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Constitutional Commitment



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Mario Chagas



Rio de Janeiro, 2018

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Detail of the meeting table

*Ministerial Hall, in the background
the work Constitutional Compromise.*

Presentation

The title, very current in contemporary Brazil, is also the name attributed to a painting, from 1896, created by the artist from Paraíba Francisco Aurélio de Figueiredo e Melo (1856-1916) to represent a political event of his time: the oath of the president of the Republic, Marshal Deodoro da Fonseca (1889-1891), to the country's first republican Constitution. The work is part of the collection of the Museum of the Republic, alongside two others by the same author, which are pictorial portraits of Marshal Floriano Peixoto, president of Brazil between 1891 and 1894, and Cardinal Joaquim Arcos, archbishop of Rio de Janeiro between 1897 and 1930.

Aurélio de Figueiredo gained renown and a good reputation with paintings that refer to historical events, and now we have the possibility of seeing one of them through his eyes and through the critical eyes of Mario Chagas. This book contemplates and examines the *constitutional Commitment*. Not just as an aesthetic experience, but as the tip of an *iceberg* which allows access to political values and behaviors present in the artist's world and thoughts. In Jacques Ravel's terms, the micro constitutes the macro, the complexity of the social inhabits each thing and Aurélio de Figueiredo's painting is no exception.

The assumption is that no cultural good can be understood as a fruit independent of the concrete social conditions in which its production takes place and its producers live. Therefore, and in principle, a work of art is an expression of broader social processes and a matter of social analysis.

From this perspective, Mario Chagas exposes a fruitful picture of ideas that gained strength in Brazil in the 1800s and that served to affirm the republican regime. Its proposal is to capture, in the singularities of a historical painting, preserved as cultural heritage and representation of the Republic, a whole set of cultural and political aspects that marked an era and that express an exclusive civilization project, led by the elites. country's policies – a project that found in artistic production a channel of mediation with society.

There is a lot of history inside a painting. Although not the “truth historic”, recalls the researcher. Historical stories and paintings will always be ways of apprehending reality, constructed by people who combine their own cognitive and affective experiences. Thus, it is not surprising that an artistic production about the national, managed by the State in the first years of the Republic, appropriate representations of the celestial nation - bratives of formal and oligarchic political power. On the other hand, if Sensations of power influence artistic production, they do not eliminate the artist's freedom to recreate history, including exploring the colors of fiction. A historical painting does not reproduce the truth, which is not even considered as certification of the value of the work. It updates historical memory and will always carry traces of the artist himself and his present time.

It is more plausible to say: within a painting there are perceptions of the world, linked to artistic production. In historiography, this approach gains strength and credibility in the developments of Cultural History, with Carlo Ginszburg remembering that no idea is assimilated without mediation. With Roger Chartier and his concept of cultural resistance. With Peter Burke, Robert Darnton and a whole host of great authors who, in short, carefully, they study cultural variables as a domain that constitutes tui worldviews shaped in the concrete experience of historical subjects rich. In the museological debate, Hugues de Varine and Georges Henri Rivière, already in the 1970s, warned about the diversity of cultural practices, you know - res and actions shared by different human groups and which shape not only different forms of coexistence and existence, but also the production of symbolic (and artistic) goods. Such thinking influenced the reorientation - tion of the concept of cultural heritage in Brazil and, from authors such as Waldisa Rússio, Mario Moutinho and Mario Chagas himself, warmed up the idea of decolonization of museological thought. No more the hateful practice of inferiorizing the symbolic assets of popular sectors, victims of prejudice and social minorities. Luiz Antônio Simas translates:

When we consider that beliefs, dances, foods, worldviews, for - but to celebrate life, bury the dead, educate children, etc. to stop - These groups are inferior, we are operating in the field of racism. (...)

May each person have the right to find the mystery of what belongs to them, in kindness and gestures of silence, drumming and songs celebrating life. Everything, in short, that one would expect from an event of conviviality between peoples. (Blog Histórias Brasileiras. Letter to members of the Brazilian Olympic Committee, 5/7/2016).

The sociocultural constraints of artistic production are relevant. It is from this perspective that Chagas proposes to reflect on the *Constitutional Commitment*. Thinking about artistic language – colors, lines, figurations, clarity, beauty... – articulated with its political orientations, which influence the ways of seeing and creating the world.

Together, Chagas proposes to reflect on the work of the Museum of the Republic, based on the painting. The institution is perceived as a privileged space for the articulation of heritage and memories. Space of the symbolic and the political that, museographically, reaffirms or subverts any memorial construct, expanding the repertoire of its communication with society beyond the impressions that Aurélio de Figueiredo may have wanted to convey with his work. The forms of exposure and reception of cultural heritage are thus problematized, in terms of the plurality of meanings and stimuli at play.

The exercise, in this book, is to penetrate the secrets of the *Constitutional Compromise painting*, analyzing it as a work that has social and political insertion, and as an element of the artist's free creation, in which freedom is also political freedom. The contextualized analysis of the painting adds to its appreciation as a museum collection and preserved memory in favor of strengthening a certain republican imaginary.

Incorporated into a national museum institution, the painting attracts the public, connects new perspectives and with each new perspective adds other ideas, memories and power relations. Participate in a new discursive field, open to a multiplicity of memories and possibilities.

Cultural mediator, guardian, but also producer, of memories and agent of their communication. On the one hand, the formation of cultural heritage is not a naive decision, as it engenders social and political values. On the other hand, museum modes of heritage mediation can

serve as counterpoints to single thinking and any simplification of the processes of representing life in society.

This book, therefore, commits museums to sharing memories and knowledge, and to the effort to build the world in terms of what is socially fair.

Today, marking the thirty years of the so-called Citizen Constitution, the preservation at the Museum of the Republic of a historical painting entitled *Constitutional Commitment* is also important for its semantic meaning, reminding us of museums' commitment to social justice. The long process of building citizenship in Brazil involved government and civil society institutions and a constellation of movements and social actors. At this point, what memories can and should we activate to represent the exercise of rights in the country? In times of strong political radicalization, which values, in this field, are at risk of being disregarded and inferior? There is a pressing commitment to preserving the social and cultural rights achieved so far, established to affirm human dignity. As Mario Chagas says: "Preserving is seeing the danger of destruction first" and preventing it from happening.

Maria Helena Versiani
November, 2018.

POLITICAL MEMORY AND MEMORY POLITICS: not to say that I didn't talk about the flowers of constitutional commitment¹

The loves in the mind

The flowers on the ground

Certainty ahead

The story in hand

Walking and singing

And following the song

Learning and teaching

A new lesson

Come, let's go

That waiting is not knowing

Who knows, maybe it's time

Don't wait for it to happen.

Geraldo Vandré

Mario Chagas

Poet, museologist, doctor in Social Sciences.

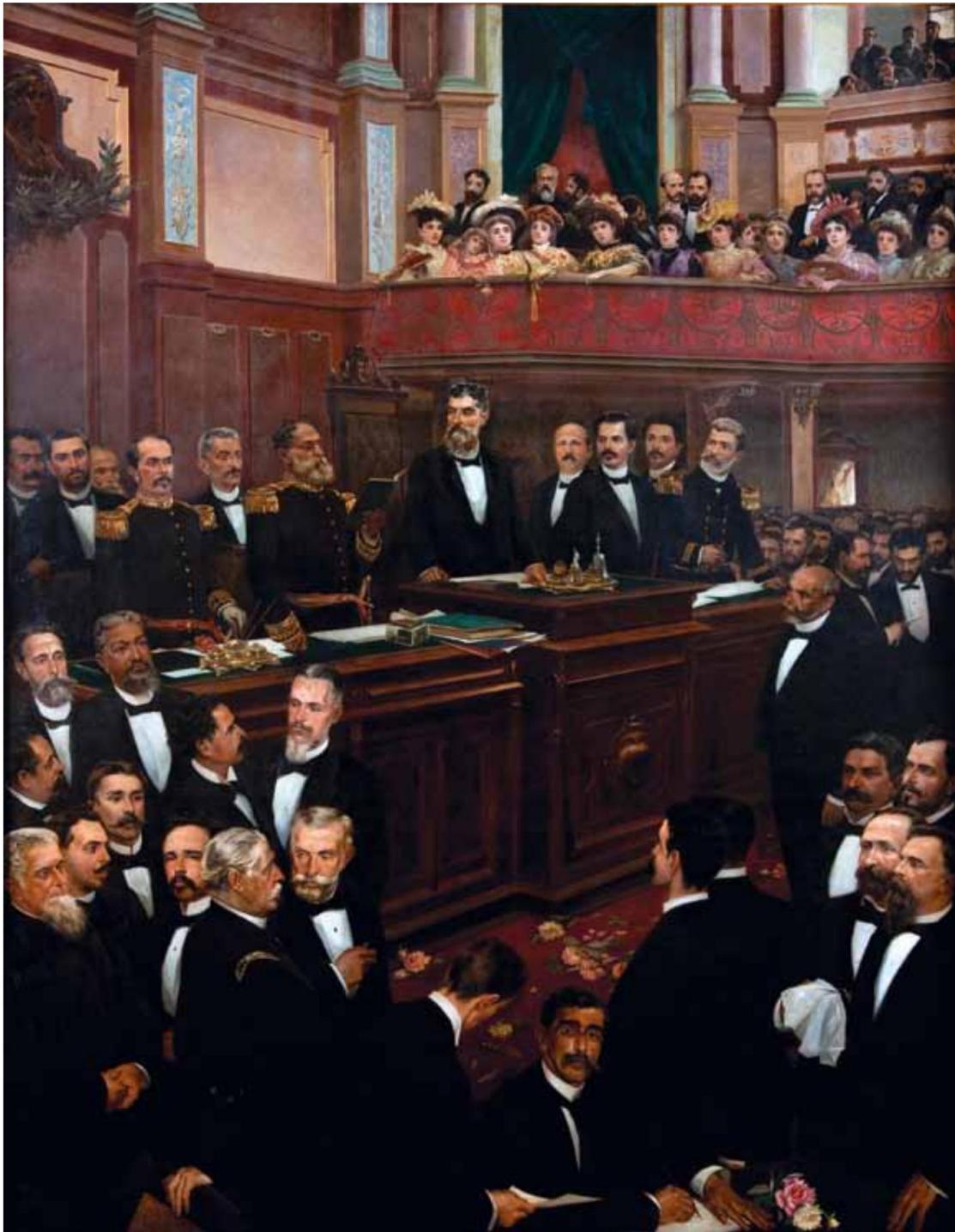
Director of the Museum of the Republic. Professor at the Department of Museological Studies and Processes at the Federal University of the State of Rio de Janeiro (Unirio), professor at the Postgraduate Program in Museology (Ppg-Museo) at the Federal University of Bahia (Ufba) and guest professor at the Universidade Lusófona de Humanities and Technologies (ULHT), in Lisbon (PT).

and power, the researcher² puts himself in a position to understand the web of forces that give it meaning. Memory and power are required. Where there is power, By placing the magnifying glass on the fabric resulting from the seam between memory there is resistance, there is memory and there is forgetfulness.³ The selective character of memory implies the recognition of its vulnerability with regard to the political action of electing, re-electing, subtracting, adding, excluding and including different fragments in the field of the memorable.

1 The text offered here takes as its starting point a previous version, included in the book *Memory and heritage: contemporary essays*, organized by Regina Abreu and Mario Chagas, published in 2003, by DP&A Editora.

2 The collaborations of Andréa Prates, Ecyla Brandão, Lúcia Vieira and Miriam Benevenute were important for the development of the research.

3 The article *Memory and Power: two movements* (Chagas, 2002), published in volume 19 of the ULHT's *Cadernos de Sociomuseologia*, deepens this discussion.



Constitutional
commitment, by
Aurélio de
Figueiredo, 1896.
Collection of the
Museum of the Republic.

Political action, in turn, frequently invokes the contest of memory, either to affirm the new, whose emergence depends on it, or to anchor in the past, in specially selected founding landmarks, the experience that unfolds in the present.

