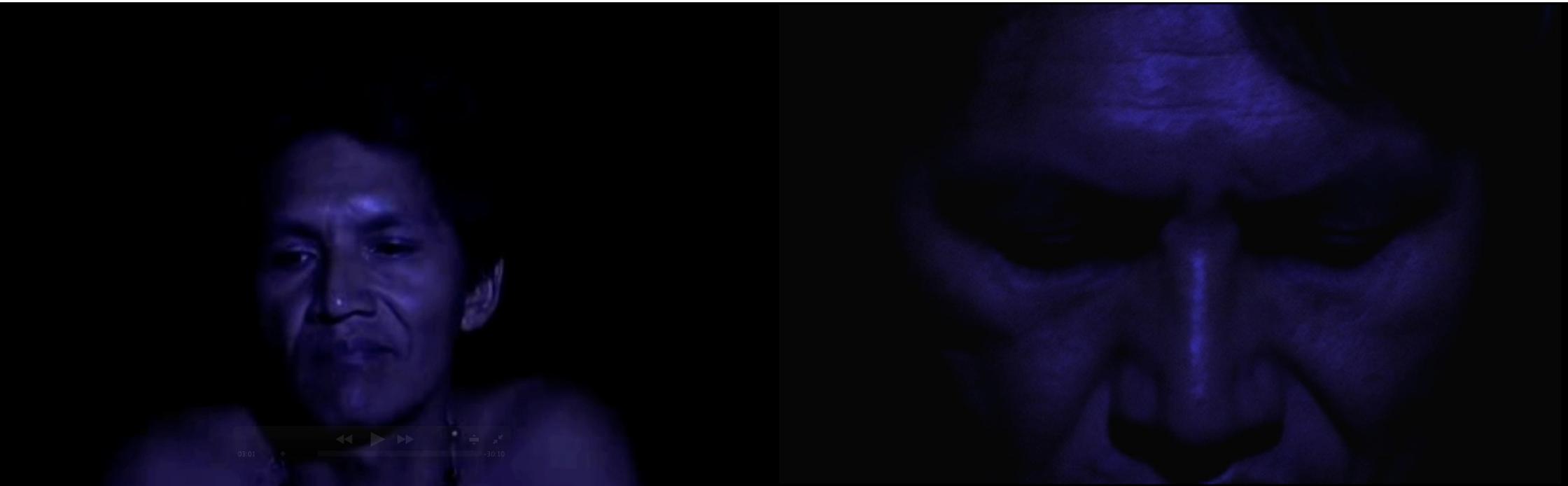


LUCIANA **CARAVELLO**  
ARTE CONTEMPORÂNEA  
rio de janeiro, brazil



**Armando Queiroz**  
*Ymá Nhandehetama [Once upon a time we were many]*  
2009 | video loop | 8'21"

## **YMÁ NHANDEHETAMA (ONCE UPON A TIME WE WERE MANY)**

*Almires Martins is a person of Guarani ethnicity whom I met in 2009. At that time, we were part of a group that put together an exhibition of ethnographic material at the Curro Velho Foundation, a State cultural entity, for the 3rd Indigenous Peoples of Pará Week. I was immediately struck by the poetry and clarity of his thought. Almires was born in a village in what is now the State of Mato Grosso do Sul, son of a murdered indigenous leader. He himself has been attacked and his own body bears witness to this. He now lives in Belém, where he has just defended a Master's thesis at the Federal University of Pará's Faculty of Law on the rights of the Guarani people, resolutely fulfilling the role that is his birthright.*

*When invited to take part in the video Ymá Nhandehetama (Once upon a time we were many), he graciously accepted the proposal. Since then, the video has been put together by way of a dialogue that aims to express the current condition of indigenous people, which is the fruit of the long process of violence and physical and spiritual dissolution imposed on the various indigenous peoples of the Americas. His words, lucid and transparent, confront us with a reality made invisible by the vastness of the forest, "...like a cry in the dark of night."*

- Armando Queiroz

### **How to Unbuild Cathedrals - Paulo Herkenhoff, 2011**

Armando Queiroz's project addresses the semiotics of violence that is repressed by mainstream historiography and the communications media.

