

**Expanded Pop:  
Politics, Popular Culture and Art in Argentina, Brazil and Peru, 1960s**

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## Abstract

This thesis investigates how Pop art emerged in Argentina, Brazil and Peru, during the 1960s.

Stemming from a growing necessity to expand the art historical canon, the thesis questions the significance of Pop as a cultural label. By de-centring the genealogy of Pop to distinct locales, the investigation allows access into contemporary issues, ranging from the tension between vernacular and imported culture, to current mappings of artistic movements. The thesis' original contribution to knowledge is the retrieval of the Pop art narratives of Argentina, Brazil and Peru, which have only partially been recognised. Through the extensive analysis of primary materials (often never translated from Spanish or Portuguese, and seldom considered in prior investigations), the thesis offers a comprehensive review of a historiography of Pop during 1960s, also establishing an alternative framework for study in this field.

The first chapter of the thesis examines the Pop practices that emerged in Argentina especially around the Instituto Torcuato Di Tella (ITDT), considered one of the most important centres of artistic innovation in the continent. Suspended on the deconstruction of key terminologies, such as *Informalismo*, *Camp*, *Lunfardo* and Art for Consumption, the chapter seeks to explain from a localised perspective, the radical changes in art production that took place between roughly 1960 -1970. Beginning with an analysis of the writings of Jorge Romero Brest, a prominent intellectual and later director of the ITDT, the chapter traces the emergence of a participatory language that became embedded in the Argentine iteration of Pop. Marta Minujín's colourful sculptures made of mattresses, combined with a bursting happenings phenomenon, reveal Pop as the keystone of a multifaceted artistic itinerary.

The second chapter of the thesis explores how Brazilian artists turned to Pop as a language of resistance against hegemonic cultural models. Rising from the ashes of a modernist utopia that eclipsed with the establishment of a military dictatorship in 1964, artists including Antônio Dias, Antonio Manuel, Claudio Tozzi and Nelson Leirner, employed Pop as the most widely intelligible idiom. Furthermore, they were animated by fervent anti-Americanism, and they sought to resist the (pro-American) regime by challenging cultural orders, often through interventions in the public sphere. A Pop aesthetic was also widely adopted by some lesser-known women artists, including Teresinha Soares and Regina Vater, who sought to propagandise female sexual liberation.

The third and final chapter of the thesis looks at Pop art practices in Peru. Reflecting the necessity to redefine the meaning of 'Peruvianism,' a Pop aesthetic was adopted by a young avant-garde – in particular the Arte Nuevo Group - to counter the hegemonic and traditionalist cultural scene in Lima. Examining how the establishment reacted to newer art practices, the chapter argues that Pop reflected the country's faltering cultural and political arenas. Following the military coup in 1968, the parallelism between politics and culture is explored through an analysis of the Pop posters produced by Jesús Ruiz Durand to advertise the extensive agrarian reform launched by the regime in 1968. In parallel, the evolving practices of the Arte Nuevo artists are analysed to reveal how artistic discourse was suspended as a consequence of the regime's oppression.



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## Introduction

*Myself, I don't believe in evolution, like a long string hooked on to a First Cause, and being slowly twisted in unbroken continuity through the ages. I prefer to believe in what the Aztecs called Suns: that is, Worlds successively created and destroyed. The sun itself convulses, and the worlds go out like so many candles when somebody coughs in the middle of them. Then subtly, mysteriously, the sun convulses again, and a new set of worlds begins to flicker alight. This pleases my fancy better than the long and weary twisting of the rope of Time and Evolution, hitched on to the revolving hook of the First Cause. I like to think of the show going burst, bang! – and nothing but bits of chaos flying about. Then out of the dark, new little twinklings reviving from nowhere, nohow.*

*I like to think of the world going pop!<sup>1</sup>*

Terminology is constantly updated. Over fifty years from Pop's first appearance in the printed press, there is no singular definition of what it means, or which works comprise its fixed canon. Consensus, some. Unanimity, none. From the outset critics from all over the world attacked the term - which was never an organised movement, lacking in any manifesto or list of subscribers - seeking to find a more precise definition, to delimit its margins, and most importantly to distinguish it from other styles that emerged contemporaneously. It is the critic's favourite question to ask: is it Pop? Or, what is Pop? Today the discussion has not progressed much.

In 2015 two exhibitions have reopened the Pop debate, only to find a bigger and more complex web of contrasting definitions, polarised opinions, and incomplete efforts

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<sup>1</sup> D.H. Lawrence, *Mornings in Mexico* and *Etruscan Places*, (London: Penguin, 1960), p. 12.

to include more than just a handful of established artists. For over two decades, scholars have been obsessed with retrieving obscure or forgotten narratives, in the noble pursuit of threading a fairer, pluralistic and more comprehensive history of art - one that would be politically correct, de-colonial, anti-capitalist and anti-canonical. *International Pop* at the Walker Art Centre in Minneapolis and *The World Goes Pop* at the Tate Modern in London, have first suggested Pop as an expanded, or global, category. The two exhibitions, albeit with distinct curatorial approaches, have individuated a common aesthetic, and a series of collective concerns, that established connections between distinct locales, seeking to showcase how Pop was in fact not only an Anglo-American phenomenon.

This endeavour echoes, to a large extent, that proposed in the 1999 exhibition at the Queens Museum of Art *Global Conceptualism: Points of Origin 1960s-1980s* where, for the first time, Conceptual art was recast as a worldwide phenomenon, as opposed to an exclusively Western dialectic. The pursuit of establishing common ground between highly disparate locals comes at the great cost of a loss of specificity, and the strengthening of centrist paradigms through the imposition of an Anglo-American terminology on so-called 'peripheral' regions.

The definitions of a 'Global' or 'International' Pop that have emerged, relate both to Pop's formal outlook, its subject matter, technical execution, and to its subversive potential: all factors that although specific to each vernacular context, emerged out of a common aesthetic that was by no means exclusive to the USA. Nevertheless, neither exhibition hazarded to provide a univocal definition, recognising Pop's ambiguity. According to Jessica Morgan, the curator of the *The World Goes Pop*:

*Mass media, desire, culture: the most iconic terms associated with Pop art must be reconsidered in its global contexts, where the 'masses' and 'culture' had no single hegemonic definition.[...] Just as 'pop style' encompasses various strategies of composition and process, so there is not one universal Pop art but rather hundreds of iterations around the globe that share a populist concern.<sup>2</sup>*

In her text Morgan explains the exhibition's intent was to counter the 'mainstream impression that Pop art operated as a simple adaptation of the techniques and images

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<sup>2</sup> Jessica Morgan, "Introduction: Political Pop," in Flavia Frigeri and Jessica Morgan (eds.), *The EY Exhibition: The World Goes Pop*, (London: Tate publishing, 2015), p. 16.



of consumer culture,' and to stress how Pop employed 'the language of the magical commercial environment as identified by Marshall McLuhan, to turn established communication strategies into political opposition, satiric critique, subversive appropriation, and utopic explorations of collective and individual identity.'<sup>3</sup>

Similarly, Darsie Alexander, curator of the *International Pop* show, declared that the exhibition proposed 'an alternative model that celebrates the heterogeneity of Pop and produces a reliable set of conditions by which selected objects might or might not qualify as examples' and 'attempts not so much to rediscover Pop as to challenge the notion that Pop comprised any kind of unified purpose of style.'<sup>4</sup> A marked difference with *The World Goes Pop* is the inclusion of canonical works from the USA especially within the display. According to the curator, this decision which sought to honour the 'Cold War dynamics in which American popular culture was the cultural export/ import model,' and to explore 'the myriad positions and vectors of influence that struggled for their own integrity and identity as they contended with US economic might and the artistic practices it underwrote.'<sup>5</sup>

Both exhibitions certainly succeeded in bringing to the fore the work of artists working in the sixties, who had been excluded from mainstream narratives, and whose work is of vital importance both within their local context – specific to their socio-political situation – and within a global one when connected to other practices worldwide through the lens of Pop. *The World Goes Pop* opted for a thematic approach, which championed the idea of a constellation of practices concerned with similar issues. *International Pop*, on the other hand, adopted a geographical methodology dividing the exhibition by country, with a selection of solo and thematic rooms in alternation. In the former case, the curatorial style sometimes betrayed a simplistic agglomeration of works, which upon closer contextual inspection had vastly differing pretences.<sup>6</sup> The success of the show was its more intelligible format, and its accessibility to the unfamiliar spectator, instantly

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid. p. 17.

<sup>4</sup> Darsie Alexander, "Introduction," in Darsie Alexander and Bartholomew Ryan (eds.), *International Pop*, (Minneapolis: Walker Art Centre, 2015), pp. 78, 84.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p. 79.

<sup>6</sup> Adrian Searle, "The World Goes Pop review – a bitty and disappointing tour of minor art," *The Guardian online*, 14 September 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2015/sep/14/the-world-goes-pop-review-tate-modern> Last accessed 27 April 2016.

made aware of the aesthetic similarities that linked artists from across the world. In the latter case, the geographic division was seen 'more successful' than the solo or thematic rooms; however the prevalence given to North American Pop, placed as a frame of reference, served to consolidate certain notions that entrench the most recognised artists within Pop's canon.<sup>7</sup> Consequently the overall objective to expand Pop's historiography was weakened, and although the geographically themed rooms gave justice to their specific socio-political contexts, they appeared in isolation from the rest. In light of such criticisms, both exhibitions contemporaneously succeeded in exhibiting and re-discovering the work of many artists involved with a Pop discourse worldwide, but failed to convince many viewers that such works were actually Pop.<sup>8</sup>

The methodological differences between the two shows are comparable to those dividing the already mentioned *Global Conceptualism*, and Mari Carmen Ramírez's and Héctor Olea's *Inverted Utopias: Avant-Garde Art in Latin America* held at the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston in 2004. While *Global Conceptualism* championed a geographical arrangement of the works on display, *inverted Utopias* was divided into themes. To differing degrees, both methodologies draw on the constellation model devised by Theodor Adorno, which charts 'a series of randomly connected luminous points that have no intrinsic relationship to one another.'<sup>9</sup>

These exhibitions importantly foreground the scope of this thesis, which focuses on selected Latin American iterations of Pop, and is the product of a collaborative effort on the part of Tate Research, and Chelsea College of Art and design, with the patronage of the AHRC, to broaden the research surrounding this fertile field. As such,

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<sup>7</sup> Mary M. Lane, "Tate Modern Tracks Pop Art's Global Heft," *The Wall Street Journal Online*, 15 September 2015, [www.wsj.com/articles/tate-modern-tracks-pop-arts-global-heft-1442334924?tesla=y](http://www.wsj.com/articles/tate-modern-tracks-pop-arts-global-heft-1442334924?tesla=y) Last accessed 3 August 2016.

David Joselit, "*International Pop and The World Goes Pop*," *Artforum*, vol. 54, Issue 5, January 2016.

<sup>8</sup> David Joselit, "*International Pop and The World Goes Pop*."

In his review Joselit remained suspicious of expanding the Pop label. In his comparison of the two shows he sees the Walker Arts Centre exhibition as more successful, although he praises Tate for the important effort to exhibit works by women artists.

<sup>9</sup> Theodor Adorno cited in Mari Carmen Ramírez, "The Displacement of Utopias," in Héctor Olea and Mari Carmen Ramírez (eds.), *Versions and Inversions: Perspectives on Avant-Garde Art in Latin America*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), p. 127.

my investigation is invariably intertwined with the intent of Tate's exhibition: to expose and redefine certain artistic practices during the sixties, which could be retrieved thanks to the individuation of a Pop aesthetic that proliferated across the world.

The opening quote by D. H. Lawrence seeks to establish the initial understanding that an evolutionary gaze on history is sometimes less interesting or productive than an understanding of the world as many singular entities that coexist within a delicate balance, which can be obliterated at the click of a finger. If Lawrence's 'Suns,' like stars in a constellation, are indeed disconnected, but still form part of a wider map of worlds, Pop art's morphology may indeed fit this paradigm.

Theodor Adorno's theory a propos the notion of the 'constellation,' can easily be invoked in relation to Lawrence's 'suns,' connected, yet independent. Drawing on this notion as a departure point for the thesis' methodology, the research presented here treats Pop as existing simultaneously, and independently in the confines of multiple self-contained worlds, that nevertheless are part of a clear network that connects them with each other. The thesis is structured geographically with the objective to delve into the contextual specificities of each country taken into consideration in order to research in full the genealogy of said Pop art practices. The countries that I chose to research are Argentina, Brazil and Peru, which reflect a methodological decision to narrow the study to South American countries (as opposed to Latin American, which include the Caribbean and Central America).

In 2012 Fundación PROA in Buenos Aires launched an exhibition titled *Art of Contradictions: Pop, Realisms and Politics, Brazil-Argentina, 1960*, which presented one of the most comprehensive reports on the field to date, inviting also a number of international scholars to participate in a symposium and in interviews. This wealth of materials, combined with the existing scholarship that I was able to individuate from abroad, motivated me to begin the investigation from Argentina. In addition, Argentina remains one of the most culturally discussed countries in the continent due to the rich literary scene of Buenos Aires, to its astounding European architecture (which earned it the denomination of 'the Paris of South America'), and the unique space it occupies geopolitically as the second largest economy in South America (after Brazil).

The second country examined in this thesis is Brazil. The largest territory in the continent, the only Lusophone, and home to Hélio Oiticica and Lygia Clark, whose

practices are synonymous with the 'Latin American avant-garde' having reached international fame thanks to multiple retrospectives and inclusions in survey exhibitions on Conceptualism or art in Latin America, not to mention protagonists in many exhibitions about the Brazilian post-war. In addition, my research took into account the guidance of my supervisor Dr Michael Asbury whose expertise in the field provided invaluable support.

The final country I included is Peru. Within South America's highly diverse cultural and social morphology, Peru's geographic location in the Andes, and its distinct racial makeup (comparatively to Argentina and Brazil), offered a unique counterpoint to Argentina and Brazil. In addition, beginning my research from the UK, the scarcity of materials available locally led me to select the areas of investigation, which offered the broadest bibliography, in Peru's case made available by Miguel López and Emilio Tarazona whose research was importantly included in the catalogue for the exhibition *Subversive Practices: Art Under Conditions of Political Repression: Latin America/Eastern Europe*, held at the Stuttgart Kunstverein in 2010.<sup>10</sup>

Because of the few primary and secondary sources available in the UK, I conducted research trips in Argentina, Brazil and Peru, gathering and translating literature from numerous archives and interviewing artists when possible. This thesis presents an extensive primary bibliography in the field of Pop, and offers original translations of multiple scholarly texts.

Having established the methodology and background of the research, the following section of the introduction offers the necessary knowledge bases to approach this field. The first segment provides an overview of the canonical origin of Pop from Britain to the USA, its perceived definition, and the arguments that support the erroneous opinion (upheld by Hal Foster and Lucy Lippard<sup>11</sup> among others) that it was a

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<sup>10</sup> Miguel A. López, Emilio Tarazona, "Crosscurrent Passages: Dissident Tactics in Peruvian art, 1968–1992," in Hans D. Christ, and Iris Dressler (eds.), *Subversive Practices: Art Under Conditions of Political Repression, 60's - 80's, South America, Europe*, (Ostfildern, Germany: Hatje Cantz, 2010).

<sup>11</sup> Lucy Lippard was aware of South American Pop especially following her travels to Buenos Aires in 1970 when she was invited to curate an exhibition on conceptual art (titled *Arte Conceptual*) at the Centro de Arte y Comunicación (CAyC), presided over by impresario Jorge Glusberg.

solely Anglo-American phenomenon. In fact, Pop (in its Anglo-American iterations) was never concisely defined, and was always inclusive and open to renegotiation. The second section established the theoretical linchpins of the thesis, breaking down some of the principal challenges in countering the dominant discourse. These are tied to the specificity of terminology (ranging from Pop itself to the expression 'Latin America'), and to the assertion of national identity and the effects of cultural imperialism.

**a. Pop within the canon: Who's Pop's Daddy?**

If we were to trace the history of the *term* Pop, we would encounter its roots in Britain in the late 1940s, when 'popular art' was becoming a greater concern in post-war recovery. The most widely accepted 'Fathers of Pop' are the members of the Independent Group (Richard Hamilton, Lawrence Alloway, Eduardo Paolozzi, Nigel Henderson, Alison and Peter Smithson and others abbreviated hereon as the IG), a London-based group of artists, writers and curators who gathered at the Institute of Contemporary Arts between 1952-1955 to discuss themes ranging from technology and science fiction to the pervasiveness of the mass media.<sup>12</sup> The 'inventor' of the term is Lawrence Alloway who in 1958 first published it in an article titled *The Arts and the Mass Media*, in which he reflected on the emergence of a 'mass popular art,' later referred to as 'Pop.' Alloway claimed, 'The idea was of an art-Pop Art continuum, in which the enduring and the expendable, the timeless and the timely, coexisted, but without damage either to the senses of the spectator or to the standards of society.'<sup>13</sup>

Today, the artist most commonly associated with Pop is Andy Warhol, which problematizes the entity and originality of Pop artworks in Britain and elsewhere. Further scholarship has also revealed how the members of the IG tended to emphasise their role in the formulation of Pop as a way to jump on the winner's wagon when New York

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<sup>12</sup> The expression *Fathers of Pop*, comes from a discussion between Michael and Magda Cordell, Mary and Reyner Banham held in 1970. The recording went on to give the title to the documentary film *Fathers of Pop* (1979) directed by Julian Cooper and produced by The Arts Council.

Transcript reproduced in Anne Massey, *The Independent Group: modernism and mass culture in Britain, 1945-59*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), p. 100.

<sup>13</sup> Lawrence Alloway, "The Development of British Pop Art," in Lucy R. Lippard, *Pop art*, (New York: Praeger, 1965), p. 36-37.

Pop had exploded becoming an iconic 'American' style. When asked whether Pop was American, Robert Indiana replied:

*Yes. America is pretty much at the core of every Pop work. British Pop, the first-born, came about due to the influence of America. The generating issue is Americanism, that phenomenon that is sweeping every continent. [...] The pattern will not be far from the Coke, the car, the hamburger, the jukebox. It is the American Myth.<sup>14</sup>*

Marco Livingstone, one of Pop's champion critics, identifies Warhol's style as almost synonymous for Pop, thus decoding the formal qualities within a strict canonical order, outside of which lies marginality.<sup>15</sup> Livingstone claims that the diverging criticism that Pop attracted due to its 'heterogeneity,' or its 'dispassionate ambiguity,' were mostly due to the neutral stance adopted by its artists. He recognizes the importance and significance of Pop Art discourses in France, Germany and Italy, however he claims that the political dimension evident in these works, markedly distinguishes them from Anglo-American ones. 'Whether such work by Europeans can be referred to as a new category of Political Pop, or whether Pop, as a 'cool' style, remains in a sense a suitable term for such hot passions, remains a moot point', Livingstone writes.<sup>16</sup> Questioning the importance of creating another label for movements akin to Pop in Europe, Livingstone also attributes to the European a passion, foreign to North Americans or Brits.

Livingstone's statement about Pop being unsuitable to describe the 'hot passions' invoked by politicised themes, suggests a reference to the discussions in the 1960s over warm/cold Informalism, originated in Marshall McLuhan's investigations on cold and warm media.<sup>17</sup> Germano Celant extended McLuhan's discussion in his seminal text on *Arte Povera*.<sup>18</sup> Here Celant makes a distinction between *informale caldo* and *freddo* (warm and cold *Informel* art), categorizing Abstract Expressionism (developed between 1948 and 1956) in the realm of the 'warm', whilst *Arte Povera* and

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<sup>14</sup> Gene R. Swenson, "What is Pop Art? Answers from 8 Painters," *Art News*, November 1963, pp. 24-27.

<sup>15</sup> Marco Livingstone, *Pop Art: a Continuing History*, (New York: H.N. Abrams, 1990).

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* p. 18.

<sup>17</sup> Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding media; the extensions of man*, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964).

<sup>18</sup> Germano Celant, *Arte Povera*, (Milano: G. Mazzotta Editore, 1969).

Pop (1956-1963), lie in the realm of the 'cold.'<sup>19</sup> This temperamental distinction between styles proves very useful in the recodification of Pop on a global scale. By suggesting that Pop is a 'cool' tendency, Livingstone precludes any emotional engagement with the subject matter, which is drained of true meaning becoming a mere simulacrum or an empty, aseptic shell.<sup>20</sup> What remains is the dry medium. Arguably, however, Livingstone's theory is inadequate to an interpretation of Pop, which may extend to further reaching socio-political critiques.

How can Pop be viewed also as a 'warm' tendency? The New Realist manifesto signed by Arman, Dufrene, Hains, Yves Klein, Tinguely, Villeglè, in Milan, 1960, expressed the need for 'an advance towards a New Realism of pure sensibility.' The manifesto promised a new 'iconoclastic' art which will enable man to reintegrate himself into the (Heideggerian) Real, identifying it 'with his own transcendent nature - which is in emotion, feeling and ultimately poetry.'<sup>21</sup> Nouveaux Realisme and Pop are surely two separate tendencies, but ultimately because Pop does not have a manifesto, nor does it have a fixed number of adepts who signed off on a strict sequence of principles. The elusiveness of Pop is therefore an advantageous feature, which may aid in threading an expanded narrative. The grand art historical division we are faced with is wholly arbitrary. Critics and historians only have marked the divisions basing their arguments on geography, temperature (Livingston), or media (Foster),<sup>22</sup> with disregard even for

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<sup>19</sup> Germano Celant, *Book as Artwork 1960/1972*, (New York: 6 Decades Books, 2010), p. 9.

<sup>20</sup> An important source for this line of enquiry is Frederic Jameson whose seminal book *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, (London: Verso, 1993), examined the certain aspects of the post-modern condition departing from an analysis of Andy Warhol's *Diamond Dust Shoe* paintings series, symbolic of consumerism, thus unable to satisfy or placate the fetishist desire.

<sup>21</sup> Pierre Restany, "First manifesto," in *'Les Nouveaux Realistes', Arman, Dufrene, Hains, Yves le monochrome, Tinguely, Villeglè*, (exh. cat., Milan: Gallery Apollinaire, 1960).

<sup>22</sup> Foster claimed that Pop initially was an "Anglo-American affair" that pivoted between London, New York and Los Angeles as capitals of post-war Western consumerism. He distinguished between British and US Pop in relation to their familiarity with consumerist objects, which for the Brits still had something 'exotic,' while for the Americans who started working a decade later, these were already imbued with a tint of nostalgia, which contributed to what Foster termed the 'death effect' as among Pop's defining characteristics.

artists' personal preferences. For example, whilst Kitaj and Hockney disliked the term Pop, they remained fully invested in formulating the idea of a Royal College style in London, where Pop was a principal tendency. The thesis' objective is to include artists who have previously been obscured from wider art histories, approaching both those that sought affiliation to the term, and others who distanced themselves from it at times. When Pop is understood as a lens, more than a movement per se, it allows the extraction of international connecting themes from a pivotal decade that reshaped globalised cultural and ideological models.

In the following sections the genealogies of Pop in Britain and the USA, the allegedly 'cool' Pops, are traced in order to assess whether canonical Pop is in fact cold, emotionally absent, and separate from the rest of the world's, seen as 'warmer.'

#### **a.1 Pop in Britain: A Very Respectable Base for Rejection and Iconoclasm**

As the 'fathers' of British Pop are considered to be the members of the Independent Group, *This is Tomorrow* (TIT) at the Whitechapel Gallery in 1956 has been inscribed as the first 'Pop' exhibition (by members of the IG and critics such as Hal Foster).<sup>23</sup> Historians such as Anne Massey have contested this interpretation, by extending Pop's genealogy to two other exhibitions: *Britain Can Make it* (BCMI), at the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1947, and *Black Eyes and Lemonade* (BEAL), at the Whitechapel Gallery in 1951, both largely organized by Barbara Jones, a key figure in this itinerary. These two antecedents demonstrate a growing concern for popular culture in the years right after The Festival of Britain (1951), and aid in arguing that Pop is not always a 'cool' tendency, but that its production was mined with political motives and agendas. In addition, this alternative history helps emphasise how the origins of British

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Hal Foster, "Survey," in Mark Francis and Hal Foster, *POP*, (London: Phaidon Press, 2005), p. 16.

