

Mementoes: Raul Seixas' fans and their collections

Do fundo do baú: as coleções dos fãs de Raul Seixas.

Del fondo Del baúl: las colecciones de los fans de Raul Seixas.

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Abstract *Raul Seixas' fans are collectors of several objects. In order to unveil the relationship of the collectors with the idol, with others, and with themselves, I reviewed the letters sent to Raul Rock Club and analyzed his collection. The articulations among the various forms of relating with objects of the singer, or that refer to him, show that the collectible objects, more than vehicles of social reproduction, can function as poetic devices.*

Keywords: *collection; consumption; fans; Raul Seixas*

Resumo *Os fãs de Raul Seixas são colecionadores de diversos objetos. Para desvendar as relações dos colecionadores com o ídolo, com outros e com eles mesmos, recorri às cartas enviadas ao Raul Rock Club e à análise de seu acervo. As articulações entre as várias formas de relacionar-se com objetos do cantor, ou a ele referentes, mostram que os objetos colecionáveis, mais que veículos de reprodução social, podem funcionar como dispositivos de uma poética.*

Palavras-chave: *coleção; consumo; fãs; Raul Seixas*

Resumen *Los fans de Raul Seixas son coleccionadores de varios objetos. Para desvelar las relaciones de los coleccionadores con el ídolo, con otros y con ellos mismos, recogí a las cartas enviadas a Raul Rock Club y el análisis de su acervo. Las articulaciones entre varias maneras de relacionarse con objetos del cantor,*

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o a él referentes, muestran que los objetos coleccionables, más que vehículos de reproducción social, pueden funcionar como dispositivos de una poética.

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Submission date: 28/07/2014

Acceptance date: 15/12/2014

Consumption and Collection

Several authors consider consumption as an object of essential study to be able to decipher contemporary societies given the centrality that this activity takes on in everyday life. One aspect still discussed by consumption sociology, without having reached a consensus among authors, is about the motivation to consume. There are currents that highlight the individual will while others address the rational choice of objects of consumption, social influences, the social construction of taste, marked or not by differences between classes, among other possibilities.

In line developed by Bourdieu (2007), consumption functions as distinction, and the taste is built socially. For Bauman (2008), the society of consumers eliminates the division between things to be chosen and subjects of choice because consumers are dissolved in the sea of goods and consume to get out of invisibility, such as the desire to be famous, no more than a desire to be consumed and thus escape anonymity. According to the author, subjectivity itself becomes merchandise in the society of consumers, thus becoming a semblance of *self*.

For Douglas and Isherwood (2009, p.108), “the essential function of consumption is its capacity to make sense,” so the authors propose to treat goods as a “non-verbal medium for the human creative faculty”.

In Lipovetsky's view, contemporary societies experience hyper-consumerism, which is understood as absorbing ever larger segments of social life, working less according to the model of symbolic confrontation between social classes, because for the author, hyper-consumerism is based on individual purposes and criteria, and no longer guided by a search for distinction. Its logic is emotional and hedonistic, which makes each person consume “primarily for pleasure rather than to rival others” (Lipovetsky, 2004.p. 25-26).

The urgency of studying consumption and the many perspectives of access to the phenomenon brings the need to clarify two theoretical avoidances that guide my perspective about the objects of this article. The first avoidance I make is to reduce contemporary society to one of its characteristics. So I choose to say nothing of a consumer society, of

hyper-consumerism, or of consumers, because I think that contemporary society transcends this aspect, though recognizing its importance. I also avoid passing judgment on consumption practices that coexist in today's world and refuse to criticize consumers and shoppers. I am interested to see what it is, as Maffesoli (1999) suggests, rather than discuss the logic behind if it should be this way.

In this paper I attempt to reflect on how the individuals themselves decide on the collection and choose which objects should be collectibles, in addition to observing the construction of native criteria used in the selection process of what will or will not be collected. So my objective, then, is to understand the choice, classification, ritualistic dimension, the destination of hiding and putting on display collectible objects and thus reflect on the fan's social constitution itself. As an empirical profile, I focus the discussion on the fans of Raul Seixas celebrating the 25th anniversary of his death in 2014, whose example may or may not be extended to other fans.

