

COMMUNICATION AND ARTS



Critic Paulo Emílio
with his cats, in 1972

An historical reference point

Paulo Emílio Salles Gomes is still a prominent figure in the university's history

Eduardo Nunomura and Fabrício Marques

Writer, critic, and professor of cinema studies at the University of São Paulo (USP), Paulo Emílio Salles Gomes (1916-1977) has played a key role in the acculturation and education of new generations of university students ever since the late 1950s. “I admired his acute awareness of the context in which he was speaking, which expressed a determination to reflect on culture as it relates to the realities of society,” says Ismail Xavier, a professor at the USP School of Communications and Arts (ECA). “He provoked and encouraged me to overcome my shyness and inhibition—and this at a time when I didn’t even know how to write in Portuguese,” recalls Jean-Claude Bernardet, a critic, cinematographer, and retired ECA professor.

Professor Antonio Candido said Salles Gomes was responsible for getting him involved in political militancy, according to a 2001 interview with Candido that appeared in *Revista Brasileira de Ciências Sociais* (Brazilian Social Science Review). Aligned with the communists during the 1930s, Salles Gomes distanced himself from them because of Stalinism but remained a leftist militant. In 1941, at age 23, he made his debut as literary critic for the magazine *Clima* (Climate), an academic landmark in São Paulo criticism that brought together leading names from Brazil’s intellectual community. “They formed a splendid constellation that would make a lasting mark on the cultural

panorama of this country,” recalls Walnice Nogueira Galvão, in one of the tributes paid during the celebration of what would have been Candido’s 90th birthday in 2008. In addition to Salles Gomes and Candido, other members of that group of friends from what was then the USP School of Philosophy, Literature and Science included Décio de Almeida Prado (who later turned to theatre), Lourival Gomes Machado (fine arts), Ruy Coelho (anthropology), and Gilda de Moraes Rocha (esthetics), Candido’s wife.

The generation from *Clima* had a very strong connection with Brazilian modernism in terms of their observations and essays, and their view of history and criticism in general. Furthermore, they were educators in the strictest sense of the word, always devoted to training Brazil’s new generations of thinkers. “No one in cinematographic criticism ever had the breadth of culture that Salles Gomes had,” Galvão recalls. Bernardet credits Salles Gomes for changing the course of his life when, in 1958, he took a course in criticism during which he heard Salles Gomes say that “cinema doesn’t exist; what exists are films.” Until then a dogmatic way of thinking had prevailed about the seventh art because of its position in a narrative that was predominately North American. “Salles Gomes encouraged freedom in our approach to films and that changed the way I thought,” says Bernardet. He became closer to the “master” while working at

the Cinemateca Brasileira, which Salles Gomes directed and which led to his becoming a movie critic for newspapers like *A Gazeta* and *O Estado de S.Paulo*.

Salles Gomes was already one of the most respected critics and columnists of *O Estado's* renowned Literary Supplement. He invited Bernardet to form the first team of faculty members in the cinema arts course at the University of Brasília, in 1965. Two years later, he started work at ECA, an activity interrupted by Institutional Act No. 5. Then, as a means of getting around the decree issued by the military government in December 1968, the “master” started holding seminars in his home for graduate students and researchers. Ismail Xavier was a member that group and recalls that a generation of movie critics was born there.

Salles Gomes is still the subject of studies and publications, as in the book to be published in France in 2015, produced in collaboration with Ismail Xavier. The work is a compilation of articles by Salles Gomes that appeared in the supplement of the *Estadão*, as well as previously unpublished texts by Brazilian and foreign researchers. Another professor who has a great affinity for the “master” is Carlos Augusto Calil, also from ECA, who worked with Salles Gomes at the Cinemateca. Calil organized the complete works by the critic, initially published by Cosac Naify before the rights were later acquired by Companhia das Letras. Both Bernardet and Xavier regret that in the field

of cinematography, Salles Gomes has become a merely historical reference for younger generations. This is because his strong nationalistic bent no longer makes as big an impact. “His thinking was connected to a specific time in history, and underdevelopment is not so much an issue in this era of globalization,” Bernardet says. “And today there is a huge difference, because university professors have fewer opportunities to project themselves into the public sphere of the media,” Xavier says. Critical thought, so dear to the heart of Salles Gomes, has become rarified.

