

MOVING THE GAZE ON ART CIRCULATIONS AND RECEPTION

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ABSTRACT

As a contribution about mobile cultures, this text addresses physical, visual, and imaginary circulations of art with passage from the museum, and exhibitions, to the public space. Thus, art from the indoors to outdoors, with which mutations in frames of visitability, semiology, mediations, and modes of perception vs. reception. Some recreations of Diego Velazquez's *Las Meninas* parallel to *Zodiac Heads/Circle of Animals* by Ai Weiwei are contrasting examples to illustrate the issue of mobility, with metamorphoses and itinerancies. Moving the gaze means to follow such journeys as a interpretative leap on contexts and relations with art.

KEYWORDS

art; mobility; reception; Diego Velázquez's *Las Meninas/ The Maids of Honour* and recreations; Ai Weiwei's *Zodiac Heads/Circle of Animals*

MOVER O OLHAR SOBRE CIRCULAÇÕES DA ARTE E RECEÇÃO

RESUMO

Contribuição sobre culturas móveis, este texto aborda circulações físicas, visuais e imaginárias da arte com passagem do museu e de exposições para o espaço público. Assim, arte de *indoors* para *outdoors* com mutações que atravessam os quadros da visitabilidade, semiologia, mediações e modos de percepção *versus* receção. Algumas recriações de *Las Meninas* de Diego Velázquez e *Zodiac Heads/Circle of Animals* de Ai Weiwei são exemplos em contraponto que ilustram a problemática da mobilidade, com metamorfoses e itinerâncias. Mover o olhar significa seguir essas viagens como um salto interpretativo sobre contextos e relações com a arte.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

arte; mobilidade; receção; *Las Meninas* de Diego Velazquez e recriações; *Zodiac Heads/Circle of Animals* de Ai Weiwei

MOBILITY AND ART IN PUBLIC

Las Meninas, or *The Family of Filipe IV* (1656), is the most famous, fascinating and enigmatic painting by Diego Velazquez (1599-1660). Few works are equivalent to this “metapainting or hypericon” that is also remembered as a reference for the *epistemé* of representation since its evocation by Michel Foucault in the opening of *As Palavras*

e as Coisas (1981/1966)¹. With all that was said about *Las Meninas*, its journey through iconospheres and imaginary museums, including in recreations of artists, *Las Meninas* is a work in motion, in addition to the painting at the Prado Museum in Madrid (Museo Nacional del Prado, 2013; Portus, 2013; Stratton-Pruitt, 2002, 2004).

This is the reason to bring “them” to this text² about mobility in art in both directions of metamorphosis and itinerancy. *Circle of Animals / Zodiac Heads* (2010) by Ai Weiwei (b.1957) will be the counterpoint, disparate in substance but similar in the itinerancy that transforms *frames* of experience (Goffman, 1974), visitability, semiology of works, mediations to understand them and modes of perception *versus* reception. Moreover, reception that forks from reception in art among artists, peers, mediators, to the reception of art in the (publics) public space (Conde, 2014a). Both plans appear in the text, from the first in recreations of *Las Meninas* to the second largely in the reflection on art in public (Conde, 2015c).

The term fits with the examples that involve – but not only – forms of public art that constitute a theme with debates on the relationship of public art with the city and contemporary citizenship (Andrade, 2010; Caeiro, 2014)³. It is an accurate theme for the creative cities that have become “axiomatic ecologies” (Conde, 2018). The approach in the text presupposes the theme but extends to other aspects and focuses mainly on transits. That is, considering physical, visual, symbolic and imaginary circulations of works of art, including the passage from the museum (and the exhibition frame) to the public space. In its turn, it extends to the semiosphere in cyberspace where images of *Las Meninas* and *Animals*, Velazquez and Wei Wei are found. Although the digital sphere is not developed here, it is a pillar of mobile cultures and linked with new forms of public art creation (Abreu & Castro, 2017).

