

# RITE OF THE *APPAREIL*

Obtain or construct a suitable apparatus or model (black box, *chambre obscure*, or photographic camera), place it on a chair or stool and darken the room, leaving a single light source, ideally the sun through a window. Attend to the apparatus throughout. *Science is preserved by silence and perpetuated by initiation.*

## *PREPARATION*

APPROACH THE APPAREIL [BOÎTE] WITH CAUTION: IT IS A JAGUAR [AN ANIMAL LYING IN WAIT], READY TO SPRING. DISARM ITS GAZE; CLOSE YOUR EYES. [SUBDUE IT WITH THE SMOKE OF YOUR CIGARS][VAPOR OF YOUR BREATH]. *O uncreated reason, spirit of light and wisdom, whose breath gives and withdraws the form of everything!*

## *THE ATTENDANT*

YOU ARE THE ATTENDANT: [FEED THE ANIMAL][LET IN LIGHT]. FLASH OPEN YOUR EYES TO SEE WHAT IT SEES; CLOSE YOUR EYES TO HOLD THE SIGHT. THE APPAREIL [BODY] BREATHES [CAPTURES][TRAPS] LIGHT [LIKE FISH IN THE RIVER]; IT DREAMS [THINKS][IMAGINES] INSIDE ITS DARKNESS. *What is movable will be fixed, the shadow become a body, the dream a thought.*

## *THE NEGATIVE*

OPEN YOUR EYES TO THE UNCREATED WORLD. LET [TIME][THE RIVER] RUN BACKWARDS. EVERYTHING REVERSES ITSELF: WHAT SHOULD BE LIGHT IS DARK, WHAT SHOULD BE DARK IS LIGHT. *See the changing empire of light.*

## *THE BLAZING STAR*

LET ALL OF THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD, PAST AND PRESENT, FILL THE APPAREIL [DEVICE][BODY]. SEEK UNION IN ANALOGY. LOOK WITHIN; BECOME THE IMAGINATION OF THE CREATED. ALL IS SEEN AND SEEABLE. [SHAKE THE RATTLE AND SING]. *The permanent revelation, one and universal, is written in visible nature.*



## OBSCURE CHAMBERS

### *FIVE FLORENCIAN BOÎTES BEARING ON THE FLUVIAL ORIGINS OF THE TECHNICAL IMAGE*

*Readers of the PROCEEDINGS OF ESTAR(SER) will already be aware of the considerable efforts made by various scholars, collectors, bibliophiles, and editors to sift the historicity of that peculiar body known as THE ORDER OF THE THIRD BIRD. Despite these labors, a great deal of uncertainty (and even some genuine confusion) persists concerning the nature and workings of this fugitive and fliating community—which would seem, at least in its modern incarnation, to function as a semi-clandestine association of histrionic aesthetes who convene to perform public and private rites of sustained attention to made things (often works of art). New documents bearing on the genesis, ideology, evolution, and practices of THE ORDER are continually coming to light, and we are pleased here to offer a brief, preliminary discussion of an unusual group of objects in the “W Cache” that bear on the Amazonian origins of the technical image and ritualized forms of attention to the obscure chamber of the apparatus.*

## TEXT AND CONTEXT

Lyric philosopher Vilém Flusser (1920–1991), the “rootless” exile who lived much of his life in Brazil, has been celebrated for his prescient vision of contemporary experience as dominated by the hallucinatory effect of “technical images” (pictures produced by “apparatuses” such as the camera, the computer, and now the smart phone). Created in the obscured chamber of the “black box,” these images can enspell if not properly decoded. Clues, in the form of a group of extraordinary objects recently uncovered in the “W Cache,” suggest the possibility of recovering from the historical archive lost methods of metempsychotic engagement with the apparatus and somatic attunement with its programmatic codes. These five beguiling *boîtes*, all bearing tubular protuberances reminiscent of early lens structures, open to reveal inscriptions suggesting their use in rites of attention as totemic models of the original *chambre obscure*, or *appareil*, designed by Hercule Florence (1804–1879), the French-born draughtsman and isolate independent inventor of photography in Brazil, c. 1829–33. Florence, a likely associate of the Order, led a picaresque life, having joined the ill-fated *Expedição Langsdorff* into Brazil’s fluvial interior, surviving a journey where others were lost to drowning, fever, and madness among the feathered cannibals and swarming insects of the Amazonian headwaters. The infinitely varied cacophony of nature inspired Florence to devise a method of transcribing bird songs (*zoophonie*) and later to invent *photographie* in the hopes of more easily reproducing his transcriptions and documentary images. Although the *boîtes* found in the “W Cache” appear to have been created and used by a mid-twentieth-century *volée*, they document ritual practices which, the Editors speculate, find their origins in Florence’s circle of bohemians, aristocrats, and Freemasons living in the vicinity of São Paulo in the 1830s. The five variant protocols reveal a syncretic mix of Masonic ritual, indigenous Amazonian shamanic practice, and technical experimentation appropriate to the dawning age of the synthetic image in Brazil. Models of Florence’s original photographic apparatus, these *boîtes* also look forward in time towards the era of techno-imagination predicted by Vilém Flusser. Can these rites of psychic union with the apparatus offer new possibilities for a contemporary relationship with today’s handheld, telematically connected image devices? In the hopes of inspiring continued research, the Editors offer a diagram from which a miniaturized model can be constructed to facilitate direct experimentation.