It is political action that makes memory, identity and national representation coincide, trampling on the “soft flower of oblivion”,⁴ confusing identity with belonging,⁵ operating towards transforming a representation of the national into the expressive brand of the national and, by the same way, transform a representation of memory into memory, as if the national and memory could be framed and fixed in a single frame, in a single understanding.

Political actions of this order are, for example, perpetrated by institutions that deal with the preservation and dissemination of so-called material and immaterial cultural heritage. Among these institutions, the researcher can highlight the so-called national museums,⁶ which operate, at the same time, as discursive fields, centers of interpretation and political arenas.

As discursive fields, museums activate museum language and operate with images, texts, colors, spaces, shapes, sounds, lights, volumes, textures, numbers and, in certain cases, odors and all of this, with the aim of producing museographically, narratives and discourses imbued with subjectivity, contaminated by their own poetics and with a strong desire to affect those who, for some reason, not always controllable, come into contact with this discursive web.

4 See the poem “Museu da Inconfidência”, included on page 183, from the book *Reunião*, published in Rio de Janeiro by José Olympio, in 1976.

5 Ver o texto “What is identity?”, by author Michel Serres, published in January in 1997 in *The World of Education and Training*.

6 At the Brazilian Institute of Museums (Ibram), the so-called national museums correspond to Unit I museums, namely: National Historical Museum, Museum of the Republic, Imperial Museum, Villa-Lobos Museum, Chácara do Céu Museum, National Museum of Belas Arts and Museum of Inconfidência. This categorization is admittedly controversial and inconsistent. It is based on archaic, contradictory and indefensible management criteria.

As interpretation centers, museums offer themselves as valid interpreters, as spaces for research and knowledge production, recognized and legitimized by a type of knowledge that presents itself as exempt and immune, even if it is ideologically contaminated.

Finally, no matter how much one wants and tries to hide it, the condition of the political arena of museums and museology is given. Museums, memory and heritage are fields of intense and tense political dispute. In this arena, everything mixes. Discourses, narratives, interpretations, speaking, singing, different types of knowledge and actions can be used to achieve very different objectives.

In so-called national museums, especially in historical museums, the issue is the preservation, use and transmission of a certain cultural heritage, made up of fragments to which the role of representing the national is attributed, or rather, representation of certain events, narrated from a perspective that is considered national. This heritage, as it is articulated with facts, events, processes and political situations, is converted into political memory. In turn, the preservation and dissemination of this memory are linked to the memory policy implemented by museum institutions.

The topic is compelling and has been approached from several angles. With this text, the researcher wants to contribute, albeit in a simple way, to the construction of a new perspective, cast on the scent of memory flowers.

In strategic, more precise terms, the research was concentrated on a single document, or cultural asset. It is a historical painting, created by Aurélio de Figueiredo in 1896,⁷ called *Constitutional Commitment* and which is part of the collection of the Museum of the Republic, created in 1960, on the occasion of the transfer of the federal capital from Rio de Janeiro to Brasília.

⁷ This publication is part of the celebrations of the 120th anniversary of the work *Constitutional Commitment*.

Francisco Aurélio de Figueiredo Cirne e Mello, known as Aurélio de Figueiredo, was born on August 3, 1854,⁸ in the city of Areia, in Paraíba, son of Daniel Eduardo de Figueiredo and Feliciana Cirne de Figueiredo, a family dedicated to the arts, especially the music.

While still young, he moved to the city of Rio de Janeiro and studied at the Imperial Academy of Fine Arts from 1876 to 1878, where he was a disciple of Jules Le Chevrel and his brother, Pedro Américo de Figueiredo Cirne e Mello. . After completing his studies in Fine Arts, he traveled to Europe and visited the following countries: Italy, France, Germany, Spain and Portugal.⁹ He was a skilled and very versatile romantic artist, he expressed himself as a caricaturist, draftsman, painter , sculptor, poet and novelist. In 1884 he married Paulina de Capanema, daughter of Baron de Capanema, and had four daughters: the twins Helena and Suzanna, as well as Sylvia and Heloysa. The Figueiredo sisters were famous in teaching and providing musical training in Rio de Janeiro. Aurélio de Figueiredo died in 1916, in the city of Rio de Janeiro.

The expographic discourse¹⁰ of the Museum of the Republic, especially with regard to the historical painting called *Constitutional Commitment*, functions as a mediating element between the public and the work conceived by the artist, which, in turn, acts as a mediator between the event and posterity. The Museum of the Republic interprets, in its own way, the work that interprets the event.

Aurélio de Figueiredo, when painting the *Constitutional Compromise*, five years after the event, produced a work that wants to inhabit the republican social imaginary and wants to tell how that event took place. The artist, from this angle, was a privileged producer of

8 Several authors indicate that Aurélio de Figueiredo was born in 1856.

In 1956, the National Museum of Fine Arts held an exhibition commemorating its centennial. Regardless of these indications, I stick to the information contained in the book *Aurélio de Figueiredo – meu pai*, authored by Heloysa de Figueiredo Cordovil (1985, p. 19).

9 See Cordovil (1985, p. 20).

10 Regarding the exhibition design. The expography is part of the museography.

political memory; he wanted (and his desire is still in motion) to reconfigure the event with his style, with his memory.

Between the artist, the visiting public and the event, there are other possibilities for mediation.

This text, divided into four parts, takes the *Constitutional Commitment* as the basis for an investigation that focuses on political memory at the beginning of the Republic, the mediumistic role¹¹ of the artist and the museum and the policy of preserving representations of memory carried out by the Museum of the Republic.

11 The term is used to indicate the role of the artist and the museum as mediators of emotions, thoughts, intuitions and sensations, between the public and facts, phenomena and events.

Political memory

cléa Bosi, in chapter 4 of her book *Memory and society: memories of old people*, clarifies that the memory of “public facts” has a AND “pronounced flavor of convention” and a visible “ideological content”.¹²

In the arena of “political memory” the intervention of value judgments is notable. “The subject,” says the author, “is not content with narrating as a ‘neutral’ historical witness. He also wants to judge, clearly marking the side he was on at that point in history, and reaffirming his position or nuanced it.”¹³

Political memory, when invoked, does not reconstitute past time, but makes it a reading, bathed in the objective and subjective experiences of the person who remembers. According to Bosi, “the memory of political events raises a word tied to the concrete situation of the subject”.¹⁴ As natural as it may seem, this memory is a construction that is updated in the present and projected into the future. To update and project itself from one time to another, memory uses different sources.

Studying the process of construction and perpetuation of the “political, social and historical memory of laborism”, João Trajano Sento-Sé observes that the means of transmitting memory do not only involve orality, but also through stories, reports and documents.¹⁵

12 See Ecléa Bosi (1998, p. 453).

13 The same.

14 Ibidem (1998, p. 454).

15 See João Trajano Sento-Sé (1999, p. 99).

The term document deserves special attention. Although its common use is associated with the idea of a textual source, it has the meaning of information support and, as indicated by Paul Otlet, cited by Edson Nery da Fonseca,¹⁶ it applies to books, magazines, newspapers, drawings, films, records, stamps, medals, photographs, sculptures, paintings, monuments, buildings, animal species, plants, minerals, etc.

The Latin origin of the term indicates that a document (*doccere*) is something that teaches someone something. In this sense, it seems clear that the transmission of political memory that uses documents, in the broadest sense of the word, also has a pedagogical intention, a desire for articulation between those who were and those who came later, a desire to form and produce continuities.

Using multiple documentary sources, political and social groups turn to the past through memory, not so much to reassemble it, but rather to retell it or even, as Sento-Sé indicates, to affirm "socially shared values, reinterpreting them and giving them relevance".

Aspects of his past are cut out and rearticulated into a meaningful whole. This, however, refers not only to the group's past history, but to its present time. It is the current nature of values and rules, projected into collective history, that memory celebrates.¹⁷

The work *Constitutional Commitment*, painted by Aurélio de Figueiredo, fits perfectly into the previously presented notion of document. The artist, when producing a monumental historical painting, also produced a document that interprets the event he wants to monumentalize; the artist, far from an intended neutrality, produced memory records impregnated with judgments of aesthetic and political value.

16 See Edson Nery da Fonseca (1983, p. 5).

17 See João Trajano Sento-Sé (1999, p. 99).

Constitutional commitment is not just oil paint on canvas, much less a portrait of the event, it wants to be a speech that gives meaning to the past, it wants to speak to future generations, it wants to be art, memory and history.

The narrative character of Aurélio de Figueiredo's paintings was captured with humor by Modesto Brócos, in a caricature published in the newspaper *Gazeta de Notícias*, where the artist appears full body, in profile, with a brush in his right ear and a feather in his left ear, with a palette and brushes in his left hand and a book in his right hand. At the foot of the caricature you will find

The following comment is made: "Camões had a pen and a sword. Aurélio has a pen and a brush. He paints excellent novels and writes splendid pictures."¹⁸

A work painted to be read, this seems to be the case with *Constitutional Commitment*, a work that reads the event and wants to be read, not only from an aesthetic point of view, but also from a historical and political point of view.

The caricature of Brócos seems to speak to the understanding of Orhan Pamuk, author of *The Museum of Innocence*, who in his book *The Naive Novelist and the Sentimental* states: "Writing a novel is equivalent to painting with words, and reading a novel is equivalent to visualize images through someone else's words."¹⁹

The kinship between words and images and between literature and painting finds a long-standing reference in Horace's old verse "ut pictura poesis" (as is painting, so is poetry).

The difference between literature and painting, as Pamuk indicates, was elaborated in the 18th century by the German playwright and critic Gotthold Ephraim Lessing. According to the playwright, poetry (read literature) "is an art that unfolds in time, while painting, sculpture and other visual arts unfold in space".²⁰

18 See *Gazeta de Notícias*, Rio de Janeiro, October 19, 1894, p. 1. See also:
www.dezenovevinte.net/egba/index.php?title=Imagen:Gazeta_de_Noticias_1894.10.19_p1.jpg#file.

19 See the book *The Naive Novelist and the Sentimental*, by Orhan Pamuk (2010, p. 69).

20 Ibidem (p. 70).

21 The same.

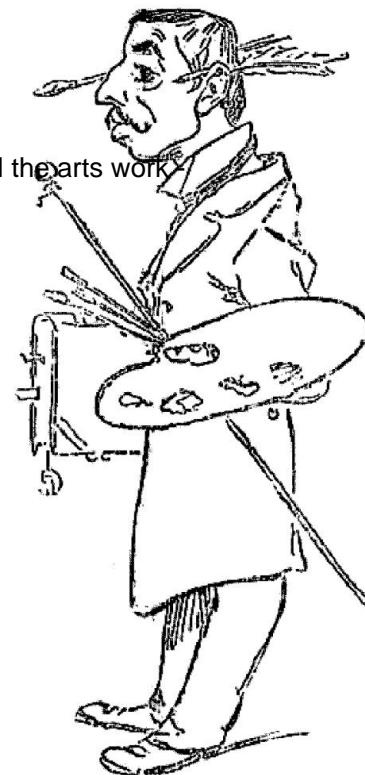
Words and images operate in distinct universes even though there are spaces of intersection between these universes. Orhan Pamuk may know from his own experience that this didactic distinction does not take into account the dynamics of life, the boundaries between the arts of time and space are not fixed, moreover, all the arts work. They came from a creative and poetic imagination; but even so, it is necessary to consider that they are not subject to or reduced to each other.

The so-called arts of time produce images, landscapes and imaginary spaces; the so-called arts of space activate and cross different temporalities. The author of *The Museum of Innocence* is a novelist with an interest in painting, architecture - ture and the world of museums. His aforementioned novel, for example, was written *pari passu* with the construction of a collection that, in April 2012, became a museum open to the public, in Istanbul, Turkey.

Added to this debate, with the aim of enhancing it, is the possibility of understanding that cinema, theater, dance, music, circus, opera, performance poetry, performance and some forms of expression of contemporary art rom -

They deal with this dichotomy and settle in time and space, at the same time-and-space.

The caricature of Brócos and his commentary also refer the researcher to chapter 1 of *Words and Things*, by Michel Foucault,²² which, after having described in detail the painting *Las Meninas*, by Velázquez, without having named the images that are represented there , he then decides, even reluctantly, to name them; but, even so, he recognizes that words and paintings participate in an “infinite relationship”.



