

A Dark Night in Lowland South America

Indigenous ways of perceiving and knowing

November 22 and 24, 2022

Deutschhausstr. 3, Hörsaal 109

LECTURES

Tuesday, November 22, 10:15-11:45

Healing the Past: Historical Consciousness among the Pume people of Venezuela

Silvana Saturno

Institute for Social Anthropology and the Study of Religions, University of Marburg

Unfolding Musicking Archives at the Northwest Amazon

Juan Carlos Castrillón Vallejo

Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania

FILM SCREENING

Thursday, November 24, 16:00-18:00

Visitors by Juan Carlos Castrillón Vallejo

+ post-screening conversation

HEALING THE PAST: HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS AMONG THE PUME PEOPLE OF VENEZUELA

Silvana Saturno

This presentation addresses the question of how the Pume people of Venezuela remember. While describing different modes of historical consciousness that coexist among the Pume, it deals with issues of temporality, agency and personhood. Drawing on theoretical insights from anthropology of the senses and phenomenological analysis, it demonstrates how a deep understanding of the use of metaphors is central to comprehend native processes of historical representation. Like most of native Lowland South American societies, the Pume understand social change and social reproduction as processes that are brought about by powerful others that are human as well as non-human agencies. The Pume become aware of the dynamics of such processes while sleeping or while going through other kinds of altered states of consciousness that are associated with certain diseases or that are attained while singing. I provide ethnographic examples to conclude that, in general, the Pume value dreaming experiences, the experiences of being sick and the experiences of singing as significant sources of knowledge. Likewise, this study shows how dreams, states of illness and the action of singing are particularly significant means by which the Pume experience, gain understanding and become knowledgeable of their past and current relations to alterity.

UNFOLDING MUSICKING ARCHIVES AT THE NORTHWEST AMAZON

Juan Carlos Castrillón Vallejo

This presentation proposes a decolonial revision of the archive consolidated by scholars, travelers and missionaries who previously sound recorded the Northwestern Amazon region, and introduces alternative ways of producing archival artifacts open to non-Indigenous and Indigenous perspectives and epistemologies alike. It studies the formation of sonic archives and points of listening that represented worlds of Indigenous expressivity in sound during the twentieth century in the Vaupés region, southern Colombia. This study focuses on Tukanoan musicking and specifically with the Cubeo Emi-Hehenewa clan, an Amazonian indigenous community living in a village called Camutí located at the Vaupés River Basin. This presentation aims to reposition ethnomusicological practice in the Northwest Amazon as a collaborative and ethical research endeavor that can contribute new theoretical and methodological knowledge about and from the Vaupés region.

Film screening

HEARING TO VISITORS: EXPERIMENTS IN TUKANOAN ORGANOLOGY

Juan Carlos Castrillón Vallejo

VISITORS is the most recent short film of Juan Castrillón, Gilbert Seldes inaugural Multimodal Postdoctoral Fellow of the Annenberg School for Communication. Based on a W.E.B Dubois poem recited in a Cubeo Emi-Hehenewa indigenous village at the Northwest Amazon, the film explores the generative tension between visual and aural forms of knowledge among Amazonians presented to a non-indigenous audience. It experiments with various modes of noticing Yuruparí ancestors and other non-human entities as they appear through diffuse shapes, dim light, ephemeral duration, and deep resonance across multiple resonators. Tukanoan Indigenous People know about ancestors through different qualities and modalities that re-veil, or mask their existence. These indirect modes of knowing not only inform about Yuruparí ancestors, themselves very difficult to precisely assert who they are, but *also* inform the sensorial composition of those who are visited and addressed. Yuruparí ancestors' unintelligible and opaque musicalized discourse folds the sensorium in which indigenous communities manage their relations of alterity and establish the epistemological limits of their expressive praxes. Through this film, blackness in darkness, as well as noise in sound, reminds viewers of the intoxicant liquidity of becoming that surrounds Tukanoan initiation ceremonies, where Yuruparí ancestors are the longest waited visitors during the rainy season in the Vaupés River Basin.