

NEOCONCRETISM AND MINIMALISM: ON FERREIRA GULLAR'S THEORY OF THE NON-OBJECT

MICHAEL ASBURY

This chapter presents the first English translation of Ferreira Gullar's 'Theory of the Non-Object' by Michael Asbury, whose essay offers a comparative study of the aesthetic philosophies of minimalism and neoconcretism. Originally published in the national newspaper Jornal do Brasil in December 1959, Gullar's text addresses the underlying concerns of the neoconcrete movement that briefly flourished in Brazil in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Gullar's 'Neoconcrete Manifesto', published in March 1959, had articulated a critical reaction to earlier constructivist tendencies and the resulting break with concretism created the context in which the Jornal do Brasil opened the pages of its weekend supplement to a new generation of poets and critics. Examining the broad philosophical reflection on modernism that informs Gullar's conception of the 'non-object', Asbury relates the discourse of the neoconcrete movement to the interest in Gestalt psychology and phenomenology that is associated with minimalism in the North American context. As a result of the contrasts and similarities produced in this comparative study, new questions are raised with regards to a consideration of cosmopolitanism at a local level and a critique of provincialism in historical accounts of this important post-war period.

THEORY OF THE NON-OBJECT ¹

FERREIRA GULLAR

The expression 'non-object' does not intend to describe a negative object nor any other thing that may be opposite to material objects. The non-object is not an anti-object but a special object through which a synthesis of sensorial and mental experiences is intended to take place. It is a *transparent* body in terms of phenomenological knowledge: while being entirely perceptible it leaves no trace. It is a pure appearance.² All true works of art are in fact non-objects, if this denomination is now adopted it is to enable an emphasis on the problems of current art from a new angle.³

The Death of Painting

This issue requires retrospection. When the impressionist painters, leaving the studio for the outdoors, attempted to apprehend the object immersed in natural luminosity, figurative painting began to die. In Monet's paintings the objects dissolve themselves in colour and the usual appearance of things is pulverised amongst luminous reflections. The fidelity towards the natural world transferred itself from objectivity to impression. With the rupture of the outlines which maintained objects isolated in space, all possibility of controlling the pictorial expression was limited to the internal coherence of the picture.

Later, Maurice Denis would say, 'a picture – before being a battle horse, a female nude or an anecdote – is essentially a flat surface covered by colours arranged in a certain order'. Abstraction was not yet born but figurative painters, such as Denis, already announced it. As far as they ⁴ were concerned, increasingly the represented object lost its significance and consequently the picture, and similarly the object, gained importance. With cubism the object is brutally removed from its natural condition, it is transformed into cubes, virtually imposing upon it an idealised nature; it was emptied of its essential obscurity, that invincible opaqueness characteristic of the thing. However, the cube being three-dimensional still possesses a nucleus: an *inside* which was necessary to consume – and this was done by the so-called synthetic phase of the movement. Already, not much is left of the object. It was Mondrian and Malevich who would continue the elimination of the object.

The object that is pulverised in the cubist picture is the painted object, the represented object. In short, it is painting that lies dying there, dislocated in search of a new structure, a new form of being, a new significance. Yet in these pictures (synthetic phase, hermetic phase) there are not only dislocated cubes, abstract planes: there are also signs, arabesques, collage, numbers, letters, sand, textiles,

nails, etc. These elements are indicative of the presence of two opposing forces: one which attempts relentlessly to rid itself of all and any contamination with the object; the other is characteristic of the return of the object as sign, for which it is necessary to maintain the space, the pictorial environment born out of the representation of the object. The latter could be associated with the so-called abstract painting, of sign and matter, which persists today in tachisme.

Mondrian belongs to the most revolutionary aspect of cubism, giving it continuity. He understood that the new painting, proposed in those pure planes, requires a radical attitude, a restart. Mondrian wipes clean the canvas, eliminates all vestiges of the object, not only the figure but also the colour, the matter and the space which constituted the representational universe: what is left is the white canvas. On it he will no longer represent the object: it is the space in which the world reaches harmony according to the basic movements of the horizontal and the vertical. With the elimination of the represented object, the canvas – as material presence – becomes the new object of painting. The painter is required to organise the canvas in addition to giving it a transcendence that will distance it from the obscurity of the material object. The fight against the object continues.

The problem Mondrian set himself could not be solved by theory. He attempted to destroy the plane with the use of great black lines which cut the canvas from one edge to the other – indicating that it relates to the external space – yet these lines still oppose themselves to a background and the contradiction between space and object reappears. Thus, the destruction of these lines begins, leading to his last two paintings: *Broadway Boogie Woogie* and *Victory Boogie Woogie*. But the contradiction in fact was not resolved, and if Mondrian had lived a few more years, perhaps he would have returned once more to the white canvas from which he began. Or, he would have left it favouring construction into space, as did Malevich at the end of his parallel development.

The Work of Art and the Object

For the traditional painter, the white canvas was merely the material support on to which he would sketch the suggestion of natural space. Subsequently, this suggested space, this metaphor of the world, would be surrounded by a frame that had as a fundamental function the positioning of the painting into the world. This frame was the mediator between fiction and reality, a bridge and barrier, protecting the picture, the fictitious space, while also facilitating its communication with the external, real, space. Thus when painting radically abandons representation – as in the case of Mondrian, Malevich and his followers – the frame loses its meaning. The erection of a metaphorical space within a well-protected corner of the world no longer being necessary, it is now the case of establishing the work of art within the space of reality, lending to this space, through the apparition of the work – this special object – significance and transcendence.

It is a fact that things occurred with a certain level of sluggishness, equivocations and deviations. These were undoubtedly inevitable and necessary. The use of collage, sand and other elements taken from the real, already signal the necessity to substitute fiction by reality. When the dadaist Kurt Schwitters later builds the Merzbau – made from objects and fragments he found in the streets – it is once again the same intention which has further developed, now freed from the frame, and in real space. At this point it becomes difficult to distinguish the work of art from the real objects. Indicative of this mutual overflow between the work of art and the object is Marcel Duchamp's notorious *blague*, submitted to the Independents' Exhibition in New York in 1917, a fountain-urinal of the kind used in bar toilets. The ready-made technique was adopted by the surrealists. It consists of revealing the object, dislocated from its usual function, thus establishing new relationships between it and the other objects. This process of transfiguration of the object is limited by the fact that it is grounded not so much in the formal qualities of the object but in its connection with the object's quotidian use. Soon that obscurity that is characteristic of the *thing* returns to envelop the *work*, bringing it back to the common level. On this *front*, the artists were defeated by the object.

From this point of view some of today's extravagant paintings pursued by the avant-garde appear in all their clarity or even naïveté. What are the cut canvases of Fontana, exhibited in the V Biennial,⁵ if not a retarded attempt to destroy the fictitious pictorial space by means of introducing within it a real cut? What are the pictures by Burri with kapok, wood or iron, if not a return – without the previous violence but transforming them into fine art – to the processes used by the dadaists? The problem lies in the fact that these works only achieve the effect of a first contact, failing to achieve the permanent transcendent condition of a non-object. They are curious, bizarre and extravagant objects – but they are objects.

