UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
RIVERSIDE

Dialectics of *Malandragem*: The Art of Resistance in Modern Brazil

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Art History

by

Camilla Querin

June 2023

Dissertation Committee:
Dr. Aleca Le Blanc, Chairperson
Dr. Yong Cho
Dr. Roberto Conduru
Dr. Susan Laxton
Dr. Judith Rodenbeck

Copyright by
Camilla Querin
2023

The Dissertation of Camilla Querin name is approved:

Committee Chairperson

University of California, Riverside

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am profoundly grateful for the generous and dedicated mentorship I received from my dissertation committee members. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my advisor, Aleca Le Blanc, whose unwavering commitment to scholarship and teaching, combined with her profound empathy, has been a constant source of inspiration for me. Her insightful feedback and exceptional editorial skills have pushed me to refine my thinking and writing Her guidance has been invaluable, extending beyond academic publishing and teaching to encompass areas such as navigating job offers, curating museum exhibitions, and even tackling bureaucratic visa processes.

I am indebted to Roberto Conduru for sharing his expertise in Afro-Brazilian art and culture, as well as his guidance and feedback, which were crucial to this project. Susan Laxton's thought-provoking questions and pointed comments have encouraged me to take bolder stances in my arguments. Judith Rodenbeck's exhortations to delve deeper into theory and her encouraging feedback have nurtured the development of this project. Yong Cho has been an excellent interlocutor, reminding me to maintain a clear perspective on the bigger picture. I am truly grateful for the mentorship and support I have received from each member of my dissertation committee, as well as the faculty from the Department of the History of Art at UCR.

I am indebted to numerous artists and curators who generously dedicated their time to meet with me to discuss their work and that of their contemporaries: Paulo Bruscky, Heitor dos Prazeres Filho, Daniel Lima, Antonio Manuel, Cildo Meireles, Paulo Miyada, Frederico Morais, Ana Pato, and Andreas Valentin; and to the archivists, researchers, and

librarians Ariane Figueiredo at Projeto Hélio Oiticica; Sebastian Bardin-Greenberg at the Estate of Desdemone Bardin; Ana Paula Marques at the Fundação Bienal de São Paulo, and Clicea Maria Miranda from IPEAFRO.

Furthermore, this dissertation has greatly benefited from the vibrant discussions I have had with colleagues and scholars, at conferences, workshops, and informal gatherings throughout the years. I am grateful to Dan Aldridge, T.J. Anderson III, Ana Cândida Avelar, Brenda Flanagan, Tatiana Flores, Zanna Gilbert, Randi Gill-Sadler, Fernanda Lopes, André Mesquita, Cristóbal Jácome Moreno, Christina A. Salowey, Lilia Moritz Schwarcz, and Gabriela Rangel for their valuable insights. I would like to extend a special thank you to Raphael Fonseca for his enthusiasm for the project and his generous assistance in connecting me with some of the artists.

An excerpt from chapter 1 of this dissertation titled "We Write Samba on the Wild Asphalt. *Malandragem* as Resistance in the Work of Heitor dos Prazeres and Hélio Oiticica" was published in the journal *MODOS: Revista de História da Arte* (2022). I would like to express my gratitude to the editors of the dossier, Roberto Conduru and Arthur Valle, for their insightful feedback.

My graduate studies at UCR, research travel opportunities, and the successful completion of this dissertation were made possible through the generous support of several grants and fellowships. These include: the University of California's President's Dissertation-Year Fellowship, the HEERF Dissertation Year Fellowship, and the California Museum of Photography Curatorial Fellowship. Field research trips to Brazil were sponsored by the Barbara B. Brink Travel Award, the Humanities Graduate Student

Research Grant and the Jean Rowe Warnke Award from the Center for Ideas and Society (UCR), and the Richard G. Carrott Memorial Fund Award.

I am grateful to the following individuals for their engagement and contributions during conferences and symposia: Alexander Nemerov, panel discussant at the 1st Getty Graduate Symposium; Ana María Reyes and Ray Hernández-Durán, chairs of the Association for Latin American Art (ALAA) Open Session for Emerging Scholars of Latin American Art at CAA (2020); Florencia San Martín and Gillian Sneed, chairs of the panel "Dissident Embodiments: Undoing Gender Binaries in Modern and Contemporary Art of the Americas" at CAA (2022); Kleber Amancio, Bruno Pinheiro, and Matt Rarey at the conference "Unchaining/ Re-connecting: Rethinking Africa in the Arts of Brazil" organized by Roberto Conduru at Southern Methodist University (2022).

During the PhD program, I was fortunate to work with curators Idurre Alonso and Maristella Casciato at the Getty Research Institute. Working alongside them not only provided me with precious insights into the museum field but also forged a dear friendship. I extend my gratitude also to Elena Shtromberg for the opportunity to collaborate on the expansion of the Oxford Bibliography about Brazilian art and architecture, which broadened my knowledge of the field.

I am deeply appreciative of the support and guidance provided by the staff at the UCR Graduate Writing Center and the UCR Department of the History of Art. I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to Susan Komura, Leslie Paprocki, and Iselda Salgado for their unwavering assistance in navigating the program. Furthermore, I extend my

appreciation to the staff of UCR's California Museum of Photography, where I had the honor of serving as the inaugural Curatorial Fellow.

On a personal note, I owe my deepest gratitude to the inspiring friends from the PhD program, Cambra Sklarz, Dr. Carlotta Falzone Robinson (C1) and Dr. Cynthia Neri Lewis (C2), Molly Bond, and Lily Allen. The completion of this project would not have been possible without the encouragement and friendship of many dear friends. I thank Amit Ahuja, Chiara Angeloni, Oriana Angelucci, Riccardo Banfi, Matteo Bertelé, Ziyad Biao, Haben Brhane Gebrezgiabiher, Ottavia Crucitti Alloisio, Rosa DiMaggio, Iana Gomes de Lima, Adele Grompone, Margherita and Marta Manzon, Silvia Minoia, Veronica Peselmann, Pina Pesenti Campagnoni, Yunied Puig de Dios, Pietro Rigolo, Artur Schuh, and Yixue Shao.

Most importantly, an immense thank you to my parents and sister for their unconditional support and patience during this long journey, and to my in-laws for their enthusiasm and for shipping several kilos of catalogues out of Brazil without which I could not have completed the dissertation, especially with limited access to libraries during the pandemic. The last word, but the first thought, goes to Manoel Gehrke Ryff Moreira: thank you for sharing this journey, and so much more.

Dedication

In memory of *Professoressa* Maria Laura Di Fabio

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Dialectics of *Malandragem*: The Art of Resistance in Modern Brazil

by

Camilla Querin

Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in Art History
University of California, Riverside, June 2023
Dr. Aleca Le Blanc, Chairperson

In his essay *Dialética da malandragem* (Dialectics of Trickery) (1970), literary critic Antonio Candido analyzes the figure of the *malandro* (trickster) as a Brazilian literary figure, concluding that his malice is not intrinsic, but the result of the brutalities and injustices of life. I borrow the title of my dissertation from Candido's essay, and I contend that the *malandro*, a bohemian and charismatic trickster who cleverly bends rules and outsmarts social conventions and adversaries, served as a model of resistance for artists working during the Brazilian military-civil dictatorship (1964-1985).

Most studies about the *malandro* dismiss his Afro-Brazilian origin. In my framing, *malandragem* is fundamentally a legacy of colonialism and slavery, and intimately related to Exú, an extremely important deity in the Afro-Brazilian religious pantheon, the messenger that navigates between the world of the living and the *orixás* (gods). This divine trickster at once subverts and maintains order, opens and closes paths, and in so doing

transcends boundaries and brings dynamism to life. God of crossroads, master of ambiguity and liminality, he symbolizes a Black culture of resistance against oppression. I argue that similarly to Exu, who moves between seemingly incompatible spheres, so artists during the dictatorship drew from local cultural traditions and blended them with international trends, reconciling the popular with the avantgarde.

While the *malandro* has received scholarly attention in religious studies, music, literature, theater, cinema, popular culture and anthropology, this figure has not been explored with the deserved emphasis for what regards the visual arts. Examining the work by Heitor dos Prazeres, Hélio Oiticica, Abdias do Nascimento, Cildo Meireles, and Paulo Bruscky among others, this dissertation investigates the work by both Afro-Brazilian and Euro-Brazilian artists who incorporated marginal figures as subjects of their works, and more significantly, it illustrates how artists embraced marginal behaviors as a strategy to eschew censorship, challenge traditional art institutions, and expose the hypocrisy of the national motto "Order and Progress."

KEY WORDS: Art of Resistance, Protest Art, Brazilian Contemporary Art, Brazilian Modern Art, Afro-Brazilian Culture, Malandro, Malandragem, Trickster, Trickery, Military-Civil Dictatorship

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction 1

Chapter 1.....39

Chapter 2.....84

Chapter 3.....122

Conclusions 176

Bibliography.....197

Figures and Illustrations.....214

Appendix.....305

TABLE OF FIGURES AND ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 0.1 Cover page of artist magazine *Malasartes* no.1 (September, October, November), 1975.....214

Figure 0.2 Cover page designed by Maurício Arraes for a booklet produced by Teatro São Pedro, São Paulo, 1979, for the musical *Ópera do Malandro* by Chico Buarque de Holanda.....215

Figure 0.3 Cover page of booklet with lyrics and music score of the musical *Ópera do Malandro* by Chico Buarque de Holanda, sold at Teatro São Pedro, São Paulo, 1979.....216

Figure 0.4 Walter Firmo, *Madame Satã* (João Francisco dos Santos), Rio de Janeiro, 1976.....217

Figure 0.5 Unknown photographer, João Madame Satã (João Francisco dos Santos, 1900-1976), undated. Photograph published in Rogério Durst, *Madame Satã*, São Paulo-SP: Brasiliense, 1985, p.43. 218

Figure 1.1 Still from Andreas and Thomas Valentin's *All Language* movie, New York, NY, 1974.....219

Figure1.2 Unknown photographer, Deixa Falar, undated. From left to right: Paulo Benjamim de Oliveira (Paulo da Portela), Heitor dos Prazeres, Gilberto Alves, Alcebíades Barcelos (Bide) and Armando Marçal in the neighborhood Engenho de Dentro. Unknown photographer.....220

Figure 1.3 Heitor dos Prazeres, *Jogo no Barraco* (Game in the Shack), 1953, oil on canvas. Reproduction printed in *Correio da Manhã*, January 31, 1954, p.11.....221

Figure1.4 Heitor dos Prazeres, *Jogando Baralho* (Playing cards), 1965, oil on canvas, 55 x 46 cm.....222

Figure 1.5 Caravaggio (Michelangelo Merisi), *The Cardsharps*, c.1595, oil on canvas, 94.2 x 130.9 cm. Collection of the Kimbell Art Foundation.....223

Figure 1.6 Hélio Oiticica, *Apropriação—Mesa de bilhar, d'aprés "O Café Noturno" de Van Gogh* (Appropriation—Snooker Room, after Van Gogh's "Night Café"), 1966, billiard table, billiard table lights, wall rack and accessories. Installation view, Whitney Museum of Art, 2017. 224

Figure 1.7 Hélio Oiticica, *NC6 Núcleo médio 3* (NC6 Medium Nucleus 3), 1961–63. Photograph by Alexandra Baratta. Installation view, Galeria G-4 Rio de Janeiro, 1966…..225

Figure 1.8 Hélio Oiticica, Antônio Manuel, Lygia Pape, Nildo, Delegado and friends in a snooker bar in Mangueira, Rio de Janeiro. Photographer: Andreas Valentin, 1979…….226

Figure 1.9 Heitor dos Prazeres, *Jogadores de sinuca* (Snooker Players), 1963, oil on canvas, 50 x 60 cm.....227

Figure 1.10 Catalogue of the first São Paulo Biennial, 1951, second edition, p. 224-225…..228

Figure 1.11 Heitor dos Prazeres, *Moenda* (Mill), 1951, oil on canvas, 65 x 81 cm, Collection of the Museu de Arte Contemporânea, Universidade de São Paulo (MAC USP)…….229

Figure 1.12 Johann Moritz Rugendas, *Moulin à Sucre* (The Sugar Mill), c.1821–1825, Hand-colored lithograph. From *Voyage pittoresque dans le Brésil* (Paris, 1827)……...230

Figure 1.13 Jean Baptiste Debret, *Petit moulin à sucre, portatif* (Small, Portable Sugar Mill),1816-31, hand-painted lithograph. From *Voyage pittoresque et historique au Brésil ou Séjour d'un artiste français au Brésil depuis 1816 jusqu'en 1831 inclusivement*. Paris: Firmin Didot, 1834-39. 231

Figure 1.14 Miro da Mangueira with Oiticica's *Parangolé P4 Capa 1* (Parangolé P4 Cape 1), 1964 at the opening of the show *Opinião 65*, Museu de Arte Moderna, Rio de Janeiro, 1965. Photograph: César Oiticica Filho.....232

Figure 1.15 Hélio Oiticica, *P02 Parangolé-Bandeira 01* (P02 Parangolé-Flag 01), 1964. Photograph by Desdemone Bardin taken at the opening of the exhibition *Opinião 65*, Museu de Arte Moderna, Rio de Janeiro.....233

Figure1.16 Heitor dos Prazeres, *Porta-bandeira e Mestre-sala*, 1960, oil on canvas, 41 x 33cm, Collection of Otto Grunewalt Ferveira.....234

Figure 1.17 Pai Joãozinho da Goméia nd being prepared by a *filha de santo* as he is entering the trance. Unknown photographer and date.....235

Figure 1.18 Pai Joãozinho da Goméia during embodiment with a pano da costa tied across the body. Unknown photographer and date.....236

Figure 1.19 Hélio Oiticica, *P01 Parangolé-Estandarte 01* (P01 Parangolé-Banner 01), 1964. Unknown photographer.....237

Figure1.20 Statues of Exu duas cabeças (Exu Double-Face) and Xoroque.....238

Figure 1.21 Hélio Oiticica, *P15 Parangolé Capa 11 'Incorporo a Revolta'* (P15 Parangolé-Cape 11 'I embody revolt'), ca. 1967, worn by Nildo of Mangueira. Photo: Claudio Oiticica, 1960s.....239

Figure 1.22 Hélio Oiticica, *P17 Parangolé Capa 13*, 'Estou Possuido' (P17 Parangolé-Cape 13 'I Am Possessed'), 1967, worn by Nildo of Mangueira. Photo: Eduardo Viveiros de Castro.....240

Figure 1.23 Heitor dos Prazeres wearing a baiana costume he designed himself, with a pano da costa on the shoulder. Unknown photographer.....241

Figure 1.24 Heitor dos Prazeres, *A dança* (The Dance), 1965, oil on canvas, 54 x 64 cm….242

Figure 1.25 Hélio Oiticica, "The Eden Plan," published in the catalogue for Whitechapel Experience, April 1969.....243

Figure 1.26 Blueprint of the house of Tia Ciata. Archive of Francisco Duarte. Published in Roberto M. Moura, *Tia Ciata e a Pequena África no Rio de Janeiro*. Rio de Janeiro: Secretaria Municipal de Cultura, Departamento Geral de Documentação e Informação Cultural, Divisão de Editoração, 1995.....244

Figure 1.27 Heitor dos Prazeres, *Os músicos* (The Musicians), undated, oil on canvas 38 x 46 cm.....245

Figure 1.28 Mosquito da Mangueira dancing while wearing Hélio Oiticia's *P10 Parangolé capa 06 Homagem a Mosquito* (P01 Parangolé-Cape 06 'Homage to Mosquito', 1965), next to *B17 Bólide vidro 05 Homagem a Mondrian* (B17 Bólide-Glass 05 'Homage to Mondrian', 1965), Rio de Janeiro, 1966. Photographer: Claudio Oiticica.....246

Figure 2.1 Abdias Nascimento, *Exu Trifacético* (Trifaced Eshu), 1968, acrylic on canvas, 54 x 72 cm, Collection IPEAFRO.....247

Figure 2.2 Abdias Nascimento in a scene from *Sortilégio: mistério negro* (Sortilege: Black Mystery), 1957. Photograph by José Medeiros. Collection of IPEAFRO……248

Figure 2.3 Abdias Nascimento, *Exú Black Power– Homenagem a Rubens Gerchman* (Exú Black Power – Tribute to Rubens Gerchman), 1969, acrylic on canvas, 76 x 60 cm, Collection IPEAFRO.....249

Figure 2.4 Abdias Nascimento, *Liberdade para Huey: Omolu azul n.3* (Freedom for Huey: Blue Omolu, no.3), 1969, acrylic on canvas and collage, 75 x 60 cm, IPEAFRO.....250

Figure 2.5 Abdias Nascimento, *Quilombismo (Exu e Ogum)* (Quilombismo, Eshu and Ogun), 1980, oil on canvas, 71 x 56 cm, Collection IPEAFRO.....251

Figure 2.6 Ponto riscado. Photograph published in the newspaper *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, June 15, 1927.....252

Figure 2.7 Metal Ponto riscado of Exú. Unknown photographer and date.....253

Figure 2.8 Iron tools of Ogum, god of metallurgical technology and war. Collection of the Museu Afro Brasilerio, Universidade Federal da Bahia, UFBA.....254

Figure 2.9 Abdias Nascimento giving a speech at the Third Congress of Black Culture in the Americas, São Paulo, Brazil, August 1982. Unknown photographer. Collection IPEAFRO.....255

Figure 2.10 Hélio Oiticica, *B33 Bólide caixa 18 caixa-poema 2, "Homenagem à Cara de Cavalo"* (B33 Box Bólide 18, Box-Poem 2, "Homage to Cara de Cavalo"), 1966. Collection Gilberto Chateaubriand, MASP.....256

Figure 2.11 Hélio Oiticica with *B33 Bólide caixa 18 caixa-poema 2, "Homenagem à Cara de Cavalo."* Unknown photographer and date.....257

Figure 2.12 "Cara de Cavalo. Vingada a morte de Le Cocq" (Avenged the Death of Le Cocq), *O Dia*, October 5, 1964.....258

Figure 2.13 Hélio Oiticica, *Bólide caixa 18 caixa-poema 2, "Homenagem à Cara de Cavalo"* (B33 Box Bólide 18, Box-Poem 2, "Homage to Cara de Cavalo"), 1966.....259

Figure 2.14 Hélio Oiticica, *Bólide, B44 Bólide-caixa 21 caixa-poema 3: porque a impossibilidade?* (B44 Box Bólide 21, Box-Poem 3: Why the Impossibility?), 1966-1967. Collection Paula e Alexandre Marinho de Carvalho.....260

Figure 2.15 Hélio Oiticica, *Seja Marginal, Seja Herói* (Be an Outlaw, Be a Hero), 1968, Screen-print on fabric.....261

Figure 2.16 Cildo Meireles, "Inserções em circuitos ideológicos," *Malasartes*, Rio de Janeiro, 1975, no.1 p. 15.....262

Figure 2.17 Cildo Meireles, sketches for *Inserções em circúitos antropológicos: Black Pente*, 1971.....263

Figure 2.18 Marc Ferrez, *Negra da Bahia* (Black woman from Bahia), c. 1885, silver gelatin print. Collection Gilberto Ferrez. Instituto Moreira Salles.....264

Figure 2.19 Penca de balangandãs, Bahia, 19th century. Archive of Museu Carlos Costa Pinto. Photographer: Saulo Kainuma, 2003.....265

Figure 3.1 Cildo Meireles, *Inserções em circúitos antropológicos, Token* (Insertions into Anthropological Circuits, Token), 1971.....266

Figure 3.2 Cildo Meireles, *Inserção em circúitos ideológicos, Coca-Cola* (Insertions in Ideological Circuits, Coca-Cola), 1970.....267

Figure 3.3 Cildo Meireles, *Inserções em Circuitos Ideológicos - Projeto Cédulas* (Insertions into Ideological Circuits: Banknote Project), 1970-1975.....268

Figure 3.4 Cildo Meireles, *Zero Cruzeiro*, 1974-1978.....269

Figure 3.5 Cildo Meireles, *Ocasião* (Opportunity/Occasion), 1974-2004.....270

Figure 3.6 Cildo Meireles, *Ocasião* (Opportunity), 1974-2004, installation view.....271

Figure 3.7 Antonio Manuel, *Alab atam emof* (anagram for "Bullets Kill Hunger") from the *Flans* series, 1975. Ink on papier-mâché stereotype mold, 22 x 15 in.....272

Figure 3.8 Antonio Manuel, *Corpo Fechado*, from the *Flans* series, 1975, papier-mâché.....273

Figure 3.9 Antonio Manuel, *Clandestinas* (Clandestine), 1973-1975, *O Dia* newspapers.....274

Figure 3.10 Antonio Manuel, *Clandestinas* (Clandestine), 1973-1975, *O Dia* newspaper.....275

Figure 3.11 Antonio Manuel, *Repressão outra vez – Eis o saldo* (Repression Again – Here is the Consequence), 1968, wood, cloth, rope, and silkscreen.....276

Figure 3.12 Antonio Manuel, "*Exposição de Antonio Manuel (de 0 às 24:00 horas nas bancas de jornais)"* (Exhibition of Antonio Manuel: From 0 to 24:00 on the newsstands), *Jornal do Brasil*, July 15, 1973, Proposals 1 and 2.....277

Figure 3.13 Antonio Manuel, "*Exposição de Antonio Manuel (de 0 às 24:00 horas nas bancas de jornais)"* (Exhibition of Antonio Manuel: From 0 to 24:00 on the newsstands), *Jornal do Brasil*, July 15, 1973, Proposals 3 and 4.....278

Figure 3.14 Antonio Manuel, "*Exposição de Antonio Manuel (de 0 às 24:00 horas nas bancas de jornais)"* (Exhibition of Antonio Manuel: From 0 to 24:00 on the newsstands), *Jornal do Brasil*, July 15, 1973, Proposals 5 and 6.....279

Figure 3.15 Paulo Bruscky and Daniel Santiago, classified ad in *Diário de Pernambuco*, on March 25, 1972, *Artemcágado*, from *Arte classificada* series……..280

Figure 3.16 Paulo Bruscky and Daniel Santiago, *Artemcágado* (Artontortoise), 1972, Pracinha do Diário, Recife.....281

Figure 3.17 Paulo Bruscky and Daniel Santiago, *Artemcágado* (Artontortoise), 1972, Pracinha do Diário, Recife…….…….…….…….…….…….282

Figure 3.18 First issue of newspaper *Aurora Pernambucana*, Recife, March 27, 1821……283

Figure 3.19 Paulo Bruscky, *A Máquina de Filmar Sonhos* (Dream Recorder), from the series *Arte classificada*, 1977, classified ad…….…….……...284

Figure 3.20 Paulo Bruscky, *Dados Biográficos* (Biographical Data/Dice), 1976…….285

Figure 3.21 Paulo Bruscky, "Linha poética" (Poetic Line) in *Alto retrato* (Self/Tall Portrait), 1981. The Bronx Museum of the Arts Archive…….……286

Figure 3.22 Paulo Bruscky, *Título de Eleitor Cancelado* (Cancelled Voter Card), 1976, mail art…….…….…….…….…….287

Figure 3.23 Paulo Bruscky, *Pelos Nossos Desaparecidos* (For Our Disappeared, 1976–86), mail art…….…….…….…….…….288

Figure 3.24 Paulo Bruscky, *Censurado* (Censored), 1975, airmail…….…..289

Figure 3.25 Paulo Bruscky, *O Meu Cérebro Desenha Assim* (My Brain Draws in This Way), 1976, electroencephalograms (EEG)…….…….……...290

Figure 3.26 Paulo Bruscky, *Sentimentos: um poema feito com o coração* (Feelings: a poem made with the heart), 1976, xerox copy of electrocardiogram and rubber stamps……291

Figure 3.27 Paulo Bruscky, *Autum Radium Retratum* (Radium Self-Portrait), 1976, positive and negative radiography…..…….…….…….…….……292

Figure 3.28 Paulo Bruscky, *Mail Art*, 1979…….…….…..293

Figure 3.29 Paulo Bruscky, *PostAção* (Post Action), 1975…….…..294

Figure 4.1 Frente 3 de Fevereiro, *Monumento Horizontal* (Horizontal Monument), 2004…295

Figure 4.2 Frente 3 de Fevereiro, *Racismo Policial: Quem Policia a Polícia?* (Police Racism: Who Polices the Police?), 2004, stikers and posters…….…….296

Figure 4.3 Frente 3 de Fevereiro, *Racismo Policial: Quem Policia a Polícia?* (Police Racism: Who Polices the Police?), 2004, rubber stamps on banknotes……..…..297

Figure 4.4 Frente 3 de Fevereiro, *Brasil Negro Salve* (Hail, Black Brazil), July 14, 2005, Morumbi stadium, São Paulo; *Onde Estão os Negros?* (Where are the Blacks?), August 14, 2005, Campinas, São Paulo; *Zumbi Somos Nós* (We Are Zumbi), November 20, 2005, stadium Pacaembu, São Paulo…….…….……298

Figure 4.5 The football teams Fortaleza and Vasco, released their lineups for their upcoming match with the omission of Black players' names from the list……299

Figure 4.6 Frente 3 de Fevereiro, *Onde Estão Os Negros?* displayed on the exterior of the Museum of Art of São Paulo Assis Chateaubriand, 2018…….…….……300

Figure 4.7 Frente 3 de Fevereiro, *Zumbi Somos Nós*, hanging from Prestes Maia occupied building, February 2006…….…….…….……..…..301

Figure 4.8 Frente 3 de Fevereiro, *Know Go Area*, Berlin, June 2006……302

Figure 4.9 Frente 3 de Fevereiro, *Know Go Area*, Berlin, FIFA Fan Fest, June 7, 2006……303

Figure 4.10 Frente 3 de Fevereiro, *Know Go Area*, Berlin, FIFA Fan Fest, June 7, 2006.....304

Introduction

"Existe uma história do negro sem o Brasil, o que não existe é uma história do Brasil sem o negro"
"There is a history of Blacks without Brazil, what does not exist is a history of Brazil without Blacks"[1]
–Januário Garcia

In September 1975, the first issue of *Malasartes*, one of the most significant artists' magazines of the post-war period, was published in a print run of 5,000 copies on cheap newsprint. The editors were mostly young artists working in Rio de Janeiro –Carlos Vergara (b.1941), Carlos Zilio (b.1944), Cildo Meireles (b.1948), and Rubens Gerchman (1942-2008) among others–who were looking for a novel way to disseminate the ephemeral works they were making and engage in current debates about art.[2] They also used it as an opportunity to publish translations of those texts that were especially important to them, such as Joseph Kosuth's "Art after Philosophy," first published in English in 1969,[3] and Allan Kaprow's "The Education of the Un-Artist," originally issued in two parts between 1969 and 1971.[4] In twenty pages readers encountered theoretical texts and historical accounts, film and literary reviews, poetry, manifestos, as well as photo documentation of artists projects. [Figure 0.1]

[1] All translations are by the author, unless otherwise noted.
[2] The other founders of *Malasartes* were visual artists Jose Resende (b.1945), Luiz Baravelli (b. 1942), Waltercio Caldas (b.1946), and poet, composer, and songwriter Bernardo Vilhena (b.1949). Three issues were published between September 1975 and June 1976.
[3] Joseph Kosuth's "Art after Philosophy" was first published in three issues of *Studio International*: Part I, *Studio International* no 915 (October, 1969): 134-137; Part II, *Studio International* no. 916 (November 1969): 160-161; and Part III, *Studio International* no. 917 (December 1969): 212-213.
[4] Allan Kaprow, "The Education of the Un-Artist," Part I, *Art News* 69, no. 10 and "The Education of the Un-Artist," Part II, *Art News* 71, no. 3.

Ronaldo Brito, the lone critic among the group, contributed an essay entitled "Análise do circuito" (Circuit Analysis), where he examined the relationship between contemporary art and the market and advocated for an artistic practice that exists outside the predominant art circuit yet can still maintain a social role and stimulate a critical discourse.[5] In the second issue, artist Carlos Zilio further articulated the founders' objectives for the short-lived journal; artists should remain at the margins of society, but not to the point of vanishing from public view, carefully straddling the line between participants to the artworld and outcasts.[6] Texts by Brito and Zilio incited artists to assume a position outside the main circuits, whether social or artistic, while producing works relevant for society. In other words, artists should maintain one foot inside and the other outside of the conventional art system. This delicate balancing act brings to mind the literary character of Pedro Malasartes, for whom the journal was named, and the Brazilian archetype that he embodied, the *malandro*, a bohemian and charismatic trickster who cleverly bends rules and uses wit to outsmart his adversaries. This behavior was also a mode of survival for many artists during an oppressive military-civil dictatorship, which lasted from 1964 to 1985, and that targeted intellectual creativity and those who dissented. The title *Malasartes* is particularly apt as it consists of two words, *malas* and *artes*, that translate as "bad arts" or "wicked tricks." I argue that the choice of the magazine's name confirms that artists were subsuming the figure of the *malandro* and *malandragem* (trickery) in their own production.

---

[5] Ronaldo Brito "Análise do circuito," *Malasartes*, no. 1 (September, October, November 1975): 5-6 Art historian Irene Small made a thorough analysis of this text in her article "Insertions into Historiographic Circuits," *October* No. 161 (Summer 2017): 69-88.

[6] Carlos Zilio, "A Querela do Brasil," *Malasartes*, no.2 (January-February 1976): 8-10.

Many of the artists who were active during the military-civil dictatorship had to become masters of liminality. While they tactfully infiltrated alternative distribution channels to avoid scrutiny and disseminate their works to a broader audience, they interlaced relations with traditional art institutions, on which they depended for both funding and exposure. For instance, some of the most provocative artworks produced at the time were surreptitiously passed from hand to hand or scattered in the urban environment, yet they were also featured in the seminal exhibition on conceptual art, *Information*, organized by Kynaston McShine in the summer of 1970 at the Museum of Modern Art in New York.[7]

The *malandro*, as Brazilian archetype, emerged at the turn of the twentieth century in Rio de Janeiro in reaction to the degrading working and living conditions available to the Afro-Brazilian population following the abolition of slavery. Estimates suggest that Brazil received over four million enslaved Africans, accounting for approximately half of the total number of those brought to the Americas. Brazil was also the last country in the Western Hemisphere to abolish slavery in 1888. Contrary to the U.S., where former enslaved people were promised 40 acres and a mule– a promise not kept, as land was returned to the planters– abolition in Brazil did not come with any reparation or effort to integrate freed individuals into society. At the same time, the government, motivated by pseudo-scientific racial theories of the time, adopted the ideology of *branqueamento* (whitening), which favored White European immigrants over African descendants with the

[7] Examples are Cildo Meireles's *Insertions in Ideological Circuits: Coca-Cola Project*, and Artur Barrio's *Trouxas Ensanguentadas* (Bloody Bundles). Also Hélio Oiticica participated in the show, and the work of Guilherme Magalhães Vaz was featured in the catalogue.

purpose of whitening and bringing a "'civilizing' influence on the population."[8] Between 1850 and 1909 the national government covered the immigration costs of Europeans who, with their free or low wage labor would substitute slave labor. After 1888, although legally free, Afro-Brazilians had few alternatives other than maintaining jobs that barely allowed their subsistence, typically manual labor. Many people moved to the cities, which by the end of the nineteenth century were modernizing and expanding, in search for better opportunities. Nevertheless, the work conditions remained oppressive, and the wage work did not provide dignified living conditions to the workers, and the social order remained strongly excluding and oligarchic.[9] Out of these conditions emerged the *malandro*, who avoids labor at any cost, so linked to the idea of slavery. In a reversal of roles, he embraces the aristocrat's disdain for work, and uses the cracks of the system to survive, at the margins of the labor market.[10]

[8] Lisa Shaw, "Afro-Brazilian Identity. Malandragem and HomosExúality in Madame Satã," in *Contemporary Latin American Cinema: Breaking into the Global Market*, ed. Deborah Shaw (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2007), 89.

[9] Ruben George Oliven, "A elaboração de símbolos nacionais na cultura brasileira," *Revista de antropologia* (1983): 107-118.

[10] In *Raízes Do Brasil* (Brazilian Roots, 1936) sociologist Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, considered one of the interpreters of Brazil, analyzes the figure of the *Bandeirantes*, Portuguese adventurers who came to Brazil in search for easy and immediate wealth, mostly in the seventeenth century, and who conducted expeditions in the country's interior in search for diamonds and gold. He argues that the adventurers became part of Brazilian social iconography and describes them as follows: "This human type ignores boundaries. In the world everything comes to him in generous plenitude, and wherever an obstacle to his ambitious purposes arises, he knows how to turn that obstacle into a springboard." (44) The author contrasts the *Bandeirante*s' sense of adventure with the repetition and monotony of manual labor, which in the Portuguese society of the time was perceived as ignoble. In the context of the Brazilian rural economy, it was the exploitation of slave labor that made possible the adaptation of the Portuguese model in such a different environment. The enslaved, in fact, were responsible for all the manual labor both in the house and in the city, fields and mines. I argue that, in a reversal of roles, the *malandro* embraces the adventurers' characteristics – audacity, improvidence, irresponsibility, instability, vagabondage, including the "horror ao batente" (being horrified by work). See Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, *Raízes Do Brasil* [1936] (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1995).

With his typical stroll (*gingando*),[11] seductive mode of speaking, singular dressing, his success with women, his adversity to work and highly individualized personality,[12] the *malandro* is a charismatic bon vivant who enjoys bars and cabarets and never turns away from a fight, even with the police. According to sociologist and psychoanalyst Manoel Tosta Berlinck, the *malandro* is indeed an urban figure. There are no *malandros* in the rural areas, he writes, because in rural areas there are no cabarets or casinos, the radio, the record companies, the lucky hits, and the game that guarantee the necessary resources for the bohemian life of the trickster.[13]

At the same time, the trickster figure is not unique to Brazil. Cultural theorist Babacar M'Baye writes that it is one of the most widespread archetypes of Pan-African cultures and "symbolize[s] the harsh conditions of millions of people of African descent due to brutal historical forces such as slavery, colonialism, and other oppressions."[14] Over time, the African trickster persona blended with Indigenous and European trickster traditions in the Americas.[15] The *malandro* himself, therefore, is the result of multi-

[11] *Ginga* consists in swinging the body from side to side and is the basic step of capoeira, an acrobatic and rhythmic martial art that enslaved Africans devised to maintain their cultural practices and as self-defense. *Gingando*, refers to capoeira, but also means to swing one's body while walking, in a casually unconcerned way.

[12] These characterizations are indicated by Roberto DaMatta in *Carnivals, Rogues, and Heroes: An Interpretation of the Brazilian Dilemma* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1991). 209.

[13] See Manuel Tosta Berlinck, "Sossega leão: algumas considerações sobre o samba como forma de cultura popular," *Contexto* 1, no. 108 (1976): 101-114.

[14] Babacar M'Baye, "Tricksters in African, African American, and Caribbean Folktales and Cultures," *Oxford Bibliographies*, Oxford University Press, May 26, 2021. Accessed June 17, 2021, https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/display/document/obo-9780190280024/obo-9780190280024-0094.xml

[15] In terms of a blending of traditions, for Brazil we can think of Saci Pereré, a prankster from the Tupi-Guarani mythology which interestingly transformed into a Black character over time, and that of Pedro Malasartes, an Iberian trickster figure that has become part of the Brazilian folklore.

directional exchanges among different cultural traditions brought together by colonial and post-colonial encounters.

And while *malandragem*, the use of tricks to outwit people in positions of power and restore a temporary sense of justice, is certainly a legacy of the resistance enacted by enslaved Africans and their descendants for at least five centuries, it is also intimately related to Exú, an extremely important deity in the Afro-Brazilian religious pantheon. In both Candomblé and Umbanda,[16] Exú serves the fundamental role of messenger between the world of the living and that of the *orixás* (gods), and has many of the same qualities as the *malandro*. As the deity of the crossroads that incorporates notions of change, Exú at once subverts and maintains borders and boundaries between morality and immorality, good and evil, to guide the believers and keep the order established by Olorum, the Supreme God.[17]

Taking the artist magazine *Malasartes* as point of departure, I argue that, similar to the *malandro* who moves between seemingly incompatible spheres, artists living under repressive political conditions worked both in and outside of the institutions they critiqued, devising creative solutions to preserve their ethical position against the dominant order. While the *malandro* has received scholarly attention in religious studies, music, literature,

[16] Candomblé is a religion of Bantu, Fon, and Yoruba origins that has been practiced in Brazil since the colonial times. Umbanda originated in Rio de Janeiro in the late nineteenth century and is the result of the combination of elements that come from Afro-Brazilian traditions, Catholicism, Indigenous beliefs, and Kardecism (spiritism). Umbanda worships both Catholic saints and the *orixás*, but also a number of entities such as the spirits of enslaved Africans, Indigenous warriors, malandros, and baianos (migrants from the North-East): people who have been historically marginalized in society.

[17] Olorum, also known as Olodumare, is the creator of the *orixás* and gave them the task of creating and controlling the world. For more on Afro-Brazilian mythologies see Reginaldo Prandi, *Mitologia dos orixás* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2021).

theater, cinema, popular culture and anthropology, this figure has not been explored with the deserved emphasis for what regards the visual arts. This dissertation investigates the work by artists who incorporated marginal figures as subjects of their works, and more significantly, it examines how artists embraced marginal behaviors as a strategy to eschew censorship, challenge traditional art institutions, and expose the hypocrisy of the national motto "Order and Progress." Some of them –Hélio Oiticica (1937-1980), Cildo Meireles (b.1948), Antonio Manuel (b.1947), and Paulo Bruscky (b.1949)– are internationally renowned and their work has been examined in Portuguese and English-language scholarship. In this dissertation, though, I have examined parts of their oeuvres that are less well-known. As a result, interviews with the creators have proved relevant and informative for my research. Other artists, and especially those who identify as Afro-Brazilian –Heitor dos Prazeres (1898-1966) and Abdias Nascimento (1914-2011)– are little-known outside of Brazil and have received limited scholarly attention until very recently. Although a small number of institutions like the Museu Afro Brasil (Afro-Brazilian Museum) in São Paulo, established by artist and Emanoel Araújo (1940-2022), had been championing the work by Afro-Brazilian artists since 2004, it was the exhibition *Histórias Afro-Altânticas* (Afro-Atlantic Histories) organized by the Museu de Arte de São Paulo (Museum of Art of São Paulo, MASP) in 2018 that became a catalyst for in shedding light on the visual production by artists of African descent. The show traveled to several venues in the United States, generated bi-lingual anthology and catalogue, and a series of symposia. Because of the visibility it attracted, the show also contributed to transforming academic or activist debates on Afro-Brazilian art into popular topics of conversation.

While the artists' magazine *Malasartes* confirms that visual artists were actively considering the *malandro* as a model, at other times the references to the character, or the enactment of his *modus operandi* may not have been conscious but the result of the fact that the *malandro* imbues the Brazilian cultural context. Paradigmatic of the popularity of this trickster character, Brazilian social anthropologist Roberto DaMatta elected Pedro Malasartes as the quintessential personification of *malandragem* in his now-classic book *Carnavais, Malandros e Heróis* (Carnivals, Rogues and Heroes) (1979), also written during the regime.[18] Basing his analysis on a literary and folkloric figure –something unusual in the social sciences at that time– he proposed the *malandro* as the epitome of the Brazilian people.[19] While I reject this essentializing and stereotyping view, it is undeniable that the *malandro* and his tricks are part of the collective imagination, and that consciously or unconsciously artists over time have taken inspiration from his tactics to outmaneuver obstacles and adversaries. Drawing from social anthropology, literature, music, cinema and religious studies, this is the first study to propose *malandragem* as a lens of interpretation for the visual arts.

The *Malandro*

In Brazil, the trickster character from the Iberian Peninsula of Pedro Malasartes (often spelled with the *z*) arrived and survived through oral tradition, before becoming the

[18] Roberto DaMatta, *Carnavais, malandros e heróis: para uma sociologia do dilema brasileiro* (Rio de Janeiro: Zahar, 1979). The first English translation, *Carnivals, Rogues, and Heroes: An Interpretation of the Brazilian Dilemma*, was published in 1991 by the University of Notre Dame Press.
[19] DaMatta based his analysis of Malasartes on the collection of folktales by Luís da Câmara Cascudo, "Seis aventuras de Pedro Malasartes," in *Contos tradicionais do Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: Tecnoprint, 1967).

protagonist of literary classics,[20] operas,[21] *literatura de cordel*,[22] and cinematographic representations.[23] Malasartes became so prominent in the Brazilian cultural landscape, that famed modernist author Mário de Andrade (1893-1945) declared: "Malazarte, porém, nasceu no Brasil" (Malazarte, however, was born in Brazil).[24] Also, more often than not, Malasartes in Brazil became Black.

De Andrade, himself of European and African heritage, wrote the libretto for the opera buffa *Pedro Malazarte* (1928) where the three characters are a woman from Bahia (*baiana*), her German husband, Almão, and Malasartes. The *baiana*, who wants to leave the domestic life and run away with Malasartes for a life of adventures, informs: "Almão tem cabelo de milho, você tem cabelo negro feito o meu, vou com você, seu Malazarte!" (Almão has hair like corn, you have Black hair like mine, I'm going with you, Mr. Malazarte!)[25] In his classic modernist novel *Macunaíma*, published the same year, the protagonist, the "hero with no character," is himself a *malandro* who from "jet Black" (*preto retinto*) becomes White by bathing in holy water. The novel *Macunaíma*, which is written in a highly idiomatic style to recreate Brazilian spoken language, has been read as

[20] The collection of stories *Contos da Carochinha* (1894) by Figueiredo Pimentel presents the first mention of Pedro Malasartes in a work published in Brazil.
[21] Mário de Andrade wrote the libretto for the opera buffa *Pedro Malazarte* (1928) with music by Mozart Camargo Guarnieri (1932), presented to the public for the first time only in 1952. Another opera, *Malazarte*, was composed by Oscar Lorenzo Fernández in 1941 using as libretto the homonymous play written by Graça Aranha in 1911.
[22] Literally "string literature," *literatura de cordel* consisted in short tales, poems, and songs printed in small booklets or pamphlets sold in street markets, primarily in North-eastern Brazil. For their display, sellers would hang the booklets from strings, hence the name of the genre. Sometimes printed on colorful paper, the booklets were illustrated with woodcuts. Pedro Malasartes is a recurring protagonist.
[23] *As Aventuras de Pedro Malazartes* (1960) directed by Amácio Mazzaropi, who also interpreted the character of Malasartes.
[24] Mário de Andrade. "Chronicas de Malazarte I," *Revista América Brasileira*, n. 22 (Rio de Janeiro, October 1923): 288.
[25] Mário de Andrade, *Pedro Malazarte* (1928), quoted in Telê Ancona Lopez, "Mário de Andrade-Malazarte-I Manuscritos," *Revista do Instituto de Estudos Brasileiros* 33 (1992): 66.

an allegory for Brazil's unique cultural and racial blend.[26] Racial ambiguity is one of the many facets of the *malandro*, and has led anthropologist Lilia Schwarcz to theorize that *malandragem* and *mestiçagem* (miscegenation) are strictly interrelated.[27]

Furthermore, the *malandro* is both a historical and literary character. According to Schwarcz, the tendency to conflate culture and history in Brazil derives from the fact that they are materially and symbolically inseparable.[28] Or, as Mário de Andrade put it in his *Chronicles of Malazarte* (1923-1924), "there is nothing more real than the creatures of our fantasy."[29]

To complete the picture, the *malandro* has two contradictory images: one is positive and presents him as a well-humored character, who elicits sympathy, who uses cunning as a weapon for survival against the adversities of life and to obtain advantages, often illicit. The other is negative and associates *malandragem* (trickery) with the refusal to work, with vagabondage, and the potential criminality.[30]

---

[26] This year, New Directions published a new English translation of *Macunaíma: The Hero With No Character* by Katrina Dodson.

[27] Lilia Katri Moritz Schwarcz, "Complexo de Zé Carioca: notas sobre uma identidade mestiça e malandra" *Revista Brasileira de Ciências Sociais* 29, no. 10 (1995): 49-63.

[28] [28] Schwarcz, "Complexo de Zé Carioca," 59-60.

[29] Mário de Andrade, "Chronicas de Malazarte I," Ibid. "Nada existe de mais real que as criaturas de nossa fantasia." The *Crônicas de Malazarte* were published monthly between October1923 and July 1924 in *Revista América Brasileira* (numbers 22 to 31), Rio de Janeiro. De Andrade constructed three fictional characters –Malazarte, Belazarte and Mário– with distinct perspectives, tastes, and likings. Through their voices, he opinionated about the current cultural debates, especially on the modernist movement. Nevertheless, it would have been hard for the reader to determine if the author's perspective corresponded to that expressed by his homonymous; by the accommodating comments of Belazartes; or to the pungent criticism voiced by Malazartes.

[30] Schwarcz, "Complexo de Zé Carioca," 56-57.

The *malandro* achieved a mythical status in the 1920s-30s thanks to the Samba songs that celebrated his astuteness and malice.[31] An extremely popular and admired figure, he came under attack during the Estado Novo (New State), an authoritarian regime that lasted from 1937 to 1945 under the rule of President Getúlio Vargas. During this period, the government tried to enforce an ideology of work ethic and productivity where there was no space for *malandragem*. As I explain in chapter one of this dissertation, during the Estado Novo the government embraced Afro-Brazilian cultural practices that had been previously outlawed and forbidden, such as samba and capoeira, but glossed over their African origin, presenting them as national products to instrumentally forge an idiosyncratic national identity that would be recognizable and marketable nationally and overseas.[32] For anthropologist Peter Fry, this appropriation of popular symbols of Black culture by the state corresponds to a strategy to hide the racial domination, which is disguised under another name and thus made harder to denounce.[33] In my dissertation, I demonstrate that this strategy was not necessarily successful. Afro-Brazilian artists were active agents in bringing to the national stage elements of Afro-Brazilian culture, including

[31] See, for example, "Lenço no Pescoço" (1933) by Wilson Batista, "Ora Vejam Só" (1927) by Heitor dos Prazeres, "A Malandragem" (1928) by Alcebíades Barcelos, "O Que Será de Mim?" (1931) by Ismael Silva and Nilton Bastos.

[32] Eduardo Diathey de Menezes divides the process of cultural domination into three stages: first, the rejection of popular culture seen as offensive and disorderly, and thus persecuted by the repressive apparatus of the State; second, domestication by separating those elements considered dangerous from the "exotic/decorative" ones, which instead can be used in a process of symbolic domination; third, recuperation: the simultaneous action of the cultural industry and the ideological apparatus that appropriate these cultural expressions of the subaltern classes and transform them into codified items for the purpose of ideological education or national marketing for the tourist industry. See Eduardo Diathey de Menezes, "Elitelore versus folclore, ou de como a cultura hegemónica tende a devorar a cultura subalterna," presented at the Seminário "Cultura Brasileira?" in June 1980 in Ouro Preto, quoted in Oliven, "A elaboração de símbolos nacionais," 109; and Shaw, "São Coisas Nossas: Samba and Identity in the Vargas Era (1930-45)," *Portuguese Studies* 14 (1998): 152-169.

[33] Peter Fry, "Feijoada e "Soul Food": notas sobre a manipulação de símbolos étnicos e nacionais" in *Para Inglês Ver: Identidade E Política Na Cultura Brasileira*. (Rio de Janeiro: Zahar Editores, 1982), 52-53.

the culture of *malandragem*. After four centuries of physical and cultural repression, it was not the Vargas regime that would hinder their creativity. Consequently, they persisted in practicing elements of their culture, such as Afro-Brazilian religions and celebrations of *malandragem*, that the government still opposed and discriminated against.

If the celebration of *malandragem* had to go undercover during the Vargas's regime, starting from the 1960s, a new set of cultural and political conditions favored a resurgence of the figure of the *malandro* in the Brazilian cultural production. The country was under another authoritarian regime. Separated by less than two decades, the two dictatorships exhibited notable similarities, including military repression, concealing, and selectively showcasing state violence, the purging of leftist factions (particularly those affiliated with Communism), the pervasive yet inconsistent implementation of censorship, and a distinct state violence against marginalized, impoverished, and non-White communities. Culturally, both regimes embraced nationalism and positioned themselves as guardians of morality and social decorum (*moral e bons costumes*), subsequently waging campaigns against vaguely defined immorality and poor taste.

During the military-civil dictatorship (1964-1985) power shifted among five different generals. Although the military orchestrated a coup d'état in 1964 to overthrow then-president of João Goulart, it was in December of 1968, when the Ato Institutional n.5 (Institutional Act N.5, AI-5) was issued, that it dissolved Congress, abolished habeas corpus, legalized censorship, and increased their use of torture as a tool of intimidation. The most violent phase of the dictatorship, known as *anos de chumbo*, or "years of lead," continued until 1974. Nevertheless, as artists recounted in interviews, censorship and

persecution continued. Both Antonio Manuel and Paulo Bruscky, whose work is examined in chapter 3, told to me that they were monitored by the police for weeks, if not months. In such circumstances, humor became both a safety valve, and an artistic tactic. During the era of the military-civil dictatorship, thus, the archetype of the *malandro* resurfaced, showcasing its potential for subversion across various artistic domains. According to Frederico Coelho, during this period, two representations of the trickster, which had noticeable parallels in reality, existed simultaneously: the "bom malandro" (good malandro), likable and economically exploited, described in the samba songs by Zé Keti (1921-1999); and the *malandro-bandido* (bandit-malandro), armed dweller of the slums, depicted in the movie *O Bandido da Luz Vermelha* (The Red-Light Bandit, 1968) by director Rogério Sganzerla inspired by real-life bandit, João Acácio Pereira da Costa, known for using tricks to baffle the police and escape unscathed.[34]

Other prominent examples of works dedicated to *malandros* are Jorge Amado's novel *Dona Flor e Seus Dois Maridos* (Dona Flor and Her Two Husbands, 1966), where one of the protagonists is the *malandro* Vadinho, an extravagant joker who leads a casual life of parties and gambling. In 1969 Joaquim Pedro de Andrade made the movie *Macunaíma*, based on Mário de Andrade's novel, with Grande Otelo starring in the role of the trickster. Songwriter Chico Buarque de Holanda composed the musical *Ópera do Malandro* in 1978, where he portrays the illicit activities of pimps, transvestites, and the police to make a comment about the hypocrisy of Brazilian society. In a magazine of the

[34] Frederico Oliveira Coelho, *Eu, brasileiro, confesso minha culpa e meu pecado: cultura marginal no Brasil das décadas de 1960 e 1970* (Rio de Janeiro: Civilizacão Brasileira, 2010).

time, the musical was publicized with a drawing of the musician dressed as a *malandro* in blackface. [Figure 0.2] In the same publication, a poster advertising the show featured a portrait of Getúlio Vargas enclosed within an oval frame. Behind him, orderly crowds of only White people look up at the leader with adoring gazes and waving the Brazilian flag. Vargas's image, though, is torn at the center. The remaining half of the dictator's (then president) visage transforms into that of a Black *malandro*, donning a smirking expression directed at the viewer. In contrast with the tidy crowds, the backdrop behind the *malandro* showcases the iconic Lapa arches and a vibrant red-district night scene. [Figure 0.3]

These examples demonstrate the preponderant presence of the *malandro* in the Brazilian cultural landscape of the twentieth century and prove that artists and intellectuals looked at the trickster as a model of survival, social success, and wisdom, particularly during the authoritarian regimes. The magazine *Malasartes* testifies that the *malandro* was a reference also for visual artists. In this dissertation I posit that the *malandro*, who I interpret as an Afro-Brazilian anti-hero, served as a model of resistance for artists working under the military-civil dictatorship (1964-1985), whether they identify as Afro-Brazilian or not.

Gender and Sexuality

The *malandro* is a gendered figure linked to ideas of masculinity, force, and virility. The etymology of the name combines the Latin prefix *mal*, indicating something bad or evil, with the Greek word for "man" (*andros*).[35] This is reflected in this dissertation's

[35] I would like to thank Christina A. Salowey for her insight on the etymology on the word *malandro*.

selection of artists, who are all male. Some of them, nonetheless, produced works that promoted non-normative gender expressions and militant homosexuality. It is crucial to note that the cultural construction of manhood as a symbol of power was characteristic not only of the authoritarian government, but was also engrained in the leftist organizations and guerrilla groups resisting the dictatorship. These groups equally discriminated against homosexuals and transvestites and displayed misogynistic attitudes towards women. The portrayal of queer and transvestite bodies in the artwork of visual artists reveal an ongoing underground struggle against societal norms that dictated conformity to heteronormative and patriarchal models.

These representations find a parallel in the historical figure who challenged maleness assumptions, João Francisco dos Santos (1900-1976), popularly known by the nickname "Madame Satã" (Madame Satan), a *malandro* from Lapa who exuded virility and masculinity as a skilled rogue and *capoeirista*, and at the same time was a self-avowed homosexual and one of the first transvestites to perform in theaters in Rio de Janeiro, starting in 1928.[36] [Figure 0.4 and 0.5] In his autobiography, Madame Satã stated:

> They couldn't get used to my bravery because I was a known homosexual. They thought that they wouldn't lose [a fight] with me and that is why they were always trying to provoke me and beat me up. On the other hand, the newspapers always emphasized my exploits precisely because I was a homosexual. What was I supposed to do? Become a coward just to satisfy these people? Let them do with me what they do to all of the other *bichas* who are beat up all the time and are arrested every week only because the police believed that *bichas* should be hit and should do the cleaning in the

Another version argues that the name comes from the word *malungo*, which in Kimbundu language, spoken by people from the region that is now Angola, refers to a close friend, companion, or ally.

[36] In 1972 Sylvan Paezzo wrote a book about João Francisco dos Santos, *Memorias de Madame Satã* (Rio de Janeiro: Lidador). Madame Satã inspired the movies *Rainha Diaba* directed by Antonio Carlos da Fontoura (Filmes De Lírio, Lanterna Magica, R.F. Farias, Ventania Filmes and Canto Claro Produções Artísticas, 1974) and *Madame Satã* directed by Karim Aïnouz (Lumière 2002).

> police stations? And for free. No, I couldn't go along with that vexatious situation. I thought that there was nothing wrong with being a *bicha*. I was one because I wanted to, but that didn't make me any less a man because of it. And I became a *bicha* willingly, and I was not forced by others.[37]

Madame Satã demonstrated a rebellious attitude towards being marginalized because of his sexual orientation: in his persona masculinity and femininity blended, and this did not make him less of a respectable and feared *malandro*. He was arrested several times, spending overall twenty-eight years of his life in jail, for robbery, assault, and murder, but was also often harassed because of his homosexuality. As a matter of fact, not only criminals and political opponents, but also homosexuals and transvestites were targeted by the authoritarian government's program of executions and clandestine actions in order to terrorize, repress and control the population, both during the Vargas's regime and the military dictatorship. James Green's book *Beyond Carnival: Male Homosexuality in Twentieth-Century Brazil* (2003) presents a panorama on how male homosexuality was experienced, socially considered, and legally treated in Brazil, and especially in Rio de Janeiro. He explains that ostracism pushed many homosexuals and transsexuals into urban areas, and employment discrimination led many to engage in prostitution and petty theft. The scholar reports that, although prostitution was not criminalized in Brazil, the police used charges of vagrancy, disturbing the public peace, or conducting obscene acts in public to control prostitution, in particular by homosexuals and cross-dressed, and as an excuse to

[37] Sylvan Paezzo *Memorias De Madame Satã: Conforme Narração a Sylvan Paezzo* (Rio de Janeiro: Lidador, 1972), 115-116. English translation in James N. Green, *Beyond Carnival: Male Homosexuality in Twentieth-Century Brazil* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 90-91. *Bicha* is an offensive term for "gay."

jail them.[38] Consequently, they endured continuous forms of persecution, compelling them to resort to tricks typical of the *malandro* to scrap together a living. In the biographical book *Hélio Oiticica. Qual é o Parangolé* (2003), poet Waly Salomão recounts that he and the artist, whose work is examined in this manuscript, witnessed a "suadouro" in the brothel managed by a samba dancer Rose Matos in Mangue, an area of Rio de Janeiro's city center known as a place for prostitution and drug trafficking.[39] The "suadouro," also known as *conto do suador* (literally "the bill/tale of the one who sweats") entailed that a male prostitute would have sex with a male client while a friend hidden in the room would steal the patron's wallet.[40] Many victims of the *conto do suador* would not go to the police to avoid finding themselves in a compromising situation and exposing their own homosexuality. *Malandragem* was for male and transsexual prostitutes a strategy for survival, against poverty and discrimination. Salomão compared the experience in the brothel, where doors and windows open up to ambivalence and multivalence, to the artistic environments set up by Oiticica.

References to Afro-Brazilian religions in the visual arts examined in this dissertation also offer examples on non-binary conceptions of gender. I draw from the work of postcolonial gender theory and decolonial feminism to examine how religious rituals

[38] In his book Green writes that the police would customarily arrest homosexuals for allegedly violating article 282 of the criminal code (public assault on decency) or article 399 (vagrancy).
[39] Waly Salomão, *Hélio Oiticica: Qual é o parangolé? E outros escritos* (Rio de Janeiro: Rocco, 2003), 93-97.
[40] According to Adauto B. Alves, who is one of the founders of the first National Gathering of Transsexuals in Rio de Janeiro in 1993*:* "Most *travestis*'s clients desire a person who looks like a woman, but acts like a man." Many of the *travestis'* clients were likely discrete homosexuals who did not want the night porter of their buildings to see them entering their apartments with a male sexual partner.

challenged the Western construction of gender as biologically determined. In her work, Argentine philosopher María Lugones has theorized that gender was a violent imposition during the colonial era, a tool of domination that designated two binarily opposed and hierarchical social categories, and in so doing, destroyed pre-existing, non-gendered social, spiritual, and economic structures. Nigerian sociologist Oyéronké Oyewùmí offers a Yoruba perspective on the issue. She states: "African social categories are fluid. They do not rest on body type, and positioning is highly situational."[41] Such observations apply particularly well to rituals of Afro-Brazilian religions, where the identity of the *orixá* is not inscribed on body type of the believer. It is through ritualized movements that the body signals the gender, racial, and class, identities, the age, personalities, and histories of the entity being embodied.[42] At the same time, the religious hierarchy is based on seniority within the religion (which has nothing to do with age), rather than being determined by gender. In the Brazilian context, thus, Afro-Brazilian religions have for centuries assured the continuation of communal life that is not ruled by gender hierarchies. This is another reason why they constituted a threat to the colonial power, and later to the dictatorial regimes that sought to establish and naturalize a hegemonic gendered structure of society.

Native-American poet Paula Gunn Allen (1939-2008) argued that the colonial imposition of gender required an intensive process of "image and information control" in

[41] Oyeronke Oyewumi, "Conceptualizing Gender: Eurocentric Foundations of Feminist Con cepts and the Challenge of African Epistemologies," *African gender scholarship: Concepts, methodologies and paradigms* (2004): 7.
[42] Jane C. Desmond, "Embodying difference: Issues in dance and cultural studies," *Cultural Critique* 26 (1993): 36.

the rewriting of traditions.[43] In chapter one, I explore representations of Afro-Brazilian religiosity in the work of Heitor dos Prazeres. Although his paintings do not explicitly depict the trans-gender potential of Afro-Brazilian religions, he skillfully conveyed ritualized movements on the canvas and gave prominence to a culture of resistance that allows to envision an organization of society that is not gender-based. In the 1960s-1970s, artists of a later generation made a political use of the body to question and bend gender binaries.

A Matter of Dialectics

In his seminal essay *Dialética da malandragem* (Dialectics of Trickery) (1970)[44] literary critic Antonio Candido analyzes the figure of the *malandro* in Brazilian literature and concludes that his malice is not intrinsic, but the result of the brutalities and injustices of life. Candido alludes to the Hegelian dialectics to clarify the *malandro*'s position in society. Social injustices prevent the *malandro* to be an exemplary citizen (thesis) who adheres to the moral rules and complies with the laws. At the same time, he refuses to be excluded from the social system and lives a life of criminality (antithesis). His viable option, thus, is *malandragem* (synthesis): the use of tricks to outwit people in position of power and to restore a temporary sense of justice. I borrow the title of my dissertation from

[43] Paula Gunn Allen, [1986] *The Sacred Hoop. Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), 42.
[44] Antonio Candido, "Dialética da malandragem," *Revista do Instituto de estudos brasileiros* 8 (1970): 67-89. Cândido examines the novel *Memórias de um Sargento de Milícias* (Memoirs of a Sergeant of the Militia), written by Manuel Antonio de Almeida between 1852-53, and defines it as a "romance malandro" (trickster novel).

Candido's essay, and I contend that the *malandro* is the ideal epitome of dissent during one of the most repressive times of Brazilian history, namely the military-civil dictatorship.

Remarkably, both Candido's and DaMatta's foundational texts on the *malandro* were written during the authoritarian regime. Nevertheless, neither of these authors examines the origins of such a central figure in the Brazilian cultural landscape, nor do they analyze the specific social conditions that transform a person into a *malandro*, and that concur to perpetuate the social disparities against which he fights. The lack of conversations surrounding race could be attributed to the fact that during the dictatorship, such topic would have been deemed unwelcome. The government viewed discussions about race as a threat to the ideal of racial democracy that it sought to uphold, despite the existence of evident racial discrimination and inequality that persisted in society. It is in the literature on samba music, as well as in that on African-American literature, and post-colonial studies, that it is possible to find more hints on the *malandro*'s origin that is to be located in the history of colonialism and of the Atlantic slave trade.

A text that was central in my understanding of *manaldragem* as a culture of daily resistance is Stuart Hall's "'Africa' Is Alive and Well in the Diaspora: Culture of Resistance: Slavery, Religious Revival and Political Cultism in Jamaica" (1975).[45] Writing about African cultures of resistance in the diaspora, the cultural theorist describes the dialectic between the "cultures of resistance" constructed and defended by the enslaved in stubborn defiance of the "cultures of domination" imposed by slave society.[46] The scholar

[45] Stuart Hall, "'Africa' Is Alive and Well in the Diaspora: Culture of Resistance: Slavery, Religious Revival and Political Cultism in Jamaica," [1975] in *Stuart Hall. Selected Writings on Race and Difference*, ed. Paul Gilroy, and Ruth W. Gilmore (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021) 161-194.
[46] Ibid., 162.

argues that what matters is not how much of Africa survived, or its ethnographic purism but rather "how the African and other elements were welded into a "culture of the oppressed" that under slavery enabled the slaves to survive culturally."[47] For Hall, cultural survival was foundational to physical survival and political mobilization. To make this point, he quotes Bissau-Guinean and Cape Verdean political organizer Amílcar Cabral, leader in the wars for independence in Africa:

> To be sure, the exercise of imperialist domination demands cultural oppression, and the attempt at direct or indirect liquidation of what is essential in the subject people's culture. But this people is able to create and develop a liberation movement only because it keeps its culture alive in the teeth of permanent and organized repression of its cultural life – only because, its politico-military resistance being destroyed, it continues to resist culturally. And it is cultural resistance which, at any given moment, may take on new forms.[48]

Applying the considerations that Cabral had made about the African countries seeking independence from the European colonial powers in the 1960s and 1970s to the history of the African diaspora resistance against slavery in the Americas, Hall contends that it was cultural survival that permitted the organization of political resistance and collective actions against the slave system and societal racism. In the article, he selects three examples of cultural resistance from his native Jamaica: the preservation and celebration of spirit-possession religions as integral to social life; language, both in terms of the passing down of folks tales about survival and cunning, and about the subversion and double-articulation of the language of the oppressor enacted by the oppressed to fool the former; and African-based music, singing and dancing, whose political meaning was

---

[47] Ibid., 174.
[48] Amílcar Cabral, "Role of Culture in the Struggle for Independence" (lecture, UNESCO, Paris, 1971), quoted in Hall, 162-163. See also Amílcar Cabral, "The role of Culture in the Struggle for Independence," *International Journal of Politics* 7, no. 4 (1977): 22-23.

understood and feared by the ruling classes that tried to forbid it, and yet also to coopt and capitalize on it for its potential for social mobilization. While this dissertation focuses on the visual arts, I will explore these cultural forms of resistance throughout the manuscript, as they intertwine with the history of art, and apply to Brazil, as much as they to do Jamaica.

An understanding of Afro-Brazilian religions can also enlighten the concept of dialectic, specifically the one personified by Exú. Brazilian polymath Abdias Nascimento, whose visual work is examined in the second chapter of the dissertation, argues that dialectic existed in Africa centuries before it was theorized in Europe by Hegel and Marx.[49] When the Europeans learnt about Exú's worship in Africa in the fifteenth century, they equated the god to the devil because he is often represented with phallic attributes. Sacrifices were taken as another sign of Exú's demoniac nature, especially because he receives as offering animals, such as goats, that were associated to the devil in Medieval times.[50] This Catholic moral Manichean worldview generated a series of misunderstandings and prejudices about Exú that were carried to the Americas through the Middle Passage.[51] This negative connotation persists to these days, where in the Yoruba versions of both the Bible and the Qur'an, Satan and Al Shatan are translated as Exú.[52] In the modern Yoruba-English dictionary (Ibadan: University Press) the person initiated in Exú (elesù) is translated as "devil worshipper" or "possessed by the devil", "evil." These

[49] Abdias Nascimento, "Nota sobre nosso símbolo," *Afrodiáspora* 1.1 (January-April) 1983: 11.
[50] Vagner Gonçalves da Silva, *Exú: "o guardião da casa do futuro,"* (Rio de Janeiro: Pallas, 2015): 28.
[51] Silva, *Exú*, 17.
[52] Ayodele Ogundipe, *Èṣù Elegbára: Chance, Uncertainty in Yorùbá Mythology* [1978] (Ilorin: Kwara State University Press, 2012), 2; and Adelumo P. Dopamu, *Èsù, the Invisible Foe of Man: A Comparative Study of Satan in Christianity, Islam, and Yoruba Religion* (Ijebu-Ode, Nigeria: Shebiotimo Publications, 1986), 20.

examples provide a sense of the prejudice and misconceptions that still pervade the understanding of this fundamental deity in African and Afro-Brazilian religions. Anthropologist Vagner Gonçalves da Silva, who has written extensively about Exú in Brazil, explains that in a religious system that, contrary to the Christian or Islamic ones, is not dichotomous, it does not make sense to ask if Exú does good or bad. Yoruba scholar Ayodele Ogundipe stresses Exú symbolizes both a dynamic collective principle and the principle of individualized life. He presides over communal and public places, while at the same time he is a personalized companion.[53] Exú's shrines, thus, are found at the threshold of both public and private spaces, the crossroads and the market, the entrance of the *terreiro* and private houses. Exú epitomizes unreconciled opposites that live in harmony. He personifies paradox, flux, and mutability. Exú, therefore, resolves contradiction by embodying opposites, an attitude that will be central in understanding many of the artists' choices in this dissertation.

