

The Art of Diplomacy: Restaging a Wartime Brazilian Initiative of Public Diplomacy in the United Kingdom

Hayle Gadelha

*Valuable in the past, this initiative gains renewed relevance in the present
context of bilateral relations*

Eduardo dos Santos¹

*The Soft Power of archaeological or historical objects may be re-politicised and activated by
influential people. Long-forgotten narratives may be 'discovered' by and politicised by
cultural entrepreneurs and political brokers respectively*

Naren Chitty²

The show 'The Art of Diplomacy – Brazilian Modernism Painted for War' (hereafter: TAOd) was opened on 5th April and displayed until 22nd June 2018 at the *Sala Brasil*, the exhibition space of the Brazilian Embassy in Trafalgar Square, London. This was a partial restaging and a tribute to the 1944-1945 'Exhibition of Modern Brazilian Paintings', held at the Royal Academy of Arts in London and seven other major galleries across the United Kingdom. Out of the one-hundred-sixty-eight original artworks, twenty-four paintings³ by twenty artists were found in the public galleries of seventeen cities throughout the UK⁴.

¹ "A iniciativa, válida no passado, adquire renovada importância no presente contexto das relações bilaterais" (dos Santos, 426/2018)

² Chitty, Ji, Rawnsley & Hayden, 2017, p.23

³ 24 of the 25 found in the United Kingdom. One of the works, by Urbano de Macedo, was not loaned by the Glasgow Gallery of Modern Art, despite insistent requests, allegedly due to a renovation process that was underway.

⁴ In the midst of the Second World War, the Exhibition of Modern Brazilian Paintings left Rio de Janeiro, crossed the Atlantic Ocean and arrived in London. The exhibition resulted from a donation of one hundred-sixty-eight artworks by seventy of the most recognised Brazilian Modernist painters, including Candido Portinari, Emiliano Di Cavalcanti, Lasar Segall and Tarsila do Amaral. The largest collection sent abroad until that time, and still the most remarkable show of Brazilian art ever displayed in the United Kingdom, toured throughout the country between October 1944 and September 1945. It was first displayed at the Royal Academy of Arts (RAA) in London and subsequently at the Castle Museum (Norwich), National Gallery of Edinburgh, Kelvingrove Gallery (Glasgow), Victoria Gallery (Bath), Bristol Museum and Art Gallery, Whitechapel Gallery (London) and Reading Museum and Art Gallery. As a contribution to the Allied war effort, the funds from its sales were donated to the Royal Air Force (RAF) Benevolent Fund, at that time an organisation greatly admired by Brazilians (Gadelha, 2021).

They were shown together with a video produced for the occasion⁵ and several historical documents unearthed during a four-year academic research project.

The investigation for this meta-exhibition inspired a PhD dissertation by this author, entitled “Public Diplomacy on the Front Line: The Exhibition of Modern Brazilian Paintings within Brazil’s Second World War Foreign Policy”, for which this essay serves as a sort of epilogue⁶. The dissertation hermeneutically examined the diplomatic motivations and outcomes of this wartime initiative, concluding that it was a public component – directed at foreign societies as opposed to governments – of a foreign policy designed to increase Brazil’s prestige in the aftermath of WW2⁷. It also demonstrated that the exhibition was a successful endeavour, although its outcomes were weakened by the political discontinuity that followed the replacement of its mastermind, Minister Oswaldo Aranha (1894-1960), and President Getúlio Vargas (1882-1954). TAOd, which was as diplomacy-driven as the exhibition that it celebrated, took place within a historical, political and cultural context entirely different from the one in which the original show came into existence. The purpose of this paper is to describe how the 2018 project evolved *vis-à-vis* its diplomatic background, while also forming a *corpus* for future analyses and interpretations.

Both the dissertation on the original exhibition and this essay adopt British political scientist Mark Leonard’s scheme to take up the challenging task of evaluating the two initiatives. He offers a useful classification of the three dimensions of Public Diplomacy, each with different corresponding time frames and required skills. The management of communication on day-to-day issues, often reactive, takes place in hours and days. It must be flexible and directly connected to core government decisions. In contrast, another of these dimensions, the development of long-lasting relationships of trust with key individuals, is cultivated across years. It depends on the creation of a neutral environment that does not appear official. Finally, the consolidation of planned messages, which Leonard calls strategic communication, is executed over the course of a year or so. It requires high communicational skills and the capacity of organising events that capture the imagination (Leonard, 2002, pp. 8-21).

When the author of this essay was appointed as cultural *attaché* at the Embassy of Brazil in London in 2014, he was told by then Ambassador Roberto Jaguaribe to move ahead

⁵ Available at <https://youtu.be/M2ASGjwaB3A> [last accessed 08/09/2022]

⁶ A few paragraphs of the present essay were extracted from the conclusion of the unpublished dissertation.

⁷ Brazil was the only Latin-American nation to deploy an important contingent – of 25,000 troops – to fight on the European front during WWII. It was only thanks to a great effort of diplomacy that the Brazilian Expeditionary Force (FEB) was able to join the Allied Army in Italy, where it fought to break up the Gothic Line between Tuscany and Emilia-Romagna (Gadelha, 2021).

with the project of memorialising the ‘Exhibition of Modern Brazilian Paintings’⁸. The discovery of a copy of the 1944 catalogue triggered a fascination with the event, as the author realised that it contained unique information about British-Brazilian relations and mutual perceptions during wartime. It led to long-term and intense investigative work, which uncovered thousands of documents that had never been studied together. The joint reading of these documents revealed a number of layers, encouraging the researcher to raise questions about its diplomatic role while developing interpretive hypotheses that this was a Public Diplomacy initiative *avant la lettre* that comprised a prestige-oriented wartime foreign policy programme.

The author visited several archives in the United Kingdom, Brazil and France, as well as all the British galleries that had hosted the ‘Exhibition of Modern Brazilian Paintings’ and most of those with its artworks in their collections. The reconstruction of this long-forgotten story was cyclically reassessed and reviewed as new information flowed in, giving rise to a new sense of the whole subject under analysis. The families of the painters, artistic foundations, auction houses and owners of the artworks worldwide were contacted in order to track down their histories and whereabouts. During the period when the investigation was unfolding, it was decided that the commemorative show should be a small one, featuring only the paintings that remained on British soil, and aimed at celebrating the original diplomatic initiative and lasting bilateral relations based on common values and solidarity. Individuals and companies became involved with the project, which was mostly privately funded. In contrast to the 1940s, the Foreign Office and the British Council offered only institutional support. In turn, the Embassy of Brazil, which played only a secondary role in the 1944 endeavour, took the lead of the TAOd, from its conceptualisation in 2014 through to every detail of its implementation in 2018.

