

## ***Oui a la Biennale de São Paulo: Vilém Flusser's Anti-Boycott***<sup>1</sup>

Vinicius Pontes Spricigo

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### **To Biennial or not to Biennial?**

This was the question asked by Solveig Øvstebø, Marieke van Hal and Elena Filipovic, the organisers of the *Bergen Biennial Conference*, in 2009.<sup>2</sup> The question referred both to the plans of the city of Bergen to create a periodic exhibition and to the debate about the process of 'biennialization' of the contemporary art world. Forty years earlier, the same issue – 'to biennial or not to biennial' – was the title of an article on the boycott of the *10<sup>th</sup> Bienal de São Paulo* published in an Argentine magazine.<sup>3</sup> This coincidence of titles points out that, since its creation in 1951, the frame of reference underpinning the *Bienal de São Paulo* sought to question the opposition between centre and periphery. In so doing, it anticipated a political agenda that only emerged in the international art scene in the nineties with the proliferation of new biennials and postcolonial discourse. However, given the fact that most of the critical literature consulted in this field consists primarily of texts written in English, the biennial discourse tends to be rooted in an Anglo-Saxon theoretical framework. As a result, the work of Brazilian critics such as Mário Pedrosa and Aracy Amaral, who

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<sup>1</sup> This review of the documentation from the Vilém Flusser Archive (University of Arts Berlin) and the Archives de la Critique d'Art (Rennes) is made in the scope of a post-doctoral research conducted by the author in the Interdisciplinary Research Centre for Cultural Semiotics and Media Theory (CISC) of the Catholic University of São Paulo (PUC-SP). The research 'Exhibition as Medium' aims to analyse the transition –expected by Vilém Flusser– from artistic modernism to 'global art' in the context of large scale art exhibitions and biennials. This research project received the support of the *Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa no Estado de São Paulo* (FAPESP) in the form of a postdoctoral scholarship awarded in April 2011.

<sup>2</sup> The Bergen Biennial Conference took place between the 17<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> of September 2009. More information can be found on the website: [www.bbc2009.no](http://www.bbc2009.no)

<sup>3</sup> 'To Bienal or not to Bienal: San Pablo: protesta y abstención'. *Análisis* (Buenos Aires), July 29, 1969.

wrote extensively in the 1970s and 1980s about what we now call the 'biennial effect', is completely unknown to those participating in the current debates.

To give another example, in 1981, Walter Zanini, then chief curator of the 16<sup>th</sup> *Bienal de São Paulo*, organised the *First Meeting of International Biennial Organisers* attended by Bernice Murphy, from the Sydney Biennial, George Boudaille, general delegate of the Paris Biennial, Luigi Carluccio, director of the Department of Visual Arts of the Venice Biennale, Rudi Fuchs, organiser of Kassel Documenta 7 and Oscar Mejía, director of the Medellín Biennial. During this meeting, the participants presented critical and historical reports about their activities and discussed the theoretical and practical principles that oriented the organisation of these international exhibitions. Although the minutes of the meeting highlighted that this was 'the first time that this kind of meeting had been organised in the world', it is not considered as a reference within current debates.<sup>4</sup> The emerging consensus within the field of exhibition histories tends to settle on a genealogy that focuses on the emergence of the *Bienal de la Habana* in the 1980s as a crucial moment in the 'global turn' of periodical art exhibitions, neglecting the contributions made by the *Bienal de São Paulo* to the reformulation of the Venetian model of national pavilions.<sup>5</sup>

The research I am engaged in follows the steps of Czech philosopher Vilém Flusser back to Europe, after having lived in Brazil for more than thirty years. Focusing on the proposal submitted by Vilém Flusser to the 24<sup>th</sup> General Conference of the International Association of Art Critics (AICA) in 1972, this paper aims to analyse the passage –foreseen by Flusser– from artistic modernism to the globalisation of art exhibitions and biennials.<sup>6</sup> The debate at the Conference, which was held in Paris, confronted the

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<sup>4</sup> Fundação Bienal de São Paulo. Primeiro Encontro de Organizadores de Bienais Internacionais, 1981, Arquivo Histórico Wanda Svevo.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Rafal Niemojewski. 'Venice or Havana: A Polemic on the Genesis of the Contemporary Biennial', in *The Biennial Reader*, Hatje Cantz, 2010.