Malandragem as a Culturally Specific Framework

My research is in conversation with the literature on the visual arts produced during the authoritarian regimes that ruled most of Latin America in the second half of the twentieth century, and Brazil more specifically. Despite excellent work on themes such as the development of conceptual and unconventional artistic practices to respond to the harsh

[53] Ogundipe writes: "On the private level, every human being is believed to possess his or her own Exú, the principle of individualized life. The individual depends on Exú's assistance and support to define his or her own existence and to reaffirm his or her place in the human and supernatural world. The individual Exú is an object of private worship and small images of him may be carried by religious devotees or placed on an altar within their own homes." Ogundipe, 119.

political situation, most accounts are primarily concerned with how art produced in the region in the 1960s-1980s dialogues with international trends developed in the hegemonic artistic centers, mainly Europe and the United States, at the expense of considerations of how local cultures and conditions shaped the art.

Moreover, research on this topic to date has not attended to the oppression of people of African descent from part of the state and the civil society during the dictatorship, nor to the artistic strategies of resistance engendered by Black artists and intellectuals in Brazil. This is primarily due to a historiographic tradition where Afro-Brazilian culture has been conceptualized as discrete and disconnected from the larger narrative about Brazilian culture. Challenging this intertwined dynamic of neglect and segregation, I strike a balance between calling attention to a tradition of Black resistance that originates in colonial times, the use of tricks to outwit people in positions of power, while I demonstrate that this form of defiance was adopted by artists in Brazil, independently from them being Afro-Brazilian or not. Doing so, I do not intend to reinforce the old myth that Brazil is a racial democracy where ethnic groups and their cultural traditions coexist and mix peacefully, an idea that the dictatorial government supported and against which it did not admit criticism. On the contrary, the goal is to highlight the power dynamics that led to the lack of recognition of this fundamental heritage, shaper of Brazilian cultural identity, in most historical accounts.

Much has been written on the definition of Afro-Brazilian art, and what distinguishes it from Brazilian art (or shall we say Euro-Brazilian, as Kebengele Munanga

suggests?).[54] These considerations have centered on the formal qualities, stylistic traits, and content of the artworks, as well as the phenotype, national origin, and self-identification of the producers. The thesis by Hélio Menezes, "Entre o visível e o oculto: a construção do conceito de arte afro-brasileira" (Between the visible and the hidden: the construction of the concept of Afro-Brazilian art) (2018) offers an insightful historiography and analysis on the topic.[55] While engaging in this dialogue through the figure of the *malandro*, I do not attempt to inscribe the production of non-Afro-Brazilian artists under this category based on the content of their works and the many references to Afro-Brazilian culture and religions they make. The goal is not to expand the category of what Afro-Brazilian art should encompass, but firmly declare that Afro-Brazilian culture is indeed Brazilian culture, all while giving credit to Black people and creators who built the Brazilian nation. Paraphrasing photographer Januário Garcia, whose quote opens this dissertation, while Afro-Brazilian culture exists beyond and despite Brazil, there is no Brazil without Afro-Brazilian culture.

The extant literature on Brazilian art during the dictatorship has deployed a range of ways and a breadth of theories and methodologies to interpret the art, including conceptualism, institutional critique, guerrilla art, art systems, participatory art, materiality, phenomenology, feminism, affect and relational theory. These frameworks demonstrate that what was happening in Brazil was part of a dominant narrative. The prevalent metaphor employed in discussions surrounding the art of that period, including the

[54] Kabengele Munanga, "Arte afro-brasileira: o que é afinal?" in *Brasil 500 Anos Arte Visual* (Fundação Bienal de São Paulo, 2000), 98-110.
[55] Hélio Santos Menezes Neto, "Entre o visível e o oculto: a construção do conceito de arte afro-brasileira" (PhD diss., Universidade de São Paulo, 2018).

artworks analyzed in this dissertation, has been that of guerrilla warfare. Art critic and curator Frederico Morais (b.1936), who played a significant role in the promotion of the young generation of experimental artists, proposed it in 1970, by aligning their artworks with the underground political groups of the time. In his influential essay entitled *Contra a arte afluente: corpo é o motor da obra* (Against Affluent Art: The Body is the Motor of the Work), he stated:

> The artist today is a kind of guerrilla agent. Art is a form of ambush. Acting unexpectedly, where and when he is least expected (as everything, today, can turn into a weapon or tool of war or art) the artist creates a permanent state of tension, a constant expectation. […] The task of the guerrilla artist is to create for the spectator… indistinct, uncommon, undefined situations, provoking in him, more than aversion or repulsion, but fear. It is only in the face of fear, when all senses are mobilized, that there is initiative, that is, creation…[56]

In the text, Morais argued that artists operating under the authoritarian regime had to use surprise and give up control over the result of their creations by opening up opportunities for participation. More than producers of finished works, they had to be appropriators of objects and events, or proposers of participatory situations that would enhance the perceptive abilities of the viewer and engender them to take initiative to respond to the repressive socio-political context.[57]

---

[56] Frederico Morais, "Contra a arte afluente: corpo é o motor da obra," *Revista Vozes* (Rio de Janeiro), January-February 1970 in Frederico Morais, *Artes plásticas: a crise da hora atual* (Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1975), 26-27.

[57] In 1967 artist Décio Pignatari published an article on the newspaper *Correio da Manhã* titled "Teoria da guerrilha artística" (Theory of Artistic Guerrilla) where he explained that for him guerrilla was to war as vanguard art was to conventional art. He also argued that in the context of the military dictatorship, vanguard art was anti-artistic and anti-intellectual. He called for a meta-vanguard, which he defined as a "permanent vanguard." Décio Pignatari, "Teoria da guerrilha artística," *Correio da Manhã* (Rio de Janeiro), June 4, 1967, quoted in Artur Freitas, *Arte De Guerrilha: Vanguarda E Conceitualismo No Brasil*. (São Paulo: Edusp, 2013), 57.

Interestingly, while Frederico Morais incited artists to act as guerrilla agents, that same year another art critic, Francisco Bittencourt, defined the group of politically engaged artists as "Geração Tranca-Ruas" (Tranca-Ruas Generation).[58] Tranca-Ruas literally translates as "blocking streets," yet, it is also the appellative given to one of the appearances of Exú in Umbanda. This is a rare instance in which a critic referred to Afro-Brazilian religiosity, and Exú in particular, for the interpretation of art from the period. Although Bittencourt doesn't delve into this aspect of the expression, his word choice supports my argument that the *malandro*, in its various appearances, was part of the cultural landscape and a reference for artists and critics.

Roberto Conduru is one of the few scholars to have quoted this text and shed light on how several artworks from the 1960s and 1970s by Euro-Brazilian artists make references to Afro-Brazilian religiosity, aspects otherwise largely overlooked in the scholarship.[59]

The analogy with guerrilla, instead, has become the dominant narrative to interpret the art of the period. The idea was recovered in the last decade by art historians Claudia Calirman and Artur Freitas, in two of the first books that addressed the art produced during the most repressive years of the regime, known as the *anos de chumbo*, or "years of lead"

Tamara Silva Chagas highlighted that Morais's encouragement finds a parallel also in the text by the Argentine artist Julio Le Parc "Guerrilla Cultural?" (Cultural Guerrilla?) written in 1968 where Le Parc interrogates the role of the artist in challenging the current social structure. Tamara Silva Chagas, "Da crítica a nova crítica: as múltiplas incursões do crítico-curador Frederico Morais" (PhD diss., Universidade Federal do Espírito Santo, Centro De Artes, Vitória, ES, Brazil, 2012).

[58] Francisco Bittencourt, "A Geração Tranca-Ruas," *Jornal do Brasil*, (Rio de Janeiro), May 9, 1970.

[59] Roberto Conduru, "África, Brasil e arte–persistentes desafios," *ARS* (São Paulo) 19 (2021): 265-308; Roberto Conduru, "Índices afro na arte no Brasil nas décadas de 1960 e 1970," in *Arte não europeia: conexões historiográficas a partir do Brasil* ed. Patricia D. Meneses, and Claudia Mattos Avolese (São Paulo: Estação Liberdade/Vasto, 2020): 143-52; Roberto Conduru, *Arte afro-brasileira* (Belo Horizonte: Editora C/Arte, 2007).

(1968-1975). Both authors analyze the works of three major artists, Artur Barrio, Antonio Manuel, and Cildo Meireles. In the first scholarly book in English about these artists, *Brazilian Art under Dictatorship* (2012), Calirman supports the interpretation proposed by Morais and writes that although few artists were involved in actual guerrilla warfare (Carlos Zilio is among the few artists who joined the urban guerrilla), many, to express dissent, produced works utilizing guerrilla tactics.[60] The author argues that artists "created neither because of the regime nor despite it, yet their art was inevitably, inextricably linked to its gruesome realities."[61] She establishes a causal relation between art and politics, thus, the use of conceptual, ephemeral, performative, and media-based art are interpreted as strategies to eschew censorship and punishment. In her study, Calirman interlaces her analysis of works produced in Brazil with the mainstream history of conceptual art and demonstrates that artists strove to reconcile a concern for Brazilian politics with international artistic trends.

Freitas examines many of the artworks selected by Calirman. In *Arte de guerrilha: vanguarda e conceitualismo no Brasil* (Guerrilla Art: Vanguard and Conceptualism in Brazil, 2013) he similarly stresses the analogy between art tactics and guerrilla upholding that artists, like the guerrillas, stung by the urgency of the situation, operated outside the institutions, assuming all the risks of clandestine action.[62] Both art historians, thus, center the socio-political context in which the artworks were created to interpret both their form and content. These books have provided a wealth of historical and artistic details that have

[60] Claudia Calirman, *Brazilian Art under Dictatorship: Antonio Manuel, Artur Barrio, and Cildo Meireles* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012)
[61] Ibid., 147–148
[62] Artur Freitas, *Arte De Guerrilha: Vanguarda E Conceitualismo No Brasil* (São Paulo: Edusp, 2013).

been instrumental for my research about the art of the period. Yet, while the guerrilla framework is certainly a legitimate interpretive model for some of the works created during the lead years, the work is always yoked to the political environment and understood as a strategy. By primarily focusing on conflict, it leaves out the possibility of humor, as well as other subtleties or ambiguities, and less openly violent tactics present in the art. Unlike the metaphor of guerrilla, the concept of *malandragem*, allows for an examination of artistic practices of resistance that artists engendered against different forms of oppression, from political censorship to racial injustice.

A text that broadens the spectrum of interpretation and offers a more nuanced vision of the art of the period is *Art Systems: Brazil and the 1970s* (2016) by art historian Elena Shtromberg. The author identifies four social systems –currency, television, newspapers, and maps– and the way that artists engaged with and infiltrated them. Rather than tracing a correspondence with international trends, she centers her discussion on how artists, both internationally acclaimed and lesser-known outside of Brazil, interacted and subverted these systems of communication, an exchange that ultimately allowed them to reach broader audiences outside the art institutions. Shtromberg explains that "at its core, this book offers an in-depth social history not only of a select group of artworks but also of what they reveal about the historical moment they emerge in and the social systems they navigate."[63] The author, in fact, starts from the works to deduce the political, economic, aesthetic, and technological relationships of this period.[64]

[63] Elena Shtromberg, *Art Systems: Brazil and the 1970s* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2016), 4.
[64] Ibid., 158

These frameworks of analysis are culturally generic, rather than specifically Brazilian. *Malandragem* as an interpretative framework allows to expand this conversation, and demonstrate that artists actively combined the local with the foreign, the popular with the vanguard. It also allows a broader application beyond the years of the military-civil dictatorship. As a matter of fact, although centered on the 1960s-1980s, this dissertation considers works produced when the *malandro* was at the apex of his popularity in the 1930s, up to today, demonstrating that this figure has remained a potent symbol of rebellion and freedom for artists operating under very different circumstances. While specific to the Brazilian cultural context, *malandragem* remains largely applicable to contexts where tricks, irony, and wit have been used as the weapons of the weak.

Malandragem and *antropofagia*

In the history of Brazilian art, the only other framework of analysis that is as culturally specific is that of *antropofagia* (Anthropophagy). The idea of cultural cannibalism was first laid out by poet, playwright, and novelist Oswald de Andrade (1890–1954), in his *Manifesto Antropófago* (Cannibal Manifesto, 1928), where he proclaimed that Brazilian intellectuals should assert their independence from Europe and "cannibalize" native forms of culture to produce a new Brazilian art.[65] The Manifesto *Antropófago* was

[65] *Manifesto Antropófago* was published in the first issue of the *Revista de Antropofagia* accompanied by a line drawing reproducing the painting *Abaporú* (("Man Who Eats" in the Tupí-Guraraní language, 1928) by Tarsila do Amaral. Oswald de Andrade maintained that the inspiration for the manifesto had come from the work

published in the *Revista de Antropofagia* (1928-1929)[66] that, like *Malasartes*, was short lived.[67] It is important to preface that, while the contributors to the *Revista de Antropofagia* were united around a movement, even if heterogeneous and contradictory, *malandragem* was never a movement nor a concept coherently discussed by artists and intellectual as an artistic strategy. And while *Malasartes* is not representative of all the artists who embodied the *malandro* and *malandragem* during the dictatorship, and some of the contributors' work may not even be interpreted under this lens, it is interesting to notice that both magazines served as platforms for disseminating art and criticism beyond the prevailing institutional models. Moreover, the editors and contributors of both publications theorized the need to reconcile localism and cosmopolitanism, the vernacular with the international, the popular with the avant-garde.

Malandragem and *antropofagia* were both revived in many artistic forms: visual arts, literature, poetry, magazines, and music. Moreover, they are both based on a re-evaluation of the colonial history of the country.[68] The anthropophagists opposed colonialist ideals of civilization with a revindication of the native, the savage, and the primitive, invoking Amerindian and African myths and cultures. Nevertheless, as Rafael Cardoso remarked in his book *Modernity in Black and White: Art and Image, Race and Identity in Brazil, 1890-1945* (2021), the modernist intellectuals did not speak for the subaltern groups:

[66] The magazine was founded by Oswald de Andrade, Tarsila do Amaral, Antônio de Alcântara Machado, Raul Bopp, Jayme Adour da Câmara, Oswaldo Costa, Geraldo Ferraz, Pau (Patricia Galvão), and Mário de Andrade.
[67] Twenty-six issues were published between May 1928 and August 1929.
[68] *Manifesto Antropófago* does not mention Afro-Brazilian art, though it makes references to carnival.

> The strategic essentialism of posting all Brazilians as equal heirs to an unequal past involved appropriating the cultures of others in ways that subtly silenced them. Though they might claim to be anti-colonialist, the actions it empowered frequently involved a further usurpation of marginalized groups whose identities were exploited in the name of modernity. Thus, *Anthropofagia*'s greatest discursive strength – its deliberate code-switching – is ultimately also its fatal flaw.[69]

The idea of using *malandragem* as a key of interpretation of artistic practices of resistance presents similar risks. However, while Anthropophagy claims to reject European influence, it does not adequately credit the Afro-Brazilian and Amerindian traditions it draws from. In contrast, in my framing, *malandragem* centers the conversation on the centrality of Afro-Brazilian culture for the formation of modern Brazil. Rather than overlooking the majority culture (over fifty percent of the population identifies as either Black or Brown),[70] this study presents Afro-Brazilian culture as foundational to the understanding of the history of the visual arts in Brazil and proposes to consider *malandrgem* as a counterpoint to the concept of *cannibalism*. The *malandro,* therefore, in certain respects, takes the role the "anti-cannibal". Contrary to the cannibal, the *malandro* can morph to include the *bom-malandro* (*good malandro*) and the *malandro-bandido* (bandit-malandro), the *malandro-boemio* (bohemina-malandro) and the *bambambã* (gangster). Exú himself, can assume a multiplicity of aspects, qualities, and characters, from the divine trickster to *Tranca-Ruas*. The *malandro* can be White, or Black, or both.

---

[69] Rafael Cardoso, *Modernity in Black and White: Art and Image, Race and Identity in Brazil, 1890-1945* (Afro-Latin America. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 195.

[70] According to the last census conducted by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatistica, IBGE) in 2021, 47% of the population identifies as Brown (*pardo*), and 9% as Black.

It is the mutability of the *malandro*, his malleability to pass both as an insider and outsider, his agility to bend the rules of the system without breaking from it that makes him such a powerful archetype by which to consider artistic practices of resistance in twentieth century Brazil.

Chapters

In 2022, the samba school Grande Rio dedicated its Carnival parade to Exú with the objective of challenging and altering the negative characterizations of this *orixá* in popular culture. Carnivals are dynamically evolving phenomena, and the parades incorporate references to popular culture and become occasions to voice political and social critiques. In 2019, for example, the samba school Estação Primeira da Mangueira dedicated one of its *alas* (sections) to Marielle Franco (1979-2018), the Afro-Brazilian councilwoman and LGBTQ activist who, on March 14, 2018, was gunned down with her driver, Anderson Gomes, at the exit of a meeting in Mauá, the *favela* she came from.[71]

Grande Rio won the 2022 Carnival with a spectacular parade fully dedicated to Exú, a choice that also has political meaning, as it aimed to counter religious intolerance, often driven by ignorance and bigotry. The different *alas* were dedicated to the multiple, porous environments dwelt and ruled by Exú: the *terreiro* (temple in Afro-Brazilian religions), the crossroads, the market, the streets, the parties, and carnival. The *malandro*, a central carnival figure and one of the many manifestations of Exú, was well represented

[71] The militiamen who carried over the attack were related to the then President Bolsonaro and the crime is still under investigation.

in the parade. The organization of the dissertation, which is loosely chronological, takes inspiration from this show. The first chapter is dedicated to carnival, the second to the *terreiro*, and the third to the exchanges, thus uniting the environments of the crossroads and the market.

The first chapter, "We Write Samba on the Wild Asphalt," puts in dialogue the work of two artists, Heitor dos Prazeres and Hélio Oiticica, whose visual production was deeply impacted by their experiences with samba music and dance, and participation in carnival parades. Dos Prazeres was born ten years after the abolishment of slavery from an impoverished family in the port area of Rio de Janeiro. As a Black man and artist, throughout his life he had to confront the results of structural racism, from being arrested and jailed for vagrancy when he was thirteen, to having an underpaid job. He started to paint consistently during the Estado Novo and throughout his life his work was labeled dismissively as "naïf" and "primitive" and, thus, ostracized from the history of modern art. Painter and samba composer, he used *malandragem* to bend social barriers and infiltrate a hostile cultural world, receiving a prize at the first São Paulo Biennial.

The majority of the scholarship on Heitor dos Prazeres was written in the last three years, apart from texts written by critics during his lifetime and a book compiled by his son Heitorzinho dos Prazeres with author Alba Lírio. The difficulty of pursuing research about this artist stems also from the fact that his archive is under construction and information about it very vague. His artworks are scattered in the collection of different museums in Brazil and abroad, but each institution owns only one or two pieces. Therefore, there is no institution that has a representative selection of his work. On the contrary, his artworks

often resurface in online auctions for giveaway prices. While these websites are, at the moment, the best repositories and treasure troves of images available, the related information is often partial and imprecise, and the authenticity of the works generally uncertain. As explained in chapter one, the artist employed assistants to make multiples of his most popular subjects. Later, many have imitated his style, contributing to the circulation of fakes in the secondary market. It is to be hoped that the attention that the work of Heitor dos Prazeres is generating will result in further studies on his work, the opening of his archive, and a better financial appreciation of his canvases.

One of the most innovative artists of his generation, Oiticica, on the other hand, was born almost forty years later from an upper-class family of intellectuals and grew up in the neighborhood Jardim Botânico, one of Rio de Janeiro's most affluent. His grandfather had been an influential anarchist, and his father was an entomologist and artist in his own right, who introduced Oiticica to the world of museums and collections. In the 1960s he joined the samba school Estação Primeira da Mangueira, of which dos Prazeres was one of the founders.[72] Oiticica started frequenting the favela, befriended several of its inhabitants, and was greatly inspired by the creativity he encountered. His life choices and artistic production stemmed from a disregard for societal hierarchies and rules, that led him to admire and embrace the values of *malandragem*, both positive and negative. The chapter demonstrates that dos Prazeres was profoundly consequential in establishing the

[72] Samba schools are typically affiliated to and located in specific neighborhoods. For instance, the samba school Estação Primeira da Mangueira is located in the Mangueira hill, the school Salgueiro takes the name from the Salgueiro hill, Vila Isabela from a homonymous neighborhood, etc. The headquarter of samba schools function also a community centers where people gather to play music, dance, rehearse, prepare for the parade, or simply to hang out and have fun.

foundations of the cultural environment that Oiticica, among other artists, would draw from in the 1960s, where samba is just one aspect.

The work of Oiticica is examined also in the second chapter, "Exú, the Principle of Revolution," that considers one of the origins of the *malandro,* the trickster god Exú. It also looks at the *terreiro* as the cradle of Black creativity and resistance, and of Brazilian culture at large. In this case, Oiticica's most openly political artworks that he dedicated to *malandros* and marginal figures dialogue with the pictorial work of polymath Abdias Nascimento, and the with an understudied and never realized project by Cildo Meireles. All three artists lived for a period of their lives in the United States, and New York in particular. Nascimento and Meireles, with their works engaged with the Black Movement in the U.S. and created connections with the Black Movement in Brazil. Writer, poet, playwright, theater director, actor, politician, university professor, activist and intellectual, Abdias Nascimento began painting in his adulthood, in his fifties. A handful of solo exhibitions organized in established Brazilian museums in the past four years has brought new attention to his pictorial work.[73] His political, academic, and artistic career were devoted to the fight against racism not only in Brazil, but with a Pan-African perspective. Most of his artworks depict symbols related to religions of African origin. His canvases are simultaneously didactic and celebratory, invoking the deities while inciting the viewers

[73] *Abdias Nascimento: um espírito libertador*, organized by Pablo León de La Barra and Raphael Fonseca at the Museu de Arte Contemporânea de Niterói, 2019; A memória é uma invenção, organized by Beatriz Lemos, Keyna Eleison e Pablo Lafuente at MAM Rio, 2021-22; *Abdias Nascimento, um artista panamefricano*, organized by Amanda Carneiro and Tomás Toledo at the Museu de Arte de São Paulo Assis Chateaubriand, 2022; and four shows that explore diferent aspects of Nascimento's oeuvre, including his theatrical work, at Instituto Inhotim.

to take up the fight of their ancestors for a future free of oppression. The chapter shows that these were potent symbols and ideas also inspired Euro-Brazilian artists.

The third chapter analyzes a selection of works that revolve around the idea of circulation and exchange of information and that involved the viewers to participate in acts of trickery and clever sabotage to challenge the repressive regime. Cildo Meireles's famous *Insertions* acted on pre-existing systems of exchange to circulate subversive messages while avoiding censorship and possible violent repercussions. His subterfuges engaged the receivers in cunning acts. Antonio Manuel, on the contrary, selected as support of his works one of the most surveilled media, the newspapers. Thanks to personal contacts, he was able to infiltrate the printing room of the newspaper *O Dia*, and create and distribute unplausible stories. The artist also explored the newspaper's creative potential as an artistic support, as well as an alternative exhibition venue. Claudia Calirman and Artur Freitas wrote about the work of these canonical artists. Here, though, I am interpreting it through the lens of *malandragem*, offering new insights. This chapter, thus, is a litmus test for my methodology. Moreover, the chapter considers also a lesser studied production by Manuel and Meireles, creating a dialogue with well-known artworks. The chapter concludes with an analysis of the twenty-year artistic collaboration between Paulo Bruscky and Daniel Santiago, two artists from the northeastern city of Recife who experimented with mail art, collective performances, and classifieds. They both worked as civil servants in order not to depend on the sale of their works or art institutions for their livelihood. Theirs was a conscious choice not to participate in nor submit to the rules of the art market. This gave them freedom to experiment with a number of media and communication technologies.

With their actions and proposals, they subverted communication systems, involved the receivers in their artistic actions, and used ambiguous and ironic language to confuse the censors. Humor has been their anti-tyranny strategy against oppression and fear.

In the conclusions I offer an analysis of the oeuvre of the São Paulo artistic collective Frente 3 de Fevereiro, which formed in 2004 in reaction to the killing of Flávio Sant'Ana, a 28-year-old Afro-Brazilian dentist, by the Military Police after being mistaken for a robber. The group has been producing research and actions around three intertwined themes: police racism, the myth of racial democracy, and the architecture of exclusion in urban centers. Their work dialogues with the themes and strategies used by artists during the military-civil dictatorship. I demonstrate that Frente 3 de Fevereiro used *malandragem* combined with a meticulous study of the circumstances to infiltrate official broadcasting services and disseminate its messages to a large audience, thus challenging the hegemonic regimes of visibility. The work of this collective exemplifies how the concept of *malandragem* can serve as an interpretative framework for understanding artistic forms of resistance that emerged during the twentieth century and up to this day, extending beyond the era of authoritarian regime.

Chapter 1

From Carnival Parades to the Biennial: We Write Samba on the Wild Asphalt[74]

> "A malandragem é um curso primário/ que a qualquer é bem necessário/ É o arranco da prática da vida/ Somente a morte decide ao contrário."
> "*Malandragem* is primary education / Necessary for anyone / It is the start of the practice of life / Only death decides otherwise."
> – Heitor dos Prazeres, *Ora Vejam Só*, 1927

Between 1970 and 1978 artist Hélio Oiticica (1937-1980) lived in New York City, making a living as a freelance translator and working nights at the All Language company. One night in 1974, his friend and photographer Andreas Valentin shot a Super-8 film of Oiticica arriving for work.[75] [Figure 1.1] The film shows him entering a smoke-filled office, where the wall clock reads 2 a.m. Wearing red bell-bottoms, a blue shirt, large wrap-around glasses with silver frames and dark lenses, and sporting long hair combed back, he smirks at the camera. Coffee cup in hand, he adjusts the glasses and strolls down the dull office corridor, flanked by shelves covered in cardboard boxes and piles of paper reams, as if it were a catwalk. Aware that he is being followed, he makes a lewd hand gesture to the camera without even turning to look. He dawdles as he passes coworkers sitting at small desks along the wall. He is in no hurry to get to work. He engages again with the camera, with a sly smile, while approaching the office of Ms. Besner, the supervisor who gives orders to the employees by microphone. Unconcerned about interrupting a conversation,

[74] The expression is taken from the song "Poema rítmico do malandro" (1969) mentioned in the essay. It is from the album *Alucinolândia* by Zito Righi e seu conjunto featuring singer Sônia Santos, author of the lyrics.
[75] *All Language*, directed by Andreas Valentin, New York, 1974, Super-8, 3:30. Accessed May 7, 2021 https://vimeo.com/95866763.

he slides between two colleagues who are standing at the door. With his languid saunter, insolent attitude, resistance to authority, and unique sartorial style, Oiticica embodies the *malandro*, although transplanted from Rio de Janeiro to New York. This impression is reinforced by the soundtrack to Valentin's video, with the song "Poema rítmico do malandro"[76] (Malandro's Rhythmic Poem, 1969) playing in the background. The lyrics, describe the *malandro* as the owner of the world ("O dono do mundo"), a charismatic bon vivant who descends from the dirt roads of the *morro* to the asphalt of the city to play, dance, gamble and drink all night, yet, will turn violent if provoked, singing "I'll never run, they'll kill me or I'll kill!"[77]

Contrary to the *malandro* celebrated in the song, who leaves the poverty of the favela for the bourgeois boulevards of the city center, around 1964 Oiticica took the reverse path, leaving the elegant avenues of Jardim Botânico where he lived with his upper middle-class family to climb the maze of streets of Morro da Mangueira (Mangueira Hill) where, borrowing the words of his friend and poet Waly Salomão, "fez os batismos da malandragem," he was baptized in *malandragem* (trickery).[78] There, he befriended some residents of Mangueira, studied samba dancing,[79] and had his sexual initiation stepping outside heteronormative social expectations.[80] Oiticica had a particular admiration for the *malandros*, claiming to be close friends with the "SUPER REALEZA DA

[76] See note 74.
[77] "Se pensam que é fácil levar essa vida / enganam-se, caros, posição atrevida / é demais o cansaço, terrível e duro / jogar o baralho, jogar capoeira / fazer samba à toa, beber noite inteira! / Que vida mais besta, que coisa mais linda / ser bamba no morro, ser sambista de fato / dizer: "nunca corro, me matam ou mato!"
[78] Salomão, *Qual é o parangolé*, 55.
[79] Samba is an Afro-Brazilian music and dance which originated from religious rhythms.
[80] Oiticica in Salomão, *Qual é o parangolé*, 109.

MALANDRAGEM"[81] and even have a cryptographed map of their hiding places in Mangueira, where they found shelter against police raids.[82] At 26, the artist sought to de-intellectualize his practice and go against "*o condicionamento burguês*" (bourgeois conditioning) that characterized his upbringing,[83] exerting a cultural transgression that few people would have undertaken, and that Oiticica romanticized and mythologized in his own writings.[84] Although many have written about the importance of Oiticica's experiences in Mangueira to his artistic practice, few have considered how *malandragem*, specifically, informed his development.

Of course, Oiticica was not the first artist to inhabit the *malandro*. Heitor dos Prazeres (1898-1966), an artist from a previous generation, represents the *boêmio-malandro*,[85] one who is always oscillating, or *gingando,* between the bohemian world and that of *malandragem*. He was a samba composer, a "bamba among the bambas,"[86] the life of carnival parties. Concerned with style, he was always elegantly dressed in suits he tailored himself. [Figure 1.2] He expressed his passion for women through lyrics and paintings, and his fortunes and affairs were reported by journalists and friends. Although

---

[81] Hélio Oiticica, "Instruções para impressão, texto e fotos ho para status," 1976. AHO 172.76, p.2. Throughout the text, unpublished documents from the archive of Hélio Oiticica are marked by document number assigned by the Arquivo Hélio Oiticica (AHO).

[82] Salomão, *Qual é o parangolé*, 46.

[83] Hélio Oiticica, "A dança na minha experiência," November 12, 1965. AHO 120.65.

[84] See Michael Asbury, "O Hélio não tinha ginga / Hélio Couldn't Dance," in *Fios soltos: a arte de Hélio Oiticica*, ed. Paula Braga (São Paulo: Perspectiva, 2008), 27-65.

[85] Alba Lírio and Heitor dos Prazeres Filho, *Heitor Dos Prazeres: Sua arte e seu tempo* (Rio de Janeiro: ND Comunicação, 2003), 29.

[86] *Bamba* can be translated as hoodlum. The term *bamba* comes from the Quimbundo word *mbamba*, meaning master, the one who has a great expertise in something, "aquele que tem gingado," the one who has gingado, the one who sways, and by extension the one who knows how to dance, who moves sensuously and self-confidently. Bamba also means "bom de briga," a skilled *capoeirista*. The word *bamba* is alternatively used as synonym of the word "bambúrrio," meaning luck in the game, chance, casualty, unexpected luck. The difficulty of defining a word of so numerous meanings might recall the word *parangolé*, also used in the *gíria*, the slang, in Brazil.

most of his life revolved around Praça Onze and Mangue in the port area of Rio de Janeiro –an area he is credited for baptizing Pequena África (Little Africa)[87]– he was cosmopolitan in that he moved between different environments, from batuque to ballets, from elegant salons with a middle-class, international clientele to carnival parades, mingling with different social classes. A skilled *capoeirista*,[88] dos Prazeres was known as the "capoeira dos bons," so feared that his adversaries often chose not to confront him. With the typical duality of *malandros*, dos Prazeres had a double life, one dedicated to *malandragem*, the other spent working as newspaper seller, carpenter, typographer, shoemaker, tailor, and, eventually as a civil servant in the Ministry of Education and Culture, and at the National Radio to provide for his large family. Aside from the legendary anecdotes, dos Prazeres was multi-talented, writing songs that celebrated *malandragem*, and repeatedly depicting *malandros* in his paintings.

Although it might seem unusual to pair the work of a figurative painter like dos Prazeres with that of Oiticica, an artist who not only never produced representational art, but even declared the death of traditional painting and dedicated his career to transposing medium into space and time, in fact the culture of *malandragem* brings the two oeuvres together. Dos Prazeres used *malandragem* to infiltrate a hostile cultural and social

[87] Roberto Moura, *Tia Ciata e a Pequena África no Rio de Janeiro* (Coleção Biblioteca Carioca, Funarte, Rio de Janeiro, 1983).

[88] *Capoeirista* is a practitioner of capoeira, an Afro-Brazilian martial art which combines movement, music, game, and rituals, that was criminalized since the sixteenth century. Africans and their descendants used music and the lack of physical contact between the participants to disguise the slave owners from capoeira's true essence and purpose, and hone a form of cultural and physical resistance. After its legalization in 1937, though, the state co-opted it and transformed it into a national sport and international phenomenon. In 2014 UNESCO added capoeira to the List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

environment that relegated his artwork to the derisive categories of "naïf" and "primitive." With chicanery, he exploited these same labels to shake up the hegemonic art system. His tactics should be considered precursors to the strategies that artists working under the military-civil dictatorship would enact decades later to express dissent, as in the case of Hélio Oiticica. In what follows, I consider how the work of a seemingly minor artist from a previous generation, Heitor dos Prazeres, was profoundly consequential in establishing the foundations of the cultural environment that artists who came of age in the 1960s and 70s would draw from.

Estado Novo

Dos Prazeres began seriously dedicating himself to painting around 1937, the year which saw the beginning of the Estado Novo (New State), the authoritarian regime that lasted until 1945 under the rule of President Getúlio Vargas. Although Afro-Brazilians had begun to infiltrate and permeate the mainstream cultural scene through their creativity and perseverance, official attitudes towards Afro-Brazilian culture began changing as the Vargas government created specific policies to build a strong and recognizable national identity.[89] This marked a change from earlier times, when prejudice against Afro-descendants was so ingrained that the government forbade and persecuted all cultural

[89] In 1932, for example, Rio de Janeiro's carnival receives sponsorship from the government and becomes a national festival. Starting from 1935 samba schools are recognized, legalized and required to register under the name of Grémio Recreativo Escola de Samba. Parades are made official and financed by the State. Samba schools are asked to collaborate to the official patriotic propaganda, and to stimulate the popular love for the country's national symbols and the national glories. See Oliven, "A elaboração de símbolos nacionais," and Shaw, "São Coisas Nossas."

manifestations, such as samba, and *capoeira*,[90] which had been criminalized since the sixteenth century. Scholars Lisa Shaw[91] and Ruben George Oliven[92] explain that the Vargas regime transformed manifestations of "ethnic identity," such as carnival, samba, and *capoeira*, into symbols of national identity, thus attenuating their power as practices of dissent and resistance. Anthropologist and historian Lilia Schwarcz calls this a process of "desafricanização" (de-Africanization).[93] Nevertheless, not every aspect of Afro-Brazilian culture was accepted and absorbed by the state. Afro-Brazilian religions, such as Candomblé and Umbanda, were still disapproved of. Furthermore, the *malandro*, by then an extremely popular character celebrated by samba composers, could not be tolerated by a government that co-opted the urban proletariat and supported an ideology of strong work ethic and productivity.

An expert in modern Brazilian art, Rafael Cardoso, explains that "The cultural policies of the first Vargas era were far from affirmative of racial difference but instead geared towards ensuring conformity to an abstract ideal of the collective, embodied in the nation and its leader." He stresses: "Racial distinctions, when recognized, provided a pretext for controlling individuals and policing deviance, not for organizing resistance or laying claim to representation."[94] Those who challenged the imposed order had to be purged. Vargas clearly recognized that *malandragem* was a rejection of the political system and the implicit social norms that govern society. And as such, it constituted a threat that had to be dealt

[90] See note 88.
[91] Shaw, "São Coisas Nossas."
[92] Oliven, "A elaboração de símbolos nacionais."
[93] Schwarcz, "Complexo de Zé Carioca," 55
[94] Cardoso, *Modernity in Black and White*, 230.

with. His government, therefore, intervened officially with the launch, in 1939, of the Departamento de Imprensa e Propaganda (DIP, Department of Press and Propaganda). One of the agency's goals was to redirect samba composers away from exalting *malandragem* and encourage them to praise labor. The DIP became so pervasive that it controlled all of the popular music played on Brazilian radio.[95] Composers were forbidden from mentioning any word related to the controversial trickster archetype. Like other cultural symbols, the *malandro* did not disappear completely but was momentarily tamed. Music critic Armando Migueis observed, "o samba resistiu a tôdas as provocações e censuras" (samba resisted all provocations and censorships).[96]

Dos Prazeres began his career in the visual arts under such circumstances. Author of a samba song that goes: "Deixa a malandragem se és capaz" (Leave *Malandragem* If You Are Able, 1927), the most popular motif sung in the carnival of 1928, he was hardly going to abide by the rules.[97] His canvases are celebrations of precisely the Afro-Brazilian culture that the government first repressed and then co-opted: scenes of dances, popular and religious festivities, children's games, and the quotidian existence of the Afro-

[95] Sérgio Cabral, "Getúlio Vargas e a música popular brasileira." *Ensaios de opinião* 2, no. 1 (1975).
[96] Armando Migueis, "O Negro no Rádio Brasileiro," *Revista do Rádio* (Rio de Janeiro) n. 46, 25 July 1950, 26-27.
[97] The song "Ora Vejam Só" (Well, Look!, 1927) was the subject of a dispute between Heitor dos Prazeres and another renowned songwriter, Sinhô (José Barbosa da Silva, 1888-1930). Dos Prazeres accused Sinhô of stealing this and another song, "Cassino Maxixe," which had been interpreted by singer Francisco Alves, and recording them under his name with only minor changes. When dos Prazeres confronted Sinhô about the matter, Sinhô famously replied, "samba is like a bird, whoever catches it, owns it" (Samba é como passarinho, a gente pega no ar). In response, dos Prazeres composed a song called "Olha ele, cuidado" (Look at Him, Be Careful, 1929) as a warning to other composers to protect their work from theft. Sinhô retaliated with his own samba called "Segura o Boi" (Hold the Ox). As Sinhô was known as the "king of samba," dos Prazeres composed the song "Rei dos Meus Sambas" (King of My Sambas) in response. Eventually, the dispute was resolved, and Sinhô paid dos Prazeres a financial settlement in recognition of the co-authorship of the song. This episode illustrates how composers used music and lyrics to resolve disputes instead of resorting to violence or legal action.

Brazilian population. If on the one hand the artist shrewdly exploited this new interest in Afro-Brazilian culture, which likely increased the commissions from a middle-class clientele, on the other he defied it, by continuing to represent aspects of his culture that the regime had neither absorbed nor accepted: the Afro-Brazilian religions and *malandragem*.

There are few surviving examples of artworks produced by the artist during the Estado Novo regime, and reproductions are rare.[98] The discussion, in this context, of paintings that dos Prazeres created in the later decades, when the country had returned to democracy, could be perceived as erroneous and misleading.[99] Such an analysis is conceivable only because there are themes and subjects that the artist repeatedly depicted throughout his life. As visual artist and curator Glaucea Helena de Britto remarked, as his career progressed, and especially starting from the 1950s, dos Prazeres portrayed only Black people in his paintings, with skin-tone variations demonstrating his intent in representing his Afro-Brazilian community not as homogeneous, but diverse instead.[100] By only representing people of African descent engaged in those cultural manifestations that the government had co-opted, he challenged the very principle of "desafricanização."

In his representations, the *malandros*, are portrayed serenading and paying court to women, dancing, always dressed in elegant suits, striped shirts, stylish shoes, and wearing

[98] Examples are: *St. John's Day* (1942), Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; *Caminho da Roça* (1942), and *Na Roça* (1942), Museu de Arte Moderna, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. For those in private collections, information is scarce, though sometimes paintings from his first decade of artistic production surface in online auction houses.
[99] Brazilians would choose Vargas as their leader in the democratic elections from 1951. Vargas was the president until 1954 when, unable to control a political crisis involving the military, he shot himself.
[100] Glaucea Helena de Britto, "Heitor dos Prazeres: protagonismo e arte" (lecture, Museu de Arte de São Paulo Assis Chateaubriand, São Paulo, Brazil, March 3, 2018). Accessed June 15, 2021, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X9elDlYFYU0.

the signature Panama hat. Through his art, Heitor dos Prazeres depicts Afro-Brazilian people reclaiming the public spaces that colonialism, slavery, and racism had denied them for centuries. This inversion is particularly provocative as the people occupying these spaces are *malandros*, samba players, and *capoeiras*, and all the characters are Black.[101] His paintings display an irreverent and defiant attitude, glorifying the charismatic bon vivant who enjoys bars and cabarets and the culture of *malandragem* with its disregard for mainstream social norms that the government sought to annihilate. In some of Dos Prazeres' canvases, the *malandros* engage in impudent behavior that would be considered contrary to good morals. They can be seen smoking and drinking around a billiard table, carousing and singing at a bar, or playing cards and cheating blatantly.

Jogo no Barraco (Game in the Shack, 1953) is an excellent example of such attitude. Though the artist's participation in the Bienal de São Paulo is analyzed in the next section, it is worth mentioning that in 1953 he sent four artworks to the second iteration of the event. One of them, *Jogo no Barraco*, portrays a group of four *malandros* drinking cachaça and playing cards. The newspaper *Correio da Manhã* printed an image of the painting on January 31, 1954. [Figure 1.3] This black and white reproduction allows for a limited analysis. Nevertheless, in 1965 the artist produced an almost identical painting, *Jogo do Baralho* (Card Game). [Figure 1.4] Like in the original, the four men are gathered in a sparsely furnished room, likely located at the rear of a house where they can gamble undisturbed. Three of them are sitting around a square wooden table, engrossed in a game

[101] Jorge Luiz Barbosa, "A Atlântida Negra: a utopia da cidade afro-brasileira nas paisagens estéticas de Heitor dos Prazeres" (paper presented at the XIV Coloquio Internacional de Geocrítica, Barcelona, 2-6 May, 2016).

of cards, while the fourth stands and watches. In the background, an open door (in the version featured in the Biennial there was also a window) offers a glimpse of another room with a white and black lozenged patterned floor. The scene depicts the most stylish of the four *malandros*, wearing a full grey suit, matching hat, and white shirt, confidently claiming victory while smoking a cigar. He nonchalantly collects all the cards on the table with his right hand while patting the shoulder of the *malandro* to his left, causing his fellow players to stare in disbelief or protest with their mouths agape. Dos Prazeres conveys movement in the scene by depicting the bench on which the character on the left is sitting, falling to the ground as he leans in to get a closer look at the winner and the cards. The tilted and almost radial floorboards create an illusion of depth, but the perspectival rendering is so skew that it gives the impression that the room is spinning, much like the confusion in the minds of the *malandros* as they try to figure out how they lost the game. As a matter of fact, the viewer can deduce that the two losers had been cheating: the *malandro* on the left has a diamond card sticking out of his trousers' pocket, while the *malandro* on the right has concealed a card, possibly a club or a spade, beneath his buttocks. Like the characters in his paintings, Dos Prazeres cleverly deceives his audience, presenting the *malandro* who has gained the upper hand in the card game seated behind the table and facing the viewer, making it impossible to know whether he has played more tricks than the others, perhaps having a fake ace up his sleeve.

The artist created a significant body of work featuring *malandros* cheating at card games. While these paintings humorously represent the culture of *malandragem*, they also engage in a dialogue with a long-standing art historical tradition of depicting card playing,

reminiscent of notable works such as Caravaggio's *The Cardsharps* (c.1595), Georges de La Tour's *The Cheat with Ace of Clubs* (c.1630-34), and Paul Cézanne's *The Card Players* (1890-1892), with which *Jogo no Barraco* shares compositional similarities. [Figure 1.5] The *malandros* would continue to populate Heitor dos Prazeres's canvases until the end of his life in 1966. By then, Brazil was already under the power of another dictatorship, and many artists adopted *malandragem* as a strategy to circulate subversive messages within the repressive regime and the conservative artistic institutions. Through this, they produced many works that celebrate and memorialize the figure of the *malandro* as symbol of survival and resistance.

Participation in the Game – Participation Is Pleasure

In 1966, Hélio Oiticica presented a billiard table as an artwork at the group show *Opinião 66* that opened on August 25 at the Museu de Arte Moderna (Museum of Modem Art, MAM) in Rio de Janeiro. [Figure 1.6] While attracted to the plastic beauty of the object, he claimed that the work was not about its aesthetic qualities but aimed to "reveal the vital meaning of the act of this game."[102] The fundamental meaning was participation. The work existed as long as someone was playing: as soon as a game was over, the work, too, would end, temporarily or completely. "Is this art?" asked the artist. "The game is, after all, the key to the meaning of anti-art."[103]

[102] Oiticica, "Parangolé Lúdico," August 25, 1966. AHO 0255.66-237.
[103] Ibid.

The artist constructed an environment around the billiard table, with a black and a red wall that would dim the pool table lights and create the impression of a night scene to resemble the atmosphere in Vincent Van Gogh's *Le Café de nuit* (The Night Café, 1888). Oiticica stated, in fact, that the work was a homage to critic Mário Pedrosa (1900-1981), who had observed a similarity between his earlier series of *Núcleos* (1960-1966), chromatic environments created by wooden panels of geometric shapes painted in different shades of the same color hanging from the ceiling, and the billiard in a café at night painted by the Dutch artist. This reference is reflected in the work's title, *Apropriação—Mesa de bilhar, d'aprés "O Café Noturno" de Van Gogh* (Appropriation—Snooker Room, after Van Gogh's "Night Café"). Many of the *Núcleos* present shades of orange and yellow, colors emphasized in the Post-Impressionist's canvas. The *Núcleos* were the basis of what Oiticica called "environmental art," that is, the construction of environments that sparked from his wish to put an end to easel painting (a.k.a. traditional art) and open the possibilities for the participation of the spectator who could enter the work, walking within the suspended panels. [Figure 1.7]

The artist had begun his career producing two-dimensional works and the *Núcleos* were a three-dimensional transposition in space of his earlier series of abstract drawings *Metaesquemas* (1956-1958). But while the *Núcleos* were built as a structured environment that would only allow a structured participation, according to the artist the billiard table was a free proposal for free participation. In the text *A participaçã no jogô* (The participation in the game, 1966) that he wrote to elucidate how he had come to presenting the billiard table as a work of art Oiticica explained:

> There I discovered in a definitive way the meaning of the game as participation; that is, the free proposal of the game in place of the structure-work to be participated. […] I never felt more satisfied in seeing with how much satisfaction the players participated in the work. […] Everyone, I included, discover the game, that is the "pleasure" element in the game. This is really important: the work is pleasure, and as such it can only be free (you play whenever you wish, or if you know the rules of the game, etc.)[104]

When visitors of MAM freely decided to engage with the work, they would experiment a "free participation in pleasure." Van Gogh's painting might have been the inspiration for *Mesa de bilhar* and allowed the artist to theorize his passage from the drawings (*Metaesquemas*) to the structured environment (*Núcleos*), to the free participation in the game (Billiard table/anti-art). Yet, his first-hand experience of attending snooker and billiard games in bars was equally important, especially to conceive the game as pleasure, something that is instead muted in Van Gogh's canvas. In a photograph by Andreas Valentin, we see Oiticica and fellow artists Antonio Manuel, and Lygia Pape around a billiard table, the only White people in a crowded room. [Figure 1.8] Nildo da Mangueira,[105] a young man whom Oiticica often invited to participate in his artworks, is playing billiards with another man wearing a Panama hat, evoking the imagery of Heitor dos Prazeres's paintings of *malandros* playing billiards. [Figure 1.9] The walls of the room are painted pink, while the multiple doors are varnished in green, the signature colors of Estação Primeira da Mangueira, the samba school where Oiticica learned how to dance samba and of which Heitor dos Prazeres was one of the founders in 1928. They are, in fact,

[104] Oiticica, "A participação no jogô," September 4, 1966, AHO 0251.66.
[105] Nildo da Mangueira was an excellent *passista* (expert samba dancer, specifically in samba school parades). Many photographs depict him activating Oiticica's *Parangolés*, artworks examined in the following pages.

in the bar of the samba school. The wall behind them features a painted circle containing the name of the school, its slogan "tem que respeitar meu tamborim" (you have to respect my tambourine), and the image of a *malandro* next to the school's logo. Valentin's photograph, as well as Oiticica's built environment for *Mesa de bilhar,* could be interpreted as representations in different media of Heitor dos Prazeres's paintings of *malandros* playing billiards in bars with colorful walls and beer-full glasses circulating.

Both Oiticica and dos Prazeres use their art to evoke a sense of pleasure and enjoyment. The malandro-sambista,[106] as he was known, even carried pleasure in his very name, which literally translates as "Heitor of the Pleasures." In a documentary by Antonio Carlos da Fontoura (1965), the artist stated:

> I am Heitor dos Prazeres. Heitor dos Prazeres is my name. This pleasure that I have in the name is the pleasure I share with the people. […] The joy of this people, the suffering of this people is what compels me to work. It is what makes me transport the suffering of the people to the canvas. I am this people, a man of the people. […] I represent a piece of the people. I am the egg, and the people are the incubator."[107]

The artist felt a full identification with his community. Although some artworks do, indeed, represent labor and hardship, the majority of his canvases depict Black people having fun, enjoying life, expressing their creativity, talents, and identity in a community

[106] Muniz Sodré, *Samba O Dono Do Corpo*. 2nd ed. (Rio de Janeiro: MAUAD 1998): 87.

[107] "Eu sou Heitor dos Prazeres. Heitor dos Prazeres é o meu nome. Este prazer que eu tenho no nome é o prazer que eu divido com o povo. Este povo com quem eu reparto este prazer. Este povo que sofre, este povo que trabalha, este povo alegre que eu compartilho a alegria desse povo. A alegria deste povo, o sofrimento deste povo é o que me obriga a trabalhar. É o que me faz transportar para a tela o sofrimento do povo. Este povo que sou eu, um homem do povo. Não há nada mais sublime do que a massa humana. O povo é a massa humana, é a voz do sangue, o povo é a carne humana, o povo é o aconchego, o povo é tudo. Eu para o povo represento um pedaço. Eu sou o ovo e o povo é a chocadeira."

catharsis.[108] Depictions of joy are the most powerful and subversive response to a government and society that tried to eradicate expressions of Afro-Brazilian identity.[109]

Under different racial and social conditions, Oiticica, operating under the military-civil dictatorship, became a proposer of situations in which others could experiment in, participate in, play, and enjoy. Yet, he was attracted not only to the playful, pleasurable, and festive aspects of the life of *malandragem*, but also to its negative connotations that associated it with the refusal to work, with vagabondage, and potential criminality. The artist declared: "I have always liked that which is forbidden, the life of *malandragem* that represents adventure, the life of people who live in an intense and immediate way because they are at risk. I spent much of my life visiting my friends in prison."[110] The artist produced works to honor these friends, such as *B33 Bólide caixa 18 caixa-poema 2*, "Homenagem à Cara de Cavalo" (B33 Box Bólide 18, Box-Poem 2, "Homage to Cara de Cavalo", 1966) examined in chapter two, a tribute to his friend Cara de Cavalo, a *pé-de-chinelo*,[111] an inconsequential outlaw who lived of expedients, and who was brutally murdered by the police after being accused of killing a police officer. Other artworks, such as *P11 Parangolé-capa 7, Sexo e violência, é isso que me agrada* (P11 Parangolé-cape 7, Sex and Violence is What I Like, 1966) from the same year, extols the rebelliousness of illicit life

[108] In their book *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media* (Taylor & Francis Group, 2014) Ella Shohat and Robert Stam examine the movie *Quartier Mozart* and argue that it presents ethnic exposition, social antagonist, racial anagnorisis (self-recognition), and *community* catharsis (p.301). These characterizations could by applied to dos Prazeres's canvases.
[109] It is in this spirit that writer and activist Juliana Borges composed the phrase "Uma mulher negra feliz é uma ato revolucionário" (A Happy Black Woman Is a Revolutionary Act) which was transformed into a work of art by Mônica Ventura who rendered it in pink neon lights.
[110] Oiticica quoted in Salomão, *Qual é o parangolé*, 47.
[111] Salomão, *Qual é o parangolé*, 43.

in the face of an authoritarian regime that had declared the hunt for criminals open with the slogan "Bandido bom é bandido morto" (A good bandit is a dead bandit). Besides these direct references, "with the *malandragem do morro,* [Hélio Oiticica] learned the value of sinuous ambiguity,"[112] an attitude he would exploit over time to challenge both art institutions and social norms.

Carnival at the Biennial

In 1951, the São Paulo Biennial was conceived as a Eurocentric cultural project aimed at placing Brazil within the world map of the most important artistic events and promoting the image of a modernizing country. The prizes awarded at the first iteration rewarded artists working in a range of styles. Most famously, Swiss artist Max Bill received the first international prize for sculpture with his stainless-steel *Tripartite Unity* (1948-49), an abstract work based on the mathematical principle of the Möbius strip.[113] However, the self-taught dos Prazeres, who had begun painting consistently in his forties, was also recognized by the judges, winning the third national prize for the small oil painting *Moenda* (Mill).[114] The stylistic discrepancies are made especially evident in the exhibition catalog, where they occupy facing pages. [Figure 1.10] Dos Prazeres's canvases are celebrations of

[112] Ibid., 52.
[113] For more on the reception of Bill's work in Brazil: Angela Lammert, "The 'Swiss Watch-maker' and the 'Jungle in Construction'—Max Bill and Modernism in Brazil or: What is Modern Art?" In *O desejo da forma*, ed. Kudielka, Lammert, and Osorio, 259–269 (Berlin, Akademie der Künste, 2010); and Ronaldo Brito, *Neoconcretismo: Vértice e ruptura do projeto construtivo brasileiro* (Rio de Janeiro: Cosac & Naify Edições, 1999).
[114] With *Moenda*, dos Prazeres won the third national prize for painting (Prêmio Toddy de Aquisição). Besides *Moenda*, he presented two other oil paintings: *Calango* (Calango is the name of a dance typical of the state of Minas Gerais) and *Feira Livre*.

Afro-Brazilian culture and identity, depicting local urban and rural environments, real and imagined. Contrary to geometric abstract artworks in vogue at that time, the racial stratification of Brazilian society is blatant in his production. The exploration of social and racial themes put his work in dialogue with that of modernist artists like Emiliano di Cavalcanti (1897-1976), Tarsila do Amaral (1886-1973), Anita Malfatti (1889-1964), and Candido Portinari (1903-1962), who from the 1920s through the 1940s centered their artistic production on representations of ethnicity and labor. These representations, though, tend to exoticize, stereotype, sexualize, and racialize the subjects. The success that these artists enjoyed is exemplified by the fact that Portinari was disparagingly labeled by his antagonists the "official" artist of the Estato Novo, after he was commissioned to create a series of mural paintings for the Ministry of Education and Health (MES), a building designed by a team of architects including Lúcio Costa and Oscar Niemeyer, built between 1936 and 1945, the span of the Vargas regime. According to Rafael Cardoso, "[r]egardless of the intentions of individual artists, their rendering of the subaltern into folklore and/or lampoon perpetuated stereotypes and ultimately had the effect of excluding the objects of their ethnographic incursions from the modernity to which they themselves laid claim."[115] The case of Heitor dos Prazeres confirms this reading. Art criticism fossilized his work in the categories of "primitive," "popular," and "naïf,"[116] all linked to ideas of static tradition incapable of change, thus excluding the artist from the history of modern art.

[115] Cardoso, *Modernity in Black and White*, 13-14.
[116] For more on the labeling of Heitor dos Prazeres as a "primitive" painter see Sheila Cabo Geraldo, "Heitor dos Prazeres: A imensa riqueza interna e a instauração da arte." *MODOS: Revista de História da Arte* 5, no. 1 (2021): 54-73; and Patricia Miranda D'Avila, "Primitivo, naïf, ingênuo: um estudo da recepção e notas para uma interpretação da pintura de Heitor dos Prazeres" (PhD diss. Universidade de São Paulo, 2009).

A reassessment of popular culture, motivated by the resurgence of discussions about national cultural identity in the 1950s, likely prompted the selection of a work by a so-called "primitive" artist for a national prize at the first Biennial.[117] Three months before the opening of the Biennial the "Lei Afonso Arinos," the first Law in the Brazilian Constitution to make racial discrimination a misdemeanor, was passed. The Law was created to respond to situations where Black people had been discriminated and prohibited from accessing prestigious venues with a predominantly white audience, such as restaurants and cabarets, but also concert halls and theaters. The passing of such law was the result of demands and fights led by Black social movements and could have led to the participation of Afro-Brazilian artists in the first iteration of the São Paulo Biennial, with dos Prazeres being awarded a prize.[118]

Moenda, depicts an Afro-Brazilian woman and man working at a sugarcane mill in the countryside. [Figure 1.11] Sugar was the mainstay of Portugal's colonial economy for the first 250 years of colonization, with the Iberian country having the virtual monopoly of sugar offer in the European markets until the second half of the 17th century.[119] A very labor-intensive crop, sugar both boosted the Atlantic slave trade at the beginning of the colonial period and delayed its abolition in Brazil in the late nineteenth century, given that

[117] Lina Bo Bardi particularly contributed to the valorization of popular culture with exhibitions she curated, such as "Vitrine das Formas" (1950) at the Museum of Art of São Paulo (MASP); *Bahia*, part of the Fifth International São Paulo Biennial (1959); and the Museu de Arte Popular in Salvador, Bahia, in 1963. Another important figure for the debate on popular culture was Ferreira Gullar, who directed the Centro Popular de Cultura in Rio de Janeiro from 1962 to 1964.
[118] Bruno Pinheiro, "Moenda de Heitor dos Prazeres, medalha de prata na I Bienal do Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo," *Revista de História da Arte e da Cultura* 2.2 (2021): 138. Other Afro-Brazilian artists to participate in the first São Paulo Biennial were Tomás Santa Rosa and Antônio Bandeira.
[119] Rafael de Bivar Marquese, "Economia Escravista Mundial," in *Dicionário da escravidão e liberdade: 50 Textos críticos*, ed. Lilia M. Schwarcz, and Flávio S. Gomes (São Paulo: Companhia das letras, 2018), 204.

sugar planters were among the largest slave owners and constituted a relevant interest group in the national debate on abolition.[120] Dos Prazeres's canvas, thus, is a clear reference to Brazil's colonial past and its reliance on slave labor to propel the economy, with its history of inhumane exploitation of Africans and their descendants. Like several other artworks by the artist, it dialogues with a long and vast tradition of art historical depictions of Brazil's history, population, and economy.[121] Slavery, sugar, and mill technology are in fact the subject of many prints produced by European traveler artists who visited Brazil in the nineteenth century, with those by Johann Moritz Rugendas (1802-1858) [Figure 1.12] and Jean Baptiste Debret (1768-1848) [Figure 1.13] being among the most well-known. According to curators K. Dian Kriz, Susan Danforth and Elena Daniele, in print culture the mill signifies white ingenuity.[122] In fact, the Portuguese word "engenho," which literally translates as mill, also means ingenuity. The plantation owner is called "senhor de engenho," or master of ingenuity. *Moenda*, instead, is a painting by an artist of African descent depicting the history of exploitation of his people and who was labeled "ingênuo" by his contemporaries. *Ingênuo*, which literally translates as ingenuous, in juridical

[120] J. H. Galloway, "The Last Years of Slavery on the Sugar Plantations of Northeastern Brazil." *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 51, no. 4 (1971), 586.
[121] In his text "*Três "primitivos"," on the work of painters Heitor dos Prazeres,* José Bernardo Cardoso Júnior, and José Antônio da Silva, Rubem Braga writes that dos Prazeres produced paintings about racial revindication. In particular, he mentions a work where a White waitress serves a Black family dining, a twist of the print by Jean Baptiste Debret "Family dining" (c. 1820) showing a White family at dinner on a coffee plantation with the woman feeding scraps to a Black naked child as if he was a pet, while Black servants oversee the scene and a Black woman cools the air with a fan. Another example mentioned by Braga is the painting "Os Refugiados" (The Refugees), depicting people carrying their belongings expelled from their houses in the favelas. See Rubem Braga, *Três "primitivos,"* (Rio de Janeiro: Ministério da Educação e Saúde, Serviço de Documentação, 1953), 13.
[122] Sugar and the Visual Imagination in the Atlantic World, circa 1600-1860. The John Carter Brown Library, 2013. https://www.brown.edu/Facilities/John_Carter_Brown_Library/exhibitions/sugar/pages/mill.html.

language denotes the child of enslaved parents who is born free, thus close to dos Prazeres's family history.

The display of the painting at the Biennial underscored the contradictions of Brazilian society, contraposing the utopia that a small elite aspired to, to the reality of much of the population. In the painting, the work tools that the couple carries, a bucket and a hoe, are hardly industrial. The "white gold" is pouring from the roller mill into a wooden tub, while the sugar cane that grows all around seems to engulf them. The woman and man do not look at the liquid, and turn their backs to the viewers, to suggest that the sugary substance will not sweeten their hard labor. They are wearing straw hats and have rolled-up sleeves to signify the backbreaking nature of the toil. Dos Prazeres contributes to the history of Brazilian art with its numerous depictions of sugarcane mills, and yet offers a more dignified portrayal of the laborers than in traditional depictions.

The artist could have sent other paintings to the exhibition, like his more popular compositions portraying festivities and dances. Instead, in a choice that is all but "naïf," he presented *Moenda,* which negates the developmentalist agenda of the Biennial and Brazilian government and reveals not only the recentness of slavery, but also its legacy, with the lack of improvements in the quality of life and work conditions for a big share of the population, in particular those of Afro-Brazilian descent.

If the participation of a Black self-taught artist in such a prominent international event attracted the attention of the critics, the fact that he was awarded a prize was received

with disbelief and patronizing remarks.[123] When it was made public that the dos Prazeres was a low-ranking civil servant, the Minister of Education and Culture Simões Filho promised to promote him to a position befitting his artistic vocation. The artist was invited to meet the President of the Republic, Getúlio Vargas, who had been democratically re-elected in 1951 and who recommended that the "humble servant" be provided with every possible means to support his artistic inclination. A shower of newspaper articles provided unsolicited recommendations that the artist should be given the chance to improve his artistic education, enrolling in the Escola de Belas Artes (School of Fine Arts), or being sent to Paris, as Swiss critic Sigfried Giedion (1888-1968) suggested.[124] Despite being awarded a prize at the country's most prestigious art event, this alone was not enough to prove his value as a painter in the eyes of the conservative and bigoted art world.

Stereotypes that see Africans and their descendants as "primitive," "simple," "humble," and submissive predate the Atlantic slave trade and are long-lasting. They served to justify slavery first, and uneven social opportunities and discrimination after the abolition. These stereotypes contrast with the concurrent characterization of Black people as deceitful, untrustworthy, and cunning. According to Jamaican-born British sociologist Stuart Hall, these ambivalent stereotypes "betray the fact that, though the adapted slave

---

[123] See, for example, "Heitor dos Prazeres, Terceiro Prêmio da Bienal," *Correio da manhã*, Rio de Janeiro, October 26, 1951, 7; "No Catete o Pintor-Contínuo do Ministério da Educação," *Correio da manhã*, Rio de Janeiro, October 30, 1951, 4; and "Contínuo do Ministério da Educação o Terceiro Prêmio da Primeira Bienal," Rio de Janeiro, *Última Hora*, October 24, 1951, 2.
The jury of the first Biennial was composed by Jan van As (Netherlands), Eric Newton (United Kingdom), René D'Harnoncourt (U.S.), Marco Valsecchi (Italy), Jacques Lassaigne (France), Jorge Romero Brest (Argentina), Sérgio Milliet and Tomás Santa Rosa, and Lourival Gomes Machado, artistic directr of the Biennial (Brazil).

[124] "Sigfried Giedion Fala…", *Correio da Manhã*, January 6, 1954. See also the article "Heitor dos Prazeres terá meios para aperfeiçoar sua arte," *Correio da Manhã*, October 30, 1951.

could produce–present– those forms of dependency, submission, and fawning flattery which the slave-owner class constantly required, as a symptom that 'all is well in the world of slavery,' […] [the] total adaptation to unfreedom could *never* be depended on."[125] In this game of ambivalences, if the enslaved wanted to fool the owners, they had to play-act, "mak[ing] a joke with a straight face or produce one so ambiguous as to be capable of being "read" two-ways, covering one kind of laughter (the laughter of fear, ridicule and contempt) with another."[126] And so did dos Prazeres on the occasion of the Biennial. Soon after having returned from São Paulo, he launched a song for the upcoming carnival, *Carnaval na Bienal* (Carnival at the Biennial), recorded by Mary Gonçalves with orchestra and chorus:

Chorus

Eu vou fantasiar-me de pintor	I'm going to dress up as a painter
Eu vou para São Paulo	I'm going to São Paulo
Eu vou pra Bienal	I'm going to the Biennial
Eu vou ficar bem original	I will be very original
E lá eu vou fazer o meu carnaval	And there I will make my carnival

Solo

Um cavalhete oi	An easel oh
Uma palhete oi	A palette oh
E um modêlo bem original	And a very original model
E lá eu vou fazer o meu carnaval	And there I will make my carnival

As if assuming a persona, the protagonist of the song dons the attire of a painter. Heitor employs self-parody while also drawing attention to the fact that he was not taken

[125] Hall, 171.
[126] Ibid.

seriously by the elite. For Cardoso, "[t]he sense of belonging culturally to more than one sphere at once, and of habitually seeing oneself through the eyes of another, is frequently redressed in Brazilian culture by strategies of using humor, play-acting and sham as form of liberation from impossible social strictures. Thus, the centrality of carnival."[127] Dos Prazeres was self-aware of the different perceptions that social groups had of him navigating across different social, racial, and cultural environments, and turned this to his advantage. This light-hearted carnival march ridicules the art world's pompousness and elitism. The lyrics were divulged in the *Correio da Manhã* in an article tellingly titled "À margem do Museu de Arte Moderna, Carnaval na Bienal" (At the margin of the Museum of Modern Art, Carnival in the Biennial, 1952). And because the radio repeatedly broadcasted carnival songs, and in light of their repetitive character, one can picture members of the cultural elite humming this mocking song.

About fifteen years later, there was another attempt to bring carnival to the museum, when Hélio Oiticica paraded through the Museu de Arte Moderna, to the sound of samba with dancers and musicians from Mangueira, all wearing *Parangolé-capes*, at the opening of the exhibition *Opinião 65*. *Parangolés* are capes, banners, flags, and tents made by stitching together recycled materials such as plastic sheets, jute bags, raffia mats, printed fabrics and gauze, meant to be handled, worn, and activated by the spectator. Without movement, the work does not exist.

