

Muestra texto traducido de La representación densa
EXHIBITION "CON LA BOCA ABIERTA" (WITH MOUTH OPEN)

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DENSE REPRESENTATION

From Natural Peoples to "Au Naturel" Approach

The photography of the old ethnology was a tool to obtain documents on human diversity and, also, to exhibit them. Ethnologists, among other things, cultivated the "pose", arranged objects as singular pieces turned into unique samples, and equally arranged indigenous people also turned into unique samples, after instructing them to "pose" in the western fashion. With deliberate intention, they took pictures of them, which were not intended for the photographed subjects, but rather to the academia and western society in general. The documents ended up as part of the large data file of human races that is generally stored in museums. This task was often carried out not as rescue from oblivion, but as the noble act of registration and safeguard prior to a more than probable disappearance. Expeditions such as those of Haddon, Rivers and Seligman to the Strait of Torres, and even those of Boas and many others, included teams of specialists (photographers among them) and provided museums with extensive reports, numerous objects and a large number of photographs. Those photographs were also ethnographic products, and that efficient production, judging by the number of accumulated elements, as can be seen for example in Oxford's Pitt-Rivers Museum or Washington's Smithsonian Museum, was not only a scientific act, but no less the result of a series of interventions in colonization programs. As it is known, tasks related to data collection and document generation in those expeditions of the end of the XIX century and beginning of the XX century were meticulously executed, which involved a clear intervention in the life of the peoples, at times by making use of the force, most of the times by negotiating with them, but in all cases, by subjecting the pace and opportunity of their activities to the interest and pressing needs of the expeditioners.

The scientific use of photographs, by the then nascent anthropological sciences became widespread along the XIX century as appropriate methodology for regulating focuses, shots and measurements on the indisputable assumption of objectivity and reliability for the representation and as registration instrument, easy to manipulate and file. "Immutable Mobiles" is an expression revealing the great acceptance they reached and the values attributed to them. They were even used as work document-base inserted in the central discourse of positive science. Specifically, they were used to date human body morphology and classifications based on categories of several designations intended for exhibiting and also confirming the great criterion of human difference: race. (Customs were no less dealt with as the physical appearance, but they seemed to be so associated with it that were definitely subordinated to it).