SLEEK WORDS: ART DECO AND BRAZILIAN MODERNISM

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By

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I explore Art Deco in the Brazilian Modernist movement during the 1920s. Art Deco is a decorative arts style that rose to global prominence during this decade and its proponents adopted and adapted the style in order to nationalize it; in the case of Brazil, the style became nationalized primarily by means of the application of indigenous motifs. The Brazilian Modernists created their own manifestations of the style, particularly in illustration and graphic design. I make this analysis by utilizing primary source materials to demonstrate the style’s prominence in Brazilian Modernism and by exploring the handcrafted and mechanical techniques used to produce the movement’s printed texts.

I explore the origins of the Art Deco style and the decorative arts field and determine the sources for the style, specifically avant-garde, primitivist, and erotic sources, to demonstrate the style’s elasticity. Its elasticity allowed it to be nationalized on a global scale during the 1920s; by the 1930s, however, many fascist-leaning forces co-opted the style for their own projects.

I examine the architectural field in the Brazil during the 1920s. Art Deco was a popular style and skyscrapers rapidly appeared in Rio de Janeiro with Art Deco ornamentation. I link the rapid dissemination of the style to a similar architectural style in the region, the Neocolonial Style. I examine the origins of both styles to question their claims to national “authenticity”.
I explore Art Deco in Brazilian Modernist illustration and graphic design and trace the chronology of the printing press in Brazil. The chronology is crucial to understanding the speed with which these changes in illustration and graphic design took place in a country that had experienced centuries of print culture stagnation.

My final chapter explores several books of two prominent Brazilian Modernists, Oswald de Andrade and Vicente do Rego Monteiro. The works I explore are little studied in literary criticism and I utilize the first editions of these works to demonstrate the differences between the first and later editions. My goal is to establish that new printing technologies were just as essential as the final visual product in Brazilian Modernist printed production.
To my mother, Laurel Soler Baffès

To José María Soler Amezaga, in memoriam
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INTRODUCTION

The [Brazilian Modernist] movement’s capacity to embrace Art Deco reveals something about the slippages between differing visions of modernity. Decorative art and interior design provided intimate areas for the mingling of Art Deco style and Modernist ideals. . . . Like their architectural counterparts, many fine and decorative artists appear to have perceived Art Deco as a particularly suitable idiom for reconciling the traditional opposition between modernity and national identity, however uneasy that co-existence may eventually have proved.


In this dissertation I focus on the various manifestations of the Art Deco style in the Brazilian Modernist movement during the second decade of the twentieth century, with special emphasis on graphic design and illustration. I reconsider the transatlantic aesthetic flow of ideas during this time period as not unilateral, but rather as an exchange of forms of representation that functioned as a constantly evolving dialectic of design. I argue that the use of the Art Deco style in printed texts points to a global trend with strong consumer appeal that originated in France and was very quickly adopted and adapted by Brazilian artists and writers.

I examine several illustrated books of two Brazilian Modernists (modernistas), Oswald de Andrade and Vicente do Rego Monteiro. The work I examine by Oswald de Andrade is A Estrela de Absinto (The Absinthe Star) (1927), illustrated by fellow Brazilian modernista Victor Brecheret. I also explore Vicente do Rego Monteiro’s illustrations for P.L. Duchartre’s Légendes, croyances et talismans des Indiens de l’Amazone (Legends, Beliefs, and Talismans of the Amazonian Indians) (1923) and Rego
Monteiro’s own work of illustrated poems *Quelques visages de Paris (A Few Faces of Paris)* (1925). Despite Oswald de Andrade and Rego Monteiro’s status as prominent figures in the Brazilian Modernist movement, the works I examine in this dissertation have traditionally received little critical attention due to certain textual elements, I argue, that make these works “problematic”; they do not fit easily within the Brazilian Modernist canon.

I also examine the production processes of the aforementioned texts in order to demonstrate that both contemporary European vanguard movements, as well as Brazilian Modernism, placed great importance on how these works were produced, in addition to their final visual form. And in order to properly investigate the unique combinations of handcraftsmanship and mass production processes upon which these writers and artisans placed such great importance, I focus exclusively on primary source materials (or, the first editions of these works). Due to considerations of time and money, later editions of the works I examine have necessarily lost both the Brazilian Modernists’ original aesthetic objectives and the final visual appearance of their printed texts. Reexamining the primary source material allows for a more nuanced reading of these illustrated texts; specifically, the relationship between image and text as it appears in Brecheret and Rego Monteiro’s Art Deco illustrations for the books examined.

In 2006, I received a grant from the Center for Latin American Studies at Georgetown University to investigate Brazilian Modernist primary source material at what was then the largest private library in Latin America: The José Mindlin Library in São Paulo, Brazil. What began as a kernel of an idea after seeing the *Art Deco: 1910-1939* exposition at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston slowly grew into a full-fledged
archival research project with the goal of locating and identifying first editions of Brazilian Modernist printed works. The prominence of the Art Deco style in these works was initially surprising because neither the style nor the term had come up in my previous studies of the movement. I wished to explore how exactly the style arrived to Brazil and why it played such a prominent role in Brazilian Modernist printed production. And as I quickly discovered, Art Deco was not exclusive to print production in Brazilian Modernism; the style also appeared in architecture and more commercially-focused decorative arts endeavors throughout Brazil beginning in early years of the second decade of the twentieth century.

And as part of my ongoing investigation into Brazilian Modernist primary source material, I also conducted research at the Library of Congress, especially the Hispanic Reading Room. This step in the research process was crucial because the Library of Congress, more often than not, has all of the editions available of a particular work in their collection, therefore allowing me to examine closely the crucial differences between the first edition and all following editions (including facsimile editions). I also made use of the Rare Book Reading Room at the Library of Congress in order to examine Rego Monteiro’s works and other works published by the same publishing house in France that published Duchartre’s *Légendes* (these works are considered “rare” because they are luxury editions printed in limited runs).

In my first chapter, entitled “The Art Deco Style”, I start by defining both the style and the decorative arts field. I examine the first international manifestation of the style, the *Exposition internationale des arts décoratifs et industriels modernes* (*International Exposition of Modern Industrial and Decorative Arts*) held in Paris in 1925.
The 1925 exposition was a luxurious showcase of the Art Deco style that served primarily to promote the richness of France’s colonial possessions to both the exposition’s national and international visitors. The style, however, quickly became adopted and adapted on a global scale, creating different manifestations of the Art Deco style with localized variations. The United States, for example, utilized mass production technologies to create Art Deco products and introduced streamlining, one of the most recognizable features of the style.

I also explore the principle source material of the Art Deco style, specifically avant-garde, primitivist, and erotic sources. Fundamentally a style tied to commercial goods meant for mass consumption, Art Deco artisans utilized many elements of the aforementioned sources in order to give more modern inflections to their products. And significantly, many vanguard artisans, in turn, participated in more commercial endeavors, including Art Deco, in order to financially support their fine arts projects. My argument is that the traditional lines between the decorative and fine arts become blurred in the early twentieth century, particularly in the case of the Art Deco style.

In Chapter II, entitled “Art Deco in Brazil: Architecture and Nationalism”, I explore the origins of the style in Brazil starting with the architectural realm. Architecture was one of the first fields to incorporate the new style in Brazil, especially in the city of Rio de Janeiro. I also examine how architecture was profoundly tied to governing powers in Brazil that were highly concerned by rampant architectural eclecticism and the lack of a singular, “national” architectural style in the country. In 1922, the year of Brazil’s centennial of independence from Portugal, the country’s president opened the Exposition of the Centennial of Brazilian Independence (Exposição do Centenário da Independência
This exposition is notable for the architectural style employed in the national pavilions, the Neocolonial Style, which had many similarities with the Art Deco style.

Like Art Deco, the Neocolonial Style, I argue, revived, recreated, or reconstructed many decorative elements of a supposedly authentic, national Brazilian past. In the case of the Neocolonial Style, architects selectively employed motifs from the barroco mineiro (Minas Baroque) style, found in the state of Minas Gerais; and in Art Deco, architects primarily favored indigenous motifs from the Island of Marajó. Both architectural styles were entirely modern, however, and the 1920s proved to be a formative decade for the construction, literally and figuratively, of vying national architectural styles intended to demonstrate both locally and internationally Brazil’s rightful place amongst the modernized nations of the world.

In Chapter III, entitled “Brazilian Modernist Graphic Design and Illustration”, I closely examine the famed 1922 Modern Art Week (Semana de Arte Moderna), held in the Municipal Theater in São Paulo. Also held during the year of the centennial of independence, the Modern Art Week featured multifarious vanguardist activities, collectively known as modernismo, that challenged the nation’s traditional textual and aesthetic standards. I also explore the most important antecedents of the 1922 Modern Art Week and how many of the artists and writers who contributed works to its exposition portion were directly exposed to both the avant-garde movements and the Art Deco style in Europe during both the previous decade and then throughout the second decade of the twentieth century.

I also trace the history of printed publications in Brazil (and access to them) in order to better contextualize the speed with which new printing technologies were
introduced. The arrival of these new technologies throughout the nineteenth century coincided with the lifting of restrictions on access to printed works; and within a few decades after the introduction of a modern printing press, Brazilian Modernists were experimenting with its “grid”, producing incredibly aesthetically vibrant works that challenged the traditional boundaries between text and image. The Brazilian Modernist magazine Klaxon, for example, was a groundbreaking publication that evoked many of the international vanguard textual and visual experiments.

In my fourth and final chapter, entitled “Transatlantic Aesthetic Interplay: The Illustrated Books of Oswald de Andrade and Vicente do Rego Monteiro”, I closely examine the lesser known works of the two authors. In the case of Oswald de Andrade, I also examine the most prominent antecedents to A Estrela de Absinto, specifically his novel Alma (1922) and O Perfeito Cozinheiro das Almas deste Mundo (The Perfect Cook of this World’s Souls) (1919). I postulate that A Estrela’s lack of critical attention is due to the mixing of autobiographical elements of Oswald’s own life (as well as the life of Victor Brecheret, the illustrator of the novel’s cover) in the creation of an intensely dislikable protagonist. Today the novel’s degenerate themes are hard for a contemporary audience to understand – several scenes almost seem parodic for their sheer dissoluteness.

I also explore two beautifully illustrated books by Vicente do Rego Monteiro that are likewise little studied in Brazilian criticism, although notable efforts to revive interest in his illustrated work have been made in the past decade by Jorge Schwartz. Rego Monteiro, I argue, has been neglected in Brazilian criticism, for the most part, because his prolific poetry was nearly always in French. This proved to be especially problematic in
Brazil in an era during which many artists and writers were trying to move away from imported French aesthetics.

I furthermore examine the production technologies utilized by the French publishing houses that created the two Art Deco works illustrated by Rego Monteiro examined in this dissertation. Akin to avant-garde writers and artisans who utilized both elements of handcraftsmanship and mass reproduction processes to produce extremely innovative texts, French publishing houses that specialized in livres d’art were constantly experimenting with new techniques and technologies to create their highly prized works. By the end of the 1920s, however, due to the Great Depression of 1929, most of these publishing houses permanently closed their doors. And in Brazil, starting in 1930, the rise of new governing forces signaled the end of a decade with competing visions of both “new” and “authentic” national styles. The very nature of Art Deco that allowed localized manifestations to spring up around the globe also allowed fascist forces to co-opt the style for their own priorities.
Chapter I

The Art Deco Style

1925 marks the turning point in the quarrel between the old and the new. After 1925, the antique lovers will have virtually ended their lives, and productive industrial effort will be based on the new.

Le Corbusier

1.1. The 1925 Exposition: Consuming Modernity

Art Deco is a twentieth century style that came to global prominence between the First and Second World Wars in nearly every visual medium, from fine art, graphics and illustration, fashion and textiles, architecture and furniture, to film and photography. Art Deco refers to a “family” of works whose main purpose was decorative. It is a profoundly commercial style tied to consumer goods, both luxury and mass-produced. Art historians Charlotte Benton and Tim Benton point out, in their seminal anthology *Art Deco: 1910-1939*, that the difficulties inherent in forming a concise and categorical definition of the style are due to the fact that the “Art Deco” label is often attached to a large and heterogeneous body of works “whose sole common denominator seems to lie in their contradictory characteristics” (14). The Art Deco style label encompasses numerous contrasts and dissonances; its very eclecticism forms part of its enduring popularity and has fostered its dissemination on a worldwide scale.

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1 The book accompanied the 2003 exposition of the same title organized by the Victoria and Albert Museum in London; subsequent venues included the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto, the Legion of Honor in San Francisco, and the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston.
It is important to note that the Art Deco style label did not actually come into use until the mid- to late 1960s. The origins of the term stem retrospectively from the title of the first international manifestation of Art Deco, the *Exposition internationale des arts décoratifs et industriels modernes* (*International Exposition of Modern Industrial and Decorative Arts*) held in Paris in 1925 (16). Charlotte Benton explains that the 1925 exposition was dedicated to “modern” decorative arts in an effort to reassert France’s authority as the arbiter of taste and producer of luxury goods in an international forum (141). The luxury industries, she argues, provided a model for French industry as a whole, and the calls for their revitalization, to be provided by the exposition, would

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2 “Art Deco” is an abbreviation of the title of the landmark exposition that became systematically used after the 1966 Paris exhibition *Art Déco/ Bauhaus/ Stijl/ Esprit/ Esprit Nouveau* (Sanders 106).

Patricia Frantz Kery points out in *Art Deco Graphics* (2002) that in its time, “Art Deco style was called many things: Style Chanel and Style Poiret (after those leading fashion designers); Skyscraper Style, Vertical Style, and New York Style; Art Moderne or Modern (the American term of the late twenties and the thirties); Jazz Style; or simply modernism” (18). The term “Art Deco” first came into usage during the 1960s when there was a revival of interest in the decorative arts of the early twentieth century. The exposition was originally scheduled to take place in 1915 but was postponed on account of World War I and finally took place in 1925. The ten-year delay allowed for the Art Deco style to thoroughly develop and mature by 1925: “The stylistic unity of exhibits indicates that Art Deco was already an internationally mature style by 1925—one that had flourished in the years following World War I and peaked at the time of the fair” (Gross, “French Art Deco”, [www.metmuseum.org](http://www.metmuseum.org)).

3 The term “decorative arts” refers to the design and manufacture of functional objects and often includes interior design. Due to the nature of the functionality of the decorative arts, the term is typically used in opposition to the “fine arts” that, in theory, serve no other purpose other than to be seen. The perceived distinction between the decorative arts and the fine arts stems from a shift in aesthetic thinking that began in the eighteenth-century that provided a new “conceptual framework within which to establish a separate notion of art applicable only to painting, sculpture, architecture, poetry and music” (Frank 4). The prominent role of mechanical reproduction in the decorative arts, moreover, troubled prominent art critics and historians at the time and helped to set the groundwork for future distinctions between hand-made (fine arts) and machine-made (decorative arts) artistic creation. Nevertheless, as will be discussed in this chapter, the so-called “traditional” boundaries separating Art Deco and the fine arts pieces created by avant-garde artists are, in many cases, not absolute.
represent a powerful indication of the permanence of French cultural values and the recuperation of material prosperity in a post-World War I society (142).

In the decades prior to the 1925 exposition, several national commissions had lamented the inability of French artisans to adapt their wares for a growing middle class, both nationally and internationally. There was also mounting concern that German and Austrian artisans were succeeding where the French were not in capturing the burgeoning purchasing power of the middle class market (142). In the face of these threats, the Société des Artistes-Décorateurs called for a major international exposition that would highlight the adoption of new designs and production methods while rejecting past styles – even if they had proven to be financially successful (142). Out of concern for the need for originality, the regulations for the exhibitors for this particular exposition were quite stringent: the exhibitors could not copy historical models and could only display works of a modern and novel character. This doctrinal aesthetic, in addition to several other important factors, gave rise to the emergence of the Art Deco style, including: “a reaction against Art Nouveau; an increasing complicity between critics, institutions and artist-decorators; responses to the challenge of German competition; and the solidarity of an enterprising younger generation which had been relatively untouched by the [First World War]” (Laurent 167).

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4 The profession of the artistes-décorateurs (artist-decorators) was a relatively new field that arose during the nineteenth century and eventually displaced the architect as the designer of the building interior. A skilled craftsman, for example, who previously had been responsible for the design and construction of separate elements of interior decoration, began to take control of the “harmony of the ensemble, through his use of motifs and colors, [which] eventually gave him total responsibility for the decoration of the interior” (Laurent 165). In France, the new artist-decorators formed the Société des Artistes Décorateurs (Society of Artist-Decorators) in 1901 as a means of giving status to their production.
The seven-month run of the *Exposition internationale des arts décoratifs* also featured another, yet very different, feature of modernity in the form of small bijou shops and boutiques lining the areas between the two main exposition sites. By 1925, Parisian luxury boutiques and their ever-new products, in particular items of haute couture, had come to define modernity as a purchasable commodity (Gronberg 160). Instead of seeing permanent monuments showcasing the marvels of modern engineering, such as the Eiffel Tower, built for the 1889 World’s Fair, the 16 million visitors of the 1925 exposition strolled through the streets of *temporary* shops and department store pavilions designed to reinvigorate the luxury goods industry.\(^5\) Department stores, in particular, highly conscious of the newest styles, would later play a crucial role in the popularization and dissemination of Art Deco by making the newest styles more accessible to the masses (Laurent 170). Modernity, as displayed by the exposition, was consumable and highly ephemeral, fueling and satisfying consumers’ demands for novelty and change.\(^6\)

The 1925 exposition may have been intended to reaffirm France’s role as the ultimate definer of taste and stylishness among the elite, but it also coincided with the rise to power of the mass consumer. The short term success of the exposition for France’s luxury goods industry ended, however, with the Wall Street Crash of 1929, and the style would be harnessed by new commercial and design entities geared towards adapting it for

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\(^5\) The Eiffel Tower bore a massive illuminated Citröen logo for the 1925 exposition, transforming the structure into a mere backdrop for modern advertising for a motor vehicle company (Victoria and Albert Museum, “Art Deco: the 1925 Exhibition”, vam.ac.uk).

\(^6\) The emphasis placed on the manner in which objects were displayed, both at the Exposition and at the small shops lining the Exposition, was indicative of their presenters’ desire to promote consumption. Simon Dell argues the 1925 Exposition produced a new type of space, formed by the displayed coordinated ensemble, that “sought to establish a particular set of relations between the consuming subject and the displayed objects, in which the objects were defined as ‘expressive’ of the identity of the consumer” (311).
mass production processes and therefore accessible to the average purchaser on a worldwide scale. As will be discussed in Chapter II, much of the world didn’t share the conditions present in France that gave birth to the style although many cities in far-flung parts of the globe shared in some of them.

The representation of non-European nations was meager at the 1925 exposition and the United States famously decided not to participate based on the belief that it had nothing to exhibit (Kaplan 335). American critics and designers, however, did attend the exposition and walked away motivated to seek a parallel renewal of decorative vocabulary inspired by American national traditions. American department stores, in particular, did not want to simply import French luxury products for consumption by a tiny market and producing similar products was too cost-prohibitive. But the idea that consumption could be promoted by the (re)styling of products, such as in Parisian haute couture houses that changed styles annually, was simply too irresistible to ignore. Old designs could be reworked into something new in order to generate new buying.

American designers were also sensitive to nationalist concerns that sought an authentic American aesthetic in the decorative arts. As a result, American designers approximated Art Deco designs using new materials, such as chrome, steel, and aluminum, and modern manufacturing techniques; they incorporated motifs more generally associated with America’s particular brand of modernity: “the machine aesthetic” (339):

By 1930, many articles and books addressed the issue of a distinctly American expression of modernity – what designer Paul Frankl called the ‘new spirit manifest in every phase of American life’. As he elaborated in his influential book Form and Reform: A Practical Handbook of Modern Interiors: ‘This spirit finds expression in skyscrapers, motor-cars,
aeroplanes, in new ocean liners, in department stores and great industrial plants. Speed, compression, directness – these are its attributes. (340)

Paul Frankl, moreover, created the celebrated “skyscraper style” and considered the skyscraper to be one of the most vital contributions to modern art; he created modern interiors with furniture all shaped to resemble the new iconic building type that he associated foremost with New York City. He argued that the newly formed profession of interior design should work together with the larger public to fit the needs of the inhabitants of the modern city in order to create a style that would be attuned to America’s unique form of modernity (Long 15).

One way in which American designers restyled their products was by means of streamlining. Streamlining is the application of the horizontal lines and rounded corners which, in practical terms, reduces air resistance. Streamlining was a key component in the study of aerodynamics and made modern travel possible. Nicolas P. Maffei points out that the purpose of streamlining in design was two-fold: first, to capture the dynamic qualities of modernity, such as speed and technological progress; second, to domesticate the machine by concealing its operating parts (366). Complicated machinery thus appeared simplified and was more pleasing to the eye. Streamlining was both functional and gave the appearance of modern functionality, two concepts that at times were mutually exclusive. The Chrysler Building, for example, completed in 1930 at the height of the skyscraper building frenzy in New York City, exemplified the application of streamlining as a decorative – but not functional – element in design. The building was built using steel and steel cladding and is most easily recognizable for its crown ornamentation that consists of stainless steel sunburst-patterned arches that call to mind the stepped platforms of Mexican pyramids. Streamlining quickly became an important
signifier for modernity in every visual medium as the Art Deco style was disseminated on a global scale.

One of the most important avenues for the worldwide dissemination of America’s particular brand of Art Deco was by means of the Hollywood film. The Hollywood films of the mid-to-late 1920s and the 1930s established Art Deco as a mass style and featured sweeping design schemes that encapsulated every set detail, including the architectural backdrops, elaborate stage sets, modern interiors, and glamorous costumes and jewelry. The modern themes of many of these films:

> wove a magical web with tales of luxury, youth and beauty, upward mobility, individualism, sexual liberation and rampant consumerism. The backdrops for this exploration of contemporary dreams and aspirations were fantastic Deco-styled hotels, night-clubs, ocean liners, offices, apartments and skyscrapers. Offering a heady cocktail of modern themes and chic style, these films proved irresistible to millions worldwide. (Wood 325)

American art directors, in addition to recent European émigré designers, created meticulously detailed sets that showcased features both the Art Deco style as introduced by the 1925 Paris exposition and the American contribution of streamlining. Director Busby Berkeley famously utilized mechanical sets and grandiose, synchronized dance routines in his films that recreated the most abstract, geometrical forms of Art Deco, combining both fantasy and glamour in a powerful visualization of modernity. Art Deco,

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7 Charlie Chaplin satirized these same symbols of modernity in the classic *Modern Times* (1936) by treating the existence of the lowly factory assembly line worker as simply another cog in the machine. Both Busby Berkeley and Chaplin combined elaborate sets with machine-like, precise routines that showcased the same signifiers of modernity in vastly different lights. Fritz Lang’s *Metropolis* (1927) also famously utilized the Art Deco style, demonstrating the popularity of the decorative idiom in the global film industry.
as displayed in Hollywood films that reached millions around the globe, became the primary visual idiom to convey modernity.

Another key component of Art Deco was how the style’s very eclecticism and lack of narrow theory allowed it to accommodate a wide variety of local motifs without losing its essential character. It was very much a global style that was simultaneously able to adapt itself to become authentic with a local or regional audience:

…while Art Deco’s distinctive repertoire of frozen fountains, stylized floral and animal decoration, zigzag motifs and sunbursts, found its way all over the world, these motifs could easily be substituted or supplemented – and ‘naturalized’ – by similarly stylized abstract and naturalistic motifs with local or regional meanings, ancient and modern. (Benton and Benton 26-27)

Art Deco as it originated in France was very much a luxury style associated with fine craftsmanship and unique commissioned pieces for a very small audience. The United States popularized the style by incorporating motifs associated with the “machine aesthetic” and adapted it to mass production technologies that resulted in more affordable products for a wider audience attuned to the newness and stylishness that the trend offered. Additional manifestations included East Asia, India, Italy, Latin America, Australia, South Africa, and Eritrea, amongst others.

The French pavilions dominated the 1925 exposition but many of the foreign pavilions demonstrated the influence of national traditions in creating more localized Art Deco permutations that would later take place around the world as the style became disseminated on a global scale. In the Czechoslovak pavilion, for example, as well as in the Austrian and Dutch pavilions, folk art was a primary source material for the country’s decorative arts because it satisfied nationalist concerns and its geometric patterns could easily be modernized to fit the requirements of the exposition. The bright colors of folk
art also easily lent themselves to richly colored, lavishly ornamented Art Deco adaptations more particular to the early stages of the style. Remarkably detailed tapestries decorated the walls of the pavilion and featured various traditional handcrafts that were native to Czechoslovakia (Crowley 195). The 1925 exposition serves as a useful snapshot to illustrate competing nationalist anxieties in a post-War Europe and how the decorative arts served as a conduit to both inspire and depict modernization.

1.2. The Art Deco Graphic Style

Art Deco artists reconciled art and industry in a way that was most radically apparent in graphic design. The term “graphic design” refers to various artistic and professional disciplines that focus on visual communication to advertise products or services for sale. The term encompasses the processes used to formulate this visual communication and the product that is generated. Graphic design creates an identity for a product by means of page layout, typography, composition, and pure design elements such as shape and color. Product identity enables the consumer to associate design elements with the product being advertised.

The organizers of the 1925 exposition recognized the importance of the growing field of graphic design and devoted space to displaying fine book arts and posters. The fine book arts entailed more of the craftsmanship that was particular to the early stages of Art Deco and the role of artisans in creating unique, luxury products for individual collectors. Artisans used exotic and new materials, such as unusual leathers and rare woods and metals, in creating the book bindings commissioned and bought by art collectors. The artisans’ designs covered a wide range of texts and often played with “allusions that show engagement with the text before the volume is even opened”
It is important to note that Art Deco is not a literary genre; the style’s rich visual vocabulary did, however, permit at times a fascinating interplay between text and image in the case of illustrated books and their book bindings or covers.

The resulting interplay between binding and text that utilized the motifs popularized by the Art Deco style affected other arenas of the publishing industry that were constantly looking for new ways to advertise their products. The book jacket became the most important component of utilizing a complete design process to sell the book and to create brand awareness for the consumer: “It was recognized that book jackets not only sold the product but also identified the publisher…. Books thus joined the world of consumer goods whose commercial success depended on eye-catching design” (310).

Another component of publishing in the 1920s was the limited, numbered, *de luxe* edition (306). Advances in printing, papermaking, and color-reproduction technologies coincided with the popularization of the Art Deco style, allowing for a design process that encapsulated the binding (or book jacket) and the illustrations within the book. Patricia Frantz Kery, a leading expert on Art Deco graphics, argues that the advances in printing technologies permitted a richness of color illustration and design “comparable to that of illuminated manuscripts” (229). The *de luxe*, or luxury edition, was often financed by organizations of French book enthusiasts that would many times commission their own bindings by the leading Art Deco artisans of the time (249).

In the United States, similar book societies differed from their French counterparts in emphasizing a more commercial approach to book production, even amongst the luxury editions (231). The Limited Editions Club, for example, founded in
1929 by George Macy, sought to bring together classic and new texts with original illustrations by leading artists of the time. Macy commissioned both fine art artists and leading graphic artists to produce etchings, lithographs, and engravings that were bound in the volume. Particular emphasis was placed on achieving both “perfection and beauty” for each book: “Handsome, interesting, well-set types; well-made papers imported from the finest mills in the world; the finest of ornament and illustration; the best of binding materials; will be used in the creation of these books” (The Limited Editions Club 5). The books issued by the club, furthermore, were not to resemble a set – artists and printers contracted for each book would maintain complete control over the artistic process, thereby creating volumes that would be both unique and rare (9). The Limited Editions Club’s works represented the increasingly intertwined relationship between art and industry that was more typical of the Art Deco style in the United States, and its books were inexpensive compared to those of French book societies (231). The result in the United States was an edition that allowed for a dynamic relationship between the author

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8 Two of the most famous editions issued by the Club were Ulysses by James Joyce (illustrated by Henri Matisse, 1935) and Lysistrata by Aristophanes (illustrated by Pablo Picasso, 1934). Many times, both the author and illustrator would personally sign each copy (depending if either were still living, of course).

9 In the Club’s prospectus and application for membership, the goals outlined were to: “To furnish, to lovers of beautiful books, unexcelled editions of their favorite works… to place beautifully printed books in the hands of booklovers at commendably low prices… to foster in America a high regard for perfection in bookmaking… by publishing for its members twelve books each year, illustrated by the greatest of artists and planned by the greatest of designers… this is the purpose of THE LIMITED EDITIONS CLUB” (5). The Club’s editions would be relatively affordable due to the unique nature of the “economics of a subscription plan” (8).

Nevertheless, a sense of exclusivity was maintained by only allowing a total of 1500 applicants to join the Club, at least at its inception (2).
and artist that was emblematic of the complexity of aesthetic thinking at the beginning of the twentieth century.

The 1925 exposition also featured posters that utilized the new design language and facilitated the popularization of the Art Deco style. The poster itself is a two-dimensional visual medium that has served as a popular form of advertising since the late nineteenth century. New technologies enabled artists to produce relatively inexpensive, brightly colored posters in large quantities. In addition to serving as an advertising medium, the poster was a consumer good in its own right. Frantz Kery notes that would-be collectors pulled them right off the walls of buildings before the glue had even dried (53). Posters were relatively inexpensive as well: “In America, which eventually would lead the world in commercial advertising, posters at the turn of the century were viewed as affordable art for the masses; they cost about ten cents, the price of a popular magazine” (53). By means of this new publicly viewable art, artists could showcase their work to the masses in what became known as “the gallery of the street.”

Some of the most iconic Art Deco posters of the 1920s and 1930s were advertisements for travel by newly invented means of transportation. Artists conveyed both the excitement and novelty of the rapid expansion of modern travel by cars, ships, trains, and aircraft by using streamlining in poster design. Two-dimensional streamlining in posters portrayed visual symbols of speed that not only reflected the aerodynamics present in the vehicles themselves, but also heightened the viewers’ visual perception of the linkages between travel, speed, luxury, and modernity (Atterbury 315).10 Many

10 The application of streamlining and geometricism to indicate speed also represented the Art Deco style’s absorption of the visual vanguard movements, particularly Futurism and Constructivism.
posters featured vanishing points to create the illusion of movement and others purposefully exaggerated the proportions of, for example, great ocean liners in order to better market their fashionableness and exclusivity. Not all posters featured the exteriors of these machines; some designers depicted the sumptuous interiors of cruise ships, trains, and blimps, many decorated with Art Deco furniture and tableware. In an increasingly globalized world, Art Deco travel posters utilized the new design language in order to convey a sense of immediacy and promote the relative ease and fashionableness of modern travel to the potential consumer.

Art Deco graphic designers also innovated with typography and created compositions with interplay between text and image. Typography is a field dedicated to both the arrangement and design of type, and new typefaces integrated decorative elements that were originally absorbed from avant-garde imagery and later became synonymous with the Art Deco style. New typefaces were both functional and decorative as they still transmitted written information, albeit with stylistic inflections. Art Deco also coincided with a period of increasing internationalization in type design and new typefaces were very quickly adopted abroad (Aynsley 300). These new typefaces were crucial in creating a dynamic relationship between text and image that was characteristic of Art Deco graphic design in books, magazines, and posters.

1.3. Source Material

A. AVANT-GARDE SOURCES

Posters played a critical role in the dissemination of the Art Deco style because graphic design was the most visible manifestation of the new visual language. Frantz Kery notes that of all the graphic arts media in the Art Deco period, posters carried the
spirit of avant-garde art into the cultural mainstream (55). Avant-garde art, particularly Futurism and Cubism, inspired several key components of the Art Deco graphic style: “a more radical use of geometricism; tension and agitation from the juxtaposition of forms and fragmentation of images; abstraction; rationalization; extreme simplification. In addition, the Deco designers were inspired by the idealism and intensity of the avant-garde artists” (19). Via graphic design, Art Deco approximated avant-garde art formally, creating a tantalizing sense of provocation in the prospective consumer.

Art Deco is a modern style, but not necessarily modernist, even though it did at times incorporate many avant-garde sources. The term “avant-garde”, or “vanguard”, is often used to refer to Modernism and originates as a medieval French military term for the division of an army into three sections: the Van, the Main (or Middle), and the Rear. The Van, or vanguard, was the section that advanced first into battle and was necessarily followed by the rest of the soldiers. The term was used later in the nineteenth century to

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11 Geometric abstraction in Cubism focused on the inherent two-dimensional features of painting and assumed different stylistic forms in various European countries and in Russia. By the 1920s, it had evolved into pure abstraction and was the logical conclusion of the Cubist dissolution and reformulation of the established conventions of space and form. Neo-plasticism, a term coined by Piet Mondrian in 1919, is useful for describing the appeal of geometric abstraction to various vanguard movements throughout the world. Mondrian saw geometric forms as an absolute reality that underlined all of existence. His work expunged any real-world references and reduced (or abstracted) reality to its basic horizontal and vertical lines. Not all abstract art is necessarily reductionist, however; in other words, it does not always rely upon a fixed mimesis of forms as a starting point that is later reduced or abstracted. Art critic Kirk Varnadoe explains that in many cases, abstract art involves a “constant cycling between representation and abstraction, between drawing forms out of the world and adding new forms to it” (48). During the 1920s, geometric abstraction manifested itself as one of the primary underlying principles of the Art Deco style in France in both the decorative arts and in architecture.

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refer to artists and writers metaphorically “ahead” of received ideas and traditions.\textsuperscript{12} Philosopher Jacques Rancière argues that, in addition to the military sense of the term, “avant-garde” describes a force that “has a clear understanding of the movement” and “determines the direction of historical evolution”; the idea of the avant-garde is “rooted in the aesthetic anticipation of the future” (29). These artists and writers considered themselves the explorers of the newness of the modern world and probed deep into its anxieties.

For some historians of the fine arts, Modernism was a movement contemporary with Art Deco that lent itself towards abstraction, a viewpoint based on the perspective that fine art is, and should be, disinterested (Benton and Benton 430). In its purest form, Modernism rejected ornamentation and insisted on the autonomy of a work of art. Decoration, or ornamentation, was considered an anathema and avant-garde artists, in theory, rejected any decorative intentions (101). Modernism in architecture likewise rejected ornamentation, as epitomized by Le Corbusier’s “L’Espirit nouveau” pavilion at the 1925 exposition (Cohen 31). The pavilion served as a startling contrast to what he considered the decorative ostentation of the vast majority of pavilions at the exposition (Woodham 122). Austrian architect Adolf Loos, a leading figure at the time in Modernist theory, denounced the modern decorative arts movements as akin to cultural degeneracy. He argued for radical aesthetic purism in design and considered any ornament as too

\textsuperscript{12} The Oxford English Dictionary outlines the etymology of the term \textit{vanguard} as originating from the Old French military term \textit{avangarde} and first appearing in English in the late fifteenth century. The term and its variation, \textit{avant-garde}, started to be used figuratively to refer to the quality of being at the forefront of a political, cultural, or artistic movement in the early nineteenth century (\texttt{www.oed.com}).
time-consuming for artisans and too cost-prohibitive for consumers (*Ornament and Crime* 289).

Nevertheless, as Art Deco appropriated avant-garde imagery, it increasingly impinged on Modernist territory while still maintaining itself as a separate vision of Modernity. Art Deco imagery, when approximating avant-garde motifs, is still “decorative” even when it is not applying ornament. Moreover, some art critics argue that upon further examination of the purpose of the 1925 exposition, it is Art Deco’s engagement with the commercial world that makes it an essential facet of modernity but profoundly distinct from avant-garde art (Marwick 29). Art Deco artisans, for example, did not contribute to manifestos that were so common to the avant-garde movements; in Europe, moreover, Art Deco artisans did not seek to challenge established political and artistic institutions and instead sought renewals of visual forms within them.

One of the first European vanguard movements, Futurism, was launched in 1909 with Filippo Tommaso Marinetti’s *Manifesto del futurismo* and celebrated the new machine age and its dynamism as the antithesis of all things traditional, which were deemed irrelevant and mundane. Futurists dramatically challenged the meaning of classical aesthetics and disputed the traditional boundaries between Art and decoration:

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13 Modernism in architecture excluded ornament from the ideals of modern design: “Giving themselves up to the enchantment of industrial materials and technological structures, Modernist theorists proclaimed that only purified forms should be used to express function in the most limpid and luminous way” (Frank 13-14).

