

Amazonian and Andean visual and sensorial worlds: comparison and new interpretative trends.

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Resumen / Abstract:

During the last ten years, a systematic exploration of visual and sensorial worlds has allowed Amerindian ethnology to illuminate classic anthropological themes, such as the relations between persons and objects and the articulations between visible and invisible aspects of lived worlds. This symposium proposes to explore these themes by comparing two Amerindian regions, the Amazonian and Andean world, which rarely enter into dialogue. Recently, there has been a renewed, but still nascent interest in comparative studies of the Andes and Amazonia. Built on different intellectual traditions, the anthropologies of the Andes and Amazonia still lack a common language from which a broader body of questions can circulate. Of special importance is the elaboration of alternative analytical and thematic perspectives to avoid the antagonism between Lowland and Highland South America, a legacy of previous studies predominantly focused on political economy and cultural ecology. This symposium focuses, rather, on approaches to the Andes and Amazonia from the visual and sensorial worlds that Amerindians frequent and create. The following themes suggest different ways to begin a new dialogue. The creation and destruction of objects as spatial-temporal processes; the conceptual overlapping of materiality, embodiment and agency; the use of objects and images as producers of memory; the intersemiotic relations between visual, musical and verbal systems, especially in the field of ritual performance; synaesthetic experiences and the ways of seeing, hearing and sensing the universe; ethnographic and archaeological theories about figuration, abstraction and image and their socio-cosmological unfolding; the interpretation of systems of objects as populations and their implication for Amerindian socialities. These themes highlight how sensorial perceptions and languages are articulated and the tension between what can and what cannot be visualised – as well as what can and what cannot be materialised in Andean and Amazonian lived worlds. The symposium promises to offer new understandings of the relations of similarity and difference existing between these two contiguous regions – the Amazon and the Andes – interrelated through a long and complex process of exchange.