions between Angola and Mozambique “in the interest of science and civilisation”,²⁵ collecting ethnographic and artistic objects, animal specimens, botanical and mineral samples and publishing a regular bulletin, which trusted it a crucial role in colonial politics before and during the Portuguese dictatorship.²⁶

Since the 1940s, studies about African masks, sculptures, rituals and image production were published by the anthropologist José Redinha (1905–1983).²⁷ He was a white man working for the Portuguese government and had a profound knowledge of different tribes, rites, and several local languages of the colonised territories, mainly in and around Angola. His work could be understood as *Völkerkunde* in a colonial context. José Redinha was also the director of the

Dundo Museum, in the province of Northern Lunda, Angola, between 1942 and 1959.²⁸ The Dundo Museum promoted four expeditions between 1936 and 1946 that ended up gathering 5,500 objects for its collection,²⁹ maybe with the collaboration of the leaders of local communities (sobas), but nevertheless, under a colonial rule that certainly implied abusive appropriation of these objects. According to the anthropologist Patrícia Ferraz de Matos, in spite of his theoretical and methodological limitations, “the work developed by Redinha contributed to the beginning of the discussion of African art in the context of Portuguese colonial domination”, because he “was the first to suggest the existence of an African art and an aesthetic in the plastic expression of the *tchokwe*”.³⁰ From 1956 on, the art historian Marie-Louise Bastin from the Tervuren Museum (the colonial museum in Belgium, the first European museum of the kind, founded in 1898 by King Leopold II) was invited to study the collection of the Dundo Museum and her work also contributed to the recognition of *tchokwe* art.³¹ Therefore, the ethnography related to the Portuguese colonial project was implicated in the modernist discourse of primitivism, and although there was no proper Ethnology Museum until 1965 (opening only in 1976), the Dundo Museum and later the Museum of Angola (besides the Geographical Society in Lisbon), were overseas equivalents of colonial and ethnographic museums, the “Museums of Other People”.³² They emulated what was happening on European territory, namely in the countries with colonial possessions, by creating a European temporalisation and spatialisation within the colonised territory itself, and by placing in the museum everyday objects still used by people. There were also several cases of objects made specifically for the museum by crafters.³³ Therefore, musealisation implied a primitivisation *in loco*, by performing otherisation, and placing what belonged in the present in an undefined, allochronic³⁴ past. At the same time, the classification of those objects as art was informed by their impact on European art and on European museums.

In 2001, Alfredo Margarido (1928–2010) – who besides being a writer, teacher and painter close to the Portuguese surrealists, and an active left-wing resistant under the dictatorship, had also worked in the ex-colonies of São Tomé e Príncipe and Angola – wrote that there had never been a real “aesthetic” absorption of African art by Portuguese artists in the twentieth century. Adding up to the narrative of *belatedness*, he considered that unlike other European empires Portugal did not have a colonial museum.³⁵ Margarido refers to the lack of valorisation of African art by the Portuguese, going back to the sixteenth century, when the missionaries started to systematically destroy native religious figures while promoting Christian faith, and associates it with the dehumanisation that slavery brought in, which implied disregarding the cultures and beliefs of enslaved people. The author associates the ability of European art to absorb exotic art for its own aesthetic benefit, to the end of slavery in the United States and Europe in the eighteenth century. His argument furthermore states that while European artists were then able to understand the aesthetic qualities of African objects, the Portuguese artists were unable to do the same. The exception being the masks painted by Amadeo de Souza-Cardoso (1887–1918), but which would be the result of his Parisian immersion. The art historian José-Augusto França (1922–2021), also refers very briefly to the presence of African masks in Cardoso’s work, attributing it to a general influence of the Cubist vocabulary, a sort of *Zeitgeist* that the Portuguese artist had absorbed, without further elaboration.³⁶ Margarido finally ascribes the lack of primitivism in Portugal to a weak modernism, in which artists, in contrast with their French counterparts, were unable to understand the importance of African art, while also associating it with the persistent racism and xenophobia in Portuguese colonialism and “a difficulty of abandoning the past”.³⁷

Although Alfredo Margarido’s essay thoroughly maps out information about African art in Portugal for the first time, it lacks a comparative and structural analysis of the colonial and

imperial European context, which was all but freed from forced labour, exploitation and racism throughout the twentieth century. He sticks to the master narrative that idealises French modernism and determines the periphery’s belatedness against it, belatedness being the consequence of an alleged lack of capacity – because only a full European civilisation can recognise the aesthetic perks of the *primitive* by creating *primitivism*. While composing this argument, the author inscribes himself in a long lineage of Portuguese intellectual thought that goes back to the nineteenth century and that deplores the supposed lack of Portuguese civilisation (that is, its primitivity) in comparison to other European countries. What must be borne in mind is that this evolution was due to the successful consolidation of their empires, while the Portuguese empire lost influence and territorial area. Hence, this intellectual current looked up to Europe as a model of civilisation, but, from the early twentieth century on, that civilisation model encompassed primitiveness that was once a negative trope associated with Portugal itself.³⁸ Consequently, a complicated shift had to be performed to change the primitive to a positive trope, implicating a detachment from the association to backwardness.

Moreover, Margarido’s statements only recognise “primitivism” as the aesthetic/formal absorption of African art, failing to consider the tropes of primitivism. Ultimately, he reckons that “primitivism” only happens when a formal absorption of African aesthetics can be identified. Finally, it is from the evolutionist and civilisational paradigm that Margarido denounces the lack of a proper colonial museum to preserve African art objects during Portuguese colonial times – but would a museum in the metropole with looted artefacts be a sign of civilisation?

Today colonial museums of Europe are facing the pressure of the restitution debates and the questioning of the way their collections were constituted.³⁹ Dan Hicks associates *chronopolitics* with the anthropology museum. More than the “denial of coevalness” that Johannes Fabian diagnosed, the anthropology or ethnography museum undertakes a process of dispossession and dehumanisation that encompasses the violence of having memorialised what has been ruined by European colonisation for European consumption.⁴⁰ There is a “techno-brutality” in the anthropology museum that forces a chronology of existence, that establishes the ancient as an act of civilisation.

If primitivism is studied in formalist terms, several works with “primitivist” aesthetics can be found in twentieth-century Portuguese art (not only via African inspiration, but also folk art appropriation, or the art of children or the insane, or the depiction of exoticised and eroticised women, etc.). But the concept should be studied, as mentioned earlier, by looking at the way it was used and how its value changed (from a negative connotation to a positive one; or from one meaning to another – since it was first historically associated with early modern painting referring to national art history of a given nation, and only after with the African other). Ultimately, it can be analysed by identifying a “primitivist” imaginary, that is, certain uses of the past implicated in artistic practices or art historical narratives, even if the artists or authors themselves do not mention it.

Not only can “primitivism” be identified in Portuguese art practices and narratives, but it can also be found in the realm of ethnography and colonial narratives, especially after the shift brought on by the Colonial Act of 1930, which established the colonies as part of the national territory and proclaimed the centralisation of the colonial administration, while affirming the “civilising mission” of Portugal. It also instituted the status of the indigenous as opposed to the civilised, supposedly granting more rights to the African peoples, but in fact allowing forced labour and establishing a racial hierarchy based on the degree of “lack of civilisation”.⁴¹ Consequently, the imperial Portuguese project was, from the 1930s on, trying out a new relation with African “otherness”, promoting it as part of the nation. And primitivism played a part in that promotion.