JOURNALISM AND TELENÓVELAS

The School of Communications and Arts at USP was established in 1966 as the School of Cultural Communications. “The new field of knowledge should have been given to the School of Philosophy, but there was a group who didn’t want that,” recalled Professor José Marques de Mello in a 2012 interview with *Pesquisa FAPESP*. Marques de Mello was one of the first directors of the school, responsible for setting up the Department of Journalism and Publishing. In the 1960s he had worked in Recife with Luiz Beltrão, a pioneer in communications research, and later brought that experience with him to São Paulo—one of the assignments he received was to set up a laboratory-newspaper at ECA. He also helped install a Center for Research in Journalism to analyze production by the press.

In 1992, as Marques de Mello observed, a gap in ECA research was filled by the establishment of the Center for *Telenovela* Studies, headed by Professor Ana Maria Fadul. “When I was director of the School, I realized that our courses in radio and television were teaching everything but the *telenovela* (soap opera), which was the principal product exported by our cultural industry,” he says. Today, ECA is a leader in that field of research. In 1995, a group of 10 researchers began the thematic project *Ficção e realidade: A telenovela no Brasil, o Brasil na telenovela* (Fiction and reality: the *Telenovela* in Brazil, Brazil in the *Telenovela*). It was com-

posed of nine different studies. Maria Immacolata Vassallo Lopes, a full professor at ECA, coordinated one of the studies, the purpose of which was to investigate the way that the *telenovela* was received in a universe of four families who lived under different social conditions. Years later, Vassallo de Lopes became coordinator of the international research network known as the Ibero-American Television Fiction Observatory (OBITEL), established with participation by nine countries, involving university scholars and international television re-

searchers, such as the Globo Network and the Mexican broadcaster Televisa.

The new directions taken by the *telenovela* in Brazil were also analyzed in a thematic project entitled *Formação do campo intelectual e da indústria cultural no Brasil contemporâneo* (Formation of the intellectual field and the culture industry in contemporary Brazil), coordinated by Sergio Miceli, a professor at the USP School of Philosophy, Literature, and Human Sciences (FFLCH). It resulted in the book, *O Brasil antenado* (Tuned-in Brazil), by ECA professor Esther Hamburger. One of her conclusions is that the *telenovela* no longer occupies the position it held in the 1970s and 1980s. Hamburger is also in charge of a project undertaken as part of the FAPESP Infrastructure Program to digitize, preserve, and organize the archives of the dramatic television fiction produced by the former TV Tupi. The digitizing of the 100 hours of material has already resulted in academic studies—one of them discussing the importance of *Beto Rockefeller*, by Bráulio Pedrosa, the production that revived the genre in 1968.

A research topic in which ECA recently became interested is the so-called net-activism, a term that applies to new models of participation that use digital media. Italian sociologist Massimo Di Felice, coordinator of the school’s Atopos Research Center, in a study supported by FAPESP identified three distinct moments in the emergence of digital activism. The first, in the 1990s, was related to international thematic movements—in Australia and India, for example—in which the actions took place in arts and politics. The second moment found expression in the *zapatista* movement in Mexico and inspired the World Social Forum. That sparked international protests in cities like Seattle (in 1999) and Davos (in 2001). The third moment began in 2000 and is still in progress. In it, the researcher highlights a new activism that, in many cases, has brought about radical processes of transformation—the Arab Spring, the Occupy Wall Street, in the United States (2011), and the street protests of June 2013 in Brazil. Di Felice says the key to the evolution of the movement is found in the change from web 1.0 to web 2.0. Previously, the Internet had been a network of computers connected by modems and telephone lines that permitted only exchanges of texts

A gap in ECA research was filled by establishment of the Center for *Telenovela* Studies

and images. Now it has become a much more mobile and agile platform.