<sup>6</sup> Flusser was invited to participate in the Conference by René Berger, president of AICA coordinator of the Round Table of International Art Critics and Artists held in 1971 during the 11<sup>th</sup> *Bienal de São Paulo*. According to the resolutions of this meeting, members of the Association should also be involved in the reformulation of the *Bienal*.

reformulation proposed by Flusser for the *Bienal de São Paulo* and the boycott of the 10<sup>th</sup> *Bienal* organised by Pierre Restany in 1969. While Restany's position revealed the point of view of international art critics regarding dictatorial regimes in Latin America in the geopolitical context of the Cold War, Flusser's theoretical discourse emphasized the articulation of new relations between centre and periphery. Open to other cultural perspectives, Flusser's repertoire anticipates the issues of globalisation and postcolonialism which permeate the discussions on contemporary curatorial practices and art exhibitions today.

### **The Reformulation of the Biennial<sup>7</sup>**

Vilém Flusser was appointed technical advisor for the organisation of the 12<sup>th</sup> *Bienal* by Francisco Matarazzo Sobrinho, president of *Fundação Bienal de São Paulo*, in 1971.<sup>8</sup> According to the resolution of the meeting, the general secretary (Mario Wilches) and the team of advisors (Antonio Bento de Araújo Lima, president of the Brazilian section of AICA, Bethy Giudice, president of the Brazilian section of IAA - International Association of Art, and Vilém Flusser) would be in charge of making a blueprint for the 12<sup>th</sup> *Bienal* to be held in 1973.<sup>9</sup> It is important to underline that the position occupied by Flusser as a technical advisor at the *Fundação Bienal de São Paulo* was related to the discipline of theory of communication and aesthetics he created at the School of Communication of the *Fundação Armando Álvares Penteado*. Flusser was not a curator, as has been argued by the researcher Ricardo Mendes and the artist Mario Ramiro.<sup>10</sup> In fact, at that time, the *Bienal de São Paulo* had neither a curator nor an artistic

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<sup>7</sup> Regarding Flusser's proposal to the *Bienal*, see also: Ricardo Mendes, 'Bienal de São Paulo 1973 - Flusser como curador: uma experiência inconclusa', *Ghrebh*, n. 11, 2008; Mário Ramiro, 'Um salto para um mundo cheio de deuses', *Ars*, n. 10, 2007; Priscila Arantes, 'Media, gestures and society. Dialogues between Vilém Flusser and Fred Forest', *Flusser Studies*, n. 08, 2009.

<sup>8</sup> This was done in accordance with the resolution of the Round Table of International Art Critics and Artists held in 1971 during the 11<sup>th</sup> *Bienal* chaired by René Berger, president of AICA. See: Second Letter from the Technical Advisory Board to Francisco Matarazzo Sobrinho, 1972, Arquivo Histórico Wanda Svevo.

<sup>9</sup> Fundação Bienal de São Paulo. *Resumé final des résolutions présentés sur la Reformulation de la Biennale de São Paulo. Deuxième Table Ronde de la Fundação Bienal de São Paulo*, 1971. Archives de la Critique d'Art.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Ricardo Mendes, Op. Cit.

director. The exhibition was organised by Matarazzo according to the national pavilion format. Flusser's contribution to the Round Table held at the *11<sup>th</sup> Bienal* concerning the reformulation of the biennial was based on the emerging field of communication sciences and was presented alongside other critical contributions by Jorge Romero Brest, René Berger, Umbro Apollonio, Jorge Glusberg, Jacques Lassaigne, Mário Barata, Dietrich Mahlow, among others.

Another point that should be stressed is that the philosopher's proposals were developed in Europe and reported by mail to Matarazzo. Although the archive material does not allow us to reconstruct the exact content of the conversations between Flusser and his counterparts in Brazil<sup>11</sup>, we can deduce from the dossier analysed that it was meant to be a network of collaboration, rather than a one-man curatorship. Flusser connected workgroups in different localities (Austria, Belgium, Canada, France, Britain, Israel, Italy, Yugoslavia, Netherlands, Poland, German Democratic Republic, Federal Republic of Germany, Romania, Switzerland, and Zaire) and each group was supposed to work on a specific subject. For instance, Fred Forest worked in retro animated media; Derrick de Kerckhove on Communication and Happening laboratory experiments; and Manfred Eisenbeis and Alexander Bonnier carried out research at the Institut de l'Environnement de Paris. Other collaborations included exchanges with the Paris Biennale (Radu Varia), the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam (Eduard de Wilde), the Venice Biennale (Umbro Apollonio), and the AICA (René Berger).

