

Incorporating BLACK PHOENIX

THIRD TEXT

THIRD WORLD PERSPECTIVES ON CONTEMPORARY ART & CULTURE

AUTUMN/WINTER 1994

28/29

Founding Editor: Rasheed Araeen
Editor: Jean Fisher
Editorial Assistants: Richard Dyer, Nicola Gray
Design Layout: Jaime Flórez

Advisory Council: David A Bailey, Guy Brett, Sean Cubitt, Mona Hatoum, Geeta Kapur, Sarat Maharaj, Evelyn Nicodemus, Gerardo Mosquera, Olu Oguibe, Nikos Papastergiadis, Howardena Pindell, Kristian Romare, Ziauddin Sardar, Gayatri C Spivak, Ciliane Tawadros, Judith Wilson.

3	Li Yuan-Chia (1929-1994)	Obituary	Benita Parry
5	Signs of Our Times: A Discussion of Homi Bhabha's <i>The Location of Culture</i>	Paul Gilroy	Bracha Lichtenberg-Eitinger
25	"After the Love Has Gone": Biopolitics and etho-poetics in the black public sphere	Graciela Pollock	David Clarke
47	The almost-missed encounters as eroticized aetials of the Psyche	Elisabetta Andreoli	Guillermo Gómez-Peña
61	The Work of Bracha Lichtenberg-Eitinger: An Introduction	Luciano Figueredo	Sônia Salzstein
71	Between East and West: Negotiations with Tradition and Modernity in Hong Kong Art	Waly Salomão	Gerardo Mosquera
87	Lina Bo Bardi: The Anthropological Gaze	Néstor García Canclini	Clementine Deliss
101	Marcos: The 'Subcommandante of Performance'	Reviews	Luis Camnitzer
105	The Other Malady	Jay Murphy	Tania Guha
117	Hélio Oiticica: Autonomy and the Limits of Subjectivity	Sean Cubitt	Judy Purdom
129	OMage	Jaki Irvine	Mónica Amor
135	Ernesto Pujol: My Homeland	Judy Purdom	Fernando Palma
139	Remaking Passports: Visual Thought in the Debate on Multiculturalism	Jay Murphy	Evelyn Joannou
147	The Fifth Biennial of Havana	Luis Camnitzer	Debate
155	The Young and Restless in Havana Revisited	Jay Murphy	Yinka Shonibare
165	Mritalini Mukherjee: Labyrinths of the Mind	Jay Murphy	Yinka Shonibare
169	V-Topia	Jay Murphy	Yinka Shonibare
173	Who is Jimmie Durham?	Jay Murphy	Yinka Shonibare
181	Jimmie Durham: Original Re-Runs	Jay Murphy	Yinka Shonibare
185	Cartographies: Exploring the limitations of a curatorial paradigm	Jay Murphy	Yinka Shonibare
198	Ik + De Ander	Jay Murphy	Yinka Shonibare
201	Out of the Centre or Without the Centre	Jay Murphy	Yinka Shonibare
203	Jean-Michel Basquiat, please do not turn in your grave, it's only TENQ	Jay Murphy	Yinka Shonibare
	Reply to Yinka Shonibare	Jay Murphy	Yinka Shonibare



Hélio Oiticica Autonomy and the Limits of Subjectivity

Sônia Salzstein

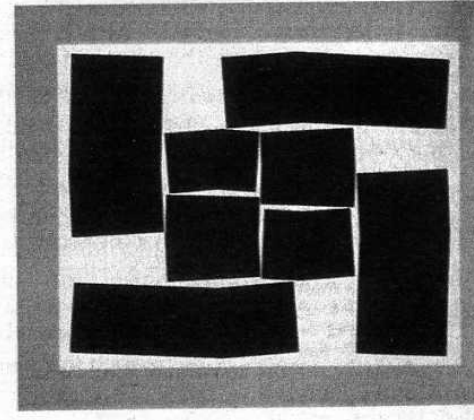
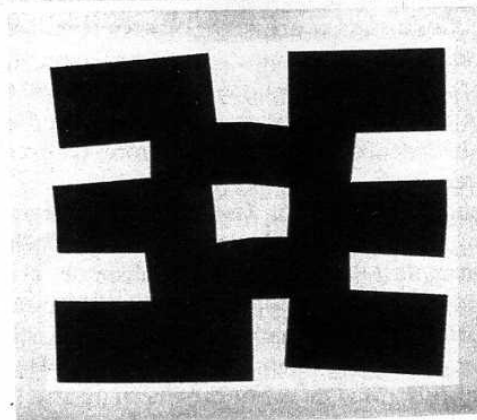
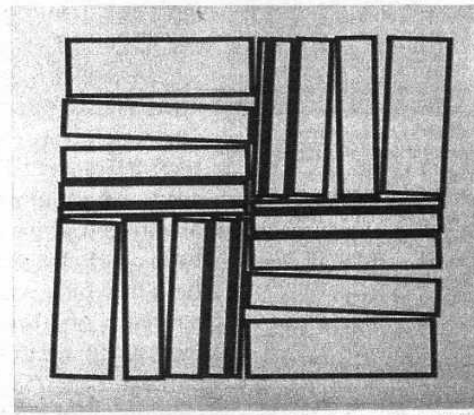
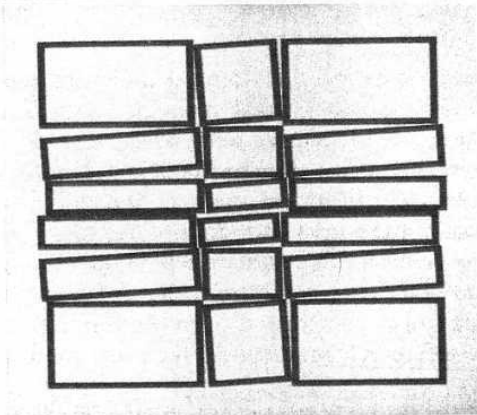
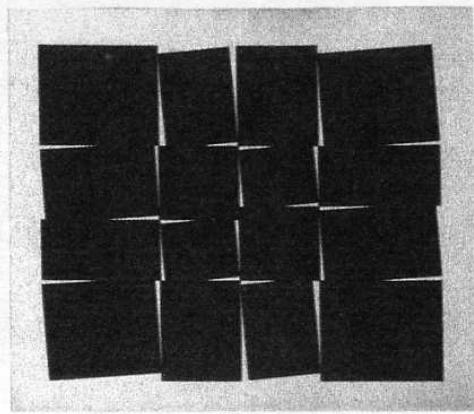
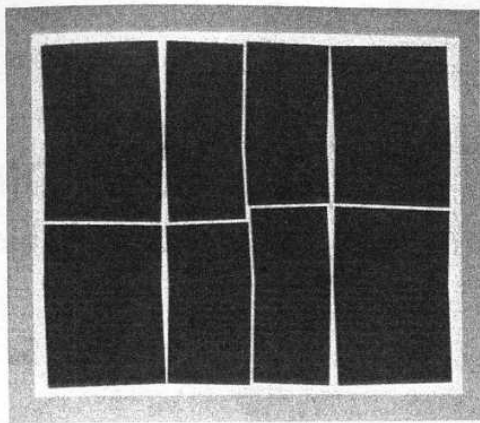
It has become a commonplace in the Brazilian art milieu to refer to Hélio Oiticica's work, usually associated with that of Lygia Clark and the Neo-Concrete group, as the inaugural moment of what constitutes 'Brazilian Contemporary Art'. To understand such a term in Brazil is not as easy as it may seem. Much more than the clear historical evidence through which we are able to recognise ourselves in the works and ideas of our time, the assertion here of what is *contemporary* calls for the mediation of an ideologically loaded injunction of a Reason that would *correct* and *redeem* the misery of a colonial past. Brazil would be the great emblem of this impossibility.

