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Modern and contemporary, the bull insists on keeping itself as Art's main character in Mato Grosso do Sul

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**ABSTRACT:** The State of Mato Grosso do Sul, Brazil, was established and politically from the geographic division of the State of Mato Grosso in 1977. The new State assumed the title of largest producer of dairy cattle and cropping in Latin America. Since then, various artistic themes have been addressed by local art production, as it has been done throughout Latin America: the artistic cultural productions turn their heads to their rural areas. From this period of division of states, cattle prevailed routinely as the most expressive theme of art production. In this production, cattle is preserved and supported both by the government and by its co-opted critics, which keep resonances in Mato Grosso do Sul's artistic production. Horns, leather, iconographies, hot iron brands permeate the works made by artists born and residing in the State. This article aims to investigate critically this recurrence in artistic production between the years of 1977 and 2010, a period that marked the State of Mato Grosso do Sul as a particular artistic and cultural entity member of the National Assembly, by tracking the way in which the lowland landscape of the bull is still in keep with being an "artistic relief" representing the State. Using concepts like Charles Baudelaire's *beauty*, as well as Theodor W. Adorno's *Essay as form*, among others, this work aims to reflect on Mato Grosso do Sul's current, post-division artistic situation. That is, why is the bull a constant in the state's visual arts.

**KEYWORDS:** Mato Grosso do Sul. Local culture. Cattle Production. Humberto Esp  ndola. Visual arts. Contemporaneity.

[...] the academic guild only has patience for philosophy that dresses itself up with the nobility of the universal, the everlasting, and today -when possible -with the primal; the cultural artifact is of interest only to the degree that it serves to exemplify universal categories, or at the very least allows them to shine through -however little the particular is thereby illuminated.

Theodor W. Adorno, *Essay as Form*, p. 16

The fair consists of an eternal, invariable element whose quantity is exceedingly difficult to determine, and of a relative, circumstantial element that is -- if we want it to -- in a subsequent or combined fashion, time, fashion, moral, passion.

Without this second element--a pleasant, throbbing wrapping, like an aperitif for the divine feast--, the first element would have been indigestible, unappealing, unfit and inappropriate for human nature. I challenge any person to find out an example of beauty without both these elements.  
Charles Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life*, p. 10-11

A priori, we should clarify that our work is not about the recognition of values of modern aesthetics in Mato Grosso do Sul's artistic production. Before that, we want to address the contemporary, continuous, adjoined and explainable presence of cattle modern features in the artistic production of Mato Grosso do Sul. In order to do so, we will take as the main scope of our debate and/or acknowledgment the Critical theoretical formulations by Charles Baudelaire in his book *The Painter of Modern Life* (1996)-- which deals with the work of art by Constantin Guys, regarding the maintenance of classic features in its Baudelairean modernity --, and in *The Essay as Form*, by Theodor W. Adorno, published in 2003 in Brazil, in Portuguese, which will allow us to postulate that the academy only recognizes local in its relationship with universal, with aesthetic-formal traditional features arising out of the discovery of the first, with more essayistic propositions. Through an optics of invented universality, the aesthetics of the bull has been a reference to the visual arts of contemporary Mato Grosso do Sul ever since modern times.

Coated with divine beauty by traditional critics from the State of Mato Grosso do Sul, the bull won the status of *persona mui grata* in the local artistic production. While we think about the specie's characteristics, such an armour was assigned to this beautiful animal from concepts formulated in the highest aesthetic-artistic tradition -- since the Renaissance, the fine arts from around the world display concepts of beauty, color, light, form, technique and so on as defining elements of the qualitative value of artistic and cultural production. Thus, the *personas* invented for bulls began to circulate the "high wheels" of the artistic society of Mato Grosso do Sul. The bulls have been dressed up as generals, native brazilians, sacred and profane myths from other cultures, and, now, they face the fine social tastes in artistic productions, *hooded* as bull-animals. Now, probably after a thousand and one ideas, they are suffering animal mutations:

After having painted the bull in every form, Humberto Esp  ndola has lately decided to portray it in a minimalist synthetic language. For this series of experiments, he chose the hump, a part of the animal hitherto scorned by other artists. With that, the artist

projected himself through time, with the peculiar ability creators have of swallowing minutes in order to anticipate the future they sympathize. Forms resembling hooded creatures began to appear, rooted in the current moment. The bulls are turned into covered Muslim; The women, enveloped in the sadness of their burqas, in their grief and protest against oppression, bestow a sacred presence upon the painting. The whiteness of humps conveys a strong feeling of solitude; the cattle's sadness gets to us, makes us part of their grief. (Rosa, 2002).

Over many years, the aesthetics of the bull in Mato Grosso do Sul, as is it well known, has been dominating the insistent aesthetic/modern readings made of productions with bull iconographic feature – also considered more relevant in all artistic and cultural production in the State by those same traditional readings. Attached to aesthetic concepts, the art critics in Mato Grosso do Sul have generally engaged to think of the bull as characteristic of an aesthetic tradition in the cultural production of Mato Grosso do Sul. As a newcomer of colonizations, the bull has taken a place in the sun in the academicist tradition in Mato Grosso do Sul, anchored by this same critical and aesthetical production; this is true at least for the south of the state. The standardization of the bull as an artistic object causes a greater relocation in its history as an animal, endowed with mystical aura in some countries and with a food aura in many others, which have been grouping the creature in many other cultural faces over the years.