The colonial trope – Diogo de Macedo's theory of the Benin bronzes

Way before José Redinha acknowledged African sculptures and masks as art, the modernist artist Diogo de Macedo (1889–1959) had already extensively written on the subject.

Macedo, who later became director of the National Museum of Contemporary Art (1944–1959), authored a series of articles promoting African art which, following the Colonial Act of 1930, he designated Portuguese art (not African). These articles started in 1934 and were published mainly in the magazine *O Mundo Português* (1934–1947). This title, *The Portuguese World*, came with the description “magazine of culture and propaganda of the colonial arts and culture”, which clearly indicates a shift in the value of African culture, from “primitive barbaric” to “primitive modern”. The magazine was published in the same year that a big Colonial Exhibition took place in Porto.

Portugal had organised a considerable number of colonial exhibitions since the second half of the nineteenth century, mainly displaying the economic products and raw materials that came from the colonies (such as coffee and sugar) and a few artefacts, and participated in the colonial sections of international exhibitions since the 1855 Paris exhibition.⁴² These exhibitions were instruments to legitimise colonialism, as they were a showcase to portray Portugal as a “respectable colonising power, with an economically useful empire if well managed”.⁴³ With the dictatorship and its consolidation in 1933, when a new constitution established the Estado Novo (New State) and António de Oliveira Salazar as the dictator, these exhibitions also promoted the regime's politics, which had colonialism as one of its cornerstones.

The Colonial Exhibition in Porto replicated features of other colonial shows, such as the 1931 Paris Exhibition, namely with an exhibition of African people removed from their countries and displayed in fake villages. The art historian Filipa Lowndes Vicente has identified a key goal of this exhibition and the role the display of naked female bodies played in it, as well as the role of photography in the reproduction and circulation of images of those bodies: to promote lands overseas, attracting white settlers who could obtain administrative training, streamlining the intentions of a more effective governance of (mainly) African territories, and to consolidate a long-desired effective occupation of the territory, a condition required by the Berlin Conference of 1884–1885 (which divided African territories by European powers, ones coveting the others). In short, to make the empire an object of exotic and erotic desire for recruiting settlers.⁴⁴

The Colonial Exhibition had extensive press coverage in a concerted action of dissemination and propaganda.⁴⁵ A luxurious album was published, illustrated by the painter Eduardo Malta (1900–1967), who would follow Diogo de Macedo in running the National Museum of Contemporary Art in 1959 and was one of the artists closest to the regime. The illustrations made for the album comprise the “races” that could be found in the Portuguese Empire. A “Book of the Exhibition” also appeared after its closure, spreading its success, including the history of Portugal's participation in other colonial and international exhibitions and a synopsis of its costs, foreign reception, number of visitors, and so on. I will return to this publication further on.

Diogo de Macedo published the volume *Arte Indígena Portuguesa* in 1934,⁴⁶ closely related to the Porto Colonial Exhibition, with a foreword by Luís de Montalvor (former collaborator of Fernando Pessoa's avant-garde literary magazine *Orpheu* in 1915), who stated that Macedo's study of primitive art was a great service to the “propaganda” of “Portuguese indigenous art, as good as that of other colonies”.⁴⁷ The book cover was designed by the artist Almada Negreiros, comprising two stylised modernist African statuettes facing each other. Continuing the promotion of African art, Macedo defended and praised African and Oceanian art, showing photographic reproductions of various objects from the Geographical Society of Lisbon and private collections, especially his own.⁴⁸ Diogo de Macedo writings echo Robert Goldwater's

1938 book *Primitivism in Modern Painting* (republished in 1966 under the title *Primitivism in Modern Art*), in which “primitivism” is presented as designating an “attitude” towards the other; Goldwater also underlined the positive connotation of the term and defended that modern art had taken a path into an inner search for the primordial expression that led it to “discover” the affinity with the primitive.⁴⁹ This evolution of the meaning of the term was later understood by William Rubin (in the famous 1984 MoMA exhibition about affinities between the ‘modern’ and the ‘primitive’), as an “evolution of taste”.⁵⁰ The affinities for Macedo were even closer, because, as a sculptor himself, he considered this form of art the most “individual and independent”, that is the most autonomous. Evoking the myth of the origin of sculpture by the potter Dibutades (which is also the myth of the origin of painting), Macedo writes that “sculpture is the most tangible art, more objective and linked to physical contact, and therefore the most direct transposition from spirit to matter”.⁵¹ By affirming African art as mainly sculptural, the author established an affinity between his modernist practice (and modernist theory of art’s autonomy) and the so-called primitive art. He reinforced this statement by referring to Fauvist and Cubist artists and their learning from the simplicity of the primitive (Matisse, Vlaminck, Picasso, Dérain, Lhote, Modigliani, Zadkine and Lipchitz).

For Macedo, African art could get closer to “civilized art, which, the simpler and more synthetic the more poetic it becomes – and this simplicity is more difficult to accomplish”.⁵² Quoting Carl Einstein, he says that African arts deserve to be seen as universal arts and that only the twentieth century was endowed with the capacity of the “virgin sensation – without the sin of foreign influences – that is, where scholarship has not yet infiltrated the restriction of the historical or superfluous tastes for the developed techniques”.⁵³ The exact Carl Einstein quote is the following: “L’art africain possède des qualités plastiques, ornementales [sic] et picturales justifiant por lui un rang auprès des arts universels”.

In short, only the twentieth century was able to feel “primitively”, levelling up with African art. Carl Einstein’s *Negerplastik* (1915), which was clearly read by Macedo, praised African and Oceanian Art for their formal language. Only modernity could separate its formal qualities from the context and endow it with aesthetic autonomy. The modern gaze was the only one capable of seeing this as art and of depriving it from its time and space.⁵⁴

Diogo de Macedo furthermore states that, since it preceded the arrival of the Portuguese, the art from the colonies should be called pre-Portuguese, in analogy to pre-Colombian art. Macedo strives to maintain the characteristics of the art of the different African communities uncontaminated and defends the creation of an Ethnography Museum. But while approaching Benin sculpture, he writes that it benefitted from the orientalisising influence introduced by the Portuguese, namely in the work of iron and bronze, and that it allowed Benin Bronzes to reach a higher quality. This is the core focus of this book: Benin had better art because “the Portuguese sailors” brought them the bronze from India. Its exceptionality was due to a previous contact with the Portuguese. Proving his argument, Macedo presents an ivory sculpture belonging to a foreign collection, in which he believes Afonso de Albuquerque and Vasco da Gama (sixteenth-century national “heros” of the so-called “Portuguese Discoveries”) are represented, with a caravel and an unequivocally “Manueline” (Portuguese sixteenth century) rigging.

Dan Hicks’ study clearly argues that the mastering of bronze and other metals in Benin is, in fact, prior to the arrival of the Portuguese.⁵⁵ Hicks also states that the idea of a “northern / European influence” on the Benin sculptures was put forward by ethnographers such as Pitt-Rivers in 1900, and in 1909, Leo Frobenius was willing to believe that pre-colonial cities such as Benin and Ife were the Lost Atlantis.⁵⁶ So, the idea of a European influence on Benin sculpture that explained their exceptional quality (and value) was far from new.