In order for a non-Brazilian reader better to contextualise the issue, it would be necessary to say that our cultural process has always been seen through the ghost of a failed modernity,¹ or, at most, by a suspicion that our art, deviously integrated to modern tradition, would be condemned to regard itself as a subsidiary occurrence in the contemporary debate, without the autonomy of coining a linguistic productivity of its own and, therefore, without the choice of interfering in the debate itself.

Even the iconoclastic modernism of our Twenties² which bequeathed us one of the most stimulating and original explanations of the *possibility of creating art in a culturally dependent context* (the idea of cannibalism or *antropofagia*) — even this gesture of appropriating hegemonic culture with shrewdness and discriminatory whim,³ turned out to be merely a virtual mark still left to be developed in its innermost conceptual dilemmas, beyond the ideological pro-phyllaxis of everything that suffocated us in our provincial misery. The modernist artists' impulse towards formal renewal was indeed enfeebled during the Thirties and Forties, through an eclecticism blown by the atmosphere of Socialist Realism; or diversely, it has taken the short-cut of isolated *démarches*, as in the works of Lasar Segall, Oswaldo Goeldi, Volpi and a few others. Brazilian art, therefore, had to wait until the following decade so that the recalcitrant process of cultural modernisation⁴ could establish and diffuse itself within the debate to a social dimension, now corresponded by the coun-

1 The argument concerning the inexorable bankruptcy of Brazilian modernity's cultural project is basically sustained by the idea that modernism could not work out amongst us unless through (a permanently updated) authoritarian injunction of a Reason that would *correct* and *redeem* the misery of a colonial past. Brazil would be the great emblem of this impossibility.

2 1922 is the date of 'Modern Art Week', an event that served to emulate the Modernist Movement which was then being articulated in São Paulo, and which gathered together artists like Anita Malfatti, Tarsila do Amaral (in Paris during the 'Week', she joined the movement subsequently), Emiliano Di Cavalcanti, Victor Brechret and others, embraced by the spirit of Oswald de Andrade and the intellectual formulations of writer and critic, Mario de Andrade, both of whom were concerned (although in different aesthetic postures) with the foundation of a *modern* national culture, capable of conciliating the exaltation of 'local' values with a cultured apprenticeship to European modernity. Converted though it may have been into a truly national institution, one which wound up



Metaesquemas, 1958, gouache on paper, 55 x 64 cm.

