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Anicka Yi. Jungle Stripe
Curated by Susanne Pfeffer

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Film stills are taken from *The Flavor Genome* (2016), © Anicka Yi

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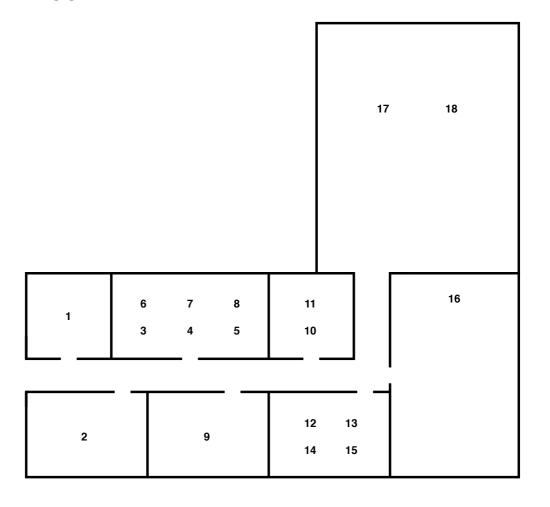
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# **ANICKA YI**

# JUNGLE STRIPE

#### FLOOR PLAN



1

Escape From The Shade 3, 2016, epoxy resin, stainless steel, lightbulbs, digital clock interface, wire, 139 × 59 × 60 cm

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Escape From The Shade 5, 2016, epoxy resin, stainless steel, lightbulbs, digital clock interface, wire, 105 × 62 × 59 cm

3

Shine Or Go Crazy, 2016, wire, foam, epoxy resin, paint, aquarium pebbles, imitation pearls, LEDs, 184 × 120 × 145 cm

4

Vegetable Psychology, 2016, wire, foam, epoxy resin, paint, aquarium pebbles, imitation pearls, LEDs, 184 × 120 × 140 cm

5

Sessile, 2016, wire, foam, epoxy resin, paint, aquarium pebbles, imitation pearls, LEDs, 184 × 120 × 120 cm

6

When Species Meet Part 1, 2016, acrylic pipes and fittings, faux fur, lab hardware, 183 × 183 × 183 cm

7

When Species Meet Part 2, 2016, acrylic pipes and fittings, faux fur, lab hardware,  $183 \times 183 \times 183$  cm

8

When Species Meet Part 3, 2016, acrylic pipes and fittings, faux fur, lab hardware,  $183 \times 183 \times 183$  cm

9

Search Image, 2016, taxidermy animal, silicone, hardware, 90 × 60 × 90 cm

10

Escape From The Shade 1, 2016, epoxy resin, stainless steel, lightbulbs, digital clock interface, wire, 177 × 62 × 59 cm

11

If Tomorrow Comes, 2016, silicone on panel, artificial flowers,  $106 \times 71 \times 9$  cm

12

Escape From The Shade 4, 2016, epoxy resin, stainless steel, lightbulbs, digital clock interface, wire, 119  $\times$  66  $\times$  64 cm

13

Escape From The Shade 2, 2016, epoxy resin, stainless steel, lightbulbs, digital clock interface, wire, 137 × 62 × 64 cm

14

Scale of Value, 2016, silicone on panel, artificial flowers,  $106 \times 71 \times 9$  cm

15

Childless Comfort, 2016, silicone on panel, artificial flowers, 106 x 71 x 9 cm

16

*The Flavor Genome*, 2016, single-channel 3D video, 22 min.

17

*Perfect Dark*, 2016, MDF, video monitor, multichannel video, 4080 × 2060 × 2060 cm

18

Second Hand Flavor, 2016, MDF, video monitor, multi-channel video, 3811 × 2060 × 2060 cm



#### JUNGLE STRIPE

The origin of the word "hybrid" can be traced etymologically to two sources: Latin *hybrida* (mongrel, bastard) and Greek *hybris* (pride, arrogance). Unions between plants, human beings, animals and technologies give rise to flexible hybrids; organic and synthetic materials mutate into amorphous, indefinite beings. Neuroscience, bioengineering and science fiction enter into tacit relationships of complicity, blurring the once clearly delineated boundary between the natural and the artificial.

For her first institutional solo exhibition in Germany, Anicka Yi (b. 1971) compacts the ground floor of the Fridericianum into an expansive installation. With sculptural and video works all produced specifically for the *Jungle Stripe* exhibition, she creates a complex structure of hybrid forms. In the process, Anicka Yi takes up constructions of nature and brings them to collision with scientific and colonialist hubris.