The path followed by the Russian avant-garde has proved to be more profound. Tatlin's and Rodchenko's counter-reliefs, together with Malevich's suprematist architecture, are indicative of a coherent revolution from the represented space towards real space, from represented forms towards *created* forms.

The same fight against the object can be seen in modern sculpture from cubism onwards. With Vantongerloo (De Stijl) the figure disappears completely; with the Russian constructivists (Tatlin, Pevsner, Gabo), mass is eliminated and the sculpture is divested of its condition of *thing*. Similarly, if non-representational painting is attracted towards the orbit of objects, this force is exerted with far greater intensity amongst non-figurative sculpture. Transformed into object, sculpture rids itself of its most common characteristic: mass. But this is not all. The base – sculpture's equivalent to the painting's frame – is eliminated. Vantongerloo and Moholy-Nagy attempted to create sculptures that would inhabit space without a support. They intended to eliminate weight from sculpture, another fundamental characteristic of the object. What can be thus verified is that while

painting, freed from its representational intentions, tends to abandon the surface to take place in space, thus approaching sculpture, the latter liberates itself from the figure, the base and of its mass, therefore maintaining very little affinity with what traditionally has been denominated as sculpture. In fact, there is more affinity between a counter-relief by Tatlin and a sculpture by Pevsner than between a Maillol and a Rodin or Fidias. The same could be said of a *painting* by Lygia Clark and a *sculpture* by Amílcar de Castro. From which we can conclude that current painting and sculpture are converging towards a common point, distancing themselves from their origins. They become special objects – non-objects – for which the denominations *painting* and *sculpture* perhaps no longer apply.

Primary Formulation

The problem of the frame and base, in painting and sculpture respectively, has never been examined by critics in terms of its significant implications as static. The phenomenon is registered but simply as a curious detail that escapes the problematics raised by the work of art. What had not been realised was that the actual work of art posited new problems and that it attempted to escape (to assure its own survival) the closed circuit of traditional aesthetics. To rupture the frame and to eliminate the base are not in fact merely questions of a technical or physical nature: they pertain to an effort by the artist to liberate himself from the conventional cultural frame, to retrieve that desert, mentioned by Malevich, in which the work of art appears for the first time freed from any signification outside the event of its own apparition. It could be said that all works of art *tend towards* the non-object and that this name is only precisely applicable to those that establish themselves outside the conventional limits of art: works that possess this necessary limitlessness as the fundamental intention behind their appearance.

Putting the question in these terms demonstrates how the tachiste and l'informel experiments in painting and sculpture are conservative and reactionary in nature. The artists of these tendencies continue – although in desperation – to make use of those conventional supports. With them the process is contrary: rather than rupturing the frame so that the work can pour out into the world, they keep the frame, the picture, the conventional space, and put the world (its raw material) within it. They part from the supposition that what is within the frame is the picture, the work of art. It is obvious that with this they also reveal the end of such a convention, but without announcing a future path.

This path could be in the creation of these special objects (non-objects) that are accomplished outside of all artistic conventions and reaffirm art as a primary formulation of the world.

NEOCONCRETISM AND MINIMALISM: COSMOPOLITANISM AT A LOCAL LEVEL AND A CANONICAL PROVINCIALISM

Neoconcretism is one of the key references within the current economy of legitimation of Brazilian contemporary art, and has gained international notoriety while remaining contextually obscure. Its notoriety arises from the fact that it has acquired a quasi-mythical status: that of signalling the national origin of contemporary Brazilian art. Interpretations suggesting such an inaugural role rely on artists associated with neoconcretism such as Hélio Oiticica and Lygia Clark whose participatory work during the 1960s transcended the contemplative nature of previous modernist art. Some contemporaneous critics, most notoriously amongst them Ferreira Gullar,⁶ argued that such a move not only questioned art's *raison d'être* but went beyond the domain of the discipline and thus lead to an art historical dead end.⁷ Precisely due to such a rupture, Oiticica and Clark have become paradigmatic figures within the discourse surrounding the very character of Brazilian contemporary art.⁸ Neoconcretism's obscurity is the result of the fact that only vague and often incorrect information on the movement is articulated in support of this paradigmatic role.

Neoconcretism's profound influence upon subsequent generations of artists is not in question here, yet it would be reductive to describe its complex legacy as a tradition. Despite the fact that it is often cited within the context of the 1960s, the development of the movement is historically placed at the crest of the wave of optimism that spread through Brazil during the late 1940s and 1950s. During this period, constructivist-orientated art, and concrete art in particular, was consolidated in Brazil through influential figures such as the Argentinean critic and curator Romero Brest and the Swiss artist and designer Max Bill.

Although the term *art concret* had been coined by Theo van Doesburg in 1930, in response to the notion of abstraction promoted by Joaquin Torres-Garcia and Michel Seuphor's first *Cercle et Carré* exhibition (at Galerie 23 Rue la Boétie, Paris), concrete art nevertheless only gained widespread international recognition as an aesthetic philosophy in light of the post-war spirit of reconstruction. In Brazil, concretism was very much a product of its time as it accompanied an intense period of industrialisation and urbanisation that highlighted the nation's momentary yet seemingly unlimited faith in modernity.⁹

Architecture, perhaps more so than art, was symbolic of the developmentalist ideology that became hegemonic in this period. It is not coincidental that the constructivist tendencies emerged alongside the inauguration of the museums of modern art in São Paulo and in Rio de Janeiro during the late 1940s,¹⁰ and declined shortly after the inauguration of the new capital Brasília in 1960 as faith in the industrial development of the nation dissipated with the political and economic crisis brought by the excessively accelerated modernisation of the 1950s. Brazilian concrete art therefore corresponds to the most striking icons that marked the rise and fall of the optimism of the period. The fact that in 1957 the national newspaper *Jornal do Brasil* invited Amílcar de Castro and Reynaldo Jardim, two constructivist artists from Rio de Janeiro, to redevelop its graphic design provides a further indication of the enthusiasm for modernity that characterised the era.¹¹ As well as a radical change in its visual identity, the newspaper gained a weekend cultural supplement that featured contributions from young avant-garde critics, including Ferreira Gullar. The resulting neoconcrete

Ferreira Gullar, 'Teoria do Não Objeto', Suplemento Dominical, *Jornal do Brasil*, 19–20 December 1959



movement was in effect established by the newspaper's role in providing Gullar with opportunities to publish both the 'Neoconcrete Manifesto' and the 'Theory of the Non-Object' in March and December 1959.¹²

The first *National Exhibition of Concrete Art* had opened at São Paulo's Museum of Modern Art in 1956 and travelled to Rio in 1957. Despite the disagreements that surrounded the exhibition, which clearly indicated a rift between the São Paulo and Rio-based groups of artists, it was primarily through poetry that the neoconcrete rupture took place. In light of his access to the broadsheet, Gullar had been asked by the São Paulo-based concrete poets Haroldo and Augusto Campos to publish in the *Jornal do Brasil* a text entitled *Da Psicologia da Composição à Matemática da Composição* (From the Psychology of Composition to the Mathematics of Composition), and to include his name amongst its signatories.¹³ However, as he could not accept the premises of mathematics as an a priori formula for poetry, Gullar wrote another article instead that was published alongside the *Paulista* text, entitled *Poesia Concreta: Experiência Fenomenológica* (Concrete Poetry: Phenomenological Experience).¹⁴ It was this phenomenological experience rather than the neoconcrete manifesto's initial reaction to the orthodox nature of concrete art's rhetoric that was articulated in the 'Theory of the Non-Object'. No longer directly concerned with establishing parameters of distinction for neoconcretism, Gullar's text centres on the unfolding of the two-dimensional plane within space as a general art historical development.