Diogo de Macedo returns to this subject at length in a 1944 text, with the title “A national problem in the art of Benin”. In this text, he clearly writes that the art of Benin is exceptional because it expresses a “civilised” vision, for it is

worked in durable materials (bronze, iron, brass, ivory) and with inlaid precious metals, presumably enameled and gilded in certain points; what is certain is that these sculptures are only African in the black types they reproduce, the religious or priestly symbols and, presumably, the rudimentary deficiencies of the execution, however always much superior to any other of the so-called black art.⁵⁷

In short, Macedo writes that their aesthetics are Asian, their technology is European, and all their exceptional character is due to the Portuguese.

As Adam Kuper underlines, the Benin Bronzes were in fact mostly cast from brass or carved from ivory. Benin corresponds to the prestigious kingdom of Edo, now southwestern Nigeria. Kuper asserts that “Benin” is

the Portuguese version of a vernacular term, *itsekiri Ubinu*, meaning royal capital; the Europeans began to call Edo ‘Benin’ and the term was applied more widely to the region bordering a bay on the Gulf of Guinea in West Africa, which became known as the Bight of Benin.⁵⁸

The Portuguese arrived in the late fifteenth century in what was a prosperous kingdom. Although included in the narrative of “discoveries”, it was in fact a sophisticated kingdom by the time Europeans arrived. The Portuguese established there a commercial outpost for trade, a *feitoria*, factory in English, like many others on the African coast.⁵⁹ Throughout the centuries it had commercial relations with other countries and was one of the spots for the trade of enslaved people. In 1885 the British Foreign Office established a protectorate in the Niger Delta, in the aftermath of the Berlin conference and the division of Africa. In 1897 there was a brutal British raid resulting in the destruction of the Benin city and the pillage of thousands of objects, many of them now in the British Museum; others bought by other European colonial museums.⁶⁰

By claiming the exceptionality of Benin’s art, Diogo de Macedo was claiming the Portuguese heritage in that territory and, ultimately, claiming the “true” Portuguese nationality of Benin through ‘primitive’ art – primitivism being a matter dear to all the actors of culture and art of modernity and a sign of cosmopolitanism. Diogo de Macedo colonises Benin’s historical time, since the Portuguese influence over the territory had long been lost. He therefore bridges the fifteenth century with modernity: the imperial and colonial narrative of the “discoveries” is linked with modernist primitivism.

At the same time, Diogo de Macedo is contributing to the discourses on positive miscegenation and “good Portuguese colonialism”. Although this was a later thesis prompted by the work of Gilberto Freyre,⁶¹ it was also ingrained before in other authors such as Diogo de Macedo as a counter-discourse to racial and segregation theories and to the negative meaning usually given to “primitive”. As far as the Benin sculptures are concerned, he sees the “good” miscegenation of Eastern, European and African arts, which gives rise to a greater art from the African continent thanks to the Portuguese. Macedo is inscribing a nationalist and colonial sub-narrative in the “preference for the primitive” that is part and parcel of modernity’s narratives. In that way, he combines cosmopolitan anthropology, or *Völkerkunde*, with local ethnography, or *Völkskunde*, insofar as he sees the self in the other – that is, he values the suggested Portuguese characteristics of the primitive art from Benin and manages to conciliate nationalism and cosmopolitanism.

I return now to the book published to promote the Colonial Exhibition of 1934, titled *O Livro da Exposição – 1ª Exposição Colonial Portuguesa*, which served as an extensive instrument of

colonial propaganda and at the same time of the recently instituted Estado Novo. The book includes an unsigned text titled “Etnografia e artes indígenas” [Ethnography and indigenous arts], in which excerpts of Diogo de Macedo’s *Arte Indígena Portuguesa* are largely replicated. This fact remained unnoticed until now, but the text is, in fact, a summary of what Macedo published before, including Carl Einstein’s quotations, establishing affinities between modernism and primitivism. It consequently links Macedo directly to the colonial exhibition of 1934 and the colonial trope of primitivism. The ‘primitive’ in art objects was seen as a manifestation of modernity to be associated with the colonial enterprise that was presenting the colonies as desirable places for very much needed potential colonisers being targeted in the country’s northern rural areas.

“Good” primitivism and “bad” primitivism

As Torgovnick writes, Hal Foster “roasted” the 1984 MoMA exhibition in a 1985 essay,⁶² “but with the apparent subgoal of elevating surrealist art, part of the tradition in which he saw himself and certain fellow members of the New Left”.⁶³ Hal Foster ended his text by saying that it is necessary that other narratives, the narratives produced by the other, non-white, women, tribal, minorities, replace the narcissistic Western narrative, that is, they should have the right to speak and to their own agency. But the final aim of his text was to underline that there is a “good” primitivism in which, however, we very much notice that those voices remain silent. Foster finds “good” primitivism in what he considers “transgressive surrealism”, such as the one practiced by Georges Bataille (1897–1962). Based on the famous text by James Clifford, “On Ethnographic Surrealism” (1981),⁶⁴ Foster highlights the *bricoleur* character shown in the magazine *Documents* (1929–1930) in which Picasso, Matisse and others were shown alongside African and Oceanian sculptures, or with images of butchers and Boiffard’s big toes, or frames from Hollywood films and commodity advertising. As James Clifford wrote, *Documents* was a strange museum that shuffled the cultural order and showed only the juxtaposition or collage or montage of documents in a perverse collection.⁶⁵ *Documents* was founded by dissidents of André Breton’s surrealism: Georges Bataille, Michel Leiris, Carl Einstein, among others, and also included collaborations by Marcel Griaule, Paul Rivet and Georges-Henri Rivière (responsible for the reconfiguration of the Trocadéro Museum in two, the Museum of Decorative Arts and the Musée de l’Homme). Their tutelary figure was Marcel Mauss. The operation of *ethnographic bricolage* should imply the disruption of hierarchies, the display of heterogeneities, the subversion of apparent reality. The *bricolage* would “deconstruct ‘affinities’ between the modern and the tribal, or modernist ‘universality’, and such constructs as a fixed primitive ‘essence’ or a stable western ‘identity’”.⁶⁶

In her text from the MoMA exhibition catalogue, Rosalind Krauss also associated Giacometti with transgressive primitivism, and with Bataille’s disruptive surrealism. Krauss speaks of a “soft” version of primitivism, that is, a primitivism reduced to the valorisation of form that saw the primitive as a formal and aesthetic solution to the impasses of modern art, as opposed to a “hard” primitivism, destructive of civilisation, formless.⁶⁷ This approach paved the way for a whole history of twentieth-century art from the perspective of Bataille’s concept of *formless* — against the dominant, formalist-oriented narrative of modernity — a history of art that she went on to co-author with Yve-Alain Bois in an exhibition at Pompidou in 1996 and its influential catalogue.⁶⁸

However, it must be noticed that the transgressive “hard” primitivism that these authors find in *Documents* or in Giacometti’s art continued to radiate from Paris. Moreover, the primary source for ethnographic surrealist bricolage was the collection of the Trocadéro Museum. The protagonists of this primitivism were still performing *Volkskunde* and promoting the constitution of museums with looted or acquired objects in an irregular or unfair way — as is well

known, Marcel Griaule directed the Dakar-Djibouti mission, in which Georges-Henri Rivière and Michel Leiris participated, and that constituted the collection of the Musée de l'Homme, now in the Quai Branly.