In a letter sent to Matarazzo, Flusser attached a draft of his 'Proposal for the Organisation of Future São Paulo Biennials on a Scientific Basis', presented in the 24<sup>th</sup> General Conference of the AICA. According to him: 'Due to the fact that communication theory has been elaborated as a scientific discipline, the merely empirical organisation of important

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<sup>11</sup> Mário Wilches (secretary-general Fundação Bienal de São Paulo), Alan Meyer and Gabriel Borba Filho (assistant professors FAAP), Rubens Ricupero (Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs), and Emanuel Massarani (Cultural Attaché of the Delegation of Brazil in Geneva).

projects such as the *Bienal* no longer make sense.<sup>12</sup> His proposal was that art itself was not in crisis, but rather its mediation with the audience. In general terms, Flusser pointed out that art exhibitions were mono-directional devices or arrangements in which meanings were attributed in relation to the art object. In this case, the philosopher's proposal consisted in shifting the exhibition focus from objects to dialogical processes with the audience. He did not want to bring artworks to the *Bienal*. Instead his project aimed at sharing information between multidisciplinary groups – composed of international artists, critics and theorists, among others– and engaging different local institutions including schools, laboratories, factories, etc. As Flusser argued:

The so-called crisis in the arts is not the result of structural crisis in the arts themselves, but of an inadequacy in the process of communication between the arts and the people. The arts become ever more sterile, and the people ever more subjected to mass culture. If a meaningful communication between both were established, art would again become part of daily life. The *Bienal* of Sao Paulo offers itself as a laboratory for this purpose. [...] shifting the emphasis from works to be exhibited to works to be done on the spot by groups of foreign and Brazilian specialists [...] All sorts of people should be motivated to participate in it.<sup>13</sup>

After having this proposal approved by the technical advisory board and included in the exhibition regulations of the *Fundação Bienal*, Flusser travelled to Europe carrying presentation letters from the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The next step for the reformulation was the public discussion of the proposal in the 24<sup>th</sup> General Conference of the AICA in Paris. Invited by René Berger, Flusser participated in the General Conference, in which, by suggestion of Berger himself, he submitted his proposal for the consideration of the delegates. This was considered a forum of major importance, which would be very useful for the *Bienal*.<sup>14</sup> Thus, during the Conference, Flusser appealed to the association's

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<sup>12</sup> Vilém Flusser, 'Initial Proposal for the Organisation of Future Biennials on a Scientific Basis', 1972. Vilém Flusser Archive, *Bienal 1*, No. 166. [All quotations from Flusser's documents are the author's translations, unless otherwise stated.]

<sup>13</sup> Vilém Flusser, 'Proposal to be submitted to the General conference of AICA, to be held in Paris on September 12th, concerning the 12th S. Paulo Bienal', 1971, Vilém Flusser Archive, *Bienal 1*, No. 171.

<sup>14</sup> Vilém Flusser, '3rd Report sent to Francisco Matarazzo Sobrinho', 1972, Vilém Flusser Archive, *Bienal 1*, No. 3.

members for support of the reformulation project, addressing the assembly as follows:

I am appealing to the help of all critics members of AICA for this reorganisation. I offer the Bienal a laboratory of experience. [...] The foreign specialists should be artists-critics-specialists of mass media. The general public should be modified by the mass media in order to participate in this work. Different groups should be constituted with precise specific tasks. [...] Once again, I am appealing to all art critics to help us in this realisation.<sup>15</sup>

However, after the meeting, Flusser reported back to Matarazzo commenting on the disapproval of the public present at the plenary.<sup>16</sup> Among them was Jacques Lassaigne, director of the *Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris*, and the art critic Pierre Restany, who had been approached earlier by Matarazzo to present a project to the *Bienal de São Paulo*, a group exhibition under the theme 'Art and Technology' in 1969. Restany stated in the plenary that a great number of critics and artists, including himself, had decided to boycott systematically the *Bienal* and, thus, refused to participate in the exhibition or collaborate with Matarazzo's plans for the reformulation of the *Bienal de São Paulo*. In June 1969, Pierre Restany organised in the *Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris* a debate about the participation of the French delegation in the *Bienal de São Paulo*. It started with a reading of the dossier '*Non a la Biennale*' which criticised the closure of the exhibition organised by the Museum of Modern Art in Rio de Janeiro where the artists would have been chosen to represent Brazil in the 6<sup>th</sup> *Biennale de Paris*. In this document, Restany also underlined repressive acts against the *Bienal da Bahia* and the censorship operated by the military regime. At that point, the *Bienal* was taken as an official institution serving the power of the military regime and became the target of a boycott that gained support from international artists and critics.<sup>17</sup> The French boycott had a profound impact on the international art criticism about the *Bienal de São Paulo*, which paid almost no attention to the exhibitions held during the 1970s in

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<sup>15</sup> Jean Bouret, Dossier A.I.C.A., 1972, Archives de la Critique d'Art.

