Pontifícia Universidade Católica
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Mariana Caldas Pinto Ferreira

Experience and Ways of Seeing:

The limits and promises on the concept of violence through aesthetics deviations and works of art

Tese de Doutorado

Thesis presented to the Programa de Pós-Graduação em Relações Internacionais of PUC-Rio in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doutor em Relações Internacionais.

Advisor: Monica Herz

Rio de Janeiro
April 2022

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Profa. Monica Herz
Advisor
Instituto de Relações Internacionais – PUC-Rio

Prof. Michael J. Shapiro
Department of Political Science – University of Hawaii

Profa. María Mercedes Andrade Restrepo
Departamento de Humanidades y Literatura – Universidad de Los Andes

Profa. Bethânia de Albuquerque Assy
Departamento de Direito – PUC-Rio

Profa. Anna Gudrun Christina Leander IInstituto de
Instituto de Relações Internacionais – PUC-Rio

Prof. James Casas Klausen
Instituto de Relações Internacionais – PUC-Rio

Rio de Janeiro, April 20th, 2022

Mariana Caldas Pinto Ferreira

Graduated in International Relations at the Pontifical University Catholic of Rio de Janeiro (PUC-Rio) in 2012 and obtained a master's degree in Law with emphasis on Constitutional Law and State Theory in 2015 from the same institution. In 2015 and 2016, worked as a researcher associated with the Truth Commission of the State of Rio de Janeiro (CEV-Rio) in partnership with Center of Human Rights (PUC-Rio) granted by the Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa Carlos Chagas (FAPERJ). She was also Fellow Researcher at the Institute for Critical Social Inquiry – New School for Social Research, EUA in June 2018, and Visiting Researcher at War Studies Department – King's College London, UK, between 2018-2019, granted by Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior (CAPES).

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"Eve felt exhausted: *A game*, she thought with remorse; *it was only a game*. I didn't sincerely believe it for an instant. And all that time he suffered *as if it were real*. Pierre relaxed and breathed freely. But his pupils were strangely dilated, and he was perspiring.

'Did you see them?' he asked"

The Room, Jean-Paul Sartre

To Rogerio - because I did see them too.

And to old Feline, for teaching this old soul how to endure.

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To all my dearest friends, I would like to remember Maya Angelou's words:

“I’ve had so many rainbows in my clouds – I’ve had a lot of clouds, but I’ve had so many rainbows, and one of the things I do

When I step upon the stage, when I stand up to translate, when I go to teach my classes, when I go to direct a movie

I bring everyone who has ever been kind to me with me

Black, white, Asian, Spanish-speaking, native American, gay, straight, everybody

I say come with me, I’m going on the stage, come with me, I need you now.

Long dead.

You see I don’t ever feel I have no help

I’ve had rainbows in my clouds

And the thing to do it seems to me is to prepare yourself so that you can be a rainbow in somebody else’s cloud

Someone who may not look like you

May not call god the same name you call god

If they call god at all”

My friends, come with me, I need you now.

Abstract

Caldas Pinto Ferreira, Mariana; Herz, Monica (Advisor). **Experience and Ways of Seeing: the limits and promises on the concept of violence through aesthetics deviations and works of art**. Rio de Janeiro, 2022. 151p. Tese de Doutorado – Instituto de Relações Internacionais, Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro.

This thesis investigates the concept of violence in International Relations whilst formulating an alternative theoretical framework that observes critique and politics from an aesthetical judgement. It assumes aesthetics as the sensory experience of perception. The subjectivity apprehends the world as it appears to them while creating the common ground of meanings and visibility among others. Therefore, this thesis highlights the place of experience to problematise the conditions of possibility to understand violence as a relevant phenomenon. Then, the aesthetic provides the legibility through which we may understand (and frame) conflict while highlighting the limits and potentialities left for politics. This work advances that violence, within traditional methodologies, is framed by the dynamics between war and peace. Nevertheless, as a category of understanding the social world, I shall argue that conflict is a theoretical abstraction because it draws from what reality supposedly is. In this regard, highlighting how we apprehend phenomena allows an enlargement of alternative narratives and ways of seeing conflict and violence in IR. With this assumption, this thesis brings Walter Benjamin's thinking as an inspirational framework to discuss the concept of violence by shedding light on the bodily experience of violence and what is left from it. To do this, I will rely on works of art as methodological support to comprehend how we apprehend the phenomena aesthetically. This work explores how art can be considered an epistemological endeavour to comprehend conflict differently, beyond a representation of violence. To pursue this reasoning, this work will consider artworks from Rio de Janeiro's plastic artists that discuss contemporary violence in the city to highlight how art could function as a device of thinking and visibility.

Keywords:

Art; War; I.R. Theory; Aesthetics; Epistemology; Violence; Critical Theory; Walter Benjamin

Resumo

Caldas Pinto Ferreira, Mariana; Herz, Monica. **Experiência e Formas de Ver: limites e promessas do conceito de violência por meio de desvios estéticos e obras de arte**. Rio de Janeiro, 2022. 151p. Tese de Doutorado – Instituto de Relações Internacionais, Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro.

Esta tese discute o conceito de violência nas Relações Internacionaisenquanto formula um referencial teórico alternativo que consiga articular crítica e a política a partir de um julgamento estético. Dessa maneira, o sujeito entende o mundo enquanto um fenômeno ao mesmo tempo constrói o espaço comum de significados e visibilidade. Por isso, esta tese destaca o lugar da experiência para problematizar as condições de possibilidade de compreender a violência como um fenômeno relevante. Então, a estética fornece a legibilidade através da qual podemos entender (e enquadrar) o conflito ao mesmo tempo em que destaca os limites e potencialidades deixados para a política. Este trabalho avança que a violência, dentro das metodologias tradicionais, é enquadrada pela dinâmica entre guerra e paz. No entanto, como categoria de compreensão do mundo social, argumentarei que o conflito é uma abstração teórica porque se baseia no que a realidade supostamente é. Nesse sentido, destacar como apreendemos os fenômenos permite ampliar narrativas alternativas e formas de ver o conflito e a violência nas RI. Com esse pressuposto, esta tese traz o pensamento de Walter Benjamin como um referencial inspirador para discutir o conceito de violência ao lançar luz sobre a experiência corporal da violência e o que dela resta. Para isso, vou me basear em obras de arte como suporte metodológico para compreender como apreendemos esteticamente os fenômenos. Este trabalho explora como a arte pode ser considerada um esforço epistemológico para compreender o conflito de forma diferente, além de uma representação da violência. Para seguir esse raciocínio, este trabalho considerará obras de artistas plásticos do Rio de Janeiro que discutem a violência contemporânea na cidade para destacar como a arte pode funcionar como dispositivo de pensamento e visibilidade.

Palavras-chave:

Arte; Guerra; Teoria de R.I.; Estética; Epistemologia; Violência; Teoria Crítica; Walter Benjamin

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Introduction

The world's dance started from standing,
but mine started from not being able to stand

Tatsumi Hijikata

Mise en scène.

First image.

The colours are vibrant. A man on a horse blows his bugle upwards as if he is willing to spread its sound even louder into the air. In the background, the sky is clear, but there are red circles, which seem to be bomb-bursts. There is something unsettling about this image. Close to the horse's hooves, we can read "the ra band is coming". Every time the lift doors open on the Strand Building 6th floor, we can see two paintings - both referring to the Imperial War Museum Collection, but this one intrigues me. The description says the painting is entitled "The Regimental Band" from Darsie Japp, and it was aimed to be a poster. It ends its description by asking directly: "can the sound of the bugle be heard above the explosion?".

Second image.

The background resembles the patterns of a well-known pool brand, which also reminds the waves of an ocean. The ocean metaphor is highlighted with the object in the middle, carrying people, visibly with brown/darker skin. At first, it looks like a boat, but the signal says otherwise: there is a coat of arms of the military police of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Leading the vehicle, a policeman. None of them shows any sign of resistance. We cannot distinguish their faces or where they are going. As if they might vanish into the water. The painting is from Maxwell Alexandre, untitled. Silence. Can we hear them despite the sound of waves?

Figure 1: Maxwell Alexandre, untitled (2020). (Artist's Collection – Museu de Arte do Rio)

As an International Relations graduate student working with *Conflict, Violence and Peacemaking* line of research, my main objective from the very beginning of my studies was to highlight violence as a relevant *concept* within the I.R. field. As this thesis will argue, discussing violence in I.R. field implied *looking* at battlefields, conflicts, or even the development of means of destruction. Nevertheless, I have never been in a conflict zone, I have never visited a country destroyed by war, and I have never seen violence in its visceral aspect. I grew up in a city marked profoundly by inequality, invisibility and rage that made all social relations pursue a conscious movement to ignore everyday atrocities that happen just around the corner. Still, violence, somehow, is a silent presence that informs my daily life - how should I cross the streets, to which areas I am able to walk in the city or what kind of trajectories I see (or not) when I enter a room only with white people to discuss War while looking at the Rocinha favela looking at the window.

Whenever I look to the painting questioning me if I can listen to the bugle or even when I wonder to where the Alexandre's ship is leading to, I feel like I can

listen – or somehow, relate to what they are telling me. Certainly, I cannot answer, but it makes me wonder. Looking at these paintings calls for a meditation, a pause, even respect to those blurred faces or the absent ones – they haunt me. Observing that the etymological origin of the word "Aesthetic" derives from the Greek word "*Aisthitikos*", which means "perceived by sensation" (Buck-Morss, 2015: p.175), I assume that we live through aesthetical experiences. Perhaps this is what Shapiro advances in what he calls the aesthetic subjects (Shapiro, 2013) – subjectivities that acts upon the world being affected by it, intervening, then, in the general distribution of sensible – namely, a cognitive structure that grounds the perception of what is seeing and acknowledged (Rancière, 2004). The exercise of thinking with the work of art helps me to find an openness to enlarge ways of imagining alternative worlds – in this sense, this is not to say that art saves everything, but, instead, that art, as a metaphor, resembles the aesthetics experience of living. It remembers how living, in the way I feel, smell, *see* – are being affected by this mystery world that appears in front of us.

If art implies an abstraction, we can also argue that fields of knowledge do work with abstractions. As theorists, most of us have learned to do a proper work isolating some aspects through deduction until creating an abstraction of what reality *really* is. But there is also another sense that matters in the distribution of sensible – it is not only the exercise of creating abstractions of reality, but the very condition of possibility available to see. In this regard, John Berger argues that "the way we see things is affected by what we know or what we believe" (Berger, 1972, p.2). As we do not exist alone in the world, seeing also informs me if I can be seen by others – and this encounter constitutes the space of what is the visible world. Nevertheless, the relationship between what is shown to us as a phenomenon and what is known is never settled – and this unsettling tension is what unveils the space of politics and redistribution of the space of the sensible (Berger, 1972; Rancière, 2004).

This thesis attempts to observe how the ways of seeing violence in International Relations, framed in the relationship between war and politics, informs which abstractions is seen as relevant in the discipline – it implies looking at the ways of seeing that informs what is visible in talking about what violence supposedly is. My interest in the relation between works of art and ways of seeing, in an aesthetical apprehension of reality stems from what the discourse on artistic

practices entails: a practice that engage with violence in a way of providing methods while understanding the ethical consequences of violence to human bodies.

I thus seek to engage with arts not in their mimesis or representative features – if there is such thing as such -, but in their potentiality of making one imagine differently from their bodily experience while looking at the work of art. Art here operates as a metaphor that might operate shedding a light to other narratives – then, providing an encounter with the world that escapes us. Led by the question of how violence is portrayed in I.R. and how it informs what is seen in the field, my research highlights the potentialities of the aesthetical experience for the ethical judgement and inclusion of others – humanising what is invisible.

Nevertheless, I do not provide an empirical case study of analysis. For this thesis, my aim was to provide an epistemological quest towards the process of abstraction of the world to identify the common grounds for an ethical attitude of seeing. This is relevant for understanding how reflexivity has a material consequence in the decision of what count as relevant, especially in regard what is left from the experience of violence. By assuming that violence is a practice that permeates this very distribution of sensitive, my argument is to reflect how we can leave the epistemological assumptions unsettled in order to turn visible other subjectivities. I am looking for the traces from the subjectivity that suffered the violence, bodily, but recognising I cannot make him speak. Nevertheless, by telling other possibilities, I argue that we might offer an epistemological quest of dealing with violence while acknowledging the politics and ontological right to exist in the public sphere.

Primo Levi once told that he wrote his work because he felt a "need to tell ours 'to others', to make 'the others' share it, [which] took on for us, before the liberation and after, the character of an immediate and violent impulse" (Levi, 1988, p.8). In many of his works, Levi tells us stories of persons he met during his months in Auschwitz, whose memories lingers throughout his life and writings. Levi never aimed to represent what Auschwitz really was. From the very beginning, we know we are dealing a frustrated representation. The people with whom Primo Levi met cannot speak for themselves, for they are no longer here, but we can be in the ethical exercise of imagining them through Levi's narrative. Levi recognises that an author cannot reproduce another's experience fully because words are often not enough. However, the act of telling and listening to stories invites us to an ethical exercise

of imagination, or, in other words, turning present those who are no longer among us. Through literature, Levi invites the reader to reflect upon the conditions of their present. Through literature, we might grasp the experience of other's experience, not to feel it fully (because we cannot), but to enlarge our way of seeing the world – *producing knowledge*.

Experience and Method: the Benjaminian hole

> "A Brechtian maxim: 'don't start from the good old things but the bad new ones'"
> (Benjamin, conversations with Brecht, 25 august 1934).

Whenever Walter Benjamin's name comes up to discussion, there is an exciting surrounding. Benjamin had a dramatic life, in which, towards its very end, he pursued surviving despite all difficulties, frustrations and darkness. In 1940, once he realised that he would not cross Spain's border to travel to America on the following day, running away from the Fascist expansion in the old European Continent, Benjamin, perhaps exhausted, killed himself. He left books, notes, artworks dispersed with friends – many of them got lost. What remained became the philosopher's nostalgic amulet, as a secret to be revealed when the riddle would be decoded - a Benjamin sphinx's puzzle. This was the case of Paul Klee's *Angelus Novus*, kept by Gershom Scholem and now displayed at the Israel Museum, and Benjamin's *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, given to Hannah Arendt in their last encounter shortly before his suicide.

Benjamin's great dispersal characterised his life, but it also enacts in the philosopher's works, being them literary writings, fragmentary projects and even his PhD thesis, which he failed at finishing. This same dispersal also explains why he is "one of those rare contemporary scholars that truly evades disciplinary distinctions, establishing himself as a scholar of 'experience' in its multitude of forms: material, architectural, emotional, visual, psychological, or aesthetical" (Pusca, 2009, p.238). As matter of fact, Benjamin's writings were quite influential in fields such as Literature, Cultural Theory, Philosophy, History, Geography, Art Studies, Media Studies, among others, with particular reception and excitement from 1970s on (Benjamin, 2005, p.1; Benjamin & Osborne, 1994, p.x; Caygill, 1998, p.x; Jennings et al, 2008, p.1; Pusca, 2009, p.238; Stephens, 2009, p.77). Indeed, not having a unifying thread that underlies his writings presents to even the

most refined reader a difficulty of fully assuming what he wanted to say. Or to which direction his method would lead. Those who fail on Benjamin's hole embracing his enchanting promise soon find themselves in a disorienting and absurd state.

"I wonder how many miles I've fallen by this time?" Alice said aloud noticing she could not estimate what latitude or longitude she has gone to after chasing a late rabbit, in the famous book Carroll. One cannot but consider that failing on Benjamin's hole[1] implies leaving behind a complex metaphysics that sustained thinking *per se*, supported by the modern assumption of the distinction between subject and object, time, and space. Leaving this Western tradition behind takes the Benjamin's reader to complete darkness, as Benjamin's promise cannot be fulfilled. The problem with the Benjamin's hole is that his contradictory, fragmentary, incomplete writings, although uneasily prophetic, left more doubts than answers.

We cannot lose sight of the fact that Benjamin was a literary critic and philosopher (Arendt, 1968, p.13). From that, we can start by identifying which elements underlie Benjamin's writings and, certainly, critique takes on an essential role. Beatrice Hanssen (2020), for instance, looks at Benjamin's attempt to "practice critique and to understand power/violence" in his essay *Critique of Violence* [*Zur Kritik der Gewalt*] as an exposure of the "fatedness of the critical tradition" (Hanssen, 2020, p.3). Following Derrida, Hanssen states that far more than the exercise of criticism, Benjamin did "a genuine critique of violence", which explains Benjamin's adhesion to the Kantian convention of *Kritik*, namely, to cut, to discriminate, in order to make a typology of violence – separating categories of "legitimate power from sheer force" (Hanssen, 2020, p.3). Nevertheless, Benjamin's essay leads showing the very crisis of critique in tradition[2], "marked by as many vicissitudes as the genealogy of modernity" (Hanssen, 2020, p.4).

[1] Here, I am comparing Benjamin's thinking to the hole to which Alice, in the book *Alice in Wonderland,* falls when chasing the rabbit. Once she entered the hole, she lost the track of how much time and how much deep was the role. As in regard the Benjamin's method, one cannot feel the same feeling of vertigo when falling into it, once to realise that Benjamin offered no ground to secure this falling.

[2] According to Hanssen, Benjamin set the tone for debates within Critical Theory for its essay on the Critique of Violence when aimed to practice critique and to discuss power/violence – both rendered by the German word Gewalt. The text became an important point of discussion within the literature, having an expressive number of responses – including the famous essay Force of Law from Derrida. Despite adhering to the formal grounds of Kantian philosophy, namely in regard what is critique and the practice of discriminating, Benjamin wanted to discriminate legitimate power

In fact, also unfinished, Benjamin aimed to publish a work on criticism and critique, which would be opened by an essay on the task of the critic and to be closed by the essay *The Task of the Translator*, published in 1921. From the notes left, Salzani (2021) argues that this material can be taken as paradigmatic for understanding Benjamin's advancements in what he would call "philosophical criticism"[3] that includes his own philosophy of *Kritic* – which, as Salzani remarks, the German term translates both the English "criticism" and "critique" -, that envisages a proper methodology of reading. Certainly, as Hanssen and many others state, the practice of critique "coincides with the arrival of the modern epoch" (Hanssen, 2020, p.4), so the term "has had a history marked by as many vicissitudes as the genealogy of modernity" (Hanssen, 2020, p.4). In its etymological origin, critique came from the Greek work of *krinein,* referring to separation and distinction. In the Kantian reading, critique as an ability is grounded in the historical "conditions of possibility that underlie knowledge, moral deliberation, and aesthetic judgement" (Hanssen, 2020, p.4; Kant, 2016). To a poststructuralist approach, the term was taken in the sense of "judgement on the present, with an eye towards the realization of a (utopian) future as a way of undoing the errors of the past" (Hanssen, 2020, p.4; Horkheimer, 1995). Reading Marx, Horkheimer advances that "the thinking subject is not the place where knowledge and object coincide, or consequently the starting-point for attaining absolute knowledge" (Horkheimer, 1995, p.218). This means to assume an epistemological implication of the subject in its gaze to the object of critical analysis – which leads, inevitably, that every "theory is always for someone and for some purpose" (Cox, 1981, p.128).

To the purpose of this thesis, I am embracing critique here as a tool of legibility. Even though Benjamin left us without a definition of what he understood as critique, in his essay on translation, Benjamin remarks that translations proceed

from force. Nevertheless, the critical project failed while pursuing the rigorous assumption of critique, "as he was moved to acknowledge the persistence of force in liberal institutions". Hanssen advances by questioning: "Did he simply revert to a theological dogmatism as he paid tribute to the sovereign power of the divine name, or, quite to the contrary, might the undoing of the critical project eventually lead not to an irreversible crisis but to hopeful regeneration?" (Hanssen, 2020, p.x).

[3] As Friedlander argues, it is fundamental to consider, when dealing with Benjamin's concept of critique, "his understanding (…) of the concept of criticism in early Romanticism in his dissertation, as well as the formulation in the epilogue of that work, of the task of overcoming the polar opposition of Romantic critique and Goethe's classicist understanding of the 'uncriticizable' character of great art" (Friedlander). In addition, his essay on Goethe's Elective Affinities, the preface of the Origin of German Trauerspiel and, as I have been pointing, his *Critique of Violence* (1920).

from a mistaken premise of turning original languages equal in form to the language to be read[4]. He wrote:

> The traditional concepts in any discussion of translation are fidelity and license – the freedom to give a faithful reproduction of the sense and, in its service, fidelity to the word. These ideas seem to be no longer serviceable to a theory that strives to find, in a translation, something other than reproduction of meaning (…) What can fidelity really do for the rendering of meaning? For this sense, in its poetic significance for the original, is not limited to what is meant but rather wins such significance to the degree that what is meant is bound to the way of meaning of the individual word (…) a real translation is transparent; it does not cover the original, does not block its light, but allows the pure language, as though reinforced by its own medium, to shine upon the original all the more fully (…). For if the sentence is the wall before the language of the original, literalness is the arcade (Benjamin, *the Task of the Translator*, 1996d, p.259-260).

This text is insightful because Benjamin, (Benjamin, 2006, p.171; 2004, p.373) explicitly refers it – the translation - as important task of the critic. Further, the conception of task here means a "historical dialectic" between the work and the action of the translator/critic (Eiland & Jennings, p.109; Salzani, 2021). In his dissertation on the concept of criticism in German Romanticism, though, that Benjamin's critical approach was made explicit. Advancing on the German Trauerspiel, Benjamin presented a "philosophical criticism that, through the mortification of the works, aims to make historical content, such as provides the basis of every important work of art, into a philosophical truth" (Benjamin apud Salvazi, 2021).

> Historical "understanding" is to be grasped, in principle, as an afterlife [*Nachleben*] of that which is understood; and what has been recognized in the analysis of the "afterlife [*Nachleben*] of works," in the analysis of "fame," is therefore to be considered the foundation of history in general" (Benjamin, 2002, p.460 [Arcades, N2,3]).

[4] For that, Benjamin draws on the following quote from Rudolf Pannwitz, in The Crisis of the European Culture [*Die Krisis der europaischen Kultur*]: "The basic error of the translator is that he preserves the state in which his own language happens to be instead of allowing his language to be powerfully affected by the foreign tongue. Particularly when translating from a language very remote from his own, he must go back to the primal elements of language itself and penetrate to the point where work, image, and tone converge. He must expand and deepen his language by means of the foreign language. It is not generally realized to what extent language differs from language almost the way dialect differs from dialect. However, this last is true only if one takes language seriously enough, not if one takes it lightly" (Pannwitz apud Benjamin, The Task of the Translator, 1996d, p.265).

Hence, a critical approach deals to a certain way of reading the historical event, but after it has already happened – the "historical index", as he refers, that brings an event, a work of art to a moment of legibility (Salzani, 2021). The task of the historian, as it is the task of the translator and of the critic, "is thus to recognise their truth-content[5] and make it 'present', 'actual'" (Salzani, 2021)[6]. Thus, we are dealing here with a theory of history to Benjamin, because, in the center of his work, there is a "notion that certain historical moments and forms become legible only at a later moment – one that correspond to them and only to them" (Jennings et al, 2008, p.5-6). In his letter to Gretel Karplus in 1935, Benjamin writes: "I have found that aspect of the art of the nineteenth century which only 'now' becomes recognisable – it had not been so before and it will never be so again" (Benjamin, 1999, p.171).

Certainly, when dealing to the task of critic and historical approaches, one cannot but remember Benjamin's ethical-political involvement with Communism thinking during his life. Indeed, much has been written concerning Benjamin's redemption and the Marxist influence on his work (Buck-Morss, 1989; 1992; Friedlander, 2018; Jennings et al, 2008; Lowy, 2005). Nevertheless, the reader will soon realise that the subject of this thesis is not Walter Benjamin; neither it is a literature review on his thinking or method applied to I.R. Instead, the central focus of this study is to read Benjamin as an inspirational framework to delineate the figurations in which his thinking takes on when one looks at the conditions of possibility of understanding what is I.R., especially in concern to its discussion on violence. In this way, failing into the Benjamin's hole, Benjamin "compels us to search for images of sociohistorical reality that are the key to unlocking the meaning of his commentary" (Buck-Morss, 1989, p.x). Hence, I am looking to the ways of looking in I.R. theorisation and, in this sense, Benjamin's thoughts bring instigating insights in regard his (i) treatment of temporality and processes of history and (ii) focus on the visual "as key to escaping the limitations" of a canonical text (Pusca, 2010).

[5] In Salzani's words, truth-content relates to what is indexed by this methodology of reading. According to him, it was very popular reading Benjamin misunderstood the "afterness of this continued life as a moving away from a notion of self-contained meaning of signification – from Truth" (Salzani, 2021).

[6] In the *Arcades Project*, The vocabulary of "actualization" translates in this context Vergegenwärtingung and gegenwärtig machen, "presentification" and "making present" (Benjamin, 2002, p.790 and p.460 [Arcades Project, K2, 3 and N2,2]).

Taking the role of critic as reading, hence, is intimately bounded to the historical conditions of perception – as I shall argue throughout this thesis. In this sense, I am embracing Benjamin approach to history as a ground that informs the conditions of reading phenomena. As Benjamin argues:

> What is at stake is not to portray literary works in the context of their age, but to represent the age that perceives them—our age—in the age during which they arose. It is this that makes literature into an organon of history; and to achieve this, and not to reduce literature to the material of history, is the task of the literary historian (Benjamin, *Literary History and the Study of Literature*, 2005, p.464).

Hence, to be affected to the ways things appears to me and the *problemátiques* in the way I realise them. Benjamin's *Aktualität* (which is quite an untranslatable term) does not hold within itself a promise of emancipation, or rather, an instrumental device for current problems, but it relates to "his enduring afterlife, in the historical index that his work contains and that brings it to legibility—*even through, and perhaps precisely thanks to, a certain untimeliness and historical lag*—at a certain time" (Salzani, 2021).

Benjamin described his work as a Copernican revolution when writing on history (Buck-Morss, 1989, p.x). As Buck-Morss states:

> If history is abandoned as a conceptual structure that deceptively transfigures the present, its cultural contents are redeemed as the source of critical knowledge that alone can place the present into question. Benjamin makes us aware that the transmission of culture (high and low), which is central to this rescue operation, is a political act of the highest import – not because culture in itself has the power to change the given, but because historical memory affects decisively the collective, political will for change. Indeed, it is its only nourishment (Buck-Morss, 1989, p.x).

Whilst highlighting a cultural continuum that makes one aware that the present is its culmination, Benjamin opens to what he calls to a historical constellation, namely, how past artifacts will culminate to the conditions of perception of one own embeddedness in history. "Benjamin's understanding of history as critique culminate in his *Arcades Project*", which, despite appearances, "it is not a work of cultural history" (Friedlander, 2018, p.95). This is because Benjamin knew that any dispute in political and ethical terms concerning one

contemporaneity demands taking very seriously the transformation of perception in each period of time – and this dispute cannot be settled other but the cultural field[7].

In this sense, the role of critique is with a surgical scalpel, to cut the surface to unveil materialities that inhabit there, invisible at first sight.

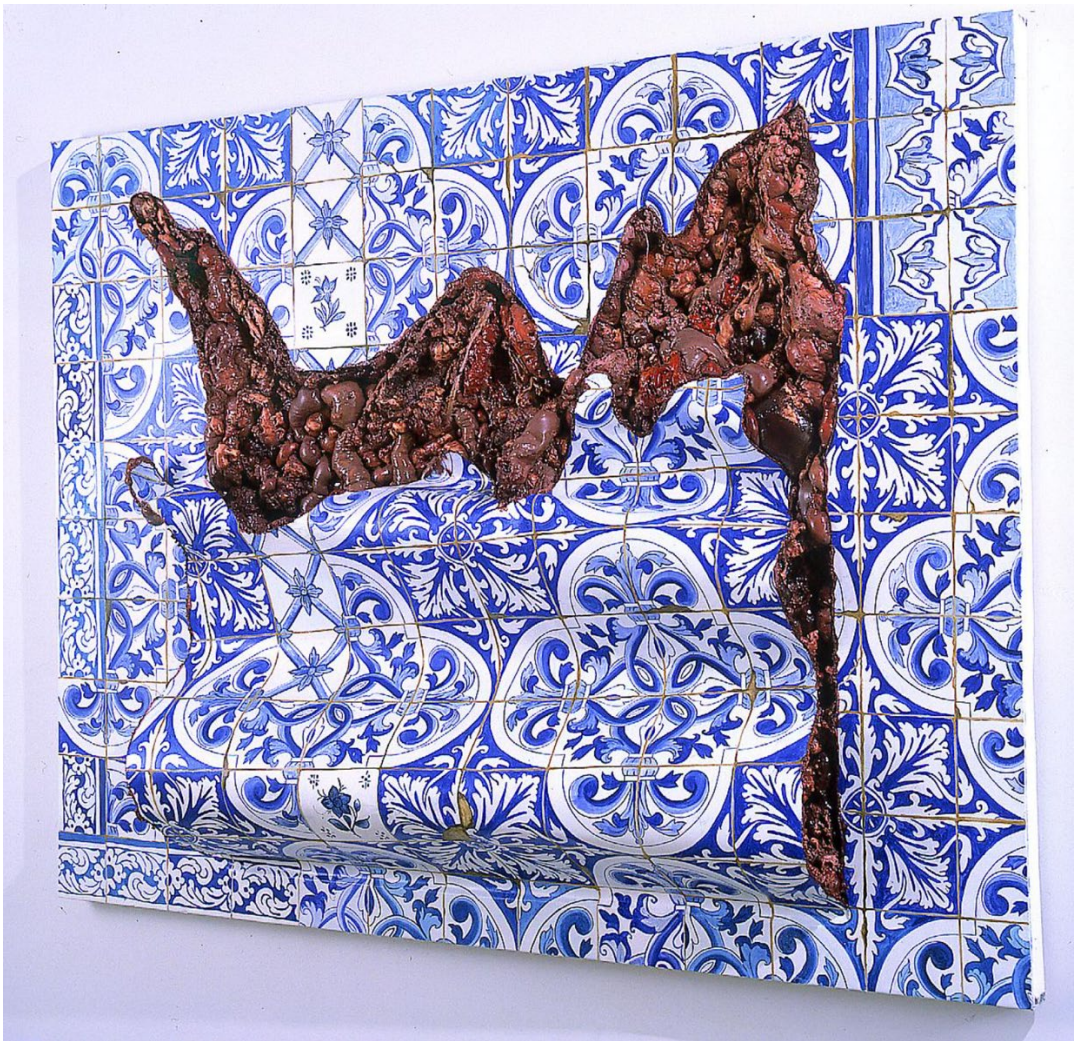

Figure 2: Adriana Varejão. Outros Corpos Atrás (2019) - Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro - Gagosian Gallery

As Varejão shows us, presenting a work with Portuguese ceramics that, once is cut, everything what is inside falls apart – a wounded painting, bleeding. "Adriana Varejão's work is the practice of an intricate cartography that covers the span from China to Brazilian historic town of Ouro Preto, between the image of a portolano

[7] As it shall be argued later, therefore Benjamin deals with the Fascist expansion in cultural terms, urging for the politisating of arts against the aesthetisation of politics (Benjamin, 2008; Buck-Morss, 1992; Jennings et al, 2008; Sontag, 1977).

and the signs of painting, from body to history" (Herkenhoff, 1996). The Portuguese ceramics, which crystallizes the colonial operations of government and expansion, are presented in their beautiful aspect. Nevertheless, seeing the painting in its flesh make us aware that things have bodies, that there is a synchrony in the present, in which, through the artist's poetic action, finds its *Aktualität in* the encounter with the work of art – a process of symbolic mediation, confrontation, articulation and synchronic perspective (Herkenhoff, 1996). Varejão knows that "to articulate the visual past historically means to take possession of a reminiscence, of visual evidence so that it produces flashes of light in a moment of danger. In this respect, her art acts as an agential process of history" (Herkenhoff, 1996). Art here works as a metaphor – if we manage to somehow embrace the possibility of politicising the arts, as Benjamin wanted, following Brecht, perhaps arts further that crystalling an artifact from a certain time, can work as a mobilising agent that enlarges our way of seeing.

"Open the supposed body and unfold all its surfaces" says Lyotard, but it easily relates to Varejão's poetics and Benjamin's role of critic. This leads to another dimension, which is the experience. If Benjamin's critique relates to a critique on history, which, in its turn, is a dispute in the cultural field, Benjamin highlights the role of the individual experience at facing the phenomena.

According to Howard Caygill, "at the heart of this new philosophy is a radical transformation of the concept of experience bequeathed by Kant's critical philosophy (1998, p.2). This reveal the Benjaminian attempt to develop a new form of philosophy that would consider the intimate relation between object and agent. As Kant suggests, the objects are apprehended as a phenomenon. Thus, what could be known is a concept of a thing. This concept is mediated by *a priori* categories of understanding. In other words, Kant delineates the conditions of possibility of any experience though the categories' concepts of understanding (space and time) and, with that, determines the limits of knowledge (Caygill, 1998, p.1-5; Pusca, 2009, p.244). In contrast, Benjamin advances a concept of experience that privileges the impact of the objects on the individual, in which the subject is able to control the expression and materiality of things. In this sense, each object guards a revelation of a tradition (Benjamin, 2010; 1987; 1970, p.9).

