

This issue of *Revista de História da Arte* presents a collection of articles aiming to contribute to an understanding of how censorship and the repression of sexuality and eroticism have impacted the creation, circulation, exhibition, and interpretation of works of art in different contexts and across several geographies; and, in turn, how the structures of censorship and control of artistic production are shaped by a range of forces including political control, forms of institutionalisation, acts of transgression, and social and historical dynamics.

These articles draw on an eclectic range of case studies, theoretical frameworks and methodological approaches. Taken together they amount to a comprehensive reading apparatus and a critical examination of several of the questions that we consider to be of the utmost importance for the investigation of sexuality and censorship in art. How have social inhibitions and taboos been addressed by contemporary art? Today, in a climate marked by neoliberalism, and by such phenomena as the “hyper-sexualisation” of culture or the “pornification” of art itself, what limits are there to the permissible, to the “decent”, and, conversely, to freedom of expression? Within the limits of so-called western culture, these issues summon up the battles waged around tensions between art, eroticism and pornography. Intensifying as the twentieth century progressed, such tensions reveal how the limits to the socially permissible have been tied to sexual explicitness and erotic representation. It is in this context that a re-reading of “decency” and of obscenity standards has surfaced, propelled by a renewed historiographical focus on the relationship between art and sexuality, focused on such controversial themes as censorship, prohibition and taboo. On the one hand, the decline of colonial power and the collapse of the Eastern bloc have released a considerable amount of fresh archival material that helps shed new light on the relationship between state control and artistic production. On the other, the phenomenon of globalisation, which allays institutional constraints and the limits imposed by national state policies, has triggered innovative debates around the very definition of censorship. The perspective according to which control of artistic production is perceived as ‘a state of exception’ is challenged by what has since been labelled “new censorship”.

This topic takes on redoubled importance in the wake of a recent wave of censorship acts on works of art and exhibits. Perpetrated by museums, the press, and social networks (especially Facebook and YouTube), this type of incident has increased, stretching to numerous forms of expression. From cinema to photography, painting, performance and installation art, the impulse to suppress has left no artform untouched and has ignited widespread debate in the public sphere. Positions are generally polarised between safeguarding freedom of expression, and the values of “decency”, “discretion” and the protection of the image of women and children against sexual objectification and exploitation. It is in this context that a few important voices warn of the dangers of a “neoconservative”, puritan climate that reactivates “surveillance” and “control” systems, directly affecting artistic production in its capacity as a positive transgressive agent. Concerns are raised with respect to freedom of expression and the sexual rights attained by the decisive struggles (and reflecting their bold claims) of feminist and LGBT movements. The issue opens with an interview with the interdisciplinary artist **Julião Sarmiento**, a prominent contemporary Portuguese artist, whose work has been celebrated in numerous solo and group exhibitions throughout the globe over the past five decades. In this conversation, Sarmiento reflects on his early days as an artist, influenced by the transition from dictatorship to democracy in Portugal: the role played by his experimental films from the mid-1970s; the importance of desire, sexuality and voyeurism as axial features of his multidisciplinary work; and the weight of censorship in his oeuvre and in contemporary cultural landscapes.

The articles collected in the “Dossier” section provide insightful approaches to a range of pertinent topics, offering original perspectives on a number of issues. Focusing on the exhibition *Queermuseu: Cartography of Difference in Brazilian Art*, **Simone Amorim** provides ample material for a discussion around the politics of art, especially in the context of some striking setbacks stemming from the authoritarian action of Brazilian conservative groups. **Stefanie Gil Franco** explores the meeting-point between sexuality and the disruptive work of artists who have somehow generated inventive proposals “outside the continuum of art history”. Taking as reference the exhibition *Known/Unknown: Private Obsession and Hidden Desire in Outsider Art*, Franco discusses the ‘psychiatrisation’ of those individuals with a background of so-called sexual deviation and the sense of sexual freedom with which these minds respond. **Viktoriia Myronenko** considers the historical, social and cultural circumstances that shaped the representation of the body and of sexuality in Ukrainian photography of the 1990s. She stresses the rupture with the Soviet tradition after independence, the impact of artistic experimentation within a complex and contradictory period of cultural transition, and the cross-fertilisation of aesthetic freedom and sexual liberation. **Ángeles Alemán Gómez** examines the censorship of the copy of Buñuel’s *L’âge d’or* André Breton took to Tenerife in 1935, which became embroiled in a heated polemic leading to the punishment of those who supported the screening and the disappearance of the film. **Clara Sampaio** dissects the work of contemporary artists whose work questions the ideological roles

played by major art institutions, as well as curatorial projects that turn exhibitions into critical platforms for debating socio-political issues. **Gillian Sneed** focuses on two works by Brazilian artist Lygia Pape, attempting to demonstrate how Pape appropriated and satirised—or “cannibalised”—commercial, pornography and erotica as part of a broader strategy for resisting the Brazilian dictatorship’s conservative sex and gender ideologies.

The section entitled *Varia* includes José Gabriel Pereira Bastos’s article on *The House that Jack Built* (2018), the latest provocation by controversial filmmaker Lars von Trier. While attempting to put forward a post-Freudian interpretation, **Pereira Bastos** interprets the film as a severe critique of contemporary civilization, addressing topics around the disruption of the postmodern family, the loss of love, and the multi-secular Phallic battle of the sexes.

“Book Review” includes two distinct proposals. **João Oliveira Duarte** discusses T. J. Clark’s most recent book, *Heaven on Earth: Painting and the Life to Come* (2018), delivering a critical and comprehensive reading of an invaluable publication in the field of art history; and **Susana Lourenço Marques** focuses on Arunã Canevascini’s photobook *Villa Argentina* (2018), to address the notions of identity, intimacy, and desire activated by the photographic representation of the female body.

This edition is also an opportunity to engage with the work of Brazilian visual artist and academic **Júlia Machado**, by showcasing some of her work in video that more patently pushes the boundaries of transgression. Machado’s work asks if and to what extent may the erotic body become excessive in art films, in a filmic essay exercise that poses a challenge to the notions of boundary between the erotic and the pornographic, between “good taste” and the frontiers of contemporary visual voyeurism.

We would like to thank all the writers and artists who have contributed to this volume, and also the reviewers, for their valuable insights and revisions. This edition is particularly relevant for the interview with Julião Sarmiento and the article by José Gabriel Pereira Bastos, which are published here posthumously, as a testimony to their intellectual brilliance and generosity. This edition results from a long and complex process, which reflects the collective work and passion of all those involved.

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