



*What if relevant data
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through the life-case of
Maria Graham*

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What if relevant data concerning historic Brazilian heritage would not be accessible for those who do not master English language? A case study through the life-case of Maria Graham

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Abstract. Historical perception, and Artistic Historical perception in particular, is closely dependent of the availability of preserved artwork through source and language. However, preservation and availability in non-original languages, though now extremely universal through digitalization, still faces obstacles such as (the lack of) open-access digital records, or the academic shared knowledge of this non-English sources. Maria Graham was a 19th century woman-traveler that crossed paths with important Brazilian historical figures and left a body of work comprising travelogues and artwork. Through the case study of her life and artistic production, one can develop a hypothesis-driven narrative of what our historical perception would be without the open access of digitalized artwork and historical depositories.

Keywords: Alternative History; Hypothesis-driven narrative; Maria Graham; Artwork preservation; Artwork digitalization; open access repositories

1. Introduction

What if relevant data concerning historic Brazilian heritage would not be accessible for those who do not master English language?

Maria Dundas Graham, later Maria, Lady Callcott, accomplished a great feat. Her travelogue about Brazil has remained as an invaluable treasure chest of unmediated eye-witness chronicling combined with a sharp critical appraisal of unravelling events, and has long served as a primary source for numerous writers and historians [1].

Maria was not a common traveling artist [Artista-Viajante], unlike others fellow Europeans, that mainly reproduced picturesque assumptions of nature/landscape/figure iconographies.[2]

In Maria Graham's Correspondence with Empress Dona Leopoldina and Letters Attached (1997), we learn about the close relationship that Graham had with the Portuguese crown, Emperor Pedro I and especially with Empress Leopoldina, who will be for the traveller a woman of reference, and that will put Graham close to the recognition and social status, to which she believes she belongs [3 p6].

Maria Graham was remarkable among the 19th century women-travellers due to her scientific and

objective approach in her books and travelogues, that artistic perspective of her artwork, and for having been a key witness for the Brazilian Court [2]. The value of her body of work for History and Art History could have been lost due to language barrier, as she wrote and published in English.

Fortunately, Graham's books were translated to Portuguese and Spanish², although quite lately, as mentioned before; its relevance is recognized by Brazilian academics and covers her plural intellectual heritage. In England, several researchers are acquainted with her work, although she is seldom mentioned in Women Travelers Writers [4].

- She promptly referred to the notable three-volume History of Brazil by the Lake Poet and Poet Laureate Robert Southey (1774-1843) published by Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme from 1810-1819 [1].

What if 19th century women hadn't travel to distant territories of former (European) Empires? Some of them, Maria Graham as underlined before [2] is among those women-traveller that assumed academic role as researcher, contributing to humanistic and scientific knowledge. It is remarkable the multidisciplinary contents that can be extracted from Graham published volumes, how accurate and detailed was her field research to culture and science of afar georeferenced cultures.

1 And the reverse is equally an interesting question: what if relevant data's concerning historic Brazilian heritage would not be accessible for those who do not master portuguese language? One key refernce of this work, *Escorço biográfico de D. Pedro I*, was bought in London in 1938 and translated by Américo Jacobina Lacombe into Portuguese language. The original writings were never published in its English version, being available online only in Portuguese language, besides the *Biblioteca Nacional* publishing: Anais da Biblioteca Nacional, v. 60, preface by Rudolfo Garcia. On the other hand, regarding Graham's Brazilian Journal, it was only translated into Portuguese language more than a century after, in 1956.

2 See: Graham, Maria (1956). *Diário De Uma Viagem Ao Brasil - e de uma Estada nesse País durante parte dos Anos De 1821, 1822 e 1823* [Translation by A. J. Lacombe (1909-1993)]. São Paulo: Companhia Editora Nacional [Pedagógica Brasileira]Brasiliana series V, Volume 8] <https://bdor.sibi.ufrj.br/bitstream/doc/444/1/GF%2008%20PDF%20-%20OCR%20-%20RED.pdf> And: Graham, Maria (s/d) *Diario de su Residencia en Chile (1822) y de su Viaje al Brasil (1823) San Martín. Cochrane. O'Higgins*. Madrid: Ed. América. <http://www.memoriachilena.gob.cl/archivos2/pdfs/MC0000018.pdf>

But one should not forget the meaningful role of her emancipatory assumption also in terms of gender studies. The scientific and humanist research accomplished by women-traveller such Graham has been gradually considered when re-writing History of Art, History of Science(s), History of Philosophy, for instance. Curiously, when attending to Literature and Poetry, one may find more entries and better well-known than what occurs with female artists. It is understandable how Graham crosses different fields of knowledge.

