

Teaching anthropologists to draw: a didactic research experience

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In this article I present the results of a teaching experience called “Laboratory of Anthropology and Drawing,” which proposes drawing as an important tool in ethnographic research. Students with no prior training in the area were introduced to drawing as a way of knowing the world. During the workshops, conventional conceptions of drawing were deconstructed and new narrative forms encountered, which graphically evoked ideas, encounters, conversations, observations and insights into social life. During the exercises, we trained researchers to dialogue and interact with their research universe, collect data and communicate their research results. The experience continued outside the classroom to explore public spaces in the city of Rio de Janeiro, trying to understand the city and the multitude of possible viewpoints offered by an urban space. The analysis of the produced material aimed to address central issues in the praxis of anthropological research, exploring questions and answers that emerge out of the teaching of drawing and the construction of pictorial narratives on (and about) fieldwork.

Keywords: anthropology, drawing, teaching, ethnography

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Teaching anthropologists to draw



Can drawing contribute to the production of anthropological knowledge? And can an undergraduate student in Social Sciences learn enough about drawing to use it profitably in anthropological course work? My reply in this article will be a double ‘yes.’ Or more precisely, *our reply* will be a double ‘yes,’ since this text is about a collective experience.²

In April 2013 for the first time I offered the “Laboratory of Anthropology and Drawing” as an optional course to around thirty undergraduate students in Social Sciences at IFCS/UFRJ.³

The creation of this course formed an integral part of the research project I have been pursuing under the title “Drawing cities: ethnographic studies in Rio de Janeiro.” Not that I had planned this development. In 2011, when I wrote the project application for CNPq, I believed that Rio de Janeiro would soon acquire a group of people interested in drawing the city,

² I thank CNPq, Faperj and UFRJ for the funding that supported the research documented in this article. This work also results from the intensive collaboration with the research assistants Pedro Ferraz Gama (Faperj), Carlos Henrique Sousa (CNPq) and Vinícius de Moraes Azevedo (CNPq/UFRJ), members of the Urban Anthropology Laboratory (LAU) during the first semester of 2013, to whom I offer my sincere thanks. I also cannot fail to mention the collaborators who were fundamental to the planning and implementation of this project: Elisa Kuschmir, Celina Kuschmir, Andréa Barbosa, Moana Van de Beuque, Claudius Ceccon, Nazaré Saluto, Els Lagrou, Zoy Anastassakis, Carlos Vergara and Ana Maria Daou. Finally I thank Juva Batella, Adriana Nóbrega and Antônio Kuschmir Castro for their support towards concluding this article.

³ The course was officially registered in the form of ‘Special Topics’ and lasted 60 hours over the course of one academic semester (2013-1). All the images included in this article were produced during the course. The first picture shown was drawn by myself on an iPad (App Adobe Ideas, Bamboo pen) based on a photograph taken in class. I take this opportunity to thank all the students who collaborated with the research during the course and ceded their time, images and texts to the research.

supporters of the international network Urban Sketchers, known in Portuguese as *desenhadores urbanos* (Kuschnir 2011). A branch of the group was founded in Brazil that year including sketchers from São Paulo and various other state capitals. In Rio de Janeiro, though, the few ‘correspondents’ never became organized, or proposed a widely advertised program of regular public meetings as happened in other cities.

In 2012 and 2013 the situation remained the same. Perhaps the ‘natives’ (urban sketchers) anticipated in my original project simply did not exist in Rio de Janeiro. I even elsewhere, among arts, architecture and design students, for example. Some people from these areas do in fact like to draw and/or attend drawing classes on free or university courses. But *urban life* seldom receives much attention in this sphere – apparently more focused on improving techniques, illustration and the arts. As I have explained elsewhere (Kuschnir 2011, 2012), I needed to discover sketchers interested *in the experience and dialogue with the people and city* in which they lived, worked, visited, etc.

It was this lacuna that prompted my idea to create my own group of ‘urban sketchers.’ Perhaps I would be able to convince IFCS’s Social Science students to become interested in the idea? My adventure was at once investigative and didactic and faced a double challenge: (i) teach drawing techniques that could be used in the short-term by students, and (ii) encourage them to practice this knowledge during field research in the form of small urban ethnographies that, in turn, would help me to conceptualize the city of Rio de Janeiro anthropologically and graphically.

To avoid any suspense, I should state from the outset that for me the experience was a real success, both didactically and from an investigative viewpoint. I was also lucky enough to receive very positive results and evaluations from students, research award holders and partners involved.

The course had 26 enrolled students, including three LAU research award holders who helped me carry out and record all the activities pursued over the semester, as well as another two listening students. There were a total of 29 class days (totalling approximately sixty teaching hours) with twenty practical workshops mixed with theoretical reflections. We received visiting lecturers in seven classes who contributed to the discussions and workshops. We also undertook trips to the Hélio Oiticica Municipal Art Centre and the studio of artist Carlos Vergara.⁴

All the activities were recorded through 1,044 photographs and ten films (later transcribed), as well as digital scanning of 415 works made in class. Each student also completed two fieldwork assignments, which produced a collection of 25 compositions of sketches and texts on a common theme (the area surrounding IFCS) and fifteen research projects (around ten to fifteen pages each) illustrated with ethnographic drawings, made individually or in pairs, in different areas of Rio de Janeiro city. This material was also studied by the LAU student researchers with the results presented at two events.⁵

⁴ Here I refer the reader to the experience of Andrea Barbosa, coordinator and teacher of photography workshops with young people from the outskirts of Guarulhos, who inspired me enormously in this project (see Barbosa 2012b).