The implicit linearity in Gullar's positioning of neoconcretism within the wider history of art contrasts sharply with the recent

misunderstandings surrounding the relation that the movement possesses with Brazilian art history. Within such discourses, the phenomenological emphasis on the physical space that the work of art occupies is seen as directly related to subsequent experiments such as Oiticica's environmental installations of the 1960s in which both physical and social spaces were emphasised.¹⁵ Oiticica acknowledged his debt to neoconcretism but his references to the popular culture and architecture of the *favelas* (shanty towns) belonged to an altogether different context to that of the aesthetic experimentation of neoconcretism.¹⁶

Although various artists originally affiliated to the neoconcrete movement maintained their production relatively unchanged throughout their careers, as a united front neoconcretism only lasted approximately three years: between 1959 with the publication of its manifesto and 1961 with Ferreira Gullar's abandonment of avant-garde practice and the demise of the weekend supplement of the *Jornal do Brasil*.¹⁷ This short period nevertheless coincided with a moment of intense political transformation (which will be discussed shortly) that went far beyond the transferral in 1960 of the federal capital from Rio de Janeiro to Brasília.¹⁸ Such a significant moment would naturally invite historical associations. However, it is only through a careful historiography that the often misleading connections between past and present can be identified. It is perhaps because neoconcretism came to international attention alongside various generations of Brazilian artists during the late 1980s and early 1990s that such connections have been established between the neoconcrete movement, 1960s radicalism, and today's generation of contemporary Brazilian artists.¹⁹

Such connections are the result of similar processes to those denounced by Benjamin Buchloh with regard to post-pop and minimalist art in the USA during the late 1980s:

[...] the critic might best define his or her practice, especially in regard to the legacies of pop and minimalism and their successors, as an act of counter-memory, one which opposes such facile and falsifying 'rediscoveries' of '60s practice in the present.²⁰

Buchloh is provocatively mourning the demise of the art critic as an agent who identifies the quality as well as the progressive tendency within creative production. He argues that the critic's alienation from the ranks of contemporary production has enabled those who stand to benefit the most from such disengagement to establish their own criteria for validation. In Buchloh's view, this legitimating machine is often powered by conjuring historical connections and a sense of aesthetic 'tradition':

[T]he merger between avant-garde culture and culture industry has initiated among curators and collectors, dealers and artists a new awareness: namely, that management and control, validation and affirmation can just as well be performed from within the ranks of the given institutions and their networks of support, in particular the museum and the market.²¹

Such methods of artistic validation tend to limit themselves to the scope of a national art tradition, while ignoring the contextual distinctions faced by each generation. Buchloh suggests that the art critic, now confined within academia, is restricted to the denunciation of

historical simplifications and the investigation of that which lies on the margins of such discourses. Similarly, this essay will discuss neoconcretism and raise certain parallels with discourses on minimalism. However, rather than simply discussing neoconcretism as a possible, albeit obscure, precedent to minimalism, I adopt Buchloh's suggestion of displacing simple linearities and exploring the margins of history as related aspects of a single methodological practice.

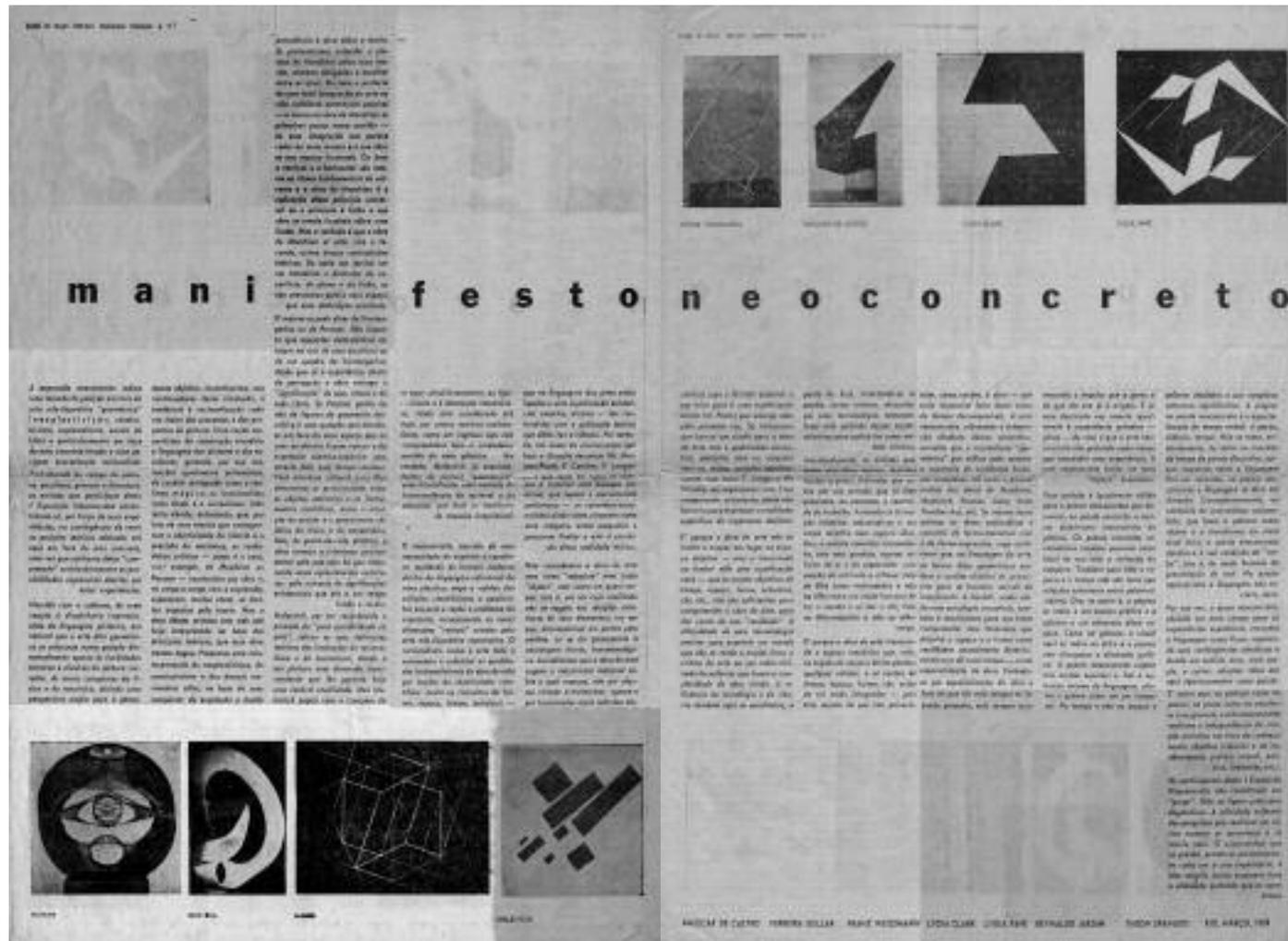
Resulting from the difficulty encountered in categorising a work by the artist Lygia Clark,²² Ferreira Gullar's 'Theory of the Non-Object' introduced issues that informed much of the local 'environmental' and 'participatory' work which followed in Brazilian art, and also anticipated theoretical debates that would emerge in North America during the following decade. While Robert Morris's interest in Gestalt psychology would suggest a proximity with the theoretical repertoire of concrete art, Donald Judd's text 'Specific Objects' and Ferreira Gullar's 'non-object' present surprising similarities.²³ Both share a common philosophical awareness and consequently reach the same conclusion. Judd's realisation in 1965 that 'half or more of the best new work in the last few years has been neither painting nor sculpture'²⁴ confirms Gullar's conclusion in 1959 that 'current painting and sculpture is converging towards a common point, distancing themselves from their origins. They become special objects – non-objects – for which the denominations *painting* and *sculpture* perhaps no longer apply'. Similarly, Judd's critique of the limitations of the rectangle within which painting operates could be equated with Gullar's observation that painting was in the midst of transcending its frame in the same way in which sculpture was discarding its mass and its