MUSIC AND FINE ARTS

A recent highlight in music is the thematic project entitled *Móbile*, completed in 2014 and coordinated by Professor Fernando Iazzetta. The idea was to bring together researchers from music, visual arts, scenic arts, computer science, and engineering to develop new musical processes centered on the interaction among the various apparently unrelated sectors. The project especially sought to question the technology fetish, following the initial models of experimentalism focused on high-tech studies and equipment. “Very often, too much technology can trip you up (...). The more complicated articulation has to take place in artistic thought, not in engineering,” said Iazzetta in an interview with *Pesquisa FAPESP*. The researchers in *Móbile* exhibited the results of the project during an international tour. The show featured six scenes in which “traditional” works were mixed with instruments and scores; other scenes used improvisation; and three were based on searches through the interaction among music, technology, and other arts.

In the field of fine arts, one of the ECA highlights is the work by Professor Regina Silveira, who has since retired. An intermedia artist, Silveira’s work circulates among various artistic media, from photography to painting, passing through postal art and intervention focused on urban architecture. In the 1960s, she studied painting with Iberê Camargo in Porto Alegre. In the 1980s, as part of her PhD project in arts at USP, she produced a series of engravings and drawings entitled *Anamorfás*, about distortions in perspective. “It may seem paradoxical, but being both a figure from academia and a transgressive artist were never, in my experience, incompatible terms (or attitudes),” Silveira said in 2010. “On the contrary, academia gave me a good ‘niche’ in which to exercise my freedom to experiment and violate rules. First, I was able to produce a lot of works and projects that were really new and experimental, thanks to support from research grants, such as from FAPESP and the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq). I would not have had the chance to take the risks I took if those works had been destined for the art market which, at least at the time, was nascent and conservative,” she said. ■



ARCHITECTURE

Social progressive

Vilanova Artigas and Mendes da Rocha promoted the idea that cities should be more human and accessible

João Batista Vilanova Artigas and Paulo Mendes da Rocha were professors at the School of Architecture and Urban Studies (FAU-USP) and advocates of a progressive architecture that was socially responsible and who left in their wake an agenda for Brazil. Artigas is considered to have been a central figure in the so-called “São Paulo architecture,” that flourished during the turbulent years of the 1960s and 1970s. He was responsible for the symbolic building occupied by the FAU, which was designed to be an edifice that cannot be closed up and that encourages people to engage in fellowship with each other. “You become infected by the shape, and so no one who studies there can produce mediocre, insignificant architecture,” says Professor Alvaro Puntoni, who worked at the Vilanova Artigas Foundation. Puntoni’s “master” was the proponent of a unique, humanistic way of teaching the subject, based on the principal of “calling upon the necessary bodies of knowledge (philosophical and technological) and with a very clear idea of generosity and the duty

to share that knowledge with new generations.” For his part, Mendes da Rocha, one of the most recognized disciples of Artigas’s work, was the second Brazilian to win the Pritzker Architecture Prize, the world’s most important award in architecture, in 2006—the first was Oscar Niemeyer. The award served as recognition of the importance of São Paulo architecture, which placed greater emphasis on intelligent construction and less on exuberant forms. Professor Milton Braga, also from the FAU, had already worked with Mendes da Rocha on projects ranging from the Avenida Rebouças corridor in 1995, to the 18-story SESC 24 de Maio building under construction in the historical center of São Paulo. “He was always concerned about technical construction in Brazil. If in the 20th century there was regional disorganization, the 21st century agenda that calls for a focus on the major cities persists,” he explains. In other words, the teachings of “masters” like Artigas and Mendes da Rocha left to subsequent generations the lesson that it’s not enough to build houses; we have to equip cities with sufficient transportation, accessible sidewalks, and an attractive urban environment so that they can be more humans. ■