<sup>16</sup> Vilém Flusser, '4th Report sent to Francisco Matarazzo Sobrinho' (22.09.1972), Vilém Flusser Archive, Bienal 1, No. 183.

<sup>17</sup> '*Non a la Biennale de São Paulo*', 1969, Archives de la Critique d'Art.

Brazil. As a consequence, the boycott led to a blind spot in the historiography of art exhibitions during this decade.<sup>18</sup> Flusser responded to the boycott in these terms: 'There are two ways to contest, one in a chair in Paris and the other on site. I propose the latter.'<sup>19</sup> Besides the polemic it created, Flusser's sharp comment pointed to the ethical and political issues related to the reorganisation of the *Bienal*. Flusser, as well as many other critics and artists, participated in the Round Table of 1971 and supported the reformulation project. Even though the *Bienal de São Paulo* contributed to the reformulation of the Venetian national pavilion model in the eighties, in my view, the project of reformulation of the *Bienal de São Paulo* in 1970 has not yet received the attention it deserves within the field of 'exhibition histories'. In this sense, the blind spot did not correspond to lack of ideas and proposals developed around the *Bienal* after the boycott, but to an official historiography that reinforced a point of view based on the flux of ideas from the centre to periphery. This is exactly the kind of perspective Flusser was trying to invert through his proposal.

### **The Biennial as Medium**

Although the 12<sup>th</sup> *Bienal* presented several projects in a section entitled 'Art and Communication' related to the proposal presented by Vilém Flusser at the end of 1972, he disconnected himself from the *Fundação Bienal*.<sup>20</sup> A review of his letters leads to the conclusion that the *Bienal* did not fully incorporate Flusser's proposals. This was not due to political reasons, as one would imagine, but to financial and administrative ones. In a reply to Mario Wilches, the philosopher expressed that he was concerned about the way his project was being misrepresented:

The idea that I submitted to you and to the others (and that was approved), was to invite foreigners to form laboratory-teams with Brazilians. Although all topics and personalities proposed by me

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<sup>18</sup> Cf. Isobel Whitelegg, 'The Bienal de São Paulo: Unseen/Undone (1969-1981)', *Afterall*, n.22, 2009.

<sup>19</sup> Vilém Flusser, 'General Conference of the AICA', 1972, Archives de la Critique d'Art.

<sup>20</sup> Vilém Flusser, 'Reports sent to Francisco Matarazzo Sobrinho', 1972, Vilém Flusser Archive.

have been accepted, and although the *Varia* has been accepted as my proposal, I am afraid that you are mistaken in saying that the reformulation follows practically my proposal. It seems that the active Brazilian contribution was marginalised.<sup>21</sup>

Flusser addressed the misrepresentation of the proposal, not as a personal failure, but as a missed opportunity for, on the one hand, articulating new relationships between centre and periphery and, on the other, proposing a geopolitical approach where the event in Brazil could be turned into a model for other international art exhibitions. The misrepresentation of the reformulation project was not the result of an individual enterprise but it was rather related to the colonial foundations underpinning the exhibition. That is, to the concept of national pavilions, the flux of international artists from centre to periphery, the hegemonic centres responsible for the legitimisation of artistic production, the prestige of international art critics, art history's Eurocentric perspective, etc.

Beyond the project for the reformulation of the *Bienal*, the documentation provided by the Vilém Flusser Archive and the Archives de la Critique d'Art also reflect the author's thoughts on art in the mid 1970s and the early 1980s. According to Flusser, artists should challenge the determinism of consumer society by changing the emphasis of their production from the object (artwork) to the exhibition as medium of dialogical communication process. In a review of the 18<sup>th</sup> *Bienal de São Paulo* curated by Sheila Leirner in 1985 under the theme '*O homem e a Vida*' ('Man and Life'), Flusser stated:

[...] this is the problem faced by the curatorial team of the 18<sup>th</sup> São Paulo Bienal: choosing single artworks, encompassing them into a relational context, and ensuring that such a context informs the audience in a connotative manner about *O homem e a Vida* (Man and Life). The relational context is the focal point of the problem. The choice of the artworks becomes the input of the context, and the information of the audience becomes its output. [...] The choice of the artworks is no longer made, according to the criteria appropriate to the work and its author, as in traditional exhibitions, but according to the criteria suitable to the relational context to be produced. The information proposed to the audience will no longer