In his writings on the role of decoration in a modern society, Adolf Loos contrasted what he perceived as frivolous versus functional ornamentation. In non-industrial societies, he argues, ornamentation serves a practical purpose: “The nomadic herdsmen had to distinguish themselves by various colours; modern man uses his clothes as a mask” (294). Decoration necessarily becomes senseless and impractical in a modern society because it serves no utilitarian purpose.
Rejecting the static, passive audience that looks at images as isolated entities, the futurists proposed to create ‘plastic complexes’ which would expand the interaction through ‘an architectural continuity with the observer.’ These dynamic interactions and totalizing experiences expanded beyond the pre-imposed limitations of ‘fine art’ discourse by equating painting and sculpture with, for example, ‘the moving hands of a clock.’ Challenging the prevailing hierarchic value system and pre-established categories, the futurists called for a unified artistic realm that would dismantle the condescending division existing between ‘high art’ and ‘decorative arts’. (Costasche 184)

While the futurists were not the first aesthetic movement to advocate a new understanding of the modern decorative arts, they were the first vanguard movement to embrace the technological advances that relied more on mass production and less on highly trained craftsmen. Everyday objects, moreover, were perceived as sources of dynamism that served as more than their utilitarian purpose: a chair that was brightly painted with geometric shapes, for example, simultaneously had purposefulness in its everyday use and as a sculptural element to be admired for its form and color. The futurists rejected the notion of decoration as a simple embellishment with no inherent meaning and instead conceived their works – everything from ties and dresses to paintings and sculptures – as a means of interacting dynamically with the space of the viewer.¹⁴

Art Deco artisans, similar to proponents of Futurism, embraced the machine and mass production processes but unlike avant-garde art and design, Art Deco artists’ purpose is not an attack on the institution of art itself and they make no claim to being

¹⁴ Futurist painting and sculpture were especially concerned with expressing movement and the dynamism of natural and mechanical forms. Cubo-futurist works, such as Marcel Duchamp’s Nude Descending a Staircase, nº 2 (Nu descendant un escalier nº 2) (1912) also entailed geometric abstraction to suggest rhythm and convey movement. Streamlining, a key feature of Art Deco, also sought to capture the plastic sense of mechanical movement, or velocity. Modernity, as expressed by both Futurism and Art Deco, was constantly in motion on a forward-looking path.
disinterested (Benton and Benton 16). Avant-garde manifestos had their mass marketing aesthetics as well, but they served more of a subversive purpose in challenging what had previously been considered the definition of Art (Perloff 94). The Art Deco style, on the other hand, while borrowing from many different sources, renews aesthetic forms through design rather than fragmenting reality. Ironically, this renewal also includes avant-garde forms, thus humanizing what was previously considered “dehumanized.” Art Deco approximations of avant-garde art successfully diluted its subversive criticism of established traditions and values and persuasively interpreted its imagery for general public consumption. According to both Benton critics, the Art Deco style borrows from and then completes the modernist vision of the avant-garde to the point where what was originally decorative becomes unornamented (110).

The Benton critics point out, however, that the work of many avant-garde artists featured interpolations of decorative tendencies that at times blur the distinctions between these two seemingly separate visions of modernity (104). The supposed line between avant-garde art with abstract tendencies and pure decoration is an extremely fine one that in many cases is difficult to determine. Many avant-garde artists and Art Deco designers, for example, shared an interest in the primitive as a means of renewing their visual vocabulary and found similar inspiration in African forms. Both groups also leaned toward abstraction in an attempt to move away from representational art and the mimesis

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15 Peter Bürger, in *The Theory of the Avant-garde*, considers the “European avant-garde movements as an attack on the status of art in bourgeois society” and explores the problematization of art’s claims to autonomy (49).

16 Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset criticizes modernist artistic thought for not trying to relate itself to the human condition, thereby “dehumanizing” art. According to Ortega y Gasset, the modernist work of art gains its place and legitimacy in its isolation from realism and human representation and can only be enjoyed by a select few (La deshumanización del arte y otros ensayos estéticos).
of fixed forms. Avant-garde artists also practiced the decorative arts at times for financial reasons in order to support their fine art endeavors, just as decorative artists raided avant-garde source material in order to give a more modern inflection to their work. These aesthetic incursions between Modernism and Art Deco:

… indicate that however puritanical avant-garde artists and theorists might be about the need to keep art divorced from function and decorative application, in practice there was widespread interest in the overlap between the fine and decorative arts. As a result artists often broke their own rules. (107)

Vanguard publications, moreover, – in the form of manifestos, books, little magazines, and posters – often blurred the traditional distinctions between text and image and artists and writers created highly experimental works that played with a wide range of motifs, including Art Deco imagery. And Art Deco graphic artists frequently drew upon vanguard imagery in order to seize upon the commercial aspect of new and exciting design language possibilities. The origins of modern graphic design can be traced, for example, to the visual experimentations in the *Futurist Manifesto* of 1909 that utilized innovative typography, language forms, unusual formatting, and color schemes.¹⁷ Sonia Delaunay, in addition to her numerous decorative arts forays, was also a key figure in avant-garde art and famously illustrated the poem *La Prose du Transsibérien et de la petite Jehanne de France* (1913) by Blaise Cendrars. The poem was printed as an accordion-pleated book and utilized *simultanéiste* text and design theory that resulted in a synchronized interaction between Delaunay’s designs and Cendrars’s poetry. Marjorie

¹⁷ One of the earliest experimentations with visual poetry is the Symbolist poet Stéphane Mallarmé’s “Un Coup De Dés Jamais N’Abolira Le Hasard” (“A Throw of the Dice Will Never Abolish Chance”) (1897). The poem is a single, long complex sentence with varied levels of meaning deriving from the black print of the words, their arrangement on the page, and the white spaces. In many ways the poem anticipated twentieth-century Modernist experimentations with graphic design (Sackner 61).
Perloff points out that the poem-painting was a “kind of advertising poster” in its “transformation of the conventional page” into a “luminous billboard” (9). The unique poem-book resulting from Delaunay and Cendrars’s collaboration signaled a new beginning in graphic design with its interchangeable iconographies of word and image (Sackner 63).

B. PRIMITIVE AND ANCIENT SOURCES

In addition to examining avant-garde source material, a more critical understanding of Art Deco requires a close examination of its decidedly primitivist appropriation of non-Western imagery. Primitivism is the appropriation of non-Western forms in art and literature and became a fundamental component of modernism as artists and writers became disenchanted with received Western aesthetic conventions. The “primitive” was considered the antithesis of “civilization” and denoted the chaotic and the irrational, both of which were explored as more “authentic” representations of the self. The historical context of the primitive art form was deemed unimportant as opposed to the emotions that it evoked in the Western viewer or reader.

James Clifford, in his critical review of Western ethnography, labels the convergence of modernism and primitivism as a “modernist primitivism” for its “appropriating or redeeming otherness, for constituting non-Western art in its own image, for discovering universal, ahistorical ‘human’ capacities” (193). He uncovers Western writers and artists’ inability to “see” how this “primitive” art is culturally situated. On an aesthetic level, modernist primitivism occurs when non-European art forms are transformed to function as a catalyst in renewing European art. The assumed gap between
the modern and the primitive disappears entirely as the Western self is projected onto a
construction of the non-Western Other.

The use of primitive forms to represent the modern was a fundamental component
of Art Deco. It is important to note that the definition of primitive art, as Marianna
Torgovnick argues, has also changed throughout the centuries to signify diverse
categories of artistic production. By the 1920s, the term primarily referred to “tribal” art—
Native American, Eskimo, African, and Oceanic (Gone Primitive 19).18 Little distinction
was made between the art of these regions and the emphasis was instead on their
rejuvenating qualities for the inspiration and creation of modern art. The European elite
for example, including vanguard artists and writers, embraced all things African during
the first two decades of the twentieth century due to their exotic appeal (Wood 79).
Africa became the exotic signifier of modernity for European artists and writers; artists
outside of Europe explored their own heritage in a search for modern iconography based
on “native” sources.

The 1925 Paris Exposition, announcing that its objective was to bring together
“what was thought to be the best and most representative of contemporary work from
both inside and outside the colonial empire,” served as an attempt to show off France’s
colonial art in an act of assertive nationalism:

One agency for (allegedly) fostering internationalism, while at the same
time indulging national pride and displaying the richness and variety of
colonial possessions, was the international exhibition…. Without doubt,
the French organizers were keen to assert the importance of co-operation
among the colonizing powers in establishing and maintaining what they

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18 Outside the scope of Torgovnick’s book, American and Latin American artists
constructed different definitions of tribal art. Many Art Deco artists, for example, made
little distinction between ancient and tribal art.
saw as a beneficial world order; and to stress the West’s responsibility to continue colonization and the good works it entailed. (Marwick 36)\(^{19}\)

The only African exhibits on display at the 1925 exposition were those of French colonial possessions or protectorates, as well as works of “negro” inspiration in some of the other European pavilions (Charlotte Benton 143). Exposition rules strictly prohibited primitive sources in their original form – works displayed could not be reproductions, imitations, or counterfeits and instead had to combine real inspiration with originality, resulting in the (re)fashioning of the original by the artist’s hand. The artist therefore had

\(^{19}\) International expositions (also known as world’s fairs, world fairs, universal expositions, or world expositions) were a popular and frequent feature of the nineteenth century. The Great Exhibition of the Works of all Nations, popularly known as the Crystal Palace Exhibition, was the best-known “first” world exposition and took place in Hyde Park, London in 1851. Organized by Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, the exposition celebrated modern industrial technology and design and sought to establish the role of Britain as the leader of modern progress. The modern decorative arts, as a result, evolved from “a domain of relative limited interest into one of public consequence, exposing for all to see the relative merits and weaknesses of national products” (Frank 5). And as will be discussed in Chapter II, the modern decorative arts became irrevocably tied to efforts to discover and foster “authentic” national styles. Starting in the mid-nineteenth century, the words “exposition” and “exhibition” became interchangeable when referring to the act of putting out into public view, or publically displaying something. While formally titled The Great Exhibition, onlookers also described the event as the “Exposition” (www.oed.com). In this dissertation, “exposition” refers to the entire event, while “exhibition” refers to the separate thematic displays within the exposition. Later European expositions throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century sought to emulate The Great Exhibition in order to promote their own projections of technological and colonial superiority relative to other nations. The great draw for many spectators of such expositions were the national pavilions, designed and decorated by the participating countries in ways that were intended to convey modernity. International expositions during this time period inherently commodified art, industry, and the colonial “trophy” as a means of assertive nationalism. The fascination for exotic styles was fueled by impressive exhibits of non-Western art at many of the international expositions from 1851 onward and many expositions later became entirely devoted to colonialism. The last of these colonial expositions took place in Paris in 1931 as the outbreak of the Second World War would later make the financing of such events impossible. L’Exposition Coloniale Internationale de Paris is notable in that it actively tied positivist scientific thinking with a resulting beneficial world order as provided by the spread of French civilization (Morton 357).
to transform primitive source material into a modern discourse that was obvious to the viewer.

The use of new materials in both luxury and mass-produced products, along with the application of streamlining, converted primitive sources into something marvelously novel and exotic. In the twelve-volume *Encyclopédie des arts décoratifs et industriels modernes*, issued to coincide with the 1925 exposition, the novelty offered by the transformation of primitive source material was understandable given the recent vogue for exoticism in the context of easier tourism and less expensive international travel (Frayling 41). Newly invented means of transportation, such as airplanes and ocean liners, enabled greater numbers of people to travel longer distances at relatively affordable prices. Technological advancements in travel also enabled Art Deco to become the first truly global decorative style; many foreign-born artists and writers were able to travel at a relatively quick pace between Europe and their countries of origin and adapted the new style to their local environments within the first decade of its inception.

The appropriation of primitive source materials went hand-in-hand with that of certain ancient sources that were also viewed as new and exotic. 20 Just three years prior to the exposition, Howard Carter’s discovery of the tomb of Tutankhamun was followed by a global “Egyptomania” that touched upon every aspect of design, in both the market for luxury goods and mass-produced item. 21 Christopher Frayling describes the archeological discovery to have been the “most significant peacetime mass media event, up to then, of

20 Ancient source material, such as classical imagery from Greek and Roman times, was considered overworked and, for the most part, no longer sufficiently exotic to represent modernity.

21 Several *revivals* of Egyptian-inspired design have taken place throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries following Napoleon’s campaign in Egypt in 1789 (Oshinsky, “Exoticism in the Decorative Arts”, Metmuseum.org).
the twentieth century” (42). The archeological discovery fueled a romantic fascination with ancient Egypt and the sheer opulence of the treasure found at the site stirred the public’s imagination as newspapers worldwide quickly disseminated photos of the discovery.²²

Designers converted Egyptian motifs into a decorative vocabulary that was “new” and “original” and oftentimes overlapped with other ancient sources, as well as with avant-garde art:

Whatever the motivation of the organizers, the illustrations that accompanied their texts contained plenty of visual evidence that French décorateurs had indeed been inspired by ancient Egypt, as well as by many other ancient cultures. […]

Such images made reference to Egyptian motifs, but in doing so designers also abstracted from them – often turning them into triangles and other geometric shapes, as in Le Luxe. They also combined them with elements from other sources: Egyptian and Mayan, for example, are sometimes difficult to distinguish. To the designers of the 1920s this visual language probably had less to do with the cultural specificity of ‘ancient forms’ such as Egyptian, Mycenean, Chinese and Mayan, than with geometry. It represented the absorption of Modernism – in the form of basic geometric shapes, speed lines and assorted flat pattern – into the vocabulary of the decorative arts. This was done in ways that would ‘go’ with contemporary luxury interiors and complement both the construction and style of luxury architecture, making the [Art Deco] style a decorative idiom for modern life (41).²³

²² Frayling observes that the story of the boy-king who died at a young age struck a sentimental chord with a world that was still reeling from the deaths of young soldiers in the trenches in World War I. One newspaper likened the way in which the treasure was transported out of the site to the casualties of war being brought out of the trenches in stretchers (46).

²³ Art Deco in the United States incorporated many Mayan motifs; it was not, however, the only modern art style to incorporate Mayan source materials. As will be discussed in Chapter II, the Neocolonial Style in Latin America and the Mayan Revival Style in the United States both derived ornamental elements from indigenous architecture. See Marjorie Ingle’s Mayan Revival Style: Art Deco Mayan Fantasy (1984).
Art Deco artists and designers frequently pillaged ancient and primitive art for their forms and patterns alone and, in the case of French artisans, adapted them for the modern taste for luxury materials and glamorous surface effects (Wood 86). These luxury materials often came from the colonies as well; artisans utilized exotic animal skins and rare woods, at times creating a deliberate contrast between the “primitive” and the “modern.” Designs and objects obtained by French colonialism were increasingly associated with urban sophistication; home furnishings, in particular, highlighted the powerful influence of art nègre and other non-Western art on the modern interior. Geometric, abstracted patterns derived from primitive source material were introduced into numerous inter-war homes, bringing the “primitive” into the realm of modern mass culture (79). African textiles, for example, that employed earthy tones in geometric patterns that for some tribes may have denoted historic events, or related religious, political, or financial significance, were transformed by Western artists into brightly

24 The source material “pillaging” that Wood mentions also went both ways at times. She mentions the case of a chair designed by Swiss-born Jean Dunand and Jean Lambert-Rucki that was based on a West African Tchokwe chair from the Congo or Angola. The “original” Tchokwe chair had been adapted by the tribe in the seventeenth century from European models (84-85).

25 It is exceedingly difficult to trace the exact nature of the primitive origins of many Art Deco and Modernist pieces given the fact the artists frequently blurred the lines between various source materials in their adaptive endeavors. Many artists, such as Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque, were furthermore unconcerned with questions of authenticity of the objects of their inspiration due to the fact that they served as more of a catalyst for their own artistic production and the appearance or approximation of exoticism was deemed more of a priority. The dangers inherent to a critical undertaking of comparing an object of Modernist or Art Deco art to that of its assumed primitive inspiration became apparent in the infamous Museum of Modern Art exhibit Primitivism in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern (1984). Curated by William Rubin, the exhibit drew widespread denunciation for its pairing of works by modern masters with their supposed African and Oceanic formalistic counterparts. In not defining what he meant by “affinity”, Rubin ignored the cultural context of the primitive art objects and “failed to shed eurocentric biases that [he] must have been aware of” (Lemke 44).
colored patterns that conveyed only their exotic nature. These patterns adorned clothing, carpets, upholstery, and wall hangings throughout the Western world in a renewal of decoration, thus providing an exotic guide towards modernity.

But while the original intention of the exposition seemingly revealed a dichotomy between modernism and primitivism as represented in luxury goods, much of the ensuing mass appeal of Art Deco came precisely from the convergence of newness and exoticness. “New” in the sense that it captured the essence of an increasingly mechanized and mass culture and “exotic” in that primitive cultures provided forms and motifs with which artists could constantly renew their decorative vocabulary (Benton and Benton 22). As Art Deco grew in popularity, the style was disseminated by means of mass production technologies that permitted less expensive approximations of Art Deco’s more luxurious products. Department stores on both sides of the Atlantic played a crucial role in offering affordable variations of furniture designs that were originally handcrafted by French artisans. Streamlining appeared in numerous household goods that were already associated with modernity by dint of being new technological products such as radios, refrigerators, jukeboxes, portable cameras, and electric clocks. Many of these items were made using newly invented plastics, such as Bakelite and other synthetic polymers. And in the world of fashion, affordable Deco jewelry, much of it made using these new plastics, was widely sold in department stores along with clothing that featured geometric details that later would become associated with the flapper style.

Non-Western source material was particularly apt for Art Deco appropriation due to its perceived lack of cultural “history”; it was perceived simply as design. Decoration needed no explanation because exotic source material simply explained itself by
appearing to be timeless and non-mimetic. Frayling’s argument thus suggests that the exotic is very easily “written upon” by Art Deco interpretations, thus allowing for the creation of a new history to take its place (48). It was a way of interpreting the modern world that offered a renewal of ancient forms in order to promote consumption of new products.

Art Deco in Brazil will be discussed in greater detail in Chapters II, III, and IV but the manifestation of the style in Eritrea does deserve special recognition for the astounding juxtaposition of both Art Deco and Modernism in a colonial environment. Eritrea is an East African nation whose capital, Asmara, was built mostly by Italian colonists during the 1930s during the period of fascist rule and, for the most part, still exists in its original form today. Far from Europe, Asmara offered Italian architects and designers “a perfect environment for innovation and experimentation. There is much evidence to suggest a distinct penchant in Eritrea towards Modernism from the mid-1930s, where before none had existed in architecture, though even more radical styling was adopted at the end of the decade” (Denison 63). Eritrea was to serve as a launching point for Benito Mussolini’s invasion of Ethiopia, and the urban planning and the rapid construction of Asmara represented one of the most highly concentrated assemblages of Modernist and Art Deco architecture in the world.26 The city exists as a notable exception to both the geographic distance and the artificially constructed exoticness between much of Art Deco and its primitive source material.

26 Art Deco architecture became the preferred style by many fascist governments during the 1930s. Susan Sontag points out in “Fascinating Fascism” that “the fascist style at its best is Art Deco, with its sharp lines and blunt massing of material, its petrified eroticism” (Under the Sign of Saturn, 1980).
While a discussion of primitive source material in modern design points to the apparent ease of discovering new decorative vocabularies to express modernity, other industries in the 1920s and 1930s, namely the Hollywood film industry, portray a much more violent conflict between primitivism and the destructive powers of modernity. In the most technically advanced film of its time, *King Kong* (1933), featured a symbolic clash between the modern and the primitive, or the Beauty and the Beast, in the form of an woman kidnapped by a fantastically large ape who escapes any and all attempts of its Western handlers to confine it. The travails of the woman and the actions of the fierce Kong play out in Manhattan, the capital of modern progress, and feature the destruction of symbol after symbol of modernity, from cars and trains to skyscrapers. The final scene of the movie shows Kong scaling the Empire State Building, the tallest building in the world at the time, and also of the Art Deco style, and ultimately falling to his demise after being shot at by a squadron of military airplanes. Ghislaine Wood points out that Kong’s destruction “is less a victory for the modern world than the loss of an irreplaceable primal force. *King Kong* was as powerful a warning of the destructive force of technological progress as *Metropolis*” (332).

C. Erotic Sources

Art Deco in many ways continued the *fin-de-siècle* fascination with sexual and erotic cultural degeneracy that was present in the Art Nouveau style. Art Nouveau was a decorative style that preceded Art Deco and took inspiration from natural forms of plants and curving lines. The style favored organic and curvilinear motifs and, in Art Nouveau architecture, harmonization with a site’s natural environment. The combination of decoration and eroticism was a determining feature of Art Nouveau and the female body
in particular was a place to project society’s anxieties regarding modern-day fears about female sexuality and shifting gender roles:

Female sexuality received particular attention, in a world beginning to experience the social, economic and cultural liberation of women. Such diverse social phenomena as women’s suffrage, the new field of psychology, and pornography, held a common thread of the exploration of female sexuality; indeed all these formed a direct relationship with each other which anticipated the debates and movements of the century ahead. Women became the dominant theme of Art Nouveau, and the erotic potential of the female body was fully exploited to express many different concerns. (Wood, Art Nouveau and the Erotic 8)

Art Nouveau artists were particularly intrigued by the imagery of the female prostitute and mistress and her role as a seductress. She was portrayed as being simultaneously submissive and threatening because she existed in opposition to conventional morality.

For Art Nouveau artists, the erotic had come to signify modernity and was the ultimate symbol of a consumer world (38).

The Art Deco style continued this commodification of the female body and turned increasingly towards the non-Western female form. Modernist primitivism, a fundamental component of both avant-garde and Art Deco aesthetics, was ultimately a construction of non-Western sexuality that was coded metaphorically as feminine while “civilization” was righteously masculine (Torgovnick, Primitive Passions 14-15). These gender dualisms are also discussed in-depth by famed anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss in his research on the Caduveo tribe of Brazil in the 1930s. He observes that the women of the tribe practice graphic body art – in the form of tattoos and body paintings – that is non-figurative and abstract. He notes that no two designs are alike and that the practice serves a sociological function that underscores the transition to culture, the hallmark of
civilized man (*Tristes Tropiques* 195). He also observes that the motivation behind these abstract designs, as practiced by the female members of the tribe onto the naked female form, is undoubtedly erotic (188). Abstract art, as practiced by primitive peoples, becomes coded by Western artists as undeniably modern for its employment of non-representational styles and its eroticism. The naked female body of the primitive becomes a canvas of sorts onto which the hallmarks of modern civilization are ultimately drawn and written upon.

Of all of the avant-garde movements, Cubism had the most profound influence on the Art Deco style, particularly in Art Deco graphics, and Pablo Picasso’s *Les Demoiselles d’Avignon* (1907) epitomized many of the emotions and ideas that Art Deco borrowed from Cubism (Frantz Kery 23). The painting features Iberian and African-inspired masks on five nude female bodies that are fragmented and distorted. The image is a scene in a brothel in which four out of the five prostitutes look directly outwards toward the viewer in a confrontational manner that shocked audiences at the time. The painting marked a break with nineteenth-century realism and the beginning of the renewal of European art by means of African and ancient forms. Picasso, in later years, would refer to the work as his first “exorcism painting”, a statement that Sieglinde Lemke has interpreted as Picasso utilizing the African mask he came across in the Musée de

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27 Adolf Loos, who decries the use of ornamentation in a modern society, argues that a civilized man who tattoos himself is either a degenerate or a criminal. The tattooed primitive man however, is amoral and like a child, and warrants no such judgment (*Ornament and Crime* 288).

28 Critics also point out the strong influence of Japanese *shunga*, or erotic prints, on Picasso’s work that had become enormously popular amongst the Impressionists. Malén Gual argues that there are many formal similarities between *shunga* and *Les Demoiselles d’Avignon* (205).
Trocadéro as a weapon for exorcising old styles (37). Lemke argues that this “exorcism” was not simply a substitution of aesthetic forms, but rather a projection of desired metaphors onto the art of the Other:

What is at stake here is not just a growing interest in African art and the direct borrowing from this art; what matters is its seminal role as a catalyst in shifting the aesthetic paradigm. The European interest in black art cannot be reduced to apparent similarities. Nor is it enough to assume a natural affinity between modern and ‘primitive’ art. Although there was direct borrowing, the contribution that black art made was to initiate a paradigm shift in European art history. The intercultural encounter – or rather discovery of non-European art in European institutions – caused European artists to experiment, transform, and regenerate their own styles. (40)

John Richardson, Picasso’s biographer, argues that the five “monstrous” faces of *Les Demoiselles d’Avignon* also served as an exorcism of traditional concepts of “ideal beauty” (32). The monstrously-faced female prostitute becomes the perfect metaphor of savagery in the midst of civilization. Richardson, moreover, calls the five figures Picasso’s “apocalyptic whores” for the painting’s resemblance to El Greco’s *Opening of the Fifth Seal* (1608-1614) (also known as *The Vision of Saint John* and *Apocalyptic Vision*) and how its unveiling to the public was akin to Picasso’s releasing on the world five gorgons, or Medusa-like female monsters, that would turn to stone all who looked upon them (32). Modernist primitivism, as depicted by Picasso, established a clear link between the feminized erotic primitive Other and modern, civilized man’s mortality.

Other avant-garde artists like Wassily Kandinsky also put forth theories of modern art that likened the process of artistic abstraction with that of the Western male artist subjugating – as opposed to imitating – a feminized Nature. Kandinsky, a Russian painter and art theorist associated with Expressionism, considered the modern artist to be a prophet of sorts who created art driven by an internal necessity – based on his feelings
and emotions – to make new discoveries and usher in tomorrow’s reality. In Concerning the Spiritual in Art (1912), Kandinsky argues that the modern artist can approximate these internal truths, just as the primitive artist does, by means of non-representational art (1-2). The alternative, copying or imitating the forms of previous styles, leads only to replication deprived of any spiritual significance. It is the journey that the modern (male) artist undertakes to seek these truths that Kandinsky conflates with forceful colonialism:

“I learned to battle with the canvas to come to know it as a being resisting my wish (= dream), and to bend it forcibly to this wish. At first it stands there like a pure chaste virgin with clear eye and heavenly joy… And then comes the willful brush which first here, then there, gradually conquers it with all the energy peculiar to it, like a European colonist, who pushes into the wild virgin nature, hitherto untouched, using axe, spade, hammer, and saw to shape it to his wishes. (Complete Writings on Art 364)

In his colonialist metaphor of the male artist conquering the feminized, naked, and virgin canvas, Kandinsky depicts the male painter as a creator in his own right, and not merely an imitator of a feminine Nature’s existence. Abstraction, according to Kandinsky, represented a masculine victory over Nature through the appropriation of feminine creative omnipotence.

Art Deco artists were similarly tantalized by the naked female Other and many found their muse in Josephine Baker, who was introduced to the Paris stage in 1925 and was at the center of the broader trend known as the vogue nègre. Her danse sauvage, consisting of her dressed in nothing more than a skirt of bananas, electrified Parisian audiences by its blatant sexual energy. Lemke notes that in a curious twist, “many critics connected Baker to the primitive because of her resemblance to primitivist art. For the dance critic André Levinson, the ‘Black Venus… evoked all of the prestige of the best Negro sculpture. The plastic sense of a race of sculptors and the vigor of the African Eros
caught us in its grip”” (quoted by Lemke in *Primitivist Modernism* 99). Baker performed primitivism, and graphic artists in turn, most famously Paul Colin, portrayed her in a modernist primitivist light that found inspiration in her particular portrayal of Otherness.

Not all Art Deco erotic art was primitivist, however, and Art Deco female artists, most notably Polish painter Tamara de Lempicka, depicted the female form in a highly erotic light that glorified the lives of wealthy white women of leisure. According to Neville Weston, Lempicka remains a popular, yet critically ignored figure who painted some of the most defining images of high society in the 1920s and 1930s (79). Her paintings featured cubo-mechanistic reclining women, adorned in sumptuous, brightly colored negligees, with aloof, disinterested expressions facing sideways, and rarely directly outward toward the viewer. Her art is a thoroughly commercial one that critics denounced as shallow and ultimately meaningless but that serves as a window to Gatsby-type wealth during the heyday of the Roaring Twenties. The highly charged eroticism of her work also found a considerable audience with consumers drawn to the tawdry portrayal of nude and barely dressed female forms. Lempicka’s glamorous biography often intertwines with her portraits that sought to convey the wealth of both her aristocratic and Hollywood sitters. Lempicka, in many ways, epitomized the “New Woman” who found tremendous financial success by means of her own artistic talent (80).

The Modernist and Art Deco depictions of listless women passively staring at the male museum spectator who visually consumes her serves as an intriguing contrast to the decidedly non-passive role of the female consumer in a post-World War I society. One of the main concerns of the organizers of the 1925 exposition was to promote shopping
among the industries dedicated to the adornment of women, namely the haute couture houses. Women played an active role in this consumption, making the *femme moderne* irrevocably tied to the new age of consumerism (Gronberg 158-9). The modern woman was furthermore a cultural producer in her own right and female artisans actively participated in the 1925 exposition, namely in the boutiques lining the pavilions (163). Artists such as the highly influential Sonia Delaunay sold her wares in her Parisian *Boutique Simultanée* and went on to produce fashion and textile designs for the theater and cinema.\(^{29}\)

While Delaunay’s clothing designs may have reached a small audience that could afford haute couture products, American department stores were quick to capitalize on the new styles and offered affordable approximations – known as ready-to-wear clothing – that soon became available in both retail locations and through mail-order catalogs such as Sears, Roebuck, and others (Zeitz 161-2). Hugely successful Hollywood merchandising schemes created new lines based on cinema fashions that offered less expensive imitations of the newest modern styles to women all over the country (Wood 330). Valerie Mendes notes that “the osmotic interchange of creative ideas across the Atlantic resulted in one of fashion’s ‘golden’ periods for both Paris couture and Californian costumiers (269). And large swaths of the United States, from the most fashionable department stores in urban areas to the small towns geographically removed

\(^{29}\) Delaunay’s boutique featured a range of “simultaneous” fabrics, clothes, and accessories. Valerie Mendes notes that her creations were “the shortest (yet still below the knees) to be photographed at the exhibition. In acknowledgement of the advanced nature of her striking geometrically patterned outfits, on-site locations were selected to match her advanced concepts. Two Delaunay-clad models posed beneath the Martel brothers’ Cubist trees, while in front of Rob Mallet-Stevens’s Pavilion du Tourisme an automobile painted with a ‘simultaneous’ check provided another suitably avant-garde location (262).
from New York and Hollywood, could purchase and “keep in step” with the latest fashions.

One of the hallmarks of modern women’s fashion was its practical design. The flapper look that Paul Poiret and Coco Chanel helped pioneer blurred the line between masculine and feminine clothing and the latter’s designs:

eliminated altogether the frills and excesses of women’s couture in favor of styles that offered comfort, maneuverability, and practical use. In place of the three-dimensional ruffles, edges, and leg-of-mutton sleeves, she used complicated beadwork and colored swirls that evoked some of the trends in modern art then very much in favor in Paris.

It was a style that took hold quickly…. [World War I] accelerated precisely those trends that made Coco’s signature style so appealing. As hundreds of thousands of American, British, and French women entered the workforce to help sustain war production – these were the unsung heroines whose daughters would earn greater renown during World War II as ‘Rosie the Riveter’ – they needed more practical clothes. (153-4)

The introduction of mass droves of female workers, much like their functional clothing, was driven by practical necessity and underscores the complex existence of the modern woman. As a consumer during a wartime period, her needs shaped fashion in such a way that liberated her from the confines of both the home and the literal cage of her corset. Some Art Deco artists took note of these changes in women’s fashion, and fashion, entertainment, and travel magazines celebrated elongated, sleekly dressed female forms worldwide. From Paul Colin’s drawings of a naked Josephine Baker to Vanity Fair’s eye-catching covers featuring the flapper style, the femme moderne was indeed a complex figure who signified the “destabilization and loss of established identities, tantalizing in her promise of innovation and change” (Frantz Kery 163).
1.4. Conclusion

The 1925 Paris *Exposition internationale des arts décoratifs et industriels modernes* marked a drive for modernity that simultaneously represented the decline of the Parisian luxury goods industry and the rise of a truly global style that involved mass-production technologies. The 1925 exposition was a turning point in the relationship between art and industry in the search for a new visual language that could address the pressures of modernity. By examining Art Deco’s origins and source material, it is possible to shape a more critical understanding of the style as a distinct, but not entirely separate vision of modernity from Modernism. The decorative arts have traditionally not received the same critical regard as the fine arts, and the manners in which avant-garde art, modernist primitivism, and the erotic converge stylistically in Art Deco warrant a reexamination of the style and its international manifestations.
Chapter II

Brazilian Art Deco: Architecture and Nationalism

You could say architecture is what happens when people build with an awareness that they are doing something that reaches at least a little beyond the practical.

Paul Goldberger

If commercialism is the guiding spirit of the age, the building which advertises itself is in harmony with that spirit.... There is no reason why the term ‘commercialism’ would ever be considered as opposed to art. Perhaps a new kind of commercialism in its new and higher relation to human welfare.

Harvey Wiley Corbett

2.1. Art Deco in Brazil

Art Deco arrived in Brazil during the mid-1920s and took its impetus from both the 1925 Paris *Exposition internationale des arts décoratifs et industriels modernes* and Hollywood movies that established the style as one of the main visual media to convey modernity. Many Brazilian artists and writers studying and working in Europe after World War I encountered the style in its formative years and returned to Brazil motivated to seek a parallel renewal of decorative vocabulary inspired by “native” traditions. Increasing numbers of European immigrants, among them architects and engineers, likewise spurred the dissemination of the style, and local variations of Art Deco appeared

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30 Art Deco was irrevocably tied to advertising and conspicuous consumption and the new medium of film further developed it as a mass cultural form on a global scale. Several notable Art Deco interior designers were also Hollywood set designers, fueling the links between modern themes and glamorous settings (Wood 325). Moreover, one of the modern building types to become most associated with Art Deco was the movie theater (Benton 257).
nearly simultaneously in rapidly industrializing cities throughout Brazil. The 1920s marked a decade of great transatlantic cultural exchange that was due, in part, to new innovations in transportation that made intercontinental travel more accessible to greater numbers of people. New advancements in printing technologies also coincided with the rise of the Art Deco graphic style and facilitated the prompt adoption and adaptation of the new design language in Brazil.

Art Deco is profoundly tied to nationalist movements in Brazil that sought new “authentic” national aesthetics to express modernity on a local level; the Art Deco style, even though it originated in Paris, significantly was not perceived as being a European import or imitation because of the style’s ability to be adapted to local motifs. In Brazil, as well as throughout Latin America, artists widely integrated local indigenous motifs because they were primarily geometrical and abstract and therefore easily adaptable for Art Deco interpretations. Brazilian Art Deco artists also strongly favored jungle motifs, specifically those based on the flora and fauna of the Amazon, as the region increasingly became perceived as uniquely Brazilian cultural territory.

It is exceedingly difficult to trace the precise evolution of the Art Deco style in Brazil and it cannot be described strictly as an artistic “movement” due to a lack of unifying theoretical doctrine such as manifestos or other publications. Although disseminated throughout Brazil, it did not encompass the whole production of a time or region; rather, during the 1920s, it existed contemporaneously with other artistic currents that frequently overlapped with each other, such as Neocolonialism and International Modernism in architecture and the Brazilian Modernist movement in literature and art. Different and, at times, competing modernizing forces in Brazil utilized the Art Deco
style during the decade to convey visions of modernity that were grounded in their respective constructions of national authenticity.

A. ART DECO ARCHITECTURE IN BRAZIL

Architecture was one of the first and most visible fields to adopt the Art Deco style in both Brazil and throughout Latin America during the second decade of the twentieth century (Cardoso 398). The modern skyscraper exemplifies Art Deco architecture and the form of the building itself becomes a motif in its decoration. Additional Art Deco decoration, both inside and out, appeared in many of these structures, thus allowing the most basic of geometric forms to recur in the actual shape of the building projected onto the sky and onto the smallest architectural details. The lighting of the exterior of the building, particularly in the form of the strobe light at night, served to create a dramatic black and white contrast that heightened the grandiosity of the skyscraper. The film industry also explored the iconography of the skyscraper and

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31 In Rio de Janeiro, Art Deco architecture appeared throughout the city in the form of the country’s first skyscrapers, cinemas, and garages and many buildings featured interior design elements also inspired by the new style. The style also appeared in buildings associated with pleasure and leisure such as hotels, museums, casinos, and resorts. Private homes for the wealthy embraced the style’s decorative vocabulary, in addition to banks, police stations, and residential buildings (Cardoso 398). For a more complete guide to past and present Art Deco structures in Brazil, see the Guia da arquitetura: art déco no Rio de Janeiro (2000).

32 The Guia da arquitetura: art déco no Rio de Janeiro (2000) describes in further details the architectural characteristics of Art Deco buildings in the capital city. They include classical matrix composition; volumetric treatment of the parts and surfaces in terms of the articulation of geometric and simplified volumes (streamlining); the articulation/integration of architecture, interior design, and design; a mixture of industrial/modern building techniques and hand-crafted/traditional decorative techniques; flexible layouts; and dazzling and stage-set lighting, perhaps influenced by Art Deco as it appeared in the cinema (129).

33 The design of Art Deco lighting fixtures were a dramatic departure from those of Art Nouveau in that the former emphasized both form and function and the latter focused on form alone. Tim Alastair Duncan argues that Art Nouveau lighting was never very
transmitted sophisticated plays of light and shadow that carried through the entire set, from the extravagant Deco interiors to the beaconing floodlights of the buildings themselves.

The remarkable ease with which the style was warmly embraced in Brazil was due, in large part, to the similarities it held with the “official” architectural style of many countries in the region during the same decade: the Neocolonial Style. Both architectural styles were entirely modern and both relied upon the importance and sense of urgency attached to their respective (re)discoveries of an “authentic” national aesthetic. Art Deco in Brazilian architecture, however, existed in a space outside of the state-sponsored Neocolonial Style, and until the year 1930, was perceived as being both sufficiently “authentic” and “modern” without the stigma of institutionalization.

During the 1920s, Art Deco in Brazilian architecture spread quickly in Rio de Janeiro and played a significant role in forging a unique urban expression. It was not until the following decade that the style became more widespread throughout the country, appearing mainly in newly developing urban centers. As the capital of Brazil from 1763 to 1960, Rio de Janeiro had long been the focus of various modernization projects promoted by the city’s elites in order to make it a metropolis worthy of international attention and European investments for development (Underwood 130). Imported formulas were difficult to implement, however, due to Rio de Janeiro’s dramatic

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34 These urban centers included (but were not limited to): São Paulo, Belo Horizonte, Belém, Goiâna, Ceará, Salvador (Bahia), Curitiba, and Rio Grande do Sul. There is also ongoing research into the so-called Sertanejo Déco manifestation of the style in Campina Grande, Paraíba that originated during the mid-1930s. See http://art-deco-sertanejo.com/.
topography, specifically its mountainous terrain and unplanned, cobbled streets (131). The 1922 centennial anniversary of the country’s independence from Portugal served to further heighten concerns that Rio de Janeiro was not yet a world-class capital due to the perceived lack of both a national architectural style and urban development that included wide avenues and formal esplanades.