Ferreira Gullar et al., 'Manifesto Neoconcreto', *Suplemento Dominical, Jornal do Brasil*, 21–22 March 1959

base or pedestal. Gullar and Judd both drew upon a phenomenological approach towards the work of art and its relation to space. In other words, they were equally critical of the emphasis on the surface of painting, and ultimately both Gullar and Judd attempted to transcend a critique that relied upon its inherently two-dimensional nature. To do so required an engagement with the nature of the object (of art) as opposed to the medium.

Such writing emerged as reactions to quite distinct local precedents. Although both Judd's and Gullar's texts are imbued with a sense of history that maintained a teleological bias, it was their understanding of history that kept them apart. To establish a comparison between their respective critical positions is therefore to question the high modernist canon, and in particular its obligatory passage via Clement Greenberg's highly influential views. Hence, with Gullar's 'Theory of the Non-Object' in mind, Hal Foster's description of the contemporary pertinence of minimalism is worth quoting at length:

Although the experimental surprise of minimalism is difficult to recapture, its conceptual provocation remains, for minimalism breaks with the transcendental space of most modernist art (if not with the immanent space of the dadaist ready-made or the constructivist relief). Not only does minimalism reject the anthropomorphic basis of most traditional sculpture (still residual in the gestures of abstract-expressionist work), but it also refuses the siteless realm of most abstract sculpture. In short, with minimalism sculpture no longer stands apart, on a pedestal or as pure art, but is repositioned among objects and redefined in terms of space. In this



transformation the viewer, refused the safe, sovereign space of formal art, is cast back on the here and now; and rather than scan the surface of a work for a topographical mapping of the properties of its medium, he or she is prompted to explore the perceptual consequences of a particular intervention in a given site. This is the fundamental reorientation that minimalism inaugurates.²⁵

While Gullar seemed to be calling for such a re-orientation in 1959, we should observe that his notion of the non-object does not directly suggest a break with the ready-made, as he states that its immanent space is limited by its connection with the object's quotidian use. It is this connection that the non-object's 'perceptual transparency' breaks with, along parallel lines to Foster's interpretation of minimalism.

Foster's claim that 'minimalism is an apogee of modernism, but it is no less a break with it' in effect establishes a relationship between high modernism and contemporary art.²⁶ Here, too, a parallel could be raised with the art critic Ronaldo Brito who saw neoconcretism as the 'peak and rupture' of the constructivist project in Brazil.²⁷ Foster's argument regarding minimalism and modernism nevertheless entails some important historiographical speculations:

It is true that, as represented by Edmund Husserl and Ferdinand de Saussure, phenomenology and structural linguistics did emerge with high modernism. Yet neither discourse was current among artists until the 1960s, that is, until the time of minimalism, and when they did re-emerge they were in tension.²⁸

Gullar's reading of Merleau-Ponty (an indirect route to Husserl) and Haroldo de Campos' discussion of semiotic categories in relation to concrete art seem to question the decisive character of minimalism in Foster's account.²⁹ Indeed, similar theoretical tensions can be perceived between the concrete poets' interest in linguistics and Gullar's use of phenomenology. The increased emphasis on the individual's perception, and therefore the presence of a certain theatricality, are indicative of such parallel tensions. In fact, it could be argued that the tension between spatial and linguistic approaches has its origins in the historical avant-garde and particularly with dada and the ready-made. The fact that dada's deferred action upon minimalism cannot be considered as an exclusive historical relationship seems to escape Foster whose linear narrative could be interpreted as a product of his own provincialism.

Buchloh's observation that the activity of art criticism has declined due to the critic's disengagement from the ranks of contemporary production seems to be confirmed by the fact that the primary writing on both minimalist and neoconcrete art emerged from artists and/or poets affiliated to those movements and as such naturally courted controversy. While minimalism was notoriously confronted by Michael Fried's 'art and objecthood',³⁰ neoconcretism's primary opponents were the concrete artists and the concrete poets of São Paulo. In both contexts, controversies implicitly revolved around the views held by senior critics, namely Clement Greenberg and Mário Pedrosa. However, while it is undeniable that Judd referred to the edges of painting as a direct or literal reference to Greenbergian critique, Gullar's attack on tachisme and l'informel could be interpreted as

theoretically similar albeit paradigmatically distinct. All the activity associated with neoconcretism somewhat obscures the fact that if indeed there had been a generalised enthusiasm for constructivism it was clearly in decline by the late 1950s. The most obvious sign of such a shift could be seen in the São Paulo Biennial of 1959 (the year in which Gullar published the 'Theory of the Non-Object'), which had been overwhelmed by 'informal abstraction'. According to Gullar, the 5th Biennial had as much an impact as the first. The difference was that, while in 1951 the impact of novelty was restricted to the Swiss section, in 1959 the entire Biennial was dominated by tachisme. As Gullar remarked: 'Even Mário Pedrosa came back from Japan defending it'.³¹

If Greenberg became representative of that which minimalism rebelled against, Pedrosa's role within the rift that developed between São Paulo's and Rio's constructivist tendencies was far more ambivalent. One of the most frequent citations with regard to the critic's position has been Pedrosa's thesis on Gestalt psychology. The thesis was 'defended' in 1949 as part of Pedrosa's submission to the chair of Art and Aesthetics at the National Faculty of Architecture. Although it circulated amongst intellectual circles,³² it was however only published in 1979.³³ This informal nature of intellectual exchange was fully encouraged by Pedrosa's generosity and was responsible for Gullar's immersion within the field of art criticism. Pedrosa frequently organised meetings at his home in Rio, and his library was made available in this way to the young poet Ferreira Gullar who gained his art historical and philosophical knowledge through Pedrosa's tutelage.