In an earlier research of an ethnographic content on the Raul Seixas public between 2001 and 2005, I used a variety of sources, surrounding myself with people and objects. I made interviews with fan club presidents, promoters of the songs of Raul Seixas, lookalikes, and impersonators; I was a participant in events honoring the singer; participated actively in a virtual community (the *Komuna Raulseixística*), and collected thousands of letters that were sent to the *Raul Rock Club - Raul Seixas Official Fan Club*, the RRC, the largest and oldest singer's fan club founded in 1981 in São Paulo with the help of its president. Of the letters received, I selected 300 of them at random in order to understand the meaning of the singer to the fan through the fragment observed. However, a dimension considered secondary stood out in a recent rereading I did of the letters: the collector. Comparing the data of the letters to the transcript of the interviews and the discussions of the virtual community that I saved in large files, it was possible to see the recurrence of data that functioned as genuine clues to unravel the relationship of the fans with the objects that they collect. So, I clarify

that even while using previously analyzed material for other purposes, the reflection which I now present is unprecedented.

Undoubtedly, one side of fans is that of a collector. They are committed to possessing objects that belonged to, were produced by, or simply touched by the idol, bringing together everything that relates the object to their admiration. (Teixeira, 2008.p.121)

The most common theme in the letters, which were read and indexed, is the request of association, followed by request for information about acquiring a certain CD, record, or books. A curious comment kept arising:

Sometimes these questions are accompanied by a description of what they already own, as if the fact that they are collectors makes them more worthy to be official fans, to be part of a group considered by they themselves as more elite than the anonymity that characterizes the condition of just a normal fan (ABONIZIO, 2011.p.200).

Among the items collected described by the fans whose letters I had access, I highlight Raul Seixas things such as his records, CDs, DVDs, photos, and books by the singer himself or that contain his writings, things about Raul Seixas such as newspaper and magazine articles and books promoting his songs, things that remind you of Raul Seixas such as miniatures, apparel, and accessories, refrigerator magnets, postcards, and other objects with his face or sayings printed on them. This latter item includes the consumption of tattoos with drawings and phrases related to the singer. Finally, there is also another collectible item: the objects of Raul Seixas himself as an individual: his clothes, documents, manuscripts, autographs etc.

Understanding the social life of these things becomes a challenge.

From merchandise to collection objects

For Appadurai (2008), merchandise can be defined as an object of economic value. The author argues, using Simmel's approach, that the

value is not intrinsic to the objects, but comes from the judgment of the subjects on them. Appadurai, however, proposes an advance in relation to Simmel's theory saying that things are not separate from people's capacity to act and from words to communicate. Therefore, we cannot just say that things have no meaning other than those assigned them, because to know this does not help in the understanding of things in the real world. To do so:

[...] we need to follow things themselves because their meanings are inscribed in their forms, their uses, their trajectories. Only by analyzing these trajectories can we interpret the transactions and human calculations that give life to things (APPADURAI, 2008, p.17).

Appadurai (2008, p. 27) realizes that merchandise corresponds to a state and thus intends to address them as things in a certain situation at different points of their social lives considering the look to existence of a "market potential" of all things. For the author, the market situation would be one in which its "exchangeability (past, present, or future) for something else becomes its relevant social trait" (Appadurai, 2008 p.27).

The marketability of things is subject to contexts, the complex intersections of temporal and cultural factors. Therefore, goods, according to Appadurai (op. cit.) updating the distinction of Jacques Maquet, corresponds to a phase of life of the thing, which can be merchandise by appointment, transformation, deviation, and may even stop from being so.

The deviations of the objects from the merchandise routes can be of various types such as theft, looting, tourist art, inheritance, and collections. For Appadurai (2008, p.45), "[...] the best examples of merchandise deviations from their original connections are to be found in the field of fashion, home displays, and collections in Modern Western".

The collections, according to Krzysztof Pomian (1984), can be understood as heaps of things without use value taken from everyday life. These things can be displayed or safeguarded in special places. The author classifies as belonging to the category collection the objects kept temporarily or permanently excluded from the circuit of economic

activities and put in a protected place prepared for this purpose and put on exhibit for the public eye. However, in the case of that I am dealing with, not all objects collected are put on display by the collectors.

Interestingly, the collection objects, though excluded from the state of merchandise, have value and are subjected to special care. Such objects have exchange value, even if this is rarely done, without having use value. For Pomian (1984), the absence of utility is an essential characteristic of the objects for collections. In his approach, the notion of utility cannot be extended to the point of being assigned to objects whose sole function is to be seen. The care dedicated to the objects attest to their value, and the value, according to Pomian (op. cit.) is increased by the public eye, as in the case of the museum. Although the author distinguishes museum collections from private collections, there are similarities among them to make it possible to classify them both as collections. The function of the collections is to give to the useless objects that are part of them to play the role of mediators between the spectators and the invisible world.