<sup>23</sup> Fiona MacCarthy, "Richard Hamilton: they called him Daddy pop," *The Guardian Online*, 7 February 2014.

<https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2014/feb/07/richard-hamilton-called-him-daddy-pop> Last accessed 3 August 2016.



Pop are not inextricably connected to the IG, but are the product of a more complex set of circumstances and specific cultural initiatives.

By the early 1950s Britain was heavily concerned with reinventing its cultural landscape, instrumental in overcoming the post-war depression. In 1945, when the war ended along with the American aid, the British economy halted to the point where all goods including clothes had to be rationed. The massive food shortages that were sweeping over a broken Europe were attended to by the Marshall Plan, that provided invaluable aid, and strengthened US economic hegemony (as opposed to Soviet one). In Britain the Marshall Plan marked the end of austerity and a return to economic growth. In this context the predominant artistic style responded to the hardships that had begun with the great depression in the 1930s and had culminated in the Second World War. Artists such as Francis Bacon or Lucien Freud emerged in response to this existential angst characterized by an omnipresent nostalgia.<sup>24</sup> Simultaneously, however, an ambiguous sentiment began to seep through culture towards America, its products and what it stood for, simultaneously saviour and oppressor, considering the overbearing economic power the Marshall plan ensured.

In this context Clement Attlee's administration sought to foster production in the country also through important cultural initiatives such as BCMI, an industrial design exhibition organised by the Council for Industrial Design, which aimed at boosting British manufacture for the export market 'to promote by all practicable means the improvement of design in the products of British industry.'<sup>25</sup> Barbara Jones was involved in BCMI, and in 1951, as part of the Festival of Britain (another government sponsored initiative to kick-start nationalism and economic growth), she began to work on *Black Eyes and Lemonade* at the Whitechapel Gallery.<sup>26</sup> On show were objects of 'popular

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<sup>24</sup> Francis Bacon had begun to incorporate stills from Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* and images from Muybridge's explorations of movement in his paintings in the late forties, an operation that raised many eyebrows at the time.

Muybridge's photos were included in 'Parallel of Art and Life' exhibition at the ICA in 1953.

<sup>25</sup> "Summer Exhibition 1946: Policy Committee Minutes, in Elizabeth Darling, *Exhibiting Britain: Display and National Identity 1946-1967*, [http://www.vads.ac.uk/learning/designingbritain/html/bcmi\\_intro.html](http://www.vads.ac.uk/learning/designingbritain/html/bcmi_intro.html) Last accessed 3 August 2016.

<sup>26</sup> Barbara Jones, Tom Ingram and Douglas Newton, *Black Eyes and Lemonade: A Festival of Britain Exhibition of British Popular and Traditional Art, Arranged in*

art', duly abbreviated as Pop art in her notes, collected at county fairs, bazaars and second hand shops. Among the specimens were a talking lemon advertising Idris lemon squash, a fireplace in the shape of a dog, decorated pub mirrors, an edible model of St Paul's Cathedral, and a life-size wax model of a Rabbi. Jones' objective was to suggest new aesthetic hierarchies for the consumption of culture on a wider scale.

It is within this cultural milieu that the IG began to meet in 1952 at the ICA, which, modelled after MoMA, was trying to establish an art scene in London parallel to that of Paris or New York. The IG had felt the urgency to discuss the relations between mass-culture and popular art, which had started to permeate all levels of society.<sup>27</sup> What they termed the theory of an 'Expendable aesthetic' - namely rejection of Aristotelian logic, or the premise for all western thought based on fixed hierarchies of orders and values - became their instrument to examine the effects that mass culture was having on society and on the issue of 'taste,' as already challenged by BCMI. The IG shared a populist view of progress and consumption in response to the realization of a shift from an age of production to an age of consumption. They examined American advertising as a sophisticated code, which enlightened the relationship between the consumer and the creator of the image. Non-Aristotelian logic permitted to elevate common images from advertising and the mass media to fine art objects:

*The notion that you couldn't say that something was good or bad leads to the possibility of inclusion into painting of figurative matter which wouldn't have been conceivable without that fundamental notion of non Aristotelian thinking. It gave us a very respectable base for rejection and iconoclasm to say that American universities were now putting this forward as a very serious and well established*

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*Association with the Society for Education in Art and the Arts Council. (exh. cat., London: Whitechapel Art Gallery, 1951).*

Ironically the works on display were only available for the export market, which earned the exhibition the name of 'Britain Can't Have It.' Elizabeth Darling, *Exhibiting Britain: Display and National Identity 1946-1967.*

<sup>27</sup> The Independent Group did not share Jones' enthusiasm for traditional British popular. The Group distinguished between traditional craft based popular culture and the new, mass culture decoded by the mass media, however the transition from one onto the next is undeniable. The initial breaking of the boundaries between objects considered low and those considered high, created the platform for theories such as the Expendable Aesthetic.

*scientific study. The question of value judgements became so liberating that we were able to say everything we can think of is right and can be used.*<sup>28</sup>

In this passage Hamilton relates this theory to his collage paintings, for instance the famous *Just what is it that makes today's homes so different, so appealing ...* (1956), hailed as one of the first authentic Pop Art works.<sup>29</sup> Importantly there is a reference to iconoclasm, which is not directed towards the familiar banality of contemporary life, but at the icons of good taste and decorum.<sup>30</sup>

At stake were not the only traditionalist views on art but also the influence that American culture had over British one. In 1955 (when Winston Churchill resigned his post as prime minister) the Harmful Publications Act banned the import of certain American magazines and comics. Mass culture at the time was a quasi-taboo topic for artists. The most common sentiment towards American culture (films, advertising, pin-ups and comics) was one of disdain towards poor and corrupt items of consumption for the young.

After the IG disbanded already in 1955, the Pop phenomenon further exploded in Britain in the early sixties especially at the Royal College of Art. Michael Bracewell, in his brilliant history of Roxy Music, explains how the RCA had become a hub of Pop culture as an intersection of Music, Art and Life, which are brilliantly reflected in the character of Brian Ferry as well as his collaboration with artists for record covers and music videos. The artists at the RCA (including Peter Blake, David Hockney, Joe Tilson Patrick Caulfield, R.B. Kitaj), however represent a more mature phase of British Pop under the aegis of the IG, BEAL and BCMI.

This brief introduction to the Pop phenomenon in Britain immediately shows the connections between official cultural policies, the influence of diplomatic deals such as the Marshall Plan, and can hardly be interpreted as a-political as intended by Livingstone. On the contrary, the iconoclastic gestures of the IG members and of

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<sup>28</sup> Massey, *The Independent Group*, p. 87-88.

<sup>29</sup> For detailed perspectives see: Mark Godfrey et. al., *Richard Hamilton*, (exh. cat., London: Tate Publishing, 2014).

<sup>30</sup> Bradford Collins wrote that Pop was the 'expressions of the yearning of the severely deprived British people following World War II for the consumer Utopia they saw pictured in American glossy magazines and Hollywood films.' Bradford R. Collins, *Pop art: the Independent Group to Neo Pop, 1952-90*, (London: Phaidon Press 2012). p. 23.

Barbara Jones herself were the product of a moment of radical renegotiation of cultural models, right after the trauma of the Second World War, which had left Britain to face considerable hardship. The following section traces Pop's genealogy in the US stressing how it was distinct and largely independent to Britain's. This point opens up debate on whether Pop indeed had any belonging at all proving how it was a socio-political context that spurred its development as part of a geopolitical topography that connected independent phenomena worldwide.

## a.2 Pop in New York: Imperial Swagger on an Intercontinental Scale<sup>31</sup>

Mainstream historiography teaches that the Pop phenomenon in the USA emerged as a reaction against the dominance of Abstract Expressionism as the most acclaimed Post-War style in the country.<sup>32</sup> It became widely assumed, also through Alloway's influence (he became curator at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in 1961),<sup>33</sup> that there was a similarity with its British counterpart, however the two iterations had highly distinct genealogies. Lucy Lippard noted that 'Pop is a hybrid, the product of two abstraction-dominated decades, and, as such, is the heir to an abstract rather than figurative tradition.'<sup>34</sup> Although her text supports the idea of a canonical Pop art history interpreted by a set number of key players, she suggested that although Pop was considered to have first of all emerged in Britain, it appeared coincidentally in New York in the early sixties, independently from Britain, almost by 'accident.'<sup>35</sup>

The first symptom of Pop emerged in New York in the mid-fifties with the work of Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg, considered the 'real point of departure for Pop Art in New York.'<sup>36</sup> Influenced by the legacy of Duchamp's readymade, Johns' painted object posed the question 'is it a flag or is it a painting?' - a gesture that anticipated

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<sup>31</sup>Steven Henry Madoff, *Pop art: a Critical History*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), p. XV.

<sup>32</sup> This view is supported by Lippard and Hal Foster in addition to Mark Francis as expressed in: Mark Francis, *Les Années Pop: 1956-1968*, (exh. cat., Paris: Éditions du Centre Pompidou, 2001).

<sup>33</sup> Alloway, *The Development of British Pop Art*, p. 48.

<sup>34</sup> Lippard, *Pop art*, p. 9.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Lippard, *Pop art*, p. 69.

Pop's concerns. Simultaneously, Rauschenberg's work thinned the line between Assemblage, Neo-Dada and Pop, re-evaluating the role of the readymade within Abstract painting.<sup>37</sup> By the early sixties Pop was a term widely debated upon, and there was little consensus on which artists could be grouped under this definition, with the exception of Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein, James Rosenquist, Claes Oldenburg and Tom Wesselman – recognized by Lucy Lippard as the 'hard-core' Pop artists.

In light of the confusion surrounding this term, MoMA held a symposium on Pop art in 1962, which legitimised the style in New York. The participants did not agree on a singular definition: Hilton Kramer claimed that Pop was truly the champion style of criticism being the first form of art where text and interpretation could enhance the work of art's value and reception – 'the conversation piece par excellence.'<sup>38</sup> In fact, because of the absence of a manifesto or of an organised group, all the categorizations stemmed from critics, gallerists, curators, and none succeeded in reaching a univocal definition. Livingstone also pointed out, 'the attitude of American Pop artists toward their source material was so fundamentally ambivalent that critics and their spectators could read whatever they wanted into the works.'<sup>39</sup>

Pop situated itself across Nouveaux Realisme, Neo-Dada and New Figuration, various exhibitions attempted to elucidate this new art form by using neutral and modest titles including *New Media – New Forms* (Martha Jackson Gallery, 1960), *New Paintings of Common Objects* (Pasadena Arts Museum, 1962) *The New Realists* (Sidney Janis Gallery, 1962), *Six Painters and the Object* (Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1963), to name but a few. Critics also came up with more specific alternative definitions for the Pop artists, which included *Factualists* (Sidney Janis), *Urban Folk artists* (Jasia Reichardt), *Painterly Commonists* or *Meticulous Copyists* (Jules Langsner), *Pop-Sickles* (Mark Rothko) and *New Vulgarians* or *Gum-Chewers* (Max Kolzoff).<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Lippard, *Pop art*, p. 72.

<sup>38</sup> Hilton Kramer, transcript of *Pop Art: A Symposium*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, December 1962, reproduced in Madoff, *Pop art*, p. 68.

<sup>39</sup> Livingstone, *Pop Art*, p. 16.

<sup>40</sup> Madoff, *Pop art*.

Though many critics, including Clement Greenberg, Max Kolzoff and Stanley Kunitz, condemned Pop to a mediocre blitz advertising campaign,<sup>41</sup> others experienced it as a new art, not as densely packed and emotionally charged, which ‘spelled out the youthful buoyancy of America’s unchecked global climb.’<sup>42</sup> Lippard attributed the birth of Pop to a reaction on the part of artists to reject the pessimism and introversion that drenched Abstract Expressionism as the paramount Post-War movement. Pop emerged as a form of optimism against all odds, a positive rather than a negative attitude and it had a distinct genealogy to its British counterpart.<sup>43</sup>

Because of Pop’s historical proximity to Abstract Expressionism, their formal traits - the large scale, the orgiastic colours and the use of symbols (icons) – were placed in dialogue. Pop rapidly grew to become (like Abstract Expressionism) a great American style, and critics became convinced that Pop was a regional style that had been amplified, first nationwide and then to Europe, by the mass media – precisely due to the US’ ‘Imperial swagger on a global scale.’<sup>44</sup> Pop’s devotion towards the destruction of barriers of self-importance reflected its portrayal of objects commonly identified with consumer culture and mass media.

From this summary of Pop’s genealogy and the cultural debates surrounding it in the early sixties, it becomes apparent how claiming any ownership or establishing an orthodoxy related to this label is a purely sophist exercise. The question regarding Pop’s temperature, however, remains to be settled over two major issues, namely New York Pop’s engagement with politics, and the techniques it employed. In regards to NY Pop’s

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<sup>41</sup> Brian O’Doherty continues by claiming, ‘since the very essence of the movement is compounded of lightness, irreverence and wit, it would be ridiculous to take it with deep philosophical seriousness. This would perform the nice trick of making mass culture esoteric’. This statement fantastically conveys the enthusiasm for the show at the Sidney Janis Gallery, however it also confirms the opposition’s considerations of Pop’s superficiality, far from the stature of Abstract Expressionism. Furthermore the element of play in the works, alluded to by O’Doherty, is more than enough material for philosophical speculation, or the de-codification of human emotion. O’Doherty’s stance reconfirms that Pop is a style dense of pathos and gravitas.

Brian O’Doherty, “Art: Avant-Garde Revolt”, *The New York Times*, 31 October 1962, reproduced in Madoff, *Pop art*, p. 41.

<sup>42</sup> Madoff, *Pop art*.

<sup>43</sup> Lippard, *Pop art*, p 9-10

<sup>44</sup> Henry Geldzahler cited in Livingstone, *Pop art: a continuing history*, p. 20.

politics, the issue was tackled in criticism via a comparison with Dada.<sup>45</sup> Their main difference, according to Alan Solomon, rested in ‘the apparently negative attitude of the Dada group toward art and society [which] grew out of a deep sense of aesthetic and political frustration.’ In contrast, he argued, ‘the [Pop artists operate] in complete aesthetic freedom, and politically, they have disengaged themselves totally.’<sup>46</sup> Even more antithetically, Rainer Crone attributed Warhol’s use of mechanical reproduction to Marxist leanings, meant to initiate a critique of labour and mass production.<sup>47</sup> Lippard described Pop as ‘ideological anarchy,’ which perhaps is the best fitting definition, marking once again its ambiguity and heterogeneity.<sup>48</sup>

In terms of Pop’s media and techniques, its ‘cool-ness’ was supported by the use of mechanical means of reproduction, which eliminated the sentimentalism and highly personal touch that distinguished Abstract Expressionism. Though Warhol and others undoubtedly relied on silkscreen techniques, and borrowed readymade images from the media to evacuate the artist’s personal touch – to some extent a renunciation of personal vanity<sup>49</sup> – soft sculptures by Oldenburg dismantle the idea of a cool mechanised medium by being hand sewn and being irreproducible.

On a final note, Pop’s emergence cannot be divorced from North America’s foreign policy after WWII. As the victor and saviour of Europe, the country thrived on an image of prosperity based on the American Dream, an official antidote to the trauma of the war that struck the US regardless of the victory. The recurrent imagery of violence in Warhol’s electric chair series, or the recurrent images of warfare in Lichtenstein’s ben day dot canvases, are but a few of the examples of how politics seeped into these artists’ oeuvre.

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<sup>45</sup> Lucy Lippard, Marko Livingstone and Alan Solomon.

<sup>46</sup> Alan Solomon, transcript of *Pop Art: A Symposium*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 3 December 1962, reproduced in Madoff, *Pop art*, p. 70.

<sup>47</sup> Rainer Crone, *Andy Warhol*, (New York: Praeger, 1970).

<sup>48</sup> The role of Dada in the development and understanding of Pop marks a further difference with between US and British iterations. Dada had an important influence on the IG, who discussed particularly the influence of Marcel Duchamp during their meetings in 1955-1956. The IG’s main objective was to subvert the elite’s role as tastemaker in British society. “In place of what Alloway called Read’s ‘aesthetic of exclusion’, the group strove to establish an ‘aesthetic of plenty’, one open to all facets of modern culture.’ Collins, *Pop Art*, p. 27.

<sup>49</sup> Jean Arp, “Abstract Art, Concrete Art,” in Peggy Guggenheim et. al., *Art of This Century*, (exh. cat., New York: Art of this Century, 1944).

The following section addresses how the notion Pop as an American prerogative was perpetrated throughout the sixties, erecting and consolidating the canon that this thesis seeks to discredit. Departing from an overview of the effects of the 1964 Venice Biennial, the notion of 'Americanization' is explored with particular emphasis on its reception both in Italy and abroad. The outright hostility Pop elicited in most places resuscitates the question of whether any of the works that share a Pop look can ever be cast as imitative or derivative.

#### **b. Pop International: Coca-Cola over Red Wine**

In the UK, as previously discussed, and across Europe, the emergence of Pop generated a wave of anti-Americanism. Pop was seen as the triumph of Coca-Cola (the symbol of capitalism and consumerism) over red wine (a symbol of Christianity and secular institutions) - the ultimate insult to good taste.<sup>50</sup> The 1964 Venice Biennale is remembered as the Pop Biennale because the Golden Lion was awarded to Robert Rauschenberg who represented the United States. His works shocked the Venetian clergy to the point that the catholic authorities prohibited all Catholics to visit the exhibition. The Italian president did not attend the opening ceremony of the US pavillion either. In a review for the Biennale, Tullia Zevi acutely observed:

*There is a common root in Pop art and a common motive that implies converging attacks of cardinals and communists on the American Pavillion and its appendix at the American Consulate. To them it is Pop Art vs. the Soul.*<sup>51</sup>

In the early sixties US intellectuals also resented Pop for being a nemesis to Abstract Expressionism, the proud champion in the battle for the supremacy of modernism with

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<sup>50</sup> I am borrowing this expression from Sarah Wilson who used it during the *Global Pop: Symposium*, Q&A, Tate Modern, 14-15 March 2013. For the full event recording see: <http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/conference/global-pop-symposium>

<sup>51</sup>Tullia Zevi, "The Biennale: Hoe Evil is Pop Art?" *La Repubblica*, 19 September 1964, reproduced in Madoff, *Pop Art*, pp. 32-33.

Another interesting excerpt from the Italian press worth mentioning in order to stress the malaise that had formed towards America is an unreferenced article from the magazine *Arts*, which states: "We Europeans are now in the eyes of the American nothing but poor backward Negroes, good only for being colonized". *ibid*



Europe.<sup>52</sup> Pop in the USA and in Britain developed as a consequence of the pervasiveness of consumer products, which incarnated capitalism, the American Dream (the US post-war trauma remedy) and the hegemonic power asserted through the Marshall Plan.<sup>53</sup> Massey writes, ‘this Shift in the meaning of modernism [namely the arrival of Pop] was symptomatic of the new global balance of power engendered by the Marshall Plan, which generated Britain’s increased dependency, both politically and economically on the United States.’<sup>54</sup> As the ‘American way of life’ travelled and the consumer utopia was progressively realised, artists responded to this with the same lexicon, which British artists had used to retour the cultural spotlight from melancholic painting to dynamic contemporary iconography.

Nevertheless, the reticence towards ‘Pop’ did not last long, and the term was soon adopted for better or for worse. The short and snappy expression simultaneously invoked popular culture, teenage rebellion and pop music, shifting the emphasis of the tendency from its subject matter to its attitude – a new definition of taste.<sup>55</sup>

The canonical historiography traced so far has revealed how Pop is in fact more of an ethos, a phenomenon or a lens through which to observe how artists responded to the radical changes that affected popular culture and the day-to-day from the late fifties onwards. Both Pop incarnations in Britain and in the US reflected a very local socio-political situation and artistic milieu attesting to their specificity. Departing from the understanding that Pop is an applicable lens to interpret the artistic breakthroughs of regions outside the Anglo-American axis, the remainder of the introduction is dedicated to clarifying my stance towards certain issues that complicate the study of Pop in Latin America. These include a discussion on the meaning of the expression ‘Latin America,’ its connotations in relation to development and modernization, and considerations on

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<sup>52</sup> For a detailed and compelling overview of how the United States were able to assert cultural independence and supremacy over Europe, see Serge Guilbaut, *How New York stole the idea of modern art: abstract expressionism, freedom, and the cold war*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

<sup>53</sup> ‘We have carefully prepared and reconstructed Europe in our own image since 1945,’ Henry Geldzahler, Transcript, *Pop Art: A Symposium*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 3 December 1962, reproduced in Madoff, *Pop Art*, p. 66

<sup>54</sup> Massey, *The Independent Group*, p. 62.

<sup>55</sup> Marco Livingstone and Dan Cameron, *Pop art: an international perspective*, (New York: Rizzoli, 1992), p. 12.

certain assumptions attached to culture, folklore, and national identity in the region, as analysed from my European standpoint.

### **b.1 What is Latin America?**

Defining Pop Art in Latin America requires recognition of what is meant by the expression 'Latin America' itself. The September 2012 issue of *Art in America* solely focused on the Southern Cone, outlining how nationality influences cultural production. It questioned the implications of the label 'Latin America' and how it is a stereotype and a generalization. In doing so it presented views from eminent critics, historians, anthropologists, who commented on the reasons behind this taxonomy. Mari Carmen Ramírez suggested that the formation of the Latin American stereotype is the product of globalization and of the region's popular art fairs, biennials and museums. In addition, she pointed at the proliferation of Latin American art collectors, combined with an increasing curatorial necessity to incorporate new works in the Euro-American art historical canon. Eduardo Abaroa argued that the term is used as a means to homogenize and become economically competitive. Abaroa used the example of Mexico, which he claims to be sacrificing its cultural identity in favour of capitalism, as an ideal of progress. Luís Pérez Oramas, on the other hand, simply acknowledged the limits of such a categorization, which he underlines should always be acknowledged.

Marta Traba is another important contributor to the critique of 'Latin America,' who did not appear in the *Art in America* issue. In 1982, two years before her death, she wrote:

*Latin America, like Africa, is a block – divided but still a block, for that, despite all the controversies on this subject, it is legitimate to talk about Latin American art, or the art produced in Latin America, as a contributing fact to the definition of a culture that cannot and does not wish to become confused with others.*<sup>56</sup>

Unlike her more contemporary peers in *Art in America*, who fail to provide definitive judgements on the term, Traba recognizes the necessity to establish a specific definition of Latin American art outside the perimeters of comparative structures. However, written

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<sup>56</sup> Marta Traba quoted in Geraldine P. Biller, Bélgica Rodríguez, Edward J. Sullivan, and Marina Pérez de Mendiola, *Latin American women artists = artistas latinoamericanas : 1915-1995*, (exh. cat., Milwaukee, Wis: Milwaukee Art Museum, 1995), p. 19.

in the 1980s, this text emerges within a context in which Latin American narratives were at the very beginning of their struggle to enter the canon as independent and non-derivative art histories. Traba's contemporary peers, including Jorge Romero Brest and Jorge Glusberg, widely used the term in order to gain greater visibility. Since the 1970s, most exhibitions that included artists from the region were defined as 'Latin American.'<sup>57</sup> Therefore the principle of Latin American art was present, however lacking in specificity. Thirty years on, a necessity to address this specificity is imperative in order to give justice to the artistic innovation that occurred. Because of the growing focus on this region as a new epicentre of cultural production, as exemplified by the number of *Art in America*, Traba's acceptance of this generic definition is no longer justified. Already in 1959, filmmaker Glauber Rocha suggested 'Indo-Iberian America' as an alternative expression to the limiting 'Latin America' in a Mexican magazine called *America Indigena*.<sup>58</sup> According to Paulo Herkenhoff, the use of this term is decoded by a sense of impermanence and instability due to the 'social frailties, external exploitation, political corruption, arbitrariness and the continuous transformation of things.'<sup>59</sup> This interpretation is at the base of seminal texts including *Tactics for thriving on adversity: conceptualism in Latin America, 1960-1980* by Ramírez.<sup>60</sup> *Thriving on Adversity*, (from the Portuguese *da adversidade vivemos*, which I would translate as 'we live off adversity') was the name given to one of Hélio Oiticica's *Parangoles* - wearable sculptures from 1964-1965 made of a wide range of materials sourced in Rio's favelas. However also this terminology is limited by a univocal sense of political turmoil, which may exclude practices engaged differently with the socio-political context.