By then, Brazilian art had long been acknowledged worldwide. In the summer of 2018, major comprehensive shows by Brazil’s leading contemporary artists were displayed in some of the most prestigious venues in the United Kingdom. The White Cube hosted the large-scale ‘Rio Azul’ by Beatriz Milhazes (White Cube, 2018); the Richard Saltoun Gallery presented a *début* exhibit in London by Paulo Bruscky (Richard Saltoun, 2018) called ‘The Gallery Will Be Fumigated of Art’; and the South London Gallery featured, also for the first time in the United Kingdom, works by Luiz Zerbini, at the show ‘Intuitive Ratio’ (South London Gallery, 2018). Moreover, the Tate Liverpool introduced the art collective

⁸ Ambassador Jaguaribe had been informed about the event by Afonso Costa, a dealer who intended to organise a large-scale commemorative commercial show which did not prosper for lack of funds. In 2004, João Candido Portinari, son of the acclaimed painter Candido Portinari, also proposed the re-staging of the 1944 exhibition to the Embassy.

OPAVIVARÁ to the British public (Tate, 2018), while the Modern Art Oxford hosted the 'The Family in Disorder' installation, by Cinthia Marcelle (Modern Art Oxford, 2018).

Brazil was also at the forefront of the architectural realm. In 2017, Paulo Mendes da Rocha (1928-2021), who had already won the Pritzker prize in 2006, was awarded a Gold Medal by the Royal Institute of British Architects, the most important European honour in this field (Archdaily, 2017). The Embassy of Brazil in London alone hosted more than seventy cultural events that year, showcasing the nation's diversity of expressions. Each of the Brazil Days organised between 2014 and 2016 by the Embassy was attended by up to 60,000 people at Trafalgar Square (dos Santos, 27/2018).

Furthermore, major North American museums had just held retrospective shows by Brazilian visual artists. The Whitney Museum staged 'To Organize Delirium' by Hélio Oiticica (Whitney Museum of American Art, 2017) and the MoMA of New York hosted Tarsila do Amaral's milestone 'Inventing Modern Art in Brazil' (MoMA, 2018). According to a review by the *Guardian* from April 2018, "Brazil's artists appear to be in higher demand internationally than ever" (Armitstead, 2018). The level of awareness and prestige of Brazilian arts abroad had clearly surged, reaching a very respectable position in the most prominent international cultural circles.

At the time, Brazil was one of the world's ten largest economies. Having consolidated its leadership in Latin America and among the developing nations in general, it had built up a totally different kind of cultural influence and reputation abroad. According to the Soft Power 30 - 2018 ranking, culture was the attribute that added the most leverage to Brazil's Soft Power that year (McClory, 2018). After successfully hosting the World Cup in 2014 and the Olympic Games in 2016, Brazil had become even better known and more admired across the globe, despite successive political and economic crises from 2015, including the impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff (b. 1947) in 2016.

Even though TAoD was conceptualised during Rousseff's term of office (2011-6), most of its planning and implementation took place during subsequent president Michel Temer's (b. 1940) administration (2016-8). Notwithstanding their ideological divergences, the main lines of Brazil's diplomacy continued to follow the path pursued since returning to democracy in 1989. Brazilian foreign policy sought, *tout court*, to contribute to a balanced and peaceful international order, in which multilateral rules should foster development, fairness and equality for the community of nations. Brazil positioned itself as a consensus builder, a bridge between the developing and developed countries; a large, Latin American, Western, and emerging power. Its (only) apparently contradictory facets were reflected in its active role in various groupings, such as the BRICS, the G20, the IBAS, and a number of regional organisations. Its aspiration for a permanent seat on the United Nations Security

Council had been revived in recent years, as it had become a key player in global agendas as diverse as the environment, development, food security, sustainable energy, and peacekeeping. The need for cultural credentials that presented the nation as a creative force capable of keeping pace with the international progress that guided the WW2 initiative thus remained untouched (Gadelha, 2021).

Having developed political and economic ties with all regions, by 2018 Brazil had achieved a certain balance in its trade and diplomatic relations. In contrast to the 1940s, there were many partners and no evident risk of excessive dependence. In his speech at the United Nations General Assembly in 2018, President Temer emphasised Brazil's belief in multilateralism as an antidote to growing intolerance and isolationism. He defended international integration and openness as instruments of a desirable Universalist foreign policy (Agência Brasil, 2018). Participation in global value chains and the pledge to free trade with all nations were seen as paths to prosperity and well-being, according to diplomatic discourse at the time (Gadelha, 2021).

In bilateral terms, the United Kingdom was still a relevant source of investments, although less central to Brazilian foreign relations than in earlier centuries. In 2017, the UK ranked fourteenth among Brazil's trading partners, and twelfth for foreign investments (dos Santos, 255/2018). The two countries also maintained prolific cooperation in fields such as defence, environment, science and technology, health and education. As an established hub of media, cultural and academic flows, London was also viewed as an important node from which Brazil could showcase and publicise its culture, values, and ideas. British universities were the second-choice destination for Brazilian students under the large-scale Science Without Borders academic exchange programme, which sponsored over 10,000 students to study in the United Kingdom in 2017. Finally, King's College London has hosted, since 2008, the Brazil Institute – Europe's only academic centre devoted exclusively to Brazilian Studies.

Relations with the United Kingdom were reassessed following 2016, when the British public voted to leave the European Union. The new motto of a post-Brexit "global Britain" was perceived as a chance for Brazil to strengthen bilateral ties and negotiate less restrictive trade agreements on agricultural exports, a sector traditionally protected by British partners in the European Union. According to Ambassador Eduardo dos Santos, in a speech during Brazil's National Day in 2018 (920/2018):

We must seize the opportunities that will unfold as Brexit takes place, which might hopefully culminate in a balanced and ambitious free trade agreement between Mercosur and the United Kingdom ... but I think that targets must go beyond Brexit

and its trade implications. We truly believe that a global Britain will find trustworthy and solid partners in Brazil, as in Latin America in general, and will certainly further deepen cooperation in all fields.