Toward the latter end of the 1920s and during the 1930s, Art Deco in Brazil also assumed more of the universally recognized features of the style, such as streamlining, and was incorporated into numerous monumental architectural projects that will be discussed later in the chapter. Streamlining in architecture, furthermore, could easily be nationalized due to Brazil’s own steps in industrialization and was universally recognized as being “modern.” One manifestation of the style, also known as Streamline Moderne, stripped applied ornament from buildings and instead favored pure streamlining. This manifestation of the style was more economically practical because it could produced with relative ease in art studios and foundries and, as a result, became more globally prominent during the depression decade of the 1930s. Streamline Moderne originated in the United States and some buildings decorated with the simple only featured the simplest of the lines, intended to evoke aerodynamic “wakes” left by planes or boats. It tended to be popular in the construction of factories and hubs of production where the imagery of speed caused it to represent static objects as moving ones.

35 Tim Benton points out that Streamline Moderne became particularly important during the 1930s as a more “sober” approach to Art Deco. Cheaper materials and simplified forms allowed both designers and consumers to keep pace with cosmopolitan trends (258).
B. INTERNATIONAL MODERNISM IN ARCHITECTURE IN BRAZIL

Art Deco, as well as Neocolonialism, also coincided with the early stages of International Modernism in architecture in Brazil that saw the house as a “machine for living.” Proponents of the style argued that modernity necessitated new architectural solutions based on analysis of function and expression of new structural methods (Benton 245). They disapproved of ornamentation in architecture and sought to break completely free of the past, both by rejecting past architectural styles and by means of urban renewal efforts that sought to reshape and modernize city landscapes. The conceptualization of the house, or building, as a machine encompassed both its exterior appearance and its interior design elements. Furniture, for example, was not treated as an isolated piece in a home; rather, it became part of a greater ensemble designed by the architect, the maitre de l’oeuvre. In International Modernism, furthermore, the concept of object was extended to the house and a new house was considered an object in itself (Arestizábal; Shaw 187).

For practitioners of International Modernism, the decorative arts, including the Art Deco style, represented a style of the past and were incongruous with modernity. In an essay discussing the 1925 Paris Exposition, Le Corbusier, the best-known pioneer of International Modernism, denounced what he perceived as excessive personalization in the decorative arts and interior design. Everyday objects, he argues, were too hand-tailored to specific individuals and therefore served no purpose to anyone else or to society as a whole (“Type-Needs: Type Furniture” 85). These “sentiment-objects” or “objets d’art” provided no permanent value in a modern society and did not properly harmonize with the modern architectural structure (85). Le Corbusier himself first visited Brazil in 1929 and again in 1936 and gave lectures on urban renewal projects before an
enthusiastic public. He was also a consultant on the construction of the Ministry of National Education and Public Health (O Ministério da Educação e Saúde Pública) in Rio de Janeiro (1937-1945) that adapted International Modernist principles for a tropical climate.\(^{36}\)

Art Deco architecture, although modern, was not modernist and by the late 1920s and early 1930s, was increasingly viewed by proponents of International Modernism as showy and vulgar. Tim Benton argues, however, that the Streamline Moderne manifestation of the style demonstrates that Art Deco and International Modernism were not always on opposite ends of the architectural spectrum (259). Art Deco architecture, he explains, cannot be reduced to its decorative elements; rather, it is an entirely modern style that encompasses modern building types as well as their decorative elements. Art Deco, furthermore, was prefigured by the European avant-garde movements of the early twentieth century and is a necessary stage in understanding the development of the International Modernist style. In other words, the worldwide dissemination of Art Deco cannot simply be “explained away” as an inconsequential indulgence of a decade:

[For] all its exuberance, art deco was not an insubstantial movement, nor did it shrink from artistic complexities…. [The] art deco designers sought to blend ancient imagery… with the futurist imagery…. This simultaneous reaching out to the past and future

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\(^{36}\) The collaboration of a group of Brazilian architects with Le Corbusier translated his principles into a “tropical rereading”; the Ministry of National Education and Public Health building, for example, adhered to the principles of International Modernism and featured a large tropical garden designed by Roberto Burle Marx and a brise soleil (a “sun-breaker”) that protected the building from the tropical heat, demonstrating that it was possible for the style to exist outside a moderate European climate (Calvalcanti, “The Role of Modernists in the Establishment of Brazilian Cultural Heritage”, 15).

Leslie Bethell comments that there “is no doubt that the pilotes [stilts] and the brise-soleil, so indispensable there for climatic reasons, are [Le Corbusier’s] influence, but in the hands of Brazilian architects they surpassed their merely functional roles and came to constitute a proud symbol of tropical affirmation” (389).
was highly symptomatic of concerns of the interwar period. Here was a design that sought to ‘locate’ itself symbolically – and by extension to offer a commentary on its times and its cultural milieu – using extremes in historical imagery as points of emotional reference. What better way to ‘get one’s bearings,’ so to speak, to conjure with the question, Who, and where, are we, in this turbulent age of the machine? (Striner 21-22)

Art Deco, Striner argues, served as a middle ground between classicists that clung to past styles and vanguard tendencies in International Modernism that sought to sweep out any elements of the past (22). The style fused ancient and modern imagery and contemporary critics even likened skyscrapers to the grandiose temples and pyramids of ancient times; for enthusiasts of Art Deco, modern structures were ageless archetypes that spoke of the world of tomorrow.

The Art Deco, Neocolonial, and International Modernist styles existed contemporaneously in Brazilian architecture during the 1920s and new buildings at times contained elements of all three styles. Architecture is a cultural product and, in Brazil, differing styles during the 1920s were in many ways evoked elements of each other, with buildings referring to other buildings. The impulse to synthesis was a key element of Art Deco architecture and explains the stylistic reconciliation of seemingly disparate aesthetic tendencies. In her essay advocating for a broader understanding of the cultural context of architectural styles, Miriam Gusevich argues that architecture:

… articulates cultural values spatially through the forms and organizations of buildings, technically through the choice of materials and means of construction, and discursively through the construction of the canon by the critical establishment.…

To recognize the political dimension of architectural judgment is to acknowledge that reception is culturally mediated, through both cognitive schemata and socially established norms of propriety and bienséance – in other words, that aesthetic judgment as a problem of taste and sensibility is culturally and historically situated. From this perspective, architecture is a social construct. (18-19)
Both new building types and styles during this time period expressed the aspirations of a
dynamically developing Brazilian society that had differing visions of modern life. And
Art Deco architecture, at least for a short period of time, proved to be a middle ground
between polarized aesthetic tendencies. The style greatly appealed to both partisans of
national style and modernity because it offered the welcome rupture with more recently
imported past styles without completely breaking away from a Brazilian past, albeit a
constructed one.

2.2. The Neocolonial Style

A. The 1922 Rio de Janeiro Centennial Exposition

The rapid rise to popularity of Art Deco in Brazil during the second decade of the
twentieth century was facilitated by another modern architectural movement in the
country that paralleled the former’s interest in the (re)discovery of an “authentic” national
style. The Neocolonial Style rose to prominence in nearly every major country in Latin
America beginning in the first decade of the twentieth century as the region began to look
towards both their colonial and indigenous pasts, oftentimes for their respective
centennial independence celebrations. In Brazil, President Epitácio Pessoa opened the
Exposition of the Centennial of Brazilian Independence (Exposição do Centenário da
Independência do Brasil) in the capital city of Rio de Janeiro in September of 1922 that
trumpeted the young republic’s strides towards modernity. Similar to the intent and
design of world’s fairs in Europe, the 1922 Rio Exposition served the dual purpose of
showcasing the march of progress of Brazilian art and industry to both the country’s own
citizens, as well as to its international participants and visitors. According to Daryle
Williams, in his seminal work Culture Wars In Brazil: The First Vargas Regime, 1930-
1945 (2001), the Rio Exposition “left its 3.6 million visitors with a vision of a modern, civilized society coming of age” (37). It is interesting to note that a grandiose exposition, akin to those of British and French origin, was the stage upon which Brazilian modernity was to be displayed and projected for the world to see.37

The 1922 Rio Exposition was very much a celebration of a century’s worth of progress that simultaneously constructed both a fond nostalgia of a Brazilian past and a progressive-looking vision of the future. The event’s organizers designed the Exposition to be a respectful retrospective of the country’s origins that treated the period of monarchical rule as necessarily leading up to independence, followed by the later republican transition that began in 1889 (Williams 37). The construction of a seamless past went hand-in-hand with efforts to promote national development, and organizers took great care in choosing the architectural style of the national pavilions best suited to their vision of modern progress that properly saluted the country’s colonial origins. The Neocolonial Style (o estylô neo-colonial or neocolonialismo) perfectly encapsulated the Exposition’s purpose in rejecting more recently imported styles, specifically those of French or British taste, in favor of a style viewed to be uniquely Brazilian, both traditional and modern. Using the occasion of the one hundredth anniversary of political liberation, the Neocolonial Style “was declared to be the style of national aesthetic emancipation. The government decreed the neo-colonial as the national style par

37 Williams notes that the 1922 Rio Exposition was not the first of its kind in Brazil. Impressed by the Great Exposition of 1851 in London, Dom Pedro II opened the first Brazilian National Exposition in Rio de Janeiro in 1861 (193). Official delegations, furthermore, were sent to international expositions in order to promote the idea of a civilized Brazil for both Brazilian and global audiences. Williams points out that the Brazilian “standards of civilization were always European, but civilization itself was exhibited as a national project” (193).
excellence, making its use mandatory for representing the country abroad” (Cavalcanti 163).

B. ORIGINS OF THE NEOCOLONIAL STYLE IN BRAZIL

Ricardo Severo (1869-1949), a Portuguese-born engineer, was one of the first proponents of the Neocolonial Style in Brazil during a time period in which he bemoaned the country’s lack of appreciation for its colonial past. For Severo, as well as the organizers of the 1922 Rio Exposition, *arte tradicional* (traditional art) was “the quintessential signifier of national identity” that needed to be both preserved and to serve as the basis for modern architectural projects (Williams 44). Severo was particularly alarmed by the preponderance of architectural eclecticism in Brazil’s major urban centers that was due, in part, to the heavy flow of immigrants to the region at the beginning of the century. These immigrants constructed their homes in styles native to their countries of origin and, as a result, main avenues were lined with Florentine, Mozarabic, Neoclassical, Bavarian Baroque, French, and completely eclectic structures – everything but the colonial style “native” to Brazil (Carlos A. C. Lemos 151). Local architects promoted

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38 Aracy Amaral points out that many Latin American nations utilized the Neocolonial Style as the “national”, “official” style in their respective centennial independence celebrations (*Arquitectura necolonial* 12).
39 Williams also notes that the year 1922 was significant for the steps taken by the Brazilian government to institutionalize the preservation of cultural memory. President Epitácio Pessoa authorized the creation of Brazil’s first National Historical Museum that would “protect military and other cultural objects” of importance (43).
40 Jose Murilo de Carvalho notes that between “1884 and 1920 three million immigrants, mainly Italian, entered the country. Of these, 60% went to São Paulo, profoundly altering the demographic composition of the state. The capital of the state entered a period of explosive growth and came to rival Rio de Janeiro in terms of industrial production” (146).
41 Ricardo Severo’s interest in *arte tradicional* stemmed from his nostalgia for the Lusitania of ancient times – that of before the Roman invasion. Although he was an immigrant to São Paulo, Severo was a highly influential voice in Brazilian architectural
the Neocolonial Style as a formal rebuke to more recently imported styles and circumvented their role in the country’s architectural history in order to draw more deeply upon a Luso-Brazilian colonial past.

The Neocolonial Style was, however, a modern style and did not simply recreate the structures of a bygone era; rather, it was an important architectural style of the 1920s and 1930s throughout Latin America that selectively applied decorative motifs of local and imported origin to modern structures that employed the latest industrialized building techniques (Cardoso 398). Fundamentals of the style in Brazil included “amalgamated disparate elements of Ibero-American colonial architecture spiced with heavy doses of the California Mission style lifted from Hollywood films and imported magazines” (Williams 44). In Brazil, proponents of the style especially favored barroco mineiro (Minas Baroque) motifs found in colonial structures in the state of Minas Gerais.

C. BARROCO MINEIRO

*Barroco mineiro* is an architectural style unique to Minas Gerais that developed and flourished during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The vast mineral wealth of the region – and its relative isolation during the colonial era – fostered the development of the richly ornamented style in churches and other structures, in addition to significant manifestations of *barroco mineiro* in sculpture and painting. As Guiomar de Grammont points out, the term *barroco mineiro* is somewhat of a misnomer because the style had more in common with Rococo than with the European Baroque and was characterized by its elaborate ornamentation and lightness of expression (55-56). During the early decades of the twentieth century, the style was “rediscovered” by both distinct circles who started his career in Portugal by valorizing pre-roman Lusitanian culture (Carlos A. C. Lemos 151).
and overlapping modernizing forces and promoted as a fully Brazilian, thereby authentic, aesthetic.

For the novelist, poet, musicologist, and critic Mário de Andrade, *barroco mineiro* was quintessentially Brazilian and he devoted numerous articles in the 1920s to discussing its characteristics during the colonial era. In the *Revista do Brasil* in 1920, he published four essays tracing the evolution of religious festivities in the colonial period in order to demonstrate the totalizing cultural prominence of the Catholic Church in artistic production, including painting, sculpture, and architecture, in addition to music and dance (Avancini 112). In “A Arte Religiosa no Brasil” (“Religious Art in Brazil”), he stated that the past:

.... É um Fóssil, necessitando ainda de classificação, de que pouca gente ouviu falar e ninguém se incomoda. No entanto ela existe – ou melhor, existiu. A mim tomei a tarefa, e apenas essa, de mostrar-vos que se a nossa arte cristã não tem a importância decisiva nem marca a eclosão dum estilo, ao menos existiu vivida; com alguns traços originais, e é um tesouro abandonando onde nossos artistas poderiam ir colher motivos de inspiração. Bastaria para tanto darem-se ao trabalho de separar a ganga onde se recataram as pepitas. (quoted in Avancini 113)

.... [Is] a fossil, requiring further classification, that few people have heard about and nobody bothers to know about. However it exists – or rather, existed. I took it upon myself, and only this task, to show you that if our Christian art does not have a decisive importance or the signs of the emergence of a style, at least there was a vividness to it, with some unique features, and it is an abandoned treasure where our artists could go to gather inspiration. It is enough for now for them to dedicate themselves to breaking up the vein where they can safeguard the nuggets. (quoted in Avancini 113)

Mário de Andrade also traveled to Minas Gerais on numerous occasions and was part of broader Brazilian Modernist efforts to rediscover more fully, document, and preserve old colonial towns that were mostly still intact in the early decades of the twentieth century. Daryle Williams notes that in 1924 other members of the movement, including poet-
novelist Oswald de Andrade and painter Tarsila do Amaral, accompanied the French symbolist poet Blaise Cendrars to several old mining towns (45). Their _caravana modernista_ (modernist caravan) coincided with Holy Week and they attended the elaborate Easter processions in the baroque churches in the town of São João and greatly admired the colonial architecture of the region (45). The Brazilian Modernists treated _barroco mineiro_ as the moment at which European art and culture transformed into Brazilian art and culture; the trip to Minas Gerais served as a starting point for the construction of an authentic, modern Brazil.

D. “The Style That Never Existed”

Ricardo Severo was one of the first intellectuals in Brazil to argue that the works of Brazilian Baroque sculpture masters Valentim (Valentim da Fonseca e Silva) and Aleijadinho (Antônio Francisco Lisboa) should be further studied. As a result, he created an awareness of Brazil’s so-called “Golden Age” of architecture that was mostly unknown in prominent academic circles at the time. As a result of his impassioned pleas for the appreciation, study, and preservation of these authentically “Brazilian” buildings, Brazilian architects, much like the _caravana modernista_, organized and funded expeditions to catalogue the surviving colonial structures with special emphasis on those found in Minas Gerais (155). Architectural historian Carlos A. C. Lemos, however, refers to these expeditions’ documentations, or “discoveries”, as amounting to “el estilo que nunca existió” (“the style that never existed”) because the only modern application of elements of colonial architecture was reduced to the purely decorative; in other words,

42 Mário de Andrade published an essay about the trip in the magazine _América Brasileira_, in addition to several poems lauding the colonial architecture that he and his colleagues “discovered” in Minas Gerais. See Silviano Santiago’s “O Dentro Do Dentro” in _Nas Malhas Da Letra_ (1989).
twentieth-century structures could be decorated with selectively chosen motifs found in Minas Gerais but always according to modern architectural standards that necessarily converted the style from the colonial to the neocolonial.\(^{43}\)

Famed writer, illustrator, and critic Monteiro Lobato took special note of Ricardo Severo’s conferences and mounted a vigorous campaign for what he perceived as the obligation of the São Paulo Liceu de Artes e Ofícios (School of Arts and Crafts) to train young workers and artisans to adhere to the national style (Lemos 152). He lamented the lack of “Brazilianess” in architecture and the rampant eclecticism that was imitative of European styles. Lobato’s articles on the topic in the year 1917 constituted the first praise, for what is now referred to as the Neocolonial Style, that appeared in the press, and he praised Severo’s efforts as both authoritative and as marking the beginning of the necessary architectural renaissance in Brazil (Lemos 152). For Lobato, a modern city required a style, or a “face”, and to lack such a “face” is only to hide behind a mask of imported falsehoods.\(^{44}\)

Art historian Aracy Amaral explains, however, that there was little “authentic” about different regional manifestations of the Neocolonial Style in Latin America because it was a simultaneous architectural revival and survival of a colonial past that never existed:

\(^{43}\) Lemos also points out that the Neocolonial Style in Brazil encompasses a tremendously broad range of building types because its practitioners were not unified their techniques or practices; architects all over the country demonstrated great “poetic license” and “unending imagination” in their respective manifestations of the style (155).

\(^{44}\) Monteiro Lobato’s lifelong concern with the creation and promotion of “Brazilianess” in architecture is equally apparent in his prolific writing career. Mary L. Daniel notes that Lobato dedicated himself to the “stimulation of the Brazilian reading public and the ready availability of books for its consumption”, an inclination that was especially evident by his writing of more than twenty volumes of children’s fiction (163).
En toda América del Sur, así como en América Central y en México, debido a la ansiedad de recoger rasgos de alguna arquitectura del pasado, acabaron adoptándose elementos arquitectónicos y decorativos que nunca llegaron a existir en el período colonial de Latinoamérica. Ese es el caso del encanto que Martín Noel, argentino, experimentó en Arequipa y Cuzco, como también de innumerables restauraciones o reconstrucciones forzadas o escenográficas que sólo se explican por las propias intenciones ideológicas de afirmar una nacionalidad o un atavismo…. De este modo, se menospreciaba todo lo que fuese incremento o reforma del siglo siguiente, en la búsqueda de una pureza inexistente. (Amaral, Arquitectura neocolonial, 13-14)

In all of South America, just as in Central America and Mexico, due to the anxiety to retrieve characteristics of some sort of architecture of the past, they ultimately adopted architectural and decorative elements that never actually existed during the colonial period in Latin America. This is the type of enchantment that Martín Noel, an Argentine, experienced in Arequipa and Cuzco, just like countless forced or staged restorations and reconstructions that are only explained by their own ideological intentions in affirming a nationality or an atavism…. This way, everything that might mark growth or reform from the following century was belittled in the search for an inexistent purity. (Amaral, Arquitectura neocolonial, 13-14)

Moreover, the Neocolonial Style in Brazil was not a recreation of colonial structures in that it did not attempt to stay faithful to the original scale, materials utilized, or actual building techniques of the colonial era; rather, it was a way of reimagining the country’s colonial past while reengineering it to fit modern architectural standards that included plumbing and electricity.  

45 The Neocolonial Style therefore amounted to decorative

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45 Carlos Alberto Cerqueira Lemos argues that exact copies of Brazilian colonial structures in a modern age were neither desirable nor truly feasible due to their poor architectural quality. His argument is not so much that recreations of these buildings would have been aesthetically unpleasing, but that they were never soundly built in the first place. Brazil, furthermore, did not have the monumental structures of indigenous civilizations that were present in the Spanish colonial empire; the lack of these structures meant that colonialists in Brazil were never presented with the opportunity to build upon these designs or even use them for inspiration in their own designs. The so-called “colonial” inspiration of the Neocolonial Style for the most part came entirely from baroque structures – both churches and estates – in Minas Gerais that were funded by the vast mineral wealth in the region (148).
elements that were not integral to the structure; in other words, reproduced or adapted colonial ornamentations were mere embellishments that architects added to the main, modern structure. In a curious twist, Amaral notes, many authentic colonial structures, including private dwellings and churches, were completely demolished to make room for so-called neocolonial substitutions, restorations, or reconstructions of the style’s supposed inspiration. Urban developers razed entire neighborhoods in the name of modernization, all while harkening to calls for national authenticity.⁴⁶

During the 1920s, there was a particular sense of urgency driving the rampant demolition of older structures and neighborhoods in favor of urban renewal efforts that could be traced to late nineteenth and early-twentieth century positivist thinking in Latin America. Positivism is the belief that the ruling classes and the intellectual elite could socially engineer a better society in order to hasten modernization (Clark 53). Positivism is a deterministic philosophy because it maintains that everything that happens is determined by a necessary chain of causation; the purpose of “scientific”, or “positive”, thought is to uncover these natural causes in order to promote human progress. In Brazil, variants of European-inspired positivism became central to the tenets of “order” and “progress” that would drive the restructuring of society. Architectural eclecticism and the perceived lack of a national style further fueled the concern among the Brazilian

Neocolonial structures employed the latest building techniques, which included utilizing reinforced concrete and steel. The widespread use of both materials allowed for the construction of larger and taller buildings.

⁴⁶The influx of immigrants to Brazil during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century to some extent necessitated state-sponsored urban reforms in order to address problems relating to overpopulation, disease, and bad hygiene practices (Sisson; Jackson 144). On the other hand, calls for “urban renewal” were often racially-tinged and the Brazilian elite welcomed European immigration as the cure for the perceived economic backwardness of the country (Amaral; Hastings 10).
intelligentsia that theirs was not a properly “modern” nation. Ironically, the spread of the newly “official” national style, the Neocolonial Style, often resulted in the destruction of its source material.

The Neocolonial Style of the national pavilions of the 1922 Rio Exposition represented the most powerful visual manifestation of state-sponsored modernity in Brazil and existed against the backdrop of rapid industrialization and urban renewal efforts throughout the country. The republic as an idea and image of progress was one of the central preoccupations of the nation’s bourgeoisie, and the Neocolonialist Style in many ways became visually emblematic of the viability of a modern Brazil. Nevertheless, by the end of the 1920s, the same neocolonial movement, “which was born to oppose the formalism of the Beaux-Arts system, had become the new ‘academy’” that other modernizing forces outside of state sponsorship intended to uproot (Cavalcanti 164).

Despite the fact that it was a modern architectural style in many ways “local” to Brazil, the rapid institutionalization of the Neocolonial Style garnered strong disapproval in newly forming aesthetic movements already intent on moving away from European styles.

2.3. Marajoara Déco

During the 1920s, the Art Deco style, or what it was commonly referred to then in Brazil, the Marajoara style (o estilo Marajoara or Marajoara Déco), became widespread

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47 Lara explains that the Escola Nacional de Belas Artes (Brazilian School of Fine Arts) had been created as the Imperial Academy of Beaux-Arts by the king of Portugal, D. João VI, when he transferred the court to Rio fleeing Napoleon in 1808. With him (and thousands of the Portuguese nobility), many French artists also fleeing Napoleon’s regime arrived in Rio, and the academia (academy) established itself and dominated the arts in nineteenth-century Brazil. Its pedagogy and values were based on French neoclassical ideas that dominated the ENBA as late as 1930. (213)
in Rio de Janeiro. The ceramics of the Island of Marajó served as the primary “localized” inspiration for the style, in addition to more generalized primitivist depictions of the Brazilian Indian and the Amazonian jungle. Architects and designers also gave many of these structures indigenous names, thereby heightening their claim to an authentic, national aesthetic (Guia da arquitectura: art déco no Rio de Janeiro 15). Brazilian artists and architects adopted and adapted Marajoara patterns more than any other native source material because they were the most complex geometric patterns in all of Brazil and they very easily lent themselves towards abstraction. The patterns’ historical specificity, furthermore, had been lost to time and designs were thus very easily “written upon” by Art Deco interpretations.

One of the defining features of Art Deco in Brazil is nature as symbolized by the jungle. In some cases, depictions of the jungle consisted of sweeping portrayals that took little care to distinguish between the flora and fauna native to the Brazilian jungle as opposed to other parts of the globe; many artists, however, took great interest in the Island of Marajó, located at the mouth of the Amazon River in the state of Pará. Beginning in the 1870s, modern-day explorers and researchers from both sides of the Atlantic began publicizing their findings on the remarkable man-made earthen mounds and cemeteries filled with incredibly ornate ceramics that are unique to the island (Young-Sánchez 9). The island is the site of a pre-Columbian culture, the Marajoara, that

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48 The most commonly utilized motifs in the Marajoara variant of Art Deco in Brazil were those modeled after the ceramics found on the Island of Marajó in Pará. Less frequently utilized were “high and bas-reliefs and statues (rarer) depicting Indians and Amazonian flora and fauna” (Guia da arquitectura: art déco no Rio de Janeiro 130).
endured from about 400 to 1300 CE.\textsuperscript{49} The culture’s ceramics are notable due to their complex, geometric patterns that include stylized representations of humans, animals, and hybrid creatures, in addition to highly intricate abstract designs. Common characteristics of the ceramics include “thick rims, white slip, red painting, brushing and decorative incisions” (Schaan 111).\textsuperscript{50} In addition to ceramic urns, unusual ceramic female pubic covers, known as \textit{tangas}, also are found in abundance on the island, sometimes inside the burial urns. The seemingly nonrepresentational, abstract patterns found on the ceramics arguably may have had meaning to the ancient Marajoara culture, but it is possible that they served as an entirely decorative element that existed only to please the eye (Young-Sánchez 42). The original purpose of the ceramics is also difficult to determine and it remains unclear whether they served as functional, ceremonial, or decorative objects (36).

Some of the most commonly recurring “abstract” motifs in Marajoara ceramics are scrolls, circles, steps, hooks, spirals, and double lines that are evocative of snakes or rivers (Schaan 121). The labyrinthine designs played an important part in Marajoara iconography:

\textsuperscript{49} Early to mid-twentieth century scholars of Marajó theorized that the sophisticated earthen mounds and ceramics found on the island must have been the product of a culture that was an off-shoot of earlier Andean high civilizations and not an autochthonous Amazonian development. More recent scholars have disputed this notion and argue that the Marajoara culture was not an anomaly, but rather “a high point of a lengthy and widely distributed Amazonian cultural pattern” (Young-Sánchez 13-14). CE stands for the “Common Era” and corresponds to the abbreviation AD used as a designation intended to be a reference date.

\textsuperscript{50} A “slip” is “a semi-liquid material, made of finely-ground clay or flint, etc., mixed with water to about the consistency of cream, and used for making, cementing, coating, or decorating pottery, tiles, etc.; also, clay suitable for making this” (\textit{www.oed.com}). The types of incisions made on the slips, and whether or not they are white, can distinguish a male funerary urn from a female one, demonstrating that Marajoara ceramics at times served a functional or ceremonial purpose (Schaan 121).
Most of these motifs are iconic representations of the mythical paired snake, but some are also related to caymans, scorpions and humans. Snakes occupy a prominent place on vessels, often appearing in a repetitive pattern covering their whole body, but also as bands. These patterns are sometimes repetitions of a single element or may appear as two interwoven elements. A careful comparison of the patterns that display a similar structure reveals that they are actually different readings of the same theme. (Schaan 121)

A. ORIGINS OF MARAJÓARA DÉCO

Late nineteenth-century archeological discoveries of the ceramics of Marajó coincided with the development and promotion of a national consciousness that sought to put forward the wonders of the Amazon as being uniquely Brazilian. Swiss-born naturalist Emílio Goeldi, for whom the Museu Paraense would later be named, wrote in 1895 that the Brazilian jungle, specifically that within Pará, was worthy of the foundation of new scientific and museological institutions:

We covet neither the elephant of India nor the giraffe of Africa. We want what is ours, what is Amazonian, of Pará, and it isn’t necessary for me (who wasn’t born in this land and who today sees himself here for no reason other than love of science and the desire to create a solid stronghold in the Amazon) to show the people of Pará that the nature surrounding us has more than enough material to warrant filling a zoo as well as a botanical garden. (quoted in Herkenhoff; Hastings 241)

Goeldi makes his spirited case for the literal confinement of the flora and fauna of the Amazon by praising the wondrous exoticness of the hitherto unconfined jungle. His argument relies on the outlining of numerous borders – national, state, and institutional – in order to demonstrate the merit of studying “the nature surrounding us” that belongs to the country. Brazil, he makes clear, has no need to import exotic animals or plants for display because it is a source of comparable wildlife that rivals that housed in European institutions. The jungle of Pará, Goeldi argues, is inherently Brazilian and, by extension, Brazil is the jungle.
The late-nineteenth and early twentieth century archeological discoveries, analysis of the ceramics of the Island of Marajó, and the foundation of scientific institutions dedicated to their study coincided with a period of nation building that started with the end of imperial rule and the birth of the Old Republic (1889-1930). The primary activities of the newly formed central government in Brazil were to incorporate faraway lands and peoples within the national context in order to promote a sense of national consciousness and to put the country on a path to modernization (Diacon 14). The symbol of the Brazilian jungle served as a point of national pride but also of angst because it detracted from the government’s projection of progress made in the construction of a more “civilized” society. Former U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt’s highly publicized and disastrous expedition through the Brazilian wilderness from 1913 to 1914 drew widespread concern from Brazilian critics because of his apparent lack of interest in the modernized parts of the country; he instead sought out what he perceived to be an “authentic” Brazilian experience that consisted of the jungle alone (Diacon 33-34).

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51 Roberto González-Echevarría discusses in *Myth and archive: A theory of Latin American narrative* (1998) that Brazil had a long history of naturalists who traveled through the colony, especially in connection with the mining industry in the interior: “…from early on Brazil established institutions for the promotion of scientific research and exploration such as the Imperial Museum, founded in 1818, and the Sociedade Velosiana de Ciências Naturais, which was created in 1850” (129).

52 Roosevelt was an avid proponent of the Monroe Doctrine that barred European intervention in any country in the Western Hemisphere. In what became known as the Roosevelt Corollary, the United States, he argued, had the right to intervene in those affairs whenever it so deemed necessary. South Americans bristled at the inherent contempt for their sovereignty and numerous tensions arose over Roosevelt’s trip to the region (Millard 39-40). Other explorers also took part in exploring the Brazilian jungle and, in the now infamous case of English adventurer Percy Fawcett, went missing. Fawcett and his companions disappeared in the year 1925 in their search for what he referred to as the ancient
In additional missions of progress and science in the Amazon, Roosevelt’s guide, Cândido Rondon, spearheaded expeditions that opened roads while laying telegraph lines through the jungle in order to modernize the most far-flung parts of the country. Rondon was part of greater government efforts to civilize the populations of the interior by distributing tools – in this case, the telegraph lines – in order to hasten the evolution of these regions towards progress (de Carvalho 148). Rondon’s expeditions marked the dream of reforming nature by the force of technology and but, unlike his decades-long efforts, not all missions to the Amazon were successful. In the case of the Madeira-Mamoré railway effort to link Brazil to Bolivia, disaster ensued when thousands of workers died due to malaria and other forces of nature. The process of modernizing the jungle was at times efficient but always ruthless. Brazilian modernity had been constructed, in part, on the symbol of the jungle and the relationship between the two was proving to be highly uneasy whenever the actual wilderness was perceived to be encroaching on the territory claimed by the proponents of progress and order.

And as will be discussed in Chapters III and IV, several of the Brazilian modernistas also traveled to the Amazonian region for research purposes. Mário de Andrade, for example, went to the Amazonian jungle, once in 1927 and a second time in 1928-1929, and took extensive notes detailing his experiences. He found the monotony of the Amazons to be sublime:

O Amazonas prova decisivamente que a monotonia é um dos elementos mais grandiosos do sublime. É incontestável que Dante e o Amazonas são igualmente monótonos. Pra gente gozar um bocado e perceber a variedade

vanished city of “Z”, believed to be El Dorado. The expedition, and its subsequent disappearance, was widely reported in Brazilian newspapers at the time. See David Grann’s *The Lost City of Z: A Tale of Deadly Obsession in the Amazon* (2009).

que tem nessas monotonias do sublime carece limitar em molduras mirins
da sensação.... A foz do Amazonas é tão ingente que blefa a grandeza.
Woodworth, quarteirão dos cinemas do Rio, Y-Juca Pirama são muito
mais grandiosos. (O Turista Aprendiz 61-62)

The Amazon proves decisively that monotony is one of the grandest
elements of the sublime. It is undeniable that Dante and the Amazon are
equally monotonous. For us to enjoy it a bit and perceive variation in these
monotonies of the sublime, we need to limit the sensation to small
frames.... The mouth of the Amazon is so enormous that it disguises its
greatness. Woodworth, a block of Rio de Janeiro cinemas, and Y-Juca
Pirama are much more grandiose.

The purpose of his journey, Mário de Andrade wrote, was to write a modernist novel and
in 1928, he published his highly acclaimed novel Macunaíma (O Turista Aprendiz 49).

As will be discussed in Chapter IV, the illustrator and poet Vicente do Rego Monteiro
also traveled to Marajó to conduct detailed research of the ceramics of the island.

B. MARAJÓARA DÉCO IN BRAZILIAN DECORATIVE ARTS

Art Deco artisans and interior designers in the 1920s looked for creative
inspiration in the Brazilian jungle, particularly the island of Marajó. Theodoro Braga, for
example, a prominent ceramic artisan native to the Amazon region, adapted Marajoara
motifs in his series of home furnishings, including rugs, wall hangings, vases, and
cushions (Herkenhoff; Hastings 245-246). The vases he produced at the beginning of the
1920s were more imitative of their source material and were made with terracotta; by the
end of the decade, he used metal and painted more stylized patterns in red, yellow, and
white enamel on vases that were exhibited at the 1927 National Salon of Fine Arts in Rio
de Janeiro (247). The shift in Braga’s work demonstrates how Marajoara patterns were
adapted for decorative application onto modern materials, albeit with clear references to
their origins, such as utilizing the same color scheme, proportions, and repertoire of
animal and plant motifs.
The Swiss-born, multi-talented John Graz was also a leading figure in modern Brazilian design and his work stressed more of the links between industry and art than pure hand craftsmanship. Alongside Regina Gomide Graz and Antônio Gomide, Graz produced prolific works in architecture, interior design, the decorative arts, painting, and illustration. In order to better understand the nationalist undertones of his work, Irma Arestizábal argues that elements of the Swiss artistic tradition must have influenced him significantly: “patriotism, symbolized by the mountains, the country’s people, historical events, and personalities; and the idea that design was to be utilized by industry” (181). In Brazil, Graz’s artistic production was strongly inspired by cubism and futurism and he favored indigenous motifs and jungle landscapes with geometric shapes and abstract forms (183). He was the first architect in Brazil to introduce the use of metals in interior design and decorated the homes of many wealthy São Paulo families throughout his career using rich and industrialized materials (191). These types of side projects complicate our notions of Modernism because of their commercial purpose.

John Graz was also a prolific graphic designer and illustrator and illustrated the cover of the first edition of *Era uma vez...* (*Once Upon a Time...*) by Guilherme de Almeida in the Art Deco style. John Graz, Regina Gomide Graz, and Antônio Gomide were all members of the Brazilian Modernist movement and, as will be discussed in Chapters III and IV, formed part of a strong tendency of the movement of participating directly in the graphic presentation of their published works. Graz’s decorative arts explorations also demonstrate his integration of many artistic expressions and the manner

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54 Irma Arestizábal points out that it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between the work of John Graz and Regina Gomide Graz because of the similarities in their artistic production (181).
in which he imposed the presence of art, specifically Art Deco, on all aspects of modern design production.

Similar to John Graz, Flávio de Carvalho, a São Paulo architect and engineer trained in England, likewise integrated Art Deco and futurist aesthetics with Marajoara decorative elements in his designs. In his proposed design for the Columbus Memorial Lighthouse, submitted to an international competition in the Dominican Republic in 1928, de Carvalho featured elements of streamlining on the exterior of the structure with elevated gardens in the front (Leite; Burbridge 198). The interior of the lighthouse combined several pre-Columbian decorative patterns from pottery for the cast-iron grilles and Marajoara motifs for the ceramic flooring (199). His submission was ultimately not selected by the competition’s committee but he did design and construct private residences in the International Modernist style – adapted for a warmer climate – in São Paulo during the 1930s. He also found success as an illustrator and famously produced the cover for the first edition of Raul Bopp’s poem *Cobra Norato (The Snake Norato)* (1931). His illustrations, much like his early architectural drawings, emphasized geometric forms of the futurist and Art Deco variety. His multifarious activities in architecture, interior design, and illustration were indicative of the search for a national aesthetic that drew upon ancient and modern forms in order to express modernity on a local level.