Moving the eye means following those circulations and constitutes an interpretive leap with the mobility issue less contemplated in studies on art and reception. Indeed, while mobility has become a keyword (Salazar & Jayaram, 2016) for our time when everything travels physically and / or virtually (Bal & Hernández-Navarro, 2011; Conde, 2018), in these studies the intramural model remains with the contemplative stop of audiences in front of works. However, in everyday life other contexts, movements and relations with art stand out.

¹ Epistemology of an order of perception, knowledge and power. The use of paradigmatic works, such as *Las Meninas* by Michel Foucault, makes them hyper-icons that support a thought as visual (icons) and mental (hyper) images. They belong to the self-reflective category of meta-images or metapaintings (Grønstad & Vågnes, 2006; Michell, 1994). In this way we have looked at *Las Meninas* and its enigmas, with glosses and de-centering by Michel Foucault among diverse perspectives (Ansell, 2013; Gugleta, 2011; Nikolov, 1998; Orellana, 2014; Villegas, 2010; Wicks, 2010; Wilder, 2014).

² Text from a chapter in “Reconhecimento em arte: passagens de um percurso” (Conde, 2014a). Also partial presentation of the images are included in “European iconographies for cultural literacy” (Conde, 2015b).

³ There is an extensive bibliography on typologies, contexts, meanings and audiences of public art, of which only a few titles are pointed out besides those mentioned in the text (Athanasopoulos & Mahiou, 2012; Baldini, 2014; Calvário, 2008, 2009; Finkelpearl, 2001; Gheorghe, 2010; Sequeira, 2008).

***LAS MENINAS* WITH WHICH TRIPS?**

Starting with *Las Meninas*, where do they go beyond the painting at the Prado Museum? First of all, and practically ever since, they walk in countless reproductions and comments that thus transport an *ex-libris* of the canon in imaginary and virtual museums (Conde, 2020d; Delroche, 2001; Malraux, 1997/1965). For a long time, also in the imagination of artists like Pablo Picasso (1881-1973) who made 58 variations on *Las Meninas* in 1957. Thanks to the metamorphosis of the “alchemist” Picasso (Jiménez-Blanco, 2008; Lucero, 2010), *Las Meninas* traveled from Prado in Madrid to the Picasso Museum in Barcelona where these recreations are⁴.



Figure 1: Diego Velázquez, *The Family of Filipe IV* or *Las Meninas*
oil on canvas, 3,18 m x 2,76 m, 1656, Prado Museum, Madrid
Crédits: Prado Museum



Figure 2: Sophie Matisse, *Las Meninas*, oil on canvas, 177.8 x 152.4 cm, 2001
Crédits: Sophie Matisse

⁴ See https://cataleg.museupicasso.bcn.cat/fitxa/museu_picasso/H290770/?resultsetnav=5ef904f13cde3

Picasso then made his “meninas” an alternative to those of Velazquez, but the artistic metamorphosis varies according to the authors. Their relationship with the referent may go from a cult to some irony or iconoclasm, but in any case it reaffirms the canon as a place of passage: the obsidian presence of Velazquez and *Las Meninas* in art history. For example, Sophie Matisse (b. 1965)⁵ reproduced the empty stage of *Las Meninas*, without them and without Velazquez’s self-portrait. A painter known for subtracting from iconic paintings, the “missing person”, she also has a variation on *Monalisa* without her and with the title *The Monna Lisa (Be back in 5 minutes)* (1997). As for Velazquez’s work, she left despoliation, literally an open image that can be replenished with imaginary figures who, by the way, have become very *Las Meninas*.

From pictorial to photographic variations, Thomas Struth’s (n. 1954) looks at the “museum as muse” (McShine, 1999). That look was redoubled over the icon and its cult when Thomas Struth photographed audiences at the Prado Museum, and with girls from school groups in front of *Las Meninas*. It is a double image (Liljegren, 2012) that shows ways of seeing and ritualizing the visit as well as the artist-photographer himself when re / finding in Vélasquez’s work a *punctum*⁶.