In her work, Anicka Yi explores life forms, organisms and microbiological processes. Her approach is oriented towards the cosmologies of indigenous peoples from the Amazon region and follows a non-anthropocentric and non-hierarchical thinking—described by Eduardo Viveiros de Castro as a multinatural perspectivism. In her film The Flavor Genome (2016), for example, nature is not conceived in absolute terms, but assembled from a multitude of perspectives and perceptions. In scenic episodes, Anicka Yi depicts a fluid mutation of species, at the same time showing how biology can no longer be separated from its narrative, its biography. "Humanity still has not successfully metabolized the imperialist cultural pollution, the planetary despoliation, the vanished indigenous civilizations key elements that comprise the flavor profile of the Tropics" (from The Flavor Genome). In search of stimulating aromas, new tastes and smells, the film's protagonist does not differentiate between biotechnologically-produced and natural phenomena. "We were on the trail of the flavor genome. By elaborating perceptual worlds through flavors reality as an interlocking of perceived unique essences could be newly synthesized" (The Flavor Genome). The filmic exploration of the Amazon raises not only the question of how perceptions can be changed but also how sensory experiences can allow for a different understanding of perception. Taking these new sensory discoveries as its point of departure, The Flavor Genome imagines a chemical synthesis of plant and animal forms. For instance, the secretion of the stigmata of such a mythical hybrid can be used to obtain an essence with which various human personas can be created for consumers to try on like colored contact lenses. This essence is a condensate of fear and anxiety that can then be used to shape a hybrid identity. It remains an open

question whether the result leads to more empathy on the part of the "wearer" or causes confusion because too many personas can be chosen. The complexity of one's own persona would no longer be bound to immediate experience: the body is but a storage medium that can be played at will.

Anicka Yi's sculptures are similarly indefinable in their fluid transitions—fur grows on cages, artificial honeycombs and intermediary beings populate the spaces of the Fridericianum. The atmosphere of these spaces and amorphous sculptures generates a subtle sense of anxiety. Anicka Yi interweaves sensual impressions, new developments in genetics and biotechnology with the speculative moment of possible visions of the future in a biofiction where bio diverse intelligence sharing is at the core. Here, sensory deception, manipulations of the environment, and the insoluble unity of the artificial and the natural create a new reality.



ellargaret ellee

1 Loregelia (unclassified) Proc. Amazonas, Rio Uaupos Dec. 1964 Neoregelia Leviana L. 18. Smith (1968)

### THE FLAVOR GENOME Film script

#### NIGHT FLASHLIGHT SCENE

Flavor chemists are illusionists. We can create flavors that mimic the taste and smell of virtually anything. Strawberry and vanilla flavors can be extracted from the gland in a beaver's backside. Indoles are present in feces. At low concentrations this compound smells like flowers. Imagine if you could taste a multitude of chemical personas. What if you could inhabit the mind of a cannibal? A hormonal teenager? Or be suicidal without having to be socially alienated and go through with killing yourself? *Fade to black* 

#### **GREENHOUSE SCENE**

We were on the trail of the flavor genome. By elaborating perceptual worlds through flavors reality as an interlocking of perceived unique essences could be newly synthesized. For any and each moment an organism is alive, there is an imprint of sensorial sequences undergoing change that allows for the rapid synthesis of substrates in biological systems.

#### **TURTLE / FROG SCENE**

If we could extract the substance that could catalyze the genome lability of organisms of different species, this would enable the potential for biodiverse intelligence sharing through direct sensory information.

#### **SMELLING NOSES / GOLD FOIL**

Another kind of trace is formidably encapsulated by the French word *sillage*. It means the degree to which a perfume's fragrance lingers in the air when worn. So in a way, an organism's *sillage* is a living presence sensed even in the absence of a body or an author. Fade to black

#### **BLADES OF GRASS / PSYCHEDELIC RIVER SCENE**

There was surreptitious talk of the elusive *Saudaderrhiza* of the *Zoo-phopetalum* tribe, subtribe unknown. The *Saudaderrhiza* is reputed to be something of an animal-plant hybrid.

This organism blooms once every one hundred and seven years according to our data, but local folklore claims that its anatomy keeps mutating so that the flower takes on different shapes. This hybrid has been described as resembling a human nose straddling

a folded futon or a horse's leg that swallowed a grapefruit. Other times it has been said to look like an airplane crashing into a building.