He also wrote in a report sent to Brasília that the British leadership understood that the new context would demand the maintenance of both Soft Power and the defence of an international system based on international law and Western values. On the other hand, he noted that the possibility of the United Kingdom losing international influence was in question. In his opinion, despite the challenges imposed by the Brexit negotiations and Brazil's turbulent political environment, great opportunities for bilateral relations could be glimpsed in different fields (dos Santos, 27/2018). Indeed, Prime Minister Theresa May (b.1956) had recently announced the intention of signing a trade agreement with Brazil, and several high-level visits were exchanged in 2017, including the Chancellor of the Exchequer's travel to Brasília and the trips to London by the Brazilian Ministers of the Economy, Mines and Energy, and Foreign Affairs. The latter discussed TAoD with Boris Johnson (at that time the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs). In addition, the Brazilian Ambassador was welcomed by Queen Elizabeth II (b. 1926) at Windsor Castle, where they talked about restaging the project.

As mentioned, Brazil's image in the UK in 2018 was positive and multifaceted; the country was perceived as a considerable international player and a producer of original and first-rate art. Despite these favourable circumstances – when compared to the wartime conditions of the 1940s –TAoD was not an uncomplicated diplomatic endeavour. As expressed by Ambassador dos Santos during its opening ceremony (344/2018),

The Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Foreign Office and the British Council must have devoted a great deal of effort to make that [1944/5] exhibition happen in a very short period of time. I can say with confidence that, having learnt indeed the challenges of putting on just a part of that first exhibition, when no bombs threaten London and Brazilian art has achieved a much higher level of recognition.

The initial intention of displaying the pictures at one of the galleries hosting the original exhibition proved to be just as challenging as it was back in the 1940s. According to the Royal Academy's Senior Curator Adrian Locke, who curated TAoD jointly with this author, there are still some "reservations" about assembling Latin American art shows in the UK, a stance that reveals the ongoing conservatism of the institution (Neto, 2018).

The author talked to directors of the Royal Academy and the Whitechapel Gallery, who offered to host side events, but not the commemorative exhibition itself. The Tate

Modern and the Imperial War Museum also demonstrated their interest in being involved in the endeavour, but could not make their walls available for hanging the Brazilian artworks. The solution of displaying the show at the Brazilian Embassy's *Sala Brasil* was seamlessly aligned with the curatorial choice of celebrating Cultural Diplomacy and British-Brazilian Relations, whilst also endowing this venue with a higher profile.

Once it was decided that the *Sala Brasil* (an imposing but not widely known cultural centre) would host TAOd, the Embassy staff chose to work with highly experienced professionals, in order to produce an exhibition able to draw attention to the competitive London art scene. Momart art logistics company was hired to insure, pick up, pack, transport, and assemble the artworks that were scattered across the UK. The Bolton & Quinn arts and culture PR consulting firm handled press relations, while the Cogency arts and culture marketing agency ran the social media campaign. A website was developed by cultural producer Adriana Rouanet with rich content on the show and the story behind it, and an appealing visual identity was created by designer Ruth Reis, encouraging the public to revisit the original exhibition with the understanding that both shows represented different times in the solid relationship between two societies sharing democratic values and a taste for art. A video featuring some of the most important art experts in the United Kingdom was produced by Daniela Pfeiffer and Michaela Moir to publicise the initiative. It was screened at the Ambassador's residence for groups of potential sponsors and journalists, along with Portinari's '*A Boba*', which was brought in advance from the Mercer Art Gallery in Harrogate. Brazilian companies with offices in London and British companies with interests in Brazil, alongside eleven art-lover families, were enticed by the symbolic power of the project and sponsored most of the endeavour.

In the heart of London, the iconic façade of the Brazilian Embassy was enveloped with images of Brazilian modern art. Exhibition designer Robin Kiang was responsible for devising the layout of the artworks. Once the artworks had been located, the Embassy's cultural sector had to individually negotiate their restoration and loan with the owner galleries, and the use of related images with the artists' families. This involved insuring the paintings and ensuring appropriate levels of security, lighting, and humidity control, among many other details.

On 5th April 2018, the Ambassador's residence at Mount Street was turned into a theatre, where a hundred people were invited to the *début* performance of *Sumaúma*, a piece composed and choreographed specially for the occasion. It starred two celebrated Brazilian artists – Thiago Soares (principal dancer at the Royal Ballet) and pianist Marcelo Bratke, both living in London.

Prepared by award-winning chef Luciana Berry, the menu showcased Brazil's rich cuisine, and included *steak à la Oswaldo Aranha*⁹, in homage to the favourite dish of the mastermind behind the original 'Exhibition of Modern Brazilian Paintings'. After the presentation, the guests were ushered into the *Sala Brasil*. Among those present were Sérgio Sá Leitão, Brazilian Minister of Culture; Air Vice-Marshall David Murray, Controller of the Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund; Sir Ciáran Devane, CEO of the British Council; members of the Houses of Lords and Commons; some of the most influential personalities from artistic and academic circles of the United Kingdom; the diplomatic corps; and businesspeople. In his inaugural speech, Ambassador dos Santos affirmed that TAOd was intended to celebrate the power of Cultural Diplomacy. In his words,

by telling this story, we expect to give a meaningful context to these paintings which have been spread through the United Kingdom, and to reassess the significance of Brazilian Modernism. And, also, from a diplomatic perspective, to remind us, in a time of global changes, that Brazil and the UK have a long-standing partnership, based on shared values and solidarity (344/2018).

He closed TAOd's inauguration by saying that "as much as back in the 1940s, this is a valuable opportunity to reaffirm both our nations' willingness to jointly pursue a democratic, balanced and peaceful international order", (dos Santos, 344/2018), thus making it clear that, once more, this art show was above all a diplomatic initiative. Afterwards, Adrian Locke, co-curator of the exhibition, Santiago Mourão, Brazilian Under-Secretary of Foreign Affairs, and Minister of Culture Sérgio Sá Leitão (the latter two having travelled from Brazil for the opening)¹⁰ offered a few words to the three-hundred-fifty guests.