In light of Pedrosa's interest in Gestalt psychology, subsequent art critics and historians such as Ronaldo Brito considered it to be an exclusive concern of concrete art since it corresponded to the drive for a scientific interpretation of art's function and action upon the world. This close association of concretism and Gestalt theory, as Brito argued, took shape as an autonomous enquiry that could benefit the rest of society:

A brief analysis of concretist visual production immediately reveals its poles of interest and therefore, to a certain extent, its truth. This production characterised itself by the systematic exploration of serial form, of time, mechanical movement and it defines itself by its strictly ethical-sensorial intentions. That is, it proposed a perceptivist game against representational content – a program of ethical exercises that were, in themselves, 'beautiful' and significant, that meant the explication and invention of new visual syntagms whose interest was their capacity to renew the possibility of communication and their capacity to act as feedbacks, factors of the fight against entropy, to use the terminology of the theory of information. Concrete art is an aesthetic repertory of the optical and sensorial possibilities prescribed by the *Gestalt* theory.³⁴

Brito established the chronological development of neoconcretism with respect to concrete art as a process that had exhausted the constructivist project. He posited concretism as the implementation of ideas brought into the country from Zurich and Ulm, while neoconcretism represented their absorption

within the local Brazilian context. Moreover, Brito found the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty, as well as existentialism in general, to be of key importance as Merleau-Ponty's attacks on Gestalt theory were analogous, for Brito, to neoconcretism's reactions against concrete art.

Gullar, for his part, saw the concretist interest in Gestalt psychology as related to the composition of the two-dimensional plane, which, when formed by geometrical arrangements, appeared to the viewer through the foreground/background distinction, while in neoconcretism the work became the foreground and its environment (the world) became its background.³⁵ Again, despite the fact these debates took place in very different contexts, a remarkably similar proposition to that of Gullar was expressed by Robert Morris:

While the work must be autonomous in the sense of being a self-contained unit for the formation of the Gestalt, the indivisible and undissolvable whole, the major aesthetic terms are not in but dependent upon this autonomous object and exist as unfixed variables that find their specific definition in the particular space and light and physical viewpoint of the spectator.³⁶

For Gullar,³⁷ neoconcretism did not regard Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology as entirely antagonistic to Gestalt psychology. The relationship between these two analytical approaches was in this sense coherent with that between concretism and neoconcretism, as expressed by Gullar in a column in the *Jornal do Brasil* in 1959, shortly after the first neoconcrete exhibition:

An important point expressed in the neoconcrete manifesto [...] concerns the insufficiency of Gestalt psychology in defining and comprehending, in all its complexity, the phenomenon of the work of art. It is not a question, of course, of negating the validity of the Gestaltian laws within the field of the perceptual experience where the direct method of this psychology really opened new possibilities in which to comprehend formal structures. Gestalt's limitation, according to Maurice Merleau-Ponty ('La Structure du Comportement' and 'La Phenomenology de la Perception') is in the interpretation that the theorists of form give to the experiments and tests that they have carried out, the laws that the experiments permitted being observed within the perceptual field [...] after thorough scrutiny of the concept of form show that Gestalt remains a causalist psychology, which in turn obliges it to give up the concept of 'isomorphism' in order to establish a unity between the external world and the internal one, between the object and the subject. We do not intend in this short note to do more than to draw the attention towards this important aspect of the new attitude – in practice and theory – that the neoconcrete artists adopt faced with constructive-geometric art.³⁸

Gullar's critique of the notion of 'wholeness' within concrete art's related theory would therefore suggest a further distinction from Foster's argument that minimalism transcended the dialectics of objectivity versus subjectivity:

For it is precisely such metaphysical dualisms of subject and object that minimalism seeks to overcome in phenomenological experience.³⁹

In contrast to such claims, Gullar drew on existential philosophy as well as the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty in order to articulate the existential complexity within the object-subject relation. As he explained:

Whilst the subject exists for itself, the object, the thing exists in itself. Leaving aside the implications that [Sartre] draws from such a fundamental contradiction, let us stay with the fact that it reaffirms the opacity of the thing that rests on itself and the perplexity of the man who feels exiled amongst them. A nexus of significations and intentions constitutes the human world, in which the opacity of the non-human world persists, exterior to man. The experience of the object without-name is the experience of exile. The fight to overcome the subject-object contradiction is at the core of all human knowledge, of all human experience and particularly of the work of art.⁴⁰

Underlying the distinguishing character of the non-object in relation to other more mundane objects was Gullar's implicit belief in art as an autonomous activity. Such autonomy was posited by his view that ordinary objects – due to their inescapable association with their name and thus with their function or place in the real world – were semantic hybrids. Their own specific form was the only aspect of their being that presented itself to the perceptual field. This is what Gullar meant by his statement that the non-object 'is a *transparent* body in terms of phenomenological knowledge: while being entirely perceptible it leaves no trace. It is a pure appearance'.⁴¹ The non-object, in this manner, possessed an immanent signification associated with its form:

'Experiência Neoconcreta',
Suplemento Dominical,
Jornal do Brasil,
21–22 March 1959



the latter, according to Gullar, represented its pure signification.

Brito had described neoconcretism's insistence on the autonomy of art as a specific field of research (its perceptual purity in Gullar's terms), arguing that it represented an activity comparable to that of an experimental laboratory.⁴² It is due to this emphasis on autonomy that the subsequent radical experimentalism during the 1960s of artists such as Lygia Clark and Hélio Oiticica cannot be considered as a continuation of the neoconcrete movement. The transition between the optimistic 1950s and the tumultuous 1960s deeply affected their practice.

With the political crisis brought about by the resignation of the recently elected president Janio Quadros in 1961, a radical shift took place within the cultural landscape of the nation. The unreserved belief in the modern destiny of the nation was swiftly replaced by a period of political and economic instability that would ultimately lead to the military coup in 1964. The aesthetic stance of avant-garde practice became unsustainable for many practitioners as artists and intellectuals saw themselves breaking away from the autonomy of their field and searching to establish relations with the Brazilian people. The legacy of neoconcretism varied from ex-members such as Oiticica, who attempted to articulate Brazilian popular culture with his previous aesthetic experiments, to artists such as Raymundo Collares, who acknowledged constructivist and neoconcrete aesthetics within his experiments that drew on pop art and the visual culture of the streets of Rio de Janeiro.

One of the most radical repercussions entailed by this transition in the arts was its effect on Ferreira Gullar. Approximately two years after publishing the 'Neoconcrete

Manifesto' and the 'Theory of the Non-Object', Gullar abandoned the neoconcrete group to become involved with a movement of popular engagement, the CPC (Popular Centres for Culture), associated with the Marxist inclined National Students' Union (UNE).