One of the first European critics to openly dismiss this definition was Guy Brett, who in the 1990 exhibition catalogue *Transcontinental: Nine Latin American Artists*,

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<sup>57</sup> See: Dawn Ades et. al., *Art in Latin America: The Modern Era, 1820-1980*, (exh. cat., New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); Edward J. Sullivan, *Latin American Art in the Twentieth Century*, (London: Phaidon Press, 1996).

<sup>58</sup> *America Indigena*, Vol XIX, no. 2, April 1959, cited in Ivo Mesquita, Paulo Herkenhoff, and Justo Mellado, *Cartographies: José Bedia ... [Et Al.]*, (exh. cat., Winnipeg: Winnipeg Art Gallery, 1993), p. 63.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Mari Carmen Ramírez, "Tactics for thriving on adversity: conceptualism in Latin America, 1960-1980," in Luís Camnitzer, Jane Farver, Rachel Weiss, and László Beke (eds.), *Global Conceptualism: Points of Origin, 1950s-1980s*, (exh. cat., New York: Queens Museum of Art, 1999).

stresses the importance of examining the specificity of each country's relationship with modernity, therefore challenging the definition 'Latin American.' Brett refuses to solely evaluate an artist by his/her place of origin, hence the value of the term 'transcontinental.' Brett adopts the 'burst onto the scene' strategy in order to accentuate the significance of the chosen artists within a wider conceptual arena. 'What is 'local' cannot be separated from what is 'global,'" is the crux of the matter, therefore, although the artists were born in the same continent, each is approached specifically in order to contextualize them within an expanded narrative.<sup>61</sup>

Within wider discussions, the term Latin America has also been widely dismissed as a geo-political label. Suely Rolnik is another critical voice that chose to replace the term 'Latin' with 'South' as a rejection of the European imperialistic connotation of the former. Rolnik contests the Roman Catholic tradition that links Latin America in its current definition to Rome, which enforces European paradigms of logocentrism, capitalism, machismo and even racism.<sup>62</sup> The first person to use the term, and the concept of *Latinidad* was, in fact, Napoleon, when he was planning to conquer the continent. *Latinidad* was adopted by the creole<sup>63</sup> elites to define themselves in order to demote the identities of Indians and Afro-South Americans and champion their own 'Latin' descent.

Within this thesis, the definition Latin America serves merely as a geographic starting point for the retrieval of the obscured or forgotten artistic practices. As the title itself suggests, the thesis focuses specifically on the Pop phenomenon in Brazil, Argentina and Peru only. The generalizations or conclusions that may be extracted from the research serve to deconstruct the canonical and restrictive definition of Pop art, which in turn is transformed into a lens through which the problematics of an époque can be studied and interpreted.

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<sup>61</sup> Guy Brett, *Transcontinental: an investigation of reality: nine Latin American artists*, (London: Verso, 1990), p. 6.

<sup>62</sup>Suely Rolnik, PROA TV. Interview for the exhibition *Pop, Realismos y Política*, 2011. [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I\\_qReGoyh4U](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I_qReGoyh4U) Last accessed 3 August 2016.

<sup>63</sup> Creole is the term Latin Americans of Spanish descent coined for themselves in order to be differentiated by indigenous populations.

## b.2 Modernity and the Avant-Garde

Defining a continent in relation to its Latin roots raises questions on the extent of colonialism's legacies. A key source, which unpacks this issue from an anthropological perspective, is Walter Mignolo's book *The Idea of Latin America*. The text outlines how the notion of a 'Latin' America was 'invented' by Europe in the XV century, through a process of imposed modernization, which he terms 'coloniality.' 'There is no modernity without coloniality because coloniality is constitutive of modernity,' he argues. 'Modernity is the name for the historical process in which Europe began its progress towards world hegemony, it carries a darker side, coloniality.'<sup>64</sup> Mignolo explained that Europe's strategy to dominate the colonies pivoted around a 'dialectic of salvation,' according to which being colonised and modernised equated to achieving redemption and happiness – a logic tightly bound with the Christian faith's message of forgiveness in exchange for repentance.<sup>65</sup> Mignolo looks at Latin America as a place without history in order to counter the 'colonial wound,' the feeling of inferiority imposed on those who do not match pre-determined Euro-American models.

Considerations over the impact of colonialism on modernization in the XX century extend to broader issues relating to underdevelopment, and in the context of this thesis on the role of the art in Mignolo's 'dialectics of salvation.' In the valuable 1969 text *Vanguardia e Subdesenvolvimento* (Avant-garde and Underdevelopment), Brazilian critic and poet Ferreira Gullar picks up on the idea of modernity as an imposed process, whilst analysing the avant-garde's role within its dynamic. He argues that underdeveloped countries feel inferior to first world nations, becoming trapped within a dynamic of dependency calcified in the notion of 'civilization.' Gullar wrote, 'we are

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<sup>64</sup> Walter Mignolo, *The Idea of Latin America*, (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub, 2005), p. xiii.

<sup>65</sup> The association Mignolo makes between salvation, modernity, clonality, sought to establish a new 'de-colonial' frame for Latin America. De-colonialism is a notion first established after WWII with the United Nations' effort to dismantle neo-colonial empires in Africa and Asia. Among its foremost theorists is Martinique-born Franz Fanon. Fanon oriented his thought across Marxism and colonial theory and enacted a semiotic analysis of the role of the colonizer. Fanon's work urged the metropolis, synonym of the modernized society, to rethink its history alongside the history of the colonies as a means to destabilise identitarian thought, otherness and difference. He believed, however, that was that armed struggle would have been the only possible counterweight to beat coloniality.

condemned to civilization.’<sup>66</sup> As such, he identifies the avant-garde as the cultural reflection of a strife to become modern and ‘internationalist.’ Yet, Gullar critiques the very definition of avant-garde in Latin America for being an imported terminology, which was never questioned, and which in its original definition (connected to the French historical avant-gardes) was wholly inadequate for the Brazilian context.

Departing from a reading of Marx and Engels’ *Communist Manifesto* where he draws the fundamental truth that all inventions belong to humankind and not to a singular person or country, he explains that artists must avail themselves of all the tools within their historical moment, and to use them to interpret specific surroundings, and specific historical context. Gullar advocates for a pluralist view of culture, countering the widely held idea in Brazil (and many other underdeveloped countries) that in order to participate on an international stage artists had to extinguish narrower national traits. He concludes that an artist must be able to transcend the singularities of his own context, also by using the languages he perceives from outside his immediate sphere of influence. Crucially, focusing on the national traits does not mean being regressive, traditionalist, or antinationalist. Through details, and national nuances, the artist can reach international circuits.

The idea of pluralism as the essence of Latin American modernity was theorised also by Néstor García Canclini who argues that avant-garde practice in Latin America became ‘multifocal,’ meaning susceptible to influence, to traditional societies, but increasingly innovative and democratic. His reflection relates to the changes in ‘symbolic markets,’ which traded in the symbolic visions of modernization and development – although he claims that ‘modernity never quite arrived.’ He explains that whilst until the 1950s<sup>67</sup> national identity was of primary concern, the influx of international companies and the consequent convergence of power, caused the symbolism of nationality to shift towards internationality.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Ferreira Gullar, *Vanguarda e subdesenvolvimento: ensaios sobre arte*, (Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 1978, second edition), p. 24.

<sup>67</sup> Gayatri Spivak also explained that in the 1920s and 1930s, artists in Brazil or Cuba drew themes and images from local culture in order to strengthen ideas of nationalism in visual culture. She termed this technique ‘strategic essentialism.’

<sup>68</sup> Néstor García Canclini, "Modernity after postmodernity," Gerardo Mosquera (ed.), *Beyond the Fantastic: Contemporary Art Criticism from Latin America*, (London: The Institute of International Visual Arts, 1996), p. 45.

In contrast to Gullar or Canclini, Marta Traba did not even consider the notion of ‘multifocal culture’ or pluralism. In her important text *Dos décadas vulnerables en las artes plásticas latinoamericanas, 1950-1970*, (Two vulnerable decades in Latin American Plastic Arts, 1950-1970) she claims that European and then North American art were wholeheartedly copied by Latin American artists. She attributes this unoriginality to ‘four centuries of foreign cultural domination’ and denounces how all the new languages and forms of communication imported from abroad corrupted a local way of expressing creative independence.<sup>69</sup>

Andrea Giunta, though she lengthily studied the relationship between internationalism and the avant-garde,<sup>70</sup> also claimed that ‘modernity in Latin America was a misappropriated and modified project.’ She continued – ‘an educated intelligentsia built up alliances between a project born in the context of nascent capitalism in the nineteenth century and a discordant periphery,’ where the arrival of a machine age was hailed though cars were so few and there were ‘no roads to speed on.’<sup>71</sup>

The sum of these theories reveals how the implementation of modernization in Latin American countries, which were ‘underdeveloped,’ greatly influenced the symbols associated with aspiration and the reformulations of national identities, at once internationalist and local. The modernization project was indeed mined with contradictions and incongruences. As Giunta pointed out, the ideal outcome of modernization was seldom reflected in the reality of infrastructure, government policy and distribution of wealth. Nevertheless, it was the objective and ‘obligation’<sup>72</sup> of the avant-garde, in its new more specific definition, to reflect on such incongruences and to keep faith with the unique customs that were still traits of their local milieus.

A recognition of colonialism’s effects and its role in the formulation of national identity is fundamental for understanding how certain cultural paradigms continue to influence historiography to date. As such, the thesis acknowledges the legacies of

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<sup>69</sup> Marta Traba, *Dos Décadas Vulnerables en las Artes Plásticas Latinoamericanas, 1950-1970*, (Buenos Aires: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 2005), p. 58.

<sup>70</sup> Andrea Giunta, *Avant-garde, Internationalism, and Politics: Argentine art in the sixties*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).

<sup>71</sup> Andrea Giunta, “Strategies of Modernity in Latin America,” in Mosquera, *Beyond the Fantastic*, p. 55-57.

<sup>72</sup> Gullar, *Vanguardia e Subdesarrollo*. pp. 79-80.

colonialism and the effects of 'modernity' in each chapter. Nevertheless, it seeks to trace a history kindred to local narratives by minimising comparative analyses of contexts and works of art, but highlighting as much as possible such local genealogies.

### **b.3 Popular Culture: Folklore vs. Mass**

*Indigenism is a vector into exoticism from outside and identity from within.*<sup>73</sup>

Having examined the concept of Latin America and the impact of colonialism on its very definition, this section approaches some themes concerning the complex makeup of national culture in the regions examined in the thesis, specifically decoded through a combination of popular culture, imported culture, and folklore. In the sections on Pop in Britain and the US, popular culture was a fusion between commercial culture, mass culture and popular art. Hal Foster argued that for the IG American consumerism was 'exotic' and 'cult cargo,' and it had not yet replaced everyday culture.<sup>74</sup> Gradually, he observed, American culture displaced 'folk' with 'Pop' as the basis for common culture.<sup>75</sup> Nevertheless, the IG and the New York Pop artists shared the objective to challenge aesthetic hierarchies and to rethink what 'taste' could be. In a letter to Alison and Peter Smithson dated 16 January 1957, Richard Hamilton wrote, 'Pop Art is: popular, transient, expendable, low-cost, mass-produced, young, witty, sexy, gimmicky, glamorous, and Big Business' - stressing its everyday, commonplace values. More than describing the characteristics of a style, Hamilton was listing the salient attributes of modern popular culture. By the 1960s the fine line between commercial art, or popular art and high art thinned further.

In South America this difference was accentuated because a commercial culture largely composed of presumably imported products changed the aesthetics of everyday life. Yet, because the economies of Argentina, Brazil and Peru were still underdeveloped comparatively to the US or Britain, the difference between local and imported culture, or between folk art and mass culture, was striking. These differences were further marked when placed next to traditional local products, which shared little

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<sup>73</sup> Mirko Lauer, "Populist Ideology and Indigenism: A Critique," in Mosquera, *Beyond the Fantastic*, p. 77.

<sup>74</sup> Foster, *Pop*, p. 18.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid*, p. 20.



with the images of the foreign worlds represented by their consumer products. In line with Mignolo's theories on modernity being the flipside to coloniality, imported items of consumption became metonyms of development and prosperity radically shifting certain aspects of nationalist aspirations— highlighting a fundamental parallelism with Anglo-American iterations, which ultimately pursued a new vision of contemporary culture.

Antonio Gramsci's writings prove very useful in the deconstruction of the issue of folklore vs. modern culture from a non-deterministic standpoint. In his *Observations on Folklore*, published in the 1950s, Gramsci claims that folklore is not a peculiar cultural form, but as a serious reflection of class differences found in a 'moral of the people' or a specific set of maxims for the practical conduct and ethics, linked, as superstition, to religious beliefs.<sup>76</sup> As such he claims,

*In this sphere, too, one must distinguish various strata: the fossilized ones which reflect conditions of past life and are therefore conservative and reactionary, and those which consist of a series of innovations, often creative and progressive, determined spontaneously by forms and conditions of life which are in the process of developing and which are in contradiction to or simply different from the morality of the governing strata.<sup>77</sup>*

Gramsci's aim was to divulge a folk culture that belonged to a vast uncultured majority that would bridge the gap between traditional and modern culture. Within Gramsci's definition, folklore emerges as defining element in the generation of a unifying national identity. Using the example of folk literature he explained that its origin in a vast, uncultured majority, made it a truly national expression.<sup>78</sup> Gramsci's theory therefore pivots around two nodes; the first, that truly national expressions are not necessarily linked to 'high-culture,' the second that folklore is a reflection of national identity.

Susan Sontag used Gramsci's theory to examine how poster production in Cuba developed endemically rather than in relation to North American aesthetics. Sontag sees that by responding to foreign trends, Cuban posters were internationalist (outward looking) as opposed to nationalist (inward looking). As such they were more

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<sup>76</sup>Antonio Gramsci, and David Forgacs, *The Gramsci reader: selected writings, 1916-1935*, (New York: New York University Press, 2000), p. 361.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid, p. 123.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

revolutionary by responding to one of the fundamental calls to divulge the revolutionary message. Although Sontag sees that the eclecticism in Cuban posters represents a limitation of their radical or revolutionary impact,<sup>79</sup> she concedes that ‘becoming international is then Cuba's indigenous path to cultural revolution.’<sup>80</sup>

In opposition to Alan Solomon, Peter Selz wrote that Pop ‘is not a folk art, grown from below, but Kitsch, manufactured from above and given all the publicity Madison Avenue dealers have at their disposal.’<sup>81</sup> Selz ignores one of the notions so far considered at the core of Pop art, namely the dismissal of aesthetic hierarchies. Sontag successfully adopts the opposing stance. Arguing that the posters in Cuba, despite the visual similarities to North American Pop, also emerged from popular traditions (woodcuts and street art), Sontag looks at them from a local perspective therefore placing the emphasis on a bottom up view of popular culture, aligned with Gramscian dialectics.

#### **b.4 ‘Tupi or not Tupi, that is the Question:’<sup>82</sup> a Theory on Syncretism**

The previous examination of issues invoked by popular culture in its multiple facets, has explained how each aspect fits within a pluralistic mosaic, where the high art vs. low art paradigm is not the established order. Though it has been observed that popular culture reflected in Pop is the sum of cultures high and low, folk and mass, the issues of imitations or derivation remain at stake. This explicative section addresses the notions of hybridity and syncretism, which have been used to counter allegations of derivation or imitation.

An often cited example of hybridity in Brazil, for instance, is Oswald De Andrade’s *Manifesto Antropófago* written in 1928. One of the most well-known phrases in the text (a play on Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*’s dilemma) is ‘Tupi or not Tupi: that is the

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<sup>79</sup> Sontag claimed that ‘[posters are] illustrative of the revolution rather than artistically revolutionary,’ Susan Sontag, “The Cuban Revolutionary Poster,” in Dugald Stermer and Susan Sontag, *The Art of Revolution*, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1970), p. 8.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid, p. 9.

<sup>81</sup> Peter Selz, *The Flacid Art*, Partisan Review, Summer 1963, pp. 313-16.

<sup>82</sup> Oswald de Andrade quoted in, Mesquita, Herkenhoff, and Mellado, *Cartographies: José Bedia ... [et al.]*, p. 41. Original text in full can be found here: Oswald De Andrade, *Manifesto Antropófago*, 1924, original and transl. Leslie Bary, [http://www.corner-college.com/udb/cprok3mKYQAndrade\\_Cannibalistic\\_Manifesto.pdf](http://www.corner-college.com/udb/cprok3mKYQAndrade_Cannibalistic_Manifesto.pdf) Last accessed 27 June 2016.

question.’ Written in a decade propelled by modernist aspirations, and in the aftermath of the ‘Modern Art Week’ (a landmark event in the history of modernism in the country), *Manifesto Antropófago* proposed a solution to the dilemma of Brazilian national identity. Instead of having to choose whether to be Tupi (an indigenous Amazonian tribe) or ‘modern,’ De Andrade exposed how Brazilian culture was instead both at once, thanks to an anthropophagite tendency, the ability to ingest foreign cultures, digest them, making them Brazilian.

As exemplified by anthropophagy, hybridity is a paradigmatic concept within South American narratives, which highlights the issues surrounding the imported vs. vernacular culture dichotomy. Michael Asbury, in his essay *Tracing Hybrid Strategies in Brazilian Modern Art*, examines the use of hybridity questioning its role in the renegotiation of geo-political boundaries and its relation to canonical discourses.<sup>83</sup> The conclusion is that hybridity is a cultural cul-de-sac, which leads Asbury to opt for *syncretism* as a more successful terminology. Syncretism, which conveys an exchange (rather than a detriment) between contemporary discourse and tradition, alleviates subaltern strategies of their hybrid burden. ‘In this definition, the syncretic does not occupy a third space – implied by the notion of hybridity – but poses ambivalence as a subversive strategy.’<sup>84</sup> Asbury continues, ‘syncretism thus demands an understanding of the *other* in order to delineate a territory for the self.’<sup>85</sup> This theory illuminates decolonialist concerns over colonized-colonizer relationships, foregrounding Homi Bhabha’s key question, How can a human live Other-wise?<sup>86</sup>

Bhabha’s Other-wise, relates to the conflict between imported and local culture. In Lacanian terms he claims that notions of ‘nation’, ‘culture’, ‘community’ are *subjects* in

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<sup>83</sup> Asbury firstly examined how Canclini placed hybridization within the politics of subaltern struggles, where adaptation prevails over preservation. The discussion builds on Canclini’s evaluation looking at how hybridity may also invoke sterility, a cultural cul-de-sac.

<sup>84</sup>Michael Asbury, “Tracing Hybrid Strategies in Brazilian Modern Art,” in Jonathan Harris (ed.), *Critical perspectives on contemporary painting: hybridity, hegemony, historicism*, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2003), p. 142.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid, p. 143.

<sup>86</sup>Bhabha sees hybrids as a menace to coloniality because the approximation of difference and distance between the self and the other weakens the contrast between the colonizer and the colonized.

Homi Bhabha, “Remembering Fanon: Self, Psyche and the Colonial Condition,” foreword to Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, (London: Pluto, 1986), p. xxv.

discourse, which therefore acquire the power of identification. When the colonizer hijacks these *subjects*, the colonized encounters the impossibility to reach psychic identification with his/her surroundings. According to Lacan, the process of identification occurs during the mirror stage, a phase during infancy, in which the child recognises itself in the mirror as 'other' to its mother for the first time. The shock that derives from this realization corresponds to 'identification'.<sup>87</sup>

From a European perspective, the discovery of America acted like a Lacanian mirror, as it introduced the 'other' for the first time, strengthening European notions of self.<sup>88</sup> This mechanism, however, functioned also in reverse: the arrival of the coloniser also strengthened ideas of self in the colonised. Because of the oppressive nature of colonialism, the colonized developed a complex by which 'Freudian mechanisms of psychic repression [were] set in relation to those of colonial repression.'<sup>89</sup> Therefore the colonized subject simultaneously suffers and thrives within colonialism and identifies the 'other' with this double sentiment, which causes a crisis of identity - in Lacanian terms an impossibility of psychic identification.<sup>90</sup>

As such, the colonial encounter sabotages identification. Figuratively the child (colonized) fails to ever encounter the mirror (the subject, for Bhabha the nation/ culture/ community that reflects it) therefore identification never occurs and the mother's (colonizer's) power of identification remains intact. Within this framework, Asbury's syncretism provides an ideal backdrop to support the efficacy of Pop as a strategy to dismiss derivation. Pop, as an arguably imported terminology, emerged in South America as a syncretic strategy to generate psychic identification.

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<sup>87</sup> If a psychoanalytic reading proves useful, the colonial encounter sabotages identification. Figuratively the child (colonized) fails to ever encounter the mirror (the subject, for Bhabha the nation/culture/community that reflects it) therefore identification never occurs and the mother's (colonizer's) power of identification remains intact.

<sup>88</sup> Mignolo. *The idea of Latin America*.

<sup>89</sup> Henry Louis Gates, *Tradition and the Black Atlantic: Critical Theory in the African Diaspora*, (New York: BasicCivitas, 2010), p. 104.

<sup>90</sup> Gayatri Spivak joins in the critique of alteritism: 'I am critical of the binary opposition Coloniser/ Colonised. I try to examine the heterogeneity of 'Colonial Power', and to disclose the complicity of the two poles of that opposition as it constitutes the disciplinary enclave of the critique of imperialism.' cited in Albert J. Paolini, Anthony Elliott and Anthony Moran (eds.), *Navigating Modernity: Postcolonialism, Identity, and International Relations*. (Boulder, Colo: L. Rienner Publishers, 1999), p. 54.

Returning to the issue of vernacular vs. imported culture, syncretism provides a route into the creation of a national identity. Originating from the bottom it complies with the Gramscian notion of truly national expressions. Furthermore, because it dethrones hegemonic views on colonizer/colonized relationships, it allows space for psychic identification. Pop, understood as a form of syncretism, propels notions of national identity through the fusion of imported and vernacular expressions.

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This introduction has established how Pop in its canonical definition is a wide-ranging lens that encompasses works that capture a moment of transition when aesthetic hierarchies were being renegotiated because of socio-political conditions specific to each country's context. The mainstream interpretations of survey exhibitions and texts that have been produced in Western Europe and the United States since the 1960s have established an arbitrary and inadequate canon, which never succeeded in forming a comprehensive definition for the style. As such, this thesis endeavours to dismantle stringent definitions by approaching the field from localised perspectives and with consideration of the theories and discourses introduced above.