I first started taking photographs of people in museums in the early 1990s. I went to the Prado in Madrid and was flabbergasted by one particular painting, *Las Meninas* by Velázquez. It was so close to my own interests. I thought: “Jesus Christ, why did nobody tell me about this?” And yet I never photographed it until 2005. I don’t know why. When I went back to it, it marked a moment of evolution for me. I decided that I had to try something different: I had to stand inside the groups of viewers, creating a greater intimacy between the people viewing the painting and those depicted in it.

I worked there for seven days, eight hours a day, and I noticed how the school groups stood very close to the picture, almost touching it with their elbows. I like the two guys [at the left] of this image, who look very sceptical about what the guide is saying about the painting. I find that funny. Evidently, they mistrust the situation. Perhaps they would rather have a beer.

I had my tripod mounted on wheels, so I could move it more spontaneously. But because the camera was so large, I was still very conspicuous. Some people thought I was the museum photographer, and some even recognised me. A Japanese guy came up and said: “are you from Germany?” I said I was, and he said: “well then, you must be Thomas Struth”. When I

⁵ Sophie Matisse, great-granddaughter of Henri Matisse (1869-1954) and granddaughter of Alexina “Teeny” Duchamp (1906-1995), second wife of Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968).

⁶ Roland Barthes’ term (1980) for the detail or chance that arouses attention and emotion in a photographic image, in contrast to the *studium*, a panorama for more convenient interest and medium taste. The image above is also found in Fróis (2008). About *Museum Photographs* and the work of the artist in general, check some references in Struth and Belting (2005/1993); Struth and Diego (2007); Struth, Bezzola, Lingwood and Kruszynski (2010); Schmickl (2005).

was finished I thought: “right, it’s time to quit this subject. I can’t stay undercover any more”. (Struth & Benedictus, 2008, p. 1)



Figure 3: Girls seeing *Las Meninas* in the Prado Museum Thomas Struth, Museo del Prado 7 Madrid, 2005 c-print, 178 x 219 cm, 2008

Créditis: Thomas Struth

From the Prado Museum to the Picasso Museum, among more digressions in time, space and images such as those by Thomas Struth or other iconospheres (Bizri, Johnson & Vasilakis, 1998)⁷, *Las Meninas* can still travel with more shapes/movements through outdoors spaces, imagetive and physical spaces as in the *Meninas* by Manolo Valdés (b.1942)⁸, with new faces and headdresses, graceful sculptures lined up on the public promenade. Or part of them, the heads, which Valdez creatively reinterpreted in *Damas*, that are also inspired by Rembrandt, Zurbarán, Rubens or Matisse⁹. Thus, the sculptures represent mnemonic and imaginary palimpsests using masterpieces in art history to inquire and overcome; as for Velázquez, to remember and “forget” him¹⁰.

In Madrid there are four *Damas*, crowned by the monumental *La Dama del Manzanares* (2003) in bronze and steel at the top of the park of the same name¹¹, together with *Meninas* in circulation in the squares and streets of various cities. It remains to be

⁷ In the digital iconosphere, with recreational images similar to other masterpieces, as shown by Domenico Ghirlandaio's *Portrait of Giovanna degli Albizzi Tornabuoni* (1489-1490) (Barranha, 2018).

⁸ Valencian artist with international projection, highly awarded since 1965, one of the founders of *Equipo Crónicas* (1963-1981) with an important role in the renewal of painting in Spain.

⁹ Rembrandt van Rijn (1606-1669); Francisco de Zurbarán (1598-1664); Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640); Henri Matisse (1869-1954).

¹⁰ Quoting the exhibition title *Olvidando a Velázquez. Las Meninas*, Picasso Museum, Barcelona, from May 16 to September 28, 2008, with 61 works in painting, sculpture, photography, printmaking, video, reflecting the influence of Velázquez.

