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## PORTFOLIO: YĂMYĪ

Sueli Maxakali

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## PORTFOLIO

## YĂMĨY

SUELI MAXAKALI

*Visual Artist*

Among the *Tikmũ'ũn*, community life is organized around their relationship with a myriad of spirit-people from the Atlantic Forest, the *Yămĩyxop*, and their respective sets of chants. Many of these chants are sung collectively, as the most fundamental way of relating to the *Yămĩyxop* spirits, who are invited to visit the villages to sing, dance, and eat during the rituals.

In this series of photographs entitled “Yămĩy”, Sueli Maxakali presents an afternoon of celebration in her village, during the passage of these spirits. During these occasions, women approach the *yămĩy* spirits to play, dance, sing and feed them. This interaction is guided by a delicate etiquette of the look. Magnificent and masked, the *Yămĩyxop* are also fierce and dangerous. One must never look them in the eye. In this photographic series, the artist captures this etiquette of the look of *tikmũ'un* women through images that play with the relationship between the visible and the invisible. The series challenges the viewer's gaze as a mode of “quasi-seeing”, that allows to see just a little or not at all. Here, the author deliberately escapes fixed framings, the sharpness of the images and often confuses bodies and landscape, provoking the Western gaze in its eagerness to see and understand everything. As one of these *yămĩy*, the *xũnĩm* spirit-bat sings: “My image in the eye/my image in the eye listening/nieces/look just listening.”

Sueli Maxakali holds a PhD in Literary Studies (Recognized Erudition) from UFMG. She is a photographer, filmmaker, writer, scholar, and leader of the *Tikmũ'ũn* (Maxakali), an indigenous people from the region between what are now the Brazilian states of Minas Gerais, Bahia, and Espírito Santo. Her works have been exhibited in Brazil and abroad, including ICA London, Luma Arles, Jeu de Paume, State of Fashion Biennale and Bienal de Arte de São Paulo. Sueli Maxakali currently lives and works in Aldeia-Escola-Floresta (Minas Gerais, Brazil), where she develops an educational art project focused on environmental conservation.