By the 1930s and early 1940s, *Marajoara DÉco* was sufficiently ingrained into the national aesthetic landscape to the point where it somewhat replaced the Neocolonial Style as the national style par excellence for display in the Brazilian delegations sent to international expositions. In 1940, Brazil was the only “independent foreign nation” that
received an invitation to the *Exposição do Mundo Português (Exposition of the Portuguese World)* that was to mark the eight-hundredth anniversary of Portuguese nationhood and the “worldwide civilizing mission of the Portuguese race” (Williams 228). The Portuguese invitation’s so-called “civilizing mission” rattled the nationalistic sensibilities of the Brazilian delegation – the country had no wish to be reinscribed within the narration of worldwide Portuguese colonialist domination (230). The Brazilian delegation successfully negotiated the right to arrange and supervise an autonomous historical exhibit at the exposition that would be decorated by Brazilians: “Brazil would speak for itself from Cabral forward” (231).

The independent Brazilian pavilion in many ways, however, did not start with Cabral and instead went further back for aesthetic inspiration – to a pre-Portuguese Brazil, so to speak. The exterior atrium of the pavilion, for example, included columns that were stylized deco palm trees and a large water fountain featured Marajoara motifs (241). Williams notes that the presence of the

[...] marajoara suggested that Amerindians were the original Brazilians, present even before the Portuguese sailors sighted Monte Pascoal in April 1500, and it was they who first helped the Portuguese establish a foothold in America. But in an exposition built upon the notion that it was the Portuguese who single-handedly brought civilization to Brazil, these were unstable messages about national origin. (244)

The type of Brazilianness exhibited in Lisbon by the Vargas regime demonstrates how the aesthetics of national self-representation necessitated a shift from the Neocolonial to *Marajoara Déco* in order to satisfy the concerns over the “export quality” of Brazilian culture. Brazilian modernity, as displayed in Lisbon, was constructed upon the vestiges of

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55 Pedro Álvares Cabral (c. 1467 or 1468 – 1520) was a Portuguese explorer who is regarded as the “discoverer” of Brazil in the year 1500.
the jungle and its long-lost Marajoara inhabitants, both answering and creating troublesome questions regarding the country’s foundational fictions.

2.4. Monumental Deco

A. Ambiguous Modernity in Brazil

Designed around 1924 by the French-Polish sculptor Paul Landowski and constructed with the collaboration of Brazilian civil engineer Heitor da Silva Costa, the monument *Christ the Redeemer (Cristo Redentor)* is a statue of Jesus Christ overlooking Rio de Janeiro and is considered to be the largest Art Deco statue in the world.\(^{56}\) It is located at the peak of the Corcovado Mountain and was constructed between the years 1926 and 1931 using reinforced concrete and soapstone. Rafael Cardoso notes that it is a rare example of Art Deco sculpture on a monumental scale and that it is “ambiguously modern” because it was “conceived in conservative intellectual circles as an affirmation of Brazil’s Catholic heritage;” and yet the style chosen was strikingly modern for its time: “Modern also, in building technique, as the monument’s reinforced concrete structure represents an engineering triumph for its time. If, on the one hand, the statue’s symbolism is ‘reactionary’ – to use ideological terminology – it is, on the other, also ‘progressive’” (397).

The conception and construction of monumental sculpture in Brazil points to nationalist efforts to create and preserve cultural memory. Unlike architecture, monument sites are culturally constructed *places* that actively express ideology, elicit memory, and help to constitute national identity (Knapp 47). They are imbued with meanings and

\(^{56}\) It is especially curious that Landowski himself never went to Brazil and yet his designs were chosen for the construction of what is perhaps the most iconic man-made symbol of the region.
memories of the past, thus providing a kind of political authority for those behind their construction (48). In Brazil, the second decade of the twentieth century marked the beginning of the institutionalization of memorializing the past, and in 1922, President Epitácio Pessoa authorized the creation of Brazil’s first National Historical Museum:

The idea of a national historical museum had circulated among intellectuals and historians well before Pessoa’s move, but the passage of the centennial of Brazilian independence brought together the political and civic forces necessary for the federal government to take a definite step toward creating a permanent temple of national memory (Williams 43)

Steps in monumental architecture began during the same decade but truly took force beginning in 1930 with the rise to power of authoritarian populist leader Getúlio Vargas. He inaugurated the Christ the Redeemer monument in 1931 and commissioned and financed many monumental Art Deco structures throughout the country. The entrance of the 1938 Exposição do Estado Novo (Exposition of the New State) in Rio de Janeiro, for example, featured an austere deco tower with the motto “O Novo Brasil 1930-1938” (“The New Brazil 1930-1938”) (Williams 197). The message of the exposition was clear: “the Brazilian republic had been stripped from its conventional temporal associations with the Proclamation of the Republic (1889) and promulgation of the Constitution (1891) to be redeemed by the Revolution of 1930 and the first year of Estado Novo rule” (197). As a result of the intertwining of deco aesthetics with the Vargas regime, the symbolism of these monuments was somewhat murky because while they were “temples of national memory” that revered a constructed past, they were also undoubtedly modern by means of the style employed. For that reason, Cardoso considers the widespread use of the Art Deco style in Brazil to be “ambiguously modern” due to its inherently contradictory nature (397). He notes just how easily and how quickly Art Deco was
appropriated by fascist-leaning forces in Brazil that were keen on profiting from the style’s seemingly populist roots. The newly installed Vargas regime utilized the style to solidify their dictatorial aspirations by generating and spreading the symbols and codes of a new social order that was taking place on a global scale (402).\textsuperscript{57}

**B. FASCIST DECO IN THE PAMPAS**

A similar and even more rigorous use of the style in monumental structures also took place in the 1930s in the Pampas, the fertile lowlands of Argentina. The governor of the Buenos Aires Province, Dr. Manuel A. Fresco (1936-1940), commissioned numerous public works projects from his architect friend Francisco Salamone that are notable for their “surprising combination of authoritarianism, art deco, functionalism, and propaganda value on a colossal scale” (Bellucci 91). The governor wanted the tiny frontier cattle-raising towns dotting the flat Pampas to be the subject of urban renewal projects that would focus on three paradigmatic works: the town hall, the slaughterhouse (matadero), and the monumental cemetery portal (93). The tower of the town hall was to be constructed taller than the local church, solidifying the image of state power by means of monumental architecture. The redesign of the town’s slaughterhouse secured its place

\textsuperscript{57} Historian Ricardo Silva Seitenfus has explored in further detail the direct political ties between the fascist forces of Italy with those of Brazil during the Vargas regime, specifically between the years of 1935 to 1938. He argues that the large numbers of Italian immigrants to Brazil set the framework upon which strengthened diplomatic ties would take place as the respective governing forces in the two countries recognized their ideological similarities (507). Several high-ranking Italian diplomats also maintained their political connections to Argentina during the same time period as the country also had many Italian immigrants (509). The ideological relationship between Italy and Brazil would ultimately prove to be more superficially constructed when Brazil officially entered into World War II on the side of the Allies in 1942.
as a symbol of pride of local industry; the monumental cemetery portal linked death with
the nationalist ideal of immortality.

Francisco Salamone was a prolific architect in Argentina and his projects, many
of which survive to this day, are very austere structures that make heavy use of
streamlining and Art Deco lettering in the case of the slaughterhouses. The purpose and
intent of the renewal projects in the Pampas, however, suggest a troubling link between
Art Deco and the fascist regimes that utilized the style as a way of cementing, both
literally and figuratively, the symbols of state power. In her review of Leni Riefenstahl’s
The Last of the Nuba (1973), Susan Sontag explores the aesthetics of fascism and argues
that fascist art “glorifies surrender; it exalts mindlessness; it glamorizes death” (11). In
case of Art Deco in the Pampas, the slaughterhouses and cemetery portals intrinsically
 glamorize death: the former the butchering of cattle and the latter the significance placed
on common burial ground. The cemetery portals of Salamone also featured very cubist-
looking sculptures of Jesus Christ and at times, angels of death. Their bodies display the
type of utopian aesthetics present in fascist art: that of physical perfection (Sontag 12).
Art Deco in the Pampas of Argentina demonstrates that in totalitarian regimes,
monumental architecture served the purpose of immortalizing its doctrines.

Mark Antliff also points out that that the “ambiguous modernity” of artistic
production under fascist regimes also took place in the decorative arts in Germany and
Italy, in addition to fascist movements in France, during the height of the Second World
War. Inherent to fascism’s cultural politics was both the construction of a mythic past and
a technological future upon which societal regeneration would take place (148). Antliff
argues that this seemingly contradictory matrix suggests that modern art, including that of
the vanguard movements, is not always mutually exclusive from fascist art (148). By extension, Art Deco architecture and decorative objects produced by fascist-leaning regimes did not run contrary to modernizing forces because it too relied upon the unearthing or (re)discovery of an authentic past in order to lend it the veneer of legitimacy. Fascist Deco, on both an architectural and a decorative scale, exemplifies the slippages present between modern design and the various political forces that commandeered it all in the name of national identity.

C. THE MONUMENTAL STRUCTURES OF VICTOR BRECHERET

In Brazil, not all monumental architectural during the Vargas regime was necessarily fascist-leaning, although many artists received commissions from local and federal entities. Italian-born sculptor Victor Brecheret, whose work and participation in the 1922 Modern Art Week will be more thoroughly explored in Chapter III, also created several Art Deco civic monuments, most notably the *Monumento às Bandeiras* (*Monument to the Pioneers*) in the Parque Ibirapuera in São Paulo. Although inaugurated in the year 1954, the origins of the monument trace back to the year 1920 with his plaster maquette of the monument, as well as the sculpture *Fragmentos do Templo de Minha Raça* (*Fragments of the Temple of My Race*).\(^{58}\) The monument plays tribute to the *bandeirantes* (“those who follow the flags”), the sixteenth to eighteenth-century slave-hunters and precious mineral seekers who ventured into unknown territory to make their fortune, whether in people or in mineral wealth. Many *bandeirantes* originated from São Paulo and traversed the wilderness, thus enabling Portugal to expand its control over the Brazilian interior. Many of the themes explored in Brecheret’s Art Deco monument are

\(^{58}\) The plaster maquette was exhibited to the public in July of 1920 and photos of it were subsequently published in the magazine *Papel e Tinto* (*Paper and Ink*) (Peccinini 42).
allegorical and encapsulate the distinct forces that enabled the territorial enlargement of Brazil:

Foi nesse período de aproximação com os paulistas que o Monumentos às Bandeiras foi concebido, sob o influxo do sentimento nativista do grupo somado à influência mestroviciana de exaltação da nacionalidade, expressividade violenta e uso de alegorias – Gênios, Vitórias, Insídias do Sertão – e ao clima patriótico suscitado pela proximidade do Centenário da Independência do Brasil. (Peccinini 42)

It was during this period of rapprochement with the Paulistas that the Monument to the Pioneers was conceived, under the influence of the nativist sentiment in the group added to the Mestrovic-like influence of the exaltation of nationality, violent expressiveness, and the use of allegories – Geniuses, Victories, Lures of the Backlands – and of the patriotic climate engendered by the proximity of the Centennial of the Independence of Brazil. (Peccinini 42)

The monument is an allegorical depiction of the origins of a modern-day Brazil as a racially diverse country as represented by the ethnic diversity of the famed bandeirantes. The monument includes bearded Portuguese explorers and mixed-race explorers of indigenous and African blood who are led by men seated on horses, animals introduced by Europeans to the continent. The monument concentrates the whole of Brazil into a processional group elevated on a granite stage and set at an upward angle, suggesting forceful advancement and ascending movement. The Monumento às Bandeiras is a unique example of a work designed in a modernist context but ultimately constructed and inaugurated thirty-four years after its initial inception during a more abstract phase of Brecheret’s sculpture. Although inaugurated in 1954, the year of Getúlio Vargas’s death,

59 The backlands (os sertões) formed a significant part of national lore after the publication of Euclides da Cunha’s highly influential Os Sertões (Rebellion in the Backlands) in 1902 that chronicled the disastrous military campaign of Canudos.
the Monumento às Bandeiras is constructed in the Art Deco style, demonstrating the intertwined nature of aesthetic movements in sculpture and monumental architecture.  

2.5. Brazilian Modernismo in Architecture

Another aesthetic current of the second decade of the twentieth century was Brazilian Modernismo (Modernism) and many of the aforementioned architects and artists participated in the celebrated Modern Art Week (A Semana de Arte Moderna), an exhibition held in the São Paulo Municipal Theater in 1922. The exhibition highlighted the birth of the Brazilian vanguard that steered its aesthetic creations away from the official nationalist message of the centennial celebration held in Rio de Janeiro. Brazilian Modernism is a vanguard movement that will be more thoroughly explored in Chapters III and IV, with particular emphasis on the development of the Art Deco graphic style and illustration amongst its members during the 1920s. What is notable about the 1922 Modern Art Week is that how little architecture factored into the movement’s search for a new and authentic national aesthetic. Brazilian Modernism did not have a clearly defined architectural program and its members ascribed to a wide range of architectural styles throughout the decade.

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60 The Monumento às Bandeiras was ultimately not inaugurated until 1954 due to pressure from the Portuguese community in São Paulo to build a monument dedicated to similar themes by a different sculptor, António Teixeira Lopes (Peccinini 43). Teixeira Lopes was a Portuguese sculptor who was classically trained at the Escola de Belas Artes (Academy of Fine Arts) in Porto, Portugal and the École des Beaux-Arts (School of Fine Arts) in Paris, France. In a conciliatory gesture, the President of the State of São Paulo, Washington Luís, sent Brecheret’s plaster maquette to the Pinacoteca do Estado, one of the most important art museums in Brazil, and the modernists hailed the move as a symbolic victory for their movement because it was the first work of a “modernist” aesthetic accepted into the institute (Peccinini 43). Brecheret, in turn, won a five-year scholarship for study in Europe in order to further pursue and develop his sculptural skills.

61 Brazilian Modernism, or Modernismo, collectively refers to Brazilian vanguard artists and writers (modernistas) and is not to be confused with architectural modernism (International Modernism) or modernismo of Spanish-speaking Latin American origin.
Brazilian Modernism differed from European vanguard movements in that the past was not to be rejected for modernity to take place; rather, the modernistas constructed their respective visions of a Brazilian past – whether from barroco mineiro or Marajoara sources – in order to create and foster a modern, national identity. As of 1922, Art Deco had not yet truly arrived in Brazil and for that reason, at least in terms of architectural aspirations, several participants of the Modern Art Week favored the Neocolonial Style. Despite its institutional backing and the fact that it was the official style of the Rio Exposition of the same year, the Neocolonial Style did not necessarily run contrary to Brazilian Modernist thinking during the early years of the decade. The Neocolonial Style was modern and very much Brazilian and laid the groundwork for the later adoption and widespread dissemination of Art Deco. Unlike its status in the 1925 Paris Exposition, Art Deco had no official backing in Brazil during the 1920s and proved to be highly appealing to the modernistas for its very lack of state-sponsorship. The style, furthermore, could be adapted to fit their nationalist message without the taint of being perceived as imported from France.

A. Architecture and the 1922 São Paulo Modern Art Week

Despite the relative lack of emphasis on architecture, the 1922 Modern Art Week featured two architects, Georg Przyrembel and Antônio Garcia Moya, who contributed works to the exhibition. The drawings displayed by Polish-born architect Georg Przyrembel favored the Neocolonial Style and he traveled extensively to Minas Gerais to study barroco mineiro (Lemos 161). Antônio Garcia Moya, however, displayed drawings that were more fantastical than realistic architectural plans (none were actually executed) and that drew inspiration from a variety of ancient sources, including Mesopotamia and
Pre-Columbian Mexico. Moya’s monumental structures have Cubist geometric features, as well as Art Deco ornamentation on their exteriors. Architectural Modernism had not yet reached Brazil and Moya and Przyrembel’s drawings shown in São Paulo at the Municipal Theater did not surmount the prevailing eclecticism and the Neocolonial Style passionately advocated by Ricardo Severo (Leite; Burbridge 197). Several sculptures by Victor Brecheret were also displayed at the 1922 Modern Art Week and deserve mention because of his later monumental architectural projects in São Paulo.62

Many participants of the 1922 Modern Week initially favored the Neocolonial Style as being sufficiently “authentic” and “modern” as they had, at various points in time, traveled to Minas Gerais with the goal of rediscovering what they perceived to be a uniquely Brazilian architectural style. Fernando Luiz Lara points out that the avant-garde architecture of Europe could not be adapted to suit nationalist priorities in Brazil because the former necessarily broke with past styles; Brazilian Modernism had no such past from which to break free:

When the first Brazilian avant-garde experiences began in the early 1920s, the actual state of social and economic modernization that generally precedes such tendencies was not completely established. The arrival of avant-gardist movements into an environment of “incomplete modernization” triggered a unique response from its proponents regarding past traditions. Working at the same time on both sides, the first generation of Brazilian modernist architects wove avant-garde ideas with their heritage. Brazilian modernists went back to the eighteenth-century baroque to anchor their projects after having experimented with the avant-garde. (211)

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62 Brecheret’s role in the Brazilian Modernist movement and his interactions his fellow members, the “Paulistas,” is crucial to understanding the context in which the Monumento às Bandeiras was conceived and will be more fully explored in Chapter III.
B. The “Casa Modernista”

Giorgi Warchavchik, a Russian architect who lived in Rome, arrived in Brazil in 1923 and was responsible for the introduction of the International Modernist style in Brazil. For his Casa Modernista (also known as Casa da Rua Santa Cruz), a private residence in São Paulo, Warchavchik designed the home itself, the landscaping, and all of the interior decoration elements, including the furniture, hardware, and lighting (Arestizábal; Shaw 187). Built between the years 1927 and 1928, the Casa Modernista was the first International Modernist residence in the Brazil and served as a physical meeting point for the convergence of concurrent modern styles in the country. In April of 1930, it was the site of an exhibition that was the “first representation of the contemporary art movement in Brazil since the Week of Modern Art…. and served as an example of the integration of many forms of artistic expression” (Arestizábal; Shaw 187). The exhibition was the closing chapter of a decade during which many modern styles both coexisted and overlapped and the start of a new governing regime (the Estado Novo) that co-opted many of the artists of these same movements.

2.6. Conclusion

Between the years 1922 and 1930, leading Brazilian architects and engineers pursued the idea of an authentic Brazilian past for their respective nationalist projects. Driving this search was a desire to move away from more recently imported styles, as

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63 At the encouragement of Le Corbusier, Giorgi Warchavchik was the Brazilian representative at the Congrès internationaux d'architecture moderne (International Congress of Modern Architecture), or CIAM that was held in Frankfurt (then known as Frankfurt am Main) in 1929 and in Brussels in 1930 (Williams 44).

64 This style of architecture was not very appealing to many of the modernistas during the 1920s because it was too “internationalist.” It was also prohibitively expensive for widespread dissemination (Arestizábal; Shaw 187).
well as the sense of urgency attached to documenting and preserving authentic past styles – those of the colonial era and ancient times. The Neocolonial Style and Art Deco were initially very similar in both respects in that they were both modern and authentic. Both architectural styles also relied on decorative elements that were (re)discovered and adapted for modern standards of living. And both served as an alternative to the International Modernist Style that could not be nationalized in the same fashion.

The competing exhibitions in 1922 in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, the former government-sponsored and the latter avant-garde, demonstrate the complexity of aesthetic thinking during a decade of formative nation-building. The Neocolonial Style, the official style of the state-sponsored Rio exposition, however, eventually fell out of favor among the Brazilian Modernists because of its ties to the governing forces of the country; it was too institutionalized for the artists and writers seeking a new, national aesthetic to express modernity on a local level. And although several of the modernistas initially supported the style, as evidenced by the meager architectural submissions to the São Paulo exposition, the stage was set for the rapid spread of Art Deco among nearly all of the movement’s primary members in their respective aesthetic endeavors.
Chapter III

Brazilian Modernist Graphic Design and Illustration

The golden age of illustrated books began just before the 1920s, when the modernist movement was forthcoming.

José E. Mindlin

These works of art appeal to our eyes and our minds, making vivid the unexpected links between avant-garde and commercial activity, shaped in an era of new technologies that was not unlike the electronic revolution of our own age.

Linda Shearer and Dianne H. Pilgrim
*Graphic Design in the Mechanical Age*, 1998

3.1. Introduction

Art Deco in graphic design and illustration arrived in Brazil during the second decade of the twentieth century, both in the cultural mainstream and in the multifarious vanguardist activities, collectively known as *modernismo*. Art Deco in the plastic arts, graphic design, and illustration satisfied the Brazilian Modernists’ search for an authentic, national aesthetic because it was both modern and new. And one of the principles of Brazilian Modernism was the redefinition of nationality through indigenous, specifically Marajoara, sources. Aracy Amaral notes that the Art Deco style became more strikingly apparent among the Brazilian *modernistas* after the 1925 *Exposition internationale des arts décoratifs et industriels modernes*:

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65 The term *modernismo* designates the renovation that took place in Brazilian literature, the visual arts, and architecture from the early 1920s through the mid-1940s. Brazilian Modernism was a vanguard movement that paralleled Spanish-American *vanguardismo* (vanguardism). *Modernismo* in Spanish-America bears no relation to Brazilian *modernismo* and refers to the end of the nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century literary movement that drew from Parnassianism, Romanticism, and Symbolism.
After trips and stints in Europe, Brazilian artists quickly comprehended the precepts of cubism, seen in 1923 in Tarsila do Amaral’s paintings. Amaral, for her part, visited the studios of Lhote, Gleizes, and Léger that same year. Other artists who traveled or took up residence in Paris would present surprisingly mature works throughout the decade – Brecheret, Di Cavalcanti, Rego Monteiro, Antônio Gomide, and Ismael Nery. Art deco became part of the modernist vocabulary of all of the aforementioned artists during the twenties although Antônio Gomide and Regina Gomide Graz were the first to introduce cubist concepts into the applied arts in São Paulo interiors – just as architect Gregori Warchavchik would. As a client of Parisian dressmaker/cultural activist Paul Poiret, Tarsila do Amaral would also bring to Brazil fashions and styles discovered after the 1925 Decorative Arts Exhibition in Paris. (17)

As discussed in Chapter II, the Art Deco style was also uniquely suited for worldwide adoption and adaption on a local scale and, as evidenced by the rapid dissemination of the Art Deco architectural style in Rio de Janeiro, it was highly popular with the mass consumer as well. The modernistas may not have invented the Marajoara Déco style, but it was far from incongruent with their search for a non-institutionalized, modern aesthetic.

3.2. The 1922 São Paulo Modern Art Week

The marking of the Brazil’s centennial of independence in 1922 prompted competing commemorative expositions with vastly different aesthetic undertakings that sought to both address and encapsulate Brazilian modernity. As explored in Chapter II, the state-sponsored Rio de Janeiro Exposition of the Centennial of Brazilian Independence (Exposição do Centenário da Independência do Brasil) heralded the country’s strides in modernization to national and international audiences with grand pavilions designed in the Neocolonial Style. These pavilions were adorned with “nostalgic-memorial paintings,” works of nineteenth century realism and expressionism that “fondly and proudly looked back upon moments leading up to independence” (Williams 37). Both the neocolonial architectural style employed, as well as the paintings
that decorated the structures, were the official version of national culture as presented by the state.

The centennial anniversary of 1922 also served as a catalyst for numerous young writers, artists, musicians, and architects, collectively known as the modernistas, who sought to reexamine and challenge the traditional literary and plastic arts forms exhibited in Rio de Janeiro. In February 1922, the celebrated Semana de Arte Moderna (Modern Art Week) took place in the lobby of the São Paulo Teatro Municipal (Municipal Theater) and shocked audiences with its iconoclastic blending of elements of the European vanguard movements with strong nationalist inflections. Daryle Williams explains that the São Paulo Modern Art Week:

 [...] launched a frontal assault upon the type of faux modernity cultivated by the regional oligarchies who controlled the national purse strings and the acadêmicos who controlled the cultural establishment in Rio. The week-long series of art exhibitions, musical performances, literary readings, and cultural polemics lashed out at the bourgeois establishment, mocking the formal conventions that dominated literature, architecture, and the visual arts. The week’s three “festivals” offered bold, sometimes shocking, visions of the plasticity of language and paint, the plurality of Brazil’s musical traditions, the speed of technological change, and the new living and working spaces that would come to define modern life in the second century of independence. (40)

The Modern Art Week in São Paulo was a watershed moment because the Brazilian modernistas rejected both Parnassian academic formalism and realist representation in the plastic arts and prose.66 Having rapidly industrialized after the First World War, São

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66 Parnassian formalism refers to a school of French poetry of the late nineteenth century that favored rigid formal structures and emotional detachment in poetry.
Paulo provided a center for vanguardist activity in Brazil, although significant regional manifestations did take place in other urban centers throughout the country.\textsuperscript{67}

In *Latin American Vanguards: The Art of Contentious Encounters* (1994), Vicky Unruh approaches Latin American vanguardism “as a form of activity rather than simply a collection of experimental texts exhibiting certain common features” (3). The 1922 Modern Art Week in São Paulo, she notes, included three festivals of “audacious multigeneric, multimedia presentations that were confrontational in their novelty” (33). Graça Aranha, a founding member of the Brazilian Academy of Letters (Academia Brasileira de Letras), with which he would later grow increasingly disaffected, gave lectures on *modernismo* and contemporary art. Williams observes that Aranha’s speech absolutely “reveled in the prospect that the more conventional members of the audience, whom he labeled *retardatários* [laggards], would reject the artwork hanging in the Teatro Municipal. The author spoke as if the quicker the conservatives reacted, the better the new art would seem” (40). Aranha’s denunciation of the *retardatários* reflects the “polemically antiacademic sprit” of Brazilian *modernismo* that involved a “rejection of prescriptive expressive forms, and the explicit goal to employ the idiosyncrasies of spoken Brazilian Portuguese as the material of art” (Unruh 224). The Modern Art Week proved to be a “form of activity” that was intended by many of the participants to be a “contentious encounter” against the old guard establishment forces in literature and the arts.

The schedule of the three days of festivals that took place during the Modern Art Week demonstrates the wide range of topics covered by a significant number of

\textsuperscript{67} Other areas included Pernambuco, Minas Gerais, Rio Grande do Sul, amongst others (Schwartz 16).
participants. Graça Aranha, for example, opened the festivals with a lecture entitled “A Emoção Esthetica na Arte Moderna” (“The Aesthetic Emotion in Modern Art”) and was followed by music and poetry by Ernâni Braga, Guilherme de Almeida, and Ronald de Carvalho. De Carvalho also gave a lecture on painting and sculpture and the evening concluded with a piano recital of music by Heitor Villa-Lobos. The following day, described by Alfredo Bosi as “a grande noite da Semana” (“the big night of the Week”), Menotti del Picchia gave a lecture, followed by prose and poetry readings by Oswald de Andrade, Álvaro Moreira, Mário de Andrade, Ribeiro Couto, Manuel Bandeira, Sérgio Milliet, Luis Aranha, and Affonso Schimidt. Cândido Motta Junior also spoke about modern criticism and Guiomar Novais on modern music (382).

In his lecture on the second evening, Menotti del Picchia combatively affirmed the principles of the Brazilian Modernist movement, purposefully agitating the audience much like Graça Aranha had done the day before:

A nossa estética é de reação. Como tal, é guerreira. O termo futurista, com que erradamente a etiquetaram, aceitamo-lo porque era um cartel de desafio. Na geleira de mármore de Carrara do Parnasianismo dominante, a ponta agressiva dessa proa verbal estilhaçava como um aríete. Não somos, nem nunca formos ‘futuristas’. Eu, pessoalmente, abomino o dogmatismo e a liturgia da escola de Marinetti. Seu chefe é para nós um precursor iluminando, que veneramos como um general da grande batalha da Reforma, que alarga o seu front em todo o mundo. No Brasil não há, porém, razão lógica e social para o futurismo ortodoxo, porque o prestígio do seu passado não é de molde a tolher a liberdade da sua maneira de ser futura. Demais, ao nosso individualismo estético, repugna a jaula de uma escola. Procuramos, cada um, atuar de acordo com nosso temperamento, dentro da mais arrojada sinceridade. (quoted in Bosi 382)

68 Jorge Schwartz, in his Caixa Modernista (2003), reproduces the printed schedule of events, entitled “Semana de Arte Moderna.” The third and last festival included a lecture by Ronato Almeida on modern philosophy, followed by Ronald de Carvalho on the music of Villa-Lobos. Villa-Lobos himself closed with festival with a concert (Schwartz, 2003).
Our aesthetic is that of reaction. As such, it is warlike. We accept the term futurist, with which our aesthetic has been erroneously labeled, because it was a pact of defiance. In the iceberg of the dominant Parnassianism of Carrara, the aggressive tip of this verbal prow shattered like a battering ram. We are not, nor ever were 'futurists'. I, personally, abhor the dogmatism and liturgy of the school of Marinetti. Their boss is for us an illuminating precursor, whom we venerate as a general of the great battle of the Reform, which extends its front worldwide. In Brazil there is, however, no logical or social reason for orthodox futurism because the prestige of its past is not likely to hamper the freedom of its way to be the future. Besides, our aesthetic individualism abhors the cage of a school. We seek, each one of us, to act in accordance with our temperament, within the boldest sincerity. (quoted in Bosi 382)

Picchia takes care to acknowledge yet differentiate Brazilian Modernism from the European avant-gardes, specifically Filippo Tommaso Emilio Marinetti’s Futurist movement. Marinetti may have been the initial agitator who struck the first blow against traditional systems of knowledge, Picchia admits, making Marinetti a great leader in that respect, but his version of futurism, or orthodox futurism, has no place in Brazil. Unlike Europe, Brazil’s past, Picchia argues, does not hinder its future. The Brazilian modernistas, furthermore, do not operate under the confines of a single dogma or school: they are true to themselves, acting sincerely in their collective “aesthetic of reaction.”

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69 Marjorie Perloff points out in The Futurist Moment (2003) that the “Marinetti of the twenties and thirties had become a confirmed if unorthodox fascist” but that the “Futurism of the avant guerre did not, as is often assumed, inevitably point in this direction” (30). Fascism, she argues, was not the “inevitable fruit” of Futurism and to describe the entirety of the movement as such would be anachronistic (33). Menotti del Picchia makes a similar distinction in his lecture between the Marinetti of the “avant guerre” and the contemporary, fascist writings of Marinetti during the 1920s, the latter of which he makes sure to explicitly denounce. Williams also notes that the term “futurist” was interchangeable with “modernism”, especially during the early years of the Brazilian Modernist movement. “Futurism” was more of a catch-all term that broadly referred to all of the European avant-garde movements (44).
Antônio Cândido clarifies that the traditional systems of knowledge in Brazil against which Picchia and his fellow modernistas “reacted” consisted of symbolist idealism and conventional naturalism, two literary currents that lacked intellectual “agitation” (141). Cândido considers these trends as ideologically fragile and not very constructive: “Uma espécie de gorgeio esmaecido, em que se refletia aqui o idealismo literário da burguesia européia; e, por isso mesmo, pouco apto a intervir na nova fase que se impunha, ante o esgotamento do academismo cosmopolita, diletante e pós-naturalista” (“A kind of dulled twittering, which was reflected here in the literary idealism of the European bourgeoisie, and, therefore, poorly suited to intervene in the new stage that was needed, before the exhaustion of cosmopolitan scholarship, amateurish and post-naturalist”) (142). The staleness of Parnassianism was all the more apparent in Brazil given the “embarrassing” state of affairs of the Brazilian Academy of Letters – a state that extended to the School’s actual building that was a reproduction of the Petit Trianon in Versailles and that is still referred to by the same name. Cândido makes no attempt to hide his disdain for “servile imitation” of styles, both in literary forms and architecturally, and considers it to be a form of “backwardness” that promotes dependency even in a so-called “independent” Brazil (Cândido; Becker 135). Cândido concludes that the state of “reaction” of the Brazilian modernistas, paralleled by vanguardist movements throughout Latin America, to both European literary currents and to institutionalized academia within Brazil, however, was not just an attempt to copy whatever was in vogue in Europe. The Latin American vanguards were “new” and “original” but also part of broader cultural trends that took place on both sides of the Atlantic during the decade of the 1920s. These expansive trends do not diminish the originality of the Brazilian modernistas –
they simply require broader contextualization that take into account the many European (and Russian) avant-garde movements, such as Fauvism, Expressionism, Cubism, Dada, Purism, and Constructivism, that did not exist in a vacuum of influence with regards to transatlantic movements and aesthetic trends of the era.

The multifaceted nature of the plastic arts exhibited at the Modern Art Week also demonstrates Picchia’s description of the “aesthetic individualism” on display in the Municipal Theater. There was no singular cohesive aesthetic style present in the plastic arts and the artists who participated adhered to a wide variety of styles that were at times contradictory. As discussed in Chapter II, the architectural contributions, for example, were meager at the Modern Art Week, with the architects Georg Przyrembel and Antônio Garcia Moya exhibiting drawings that favored extremely different styles. Przyrembel favored the more traditional Neocolonial Style and Moya Cubist geometricism and Art Deco ornamentation. The painters Tarsila do Amaral and Vicente do Rego Monteiro (who was studying in France at the time of the 1922 exposition) exhibited numerous works and the sculpture Victor Brecheret, also in France, twenty sculptures with traces of the Art Deco style. 70

Despite the occasional stylistic incongruence of many of the works on display during the Modern Art Week, the participants were indeed united by their respective searches for a modern, yet authentic national aesthetic (Oliven 57). 71 Modern, in that

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70 Victor Brecheret’s name appears alternately spelled as Vítor Brécheret (Unruh 33).

71 Daryle Williams points out that the regional manifestations of modernismo in other parts of Brazil often had very little in common with the modernistas in São Paulo: “The modernistas mineiros, drawn to the baroque heritage of the state of Minas Gerais, were far less obsessed with the futurist city. They, instead, looked for the cultural essence of a regional identity grounded in the Luso-baroque. The verde-amarelistas, so named for their appropriation of the colors of the Brazilian flag, were the most explicitly
Brazil assumed a position befitting its equal importance in a global society; national, in that artists and writers represented and contributed to the society what was characteristic and/or particular to their nation-state. On a broader scale, according to Unruh, the defining tension of Latin America’s vanguard expressions was the search for both a modern and national discourse (3). The break with the European avant-garde movements, as well as with previous forms of artistic expression such as the Neocolonial Style, led them to construct (or reconstruct) a multicultural past that strongly favored indigenous motifs (Ades 126). In contrast with the European avant-garde movements that appropriated African aesthetics, indigenous motifs were more frequently utilized in Brazilian Modernist art – even amongst those artists who chose to remain in Europe throughout the interwar period.72

It is important to note that the Brazilian modernistas – even those that remained in Europe during the interwar period and who were directly exposed to the European avant-garde African-inspired primitivism – did not utilize similar motifs in their search for a new, nationally authentic aesthetic. This fact is especially curious considering Brazil’s large population of newly emancipated African slaves (as well as their freemen counterparts). The popularity among the modernistas for the newly (re)discovered Marajoara ceramics from both an ancient culture and that were located in a part of Brazil that was a considerable geographic distance from São Paulo vanguardist activity somewhat parallels the vogue nègre in Europe and merits future analysis. More specifically, when the modernistas turned to indigenous motifs, why did many, if not all of them, avoid African or Afro-Brazilian themes and motifs?

Jorge Schwartz notes one notable exception to the glaring lack of African or Afro-Brazilian themes and motifs in Brazilian Modernism: the magazine “Leite Criôlo” (“Creole Milk”) (1929) (299). Published as a supplementary feature in the newspaper Estado de Minas (State of Minas), the magazine “rompió el silencio en torno al negro dentro del Modernismo y anticipó varios datos para la reflexión que la inteligencia nacional emprendería a partir de 1930, sobre la presencia negra en la vida y la cultura brasileñas” (“broke the silence with regards to the black individual within Modernismo..."
Regardless of Picchia’s outright rejection of Marinetti’s ideology, the *modernistas* were conscious of what was happening in Europe in literature and the arts and many traveled and studied in various European countries during the birth and dissemination of that continent’s avant-garde movements. The time period spanning from 1909, the year of the publication of Marinetti’s manifesto, to 1922, the year of the Modern Art Week in São Paulo, furthermore coincided with the development of the Art Deco style in the decorative arts, architecture, graphic design, and illustration. And early manifestations of the style did appear at the São Paulo Modern Art Week, particularly in Moya’s architectural drawings, Brecheret’s sculptures, and Monteiro’s paintings. These early manifestations cannot be considered a movement but they do signal an aesthetic flexibility that allowed for a blending, or confluence, of various artistic styles that would more fully develop among the *modernistas* throughout the decade, particularly in graphic design and illustration. The convergence of European avant-garde source material with the Art Deco style does, however, make it exceedingly difficult to separate the two in Brazilian Modernist art and design. As discussed in Chapter I, Art Deco in Europe had absorbed many avant-garde motifs during the 1920s and the style, as it appeared in Brazil during the same period, became thoroughly nationalized by means of Marajoara inflections.

—and anticipated various realities for the reflection that the national intelligentsia would undertake starting from 1930 about the black presence in Brazilian life and culture”) (Antonio Sérgio Bueno, quoted by Schwartz, 300).
3.3. Antecedents of the 1922 Modern Art Week

A. The Early Twentieth Century

The origins of Brazilian modernismo lie in the decade previous to the 1922 Modern Art Week when many of the primary participants were studying and working in Europe. Their exposure to the European avant-garde movements served as a crucial impetus for the formal renovation the modernistas sought in the arts and literature, albeit with nationalist inflections. Oswald de Andrade, for example, returned from Europe in 1912 and began publishing his own free verse poetry in which he described the travails of modern urban life (Brito 27). He urged Brazilian artists and writers to develop their own styles and to cease copying those from abroad, specifically Parnassianism that had been enshrined within the Brazilian Academy of Letters (Franco 109). He was also the first in Brazil to publicize the works of the European avant-garde movements, specifically Marinetti’s I Manifesti del futurismo (Futurist Manifesto). Within three years of its initial publication, the manifesto that signified the starting point of the European avant-garde movements had crossed the Atlantic, spurring Brazilian writers and poets to seek their own transformation in literature and poetry.