(Brócos, des.)

22 Ver Michel Foucault (1966, p. 25).

These are two things that are irreducible to each other: no matter how much one tries to say what one sees, what one sees never resides in what one says; no matter how much one tries to make one see through images, metaphors, comparisons, what is said, the place where these shine is not the one that the eyes project, but rather the one that the syntactic sequences define.²³

Next, Foucault maintains that the

proper name in this game, it is just an artifice" that allows a quick passage between the space of speech and the space of looking. The philosopher's recommendation is to "put aside proper names" and remain "in the infinity of the task.²⁴

The work carried out here provisionally sets aside the philosopher's recommendation and searches for proper names, wanting to know how the artist established the connection between names, visual representations and political events. It's not unreasonable that some characters (and their given names) are easily identified and others are not. Furthermore, the historical painting of an event, in order to establish "its perennial character"²⁵ and for the glory and exaltation of the memory of the person recorded, allowed licenses and betrayals.

Before undertaking a reading of Aurélio de Figueiredo's work, it is important to understand with José Murilo de Carvalho the formation of a republican iconography in Brazil.

As we know, processes of political and social change favor the re-signification and proliferation of new images, words, sounds and objects, with the aim of occupying the place of old signs in the social imagination. The "battle of symbols and allegories", as Carvalho calls it, is part of political and ideological struggles.

23 The same.

24 The same.

25 See Cláudia Valladão Mattos and Cecília Helena de Salles Oliveira (1999, p. 123).

The elaboration of an imaginary is an integral part of the legitimization of any political regime. It is through the imaginary that one can reach not only the head, but, in a special way, the heart, that is, the aspirations, fears and hopes of a people. It is here that societies define their identities and objectives, define their enemies, organize their past, present and future.²⁶

In the elaboration of this imaginary, artists (painters, sculptors, musicians, poets, architects, urban planners, etc.) play a role of decided relevance. Accustomed to working with spaces, shapes, images, words, colors and sounds, they are called to participate as mediators between the new political regime and the population. The role of his works is not only poetic, it is also political and pedagogical. Exemplary values need to be disseminated, new landmarks of political memory need to be created and disseminated. This was the case in the French Revolution, from 1789 onwards, as demonstrated by Carvalho (1999), and in the establishment of the Brazilian Republic, a century later.

Artists such as Henrique Bernadelli, Décio Villares, Eduardo de Sá, Aurélio de Figueiredo and Pedro Américo participated in the construction of this republican imaginary. Eduardo de Sá and Décio Villares were positivist artists. The latter, one of the most active republican artists, was, together with Aurélio de Figueiredo, a disciple of Pedro Américo. Décio Villares was responsible for designing the Brazilian flag with the slogan “order and progress”, painted and sculpted republican allegories and several images of Benjamin Constant and Tiradentes. Aurélio de Figueiredo was also a republican, as can be seen from the first quartet of his sonnet dedicated to the Amazon, included in the work *Aurélio de Figueiredo – my father*:

Peerless Amazons, River – Sovereign Sea,
Allow that when you review this immense soil of yours,
Let me bow, full of intense pride
To acclaim you – Rei! – being eu, republican!²⁷

26 See José Murilo de Carvalho (1990, p. 10).

27 See Helyosa de Figueiredo Cordovil (1985, p. 22).



Detail of the Constitutional

Commitment. In focus the

artist, his brother Pedro

Américo and some politicians.

Following the pattern of

glances is a good exercise.

Considered a romantic artist, Aurélio de Figueiredo had a much more discreet republican activism than that of Décio Villares. Among his works that compete for space in the popular republican imagination, the most notable are *O martírio de Tiradentes*, *Compromisso constitucional* and *A Ilusão do ter-ceiro* reignado²⁸ or "The last ball on Ilha Fiscal". The latter, painted in 1905, is his most famous work. It was produced with the authorization of the Federal Congress and was acquired by President Rodrigues Alves. In it, the allegory of the Brazilian Republic stands out in the upper part of the painting, on the east side, accompanied by "Deodoro da Fonseca, Benjamin Constant, Aristides Lobo, Quintino Bocaiúva, Floriano Peixoto etc."²⁹ There, in apparent harmony, are the leaders of the Republic, those who, according to Carvalho,³⁰ they competed for a prominent place in the republican pantheon. About *The Last Ball on Fiscal Island*, the artist himself clarifies:

Following an inveterate practice among painters, I placed among the guests of this memorable party, which I had the pleasure of attending in the company of my lady, in addition to our portraits, those of three of my daughters, who were not there, as the two The twins were only one year old, and the third was not yet born. It is a very common anachronism [in] these history paintings. However, I stopped portraying many gentlemen and ladies that I saw at the ball, because they had asked me, almost formally ordered, not to put them on the canvas! Finally, it was not possible for me to represent many of the big names who should have been there, due to the absolute lack of portraits, especially in the case of deceased people.³¹

To date, the researcher has not found the artist's description of the *Constitutional Commitment*. Still, the text that

28 Both "The Martyrdom of Tiradentes" and "The Last Ball on Ilha Fiscal" are part of the collection of the National Historical Museum.

29 See Aurélio de Figueiredo (1907, p. 132).

30 See José Murilo de Carvalho (1990, p. 35-54).

31 See Aurélio de Figueiredo (1907, p. 132).

accompanies *The illusion of the third reign* or *The advent of the Republic*, published in the magazine *Renaissance* n. 37, dated March 1907, explains the artist's working method and contributes to the understanding of his process of producing social memory. The work has an exemplary and idealized character, it makes concessions, breaks with reality and temporal ties, but is still considered a history painting. The presence of the artist, who considers himself a republican, among the guests, raises, among others, the following question: wouldn't the situation of some artists trained at the Imperial Academy of Fine Arts, in the transition from the Monarchy to the Republic, be full of ambiguity?

The case of Pedro Américo, Aurélio de Figueiredo's older brother and teacher, deserves mention. Having become notable for the production of historical paintings, including *The Battle of Campo Grande* (collection of the Imperial Museum), *A Batalha do Avaí* (collection of the National Museum of Fine Arts) and *Independência ou morte*³² (collection of the Museu Paulista), Pedro Américo was identified by some critics as a collaborator of the "cultural policy of the Empire" and "the nationalist project of Emperor D. Pedro II". According to Mattos and Oliveira, this position threw the artist, after the establishment of the Republic, "into serious difficulties".³³ However, as Rafael Cardoso Denis demonstrates, "the republican movement recognized in Pedro Américo a possible representative and wanted to appropriate him. consider his works as symbols of a cause far removed from imperial propaganda."³⁴ The best example, cited by Denis, is the laudatory letter from Quintino Bocaiúva, published on October 10, 1871, in *A República*, the official organ of the republican party., addressed to Pedro Américo and designating him as an "American genius".³⁵

³² This work is also known by the names *O brado do Ipiranga*, *O cry do Ipiranga* or "The proclamation of Independence".

³³ See Claudia Valladão Mattos and Cecília Helena de Salles Oliveira (1999, p. 117).

³⁴ See Rafael Cardoso Denis (1999, pp. 191-233).

³⁵ The same.

These references do not aim, in any way, to minimize the artist's personal and professional connections with the cultural project of the Empire and the emperor, they only aim to relativize his political-ideological commitment. In 1890, Pedro Américo was elected deputy to the Constituent Assembly by Paraíba, having been the second "most voted in his home state".³⁶ With notoriety in the new political regime, Pedro Américo produced historical paintings aiming at the republican imaginary. As Denis explains: "His evident ease in always being in the grace of the current institutional power militates against any attribution of a more radical ideological positioning".³⁷

As notable as it may be, it is worth clarifying that Pedro Américo's political behavior is not an explanatory standard for other artists, it merely highlights the drama of the ambiguity of those who depend in some way on economic power (be it in the condition of executive power). -cutive, legislative, judiciary, business, banking or popular) for the production of their works.

In the next section, the research will be oriented towards reading the work *Constitutional Commitment*, its relationship with the republican social imaginary and the political questions it raises.



The artist Aurélio de Figueiredo with the work *The last ball on Ilha Fiscal* in the background, a collection of the National Historical Museum.

36 See Helyosa de Figueiredo Cordovil (1985, p. 82).

37 See Rafael Cardoso Denis (1999, p.214).

Not to say that I didn't talk about the flowers of memory

A theatricalization of republican memory, when taking as a reference the anniversary of November 15, 1889, it highlights, as the main actors of this "social"³⁸ and political drama, the army soldiers. As José Murilo de Carvalho³⁹ observes, *The proclamation of the Republic*, oil on canvas painted by Henrique Bernadelli, concentrates the memory theater scene on Deodoro da Fonseca, mounted on his horse, with in the background, in a secondary position, some more military men and some few civilians.

Although one should not fall into the exaggeration of disregarding the participation of civil leaders in the outbreak of the movement, since they were in coordination with Army officers, it is necessary to recognize⁴⁰ that, without the presence and effective participation of the military, the implementation of the Republic It would hardly have been perpetrated.

The republican movement, since 1870, with the publication of its manifesto, had been organizing and disseminating its ideas. Civil and military groups participated in the movement, which, regardless of the different political orientations within it, did not achieve or aim at popular mobilization. Joaquim Nabuco's criticism points out, in other terms, this same situation:

38 For the notion of "social drama", see Sento-Sé (1999, p. 41-46).

39 See Carvalho (1990, p. 40).

40 See Rodrigo Patto Sá Motta (1999, p. 48).



*The stenographer Caetano
da Silva and the
flowers of memory.*

In this sense, Abolitionism should be the primary school of all parties, the alphabet of our politics, and it is not; By a curious anachronism, there was a republican party long before there was an abolitionist opinion, and hence the main reason why this policy is a Babel in which no one understands each other.⁴¹

The centrality of military force in the establishment of the Republic is confirmed by the fact that the head of the provisional government, the first president and the first vice-president (later second president) of the nascent Republic were Army soldiers and were not elected. by direct vote.

The first civilian president was Prudente de Morais. Elected by direct vote in 1894, he governed the country until 1898, with a short break due to health reasons. It was during the Prudente de Morais government that the transfer of the headquarters of the Executive Branch from the Itamaraty Palace to the Nova Friburgo Palace (later Catete Palace and Museum of the Republic) was decided and carried out. The new presidential palace, whose renovation began in mid-1896, was inaugurated on February 24, 1897.