Each type of object that makes up the collection of Raul Seixas fans have a different treatment, which may or may not be displayed depending on the occasions, having more or less value, and demanding greater or lesser care. The most recurring item in the letters, and that requires more care and financial investment to obtain, are his records.

The songs of Raul Seixas were made available on records during the years of his career (marked by the launch of his first record, *Raulzito e os Panteras* in 1967 to the release of his last record, *A Panela do Diabo* in 1989) with the intention of being sold, and the idol himself is considered a product to be sold and consumed in the mass media. However, even after more than two decades since his death in 1989, his entire discography and posthumous albums are available in a CD format, and despite the obsolescence of record players, his records are still sold in the informal market, a market just for collectors.

The records were means of access to the musical work of Raul Seixas and its usefulness was in allowing such access. However, with the passing

of this technology, the record loses its function to reproduce the songs and becomes a collection item of fans. The criteria of the collectors to acquire the records show this transformation. If any record would have the option of granting access to the songs, the characteristics for determining its value will be others, namely the press date, the seal, the original inserts, and the autograph.

Once acquired, the records are no longer merchandise, but become collection items. However, they can return to be merchandise, according to the data in the letters, when the collector is no longer a fan of the singer or due to financial constraints. In the first case, the record becomes meaningless; in the second, the object will go to another collector. The collection can also be stolen, as told in one letter. A fan became the victim of theft, who, despite his outrage, still did admire the thief's refinement: "*At least the thief has good taste*". In this episode, the collection could remain as such, or have its items returned to the condition of merchandise, which I imagine to be more likely.

Prices vary depending on the press date, ranging from R\$ 40.00 to R\$ 1,500.00 in the survey conducted. The color of the seals varies depending on the record's press date and this becomes an auxiliary criterion in establishing the value. This characteristic, among others, demonstrate the expertise that is needed for negotiating and acquiring on the part of the collectors who need to take action with criteria that are virtually indiscernible for other subjects. A collector often becomes a seller for other collectors when beginning to "sift" through collectible articles.

Records may or may not be displayed, which can be done on a continual basis, such as on a shelf, for example, or occasionally when they are shown to someone or to a group. Rarely are they touched, though, in order to avoid being damaged. To listen to the singer's songs, the fans use CDs, MP3 recordings, cell phones, and other sound systems and, according to the analysis of the letters, rarely resort to piracy when it comes to the songs of Raul Seixas, which is more easily admitted when referring the other singers or bands.

T-shirts, despite the possibility of considering them useful, which removes them from the collection criterion proposed by Pomian (1984), are included in the collection of fans, and their usefulness to protect the body is minimal in relation to the purpose of display that they exercise. Thus, even if it is put on and used, the shirt is an item from the collection and used by its owner on occasions specifically for this. Near the singer's death anniversary, August 21, one of the fans calls the others to attend the annual parade that takes place in São Paulo dressed in their "uniform", an expression used to designate the shirt with prints referring to Raul Seixas.

What caught my attention in the letters is the fact that the senders list the items from their collection as if the quantity and the quality are proof as to their appreciation or understanding of the songs of Raul Seixas.

In addition to taking on the thoughts of Raul Seixas, who often is placed in the position of mentor by the fans who call him master, guru, guide, etc., the fans also seek to understand what they say about him. Books and newspaper and magazine clippings are other very common items in collections of fans in general, also seen in the particular case highlighted at this point.

Teixeira analyzes the dimension of the collector that characterizes the Raul Seixas fans and affirms:

Some seek indiscriminately everything that refers to the idol, others show a preference for images, articles, or unusual objects such as sand and grass from the cemetery where the artist is buried, for example. There are those whose dream is to find something rare, unique, one-of-a-kind that belonged to Raul.

At any rate, what they have accumulated seems to be distinguished from everything else—it is 'pure emotion'. To keep, worship, share, trade, and even sell: the admiration determines how to behave in relation to them, which can transform over time (Teixeira, 2008, p.127).

Along with books and reports, pictures are also considered memorabilia, especially if autographed, which are given more value than an ordinary photograph as the photos reproduced in newspapers and

magazines, which are considered as less authentic. Unique items and sometimes unusual ones, such as the grass and the dirt from the cemetery as described by Teixeira (2008), are looked for in the collections. Raul Seixas himself was the victim of theft from his fans who wanted to have something from him, anything, as if the characteristic admired of the idol remained in the object touched (AUTHOR, 2012).