Both Diogo de Macedo's 1934 book *A Arte Indígena Portuguesa* and the 1944 essay "Um problema nacional na arte de Benim" were thoroughly commented from a theoretical perspective by the literature scholar Pedro Serra in an important text from 2006, "Uses of the African 'Primitive' on the *Orpheu* Scene. An incorporation of Fernando Pessoa". He contextualises them in the nationalist logic of affirmation of a Portuguese Colonial Empire and of the Portuguese "civilising mission" and considers that Diogo de Macedo's primitivism is marked by the "imperial delusion determined by a racial discourse", and also by the ethnocentric fascination with the exotic that moves away from the political and aesthetically significant tendency of *strong* modernist primitivist appropriations, which should be considered, by contrast, interesting.⁶⁹ Therefore, Pedro Serra also distinguishes good primitivism from bad primitivism, or a "soft" primitivism and a "strong" or "hard" primitivism. "Hard" primitivism, as acknowledged by Serra, "is related to, in the modernity discourse and in the culture of modernism, the problem of Origin, either historical, cultural or associated with individual conscious".⁷⁰ Since he considers the indigenous art as Portuguese, Macedo's primitivism is not concerned with the Origin problem as "strong" primitivism would be. For Serra, he lacks "the prospective pulsion of the modernist primitivism" and his "'primitive' is not that Other with political and aesthetic significance of the *strong* modernist primitivist appropriations". There is a "racist determination" in Macedo, while the "good" primitivism "articulates a critique of civilisation, mediated by a rebelled aesthetics that presents itself as mixed-race".⁷¹

Serra does not exactly oppose a merely formal primitivism to a transgressive formless one, as Hal Foster or Rosalind Krauss do. Rather, he recovers the argument on the lack of a formal aesthetic vocabulary of primitivism in Portuguese modernism,⁷² while actually associating "strong" primitivism with that formal absorption. The "soft" primitivism of Krauss and Foster becomes "strong" in the light of Serra's analysis. He further considers that a "weak" primitivism is a colonial-informed primitivism.

This shift is of the utmost interest because, on the one hand, it seeks to analyse the concept of primitivism in the specific context of a peripheral European colonial dictatorship. On the other hand, the syndrome of *belatedness* towards a European model irradiating from the centre continues to manifest itself. Serra considers the Portuguese modernists who 'failed' to formally absorb primitivism as being delayed. As a result, a desired aesthetic crossbreeding was never achieved. That is, Serra's assumption rests on the affinity between the modern and the "primitive" which had been at the centre of the MoMA exhibition "roasted" by Hal Foster as "soft" primitivism.

The question is that soft/weak and hard/strong primitivism share exactly the same colonial trope of primitivism, and this hierarchisation and judgement is not useful in a critical analysis of the concept. Instead, the prevailing tropes of primitivism can be acknowledged as working differently, and in a more complex way, in the southern European periphery, precisely because it is through them that primitivism manifests itself, in a transaction between formal aesthetics and colonial politics, between negative and positive connotations (which can both encompass racism), between nationalism and cosmopolitanism, between resistance and compliance.

Primitivism and anti-colonialism

In March and April 1946, an exhibition was held during the Black Art Week at the Escola Superior Colonial (Colonial School), which was associated with the Lisbon Geographical Society and was where administrative staff for the government of the colonies trained. The exhibition

was organised by Ernesto de Sousa (1921–1988), then a young neo-realist art cinema critic, who opposed the dictatorship and promoted cultural events that were hotspots of resistance and a pretext for the gathering of oppositional forces.⁷³ He had the collaboration of Diogo de Macedo, then director of the National Museum of Contemporary Art, who lent objects from his collection of African art. The aim was to compare “primitive” art and modern art – the first exhibition of this nature to be held in Portugal. Sculptures from Angola, Guinea and Mozambique, originals by Amadeo de Souza-Cardoso, Modigliani and Almada Negreiros, and reproductions by Picasso and Matisse were exhibited. A card by Macedo in Ernesto de Sousa’s archive clearly indicates the number of objects he lent:

Here are twenty sculptures of black people. They all have a label, by which you can organise your catalogue. Those from Mozambique can form a nucleus; those from Angola, another group; and those from Guinea a third group. Except for the large one, of the nalus, which will deserve a plinth, they can all be kept on the shelves I mentioned. I ask you to take great care not to misplace them or confuse them with others you may borrow. Regards from Diogo de Macedo.⁷⁴

The programme of the Black Art Week announced a lecture by Diogo de Macedo on the opening day and another lecture by Ernesto de Sousa on “Black sculpture and the Paris school”. In this conference, Ernesto de Sousa tackled the “affinities” between the primitive and the modern, and the “abstract” tendency of primitive art. In his manuscript, it is clear that he consulted and paraphrased excerpts of Macedo’s 1934 book, even quoting the exact same sentence (and with the same misspelling) by Carl Einstein: “L’art africain possède des qualités plastiques, ornementals [sic] et picturales justifiant por lui un rang auprès des arts universels”. However, he twists the colonial framework of Macedo’s text to relate primitivism and neo-realism by stating that African objects could empower a collective experience that could provide the critical tools to combat oppression. Ernesto places “black art” on the same level as the art of the Mexican muralists or that of Cândido Portinari, who were major references for the politically engaged art pursued by the neo-realists.⁷⁵ Furthermore, he ends the conference (which escaped censorship) with strong criticism of colonialism, denouncing the centuries-long exploitation carried out by “pseudo-civilised rulers” and their racism.⁷⁶ He recognised that “art reflects the problems of colonization”.⁷⁷ Speaking at the Colonial School, he was talking directly to those who were going to be dislocated to work in the colonies’ administration, and he was using primitivism as a cultural instrument of anti-colonial propaganda.

In the following year, the young surrealist poet and painter Mário Cesariny (1923–2006), poet and painter, travelled to Paris, most certainly to see the international surrealist exhibition promoted by André Breton, with the patronage of Marcel Duchamp. Cesariny famously said that “Africa was the last surrealist continent”, as if stating that to be a surrealist one would have to be metaphorically in Africa. He further stated:

Africa enjoys the rare privilege of having produced neither Cartesianism nor any of the systems of thought and action based on universes of categories. Africa knows a myth that we ignore. – We think it lies dormant in the past and is perhaps making up the future.⁷⁸

On the one hand, he exoticises Africa as much as his next fellow surrealist, but on the other, he steps outside the narrative of allochronism and of mythical origin, projecting Africa in the future.