⁹ According to the chef's menu, this dish consists of a "fillet steak with garlic, rice, potatoes and egg *farofa*".

¹⁰ The Brazilian Ambassador suggested, in an official document, that a senior delegation should be sent from Brazil for the occasion, which would represent an unprecedented opportunity for high-level meetings and raising the profile of bilateral relations, through an auspicious agenda based on common values (dos Santos, 1257/2017).



Figure 1: Thiago Soares performs at TAOd (*Press Association/ Embassy of Brazil in London*)

This opening success was continued through a steady stream of more than fifty visitors each day (dos Santos, 341/2018). During the two and a half months they were displayed in the *Sala Brasil*, the paintings (restored to their original condition) were seen by around three thousand visitors, in a context very different to that of the 1940s. The exhibition was accompanied by a full calendar of parallel events and special visits, enhancing its value and disseminating the multiple historical, diplomatic, and artistic narratives underpinning this project as extensively as possible to widely diverse groups of prospective audiences (dos Santos, 341/2018). For instance, a visit of Members of Parliament¹¹ provided a setting for discussions on the role of public policies in fostering creative exchanges and collaborations. The event accomplished its goal of offering an intimate setting for art appreciation and exchanges of views among leading names in British political, artistic, and diplomatic circles (449/2018).

On another special visit, Prince Andrew, the Duke of York¹² – whose grandmother, the Queen Elizabeth, and aunt, Princess Margaret, had seen the wartime exhibition – enjoyed the show and highlighted the courageousness of Brazilian modern artists, who were able to disrupt an inert cultural system represented by the academicist art establishment. His visit involved eighty people, including São Paulo Mayor Bruno Covas, demonstrating the diplomatic and cultural outreach of TAOd (dos Santos, 623/2018). In his speech, the Duke of York emphasised the importance of Cultural Diplomacy for drawing nations and peoples closer, expressing satisfaction at the historical retrieval of the 1944

¹¹ Drawn from all-party parliamentary groups of culture, arts, heritage and relations with Brazil, among the thirty guests were Baroness Hooper, MP Mark Prisk, Baroness Lucy Neville, Lord Cathorne, MP Daniel Kawczynski, MP Peter Bottomley and Ambassador David Charlton (dos Santos, 449/2018).

¹² See figure 2.

exhibition by the Embassy of Brazil. He also affirmed that British-Brazilian relations have been constant and consistent since the Second World War. According to a cable from the Embassy, the Prince looked closely at all the paintings on display and inquired about the history of Brazilian visual arts (dos Santos, 623/2018). That same day, he mentioned the visit on his Twitter account (The Duke of York, 2018).

A few days later, curators, archive managers and international collectors, a group organised by and consisting largely of members of the Tate Latin American Acquisitions Committee visited TAOd. This occasion prompted reflections on the legacy of the 1944 Exhibition from the standpoint of the construction of international public collections. Furthermore, a group of founders and benefactors of the Educa Foundation saw the show and emphasised the educational potential of cultural actions, as well as their capacity to transform society. Finally, visits from renowned Brazilian artists Beatriz Milhazes and Paulo Bruscky floodlighted the legacy of Brazil's modern artists and the importance of their works for contemporary arts. The Embassy also organised special tours during alternative opening hours for sponsors, businesspeople, and travel agents. Moreover, a special event was held on 6th June at the National Archive, where co-curator Adrian Locke offered audience members an interesting opportunity to become more familiar with the historical and cultural context of the 1944 Exhibition, analysing the reception of Brazil's artistic legacy since the mid-twentieth century. TAOd closed with an investiture ceremony for new recipients of the Order of Rio Branco, with the Brazilian Government honouring Adrian Locke, Vinicius de Carvalho and Catherine Petitgas, who had played fundamental roles in bringing this project to completion and celebrating its success (dos Santos, 341/2018).



Figure 2: The Duke of York and Curator Adrian Locke observe a painting at the TAOd, flanked by Ambassador Eduardo dos Santos (*Press Association/ Embassy of Brazil in London*)

Edited jointly by Michael Asbury, Marcio Sono, and this author, the catalogue of TAOd is a formatted hard-cover book of 140 pages, produced to outstanding graphic standards – in sharp contrast to its wartime predecessor, whose reduced size was due to the scarcity of paper at the time. Designed by Georges Moes as a representation of the time fusion pursued by this commemorative show, it contains an indented *fac-simile* of the diminutive 1944 catalogue. Its introductory texts are written by the Brazilian Ambassador to the United Kingdom, Eduardo dos Santos; the British Ambassador to Brazil, Vijay Rangarajan; Royal Academy Artistic Director, Tim Marlow; Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund Controller, David Murray; British Council Chief Executive, Ciarán Devane; and National Archives CEO and Keeper, Jeff James. Subsequently, it features essays by Adrian Locke (Royal Academy), Dawn Ades (University of Essex), Vinicius Mariano de Carvalho (King's College London), Michael Asbury (Chelsea College of Arts) and this author, each analysing different aspects of the two shows, from the diplomatic context to aesthetic issues and Brazil's role in the War. It also includes pictures of all the twenty-four works that comprised TAOd, accompanied by brief biographies of their painters. Through its richness of content, graphic quality and retrieval of an episode of solidarity in critical times, this catalogue offers a relevant contribution to cultural relations between Brazil and the United Kingdom. In contrast to the 1940s, when a Brazilian and a ill-informed British critic presented irreconcilable views about the artworks sent to London, this new catalogue clearly shows that today there are very knowledgeable scholars in the United Kingdom who are experts in Brazilian culture. Printed and distributed free of charge to partner institutions, British public libraries, university libraries, and a wide variety of research centres, it was almost out of stock by the end of the show, according to an Embassy report (dos Santos, 698/2018).