Aesthetic values, such as color, shape, volume, connection with tradition, etc., attributed standardized places to bulls in Mato Grosso – spots that used to be occupied by Madonnas, landscapes, Biblical passages and many other figures nowadays thought of as traditional in the world production of visual arts – in addition to linking them to local historical facts which, in its turn, for traditional readers, raise the animal species to a place/position of sociocultural and historical relationship with its cultural and local geographic space. In many artistic productions in Mato Grosso do Sul, the bull has began to occupy a place of cultural subject. The animal has taken no “bull” from criticism [NT1]. No platform for cultural and artistic production in Mato Grosso do Sul lacks cattle in image and resemblance. Here, bulls are “seen and herd” [NT2], from marginal to traditional aesthetics:

At the time of the distention, the rose-bull condensed secrets whispered behind closed doors. During the military dictatorship, green-yellow tones saw the Brazilian oppressing rulers with irony. In the Division of the State, numerous paintings symbolized the political force that split in two the big leather bull that was Mato

Grosso Uno. The art of Humberto Espíndola is bound to this moment in history, resulting from the awareness of an artist identified with the State in which he was born and chose to live. (Rosa, 2002).

Georg Von Lukács' idea (in Adorno's essay) that literature – and artwork as well, we suppose – has freed itself from formality, unlike the essay at that time in Germany points at the fact that we want to think that the artwork of Mato Grosso do Sul has not yet broken from that same formal tradition imposed by the academy. As observed by Adorno, this formality is also relevant to us and advocated in Baudelaire's work when he deals with the advent of modernity during his period in Paris. Such findings are relevant for considering that the work of art in Mato Grosso do Sul (through the practice of art, such as stigmatized readings by the traditional criticism) still has a close, intimate relationship with Baudelairean modernity and the non-essayistic formality recognized by Adorno. The relationship and “weight” of the artistic-academic tradition still dominates the conceptualizations of value of the artistic productions in the State.

Whilst, on one hand, Adorno defends the view that the academy only recognizes the local that communicates with the universal, on the other, Baudelaire ensures that an entire tradition defines the production of a given place. Namely, on the one hand, we have Adorno's formulations in defense of greater freedom of speech – at least, in the aforementioned essay, we make use of here – and, on the other, a vehement defense of the maintaining of tradition as a way of structuring an entire contemporary artistic and cultural production – that if we think, obviously, with the same propositions with which Baudelaire thought in his time. So we have two different points of view, even though each one in its own time and space, of which we shall make use of to think the binarism between formal and liberal, young and old, Center and periphery, aesthetic and non-aesthetic, etc. –, with the bull being present in the possible conclusions – in addition to allowing us to understand how these binarisms can be seen also in artistic-theoretical-critical and plastic productions throughout Mato Grosso do Sul.

In this sense, it is important to do the transcript of excerpts taken from our base-writings of both authors – including with great approximation in the form of a thematic approach in which each one shows their topic of interest – in order to prove what we're trying to explain. First, Adorno tells us:

Instead of achieving something scientifically, or creating something artistically, the effort of the essay reflects a childlike freedom that

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catches fire, without scruple, on what others have already done. The essay mirrors what is loved and hated instead of presenting the intellect, on the model of a boundless work ethic, as *creatio ex nihilo*. (Adorno, 2003, p. 16-17).

However, one of the Baudelairean essays that complete the collection, but are nevertheless important to our formulations, states that:

[...] inspiration has something in common with a convulsion, and that every sublime thought is accompanied by a more or less violent nervous shock which has its repercussion in the very core of the brain. The man of genius has sound nerves while those of the child are weak. With the one, Reason has taken up a considerable position; with the other, Sensibility is almost the whole being. (Baudelaire, 1996, p. 18).

In both quotes, we have, as an object of comparison, the child, in order to establish the relationship between the writer subject and the academicist subject – keeping Adorno's line of thought –, and also between artist and Baudelaire's *Man of the World*. I.e. Adorno takes advantage of the writer in order to speak in a less formal fashion, likewise himself in addressing particular subjects in his essay writing. From the conscience of a child, Baudelaire compares the artistic productions of a man who is a mere painter as a reproducer – a bad observer – and an artist who is a Man of the World and therefore a good observer.

The issue being discussed here is that, for one, we have freedom of expression and production, and, for another, the relationship between production and tradition is a *sine qua non* condition. From this comparable perspective between both scholars, we can formulate two questions about Mato Grosso do Sul's artistic production: do artists and the contemporary criticism of their productions formulate essayists or academic speeches? The bull, as an aesthetic characteristic, is already consolidated in the state's artistic production, being represented as a contemporary factor or as influenced by the artistic productions of modern-academic tradition? Both issues that should guide our work have artist Humberto Espíndola's works as a source for primary research, for he is the creator of cattle (1968 and 1972).<sup>1</sup> This theme is still represented in its contemporary production, as well as his bulls serve as influence for much of

the artistic and cultural production of the vast majority of artists from Mato Grosso do Sul.