¹¹ Parque Lineal del Manzanares in Madrid, around the river of the same name. The Valdés sculpture appears on top of the artificial hill of La Atalaya, a viewpoint for the city, on a 21-meter-high pyramidal platform, designed by the architect Ricardo Bofill. Since 2005, lit by 24 projectors that change tones according to the seasons (the other three Madrid *Damas*, also from 2003, are at Barajas airport. In 2005, Valdés also performed two horses, *Asturcones*, for the city of Oviedo and there he took 21 sculptures of *Meninas*.

seen whether those who find them identify the origin in *Las Meninas*. Identifying it, the reception will be able to compare and perceive the artistic metamorphosis, but without this retreat to the referent, the partly mutilated sense predominates over the sculptures. In Spain, in cities such as Madrid, Cordoba, Oviedo, Zaragoza, San Sebastian, Valladolid and others, many may recognize *Las Meninas* in Valdez's works, knowing them, because the Velasquez painting integrates national, school and visual heritage.

The same does not happen for most tourists and inhabitants in different contexts, although without stopping the applause for these works for the animation they bring to the urban stage. Amongst more elusive perceptions and attentive to sculptures due to their gracefulness and dimension, their full legibility is suspended, however relative and distinct from the taste for admiring the sculptures in the public space. The following point systematizes mutations that occur there on several levels.



Figure 4: *Meninas* by Manolo Valdés in a street of Córdoba, 2010

Credits: Idalina Conde and Fernando Ribeiro



Figure 5: *Meninas* and *Damas* by Manolo Valdés in San Sebastian, 2009

Source: "San Sebastián convive con las esculturas de Manolo Valdés", 2009



Figure 6: *Meninas* by Manolo Valdés in Oviedo, 2005

Source: <https://www.minube.com/rincon/oviedo-y-las-meninas-de-manolo-valdes-a2135218#gallery-modal>



Figure 7: *La Dama* (2004) by Manolo Valdés in a street of Córdoba, 2010

Credits: Idalina Conde and Fernando Ribeiro



Figure 8: *Regina II* (2005) by Manolo Valdés, Paseo del Prado, Madrid, 2009

Credits: Miguel Veny Torres



Figure 9: *Ariadna IV* (2004) by Manolo Valdés, Paseo del Prado, Madrid, 2009

Credits: Miguel Veny Torres



Figure 10: *Regina II* (2005) by Manolo Valdés, Paseo del Prado, Madrid, 2009

Credits: Miguel Veny Torres



Figure 11: *La Dama del Manzanares* (2003) by Manolo Valdés, Parque Lineal del Manzanares, Madrid

Source: www.miradormadrid.com



Figure 12: *La Dama del Manzanares* (2003) by Manolo Valdés, Parque Lineal del Manzanares, Madrid

Source: www.miradormadrid.com

MUTATIONS OF INDOORS FOR OUTDOORS

Semiologically, the transition from perception to reception (Conde, 1992) implies the use, even if elementary or interrogative, of the “key” of a code: the referent, sometimes with a dense texture. Basis for the reflexivity with which sense is elaborated and the opinion expressed, substantially a question of literacy or artistic education (Queiroz, 2017; Conde, forthcoming). It is parallel to other forms of emotional, playful, aesthetic and aesthetical or sensorial involvement, with works of art. Hence, legibility and affection are also talked about visiting museums (Henning, 2007) and the public space increments alternatives to deciphering codes. Even there, not all works have the semiology of thick signs (Conde, 2014c), many of them are decorative, ideographic, functional and playful.

The museum, and similar contexts, institutionalizes a concentrated and contemplative way of seeing (Alpers, 1991) in contrast to the panoramic, digressive, fleeting or elusive gaze in the public space. While in the museum pedagogical mediations operate, such as guided tours in the service of legibility, the equivalent does not work in its exterior space, where much public art is conceived for practical and direct experience. No mediation or at least that kind. The temporary exhibitions in the public space correspond to another situation because they frame the works with communication strategies and symbolic mediation (Davallon, 2000). Except for that situation, from a cognitive point of view, the works in outdoors are more vulnerable to the dis/re cognition-knowledge of passers-by.