From 1961, neoconcretism could no longer contain the diverging trajectories of its artists. Central to this dissolution of the neoconcrete movement was its apolitical posture. For Brito, the ideological lucidity of the constructivists' 'abdication of politics', via their emphasis on autonomy, related to the position taken by *concretismo* as a practice within the neutral fields of culture and economics and *neoconcretismo* as a practice within the neutral fields of culture and philosophy.⁴³

Brito had thus emphasised the apolitical nature of concrete art by stressing that its interpretation of culture was a non-ideological and autonomous development.⁴⁴ As a specialised field of enquiry, it saw itself ideally entering a centralised state programme that would direct its aesthetic production into a meaningful relation with society as a whole. This position was sustainable while the country's *intelligenza* had been intoxicated by the ideology of developmentalism: a belief that underdevelopment could be overcome through industrialisation, urbanisation, in short, planning. The most extravagant outcome of this line of thought was undoubtedly the new city of Brasilia.

Neoconcretism on the other hand, with its operation strictly restricted to the field of culture was, according to Brito, even less politically orientated.⁴⁵ It did not actively seek to inform industrial design, for instance, but preferred to remain strictly within the field of artistic activity:

Characteristically of underdevelopment such a typically Brazilian paradox occurred: a constructive avant-garde that did not guide itself based on a plan of social transformation and that operated in a manner that was almost marginal.⁴⁶

According to Brito, this marginality in relation to society was one of the most significant characteristics of neoconcretism, as it had opened the possibility for a questioning not only of the premises of constructivism but of the nature of art itself.⁴⁷ While this argument is similar to that presented by Foster with regard to minimalism, Brito's epistemological differentiation between the two groups – concretism which placed 'man' as social and economic agent, while neoconcretism placed 'man' as a being in the world⁴⁸ – is specific to the debates in philosophy and science that influenced the context in which the relationship of art and society was discussed in post-war Brazil.

Acknowledging the retrospective nature of his essay, Brito admitted that neoconcretism – in attempting to escape the technician nature of concretism – found two solutions contained in humanism: one that represented the peak of the constructivist tradition in Brazil (in which he included the artists Willys de Castro, Franz Weissmann, Hércules Barsotti, Aluísio Carvão and to a certain extent Amílcar de Castro). Such artists engaged in aesthetic research that held the sensibility of the work of art as paramount and sought to preserve its specificity. In the other more disruptive side to neoconcretism, such sensibility was replaced by a dramatisation of the work of art. In the latter category Brito had in mind artists such as Hélio Oiticica, Lygia Clark

and Lygia Pape.⁴⁹ It would be possible to add to this group Ferreira Gullar himself who, through the production of object-poems, entered into an ambivalent space between written and visual language.

For Brito, neoconcretism thus held two distinct tendencies: a rationalist humanism which tended to inform industrial design in a qualitative manner, while preserving the specificity and aura of the work of art;⁵⁰ and another more disruptive tendency that distanced itself from the constructivist tradition through a dramatic transformation of art's function and *raison d'être*.⁵¹ Both tendencies nevertheless maintained a united front against the precepts of concretism, either on account of its technicism (as opposed to the neoconcrete aesthetic sensibility) or, on the other hand, on account of its 'fear for the loss of the specificity (and aura) of the work of art'.⁵²

Implicit in Hal Foster's argument that minimalism represented a rupture with modernism is the assumption that Greenbergian high modernism represents the culmination of modernism as a whole. This in fact is the most negative consequence of Foster's argument (its provincial nature⁵³) and shows why a parallel discussion of neoconcretism – in the context of the 'peak and rupture' of the less totalising Brazilian constructivist project – seems pertinent. Indeed, considering Foster's key argument in *The Return of the Real* – in which he proposes that the neo-avant-garde brought the disruptive element of the historic avant-garde⁵⁴ into the institutional space of the gallery/museum as a form of critique from within – Alex Coles⁵⁵ has suggested that this approach seems oddly coherent with Greenberg's maxim that:

The essence of modernism lies, as I see it, in the use of the characteristic method of a discipline to criticise the discipline itself – not in order to subvert it, but to entrench it more firmly in its area of competence... modernism criticises from the inside, through the procedures themselves of that which is being criticised.⁵⁶

Foster states from the outset that his argument stands as a critique of Peter Bürger's *Theory of the Avant-Garde*.⁵⁷ He argues that the utopian desire to merge art into the praxis of life (celebrated by Bürger) was replaced by the neo-avant-garde's pragmatic exercise of institutional critique from within. The historic avant-garde in Foster's account acts upon the neo-avant-garde through a process of deferred action while ignoring the heroic utopian idealism of its predecessors. If we are to extend such a logic beyond the association with the inescapably utopian character of Brasília, and into the context of the relation that contemporary Brazilian art holds with movements such as neoconcretism, it is possible to remark that neoconcretism's apolitical stance together with the belief in the possibility of participating on equal terms within an international community of practitioners has been perversely fulfilled by the current position Brazilian contemporary art holds within the globalised art market.

Neoconcretism's effect upon subsequent art is in fact more complex than a Foster-like deferral would suggest. To a certain extent, one can observe the reversal of the process described by Foster. The radical neoconcrete artists, and particularly Oiticica, transformed the work's phenomenological character, its relation with the viewer, into a participative element that eventually

transcended the domain of the institution of art (and some – including Gullar himself – would argue art itself), eventually questioning wider socio-cultural hierarchies. Such a connection with life was inextricably related to the concurrent political transitions of a country suffering from the hangover of the developmentalist dream of planned modernisation.

For today's historians, perhaps the most interesting characteristic of the 'Theory of the Non-Object', and by extension the neoconcrete movement, is precisely its out-of-jointness with respect to the wider history of art. Despite its innovative character and its importance within contemporary Brazilian art, it is this marginality towards mainstream history that maintains it within a strictly national context. Gullar realised this when, following his abandonment of the movement, he wondered whether in an underdeveloped country such as Brazil it is possible to envisage the notion of an avant-garde in a similar manner as is possible in Europe or North America.⁵⁸ Such an insight was not the product of a cosmopolitan modernist but that of a man on the eve of six years of political exile.⁵⁹ Gullar's subsequent critique of contemporary art practices goes beyond the scope of this study, yet his realisation that Brazilian avant-garde practice escaped canonical narratives of the development of modern art reveals the importance of re-evaluating the different chronologies existent within the wider history of modern art.