The genus derives its name from the Portuguese word saudade, which has no direct translation in English but can be described as a feeling of longing, melancholy, or nostalgia. But this doesn't quite capture the essence of the meaning. Our field guide described saudade as the feeling of missing something you love while knowing that its likelihood of return is unknowable, entirely left to fate. Fade to black

#### **DONUT-SHAPED PROTIST SCENE**

No voice

#### FLOWER LAB SCENE

Moments after well-anticipated coitus with the ungentle wasp, trillions of trapped pathogenic bacteria release a black gas that encircles the flower in a frizzy cloud the size of a large doilie. They link up with a mycelial network, the fungal internet and transfer carbon. It is while in this noxious afterglow that the flower must be plucked in order to discover its truly brain-wrinkling properties.

#### **BRIDGE SCENE**

Do you recall that time in Sumatra? The night was full of moods in windless unrest.

We were gathering samples of rotting meat aroma from the Corpse Flower. A dissident with webbed feet chased us out of the field.

Flavorists were often tangled in the specter of colonial ravaging. After all, absorption is the key to evolution, yet humanity still has not successfully metabolized the imperialist cultural pollution, the planetary despoliation, the vanished indigenous civilizations—key elements that comprise the flavor profile of the Tropics. If pleasure is to give the world gloss, then pain must be its pores.

In order to forecast advanced sensory desire we would need to re-write the genetic biography. The reshuffling of taste awaits a new metaphysics.

#### CATERPILLAR LAB SCENE

No voice Fade to black

#### **LIGER SCENE**

Of course synthesized mutations are nothing new. In the animal world, who can forget the liger experiment of the 19th century? A rare hybrid alliance between a lion and a tiger. Ligers enjoy swimming, which is a characteristic of tigers, but are also very sociable, like lions.

Ligers exist only in captivity because the habitats of the parental species do not overlap. In other words, this crossbreed is not viable

in the wild since they are unable to produce offspring independently. Neither the lion nor the tiger was read their rights, so for now the liger lives in a state that embarrasses the idea of the purposeful.

#### SHOWERING PLANTS ON WHITE BOAT SCENE

Such splicing tendencies are even more abundant in our cartoonish contemporary era. They can be found everywhere, in our tastes in food, pets, lexical identity. Take portmanteaus. They make us cringe, but why can't we resist morphing common words into inane colloquialisms? Inoculated by marketing strategists, mashups like Fugly, Turducken, Sexting have sprouted on our psychic palates like mushrooms on a log. Perhaps this tendency is a way to encode anxieties around a collective memory *mushroom* as we compulsively disinfect old data in the way we bureaucratize the senses.

#### **DEAD FLOATING BODY SCENE**

Among the rumors about the *Saudaderrhiza* was that among its food sources was human remains. Dead bodies began appearing along our path. They appeared to be discarded like empty plastic bottles drowning in digestive fluid. Is it possible that here in the jungle we had located missing persons whose energies had migrated into other forms? How long had we been prowling in the mud-caked maze? Did nothing exist outside of this? The jungle was a rorschach test. You saw in it what you wanted. Time itself was an optical illusion. A temporal tromp l'oeil.

#### **DOLPHIN SCENE**

No voice

#### **ELECTRIC FLOWER COVE SCENE**

Back in Aquira we had a lead on some renegade biologists who were mutating plants for fun and profit. Having lost our way to their lab, we stumbled upon a large hive of meat, whose rotating light moved through the trees. I leaned in and caught one of its dripping brilliance in my mouth.

Later that night I experienced liquid sensations of what felt like chemical rape, only I was the one who was doing the raping. I was a man with an outdoor theme composed of air, water and wood with base notes of musk and vegetal amber, heart note of white fir and aquatic accord. This warping into delirious worlds only heightened my senses. I wondered in a lost moment how tenable is this human screen?

#### PINEAPPLE INJECTION SCENE

We were most interested in the secretion of the petal's stigmata surface emulsified by the wasp's pollination, in order to synthesize a plant animal hybrid chemistry. We talked well toward dawn about designing chemical personas. Our product could be the elixir of anguish and anxiety without the commitment of depression and the debts paid to self worth. There's a value in having gone through the dark night of the soul. You could be more "complex" with someone else's dark, edgy history.

We could bottle these emotions for a functional apocalypse. The longer it aged the more complex the subjectivity, like a multidimensional crystal garden.