What is the portability of their school, expert or media knowledge (Saurier, 2008) to identify a masterpiece, *Las Meninas* de Velasquez in *Meninas* de Valdez? The question of literacy is repeated on which the “allocation of attention” still depends (Coavoux, 2016) and often influenced by the status of the works. Nevertheless, it is not all about knowledge. There is the taste, the surprise and the charm to give attention to the showy *Damas* and *Meninas*, instead of more discreet or adverse works in the public space. Attention is fundamental in the genesis of any process of perception *versus* reception, and especially in this space that transforms the ecology of attention.

The expression comes from digital environments (Citton, 2014) with new visual paradigms (Raux & Dubuisson, 2015) and the *scripted culture* that crosses – with digitization – the public and cultural sphere (Widmer & Kleesattel, 2018). From hypertexts, zapping or surfing through cyberspace, “attention problems” also emerge (Birkerts, 2015) which are added to “suspensions” of perception, or attention related to visual and spectacle culture (Crary, 2000; Kennedy, 2009). Likewise, the physical public space constitutes an ecology in which to build attention, and with the passage from looking to seeing (Conde, 2015a), is the challenge against indifference and weak use of works/images (Ghebaour, 2013a; Passeron, 2006/1991; Pecqueux, 2003). Even to the attentional ecology of the museum does not lack such “behaviors without belief and works of art without spectators”- quoting the title of an article on the issue (Veyne, 1988). So, many works are in lesser mode of reality (Piette, 2009) for not having the due attention.

How to observe the fluctuation of alienations and interests in non-reception? Visual ethnomethodology, which is applied in / outdoors among more ethnographies (Gonon, 2007), is a heuristic resource for “following paths” (Mariani-Rousset, 2008/2001), gaze practices (Goodwin, 2001; Sturken & Cartwright, 2003/2001), body engagement with works (Belting, 2014; Coavoux, 2015a), duration and dynamics of attention (Coavoux, 2015b). In fact, several of the topics appear in artistic projects aimed at ways of attending, looking, using, interacting and participating; in short, the behaviors of the spectator as *enjeux* of contemporary art (Viollet, 2011).

As for sociological and related studies, the topics broaden the perspective and it should be noted that the notion of “non/publics” gains conceptual configurations without linear homology with non/reception¹². In effect, in the public space, art is aimed at citizens of whom only a small part coincides with museum or exhibition audiences. To classify the vast rest as non-public obscures our understanding on two levels. Whether because habitual non-publics of art relate to works of public art, at least as spectators; or because that classification subtracts the issue of citizenship inherent in art in the public space. The polysemy of this space (Barril, Carrel, Guerrero & Marquez, 2003) calls for dimensions of the public sphere and, if for museums (Barrett, 2011) it matters, public art is more closely linked to the publicness of that art (Andrade, 2010; Baldini, 2014).

The works themselves – some – raise “micro” public spheres with the involvement of citizens. There are examples in famous differends (Conde, 2004) and not only for aesthetic reasons that do not always have the presumed priority (Hanquinet, 2018). The set of arguments in question, which are found in more common misunderstandings, fetch values beyond the “beautiful and the ugly” (Heinich, Schaeffer & Talon-Hugon, 2014). Civic, ethical, political, economic, legal, urban, ecological, etc., these are values in the construction of public opinion. At the same time that contemporary art’s relations with citizenship are multifaceted, from sociocultural ergonomics in a large part of public art to relational, site-specific, community and emancipatory aesthetics projects.

In summary, we have “contact zones” or dialogues as well as disputes in the public sphere with diversity of cultures and arts (Conde, 2010a, 2010b). Provocation and dialogism is also the binomial in an essay on theater pedagogy (Desgranges, 2006). Tensions can break out in specific situations, or come from “arts of disturbance” (Mahiou & Riado, 2014), especially in the more critical, political and “artist” front with ballast since the vanguards in the 1970s and the impulse in the 1990s (Conde, 2003, 2009; Moner, 2012). Crossed with deconstruction and postcolonial turns, among others, this front subverts the ideology of *joy forever* in the fashion of creativity and produces thick signs, hence demanding in communication with the reception. This is the reference to introduce the second example in counterpoint with the *Meninas*.