The *passistas* (samba dancers of a samba school) traveled from the dirt streets of Morro da Mangueira to the asphalt of Rio's central avenues and burst into the museum,

[127] Cardoso, *Modernity in Black and White*, 205.

wearing these colorful and voluminous capes as they danced. [Figure 1.14] Despite the festive atmosphere, the violation of clothing etiquette and behavioral decorum were nonetheless pointing fingers at conventional art and social hierarchies. The event caused a big commotion, and the dancers were vehemently kicked out and forced to continue their celebrations outside, leaving the carnival at the margins of the museum. Like dos Prazeres with his canvases, Oiticica infiltrated the art institution with the *Parangolés*. Unlike dos Prazeres, though, Oiticica did not have to resort to subtle tricks to deliver his message.

Scholar and artist Cíntia Guedes argues that Oiticica's gestures of appropriation to bring the favela to the museum reveal the power dynamics through which certain territories—geographical, affective and identity-related—and their inhabitants are allowed, or not, to enter into art and its institutions.[128] She states that, while it is legitimate for an artist to look for inspiration and self-exploration in social and cultural environments different from those of origin, this freedom remains a privilege restricted to White, middle-class, often male, artists. And it is this same privilege that opens the doors of established art institutions for them to exhibit their work. As Guedes explains, it is the paradigm of whiteness in which Oiticica found himself, understood not simply as someone's skin color, but as the racialized experience of the world which places the White person in a privileged position, what allowed the Euro-Brazilian artist to transit across different social, cultural, and urban environments and absorb what the favela had to offer. On the contrary, people from the lower social classes, and in particular Black people like the *passistas*, were either

[128] Cíntia Guedes, "E se Hélio fosse hoje, como a favela chega ao museu," in *Hélio Oiticica para além dos mitos*, ed. Bárbara Szaniecki, Giuseppe Cocco, and Izabela Pucu, 122-135 (Rio de Janeiro: R&L Produtores Associados, 2016), 129.

barred from entering the museum, or could do so only under invitation, individually or in controlled groups.[129] Similarly, as a Black artist, dos Prazeres penetrated the hegemonic art world individually, under invitation,[130] and yet through his choice of artworks and his samba songs he breached the bailey of silences and forgetfulness about Brazilian history and social stratifications, for those willing to listen.

Oiticica was acutely aware of the social stratification of Brazilian society and the urban segregation in Rio de Janeiro. Although he would never fully belong to the community of Mangueira, the *Parangolés* were an attempt to reach an existential communion with it.[131] Through the *Parangolés*, the wearer could reach or express identities and identifications of their choice. With the *Parangolés*, Oiticica attempted to trigger an individual transformation that would result in collective and social change, while at the same time he emphasized social conflict and divides. At the same time, taking into consideration dos Prazeres's participation in and reaction to the Biennial, it must be underscored that Oiticica was not the first to employ carnivalistic strategies to infiltrate art institutions, exposing their hegemonic ideology from within, and from their outside, too. The song *Carnaval na Bienal* and the activation of the *Parangolés* outside the Museum walls display strong similarities, not limited to the use of samba music and dance by the artists.

[129] Ibid.
[130] After submitting his works at the first Biennial, he was invited to exhibit in a special room at the second iteration of the even in 1953 and was invited to produce the costumes and choreography for the celebrations of the fourth centennial of the city of São Paulo.
[131] Renato Rodrigues da Silva, "Hélio Oiticica's Parangolé or the art of transgression." *Third Text* 19, no. 3 (2005), 226.

Panos da Costa, Carnival Banners and Parangolés

The first *Parangolé* that Oiticica produced is *P01 Parangolé-Estandarte 01* (P01 Parangolé-Banner 01, 1964), followed by *P02 Parangolé-Bandeira 01* (P02 Parangolé-Flag 01, 1964). [Figure 1.15] The *Parangolé-Estandarte* and the *Parangolé-Bandeira* require that the spectator dances with them, developing the structure of these works as a "manifestation of color in the environmental space."[132] Judging from his writings from this period, it seems that the artist was trying to grapple with these creations and how they should be perceived by the public. He insisted that the *Parangolés* should not be interpreted based on the materials they are made of nor their resemblance to pre-existing objects because he did not want them to be confused for simple representations or transpositions. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that the way these objects were supposed to be activated by the spectator also recalls their original function. When Oiticica publicly presented the *Parangolés* at the opening of *Opinião 65,* he had planned the presentation as a carnival parade, with a *porta-estandarte* (banner-bearer) and *porta-bandeira* (flag-bearer) carrying respectively the *Parangolé-estandarte 01* and the *Parangolé-bandeira 01* and introducing the dancers from the samba school Estação Primeira da Mangueira wearing the *Parangolé*-capes.

The *porta-bandeira* is also the subject of a painting by Heitor dos Prazeres, *Porta-bandeira e Mestre-sala* (Flag-bearer and Master of Ceremonies, 1960), a small-scale oil canvas portraying a woman and a man rehearsing for carnival celebrations in a quiet pebble street. [Figure 1.16] They are the couple responsible for carrying and guarding the symbol

[132] Hélio Oiticica, "Anotações sôbre o Parangolé," November 25, 1964. AHO 0070/64.

of the samba school in carnival parades, opening the path for the dancers that follow.[133] While the *porta bandeira* literally carries the flag of the samba school, the *mestre-sala* has the role of protecting the flag-bearer, often lifting the corners of the flag to facilitate the view of the name and symbol of the school. In the painting, the woman is carrying the white and blue flag of the samba school Portela, whose colors were chosen by dos Prazeres, one of its founders. Despite this being a night scene, the white fringes that border the flag make it sparkle as a halo, and both the figures look in joyful veneration with their chins lifted at the name and symbol of the school, an eagle with open wings, a little washed out at the center of the flag. We know this is a rehearsal because the characters are wearing elegant, and yet regular clothes instead of being in full costume with the colors of the samba school. In fact, the official costumes of *mestre-sala* and *porta-bandeira* imitate the sumptuous fashion of the seventeenth-century nobility, with powdered wigs, tiaras and crowns, gloves, long and wide skirts with crinoline, or tailcoats with jabot. According to scholars, the tradition comes from Brazil's colonial times, when African enslaved people had to learn courteous manners to fulfil their duties as servants during dinners and ceremonies. Back in the slave quarters, they would mimic, caricature, and mock this imposed behavior, mixing it with *capoeira* movements and other motions from African dances and rituals.[134] The tradition of flag-bearer and master of ceremonies thus, come

[133] *Mestre-sala* and *porta-bandeira* are adaptations of similar figures in other carioca popular celebrations, such as the *porta-estandarte* (standard-bearer) and the *baliza* (beacon).
[134] Ricardo Lourenço, "Bandeira, porta-bandeira e mestre-sala: elementos de diversas culturas numa tríade soberana nas escolas de samba cariocas," *Textos escolhidos de cultura e arte populares,* Rio de Janeiro, 2009, v6 n1, 7-18; and Miguel Santa Brígida, "A Dança do Mestre-Sala e da Porta-Bandeira: Performance e Ritual na Cena Afro-Carioca." *VI Congresso de Pesquisa e Pós-Graduação em Artes Cênicas*, (2010): 1-7.

from the ridiculing of the slave owners, and from the appropriation and adaption of party rites. This tradition predates the formation of samba schools that would officialize these figures.

Interestingly, Heitor dos Prazeres, who participated in the creation of several samba schools, has his own ideas about the origin of the *porta-estandarte*, which in time would be substituted by the *porta-bandeira*. He recounts that in the early days of carnival parties he would go out playing samba with his cavaquinho, a small four-string guitar, wearing a *baiana* (woman from Bahia) costume he had designed himself. Looking behind, he would see hundreds of people following him in the frenzy. As part of the costume, he would wear a *pano da costa* of vivid colors on the shoulders, a rectangular cloth that is part of the traditional garments of *baianas*, and other musicians behind him would lift its corners as if it were a flag. In an interview from 1954 for the weekly magazine *Manchete*, dos Prazeres talks about the history of the banner:

> I have my own theory about the appearance of the banner in the carnival blocks and parades. In the past, when we paraded, we used large 'panos da costa.' Dressed up as *baianas*, these shawls indicated the colors of the various clubs. […] When we went out playing samba, moving in circles, especially in Praça Onze, we lifted up our *panos da costa*. One year, without any formal decision, we exchanged the shawls for the banners. It seems to me, thus, that the real precursors of the banners were the primitive 'panos da costa.'[135]

The *pano da costa* is a rectangular cloth, measuring on average 200 x 60 centimeters, sometimes striped, often bordered with embroidery or lace, used as a shawl, which, together with the *pano de cabeça*, or turban, is part of the traditional attire of black

[135] Paulo Medeiros, "Mano Heitor e seus sambas." *Manchete*, April 17, 1954. Accessed June 18, 2021, http://memoria.bn.br/docreader/004120/6766.

women in Bahia. This garment is also part of the ritual clothing used by the women believers, called *filhas de santo,* of Candomblé. Anthropologist Raul Lody explains that the *pano da costa* is a demarcation-symbol which has a profound social and religious connotation; it indicates the woman's status as initiated or leader in Afro-Brazilian places of worship, or *terreiros*. Not wearing *the pano da costa* during a ceremony is taboo. When, during rituals, a person, regardless of the gender, is incorporated by an *orixá*, other believers remove the shoes, jewels and other profane clothing of the person being embodied and grab the *pano da costa* with the appropriate colors of the deity. If the *orixá* is feminine, the *pano* is tied around the bust; if it is a male *orixá*, it is tied over one shoulder or backward.[136] [Figures 1.17 and 1.18] These descriptions recall Oiticia's *Parangolé-capes*, some of which are worn around the shoulder and others across the waist.[137] Color, so relevant to distinguish and honor the different *orixás*, is also central to Oiticica's conception of "giving body to color" through his creations. Moreover, his *Parangolé-estandarte* does not resemble a typical carnival banner but strikingly looks like a loose *pano da costa* tangled up in two poles. [Figure 1.19]

In Afro-Brazilian trance religions, believers can be possessed by both female and male *orixás,* thus embody deities of the same or opposite gender. Moreover, some of these

[136] Raul Giovanni da Motta Lody, *Pano da costa*. (Rio de Janeiro: Ministério da Educação e Cultura, Departamento de Assuntos Culturais, Fundação Nacional de Arte, Campanha de Defesa do Folclore Brasileiro, 1977), 5.
[137] Roberto Conduru comments on the similarity between Hélio Oiticica's *Parangolés* and clothes used by Eguns, ancestral spirits that are worshipped in *terreiros* of Afro-Brazilian religions of yorubá origin, noticing, though, that the *Parangolés* are far from being religious garments. See Roberto Conduru. *Arte afro-brasileira* (Belo Horizonte: Editora C/Arte, 2007), 83.

orixás challenge sex and gender binaries. In Candomblé, for instance, Logun Edé,[138] Oxumaré,[139] and the same Exú synthetize gender duplicity. Oxalá,[140] on the other hand, can manifest himself as a young (Oxaguiã) or old man (Oxalufã). In Umbanda there are entities that are two-gendered, like Exú duas cabeças (Exú Double-Face) who is half male and half female; others that are trans-racial, like Xoroque, who is half Exú and half caboclo (half Black trickster and half Indigenous warrior). Some deities challenge social norms of gendered behavior. [Figure 1.20] Pombagira, for example, subverts the expectations of feminine respectability. She is often associated with the figure of the prostitute, a woman who refuses the motherly role and domestic chores. When she manifests in a *terreiro*, she drinks, smokes, bursts out in strident laugh, and dances voluptuously.

Part of the prejudice against Afro-Brazilian religions comes from the fact that they follow oral traditions and do not have written sacred texts. This conception fails to notice that the body of the believer becomes a text, movement being the language through which the deities express themselves, a means they use to descend on the earth to communicate with the believers and participate in celebrations. The body prays, dances, sings, claps hands, narrates stories. In trance dance, movement is the marker for the production of gender, racial, ethnic, and sexual identities, and can also indicate age, illness or health.[141]

---

[138] Logun Edé is the orixá of wealth and abundance. He divides his life between the woods where he is a skilled hunnter, and the rivers, where he is a fisher. His duality is expressed by the fact that he can display both aggressiveness and sensitivity and benevolence.

[139] Oxumaré is the *orixá* that represents fortune, abundance, prosperity and wealth. It is symbolized by snake eating its tail (Ouroboros), referring to continuity and permanence, and by the rainbow uniting the sky and the earth. It represents duality, the union of the opposites that complement each other.

[140] Oxalá, also known as Obatalá, is the orixá that was taksed by Olodumarê to create the world and human beings.

[141] Jane C. Desmond, "Embodying difference: Issues in dance and cultural studies," *Cultural Critique* 26 (1993): 36.

During rituals, the identity of the *orixá* is not inscribed on body type but signified through body movements and vestments. The Western belief that categories of identity are mapped onto unchangeable bodily difference is, hence, challenged.

Roger Bastide, in his seminal work *Candomblé of Bahia* (1958), writing about believers being embodied by the *orixás*, states:

> They are no longer seamstresses, cooks, washerwomen who twirl at the sound of drums in the Bahian nights; here is Omolu covered in straw, Xangô dressed in red and white, Yemanjá combing her hair with seaweed. The faces metamorphosize in masks, lose the wrinkles of daily work, the stigmas of everyday life, made of concerns and misery, disappear. Warrior-Ogum shines in the fire of rage, Oxum is all made of carnal voluptuousness. For a moment, Africa and Brazil merge, the ocean is abolished, the time of slavery is erased.[142]

Apart from the obvious social class characterization of the believers, Bastide emphasizes the transformation that happens in the moment of embodiment. When the *orixá* descends into the human being, the person assumes the vestments, tools, attitudes, and gestures of the deity in a complex choreography of role-playing that is often trans-gender and trans-racial. In a similar way, Oiticica's *Parangolés*, which curator Guy Brett termed "transsexual," with no relation to conventional gender attributes, were meant to free the individual expression of the wearer through a "magical incorporation".[143] Some of them have a textual component that makes explicit reference to Afro-Brazilian religiosity, like *P15 Parangolé Cape 11 Incorporo a Revolta* (I Embody Revolt), [Figure 1.21] and *P17*

[142] Roger Bastide, "O Candomblé da Bahia (Rito Nagô)," [1958] (São Paulo: Companhia Editorial Nascional, 1961), 30.
[143] Hélio Oiticica, "Anotações sôbre o Parangolé," November 25, 1964. AHO 0070/64.

Parangolé Cape 13, Estou Possuido (I Am Possessed),[144] both from 1967. Embodiment and possession are allusions to rituals of transformation. [Figure 1.22] Talking about the *Parangolé Estou Possuido*, which he considered the most radical and fundamental, the key to the other creations of the same series, the artist explained: "This (cape) defines a characteristic state of mind, as if, with it, I had incorporated the consciousness of myself as a being (self-awareness), a being that expresses itself, that is social, ethical, political. […] It is not an awareness of the body but of oneself: it is being possessed by yourself, your current thoughts…"[145] So, while in Afro-Brazilian religiosity an individual who is embodied expresses the qualities and personality of the *orixá*, for Oiticica, wearing and activating the *Parangolé* would engender a discovery of the self, an incorporation of the subjective element to reveal the condition of being.[146] Despite the fact that the objectives and results would be so drastically different, the artist aimed to propose an experience that would be equally powerful as that of trance. According to Waly Salomão, the *Parangolé Estou Possuido,* an initializing cape, was an emanation of the Umbanda entity Exú-moleque, also affectionately called "Seu Malandrinho" (Little Mr. Trickster), who descended through embodiment (*baixar*) in a *terreiro* in the Morro da Mangueira that he and Oiticica frequented. The poet so described the behavior of the believer being embodied by Exú:

[144] According to Anna Dezeuze, the message Estou possuido (I am possessed) was suggested to Oiticica by Nildo da Mangueira. Anna Dezeuze, "Tactile dematerialization, sensory politics: Helio Oiticica's Parangoles." *Art Journal* 63, no. 2 (2004): 65.
[145] Oiticica, "Estou Possuido," May 25, 1967, AHO 0111.67, p.2
[146] Ibid, p.3

> "Seu Malandrinho" – popular green-yellow Dionysus – is a malandro, likes to drink sugar-cane liquor from the bottleneck, to smoke, drink, play and cheat in the game, sniffing blow, take a bath in an infusion of leaves that evoke the smell of genitals (partes pudendas, pudico), and with his *jeitinho vazelinado* (vaselinated way), to fornicate, fornicate, fornicate.[147]

Mocinha (Rivailda do Nascimento Souza 1926-2002), the legendary *porta-bandeira* of Mangueira, would tell laughing to Salomão: "He likes to do EVERYTHING!"[148]

If we were to trust Salomão's indication, it becomes evident why Oiticica, who aimed to free himself from the "bourgeoise conditioning" and yearned for an unrepressed expression of the self, perceived the *incorporação* that he witnessed in the *terreiro* as the discovery of the self, rather than a manifestation of Exú's ebullient and saucy personality.

Music, dance, and garments are vital aspects in religious rituals as well as carnival, another cultural celebration centered in self-transcendence and social union. These manifestations are at the heart of dos Prazeres's oeuvre as painter and samba composer. Oiticica may have not been aware of dos Prazeres's theories about the origin of the *estandarte*, but his *Parangolés*, in their multiple manifestations as banners, flags and capes, are indebted to the cultural environment that dos Prazeres contributed to establish, with his music, parades, and cross-dressing heralding the *panos da costa*. [Figure 1.23]

[147] Salomão, *Qual é o parangolé*, 39.
[148] Ibid.

Tia Ciata and Eden

A practitioner of both Candomblé and Umbanda, from an early age Heitor dos Prazeres attended the clandestine *terreiros* of Tia Ciata and other *tias baianas*, women originally from Bahia who played a prominent role in cultivating Afro-Brazilian traditions.[149] Musicians, intellectuals, and people tied to the Bahian diaspora in Rio de Janeiro[150] would gather at her place to worship, play music, dance, and discuss. Dos Prazeres was *Ogã Alabê-Nilu,* the initiated person responsible for playing the sacred drums and singing the ritual music in the *terreiro* of Tia Ciata (Hilária Batista de Almeida), thus absorbing the African rhythms that eventually led to the creation of samba.[151] After attending the Catholic mass in the church, it was common for Afro-descendants to gather in the *terreiros* in a continuity of religious celebrations, which allowed them to disguise and keep their beliefs alive.[152] The *terreiros*, thus, functioned as cells of resistance to perpetuate Afro-Brazilian culture, and guarantee the social and political organization of the community. Tia Ciata (1854-1924), in particular, exploited the architecture of her house, next to Praça Onze, to resist cultural domination. Because Candomblé and samba were forbidden – the political meaning of drumming was never lost on the dominant classes[153]–

[149] Roberto Moura, *Tia Ciata e a Pequena África no Rio de Janeiro* (Coleção Biblioteca Carioca, Funarte, Rio de Janeiro, 1983), 94.
[150] The expression "Bahian diaspora" denotes the migration of Afro-Brazilian people from the state of Bahia to southern urban areas, in particular Rio de Janeiro, after the abolition of slavery, and in particular in the first decades of the twentieth century. These people brought with them their traditions, contributing to the formation of the *carioca* cultural life.
[151] Tia Ciata was Iyá Kékeré, or *mãe pequena*, in the *terreiro* of babalorixá (priest) João Alabá de Omolu. In the hierarchy of a *terreiro*, the *mãe pequena or pai pequeno* occupy the second highest position after the Babalorixá or Iyalorixá (priestess). They can eventually substitute the priest and have the responsibility of educating, and guiding the believers. They also supervise the proper functioning of the *terreiro*. Although Tia Ciata was *mãe pequena*, religious ceremonies took place in her house as well.
[152] Moura, 93.
[153] Hall, 168.

she tricked the police by hosting religious cults and samba musicians in the backyard, where they would use drums, while in the front sitting room of the house she would have a band playing *choro* music or polkas with string and brass instruments, genres that were considered more acceptable. So, in case the police showed up, she would simply say that she was hosting a *choro* gathering while people in the backyard would have time to disperse.[154] Dos Prazeres, thus, had his musical and religious education, and his initiation to *malandragem* there. As a true polymath, besides composing music and painting, he also wrote poetry. In the song *No Terreiro de Tia Chimba* (In the Terreiro of Tia Chimba, 1930) that he composed for Paulo da Portela (1901-1949) he recounts in rhymes and with humor such an event: following a police raid during an Afro-Brazilian religious ceremony, the brazen narrator escapes by exiting from the backyard, corrupting a policeman to vanish unscathed.[155] So while denouncing religious intolerance and vicious police violence against the believers, Heitor dos Prazeres also put in verses the attitude that allowed them to dodge these attacks by exposing the dishonesty of the policemen involved.

The artist produced several paintings that depict Candomblé and Umbanda rituals.[156] The scenes are sheltered in nature, as in *Macumba no mato* (c.1960); in rooms with windows and doors shut as in *Festa de Preto Velho* (1963); or in protected backyards as in *A dança* (1965). This is likely due to the private nature of the rituals, and because Afro-Brazilian religions were discriminated against, and their practitioners punished with

[154] Cristiana Tramonte, *O samba conquista passagem. As estratégias e a ação educativa das escolas de samba* (Florianópolis: Diálogo, 1996), 30.
[155] Lírio and dos Prazeres Filho, 195.
[156] Dos Prazeres recorded songs that are *pontos de Candomblé* and *pontos de Umbanda*, songs inspired by sacred rhythms and lyrics. See, for example, the album *Macumba* from 1955.

imprisonment, eviction, and confiscation and destruction of sacred objects.[157] For this reason, as Amy Buono beautifully put it, since the 1920s police collections like the one of the Rio de Janeiro's Civil Police Museum have "served as a place of incarceration for spiritually dynamic objects of Afro-Brazilian religions."[158] In *A dança* (1965) we see a group of people playing and dancing to music in the earthen backyard of a house that is surrounded by tall blades of grass. [Figure 1.24] Three *ogãs* are sitting in line on a bench and playing the *atabaques*, sacred drums used in rituals to mark the rhythm of chants and dance, create a connection with the *orixás* and aid the trance and embodiment.[159] The men are wearing white shirts and the traditional white kufi cap (*filá*) used by Candomblé male priests and believers. Meanwhile, six women enraptured by music are dancing in a circle. They are all wearing a *pano de cabeça* (turban), and a white stiffened skirt covered by another striped cloth of different colors, likely a representation of a *pano da costa*, both components of the traditional garments of *baianas* also required in rituals. Scenes of religious rituals are among the few exceptions in the paintings by the artist where the characters are not wearing shoes.[160] The women stand on the tips of their toes, with knees

[157] The first legal measure to establish freedom of worship in Brazil was implemented through a presidential decree on January 7, 1890. After numerous struggles and mobilizations, this right was eventually expanded and reaffirmed in the 1946 constitution, specifically in Article 141, paragraphs 7 and 8. However, despite this legislation, Umbanda, Candomblé and other Afro-Brazilian religions and practices continue to face persecution and repression.

[158] Amy Buono, "Historicty, Achronicity and Materiality in the Cultures of Colonial Brazil," *The Getty Research Journal*, no. 7 (2015), 30.

[159] The three atabaques are respectively called rum, rumpi, and lé (in order of diminishing size). They are considered to be alive and the intermediaries between the believers and the *orixás*, therefore they also receive sacrifices (palm oil, blood, consecrated water).

[160] During colonial times, the enslaved were forbidden from owning and wearing shoes. In his canvases, dos Prazeres makes a point of always representing his characters wearing shoes, which he paints meticulously in every detail. Paintings of religious ceremonies are among the few exceptions. In fact, shoes and daily garments must be removed when taking part in rites.

bent, they look up with an arm raised and the other on the waist. The wrinkled hems of the skirts give the impression of the waist movement. Because of the vigor of the dance, the *pano de cabeça* of some of them is loosening. These poses, the little shading, and the fact that the ground takes up two thirds of the painting give the impression that the figures are floating. We can peek at the interior of the house: behind a red curtain we can see an altar and on its top a cross and a small statue of the Virgin Mary with a blue cape, likely a representation of Nossa Senhora dos Navegantes (Our Lady of Navigators) or Nossa Senhora da Conceição (Our Lady of Immaculate Conception). These Catholic symbols can reference the so-called syncretism of Afro-Brazilian religion that is being celebrated, with the statue of the Virgin being the syncretic representation of the *orixá* Yemanjá, protector of the sea and patron of sailors, considered the mother of other *orixás* and thus a symbol of fertility.[161] Yet, the fact that all the characters look so concentrated on the dance and the men give their backs to these symbols, indicates that dos Prazeres was hinting to the same *malandragem* used by Tia Ciata: that of displaying the culture of the oppressor in the most visible section of the house, while keeping alive African beliefs in the backyard, in a game of appearances meant at deceiving the authorities.

The *terreiros* of *tias baianas* were places where people learnt about religion, culture, trades, and strategies of survival, and where both communal and individual

[161] Artist Abdias Nascimento, whose work is examined in chapter 2, vehemently defended the idea that the term "syncretic" can be appropriately applied to define Afro-Brazilian religions only to refer to the mixing of different African religious traditions brought by people of varied ethnicities and religious cultures (Yoruba, Bantu, etc.) in Brazil. This syncretism, he argues, has nothing to do with the Afro-Catholic syncretism. For him, what cultural anthropologists labeled "syncretism" between Catholic and African religions was nothing short of a cover-up under which the enslaved were able to clandestinely practice their religious cults, repressed in many ways by the dominant colonial order. See Abdias Nascimento, *O quilombismo* (São Paulo: Editora Perspectiva S.A., 2020), 122.

creation were fostered. Talking about his upbringing, dos Prazeres stated: "I am from the time of apprenticeship, which is now difficult. Those who knew more taught [the others], which would engender the formation of groups of people around certain trades that became traditional among the Bahian group in Praça Onze, in the Peo area, in Saúde."[162] The experience in the *terreiro* of Tia Ciata likely informed the way that dos Prazeres set up his studio in Rua General Pedra, in the neighborhood Saúde. There, the artist painted his canvases, built and decorated musical instruments, composed and rehearsed samba songs with his group, and designed and tailored the dresses they used in shows. As he gained notoriety, he started receiving more and more commissions for his paintings. In a documentary by Antonio Carlos da Fontoura from 1965, he stated: "The artist who is obliged to go commercial, to meet market demands, lives in chains and ends up dying not doing what he wants."[163] To respond to these pressing demands, he hired assistants and worked with prototypes. Like in a Renaissance workshop, the assistants painted the general scene and used cardboard cutouts to outline the figures, while dos Prazeres took care of the details, finishing the faces, limbs, and clothes. This is something he was blamed for by some critics who saw in this method a lack of originality and who questioned the authorship of the work. Instead, it was communal living that allowed dos Prazeres to put in practice and teach many of the skills that he had learnt. Moreover, art critic Clarival do Prado Valladares (1918- 1983), author of "O negro brasileiro nas artes plásticas" (The Black Brazilian in the Visual Arts, 1968) and who was a friend and supporter of dos Prazeres,

[162] Heitor dos Prazeres in Moura, 69.
[163] Heitor dos Prazeres in *Heitor dos Prazeres*, directed by Antonio Carlos da Fontoura (Canto Claro,1965). Accessed June 20, 2021, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-FgabF3G32s.

recounts that while the artist worked with assistants in stages to produce the canvases for the commercial galleries and collectors, he did not allow anyone to intervene on the works that he created for "the people of his social class."[164] Valladares reports that the artist believed that the commercial production of his studio was acceptable and unremarkable. This practical approach highlights once again dos Prazeres' affinity for *malandragem*, as he enlisted the assistance of others to create artworks that he would sign and profit from as the sole creator. Meanwhile, he dedicated his own time and talents to producing pieces intended for his community, whom he deemed more deserving.

Communal Living Oiticica

Communal living, learning, and creating are concepts that would be important also for Hélio Oiticica, who, as a *passista* (dancer) of the samba school Estação Primeira da Mangueira discerned: "in samba schools nobody knows who did this or that; what matters is the whole, where each one gives everything they have."[165] And in fact the *barracão de escola de samba*, the headquarter of samba schools where people from the community meet to create and rehearse the choreography, produce the costumes and carnival floats, learn the lyrics of the parade song, or *samba-enredo,* in sum where the creative process is shared, seems to have evolved from the *barracão de candomblé*, where the word *barracão* stands as a synonym of *terreiro*.

[164] In Lírio, Alba. *Heitor dos Prazeres: sua arte seu tempo* (ND Comunicação, Rio de Janeiro, 2003), 150-151.
[165] Oiticica [1967] in Paola Berenstein Jacques, *Estética da ginga: a arquitetura das favelas através da obra de Hélio Oiticica* (Rio de Janeiro, RJ: Casa da Palavra, 2011) 37.

Besides rehearsing in the *barracão de escola de samba,* Oiticica was also familiar with the Umbanda *terreiro* "Seu Malandrinho" in Mangueira, as described in the previous section.[166] It is a telling coincidence the fact that the *terreiro* Oiticica was familiar with was dedicated to Exú, affectionately called Seu Malandrinho (Little Mr. Trickster). These experiences likely led Oiticica to formulate his own idea of *Barracão* (1969) as a "collective site" for "experimental communities," a place where the artist would propose situations or environments requiring the participation of the spectator/participator for their full realization. In a conceptual concatenation, Oiticica states that the behavior-structure of *Barracão* led him to "the discovery of *crelazer* as essential to the conclusion of the participation-proposition: the catalysis of the non-oppressive energies, and the proposition of the leisure connected to them."[167] *Crelazer* (Creleisure) is a neologism that Oiticica composed putting together the words *crer* (to believe), *criar* (to create, to raise), and *lazer* (leisure, recreation). If the *Mesa de bilhar* from 1966 was an early attempt to create an environment that would foster pleasure in collective participation, the *Barracão*, thus, would be an environment where one could experience *crelazer*, a space that allows at once for the expression of collective potentiality and the search for oneself, where Oiticica would propose participating propositions and sensorial experiences. The relationship between individuality and collectivity in Oiticica's project recalls that of religious rituals, where the incorporation of the *orixá* in the believer would not happen if the collectivity

[166] In a letter to Martine Barrat Oiticica writes that they are shooting the movie *HO* by Ivan Cardoso, with some scenes filmed in the *terreiro* "Seu Malandrinho" in Mangueira. The soundtrack would also include some *pontos de Umbanda* (ritual songs). These scenes were cut from the final version of the movie. See Oiticica, "Carta para Martine Barrat," May 23, 1979, AHO 0085.79. The letter includes also the proposal for "A ronda da morte" (Death's Patrol).
[167] Hélio Oiticica, "Barracão," London, August 19, 1969, AHO 0452.69.

was not there to support the trance. "Rhythmic music and dance have been the main introduction to these convictions for me…,"[168] stated Oiticica talking about *crelazer*, in a clear hint to aspects of religious rituals and samba dance.

Although he never produced the *Barracão*, he kept referring to it in his writings, and the installation *Eden* that he presented at the Whitechapel in London in 1969 is closely associated with this idea. [Figure 1.25] *Eden* consists of a series of *Bólides*, *Ninhos* and *Penetráveis*: structures presenting different materials, such as sand, water, hay, to be experienced sensorially by walking barefoot, lying and crawling.[169] One of them is a homage to Tia Ciata, demonstrating the important role she played in molding the cultural environment of Rio de Janeiro.[170] *Penetrável* "Tia Ciata" is a rectangular structure wrapped in a red plastic sheet, which filters and colors the light coming from the outside. Inside, the environment is enveloped in incense and the visitor is invited to lie on a foam floor. The two *Penetráveis* placed next to it, *Penetrável Iemnajá* with its floor covered with water, and *Lololiana* with leaves, are references to Afro-Brazilian religions. Iemanjá, the *orixá* that dos Prazeres was referring to in his painting, the protector of the sea, here is symbolized by water. On the other hand, the leaves that cover the floor of the *Penetrável* "Lololiana" might refer to the multiple uses of leaves in Afro-Brazilian rituals.

[168] Hélio Oiticica, "Eden," February 25, 1969, AHO 365.69.
[169] *Eden* consists of two *Bólides* (*Bólide-área 1* and *Bólide- área 2* with hay); six *Penetráveis* ("Iemanjá," "Lololiana," "Cannabiana," "Tia Ciata," "Ursa," and the Penetrável "Tenda Caetano-Gil"); two *Ninhos* and two *Núclei* (Área-aberta-do-mito).
[170] Tia Ciata is known as the matriarch of samba. Her backyard is where samba songs were composed, rehearsed, improved, where the genre was born, where songs would become popular before they were presented at carnivals, to the public, before radio. The first samba song ever recorded, *Pelo telephone* by Donga and Mauro de Almeida, was recorded in her house at the end of 1916, and became a hit in the carnival of 1917.

I propose a similarity between *Eden*, which Irene Small defines as an "environment for the reawakening and discharge of creative energies suppressed by contemporary society,"[171] and the house of Tia Ciata. As explained above, Tia Ciata used the different rooms in her house to host a variety of activities, leaving those forbidden to the backyard. Besides playing music and participating in religious rituals, people from different backgrounds gathered there because she was a renowned *feiticeira*[172] and *quituteira*.[173] People turned to her for medical treatments as well as for her cuisine. Moreover, she produced *baiana* dresses that were sought after by the middle class for carnival costumes. Analyzing the blueprint of the house, Roberto Conduru notices that this long structure is typical of common houses ("residências menores") built in Brazil between 1850 and 1900.[174] [Figure 1.26] He argues that their architectural limitations, such as poor illumination, did not prevent these constructions from being reinvented daily according to the use, including religious rituals. The house of Tia Ciata can be considered a versatile environment where people could listen to different music genres, play music and dance, smell and consume the food used in ritual and that for sale on the streets, be in dark rooms, or in the sunlit yard. Similarly, with *Eden* Oiticica invites the visitors to move between different environments where the senses and creativity are activated.

---

[171] Irene Small, *Hélio Oiticica: Folding the Frame* (Chicago; London University of Chicago Press, 2016), 103.
[172] *Feiticeira* literally means witch. It is used derogatively to refer to priestess of Afro-Brazilian religions, accused of practicing black magic.
[173] A *quituteira* is a seller of *quitutes*, delicacies. Very often the *quituteiras* are women from Bahia who sell regional recipes in the street, recognizable for their traditional clothes.
[174] Roberto Conduru, "Das casas às roças: comunidades de candomblé no Rio de Janeiro desde o fim do século XIX." *Topoi* (Rio de Janeiro) 11, no. 21 (2010): 192.

Oiticica began experimenting with *Ninhos* (Nests) within art institutions, before adopting them as structural cells in his apartment. When he moved to New York City in 1971, he transformed his loft on Second Avenue in a space for leisure, creative activities, debates, social and sexual relations. He divided the space into six different *Ninhos*, compartments within which different activities took place, from film editing to photo development, from writing to artistic discussions, and where the television was constantly on and the phone busy. There, Oiticica gave shelter to people from the artistic and queer community, some dwelling for long periods and others for short stays. With the *Ninhos*, thus, Oiticica attempted to transpose to his daily life those radical collective experimentations, necessary for survival, that he had experienced in the *barracão de escola de samba*, in the *terreiro* Seu Malandrinho, and in the Morro da Mangueira more in general, and that were legacy of a daily and collective culture of resistance enacted by disenfranchised and predominantly Black segments of the population. From this perspective, *crelazer* becomes a political attitude closely related to *malandragem*: the refusal of productive work and alienating entertainment. The artist stated: "Creleisure is the non-repressive leisure, opposed to diverted oppressive leisure thinking: a new unconditioned way to battle oppressive systematic ways of life."[175]

[175] Hélio Oiticica, "The Senses Pointing Towards a New Transformation," London, June 18-25, 1969. AHO 0486.69, p.3.

Conclusion – We Write Samba on the Wild Asphalt

Samba music, a passion they shared and that accompanied them throughout their lives, was played at the funeral of both Heitor dos Prazeres (his composition "Pierrô Apaixonado") and Hélio Oiticica ("Toque para Oxossi" composed by Padeirinho, the nickname for Osvaldo Vitalino de Oliveira). It is not clear if the two ever crossed path in museum galleries or samba rehearsals in Mangueira, nor is this relevant for the argument of this dissertation. Both artists operated under authoritarian regimes, and used *malandragem* to infiltrate and destabilize dominant orders in the social and the art worlds, from the São Paulo Biennial to *Opinião 65*, from Rio de Janeiro to New York, from the National Radio to the dusty office of Ms. Besner at the All Language company.

Samba, dance, carnival, ludic elements, rituality, and communitarian experience are aspects present in the work of both artists, who, under very different conditions, traversed and brought their art to a variety of social environments. Ricardo Cravo Albin, director of the Museu da Imagem e do Som who recorded an oral history with dos Prazeres stated:

> Heitor and his companions participated in the extraordinary adventure of the birth of samba schools, when the schools truly reaffirmed all that voluptuousness of Zumbi, summoning people. The quilombos of samba schools were all virtually Black, imposing a new cultural manifestation. What war is more prominent than the war of putting people together, not around bloody weapons, but around the joy and confirmation of rhythms that invigorate the Brazilian soul? I believe that, in this configuration, Heitor was a great marshal of Zumbi, together with Cartola and Paulo da Portela.[176]

[176] Ricardo Cravo Albin quoted in Lírio and dos Prazeres Filho, 177.

Dos Prazeres, the composer and the painter, was indeed a trailblazer who with his musical and painterly compositions brought together and gave voice to his community. Like Zumbi, seventeenth-century abolitionist, and leader of Quilombo dos Palmares, one of the largest fugitive communities, and like Tia Ciata, guardian of Afro-Brazilian culture and mobilizer of her community, he implanted the seeds for new revolutions to come.

Some of the fruits would be harvested by Oiticica, an artist who did not suffer from racial discrimination, but spoke against it and against a brutal regime that would unleash a violent campaign against the Afro-Brazilian population that lasts to these days. He and dos Prazeres wrote samba on the wild asphalt, leaving an enduring mark on Rio de Janeiro's streets and the art world's avenues. [Figure 1.27 and 1.28]

Chapter 2

Exú: The Principle of Revolution[177]

"Exú matou um pássaro ontem com uma pedra que só jogou hoje."
"Exú killed a bird yesterday with a stone he threw today."

One of the most canonical Yoruba tales regarding the god Exú, recounted both in Africa and the Americas, is that of "The Two Friends." As the myth goes, two inseparable friends had made a vow to never quarrel but had overlooked Exú. Therefore, Exú decided to intervene, and one day walked in the middle of the two friends, wearing a double-colored hat, half black and half white. Having greeted them, he went on. Commenting on the fact, one friend mentioned the charming individual who had passed by wearing a white cap, while the other contended that the cap was black. With this simple act, Exú created a great commotion, as the two friends began vociferously bickering and could not come to an agreement, until when Exú came back and showed them his two-faced hat. The myth teaches that, although the truth might be one, points of view are multiple and valid, and it would be pointless to insist on a single, determinate meaning that is based on vantage and a way of seeing the world. As a matter of fact, neither friend is correct, but neither is wrong either: they are simultaneously right and wrong. The tale also shows Exú's tricky ways of teaching a lesson, his use of mutable aspects to deceive people and create confusion, and the misfortune that comes when people do not worship him.[178] Exú engenders both

[177] This is a definition of Exú by Ketu mãe de santo Palmira de Yansan.
[178] For more on Exú's mythology see Vagner Gonçalves da Silva, *Exú Um Deus Afro-atlântico no Brasil* (São Paulo: Edusp, 2022), Reginaldo Prandi and Pedro Rafael, *Mitologia dos Orixás* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2009), and Ayodele Ogundipe, *Èṣù Elegbára: Chance, Uncertainty in Yorùbá Mythology* (Ilorin, Kwara State: Kwara State University Press, 2012).

disruption and reconciliation, closure and disclosure. He is a mediator, but his mediations often take the form of tricks.[179] Henry Louis Gates wrote about Exú in his seminal book *The Signifying Monkey,* where he traces the origin of signifyin'[180] and linguistic playfulness in African-American literature and music to Yoruban and Fon mythologies. Gates explains that Exú represents the multiplicity of meanings, the transcendence of binary oppositions: "What appears in a binary system to be a contradiction resolvable only by the unity of opposites is more subtly—and mysteriously— resolved by the Yoruba in the concept central to the Ogboni secret society that "two, it becomes three."[181]

In 1968, Brazilian polymath Abdias Nascimento (Franca, São Paulo, 1914 – Rio de Janeiro, 2011) made a painting that functions as a visual corollary to Gate's description, *Exú Trifacético* (Trifaced Eshu). [Figure 2.1] Against an electric blue background, two specular but non-identical devil-looking figures occupy much of the pictorial space, dividing the horizontal canvas in two halves.[182] The figure on the left is painted a bright red, holds a black pitchfork, and is defined by sharp lines and geometric shapes. The eye, for example, is drawn as an equilateral triangle framed by a thick triangular eyebrow. With

[179] Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African American Literary Criticism* (Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 2014), 5.
[180] The expression "signifyin(g)" points to rhetorical practices where language is bent to include multiple meanings through the use of ambiguity; this includes verbal games, punning, exchanging insults, speaking indirectly, lying
[181] Gates, *The Signifying Monkey*, 42.
Ogboni is a secret society formed by the elder men and women who embody wisdom.
[182] Exú has been equated to the devil by the Europeans since the fifteenth century, because the god is often represented with phallic attributes, and because he receives animals associated to the devil in Medieval times, such as goats, as offering. In the Yoruba version of the Bible, the word devil is translated as Exú, thus reinforcing this parallel, and the translation hasn't changed since the sixteenth century. While Candomblé practitioners in Brazil reject any correlation between Exú and the devil, this idea was instead incorporated in Umbanda, where Exú maintains his duality, but is often represented with attributes of the devil, such as the trident.

two pointed horns, and the mouth open in a grim, he displays a wicked expression. Mirroring this anthropomorphic figure is another one painted in black, with red dots covering the body, and carrying a red pitchfork. Here Nascimento used curvilinear forms and softer lines, and yet the expression is that of a restless, livid deity that the believer needs to please with offerings in order not to incur in his wrath. The trident and horns are also curved, and a long red tongue protrudes from his open mouth, symbolizing that he is the god of communication and dialectic. It takes a moment to the viewer to realize that the combination of the two figures forms a third, frontal face staring onward. Half red and half black –the two colors associated with Exú– half geometric and half round, with a straight nose and a large mouth with closed lips, the figure displays an alert and serious expression, his inquiring gaze is magnetic and inescapable. *Exú Trifacético* could well be Nascimento's visual representation of "The Two Friends" tale, as the two devils are indeed one. The experience of looking at Nascimento's work unlocks this cryptic and metaphysical riddle, as "two, it becomes three," a three-faced Exú.

In Nascimento's painting, the lips and nose of the central face are brown, the artist's acknowledgment of Exú as a Black god, a Pan-African god, ruler across the big crossroad that is the Atlantic Ocean. As a matter of fact, Exú is worshipped on both sides of the Atlantic. He is called Exú-Elegbara by the Yoruba in Nigeria, Legba by the Fon in Benin, Exú in Brazil, Echu-Elegua in Cuba, Papa Legba in Haiti, and Papa La Bas in the United States. Gates explains that despite being enslaved and coercively brought from the west coast of Africa to the Americas, people of different African origins retained their belief systems, cultures, and world views. These aspects of their identities were not washed away

in the baleful Middle Passage but preserved through the willful efforts of those who refused to forget. Slavery brought into contact previously isolated African cultures, creating an original Pan-African culture, which mixed with Indigenous and European ones. The Atlantic, thus represents that "liminal crossroads of culture contact and ensuing difference at which Africa meets African-America."[183] And Exú, who dwells and rules over the crossroads, is one of those topoi who traversed the ocean and thrived in the New World belief system, taking on multiple appearances and new meanings.[184]

Abdias-Exú

In both Candomblé and Umbanda, two Afro-Brazilian religions, Exú serves the fundamental role of messenger between the world of the living and that of the *orixás*. As the deity of the crossroads that incorporates notions of change, Exú at once subverts and maintains borders and boundaries between morality and immorality, good and evil, to guide the believers and keep the order established by Olorum, the Supreme God.[185]

Exú is a central character in the theatrical and visual production of Abdias Nascimento, who, throughout his oeuvre, made Exú the protagonist of his plays, produced more than twenty artworks that have the trickster god as subject, and often invoked the deity at the opening of his political speeches, to propitiate the god of dialectic, companion

[183] Gates, *The Signifying Monkey*, 4.
[184] Nowadays, Exú is worshipped in Africa, the Caribbean, and South America, and in particular in Nigeria, Benin, Brazil, Cuba, Haiti, and the United States. He is called Exú-Elegbara by the Yoruba in Nigeria, Legba by the Fon in Benin, Exú in Brazil, Echu-Elegua in Cuba, Papa Legba in Haiti, and Papa La Bas in the United States.
[185] Olorum, also known as Olodumare, is the creator of the *orixás* and gave them the task of creating and controlling the world. For more on Afro-Brazilian mythologies see Prandi (2021).

in the fights for Black liberation. Writer, poet, playwright, theater director, actor, politician, university professor, activist and intellectual, Nascimento was raised in a Catholic family. His conversion to Candomblé stemmed from a conscious will to come close to the belief system of his ancestors that the colonial endeavor tried, unsuccessfully, to eradicate. His whole political, academic, and artistic career, his whole life, were devoted to the fight against racism not only in Brazil, but with a Pan-African perspective. His plays, canvases, political speeches, texts, and lectures were tools to denounce and fight racism, teach and celebrate African epistemologies, and engender the amelioration of the social condition of Black people. Nascimento conceived the *terreiro* (temple) as the cradle of Black creativity and resistance:

> Attacked by the Catholic priests, persecuted by the police, the Candomble temples – *terreiros* – had to be hidden in woods, hillsides, and all sorts of places of difficult access and visibility for the enemies. The religion, however, remains the deepest source from which flows the inspiration and the basic lines of Black creativity. Through the Candomble, predominantly, the Africans and their descendants have exercised a powerful influence in all aspects of Brazilian art: music, dance, visual arts, literature-including poetry, the novel, and theatre. Place of worship, point of social convergence, and cultural citadel, the Candomble provided the Black with a means for resisting.[186]

Terreiros, in his view, were not only the concealed places where African religiosity and culture could survive and prosper in a disguised way, but also places of resistance and the environments where Black creativity could be expressed, a creativity that shaped Brazil's cultural identity at large.[187]

---

[186] Abdias Nascimento, "African culture in Brazilian art," *Journal of Black Studies* 8.4 (1978): 400.

[187] In the 1950s, Nascimento brought the *terreiro* and Afro-Brazilian religiosity and cosmovision on the theater stage with his play *Sortilégio: mistério negro* (Sortilege: Black Mystery), that he wrote in 1951 but was only staged publicly in 1957 because of government censorship that forbade its production twice, accusing it of inspiring racial tensions between the white and black population. The stage production of

The Teatro Experimental do Negro

If the *terreiro* functions as a political organization structured around a religious belief system, the Teatro Experimental do Negro (TEN, Black Experimental Theater), a theater organization that Nascimento together with other Black intellectuals founded in 1944, was a political organization organized around a cultural project that envisioned the production of a new, self-produced image of Black people. When it was formed, Brazil was still under the Estado Novo, president Getulio Vargas's authoritarian regime, which had banned political parties and associations opposed to the government, including the Frente Negra Brasileira (Black Brazilian Front) of which Nascimento was a member. At that time, the two had a tense meeting in which Vargas paternalistically had offered to help to Nascimento with TEN.[188] In fact, while the regime was very repressive, one of its aims was the coercion and control of the cultural production to mold a definition of *brasilidade* (Brazilianness) to unite the country and export abroad the image of a modern country where people of different ethnicities lived harmoniously. Nascimento reversed the affront taking advantage of Vargas's offer and requesting to stage the company's first play in Rio de

Sortilégio by Abdias Nascimento was censored twice. First, in 1951, censors banned it arguing the play "attempted to exploit racial prejudice by using a language that should never be heard by a theater audience." Then, in 1953, they reiterated that that "the drama attempted to make relations between blacks and whites in Brazil tense and to cause an incomprehensible racial shock." Nascimento was eventually able to stage *Sortilégio* having obtained the support of the Brazilian Association of Theatrical Critics, which published his play in the renown São Paulo cultural magazine *Anhembi* along with the censor's letters to Nascimento. It was eventually staged in 1957 in the Municipal Theater of Rio de Janeiro and in the Municipal Theater of São Paulo. See Doris J. Turner, "Black theater in a" racial democracy": the case of the Brazilian Black Experimental Theater." *CLA Journal* 30, no. 1 (1986): 41; and Abdias Nascimento, "Sortilégio," *Anhembi*, 12, No. 36 (November 1953), 544-546.

[188] Cheryl Sterling, *African Roots, Brazilian Rites: Cultural and National Identity in Brazil* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2012).

Janeiro, then still capital of the country, on the central stage of Brazilian dramatic arts at that time, the Municipal Theater.

TEN inaugurated its production in 1945 with Eugene O'Neill's play *Emperor Jones* done for the first time in Portuguese and with Black actors, with Aguinaldo Camargo, TEN's co-director, playing the role of Brutus Jones.[189] It was O'Neill's play, in fact, that had inspired Nascimento to create the Teatro Experimental do Negro, when he saw it interpreted by White actors in blackface at the Municipal Theater of Lima in the early 1940s.[190] The scene made him so indignant about the racist exclusion of Black people from the theater that in 1944 he founded TEN as "an instrument of redemption and revindication of black African values."[191] Values that, according to Nascimento, "were oppressed and/or relegated to an inferior plane in the context of so-called Brazilian culture where the emphasis is on elements of white European origin." Clarifying his goals, he stated: "[o]ur theater would be a laboratory of cultural and artistic experimentation whose work, action and production explicitly and clearly confronted the elitist and Aryan supremacy of the

[189] O'Neill wrote a letter to Nascimento wishing success to TEN and waiving all his royalty fees. The letter was published on several newspapers, calling attention to TEN's production and seriousness.
[190] In the early 1940s, Abdias Nascimento toured several South American countries with the Rio de Janeiro-based group "Santa Hermandad Orquídea" formed by Argentine and Brazilian poets and artists (the Argentine Godofredo Iommi, Efraín Tomás Bó and Raúl Young; and the Brazilian Gerardo Mello Mourão, Napoleão Lopes Filho and Abdias Nascimento. Upon his return to Brazil from Buenos Aires, where he had spent a year working with the experimental theater Teatro del Pueblo, he was incarcerated in Carandiru prison having been indicted in absentia for contesting racism: he and a friend had resisted been forbidden from entering a club because they were Black. In prison, he created the Teatro do Senteciado (Convicts Theater), where the incarcerated wrote and interpreted their own texts, thus merging dramaturgy with political action. Upon his release from prison two years later, he created the TEN.
[191] Besides Abdias, actor Aguinaldo Camargo, the painter Wilson Tibério, Teodorico dos Santos, and José Herbel were founding members of TEN.

dominant classes. TEN existed as a systematic unmasking of the racial hypocrisy that permeated the nation."[192]

TEN was born to contrast the myth of racial democracy and denounce Brazil's scornful disdain for its African heritage, and strove "to legitimate Brazil's African heritage in the eyes of the dominant white society, which had reduced that heritage to folklore."[193] It was thus a subtle denunciation of the government's strategy of superficially co-opting Afro-Brazilian cultural expressions, without providing the improvement of the economic and social conditions of the Black population, and even cancelling the Black agency of those creations.[194]

TEN was a political Black movement that remained active for twenty-four years, until 1968 when Nascimento moved to the United States. It was much more than a theater organization, and therefore perceived as a thread by the government, that often censored its productions, and the mainstream cultural sector, that dismissed its plays with criticism imbibed of prejudice. The theater company not only demolished centuries of biased representations of Black people and brought Black actors and producers to the most important Brazilian stages, launching the career of many actors, playwrights, and theater designers. It also promoted literacy classes and courses to train actors, organized national

---

[192] Abdias Nascimento, *O Quilombismo* (Petrópolis: Vozes, 1980), 68, quoted in Leda Maria Martins, "A Ritual Choreography: The Orishas' Steps in *Sortilégio*," trans. Phyllis Peres *Callaloo*, Johns Hopkins University Press 18, no. 4 (1995): 864.

[193] Turner, "Black theater," 33-34.

[194] Nascimento wanted to encourage the work of Black authors, and stage plays where Black characters had prominent and non-stereotyped roles. He put on stage works by prominent national and international authors: *Emperor Jones* and *All God's Chillun Got Wings* by Eugene O' Neill; *Caligula* by Albert Camus (who visited TEN and saw it in person); and the plays written expressly for TEN: *O filho pródigo* (The Prodigal Son) by Lúcio Cardoso; *Aruanda* by Joaquim Ribeiro; *Auto da Noiva* (The Girlfriend's Car) by Rosário Fusco; *Rapsódia Negra* (Black Rapsody) and *Sortilégio: mistério negro* (Sortilege: Black Mystery) by Abdias Nascimento. Many of the works written by Brazilian authors involve Afro-Brazilian religiosity.

conferences such as the I Congresso do Negro Brasileiro (First Congress of the Black Brazilian, 1950), visual arts contests, such as "Cristo Negro" (Black Christ, 1955) –a competition aimed at fostering artists and the public to embrace the idea of a Black Christ– and had its own publications: the magazine *Quilombo* of which ten editions were published, and books. Moreover, TEN included two Black women's organizations, the Associação das Empregadas Domésticas (Association of Domestic Workers) and the Conselho Nacional de Mulheres Negras (National Council of Black Women). According to renowned actress Léa Garcia, who began her acting career when Nascimento invited her to participate in TEN: "He is Exú, Exú who opens the doors, Exú who opened the door of the Black cause in Brazil. Despite being a *filho de Oxum* (son of Oxum), he is Exú. […] TEN did a social-racial work, social inclusion of the Black. I can only thank this Exú-Oxum […] especially for making me aware of the Black issue in Brazil."[195] Nascimento himself, thus, is considered an Exú, a trailblazer who opened new paths not only for himself but for the Black community, who advanced the fight for the Pan-African cause and for justice.

Exú: the Principle of Revolution

Exú is also the dynamic principle that engenders action and change in the play *Sortilégio: mistério negro* (Sortilege: Black Mystery, 1951) that Nascimento wrote expressly for TEN. *Sortilégio* narrates the drama of Dr. Emanuel, a Black man who is

[195] *Exú Rei - Abdias Nascimento*, directed by Barbara Vento (Cultne Cinema, Rio de Janeiro, 2017), accessed September 14, 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tIIqqtve-cI.

destined to die at midnight for his apostasy. In fact, because of societal constrains and for self-preservation, he has assimilated and acculturated to the prescriptive values of the hegemonic and discriminatory society. Raised in a Catholic family, he is imbued of a Eurocentric view that makes him despise Afro-Brazilian religions, devalues Black music and dance, and disowns his cultural roots. He is in love with his Black girlfriend but leaves her to marry a White woman as a form of social validation Despite his interracial marriage, and notwithstanding his law degree, he is not able to overcome racial prejudices and to ascend socially. Emanuel is the opposite of the *malandro:* he follows the Vargas government's dictates: work ethic and the official policy of *embranquecimento* (interracial marriage to obtain the whitening of the population), and yet he lives in a society that precludes any possibility of success to a Black person, a society where he is destined to succumb because of racial prejudice despite having transformed into a "white simulacrum."[196]

Exú is also the principle of change, or the "principle of revolution"[197] in a person's life. He is fundamental for Emanuel's liberation and that of the Black population, and this liberation is not just political and economic, but involves also the religious, cultural, aesthetic, epistemological, sexual dimensions.[198] Writing about *Sortilégio*, poet, playwright, and theorist of Afro-Brazilian theater and religious performance Leda Maria Martins argued:

---

[196] Martins, "A Ritual Choreography," 865

[197] This is how Ketu mãe de santo Palmira de Yansan defines Exú. See Stefania Laffitte Capone, *Searching for Africa in Brazil. Power and Tradition in Candomblé* (Duke University Press, 2010), 43.

[198] Geraldo Jose Natalino, "Quem disse que Exú não monta? Abdias Nascimento, o cavalo do santo no terreiro da história" (PhD diss., Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo (PUC-SP), 2018), 231.

> Black culture is a culture of crossroads, the center from which crossings, intersections, fusions, deflections, derailments, fissures, ruptures, confluences, multiplicity, and ambiguity originate and disseminate. As the dynamic sign of movement, structural principle, and the organizer and generator of meaning, Exú metonymically represents this differentiated and differentiating cultural corpus. Thus, in Nascimento's play, this orixá, is so much more than a character, but rather the very vehicle of the scenic-dramatic narrative.[199]

Exú is the *orixá* of empowerment and agency through which Emanuel becomes aware of his submission and takes action to change his path. And this transformation takes place in the *terreiro*, which is not just a religious space, but also a memory site and place for the resistance of black culture and religiosity where the Afro-Brazilian population can connect to its roots, overcome the social and interior obstacles that are a legacy of colonialism, reshape its present, and take responsibility for a collective future. [Figure 2.2]

Sortilégio was the first Brazilian play to put on the stage issues such as the myth of racial democracy, the impossibility of social mobility for Black people, police brutality against the Black population, religious intolerance and iconoclasm, and interracial relations. It also presented Afro-Brazilian religions and Black culture as a fundamental tool in the fight against racial oppression. Rather than residuals of a subaltern and dominated culture, they are the catalysts of change and resistance within a hostile environment. With this play Nascimento created a dramaturgical model based on Afro-Brazilian religiosity that was revolutionary not only in terms of content and ethic, but also in terms of aesthetics.

[199] Martins, "A Ritual Choreography," 869.

Abdias Nascimento and his Pictorial Work

Nascimento began painting in 1968, during one of the harshest periods of Brazilian history, the lead years of the military-civil dictatorship. He moved to the United States that same year. As a matter of fact, because of his outspoken stance against the myth of racial democracy and his participation in opposition parties, Nascimento was under threat in Brazil. Thanks to a two-month scholarship from the Fairfield Foundation to visit Black theaters in the United States, he was able to leave his home country in what became a self-imposed exile that would last for thirteen years, from 1968 to 1981, when the re-democratization process had begun.

Although he had started painting while still in Rio de Janeiro that year, most of his pictorial work was produced while he was living in the United States. Living first in New York, after limited-term appointments at Yale (1969) and Wesleyan University (1970), he became professor at the State University of New York (SUNY) in Buffalo, where he taught Black cultures and where he founded the chair for African Cultures at the Center for Puerto Rican Studies in the Department of American Studies (1971). Nascimento stated that in the U.S. he felt free to express his creativity and talk openly about racism in Brazil that the government and society wanted to silence. In the country he found a receptive environment and he soon found the opportunity to exhibit his work, with solo exhibitions at the Harlem Art Gallery, New York (1969); Columbia University (1969); Yale University (1969); the Studio Museum in Harlem (1973), among others.[200] Painting was for him a source of

[200] He had solo exhibitions at the Harlem Art Gallery, New York (*Abdias Nascimento*, 1969); Crypt Gallery at Columbia University (*Afro-Brazilian Paintings*, 1969); at Yale University School of Art and Architecture (*A One Man Exhibition of Paintings (Commemorating the Birthday of Malcom X)*, 1969); at the Studio Museum in Harlem (*Afro-Brazilian Theogony*, 1973); at the Fine Arts Museum of Syracuse

revenue, and a way to express himself in visual language, given that he refused to perfectionate his English, stating that he had already been colonized once, having to learn and speak Portuguese, he did not want to be colonized twice.[201] As author of *Black Art in Brazil* (2013) Kimberly Cleveland noticed, his was a conscious choice of privileging African over European culture, the visual language of the *orixás* over the language of the European colonizer.[202]

Exú Black Power

Self-taught, Nascimento was a very prolific painter. His pictorial work is a thorough and original investigation of religious symbolism. Apart from a few cityscapes, most of his artworks have as subject matter symbols related to religions of African origin such as the *orixás*, the Akan *adinkras*, the Haitian voodoo *veves*, and Egyptian hieroglyphs. His canvases are simultaneously didactic and celebratory, invoking the deities while inciting the viewers to take up the fight of their ancestors for a future free of oppression. Nevertheless, he was not orthodox in his representations. He did not produce paintings with the purpose of displaying or using them in religious contexts, nor as representative of a religious order. Instead, he exhibited them primarily in university art galleries, with a didactic purpose. He explained:

(*Abdias do Nascimento*, 1974); at the Inner City Cultural Center in Los Angeles (*Paintings by Abdias do Nascimento*); and at the Howard University Gallery in Washington DC (*Abdias do Nascimento of Brazil*, 1975), among others.

[201] Elisa Larkin Nascimento, "Ogun's Warrior," *Transition* 132.1 (2022): 408-409.

[202] Kimberly Cleveland, *Black Art in Brazil: Expressions of Identity*. (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2013), 62.

> In a real sense my paintings emerge from a projection of Afro-Brazilian symbols and myths, mainly those which express religious emotion. However, they do not seek in it an orthodox ritual art. […] My art does not conform to systems or norms, and if it occupies the world of symbols and images it is to use them, to discover them, and to intensify their archetypal or pristine meaning. That is, the use of myth as an instrument of effective knowledge-the language of art-paralleled to rational knowledge-the language of science. For us the emotion caused by the sacred is at the same time the aesthetic emotion.[203]

Therefore, the artist put on the same plane myth –that he expressed in the language of art with his plays and artworks– and science, as equally effective tools for the formation of knowledge.

Among the religious symbols, it is Exú who occupies a central stage in his artistic production. Exú is the messenger that is responsible for connecting the invisible with the visible spheres, the tangible world of the living Aiyê, with Orum, the world of the *orixás*, and he is one of the few deities that can also travel to the world of the dead, Egum, hence he is able to traverse time and connects past, present, and future. In his essay "Os Afro-Brasileiros e os Orixás" (The Afro-Brazilians and the Orixás, 1995), Nascimento argues that "[b]etween Orum and Aiyê, there is a space of mystery ignored by the vain human rationality. My paintings come from there, in the effort to rescue some of the symbolic images of the supernatural and historical path that has brought us from a mythical past to a fully human present and future."[204] The painter, thus, claims that his creativity comes exactly from this space of transition inhabited by Exú, the crossroad between the world of

[203] Abdias Nascimento, "African culture in Brazilian art," *Journal of Black Studies* 8.4 (1978), 404.
[204] Abdias Nascimento, "Os Afro-Brasileiros e os Orixás," in *Orixas: os deuses vivos da Africa*, ed. Nascimento (Rio de Janeiro: IPEAFRO/Afrodraspora, 1995), 66.

the ancestors and that of the living, a space of mystery that connects past, present, and future.

Throughout his oeuvre, the artist produced more than twenty artworks that have Exú as subject, and used a variety of forms to represent the *orixá*: with the colors red and black associated with the *orixá*; as the devil, a figure Exú was mistakenly associated with by the catholic church and later appropriated in Umbanda; as anthropomorphic subject fighting for the rights of the Black diaspora; as an offering (*padê*), and as a *ponto riscado*, a cabalistic ritual drawing used to summon the deity in rituals, or used by the believer who is being embodied to communicate to the community which is the entity that is taking control of their body.

In the painting *Exú Black Power– Homenagem a Rubens Gerchman* (Exú Black Power – Tribute to Rubens Gerchman, 1969), which he produced soon after having arrived in the States, Exú occupies a large portion of the canvas. [Figure 2.3] Represented in an anthropomorphic way, his body is composed of geometric shapes: a rectangle for the torso, a rhombus for the head, two straight and parallel lines for the legs, and long, diagonal linens for the arms. The facial features are also simple marks: the mouth and nose are a horizontal and vertical line respectively, and the eyes are two lozenges. Yellow snakes that protrude from the eyes of Exú and flow around his head give dynamism to the representation. They denote the fact that Exú can see in all directions, both spatially and temporally. One of the snakes has a double head, showing that paths and meanings can be multiple. What calls most the attention is the enlarged right fist raised in the gesture of Black Power, which gives title to the painting, and is the most detailed element of the canvas. With the other

hand, also raised but not represented, Exú is holding a trident with which he is stabbing the U.S. flag, symbol of imperialist and hegemonic power, yet depicted upside down, already defeated, at the right corner of the canvas. At the same time, he himself is being threatened by a pitchfork that emerges from the bottom left and points towards him, symbolizing that the fight for racial justice is a continuous endeavor that does not allow to lower the guard. Exú is painted in red and black, the colors associated with the *orixá*, and stands against a blue, flat background. Exú is standing on a ground painted in black and yellow stripes that allude to the yellow and black caution tape used to mark off and control crowds during protests in the United States.[205]

Through his use of bright and bold colors, simple shapes, and a politicized agenda, Nascimento demonstrates his aesthetic engagement with pop art and the figurative movement *nova figuração*, which emerged in 1960s Brazil.[206] While the Brazilian vanguard of the 1950s and early 1960s engaged in geometric abstract art with the Concrete and Neo-Concrete movements, abstraction linked to "national developmentalism" became anachronistic after 1964 with the beginning of the dictatorship. In response, a group of artists returned to figuration in the mid-1960s, drawing inspiration from popular culture and mass media imagery to create political commentary on the dictatorship. Their aim was

[205] Abigail Lapin Dardashti, "Abdias Do Nascimento in New York: Migration, Resistance, and Transnational Black Art, 1968–70," *MODOS: Revista de História Da Arte* 6, no. 1 (January 10, 2022): 483. Lapin Dardashti explains that painter Rubens Gerchman, to whom Nascimento's painting is dedicated, used this pattern in several of his works from the 1960s, a time when he was also living in New York. A friend of Nascimento, the artist also designed the cover of his 1968 book *O negro revoltado* (The Outraged Black) employing a similar yellow-and-black-striped motif.

[206] Representatives of *nova figuração* are Rubens Gerchman (1942-2008), Antonio Dias (1944-2018), Claudio Tozzi (b.1944), Carlos Vergara (b.1941), Antonio Henrique Amaral (1935-2015), Anna Maria Maiolino (b.1942), and Roberto Magalhães (b.1940).

to make their visual language more accessible by selecting subjects from outside the fine-art world while at the same time voicing criticism about the national situation. Nascimento's friend Rubens Gerchman (1942-2008), to whom the painting is dedicated, was a representative of such movement and was living in New York around the same time as Nascimento.[207] The artist, though, had also met members of the Black Panther Party in Oakland and even created a painting calling for the liberation of their leader, Huey P. Newton*: Liberdade para Huey: Omolu azul n.3* (Freedom for Huey: Blue Omolu, no.3, 1969).[208] [Figure 2.4] Therefore, he was familiar with the specific striking graphic language of *The Black Panther* newspaper[209] and of political campaign posters by Emory Douglas, Minister of Culture for the Black Panther Party.[210] In his militant and bold visual language, Douglas often included representations of weapons in a reference to armed resistance; the U.S. flag as a symbol of American imperialistic foreign politics; and pigs and swine as representatives of vicious law enforcement officers. All these concepts –armed resistance, American imperialism, and police brutality– are present in *Exú Black Power*, where Exú's spear becomes a allusion to the spear held by Huey Newton in the iconic 1967 black and white photograph by Blair Stapp of Black of the Panther Minister of Defense sitting on a rattan throne chair.[211]

[207] Rubens Gerchman lived in New York from 1969 to 1973.
[208] The Black Panther Party for Self-Defense was founded in October 1966 in Oakland, California, by Huey P. Newton, Minister of Defense, and Bobby Seale, Chairman.
[209] The first issue of *The Black Panther* was published on April 25, 1967. The newspaper run until 1980 with about 537 issues.
[210] I would like to thank Dan Aldridge for inviting me to think about Nascimento's references to the Black Panther's aesthetics and motives.
[211] The photograph was first published in *The Black Panther*, Vol. 1, No. 6, November 23, 1967.

