

“Indigenous” / “Afro” Theatre? Reconstructing Indigenous and Afrodescendent Lives on Stage Within and Beyond Art/Activism

Cañuqueo, Lorena, Miriam Álvarez, Alejandra Egido y Ana Vivaldi.

Panel Rethinking categories of indigeneity and artistic practice II, Giuliana Borea and Alex Ungprateeb Flynn (org.). Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK, 29 de Marzo al 02 de Abril de 2021.

The two-decades-long work of Mapuche director Miriam Alvarez and Afrodescendant director Alejandra Egido challenge the project of a white (settler) Argentina and are hard to locate as “art” or “activism”. During 2020 we engaged in collaborative research over the theatrical practices of Alvarez, who reconstructs the histories of land displacement and silencing of Mapuche people; and Egido, whose stage challenges Afro-descendant erasure and microracism In Buenos Aires; alongside researchers Lorena Cañuqueo and Ana Vivaldi. Their work is anticolonial in several ways. It goes beyond artistic representation of Mapuche and Afro themes (art with a hyphen), and yet it does not necessarily follow a plan by political organizations. First, none of them is satisfied with “representing” their communities as essentialized identities. Instead, they recreate the multiplicity of lives, including Mapuche people who are urban and may not always identify as Mapuche, Afro-women who get trapped in representing ideal Afro and make fun of that. In this, they not only challenge but also overflow a politics of representation. Second, as trained directors, they are concerned with producing effective performances, ones that use theatrical poetics to affect their audiences. And yet Theatre conventions as a “Western” art push them to constant anticolonial disruptions, including breaking linear temporalities of Argentine history. These disruptions are not only aesthetic choices but political actions that transform the regime of the sensible against colonial erasure, to regenerate Indigenous and Afro lives.