¹² The broadening of perspective refers to less frequent aspects in approaches of publics or audiences (Conde, 2020c). Equally important is the questioning of the notion of non-publics (Ancel & Pessin, 2004; Ghebaur, 2017; “Public, non-public: questions de méthodologie”, 2017).

A COUNTERPOINT WITH *CIRCLE OF ANIMALS*

Then we have Ai Weiwei (b.1957), an artist at the apex of contemporary and global art, an opponent of the political regime in China of which he was a victim, an activist for human rights, and an indefatigable creator of mega installations or exhibitions¹³. Along that line, and with relational aesthetics on a larger scale, *Farytale* as Weiwei's project that took 1001 chinese to *Documenta 12* at Kassel, in 2007, as well as an equal number of ancient Chinese chairs, heritage of the pre-communist era ("Documenta Kassel 18/06 – 23/09", 2007; Schnetz & Weiwei, 2013). A human sculpture in a (very) expanded field (Krauss, 1979) to bring the East to the West through this art of political commitment (Moner, 2009; 2015).

Farytale belongs to the triptych of the largest open air installations in Kassel that year¹⁴. However, speaking in the text in heads as those of *Damas* and *Meninas*, we revisit another work by Weiwei: *Zodiac Heads/Circle of Animals* (2010-2011), a set of sculptures in bronze with the figuration of the 12 creatures of the Chinese zodiac who also traveled across countries and indoors towards outdoors (Delson & Weiwei, 2011). It consisted of the artist's first major public sculpture project for a tour in the United States, Europe and Asia. In 2010 they were also at the 29th Bienal de S. Paulo. Then they headed to New York in 2011, where they settled in the historic Pulitzer Fountain¹⁵ of the Grand Army Plaza in Manhattan, south of Central Park.



Figure 13: Ai Weiwei at the beginning of the process at the foundry in Chengdu, China

Source: www.zodiacheads.com

¹³ About the artist, see some references in the bibliography (Gaensheimer, Krystof & Wolf, 2019; Sorace, 2014; Weiwei & Holzwarth, 2016).

¹⁴ The other two were *Terrace rice field* by Sakarin Krue-On and *Mohnfeld/Poppy field* by Sanja Ivekovic ("Documenta Kassel 18/06 – 23/09", 2007; Conde, 2009, 2014b).

¹⁵ Inaugurated in 1916, the source is due to Joseph Pulitzer (1847-1911), figure of the press and of the democratic party. He also helped bring the statue of liberty to New York.



Figure 14: *Zodiac Heads/Circle of Animals* by Ai Weiwei, bronze series, São Paulo Art Biennial, 2010 (29th Biennial)

Source: www.zodiacheads.com



Figure 15: *Circle of Animals / Zodiac Heads* by Ai Weiwei, bronze series at the Pulitzer Fountain, Grand Army Plaza (Central Park), New York, 2011

Source: <https://arrestedmotion.com/>

After São Paulo and New York, *Circle of Animals* circulated in 23 more cities in the United States, Europe, Taiwan. The *Bronze Series* is duplicated by the *Gold Series*, bronzes with golden *patine*. Between 2012 and 2019, they traveled to 19 locations in Canada, the United States, Russia and Australia¹⁶. The image below shows also a passage of one portable series through Marseille.

¹⁶ See http://www.zodiacheads.com/world_tour_bronze.html; http://www.zodiacheads.com/world_tour_gold.html



Figure 16: *Circle of Animals/Zodiac Heads*, Gold Series in the exhibition Ai Weiwei Fan-Tan, 20 June - 12 November, 2018, MUCEM - Musée des Civilisations de l'Europe et de la Méditerranée, Marseille

Crédits: MUCEM

As for the semiology of heads and possible transformations in their journey through different environments and audiences, for those who know Ai Weiwei's work, it would mean a thick and political sign related to the confrontation between the East and the West. Specifically, in what regards ancient China or before the communist regime that returns to the works of Weiwei. He says: "we never change the subject but always the interpretation"¹⁷, and in this case to tell a story of Europe's violence about China, with plunder and humiliation.