Anita Malfatti, who exhibited twenty paintings at the Modern Art Week, had studied painting in Germany and had her first solo exhibition, entitled Exposição de Pintura Moderna (Exposition of Modern Painting) in São Paulo in 1917. Her paintings featured elements of Post-Expressionism and, in particular, Cubism. In a country that still favored traditional academic art and fin-de-siècle romanticism, her 1917 exhibition was without precedent in Brazil; and since it was a solo exhibition, her work did not yet have the benefit of a broader movement in which to contextualize her work in Brazil.
Prominent critics such as Monteiro Lobato denounced her paintings for being too “futurist” and thereby inauthentic to the Brazilian spirit. Lobato recognized and lauded the Brazilian Modernist search for a modern and nationally authentic aesthetic – he simply did not consider each artist’s work as representative or as adequately satisfying the requirements of said qualifications. Lobato, therefore, generally agreed with the principles of Brazilian Modernism but believed that Malfatti simply did not meet them. Oswald de Andrade vigorously came to Malfatti’s defense and lauded her boldness in exhibiting works of such a personal and modern nature (Amaral 93). Malfatti’s 1917 exhibition proved to be a defining moment in the Brazilian arts that helped lay the groundwork for the 1922 Modern Art Week. She had succeeded in upsetting the status

73 Lobato’s main complaint of Malfatti’s work was not a question of talent, but rather a lack of originality (Azevedo 85-86). More specifically, he viewed her as too attached to the European vanguards to develop a personal style reflective of a new modern national aesthetic (Azevedo 86). See Monteiro Lobato’s “Paranóia ou mistificação? A propósito da exposição de Malfatti” (“Paranoia or Hoax? The Purpose of Malfatti’s Exposition”) in O Estado de São Paulo (20 Dec. 1917). Lobato’s concerns indicate a broader apprehension among numerous Brazilian intellectuals with regards to the imitation or copying of European culture, specifically that of France. See Roberto Schwarz’s essay “O Carroça, O Bonde e o Poeta Modernista” (“The Wagon, the Tram, and the Modernist Poet”) in Que Horas São? (What Time is It?) (1987).

Not all critics agree with the reception of the content of Lobato’s article on Anita Malfatti. Wilson Martins argues in The Modernist Idea (1971) that the title of Lobato’s article, “Paranoia or Hoax”, was more incendiary than the actual content of said article. Lobato, Martins continues, should not be characterized as a “partisan of strict academism” because he certainly did not “blindly attack all modern art” (22-23): “... one can conclude that his quarrel was aimed more at the new schools in painting rather than the artist” (22). Martins’s argument suggests that the Lobato article became a focal point for the vigorous defense of Malfatti precisely because it allowed her to become a cause-célèbre for the purposes of both initiating and fostering a debate about the nature of modern art in Brazil. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, “futurism” became a catch-all derogatory term in criticism to refer to the work of writers who rebelled against the literary standards put forth by the Brazilian Academy of Letters (Brito 31). It was also used by critics in reference to Malfatti’s paintings because of their clear European avant-garde influence.
quo and in many ways initiated a modern cultural transformation that adopted and adapted international influences using local variations.

The chance encounter in the year 1919 between the sculptor Victor Brecheret and Oswald de Andrade (along with Emiliano Di Calvalcanti, Menotti del Picchia, and Hélio Seelinger) in the São Paulo Palácio das Indústrias (Palace of Industries) also proved to be a highly formative event in the development of the Brazilian Modernist movement. Brecheret, of Italian descent, attended the Liceu de Artes e Ofícios (School of Arts and Crafts) in São Paulo where he also had his first lessons in drawing and sculpture. In 1914 he traveled to Rome and was strongly influenced by the Croatian and Yugoslav sculptor Ivan Meštrović, as well as the French sculptor Auguste Rodin. The “melancholic deco” style of Meštrović had a particularly profound impact on the development of Brecheret’s early style and, while studying in Paris several years later, he was strongly affected by the 1925 *Exposition internationale des arts décoratifs et industriels modernes* (Ribeiro 8). And while he was in Paris, twelve of his sculptures took part in the 1922 São Paulo Modern Art Week.

In contrast with the work of Anita Malfatti, Brecheret’s work was very well received by critics in Brazil and Monteiro Lobato declared his absolute admiration for the sculptor’s “soberba manifestação da grande arte” (“noble manifestation of magnificent art”) (quoted in Klintowitz 82). Brecheret’s work served as a startling contrast to the national sculpture of the time that was primarily Neoclassical and, in some cases, favored the art nouveau style (Peccinini 41). The reason for Lobato’s differing reactions to the

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work of Malfatti and Brecheret may lie not with the question of European influence, but rather with the distinctive aesthetic principles of Brecheret, specifically those of the Art Deco style, that allowed him greater flexibility than Malfatti in his search for new Brazilian artistic languages.

In *História Do Modernismo Brasileiro (History of Brazilian Modernism)* (1958), Mário da Silva Brito describes the meeting “o escultor taciturno” (“the taciturn sculptor”) as a momentous “discovery”:

> Durante meses, Brecheret vive em seu “atelier” sozinho, sem que ninguém lhe bata à porta. Um dia, visitando a exposição de “maquettes” para o monumento da Independência, instalada no saguão principal do edifício, um grupo de pessoas é informado pelo porteiro de que ‘lá em cima anda um escultor trabalhando, um tipo esquisitão, de pouca prosa e que faz umas estátuas enormes e estranhas’. ‘Resolvemos subir para arreliar o excêntrico artista’ – declara Oswald de Andrade. E o que vimos foi um deslumbramento para nós, pois estávamos diante de escultor original e poderoso. (Brito 93)

For months, Brecheret lives in his "atelier" alone, without anybody knocking at the door. One day, while visiting the exhibition of "maquettes" for the Independence Monument, located in the main lobby of the building, a group of people is told by the doorman that 'up there a sculptor is working, a weird type of few words that makes huge and strange statues'. 'We decided to go up to tease the eccentric artist' - declares Oswald de Andrade. And what we saw amazed us, for we were before an original and powerful sculptor. (Brito 93)

The “discovery” of Brecheret’s large and somewhat imposing atelier greatly impacted the group, particularly Oswald de Andrade (Peccinini 41). As will be discussed in Chapter IV, the “discovery” of Brecheret, his sculptures, and his studio by Oswald de Andrade became a focal point for the latter’s earliest works of fiction that included a trilogy of novels entitled *A Trilogia do exílio (The Trilogy of Exile)*, a title later changed to *Os Condenados (The Condemned)*. A fictionalized Brecheret is the protagonist of the

**B. Historical Trends in Brazilian Printing Production**

New methods of graphic design production and new styles in illustration in Brazilian Modernism are notable for both the modernistas’ resulting innovative aesthetic expression and the extraordinary speed with which those innovations took place. This technological change warrants a look back at both the introduction and development of printing technologies in Brazil. Nelson Werneck Sodré points out in his definitive work on the history of the printing press in Brazil that the technology was extremely late in arriving to the Portuguese colony compared to the Spanish colonies in the Americas. The first printing press arrived in Brazil in 1808 when the Royal Court from Portugal arrived to the colony after fleeing from Napoleon in 1807. The Impressão Régia (Royal Press) began production on May 13, 1808 in Rio de Janeiro, printing a booklet called *Relação dos despachos (List of Orders)*, in addition to other official documents such as decrees and sermons (“Impressão Régia in Rio de Janeiro”, www.brown.edu). Even with the arrival of an actual printing press, however, textual production was still extremely limited and strong censorship laws restricted the type of materials produced.

The lack of a printing press in Brazil during colonial times (for approximately 308 years) meant that civil and ecclesiastical authorities had to bring or request materials from Portugal or other European countries – others occasionally found ways to smuggle them illegally into the colony.\(^{75}\) And books printed in Portugal, furthermore, were subject

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\(^{75}\) The centuries-long delay in the arrival of a printing press to Brazil serves as a marked contrast to the proliferation of presses that took place in Europe within fifty years of the invention of the Gutenberg press: “Unknown anywhere in Europe before the mid-fifteen
to censorship from both the Inquisition and the Crown (12). Sodré links this tight control over the dissemination of information in the Brazilian colony to the additional absence of a university system during the same time period. Most proprietors of the great estates, he points out, sent their sons to be educated at the University of Coimbra in Portugal, one of the oldest universities in the world, as well as to other prominent European institutions of higher learning (12). He argues that the lack of a national printing press and the outsourcing of education to Portugal caused a deep cultural stagnation for centuries, especially when compared to Spanish colonies in the Americas. Literacy rates, furthermore, remained shockingly low as systems of knowledge and learning were almost entirely prohibited for the vast majority of the population.

Moreover, the arrival of the Royal Court – and its printing press – did not vastly alter the availability of printed publications in Brazil because the dissemination of information continued to be strictly controlled and regulated. Public libraries, for example, were prohibited and royal book holdings were for the Crown alone. Sodré argues that both the lack of a printing press during colonial times and the strict regulation of printing technologies during the early nineteenth century were in the interest of the elites that relied so thoroughly on slave labor. Slavery was a mainstay of the Brazilian economy and the intensity of this forced migration to Brazil was the highest in all of the Americas.76

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76 Herbert S. Klein and Francisco Vidal Luna demonstrate in *Slavery in Brazil* (2010) that: “Of the estimated 10.7 million Africans who safely crossed the Atlantic from the late fifteenth century until the late nineteenth century, an estimated 4.8 million survived the crossing and landed in Brazil” (151). By 1872, approximately sixteen years before the official abolition of slavery in Brazil, slaves made up fifteen percent of the country’s total
Sodré finds it especially telling that the Dutch, who dominated the richest part of the colony during the seventeenth century (approximately between the years 1630 and 1654), also never introduced a printing press. Sodré argues that the lack of a Dutch press further demonstrates how the reliance on slave labor of the entire territory, both that of the Dutch and of the Portuguese, fueled opposition to any technological advances that would have facilitated the diffusion of information:

... a razão essencial [para o retardo com que conhecemos a imprensa] estava nas condições coloniais adversas: o escravismo dominante era indefenso à cultura e à nova técnica de sua difusão. A etapa econômica e social atravessada pela colônia não gerava as exigências necessárias à instalação da imprensa. (19-20)

... the essential reason [for the delay we recognize of the press] was in the adverse colonial conditions: the prevailing slavery was indefensible to culture and to the new technique of its diffusion. The economic and social stage traversed by the colony did not generate the necessary requirements for the installation of the press. (19-20)

In his exploration of the history of books in Brazil, Benedito Nunes argues that only with the actual declaration of independence from Portugal in 1822 was the identity of a truly Brazilian literature legitimized. While books did exist in Brazil during colonial times, the arrival of the Royal Court and its printing press was simply a geographic transfer of the same institutional forces that produced the same types of written materials – only now actually within the colony. Independence, he continues, allowed for the appearance of a “literary historiography.... Amounting to a second beginning, that legitimacy conferred a lawful existence on literature as opposed to its earlier de facto existence during the colonial period” (11). A year earlier, Dom Pedro I, while still Regent, population (186) and slavery was still very much a profitable venture (188). Had a “strong abolitionism” not occurred, Klein and Luna argue, the industry of slavery could have continued well into the twentieth century (188).
had rescinded the censorship of imported books and warmly welcomed scientific missions to catalogue the country’s zoological and botanical species (13-14). The King’s liberalization of the printing press, as well as the literal and figurative opening of the ports to more foreign researchers and explorers, essentially ended three centuries of idled print culture in Brazil – at least among the few literate elite.

Despite the lifting of restrictions on printed materials, the growth of editorial houses was meager during the second half of the nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth. The scope of a literate public remained extremely limited and even though newspapers, almanacs, and folhetins (weekly or monthly literary installments printed in journals, oftentimes using artisanal presses) did become popular, they were often read aloud by the few that could read to the majority who could not (Sodré 279). Editorial houses for books, furthermore, nearly always sent their materials to be published in Portugal, France, and Germany and remained prohibitively expensive for mass consumption (278).

It was not until the end of the nineteenth century, however, that printing technologies in Brazil began to shift from the antiquated presses to modern machinery that could mass produce both printed texts and illustrations of better quality. These technological advances were mostly limited to newspapers and other ephemera that were

77 Nancy Stepan explains in Beginnings of Brazilian Science (1976) that a limited number of scientific expeditions to South America began with Alexander von Humboldt’s travels between the years 1799 to 1804. “The tradition of scientific exploration of South America established by [Alexander von] Humboldt gained momentum in Brazil with the opening of Brazil to European trade after 1808.... With the marriage of the Archduchess Leopoldina, daughter of the Austrian Emperor, to the Brazilian Prince Regent, Dom Pedro, a number of scientists came to Brazil with her court [in 1817] to examine Brazilian vegetation and animals” (26-27). These expeditions increased in number the years immediately following the declaration of Brazilian Independence.
not bound in a volume during this period. Latin America was not very far behind Europe and the United States in the introduction of modern printing technologies and by 1889, the year of the advent of the Brazilian Republic, the newspaper *O Estado de São Paulo* (*The State of São Paulo*), was using a Marinoni printing press (Bethell 520). This type of rotary press allowed newspapers to print large editions quickly and very efficiently.

The abolishment of slavery in 1888 and the birth of the Republic in 1889 had profound implications for the speed with which changes took place in both the dissemination of information and the growth of the technology required to do so:

It must be remembered that the period in consideration was marked by the end of slavery, the establishment of the republican regime and its ideal of reforming education and disseminating literacy, the prosperity brought by coffee, the growth of urban centers and the services sector, with particular emphasis on Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, the extension of the railway, the entry of large waves of immigrants, and the beginning of a first industrial surge, circumstances that, at the same time, favored and demanded the flow of information.

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78 The Marinoni printing press, also known as a rotary printing press, was a high speed press that could print on continuous rolls of paper.
This extensive list of transformations, coupled with modern products and new media invading the everyday – cars, electric trams, cinema, portable cameras, typewriters, phonographs, advertising and, in the 1920s, the radio – outlined as much a landscape marked by the presence of technical objects as they configured other sensitivities, subjectivities, and forms of social interaction. Efficiency, urgency, speed, and mobility became hallmarks of the urban way of life, and the press took an active part in this process of acceleration. (De Luca 150)

Yet despite having abolished slavery in 1888, making Brazil the last regime to do so in the Americas, illiteracy continued to slow the dissemination of newspapers and magazines throughout the country.

In his sweeping survey of illustrated texts in Brazil from 1875 to 1945, famed Brazilian bibliophile José E. Mindlin observes that newspapers and folhetins did contain very inventive, original illustrations, especially caricatures and cartoons (61). He makes special note of the magazine A Careta (The Pout) and the high quality of the illustrations and caricatures of J. Carlos (68). Book illustrations, on the other hand, were, for the most part, of poor quality and were oftentimes reproductions from European texts (61). Many times these illustrations were anonymous and their exact origins unclear. Aracy Amaral notes that earlier art nouveau illustrations appeared sporadically in books, although the style never found broader acceptance within the country’s institutionalized literary and graphic design forces (Artes Plásticas, 27-28).

It was not until 1922, with the production of Klaxon, that the first break with previous imported styles in illustration took place in Brazil (Mindlin 69). Although Mindlin does not use the term “graphic design” to describe the innovative cover of

79 Although the topic is not fully explored in Mindlin’s article, J. Carlos’s work took on a decidedly deco appearance during as of the late 1920s and early 1930s. See Isabel Lustosa’s (with Paulo Henriques Britto) article "The Art of J. Carlos" in The Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts (1995).
Klaxon, his focus on the distinct aesthetic shift in the printed form indicates that he takes into account that the modernistas did not simply import their styles in illustrated texts from abroad. The vanguardist text – in this case the Brazilian Modernist text – was an entirely different aesthetic form that requires an understanding of both production methods and the final product in a modern context.

3.4. Art and Mechanical Reproduction in Vanguardist Printed Publications

A. Vanguardist Textual Interface

In his analysis of the politics of aesthetics, philosopher Jacques Rancière reexamines the relationship between art and mechanical reproduction and argues that the modernist model disturbs the traditional representative paradigm that distinguished between the fine arts and the decorative arts in the plastic arts, a paradigm that extended to different types of printed mediums as well:

Modernist discourse presents the revolution of pictorial abstraction as painting’s discovery of its own proper ‘medium’: two-dimensional surface. By revoking the perspectivist illusion of the third dimension, painting was to regain the mastery of its own proper surface […]

The type of painting that is poorly named abstract, and which is supposedly brought back to its own proper medium, is implicated in an overall vision of a new human lodged in new structures, surrounded by different objects. Its flatness is linked to the flatness of a pages, posters, and tapestries. It is the flatness of an interface. Moreover, its anti-representational ‘purity’ is inscribed in a context where pure art and decorative art are intertwined, a context that straight away gives it a political signification […]

It is initially in the interface created between different ‘mediums’ – in the connections forged between poems and their typography or their illustrations, between the theatre and its set designers or poster designers, between decorative objects and poems – that this ‘newness’ is formed that links the artist who abolishes figurative representation to the revolutionary who invents a new form of life. This interface is political in that it revokes the twofold politics inherent in the logic of representation. (15-17)
According to Rancière, the lines between the vanguard movements and the decorative arts, including Art Deco, are blurred as the “pictorial surface” becomes redefined as a “surface of shared writing” (15). Different “mediums” in the modernist printed work, such as typography and illustration, are egalitarian and upend the traditional hierarchy of the page, thereby reconfiguring the distinction between mimesis and abstraction. The fine arts and the decorative arts are no longer binary opposites in a modernist printed work – they are equal by means of the “interface” they forge together on the page.

It is very difficult to separate the seemingly separate fields of graphic design, typography, illustration, the decorative arts, and the fine arts in modernist printed works because the paradigm of the page exceeds the materiality of a written sheet of paper. These distinctions also extend to more commercial endeavors that appealed to the mass consumer because avant-garde movements utilized mass marketing techniques, and mass advertising, in turn, utilized avant-garde aesthetics to give a modern inflection to their sales campaigns. Deborah Rothschild points out that avant-garde textual experiments “expanded the expressive potential of language” and even the movements’ most radical innovations with words and paper were absorbed and modified by commercial advertising geared toward a broader audience (10). The lines between avant-garde graphic material and commercial mass media became blurred, furthermore, as both Futurists and Dadaists, for example, used methods of modern advertising to attract attention for their performance events and to promote their positions via books, manifestos, and reviews (14).  

80 It is important to point out that beyond the physicality and the message of the manifesto, a specific genre of a modernist printed work, Vicky Unruh has explored the fundamental connection between the written manifesto and the “oral public
B. GRAPHIC DESIGN IN THE MECHANICAL AGE

Modern graphic design took shape in the early decades of the twentieth century, when avant-garde artists, designers, illustrators, typographers, and writers challenged traditional forms and functions of printed aesthetic expression. Linked together by the medium of paper, graphic designers created new innovations in the art of design and printing in books, magazines, manifestos, and posters. In the seminal work *Graphic Design in the Mechanical Age*, Deborah Rothschild explores Merrill Berman’s private collection of modernist printed works from Europe, Russia, and the United States. She makes particular note of the networking among the regions’ avant-garde groups and the resulting aesthetic intersections that took place after the first World War:

[...] there was an unprecedented give-and-take of new ideas and ways of seeing that took place among a small group of artist-designers of different nationalities, an interchange made possible in part by twentieth-century advances in travel and communication. This interchange was also in large part a reaction to the nationalism that led to World War I and concomitant fresh belief that confreres, be they workers or artists, could form alliances across national boundaries. The result was not one homogenous style but a

manifestation”; Mário de Andrade, for example, gave such a “performance manifesto” entitled “As enfibraturas do Ipiranga” (“The Moral Fibrature of the Ipiranga”) at the 1922 São Paulo Modern Art Week (32). Broadly speaking, Unruh explains, “the prototypical manifesto possessed a highly dramatic structure, and its confrontational discourse put into play conflicting views of art and culture by employing rhetorical strategies with a potentially theatrical effect” (35). “As enfibraturas do Ipiranga”, Unruh explains, “is the lengthy final composition in the 1922 poetry collection *Paulicéia desvairada* (Hallucinated City)” and is “a poetic blueprint for the performance of an oratorio in verse” (43-44). The poetry collection is framed at the outset by a performance manifesto “designed to enact those ideas within the specific socioeconomic context surrounding the emergence of Brazilian vanguardist activity” (44). In the context of modernist activity, therefore, the manifesto cannot be only defined by its textual features; although a printed product, the manifesto was part of broader public manifestations that necessarily must be considered in an examination of the text. The vanguardist manifesto is a genre in itself: one that requires an appreciation of its literary, artistic, and performance aspects.
variety of innovations in art-making, including design and typography, which were each inflected with national and personal accents. (9)

Although Merrill Berman’s collection of modernist printed works does not include Latin America, the “interchange” of aesthetic styles certainly took place on a transatlantic level as avant-garde and commercial artists and writers studied and traveled throughout both hemispheres. And beyond the “interchange” of individuals, the “innovations in art-making, including design and typography” took place on a technological level as newspapers located in major urban areas imported modern machinery, such as a Marinoni rotary press, in order to seek more efficient methods of printing. Pan-oceanic commercial webs that included regular networks of trade and communications had long been established in the Atlantic world starting in the earliest stages of the colonial era (Morgan; Green 19). The evolution of these webs in the modern era involved the compression of both time and space as the volume of peoples, ideas, and technologies increased while shipping times decreased, thereby consolidating commercial, cultural, and political relationships among Europe, the Americas, and Africa (21).

Graphic design historian Ellen Lupton argues that avant-garde graphic design works are uniquely characterized by their strong emphasis on production methods, both in cottage-industry production that involved handcraftsmanship and new mass production techniques with well-organized assembly lines. Handcraftsmanship and mass production techniques in modernist graphic design were not necessarily mutually exclusive: for some

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81 Marjorie Perloff refers to these formative years of “give-and-take” between vanguard artists and writers as the “futurist moment”, during which there was a “brief utopian phase of early Modernism when artists felt themselves to be on the verge of a new age that would be more exciting, more promising, more inspiring than any preceding one” (36).
82 Merrill Berman’s collection does include several Cuban cinema posters from the 1960s.
artists and writers, it was more important that a particular work appeared machine-made and conveyed the idea of technology (51-52). Lupton stresses that the production of avant-garde texts – which consists of “the process of planning and assembling a poster, book, or document before its manufacture by a printer” is equally, if not more critical for analysis, than its finalized form (53). Reproductions of modernist texts, furthermore, crucially lack an understanding of the original physical processes that produced them (53). Oftentimes these reproductions do not even include the original graphics and instead put them back within the traditional Gutenberg grid in order to print them more easily and cheaply.

Avant-garde graphic designers chafed against what they perceived to be the confines of the grid structure of the Gutenberg press. Early twentieth century texts did not differ much from Johannes Gutenberg’s 1450 Bible in terms of their methods of production, as well as their format and layout. In The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe, Elizabeth L. Eisenstein defines the invention of “printing” as a “shorthand way of referring to a cluster of innovations (entailing the use of movable metal type, oil-based ink, wooden handpress, and so forth)” (13). Eisenstein’s goal in examining the advent of printing is to survey the communications revolution of the fifteenth century when the shift from script to print took place. Broadly speaking, she notes, printing resulted in the “marked increase in the output of books and the drastic reduction in the number of man-hours required to turn them out” (13). The “printing revolution” meant that a profitable industry could develop based around the production and sale of books. From its initial onset, therefore, printing was an inherently commercial endeavor.
Vanguard textual experiments brought the entire visual field of the printed page into play by “breaking” the Gutenberg grid. The 1922 cover of Brazilian Modernist magazine *Klaxon*, for example, features different fonts and type sizes with an asymmetrical layout. A huge single capitalized letter “A” unevenly unites each of the title words that contain the same letter: “mensArio de Arte modernA SÃ£o Paulo.” The number “1”, denoting that it is the first issue of the magazine, is printed top-down rather than left-to-right, requiring the reader to read in different directions.\(^3\) The traditional printer’s grid structure is undermined in that the empty space on the page must be “read” in addition to the text. The result is that “… the asymmetric distribution of typographic elements on the page created an overall visual tension that converted then negative white space from a passive to an active value…. The tension of this field was due as well to the use of sans serif typography, which decreased visual interaction between different letterforms and between letters and white space” (Williamson 23).\(^4\) Nevertheless, the grid was still an “understructure” that controlled these formatting and layout challenges; it still played a central, albeit a different, role in early twentieth century graphic design. Vanguard movements sought to change the values of the grid’s constructive elements, thereby shifting its meaning, both visually and symbolically.

Artisanal vanguard works made to appear mass-produced by a mechanical press furthermore contain elements of subversion that challenge the fundamental principles of Western art and literature. In her discussion of the invention of collage, Marjorie Perloff

\(^3\) The cover of the first issue of *Klaxon* consists of three colors: black and red text and the white space between the text. It is possible that the color scheme is an intentional allusion to Marajoara ceramics which also featured black, red, and white painted slips.

\(^4\) Sans serif typography refers to typefaces that do not have the small projecting features at the end of strokes. With the dawn of modern advertising, typographers created hundreds of new sans serif typefaces.
argues in *The Futurist Moment* (2003) that the practice of pasting papers “in front of and on top of one another on an opaque picture surface” subverted Western painting “from the early Renaissance to the late nineteenth century.... For each element in the collage has a dual function: it refers to an external reality even as its compositional thrust is to undercut the very referentiality it seems to assert” (48-49). The art of collage composition developed simultaneously in France, Italy, and Russia during the first decade of the twentieth century as artists sought to challenge representational painting – in other words, that painting was necessarily a “window to the world.” Nevertheless, collage remained a two-dimensional art form that did not necessarily break free from the “frame” of painting.

And just as collage subverted and “reclaimed” painting, vanguard graphic design subverted the traditional printed page of Gutenberg. Lupton points to the case of a 1924 Russian film poster by Aleksandr Rodchenko as an example of this subversion:

the poster’s style and symbolism celebrate the new mechanization of vision, the images and letters all have been drawn by hand.... Rodchenko’s hand-constructed letters convey the idea of technology more vividly than the machine-made yet traditionally designed fonts typically stocked by commercial printers.

Rodchenko’s poster is a striking instance of how modern designers, working in the ambitious decades between the two world wars, aimed to emphasize and transform the conditions of reproduction; they sometimes buried the evidence of one technology in order to objectify another. Mass manufacturers of the nineteenth century had proven that industrial production could replicate the work of traditional artisans; modern designers sought instead to express the techniques of production in the form and appearance of the object. They sought to expose technology and loosen its constraints, viewing the process of manufacture not as neutral, transparent means to an end but as devices equipped with cultural meaning and aesthetic character. (51-52)  

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85 The Russian film poster that Lupton explores was for the 1924 film *Kino Glaz (Kino eye)* (Lupton 50-51).
Avant-garde experimentations with graphic design and printing involved a considerable amount of man-hours, a time commitment contrary to the advantages originally presented by the Gutenberg press. Rodchenko, for example, “chose to build his letters with a ruler, compass and brush – employing the tools of the engineer alongside those of the artist – rather than rely upon the manufactured characters available in a printer’s type shop (Lupton 51). Artisanal presses, therefore, did entail some methods of mass production, but the handcraftsmanship, at least the masked appearance of it, was a significant factor in the creation of many modernist printed works.

**3.5. Brazilian Modernist Graphic Design and Illustration**

Jorge Schwartz’s facsimile edition of the original printed materials distributed to the participants and audience of the 1922 São Paulo Modern Art Week reveals a rather unimaginative calendar of the three festivals. The schedule is typewritten on lined paper bearing the logo of the Automóvel (Automobile) Club of São Paulo and is curiously lackluster compared to the ingenuity of the plastic arts works exhibited at the exposition. Emiliano Di Cavalcanti’s cover of the catalogue of these works appears to be more professionally printed; his illustration combines varying Symbolist and Expressionist imagery with no uniquely Brazilian characteristics. Taken together, the festival schedule and Di Cavalcanti’s illustration do not demonstrate much innovation in graphic design or illustration, nor were they a radical departure from European styles.

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86 Jorge Schwartz’s *Caixa Modernista (Modernist Box)* (2003) also includes facsimiles of far more aesthetically groundbreaking printed publications of the Brazilian Modernist movement. It also includes color postcards of many famous paintings of the modernistas.
Within a few months of the exposition, however, many of the same organizers and participants of the São Paulo Modern Art Week produced the magazine *Klaxon, mensário de arte moderna* (*Klaxon, monthly magazine of modern art*) (see figure 3). The first issue was released in May of 1922 and an additional eight issues were produced through January 1923. The nine total issues represented “o primeiro esforço concreto do grupo para sistematizar os novos ideais estéticos ainda confusamente misturados nas noites bulhentas do Teatro Municipal” (“the group’s first concrete attempt to systematize the new aesthetic ideas still confusingly mixed in the noisy nights of the Municipal Theater”) (Bosi 385). Visually, *Klaxon* proved to be more than just an innovation in graphic design among the *modernistas*: the magazine was the first significant break in all of Brazil with previous imported styles in printing and illustration (Mindlin 69).

The second decade of the twentieth century was a point of departure for printing technologies in Brazil, beginning with the Brazilian Modernist movement. Many modernist printed works used artisanal presses that combined mechanized techniques with handcraftsmanship in order to achieve certain aesthetic goals. The role of

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87 The back of the front cover of *Klaxon* features a curious disclaimer that the magazine itself was in no way responsible for the ideas presented by its collaborators. The index of collaborators features, for example, initials rather than entire names. In the case of Mário de Andrade, he is listed as simply M. de A.

Vicky Unruh points out that the manifesto-style editorials of *Klaxon* “create a sense of group identity by substituting a journal’s name for the personal pronoun and combining this name with a singular verb, for example, ‘Klaxon is Klaxist’ or, more explicitly, ‘Klaxon has a collective soul’” (37). The use of pseudonyms and initials by *Klaxon’s* contributors heightens this sense of collectivity.

88 The Oxford English Dictionary defines “artisanal” as: “Of, relating to, or characteristic of an artisan or skilled craftsperson; involving or utilizing traditional, small-scale, or non-mechanized methods or techniques” (*www.oed.com*). The word also implies that the handmade, “artisanal” product is made with great skill and care (*oed.com*).
production, therefore, must be considered within the ideologies and aesthetics of Brazilian Modernism with regard to the movement’s printed publications. Production methods and techniques have received little attention in criticism of Brazilian Modernist works and merit further analysis in order to contextualize the importance that many vanguard writers and artisans, both in Brazil and globally, placed on both the manufacturing process and the visual effect of final printed product.

In addition to the ground-breaking cover of *Klaxon*, the content of the first issue of the magazine itself includes a manifesto-style editorial declaring its “Significação”, “Esthetica”, “Cartaz”, and “Problema” (“Significance”, “Aesthetic”, “Playbill”, and “Problem”) (1-3). The “Problem”, as outlined by the manifesto, declares that Romanticism and Symbolism are of the nineteenth century and have no place in the twentieth century: “Molhados, resfriados, rheumatisados por uma tradição de lagrimas artisticas, decidimo-nos. Operação cirurgica.... Era de construcção. Era de KLAXON” (“Wet, cold, rheumatic by a tradition of artistic tears, we are decisive. Surgical operation.... Age of construction. Age of KLAXON”) (3). KLAXON, the manifesto declares, embraces nature, progress, science, and the cinema. It is future-oriented, although not “futurist”: KLAXON, for example, hails the famed silent film actress Pearl White (“Perola White”) as opposed to Sarah Bernhardt, the stage actress (2). The Artisanal presses were small-scale operations that utilized handcraftsmanship, as opposed to mechanized technologies, to produce printed works. They were not unique to the early twentieth century but they did see a rise in popularity with the publication of vanguard works that sought to work outside the established printing industry.

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89 See Mário da Silva Brito’s color facsimile edition of all nine issues of *Klaxon* (1973). The first issue of *Klaxon* includes an illustration by Victor Brecheret and a fascinating back cover that, at first glance, appears to be an advertisement. In various typefaces and shifting font sizes, the words “coma lacta” (“eat chocolate”) appear crisscrossing the page.
magazine, above all, embraces being contemporary and therein lies its newness (1). The word “klaxon”, furthermore, is the electric horn of an automobile, a direct reference to modernity and the speed, technology, and noisiness it entails.

And in addition to its revolutionary cover and the first issue’s manifesto-like editorial, the content of Klaxon included a wide range of articles, poems, original illustrations, critical commentaries on the plastic arts, and further elaboration on the Brazilian Modernist movement. Jorge Schwartz observes in Las vanguardias latinoamericanas: textos programáticos y críticos (Latin American Vanguards: Programmatic and Critical Texts) (2002) that the magazine was also internationalist in the sense that it published articles and poems from writers abroad, all in their original languages (261). The magazine also featured segments of upcoming novels; as will be discussed in Chapter IV, the sixth issue of Klaxon included a segment from Oswald de Andrade’s then-forthcoming novel A Estrela de Absinto (The absinthe star) (1927) that contains several notable variations from the novel’s final form. The magazine’s love of the cinema is apparent in this particular fragment as well – below the title of the fragment is an illustration of a movie projector. And under the projector is the word “KLAXON” in a deco typeface that alludes to dynamic movement – or, the flickering lights of cinemachinery.

Additional vanguard magazines that deserve mention for their innovative illustrations but that are, according to Mindlin, “lacking the irreverence of Klaxon”, include:

Verde (Green), published by youngsters in the small town of Cataguazes, Minas Gerais, also from 1927 to 1929 (the editor in chief of Verde, Rosário Fusco, was seventeen, and the oldest editor was twenty-two years old); and most importantly, the Revista de Antropofagia (Cannibal review),
published in São Paulo from 1928 to 1929 in two phases (called teethings). The first phase, in smaller format, from May 1928 to February 1929, was under the direction of Antônio de Alcântara Machado; and the second phase, from 17 March to 1 August 1929, was under the direction of Oswald de Andrade as a supplement to the newspaper *O Diario de São Paulo (The São Paulo daily)*, in the same format as the newspaper (69).\(^90\)

The magazine *Verde* is also notable for its distinctive deco typeface that featured rivulets in each letter. The bright green color also gives the title a jeweled tone and appears to be hand-inked, in addition to the border of the same color.

Outside of the São Paulo modernistas, the Brazilian modernist magazine *Arco e Flexa (Bow and Arrow)* (1928-1929) also featured Art Deco graphic presentation, particularly in the cover design and the decorative margin markers at the top and bottom of every page. Published in Bahía, the magazine affirmed that “brasilidad” (“Brazilianess”) would be take place by means of an indianist semantic that would run counter to that of the Europeans (Schwartz 292). The group was also firmly opposed to “São Paulo primitivist anthropophagic principles” (these “principles” will be further explored in Chapter IV). According to Jorge Schwartz, the magazine’s literary content consisted mostly of romantic-symbolist poetry (292).\(^91\)

There is, regrettably, a notable lack of research on the production techniques of the Brazilian avant-garde. Just how were *Klaxon* and *Verde* produced? Despite their

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\(^90\) Vicky Unruh also makes note of “*Terra Roxa e Outras Terras* (São Paulo, 1926), *Festa* (Rio de Janeiro, 1927-28), [and] *A Revista* (Belo Horizonte, 1925-26)” (13). The content of the *Revista de Antropofagia* will be discussed in Chapter IV. Whereas the publication was not very innovative in terms of graphic design (it was printed in traditional newspaper form), it did feature notable illustrations by the Brazilian modernist Tarsila do Amaral. See Antônio de Alcântara Machado’s *Revista De Antropofagia: Reedição Da Revista Literaria Publicada Em São Paulo* (1975) for an accurate reproduction of the text, including the scale and format of the original magazine.

\(^91\) See the Fundação Cultural do Estado da Bahia’s color facsimile edition of *Arco e Flexa* (1978).
lengthy overviews of the history of the printing press in Brazil, neither Sodré nor Mindlin discuss the production of Brazilian Modernist publications, presumably because the former is more interested in presses that could mass manufacture texts and the latter because his concern is mostly with illustrated texts in Brazil. *Klaxon* and *Verde* were clearly printed using artisanal presses; in order to achieve the desired format and typographic appearance, manual techniques must have been used that either involved stencils or hand-cut lettering that was then placed in such a way as to crisscross the page. Woodblocks, such as the sort used in the production of some *folhetins*, are also a possibility. The title of *Verde* (specifically the rivulets running through each letter) looks to be hand-drawn with the intention of appearing to be a mechanized typeface. With the exception of the *Revista de Antropofagia*, the movement’s heterogeneous printed publications certainly did not make use of the expensive presses employed in major newspapers; the various manifestos and little magazines were instead printed in small batches and contain visual signatures of handcraftsmanship. Jorge Schwartz has made a notable effort to reproduce many of these early texts but these reproductions, despite being visually accurate copies, necessarily lose a sense of the goals and intentions behind the original production processes. There is, fortunately, a clearer understanding of printing technologies in the work of Vicente do Rego Monteiro, but only because his work was published in France by distinguished French publishing houses whose techniques have been well researched and analyzed. As will be discussed in Chapter IV, the famed editorial house Tolmer that published Monteiro’s illustrations for *Legendes, croyances et talismans des Indiens de l’Amazone* (1923), frequently made use of the
pochoir (stencil) technique that involved both elements of handcraftsmanship and mass production technologies.

