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SUMMARY

Manifiesto: Towards a decolonial video in *El bembé del amor*

*Katia Sepúlveda**

Dedicated to all my ex partners

Abstract

The intention of this manifesto is to interrupt the historical flow of the scopic regime, constructed by the aesthetic studies of the 'modern colonial world system' (Quijano, 2000) in Europe around the 18th century. From that moment on, a myriad of taxonomies and exclusions developed, in which the experience of the 'condemned of the earth' (Fanon 1963) was silenced by allegedly Eurocentric erudition. Film and visual studies have been fundamental in shaping the subjectivity of subjects. In other words, they have become a device for the production of truth. On this basis, the work of the decolonial political process within transmodernity (Dussel, 1994) develops together the visibilisation of other existing worlds as a result of the ontological turn and in resonance with dialogues that have different methodologies for addressing the civilisational crisis that the West has produced, and which today is seriously threatening our very existence.

Keywords: Decolonisation of aesthetics • decolonial feminism • scopic regime • decoloniality of the gaze • ontological turn • relational ontologies • decolonial aesthetics

*Katia Sepúlveda studied photography at the Instituto ARCOS de Artes y Comunicación in Santiago de Chile, followed by a post-graduate course in film direction at the University of Chile. After receiving a DAAD arts scholarship, she moved to Germany in 2004 to study at the Academy of Arts and Media in Cologne, where she attended classes by VALIE EXPORT, Jürgen Klauke, Matthias Müller and Julia Scher. The structure of her work deals with critical and decolonial feminisms. In 2009, she began her master's degree at the Cologne School of Arts and Media with a scholarship from the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung. She is currently studying for a doctorate in critical theory at the Instituto de Estudios Críticos in Mexico City. She was a selected artist at the 32nd São Paulo Biennial and her work has been exhibited at MASP in São Paulo and in other countries. She is currently the curator of the research project and exhibition 'El futuro ya fue: Anti-futurismo cimarrón' at La Virreina Centro de la Imagen/ Arts Santa Mónica, Barcelona. She lives and works in Cologne, Germany.

Decolonial video represents a form of artistic expression that is deeply committed to exploring the micro-politics of the senses, critically and reflexively addressing key issues such as anti-racism, anti-colonialism and anti-patriarchy. This artistic practice is distinguished by its disruptive approach to traditional narrative conventions, challenging the linear aesthetic tradition imposed by the West and adopting a circular temporality that seeks to transcend pre-established conceptual structures and explore new forms of representation and artistic expression.

In the context of decolonial video, the concept of the 'integral sequence shot' (Sanjinés 1989) is used as a fundamental tool for creating an audiovisual proposal that goes beyond the limits imposed by the conventional three-act narrative. This innovative approach moves away from the classic three-act rule and dives into a deep exploration of the complexities of human and social experiences, seeking to break away from fragmented thinking and the centrality of the individual in audiovisual representation.

Decolonial video incorporates ancestral spirituality and emotional language to question and challenge the conceptions of modern thought. From there, the audiovisual work explores other forms of understanding and expression that go beyond Western paradigms, allowing for a deeper connection with ancestral and emotional roots and challenging the norms imposed by modernity.

In addition, this type of video is based on the concept of autopoiesis, which extends Maturana and Varela's (1973) notion to apply not only on a biological level, but also on a relational level. This approach seeks to reconstruct and recover ancestral memories, challenging the power structures imposed by necromodernity and promoting a binding healing that allows alternative and liberating narratives to resurface, rooted in resistance and the need to reconstruct life from a decolonial and emancipatory perspective. Moreover, to heal the colonial wound.

Decolonial video uses self-representation to tackle colonial visual narratives. It places special emphasis on the voices of the protagonists, who, precisely by writing about their own life experiences and ancestry, subvert and reconstruct this colonial visual aesthetic and become historical subjects of their own realities. In contrast to the dominant colonial narrative, decolonial video is characterised by its decentralised and participatory approach, in which the dialogues are created by the artists themselves, allowing for a more authentic and diverse representation of subaltern experiences and realities. It attempts to give voice to the silenced and challenge hegemonic norms, proposing a conscious counter-narrative that questions power structures and promotes resistance and social transformation, in an act of claiming and empowering marginalised and oppressed voices.