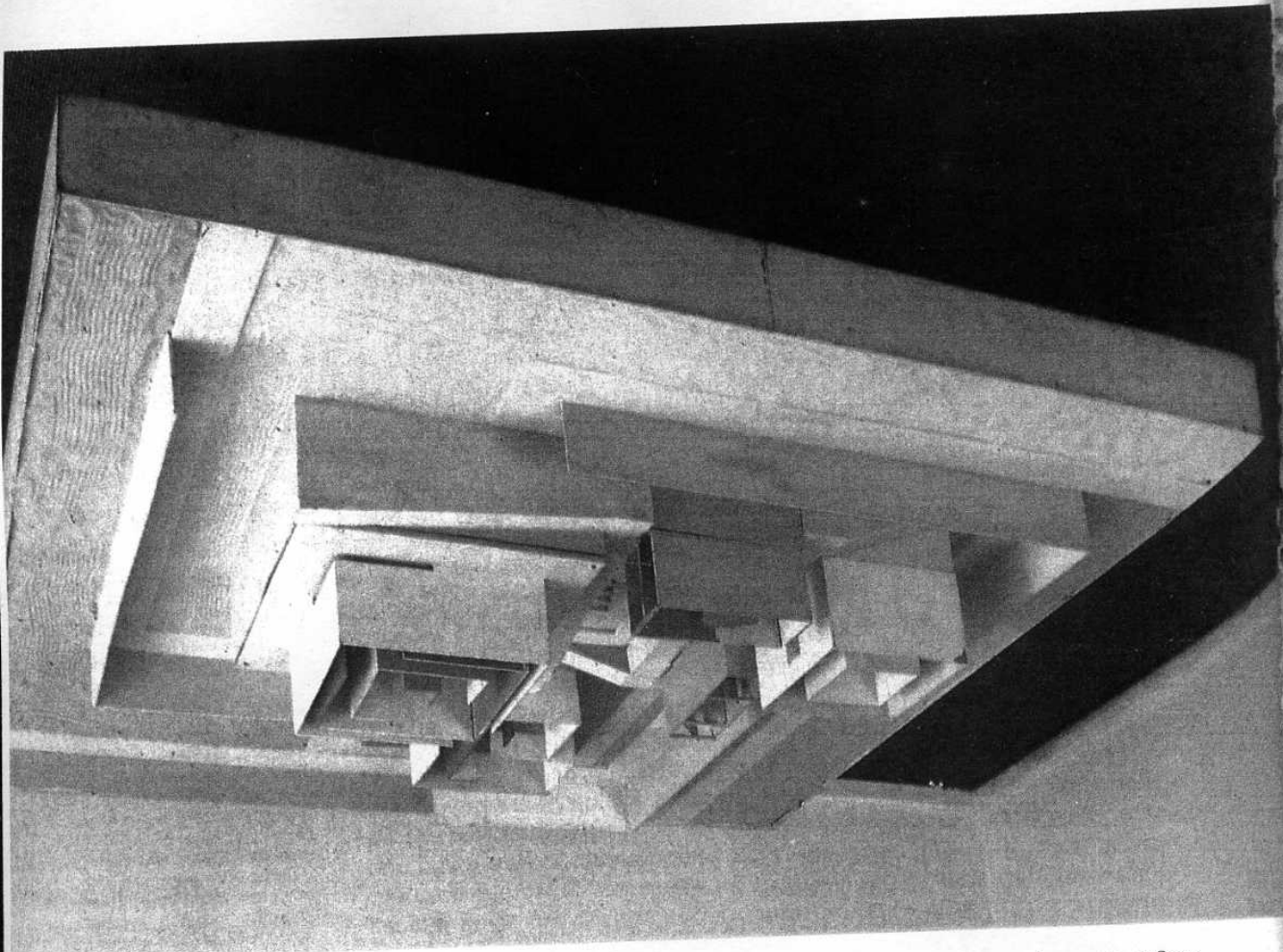
try's programme of industrial modernisation. Modern Brazilian architecture (whose inaugural steps may already be found in the Thirties), *Cinema Novo* and *Bossa Nova*, all emerge, during the passage from the Fifties to the Sixties, as paradigms of the possible precipitation of an emancipated cultural experience within the postcolonial framework of a new and traditionless country.

It was then that significant discussions on Brazilian art began. Undoubtedly, the most articulate testimonies of the transformational impulse are the work of the Concrete group in São Paulo, the Neo-Concrete group in Rio de Janeiro and the influence exerted by art critics Mário Pedrosa and Ferreira Gullar, not only within these groups, but in the opening up of a new field of interest in modern art within our circles. They were able to articulate within a broader reflection the aesthetic problems contained in the horizon of modernisation and could thus assert the due political dimension demanded by such problems *vis-à-vis* the consolidation strategy of a new cultural experience, despite the fact that it had to blossom in a peripheral context.

repressing an understanding of Brazilian modernity as a tortuous and ambiguous process, reverberating prominently even to this day in the Brazilian cultural context (through the unfulfilled expectations that it bequeathed to us), the event, in fact, marked the first moment in which Brazilian art reflected in a critical manner about the possibility of creation within a culturally dependent situation.

3 The term 'anthropophagy' (cannibalism), in Oswald de Andrade's *Cannibalist Manifesto* (*Manifesto Antropofágico*), designates the allegory of colonised man

Maquette for *Hunting Dogs Project*, 1961, composed of 5 Penetrables, Buried Poem by Ferreira Gullar, Integral Theatre by Reinaldo Jardim.



The São Paulo Concrete movement responded to the deadlock, which modernisation in a dependent cultural ambience would inevitably encounter, with the positive belief that a change of visuality in an uncultured country would be brought about in the course of the process of industrial modernisation. For these artists the final integration of Brazilian art to European modernity would be accomplished as a natural result of the universal progress of form, whose conceptual premise they would seek in the constructive rationality of the School of Ulm, also disseminated amongst us by Max Bill.

Suspicious of the technicist content and dogmatic tone of this positive integration into the ideology of modernist internationalism, the Neo-Concrete dissidents reacted to that same deadlock by questioning the idea of a belated integration which would be accomplished by 'rectifying the lateness', and, finally, by questioning the assumption of a universal rationality of form. At any rate, the perception of our social and cultural delay was secondary to artists faced with an aesthetic project whose scope strived for nothing more nor less than the reform of a psychic, interior subjectivity which would be both psychological and historical, thus rendering conspicuous, and equally strong, the ideas of freedom and social praxis.