To Benjamin, experience refers to a methodology that highlights perception and visuality as epistemological and political categories in order to apprehend the

events. The experience, then, is the ability to apprehend objects by the subject, rescuing the brief moment of the revelation by which the things reflect on the conditions of possibility of our own times. Objects impact on how we feel and live the world we share[8][9].

Benjamin advances in a break down in the Kantian distinctions between intuition, understanding and reason, by affirming a speculative philosophy instead of a transcendental one (Caygill, 1998). To the aims of this thesis, I will not delve in the Kantian literature to analyse his heritage regarding moralism and the categories of knowledge. To the purposes of this work, it is important to observe how Benjamin responds to Kant in order to settle the ground of his own methodological and philosophical endeavour. What interests me is how Benjamin's experience could provide a relevant ground for studies in I.R. and, as I shall argued, to the aesthetic turn in the discipline. In this sense, experience, as formulated by Walter Benjamin, emerges as a key concept to comprehend how we apprehend the present time and space in late modernity, informing, hence, the categories of thinking that allows us to see (or not) the other and the spread of violence. To this extent, my aim is to engage with concept of aesthetics – as a sensorial perception of reality - as the perception through which we formulate a judgment of the material world that appears towards us phenomenologically[10]. For that, it is vital to observe that Benjamin will operate with concepts such as visuality, history, culture,

[8] Specifically in the essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility*, Benjamin worries about the loss of experience, since the technology alters the perception of art and things – its aura. Aura is a characteristic and effect of objects being uniquely present in time and space. As the concept refers to authenticity, the work of art reproduced cannot be fully presented anywhere, while the original one loses his uniqueness. As a result, the objects lose their authenticity along with their authority. Within a mass society, the loss of aura happens when the masses are constantly seeking to bring things closer. Notwithstanding, the work of art, traditionally, is experienced through distanced contemplation. In this modern society, in which every aesthetic form could be enlarged, photographs, shows, films are displayed in an imperative and dynamic way to the viewer. According to Jeanne Marie Gagnebin, the loss of aura is not indeed a negative aspect; on the contrary, it might be possible to create new spaces and forms of interaction in this way (Gagnebin, 2014, p. 119). However, this loss could only be interesting if we do not lose what matters most: politics. In her words: What Benjamin condemns is what precisely immerses us today in the many products of cultural industry: the masse reproductions of a fictitious aura whose main function is to obliterate the desolation of the real" (Gagnebin, 2014, p.117).

[9] It is also assumed that the concept of world is understood as space in-between individuals in which they can act and talk to each other (Arendt, 2010, p.220-223).

[10] There is here a conception of a phenomenal character of the world, which is necessarily intermediated by the sensory experience. To act and / or to speak, the individual appears to others - and this is the moment in which individuals reveal their unique personality. Therefore, the world is a space of appearances, wherein for individuals to appear among themselves, they need the condition of plurality. Through this interaction where individuals come together, it is possible, then, to build a worldly objective reality that interests the whole collective (Arendt, 2010, p. 220-223).

aesthetics and linguistic to advance in the concept of experience as "new philosophical space able to contain the experience of the absolute" (Caygill, 1998, p.3). On his essay *On Perception In Itself* (1917), Benjamin wrote

> Perception is reading
> Only that appearing in the surface is readable
> Surface that is configuration – absolute continuity (Benjamin, 1996, p.92).

Hence, once again, the quest for readability presents as an epistemological key for an entrance in Benjamin's understanding of the role of critique. Or, to what Varejão aimed to open in flesh and blood in the gelid and cold surface from the ceramics. In Caygill's words:

> The train of thought moves from the proposition that perception is reading to a transcendental definition of the conditions of the possibility of legibility (namely, of what can qualify to be read, or which appears on a surface), and then to a speculative statement of the condition for the transcendental condition of legibility itself (namely, the configured character of the surface) (Caygill, 1998, p.4).

In this sense, Benjamin's concept of experience appears firsts as the condition of legibility[11] – this justifies why the German author will reflect upon culture and translation. To the aims of this thesis, by delineating the conditions of possible experience, Benjamin specifies the object of such an experience in terms of *appearance* (Caygill, 1998, p.4). To this thesis, this is especially relevant not only because I shall engage in an aesthetical approach in relation to the ways we theorise on I.R., but, foremost, because I want to end up by embracing Arendt's proposal of what is politics, namely, the irruption of novelty and being together as a plurality in a *space of appearances* – a public sphere in which we appear to each other and create the world-in-common (Arendt, 2011; 2010; 1979). Furthermore, reading this space through an aesthetical apprehension of reality might help us understand the ethical attitude of looking at things, and how this informs an ethical judgement of what is visible in the political grammar – as I shall advance throughout this thesis.

[11] Furthermore, as Caygill observes, the relationship between subject and object are not exactly separate: Even more significantly, experience as reading is not divided between an active 'reader' (subject of experience) and a passive 'read' (object of experience). The 'read' is by no means a passive datum but makes as active a contribution as the 'reader' to the accomplishment of 'perception as reading' (Caygill, 1998, p.4).

Hence, I am pursuing here a reflexion of the experience as concept, alongside how it informs conditions of possibility to an ethical commitment of seeing. Nevertheless, when I engage with a Kantian framework of reacting to the work of art, I suggest a 'disinterested' attitude to judge an object regardless of its function, but I will argue that we can further engage in this kind of relation with any object (Vidal & Ortega, 2017, p.111), in this same manner with Arendt's reading of political action (Arendt, 2010). Because "it is not the object that makes the relation aesthetic, but the relation that makes the object aesthetic" (Genette apud Vidal & Ortega, 2017, p. 111). With this said, I want to advance in how theorise is informed by these same dynamics.

Indeed, much have been written on how Benjamin concepts provides relevant approaches to comprehend aesthetics, history, technology, and experience impoverishment of transmission in a world left by tradition (Buck-Morss, 1992; 1989; Caygill, 1998; Friedlander, 2018; Pusca, 2010). But Benjamin's in trouble: concerning the impoverishment of experience and the loss of unique appearance of works of art, aura is the unique appearance of a distant thing, regardless of how close it is. This is to say that things in the world resist us; they are not docile instruments of our gaze and understanding; they point to our non-sovereignty. Thus, *things escape us*; they do not obey us. In this sense, I will not start from *the good old things*, namely, using a Benjaminian's framework *per se*, but I shall engage with it, problematizing up the ways of seeing in I.R. This is what I refer as *start from the bad new ones*: enlarging the discussion on experience within Security Studies/I.R. theory but localizing its limits and conditions of possibility as a concept that has political effects/affects[12] in the material world.

The Onion Layers

My fundamental goal is to problematize ways of seeing the violence in I.R. framed by the traditional and abstract relationship between war and politics through the phenomenological concept of experience. To pursue this argument, my thesis presents works of art I curated from the last years of my PhD not to bring image as

[12] Here I am applying the concept of "affect" from Spinoza in the sense of being affected by stimulus around that informs the *potential* (power). In this regard, it is not only direct implications of politics, but the affects regime that informs bodies and perceptions of a world.

a representation, but as a methodological device of thinking. My aim is to engage with an aesthetical approach towards phenomena, particularly considering Walter Benjamin's framework as an inspiration of conceptualisation, especially in regard the complexities of producing knowledge within a historicity that informs our embeddedness in time and space. Works of art, hence, work as a metaphor to resemble this aesthetical experience of theorizing on violence and the ethical attitude of seeing in I.R. I would like to propose reading the arts presented here in a performative perspective – observing them as an invitation to other experiences, other ways of entering the relational space, and in constituting new modes of perception – hence, art as an experience.

My previous project envisaged working with aesthetics and possible contributions of Walter Benjamin's thinking to the debate on violence in I.R. After I went to my period of research abroad at King's College London, I understood that I wanted to make something about artworks that left their mark on me. I participated in groups and events dealing with Conflict and Art in a broader sense. I had the opportunity to meet artists and curators whose artistic practices aimed to question the very notion of war. Back in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, I rearranged the calendar to reallocate new activities to be included in my thesis. I decided to work exclusively with works of art. Still, instead of taking canonical works, I wanted to engage with artists from Rio de Janeiro that discussed violence – either directly or not – to offer an alternative conceptualisation of this social phenomenon – one that would bring to evidence the postcolonial condition.

Hence, I took curatorial courses in the Escola of Artes Visuais – Parque Lage and Hélio Oiticica Center to advance specific writing skills about art and curatorial practices. I also did archival research in the Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro (MAM-Rio), and Museu de Arte do Rio (MAR). Both museums have a rich collection of residents and artists from Rio de Janeiro -, asking for the copyrights of reproduction of particular works. And, as well, I had the opportunity to meet some artist's studios to present my thesis objectives and research results that would help in this thinking exercise. Nevertheless, although I already had an extension for pursuing this fieldwork, all my planned activities were suspended with the expansion of the COVID-19 in March 2020. Thus, the reader who turns the pages of this present thesis will find a work interrupted, not because it is not finished, but because it was written amid the feeling of not finding the ground to

put my feet on. “But where the danger is, also grows the saving power”, says Hoelderlin. I could not meet the schedule I aimed to at first, and, later, I did not have the time to re-organising this field experience – thus, this present thesis – the only possible one in a world out of joint – mainly made a bibliographical discussion while rescuing some of the data I researched in the months followed by my return to my country.

Having said this, my thesis has the following structure: in the first chapter, I provide a ground to all concepts I discuss throughout the thesis – in what I will call as the bulb of an onion. As the reader will realise, I compare the exercise of theorising as an eye that opens – to draw from Berger’s illustration in the ways of seeing. The first chapter is the core of the onion. Or to putting it simply, from its theoretical development, the other chapters of this thesis (or layers of the onion) unfold. In this sense, what is crucial here is to defend the use of the work of art as a methodology while acknowledging an epistemology that articulates the production of images from a specific time and space, crossed by other times and spaces. To this end, there are some objectives that seemed fundamental to achieve: the first, above all, is to make a state of the art of the discussion of Benjamin's work in R.I., but also making a small survey of secondary literature. There are neuralgic concepts here: **image, history, experience, transmission, media, and critique**. Concepts that are both connected and distant in Benjamin's work. As Benjamin will argue that the material conditions expressed culturally (media, art, cinema, newspaper, billboards, etc.) That is:

> Marx adopted an approach which gave his investigations prognostic value. Going back to the basic condition of capitalist production, he presented them in a way which showed what could be expected of capitalism in the future. *What could be expected, it emerged, was not only an increasingly harsh exploitation of the proletariat but, ultimately, the creation of conditions which would make it possible for capitalism to abolish itself.* Since the transformation of the superstructure proceeds far more slowly than that of the base, it has taken more than half a century for the change in the conditions of production to be manifested in all areas of culture. How this process has affected culture can only now be assessed, and these assessments must meet certain prognostic requirements. They do not call for theses on art of the proletariat (…). They call for theses defining the tendencies of the development of art under the present conditions of production (Benjamin, 2018, p.19, *my emphasis*).

Thus, far from thinking about a proletarian art, there is a discussion here about how modes of production and techniques of modernity, expressed in cultural

terms, informs *a sense of contemporaneity*. In other words, how we are aesthetically affected by everything and others that surround us. Here, the quest is to know where the space is left for politics – necessarily informed by a historical sense. This is because Benjamin's enemy is very clear: fascism. For him, the "non-comprehension" of the diagnosis of the period leads to the fascists dominating the culture more easily (see current extreme right moments and the use of the media). Hence, his dialogue with Brecht to think of a proletarian art (theater of the oppressed, art without being a commodity, cinema without being mass language and intensification of reality).

In the second chapter, my goal is to understand how the literature on violence in R.I. reifies an abstraction of the real – an aesthetic of what violence is. - expressed in the use of images - which gives us a sense of contemporary. Ultimately, I look for the conditions of possibility of politics in the discussion about seeing/narrating the world in R.I. When talking about violence, my aim is to use artworks/interventions from lived experiences of violence as possible ways to achieve what is unrepresentable and even unspeakable – what makes the space of politics possible, because talking about pain is putting my ontological right to exist (Butler, 2004, p.4). This cannot give us a complete historical overview of the condition of possibility of politics in R.I., but it does give us a glimpse of these conditions – thinking in deviations.

As it shall be argued in the third chapter, my work is, above all, epistemological, as I criticize the conditions of possibility of knowledge in R.I. and how he narrates subjects and affects. There is a tragedy: the world around us escapes us. Benjamin's historical redemption does not give us the justice of the defeated; redemption is just remembering those who are no longer here.

> From this perspective, then, we understand that the image does not reawaken anything, nor does it console. It is *redemption only in precious moment of its disappearance*: it expresses the tearing of the veil in spite of all, in spite of the immediate re-veiling of everything in that which Benjamin would call the desolation of the past (Didi-Huberman, 2008 p.170, *my emphasis*).
>
> *Redemption* is thus, more profoundly, *that which enlightens us regarding the dialectical manner in which both of these states exist on the foundation of the possibility of the other* (Didi-Huberman, 2008, p.171, *my emphasis*).

According to Maurice Blanchot (and remembering Primo Levi), literature and art are spaces where I can put the "other to speak". By using works of art to find

glimpses/traces of the subject who narrates the violence, I put the other to speak. Finding the conditions of possibility for thinking through breaches can allow space for the other, albeit tragic, as the subject is always captured. This should be a deliberate tension throughout the thesis.

Methodologically, there will also be the use of works of art here but using in a particular sense: Benjamin's conception of aesthetics implies how we perceive/see the world that affects us (how we look at others and how others look at us, cities look at us, memories that do not pass). The choice to use works of art by contemporary Brazilian artists is deliberate, although it is also about an aesthetic. But there is a difference: I do not treat aesthetics as a representation of the real (and that is why the section moving away from the aesthetic turn in R.I.), but as ways of narrating the unspeakable. The image is a text, for Benjamin, and it should be a support in writing. Therefore, the use of image alongside with text will happen throughout the work.

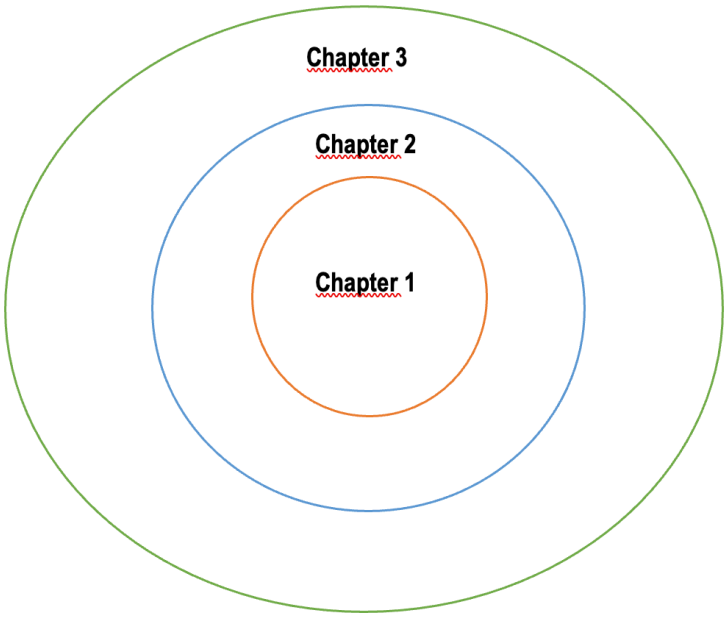

Figure 3: the onion method

In short, this is what I call an onion method: the thesis works like an onion, in which the rigid core (chapter 01) will inform the methodological and epistemological deviations of the following chapters. It also presents that all discussion will not be exhausted exclusively in the specific chapters, but it shall be repeated and rescued in every section as a metaphor of the layers in the exercise of

thinking. The reader can look each chapter individually, as a story of the subject of knowledge opening their eyes towards the world that appears, but they also can read individually or in the mixed order - as thinking does not happen in a linear way; it has its own deviations, as a fox getting lost in a forest.

1. Images Taking Position

The subject of knowledge at the edge

I see it feelingly.
Gloucester to Lear
Shakespeare, King Lear, Act IV, Scene VI

Only the eyes are capable of screaming.
René Char

Figure 4: Adriana Varejão. Testemunhas Oculares X, Y e Z (1997) - Gagosian Gallery

In *Eyewitness X, Y and Z* (1997), we see three different versions of the same woman: Adriana Varejão, the artist who made this work. She presents herself as a

Moorish, as an Indian and as a Chinese. Whoever looks at her work immediately notices that these portraits miss an eye – in their place, we see flesh. Alongside in front of each women's portrait, there is a porcelain's eye with a magnifying glass. We soon understand that the setting suggests that the eye of each woman, taken away from them and presented in front of us, invites us to see what they were witnessing. Varejão presents the eye of each woman in a very delicate way, as a sort of rare old jewelry. As if it were a *lost treasure*, transmitted to the one who encounters them to tell a specific history. As soon as we stop to look at this eyepiece, we see pictures from Theodore de Bry[13] framing a cannibal feast in which natives take out what is inside their victims' bodies. The work's aim is to put using the shoes of these women, seeing from the perspective of their eyes. This is precisely what Varejão aims to provoke: to make us wonder what they were seeing. What if we could see what these women have seen? What could each one of them have had to say to us? Those whose voices are probably not heard in the grand narratives of colonisation – a Moorish, an Indian and a Chinese – what did they see?

Figure 5: Adriana Varejão. Testemunhas Oculares X, Y e Z (1997) - Gagogian Gallery

[13] Theodor de Bry (also Theodorus de Bry) (1528 – 27 March 1598) was an engraver, goldsmith, editor and publisher, famous for his depictions of early European expeditions to the Americas. De Bry created many engraved illustrations for his books. Most of his books were based on first-hand observations by explorers, even though De Bry himself, acting as a recorder of information, never visited the Americas.

Figure 6: Adriana Varejão. Testemunhas Oculares X, Y e Z (1997) - detalhes - Gagosian Gallery

This work of art does not hold any meaning unless someone looks at these portraits while looking at these eyepieces' jewels, *imagining* unknown memories of a time which took place somewhere else, but still, that is so close to the point we can touch their skin – we can see their flesh. Commenting on this setting, Adriana Varejão remembers that phrenology became a relevant field of research during the XIX-19th century, famous for studying parts of the human body that would reveal the identity of criminals and other disturbance patterns. One of these practices included removing irises from the eyes to analyse individuals' alienation, propensity for crime, and ability to know. To that, Varejão also adds that once she has read a study that demonstrated the possibility of revealing the last scene seen by someone murdered departing from their dead eyes as a starting point. Then, "Eyewitness X, Y and Z" explores ways of accessing the world from one's eyes, putting into play reality and imagination in a common ground of senses and feelings. The witness' eyes work as the materiality of history: looking at them, we realise that these narratives are not an event that is far away, but rather one which takes place in the present time, with open flesh – we imagine from these bodies, without feeling them fully. Here, seeing informs an attempt to trace who was there, which, as Vivienne Jabri remarks, is an endeavour informed by a historical and dialectical imagination. As she explains: it is "historical, for history is always present, and constitutively so in the subject traced and the subject lost, and dialectical, in that theory is understood to be always implicated in practice, and always emergent from contestation and contradiction" (Jabri, 2013, p.18). Thus, *seeing and time are intricate somehow to the conditions of knowing*. In this sense, we come across a fundamental question:

what are the conditions of possibility to know the world from what we see, from one's standpoint, historically conditioned?

Along with Adriana Varejão's visceral poetics, my aim in this chapter is to discuss ways of knowing the world from the lived experiences of history, expressed through images, since as Walter Benjamin stated once, "history decays into images, not in stories" (Benjamin, 2002, p.476). Every possibility of giving meaning to the world we share in common (namely, the conditions of knowledge) comes from a specific time and place, which, in turn, are affected by how historicities cross us bodily. This is to say that practices, values and, most importantly, concepts are developed through history. To fulfil the aims of this chapter, I must highlight that I take the conditions of possibility of knowing the phenomena very seriously – namely, how I access the world, how *I see the world*. Benjamin also said that history appears to us as a constellation of images in a glimpse way. To think with Benjamin, I will rely on works of art and, specifically in this chapter, I will discuss aesthetics and art to problematise my condition of knowing while coming from an IR field but never belonging to it. My argument is that works of art can reveal to us an image of history, helping us see history by "telescop[ing] the past through the present" (Benjamin, 2002, p.471). This would allow "the past to place the present in a critical condition" (Buck-Morss, 1989, p.338) and, in so doing, to propose a critical standpoint *through* and *with* images. As I shall discuss, images work here not as representation but as metaphor – a metaphor of our ways of comprehending politics as the possibility of belonging to a shared public sphere, in which ways of accessing the materiality are set in dispute. Paul Klee once stated that “art does not reproduce the visible; rather, it makes visible”. Under this interpretation, I will develop my argument from and through works of art, considering that a painting is not a sort of mechanism that captures and displays existing visible data, but an engine to create a way of looking at it.

1.1. History from the edges

In this section, I would like to advance in what I shall call "the eye of history" – which is not quite an expression of my own, but it helps illustrate the intimate relationship between time, space and seeing. Varejão’s poetics helped me conceive that relationship.

I come back to the setting of the work of art. Varejão, when re-affirming herself in the piece, highlights a disturbing absence: the lack of a white version of her[14]. These subaltern women are presented as witnesses from another time, but whose historical imagination is different from one coming from a colonizer's story.The display of their eyes allows us to see the cannibalism scenes "expressed in the irises" of the subaltern. Crushed bodies, guts, flesh: everything unveils in absolute exposure, but in an alternative way other than that expressed by a biological and historical obsession for classification and order (Schwartz & Varejão, 2014, p.33).[15]

For this reason, the eyes, presented as crystals jewellery, are a fundamental part of this work. For Varejão, there lies the real anthropophagy[16]: "the anthropophagy that is linked to our colonisation and works as an engine of stories (...). Stories that can be read in a long time - transformed simultaneously - and from various perspectives" (Schwartz & Varejão, 2014, p.32). From the eyes presented on the table, we are invited to imagine the mysterious archaeology of past violence and passion in Brazil. I am not saying that they represent the authentic history of the lived experience, but it is a metaphor of how particular life experiences inform montages of our constellation of historical imagination. This is vital to problematise my way of making connections in the world I am living, in the way I am living, and what conditions of possibility inform my way of imaging an alternative world, politically and intellectually speaking.

"How one could see time?" asks George Didi-Huberman (2018a, p.161). We certainly cannot *see* time, but we know that the eyes are witnesses from a *certain place*. In this specific case, a place from the edges, as I started this chapter. As Benjamin argues, places and time have an intimate relationship, since space has

[14] The relevance of this observation is worth noting, which reveals that Varejão was not naive. Bell Hooks will discuss the traumatic relationship to the gaze that unveils the slavery past and how it informs black spectatorship. According to her, "the politics of slavery, of racialized power relations, were such that the slaves were denied their right to gaze" (Hooks, 1992, p.115). The black communities were punished for gazing directly, for instance. Thus, there is power in looking because it is a historical and subtle relationship informed by power relations in a Foucaultian sense (Hooks, 1992).

[15] Adriana Varejão discusses how the civilizing process, which permeates all colonisation, emphasized cleanliness and health practices. Thus, much of her discussion goes back to materiality and the body, as if to go in the opposite direction of a uniform civilizing process, based on cleanliness. For further information, please see the artist interview to Gagosian Gallery: https://gagosian.com/quarterly/2021/02/24/video-adriana-varejao-in-the-studio/

[16] I will come back to the relevance of anthropophagy not only to Varejão's work, but to my thesis as well.

multiple temporal layers. Throughout this chapter, my attempt is to demonstrate how time and space are imbricated into each other, informing not only what we shall name as “history”, but, furthermore, how critical thinking comes from a conditioned standpoint. To Benjamin, we can grasp the layers I referred to from cultural expressions, and therefore, discussing history demands a serious regard for culture.

Nevertheless, this is not a properly Benjaminian discussion. The one responsible for this spatial and temporal delimitation in knowledge was Kant. For the German thinker, the categories that enable the ability *to know* are grounded in time and space. Indeed, Benjamin comes after Kant's works, but Benjamin has his own historiography. As we will see in this section, the present time holds within itself constellations of other times, past and future. The question is the fissure, which makes us see differently - and, for Benjamin, *this fissure is in the image*.

"It is, in the complexity of the now, in all its fragmentations and uncertainties that the traces of history emerge, even as the history itself permeates the present" (Jabri, 2013, p.15). The present is not an enclosed structure of space and time; on the contrary, the present is a constellation of times, unfold with unseen narratives[17]. However, the temporal aspect of this constellation is not detached from the site in which one stands. As Vivienne Jabri remarks, even though Kant defined space and time as different categories, "the temporal cannot (…) be assumed in ontologically separate terms from the spatial" (Jabri, 2013, p.23). In this sense, as time is within a space, the way through which we could access a time is from a standpoint, placed at some point, in some moment[18].

[17] Walter Benjamin will develop a theory of distraction when discussing new technologies, in which films are a paradigmatic example. Contrary to distraction, Benjamin explains that a traditional work of art demands a concentration, even immersion into the work. When the work of art loses its ritualist characteristic, Benjamin argues that art reproducibility turns the experience of work of art into an uninterested act – which is precisely the conditions to its pollicisation. Still, “distraction, like catharsis, are defined with regard to tragedy”. This is to say that the reproducibility of work of arts allows a distracted attitude towards them, which is informed by a bodily experience, which, for a fleeting moment, realises its own historicity in space.

[18] Memory plays a role exactly in this translation of different historical times embedded within the present time. After all, as the present is enclosed with the past and future, memory acts as a social practice aiming to dispute the meanings of this very present. Political societies have, for some time, faced the issue of "what to do" dealing with the complicated relationship between violence and ethics to maintain a sort of harmonious order. It is literally in this sense that memory functions as a tool of contesting and claiming different versions of the time we live in. Nevertheless, these memory narratives are constantly updated in struggle relations to "illuminate this present with old injustices legacy" (Gómez, 2014, p. 74). As Gómez among others will argue, this memory gives meaning not only to our collective historical narrative – that is never enclosed itself – but also constitutes the conditions of possibility to how subjectivity understands its own contemporaneity. This memory

Walter Benjamin, after Emanuel Kant, will advance arguing that time and space are both implicated in each other (Benjamin, 2012; Buck-Moss, 1989; Caygill, 1998 p.1-2; Jabri, 2014, p.19). Thus, understanding our present implies comprehending how time and space cross ways through which we look *at the now*. To Benjamin, it is precisely this "complexity of now", embedded with traces of history, that informs a historical imagination, namely, how we make projections towards our reality, within specific conditions of possibility of knowing. *To see*. Clearly, this historical imagination will propitiate the mechanisms to know what is visible or not when conceptualising history. Nevertheless, this imagination is "itself subject to not just the limits of imagination, but also the paucity of linguistic constructs that have the capacity to capture the complexities" (Jabri, 2014, p.15) of the time we are living. In this sense, historical imagination has clearly epistemological limits tough; but, even with these limits, this imagination reveals tensions and potentialities of the subject's capacity to transform (dis)continuities of social and political life (Jabri, 2014, p.16).

Thinking with the work of art, Varejão is an artist who rescues different narratives throughout her works: from Chinese Ceramics that crossed seas to Brazil by Portuguese Imperialism until geometric abstractions in blue saunas, we see unique poetics that bring textures and wounded frames. In pieces or even quartered, her paintings expose a picture that bleeds. The paintings have materiality crossed by violence and temporalities and, when cut with a surgical scalpel, they decouple themselves into the human organism's internal organs. They are interiorities that show how many layers the paintings have, revealing the world's materiality around us. The artist seems to be telling us that the objects around us are also witnesses of this past, which is still a pulsating matter —but the ruins of our visceral present.

Varejão connects marginal stories by adding personal and fictional ornaments, presenting us with a fragmented story from the edges – an untold history. Thinking with Varejão, painting gives embodiment to those marginal stories as "the body is revealed as the skin and flesh of painting" (Herkenhoff, 1996). Varejão, while as a Moorish, Chinese and an Indigenous, emphasises the

repository forms "practical consciousness that is always already in the background and comes to be foregrounded as the subject encounters the world epistemologically" (Jabri, 2013, p.23). Hence, Varejão's attempt in *Eyewitness* is to let us *reappropriate* time, enlarging the manners through which we look upon (our) past.

bodily experience of the eyewitness, that of seeing. In this sense, "the spatiality of the body too must be part of this picture, not just in the sense that the body takes up space, claims a location", but, as Vivienne Jabri argues, "the body [is] a landscape whereupon time and space make their imprint" (Jabri, 2014, p.60). With this, I am considering that body in a complex relationship of affects[19], understanding that being is not only mind and body, *but also time*, which happens to be a material experience "for the object, in turn, carries subjectivity [and] is imbued with subjectivity" (Jabri, 2014, p.60). As for the viewer, we play with Varejão's work with a bodily experience: taking the lunettes, coming close, looking at these objects to make sense. Art becomes subject-object of itself. Certainly, we cannot be at these testimonies' standpoint – they escape us -, but their eyes made us wonder and, as Didi-Huberman states, "in order to know, we must imagine for ourselves" (2009, p.3)[20].

I am engaging in this imagination exercise with Varejão and in the company of her visual fictions. She gambles/ knows that we access ourselves through our contexts' lens. This is precisely why she paints herself mirrored in different cultures.

> We know, as the historian Simon Schama taught us, that the landscape is already full of memory and has little to do with the observation made with the naked eye. In fact, all visual observation uses some type of lens and, according to cultural anthropologist Franz Boas, 'the eye that sees is an organ of tradition'. It is impossible to observe objects, situations or people abandoned or stripped of any cultural convention or prejudice of the time. Most of the time, we write everything down through the lens of our context - our customs, agendas and traditions (Schwartz & Varejão, 2014, p.69).

Again, seeing and being in time, then, do not separate from one another; they are imbricated into each other (Didi-Huberman, 2018a, p.161). Understanding

[19] This shall be discussed later, but this work relies on what Gilles Deleuze develops as “affect” for believing it holds intimate connection to an aesthetical experience. Gilles Deleuze turns to Spinoza to explain *affect*, based on a philosophy contrary to rationalism. In discussing, for instance, cinema, Deleuze argues that affect is another kind of information that prompts us to think or perceive differently. In this sense, something that one sees, hears, or even feels and one did not feel before. Affect, then, is not something given or thought, but consists of events that stimulate reconsideration in how to see and feel things. G. Deleuze, *Cinema 1. L'Image-Mouvement* (Minuit, 1998).

[20] Conversely, testimonies are also an aspect of uncertain since they are very often subjective and even inaccurate. Can we trust those women? The viewer has no other option other than to follow their gazes, as fragmentary as they are. "What we see is still little in comparison to what we know (…) these images are, to a certain extent, inexact" describes Didi-Huberman while looking at the rare photos of Auschwitz (Didi-Huberman, 2005, p.33), but it helps us decode at some extent Varejão's work. All we grasp are traces that leave us to wonder what they had seen. From these traces, we are able to access just a specific frame from their eyes. This relates to what Jabri was arguing following Benjamin about historical imagination.

this setting, *Eyewitnesses X, Y and Z* reminds us of our own projections in history and how they are in turn informed by memories. As Didi-Huberman develops, we apprehend time through our psychic experience, the body and space around us, but we only locate ourselves from a place and with a perception, that crosses desire and memory. Women and their eyes in history are witnesses, but they are witnesses from a certain standpoint.

Advancing towards the eye of history, my point is to argue that, when I highlight that seeing corresponds to a sort of historiography, the question is not about finding a bodily hierarchy of experience, much less proposing a nihilist foundation of knowledge, in which only what I see matters. On the contrary, to sustain that about the eye of history indicates a subjectivity which is aware of regarding something from a particular place, crossed by layers of time. Through my aesthetic experience of the phenomenon, necessarily external to me, I make a judgment about the phenomena. Through my particular experience, which is necessarily crossed by my senses, I form a judgment on what appears to me, and this encounter enables the exercise of thought and imagination. Hence, the ethical exercise of broadening understanding through critical thinking and creating a common sense is a shared grammar to make sense of the factual reality. As I will discuss later in this chapter, I am following Arendt when I discuss the formation of judgment for Kant. Albeit addressing works of art, there is a political stake associated with a historiography of events which Benjamin leaves us as a legacy of his thinking.

I now move back to the concept of “the eye of history” as developed by Didi-Huberman. He presents three patterns: firstly, they "reveal something about space and time, which they saw" (Didi-Huberman, 2018a, p.161). Therefore, when we see their eyes on the table, open, as a fissure, as if we could see what they see, there is also a re-spatialisation and re-temporalisation of our own way of seeing. Secondly, they are *fertile* eyes, because, from them, we explore ways of knowing history. We can see, from the work, scenes of the colonisation process in America and the founding encounter between Indians, Portuguese, Chinese – a cosmology of Portuguese navigations that crossed Asian, African, and Amerindian seas. Moreover, they are eyes that participate in a gesture. Following Didi-Huberman, he states that there is a demand to recognise the content of the image as a fundamental anthropological content – an encounter with the other. In other words, the gesture

of looking at the image is to recognise that in a fiction that we see, there is a gesture that transforms time.