The relational healing between the artist and the community that this documentary format allows revives ancestral memory and emphasises the meaningful and healing connection between the artist and the community, with the aim of recovering and keeping this memory alive. This practice seeks to strengthen the links between the past and the present, promoting a process of collective healing through art and the expression of life itself.

In short, decolonial video presents itself as an artistic practice deeply committed to the transformation of life and resistance against hegemonic and oppressive narratives. Through its propositional and critical approach, it aims to challenge power structures, foster relational healing and promote the coexistence of multiple realities in an anti-futurist and decolonial approach that reconstructs experiences from a libertarian perspective, in an act of resistance and profound and meaningful transformation of life.

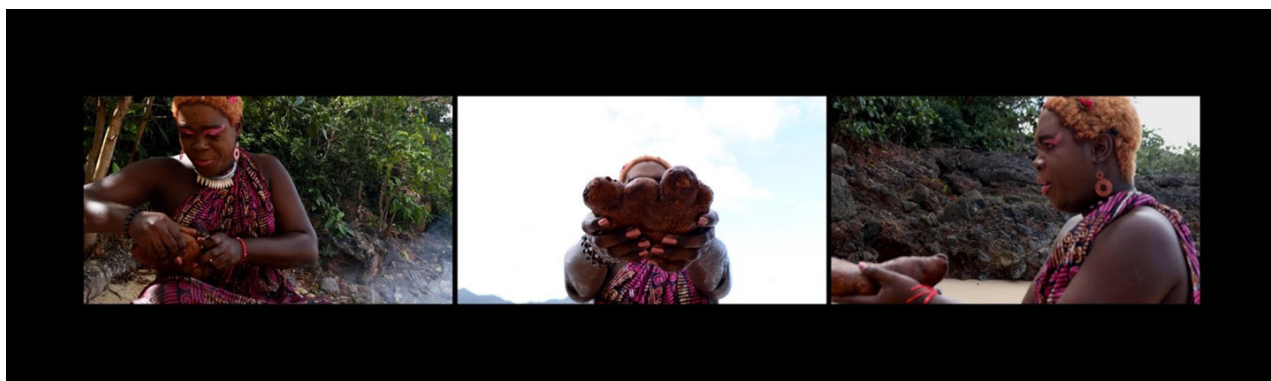


Fig. 1. Sequence “Si hubiera nacido varón” (from Tokischa’s song Varon), scene three: daughter of Erzulie Fredo/Danto (Agatha Brooks) Diosa del amor, and compassion. Protector of sexual dissidence. She cares for everyone. That’s why it is her who cooks in this bembé (Film stills, Katia Sepúlveda (maker), El Bembé del amor, 2022, video 4K, 26min, Dominican Republic/Germany. Courtesy of the maker).

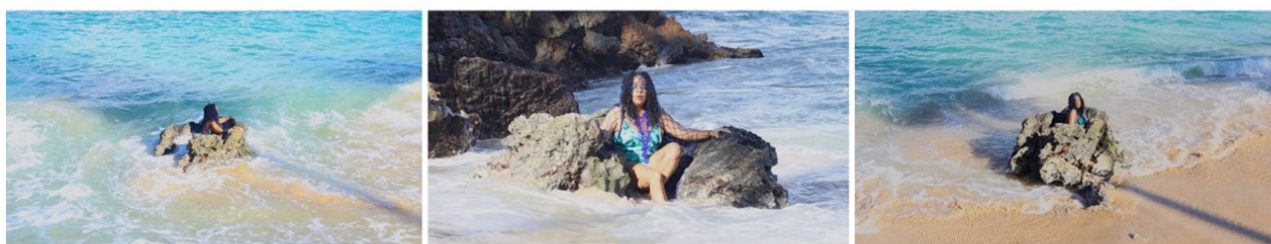


Fig. 2. Sequence “Hija de Yemayá” (Yuderkys Espinosa Miñoso), scene one: tribute to the sea and to the goddess of fertility and mother of all Orishas. She represents the energy of the sea and her colour is blue (Film stills, Katia Sepúlveda (maker), El Bembé del amor, 2022, video 4K, 26min, Dominican Republic/Germany. Courtesy of the maker).