The criticism's elation of cattle in the artist's production contributes to the dissemination and maintenance of the bull characteristic as a source of "inspiration" of an entire local cultural production – crafted to academic. The dream of turning local into universal, or the particular into global...

When the "Cupins" (humps) series' naturalism gave rise to the representativeness of brands of indigenous captains, the visual artistry of the Cattle artist entered the dense space of interiority, as if seeking once again the riddle of origins in abyssal zones. He had already worked with the cattle branding of farmers, applied with fire on leather in works that were almost ritualistic. Kadiwéu pottery and body painting had already been featured in his paintings. Works in the form of aerial view, such as "Mapas de ocupação" (1975), had pyro engraved leather collages and settings, and were part of installations that comprise today the artist's symbolic encyclopedia. With the bull as the central axis of so many variants and figurations, Humberto Espíndola's artistic production does not fail to mention the thematic coherence of its own trajectory (Bertoli, 2005, p. 1).

If, on the one hand, we have the maintaining of an artistic specificity as the label of *coherence* in the work of art throughout a career – and therefore as a valued characteristic – on the other hand, the linearity in the trajectory of the production of the painter corroborates the stating of a formalism as this artistic production's tradition. With his bulls, Espíndola has been upfront the artistic production of Mato Grosso do Sul as its symbol. Having tried several techniques in his artistic production, made into an icon almost always with the "mark of the bull" – let us think here of hot "pyro engraved" branding irons in the hides of animals – the artist has structured an entire artistic production that, today, is seemingly based in aesthetic formalism that could be understood as academic production – as opposed to Adorno's essayism and to an artistic work resulting from relationships established with tradition. This is an achievement for Charles Baudelaire's considerations on the advances of modernity in his time.

According to Adorno's text, the essay, therefore, the essayist has greater freedom of speech and formulation in writing on a particular subject that they want to write about. The scholar also assures us that the essay does not purports to establish itself as an academic form of discoursing over a given subject. In other words, there's no need to undertake certain aesthetic and formal standards to make overinterpretations – which ultimately end up

1. "Humberto Espíndola has been the flagship of the plastic arts of Mato Grosso and Mato Grosso do Sul ever since 1967. In his works, he has cracked open the environment and the world in which he lives. Thus, he was the first artist to think of and design Central Brazil. A Cattle Production artist, he was awarded between 1968 and 1972 in the most important halls and took part in international Biennales. The midwest and the entire Brazilian upbringing from within have found its place through the emblematic echo of cattle." (See: FIGUEIREDO, s.d. Available at: <[http://www.humbertoespindola.com.br/001-index\\_frameset.htm](http://www.humbertoespindola.com.br/001-index_frameset.htm)>. Accessed in: June 11, 2010.)

being shallow, if you think of them culturally-theoretically –, the critic's words about the topic, or to use a particular resource to be able to speak better or worse for a particular audience. On essay and the essayist, Adorno says:

Its concepts are neither deduced from any first principle nor do they come full circle and arrive at a final principle. Its interpretations are not philologically hardened and sober, rather, according to the predictable verdict of that vigilant calculating reason that hires itself out to stupidity as a guard against intelligence, it overinterprets. (Adorno, 2003, p. 17).

Using the works of artist Constantin Guys as an example of the advances of modernity in his time, Charles Baudelaire asserts that an artist must make precise relations with tradition, so their work can be the maintaining of their perception of beauty. According to Baudelaire's view on the matter, the artist must emphasize, through their works, characteristics such as *man of the world* that the common artist (a mere copycat of tradition) would not observe in her contemporaneity. The thinker also advocates that, upon walking amidst the crowd, the artist must be able to pick up on the "northern style" – as Clarice would've said – of people in his same sociocultural environment. It would not be possible to just copy the works of European artistic tradition, in the hopes of keeping oneself as a visual artist; it was important to capture and let oneself be captured by its characteristics. Baudelaire states that:

For the perfect *flâneur*, for the passionate spectator, it is an immense joy to set up house in the heart of the multitude, amid the ebb and flow of movement, in the midst of the fugitive and the infinite. To be away from home and yet to feel oneself everywhere at home; to see the world, to be at the centre of the world, and yet to remain hidden from the world — impartial natures which the tongue can but clumsily define. (Baudelaire, 1996, p. 20-21).

Baudelaire's concept of man artist is a romantic person who is the combination of everything in the most perfect order. His man artist is an observer of the world, a flattered observer surrounded by the world, the center of this world. Form and effect characterize the subject artist to Baudelaire. Adorno's essayist man, however, cherishes the loosening and shutdown that (in)formality can confer to his work. If we think on the subject of Adorno's essay as an artist subject, we characterize this as a subject engaged with her time and space in a cultural and not formal manner. The bull, that is, the artistic production in contemporary times, would slip through its aesthetic-formal forms, but would not emphasize its current sociocultural conditions. As we had stated in the beginning of this work, this is not about recognitions and much less about disdain for the

aesthetic, but about elucidations of the presence of this traditional reading, always with the bull as the leading actor and the formalist criticism as the supporting actor in local artistic production.