#### **DEAD PHOTOGRAPHER SCENE**

These startling and confusing possibilities induced gassy hallucinations; lucidity was not digestion-friendly. Or maybe it was the malarial fevers talking. In Aquira, as in Sumatra, the ordering of intensities are health, taste, magic, death.

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## THE NOTION OF SPECIES IN HISTORY AND ANTHROPOLOGY Eduardo Viveiros de Castro

I do not have the competence to speak about the history of the notion of species in Western philosophy. In the case of anthropology, the notion comes into play in two distinct conceptual contexts.

In the first place, and most importantly—as it involves the very definition of the object of the discipline—anthropology has, from its outset, clung to the postulate of the "psychic unity of the species," which is equivalent to the defining of the human species by its "psychic" capacities, meaning, in this case, cognitive capacities. This, in turn, presupposes a foundational discontinuity between our species and all others, given that the "psychic unity" suggests that our species counter-unifies all others into a single sub-psychic (or a-psychic) realm, which is exhaustively determined by an extra-psychic corporeality. The idea of species, in this case, works in a somewhat paradoxical fashion, given that for anthropology there is, strictly speaking, only one species—the human—which cloaks itself in the nature of a genus or domain, as the "ontic" or "empiric" differences among myriad living species are neutralized by the greater "ontological" or "transcendental" difference between this special species and the other mundane species. Humanity works here as a collective angel, in the sense that, for some medieval thinkers, angels were thought of as being individuals who were each a species in their own regard. The analogy with angels is not accidental, since humanity was frequently thought of as an entity "halfway between ape and angel." It is unnecessary to emphasize that here the aspect of the "ape" pertains to the body while the "angel" signifies the soul or the "psychic unity." Anthropology is congenitally dualist, and because of that the idea of species is less a way of situating man among a natural multiplicity than of radically setting him apart as unically dual and dually unique.

On the other hand, any attempt at introducing anthropologically (i.e. "psychically") relevant discontinuities to the animal realm, understood as the residual domain of the non-human, threatens the homogeneity and thus the integrity of the human species as one of coherent unity. It is as if there existed a zero-sum game between internal unity and external counter-unity: every meaningful internal differentiation of the external domain of the non-human threatens to differentiate internally the domain of the human, externalizing part of this domain as something quasi- or sub-human. In other words, everything takes place as if the only mode of exorcising racism (internal speciesism) were through the strengthening of external speciesism (the theory of human exceptionality). However, Lévi-Strauss, in his famous homage to Jean-Jacques Rousseau "Rousseau, Father of Anthropology" (1962), already warned that the relationship between racism and

speciesism is not one of discontinuity, but rather one of continuity. Speciesism anticipates and prepares for racism:

Never in the course of the past four centuries has western man been in a better position to realize that by arrogating to himself the right to raise a wall dividing mankind from the beast in nature and appropriating to himself all the qualities he denied the latter, he was setting in motion an infernal cycle. For this same wall was to be pulled steadily tighter, serving to set some men apart from other men and to justify in the minds of an ever-shrinking minority their claim to being the only civilization of men. Such a civilization, based as it was on the principle and notion of self-conceit, was corrupt from the very start.

Secondly, the concept of species was mobilized in anthropology to account for a phenomenon whose intellectual history is indissociable from that very discipline, namely, the so called "totemism" or, more generally, the innumerable devices for internal differentiation of a society that resorts to the perceptible differences between living species (or, more generally, the so-called "natural kinds") to think the segmentation of the socius in categories that are articulated horizontally or vertically. The classical interpretation of totemic phenomena saw them as manifestations of an originary identity between humans, animals and other forms of life. If not the first, once more Lévi-Strauss was the anthropologist who inverted the terms of the problem and called attention to the fact that the identity between two different genera (the human and the generic non-human) was subordinated to the contrast between two systems of difference; the differences between "natural" species; and the differences between "social" species or segments that are internal to human society. It is worth noting that the explanation, although it emphasizes the internal differences of the non-human domain, continues to think through the "natural chain" (série natural) of totems as globally discontinuous in relation to the "cultural chain" (série cultural) of social segments. The father of structuralism, in the end, would cast the notion of species into an absolutely central role within his image of the "savage mind": species appears as the central operator of an essentially classificatory reason, located halfway between the individual and the category. Moreover, for Lévi-Strauss, species is the empirical equivalent of the complete sign (signo pleno), halfway between the sheer concrete ostentation (the individual) and the abstract category (the concept). As a unit of a multiplicity, species appears as the very form of the object to the savage mind. In this sense, the savage mind is Aristotelian (and vice-versa), as pointed out by Scott Atran.