Similar to the Exhibition's coverage in the 1940s, the ripple effects of TAOd were rated "extremely positive" by the Embassy of Brazil (dos Santos, 349/2018). This time, in addition to comprehensive and rather acclamatory newspaper reviews, other media played an important role in displaying this initiative. It was featured on many television and radio programmes, while social media posts reached an unprecedented number of people. Coordinated (as previously mentioned) with professional firms, press relations efforts proved quite successful. By hosting a lunch for journalists from major media groups and offering them the chance to meet art experts Adrian Locke and Dawn Ades and appreciate first-hand the exhibition catalogue, its film and its most celebrated painting, '*A Boba*' by Portinari, the Embassy managed to have the exhibition publicised by top-tier critics. The initiative received coverage across the board from some of the most prominent British, Brazilian and international news and media outlets, an accomplishment without precedents

in the Embassy's history of cultural events (dos Santos, 698/2018). The social media strategy was equally successful, with some impressive results in terms of figures, including a total of 2.3 million Twitter interactions; over 600,000 shared Facebook posts, with over 31,000 interactions (likes, comments, and shares); 21,000 users viewed the guided video-tour with Curator Adrian Locke, transmitted live and subsequently available on video; and more than 10,000 likes on images posted on the Embassy's Instagram account (dos Santos, 698/2018).

A press briefing released in February 2018 announced: "Hidden story of Brazilian artists' contribution to Britain's War effort revealed in major exhibition in London" (Embassy of Brazil in London, 2018). The document underscored that the Exhibition aimed at "giving voice to the artists' support of democracy, domestically and in the context of the War"¹³ (Embassy of Brazil in London, 2018) and spotlighted works by Candido Portinari, Emiliano Di Cavalcanti, Lasar Segall, José Pancetti, and Roberto Burle Marx. It stated that "24 of the newly discovered works will be shown, reunited for the first time since the original show in 1944" and mentioned the involvement of Adrian Locke, Dawn Ades, Michael Asbury, and Tim Marlow in this initiative.

The first article to refer to the still-incipient project of reviving the Exhibition was published by the *Estado de São Paulo*, the same newspaper that broke the news back in September 1943. In May 2015, João Villaverde wrote a one-page story about this author's research and the intention of convincing the Royal Academy to host a commemorative exhibition (Villaverde, 2015). Two weeks later, Maria Ignez Barbosa, the granddaughter of Minister Oswaldo Aranha, authored an article (in both Portuguese and English) for *Brasileiros* magazine, commenting on the investigative work undertaken by the Embassy (Barbosa, 2015).

The 2016 summer edition of the Royal Academy Magazine published a note on the project. At the end of 2017, both BBC Brasil and G1 broadcast a long piece on TAoD, highlighting its diplomatic motivations. It alludes to the original Exhibition, "at the time perceived as a pioneering strategy of Soft Power" (BBC Brasil, 2017), and speculates about a supposed decline in Brazil's international influence, which the project would aim at reversing. It quotes Ambassador dos Santos, for whom the initiative was an event of historical, cultural and diplomatic relevance for British-Brazilian relations, as a yet another step affirming Brazil's values and the style of its diplomacy (BBC Brasil, 2017). Finally, it mentions talks between the Brazilian Ambassador and the Queen on the reconstruction of that episode. The Brazilian broadcaster *RedeTV* aired a piece about the upcoming exhibition,

¹³ The Exhibition was used by Modernist painters as leverage, calling for immediate free elections in Brazil, in accordance with its stance in the international conflict. Ambiguities of the Brazilian government, authoritarian at home and aligned with the Western democracies on the European War front, were becoming too evident and made the artists increasingly oppose Vargas' *Estado Novo* regime.

referring to the diplomatic environment following Brexit and the interest in the project expressed by the Queen (Abreu, 2018). A long article on the TAOd was written by Ulisses Neto and published in Brazil by the *Valor Econômico* newspaper in early 2018. According to him, the new exhibition would endow the paintings with historical context, while also memorialising an important Soft Power move, at a time when this concept was still far from inclusion in policy discussions. It refers to the author of this essay, who declared that in 1944 Brazil benefited from a strategic moment for the Allies, questioning whether it would have been possible to hold an exhibition of that scope in such a prestigious gallery as the Royal Academy, either before or after WW2 (Neto, 2018).

The first major British publication to spread the news of this commemorative project, in February 2018, was the *Times*, which announced the show and quoted this author, for whom “both initiatives – the deployment of the artworks and the expeditionary force – are examples of soft and hard power” (Sanderson, 2018, p. 17). In March, Brazil’s *Band TV* channel televised the story of TAOd on its prime newscast, featuring interviews with Ambassador dos Santos, Adrian Locke, and this essay’s author (Kieling, 2018). For the *Deutsche Welle*, the project would not only showcase 20th century Brazilian Modern Art, but also teach lessons in history and diplomacy. It reproduces a statement from dos Santos, who believed that TAOd would celebrate the power of art and diplomacy to bring countries closer together, which is why he wanted to highlight the diplomatic legacy of the 1944 exhibition. It also cites Locke, who hoped that telling the stories of how the artworks came to the United Kingdom would enhance their visibility and eventually ensure acknowledgement of their true historical and cultural value (Yonezawa, 2018). The Swiss art magazine *Widewalls* published a note, highlighting the artistic and political meanings of the Exhibition that were being re-enacted through TAOd (Takac, 2018).

Critic Jackie Wullschlager, from the *Financial Times*, included the exhibition in the publication’s Critics’ Choice section, illustrated with a reproduction of Portinari’s ‘*A Boba*’. This effusive review praised the “broad, lively spectrum of early Brazilian Modernism” (Wullschlager, 2018). Apart from the artistic merits, she added, the Exhibition had been “a model of Cultural Diplomacy, a blockbuster: 100,000 visitors (including the Queen) and strong sales” (Wullschlager, 2018). The culture newswire *Artnet* called the 1944 initiative a “moral-boosting exhibition of modern art” (Pes, 2018) and emphasised the part played by Tarsila do Amaral, referring to the then-ongoing 2018 show of her work at MoMA in New York. Critic Javier Pes recalled that “the Tate could have got a work by a modernist master for a song. In fact, wealthy British collector and art patron Peter Watson bought a painting by do Amaral for £6 (\$8)” (Pes, 2018). On 3rd April, the BBC Radio 3 programme *In Tune* broadcast a conversation about TAOd between a representative of the Brazilian Embassy

and the London-based artists Thiago Soares and Marcelo Bratke (Rafferty, 2018). One day before the opening, Brazilian newspaper *O Globo* underscored the role played by Tarsila do Amaral in the original exhibition and her retrospective on display in New York, as well as the inaugural performance by Soares and Bratke (Campos, 2018).