B. THE “JUNGLE AESTHETIC” IN BRAZILIAN MODERNIST AND COMMERCIAL DESIGN

In his article on the “jungle aesthetic” in Brazilian Modernist design, Paulo Herkenhoff notes that: “One of the defining traits of Brazilian modernism was the creation of the graphic design profession” (251). Many Brazilian modernists participated directly and/or indirectly in the graphic presentation of their published works. Oswald de Andrade, for example, was an active contributor to the production of various books, even when he did not do the illustrations himself. Other artists belonging to the movement acted occasionally as illustrators: Victor Brecheret for the cover of A Estrela de Absinto by Oswald de Andrade and Anita Malfatti for the cover of Menotti del Picchia’s O Homem e a Morte (The Man and Death) (1922). Both covers interestingly feature a sphinx, although in different artistic styles. Vicente do Rego Monteiro and the prolific artist Correia Dias focused almost exclusively on Marajoara motifs in their illustrations.92

The themes of A Estrela de Absinto and Vicente do Rego’s illustrations for P. L. Duchartre’s Legendes, croyances et talismans des Indiens de l'Amazone (Legends, Beliefs, and Talismans of the Amazonian Indians) (1923) and Monteiro’s own book of illustrated poems Quelques visages de Paris (A Few Faces of Paris) (1925) will be more thoroughly explored in Chapter IV. The text, graphic design, and illustration of these works demonstrate the intertwined relationship between text and image particular to the

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92 Although published in 1931, Raul Bopp’s Cobra Norato (The Snake Norato) also deserves mention for its innovative cover and illustrations by Flávio de Carvalho (see figure 4).
vanguardist printed expression that took on Art Deco inflections in Brazil. They are also little discussed works in Brazilian criticism, the former because it is an early work of Oswald de Andrade who is better known for his later writings toward the end of the decade; the latter because his work was published in France and written in French.

Outside of the 1922 São Paulo Modern Art Week, cartoonists and illustrators for popular magazines also integrated the Art Deco style into their more commercially-orientated works. J. Carlos, for example, drew many caricatures, cartoons, and illustrations in the style for O Malho (The Mallet), Para Todos (For Everyone), and A Careta (The Grimace) during the latter end of the 1920s and throughout the 1930s (Lustosa; Britto). His drawing “Pororoca” for Corrêa Pinto’s Fascinação (Fascination) (1943) is an example of more broadly Amazonian (or jungle) deco that not contain any particular Marajoara features. Emiliano Di Cavalcanti also drew many internationalist deco illustrations, most famously Fantoches da meia noite (Marionettes of Midnight) in 1921. Correia Dias was one of Brazil’s most prolific illustrators and his drawings nearly always favored Marajoara Déco motifs (Herkenhoff; Hastings 251).

93 The spelling of “A Estrella de Absyntho” in the 1922 issue of Klaxon differs from how it appears in later 1927 novel: A Estrela de Absinto.
94 Critical emphasis of Brazilian Modernismo tends to focus on the “intense production of poetic works as well as polemic essays, and the positioning of amarelismo, Anta, Pau-Brasil, Anthropofagia” as opposed to the early prose fiction of the movement. See Mary L. Daniel’s “Brazilian fiction from 1900 to 1945” in The Cambridge History of Latin American Literature, Vol. 3: Brazilian Literature Bibliographies (1996). Critical emphasis of Oswald de Andrade’s prose fiction tends to focus entirely on his novels Memórias sentimentais de João Miramar (Sentimental Memories of João Miramar) (1924) and Serafim Ponte Grande (Seraphim Grosse Pointe) (1933).
3.6. Conclusion

The birth of the Brazilian vanguard in the second decade of the twentieth century can be better understood if it is contextualized within the country’s history of both printing and access to printed materials. The nearly four-centuries delay between the invention of the Gutenberg press in Germany in the year 1450 and the technology’s arrival in Rio de Janeiro in 1808 was not without serious repercussions: literacy rates remained shockingly low and education for an elite few was outsourced primarily to the University of Coimbra in Portugal. The arrival of the Royal Court from Portugal allowed for a minimal increase of printed publications, but for an Empire economically dependent on the institution of slavery, the diffusion of information remained necessarily limited. The near simultaneous abolition of slavery and the republican transition to power at the end of the nineteenth century increased this flow of information, and modern printing presses appeared in many major cities. Newspapers and other printed ephemera flourished throughout the country, although book production remained of poor quality – and of limited quantities – for several more decades.

The appearance of *Klaxon* in 1922, the printed culmination of the São Paulo Modern Art Week, presented a radical, and incredibly rapid, break with the past not only for its vanguardist content, but also because of its innovative graphic design. Previous researchers on *Klaxon* and other Brazilian Modernist texts have focused almost entirely on the content and have limited their focus to the finalized printed surface of the graphic design. Researchers have looked past the question of the production of vanguardist texts – a question that is crucial in the understanding both *how* these works were printed and *why* such time-consuming, artisanal techniques were utilized in a modern era. In their
printed publications Brazilian Modernists reset the grid of Gutenberg as both an act of subversion and as a means of fostering new systems of knowledge.
Chapter IV

Transatlantic Aesthetic Interplay:
The Illustrated Books of Oswald de Andrade and Vicente do Rego Monteiro

... Alexander von Humboldt reinvented South America first and foremost as nature. Not the accessible, collectible, recognizable, categorizable nature of the Linnaeans, however, but a dramatic spectacle capable of overwhelming human knowledge and understanding.

Mary Louise Pratt, Imperial Eyes (1992)

4.1. Introduction

Art Deco in Brazilian Modernist illustration is featured prominently in the books of Oswald de Andrade and Vicente do Rego Monteiro. A discussion of the early illustrated works of both authors sheds a unique light on the multifarious nature of the Brazilian Modernist movement during the second decade of the twentieth century. The two modernistas, for example, worked and published on different sides of the Atlantic: Oswald in São Paulo and Rego Monteiro in Paris. As discussed in Chapter I, the origins of Art Deco trace back to the first decade of the twentieth century and only came to full international prominence with Exposition internationale des arts décoratifs et industriels modernes held in Paris in 1925. The style, and its various manifestations, appeared worldwide during the same decade, albeit with nationalist inflections. Oswald and Rego Monteiro both studied in Europe during this time period and the two were directly exposed to the new style; and Victor Brecheret, who illustrated the cover of Oswald de Andrade’s novel discussed in this chapter, likewise studied in Europe and quickly

95 In order to avoid confusion in this chapter between discussions of Oswald de Andrade and Mário de Andrade (no relation), I will refer to the former simply as “Oswald” and the latter as “Mário.”
integrated the style into his works. Brecheret and Rego Monteiro both utilized the style in
their illustrated works, in addition to various other artistic mediums.

A. Oswaldo de Andrade’s Trilogy

*A Estrela de Absinto* (*The Absinthe Star*) (1922; 1927) features an Art Deco cover
illustrated by fellow *modernista* Victor Brecheret.96 The novel forms part of Oswald’s
highly autobiographical *A Trilogia do Exílio* (*The Trilogy of Exile*), a title later changed
to *Os Condenados* (*The Condemned*), that Oswald wrote in the years immediately
preceding the 1922 publication of the first novel of the trilogy, *Alma*, as well as a
fragment of the second novel, then entitled “A Estrela de Absyntho”; the latter was
ultimately published in its final form in 1927. The first section of this chapter will closely
examine the visual and textual interplay between the illustrated cover and the thematic
content of the novel, as well as *A Estrela de Absinto’s* most significant literary
antecedents, *Alma* and *O Perfeito Cozinheiro das Almas deste Mundo* (*The Perfect Cook

96 As mentioned in Chapter III, Oswald de Andrade published an early fragment of “A
Estrella de Absyntho” in the sixth issue of *Klaxon* in 1922. The fragment served as an
official announcement of the upcoming novel, *Os Condenados* (a title later changed to
*Alma*), during the same year (Brito 8). Mário da Silva Brito further clarifies that Oswald
himself explained in 1941 that he wrote the entirety of the trilogy between the years 1917
and 1921 (8). It is clear, however, that minor editing did take place upon the final
publication of *A Estrela de Absinto* in 1927 as evidenced by the differences between the
1922 *Klaxon* fragment and the 1927 novel.
The spelling of “A Estrella de Absyntho” in the issue of *Klaxon*, furthermore, differs
from how it appears in the publication of the novel: *A estrela de absinto*. I will use the
distinctive spelling between the two in this chapter in order to differentiate the works’
respective textual differences.
The third novel of the trilogy, *A Escada de Jacó* (*Jacob’s Ladder*), later shortened to *A
Escada* (*The Ladder*), and ultimately renamed *A Escada Vermelha* (*The Red Ladder*)
(1934) will be mentioned briefly in this chapter but will not be fully explored due to its
non-analogous themes and writing style.
For a more detailed chronology of the preparation, various manifestations, publication
dates, and altered titles of the trilogy see Mário da Silva Brito’s “O Aluno de Romance
Oswald de Andrade” in *Os Condenados* (2000).
of this World’s Souls), the latter being an amalgam of handwritten journal entries, drawings, and other ephemera by Oswald and the frequenters of his São Paulo garçonnière during the year 1919.\footnote{Garçonnière: a bachelor pad. In Oswald de Andrade’s case, also his artistic studio.}

\emph{A Trilogia do Exílio} and \emph{O Perfeito Cozinheiro} are among the earliest works of Oswald de Andrade’s lengthy and prolific writing career and are oftentimes overlooked by critics who consider the former to be more of an “obra precursora” (“precursor work”) to Oswald’s more groundbreaking publications during the same time period (Milliet 35). These critics take greater interest in his books of actual “influence” that are more “aggressively irreverent”, namely the novels \emph{Memórias Sentimentais de João Miramar} (\emph{Sentimental Memories of João Miramar}) (1924) and \emph{Serafim Ponte Grande} (\emph{Seraphim Grosse Pointe}) (1933) (Daniel 37).\footnote{Mary L. Daniel describes \emph{Memórias Sentimentais de João Miramar} and \emph{Serafim Ponte Grande} as “telegraphic, episodic works consisting of montages of travel narratives, sensorial and philosophical impressions, fragments of verse and letters, and parodic prefaces arranged in what might be called ‘cubist’ style; both ‘antinovels’ offer a carnivalization of a series of traditional literary forms in juxtaposition, including the initial copyright of the text.” See Daniel’s “Brazilian fiction from 1900 to 1945” in \textit{The Cambridge History of Latin American Literature} (1996) (168-169). My spelling of \emph{Seraphim Grosse Pointe} is from the 1979 English translation of the novel.} And as will be explored later in this chapter, Oswald de Andrade is perhaps most famously known for his contributions to the Brazilian Modernist movement during the latter end of the 1920s, specifically the \emph{Revista de Antropofagia} (\emph{Cannibalist Magazine}) and the “Manifesto Antropófago” (“Cannibalist Manifesto”) that appeared in the magazine’s first issue in 1928.

Mário da Silva Brito points out that Oswald de Andrade’s writing production during the twelve-year period between the years 1922 and 1934 contains two prominent
literary strains that are separate, but that also occasionally overlap in fiercely contradictory manners:

Thus, in the ensemble of Oswaldian work, appearing in these twelve years, there are two directions, two trends, an inventive duplication: one which characterizes the stylistic and aesthetic features of the *Trilogy of Exile*, and another which, in prose and poetry, marks his vision of the extreme avant-garde and that gives him his place within the context of the national letters, and likewise within Modernismo. They are guidelines that coexist in space and time, but that fight amongst themselves, oppose one another, contradict themselves in various points and aspects. But, drawn out from the same pain, from the same restless and creative intelligence, together they maintain, in the background, an underground kinship, so to speak, a common area of criticism and analysis of life and the world. (9)

*A Trilógia do Exílio*, Brito argues, is not an aberration within Oswald’s writing career – it is simply a divergent literary path that occasionally intersects with his other writings during the same time period, conceptually and thematically. The interpolations between *A Trilógia do Exílio* and his other more experimental novels reveal a writer still testing and struggling with certain overarching themes that manifest themselves in manners that complicate attempts to pigeonhole Oswald’s early literary career.

In his recently published intertextual analysis of the three novels comprising Oswald’s trilogy, Sebastião Marques Cardoso argues in *Oswald De Andrade: Anti-Heroísmo, Literatura e Crítica* (*Oswald de Andrade: Anti-Heroism, Literature, and Criticism*) (2010) that the author’s early writing style has three fundamental
characteristics that merit a reevaluation of the works within Brazilian Modernism’s so-called “literary canon”: “a) o uso da técnica cinematográfica, b) a frase curta, condensada e poética como estilo e c) a verossimilhança dos personagens. Este último tópico foi, ao longo da crítica, o quesito mais polêmico e inquietante” (“a) the use of cinematographic technique, b) a short, condensed, and poetic sentence as a style, and c) the verisimilitude of the characters. This last topic, throughout all of the criticism, was the most problematic and disturbing question”) (17). Cardoso’s third point, in other words, is that the complex autobiographical parallels throughout the trilogy proved to be highly problematic for many critics, especially given the “anti-hero” status of the protagonists. This proves to be especially unsettling in A Estrela de Absinto, I argue, because the “anti-hero” protagonist, a violent misogynist, is clearly based on the real-life Victor Brecheret as well as elements of Oswald’s own life. Cardoso points out that many of Oswald’s contemporaries praised the trilogy but that several thought it was excessively melodramatic and the characters poorly developed (19-20). And decades of Brazilian criticism, he continues, have relegated the “kitschy” trilogy to literary obscurity that continues to this day (24).

This chapter, however, will not entirely explore the intertextual relationship between Oswald’s two so-called literary currents of the 1920s in his novels or within the trilogy itself; rather, A Trilogia do Exílio, specifically A Estrela de Absinto, will be more fully contextualized with regards to its Art Deco cover, as well as with Oswald’s contributions to O Perfeito Cozinheiro das Almas deste Mundo and his involvement in the Revista de Antropofagia and the “Manifesto Antropófago.” A Estrela de Absinto merits closer examination not only for the conspicuous lack of broader critical discussion of Oswald’s earliest prose fiction, but more importantly because of the fascinating
aesthetic interplay that takes place on multiple visual and textual planes within and throughout the novel. Victor Brecheret, most famously known for his Art Deco sculptures in the Brazilian Modernist movement, illustrated the cover for *A Estrela de Absinto* and is also the fictionalized protagonist of the novel. The “chance encounter” between Brecheret and the other *modernistas* described in Chapter III that took place in the former’s São Paulo *atelie*r is a prominent scene in the novel; the scene, furthermore, makes specific mention of a sphinx-like sculpture that illustrates the novel’s cover. Illustration, the plastic arts, and experimental prose converge visually and textually in *A Estrela de Absinto*, thereby making it an early Brazilian Modernist work that defies easy categorization. And although it is an early work of Oswald de Andrade, it is a Brazilian vanguardist text that challenges traditional textual and visual boundaries within the novel. Oswald’s novel does not contain illustrations within its pages but the cover alone is sufficient to warrant its classification as an illustrated work. Oswald, furthermore, was directly involved in the graphic design production of many of his printed works and the fact that he writes of a sculpture that visually resembles the one that illustrates the cover of *A Estrela de Absinto* demonstrates his ongoing involvement in all aspects of the production of his texts.

**B. VICENTE DO REGO MONTEIRO**

The work of Vicente do Rego Monteiro, also a Brazilian *modernista*, warrants closer examination for a similar textual and visual interplay that takes place in his illustrations for P. L. Duchartre’s *Legendes, croyances et talismans des Indiens de l’Amazone* (*Legends, Beliefs, and Talismans of the Amazonian Indians*) (1923) and his own book of illustrated poems *Quelques visages de Paris* (*A Few Faces of Paris*) (1925).
Both published in France and written in French (although by different publishing houses), the two works complement each other in that the latter provides a humorous visual and poetic subversion of many of Duchartre’s writings on the Amazonian natives. In *Quelques visages*, for example, Rego Monteiro subverts traditional Eurocentric primitivism with visual signifiers of Paris that the reader is then instructed to translate into their indigenous meanings. The most recognizable symbols of Paris thus become transformed by means of total resignification.

Both works are also illustrated in the Art Deco style – although the style appears more prominently in *Quelques visages De Paris*. The two works are *livres d’art*, luxury books published in limited editions and typically available only to subscribers of French bibliophile societies. The production methods of these works are also vastly different from those of *A Estrela de Absinto* and necessitate further examination for the remarkable handcraftsmanship involved in both the illustrations and the highly time-consuming production techniques that were in vogue in French Art Deco at the time.

The Marajoara manifestation of the Art Deco style in Brazil facilitated the Brazilian Modernist search for a new modern national aesthetic – a search that can be considered as a Brazilian Modernist primitivist undertaking. As discussed in Chapter I, James Clifford refers to the convergence of modernism and primitivism as “modernist primitivism”; this convergence takes place, Clifford argues, when non-European art forms are transformed to function as a catalyst in renewing European art. In the case of Brazilian Modernist primitivism, indigenous art, specifically that of the ancient Marajoara culture, served as a catalyst for many of the modernistas in their respective

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99 The Oxford English Dictionary defines “artbook” as a book relating to art; *spec.* a book containing printed “reproductions of works of art” ([www.oed.com](http://www.oed.com)).
searches for a new, yet authentic national aesthetic. And as discussed in Chapters II and III, the modernistas greatly favored the Marajoara Déco style: Rego Monteiro’s illustrations, for example, exemplify the style in illustrated books during the 1920s.

In the case of French and Brazilian graphic design during the 1920s, Art Deco was in many ways a transatlantic style that was highly dynamic, thereby lending it characteristics that were often contradictory in their appearances and cultural purposes. Art Deco in Brazil, specifically the Marajoara manifestation of the style, heightened these contradictions by nationalizing an ancient indigenous culture by means of a modern decorative arts style. This contradiction arises because there is a glaring lack of African/Afro-Brazilian-themed art which comprised such a significant part of Art Deco in Europe. Why did African/Afro-Brazilian motifs never enter into the vast repertoire of Art Deco decorative vocabulary in Brazil? And why did Brazilian Modernist primitivism transform the ceramics specifically of the Island of Marajó into exotic source material for a nationalist agenda? They clearly favored an indigenous tradition over the African legacy in Brazil. This erasure of the Afro-Brazilian tradition is puzzling, especially since the modernistas claimed to exalt the particularly Brazilian nature of their art.100

It is also important to take into account that when discussing the aesthetic interplay that takes places between text and image in Brazilian Modernist illustrated books that the source materials of the Art Deco style explored in Chapter I are a significant part of the literary themes of both A Estrela de Absinto and Rego Monteiro’s respective works. As previously mentioned, while not a literary genre itself, the principal

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100 The African legacy was not entirely absent in Brazilian Modernism. Tarsila do Amaral, for example, did address the Afro-Brazilian tradition in her famous painting “A Negra” (“The Black Woman”) (1923). And as will be discussed later in this chapter, Vicente do Rego Monteiro did paint several works depicting Afro-Brazilians.
source materials of the Art Deco style included elements of the European avant-garde, in addition to primitive/ancient source material and erotic source material that many times stemmed from the Art Nouveau style. Brazilian Modernist primitivism heavily utilized Marajoara motifs; other members of the Brazilian Modernist movement discussed in Chapter II drew more so upon the colonial *barroco mineiro* motifs found in the state of Minas Gerais. The “primitivist” label does not apply to the resulting Neocolonial Style – the “rewriting”, so to speak, of the Brazilian colonial era – but it is still important to mention because of the intriguing parallels between the appropriation of both colonial source material and ancient source material for modern decorative, architectural, and graphic design styles in Brazil during the second decade of the twentieth century.\(^{101}\)

*Marajoara Déco*, on the other hand, is absolutely an appropriation of non-Western forms because the style was a localized aesthetic manifestation by Brazilian artists, writers, and architects who sought to create a modern Brazilian identity based on primitive utilitarian objects and art. And as will be discussed later in this chapter, Vicente do Rego Monteiro, for example, was not interested in simply copying or reproducing Marajoara forms; the Art Deco style functioned as a visual means of conveying modern “brasilidade” based on newly (re)discovered “native” sources. Other modernistas, most prominently among them Mário de Andrade, closely studied the Amazonian peoples and legends on broader terms, the culmination of which would be his highly acclaimed rhapsody-novel *Macunaima* (1928). Many of the Amazonian legends present in

\(^{101}\) The fervor for *barroco mineiro* and the resulting Neocolonial Style and can not be described as “primitivist” because although it consisted of an appropriation of Brazilian colonial forms and motifs, this appropriation is not of non-Western forms in architecture and design. By contrast, Brazilian architects, among them modernistas, both developed and embraced the Neocolonial Style as a uniquely Brazilian, modern style due to their disenchantment with past Western architectural conventions.
Macunaima, as well as Raul Bopp’s Cobra Norato (The Snake Norato) (1931) demonstrate how the Amazon, including the Island of Marajó, became a source of aesthetic and literary inspiration for nearly all of the modernistas.102

4.2. Modernity’s Bitter Waters

The third angel blew his trumpet, and a great star fell from heaven, blazing like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water. The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters became wormwood, and many died from the water, because it was made bitter.

The Book of Revelation 8:10-11

In the climax of Oswald de Andrade’s novel A Estrela de Absinto (1927), the protagonist Jorge d’Alvelos destroys in a sudden fit of rage and despair many of his formerly beloved sculptures in his private atelier. He keeps, yet decidedly transforms, only one, a sculpture inspired by the lover whose act of betrayal has now forever changed his artistic trajectory. D’Alvelos outlines his new aesthetic values in quite chilling terms:

Duma espiritualização trágica de linhas, tirara efeitos alucinantes, erguera os braços para cima em paralelas infinitas, immobilizara um rictus poderoso na maxila, arrendondara o crânio sob os cabelos em toalha – e a figura ficara numa exclamativa postura de necrópole. Dela se derramava um isolamento penetrante e gelado. (33)

From a tragic spiritualization of lines, he extracted hallucinatory effects, stretched upwards the arms into infinite parallels, immobilized a powerful gaping grimace in the jaw, curved the head under hair held up by a turban – and the figure stood immobile, in a frozen exclamatory, tomblike stance. From her flowed a penetrating and frozen isolation. (33)

102 Candace Slater, in Entangled Edens, notes that in addition to Macunaima and Cobra Norato, the Amazon jungle served as inspiration for the equally significant Bachianas Brasileiras composed by fellow modernista and 1922 Modern Art Week participant Heitor Villa-Lobos which she considers “the single best-known classical work by a Brazilian composer” (201).
The sculptor, however, never achieves this desired disassociating effect upon his observers; instead, in a surprising plot twist, his “renewed” sculpture, discredited for its “futurist” qualities by one critic, is simultaneously hailed by fellow artists for these very same qualities as marking the beginning of Brazilian Modernism (66).

The parallels between the characters and events in *A Estrela de Absinto* and elements of Oswald de Andrade’s autobiography are too numerous to list here; as evidenced by the above scene in d’Alvelos’s *atelier*, Oswald de Andrade did place tremendous importance on his real-life encounter with the sculptor Victor Brecheret (who serves as the primary inspiration for Jorge d’Alvelos). As described in Chapter III, the chance encounter in Brecheret’s *atelier* had an astounding effect on Oswald—an event that inspired him to write a novel based on the encounter that included fictionalized scenes of the real-life events leading up to the acclaimed São Paulo Modern Art Week.

Victor Brecheret also illustrated the cover of the first edition of *A Estrela de Absinto* and the Art Deco sculpture depicted in the illustration is described on the first page of the novel: (“uma pequena esfinge de doze mamas”) (“A small sphinx with twelve teats”) (13). Brecheret’s cover furthermore depicts a highly sexualized female sphinx, adorned with an ancient Assyrian headdress. The elongated female form, in addition to the streamlining of the headdress, are hallmark features of the Art Deco style in illustration. It is unclear, however, as to what extent Brecheret and Oswald collaborated on the cover; in other words, did Brecheret read the novel and then illustrate the cover or did Oswald see the illustration and then include a passage describing the sculpture at the
outset of the novel? These uncertainties are all the more tantalizing when one takes into account that the cover is that of a sphinx, a creature in Greek mythology associated with both riddles and the ultimate death of those who could not answer them.

In addition to D’Alvelos, the character of Alma plays a tremendous role in both A Estrela de Absinto, as well as the first novel of the trilogy, Alma. Based on Oswald’s real-life affair with the young Maria de Lourdes Castro de Andrade, affectionately known by the real-world modernistas as Deisi, the character retains an almost obsessive focus by both the author and his fictionalized counterpart d’Alvelos throughout the first two novels of the trilogy. Although Brecheret remains the primary inspiration for the character of d’Alvelos, there are many autobiographical elements of Oswald himself spun into the same character, particularly in scenes involving Alma. And as will be discussed later in this chapter, Deisi was a noteworthy contributor to O Perfeito Cozinheiro das Almas deste Mundo and played no small role in the earliest stages of the Brazilian Modernist movement.

A. CHANCE DISCOVERIES AND PRIMITIVIST ENCOUNTERS

103 Typically, the artist illustrates a scene or motif conceived by the author of the book; he or she lifts, so to speak, the image from a page of the book. One notable exception to this “rule” is the acclaimed novel The Great Gatsby by F. Scott Fitzgerald (1925). In this instance, the artist’s image preceded the finished manuscript and Fitzgerald actually maintained that he had “written it into” his book. The Art Deco cover, by Francis Cugat, has become one of the most celebrated book jackets in twentieth-century American literature. See The Great Gatsby (eds. F. Scott Fitzgerald and Matthew J. Bruccoli, 1991) (209-211).

104 The Oxford English Dictionary defines “sphinx” as “A hybrid monster, usually described as having the head of a woman and the (winged) body of a lion, which infested Thebes until the riddle it propounded was solved by Œdipus; also, any monster of a similar form and character” (www.oed.com). In A Dictionary of Symbols, J. E. Cirlot describes the symbolism of the sphinx as “being the supreme embodiment of the enigma, the sphinx keeps watch over an ultimate meaning which must remain for ever beyond the understanding of man” (304).
The chance encounter that takes place between Victor Brecheret and Oswald de Andrade (as well as several other modernistas) takes on many allegorical features as described in its fictionalized form in *A Estrela de Absinto*. Primarily, the scene described above of d’Alvelos dramatic change of aesthetic standards that involves him destroying his previous art in order to make way for a new style portrays the artist as the “discoverer” of “newness.” As Vicky Unruh notes, the vanguardist novels of Latin America, like the movements’ manifestos and little magazines, treat artists as the frontrunners of this newness, thereby creating new spaces for continuously renewable artistic encounters with an imagined past (82-83). The creation of these new spaces, as explained by modernist primitivism, demonstrates the capacity for the birth of new languages of expression.

In *A Estrela de Absinto*, this “discovery” is two-fold; the artist finds a new, yet more national aesthetic; and second, the artist’s colleagues and a critic “discover” his new work. This scene, as Unruh would argue, “is emblematic of the vanguards’ obsessive self-reflexive portrayal of artists and artistic activity” (72). All immediately recognize and inform the artist, d’Alvelos, of his modernity but not all necessarily welcome his particular type of break with the past. The resulting aftermath contains elements of physical violence as well; Oswald de Andrade’s novel contains extraordinarily violent scenes in which d’Alvelos desperately attempts suicide after his critical rejection. Yet in a literal “rebirth”, the artist, who had already broken with his earlier forms of artistic expression, decides that in order to maintain his newness he must depart São Paulo for the interior of the country:

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105 The rejection of d’Alvelos’s work closely resembles that of Anita Malfatti’s paintings (as described in Chapter III). In both cases, a critic denounces their works for being too “futurist.” D’Alvelos defends himself by explaining that he was only attempting to be modern, *with his own personal touch*. 

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131
Ia partir para Nova Olimpia. Esse nome cantava-lhe aos ouvidos como uma promessa. Ia ensaiar de novo o gume dos duros antepassados no cerne das florestas brasileiras, lá, onde eles haviam aberto a primeira passagem ao homem da Europa e, nas noites sertanejas, cerrados os olhos cheios e alma leve à benção calada do Cruzeiro. Era a fuga para outra calma do céu. Ele renovara a funesta experiência citadina dos ancestrais e resumia-se naquele ciclo catastrófico a prometida messe de vitórias nas lutas babilônicas! Mas transportava-se a tempo ainda para a alegria integral dos descampados puros e das cidades paradas no surto virgem das eras inocentes. (110)

He was going to leave for New Olympia. That name sang like a promise to his ears. He was going to reenact the cutting edge of the tough ancestors in the thick of the Brazilian forests; there, where they had opened the first passage to European man and, in the sertaneja nights, eyes wide shut and the weightless soul to the silent blessing of the Cross. It was an escape to another calmness of the heavens. He had renewed the deadly ancestral urban experience and resumed the catastrophic cycle of promised victories in Babylonian battles! But he was transporting himself in time to the integral happiness of the uninhabited, pure fields and the frozen cities in the virgin enthusiasm of innocent eras. (110)

In this allegorical description of the modernista idea of the discovery of an original past, d’Alvelos must embark on a journey to the mysterious jungle in order to renew his artistic encounters with an ancestral world. Furthermore, this route of discovery also crosses paths, multilaterally, with those of the Europeans. The journey must necessarily follow in the footsteps of the Europeans, who historically first forged a path into the Brazilian interior. This journey parallels that of the birth of the European avant-garde movements that prompted the Brazilian Modernist movement’s attempts to renew their country’s perceived past at the beginning of the twentieth century. In other words, the artist may be following the lead of the European vanguards that take inspiration from primitivist source material, but his personal encounter is still new and cutting edge.

In Transatlantic Topographies (2004), Ileana Rodríguez observes that modern tales of the Amazon strongly echo those from the colonial era in that writers still struggle with jungle as “not yet fully determined and historicized sign” (200). The narrator of A
Estrela de Absinto, for example, evokes the bandeirantes of colonial times when describing the path Jorge d’Alvelos must take in order to constantly maintain his attempts at renewal. In other words, he must go backwards, temporally and figuratively, in order to be one step ahead of himself artistically and perhaps spiritually. Rodríguez explains that:

colonial paradigms are recycled and early exploration narratives are mirrored in the speculum of the modern. Modern and colonial narratives plot nature, in this case the Amazon jungle, either as a utopia – a cultural terrain to ponder and enjoy: the place of wilderness in frontier narratives of adventurers, pilgrims, ambitious military men – or as a setting to exploit, later to become a topos for development. And just as space permits Father Gaspar de Carvajal to project himself in time, in his case a future time, so it serves the contemporary writers, whose projections in time, are, in reverse, toward the past. (226)¹⁰⁶

The jungle is not truly an actual geographic site in A Estrela de Absinto, but rather a symbol of the artistic “journey” that d’Alvelos must undertake in order to break with past aesthetic styles. Nova Olimpia translates to New Olympus, a reference to Mount Olympus, the home of the Greek Gods according to ancient Greek mythology. It is an unattainable location for mere mortals – a road to nowhere, so to speak – and its “new” location within the heart of the Amazon serves as a powerful metaphor of the impossibility of finding his own artistic past. But it is precisely that impossibility that paradoxically fuels d’Alvelos: an artist cannot constantly maintain a “newness” of style – all the artist can do is keep on trying, thus maintaining his artistic originality in his engagement with the imagined origins of Brazil.

As Unruh explains, the Latin American modernist primitivism discourse is both “very old” and “very new”; in Macunaima, for example, “a primeval world of

¹⁰⁶ Father Gaspar de Carvajal was a Spanish missionary who famously joined the expedition of Gonzalo Pizarro to the Amazons in the early sixteenth-century. See José Toribio Medina’s The Discovery of the Amazon: According to the Account of Friar Gaspar de Carvajal and Other Documents (2010).
unprocessed experience where inaugural events, like Macunaima’s birth in the virgin forest, had happened once and could therefore, paradoxically, happen again and again, always for the very first time” (143). And as Rosalind E. Krauss notes, the vanguardist encounters with these origins are not so much a formal invention but instead a reference to sources of life (157). The self can constantly be reborn in the present, thus imagining a precedent, without having to resort to an actual tradition-laden history.

It is important to note the autobiographical parallels between d’Alvelos’s journey to Nova Olimpia (in the state of Mato Grosso) and that of the Brazilian Modernists to Minas Gerais. As discussed in Chapter II, many of the modernistas embarked on a journey by train to the interior of Brazil in order to (re)discover the colonial mining towns of the state. The so-called caravana modernista (modernist caravan) became a foundational moment in the formation of Brazilian Modernism and some of Oswald’s writings, in particular, were directly inspired by the journey and the (re)discovery of a “colorful, exotic, almost primordial Brazil” (Williams 45). Many of the modernistas also went to various parts of the Amazon; Mário de Andrade; for example traveled twice to the jungle, motivated to seek source materials for his modernist novel, Macunaima (see O Turista Aprendiz).

B. THE DOOMED HARLOT: PRIMITIVIST EROTICISM IN A ESTRELA DE ABSINTO

The violence that erupts with d’Alvelos’s literal and figurative break with his past aesthetic styles also mirrors the sexualized brutality he levels at his lover, Alma, in his attempts to dominate her. Also the title character of the first novel of Oswald’s trilogy,
Alma is a prostitute and leads a life marred by constant tragedy. And similar to the male protagonist of the first novel, D’Alvelos futilely attempts to save Alma, also his cousin, from further ruin. It is precisely his inability to dominate Alma that drives him to unintentionally destroy (therefore “renew”) his artistic production in such a way that others label as futurist. She is the sphinx that graces Oswald’s cover: the primitive Other whose secret all try to unlock but ultimately fail:

Jorge d’Alvelos glanced over at the sphinx pressed against Alma’s side, to the statues tired of hearing them at night’s fall. The statues increasingly doubled their silent gestures, opened even more their inert mouths. And victorious and rough torsos planted in the dawning shadow ironic nods. (164-5)

And elsewhere:

Jorge d’Alvelos searched for the plaster sphinx at the head of the divan, lifting, from the ground at the base of the pedestal, an old roman lamp. He turned it on. The face of the sphinx grew golden, enigmatic, terrible. And the light raised shadows from behind the rising statues in the atelier. (247)

The drive for sexual power permeates A Estrela de Absinto and d’Alvelos, enraged by his lover’s promiscuous behavior, beats, stalks, and then ultimately rapes Alma. Even though she is born to a financially well-off family, she is sold by her uncle to a pimp as a teenager, a fact that the narrator deplores as the apathy of society’s voyeuristic, but ultimately disengaged eye. Her fall is inevitable, as well as that of every man, and significantly artists, to obsessively “fall” for her. As Mariana Torgovnick notes,
modernist aesthetics frequently associates the primitive with debased sexuality, particularly depictions of prostitutes and brothel life: Édouard Manet’s *Olympia* (1863) and Pablo Picasso’s *Les demoiselles d’Avignon* (1907) link “nonwhites, women, and sex for sale” with “violence, misogyny, and voyeurism” (99).107

Unlike the sphinx of ancient Egypt that was the head of a man and the body of a lion, Brecheret’s illustration is perhaps an allusion to the Roman legend of Romulus and Remus, also a story of origins, sexual violence, and renewal.108 Moreover, Scott Trafton argues, ancient Egyptian imagery was a focal-point for modern-day sexual politics. Cleopatra, for example, becomes increasingly de-robed in varying artistic renderings throughout the centuries, reflecting the same primitivist sexuality found in Picasso’s whores (172). Picasso’s use of African masks, like the depiction of a female sphinx, was meant to strike unease or even fear into Western viewers at the beginning of the twentieth century (104). As discussed in Chapter I, Art Nouveau, the principle *fin-de-siècle* design style, favored oftentimes violent depictions of odalisques, sirens, goddesses, and priestesses, linking the female form to modern consumerism.

The desire to unlock the secret of Alma’s being, or to take possession of her, seals Jorge d’Alvelos’s doom. The overtly religious themes of damnation and salvation permeate the couple’s tumultuous relationship and it is Alma’s wantonness that drives their lives to spiral out of control. The title of the novel, *The Absinthe Star*, refers to one

107 Brito notes that the novel’s fixation on prostitution was partially responsible for its mixed critical reception at the time of its publication. Critics, he argues, regarded the book as containing passages of immorality that reflected poorly upon São Paulo (28).

108 According to the Roman legend, a god raped the daughter of King Numitor, Rhea Silvia, producing twin boys who were then ordered to be killed. Found and suckled by a she-wolf, the twins ultimately founded the city of Rome (Mills 203). Brecheret’s illustration of a multiple-teated sphinx alludes to the common artistic renditions of the she-wolf, most famously the sculpture “Capitoline Wolf.”
of the harbingers of the Biblical Apocalypse, the Star Wormwood, and is the taste of man’s seduction and demise; indeed, the Book of Proverbs warns, to seek comfort in the arms of an adulteress is to taste the bitterness of life, leading the weak and insolent to foolish acts of wickedness which will inevitably lead to death (Proverbs 5:1-6). And the harlot, the Book of Revelation concludes, is explicitly said to be a city and that city is Babylon, populated by “peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues”, and ultimately to be purged from the face of the earth by God at the arrival of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ (17:15). She is furthermore the mother of all harlots, the originator of idolatrous influences passed on to her daughters, and thereby the root of man’s inattentiveness to all things leading him astray from a path of righteousness (17:5).