Pop in Argentina, Brazil and Peru was not readily recognized as an established phenomenon, as it arguably occurred *avant-la-lettre*, just before the actual term became of common use. As such, the thesis considers the overarching themes of colonialism and modernity to trace a critical historiography of the style, which remains contentious due its frequent exclusion from broader narratives for being derivative. In the coming three chapters, the thesis approaches this field anew, paying attention to how its colonial past, the dream of modernization, and internationalist aspirations informed the formulation national cultures. Pop is recast as a reflection of international economic circuits and domestic and foreign policy (as opposed to an exclusive label or movement), informed by the theories examined in the introduction regarding underdevelopment, pluralism and syncretism, folklore, and internationalism. In this way, patterns of call and response or imitation are challenged, as a wealth of artistic practices from the three countries examined reveal a new extensive field of investigation, which this thesis only begins to exhaust.

## Chapter 1: Argentina

Though it is apparent that Pop practices have not been paramount in many South American scholars' agendas, Argentineans have widely studied the phenomenon and several exhibitions have been dedicated to art in the 1960s under the denomination of Pop,<sup>91</sup> regardless of any prejudice about originality or derivation.<sup>92</sup> Reasons for this

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<sup>91</sup> Among the key texts that examine the Pop phenomenon in Argentina are: María José Herrera, *Pop!: la consagración de la primavera*, (Buenos Aires: Fundación OSDE, 2010); Andrea Giunta, *Avant-garde, internationalism, and politics: Argentine art in the sixties*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007); Inés Katzenstein (ed.), *Listen, Here, Now!: Argentine Art of the 1960s : Writings of the Avant-Garde*, (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2004); Ana Longoni and Mariano Mestman, *Del Di Tella a 'Tucumán Arde': vanguardia artística y política en el '68 argentino*, (Buenos Aires: El Cielo por Asalto, 2000); Gonzalo Moisés Aguilar, Rodrigo Alonso, and Paulo Herkenhoff, *Arte de contradicciones: pop, realismos y política, Brasil - Argentina 1960*, (exh. cat. Buenos Aires: Fundación Proa, 2012); Karen Benezra, 'Media Art in Argentina: Ideology and Critique 'Después Del Pop,' *ARTMargins*, n. 1, vol. 2–3, MIT Press Journals, pp. 152–175. Amongst the primary resources that document this phenomenon are also texts by Pierre Restany, Lawrence Alloway, Edward Sullivan, Jacqueline Barnitz and Dawn Ades.

<sup>92</sup> Uruguayan (New York based) historian and artist Luís Camnitzer is a representative voice among those historians who have not recognised the value of Pop art practices in Latin America. He claimed that 'in Latin America, Pop art had no echo of consequence. [...] attempts to produce vernacular Pop art in Argentina, Brazil, and Colombia brought only facile and folklorized versions of the formal solutions developed in New York. [...] It was an issue that I then shrugged off as symptomatic of an incomplete derivation.' He continued that 'from outside of American consumer society, Pop's most evident and understandable contribution was the change of the rules of composition,' a claim, which this thesis fully counters arguing from the very introduction that the capsizing of aesthetic hierarchies was among Pop's prime achievements. Luís Camnitzer, 'On and

keen interest, both during the 1960s and in recent years, include the remarkable convergence of international artists and critics in Buenos Aires, for example, Lawrence Alloway, Pierre Restany, Clement Greenberg (though he fervently opposed Pop), and Otto Hahn. In addition, artists such as Marta Minujín have risen to international stardom, enabling a greater visibility of their formative years in the Argentine capital. The climate that fostered such acute experimentation and attracted such an enviable audience is wholly attributed to the support of the Visual Arts Centre of the Instituto Torcuato di Tella (ITDT), which, being widely idolised as a beacon of artistic freedom in all existing literature, forms a critical part of my study. The Di Tella family's entrepreneurial undertakings, in fact, unveil the connections between cultural institutions and governmental policies further problematizing their social role.

Of all the cities in the southern cone, Buenos Aires was one of great allure, known since the turn of the century as the 'Paris of South America,' because of its European architecture, and its romanced portrayal in novels by Jorge Luís Borges, Julio Cortazar, Manuel Puig, Bruce Chatwin (among many others), who all travelled to and from Europe, particularly to Paris, establishing important cultural bonds. Though Argentina gained independence from Spain in 1818, it was vastly populated by Europeans (both creole and peninsular<sup>93</sup>), still eager to participate in the discovery of the new frontier. It came naturally, then, that the creole elites of the country – both of Hispanic and more generally European descent - had a decisively Eurocentric and keenly Francophile taste, even after modernism had flooded over Europe during the first half of the XX century.

Argentine modernism emerged in the late 1920s, and among its most important exponents were Emilio Pettoruti, Xul Solar, Norah Borges, Aquiles Badi, Horacio Butler, among others. Many artists studied in Paris and were eager to inaugurate new movements in the Argentine milieu that mostly supported naturalistic painting – vehemently advocated for by Atilio Chiappori, the then director of the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes. Having studied in Paris, Antonio Berni was another pivotal figure that contributed to the remodelling of Argentine art. He had widely collaborated with David

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Against Translation,' in Luís Camnitzer, and Rachel Weiss (ed.), *On Art, Artists, Latin America, and Other Utopias*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009), p. 32.

<sup>93</sup> Creole (*criollo*) and peninsular – respectively referred to Argentineans who were born in America (though of European descent), and those born abroad.

Alfaro Siqueiros, the communist Mexican muralist who had settled in Buenos Aires in 1933, and was famous for lecturing about subversive painting. Influenced by Siqueiros and his years in Paris, Berni outlined a new tendency called *Nuevo Realismo* (New Realism, which is completely distinct to the 1960s French *Nouveau Réalisme*), defined as ‘a basically apolitical strain of realism that overwhelmingly places emphasis on ‘humanism,’ which he used to faithfully portray the Argentine reality.<sup>94</sup> One of Berni’s main concerns was the disconnection between art and audiences, which continued to inform and influence the generations that followed. Unsurprisingly, there is a perceivable tension in the texts produced from the 1930s onwards – as explored in the first section of the chapter – between an older guard of artists, and younger generations eager to renovate the local art scene and to broaden art’s spectatorship.

With this backdrop, this chapter provides an analysis of Pop art in Argentina, examined as the result of a growing desire to include wider sections of the population within the art discourse. This narrative intertwined this aim with more obvious ones relating to avant-garde practice, including the creation of a national aesthetic, and the will to participate in a global art circuit. The majority of texts that have been published over the past fifteen years have associated the rise of a Pop aesthetic in Argentina to the boom of a youth culture driven by sexual liberation, rock and roll and the mass media, during a time of economic prosperity before a military coup in 1966. Among the most interesting accounts, one by Rodrigo Alonso written for an important exhibition at the Fundación PROA in Benos Aires<sup>95</sup> (in agreement with Maria José Herrera) narrates the emergence of Pop within a cultural itinerary that sought to rupture with the past by dismissing altogether academicism, and seeking independent ways of producing art – a history that does not majorly differ from North American or Western European ones in principle, but is deeply distinct in practice. Alonso addresses the Pop phenomenon by first observing how the notion of ‘popular culture’ shifted from being tied to vernacular

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<sup>94</sup> Roberto Amigo, offering a synopsis of Antonio Berni, ‘Brevísima historia de la pintura moderna,’ *Renovación* (Buenos Aires), 20 March 1938, p. 6.

<http://icaadocs.mfah.org/icaadocs/THEARCHIVE/FullRecord/tabid/88/doc/794479/language/en-US/Default.aspx> last accessed 27 June 2016.

<sup>95</sup>Aguilar, Alonso and Herkenhoff, *Arte de Contradicciones*. and Rodrigo Alonso, Jaime Arrambide, Laurence Henaff, and Agustín Bruni, *Sistemas, Acciones y Procesos, 1965-1975*, (exh. cat. Buenos Aires: PROA, 2011).



traditions, literature and history, to being focused on change, progress and doing away with historical/cultural burdens. He continues explaining:

*...it is evident that the popular element invoked by the abbreviation 'Pop' resonates differently in the North and South of the planet. If in England and in the United States it is identified with the imagery of the pulsating mass culture industry, in South America the unbalance between the media exaltation of consumption and the political and socio-economic realities of its population gives rise to phenomena of displacement that promote anything from parodic deviations to true forms of critical resistance.* <sup>96</sup>

Andrea Giunta and Ana Longoni, both eminent contributors to the field of 1960s Argentine art history, have not focused their studies on Pop, yet have nuanced it within the wider trajectory of politicisation of artistic practices in the country (their studies are widely referenced throughout the chapter).<sup>97</sup> Both scholars see Pop as the reflection of a socio-political and moral crisis in the first half of the sixties that ultimately led to the radicalization of artistic practices, with an increasing reliance on political activism, and a widespread sentiment of irreverence and disregard of traditional values. Nevertheless, neither Longoni nor Giunta wholly focus on the intricacies that led to the appearance and relative success of such a phenomenon.

Seeking to offer a comprehensive study of the topic, with a more pointed analysis of the connections between art and politics through the specific lens of Pop, this chapter examines how public funding and the rise of public institutions played against domestic and foreign policy, which set the stage for the outburst of a Pop art style that was internationally recognised as such. Not excluding or negating previous scholarship, the chapter is grounded in the deconstruction of key terminologies, such as *Informalismo*, *Camp*, *Lunfardo* and *Art for Consumption*, seeking to explain from a localised perspective the radical changes in art production that took place between roughly 1960 -1970.

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<sup>96</sup> Original: '...es evidente que el sentido de lo popular implicado en la abreviación 'Pop' resuena de diferentes maneras en el Norte y en el Sur del Planeta. Si en Inglaterra y los Estados Unidos se identifica casi sin conflicto con la imaginaria de la pujante industria cultural de masas, en América del Sur el desfase entre la exaltación mediática del consumo y las realidades políticas y socioeconómicas de sus pobladores da lugar a fenómenos de dislocamiento que promueven desde desvíos paródicos a verdaderas resistencias críticas.' Aguilar, Alonso and Herkenhoff, *Arte de Contradicciones*, p 27.

<sup>97</sup> Giunta, *Avant-garde, internationalism, and politics*, and Longoni and Mestman, *Del Di Tella a 'Tucumán Arde.'*

The first section addresses the legacy of *Informalismo*<sup>98</sup> and how it contributed to the development of participative artworks. Contextualised in a post-Peronist moment, the section seeks to highlight the changing value of the art object in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The theme is addressed principally through the writing of Jorge Romero Brest, whose essential role as an intellectual in Buenos Aires brought him to chronicle, mostly in unpublished essays, changes in contemporary art production. The shifting significance of the object is also examined through three exhibitions, which demonstrate a gradual move-away from painting and two-dimensionality.

The second section addresses the tensions between art objects and the notion of consumption. During Peronism the latter had been somewhat morally stigmatised, yet after his exile the situation quickly changed also due to the mass influx of imported products. In this context, artists had to come to terms with art objects as objects of consumption. A key exhibition that illustrates the sense of disillusionment that artists felt towards a system that did not support their practices is *La Destrucción* at the Galería Lirolay in 1961. Being in between an exhibition and an immersive environment, this show is seen as a crucial stepping-stone for the development of participative art practices later in the decade, and as a first impulse that motivated artists to seek alternative currencies that would allow entry into the art circuit. These included research into the potential of the mass media and of public spaces to reach wider audiences. Works belonging to dissimilar artistic traditions are positioned in dialogue - namely the growingly participative work by Marta Minujín and the curious objects by Edgardo Giménez.

The discussion continues on to the ascent of Pop art within the Argentine critical lexicon surrounding the ITDT. Directed by Romero Brest, a luminary of culture in Buenos Aires, the ITDT was one of the most important and recognized platforms for young artists throughout the decade. The use of the term Pop, an imported label, problematizes canonical mappings of artistic movements, allowing insight into concerns over originality and derivation, widely voiced by Romero Brest. The value of Pop as a useful terminology is further discussed through the writings of Oscar Masotta whose use of the term 'camp' aids in differentiating Argentine Pop from other iterations.

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<sup>98</sup> *Informalismo* is the Spanish translation of the French *Informèl*.

In conclusion the closure of the ITDT is examined in relation to the alternative avenues undertaken by artists after the military junta of 1966. Events such as Tucumán Arde are examined in opposition to theories of art for consumption, embraced by Romero Brest and artists closest to him. As such, the perception of Pop as a seamless continuum in all its international facets is challenged and dismantled. In conjunction with traumatic events such as the military dictatorship, Pop is an extraordinary prelude to the events that took place in the following decade.

### 1.a The legacy of 'Morbid Art': Moving towards Participation, 1945-1961

*The Work is, it does not express itself.*

*The Work is, it does not represent.*

*The work is, it does not signify.*

Madí Manifesto, 1946 (excerpt)

To introduce the seminal ideas that explain how a Pop aesthetic, but also a Pop rhetoric emerged in Buenos Aires, this section focuses on the period right after the election of Juan Domingo Peron, the end of the Second World War, and a perceived period of economic prosperity possible due to greater exports in Argentina. At the time, avant-garde artists struggled to establish themselves – as in the cases of Xul Solar, Antono Berni and the others examined in this section – because of a lack of institutional and commercial support. Departing from an analysis of Romero Brest's writings from the late 1940s, the section examines the broadening of artistic trajectories to include geometric abstraction (in its widest definition), informalism and ultimately Pop, caused by the greater internationalism that also characterised Argentine politics. The section's focus terminates in 1961, when the dominant term among the Argentine avant-garde was *Art Informèl*, representing a vast leap from Berni's *Nuevo Realismo* briefly introduced earlier. In fact, whilst Pop in the United States emerged in reaction to Abstract Expressionism, in Argentina it developed from informalist tendencies, demonstrating an original and independent genealogy.

Romero Brest, originally a physical education teacher, established a reputation in Buenos Aires, because of a book he published on understanding European

contemporary art in 1936. Albeit accessible, the text unveiled topical problematics for the late 1930s, which pivoted on the changing and contradictory value of the art object (vis-à-vis the legacy of the Dada readymade, which the Argentine artists who lived in Paris were aware of).<sup>99</sup> By 1940, Romero Brest had become a professor at the University of Buenos Aires and his principal enquiry continued to concern the development of contemporaneous art practices in opposition to so-called traditional media, such as painting or sculpture. In these years one of his principal objectives was to explain why Argentine art was considered peripheral to European art, an issue that persists to date. In a 1969 letter to Peter Townsend, editor of *Studio International* in London, Romero Brest still described non-avant-garde painting in Argentina, the most common medium, as ‘imitative and derivative,’ ‘between academicism and impressionism.’<sup>100</sup>

In 1945 Peron, who had just been elected President, forced him out of the University of Buenos Aires because of his subscription to the Socialist party – regardless of the fact that Romero Brest was not involved in politics and his political orientation was never explicit in his writing.<sup>101</sup> In the same year he began to teach aesthetics and art history at the bookstore Fray Mocho, located in one of the most popular neighbourhoods in the city. In his lectures and articles Romero lamented the lack of an introspective, self-analytical spirit – the culprit for unoriginal art in Argentina. In an article in 1947 Romero wrote:

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<sup>99</sup> On June 3<sup>rd</sup> 1961 the exhibition *Modern Argentine Painting and Sculpture* opened at the Scottish National Gallery in Edinburgh under the auspices of the Arts Council and the MAM of Buenos Aires.

*The Times* reviewed the show negatively because of the uncanny similarity between Argentine and French art, condemning the lack of a national identity and accusing it of ‘servile imitation’ (*Comentase en Gran Bretana el Arte Argentino*, La Prensa newspaper, June 1961, quoted in Katzenstein, *Listen, Here, Now!*, p. 129.

<sup>100</sup> Jorge Romero Brest in a letter to Peter Townsend of 1969, Editor of *Studio International*, London, reproduced in Katzenstein, *Listen, Here, Now!*, p. 133.

<sup>101</sup> In 1969, in response to criticism for his lack of involvement in the political events in Buenos Aires, Romero Brest published an article entitled ‘Why I Am not Polemical’ where he expresses his disinterest in engaging in aggressive debate. This will be examined in greater depth further on in the chapter. Reproduced in Jorge Romero Brest, Edgardo Giménez, and Alfredo Arias, *Jorge Romero Brest: la cultura como provocación*, (Buenos Aires: Edición Edgardo Giménez, 2004).

*The worst calamity [in Argentina] is the lack of a common emotional climate among the artists, the lack of a sort of intimacy among and with themselves. These conditions, if established, would lead the artist to a discovery of our national identity, via the individual vision, which paradoxically is the only way toward a sense of universal being<sup>102</sup>.*

Because of the success of his lectures among the intelligentsia porteña,<sup>103</sup> in 1948 Romero founded the magazine *Ver y Estimar* (To See and to Appreciate). Many prominent personalities contributed to the magazine – including art historian and critic Marta Traba – which featured the most diverse topics as Medieval art (n. 5), Gauguin (n. 7-8), sociology of art (n. 9), Angel Ferrant (n. 10), Cubism and Mathias Goeritz (n. 20). *Ver y Estimar* soon became a popular bastion for culture, providing a platform for local artists.

During this period Romero Brest was convinced that the future of art was in geometric abstraction and in the integration between art and architecture. Soon, in fact, *Ver y Estimar* was one of the most important platforms for local concrete artists including the Grupo Madí, which comprised Gyula Kosice, Carmelo Arden Quin, Rhod Rothfuss, Esteban Eitler, Diyi Laań, and Martín Blazsko. In assonance with Romero Brest's beliefs, Madí advocated for an original art and a cross disciplinary approach opening the boundaries of their practices to music, poetry, dance, sculpture, architecture and painting. Carmelo Arden Quin, who some argue to be the author of the first manifesto Madí (as opposed to Kosice), criticized non-geometric art for being of 'a scholastic and idealist historicism,' 'irrational' and for having a 'unilateral composition, static and incoherent.'<sup>104</sup> Arte Madí repositions the object at the centre of dynamic, mobile forms and themes they called *jokes*.<sup>105</sup> In fact, one of the concepts at the core of

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<sup>102</sup> Katzenstein, *Listen, here, now!*, p. 103.

<sup>103</sup> *Porteño* (literally 'of the port' in Spanish) is the term used to address the inhabitants of Buenos Aires, which is a port city.

<sup>104</sup> *Manifiesto Madí*, 1946, reproduced in Maria Llúisa Borràs, *Arte Madí: exposición organizada por el Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía*, (exh. cat., Madrid: Ministerio de Educación y Cultura, 1997). p. 30.

<sup>105</sup> The Manifiesto Madí was read at the first exhibition of the Madí group in the Instituto Francés de Estudios Superiores in August 1946. At the exhibition *Art from Argentina* at the ICA in 1974, Arden Quin distributed the Madí Manifesto, which he claimed to have

Grupo Madi, was Schiller's notion of play, one of the highest forms of human expression. Madistas wanted painting to become a game with forms and colour, almost a conversation with the viewer.<sup>106</sup>

It's important to note, however, that geometric abstraction was not part of the 'official art' promoted by the Peronist state, which championed figuration and landscape following the French academic tradition. For instance, already in 1946, the National Salon at the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes (MNBA), the most important event of the year, was taken over by the authorities. It was stipulated that each exhibited work responded to a predetermined theme, which would resonate with official policies.<sup>107</sup> Furthermore, Peron's Minister of Education Dr. Oscar Ivanissevich was vehemently against the modernist aesthetic as proclaimed in his infamous speech at the opening of the 1949 National Salon. The anti-Peronist newspaper *La Nación* published it word for word without a commentary letting it speak for itself. The speech provided ample parallels with the 'degenerate art exhibition' of Nazi Germany, defining abstract art as 'morbid art.'<sup>108</sup> Because of its didactic role, *Ver y Estimar* was able to discredit the regime, at least in the eyes of its readers.<sup>109</sup> Alongside *Ver y Estimar*, Romero Brest's important volume *La Pintura Europea Contemporanea* (1952), stressed geometric abstraction as the most poignant style of the XX century, reflecting his predilection for Madí artists (in 1974, however, upon publishing the volume's third edition, he would look back on this assumption as the book's greatest shortfall).

During Peron's first term, his successful domestic policies caused the GDP to rise, and for minimum wages to statistically increase (in most cases minimum wages were fixed). The erratic, yet marked, improvement in public services and infrastructure

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authored in 1946. It is still not clear whether it was in fact Arden Quin or Kosice who wrote the Manifesto in origin.

<sup>106</sup> The notion of play introduced by Madí in Argentina widely resonates with the Neo-Concrete movement in Rio de Janeiro, which is examined in the chapter dedicated to Brazilian Pop practices.

<sup>107</sup> Andrea Giunta, *Avant-garde, internationalism, and politics*, p. 39.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Prior to *Ver y Estimar*, another important episode, which marks the Argentine avant-garde's opposition to academicism, is the magazine *Arturo*. Published in 1944 by Arden Quin, Kosice, Rothfuss, Maldonado, and others, the first and only issue of *Arturo* featured texts and reproductions of works Joaquín Torres García, Lidy Prati, Wassily Kandinsky, and Piet Mondrian, which at the time rarely circulated in print.

generated a phenomenon of urbanization, which in turn gave rise to one of the proportionally largest middle classes in the continent, gaining him widespread support. Simultaneously, however, the government exercised strict state control over press, private enterprises and steadily nationalized industries. By 1950, 110 publications had been shut down due to censorship regulations and state control over media, and many intellectuals with contrasting political views were forced out of the country. In this context *Ver y Estimar* occupied a complex position within the cultural sphere, becoming a rare 'alternative' platform that was more strongly associated with the intellectual elites. This distinction does not relate to economic wellbeing, or to political orientation, as Romero Brest's subscription to the socialist party would suggest. In fact, notions of 'good taste,' associated with late nineteenth century French painting, still obsessed the Argentine upper classes.<sup>110</sup>

After Peron was ousted and exiled in 1955, Romero Brest was appointed director of the MNBA, where he importantly contributed to a total restructuring of the museum, still modelled after the late nineteenth century French salon. The change in government implied a radical refashioning of cultural models, within a climate of great political experimentation after almost a decade of Peronism. Romero Brest's appointment acquires further significance in light of his involvement with *Ver y Estimar*, which had been on the margins of official art. With his appointment as director of the MNBA, Romero Brest was drawn from the margins and repositioned within official art. Bearing in mind the pedagogical role of the institution, Romero Brest reorganized the collection by movement and in chronological order, and initiated a public program that would run alongside the exhibitions.

In this post-Peronist moment, a freer attitude towards art was finally admissible and encouraged. Gradually, the former diatribe over abstraction vs. figuration, was replaced by another, which examined the value of objects as catalysts for experience.<sup>111</sup> Within the arts this responded to the advent of *Art Informel*, once again exemplified in

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<sup>110</sup> Monica Peralta Ramos, in her book, *The Political Economy of Argentina*, argues that the inability of political elites to reconcile conflicting interests derives from the dominance of struggle for economic power over forms of social confrontation. Mónica Peralta-Ramos, *The political economy of Argentina: power and class since 1930*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992).

<sup>111</sup> In this moment experience is understood as process opposed to contemplation, through which the spectator could access new sources of knowledge.

Romero Brest's writings from the late 1950s and early 1960s. In this period Brest reoriented his interest towards *Art Informèl*, translated into Spanish as *Informalismo* – a radical break with geometric abstraction. Romero Brest's definition of *Informalismo* emerges in particular in two texts titled *Reflections on Art Criticism in the Context of the Most Recent Avant-Garde Painting* and *Notes on informal Painting*, both written between 1960-1963.<sup>112</sup> Although Romero Brest's analysis belongs to a more traditionalist art historical tradition – relying on terms such as symbolism, form and iconography - his focus on 'objectivity,' 'truth,' 'being,' and 'experience' unveils a new approach towards art criticism. The first text reflects on the value of *Informalismo*, departing from a critique of contemporary art criticism. The second text is a list of reflections on *Informalismo* in opposition to older conceptions of painting, and art making more broadly.<sup>113</sup>

Romero Brest championed Michel Tapié's definition of *Un Art Autre* (another kind of art) because of its philosophical and existentialist connotations.<sup>114</sup> He claimed, 'Only essential thought can provide the key [to understanding] Informèl.'<sup>115</sup> 'To be informal is to be true' – Romero continued – 'in as much as one opens oneself to that which exists beyond what one sees, thinks, feels, or fabricates.'<sup>116</sup> Therefore in his eyes, existentialism was a vital prism for the understanding of 'most recent avant-garde painting.'