The day after its launch, on 6th April, the commemorative show was publicised by several papers. The *i Morning* daily published a photograph of Thiago Soares dancing in the exhibition hall, in front of Portinari's 'A Boba' and announced the revelation of the "hidden story of Brazilian artists' contribution to Britain's war effort" (The i, 2018). The same picture, commissioned by the Embassy¹⁴ for the Press Association, was featured in the *Times* (The Times, 2018), the *Irish Examiner* (Irish Examiner, 2018), and New Zealand's *Otago Daily Times* (Otago Daily Times, 2018). Monocle Radio aired a long interview with this author about the project of reviving the original Exhibition (Pacheco, 2018), and BBC London Radio broadcast a talk on this topic with Brazilian Minister of Culture Sérgio Sá Leitão. José da Silva and Donald Lee wrote a piece for the *Art Newspaper*, recommending TAOd as one of the three ongoing exhibitions in London to be seen and announcing that, amongst the paintings on show, "there are pieces by some of Brazil's best known Modernist artists" (da Silva & Lee, 2018).

Other important reviews were broadcast during the following months. The *Monocle Magazine*, in its weekly 'Minute', praised the diplomatic perspective of both events and stated that "Brazil's soft-power play during the Second World War is a work of art" (Monocle Minute, 2018).

The *Tainted Glory* art blog's critic, whose prejudiced perspective reminded one of some of the uninformed reviews from the 1940s, confessed that (Tainted Glory, 2018)

when I was invited to review the show the first thought that struck my (admittedly often shallow...) mind was that Modern Art is not really the first thing we associate with Brazil when considering its wider cultural impact on the world. Football, carnival, beaches, samba, Formula 1 and the odd supermodel are probably more likely to come to mind. Maybe this is because – unlike countries like Mexico – it has never had an iconic, publicity-savvy painter, a Frida Kahlo or a Diego Rivera, to bring its visual art to the mainstream.

For him, TAOd would be "a welcome reminder of, and for many a first encounter with, the many artists who have been part of what is undoubtedly a rich tradition of figurative and to a lesser degree abstract painting, often inspired by political and social activism" (Tainted

¹⁴ See figure 1.

Glory, 2018). Once again, Brazilian Modernism was referred to as a novelty, through an isolated view that demonstrates that, even so recently, there were still excessively Eurocentric stances and discrimination in the British art world. He opined that

this is definitely a show worth seeing if you are after a first introduction to many of Brazil's most celebrated painters and a great opportunity to discover hidden gems. It is also a chance to see how Modernism was interpreted beyond the usual artistic hubs of Paris, London or New York" (Tainted Glory, 2018).

Finally, he delivered a comment on the *Sala Brasil*,

although not the most obvious of venues for an art exhibition, the Embassy manages to provide a warm and welcoming environment for the show: no one batted an eyelid when this Brit turned up to their rather grand opening night wearing scuffed red trainers and a tattered coat (Tainted Glory, 2018).

In turn, David Gelber wrote for the 1925-founded and rather influential international magazine *Apollo* that the TAOd "represents an admirable feat of historical reconstruction and a rare opportunity to see in one place a broad sampling of Brazilian modernist works on canvas. It also casts an intelligent eye on 'Soft Power' in action, *avant la lettre* ... one step in a lengthy diplomatic tango between Britain and Brazil" (Gelber, 2018). Commenting on the Peruvian *Chargé d'Affaires*, who was reportedly upset by the success of the Brazilian exhibition back in 1944¹⁵, he concluded by asking "what's the art of diplomacy if it's not getting one over the neighbour?" (Gelber, 2018).

A rare openly negative view on TAOd was delivered by the *Times* critic Rachel Campbell-Johnson in her one-page article 'A diplomatic feat: but is it good art?'. She started her review by asking "what do we make of the works now?" (Campbell-Johnston, 2018). For her, the paintings on display formed "an oddly disparate show, a random mishmash of subjects and styles [that] feels like European Modernism in second or third-rate translation" (Campbell-Johnston, 2018). The overall aesthetical result was considered by her to be "dispiriting, not least when you remember Brazil's brave contributions to architectural Modernism or think of the post-War art scene: the exuberant inventions of Hélio Oiticica, or the shocking performance and sensual installations of Cildo Meirelles, both made

¹⁵ In a picturesque official report, the Director for the Americas at the Foreign Office, Victor Perowne, alluded to the Peruvian *Chargé d'Affaires*, who "blatantly gate-crashed the private view and was seen proceeding round the exhibition with a scowl of envy on his face; however, he justified his presence by buying two pictures, one of them by a Peruvian artist, which he said was the best picture in the show" (Perowne V. , 1944).

familiar to us by Tate Modern shows” (Campbell-Johnston, 2018). She summed it up by saying that the “far from thrilling” 1944 show (Campbell-Johnston, 2018)

served a political purpose [as it] was intended to play a diplomatic role. It professed the alliance between Brazil and Britain. This alliance still stands. And, as Britain prepares for Brexit, the moment to mark it returns. Our country is looking to forge stronger trade links with South America. This show arrives as a reassurance that such links have borne the test of time. It plays once again a diplomatic role.

Brazil’s leading TV channel, *Globo*, aired a four-minute feature on the TAOd in its prime Saturday news programme, *Jornal Hoje*. For its correspondent Cecília Malan, who interviewed dos Santos, Locke and this author, “the legacy of an exemplary wartime initiative of Cultural Diplomacy ... was being revisited in times of relative peace” (Malan, 2018). Another relevant article on the TAOd was published by the *Guardian*, which highlighted the contemporary power of Brazilian art, relating it to the modernist period represented in the shows. Critic Claire Armitstead opened with the caveat that “the 24 pictures in The Art of Diplomacy might not all be world-class art, but they contain forewarnings of this coming wave” (Armitstead, 2018). The periodical *New European* and Brazilian newspaper *Diário de Pernambuco* published notes recalling that the exhibition was a way of using culture for strengthening Brazil’s image abroad (Hollidge, 2018) (Dantas, 2018).