Thus, it is not just a matter of seeing, but knowing, "to return the history of the montage principle: it is understood that the past becomes legible, soon recognisable, when singularities appear and articulate dynamically with each other like so many moving images" (Didi Huberman, 2018b, p.20). What Varejão allows is to turn the imbricated historicity that lies in objects and ways of being in the world into something legible. According to Didi-Huberman and many Benjamin readers, such as Susan Buck-Morss and Jeanne Gagnebin, Walter Benjamin was one intellectual who took the meaning of legibility within the historical domain seriously. As Benjamin remarks, history's legibility (*lesbarkeit*) articulates with its "concrete, immanent and singular *visibility*" (*anschauliechkeit*) (Didi-Huberman, 2018a, p.21).

My attempt here is to advance that knowledge happens within time and space, through our bodily apprehension of events. Considering this, highlighting the role of history in the ways we gave meaning to the world is not to say that we are displacing the past because the past and future only happen from the 'now'. In other words, in the apprehension of our contemporaneity, which present us with texts, and images, and producing knowledge implies giving legibility to the events around us. This is precisely the critical point in tradition. To Benjamin, this critical point is an image: a dialectical image, which appears as a flash.

A dialectical image is an image from the past that unveils when one awakes to historical consciousness by considering its actualisation in the present from enlarging other perspectives of objects. This moment of historical awareness is a moment of thinking enlargement because we see different perspectives by becoming aware of social struggle Thus, we are not yet referring to a clear definition of what "dialectical image" means, but one can observe that this image is intimately connected with Benjamin's concept of History.

> Articulating the past historically does not mean recognising it 'the way it really was.' It means appropriating a memory (*Erinnerung*) as it flashes up in a moment of danger. Historical materialism wishes to hold fast that image of the past which unexpectedly appears to the historical subject in a moment of danger[21]. The danger

[21] Benjamin uses the words flash and danger very often, especially when discussing dialectical images in *The Arcades Project*. The use of the term flash is particularly interesting because Benjamin makes a direct correspondence with photography devices – a dialectical image appears as

> threatens both the body the content of the tradition and those who inherit it. For both, it is one and the same thing: the danger of becoming a tool of the ruling classes (Benjamin, *thesis VI 2*010, p.391).

As this awareness of History comes in *flashes* (i.e., very quickly), Benjamin's notion of the image is key to his historiography (Ross, 2015, p.201). For Benjamin, "the image that is read […] bears to the highest degree the imprint of the perilous critical moment on which all reading is founded" (Benjamin, 2002, p. 463 [Arcades, N3,1]). The dialectical image presents itself as a moment of *awakening*. It is a moment of consciousness both of historicity and of the danger of what is coming (Benjamin, 2002, p. 463 [Arcades, N3,1]), since "the materialist presentation of History leads the past to bring the present into a critical state" (Benjamin, 2002, p. 471 [Arcades, N7a,5].

In Benjamin's words:

> It's not that what is past casts its light on what is present, or what is present its light on the past; rather, image is that wherein what has been come together in a flash with the now to form a constellation. In other words, image is dialectics at a standstill. For a while, the relation of the present to the past is a purely temporal, continuous one, the relation of what-has-been to the now is dialectical: is not progression but an image, suddenly emergent. – Only dialectical images are genuine images (that is, not archaic); and the place where one encounters them is language (Benjamin, 2002, p.462 [*Arcades*, N2a,3]).

The concept of dialectical image plays an essential role in Benjamin's *Arcades Project* [*Das Passagen-Werk*][22]. Despite being the methodological heart of Benjamin's alternative historiography, however, there is no straightforward definition of what this "image" is. It is difficult to understand how dialectical images "were to be related to the agency of the critical historian" (Pensky, 2004, p.178). According to Rolf Tiedemann (1989, p.294), the term "dialectical image never achieved any terminological consistency." Thus, the dialectical image, which was supposed to shed new light on looking at History, turned into a theoretical black hole (to quote Max Pensky's words).

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if a photo was taken, we just see a "flash," very quickly. This is relevant because we suddenly became aware of injustices or victims of violence in a quick way, so the danger is twofold: one is how some aspects of violence and injustice can still exist in social bonds; the second is the danger of forgetting theses injustices for a second time.

[22] In a letter to Scholem on January 20th, 1930, Benjamin states that the Arcades Project "was to embody a theory of the consciousness of History." Despite leaving more gaps than answers, Benjamin meant to put in motion an alternative historiography by proposing a phenomenological approach to History using images. It is worth reading this work along with his "Thesis of History." Written days before Benjamin's suicide, these enigmatic fragments help shed light in what it wanted to do in Arcades Project's essay (Löwy, 2005).

As stated in the literature, the reasons are, overall, twofold: Firstly, as the concept of "dialectical image" was meant to be both a new theoretical framework of materialist historiography and a practical tool for political intervention, it is unclear how this methodology was supposed to be used (Pensky, 2004, p.178; Ross, 2014, p.102; Tiedemann, 1989, p.294). Secondly, Benjamin's lack of explanation for the concept, notwithstanding his frequent use of it (Buck-Morss, 1999, p.67; Pensky, 2004, p.178), makes it difficult to connect the applications of the methodology of the dialectical image *per se* developed in *Arcades* with "the critical perspective Benjamin's early writing takes on the hermeneutics of the image" (Ross, 2014, p.103).

It is also worth stressing that throughout his work Benjamin does not fully enclose the conceptions he uses. As Pensky argues, elaborating a closed theory demands introducing "a subjective intention on the structure of historical time," stabilising it and, thus, pacifying how phenomena should be read. Benjamin was interested in an epistemology that would allow him not to define events, but rather, to interrupt any stable comprehension of them. In this sense, Benjamin did not want to enclose a theoretical framework because he tried to advance an alternative method of History (Pensky, 2004, p.199); especially to be "more persistent in his attack against the myth of automatic historical progress" (Buck-Morss, 1989, p.80).

It is worth noting that progress is precisely what Benjamin criticizes when advancing in his alternative historiography and the role of the historian. Benjamin writes on history sustaining a radical critique against the traditional philosophy of history, which authors such as Kant and Hegel develop when proposing their intellectual systems of thinking. Against such tradition, Benjamin will look at history stressing the way politics and the temporality of history interconnect. To that, Benjamin puts emphasis on interruption[23], since it might provide a rupture between linearity, aiming to advance a methodology that would open room for other perspectives and ways of thinking. At the same time, interruption opens to the

[23] Benjamin's appealing concept of interruption presents a methodological challenge for those who are very keen on his work. Interruption is a crucial concept since it is the very condition of the possibility of awareness of history. Nevertheless, Benjamin left more doubts than answers to its methodological uses, being the relationship between interruption and discontinuity, being it a promise of redemption (Benjamin, 2006, p.1-2). I do not intend to solve this tension but, instead, I want to maintain it to advance in terms of what it might reveal, especially when considering the aesthetic experience from works of art.

dialectical image, namely, the moment through which there is a historical consciousness by looking at the constellation of objects around.

In other words, to understand what a dialectical image is and its relationship with the now, one must consider History not as a sequence of events, but as a *dispute* of them in which past and future are matters of political struggle in the present. Thus, culture, media and works of art are not the products of an epoch *per se*, so much as an element of the superstructure, in Marxist terms. Benjamin realised that the transformation of cultural products into commodities directly informs how the current period understands (and uses) the past (Gagnebin, 2014, p.199).

> It seems, then, that Benjamin hoped that readers of his essay on the work of art would become aware not only of the political and epistemological potentialities of forms of art made possible utilising new technologies of production and reproduction, but also of their correspondence to the artefacts and modes of perception inhabiting other historical moments, and thus of the particular - and particularly endangered – a character of our own embeddedness in History (Jennings, 2008, p.6).

If we use the dialectical image as a concept that explains his methodology and objectives, we can understand his version of historical materialism. For Benjamin, cultural products, works of art and informal media inform how we perceive the present. Culture is not only a product but mainly, as Nietzsche says, an extemporaneous (*unzeitgemäss*) sign of an epoch. Consequently, it is also an anticipatory sign of another time – as Bloch (1986) advances (Gagnebin, 2014, p.199).

The dialectical image implies enlarging the way we look at events. Benjamin proposes a conception of time characterised by lived experience and disruption. The dialectic, to him, works in a way in which images of the past (remembrance) inform historical consciousness. This remembrance opens the possibility for intervention in the present. Nevertheless, this awakening promise never fulfils its commitment – this historical consciousness is always in danger of not working well. Plus, Benjamin was dealing with a political aesthetic expressed by fascism in his time. Culture is at the core of his philosophy because the ways of seeing inform ways of understanding our times. Benjamin knew that the openness of the dialectical image, this particular awakening, was also a dispute within the culture field.

Thus, although we grasp very little of Benjamin's concept of dialectical image, Varejão's work is elucidative to think on what Benjamin aims to discuss, especially concerning what he understands as a constellation. Again, I am discussing aesthetics as reasoning of thinking and feeling but works of art help create resemblances to this thinking endeavour. As Rancière states, artistic practices are fundamental to the discussion of the sensible since they "suspend the ordinary [coordinating the] sensory experience and reframe[ing] the networks between spaces and times, subjects, and objects" (Rancière apud Shapiro, 2013, p.30).

When attending to Varejão's *Eyewitness*, one must believe in the artist's narrative; otherwise, the experience of the work will not make any sense. When looking at these minor colonisation stories through the magnifying glass as a sort of image of what these women supposedly have seen, one also becomes a witness. The history/story/ies is/are contagious.

What is most interesting in this work is that it reveals the potentiality of the poetics of difference proposed by the artist (Duarte, 2021). By literally opening the women's eyes, which are precious jewels, the spectator broadens their ethical exercise of imagination, as she is obliged to imagine the world *from the standpoint of the other,* while assuming that she never could be in the other's shoes. So, she is forced *to imagine from the other.* The work simulates what would be the encounter with otherness and, hence, the poetics of difference, which is necessarily a poetics that is born from the encounter with difference, displacing us from our points of view. Therefore, it is not possible to be neutral to the story that Varejão tells because, by being witnesses as well, we are committed to history.

By exposing the Kantian grammar, concerning his view of the structure of our knowledge from specific categories, Benjamin will problematise the place from where the subjectivity apprehends the phenomena. That way, he will introduce the notion of a constellation, which assemblages to the astronomical concept – a group of stars that forms a pattern in the sky. In other words, just like a constellation, one must consider the relationship between the individual objects to each other and to the viewer. As for the dialectical image, one must be aware of this relationship, observing that the moment of revelation – historical awakening - "can be grasped only instantaneously and only from a specific viewer's standpoint" (Sahraoui & Sauter, 2018, p. x). In this sense, then, "constellation is an instantaneous, relational figure of epistemological, historic-political, and literary objects", which, as "the

ever-changing stars of a stellar constellation never stand still, the movement of reading or writing [or thinking] never becomes fixated" (Sahraoui & Sauter, 2018, p. x). Considering this notion of constellation helps understanding Benjamin's philosophical method, especially towards what he aims to achieve by introducing the idea of dialectical image. As Buck-Morss states:

> Benjamin described his work as a 'Copernican revolution' in the practice of history writing. His aim was to destroy the mythic immediacy of the present, not by inserting it into a cultural continuum that affirms the present as its culmination, but by discovering that constellation of historical origins which has the power to explode history's 'continuum'. In the era of industrial culture, consciousness exists in a mythic, dream state, against which historical knowledge is the only antidote. But the particular kind of historical knowledge that is needed to free the present from myth is not easily uncovered. Discarded and forgotten, it lies buried within surviving culture, remaining invisible precisely because it was of so little use to those in power (Buck-Morss, 1989, p.x).

Hence, highlighting the constellation concept as developed by Benjamin helps to cast light on the so enigmatic dialectical image in comprehending history and historicity. In this vein, we might be able to provide other sources of legibility of the phenomena, but one that considers the spectator, the one who sees, as part of it, through the encounter. As a spectator of Varejão, we are compromised by history. *Eyewitness* provides an accurate resemblance to my reading of what Benjamin meant by constellation. Regarding Varejão's setting, one sees themselves confronting different objects that inform a meaning configuration, materialized from the moment one follows what she is saying, taking part in looking through the magnifying glasses.

A constellation of narratives built in the aesthetic experience of a work of art made the spectator think otherwise on an actualisation of Brazilian past – which is what Benjamin referred to as *Jetztzeit* ("now time"). By this term, Benjamin meant to argue that the "lineaments of the past are first detectable after a certain period" (Tiedemann, 1989, p.942), because, according to him, "History is the object of a construct whose site is not homogeneous, empty time, but time filled by now-time – *Jetztzeit*" (Benjamin apud Tiedemann, 1989, p.942). Varejão's witness holds similitudes to think into an alternative production of historical knowledge, in a way that challenges the historicist position. Thus, against historicism, the engagement with the past is one of "not progress but actualisation" ([N2,2], 1999, *The Arcades Project*, p. 460).

Again, we come back to Benjamin's concern on legibility (*lesbarkeit*) in relation to what is visible (*anschauliechkeit*) and concrete (Didi-Huberman, 2018a, p.21).[24] For Benjamin, the quest for legibility implies considering our psychic experience of time, which is, in turn, a bodily physic experience of the space around. To this, Benjamin compares the moment of dialectical image appearance as a moment of awakening from a dream. As he states: "the present (…) already stands to the recent past as the awakening stands to the dream" (Benjamin, 2002, p.898). It is a bodily experience of awakening, and, from that, we apprehend time (Benjamin, 2002, p.462; Buck-Morss, 1989; Buck-Morss, 1992; Didi-Huberman, 2018a). Conversely, from Benjamin's attempt of the definition of what dialectical images are, we understand that those images which appear as a flash appear *as a legible image*. In this sense, a dialectical image towards its relationship has nothing to do with the history *per se* of images (or for works of art), but, instead, it relates to a system of knowledge that becomes *readable.* As Sigrid Weigel observes, "the image (…) is for Benjamin the shape in which experiences, history, and reality become cognizable, in which they are made visible, as in a mnemic image" (Weigel, 2016, p.47). Thus, the past actualises itself in the now-time (*jetztzeit*) through a dialectical image that turns it legible in the moment of realisation of this very past. A constellation means nothing else than an image that reveals a relation of resemblances.

> The image is the general term, from which various particular resemblances and correspondences subtend (*convenientia, aemulatio, analogia, sympathia*), which conjoins the world with 'figures of knowledge' (Mitchell apud Weigel, 2016, p.47).

According to Sigrid Weigel on Benjamin, he relies on a biblical or Judaic tradition to argue that image figures as a system for resemblance or similitude (*Ahnlichkeit*) (Weigel, 2016, p.48). In this sense, discussing dialectical images implies a system of comprehension of phenomena apprehending it from a place in

[24] Didi-Huberman, for instance, when discussing the history and Benjamin's thoughts, will highlight the role of montage, especially regarding cinema attempts of building a narrative through montages – like Buñuel and Farocki did (Didi-Huberman, 2018a). I shall remind the work *Aufschub* (2007), in which Farocki works with images by Jewish photographer Rudolf Breslauer set in 1944 in Westerbork, a Dutch refugee camp created in 1939 to house Jewish fugitives from Germany, which turned into a "transit camp" before detainees were deported to other camps. Farocki presents a movie without subtitles to urge for the forces of images themselves, along with their silence. This project was made after a Laboratory of Cinema he coordinated in Vienna. I shall also highlight Christine Sylvester's argument, which shall be discussed later in this thesis, by which she introduces a collage methodology by referring to the artistic experiences with this method to put, on the same surface, different elements, and materials, coexisting with one another.

history. To that, Benjamin will use the term "thought-image" (*Denkbild*) and "thinking-in-images" (*Bilddenken*) precisely to compare thinking as a metaphor to describe dialectical images and its relevance to understanding historical times. As Weigel explains:

> His thought-images are as it were dialectical images in written form, literally constellations-become-writing (*Schrift-gewordene Konstellationen*) in which the dialectic of image and thought is unfolded and becomes visible. They are in the first instance linguistic representations of those resemblances which conjoin 'the world with 'figures of knowledge', that is, texts proceeding from those images and figurations in which the act of thinking is performed and in which history, reality, and experience find their structure and expression: representation of ideas (*Darstellungen von Vorstellungen*) (Weigel, 2016, p.48).

Thus, Benjamin's concern with history implies a direct concern with the entanglements of temporality and the political. To that, he sustains this radical critique against the enlightenment philosophies of time by developing an epistemological setting to enhance one's apprehension of their contemporaneity (Benjamin, 2005, p.1; Buck-Morss, 1989; Gagnebin, 2014). Dialectical images unfold his system of thought-images that is nothing more than a system of legibility – how one can "read" their temporality, and, furthermore, what are the political implications of this reading. Thus, as Benjamin stated that "history decays into images" (Benjamin, 2002, p.476), he was advancing that history is a product of the present, composed by "a constellation saturated with tensions" ([N2,2], 1999, The Arcades Project, p. 460). The dialectical image is not an object of contemplation; but, instead, a dynamic – a montage constructed by the encounter. This also justifies the relevance of interruption as a methodological endeavour, yet the question of how it "is to be understood itself [as] an important site of research" remains (Benjamin, 2005, p.1).

I do not seek to offer an answer to the methodological gaps left by Walter Benjamin, whose theological framework is still in dispute by a vast literature (Buck-Morss, 1992; Buck-Morss, 1989; Caygill, 1998; Gagnebin, 2014; Löwy, 2005; Pensky, 2004; Ross, 2015; Tiedemann, 1989). Instead, my aim of thinking with Benjamin is to acknowledge our relation towards the present time in a critical way, especially when theorizing about the phenomena of which we are all witnesses as well. But not passive ones. Benjamin's thinking works here as an inspirational framework to look at the relocation of the political subject, who is intimately related

to a relationship with history and place – ultimately, how we theorize violence within the I.R. field is grounded by a certain standpoint. This is not to say that the goal is to delineate a theory that aims to reconcile the gaps, but perhaps to suggest that we should leave them open to sustain the tension,[25] or to sustain this irrepresentability of the dialectical image. After all, understanding has to do with our ability to read, and, for Benjamin, the quest for legibility implies considering our psychic experience of time, which is, in turn, a bodily physic experience of the space around us (Hansen, 1987).

> What distinguishes images from the 'essences' of phenomenology is their historical index. (Heidegger seeks in vain to rescue history for phenomenology abstractly through 'historicity'). These images are to be thought of entirely apart from the categories of the 'human sciences', from so-called habitus, from style, and the like. For the historical index of the images not only says that they belong to a particular time; it says, above all, that they attain to legibility only at a particular time. And, indeed, this acceding 'to legibility' constitutes a specific critical point in the movement at their interior. Every present day is determined by the images that are synchronic with it: each 'now' is the now of a particular recognisability. In it, truth is charged to the bursting point with time. (This point of explosion, and nothing else, is the death of the *intentio*, which thus coincides with the birth of authentic historical time, the time of truth) (…). In other words: image is dialectics at a standstill. For while the relation of the present to the past is purely temporal, the relation of what-has-been to the now is dialectical: not temporal in nature but figural (*bildlich*). Only dialectical images are genuinely historical - that is, not archaic - images. The image that is read - which is to say, the image in the now of its recognisability-bears to the highest degree the imprint of the perilous critical moment on which all reading is founded ([N3, 1], 1999, The Arcades Project, p.462-463).

From the frame surface, the eyes of these marginal women scream. Varejão creates visual fiction to understand what colonisation was, aware that discussing such violent and visceral times is not an emancipatory goal. She recreates the objects – the painting frames, the jewellery eyepiece, the historical data -, as a mirror, but a false one: the reflection is not equal, but introduces a new object (Schwartz & Varejão, 2014, p.315). It is a statement against pure formality, the way that it is discussed in History of Art.

The work speaks for itself, but it is useful to highlight that the movement here is not applying theoretical concepts as measurements from which we describe

[25] Lyotard, for instance, argues that stabilizing trauma experiences is a fundamental approach to not forgetting the past. In this way, the trauma helps to work to denounce what happened, and as a promise for not happening again (Assmann, 2001, p. 281). As such, my argument of letting the branches open is in the sense of always enabling the condition of possibility of political action, aware that it is always at risk of being captured.

the phenomena. “By recasting the relationship between philosophy and inquiry” (Shapiro, 2013, p.20), Benjamin “displaces the Kantian configuration of the faculties with the configurations immanent in the conditions of legibility” (Shapiro, 2013, p.20). Thus, the work of art here works not as “an object of recognition but of a fundamental encounter” (Deleuze apud Shapiro, 2013, p.30).

Concerning these witnesses from History, that Varejão introduces to us, these women disrupt the main dominant modes of intelligibility and open space for new possibilities of narrative – a narrative which places historical violence not as something to be pacified, but something that makes us subjects, placing us into a politically relevant space. Although being a frame, the wounded eyes from these witnesses unveil the presence of the body in history or history written in the body. What Benjamin teaches us is that we think of history as a separate pure entity, when it pulses through us. Varejão turns this tension visible, but, again, *Testemonies X, Y e Z* only works when we put ourselves as imagining ourselves from the edges. This imagination is both historical and dialectical, again quoting Jabri: historical because history is always present, and “dialectical, in that theory is to [be] understood [as] always implicated in practice, and always emergent from contestation and contradiction” (Jabri, 2014, .18). Then, a historical imagination has nothing to do with reifying the past, but it is one which embodies the “continuities and discontinuities that at once both shape the subject and inform the subject’s capacity to form and transform these (dis)continuities” (Jabri, 2014, p.16).

Hence, perhaps we cannot see time, to answer Didi-Huberman’s inquiry, but we could feel it bodily in the exercise of dealing with the phenomena. In other words, we are discussing here not only that every knowledge is historically conditioned (history as a fragment), but also that we apprehend the world aesthetically – from our senses as a starting point. In this sense, the eyewitnesses urge us to imagine as well, although we cannot fully see it.

1.2. The interruption as contagion: aesthetics and judgment

Frida Baranek puts into tension materiality and space – a work that seems to be still in progress, unfinished. The artist combines a range of different materials such as aged iron, used wood, useless electrical wires, and, also, stone, wood, pigments, sand, and water. The materials are the protagonist since every piece

seems as if the artist wants to find the border of what constitutes them in their uniqueness. As Roberto Conduru states: Baranek "doesn't adopt them in their pure, original form, but rather as elements that pervade contemporary existence" (Conduru, 2014, p.13). According to him, Baranek's poetics relates to the term *bololô*, which, in Portuguese, connotes a confusion of encounters or an amalgam of elements (Conduru, 2014, p.13). The phenomenological approach to the objects occurs precisely because these materials have been taken away from their ordinary use, appearing in a singular way. As if she can abolish the very function of objects, while still letting them be recognizable for those who see. In this way, and remembering Merleau-Ponty on perception[26], seeing the material differently allows different ways of thinking or, even, different ways of imaging materiality around us.

Figure 7: Frida Baranek (2019) Liminaridade (Artist's Personal Collection - Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro)

Her series of works entitled *Liminaridade*, from 2019, are sculptures made of galvanized metal mesh which, despite the brutality of the material, sustains a subtle lightness – the sculptures form a column, suspended in the air. The work's name also offers a grasp – *liminaridade* means an injunction, something in the

[26] Maurice Merleau-Ponty is a French philosopher who turns to Husserl phenomenology whilst highlighting the body's role in apprehending the world. Merleau-Ponty advances that "true philosophy consists of relearning to look at the world" (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, p.xxiii). According to this line of thought, Merleau-Ponty argues that the way we apprehend and create a meaning to the world around us is through the perception of its materiality. Thus, perception is fundamental to understanding both the construction of knowledge and the production of subjectivities.

border – the limits between heaviness and lightness. “This term refers to the experience of proximity to the subjective border between two different existential states”, comments Rafael Fonseca on the work. Baranek introduces us to an essential ambiguity.

Figure 8: Frida Baranek. Liminaridade (2019) - (Artist's Personal Collection - Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro)

Incompleteness is necessary, Baranek states. Following the gaps, injunctions allow things to be seen out of order or, to quote Hamlet, to realise that “time is out of joint”. It is precisely this feeling of being “out of joint” that interests me while discussing aesthetics – a moment of disruption that might shed a light on what was invisible until then. Falling on Benjamin’s trap, the German author will advance that “method is detour” (Benjamin, 2013b, p.48) to build a project towards critical thinking (Gagnebin, 2006). Pursuing detour as a method of thought and writing is to open space to new epistemological thinking – one that might enlarge who counts as subjectivities. In this way, Baranek’s *Liminaridade* supports how artistic practices entail “ways of doing and making that intervene in the general distribution of? the sensible” (Rancière, 2004, p.13; Shapiro, 2003, p.xiv), which “disturb accepted relationships between the sayable and the visible” (Shapiro, 2003,

p.xiv). The aesthetic experience, thus, allows an interruption in the order of seeing things.

Although works of art reveal an aesthetics - rather, poetics -, aesthetics does not only concern artistic works, but rather the regime of apprehension of the phenomenon. As I have been arguing, aesthetics embraces a sensory experience of the phenomena, or how the world appears to us (Buck-Morss, 2015, p.175; Kant, 2007). From works of art, my aim is to remind the aesthetic experience of the encounter of the artistic work by comparing it with the aesthetic experience of meeting the world.

Certainly, when we are discussing I.R. and aesthetics, one cannot but remember how literature started to address more directly other aspects of politics by looking at artistic intervention, such as poetry, painting, cinema and so on (Callahan, 2020; 2015; Bleiker, 2001; Hansen, 2015; Shapiro, 2016; Shepherd, 2017). However, beyond just expanding the methodological data to the field, an aesthetic sensibility also extends understanding of the process of abstraction through which we name things and acknowledge subjectivities. Following Rancière, Bleiker will argue that the "aesthetic insight recognises that the inevitable difference between the represented and its representation is the very location of politics" (Bleiker, 2001, p.510).

Nevertheless, it is Kant who will provide the epistemological endeavour of identifying the conditions of possibility for something to appear (Kant, 2007; Ginsborg, 2019; Shapiro, 2013, p.1). Kant changed the modes of inquiry about the experience of the object world. As Shapiro develops, this meant "an innovation in the philosophy of experience that puts critical pressure on the way that political inquiries have construed issues of method" (Shapiro, 2013, p.1). This thesis does not aim to provide a comprehensive account of the Kantian discussion on aesthetics. However, in order to explain what I engage as aesthetical experience, Kant is the point of departure for much of the literature not only on aesthetics but also on critical thinking, as he sets a fundamental limit on knowledge (Arendt, 1989; Duarte, 2009; Kant, 2007; 1985; Ginsborg, 2019).

According to Kant, we are not able to know any object as a thing in itself, but only as an object of sensible intuition (Duarte, 2009, p.47; Kant, 1985, p.48). In this sense, "'thing' always refers to a phenomenal object, i.e., to a determinate object structured by the categories of understanding and forms of intuition"

(Grabau, 1963, p.770). This means to say that there is no absolute knowledge since there is a cognitive limit at apprehending phenomena. We can only access it as *appearances:* we only know the phenomena (Kant, 2007). Hence, Kant goes against the western tradition of thinking, since Plato, by arguing that we cannot have immediate access to things but through our sensibility – known as intuition (Duarte, 2009, p.47). With that, Kant sets the ground for critique and method:

> His criticism means distinction, discernment, division. If it has a negative meaning, it is not to attack what it criticizes offensively. If there is a denial, it is only in the sense of restricting. Our knowledge is limited to phenomena, and we cannot reach the things in themselves. Kant's critique (…) splits: phenomenon and something in itself, sensitivity and understanding, intuition and concept, necessity and freedom, knowledge and morality, theory and practice, finite, and infinite, subject and object (Duarte, 2009, p.48).

Kant, then, will delve into the conditions of the possibility of experience, namely, space, time, and categories – that do not detach ourselves from reality but are means through which we apprehend it (Kant, 1985). Nevertheless, the human cognition has a limit to access phenomena and critique means precisely identifying this limit in order to delineate the possibility to know. Deriving from the Greek term *diakrisis*, which relates to incisive cutting and distinction, Kant's critique was meant to stablish a secure "demarcation of the transhistorical conditions of possibility that underlie knowledge, moral deliberation and aesthetic judgement" (Hanssen, 2000, p.4). However, when it comes to discussing judgement and taste, Kant settles the debate in other terms. While the objective universality of knowledge provides the conditions of possibility to the rational subject access the truth, the same motion cannot be developed when dealing with the judgement of taste (Duarte, 2009, p.48; Gisborg, 2009).

When saying that something is beautiful, or rather ugly, despite being based on an objective feeling, "the subjective universality of the beautiful is only intended as a horizon of sharing, as the basis of common communicability in which anyone, not necessarily everyone, will share my feeling" (Gisborg, 2009). In other words, the subjective apprehension of a taste will only make sense once it is shared among others – a singular perspective turned into the basis of common feelings. That way, Kant advances in a universal theory of culture based on the individual's appreciation of beauty, in which he observes "the agency of aesthetic judgment from a level of communal response based on *sensus communis* to a transhistorical

subject" (Gelley, 1999, p.938). What is interesting about Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, nonetheless, is that the work "is saturated with politics even, if not especially, (…) it is ostensibly not at all political" (Lloyd apud Gelley, 1999, p.938).

In this regard, Arendt provides insightful support to highlight politics, as the negotiation of individuals concerning the common, from an ordinary experience from our senses. Extensive as it is, Arendt's works never directly addressed aesthetics (Assy, 2005; Sjöholm, 2015). Nevertheless, Arendt will advance her understanding of politics by using the Kantian's *Critique of Judgement* as a basis to discuss subjectivity and plurality. She appropriates Kant's contribution to offer an interpretation of judgment that considers the relationship between the individual and others as a group. As a distinct human faculty, judgment goes further than determining what is right or wrong as an ideal of living; it demands an exercise of imagination through which we might consider perspectives of others – which was not properly Kant's concern. In this sense, whilst not providing an aesthetic theory, Arendt's conception of politics entails an aesthetical assumption, since, as the phenomena appeal to our judgment, this necessarily implies a discussion within the field of aesthetic inquiry (Sjöholm, 2015). "The political is seen, heard, felt, and apprehended through a sensible form of being, producing judgment and imagination as functions of sensibility" (Sjöholm, 2015, p.x). In other words, aesthetic sensibility "underlies all forms of political reflection" (Sjöholm, 2015, p.x).

Baranek uses protection screens, usually found in civil construction, to divide space and circulation of people and animals, to build the work's setting in *Liminaridade*. Still, she says she made this work after experiencing a flight in zero gravity, in which she says that it felt like space and movement became her body (Conduru, 2014). As if there were no difference between inside and outside – a proximity between two different existential states. Relying on Merleau-Ponty, Baranek explains that perception and imagination are two key concepts that inspire her creation.

She uses an ordinary raw material for organizing space, but, approaching the artworks suspended in the ceiling, the artist informs a different relation to this materiality, one that reminds us of lightness. Baranek "appropriates figures from the world and reinvents them, altering their meaning (…). [The instrument] undergoes a reconfiguration of its size and density, acquiring new uses, new laws, new meanings, a new trajectory" (Conduru, 2014, p.8). A material previously

existed for specific uses but somehow imagined differently, exploring its borders of content, and meaning. For enlarged mentality asks an enlargement as well at imagining. On imagination and enlargement, Arendt claims:

> The 'enlargement of mind' plays a crucial role in the *Critique of Judgment*. It is accomplished by 'comparing our judgment with the possible rather than the actual judgment of others, and by putting ourselves in the place of any other human'. The faculty that makes this possible is called imagination. (…) *Critical thinking is possible only where the standpoints of all others are open to inspection*. Hence, critical thinking, while still a solitary business, does not cut itself off from all others. To be sure, it still goes on in isolation, but by the force of imagination it makes the others present and thus moves in a space that is potentially public, open to all sides (…). To think with an enlarged mentality means that one trains one's imagination to go visiting (Arendt, 1989, p.43, *my emphasis*).

Hence, enlargement happens by one's abstraction of their limitation (*subjektiven Privatbedingungen*) (Kant, 2007, p.123), disregarding one's subjective private conditions, and moving to another standpoint – visiting it, since it cannot occupy it (Arendt, 1989, p.49). Indeed, this is a sensitive point here: the enlarged mentality does not encompass an embodiment of one's view or feelings. Instead, it is an imaginative exercise, in which I attempt to imagine what it is to feel as one feels, assuming that it would never be exactly de same. As Arendt argues: "the more people you are able to think in the place of, the more you will be able to represent, to make present in your own person while they are absent (…). This is not empathy. You are not supposed to feel as they felt but to imagine through learning of their 'feelings', thinking, etc. how you would have felt" (Arendt apud Lafer, 2018, p.67). Thus, one cannot but imagine how someone feels through their own life experience. To that, Assy remarks that Arendt will use a visual terminology, such as *imagination, analogy and re-presentation*, to describe "a sort of 'mind's language' that makes thinking able to come back to the visible world" (Assy, 2006, p.2). Then, judgment, at first, takes place in the individual's mind. Then, one shares their opinion among others[27], in a plurality. Thinking critically requires a visibility of being heard and be seen by others, in order to, politically speaking, construct the

[27] In this process, forming an opinion – the doxai – is carried out through imagination and thinking dynamics, carried out in a disinterested way. It is not a situation of solitude; instead, it involves the activity of thought in the first moment, but, in the second, one should return to plurality to share their feeling (Arendt, 2011a, p.299-300). Further, it expands one's reflexivity in a way that leads to the opening of the world in common, as a shared condition (Assy, 2005, p.12). Based on Kant's philosophy, Arendt concludes that the formation of opinions involves judgment, which demands the presence of others while being "crucial for reconciliation with the world" (Assy, 2005, p.15).

very conditions of politics. Arendt will argue that this is what Kant meant by *sensus communis* – namely, a coincidence of private and the public[28]:

> However, by the name *sensus communis* is to be understood the idea of a *public* sense, i.e. a faculty of judging which in its reflective act takes account (*a priori*) of the mode of representation of everyone else, in order, *as it were*, to weigh its judgement with the collective reason of mankind, and thereby avoid the illusion arising from subjective and personal conditions which could readily be taken for objective, an illusion that would exert a prejudicial influence upon its judgement. This is accomplished by weighing the judgement, not so much with actual, as rather with the merely possible, judgements of others, and by putting ourselves in the position of everyone else, as the result of a mere abstraction from the limitations which contingently affect our own judging (Kant, §40, 2007, p.123).