Nowadays, if we consider a subject artist as being a Baudelairean *man of the world*, we are bringing it to an invented local reality. In other words, to expect that the artwork of the subject still has formal references with Rubens' drapery, as did Baudelaire in his time, is to validate the production of this artist with relations linked to the characteristics of traditional world art history. As Adorno has already warned us, *grosso modo*, the artistic production should not aspire to a privileged place just for its aesthetic-formal characteristics. In this sense, the world observer subject-artist is both the center of the world she observes and not the periphery, or observer, of this world that observes her. We can think that Adorno's subject-artist is an artist who does not have the formalism as a vanishing point for all her artistic and intellectual production.

At the same time, we can say that the insistence of aesthetic recognition in the work of a contemporary artist causes her own work's bankruptcy, as well as of an entire artistic career that traditional critics insist on keeping. To echo Baudelaire and use Rubens' drapery to state that Espíndola's bulls are contemporary to the new, XXI century artistic proposals is the same as saying that the painting has no importance to the sociocultural subject in Mato Grosso do Sul without the drapery on the bull's hides, done by paint and pencils. For the aesthetic is not the *surplus value* that must be considered in contemporary artistic production. Through this perspective, we can also say the two authors referenced in this paper agree with our statement, each one in their own way. According to Adorno:

No one would have thought to dismiss as unimportant, accidental or irrational the observations of an experienced man because they are only his own and as such do not lend themselves readily to scientific generalization. (Adorno, 2003, p. 23).

We can also say, echoing Baudelaire when speaking of men's capacity – at least when the person is considered a good observer: "Few men are gifted with the capacity of seeing; there are fewer still who possess the power of expression." (BAUDELAIRE, 1996, p. 23). Even though artwork is understood by Baudelaire as a force of the artist's feeling, an inner force that emanates from their experiences with the world, within its limitations in favor of classic as its defining aesthetic. It is not the observer's experience of a given world, but the world that surrounds her as a subject of the lived present.

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From Adorno's and Baudelaire's considerations on the matter, we can say that the readings which lean towards the recognition of the bull as an unique iconographic feature of Mato Grosso do Sul's artistic production seek to enlist the local artistic and cultural production as universal productions. A tireless attempt by the Academy to make the particular recognized in the global, as adverted by the epigraph above Adorno's essay. In this sense we may ask: what is the bull's characteristic that is more or less universal for them to be vested in prominent places in the *hall* of global cultural production? From the premise that the bull is a commercially important product for Mato Grosso do Sul's culture, we can say that the wording of the current critique contributes by valuing the image of cattle with the same purpose of the speech that says the state of Mato Grosso do Sul is the Land of Cattle. The government of Mato Grosso do Sul links the divine image of the bull to its local culture in order to headcount its quality in artistic and cultural production. These readings just what is seen through the eyes of the power, who claims to be concerned with the participation of the cultural production of the nation in its decisions behind closed doors:

In 1981, Espíndola visited the indigenous universe and appropriated the signs of kadiwéu painting. The bull turned into a handmade piece, seen in fairs as sold and despoiled indigenous culture. Humberto's view reinvented the environment with the inks of irony to point fingers at and raise awareness about ecology issues, forever present in his work. (Rosa, 2009, p. 114) [emphasis added by author.]

If art supposedly responds to expectations (as the government and the criticism founded in aesthetic concepts constantly wishes) of people regarding people's inquiries, for, nowadays, the public and the private coexist harmoniously in society. We can say that this same criticism can answer our first question on whether our artistic and critical production wonders if artists and contemporary criticism formulate essayist or academic discourses. Tradition and formalization constitute Mato Grosso do Sul's artistic production almost in general. We agree in this sense, considering Adorno's views on the matter: "It allies itself with that reification against which it is the function of functionless art, even today, to raise its own however mute objectified protest" (Adorno, 2003, p. 22). The Public and private will always be against each other, whereas such social and cultural positions are also antagonistic. Bearing in mind, of course, that these antagonistic positions of the artistic production are arbitrary; notwithstanding that, they are only endorsing a biased rhetoric.

It is still possible to say that our productions, through the optics of aesthetic tradition, are influenced by modern Baudelairean formalities, considering the claims of Charles Baudelaire himself, which state that the artist is a giftbearer, an inspiration that causes her to be able to transform the observed into art and poetry. Thus making the world around her into an observed thing, full of shapes and colors. Giving beauty to which used to be regarded as colorless, unimportant, lackluster. According to Baudelaire:

An artist with a perfect sense of form but particularly accustomed to the exercise of his memory and his imagination, then finds himself assailed, as it were, by riot of details, all of them demanding justice, with the fury of a mob in love with absolute equality. Any form of justice is inevitably infringed: any harmony is destroyed, sacrificed: a multitude of trivialities are magnified; a multitude of little things become usurper of attention. (Baudelaire, 1996, p. 31).