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<sup>21</sup> Vilém Flusser, Letter to Mario Wilches, 1973. Vilém Flusser Archive, Bienal 2, No. 84.



emanate from the artworks, but from the relationship established between them. The attention turns from the 'source', the 'transmitter', to the 'channel', the 'medium', since 'the medium is the message'.<sup>22</sup>

Particularly influential to his development of the concept of 'exhibition as medium' was his contact with Fred Forest, member of the *Collectif d'Art Sociologique*, who participated in the 12<sup>th</sup> *Bienal de São Paulo* with the project *Comunicação de Massa – Animação de Imprensa*. This project was part of a series named 'Space-Media' in which blank spaces were inserted in the local newspapers and the audience was invited to participate by writing on them and sending their contributions to be presented in the Pavilion exhibition.<sup>23</sup>

In an article on the works of Fred Forest, Flusser analysed the concept of 'sociological art'<sup>24</sup>, proposed by the artists Hervé Fischer, Fred Forest, and Jean-Paul Thénot, in the context of the emerging consumer society of the time:

The term 'mass' no longer applies to the mainstream social reality in the sense that it has been set. The 'mass' that surrounds us and threatens us as individuals is no longer the 'lonely crowd' of twenty years ago: the passive consumer of 'goods' distributed by the media. Much less the proletarian mass of fifty years ago that made revolutions. It is the four (soon five) billion of Asians, Africans, South Americans who are starving without knowing it. [...]The 'consumer society' is now seen as an ephemeral and localised event in a society of widespread hunger. The West (Europe and USA) is now seen as the tip of a glacier elite undergoing the assault of the tropical tide of the mass. The movement of the West has now become an 'objectively' reactionary movement because the West is a reaction to the mass that bursts.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Vilém Flusser, *18ª Bienal de São Paulo, exemplo de espaço tempo novo*, 1985, Vilém Flusser Archive.

<sup>23</sup> Forest would later develop other projects with curator Walter Zanini in the Museu de Arte Contemporânea da Universidade de São Paulo (MAC-USP), including the video 'Record of the sociological tour through Brooklyn' (1973), a performance held in a São Paulo's neighbourhood called Brooklyn, and a proposal for a counter-biennial –'Bienal do Ano 2000' – (1975).

<sup>24</sup> These artists formed a *collectif d'art sociologique*, a work structure for research and artistic practice focused on the theme of sociology and the relations between art and society. Cf. 'Manifeste I de l'art sociologique', *Le Monde*, 10 October 1974.

<sup>25</sup> Vilém Flusser, 'L'Art Sociologique de Fred Forest', in Herve Fischer, et al. *Collectif Art Sociologique: Theorie - Pratique - Critique*. Paris: Musée Galliéra, 1975, p.52.

In the framework of the debates about Brazilian culture, 'hunger' is a concept that emerges from the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised. A clear example of this can be found in the manifesto 'Hunger Aesthetics' written by Glauber Rocha in 1965. This concept, as well as that of 'tropicalism' from the late 1960s, is rooted in the Anthropophagic Movement of the 1920s. The term *anthropophagia* implies a metaphor for devouring the other, stressing a radical change in the concept of cultural exchange. This metaphor used by the poet Oswald de Andrade was based on reports made by the first European travelers to Brazil where they described the act of cannibalism.<sup>26</sup> In the context of modernisation of Brazilian society, Flusser understood the definition of 'culture' as the result of a process of devouring, situated in a dialectical position to hunger, a characteristic of peripheral countries that arose from colonial relations.

Nevertheless, Flusser's ideas are usually disassociated from its cultural background in the same way that his participation in the reformulation of the *Bienal de São Paulo* is seen as a mere anecdote in the philosopher's trajectory. In the early 1970s, Vilém Flusser called attention to this rise of two-dimensional predominance produced by what he called, according to Norval Baitello Junior, 'ladder of abstraction' or 'stair case of abstraction'. That is, the replacement of the three-dimensional by the image in the contemporary world. The problem diagnosed by Flusser was the fact that the three-dimensional world was losing its connection with both conceptual and imaginative thinking. This 'ladder of abstraction' means that the images subtract the dimension of reality.<sup>27</sup> In a text for the International Flusser Lectures, Baitello combines the concept of 'ladder of abstraction' with the idea of devouring to produce a void:

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<sup>26</sup> The Manifesto was inspired by a Tupi ritual that consisted in devouring the bravest warriors of the enemy tribe with the aim of absorbing the adversary's vital force. Displaced to the field of culture, the concept of anthropophagy became a metaphor for the relation that Brazilian culture establishes with its European matrix. Often associated with the exotic or primitive character of cannibalism, the term marks a specific position for the development of an artistic vanguard in the context of the rediscovery of the Brazilian modernist tradition in the 1960s by the Tropicalist movement.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. The article 'Diacronia e Historicidade', sent by Flusser to his Brazilian friend Miton Vargas by mail from Italy as part of his engagement with the Bienal. Vilém Flusser, 'Diacronia e historicidade', 1972. Vilém Flusser Archive, Bienal 1, No. 221.

The 'ladder of abstraction' or the 'staircase of abstraction' is, thus, a leap into the void, or a descent into the void, into nothingness, into the wind. This leap is not an image of the action of devouring, but certainly a metaphor for allowing oneself to be devoured.<sup>28</sup>

It is in this way, following the publication of Flusser's article 'Da gula' ('Gluttony') in 1963<sup>29</sup>, that Baitello positions the genesis of media theory – further developed by Flusser in his celebrated book *Philosophy of Photography* (1983)– within the development of cultural criticism and resistance to colonialism of the Brazilian *Anthropophagia*.

By way of conclusion, I would like to retain the idea of void as the result of the devouring 'gula', a concept that could be developed beyond the blind spot in the historiography of art resulted from the international boycott to the *Bienal de São Paulo*.<sup>30</sup> Both, Flusser's theoretical proposal and its refusal, reveal precisely this aspect of culture as a void; the result of the devouring 'gula'. As previously stated, Flusser underlined a missed opportunity for establishing a dialogical process between centre and periphery in the framework of international exhibitions. Consequently, the impossibility of the reorganisation of the *Bienal* in the 1970s meant that it remained another decade operating as a receiver of information from North to South. Only in 1980, Walter Zanini, the first curator of the *Bienal de São Paulo*, questioned again the Venetian model of national representations and organised the exhibition according to the principle of language analogies.<sup>31</sup> In Flusser's archives there is also a typed copy of the article 'The contemporary meaning of the Biennale' sent by the Brazilian curator Sheila Leirner, general director of the 18<sup>th</sup> *Bienal de São Paulo*, in which she wrote about a reformulation of the model of periodic

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<sup>28</sup> Norval Baitello Junior, 'A gula de Flusser: a devoração da natureza e a dissolução da vontade'. In: *A serpente, a maçã e o holograma: esboços para uma Teoria da Mídia*. São Paulo: Paulus, 2010, p.23.

<sup>29</sup> In the 1960, Vilém Flusser also wrote articles about the *Bienal* published in the local newspaper *O Estado de São Paulo*'s Literary Supplement, for which he regularly contributed. Cf also Vilém Flusser, *Da Bienal*, *O Estado de São Paulo*, 04.09.1965, Suplemento Literário, p.6; *Bienal e fenomenologia*, *O Estado de São Paulo*, 02.12.1967, Suplemento Literário, p.5; *As bienais de São Paulo e a vida contemplativa*, *O Estado de São Paulo*, 27.09.1969, Suplemento Literário, p.4.

<sup>30</sup> For a further development of the ideas presented on this paper, cf. Vinicius Spriggo, 'Beyond the Void: Flusser and the biennials'. OEI. no 60-61, 2013, pp.239 – 251.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Vilém Flusser, *Encounter: 'analogies of languages'*, 1981, Arquivo Histórico Wanda Svevo.

international exhibitions started in 1895 by the Venice Biennale. This document is part of the extensive correspondence maintained between the curator and the philosopher during the organisation of the *18<sup>th</sup> Bienal*. It was during this time that Flusser wrote his last article on the *Bienal* theme. Thus, a thorough archival research would allow us to go beyond the idea of cultural void and reconnect the biennials curated by Walter Zanini (1981-1983) and Sheila Leirner (1985-1987) with the ideas and proposals that Vilém Flusser developed around this topic and which he initiated with the essay 'Da Bienal' ('On the Biennial', 1965), an archival document specially translated for this issue of Arara.

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**Vinicius Pontes Spricigo** is member of the Centro Interdisciplinar de Semiótica da Cultura e da Mídia (Universidade Católica de São Paulo) and research fellow at the Interdisziplinären Zentrums für Historische Anthropologie (Freie Universität Berlin).