It was in 1947 that Cesariny made a significant collage (Figure 7.7) with the image of a head from the collection of the Musée de l’Homme,⁷⁹ which he visited, as a surrealist would have

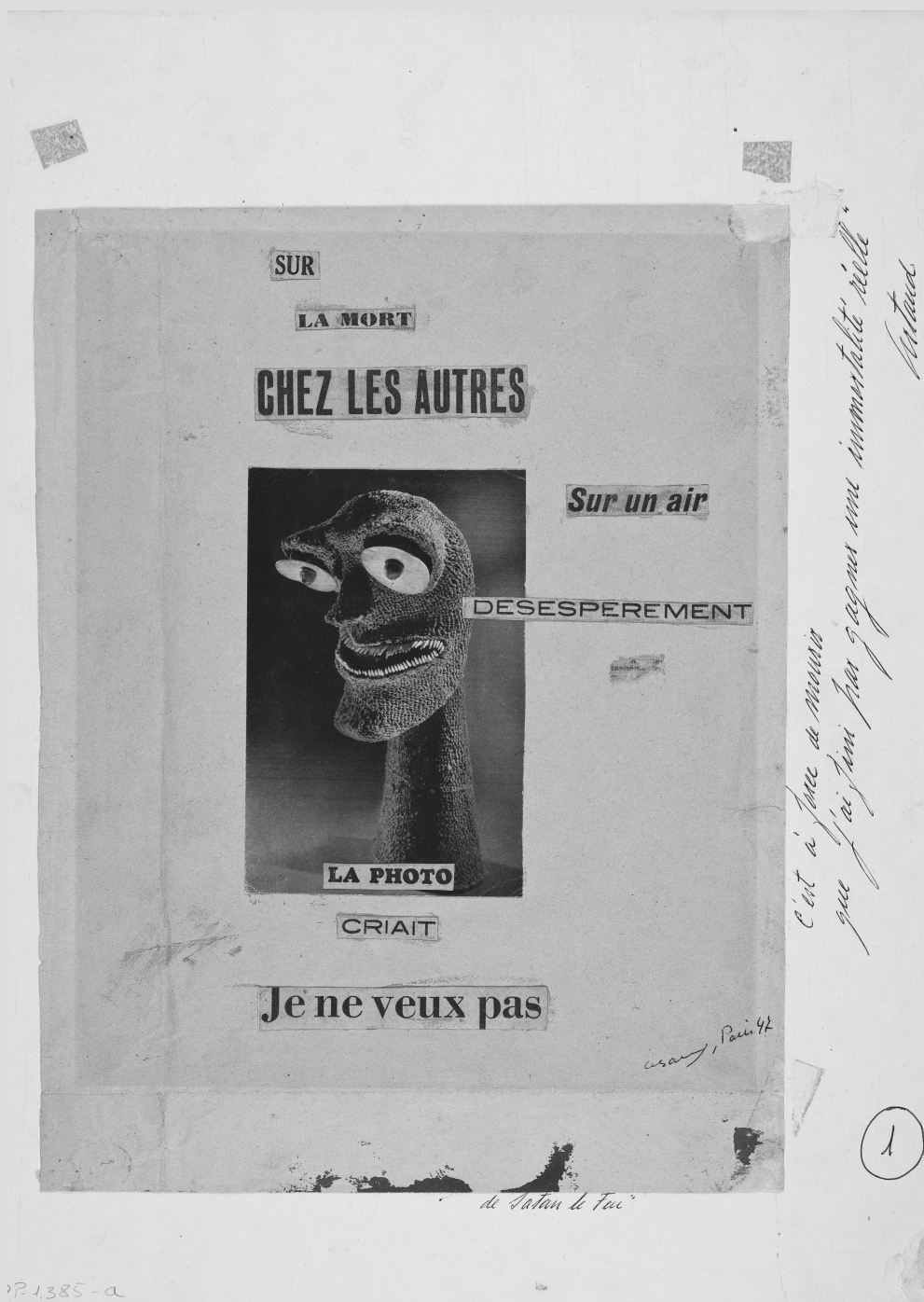


Figure 7.7 Mário Cesariny, *Poème*, 1947. Collage on paper, 21 × 27.5 cm. Inv. DP1385/a. Photograph by Paulo Costa. CAM-Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, Lisbon. © Fundação Cupertino de Miranda.

done in Paris in 1947. The head is originally from Hawaii, brought over by James Cook (the first European “discoverer” of Hawaii, or at least the first claiming the discovery, since the islands were certainly known on the Spanish routes) in the late eighteenth century. The head is made of wood, mother-of-pearl shells, dog teeth and once had feathers and hair. It represents a god of war, possibly Kukailimoku. This information was most probably not available to Cesariny, but the surrealists established a difference between African and Oceanian art, seeing in the later general shamanic powers capable of disturbing the unconscious.

This collage seems to perform the gesture of giving voice to this image so that it can refuse primitivist appropriation, or the refusal of colonial violence and forced civilisation. Nevertheless, primitivist appropriation is a *sine qua non* for that performative activation. The photo screamed “je ne veux pas”, but for Cesariny to make it scream, it must be silent from the outset – it has been collected and photographed, and its original story is gone. On the side there is a quotation from Artaud: “C’est à force de mourir que j’ai finis par gagner une immortalité réelle” [It’s by sheer dint of dying that I’ve ended up gaining real immortality]. Dan Hicks’s *chronopolitics* mentioned before can be evoked: there is a deliberate consciousness that the statue must be silent, dispossessed of its history, to gain immortality in a Western surrealist collage. Cesariny’s glued newspaper words and Artaud’s handwritten quotation turn the head into a ventriloquist’s dummy that makes her denounce the relationship between art and colonialism.

The discussion of primitivism seen from the periphery of Europe, I have argued, amounts to a reckoning with the idea of the Other as a tool to forge the identity of the self – either national, artistic, European or cosmopolitan. Going back to António Areal’s series, the *popping* demoiselle may also be seen as that process, from other to self and back again, a recurrent self-othering that goes along with the narrative of modernity. This split identity⁸⁰ is intrinsic to the ascertainment of uneven processes of modernisation, and of the failure of universal categories, which nevertheless persist as cornerstones of the discourses on civilisation. It is not only related to racism but also to xenophobia and distancing centre/periphery dichotomies which have produced what Piotr Piotrowski called the “close other”.⁸¹ As counter-narrative to the belatedness syndrome, concepts like “primitive”/“primitivism” should be seen working in the *longue durée* – they do not relate exclusively to the formal aesthetics of art objects, or even to an artistic attitude, but to a process of construction of difference and identification, implicating the relationship with the history of the term and with its historical (and psychoanalytical) charge. They are an indefinitely unfinished process present in museums, collections, cultural policies, mass culture and transnational artistic practices of the present.

On the other hand, this split identity is itself a product of modern categories that perform what Denise Ferreira da Silva calls *engulfment*, that is a “‘partial negation’, the productive violent act of naming, the symbolic appropriation that produces modern subjects, inaugurating a relationship precisely because, in the regimen of representation interiority governs, it institutes unsublatable and irreducible subjects”.⁸² According to the Brazilian philosopher, the racial and cultural differences could only be represented within a context of subalternisation, that is, the condition for representation is subalternisation.⁸³ Subaltern is a precondition for the Other – of which Cesariny is also well aware. In other words, the mere concept of difference, of otherness, has historically produced an unequal relation. The modern post-Enlightenment subject (*Homo Modernus*, as Denise Ferreira da Silva names it) emerges from that contrast with otherness which is *engulfed* in universalist categories.

The modern universal, transparent, categories entail an *engulfment* of the Other, of the subaltern. Maybe that can also be seen, speculatively, in António Areal’s paintings, the *engulfment*

of cultural and racial difference, the absorption of otherness as constitutive of the modern narrative. Recognising the “strategy of engulfment” as constitutive of the *Homo Modernus* mines the divisions of good/strong primitivism and weak/soft primitivism, and puts into perspective the belatedness syndrome. Therefore, the supposed universal categories implied in a diagnosis of historical belatedness are exposed as constructs which narrow, flatten and uniformise the concepts of culture, civilisation or art.