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<sup>112</sup> Respectively reproduced in: Romero Brest et. al., *Jorge Romero Brest: la cultura como provocación*. and Katzenstein, *Listen, here, now!*.

<sup>113</sup> Because many of Brest's longest essays remained unpublished and were often written in the form of notes, it is difficult to identify exactly how this transition took place. On one hand Romero Brest's call for a 'common emotional climate' among artists mirrored his interest in a universalist aesthetic, which art *Informèl* stood for. Whether his interest in art *Informèl* derived from an interest in European currents, or whether it surfaced spontaneously in Buenos Aires, is less relevant. Many artists at the time, including Gyula Kosice Kenneth Kemble and Antonio Berni had come into close contact with the Parisian *Informèl* during their travels to Europe. Tapié's dream of aesthetic universality - although widely criticised – succeeded to have an impact on many artists in Europe and abroad (such as Gutai in Japan).

<sup>114</sup> A connection between existentialism and art *Informèl* has been widely established by historians such as Sarah Wilson in her valuable catalogue essay for the exhibition *Paris: Capital of the arts, 1900-1968*, at the Centre Pompidou.

<sup>115</sup> Jorge Romero Brest, *Notes on informal Painting, 1960-1963*, reproduced in Katzenstein. *Listen, here, now!*, p. 98.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.* p. 100.



In the first essay Romero Brest criticizes contemporary critics for using symbolism, form and iconography as parameters for an 'objective' evaluation of artworks and of artistic reason. He claims that 'objectivity,' like 'truth,' is not a viable pursuit. His understanding of objectivity emerges in relation to 'experience', inasmuch as experience is so subjective as to reduce to the minimum a univocal understanding of the work of art. The pursuit of truth emerges, therefore, as a nodal term for the interpretation of *Informalismo*. Romero Brest traced a crucial differentiation between a subjective truth, or 'truth of the entity', and an absolute truth, or 'truth of the being:'

*I must point out the misconception, which has been growing around what is understood by truth. Because, although it may seem legitimate to call scientific reason truth when referring to a pre-existing reality—even hypothetically—with which it coincides, it does not seem as legitimate to call artistic reason truth, as, because it cannot be the truth of the entity, it must be the truth of the being.<sup>117</sup>*

In this passage, Romero Brest's thought paralleled the phenomenological and existentialist concerns of Martin Heidegger, where painting stems from a pre-existent and universal 'state of being' – the Heideggerian *Dasein* - which the artist translates into the physical world.<sup>118</sup> Heidegger saw the creative act as a physical manifestation of the *Dasein* channelled by the artist, reflecting the ability to dip into what Romero Brest understood as 'truth of being.' He also understood how the search for truth permeated art history finding its culmination in *Informalismo*:

*It is the Informalists who protest against the last bastion: will and construction, as if seeking the way to annihilate for ever the symbol and show themselves to be*

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<sup>117</sup> Jorge Romero Brest, *Reflections on Art Criticism in the Context of the Most Recent Avant-Garde Painting, 1960-1963*, reproduced in Romero Brest, et. al., *Jorge Romero Brest*, p. 6.

<sup>118</sup> Heidegger's theories, expressed in vital texts as *Being and Time* (1927) and *On the Essence of Truth* (1942), greatly informed Brest's thinking. Especially the concept of *Dasein*, in German 'existence' or 'life', is understood by Heidegger as a 'state of being', which is intrinsically defined by temporality. Heidegger describes *Dasein*, as being characterized by three ontological elements: *existence, thrownness, and fallenness*. These tripartite structure determine *Dasein* as a 'state of being' which exists in time and space.

*at the very least in the truth of existence.*<sup>119</sup>

In the author's view, will, construction and 'the symbol' are equally absent from the 'truth of existence,' marking a departure from any deliberately controlled form of geometry or explicit figuration, and an absolute predilection for *Informél*. In addition, Romero Brest's definition of truth is suspended on considerations regarding the value of experience, understood as the exact counterpoint to symbolism, which he defines as 'a particular style of spiritual projection in the historical context to which it belongs.'<sup>120</sup> He distinguishes between old and new artworks, old ones being the 'product' of experience (and therefore tied to a historical context and the 'symbol'), and new ones being 'irrefutably experience:'

*All human history rotates around our own experiences, which is constrained by ideas regarding the validity of what we think we have experienced. But it is one thing to have experience of realities, as in the past artworks were the fruit of experience, and quite another to have an experience of the real, as we do now that art works are, in themselves, irrefutably experience.*<sup>121</sup>

What emerges therefore from the analysis of terminologies such as 'truth,' 'symbol' and 'experience' in Romero Brest's texts, is a shift concerning the object of contemplation within *Informalismo*. No longer understood as the 'fruit of experience,' but as 'irrefutably experience,' the object (whether an informalist painting or a sculpture) acquires an active potential. The object of contemplation, from 'passive' is transformed into 'active' because it conveys experience.

The object becomes a catalyst for the formation of a history, which rotates around human experience, which shaped forms of knowledge. The viewer no longer gains an understanding of the artwork through contemplation. On the contrary his/her understanding is triggered, not by the act of looking, but by a living experience. Because the object stimulates an action on the part of the viewer, forced to expand his

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid, p. 14.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid, p. 8.

<sup>121</sup> Jorge Romero Brest, *Informal Art and the Art of Today: A Very Updated Article and New Reflections*, Originally published as *El Arte informal y el arte hoy: Un Artículo muy Remozado y reflexiones nuevas*, in the catalogue for the 1963 National and International Prizes, Instituto Torcuato Di Tella, Buenos Aires. Reproduced in Katzenstein. *Listen, here, now!: Argentine art of the 1960s*. P 100.

awareness, I argue that this transition marks a first step towards participation.<sup>122</sup> From this point forwards the terms object and experience are intertwined.

### 1.b Breaking the Barriers of the Permissible: *Informalismo* and *Arte Destructivo* 1961-1964

Building on the context provided by Romero Brest's writings, this section examines how *Informalismo*, in its Argentine iteration, paved the way for the participative art practices that appeared soon after. A particular focus is placed on the notion of 'destruction' (arguably a response to the oftentimes morbid and decaying aesthetic of *informél/tachism/art brut*), most expounded in the 1961 exhibition *Arte Destructivo* (Destructive Art) – one of the first events that historiography has consecrated as an important prelude to the Pop phenomenon. Considering also the disparity between groups of artists that formed in this period, the section aims to introduce the 1960s as a decade of profound transformation in Argentina.

An official milestone for the appearance of Informalism in Buenos Aires was the exhibition *the Informal Movement* (launched on 13 July 1959 at the Van Riel Gallery), which featured the work of artists including Kenneth Kemble, Enrique Barilari, Alberto Greco, Olga Lopez, Fernando Maza, Mário Pucciarelli, Towas and Luís Alberto Wells. In 1969, ten years after this exhibition, Kemble, considered one of the foremost proponents of the movement, claimed, 'the emergence of Informalism completely altered the mind-set of the generation that came after us.'<sup>123</sup> Within the parochial and closed-minded milieu of the late 1950s and early 1960s, Informalism broke the barriers

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<sup>122</sup> Participation, relates to Heideggerian phenomenology in terms of the contact with the 'state of being', which is also the site where the creative primal energy at the origin of art making resides. In *The Origin of the Work of Art* (1935-1960) Heidegger explores how the artist taps into the *Dasein* in order to produce a universal work of art. Romero Brest suggests that *Informalismo's* mode of representation invites the viewer to become involved in this process, becoming an active participant in the materialization of a work of art.

<sup>123</sup> Kenneth Kemble, 'The Artist Speaks: Ten Years after Informalism,' in *El Informalismo*, (exh. cat., Buenos Aires: Fausto Gallery, 1969), reproduced in Kenneth Kemble, Florencia Batitti, Jane Brodie, and Alicia Di Stasio, *Entre el pincel y la Underwood: Kenneth Kemble, crítico de arte del Buenos Aires Herald*, (Buenos Aires: JK Ediciones, 2012), p. 293.

Fig. 1 Luis Felipe Noé (Argentina, Buenos Aires, 1933 )  
*Introducción a la Esperanza*, 1963  
 Oil on canvas  
 201 x 214 cm



Fig. 2 Participating artists at the exhibition *Arte Destructivo*, Galeria Lirolay, Buenos Aires, 20 November 1961.  
 From left to right: Kenneth Kemble, Jorge López Anaya, Silvia Torras, Luis Wells and Jorge Roiger.



of the permissible, leading to the outburst of environments and happenings as principal forms of expression.

Kemble's role, not only as an artist, can be easily partnered with that of Luís Felipe Noé, a pivotal figure in the contemporaneous movement of *Otra Figuración*.

*Noé and Kemble were both art critics at a time of transition when new debates were taking shape; their interests lie in providing a thorough interpretation of the scope of those debates, and facilitating the ability of an art audience in the making to understand contemporary art*<sup>124</sup>

*Otra Figuración* (also known as *Nueva Figuración*), included Luís Felipe Noé, Jorge De La Vega, Romulo Macció, Ernesto Deira, Carolina Muchnik and Sameer Makarius. *Otra Figuración's* first exhibition took place at the Galería Peuser in August 1961 and the group remained active until 1965. Similarly to *Arte Destructivo*, *Otra Figuración* sought to move forward from the figuration vs. abstraction dichotomy. Furthermore the group was concerned with redefining figurative painting. However its main difference with *Informalismo*, was that its members rarely incorporated objects or active experience into painting. Assemblage, however, became incorporated in the canvases after 1963. A talismanic work from that year is Noé's *Introducción a la Esperanza* (Introduction to Hope, fig. 1), a large scale assemblage of canvases (a larger base with six others above it) portraying a crowd in protest, which was made at the same time Frondizi lost the presidency.

Both *Informalismo* and *Otra Figuración* were consistently informed by the legacy of Dada and Surrealism, the *objet trouvé*, the readymade and assemblage. Nevertheless what distinguishes *Informalismo* as the movement that altered the future generation's mind-set is the participative element, which artists began to use in the creation of environments and artworks that immersed viewers, seeking to activate their involvement.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Roberto Amigo, *Un chico correcto Luís Felipe Noé: crítico de arte en los años cincuenta*, Buenos Aires: Fundación Espigas)  
 icaadocs.mfah.org/icaadocs/Portals/0/WorkingPapers/No1/Roberto%20Amigo.pdf  
 Last accessed 7 July 2016.

<sup>125</sup> It is important to note that artists, for example Romulo Macció, participated in exhibitions by both groups suggesting a degree of communication between them.

Fig. 3 *Es Evidente*, 1961  
Armchair  
Installation view of the exhibition *Arte Destructivo*, Galeria Lirolay,  
Buenos Aires, 1961.



Fig. 4 *Tres ataúdes usados, uno baleado*, 1961  
Three wooden coffins  
Installation view of the exhibition *Arte Destructivo*, Galeria Lirolay,  
Buenos Aires, 1961.



An emblematic example of this occurrence is an exhibition now referenced in most texts about Argentine art in the 1960s. *Arte Destructivo* opened in November 1961 at the Galería Lirolay,<sup>126</sup> a key space for young artists in Buenos Aires. Primarily organized by Kemble the exhibition featured works by Enrique Barilari, Jorge López Anaya, Jorge Roiger, Antonio Seguí, Silvia Torras and Luís Wells (fig. 2), and was described as an 'ironical response to existentialism, present in the practice of Informalism and [*Otra-Figuración*],<sup>127</sup> and more recently as 'a laboratory set up for Faust's exile.'<sup>128</sup> The exhibition's uniqueness lies in the fact that the participating artists were commonly labelled by critics as 'informalists,' and their oeuvre mostly consisted of painted canvases. *Arte Destructivo*, however, marks a breaking point with the informalist canvas.

Entering the dimly lit gallery through a burlap curtain, the viewer was faced with a slashed armchair, broken coffins, shattered umbrellas hanging from the ceiling, burnt paintings, wax heads scorched by fire, decapitated dolls, a tarred bathtub, broken bottles, deformed photographic portraits, among many other items. From scattered testimonies it is known that the armchair allegedly by Kemble was titled *Es Evidente* (It's Evident, fig. 3), as it was quite explicitly representing female genitalia; the coffins were called *Tres Ataúdes usadas, uno baleado* (Three used coffins, and a shot one, fig. 4); an old fruit crate hanging from the wall containing an oil soaked lamp for fishing at night, *Maqueta para un monumento a Lamuel Lumija Mainez* (Maquette for a monument to Lamuel Lumija Mainez), was dedicated to Manuel Mujica Lainez who was the critic of *La Nación* at the time. Seguí had been in charge of the bathtub, Barilari of a twisted metal sheet placed on a pedestal and Wells of the torched wax heads, which came from a

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<sup>126</sup> Galería Lirolay was owned by the Fanos', a French-Jewish husband and wife. Germaine Derbecq served as director for the gallery in the early-1960s. She was a French artist and critic, and the wife of sculptor Pablo Curatella Manes. The artists who would later become more well known through the Instituto Torcuato Di Tella had their first exhibitions at the Galería Lirolay, a space that would change shows every two weeks.

<sup>127</sup> Jorge Lopez Anaya quoted by Marcelo Pacheco in Marcelo Eduardo Pacheco, and Enrico Crispolti, *Argentine Abstract Art: (English Version)*, (exh. cat., Buenos Aires: Fundación Proa, 2002), p. 12.

<sup>128</sup> Kenneth Kemble, Julieta Kemble, Jorge López Anaya, Marcelo Eduardo Pacheco, and Adriana Lauria. *The Great Breakthrough, 1956-1963: Kenneth Kemble*, (Buenos Aires: Julieta Kemble, 2000).

beauty school (brought by Rogier). Rogier had deformed the negatives of the photographs exhibited at the entrance, Torras had prepared the panels with the broken dolls, and Lopez Anaya hanged the umbrellas.

Among the sound experiences also present in the exhibition were recorded fragments of the *Poetics of Aristotle*, mixed with quotes from Picasso's play *Desire Caught By The Tail*, lines from Descarte's *Discourse on Method*, and finally a speech by Jorge Romero Brest taken from the backward projection of a documentary on Pedro Figari, the Uruguayan artist. *Arte Destructivo* was arguably the first environment made in Buenos Aires: the works on display were not meant to be contemplated singularly, but rather the whole exhibition's aim was to transmit an emotion, a destructive energy, perceived by the viewer through the experience of being immersed in the gallery space.

The catalogue of the exhibition, with contributions by Aldo Pellegrini, Kemble and Rafael Squirru, founder of the MNBA, contained some of the principal themes that characterised the early 1960s as a moment of transition. From the outset Kemble addresses the complexity of the socio-political situation from which the exhibition emerged defined by one of the hottest moments of the Cold War (the Cuban Missile Crisis and the threat of atomic warfare):

*... it would seem that we are now living on the brink of an orgy of destruction, this one unparalleled in history due to scale, breadth and implications for the future. In just a few seconds, a 50-megaton bomb could annihilate the entire city of Buenos Aires and millions of its inhabitants. Authorities in the United States calmly speak of the possibility that 160 of 175 million inhabitants might die in a future atomic war. Is it possible that the artist, who has always been an antenna that captures the future, be immune to that eventuality?<sup>129</sup>*

In light of this context, Kemble continues:

*This exhibition has the character of an experiment, a tentative test of an idea that occurred to me just over a year. Like any other relatively new experience its presentation may be imperfect and confused and above all, too heterogeneous. However it will have precisely the value of its own imperfection to leave open several avenues for future experiences. [...] The idea is summarized in the following: [...] since man derives intense emotions, satisfaction, pleasure, or*

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<sup>129</sup> *Arte Destructivo*, (exh. cat., Buenos Aires: Galería Lirolay, 1961), reproduced in Kemble, et. al. *Entre el pincel y la Underwood*, p. 264.



*whatever you'd like to call them, from constructive and creative activities, there also exist within him an opposite pole. To draw emotions, pleasure or satisfaction from destruction, from breaking, burning, dismembering and from the contemplation of these activities.*<sup>130</sup>

In this last segment Kemble stresses the importance of unleashing human instincts through experience, confirming the innovation of *Arte Destructivo*. For Kemble it was a question of humanising art, 'bringing it to life and through humour and irreverence, elements that, though so common in our daily life, had been until that point left out of great Art with a capital A.'<sup>131</sup> Complementarily to Kemble, Aldo Pellegrini addressed the value of humour:

*The artist's destruction is not the brutal and senseless action driven by hatred, it is a meaningful action and its meaning entails the indelible mark of humour. Humour, a destructive phenomenon, of the highest rank, attacks stupidity, routinism, pretentiousness, falseness. Humour, a dynamic power that drives the artist's destructive activity to which it confers together with its peculiar aesthetic sense, a deep ethical content.*<sup>132</sup>

The Informalist Movement's exhibition aroused inflamed reactions among the critics who doubted the seriousness of the works in comparison to abstractions, which had been accepted within the canons of 'good taste.' Enrique Azcoaga, later nominated the 'spontaneous matador'<sup>133</sup>, condemned it as an 'artistically assembled garbage dump; a truly tragic collection; a room full of modernly arranged junk, with a romantic aftertaste, inadmissible from our point of view.'<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Original: 'Esta exposición tiene el carácter de experimento, de un ensayo tentativo, de una idea que se me ocurrió hace poco más de un año. Como toda experiencia relativamente nueva su presentación quizá sea imperfecta y confusa y por sobre todo, demasiado heterogénea. Pero tendrá justamente el valor de su imperfección al dejar varios caminos abiertos para futuras experiencias. [...] La idea resumida consiste en lo siguiente: [...] así como el hombre deriva emociones intensas, satisfacción, placer, o lo que quiera llamársele, de las actividades constructivas y creadoras, también existe en él, el polo opuesto. El de derivar emociones, placer o satisfacción de la destrucción, del romper, quemar o descomponer y, de la contemplación de tales actividades. [...] Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Kenneth Kemble, 'The Artist Speaks,' reproduced in Ibid, p. 295.

<sup>132</sup> Kemble et. al., *The Great Breakthrough*, p. 133.

<sup>133</sup> Jorge Lopez Anaya, cited in Ibid, p. 14.

<sup>134</sup> Enrique Azcoaga, 'Destructive Art Fair,' *Del Arte Magazine*, no. 6, Buenos Aires, December 1961, reproduced in Kemble, et. al., *Entre el pincel y la Underwood*, p. 133.

Fig. 5 Marta Minujín  
*Testimonio para una joven tumba*, c. 1961,  
 Mixed media  
 130 x 160 cm  
 Museo de Arte Moderno, Buenos Aires



Fig. 6 Marta Minujín  
*Untitled*, 1962  
 Cardboard, mattresses and boots




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Positive criticisms included Cordova Iturburu who described *Ate Destructivo* as ‘a bold adventure enlivened with fantasy and talent, suggestive and with that sense of humour usually present in real work[s] of intelligence.’ Cordova Iturburu, ‘La singular exposición de arte destructivo,’ *El Mundo*, Buenos Aires, November 1961, reproduced in *Ibid*, p. 135.

Fig. 7 Marta Minujín with *Caja* c.1962  
Reproduced in Catherine Spencer, 'Performing Pop: Marta Minujín and the 'Argentine Image-Makers'', *Tate Papers*, n. 24, Autumn 2015, <http://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/24/performing-pop-marta-minujin-and-the-argentine-image-makers> Last accessed 27 September 2016.

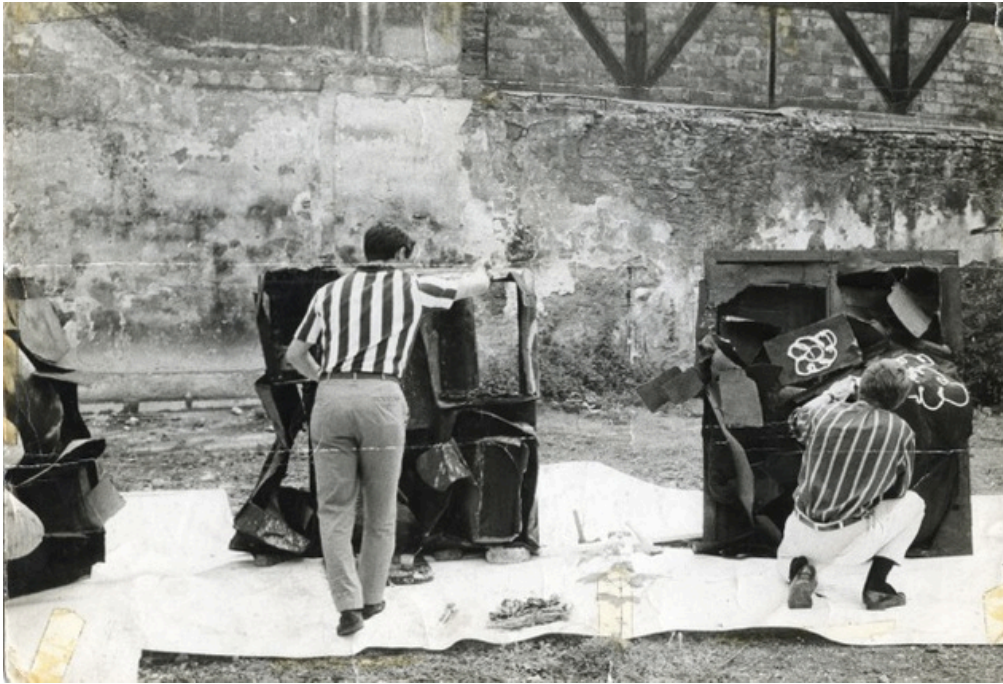


Fig. 8 Marta Minujín with one of the works presented in the exhibition *El Hombre Antes del Hombre*. Galería Florida, 7-30 September 1962.





Fig. 9 Marta Minujín, "Destrucción de mis obras en el Impasse Ronsin, París," (unknown publication, June 1963). Archivo Marta Minujín, Buenos Aires.



It comes across how whatever was interpreted as 'not serious' was then a joke. The notion of the 'joke' thus became linked to the notion of 'bad taste.' Artists sought to solicit bad reactions by resorting to humour, or 'jokes' in order to challenge established hierarchies, calcified within the backward looking bourgeoisie.

In addition to *Arte Destructivo, El Hombre Antes del Hombre*, an exhibition held at the Galería Florida, 1962, and *Objeto 64: Exposición Antológica* at the MNBA, are important stepping stones in the cultural itinerary that originated Argentine Pop. A key artist whose work appeared in both exhibitions and who then significantly developed her practice at the ITDT is Marta Minujín. Still a teenager, Minujín was trained at the studio of Jorge Lopez Anaya, one of the participants in *Arte Destructivo*. Minujín had started her practice producing dark abstract canvases that incorporated urban debris and found objects in a manner similar to assemblage (fig. 5-6). By 1962, and arguably through the influence of Anaya and exhibitions such as *Arte Destructivo*, Minujín's dark and metallic assemblages used military helmets, boots, cardboard boxes and barrels she had collected in warehouses and on the streets, deliberately commenting on the unstable political situation which led to the deposition of Frondizi in 1963.<sup>135</sup> Furthermore, photographs from the period show Minujín experiencing her works in a playful manner, trying to fit her head, arms and legs into the boxes, playfully engaging with the tension between object and experience (fig. 7).