*Circle of Animals*¹⁸ shows replicas of the zodiac created in the 18th century by European Jesuits¹⁹ at the court of Emperor Qianlong of the Qing dynasty. Originally, they decorated a water clock fountain in the gardens of Yuanmingyuan, the Old Summer Palace of the Emperor, near Beijing. In 1860, at the end of the Second Opium War (1856-1860), French and British troops destroyed and sacked the magnificent Yuanmingyuan - more than a palace, a complex of buildings and gardens²⁰. A barbaric episode through which a treasure of Chinese art, objects and the heads of the fountain, landed in Europe. Such treasure, although made by European Jesuits, connote with the national wound (Kleutghen, 2011; Lee, 2012; Ringmar, 2013a; Thomas, 2008).

¹⁷ Statement available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=65&v=u1f_HmoT7bM&feature=emb_title

¹⁸ See http://www.zodiacheads.com/about_exhibit.html

¹⁹ Giuseppe Castiglione (1688-1766), painter, and Michel Benoist (1715-1774), responsible for the hydraulic system and fountains in Yuanmingyuan, two among other Jesuits with a presence in China and intercultural encounters in the 18th century (Kleutghen, 2012, 2015; Musillo, 2011; Siu, 1988; Vossilla, 2016).

²⁰ However, only British troops set Yuanmingyuan on fire. After the destruction, the ruined space had a troubled history of abandonment and rescue, at one point, with the idea of the Chinese government to transform it into a theme park that would represent another form of "imperial vision" (Ringmar, 2013b).

The symbolic ambivalence stimulated Ai Weiwei²¹ who reinterpreted the heads on a large scale, including imagining some missing specimens, and produced the doubly thick sign. On the one hand, it contains the web of encounters/clashes among civilizations, the violence of looting, nationalism and patrimonial repatriation. On the other hand, the sign continues the artist's questioning about notions of the false and copying in face of an original, or supposed as such. How was the sign recognized?

Going back to the beginning, to the indoors of the *São Paulo Art Biennial* with the majority of peers and informed audiences (similar to visitors to *Documenta* in Kassel), there would be a horizon of expectation for this work and its message. In general the audience has enough references as well as about Weiwei. Moreover it is an audience able to deal with semiotic traps on the basis of artistic literacy to capture the dense meanings under the visual surface of the works. In this case, also with the synapse between the memory of violence in the 19th century and the denunciation of contemporary tribulations. As for New York, with *Circle of Animals* in outdoors, except for the similar segment of artists and fans of Ai Weiwei, expectations would not even exist for the wave of citizens crossing the Grand Army Plaza.

In the diversity of situations, some of the least informed could be deceived by the very naturalism of the sculptures. Hostages of the optical illusion of only recognizing the familiar in these *Zodiac Heads*: figures of the Chinese horoscope who are consulted on personality, love, fortune and future. Yet, to ask how many New Yorkers could know about the history of Yuanmingyuan, an inevitable opacity in the trans-temporal and cultural displacement of these works. Although their impact depends on circumstances to arouse attention with the pedagogy of curiosity (Bann, 2008; Thomas, 2016) to seek information. Or for civic reasons, as in the case. Remember that the opening of *Circle of Animals* in New York, in May 2011, coincided with Weiwei's²² arrest, turning into a highly political event.

In front of the Pulitzer Fountain, authorities, notables, artists' associations and intellectuals called for the artist's release. The diplomacy of the United States itself was mobilized towards the Chinese authorities. With the media coverage of the case, less people would be indifferent to the work in Grand Army Plaza, being able to add to it a free interpretation, in solidarity with Ai Weiwei. So, a *Circle of Animals* as the anthropomorphic heads of the "animals" who arrested the artist: the pig, the dog, the rooster as leaders of the Chinese regime. Thus, another curve in the sinuous semiosis (Véron, 1981) of art in public with its many journeys.