- Examining practices such as collecting and productions such as published writing has taken imperial scholars outside of the colonial archives and has allowed them to begin to recognize the different means through which contemporaries constructed difference and embedded the asymmetrical power relations that lay at the heart of colonizing processes. Nevertheless, these studies have tended to focus on the cultural productions created by men, with much less attention given to those of women [5].

Following the approach of a previous work [2], we reflect about the answer to this hypothetical question, constructing a hypothesis-driven narrative whose *alternative resolutions/solving procedures* [2] can provide a guiding map for new research possibilities in Art History and Gender Studies. This methodological journey will be that follows those journeys and experiences of Maria Graham (1785 – 1842), as well as the browsing of her preserved creative, literary, and scientific works.

This paper approaches the guidelines of Alternative History by a wondering/wandering methodology [2], organizing departing narratives arising from introspective aesthetic doubts around key elements from the case study of Maria Graham. The order of the questions follows the cinematic nature of this research journey. We begin with:

- A personal approach to Graham's drawings;
- Cross-referencing it with Graham's works open access availability;
- Probing source intelligibility through artwork and writing in travelogues;
- Graham's chronology of written and visual work, identity topics and evidenced facts per this perspective.

The main objectives are to develop, construct and deconstructs the importance of not only preserving and studying the works of 19th century women-travellers but also how the digitisation and availability in multilingual platforms might be the key factor for aesthetic and historic paradigms.

2. Conjecturing briefly about Drawings (again): reminiscences, knowledge and images

2.1 [Scientific and Humanistic] Knowledge

What if Graham would not consider introducing quotes and transcriptions by others' studies, most rightly mentioning the sources? Because, not many years after, others used her writings without quoting the source.

- Robert Southey's history was highly influential, and he perused copious primary source documents from mainly Portugal, Brazil, Spain, Great Britain. Originally, he had intended to write a history of Portugal including that of Brazil and other Portuguese colonies. As events unfolded, he decided to write a history of Brazil. Although he had never visited Brazil, he succeeded in creating a superb history which would be used and, indeed, plagiarised (e.g. Alphonse Beauchamp (1767-1832) and José Inácio de Abreu e Lima (1794-1869) c.f. W. Martins's *Historia da Inteligência Brasileira*, Vol. II). In addition, he also wrote a three-volume History of the Peninsular War

published by John Murray in London in 1823, 1827, 1832, which has remained as a key source about the Napoleonic invasions of Portugal to date. One could speculate that he may have read some of Maria Graham's works [1].

- I judged it necessary to prefix the following sketch of the history of Brazil to the journal of my voyage thither, in order that the political events to which I was an eye-witness might be the better understood. The early part of the history is almost entirely taken from Mr. Southey. It would have been easy for me to have referred to the Portuguese authors, as I have read nearly all that are to be found in print of Mr. Southey's authorities, and some that he does not mention; (...) From the time of the King's arrival in Brazil, or rather of his leaving Lisbon, I am answerable for all I have stated: it is little, but I hope that little is correct [6 p1].

What if your personal writings, letters and note books contents were not taken in care?

What if your personal writings, letters and note books contents had not been digitized and turned available at scientific and cultural websites: such libraries, museums, foundations or

trusts platforms? That achievement means a lot, regarding the access to data that may enlighten and/or confirm hypothesis and open new challenges of understanding as documented in Graham case.

2.2 Conjecturing about Graham's botanist role

Since the first residence in Brazil, Graham took interest in Botanic, collecting species and organizing it according to scientific procedures. She undertook excursions in Rio de Janeiro' surroundings, up the hills nearby, both for botanic mission and artistic ones. The drawings she produced from afar, looking at the city take either a panorama shape or she focused in landscape excerpts. Getting closer in observation, she progressively accomplished her mission, which would be considered closed in 1825, closing her Brazilian period of life. Meanwhile, also aware of her Chile botanic mission, she aimed an edition dedicated to all the data she gathered (Fig.1).