⁵ The research award holders presented their works at the UFRJ Scientific Initiation Conference (Pedro Ferraz Gama: Contributions of drawing to anthropological research *; Carlos Henrique Alves de Sousa: The language of drawing in teaching anthropology; and Vinícius Azevedo: The language of graffiti: an

At the end of each activity the students were also invited to produce an assessment in writing and/or with drawings, which resulted in 145 cards that were kept anonymous. Twenty students also answered an end of course assessment form (also anonymous) with questions elaborated by the research award holder Carlos Henrique Sousa (with the participation of the LAU team), whose project focuses precisely on the didactic experience involved.⁶

As mentioned at the outset, the overall purpose of this endeavour was to teach undergraduate students in the Social Sciences how to conduct anthropological research that includes *sketching as a vital component of the participant observation process* and where the resulting field drawings are treated as *material for analysis* and *for the final presentation of results*. Here I adopt the approach signalled by Bela Feldman-Bianco and Miriam L. Moreira Leite (1998) when they stress the need to treat the images found in research *not* as a “document of ‘objective reality’ or as a mere illustration of verbal texts,” but as material filled with cultural meanings produced through the interactions between “researchers, research subjects, products and historical contexts” (p. 12).⁷

By encouraging students to produce small-scale urban ethnographies, I set out from the theoretical premise that ethnographic research is essential to training in anthropology (Peirano 1992) and that part of this training involves learning how to investigate our own society. I concur, therefore, with Gilberto Velho (1978) when he argues that our familiarity with our home city does not necessarily make it known. As the author stresses, very often we navigate urban spaces equipped with congealed maps filled with stereotypes. Detailed and careful ethnographic observation is a powerful means of recognizing the “profound discontinuities between the researcher’s world and other worlds” (p. 73) leading to a greater understanding of the complexity of urban life. I also drew from Magnani’s observation (2002) that the ethnographic method produces knowledge shaped by the researcher-researched encounter where the ‘native explanation’ enables the researcher’s theoretical schema to become ‘lived.’ In this encounter, the ethnographic method produces ‘close inside’ knowledge of the city, capable of “identifying, describing and reflecting on” aspects excluded in other disciplinary

ethnographic analysis of graphic production in the city) as well as the Image, Research and Anthropology Seminar (Visurb/ABA) at Unifesp (the latter including the presence of Máira Mafra, as co-author, who I thank for joining the LAU team). *Pedro’s paper was selected as the best from his session, awarded the chance to publish the work in the *Revista do CFCH/UFRJ* (see Gama & Kuschnir, in press).

⁶ The final evaluation was made using an electronic form. Its goal was to hear the students’ views of the course experience and to plan future developments. The open questions, answered anonymously, were: What did you expect from the course when you enrolled? What was your relation to drawing like before you enrolled on the course? Were you familiar with any example of the use of drawing as a tool in anthropology? Did the course help your practice as a researcher? Tick the three Workshops that you most liked; Tick the three workshops that you LEAST liked; Do you think that this course should be offered as an Extension course? If so, what days, times and course duration? Do you wish to mention something that has not been asked? Age; Sex; Course; Current Year/Term.

⁷ It is important to note, however, that the concept of ‘image’ in the bibliography of the visual anthropology area is almost always associated with photographic and film productions, as Afonso points out (2004). For an example, see Samain (2012). Nonetheless it is drawing that for a much longer time has been providing solutions to the problem of the limits of verbal language, as Sennet reminds us (2009:111).

approaches (p. 17).

To sustain my hypothesis that students could learn to draw in a few weeks, I based myself principally on Edwards (2001), Brookes (1996), Gregory (2003, 2006) and Salavisa (2008), as well as my own experience as a sketcher and reader of hundreds of texts on drawing over the last few years (Kuschnir 2011). Edwards's work is known worldwide and also serves as a reference point for other sources cited here. She advocates a set of practices that can teach a person to draw, through observation, in a 'realistic' form with a few days training. Her proposal is grounded in the observation that drawing is a 'global skill,' much like reading, driving or riding a bike. Once learnt, it is never lost. It needs only "practice, refinement of technique." Edwards argues that any person able to produce legible calligraphy has the skills needed to draw. Another central tenet of her theory of learning to draw is that the focus should be on teaching not a *manual* skill but a *visual* skill:

We need say no more here about hands, but about eyes we cannot say enough. Learning to draw is more than learning the skill itself; by studying this book you will learn *how to see*. [...] Drawing is not really very difficult. Seeing is the problem, or, to be more specific, shifting to a particular way of seeing.
(p. 29-30)

For Edwards, this specific form of seeing is related to the right hemisphere of the brain, responsible for our 'visual-spatial' navigation, our capacity to "perceive and nonverbally assess relationship of sizes, curves, angles, and shapes" (p. 73). To learn to see in this way, we need to 'switch off' our more rational-verbal perceptions. Edwards demonstrates these principles through an exercise in which two faces and a vase merge in the same image. Drawing it requires ceasing to perceive a vase or a face (with their cognitive markers: mouth, nose, eyes, forehead; or base, bowl, etc.) to perceive visually only lines, proportions and spaces (p. 72-76).

As I remarked above, Brookes (1996), Gregory (2003, 2006) and Salavisa (2008) explore learning to draw in tune with the principles set out in Edwards's work (first published in 1979). These are authors writing for the general public – a public very similar to my own group of Social Science students, almost all without any previous drawing experience as adults. For a debate on teaching art in an academic setting, however, we require a deeper analysis of modernist approaches and their most prominent influences (John Dewey, for example), as found in the fascinating *Ensino da arte: memória e história*, edited by Ana Mae Barbosa (2008).

It is not within my reach to explore the connections between these two areas of exploration into drawing at the present time, though affinities and dialogues undoubtedly exist between them. Both helped me to design the proposals and exercises for teaching anthropology students how to use drawing in their ethnographic research. In practical and technical terms, Edwards's work was undoubtedly crucial, especially her three initial stages: borders, spaces and relationships (p. 19). However, I find myself diverging from her approach when it becomes more focused on the search for artistic refinement (her 'light and shadows' and 'Gestalt' stages).

I feel much more clearly aligned with the proposals set out by Barbosa (2008) and vividly exemplified in her chapters on the Cândido Portinari Art School. The creator of the latter, Vicente V. M. Carvalho, reveals how the aim was to forge a space of creation and experimentation without focusing on the training of 'artists' per se or on works aesthetically

adapted to their period. I think that Gregory and Salavisa, cited above, take the same approach, along with many of the members of the Urban Sketchers network who value the *experience of drawing* more than technical virtuosity. In other words, the process is more important than the outcome. In taking this approach, it is more important *to learn a new form of seeing the world* than ‘drawing well,’ as I sought to explore in Kuschnir 2011 and 2012.

It is easy to see the proximity between this objective and the kind anticipated in the teaching of ethnographic methodology. For Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira (2000), seeing is an essential component of the anthropologist’s practice, along with the skills of listening and writing. This does not imply a neutral gaze but one formed during the researcher’s training.