This generous press coverage shows that studying the meanings, motivations, and outcomes of TAOd has been a very different challenge in comparison to examining the Exhibition of Modern Brazilian Paintings, as the intentions and achievements of conceptualisers of the more recent event were widely publicised and documented. Furthermore, this author’s direct participation in the project offered privileged access to documents, such as Embassy’s cables and internal memos, and behind-the-scenes events. In any case, the hermeneutic analysis of official texts and press news are useful in determining specificities of the endeavour. In 2018, the Embassy of Brazil in London declared that it viewed the commemorative show as a diplomatic instrument for pursuing foreign policy objectives. The goals for the bilateral relations with the United Kingdom were clearly stated in several documents, and positioning Brazil as its close ally on the verge of a wholly new British geopolitical insertion was a priority.

This intended projection was grounded on a shared history of solidarity during wartime, an appealing narrative for the United Kingdom’s society, as well understood by the Embassy. Revitalising the bilateral relations, in the wake of radical political changes in both countries, should include the use of cultural connections and lasting commonality, in

order to present Brazil as a solid partner, capable of offering sophisticated and original contributions in artistic, economic and political realms. Moreover, London was, more than ever, perceived as a nodal point of cultural irradiation, and it was evident to Brazilian diplomats that TAoD's consequences would extrapolate beyond bilateral relations, conveying a desirable image of the nation worldwide. The primary goals of the Public Diplomacy drive were to positively affect Brazil's international reputation by means of rediscovering its role in WW2 and its modern art output, while drawing attention to the power of Public Diplomacy for international relations. According to an Embassy cable (dos Santos, 1105/2017),

the initiative that we are now conceiving [has] the potential of positively impacting local and global perceptions about Brazil [in a way similar to that of the original Exhibition]. As is a commonplace, WW2 is a topic that triggers particular affection amongst the British. [TAoD will represent] a unique opportunity to reveal to the local public, by means of the arts, the little-known Brazilian part in the War efforts, in those critical times for the United Kingdom. Common values and shared battles will remind one of the density and longevity of bilateral relations and will shed light on the power of Brazilian Modernist Art, still unfamiliar to local audiences. It will finally demonstrate and commemorate – and this will be the curatorial core of the show – the value and effectiveness of Public Diplomacy in establishing long-lasting relationships of mutual trust between the societies of different countries¹⁶.

For the first goal, it rated the project's potential to improve Brazil's image as "incalculable". For the latter, it felt that the show was emphasising the power of arts and Public Diplomacy to establish networks of trust between Brazil and the United Kingdom (dos Santos, 1257/2017). As seen in another official document sent to Brasília, TAoD (dos Santos, 255/2018)

reinforces the symbolism of the rapprochement between Brazil and the United Kingdom through an initiative of undeniable diplomatic, cultural and historical value [...] as a result of the understanding of the United Kingdom's importance as a

¹⁶ "Percebo na iniciativa que ora preparamos semelhante potencial de impacto positivo nas percepções locais e globais acerca do Brasil. Como se sabe, o tema da Guerra desperta particular afeto entre os britânicos. A exposição do próximo ano será, s.m.j., oportunidade singular de revelar ao público local, por meio da arte, a pouco conhecida participação brasileira nos esforços de guerra em tempos críticos para o Reino Unido. Os valores comungados e a luta compartilhada recordarão, acredito, a densidade e a longevidade das relações bilaterais e revelarão a força da arte modernista brasileira, hoje desconhecida do público local. Evidenciará e celebrará, por fim - e esse será o enfoque curatorial da mostra -, o valor e a efetividade da diplomacia pública na construção de relações duradouras e de confiança entre sociedades de diferentes países".

global centre of public opinion formation and as an emitter of culture and knowledge. [The Embassy's cultural activities] are developed in coordination with trade promotion, tourism, sports cooperation and press sectors, in order to maximise impacts on their image and the benefits for bilateral relations¹⁷.

As shown, the results of TaoD were outstanding. More than 3,000 people attended the show and another 21,000 visited it virtually – an admirable number when recalling that it was hosted on the premises of the Brazilian Embassy, a venue that is not part of the top-tier circuit of the competitive London cultural scene. From the Embassy's standpoint, "The Art of Diplomacy was an unprecedented success [as] it not only fulfilled one of the project's principal objectives – to promote knowledge of Brazilian Modernism and the historical events in question – while also enhancing the Embassy's reputation as a consistent space dedicated to the promotion and fruition of Brazilian culture in London" (dos Santos, 698/2018)¹⁸. The number of minds reached by TAOd were multiplied by the high-quality catalogue and video produced for the show. Both spread the desired messages as diplomatic statements of sophistication and cultural prowess. Another invaluable consequence was the restoration of the artworks to their original condition.

According to Leonard's parameters, mentioned earlier, it is clear that the day-to-day press relations, the building of personal links, and the reputational impacts of TaoD were astonishingly successful. Although Brazilian art is no longer as 'exotic' as it was back in the 1940s, the comprehensiveness and quality of the press coverage were outstanding, including pieces by leading Brazilian and British communications outlets, as well as several foreign news services. The outreach through social media was equally notable, with around three million people having contact with TAOd messages worldwide.

Regarding the development of lasting and trustful relationships with key figures of British society, the initiative obtained great results. The engagement of the Queen and the visit of Prince Andrew indicate that it matched the original show in terms of interesting members of the royal family. The involvement of some of the most influential individuals and institutions of British art circles established an affective connection between them and

¹⁷ "Reforça o simbolismo da aproximação entre o Brasil e o Reino Unido por meio de uma iniciativa de inegável valor diplomático, cultural e histórico [e] faz parte da constatação da importância que tem o Reino Unido como centro global formador de opinião e irradiador de cultura e conhecimento [Muitos desses eventos] foram coordenados com as áreas de promoção comercial, investimentos, turismo, cooperação esportiva e imprensa, de forma a potencializar seus resultados para a imagem do país e benefício das relações bilaterais".

¹⁸ "The Art of Diplomacy se mostrou um sucesso sem precedentes nas dependências da Sala Brasil. O resultado não apenas contempla objetivos diretos do projeto - difundir conhecimento sobre o modernismo brasileiro e sobre o evento histórico em pauta e reforçar os coeficientes de 'Soft Power' nacionais - mas também fomentou maior reconhecimento da Embaixada como consistente espaço de fruição e incentivo à cultura brasileira em Londres".

the story behind the exhibition, and by extension with Brazil. Members of the House of Lords and Parliament, senior civil and military authorities, academics, artists, journalists, curators, and collectors all had the chance of getting to know Brazil better through its artistic output, while learning about its engagement in a War fought an ocean away from its borders. The side events organised for specific audiences spotlighted these aspects, striving to convey dovetailed messages that underlined features of interest for each visiting group.