Unlike the Adornian essayist, the Baudelairean artist values the relationship between his own artistic production with tradition. While the essayist artist works on her production based on a freedom of expression, taking into account her current memory, the Baudelairean artist uses her historical (mainly about modernity) and archivist memory to build her prone relationship with traditional works. In contrast to this artistic stance advocated by Baudelaire, Hal Foster's relevant words on the context of Post-modernity serve us, for they deal with similar changes on past artistic conceptions, i.e.: in Baudelaire's time, these were transpositions from classical to modern, and in "post-modern" times, they were changes in the critical thinking from modernity to post-modernity, changes on the position occupied by criticism; and criticism, in its turn, can change this conception about the artist in regards to concepts that formulate their production. According to Foster, it is the role of the critics to intervene or even to provide new possibilities and ways of (re-) reading the cultural artistic productions of their time. This stance, as advocated by Foster, is closer to Adorno's formulations about essay as another form of thinking new conceptions brought by temporal and inevitable changes. Foster tells us that:

Thus rather than make a fetish of theory, it seems legitimate to me (though legitimacy is not the issue) to engage different objects with different tools as long as the critical specificity or "sectorial validity" of each method in the present is kept in mind. (Foster, 1996, p. 19).

Considering critics, we understand it is not possible to analyze culturally different objects, using the same theoretical contribution towards similar results, but unknowing the objects we seek. That is to say that Humberto Espíndola's bulls can only be recognized as fragments that are possibly characterizing of Mato Grosso do Sul's

culture if the critic considers the bull works of value to this culture, thus validating the government's speech, which wants to make this aesthetic and financial recognition into cultural importance. The intellectual instance of criticism is who changes the way of reading the specific socio-cultural objects produced by society. In this sense, there is truth to Adorno's position when he states that academicism induces a formatting of these readings, which demand a new deformation so that new understandings and ideas about the cultural production of criticism's theoretical production can be drawn. As long as criticism keeps reproducing the idea that the bull represents the epitome of Mato Grosso do Sul's culture (through music, visual arts, theatre, cinema or people's cultures), we will always have the bull's image as a fetish of cultural representation.

Baudelaire was right in some aspects regarding the ghost of modernity. One of them was stating that even modernity would someday become classic. From this perspective, together with the readings that rule over a good part of Mato Grosso do Sul's cultural and artistic production, it is possible to say that the aesthetic and critical readings rule over as the main characters of evaluation of our artistic productions. There are only a few readings about the bull, for example, that recognize that this "icon" of Mato Grosso do Sul's artistic production insists on appearing in places or platforms less expected to the production. Wisely, Baudelaire states that:

If we cast our eye over our exhibitions of modern pictures, we shall be struck by the general tendency of our artists to clothe all manner of subjects in the dress of the past. Almost all of them use the fashions and the furnishings of the Renaissance, as David used Roman fashions and furnishings [...] (Baudelaire, 1996, p. 24-25).

The cultural production of the people as a nation was turned into an elite product by the traditional Mato Grosso do Sul criticism, and, in that said production, the bull insists on making itself present. Sometimes, it occupies the first seats of the state's aesthetic-financial rankings; sometimes, it appears illustrated as a cultural representation by the formal, aesthetical critical readings.

Is the bull, as an aesthetic characteristic, already consolidated in the state's artistic production, represented as a contemporary factor or influenced by the artistic productions of the academic tradition? This was the second question – among some others that have come up during the work's development – that we intend to investigate in our analysis of the aesthetics of the bull, so to speak, in this work that analyses but a portion of the production in Mato Grosso do Sul. Well, considering Baudelaire's first characteristics for "the beautiful" – introduced in the initial writings of the aforementioned

collection –, we would say that the aesthetic contouring of the animal is an aesthetic-formal characteristic largely featured in the arts production of this west-central portion of Brazil. "Now I think of both MTs" that dispute the title of state representing cattle production to the rest of the world. If, in cattle production, there is a dispute for the bull's image as a constant between the two states, a dispute for the representation as an artifact of the culture, the image of the animal seems to prevail with greater force in the culture of Mato Grosso do Sul, if Adorno's conscience prevails as per the formalization imposed by tradition.

There seems to be another consensus among critics, when it comes to the relationship between humankind and its cultural milieu: on the importance of the Adornian critic's attentive and differential "sight" in relation to the configuration of their theoretical formulations, or, as advocated by Baudelaire, the man-of-the-world artist in comparison to the man-of-tradition artist. That is to say, both critics, poet and philosopher, agree (each in their own way) that the bios of the "reader" subject, as a critic of their time, is the one who is going to modify the form of reading or thinking their artistic or critical cultural production. In this sense, we think that both artist and critics are advocating a point of view that is being completely interfered by their way of seeing their surrounding world. If Baudelaire wants the artist to be a man of the world – a good *flâneur* –, Adorno's desire, in *The Essay as Form*, is to be a person capable of reading her world in a more informal manner.