Perhaps the researcher’s first experience of the field – or *in* the field – resides in the theoretical domestication of his or her gaze. This is because from the moment we feel ready for empirical investigation, the object on which we are focusing our gaze has already been altered by the very mode of visualizing it.

(Oliveira 2000: 19)

For Oliveira, objects, people and contexts are “apprehended through the conceptual schema of the discipline responsible for training our way of seeing reality” – and it is anthropology that provides the “prism through which observed reality undergoes a process of refraction” (p. 18-19). In the author’s example, a well-trained ethnographer does not see just the inside of a longhouse, therefore, but observes *fires*, cooking spaces, domestic groups, *social beings*. The researcher sees this universe filtered through the contemporary and historical ethnological literature.⁸

My objective in this teaching proposal, therefore, was to show students that anthropology and drawing are both *ways of seeing* and also *ways of knowing* the world. Placing these two universes in dialogue allows a mutual enrichment within my research hypothesis. Drawing contributes positively to anthropological research and vice-versa: researching anthropologically contributes to drawing the world about us.

Since the students in the group I was teaching were already familiar with ethnography, my initial task was to increase their acquaintance with the practice of drawing. Undoubtedly what was initially just *my* research became a project of collective investigation (and fun!). It would be impossible to narrate here everything that we developed over the sixty hours of the course itself and the many other hours spent on fieldwork. I have therefore chosen to present just some key classes as *ethnographic examples* of the investigation.

I divided the course into four modules: ‘Exploring the ethnographer,’ ‘Exploring the city,’ ‘Ethnography and drawing’ and ‘Research and development.’ The purpose of this sequence was to establish connections between research and drawing, conceptualizing the act of drawing as *making visible, narrating, comprehending, producing, appropriating and knowing*. I arrived at this definition through various authors, as I demonstrate in Kuschnir 2011 and 201). Here I am also in close agreement with Massironi (2010), who highlights the infinite objectives

⁸ For another example of the decentring of *ways of seeing*, see Turner’s work (2005) on colours in the Ndembu ritual.

of drawings. As a graphic annotation that serves to “describe or explain a world of phenomena,” the drawing is...

...a very simple tool but, at the same time, its inherent elasticity allows complexity to be narrated in diverse and increasingly dilatable ways covering the range of expressive possibilities.

(Massironi 2010:17)

The table below summarizes the four modules and twenty workshops proposed during the research (recalling here that around 35% of the classes were dedicated to theoretical presentations and debates not included in the table):

Module I	Exploring the ethnographer
Workshop 1	Forms and outlines
Workshop 2	Finding lines
Workshop 3	Basic elements of form
Workshop 4	Handmade sketchbook (with Elisa Kuschnir and Celina Kuschnir)
Workshop 5	Typography
Workshop 6	Negative spaces (in monotype)
Module II	Exploring the city
Workshop 7	Drawing with the city (with ESDI)
Workshop 8	Maps, mapping and graphic representation
Workshop 9	The child in the middle of the city (with CECIP)
Workshop 10	An affective map (with CECIP)
Workshop 11	Stamp printing the city
Module III	Ethnography and drawing
Workshop 12	Body painting and indigenous graphics (with Els Lagrou)
Workshop 13	Drawing in the Hélio Oiticica Municipal Art Centre
Workshop 14	Ethnographic photography and graphic interventions (with VISURB)
Workshop 15	Observational drawing I
Workshop 16	Observational drawing II
Module IV	Research and development
Workshop 17	Collective research – Cats in the city centre
Workshop 18	Visit to Carlos Vergara’s studio
Workshop 19	The art of demonstration and making placards
Workshop 20	Illustration: a conversation of text and image
Finalization	Presentation of final works

My objective in Module 1, ‘Exploring the ethnographer,’ was to present students with this concept of drawing by means of practical workshops. In addition, as the title suggests, the module looked to transform these ethnographers/researchers into ethnographers/sketchers. In other words, the tools had to be provided for all of them to absorb the idea that they too could draw.

The course’s first exercise was designed in response to experiences with my own children, Antônio and Alice, 12 and 7 years old at the time. Like many children in this age range, they are already somewhat resistant to making art and critical of their own drawings (Brookes 2009).

Living with a mother who draws frequently, this self-critical voice proved almost as persuasive as that of my adult students (or post-adolescent in some cases).

This initial exercise has to be extremely simple, therefore, but simultaneously capable of producing complex results. The stages should be completed collectively so that the visual end product of each person's work does not interfere with the next stage of the process. The idea is for the whole class completes the stages more or less simultaneously while swapping ideas along the way. The exercise follows the sequence listed below:

1 – Gather the materials required: newspapers, magazines, black felt tip pens (thick and fine), scissors (various sizes), glue, A4 coloured paper, large-size craft paper (optional).

2 – Select a photograph published in a newspaper or magazine in which a person's full body appears (in any position so long as you can see a figure from head to foot).

3 – Cut out a rectangle around this image so as to obtain the complete photograph or image of the person in the context in which it was published.

4 – Carefully colour in the entire human figure with black felt tip pens (fine or thick, depending on the size of the figure and its parts).



5 – Carefully cut out the silhouetted figure, making sure to follow all the edges neatly without distorting the human figure and keeping the surrounding image intact except for the entry cut with the scissors.