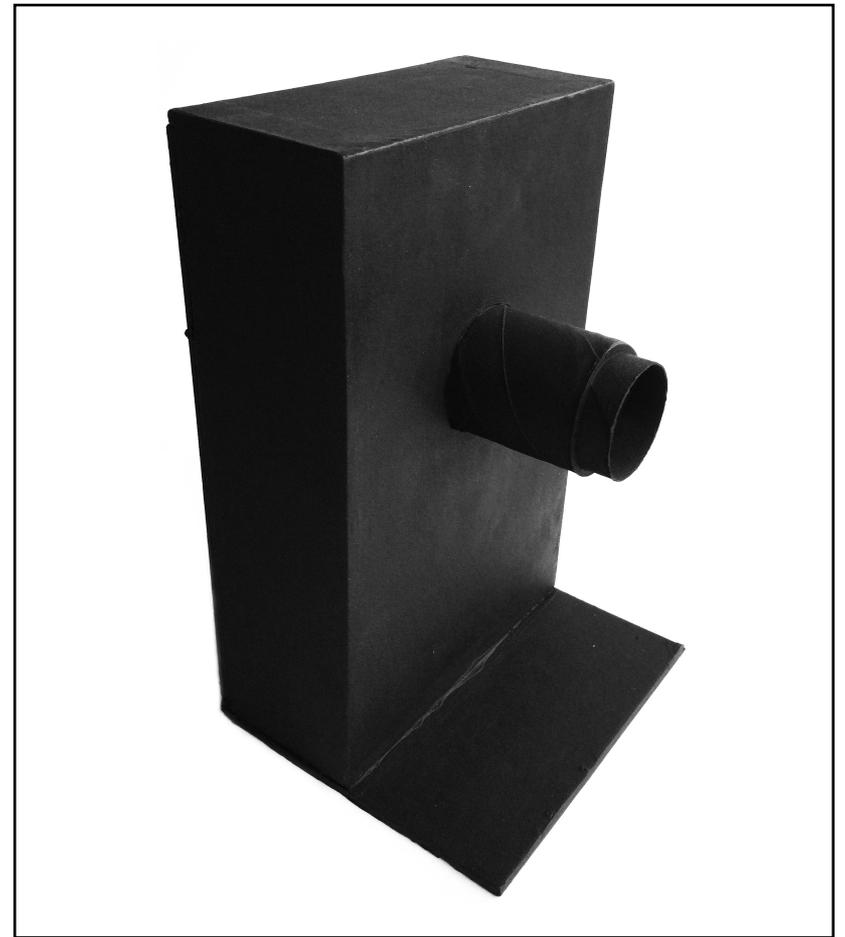


FIGURE: One of five *appareil* models in the “W Cache,” apparently made and used by a *volée* operating in the United States at midcentury and possibly preserving practices inherited from a Brazilian filiation surrounding Hercule Florence in the 1830s. The models range in dimension from 9" x 6.5" x 5" to 6" x 6" x 5" and appear to have been made over a span from 1942–1975, each having been fashioned from a commercial cardboard cigar box sourced in North America, four of the boxes being painted a flat black, and the fifth remaining uncoated. These *boîtes* fortunately bear inscriptions on the interior “lid” or rear opening, suggesting their use in an unusual rite. The text of this permutating protocol, with variant wordings shown in brackets, is reproduced overleaf.