One should note that the first context of the use of the notion of species is anthropocentric—the human species is not a species like the others, for it expresses determinations that are inexistent in the other species, where taken as a whole. Indeed, it expresses a certain essential indetermination, an irreducibility towards those

natural determinations that differentiate species among themselves. As we have seen, the human species is dual, being at the same time a species and a domain, an empirical entity and a transcendental subject who knows its own condition and, in this sense, frees him- or herself from it. The second context of use—totemic systems—remains anthropocentric to some extent, in that living species are thought of as being enmeshed in biunivocal relations with human sub-species (the totemic segments). Each totemic species corresponds to a "type" of human, it is a partial humanity; as if the universe, represented in miniature by the finite multiplicity of the totemic species, were in a projective homologic relationship with society. The relationship between society as microcosmos and cosmos as macro-society establishes a formal identity between internal and external relations.

The discovery of "multinatural perspectivism" as the presuppositional ground for the Amerindian cosmologies—and in many cases as a doctrine explicitly elaborated in shamanism and native mythologies—led to the conceptual position of a non-anthropocentric virtuality of the idea of species. Perspectivism is the name we have given to a formulation culturally characteristic of so-called "animism," a cosmological attitude that consists of refusing the psychic discontinuity between the different types of beings that populate the cosmos, imagining all the inter-species differences as a "horizontal" extension, analogic or metonymic, of intra-species differences (and not, as in the case of totemism, as their "vertical" repetition, homologic or metaphoric). The human species then ceases to be a separate domain and starts to define the "universe of discourse": all the species-specific differences appear as modalities of the human. This causes the human condition to cease being "special" and to become, instead, the default mode or generic condition of any species. The domain of nature characterized as a province that is counter-unified by the eminent unity of the human domain, in essence, disappears. Animism is "anthropomorphic" to the exact extent that it is anti-anthropocentric. The human form is, literally, the form from which all species emerge: each of the species is a finite mode of a humanity as universal substance. This includes the human species (as we understand it), which effectively becomes just another species: the differences between human sub-species (the social segments of a particular people or of different peoples) are of the same nature as the human "super-species," i.e., those which we call natural species.

Perspectivism is the presupposition that each living species is human in its own department, human for itself (*humano para si*), or better, that everything is human for itself (*todo para si é humano*) or anthropogenic. This idea originates in indigenous cosmogonies, where the primordial form of the being is human: "in the beginning there was nothing," say some Amazonian myths, "there were only people." Thus, the different types of beings and phenomena that populate and wander the world are transformations of this primordial humanity.

Such an originary condition persists as a kind of "background anthropomorphic radiation," making it so that all current species apprehend themselves more or less as intensely as humans. Insofar as they are not apprehended by the other species as humans, the distinction between reflexive or internal perspective and "third person" or external perspective is crucial. The difference between species ceases to be merely an external distinction, as it comes to constitutively incorporate a change in any being's point of view. What defines a species is the difference between the internal and the external point of view of the species on itself of all the other species on that species in particular. Thus, on the one hand, all species becomes "dual," consisting of a spiritual dimension (the interior human "person" of each species) and a corporal dimension (the "clothing" or corporeal equipment that is distinctive of the capacities of each species). Upon universalizing itself, the invisible/ visible, first-person/third-person duality stops singularizing one single species and begins to define every species as such. There is no longer a "definition" of species that can be made from a species-independent point of view. Every species is thus a point of view about (and in relation to) other species, and everything that exists is a species of species (uma espécie de espécie), in other words, a "subject."

To the extent that every species is formally composed of a similar inside/outside, soul/body, human/non-human perspective oscillation—since every species apprehended from another species' point of view is not apprehended as human, which includes our own species when considered, for example, from the point of view of jaguars, or of peccaries (to whom we are, respectively, peccaries and jaguars, or cannibal spirits)—the passing between species is much more fluid than in the case of our exceptionalist and anthropocentric cosmological vulgate. The species are fixed for Amazonian cosmologies in the sense that pertinent global transformations generally took place in one go in the pre-cosmological world of myth (myths are, in essence, narratives of the process of speciation)—there is not a continuist transformism (transformismo continuísta), as our modern evolutionary biology would have it. But, at the same time the individuals of each species are able to "leap" from one species to another with relative ease, a process that is schematized principally in the imagery (imaginário) of alimentary predation: the incorporation by another species is frequently conceived as the integral transformation of the prey into a member of the predator's own species. All of which seems to give meaning to Samuel Butler's assertion that "there is no such persecutor of grain, as another grain when it has once fairly identified itself with a hen" (Life and Habit, 137). Another form of inter-species transformation is shamanism, which is the manifest capacity by certain individuals (of different species) to oscillate between the points of view of two (or more) species—being capable of seeing the members of both species as they see themselves, i.e., as humans and thus being capable of communicating multiple points of view and rendering intelligible that which is noticeable only to them (the

shamans), namely, the fact that each species appears to the other in a radically different way than it appears to itself.