She collected seeds, sending them back to the botanist Robert Graham at the University of Edinburgh, whilst bulbs made their to Lee and Kennedy's Vineyard Nursery in Hammersmith [7 p59-85].



Fig. 1 Scripture Herbal. Cover and drawings. <https://archive.org/details/ascriptionherbal00calluoft>

The other day a thunderstorm floated my parlour - & for three days my mountain torrent[?] was so high I had no communication with the rest of the world.- However I will make you envious: in the first place my cottage is known by its Tree the Crataeva or garlic pear, the largest & finest I ever saw - it has not blossomed since I came though. (...) Then such butterflies & grasshoppers and creatures of all sorts & the little humming birds playing about (Maria Graham Callcott Extract from letter - Archive ref: DC 43 f. 49) [1].

Before starting her brief tenure at court, Graham returned to London to publish two travelogues, each illustrated with landscapes after her sketches that documented the natural and human history of Brazil and Chile: *Journal of a Voyage to Brazil* (1824) and *Journal of a Residence in Chile* (1824) [8].

After returning to London by December 1823, Graham began her productive correspondence with the botanist William Jackson Hooker, who became the first full-time director of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. While Graham herself did “not habitually draw flowers”, she inquired whether he would find it useful to receive sketches with “just an outline with the real colour of a petal and a leaf ... & also many peculiar forms of seed &c.”, given that vivid colors faded from dried specimens. She began drawing plants to further her botanical interests even though she had not previously done so as part of her artistic practice. Once back in Brazil the following year, Graham sketched hundreds of annotated botanical illustrations on every last scrap of paper [8].

Graham describes herself as botanically ignorant, however her letters and sketches certainly suggest otherwise. She also discusses using publications to improve her plant descriptions and recalls attending botanical lectures, including a charming one given by the Swiss botanist de Candolle on palms. Graham emphasises to Hooker that she will not be negligent in the search for plants and may be of use in exciting other people

to be busy, a skill which Hooker was always eager to encourage [9].

In her letter Graham focuses on botanical matters such as the various difficulties of drying plants in Rio; the abundance of fleshy vegetation which does not press well, the unsuitable climate, mould, and insects. She does however meet with some success and by the *Aurora* has sent Hooker 22 fern varieties all growing between her cottage and the top of the Corcovado (where Christ the Redeemer now stands). Where she cannot dry a plant she draws it very carefully [9].

Maria Graham’s extensive collection at the Royal Botanic Gardens is made up of botanical illustrations, letters and dried plants. This file is the result of the traveler’s cooperation with William Hooker, who was director of Kew Gardens between 1841 and 1865. (...) In all, there are five letters, dated between April 11, 1824 and February 5, 1826 (Letters from Ms Maria Graham to Sir William Jackson Hooker, 1824-1826) [9].

The contents of the letters cover subjects such as proper techniques for drying plants, methods of sending remittances from natural collections, botanical findings, consultation of recent scientific publications on the European market and updates on the European intellectual milieu (Letters from Ms. Maria Graham to Sir William Jackson Hooker, 1824-1826) [9].

Although the contribution of researchers could be ambiguous, difficult to systematize data:

- The annals of science in the middle decades of the nineteenth century are full of complaints about the difficulty of enforcing some sort of uniformity. Some common direction in the vast volume of research being conducted by many different people in many different places and published in many different forms [10 p327].
- Women moved into botanical culture in growing numbers at the beginning of the nineteenth century and botany became increasingly seen as

suitable for female study [11 p44].

What if these historic (first) editions would not articulate – not only graphic design issue – text and writing? Which repercussion would be generated? Is it a positive achievement or not?

What if, when relating both text and image, one considers it difficult understanding, leading to sideways or oblique conclusions?

- In 2004, Maria Graham appeared in the London National Portrait Gallery promotional poster for the 2004 exhibition featuring her portrait (1819) by Sir Thomas Lawrence (1769-1830) held an exhibition on women travellers [1].

When accessing KEW Garden’s Website, consulting Maria Callcott contribution is quite interesting to notice she even has a botanic specie named after her - ‘*Wahlenbergia grahamiae*’ [7 p23].