²¹ *Circle of Animals* originates from the controversy in 2009, with a nationalist outbreak. That year, the heads of a rat and a rabbit from the original zodiac, owned by the Yves Saint Laurent and Pierre Bergé collection, reappeared at the Christie's auction. China tried to legally prevent the auction, which nevertheless took place, and Chinese bidder Cai Mingchao, art dealer and consultant for the National Treasures Fund (foundation for the acquisition of Chinese art around the world) snatched the pieces for nearly € 40 million (14 million euros for each head) to withdraw them from the international market and return to the motherland. He refused to pay the amount to Christie's, the pieces returned to the Pierre Bergé – Yves Saint Laurent Foundation collection and, later, the magnate and collector François Pinault bought them to, he said, return them to China. In 2009, also tycoon Stanley Ho acquired the horse's head for millions to return to China, as well as a boar's head bought in private sale. In possession of the Beijing Polytechnic Museum, with two more heads, the monkey and the ox.

²² See <http://arrestedmotion.com/2011/05/openings-ai-weiwei-circle-of-animals-zodiac-heads-pulitzer-fountain-central-park>. Weiwei was arrested on April 3, 2011 at Beijing International Airport, shortly before traveling to Hong Kong.

FINAL REMARKS

Between what images want (Mitchell, 2006) and what people want from them, or what they want from art (Arts Council of England, 2008), there is a cleavage of perspectives that range from the aesthetic and iconological to the sociological. Alternatively, the text brings an eclectic approach that contradicts absolutes or assumptions about “wanting”. First, because against “visual essentialism” (Bal, 2005), much of art in public comprises semiotic puzzles (Elkins, 1999) which do not just ask us for “the commitment to look” (Bal, 2003). More than seeing those art works, it is necessary to establish a relationship with them through their use and other implications. The tour of the works also changes the frames for their visitability, visibility and legibility. Second, as to what people want, or not, depends on various socio-cultural conditions and circumstances as well as the specificity of in / outdoors spaces. Also of “ways of expecting” (Oddey & White, 2009) that are induced by *culture on display* and in touring as a contemporary production of visitability (Dicks, 2003) that interferes in the will.

The approach in the text goes beyond the usual references in the sociology of audiences and policies of emancipation, thinking on Pierre Bourdieu and legacies and Jacques Rancière (Nordmann, 2006; Rancière, 2008). There is more to say as it was shown with the mobility issue, itself as a traveling concept (Neumann & Nunning, 2012), crossing the text with the concepts of reception and literacy also in motion. The itinerancy of art provides different regimes of experience in micro (Roueff, 2011) and macro scales, local and global, physical and virtual. Therefore, modes of communication with audiences and the public sphere are relevant, in parallel to public communication related to institutions such as museums (Andrade, 2015). In brief, a set of factors to enhance the encounters with art works, to experiment, practice, teach (Chabanne, Parayre & Villagordo, 2012).

Regarding the examples in the text, the teaching also applies to historical and European literacy. Or rather, about Europe in interface with the world, a line that the text shares²³. *Las Meninas* de Velazques represent an important European reference to which their recreations and travels add global dimensions. Indeed, they permeate much of Europe’s heritage (Conde, 2019a). *Circle of Animals* reminds a part of the violence in relations with the world with an episode of Europe about China. In conclusion, art travels to update the Warburgian²⁴ “image atlas” with more cases about the global history of Europe. In parallel to part of the art history that is now rewritten with de artistic endless circulations (Kaufmann, Dossin & Joyeux-Prunel, 2015).

Translation: Pedro Andrade

²³ In dialogues with images that revisit several cases (Conde, 2015a, 2015b); on face-to-face and virtual relations of citizens in the European Union with heritage and the analysis of the Europeana portal for digital heritage, art and remembrance (Conde, 2019b).

²⁴ Reference to “Atlas Mnemosyne” by Aby Warburg (1866-1929), built with symbols and transtemporal archetypes in which images symbolize memory, metaphor and allegory (Johnson, 2012).

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