Teixeira (2008) realizes that the act of collecting goes well beyond an accumulation impulse. Collectors become, according to the author, archaeologists of their own passion, and build from the objects accumulated and translated knowledge about the idol's personality, which is highly valued among fans, generating a veiled kind of competition for possessing objects and knowledge. In the analysis of the author, the act of collecting is viewed as acts of love and also of suffering. On the one hand, we see the idea of joining the fragments that make up the object of affection, but given its infinity, it is both a tireless and endless pursuit that ultimately brings together love and suffering. The incompleteness of the collection is both the motivation and the anguish and, according to Teixeira (2008), there is always a search for some uncatalogued object, some interview that went unnoticed. I interpret this as a search for an object that is unknown, but that brings authenticity to the collection and the collector for owning what is unique among collectors.

To find this unique object and become its owner also means owning a singularity related to escaping from, or at least reducing the effects of, the massive condition of being a fan, interpreted by Coelho (1999) as an obstinate admire, opposite the idol, who is singular and unique.

The most desired objects are the singer's own objects, that possess *mana*, an energy, a magical efficacy, in the notion used by Mass (1974) that was given to objects by contact with the idol. These objects are rarer and not available to the average fan. It is important to mention that the death of Raul Seixas limited the possibility of access to his belongings, which heightens the status of their owners. Most of his things today are kept by his family or by fan clubs, among which the *Raul Rock Club* stands out for its collection size.

From a Collection to the Museum

In 1981, Sylvio Passos founded the first Raul Seixas fan club and managed to have contact with the protagonist who, in addition to their friendship, donated several objects that today make up the largest collection on the performer.

Sylvio Passos intends to transform his collection into a museum and has opened his possessions to the public through itinerant exhibitions—the *Raul Expo*—anticipating the public dimension of his collection, initially a private one.

His collection include Raul Seixas' first guitar, his personal documents and of his ancestors, his clothes at various ages, manuscripts, shoes, accessories, among other items that fascinate fans. Sylvio Passos calls himself the “guardian of Raul’s mementoes” and says that the things he has belong in fact to the Brazilian people, and he is simply the mediator and protector of the material (AUTHOR, 2012).



Figure 1. First guitar Raul Seixas

Source: collection of data of the RRC

The status that Sylvio Passos has in the group of Raul Seixas fans is unattainable by other fans since his collection is only accessible to the eyes, never for possession, along with the fact that he was the idol’s

friend, gives him symbolic power in relation to most of the fans who do not have, and will not have, the ability to do so.

Common fans, once they become a member, add to their private collection an element of desire expressed in the letters—the membership card. It is only a few inches of paper with the name, registration number, a stamp, and signed by the president, but this paper, without any practical utility, brings distinction between fans who, coming from a context of anonymity, desire singularity. Once a member, the fan receives the membership card and what is called the *Raulseixista Kit*, composed of a Raul Seixas signed photograph mechanically reproduced, a copy of the singer's death certificate, and a list containing his complete discography, filmography, and bibliography. In addition, the fan receives a list of materials produced by RRC and made available for sale to the members: several CDs of radio programs made by the singer, DVD shows, and televised programs edited by the fan club, composing a vast set of material on Raul Seixas that is not available in the common market.

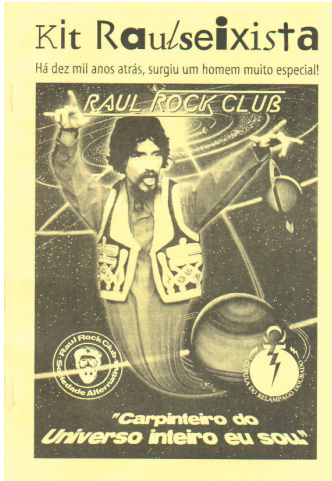


Figure 2. Raulseixista Kit: Notebook distributed to members of the RRC

Source: Author's Photo

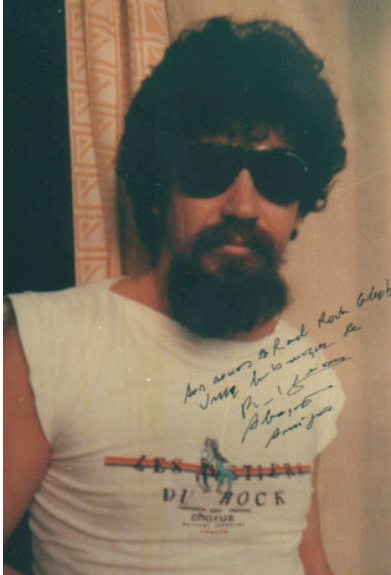


Figure 3. Autographed photo: desire item

Source: Autographed photo by Raul Seixas mechanically reproduced and sent to members of the RRC. Received by the author during his association



Figure 4. Stars coat used by Raul Seixas shows and clips – collection of data of the RRC

Source: Author's Photo

From a theoretical point of view, we could think that the museum differs from the private collections, consisting in a specific form of relationship between the visible and the invisible. The museum is a public space laid out to communicate to the public and, while the collections are made by individuals, museums are built by companies that in some way feel portrayed by means of a culture communicated through objects.

