

The Mansueto Institute Lunch Colloquium Series

Urban Occupation Photography: Photo-ethnography of Vanguard Youth Movements in Brazil



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This paper compares—and analyzes the gap between—photographs taken by an ethnographer (myself) and photographs taken by interlocutors during a 64-day protest occupation of a public high school in one of Rio de Janeiro's working-class neighborhoods. My photos foreground upended spatial and social arrangements in the fashion of global North movements such as Occupy Wall Street. In contrast, the photos taken by the students (or *ocupas*) are instruments for thinking materially across a history that includes but exceeds strictly present spatial arrangements. They are not objective representations of static, unyielding space (and its ruination), but rather reminders of a not-so-distant history, gesturing towards radical contingency and the possibility of vindicated social and political rights. Taking as its starting point both the photographs of the ethnographer and those of the interlocutors— cultural production in their own right—the photoessay proposes a methodology that proceeds by retroactively mining the gap between the two for insights. Taking a queue from proponents of multimodality, it concludes by making an argument for taking images as seriously as words, pointing to the implications of such a move for the way we study the uses and meanings of media as they intersect with vanguard youth cultures in the contemporary moment.

Tuesday, March 10th
Searle Chemical Laboratory
Suite 240A
12:30 - 1:30pm
Lunch will be provided