4.3. Antecedents to A Estrela de Absinto

A. Alma (1922)

Jorge d’Alvelos is not the first man to fall into Alma’s seductive snare; he only arrives onto the final scene of the first installment of Oswald’s trilogy, named for the prostitute herself. Alma (1922) follows the early years of the title character, beginning with her fall from grace at the hands of the pimp Mauro Glade, to her lengthy love affair with João Carmo, a telegrapher by profession. Mauro is the “filho confuso de confusos dramas da América” (“confused son of the confused dramas of America”) (Obras Completas 7), also an object of hateful obsession by his barely distinguishable male

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109 A similar warning is also found in Ecclesiastes 7:26. In the modern era, absinthe is also irrevocably tied to the licentiousness of Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec’s Montmartre and was the token drink of the fin-de-siècle decadence captured by countless artists.

110 The original title of the novel was Os Condenados (The Condemned).
competitors. Mauro’s crime, the narrator denounces, is the crime of the city’s rich for failing to protect the young girl from his clutches:

Era uma luta estabelecida, clara, com surtidas e embates, recuos e rendições, entre o cáften branco e a covardia da cidade. Eles iam todos, os vadios da sociedade chique, os velhos vermelhos do São Paulo Clube, os arrivistas comerciais, levados no volúpia de possuir, num leito rendado de casa suspeita, a desvirginada do bairro distante, cuja inocência a senilidade trêmula e ingênua do velho avô garantia. Era um caso raro: uma menina de família brasileira, educada para as devotações burguesas dos lares obscuros, e que rolava num esbandalhamento de gritos e surpresas, pela rampa mirífica das prostituições sensacionais. (21)

It was an established struggle, fixed, with outbursts and clashes, retreats and capitulations, between the white pimp and the city’s cowardliness. They all went, the vagrants of high society, the ruddy old men from the São Paulo Club, the commercial opportunists, carried away by their lustfulness in a rented bed in a house of ill-repute, to possess the defiled virgin of a distant neighborhood, whose innocence the senility and naïveté of the old grandfather guaranteed. It was an odd case: a daughter of a Brazilian family, educated for bourgeois devotions of obscure hearths, and that spun shuttered by shouts and surprises, by the exalted slope of sensationalized prostitutions. (21)

The city and its infatuation with the now disgraced Alma become inseparable from her very existence. The two male protagonists in the first two installments of the trilogy, Carmo and d’Alvelos, are nearly interchangeable characters who each form their respective symbiotic relationships with Alma.

Carmo and d’Alvelos are desperate to rescue Alma from the misery they project upon her and are constantly both intrigued and disillusioned by her apathy to her situation. Alma’s unwillingness (or inability) to commit to a monogamous relationship with Carmo ultimately results in his successful attempt at suicide, thereby ending the first novel. The final straw for Carmo is coming upon Alma’s reunion with her cousin, the same Jorge d’Alvelos of A Estrela de Absinto, whom Carmo prematurely mistakes for her lover.
In *A Estrela de Absinto*, seemingly a more complex rewrite of *Alma*, the now romantic relationship between Alma and Jorge d’Alvelos provides the bulk of the dramatic tension throughout the novel. In a strange point of departure from the first novel, however, Mauro Glade beats Alma for the last time and she dramatically lingers on her deathbed, writhing in pain from pelvic inflammatory disease, attributed to an earlier botched abortion. She is attended by d’Alvelos and a chorus of physical and spiritual healers and dies after receiving Last Rites by a priest. As Antônio Cândido notes in *Brigada Ligeira* (1945) the epic battle between good and evil is central to both the first and second installments of the trilogy; in fact, both novels end with the pronouncement LAUS DEO, or “Praise be to God”, thus sealing the religiosity of the texts (17). Cândido likewise makes note of the remarkable similarities between the two novels, although noting that *A Estrela* is a notable progression in Oswald’s literary career (17).

Following Alma’s gruesome death, d’Alvelos has a vivid nightmare that is strikingly similar to the description of his “futurist” sculptor. The notable distinction between Alma’s death scene and d’Alvelos’s nightmare is the Christian imagery that permeates his visions, as well as the excessive brutality that is somewhat at odds with the comparatively tame remainder of the novel. The nightmare calls to mind the opening sequence of the novel in that Alma’s dead body, about to be literally crucified by two unnamed sculptors, is indistinguishable from early descriptions of the sphinx in d’Alvelos’s atelier. The artist’s workshop is a morgue, peopled with the silent witnesses
to his sins. Alma is the woman-object whose enigmatic existence only serves to entrap her willing victims.¹¹¹

As noted in Chapter I, much of Art Deco was informed by the eroticized female form in Art Nouveau. Erotic art, Ghislaine Wood argues, was almost exclusively and predominantly for male consumption (73). And the portrayal of female bodily degradation thrived in the *fin de siècle*, where the Marquis de Sade served as a model:

The Marquis de Sade’s model of elite male groups indulging in ‘evil’ practice was one which had a much broader significance for the way pornography was consumed. Sade took pornography to its logical extension, the degradation of the body, and the precedence from this came from orthodox Christianity. Images of subjugation and even crucifixion proliferated in the *fin de siècle*. Octave Mirbeau’s erotic novel *Jardin des Supplices* (1899) described torture, orgies, death-inducing ecstasies, and female crucifixion (73).

And Biblical stories, in particular, Wood continues, often produced “the most potent erotic images” (73). The debasing eroticism of Alma’s crucifixion in *A Estrela de Absinto* is heightened by her naked female body that the character Rodin hoists by her now “useless” chest to the wall. Alma’s degradation already complete by means of the manner of her death, D’Alvelos’s nightmare amounts to nothing more than voyeuristic sadism.

Oswald’s mixing of ancient and Christian imagery provides a powerful backdrop to d’Alvelos’s soon-to-be path of artistic renewal. The author never explicitly reveals that his real-life friend Victor Brecheret served as inspiration for the character of Jorge d’Alvelos but he does pointedly name actual artists who directly inspired Brecheret’s Art Deco style in an earlier version of the crucifixion scene. In the fragment “A Estrella de Absyntho”, published in the sixth issue of *Klaxon* in 1922, the two anonymous sculptors

¹¹¹ Sebastião Marques Cardoso argues that Brecheret’s sphinx is possibly an allusion to the pains of motherhood, with the red color of the sphinx alluding to blood, and the twelve teats to maternity (25).
are actually named Rodin and Ivan Mestrovic and are most definitely based on Auguste Rodin (1840-1917) and Ivan Meštrović (1833-1917) (see figs. 4.2 and 4.3). One crucial distinction between this early version of the scene that later appears in the novel lies with Rodin’s explanation to his apprentice that in order to have art, one must have martyrs. Oswald omits this explanation in the novel and instead states that “era preciso haver mártires” (“it was necessary to have martyrs”) (210) (see figs. 3 and 4). The omission is glaring because there is no longer a sacrifice required for the creation of art; in other words, there is no longer a justification for d’Alvelos’s actions in the novel. D’Alvelos attempts to be a martyr but, unlike his counterpart in Alma, the artist botches his own suicide attempt after being denounced for his “futurist” sculpture. It becomes increasingly clear that Alma has no choice in her fate: being the artist’s muse seals her path to martyrdom.

The earlier Klaxon fragment also ends by having Jorge d’Alvelos aimlessly staring around his atelier: “Jorge d’Alvellos sentou-se. Viu descer, descer, no escuro, num desequilibrio, sobre os hombros que tinha aconchegados um mundo apagado de formas. E ficou alli, numa concentração musculosa de caryatide” (Jorge d’Alvelos sat down. He saw descending, descending in the dark, a disorientated world darkened by forms weighing down the shoulders that had carried it. And it stayed there, in a concentrated musculature of a caryatid”). Oswald omits the last word, “cariatide”, in the Klaxon fragment but does indeed point to the sculpture of the now crucified Alma as reduced to a symbolic caryatid, that is, a female figure used to as a column to support an entablature in Classical architecture. She is the female Atlas, punished by the Gods for

112 The spelling of the protagonist’s name, Jorge d’Alvellos, is slightly different in the Klaxon fragment.
her wantonness who must carry the burden of the world upon her shoulders for all eternity.

By contemporary standards, it is exceedingly difficult to interpret the decadence that permeates Oswald’s first two novels of the trilogy. At first glance, the excessive violence and blatant misogyny seem parodic, especially given the blatant autobiographical parallels present throughout the works. It is baffling to consider Oswald’s personal and literary objectives in creating a deplorable protagonist based on both elements of his own life and that of the real-life Victor Brecheret. To consider d’Alvelos as an “anti-hero” is almost too conciliatory on the part of the reader: he is no foil to a genuine hero as there are none to be found in Oswald’s literary construction of the city of São Paulo. The unredeemable nature of the protagonist is arguably why Brazilian critics have left the trilogy mostly untouched for decades; the trilogy’s themes are too disturbing and the autobiographical elements also too discomforting to the reader, especially given Oswald’s stature within the Brazilian Modernist movement.

B. O Perfeito Cozinheiro das Almas deste Mundo (1919)

Oswald’s earliest writings offer tantalizing clues as to the evolution of his literary explorations of many of the themes present in A Estrela de Absinto, specifically the harlot trope. A critical predecessor to A Trilogia do Exílio is O Perfeito Cozinheiro das Almas deste Mundo, a fusion of handwritten journal entries and drawings by Oswald and his fellow modernistas from the year 1919. The collective diary served primarily as a message book among Oswald and his colleagues and is full of fragmented phrases, wordplays, witty remarks, and personal jokes. There are references to the mundane details of city life, ill friends and family members, and vague allusions to World War I. It
also contains reflections on a wide range of topics such as art, poetry, and theater, as well as the occasional entries of the contributors’ own experiments in the same fields. There are newspaper clippings and pressed flowers stuck between some pages and all of the text is written in colored inks. It is a textually insightful book of the first stirrings of Brazilian Modernism, a “cookbook” of ideas as it is justly titled, and a visually stimulating work that strikes both a serious and playful tone.

Two hundred pages in its entirety, *O Perfeito Cozinheiro* is a tumultuous ode to Oswald’s (and his colleagues’) muse, “Miss Cíccone.” The journal has quite a few entries written by Miss Cíccone herself (also referred to as Daisy, Deise, or Dasinha) but mostly consists of messages between the male frequenters of the *garçonnière* who lament missed encounters between them and the driving force of their creative inspiration. Edmundo Amaral notes in the journal that the book serves as a stage on which he and his fellow “disarticulate clowns” sigh and complain (54). The frequenters to Oswald’s *garçonnière* included, amongst others, Monteiro Lobato, Menotti del Picchia, Léo Vaz, Guilherme de Almeida, Ignácio da Costa Ferreira, Edmundo Amaral, Sarti Prado, and Vicente Rao. And, of course, Miss Cíccone, the real-life Maria de Lourdes Castro de Andrade. All of the contributors have pseudonyms or nicknames in the journal, making it difficult to pinpoint at times who is contributing what or for whom a certain comment may be intended.

Miss Cíccone is the female figure who intrigues and fascinates the *garçonnière* as contained within the pages of *O Perfeito Cozinheiro* and whose very nickname evokes “os ventos da tempestade clássica de Virgílio” (“the winds of Virgil’s classic tempest”), namely the storm of emotions that flow throughout the journal obsessing over her
absences and missed encounters with her (10). One contributor, nicknamed João de Barros, observes:

A Cylone, ella sósinha, basta para encher um ambiente intelectual de homens do quanto elle precisa de feminino, para sua alegria e para seu encanto. Ella é multiforme e variável, na sua interessante unidade de mulher moderna. (9)

Cyclone, by herself is enough to fill an intellectual environment full of men as much as it needs the feminine for its happiness and beauty. She is distinctive and mercurial, in her interesting example of the modern woman. (9)

Miss Ciclone is heralded for being both a modern literary woman, the “basbleuzinha do Brás” (“the bluestocking of Brás”), yet remains an intriguing enigma who is also called the “esphynge do deserto do Braz” (“the sphinx in the desert of Braz”), an allusion to the future cover of A Estrela de Absinto (xxii; 52). Her sexuality is often commented upon within the journal; she is Oswald’s lover, for example, but also has an affair with a Japanese man, a fact that is ridiculed with crude jokes and denounced by the male contributors to the journal as perverse behavior. Oswald’s jealousy is evident and it is ultimately the real-life accounts contained with the journal that quickly unravel their relationship. The journal ends literally with Miss Ciclone’s death: “E tanta vida, bem vivida, se acabou” (“And so much life, well lived, ended”) (200).

In his introduction to O Perfeito Cozinheiro, Mário da Silva Brito explains the events leading up to Miss Ciclone’s death, as revealed by Oswald himself in his memoirs. Due to an illness that is not entirely clarified in the journal, Miss Ciclone is hospitalized and thus absent from the garçonnier. Her colleagues fill the diary with entries lamenting

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113 I maintain the original spelling utilized in this passage.
114 Basbleuzinha (“bluestocking”): “In its broadest sense, the term refers to women who are socially prominent not because they are aristocratic, and not always because they are wealthy, but because of their learning, because they are women of letters” (Pohl 60).
her absence and inquires as to any news regarding her health. There are occasional letters sent by her to the *garçonnière* included amongst the pages, as well as entries detailing her phone calls. Brito clarifies that in June of 1919, Miss Cíclone revealed to Oswald that she was pregnant by an unknown father and that the two of them agreed on an abortion. The procedure resulted in horrific medical complications and they marry *in extremis* (“at the point of death”) immediately preceding her agonizing death. Oswald laments that in trying to make Miss Cícione entirely his, his jealousy is what ultimately killed her (*x*).

The parallels between the real-life Miss Cícione and her fictionalized counterpart, Alma, in the first two novels of *A Trilogia do Exílio*, permit a more complex understanding of both the autobiographical events that inspired Oswald’s earliest prose. Literally speaking, Miss Cícione was Oswald’s lover and muse; figuratively, she was the driving force, the life, if not the very soul, of the *garçonnière* and the collective diary that it produced during 1919. Miss Cícione’s painful death as a result of an abortion mirrors Alma’s death in *A Estrela de Absinto*. D’Alvelos’s nightmare that he crucifies Alma for her promiscuous ways stems directly from Oswald’s admitted guilt for pressuring Miss Cícione to destroy her child due to its unknown parentage. Oswald appropriately renamed the trilogy *Os Condenados* (*The Condemned*), for Oswald/d’Alvelos and Miss Cícione/Alma are condemned by the former’s jealous actions, Oswald spiritually and Miss Cícione physically.

*O Perfeito Cozinheiro* also sheds light on Oswald’s eroticized approach to the way he constructs his female protagonists in the first two installments of *A Trilogia do Exílio*. In a section entitled “Receitas Sentimentaes” (“Sentimental Recipes”), he states...
his treatise on women, or the “Mãe Eva” (“Mother Eve”), demonstrating the mother-lover dualism that is prevalent throughout the trilogy:

... como desde a Mãe Eva, a mulher tem sido a synthese suprema do Vinho, do Bem, do Prazer, a triologia luminosa da Vida, e como Ella se nos escapam sempre com um lindo riso por entre malhas inhabeis do sentimentalismo macho, ahi vão para os simples, para os ingenuos e sentimentaes, um punhado de conselhos à guiza de receitas, todas ellas sentidas, todas ellas vivdas, todas sofridas.

Que evitem uma desilusão, que causam menos sonetos e menos consumo de lysol, será para nós que a sentimos e as vivemos a suprema compensação; nos que não cremos n’uma verdade femenina, mas cremos eternamente no seu encanto e doçura. (104)

... and since Mother Eve, woman has been an ultimate synthesis of Wine, of Good, of Pleasure, the luminous trilogy of Life, and as She always escapes us with a beautiful smile from amidst the awkward nets of male sentimentalism, here goes for the uncomplicated, for the naïve and sentimental ones, a handful of advice in the form of recipes, all of them felt, all of them suffered.

To avoid disillusion, which results in fewer sonnets and less consumption of Lysol, it is for us to feel and live the ultimate compensation; we who do not believe in a feminine truth, but who eternally believe in its beauty and sweetness. (104)

Miss Ciclone was, of course, an expecting mother who hurriedly marries Oswald after her botched abortion in an attempt to religiously legitimize their relationship. Alma is the mother/lover fictionalized counterpart who must die, Haroldo de Campos argues, due to her romantic dalliances, much like Luciola and Iracema in the works of José de Alencar (xvii). In the same manner as “Romanticismo alencariano” (“Alencarian Romanticism”), Alma is a tragic figure whose decline is inevitable. She is no longer the bluestocking

\[115^\text{I maintain the original spelling utilized in this passage.}\]

\[116^\text{Ghislaine Wood notes in Art Nouveau and the Erotic (2000) that much in much of nineteenth century literature, the courtesan, or mistress inevitably suffers a tragic ending due to her “existence in opposition to conventional morality” for which “she would have to be controlled and eventually punished” (40). She continues: “Depictions of the}\]

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woman that Miss Ciclone was, but instead a fictionalized prostitute and a victim of a degenerate city. Miss Ciclone’s free will is removed, leaving in its place d’Alvelos’s sculpture that is to be forged, thus manipulated, entirely by his own hands.

It is precisely this decadent tragedy that Oswald is willing to fully explore in *A Estrela de Absinto*. Anti-morality permeates the sadistic city of São Paulo just as disease devastatingly infects Alma’s body. Language breaks apart only to re-born by the juxtaposition of the still shots of modernity’s ill effects. And just as the title of the book suggests, the biblical reference to the absinthe star may indeed represent a transitory truth, but it is still a message of doom and not one of pleasure:

O terceiro anjo tocou a sua trombeta, e caiu do céu uma grande estrela, ardendo como uma tocha, e caiu sobre a terça parte dos rios, e sobre fontes das águas. O nome da estrela era Absinto; e a terça parte das águas tornou-se em absinto, e muitos homens morreram das águas, porque se tornaram amargas. (Apocalipse 8:10-11)\(^{117}\)

The third angel sounded his trumpet, and a great star, blazing like a torch, fell from the sky on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water. The name of that star is Wormwood. A third of the waters became wormwood, and many died from the water, because it was made bitter. (The Book of Revelation 8:10-11)\(^{118}\)

The star Wormwood is one of the six trumpets that introduce new transfigurations of nature in judgment upon the wicked, much like the plagues of Egypt. The editors of the

mistress ranged from the poor and desperate prostitute to the high skilled and richly rewarded courtesan. Of course neither escape their fate; the protagonists in both Émile Zola’s *Nana* (1880) and Alexandre Dumas’ (fils) *La Dame aux Camélias* (1852) suffer painful deaths in penury” (40).

\(^{117}\) The Portuguese-language Biblical passage is from the *João Ferreira de Almeida Atualizada* (AA) edition.

\(^{118}\) The English-language Biblical passage is from the *New Revised Standard Version* Bible (Oxford University Press, 1989). It is interesting to compare the star “Wormwood” to the Portuguese star “Absinto.” Instead of using the word “losna” for wormwood, Oswald utilizes the term “absinto”, the alcoholic-drink derived from the plant that is associated with *fin-de-siècle* decadence.
New Revised Standard Version Bible note that the word “apocalypse” is derived from the Greek word *apokalypsis* which means “revelation”, “disclosure”, or “unveiling” (362 NT).\(^{119}\) In *A Estrela de Absinto*, it could be argued that the artist is the visionary whose nightmare signals a prophetic end of times, that is, the painful breaking with past traditions and the dawn of a new age. It is fascinating to note that the Book of Revelation and other contemporary apocalyptic literature from Biblical times served to comfort and encourage the faithful during difficult moments in their lives. The editors note that it frequently “reflects a negative view of *this* world and expresses hope for salvation in *new* creation or in another life” (362 NT; emphasis mine).

4.4. Decorative Anthropophagy

A. *ANTROPOFAGIA*

In 1928 Oswald de Andrade published the famous “Manifesto Antropófago”, declaring that the new movement of *Antropofagia* would cannibalize European culture and undertake the permanent transformation of “taboo into totem”, thereby allowing Brazilians from this time forward to embrace their own native “barbarism.” Inverting the traditional crisis of imitation between the model (Europe) and copy (Brazil), the manifesto lauds the anthropophagist, in this case the Tupi cannibal, who is treated as a symbol of resistance to the influence of the European cultural element. The anthropophagist metaphorically “devours” European culture by means of localized originality, producing a new synthesis that guarantees a wholly Brazilian originality in the arts, literature, and poetry.

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\(^{119}\) NT stands for the New Testament of the Bible.
Oswald de Andrade’s “Manifesto Antropófago” furthermore gave an original cultural voice to Brazil (and Latin America) that is neither totally primitivist nor totally derived from European culture. The cannibalist metaphor of consumption becomes an remedy for the question of imitation, a “síntese dialéctica” (dialectical synthesis) that would allow for the assimilation of the positive qualities of foreign influences in order to recast them into a uniquely national form (Schwartz 135). It offers a perspective that centralizes the so-called “periphery” (Brazil), thus creating an alternate paradigm that addressed the “anxiety of influence” that so concerned the modernistas at the beginning of the twentieth century. Oswald’s transatlantic awareness, mostly between Europe and Brazil and less significantly, the United States, also demonstrates a strong desire for a broader historical outline. The Brazilian modernistas sought to place themselves within the larger context of transatlantic history by engaging with Brazilian source material – oftentimes in an iconoclastic manner.

Oswald’s construction of the Tupi cannibal, however, meant superimposing the politics of the early twentieth century onto an ahistorical vision of the past. Brazilian Modernism placed at its very center a positive reevaluation of the cannibal as a means of constructing a Brazilian national identity. Peter Hulme, in Cannibalism and the Colonial World (1998), argues that the term “cannibalism” today exists as “primarily a linguistic phenomenon, a trope of exceptional power” (4). By metaphorically consuming source material, whether it derived from Europe or an ahistorical Brazilian past, Oswald created a literary and artistic mechanism that would regurgitate newness. Hulme notes:

Primitivism was very much a dimension of European modernism, but the supposed primitive was very definitely elsewhere – the Congo, the Pacific, Mexico. For Oswald de Andrade, however, the figure of the cannibal was part of a possible national past, an authentically Brazilian figure which
offered the possibility of a defined national tradition, an anti-colonial critique, and a communitarian ideal. (27)

The metaphor of consumption also plays a prominent role in Oswald’s fictional writings from the same decade. The presence of the European avant-garde movements, for example, in A Estrela de Absinto serve as an necessary point of departure in d’Alvelos’s artistic endeavor to reaffirm national values by utilizing a uniquely Brazilian language of design.

In his work Cannibal Modernities: Postcoloniality and the Avant-garde in Caribbean and Brazilian Literature (2005), Luís Madureira discusses “peripheral modernisms” in Latin America, including Brazilian Modernism, that are oftentimes self-contradictory. Antropofagia, led by Oswald de Andrade, he argues, can never quite escape the same Western narratives that it attempts to destroy. Madureira closely examines, for example, Oswald’s 1928 “Manifesto Antropófago” and argues that there is an inherent irony in Brazilian Modernist claims of national rebirth and authenticity “... in terms of an emblematically European reclamation of the creative power of the primitive, of the cultural and language of Brazil’s ‘original’ decimated inhabitants...” (29). In other words, the discourse that inverts the margin (or periphery) and the center belies their clear mutual dependency: “... Europe’s foundational discourses of modernity are enabled and sustained by the very (‘native’) peoples and cultures that such discourses have consistently relegated to the margins (or indeed excised from) the ‘experience’ of the modern” (214). This is not to say, however, that Madureira finds these “peripheral modernisms” as weak imitations of European models; on the contrary, the margin can

Madureira also examines Caribbean modernisms that produce what he refers to as a “counter-discourse” of modernity (215).
and will transform the center each time its own manifestation of modernity take place. In spite of the nationalism and nativism of Antropofagia, the movement still disrupts the idea of imitating the European modernization undertaking in the periphery itself.

B. CANNIBALIST DECORATION

Oswald’s antropofagia becomes an interesting metaphor onto itself when taken into context with the Art Deco style that became prominent during the 1920s in Brazil. As discussed in Chapter I, Art Deco is the first truly modern, global decorative arts style; artists and designers could easily incorporate a wide variety of local motifs without losing the style’s basic character. Art Deco was an international style that was simultaneously able to adapt itself to become authentic with a local or regional audience. In Brazilian Modernist “cannibalist” terms, Art Deco “consumes” its source material, producing, in turn, a localized manifestation of the style that is entirely new and authentic. And while both antropofagia and Art Deco do not completely fit within the context of the metaphor of consumption, they do allow for enlightening readings of each other.

4.5. Vicente do Rego Monteiro

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>une grande cheminée</td>
<td>A tall chimney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>où tour de combat :</td>
<td>Or combat tower:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>il paraît qu’elle n'est pas très solide</td>
<td>It seems that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>où bien d’aplomb :</td>
<td>It is neither very solid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>de peur qu’elle ne tombe on l’a attachée à terre de tous les côtés par plusieurs cordes bien tendues.</td>
<td>For fear of its fall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>est-ce les débris de la tour de Babel !</td>
<td>One has tied it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To the ground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>From all sides with several Well-tightened ropes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Are thes e pieces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Of the Tower of Babel! ^121</td>
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Vicente do Rego Monteiro
“Tour Eiffel”, 1925

^121 English translation provided by Dr. Pierre Taminiaux. I also maintain the original spelling of the French poem.
The early work of the prolific Brazilian artist and poet Vicente do Rego Monteiro (1899-1970) demonstrates the influence of a wide variety of styles and movements that included Japanese woodblock prints, Art Nouveau, Cubism, Futurism, Art Deco, African tribal art, *barroco mineiro*, and indigenous motifs primarily from the Island of Marajó. Born in Recife in the state of Pernambuco, Rego Monteiro spent much of the second decade of the twentieth century in Paris, first studying art there in 1911 (Amaral, *Artes Plasticas* 260). He was a prominent member of the School of Paris (Ecole de Paris) and worked with various artistic media, including sculpture, printmaking, typography, photography, set design, and illustration (Zanini 7). Rego Monteiro’s artistic and poetic production remained in relative obscurity for decades, however, due to certain elements of his life, as well as many of his aesthetically vibrant works’ transatlantic characteristics that make it difficult to pigeonhole him as a purely “Brazilian” artist, much less what many Brazilian critics have considered to be a wholly dedicated *modernista*.

Rego Monteiro was not physically present at the 1922 São Paulo Modern Art Week but did contribute ten paintings to the exhibition. The ten paintings demonstrate a remarkably wide range of artistic styles and subject matters, including an expressionist portrait of a fellow Modern Art Week participant (“Retrato de Ronald de Carvalho”) (“Portrait of Ronald de Carvalho”) (1921), an impressionist portrait of black women (“Cabeças de Negras”) (“Heads of Black Women”) (1920), and two cubist works, both

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122 The School of Paris (Ecole de Paris) is a term “applied to the loose affiliation of artists working Paris from the 1920s to the 1950s” (Oxford Art Online). The terms also generally refers to non-French artists, many of whom lived or worked in Montmartre or Montparnasse.
entitled “Cubismo” (“Cubism”). He also contributed paintings with a more decidedly Brazilian subject matter, both entitled “Lenda Brasileira” (“Brazilian Legend”). During the early years of the 1920s, Rego Monteiro also began developing his characteristic “relief” technique in painting that gave his paintings a sculptural appearance. Two-dimensional paintings appear carved, or etched into the surface, lending them three-dimensional characteristics that blur the viewers’ perception of artistic media. These “relief” paintings, furthermore, carry many elements of the Art Deco style, particularly streamlining and geometricism.

Many of Rego Monteiro’s “relief” paintings address religious themes, specifically Biblical scenes from the New Testament. “A Crucifixão” (“The Crucifixion”) (1922) is perhaps one of Rego Monteiro’s most famous paintings and features squared figures that appear to have been etched into the canvas. The rectangular drops of blood that line the forehead of Jesus Christ mirror the tears on the faces of the two presumably female figures that flank his sides. “A Crucifixão”, “A Descida Da Cruz” (“The Descent from the Cross”) (1924), and several paintings of the Last Supper feature forlorn-looking figures that are mourning or crying. The colors of these paintings are also very muted, unlike his decidedly more vibrant works of indigenous peoples and ceramics of Brazil.

123 It is important to note that Rego Monteiro painted and illustrated several works dedicated to portrait studies of black or “mulatto” peoples in Brazil. While not as vast as his works dedicated to indigenous peoples and motifs, works such as “Cabeças de Negras” and “Cabeça de Jovem Mulata” (“Head of a Young Mulatta”) (1919) are unique due to the pronounced scarcity of the Afro-Brazilian images in Brazilian Modernism.
124 See Jorge Schwartz’s reproduction of the exhibition catalogue of the “Semana de Arte Modern” in the Caixa Modernista (2003) for a complete list of the Rego Monteiro’s exhibited works.
125 Vicente do Rego Monteiro also blurred the lines between typography and both writing and illustration by signing his works with his characteristic signature that appeared to be more of a serif-typeface than actual handwriting.
For this reason, much of religious-themed work is very similar to that of the so-called “melancholic deco” style of Ivan Meštrović, who was also very influential in the work of Victor Brecheret.

Walter Zanini, the foremost expert on the work of Rego Monteiro, notes that the artist was the only “northern” Brazilian exhibitor at the 1922 Modern Art Week because he was from Pernambuco and not São Paulo like his fellow exhibitors and presenters (11). Zanini also notes that his ties to the School of Paris, combined with his interest in the Island of Marajó, lent him a unique internationalist/nationalist aesthetic that set his work somewhat apart from that of the modernistas (11). His paintings and illustrations that favored Marajoara influences, such as the two paintings entitled “Lenda Brasileira”, may have garnered him a place in the Brazilian Modernist canon, but his poetry was nearly always written in French. Writing in French placed him in opposition to critics who were against the prominence of Parnassian aesthetics in Brazil at the time.126

Several prominent writers have come to Rego Monteiro’s defense over negative criticism that the artist and his work were too connected to France; chief among them was the famed Brazilian ethnographer Gilberto Freyre who wrote in 1954 that it was only in Paris that Rego Monteiro’s artistic production became truly Brazilian (63).127 Freyre laments Rego Monteiro’s virtual obscurity in Brazil and the lack of critical discussion of his “vigoroso” and “new” art (63). His essay is as much an introduction to Rego

126 The editors of Vicente do Rego Monteiro – Poeta, Tipógrafo, Pintor (2004) argue that the French-language poetry of Vicente do Rego Monteiro is the least studied area of his work (18). His plastic arts production, in addition to his illustrations, are the most studied by Brazilian critics because of their clear adherence to so-called “proper” Brazilian themes and motifs.

Monteiro’s biography as it is a contextualization of the artist’s work as both Brazilian, a type of “Recife-like” Brazilianness, and internationalist. The colors most frequently utilized by the artist, Freyre argues, are of the Brazilian tropics, and his stylizations loyal to Recife, therefore to Brazil as well (65). Freyre himself was also from Recife and his vigorous defense of Rego Monteiro demonstrates a desire to both create and expand a more profound understanding of what he considers to be “authentic” Brazilian art. His essay belies concerns that Rego Monteiro, still a prolific artist and writer at the time of the publication of Freyre’s essay, had been regretfully forgotten and purposefully neglected by Brazilian critics.

Due almost entirely to the recent efforts of Jorge Schwartz, it is only during the past decade that Rego Monteiro’s work, primarily his illustrations from the 1920s, has received more critical attention, creating a critical “revival”, so to speak, focused primarily on Rego Monteiro’s role at the 1922 Modern Art Week. As discussed in Chapter III, Jorge Schwartz reproduced many of the primary documents of the 1922 São Paulo Modern Art week in his *Caixa Modernista* (*Modernist Box*) (2003), thereby allowing for a more complete understanding of the visual intricacies of the original printed publications that are lost in later editions that did not remain faithful to *modernista* aesthetics in printing, graphic design, and illustration. In 2005 Schwartz produced a similar “box”, entitled *Do Amazonas a Paris: As Lendas Indígenas De Vicente do Rego Monteiro* (*From the Amazon to Paris: The Indigenous Legends of Vicente do Rego Monteiro*) (From the Amazon to Paris: The Indigenous Legends of Vicente do Rego Monteiro).  

Freyre also writes in a section entitled “Introdução” (“Introduction”) collected in *Vicente do Rego Monteiro: Pintor e Poeta* (1994) that both his personal and critical interest in Rego Monteiro began in the year 1922 when Freyre himself first wrote of the young artist’s work (19). He essay is very much an exploration of the kinship he perceives between Rego Monteiro and himself, both due to their Recife heritage, but also because of their “non-conventionalism” in Brazilian arts and letters (28).
Vicente do Rego Monteiro, this time reproducing two of Rego Monteiro’s most significant illustrated texts of the 1920s: his illustrations for P. L. Duchatre’s Légendes, croyances et talismans des Indiens de l’Amazone (Legends, Beliefs, and Talismans of the Amazonian Indians) (1923) and his own book of illustrated poems, Quelques visages de Paris (A Few Faces of Paris) (1925). Schwartz notes in his introduction to the “box” that previous reproductions of Rego Monteiro’s illustrated work were limited to the vibrant cover of Légendes alone and typically did not include the remainder of the book (“Apresentação” 1). This scarcity may be attributed partly to the fact that only 600 original copies were ever printed, furthermore, by a publishing house in France. Quelques visages is an even rarer work with only 300 original copies produced by a different French publishing house.

Schwartz presents his rationale for including these two seemingly separate books together in his Vicente do Rego Monteiro “box” by highlighting their intertextuality:

Apesar de projetos muito diferentes, os dois livros são interdependentes. O formato complementar escolhido para a reedição fac-similar de Légendes... e de Quelques visages... sugere um movimento unidirecional: do Brasil para a França, do primitivo para o civilizado, da Floresta Amazônica para a Cidade Luz, do imaginário mitológico para a ratio cartesiana, ou, nas palavras de Lévi-Strauss, do cru para o cozido. Quais as motivações dessa luxuosa ‘produção brasileira’ em Paris e em francês? (“Apresentação” 1)

Although very different projects, both books are interdependent. The format chosen to complement the facsimile reprint of Légendes... and Quelques visages... suggests a unidirectional movement: from Brazil to France, from the primitive to the civilized, from the Amazonian Rainforest to the City of Light, from the mythological imaginary to the Cartesian reason, or in the words of Lévi-Strauss, from the raw to the cooked. What are the motivations of this luxurious 'Brazilian production' in Paris and in French? (“Apresentação” 1)

As will be discussed later in this chapter, the “luxurious” production of both Légendes and Quelques visages makes them decidedly different vanguard texts than Oswald’s A
Estrela de Absinto. Published only two years apart and by different publishing houses in Paris, Rego Monteiro’s illustrations were furthermore meant for a remarkably small audience that could afford such lavishly produced books.

It is important to note, however, that while Schwartz’s efforts to reintroduce Rego Monteiro’s illustrated works to a larger audience have resulted in a significant reevaluation of the artist/poet and his role in Brazilian Modernism, his “box” is a facsimile of the originals. As discussed in Chapter III, the understanding and appreciation of the original production techniques utilized in the creation of these vanguardist texts is usually lost in later editions. Unlike the later editions of Oswald’s works, however, Schwartz’s “box” does remain faithful to the size, layout, and colors of the originals – but as will be discussed later in this chapter, it is not faithful to the pochoir technique that was highly popular in luxury French book production at the time. Rego Monteiro’s vanguardist texts, much like the printed works of the European and Russian vanguards that graphic design historian Ellen Lupton explores in Graphic Design in the Mechanical Age, contain elements of both handcraftsmanship and mechanical production processes that merit further critical examination.

A. LÉGENDES, CROYANCES ET TALISMANS DES INDIENS DE L’AMAZONE (1923)

Although the text of Légendes is not written by Rego Monteiro himself, the driving forces behind the book are his Amazonian-themed illustrations; it is indeed the reason for the work’s visual permanence in the Brazilian Modernist canon, even if that permanence has long been limited to just the book’s cover. In Légendes, the French

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129 In the case of Jorge Schwartz’s edition of Duchatre’s Légendes, croyances et talismans des Indiens de l'Amazone, as well as Rego Monteiro’s Quelques visages de Paris, each “box” was published in a limited run of 1000 copies, perhaps ironically making them both “luxury editions.”
ethnographer P. L. Duchartre whimsically recounts several Amazonian legends, presenting himself in the “Avant-Propos” (“Preface”) as an explorer-adventurer who bravely surveyed the lands already traversed by Cândido Rondon, the explorer who set out with Theodore Roosevelt earlier in the century. Duchartre summarizes aspects of Amazonian mythology and places special emphasis on the “surprisingly” rich art of the region. Amazonian art, he explains, is highly symbolic and extremely stylized to the point of abstraction (“Avant-Propos” 7). He does not mention Rego Monteiro by name but makes a point of noting that the illustrations of the text, taken from motifs adorning funerary urns (presumably from the Island of Marajó) will allow the reader to have a more precise idea as to the complexity of the graphic innovations of the native peoples of the region (8).

One of the most fascinating and perplexing aspects of Légendes is the section entitled “Caractères Symboliques Comparés” (“Compared Symbolic Characters”) that consists of four pages of hand drawn charts comparing a list of signifiers and hieroglyphs between Brazil (specifically, the Marajoara civilization), Mexico, China, and Egypt. For example, the written description of “L’œil” (“The eye”) is followed horizontally by

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130 As Légendes, croyances et talismans des Indiens de l’Amazone does not have any page numbers, I have approximated them in all of the citations for the work.

131 The contribution by Rego Monteiro, a Brazilian artist who had studied indigenous art in South America, perhaps garnered more perceived authenticity to an ethnographic work about the legends of Amazonian peoples.