Imagination has a fundamental role in judgment and the cultivation of common feelings, or what Kant referred to as *sensus communis* in Arendt's view. In practice, judgement implies not only an appreciation of things as it appears in all their otherness, "but also be able to see from another standpoint" (Assy, 2015, p.173). An enlarged mentality is the possibility of communicating feelings to others, but in a critical thinking way that would consider another point of view (Assy, 2015, p.173). Hence, imagination plays an essential role in judgment since, as a distinct human faculty according to Kant, it relates to a moral attitude towards a grammar of seeing. In this sense, we are confronted by three dimensions: i) an image (what appears), ii) its object (from where a vision is built), and iii) its subjectivity (who constructs the vision/who sees) – to Didi-Huberman, those dimensions are what informs the standpoint (Didi-Huberman, 2018, p.165). The relationship between appearance, subjectivity, and plurality is interestingly best understood with Butler when using an Arendtian vocabulary:

> I am, as a body, not only for myself, not even primarily for myself, but I find myself, if I find myself at all, constituted and dispossessed by the perspective of others. So, for political action, I must appear to others in ways I cannot know, and in this way, my body is established by perspectives that I cannot inhabit but that, surely, inhabit me (Butler, 2015, p.76-77).

[28] Again, while discussing judgement and politics, there is here a conception of a phenomenal character of the world, which is necessarily intermediated by the sensory experience. To act and / or to speak, the subjectivity must appear to others. Therefore, the world is a space of appearances, wherein for individuals to appear among themselves, they need the condition of plurality. Through this interaction where individuals come together, it is possible, then, to build a worldly objective reality that interests the whole collective (Arendt, 2010, p.220-223).

Aesthetics, then, provides the conditions of legibility of how subjectivities construct the common ground for living together. Because of that, aesthetics is compatible with ethical and political judgement inasmuch it implies being sensitive to what is visible in the public realm. Certainly, it goes back to what Rancière advances as the politics of aesthetics, which "involves reconfiguring the way the sensible is partitioned, revealing new objects and subjects and rendering visible that which has not have been visible" (Shapiro, 2013, p.9). In this regard, the question is to look at the ways politics make visible forms of existence that could not otherwise be seen.

I am not suggesting that Rancière, Butler and Arendt are advancing in the aesthetics in the same manner; these authors respond differently to the *problématiques* of violence and politics. Nevertheless, all of them, somehow, address the Kantian framework in their discussions. My aim here is to highlight how Benjamin offers an opening to understand the aesthetical relationship by telescoping history, subjectivity, and violence. To that, Arendt's account on judgement helps me in thinking with Benjamin, in the sense that judgment informs the moral possibility of being visible in the space of politics, namely, a space marked by an embodied form of sociality – the plurality.

Along with that, I am pursuing here a reflection of experience as a concept. The experience, then, is the ability to apprehend objects by the subject, rescuing the moment of the revelation by which the things reflect on the conditions of possibility of our own times. Nevertheless, when I engage with a Kantian framework of reacting to the work of art read by Arendt, I suggest a 'disinterested' attitude to judge an object regardless of its function. Furthermore, my hypothesis is that we can further engage in this kind of relation with any sort of object (Vidal & Ortega, 2017, p.111), in this same manner with Arendt's reading of political action (Arendt, 2010). Because "it is not the object that makes the relation aesthetic, but the relation that makes the object aesthetic" (Genette apud Vidal & Ortega, 2017, p. 111).

To Benjamin, for instance, this is relevant to understand one's contemporaneity. Since we know things from our perceptions of reality, Benjamin will remind us that "just as the entire mode of existence of human collectives changes over the long historical period, so too does their mode of perception" (Benjamin, 2012). Indeed, one of the Benjamin's incomplete works, which many is known for being interrupted or even abandoned, is precisely his elaboration on

perception (Caygill, 1998, p.3). Benjamin supposedly aimed to recast Kant's concept of experience through perception, in which he wanted to build a philosophical quest able to contain the experience of the absolute. For this thesis, what matters to me, though, is the possibility of 'reading' the image, of the regime of what is visible. For instance, as already quoted from Benjamin's fragment from 1917, *On Perception Itself*, "perception is reading / Only that appearing in the surface is readable".

What is to be read, what appears on a surface? Benjamin establishes a correspondence between perception and reading but moves to "a transcendental definition of the conditions of the possibility of legibility" (Caygill, 1998, p.3). In Baranek's *Liminariedade*, the surface/reading of the work does not relate at all to the object's function. She asks for a new reading, for a new discursive dimension. The screens do not divide but are sculptures of multiplication: "both as forms in space as well as an invitation for the gaze of the other people to run over their textures and to think about the many limits they seek to impose on us, but we should fold and remount each of them in their own way" (Conduru, 2014, p.13). To Benjamin, any surface can be "framed and supplemented by the speculative infinity of possible surfaces for inscription and legibility" (Caygill, 1998, p.4). Central to the thesis is how Benjamin, more than setting the conditions of a possible experience, specifies the object of such an experience in terms of *appearance* (Caygill, 1998, p.4). Moreover, how one can read what is visible, because from Benjamin's "theory of readability and his definition of dialectical images as read, it is clear that Benjamin regarded images in terms of their property as writing (*Schrift*) rather than as representations" (Weigel, 2016, p.46).

> Benjamin circumscribes precisely that field in which the image is constituted as a resemblance between the figures of the external world and those of abstract knowledge. This is the field of his writing in which he develops his thought-images, images located in a space beyond the opposition of poetic language and philosophical discourse, in a different sort of language, the language of thought-images that operate with the received figurations of thought. Yet these thought-images do not stand at the beginning of his writing but are rather the result of many and varied detours—for method is detour (*GS* I.1, 208)—and arise 'from the centre of his image-world' (Weigel, 2016, p.51).

Then, we are dealing with the conditions of reading an image that appears. For the purposes of this thesis, embracing Benjamin's erratic method means to

allow other possibilities of seeing violence within the field of I.R., as it shall be argued throughout this present work. What are the conditions of possibility of looking to conflict differently? Furthermore, what are the conditions of possibility of seeing other subjectivies/ways of living? What is to be seen then?

My aim in rescuing Benjamin is to trouble the epistemological implication of the knowing subject in its object of critical analysis. Ultimately, I am thinking about the place of critique by embracing assuming that things affect us aesthetically and how this informs a judgment of morality. "Critique and violence are two axes of a major juncture at which critical theory and poststructuralism meet" (Hanssen, 2000, p.3); so, discussing critique helps me explore how violence has been a nerve thread in Conflict and Security Studies, but an open wound which still bleeds. For violence and critique are tied in dispute according to the Western tradition left to us by no testament, to quote René Char.

It is tied because since Kant delineated what critique is – and, conversely, what is enlightenment - critique aimed to find the limits of knowledge and the fundaments of a moral attitude that would allow living in common (the category imperative) established. A critical attitude to understand the present through self-reflection within power arrangements. Then, for people to overcome "their 'self-imposed immaturity' thereby encouraging them to dare to engage in unhindered participation in public reasoning" (Shapiro, 2013, p.8). To Foucault, the critical attitude provides a need for a "historical ontology of ourselves", from which we must analyse the discourse through which we think, say, and do (Foucault apud Shapiro, 2013, p.8). To Benjamin, in my reading, critique is actualisation:

> The 'recognizability' and 'readability' of the historical event that the materialist historian pursues are functions of its afterlife; the 'historical index' that brings an event, a work, a situation to 'legibility' is a function of their Überleben, Fortleben, Nachleben, and the task of the historian, just like that of the translator and of the critic, is thus to recognize their truth-content ('what was never written', as Benjamin quoted from Hofmannsthal) and make it 'present', 'actual' (Salzani, 2021, p.xi-xii).

Benjamin never addressed directly what he meant by critique[29]. We were left by some notes relating to some projects, especially the never finished *Krise und*

[29] It is worth noting that in April 1930, Benjamin planned to write a volume on literary criticism entitled *Gesammelte Essays zur Literatur*, and which would contain his previously works on Gottfried Keller, Johan Peter Hebel, Franz Hessel, Marcel Proust, André Gide and Surrealism,

Kritik journal. The quest for a critical attitude is not an instrument for dealing with a current concern, but what "brings it to legibility – even through, and perhaps precisely thanks to, a certain untimeliness and historical lag – at a certain time" (Salzani, 2021, p.xiii).

"Method is detour", said once Walter Benjamin, putting us into the sphinx's trap. Indeed, it is rather difficult to set a procedure when bringing Benjamin's thinking into scene. Benjamin was attentive to shortcuts, small objects and details, labyrinths, unconsciousness. In the letters exchange with Adorno, Benjamin confessed that his work was a sort of literary montage. "I have nothing to say, only to show", he said[30].

I will rely upon another metaphor, beautifully made by Maria Laet. In the streets of London, Laet poured buttermilk into pavement cracks, photographing later the path through which the milk slowly made through the deviations. Suddenly, the open cracks become visible in the grey concrete floor. Perhaps this is what Benjamin meant as a detour: looking at the open deviations and being astonished by the unexpected path it will lead. Looking at the branches but leaving it viscerally open to unveil any tradition, form, or content, letting it speak for itself.

among other writings. This collection aimed to be opened by an essay titled *The Task of the Critic*, but he never finished (Salzanii, 2021, p.x). Instead, we have a grasp of Benjamin's project with the essay *The Task of the Translator*, that would close the volume.

[30] Benjamin also stated that the *The Arcades Project* "must develop to the highest point the art of quoting without quotation marks" (Benjamin, 1999, p.460), which is quite revealing by what he meant by montage.

Figure 9: Maria Laet. Leite no Pavimento (2008-2012) (A Gentil Carioca Gallery)

Hence, falling on this trap will not offer any guidance, but it might help grasp the unseeing – our blindness. When Benjamin looks for fissures, he advances in a phenomenological experience that might redeem what is unseen. In this sense, interruption here works as a tool to reveal the uneasiness between theory and reality. After all, as Benjamin argues, "in the fields with which we are concerned, knowledge comes in lightning flashes" (Benjamin, 2002, p.456 [Arcades, N1,1]. Or, in Baranek's poetics, the material uneasiness of an object without its function. Here, "fields with which we are concerned" are certainly epistemology and history, but, furthermore, we are dealing with politics as well.

1.3. Why use works of art?

So far, I have been discussing aesthetics and seeing by using Walter Benjamin's framework as an inspiration for seeing gaps in theory-making, or, more specifically, as a previous theoretical formulation to advance in the *problématique* of defining the concept of violence in IR. In this sense, Benjamin's thinking helps to cast a light in the process of perception in which subjectivity, within a certain historical conditioning, apprehends their historical meaning in a 'flash of lightning', to use a Benjamin expression – when dialectical image appears in a glimpse. From

critical attitude of judgment, this subjectivity reconciles themselves with the political space shared among others, allowing a common grammar for politics. From that, we set the conditions of possibility of something to be seen. To the last extent, it is an ethical attitude towards what appears to us, since, at looking at the image that appears, we become responsible for them (Didi-Huberman, 2008; Sontag, 2004; 2003; Werner, 2020).

Yet, if history unfolds in images, and there is an ethical commitment of reading it, Benjamin also worries about the conditions of legibility of our times, which, in the period of his writing, he oscillates between finding it promising and reading it as a moment of crisis, due to impoverished ability of narrating. Moreover, things escape us. As historical meaning is "what survives the moment or time in which it occurs, [it] is only in the terms of later understandings that its significance can be recognized" (Ferris, 2006, p.14). He goes further by arguing that since our understanding of historical knowledge shift, every moment of recognition is also a moment of losing it, since "even the moment in which this recognition occurs is understood to be unsustainable from one moment to the next" (Ferris, 2006, p.14). As Benjamin states, "the next moment already irretrievably lost" (Benjamin, *Arcades*, 473, N9, p.7).

While emphasizing present as the time of living, Benjamin proposes a conception of time considering lived experience, which is characterized by disruption. As I attempted to argue, dialectics, to him, works in a way that images of the past (of remembrance) inform a historical consciousness. This remembrance opens the conditions for an act of intervention the present. Nevertheless, this awakening promise never fulfils its commitment – this historical consciousness is always in danger of not working well. On his period, Benjamin was dealing with a particular political aesthetic expressed by fascism. Culture is in the core of his philosophy because of ways of seeing inform ways of understanding our times. Benjamin knew that the openness to the dialectical images, to this awakening, was through a dispute in culture (Benjamin, 2002; Buck-Morss, 1989; Jennings et al., 2008, p.1).

In this regard, Didi-Huberman will stress the montage technique to advance in a theory of the readability of images (*Lesbarkeit von Bildern*) (Didi-Huberman, 2008), following Benjamin. In order to know, we ought to see, says Didi-Huberman (2009, p.33), a necessary practice for dealing with images, aware of the

correspondence between looking and knowing (Didi-Huberman, 2008). A theory of readability because the historical consciousness is not evident, it always in the edge of being lost. From montage, by using images in parallel, Benjamin might offer his readers a grasp of how trace the moment of awakening, necessary for comprehending the subjectivity relation to history and time – to develop his image-thinking [*Bilddenken*].

> The first stage in this undertaking will be to carry over the principle of montage into history. That is, to assemble large-scale constructions out of the smallest and most precisely cut components. Indeed, to discover in the analysis of the small individual moment the crystal of the total event. And, therefore, to break with vulgar historical naturalism. To grasp the construction of history as such (Benjamin, 2002, p.461 [*Arcades*, N2, 6]).

Thus, the idea that this critical attitude is to be understood in terms of image – as a constellation. However, what is an image? Indeed, we are surrounded and haunted by them every day. "We live in a visual age", observes Bleike (2018). "Photographs, cinema, and television influence how we view and approach phenomena as diverse as war, humanitarian disasters, protest movements, financial crises, and election campaigns" (Bleike, 2018, p.1). Furthermore, "images and visual artefacts do things. They are political forces in themselves" (Bleike, 2018, p.3). As stated by Alloa, the proliferation of images leads to intellectual exhaustion - we cannot say what they correspond to (2015, p.7). Then, we face the impossibility of finding any ontology for it. Furthermore, it is not the purpose of this thesis to meet the literature, and its highly relevant discussion, on the image.

This thesis suggests image as a metaphor of thinking, following Didi-Huberman's reading on Benjamin. Image is a device of opening a way of thinking and seeing; therefore, this justifies why the inquiry for legibility – the conditions of possibility of knowing – is crucial in this work, since what matters to me is how to turn visible. However, I also work with image in the sense of picture taken by device, since I will be relying in pictures of works of art (even artistic photographs) to support my methodological goal of thinking with them. Aesthetics is a form of cognition – its original field is not art but reality. "Aesthetics is born as a discourse of the body" (Eagleton apud Buck-Morss, 1992, p.6). Thus, aesthetics is the way through which we apprehend the world from our senses, images as a metaphor of thinking and, at the end, works of art as productions made by plastics artists. Aesthetics, images, and art are not equal – but they relate to the question of seeing.

In this work, they are in motion together, since my aim of using artworks is to provoke a correspondence with the aesthetical experience of seeing, while discussing the concept of violence through images as a metaphor.

Using works of art was not intentional at first, but the way I began writing on violence and politics were guided by the way artworks left their mark on me, supporting my attempt of thinking and seeing. Somehow, all artworks selected throughout this thesis have a particular encounter. Benjamin wanted to show images, letting them speak for themselves. Following him, my aim is to let the artworks speaks for themselves while I think with them, avoiding any possible re-presentation of things. Again, art works here as a device to make visible. To resemble the aesthetical experience of imagining and judging in the public space.

Most importantly, Benjamin will look at works of art to highlight their "political and epistemological potentialities (…) but also of their correspondence to the artifacts and modes of perception inhabiting other historical moments" (Jennings et al., 2018, p.6). Then, Benjamin was not comparing aesthetics with works of art, but he knew that the discussion on the place of art in society reveals the cognitive conditions under which art is produced, and, yet, how its reception implicates in the "experiences of the human subject as such" (Jennings et al, 2018, p.6). Benjamin worried, to the last extent, to the historical change in the human sensorium. Thus, he conceived art as an artifact that unveils the conditions of possibility of legibility, and our own embeddedness in history (Benjamin, 2018).

Then, bringing this inspiration to Global Politics and Conflict Studies, art works as a calling about its conditions of possibility and reproducibility, but also as a methodological tool, as "another way of apprehending the world" (Danchev & Lisle, 2009, p.775). "Not only does it make us feel, or feel differently, it also makes us think, and think again. It is in a certain sense irrefutable" (Danchev & Lisle, 2009, p.775). Thus, "this means refusing to see art as merely illustrative of more fundamental issues in the 'real' world" (Danchev & Lisle, 2009, p.777).

Moreover, to use works of art as a resemblance to the aesthetical experience of living, reinforces to think the moral commitment to politics, in the sense of making visible other narratives and subjectivities when discussing the concept of violence. "Works of art themselves bear witness" (Danchev, 2018, p.332). As Didi-Huberman remarks: "from this grammar, it becomes clear that an epistemological decision about images initially implies an aesthetic dimension, but it goes towards

on to ethical questioning and the political position of the problem" (Didi-Huberman, 2009, p. 164). Hence, discussing ways seeing implies taking into consideration how one bear witness to what appears[31].

For instance, Didi-Huberman discuss the role of using the photographs what is known of the unique photographs from Auschwitz, taken in a moment of danger. Now displayed in Israel, the four photographs show the exact moment of victims walking into the chambers. Its fragmented and distorted quality reveals the intense danger of taking these photos. We barely see their faces; For some time, these photos were the object of controversies – some would argue that these photos are an important register of denounce of what happened; others, such as Lanzmann, would argue that Auschwitz is beyond any sort of representation. To all criticism regarding its exposition, Didi-Huberman responds:

> In *order to know, we must imagine for ourselves*. We must attempt to imagine the hell that Auschwitz was in the summer of 1944. Let us not invoke the unimaginable. Let us not shelter ourselves by saying that we cannot, that we could not by any means, imagine it to the very end. We are obliged to that oppressive imaginable. It is a response that we must offer, as a debt to the words and images that certain prisoners snatched, for us, from the harrowing Real of their experience. So let us not invoke the unimaginable. How much harder was it for the prisoners to rip from the camps those few shreds of which now we are trustees, charged with sustaining them simply by looking at them. Those shreds are at the same time more precious and less comforting that all possible works of art, snatched as they were from a world bent on their impossibility. Thus, images in spite of all: in spite of the hell of Auschwitz, in spite of the risks taken. In return, we must contemplate them, take them on, and try to comprehend them. Images in spite of all: in spite of our own inability to look at them as they deserve; in spite of our own world, full, almost choked, with imaginary commodities (Didi-Huberman, 2008, p.3).

Certainly, art helps us to comprehend violence in its unspeakable texture. Turning to oil paints or to cameras allows for most narratives of the unimaginable to become imaginable to those who did not witness the conflict; or even to those who were present but did not find any possible word to explain it. Nevertheless, engaging aesthetically as a disinterested attitude towards the sublime does not allow a reconciliation with the world that appears before us. As Hannah Arendt remarks, it is artists and poets who are builders of monuments without whom 'the history that mortals play and recount would not survive an instant" (Arendt, 1994, p.230). When works of art take position, they urge us to look into images to see the conditions of the possibility to know the present of time. We become responsible.

[31] In the next chapter, I shall further explore the ethical implications of the aesthetisation of politics.

I come back to Varejão's works, and I look into her wounded eyes. A simulacrum – a fiction of violence's colonisation. We were not there, but, in some sense, from the edges, those women urge us to imagine what they saw. The eye is an open and flesh wound. In order to know, one must see.

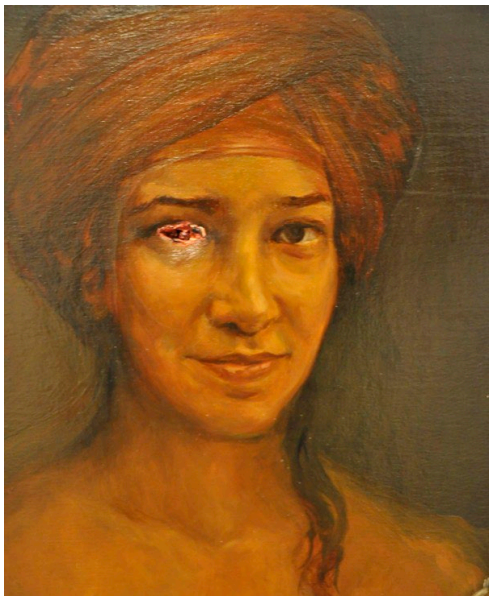


Figure 10: Adriana Varejão. Testemunhas Oculares X, Y e Z (1997) – details

2. The Art of War

(...) life might just as well be (...) a battle as an opera
Machado de Assis, Dom Casmurro

The argument presented in this thesis suggests that the concept of violence, as framed by the relationship between war and politics within the International Relations field, is an abstraction that informs certain ways of seeing conflict. Thus, I am looking at the production of (in)visibilities in the production of knowledge by assuming that our approach to the world is an aesthetical one, within a complex historical constellation that informs our political capacity to imagine and render visible (hidden) subjectivities of violence. By highlighting the phenomenological concept of experience[32], namely, how individual apprehends the world through their senses, my fundamental aim is to problematise the ethical conditions of seeing in I.R. by using works of art as an illustrative example of looking for traces from the embodied subject of politics and resistance. Nevertheless, aware of the violent epistemological limits of speaking for others (Spivak, 1988), this thesis believes that, perhaps, illuminating artistic approximations of violence, this text might provide what Maurice Blanchot once proposed. He argued that literature is the place in which the other comes to talk. Besides, "any discourse that brings forth experience and its embodiment come to constitute a moment of resistance" (Jabri, 2006, p.823).

[32] I am pursuing here a reflexion of the experience as concept, alongside how it informs conditions of possibility for an ethical commitment to stare back at the other. The experience, then, is the ability to apprehend objects by the subject, rescuing the brief moment of the revelation by which things reflect on the conditions of possibility of our own times. Nevertheless, when I engage with a Kantian framework of reacting to the work of art, I suggest a 'disinterested' attitude to judge an object regardless of its function, but I will argue that we can further engage in this kind of relation with any object (Vidal and Ortega, 2017:111), in this same manner we can engage with Arendt's reading of political action (Arendt, 2010).

As Rancière argues, words are images, ways of distribution of sensible, from which we act upon the world through the perception of it (Rancière, 2004, p.86). Regarding the conditions of possibility of violence and politics in our late modernity, and how we understand it from perceptions of reality, Benjamin reminds us that "just as the entire mode of existence of human collectives changes over the long historical period, so too does their mode of perception" (Benjamin, 2012).

In the previous chapter, I attempted to shed a light on Benjamin's proposal of historicity and on the role of critique in opening breaches to reveal disputes of meaning and history in order to make sense of our own contemporaneity. Yet, engaging with critique in Benjaminian terms unveils the entanglement of power and violence while setting the ground of the condition of possibility of *legibility* or, according to Benjamin, *to read violence*[33]. In this chapter, I shall engage with the problem of framing, namely, the epistemological and ethical consequences of defining which subjectivities are within the borders of the discipline[34]. Considering war as a practice allows for seeing how violence permeates daily life (Jabri, 2006) and, most importantly, how these violent affects are exposed in the political imagination and ethical consideration of the other in the public sphere. For that, this chapter also elaborates a reading of the danger of aestheticizing violence, or, in other words, how certain experiences of violence are erased in the function of its sensorial shock or even its artistic formality, which leads, necessarily, to emptying the subjectivity's experience. Against that, following Benjamin's critique of the aestheticisation of politics, I look at the potentialities and limits of politicising art as a rupture of the prevailing order and hidden violence (Benjamin, 2008, p.42). Hence, the art of war is a proposal of finding the breaches through which art can be a device for turning visible precisely this tension between war and politics, providing a rupture in the way of seeing things.

[33] One cannot lose sight of the relevancy of Benjamin's *Critique of Violence* essay, which, according to Beatrice Hanssen, was a pioneer in discussing the borders between violence and power and its necessary consequence to the role of critique (Hanssen, 2000, p.8). It is also relevant to stress that this insightful essay is not the object of this present thesis, although its discussion permeates what I bring as violence in this present work, but my aim is to discuss the regimes of visibility and the concept of aesthetics according to Benjamin's critique on culture.

[34] I shall not engage with a specific conflict or introduce victims from bodily experiences of violence, insofar as my notion of narrative here goes in the direction reading other narratives in the distribution of the sensible.

2.1. The Art of War: three frames

The debate on war in the study of International Relations is a very sensitive issue since as it is the very foundation of the discipline[35]. Historically, the unfinished book *On War* from the Prussian General Carl von Clausewitz is a significant work that informs studies on the nature of war and violence. He explained the unpredictable nature of war (Clausewitz, 2007; Freedman, 2012; Stray, 2007, p.15), insisting that: "war is the realm of chance, risk, and uncertainty" (Clausewitz apud Stray, 2007, p.15). Most importantly, though, the logical relationship between politics and war established by the Prussian Military still endures how the International Relations discipline understands the relationship between politics and violence. In the end, to study war is aimed at studying violence; otherwise, "without the element of violence, the study of war loses all focus" (Freedman, 2012, p.20). In this sense, we might argue that theorists from I.R. tend to consider the relationship between violence and politics through the relationship between war and peace[36].

This distinction of the conditions both for peace and for war relies upon constructing war as a national enterprise during the Napoleonic Wars, the moment in which Clausewitz was writing his work. As the exclusive monopoly of using force by a public authority was gradually recognised internally, the dichotomies were created to delineate the spheres of public and private; domestic and international; war and peace (Kennedy, 2006, p.61). Thus, to sum up, the consolidation of these dichotomies in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries formulated the legal construction of the space of war in which the Nation-State would be the protagonist of conducting the use of violence internally and externally

[35] The field of International Relations appeared within the domain of Political Science, characterized by an interdisciplinary study along with International Law, History and Economics. It first appeared at the Royal Institute of International Affairs and at the London School of Economics in 1920, soon after the end of the First World War.

[36] At the beginning of I.R. studies, the comprehension of what is political action was closely related to the question: "why wars occur?". Both theoretical perspectives inform how to answer this question thorough the twentieth century: realism and idealism. First, the debate was centered on the moral character of the men (Are men characterized by good by nature? Or evil?). Lately, this debate changes to consider the systemic conditions of anarchy, which leads to a self-help situation (Waltz, 1979, p.71-129). Overall, regardless of theoretical assumptions, whether pessimist or optimist, I.R. theory was founded with the preoccupation on the conditions to war and peace (Weber, 2009, p.17-21).

(Kennedy, 2006, p.65-66). This construction consolidates the State-Nation as a referential object in I.R., highlighted by the argumentation that "war is simply a continuation of political intercourse, with the addition of other means" (Clausewitz, 2007, p.252)[37].

If we take seriously that violence within I.R. studies is only to be found within legal frames of what are "war" and "conflict", violence has never been felt as challenging as nowadays. The laws of war (Kennedy, 2006), which should be the pacifier of states of war and peace (or domestic and international, or inside and outside), seem to fall apart when an I.R. student deals with contemporary conflict situations.

For some, in contemporaneity, war becomes a global undertaking, in which the limits of "war" and "peace" are no longer helpful categories to delineate the use of force in the international system (Jabri, 2007). It implies, then, an emphasis on the relevance of the global aspect of war to comprehend the relationship between war and politics in the study of International Relations[38] (Jabri, 2006, p.49). In this context, the idea of humanity, presumably universal, sustains an operational logic responsible for legitimizing violence (Jabri, 2007, p.65). In this sense, the banalization of violence crystallizes as a technology of governmentality, namely, a mode of control that pacifies and depoliticizes plurality (Jabri, 2007, p.62). Therefore, Jabri argues that war as a practice implies considering how violence affects individual bodies, in which the other is defined as "a monster or inhuman, suggesting a depoliticisation of the conflict" (Jabri, 2007, p.65). In this same line of reasoning, Kinsella will observe how the brutalization of the other, specifically in the War on Terror, also relates to the knowledge production and definitions of what is conflict (Kinsella, 2007). It is interesting to look at the political dimensions of

[37] Wars, especially after the Napoleonic battles, become a project for the nation and an extension of public policy. War was a primordial instrument, expressing the purity of national sovereignty (Kennedy, 2006, p.58): "We know, certainly, that war is only requisitioned through the dynamics between governments and nations; but, in general, it is thought that this dynamic suffers a rupture with the advent of war, and then a totally different state of affairs arises, subject to no law. We argue, on the contrary, that war is nothing more than the continuation of political dynamics (Clausewitz apud Kennedy, 2006, p.57).

[38] This work follows Jabri's argument regarding a matrix of war in the sense of a set of interconnected practices – such as invasion, torture, state-building – in which the relations of power are imbricated in the regulation of populations internationally (Jabri, 2007, p.59). The matrix of war happens in a context in which the legal and social definitions of what is war and what is peace does not make sense in our contemporaneity, since the conflicts affect liberal democracies as, for instance, in terrorist acts. In some way, the production of violence cannot be contained in one single region or country, because it spreads around the globe.

violence when discussing war to consider ways "in which political violence and war are, in the late modern age, redefining politics and the sphere of the international" (Jabri, 2007, p.7).

Indeed, the literature on violence and transformations of warfare are plenty, and it is not my goal to make an elusive review of it, as tempting as this genealogy might be. Instead, the puzzle relies upon how we respond to it. In other words, I am looking at how violence is entangled in the relationship between aesthetics and politics. To pursue it, my aim is to consider the relationship between war and aesthetics in a way that does not consider violence and war as an exceptional event but, on the contrary, to understand how the practice of violence permeates the lived experiences and, from that, how we apprehend the sensitive regime according to Rancière's terms, or even how it informs a historical constellation, in Benjaminian terms. To put it straightforwardly, I am seeking to draw attention to how we respond to violence in the way it is framed by war narratives within the I.R. field – thus, I am dealing with a problem of framing. Nevertheless, framing also implies framing whose subjects (do not) appear in the portrait. What is missing, then, when we are discussing war?

This act of framing is what I shall call the *art of war*. An attentive reader would recall immediately that this term is not exactly new; on the contrary, it goes in the direction of what Clausewitz once praised to be the permissive conditions of violence in the modern world. War was back then a suspension of political life within a legal framework, which displays the perpetration of deliberate violence upon the enemy (Clausewitz, 2007; Scarry, 1985, p.63). In this conception, war was not an ordinary endeavour but instead a very sophisticated one, in which the goal, namely, to defeat an enemy, was to be pursued by applying military principles amidst an almost spiritual journey towards victory. Clausewitz's *On War* is a turning point in military studies mainly because he aims to analyse war by understanding its nature (*Wesen*), to provide better principles to make war more effective, regardless of what the motives for waging it were.

In this sense, war has rational reasoning. A good strategist would be sensitive to what Clausewitz calls the *art of war* – which is "the art of using the given means in combat; there is no better term for it than the conduct of war" (Clausewitz, 2007, p.73). Thus, the *art of war* refers to military operations' strategic aspects towards the ultimate goal of injuring an enemy. Here, we are dealing with

an instrumental conception of violence – if war is to be considered politics by other means, violence works as a *means* for politics. This is the first frame.

Second frame: representation. While Clausewitz became impressed with the Napoleonic leading campaign in the Rhines, Francisco Goya faced the bloody aspects of Spain's violence. The *Disaster of War* consists of eighty aquatint plates with vivid captions of what Goya saw in the Spanish Insurrection against Joseph Bonaparte. Published in 1863, the works display crying faces and angry reactions against abuses of power in scenes of rape, death, famine, craziness… *One cannot look at this… This is too much!* It says at one moment. Goya's work has a clear purpose: to denounce war by making a visual report of its events and narratives, offering another history of conflict, of those who truly lived it at its edge.

From that, one realises that Clausewitz's frame was missing a relevant aspect of violence. War is not merely a matter of *means*[39], namely, warfare and its instrumental characteristic. Still, also it is an institutional practice that enables the conditions for violence, "both materially and discursively", so war "must be understood in social terms" (Jabri, 2007, p.12-13). As I shall discuss throughout this chapter, conventionally, in I.R., war is seen in instrumental terms[40]. Nevertheless, this reading fails to comprehend the constitutive role of political violence regarding to subjectivity and the social sphere they belong (Jabri, 2007, p.12-13). In practical terms, it demands looking at how war happens to injurious bodies, how war practices permeate the political domain, and how this is narrated in the public sphere.