Nascimento was convinced that Black liberation could only be attained if fought across the diaspora. In this painting, Exú becomes a transnational symbol of Black defiance and resistance against racism and oppression exerted by official institutions: the government and the police. Like the *malandro*, in fact, also Exú is a Pan-African symbol. Celebrated both by the Yoruba and the Fon in Western Africa, the god who dwells and rules over the crossroads, is one of those topoi who traversed the ocean and thrived in the New World belief system, taking on multiple appearances and new meanings. He is a symbol of resistance for the African diaspora in the Americas, attacked by the dominant structure on which he stands, and against which he fights relentlessly.

Quilombismo

Exú is also central to Nascimento's conception of *Quilombismo*, which he defined as "a decentralized socialist form of political and economic organization, complemented by multiracial and pluricultural social organization that respects the cultural values of ethnic components and their specific identities."[212] The name and concept of Quilombismo come from the quilombos, maroon communities of fugitive and freed African people that originated in the colonial times and are still examples of communal, non-capitalist, identity-based communities. The most famous of these was the Quilombo dos Palmares, in northeastern Brazil. It is considered the first republic formed by enslaved Africans in the Americas, founded in the seventeenth century and survived for about a century,

[212] Abdias Nascimento, and Elisa Larkin Nascimento, *Africans in Brazil: A pan-African perspective*, (Africa World Press, 1992), 108, quoted in Sterling, "The Art and Times of Abdias Nascimento," 646.

withstanding regular attacks from the Portuguese. Nascimento looked at this legacy to form a philosophy of resistance and conceive a state modeled according to the values of quilombo, a multiracial and pluricultural state where different identities would be respected and not used as a basis for prejudice, discrimination, and segregation.

In 1980 Nascimento made a painting that would become the emblem of Quilombismo as well as the symbol of political campaigns, events, organizations, and publications to come.[213] *Quilombismo (Exú e Ogum)* (Quilombismo, Eshu and Ogun, 1980) is a vertical canvas cut in two diagonally; the top half is painted orange red and the bottom green. [Figure 2.5] At the center, in thick lines, there is the representation of a *ponto riscado*, a cabalistic ritual sign drawn on the earth with a chalk during rituals to salute or summon a divinity and their power during trance religious ceremonies. [Figure 2.6] *Pontos riscados* are also produced as three-dimensional metal sculptures placed in the *orixá*'s shrine. [Figure 2.7] The symbol of *Quilombismo* is Nascimento's interpretation of the combination of the *pontos riscados* of two *orixás*, Exú and Ogum, the god of metallurgical technology and war. The upper half presents the trident of Exú, who, in the artist's words, "incorporates the principles of contradiction and dialectic (already present in African philosophy much earlier than Hegel and Marx). As a dialectical entity, Exú comprises the forces of good and evil. Because of this, he was mistakenly confused with the devil, in the

[213] The symbol of Quilombismo became the insignia of the Instituto de Pesquisas e Estudos Afro-Brasileiros, IPEAFRO (Afro-Brazilian Studies and Research Institute), founded by Abdias and Elisa Larkin Nascimento after they returned to Brazil in 1981. It was also adopted as logo of the 3° Congresso de Cultura Negra das Américas (Third Conference of Black Culture in the Americas) that IPEAFRO organized in 1982 at the Pontifical University of São Paulo (PUC-SP), and of the bilingual magazine *Afrodiáspora*, created as a result of the event, of which seven issues were published between 1983 and 1987.

ignorant and Manichean concept of certain Christian sectors."[214] This association was maintained since the sixteenth century, and common representations of Exú depict him with horns and a trident, as in *Exú Trifacético*. The bottom half presents the irons of Ogum –a semicircle with tools as pendants in the interior curve of the bowl that, according to the artist, "signif[y] the scientific conquests of pre-colonial Africa, brutally suppressed in the European versions of "universal history." […] Ogum represents the African and Afro-American struggle for justice and liberation, being the warrior god and defender of his people."[215] [Figure 2.8] In many mythological narratives, Exú and Ogum are considered brothers. Nascimento chose these two gods, their union, as representative of *Quilombismo*, a movement that fought for the liberation of Black people.[216] The colors red and green are associated with Ogun, while the color red and black are those of Exú. Red, black, and green are also the colors chosen in 1920 by political activist Marcus Gravey (1887-1940), for the Pan-African flag: red symbolizing the blood shed in the fight for Black liberation, black representing people of African-descent, and green the fertility of Africa.[217] Nascimento's symbol for Black liberation, therefore, expands beyond Brazilian borders to embrace the African diasporas across the world.

[214] Abdias Nascimento, "Nota sobre nosso símbolo," *Afrodiáspora* 1.1 (January-April) 1983: 11.
[215] Nascimento, "Nota sobre nosso símbolo," 11.
[216] Molefi Kete Asante, who was a good friend of Nascimento, stated that he came up with the concept of Afrocentricity at the same time that Nascimento was developing his concept of Quilombismo. See Amy Winter, Elisa Larkin Nascimento, and John F. Collins, eds. *Abias Nascimento: Artist, Activist, Author* (New York: Godwin-Ternbach Museum, Queens College, CUNY, 2014): 36.
[217] Marcus Gravey first presented the Pan African flag, also called Black Liberation flag, at a 1920 conference in New York organized by the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) of which he was the leader.

Throughout his life, the artist engaged in fights both on the political and artistic battlefields. Through his personal experience and that of Afro-Brazilian artists who had preceded him, like Heitor dos Prazeres, Nascimento was well-aware that the paintings of a Black, self-taught artist would have been received by the hegemonic art world with either tepid indifference, or badly masked racist criticism. Painting the *orixás*, thus, wasn't just a matter of aesthetic preference, but a choice that entailed a fight for freedom. Nascimento argued: "The exact definition is that by Wole Soyinka: the *orixás* are our "sources of strength", a reality of our own being; they are 'the gods that produce the energies of the Black Continent.'"[218] Taking it from the Nigerian author, he continued:

> In the face of such an enlightened cosmovision, what does it matter to be labeled "instinctive painter," "an innate artist," "neo-primitive" or any other codification of conventional criticism? As I paint Ogum I communicate with the divinity of iron, war, vengeance, humans' partner in the fights, brothers who fight for freedom and dignity…[219]

Nascimento goes on listing the *orixás* that populate his canvases, and concludes with Exú, "a trickster genius who controls paths and crossroads of the universe." From this perspective, labels meant to belittle Black artists pale into insignificance when considering that the depictions of the *orixás* bring with them the potential for a revolution, the fight for freedom.

---

[218] Nascimento was Visiting Professor 1977 in the department of African Languages and Literature at the University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University) in Ife, Nigeria, in 1976-1977. In 1977 he took part, uninvited, in the Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC '77) to protest that a White man, art historian Clarvial do Prado Valladares (1918-1993), had been chosen to lead the Brazilian delegation.

[219] Abdias Nascimento, "Arte afro-brasileira: um espírito libertador," in *Abdias Nascimento: Um Artista Panamefricano / A Panamefrican Artist*, ed. Adriano Pedrosa and Amanda Carneiro (São Paulo: Museu de Arte de São Paulo, 2022): 293. Originally published in *Black Art: An International Quarterly* 1, no.1, Autumn 1976.

One of the most common riddles related to Exú goes: "Exú killed a bird yesterday with a stone he threw today."[220] With the artworks and political activism, Nascimento knocks out the past of oppression of the Black population to open the paths for a future of liberation. Expert of African and African diasporic cultures Cheryl Sterling writes that Abdias Nascimento is a *quilombola*, which she interprets as more than a warrior and political figure. For her, "the Quilombola is an artist, a creator who inspires, who records, who uses culture as a source to serve the people in whatever manifestation they may need."[221] With his painting, writing, speeches, and the political and cultural organizations he founded, he established Quilombismo as a movement born out of the legacy of the physical, spiritual, and cultural resistance of enslaved Africans and their descendants, which would allow for the "dynamic preservation, practice, and development of the philosophical, spiritual, and communitarian values embodied in Afro-Brazilian religions."[222]

Nascimento was convinced that "the strategic use of the orixá mythology as a source of knowledge and language can preserve the memory of Black people's struggle and strengthen their mobilization in the present, as well as subvert the hegemonic paradigms established in art or society."[223] [Figure 2.9]

---

[220] "Exú matou um pássaro ontem com uma pedra que só jogou hoje."
[221] Cheryl Sterling, "The Art and Times of Abdias Nascimento: Quilombola Extraordinaire," *Journal of Black Studies* 52, no. 6 (September 1, 2021): 644.
[222] Nascimento, and Elisa Larkin Nascimento, ibid.
[223] Glaucea de Britto, "Do axé à justiça: a mitologia dos orixás na obra de Abdias Nascimento / From Ashe to Justice: The Mythology of the Orishas in the Work of Abdias Nascimento," trans. Ela Bittencourt, in *Abdias Nascimento: Um Artista Panamefricano / A Panamefrican Artist,* ed. Adriano Pedrosa and Amanda Carneiro (São Paulo: Museu de Arte de São Paulo, 2022), 66 and 68.

Hélio Oiticica

Building on Nascimento's assertion I posit that, during the military dictatorship, it was not just those artists who identified themselves as Afro Brazilian that looked to Exú, as a model of creativity and resistance. In 1966, Hélio Oiticica, who opted for a self-imposed exile in the U.S. around the same time as Nascimento, produced an artwork that was a tribute to his friend Cara de Cavalo (a nickname that means Horse Face). Cara de Cavalo was a young man who lived in the favela do Esqueleto, a shantytown in the northern zone of Rio de Janeiro, piecing together a living through a series of odd jobs, first as a pimp and then as a bodyguard to the gamblers running the *jogo do bicho*, an illegal game. Cara de Cavalo was an inconsequential outlaw who went by with tricks and petty crimes, representing the epitome of the *malandro*, "a being out of place, a being dislocated from the formal rules that govern the social structure, relatively excluded from the labor market," to used DaMatta' words.[224] The problems of Cara de Cavalo started when the *bicheiros* (the operators of the *jogo do bicho*) accused him of extorsion and hired the cop Milton Le Cocq, who was also a hitman, to "get rid" of him. On August 27, 1964, caught while collecting money from his customers, Cara de Cavalo escaped in a taxi chased by the police. In defending himself, he shot at the car pursuing him and hit Le Cocq twice, killing him. In response, three thousand policemen launched the largest manhunt Rio de Janeiro had ever seen, which lasted over a month and expanded beyond the Favela do Esqueleto to all the *morros* (hills) of the city, a way to terrorize the marginalized population, until he was finally located and murdered on October 3, 1964.

[224] DaMatta, *Carnivals, Rogues, and Heroes*, 209.

Oiticica responded forcefully to this idea of annihilation, transforming the outlaw into a hero. In honor of his friend, the artist created *B33 Bólide caixa 18 caixa-poema 2, "Homenagem à Cara de Cavalo"* (B33 Box Bólide 18, Box-Poem 2, "Homage to Cara de Cavalo"), two years after the murder, in 1966. [Figure 2.10] The work consists of a black box made of polished wood that the viewer is meant to open. Inside, a piece of red nylon netting unfolds, like a carpet, a mourning veil, or a streak of blood. This semi-transparent textile also filters one's view of a photograph repeated on all four sides: a black and white image taken from the newspaper of Cara de Cavalo's bullet-riddled body, auspiciously positioned as if crucified.[225] Cara de Cavalo is the focal point of the composition, yet two dark figures that stand shoulder to shoulder at the bottom draw the viewer in. Like the viewer of Oiticia's artwork, in fact, they are looking at the crime scene from a position that could have been that of the shooters. Several photographs of the body of the felon taken from different angles circulated in those days in the newspapers, yet Oiticica selected the one that unmistakably makes us witnesses of the scene, involved, maybe even responsible for the killing.[226] The media coverage and the circulation of macabre photographs depicting bodies hunted down and cruelly slaughtered served the regime not only as a proof that the

[225] *Jornal do Brasil*, October 4, 1964

[226] As historian of Brazilian and Portuguese literature Gonzalo Aguilar, has observed a similitude between the *marginal* (marginal/outlaw) and the *homo sacer* as theorized by the philosopher Giorgio Agamben: a paradoxical figure set apart from society who is simultaneously cursed and hallowed, marginal and hero. See Gonzalo Aguilar, "La ley del bandido, la ley del arte. *Bólide caixa 18, Poema caixa 2, Homenagem a Cara de Cavalo* de Hélio Oiticica," *Revista iberoamericana*, (2009): 539-50.

outlaw had been executed, but that also the revolutionary potential he brought with his actions, and lifestyles were extinguished.[227] [Figure 2.12]

Beneath the red netting is a clear plastic bag filled with red powder, and a poem silkscreened on its surface: "Here he is and here he will stay. Contemplate his heroic silence." In fact, the artist wanted to homage an "individual social revolt: that of the so called-bandit."[228] [Figure 2.13] The *Bólide* is a "haptically provocative object."[229] When detaching the red net, and especially when touching the plastic bag filled with the red pigment, again, the viewer becomes implicated, either with the crime or with the revolt.

Hélio Oiticica explained the motivation behind *B33 Box-Bolide 18*:

> What I wanted to show, the reason behind this homage, is the way in which this society castrated any possibility for Cara de Cavalo to survive, as if he was a leprosy, an incurable disease. The press, the police, politicians, the morbid and unscrupulous mentality of a society based on the most degrading principles, as is our society, collaborated to transform him into the symbol of the one who must die, and I say more, die violently, with cannibalistic refinement. […] There is a kind of social enjoyment in this, even in those who say they are shocked or feel sorry.[230]

Oiticia's homage was not an endeavor to justify Cara de Cavalo or present a romanticized portrayal of the *marginal.* Rather, he highlights the dearth of options society provides to disenfranchised individuals like Moreira, who inhabit the gray area between legality and illegality. While this liminal position may be tolerated among policemen-

[227] Beatriz Helena Scigliano Carneiro has written a thorough analysis of how the media built the public image of Cara de Cavalo. See "Relâmpagos com claror: a construção da vida como obra de arte em Lygia Clark e Hélio Oiticica" (PhD diss. Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo, 2001).
[228] Hélio Oiticica, "Cara de Cavalo," in *Helio Oiticica* (Whitechapel, London, 1969). Originally written in English, reprinted in *Hélio Oiticica* (Rotterdam: Minneapolis: Witte de With; Walker Art Center, 1992), 25.
[229] Karl Posso, "An Ethics of Displaying Affection: Hélio Oiticica's Expressions of Joy and Togetherness," *Portuguese Studies* 29, no. 1 (2013): 45.
[230] Oiticica, "O Herói Anti-Herói e o Anti-Herói Anonimo," March 25, 1968, AHO 0131/68.

turned-militiamen engaged in activities such as *jogo do bicho* and prostitution, it is not forgiven for the impoverished, predominantly Afro-Brazilian population residing in the *morros*.

A similar indignation and identification with the *marginal* brought Clarice Lispector, four years earlier, to write a short story dedicated to the José Rosa de Miranda, known as Mineirinho, murdered by the police in 1962.[231] The author writes that she felt compelled to count the thirteen shots that killed Mineirinho, rather than the number of crimes he had committed because, whatever the crimes were, one bullet would have been enough, the rest was the sheer wish to kill, it was prepotency.[232]

> This is the law. But if there is something that makes me hear the first and second shots with a relief of safety, the third makes me alert, the fourth restless, the fifth and sixth cover me with shame, the seventh and eighth I listen with my heart pounding in horror, ninth and tenth my mouth is trembling, the eleventh I say God's name in awe, the twelfth I call my brother. The thirteenth shot kills me - because I am the other. Because I want to be the other.[233]

Like Oiticica, Lispector was reacting to the dehumanizing depiction of a marginal from part of the media and denouncing her own complacency, as part of society, in his murder.

Hélio Oiticica produced another artwork dedicated to another *malandro*, the bank robber Alcir Figueira da Silva, who, in 1966, committed suicide rather than being captured

---

[231] The story of Mineirinho inspired also director Aurélio Teixeira to produce the movie *Mineirinho Vivo ou Morto* (Mineirinho, Alive or Dead), in 1967.
[232] Interview to journalist Julio Lerner, from Cultura TV Station, in January 1977.
[233] "Esta é a lei. Mas há alguma coisa que, se me faz ouvir o primeiro e o segundo tiro com um alívio de segurança, no terceiro me deixa alerta, no quarto desassossegada, o quinto e o sexto me cobrem de vergonha, o sétimo e o oitavo eu ouço com o coração batendo de horror, no nono e no décimo minha boca está trêmula, no décimo primeiro digo em espanto o nome de Deus, no décimo segundo chamo meu irmão. O décimo terceiro tiro me assassina — porque eu sou o outro. Porque eu quero ser o outro" Clarice Lispector, "Mineirinho" in *Para não esquecer*. São Paulo: Ática, 1979, 101.

by the police who were chasing him. *Bólide, B44 Bólide-caixa 21 caixa-poema 3: porque a impossibilidade?* (B44 Box Bólide 21, box-poem 3: Why the Impossibility?), 1966-1967 consists of two white crates, one fitting inside the other. The outer box is made of wood and the internal walls are painted in orange and yellow, while on the bottom there is the photograph of Alcir Figueira da Silva's corpse that was found on the shore of the Timbó river, which, like in the homage to Cara de Cavalo, Oiticica appropriated from the sensationalist press. [Figure 2.14] The viewer, therefore, looks at it from above, as if staring on a marine environment, the body of the marginal with crossed legs in a seemingly resting pose, already partially engulfed by the sand. There is a stripe of orange gauze attached to the bottom of the crate, similar to the one used in *B33 Box Bólide 18*, which unfolds to reveal a poem that likely reads: "Porque a impossibilidade? Resistência na busca de querer ser" (Why the Impossibility? Resistance in the Search for the Wish to Be).[234] The work elicits the question of why a person would prefer death over the prospect of being jailed for theft. During the authoritarian regime tolerance towards crime was very low, and Alcir Figueira da Silva's chase, hadn't he chosen to take his own life, would have likely ended in his murder, or in torture and imprisonment without a trial. The work, therefore, is a reference to the impossibility of justice, the vulnerability of the population with respect to the armed forces, and the lack of alternatives of the deprived population. Later, Oiticica silkscreened this same image to produce his famed *Seja Marginal, Seja Herói* consisting

[234] The artwork is in a private collection and very little information is available. Only two photographs of it have been published in dissertations and on the website of Projeto Oiticica, therefore I can only make up part of the text and guess the functioning of the boxes. The content of the second box is unknown.

in a red banner with the slogan *Be an Outlaw, Be a Hero* (Marginal ~ Outlaw/outcast) and the image of da Silva's body. [Figure 2.15]

Oiticica made over 70 different *Bólides,* a Portuguese word that translates as 'Fireballs,' starting in 1963 until his premature death in 1980. The *Bólides* are sculptural objects built with inexpensive everyday materials, generally mixing organic and industrial elements like fabric, powder pigments, sand, and plastic, intended to be handled and manipulated by the spectator. Color is a fundamental aspect in the construction of the Bólides. Oiticica stated that with this series of sculptural objects he wanted to "give body to color." Color is also a very relevant element in Candomblé and Umbanda, where different colors are associated to the various *orixás.* Significantly, for B33, which honors a *malandro,* Oiticica chose the colors red and black, associated with Exú. Although not a believer, in some typewritten notes, Oiticica mentions that he attended a *terreiro* called Seu Malandrinho. In the art historical literature, B33 has been examined through the lens of phenomenology, in connection to the Neo Concrete movement that Oiticica was affiliated with (against the Concrete movement that was felt too rationalist), or even as part of a legacy of Russian constructivism from the 1920s, despite the fact that the visual references to the *malandro* and Exú are so prevalent. The same goes for the banner *Seja Marginal, Seja Herói.*

From where we stand in 2023, with current beliefs on racial representation, a white artist's decision to amplify by repetition an image of anti-Black violence perpetrated by the hands of the police results highly problematic. The work prompts the question formulated by Black Studies professor Christina Sharpe, "How do we memorialize an event that is still

ongoing?"[235] How can we gain a historical distance from a phenomenon, racial violence, that is still ongoing? It is the paradigm of whiteness in which Oiticica found himself, (and where I recognize myself, too) understood not simply as someone's skin color, but as the racialized experience of the world which places the white person in a privileged position, what allowed the artist to have access to and controversially pay homage to the "public enemy number one," the most wanted outlaw in Brazil, in institutional contexts such as galleries and museums.

Although this aspect should not be dismissed, reading this work through its allusions to Exú grants the piece additional connotations. The violence perpetrated by the military-civil regime against Afro-Brazilian people has been neglected from most historical accounts. Nevertheless, recent reports by Rio de Janeiro State's Truth Commission show that the Black population was specifically targeted by the military police, aggravating an already heinous situation.[236] Oiticica's memorialization of a Black man that had been marginalized by society, a *malandro* that lived in the interstice between law and disorder, using the colors of Exú, the *orixá* companion in the fight for Black liberation, suggests that the artwork was intended as a call for action. In a text he wrote about the death of Cara de Cavalo, Oiticica declared: "I am not in favor of peace – I consider it useless and cold – how can there be peace, or aspire to it, as long as there are master and slave!"[237] He saw a clear connection between Brazil's history of enslavement and the social injustices perpetrated

[235] Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 20.
[236] Cynara Menezes, "Na ditadura, o negro não podia nem ter cabelo black power que era preso," *Socialista Morena*, October 18, 2018, accessed April 6, 2022: https://www.socialistamorena.com.br/racismo-na-ditadura-o-negro-nao-podia-nem-ter-cabelo-black-power-que-era-preso/
[237] Hélio Oiticica, "Posição e Programa," July 1966, AHO 0253.

by the authorities against Afro-Brazilians during the 1960s, and assumed a combative stance against it.

In 1968 the artist wrote a text entitled *O herói anti-herói e o anti-herói anônimo* (The Hero Anti-Hero and the Anonymous Anti-Hero), for the exhibition "Iconografia de Massa" (Mass Iconography) organized by art critic Frederico Morais and that was eventually published on the newspaper *Diário de notícias*.[238] Here he explained that the anti-hero (Cara de Cavalo) and the anonymous anti-hero (Alcir Figueira da Silva) are, indeed, the same person and represent the visceral, self-destructive, suicidal revolt against the social *status quo*, the adversity against the social state, and the denunciation of something rotten in the society we live in.[239]

If, on the one hand, his works dedicated to outlaws, both lionized and anonymous, are accusations against the conservative society, on the other they read as provocations, as incitements to act as a marginal, outside of the rules and roles imposed by the dictatorial government and the priggish sectors of the society to strive for an uncompromising search for individual freedom and happiness. Cultural theorist Heloisa Buarque de Hollanda asserts that "[m]arginality is taken not as an alternative exit, but as a threat to the system; it is appreciated exactly as an option of violence, in its possibilities of aggression and transgression. Contestation is claimed consciously."[240]

---

[238] Hélio Oiticica, "O herói anti-herói e o anti-herói anônimo," *Diário de notícias*, Rio de Janeiro, April 10, 1968, AHO 0736/68.
[239] Oiticica, Ibid. p.2.
[240] Heloisa Buarque de Hollanda, *Impressões de viagem – CPC, vanguarda e desbunde*. (São Paulo: Brasilience, 1980), 68, quoted in Coelho, *Eu, brasileiro, confesso*, 220.

The popular musicians Caetano Veloso and Gilberto Gil brandished the banner *Seja Marginal, Seja Herói* in a concert in a bar in Rio de Janeiro 1968 and were arrested as a consequence. This exemplifies how threatening the artwork was perceived by the authorities, and epitomizes the level of control and repression experienced by artists during the harshest years of military dictatorship.

Inserções em circúitos antropológicos: Black Pente, 1971-73

In 1971, while he was living in New York on a Guggenheim Fellowship, artist Cildo Meireles (b.1942) conceived a project never brought to completion, *Inserções em circúitos antropológicos: Black Pente* (1971-1973), which consisted in the production and distribution at cost price of combs used to create the Afro hairstyle associated with Black Power. In 1969, a comb of this kind was patented in the U.S. by Samuel H. Bundles Jr., and Henry M. Childrey (Tulloch).[241] Meireles's work was informed by the fashion used by African Americans to affirm their cultural identity, underscore racial pride, and stand against the social push to conform to European fashions and straightened hair, which he witnessed while living in NY.[242] Yet, the project would have resonated also in Brazil, given

[241] Sally-Ann Ashton, "Radical Objects: The Black Fist Afro Comb," *History Workshop Online*, February 10, 2014, accessed on June 2, 2022: https://www.historyworkshop.org.uk/black-history/radical-objects-the-black-fist-afro-comb/.
Although associated to the 1970s counterculture and civil rights, this comb is much more ancient. The first item that survives comes from Egypt and is 5,500 years old. In 2013, the Fitzwiliam Museum in Cambridge organized an exhibition on the subjet, *Origins of the Afro Comb: 6,000 Years of Culture, Politics, and Identity*, July 2-November3, 2013.

[242] Jardim De Santa Cruz Oliveira, Teresa Cristina. "Systems and feedback: Cildo Meireles's" Insertions into Ideological Circuits", 1970-ongoing" (PhD diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2014), 145.

that the Black Movement in the country was gaining momentum in those years, a period that interestingly overlaps with the toughest years of the military dictatorship.

Like Nascimento's *Exú Black Power*, thus, Cildo was tracing a connection between the Black Movement in the States and that in Brazil. The military-civil dictatorship made official the myth of racial democracy, and thus any association related to a specific race or ethnic group was not tolerated because, according to the official rhetoric, it incited disaggregation. As a consequence, Black people were harassed for wearing the Afro hairstyle associated with the Black Power movement. The police would arbitrarily arrest them at the exit of dance parties, and shave off their hair as punishment and humiliation. Journalist Cynthia Menezes explains that the police's habit of shaving off the hair of Black people has colonial implications and dates back to when the people caught fleeing or resisting slavery were punished and humiliated with this dehumanizing ritual. A nineteenth-century police chief, Coelho Bastos, even earned the nickname "rapa-coco" (coconut-shave off) for shaving the heads of Afro-Brazilians he captured.[243] Therefore, sporting the Afro hairstyle with the comb threaded in the hair would have been a visible sign of defiance against the police and hegemonic culture, requiring stamina and courage from part of the wearer.[244]

The combs were generally handmade, as they were not available in pharmacies and supermarkets. Asfilófio de Oliveira, known in the dance scene from the 1970s as DJ Dom Filó, narrates that they manually produce the combs using bicycle spokes measuring about

[243] Cynara Menezes, Na ditadura, o negro não podia nem ter cabelo black power que era preso"
[244] Songwriter Gilberto Gil had his hair and beard shaved off when he was put in military prison in 1968 after displaying Oiticica's banner Seja Marginal, Seja Herói. Spoerting long hair was, in general, seen as a behavioral deviation. See Coelho, *Eu, brasileiro, confesso minha*, 183.

30 cm. They were able to fabricate about ten per month, which the police regularly confiscated.

Although Meireles never found the financial means to produce the combs, the project came to the public in an article published in the first issue of the Brazilian art magazine *Malasartes* in 1975 where Meireles accompanied the image of the comb[245] with a short text titled Arte-Cultura (Art-Culture), where he argued "that what is done today tends to be closer to Culture than Art, [and thus] is necessarily a political interference. [Figure 2.16] Because, if aesthetics is the basis of Art, Politics is the basis of Culture."[246] Meireles, thus, claimed that the production of art (culture) at his time, thus during the military dictatorship in Brazil, was necessarily a political interference.

In one of the sketches for *Black Pente*, the artist drew the handle of the comb as a clenched fist, reinforcing its political signification.[247] [Figure 2.17] The title, *Black Pente*, combines the English word "black" and the Portuguese "pente", comb, and has an assonance with Black Panther, the Party founded in 1966 in Oakland, California by Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale around an ideology of Black nationalism, and armed self-defense against police brutality. The shape of the comb resembles Exú's trident, and in fact the combs were regularly confiscated by the police who considered them as weapons, if

[245] As illustration, the artist cut out the image of the styling pik comb n. 6, the "Natural style" comb sold for .69 cents, from the page of a mail order catalog advertising coramite Afro combs produced by the Chicago-based Supreme Beauty Products Company.
[246] Cildo Meireles, "Inserções em circuitos – Arte e Cultura," *Malasartes*, no.1 (September, October, November 1975):15.
[247] The comb with a fist as handler was designed in 1972 by Anthony R. Romani and granted the patent in 1976. Clenched-fist combs are also produced in different countries in Africa, Europe and the Americas. This demonstrates the transnational value of the symbol, the cultural exchange among people of African descent.

not physical, for sure ideological. The image of the comb as a weapon is therefore quite fitting to this interpretation and the *Insertion* by Meireles reads as a glorification of the Black Movement. At the same time, like in the case of Oiticica, from today's perspective the appropriation of such a powerful symbol by an artist who does not identify as Afro-Brazilian, but as "the son of a hybrid indigenous heredity nourished by Europe and Africa and which continues to search for one of its original dimensions" is controversial.[248] In a text written in 1981, Meireles explained that this *Insertion into an Anthropological Circuit* had objective of "introducing a habit and, from there, the possibility of typifying a new behavior. In the specific case of "Black comb," the project aimed to affirm an ethnicity.[249] Distributing at cost price styling piks, which the police considered weapons, typifying a behavior that consisted in defiance of the established order, resistance to racist harassment, and emphasis of racial pride, is an act of *malandragem*.[250]

The idea of defiantly expressing resistance by wearing a potent symbol is not new to Afro-Brazilian culture. During the colonial times, enslaved and freed Afro-Brazilian women often used the *joias de crioula*, lavish, opulent, shiny, bulky jewels that they infused of magic and religious meanings. [Figure 2.18] The *joias de crioula* were often gifted to the *escravas de ganho*, enslaved women who lived in urban centers and who

[248] Antonio Calabrò, "A Work of Art is Like a Journey: It Involves Participation," in *Cildo Meireles: Installations*, ed. Vicente Todolí (Milano; London: Mousse publishing: Koenig Books, 2014), 56.
[249] Cildo Meirles quoted in *Cildo Meireles*, ed. Ronaldo Brito and Eudoro Augusto Macieira de Sousa (Rio de Janeiro: FUNARTE, 1981), 26.
[250] In 2002, the image *of Black Pente* was published in the magazine *Item: Revista de Arte: Afro-Américas* (Rio de Janeiro: Espaço Agora/Capacete, No 5, fevereiro de 2002): 56-57. Meireles was not credited for the image of the comb taken from *Malasartes* and the work was re-signified by it juxtaposition with another work published on the same page spread, an artistic proposition by the U.S. artist Glenn Ligon, *Project Design* (1998) which read: "Dear Readers,/Please answer the following question:/If you were black, what kind of hairstyle would you have?/Send your answer along [with] a photograph to:/Glenn Ligon/526 West 26th Street, Room 616 New York, New York 10001 U.S.A./Thank You."

worked as street sellers, by the masters to display wealth and social distinction. The master would set the amount of money that they had to bring back at the end of the day, while they could keep the rest, in the eventuality that the profit was higher than the sum stipulated. In this case, the enslaved could, with time, buy their own freedom, and often as freed people they continued dealing with trade.[251] At the same time, with these eye-catching jewels, the women challenged the prohibitions on style and sumptuousness imposed by the Portuguese crown to the lower sectors of society. As Roberto Conduru has observed, "more than expressing wealth and power, these jewels are signs of resistance, exchange, invention and freedom."[252]

Cildo Meirele's *Black Pente* presents formal, functional, and apotropaic similitudes with one of the jewels that most has attracted scholars' attention, the *pencas de balangadãs*,[253] wrought chains of amulets made of cast silver or gold, as well as organic

[251] Simone Trindade Vicente da Silva, who has studied the largest collection of *pencas* housed at the Museu Carlos Costa Pinto in Salvador, Bahia, explains that the *penca* is an "open work" composed by the user, who with time can add elements to it or take them off the wrought chain. It was not uncommon for women to add amulets or sell them for financial need, or to buy their own freedom or that of somebody else, and gain emancipation from slavery. See Simone Trindade Vicente da Silva. "Referencialidade e representação: um resgate do modo de construção de sentido nas pencas de balangandãs a partir da coleção Museu Carlos Costa Pinto" (PhD diss. Universidade Federal da Bahia, UFBA, 2005), 95.

[252] Conduru, Roberto. "Pérolas da liberdade: joalheria afro-brasileira," *Textos Escolhidos de Cultura e Arte Populares* 10, no. 1 (2013), 33.

[253] In her article "Historicity, achronicity, and the materiality of cultures in colonial Brazil," Amy Buono exposes the fact that object like the pencas de balangandãs are better studied and more often exhibited in museum, compared to objects with similar apotropaic functions that do not offer the same visual and material appeal. She uses the example of the *bolsas de mandingas,* leather or fabric pouches filled with folded pieces of paper inscribed with kabbalistic signs and numbers, passages from the Qur'an, and drawings of Christian symbols and orations, which were deemed powerful objects but are rarely studied. Buono argues that the difference in the way art history as a discipline treats the two objects depends on the materiality and aesthetic aspects and on the fact that very few *bolsas de mandinga* survive today, because of their fragile materiality, and because they were seen as a form of *feitiçaria*, and thus outlawed by the Portuguese Inquisition. Amy J. Buono, "Historicity, achronicity, and the materiality of cultures in colonial Brazil." *Getty Research Journal* 7 (2015): 19-34. Buono argues that some amulets in the form of body parts functioned as ex-votos, and thus protected also against physical harm.

materials such as ivory, coral, wood, and horn that served to protect against the evil eye but also enslavement.[254] Common symbols included in the *penca de balangandãs* are the key, the pomegranate, the bunch of grapes, the fish, a coconut used as recipient, coins, and the tooth. Nevertheless, the element that is almost omnipresent is the *figa*, usually made of silver, gold, horn, ivory, wood, and coral.[255] [Figure 2.19] The *figa* (mano fica or mano in fica) is an amulet represented by a clenched fist where the thumb is thrust between the forefinger and the middle finger, representing the female and male genitals in the sexual act.[256] Therefore, the *figa* symbolizes fecundity, the creation of life, and is thus opposed to the destruction of life, to death, thus known to avert the evil eye, the power to exert an evil influence on somebody by a glance, the *jettatura*, and envy.[257]

African and Afro-Brazilian women used the *mano fica*, together with other amulets, for good fortune in trade, against the evil eye of avaricious customers and jealous competitors, and as protection against enslavement. There is a particular similarity between

[254] Renato Rezende first compared the circulation of *joias de cri*oula in colonial Brazil with that of Cildo Meirele's series *Insertions* during the military dictatorship, arguing that both dissolve disciplinary boundaries, are made of different materials, transgress the rigid structure of the circuit and have as medium the social body and its symbolic connections. See Renato Rezende, "Joias de crioula –outras inserções em circuitos ideológicos (ou mais sobre a brasilidade da arte brasileira)," *Revita Poiésis* 16, no. 26 (2015): 221-234.

[255] 26 out of the 27 *pencas* in the collection of the Museu Carlos Costa Pinto analyzed by Silva has at least a figa.

[256] Its name comes from the Latin word *ficus*, which indicates both the fig tree and its fruit. *Figa* was the vulgar name that Romans gave to the vulva given its similarity with the fruit. The wood from the fig tree, instead, was the one favored to carve images of the god Pirapus, considered the protector of gardens and fecundity by ancient Romans, often represented by a phallus.

[257] This amulet was common among the Etruscans and then adopted by the Romans, though its origin seems to come from the Middle East. The symbol remained popular through the centuries despite the conversion of the Romans to Catholicism and was still very much widespread during the Middle Ages not only in nowadays-Italy but in the Iberian Peninsula as well, where different traditions brought by the Moors, Jews and Christians merged, and from there it arrived in colonial Brazil. See Frederick Thomas Elworthy, *The Evil Eye: an Account of the Ancient & Widespread Superstition* (London: John Murray, 1895); and Eva-Maria Von Kemnitz, "Porous Frontiers of the Hand Symbol," *In the Iberian Peninsula and Beyond: A History of Jews and Muslims (15th-17th Centuries) Vol. 2* 2 (2015), 258.

the *figa* and the Black Power gesture. In fact, they can be easily confused, especially because examples of "falsas figas," simple fists where the thumb does not stand out between the forefinger and the middle finger, abound.[258]

Like the *pencas*, Meireles's *Black Pente* is portable, can be prominently displayed on the body and exchanged, contains hidden messages, and is a symbol of freedom, resistance, and creativity. Therefore, while Meireles was surely referring to the Black Power gesture in his pencil drawings of Afro combs with a clenched fist as handler, he was also drawing from larger cultural references and symbols of resistance from his native Brazil. Moreover, a comb with a fist as handler was designed in 1972 by Anthony R. Romani and granted the patent in 1976.[259] Meireles's *Black Pente* is the opposite of patented goods: he defied the mechanisms of the capitalist market, planning to distribute the combs at cost price, thus not for profit. *Black Pente*, like the *figa*, could be considered an amulet asserting a set of believes; an item to be exchanged and circulated to maintain its powerful potential.

Conclusion

Abdias Nascimento conceived Black art as the practice of Black liberation. With his art, but also theater production, activism, and political speeches, the artist fought to demonstrate that the Afro-Brazilian cosmovision, philosophy, and epistemologies are not only necessary tools for Black liberation, but shapers of Brazilian cultural identity.

[258] In the collection of the Museu Carlos Costa Pinto, for example, among the 53 figas, 35 are "falsas figas." Silva, "Referencialidade e representação," 101.
[259] Clenched-fist combs are also produced in different countries in Africa, Europe and the Americas. This demonstrates the transnational value of the symbol, the cultural exchange among people of African descent.

According to him, "only when Brazil will be able to accept the African tradition in its integrity, it will undoubtedly come closer to that elusive, yet so dearly pursued, national identity. Until then, such an identity will certainly remain crippled by ideas of syncretism that, in a mistaken way, incorporate a hierarchy that goes from the Black "popular" or "folkloric" bottom up to the high White and European "erudite."[260] Accepting and cherishing this heritage will demolish the implicit racist hierarchy that places the production of artists of African descendants on a lower level than that of Euro-Brazilians. Hélio Oiticica and Cildo Meireles recognized the importance of Afro-Brazilian culture. They drew from it for inspiration and for its power of contestation to denounce political and racial violence inflicted by the dictatorship.

[260] Elisa Larkin Nascimento, "A negra arte da luta de Abdias," in *Abdias Nascimento: um espírito libertador,* ed. Pablo Leon de la Barra and Rafael Fonseca (Museu de Arte Contemporânea, Niterói, 2019), 14.

Chapter 3

Illicit Exchanges & Subversive Humor

"Se não podiamos gritar, falar abertamente, então alguma coisa precisava ser derrubada. Foi a tela. O nosso modo de atuar no circuito estava baseado no que Cildo chamava de nebulosa. Queríamos mostrar algo novo mas, ao mesmo tempo, impeder que nos entendessem inteiramente. Era nossa tática principal."

"If we couldn't shout, speak out openly, then something had to be dropped. It was the canvas. Our way of working in the [art] circuit was based on what Cildo called 'nebula.' We wanted to show something new but, at the same time, prevent people from fully understanding us. It was our main tactic."

– Luiz Alphonsus[261]

In 1971, while he was living in New York on a Guggenheim Fellowship, Cildo Meireles began counterfeiting tokens, like those used for telephones, dispensing machines, or public transportation at that time. He made them by hand, pressing clay into a wooden mold that he had carved himself.[262] [Figure 3.1] Once he spent them, they were gone, moving through a seemingly infinite web of exchanges. However, this project was about more than just a young artist cheating the system (he was 23 at the time). Meireles was manipulating a pre-existing circuit of exchange with his insertion. He also imagined how New Yorkers might react, upon realizing their token was a fake; would they be angry, or feel tricked? Would they use it again, thus participating in the subterfuge? Or not, and sacrifice the money they had spent? The decision rendered depended on a number of

[261] Luiz Alphonsus, "Nossa tática: a nebulosidade," interview with Galeria de Arte Banerj, May 5, 1986, in *Depoimento de uma geração, 1969-1970* (Rio de Janeiro: Galeria de Arte Banerj), 1986.

[262] In an interview Meireles recounts that he had initially considered using linoleum of the kind used to cover floors as a possible material, as in those days it was common to find it in trash cans around the city. Eventually, he chose clay instead: a malleable material that would be easier to mold to different token shapes. See Cildo Meireles, and Felipe Scovino, *Cildo Meireles. Encontros* (Rio de Janeiro, RJ: Beco do Azougue Editorial, 2009), 249.

factors, such as the person's financial situation, or their urgency to make a phone call. At the same time, even without considering the financial value of the coin, a person feeling cheated would need to choose whether to pass on the deception to somebody else and become hustlers themselves.

Meireles stated that he wanted to call attention to the artificial cost of tokens, whose price is regulated by the Communication or Transport agencies and not determined by the cost of manufacturing, thus pointing out the gap between symbolic value and real value, use value and exchange value, which in art is a constant question.[263] He narrates that, working on *Token*, he had in mind the expression "Viver em estado de graça" (Live in a state of grace), referring to the multiple meanings of the word "graça" which means "grace" but also "free of charge," as was the case for the token.[264] Moreover, "graça" means also humor, amusement, joke. Henceforth, Meireles's incitement was to live in a state of grace, taking things with light humor, using wits and tricks to achieve objectives without investing personal resources. More than the tokens *per se*, the work consisted in circulating the idea that the system could be tampered with.

In 1975, Meireles published the visual representation to produce the tokens on the pages of the artists magazine *Malasartes*, of which he was one of the founders, so that people could independently continue the swindle. In the photograph, the artist uses a hand-made wooden mold to transform a sphere of clay into a flat token with a central line cutting

[263] Cildo Meireles, sketch for *Inserções em circúitos antropológicos, Token* (Insertions into Anthropological Circuits, Token), 1972.
[264] The artist initially thought about producing counterfeit tokens, which had to be of a certain weight and size, to activate the subway turnstile. The idea was that people should be able to replicate the process, and produce the tokens for free, so he thought of using linoleum, a material that was easily found in New York's trash at that time. Scovino, *Cildo Meireles*, 249.

through on one side, and two parallel ones on the other, resembling the public telephone tokens used in Brazil at that time. As with *Black Pente*, the comb for the Afro hairstyle described in chapter 2, he was able to translate an art project conceived in the United States to an intervention meaningful for the Brazilian context, and pass on the instructions so that people could learn the process and make it their own.

The work, titled *Inserções em circúitos antropológicos* (Insertions into Anthropological Circuits), belongs to a larger series that Meireles started the previous year while still living in Rio de Janeiro, and one that he has continued to revive over the years. In the first iteration of the project Meireles modified a thousand Coca-Cola bottles by silk-screening subversive political messages on empty bottles before returning them to the bottle return system. [Figure 3.2] Messages like 'Yankees go home' only became visible once the bottles were refilled with soda and put back into circulation. Like the New Yorker who ended up with the fake token, unassuming thirsty Cariocas would only discover the messages once the iconic bottle was in their hands, thus implicating the customer. Although this version can be understood as a comment on the encroachment of U.S. capitalism and U.S. imperialism in the region, he created different versions, and some were much more aggressive, becoming a call to arms against Brazil's brutal military dictatorship, with instructions on how to transform the Coca-Cola bottle into a Molotov cocktail, a rudimentary weapon used during student riots and urban guerrilla actions. Others, with the question "Which is the place of the work of art?" interrogated the role of art and art institutions in society. In all of these, his identity was concealed.

Meireles began this intervention when the repression of civil and human rights exacted by the military dictatorship in Brazil was at its peak (this clearly needs to be distinguished from the tradition of continuous and vicious violence against African and Afro-Brazilian people from the colonial times to these days). Although the military took power in 1964, it was in December of 1968 that they dissolved Congress, abolished habeas corpus, legalized censorship, and increased their use of torture as a tool of intimidation. Consequently, freedom of expression – in all creative genres and media – was radically curtailed. Under these conditions, there were two options: self-imposed censorship or identification of alternative means to share one's art. Meireles adopted the second option and in order to eschew censorship and reach a broader public, he manipulated channels less likely to be surveilled than art institutions and mass media. With his *Insertions*, he tricked random members of the public, while also relying on their participation, hoping they would repeat the process and keep the counter-information flowing (as a matter of fact he also realized some versions with encouragements to the receivers to replicate the gesture and circulate new messages: "Register information and critical opinions on bottles and return them to circulation"). More than a producer of finished artworks, he acted as a provocateur, sharing his authorship with the public and setting the basis for endless possibilities of collective participation.

Meireles's work with Coca Cola bottles is an excellent example of *malandragem* because the artist was able to exploit the strengths of multinational capitalism and co-opt the North American company's marketing and distribution system to his own ends, without detection from the company, the consumer, or the government. Moreover, the same year

that he anonymously circulated the recipe for a Molotov cocktail, Meireles also sent the bottles to the Museum of Modern Art in New York to be displayed in the seminal exhibition on conceptual art *Information,* organized by Kynaston McShine, revealing his identity. So, like the *malandro*, he molded his way of operating in response to the circumstances, transforming into advantages what had first appeared as an obstacle, all while testing the limits of what was allowed and tolerated in society and art institutions.

Another iteration of the project, *Inserção em circúitos ideológicos: Projeto Cédula* (Insertions into Ideological Circuits: Banknote Project, 1970-1975), consisted in the circulation of cruzeiro banknotes, the Brazilian currency of the time, that the artist had rubber-stamped with charged messages, such as "Down with the dictatorship," or the names of people who had been arrested or disappeared by the government. One of the most provoking inscriptions was the rhetorical question: "Who killed Herzog?" Vladimir Herzog was a well-known journalist. Accused of subversion, on October 25, 1975, he was arrested and died that same day in a prison in São Paulo. [Figure 3.3] Covered up as suicide, his death was indeed a consequence of torture by electroshocks. Meireles's intervention unmasked the hypocrisy of the official version spread by the police and the government. People receiving the banknote with such message would feel uncomfortable, and, not wanting to rip money, they would hurry up to put the bill back in circulation. Spending or exchanging the money allowed them not to carry the burden of truth in their pockets, and pass it on to somebody else.

The series *Insertions* comprises the *Insertions in Ideological Circuits,* where the artist modified pre-existing objects and put them back in circulation, such as the Coca-Cola

bottles; and the *Insertions in Anthropological Circuits*, where he created objects from scratch and inserted them into systems of exchange, such as *Token* and the *Black Pente*. All these iterations represent open-ended experiments, as Meireles had no control over the receivers' reactions. He stated that the *Insertions* had an element of sham, of dribbling and avoiding the system. For him, it was a matter of opposing awareness to anesthesia.[265] He explained:

> The insertions are a negation of authorship, of copyright. They aren't works of art, they are propositions for action and participation. Nor are they a form of multiplied art – or whatever you want to call that (multiples, editions, etc). […] Could I explain the *Inserções* being part of museum collections, as works of art? I soon understood that they weren't even souvenirs or editions. They were actually examples of action.[266]

Meireles never sold any of the *Insertions* because the purpose was not for them to remain stuck in some gallery space, on the shelf of a private house, or in a museum storage. For him, the *Insertions into Anthropological Circuits* had "the objective of introducing a habit and, from there, the possibility of typifying a new behavior."[267] What would be this behavior if not *malandragem* as a reaction to any form of subordination to the state and capitalist society at large?

In this chapter I examine the work of four Brazilian artists, Cildo Meireles, Antonio Manuel, and the duo Paulo Bruscky and Daniel Santiago, who used pre-existing networks of exchange to spread their critical messages and involve the public in acts of *malandragem*.

---

[265] Meireles quoted in Scovino, *Cildo Meireles*, 249.
[266] Cildo Meireles and Frederico Morais, Interview, "Material Language", *Tate Etc*, September 1, 2008, accessed April 14, 2022: https://www.tate.org.uk/tate-etc/issue-14-autumn-2008/material-language
[267] Cildo Meirles quoted in *Cildo Meireles*, ed. Ronaldo Brito and Eudoro Augusto Macieira de Sousa (Rio de Janeiro: FUNARTE, 1981), 26.

Zero Cruzeiro

Another *Insertion* that, like *Token*, involves the creation of counterfeit money is *Zero Cruzeiro* (1974-1978): cruzeiro banknotes, the currency used in Brail at that time, that Meireles fabricated, substituting the numerical value with a zero.[268] [Figure 3.4] To produce them he employed the same printing technique of Casa da Moeda, the agency that printed paper money, photolithography. Meireles's bills, thus, resembled in aspect and touch the official, government-issued ones.[269]

While *Token* could be distributed by using it at turnstiles, thus involving the receivers in the forgery, *Zero Cruzeiro* could not be easily exchanged in a counterfeit manner. Hence, Meireles resorted to a different solution to distribute banknotes of zero value: he planned on relying on Rio de Janeiro's network of *camelôs,*[270] hawkers or street sellers who commonly work on the streets of major cities of Brazil. The idea was coherent: using an informal, illicit network to sell counterfeit money.

The first time Meireles tried to distribute the *Zero Cruzeiro* was in 1978. He mapped the street peddler network in the Center of Rio de Janeiro. Talking with a few of the street sellers, he obtained the contact of the person in charge (general manager), a policeman who used the nickname of Oxossi, the Afro-Brazilian god of hunt and forests,

[268] Although often not recognized as part of the series, Meireles has stated that he considers Zero Cruzeiro to be an Insertion. See Scovino, *Cildo Meireles*, 256.
[269] To increase the semblance, he even modified the serial numbers on the bottom corners, imitating the official layout. For a more detailed description, see Shtromberg. *Art Systems*, 17-18.
[270] The Portuguese word *camelô* comes from the French *camelot*, which in turn derives from the Arab word *khamlat*, used to refer to textiles sold by hawkers. In 1998 Meireles produced an artwork dedicated to the figure of the camelô as a homage to people who make a living selling trifles, knick-knacks, but also smuggled goods. *Camelô* consists in a box that contains the tools and instructions to mount what looks like a puppet show: a latex doll and a motor to make it move, two miniature wooden folding tables of the sort used by street peddlers, and the merchandise to be placed on the tables.

animals, and abundance, which is also the *orixá de cabeça* (spiritual guide) of Meireles,[271] which the artist took as a good sign. As it is often the case, policemen in charge of limiting illegal activities end up exploiting the marginal population involved in these activities, tolerating the business for a share of the profit. The idea of dribbling the system for personal advantage, hence, is practiced by the very same people in charge of making sure that laws are abided by, often to the disadvantage of the already disenfranchised population.

Oxossi showed interest in the modified banknotes and decided to run a test. The day after, he gave fifty banknotes to the person responsible for coming up with the jingle to sell the merchandise. The man set up his wooden table and began selling the *Zero Cruzeiros*, while Meireles and Oxossi watched from a bar in the vicinity. The banknotes sold quickly. Oxossi was thrilled and proposed Meireles to meet the day after in a building under construction in Buenos Aires Street, a nearby storage place where all the merchandise was distributed among the hawkers. They were going to define how many banknotes would be sold and for what price. Nevertheless, when he met with Oxossi, the policeman said: "I am really sorry. The product sells, but it cannot be marketed because the man who did the test came up with the following line: 'Look how far we've come: zero cruzeiro!'"[272] Meireles has repeatedly denied that this project revolved around a criticism of the skyrocketing inflation, yet the *camelô*'s jingle sounded like a criticism of the government's monetary policies and would have attracted the authorities' attention.

---

[271] The *orixá de cabeça* (head orixá) is the *orixá* that guides and supports a person from before birth, throughout life and after death, assisting them in the fulfillment of their destiny. The Yoruba word "ori" literally means head, and is the root of the word ori-xá. The *orixá de cabeça* is often referred to simply as Ori, and indicates the spiritual guide of a person. To identify their Ori, believers consult the *pai or mãe de santo* (priest/priestess) who uses geomancy for this determination.

[272] Scovino, *Cildo Meireles*, 255-56

If his attempt had succeeded, Meireles would have reached a large number of viewers, or customers, and the banknotes would have kept circulating. Distributing *Zero Cruzeiro* would have meant not only infiltrating the market with money of no value, but also circulating critical messages. As a matter of fact, besides the zero value, what made the banknotes daring was the fact that the artist had substituted the historical figures and national icons that traditionally ornate the bills,[273] with people marginalized by and from society, whom he elected as national symbols. On one side, Meireles printed the photograph of a Kraô Indigenous person in reference to a massacre documented by his father, Cildo Furtado Meireles, who had been sent by the Serviço de Proteção ao Índio (SPI, Indian Protection Service) to investigate a massacre of Kraô people ordered by a powerful local landowner and that was perpetrated in the 1930s by dropping by airplane clothes infected with the flu virus and tuberculosis bacteria in the area inhabited by the group. Meireles recounts that, fifteen days after the baleful flyover, the Kraô people had been decimated, of 4,000 only 400 were still alive, and half of them had lost their mind as a consequence of the genocide, the loss of family members, relationships, identity, and culture.[274] According to Meireles, this was the first time that someone involved in these crimes was charged. After the scandal, the SPI was disbanded, and in its place the Fundação Nacional do Índio (FUNAI, National Indian Foundation) was created by a government decree in January 1967. The government considered Indigenous peoples as obstacle in the way of modernization and industrialization of the country, as reflected by the words of José

[273] Examples are characters linked to Brazil's colonial or imperial past such as Dom Pedro I and Dom Pedro II, and military men such as the first president and vice-president of Brazil, Deodoro da Fonseca and Floriano Peixoto. Shtromberg, *Art Systems*, 20.
[274] Meireles quoted in Scovino, *Cildo Meireles*, 253

Costa Cavalcanti, minister of Interior during the Medici's government: "We will take all precautions with the Indians, but we will not allow them to hamper the advance of progress."[275] Therefore, massacres using biological weapons were a common tactic to eradicate ethnic groups using viruses and bacteria. Elena Shtromberg explains that Meireles's gesture of distributing the photograph of a Kraô person was even more audacious, considering that a Law from 1973 (Lei No. 6.001) prohibited the use of images of "the Indian or the indigenous community as an object of tourist propaganda" or "for any lucrative ends."[276] Meireles's plan of selling the *Zero Cruzeiro* thus was against the law.

On the other side of the *Zero Cruzeiro* banknote, Meireles printed a photograph he had taken of a patient of the psychiatric hospital of Cotolengo, Trinidade, in the state of Goiás, while he was conducting interviews with inmates and care givers. Starting from the 1920s, and particularly in the 1960s, there was in fact an interest in mental illness, asylums, and the incorporation of art in therapeutic practices in Brazil. In particular, art critic Mário Pedrosa had been a supporter of the idea of outsider art, collaborating with Nise da Silveira, a psychiatrist who in 1952 founded the Museu de Imagens do Incosciente (Museum of Images of the Unconscious) and who used artistic and corporal practices in the rehabilitation of patients formerly treated in psychiatric institutions.[277] The patient that Meireles photographed had been in the hospital for seventeen years, spending his days, from morning to evening, standing at the corner of two walls with his head lowered, a setting that reminds some early works by Meireles, *Cantos*. Portraying two marginalized

[275] Shtromberg, *Art Systems*, 23.
[276] Ibid.
[277] For more on the matter see Kaira M Cabañas, *Learning from Madness* (University of Chicago Press, 2018).

groups on bills of zero worth was symbolic of the null value given by the government and by society to these marginal figures. With these modified and counterfeit banknotes, Meireles circulated subversive messages, and went a step further relying on the network of informal sellers to distribute his dissent.

The Opportunity

Meireles tested the viewer with a similar moral dilemma to the one posed by the circulation of counterfeit money with an installation he conceived in 1974. This time, though, he exacerbated the internal debate by forcing the audience to make an ethical decision within an institutional setting such as a museum or gallery, which allowed Meireles to directly observe the visitors' behaviors and reactions. The installation develops in two rooms. One is brightly lit, empty if not for an enamel washbasin on an iron stand at its center, and with large mirrors hanging on three of the four walls. The adjacent room is dark and empty, and a two-way mirror offers a concealed view of what is going on next door. This is the setting up of the work *Ocasião* (Opportunity/Occasion), abbreviation of the expression "a ocasião faz o ladrão" (opportunity makes a thief). The washbasin, in fact, is filled with money, and the visitor who has entered the bright room is confronted with the ethical question of whether to take it or not. [Figure 3.5] In *Ocasião,* there is no instruction provided to engage with the work, yet the title seems an encouragement to make the most out of an unexpected opportunity. However, this encouragement clashes with the self-awareness elicited by the mirrors reflecting any action that is taking place in the room. The money is left unattended, and the work does not have security cameras, but mirrors.

Therefore, the visitor's choice is not based on surveillance, but self-surveillance and self-censorship, a permanent condition that was imposed onto the population by the dictatorial Brazilian government.

According to the artist, the work is a behavioral sensor.[278] As a matter of fact, the installation forces the visitors to explore their own attitudes and make quick decisions on the spot. The person encountering the basin filled with money cannot know if they are being spied upon by someone in the other room. On the other hand, the person in the dark room is placed in the exciting, yet uncomfortable position of voyeur-surveyor sadistically watching how other people will react to an ethical dilemma. And in case somebody were to take the money, the voyeur-witness would be summoned by the moral question of whether to intervene or denounce the theft. [Figure 3.6]

Speaking about the artwork, Meireles stated:

> I first thought about it around 1974 […] You would encounter a sort of interface which makes you feel like a voyeur. You find that this voyeurism has much to do with time: when you pass into the second room you look back and see someone else in the situation you were a minute or two before. The work is an occasion to check out your own attitudes. The money is in a basin, which rather reminded me of Pontius Pilates: to 'wash one's hands' of moral responsibility. People get a little bit nervous in the room, I don't think they feel comfortable at all.[279]

Moving from one room to the other, the viewer is, in fact, led to occupy subsequently different, conflicting, even irreconcilable positions and experience a full-circle moment, a baffling *déjà vu* of some sort. Art historian Sérgio Martins writes that the

[278] Marina Fraga and Pedro Urano, "Carbono entrevista Cildo Meireles," *Revista Carbono*, no.4 (2013), accessed March 14, 2022: http://revistacarbono.com/artigos/04carbono-entrevista-cildo-meireles/.
[279] Cildo Meireles, "Ocasião/Occasion," in *Cildo Meireles*, ed. Guy Brett, and Moacir dos Anjos (London: Tate, 2008), 176.

architecture of *Ocasião* is not meant to create a simple relationship of opposition (surveyor/surveyed) but demonstrate that each position exists within us: two distinct viewpoints coexist within a split subject.[280] This constitutes the dialectic symbolized by Exú and described in the previous chapter, where "two, it becomes three," two perspectives coexist.

To interpret the installation, Martins starts from his personal experience of it: the impossibility he felt of gripping the money, of taking full advantage of the opportunity offered. To explain his reaction, he employs Slavoj Žižek's reworking of the Freudian concept of the superego. Martins argues that a visitor will not take the money from the basin because of what the Slovenian philosopher calls a "nonsensical guilt" triggered by our superego.[281] The superego's "injunction to enjoy generates a kind of guilt that is so incomprehensible (since we cannot possibly fulfill its demands) that, if the subject comes to 'obey' the *public* Law, it is not mainly because of its coercive power, but because its prohibitions actually relieve us from this unbearable guilt. It offers a refuge against this *internal*, ruthless manifestation of the Law."[282] That is, taking the money is not prohibited, but we are inhibited by our moral values. Following the law (Do not steal) liberates from blameworthiness and self-reproach. *Ocasião*, thus, offers for the viewer what Žižek calls the "parallax gap": "the result of an instance in which two perspectives on a same object

[280] Sérgio B. Martins, "Occasion," in *Cildo Meireles* (Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, 2013), 212-213.
[281] Žižek's reworking of Freud's superego (self-prohibition).
[282] Slavoj Žižek, *The Metastases of Enjoyment: Six Essays on Women and Causality*, (London: Verso, 2005), 61, rephrased by Martins, "Occasion," 213.

cannot be plausibly mediated."[283] Martins concludes that the issue is not whether a person takes the money or not. What matters is the mental process of participating in this dilemma.

Martins's analysis offers an insightful perspective on the intellectual investment caused by *Ocasião*. Nevertheless, his assumption that people will not take the money because of a "nonsensical guilt" is contradicted by what really happened every time the artwork has been exhibited in public.[284] Despite been conceived in 1974, the work was publicly displayed for the first time only in the 2000s. In Madrid (2013), visitors substituted the euro banknotes in the washbasin with currencies of Latin American countries.[285] In London (2008), people began exchanging money, then taking banknotes and leaving coins, and eventually stealing what was left.[286] In São Paulo, when *Ocasião* was exhibited at the Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil (Bank of Brazil Cultural Center, 2012), people took the money without scruples. Meireles joked that, given that the work was installed in the Banco do Brasil, Brazil's major public bank, the institution could have replenished the basin indefinitely.

---

[283] Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), 10.

[284] Exhibition history of *Ocasião*: "Cildo Meireles; Occasion", Portikus im Leinwandhaus, Frankfurt am Main, 2004; "Cildo Meireles; Occasion", Chelsea College of Art and Design, London, 2008; "Planos de fuga – Uma exposição em obras", Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil, São Paulo, 2012; "Cildo Meireles" traveling exhibition: Palacio Velázquez, Parque del Retiro (Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía), Madrid, 2013; Museu de Arte Contemporânea de Serralves, Porto, 2013-14; Pirelli HangarBicocca, Milano, 2014.

[285] Fraga and Urano, "Carbono entrevista Cildo Meireles"

[286] The same Martins recounts that, when in 2008 *Ocasião* was shown at the Chelsea College of Art and Design in London, Brazilian artist Lourival Cuquinha interacted with the piece making "a reverse exchange operation." He broke the self-constrain taking twenty pounds out from the basin and replaced the money with seven Brazilian reais, reversing the exchange rate of 1:3 between British Brazilian currencies at that moment. Martins writes that Cuquinha did not want to conform with the expression "Occasion makes a thief" and yet there was personal gain, both financial and artistic, as a result of his action. Martins, "Occasion," 208-209.

Going back to the idea suggested by Meireles that the washbasin might be read as a reference to Pontius Pilates washing his hands from moral responsibility, the message is thus to take the money without guilt or regret. The idea of taking advantage of an occasion without qualms is very much linked to the idea of *malandragem*. The *malandro* uses the cracks of the system, extracting money from those who have it with a thousand and one tricks, by deceit to survive. At the same time, the *malandro* takes pride in being so shrewd and is respected for his cunning. Meireles himself acts as a *malandro*, forcing us to make a dramatic choice, playing tricks on us and watching with complacency as we make up our minds. The artist stated that the theatrical aspect of his installation is a deliberate strategy for "hijacking" the viewer, throw the viewer off-balance.[287] He incites us to break free from our constrains. At the same time, the installation is a test: can you overcome the sense of guilt and make the full of an occasion? *Token*, *Zero Crueiro* and *Ocasião* test the participant's attitudes, inciting them to behave as *malandros* without projecting a moral judgment. To live in a state of grace, thus, is to live free of guilt: the *malandro* reacts to the adversities and injustices imposed upon him by society and does not accept to be saddled with society's hypocritical moral contempt.

Antonio Manuel, Flans

With his *Insertions*, Cildo Meireles identified systems of exchange that bypassed the circuit of museums and galleries, as well as the press, radio and television, which had the potential to reach a vast audience but were all subject to varying degrees of control and

[287] Sérgio B. Martins, "Occasion," 211.

censorship at the time. In contrast, artist Antonio Manuel chose exactly the pages of newspapers as vehicle to carry out his acts of *malandragem*. Born in 1947 in Avelãs de Caminho, Portugal, Manuel moved to Rio de Janeiro with his family in 1953 and studied at the Escola de Belas Artes (School of Fine Arts) before turning to the art classes offered by painter Ivan Serpa at the Museu de Arte Moderna (MAM) in Rio de Janeiro, where he met artists from the Neo-Concrete generation like Hélio Oiticica and Lygia Pape, who also attended Serpa's art workshops. Like many artists from his generation, Manuel explored various artistic media, even going so far as to offer his own body as a sculptural work of art. However, it was with his manipulations of the newspaper that he achieved eclectic and paradoxical results. Initially, the artist limited himself to intervening on the pages with drawings, obscuring certain sections of the news while leaving others visible. Yet, he quickly progressed to experimenting with the newspaper's aesthetic and structural elements, producing a series of *Flans* (1967-1975). These stereotype matrices consisted of thick sheets of paper with high and low relief, used to transfer the news onto lead stereotype molds, which were then used to print the newspaper. In the beginning, he was limited to working with discarded flans that he scavenged from the trash bins of Rio's newspapers, highlighting with color certain elements of the news that attracted his attention. However, in 1973, Manuel gained access to the newsroom of *O Dia*, one of Rio de Janeiro's the most popular newspapers, thanks to his friendship with journalist Ivan Chagas Freitas, whose family ran the business. This allowed Manuel to create his own flans with the assistance of *O Dia*'s graphic designers and typesetters. By appropriating the newspaper's aesthetics and grid structure, he combined visual and written components, headlines and images, to create

artworks that were a commentary about society and urban violence. Some Flans carry a distinct social and political message, such as the one featuring the headline *Alab atam emof* painted in black, which is the reversal of the sentence "Bala mata fome" (Bullet Kills Hunger). [Figure 3.7] Below the headline, in the bold capital letters, is the sentence "O pão nosso de cada dia" (Our Daily Bread), which is less visible due to being a text in low-relief left unpainted. The lower portion of the Flan is occupied by an image of bullets painted in black. As noted by art historian Elena Shtromberg, the Flans function as rebus puzzles to be deciphered. *Alab atam emof* alludes to the daily occurrence of violence in the city's marginalized areas (our daily bread), and the government's response of criminalizing poverty instead of sponsoring social policies to address social inequalities. The Flan's message suggests that only violent death can release an oppressed population from chronic hunger. Some of the other Flans, such as the one featuring the headline "Corpo Fechado" above an image of Batman running towards the viewer, were more enigmatic.[288] [Figure 3.8] "Corpo fechado" literally translates to "closed body" and is an expression used in Afro-Brazilian religions to indicate that a person is immune to danger and harm thanks to the protection of the *orixás*. Their body is shielded from both disease and violence, as well as the evil eye. Manuel, thus, combines this expression from Afro-Brazilian religious traditions with an American comic book superhero, Batman, who one could argue, also has a "corpo fechado" that enables him to fight against the societal ills and uphold justice. The image of the superhero is flanked by four sentences: "Opção de liberdade" (Freedom Option) and "Ame ou deixe" (Love it or leave it) on the left, and "Esquadrão da Morte"

[288] I would like to thank Roberto Conduru for pointing out this artwork to me.