Although the central interest of this text is the work of Hélio Oiticica, I have thus far made use of a generic tone and the distanced perspective with which one speaks of groups and movements, with the intention of affording, along general lines, the cultural background through which we focus the crucial insertion of these movements and, above all, the artists within the configuration of a Brazilian contemporary art. I would like, however, to call attention here to the fact that the work produced within the scope of the Neo-Concrete group, and especially the work of Hélio Oiticica and Lygia Clark, has been so frequently disappropriated of its poetic and formal specificities, as to be introduced as the touchstone of Brazilian contemporary art and simultaneously as a pledge of a Brazilian cultural identity.

It is not that this interpretation does not contain a great deal of truth, at least insofar as the first part is concerned. But, especially in the case of Hélio Oiticica, I think that such an interpretation might surreptitiously overwhelm his work with a sociological argument and situate it within an uncomfortable historical perspective. One loses sight of its aesthetic thought, of the intervention it achieves not only in *universal* terms of the question of local dependency but also, and at the same time, in the new conditions under which the problems of form began to appear in the international context of art. This means that the question of emancipation, as it is asserted in Oiticica's work, concerns not only the will to be freed from all mimicry to which a peripheral milieu is subject, but also the confrontation of a new cultural reality, hindered by the fetish of the market and the gradual substitution of the paradigms of form to have been progressively devoured.

At any rate, it is quite understandable that the changes which have occurred in our cultural debate since the beginning of that decade, came to provide the ideal vanishing point upon which to project our contemporary art, even at the price of forging a historical framework and an identity for works which seek precisely the full temporality of phenomenon and emancipation from all moral prescription, even if it were for the good cause of the local culture. It is time, in this sense, to cease from merely *identifying* Oiticica's work with something outside it — be it international contemporary art or Brazilian culture — and to begin to recognise it within this diluted field, agitated by transitory

4 I should mention that I consider the Fittes methodologically as the moment when our country entered modernity's *reflexive age*, able to think of itself in reciprocity with irradiating cultural centres and thus able to recognise itself as protagonist in the lineage opened by modern tradition.

who, in order to react to the burden of subservience, devours the ideas of the coloniser, so that the relationship of domination, marked by the resentment and impotence of the colonised, is substituted by the cunning appropriation of the coloniser, of the very possibility of domination. I quote two maxims of the aforementioned *Manifesto*: "I asked a man what the Law was. He answered that it was the guarantee of the exercise of possibility. The man's name was Galli Mathias. I ate him." And: "Cannibalism, Absorption of the sacred enemy for his transformation into Totem." See Oswald de Andrade, *Revista de Antropofagia*, Year I, No I, May 1928. Oswald was the impassioned ideologue of the modernist movement, having launched the Cannibalist Manifesto in 1928.

objects, where indetermination, uncertainty and the lack of formal limits, in their radical negativity, are what constitute the work's actuality.

Let us first consider the heterodox position of Oiticica's work within the local context's process of modernisation. As we know, the conceptual framework within which Brazilian art had developed since the modernism of the Twenties basically questions the possibilities of a secondary cultural branch dependent upon the universalist birth of modern tradition, and constitutes its own cultural experience within the trails blazed by this tradition. Oiticica's great reflective turnaround with regard to this conceptual frame was, shall we say, to have *universalised* the problem of cultural heteronomy, repositing it now as a problem of *emancipation* and *freedom*, relevant to each and every artistic context.

What I feel to be crucial in this gesture is that the artist, having caused the dependency problem to draw back from its 'external' motivations (the torments of the matrix vs periphery and coloniser vs colonised conflict) to the subjective sphere of liberty and cultural autonomy, his uneasiness will have been steered simultaneously towards the very conditions of constituting subjectivity in the contemporary world. Thus, the emerging of the subjective sphere that is to be introduced in Oiticica's work as a heterogeneous component, intertwaving of individual and collective instances — will depend on a profound revision of the presuppositions of form left to us by modern art.

Before we continue to analyse the issue of subjectivity (which, as we shall

Bacia Bólida I (Basin Bolide I), 1966.

Photo: Guy Brett. Courtesy: Projeto HC



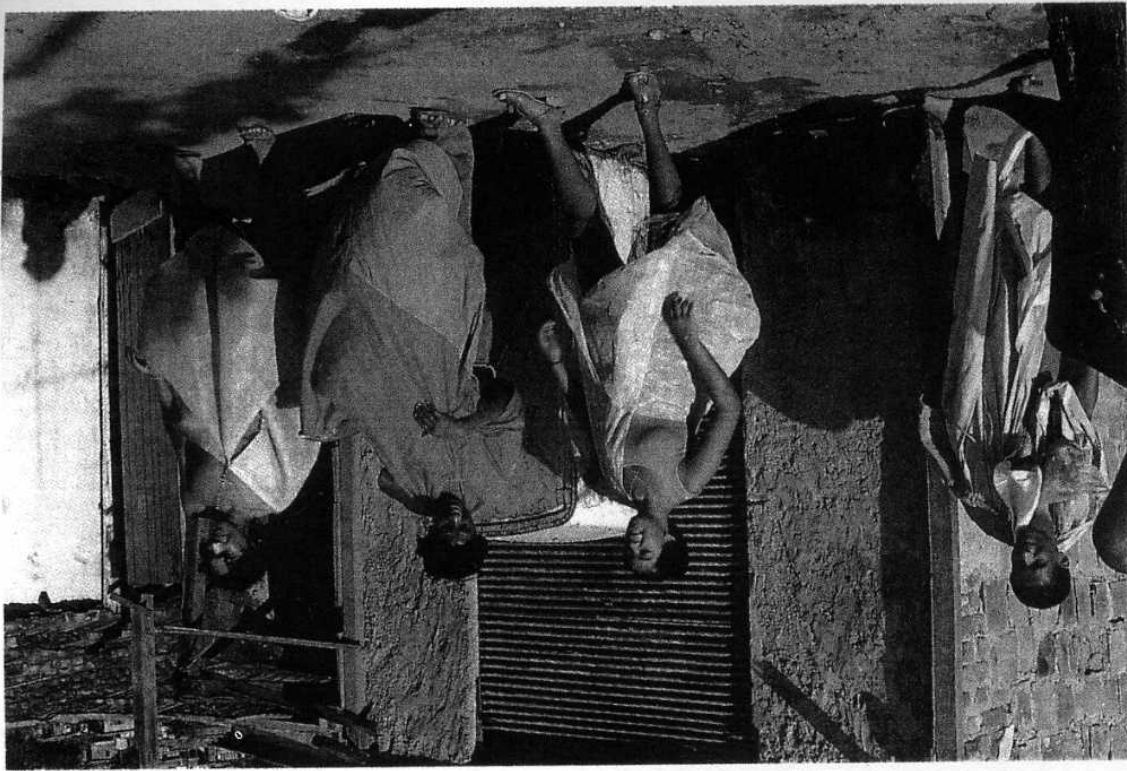
rich
ter,
ity,
isa-
der-
um,
y of
tive
rete
ated
nd,
. At
tists
less
both
ng,
have
nich
ong
icial
ura-
tion
rete
een
be
usly
at
lio
elm
able
en-
ncy
ans
llen
l by
orm
ned
red
ide
ven
nich
rom
ure.
with
ture
tory