Acknowledgments

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Notes

- 1 Patricia Leighton writes that Picasso never painted from a specific mask or sculpture, but rather “synthesized aspects of a variety of masks and statues, all from various parts of the French Empire; it was the idea of Africa that Picasso sought”. Patricia Leighton, *The Liberation of Painting. Modernism and Anarchism in Avant-Garde Paris*. Chicago, IL and London: University of Chicago Press, 2013, 60, 77.
- 2 Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel, *Naissance de l’Art Contemporain – 1945–1970. Une histoire mondiale*. Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2021 (in particular, Chapter 1, “Les choix de la reconstruction” and Chapter 3, “Le triomphe international de l’abstraction Parisienne”).
- 3 Sigmund Freud, *Civilisation and Its Discontents* (1930) (David McLintock, trans.). London: Penguin Books, 2002, 39.
- 4 Sigmund Freud, op. cit., 30.
- 5 Idem, 17–18.
- 6 Ibidem, 11.
- 7 Marianna Torgovnick analyses how Freud links the primitive and the female in the chapter “Entering Freud’s Study” *Gone Primitive. Savage Intellectuals; Modern Lives* (Marianna Torgovnick, ed.), Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1990, 204–209.
- 8 Idem, 207. Torgovnick also points that there is a complex relation made by Freud between civilisation and primitiveness, since he and his family were persecuted and discriminated as Jews in Nazi-occupied Austria, and the anti-Jewish propaganda constructed an idea of Jews as the Other, as ‘primitives’. Freud’s work claims back civilisation for himself. Ibidem, 198–199.
- 9 Hal Foster, “Primitive Scenes”, *Prosthetic Gods*. Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 2004, 33.
- 10 In a 1937 interview conducted by André Malraux, quoted in Hal Foster. op. cit., 31.
- 11 Torgovnick, op. cit., 8.
- 12 See Leighton, op.cit., 79.
- 13 Idem, 58.
- 14 T. J. Clark, *Farewell to an Idea. Episodes from a History of Modernism*. New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 1999, 306–307.
- 15 Leighton, op.cit., in particular Chapter 2, “The White Peril. Colonialism, *L’Art Nègre*, and *Les Femelles d’Avignon*” (57–84), and Chapter 3, “A Rational of Ugliness: Cubism and its Reception” (85–110).
- 16 Idem, 58.
- 17 Some of authors and works dealing with folk art during the dictatorship are: João Leal, *Etnografias Portuguesas (1870–1970): Cultura Popular e Identidade Nacional* [Portuguese Ethnographies 1870–1970: Folk Culture and National Identity]. Lisboa: Dom Quixote, 2000; Daniel Melo, *Salazarismo e Cultura Popular (1933–1958)* [Salazarism and Folk Culture]. Lisboa: Instituto de Ciências Sociais, 2001; Vera Marques Alves, *Arte popular e nação no Estado Novo. A política folclorista do Secretariado de Propaganda Nacional* [Folk Art and Nation under the Estado Novo. National Secretary for Propaganda’s Folklore Policies]. Lisbon: Imprensa de Ciências Sociais, 2013; Bárto, “The Story of a Portuguese Cock and other Knick-Knacks: Heritage, Propaganda and Design in Carlos a Far-right Dictatorship”, *Design, History and Time: New Temporalities in a Digital Age* (Zoë Hendon and Anne

- Massey eds.). London: Bloomsbury, 2019, and “Damned Words: The Use and Disuse of Modern as an Attribute for the Interpretation of Folk Customs in Theatrical Revue Stage and Costume Design at the Turn of the 1930s”, *RIHA Journal*, 0139, 2016. Vernacular architecture, regionalism, folk art were the core themes of the book *Southern Modernisms: From A to Z and Back Again* (Joana Cunha Leal, Maria Helena Maia, and Begonã Farré Torras, eds.), Lisboa/Porto: CEEA/IHA, 2015. Joana Cunha Leal’s art history work has continually analysed the relationship between local and global in Portuguese modernist practices. See, for instance, Cunha Leal, “Disclosing the Ultimate Mediterranean Cubist Village”, *Artl@s Bulletin*, 10, 2, Article 9, 2021; “Distance and Distortion: Amadeo Souza Cardoso’s and Joan Miró’s War-years Painting and the Words that Fail Them”, *Artl@s Bulletin*, 6, 2, Article 2, 2017; and “Trapped Bugs, Rotten Fruits and Faked Collages: Amadeo Souza Cardoso’s Troublesome Modernism”, *Konsthistorisk Tidskrift/Journal of Art History*, 82, 2, 2013, 99–114.
- 18 João Leal, “Center and Periphery: Anthropological Theory and National Identity in Portuguese Ethnography”, *The Palgrave Handbook of the History of Human Sciences* (David McCallum, ed.). Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022, 1–20.
- 19 Pinto dos Santos, Mariana, “On Belatedness. The Shaping of Portuguese Art History in Modern Times”, *Artium Quaestiones*, 30, 2019, 37–64.
- 20 On the idea of periphery as a temporal concept, see Vlachou, Foteini, “Why Spatial? Time and the Periphery”, *Visual Resources*, 32, 1–2, 2016, 9–24, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01973762.2016.1132500>, reprinted in Vlachou, Foteini, *The Disappointed Writer: Selected Essays*. Lisbon: Edições do Saguão, 2019.
- 21 João Leal, op. cit., 7. This topic was extensively studied by Vera Marques Alves, *Arte popular e nação no Estado Novo. A política folclorista do Secretariado de Propaganda Nacional* [Folk Art and Nation under the Estado Novo. National Secretary for Propaganda’s Folklore Policies]. Lisboa: Imprensa de Ciências Sociais, 2013.
- 22 See note 17.
- 23 João Leal, op. cit., 8. The couple also undertook extensive research of peasant and folk traditions in Portugal.
- 24 See for instance Dino Costantini, *Mission civilisatrice. Le rôle de l’histoire coloniale dans la construction de l’identité politique française*, Paris: ed. La Découverte, 2008; Fredrick Cooper and Ann Stoler, *Tensions of Empire. Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997. See also Leighton, op.cit., 59 and ff.
- 25 Decree of 11 March 1877, quoted by Alexandre Valentim, “Nação e Império”, *História da Expansão Portuguesa* (Francisco Bethencourt and Kirti Chauduri eds.), vol. 4 – *Do Brasil para África*. Lisbon: Círculo de Leitores, 1998, 115. See also Miguel Bandeira Jerónimo, “The ‘Civilisation Guild’: Race and Labour in the Third Portuguese Empire, c. 1870–1930”, *Racism and Ethnic Relations in the Portuguese-speaking World* (Francisco Bethencourt and Adrian J. Pearce, eds.). New York: Oxford University Press, 2012, 173–199. Henrique de Carvalho was responsible for expeditions in the North of Angola between 1884 and 1888, capturing several objects from the Lunda region and he publishes *Ethnographia e História Tradicional dos Povos do Lunda* in 1890 (see José Redinha, *Quelques témoignages de l’esprit de la bonne entente entre les Portugais et les Africains*. Luanda: Museu de Angola, 1961).
- 26 On the role of the Geographical Society throughout the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, see Afonso Dias Ramos, “Sociedade de Geografia”, *Re-mapping Memories Lisboa-Hamburg*, 2021, <https://www.re-mapping.eu/pt/lugares-de-memoria/sociedade-de-geografia-de-lisboa> (consulted 6 May 2023).
- 27 Besides the publishing related with the Dundo Museum since 1942 and its growing collection resulting from expeditions, José Redinha published studies on cave paintings from Zambeze (1948), on religious costumes and fetishes of the kiokos, Angola (1949), on African Masks (1952) and an important study on ephemeral mural painting in Lunda (*Paredes Pintadas do Lunda*, 1953). All of these were publications from the Museum of Dundo, financed by Diamang, Angola’s Diamond Company, founded in 1917 with Portuguese, Belgian, North-American and French capital (see Patrícia Ferraz de Matos, “Projectos coloniais e seus efeitos: o caso do trabalho de José Redinha desenvolvido no Museu do Dundo”, *Poiésis*, Universidade do Sul de Santa Catarina, UNISUL, Tubarão, 2, 2, July/December 2009, 42–61.
- 28 From 1959 on to he would collaborate with the Angola Museum, collaborating with a younger anthropologist called Mesquitela Lima (1929–2007) who became director of the Angola Museum in 1963 and later founded the department of Anthropology of NOVA University in Lisbon. The Dundo

