

## Arts' Histories: Simultaneity as a Methodological Approach

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### Abstract

The contemporary art scene, its exhibitions, publications, and academic debates, has growingly engaged with plural histories, aligning with curatorial, research, and activist efforts connected to decoloniality, postcoloniality, intersectionality, pluriversality, feminisms, anti-racism, queer theory, contra-coloniality and also south-centered, Black, Indigenous, anti-ableist, and LGBTQIAPN+ movements. These revisions and critical interventions are intrinsically tied to broader political struggles for diversity and rights, which, since the mid-20th century, have been marked by organized resistance against the colonial matrix (Akotirene, 2023). Within this context, the discipline of Art History has been subject to increasing scrutiny regarding its methodological frameworks and its role in perpetuating hegemonic narratives that reinforce ethno and eurocentrism and also structural oppressions. As Pedrosa (2018) argues, “the discipline of art history, with its deeply European roots, structures, and model, is the most powerful and enduring apparatus of imperialism and colonization.” In response to these challenges, this study explores alternative transdisciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches to reconfiguring these narratives, conceptualized here as Arts' Histories. Drawing on pluriversal and critical interculturality perspectives (Acosta et al., 2022, Ramose, 2011; Walsh, 2019, 2010), this study seeks to move beyond Western epistemologies by proposing simultaneity as a methodological tool. This approach aims to foster the convergence of multiple artistic temporalities and cultural frameworks, challenging the notion of absolute truths imposed by colonial technologies, embracing a diversity of histories coexisting within a shared epistemic space.

*Keywords:* arts' histories, art history, art education

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## Introduction

First, it is important to contextualize that this article is part of the author's doctoral research, initiated in the same year this work was presented (2025) at the 13th ECAH. Entitled “In the Antiroom: Arts’ Histories as a pluriversal methodology,” the forthcoming doctoral thesis is based not only on the theoretical references and practices outlined above, but also on the author's past and ongoing teaching experience, which began at the time of her Master's degree, both (PhD and Master) in the Media and Technology field. Since then, it has sought to promote convergences and an ecology of knowledge in undergraduate courses related to the history and pedagogy of the arts. With this in mind, this paper presents theoretical and practice-based reflections on diversifying Art History in ways that go far beyond its traditional boundaries.

In this context, Arts’ Histories as a concept and praxis assumes a critical role by addressing the urgency of multiple global narratives that have emerged from the intersections of art, life and politics since the second half of the last century, within curatorial efforts and activist and political resistance movements for equality and justice, seeking to integrate these plural narratives into a complex, critical, collective, and convergent methodological framework, wherein diverse voices are orchestrated through intricate harmonies, melodies, and arrangements, yet, most significantly, through dissonances, tensions, and controversies. To this extent, Arts’ Histories can be described as a potential approach to developing knowledge (in both teaching and research) in the realm of art history through a pluriversal methodology, which will be shown in this article through theory and classroom (antiroom) experiences. Having set this context, we now proceed to tell these histories — and also, stories.

Belting once stated that “the end of art history is the end of a narrative: either because the narrative has been transformed or because there is nothing left to narrate in the sense understood until then” (Belting, 2012, p. 45). The citation in question offers an interesting entry to this work: since linearity, the discipline's colonial and imperialist practice and paradigm, proves to perpetuate the very condition of its genesis, the simultaneity proposed here may not seek to be a new or different model for the area, since that would certainly follow another exclusionary logic, but rather an exercise and condition of autonomy, ecology and plurality of knowledges, inspired by post-colonial politics and epistemologies, such as pluriversality and critical interculturality. What is meant is that universality through resistance is being radically displaced by pluriversality, or rather, by many worlds that can respectfully coexist within one. The line gives way to various wefts, like in the Chimú mantle (Figure 1), whose history is inextricably intertwined with that of generations of Andean women from the Chimú Culture (1200-1450), an outcome of knowledge transmission sustained for nearly three millennia. Arts’ Histories: a weft of times and spaces.