(Death Squad) and "Isso é que é" (That's what it is) on the right. "Love it or leave it," in particular, became a popular slogan during the administration of Emílio Garrastazu Médici (1969-1974), a period that is known as the lead years of the dictatorship. During this time, those suspected of opposing the government could arbitrarily be subject to harassment, arrest, or torture.

Clandestinas

During his career, Manuel created about fifty Flans, taking advantage of his privileged and secretive access to *O Dia*'s newsroom and printing room, which he had acquired through his connections. In 1973, he went even further and began manipulating the news by inserting his own images and texts on the newspaper's cover pages. His additions not only matched the logotype, but also the tone and the sensationalist style of news typical of the newspaper, making his infiltration difficult to distinguish at first glance. [Figure 3.9] Between 1973 and 1975, Manuel produced ten interventions, printing two to three hundred copies of each. He personally distributed them to newsstands across Rio de Janeiro, camouflaged among the authentic copies of *O Dia*. The artist was meddling not only with the production and publication of news, but also with the distribution system. Like Meireles with his *Insertions*, Manuel was able to deceive the unsuspecting owners of *O Dia*'s, as well as the readers, who were unaware that they were purchasing artworks made up of fanciful and implausible news stories.[289] The news he concocted –involving

[289] Elena Shtromberg demonstrates that Manuel was replicating a resistance strategy used by the newspaper *Tribuna da Imprensa*. The editorial staff would bring 500 hundred copies of the daily to be examined by the censors, but keep five or six uncensored copies hidden, which they would furtively distribute to the

vampires, cocks, poets-turned-stars, and goats– were so absurd that the reader would have disputed the limit between reality and fiction under the regime. Manuel's fake news did not have an explicit political character, but rather played with exaggerating *O Dia*'s tabloid-like scabrous stories about crime, urban violence, and soccer. In the 1960s and 1970s, in fact, there had been an increase in urban criminality and a corresponding morbid curiosity fueled by the tabloids, whose reports would inspire the content and aesthetic of many artworks. As curator Antonio Sergio Bessa noticed, while the intellectual left saw this social downturn as symptomatic of the social-economic policies (or lack thereof) implemented by the military regimes across Latin America, and produced artworks in response to this, the consequences were borne by the marginalized population.[290]

Much of the news Antonio Manuel fabricated featured and celebrate his friends such as Lygia Pape, Torquato Neto, and Hélio Oiticica, or provided commentary on the traditional art institution's inadequacy towards new developments in the arts. For instance, the front page from May 29, 1973, was dedicated to painter Ivan Serpa, who had recently died and had been a mentor to Manuel during his teenage years when he was just beginning his artistic career. [Figure 3.10] Manuel placed the headline: "Pintor ensina Deus a pintar" (Painter Teaches God how to Paint) next to the photograph of Serpa. The cutline under the photograph reads: "For a long time here on earth Ivan Serpa ate the color blue – he also tried the red and yellow, though his weak spot was blue– that tasted like toothpaste. A mysterious force took him to teach God how to paint." Above the primary headline is the

---

newsstands, so that a number of readers would get the full version of the facts. Shtromberg, *Art Systems*, 76.

[290] Antonio Sergio Bessa, "Citizen Bruscky," in *Art Is Our Last Hope: Paulo Bruscky* (New York, Phoenix: Bronx Museum; Phoenix Art Museum, 2014), 13.

sentence “Alma de bandido aparece gemendo” (Bandit soul appears moaning) while the drophead reads: “Causa espanto no hospital o homem da pele colorida” (Man with Colorful Skin Causes Astonishment in the Hospital). The teaser follows, announcing the news of a man kidnapped by an UFO, and later found by highway patrol and brought to the hospital with mutating skin color. These poetic, absurd, and lighthearted news contrast sharply with the bottom of the page, which in capital letters announces the grim news “174 dealers shot.” In other instances, Manuel discussed the poor reception of his works and artistic ideas in Brazilian art institutions. In the front page from June 29, 1973, the headline read: “Madness. A Man Displays Himself Naked in the Museum. As a Work of Art.” Underneath he placed a photograph of *O corpo é a obra* (The Body is the Work), the protest-performance that he enacted in 1970 when his proposal to exhibit his own body as work of art was rejected by the jury of an artistic competition by the Museu de Arte Moderna (Museumf of Modern Art), Rio de Janeiro. As a reaction, Manuel attended the opening of the exhibition (the 19th National Salon of Modern Art) where the selected artworks were on display, took off his clothes and presented himself as a living work of art. The action caused such a tumult that Manuel had to flee from the security guards, and he was forbidden from entering the Museum and from participating in official salons for a period of two years. In *Clandestinas* he combined a photograph of himself naked in the museum with the caption:

> Hairy, thin, and scrawny he presented himself bare-naked to the jury of the Museu de Arte Moderna – he wanted to be an acquisition – he would live in the museum – room and board – the jury got worried – they rejected the work – they called Pinel[291] – the rejected artwork left the Museum very sad – drove the jury crazy – all were admitted to the hospital of the conservatives of the state of morals.

While caricaturing himself, describing his body in an unflattering manner, and presenting the idea that he wanted to be subsidized by the museum for life as a work of art, Manuel was also aiming to critique the Museum's narrow and conservative selection criteria. He wanted to highlight how the Museum had aligned itself with the authoritarian government's rhetoric of morality and good taste, while curbing what was considered bad taste.

The irony of *Clandestinas*, a title that references Manuel's semi-clandestine access to the newspaper's printing room, is further enhanced by the fact that, on each cover page, next to Manuel's improbable news, the masthead featured the name of *O Dia*'s founder, Antônio de Pádua Chagas Freitas, who was completely unaware that his newspaper was being manipulated. Poet Décio Pignatari defined Manuel's intervention as "anti-news of an anti-behavior for an anti-public."[292] Like Meireles's *Insertions*, in fact, *Clandestinas* are an example of *malandragem* and deviant behavior. Demonstrating, primarily to himself, that the system could be compromised, and that resistance was possible, Manuel used art

[291] Pinel refers to French physician Philippe Pinel. "Pinel" was used as a generic term to indicate mental health clinics.
[292] Décio Pignatari, "Clandestinas," in "De 0 à 24 horas," *Suplemento Dominical, Jornal do Brasil*, July 15, 1973.

as a small act of sabotage that lasted until when the newspaper owner Chagas Freitas found out about it an expelled Manuel from the printing room in 1975.[293]

De 0 às 24 horas - From 0 to 24:00

Antonio Manuel reached the apotheosis of his guileful insertions in the media when he repurposed the pages of the national newspaper *Jornal do Brasil* for an exhibition space to display artworks that had been repeatedly censured by the police and art institutions. In 1973 he had approached the Museu de Arte Moderna of Rio de Janeiro, this time to produce a solo exhibition. However, all of his artworks, except for one called *O bode* (The Goat), consisting in having a living black goat in the foyer of the museum, had been rebuffed by the museum's staff due to fears of retaliation from the authoritarian government. In fact, Manuel had already attracted the authorities' attention with his political artworks and unconventional behavior in art institutions. In 1968, his artworks critical of military police violence against student protests, featured in the Second Bahia Biennial, were confiscated and destroyed by the police. The exhibition closed less than twenty-four hours after its opening. The following year, in 1969, Manuel's artwork *Repressão outra vez—Eis o saldo* (Repression Again—This Is the Consequence, 1968), which also addressed themes of police violence and censorship and was part of a group show featuring the work of Brazilian artists selected for the Sixth Paris Biennial of Young Artists (October–November 1969), was closed hours before its opening due to government scrutiny. [Figure 3.11] *Repressão outra vez – Eis o saldo* (Repression Again – Here is the Consequence)

[293] Manuel produced eight cover pages in 1973, and two in 1975.

comprised five large canvases covered by a thick black fabric that through a pulley system can be lifted by the viewer by pulling a string. The viewer was called to participate in the act of unveiling police serial brutality. Beneath the fabric, in fact, were red panels silkscreened with reproductions of the news of the clashes between students and the police that took place in 1968 in Rio de Janeiro. The canvas that gives the title to the whole work, reproduced the headline "Repressão outra vez" (Repression Again), printed on top of a photograph of policemen ceasing and beating students with batons. Manuel's work caused an amplification by way of repetition and enlargement of the news about police violence. The canvases implicated the viewer, who, by lifting the curtain revealed that which was supposed to stay concealed, confronting censorship. Manuel's choice of the color red for the canvases has been interpreted as a reference to blood, as well as to communism, which the regime fought against. Nevertheless, the association with Exú adds meaning to the reading of the artwork. Manuel was familiar with Afro-Brazilian religiosity, and artworks that refer to the animals normally offered to Exú, the cock and the goat, are described below. With this work, the artist produced double-faced canvases and used trickery to make a point: by hiding the news, he gave visibility to it, and in so doing provided to the viewer with an example of what form resistance can take.

Manuel, therefore, had a history of having his artworks censored, confiscated, destroyed, and was even banned from MAM as a consequence of his irreverent proposal *O corpo é a obra* (The Body Is the Work, 1970). After lengthy discussions with the artist, MAM ultimately decided to cancel his solo exhibition, leaving Manuel with limited options for showcasing his art. Once again, he turned to the newspaper as a medium for reacting

against political and institutional censorship, protesting the climate of oppression, and reaching a much broader public with his artworks. He pitched the exhibition proposal to *Jornal do Brasil*'s editor Washington Novaes, who agreed enthusiastically to publish it on the pages of the Sunday supplement. The title, *Exposição de Antonio Manuel (de 0 às 24:00 horas nas bancas de jornais)* (Exhibition of Antonio Manuel: From 0 to 24:00 on the newsstands) refers to the duration of the show, that, like its physical support, had a lifespan of 24 hours, on July 15, 1973. The exhibition comprised six proposals, accompanied by a brief presentation of the artist and photographs of Manuel's provocative performance piece, *O corpo é a obra*, which had generated much controversy. Additionally, there was a hand-drawn blueprint of the Museu de Arte Moderna where the exhibition was originally scheduled to take place, leaving readers to ponder why it never happened.[294]

The first proposal was the documentation of Manuel's *Urnas Quentes* (Hot Ballot Boxes/Hot Urns) that he presented in the event *Apocalipopótese*, a word that combines the terms apocalypses and hypothesis, organized by Hélio Oiticica and Rogério Duarte in 1968 at the Aterro do Flamengo in Rio de Janeiro. [Figure 3.12] It consisted in twenty hermetically sealed wooden boxes that the public was invited to crack open to disclose their content: poems, newspaper articles reporting on the dictatorial government's violence against the population, and messages like "Down with the dictatorship," "Freedom to the people," "Hunger," inscribed as graffiti on the bottom of the cases. Samba musicians from the school Estação Primeira da Mangueira, who had been invited by Oiticica to activate his *Parangolés* improvised songs that invited the public to discover the content of the boxes,

[294] Shtromberg, *Art Systems*, 85.

even implying that they might find money inside, thus increasing their curiosity. The work's title referred to the suppression of elections during the regime, while the revelation of their contents required a cathartic act of violence. Manuel made hammers available to the public to smash the boxes and he himself was startled by the ferocity of the rage he witnessed, which was a metaphor of the political violence that the population was experiencing.

The second proposal was *O Bode* (The Goat), which involved placing a living black goat in the middle of a large round fencing with the floor painted red. This was the only artwork that MAM hadn't deemed controversial, but eventually refused to exhibit, paternalistically claiming that it was not representative of Manuel's oeuvre. For the artist, instead, the black goat was a symbol present in his life since childhood, when he used to see goats grazing freely on the streets as sacred elements. The animal, for Manuel, presents both a ludic and an evil side and this ambivalence, the fusion of playfulness and malignity, is what led him to work with this symbol. Cryptic and ironic verses accompanied two photographs of a goat, which the artist describes as "de-repressive element" and "fundamentally a symbol of freedom."[295] Placing a goat in MAM's galleries constituted a statement against censorship in art institutions and political repression at large. In the artist's mind, the red circle would have contrasted with the black fleece, bringing together

[295] "Alive elements / inside the space of MAM – / symbolism of the evil – / de-repressive elements" and "The evil smelled of something playful/ The evil approached friendly and poetic. The evil goat transformed/ into an insatiable search for love/ EVIL GOAT / What good smell is there in this evil? / The creator is embodied since the first playful and easygoing butt of horns that happened in the WOOD / Be evil? / If the evil goat is the total symbol of all the evil load / With all the density of this evil is fundamentally a symbol of freedom."

the colors of Exú, to whom black goats are often sacrificed. The reference to Afro-Brazilian religiosity was apparent, and purposeful from part of the artist, who explained:

> In Umbanda, the goat is used to unload evil from people, while in Quimbanda the goat is sacrificed because it absorbs so much evil and tension that only the goat itself can take it. I think it ends up getting sacrificed so that it doesn't just explode. It's a reflection of a very tense and repressive time that we all experienced.[296]

As Judith Rodenbeck has pointed out, *O Bode* brings to mind the symbol of the scapegoat: an animal, person, or group to which all the evil is attributed, and that society decides to sacrifice in vain hope of getting rid of all that is rotten within it.[297] Significantly, the third proposal was dedicated to people ostracized by society: bandits, transvestites, and the mentally ill, people that the artist labeled *Margianos*, mixing the Portuguese words *marginal* (marginal/outlaw) and *marciano* (Martian). [Figure 3.13]

In this work, Manuel appropriated photographs from *O Dia* and combined them with lyrical sentences. The top of the page features three photographs of the same emaciated Black man, likely a mental patient: the first depicts him from the waist up, naked, as he looks absentmindedly at the camera; the second is a close-up of his face, his eyes wide open and so devoid of expression that he might be dead; the third depicts his body on a bed, with a woman (his mother?) kissing his forehead from behind. In contrast, the bottom of the page features a photograph of two lifeless, wounded bodies lying supine next to the

---

[296] Antonio Manuel, "Bode; A exposição de Antônio Manuel de zero às 24 horas nas bancas de jornais." In: Antonio Manuel, Frederico Morais, Hélio Oiticica, Mário Pedrosa; Ronaldo Brito. *Antonio Manuel* (Rio de Janeiro: Funarte, Instituto Nacional de Artes Plásticas, 1984), 46-47. ICAA 1110565. Also in "Interview Antonio Manuel with Beverly Adams," in *Antonio Manuel: I Want to Act, Not Represent!*, ed. Claudia Calirman and Gabriela Rangel (New York; São Paulo: Americas Society; Associação para o Patronato Contemporâneo, 2011), 108.

[297] Judith Rodenbeck, "Antonio Manuel's Exercitation," in *Antonio Manuel: I Want to Act, Not Represent!*, 97.

sentence "Com a marca profunda na carne, o sonho acabou" (With the deep mark in the flesh, the dream came to an end). In the center of the page, Manuel placed two images of transvestites, one White and the other Black, wearing makeup, short dresses, and pointed-toe low-heel shoes, taken from police records that he found in the archive of *O Dia*. The images look identical, except for one detail: in one image, they wear long-hair wigs, while in the other they are holding the flowing wigs in their hands, showing their short haircut. The transvestites are performing for the camera: one is standing in contrapposto next to the other who is sitting on a chair with the legs crossed in a three-quarter pose, leaving much of the tight exposed. The gaze they return to the viewer is not one of fear, but boredom and annoyance. A typewriter is visible behind them, prompting the viewer's imagination to envision the scene that preceded the photo shoot, with a policeman interrogating the detainees while another types a detention report.

It is important to underscore that in the 1970s, the cultural construction of manhood as a symbol of power was characteristic not only of the authoritarian government, but intrinsic also of the leftist organizations and guerrilla groups, who wielded similar forms of oppression towards those who did not conform to heteronormativity.[298] The platform of the left, in many instances, did not represent marginal people, those who did not fit in the labor market, in the political ideology, and in sexual binaries. In particular, homosexual

[298] This is very evident in novels and testimonies by Brazilian authors who described the armed resistance to the dictatorship. The novels *Bar Don Juan* (1971) by Antônio Callado and *Em câmara lenta* (1977) by Renato Tapajós, together with the collection of memories by Fernando Gabeira, *O que é isso, companheiro?* (1979) offer a portrait of how the gender relations worked inside the urban guerrilla groups. Gabeira, who personally took part in the kidnapping of the American ambassador Charles Burke Elbrick, and was then exiled for almost a decade, provides a honest description of how women in the organization were sexualized and instrumentalized to attract new members, and how homosexuals and transsexuals were discriminated, and obliged into forced labor.

behaviors were considered anti-revolutionary, derived from bourgeoise decadence, an obstacle to the leftist political project.

Peruvian curator and researcher Miguel Lopez, in a study on the state repression in the dictatorships that plagued several Latin American countries in the twentieth century, "Disrupting Normality: Disobedient Bodies and Dissident Sexualities Against the Politics of Extermination" (2015), observes that despotism affected not only criminals, but a "whole range of subjects, feminized bodies, seropositive persons, undocumented migrants, but also female subjects, feminized bodies, and all those bodies that occupy the place of the "feminine" in society."[299]

The appearance of queer and transvestite bodies in the work by visual artists, thus, brings to surface an underground war against subjects who did not conform with the heteronormative, patriarchal model, against those individuals who represented a threat to the regimes of "normality." These works also highlight how the political apparatus, but also the conservative moral values, equated homosexuality with criminality, the punishment of which was accepted for its promise of redemption and sanitization. In *Margianos* Antonio Manuel juxtaposed the photographs of transvestites with the sentence "O rei mandou dizer que ninguém toque as frutas do seu pomar" (The king demands that nobody touches the fruits of his orchard), where *frutas* in the 1970s was a derogatory term commonly used to indicate homosexual men and corresponding to the equally offensive expression "fruit" used in the U.S. As always, Manuel's lines can be read in multiple ways:

[299] Miguel Lopez, "Disrupting Normality: Disobedient Bodies and Dissident Sexualities Against the Politics of Extermination" in *Resistance Performed: An Anthology on Aesthetic Strategies under Repressive Regimes in Latin America*, ed. Heike Munder (Zurich: Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst: JRP Ringier, 2015), 30.

who is the king in question? Perhaps it is the police chief responsible for removing prostitutes and cross-dressed individuals from the streets, who nonetheless ordered that the two transvestites should be treated magnanimously in police custody? Although the wordplay contains a slur, r, it mocks conservatives who often persecuted cross-dressed individuals to conceal their own homosexuality.

Works such as Oiticica's *Seja Marginal, Seja Herói*, Meireles's *Zero Cruzeiro*, and Manuel's *Margianos* are representative of the fascination and identification that some artists in the 1960s and 1970s felt with marginal people. Both Manuel and Oiticia, for instance, considered themselves cultural marginals,[300] and often collaborated with a heterogenous group of poets, musicians, filmmakers, and visual artists engaged in the production of *cultura marginal*, which aimed to subvert hierarchical positions and question cultural hegemonies.[301] One of the main exponents of this group, poet Troquato Neto (Teresina, Piauí, 1944 – Rio de Janeiro, 1972), declared:

> I only believe in the outlaw artist, that is to say: tradition is super boring. It is the marginal the one who maintains the bow in permanent tension, the eccentrical who outrages Hebe, the madman who horrifies the middle-class-bread-and-butter, the foolish who infuriates the investigations of any time. These are the good ones, the ones who kick the ball forward.[302]

---

[300] In a letter from 1968 to artist Lygia Clark, Oiticica declares that he is at the margin of margins, "at the margin of everything, which provides me with total freedom of action – and for this I just need to be myself according to my principle of pleasure: even to earn a living I do what pleases me at each moment." See Lygia Clark, Hélio Oiticica, *Cartas 1964-1974*, ed. and intro and Luciano Figueiredo, (Rio de Janeiro: Editora UFRJ, 1996), 44-45. In an interview with Lúcia Carneiro and Ileana Pradilla, Antonio Manuel stated that he considered himself a cultural marginal. See Antonio Manuel, *Antonio Manuel/Entrevista a Lúcia Carneiro e Ileana Pradilla* (Rio de Janeiro: Lacerda Editores, 1999), 48.

[301] Artists who engaged with *cultura marginal* are: film directors Neville d'Almeida, Ivan Cardos, Rogério Sganzerla, Glauber Rocha, poets Torquato Neto and Waly Salomão, illustrator and composter Rogério Duarte, singers and songwriters Caetano Veloso, Gilberto Gil, Gal Costa, Tom Zé, Maria Bethânia, visual artist Hélio Oiticica. For more on *marginalia* see Claudia Calirman (2019) *Marginália* in Brazil's "Stone-Throwing Age", Art Journal, 78:1, 48-65

[302] Torquato Neto's statement was published in Marisa Alvarez Lima's article "Marginália: Arte e cultura na idade da pedrada," *O Cruzeiro*, December 12, 1968.

According to historian Frederico Oliveira Coelho, being at the margins was not a simple act of dissidence, nor a passive acceptance of an "alternative" or "minor" position in the cultural landscape, but rather a conscious and active positioning that demonstrated a "strategic intentionality" to break from certain bases of Brazilian cultural production shaped by militarist and middle-class conservatism.[303] These artists rejected conformity to the market, the artistic canon, and prevailing cultural norms, and instead prioritized freedom of expression and experimentation over adherence to "national traditions." In what might seem a paradoxical choice, to dispute power, they often utilized institutional channels, like Manuel presenting his body as an artwork for an official competition at MAM, or spreading his art on the pages of regional and national newspapers, or Neto, who wrote the weekly column "Geléia Geral" (July 1971-1972) on the national newspaper *Última Hora* where he promoted marginal culture. However, as Coelho emphasizes, it is important to determine the extent to which this stance was taken to defend the implementation of a cultural intervention in the dominant cultural sector, and the instances in which it became a trend, equally strategic, associated with the broader Western counterculture movement.[304] Additionally, while society often equated *malandros*, outlaws, *favelados*, homosexuals, prostitutes, transvestites, drug addicts, mental patients, and subversives in a single stigmatizing "category of accusation," often artists who sought to pay tribute to these individuals equally conflated them in their mythical-discursive framework. Manuel's decision to include a person with mental illness, gunned-down

[303] Coelho, *Eu, brasileiro, confesso*, 200.
[304] Ibid., 203-204.

criminals, and cross-dressed homosexuals in *Margianos* illustrates this tendency to merge individuals whose behavior transgressed the boundaries of prescribed social norms.

The fourth proposal regarded the *Clandestinas*, an artwork that clearly implied a marginal behavior for its realization. Published in the pages of *Jornal do Brasil,* the modified cover pages of *O Dia* constituted a meta-proposal. The installation titled *Eden* (1969-1973) was Manuel's fifth proposal, which involved a five-meter map of Latin America made of dirt, with the word 'Eden' stamped three times in capital letters. [Figure 3.14] The accompanying caption explained that the map was covered by a cloth which viewers were invited to lift – a mechanism similar to the one used for *Eis o saldo*– symbolically re-enacting the European narrative of "discovering" an Eden on earth, the "New World," only to find that it was made of dirt. The sixth and final proposal was a still image from Manuel's 16mm movie *O galo* (The Cock of the Golden Eggs, 1972), showing the artist emerging naked from a straw nest on top of mount of white seashells that he had filmed in Barra da Tijuca, in the West zone of Rio de Janeiro. The words "O galo, A impossibilidade–a impotência" (The Cock, Impossibility and Impotence) were written underneath, reflecting the artist's perception of his own situation and that of the country at that time: "I felt impotent in face of reality of the exceptional environment in which we lived. […] The cock is strong, powerful; it sings at five in the morning, it awakens the city. This is the kind of symbolism that interested me. A cock sings and is strong even when it needs its nest; so it also has a kind of impotence."[305]

[305] Interview. Antonio Manuel with Bevery Adams, in *I Want to Act, Not Represent*, 108

While the work is indicative of the culture of repression of the time, it also has sexual undertones. Manuel's erect posture, inspired by two years of intense yoga according to his own account, denotes virility rather than impotence and suggests a masculine performativity similar to the one he displayed by posing naked at MAM. Claudia Calirman points out that while this exhibitionism teased conservative moral values and authoritarianism, it also "reasserted the heroic ideal of the masculine figure within a phallocentric society."[306]

De 0 à 24 horas, thus, served as a retrospective exhibition showcasing some of Manuel's most important artworks from the first decade of his career, which had all been censored by MAM either for their anti-canonical nature, or out of fear of political repercussions. By transposing his exhibition to the pages of *Jornal do Brasil*, a national newspaper with a circulation of 60,000 copies, Manuel was able to reach a wider audience than he could have with a show at MAM. Through the newspaper, he could share his irreverent artworks, playful poems, and serious criticisms of censorship and obtuseness in art institutions with the public.

Paulo Bruscky and Daniel Santiago: Declassified Art

It was not only artists based in Rio de Janeiro who worked to subvert communication systems and circulate their messages, involve the receivers in their artistic actions, and use ambiguous and ironic language to confuse the censors. Although they did

[306] Calirman, *Brazilian Art*, 41.

not take part in *cultural marginal*, Paulo Bruscky (Recife, b.1949) and Daniel Santiago (Garanhuns, Pernambuco, b.1939) did operate from the margins: of the cultural axis Rio de Janeiro-São Paulo, working from Recife, the capital of the north-eastern state of Pernambuco. Their long and prolific collaboration began in 1970 and continued for the following two decades until the team dissolved in 1991. Both artists were active participants in the mail art movement, a vast network of international artists that allowed them to be well connected without having to leave Recife. Additionally, both artists worked as civil servants: Santiago as an art teacher in secondary schools, and Bruscky as a clerk at the Hospital Agamenon Magalhães, which, according to his own account, allowed him to make a living with minimal effort. These nine-to-five civil servant jobs granted them financial stability and creative autonomy, as they did not need to produce to sell work, nor depended on art institutions' grants for their livelihood. To the contrary, they refused to place an exchange value on their work in an attitude that art historian Cristina Freire labels "anti-capitalism romanticism."[307] Both are also well-known in Recife for being regular customers in the bohemian bar scene and for entertaining people with their wit and improvised poetry performances.

Together Bruscky and Santiago created some of the most irreverent artworks that they spread throughout the city of Recife, through its streets, newspapers, billboards, exhibitions, noise concerts,[308] and the mail system. In particular, they collaborated on the

[307] Cristina Freire. *Paulo Bruscky: arte, arquivo e utopia* (São Paulo: Companhia Editora de Pernambuco: Fundo Pernambucano de Incentivo à Cultura, 2006), 216.

[308] In 1972, they put together a show of noises at the Philosophy Department of Federal University of Pernambuco (UFPE). They advertised the event through flyers. They distributed three hundred match boxes of four different colors (yellow, red, blue, green) to the participants. Matchboxes were used as rudimentary percussion instruments in improvised street jams. The participants were given the instructions of playing

series *Arte desclassificada* (Declassified Art), a reference to surveillance and censorship, but also a pun with the word classified. As a matter of fact, the works consists in classifieds published on the pages of regional, national, and international newspapers. Cildo Meireles, too, in 1970 had experimented with classifieds with his *Inserções em jornais: Classificados* (Insertions into Newspapers: Classified Ads), proposing graphic interventions in the *Diversos* (Miscellaneous) section of the classified ads of *Jornal do Brasil*. Nevertheless, his instructions for leaving empty a section of the page, a metaphor for censorship, were not properly followed and after a second unsuccessful attempt, the artist gave up the idea.[309]

Instead, Bruscky and Santiago, working solo or as a team, published numerous classifieds with either proposals for bizarre inventions, or invitations for collective exhibitions in the streets of Recife. On March 25, 1972, they sent out a paid advertising on the *Diário de Pernambuco*, a conservative newspaper, the oldest continuously circulated in Latin America, calling on tortoise owners to show up at a square in downtown Recife with their pet to participate in a competition for the best-adorned tortoise.[310] [Figure 3.15] With self-mocking humor, the artists assured participants that the judging commission was composed of individuals with a sufficient artistic background to evaluate the presented

---

their match box according to the color being projected on the wall of the theater. A pianist, Marcos Caneca, improvised and interacted with the percussions. They also organized the International Ra(u)dio Art Show at the First and Second Unicap (Catholic University of Pernambuco) Winter Festival, in 1978-79 and 1979 respectively. The open call was circulated via their mail art network, and there was no selection jury: all works sent were accepted. The noise recordings were broadcast on the Radio Clube Pernambuco station and Pernambuco/Unicap internal radio station.

[309] For a thorough analysis of *Inserções em jornais* see chapter 2 of Elena Shtromberg's *Art Systems*.

[310] "Do you have a tortoise? Do you want to put a tortoise in an exhibition? Today, starting from 8:00am, there will be an exhibition/contest of tortoises at the Diário Square. In order for your tortoise to participate, you only need to ornament it any way you wish. Be careful not to use materials that might damage the shell of the little animal. If your tortoise is judged the most interesting, you will win a collection of Fine Arts Dictionaries from the Livro 7 bookstore. The judging commission is composed by people that have a sufficient artistic background for evaluating the work presented."

work. The winner of the competition would receive a collection of fine arts dictionaries kindly provided by the Livro 7 bookstore. Ironically, the duo selected the square in front of the headquarters of the newspaper that had published their advertisement, Praça da Independência, which is popularly known as Praçinha do Diário, as the venue for their parade.[311] The event was called *Artemcágado* (Artontortoise), and received ample response. According to Freire, who has written a monograph about Paulo Bruscky, in the nineteenth century it was fashionable for flâneurs to stroll around Paris with their tortoises, letting their pace and direction dictate their walks.[312] Keith Tester, in his work *The Flâneur,* interprets this craze as "an example of flânerie against the local clock of hours and the universal clock of progress."[313] *Artemcágado* had a twofold effect: it encouraged the public to slow down and appreciate the city and its surroundings at a leisurely pace, while also serving as a commentary on the current situation: a population stuck to a motionless present by political repression.

The irony of the spectacle was enhanced by decorations on the tortoises, which transformed the competition into a carnival parade of sorts. Photographs of the event depict a large crowd of people admiring the animals, adorned with ribbons, with the carapace painted to resemble a beetle car, or even with a candle lit on top of it. [Figure 3.16] One tortoise, however, carries around a Brazilian flag attached to the top of its shell. [Figure 3.17] Nationalistic pride, or a humorous critique of the dictatorship's propaganda about the

[311] The square is still known under this name, as its most prominent building is the historical headquarter of *Diário de Pernambuco*, although the current venue is onn Avenida Marquês de Olinda, 133.
[312] Freire, *Paulo Bruscky*, 233. Freire quotes Walter Benjamin's essay "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire" where the author describes this fad. Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken Books, 1985).
[313] Keith Tester, *The Flanêur* (London: Routledge, 1994), 15, quoted in Bessa, "Citizen Bruscky," 17.

speed of its modernizing efforts? At the beginning of the 1970s, the phrase "economic miracle" was on everyone's lips, but in had only enriched the higher middle-class while the majority of the population had become poorer.[314] The ironic nature of *Artemcágado*'s parade and its slow-moving tortoises served as a reminder of the discrepancy between the government's rhetoric and the reality on the ground. To this must be added that in September 1971, just one year prior, a law (Lei nº 5.700 /71) was passed that made the improper use of the Brazilian flag a punishable offense. While the Law permitted its use in parades, it had to be displayed with the due respect for the nation's symbol. Moreover, any alterations to the flag's shape, colors, or proportions would be considered a criminal misdemeanor subject to a fine.[315] The authorities may not have appreciated the patriotism of a tortoise waving the Brazilian flag while parading alongside other festooned testudines in a public square. This further underscores the fact that Bruscky and Santiago, as the organizers of the event, were taking risks with their open-ended participatory actions.

That same year, the duo invited people to produce a shoe exhibition at the Escola de Comunicação (Communication School) of the Universidade Federal de Penambuco (Federal University of Pernambuco, UFPE). The participants were instructed to arrive at the Noble Salon of the School with intentionally mismatched shoes, highlighting the contradiction between the elegant title of the venue and the unconventional nature of the event. *Artempé* (Artonfoot or Standing Art), which took place on November 29, 1972, had

[314] The expression "economic miracle" refers to the period between 1968-1973 when there was unprecedented growth, halted by the 1974 oil crisis. Despite this, only the wealthy and the upper middle-class benefited from it.
[315] Lei nº 5.700 /71, Article 11 and article 31: https://www.jusbrasil.com.br/noticias/mp-quer-eliminar-restricoes-ao-uso-da-bandeira-do-brasil/109855

the effect of questioning habits and everyday gestures. In 1973, instead, they called the public to participate in "an art exhibition in the air, an aleatory composition of paper airplanes in the space," to homage Brazilian aviation pioneer and airship inventor Alberto Santos-Dumont. The duo promoted their concept for *Arteaerobis* by advertising it in the *Diário de Pernambuco*, as well as distributing flyers throughout schools, universities, bars, and via mail. On October 20, the ephemeral air painting momentarily took shape when roughly a hundred people converged on the historic Boa Vista bridge at midday to simultaneously toss their colorful origami creations, made from the flyers promoting the event, in the waters of the Capibaribe river that runs through the city. "It might look like a joke" – said Santiago – "and ultimately, it is. Only commercial art is serious. Our exhibition is playful, yes, and represents a hymn to peace."[316] Humor, irony, and the absurd are, in fact, the bread and butter on which he and Bruscky fed and that sustained them and kept them and their art's audience sane through the period of dictatorial oppression. According to Bruscky, in the 1970s "[t]here was a climate of silence, a sort of general depression. People didn't really understand what was going on, but they knew they couldn't join forces because the military's subliminal propaganda was very strong and effective."[317] Therefore, opportunities to convene in public spaces and engage in collective acts out of the ordinary were highly sought after.[318] The overwhelming and enthusiastic response that their

[316] "Capibaribe terá revoada de aviões," *Diário de Pernambuco*, October 20, 1973.
[317] Interview by Antonio Sergio Bessa, translated by Adam J. Morris, *BOMB Magazine* no. 125 (Fall 2013): 122-129, accessed April 28, 2023: https://bombmagazine.org/articles/paulo-bruscky/
[318] Indicative of the paranoia of that time, when the police later arrested the artists, they accused them being involved in an accident that happened in Fortaleza at that same time as *Arteaerobis* when an airplane of the Brazilian Air Force fell. See the interview with the artists by Gilberto Prado, "Paulo Bruscky, Daniel Santiago," São Paulo 1989, accessed May 2, 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zGEmnljNNsQ

proposals received highlights how art functioned as safety valve, a crucial outlet for the population, regardless of their prior exposure to art or participation in political mobilization.

Some of their classifieds encouraged readers to view the city itself as a work of art, prompting them to select particular locations at specific times of the day. Ads like "Madrugada na Avenida Conde de Boa Vista" (Dawn on Conde de Boa Vista Avenue) involved cultivating a critical perspective by inviting people to view the city with a fresh set of eyes. According to Bruscky, "The artist makes things only because people don't know how to see for themselves. Someday artists won't need to sacrifice themselves so much, because people will begin learning how to see art in everything. The function of the artist is minimal, because art is present everywhere—the artist merely captures and displays it."

Another group of classified, published later, proposed imaginative inventions. *Arteaeronimbo* (Artaeronimbus, September 22, 1974, *Diário de Pernambuco)* called for a chemist, meteorologist, or any other person capable of coloring the clouds in the sky of Recife.[319] A translation of the advertisement later appeared on international newspapers, including New York's *Village Voice* in 1982. As a continuation of this proposal that was never answered, Bruscky and Santiago issued *Composição Aurorial* (Auroral Composition), this time in the Caderno B, the cultural section of *Jornal do Brasil*, the same

[319] "Composição aleatória de nuvens coloridas no céu de Recife. A Equipe Bruscky e Santiago, resposavél pela idéia, deseja entrar em contato com químico, meterologista, ou qualquier pessoa capaz de colorir uma nuvem. Correspondência Arteaeronimbo." Translation: "Random composition of colored clouds in the sky of Recife. The Bruscky and Santiago Team, responsible for the idea, desires to get in contact with a chemist, meteorologist, or any other person capable of coloring a cloud. Arteaeronimbus Correspondence. P.O. Box—Diário de Pernambuco."

national newspaper where Manuel had created his exhibition *De 0 às 24 horas* in 1970. The call for a "Nocturnal Exhibition of Spatial Art Visible to the Naked Eye in the City of Recife" went out on December 24, 1976:

> The Bruscky and Santiago Team, responsible for the idea, looks for a person capable of financing the project. The Team proposes to exhibit a colored tropical aurora provoked by the excitation of atoms of atmospheric components at 100 kilometers of altitude. The atoms will return spontaneously to their natural state after the exhibition. The exhibition will not pollute the space, alter the weather, nor influence astrology; it is an occurrence of contemporary art.[320]

The team later sent a letter with the proposal to Daniel S. Goldin, the Administrator (1992-2001) of the U.S. National Aeronautic and Space Administration (NASA).[321] As Simone Osthoff remarks, NASA eventually realized the experiment in 1992 when luminous artificial auroras were created shooting electron beams in the atmosphere, ionosphere and magnetosphere from the space shuttle Atlas 1.[322] It is unclear if the artistic duo played a role in inspiring the experiment. However, in the ad they made clear that the idea was a work of contemporary art. Their remarks about the fact that the artificial aurora would not pollute or alter the weather (or astrology, for that matter) resembles the language used in information leaflets about medicine side effects, and the greenwashing messages commonly found in corporate advertisements today.

---

[320] Composição Aurorial. Exposição Noturna de Arte Espacial Visível a Olho Nu da Cidade de Recife. A Equipe Bruscky e Santiago, responsável pela idéia, procura pessoa capaz de patrocinar o projeto. A Equipe propõe expor uma aurora tropical colorida provocada pela exitacão dos átomos dos componentes atmosféricos a 100 km de altitude. Os átomos voltarão espontaneamente ao estado natural depois da exposição. A exposição não polui o espaço, não altera o tempo, nem influencia a astrologia, é um acontecimento de arte contemporânea.

[321] Letter Published in *Pernamuco Experimental*, 86.

[322] Simone Osthoff, "From Mail Art to Telepresence: Communication at a Distance in the Works of Paulo. Bruscky and Eduardo Kac," in *At a Distance. Precursors to Art and Activism on the Internet*, ed. Annmarie Chandler and Norie Naumark (Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 2005), 265. See also the NASA Technical report: https://ntrs.nasa.gov/citations/19930047920.

Composição Aurorial also resembles the name of the first newspaper to be officially published in Pernambuco, *Aurora Pernambucana*, that was first issued on 27 March 1821.[323] [Figure 3.18] During Brazil's colonial period, printing presses were forbidden, which was a unique case in colonial Latin America. This meant that all news, as well as official documents such as decrees, legislation, treaties, sermons, scientific and literary works, had to go through the censors in Portugal. Consequently, the news was never up-to-date and did not provide a Brazilian perspective. However, there were exceptions to this rule, and over the centuries, Pernambuco was one of the few places where typographies, both legal and illegal, were established, only to be eventually shut down by the colonial power.[324] In 1808, after the Portuguese court fled *en masse* to the overseas colony from the Napoleonic invasion of the Iberian Peninsula, that the Royal Press was finally established. However, even then, the publications had to go through the scrutiny of the directors who censored all texts that might be critical of the monarchy, the Church, or considered against public morality: criteria similar to those applied during the military-

[323] *Aurora Pernambucana* was founded by the Portuguese governor of Pernambuco Luiz do Rego Barreto and printed at the Pernambuco National Railway Maintenance Facility. Consisting of three or four pages, the newspaper was issued once or twice a week, and was shut down at its 30th edition, on September 10, 1821. In the first edition, above the title was a headpiece with a drawing of reefs, palm trees, and the sun rising from the sea. Underneath the title, were four lines from sixteenth-century poet Luís Vaz de Camões's epic work Os Lusíadas: Depois de procelosa tempestade (After the raging storm)/ Nocturna sombra, e sibilante vento, (Dark night and whistling wind)/ Traz a manhã serene claridade, (Comes the clear, serene morning)/ Esperança de porto e salvamento. (Hope of port and salvation), from Canto Quarto. See Lúcia Gaspar, Aurora Pernambucana (Newspaper). Pesquisa Escolar On-Line, Joaquim Nabuco Foundation, Recife. Accessed: April 25, 2023, http://basilio.fundaj.gov.br/pesquisaescolar_en/index.php?option=com_content&id=919:aurora-pernambucana-newspaper.

[324] In Pernambuco, printing presses had existed in the 17th century when the region was under the Netherlandish rule, and their production halted when the Portuguese reconquered the land and the Dutch colonizers fled to the United States, where they eventually founded New York. Recife was also the first city to have a printing press supported by the local governor Francisco de Castro Morais, shut down in 1706 by the colonial authorities that confiscated the printing materials. It is only in the constitution from 1824 that Dom Pedro I, the son of João, established the freedom of press, though censorship remained in place.

civil dictatorship. As Lilia Moritz Schwarcz has remarked, the Royal Press "was behind schedule from the day it was founded."[325] The establishment of the *Gazeta do Rio de Janeiro* as the first official Brazilian newspaper on September 10, 1808 was preceded by a few months by the *Correio Braziliense*: an independent newspaper founded by journalist Hipólito José da Costa that was printed in London to outmaneuver the censorship in Brazil. It ran for 13 years, starting on June 1, 1808. Forbidden in Brazil, it had to be smuggled into the country and circulated undercover. The *Correio Braziliense* provided Brazilians with articles in favor of the abolition of slavery and against the colonial status of the country. In his articles, Costa denounced the abuses of power by the Church and the Crown, as well as the corruption, bribery, and nepotism of Portuguese politicians. Therefore, the production and circulation of news through undercover means during the dictatorship has a long legacy in Brazil's history.

Like Manuel with his *Clandestinas, Arte desclassificada* permitted Bruscky and Santiago to circulate their art propositions to a large public that would find these unorthodox ideas in the middle of other want advertisements. For Freire, the classifieds were a strategy for "making noise in the mechanisms of information control."[326] An example that encapsulates this statement is the ad for a machine able to record dreams that Bruscky published on July 3, 1977, on the pages of *Diário de Pernambuco*:

> For sale—The project for a machine that records dreams using film (black and white or color), with sound, brand name Bruscky. Watch your dreams while eating breakfast. Inventor Paulo Bruscky. PO Box 859 – Recife, PE."[327]

[325] Lilia Moritz Schwarcz and and Heloisa Maria Murgel Starling, *Brazil: A Biography* (New York: Picador/Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2020), 194.
[326] Freire, *Paulo Bruscky*, 226
[327] A Máquina de Filmar Sonhos (Dream Recorder),

Such bizarre invention concealed obscured undertones. [Figure 3.19] By 1977, Bruscky had already been jailed three times and had suffered persecution because of his art.[328] In 1976, he and Santiago had organized the *Exposição Internacional de Arte Correio* (International Mail Art Exhibition) at Recife's post office that featured 3,000 works from 21 countries. It was supposed to stay open from August 27 to September 11, 1976 but was closed by the federal police and the Serviço Nacional de Informações (National Information Service) a few minutes after its opening because of the subversive content of artworks by Latin American artists denouncing the dictatorial regimes gripping their respective countries. The show was witnessed by only a handful people, and the two organizers were detained for about ten days in solitary confinement, charged with subverting public order. Although most of the works were returned, many were damaged, and others were confiscated and never returned, kept as evidence. After his release from jail, Bruscky was followed by the police for months and received death threats.[329] A machine capable of recording unspoken dreams and hidden thoughts was a chilling reminder of pervasive surveillance that can lead to paranoia and self-censorship.[330] The proposal also predicts future technological advancements, such as the algorithms that try to predict not only our consumption habits, but to control and shape our political choices.

[328] It is only in 2011 that he was granted amnesty from the Pernambuco state government as well as the federal government for these arrests.

[329] Bruscky continued being followed until when he made this situation public as the theme of an exhibition at Espaço Passacale Gallery in Recife (1976). He arrived at the gallery wrapped up as a parcel, stamped and sealed. When people started to undo the package, they found him gaggled. He stated that he wanted people to know about the persecution he was going through because of his mail art.

[330] Santiago, in response to the experience of being arrested and jailed, produced the mail work "De que é que eu tenho medo?" (What am I afraid of?) 1976. See Zanna Gilbert, "Networking Regionalism: Long-Distance Performativity in the International Mail Art Network", *TAREA*, 4 (4), (2017), 93

Soon afterwards, the *Diário de Pernambuco* stopped publishing classified ads altogether, after they started noticing these ambiguous and playful ads, and after an ad called "*A gente vive sorrindo, mas paga caro*" (We live smiling, but pay a big price) arrived at newsstands.[331] This did not impede the artists to keep poking fun at their fellow citizens and the authorities alike. With their access to the local newspaper restricted, they turned to the walls of Recife as the blank pages for their impertinent proposals. In 1981, they organized the I Exposição Internacional de Arte em Outdoor—Art-Door (I International Exhibition of Billboard Art), where the work of 286 artists from 25 countries, who sent their propositions via mail, replaced advertising on 180 billboards across the city. This, once again, made art accessible to a broader public. However, their most insolent work was from 1987 when they spray-painted the walls of the Cemitério dos Ingleses (British Cemetery though the literal translation would be Cemetery of the British) with the sentence:

> Ensina-se português as almas do Cemitério dos Ingleses (Portuguese lessons for souls of the British Cemetery)
> Ensina-se inglês as almas de outros cemitérios (English lessons for souls of other cemeteries)

The British cemetery had been built in 1814 by royal decree. The British had an important presence in Latin America in the nineteenth century as they were involved in the construction of railways, the telegraph, and public buildings like theaters and public markets in return of raw materials (sugar, rubber, wax, cotton). With their "vandalism,"

[331] "Declassificados," *VEJA* (São Paulo: Editora Abril), n. 464 (July 27, 1977):122, quoted in Freire, *Paulo Bruscky*, 227.

Bruscky and Santiago drew attention to the history of the city, making the passerby smile, while also making them ponder why a British cemetery existed in their city.

Humor

Humor, which he considers "anti-tyranny, anti-authoritarian,"[332] is the bonding of Paulo Bruscky's multifaceted work (whether in his collaboration with Daniel Santiago and on his own), generally expressed through twists of language and word puns. In chapter 1, I described how, during the colonial times, the enslaved used ambiguity to crack jokes of double entendre, to fool their masters while speaking their mind. Slang and wordplay are some of the tools of the *malandro,* too, who infuses his language with innuendos for those shrewd enough to read through his cunning lines. Bruscky, who defines himself as "a visual artist who writes,"[333] is skilled at manipulating language to obtain humorous and at times cryptic messages. The ability enabled him to voice dissent during some of the most oppressive years of the military regime.

Dados biográficos (Biographical data/dice, 1976?), for instance, is a visual poem where a black and white photograph of a hand caught in the gesture of releasing a handful of dice is accompanied by the humorous caption of double signification from which the work takes its title. [Figure 3.20] "Dados" in Portuguese is the plural of both "datum" and "die." The title, hence, refers to the fact that biographical data is random as a roll of dice.

[332] Simone Osthoff, "Elsewhere in Contemporary Art: Topologies of Artist's Works, Writings, and Archives," *Art Journal* 65, no. 4 (Winter 2006): 11.
[333] Interview with Thiago Soares: "A palavra, de alguma forma, faz transbordar a visualidade," in *Pernambuco, Suplemento Cultural do Diario Oficial do Estado de Pernambuco* no. 75 (May 2012). Quoted and translated in Bessa, "Citizen Bruscky," 21.

It also suggests that an individual may have "multiple faces" and biographical data doesn't necessarily reveal much about a person.

In an interview with the curator Antonio Sergio Bessa, Bruscky stated: "Words have a fundamental role in my work. I often go from the word to the work, examining linguistic and semiotic issues." According to Bessa, Bruscky who studied journalism at the Universidade Católica de Pernambuco in the 1970s, was well read in semiotic theories and writings by Roland Barthes and Umberto Eco. Moreover, Bruscky had been marginally associated with Poema Processo (1967-1972), a national movement that had a strong impact on his work, and that saw the participation of many artists who then became involved with mail art.[334] Founded by Moacy Cirne, Alvaro de Sá, Neide Sá, and Wlademir Dias-Pino, Poema Processo aspired to bring further the language revolution initiated by concrete poetry. If the latter sparked from the will to go against "the atrophy of language relegated to a merely communicative function"[335] and aimed at changing our relation to language, Poema Processo went a step further, creating purely graphic poems to avoid the structure of linguistic altogether and dismantle the aura of the author.[336]

According to linguist Craig Saper, "Process Poetry builds on the advances of concrete poetry and moves that tendency toward visual conceptual games, scores, and activities. Although these poems are not yet scores, they do suggest a secret code system waiting for a reader to interpret or play. The "process" can refer to the process of

[334] Gilbert, "Networking Regionalism," 89.
[335] Haroldo de Campos, "The Informational Temperature of the Text," trans. Jon Tolman, *Poetics Today 3*, no.3 (1982): 178.
[336] Wlademir Dias-Pino, "Limit Situation: Distinction and Consequences," *Ponto-Ovum 10*, no.1 (c.1969) 10, in Saper, 72.

interpretation; the reader as writer-performer has to try out these strange code systems."[337] *Dados biograficos* requires such a ludic effort from the reader who needs to interpret the rebus created by the juxtaposition of image and text. At the same time, the composition of the work, a black and white photograph with a caption that seems to restate that which is visually represented in the picture, calls to mind Joseph Kosuth's *One and Three Chairs* (1965): one of the most well-known works of conceptual art consisting in three representations of a chair: the wooden object, its black and white photograph, and a dictionary entry for the word "chair." Joseph Kosuth, who has de-facto become the representative of analytical or tautological conceptual art, believes that the function of art is to question its own nature. In his creations, thus, art often takes a linguistic form that serves as an instrument of analysis of the idea of art. Although Bruscky also questions the nature of the creative process, with *Dados biográficos* he turns tautology on its head with a word pun, calling attention to language's ambiguity.

Another example of Bruscky bantering with language is one of the visual poems comprised in an artist booklet *Alto retrato* (Self/Tall Portrait) (1981).[338] The poem's title, rubberstamped at the top of the page in black ink, reds: *Linha poética* (Poetic Line). Below, on the white paper page is an entangled thin sewing red thread, literally a poetic line: an apparently straightforward meaning for a non-straight, winding line, to continue the wordplay. [Figure 3.21] *Linha poética* reflects concrete and process poetry's effort to go against "linear" writing, and invites the reader to decipher this secret code system. The red

[337] Craig Saper J., *Networked Art* (University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 92-93.
[338] On the cover, a drawing of a very tall Bruscky carrying a gigantic envelope (a reference to the performance PostAção from 1976) with the title *Alto retrato* (Self/Tall Portrait) is itself a play on words.

thread could be read as a remark about the publishing industry, or the political censorship that forces artists to find other modes of expression, where a poem becomes a red knot. Bruscky, in fact, has utilized humor to comment on the dire political situation, in particular during the military-civil dictatorship. According to art historian Cristina Freire, "Bruscky seeks to awaken the *homo ludens* dozing in each of us. He dethrones hegemonic economic value and appoints the imagination and the ludic, in alliance with irreverence and humor, as guides to his poetics."[339] Irony, in fact, was a remedy to paranoia, terror, fear of search and arrest operations by the police, and it is also the element that permitted Bruscky to dupe the censors and circulate his messages.

Mail Art

Like many artists of his generation, Paulo Bruscky was convinced that art should be circulated to reach an audience larger than that of museumgoers.[340] Apart from the classifieds, over his career he experimented with a number of communication technologies: film and video, fax, telexes, telegrams, and billboards, and was one of the main proponents of mail art, an international movement that offered an alternative artistic environment outside the control of art institutions, often perceived as aligned to the dictatorial government or subject to strict scrutiny by the censors. It was Fluxus artists, an

[339] Freire, *Paulo Bruscky*, 216. Here Freire is referring to Dutch historian and cultural theorist Johan Huizinga's *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture*, 1938.
[340] "For this reason," Bruscky explains, "I have worked with diverse media, and I believe that art is to be circulated, [and] because of this I created various projects/works in the mail art movement. I always created the work precisely to be circulated." Paulo Bruscky, interview by Marília Andrés Ribeiro and Marconi Drummond, in *Paulo Bruscky: Depoimento* (Belo Horizonte: Editora C/Arte, 2011), 13, quoted in Vanessa Davidson, ""Today, art is this communiqué:" Paulo Bruscky's Communication Art," in *Art Is Our Last Hope: Paulo Bruscky*, 32.

international informal group of visual artists, poets, and musicians experimenting with words and sound, that had begun using the mail to playfully integrate art and life, an idea that appealed to Bruscky who never distinguished between the two: "I don't separate my life and my art. It's been a long time since I knew which was which."[341]

The mail art network grew quickly and welcomed both professional and amateur international artists who were interested in challenging the aura of art, its uniqueness, preciousness, and commodification. At the same time, mail art facilitated the circulation of counter-information and protest art in countries ruled by military regimes. While mail was subject to inspection, forcing artists to use subtlety and ambiguity to hide their protest art, it also allowed for the creation of networks of solidarity that held governments accountable for arrests, disappearances, and torture of participating members.[342] Bruscky, who over the years has amassed an archive of over 15,000 pieces of mail art, corresponded with artists from Latin America, Japan, the U.S., and Europe, and in the 1970s organized three mail art exhibitions in Recife.[343] As a matter of fact, he did not need to leave his hometown, a city at the periphery of Brazilian and international cultural centers, to be extremely well

[341] Interview with Bessa, *BOMB Magazine*, 2013.
[342] Mail artists Clemente Padín and Jorge Caraballo from Uruguay were jailed in 1977 for subversive activities and released in 1982 after pressures from the mail art network. Bruscky and Santiago were themselves arrested, jailed, and persecuted for their mail art, as well as Chilean artist Guillermo Deisler who also got his works and archive destroyed.
[343] In 1975 he put together the Primeira Exposição Internacional de Arte Postal (First International Exhibition of Mail Art) with artist Ypiranga Filho (1936-2019) in the hall of the hospital where they both worked and that involved 31 artists from 12 countries. The title was a joke, as this was hardly the first show of mail art to be organized. In 1976, he and Daniel Santiago organized the II Exposição Internacional de Arte Correio (Second International Mail Art Exhibition) at Recife's post office, which had sponsored the show, that featured 3,000 works from 21 countries. It was meant to last from August 27 – September 11, but the federal police closed it down a few hours after opening. In 1979 Bruscky realized the *III Exposição Internacional de Arte Correio* (Third Exhibition of Mail Art) at the Biblioteca Pública Marechal Humberto Castelo Branco to homage the Uruguayan artists Clemente Padín and Jorge Caraballo and call attention to their arrest.

connected.[344] As he asserted, mail art was "his own personal antenna for tuning into the world."[345] Expert on postal art Zanna Gilbert remarks that mail art surpasses the idea of the peripheral artist exhibiting in central institutions.[346] Because of its mobility, circulation, and ephemerality, with mail art the very distinction between center and periphery ceases to matter, making access to the art and the artworld more democratic and egalitarian.

In an article he wrote in 1976, "Arte Correio e a grande rede: Hoje a arte é este comunicado" (Mail art and the great network: Today, art is this communiqué), Bruscky defended the idea that postal art is "antibourgeois, anticommercial and antisystem." And further explained: "This kind of art shortened distances between people and countries, affording with great ease exhibitions and interchanges, where there are neither judgments nor prizes for the works, as in the old salons and fleeting biennials. In mail art, art has reclaimed its main functions: information, protest, and denunciation." As a matter of fact, he used the mail to circulate messages critical of the dictatorial regime. Some artworks were quite explicit, such as *Título de Eleitor Cancelado* (Cancelled Voter ID), 1976 consisting in photocopies of his voter ID stamped with the word "CANCELADO" (cancelled) that he sent out to decry the dictatorship's abolishment of democratic elections.

---

[344] In an interview with Antonio Sergio Bessa (*BOMB Magazine*, 2013): "For a year I lived in New York and Amsterdam on a Guggenheim Fellowship, but aside from that, I never had any desire to move to Rio or São Paulo. After I got involved in arte correio [mail art] at the beginning of the seventies, I became aware of what was going on in the world thanks to my correspondence with other artists. I felt that I didn't need to leave even more strongly than before."

[345] Interview with Cristiana Tejo in *Paulo Bruscky: Arte em Todos os Sentidos* (Recife: Companhia Editora de Pernambuco, 2009), 132.

[346] Zanna Gilbert cites French artist Robert Filliou's idea of "Eternal Network" of artists: "The network is everlasting…each one of us artistically functions in the network which has replaced the notion of avant-garde. It means there is no art center in the world now, nobody can tell us…where the place is, where "we are" is, where things are taking place." Gilbert, "Art in Contact: The Mail Art Exchange of Paulo Bruscky and Robert Rehfeldt," *Art in Print* 5.3 (2015): 40.

[Figure 3.22] For the series *Pelos Nossos Desaparecidos* (For Our Disappeared, 1976–86), instead, he juxtaposed the title with passport photos of unknown Brazilians obtained from a photographer friend. [Figure 3.23] This powerful work denounced the violence against political opponents who had been disappeared by the police and military forces. At other times, Bruscky cleverly used the ambiguities of written and visual language to disguise protest and denunciation in his art. *Censurado*, for example, is an aerogram he sent out in November 1975 to fellow mail artist Unhandeijara Lisboa. Bruscky used an existing object, a postcard with a tender image of a cupid and the Christmas wishes: "For you, I wish a Christmas with the utmost human warmth, with much peace and happiness, health and love."[347] [Figure 3.24] On top of this ready-made greeting card sentence, he stamped the word "Censured," questioning the loss of human warmth under a regime that pits citizens against each other. The stamp also highlights the absurdity and hypocrisy of wishing for a joyous festivity under an authoritarian regime.

Bruscky also used mail art to circulate his experiments with machines. His fascination for visionary scientific and technological inventions was evident in the classifieds for a machine to record dreams and his scientific experiment to create artificial dawns. Like Cildo Meireles who cut a deal with the policemen Oxossi for the distribution of his *Zero Cruzeiro*, and Antonio Manuel who had access to *O Dia*'s print room through to his friendship with the son of the newspaper owner Ivan Chagas Freitas, Paulo Bruscky was able to utilize the equipment of the Hospital Agamenon Magalhães where he worked as a clerk thanks to a contact with an insider:

[347] "Pra Você quero um Natal com o mais humano calor, com muita paz e alegria, muita saúde e amor"

> I struck up a friendship with a neurologist who had arrived from Paris and let me use his office once a week to experiment with encephalograms—I could make drawings directly from the brain, without using my hands as intermediaries. It was very gratifying to complete a piece made by pure thought. This friend of mine lent me books about the process, and explained how the electrodes on the machine worked and all of that. The face is the part of the body with the highest concentration of muscles, so to make these drawings I would make certain facial expressions, which was also a sort of performance. Sometimes I laughed a little or moved my lips around a bit.[348]

This is how Bruscky transformed a tedious work into an opportunity for experimentation. In 1976 he produced his series *O Meu Cérebro Desenha Assim* (My Brain Draws in This Way), electroencephalograms (EEG) of his brain waves that he then collected in a booklet and shipped as a mail art piece.[349] [Figure 3.25] On top of the EEG waves traced in black or blue ink, Bruscky stamped the English word "Thought." He also made a Super 8 film recording his "creative partnership with the apparatus."[350] As Bessa described it: "The machine captures information from the brain and transposes it directly onto paper, giving a new twist to the surrealist dream of automatic writing."[351] The artist produced artworks also with the electrocardiogram (EKG) in a series he titled *Sentimentos: um poema feito com o coração* (Feelings: a poem from the heart 1976), and experimented with x-rays for the series *Autum Radium Retratum* (Radium Self-Portrait) where he used collages of x-rays to produce self-portraits, not of his external appearance, but of his bone structure. [Figure 3.26 and Figure 3.27] Bruscky then reproduced the x-rays with the xerox

[348] Interview with Bessa, *BOMB Magazine*, 2013.
[349] The EEG registers the electrical activity of the brain through electrodes attached to different parts of the head. The electrical activity changes based on the brain activity (for example it detects if a person is awake or asleep), but the largest undulations are a reflection of the muscular contractions that happen when a person moves the eyes or activates other face muscles.
[350] Freire, *Paulo Bruscky*, 228
[351] Bessa, "Citizen Bruscky," 23

machine, which he considered co-author of the piece, and created artist books, post stamps, and labels that he sent via the postal system. [Figure 3.28] Images of bones, EEG and EKG measuring the artist's body activity evoked the totalitarian state's use of similar scientific methods for identification purposes, such as fingerprints and the dental arch. Despite the humorous titles, Vanessa Davidson observes that "[i]n the process, he coopts hospital systems normally reserved for treating the sick into metaphorical tools used to reflect upon his society's own ills."[352]

Sabotage

Bruscky saw a radical potential in the postal system, which he nonetheless playfully proceeded to challenge, and subvert, for example sending large or bizarre objects. In 1975 the artist sent to Buenos Aires a 1,8 meter long and 90 cm wide letter to be exhibited in the show *Última Exposición de Arte Correo* (Last Exhibition of Mail Art) organized by Edgardo Antonio Vigo and Horacio Zabala at the Galería de Arte Nuevo. The title of the exhibit was ironic: that same month, Bruscky and artist Ypiranga Filho (1936-2019) had put together the *Primeira Exposição Internacional de Arte Postal* (First International Exhibition of Mail Art) in the hall of the hospital where they both worked, which in turn was not the first show of mail art ever being organized. [353] The consignment of the letter to

[352] Davidson, ""Today, art is this communiqué," 42.
[353] The first exhibition dedicated to postal art in Latin America was Creación/Creation, organized by Julio Plaza and Regina Silveira in Porto Rico in 1972, followed by the Festival de la Postal Creativa (Creative Postcard Festival) organized by Clemente Padín in in 1974 at the Galería U in Montevideo. The exhibition Prospectiva '74 organized by Walter Zanini at the University of São Paulo's Museu de Arte Contemporânea (MAC USP) in 1974 was the first to take place in an official art institution in Latin America. Mail art also received a special exhibition room at the 16th São Paulo Biennial in 1981, giving institutional legitimacy to the movement.

the post office became a performance in and of itself. With a group of artists, Bruscky marched through the streets of Recife, from the bookstore Livro 7 in Rua 7 de Setembro to the central post office, carrying the gigantic envelope that contained an even larger letter measuring 5 meters in length. [Figure 3.29] Several people started following the group and in the post office a negotiation ensued with the staff. Bruscky, himself an administrator used to dealing with bureaucracies, was challenging the mail system using loopholes. In fact, there was no official regulation as to the dimension of letters. *PostAção* (Post-Action, but *postação* also means to post, to take up a position, and emplacement) made it to Buenos Aires without delays, and was exhibited hanging from the ceiling next to the letter it contained with slides documenting the performance projected on it.

Bruscky also tested the bureaucratic apparatus of the postal system with his series *Sem Destino* (Without Destination/Destiny), 1975-1983, when he sent letters around the world leaving the addressees' contact information empty. This action allowed the artist to track the functioning of the postal system as the letters were returned to him with an added layer of bureaucratic markings. To increase the variety of signs, he even involved the network of mail artists, sending them the unaddressed letter inside separate envelopes and asking them to post it in a mailbox of their city. So, despite the sender's address was in Recife, the letter was mailed from different locations in Brazil and abroad. In 1986, he employed a different strategy: he sent letters to purposefully wrong addresses, tricking postal workers. The letters were eventually sent back to him, as the title of the work suggests, *Ao Remetente* (Return to Sender). He then cut out all the new postal markings and redirections from the envelopes and created a collage with this visual noise,

photocopied it, and sent it out as a new piece of mail art. Therefore, if the censors were examining correspondence to track subversive messages, Bruscky on his part with his tricky, playful, and participatory actions exposed the bureaucratic working of the postal system and exploited its loopholes to subvert its rules.

Conclusion

Cildo Meireles, Antonio Manuel, and Paulo Bruscky, each in his idiosyncratic way, infiltrated systems they wished to bend for their artistic purposes and to spread messages to a broad public while eschewing censorship. Their way of operating calls to mind the description of the *malandro* provided by Roberto DaMatta, according to whom the trickster is one "who lives in the interstice between order and disorder, using both and finding sustenance from those who are inside the normal, structured world and those who are not."[354] The three artists reached out to acquaintances within the system –Chagas, the neurologist– and contacts outside of the structured world –Oxossi, the *camelôs*– who became collaborators in their acts of sabotage. Like *malandros*, the artists used licit and illicit ways to be admitted in the system they wanted to disrupt. These acts required a meticulous study of the rules and bureaucracies regulating the system and depended on the collaboration of unaware receivers of or their willing participants in their projects. Using tricks and wit, they duped the authorities (and the public alike) without them realizing they had been deceived.

[354] DaMatta, *Carnivals, Rogues, and Heroes*, 131.