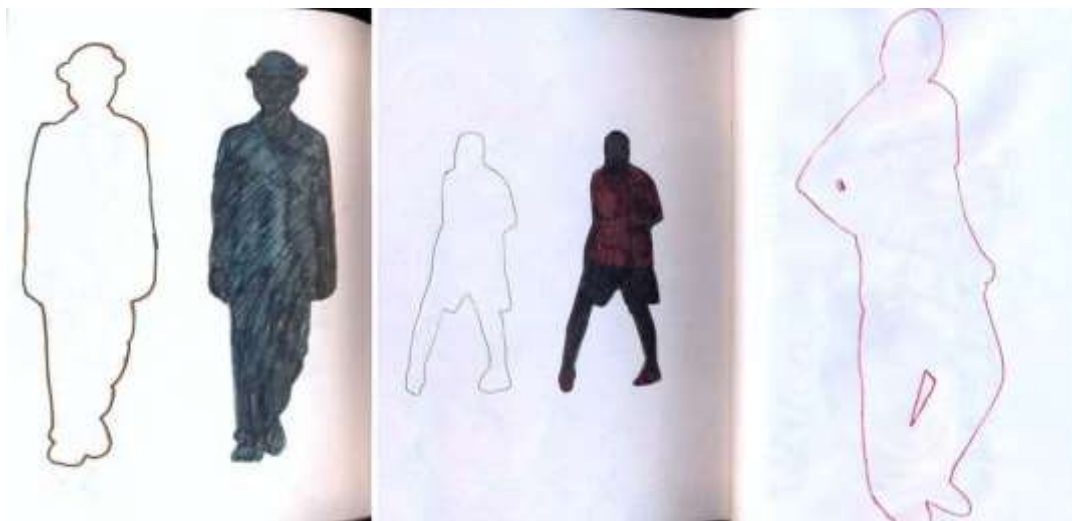
6 – Place the cut-out human figure on the large craft paper along with the other figures cut out by the class. Observe the elements individually and as a set.



7 – Stick the cut-out frame on a sheet of coloured A4 paper, place next to the others produced by the class. Observe.



8 – Use the two cut-out shapes to produce drawings, tracing around the outer edge (the silhouetted figure) and the inner edge (the framing image).



9 – Reflect on the significations or re-significations produced by the new drawings and their different combinations.

10 – As homework, explore the same process using images of objects. Explore making new drawings with the cut-outs produced in the classroom.



During this activity, I accompanied the students as they worked, answering questions and observing. On the technical side, the only difficulty encountered was cutting out very small figures or intricate details (like separate fingers). Even in these few cases, everyone completed the stages, many of them more than once. The consensus was that the exercise was both 'easy' and 'fun.' The students also remarked on the fact that they were involved in a practical workshop at the Social Sciences Faculty 'for the very first time.' Sitting on the floor and handling paper, pens and scissors were activities not undertaken in classrooms since they were children.

To ensure the objectives were completed by the students themselves rather than by myself, the teacher, I suggested we talked about the activity, examining the images produced by the cut-outs. One student noted that 'painting' the photographs black made us see them in just *two dimensions*. Another pointed out that this helped us perceive human *contours* and *forms*, bringing them closer to the language of drawing.

I suggested placing the cut-out forms together on a sheet of paper, looking for some kind of classificatory schema, as social scientists tend to do. The works appeared to divide into more static images and more dynamic images, as well as being classifiable by size. We experimented with arranging them in groups to perceive their affinities and also observed how the different layouts on the paper changed our perception of the relation between them, as well as the feeling of depth that they produced (see image above).

Everyone agreed with the idea that in this process we reproduced sets of familiar images, mentally associated with other images we know (cf. Barthes 1990). In other words, we recognize our own visual 'literacy' in the context of the technologies in which we are immersed. In separating larger and smaller human forms, for example, we did *not* imagine the

existence of large and small people, but people at different *distances* from the photographer, given our familiarity with Renaissance rules for depicting perspective.

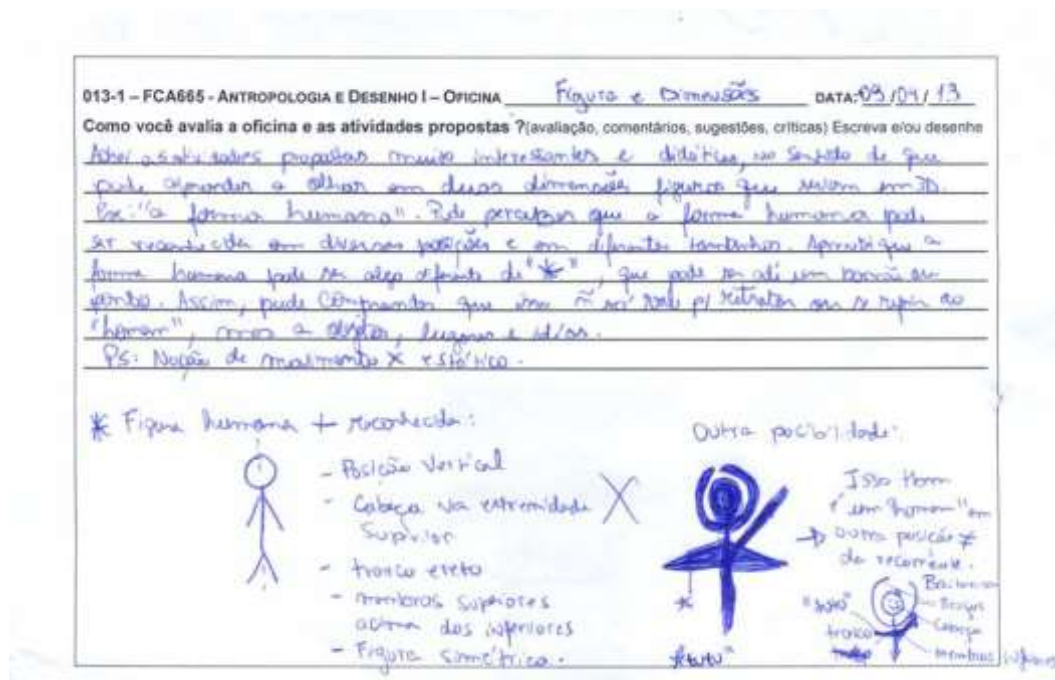
Likewise, in the process of separating images into more static and more dynamic, it also became clear just how much our imagination is fed by photographs and movies, which make us accustomed to the possibility of 'freezing' movement in previously unimaginable positions. One historical landmark in this transformation occurred with the series of photographs of movement taken by Eadweard Muybridge, including the famous 'The Horse in Motion.' Muybridge not only demonstrated that horses do not fly when they run, he also revolutionized the way in which we perceive the movement of animals and people, thereby influencing other visual arts.⁹

We also discussed how these images would be seen, classified and arranged on paper were we from other societies/cultures, a topic we also explored in a practical and playful form in the workshop run by Professor Els Lagrou on indigenous body painting, especially the designs made by the Kaxinawa, which I discuss later.