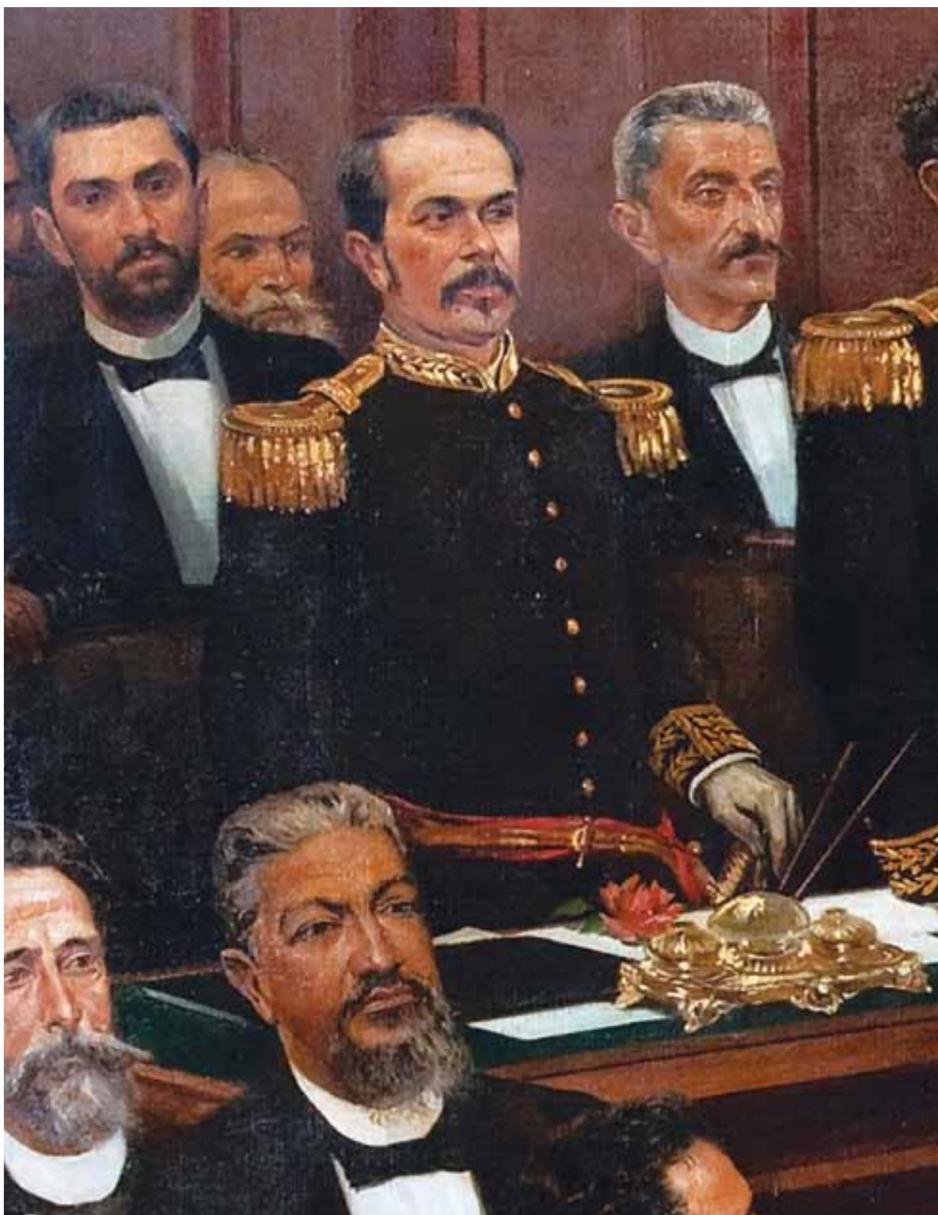
It was a symbolic date, adopted as a marker of memory to celebrate the sixth anniversary of the promulgation of the first republican Constitution. At the inauguration of the new headquarters of the Executive Branch, the *Constitutional Commitment canvas*, measuring 3.30 mx 2.57 m, dated and signed,⁴² it was already decorating one of the walls of the Audience Hall, located, at the time, on the first floor.⁴³

As can be seen, the painting commissioned from the artist by the Banco da República do Brasil, whose president was Afonso Pena, is part of a set of gestures that aim to inaugurate and mark a new phase in the country's republican trajectory. And, at that moment, the figure of a civilian president and his gestures began to be worked as anchors of a new political cycle. The date of elaboration of the pictorial representation (1896) is in line with the date of the

41 See Joaquim Nabuco (1977, p. 64).

42 In this work, dated 1896, the artist's signature is F. Aurélio.

43 See Lopes (1964, p. 202).



Detail of the Constitutional Commitment. In the middle Floriano Peixoto, in military clothes. Just below highlighted Francisco Glicério de Cerqueira Leite, black, descendant of slaves, one of the most important republican leaders in São Paulo.



Chair used during

National Assembly

Constituent Assembly, 1891.

Collection of the

Museum of the Republic.

event represented (1891) and in both moments the emphasis falls on the figure of Prudente de Moraes, as if what was wanted to be represented -
tar was the construction of a new (or the restoration of an old) cen -
traality. In this sense, leaving behind the Itamaraty Palace, occupied by two
military presidents, and moving to another palace, in this case Nova Friburgo, also
had the air of a new cycle.

When the researcher stands in front of the large canvas painted by Figueiredo,
he finds that even the least attentive spectator is attracted ini -
especially towards the central area of the painting, where the figure of a man with
a beard, in civilian clothes, standing in a hieratic position stands out, with his
hands solemnly resting on a wooden table and green felt. From that point, the eye
can slide slightly over the front of the table and you can pick out camellias,
camellia buds, petals -

trees and foliage. Breaking with the magnetism of the central point, the eye
searches for more flowers and finds them in the foreground, in the lowest part of
the painting, on the table of a man with glasses and a mustache, in civilian clothes,
sitting, taking notes. This man's gaze meets the viewer's gaze. Where does he
look? Moving away from the painting, the spectator realizes that, turning his gaze
clockwise, from this seated man and taking as a reference the heads represented
in the first -

First and in the background, he draws a kind of human circle or ellipse that opens
and closes on the seated man. This circle or ellipse of male heads forms around
the table and the flowers on the floor.

On the table are books, papers, quills, inkwells and a flower. And put -
It is possible to visualize a straight ascending line between the seated man looking
at the front of the painting and the central character, standing, with a beard and
civilian clothes, as if they were two spatial and temporal extremes. Behind the
table, to the left side of the central and highest character you will find -
there are four men, three in civilian clothes and one in military clothes; on the right
side there are six men, the first two and the ones at the front wear military
uniforms. The one immediately to the right of the central man, on a lower level, is
older, wears a beard and is reading a book, in a solemn and serious manner; the
other milli -

tar, to the left of this soldier, is younger, wears a mustache, and on the table at the

In front of it you can see a camellia (it is clear that the presence of the flower is not the result of chance). The military uniforms of these two men stand out, corresponding to high-ranking military personnel. The reading carried out by the eldest does not seem to be followed with the same interest by all the men in the circle or ellipse viewed by the spectator. The environment is not peaceful; on the contrary, it is tense. Another spectator would say: "You can feel the heavy atmosphere, there is no euphoria in the severe faces of those present"⁴⁴. Some men talk to each other; others, with their backs to the table, look at a scene unfolding outside the field of pictorial visibility; For many represented, the older man's reading does not seem important. If at least there were, as in the painting *Las Meninas*, painted by Velázquez and described by Foucault,⁴⁵ the representation of a mirror in the background of this solemn scene, it would be possible to identify other actors, more or less hidden. There is no mirror, but deep inside there is a half-open curtain. In the last plane or upper plane, the eye will find a group of women, including girls, well dressed, sitting on the red stand, some carrying fans and hats. There are those who say that they are "wives and daughters of the constituents"⁴⁶.

Behind them, some men, standing, observe the events. Among them, an older man with a beard watches vigilantly. It is solemn and attracts attention. He seems like an influential figure, even if he tries to preserve himself. The female presence and her place in the background and at the top to the left of the central character draw the eye's attention. The flowers are once again imposing, they have not been forgotten. Who would have thrown them on the carpet in the painting and on the central table in front of the uniformed soldier with mustaches and on the table of the seated man who takes notes and looks in front of or out of the painting, with his back to the central character and the man old in the act of reading? The gesture of throwing them seems, but

44 Idem (1964, p. 211).

45 Ver Michel Foucault (1966, pp. 17-33).

46 See Lopes (1964, p. 205).

it just seems like a feminine gesture. Nothing prevents this gesture from being constructed with the participation of men. The Republic was also abundantly represented by feminine allegories.⁴⁷ It seems that the seated man tries to identify with his eyes who threw the flowers. But the gaze he meets is that of the spectator. It searches and finds what is not visible on the screen. This place of looking outside the screen, as Foucault would say,⁴⁸ coincides with the place of gaze of the artist, the spectator and the thrower of the flowers. Looking forward and away from the represented event is also looking at posterity, at the invisibility of the future, at the future of the Republic that was being drawn back there. What is this man doing sitting down? He records, he takes notes. The researcher guesses his function: he is the memory man. He looks at the viewer like someone looking into the future. And the artist, who also takes care of the memory of the political event, dialogues with it. This man-memory, according to tradition, is the stenographer Caetano da Silva, accompanied by three assistants, concentrated on their work. Maybe he knows who threw the flowers. Looking more closely at the large canvas, the viewer realizes that its center is the flowers, thrown from the future (1896) into the past (1891).

47 See Carvalho (1990, pp. 75-96).

48 Ver Michel Foucault (1966, pp. 17-33).

Names, surnames and representations

event represented on the big screen *Constitutional commitment* it was carried out on February 26, 1891 as a consequence of previous events. In November 1890, at the Quinta da Boa Vista Palace (currently the National Museum), the National Constituent Assembly of the Republic was installed under the presidency of Prudente de Moraes and, at the same time, the Draft Constitution was presented, drawn up by the commission appointed by the provisional government, formed by Saldanha Marinho, Rangel Pestana, Antônio Luis dos Santos Werneck, Américo Brasiliense de Almeida Mello and José Antônio Pedreira de Magalhães Castro.

The following year, on February 24, the Constitution was promulgated.

The first election for president and vice-president would be exceptional. A transitional provision indicated that, after the promulgation of the Constitution, the constituents should elect them. Thus, the next day the election was held. The paper bin, improvised into an electoral ballot box, the chair of the president of the Constituent Congress, the first Constitution and the pen possibly used for its signature were transformed into monuments, documents, memory supports and, today, are also part of the collection of the Museum of the Republic.

Congress became a focus of resistance to the candidacy of Deodoro da Fonseca. The result of the election⁴⁹ was as follows:

49 See Lopes (1965, p. 206).

FOR PRESIDENT	NUMBER OF VOTES	%
Deodoro da Fonseca	129	55,60
Prudente de Moraes	97	41,81
Floriano Peixoto	3	1,29
Joaquim Saldanha Marinho	2	0,86
José Higino Duarte Pereira	1	0,44
Valid votes	232	100
Blank votes	2	
Voting constituencies	234	
Missing constituents	34	

FOR VICE PRESIDENT	NUMBER OF VOTES	%
Floriano Peixoto	153	65,94
Eduardo Wandenkolk	57	24,56
Prudente de Moraes	12	5,17
Colonel Piragibe	5	2,15
Almeida Barreto	4	1,72
Custodio José de Melo	1	0,46
Valid votes	232	100
Blank votes	2	
Voting constituencies	234	
Missing constituents	34	



1. Prudente de Moraes
2. Deodoro da Fonseca
3. José Cesário da Faria Alvim Filho
4. Floriano Peixoto
5. José Simeão de Oliveira
6. Júlio Prates de Castilhos
7. Antônio Justiniano Esteves Júnior
8. José Paes de Carvalho
9. João da Mata Machado
10. Eduardo Mendes Golçalves
11. João Soares Neiva
12. Alcindo Guanabara
13. Amaro Cavalcanti
14. João Batista Sampaio Ferraz
15. Antônio Augusto Borges de Medeiros
16. Francisco de Assis Rosa e Silva
17. Lauro Müller
18. Antonio Francisco de Azeredo
19. Aristides Lobo
20. Campos Sales
21. Unidentified figure 22.
- Unidentified figure
23. Caetano da Silva
24. Unidentified figure 25.
- André Cavalcanti
26. Eduardo Wandekolk
27. Lauro Sodré
28. Joaquim Saldanha Marinho
29. Aurélio Figueiredo
30. Pedro Americo
31. Alexandre Cassiano do Nascimento
32. Bernardino José de Campos Júnior
33. José Gomes Pinheiro Machado
34. Francisco Glicério Cerqueira Leite
35. Quintino Bocaiúva
36. Sylvia Figueiredo (younger)
37. Paulina de Capanema Figueiredo
38. Sylvia de Figueiredo (a little older)
39. Helena de Figueiredo / Suzana de Figueiredo
40. Barão de Lucena

Prudente de Moraes' candidacy became a stepping stone on Deodoro da Fonseca's almost naturalized path towards becoming head of the Executive Branch. The victory did not imply the consecration of the old soldier, proclaimer of the Republic and candidate for the pantheon of national heroes, since the small difference of 32 votes (13.8%) in relation to second place, was not comfortable and indicated the prestige of a civil leadership, with a political base in São Paulo, where the Republican Party, from the beginning, was more organized. As if that weren't enough, the government (or deodorist) candidate for vice-president, Eduardo Wandenkolk, represented in military uniform in the circle of male heads, was defeated by Floriano Peixoto with a large margin of votes (41.3%).