Conclusions

"E os negros? Onde estão os negros?"
"And the Black people? Where are the Black people?"
–Jean-Paul Sartre

On February 3, 2004, Flávio Sant'Ana, a 28-year-old Afro-Brazilian dentist, was gunned down by the Military Police after being mistaken for a robber. The incident unfolded when a merchant contacted the police, reporting a robbery in his shop. When it became evident that they fatally targeted the wrong person, the policemen attempted to manipulate the crime scene to depict Flávio Sant'Ana as an armed individual who had resisted their orders, so as to mitigate the sentence and receive lesser charges. The event served as a catalyst for the formation of Frente 3 de Fevereiro, named after the date of Flávio Sant'Ana death. This transdisciplinary collective is dedicated to conducting research and organizing direct actions that address interrelated themes: police racism, the myth of racial democracy, and the architecture of exclusion. Operating under a model of horizontal creativity, the collective has engaged in a diverse range of projects that intertwine art, activism, and media interventions. Throughout the years, they have undertaken urban interventions, produced a documentary, authored a book, composed a music album, curated exhibitions, and staged theatrical performances. Initially formed by six individuals, the collective has grown, now comprising twenty-one members, including visual artists, actors, musicians, filmmakers, dancers, graphic designers, historians, sociologists, lawyers, and scenographers.[355]

[355] Members include: Achiles Luciano, André Montenegro, Cássio Martins, Cibele Lucena, Daniel Lima, Daniel Oliva, Eugênio Lima, Felipe Teixeira, Felipe Brait, Fernando Alabê, Fernando Coster, Fernando

The collective's inaugural action took place on the street where Flávio Sant'Ana was murdered in the northern zone of São Paulo. Collaborating with Flávio's family, they installed a metal plate on the asphalt, bearing a black silhouette against a red backdrop. Emblazoned across the torso in white ink were the words: "Aqui, Flávio F. Sant'Ana foi morto pela Polícia Militar de São Paulo" (Here, Flávio F. Sant'Ana was killed by the Military Police of São Paulo). Encircling the silhouette, the collective inscribed the phrase: "racism +1 victim." This intervention, titled *Monumento Horizontal* (Horizontal Monument, 2004), aimed to commemorate the loss of yet another Afro-Brazilian life at the hands of the state. [Figure 4.1] The intervention sought to raise awareness about the stark reality of racial violence in the country. Recent statistics from the research portal "Atlas da Violência" (Violence Atlas) indicate that Black individuals account for 77% of homicide victims, with a 2.6 times higher likelihood of being murdered compared to non-Black individuals.[356]

The horizontal monument resembled a headstone, representing a living body flattened to the ground by a gunshot. The collective aimed also to question the criteria society employs to determine who is deemed deserving of being celebrated in public spaces. *Monumento Horizontal* shares many similarities with Hélio Oiticica's *B33 Bólide*

Sato, João Nascimento, Julio Dojcsar, Maia Gongora, Majoí Gongora, Marina Novaes, Maurinete Lima, Pedro Guimarães, Roberta Estrela D'Alva, and Will Robson.

[356] Atlas da Violência is a portal that gathers, organizes and makes available information on violence in Brazil. It was founded in 2016 and is part of the Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada (Institute of Applied Economic Research). According to a 2021 report, in 2019, Black people (the sum of Black and Brown people in the IBGE classification) accounted for 77% of homicide victims, with a homicide rate per 100,000 inhabitants of 29.2. Comparatively, among non-blacks (the sum of Yellow, White and Indigenous people) the rate was 11.2 per 100,000, which means that the chance of a black person being murdered is 2.6 times higher than that of a non-black person. See: https://www.ipea.gov.br/atlasviolencia/arquivos/artigos/5141-atlasdaviolencia2021completo.pdf

caixa 18 caixa-poema 2, "Homenagem à Cara de Cavalo." Daniel Lima, one of its members and the collective's spokesperson, has stated that the art of resistance of the 1960s-1970s served as inspiration for many of their creations. Both artworks are dedicated to Black men victims of police brutality. The colors of Exú, red and black, prevail, together with the combination of image and written text. But while Oiticica memorialized the revolt of the so-called social bandit, Frente 3 de Fevereiro protested the police and institutional racism that automatically label a Black person a criminal. Flávio F. Sant'Ana was murdered not because he was an outlaw, but as a consequence of the pervasive racism he faced as a Black individual. Similar to the protagonist Emanuel in Abdias Nascimento's play *Sortilégio*, Flávio's educational attainment and social standing did not prevent him from being unjustly targeted and treated as a criminal solely due to the social stereotype associated with his skin color. The interventions proposed by the collective demonstrate that many of the social and political issues that were relevant during the military-civil dictatorship remain urgent today.

Frente 3 de Fevereiro issued a manifesto denouncing the pervasive bias that portrays Black citizens as the primary suspects in criminal activities, highlighting how this harmful stereotype is deeply ingrained in Brazil's sociocultural fabric and perpetuated by the myth of racial democracy. They drew attention to the negative connotations associated with the word "negro" (black), transcribing some of the definitions provided by the widely used Portuguese dictionary Dicionário Aurélio: the color black; an individual of Black race; dirty, stained; gloomy, mournful; melancholic, sad; that evokes fear, sinister; cursed, wretched; wicked, perverse; enslaved. The etymology of the word and its everyday usage,

therefore, contribute to the stigmatization of Blackness. The manifesto further sheds light on the significant presence of Black individuals within the police force, which perpetuates a narrative where a Black person can only occupy the roles of either an enforcer (policeman) or an offender (bandit). This mechanism effectively allows Brazilian society to "outsource" its racism to the police institution, shielding it from accountability. As a result, Brazil engenders one of the most insidious and effective systems of racial discrimination, as it suppresses any possibility of questioning the existence of racism within the broader fabric of Brazilian society.[357]

Monumento Horizontal was built as a permanent installation in memory of a young Black man, victim of police violence and the myth of racial democracy. Nevertheless, the plate was vandalized and removed by the police the very next day. Undeterred, after a week the collective replaced it with a monument crafted from cement and paint, with the idea that it would last longer, but it too was swiftly destroyed. The removal of *Monumento Horizontal* serves as an illustration of Jacques Rancière's concept of the "distribution of the sensible" that governs police-order, as noted by researcher Pedro Caetano Eboli Nogueira. This concept highlights the power wielded by the police to control what is visible and invisible, sayable and unsayable, audible and inaudible, thereby shaping the boundaries of what is considered important or insignificant, permissible or forbidden. Nogueira further argues that the repeated destruction of the monument underscores the police's authority to dictate what can be memorialized and what cannot, and ultimately, which narratives are

[357] Manifesto transcribed in Raquel Ribeiro Borges, "Coletivo Frente 3 de Fevereiro: um estudo sobre intervenções midiáticas e políticas" (master's thesis, São Paulo: Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo, 2021), 48-49.

accepted in society, and which are silenced.[358] This cycle of destruction and erasure reveals the entrenched power dynamics that perpetuate the policing of visibility and control over collective memory in relation to racial injustices.

In the book *Zumbi Somos Nós* (2007),[359] Frente 3 de Fevereiro refers to literary critic João Cezar de Castro Rocha's idea of substituting the "Dialectics of *Malandragem*" theorized by Antonio Candido, with the "Dialectics of *Marginalidade*" (marginality or criminality).[360] Rocha argues that the persistent social inequality in Brazilian society makes unattainable the utopian promise of a better life. The Dialectics of *Marginalidade* aims to overcome social inequality with open conflict, rather than dissimulation or conciliation, and by exposing violence, rather than hiding it. Rocha arrives to this conclusion by observing the development of armed violence in Brazilian society and by comparing two movies, one from the early 1960s, *O Pagador de Promessas* (Keeper of Promises, 1962) directed by Anselmo Duarte, and *Cidade de Deus* (City of God) from 2002 directed by Fernando Meirelles and Kátia Lund. While I agree with Rocha's analysis of the exacerbation of state violence against disenfranchised sectors of society which had led some people to take up arms, I contend that in the artistic field *malandragem*, rather than open violence, remains a successful artistic strategy to bring visibility to police brutality and social injustices.

---

[358] Pedro Caetano Eboli Nogueira, "A política e a poética do coletivo Frente Três de Fevereiro," *PosFAUUSP* 28, no. 52 (August 30, 2021): 4.
[359] Frente 3 de Fevereiro, *Zumbi somos nós. Cartografia do racism para o jovem urbano* (São Paulo: Programa de Valorização de Iniciativas Culturais, 2007).
[360] João Cezar de Castro Rocha, "A guerra de relatos no Brasil contemporâneo. Ou: a "dialética da marginalidade"," *Letras* 28/29 (2004): 153-184.

In their ongoing pursuit of challenging the hegemonic regimes of visibility, Frente 3 de Fevereiro continued to innovate and experiment with new means of communication with the public. The same year, they carried out a display of posters and stickers on the walls of São Paulo with the question: *Racismo Policial: Quem Policia a Polícia?* (Police Racism: Who Polices the Police?) [Figure 4.2] Employing an aesthetic reminiscent of Barbara Kruger's works, they used a black and white silkscreen mirror image of a military police officer overlaid with the statement printed in white on red background, employing the Futura Bold Oblique typeset as Kruger. Akin to the American artist, the collective aimed at unmasking the power of mainstream media in shaping our perception of the world. Frente 3 de Fevereito intended to challenge the prevailing narrative about racial violence and raise concerns about the police's lack of accountability. By posing a question, rather than providing an answer, they directed the viewer's attention to question the mechanisms of power.

The collective then proceeded to employ a similar strategy as Cildo Meireles's *Inserções em Circuitos Ideológicos - Projeto Cédulas* (Insertions into Ideological Circuits: Banknote Project, 1970-1975), by rubber-stamping the message "POLICE RACISM - 91% of young Black men have been stopped by the police. Data: Datafolha, February 2004" in red ink onto R$ 1,00 banknotes, enclosed within a rectangular frame. [Figure 4.3] Frente 3 de Fevereiro credits Datafolha, an independent polling institute, as the source of their data, underscoring their commitment to basing their work on statistical accurate data. Similar to how Cildo Meireles utilized the same technique to disseminate news about the assassination of Wladimir Herzog in police custody during the military-civil dictatorship,

they utilized the same approach to convey a message about police racism. Yet, it is by appropriating the visual, performative, and communicative strategies commonly employed by football supporters in Brazil that the collective achieved its most impactful results.

Stadium Banners

In 2005 Frente 3 de Fevereiro began working with enormous banners similar to those used among *torcidas organizadas*, organized fan clubs, who often create wide and vibrant banners to proudly cheer their teams. These banners can reach staggering dimensions of up to eighty by forty meters, covering entire sections of the stadium seating. The spectacle involves all spectators within that area, as they collaborate to unfurl and hold the banners aloft.

This new artistic intervention was motivated by an incident of racism directed at Edinaldo Batista Libânio, popularly known as Grafite, an Afro-Brazilian player from São Paulo Futebol Clube. During a match on April 13, 2005, he Grafite was subjected to racist insults by Leandro Desábato of the Argentine team Quilmes Atlético Club. While Grafite had previously experienced racial slurs, like many other Black players, this was the first instance where the crime was met with punishment. Desábato was denounced for defamation and spent a night in jail. He eventually paid a fine of R$ 10,000 and was allowed to return to Argentina with his team. Other incidents of racism occurred. On April 27, 2005, during a friendly match with the Brazilian national team at the stadium Pacaembu stadium, a banana was thrown on the field, bearing the inscription “Grafite macaco,” using the derogatory term “macaco” meaning monkey.

Frente 3 de Fevereiro had to negotiate with the *torcidas* of different teams to secure their agreement that they unveil the 20 by 15-meter banners during important matches, and at specific times. The first banner bore the message *Brasil Negro Salve* (Save/Hail Black Brazil), and was unwrapped on July 14, 2005 during the final of the Taça Libertadores da América, the most prestigious football tournament in South America, where the champions of the South American leagues compete against each other.[361] [Figure 4.4] The match took place between São Paulo and Atlético Paranaense at the Cícero Pompeu de Toledo stadium, better known as Morumbi, in São Paulo. A crowd of seventy-five thousand spectators attended the game in the stadium, and the match was broadcast by TV Globo, the largest free-to-air commercial television network in Latin America, as well as SporTV, a pay-per-view sports channel also owned by Globo, along with numerous other Latin American networks.[362]

Even though the tickets for the final were completely sold out, members of Frente 3 de Fevreiro managed to buy seats from ticket scalpers on the opposite side of the stands where the *torcida* would sit. That position would allow them to document the ephemeral action. Much like Cildo Meireles collaborating with the *camelôs* (street vendors) to distribute his *Zero Cruzeiros*, Manuel leveraging his acquaintances to gain access to *O Dia*'s printing room, or Paulo Bruscky striking up a friendship with a neurologist to have access to the hospital's medical equipment for his artistic creations, Frente 3 de Fevereiro worked alongside football fan organizations, and ticket scalpers to accomplish their goals.

[361] The tournament takes its name from the Libertadores, the leaders of the wars of independence from the Iberian colonial powers.
[362] TV Globo was founded during the military-civil dictatorship in 1965 and was alined with the government.

They had meticulously studied the TV live broadcast and identified the precise location and moments when the camera would focus on the stands filled with fans: right after each goal, the start and conclusion of the first half, the beginning of the second half of the game, and the final whistle. So, when the player Amoroso scored a goal, just 16 minutes into the match, the *torcida* promptly unfurled the banner and cameras captured the action. Employing a communication method specific to football supporter in Brazil, Frente 3 de Fevereiro breached the event's protocol. For a few seconds, they brazenly invaded the most expensive and widely watched prime-time broadcast in Brazil. Passed from hand to hand, an action that took a matter of seconds in the stadium was multiplied on thousands of screens. The banner, which started as an urban, local proposition, gained a mediatic dimension when it is live broadcast on international networks. Recorded by the collective, it turned into a documentary (*Zumbi Somos Nós*, 2007) transmitted via the internet.[363]

In addition to securing the cooperation of the *torcida* to use the banners during matches, Frente 3 de Fevereiro had to obtain prior approval from the police for the banner inscriptions. As a result, the collective couldn't convey a straightforward protest slogan. Instead, they had to employ a poetic and ambiguous language that would withstand scrutiny and have a major reverberation. According to Daniel Lima, the word "Salve" on the banner held a dual meaning, functioning both as a greeting and a plea for rescue or salvation. Those who recognize themselves as Black, saw a message of resistance, a political proposal to be active agents of history.[364] This same flag was repurposed 15 years later to draw attention

[363] *Zumbi somos nós*. Directed by Frente 3 de Fevereiro. Brazil, 2007. Accessed May 10, 2023. http://www.danielcflima.com/Zumbi-Somos-Nos.
[364] André Mesquita, "Insurgências poéticas: arte ativista e ação coletiva (1990-2000)" (master's thesis, Universidade de São Paulo, 2008), 269.

to the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on Black individuals and denounce the inequities experienced by the Black community during the pandemic.

The second banner created by Frente 3 de Fevereiro featured the inscription *Onde Estão os Negros?* (Where are the Black people?), which was prominently displayed during a Brazilian championship match between Corinthians and Ponte Preta at the Moisés Lucarelli stadium in Campinas, São Paulo, on August 14, 2005. The sentence was famously pronounced by Jean-Paul Sartre during his visit to Brazil alongside Simone de Beauvoir in 1960.[365] Playwright and journalist Nelson Rodrigues years later recounted in an article published in *O Globo* newspaper that during a social dinner, Sartre had posed the question while spitting out the pits of *jaboticaba*, a fruit he was experiencing for the first time. His query, "E os negros? Onde estão os negros?" (And the Black people? Where are the Black people?), expressed his astonishment at the absence of Black individuals in the social and intellectual events they had attended throughout their visit to the country. In the article, Rodrigues wrote:

> "Where are the black people?" - this is the question that Brazilians should ask each other, without finding the answer. There is no way to respond to the French. In truth, we don't know where the blacks are. And there is something sinister about the brazenness with which we are always ready to proclaim: - "We are a racial democracy."[366]

[365] Jean-Paul Sarte and Simone de Beauvoir spent two months in Brazil in 1960, visiting Recife and Olinda in Pernambuco, Rio de Janeiro, Brasília, Manaus in Amazona, and Salvador in Bahia. For more on their trip see Hazel Rowley, "Beauvoir, Brazil, and Cristina T," *Bookforum*, April-May 2007. Accessed May 31, 2023, https://www.bookforum.com/print/1401/beauvoir-brazil-and-christina-t-96

[366] "Onde estão os negros?" - eis a pergunta que os brasileiros deviam se fazer uns aos outros, sem lhe achara resposta. Não há como responder ao francês. Em verdade, não sabemos onde estão os negros. E há qualquer coisa de sinistro no descaro como estamos sempre dispostos a proclamar: - "Somos uma democracia racial". Nelson Rodrigues, "As Confessões de Nelson Rodrigues. Capítulo XIII," *O Globo*, December 18, 1967, 2.

Sixty years have passed, yet the urgency of the question remains undiminished. As I am writing this conclusion, during the last week of May 2023, Brazilian teams organized actions of solidarity in support of Brazilian player Vinicius Jr. of the team Real Madrid, who has been subject to repeated racial abuses. The most recent attack occurred on Sunday, May 21, during a league match against Valencia. On May 27, Players from Vinicius Jr.'s former team Flamengo donned jerseys emblazoned with his name on the front and staged a sit-down protest at the start of the match with the players of Cruzeiro, who did the same, in the Maracaná stadium. The teams Fortaleza and Vasco, instead, released their lineups for their upcoming match with the omission of Black players' names from the list. [Figure 4.5] The vacant places between the lines seem to pose the question: where are the Black players?

Football, like carnival, represents a phenomenon where the nation can mold its self-image as a cohesive collective where inclusivity reigns, and individuals of different ethnicities and backgrounds coexist harmoniously and working towards a common goal, in the double sense of the word. Yet, stadiums, while often serving as arenas that perpetuate the national myth of racial democracy, also offer a platform for these narratives to be vigorously scrutinized and challenged, as was the case for Frente 3 de Fevereiro's display of the banner *Onde Estão Os Negros?*

The message took on an added layer of significance when it adorned the façades of art institutions.[367] In 2018, two banners bearing this message were displayed on the exterior

[367] The banner *Onde estao os negros* was exhibited in 2006 at the Palais de Glace in Buenos Aires, and in 2015 in the Museu de Arte do Rio as part of the exhibition *Zona de Poesia Árida* curated by Daniel Lima and Túlio Tavares.

of the Museu de Arte de São Paulo Assis Chateaubriand (MASP) and the Instituto Tomie Ohtake during the exhibition *Histórias Afro-Atlânticas* (Afro-Atlantic Histories). [Figure 4.6] The show showcased artworks created by or representing Africans and the African diasporas spanning five centuries, charting the Atlantic slave trade and its enduring legacies, telling histories and stories (the double meaning of the Portuguese word *histórias*) of slavery, emancipation, and resistance.[368] The banner displayed by Frente 3 de Fevereiro served as a poignant reminder that it has taken until this moment for art institutions to finally incorporate the voices and perspectives of individuals of African descent into their mainstream art historical narratives.

While Hélio Oiticica orchestrated a carnival parade in the Museum of Modern Art of Rio de Janeiro to challenge exclusionary practices within art institutions and their stagnant and conservative programs, Frente 3 de Fevereiro employed a language drawn from football to assert the agency of Afro-Brazilians in shaping and narrating their own histories and stories. By tapping into two cultural phenomena through which the nation constructs its self-image, both internally and abroad, they amplified the impact of their messages, making them all the more potent.

[368] *Histórias Afro-Atlânticas* was organized by the curatorial team comprising Adriano Pedrosa, Ayrson Heráclito, Hélio Menezes, Lilia Moritz Schwarcz, and Tomás Toledo. In the last two years the exhibition has toured multiple venues in the United States, including the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, the National Gallery of Art in D.C., the Dallas Museum of Art, and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, and the New York Times art critic Holland Cotter described it as "one of the most enthralling shows I've seen in years, with one visual detonation after another." See Holland Cotter, "Brazil Enthralls With an Art Show of Afro-Atlantic History," *The New York Times*, October 12, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/12/arts/design/afro-atlantic-histories-sao-paulo-museum-of-art-tomie-ohtake-institute.html

In an interview with researcher and curator André Mesquita, Daniel Lima talked about the experience of bringing the collective's actions within an institutional setting. He argued:

> There is a distinct possibility of being entirely engulfed by the institution, where your work may be appropriated and wielded with far greater reach and impact than you could achieve alone. However, there exists the contrary possibility, where you can unfold your work to yield numerous other outcomes that bear a significantly more potent historical legacy than what can be accomplished within the confines of the institution.[369]

While shaking up the foundations of Eurocentric art institutions, Frente 3 de Fevereiro has achieved far greater impacts by working outside the confines of museums. Yet, some of their projects have been commissioned and financed by public art institutions. Like artists working under the authoritarian regimes examined in this dissertation, therefore, the collective has been swaying between different contexts to amplify the outcome of their work.

Their third banner, bearing the message "Zumbi Somos Nós" (We are Zumbi), was displayed at the Pacaembu stadium in São Paulo during the match between Corinthians and Internacional on November 20, 2005. This date marks the Day of Black Conscience (Dia da Consciência Negra). Zumbi, the central figure of the banner, was the last leader of the Quilombo dos Palmares, a national hero celebrated as a freedom fighter, particularly on November 20th. Palmares represented the largest and longest-lasting fugitive community in Brazil, with a population ranging between ten and twenty thousand inhabitants, surviving for approximately a century. The quilombo served as a refuge not only for

[369] Daniel Lima interviewed by André Mesquita in *Insurgências Poéticas: Arte Ativista e Ação Coletiva* (São Paulo: Annablume editora, 2011), 123.

escaped enslaved Africans and Afro-Brazilians but also for Indigenous people and White individuals who did not fit in the colonial order. It served as a model for Abdias Nascimento's concept of *Quilombismo*: a multiracial and pluricultural social, political and economic organization that would respect the identities and cultural values of its ethnic components.[370]

Significantly, the banner *Zumbi Somos Nós* was also used in February 2006, hung from the Prestes Maia building, a two-tower block that had been occupied since 2002 by members of MSTC (Movimento Sem-Teto do Centro), the Downtown Roofless Movement. This 23-story high-rise building is situated on Prestes Maia Street, one of the main avenues connecting the northern zone of São Paulo with the city center. The banner was unfurled during a protest against the eviction of the building's occupants. [Figure 4.7] Abandoned for over a decade, the owner had accumulated a municipal tax debt exceeding five million reais (approximately 2.2 million US dollars). 468 families squatted the building, the largest vertical occupation in Latin America, housing approximately 2,000 inhabitants. Within this community, the residents organized educational, cultural, and social activities. They established a library, and hosted workshops. Prestes Maia, therefore, served as a symbol of resistance, and struggle, for the right to land and property within the urban landscape—a modern-day urban quilombo—bringing together individuals from diverse backgrounds who had been marginalized and excluded by society. The occupation received support from different artistic collectives who produced works to protest the

[370] Abdias Nascimento, *Africans in Brazil: A pan-African perspective* (Africa World Press, 1992), 108, quoted in Sterling, "The Art and Times of Abdias Nacimento," 646.

potential eviction. The allusion to the historical *quilombola* leader Zumbi in the banner of Frente 3 de Fevereiro articulated the merging of active political resistance and collaborative artistic practices.

Know Go Area

On June 7, 2006, the artistic collective Frente 3 de Fevereiro entered the FIFA Fan Fest in Berlin, an open-air public event organized on the eve of the World Cup opening ceremony, with a large black banner that they carried wrapped on the shoulders. The collective had been invited by the Goethe-Institut and the Ministry of Culture to participated in a workshop with German and international collectives in Berlin that would respond to the latest episode of racial violence in the country.[371] On April 16, Eastern Sunday, Ermyas Mulugeta, a German man of Ethiopian origin, was brutally beaten by neo-Nazis at a tram stop in Potsdam, a city west of Berlin in the state of Brandenburg. Two men were charged with racially motivated attempted murder, but their charges were eventually dropped. The horrific event sparked a lively political debate, particularly due to its occurrence just months before the commencement of the World Cup, which was scheduled to take place in twelve cities across Germany that year. This led Uwe-Karsten Heye, spokesperson (1998-2002) of former Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, to publicly warn non-White World Cup visitors to steer clear of the state of Brandenburg, where the attack had taken place. "There are small and mid-sized towns in Brandenburg and elsewhere where I would advise anyone with a different skin color not to go. They might not make it

[371] The German collectives were Kanak Attak, La Plataforma, Sagaz, Respeto, and Togo Action Plus.

out alive,"[372] he told the national radio station Deutschlandfunk Kultur, fueling a fiery debate among local and national politicians. Africa Council, an umbrella organization of African and German-African community groups and activists in Germany planned to publish a guide to "no-go" areas for Black visitors to Germany.[373]

Frente 3 de Fevereiro worked with local activists, asylum seekers, and immigrants to identify and map such areas in Berlin. They designed street signs using the same colors and layout as traditional "no trespassing" signs but incorporated the phrase "Know Go Area" in white. This wordplay aimed to highlight the existence of these areas, which, although not officially recognized, are widely known to individuals who are vulnerable to racial violence and need to steer clear of such places. The group strategically positioned these signs along different streets, including in front of the residence of a prominent Neo-Nazi leader. [Figure 4.8] The action bears a resemblance to Heitor dos Prazeres's paintings, wherein he portrayed Black individuals joyously occupying the streets, metaphorically asserting their right to unrestricted access to urban spaces.

The invitation to Germany represented an opportunity for Frente 3 de Fevereiro to expand their research to a different cultural, social, political, and historical context.[374] While the myth of racial democracy is deeply rooted in the Brazilian cultural landscape,

---

[372] "Former Government Spokesman Warns of Racist Hotspots," *Deutsche Welle*, May 18, 2006 Available at: https://www.dw.com/en/former-government-spokesman-warns-of-racist-hotspots/a-2024935

[373] References to "no-go areas" were also published in two English guidebooks: *Time Out Berlin* and *The Rough Guide to Berlin*. For more on the no-go areas in Germany see Lukáš Novotný, "Right-Wing Extremism and No-Go-Areas in Germany," *Sociologický Časopis / Czech Sociological Review* 45, no. 3 (2009): 591–609.

[374] Besides the beating of Mulugeta, the group discussed and protested also against the death in police custody of Oury Jalloh, an asylum seeker from Sierra Leone who had been burned alive in a cell inside a police station in the German city of Dessau on January 7, 2005. The police had attempted to cover up the event calling it a suicide, and the media criminalized the victim. Nevertheless, independent investigations showed that the man was found with his hands and feet handcuffed to a bed.

the initiatives they undertook in Berlin directly addressed the issues of racism and the architecture of exclusion. Their actions shed light on urban areas where individuals of specific racial backgrounds or social statuses are systematically barred from entry. According to Eugênio Lima, one of the members, the collective works in the dialectic between the world of race relations in Brazil and that of the African diaspora around the world.[375]

Frente 3 de Fevereiro decided to produce a large banner similar to those they displayed in Brazilian football stadiums to deprecate racism in Brazil. During a protest in support of Mulugeta on June 3, 2006, they marched through Berlin carrying a specially crafted banner, bearing the message "Know Go Areas." However, they aimed to leverage the heightened visibility brought about by the World Cup, which was being hosted in Germany that year, in order to generate a more substantial impact on this pressing issue. Therefore, they made the decision to attempt infiltrating the opening of the FIFA Fan Fest in Berlin and unveiling the banner during the event, aiming for maximum exposure. The event would take place in Straße des 17. Juni, in an area the size of 12 football fields next to the Brandenburg Gate and the Reichstag, and it would be broadcast live on the German public-service television ZDF (Zweites Deutsches Fernsehenv).

The FIFA Fan Fest would feature live concerts with international musicians, entertainment, and even the participation of Brazilian soccer legend Pelé.[376] Hundreds of

[375] Eugênio Lima, "Frente 3 De Fevereiro: Um olhar pessoal sobre uma trajetória coletiva," *O Menelick 2º Ato*, February 2012. Accessed: May 28, 2023, http://www.omenelick2ato.com/mais/frente-3-de-fevereiro
[376] FIFA Fan Fest open screening events were organized in the twelve host German cities for the duration of the World Cup and have become regular events at each tournament of World Cup ever since.

policemen would be present, stopping people at the crowd control barriers at the entrance to check begs and belongings.

The activists were doubtful regarding the feasibility of circumventing the tight security measures and unfurling the flag during the highly monitored and visible event. Immigrants within the group expressed concerns about potential repercussions on their immigration status, and abstained from participating in the action. This disparity in vulnerability between immigrants and Brazilians, who enjoyed greater freedom as visitors, underscored the fluctuating nature of one's status and positionality based on the circumstances.

The process leading up to the action was documented and captured in the film *Zumbi Somos Nós* (2007). The documentary showcases the group engaged in discussions on how to navigate the security measures at the FIFA Fan Fest while keeping the content of the banner concealed. During these deliberations, one member argued that the political intentions should be disguised with a tricky approach: rather than simply proceeding towards the security checks, they should adopt the guise of a Carnival parade, marching joyfully and singing a *sambinha*. Essentially, they sought to conform to the stereotypical image attributed to Brazilians as a means to enhance their chances of success. In the documentary, the diverse group is depicted wearing Brazilian flags draped over their backs like cloaks or as turbans. A man is play drums, while the group sings the song *Alguém me avisou* (Someone Warned Me, 1980) by the singer and composer Dona Ivone Lara (1921-2018), known as the Queen of Samba.[377] The lyrics say:

[377] The song was launched by Maria Bethânia, Caetano Veloso and Gilberto Gil in the album *Talismã* in 1980, and then recorded by the same Dona Ivone Lara in her album *Sorriso Negro* from 1982.

Sempre fui obediente	I've always been obedient
Mas não pude resistir	But I couldn't resist
Foi numa roda de samba	It was in a samba circle
Que eu juntei-me aos bambas	That I joined the *bambas*
Pra me distrair	To distract myself.

And so, the members of Frente 3 de Fevereiro behaved like *bambas*, exuding a carefree energy, swinging while walking, singing, dancing, and sporting broad smiles that canceled their tension. They embodied not only the essence of the *malandro*, but also the stereotype of the Brazilian abroad. Through their use of *malandragem* they converted a perceived disadvantage –a stereotype– into an advantage, gaining entry to the concert. [Figure 4.9]

According to Daniel Lima, the agreement was that if the security were to stop them, "Vamos dar uma de louco que não entendeu o inglês e vamos embora" (Let's act as if we don't understand English and keep going). The documentary portrays, in fact, the moment in which a policeman required the group to unroll the banner for inspection. However, one of the members replied that it would be very difficult to fold it back. The majority of the group carrying the banner had already passed through security, and the guards appeared to be influenced by the joyful atmosphere. Smiling, they allowed the group to proceed. Perhaps they, too, wanted to defy the stereotype that portrays Germans as rigidly adhering to rules and regulations.

During the event, Frente 3 de Fevereiro successfully unwrapped the massive black banner bearing the message "Know Go Zone" during the event. The enthusiastic audience who could not possibly see the message as it was being unfolded, played a role, exerting

such force that the artists lost control of the banner. It was passed from hand to hand until it reached the foot of the concert stage. The entire spectacle was broadcast live on German television, reaching viewers across the nation. [Figure 4.10]

Conclusion

Half a century before Frente 3 de Fevereiro's interventions, Heitor dos Prazeres participated in the inaugural Bienal de São Paulo and later mockingly portrayed the elite event through his samba music. In 1965, Hélio Oiticica employed samba as a means to infiltrate the Museu de Arte Moderna, disrupting the conventional decorum expected for such venue with his *Parangolés* and questioning the notions of inclusion and exclusion in art institutions. This time, Frente 3 de Fevereiro utilized samba to camouflage their protest. Their banner represents the legacy of the *pano da costa* that became the *estandarte* (banner) of carnival parades, and of the spirit of the *Parangolé*. This time, rather than relying on individual samba dancers to activate the protest-poems through movement, Frente 3 de Fevereiro worked with the coordinated movement of a crowd. Furthermore, the action carries particular significance when viewed through the lens by Abdias Nascimento, who envisioned Black Liberation as a Pan-African movement: not a struggle confined to isolated nations, but a collective endeavor that encompasses African diasporas worldwide.

Like the artists who operated during the authoritarian regime, Frente 3 de Fevereiro engaged in urban interventions that transcend the boundaries of traditional art institutions. They skillfully used *malandragem* to infiltrate mass communication channels and leverage technology to disseminate their critical messages to a wider audience. Similar to the artists

of the 1960s-1970s, their goal was not to create simplistic propaganda, but rather to merge politics with poetics, allowing space for interpretation and aiming to create a profound impact on viewers.

The work of this collective exemplifies how the concept of *malandragem* can serve as an interpretative framework for understanding artistic forms of resistance that emerged during the twentieth century and up to this day, extending beyond the era of dictatorship. Frente 3 de Fevereiro's focus also demonstrates that many of the social and political concerns that motivated artists to produce protest art in the 1960s-1980s persist to this day. Today, artists are drawing inspiration from the ingenious practices of resistance employed against political and racial oppression, to create innovative artworks that are equally potent and astute.

I argue that, similarly to the *malandro*, artists used wits and tricks to outsmart authorities, and adopted ambiguous stances toward traditional art institutions to maintain an appearance of order while clandestinely expressing dissent. This study will have far-reaching implications on the understanding of different forms of artistic resistance, illustrating that, in certain circumstances, wit, irony, and tricks can prove more effective than aggression and overt violence. Rather than assessing the artists' success in inciting political change, the objective is to showcase how they embraced *malandragem* to expose the artificiality of power hierarchies, enabling audiences to envision different and better futures.

Bibliography

Adams, Beverly. "Interview with Antonio Manuel." *Review: Literature and Arts of the Americas* 44, no. 2 (November 1, 2011): 292–96.

Aguilar, Gonzalo. "La ley del bandido, la ley del arte. *Bólide caixa 18, Poema caixa 2, Homenagem a Cara de Cavalo* de Hélio Oiticica." *Revista iberoamericana*, (2009): 539-50.

All Language. Directed by Andreas Valentin. New York, 1974, Super-8, 3:30 min. Accessed June 13, 2021. https://vimeo.com/user17153018.

Allen, Paula Gunn. *The Sacred Hoop. Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions*. [1986] Boston: Beacon Press, 1992.

Alvarez Lima, Marisa. *Marginália – arte e cultura na idade da pedra*. Rio de Janeiro: Salamandra, 1996.

Alves, Iulo Almeida. "O arranjo entre o espaço urbano, a arte contem-porânea e a descentralização do papel do museu: reflexões a partir da ação 'Brasil Negro Salve', do coletivo Frente 3 de Fevereiro." *Revista do Colóquio*, no. 4 (June 16, 2013): 16–30.

Asbury, Michael. "O Hélio não tinha ginga / Hélio Couldn't Dance." In *Fios soltos: a arte de Hélio Oiticica*, edited by Paula Braga, 27-65. São Paulo: Perspectiva, 2008.

Ashton, Sally-Ann. "Radical Objects: The Black Fist Afro Comb." *History Workshop Online*, February 10, 2014, accessed on June 2, 2022. https://www.historyworkshop.org.uk/radical-objects-the-black-fist-afro-comb/

Barbosa, Jorge Luiz. "A Atlântida Negra: a utopia da cidade afro-brasileira nas paisagens estéticas de Heitor dos Prazeres." Paper presented at the XIV Coloquio Internacional de Geocrítica, Barcelona, 2-6 May, 2016.

Barra, Pablo Leon de la and Rafael Fonseca. *Abdias Nascimento: um espírito libertador*. Museu de Arte Contemporânea, Niterói, 2019.

Bastide, Roger. *O Candomblé da Bahia (Rito Nagô)*. [1958] São Paulo: Companhia Editorial Nascional, 1961.

Basualdo, Carlos. "Maxima Moralia: The Work of Cildo Meireles." *Artforum International* 35, no. 6 (February 1997): 58–63.

Bentes, Ivana. "Multitropicalism Cinematic-Sensation, and theoretical devices" in *Tropicália: a Revolution in Brazilian Culture[1967-1972]*. Edited by Carlos Basualdo. São Paulo: Museum of Contemporary Art BronxMuseum/CosacNaify, 2005. 99-130.

Berlinck, Manuel Tosta. "Sossega leão: algumas considerações sobre o samba como forma de cultura popular." *Contexto* 1, no. 108 (1976): 101-114.

Bessa, Antonio Sergio. *Art Is Our Last Hope: Paulo Bruscky*. New York, Phoenix: Bronx Museum; Phoenix Art Museum, 2014.

Bishop, Claire. *Installation Art: A Critical History*. Tate Publishing, 2009.

Bittencourt, Francisco. "A Geração Tranca-Ruas," *Jornal do Brasil*, (Rio de Janeiro), May 9, 1970.

Borges, Raquel Ribeiro. "Coletivo Frente 3 de Fevereiro: um estudo sobre intervenções midiáticas e políticas." Master's thesis, Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo, 2021.

Braga, Felipe Paranaguá, "Os museus impressos: *Malasartes* e *A parte do fogo*," *ARS* (São Paulo) N42, 19 (2021): 809-862.

Braga, Rubem. *Três "primitivos."* Rio de Janeiro: Ministério da Educação e Saúde, Serviço de Documentação, 1953.

Brett, Guy. "Fiat Lux," *The Exhibitionist* no.11, July 2015.

————. Oiticica Hélio Galerie Nationale du Jeu de Paume (Paris) and. 1992. *Hélio Oiticica*. Rotterdam: Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, 1992. Published in conjunction with the exhibition shown at the Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, Rotterdam, and the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis.

————. "Cildo Meireles." *Review: Literature and Arts of the Americas* 24, no. 42 (1990): 26–30.

Brígida, Miguel Santa. "A dança do mestre-sala e da porta-bandeira: Performance e ritual na cena afro-carioca." Paper presented at the *VI Congresso de Pesquisa e Pós-Graduação em Artes Cênicas*, (2010): 1-7.

Brito, Ronaldo, Cildo Meireles, and Eudoro de Sousa. *Cildo Meireles*. Rio de Janeiro: FUNARTE, Fundação Nacional de Artes, Ministério da Cultura, 2009.

Brito, Ronaldo. *Neoconcretismo: Vértice e ruptura do projeto construtivo brasileiro*. Rio de Janeiro: Cosac & Naify Edições, 1999.

———. “Análise do circuito.” *Malasartes*, no. 1 (September, October, November 1975): 5-6

Britto, Glaucea Helena de. “Do axé à justiça: a mitologia dos orixás na obra de Abdias Nascimento / From Ashe to Justice: The Mythology of the Orishas in the Work of Abdias Nascimento.” Translated by Ela Bittencourt, in *Abdias Nascimento: Um Artista Panamefricano / A Panamefrican Artist*, edited by Adriano Pedrosa and Amanda Carneiro, 54-69. São Paulo: Museu de Arte de São Paulo, 2022.

———. “Heitor dos Prazeres: protagonismo e arte.” Lecture, Museu de Arte de São Paulo Assis Chateaubriand, São Paulo, Brazil, March 3, 2018. Accessed June 15, 2021, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X9elDlYFYU0.

Brodbeck, Anna Katherine. “The Salão Da Bússola (1969) and Do Corpo à Terra (1970): Parallel Developments in Brazilian and International Art.” *RACAR: Revue d’art Canadienne / Canadian Art Review* 38, no. 2 (2013): 109–23.

Bruscky, Paulo. *Poesia Viva: Paulo Bruscky*. São Paulo: Cosac Naify / APC, 2015.

———. Interview by Antonio Sergio Bessa. Translated by Adam J. Morris, *BOMB Magazine* no. 125 (Fall 2013): 122-129. Accessed April 28, 2023. https://bombmagazine.org/articles/paulo-bruscky/.

———, and Adolfo Montejo Navas. *Poiesis Bruscky*. São Paulo, SP: Cosac Naify: APC, Associação para o Patronato Contemporâneo, 2013.

———, and Cristina Freire. *Paulo Bruscky: arte, arquivo e utopia*. São Paulo: Companhia Editora de Pernambuco: Fundo Pernambucano de Incentivo à Cultura, 2006.

———, Fernando Pedro da Silva Ribeiro, Marília Andrés, and Marconi Drummond. *Paulo Bruscky: Depoimento*. Belo Horizonte: Editora C/Arte, 2011.

———. “Arte Correio e a grande rede: hoje a arte é este comunicado.” In *Escritos de Artistas, Anos 1960–1970*, edited by Gloria Ferreira and Cecília Cotrim, 374-379. Rio de Janeiro: Jorge Zahar Editor, 2006.

———, and Daniel Santiago, interviewed by Gilberto Prado. São Paulo, 1989. Accessed May 2, 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zGEmnljNNsQ.

———. “Xerografia artística: arte sem original (da invenção da máquina ao processo xero/gráfico).” In: *Arte: novos meios / multimeios*, edited by Daisy Peccinini, 131-135. São Paulo: Fundação Armando Álvares Penteado, 1985.

Bruscky, Yuri. “Radio Art, Cassette Culture, and Networked Artistic Practices: The Internationnal Ra(u)dio Art Show (IRAS) in Recife.” In *Making it Heard: A History of Brazilian Sound Art*, edited by Rui Chaves and Fernando Iazzetta, 95-112. New York, NY: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019.

Buono, Amy J. “Historicity, Achronicity, and the Materiality of Cultures in Colonial Brazil.” *Getty Research Journal* 7 (January 2015): 19–34.

Cabañas, Kaira M. *Learning from Madness*. University of Chicago Press, 2018.

Cabral, Alfredo do Valle. *Annães da imprensa nacional do Rio de Janeiro de 1808 à 1822*. Rio de Janeiro: Typ. Nacional, 1881.

Cabral, Amílcar. “The role of Culture in the Struggle for Independence.” *International Journal of Politics* 7, no. 4 (1977): 18-43.

Cabral, Sérgio. “Getúlio Vargas e a música popular brasileira.” *Ensaios de opinião* 2, no. 1 (1975).

Calabrò, Antonio. “A Work of Art is Like a Journey: It Involves Participation.” In *Cildo Meireles: Installations*, edited by Vicente Todolí. Milano; London: Mousse publishing: Koenig Books, 2014.

Calirman, Claudia. “*Marginália* in Brazil’s “Stone-Throwing Age.” *Art Journal*, 78:1 (2019): 48-65.

————. *Brazilian Art under Dictatorship Antonio Manuel, Artur Barrio, and Cildo Meireles*. Duke University Press, 2012.

————, Alexandra García and Gabriela Rangel, eds. *Antonio Manuel: I Want to Act, Not Represent!* New York: Americas Society, 2011.

Cameron, Dan, and Cildo Meireles. “Cildo Meireles.” *BOMB*, no. 70 (2000): 124–27.

Candido, Antonio. “Dialética da malandragem,” *Revista do Instituto de estudos brasileiros* 8 (1970): 67-89.

Capone Laffitte, Stefania. *Searching for Africa in Brazil. Power and Tradition in Candomblé*. Duke University Press, 2010.

Cardoso, Rafael. *Modernity in Black and White: Art and Image, Race and Identity in Brazil, 1890-1945*. Afro-Latin America. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2021.

Carneiro, Beatriz Helena Scigliano. “Relâmpagos com claror: a construção da vida como obra de arte em Lygia Clark e Hélio Oiticica.” PhD dissertation, Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo, 2001.

Cascudo, Luís da Câmara. *Contos tradicionais do Brasil*. Rio de Janeiro: Tecnoprint, 1967.

Chagas, Tamara Silva. “Da crítica a nova crítica: as múltiplas incursões do crítico-curador Frederico Morais.” PhD dissertation, Universidade Federal do Espírito Santo, Centro De Artes, Vitória, ES, Brazil, 2012.

Clark, Lygia, and Hélio Oiticica. *Cartas 1964-1974*, edited by Luciano Figueiredo. Rio de Janeiro: Editora UFRJ, 1996.

Cleveland, Kimberly. *Black Art in Brazil: Expressions of Identity*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2013.

Coelho, Frederico Oliveira. *Eu, brasileiro, confesso minha culpa e meu pecado: cultura marginal no Brasil das décadas de 1960 e 1970*. Rio de Janeiro: Civilizacão Brasileira, 2010.

Conduru, Roberto. “África, Brasil e arte–persistentes desafios.” *ARS* (São Paulo) 19 (2021): 265-308.

————. “Índices afro na arte no Brasil nas décadas de 1960 e 1970.” In *Arte não europeia: conexões historiográficas a partir do Brasil*, edited by Patricia D. Meneses, and Claudia Mattos Avolese, 143-52. São Paulo: Estação Liberdade/Vasto, 2020.

————. “Das casas às roças: comunidades de candomblé no Rio de Janeiro desde o fim do século XIX.” *Topoi* (Rio de Janeiro) 11, no. 21 (2010): 178-203.

————. *Arte Afro-Brasileira*. Belo Horizonte: Ed. C/ Arte, 2007.

Correio da Manhã. “À margem do Museu de Arte Moderna, carnaval na Bienal.” January 20, 1952.

Crockett, Vivian A. “War Heroes: Toward a Poetics of Blackness in Hélio Oiticica.” In *Hélio Oiticica: Dance in My Experience*, edited by Adriano Pedrosa and Tomás Toledo, 132-145. São Paulo: Museu de Arte de São Paulo Assis Chateaubriand, 2020.

D’Avila, Patricia Miranda. “Primitivo, naïf, ingênuo: um estudo da recepção e notas para uma interpretação da pintura de Heitor dos Prazeres.” PhD dissertation, Universidade de São Paulo, 2009.

DaMatta, Roberto. *Carnivals, Rogues, and Heroes: An Interpretation of the Brazilian Dilemma*. University of Notre Dame Press, 1991.

Dardashti, Abigail Lapin. "Abdias do Nascimento in New York: migration, resistance, and transnational black art, 1968–70." *MODOS: Revista de História da Arte* 6, no. 1 (2022): 471-493.

Davidson, Vanessa. ""Today, art is this communiqué:" Paulo Bruscky's Communication Art." In *Art Is Our Last Hope: Paulo Bruscky*, ed. Antonio Sergio Bessa, 31-64. New York, Phoenix: Bronx Museum; Phoenix Art Museum, 2014.

———. "Paulo Bruscky and Edgardo Antonio Vigo: Pioneers in Alternative Communication Networks, Conceptualism, and Performance (1960s-1980s)." PhD dissertation, New York University, Institute of Fine Arts, 2011.

de Andrade, Mário. "Chronicas de Malazarte I." *Revista América Brasileira*, n. 22 (Rio de Janeiro, October 1923.

———. *Macunaíma: o herói sem nenhum caráter*. [1928] Olympio, Jose Editora Ltda; 2022.

———. *Pedro Malazartes*. [1928] Opera in one act. Music by Mozart Camargo Guarnieri.

de Campos, Haroldo. "The Informational Temperature of the Text," trans. Jon Tolman. *Poetics Today 3*, no.3 (1982): 177-178.

de Castro Rocha, João Cezar. "A guerra de relatos no Brasil contemporâneo. Ou: a "dialética da marginalidade"." *Letras* 28/29 (2004): 153-184.

de León, Christina L. "On Cover Artist Antonio Manuel: The Cock and the Golden Egg." *Review: Literature and Arts of the Americas* 44, no. 2 (November 1, 2011): 187–89.

de Oliveira, Eduardo Jorge. "How to Build Cathedrals. Cildo Meireles: A Sensory Geography of Brazil." *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies* 28.4 (2019): 607-636.

Desmond, Jane C. "Embodying difference: Issues in dance and cultural studies," *Cultural Critique* 26 (1993): 33-63.

Dezeuze, Anna. "Tactile Dematerialization, Sensory Politics: Helio Oiticica's Parangolés." *Art Journal* 63, no. 2 (2004): 58-71.

Elias, Norbert, and John Scotson. *The Established and the Outsiders – A Sociological Enquiry into Community Problems*. Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2008.

Elworthy, Frederick Thomas. *The Evil Eye: an Account of the Ancient & Widespread Superstition*. London: John Murray, 1895.

Exú Rei - Abdias Nascimento. Directed by Barbara Vento. Cultne Cinema, Rio de Janeiro, 2017.

Farmer, John Alan. "Through the Labyrinth: An Interview with Cildo Meireles." *Art Journal* 59, no. 3 (September 1, 2000): 34–43.

Fernandes, João, ed. *Cildo Meireles*. Porto/São Paulo: Fundação Seralves/Cosac Naify, 2013.

Fraga, Marina, and Pedro Urano. "Carbono entrevista Cildo Meireles." *Revista Carbono*, no.4 (2013). Accessed March 14, 2022. http://revistacarbono.com/artigos/04carbono-entrevista-cildo-meireles/.

Freitas, Artur. *Arte de guerrilha: vanguarda e conceitualismo no Brasil*. São Paulo: Edusp, 2013.

Frente 3 de Fevereiro. *Zumbi somos nós. Cartografia do racism para o jovem urbano*. São Paulo: Programa de Valorização de Iniciativas Culturais, 2007.

Fry, Peter. "Feijoada e "Soul Food": notas sobre a manipulação de símbolos étnicos e nacionais." In *Para Inglês Ver: Identidade E Política Na Cultura Brasileira*, 47-53. Rio de Janeiro: Zahar Editores, 1982.

Galeria de Arte Banerj. *Depoimento de uma geração - 1969-1970*. Rio de janeiro: Galeria de Arte Banerj, 1986.

Galloway, J. H. "The Last Years of Slavery on the Sugar Plantations of Northeastem Brazil." *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 51, no. 4 (1971): 586-605.

Gates Jr, Henry Louis. *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African American Literary Criticism*. Oxford University Press, 2014.

Geraldo, Sheila Cabo. "Heitor dos Prazeres: A imensa riqueza interna e a instauração da arte." *MODOS: Revista de História da Arte* 5, no. 1 (2021): 54-73.

Ghiraldelli da Silva, Rafael. "Urbanismo de exclusão: a necropolitica em debate nas intervencoes de Daniel Lima e da Frente 3 de Fevreiro." In *Efímero, permanente:*

pugnas por la conservación del arte público, edited by Carolina Vanegas, Silvia Furegatti, and Elio Martuccelli, 105–22. Lima, Perú: Grupo de Estudio sobre Arte Público en Latinoamerica (GEAP Latinoamerica): Universidad Ricardo Palma, 2019.

Gilbert, Zanna. "Networking Regionalism: Long-Distance Performativity In The International Mail Art Network", *TAREA*, 4 no.4 (2017), pp. 84-96.

————. "Bureaucratic Sabotage." In *Sabotage Art: Politics and Iconoclasm in Contemporary Latin America*, edited by Halart Sophie and Mara Polgovsky Ezcurra, 84-104. London: I.B. Tauris & Co, 2016.

————. "Art in Contact: The Mail Art Exchange of Paulo Bruscky and Robert Rehfeldt." *Art in Print Review* 5, no. 3 (2015): 36–41.

Green, James N. *Beyond Carnival: Male Homosexuality in Twentieth-Century Brazil*. Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press, 1999.

Guedes, Cíntia. "E se Hélio fosse hoje, como a favela chega ao museu." In *Hélio Oiticica para além dos mitos*, edited by Bárbara Szaniecki, Giuseppe Cocco, and Izabela Pucu, 122-135. Rio de Janeiro: R&L Produtores Associados, 2016.

Hall, Stuart. "'Africa' Is Alive and Well in the Diaspora: Culture of Resistance: Slavery, Religious Revival and Political Cultism in Jamaica." 1975. Reprint. In *Stuart Hall. Selected Writings on Race and Difference*, edited by Paul Gilroy, and Ruth W. Gilmore, 161-194. Durham: Duke University Press, 2021.

Hannud, Giancarlo. Interview with Cildo Meireles, July 27, 2012, in Rio de Janeiro. In *Aberto, fechado: caixa e livro na arte brasileira*, edited by Guy Brett. São Paulo: Pinacoteca do Estado, 2012.

Heitor dos Prazeres. Directed by Antonio Carlos da Fontoura. Canto Claro,1965. Accessed June 20, 2021. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-FgabF3G32s.

Herkenhoff, Paulo, Cildo Meireles, Gerardo Mosquera, and Dan Cameron. *Cildo Meireles*. London: Phaidon, 1999.

Holanda, Sérgio Buarque dê. *Raízes Do Brasil.* [1936], São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1995.

Hollanda, Heloísa Buarque de. *Impressões de viagem: Cpc, vanguarda e desbunde.* São Paulo: Brasilience, 1980.

HO. Directed by Ivan Cardoso, 1979.

Home, Stephen. “Cildo Meireles: The gold thread.” *Third Text*, (2000): 31-44.

Huizinga, Johan. *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture*. [1938] Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 2014.

Jacques, Paola Berenstein. *Estética da ginga: A arquitetura das favelas através da obra de Hélio Oiticica*. Rio de Janeiro, RJ: Casa da Palavra, 2011.

Jardim de Santa Cruz Oliveira, Teresa Cristina. “Systems and feedback: Cildo Meireles's" Insertions into Ideological Circuits", 1970-ongoing.” PhD dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2014.

Jáuregui, Carlos. “Antropofagia.” In *Dictionary of Latin American Cultural Studies*, edited by Robert McKee Irwin and Mónica Szurmuk, 22-28. Gainesville: The University Press of Florida 2012.

Kemnitz, Eva-Maria von. “Porous Frontiers of the Hand Symbol.” *In the Iberian Peninsula and beyond*; Vol. 2 (2015): 258-270.

Lammert, Angela. “The ‘Swiss Watch- maker’ and the ‘Jungle in Construction’—Max Bill and Modernism in Brazil or: What is Modern Art?” In *Das Verlangen nach Form: Neo-concretismo und zeitgenössische Kunst aus Brasilien = O desejo da forma*, edited by Kudielka, Lammert, and Osorio, 259–269. Berlin, Akademie der Künste, 2010.

Lima, Eugênio. “Frente 3 De Fevereiro: Um olhar pessoal sobre uma trajetória coletiva.” *O Menelick 2º Ato*, February 2012. Accessed: May 28, 2023, http://www.omenelick2ato.com/mais/frente-3-de-fevereiro.

Lima, Marisa Alvarez. “Marginália: Arte e cultura na idade da pedrada.” *O Cruzeiro*, December 12, 1968.

Lima, Rainério dos Santos. “Entre Exú e Ogum: políticas do sagrado no teatro de Abdias do Nascimento.” *Estudos de Literatura Brasileira Contemporânea*, no. 59 (2020).

Lírio, Alba, and Heitor dos Prazeres Filho. *Heitor Dos Prazeres: sua arte e seu tempo*. Rio de Janeiro: ND Comunicação, 2003.

Lispector, Clarice. *Para não esquecer*. São Paulo: Ática, 1979.

Lody, Raul Giovanni da Motta. *Pano da costa*. Rio de Janeiro: Ministério da Educação e Cultura, Departamento de Assuntos Culturais, Fundação Nacional de Arte, Campanha de Defesa do Folclore Brasileiro, 1977.

Lopez, Miguel. “Disrupting Normality: Disobedient Bodies and Dissident Sexualities Against the Politics of Extermination.” In *Resistance Performed: An Anthology on Aesthetic Strategies under Repressive Regimes in Latin America*, edited by Heike Munder, 28-36. Zurich: Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst: JRP Ringier, 2015.

Lopez, Telê Ancona. “Mário de Andrade-Malazarte-I Manuscritos.” *Revista do Instituto de Estudos Brasileiros* 33 (1992): 50-67.

Lourenço, Ricardo. “Bandeira, porta-bandeira e mestre-sala: elementos de diversas culturas numa tríade soberana nas escolas de samba cariocas.” *Textos escolhidos de cultura e arte populares* 6, no.1 ((Rio de Janeiro, 2009): 7-18.

M’Baye, Babacar. “Tricksters in African, African American, and Caribbean Folktales and Cultures.” *Oxford Bibliographies*, Oxford University Press, May 26, 2021. Accessed June 17, 2021. https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780190280024/obo-9780190280024-0094.xml.

Manuel, Antonio. *Antonio Manuel: I Want to Act, Not Represent!*. Edited by Claudia Calirman and Gabriela Rangel. New York; São Paulo: Americas Society; Associação para o Patronato Contemporâneo, 2011.

————. *Antonio Manuel: eis o saldo: textos, depoimentos e entrevistas*. Edited by Guilherme Bueno. Coleção Fala do artista. Rio de Janeiro: FUNARTE, Ministério da Cultura, 2010.

————. *Antonio Manuel/Entrevista a Lúcia Carneiro e Ileana Pradilla*. Rio de Janeiro: Lacerda Editores, 1999.

Marquese, Rafael de Bivar. “Economia escravista mundial.” In *Dicionário da escravidão e liberdade: 50 Textos críticos*, edited by Lilia M. Schwarcz, and Flávio S. Gomes, 203-209. São Paulo: Companhia das letras, 2018.

Martins, Leda Maria. “A Ritual Choreography: The Orishas’ Steps in *Sortilégio*.” Translated by Phyllis Peres. *Callaloo*, Johns Hopkins University Press 18, no. 4 (1995): 863–70.

McElroy, Isis. “O reino de Aruanda: de porto luso-angolano de escravos a reino mítico afro-brasileiro.” *Scripta* 11, no. 20 (2007): 127–35.

Medeiros, Paulo. “Mano Heitor e seus sambas.” *Manchete*, April 17, 1954. Accessed June 18, 2021. http://memoria.bn.br/DocReader/004120/6766.

Meireles, Cildo, João Fernandes, Guilherme Wisnik, and Sérgio B Martins. *Cildo Meireles*, Porto: Fundaçao Serralves, 2014.

————, and Vicente Todolí. *Cildo Meireles: Installations*. Milano; London: Mousse publishing Koenig Books, 2014.

————, Sérgio B. Martins, Guilherme Wisnik, and João Fernandes. *Cildo Meireles*. Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, 2013.

————, and Frederico Morais. Interview, "Material Language." *Tate Etc*, September 1, 2008, accessed April 14, 2022. https://www.tate.org.uk/tate-etc/issue-14-autumn-2008/material-language.

————, and Felipe Scovino. *Cildo Meireles*. Encontros. Rio de Janeiro, RJ: Beco do Azougue Editorial, 2009.

————, Guy Brett, and Moacir dos Anjos. *Cildo Meireles*. London: Tate, 2008.

————, Cécile Dazord, Allan Sekula, Sally Stein, Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, and Library. *Cildo Meireles*. Strasbourg: Musées d'art moderne et contemporain, 2003.

————, and Charles Merewether. "Memory of the Senses." *Grand Street*, no. 64 (1998): 216–23.

————. "Inserções em circuitos – Arte e Cultura." *Malasartes*, no.1 (September, October, November 1975): 15.

Mendes, Miriam Garcia. *A Personagem negra no teatro brasiliero (Entre 1838 e 1888).* São Paulo: Editora Ática, 1982.

Menezes, Cynara. "Na ditadura, o negro não podia nem ter cabelo black power que era preso." *Socialista Morena*, October 18, 2018, accessed April 6, 2022: https://www.socialistamorena.com.br/racismo-na-ditadura-o-negro-nao-podia-nem-ter-cabelo-black-power-que-era-preso/

Menezes Neto, Hélio Santos. "Entre o visível e o oculto: a construção do conceito de arte afro-brasileira." PhD dissertation, Universidade de São Paulo, 2018.

Mesquita, André. *Insurgências poéticas: Arte ativista e ação coletiva*. São Paulo: Annablume editora, 2011.

————. "Insurgências poéticas: arte ativista e ação coletiva (1990-2000)." Master's thesis, Universidade de São Paulo, 2008.

Migueis, Armando. “O Negro no Rádio Brasileiro,” *Revista do Rádio* (Rio de Janeiro) n. 46, 25 July 1950, 26-27.

Morais, Frederico. *Artes plásticas: a crise da hora atual*. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1975.

Moura, Roberto. *Tia Ciata e a Pequena África no Rio de Janeiro.* Coleção Biblioteca Carioca, Funarte, Rio de Janeiro, 1983.

Munanga, Kabengele. “Arte afro-brasileira: o que é afinal?.” In *Brasil 500 Anos Arte Visual*, 98-110. Fundação Bienal de São Paulo, 2000.

Nascimento, Abdias. *O quilombismo*. São Paulo: Editora Perspectiva S.A., 2020.

———. ed. *Orixas: os deuses vivos da Africa*. Rio de Janeiro: IPEAFRO/Afrodraspora, 1995.

———, and Elisa Larkin Nacimento. *Africans in Brazil: A pan-African perspective*. Africa World Press, 1992.

———. “Nota sobre nosso símbolo,” *Afrodiáspora* 1.1 (January-April) 1983: 11-15.

———. “African culture in Brazilian art.” *Journal of Black Studies* 8.4 (1978): 389-422.

———. “Arte afro-brasileira: um espírito libertador.” *Black Art: An International Quarterly* 1, no.1, (Autumn 1976).

———. *O negro revoltado*. Rio de Janeiro: Nova Fronteira, 1968.

———. *Drama para Negros e prôlogo para Brancos*. São Paulo: Teatro Experimental do Negro, 1961.

———. “Sortilégio,” *Anhembi*, 12, No. 36 (November 1953), 544-546.

Nascimento, Elisa Larkin. “Ogun's Warrior.” *Transition* 132.1 (2022): 408-433.

———. “Sortilege: Building an Afro-Brazilian Identity on Stage.” In *Marvels of the African World: African Cultural Patrimony, New World Connections, and Identities*, edited by Niyi Afolabi, 277–300. Trenton, NJ: Africa World P, 2003.

Natalino, Geraldo Jose. “Quem disse que Exú não monta? Abdias Nascimento, o cavalo do santo no terreiro da história.” PhD dissertation, Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo (PUC-SP), 2018.

Nogueira, Pedro Caetano Eboli. “A política e a poética do coletivo Frente Três de Fevereiro.” *PosFAUUSP* 28, no. 52 (August 30, 2021): 1–12.

Novotný, Lukáš. “Right-Wing Extremism and No-Go-Areas in Germany.” *Sociologický Časopis / Czech Sociological Review* 45, no. 3 (2009): 591–609.

Ogundipe, Ayodele. *Èṣù Elegbára: Chance, Uncertainty in Yorùbá Mythology*. [1978] Ilorin: Kwara State University Press, 2012.

Oiticica, Hélio. “Carta para Martine Barrat.” May 23, 1979. AHO 0085.79.

————. “Instruções para impressão, texto e fotos ho para status.” 1976. AHO 172.76.

————. “Barracão.” London, August 19, 1969. AHO 0452.69.

————. “The Senses Pointing Towards a New Transformation.” London, June 18-25, 1969. AHO 0486.69.

————. “Eden.” February 25, 1969. AHO 365.69.

————. “O Herói Anti-Herói e o Anti-Herói Anonimo.” March 25, 1968. AHO 0131/68.

————. “Estou Possuido.” May 25, 1967. AHO 0111.67.

————. “A participação no jogô.” September 4, 1966. AHO 0251.66.

————. “Parangolé Lúdico.” August 25, 1966. AHO 0255.66.

————. “Posição e Programa.” July 1966. AHO 0253.66.

————. “A dança na minha experiência.” November 12, 1965. AHO 120.65.

————. “Anotações sôbre o Parangolé.” November 25, 1964. AHO 0070/64.

Oliveira, Eduardo Jorge de. “How to Build Cathedrals. Cildo Meireles: A Sensory Geography of Brazil.” *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies* 28, no. 4 (October 2, 2019): 607–36.

Oliven, Ruben George. “A elaboração de símbolos nacionais na cultura brasileira.” *Revista de antropologia* (1983): 107-118.

Olmo, Santiago B., “Cildo Meireles,” *ArtNexús* 17 (October 1995). Accessed September 25, 2022, https://www.artnexus.com/en/magazines/article-magazine-artnexus/5f4ad5bb00f7b8db1f348060/17/cildo-meireles.

Osthoff, Simone. “Elsewhere in Contemporary Art: Topologies of Artist’s Works, Writings, and Archives.” *Art Journal* 65, no. 4 (Winter 2006): 6-17.

————. “From Mail Art to Telepresence: Communication at a Distance in the Works of Paulo. Bruscky and Eduardo Kac.” In *At a Distance. Precursors to Art and Activism on the Internet*, edited by Annmarie Chandler and Norie Naumark, 260-80. Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 2005.

Oyewumi, Oyeronke. “Conceptualizing Gender: Eurocentric Foundations of Feminist Concepts and the Challenge of African Epistemologies.” *African gender scholarship: Concepts, methodologies and paradigms* (2004): 1-8.

Paezzo, Sylvan. *Memorias de Madame Satã: conforme narração a Sylvan Paezzo*. Rio de Janeiro: Lidador, 1972.

Pedrosa, Mário. *Mário Pedrosa: Primary Documents*. Edited by Glória Ferreira and Paulo Herkenhoff. MoMa Primary Documents. New York, NY: Museum of Modern Art, 2015.

Perlman, Janice E. *The Myth of Marginality: Urban Poverty and Politics in Rio de Janeiro*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979.

Pignatari, Décio. “Clandestinas.” In *De o à 24 horas, Suplemento Dominical, Jornal do Brasil*, July 15, 1973.

————. “Teoria da guerrilha artística.” *Correio da Manhã* (Rio de Janeiro), June 4, 1967.

Pinheiro, Bruno. “Moenda de Heitor dos Prazeres, medalha de prata na I Bienal do Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo.” *Revista de História da Arte e da Cultura* 2.2 (2021): 119-141.

Posso, Karl. “An Ethics of Displaying Affection: Hélio Oiticica's Expressions of Joy and Togetherness.” *Portuguese Studies* 29, no. 1 (2013): 44-77.

Prandi, Reginaldo. *Mitologia dos orixás*. [2001] São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2021.

Quinalha, Renan. *Contra a moral e os bons costumes. A ditadura e a repressão à comunidade LGBT*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2021.

Ramos, Arthur. *O folclore negro no Brasil: demopsicologia e psicanálise*. São Paulo: WMF Martins Fontes, 2007.

Ramos, Fernão. *Cinema marginal, 1968-1973: a representação em seu limite*. São Paulo: Editora Brasiliense, 1987.

Rezende, Renato. “Joias de crioula–outras inserções em circuitos ideológicos (ou mais sobre a brasilidade da arte brasileira),” *Revita Poiésis* 16, no. 26 (2015): 221-234.

Ribeiro Borges, Raquel. “Coletivo Frente 3 de Fevereiro: um estudo sobre intervenções midiáticas e políticas.” Master’s thesis, São Paulo: Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo, 2021.

Rodrigues, Nelson. “As confessões de Nelson Rodrigues. Capítulo XIII.” *O Globo*, December 18, 1967.

Rowley, Hazel. “Beauvoir, Brazil, and Cristina T.” *Bookforum*, April-May 2007. Accessed May 31, 2023, https://www.bookforum.com/print/1401/beauvoir-brazil-and-christina-t-96.

Salomão, Waly. *Helio Oiticica: qual é o Parangolé? E outros escritos*. Rio de Janeiro: Rocco, 2003.

Santoro, Artur, André Mesquita, Amanda Carneiro, Adriano Pedrosa (eds.). *Histórias Afro- Atlânticas*. Vol. 2: Antologia. São Paulo: Museu de Arte de São Paulo Assis Chateaubriand MASP: Instituto Tomie Ohtake, 2018.

Saper J., Craig. *Networked Art*. University of Minnesota Press, 1997.

Schwarcz, Lilia Moritz, and Heloisa Maria Murgel Starling. *Brazil: A Biography*. First Picador paperback edition. New York: Picador/Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2020.

Schwarcz, Lilia Moritz, and Flávio dos Santos Gomes, eds. *Dicionário da escravidão e liberdade: 50 textos críticos*. São Paulo, Brazil: Companhia das Letras, 2018.

———. “Complexo de Zé Carioca: notas sobre uma identidade mestiça e malandra.” *Revista Brasileira de Ciências Sociais* 29, no. 10 (1995): 40-63.