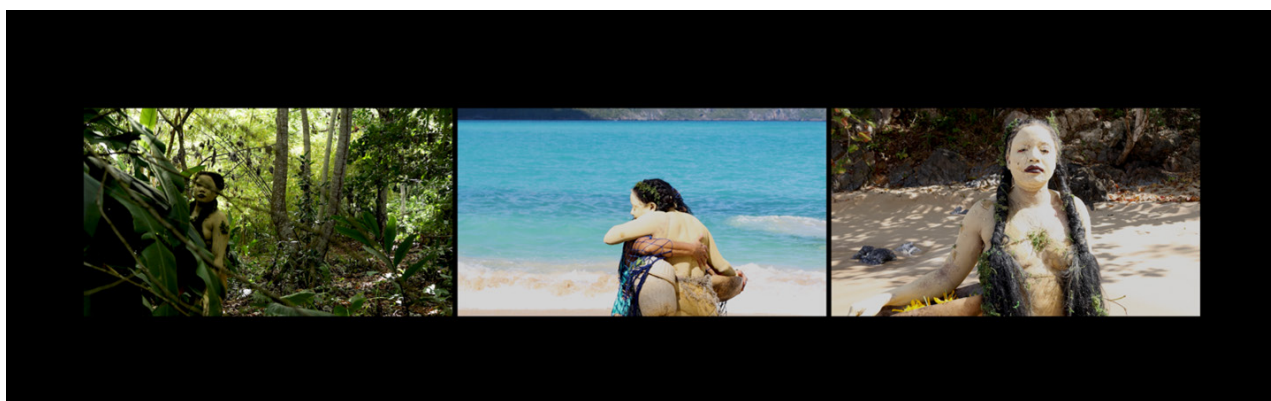


Fig. 3. Sequence “Encuentro entre de la hija de Yemayá (Yuderkys Espinosa Miñoso) con la Ciguapa (Ruth Pion)”, scene two: La Ciguapa represents the non-linear temporality (Anti-future) Taína. She walks with her feet reversed. The daughter of Yemayá arrives at the island in African diaspora. This embrace means healing the wound caused by colonization (Film stills, Katia Sepúlveda (maker), El Bembé del amor, 2022, video 4K, 26min, Dominican Republic/Germany. Courtesy of the maker).



Fig. 4. Sequence “La putona”, scene twelve: Oshun’s daughter (Nicky) is the most sensual in the bembé, she shows the sweetness of sex and life. Yellow predominates her clothes (Film stills, Katia Sepúlveda (maker), El Bembé del amor, 2022, video 4K, 26min, Dominican Republic/Germany. Courtesy of the maker).



Fig. 5. Sequence “Rito de agradecimiento a Yemayá”, final scene: Invoking the metaphysic forces for the momento of the offering to the mother of mothers (Film stills, Katia Sepúlveda (maker), El Bembé del amor, 2022, video 4K, 26min, Dominican Republic/Germany. Courtesy of the maker).



Fig. 6. Final sequence, scene nineteen: Yemayá's daughter, La Ciguapa, and Erzulie Fredo/Danto's daughter are approaching slowly their mother, they worship her and thank her for all existence on earth (Film stills, Katia Sepúlveda (maker), *El Bembé del amor*, 2022, video 4K, 26min, Dominican Republic/Germany. Courtesy of the maker).



Fig. 7. Making-off, final scene: camera woman Marlene Garó with the maker-sentesica Katia Sepúlveda. Photo: Marisol Peláez, Playa de los Enamorados, Dominican Republic, 2022.

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