The oil on canvas by Aurélio de Figueiredo, builder of a dramaturgy of memory, wants to portray the next day. Once the storm had passed, the belly of the improvised ballot box had been opened, the votes had been counted and the winners elected by 232 citizens had been identified, the process would have to continue. Figueiredo's representation wants, at the same time, to mark difference and affirm continuity. It is as if the big screen said: today (1896) is another time, but that other time was already present and in the making at that time, in the yesterday (1891) that is represented here. The next day was February 26, 1891. According to Lopes, "Deodoro was received coldly, while a warm round of applause welcomed Floriano. This attitude has just made the generalissimo incompatible with the Assembly."⁵⁰

Still in 1891, before completing nine months, the commitment or constitutional oath taken by Deodoro was broken and Congress was dissolved. Faced with reactions from the opposition and the weakening of his political position, twenty days later, Deodoro resigned and the presidency was passed to Floriano Peixoto.

The researcher wants, at this moment, to name and point with his finger at the characters represented by Aurélio de Figueiredo.⁵¹ The contributions

50 See Lopes (1965, p. 211).

51 The *Dictionary of the Republican Political Elite (1889-1930)* was fundamental for this work. See: <http://cpdoc.fgv.br/dicionario-primeira-republica/1>.

Professor Gilda Marina Almeida Lopes and colleagues Lúcia Vieira, Andréa Prates and Nara Abud were decisive in this identification. The table below, accompanied by a silhouette drawing,⁵² facilitates the naming, which is not thought of as definitive.

REPRESENTATIONS AND NAMES

1. Prudente de Moraes (1841, SP – 1902, SP)

Bachelor of Law, provincial deputy for São Paulo (1868, 1878 and 1885), president of the province of São Paulo, constituent senator and president of the Constituent Congress (1890-1891), president of Brazil for the Federal Republican Party (1894-1898).

2. Deodoro da Fonseca (1827, AL – 1892, RJ)

Military man, head of the provisional government (1889-1891) and president of the Republic (1891), in a coup, decreed the dissolution of Congress, but soon afterwards he was forced to resign.

3. José Cesário de Faria Alvim Filho (1839, MG – 1903, RJ)

Bachelor of Law, provincial deputy (1864-1865 and 1866-1867), general deputy (1867-1868), president of the province of Rio de Janeiro (1888-1889), president of the province of Minas Gerais (1890), minister of the Interior and mayor of the Federal District (1898-1900).

4. Floriano Peixoto (1839, AL – 1895, RJ)

Military man, Minister of War in the provisional government, vice-president of the Republic (1891) and president of the Republic (1891-1894), after the resignation of Deodoro da Fonseca.

⁵² The photography is by Flávio Leão and the production of the silhouette is by Romy Morgado, with guidance from Patrícia Fernandes.

5. José Simeão de Oliveira (1838, RS – 1893, USA)

Military, engineer, appointed president of the province of Pernambuco (1890), elected twice to the Senate, once to the Constituent Assembly (1890-1891) and once to the ordinary legislature of the National Congress (1891-1893), Minister of War (1891).

6. Júlio Prates de Castilhos (1860, RS – 1903, RS)

Bachelor of Law and journalist, constituent deputy (1890-1891), president of Rio Grande do Sul twice (1891 and 1893-1898).

7. Antônio Justiniano Esteves Júnior (1832, SC – 1900, RJ)

Abolitionist and republican. He was a constituent senator (1890-1891) for the province of Santa Catarina.

8. José Paes de Carvalho (1841, PA – 1943, FR)

Doctor, founder of the Republican Club of Pará. Constituent senator for Pará, second secretary of the National Constituent Assembly of 1890, governor of Pará (1897-1899).

9. João da Mata Machado (1850, MG – 1901, MG)

Doctor, provincial deputy and general deputy for Minas Gerais in several terms, he was president of the Chamber of Deputies in 1891 and first secretary of the National Constituent Assembly.

10. Eduardo Mendes Gonçalves - (? , PR – 1911, SP)

Republican activist. Civil engineer from the Polytechnic School of Rio de Janeiro. Constituent deputy (1890-1893) for the state of Paraná and fourth secretary of the National Constituent Assembly.

11. João Soares Neiva (1839, PB — 1903, RJ)

Military man, senator for the state of Paraíba (1890-1897), fourth secretary of the National Constituent Assembly (1891), federal deputy (1900 to 1903) and general director of the Fire Department.

12. Alcindo Guanabara (1865, RJ – 1918, RJ)

Abolitionist and republican. Writer, journalist and politician. Constituent deputy (1890-1893), deputy in the second legislature (1894-1896) and one of the founders of the Brazilian Academy of Letters.

13. Amaro Cavalcanti (1849, RN – 1922, RJ)

Bachelor of Law, journalist, diplomat and constituent deputy (1890-1891), minister of Justice (1897), of the Supreme Court (1906) and of Finance (1918), governor of the Federal District (1917-1918).

14. João Batista de Sampaio Ferraz (1857, SP – (?))

Bachelor of Law, public prosecutor, chief of police and constituent deputy (1890-1891). He was the first police chief in the city of Rio de Janeiro, he was known by the nickname “Cavanhaque de Aço” and his administration was marked by the persecution and attempted criminalization of capoeira people.

15. Antônio Augusto Borges de Medeiros (1863, RS – 1961, RS)

Bachelor of Law, police chief, constituent deputy (1890-1891), president of the province of Rio Grande do Sul from 1898 to 1907 and from 1913 to 1928 and candidate for president of the Republic in 1934, in the election held at the National Congress, when he was defeated by Getúlio Vargas.

16. Francisco de Assis Rosa e Silva (1857, PE – 1929, RJ)

Bachelor in Law. Provincial deputy (1882) and general deputy (1886-1889). During the Republic, he was a constituent deputy (1890-1891), president of the Chamber of Deputies (1894-1895), senator for Pernambuco (1895) and vice-president of the Republic (1894-1898) on the Campos Sales ticket.

17. Lauro Müller (1864, SC – 1926, RJ)

Military, engineer, politician and diplomat. President of the province of Santa Catarina (1889-1890), elected constituent deputy (1890-1891),

He served several terms as deputy and senator, was Minister of Transport and Public Works (1903-1906) and Minister of Foreign Affairs (1913-1917).

18. Antônio Francisco de Azeredo (1861, MT – 1936, RJ)

Journalist and politician, constituent deputy (1891) for the state of Mato Grosso, senator for several terms. He worked prominently in the press, founded and controlled several periodicals, such as: *Gazeta da Tarde*, *Diário de Notícias*, *O Malho* and *A Tribuna*.

19. Aristides Lobo (1838, PB – 1896, MG)

Abolitionist and historic republican. Bachelor in Law. Public prosecutor and journalist. He was Minister of the Interior in the provisional government (1889-1890), constituent deputy (1890-1891) and senator for the Federal District. (1892).

20. Campos Sales (1841, SP – 1913, SP)

Bachelor in Law. Historic Republican. He participated in the creation of the São Paulo Republican Party, for which he was provincial deputy for three terms (1867, 1881 and 1889) and general deputy for one term (1885). He was Minister of Justice in the provisional government (1889), constituent senator (1891), president of the Province of São Paulo (1894-1898), president of the Republic (1898-1902) and federal senator (1909).

21. Unidentified figure

Assistant Stenographer

22. Unidentified figure

Assistant Stenographer

23. Caetano da Silva

Stenographer

24. Unidentified figure

Assistant Stenographer

25. André Cavalcanti (1834, PE – 1927, RJ)

Bachelor of Law, public prosecutor, provincial deputy in the province of Pernambuco (1870-1871), chief of police in Paraíba, Pernambuco, Bahia and the Federal District. Elected as a constituent deputy for Pernambuco (1890-1891), he was judge of Feitos da Fazenda (1891), minister (1897) and president (1924) of the Federal Supreme Court.

26. Eduardo Wandenkolk (1838, RJ – 1902, RJ)

Navy soldier, Minister of War (1890), Minister of the Navy (1890-1891), Senator for the Federal District (1890-1891), Chief of the General Staff of the Navy (1902).

27. Lauro Sodré (1858, PA – 1944, RJ)

Military man, disciple of Benjamin Constant, constituent deputy (1890-1891), governor of the state of Pará (1891-1897). He demonstrated against Deodoro da Fonseca's coup, which resulted in the closure of Congress and his deposition; Soon afterwards, with Deodoro's resignation, he was kept in office. He was a senator for almost thirty years.

28. Joaquim Saldanha Marinho (1816, PE – 1895, RJ)

Historic Republican. Bachelor of Law, deputy general (1848-1849, 1861-1863, 1864-1866, 1867-1868 and 1878-1881). He was president of the provinces of Minas Gerais (1865-1867) and São Paulo (1867-1868) and senator from 1890 to 1895. He was the president of the commission that prepared the draft Constitution.

29. Aurélio de Figueiredo (1854, PB – 1916, RJ)

Self-portrait. A clear indication that the work should not be read as historical truth, Aurélio de Figueiredo did not participate in the Constituent Assembly.

30. Pedro Américo (1843, PB – 1905, Florence)

Visual artist, brother of the author of the work *Constitutional Commitment*,

nationally and internationally renowned artist, constituent deputy (1890-1891) for Paraíba.

31. Alexandre Cassiano do Nascimento (1856, RS – 1912, RJ)

Bachelor of Laws, state public prosecutor, municipal judge and republican activist. He was elected as a constituent senator (1890-1891) for Rio Grande do Sul and was Foreign Minister in the government of Floriano Peixoto.

32. Bernadino José de Campos Júnior (1841, MG – 1915, SP)

Abolitionist and republican. Bachelor of Law, councilor, provincial deputy (1877), constituent deputy (1890-1891), president of the province of São Paulo (1892), minister of Finance (1896), senator for São Paulo (1902) and new president of the province of São Paulo (1902).

33. José Gomes Pinheiro Machado (1851, RS – 1915, RJ)

Bachelor of Law, constituent senator (1890-1891) for the province of Rio Grande do Sul, one of the most influential and controversial politicians of the Old Republic. Murdered in the city of Rio de Janeiro.

34. Francisco Glicério de Cerqueira Leite (1846, SP – 1916, RJ)

Abolitionist and republican. Self-taught, trained lawyer, typographer, teacher, Minister of Agriculture (1890-1891), constituent deputy (1890-1891) and senator of the Republic (1902) for São Paulo.

35. Quintino Bocaiúva (1836, RJ – 1912, RJ)

Abolitionist and republican. Journalist, Minister of Foreign Affairs (1890), constituent senator for Rio de Janeiro (1890-1891), president of the province of Rio de Janeiro (1901-1903).

36. Sylvia de Figueiredo (?)

Hypothetically, Sylvia de Figueiredo (daughter of Aurélio de Figueiredo and Paulina de Capanema Figueiredo, when she was younger).



Detail of the Constitutional Commitment. In the center Prudente de Moraes, the president of the National Constituent Assembly, from 1891, and the first civilian president of Brazil.



Deodoro da Fonseca, in military clothing, takes his constitutional oath. O first constitutional oath in the republican period.

37. Paulina de Capanema Figueiredo (?)

Hypothetically, Paulina de Capanema Figueiredo (wife of Aurélio de Figueiredo).

38. Sylvia de Figueiredo (?)

Hypothetically, Sylvia de Figueiredo (daughter of Aurélio de Figueiredo and Paulina de Capanema Figueiredo, a little older).

39. Helena de Figueiredo (? - 1957) / Suzana de Figueiredo (? - 1948)

Hypothetically, twin daughters of Aurélio de Figueiredo and Paulina de Capanema Figueiredo (Helena de Figueiredo or Suzana de Figueiredo).