- Maria Graham is among the collectors of *Flora Brasiliensis*, by Martius, with the list of her botanical works and the itinerary of her herborizations, which covered, in 1821, Pernambuco, Bahia and Rio de Janeiro, in 1823 Rio de Janeiro, on the way to Santa Cross, op. cit., vol. I, part I, p. 30. There is no mention of her contributions from 1824 and 1825, still in Rio de Janeiro, Laranjeiras and Fazenda do Macacú, of which there is news in the writing now published [12 p40].
- While Maria Graham did use Linnaean terminol-

ogy frequently and correctly, she consistently combined this with a respect for the knowledge base of local people. She learned languages easily and throughout her accounts of her travels we find her consulting local people about plant names, uses and methods of propagation and cultivation [13].

In Graham’s work the different scientific and humanistic disciplines are connected but distinguishable, converging towards a more complete approach to her “target”: dissemination of data obtained from a direct contact *in loco*. Graham’s data from face-to-face experience were transposed into art works, expressing her own approach, analysis, reflective perspective and interpretation in context: drawings, sketches and paintings.

2.3 Conjecturing about Graham’s drawings: What if Graham did not draw or paint during her travels and residences?

Her editions would not offer to the audiences such proximity providing visual approach to faraway descriptions of real: facts, situations, circumstances, acts and thought. Illustrations accomplish a meaningful role, either those of her authorship, either other artist’s illustrations she chose.

The drawings from Bahia may not be of Maria’s authorship (Fig. 2), although previously they



Fig. 2 Drawings attributed to Lady Maria Callcott. <http://acervo.bndigital.bn.br/sophia/index.html>

were and still are (doubted) attributed to her - Brazilian National Digital Library' Website.

- However, from 1950 onwards, we were able to study the set of watercolours in greater detail and thus consider it the work of two different amateur artists. The first, H. Lewis, is the author of the drawings of Pernambuco, already published on the occasion of the commemorations of the Tercentenary of the Pernambuco Restoration, in 1954, when the Recife Iconography Exhibition in the 19th century was organized in Recife. He provided the National Library with a photographic copy of the originals; some appeared in the published catalogue. The attributions would then be divided, leaving to consider or not Maria Graham as the author of the drawings about Bahia [14 p189].



Escravos carregando uma pipa nas ruas de Pernambuco
(aliás Rio de Janeiro - V. retificação da autora em pg. 393)



Cadeirinha, na Bahia

Fig. 3 Street scenes of Pernambuco and Bahia, *Journal's* illustrations, 1824: 131-132. <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/21201/21201-h/21201-h.htm>

- By the diligence of the kind sir Erich Eichner, from the Kosmos bookstore, in this capital, acquired the National Library in 1938, of the lord. Walter T. Spencer, antique bookseller London River, a part of the literary estate and artistic

work of Maria Graham, constant epistolary correspondence between her and the empress Maria Leopoldina, accompanied by some letters from the Baron de Mareschal, from Sir Charles Stuart, by Sir Robert Gordon, and others most; from a biographical foreshortening of the emperor d. Pedro I, and 61 small watercolors of his authorship, representing aspects, types and customs of Brazil [12 p17].

The *Journal* includes Graham's plates, engravings and drawings and by other artists, with referred authorship. When compared with the Brazilian Library' 61 drawings, it is noticeable its diverse pictorial approach, regarding the depiction of landscape, but quite similar of some illustrations seen in the *Journal* (Fig. 3). Nevertheless, these coloured drawings were included in Graham's collection. It is quite interesting if seen in parallel with Marianne Baillie's ethnographic and picturesque *Album Costumes in Portugal: 1821-1823 drawn from nature*³ (manuscript) [15]. The graphic and drawing resemblances are remarkable, seeing that it is a standard of taste subject, insofar as both had their travelogues published in three years apart.

When compared to Baillie's Portuguese Costume drawings (Fig. 4), both are relevant in context, regardless of whether or not the Brazilian drawings are by Maria Graham:

- The set of works constitutes a social documentary of the greatest importance in which slaves are represented in their different activities; women of the people, from the white girl to the mulatto sweets; free baianas with luxurious typical clothes; the variety of religious from the various convents in Salvador; the soldiers, the prisoners in their humble functions;

3

See Marianne Baillie: https://purl.pt/23388/4/ds-xix-282_PDF/ds-xix-282_PDF_24-C-R0150/ds-xix-282_0000_capa-capa_t24-C-R0150.pdf

the transport of the wealthy classes; public ceremonies of a religious nature, everything is recorded [14 p 189].