Rafael Squirru who wrote about the origin of *El Hombre antes del Hombre* in the exhibition booklet:

*The idea came up during Graciela Martinez's dance recital. 'We must do something', Marta Minujín told me. 'We must shake up a little bit or a lot this milieu before it swallows us all with its indifference, defeatism; in short, we must assure life. Santantonín immediately sprung and everything started. Argentine man is the intense version of man in crisis. We, Argentines, are paralyzed by fear, fear of ourselves. Such terror, this paralyzing complex is mostly fear of accepting our past...'*<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> For an exhaustive description of this event and Minujín's early works see Jorge López Anaya, *Arte Argentino: Cuatro Siglos de Historia (1600-2000)*, (Buenos Aires: Emecé Editores, 2005), pp. 374-410.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid*, p. 136.

Squirru's point relates to an arguably Latin American fixation - apparent in the literature of Jorge Luís Borges and García Márquez (*One Hundred Years of Solitude* is a major example) - related to the transmission of heritage, personality, habits and identities across generations. This attachment to the past, which Squirru laments, was reacted against by artists like Minujín, who sought to destroy past legacies in order to construct new ones. Squirru concludes that Argentines fail to see themselves as 'Americans,' understood as inhabitants of a continent completely detached from Europe. Criticising the widespread Eurocentric view of culture – the same one that led Romero Brest to translate the term *Informel* – Squirru argues that Argentines must choose the American essence as opposed to the safe European one, stating the need for a bold move in contemporary art. Therefore the bold move Squirru referred to is the idea of participation unlocked by the impetus of *Arte Destructivo* and *El Hombre antes del Hombre*.

In the exhibition *Objeto 64: Exposición Antológica*, Objectualism emerged as one of the most significant trends of the early sixties.<sup>137</sup> Building on *Informalismo*, Objectualism drew from Surrealism and Dada and importantly sought to demystify the traditional values associated to the work of art, the artist and the public.<sup>138</sup> In the exhibition, Minujín exhibited the first versions of a work, which would become a principal motif within her practice to date: *Colchones* (fig. 8). This work was developed at first in Paris in 1963, during Minujín's second trip to the city.<sup>139</sup> Initially the works were chopped and reassembled mattresses, dirty clothes and cardboard boxes, simply defined 'mattresses.' On 6 June that year, Minujín held an exhibition of her works together with Portuguese artist Lourdes Castro and the Venezuelan Alejandro Otero. The exhibition

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<sup>137</sup> María José Herrera widely supports this claim in Jorge Glusberg, María José Herrera, Pierre Restany, and Albino Diéguez Videla, *Edgardo Giménez*, (exh. cat., Buenos Aires: Fundación Amalia Lacroze de Fortabat, 2000), p. 252.

<sup>138</sup> The *Objetualistas* included Santantonín, Renart, Minujín, Zuelma Ciordia, Puzzovio, Stoppani and Rodríguez Arias.

<sup>139</sup> During her first visit in 1961 with her friend and mentor Alberto Greco, known as a crucial figure in Argentine Performance Art and Happenings, she had participated in an important exhibition *Pablo Manes Sculptures, Période Parisienne 1921-1946; 30 Argentines de la Nouvelle Generation* at the Creuze Gallery. In this exhibition Minujín exhibited assemblages of cardboard boxes and urban debris (box things objects), which reflected her informalist training. Of Alberto Greco and Minujín, Oscar Masotta wrote: 'there are two names at the centre of this brief history [of happenings]: Alberto Greco and Marta Minujín.' In Masotta, *Happenings*, p. 13.

was held in a space on Rue Delambre, which had formerly been the studio of Brancusi and Niki de Saint Phalle, which Minujín borrowed from Tinguely and Larry Rivers (fig. 9). At 7PM, on the Impasse Rosin, an empty plot of land next to the studio, Minujín invited the guests to participate in a grand finale. Of the evening Minujín recalls:

*They all came to the studio and I told Erik Beynom, who was a Pop artist, 'this work is for you', and Hernandez, who was an abstract expressionist, 'this one if for you', and Paul Gette, who was a performance artist, 'you destroy this with an axe, break it to bits.' I told Lourdes Castro who worked exclusively with silver, to spray silver paint all over my work. I asked Christo to wrap me in one of my works.*

The event was concluded when Minujín torched the remains of her works and released dozens of birds and rabbits amongst the artists and the visitors, leaving the fire brigade with an apocalyptic scene of burning mattresses and roaming farm animals. She claimed: 'For me, art was a way of intensifying life, of impacting the viewer, shaking [him] up, removing [him] from inertia. So why keep my work?' Minujín's action, baptized *La Destruction*, presents several parallels with Kemble's *Arte Destructivo*. In both cases objects become catalysts for a release of energy. Both seek to 'draw emotions, pleasure or satisfaction from destruction.' The *Colchones in Technicolor* (this time) Minujín exhibited in Buenos Aires the following year were no longer made to be destroyed, but became carefully hand painted colourful objects, visibly shifting away from her informalist training. With this work, Minujín further developed the notion of the informalist object/experience, and began to sow the seeds of participation within her practice, inviting the spectator to touch and to physically experience her works.

Two final events demonstrate how the seed of participation through experience was passed from the old guard (represented by Kemble Anaya and others) to the new one, heralded by Minujín, Dalila Puzzovio, Edgardo Giménez and others. The first event *Pintura Espejismo* (Painting mirage) took place in September 1963 at the Witcomb Gallery. The walk-through environment, based on a project by Anaya, Kemble, Barilari, Polesello, Macciò and Seguí, consisted in several closed compartments into which visitors could peer, via small windows at different heights. Peeking their heads through these openings the visitor would encounter a mirror that reflected his/her head and the

Fig. 10 Edgardo Giménez  
*La Mamouschka Operada*, 1964  
Metal, canvas and synthetic varnish  
100 x 110 x 100 cm  
Work exhibited in *La Muerte*, Galería Lirolay, Buenos Aires, September -  
October 1964.



Fig. 11 Dalila Puzzovio  
*Escape de Gas*, 1963  
Mixed media  
135 x 80 x 45 cm  
Work exhibited in *La Muerte*, Galería Lirolay, Buenos Aires, September -  
October 1964.





- a. Dalila Puzzovio  
*Cáscaras*, 1963  
Installation view, Galería Lirolay



- Fig. 12 Juan Stoppani  
*Soldado del Espacio*, 1965  
Papier-mâché and mixed media  
188 x 40 x 40 cm



work on the wall they emerged from.<sup>140</sup>

In Kemble's compartment only a cracked mirror could be seen. Under the window there was a statement that explained the sense of the work (relating to the cost of the mirror and the role of the spectator as not being expected to expect anything more) and a testament to the fact that Ernesto Deira had cracked the mirror thus participating in the work.

Brilari set up a mirror play that reflected the whole compartment except for the visitor's face, as a gesture of annulment of the self. Lopez Anaya presented a photomontage with popular celebrities including John F. Kennedy and other local ones. The visitors were instructed by signs to insert their hand in a fixture, which held a wet sponge. Seguí made the spectator emerge between the legs of a woman suggesting a 'rebirth.' Rómulo Macció in his compartment titled *El Pan nuestro de cada dia* (Our daily bread) placed the public at a bar's table with dishes and cutlery on which he placed a photo of Pedro Vecchio in Jail – a man accused of murdering a little girl, Mirta Penjerek. The story had been turned by the media into daily news, a mass consumption product. Lastly, Rogelio Polesello built *Sueño de un Adolescente* (Dream of an adolescent), making the spectators look out of a toilet seat decorated with pornographic photographs he had imported from NY.

Because of some of the exhibition's upsetting content that critiqued religion or incorporated pornography, the exhibition was closed down the day after the opening. This drastic gesture reveals how the elites were not prepared to embrace such experimentalism within the arts. While *Arte Destructivo* explored the value of experience, *Pintura Espejismo* also incorporated a critique of the mass-media for the first time, responding to radical changes in Argentine society.

Marking a productive exchange between Kemble and Anaya's generation and the younger one, in September 1964 Giménez with Delia Cancela, Pablo Mesejean, Zuelma Ciordia, Dalila Puzzovio, Carlos Squirru and Antonio Berni, presented *La Muerte* (fig. 10-11). The exhibition, in a way a reinterpretation of *Arte Destructivo*, was a

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<sup>140</sup> Descriptions of these works and exhibitions are largely indebted to the volume Kenneth Kemble, Julieta Kemble, Jorge López Anaya, Marcelo Eduardo Pacheco, and Adriana Lauria. *The Great Breakthrough, 1956-1963: Kenneth Kemble*, (Buenos Aires: Julieta Kemble, 2000).

group experience in which each artist contributed an object, holding faith to Objectualism, and the informalist notion of experience introduced in *Arte Destructivo* and *Pintura Espejismo*. Defined by a good dose of black humour, among the works on display were an object/sculpture by Edgardo Giménez of a red winged plastic bat made from a biscuit can and a plastic bread basket, and a re-worked left-over medical cast by Dalila Puzzovio. In the gallery space was played a recording of poetry by Ignacio Beola, music by Miguel Angel Rodano and Villalpando (both experimental composers).

The final passing of the baton took place in 1963 when Kemble along with Santantonín, Renart, Minujín, Puzzovio, Squirru and Zuelma Ciordia (a cross-generational group) presented to the ITDT a maquette for an ambitious work made of environments. The project was rejected, as *Arte Destructivo* was criticised and *Pintura Espejismo* shut down. Although the same group of artists did not work together again, Anaya defines it the most immediate antecedent of *La Menesunda*, one of the exemplary Argentine Pop endeavours.<sup>141</sup>

From the description the events that were taking place in the early 1960s, which appeared across *Informalismo*, *Objetualismo*, and *Otra-Figuración*, it emerges how the milieu was not yet ready to receive participatory art, or to disestablish accepted canons of good taste. Through the language of *Arte Destructivo* a chain of exhibitions made it their scope to challenge set notions and redefine contemporaneous art by destroying, breaking with the past and, at last, participating.

### **1.c From Democratized Consumption to Developmentalism: Art on the Streets, 1962-1963**

Within *Informalismo*, objects have been examined as inextricably connected to experience through the analysis of exhibitions such as *Arte Destructivo*, and through works by Marta Minujín. However, there is a further aspect, which complicates the role of objects, concerning the idea of consumption within the specific socio-political climate of the early sixties, and against the backdrop of the Peronist era. This section is devoted to recording the political context that accompanied this ambivalence towards objects. In addition, it examines certain events that marked artists' awareness of the urban

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<sup>141</sup> Jorge Lopez Anaya, cited in Kemble et. al., *The Great Breakthrough*, p. 14.

environment as a stage for their art, motivated by a desire to be more inclusive, more consumable, and to contest the traditionalism that still dominated the Argentine art market. The section stresses certain parallelisms between politics and art, to point at how artists were pushing to refashion cultural models, and to highlight how this was achieved through institutional support. The inconsistencies and contradictions that emerge - considering the provenance of the funding (mostly from the US), and the often leftist ideological agendas that often drove artists' projects – engender the successes and failures of these projects. As the remainder of the chapter, this section seeks to recast the historiography of Argentine practices in the 1960s within a specifically local scene, that reveals more interesting connections with the international art circuit.

Peronist policies importantly influenced the formation of an ideological ambivalence towards consumption. This was due to a tension between Peronist unrealized ideals of prosperity and what was propagandised as an elitist cupidity for luxury. Peron often demonized the opposition arguing that only egotistic elites could bemoan the absence of imported products such as perfume, whisky and refrigerators.<sup>142</sup> Refrigerators were one of Peron's recurrent examples especially after his nationalization campaign in 1947, which targeted refrigerators, telephones, gas, electricity and various transport systems. The only exception was with the refrigerator SIAM Di Tella. Torcuato Di Tella, the company's owner, was close to Peron, and was able to have almost complete monopoly of the market. It's important to note that Torcuato Di Tella's son Guido founded the ITDT. SIAM refrigerators were even found in working class homes, a symbol of the illusive 'bonanza years of Peronist prosperity and the democratization of consumption', which steadily declined after 1955.<sup>143</sup>

Simultaneously, one of the dictums of Peronism was that one should produce at least as much as one consumes. From the outset, the relationship of the Argentine subject with objects was in tension. In one of his infamous populist speeches at the end of his first term Peron boasted, 'Today one eats well and four times a day. Those who in

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<sup>142</sup>Eduardo Elena, *Dignifying Argentina: Peronism, citizenship, and mass consumption*, (Pittsburgh, Pa: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011), p. 1.

<sup>143</sup>Ruth Berins Collier and Samuel Handlin, *Reorganizing popular politics: participation and the new interest regime in Latin America*, (University Park, Pa: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009), p. 143.

the past had one suit now have a closetful. Those who in the past went to the cinema or the theatre once a year now can go every week.<sup>144</sup>

In 1951 Peron sent to every household for Christmas a fruitcake, a bottle of cider and a child's toy – a present from the president, proof of the country's prosperity. The focus on consumption inherent in Peron's policies led for these objects and goods to acquire controversial meanings. A famous example that highlights the incongruence between Peron's words and the actual condition of the average Argentine household is a letter by Hilda Benitez de Maldonado, a working class housewife from the province of Mendoza. In her heart felt letter, Hilda explained the dire living conditions of her family, and she thanked the Presidential couple for the present, which made such a difference in her family's Christmas.<sup>145</sup>

This inconsistent approach towards sentiments attached to consumer goods, paired with constant economic fluctuations and soaring inflation, led to confusion towards the value of consumption and objects. Because of Peron's policies everyday objects –from refrigerators, to cars to foodstuffs - became charged with political meaning, whether of elitist oppressiveness or Peronist social justice and prosperity.<sup>146</sup> This ambivalence towards objects was also translated into art, as in *Arte Destructivo*, however the political changes that took place, further contributed to a change in perception towards objects and culture in particular.

In the early sixties, despite the establishment of a relatively stable government, Peronism was as present as ever. Peron's support had not dwindled among the working class and he was able to exert political influence even from exile in Francoist Spain. However, Arturo Frondizi (in power between 1958-1963) was able to gain significant support making compromises with former Peronists – for instance by lifting the ban on Peronism in 1958. Remarkably, Frondizi implemented a new economic policy known as Developmentalism – a governmental policy based on the premise that cultural

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

It was a common populist strategy to inflate a country's prosperity in order to boost morale. In 1957 the British Conservative Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan, made an optimistic speech claiming 'most of our people have never had it so good.' Macmillan's rosy picture of Britain's economy took place in a complex moment in the post-war, only a year after coal had stopped being rationed.

<sup>145</sup> Elena, *Dignifying Argentina*, p. 3.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid, p. 4.

development is an essential prerequisite for economic growth. Frondizi encouraged foreign investment in heavy industry, especially in motor vehicle production (including substantial subsidies to the Di Tella family for the production of the Siam 1500), which gained him the support of the middle class.

Therefore, Developmentalist ideology significantly contributed to a change in people's perception of objects of consumption. On one hand, artists continued to experiment with experience as an innovative element in art making. On the other, artists became progressively receptive towards the value of objects within the framework of consumption. In addition Developmentalism had contributed to the proliferation of commercial products, widely publicised in the mass media. Considering the Peronist ambivalence towards goods of consumption, this phenomenon generated further suspicion towards both consumption and the mass media.

While Minujín's works discussed thus far, demonstrate a connection to an informalist understanding of the object (as intertwined with experience), other contemporary works approached the object from the perspective of consumption.<sup>147</sup>

Edgardo Giménez's *La Mamouschka Operada* (The operated mosquito, fig. 10), and Juan Stoppani's papier-mâché sculptures of 'Space Soldiers' (fig. 12), also exhibited in the exhibition *Objeto '64*, are important examples. Giménez's *La Mamouschka Operada* belongs to the first series of sculptures he produced at the early stages of his career. Made of an assemblage of plastic toys and paper mace, *the Mamouschka* was emblematic of a new approach to art, characterized by a naïve and playful aesthetic. This work was interpreted by Mercedes Trelles-Hernandez, as 'a typical Dadaist gesture, without the negativism and the skepticism common among the noisy followers of the Zürich movement, but endowed with the same humor and the same lack of inhibition, to which Giménez added the advertising angle.'<sup>148</sup> Though there certainly is a

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<sup>147</sup> Consumption is a notion more closely associated to the concerns of the French *Nouveau Réalistes*, led by Yves Klein and Pierre Restany. The New Realist manifesto signed by Arman, Dufrene, Hains, Yves le Monochrome, Tinguely, Villeglè, in Milan, 1960, expressed the need for 'an advance towards a New Realism of pure sensibility.' The manifesto promised a new 'iconoclastic' art which will enable man to reintegrate himself into the (Heideggerian) Real, identifying it 'with his own transcendent nature - which is in emotion, feeling and ultimately poetry.'

<sup>148</sup> Mercedes Trelles-Hernandez, *The Contested Object: Pop art in Latin America 1964-*

Fig. 13 Edgardo Giménez, Dalila Puzzovio y Charlie Squirru  
*¿Por qué son Tan Geniales?*, 1965  
Poster/Billboard on the Viamonte and Florida Streets in Buenos Aires.



Duchampian readymade quality to *Mamoushka*, it seems that the three artists were not motivated by Tzara's intention to '[throw] up ideas so that they can be shot down,'<sup>149</sup> and to dismantle the hierarchy of art through nonsense, but rather by a mocking spirit towards the art *system* and its consumers, which excluded young artists in Buenos Aires.

*Mamouschka* first appeared in the billboard poster *Por Que Son Tan Geniales?* (Why are they so brilliant? fig. 13), which was presented in conjunction with the exhibition. The billboard, produced by Giménez in collaboration with Dalila Puzzovio and Carlos Squirru, demonstrated an awareness of the influence of the mass media in shaping notions of 'taste' and aesthetic hierarchies. Placed in the heart of a very elite neighbourhood, it was an ironic self-celebration of the artists holding their signature artworks. Along with Giménez, the billboard showed Carlos Squirru holding a blood bag, which he often incorporated in his visceral silkscreens on canvas and Dalila Puzzovio, portrayed holding one of her revisited medical casts, hospital leftovers, spectral remains of human limbs. The value of this work lies in its embedded-ness within the fabric of the urban landscape and its strategic location within an area associated with privilege and 'good taste.' The artists sought to parody the Eurocentric taste of the elite, which was largely disinterested in the contemporary art market. As previously stated, by 1964 art sales did not provide means of subsistence for young artists, who often were employed as graphic designers, decorators or journalists. *Por Que Son Tan Geniales?* articulates the first recognition of the critical power of the media and was the first work to harness this force for art's ends.

Oscar Masotta, the eminent critic who had famously translated Jacques Lacan's landmark psychoanalytic collection of texts *Ecrits* into Spanish, wrote extensively about the relationship between art and advertising as medium/subject matter. Masotta argued that whilst advertising targeted the consciousness of its spectators by constructing an image and distributing it widely, the artists who used advertising strategies created a mythical product that generated a sense of aesthetic estrangement.<sup>150</sup> By advertising

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<sup>149</sup> Tristan Tzara, *Dada Manifesto*, Cabaret Voltaire, Zürich, 23 March 1918, reproduced in Dawn Ades, *The Dada Reader: A Critical Anthology*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

<sup>150</sup> Oscar Masotta, *El Pop Art*, (Buenos Aires: Editorial Columba, 1967), reproduced in Alonso, Aguilar and Herkenhoff, *Arte de contradicciones*, p. 49.



themselves as objects of consumption, Giménez, Squirru and Puzzovio subverted the mechanisms of desire implicit in advertising and therefore constructed a myth, an impossible product. In advertising, the viewer's gaze, captivated by unfulfilled desire, creates a symbolic structure that is inseparable from the image it is inspired by. In Lacanian terms, this fixed bond to the symbolic emerges because the subject is anchored to the symbolic other: the point of juncture between the conscious mind and the unconscious fantasy. According to Roland Barthes, intrinsic to the notion of myth is the inseparability between its composite form and meaning, in line with Aristotelian thinking, based on fixed values and associations. *Por Que Son Tan Geniales?* divorces signs and meanings analysing why these were assigned and how there is no singular relationship between form and meaning. Another important element which embeds the work within the historical narrative of the city is that, while the medium is mass media advertising, in tune with newer tendencies, the artists represent themselves holding works that still associate to Informalism. The poster hence immortalizes the overlap of two key periods in Argentine art, Informalism and Pop.

Although the work did not instantly provoke a strong public reaction, it did generate a response in other artists such as Marta Minujín, who was inspired (challenged) to, once again, bring her artworks onto the streets. According to an article in the popular Argentine weekly magazine *Primera Plana*, Minujín threw the *Colchones Falsos* out of the Galería Lirolay, where she was exhibiting them. Minujín later invited bodybuilders and motorcyclists to play with and manipulate her objects on the street.<sup>151</sup> The exhibition in Lirolay was titled *La Feria de las Ferias* as Minujín, for the duration of the show, had invited artists to sell their works in the gallery. Marilú Marini was selling her dances, Pierre Restany had a kiosk where he sold impromptu catalogue prefaces to artists, Romero Brest sold some he had already written. Paintings were sold at 100 pesos per meter (a gesture contemporaneously proposed by the Japanese group Gutai) and objects by fragments according to the amount of money carried by the spectator

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<sup>151</sup> Anonymous, 'Sociología del Pop,' *Primera Plana*, vol.4, no.191, 23–29 August 1966. Examined in María Fernanda Pinta, 'Pop! La puesta en escena de nuestro 'folklore urbano,' *Caiana Revista de Historia del Arte y Cultura Visual*, n. 4, 2015. Available online on [http://caiana.caia.org.ar/template/caiana.php?pag=articles/article\\_2.php&obj=139&vol=4](http://caiana.caia.org.ar/template/caiana.php?pag=articles/article_2.php&obj=139&vol=4) Last accessed 10 July 2016.

with the aim of desecrating the artwork. Whatever was left, they threw in the river. The event even had a certain financial success. Romero Brest wrote: 'In the era of consumerism, art's sphere of action also is consumed. The exhibition ironically unveiled how obsolete art was with works that were either ephemeral or designed to be destroyed'<sup>152</sup>.

Minujín's *Colchones*, alongside exhibitions such as *Arte Destructivo* and *Objeto '64* demonstrate how artists in Buenos Aires gained confidence with the notion that objects could translate into participatory experiences. In conjunction, Giménez's *Por Que Son Tan Geniales?* reflects upon notions of good taste in relation to patterns of consumption. Finally, *La Feria de las Ferias*, provides a unifying link between these two approaches to objects, experience and consumption. At this stage it is interesting to examine how Pop entered the critical lexicon in the city and how this developed in relation to these terminologies.

#### 1.d Between 'Lunfardo' and 'Camp': The Politics of Pop, 1964-1966

Once the mass media, participation, advertising, and consumption became visible players in Buenos Aires' arts arena, artistic practices proceeded to become more defined. When Pop began to circulate as a distinctive terminology, artists and intellectuals had to take a stance towards this phenomenon, which invoked reflection on broader structures of foreign and domestic policy. This section examines how artists thrived on the tensions generated by such relationships. Following a brief focus on the political context, the section addresses how and why Pop was used, starting with Romero Brest's travels to the 1964 Venice Biennial. The discussion on the literature that was produced in the years right after reveals the very local character of this phenomenon, and its deep seated connection to the issues confronted thus far relating to objecthood, cultural renovation, and a connection to official policy. The terms 'Lunfardo' and 'Camp' are used as departure points for analysing the intricate

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<sup>152</sup> Romero Brest wrote: 'In the era of consumerism, art's sphere of action also is consumed. The exhibition ironically unveiled how obsolete art was with works that were either ephemeral or designed to be destroyed.' Original: 'El na era del consumismo, el arte y su esfera de accion tambien se consumen. La exposición mostró, ironicamente, la obsolencia del arte en obras efímeras o proyectadas para ser destruidas.' Jorge Romero Brest, *Marta Minujín*, (Buenos Aires: Edición Edgardo Giménez, 2000).

specificities of the phenomenon until 1966 – the year of the establishment of a military dictatorship.