The essential difference between this "perspectivism" and our own "multiculturalism" is that this variation of point of view does not only affect our "way of seeing" a world that would otherwise be objectively exterior to the point of view and larger than any possible point of view; it is an ontologically and epistemologically infinite world. In the first place, the perspectivist "world" is a world exhaustively composed of points of view: all beings and things in the world are potential subjects, hence the entities that "we see" are always seeing beings. That which we experiment is always a subject of a possible experience: every "object" is a type of "subject." Secondly, the difference between species is not a difference of "opinion" or "culture" but rather a difference of "nature": it is a difference in the way each species is experienced by others, i.e., as a body, as a collection of affections that are vulnerable to the senses, of capacities for modifying and being modified by agents of other species. The world as seen by another species is not the same world merely seen differently, rather, it is "another world" ("outro mundo") that is seen in the same manner. Each species, by seeing itself as human, see the other species (that is, the world) as we—those who apprehend ourselves as human—see them. Every species see the world in the same way. There is only one point of view, the point of view of humanity. What changes is the point of view of this point of view: which species is seeing the world upon seeing itself as human? If it is the species of jaguars, then they will see (those we see as) humans as if they were peccaries, because human beings eat peccaries (and not other humans). All humans share the same culture—human culture. What changes is the nature of that which they see, according to the body these referential humans possess. The point of view is in the body. Perspectivism is not merely a theory of representation (of nature by the spirit), but rather a pragmatic of corporeal affection. It is the species-specific potency of each body that determines the correlative objective of universal cultural categories that are "applied" by all species in their human moment.

The living species, the difference between the species, therefore, is a fundamental concept in perspectivist worlds. But there species is not as much a principle of distinction as it is a principle of relation. To begin with, the difference between species is not anatomical or physiological, but behavioral or ethological (what distinguishes a species is much more its ethogram—what they eat, where they live, whether they live in group or not, etc.—than its morphology). In this sense, the differences between "species" do not lend themselves to be projected onto a homogenous ontological plane, unless we define corporeality as the constituent of such a plane; however, this corporeality is a heterogeneous and relational totality of affections rather than a substance endowed with attributes. Differences in the feeding habits of jaguars, peccaries and humans, differences in feeding habits among human groups, the physical appearance of different animals and diverse peoples—all these differences are equally taken as

differences that express diverse bodily affections. De jure, it is not more difficult for an Araweté to transform into a Kayapó than into a jaguar. The transformation processes implicate only qualitatively discrete affections. Furthermore, inter-specific differences (diferenças inter-específicas) are blocs of relational virtualities, of modes of relative positioning of species among themselves. The difference between species is not a principle of segregation but of alternation: for what defines the specific difference is that two species (unlike two given individuals) cannot both "be" human at the same time, which means that both species cannot perceive themselves as human one for the other, or else they would cease to be two different species.

If we project perspectivism onto itself, and onto our own multiculturalism, we will be compelled to conclude that it is not possible to be at the same time perspectivist and multiculturalist. Nor is this even desirable. We must conclude, therefore, that these two anthropologies are inter-translatable (commensurable), but are incompatible (no dialectic synthesis is possible). I have been speaking in terms of "anthropologies" because I understand every cosmology to be an anthropology, not in the trivial sense that human beings are only able to think through human categories—the Indians would agree, but they would disagree that only our species is "human" — but in the sense that even our anthropocentrism is inevitably an anthropomorphism, and that every attempt to go beyond this "correlation" is merely an anthropocentrism in the negative, which still does and always will refer to the anthropos. Anthropomorphism, far from being a speciesism, as is anthropocentrism, be it Christian, Kantian, or neo-constructivist, expresses the originary "decision" to think the human as rooted within the world, not above it (even if at only one side of its dual being). In a world where every thing is human, humanity is an entirely different thing.