see, will result in an extremely original conception of form) I feel it might be expedient to discuss the way in which the artist reverted the feeling of impotence inherent to the experience of domination, to a vigorous feeling of starting a new culture, not despite, but on account of the lack of tradition and history. Notwithstanding the suffocating climate of conservatism and provincialism, it was as though Oiticica had diagnosed the problem of dependency in a Nietzschean manner: we should in this case find ourselves before an unachieved subjectivity, not culturally constituted, for it can only manifest itself through the model of the European tradition, which it denounces and where it cannot be part of it except in a reactive mode, as a symptom. It would therefore be necessary to establish a sort of *cultural zero*, which would dismantle the symbiotic relationship between dominator and dominated implicit within that model, and which would finally *de-hierarchise* the positions in question. This diagnosis could, at any rate, be universalised in order that it might be equally effective in considering the problem of autonomy in art, in view of the fetishising power of the market and the accelerated institutionalising of form within the context of contemporary art.

Nothing better to express this *cultural zero* — which is not privation, but the condition for the possibility of a 'new culture' — than the constructive lineage of modernity, especially the one stemming from Mondrian and from Neo-

Mosquito of Mangueira with Parangolé P4 Cape 1, opening Plastic Bolide 1, 1966.





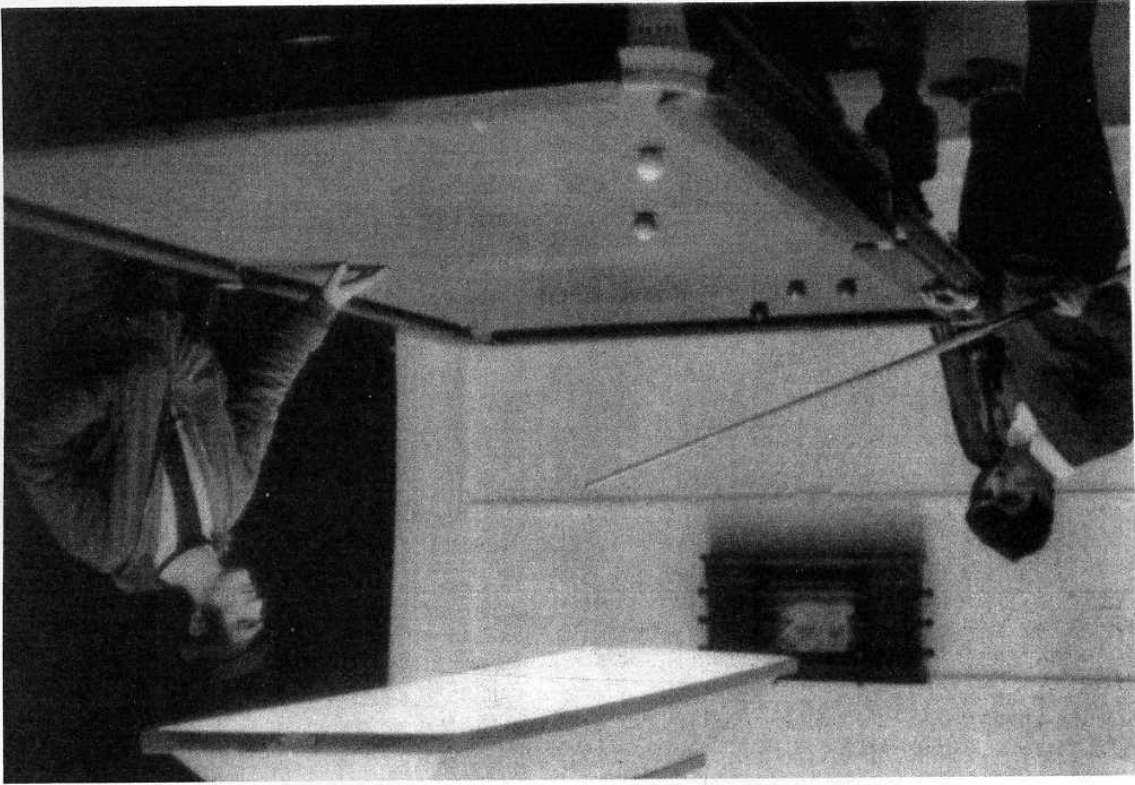
Dancers of Mangueira including Nininha and Nildo of Mangueira with Capes.