40. Barão de Lucena (1835, PE – 1913, RJ)

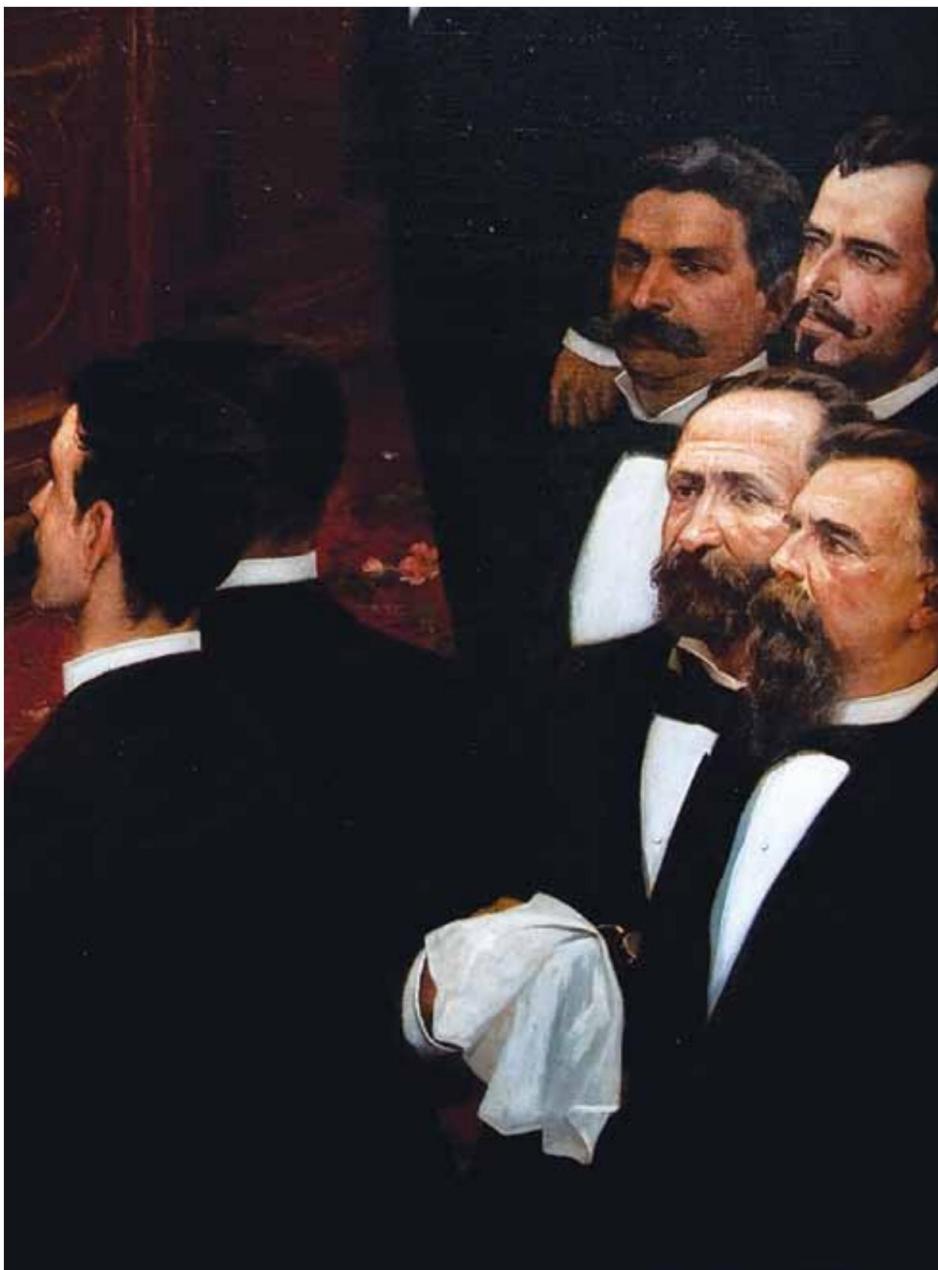
The circle or ellipse of male heads in Aurélio de Figueiredo's large canvas is a record of political memory relating to the early days of the Republic. It is not just illustrious and influential political men who are represented there.

Gestures and movements, places, approaches and distances, conversations and looks, everything wants to represent. Everything makes up the artist's speech, even his forgetfulness, his naturalizations and his romanticisms.

With the artist's will (or not), in addition to the noble virtues, hidden interests, enmity, hatred, envy, betrayal, arrogance, arrogance, tyranny, pride are also represented there. , vanity, pettiness, prejudice, buying and selling images for the future. There, in an area of 8.48 m², the artist gave pigment, color and shape to multiple representations of power. The concentration of political energy is extraordinary.

In terms of training or professional performance, those represented were politicians, law graduates, military personnel, journalists, engineers, doctors, visual artists, stenographers, as well as men, women and children.

The military presence was broad and did not limit itself to those in uniform; but even so, civilians and law graduates dominated the scene. In addition to military personnel and graduates, journalists stood out. The support



*Detail of
Constitutional
commitment. In
focus Campos Sales
and Aristides Lobo.*

of journalists was fundamental to the Republican campaign. Dominance, control and ownership of a newspaper was a strong indication of political power, of the possibility of articulation and mobilization. Through newspapers, abolitionist and republican ideas spread across the country.

Two strangers in the nest (or not) are registered: the artist Aurélio Figueiredo himself, who was not a constituent, and his brother Pedro Américo, an artist and constituent deputy. According to Helyo de Figueiredo Cordovil, her uncle Pedro Américo was disillusioned with politics and, after his term ended, "did not run for re-election",⁵³ he preferred to embark on artistic activities in Italy.

In terms of occupying positions in the Executive, Legislative and Judiciary branches, there are represented people wearing male uniforms who, in different periods of time, held positions as presidents of the Republic, vice-presidents, presidents or governors of provinces, ministers, mayors, police chiefs, public prosecutors, judges, senators, federal deputies, state deputies and councilors. Summary: the elite of the first republic is represented there.

It is, as can be seen, an elite (civil and military) with great political agility, with an extraordinary ability to move between the Executive, the Legislative and the Judiciary, with the versatility to accumulate positions and functions.

Two examples: Cesário Alvim and Borges de Medeiros. O first he had three general deputy legislatures in the Monarchy, he was president of the province of Rio de Janeiro during the Monarchy and provisional governor of Minas Gerais at the beginning of the Republic, he was also Minister of the Interior and mayor of the Federal District; the second was a police chief, president of the province of Rio Grande do Sul from 1898 to 1907 and from 1913 to 1928 and deputy in the first and second National Constituent Assembly (1933/1934). The memory of Borges de Medeiros' candidacy for the presidency of the Republic in 1934, when he was defeated by Getúlio Vargas, gives the perspective of the political longevity of some constituents of 1891.

53 See Cordovil (1985, p. 85).

After those who are represented in the insistently mentioned circle or ellipse of male heads have been numbered and named, the researcher turns to those who are outside and what is contained within it (the circle).

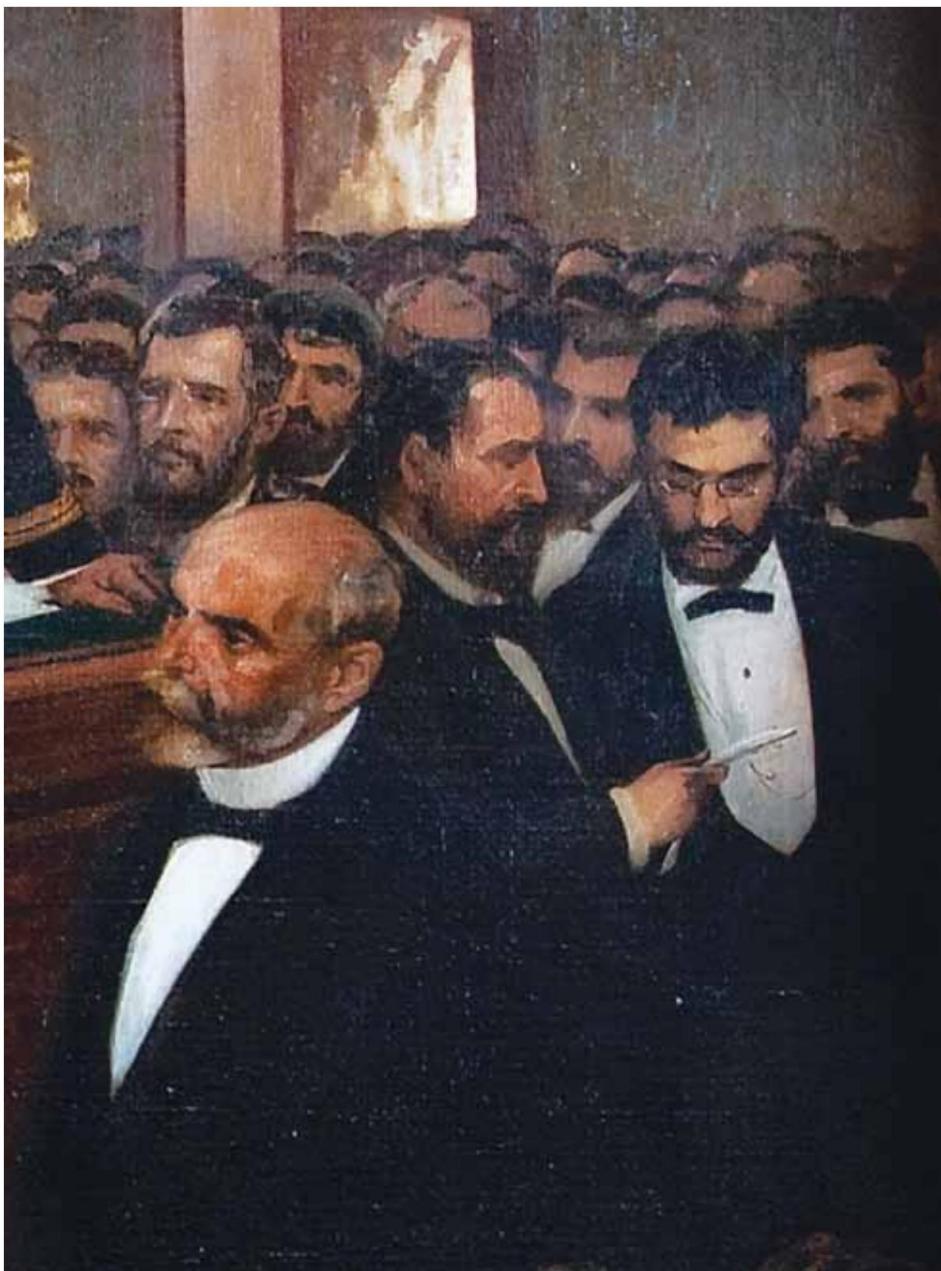
Outside the circle or ellipse, on the stand, there are some women, as well as children and men. According to Lopes, they are "the wives and daughters of the constituents"⁵⁴ and, among the men, the image of a gray-haired man with a beard stands out in the last plane, next to a half-open curtain. This is Barão de Lucena (1835, PE – 1913, RJ), an influential man, friend and compadre of Deodoro da Fonseca who was president of the provinces of Pernambuco, Bahia, Rio Grande do Norte and Rio Grande do Sul, Minister of Finance, Public Works, Justice and the Federal Supreme Court. What does Baron de Lucena represent, with his CV so familiar to all other politicians, outside the main circle or ellipse? What brings you closer to well-dressed women? What is similar between him and them? The researcher understands that they are representations of political witnesses who, even in the artist's view, are far from being uninfluential. They give opinions and decide outside the forum established below, they are also power, a power that moves through other networks of (in)fidelity.

After spending a long time observing the characters on the stand, the researcher began to consider the hypothesis that there, in the group of women, they would be portrayed, as a subjective mark, as a stylistic and poetic signature, the artist's wife and daughters. One of his daughters (possibly Sylvia) appears to be represented in the image of a girl who delicately leans over the right shoulder of an older woman, possibly her mother (Paulina de Capanema de Figueiredo). The two young women on the left side of this maternal figure are very similar to each other (is this a representation of Helena and Suzanna, the couple's twin daughters?), the researcher suspects that there is a game here, almost an enigma.

54 See Lopes (1965, p. 205).



*The artist and the
artist's brother. Here
is another way to sign
the work.*



*Detail of
Constitutional
commitment. In the
foreground, Amaro
Cavalcanti and soon
after, Sampaio Ferraz,
the great opponent of capoeiras.*

Whatever the game, the researcher considers that the artist's main suggestion concerns questioning the place of women in politics, especially in the republican context. Here the researcher stops: what is the place of women in the first Constituent Assembly of the Republic?