Counterpointing all this to the Baudelairean idea of the subject as a man of the world – through Adorno's non-formal view –, we understand, once again, that aesthetic-formal readings emphasize a side of Humberto Espíndola's work that does not favor its placement in the intricacies of academic and aesthetic artist. Contrary to the ideas that we just trying to expose of both authors, one realizes that the critical *entrepôta* in the State and also the one that talks about the production of the State, generally, assess the production of artists by the world-past by fellow artistry.

The Guaicuru heraldry is a celebration of that moment of passion between the artist and the act of painting. It comes in new chromatic plans, deepened by heat, having as their talisman the marks of native Brazilian captains, the brave knights of the Pantanal, who brand their horses and belongings and paint the warriors and the women. As an aside, women are the artists of the body. Which riddles the Guaicuru writings are hinting at in this painting? (Bertoli, 2005, p. 2).

Espíndola's bois were, now and then, assessed by the

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aesthetic-critical tradition of the place and also by critics that give “universal” recognitions, as powerful cultural *mutants*. Built with parts of anonymous bodies and/or renowned time/fact-cultural subjects to the artist, cattle gained the status of *representamen*, necessarily of a platonic imitation. Roughly speaking, the subject kept away at three levels of representation of what is possibly believable as reality. In the bull artist's case, his works feature a plausible (according to critics) correspondence to the sociocultural subject of Mato Grosso do Sul, distant by “three decades” from their true artistic and cultural conditions. For this relation to be completed with the first of Baudelaire's ideas on the beautiful, let us see the correspondence, with regards to illustration, to the sense of aesthetic beauty to the art critic-poet, who thinks that the beautiful consists of two inseparable and conjoined elements, “an eternal element, which is invariable, the quantity of which it is exceedingly difficult to determine, and a relative element, which is, and a relative element, which is circumstantial, which will be, if one wishes, sequential or all at once - the period, fashion, morality, passion.” (Baudelaire, 1996, p. 10)

From this point thereon, we shall see what both scholars have to say, in order to go back to the idea that the bios, for each of its ways, interferes in the possible readings that the subject can make of her own world. Predilections aside, Adorno makes a claim on the privileged articulation that one may make on the articulation of concepts:

In this the very method of the essay expresses the utopian intention. All of its concepts are presentable in such a way that they support one another, that each one articulates itself according to the configuration that it forms with the others. In the essay discreetly separated elements enter into a readable context; it erects no scaffolding, no edifice. Through their own movement the elements crystallize into a configuration. It is a force field, just as under the essay's glance every intellectual artifact must transform itself into a force field. (Adorno, 2003, p. 31).

Emphasized by our favoring the readings of this author, this passage shows us that only the de-formalized essayist is able to transform the reading possibilities of a determined object produced by culture.

Notwithstanding, Baudelaire, from our perspective, collaborates with Adorno's reading in the aspect of subject involvement with its object of work, and the former author describes the process of artistic production of a subject man-of-his-sociocultural-world:

Few men have the gift of seeing; fewer still have the power to express themselves. And now, whilst others are sleeping, this

man is leaning over his table, his steady gaze on a sheet of paper, exactly the same gaze as he directed just now at the things about him, brandishing his pencil, his pen, his brush, splashing water from the glass up to the ceiling, wiping his pen on his shirt, hurried, vigorous, active, as though he was afraid the images might escape him, quarrelsome though alone, and driving himself relentlessly on. And things seen are born again on the paper, natural and more than natural, beautiful and better than beautiful, strange and endowed with an enthusiastic life, like the soul of their creator. (Baudelaire, 1996, p. 23-24).

It bears reminding here our interpretation of the writings of both authors as privileging a *bios* subject in its theoretical-critical productions or even cultural-artistic productions, considering that maybe a critical-aesthetic reading would not be able to distinguish such trace from the enrollment of the subject in the reading of their texts. In this sense, we stress that it is not our proposal, as we have already said more than once, to see through aesthetic eyes, nor consider object of predilection of analysis, much less our theoretical-critical support of the authors. Therefore, *interpreted in its entirety* – works by the artist and theoretical-critical production –, we read between the lines in search of fragments of what other readers of tradition would be unable to read.

With that in mind, taking into account the readings that, until then, are made of the artistic work, we can say that the production by Humberto Espíndola has the stigma of an artistic and cultural production linked to a state label, with formal traits corresponding to the highest aesthetic-artistic tradition. The relationship between him and his cultural environment is also represented in his cattle production. However, the bull who insists on characterizing the Mato Grosso do Sul person is masking the truth and suspected of another truth invented by the artist. The bull occupies the spot of the dweller of the borders, first to represent the aesthetic and financial culture. Afterwards, cattle acquires the aesthetic-formal image, to, only after the wear and tear of the image of “the deity lord Bull”, achieve the closest relationship it achieves with the social subject of the west-central locus, in its dishes and pans filled with yellow cassava.