Lygia da Cunha [14] proposes two groups corresponding to different authorship – free access at BNB Digital Archive - <http://bndigital.bn.gov.br/acervodigital>. The 1st group, referring to Bahia's portrayed characters, is attributed to an anonymous author/artist "inclined towards the unusual aspects of a society with "picturesque" characteristics different from their native environment. There is a concern to establish the exotic of local customs, without any interest in the landscape. [14 p189]; this group includes numbers: 1, 4, 5, 6, 8, 15 to 26, and 28 to 30, 34, 35, 37 to 43, and 48 to 53 [14 p189]. The other drawings (Fig. 5) referred to Pernambuco are attributed to Hanke (H.) Lewis [14 p189].

To conclude: it seems to be still an open issue. Nevertheless, when reflecting about Graham relationship with art:

What if she was not acquainted with artists and intellectuals since her youth? Graham followed some of the cultural paths in Europe, namely when she travelled and journeyed in the *Hills of Rome* with her first husband. After her South America travels and residences, she travelled once more in through the "Continent".

What if she did not research about History of Art, would she be so keen when contemplating the world, considering the specificities of the different portraying destinies?

Truthfully, Graham was impressed by artistic interpretations of real, either nature, landscape as for monuments, ruins and architectural heritage. It is notorious these affinities just be considering her 1st and 2nd India travelogues. The visual documentation of cultural goods contributes for a foreign heritage art line. Suddenly, regarding the Italian sketches, her gaze captivates the same order of evidences: nature/landscape, architectural and artistic heritage. She encountered Turner in



Fig. 4 - Drawings: A. Marianne Bailie. | B. Maria Graham: n.37. | C. Marianne Baillie



Fig. 5 – Drawings by H. Lewis: Pernambuco- n.57, 32, 27.

Italy; she socialized with artists and was considered within the aesthetic canon of the pre-Victorian era she lived in.

Where her drawings or paintings influenced by her second husband artistic style?

There are no observed details that may affirm it. With the exception of the 61 drawings of the Brazilian National Library, one does not identify significant variations on her aesthetic and artistic language or technic. She follows the aesthetic patterns for notebook travel illustrations as though for scientific botanic drawings. She applies in each case and situation the right technic, being able to produce the correct work.

What if, when developing these considerations about her 2nd husband, we were faced with the fact that she has not remarried?

- In that letter of November 2nd, Maria Graham shared with her imperial friend that she was determined to convoke to a new marriage, with a painter, Augustus Callcott, who had loved her for a long time; she was tired of living alone in this world [12 p36].
- Captain Graham died in 1822, and five years later Callcott married the painter Augustus Wall Callcott. Her journal recording their 1827–28 honeymoon travels through Germany, the Austrian Empire, Italy, and France is undoubtedly her most important contribution from an art historical perspective and demonstrates how revolutionary her taste was for the early Italian and Northern Renaissance masters [16 p2].

And:

- ...she met and ended up marrying Augustus Callcott, a member of the Royal Academy, in 1827. They embarked on a long European honeymoon studying art and architecture and meeting the curators and artists who were producing a 'revolution' in taste. The trip resulted in her groundbreaking *Essays Towards*

the History of Painting and artistic debates in her salon [13].

She would not have been a sitter for such portrait:

- Her second husband, Augustus Wall Callcott, portrayed her in costume designed to reflect the well-seasoned traveller she had become after sojourns in India, Italy, Brazil, and Chile [17].

Maybe she would not – or maybe she did – publish the volumes:

- *A short history of Spain* (1828) [18]
- *Description of the chapel of the Annunziata dell'Arena; or, Giotto's chapel in Padua* (1835) [19]
- *Little Arthur's history of England*(1835) [20]
- *Histoire de France du petit Louis* (1836) [21]
- *Essays towards the history of painting* (1836) [22]
- *The little bracken-burners, a tale; and Little Mary's four Saturdays* (1841) [23]
- *A Scripture Herbal* (1842) [24]

Surely, travelogues about South America induced her fame as an author:

- It was her stays in these two countries that paved the way for the traveller Maria Graham to consolidate her prestige as an author of travel literature, having published *Journal of a Voyage to Brazil* and *Journal of a Residence in Chile*, launched in 1824 by the renowned publishing house John Murray, who, in addition to publishing notable writers such as Jane Austen, Lord Byron and Walter Scott, was one of the leading publishers of travel literature between the late 18th century and throughout the 19th century [25 p171].