**Figure 1**

*Women of Chimu Culture, Chimu Mantle, 1200–1430, Wool, Cotton, and Pigment, 90 × 85 cm, on Loan From Masp Landmann, C.00991*



Source: MASP website

But this process is far from easy. Histories, memories and also contemporary practices of resistance to colonial linearity and its multifaceted impacts had found its echo intensified in the recent decades, shaped by long-standing struggles, which, from the 1950s onwards, can be correlated to the global uprisings for equality and civil, sexual and ethnic-racial rights, influencing and being influenced by a field that for some time had bid farewell to single images and its frameworks. Through this lens, the linear path has been intentionally cut by political activists, theorists and artists, such as Lélia Gonzalez, who, in addition to the academic, activist and political career, taught the first Black Culture course at the Parque Lage School of Visual Arts (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil), Abdias Nascimento, through his artworks, the Quilombismo, the Teatro Experimental do Negro and the Museu de Arte Negra, Linda Nochlin, with the inaugural “Why haven't there been any great women artists?” (1971), Lucy Lippard and more recently Maura Reilly, whose feminisms on the agenda corrode the discipline from the inside out - as well as Lélia Gonzalez.

Daiara Tukano, Jaider Esbell, Denilson Baniwa, who through reanthropophagy devour those who previously devoured them (Simões, 2022) alongside many others, such as Adriana Varejão, Grêmio Recreativo Escola de Samba Primeira de Mangueira, Ana Mae Barbosa, Noemia Varela, Stuart Hall, MAHKU - Huni Kuin Artists' Movement, Priscila Leonel, Grada Kilomba, Renata Felinto, Guerrilla Girls, Coletivo Mujeres Creando, Manauara Clandestina, should be highlighted as the promoters of other plots and narratives, in the past and at the very present. In many aspects, what has been challenged since then is the colonial matrix:

From my point of view, it is imperative for activisms, including theoretical activism, to conceive the existence of a modern colonial matrix whose power relations are imbricated in multiple dynamic structures, all of which are worthy of political attention. Combined, they will require from the victimised groups: 1. conceptual instrumentality of race, class, nation and gender; 2. interpretative sensitivity to identity effects; 3. global attention to the modern colonial matrix, avoiding analytical deviation towards just one axis of oppression. (Akotirene, 2023, p. 14, our translation)

In that way, the concept and plurality of histories have been reformulated and presented as a possibility for other narratives for Art History, fighting colonial matrix, based on their varied

contributions to it, considering as an extension of the areas it articulates together, including Art Theory, Critic and Curatorship. It is important to note that the research in question does not claim to have invented or coined the term (Arts' Histories), but rather uses it as a strategy to examine and highlight the discussions that are taking place, as its name indicates. This panorama could be best understood through Pedrosa:

What other histories can art help to reveal or address beyond art history? What other characters, themes, and narratives, besides styles, movements, schools, and periods of the discipline itself? How can we approach more plural, inclusive, multiple, and diverse histories? What lies beyond the history of the Renaissance and Baroque, Impressionism and Expressionism, abstraction and figuration, Constructivism and geometry, Pop Art, Minimalist or Conceptual Art? Several histories can be considered: sexuality, madness, childhood, feminism, histories of colonization and imperialism, indigenous histories, Afro-Atlantic histories. The themes are vast and must include many territories, periods, media, and objects, without completely avoiding Eurocentric inflections. (...) Histories [in portuguese], therefore, are distinctly polyphonic, speculative, open, impermanent, in friction. There is a cannibalistic aspect to the term—they can devour everything and, in fact, their own opposite (even the history of traditional art and its canon can constitute one of the many layers of histories). (Pedrosa, 2018, pp. 15-16, our translation)

What emerges from the excerpt above and also from the Chimú Mantle (Figure 1) is the possibility of stories and histories woven from diverse threads, lines, materials, locations, territories, knowledges, cultures and adornments originating from different parts of the globe, creating a critical and open tapestry of practices, ideas and visualities, indicating other directions for practicing this approach. To reimagine those lines and layers, is where the Antiroom, part of this Doctorate Research title, takes place. And part of this space is the article's body.

### **Another Time(s), Another Space(s)**

Antiroom, is an unusual term, an invented word that challenges conventional spatial concepts. The more common anteroom, according to dictionaries, designates an entryway or transitional passage to the inner chambers of a building. It is a space that exists, yet is often overlooked in the hurried movement through the city, lost in the fortuitous rush towards the grand hall. The term room, when prefixed by anti- in this reimagined construction, invokes any interior space within a house or institution. Of all the possibilities of rooms, the classroom stands out as a space for learning, exchange, and expansion of understanding. However, it is a place where dominant cultural paradigms are reinforced most of the time, either in the minds of children or adults.