By making these cut-out figures, therefore, we were able to embark on a discussion that lasted the entire course: *what are we capable of seeing*, or put otherwise, what images are *given* before we even open our eyes (Kuschnir 2011 and 2012). It became clear that our pre-notion of a 'drawn human figure' failed to match the many different forms before our eyes, as one student summarized in his assessment card for the workshop. Below I reproduce the main text from the assessment card:

I found the proposed activities very interesting and didactic in the sense that I was able to learn to see in two dimensions figures that would otherwise be seen in 3D, e.g.: 'the human form.' I was able to perceive that the human form can be recognized in diverse positions and different sizes. I learnt that the human form can be different from * [see image below], that it can even be a blur or a dot. So I was able to comprehend that this does not apply just to depicting or referring to 'man' but also to objects, places and ideas. PS: Notion of movement versus static.

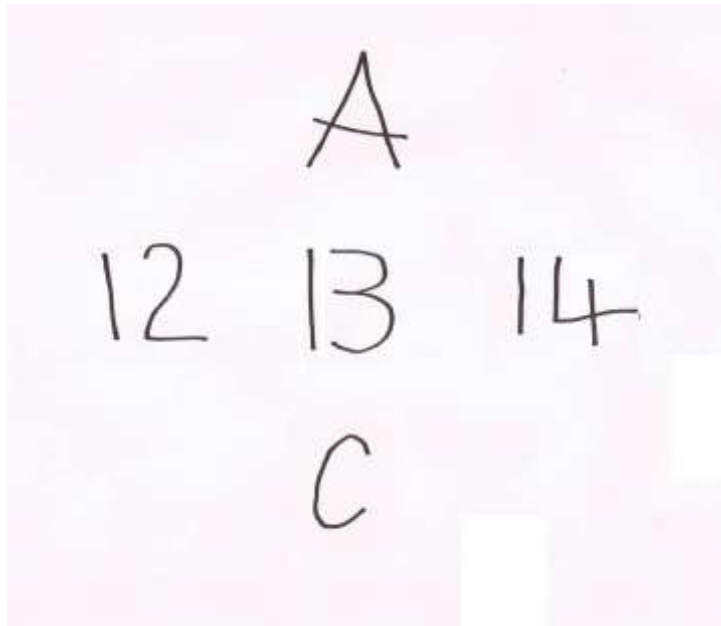
⁹ Available at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eadweard_Muybridge.



The student supplements his explanation with drawings. On the left he draws a 'more familiar' human figure with the notes: "vertical position, head on the upper extremity, erect trunk, upper members above lower members, symmetrical figure." On the right, 'another possibility': "This too is a 'man' in a different position from the usual."

Judging by the collective exchange of ideas and by the assessment cards, the group easily attained one of the exercise's central objectives: to perceive the analogy between the anthropological method and the method of observational drawing. In both cases we need to avert culturally and historically predetermined notions to construct new knowledge. Whether through images or texts, this is a search fed and enriched by looking, listening and dialoguing with interlocutors without predefining the latter on the basis of ethnocentric and/or visually stereotyped perceptions.

We were also able to explore the problem of how *context* affects the way in which we attribute meaning to information. To illustrate the idea, I showed the students the image below, reproduced in Reichenstein 2013.



What do we see in the centre of this figure? The number 13 or the letter B? The graphic representation is identical, but its meaning changes depending on how we 'read' the image. Read vertically, from top to bottom, we expect to 'see' a letter; read horizontally, from left to right, we expect to 'see' a number. In both, in fact, the *meaning 13 or B* is determined by the form, by the *point of view* and by the *context*. In other words, the outcome is affected by the observer's position (on the top or on the left) and by the meaning of the other elements making up the observed scene (letters or numbers). It is the combination of these three factors (form, point of view and context) that generates the image's meaning.

Virtually all those involved in the project were Social Science undergraduates. When they enter university today, these students are well aware that becoming a researcher involves the need to 'relativize' their own perceptions of the world. In other words, their disciplinary grounding (in anthropology) includes recognizing that context affects meaning. This context includes both the researcher's cultural-ethnic-historical training and the conditions in which research unfolds: that is, the mediations enabling the encounter between researcher and the researched universe. In practice, though, my experience suggests that all of us (professors and students) find it difficult to transform this abstract knowledge (learnt in classes and by reading texts) into *actually lived and perceived* experiences.

Indeed this was one of the objectives of our first exercise: to observe how such shifts in meaning operate in relation to viewpoints and contexts. This is a conceptual *and* practico-methodological operation important both to anthropology and to graphic representation and observational drawing. Developing a dialogue between these two different worlds can contribute didactically to better training in both. As some students wrote, combining the two areas of knowledge without difficulty: "The experience raised questions about the anthropological gaze in relation to forms," it started "to educate the gaze" and taught "how to undertake research into the forms of expressing ideas not only through words."

When we analyzed the full and empty forms created in the classroom, we were able to imagine innumerable shifts and meanings that altered in accordance with the inferences made about the images. In the image containing the experiments undertaken at home by the

students (see above), we can see some examples of what later became a procedure widely explored by everyone.

It should also be remembered that one of the objectives of the course exercises was simply to provide the chance for students to practice the *act of drawing*. From the very beginning many of them expressed their worries about taking the course, saying: “Professor, I don’t know how to draw.” One student told me that she was going to drop the course due to a ‘lack of talent,’ her fear of ‘getting things wrong’ or of being unable to ‘make something beautiful.’ Happily she not only did not give up, she ended up producing excellent work, since neither of these adjectives is a priority for the kind of drawing we are looking for.

The secret to encouraging students to practice drawing in the initial phase of the course was to provide various supports rather than a sheet of white paper. This is what we did in the first exercise where full and empty forms served as the basis for tracing outlines. Similarly, in the course’s second exercise, I adapted an idea proposed by Sonheim (2010) of using images of pavement cracks as the base for a drawing, slightly adapting the objectives and way it was implemented. The sequence proposed for the students was as follows:

1 – Gather the materials required: an A4-sized photograph of cracked cement pavement (cf. the examples below), an A4 sheet of tracing paper, 1 small binder clip, a lead pencil, coloured pencils, A4 white paper, a large sheet of craft paper (optional). (In order to provide the material to the entire class, we made 6 copies of 5 different photos. For this exercise it is important to have variations of the base image, though it is equally important that the same image is worked on by different students.)