[39] Clausewitz tells a narrative of war in which a rational subject should meet specific objectives to achieve a goal, observing a subordination of military reason to political reason – this provided a reading that Clausewitz were a utilitarian rationalist, placing his "discourse within a rationalist, means-end epistemology" (Clausewitz, 2007; Shapiro, 1993, p.121). However, the prominence of this instrumental discourse does not consider his ontological commitment to war. As Shapiro argues, "war for Clausewitz is purely a form of acting on behalf of externally perceived threats that leads to subsequently educed objectives. Ontologically, (…) war is a major aspect of being; it emerges as a production, maintenance, and reproduction of the virtuous self, a way to achieve an ideal form of subjectivity" (Shapiro, 1993, p.121).

[40] As the literature states, when I.R. was created, the discipline aimed to answer the reasons that lead to conflict. With this, this attempt of understanding the root causes of war, its dynamics, leads to approaches that deals with violence with a methodological individualism, and those whose focus is on the structural imperatives of the international system. Either way, both approaches fail to look to the historicity of war, its practices within the public space and reads violence as an instrument to pursue a certain goal (Jabri, 2007; Wright, 1966, p.20; Suganami, 1997). For the literature that focus on methodological individualism, see: Nicholson, 1992, and, for the literature that looks to systemic explanations: Waltz, 1979; 1949.

Thus, the art of war refers to all artistic expressions related to war and conflict regarding the question of framing. The relationship between artistic expressions and war is not exactly recent (Brandon, 2007, p.11). We could identify, overall, some patterns in which artists "have blended colours (…) to depict wartime (…) practices and symbols" (Bourke, 2017, p.7). Even though there is no clear genre of "war art", there are expressive artistic expressions about battles for some time (Brandon, 2007, p.16)[41]. For a moment, governments wanted to create a record of conflicts by sending artists to warzones, which naturally raised a debate on artistic freedom and censorship.[42] In this aspect, it is worth noting the problem of witness authenticity, which excluded gender approaches. Works such as Paul Nash's paintings, such as *The Menin Road* (1919) and *We Are Making a New World* (1918) (Gough, 2017, p.270), denounced war as full of horrors, inquiring against its heroic images. Besides, there is significant expressivity in artists against war, in which art operates as an instrument of mobilisation. One of the most emblematic examples comes from artistic interventions against the Vietnam War, such as protests in front of Picasso's *Guernica* at MoMa in the 1970s (Malvern, 2017, p.183), and works such as Jenny Holzer's *Lustmond* (1993) and Haroun Farocki's *Eye/Machine* (2003)[43] (Bourke, 2018; Brandon, 2007, p.99-100).

Hence, there is remarkable work in the arts addressing conflict, for those in war campaigns to represent what had happened in the field or for those who wanted to translate what they witnessed. Recently, some had written on the "artistic turn' in activism (Blanco apud Crimmin, 2013, p.10), in which "art becomes a platform for achieving things that mere politics cannot"[44] (Castellano, 2020, p.437). In this

[41] As Laura Brandon remarks, there is not a genre of "war art" in art history. Instead, works related to conflict encompassed other genres, such as landscape, portraiture, and history painting, mostly. Especially in the nineteenth century, works of art aimed to talk about scenes from war campaigns (Brandon, 2007, p.5).

[42] I should note that this practice is still recurrent, for instance, with "embedded reporting". The term means incorporating journalists and photographers into military units to cover onsite military operations. The condition to do so is to comply with restrictions imposed by the military unit, especially regarding the content of images and regarding which operations would be disclosed (Butler, x).

[43] *Eye/Machine*, dir. By H. Farocki (Harun Farocki Filmproduktion, 2003), online at https://www.harunfarocki.de/installations/2000s/2000/eye-machine.html (Here and subsequently, all internet links were last accessed on 12 November 2019).

[44] As Castellano will argue, the recent debates in the cultural field demands thinking through contemporary practices, where expressions such as "participate aesthetics" or "collaborative art" "have become frequent in the vocabulary of cultural criticism" (Castellano, 2020, p.440), although these terms have been used in an uncritical way, according to him. In the "Art and Conflict" short essays, published after a research enquiry supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council and the Royal College of Art, Michaela Crimmin advances that far from looking at art in

regard, as Michaela Crimmin observes: "there is a frequent call for artists as communicators to show the inhumanity of conflict or the 'victims' of war as its primary purpose" (Crimmin, p.2014, p.11). In this sense, the second frame of art of war leads us to a conceptualisation in which art has, as well, an instrumentality when dealing with conflict. However, contrary to the first frame, the second frame goes towards the idea that art has a role when representing violence. Art operates here as a documentation or even justification for war, or a denounce against it[45]. Thus, art will take on the responsibility of making a portrait of conflict or as denunciation of its abuses.

In critical I.R.[46], especially concerning the field of Visual Security Studies, representation has been studied addressing the role of images or communications at informing security practices – highlighting the performative aspects of images (Andersen & Vuori, 2018, p.7; Campbell, 2004; Hansen, 2011; Shapiro, 1988). Taken representation as a frame of analysis, "visual artefacts have political implications [and] should be taken seriously as an object of security analysis" (Andersen & Vuori, 2018, p.7). Overall, the Visual Security Studies explores many ways through which image and representation, as a security practices, informs methodological and ontological implications: some works will look at ways images have a performative power politically, or even their ambiguity towards political discourses (Andersen & Vuori, 2018, p.8-9). Further, other works, will advance how these visual artefacts can work for critique and des-securitisation (Anderson & Vuori, 2018, p.9; Der Derian, 2009; Weber, 2008). Observing this, then, I advance to the role of framing and delimitation of the object.

Third frame: pressing the camera shutter or a method matter. This is at the core of what I meant by the *art of war*. An active camera shutter is a device that allows a precise and permanent image by controlling light. A vital tool, then, to obtain a (good) picture. Ariella Azoulay will argue that although the shutter is

emancipatory terms, it is far more interesting to look at art when it is ambiguous, lateral and paradoxical, stimulating new debates (Crimmin, 2014, p.11).

[45] According to Chouliaraki, the literature on representation of war can be divided into two strands: war as propaganda and war as cultural memory. As she argues: "whereas the former is about how photojournalism manipulates war communication with a view to legitimizing it in people's 'hearts and minds', the latter focuses on how war images contribute to working through the traumatic memories of those subject to its suffering" (Chouliaraki, 2018, p.72).

[46] Here, visual as representation are a paradigmatic field in relation to i) visual artefacts and its enactment of the international (Campbell, 2004); ii) security practices or practices of securitizing (Hansen, 2011; Vuori, 2010); and ii) "in terms of how visual signs differ from and relate to verbal or other categories of signs/texts" (Andersen & Vuori, 2018, p.7).

understood mainly in technical terms regarding its velocity and performance swiftness, its role and operation are erased by its means-ends prerogative, namely, to make a good image (Azoulay, 2019, p.21). In this sense, Azoulay looks at the moment when the picture is presumed to exist – "the image that prefigures and conditions the closing and opening of a shutter" (Azoulay, 2019, p.21). It is precisely this in-between moment, of controlling the lights and image, that configures the imperialist project of defining subject and image, subject and object (Azoulay, 2019). As Aradau & Huysmans (2014) argue, methodological choices – and here I am referring to act of framing – are methods that created worlds.

Using the camera metaphor, my aim is straightforward: to find precisely the gap between subject and object and look at violence in I.R. from a social, and, consequently, political standpoint. Thus, going against an *instrumentality* of things, and emphasising what happens in-between. Perhaps, instead of looking at the genre of war art or war's rationality, "we can examine it as reflecting socio-cultural attitudes to conflict over time" (Brandon, 2007, p.5). Pursuing this can offer an alternative way of looking at the event, in which the viewer's reaction to a piece might reveal a breach (in a Benjaminian sense). In this way, we can identify how one responds to war, violence; to the political bonds that supposedly connect us to others.

Acknowledgement that security cannot be a settled meaning might be helpful in the sense of looking at the art of war as a tool to embrace a more flexible understanding of the quest for critical theory, in the sense of opening different ways of reading. Krause & Willams (1997) address the "term critical to security studies" as "to imply more an orientation toward the discipline than a precise theoretical label" (1997, p.5). Furthermore, discussing security, observe that different theoretical approaches are "constantly involved in judgments about what security means, and in deciding and discriminating what the objects and objectives of security studies should be" (Peoples & Vaughan-Williams, 2010, p.4). Hence, using art as device for critique is an attempt of finding new surfaces of reading and understanding.

As stated throughout this work, works of art are not used in the traditional way of representing things, mainly because this operates within the modern construction of what is art, i.e., an object coming from an imperial history of collecting (Azoulay, 2009, p.94). Instead, it looks at how art can be considered,

beyond a representation of violence, an epistemological endeavour to comprehend conflict differently. It argues that materiality, through artistic expressions, might disrupt a conventional set of meanings, turning visible narratives, subjects and bodies. In other words, to notice how we *respond to* violence by enlarging the methodological tools to access it.

An inevitable and notorious example comes from *The Rwanda Project* (1994-1998) of Alfredo Jaar, which combined installations and arranged interventions. How do we respond to the unimaginable? Or, further, how to represent it. In one of his installations, we look at Gutete Emerita's eyes to evoke no visible ones. Gutete Emerita, the viewer later gets to know, witnessed her husband and sons' slaughter, killed in front of her. She survived, and all one can grasp from this atrocity is a pair of eyes looking straight at us (Brandon, 2007, p.101; Reinhardt, 2007; Shapiro, 2016). As viewers, we are facing the gaze of a survivor while we wonder what those eyes saw. This “not seeing” amidst seeing does not allow access to Gutete’s pain, but we enlarge it enough to acknowledge her in our gaze, in the public sphere. Art becomes a subject-object of itself. Certainly, we cannot be at the standpoint of these testimonies, for they escape us, but their eyes made us wonder and, as Didi-Huberman states, “in order to know, we must imagine for ourselves” (Didi-Huberman, 2008, p.3) – as I argued in the previous chapter. Hence, art operates here as a methodological apparatus to enlarge the subject’s comprehension of oneself relating to the world in common.

Figure 11: Rivane Neuenschwander, "Fear of" (2020). (Courtesy of the artist and Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York / Los Angeles; Photo: Pierre Le Hors)

Rivane Neuenschwander organized an art-making workshop in cities such as Rio de Janeiro, Bogotá, and London,[47] where she invited children to compose drawings of things, they feared the most. This work comes from the artist's long-term interest in psychoanalysis, specifically, how fear nourishes our current social imaginaries and symbolic knowledge regime, besides revealing the limits of language when expressing our most hidden internal fears (Victorino, n.d.).

Following the activities, Neuenschwander works with the children's drawings and texts, creating embroidery, as seen above, and creating fabric cape designs that later the children might wear. With that, the Brazilian artist plays with the cape's idea as an object of protection and supernatural power, where the children put on their fears as a cape. Talking about this experience, Neuenschwander says:

> Whatever it results as an artwork it is important that the piece has autonomy and tells a story by itself. It needs to contain the experience but also to go beyond the

[47] See the short film produced for the exhibition at the Whitechapel Gallery. http://www.whitechapelgallery.org/exhibitions/childrens-commission-2015-rivane-neuenschwander/ .

> museum and to leave the experience with the people that encountered it (…). In terms of the psychoanalytical process, there is a very specific time and space that you create with the psychoanalyst. Every time you go there and see the analyst, you have an experience that is important, but you also know that when you are not there, this experience continues beyond the walls of the consulting room. It has a long-lasting effect. In some pieces, I try to achieve that (Neuenschwander apud Victorino, n.d.).

Neuenschwander's poetics goes towards what Bishop remarks as returning to the social in artistic practices, mostly from the 1990s (Bishop, 2012, p.3). As Bishop observes: "participatory art is not only a social activity but also a symbolic one, both embedded in the world and at one remove from it" (Bishop, 2012, p.7). In this way, Neuenschwander's workshops with children draw attention to notions of singular and collective authorship and, most of all, reveal the complexities of social dynamics of meaning and the construction of relations (Bishop, 2012; Victorino, n.d.) With the work in which the singular fears are in dialogue with a more extensive imagination of belongings and collective fears, the fabric of words and monsters reminds us that fear is personal and political in its intimate bodily aspect.

Thus, an art of war means considering how subjects see and are seen in aesthetic apprehension of reality (Buck-Morss, 2012, p.175; Rancière, 2004) or, in other words, the in-between moment of image-to-be and perfect image when the camera shutter is pressed – the moment of politics. If I am looking to violence in I.R. by the frame of war practices, then the art of war implies apprehending this social phenomenon as a political dispute set of meanings. To do so means understanding an existential dimension of conflict by affirming those who experienced them – how do we access, epistemologically, other subjects of violence?

This goes in the direction to what once Jacques Rancière meant by the distribution of the sensible, as previously mentioned:

> I call the distribution of the sensible the system of self-evident facts of sense perception that simultaneously discloses the existence of something in common and the delimitation that define the respective parts and positions within it. Distribution of the sensible therefore establishes at one and the same time something common that is shared and exclusive parts. This apportionment of parts and positions is based on a distribution of spaces, times and forms of activity that determines the very manner in which something in common lends itself to participation and in what way various individuals have a part in this distribution (Rancière, 2004, p.12).

As Ranciére will argue, it is precisely in this set of meaning disputes that would be built up "what is common to the community based on what they do and, on the time, and space in which this activity is performed" (Rancière, 2004, p.12). Coming back to Jaar's Rwandan Project work, Rancière states that looking at the eyes of Gutete Emerita is a "construction of a sensory arrangement that restores powers of attention itself" (Rancière apud Shapiro, 2016, p.1). As Jaar, Neuenschwander does not want to represent or tell an enclosed history of political and social connections; instead, she aims to create the possibility of sharing private meanings in public as a political endeavour of constructing the common.

An insightful recent example happened in 2003 when the US troops entered the Historical Museum of Baghdad (Museum of Iraq)[48] as a war campaign site in the so-called Iraq War. What followed was severe criticism of US troops, not only due to the invasion per se but for historical and unique artifacts and other art objects that went missing in the following days after its occupation. As Sylvester describes those events, she comments how "I.R. has accumulated considerable knowledge about (…) weapons and strategies of warfare (…), the correlates of war, (…) the social problems created by wars" and so on (Sylvester, 2005, p.856). Yet, she argues, little was discussed of this event, revealing to her myopias that underline most of the field's theoretical and methodological debates. Then, Sylvester develops a collage method of some issues that do not seem to dialogue to find intersections and gaps when discussing security problems. She argued that "[bringing] art into war thinking via a method associated with art-making" (Sylvester, 2005, p.855) allows expanding the subjects in the field. So, making a "collage" of I.R., war studies, feminism, art, and war introduces us to a place where we are strange, but also belong to it, understanding the social phenomena somehow differently (Sylvester, 2005, p.877).

Neuenschwander's fabric collage makes us aware of other lived experiences of fear and how those experiences can be translated into a common grammar – in the dispute of the sensible. Relating to what Rancière, among others,

[48] This discussion also leads to other *problemátiques*, especially concerning western museums and collection of cultural objects throughout imperial and colonial processes. Azoulay will advance in a historiography that enables imagination – to imagine other possible worlds, and, to that, it is essential "to decolonise museums and knowledge" (Azoulay, 2019, p.111). It evolves "the possibility to reverse the conditions under which art and art objects are perceived as separate from the active life of communities. Decolonising museums is essential to rewinding the imperial condition" (Azoulay, 2019, p.111).

will discuss, Sylvester relies upon the process of art-making to discuss the political process of giving meaning to security practices. Concerning the case of the US invasion, she asks, “under what conditions can art touched in war be a means of redistributing war’s effects, including grief, more evenly?” (Sylvester, 2005, p.877).

Figure 12: Igor Vidor. Schemes (2018) (Artist's Personal Collection - photo taken from me at ArtRio Fair)

Igor Vidor, a Brazilian plastic artist, invites us to look at this intensive red frame. Still, something bothers those who look at it: the frame is fragmented, even irregular, although it seemed to propose a geometrical perspective. Between these breaches, one realises that it is caused by bullets, which distorts a perfect framing. “Schemes” is a product of what Vidor calls *aseptic functionalism*, namely a national project that did not foresee how certain bodies did not participate in the “social contract” while pursuing development/modernisation. Using bullet cartridges literally from Rio de Janeiro’s conflict zones, we see a fragmented narrative. Still, it is a story without bodies framed in a geometrical discourse, a country’s abstraction, according to Vidor. Igor Vidor painting tells us what we have not seen

politically in public space, from materiality that disrupts the aesthetic experience of reality: bullets that split paths and bodies missing. Daily, traditional media covers shootings from favelas or hills to inform political imaginaries of what it means to live in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

So, how do we find the tools to re-frame the way we look at violent conflict? What political consequences do those choices affect the frame of narratives, and subjects, and what counts as legitimate violence? Discussing the Iraqi Museum, which turned into a battlefield, Sylvester describes the entanglements of violence, sites, subjects, and objects – after all, I.R. works with power struggles. But, looking at war and senses, what guides "the politics of those who find it easier to grieve the art lost in war than the people that a war has destroyed" (Sylvester, 2005, p.877)?

John Berger will argue that the "relation between what we see and what we know is never settled" (1972, p.7); and this is precisely what is at stake in what I am arguing. Discussing conflict and violence in the IR field implies being attentive to other *ways of seeing* – and, especially, whose subjectivities are appearing when we are defining violence. As Sylvester highlights, the feminist and postmodernist literature has been engaging in looking from alternative standpoints to argue how international relations provide partial views into social phenomena for a long time (Sylvester, 2006, p.208). With this, to consider an approach that interchanges with "art", here it means to take art in its aesthetical stake at juxtaposition techniques that open up to "unexpected sights of analysis." (Sylvester, 2006, p.219).

Hence, the art of war is a reflexive[49] attitude of drawing attention "to the epistemological problem raised by [the] issue of framing" (Butler, 2009), since, as Butler states, "[frames] are themselves operations of power". She argues: "they do not unilaterally decide the conditions of appearance, but their aim is nevertheless to delimit the sphere of appearance itself" (Butler, 2009) – pressing the camera shutter (Azoulay, 2019). It aims to consider the aesthetical construction of worlds and relationships through which people give meaning to their lived experiences and, specifically, think of how violence plays a role in this

[49] Here, it is important to highlight that reflexivity is not much about a personal matter, but a practice aiming at decentering ourselves and taking our practices as objects of inquiry. Thus, reflexivity directly impacts knowledge production.

process. It demands to presuppose, then, that subjects and objects are not clear categories in themselves but are realms of dispute in the distribution of the sensible, and politics happens precisely in the moment of irruption: when the subject opens paths to new possibilities of being despite the attempts to delimit them. Art of war looks for a sensitive comprehension of the "relocation of the political subject" (Jabri, 2013, p.70) within an imaginative configuration anew where violence plays a role.

2.2. The Aesthetisation of War or Should We Let the Art Flourish?

If the art of war goes further than privileging the strategic objectives to wage a conflict, I attempted to look to art practices to delineate a methodological account that reminds the aesthetical experience of accessing the world as a social and political phenomenon. As Sartre told us, image is an act and not a thing. Then, this present work suggests the relationship between subject and object is not straightforward but, instead, dynamic. In other words, there is a conscious argument that the images we create from the world cannot represent it fully. What we apprehend from it comes from a social dynamic of creating and setting the meaning in dispute while informing the conditions of possibility of seeing. When I rely on works of art, my aim is not to find a synthesis – a representation of violence -but the very uneasiness of the relationship between aesthetics and violence.

Hereupon, what is interesting about building an intersection with arts, engaging with them, is to expand forms of interpretation within the Social Sciences. Particularly in this section, I will consider that "how we formulate moral criticisms, how we articulate political analyses, depends upon a certain field of perceptible reality having already been established" (Butler, 2009, p.64). My attempt is to destabilise the I.R. traditional reading that war, socially and legally speaking, is exceptional in social dynamics to argue that, on the contrary, war is never confined to one time and one place, but lingers through them, affecting the perception of what is a relevant object of discussion. In this sense, Arts, in general, provide a reminder that conflict does not have a specific time zone and place to be held.

In this section, I shall engage with the discussion of *aesthetisation* – the phenomena of turning pictures of horror and violence into an object of admiration and beauty, ignoring their content. For some authors, introducing conflict beautifully in an aesthetic sense would undermine the relationship between image and viewer, in which the latter might not respond accordingly, either because the image is evaluated by its aesthetic formality or because one cannot bear looking at it (Reinhardt, 2007, p.14-16).

Coming back to the relationship between war, aesthetics, and politics, these categories certainly relate to each other in complex ways, but it is interesting to look at the border of these concepts to consider how they affect world-making. Observing violence as a practice helps us to identify the ways in which the war narrative permeates politics through an aesthetical experience. For the aim of this work, this assumption entails a critical attitude toward the humanisation of other lived experiences of violence, enlarging the visibility of alternative narratives of violence and even being in the world[50].

Helen Kinsella, for instance, observes how far certain acts of violence establishes an ethical distance between the response to so-called potential threats and radical vulnerabilities at moments of intimate violence – better illustrated as the act of dropping bombs from the air, ignoring the consequences to the targets (Kinsella, 2007). In such de-humanising act, what we witness is an act of the brutalization of the other through exemplary violence. According to Kinsella, further than looking epistemologically to the ways war, as traditionally conceived within a certain space and time, does not seem to suit to the recent practices of war against terror, the pursuit of knowledge must turn back to orienting politically toward a world-in-common (Kinsella, 2007)[51].

[50] Here, subjectivity is understood regarding how different bodies affect us politically speaking. Subjectivity is crossed by experiences, practices, and discourses that unveil articulations of present and future (Jabri, 2012, p.638)

[51]Concerning the war on terror, Kinsella worries that not defining properly what makes this endeavour different from other types of war would also imply failing to understanding our implication in it, especially about the ways the brutalization of the other was ostensibly published after Abu Ghrabi photos came to be known, which leads to overall dehumanisation of the other. Violence as an epistemic event puts into question the predominance of certain logic that informs "our comprehension of war and of peace and of ourselves by transforming difference into the other, into a target to be found, sighted, and destroyed. Difference becomes substantive when it is made into or embodied as other" (Kinsella, 2007, p.216). For this, Kinsella also advances that gender discourses "reman constitute of our understanding and knowledge of war" (Kinsella, 2007, p.227).

As I have been arguing, if the world appears to me as a constellation – a complex crystallized image that unfolds a glimpse of alternative hidden histories and disputes of power -, what is the role of aesthetics in theorising contemporary warfare? Again, this is not to say that art and life are synonymous when I am advancing in an aesthetical experience, but I assume that the phenomena affects me aesthetically, informing my judgment of the world. Concerning the imagination of what violence is, artwork worked as a tool of representation of events, and photography has had a fundamental role in portraying conflict in late modernity (Sontag, 2003).

However, when I advance in a conceptualisation of violence, a reflection on the aesthetics of war should be one that seeks to de-sublimate the gaze towards events. Acknowledging the aesthetical experience of seeing, Bleiker & Leet state that "key events in international politics (…) can be characterised as sublime", and these "encounters with the sublime allow us an important glimpse into the contingent and often manipulative nature of representation" (Bleiker & Leet, 2005, p.713). In this sense, "the sublime helps us reflect on the impact of, and responses to, dramatic political events", putting into evidence prevailing understandings of the international (Bleiker & Leet, 2005, p.713).

One of the Kantian legacies[52] is the assumption that there is universal reasoning that will enable subjectivities, both as a subject of knowledge and a subject of interaction, to make sense of the world. This universal worth is better expressed in what Kant will call transcendence, which is "at the heart of the very enabling condition of the 'sublime'" (Jabri, 2006, p. 820), that is, *something that transcends the senses– which escapes meaning*. Nevertheless, the Kantian synthesis towards the "sublime"[53] has a fragility, since the same subject that experiences the sublime is the subject of universal reason – which, necessarily, justifies why the sublime must "remain a problematic concept, for it assumes the capture of the subject and the capture of the universal" (Jabri, 2006, p.821). To put it differently,

[52] As this thesis is not an analysis of Kantian philosophy, further developments in the topic can be found in an exhaustive literature. For this thesis, some of the works I found particularly helpful to engage with the theme were: LYOTARD, Jean-François. *The Postmodern Condition: a report on knowledge*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984; and CROWTHER, Paul. *The Kantian Sublime: from morality to art*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1991.

[53] Shapiro will argue that the relevance of the concept of the sublime persists due to Kant's enduring influence on modernity, particularly in how his three critiques were revolutionary in the history of thought (Shapiro, 2018, p.2), which influenced later authors to advances critical approaches concerning aesthetics and sense-making (Shapiro, 2018, p.3).

while the Kantian subject, when dealing with an object of beauty, relies on mental faculty to find a consensus among others (the *sensus communis* as Arendt advances), they cannot find any support in the "universal worth" to deal with the sublime (Shapiro, 2018, p.1).

But how does it connect to aestheticising processes? Aestheticising as a category is not exactly elusive, as Reinhardt remarks (2018, p.322). For the purposes of the thesis, I am referring to aestheticising any process of dealing with images of violence, being artwork or photography, that, although aiming to represent it, ends up erasing its event and the subjectivity, being appreciated exclusively for its formal artistic feature. In other words, introducing conflict beautifully in an aesthetic sense would undermine the relationship between image and viewer, in which the latter might not respond accordingly, either because the image is evaluated by its aesthetic formality (Reinhardt, 2007, p.21) or because "one cannot [stand] looking at it", to quote Goya (1893, p.48) facing the visceral destruction of the human body.

Here, the movement of aestheticisation is twofold: we see an aestheticisation of violence in warfare practices, especially concerning devices and use of technology, but, as well, in the process of targeting and governing what and how violence is seen. In relation to the first movement, one cannot but stress the "shock and awe"[54] practices celebrated in situations such as the invasion of Iraq (Jabri, 2006), the recent conflict in Syria – which is highly mediated by social media -, and the "nuclear sublime" of the experience of nuclear explosions in Hiroshima and Nagasaki (Shapiro, 2018). Being a witness of late modern wars, in a context of 'disinterested' aesthetic experience, provokes feelings of fascination and horror. Nevertheless, if those 'sublime' experiences of seeing cannot be represented, the very act of representing itself implies a certain enactment of violence.

Perhaps, Benjamin already set the terms concerning images that would be a metaphor for our own embeddedness in time when he says that the story decays into images. Nevertheless, we cannot lose sight that Benjamin worried about the transformation of perception with the new technology. Concerning conflict, "when

[54] "Shock and awe" is a military tactic that aims to use spectacular displays of force to paralyse the enemy's perception of the battlefield. This was introduced as a military doctrine by the US military thinking in the 90s. See ULLMAN, Harlan, WADE, James. *Shock and Awe: achieving rapid dominance*. Washington: National Defence University, 1996.

war is spectacle, experience and its materiality in the body are somehow occluded from discourses that merely see the aesthetic in its technological rendition" (Jabri, 2006, p.823). When Benjamin worries about an aestheticization of politics[55], he is concerned about how this leads to an experience of the sublime that suspends critical thinking. Here, the crucial link that Benjamin introduces is technology[56], "since [for him] fascism was a response to a crisis which was both social and technological" (Caygill, 1998, p. 103). As perception changes, it also changes how we think about ourselves concerning place and time in History, so a technological apparatus has a crucial role in this mediation. Either technology works leading to constant innovation (in terms of subject construction or reality); or by imposing a distance between object and subject, creating the sublime, the monumentality (Caygill, 1998, p.103).

The trouble with International Relations as a discipline is that we cannot avoid the mismatch between object and concept, since the subject – supposedly, those who explain reality - and object – supposedly, power – are trapped within the same matrix of relations, which is the condition of possibility of the subjectivity (Jabri, 2006, p.824; Sylvester, 1994). Interestingly, Lyotard's reading of Kant's aesthetics highlights exactly 'the association of the sublime with unrepresentability" and "(…) the mismatch between the object and the concept" (Lyotard apud Jabri, 2006, p.824). Being attentive to how cognitive processes inform individual experiences within a political space among others, embedded with complexities of past and future, it is sensitive to open new paths of theorising. Hence, from the point of view of the I.R. discipline, in which specific bodies and narratives have long been outside its frame (Jabri, 2013; Sylvester, 1994; Sylvester,

[55] In this regard, see Sontag's point concerning Riefenstahl: the force of her work being precisely in the continuity of its political and aesthetic ideas, what is interesting is that this was once seen so much more clearly than it seems to be now when people claim to be drawn to Riefenstahl's images for their beauty of the composition. Without a historical perspective, such connoisseurship prepares the way for a curiously absentminded acceptance of propaganda for all sorts of destructive feelings-feelings whose implications people are refusing to take seriously" (Sontag, 1981, p. 97).

[56] According to Benjamin: "What disappears during the era of technical reproducibility of work of art is its aura. This process is symptomatic, and its consequences extend beyond the realm of art. The technique of reproduction delineates what was reproduced and what was produced under the scope of tradition. By reproducing the same work multiple times, it replaces the unique existence of a work of art with a serial one. So, to the extent that reproduction allows the recipient to access the work under any circumstances, it updates it constantly" (Benjamin, 2008, p.15). Regarding this, cinema would configure the technique of art that would be most damaging to tradition, in the sense that it redefines and impoverishes the human experience of reality - intensifying it (and, hence, the reason for Benjamin's critique of totalitarianism and mass movements).

2012; Wilcox, 2015), "to bring subjectivity into International Relations would enable engagement with embodied experience" (Jabri, 2006 p.826). In this way, the absence of subjectivity disables IR from theorising about violence in a critical way.

My argument is straightforward: aware of the limits and *problemàtiques* of an aesthetical approach (there is no redemption at the end), it is relevant to engage aesthetical theory against the aestheticisation of violence and warfare. In this sense, Benjamin argued that works of art take on an important role in disrupting aestheticising movements, by offering another set of affects that suspends the shock experience and compels one to take a stance. Again, Benjamin's reading on culture advances in a reconfiguration of theorising critically towards the present, centering the individual sensory abilities in apprehending the other and the world. As Jennings et al. (2018) remark:

> The resolutely historical nature of Benjamin's project is driven thus not by any antiquarian interest in the cultural forms of past epochs, but by the conviction that any meaningful apprehension of the present day is radically contingent upon our ability to read the constellations that arise from elements of a past that is synchronous with our own time and its representative cultural forms (Jennings et al., 2018, p.16-17).

"Just as the entire mode of existence of human collectivites changes over long historical periods, so too does their mode of perception" according to Benjamin in the essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility*[57] (Benjamin, 2018, p.23), and perception is conditioned by history. Hence, works of art can provide an aesthetical rupture that might alter ways of seeing and, possibly, de-sublime politics, suggesting an opening for critical thinking. It is not to say that I.R.'s abstractions should fix the breaches, but perhaps we should leave them open in order to sustain the tension[58], or to sustain this unrepresentability. Those experiences could not only provide a sense of shock and horror but through a glimpse, reveal a *potentia* (power) of an embodied subject, who disrupts configurations of power.

[57] I am working with the second version of the essay because this would be the version Benjamin thought would be more complete.

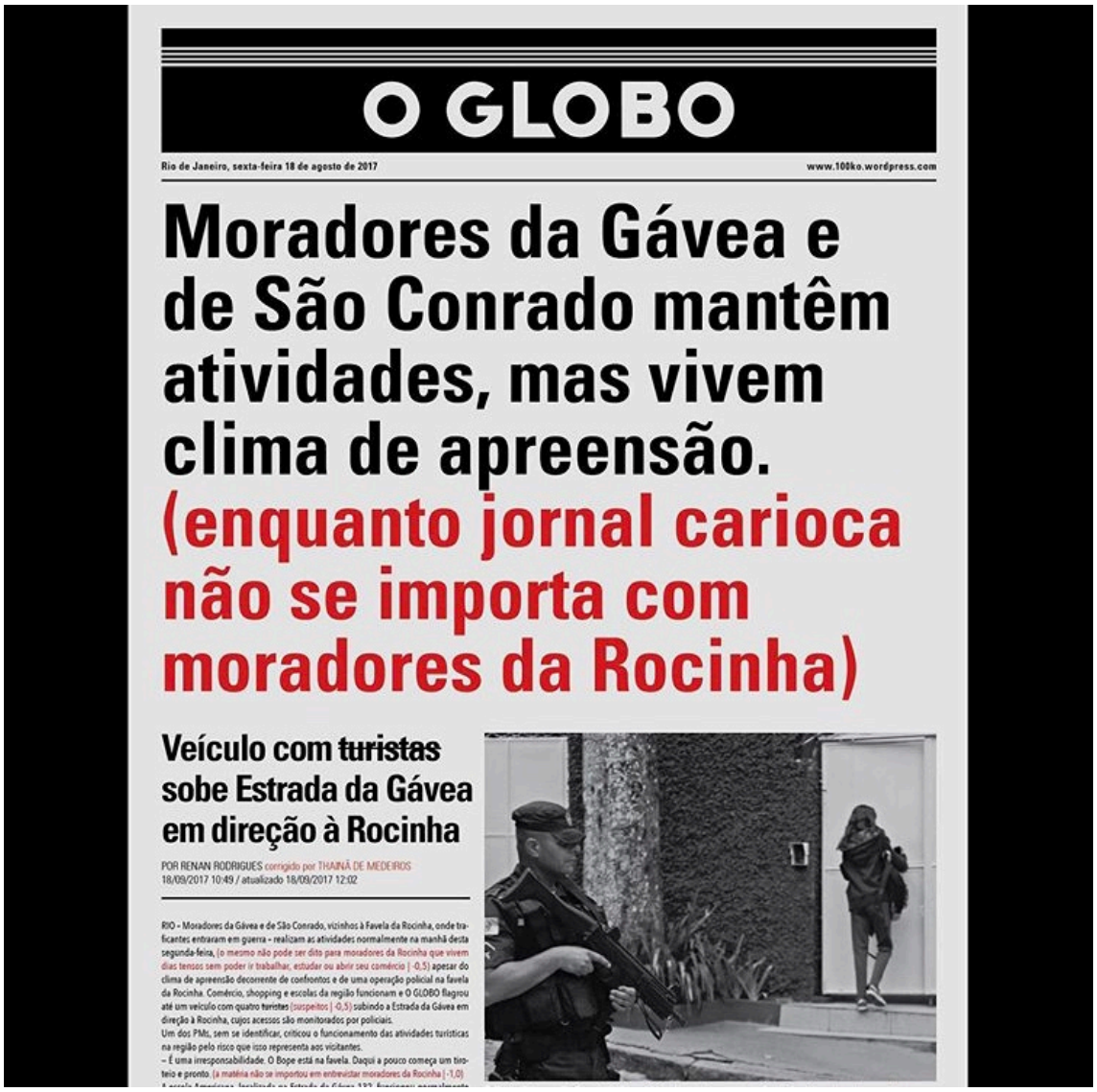
[58] Lyotard, for instance, argues that stabilizing trauma experiences is a fundamental approach to not forgetting the past. In this way, the trauma helps work to denounce what happened, and as a promise that it will not happen again (Lyotard apud Assmann, 2001, p.281). In this manner, my argument of letting the branches open is in the sense of always building the condition of possibility of political action, aware that it is always at risk of being captured.