According to Marcelo Melo da Silva:

In the discussions of the Constituent Assembly, the majority was against female suffrage. In the session on January 12, 1891, deputy Muniz Freire lamented the refusal to vote for monastic and illiterate religious. However, regarding female suffrage, he considers it immoral and anarchic because, on the day we converted it into law by a vote in Congress, we would have decreed the dissolution of the Brazilian family (*Anais do Congresso Constituinte, 1891, p. 456*)".⁵⁵

It is evident that the constituent's dramatic and exaggerated argument was false, conservative, prejudiced and a defender of the patriarchal family. He didn't look at the past, he didn't consider the women who fought for the Republic, he didn't even consider the women who had political prominence in the Empire, starting with Empress Leopoldina, the Marquesa de Santos and Princess Isabel.

Seventeen days later, in the session of January 29th, constituent César Zama, as Silva indicates, resumed the debate and, coherently, argued that, if "the family did not become disorganized when the woman worked as a lawyer, doctor or when holding public positions that required much more time", therefore, "on election day, a woman going to vote would not cause any problem in the organization of the family" (*Annals of the Constituent Congress, 1891*)".⁵⁶

César Zama countered the opinion of opponents of female suffrage, saying:

No serious objections have I yet heard against the opinion, that

⁵⁵ See article by Marcelo Melo da Silva at <http://www.unicap.br/coloquiohistoria/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/4Col-p.483.pdf>.

⁵⁶ The same.





Detail of the Constitutional Commitment. The work seems to set in motion the question regarding the place of women in politics. In fact, the twelve women in this scene are very similar to each other. The suggestion is that the artist restricted himself to familiar models.

we maintain: our opponents limit themselves to asserting that the granting of political rights to women will, without fail, bring disorganization to the home and family; None of them, however, took the trouble to explain to us the manner and reasons for this disorganization. In matters of this nature, it is not enough to state, it is necessary to prove. (Annals of the constituent congress, 1891, p. 356).⁵⁷

The debate sustained by Zama in favor of universal suffrage, including female suffrage, shows that feminist issues were by no means restricted to the platform. Furthermore, it is important to highlight that the Bahian deputy César Zama was not alone, several other congressmen defended female suffrage, including Saldanha Marinho, who, with the support of at least 31 constituents, forwarded an amendment to the Constitution project extending the Brazilian women the right to vote. In the plenary, Saldanha Marinho's amendment was defeated. It is interesting to observe on Aurélio de Figueiredo's large canvas the place where Saldanha Marinho is located, surrounded by the artist himself, the artist's brother and Lauro Sodré.

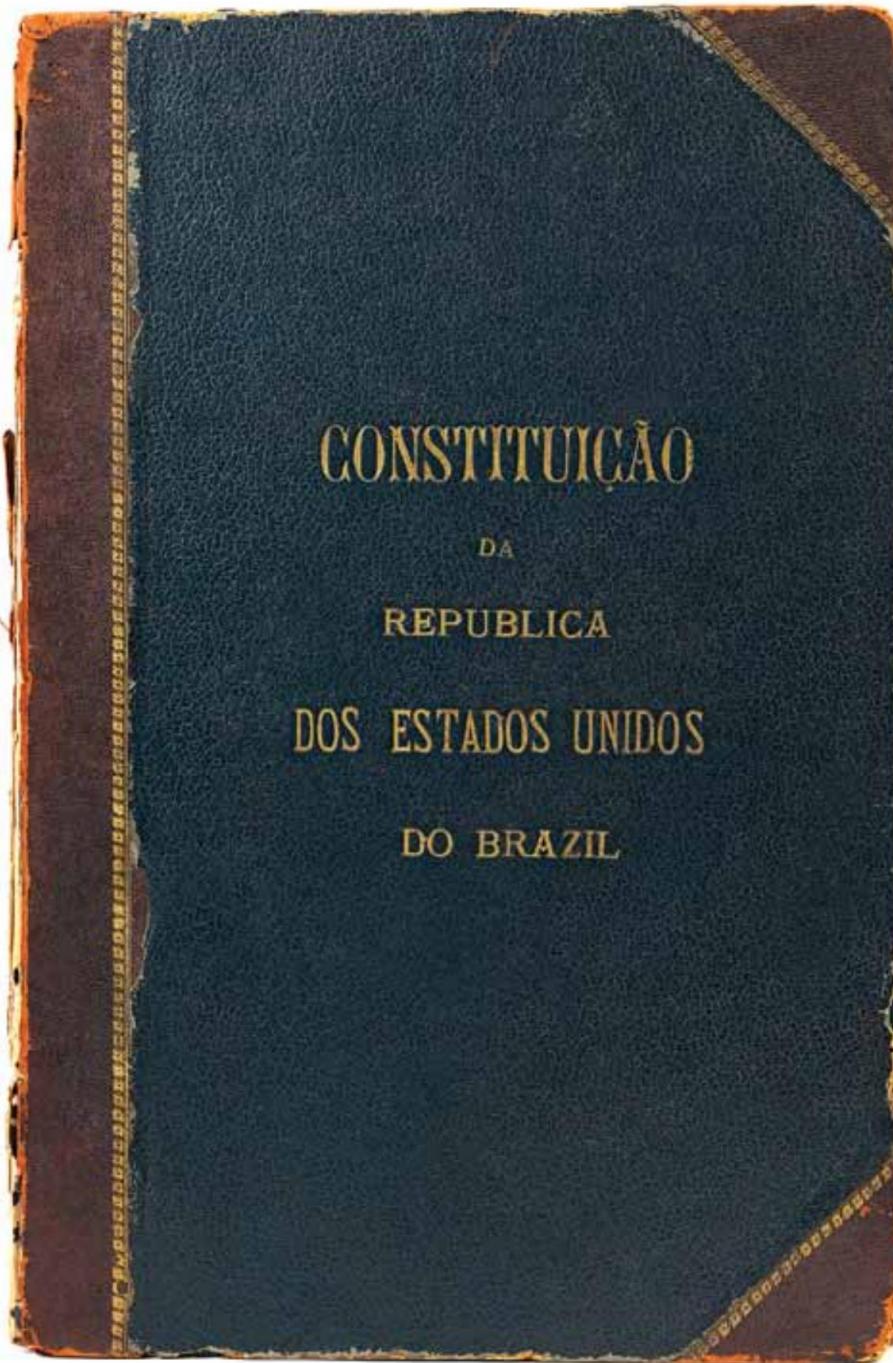
As Silva suggests:

"The speeches against female suffrage, all written by men, the deputies of the time, emphasized a negative nature in the psychological and biological formation of women. However, this discourse is deconstructed over time in the face of the fight for women's political rights. What was previously socially accepted, the exclusion of women from voting, with biological justifications of the female being, is now identified as anachronistic ideas.⁵⁸

In addition to those that are visible and identifiable in the circle or ellipse of male heads and on the stand, there are also those that are forgotten. César Zama and Muniz Freire, for example, even though they held an important debate

⁵⁷ The same.

⁵⁸ The same.



*Original of the Constitution
promulgated in 1891.
Collection of the Museum of
Republic.*

on women's right to vote, apparently, were not retracted.

Gilda Lopes, in turn, remembers Silva Jardim⁵⁹ (who was not elected to the National Constituent Assembly) and Rui Barbosa, who was Minister of Finance and deputy head of the first provisional government (1889) and a prominent senator in the works drafting and reforming the draft Constitution. "Aurélio de Figueiredo, however", says Lopes, "omitted the great Bahian from his

canvas".⁶⁰ In 1893, after having opposed the government of Floriano Peixoto, Rui Barbosa went into exile and only returned to Brazil in 1895. However, in the past time that the artist wants to represent (1891) and in the present time in which he painted (1896), Rui Barbosa was active in Brazilian politics and, even so, he was exiled from the big screen. It is interesting to observe how Lopes (1965, p. 205), despite noticing the absence of the Bahian senator, remains entangled in the methodological web of the naturalizing and positivist reading of the artist's work. Hostage of the web that conditions the gaze, the author states: "Like every historical painting, this narrates, quite truthfully, an episode of our republican life". There is no veracity in Figueiredo's great canvas, as he himself would suggest in the text that accompanies *The illusion of the third reign*. What is at stake is not the truth, it is the interpretation, it is the different possibilities of reading the same document. The artist's subjectivism individualizes his work. Those flowers on the table and in front of Floriano Peixoto, on the floor, on the carpet and on the stenographer's table, continue to challenge the spectator's gaze.

In addition to the absences indicated, there is silence surrounding the illiterate population, recently freed slaves, indigenous peoples, women and men who were not part of the elite represented there. While the painter painted the large canvas, Antônio Conselheiro shook and redrawn

59 The combatant Silva Jardim, after the proclamation of the Republic, did not receive any support from the republicans.

Disgusted, he embarked for France in 1890. Abroad, he received a petition with more than 3 thousand signatures requesting his return, which did not happen.

On a visit to Vesuvius, he became careless and fell into the mouth of the volcano.

60 See Lopes (1965, p. 205).

the sertão and, at the same time, the Brazilian Army, with its lieutenants, majors, colonels, generals and marshals, produced the first great republican genocide, the first civil war of the Republic and, in this vein, celebrated barbarity.

*View of the Ministerial Hall
of the Museum of the Republic.*



Memory policy

Examining the relationship between images and memory, James Fentress and Chris Wickham consider that “a memory can only be social if it can be transmitted and, to be transmitted, it must first be articulated. Social memory is, therefore, articulated memory”,⁶¹ This articulation, as the authors observe, does not only occur through verbalized or spelled words, but also through images. Thus, in the same way that there is a vocabulary, there is an imaginary linked to social memory. This social imaginary, produced from individuals, is complex, dynamic and procedural. Otherwise, it has subtleties, recesses and protrusions, folds and undulations, and is not definitively given; rather, it is under construction. Images that were illuminated can, from one generation to another, be cast into shadow and vice versa. The fundamental notion is that without transmission, social memory cannot be constituted. Transmission, therefore, implies updating the memory. But transmission alone does not guarantee the continuity of the preservation process, reception must be taken into account. There is no possibility of thinking delicately about heritage, memory and museum without paying attention to reception.

In this sense, memory and preservation come together. Preserving means seeing the danger of destruction first, valuing what is in danger and trying to prevent it from manifesting itself as a fatal event. Thus, preservation participates in a permanent game with destruction, a game that in every way resembles that of memory with oblivion. The adoption of procedures, resulting from deliberation of individual or collective will, that

⁶¹ See James Fentress and Chris Wickham (1992, p. 65).

*Paper bin (Empire style) used as a ballot box
for the indirect election of Deodoro da
Fonseca, first president of the Republic, in
Brazil.
Collection of the Museum of the Republic.*



aimed at preserving tangible or intangible assets constitutes what is called a preservation policy.

It is, in fact, a social practice that can be identified in families, religious groups, ethnic and professional groups, political parties, public and private institutions and, in particular, museums. If what is preserved is conceived as a support for information and as something that can be used to transmit (or teach) something to someone, we can speak of documents and memories. In this case, we can also talk about memory politics.

In museums, a memory policy is on the agenda: in tune or not with the political guidelines of other museums and other institutions that act as places of memory; committed or not to the project that originally concentrated fragments of political memory in them.

The document *Policy for the Preservation of Institutional Collections*, published 21 years ago by the Museum of the Republic and the Museum of Astronomy and Related Sciences, considered conservation, documentation, acquisition, technical processing, research, access, dissemination , training, restoration and security as specific principles of a preservation policy. Henrique Lins de Barros and Anelise Pacheco, recognizing the importance of this work for “the institutions that deal with memory”, maintained that a “preservation policy aimed at these institutions must constitute yet another way of supporting their function social, allowing future generations to come to know their past references”.⁶²

All of this favors the understanding that memory policy and preservation policy, in the case of museum institutions, go hand in hand and are sometimes confused.