Let us retrace the steps which led Oiticica to attribute a central place to the theme of subjectivity in his work. First, as already stated, he reinstated art as the subject's fullest exercise of autonomy — not because he had conceived

him had been reduced. On the contrary, with this gesture Oiticica demonstrated the local validity of the constructive premises, attained outside their natural *habitat* but now appropriated under a strictly autonomous point of view. The term 'constructive', so insistently referred to in the artist's writings,⁵ comes to designate the creative will of a culture in the making and, in a broader sense, the possibility of rethinking the question of form within a wider aesthetic framework, freed from the burden of tradition and the linguistic mediations which would be determined by such tradition. In fact, the immediate projection of the sphere of subjectivity upon a horizon that is both aesthetic and social (the *cultural zero*), allowed him to elaborate a holistic notion of form, a notion with which he responded vehemently to the phenomenon of professionalisation and specialisation to which he felt that much of the art which surrounded

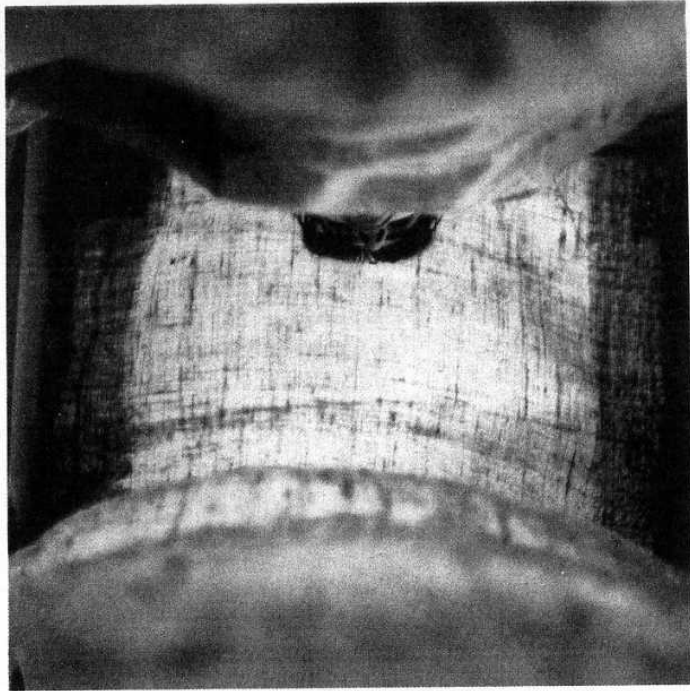
Reason. to push the local culture latecomer forward in the inexorable march of modernisation of constructive extraction, should not at all be understood as a strategy recognises and defines a place for modern Brazilian art in the European tradition of constructive extraction, should not at all be understood as a strategy of deepest aspirations as to an aesthetic revolutionary experience, capable of becoming totally blended in a *social form*. This stated, the fact that the artist Plasticism, and in whose heritage Oiticica would find affirmation for his

⁵ See mainly, Hélio Oiticica, *Aspiro ao Grande Labirinto*, Rocco, Rio de Janeiro, 1968.



Appropriation, Snooker Room, after Van Gogh's Night Café atmosphere, 1966.

Bed Bolide 1, Suprasensortal, 1968.



that such an autonomy could be previously attained in the mirror of consciousness but because, on the contrary, he projected it in its crudest worldliness, destined to adapt itself, but also to modify its social circumstance. Seen through this prism, it might be said that Oiticica constituted a strange presence in the art scene of his time, since the artists for whom the issue of subjectivity had emerged with equal strength — the most evident examples for us today are Jackson Pollock, Eva Hesse, much of body art, and even such quasi-lyrical artists as Yves Klein — saturated it with the tragic sense of the impossibility and dismemberment of form. There is still the exceptional case of Joseph Beuys⁶ in whose 'social sculpture' we can see something akin to the psychic and social subjectivity experienced by Oiticica. But the fact is that Beuys, at the very moment of its social appearance, bestows upon subjectivity a moral (and — why not? — ecological) sense, something unthinkable in the work of the Brazilian artist.

Secondly, Hélio Oiticica wanted to safeguard a plastic nature — gratuitous and discretionary — for this subjectivity, which would both link and separate it from its social instance. Its transformative potential lies exactly within the whimsical oscillation of this movement. In this manner, that which I have designated as the sphere of subjectivity — and which, if ideally taken, would be merely an abstract *topos*, inaccessible to the intersubjective demands of social life — is manifested in Oiticica's poetics, at the very core of this movement which I have described, that is, as a dynamic phenomenon which permanently seeks to anchor its *social form*. I therefore see the concepts of form and subjectivity as intrinsically linked in the artist's work, so that we may never consider them as absolute entities.

It might, at this stage, be asked why I avail myself of an idea as systematic and absolute as form to designate a work whose most outstanding characteristics are precisely indeterminateness and transitoriness. Oiticica's trajectory cannot, after all, be understood as the sum of distinct objects materialised in each work, nor can the stages of this trajectory be dryly described as the results of successive linguistic developments, legitimised by the vocabulary of art history. "I don't produce works", he said, but rather a "metacriticism of the production of works",⁷ and it is in this sense that Mário Pedrosa's definition of art, beyond all objectification, as the "experimental exercise of liberty", fits so perfectly to the artist's work.

Although nourished by strict and methodical thought, the artist's work presents itself as an imponderable and heterogeneous body, which blends and equates value, attitudes towards life, aesthetic acts and personal impressions on most diverse topics, from the Brazilian cultural situation (*tropicalismo* and *cinema novo*) to reflections on art history and aesthetic perception, which intersect one another in a frenetic rhythm and a projective dimension, that far exceeds the realm of visuality.