Although Frondizi's policies proved in large part successful, a coup deposed him in 1963 due to his problematic diplomatic relations with Cuba, which led the military and the conservatives (supported by the United States) to fear a government's shift to the left. The new president Arturo Illia, however, carried on Frondizi's work. By 1964, 24% of the national budget was invested in education, which was an exceptional achievement considering that the UN's bar was set at 25%. Furthermore foreign investment - which Peron's isolationist policies had blocked until 1955 - provided significant aid. The United States was Argentina's major investor, providing 56% of foreign capital in the country.

In 1964, the exhibition *Objeto '64*, the billboard poster *Por Que Son Tan Geniales?* are significant episodes in Pop's debut. Furthermore, the exhibition *11 Pop Artists from New York* (including Andy Warhol, James Rosenquist, Jim Dine and Roy Lichtenstein) opened at the MAM, and the ITDT held a Christmas pantomime that parodied North American popular culture. Thanks to these events North American Pop art currents were no longer confined to the black and white reproduction in magazines, but they entered artists' critical consciousnesses. Jorge Romero Brest wrote a text of his impressions on Pop art, which he had come into contact with at the Venice Biennale.<sup>153</sup> The 1964 Venice Biennale, in fact, remained in the annals for the scandal the United States pavilion provoked. Curated by Alan Solomon and featuring the work of artists including Jim Dine, Claes Oldenburg and Robert Rauschenberg, the exhibition generated great distress in Italy. The most telling anecdote is the reaction of the Venetian clergy that barred Catholics from attending the exhibition - as explained in the introduction.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> Jorge Romero Brest, *Report and Reflection on Pop Art*, unpublished essay, 1967, reproduced in Katzenstein. *Listen, here, now!* p. 166.

<sup>154</sup>See: Tullia Zevi, 'The Biennale: How Evil is Pop Art?' *La Repubblica*, Rome, 19 Sept 1964.

Another interesting excerpt from the Italian press worth mentioning in order to stress the malaise that had formed towards America is an unreferenced article from the magazine *Arts*, which states: 'We Europeans are now in the eyes of the American nothing but poor backward Negroes, good only for being colonized.' Ibid.

In the text written in response to his visit to the Biennial, Romero Brest remarked that he was incapable of reading Pop because he felt like the 'orphan of an intimacy within himself.'<sup>155</sup> Brest continued:

*I affirm that the painted image of a Campbell soup can (Warhol) or the famous Bedroom by Oldenburg are an expression as fixed, serene and exemplary as Polycleitus' Doryphorus and the Parthenon itself<sup>156</sup>*

Because of his affinity with existentialism as a tool to approach contemporary art, especially in the case of *Informalismo*, Brest found himself disoriented by this new style, which required no interpretation. Brest attributed his initial discomfort with Pop to an a-temporal quality, which he associated with Classical Greek sculpture. In making this comparison, Brest uses geometric abstraction as a further example of art that only presents the essential and necessary aspects of reality. A term used by Brest in Spanish to define the immutability of Pop artworks is *cosidad* (object-ness), in other words, a de-contextualization and invariability that empties images of their mythic-sentimental quality shifting it towards an intellectual and rational one (here Romero Brest uses mathematics as a system of reference). He concludes, however, that Pop was ultimately figurative, as opposed to abstract, bringing the process initiated by geometric abstraction to completion.

Brest's perception that Pop was a figurative phenomenon opposed one widely accredited in New York following the 1963 MoMA symposium on Pop (voiced by Alan Solomon in particular) that understood Pop as an extension of abstraction.<sup>157</sup> Jacqueline Barnitz's perspective on Pop in Argentina aids in explaining Brest's view, which subsequently influenced the Di Tella artists. In an article on Minujín for Arts Magazine in 1966 Barnitz explained:

*It is no accident that the Latin Americans refer to their new realism as the 'art of things' (like the French art does objects) rather than Pop art. While popular images are used, their implication is very different. Pop art speaks of 'things,' the*

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<sup>155</sup> Jorge Romero Brest, *Report and Reflection on Pop Art*, in Katzenstein. *Listen, here, now!* p. 168.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid*, p. 169.

<sup>157</sup> See Madoff, *Pop art*.

*things that surround us, whereas the 'art of things' paradoxically speaks of people. It employs objects in order to create an image of man.*<sup>158</sup>

Barnitz's reference to Pop being interpreted as 'the art of things' is both connected to Romero Brest's perspective, and to Oscar Masotta's who in his important volume *El Pop-Art* spoke about certain strains of Argentine contemporary production under the denomination of *arte de las cosas* (the art of things).<sup>159</sup> Their comments are important in furthering the discussion on the 'object,' or the 'thing' as a perpetual site of tension in the evolution of the *Porteño* Pop phenomenon. Masotta included among what he termed the *objetualistas* (objectualists), Santantonín, Renart, Minujín, Zuelma Ciordia, Puzzovio, Stoppani, Rodríguez Arias. In her analysis of this terminology, María José Herrera wrote that 'objectualism was one of the strongest trends of the 1960s. [...] [While many objects produced were] of surrealist origin, and others were linked to Pop, objects were used to demystify the work of art amid a process which questioned traditional roles attributed to the artist as well as to the public.'<sup>160</sup>

Returning to the importance of Brest's text for local artists, one can observe how his opinion influenced the cultural currents in the city. Since 1963, in coincidence with the change of regime, Romero Brest was invited to become director of the Centro de Artes Visuales at the Di Tella and to leave his post as director of the MNBA. This change in institutional affiliation represented a further stage in Romero Brest's career, who went from PE teacher, to published author, to university professor, magazine editor, museum director and finally director of what then became one of the most experimental art centres in the city. His role was increasingly prominent in the eyes of the young artists who gravitated towards the Di Tella, where he often gave lectures. Many artists were aware of Romero Brest's views on Pop, which, in conjunction with the various events on North American Pop that year, would have informed their practice. In Dalila Puzzovio's and Edgardo Giménez's words, Pop became a release that permeated all aspects of youth culture. Young artists or 'chicos del barrio,'<sup>161</sup> meaning

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<sup>158</sup> Jacqueline Barnitz, 'A Latin Answer to Pop,' *Arts Magazine*, June 1966, pp. 36–9.

<sup>159</sup> Masotta, *El 'Pop-Art.'*

<sup>160</sup> María José Herrera in Glusberg, et. al. *Edgardo Giménez*, p. 252.

<sup>161</sup> Edgardo Giménez in interview, youtube video: *Arte Pop en Argentina*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=feYhJVNoQ9E>

Last accessed 10 July 2016.

those from underprivileged neighbourhoods, found refuge within the Di Tella Institute and under the wing of Romero Brest, where they had the 'privilege to be protagonists.'<sup>162</sup> Nevertheless, it is important to stress how Pop in Buenos Aires responded to the specificities of a distinct genealogy, one that had its roots in manifestations other than Abstract Expressionism (namely Geometric Abstraction and Informalism), and that emerged out of local conditions independent of foreign movements.

At this moment the ITDT comprised the CAV (Centro de Arte Visuales), the CLAEM (Centro Latinoamericano de Altos Estudios Musicales) and the CEAV (Centro de Experimentacion Audio-Visual), providing an invaluable platform for artists to expand their practices through multidisciplinary collaboration. After seven years at the MNBA, Romero Brest had established a solid international reputation, also because of his involvement with AICA (International Association of Art Critics), which enabled him to provide the institute with global connections. His principal contribution, by 1964, was the addition of an international prize to the existing yearly national one, running since 1962. This manoeuvre signified that international artists and jurors would be invited to participate in the event. The yearly award instantly gained sensational momentum. Soon it became a didactic occurrence, and secondly it was a unique opportunity to gain international exposure and to experience first hand the work of foreign artists. At stake for the national participants was a sum of money that would enable the winner to travel anywhere in the world and the support to have a gallery solo show in a foreign city.

On a controversial note, the funding for this extraordinary organization came mainly from two sources. The first was the Di Tella family itself. Between 1962-1966, the Di Tella industries were undergoing unrestrained expansion due to the renewed access to public credit, which enabled them to cover the company's debt by defaulting on fiscal and employee benefits and obligations. The second benefactors were Ford and the Rockefeller Foundations, which established close deals with the Di Tella's, mostly through collateral businesses born during the Frondizi administration. This strong financial relationship that tied the ITDT with the Argentine government and the United States, was a significant factor in the ITDT's identity and operation. The institute

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<sup>162</sup> Dalila Puzzovio in interview, *Ibid.*

emulated North American foundations and cultural institutions, whilst being closely linked to the country's political climate.<sup>163</sup>

For the 1964 edition of the Prize, the inaugural event of Pop in Buenos Aires, Pierre Restany and Clement Greenberg, two of the foremost personalities in art criticism, were invited to judge the competition. Inviting two characters that occupied such distinct positions within the geography of art came at a great risk for Romero Brest. He and Clement Greenberg shared an evolutionary concept of modern art. Greenberg was hostile towards anything outside of modernist abstraction and especially towards anti-formalism. Romero Brest, on the other hand, was aligned with the objectives of young Argentine artists and was able to find new ways of understanding new aesthetics.<sup>164</sup> He therefore found a match in Pierre Restany who, thirty-one at the time, was a firm supporter of French *Nouveau Réalisme*, the emblem of the decadence in art that eroded Greenberg's ideology.

Within this delicate balance, Romero Brest acted as arbiter between the two figures who arguably represented the very ambivalence, or disorientation, that he felt towards Pop. Eventually Greenberg won the battle for the International Prize, awarded to Kenneth Nolan over Arman, however Restany insisted on Marta Minujín's victory over Emilio Renart and found support in Romero Brest. Minujín, twenty-one at the time, exhibited *Revuelquese y Viva!* (Roll around and live, 1965), the latest version of *Colchones* (fig. 14). The outstanding quality of Minujín's work was in its further development of a participatory element, already present in her previous experiments

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<sup>163</sup> Di Tella Foundation was the first large-scale initiative in Argentina to move from private to corporate sponsorship, following the model established decades ago by the Ford and Rockefeller families. Obviously the scale of the company was small when compared with their American counterparts but the structure was similar. In addition, Rockefeller, who served as vice-president of the United States from 1974 to 1977 under Gerald R. Ford, subsidised the creation of the São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro Museums of Modern Art in the late 1940s. In fact, throughout the 1960s, a large number of corporations were willing to invest in culture in South America. Examples include the Di Tella and Kaiser in Argentina, General Electric in Montevideo, the Esso Colombiana in Bogota and Steel Pacific in Chile. John King, *El Di Tella y el desarrollo cultural argentino en la década del sesenta*, (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Ediciones de Arte Gaglianone, 1985), p. 184.

<sup>164</sup> Romero Brest's relation to Tapié's *un art autre* aligned him with Greenberg's intent of championing abstraction as a universalist aesthetic. By including Jackson Pollock's action painting within the informalist canon, Tapié expanded and adjusted the breadth of Art Informel: a European alternative to Abstract Expressionism.

Fig. 14 Marta Minujín  
*Revuélquese y Viva!*, 1964-1984  
Wood, canvas and oil  
Dimensions variable





with mattresses. Differently from her previous works, *Revuelquese y Viva!* – which has been compared to Hélio Oiticica's *Parangoles* (fabric constructions that were only complete when worn by the viewer) - sought to playfully transcend the boundaries of the sculpture/object into something dynamic. This gigantic construction of hand painted coloured mattresses invited the viewer to roll around in its intricate, soft and mobile interior, with the slight sexual connotation of a 'roll in the hay,' an exhortation to let loose and reconnect to the more basic instincts. Romero Brest himself defined Minujín's relationship to her mattresses as an 'alliance with painting.'<sup>165</sup> Minujín was the first artist in Buenos Aires to introduce participation within her practice. Minujín's piece proved vital for Romero Brest, as it connected experience with his considerations on Informalism, thus providing a continuation of his thought process and, in his eyes, the production of original art.

Romero Brest recognized in Minujín's work that a sense of unity had emerged through a freer attitude towards art making. This sense of freedom and collective sentiment was encapsulated by what was then recognized as Pop. In fact Restany, upon his return to Paris after the Di Tella Awards, wrote the article, *Buenos Aires and the New Humanism*. In this celebratory account of his experience of the Argentine Capital, Restany marks the presence of a freedom within the very fabric of the city. Restany depicts Buenos Aires as a 'true metropolis' one 'with a soul, a personality and a body.'<sup>166</sup> The 'new humanism' stated in the title refers to a collective concern for urban life, which set aside differences and created an international constellation of young artists. The most remarkable terminology that emerges from Restany's article is the term *Lunfardo*, which he uses to describe the particular strain of Pop art he witnessed emerging at the Di Tella. Jorge Luís Borges explains the origins of this coloured term in the book *The Language of Argentines*, 1935. At the end of the nineteenth century in Buenos Aires, thieves used to call themselves *lunfardos*. *Lunfardo* or *lunfa* came to mean the secret code they used, which was complicated by multiple meanings and word plays. *Lunfardo* seeped its way into the language of Buenos Aires' outer suburbs,

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<sup>165</sup> Romero Brest, *Marta Minujín*.

<sup>166</sup> Pierre Restany, 'Buenos Aires y el Nuevo humanismo,' originally published in the magazine *Planeta*, n. 5, Buenos Aires, 1965. Reproduced in Aguilar, Alonso, and Herkenhoff. *Arte de contradicciones*. p. 222.

enlivening the more plain dialects. Many tango lyrics, in fact, are peppered with *lunfardismo*, which gradually became a typical expression of porteño identity.<sup>167</sup>

The significance of Pop as a new language in Buenos Aires emerges from Restany's reflection on a sensibility that imbued the city's cultural milieu. This definition is important to the understanding of Pop in Buenos Aires, because it highlights one of the fundamental aspects of Argentine Pop in the sixties, namely its originality and relevance within 'local' narratives. Restany recognized Buenos Aires as a metropolis equating it to other centres of production including Paris and New York. Restany's definition gained great significance for Argentine artists and critics, who had been waiting for such validation, as Romero Brest's writing suggests. Therefore the ITDT 1964 prize changed his position from Being 'disoriented' by Pop, to fully embracing it as an expression of Argentine spirit.

The energy had so vigorously changed since *Arte Destructivo* also with Restany's recognition of Pop *Lunfardo*, which further encouraged artists to continue expanding their Pop production. Victoria Noorthoorn, in an essay on Minujín's practice writes 'the need to respond to a growing mass culture and consumption society were part of the brewing cultural mixture at that moment.'<sup>168</sup> Therefore it became necessary to expose the mechanisms of construction of meaning (the codes) of the mass media.<sup>169</sup> The notion of a 'cultural mixture', is key in delineating the natural evolution of a Pop art language that was both embraced by the ITDT, who sent the winner of its prize abroad, as the most contemporary and international style and triggered by the growing presence of its images from international artists.

Representing seminal moments in the development of Pop in the city *Revuelquese y Viva!* and *Por Que Son Tan Geniales?* demonstrate how Pop in Buenos Aires was developing. On the one hand there was a heightened awareness of the

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<sup>167</sup> Edward Wright, the British graphic designer who was also involved in *This is Tomorrow*, writes about *Lunfardo* in reference to his reading of Jorge Luís Borges. (*El idioma de los Argentinos*, 1935). Edward Wright, Michael Harrison, and Judith Kimmelman, *Edward Wright, graphic work & painting: an Arts Council exhibition*, (London: The Arts Council, 1985).

<sup>168</sup> Victoria Noorthoorn, 'The Vertigo of Creation,' reproduced in Marta Minujín and Victoria Noorthoorn, *Marta Minujín: obras 1959-1989*, (Buenos Aires: Malba-Fundación Constantini, 2010), p. 242.

<sup>169</sup> Masotta, *Happenings*.

influence of the mass media evident in the billboard. On the other there is an interest in participation and physical provocation conveyed by Minujín's mattresses. Thanks to the ITDT these artists were in close contact and were encouraged to work collaboratively therefore it was only a matter of time for these ideas to merge into a new dialectic. As Romero Brest predicted, a common sensibility was seeping through art practices.

In this context critics marshalled in two opposing factions. One side, heralded by Romero Brest, they thoroughly embraced the significance of Pop at the Di Tella within an international discourse. On the opposing side, the most significant voice was Oscar Masotta's, who was known in Buenos Aires for his work as a semiotician, a Marxist journalist and for his, already mentioned, translation of Lacan's writings into Spanish.

Masotta, who also authored a book on Pop art in 1966, expressed his reservations on the definition 'Pop' applied to Argentine artists. In his reading Masotta draws examples from the work of Rauschenberg, Oldenburg and Warhol especially, who in his opinion, operate a critique of the mass media through a deconstruction of its codes. Masotta views Pop as being structured by the mass media, which is itself a structure of images. Masotta writes:

*Pop art is a movement that attempts to 'lower' the structure of the image to the status of the semiotic sign; this aims to problematize the relationship of the image with the real object to which all images refer.<sup>170</sup>*

From this statement Masotta continues that Pop is not a type of 'realism' based on objects, nor is it based on content. He claims that 'The only 'reality' in Pop is language' which he understands to be the building block of the semantic circuits that lie at the heart of social interaction and individuality.

Masotta therefore disassociates the reality of the object from the dialectic at the base of Pop, which is instead a language. Pop artists therefore only represent the reality, which has already entered symbolic structures. It is on the base of this understanding that Masotta, uses the term *Imagineros* or imaginists to define the practice of the same artists Restany baptized Pop Lunfardos. To further his argument, Masotta uses the term 'camp' to describe the objects and environments produced by

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<sup>170</sup> Rodrigo Alonso, 'Un Arte de Contradicciones,' in Aguilar, Alonso, and Herkenhoff. *Arte de contradicciones*, p. 33.

these artists. 'A joking atmosphere, a bit surrealistic, combined with Pop elements, and "environmental" intention and the construction of an "itinerary."'”<sup>171</sup>

Masotta's analysis of the *Imagineros* and of camp departs from his interpretation of Stoppani's papier-mâché sculptures depicting 'space soldiers', which also appeared in *Objetos '64*. In an interview with Masotta, Stoppani reveals that his sculptures seek to produce in the viewer a sense of doubt in relation to 'taste.' His sculptures, or 'dolls' invite considerations on the attitude towards taste as static sets of rules, which lay at the base of *Por Que Son Tan Geniales?*. Masotta, however dismisses his work as conveying a sense of farce and artifice as opposed to a serious critique of taste. Masotta's relegation of Argentine Pop to the realm of camp (or his interpretation of it) is decisively limiting. However, 'camp' is useful in establishing the value of Pop in Buenos Aires as a legitimate local rhetoric and also as a critical stepping-stone towards the development of dissident art practices post 1968.

By 1965, the term camp had hardly appeared in print. *Notes on Camp* published in 1964 by Susan Sontag compellingly traces the significance of this term that aids in countering Masotta's position. Sontag defines camp by listing its most wide-ranging features. From the scattered definition that emerges, I have extracted a sample of characteristics:

- Camp is an aesthetic sensibility, which is also taste
- Camp is a 'sensibility that among other things, converts the serious into frivolous'
- Camp is never intentional
- Camp is spectacular, a style and an attitude that manifests often as something over the top
- Camp is in the eye of the beholder

These statements allow a deconstruction of Masotta's claims. In his defence, taste and sensibility - two defining characteristics of camp - do not enter within the realm of reason and do not fit within a semiotic structure - his parameters of 'reality.' Sontag writes, 'Taste has no system and no proof.'

In order to contextualize camp in art Sontag poses the example of *Art Nouveau*.

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<sup>171</sup>Oscar Masotta, 'Prologue' in Masotta, *Happenings*, reproduced in Katzenstein, *Listen, here, now!*, p. 184.

*Art Nouveau was full of 'content' even of a political moral sort; it was a revolutionary movement in the arts, spurred by a utopia vision (somewhere between William Morris and the Bauhaus group) of organic politics and taste. Yet there is also a feature of the Art Nouveau objects, which suggests a disengaged, unserious, 'aesthete's' vision. This tells us something important about Art Nouveau -and about what the lens of camp, which blocks out content, is.<sup>172</sup>*

The ambiguous position of *Art Nouveau* as a style that champions artifice and camp, mirrors the duality in Pop *Lunfardo*. The frivolous and ironic nature of Pop art in Buenos Aires arguably masks other intentions, such as the inversion of aesthetic hierarchies. 'Camp taste turns its back on the good-bad axis of ordinary aesthetic judgement – Sontag continues - Camp doesn't reverse things. [...] what it does is to offer for art (and life) a different - a supplementary- set of standards.'

A fitting example of camp's critical potential is illustrated by *Microsucesos* (Microevents, 1965) an event/happening organized at La Recova theatre by the *Compagnia Siempre Viva* – which included Giménez, Puzzovio, Squirru, and Stoppani (fig. 15-16). The theatre was filled with sounds from the mass media including radio hits, advertising jingles, fragments of television programs. The principal actors in these actions were the iconic rooster for Knorr stock cubes and bottles of Crush orange juice, both imported goods that had become completely absorbed within local culture. Each event, which lasted approximately 45 minutes, was imbued with a satirical vein towards the mass media and its influence on the creation of taste. Marilú Marni danced to a jingle parodying an olive oil commercial that exclaimed, 'this lettuce doesn't lack anything.' Marni danced on her hands physically turning the commercial upside down while the audience sometimes threw oranges, from the previous performance with the Crush Juice, leaving her with bruises. But as Giménez claimed 'it was a cheerful environment and not violent in the slightest.'<sup>173</sup> In other *Microsucesos*, Puzzovio washed Giménez's hair, Rodriguez Arias was dressed as a nun and Giménez distributed soup to the audience dressed as the Knorr rooster.

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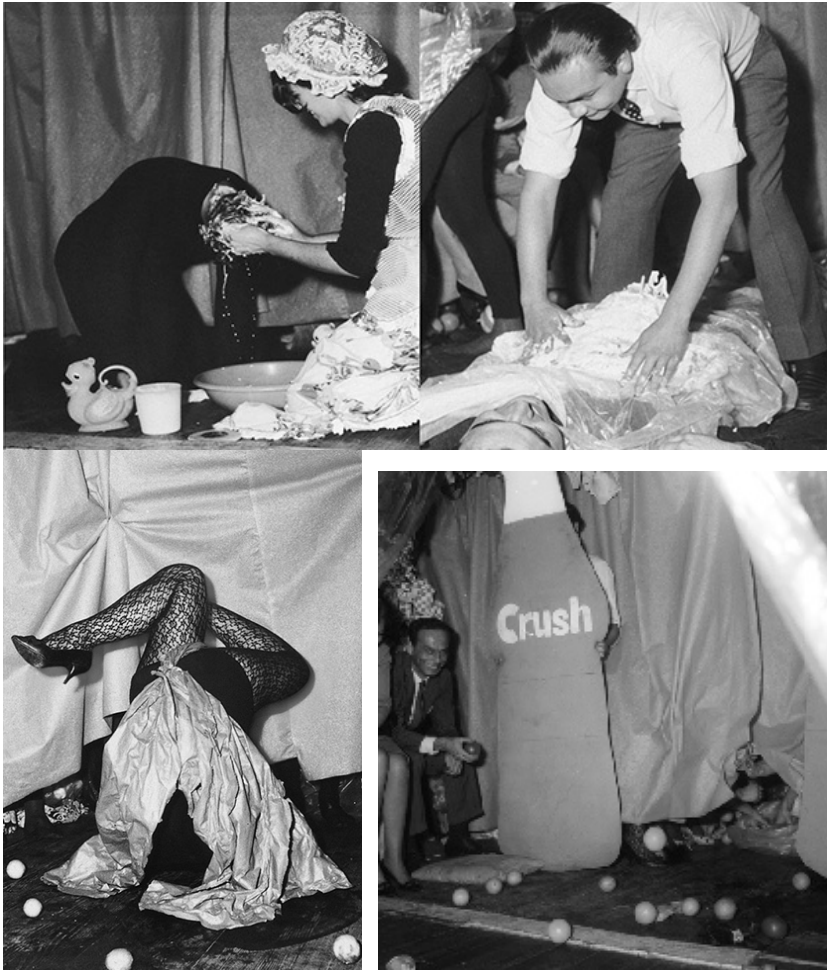
<sup>172</sup> Susan Sontag, 'Notes on Camp,' 1964, reproduced in: Susan Sontag. *A Susan Sontag reader*, (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1982), p. 110.