The evaluation of the impact on the country's reputation by T AoD arguably reveals an effective and intelligent move. According to an Embassy report, increasing the capacity of positively influencing public perceptions while strengthening bilateral ties, both matrices of Cultural Diplomacy, were fully achieved (dos Santos, 698/2018). According to the same report, T AoD (dos Santos, 698/2018)

encompassed a number of side events, with high attendance and ample media coverage. The initiative amalgamates and reinforces fundamental principles of Public Diplomacy, as well as Brazilian foreign policy and of Modernist movement [...] The fascinating story of human, artistic, and diplomatic collaboration in 1944, revisited in 2018, has touched the imagination of the people, while strengthening the ties of bilateral cooperation¹⁹.

Still according to official cables, the show unconditionally accomplished its objectives: "recalling Brazil's participation in WW2, a theme especially appealing to British public opinion; paying tribute to the unprecedented gesture of modernist Brazilian painters who donated their works in aid of the Royal Air Force; publicising Brazilian art; and strengthening the ties and common values that unite Brazil and the United Kingdom²⁰" (dos Santos, 426/2018). In the Embassy's view, the proposed targets were fully achieved, and there remained "no doubts that the initiative constitutes a successful example of Public Diplomacy, with positive impact on Brazil's image²¹" (dos Santos, 341/2018). In dos Santos' end-of-term report, he argued that with London being

¹⁹ "Contou com atividades diversas, bem como ampla cobertura de mídia e visitação pública. A iniciativa coaduna e reforça princípios fundamentais de Diplomacia Pública, da política externa brasileira e do movimento modernista [...] A fascinante história de colaboração humana, artística e diplomática de 1944, revisitada em 2018 e parcialmente remontada na Embaixada, atingiu o imaginário público e reforçou laços de cooperação bilateral".

²⁰ "Recordar o episódio da participação do Brasil na Segunda Guerra Mundial, de especial apelo junto à opinião pública britânica; recuperar a iniciativa então inédita dos pintores modernistas brasileiros de realizar doações de obras em benefício da Royal Air Force; divulgar a arte brasileira; e reforçar os laços e valores comuns que aproximam o Brasil e o Reino Unido".

²¹ "Não me restam dúvidas de que a iniciativa constitui exemplo de Diplomacia Pública de sucesso, com impacto positivo sobre a imagem do Brasil".

a radiating centre of international tendencies and standards ... the promotion and diffusion of Brazilian cultural values to civil society, companies and governments was done in a diversified way striving to effectively present the principles of Brazilian foreign policy [by developing] the ability to understand, inform and influence local circles²² (893/2018).

Having jointly analysed both shows, this author concludes that TAOd is not only a tribute to and a legacy of the Exhibition of Modern Brazilian Paintings, but also builds up from the original experience. In the 1940s, Brazilian diplomacy combined high-level political backing with non-governmental engagement from both the United Kingdom and Brazil; an accurate interpretation of British society to deliver an appropriate and attractive message that was aligned with its foreign policy goals; and a clear priority to extending its outreach through an intense media relations campaign. The Art of Diplomacy emulated this and also imprinted new features on Public Diplomacy, teaching lessons that transcend the cultural realm or British-Brazilian relations and that may inspire future projects.

Initially, the show was based on assumptions of meticulous professionalism and a sustainable public-private budget. Furthermore, in times of global connectivity and with the growing role of the digital and creative economy in shaping public opinion, the project prioritised hiring professionals from areas outside of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' core activities, including graphic design and media management, among others (dos Santos, 698/2018). On top of that, the 2018 privileged a two-way network approach, in which British and Brazilian unofficial players became part of the endeavour and jointly built its storytelling. Finally, the Brazilian diaspora engaged with TAOd, amplifying its appeal within contemporary British society and thus increasing its outreach. In a way, the comparison of both initiatives shows that Brazil's reputation has evolved since WW2. Evidence of this is the fact that "in direct contrast to 1944, today many experts in the UK are well equipped to discuss Brazilian art in depth" (Gadelha, 2018, p. 29). Alluding to the idea of an 'issue of relevance', coined by policy advisor Simon Anholt, Brazil (2015, p. 191) and its culture are nowadays familiar to the British, which resulted in broader attention to TAOd. On the other hand, and for the same reason, Brazil has a rather complex and consolidated image in the UK, and changing it requires even more robust and consistent efforts.

²² "Centro irradiador de tendências e padrões internacionais. A promoção e a difusão dos valores culturais brasileiros junto à sociedade civil, empresas e governos, deu-se de maneira diversificada e buscou efetivar os princípios da política externa brasileira a partir do desenvolvimento sustentado da capacidade de entender, informar e influenciar o meio local".

It is still too early to know whether this well-planned and executed 2018 initiative will render long-term benefits for Brazil's reputation, the third dimension of Leonard's mentioned framework, and for its relations with the United Kingdom. It might be a coincidence that, just as occurred in the wake of the War, this Public Diplomacy offensive was also followed by a rare disruption in Brazilian foreign policy, historically associated with gradual transitions and subtle inflexions. The election of Jair Bolsonaro (b.1955) in late 2018 marks a radical distancing from deep-rooted Brazilian diplomatic consensuses. The quest for universal values was replaced by a self-declared anti-globalist stance, and championing multilateralism gave way to the pursuit of a most-favoured nation relationship with the USA, similar to the foreign policy adopted by President Eurico Dutra (1886-1974), after Getúlio Vargas left office (Gadelha, 2021).

In any case, time and personal distance will be needed to gain a more complete understanding of the consequences of TAoD. This author believes that the 2018 show was a legacy and sequential outcome of the phenomenon examined by his PhD dissertation. This essay attempts to motivate other scholars to study this Public Diplomacy endeavour, whose origins date back to WW2, when diplomats and artists strove to bring Brazilian and British societies closer through cultural exchanges.

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