2 – Set aside 3 to 5 minutes to calmly examine the lines formed by the cracks on the pavement.



3 – Place tracing paper over the photograph, fixing it with a clip.

4 – Look closely at the lines that appear. Search for forms and meanings in the relations between them.

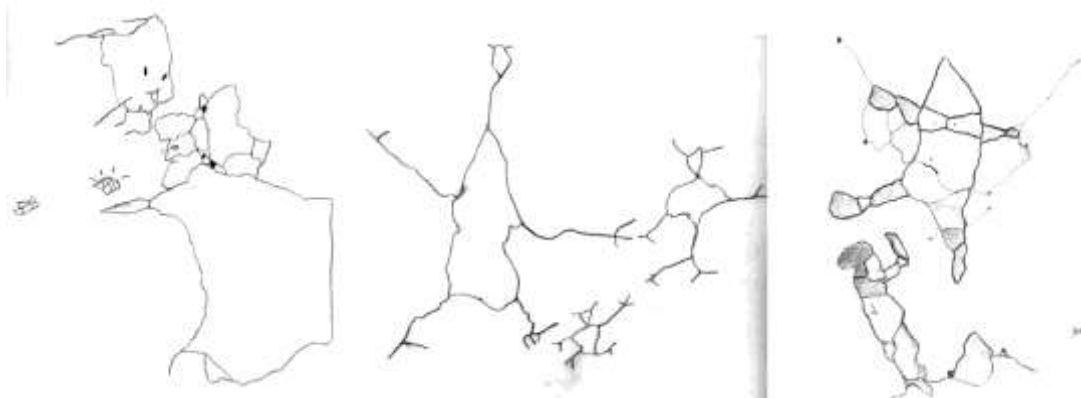


5 – Using a pencil, make a drawing on the tracing paper using *only the lines and forms already found* on the photographic image underneath.

6 – Use a coloured pencil or pens to add to the drawing made (optional).

7 – Remove the tracing paper from the photograph and attach the resulting drawing to a white sheet of paper.

8 – Place the drawing alongside the others made from the same photograph for comparison. (Below we can see three drawings made using the *same* photograph – shown on the right of the image beneath item 2 above.)



The activity unfolded calmly and in silence. A special kind of concentration accompanies this kind of classwork. The students become immersed in the image, looking attentively and performing the set task. Everyone agreed that the idea of discovering designs within a tangle

of lines was a pleasurable process, though a little more 'difficult' (in the sense of demanding greater concentration) than the previous exercise.

After everyone had finished their drawings, we placed the images side-by-side to analyze them and discuss the process and results. Each student spoke briefly about their work and those made by their colleagues. The first time I conducted this exercise, I suggested looking for figures of people, animals or fantastic creatures, following Sonheim's suggestion. (The second time I set the activity, with another class in 2014, I left the theme open, a solution that seemed to be more productive.)

The aims of this second exercise, successfully achieved, were to:

1 – Provide a support that gave the novice students *confidence* to draw.

2 – Provide a *playful* drawing activity, curbing any association with criteria such as 'right versus wrong' or 'beautiful versus ugly,' since the lines are already given. As one student observed, this playful dimensions encouraged "interaction among the group" and stimulated creativity and imagination.

3 – Provide the opportunity for students *to construct images that evade their predetermined notions* (stereotyped patterns) since the base lines do not follow any model. (We can see in the examples above that the human body was depicted using very distinct, though still intelligible, graphical solutions.)

4 – Demonstrate that *the same image can be seen in different forms* by different individuals – hence the idea of offering the same photo to different students. (In so doing, we also show the importance of comparative analysis, a procedure that every social scientist must learn.)

5 – Present a *new form of seeing an element of urban life* (pavements), kick-starting the process of renewing the way we look at apparently familiar elements in our home cities (see Velho op. cit.).

Many of these results were contained in the list of targets I had set for the exercise. Others, however, as I indicated in item two above, proved surprising. The enthusiastic involvement of the students in class discussions or in writing contributed significantly to all these stages coming to life. In a workshop assessment card, one of them wrote an excellent summary of the results observed in points one and five:

We undertook a deconstruction of how we look at everyday imagery, removing the image from its context and placing it in another, while also increasing the close connection between the hand and the image, form and paper.

Another summarized point three perfectly in his own words:

I realized that I don't need to make such rigid or 'correct' lines, I can express myself without needing to produce a perfect image. An important step to break the paradigm of beauty.

I lack the space in this article to continue to describe and analyze in detail all the twenty workshops held, or the substantial end of course works submitted.¹⁰ But I present below a summary of what we did after these initial exercises to provide an overview of the course.

Still in Module 1 — ‘Exploring the ethnographer’ — we held another four workshops with the aim of enabling the students to take up the act of drawing along the lines presented above. We conducted exercises with “basic elements of form” (Brookes 2009), “negative spaces” (Edwards 2001), typography (based on the work of Saul Steinberg) and monotype (printing with alcohol). The course also included the participation of Elisa Kuschnir and Celina Kuschnir, both designers (and my nieces), as guest lecturers to run the ‘Handmade sketchbook’ class.

The activity proved enormously productive for the group and not only in terms of learning the technique for making a particular object. The workshop became a rite of passage for the students, speeding up their transformation: from student-researchers to student-researchers-who-draw, a fundamental objective of the entire didactic experience. During the process we discussed the role of the notebook in field research, comparing its uses by designers, travellers, artists and social scientists. We saw different handmade sketchbooks, as well as examples of their use by researchers who draw — like Taussig (2011), who wrote an important text on the theme. The sketchbooks made by the students during this class were subsequently used by them for recording or incorporating the drawings made in class and during field research, becoming an integral part of the course material.¹¹

In Module 2 — ‘Exploring the city’ — the activities focused on the debate with urban anthropology and on mapping the city, themes that I shall not cover in detail here since they are less closely connected to the article’s objectives. We enjoyed a very rich space of experimentation and discussion, made possible by the participation of guest researchers like Zoy Anastassakis (today coordinator of the Design and Anthropology Laboratory, LaDA/Uerj) and the team from CECIP (Popular Image Creation Centre) represented by Moana Van de Beuque, Claudius Ceccon and Nazaré Salutto.¹² We undertook diverse exercises relating to graphic representation, map design and orientation paths (cf. Niemeyer 1998), as well as a stamp printing workshop — all of the work taking urban experience as a theme.