According to Miller (2007, p. 47), “studies on material culture work through the specificity of material objects to ultimately create a deeper understanding of the specificity of a humanity inseparable from its materiality.” With this perspective, we can say that an everyday object, a pop culture icon, a popular singer, among other creations help to understand the society that produced these objects and was produced from it in a dialectical relationship between things and people.

Collector of oneself

One letter that caught my attention was one of a boy who told that he took a while to write to the fan club, delaying his desired membership, because he thought it was necessary to have all of Raul Seixas’ records to do so. With this statement we can see how being a fan is linked to being a collector: it is by the accumulation of things that the social role of the fan is built and claims the legitimacy of this role.

However, fans not only reproduce themselves while being a fan through the material purchased. The ritual of repeating the search for new objects and the admiration of the objects acquired reinforces the feeling of belonging to that community, but also allows the reinvention of oneself. It is the fan who acquires objects and produces the collection, but the objects collected also have an effect on the collector—even though they are still, they are not passive. You could say, then, that it is the collection that makes the collector.

When thinking of consumption, Miller (2007) suggests that we disassociate the destructive image to which it is associated in the imagination and in some productivist paradigm. Continuing on in this perspective,

we could think of consumption as capable of providing poetics, and can be a mediator between a *poiesi* and the fan himself.

Collecting acts as a practice of identity construction because, as Baudrillard says (2002), the collector is the final term of the collection itself and we always collect for ourselves.

From the analysis of Pomian (1983), who claims that it is the collection consisting of objects that participate in the exchange that unites the visible with the invisible, Teixeira asks what it is that the group of Raul Seixas fans chooses to be worthy of collecting and why. In his interpretation, the desire to bring together what the artist produced, what he said, and what was said about him “seems to accomplish the task of filling in the gap between death and life, transforming the absence into presence, connecting the visible world with the invisible” (Teixeira, 2008, p.123-124). The author also speaks of a refusal by some of the subjects of her research to take upon themselves the title of collectors, even though they are in the strict sense.

The refusal to consider the things from Raul Seixas a collection comes from not wanting the objects themselves as with similar items with a numerical value, but they want to have the singer and his very *self* through objects. Perhaps this explains the adoption of beards, the adoption of the singer's last name, and the consumption of tattoos in his honor. This is not only to show what one is, but to produce oneself through the accumulation, through display, and also by secrets.

In this age of hyper-consumerism phase III of modern merchandising, the subjective and emotional aspects prevail, according to Lipovesty (2007, p. 42-43), for whom “the era of ostentation of the objects was supplanted by the kingdom of hyper-merchandising”, and “consumption for one self supplanted the consumption for the other.” One can see the consumption for one self of the things pertaining to Raul Seixas that act on the collector's own *self*, however, different than the author's analysis, the data does not point to the purpose of the display. The objects remain valid as distinction, but not between the borders commonly established between social classes. Instead, these objects act in the complexity of a

multifaceted society that contains numerous tribes in dialog that can make from the aesthetic an ethical cement, as proposed by Maffesoli (2009).

The records hidden in the wardrobe, the pictures on the wall, the T-shirt on the chest, the death certificate in a frame, the keys hanging from the neck, the ink marked on the skin, sunglasses on the face, and the things of Raul Seixas transformed into museum objects constitute a collection, to which we add the collectors themselves as also one of the parts. But if we can see the collection agent himself as an object, we can also think of the objects as acting subjects.

According to Leitão and Machado (2010), seeing the agent dimension of the things, as proposed by Latour and cited by the authors, it is possible to notice the social relations as not necessarily being prior to the objects associated with them, but at the same time, constitutive and built by such objects. According to the authors, it is important to recognize that the objects have the ability to act on the social world and on the subjects and not only to represent them.

Thus, we can view fans as being built through their relationship with the objects that they choose to collect and we can also realize that such objects act on the individual giving them a role and a meaning. In times of disposable idols, the preservation of useless objects in a non-merchandising state seems to be good to consider.

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