In the center of Mato Grosso and of the Universe is Humberto Espíndola, priest of the bull. His restless spirit was in the caves of Babylon, ran through the Valley of the Kings, venerated the Apis Bull, contemplated the loneliness of Macondo, saw the Paraguay River lighten with fire and blood. At the top of Brazil, watching the slow smashing of each fragment of life, by the means of the brush, his penetrating gaze retrieves the story of the particles made of flesh and dream who refuse the destruction by death.

Espíndola is excess, paradox, marvel, ambivalence. Only superlative adjectives are fitting of him, for these are comparison with explosive forces of the nature: volcanoes, floods, lightnings, earthquakes. He is whilst he isn't; he is the nothingness that is everything, descending into hell and to the delusions of paradise. To run one's eyes through his paintings is to walk through the maze without Ariadne's thread, with the Minotaur as a guide towards the realm of the imaginary, where halls of mirrors multiply, surpass and polish the horror of human life. Just like a crystal that gives new dimensions to objects. Espíndola, like Fellini, always makes the same movie, repaints all the previous frames that will be forever outside the same frame of Cattle Production. (Rosa, 1985).

In the extensive fragment that we have presented, we come to the very clear conclusion through which story unfolds, the artist's relationship with his social environment to the aesthetic criticism which has been, over many years, validating the work of the priest of the art in Mato Grosso do Sul. Going against what we have seen in Baudelaire – about the artist as a good *flâneur* –, just as we have seen in Adorno, which now collaborates by saying that the essayist (and we make use of it, thinking of the artist), “he will rather go for the allegedly difficult writers, who shed light on what is simple and illuminate it as a “stance of the mind toward objectivity.” (Adorno, 2003, p. 32) Not a fake and pacifying *confrontation* with someone or something that can validate her instead of rendering to the artist the thinking of her own artistic-intellectual production. Therefore, Baudelaire strengthens the topic once again, seeming to anticipate Adorno's conclusions by saying that

[...] it is much easier to decide outright that everything about the garb of an age is absolutely ugly than to devote oneself to carry out the labor of searching in modern life the mysterious beauty it might contain, as little or faint as it may be. “Modernity” signifies the transitory, the fugitive, the contingent, the half of art of which the other half is the eternal and the immutable. (Baudelaire, 1996, p. 25).

Let us make the effort to think about Baudelairean *transient modernity* – transposing it to our time as something that is useless as an artistic, aesthetic or critic evaluator for a lifetime – just as another historical reference. The authors' references is useful for us to prove that it is not enough for the primary relationship with the tradition to establish a link between the aesthetic-formal production with the aesthetic and cultural production.

To deify the production of the local contemporary subject in order to set it as universal production, thinking that there must be the same quality of detailing in the wrinkled skin of the bull as the draping effect in Rubens's paintings of villagers – now think of

Baudelaire – is equal to judging that this production is not linked with tradition. The production based on this shallow theoretical-critical relationship is nothing but an imitation in the farthest level from reality, not even supposed by Aristotle or Plato.

In *Poetics*, Aristotle tried to make a better reading of the process of imitating the man, justifying it by saying that “mimesis is inherent in man from his earliest days; he differs from other animals in that he is the most imitative of all creatures, and he learns his earliest lessons by imitation.” (Aristotle, 1993, p. 27), immediately illustrating the relationship of complacency among critics and existing artist in Mato Grosso do Sul's artistic production for the simple pleasure of recognition in the imitations of the other and vice versa. Since Plato, which is less “romantic” than his supposed “master”, is categorical when he speaks of the imitator, using the notion of a lesser artist classified by the level of actual imitation or representation of reality, which was, in its turn, named, *grosso modo*, “bad imitator”. The Greek philosopher shows a dialogue between Socrates and Glaucon:

“Do you want us to address him as [the couch's] nature-begetter or something of the kind?”

“That's just, at any rate,” he said, “since by nature he has made both this and everything else.”

“And what about the carpenter? Isn't he a craftsman of a couch?”  
Yes.

“And is the painter also a craftsman and a maker of such a thing?”  
Not at all.

“But what of a couch will you say he is?”

“In my opinion,” he said, “he would most sensibly be addressed as an imitator of that of which these others are craftsmen.”

“All right, do you, then, call the man at the third generation from nature an imitator?” (Plato, 1997, p. 324).

Even for Baudelaire, the typical idea of an artist, who should be a *man of the world*, opposes to the idea of an artist of purely aesthetic-artistic crafts. That is, only an artist who dived in, body and soul, in the small details of his social world, was able to make artistic representations so rich, detailed and, therefore, have the right to be recognized as such. For Baudelaire, many modern artists did not belong in his world, therefore, the critic considered them to be artisans; In our contemporary world, we can say that it is inconceivable for a man to be oblivious to the specifics of own sociocultural locus.

In the same sense, Adorno seems to be able to help us – even though he deals with the essayist subject – in this essayist logic of the thought of the subject-artist as the imitator of a consolidated aesthetic, to say that it is precisely by non-predilection with a first

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and already pre-established aesthetic that the feature of having a differential in relation to the aesthetic prevails in the essayist. On the essayist's openness and responsibility over her own production, Adorno states that:

It resists the idea of the master-work that reflects the idea of creation and totality. Its form follows the critical thought that man is no creator, that nothing human is creation. The essay, always directed towards artifacts, does not present itself as a creation; nor does it long for something all-embracing, the totality of which would resemble creation. (Adorno, 2003, p. 36).