Scovino, Felipe. “A ironia e suas estratégias na obra de Cildo Meireles.” *Arte & Ensaios* 15 (2007): 98–105.

———. “Tactics, Positions and Inventions.” *Third Text* 21, no. 4 (July 1, 2007): 431–40.

Sharpe, Christina. *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016.

Shaw, Lisa. “Afro-Brazilian Identity. Malandragem and Homosexuality in Madame Satã.” In *Contemporary Latin American Cinema: Breaking into the Global Market*, edited by Deborah Shaw, 87-104. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2007.

———. "São Coisas Nossas: Samba and Identity in the Vargas Era (1930-45)." *Portuguese Studies* 14 (1998): 152-169.

Shohat, Ella, and Robert Stam. *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media*, Taylor & Francis Group, 2014.

Shtromberg, Elena. *Art Systems: Brazil and the 1970s*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2016.

Sidgwick, Emma. "Vivência: From disciplined to remade lived experience in the Brazilian avant-garde of the 1960s." *Subjectivity* 3, no. 2 (2010): 193-208.

Silva, Renato Rodrigues da. "Hélio Oiticica's Parangolé or the Art of Transgression." *Third Text* 19, no. 3 (2005): 213-231.

Silva, Simone Trindade Vicente da. "Referencialidade e representação: um resgate do modo de construção de sentido nas pencas de balangandãs a partir da coleção Museu Carlos Costa Pinto." PhD dissertation, Universidade Federal da Bahia, UFBA, 2005.

Silva, Vagner Gonçalves da. *Exú um deus afro-atlântico no Brasil*. São Paulo: Edusp, 2022.

———. *Exú: "o guardião da Casa do futuro"*. Rio de Janeiro: Pallas, 2015.

Small, Irene. *Hélio Oiticica: Folding the Frame*. Chicago; London University of Chicago Press, 2016.

———. "Insertions into Historiographic Circuits." *October* No. 161 (Summer 2017): 69-88.

Sodré, Muniz. *Samba o dono do corpo*. 2nd ed. Rio de Janeiro: MAUAD 1998.

———. *A verdade seduzida: por um conceito de cultura negra do Brasil.* Rio de Janeiro: Codecri, 1983.

Sodré, Nelson Werneck. *História da imprensa no Brasil*. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 1966.

Stam, Robert. *Tropical Multiculturalism*. *A Comparative History of Race in Brazilian Cinema and Culture*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1997.

Sterling, Cheryl. "The Art and Times of Abdias Nascimento: Quilombola Extraordinaire." *Journal of Black Studies* 52, no. 6 (September 1, 2021): 643–62.

———. *African Roots, Brazilian Rites: Cultural and National Identity in Brazil*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2012.

Stori, Norberto, and Romero De Albuquerque Maranhao. "Cultural and Afro-Brazilian Manifestations in the Works of Heitor dos Prazeres/Manifestacoes culturais e afro-brasileiras nas obras de Heitor dos Prazeres." *CROMA* 14 (2019): 84-93.

Tejo, Cristiana. *Paulo Bruscky: arte em todos os sentidos*. Recife: Companhia Editora de Pernambuco, 2009.

Tramonte, Cristiana. *O samba conquista passagem*. *As estratégias e a ação educativa das escolas de samba*. Florianópolis: Diálogo, 1996.

Turner, Doris J. "Black theater in a "racial democracy": the case of the Brazilian Black Experimental Theater." *CLA Journal* 30, no. 1 (1986): 30-45.

———. "The 'Teatro Experimental do Negro' and Its Black Beauty Contests." *Afro-Hispanic Review* 11, no. 1/3 (1992): 76–81.

Veneroso, Maria do Carmo de Freitas. "A 'Revista Classificada' de Paulo Bruscky." *Revista Estúdio* 6, no. 11 (2015): 222–32.

Weinstein, Joel. "A Conversation with Cildo Meireles." *Sculpture (Archive: 1987-2005); Washington*, December 1, 2003.

Winter, Amy, Elisa Larkin Nascimento, and John F. Collins, eds. *Abias Nascimento: Artist, Activist, Author*. New York: Godwin-Ternbach Museum, Queens College, CUNY, 2014.

Zacchi, André Piazera. "Belazarte e Malazarte: caras de um intelectual ficcional." *Boletim de pesquisa nelic* v. 17, no. 27 (2017): 41-55.

Zilio, Carlos. "A Querela do Brasil." *Malasartes*, no.2 (January-February 1976): 8-10.

Žižek, Slavoj. *The Parallax View*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006.

———. *The Metastases of Enjoyment: Six Essays on Women and Causality*. London: Verso, 2005.

Zumbi somos nós. Directed by Frente 3 de Fevereiro. Brazil, 2007. Accessed May 10, 2023. http://www.danielcflima.com/Zumbi-Somos-Nos.

FIGURES AND ILLUSTRATIONS

Introduction

Figure 0.1
Cover page of artist magazine *Malasartes* no.1 (September, October, November), 1975.

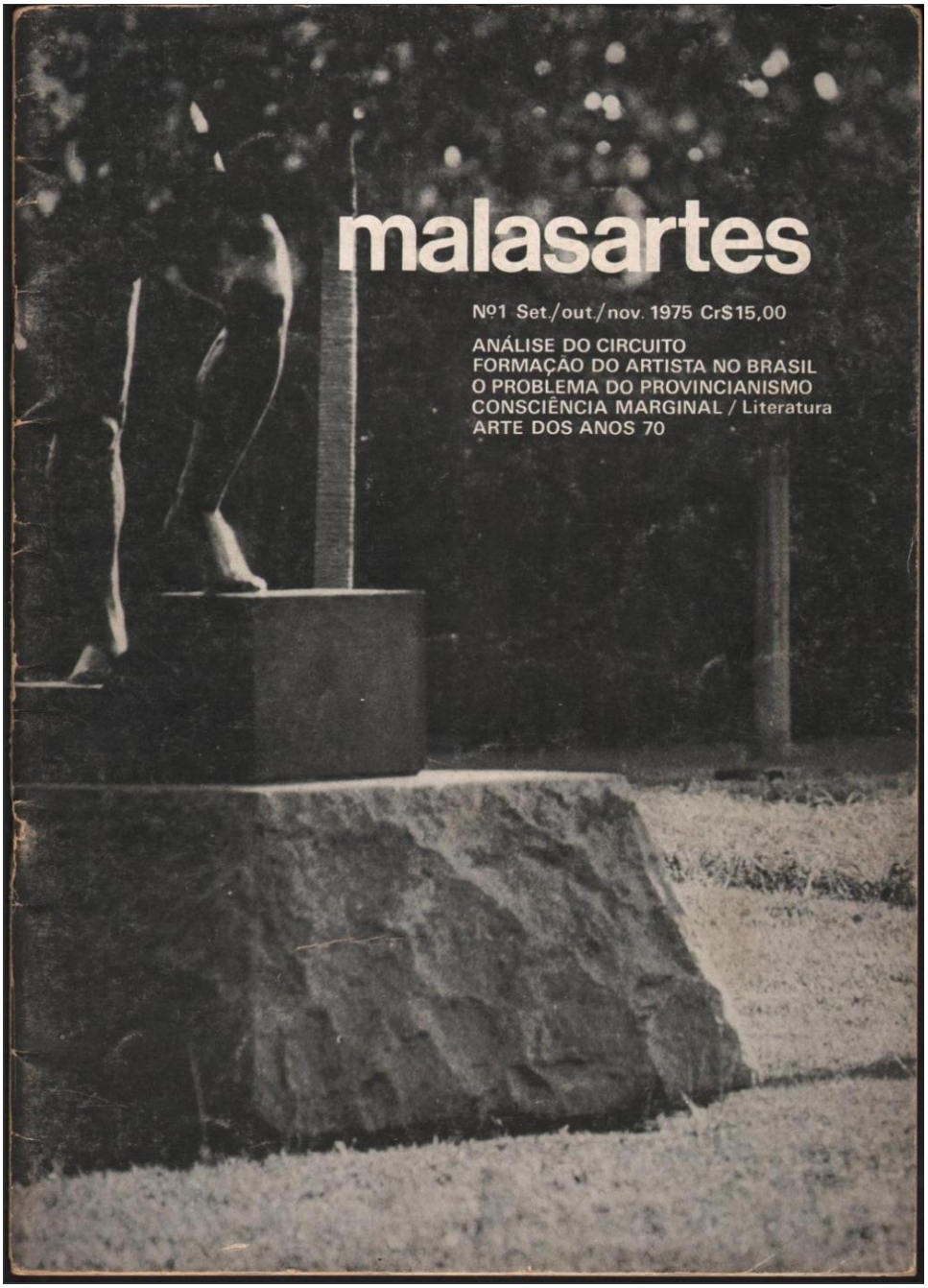


Figure 0.2
Cover page designed by Maurício Arraes for a booklet produced by Teatro São Pedro, São Paulo, 1979, for the musical *Ópera do Malandro* by Chico Buarque de Holanda.

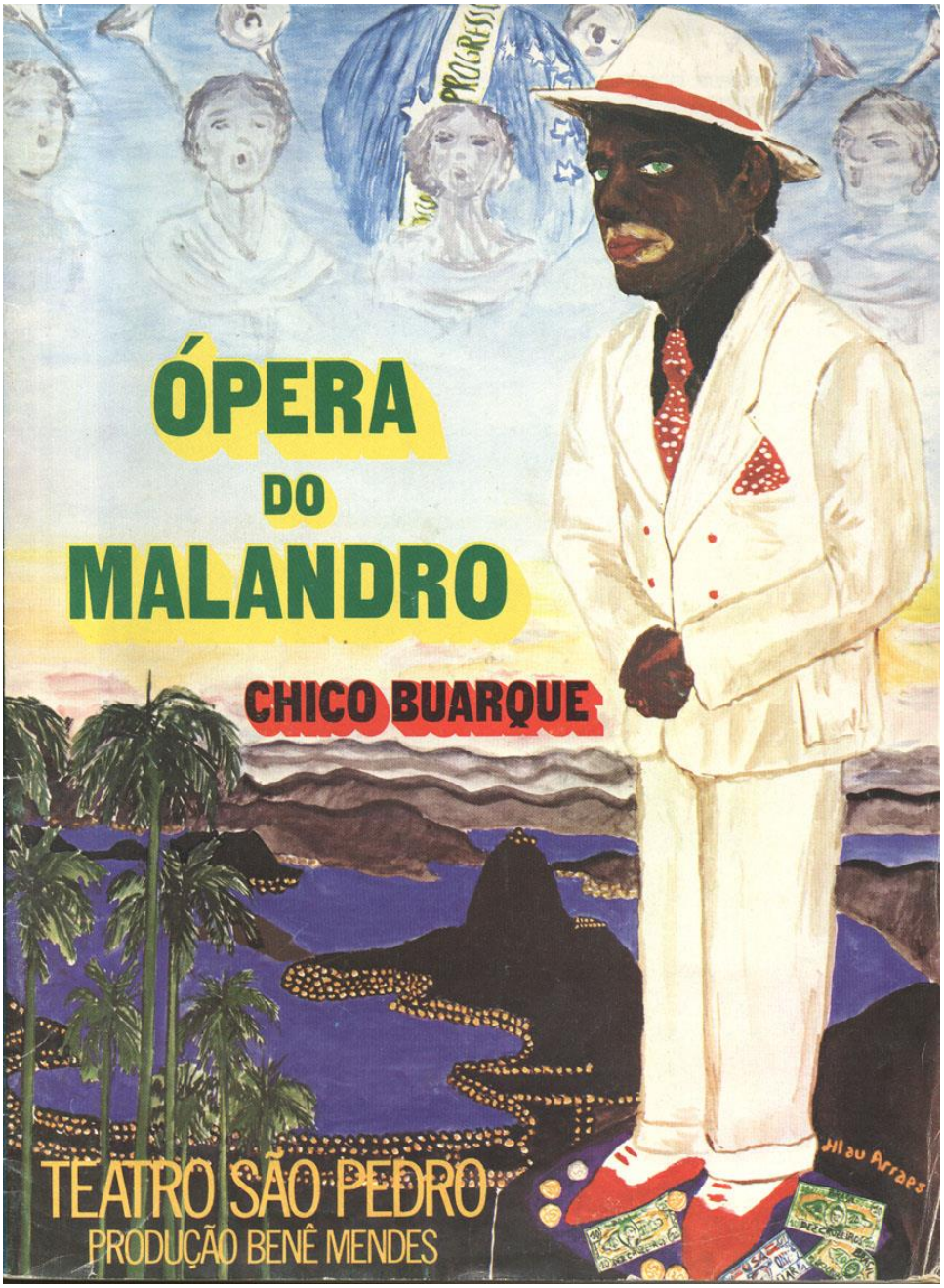


Figure 0.3
Cover page of booklet with lyrics and music score of the musical *Ópera do Malandro* by Chico Buarque de Holanda, sold at Teatro São Pedro, São Paulo, 1979.



Figure 0.4
Walter Firmo, *Madame Satã* (João Francisco dos Santos), Rio de Janeiro, 1976.

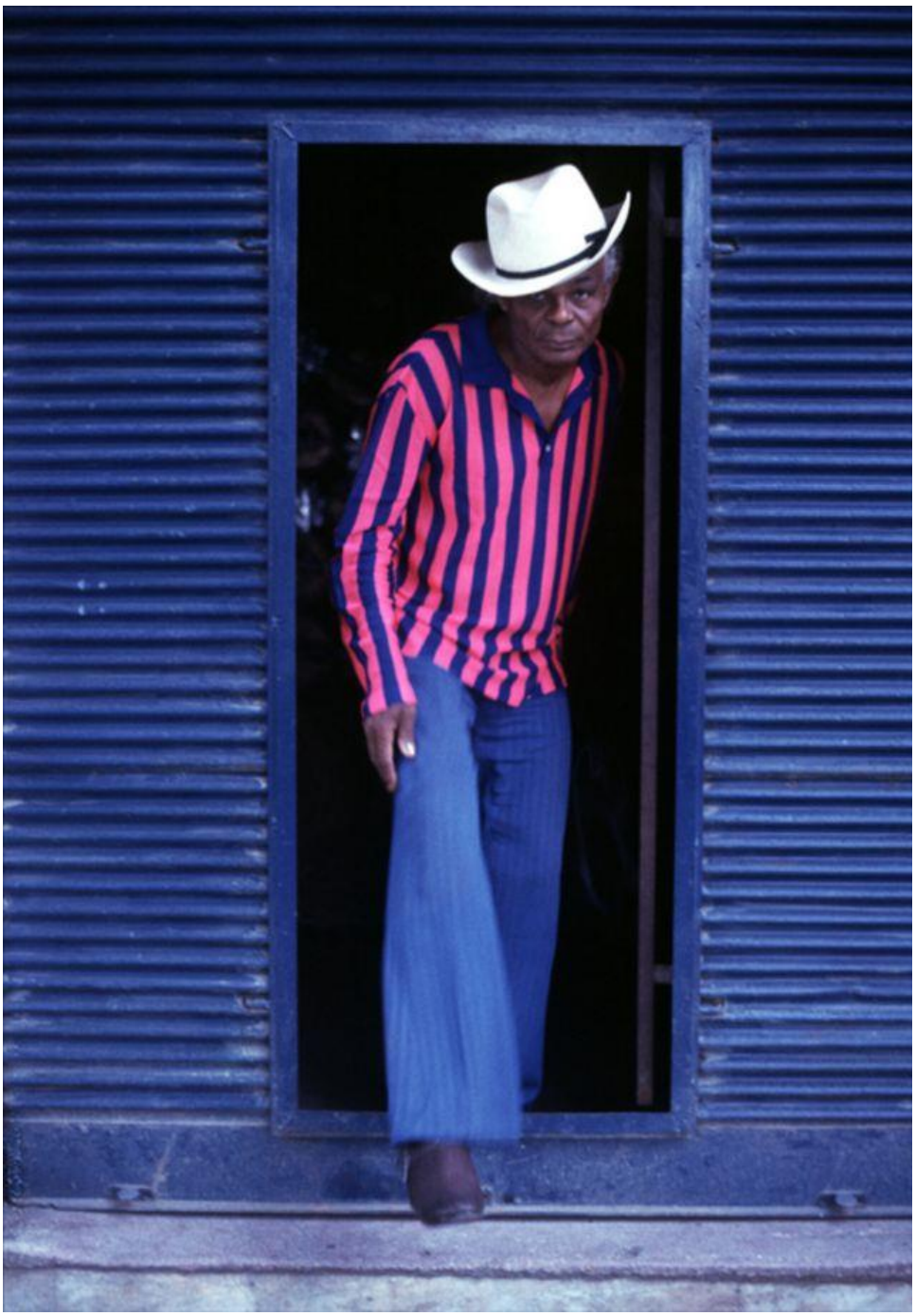
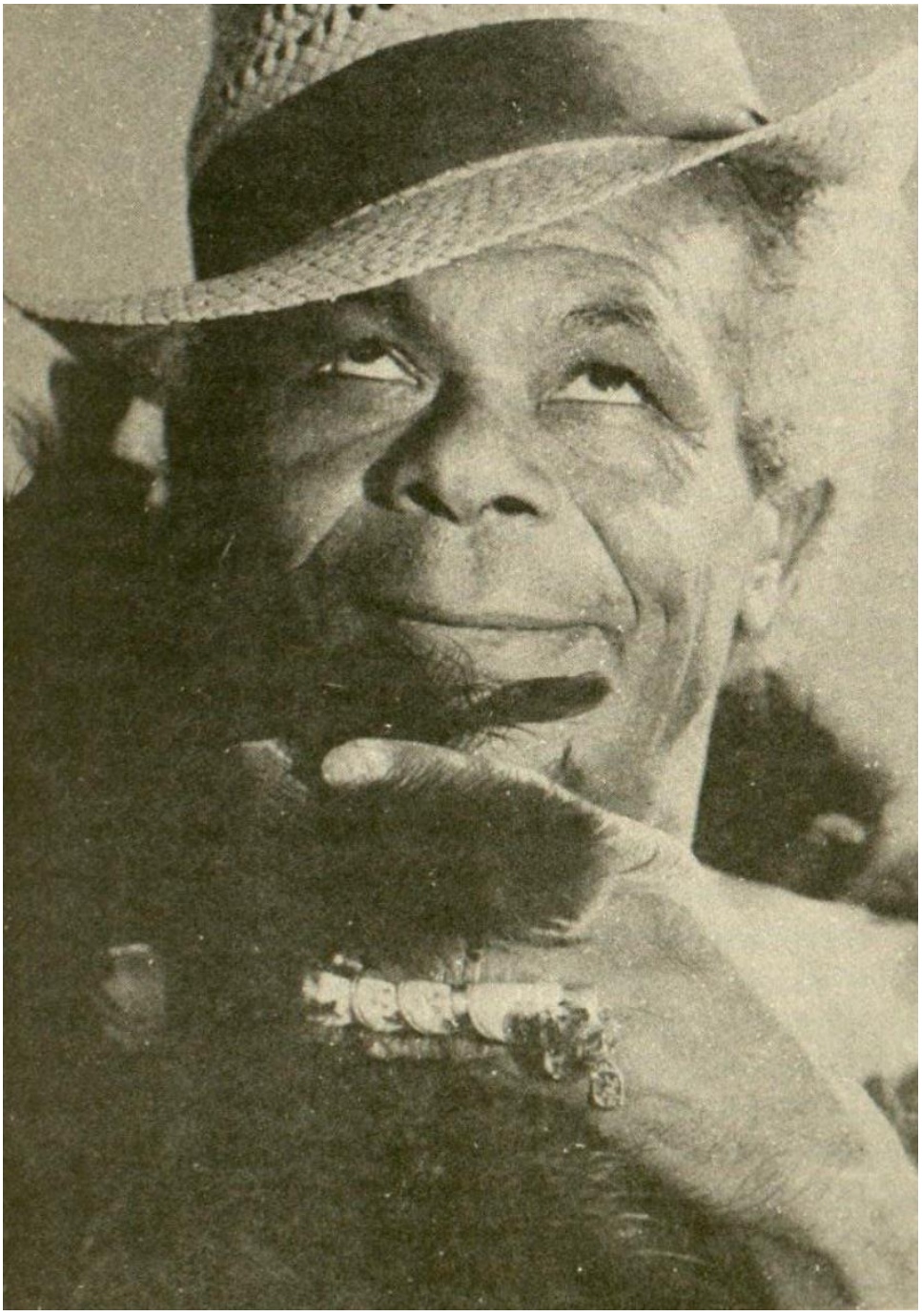


Figure 0.5
Unknown photographer, João Madame Satã (João Francisco dos Santos, 1900-1976), undated. Photograph published in Rogério Durst, *Madame Satã,* São Paulo-SP: Brasiliense, 1985, p.43.



Chapter 1 From Carnival Parades to the Biennial

Figure 1.1
Still from Andreas and Thomas Valentin's *All Language* movie, New York, NY, 1974.

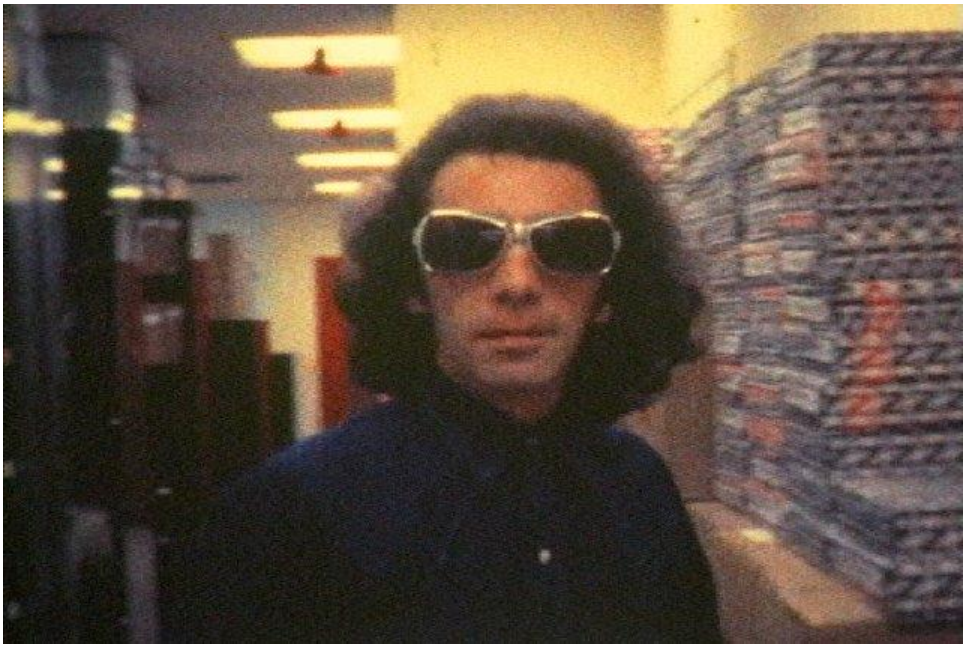


Figure 1.2
Unknown photographer, Deixa Falar, undated. From left to right: Paulo Benjamim de Oliveira (Paulo da Portela), Heitor dos Prazeres, Gilberto Alves, Alcebíades Barcelos (Bide) and Armando Marçal in the neighborhood Engenho de Dentro. Unknown photographer.



Figure 1.3
Heitor dos Prazeres, *Jogo no Barraco* (Game in the Shack), 1953, oil on canvas. Reproduction printed in *Correio da Manhã*, January 31, 1954, p.11.


BRASILEIROS NA II BIENAL

Um dos óleos que representam Heitor dos Prazeres na II Bienal de São Paulo. O artista que tanto êxito alcançou na I Bienal, cedeu o lugar desta vez a uma outra primitiva — Elisa Martins da Silveira, revelada pelo Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio

Figure1.4
Heitor dos Prazeres, *Jogando Baralho* (Playing cards), 1965, oil on canvas, 55 x 46 cm.

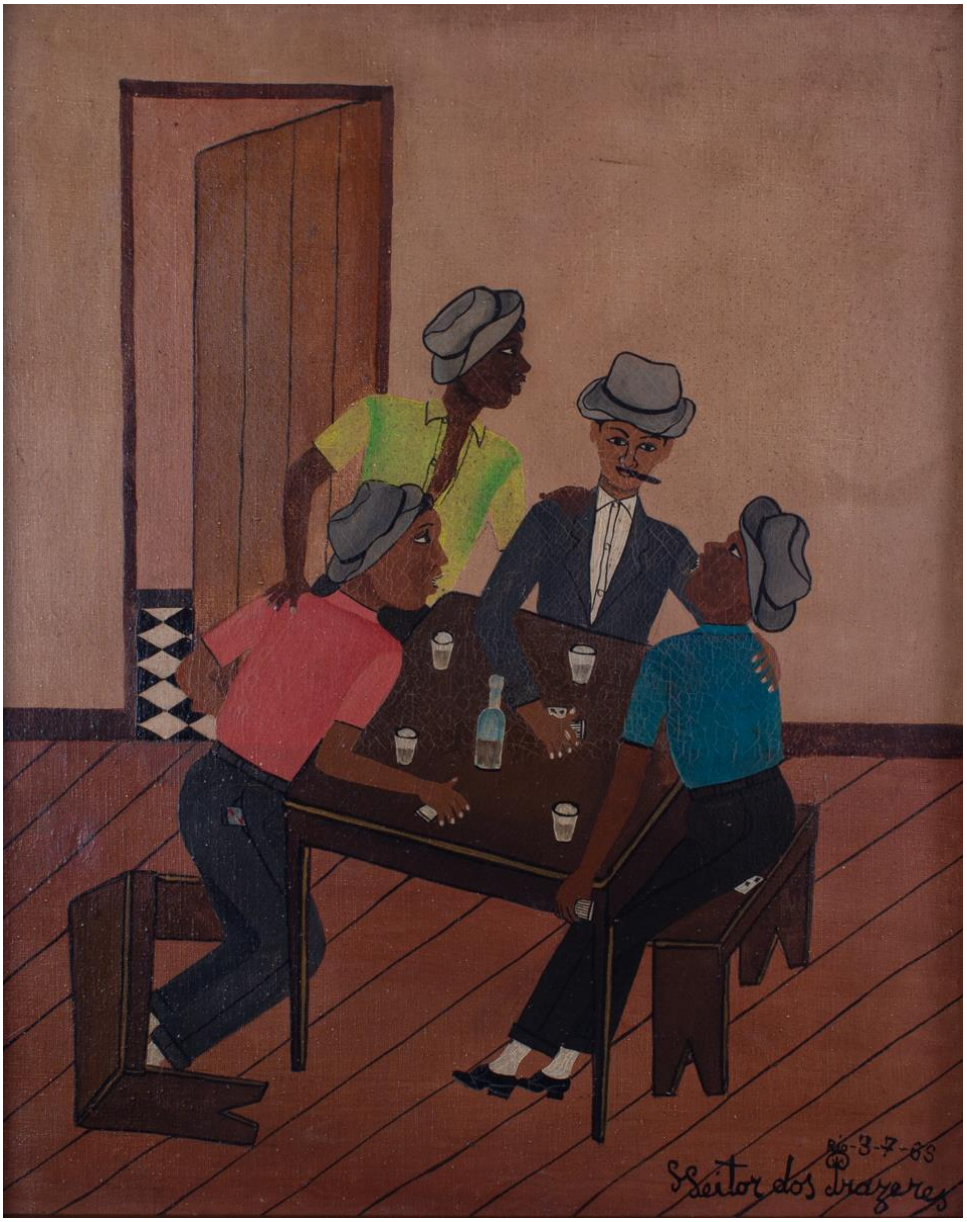


Figure 1.5
Caravaggio (Michelangelo Merisi), *The Cardsharps*, c.1595, oil on canvas, 94.2 x 130.9 cm. Collection of the Kimbell Art Foundation.



Figure 1.6
Hélio Oiticica, *Apropriação—Mesa de bilhar, d'aprés "O Café Noturno" de Van Gogh* (Appropriation—Snooker Room, after Van Gogh's "Night Café"), 1966, billiard table, billiard table lights, wall rack and accessories. Installation view, Whitney Museum of Art, 2017.



Figure 1.7
Hélio Oiticica, *NC6 Núcleo médio 3* (NC6 Medium Nucleus 3), 1961–63. Photograph by Alexandra Baratta. Installation view, Galeria G-4 Rio de Janeiro, 1966.



Figure 1.8
Hélio Oiticica, Antônio Manuel, Lygia Pape, Nildo, Delegado and friends in a snooker bar in Mangueira, Rio de Janeiro. Photographer: Andreas Valentin, 1979.



Figure 1.9
Heitor dos Prazeres, *Jogadores de sinuca* (Snooker Players), 1963, oil on canvas, 50 x 60 cm.



Figure 1.10
Catalogue of the first São Paulo Biennial, 1951, second edition, p. 224-225.

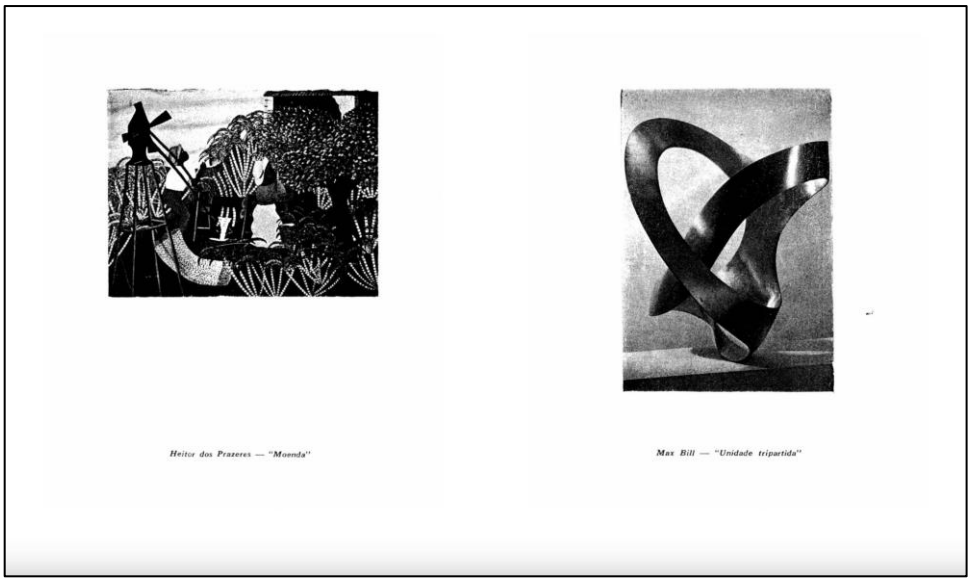


Figure 1.11
Heitor dos Prazeres, *Moenda* (Mill), 1951, oil on canvas, 65 x 81 cm, Collection of the Museu de Arte Contemporânea, Universidade de São Paulo (MAC USP).



Figure 1.12
Johann Moritz Rugendas, *Moulin à Sucre* (The Sugar Mill), c.1821–1825, Hand-colored lithograph. From *Voyage pittoresque dans le Brésil* (Paris, 1827).

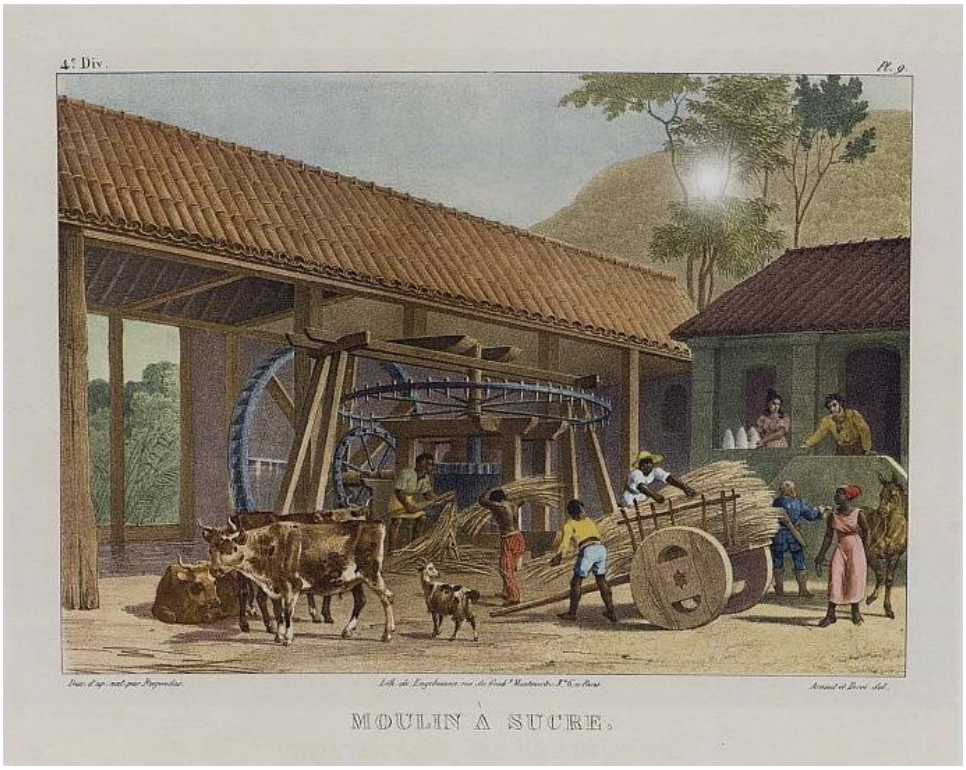


Figure 1.13
Jean Baptiste Debret, *Petit moulin à sucre, portatif* (Small, Portable Sugar Mill),1816-31, hand-painted lithograph. From *Voyage pittoresque et historique au Brésil ou Séjour d'un artiste français au Brésil depuis 1816 jusqu'en 1831 inclusivement*. Paris: Firmin Didot, 1834-39.

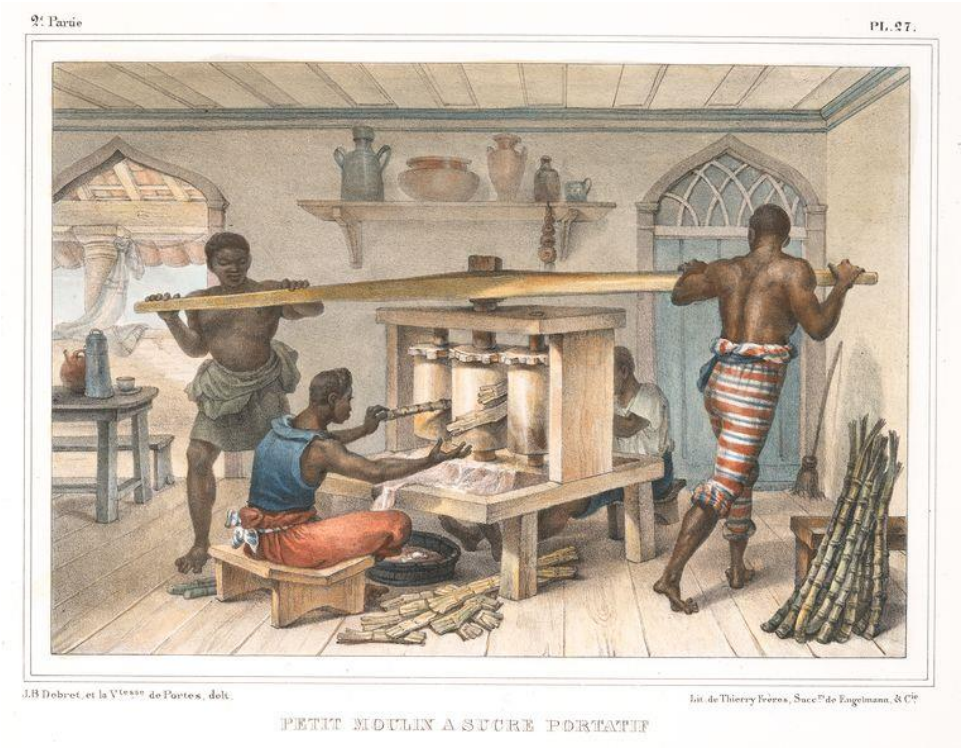


Figure 1.14
Miro da Mangueira with Oiticica's *Parangolé P4 Capa 1* (Parangolé P4 Cape 1), 1964 at the opening of the show *Opinião 65*, Museu de Arte Moderna, Rio de Janeiro, 1965. Photograph: César Oiticica Filho.

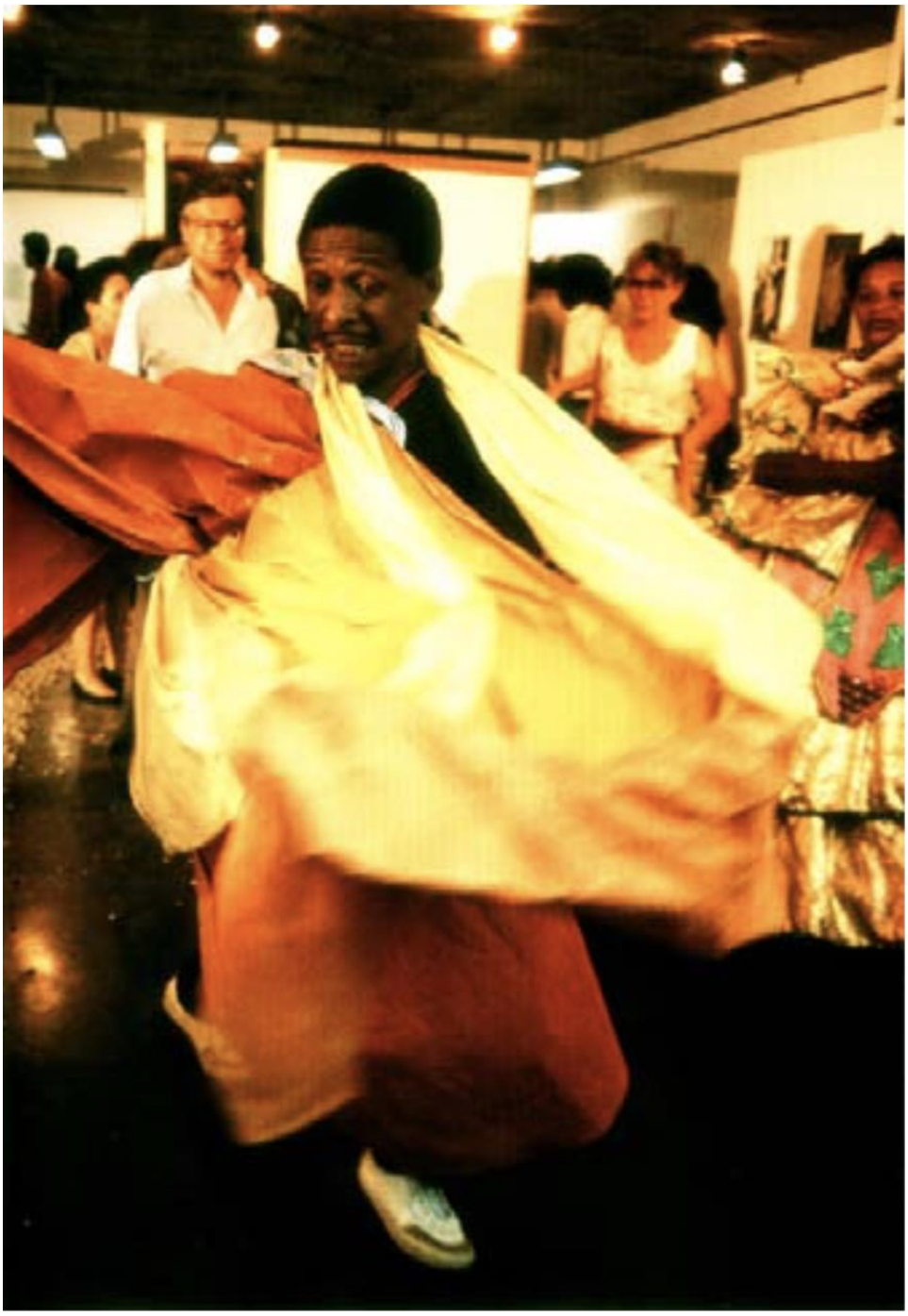


Figure 1.15
Hélio Oiticica, *P02 Parangolé-Bandeira 01* (P02 Parangolé-Flag 01), 1964. Photograph by Desdemone Bardin taken at the opening of the exhibition *Opinião 65*, Museu de Arte Moderna, Rio de Janeiro.

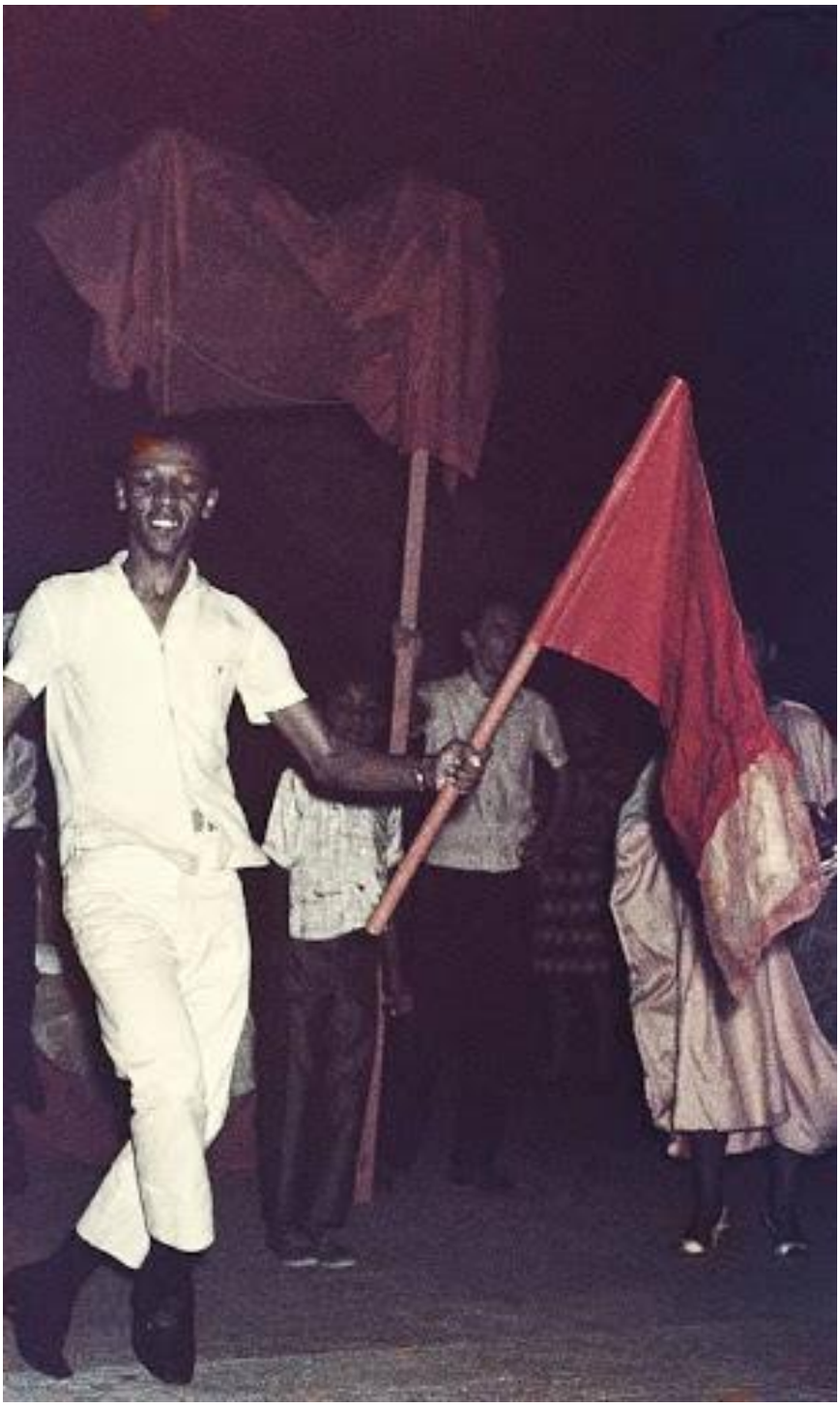


Figure1.16
Heitor dos Prazeres, *Porta-bandeira e Mestre-sala*, 1960, oil on canvas, 41 x 33cm, Collection of Otto Grunewalt Ferveira.

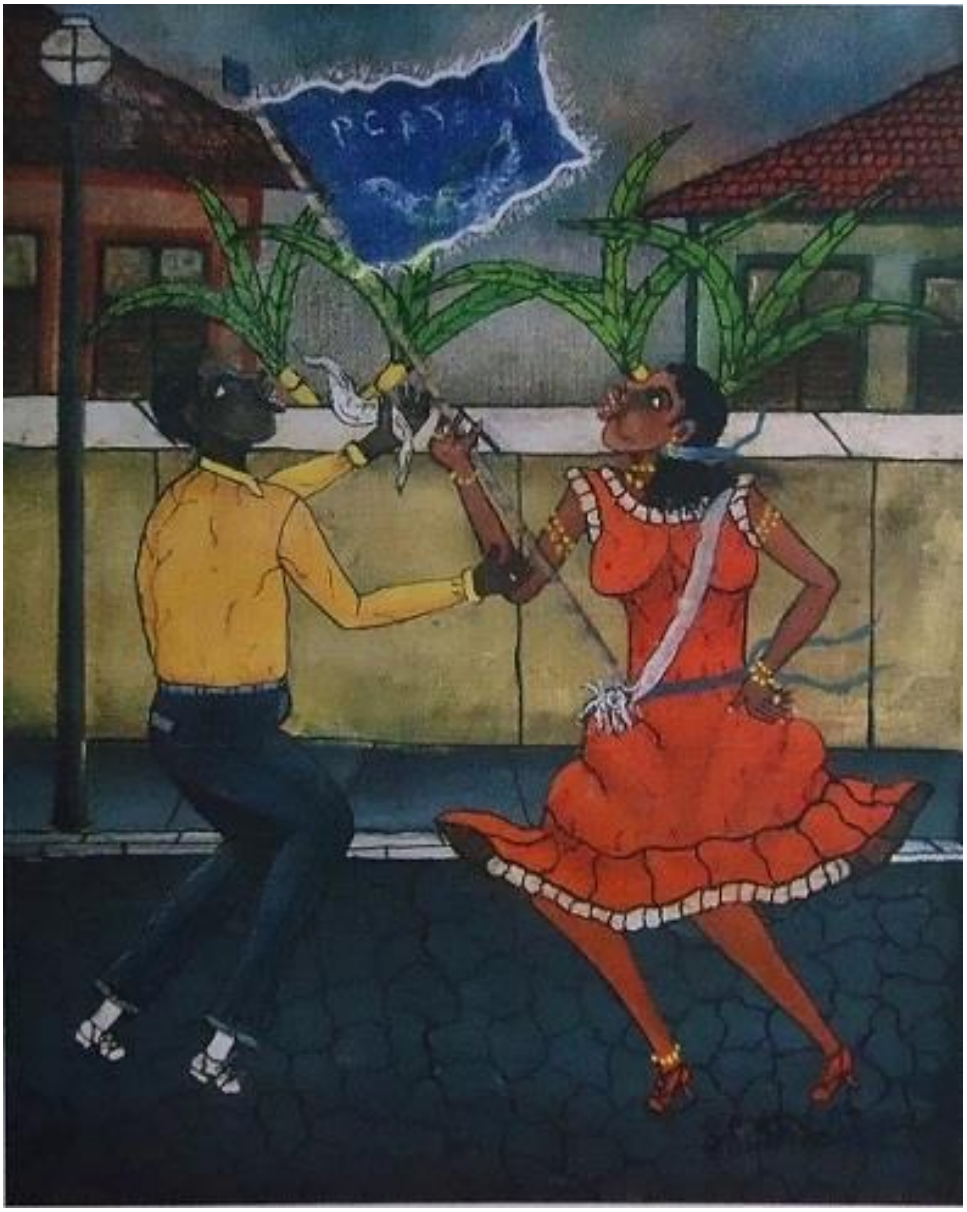


Figure 1.17
Pai Joãozinho da Goméia being dressed by a *filha de santo* as he is entering the trance. Unknown photographer and date.



Figure 1.18
Pai Joãozinho da Goméia during embodiment with a pano da costa tied across the body. Unknown photographer and date.

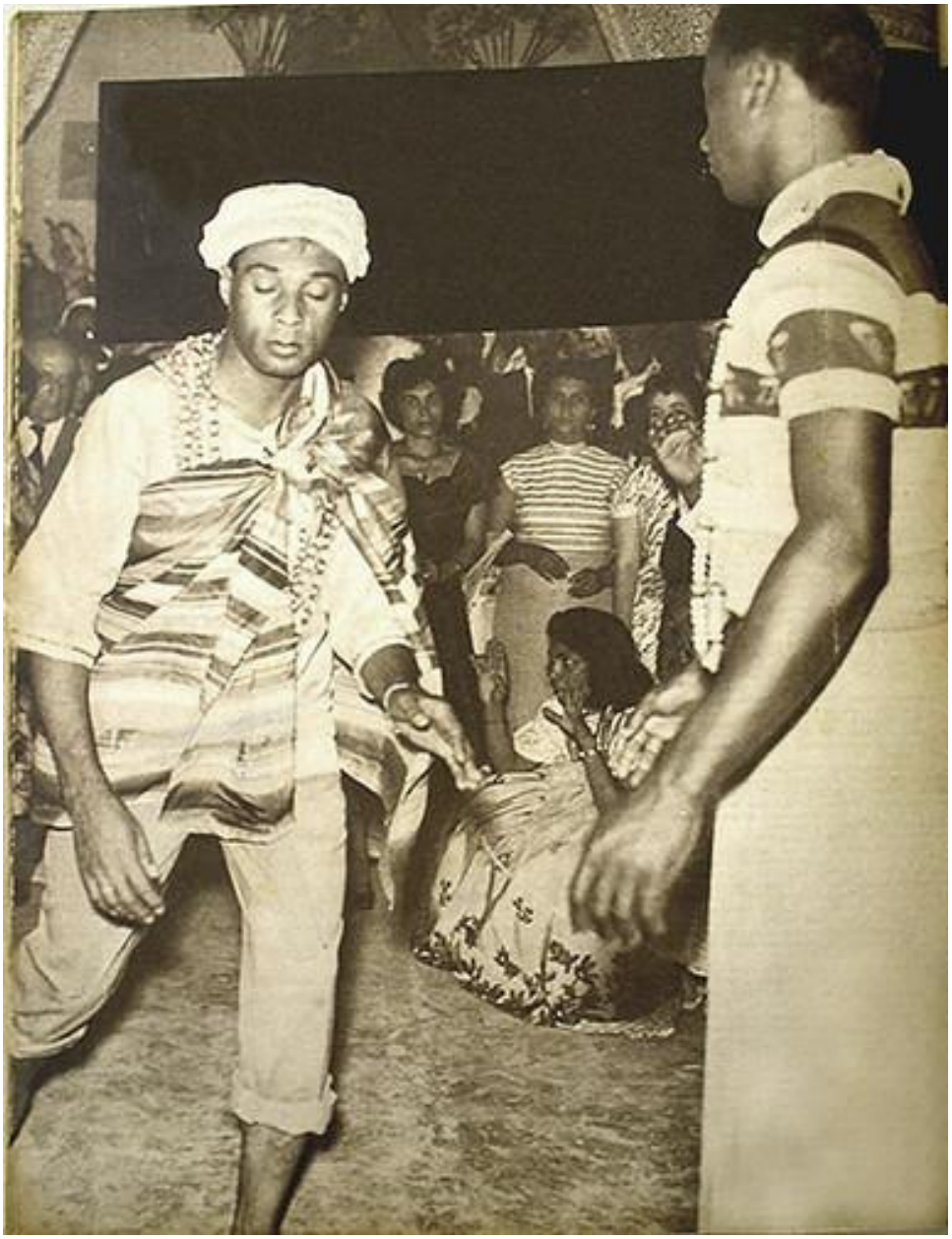


Figure 1.19
Hélio Oiticica, *P01 Parangolé-Estandarte 01* (P01 Parangolé-Banner 01), 1964. Unknown photographer.



Figure1.20
Statues of Exú duas cabeças (Exu Double-Face) and Xoroque.





Figure 1.21
Hélio Oiticica, *P15 Parangolé Capa 11 'Incorporo a Revolta'* (P15 Parangolé-Cape 11 'I embody revolt'), ca. 1967, worn by Nildo of Mangueira. Photo: Claudio Oiticica, 1960s.



Figure 1.22
Hélio Oiticica, *P17 Parangolé Capa 13*, 'Estou Possuido' (P17 Parangolé-Cape 13 'I Am Possessed'), 1967, worn by Nildo of Mangueira. Photograph: Eduardo Viveiros de Castro.



Figure 1.23
Heitor dos Prazeres wearing a baiana costume he designed himself, with a pano da costa on the shoulder. Unknown photographer.



Figure 1.24
Heitor dos Prazeres, *A dança* (The Dance), 1965, oil on canvas, 54 x 64 cm.



Figure 1.25
Hélio Oiticica, “The Eden Plan,” published in the catalogue for Whitechapel Experience, April 1969.

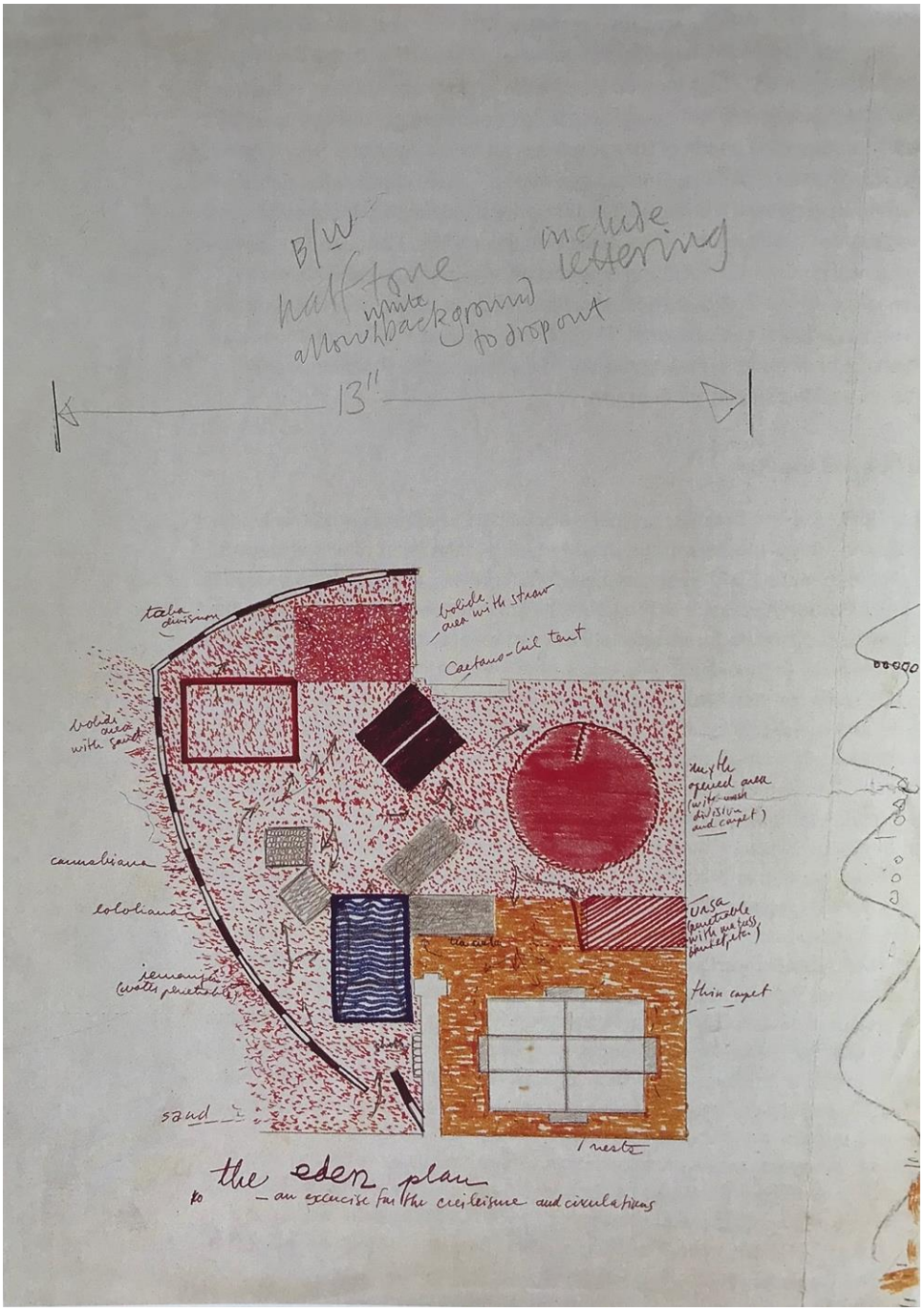


Figure 1.26
Blueprint of the house of Tia Ciata. Archive of Francisco Duarte. Published in Roberto M. Moura, *Tia Ciata e a Pequena África no Rio de Janeiro*. Rio de Janeiro: Secretaria Municipal de Cultura, Departamento Geral de Documentação e Informação Cultural, Divisão de Editoração, 1995.

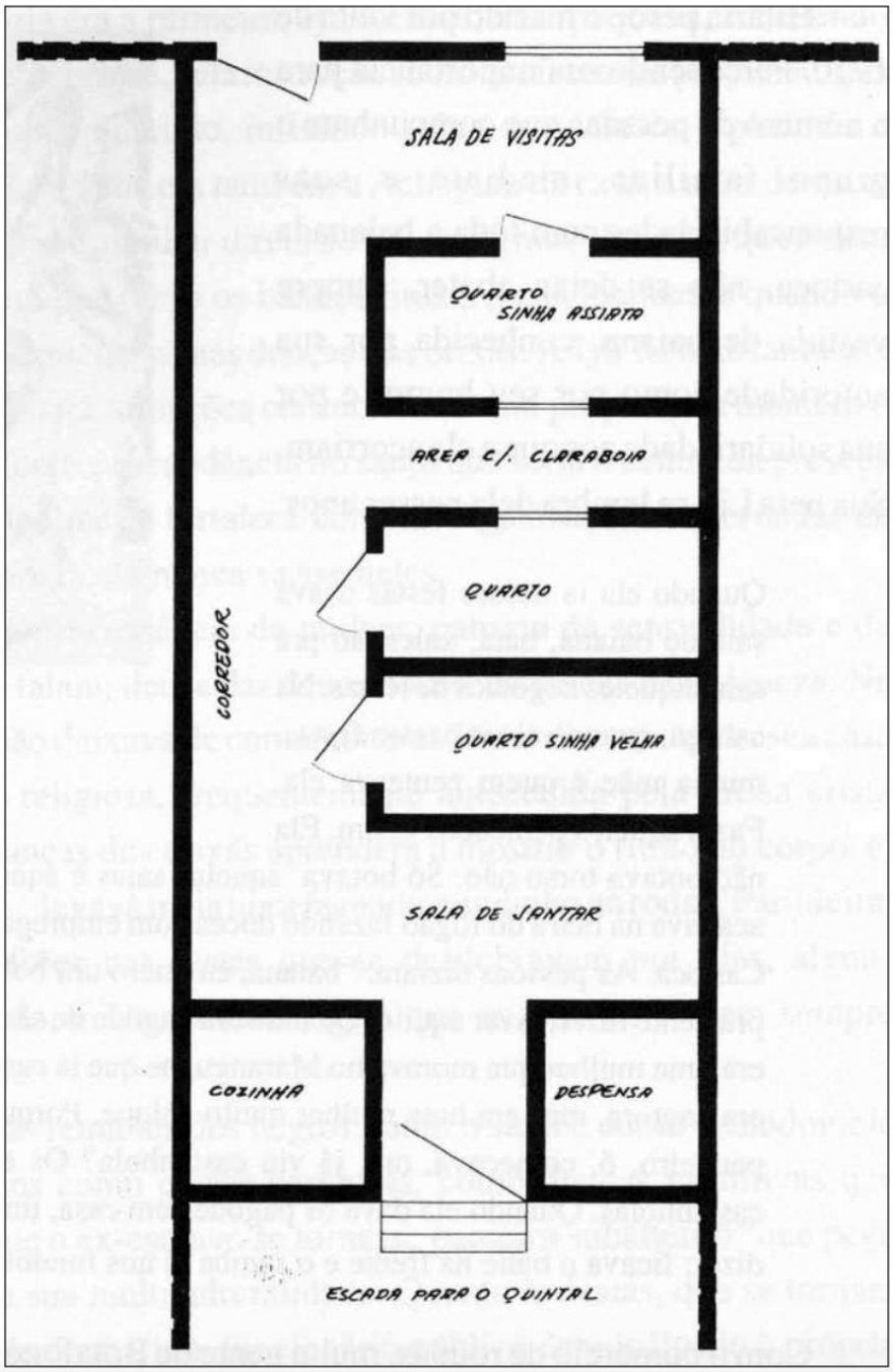


Figure 1.27
Heitor dos Prazeres, *Os músicos* (The Musicians), undated, oil on canvas 38 x 46 cm.



Figure 1.28
Mosquito da Mangueira dancing while wearing Hélio Oiticia's *P10 Parangolé capa 06 Homagem a Mosquito* (P01 Parangolé-Cape 06 'Homage to Mosquito', 1965), next to *B17 Bólide vidro 05 Homagem a Mondrian* (B17 Bólide-Glass 05 'Homage to Mondrian', 1965), Rio de Janeiro, 1966. Photographer: Claudio Oiticica.



Chapter 2 Exú: The Principle of Revolution

Figure 2.1
Abdias Nascimento, *Exu Trifacético* (Trifaced Eshu), 1968, acrylic on canvas, 54 x 72 cm, Collection IPEAFRO.



Figure 2.2
Abdias Nascimento in a scene from *Sortilégio: mistério negro* (Sortilege: Black Mystery), 1957. Photograph by José Medeiros. Collection of IPEAFRO.



Figure 2.3
Abdias Nascimento, *Exú Black Power– Homenagem a Rubens Gerchman* (Exú Black Power – Tribute to Rubens Gerchman), 1969, acrylic on canvas, 76 x 60 cm, Collection IPEAFRO.



Figure 2.4
Abdias Nascimento, *Liberdade para Huey: Omolu azul n.3* (Freedom for Huey: Blue Omolu, no.3), 1969, acrylic on canvas and collage, 75 x 60 cm, IPEAFRO.



Figure 2.5
Abdias Nascimento, *Quilombismo (Exu e Ogum)* (Quilombismo, Eshu and Ogun), 1980, oil on canvas, 71 x 56 cm, Collection IPEAFRO.

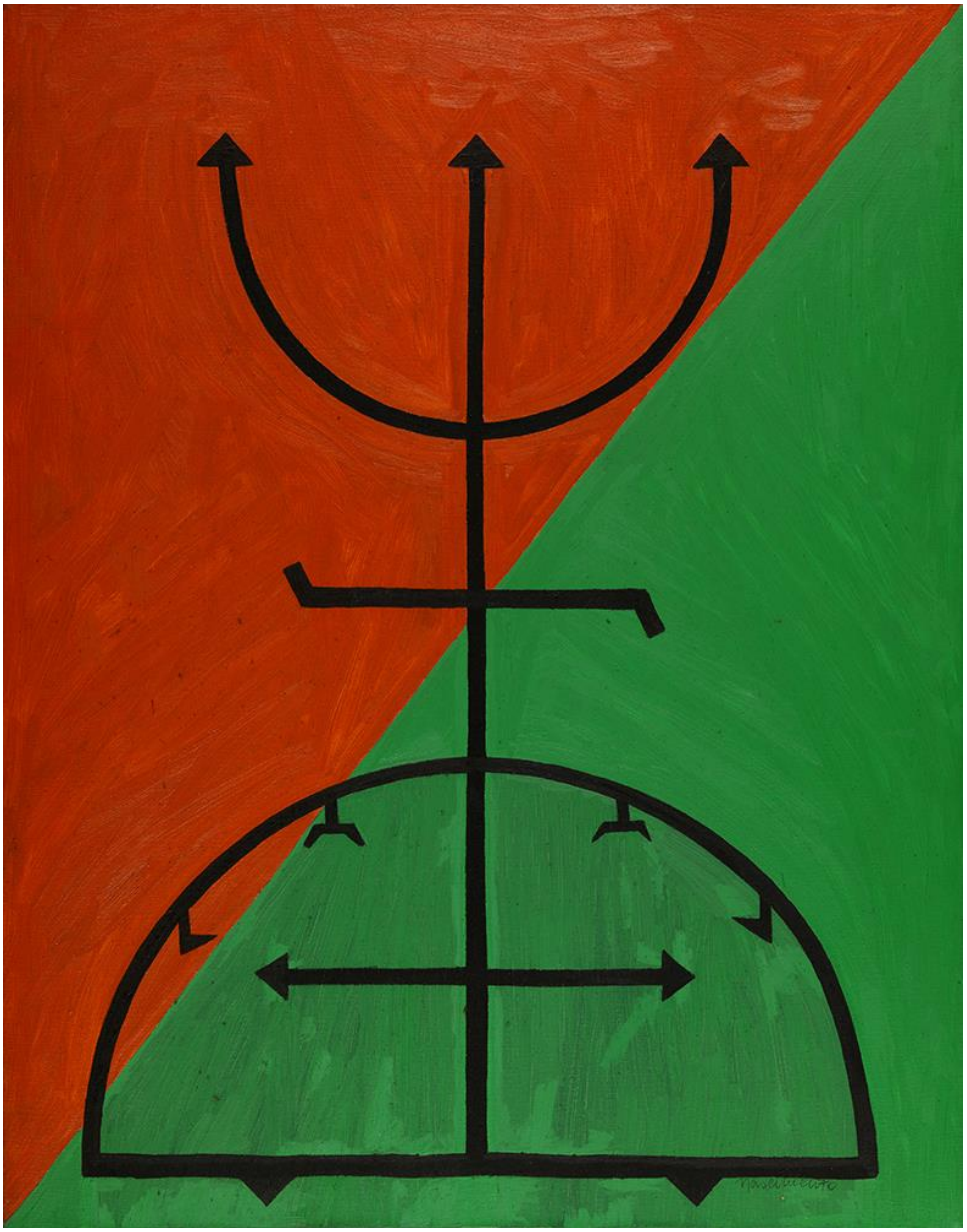


Figure 2.6
Ponto riscado. Photograph published in the newspaper *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, June 15, 1927.