For both explanatory purposes and the sake of a synthetic understanding of Hélio Oiticica's trajectory, let us detain ourselves at the path which goes from the *Metaesquemas*⁸ of the late Fifties to the suspended plates of the *Bilaterais* and their successors hanging more freely in space,⁹ through to the *Bólides*¹⁰ and *Parangolés*¹¹ of the mid Sixties, and on to the environments and environmental proposals of the last years of that decade and the early Seventies. We may clearly follow the steps taken by the artist through that condensed production which is recorded in his writings in a style at once colloquial and reflective. He wishes first to exempt the limits of an art understanding as a *tout court* visuality and, beginning with the *Metaesquemas*, whose very title

6 Of all the artists listed here, Pollock and Yves Klein were undoubtedly known to Oiticica, as they are mentioned in his writings.

7 Hélio Oiticica, "Experimental/Experimental", *Grupos 72*, Hélio Oiticica/Grupo Frente/*Metaesquemas*, texts by Luciano Figueredo and Hélio Oiticica, São Paulo, Galeria de Arte, São Paulo, 20 March-21 April, 1989.

8 The title refers to a vast series of paintings on paper, elementary visual schemes, in which perception is constantly led to oscillate between a virtual original form and its movements of advance, retreat and dispersion, which animate the surface.

9 *Bilaterais*, *Spatial Reliefs*, *Nuclei* and *Pentraíais*, to be somewhat succinct, are works which describe, from the first to the last, the processes by which elementary geometric forms are freed from the surface of the wall in order to acquire progressively complex and involved structures, a constitutive spatial presence.

10 A generic concept applied to diverse objects taken from everyday life, such as glass and plastic bottles, or wooden boxes filled with earth, liquids and other sensuous materials. They imply the decisive movement of subjectivity towards the social instance, as they are, mostly, a sort of objects *trouves* saturated with the notion of use and social circulation.

11 Cape-like sorts of clothing in fabrics of varied textures, and extraordinarily plastic and flexible structure, revealing the social expressiveness of the body.

already points to this intention, moves on in the direction of spatial structures, which come to be considered as *actual* configurations in space.

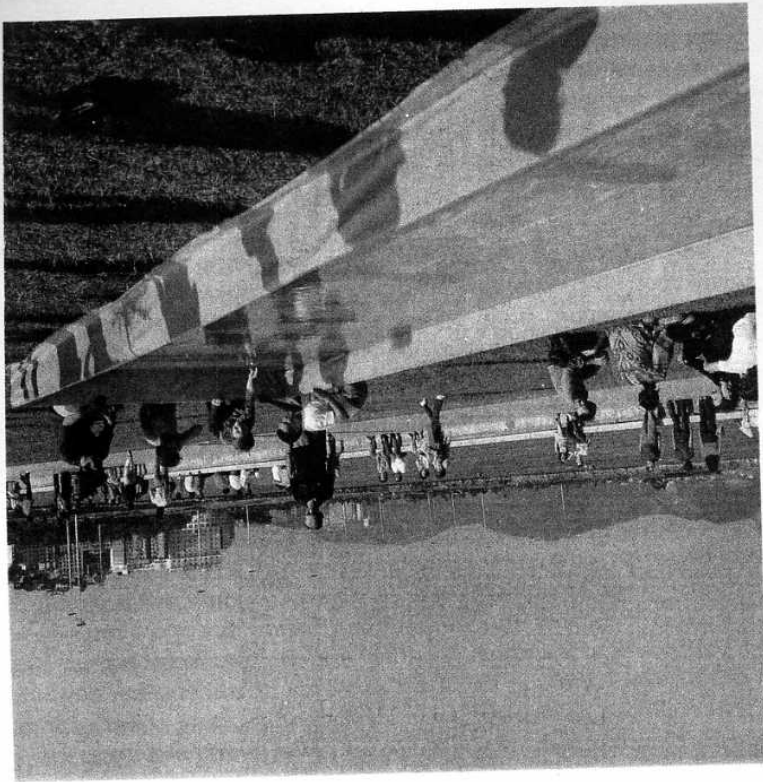
From the *Parangolés* onward, and between them and the environments and proposals, an aesthetic experience occurs which seeks its motives before the hypostasis in whatever object takes place, and the *Bólides* or other objects which came later cannot be exclusively described as visual phenomena. They are inscriptions that bear more strength within the sphere of a broader aesthetic project, inscriptions that strive to bloom in an immediately cultural soil, from which form would then emerge inextricably fused with the 'extra-artistic' contents of life. The scant and elementary presence of the works that then followed, and in contrast to this presence, the potency that they reveal in the appropriation of space, indicate that the form, in such condition, is necessarily something indeterminate, which can only realise itself if it can burst the niche of monadic and contemplative subjectivity, and if it could be projected in its intersubjective vulnerability.

It is important to observe that Hélio Oiticica is far from a practice of the informal or from a discourse about the impossibility of the form, such as we would, for example, tend to consider a great part of *arte povera*. Inversely, I would say he seeks the *form of forms*, the swift and hypothetical movement where signifier and signified coincide, or, in the still inadequate terms of polarity, the moment when form and matter would be precipitated in the shape of a psychic and social subjectivity. Returning to Mário Pedrosa, it is possible to say that, at this moment, the 'symptoms of this extreme, radical aesthetic refinement, with an extreme psychic radicalism, which involves all personality — the aesthetic lack of conformity, satanic sin and that individual sin — psychosocial lack of conformity' would be fused.¹²

Such a notion of form would be incomplete, however, were there not in Oiticica's work a perfect encounter between the cultured tradition and the popular sensibility that I see throughout Brazilian social life and which is generally expressed in the survival strategies of a cultural experience shaped on contrasts.