Regarding the sublime experience of Shock and Awe practices, it is not only about defeating an already defeated enemy, but consciously presentating a military machine whose target was not only the population aimed at but a wider public. Then, "through rendering its power spectacle, here was a self-constituting act, but it could only be such through the gaze of all who witnessed the act" (Jabri, 2015, p.127). We, as spectators (Dachev, 2018), became a moral witness of the excess of the sovereign, but, "even when the gaze is one of opposition, often of outrage, it is nevertheless one that is ultimately silenced as it is drawn into the 'field of force of destructive torrents and explosions, to use Benjamin's description of the use of aerial bombardment in the 1st world war" (Jabri, 2015, p.128);

The second movement of aesthetisation regards the gaze – the way of looking at the violence or, to put it more directly, whose bodies and narratives matter. Cildo Meireles' works during the Brazilian Dictatorship (1964-1985) provides an accurate resemblance to what I am arguing. Meireles, at that period, aimed to develop another way of knowing the world through his "insertions into ideological circuits", in which art would be a synthesis between sensorial and mental relations. In this sense, "circuits" considered how art acts directly upon the circulation ideas in society. One of his most striking interventions was stamping messages on paper bills to disrupt official narratives from the authoritarian regime. In one of the notes in use, he stamped "who killed Herzog?" (1975), a reference to the death of journalist Vladimir Herzog after being arrested by agencies of political repression. In this way, Meireles enlarges art as a *de facto* intervention in common materiality to affect truth regimes of knowledge[59].

In a more recent example, artist Thainã Medeiros, in the work "News Revisited" (2019), rescues original newspaper articles from Brazil regarding a military police operation at Rocinha *Favela* "correcting" them[60]. In it, one sees the original article's title and text being re-written in red according to subjects who lived through violence in another frame.

[59] *Inserções em Circuitos Ideológicos – Projeto Cédula (1975*), in Online Collection Memórias da Ditadura online at http://memoriasdaditadura.org.br/obras/insercoes-em-circuitos-ideologicos-projeto-cedula-1975-de-cildo-meireles/.
[60] *O Globo Journal* (18 august 2017), p.1.



O GLOBO

Rio de Janeiro, sexta-feira 18 de agosto de 2017 www.100ko.wordpress.com

Moradores da Gávea e de São Conrado mantêm atividades, mas vivem clima de apreensão. (enquanto jornal carioca não se importa com moradores da Rocinha)

Veículo com ~~turistas~~ sobe Estrada da Gávea em direção à Rocinha

POR RENAN RODRIGUES corrigido por THAINÃ DE MEDEIROS
18/09/2017 10:49 / atualizado 18/09/2017 12:02

RIO – Moradores da Gávea e de São Conrado, vizinhos à Favela da Rocinha, onde traficantes entraram em guerra – realizam as atividades normalmente na manhã desta segunda-feira, (o mesmo não pode ser dito para moradores da Rocinha que vivem dias tensos sem poder ir trabalhar, estudar ou abrir seu comércio | -0,5) apesar do clima de apreensão decorrente de confrontos e de uma operação policial na favela da Rocinha. Comércio, shopping e escolas da região funcionam e O GLOBO flagrou até um veículo com quatro turistas (suspeitos | -0,5) subindo a Estrada da Gávea em direção à Rocinha, cujos acessos são monitorados por policiais.
Um dos PMs, sem se identificar, criticou o funcionamento das atividades turísticas na região pelo risco que isso representa aos visitantes.
– É uma irresponsabilidade. O Bope está na favela. Daqui a pouco começa um tiroteio e pronto. (a matéria não se importou em entrevistar moradores da Rocinha | -1,0)

Figure 13: Thainã de Medeiros. Correção de Matéria (2019) - (Lingoa Geral's Archive)

Like Jaar's Rwanda Series, Meireles proposal illuminates how using art as a metaphor is interesting to make these cognitive and sensory spaces stimulate reflexivity – not an aim of representing what happened, since, as discussed, "to represent is to aestheticise, that is, to transform" (Strauss apud Reinhardt, 2018, p.322). For Benjamin, the dispute against fascism was a dispute set in cultural terms, and how modes of perception, supported by the transformation of technology, are intimately connected to ways of acting upon the world politically. As he argues: "all efforts to aestheticize politics culminate in one point. That one point is war" (Benjamin, 2008, p.41; Shapiro, 2013, p.103). The development of technology and transformation of regimes of consumption of media and art not only

redefined how works of art lose their aura and uniqueness but, further, these recent developments present themselves in political terms[61].

For Benjamin, against the fascist practice of aesthetising politics, communism should answer by politicising art (Benjamin, 2008, p.42; Jabri, 2006; Jennings et al., 2008; Shapiro, 2013, p.103). Hence, the question is to find breaches into ideological circuits, as Meireles put it, to open paths to critical thinking about our embeddedness in time and space. It is not so much about using art as rhetorical representations of violence, either for denouncing or glorifying it. Instead, the relevance is to find methods of rupture.

For instance, for Butler, to interrupt[62] "is to introduce into a particular epistemic, relational or political system an element deemed to be extraneous to it, in so doing destabilising its hold over meaning and order by compelling it to recognise or engage with a body or idea that it has silenced or rendered invisible" (Butler apud Wedderburn, 2019, p.177). Some of the artworks used here aimed to offer a mode of interruption that engages with the aesthetical experience of living in a world in common, reflecting upon the cognitive regimes of apprehension. Particularly, my choices throughout this chapter wanted to look at art practices that happen after encounters – curating has the same goal of constructing relationship – or how does one find oneself within the space of appearances.

Wedderburn engages with comic books to "acknowledge(s) that aesthetic, visual, and/or popular media are productive both of international politics and of the epistemic frameworks through which it is studied and known" (Wedderburn, 2019, p.179). Using the comics of *Mickey in the Camp of Gurs*, Wedderburn reflects upon the conditions of understanding the Holocaust through an aesthetical experience that did not aim to represent what happened, but how to apprehend critically the unrepresentable experience of violence. In this regard, politics is the moment of 'aesthetic break', in which this experience "leads (…) toward an ethico-political sensibility that recognizes the fragilities of our grasp of experience and enjoins

[61] It is worth noting that, even though Benjamin did not explore it, the German thinker relies on Marinetti's manifesto for the colonial war in Ethiopia, which allows the reader to make fruitful connections to Benjamin's concept of violence and imperialist practices. The manifesto describes the goals of fascism while glorifying war. As Benjamin said: "imperialist war is an uprising on the part of technology, which demands repayment in 'human material' for the natural material society has denied it" (Benjamin, 2008, p.42).

[62] It is worth noting how interruption has been a crucial term for feminists to explain their own practice (Sylvester, 1994; Wedderburn, 2019).

engagement with a pluralist world in which the in-common must be continually negotiated" (Shapiro, 2018, p.4). Certainly, art helps us to comprehend violence in its unspeakable texture. Turning to oil paints, or to cameras allows most narratives of the unimaginable to become imaginable to those who did not witness the conflict; or even to those who were present but did not find any possible word to explain it. Nevertheless, engaging aesthetically with a disinterested attitude toward the sublime does not allow a reconciliation with the world that appears before us. As Hannah Arendt remarks, it is artists and poets who are builders of monuments without whom 'the history that mortals play, and recount would not survive an instant" (Arendt, 1994, p.230).

In the Futurist Manifesto, praised by fascism, "war is beautiful because it enriches a flowering meadow with the fiery orchids of machine-guns (…) remember these principles of an aesthetic of war, that they may illuminate… your struggles for a new poetry and a new sculpture"."*Fiat ars – pereat mundus*", Let, then, art flourish, and the world pass away. Perhaps this is what Henry James called "the madness of art"[63]. Although from poets, we expect the truth[64], one should not lose sight of the dangers of engaging with aesthetical approaches. Benjamin's political proposal is imperative, but we should be cautious. In the end, Benjamin's in trouble: aura is the unique appearance of a distant thing, regardless of how close it is. Things in the world resist us; they are not docile instruments of our gaze and understanding; they point to our non-sovereignty. Thus, *things escape us*; they do not obey us. Thus, "beware the madness of art. Beware the hospitality of war", Danchev reminds us (2009, p.5).

> In the hospitality of war
> We left them their dead as a gift
> To remember us by (Archilochus apud Danchev, 2009, p.5)

[63] In the original: "We work in the dark – we do what we can – we give what we have. Our doubt is our passion, and our passion is our task. The rest is the madness of art" (James apud Danchev, 2009, p.4).

[64] I took this from Arendt's "Denktagebuch" (Diary of Thoughts), in which she claims one can only expect the truth from poets, not philosophers. Here, philosophers present a problem for politics, which relates to Plato's contempt to political affairs.

2.3. Thinking with Butler and Sontag on Frames of Violence

Now, the hospitality of war by those who experienced it. Further, by those who experience violence and how it informs dynamics of belonging to the public space of appearances.

Susan Sontag[65] (2004a; 2004b) argues that photographs are powerful to determine what we recall of events. [W]ar", she says, "(…) is inevitably a huge tapestry of actions; [but] *what makes some actions representative and others not*?"[66]. To discuss this point, Butler, following Sontag, she highlights established practices, particularly of the US Department of Defence, of regulating which images from conflict shall be broadcast to the public in general. The term 'embedded reporting' shows concern for regulating conflict's content, which follows the conditions of possibility of interpreting "what will and will not be included in the field of perception" (Butler, 2009, p.64); "thereby illustrating the orchestrative power of the state to ratify what will be called reality: the extent of what is perceived to exist" (Butler, 2009, p.65).

Notably looking at Abu Ghraib photographs[67], both Butler and Sontag will discuss the role of affect when dealing with torture and vulnerability. In the work *On Photography* among others, Sontag says that images/ photos from conflict, per se, cannot by themselves offer an interpretation. As she advances, photos have the ability to affect us, but we would still need support to *understand* what we are seeing since we are looking at a partial part of reality (Butler, 2009, p.66; Sontag, 2004a; Sontag, 2003). According to her: "while a painting, even one that achieves photographic standards of resemblance, is never more than the stating of an interpretation, a photograph is never less than an emanation (…) – a material vestige of its subject in a way that no painting can be" (Sontag, 2003, p.164). As Butler comments on Sontag's argument, whether a photograph is effective at moving us, politically speaking, it is "only because the image is received within the context of a relevant political consciousness" (Butler, 2009, p. 67).

[65] I will talk more about photography from now on because this is the object of Sontag's inquiry concerning war streaming. Nevertheless, my argumentation is supported by selected artworks from my research.
[66] My emphasis.
[67] During Iraq's invasion, the practices of torture in the Guantanamo Bay detention camp, an American military prison located within Guantanamo Bay Naval Base in Cuba became known. Torture was also widely discussed because most of the photographs taken were part of torture itself.

In this sense, Sontag advances that photographs are transitive – "they do not merely portray or represent, they relay affect" (Butler, 2005, p.823; Sontag, 1977). Because of this, Sontag will not believe in images' potential of inciting action or enrage. "In times of war, this transitive affectivity (…) may overwhelm and numb its readers" (Butler, 2005, p.823). This attitude towards war photographs justifies why Sontag "resolves that a 'narrative seems more likely to be effective than an image' to help mobilize us against a war" (Sontag apud Butler, 2005, p.824).

Commenting on torture at the Guantanamo Bay detention Center, Sontag, in her late work on *Regarding the Torture of Others*, takes a step back in her argument developed throughout her career to take a critical standpoint towards the wide dissemination of the Abu Ghraib photos, denouncing the systematic use of this violence on bodies as an official governmental policy. As she says: "the issue is not whether a majority or a minority of Americans performs such acts but whether the nature of the policies prosecuted by this administration and the hierarchies deployed to carry them out make such acts likely" (Sontag, 2004b). For Sontag, even though pictures vanish away at some point[68] – and people get used to them -, we are now facing a moment in which "there will be thousands more snapshots and videos" (Sontag, 2004b). Perhaps this might offer a grasp of a political and ethical attitude towards the torture of others, especially in the context of "endless war", as she states in one of her last words published in the New Yorker Magazine.

Although it is very interesting to discuss the relationship between word and image, subtitle, and image, here I am following Butler's critique of Sontag's work. Sontag engages in the role of interpretation when dealing with images; but, here, the critique relies precisely upon the gap between image and word. The issue is to know the conditions of possibility of perception for? framing. Or, in Butler's

[68] This argument review is particularly interesting, but it is not the aim of this work to develop it further. Throughout her writings, Sontag will be highly critical of the use of photographs per se. As mentioned, she will highlight the relevance of a subtitle to give meaning to the image. Otherwise, as she argues, images vanish away. For instance, when bringing examples of contemporary conflicts, she says that, at one moment, one will be shocked by images of war and violence, but, some moments later, one will continue preparing dinner, or engaging in any ordinary activity, as if had happened. Sontag is highly sceptical of the role of an image to produce ???require an ethical attitude. However, after the Abu Ghraib's photos became a focal point of discussion in the American policy establishment, primarily because of torture, Sontag will take another attitude, claiming the need of a different attitude towards the photographs published. For further discussion, see: Sontag, 2004a; 2004b; 2003.

words, to understand “the extent of what is perceived to exist” (Butler, 2009, p.70). This is relevant since what is at stake here is what is seen in the moment of creating the common meaning we give to the world we share.

For Sontag, this gap between word and image came to exist because photographs had lost the power to enrage. As she states, “narratives can make us understand; photographs do something else. They haunt us” (Sontag, 1970, p.83). According to her, even though one sees a photo that might shock, soon this feeling fades away, turning into a *cliché* (Sontag, 2004b; 2003; 1970). In other words, the images *per se* are not enough to ignite ethical responsiveness, especially when concerning images of torture or war atrocities. Sontag will develop how images of such violence cause a feeling of shock and even indignation, but they are forgotten due to their unbearable content.

Regarding the idea of *shock*, if we turn to the writings of Walter Benjamin, we might find his concern about the reproducibility of images, specifically towards works of art, in the epoch distinguished by technological innovations of transmission and creation of art[69] (Duarte, 2013, p.17). Benjamin remarks that cinema was the very first artistic expression able to display how materiality interferes in people’s live” (Benjamin, 2015, p.244). Unlike painting, or even photography, the cinematographer’s image comes from another logic, in which "the cinematographic representation of reality is incomparably superior to that of painting" (Benjamin, 2015, p.27), insofar as “the machine [which records] allows the profound penetration of reality’s inner core”[70] (Benjamin, 2015, p.27).

[69] According to Benjamin: “What disappears during the era of technical reproducibility of work of art is its aura. This process is symptomatic, and its consequences extends beyond the realm of art. The technique of reproduction delineates what was reproduced and what was produced under the scope of tradition. By reproducing the same work multiple times, it replaces the unique existence of a work of art by a serial one. So, to the extent that reproduction allows the recipient to access the work under any circumstances, it updates it constantly" (Benjamin, 2015, p.15). Regarding this, cinema would configure the technique of art that would be most damaging to tradition, in the sense that it redefines and impoverishes the human experience of reality - intensifying it (and, hence, the reason of Benjamin's critique on totalitarianism and mass movements). Therefore, Benjamin proposes the politicization of aesthetics, so that cinema does not become a machine of alienation, but of political revolution. Along his argumentation, Benjamin says: "Fascism thus leads to an *aestheticisation* of politics. [...] All efforts to aestheticise politics culminate in one place: war "(Benjamin, 2015, p. 34).

[70] For instance, Benjamin highlights how differently a functioning clock is framed in a play and in a movie. While in the play the clock does not have as much impact on the performativity of the work itself, during a movie, on contrary, it is quite recurrent to use the object to signal the real time, thus acquiring an essential function. According to the author, then, cinema is the first expression of art in which the materiality is glimpsed acting directly with human beings. "Therefore, it could be an extraordinary instrument of materialistic representation" (Benjamin, 2015, p.39).

Therefore, the more apprehension of the reality of cinema implies an impoverishment of experience, the more we deteriorate the critical capacity of comprehending the world we share n.

"What defines cinema is not precisely the way through which the human is represented in front of the machine, but how it represents the world due to this machine," argues Benjamin (2015, p. 28). Moving images intensify the apprehension of reality, so that "they do not [duplicate] the illusion as real, but [they interpret] reality itself as illusion" (Buck-Morss, 2015, p. 246). The complex Benjaminian idea of intensification of the present time introduced by the development of the means of production, specifically in the case of video and cinema, has altered not only how we apprehend the world, but also the capacity to imagine a different reality (Hansen, 2015, p.235). In addition, cinematographic technology provides a proliferation of the sensation of shock, in which “human consciousness [finds itself] in a permanent state of psychic defense” (Hansen, 2015, p.244).

Certainly, Benjamin was dealing with the first explorations of cinema, and we cannot say Abu Ghraib photos were a “movie” in an equal sense. Nonetheless, the relationship between machine, reality, representation, and image is the same. Notably regarding what Benjamin did not see: the reproducibility of images and works through technology that changes completely our relationship with reality. The photos inform the spectator of an intensified experience of the conflict, but, as Sontag will argue, this shock vanishes away and people get back to the dinner table, looking forward to discussing other things that are not what they just saw because they can barely stand looking at them.

The reaction to those atrocities has much to say about the ethical ability to respond to the pain of others. The aesthetic experience informs how we are able to be sensitive regarding this other *who appears to us*. Politics, according to Hannah Arendt, is a *space of appearances* in which we appear to each other as a subjectivity who reveals himself[71] (Arendt, 2009; 2010; 2011; 2013). Nevertheless, the frames

[71] There is here a conception of a phenomenal character of the world, which is necessarily intermediated by the sensory experience. To act and / or to speak, the individual appears to others - and this is the moment in which individuals reveal their unique personality. Therefore, the world is a space of appearances, wherein for individuals to appear among themselves, they need the condition of plurality. Through this interaction where individuals come together, it is possible, then, to build a worldly objective reality that interests the whole collective (Arendt, 2010, p.220-223).

of the photos do not sustain a space in which one might identify what is human or not (Butler, 2015, p.99; Butler, 2009). As Benjamin suggests, one of the symptoms of the impoverishment of the experience unveiled in the cinemas is the decline of the capacity to stare back (Benjamin, 2015). Hereby, photos reveal the difficulty to look at and recognize the lack of subjectivity of the person who appears in the public sphere. Thus, being sensitive to the one who appears to us signifies a critical attitude towards the reality there is in common in late modernity. It is a political act to consider other imaginaries to conciliate with the shared contemporary conditions.

Framing has been a particular key method for understanding coverage of conflict lately[72], in which a critical approach will look at the "relationship between media frames and broader issues of political and social order" (Carragee & Roefs, 2004, p.214; Al Nahed & Hammond, 2018). Another way of reading it, as Al Nahed & Hammond (2018) presents, is how framing analysis is applied careless to different problems and contexts (2018, p.366), which it can be debatable in how to problematise the concept. Regardless of the method, framing has direct material consequences in social dynamics. For instance, the War on Terror instigated a sensitive public discussion on the legal limits' civil rights (Al Nahed & Hammond, 2018): Blaukamp et al (2018) analyse how certain ways of framing altered people's perception on the use of the torture in detention centers. For that, they realized a survey experiment referencing the 9/11 terrorist attacks to broader American interests abroad and other topics to understand what reflect the public opinion[73]. In this sense, framing revels a social dynamic that determines what is visible in the public realm (Azoulay, 2009).

Butler advances the conditions under which those frames of violence turn the viewer into a relevant part of an immediate visual relation to reality (Butler, 2009, p.73). In accordance with Azoulay's argument on the imperial act of taking a picture, Butler says that the operation of the frame is an expression of state control through forcible dramaturgy (2009, p.73). Precisely these frames, that generates

[72] To the method of framing, see: Entman, Robert. Towards Clarification of a fractured paradigm. Journal of Communication, v.43, n.4, 1993, p.51-58. Also, there is a special issue of Media, War & Conflict Journal (2018) – Framing War and Conflict, that explores different ways of framing as a relevant method of research concerning war and conflict.

[73] They say: "although our study demonstrates that majority support or majority opposition to torture can be elicited from US public opinion, depending on how it is framed, we must exercise caution in drawming conclusions about the absolute limits of public support or opposition to this policy" (Blauwkamp et al, 2018, p.21).

specific affects crossing bodies, must become not just the basis, but the very critique of Critical Theory. Butler goes, then, further than Sontag's critique of interpretation and image, highlighting the role of framing per se as a foundational *problemátique* to think of subject and politics through the relationship between the camera and ethical responsiveness. As she argues:

> Interpretation does not emerge as the spontaneous act of a single mind, but as a consequence of a certain field of intelligibility that helps to form and frame our responsiveness to the impinging world (a world on which we depend, but which also impinges upon us, exacting responsiveness in complex, sometimes ambivalent, forms). Hence, precariousness as a generalized condition relies on a conception of the body as fundamentally dependent on, and conditioned by, a sustained and sustainable world; responsiveness-and thus, ultimately, responsibility-is located in the affective responses to a sustaining and impinging world (Butler, 2009, p.34).

Sontag asks whether the tortured can look back, and what they see when they look at us (Sontag apud Butler, 2009, p.99). For Butler, this is what is at stake to find the common ground of the world in common – finding the common condition of vulnerability that affects us all and our conditions of giving meaning to the social phenomena[74]. Certainly, against Sontag's skepticism, Butler is advancing in a more radical democratic grammar – one that finds a way of thinking together in alliance[75].

Here, there is an issue that is not quite easy to solve: dealing with images might provide other ways of accessing reality, but there is always the danger of aestheticising the subject who appears towards us – making the image a circulation "beautiful" or even "merchantable" picture (as Benjamin once predicted concerning the problem of reproducibility). In his essay *Author as a Producer*, Benjamin states that "what we require of the photographer is the ability to give his picture a caption that wrenches it from modish commerce and gives it

[74] Here, although dealing with photography, it is helpful to rely in Azoulay's assumption that photos are not representational objects but political artefacts. Then, images must, somehow, trigger a "civil political space", allowing a debate of what is visible or not when seeing images of violence – what is missing? (Azoulay, 2008). Putting in these terms leads to look at images of conflict in its possibility of generating an ethical debate on contemporary conflicts and invisible narratives.

[75] According to Butler: "the task is not to find a single or synthetic framework, but to find a way of thinking in alliance. The alliance is broad, and it is expanding, and it is a struggle for a more radical democracy." With that, Butler is advancing a feminist agenda looking at radical ways of engaging in the public sphere, enlarging modes of representation that exist in our texture realities. The author has been discussing epistemological standards that expand our sense of politics - one that is worried about the common good -, which implies that dealing with reality and knowledge demands a larger theorization of the political but finding its condition from the present. For more about this topic, see Butler, 2018.

a revolutionary use-value. But we will make this demand most emphatically when we – the writers – take us photograph". Benjamin, then, has an ambiguous relationship to the transformation of mechanisms of transmission of late modernity – one must hold suspicion facing images, but, at the same time, Benjamin seems to believe in a subversive power of visual culture (Jenning et al, 2008). However, when engaging in critical thinking, the question is not to avoid the aesthetic properties of representing human suffering – but to acknowledge it to enlarge awareness of the entailments belonging to the discourse of aestheticisation (Reinhardt, 2007; 2018).

Remembering the discussion presented in the previous chapter, Georges Didi-Huberman will reflect what would be the true value of the images for historic knowledge. How do we elaborate on knowledge of our history by studying the images – moreover, how do we elaborate on the possibility of politics? I bring here Didi-Huberman's discussion of the (perhaps) unique images from Auschwitz. There is no representation of Auschwitz – any attempt seems not enough. Somehow, Auschwitz resembles what Blanchot called an "invisible [that] was forever rendered visible". Many authors, after Auschwitz, interpreted it as a new sort of category imperative (Hockheimer, reference) refuses to identify any visual expression that relates to it, arguing that it comprises the unrepresentable. Indeed, there is nothing to represent when dealing with violence. There are no words.

However, intercepted by resistant movements, photos dated from August 1944 of what seemed to be women and men walking in the direction of the chamber of gas were found later and displayed in exhibitions held in Paris and Tel Aviv, curated by Didi-Huberman (2008). This controversial reception – (should we expose it? Should we fail in the representation's trap? *There is nothing to see regarding barbarism*) lead the French author to discuss the limits and potentialities of using images in a method of historical inquiry. It is not my goal to enter the historicity debate, but, to the aims of this thesis, this event is quite insightful towards the aestheticisation discussion. Or, further, to what I am calling attention to the role of judgment and imagination when dealing with the unspeakable from the violence.

Those images reveal very little, but, still, they are perhaps the remaining evidence of the barbarism – it is well-known that the camps found by the Allies and Soviets were quite different from what remained since the camps were hastily destroyed on the brink of war loss. For some time, what remained were the words,

the witness. This is not to say that these four photographs represent reality. This is to say that the very conditions of possibility of these photos – since the moment of pressing the camera shelter up to their circulation and display – unveils the complex constellation of the subject who looks at it, in the present time, considering the past.

> 'The authentic image of the past' writes Walter Benjamin, 'appears only in a flash. An image that springs up, only to be eclipsed forever in the very next moment. The motionless truth that merely keeps the researcher waiting does not correspond in any way to the concept of truth in the subject of history. Rather, it relies on Dante's lines, which say: it is another, unique and irreplaceable image of the past that fades with each present that has failed to recognise itself as its aim" (Didi-Huberman, 2008, p.47).

In this regard, Didi-Huberman is advancing in a method of using images as an epistemological attempt of thinking ethically towards the other who appears. More than looking at that image, the ethical attitude requires learning "how to look into images to see that of which they are survivors" (Didi-Huberman, 2008, p.182). After all, these images are not for the past, but for the present – for our eyes today. They look at us.

In this sense, my argument of leaving the fissure of the images open goes in direction of acknowledging that there is no redemption left – but, in some way, these fissures enlarge the public regime of visibilities. Leaving it into tension allows the critical endeavour to be one that opens methodological and political paths while acknowledging that things escape us. To think, despite all.

> But why in spite of all? This expression denotes tearing: all refers to the power of historical contradictions to which we cannot yet find an answer: in spite of resisting this power solely by the heuristic power of the singular. It is a flash that tears the sky when everything seems lost. It is the situation that seems to exemplify the gesture of the clandestine photographer of Auschwitz. Did it not deserve this minimal homage: that we cast our eyes for a moment at the object of his risk, the four photographs snatched from that hell? (Didi-Huberman, 2008, p.32).

Another curating practice I would like to stress comes from the Museu da Maré, a slam complex in the city of Rio de Janeiro[76]. In the line of reasoning of identifying violence as a practice that permeates lived experiences of politics, the Museu da Maré embodies the complexities of warfare practices. Despite being a

[76] The Maré Complex is in the north zone of Rio de Janeiro, and it comprises 16 favelas. The complex was built after systemic removals of the population in the noble areas of the city throughout the 20th century.

place of violent interventions of militia and police, the Museu reveals the possibility of politics despite all.

On my visit to the museum, I was left a few blocks away from the address, on Brazil Avenue, because the driver did not want to enter the favela. “I’m on a private car, you see” he said to me. I was scared but somewhat relieved. Odd as it might be, entering on my own would be less suspicious indeed – but I did not realise this until I got there. The Maré complex is highly covered by ugly walls, which pretends to make a visual harmonisation to those who just left the International Airport leading to the tourist zones of the city. Being on the other side of the wall is not inviting at all. In the middle of one of the most violent places in the city, I walked my way to the museum all by myself – clearly an alien to this arid environment. When I got into the museum, I was received by its director, who showed me each detail along with narratives from the population who live there.

The museum has a “sensory, poetic and dialogical design”, producing a “politics of life that shatters the conditions of possibility for discourses that reduce favelas to a politics of death, to crime and violence” (Poets, 2020, p.2) – namely, the space for the complete sovereign rule. The museum has undergoing construction. Its particularity is due to the residents’ active role in building every aspect of the museum, by sharing their personal objects to be displayed, but, also, participating in social activities. Then, the space provides a practice of memorialisation “that aims to show how the construction of the past is tied to how the present and future times are imagined” (Poets, 2020, p.5) – divided into thematic sections and periods of the expansion of the Maré complex.

Each space has a ludic aspect, but one space strikes the most. As I said, every piece of the museum, even its curated space, is brought by residents (there is even a part in which they brought sand and dust from where they originally came from). One of the last galleries I visited, covered in all black, aims to present what scares those who live there. On a wall, they displayed pieces of house walls that were hit by bullets due to confrontations.

Figure 14: Museu da Maré. Fear of Violence - ongoing work (Photo taken by me during my visit)

Figure 15: Museu da Maré. Fear of Violence - ongoing work (Photo taken by me during my visit)

I asked the director how they came up with this idea. Without noticing, I was looking for the aesthetical formalities that make people decide which colours, disposition, or any other formal aspects that would justify why using the wall in this way. Or even, a theoretical presupposition before the work per se. He looked at me a little confused but explained: he said that they created the spaces in the museum from what people bring to them. In one of their activities, they asked what affects them, and suddenly, with the support of the artistic coordinator, they spontaneously make a wall of this violence registers. This quite simple act – from a solidarity network of support – reveals so much. The aesthetical experience is about the ways

we feel the world, the ways we see things. I did not know the name of those who passed through this, but, somehow, it made me responsible for looking and acknowledging that there are other ways of being affected by the distribution of sensible. Then, the critical attitude is one that opens fissures to invite us into the process of engaging in another's worldview – though we cannot feel it, we could, somehow, imagine it. We come to see a frame, but, still, it's a glimpse of the constellation we are embedded within. The experience of the sublime, with horror and fascination, suspends thinking. However, as Arendt has shown, it is precisely where thought falters that we ought to persist in thinking. Imagine, in spite of all. Thus, perhaps we should let the images haunt us in order to keep imagining differently.

3. I.R. As A Work of Art:
what does those frames have to say towards the other?

The whole problem is born of the fact
that we have come to the image with the idea of synthesis […]
the image is an act and not a thing.
Sartre, L'Imagination, 1936

Ceci n'est pas une pipe is a confronting painting by René Magritte, in which we can see a pipe drawing. Far from ordinary, this is precisely what evolves all Magritte's works: to make the familiar unfamiliar, the ordinary extraordinary, or, in his words, "to make everyday objects shriek aloud" (Magritte, 2015). This remarkable painting came from his first word-image attempts to irrupt the conditions of possibility of real in representing the world around us. This work is pretty simple: it is literally a pipe, painted in simple colours. Nevertheless, we know it goes further: what Magritte is provoking is that what we see is not a pipe, but a representation of it. Thus, paintings and works of art are not a reliable representation of what reality is. In this sense, Magritte among other Surrealist's artists such as André Breton, Salvador Dalí, and Frida Kahlo, was making associations between objects and subjects reflect on how daily life is somewhat odd.

For some time, artists would recur to abstractions to inform and contemplate the world around us. These abstractions worked as a sort of synthesis to explain the world (for instance, all artists that accompanied conflict zones represent what happened there) (Bourke, 2017; Butler, 2004). Fields of knowledge do work with abstractions as well. As theorists, most of us have learned to do proper work isolating some aspects through deduction until creating an abstraction of what reality *really* is. Or what it is *supposed* to be. In International Relations Theory, we did not go further: "War, the core area of IR, has been abstracted into the language of strategic weaponry and games to the detriment of scholarly inclusions of bodies, death, and killing" (Sylvester, 2001, p.540). This is not a naïve project since it still determines the way we theorise about the world and sustains a specific order. An order where bodies – with no agency - are only relevant if they live or die or bodies

when docile (Foucault, 2009). Even so, most bodies remain ignored in the main narratives of IR theory (Jabri, 2006, p.825; Sylvester, 2012; 2001; Wilcox, 2015). Conversely, "security studies lack the reflexivity necessary to see its contribution to the very context it seeks to domesticate" (Wilcox, 2015, p.3). In other words, not only does this framework privilege a kind of individual – male, white, rational, and so on -, but it also reifies the spread of violence to those who are not eligible to belong politically. Those who are not eligible enough to expose their pain in public space, thus, do not have "the ontological right to exist" (Butler, 2004, p.132).