- Museum (1943) was financed by Diamang and was first named “Museu Gentílico” (1936), “Museu Ethnológico” (1938), “Museu Ethnográfico” (1940), and again “Museu Etnológico” (1942).
- 29 Patrícia Ferraz de Matos, op.cit., 49.
- 30 Idem, 51.
- 31 Ibidem.
- 32 I refer to Adam Kuper’s book, which surveys the constitution of European and USA colonial and ethnographic museums and the invention of ‘primitive’ art. Adam Kuper, *The Museum of Other People. From Colonial Acquisitions to Cosmopolitan Exhibitions*. London: Profile Books, 2023.
- 33 Ferraz de Matos, op. cit., 47.
- 34 The concept of allochronism, of relegating to a distant past what in fact shares the same chronology, was introduced by Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1983.
- 35 Alfredo Margarido, “A impossibilidade portuguesa de reconhecer a importância estética das máscaras e das esculturas africanas [the Portuguese impossibility of recognising the aesthetic importance of African masks and sculptures], *Latitudes. Cahiers Lusophones*, 13, décembre 2001. I thank the historian Diogo Ramada Curto for this reference. More recently Diogo Ramada Curto wrote an article in the newspaper in which he repeats Margarido’s arguments, saying there was not any true “primitivism” in Portuguese art. Diogo Ramada Curto, “Portugal em bicos de pés: etnografia colonial e modernismo truncado”, *Contacto*, 14 January 2022. (<https://www.contacto.lu/portugal/portugal-em-bicos-de-pes-etnografia-colonial-e-modernismo-truncado/489393.html>).
- 36 José-Augusto França, *A Arte em Portugal no Século XX*. Lisboa: Bertrand, 1991 (1974), 79–80. França did not acknowledge the critical reception of primitivism and consequent modifications made by Amadeo, namely by incorporating references of his own local folk art imaginary, such as the carnival masks from the North of Portugal (caretos de Podence) in his masks/heads painted in 1915. He refers to his masks/heads as “expressionist”. Idem, 87.
- 37 Alfredo Margarido, op. cit., 11.
- 38 See Pinto dos Santos, “On Belatedness...”, op. cit.
- 39 Nevertheless, there are several museums and collections in Portugal that must also deal with that debate, namely the Geographical Society.
- 40 Dan Hicks, *The Brutish Museums. The Benin Bronzes, Colonial Violence and Cultural Restitution*. London: Pluto Press, 2020, 191–192. Hicks derives his concept from Achille Mbembe’s *necropolitics*, speaking “mummification, statuefication, and fetishization” performed by museums, and, going further back, to Franz Fanon and what he called the Europeans’ “compartmentalized world” and Aimé Césaire’s “chosification”, that is, societies “emptied of themselves, [...] men thorned away from life”. Referenced in Dan Hicks, op. cit., 190–192.
- 41 “Acto colonial”, *Diário do Governo*, Series I, n. 156, 8 July 1930. See also Ferraz de Matos, “O Acto Colonial e a ‘criação’ do ‘indígena’”, *Representações raciais no Império Colonial Português*. Lisboa: ICS, 2006, 62–68.
- 42 Ferraz de Matos, “Exibir o império, imaginar a nação: representações das colónias e dos portugueses de além-mar nas grandes exposições”, *As cores do império...*
- 43 Idem, 166–167.
- 44 Filipa Lowndes Vicente, “Rosita e o império como objecto de desejo”, *Público*, 25 August 2013. See also Filipa Lowndes Vicente, “Black Women’s Bodies in the Portuguese Colonial Visual Archive (1900–1975)”, *Portuguese Literary & Cultural Studies — Transnational Africas: Visual, Material and Sonic Cultures of Lusophone Africa*, 30/31, 2017, 16–67. And also Isabel Morais, “‘Little Black Rose’ at the 1934 Exposição Colonial Portuguesa”, *Gendering the Fair: Histories of Women and Gender at World’s Fairs* (T.J. Boisseau and Abigail M. Markwyn, eds.). Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010, 19–36.
- 45 The biweekly publication *Ultramar* started four months before the exhibition, in order to prepare the public for the event, and lasted until the end of the exhibition. *Acção Colonial* was a single-issue magazine dedicated to the exhibition. The magazine *Portugal Colonial* started in 1931, the year of the Paris exhibition, and lasted until 1937. *Civilização, Ilustração, Notícias Ilustrado*, the humorous newspaper *Maria Rita*, among other periodicals, had special issues dedicated to the exhibition, sometimes with humorous drawings and texts that contribute to a general racist discourse.
- 46 Diogo de Macedo, *Arte Indígena Portuguesa*. Lisbon: Agência Geral das Colónias, 1934.
- 47 Luís de Montalvor, Preface to *Arte Indígena Portuguesa*, op. cit., iv.