Thus, Antiroom emerges in this research as a conceptual, tangible, experiential, media and technological space device to reimagine the classroom as anything but a place of repetition, wherein a singular history of art—or even a singular history of Histories of Art—is perpetuated. This space, in this research, promotes simultaneity as an approach for teaching, learning and sharing Arts' Histories. Drinking from Duchamp's Fountain—that is, from the very notion of anti-art—this seemingly nonexistent term is reconfigured into a tangible and radical possibility. The Antiroom, as said, is an experience that understands the classroom as an important place of transformation, reverberating and giving other meanings to itself and what it represents. Thinking about the correlations between education territories and art

history, some questions arise: are the histories discussed here permanent in the bibliographies and curricula of formal and even non-formal education? How can we ensure their permanent inclusion? Is its permanent inclusion a permanent exclusion of linearity?

From this perspective and located in this investigation, it can be observed that Arts' Histories were and are in process, being experienced in several classes, lectures and communications, specific reports of which can be found in articles previously presented or published such as "Experienciando las Histórias de las Artes: una mañana en la clase de diseño" (in press), at the XII Congreso Internacional de Diseño de la Habana FORMA 25, "El activismo curatorial y las historias del arte y el vídeo: mundos caleidoscópicos" (Magalhães et al, 2023) and "The B-side of these stories: media, technology, videoart and bissexualities" (Leme, 2024), which, in different ways, whether narrating a morning or evening in undergraduate and doctoral classes in design in Latin American countries or a master's thesis focused on the intersection between bisexual activism, art, and technology, highlight the character of encounter and sharing of Arts' Histories.

Besides, as it is demonstrating applications previously made of this methodology by simultaneity, it is worth highlighting the class entitled "Renaissances", which has been taught on several occasions, refuting the universality and presumed uniqueness of the European Cultural Renaissance and the narrative of Classical Antiquity - bringing Kemet to the center, offering the classroom (the antiroom), other movements also called renaissances such as Harlem, Mexican and Catalan Renaissance, plus Beyoncé's Renaissance music album (2022), diversifying the understatement of the movements' nomenclature and its numerous possible meanings.

In addition, other artistic flourishings that can be, in an intentional approach, temporally and/or epistemologically related and layered to the movement that had its epicenter in Florence were brought too - the Chimú mantle itself and its Culture, Marajoara Pottery and its history, as well as the Ifé and Benin Kingdoms in present-day Nigeria, Mali, Ethiopian and Songhai Empires, Nanbokuchō and Muromachi periods in Japan, the Ming Dynasty in China, the Indian Mughal Empire, and the artistic and cultural expressions of Aztec, Inca and Maya histories.

### **Experiencing Arts' Histories Throughout the Antirooms**

These antiroom possibilities, in addition to many others, on an open process of exchange and research, are based on two main concepts: pluriversality and critical interculturality, that should not be understood merely as theoretical constructs within a Western scientific tradition, but must be seen, studied, felt and used as resistance, cultural and political tools that imply direct changes of reality. The first one can be assumed as an important change of paradigm, since pluriverse meaning relies on a "world where many worlds fit, as the Zapatistas of Chiapas say" (Acosta et al., 2022), existing with respect, dialogue, diversity and most of all, the end of exploration and exploitation of any kind. In realms such as Art and History, this shift challenges dominant narratives by emphasizing Indigenous and African epistemologies, expanding the ways in which knowledge is produced and recognized:

Building a pluriversal house means laying a new foundation (...) the notion of the pluriverse questions the very concept of universality, which is fundamental to Eurocentric modernity. With the expression "a world where many worlds fit", the

Zapatistas give us the most succinct and adequate definition of the pluriverse. (Acosta et al., 2022, p. 44, our translation)

It is in this context that critical interculturality connects to pluriversality. More than just an academic concept, critical interculturality has arisen from the Indigenous movement in Ecuador, as a form of resistance to colonial structures of power and knowledge (Walsh, 2019). Rather than a passive recognition of diversity, it demands real changes in power relations, promoting other epistemic spaces and different ways of understanding the world. But what does it mean to interpret interculturality critically? Considering that interculturality “(...) represents other process of knowledge construction, another political practice (...) another form of thought related to and against modernity/coloniality” (Walsh, 2019, p. 9), it demands a historical look that not only considers convergences, but exposes differences by and also out of the lens of colonialist impacts in the past and the present, affecting societies differently, in diverse areas.