132 The Oxford English Dictionary defines “hieroglyph” as “a figure of some object, as a tree, animal, etc., standing for a word (or, afterwards, in some cases, a syllable or sound), and forming an element of a species of writing found on ancient Egyptian monuments and records; thence extended to such figures similarly used in the writing of other races. Also, a writing consisting of characters of this kind.” (oed.com). In the case of Duchartre/Monteiro’s chart, I use the term “hieroglyph” in the broader sense to refer to the so-called four “civilizations” that supposedly share written symbolic figures.
the four respective hieroglyphs of each civilization. The underlying assumption of this chart is that these ancient civilizations are somehow interconnected due to the visual similarities between these hieroglyphs, as illustrated by Rego Monteiro; the chart, furthermore, equalizes the four civilizations by placing the hieroglyphs into a categorical form. It is interesting to note, however, that it is not Brazil as a whole that is represented in the chart; rather, it is only the Island of Marajó that is as important as the remaining three ancient civilizations – at least in terms of their compared “advanced” symbolic characters.

The exact authorship of the chart is unclear, nevertheless; Rego Monteiro obviously drew the symbols and the illustrations are the result of his studies of the ceramics on the Island of Marajó. But to what extent is the chart a collaboration with P. L. Duchartre? The inclusion of the chart is all the more bewildering because it does not seemingly fit with the remainder of the book. Rego Monteiro does not duplicate the column of hieroglyphs listed for the Island of Marajó in his illustrations – he instead stylizes some of them as decorations for his illustrations. Rego Monteiro does not reproduce what the chart clearly labels as the hieroglyph for “water current” to literally signify flowing water in a particular illustration; it instead becomes a decorative page border, a miniature motif within a larger illustration, or an element of streamlining that is very characteristic of the Art Deco style. And as mentioned in Chapter II, Denise P. Schaan refers to Marajoara design as a “ceramic symbolic language” that placed great importance, for example, on snakes, represented “as sinuous bodies, spirals, or in the form of their skin patterns” (84). These snakes oftentimes doubled as rivers and other bodies of water; they were also quite possibly merely abstract patterns that suggested
snakes and rivers, thereby easily lending themselves to modern artistic appropriation for their forms alone. Rego Monteiro’s illustrations evokes Schaan’s interpretation of the ceramics’ original purpose as being decorative objects with abstract designs that emulated flowing water or snakes. Rego Monteiro further abstracts these patterns in his illustrations, placing them in the context of modern art movements, such as Art Deco, that evoke primitivist modernist themes and motifs.

In Légendes, the hieroglyph that denotes “supremacy”, “value”, or “divinity” later morphs into more anthropomorphic decorations that are relegated to the background of a more Art Nouveau-inspired illustration. The chart may be an effort on the part of P.L. Duchartre to garner some sort of legitimacy for his ethnographic work on the Amazon by comparing it with the more traditional civilizations of old, but Rego Monteiro abstracts from these very same hieroglyphs, converting them into a modern decorative language. Rego Monteiro’s illustrations work more as an subversion to the grandiose claims of Duchartre: they are beautiful and playful but do not attempt to convey a presumption of the historical meaning of their ceramic counterparts.133 The modernistas, chief among them Rego Monteiro, converted the ancient Marajoara “ceramic symbolic language” into a modern decorative vocabulary that served as a visual signifier for all things Brazilian. And since the Art Deco style requires no such “tradition-laden” history, it constantly forges newness by means of abstract decoration. And Marajoara Déco, more specifically, with its source material’s lost historical specificity, provided an ahistorical decorative vocabulary for artists seeking to “write” Brazilian modernity upon it.

133 It is important to note that while the work does not share the same decadent themes as Oswald de Andrade’s novel, it does contain many erotic illustrations of naked indigenous females. As discussed in Chapter I, erotic source material informed many Art Deco motifs.
B. *QUÊLQUES VISAGES DE PARIS* (1925)

*Quelques visages de Paris* (1925), both written and illustrated by Vicente do Rego Monteiro, is in many ways both a continuation of his primitivist subversion of Duchartre’s *Légendes, croyances et talismans des Indiens de l’Amazone* and is a remarkably more vanguardist work that blurs the traditional lines between text and image. Published by Imprimerie Juan Dura (Juan Dura Printing), the book is more minimalist than *Légendes*: the text and images are printed only in black ink and the pages are not bound in a volume – they are, rather, tied together by a single cord through holes punched in each of the pages. The French poet Fernand Divoire provides a short introduction to the work, underneath which appears the first illustration of the book (aside from the cover and title page). The illustration is noteworthy because it is an image of the Arc de Triomphe (Arc of Triumph) with a globe placed on top of it. The globe features only the Western Hemisphere, with the label “Amerique” (“America”) running across it. From the very first illustration, therefore, “Amerique” takes preeminence over a key visual signifier of Paris by means of its placement within the globe itself and the globe’s position on top of the Arc de Triomphe.

The following page contains a note by Vicente do Rego Monteiro that directly addresses his readers:

Un jour un chef sauvage laissant la forêt vierge vint à Paris incognito, après un petit séjour, blasé de tant de grandeurs il retourna à son ôca (home). Dans un de mes derniers voyages à l’intérieur de l’Amazone, j’ai eu l’heureuse fortune de le connaître. Il m’a confié ses impressions sur Paris, en même temps que quelques croquis pris sur place, lesquels j’ai réunis sous le titre de:
“Quelques visages de Paris”
VICENTE DO REGO MONTEIRO

Nota : Pour faciliter la lecture des dessins, j’ai ajouté l’explication de certains symboles.

One day a savage chief leaving the virgin forest came to Paris incognito, after a small stay, jaded from so many grandeurs he returned to his òca (home).
In one of my last trips to the interior of the Amazon, I had the good fortune to meet him.
He told me his impressions of Paris, at the same time some sketches made on the spot, which I have collected under the title of:
"A Few Faces of Paris"

VICENTE DO REGO MONTEIRO

Note: To facilitate the reading of the drawings, I have added the explanation of certain symbols.

By means of this introductory note, Vicente do Rego Monteiro casts himself as a mere messenger whose role in this particular book is simply to relay the “impressions” of Paris, both textually and visually, by a fictionalized “savage chief” from the Amazon. Just like the image of the globe featuring the Western Hemisphere on top of the Arc de Triomphe, the native chief from the “virgin forest” takes preeminence over Paris: the chief and his jungle are the center and Paris the periphery.

A Western “translation” is made possible by the inclusion of a key with a total of four hieroglyphs labeled respectively as dwellings, leaves/trees, waterfront constructions,

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134 The metafictional dialectic employed by Vicente do Rego Monteiro is a common literary device that purposefully muddles narrative voices - in this instance to create distance between the author/illustrator, the narrator, and the fictionalized narrative source. Miguel de Cervantes famously employed a similar dialectic in El ingenioso hidalgo don Quijote de la Mancha (1605) by having a fictionalized Moorish historian Cide Hamete Benengeli record the events in the lives of the protagonists and his manuscript, in turn, is translated into Spanish by an unnamed morisco; the Spanish version is then supposedly edited into its final form by Cervantes.
and water. There are a total of twelve visual “impressions” in the book and each one contains various elements of the hieroglyph key. Rego Monteiro’s illustrations are also notably of the Art Deco style, featuring streamlining, geometricism, and most curiously, not a single Marajoara motif. Each illustration is also accompanied by a French-language poem; in the “words” of the chief, Paris is both wondrous and bewildering. The chief finds the Arc de Triomphe, for example, to be highly confusing – why build a monument to an unknown soldier? He concludes that his name must have simply been forgotten over the years. The Louvre, he observes, must be the richest boutique in all of France because none of the paintings have prices on them. And the Trocadéro, he explains, is, judging by its trophies, the house of a great warrior, although he notes with sadness that it includes the embalmed heads of his ancestors.

Rego Monteiro’s poems are highly whimsical with strong humoristic undertones that gently mock the traditional Eurocentric travel narrative. The fictional chief, in this instance, is the awed ethnographer who can only comprehend Paris by means of the total resignification of the city’s principal cultural institutions and monuments based on his own cultural repertoire of supposed hieroglyphs. The fact that there are only four hieroglyphs in Rego Monteiro’s key also suggests that he is in no way attempting to imitate the four *pages* of hieroglyphs in Duchartre’s serious ethnographic endeavor to catalogue the visual signifiers of the native peoples of the Amazon. Rego Monteiro’s work is almost too reductionist in that sense: there are only four hieroglyphs that form part of twelve geometricized Art Deco “impressions” of Paris; the “impressions” are accompanied by very short poems, and are all printed in black. It is a spare work that undercuts Duchartre’s *Légendes* both by imitating certain structural components of it,
such as the use of a key, and then by inverting the subject-object relationship on multiple visual and textual planes. Rego Monteiro, furthermore, utilizes the Art Deco style in a far more pronounced manner than in *Légendes*, but significantly does not employ the *Marajoara Déco* manifestation of the style that is present in *Légendes* and his other illustrated work during the same decade. *Quelques visages* does not attempt to utilize even the slightest veneer of presumed authenticity; for that reason, Rego Monteiro’s illustrations contain no regionalist inflections.

Rego Monteiro’s subversive tendencies in both works furthermore undermines Jorge Schwartz’s argument that *Légendes* and *Quelques visages* suggest a “unidirectional movement” from Brazil to Paris; they are both much more significantly nuanced than a curious manifestation of “luxurious 'Brazilian production' in Paris and in French.” The two works are indeed complementary, but also highly contradictory; when read together, Rego Monteiro’s poem “Tour Eiffel” in *Quelques visages* becomes a metaphor for both works’ attempts, whether heartfelt or mocking, at reducing Brazil (the Marajoara) and, in turn, France to its “Compared Symbolic Characters.” These characters, or hieroglyphs, are “not very solid” in that they are the remnants produced by God’s act of confounding language at the Tower of Babel. There may be an original single language, according to the Biblical tale, but it has since been lost. The fictional chief finds the Eiffel Tower, or the Tower of Babel, tenuously built and, unlike Duchartre with his key, Rego Monteiro does not attempt to stabilize or rebuild it.

C. CIPHERS AND CODES IN THE ILLUSTRATED WORK OF VICENTE DO REGO MONTEIRO

Although they are very different books – by different authors and produced by different publishing houses – both *Légendes, croyances et talismans des Indiens de
l’Amazone and Quelques visages de Paris share one crucial detail: they both contain keys. In the former, the key serves no purpose in terms of “decoding” the remaining illustrations in the book; in the latter, the key is highly functional in that the reader, the narrator argues, can only make true sense of the illustrations by means of applying the key to the fictional chief’s drawings of Paris. Natasha Staller, in “Babel: Hermetic Languages, Universal Languages, and Anti-Languages in Fin de Siècle Parisian Culture” (1994) points to a “fever” over language in the decades immediately preceding the publication of Rego Monteiro’s illustrated books that indicates a broader interest in cryptography in French academic circles at the time (332). Rego Monteiro also studied in Paris as early as 1911 – he most definitely would have come into contact with artists and writers who lived and worked during the height of the fin de siècle during the late-nineteenth century. Staller defines her titular languages as follows:

Hermetic languages use language to conceal a hidden language: their secrets can be deciphered only by someone who has the key. Universal languages either were believed to be innately understood by all peoples, or were newly invented to offer new shared words or new shared ways of writing words, in the hope that all peoples (whether within France itself or the world entire) could learn them to communicate with each other. Anti-languages use language as a weapon against itself, and against the institutions that foster it. In all their guises, artistic and otherwise, hermetic, universal, and anti-languages were aggressively and explicitly artificial: they were set against ‘natural’ languages and organicist models. (334)

The enduring fascinating in “cultural cryptography” is not unique to late-nineteenth century France. The “rediscovery” of the Rosetta Stone by Napoleon’s troops in 1799, for example, set off a furor over secret languages whose allure continues to this day. See “Romancing the Stone” by Beth Py-Lieberman (1997).
And in literature, Edgar Allan Poe’s protagonist in the bestselling short story “The Gold-Bug” (1843) stumbles upon “a coded pirate letter written in invisible ink” (Whalen 35). Poe included an actual cryptogram (a text written in code) in the story which contributed to the story’s tremendous popularity among the reading public. See “The Code for Gold: Edgar Allan Poe and Cryptography” (1994).
The key in *Légendes* sets out to demonstrate that four ancient civilizations – the Marajoara, Mexico, China, and Egypt – share what Staller would consider to be a “universal language.” The chart visually compares certain glyphs of these civilizations, as illustrated by Rego Monteiro, presumably to prove to Duchartre’s peers/readers that his ethnographic work of the Marajoara was evidence of the civilization’s “greatness” and “worthiness.” The key in *Quelques visages* is quite different, however, and offers more visual playfulness suggesting that the “hermetic language” is, in fact, an invented language that Rego Monteiro employs in order to subvert the forced universality that is present Duchartre’s key. Rego Monteiro mocks the artificiality of universal languages by creating an artificial language himself. He also reverses the center-periphery relationship present in Duchartre’s Eurocentric ethnographic work by making the Amazon Indians, and their fictional chief, the center and Paris the periphery. Taken together, *Légendes* and *Quelques visages* complement each other by their means of their mutual visual deconstruction of any and all “Compared Symbolic Characters.”

Vicente do Rego Monteiro is certainly not the only writer of Latin American origins to take an interest in keys, ciphers, and glyphs. Rego Monteiro’s interest may be placed within the greater “fad” of cryptography that existed in Paris at the time of his writing, but a contest in Mexico during the same time period demonstrates how other countries were taking a similar interest in the subject as they explored their own colonial pasts. It is postulated that the first Latin American cipher, for example, is not a lost indigenous language as preserved by the few surviving codices from colonial times, but rather an enciphered letter from Hernán Cortés, written from Cuernavaca on June 25, 1532, to his legal representative Francisco Núñez in Spain. Interestingly enough, however,
“La carta cifrada de Hernán Cortés” was not deciphered until 1925, when the periodical *Anales del Museo Nacional* held a contest offering 200 pesos of “oro nacional” to anyone who could decipher the text (Martínez 650). There were a few sections of the letter that had been translated around 1915 but paleographers soon discovered that the nature of their field offered them markedly different techniques than that of decryption. Paleography is the study of writing systems whereas a ciphered text (the study of which is called cryptography) is so written to conceal information, with the understanding that there is something worth concealing in the first place. Cryptology, therefore, assumes the existence of a previously agreed upon set of visual markers. In other words, without a “key”, whether symbolically or figuratively, a text ceases to relay any sort of information between the author/artist and the reader.

**D. ILLUSTRATION AS DECORATION**

Vicente do Rego Monteiro’s illustrations point to a broader theory of drawing that encapsulates the tenets of Art Deco that many Brazilian Modernists so thoroughly embraced during the 1920s. In an essay most likely written in the late 1930s to early 1940s, Mário de Andrade proposes a theory of drawing that considers illustration to be more akin to writing, specifically poetry, than to the plastic arts of painting and sculpture. Drawing is more akin to writing, Mário postulates, because modern systems

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136 One of 1925 contestants in Mexico was able to decipher the famed letter but, to everyone’s disappointment, it contained nothing of historical or political significance (Martínez 651). The letter detailed, for example, the price paid for a mule and ongoing land negotiations between Cortés and the Crown. Martínez reproduces two pages of the original ciphered letter in his book, in addition to the entirety of the key used to decipher it in 1925. See pages 648-651 of *Hernán Cortés* (1990).

137 In the compilation of Mário de Andrade’s four essays on the plastic arts in Brazil, the editor notes the uncertainty of the date and title of the aforementioned piece. The other three essays date from 1935 to 1943 (*Nota Inicial*).
of writing find their origins in hieroglyphs (72). He does not limit hieroglyphs to the ancient Egyptians, but rather to “primitive” cultures in which every scribble, color, and smudge – every decoration – contained a symbolic value that conferred knowledge. In that sense, hieroglyphs, or the symbolic decorations of the primitive person, were much like modern drawing in that they were limitless, or “open facts” (74). Decoration, for that reason, is a highly poetic form that does not depend on the medium of the physical space utilized, but is instead the artistic intellectual endeavor that expresses a transitory truth. An application of Mário’s theory allows for a reading of Vicente do Rego’s illustrations as decorative drawings that relays signifiers in the same way as traditionally conceived written words. Especially since Rego’s illustrations for P. L. Duchartre’s Légendes, croyances et talismans des Indiens de l’Amazone and Quelques visages de Paris both contain keys; and the former an actual chart of symbolic characters that compare the decorative symbols of ancient Egypt with those of the Marajoara culture.

Mário argues that drawing cannot be defined by its typical medium, paper, unlike the media of the plastic arts:

O que me agrada principalmente, na tão complexa natureza do desenho, é o seu caráter infinitamente subtil, de ser ao mesmo tempo uma transitoriedade e uma sabedoria. O desenho fala, chega mesmo a ser muito mais uma espécie de escritura, uma caligrafia, que uma arte plástica.... É como que uma arte intermediária entre as artes do espaço e as do tempo, tanto como a dança. É se a dança é uma arte intermediária que se realiza por meio do tempo, sendo materialmente uma arte em movimento; o desenho é a arte intermediária que se realiza por meio do espaço, pois a sua matéria é imóvel. (71)

138 Mário de Andrade does not specifically mention the Art Deco style but he does discuss the decorative arts in the context of the barroco mineiro style and the “hieroglyphics” of the primitive peoples of the Amazon. In the case of barroco mineiro, Mário argues, Brazil has created a “new” decorative arts style (quoted in Avancini 124).
What I especially like, in the very complex nature of drawing, is its infinitely subtle character, of being at the same time a transitoriness and a wisdom. Drawing speaks, it even becomes much more a kind of writing, a calligraphy, than a plastic art.... It is like an intermediary art between the arts of space and those of time, much like dance. And if dance is an intermediary art that takes place through time, being materially an art in movement; drawing is an intermediary art that is realized through space, since its material is unmoving. (71)

Drawing, he continues, is “um fato aberto” (“an open fact”) that is not constrained by the frame of a painting; even a frameless painting is still limited because it is a closed composition (74). Drawing, on the other hand, can take place on any surface, lending it an anti-plastic nature that defies materiality. Evoking Rancière’s arguments on the vanguardist printed work, Mário argues that a sheet of paper with a drawing sketched upon it is simultaneously limited and limitless because an illustration is not an attempt to convey a vision of a complete reality:

O verdadeiro limite do desenho não implica de forma alguma o limite do papel, nem mesmo pressupondo margens. Na verdade o desenho é ilimitado, pois que nem mesmo o traço, esta convenção eminentemente desenhística, que não existe no fenômeno da visão, nem deve existir na pintura verdadeira ou na escultura, e colocamos entre o corpo e o ar, como diz Da Vinci, nem mesmo o traço o delimita. (74)

The real limit of drawing does not imply in any way a limit of paper, even assuming margins. Actually drawing is unlimited, since not even tracing, this eminently drafting convention, exists in the phenomenon of vision, and should not exist in true painting or in sculpture; place drawing between the body and the air, as Da Vinci says, not even tracing limits it. (74)

E. THE ART DECO ILLUSTRATED BOOK IN FRANCE

In his meticulous survey of the Art Deco book in France during the years 1919 to 1930, noted bibliophile Gordon N. Ray argues that the style as it appeared in illustration was thoroughly developed before the year 1920 and, had it not been for the outbreak of World War I, the style would have appeared more overwhelmingly in books by 1915 (28).
Ray closely examines the Art Deco *livre d’art*, books published in limited editions (from runs limited to a few 150 copies to middle-range runs between 500 or 600 copies) that were the product of remarkable coordination between publishers, printers, designers, illustrators, and in some instances, book binders. France was home to several centuries-old bibliophile societies that saw their numbers significantly broadened during the 1920s as demand for *livres d’art* skyrocketed, leading to the founding of more publishing houses throughout Paris (22). The Great Depression of 1929 devastated this burgeoning industry and many publishing houses closed their doors permanently by 1930 (25).

One of the primary shifts in the production of Art Deco *livres d’art* in France during the 1920s was the inclusion of colored illustrations instead of black and white ones (26). And the most commonly utilized method of Art Deco illustration was the *pochoir* (stencil) technique that used individually cut stencils, typically made of copper, brushed by a trained colorist with pigment for each color used in the illustration. The *pochoir* process resulted in incredibly vibrant coloring that was unmatched in other methods of colorized printing. Amy Ballmer notes that other industries, such as fashion houses and home furnishing and textile studios, also utilized the technique; Sonia Delaunay, for example, published two design portfolios *Tapis et tissus* (1929) and *Compositions: couleurs, idées* (1930) that included plates of patterns that could be transferred onto walls using a stencil or printed onto fabrics (28). Delaunay had so perfected the *pochoir* technique that she did not require the black printed outlines that many colorists relied upon to guide her work: her *pochoirs* “appear as stand-alone works made entirely of pure color…. The designs range from organic to geometric, and include intertwined circles, a motif repeated through Delaunay’s career” (28).
Ballmer explains that the pochoir technique was not unique to the early twentieth century and had, in fact, been a popular method in creating playing cards in France for centuries (27). The technique was new in books, however, and the remarkable assemblage of books illustrated by the pochoir process began in the late nineteenth century with the French “discovery” of the “sophisticated use of color and patterns on Japanese stencil-printed kimonos and woodblock prints. [Artisans] soon began to experiment with pochoir and to realize its potential as a design element, which included the use of stencils in wall and furniture decoration as well as on rugs and textiles” (27). The pochoir technique became so popular in the 1920s, particularly in livres d’art, that Parisian ateliers staffed hundreds of colorists, thereby requiring more sophisticated forms of production; the process became somewhat industrialized, with colorists arranged in assembly lines and each individual in charge of a single color (26).

Alfred Tolmer, editor-in-chief of the publishing house known as Tolmer et Cie or Maison Tolmer, published some of the most aesthetically innovative Art Deco livres d’art during the 1920s, utilizing original pochoir illustrations or lithographic prints. One of the house’s early famed works is Edy Legrand’s Voyages et glorieuses découvertes des grands navigateurs et explorateurs français (The Travels and Glorious Discoveries of the Great French Navigators and Explorers) (1921). In an extraordinarily detailed two-page pochoir illustration of Louisiana, French explorer Robert de La Salle (or René-Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle) and his fellow brightly dressed Frenchmen look upon downcast, darkly drawn natives that are bowing and whose faces are blackened. The caption at the bottom of the pages reads:

Son œuvre accomplie, Cavelier de la Salle, entouré de ses courageux compagnons, prend solennellement possession de la Louisiane. Accourus
de toutes parts, les chefs des nombreuses tribus indiennes viennent rendre hommage au grand Français et lui font leur soumission. (19-20)  

His work accomplished, Cavelier de la Salle, surrounded by his brave companions, solemnly takes possession of Louisiana. Rushing in from everywhere, the chiefs of many Indian tribes come to pay homage to the great Frenchman and submit to him. (19-20)

Ray considers the work to be “one of the handsomest of all pochoir books” with “bold designs and brilliant coloring” (50). Aside from its aesthetic beauty and sheer technical talent, however, the text also shares many common themes with a work published by Tolmer et Cie two years later: P. L. Duchartre’s Légendes, croyances et talismans des Indiens de l’Amazone (Legends, Beliefs, and Talismans of the Amazonian Indians) (1923), illustrated by Vicente do Rego Monteiro. Voyages is very primitivist in its thematic approach and visual treatment of the North American Indians, or “savages”, who “shamefully assassinate” la Salle in 1627 (21).

P. L. Duchartre’s book, despite addressing, in theory, topics relating to the native peoples of the Amazon, is considerably more nuanced, however, because of Rego Monteiro’s illustrations and, more specifically, the key entitled “Compared Symbolic Characters.” Also produced using the pochoir technique, quite possibly in conjunction with other printing techniques/mechanisms utilized by the Tolmer publishing house, Légendes is a masterful livre d’art, from the aesthetic beauty of its illustrations to the production methods of those very same illustrations. The execution of the book, including its page layouts, formatting, typography, and certain segments of the textual content demonstrate an early example of Alfred Tolmer’s constant attempts to challenge the

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139 The book contains several fold-out maps and no page numbers so my page numbers are an approximation.
140 See above.
In 1931, Alfred Tolmer himself published *Mise En Page: The Theory and Practice of Lay-Out* (The English-language version was published in London), a remarkable vanguardist text that was to be his definitive treatise on modern graphic design.

In *Mise En Page*, Tolmer experiments with *pochoir*, photography, collage, coated papers, embossed pages, and typography. And in one of the most notable sections, entitled “Freedom in Monumental and Typographical Design”, Tolmer summarizes the chapter:

The typographical freedom of modern advertising may be compared with the freedom of written inscriptions in ancient Assyria, Chaldea, Egypt and China. A study of certain forms of symbol writing. The influence of writing materials used on the appearance of the written character. (“Summary”) 141

Tolmer argues that a comparison of the writing systems of these ancient civilizations demonstrates certain “rules” to which a modern decorative use of words must adhere. The layout of Egyptian hieroglyphs, for example, is strongly geometrical, thereby purposefully leading the eye either horizontally or vertically in order to facilitate the reader. He then explains that the arrangement, or layout, of symbolic writing cannot be compared to a modern alphabet – it must be adapted when it is “an integral part of a decorative scheme.” It is highly revealing, therefore, that the same publisher of *Légendes* later published his own treatise on how not only modern graphic design layout has ancient origins, but that any attempt to make them part of a “decorative scheme” must be adapted for a modern audience. For that reason, it is highly possible that it was Tolmer himself that argued for the inclusion of the key in *Légendes*, a key that Rego Monteiro

141 *Mise En Page: The Theory and Practice of Layout* has no page numbers. The portion I explore in this chapter is labeled in the “Summary” as the third section of the book.
later subverts in *Quelques visages*. For Rego Monteiro in *Quelques visages*, modern graphic design needs no such key because all symbolic characters do not necessarily “translate” to hermetic, universal, or anti-languages.

### 4.6. Conclusion

In discussing both the illustrated works of Oswald de Andrade and Vicente do Rego Monteiro, one overarching theme is the need to study the original editions of their most experimental works in order to best approach their respective intents and purposes regarding not just the final printed products, but perhaps more importantly, the factors of handcraftsmanship and mechanical processes in vanguardist books during the 1920s. Art Deco was the style of choice for both Victor Brecheret, the illustrator of the cover of Oswald’s *A Estrela de Absinto*, as well as for Vicente do Rego Monteiro in his illustrations for both P. L. Duchatre’s *Légendes, croyances et talismans des Indiens de l’Amazone* and his own *Quelques visages de Paris*. The later editions of Oswald’s trilogy do not reproduce Brecheret’s artwork at all; and Jorge Schwartz’s “box” is a facsimile edition that, while loyal to the *appearance* of the original artwork, still has some noteworthy limitations to fully understanding the Brazilian Modernist printed book.

It is important to note the ongoing research of Sebastião Marques Cardoso who has critically examined the original covers of not just *A Estrela de Absinto*, but also the remainder of the trilogy. He laments the loss of all three of the original covers in later editions of *A Trilogia do Exílio*:

As capas – de forte conotação expressionista – propostas pelo argentino Juan José Balzi para a edição da *Trilogia* dos anos 90 apontam para uma ruptura significativa na percepção e, consequentemente, na produção e difusão do sentido inspirado no plano geral da obra. Não se trata mais de uma metáfora do drama coletivo vivido pelos personagens, mas de desgraças absolutamente pessoais. As figuras representadas das capas
The covers – with strong expressionist overtones – proposed by the Argentine Juan José Balzi for the edition of the *Trilogy* in the 1990s demonstrate a significant break in the perception and, consequently, the production and dissemination of the meaning inspired in the general layout of the work. It is no longer a metaphor of collective drama lived by the characters, but instead absolutely personal woes. The figures represented on the covers are trapped in oval frames as in windows or imaginary grids. (25)

Further research is also necessary, moreover, when it comes to the actual production techniques of the original *Trilogy*, in addition to other Brazilian Modernist printed works published in Brazil during the 1920s. How were these books produced and using what techniques? And what were the original aesthetic intentions behind these processes? In the case of the European and Russian printed vanguardist works, more research is available and the subject matter is therefore easier to approach – at least as it pertains to the production methods of Rego Monteiro’s illustrations. With regards to content, however, more research is necessary on his prolific poetic writings in French that accompanied many of his illustrations. Then, at least, more comprehensive arguments can be made concerning the relationship between text and image in works such as *Quelques visages de Paris* and his later experimental printed works of the 1930s and 1940s.
CONCLUSION

In Chapter I, I quoted designer Paul Frankl’s wonderment at the momentum with which he perceived technological progress to be taking place in the United States during the second decade of the twentieth century. Frankl discusses the “new spirit manifest in every phase of American life” which found expression in “skyscrapers, motor-cars, aeroplanes, in new ocean liners, in department stores and great industrial plants. Speed, compression, directness – these are its attributes” (quoted in Kaplan, 340). In this dissertation, I have argued that this “new spirit” was present on a global scale during the same time period, fostering the nearly simultaneous development of different manifestations of the Art Deco style in the decorative arts, fine arts, and vanguard printed production, all of which were not necessarily mutually exclusive aesthetic fields. “Speed, compression, directness,” furthermore, are elements that unite all four of my chapters in this dissertation as new advances in transportation technologies allowed for the immediate adoption and adaptation of both new ideas and the tools with which writers, artisans, and architects implemented their respective projects.

I focused on a very narrow time period, the 1920s, to demonstrate the plethora of competing aesthetic visions for an authentic, modern style in Brazil. My focus on vanguard printed production in Brazilian Modernism has demonstrated the many slippages between the movement and Art Deco, specifically in graphic design and illustration. These slippages also took place on a global scale as the modernistas traveled, studied, and worked throughout both Brazil and Europe, thereby creating works with a wide variety of aesthetic influences. What united the modernistas was their delving into
different visions of an “authentic” Brazil of the past in order to construct modern aesthetics that were both “new” and “original”.

In Chapter I, I investigated the origins of the Art Deco style in France and how nationalist concerns prompted the organizers of the 1925 Paris exposition to showcase the riches of the country’s colonial empire. In addition to discussing the raging debate that was taking place at the time regarding the field of decorative arts, I also explored the purpose and intent of grand expositions throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Colonialism was always nearly a driving force in these expositions and, in the case of the 1925 Paris exposition, primitivist modernism was the style du jour both on display and meant for purchase. Many characteristics of the style had already been well established before 1925 and while the exposition was a resounding success in the short-term, by 1929 the luxury goods industry in France had all but collapsed due to the Great Depression. The style’s ability to absorb different source material and yet still retain its most recognizable features ensured its survival, however, and other countries quickly put their local imprint on the style’s primary motifs.

I also demonstrated how mass advertising forces quickly harnessed the Art Deco style, including its various source materials, in order to lend more modern inflections to their sales campaigns. This proved to be especially true in the case of the poster; posters needed to be “new” and “flashy” in order to draw the eye of the mass consumer, and Art Deco proved to be the ideal style for department stores or travel agencies to constantly restyle their products and the printed advertisements for them. Art Deco designs also appeared in book covers (or jackets) and in book illustrations. These books were a far cry from the luxury editions with handcrafted bindings from the 1925 Paris exposition but
their sleek covers/jackets guaranteed the success of less expensive editions. American industrial forces had successfully co-opted the style in nearly every field, making Art Deco a fashionable, yet affordable style available for purchase to the mass consumer.

In Chapter II, I demonstrated how 1922, the year of the centennial anniversary of independence from Portugal, was instrumental in “setting the stage,” literally and figuratively, for Brazil’s “official” modern architectural style, the Neocolonial Style. I explored the origins of the style and questioned its proponents’ claims as to its national authenticity. I established that the Neocolonial Style was an entirely modern style that featured decorative elements of the barroco mineiro style, mixed with both ancient Iberian and California Mission Style ornamentation. One critic significantly described the Neocolonial Style as “the style that never existed”, calling into question the style’s presumed authenticity in both Brazil as well as in nations throughout Latin America. The official backing of the Neocolonial Style as Brazil’s architectural style par excellence made its use mandatory for representing the country abroad.

The rise of the Neocolonial Style also paralleled the rapid dissemination of the Art Deco style in architecture. Much like the Neocolonial Style, Art Deco in architecture also selectively applied supposedly “authentic” motifs; in this case, indigenous motifs from the Amazon and, in particular, the Island of Marajó. I argued that neither style attempted to recreate structures from a bygone era; instead, architects and interior designers constructed visions of a Brazilian past in order to create a uniquely modern, national style. Art Deco proved to be the more enduring of the two styles precisely because of its lack of official backing – at least until 1930, when President Getúlio Vargas and his administration co-opted the Art Deco style for both their monumental
structures and buildings that featured more of the internationally recognized features of the style, namely streamlining.

In Chapter III, I explored the famed 1922 Modern Art Week in São Paulo and established many of the participants’ connections with the European avant-garde movements. I argued that these connections were not the product of a “weak or servile imitation” of imported aesthetic tendencies, but rather indicative of broader transatlantic networks that facilitated the rapid dissemination of both new aesthetic experiments and new printing technologies and techniques in Brazil. Going back to Frankl, the focus of this chapter was on speed: the speed with which these changes took place in Brazil is astounding, especially considering the chronology of the introduction of the very first printing press to Brazil and the first use of modern printing technologies in the country. Within three decades from the founding of the Republic, early Brazilian Modernist writers and artisans were testing the limits of the printing press, breaking its “grid”, so to speak, and producing marvelously innovative vanguard texts. I demonstrated that the study of these production technologies and techniques is just as crucial as the final visual product in order to achieve a more complete understanding of the intents and purposes of Brazilian Modernist writers and artisans, especially given that these particular production methods were so time-consuming.

In Chapter IV, I delved into the little-studied texts of Oswald de Andrade and Vicente do Rego Monteiro. My selection of these two authors demonstrated the multifarious nature of the Brazilian Modernist movement in terms of geographic location, different publishing methods and techniques, and distinctive textual and visual interplays. In the case of Oswald de Andrade, his novel *A Estrela de Absinto* (1927) was published
in São Paulo and his protagonist was partially based on elements of his own biography and that of the illustrator of the cover of the novel, Victor Brecheret. Earlier in the decade, Rego Monteiro’s illustrations for P.L. Duchartre’s *Légendes* were published in Paris at a famed publishing house known for its beautifully produced vanguardist publications. His own work of illustrated poems *Quelques visages*, published just two years later, upended many of the ethnographic claims put forth by Duchartre. Oswald de Andrade and Vicente do Rego Monteiro may have both been *modernistas*, but these little studied early works demonstrate just how diverse illustrated and graphic design production was within the movement in its search for an authentically modern Brazilian aesthetic.

I furthermore returned to the field of decorative arts in this chapter in my discussion of Mário de Andrade’s theory of illustration as a type of decoration. His argument is that decorative drawings relay signifiers in the same way as traditionally conceived written words. I applied this theory to the illustrated texts of Rego Monteiro because of his use of charts that contained symbolic characters. Oswald’s novel contains no illustrations but the numerous overlapping textual and visual planes within and throughout the novel make clear that the cover of *A Estrela de Absinto* relays crucial signifiers to the reader. Rego Monteiro’s illustrations for *Légendes* also made particular mention of the symbolic characters of ancient Egypt. And *A Estrela’s* cover is that of a blood red sphinx, also a symbol of ancient Egypt, that furthermore plays a significant role within the novel. Numerous readings are possible by comparing both the aesthetic interplay within each work and between both authors’ works.

I also explored in Chapter IV the potential reasons behind the lack of critical attention to Oswald’s trilogy and most, if not all, of Rego Monteiro’s prolific illustrations
and writings. I concluded that the primary reason was distaste – distaste for Oswald’s excessively violent and despicable protagonist; distaste for his basing the character on elements of his own biography and that of his friend and colleague, Victor Brecheret; and distaste for the trilogy not “fitting” within the traditional literary canon of both Oswald de Andrade and the writings of the Brazilian Modernist movement. In the case of Rego Monteiro, critics disliked his obvious connections to France; his beautifully illustrated books were published in France and nearly all of his own writings were in French. And the two works explored in this dissertation were furthermore published as luxury editions in limited runs, making accessibility to them nearly impossible. There quite possibly could have been distaste for his livres d’art too – they spoke of elitism and exclusivity at a time when the Brazilian Modernists were trying to move away from imported styles, particularly those from France.

Several areas that require additional research include the distinct lack of African/Afro-Brazilian motifs in Brazilian Modernism. Why is it that Brazilian Modernists, even those who studied in Europe and were directly exposed to vogue nègre, chose only to work with indigenous themes and motifs? And why did the ceramics of one particular island, the Island of Marajó, satisfy the search for an “authentic” and “modern” Brazil? I also believe that further research is necessary into the artisanal presses that the Brazilian Modernists must have used to produce many of their printed publications. Given the transatlantic nature of the international vanguards, certain techniques and processes must have been utilized by the Brazilian Modernists but the exact extent of handcraftsmanship and mechanical processes remains unclear.
Lastly, my emphasis on the importance of understanding both the printing technologies, including the combination of handcraftsmanship and mechanical processes, is furthermore intended to demonstrate that new art, as Linda Shearer and Dianne H. Pilgrim state: “[makes] vivid the unexpected links between avant-garde and commercial activity, shaped in an era of new technologies that was not unlike the electronic revolution in our own age” (*Graphic Design in the Mechanical Age, vii-viii*). As I argued in Chapter III, the introduction of new printing technologies created and fostered new systems of knowledge, starting from the age of Gutenberg to the modern era. This dissertation explored one particular era indicative of the astounding cultural effects of such changes but many of the arguments also deeply resonate in contemporary times, the so-called “electronic revolution of our own age.” While it is not within the scope of this dissertation to explore the modern “electronic revolution,” the argument that new technologies have greatly impacted systems of knowledge and the linkages between our own era and that of the 1920s or to that of Gutenberg cannot and should not be overlooked. Rather, a study of these changes can help us to understand just how the “electronic revolution” is constantly (re)shaping our global society. Frankl’s “speed, compression, directness,” moreover, could very well be a description of the global information highway of the twenty-first century.
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