NOTES

1. Originally published as 'Teoria do Não-Objeto' in Suplemento Dominical, *Jornal do Brasil*, 19–20 December 1959.
2. Note on translation. In the original: O não-objeto não é um antiobjeto mas um objeto especial em que se pretende realizada a síntese de experiências sensoriais e mentais: um corpo transparente ao conhecimento fenomenológico, integralmente perceptível, que se dá à percepção sem deixar rastro. Uma pura aparência. Please note also that the phrase that follows is not included in subsequent catalogue editions.
3. Lygia Clark has adopted, through a suggestion of mine, the term non-object as a means of describing her latest work that consist of constructions made directly in space. The meaning of such a term does not restrict itself as a definition of specific works: the sculptures of Amílcar de Castro, Franz Weissmann, recent work by Hélio Oiticica, Aluisio Carvão and Décio Vieira, together with the book-poems by the neoconcrete poets, are also non-objects. (Original 'Theory of the Non-Object' footnote.)
4. Note on translation. In the original: Cada vez mais o objeto representado perdia significação aos seus olhos [...]. Here, 'a seus olhos' could refer to either the opinion of Maurice Denis or that of the figurative painters.
5. Note on translation. Reference here is to the 5th São Paulo Biennial.
6. Ferreira Gullar interview with the author, 27 April 2004.
7. Ferreira Gullar's abandonment of the neoconcrete movement and subsequent critique of contemporary practices is discussed later in this study.
8. Ivo Mesquita, reflecting upon the construction of such narratives, has claimed that it is necessary to 'offer alternatives to the sometimes accommodated and monolithic view that all contemporary Brazilian art is indebted to the powerful legacy of Lygia Clark and Hélio Oiticica' adding that it is 'a simplistic view, a seductive key of understanding aimed mainly at foreigners who rely on the oeuvre of these artists to approach Brazil's current art production'. See I. Mesquita, 'Nelson Leirner and Iran do Espírito Santo, Venice, 1999', in *Pavilhão Brasileiro, Bienal de Veneza*, exh. cat., Fundação Bienal de São Paulo, 1999, 38.
9. In this sense, it is possible to view two distinct events in 1951, the first São Paulo Biennial and the Festival of Britain, as part of the same international enthusiasm for modernity.
10. In São Paulo, the Art Museum (MASP) in 1947, and the Museum of Modern Art (MAM-SP) in 1948; in Rio, the Museum of Modern Art (MAM-RJ) in 1949.
11. Aracy Amaral ed., *Projeto Construtivo Brasileiro na Arte (1950 - 1962)*, exh. cat., Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo: Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro. Rio de Janeiro: MEC-FUNARTE and São Paulo: Secretaria da Cultura, Ciência e

Tecnologia do Estado de São Paulo, Pinacoteca do Estado, 1977, 23.

12. This was suggested by Reynaldo Jardim. See *Os Neoconcretos*, documentary video, [K. Maciel dir.], Rio de Janeiro: N-IMAGEM, UFRJ, 2000. For an English translation of the neoconcrete manifesto see D. Ades, *Art in Latin America: The Modern Era 1820-1980*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989, 335. Originally published as 'Manifesto Neoconcreto', Rio de Janeiro: Suplemento Dominical, *Jornal do Brasil*, 22 March 1959.
13. F. Gullar, 'A Tregua, Interview with Ferreira Gullar', in *Cadenos da Literatura Brasileira*: no. 6, Gullar Ferreira, São Paulo: Instituto Moreira Salles, 1998, 35.
14. *Cadenos da Literatura Brasileira*: no. 6, Ferreira Gullar, op. cit., 11.
15. Characteristic of the artist's general ambivalent approach, Oiticica while departing radically from the premises of neoconcretism, was the first to argue this progression within his work. See L. Figueiredo, L. Pape, and W. Salomão eds, *Hélio Oiticica: Aspiro ao Grande Labirinto*, Rio de Janeiro: Rocco, 1986.
16. See H. Oiticica, 'Esquema Geral da Nova Objetividade', in *Nova Objetividade Brasileira*, exh. cat., Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro, 1967. Reprinted and translated in Witte de With et al., *Hélio Oiticica*, retrospective, exh. cat., Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, 22 February – 26 April 1992; Galerie Nationale du Jeu de Paume, 8 June – 23 August; Fundació Antoni Tàpies, Barcelona, 1 October – 6 December 1992; Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, Lisboa, 20 January – 20 March 1993; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, 31 October – 20 February 1994, 110–19.
17. F. Gullar, 'A Tregua, Interview with Ferreira Gullar', in *Cadenos da Literatura Brasileira*: no. 6, Ferreira Gullar, op. cit., 37.
18. Ferreira Gullar has rejected any association that the neoconcrete movement had with modern Brazilian architecture, yet he agreed that both Brasília and neoconcretism were products of the same political, social and cultural moment. Gullar interview with the author, 27 April 2004.
19. Most notable among which is Gerardo Mosquera's assumption that neoconcretism took place during the late 1960s and that Cildo Meireles's radically politicised work of the late 1960s and early 1970s was produced within the context of that movement. See interview with Cildo Meireles, in P. Herkenhoff, G. Mosquera and D. Cameron, *Cildo Meireles*, London: Phaidon Press, 1999, 8–35.
20. B. Buchloh, *Periodizing Critics*, in H. Foster ed., *Discussions in Contemporary Culture*, Dia Art Foundation Number 1, Bay Press Seattle, 1987, 70.

21. *Ibid.*, 68.

22. The (unspecified) work held an ambivalent position with respect to painting, relief and sculpture. Gullar mentioned that while Pedrosa described Clark's new work as a relief, the fact that there was no background plane meant that it could not be described as such. Realising that it was also neither painting nor sculpture, Gullar could only define it as an object, yet, such a definition remained unsatisfactory since it would not distinguish it from other ordinary objects such as the table, chair and so forth. Therefore the only possibility left, was to call it – initially jokingly, Gullar admits – a non-object. Of course, Gullar's own account also described Pedrosa's claim that to call something a non-object would be nonsensical. See F. Gullar, 'A Tregua, Interview with Ferreira Gullar', in *Cadenos da Literatura Brasileira*: no. 6, Ferreira Gullar, op. cit., 36.

23. The similarities that the 'Theory of the Non-Object' holds with Judd's (1965) essay *Specific Objects* have been raised by Ricardo Basbaum in a study on the ambivalent relationship between art and writing, and by Milton Machado in discussing art and its exteriority. See R. Basbaum, *Convergências e Superposições Entre Texto e Obra de Arte*, Dissertação de Mestrado, Rio de Janeiro: UFRJ, 1996, 13.

24. D. Judd, 'Specific Objects', *Arts Yearbook*, 8, New York, 1965, 74–82. An edited version is reprinted in C. Harrison and P. Wood eds, *Art in Theory: 1900–1990, An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1992, 809.

25. H. Foster, *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century*, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: MIT Press, 1996, 37–38.

26. *Ibid.*, 42.

27. R. Brito, *Neoconcretismo: Vértice e Ruptura do Projeto Construtivo Brasileiro*, Rio de Janeiro: Marcos Marcondes, 1975. [Latest edition: R. Brito, *Neoconcretismo: Vértice e Ruptura do Projeto Construtivo Brasileiro*, São Paulo: Edições Cosac & Naify, 1999. Page numbers referred to throughout the study are based upon the English translation (of the original 1975 version): *Neoconcretism: Peak and Rupture of the Brazilian Constructivist Project*, in *Neoconcretismo: Vértice e Ruptura do Projeto Construtivo Brasileiro*, Rio de Janeiro: FUNARTE, Série Temas e Debates 4, 1985, 91–114.]