By creating other ways of relating to the world through the expansion of repertoires without homogenizing them, critical interculturality finds fertile ground in education for developing and promoting actions that contribute to the dissolution and reconstruction of other ways of knowing, integrating, and conceiving. While explaining and contextualizing interculturality as an epistemological and educational growing theme since the 1990s, as well as seeking to locate critical interculturality within and, more importantly, outside this scenario, Walsh (2010) explains it as follows:

With this perspective, we do not start from the problem of diversity or difference itself, but from the structural-colonial-racial problem. That is, from a recognition that difference is constructed within a colonial structure and matrix of racialized and hierarchical power. (...) Interculturality understood critically does not yet exist; it is something that needs to be built. Therefore, it is understood as a permanent strategy, action, and process of relationship and negotiation between, in conditions of respect, legitimacy, symmetry, equity, and equality. But even more important is its understanding, construction, and positioning as a political, social, ethical, and epistemic project of knowledge and learning, which affirms the need to change not only relationships, but also the structures, conditions, and mechanisms of power that maintain inequality, inferiority, racialization, and discrimination. Therefore, its project is not simply to recognize, tolerate, or incorporate differences within the established matrix and structures. On the contrary, it is to implode—from difference—into colonial structures of power as a challenge, proposal, process, and project; it is to re-conceptualize and re-found social, epistemic, and existential structures that bring into play and into equitable relation diverse logics, practices, and cultural ways of thinking, acting, and living. (Walsh, 2010, p. 171, our translation)

Therefore, critical interculturality questions what is established as legitimate knowledge and structures, relating once again to pluriversality. Talking about it, in the article “On the legitimacy and study of African Philosophy” Ramose (2011) dives into the field in question, bringing the concept of pluriversality, discussing and contextualizing African Philosophy, deepening into the ubuntu philosophy and also challenging the West’s monopoly on attributing and validating what counts as knowledge, implying a number of epistemicides, and its own paradigm, the universality, stating “Recognition is not merely a matter of courtesy. It is the philosophical realization of the pluriversality of being.” (Ramose, 2011, p. 13). Following a similar but particular path and also drawing on Walsh’s (2019, 2010) take

on interculturality, this article's approach digs through the discipline of Art History, asking whether multiple art histories could converge —histories and stories whose epistemological roots weren't exclusively planted in European soil, and were and are also affected by its coloniality.

Classroom experiences, viewed as a process of mutual creation between teacher and students, have demonstrated how possible these critical simultaneities are for the expanded and complex field of Arts, History, and Education. Although they involve intense joint effort, these practices yield excellent results, which have translated into powerful experiential accounts, where hierarchies and dichotomies crumble, fertilizing the soil of these pluriversal spaces. Returning to the opening citation, the old Art History narrative has indeed come to an end, since every line begins and ends at a specific point in space. However, it does mean Arts' Histories as a weft has only just begun.

### **Conclusion**

Given the above, it is understood that, in the contemporary panorama of the Arts and Art History, it is necessary and possible to (re)imagine other ways of understanding the knowledge of the arts and its histories, that have circulated so enrichingly in our times, converging into a truly collective and joint construction, understanding the importance of productions specifically aimed at and by groups and collectives of people who until then had not had their history, memory, and legacy valued as they deserved. Thinking of ways and strategies to “simultaneize” all the richness and plurality of these Histories of the Arts - Arts' Histories, means not failing to counter the “absolute truths” arising from the coloniality of knowledge and making, but instead practicing through the many worlds in one, possible and, above all, powerful histories, through the contributions that came from social movements and activism, efforts of many people and groups, sparking dialogue and important knowledge, to mention, as in the abstract: decoloniality, postcoloniality, intersectionality, pluriversality, feminisms, anti-racism, queer theory, contra-coloniality and also south-centered, Black, Indigenous, anti-ableist, and LGBTQIAPN+ movements.

It is not just a matter of broadening the field of art history and merely thinking about an allegory, albeit a fundamental one, of the word “histories” as Pedrosa (2018) proposed. Rather, it involves employing critical interculturality to counter and to confront, in a simultaneous manner, histories of many places, times and spaces, in order to produce plural historiographies from across the globe, without falling for an empty and dangerous multiculturalism paradigm, understanding the importance of pluriversality, thereby politically and epistemologically disobeying and fighting the prevailing order, creating antispaces, such as the anterooms.

### **Declaration of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies in the Writing Process**

Strictly following Elsevier's AI author policy for use of generative AI and AI-assisted technologies in writing, we attest that the sole use of these technologies, specially for the abstract, was to, as permitted, enhance the language and legibility of the previously author-written text, since English is not the author's first language. The programs used were ChatGPT 4.0 and ChatGPT 5.0. After using these tools, the text was reviewed and edited by the author, who takes full responsibility for what was written and critically articulated. No modifications to the concepts and critical points in this article were made.

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