- 48 Alfredo Margarido suggests Diogo de Macedo started his African art collection after seeing the colonial exhibition of 1931 (he mistakenly writes 1929) at the Bois de Vincennes, for which he made a statue of a national “discovery era” hero, Afonso de Albuquerque. Margarido, op. cit., 9.
- 49 William Goldwater, *Primitivism in Modern Art* (1938). New York: Vintage Books, 1966.
- 50 William Rubin, “Introduction”, “*Primitivism*” in *20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern*. New York: MoMA, 1984, 3. In this exhibition and catalogue, it was established that primitivism was “an aspect of modern art and not tribal art” (W. Rubin) and the main thesis was that the changes in modern art were not determined by “tribal art”; instead, they would have been underway since the industrial revolution, when the search for a more “pure” individual artistic expression would have manifested itself, from revivals to impressionism and post-impressionism. Thus, there would be “affinities” between modern art and tribal art, and not “influences”.
- 51 Diogo de Macedo, op. cit.
- 52 Idem.
- 53 Ibidem.
- 54 Teresa Matos Pereira also refers to Diogo de Macedo’s attribution of the Benin knowledge to the Portuguese and the European capacity of “feeling primitively”, albeit in a different reading from mine, one that describes Diogo de Macedo’s work within the context of a vast array of Portuguese references and events in a thorough and monumental cartography of Portuguese coloniality in art, collections, and exhibitions. Teresa Matos Pereira, *Uma Travessia da Colonialidade: Pintura, Coleções e Intervisualidades* [A Journey Through Coloniality: Painting, Collections and Intervisualities]. Lisbon: Caleidoscópio, 2019, 133–134.
- 55 Dan Hicks, op. cit., 150.
- 56 Idem., 199–200.
- 57 Diogo de Macedo, “Um problema nacional na arte de Benim” [A national problem in Benin art], *separata O Mundo Português*, March 1944.
- 58 Adam Kuper, *The Museum of Other People*. Op. cit., 234–235.
- 59 I thank the scholar and my colleague Nuno Senos (NOVA University) for clarification on the presence of the Portuguese commercial outpost or factory in Benin city. Susan Buck-Morss has noticed how much modern industrialization and the idea of civilisation is connected with the colonial enterprise, even in the word “factory”, that comes from the Portuguese *feitoria*, a place for trade of overseas resources that other colonial powers, such as the British and the Dutch, also installed. See Susan Buck-Morss, *Hegel, Haiti and Universal History*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009, 101–102.
- 60 Kuper, op. cit., 240.
- 61 Namely Casa Grande e Senzala, 1933.
- 62 “The final criterion is Form, the only context is Art, the primary subject is Man. In this way the exhibition confirmed the colonial extraction of the tribal work (in the guise of its redemption as art) and rehearsed its artistic appropriation into tradition. No counterdiscourse was posed: the imperialist precondition of primitivism was suppressed, and ‘primitivism’, a metonym of imperialism, served as its disavowal. [...] On the one hand, the primitivist incorporation of the other is another form of conquest [...]; on the other, it serves as its displacement, its disguise, even its excuse.” Foster, “The ‘Primitive’ Unconscious of Modern Art or White Skin, Black Masks” (1985), *Recodings. Art Spectacle, Cultural Politics*. New York: The New Press, 1999, 183 and 197.
- 63 Torgovnick, op. cit., 120–121.
- 64 Republished in James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture. Twentieth Century Ethnography, Literature and Art*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988, 117–151.
- 65 Idem, 133–134.
- 66 Foster, “The ‘Primitive’ Unconscious”..., op. cit., 202.
- 67 Rosalind Krauss, “Giacometti”, “*Primitivism*” in *20th Century Art. Affinities of the Tribal and the Modern* (William Rubin ed.), vol. II. New York: MoMA, 1984, 503–534.
- 68 Yve-Alain Bois and Rosalind Krauss, *Formless – A User’s Guide*. New York: Zone Books, 2000.
- 69 Pedro Serra, “Usos Do ‘Primitivo’ Africano na Cena de *Orpheu*. Uma incorporação de Fernando Pessoa”, *Modernismo & Primitivismo* (Pedro Serra, ed.). Coimbra: Centro de Literatura Portuguesa, 2006, 67–69.
- 70 Idem, 63.
- 71 Ibidem, 69. Pedro Serra proceeds to analyse the “transactions between the aesthetic discourse and the colonial grammar” of Fernando Pessoa. He considers that the primitivist imagery in Pessoa is

- connected with a colonial vocabulary that objectifies the African “other” and problematises the common assumption that Pessoa had a “fundamentally non colonialist attitude”, proposing that the opposite could be easily said too, that “Pessoa had a “fundamentally colonialist attitude” (95–96).
- 72 As Alfredo Margarido and Diogo Ramada Curto also argue.
- 73 See Pinto dos Santos, *Vanguarda & Outras Loas*. Lisboa: Assírio & Alvim, 2007.
- 74 See my “Apresentação de texto inédito de Ernesto de Sousa de 1946 — conferência ‘A escultura negra e a escola de Paris’” and the transcription of Ernesto de Sousa’s conference. In Pinto dos Santos and Ramos (eds.). *Ernesto de Sousa (1921–2021): uma criação consciente de situações / uma situação consciente de criações*. Lisbon: IHA (Art History Institute), FCSH, Universidade NOVA de Lisboa/Project Iberian modernisms and the primitivist imaginary (PTDC/ART-HIS/29837/2017), 2023.
- 75 In the 1940s, mural painting was the most celebrated and claimed language by the neo-realist artists, such as Júlio Pomar, Mário Dionísio and Ernesto de Sousa himself. Mural art would need the collaboration of a public able to receive it, a public that was, therefore, active. See Pinto dos Santos, *Vanguarda & Outras Loas*. op. cit., and “State-commission in modern times. Realism and modernism in the mural paintings of the artist Almada Negreiros (1893–1970)”, *Realisms of the Avant-Garde* (Moritz Baßler, Benedikt Hjartarson, Ursula Frohne, Sascha Bru, and David Ayers, eds.), *European Avant-Garde and Modernism Studies*, 6, Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020, 439–456.
- 76 Ernesto de Sousa, “A escultura negra e a escola de Paris” (1946), *Ernesto de Sousa (1921–2021)*... Op. cit., 183.
- 77 Idem.
- 78 Mário Cesariny, Lecture of Mário Cesariny about Cruzeiro Seixas first exhibition in Luanda, Angola (radio programme “Voz do Império”, 1954). *A Intervenção Surrealista*. Lisboa: Assírio & Alvim, 1997, 73.
- 79 Now it is in a section of works from the Musée du Quai Branly shown at the Louvre.
- 80 I am using Stuart Hall’s terminology in “Ethnicity: Identity and Difference”, *Radical America*, 23, 4, 1989, 16: “Only when there is an Other can you know who you are. [...] The Other is not outside, but also inside the Self, the identity. So, identity is a process, identity is split.” This relates to Du Bois’s concept of “double conscious”, which refers to the conscious of the self as him/herself and other, that is, the “sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others”. W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of the Black Folk*, 1903 (Project Gutenberg, available online).
- 81 Piotr Piotrowski, “From global to alter-globalist art history”. In *Teksty Drugie*, Warszawa: IBL PAN, 2016: “The ‘close other’, on the other hand, functions within the same episteme, in the same system of perceiving the world, in the area of the same cultural, traditional, religious models, and so on. Consequently, the culture of the European coloniser or occupant is not totally strange, or at least it is not as strange as in transoceanic relations. This makes a fundamental discrepancy as it also defines artistic relations”, 121. See also Vlachou, op. cit.
- 82 Denise Ferreira da Silva, *Toward a Global Idea of Race*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007, 29. Denise Ferreira da Silva also relates the strategy of engulfment to the advent of ethnography — and we might add, the museum and of art history — disciplines that ascribe temporality to subjects and objects: “[...] the emergence of the concept of the cultural as the privileged strategy of engulfment and of ethnography as the proper strategy of intervention marked the entry of the others of Europe into temporality [...]” Idem, 169. The book was recently (2022) translated in Brazil with the title *Homo Modernus – Para uma ideia global da raça*. Rio de Janeiro: Cobogó.
- 83 From this premise, Denise Ferreira da Silva discusses Dipesh Chakrabarty’s 2000 book *Provincializing Europe* and the perspective of the Subaltern Studies, which I cannot address in this chapter.

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