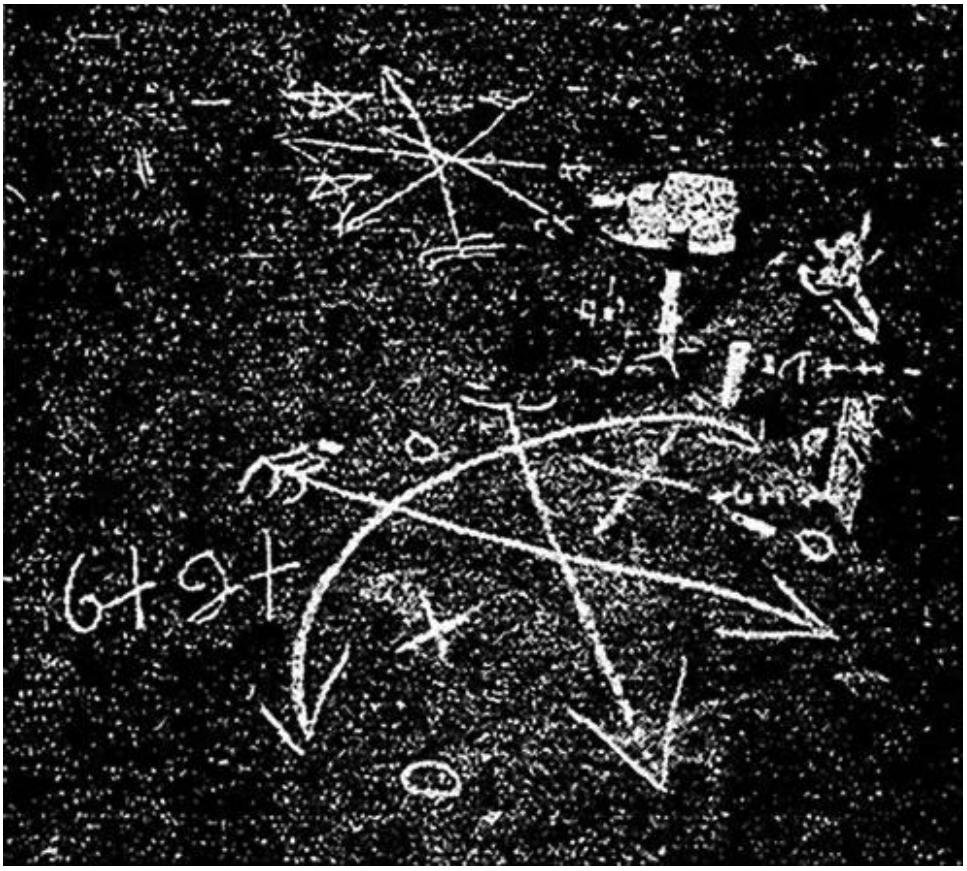


Figure 2.7
Metal Ponto riscado of Exu. Unknown photographer and date.

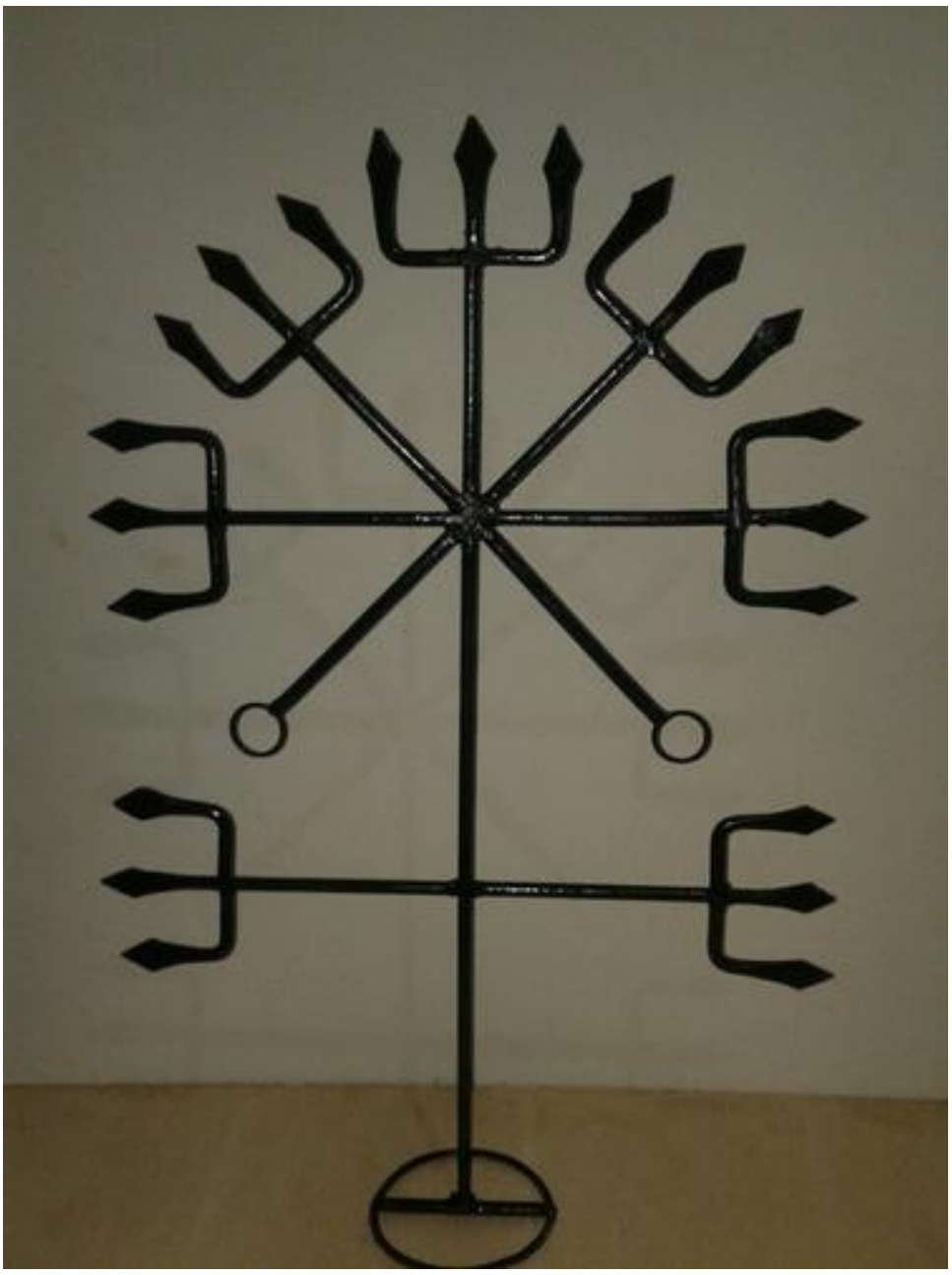


Figure 2.8
Iron tools of Ogum, god of metallurgical technology and war. Collection of the Museu Afro Brasilerio, Universidade Federal da Bahia, UFBA.



Figure 2.9
Abdias Nascimento giving a speech at the Third Congress of Black Culture in the Americas, São Paulo, Brazil, August 1982. Unknown photographer. Collection IPEAFRO.



Figure 2.10
Hélio Oiticica, *B33 Bólide caixa 18 caixa-poema 2, "Homenagem à Cara de Cavalo"* (B33 Box Bólide 18, Box-Poem 2, "Homage to Cara de Cavalo"), 1966. Collection Gilberto Chateaubriand, MASP.



Figure 2.11
Hélio Oiticica with *B33 Bólide caixa 18 caixa-poema 2, "Homenagem à Cara de Cavalo."* Unknown photographer and date.



Figure 2.12
"Cara de Cavalo. Vingada a morte de Le Cocq" (Avenged the Death of Le Cocq), *O Dia*, October 5, 1964.



Figure 2.13
Hélio Oiticica, *Bólide caixa 18 caixa-poema 2, "Homenagem à Cara de Cavalo"* (B33 Box Bólide 18, Box-Poem 2, "Homage to Cara de Cavalo"), 1966.

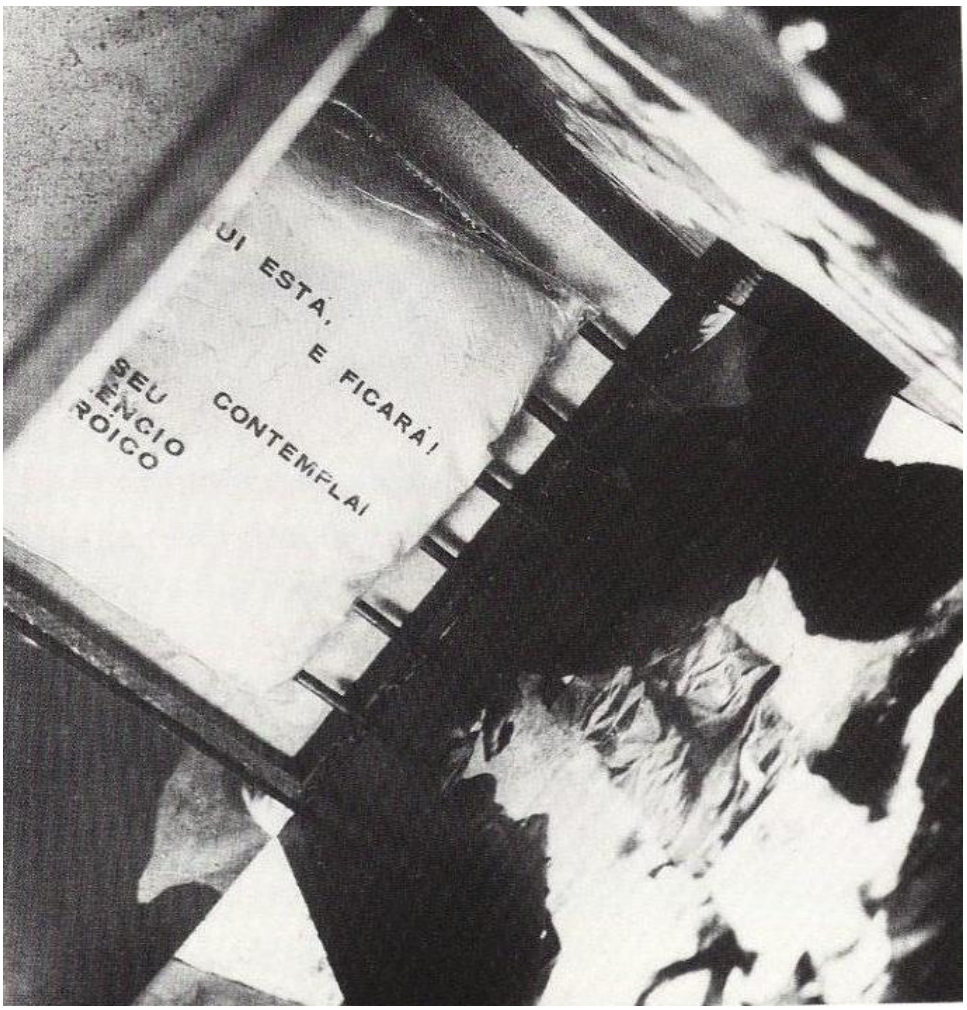


Figure 2.14
Hélio Oiticica, *Bólide, B44 Bólide-caixa 21 caixa-poema 3: porque a impossibilidade?* (B44 Box Bólide 21, Box-Poem 3: Why the Impossibility?), 1966-1967. Collection Paula e Alexandre Marinho de Carvalho.



Figure 2.15
Hélio Oiticica, *Seja Marginal, Seja Herói* (Be an Outlaw, Be a Hero), 1968, Screen-print on fabric.



Figure 2.16
Cildo Meireles, "Inserções em circuitos ideológicos," *Malasartes* no.1 (Rio de Janeiro, 1975): 15.



CILDO MEIRELES

INSERÇÕES EM CIRCUITOS IDEOLÓGICOS
Abril/Maio 1970

1. PROJETO COCA-COLA.

Circuito é uma repetição. Circuito é a circulação criada pela repetição. Circuito é a repetição cíclica da trajetória de uma informação através de um veículo.

Dividindo os vários tipos de circuito em dois grupos, basicamente, teremos: circuitos de controle centralizado e circuitos de controle descentralizado. Entre estes últimos interessa-me particularmente o circuito de bebidas e refrigerantes em garrafas de vidro. A Coca-Cola, por exemplo.

Depois de beber uma Coca-Cola, você devolve o casco vazio ao comerciante. Em troca ele lhe dá uma garrafa cheia. E envia o casco vazio para a fábrica. Lá, através de processos automáticos, ele é lavado, desinfetado, e torna a ser cheio de Coca-Cola. Após o que esta garrafa cheia é novamente enviada para o comerciante, que a venderá a outra(s) pessoa(s). Assim, sempre que você compra e bebe uma Coca-Cola e devolve o casco vazio ao comerciante, você está, por meio deste ato, criando e alimentando este circuito. Você e outras milhares de pessoas que também bebem Coca-Cola.

Inserções em circuitos ideológicos neste caso: gravar opiniões críticas e informações nas garrafas de Coca-Cola e devolvê-las à circulação. As opiniões devem ser gravadas, em tal caso (refrigerantes e bebidas), nas garrafas. O processo de gravação pode ser o da decalcomania por silk-screen (serigrafia sobre plástico) impresso com tinta branca vitrificada. A mesma tinta que a fábrica usa para imprimir o nome Coca-Cola na garrafa. A inserção é mimética, pois a tinta sendo branca, só aparece quando a garrafa torna a ser cheia.

Descobrir novos circuitos, descobrir melhores maneiras de gravar as inserções, executar e divulgar constantemente inserções em circuitos ideológicos é a realidade deste trabalho.

INSERÇÕES EM CIRCUITOS

Quando numa definição filosófica de seus trabalhos, M. DUCHAMP afirmava que, entre outras coisas, seu objetivo era libertar "a Arte do domínio da mão", certamente não imaginava a que ponto chegaríamos em 1970. O que à primeira vista podia ser facilmente localizado e efetivamente combatido tende hoje a localizar-se numa área de difícil acesso e apreensão: o cérebro.

É evidente que a frase de DUCHAMP é o exemplo, hoje, de uma lição mal aprendida. Muito mais que contra o domínio das mãos, DUCHAMP lutou contra o artesanato manual, contra a habilidade das mãos, contra enfim, o gradativo entorpecimento emocional, racional, psíquico, que essa mecanicidade, essa habitualidade, fatalmente provocaria no indivíduo. O fato de não ter as mãos sujas de Arte nada significa além de que as mãos estão limpas.

Muito mais do que contra as manifestações de um fenômeno, luta-se contra a lógica desse fenômeno. O que se vê hoje é um certo alívio e uma certa alegria em não se usar mais as mãos. Como se as coisas estivessem, até que enfim, O.K. Como se nesse exato momento, a gente não precisasse iniciar a luta contra um adversário bem maior: a habitualidade e o artesanato cerebral.

O estilo, seja das mãos, seja da cabeça (do raciocínio), é uma anomalia. E anomalias, é mais inteligente abortá-las do que assisti-las vivendo.

Abril de 1970

Blind Hotland nº 3. Múltiplo. 1971/1973
Fotos Luiz Alphonsus

Inserções em circuitos ideológicos.
Projeto Coca-Cola. Abril/Maio 1970
Foto Jeferson Silva

ARTE— CULTURA

Se a interferência de M. DUCHAMP foi ao nível da Arte (lógica do fenômeno), vale dizer da estética, e se por isso preconizava a libertação da habitualidade de domínio das mãos, é bom que se diga que qualquer interferência nesse campo, hoje (a colocação de DUCHAMP teve o grande mérito de forçar a percepção da Arte, não mais como percepção de objetos artísticos mas como um fenômeno do Pensamento), uma vez que o que se faz hoje tende a estar mais próximo da cultura do que da Arte, é necessariamente uma interferência política. Porque se a estética fundamenta a Arte, é a Política que fundamenta a Cultura.

15

Inserções em circuitos antropológicos.
Black pente. 1971/1973

Figure 2.17
Cildo Meireles, sketches for *Inserções em circúitos antropológicos: Black Pente*, 1971.

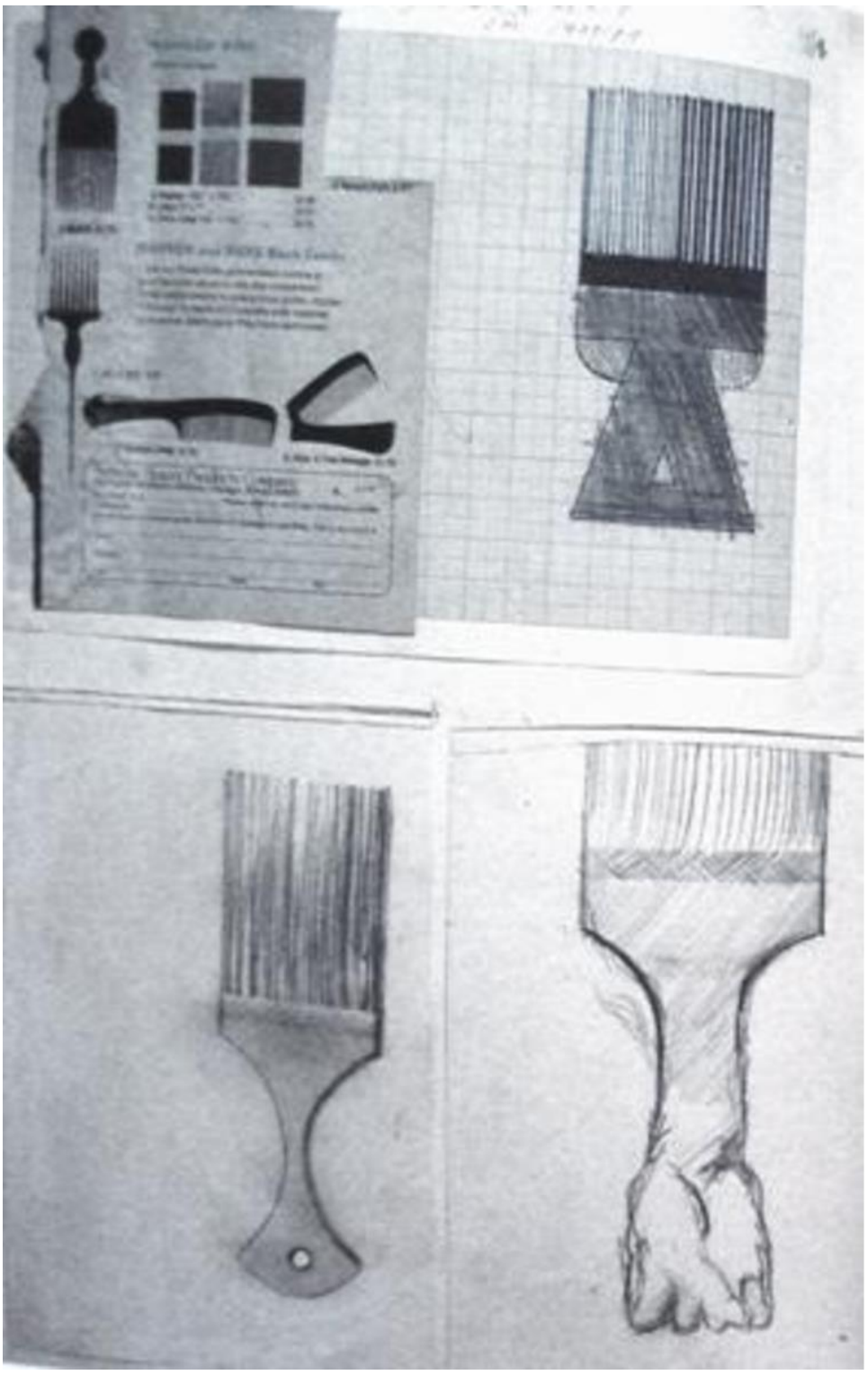
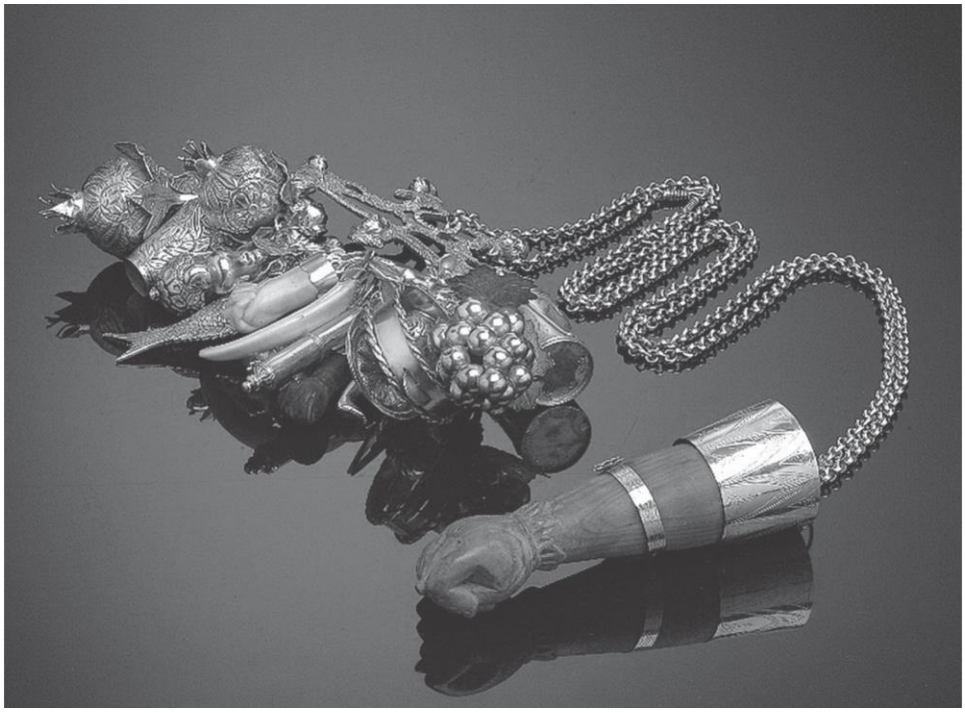


Figure 2.18
Marc Ferrez, *Negra da Bahia* (Black woman from Bahia), c. 1885, silver gelatin print. Collection Gilberto Ferrez. Instituto Moreira Salles.



Figure 2.19
Penca de balangandãs, Bahia, 19th century. Archive of Museu Carlos Costa Pinto. Photographer: Saulo Kainuma, 2003.



Chapter 3 Illicit Exchanges & Subversive Humor

Figure 3.1
Cildo Meireles, *Inserções em circúitos antropológicos, Token* (Insertions into Anthropological Circuits, Token), 1971.

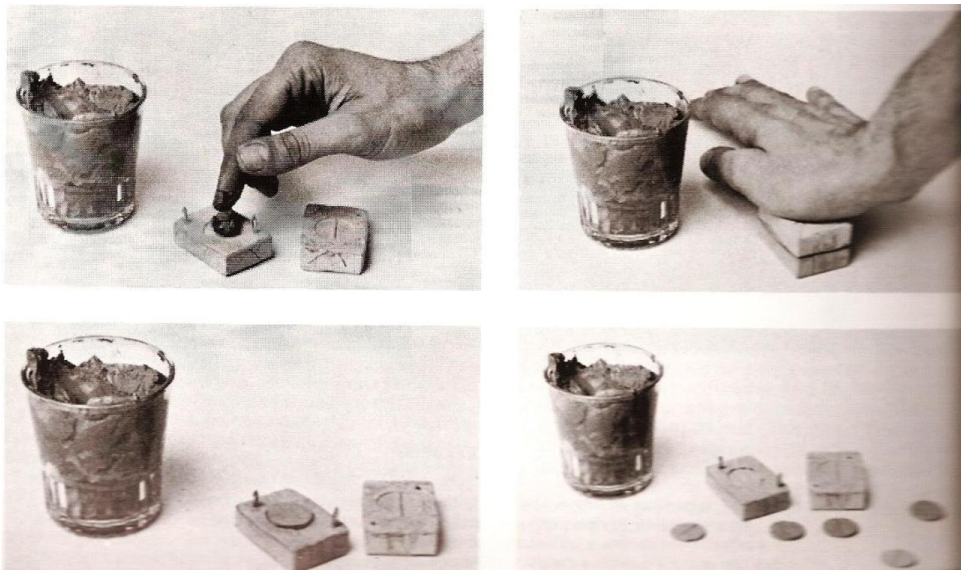


Figure 3.2
Cildo Meireles, *Inserção em circúitos ideológicos, Coca-Cola* (Insertions in Ideological Circuits, Coca-Cola), 1970.



Figure 3.3
Cildo Meireles, *Inserções em Circuitos Ideológicos - Projeto Cédulas* (Insertions into Ideological Circuits: Banknote Project), 1970-1975.



Figure 3.4
Cildo Meireles, *Zero Cruzeiro*, 1974-1978.



Figure 3.5
Cildo Meireles, *Ocasião* (Opportunity/Occasion), 1974-2004.



Figure 3.6
Cildo Meireles, *Ocasião* (Opportunity), 1974-2004, installation view.



Figure 3.7
Antonio Manuel, *Alab atam emof* (anagram for "Bullets Kill Hunger") from the *Flans* series, 1975. Ink on papier-mâché stereotype mold, 22 x 15 in.



Figure 3.8
Antonio Manuel, *Corpo Fechado*, from the *Flans* series, 1975, papier-mâché.



Figure 3.9
Antonio Manuel, *Clandestinas* (Clandestine), 1973-1975, *O Dia* newspapers.



NUVEM ATÔMICA ESTÁ SE APROXIMANDO

Informação é da Comissão de Energia Nuclear dos Estados Unidos — Poeira radiativa resultou da explosão realizada recentemente pela China — Avança pelo Oceano Pacífico à velocidade ignorada (PAG. 13)

Torquato Neto

DEUS UM CLARÃO NO SALÃO

POETA VIROU ESTRELA

SOBO LOS RIOS

DE CAMÕES A NAVELOUCA ROMPE AMARRAS NA AMPLIDÃO VIRANDO ESTRELAS ONDE ANCORA.

TORQUATO NETO O MOÇO BOM VIROU ESTRELA. O JOVEM SÉRIO COMPOSITOR E BOM ATOR E ASTRONAUTA E ACQUALOUCO DA 5ª DIMENSÃO SUBIU AOS CEUS DO PIAUI NUMA NUVEM DE GÁS.

Ana, Rainha do Sião e os manos Caetanos mais o reizinho Thiago filho seu, a Gal baba olhando os céus chorando juntos pela grande volta ao Mundo do zeppelin de prata.

DIZEM, DIZEM DIZEM QUE FOI NUMA DESSAS BOLAS DE GÁS QUE ELE PEGOU E SE MANDOU PRAS NUVENS.

Era tão frágil o Amigo que de tão leve que ele era foi subindo aos céus pendurado nela e ficou rindo, rindo lindo vendo a Terra pequenina, pequeninharinha e os homens como formiguinhas agitadas. E o Amigo se pirou, Amizade, subindo, subindo, sumindo no azul.

A TERRA É AZUL, DEUS É AZUL.

Navelouca, naverouca muito louca rompendo auroras claridades, gravidades, navelouca louca louca.

DEU-SE UM CLARO NO SALÃO E O POETA SUMIU SEM DIZER ADEUS

Quem sabe, um dia ele não volta e a gente dá de cara com ele na esquina? — Tchau, Torquato.

HÉLIO ROCHA

Fundador: CHAGAS FREITAS — Diretor: OTHON PAULINO

O DIA

O JORNAL DE MAIOR CIRCULAÇÃO DO PAIS

GB e RJ 50 CENTAVOS

Redação e Administração: Rua Riachuelo, 359. Tel.: 222-7751 — Telex 386

ANO XXIII — Rio de Janeiro, quinta-feira, 5 de julho de 1973 — Nº 7.733

Mulher de preso não pode fazer inseminação artificial

Ministério não atendeu ao apelo da esposa do tenhicado — Alegou a mulher que, com a proibição das visitas conjugais, só havia aquele recurso — Acha que ao fim da pena de 16 anos será tarde demais. (Pag. 6)

Seleção brasileira amanhece no Galeão

Delegação deixou Dublin, ontem, por volta das 12 horas — Fez escala em Frankfurt, onde trocou de avião, e Lisboa — Desembarque foi previsto para as 7 horas, no Galeão. (LEIA NA PÁGINA 16)

Nixon pensou em renunciar à Presidência

Considerou a possibilidade de abandonar o cargo durante uma reunião com os familiares — Achava que a medida seria o melhor caminho, em consequência do escândalo de Watergate — Revelação foi feita pela filha (P. 13)

O Secretário de Segurança compareceu ao local. Vê-se uma das hélices pendurada sobre a casa

HELICÓPTERO CAIU EM BENFICA

Atraídos pela explosão do helicóptero populares foram ver de perto o trabalho dos bombeiros

TRÂNSITO JÁ MUTILOU 9 MILHÕES

Quase 10 por cento da população do País — Oito mil pessoas morreram em 1972 em apenas 14 Estados — 15 mil morrerão daqui a seis anos — Ordem dos Advogados sugere medidas ao Congresso (PAG. 8)

Bispos vão falar sobre canonização do Padre Cícero

Nota oficial será divulgada esta tarde pela CNBB — Decisão foi tomada após diversas reuniões — Ouvidos também os membros da Conferência dos Religiosos (Página 13)

Figure 3.10
Antonio Manuel, *Clandestinas* (Clandestine), 1973-1975, *O Dia* newspaper.

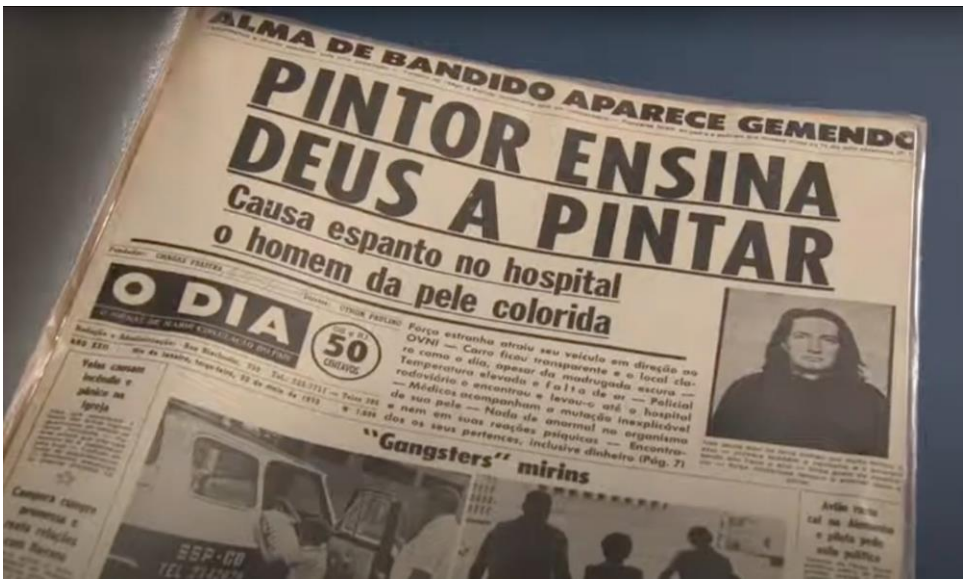


Figure 3.11
Antonio Manuel, *Repressão outra vez – Eis o saldo* (Repression Again – Here is the Consequence), 1968, wood, cloth, rope, and silkscreen.



Figure 3.12
Antonio Manuel, "*Exposição de Antonio Manuel (de 0 às 24:00 horas nas bancas de jornais)"* (Exhibition of Antonio Manuel: From 0 to 24:00 on the newsstands), *Jornal do Brasil*, July 15, 1973, Proposals 1 and 2.



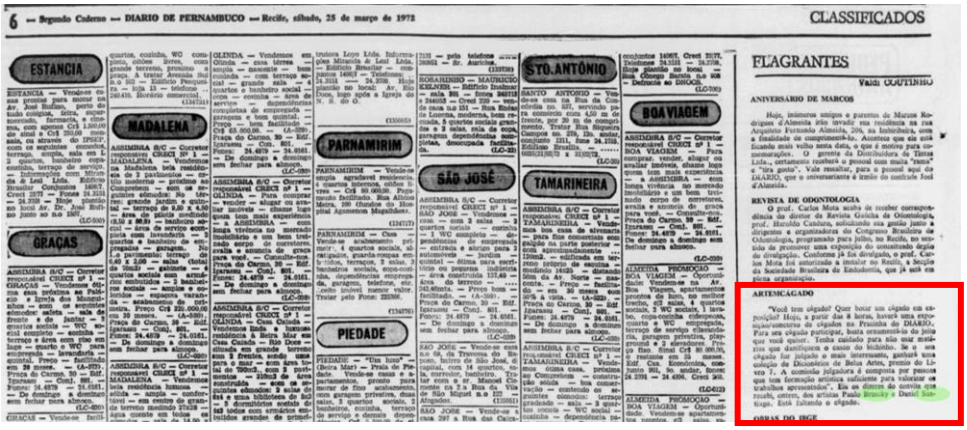
Figure 3.13
Antonio Manuel, "*Exposição de Antonio Manuel (de 0 às 24:00 horas nas bancas de jornais)"* (Exhibition of Antonio Manuel: From 0 to 24:00 on the newsstands), *Jornal do Brasil*, July 15, 1973, Proposals 3 and 4.



Figure 3.14
Antonio Manuel, "*Exposição de Antonio Manuel (de 0 às 24:00 horas nas bancas de jornais)"* (Exhibition of Antonio Manuel: From 0 to 24:00 on the newsstands), *Jornal do Brasil*, July 15, 1973, Proposals 5 and 6.



Figure 3.15
Paulo Bruscky and Daniel Santiago, classified ad in *Diário de Pernambuco*, on March 25, 1972, *Artemcágado*, from *Arte classificada* series.



6 — Segundo Caderno — DIARIO DE PERNAMBUCO — Recife, sábado, 25 de março de 1972

CLASSIFICADOS

ESTANCIA

GRAÇAS

MADALENA

PARNAMIRIM

SÃO JOSÉ

PIEDADE

STO. ANTÔNIO

TAMARINEIRA

BOA VIAGEM

FLAGRANTES

Valdi COUTINHO

ANIVERSÁRIO DE MARCOS

REVISTA DE ODONTOLOGIA

ARTEMCAGADO

"Você tem cágado? Quer bolar um cágado em exposição? Hoje, a partir das 8 horas, haverá uma exposição-concurso de cágados na Fenninha do DIARIO. Para ser cágado participar, basta ornamentá-lo do jeito que você quiser. Tenha cuidado para não usar materiais que danifiquem o casco do bichinho. Se o seu cágado for julgado o mais interessante, ganhará uma coleção de Dicionários de Belas Artes, prêmio do Livro I. A comissão julgadora é composta por pessoas que tem formação artística suficiente para valorizar os trabalhos apresentados". Eis os dizeres do convite em resumo, ontem, dos artistas Paulo Bruscky e Daniel Santiago. Está faltando o cágado.

OBRAS DO IBGE

Figure 3.16
Paulo Bruscky and Daniel Santiago, *Artemcágado* (Artontortoise), 1972, Pracinha do Diário, Recife.

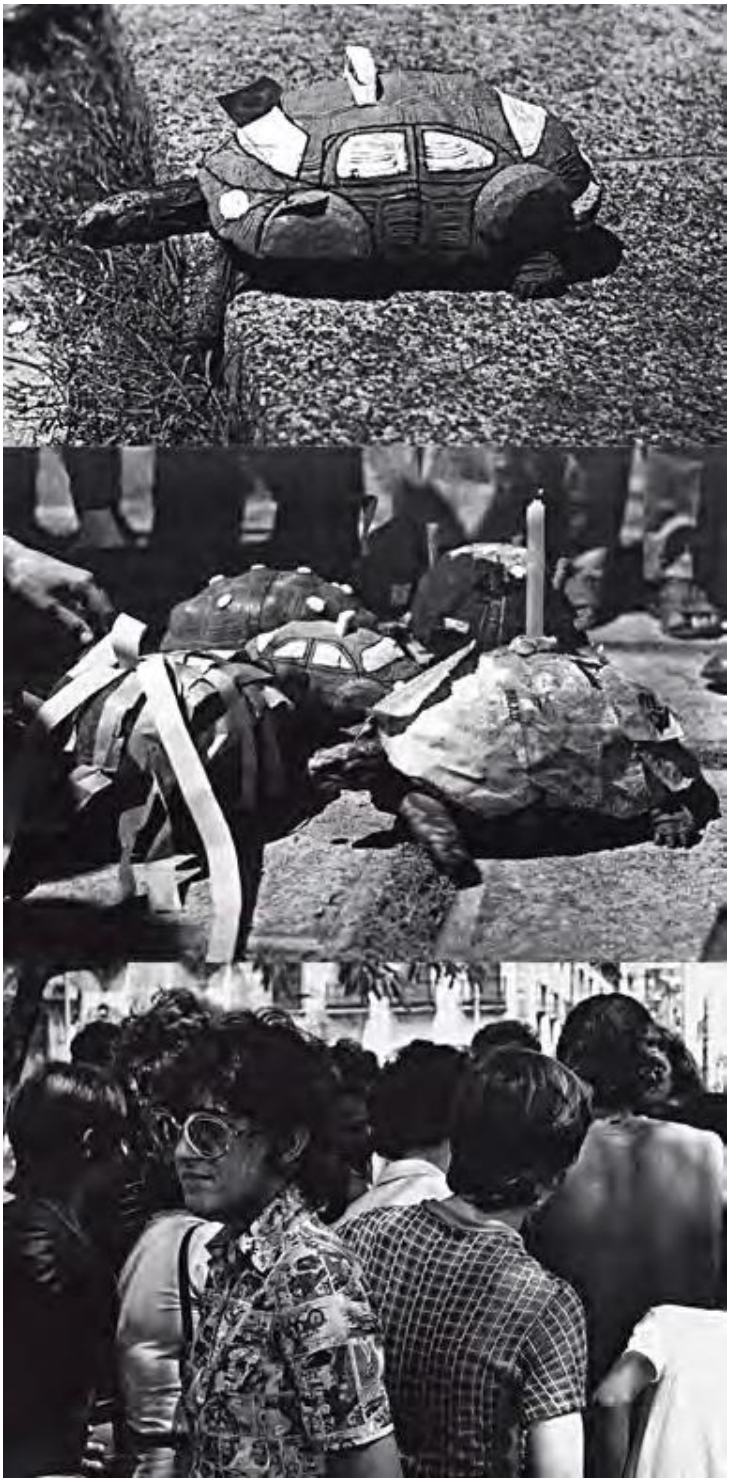
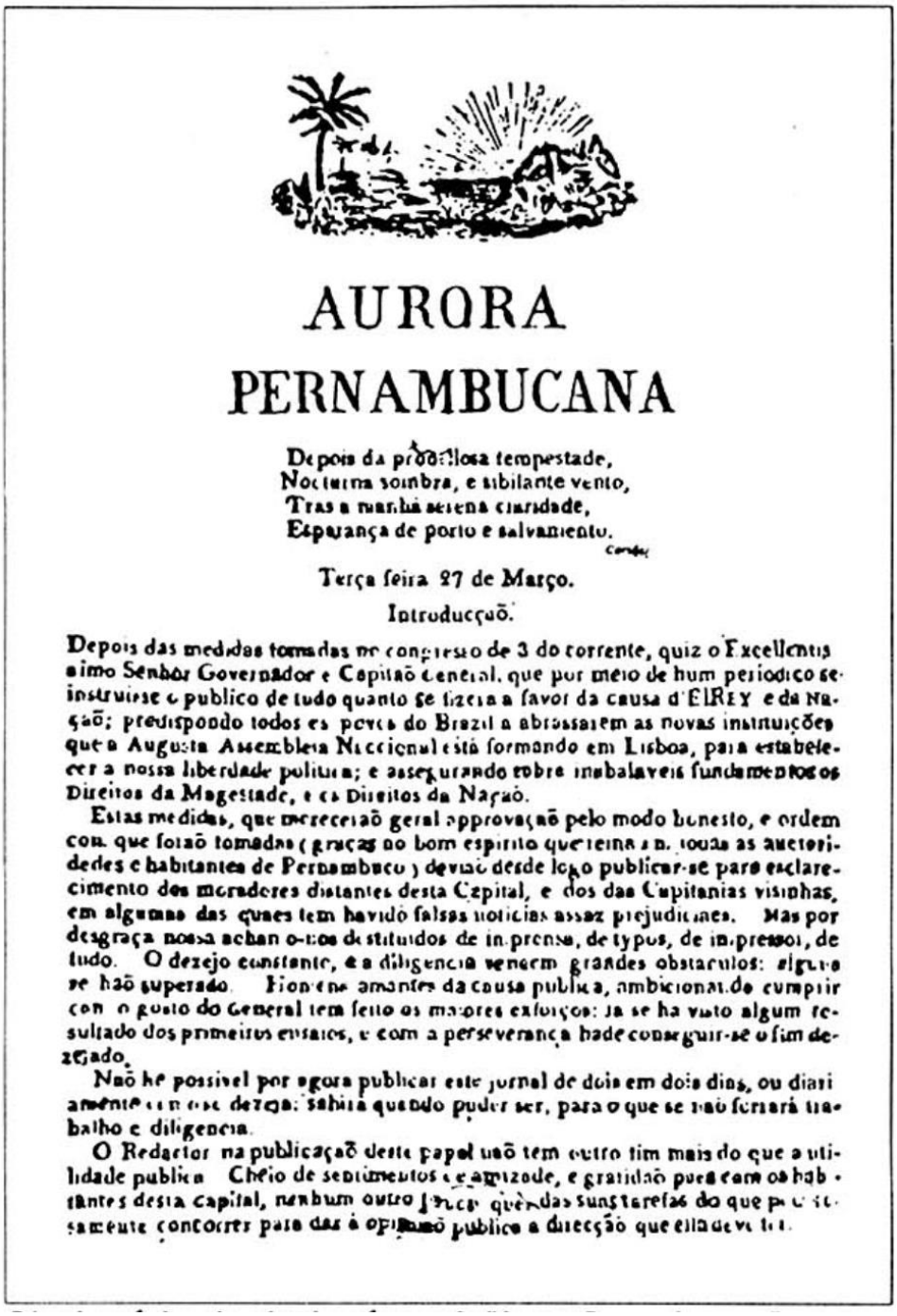


Figure 3.17
Paulo Bruscky and Daniel Santiago, *Artemcágado* (Artontortoise), 1972, Pracinha do Diário, Recife.



Figure 3.18
First issue of newspaper *Aurora Pernambucana*, Recife, March 27, 1821.



AURORA

PERNAMBUCANA

Depois da prodigiosa tempestade,
Nocturna sombra, e sibilante vento,
Tras a manhã serena claridade,
Esperança de porto e salvamento.

Terça feira 27 de Março.

Introducção.

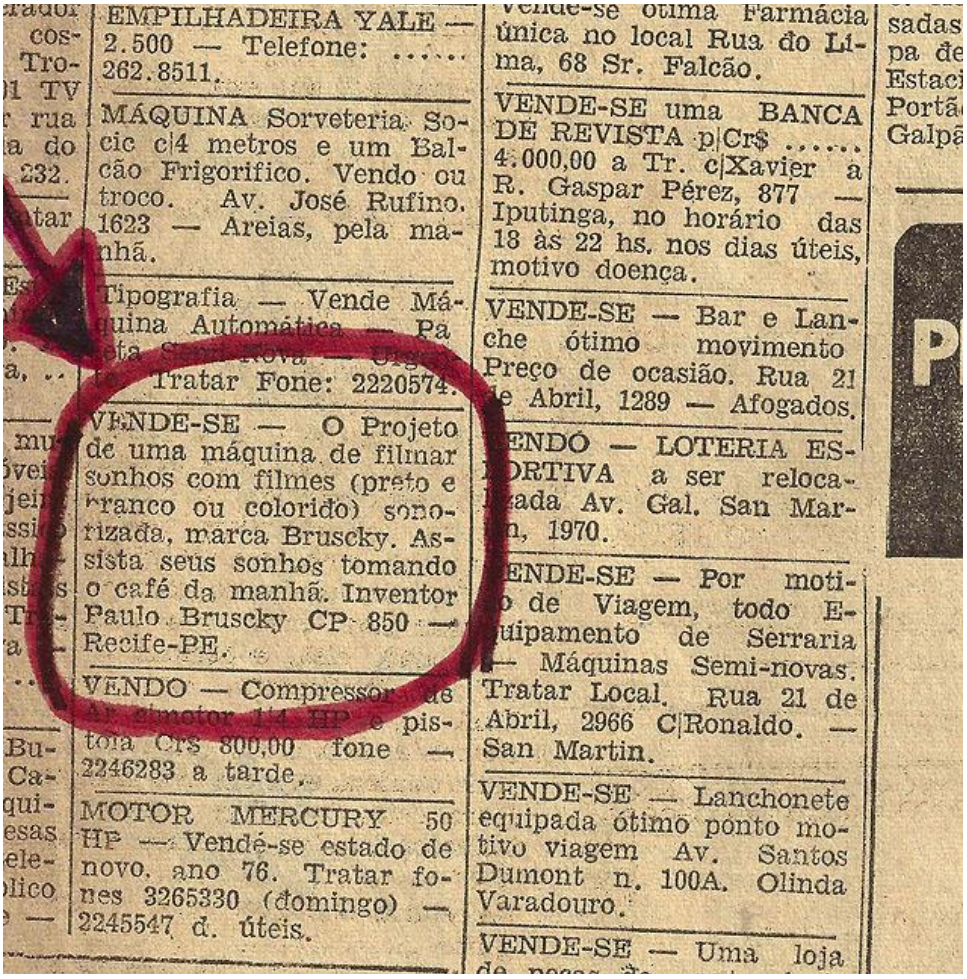
Depois das medidas tomadas no congresso de 3 do corrente, quiz o Excellentissimo Senhor Governador e Capitão General, que por meio de hum periodico se instruirse o publico de tudo quanto se fizera a favor da causa d'ELREY e da Nação; predispondo todos os povos do Brazil a abraçarem as novas instituições que a Augusta Assembleia Nacional está formando em Lisboa, para estabelecer a nossa liberdade politica; e assegurando sobre inabalaveis fundamentos os Direitos da Magestade, e os Direitos da Nação.

Estas medidas, que merecerão geral approvação pelo modo honesto, e ordem com que forão tomadas (graças ao bom espirito que reina em toda as auctoridades e habitantes de Pernambuco) devião desde logo publicar-se para esclarecimento dos moradores distantes desta Capital, e dos das Capitanias visinhas, em algumas das quaes tem havido falsas noticias assaz prejudiciaes. Mas por desgraça nossa achan-nos destituidos de imprensa, de typos, de impressor, de tudo. O dezejo constante, e a diligencia vencem grandes obstaculos: alguns se hão superado. Homens amantes da causa publica, ambicionando cumprir com o gosto do General tem feito os maiores esforços: ja se ha visto algum resultado dos primeiros ensaios, e com a perseverança hade conseguir-se o fim dezejado.

Não he possivel por agora publicar este jornal de dois em dois dias, ou diariamente como este dezeja: sahirá quando puder ser, para o que se não forçará trabalho e diligencia.

O Redactor na publicação deste papel não tem outro fim mais do que a utilidade publica. Cheio de sentimentos de amizade, e gratidão para com os habitantes desta Capital, nenhum outro [illegible] das suas tarefas do que [illegible] concorrer para dar á opinião publica a direcção que ella deve ter.

Figure 3.19
Paulo Bruscky, *A Máquina de Filmar Sonhos* (Dream Recorder), from the series *Arte classificada*, 1977, classified ad.



EMPILHADEIRA YALE — 2.500 — Telefone: ..... 262.8511.

MÁQUINA Sorveteria Socic c|4 metros e um Balcão Frigorifico. Vendo ou troco. Av. José Rufino. 1623 — Areias, pela manhã.

Tipografia — Vende Máquina Automática — Pa... Tratar Fone: 2220574.

VENDE-SE — O Projeto de uma máquina de filmar sonhos com filmes (preto e branco ou colorido) sonorizada, marca Bruscky. Assista seus sonhos tomando o café da manhã. Inventor Paulo Bruscky CP 850 — Recife-PE.

VENDO — Compressor de Ar 2motor 1|4 HP e pistola Cr$ 800,00 fone — 2246283 a tarde.

MOTOR MERCURY 50 HP — Vendé-se estado de novo, ano 76. Tratar fones 3265330 (domingo) — 2245547 d. úteis.

...vende-se ótima Farmácia única no local Rua do Lima, 68 Sr. Falcão.

VENDE-SE uma BANCA DE REVISTA p|Cr$ ..... 4.000,00 a Tr. c|Xavier à R. Gaspar Pérez, 877 — Iputinga, no horário das 18 às 22 hs. nos dias úteis, motivo doença.

VENDE-SE — Bar e Lanche ótimo movimento Preço de ocasião. Rua 21 de Abril, 1289 — Afogados.

...ENDO — LOTERIA ESPORTIVA a ser relocalizada Av. Gal. San Martin, 1970.

...ENDE-SE — Por motivo de Viagem, todo Equipamento de Serraria — Máquinas Semi-novas. Tratar Local. Rua 21 de Abril, 2966 C|Ronaldo. — San Martin.

VENDE-SE — Lanchonete equipada ótimo ponto motivo viagem Av. Santos Dumont n. 100A. Olinda Varadouro.

VENDE-SE — Uma loja...

Figure 3.20
Paulo Bruscky, *Dados Biográficos* (Biographical Data/Dice), 1976.



Figure 3.21
Paulo Bruscky, “Linha poética” (Poetic Line) in *Alto retrato* (Self/Tall Portrait), 1981. The Bronx Museum of the Arts Archive.



Figure 3.22
Paulo Bruscky, *Título de Eleitor Cancelado* (Cancelled Voter Card), 1976, mail art.

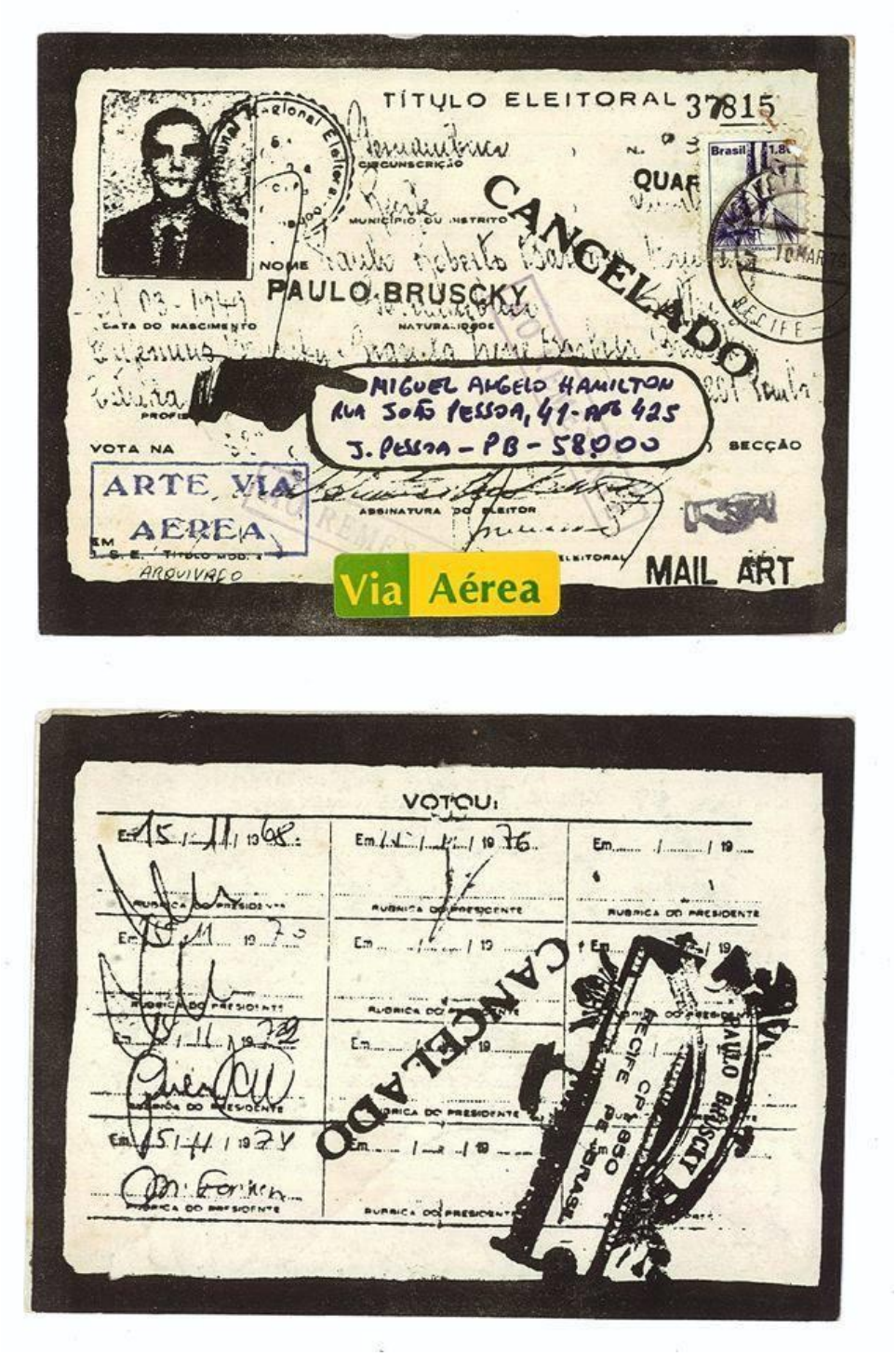


Figure 3.23
Paulo Bruscky, *Pelos Nossos Desaparecidos* (For Our Disappeared, 1976–86), mail art.



Figure 3.24
Paulo Bruscky, *Censurado* (Censored), 1975, airmail.



Figure 3.25
Paulo Bruscky, *O Meu Cérebro Desenha Assim* (My Brain Draws in This Way), 1976, electroencephalograms (EEG).

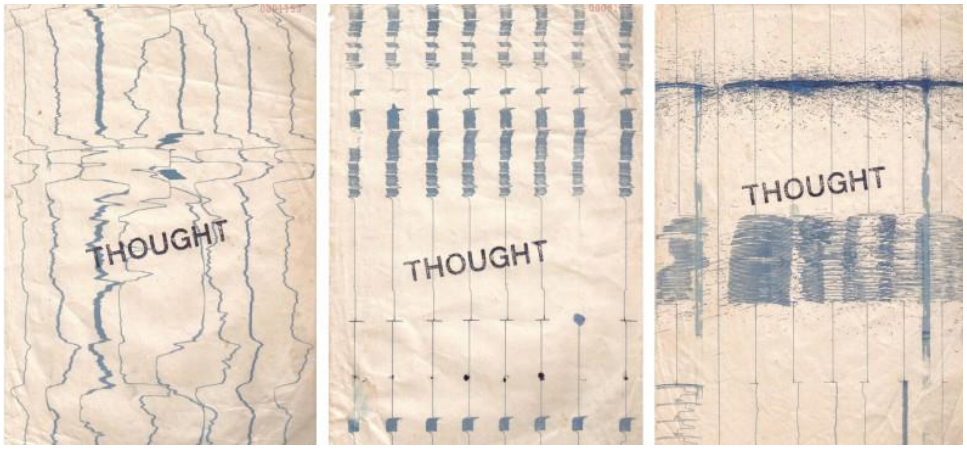


Figure 3.26
Paulo Bruscky, *Sentimentos: um poema feito com o coração* (Feelings: a poem made with the heart), 1976, xerox copy of electrocardiogram and rubber stamps.

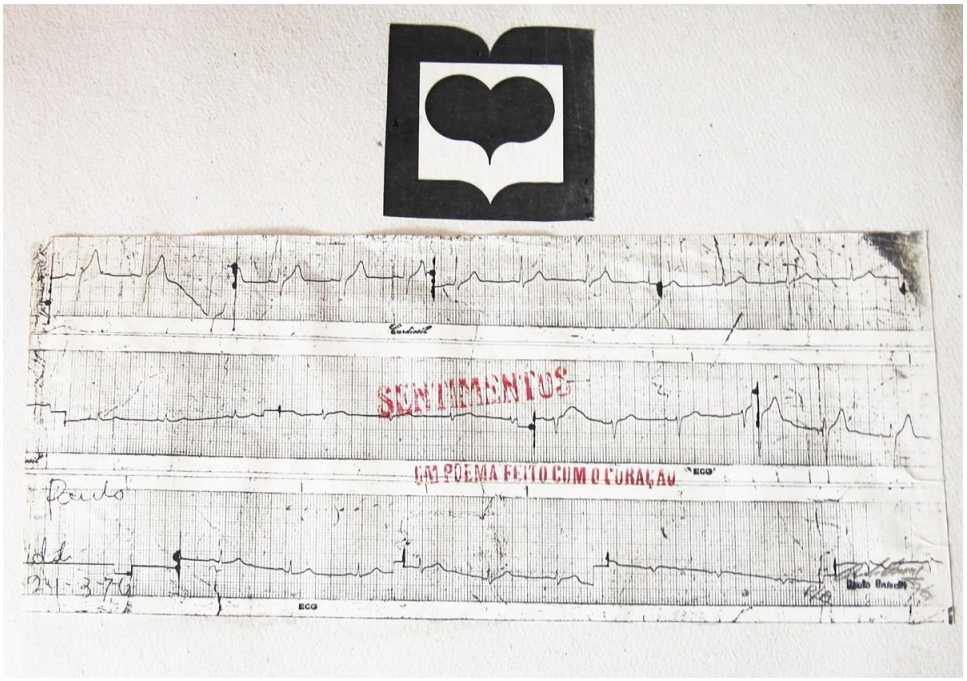


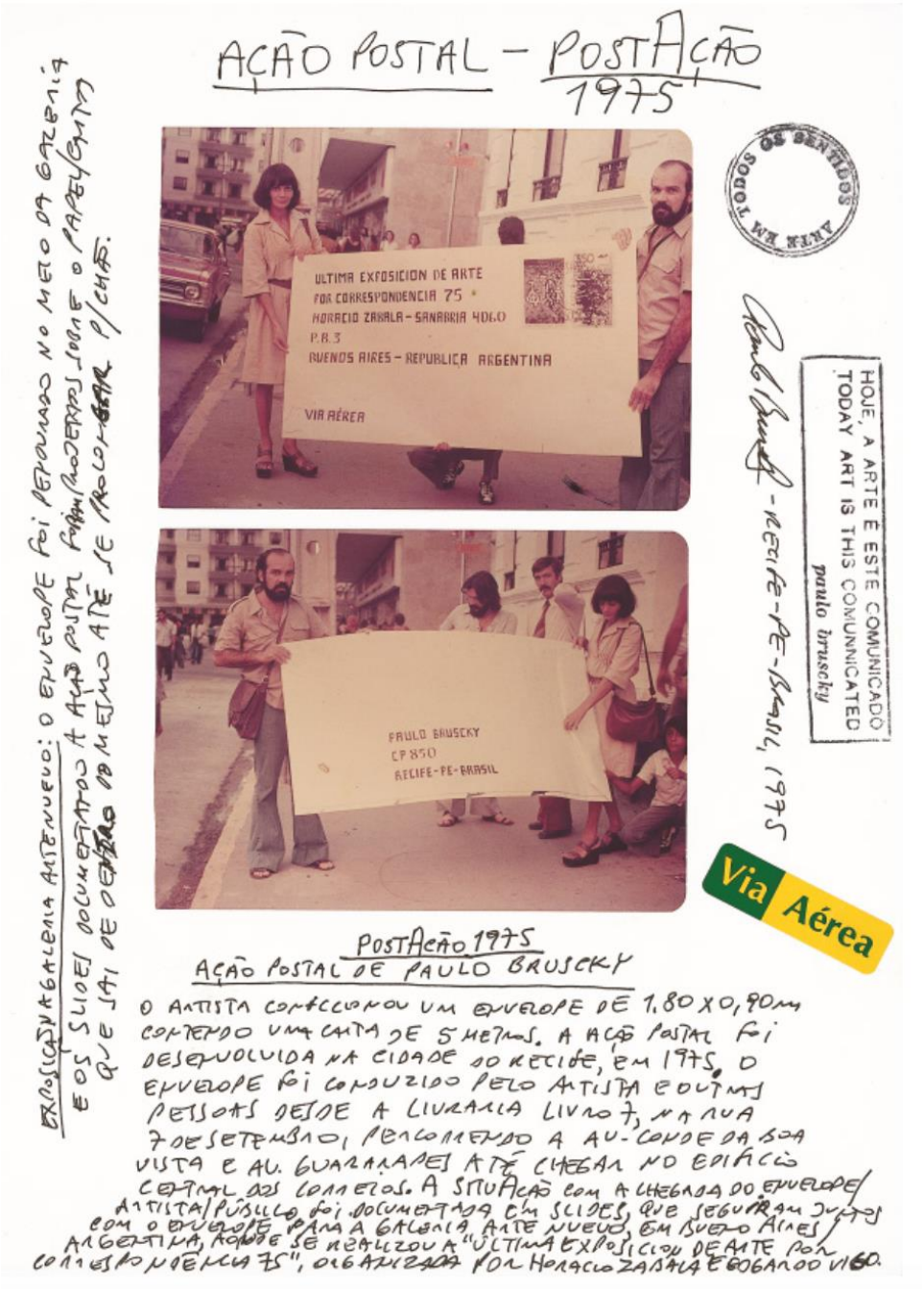
Figure 3.27
Paulo Bruscky, *Autum Radium Retratum* (Radium Self-Portrait), 1976, positive and negative radiography.



Figure 3.28
Paulo Bruscky, *Mail Art*, 1979.



Figure 3.29
Paulo Bruscky, *PostAção* (Post Action), 1975.



Conclusions

Figure 4.1
Frente 3 de Fevereiro, *Monumento Horizontal* (Horizontal Monument), 2004.



Figure 4.2
Frente 3 de Fevereiro, *Racismo Policial: Quem Policia a Polícia?* (Police Racism: Who Polices the Police?), 2004, stikers and posters.



Figure 4.3
Frente 3 de Fevereiro, *Racismo Policial: Quem Policia a Polícia?* (Police Racism: Who Polices the Police?), 2004, rubber stamps on banknotes.



Figure 4.4
Frente 3 de Fevereiro, *Brasil Negro Salve* (Hail, Black Brazil), July 14, 2005, Morumbi stadium, São Paulo; *Onde Estão os Negros?* (Where are the Blacks?), August 14, 2005, Campinas, São Paulo; *Zumbi Somos Nós* (We Are Zumbi), November 20, 2005, stadium Pacaembu, São Paulo.



Figure 4.5
The football teams Fortaleza and Vasco released their lineups for their upcoming match with the omission of Black players' names from the list.

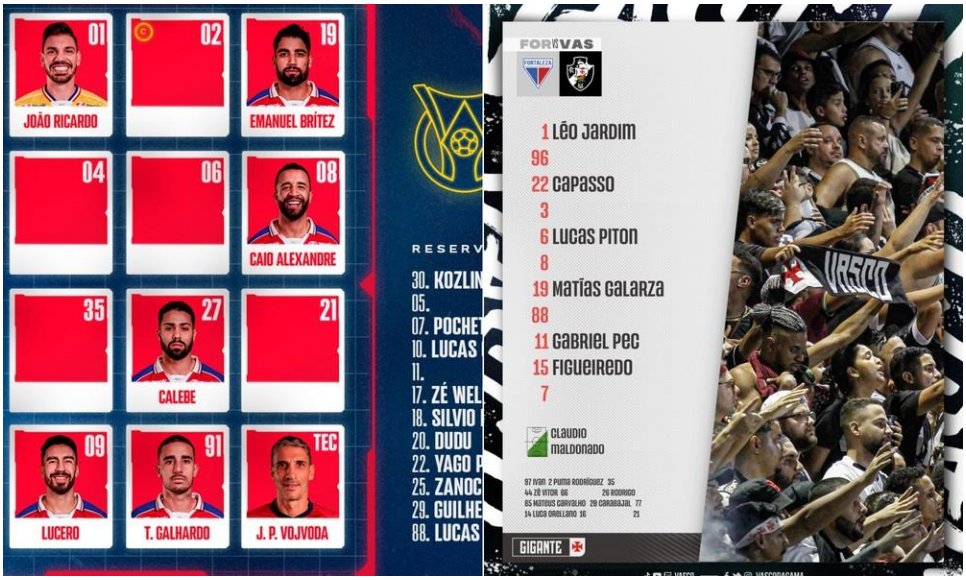


Figure 4.6
Frente 3 de Fevereiro, *Onde Estão Os Negros?* displayed on the exterior of the Museum of Art of São Paulo Assis Chateaubriand, 2018. Photograph: Felipe Neri.



Figure 4.7
Frente 3 de Fevereiro, *Zumbi Somos Nós*, hanging from Prestes Maia occupied building, February 2006.



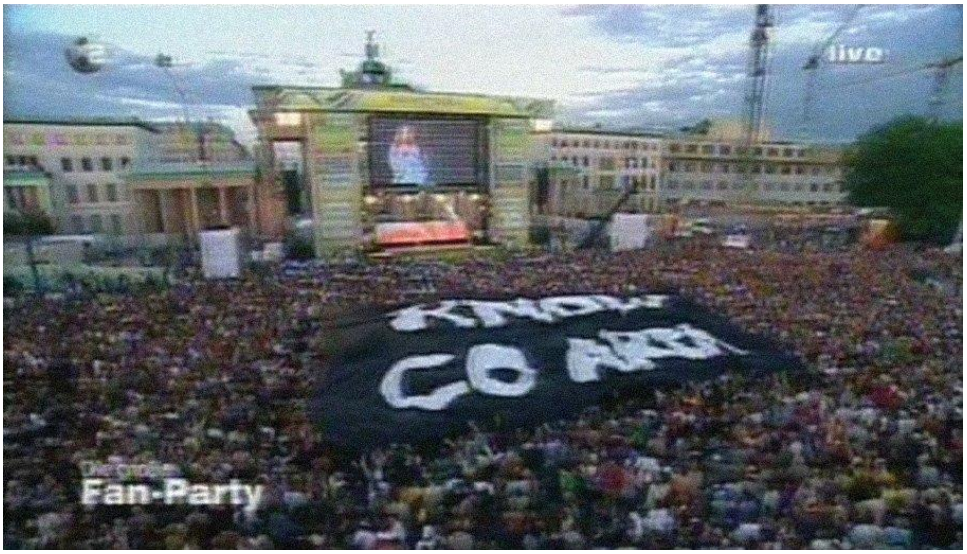
Figure 4.8
Frente 3 de Fevereiro, *Know Go Area*, Berlin, June 2006.



Figure 4.9
Frente 3 de Fevereiro, *Know Go Area*, Berlin, FIFA Fan Fest, June 7, 2006.



Figure 4.10
Frente 3 de Fevereiro, *Know Go Area*, Berlin, FIFA Fan Fest, June 7, 2006.



Appendix 1

Playlist about *malandragem*:
https://open.spotify.com/playlist/2QyivZT1PI5O8Hu5FOYSH2?si=9da317253b6a449b