Hence, drawing from this present chapter will argue that IR *per se* works as a work of art: what we see in the discipline production informs our judgment of what is the world we belong to, not only as researchers but as political and social beings. To Emmanuel Kant, looking at a work of art affects other aspects of our comprehension: the formation of a judgment, which relates to a common ground among individuals discussing what is beautiful. This same argument leads Hannah Arendt to argue that the incomprehensible monstrosity of our period is the evil realized by bureaucrats when discussing Eichmann's trial in Jerusalem – "he suffered from a lack of imagination", she argues.[77] Reacting to the work of arts is, then, reacting to the distribution of sensible available, forming a judgment which, discussed in public space, creates the ethical standards of political action considering the other.

In this regard, this chapter will start by arguing that works of art might offer an alternative dimension to enlarge our comprehension of bodily experiences within the I.R. field. The violence upon the body can be translated otherwise using other frames of narrating them, one that considers the personal experience of violence. This is not to argue that we could feel it as well, but to find the conditions of possibility of enlarging our judgment towards the experience of the other. After this

[77] When Arendt wrote her famous essay on Eichmann's trial, she develops further her comprehension of thinking and judgment as important political attitudes, since both of them, although not directly political, informs the way we apprehend the world individually and then, within a plurality. In this way, in a world of appearances, namely, in the space in common each one of us appear to each other, we deliberate a common sense of ethics. Even tough Arendt herself never wrote anything directly on aesthetics, her reading of politics has an aesthetic ground since she follows Kant's concept of judgment – "she knew well that Kant's Critique of Judgment was not a book on politics, yet she decided to read it as Kant's unfinished 'politics' (Arendt, 2013; Sjöholm, 2015, p.ix). Concerning debates on aesthetics, Kant is the fundamental work to discuss a creation of judgment that informs tastes and, most importantly, *doxa* – the Greek word that designates opinion. However, Kant limited his analysis exclusively to a Theory of Art, namely, a study of taste and beauty, not to a broader political theory.

discussion, I shall present how IR operates as a work of art producing epistemologies that hierarchizes which violence and narratives matter. By observing the aesthetisation of suffering, this section will discuss the ethical criticism of using images to narrate global violence – to what extent does this fall into the commodification of art and pain. This section will argue that IR produces an epistemology that frames how we look at phenomena in the field. Following this section, it is imperative to present how aesthetics is introduced in the discipline as an alternative to Security Studies, but I will proceed by observing the limits of relying on aesthetics. However, in accordance with what I shall be arguing in the previous sections, I will introduce the coming philosophy of Walter Benjamin to highlight how aesthetics is understood here as a sensory experience of perception, and therefore its materiality comes not from art, but from reality itself. Thus, contrary to Kant, to whom aesthetics was confined to a study of taste and beauty, Benjamin will advance in a concept of aesthetics that looks at reality, and how one reacts toward the world in an aesthetic way. In this sense, the aesthetic experience is not confined to the work of art but considers a reality in common as well. This living experience of apprehending the world informs a judgment, a taste, on how to comprehend reality. Hence, the experience addresses the capacity to create meaning for an event. In other words, it refers to the construction of meaning in the world in common that politically connects us as subjectivities. Finally, I will end this chapter by defending the use of images, despite all suffering, as a mechanism for enlarging our ability to imagine *differently*.

This chapter aims to argue that I.R. as a discipline works creating an abstraction of what is violence and subjectivity. After all, what are the conditions of possibility to know when one says this is I.R? Perhaps, as Magritte's *the Treachery of Images* suggests, what we are seeing as IR is just an abstraction of it, not what it is. Conversely, it aims to demonstrate that IR argumentation of introducing an essence of international politics is, in fact, an abstraction of this very essence. As Magritte's painting reveals to us, there is a significant gap between subject and object: the pipe, as an object, is a representation, an abstraction of a pipe. It does not correspond to a true one. Accordingly, IR political theory reasoning, even though it advances in a proper grammar to explain world politics, falls into the same trap: it does not correspond accordingly to the object of study. As Shapiro observes, it is not that much to say of what is real in war or violence,

but what is the *priori* set of true statements that inform our judgment of *what we see*.

3.1. Violence is mute: limits when explaining the unspeakable

Figure 16: Ilana Zalis. Homenagem aos 434 Mortos e Desaparecidos durante a Ditadura Militar Brasileira (1964-1985) do Estado do Rio de Janeiro (2020)

"Frente a lo que desaparece: lo que no desaparece", says the Mexican writer Sara Uribe in her book *Antígona Gonzalez*. The work above, from artist Ilana Zalis, is an attempt to express what has happened to 434 dead and disappeared persons during the Brazilian dictatorship only in the State of Rio de Janeiro. This number is uncertain. Most of the incidents related to the dictator government were found out due to victims, survivors, and families who still fight for the right to memory, truth, and justice. However, the story of those who did not count as dictatorship victims, being it because it belongs to other social classes or being it because they were used to traditional violations of human rights[78], remains blurred. There are names and bodies still missing. Nevertheless, as Uribe states, looking at what is no longer there, there is something that standstills. So, what remains?

[78] See for instance all criticism regarding indigenous rights, black movements and the biggest removals that lead to construction of Cidade de Deus, among other social spaces and the grown of slums during the 70s only in the city of Rio de Janeiro.

Zalis did not want to rely on numbers or face pictures, because, in Brazil, those missing faces cross generations and historical periods. Today, the state of Rio de Janeiro has an average of 15 missing people *per* day, according to data from the State Secretariat for Social Development and Human Rights. Thus, disappearing and dead people as a result of state truculence is a phenomenon that corresponds to a profound violent and colonialized society, in which the Dictatorship was not an exception but a regular public policy that determines which lives matter (Pélbart, 2018).

What interests me here is the translation of the unspeakable. Zalis employs oil paints and tissue remains, which is highly significant. Tissue is one of the objects brought to remind someone's life – what remains -, in the context of memory social movements. The paint is fleeting. It seems to the viewer that it will fade away at any moment to the viewer. As if to remind us of the unbearable weight of life's fragility. Yet, something remains, precisely when everything else is missing.

How to translate the unimaginable? How to tell a story of violence? Perhaps there is no possible way to achieve it fully. In I.R. debates, violence (and, consequently, political action) is framed by the traditional relationship between war and politics. In a field that discusses exhaustively war and modern conflict, we still have little to say about bodily experiences of violence and how we tell stories from them.

Feminist theorists have a fundamental role at making one sensitive towards these questions, by re-framing the experience of violence to other narratives. As Ann Tickner once stated: "international relations is a man's world, a world of power and conflict in which warfare is a privileged activity" (Tickner, 1988, p.429). Feminists have contributed "through analyses and reformulation of the traditional contents of Security Studies, explorations of the roles that women and gender play in combat and combat resolutions" (Sjoberg, 2010, p.3). Overall, Feminists have introduced an enlargement of the referential object in I.R., by exposing their gender dynamics that informs power relations. Concerning violence, as violence is an important feature of modern politics, some literature will highlight the relevance of the body to discuss the understandings of subjectivity and politics implicated in the discussion on violence (Wilcox, 2015, p.18). Redimensioning, then, the warfare to the more intimate relationship with violence can illuminate the impossibility of speaking of the unspeakable.

Chaouliaraki, for instance, discussing war photography, will observe how practices of visual representation of violence, specifically concerning battlefield, will produce a paradox: while aiming to represent and denounce bodily suffering, conflicts are fought under a moral principle. Simultaneously, the visions of humanity that it carries are of bodies de-humanized (2018, p.72). Hence, she will argue how the representation of conflict produces war as an imaginary, with "specific performances of the battlefield at specific moments in time (…) and also cultivating longer-term dispositions towards the vision of humanity that each war comes to defend" (Chouliaraki, 2018, p.73). With that, she discusses how the visual configuration of bodies in battles shifts. Nevertheless, the portrait or representation of an injured body leaves a fractured dynamic, as Der Derian argues, it is ultimately the dead broady that come to provide the "corporeal gravitas of war" (Der Derian, 2005, p.30). Still, it falls to provide the necessary tools of talking about the bodily experience of violence in a way of turning it visible in public realm (Butler, 2009).

In this sense, Primo Levi produced one of the major masterpieces of the 20th century, *If This Is a Man*, aiming to explain what happened in Auschwitz. Calling Ulysses, Primo Levi tells us "We hoped not to live and tell *but to live to tell*". However, how do narrate the terror?

Somehow, art helps us to comprehend violence in its unspeakable texture. Turning to oil paints, or to cameras allows most narratives of the unimaginable to become imaginable to those who did not witness the conflict; or even to those who were present but did not find any possible word to explain it.[79] Nevertheless, violence is not a "thing" easily represented through images, poetry or works of art. As it shall be argued, the exercised of portraying violence corresponds to the imaginary of warfare (Sylvester 2008) – guns, machines, great explosions, and, to a certain extent, injured bodies – what violence left. Danchev argues, quoting W. H. Auden, that "the primary function of poetry, as of all the arts, is to make us more aware of ourselves and the world around us" (Auden apud Danchev, 2009, p.4). But

[79] It is precisely this anxiety of representing that turns evident the complicity between aestheticized violence and fascism, in Benjamin's understanding, as argued previously (Benjamin, 2008, p.42; Hanssen, 2000, p.225). Here, as long with Benjamin's discussion on fascism and aesthetics, it is interesting to highlight Sontag's essay Fascinating Fascism. There, Sontag will discuss the cultural approaches from the work of Riefenstahl and her relation to the Nazi propaganda (Benjamin, 2008, p.45; Hanssen, 2000, p.225; Sontag, 1984). Further, discussing on the Nazi icon, Sontag remarks that "shocking people in this context also means inuring them, as Nazi material enters the vast repertory of popular iconography usable for the ironic commentaries of Pop Art" (Sontag apud Hanssen, 2000, p.225).

he continues: “I do not know if such awareness makes us more moral or more efficient: I hope not” (Auden apud Danchev, 2009, p.4).

At the same time, curiously, bodies “are largely absent in the discourses of International Relations” (Jabri, 2006, p.825). Despite the practices of violence going in the direction of human bodies, viscerally, the traditional literature does not rely on the gaze for those subjectivities object of direct violence, expressing little concern with war and hence violence against bodies (Campbell & Dillon, 1993; Jabri, 2006; Hanssen, 2000, p.225; Shapiro, 2005, p.235; Scarry, 1985; Sylvester, 2002; Wilcox, 2015). Bodies will matter because, as Butler states, “bodies matter even in a domain that remains abstracted from view, cleansed almost of all messiness, preferring formulaic renditions even where there espouse the moral and the ethical” (Butler, 1993, p.ix), as Feminist and Poststructuralist literature has been pointing out within the frame of the discipline. Butler asks, then:

> Given this understanding of construction as constitutive constraint, is it still possible to raise the critical question of how such constraints not only produce the domain of intelligible bodies, but produce as well a domain of unthinkable, abject, unlivable bodies? This latter domain is not the opposite of the former, for oppositions are, after all, part of intelligibility; the latter is the excluded and illegible domain that haunts the former domain as the spectre of its own impossibility, the very limit to intelligibility, its constitutive outside. How, then, might one alter the very terms that constitute the "necessary" domain of bodies through rendering unthinkable and unlivable another domain of bodies, those that do not matter in the same way (Butler, 1993, p.ix).

If war is about injuring bodies, so how come the bodily experience of violence is still a topic in dispute in I.R.? (Sylvester, 2013; Wilcox, 2015). Elaine Scarry, for instance, describes a certain reluctance to talk about bodies during war. She advances that “one can read many pages of a historic or strategic account of a particular military campaign (…) without encountering the acknowledgement that the purpose of the event described is to alter (to burn, to blast, to shell, to cut) human tissue” (Scarry, 1985, p.64). Feminist theorists have been arguing for some time on the relevance of embodying the individual experiences of violence to discuss power and politics, especially in the ways that “military organisations use clinical languages to distance themselves from body-injuring activities of war” (Sylvester, 2013, p.66, but also: Ackerly et al, 2006; Butler, 2009; Elshtain, 2009; Enloe, 2000; Hanssen, 2000; Jabri, 2013; 2006; Wilcox, 2015).

When bodies come to the frame, the encounter with the other is frustrated, since no one appears. The body appears as a fatality or a *simulacrum* from the

consequences of violence. In the attempt to "humanize" violence due to its unrepresentable feature,[80] the injured human body is often object of the gaze of understanding (Wilcox, 2015). But an injured or killed body cannot provide enough ground for an ethical attitude of looking at this subjectivity as political beings, since we are dealing with a "reduction of the human to biological being" (Wilcox, 2015, p.44). In order words, we fail to understand them as in their human dimension, in all their complexities, in our ethical attitude in the encounter with the other – because the other does not appear to me as human. As Butler argues, "the representation of bodies fails do fully 'capture' the human subject, as such bodies are not necessarily viewed as anything other than bodies" (Butler, 2004, p.142; Wilcox, 2015, p.45). An injured or even dead body largely relates to what Arendt remarked that "every practice of violence, like all action, changes the world, but the most probable change is a more violent world" (Arendt, 1969, p.80). As violence is mute[81], it reveals nothing in political terms. Hence, it is necessary to a fuller account of this encounter with the other – not as body per se, but what sociality remained, to "begin to account for bodies in their complex relationship to violence" (Wilcox, 2015, p.45).

In this sense, I.R. theory fails to grasp the relevance of the absence of subjectivity in theorising with violence, ignoring the "subject-matter of its frames of knowledge" (Jabri, 2006, p.825). In other words, I.R. has a specific way of seeing bodies that informs the practice of theorising the field (Shapiro, 2005, p.235). So, there is something about the abstraction of violence that does not take into account the embodied experience of subjectivity. In addition to this *problemàtique*, there is also the question that, in seeking to represent the subject of violence, aiming to refer to a certain reality of lived experience, might lead to a representational realism in Spivak's terms, that is the "disclose through the concrete experience of the intellectual, the one who diagnoses the episteme" (Spivak, 1988; Jabri, 2013). This

[80] It is worth noting that this is at the center of discussion in Memory Cultural Studies, in which there is a rejection of any attempt to formulate an ethical-political task in culture (Adorno, 2007r; Hanssen, 2000, p.223-226).

[81] In the works *The Human Condition* and *On Violence*, Arendt advances in the distinction between power and violence, in which the latter has a fundamental instrumental role in the public sphere, in contrast to power, which is, an action in concert – the ultimate act of politics, so to speak. So, if violence is an instrument of politics, pure violence is merely destructive. As she argues: "power and violence are opposites; where the one rules absolutely, the other is absent. Violence appears where power is in jeopardy (…) Violence can destroy power; it is utterly incapable of creating it (Arendt, 1969, p.56).

is to say that, besides the fact that bodies matter to reframe the complexities and potentialities of violence as a practice, there is also an aspect of the conditions of possibility of theorising violence from the other I see, as unreachable in some ways. If theorising creates a certain abstraction, one ought to be aware of the violent practices of portraying other subjectivities to advance in an enlargement of understanding violence.

Again, aestheticisation is an underlying feature in any attempt at representation. If I see feeling, and this might inform an "aestheticising" movement at looking at the injured body, then we cannot lose sight of what Benjamin warned about concerning the transformation of the means of production (Benjamin, 2012; 2008). In Benjamin's essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, the German thinker looks at the way cultural expression is impacted by the conditions of perception altered by improved technological devices, in which cinema[82] would be the first expression of art in which the materiality is glimpsed acting directly with human beings because of its movement intensity. "Therefore, it could be an extraordinary instrument of materialistic representation" (Benjamin, 2012, p.39; Duarte, 2014, p.17).[83] He continues: "what defines cinema is not precisely the way through which the human is represented in front of the machine, but how it represents the world due to this machine" (2012, p. 28). Moving images intensify the life, so that "they do not [duplicate] the illusion as real, but [they interpret] reality itself as illusion" (Burck-Morss, 2012, p. 246). The complex Benjaminian idea of intensification of present time introduced by the development of the means of production, specifically in the case of video and cinema, has altered

[82] Unlike painting, or even photography, the cinematographer's image comes from another logic, in which "the cinematographic representation of reality is incomparably superior to that of painting" (Benjamin, 2012, p.27), insofar as "the machine [which records] allows the profound penetration of reality's inner core"[82] (Benjamin, 2012, p.27). Therefore, the more apprehension of the reality of cinema implies an impoverishment of experience, the more we deteriorate the critical capacity of comprehending the world we share in common.

[83] According to Benjamin: "What disappears during the era of technical reproducibility of work of art is its aura. This process is symptomatic, and its consequences extends beyond the realm of art. The technique of reproduction delineates what was reproduced and what was produced under the scope of tradition. By reproducing the same work multiple times, it replaces the unique existence of a work of art by a serial one. So, to the extent that reproduction allows the recipient to access the work under any circumstances, it updates it constantly" (Benjamin, 2012, p.15). Regarding this, the cinema would configure the technique of art that that would be most damaging to tradition, in the sense that it redefines and impoverishes the human experience of reality - intensifying it (and, hence, the reason of Benjamin's critique on totalitarianism and mass movements). Therefore, Benjamin proposes the politicization of aesthetics, so that cinema does not become a machine of alienation, but of political revolution (Benjamin, 2012, p. 34).

not only how we apprehend the world, but also the capacity to imagine a different reality (Hansen, 2015, p.235). In addition, the cinematographic technology provides a proliferation of the sensation of shock, in which "human consciousness [finds itself] in a permanent state of psychic defense" (Hansen, 2015, p.244). If, lately, ways of seeing are informed by a radically transformation of reproducibility of images – being videos, works of art, news – due to technology, then our aesthetic experience of dealing with phenomena also changes.

This leads me to the problem with the idea of "shock."[84] If shock is what leads an individual viewer to larger ethical/political questions about a violent act, how this informs an ethical awareness concerning injured or dead bodies (Butler, 2009; Sontag, 2003; 1977)? It seems that, returning to the *problemátique* of humanising violence by showing pictures of injured bodies already posed by feminists, the representation/abstraction cannot but fails into the dilemma of emptying the body of the "other" to the viewer develop their own ethical consciousness (Sontag, 1977). In this regard, as feminists such as Sylvester and Wilcox suggest, a critical thinking needs to theorise on violence acknowledging the embodied experience of the other – seeing and imagining as critical standards of ethics, namely, humanising the injured or dead body. If to represent is to aestheticise, Benjamin offers an alternative framework of rescuing politics in art. As Buck-Morss argues, Benjamin asks the art "to undo the alienation of the corporeal sensorium, to restore the instinctual power of the human bodily senses for the sake of humanity's self-preservation" (1994, p.5) – after all, Benjamin was concerned with the aestheticizing of politics as practiced by fascism that takes the sublime experience to the annihilation of humankind. In his words:

> "Fiat ars – pereat mundus", says fascism, expecting from war, as Marinetti admits, the artistic gratification of a sense of perception altered by technology. This is evidently the consummation of *l'art pour l'art*. Humankind, which once, in Homer, was an object of contemplation for the Olympian gods, has now become one for itself. Its self-alienation has reached the point where it can experience its own annihilation as a supreme aesthetic pleasure. Such is the aestheticizing of politics, as practiced by fascism. Communism replies by politicizing art (Benjamin, 2008, p.42).

[84] Benjamin draws his notion of shock from a specific Freudian insight – a idea that "consciousness is a shield protecting the organism against stimuli – excessive energies -by preventing their retention, their impress as memory" Buck-Morss, 1992, p.15). Buck-Morss advances: "without the depth of memory, experience is impoverished". Hence, the impoverished of experience, in Benjamin terms, are intimately connected to the material conditions of possibility of perception.

Hence, art turns a possible apparatus of fissure – or opening breaches, to what Benjamin would call as the redemption moment, namely, the moment of awareness of our own embeddedness in history. If, as Terry Eagleton argues, "aesthetics is born as a discourse of the body" (Eagleton apud Buck-Morss, 1992, p.5), we might use the aesthetical experience from work of arts as a mimesis that unveils an exercise of imagination, since the work of art will affect the whole corporeal sensorium. In this sense, Primo Levi, for instance, presents us with a powerful ethical exercise of imagination, relying in words and small narratives from the horror not to represent it fully as it was – because violence is mute, there is nothing to appear. Instead, Levi asks us to listen and imagine how these persons were, their origins and tastes, what they have left in a world in ruins. As J. M. Coetzee says, storytelling is another mode of thinking. We cannot rescue them, but, as Ulysses listening to the chants of dead in hell, we can, somehow, remember and acknowledge their ties with us in the present.

Zalis had an uneasy task: to represent the unspeakable. To represent bodies that are no longer here, but, in some ways, haunts us when we are dealing to the Rio de Janeiro daily narratives of life. But she did not what to represent the unspeakable. Zalis's work has tissues painted in pink-reddish colours, that seems that will vanish into the wind at any moment. This is the fissure. The work demands us to embrace our own vulnerabilities – things escape us. Something remains, and, from that, we can take a stance.

Concerning the discussion on aesthetisation, Levi, whose work is fundamental in so many ways – not only for his writing style, poetics, but, foremost, for the ethical-political exercise facing the disaster, is known for his testimonies and the stories he tells about the people he met during his period in Auschwitz. As Didi-Huberman taught us, much of the debate concerning the camps is whether the horror should be representable or not (Didi-Huberman, 2008; Reinhardt, 2007). Lanzmann, in his turn, will advance that there is no possibility of representation. So, he presents us with only with the words of those who lived it – the radical encounter with the survivors. However, in the end of his life, Levi started noticing that the question was not telling what happened; but, on the contrary, how to make people to listen.

Furthermore, Levi in the essay *Why See These Images Again?* argues that there will be moments that there will be no words to describe what Auschwitz meant – there is no grammar that offers some correspondence, – correspondence between subject and verb -, to this visceral experience. He argues

> There have been many times when those of us who survived the Nazi concentration camps have realized how useless words are to describe our experience. Words do not work, because of 'poor reception', because we live now in a civilization of the image, recorded, multiplied, broadcast; the public, especially the young, are more and more unwilling to turn to written information. But neither do they work for a different reason, because of 'poor broadcasting'. In all our tales, verbal or written, there are commonly expressions such as 'indescribable', 'inexpressible', 'words are not enough to . . .', 'it would take a new language to . . .'. That indeed was our everyday sensation when we were there. If we returned home, and if we tried to speak, words would fail us, for everyday language is suited to describing everyday things, but this was another world; here it would take a language 'of another world', a language born in that place (Levi, 2016, p.137).

Saying this to an opening exposition of photos from Birkenau, in Italy, Levi advances that – even though that these pictures show the camps in the moment of rendition, in ruins, they are important to offer a glimpse to those who did not see and lived of imagining what happened there (Levi, 2016). Hence, it is not about finding the right words to make some correspondence to supposedly is reality, but, instead, to enlarge our cognitive apprehension to resemblances in order to make us think – as an exercise of humanising the other, as Arendt puts it when criticizing Eichmann lack of imagination.

Leila Danziger plays a game with words and faces. After researching the books and persons who were legally identified as "dangerous" in the Brazilian Dictatorship period, she put aside the books covers alongside with the face of killed and disappeared people – many faces whose fate are still un-known for many families and friends. In the work display, though, we cannot see their faces as well – they are blurred and, in front of them, the contents from the same books considered as subversives and, therefore, censored, such as Paulo Freire and Darcy Ribeiro's works. However, as past and present are set in dispute, Danziger also presents photos from recent victims of State's brutality.

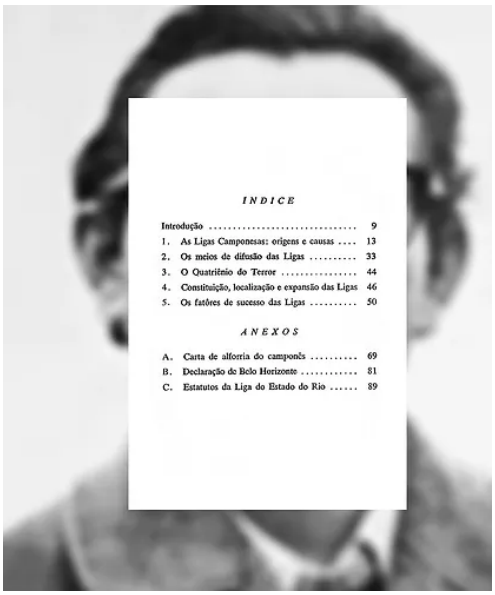


Figure 17: Leila Danziger. Dangerous, Subversive, Seditious (2017) (notebooks of the Brazilian people) (Memorial da Resistência, Pinacoteca, São Paulo)

Figure 18: Leila Danziger. Dangerous, Subversive, Seditious (2017) (notebooks of the Brazilian people) (Memorial da Resistência, Pinacoteca, São Paulo)

She argues that, putting aside the faces of black communities and the official victim of the dictatorship challenges the very notion that this period was defined in a certain place during a certain extent. On the contrary, the violence perpetrated by the public forces against what is considered as "dangerous" – eventually, a black body – still shapes the very possibility of politics in Brazil (Danziger, 2018, p.239). Putting the victims' side by side is to remember whose narratives are visible in the

social fabric[85] and the (dis)continuities from a violent and colonial times – as those Varejão's witness have saw. She explains her artistic process:

> In this series, the faces are hidden, veiled by the pages of censored books. A form left next to the work allows the reading of the names of the victims associated with the chosen censored works. Neither icons nor idols, I am not interested in continuing the traumatic reproduction of faces. Its repetition, pure and simple, seems to me to reaffirm the stuck time from which we seek some way out. Displayed on shelves, suggesting other possible recombinations, the images produced keep the memory of the library and the possibility of receiving other faces/trails waiting, always waiting to be effectively transformed into an image, narrative, history. The choice of ordering the images on the shelf and their proximity is made from a myriad of decisions, which involve formal, conceptual and affective issues (Danziger, 2018, p.240).

Thus, politizising politics implies, somehow, to put the ontological right of others to exist in the public sphere – to quote Butler. It is a process that requires an embodiment lived experience of violence. Certainly, "bodily experience can seem a distinctly unIR-like place to begin" (Sylvester, 2013, p.77), but to acknowledge other experiences of violence requires reframing to the conditions of seeing the other in their visceral humanity. The abstractions of the international remain "devoid of the complexities associated with lived experience, with difference, and modes of identification" (Jabri, 2006, p.826). Again, it is not to say as theorists and political beings we can rescue the defeated – there is no redemption. The bodies from the missing people are still missing. Things escapes us. Nevertheless, finding new frames of theorising, one that consider the lived and embodied experience of violence, is a quest for humanising others when looking at them, observing how the practice of violence informs the very condition of seeing and framing, and how they look at us.

3.2. Ceci n'est pas I.R.: epistemological production, epistemological art

"We construct, and reconstruct, our disciplines just as much as we construct, and reconstruct our world, and thus the question becomes one of why the discipline of International Relations sees only this part of the world of international violence?" asks Steve Smith, former International Studies Association's president, in his

[85] I am using fabric on purpose to make a metaphor to thread – ways we connect and sew memories in plurality.

address to the Annual Conference in 2003 (Smith, 2004, p.510). Steve argues that concepts such as interstate conflict, systems structure, identity, and the utility maximising behaviour of states are a few of the many concepts that have been privileged in IR, becoming the "self-fulfilling definition of the subject matter of the discipline" (Smith, 2004, p.510). Indeed, to discuss violence within the field, we witness what kind of violence are more relevant to become a security issue than others – but this is to say what kind of bodies and narratives are seen within the frame of what IR supposedly is (Butler, 2008).

To answer his questions, Smith looks at what once Magritte has taught us that there was no such thing as "representation": "Ceci n'est pas une pipe" - as I already mentioned opening this present chapter. Smith turns to Art and representation to problematise how the manner through which one see things is slightly different of how others see it as well. In this way, he aims to explain the epistemological limits of IR when framing its own conceptual field. As he explains, using Magritte is interesting to think about the processes by which we represent that reality. To put in his words: "the one thing that is clear is that we cannot simply de-code his pictures by deciding which one corresponds best to 'reality'. As such the observer is unavoidably caught up in the process of interpretation" (Smith, 2004, p.511-512).

Evidently, especially when discussing representation and epistemology, one cannot avoid but to highlight Foucault's famous work on Velazquez's *Las Meninas* (Foucault, 1973; Smith, 2004, p.512-514). In *Order of Things*, Foucault describes this painting as a symbol of modernity. As he argues, the painting questions the centrality of the subject of the work. Immediately, one realizes that the painting displays the Spanish *Infanta* looking to herself in mirror whilst Velasquez himself paints her. However, as one detains in this work, one realizes that mirror also reflects not only the King and Queen reflected in the mirror, but Velasquez looking at us. As Foucault observes, what intrigues is in this painting is that the subjectivity centrality alongside Foucault observes, what intrigues is in this painting is that the subjectivity centrality alongside a precise distinction between subject and object falls apart completely. As Foucault puts it:

> the observer and the observed take part in a ceaseless exchange. No gaze is stable (…) subject and object, the spectator and the model, reverse their roles to infinity.

> The great canvas with its back to us (…) prevents the relation of these gazes from ever being discoverable or definitely established (…) Because we can see only that reverse side, we do not know who we are, or what we are doing. *Seen or seeing?* (Foucault, 1973, p.4-5, *my emphasis*).

Coming back to Smith's reasoning at the ISA opening address, this author emphasises both artists in order to advance a questioning on the very nature of representation. Without any Archimedean point of reference, "it is literally impossible to make sense of this painting in terms of who is its subject" (Smith, 2004, p.513). Smith ends up his speech by arguing that he would like to see a discipline more open to other voices, subjectivities, and understanding; "a discipline that does not hide behind the mask of value-neutrality and empiricism" (Smith, 2004, p.514).

Once, in a traditional IR graduate course on theory, Christine Sylvester asked her students to paint "power". They did not understand at first, but they came with sketches of battles, explosions, smoke… - all signs of hard power in action. According to Sylvester, she realized that students looked at the practical consequences of power effects, not really accessing it in its "tangible and abstract complexity" (Sylvester, 2008, p.171). This is interesting precisely because it reveals concepts and abstractions that operate within the distribution of sensible, to quote Rancière.

For Jacques Rancière, aesthetics refers to how we might perceive the space in common, the public space. In this regard, the distribution of sensible, imbued with power relations, means the form through which we act upon the world through the perception of it. According to Rancière, this distribution "produces a system of self-evident facts of perception based on modalities of what is visible and audible, beyond what can be said, thought or done" (Rancière, 2004, p.86).

> Aesthetics can be understood in the Kantian sense as the system of a priori forms determining what presents itself to sense experience. It is a delimitation of spaces and times, of the visible and invisible, of speech and noise, that simultaneously determines the place and stakes of politics as a form of experience. Politics revolves around what is seen and what can be said about it, around who has the ability to see and the talent to speak, around the properties of spaces and the possibilities of time (Rancière, 2004, p.13).

Politics, then, would be the moment both of intervention and revelation of what is not being exposed by the traditional forms of representation. In general,

politics and art are dispositive of knowledge – both will create fiction, namely, the articulation between signs and images. As Rancière argues, "the real must become fiction in order to be thought" (Rancière, 2004, p.38-39).

In this sense, the distribution of sensible of what is IR, what is power, what is violence, and so on is evident when graduate students aim to represent all of these in a simple draw. As if we could briefly mirror the complexity around us. As I have been arguing, looking at IR as a work of art implies recognizing the abstractions which inform mechanisms through which I make sense of the world in common, theoretically speaking. Implies, thus, reconciling with our task as researchers when choosing what counts as violence, as war, as bodies, and what is not. Looking at abstractions, such as National State, Nationalism, or Identity, is not *per se* a problem, but it is when not observing how these abstract concepts inform possible interactions among individuals and institutions within the sensible distribution of meaning – exactly what Rancière advances with aesthetics. Thus, arguing that comprehending the field as a work of art means telling other conceivable stories on violence and conflict – other possible historical imaginations, to enlarge our comprehension of ourselves when doing research. As J. M. Coetzee quotes, "*storytelling is another, another mode of thinking*". So, what are other possible ways of telling the story of IR without falling into the representation trap?

Certainly, the question I just posed underlines many others, for instance, what are alternative ways of seeing it? Are we accessing reality? Discussing *Encounters: New Art From Old* Exhibition at National Gallery, Christine Sylvester inquiries Cy Twombly's interpretation of J. M. Turner's *Sun Rising Through Vapour* (1806). In his work, Twombly's painting has two ships, which we could barely see. As Sylvester states, "the experience of Twombly's ships (…) is of a compelling enigma. We see something that does not represent anything our senses may know from experience"; and, interestedly, "it is not an attempt to re-represent the narrative contained in Turner's lead-them-to its title" (Sylvester, 2001, p.538).

Historian Richard Fletcher, describing Twombly's painting series at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, demonstrates how Twombly's re-articulated the ancient Greco-Roman past, especially using contemporary graffiti – a process of naming, memorialisation, drawing. In order to do so, Twombly is particularly interested in layering time and history, with their various associations and implications in the Western subjectivity's formation. I would advance at saying that

is meaning itself that address both artists, Turner and Twombly, aiming to undermine it. After all, they are not attempting to represent symbols (in the case, ships), but, perhaps, achieving the painter's motivation of "forming the image; the compulsive action of becoming", in Twombly's words.