In the course’s third module — ‘Ethnography and drawing’ — we turned to examine how images and drawings can contribute to anthropological work, exploring this relation through workshops and discussions of the literature (Afonso 2004, Galhano 1985, Lagrou 2007, Kuschnir 2011, Leal 2008, Ramos 2004 and 2010, Rosengarten 2010 and Taussig 2009 and 2011). This is one of the key themes of the research I have been developing,¹³ and here I wish

¹⁰ I hope to fulfil this mission in future texts, so that those interested have access to the contents and can test all the activities for themselves.

¹¹ The ‘Handmade sketchbook’ workshop also came top in the students’ final assessments in terms of the ranking of the workshops that most contributed to the course. For a closer examination of this debate, see the aforementioned Taussig (2011) and Gunn (2009: my thanks to Zoy Anastassakis for the latter reference). It is also worth remembering that the production of an object is proof of the ‘craft skill’ acquired by the maker, a source of “pride in one’s own work,” as Sennet points out (2009:328).

¹² As developments of this partnership, in 2013 we created the Design and Anthropology Laboratory (Esdi-UERJ and LAU/IFCS/UFRJ partnership) and we supported the organization of the 1st Children and their Participation in the City Seminar (organized by Cecip at IFCS/UFRJ).

¹³ See Gama & Kuschnir (in press) for an initial appraisal of the topic.

to emphasize the didactic role of some of the workshops offered in this module and their impact on the students.

The participation of Professors Andréa Barbosa (Visual and Urban Studies Group – Visurb, Unifesp) and Els Lagrou (Art, Image and Ethnological Research Nucleus – Naípe, IFCS/UFRJ) was especially rich, both of them focused on the process of *learning to see and know through images*. Not coincidentally Andréa began her talk by writing the words *see*, *look* and *discern* on the chalkboard. Using projected images, she explored the transition between these skills: from the physical act of *seeing* to *looking* as the outcome of a social apprenticeship imbued with cultural filters, finally arriving at the possibility of *discerning* as an analytic approach to the world (Barbosa 2012a).¹⁴ In her workshop, the students experimented with adding drawings and collages to photographs taken by their colleagues, engaging in new creative experiences as part of this dialogue, at the same time as they revisited some of the points explored in earlier exercises, such as those of authorship, figure/ground reversal and the diversity of meanings generated by different readings and fabrications of an image. By drawing on top of a photo, as Massironi observes (2010:69), they experimented with the notion that this graphic representation is an interpretation/codification resulting from a ‘multiplicity of choices.’

Els Lagrou re-examined the idea that “making something is a means of discovering certain logics impossible to discover just by observation.” Recollecting her experiences as an ethnographer among the Kaxinawa, she told us how it was through the process of *learning to draw* the indigenous graphic designs that she gained access to the key concepts related to imagery in their cosmology (Lagrou 2007). Through projected photographs and drawings, she showed us the differences between *kene*, *dami* and *yuxin* – native terms that refer, respectively, to writing (or graphic designs), the figure and the photograph-film (“that which captures the soul”). But as Els herself recounted, one cannot learn the meaning of these terms solely at a theoretical level: “All of this I learnt drawing,” she observed. During her fieldwork, it was through trial, error and training that she acquired the capacity to perceive the meanings and subtleties of Kaxinawa designs and their relation to the body. “The challenge is for you to maintain the distance between lines and, therefore, the coherence of the design on a support that is extremely uneven,” Els explained. This is what allows the connection between the designs and native conceptions of male and female to become perceptible.

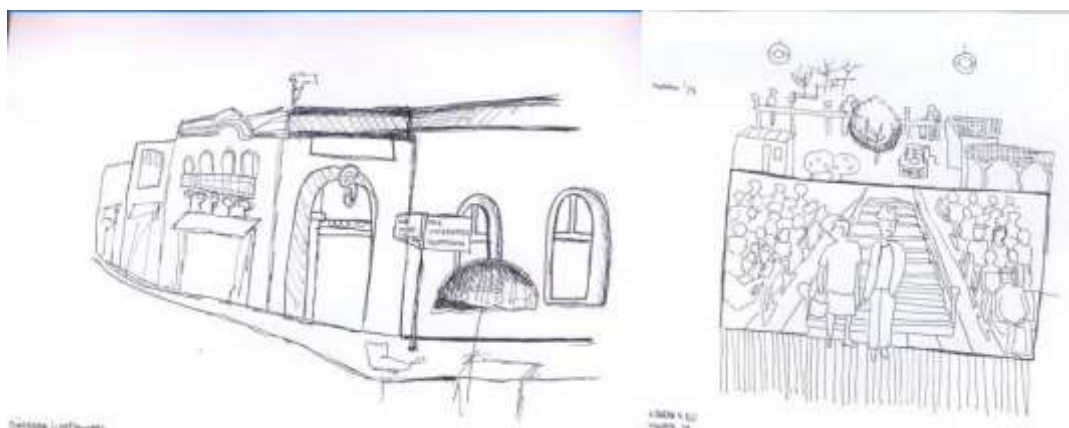
In this workshop we learnt that drawing for the Kaxinawa is “a meshwork that opens or closes the skin, enabling the interchange between what is interior and what is exterior” (Els). Painting does not aim to highlight the face’s natural features but to destructure and transform them. For the practical element of the workshop we used theatre makeup in the place of the native materials (genipap/black and annatto/red). By painting a red base on the skin as the first step, we learnt (through mistakes) that too strong a colour would be of dubious taste, since this type of colouring is associated with the Kulina, traditional enemies of the Kaxinawa. The students painted the lines on each other using various designs drawn by Els on the chalkboard and afterwards on my own face by way of demonstration.

¹⁴ Here we can also cite Rouanet’s explorations of the Enlightenment gaze, which, in the Encyclopaedia, is described thus: “you don’t always see what you look at, but you always look at what you see” (Rouanet 1988:126). The role of illustration in this work is also a prominent theme in Sennet (2009).



