

Festive Fictions: An Iconographic Study of Ritual and Intersectionality in Cartagena, Colombia

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Abstract : This paper draws upon the studies of visual culture and intersectionality to illuminate how visibility can naturalize social hierarchies. Through the use of iconography, it decodes the denotative, connotative and ideological meanings of symbols of ritualistic events in the context of the Colombian Atlantic Coast. An examination of such exceptional moments, i.e. of the spectacle, brings into focus how such performances are imbued with meaning by both the on-looker and the performer. Through an analysis of preexisting visuals (e.g., advertisements, social media) and visual materials produced by the researcher for the purpose of photo-elicitation interviews, this paper provides a contextual analysis of the ways in which three representations, popular during Colombian Atlantic coastal festivals (Negrita Puloy, Las Palenqueras, and El Son de Negro), have been historically, culturally and politically constituted. This work reveals that the visualizations are born out of and reproduce typifications systems heavily based upon race, gender, class, and ethnicity. Understanding the ways these categories are mutually constituted through the cultural practice of visual representation is essential to a more comprehensive understanding of the role such representation plays in the reproduction of social difference.

Keywords : Colombia, festivals, intersectionality, visual culture

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