Sylvester argues that Kenneth Waltz is one of the most prominent authors in IR literature and even attempting to find an absolute neutral scientific standpoint, he cannot avoid falling into abstractionism while producing "science". Somehow, both "Twombly and Waltz (to some degree) look back to look ahead. They invent and construct structure amidst the clutter of the mundane" (Sylvester, 2001, p.546). Developing further this comparison, however, Sylvester will acknowledge that Waltz does not hold a creative dimension as Twombly does. Even though neorealism produces abstract artifacts, namely, anarchy, which "eviscerates the old and the contemporary" (Sylvester, 2001, p.542), this artifact is limited in producing new meanings for the world. As she remarks: "parsimonious explanatory power traded off the gender, race, class, language diversity and cultural multiplicities of life" (Sylvester, 2001, p.542). Contrary to this, Twombly's ships reveal another way of creating abstractions: by blurring lines and emphasising the graffiti line, the artist enlarges our comprehension of the scene. Hence, it is not about finding what is real in what we are seeing, but how we could comprehend it differently.

A striking example is Jeff Wall's photography entitled *Dead Troops Talk (A Vision After an Ambush of a Red Army Patrol near Moqor, Afghanistan, Winter 1986)*, which, to use Susan Sontag's words, is an antithesis of a document (Sontag, 2004, p.97). In this work, one immediately correlates to some modern conflict somewhere in the Middle East. Indeed, the photography sounds so authentic that one cannot avoid but trust in its veracity; nevertheless, looking at twice, we realize that the photo itself is impossible. One sees 13 soldiers coming to life after death, perhaps "where they have fallen in what could be a real battle in contemporary international relations" (Sylvester, 2008, p.178). Although the atmosphere is warm even fraternal, the scene is disturbing we see the raw meat, gut, and blood of the soldiers, but they smile and seem to be happy. The work does not function in a representation code – after all, it does not represent anything. Not only the soldier's uniforms do not correspond to the period in which the photograph seems to be taken, but Jeff Wall has never been to Afghanistan. The photo is a montage in each element.

To Sontag, this work is emblematic in the sense that it does not attempt to achieve any other result but reflexivity. Sontag is well-known for her criticism regarding using photography to propitiate empathy and reaction toward modern conflict. As I argued in the previous chapter, Sontag argued that although an event known by photographs becomes more "real", after its exhaustive exposure it also becomes less and less real (Sontag, 1977). She is, thus, reflecting on the role of images in a culture of spectatorship we live in. In a later work, Sontag takes a step back to comprehend how photography, throughout history, assumes a role in denouncing war atrocities. Coming back to Goya greatest work *Los Desastres de La Guerra (The Disasters of War)*[86]*,* among other works such as *Krieg dem Kriege! (War Against War!)*[87] from Ernst Friedrich, Sontag argues how art, with Goya, will create a "new standard for responsiveness to suffering" (Sontag, 2004, p.37). Nevertheless, it became clear how photography and works of art on war and conflict, even attempting to be against violence, would be depicted according to one's caption:

> To those who are sure that right is on one side, oppression and injustice on the other, and that the fighting must go on, what matters is precisely who is killed and by whom. To an Israeli Jew, a photograph of a child torn apart in the attack on the Sbarro pizzeria in downtown Jerusalem is first of all a photograph of a Jewish child killed by a Palestinian suicide-bomber. To a Palestinian, a photograph of a child torn apart by a tank round in Gaza is first of all a photograph of a Palestinian child killed by Israeli ordnance. To the militant, identity is everything. And all photographs wait to be explained or falsified by their captions (Sontag, 2004, p.11).

From that, we could say in advance that epistemology, or, in other words, the standards from which we delineate what can be known of the world around us, is not only about the image of the world we are aiming to re-present, by explaining it through abstractions. It is, in addition, how we look at these abstractions and make sense of it. When comes to IR, in Sylvester's words, "[Wall's] work provides a way to move toward aspects of war that other types of approaches might omit or fail to

[86] *Los Desastres de la Guerra (The Disasters of War),* a numbered sequence of eighty-three etchings made between 1810 and 1820 (and first published, all but three plates, in 1863, thirty-five years after his death), depicts the atrocities perpetrated by Napoleon's soldiers who invaded Spain in 1808 to quell the insurrection against French rule.

[87] This book was published in 1924 on the tenth anniversary of the national mobilization in Germany for the 1st World War. It is a book comprising photos of wounded soldiers of this conflict. This is hotography as shock therapy: an album of more than one hundred and eighty photographs mostly drawn from German military and medical archives, many of which were deemed unpunishable by government censors while the war was on.

communicate adequately" (Sylvester, 2008, p.180). She argues that this piece demands how IR could be as much a sensory experience as pedagogical, since this odd collage makes viewers aware of the precariousness of life since it "interrogate the emergence and vanishing of the human at the limits of what we can know, what we can hear, what we can see, what we can sense" (Butler, 2004, p.151). Thus, it is not about accessing what is real in conflict, but how we gave meaning to atrocities in the way we see things. The image speaks for itself, but not only – it provides the epistemological encounter to enlarging thinking. In this sense, is what George Didi-Huberman will advance at images staring at us.

What I am attempting to argue is that producing knowledge is a way of creating abstractions of what is real, and most important, what we can meet as real. To Immanuel Kant, the fundamental aim of epistemology is "comprehended at the same time the possibility of the use of pure reason in the foundation and construction of all sciences which contain theoretical knowledge *a priori* of objects" (Kant, 2016, p.22). As Kant suggests, the objects are apprehended as a phenomenon. Thus, what could be known is a concept of a thing. This concept is mediated by *a priori* categories of understanding. In other words, Kant delineates the conditions of possibility of any experience through the categories' concepts of understanding (space and time) and, with that, determines the limits of knowledge (Caygill, 1998; Kant, 2016; Pusca, 2009: 244). In this sense, comprehending IR as abstraction means to argue that, although found in supposedly scientific norms, these rules, as abstractions, shape our comprehension of "relevant" phenomena, i.e., what counts as security problems, what life matters, what narratives are heard. Taking the image that *appears to us* into account means confronting them, reconciling in the manner of how we see things. Therefore, the dynamics between what appears and what we see demand a judgment concerned with the historical subjectivity of the one who sees, the one confronted by image, in a specific time and space[88].

[88] To see a discussion concerning image and subjectivity historicity, please see chapter 01 of this thesis. As I argued, looking to images demands a situated way of apprehending the world that appear to us. This means that producing knowledge and meaning from it is always situated in time and space.

Returning to Jeff Wall's work, the collage seems so realistic that one promptly believes in it, but what is disturbing is that this image does not talk to us directly:

> Engulfed by the image, which is so accusatory, one could fantasize that the soldiers might turn and talk to us. But no, no one is looking out of the picture. There's no threat of protest. They are not about to yell at us to bring a halt to that abomination which is war. They haven't come back to life in order to stagger off to denounce the war-makers who sent them to kill and be killed. And they are not represented as terrifying to others, for among them (far left) sits a white-garbed Afghan scavenger, entirely absorbed in going through somebody's kit bag, of whom they take no note, and entering the picture above them (top right) on the path winding down the slope are two Afghans, perhaps soldiers themselves, who, it would seem from the Kalashnikovs collected near their feet, have already stripped the dead soldiers of their weapons. These dead are supremely uninterested in the living: in those who took their lives; in witnesses—and in us. *Why should they seek our gaze*? (Sontag, 2004, p.94, *my emphasis*).

Why should they seek our gaze? I cannot stress more the relevance of this question. Since the world around us haunts us with daily images, what does this confront implies politically speaking? In social sciences, IR produces abstractions, but, as I argued, this is not exactly the problem. The issue is "the type of abstraction that eviscerates the old and the contemporary, as well as the maze of details in-between" (Sylvester, 2001, p.541). Drawing from Feyerabend, Sylvester warns that "if one does not recognise that science and art share in the enterprise of constructing artifacts of various sorts", then we, not only as researchers but as political beings, might get stuck in the repetition of "tepid generalities", such what violence counts as design research (Sylvester, 2001, p.541). Concerning Wall's Afghanistan scene, "Wall's photograph helps brings the war back home to IR", argues Sylvester (2008, p.179). I would argue that it is not because we see violence in its raw and bloodied aspect, but precisely because those dead soldiers are not interested in what we, as living beings, have to say to them. Again, why should they seek our gaze? Or what do they have to say to us? We simply cannot understand, because "we [are] everyone who has never experienced anything like what they went through. We don't' get it. We truly can't imagine what it was like. We can't imagine how dreadful, how terrifying war is" (Sontag, 2004, p.97-98). Nevertheless, it is precisely when judgment falls, when we did not experience it, that urges that we must imagine for ourselves.

"Ceci n'est pas une pipe": the picture is in accordance with an *a priori* mental set determined by common conventions for seeing a pipe - all of us know what a pipe is. Thus, this picture is in accordance with the way of *experiencing* pipes. In this regard, "it is not a picture of any particular pipe, but it is a picture of what pipes look like to common observers in standard conditions" (Von Merstein, 1983, p.371). Magritte is, thus, exposing a way of experiencing stereotyping:

> Stereotype ways of experiencing are typically unself-conscious ways of experiencing: their danger is that of a particular kind of illusion: people who are in general given to stereotype experiences rightly lack interest in the intentional component of such experiences and may fall into the trap of taking objects as given independently from experiences. Magritte doesn't take object as given, but objects as experienced according to stereotype conventions. What is given, are schemata or concepts. Magritte can be taken as making the point that we can liberate objects from intentionality only as stereotype intentional objects (Von Morstein, 1983, p.371).

Perhaps abstractions formulas from IR are failing in the trap "of taking objects as given independently from experiences", as quoted above. I cannot agree more with Sontag we she advances that we could not understand violence as those who understand by having lived it. Or having seen it. But I would not take it for granted immediately. Perhaps, images allow us to imagine despite everything to avoid falling into the same categories of thinking – *to tell stories differently*. This urges our responsibility to look at images, despite all suffering.

Frida Baranek advances in another perspective:

Figure 19: Frida Baranek. Terror, Sentimental, Album, Gala, Fatal, Veto, Original, Moral, Brutal (2000). (Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro)

The work *Terror, Sentimental, Album, Gala, Fatal, Veto, Original, Moral, Brutal* (2000) is a sculpture made by the artist. It is a hammock re-made through latex and bronze. Frida Baranek is well known for using everyday materials such as aged iron, used wood, and useless electrical wires, but re-adopting their primary use. This means that the phenomenological approach to the objects occurs precisely because these materials have been taken away from their ordinary use, appearing in a singular way. As if she can abolish the very function of objects, while still letting them be recognizable to those who see. In this way, and remembering Merleau-Ponty on perception, seeing the material differently allows different ways of thinking; or, even: different ways of imaging materiality around us. In this way, objects do not represent anything since their direct useful address has lost any sense. They create new conditions of possibility of experiencing them. In this manner, then, a work of art can offer alternative ways of enlarging our conditions of possibility to know in other frames but representation.

Baranek introduce us to a hammock, which is particular to the Brazilian culture but made of used materials. The artist plays with the traditional use of a hammock as a place of resting in popular culture; however, the piece goes against the very ordinary use of the object due to its material. It seems that the artist is suggesting that the idea of rest, informed by the work, would be far from the viewer's point of interpretation. The image does not correspond to the object's stereotype patterns, in Magritte's game, giving way to an image of discomfort – there is no rest for those who look. Moreover, far more curious is the work's title: Terror, Sentimental, Album, Gala, Fatal, Veto, Original, Moral, Brutal – a sequence of words common to Portuguese, English, French, and German. This somewhat relates to the artist's life, in the sense of living in different cities, getting lost in translation, and finding common foundations. But, furthermore, the discussion here relates to the trace of the transmission – a relevant topic for Benjamin, for instance – in which she is looking for the common grammar of comprehension. The work, thus, denounces the illusory correspondence between objects and things.

I.R. as a work of art implies looking at the epistemological production of the field inquiring about its breaches regarding language and image – the abstractions of the world which support our standpoint to comprehend political phenomena. This is not to find creative expressions within the debate, as Sylvester suggests, but it is to take responsibility for projections of the world we are making since it determines what matters to be seen and heard. Contrary to imperative categories, structuring our ethical action, the judgment of work of arts demands a step back of thinking to form an opinion, to affirm a standpoint, but this is only legitimate among others, since the discussion in what is beautiful, according to Arendt, happens within the common. Contrary to Sontag, it is not about finding subtitles/interpretations to images. Foucault address directly what is at stake here: *seen or seeing*? What those IR epistemological frames are saying to us?

3.3. Aesthetical turn in IR and the coming philosophy

I have been discussing how images and abstractions help us see differently the world. Enlarging our comprehension through images allows us to access suffering and pain when words are not enough to describe them. Thus, in this way, enlarging our experience of living in the sense that, although perhaps one was not

there, they could imagine. The aim is not to argue that one could directly access the experience of pain but to imagine means to create conditions of possibility to enlarge our political consideration towards the other. This reasoning was relevant to proceed with what was argued in the previous chapter observing the character of violence in the discipline of IR, especially regarding Security Studies.

As a social science, IR does not differ that much in the process of creating paintings within a frame: specific colours, lines, environments are chosen in order to represent the social phenomena we are discussing, being it war, globalisation, nationalism, and so on. However, far from dismissing it; my attempt in this present chapter is to consider IR per se as a work of art: perhaps reacting to it by observing how we are looking at the world around us, choosing what matters, and creating abstractions from it, we might create conditions of possibility to see *differently* – enlarging our thinking to other subjects, voices, lives. Thus, I am drawing here from Kant's critique of judgment, which considers how our experience with a work of art informs different opinions and reactions to what is seen.

In this section, I will look at how aesthetics, as a concept, is studied in the IR literature. This is essential in order to justify my a priori endeavour of using aesthetics in a particular way; in special, drawing on Walter Benjamin's concept of aesthetics and its relationship with his project of a coming philosophy, against Kant's formulation on history, subjectivity, and experience.

Benjamin, throughout his life, attempted to develop a new form of philosophy that would consider the intimate relationship between object and agent. Howard Caygill argues that all of Benjamin's writing might be read as a "coming philosophy". This means that "at the heart of this new philosophy, is a radical transformation of the concept of experience bequeathed by Kant's critical philosophy" (Caygill, 1998, p.2). As I argued before, in Kantian reasoning, what could be known is a concept of a thing. This concept is mediated by a priori categories of understanding. In other words, Kant delineates the conditions of possibility of any experience through the categories of understanding (space and time) and, with that, determine the limits of knowledge (Caygill, 1998, p.1-5; Pusca, 2009, p.244). In contrast, Benjamin advances a concept of experience that privileges the impact of the objects on the individual, in which the subject is able to control the expression and materiality of things. In this sense, each object guards a revelation of a tradition (Benjamin, 2010a; 2010b; 2002).

Benjamin was pursuing an epistemological ground, driven by a complete refusal of any attempt to access absolute metaphysics through finite categories (Benjamin, 2008; Caygill, 1998, p.1). To pursue this, Benjamin will point out experience as a key concept to regress Kant's development on subjectivity and reason. In this way, his proposal does not deny Kant's undertake, but attempts to find new grounds of thinking:

> It is of the greatest importance for the philosophy of the future to recognise and sort out which elements of the Kantian philosophy should be adopted and cultivated, which should be reworked, and which should be rejected. Every demand for a return to Kant rests upon the conviction that this system, which encountered a notion of experience […], by virtue of its brilliant exploration of the certainty and justification of knowledge, derived and developed a depth that will prove adequate for a new and higher kind of experience yet to come (Benjamin, 2002, p.108).

Walter Benjamin's project never fulfilled entirely its original promise, but it reveals important insights to discussion. Benjamin wanted to break down the distinctions between intuition, understanding, and reason, the Kantian tripartite architectonic of experience, without falling into Hegel's spirit of history. Thus, he insisted on a "transformation of the transcendental philosophy of experience into a transcendental but speculative philosophy" (Benjamin apud Caygill, 1998, p.3). It is precisely when Benjamin inquiries on Kantian categories of knowledge and intuition (space and time), that he ends up putting into question "the visual (geometrical) axioms of intuition and the acroamatic (discursive/linguistic) categories of the understanding" (Caygill, 1998, p.3). Putting it simply, all of Benjamin's writings contain a tension between visual and linguistic aspects of experience that is never solved. This is because Benjamin was reframing Kant's concept of experience to advance in a broader conception of subjectivity that understands history and knowledge otherwise. This is exactly the reason why Benjamin's coming philosophy is profoundly visual (as, he would suggest, history unfolds into images). In other words, experience enacts from one's perception of the world around in which one's feelings provide memories from ordinary situations and remembrances, appeared, and crystallized visually, and from that one that gives meaning to the world in common (Benjamin, Proust).

In this framework, Benjamin returns to the Greek conception of experience. The etymological origin of the word "Aesthetic" derives from the Greek word *Aisthitikos*, which means "perceived by sensation" (Buck-Morss, 2015, p.175).

Aesthetics is the sensory experience of perception, whereas the experience addresses the capacity to create a meaning of an event. In other words, it refers to the construction of meaning in the world in common that politically connects us as subjectivities.

Coming back to I.R., the well-known "Aesthetic Turn"[89] was responsible for enlarging the epistemological limits of the discipline by considering other textual elements, such as poetry photography, and painting. As a common argument between different authors in the debate, the aesthetic sources advance an alternative reading of International Relations, privileging power relations expressed in symbolic representations (Bleiker, 2009, p.2). In other words, an approach that considers the aesthetic characteristics in the way we represent the world takes into consideration the gap between the representation and what is being represented. It is precisely this gap that is an expression of politics (Bleiker, 2009, p.19). Thus, it is not exactly an exercise of perfectly rebuilding the world as it is, but the recognition that the world is itself a construction of how we project it politically.

According to Bleiker, aesthetic approaches distinguish themselves by not chasing the essence of international politics. He continues by identifying two possible ways of reading IR: through representational discourse, which most theoretical frameworks from the field do, and aesthetics. Or, in his words, mimesis approaches and aesthetic theories of representation (Bleiker, 2009). Bleiker, in consonance with Sylvester's discussion on abstraction (2001), argues that representation is better understood as a process of copying, advancing that some theories, such as Realism, "has made the 'the real' into an object of desire" (2009, p.21).

[89] Here, I must stress a significant body of literature that has been discussing very seriously the role of art in International Relations. In 2005, the *Millennium Journal of International Studies* published a special edition on the sublime, considering it "more than a simple word, a problem". In this regard, there is a discussion not only evoked by a certain Greek and Jewish literature, but, also, the Kantian sublime "evoked when we are confronted by the formlessness of huge scale and vast power, following which we make sense of our surroundings anew" (v.34, n.3, 2006, p.ii). In 2009, the *Review of International Studies Journal* also published a thematic edition on Arts. In Danchev & Lisle (2009) introduction, the authors explore how different artistic expressions have consequences in the ways it makes us feel and think towards the world, by assuming that art matters – ethically and politically. More recently, in 2020, the *Critical Military Studies Journal* published a special edition on curatorial and artistic practices concerning military studies and specific conflicts. Hence, as Bleiker (2018) observes, the visual and other aesthetical features have been witnessing a growing interest facing the challenges of medialisation and other narratives of conflict and knowledge production.

In this regard, IR draws on a mimetic approach, failing to observe the relationship between the represented and its representation. Representation, in this sense, would imply not denying a real world, but not paying enough attention to which set of true statements informs our sense of the event, as if there is a possible "perfect resemblance between signifier and signified" (Bleiker, 2009, p.22). To this literature, aesthetics, on the contrary, emphasises the direct political encounter; in other words, inevitable "gaps between a form of representation and the object it seeks to represent" (Bleiker, 2009, p.22). Once more, Magritte is helpful to understand what is at stake here: *ceci n'est pas une pipe* challenges the very notion of mimesis since the painting is just an artistic representation of a pipe (Bleiker, 2009, p.22; Sylvester, 2008, p.148). Thus, aesthetics, in the so-called aesthetic turn in IR, also relies on different reasoning other than mimesis, offering as *problemátique* the mode of knowing. In other words, what are the limits to knowledge when we get to access the world in common from assumptions to the objects we seek to know?

> No representation, even the most systematic empirical inquiry, can represent its object of inquiry as is. Any form of representation is inevitably a process of interpretation and abstraction. The power of aesthetics, and its political relevance, lies in the explicit engagement with this inevitable process of abstraction. This is why the discipline of international relations could profit immensely, both in theory and in practice, from supplementing its social scientific conventions with approaches that problematize prevailing practices of representation" (Bleiker, 2009, p.46).

Thus, the aesthetic turn aims to highlight the gaps between what is represented and its object. Accordingly, Bleiker goes along with Gadamer and Benjamin regarding the act of looking at a work of art: "a confrontation that highlights the extent to which our desire and capacity for understanding go beyond our ability to communicate them through verbal statements and propositions" (Bleiker, 2009, p.46). Thus, a work of arts might generate a new sense of apprehending the world in common.

In this line of thought, Michael Shapiro will advance the concept of aesthetic subject to propose a philosophical *ethos* that orients an approach to inquiry through aesthetic experience, following Rancière's work (Shapiro, 2013, p.9). In his words, it is relevant to turn to all sorts of art expressions to find "a different kind of political apprehension of security, framing it within a different political ontology and a

different spatial imaginary" (Shapiro, 2013, p.11). Adopting Rancière and Deleuze when discussing aesthetics and subjectivity, Shapiro will highlight the concept of a work of art not as an object, but as an encounter, since, according to Deleuze, it is not "an object of recognition but a fundamental encounter" that forces us to think (Deleuze apud Shapiro, 2013, p.30). Hence, the process of inquiry itself, methodologically speaking, must consider practices that stress a specific subjectivisation and world-making, while being open to unknown propitiated by an aesthetic approach. In this way, being opened to ruptures, Shapiro advances that the fundamental questions should not be presumed by a priori scientific statements – as Social Science normally does, but

> Process of inquiry should be: my investigations begin instead by presuming (rather than explicitly stating) the following questions: *given the general area in which you are interested – war, justice, urban politics, border violence, and so on – what is the origin (in terms of the array of shaping forces) of the doxa, the currently dominant way of formulating problems*? What are the forces at work that allow those formulations to persist? (Shapiro, 2013, p.31-32, *my emphasis*).

The aesthetical experience, then, is a methodological attitude that disrupts traditional modes of intelligibility to create conditions of possibility of new ways of apprehending the process of subject formation and world-making, enlarging not only epistemological thinking but, most of all, new political spaces (Benjamin, 2008; Shapiro, 2013, p.32; Sylvester, 2008; 2001). Indeed, aesthetics as a mode of inquiry owns to Kant's critique of judgment, as I have been arguing, since it's a judgment I perceived in my body and informs a *doxa* that provides a meaning to the world-in-common.

Nevertheless, although the aesthetic turn works towards an alternative methodology to access social phenomena, from intuition and perception, this literature still advances very poorly in what is understood as an experience. Hence, this work relies on this Benjaminian framework to advance, and its limits and potentialities, in the modern transmissions and creations of meanings, from one's standpoint making sense to the world around him/her. To Benjamin, experience refers to a methodology that highlights perception and visuality as epistemological and political categories in order to apprehend the events. Aesthetics, in this sense, holds the primary concept of an image from the Greeks: similarity (Benjamin, 1987; Pusca, 2009, p.250).

Experience is, thus, another way of knowing. However, this is not to say that we could achieve what affected us completely, because the event itself is fleeting. Even memory, to quote Pierre Nora, only exists when it ceases to exist (Nora, 1990, p.3). In other words, the apprehension of reality, against an atomist version of Kant's subject, is fragmented. We could only apprehend a breach of the event and, from that, make sense of what happened within a plurality.

Mayra Redin's works support my attempt to explain experience's relevance when using an aesthetic method. Redin puts into tension the relationship between image and word, considering the limits and failed points of contact of visible and invisible. Her interventions are embedded with psychoanalysis of the creation of meaning towards objects, especially regarding one's memory.

Figure 20: Mayra Redin. Escuta da Escuta (a surdez de quem ouve cantos) (2013) (Central Galeria de Arte, São Paulo)

Considering the work, *A escuta da escuta (a surdez de quem ouve – cantos)*, the artist displays to us a shell into another one, as if they are listening to the sound of others. Instinctively, we pick shells to listen to sea sounds. Shells are directly associated with listening, an experience of being close to the sea. When one is inside another, there is an attempt to listen to the listening act itself. According to Redin, the materiality that motivates the act of listening is placed as its own motivation, setting it in motion.

> I begin by placing two shells against each other, joined together by their openings, revealing a kind of physical fissure (like the crack of a breaking bank), but also showing (or hearing) a fissure caused by the image, which imposes a certain silence: two cavities that resemble ears and bear the name of "Listening to Listening". There is silence and something of the order of finitude, if we think that a shell was the shelter of a being: two houses open to each other, but without their inhabitants, which are already gone (Redin, 2018, p.157).

The works of art play with the idea of resonating, never fully enclosed in themselves. Experience regards how one apprehends materiality around them and this judgment resonates with others – but there is never a sense of completeness but a sense of fragmentation. The experience, then, is the ability to apprehend objects by the subject, rescuing the moment of the revelation by which the things reflect on the conditions of possibility of our own times (Gagnebin, 2014, p.119).

Regarding the frames, we delineate which experiences of violence is seen within the abstractions of the field, I shall conclude this chapter by evoking Cristina Salgado, especially in a sense of "excess" of the body that overlaps the frame. Salgado argues that the artistic production operates as a symptom of an unspeakable background of reality. Hence, it is not reality itself, but artistic practices unfold this underlying condition of what is shared – but it holds within itself a dimension of going further than that, further than the surface, although there will be no word or measure to fully explain it (Salgado, 2019, p.12)[90].

Working with materials whose colours resemble the visceral aspect of the body – the pink and red, the viewer looks at a materiality that is not fit into the boxes it was destined to. In Salgado's proposal, she uses cotton and synthetic material as an expression of the organic, but the velvety spills out of the transparent box. She evokes a presence of the body as an image, not as a representation, to not fulfil what is expected from an emancipated subject of knowledge – there is none. On the contrary, the body is exhausted[91] - if sovereign endeavours to delineate and occupy a closed space by establish which relations constitute as politics (Ashley & Walker, 1990; Wedderburn, 2019, p.4), the frame is transparent, showing that the materiality itself does not fit into to what an enclosed space should be. Hence, every

[90] Working with a symbolic conception of reality, Salgado looked at these women once called hysterical in the neurological school at the Salpêtrière hospital, under the direction of prominent neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot. The photos were intended to be part of a larger study on hysteria, but later become known for its discussion on gender, psychoanalysis, and even photographs (Salgado, 2019).

[91] "The world's dance started from standing, but mine started from not being able to stand", as Hijikata, Japanese choreographer, says. The body that cannot stand up.

attempt of framing what the space is, is seen as continuously on the edge of being undone, in tension. But it also is the danger of being captured. The task of critical thinking, thus, is to be able to read the conditions that inform the ways of seeing, acknowledging our embeddedness within the very same conditions of possibility. The quest is looking for the fissures, as Salgado's work has a hole – a promise of looking beyond.

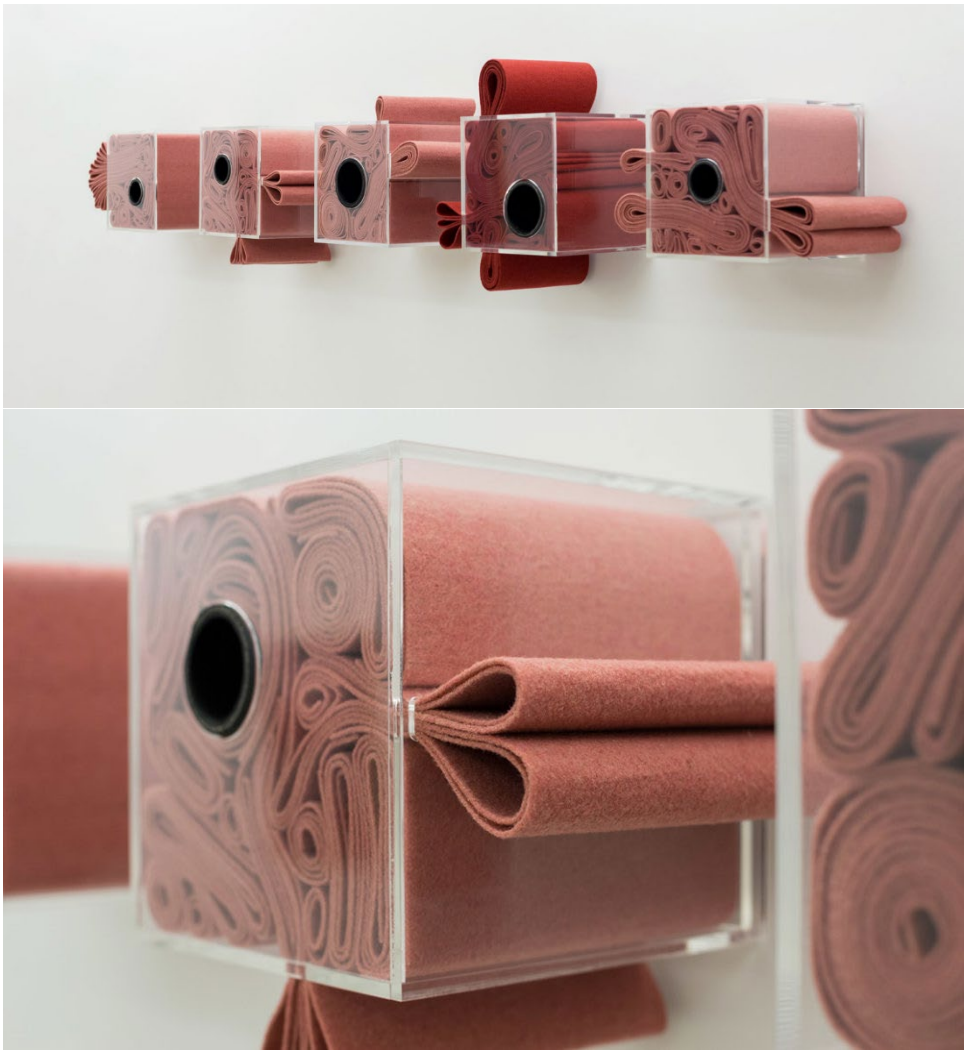


Figure 21: Cristina Salgado. Exteriores Internos (2010-2012) (Artist's Personal Collection - Musem de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro)

(In)Conclusion

Hacen falta ojos sobre los ojos, ojos para ver como miran los ojos
Baltasar Gracián

First, images taking position, they look at us, and then, we open our eyes. The first moment of this thesis was a moment when subjectivity looks at the world. However, looking is not neutral – everyone carries within themselves a constellation of histories that informs the conditions of possibility of seeing, facing a complex world that presents itself as a mystery.

As critique and critics, in Benjamin's terms, unveils a modern tension with power and violence, this subjectivity frames which violence matter. To the I.R. discussion, this framing dynamics relates to the imaginary limits of war and peace, which, supposedly, delineates the space of legality and exceptionality. However, as I attempted to argue, the mechanism of pressing the camera shutter to take a picture – a picture of what is war -, is a social and political process of violence, since, to represent is to aestheticise.

Thus, the subject of knowledge is confronted by the other – the injured body that suffers violence. The encounter with the other is frustrated – who appears? If framing as a method will delineate the war imaginary, the subjectivity realises that seeing is incompatible to what the I.R. discipline is – an abstraction of reality.

We are back to the Varejão's witnesses, whose visceral flesh of the missing eyes urges us to look away from them. Again, as Benjamin taught us, the legibility (*Lesbarkeit*) of history is articulated to its concrete and singular visibility (*Anschaulikeit*), which would imply knowing as seeing. I attempted to use work of arts as a device of turning visible this operation through history in the process of knowledge production, especially towards I.R. discussion. Hence, finding Benjamin's critical task is one of reading – opening the eyes for the dialectical images, reconnecting to them within a particular experience. "Opening our eyes to history means beginning by *temporalizing the images* that have been left to us", says Didi-Huberman (2008)

Images, here, throughout this thesis, were not understood as immediate artefacts, but metaphors of ways of seeing. A crystallisation of a certain way of reading what appears.

However, Benjamin is in trouble. As Bell Hooks tells us: “there is power in looking” (1992, p.115). Hooks reminds us how the enslaved black people were forbidden to gaze, which, according to her, produced “an overwhelming longing to look, a rebellious gaze” (1992, p.116). In Rosana Paulino’s *Embroidery frames* (1997), black women have their eyes, mouths and minds covered – Paulino looks to the ways in which the Brazilian Black population is silenced in the public sphere. Hence, we are dealing here with two failed promises of what vision cannot reach: closing the eyes because looking is, eventually, overwhelming. Or, the eyes are closed because they cannot find the secure conditions for looking properly – or even silenced.

I shall not enter the unsettling relationship of the European tradition read by Benjamin and the margins. For now, to conclude this thesis, I would just like to remark that, further than looking to the multiplicity of ways of seeing – all of which in our own embeddedness in contemporaneity -, there is also the quest for looking how we see from the edges, and if the subject of knowledge can open it.

Figure 22: Rosana Paulino. Bastidores (2010) (Museu de Arte do Rio)

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