The class's unanimous opinion was that both workshops helped render their understanding of images more complex, expanding the potential to produce knowledge through different *forms of seeing* and *ways of doing/drawing*. With similar aims in mind, we undertook group visits to the studio of Carlos Vergara and the exhibition by the late Newton Rezende at the Hélio Oiticica Municipal Art Centre. The first case primarily involved a visit interspersed by an excellent conversation with the artist, focusing on his process of researching through the use of monotypes and other techniques for producing images – a process heavily inspired by the theme of urban life and human relations.

In the second experience we had two goals: (i) to draw along the route from IFCS to the exhibition (only about 700 metres), 'protected' by being in a group; and (ii) to exercise our gaze through the task of re-drawing elements of Rezende's work in our sketchbooks, as well as focusing on urban life. Though intended as a simple exercise, it became an important turning point in the course, didactically speaking. All the students wrote enthusiastic assessments, content with the fact that they had managed to *see and record* the known space of the streets with 'other eyes' for the first time. Many of them also reported the feeling that *new layers* of information would appear in the exhibited works as they drew them. One student, for example, recounted: "I chose a painting, but it was only after starting to draw it that I realized it contained an image of a cage with a bird inside. It was invisible before!"¹⁵



Sketches by student Bárbara Lima Machado

¹⁵ Here I recall the importance of the classroom debate on *visibility* and *invisibility* in urban research, stimulated by the reading of Baptista & Nunes (2010).

The other exercises and workshops held during the course followed the same line. In other words, their objective was to stimulate field research that utilizes *drawing as tool for observation and dialogue* with the universe under study.



Sketch by student Rosa Richter

In our analysis of the final works composed of texts and drawings (see image above) we could observe just how much the acquired skills had generated positive repercussions for the researchers (Gama & Kuschner, in press). Drawing proved to be an excellent 'ice-breaker' between the anthropologists and their interlocutors. Opening the sketchbook and *sharing images at the moment they are produced* were an invitation to converse – a sharp contrast to situations in which a camera was treated with distrust and withdrawal. The students also noted that the act of drawing meant that they spent longer in the field, working more calmly and patiently. Moreover the sketchbook and the materials were support objects that left the researchers less isolated and uncomfortable in those situations so common to ethnographic research – situations in which apparently “there is nothing to do” (Taussig 2009). Or, put otherwise, the very act of drawing become ‘something to do’: a way of observing and recording data through which not only visual information but many other kinds become more accessible. The consensus was that the objective was not to document artefacts (Leal 2008). The sketch afforded *new ways and new things to see and record*, while also functioning as a ‘mnemonic catalyst’ of relations constructed in the field (Ramos 2010:31 and Afonso 2004:76). Graphic records also increase the potential to communicate research results, allowing, as Velho argued (2012), the data produced by the anthropologist to reach beyond specialists, becoming tested, revised and compared by others.¹⁶

¹⁶ The discussion on ‘intercultural ekphrasis,’ as the theme is defined in Ramos (2004), is especially rich. On the potential of this dialogue, constructed through images, photos and films, also see Peixoto

In conclusion we discovered that ethnographic drawing and the use of images in the field do indeed have numerous possibilities for anthropology, as Afonso (1994), Ramos (2004 and 2010), Taussig (2009 and 2011) and others have already observed.¹⁷ We can reply affirmatively, therefore, to the questions with which I opened this text: learning to draw can contribute positively both to the teaching of anthropology and to the production of ethnographic knowledge. And, yes, an undergraduate student in Social Sciences can not only learn to draw, but also learn new forms of *seeing and knowing* the world via this learning process.

It was also my intention here to show that the classroom “needs to be increasingly transformed more into a laboratory and less into an auditorium,” as F. Becker argues (2008), reworking the ideas of Jean Piaget. The value of ‘learning to learn’ and the positive connection between the learning process and practical/ludic activities have already been more than sufficiently demonstrated. Piaget made his name by demonstrating how subjects learn more deeply when they proactively appropriate knowledge, rather than being treated as mere containers to be filled with content (Becker 2008). These possibilities can be productively explored in dialogue with the work of Vygotsky (and its subsequent developments) who conceives learning as a interactional process, valuing dialogue as a fertile path to the production of meanings. For Vygotsky, as Nóbrega affirms (2003:57), “the student came to be seen as an active agent in the construction of knowledge whose presence was socio-historically valued in contexts beyond the classroom.”¹⁸

During the course, although I presented exercises, techniques and contents, my main objective was to transform the ‘classes’ into shared spaces of experimentation and research. As I remarked earlier, the course emerged from my need to ‘invent natives’ for an anthropological inquiry into drawing. For this reason, I was concerned always to listen to and dialogue with the students, who I regarded as *interlocutors* in the research. I agree with Oliveira (2000:30) when he emphasizes the “growing recognition of the plurality of voices that compose the scene and the ethnographic investigation,” highlighting the fact that “these voices have to be distinguished and never silenced.” Hence, the author adds, a good ethnographic text (and we could add a good ethnographic investigation) is one that not only makes evident the conditions of its production and its methods for obtaining data, but also the theoretical approaches with which it dialogues in recognizing its own ‘intersubjectivity’ (Oliveira 2000:31).

I cannot resist the temptation, therefore, to conclude this text with the opinion of the students themselves about the course, expressed in their final assessments. From the 26 enrolled staffs and two listeners, the twenty who filled out the questionnaire replied affirmatively to the question: “Did the course help your practice as a researcher?” All the aspects already

(2012).

¹⁷ In addition to the works already cited, see, for example, Leal (2008), Newman (1998) and Garavaglia & Menna (1998).

¹⁸ The idea of learning by doing has also been emphasized recently by Ingold in *Making* (2013). Though I find many of his reflections highly relevant, here I have opted not to engage in a more direct conversation with this work since I would need space (in an already long article) to show why I disagree with his ontological definitions of drawing (and anthropology). I prefer, as Gell proposed (2009: 252), to set out from the idea that “nothing can be decided in advance” concerning the nature of objects (and thus of drawings), opting to take each line, image or anthropology itself as a search for meaning in the context of social relations.

identified over the course of this text were cited in their responses. But one of the comments especially touched me when the student observed that, as well as being successful, the course brought together the concepts of observation in drawing and anthropology and that it had been above all “a place of subversion and experimentation.” This was exactly the point that I had wanted to reach.

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