28. H. Foster, *The Return of the Real*, op. cit., 43.

29. Campos is quoted in Gullar's account of the debate. See F. Gullar, 'Debate Sobre a Arte Concreta', Suplemento Dominical, *Jornal do Brasil*, 12 October 1958.

30. M. Fried, 'Art and Objecthood', *Artforum*, Summer, 1967. Edited version reprinted in C. Harrison and P. Wood eds, *Art in Theory: 1900–1990, An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1992, 822–34.

31. See interview with Gullar, in F. Cocchiareale and A.B. Geiger eds, *Abstracionismo Geométrico e Informal: a vanguarda brasileira nos anos cinquenta*, Instituto Nacional de Artes Plásticas, Rio de Janeiro: FUNARTE, 1987, 90.

32. Lucy Teixeira took a copy of Pedrosa's thesis to the Northeast state of Maranhão where Gullar was able to read it. The young poet was then able to write to Pedrosa – very pretentiously as he recalls – questioning some concepts. See F. Gullar, 'A Tregua, Interview with Ferreira Gullar', op. cit., 38.

33. Interview with Mário Pedrosa, in F. Cocchiareale and A.B. Geiger eds, *Abstracionismo Geométrico e Informal: a vanguarda brasileira nos anos cinquenta*, op. cit., 105.

34. R. Brito, *Neoconcretismo: Vértice e Ruptura do Projeto Construtivo Brasileiro*, Rio de Janeiro: Marcos Marcondes, op. cit., 101.

35. See interview with Ferreira Gullar, in *Os Neoconcretos*, op. cit.

36. R. Morris, 'Notes on Sculpture 1–3', in *Artforum*, vol. 4, no. 6, February 1966, 42–44; vol. 5, no. 2, October 1966, 20–23; vol. 5, no. 10, Summer 1967. Reprinted in edited version in C. Harrison and P. Wood eds, *Art in Theory: 1900–1990*, op. cit., 818.

37. Lygia Pape denied that neoconcrete artists, other than Gullar, had any form of profound knowledge of Merleau-Ponty's theories. See *Os Neoconcretos*, op. cit. F. Gullar 'Os Neoconcretos e a Gestalt', Suplemento Dominical, *Jornal do Brasil*, 15 March 1959.

38. In the original: Um ponto importante do manifesto neoconcreto [...] é o que se refere a insuficiência da psicologia da Forma (Gestalt Psychology) para definir e compreender em toda a sua complexidade o fenômeno da obra de arte. Não se trata, evidentemente, de negar a validade das leis gestaltianas no campo da experiência perceptiva onde realmente o método direto dessa psicologia abriu novas possibilidades para a compreensão das estruturas formais. A limitação da Gestalt, conforme o afirma e demonstra Maurice Merleau-Ponty ('La Structure du Comportement' e 'La Phenomenology de la Perception') esta na interpretação que os teóricos da forma dão as experiências e testes que realizam, ou seja, as leis que as experiências permitiram objetivar no campo perceptivo [...] depois de um exame minucioso do conceito da forma mostra que a Gestalt é ainda uma psicologia causalista, o que a obriga a lançar mão do conceito de 'isoformismo' para estabelecer a unidade entre o mundo exterior e o mundo interior, entre o sujeito e o objeto. Não pretendemos nesta pequena nota mais do que chamar a atenção para este aspecto importante da nova atitude – prática e teórica – que os artistas neoconcretos tomam em fase da arte construtivo-geométrica.

39. H. Foster, *The Return of the Real*, op. cit., 40.

40. F. Gullar, 'Dialogo Sobre o Não-Objeto', Suplemento Dominical, *Jornal do Brasil*, 26 March 1960. Translated by Hélio Oiticica in a letter to Guy Brett.

41. See 'Theory of the Non-Object' (notes 1 and 2 above).

42. R. Brito, *Neoconcretismo: Vértice e Ruptura do Projeto Construtivo Brasileiro*, op. cit., 107.

43. R. Brito, 'Ideologias Construtivas no Ambiente Cultural Brasileiro', in A. Amaral ed., *Projeto Construtivo Brasileiro na Arte (1950–1962)*, exh. cat., Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo: Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro. Rio de Janeiro: MEC- FUNARTE & São Paulo: Secretaria da Cultura, Ciência e Tecnologia do Estado de São Paulo, Pinacoteca do Estado, 1977, 304.

44. R. Brito, *Neoconcretismo: Vértice e Ruptura do Projeto Construtivo Brasileiro*, op. cit.

45. R. Brito, 'Ideologias Construtivas no Ambiente Cultural Brasileiro', op. cit., 307.

46. *Ibid.* In the original: Ocorreu então esse paradoxo tão brasileiro e tão próprio do subdesenvolvimento: uma vanguarda construtiva que não se guiava diretamente por nenhum plano de transformação social e que operava de um modo quase marginal.

47. *Ibid.*

48. *Ibid.*, 305.

49. R. Brito, *Neoconcretismo: Vértice e Ruptura do Projeto Construtivo Brasileiro*, op. cit.

50. Franz Weissmann's comments that he did not see the necessity of adding a 'neo' to concretism seem coherent with this claim. See *Os Neoconcretos*, op. cit.

51. R. Brito, *Neoconcretismo: Vértice e Ruptura do Projeto Construtivo Brasileiro*, op. cit.

52. R. Brito, 'Ideologias Construtivas no Ambiente Cultural Brasileiro', op. cit., 306.

53. Speaking at the Royal College of Art in London, (*Performance and Process in Relation to Judgement and Excess*, lecture series, 24 February 1999), Foster had indeed admitted the provincialism of his position.

54. As outlined in P. Bürger, *The Theory of the Avant-Garde*, translated by M. Shaw [based on the second German edition 1974], University of Minnesota, 1984.

55. A. Coles, 'Rendezvous: Walter Benjamin and Clement Greenberg – Programme of the Coming Art', in A. Coles and R. Bentley eds, *de-,dis-,ex*, vol. 1: Excavating Modernism. London: Backless Books and Black Dog Publications, 1996, 62–63.

56. C. Greenberg, 'Modernist Painting' (originally published as a part of the Forum Lectures, *Voice of America*, Washington, DC, 1960), in J. O'Brian, ed., *Clement*

Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism, vol. 4, 1993, 85. The passage is quoted in Coles, 1996, 63.

57. P. Bürger, *The Theory of the Avant-Garde*, translated by M. Shaw [based on the second German edition 1974], University of Minnesota, 1984.

58. F. Gullar, *Vanguarda e subdesenvolvimento*, Civilização Brasileira, Rio de Janeiro, 1969.

59. Following his involvement with left-wing politics through the CPC, he was arrested in 1968, lived in clandestine conditions for a period and eventually left Brazil in 1971, staying in exile (Moscow, Santiago, Lima and Buenos Aires) until 1977.