The essayist does not deceive herself about the "difference between culture and that which underlies it" (Adorno, 2003), so she must provide service to society to speak on the subject they intend to speak of, in order to encompass the social in their production. Accordingly, we do not simply represent the bull as characteristic of the aesthetic iconography of a people; we must provide interpretations that go beyond images that they seek to represent – and if the artist has no intention of doing so, thus rejecting his own political position, which is sociocultural by choice –, it is the critic's role and duty to providing the reader with the images of different possibilities of interpretation. Now, these last few cultural producers, the critics, have no alternatives but to inform the citizen as it is being read and reproduced for the other. It is no longer enough to restrict the reading of images that claim to talk of the other in dichotomies.

For those who seek, there is everything in his work: good and evil, God and devil, the real and the fantastic, all linked by the imagination and hard to tear apart.

Using the bull as a metaphor, he wrote the fable of life in Mato Grosso do Sul, with great economy of signs which resulted in a speech that allows the insertion of those who see, as subjects, while carrying an individual and collective history.

On the screens of Espíndola, there is an empathy between the code of the author and the viewer who, attracted by the strength of the image, by the color surroundings, take part of it as its collaborator. (Rosa, 1985).

How did Charles Baudelaire, in the final texts of his book, *grosso modo*, the beautiful is also (re) presented by ugly visual arts – the artist just needs to know how to make analogies between the beauty of what is said as beautiful with the beauty of what is despised for allegedly being ugly for the consecrated aesthetics. This is what Theodor Adorno aimed at when he brought the essay closer to art and form, for it "constructs the interwovenness of concepts in such a way that they can be imagined as themselves interwoven in the object." (Adorno, 2003, p. 44-45)

Artists and critics of Mato Grosso do Sul, show yourselves!

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## CAPTIONS OF ILLUSTRATIONS

The images in this article can be viewed in its original version in Portuguese.

Figure 1. Humberto Espíndola, from the series *Cupins*, 2001. Acrylic paint on canvas, 200 x 250 cm, artist's collection. The series has a total of nine paintings done during the years 2001 and 2002 (as per the artist's *website*).

Figure 2. Humberto Espíndola, *O passeio do general*, 1978, from the series *Divisão de Mato Grosso (Mato Grosso Division)*. Oil on canvas, 130 x 170 cm, MARCO – Museu de Arte Contemporânea de Mato Grosso do Sul, Campo Grande. As suggested by its own title, the series *Mato Grosso Division* corresponds to a total of eight paintings painted by the artist during the years of 1978 and 1979 by occasion/influence of the state's separation in the year of 1977.

Figure 3. Humberto Espíndola, from the series *Cupins*, 2001. Acrylic paint on canvas, 160 x 250 cm, artist's collection.

Figure 4. Humberto Espíndola, *O Sopra*, 1978, from the series *Divisão de Mato Grosso*. Oil on canvas, 130 x 170 cm, MARCO – Museu de Arte Contemporânea de Mato Grosso do Sul, Campo Grande.

Figure 5. Humberto Espíndola, from the series *Cupins*, 2002. Acrylic paint on canvas, 95 x 250 cm, artist's collection.

Figure 6. Humberto Espíndola, *O passeio do general*, 1978, from the series *Divisão de Mato Grosso*. Oil on canvas, 150 x 100 cm, MARCO – Museu de Arte Contemporânea de Mato Grosso do Sul, Campo Grande.

Figure 7. Humberto Espíndola, *Cabo-de-força*, 2001 from the series *Grafias Eletrônicas*. Electrography on 180 g glossy paper, 9 x 27,5 cm. The series has a total of eighteen paintings done during the year of 2001 (as per the artist's *website*).

Figure 8. Humberto Espíndola, *3 azuis*, 2001, from the series *Grafias Eletrônicas*. Electrography on 180 g glossy paper, 13,8 x 24,5 cm.

Figure 9. Humberto Espíndola, *Cabeças de mandala*, 2001, from the series *Grafias Eletrônicas*. Electrography on 180 g laid paper, 17 x 50 cm.

Figure 10. Humberto Espíndola, *Marcas rurais IV*, 2004. Acrylic paint on canvas, 75 x 95 cm, artist's collection. The series *Obras 2004/5* has a total of ten paintings done during the years of 2004 and 2005 (as per the artist's *website*).

Figure 11. Humberto Espíndola, *Fazenda*, 2005. Acrylic paint on canvas, 60 x 80 cm, artist's collection.

Figure 12. Humberto Espíndola, *Fragmentos do Império Central*, 2005. Acrylic paint on canvas, 130 x 180 cm, artist's collection.

Figure 13. Humberto Espíndola, *Marcas rurais V*, 2004. Acrylic paint on canvas, 75 x 95 cm, artist's collection.

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