The semiotics of silence, which lies in the spaces between people in the photograph by Elza Lima, is assembled by way of pauses and caesuras in the work of Armando Queiroz. A paused voice, silence and the blue penumbra of the Indian in *Ymá Nhandehetama* [*Once upon a time we were many*] impose a caesura on the violence that reduced so many to so few.

Almires Martins is a Guarani who was born in Mato Grosso do Sul. His body bears witness to the attacks he has been subjected to.

His father—an indigenous leader—was murdered. He defended his Master's thesis on indigenous Guarani rights at UFPA. The blue politicizes the monochrome in a manner akin to Cildo Meireles (*Red Shift, Fountains and Ripples*) and Yves Klein's *Grande anthropophagie bleue – hommage à Tennessee Williams* [*Great Blue Anthropophagy—hommage to Tennessee Williams*] in YKB blue. The serenity and the logic of the discourse are given unexpected and striking power—the violence of the historian—and a deliberate rhetorical confrontation of the extreme social violence that intends the physical and spiritual dissolution of the original inhabitants of the

*Ymá Nhandehetama* connects Queiroz to the Cildo Meireles of *Mission/Missions (How to Build Cathedrals)* and the entire oeuvre of the Cherokee Jimmie Durham and the Mohawk Alan Michelson, of the Kanienkehaka ethnic group. His words are transparent "a cry in the dark of night".

The artist invents meaning, refusing to submit to the order of syntax of history—the castrating Law of the Father of Freud's theory in *Totem and Taboo*. His political and anthropological care leads him to study everything from semiotics to ecology. He is cautious in his use of the term "caboclo", a social reference category. The phonetic part of the language lies in the enunciation of the name of the rebels executed in 1823 or in the vocal discourse and pauses of *Once upon a time we were many*. Queiroz is interested in the investigations of Deborah de Magalhães Lima, who warns that "as a social category, the term is an abstraction, one unit in a system of social classification designed to depict the differences between people in society". In a similar vein, Charles Wagley concluded that "the Amazonian 'caboclo' only exists in the minds of higher status groups to refer to lower status ones".

Although Magalhães Lima proposes that the use of the word "caboclo" be discontinued when referring to rural identities in the contemporary Amazon, Queiroz employs the term for the precise purpose of exacerbating the power of stigma. For Queiroz, there is a need to define the social space of the origin of language. The issue is not the theme, but the constitution of language with the power to symbolically stand up to violence. The linguistic sign is the field of that which has long been taken to be "the possibility of the impossible", a hypothesis raised by Mallarmé, Duchamp and Derrida: the violation of violence. There are, then, no totems or taboos in the Amazonian history of Queiroz that do not merit critical scrutiny.

**Armando Queiroz**, 1968, Belém, Pará, Brazil. His educational background includes readings, experimentations and participations in workshops and seminars. Queiroz has been part of several group and solo exhibitions since 1993, in Brazil and abroad. His works integrated projects such as "Macunaíma", 1997 in Rio de Janeiro, and "Prima Obra", Brasília, 2000. Was invited artist at Arte Pará, editions 1998, 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2008. In the city of Abaetetuba (PA, Brazil) in 2003, Queiroz held his first urban intervention in the Municipal Meat Market as a result of the workshop "Three-dimensional Projects II", sponsored by the Art Institute of Para - IAP. He was commissioned by the same Institute on two occasions: with the research project "Possibilidades do Miriti", in 2003 and, in 2008, with the research project "Corpo toma corpo - Studies in Video Art - The Body as Mediator between Life and Art". His artistic output ranges from tiny objects to large-scale works and urban interventions. He holds up conceptually to social, political, and equity issues related to art and everyday life. His creative process comes from observation of everyday streets, and he uses popular objects of various origins, always having the city as his main reference. Queiroz was awarded a research commission from CNI SESI Marcantonio Vilaça Prize from 2009 to 2010. In 2009, his site specific "Tempo Cabano" received the 2nd Great Prize at the 28th edition of Arte Pará. During 2010, he was granted a special room in the 29th edition of Arte Pará as honored artist. Participated in the 31st São Paulo Biennial. Lives and works in Belém, Pará, Brazil.