The thematic delimitation strategy adopted in the present study caused the researcher to concentrate his focus on the *Constitutional Commitment screen*. Painted especially for the new presidential palace,

62 See Henrique Lins de Barros and Anelise Pacheco (1995, p. 5).

in Catete, as it turns out, he has never been anywhere else. His museum dossier says nothing about his participation in exhibitions outside of Catete. In the catalog of the exhibition commemorating the artist's centenary, held in 1956, at the National Museum of Fine Arts, she was not included. Thus, in the period from 1897 to 1960, its preservation was under the responsibility of the Presidency of the Republic. Access to the work was restricted to those who frequented the headquarters of the Executive Branch. During this period the work was treated as a decorative object, with possible historical value. In other words, his contact with posterity passed through the filter (mediation) of the Presidency of the Republic. The fate of the work was changed in 1960, with the transformation of Palácio do Catete into the Museum of the Republic. This change in trajectory implied the museumization of the work, which is equivalent to its submission to a specific process of preservation, research and communication. Between November 15, 1960 and December 31, 1961, the Republic Museum received 172,400 visitors.⁶³

Subjected to contact with the public, Figueiredo's work needed to be studied. Gilda Lopes' article aims to respond to the demand of visitors "eager for explanations".⁶⁴

Between 1960 and 1996, excluding the period in which the Museum of the Republic was closed to visitors, Aurélio de Figueiredo's work was always presented as a natural portrait of an event that should receive the public's full attention and reverence.

The exhibition *A ventura republicana*, opened in November 1996, created a new museum fact. For the first time, the *Constitutional Compromise* painting was presented to the public in a critical and humorous way. Even assuming responsibility for preserving the tangible asset, the Museum included Figueiredo's historical painting in a speech that, in addition to not endorsing tradition, did not consider the constitutional *Commitment* as a central exhibition point. The Museum's new exhibition, similar to what

63 See Chagas and Godoy (1995).

64 See Lopes (1965, p. 202).

was rehearsed in the “Expansion, Order and Defense” module of the National Historical Museum, it proposed, now in a more radical way, a critical look at the assets or political memory of the first years of the Republic.

The large *Constitutional Compromise* canvas was presented in the exhibition “A ventura republican”, next to the paper bin (improvised ballot box), the chair of the president of the Constituent Assembly, the first copy of the Constitution of 1891, the first republican flag with the slogan “order and progress”, which, according to tradition, was embroidered by the daughters of Benjamin Constant and many honorary orders. A kind of counter-memory was put on the scene, moving an alternative discourse that offered two writers as guides: Barão de Itararé and Lima Barreto.

At no point did they appear iconographically, they did not compete for a place in the pantheon of heroes of the country, they operated with words, with jokes and ideas. The room where the painting was located had on the portal, from the outside, the title “The power of the living”; On the inside, on the back of the portal, appeared the countertitle “The living are always and increasingly governed by the most living”. The phrase is from Barão de Itararé, mocking positivists. The exhibition catalogue, dated 1996, left no doubt:

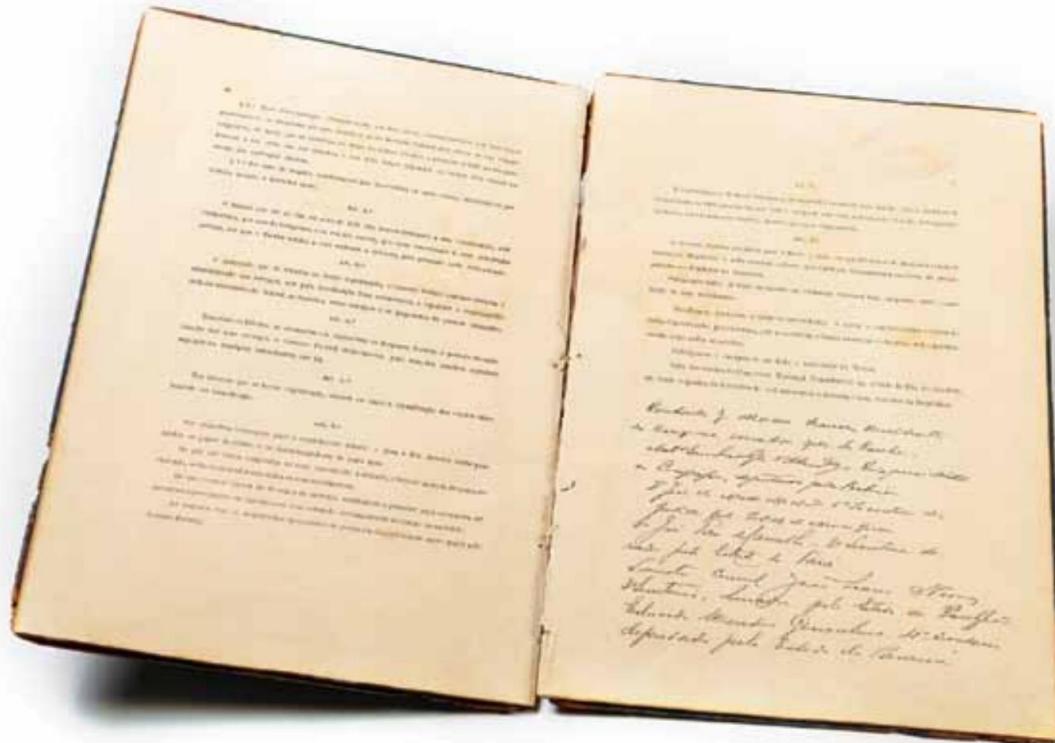
“The territory of the Most Alive are the Institutions. They do not negotiate with the Beyond, but with the Ballot Box, Constitutions, Parties, Interest Centers, Higher Instances, etc. [...] The Most Alive receive medals, buttons and fans. They left us flags, commemorative plates, speeches. They are the Moral Reserve of the Nation.⁶⁵

Among implements in silver, crystal and porcelain; among fans of lace, silk, ivory and mother-of-pearl; among honorary orders, plaques, medals and tributes; among plates, paintings, flag, pen, chair and urn, imposing Lima Barreto's thoughts are:

65 See the exhibition catalog *A ventura republican* (1996).

"We all speak badly about our senators and representatives; we all call them atrociously; but when Congress closes, there is a void in our common life and we are filled with dread."

"We also have the flag party, which is eminently biased and positivist. Its aim is to maintain the comista motto – Order and Progress – in the auriverde pavilion; and there is no other end."



Original of the 1891 Constitution, with signatures. Collection of the Museum of the Republic.

"I implicate three or four literary figures, the Chamber, the diplomats, Botafogo and Petrópolis; and it's not in the name of any theory, because I'm not a republican, I'm not a socialist, I'm not an anarchist, I'm nothing: I have implications."⁶⁶

Lima Barreto's words brought an innovative component to Aurélio de Figueiredo's image. The Museum's exhibition did not seem to be concerned with whether or not they had maintained a dialogue during their lifetime. She brought them alive now, in dialogue, and the two works completed each other. Memory through image and memory through words, without subordination, strengthened each other.

With the catalog in hand, the researcher could look at the *Commitment constitutional* and read an excerpt from Lima Barreto:

Unless a more or less decorative general comes to power, through a more or less disguised revolt, the bigwig is always chosen from among the members of the doctoral nobility; and, among doctors, the choice falls on a lawyer.⁶⁷

By offering the public another possibility of reading a work that for years was read as an expression of truth, even though it never was, the Museum enriched its discursive field, refined its instruments of interpretation and incorporated other approaches into its political arena. . Memory policy was not restricted to the field of preservation; on the contrary, it moved towards research and museum communication.

⁶⁶ The same.

⁶⁷ The same.

Final considerations

With this study, I sought to dialogue with a representation of memory constructed with the explicit objective of occupying a place in the republican social imaginary. Constructions of this type are common in

19th century, both in the Empire and the Republic. The historical painting genre, in the hierarchy of plastic arts in the 19th century, was at the top of the scale and was considered the most noble.

Direct disciple and younger brother of one of the main masters of this genre of painting in Brazil, Aurélio de Figueiredo would find a space for his artistic expression in the republican regime. At the end of the 19th century, painting great battles was no longer of interest; but, even so, the battles continued to take place, no longer to fight the French, Dutch or Paraguayans, but to fight *jagunços*, mutinous rebels and uprising military personnel. The aesthetic strength of historical painting was, however, at that time, in decline. And the government had no interest in sponsoring a historical painting about the Canudos or Contestado wars.

Before the pictorial work, in this artistic genre, a meticulous work of gathering information, collecting oral statements, consulting images and spaces and other documents. The artist clearly works with memories, with his memories and the memories of others. The report that Aurélio de Figueiredo gives about the methodology adopted for the execution of *The Illusion of the Third Reign* is quite explicit in this regard; such as Pedro Américo's account of the work *Independence or Death*:

Knowing that the artist, in addition to the 30 or 40 guards of honor, other people witnessed the fact of the proclamation of Independence, after closely comparing the different possible ways of dividing so many knights into groups, he will be able, without offending the historical truth and in the interest of eurythmy, place in D.

Pedro's immediate entourage two or more figures in addition to those resulting from the most accurate calculation, or from the most probable hypothesis.⁶⁸

Both artists sought memories in their research, fragments capable of igniting memories, images, words and orality, but they also sought new personal and professional alliances; just as they sought to highlight and silence characters, as well as project images into the future and, in this way, occupy it with their subjectivities. All this, plus some fantasies "in the interest of eurythmy" and some more power play entered the composition of the works. Artists operate as if they knew that in their works, produced to remind people, it is not the truth that is at stake, but rather the credible, the imaginable, even when on a reduced scale. They are mediating agents (I would like to say "memory agents") between different times, between the event and posterity. As individualized mediators loaded with subjectivities, they address the collective through individuals, they dialogue with the social imaginary. There is also a pedagogical intention in his works, it is not without reason that they still inhabit textbooks and notebooks today, as if they were capable of giving substance to the event. In this sense, they (artists) are also political agents, and are not as odd in the nest as one might think.

All the while I kept in mind the idea, shared with James Fentress and Chris Wickham, that memory, being both retrospective and prospective, can provide each of us with "a perspective for interpreting our experiences in the present and for predicting what will come next."⁶⁹ Memory only makes sense when updated.

68 Pedro Américo de Figueiredo e Mello (1999).

69 See Fentress and Wickham (1992, p. 70)

With this text I sought to reflect on the production of political memory based on the work of an artist and on the politics of memory based on a museum institution. The topic is broad, open and requiring new approaches. As memory is not in things, but in the relationship with them, a new reading, a new hearing or even the perception of a new aroma is always possible, there, among the flowers of memory and oblivion.

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INTERNATIONAL DATA FOR CATALOGING IN PUBLICATION (CIP)

C433c Chagas, Mario, 1956-

Constitutional commitment / Mario Chagas. – Rio de Janeiro: Museu da República, 2018. 80 p., ill. color.; 21 cm. – (Republic in documents. Museum documents; n. two)

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ISBN 978-85-85732-37-0

1. Figueiredo, Aurélio de, 1856-1916. Constitutional commitment. two.
Figueiredo, Aurélio de, 1856-1916 – Criticism and interpretation. 3. Painters – Brazil.
4. Brazilian painting – 19th century. 5. Memory in art. 6. Politics in art.
7. Brazil – History – Old Republic, 1889-1930. 8. Art and society - Brazil.
9. Cultural heritage – Brazil. 10. Memory – Social aspects. I. Museum of the Republic (Brazil). II. Title. III. Series.

CDD – 759.981

Catalog card prepared by librarian Lioara Mandoju CRB-7 5331

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Spirograph Editorial / Marcia Mattos

Silhouette drawing page 38

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Revision

Clarissa Penna

This publication dates from November 2018, 128 years
of the first Republican Constitution, 122 years of the
painting *Constitutional Commitment* by Aurélio de
Figueiredo and 30 years of the 1988 Constitution.

The Gentium Book Basic and BrightonTwo Sans
NBP fonts were used.

The text offered here examines the production of political memory based on the work of an artist and the politics of memory based on a museum institution. The topic is broad, open and requiring new approaches. As memory is not in things, but in the relationship with them, a new reading, a new hearing or even the perception of a new aroma is always possible, there, among the flowers of memory and oblivion.

Agência Brasileira do ISBN

ISBN 978-85-85732-37-0



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