As I see it, such an encounter is perfect, because it does not result from a moral prescription, from a strident decision of consciousness, exasperated by its own solipsism. Let us give some examples. I mentioned above the scant and elementary presence of objects and materials used by the artist. They appear often almost like *objets trouvés*, that is, objects and materials processed in the commerce of social life, thus charged with a sort of surplus value of the cultural process. Before continuing, I don't wish to leave any misunderstanding as to what concerns the term *objet trouvé* I use, which here does not at all indicate any ambition of the artist to theorise for the universe of art the effects of the appropriation of objects related to other contexts; I am merely trying to express, in the best possible way, the idea that Hélio Oiticica was always interested in objects whose social genealogy could never be forgotten. As for the rest, the artist never gave up the possibility of transforming these objects, analytically decomposing them, affecting them in their more secret functional structures, and then continually redoing them in accordance with the new prerogatives of subjectivity. (See, for example, the singularly remade architecture of his *Bed Bólide*, and, in general, of his environmental proposals: one has still to consider the coarse materials he takes from the world of the Brazilian unskilled worker, such as wooden boxes, earth and crushed bricks, appropriating them on an auto-cognitive level of craftsmanship.)

12 Mário Pedrosa, 'Arte Ambiental, Arte Pós-Moderna, Hélio Oiticica', in *Das Murais de Portinari aos Espaços de Brasília*, (eds) Amarel and Aracy, Editora Perspectiva, São Paulo, 1981, p. 209.



Water Area in Ogramurba, Museu de Arte Moderna, Rio de Janeiro, 1970.

The privileged colour in the work of the artist, introduced as the purest and most detached instance of the aesthetic experience, is therefore summoned to remake the universe of objects in accordance with new links. Along with what I have designated as the 'holistic notion' with which Oiticica elaborated form, colour is part of all of this notion, both inducing and linking visual, thematic, tactile and social experience of the objects (here I am, perhaps extravagantly, making use of the concept of a social experience of colour, because the artist brings forth in his work the decorative and permissive nature with which colours are present in the popular sensibility, thus subjecting the modern criterion of its pureness to this popular sensibility).

It seems to me that the meaning of all these attitudes is deeply linked to an anonymous sociability. Let us look at the aforementioned *Parangolés*, clothing which the artist optimises in their sensorial and affective aspects, and whose performance consists in incorporating, now with total liberty, the body's organic expenditures in its social existence; there are also the *Bólides*, coarse, wooden, painted boxes, sacks, commercial glass or plastic bottles, filled with sand, earth, pigments, liquids, that invite a free manipulation, imposing the constituent force of subjectivity upon the very normative realm of social objects. I would like to call attention to the disconcerting, almost ingenious availability with which, for instance, these *Bólides* and *Parangolés* spring up around us, displaying a kind of social naturalism which makes them self-sufficient, and which exempts them from having to prove their aesthetic nature.

One might say that the objects and materials from which they have been

created were deconstructed and reassembled in relation to their original functional destination, thus leaving room for the imperatives of subjectivity — but not that they have been expropriated from the everyday world. What matters in them is this continuous possibility of new assemblings, the *syntax*, which joins them together according to new criteria, unleashed from the orderly chain of social objects.

The *form of forms* which I have just mentioned thus emerges as syntax. To apprehend these objects in their syntax means also to deplete them one by one, in a gesture which simultaneously assumes aesthetic autonomy and the social finitude of the sphere of subjectivity, thus presenting itself in a continuous and ambiguous process of extroversion and adaptation to its social contingency. The syntax, therefore, is that which allows us to forget the social materiality of objects, and also that which emancipates these objects from the alienation inherent to its social genealogy. It is through this same mapping that the passages from one work to the next occur, as do the relationships between elements common to different works, so that in this flux the artist's trajectory, as well as the tragic personal biography of someone who was subjected to such an extreme degree of self-exposure, become altogether fused. Within this miscegenation of heterogeneous instances, comprehending, in a single undertaking, the urgency of life and the transcendence sought in aesthetic experience, the everyday world is superbly restored in the midst of a fully enforced moral economy and of life both planned and institutionalised.

I hope to have made it clear that the importance attributed by Oiticica's work to this everyday world, entirely moulded to a level of subjectivity, stems from the artist's profound commitment to the popular *substratum*, which, as I have observed, permeates our cultural process in several ways. As is well known, we Brazilians are accustomed to a continuous apprenticeship of how to reconcile cultured cosmopolitan baggage with the daily life subjugated by the mark of need. As I see it, the work of the artist is the synthesis of this feverish state, allowing for the coexistence of an aristocratic aesthetic sense (he has, after all, a purist side which chooses certain inventions of modernity and relegates the rest to indifference, including the formal developments of the international scene of his time) with the utopic perspective of the most *engagé* social non-conformism.

One should remember here that the unlimited bond between art and life in Hélio Oiticica's work was accomplished without any political or intellectual proselytism, and above all without having sacrificed his concerns with form to the wish of miscegenation between psychic and social instances of subjectivity. This is to say, finally, that the artist was permanently engaged in questioning the presuppositions in which modern art dealt with form, having arrived, as we saw, at a holistic and indeterminate notion, which will constitute in each case its own normative values.

It is this awareness that resists the inexorable historicisation process that has fallen upon modernity during the last decades. The fundamental question posed by the work still remains, and is therefore the order of the day: how would art reconcile autonomy and its social immanence, two antagonistic movements through which the sphere of subjectivity can still hope to be intersubjectively constituted?