One should recall the (so called) 3rd *Journal* (*Escoço biográfico de Dom Pedro*) was kept in its manuscript condition - at the Brazilian National Library - and firstly published as a Portuguese translation (1958).

- What can be said is that the text translated by Lacombe into Portuguese seems to be in the

process of being executed, as some parts are confused and sometimes truncated, which is not the case in officially published diaries [25 p171].

- For me, the last one is the most interesting part of the narrative. To the one in whose hands this manuscript is likely to fall, perhaps the passages referring to myself are not altogether worthless [25 p175].

Perhaps she did not intend to publish the manuscript which, as mentioned before, was dictated to a friend - therefore expressing herself in a more colloquial tone. When reading this Brazilian (in Portuguese) version, a different way of writing is perceptible, quite unlike from other remarkable Graham's literary production.

3. What if...: Systematization of the divergent points

We reach the welcoming harbour of our hypothesis-driven journey, sustained by Maria Graham's life and achievements. Throughout this work, several doubts were proposed and through them alternative and real details were studied. The doubts, the 'what if' questions raised can be classified in three groups:

3.1 Historical Construction and Availability of Sources

What if...

- relevant data's concerning historic Brazilian heritage would not be accessible for those who do not master English language?
- your personal writings, letters and note books contents were not taken in care?
- your personal writings, letters and note books contents had not been digitised and turned available at scientific and cultural websites: such libraries, museums, foundations or trusts platforms?
- These 'what if' doubts approach the key as-

pects of preservation of personal records, even through familiar awareness, and the need for availability of those records (through digitisation and different languages) for constructing the Historical narrative, and sustaining academic research.

3.2 Form versus Intelligibility/reliability of sources

What if...

- Graham would not consider introducing quotes and transcriptions by others' studies, most rightly mentioning the sources?
- these historic (first) editions would not articulate – not only graphic design issue – text and writing? Which repercussion would be generated? Is it a positive achievement or not?
- when relating both text and image, one considers it difficult understanding, leading to sideways or oblique conclusions?

These 'what if' doubts point to the importance that specific sources, and travelogues in particular, have through source citation and coordination between visual and text information. Additionally, it focuses how researchers need to gain skills in analysing sources through all its components (e.g. text and image) in order to avoid conclusions that miss **correctness**.

3.3 Gender and identity Aspects

What if...

- 19th century women hadn't travel to distant territories of former (European) Empires?
- she was not acquainted with **travellers**, artists and intellectuals since her youth?
- she did not research about History of Art **and Literature**, would she be so keen when contemplating the world, considering the specificities of the different portraying destinies?

- when developing these considerations about her 2nd husband, we were faced with the fact that she has not remarried?

Finally, in the last group of ‘what if’ doubts, the social and gender elements that affect the existence and preservation of women-travellers records are explored.

4. Postfatio

We now rest in the hypothesis-driven harbour, already a shore and look to the full journey. And can now conclude a bit regarding what would have been our historical perception of so many aspects, from Brazilian History, to botanical discovery, if Maria Graham had not chosen, time after time, to lead her life in a specific direction. A direction that crossed path with key political players, especially in Brazil.

Everything would have happened the same but differently. One person would be missing in this people’s life: live observations and thoughts would not be shared; social meetings, conversation pieces, dramatic episodes and facts would not be witnessed or fewer described or enlightened [2].

One person would be missing from this people’s life, and a fulcrum historical witness would be missing from our collective memory if the records have not been preserved and made available in other non-English languages.

5. Invited Lectures f2f session insights

These reflections were presented at the 1st International Conference of ‘Whatif?...’ World History, in 25th November 2021. The importance of travel, visit different type of exhibitions, and exposing oneself to different aesthetic experiences, for researchers and academic production was one of the aspects that marked the conversation.

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