<sup>173</sup> Glusberg, et. al. *Edgardo Giménez*, p. 245.

Fig. 15 *Microsucesos*, Teatro de la Recova, Buenos Aires, 1965. In the photo are the members of the Compañía La Siempre Viva, from top left to right: Giménez, Stoppani, Rodríguez Arias, Squirru, Puzzovio, Marini, Rondano.



Fig. 16 *Microsucesos*, Teatro de la Recova, Buenos Aires, 1965.



In a similar way to *Por Que Son tan Geniales?*, *Microsucesos* produced an ambiguous hilarity. By being completely 'over the top', *La Siempre Viva* parodied mass media imagery and played on their symbolic value. By using the language of the mass media, decoded through images, *Microsucesos* arguably acts within a structure of meaning. *Microsucesos* did not present images, nor did it champion content, as Masotta would have it. On the contrary, content is blocked out and the prevailing language is that of symbols, or a reality, which has already entered the symbolic. Arguably *Microsucesos*, also emerges as a fusion between *Por Que Son Tan Geniales?* and *Revuelquese y Viva!* as it merges participation and engagement with the mass media. The connection with Dada, the absurd, and the reversal of hierarchies are present also in this case. When interviewed by *Primera Plana* in 1966 Rodriguez Arias' commented with a Dada vein: 'Being profound and serious is easy; being superficial needs stronger commitment.'<sup>174</sup>

In more contemporary writing, Rodrigo Alonso criticised Masotta for ignoring to an extent the socio-political environment that led artists to establish Pop art practices. He argued that the terminology of Pop has different resonance in the north and the south of the planet. Alonso claimed that during the Cold War artists were aware that freedom of expression, comprehension, and coercion of the mass media were imperative to ensure the development of an autonomous culture. Alonso's argument, provides a valuable perspective on the current historicization of art practices in South America that often highlight their political involvement. Nevertheless in 1965, artists were in part disengaged by the intensification of the political climate because of the protectorate of the Di Tella. In this moment, the critique evident in works such as *Revuelquese y Viva!*, *Por que son tan Geniales?* or *Microsucesos* was predominantly directed towards the elites, and to a lesser extent explicitly against the regime (as later works demonstrate).

One of the most significant and powerful examples that determine 1965 as a key step towards the radicalization of art in Buenos Aires is Marta Minujín's and Ruben Santantonín's (with the collaboration of Pablo Suárez, David Lamelas, Rodolfo Prayón, Floreal Amor and Leopoldo Maler) *La Menesunda* (The Mix Up, Mayhem or in Ana

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<sup>174</sup> Rodriguez Arias quoted in Anonymous, 'Sociología del Pop,' *Primera Plana*, vol.4, no.191, 23–29 August 1966.



Fig. 17 Marta Minujin and Ruben Santantonin (with the collaboration of Pablo Suárez, David Lamelas, Rodolfo Prayón, Floreal Amor and Leopoldo Maler)  
*La Menesunda*, 1965  
Installation images, ITDT, 18 May – 6 June 1965.





Longoni's translation *The Drug on The Market*, fig. 17). The happening consisted in a visual itinerary through 16 environments that would unsettle the viewer – such as entering a room with a couple in bed and a beauty salon for visitors. In a typewritten text with notes on the objectives of *La Menesunda*, Minujín writes:

*Unaware of his or her intimate mechanisms, we would like to turn the viewer inside out, like a glove. We want the viewer to feel that previously unrecognized needs are recognized, like the need to touch, to listen, to feel art from the inside out as he moves through inner spaces...The system of La Menesunda contradicts the exhibition of individual works. It removes the viewer from the isolated thing<sup>175</sup>*

This statement is based on Constantin Stanislavski's notion of learning from within, in theatre the concept of feeling/experiencing before acting. Because it required overt physical participation as it set out to 'reawaken' the dormant sensibility of the viewer, *La Menesunda* heightens the ironic provocation present in *Microsucesos* and *Por Que Son Tan Geniales?*. Progressively more critical of conservatism and elitism that stagnated financially the cultural scene, this work marks a moment after which attitudes changed, as particularly evident in two statements by Minujín. The first from 1964 is emblematic of Minujín's positive attitude and engagement with Pop Lunfardo:

*we define ourselves as Pop... Popular art, art that the whole world can understand, a happy, a fun art, a comical art. Not an art that has to be understood, but an art that has to be enjoyed; what pop wants is to be understood*

The second statement, from 1966, marks a decisive change in perspective: 'What we do is the most anti-pop that you can have, I always make anti-Pop; I engage people in a direct dialogue.'<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>175</sup> Marta Minujín, Ruben Santantonín, Jorge Romero Brest, flyer distributed for the presentation of *La Menesunda*, held at the Instituto Torcuato Di Tella, Buenos Aires, May 26-June 13, 1965, reproduced in Kazenstein, *Listen, Here Now!*, pp. 107-110.

<sup>176</sup> Quoted in Rodrigo Alonso, 'Una Arte de Contradicciones,' in Aguilar, Alonso, and Herkenhoff, *Arte de contradicciones*, p. 54.

In 1966, due to the elite's discontent with the labour policies of President Illia, a wave of right wing radicalism led to a self proclaimed 'Revolucion Argentina' that established General Juan Carlos Onganía as the head of a de facto military dictatorship, which lasted until 1974. The socio-political climate froze causing serious friction with the cultural sector. Dalila Puzzovio, who in 1966 Di Tella prize had exhibited a 8m wide portrait of herself in a bikini – causing scandal among the conservatives – recalled how even the police officers on the street outside of the Di Tella feared her for her flamboyant outlook.<sup>177</sup> After 1966, however, as Kynaston McShine wrote in the catalogue essay to *information* in 1970, 'if you are [an artist] in Argentina, you probably have had a neighbour who has been in jail for having long hair, or for not being 'dressed' properly.'<sup>178</sup> For example, Pablo Mesejean was imprisoned for several hours because he had long hair and Ernesto Deira, who was a painter and a lawyer, had his hair cut at the police station.

The coup arguably coincided with Pop Lunfardo's zenith: in August 1966 *Primera Plana* published on its cover a photograph of Buenos Aires' Pop artists, featuring Carlos Squirru, Miguel A. Rondano, Dalila Puzzovio, Edgardo Giménez, Pablo Mesejean, Delia Cancela, Juan C. Stoppani, Susana Salgado, Alfredo Rodríguez Arias (Minujín was ostensibly absent from the cover photo, as at this stage she was working internationally, and had gained distance from the ITDT). The nine, like celebrities, were depicted in flamboyant clothing, standing over the word POP (fig. 18).<sup>179</sup> According to Maria José Herrera:

*The cover played with several meanings of the word [Pop]: to break, to jump to visibility, appearing suddenly onto an audible onomatopoeia. This image*

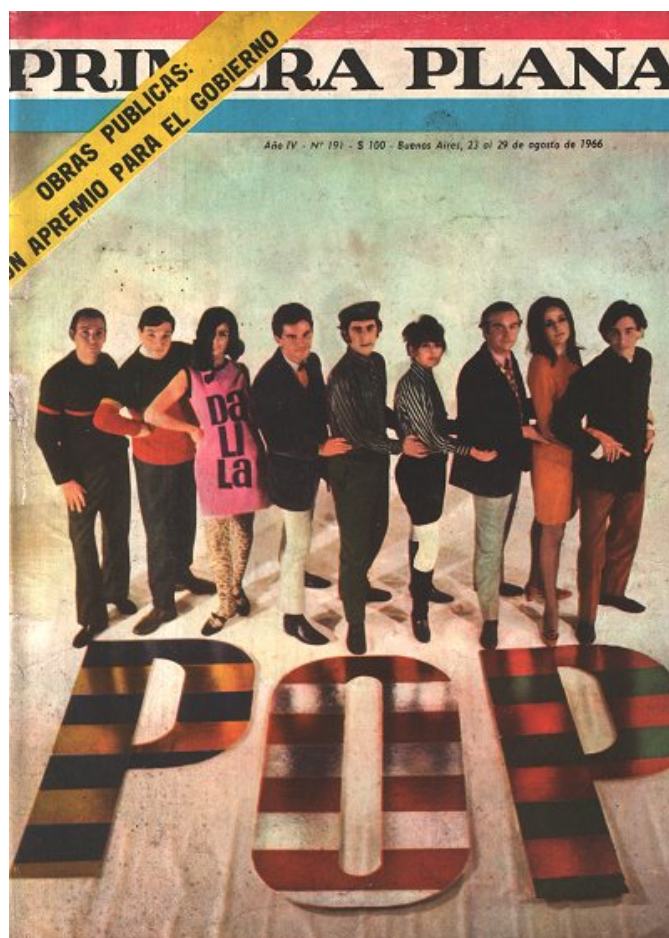
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<sup>177</sup> 'Yo, la primera vez que salí con estos zapatos de doble plataforma puestos fue para un vernissage, con unas babuchas doradas, con una mini de raso negro, una piel de mono, una pelambre así, trenzitas, todas con monedas de oro. Cuando bajé del taxi era una visión de dos metros y dos policías como que me quisieron agarrar pero les dio miedo'. Dalila Puzzovio interviewed by Mercedes Trelles Hernandez, Summer 1998, reproduced in Mercedes Trelles-Hernandez, *The Contested Object*, p. 70.

<sup>178</sup> Kynaston McShine, *Information*, (exh. cat., New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1970).

<sup>179</sup> *Primera Plana* n. 191, August 23-29, 1966.

Fig. 18 Cover of the magazine *Primera Plana*, 23-29 August 1966. From Left to right: Squirru, Rondano, Puzzovio, Giménez, Mesejean, Cancela, Stoppani, Salgado, Rodríguez Arias.



*consecrated this spring avant-garde, hedonistic, provocative, self-obsessed in a very conservative society that looked suspiciously at its early success*<sup>180</sup>.

For the first time in Buenos Aires artists acquired the status of celebrities. The cover of *Primera Plana*, which somehow encapsulated the media's perception of the sensationalism that permeated the art scene, marks the culmination of a process of popularization of art that ended when the military dictatorship was established. In addition it was even more surprising for the conservative elites to see young artists on the cover of a popular periodical, given the abrupt change in government that had taken place in June. The editorial of that same edition of *Primera Plana*, explained:

*If the passing of a government should also be measured by the public works that it builds, President Onganía and his collaborators have ahead of them, the administration of a substantial program inherited from previous administrations*<sup>181</sup>

It was through the participatory language of happenings such as *Microsucesos* and *La Menesunda*, that art practices became more and more radical. It should be noted, however, that although 'happenings' were propagandised by the media as the new artistic form, until 1966 the term was understood very little.<sup>182</sup> It was Marta Minujín's

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<sup>180</sup> Original: 'La portada jugaba con otro significado de esa misma palabra: el deirrumper, de saltar a la visibilidad, aparecer de repente en sonoraonomatopeya. Esa fue la imagen de la consagración de una vanguardiaprimavera, hedonista, provocadora, obsesionada por su propiaimagen en una sociedad muy conservadora que miraba con desconfianzael éxito temprano.' in Herrera, *Pop!*, p 5.

<sup>181</sup> Original: 'Si el paso de un Gobierno también debe medirse por las obras públicas que construye, el Presidente Onganía y sus colaboradores tienen frente a sí, en busca de decisiones, un programa cuantioso que heredan de anteriores administraciones.' 'Editorial,' *Primera Plana* n. 191, August 23-29, 1966.

<http://www.magicasruinas.com.ar/tapas/piehist594.htm>

Last accessed 10 July 2016.

<sup>182</sup>Especially tabloid magazines as *Primera Plana*, widely publicised the new medium, especially because of Marta Minujín's interventions in the media. In late 1964 Minujín staged *La Cabalcada*, which she also defined not a happening but an environment. It took place during a late night TV program *La Campana de Cristal* on Channel 7, realised in collaboration with Pablo Suárez, Marilú Marini, Alfredo Rodríguez Arias, and Graciela Martínez. Here Minujín revelled in scandalising the conservative audience, clearly represented in the photographs that document the event, by releasing amongst them bodybuilders, and farm animals generating a chaotic, yet spectacular, situation. Horses stained mattresses with buckets of paint tied to their tails, while two rock musicians were wrapped up in adhesive tape and the bodybuilders molested the

*La Menesunda*, which she called an environment (not happening) that sparked further interest for this new genre and this new terminology. Oscar Masotta, who as we have seen was not the first proponent of Pop, was instead one of the greatest exponents of the Happenings phenomenon, on which he also published a book in 1967, after a trip to the United States where he participated in happenings by Allan Kaprow, Michael Kirby and La Monte Young. Masotta, Eduardo Costa, Raúl Escari and Roberto Jacoby, known as the *Grupo de el Arte de los Medios de Comunicación Masiva* (in short *Arte de los Medios*), tried to organize a cycle of happenings in 1966, which was postponed due to the military coup. Titled *Sobre Happenings* (About happenings), the event only took place in December. Happenings by Kirby, Kaprow, Carolee Schneemann and others were restaged with the aim of 'being didactic,'<sup>183</sup> and according to Costa, the event was a 'success.' Over 500 people came to the evening of happenings and only 200 were let in. Masotta and Costa comment that spectators 'believed themselves to be witnessing something sensational.'<sup>184</sup>

Indeed, it was in 1967 that Jorge Romero Brest decided to call off the yearly award and instituted *Experiencias Visuales '67* instead. What occurred in the two years that followed *Experiencias '67*, led to a further shift in art production. *Experiencias '68* was censored and shut down just a few days from the opening as many works suggested and sometimes encouraged a critique of the regime. This was just one of many incidents of censorship that led to the final closure of the Di Tella in 1969.

1966 thus emerges as a punctuation mark in the cultural itinerary discussed so far. From Pop Lunfardo's taste for provocation, to the stronger critique enacted by *Microsucesos*, *La Menesunda* and finally *Anti-Happenings*, there was a radical change in the cultural climate due to the coup. Pop's playful irreverence was no longer enough for some.

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viewers by popping balloons. Later that year Minujín was invited by the *Centro de Artes y Letras* of the newspaper *El País*, of Montevideo (Uruguay) to carry out an action she baptized *Sucesos Plásticos*. Minujín selected the soccer stadium Luís Tróccoli where she gathered casual participants who were cuing to attend the Sunday programs outside of TV stations. Once in the stadium the people would find bodybuilders, bathtubs, Fellini-inspired fat women, a helicopter, chickens, lettuce, motorcyclists and twenty brides and grooms.

<sup>183</sup> Oscar Masotta, 'Sobre Happenings, Happening: Reflexiones y relato,' in Masotta, *Happenings*. Reproduced in Katzenstein. *Listen, here, now!*, p. 206.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

An important episode that highlights both the divisions among artists, and the connection between such an apparent crisis and institutional support, is the III Inter-American Biennial of Art held in Córdoba in 1966. Funded by the Kaiser automobile industries (which had its Latin American headquarters near the city), the biennial served to promote commerce in the region and to foster a Pan-American spirit. The initiative, which had started as a Salon for local artists in 1958, had evolved into one of the largest exhibitions of art in the continent, and was supported by the OAS.<sup>185</sup> José Gómez Sicre, head of its Visual Arts Division, was in charge of ensuring the overarching ethos would be anti-communist, and this particular edition had a strong emphasis on Pop, which meant that many of the Di Tella artists, including Puzovio and Cancela and Mesejean, were asked to participate.<sup>186</sup> Because of the success of its prior editions, the third biennial was the most ambitious to date, and not only were more works in more media admitted, but a concrete effort was made to expand the jury. While in previous editions Gómez Sicre was the only internationally renowned juror alongside one member from each participating country, on this occasion the committee included Alfred H. Barr Jr. from MoMA, Sam Hunter, (Director of the Jewish Museum in New York), Arnold Bode (President of Documenta), Carlos Raúl Villanueva (the Venezuelan architect) and the poet and critic Aldo Pellegrini.<sup>187</sup> On this occasion many of the Di Tella artists who had not been invited to show, including Marta Minujín, Roberto Jacoby, Ricardo Carreira, Pablo Suárez and others, organised an Anti-Biennial in an abandoned shoe factory as a gesture of protest. In her account of the event Longoni explained that while at the biennial the prevalent styles were minimalism, kinetic art, abstract, neo-figurative, the Anti-Biennial privileged street interventions, ambient pieces happenings, contemporary

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<sup>185</sup> For an accurate analysis and account of the Biennial phenomenon in South America see Andrea Giunta, 'Bienales Americanas de Arte: una alianza entre arte e industria,' *Patrocinio, Colección Y Circulación De Las Artes / Curiel, Gustavo (Hrsg.)*, 1997, 725-756.

<sup>186</sup> Anon., 'Comunicación masiva al más alto nivel: la tercera Bienal Americana de Arte,' *Análisis* 6, no. 292 Buenos Aires, October 1966, pp. 42-45.

<sup>187</sup> Description owed to Sofia Frigerio from Fundación Espigas, Buenos Aires, Argentina found on

<http://icaadocs.mfah.org/icaadocs/THEARCHIVE/FullRecord/tabid/88/doc/770553/language/en-US/Default.aspx> Last accessed 27 July 2016.

dance and conceptual art, marking a net division with the artists participating in the biennial.<sup>188</sup>

Artists had to resort to alternative avenues in order to achieve the same level of provocation as before and artistic trajectories once again changed. In the same way other artists remained loyal to Romero Brest and to the Di Tella, resulting in a division among them. Catherine Spencer, a prolific scholar on the works of Marta Minujín, examined the years right before the dictatorship through the two books published by Masotta titled *Happenings* and *El Pop-Art*, which shared a number of ‘themes, practitioners and works.’ She claimed that these ‘[indicated] the extent to which Pop and performance commingled in Argentina.’<sup>189</sup> As such the following section builds on this ‘commingling,’ looking specifically at how many artists found themselves before a fork in the road: on one side was a path paved with Pop’s interest in the mass media; on the other was a decisive turn towards political activism against the dictatorship. In both cases, it seemed that the tension surrounding objects had begun to dissipate because of the greater interest acquired by what Spencer termed ‘performance’ – a more apt term for Minujín’s work abroad<sup>190</sup> - that has been examined under the light of participation. Departing from an analysis of the political and economic reasons behind the closure of the ITDT, the next section focuses on the alternative avenues pursued by artists after the coup. Dominant historiography has focused on the radicalization of artistic practices, however many artists sought solutions in other aspects of daily life including cinema, theatre and fashion.

### **1.e The Only Way is Out of the Box: Politics or Art for Consumption? 1966-1970**

By the beginning of 1967 the ITDT’s board of directors became weary of the changes in economic policies that had hitherto permitted a stable financing of the

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<sup>188</sup> Ana Longoni, ‘Action Art in Argentina from 1960: The Body (Ex)posed’ in Deborah Cullen and Maris Bustamante, *Arte [no es] vida: actions by artists of the Americas 1960-2000*, (exh. cat., New York: El Museo Del Barrio, 2008), p. 89.

<sup>189</sup> Catherine Spencer, ‘Performing Pop: Marta Minujín and the ‘Argentine Image-Makers’’, *Tate Papers*, no.24, Autumn 2015, p. 7.

<http://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/24/performing-pop-marta-minujin-and-the-argentine-image-makers>

Last accessed 10 July 2016.

<sup>190</sup> In Paris and New York Minujín had participated in several performance art pieces with, for example, Mark Brusse. For detailed accounts of these events see *Ibid*.

institute. Between 1965-1966, the previous president Arturo Illia had promoted new labour policies, which jeopardised the stability of many corporations including the SIAM Corporation, the ITDT's principal funding body, causing it to accumulate significant debt. Furthermore the funding provided by the Ford foundation had been cut back significantly due to the US's war effort in Vietnam.

In response to the growing political tensions, an intensification of subversive activity among artists and the expansion of a local New Left began to define a significant portion of art production in the country. When the military regime was established, the apparent frivolity and provocative flair that enlivened the Pop art environments was no longer admissible for neither the regime nor many artists themselves. Most notably historians such as Ana Longoni, one of the most important academic contributors in the field, identifies a cultural itinerary that led to what she defines as 'the Argentine 1968': a period widely influenced by the intensification of a political climate that pushed several artists to seek alternative languages to subvert a notoriously oppressive regime.<sup>191</sup> In alignment with Longoni, Andrea Giunta explains:

*Within this context of revolutionary emergency, art necessarily had to find itself in a new place and ask itself, once again, what its purpose was and which forms were best for facing the challenges implied by the revolution. At the end of the 1960s and the face of the radicalisation of the revolutionary movements in Latin America, the margin of ambiguity that was permissible at the beginning of the decade began to disappear. Artists, as well as the rest of society, had to define their positions.*

In this context there are two concurrent narratives that conclude Pop's significance within Buenos Aires' art scene. The first dominates existent historiographies, and is a continuation of the itinerary examined so far that led to a politicization of artistic practices, and in many cases to the abandonment of art in favour of political activism. The key terminology used to deconstruct this narrative is 'dematerialization,' and its main proponent was Oscar Masotta. The second trajectory, in contrast, is connected to Jorge Romero Brest's notion of 'Art for Consumption,' or an

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<sup>191</sup> León Ferrari, one of the older and highly respected artists who frequented the Di Tella, claimed during a talk in 1968 (titled *El arte de los significados*, in English *The Art of Meaning*) that the work of art should '[have] the same impact as a terrorist attack in a country in the process of liberation.' Quoted in Benezra, 'Media Art in Argentina,' p. 165.



art intertwined with disciplines adjacent to it, such as design, fashion, theatre and cinema, reflective of the ever-present desire to blur the line dividing art and life. Maria José Herrera, one of the most important scholars on Argentine art from that period, explains:

*If the objective was to join art and life, fashion seems to have been the link for these artists [...] embarked upon an adventure within the prosperous and optimistic atmosphere of the early 60s. Fashion, an indication of day-to-day life, became a metaphor and acted both as a vehicle for and expression of social changes<sup>192</sup>*

A series of works and exhibitions produced between 1965-1966, less accounted for in literature, reveal the roots and consolidation of this intersection. An emblematic example is an exhibition organised at the new Rubbers Gallery on the popular shopping street Florida in 1965, featuring works by the *Compania Sempreviva*. Titled *La Siempre Viva Liquida*, the exhibition was a tribute to the iconic British model Jean Shrimpton, who had recently appeared at the Victoria Derby in Melbourne wearing a miniskirt - hitherto hardly seen in public - causing great scandal in the media. On the occasion each artist exhibited a personalised doll/sculpture of Shrimpton, to celebrate her gesture. In a very conservative Argentina, where the New Left hippies were scarcely seen outside of the Di Tella, the miniskirt caused a sensation that bordered on an outrage. Dalila Puzzovio in an interview, recalled how at the Di Tella people were sometimes even scared of her flamboyant outlook, of her hair, her miniskirts and her heavy makeup. Minujín also stated that when she saw her first miniskirt in Milan, '... light blue with pink flowers, I bought it, and changed my whole way of looking at art. I went Pop.'<sup>193</sup> The iconicity of the miniskirt was conveyed through 'The Shrimp' in *La Siempre Viva Liquida*, and transformed into a vehicle for protest that activated a process of sexual liberation fully embraced by the Di Tella artists.

An artist couple who became immediately associated to the fashion/art binomial is Pablo Mesejean and Delia Cancela. Today their name is most strongly associated to

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<sup>192</sup> Glusberg et. al. *Edgardo Giménez*, p. 256.

<sup>193</sup> Marta Minujín, interview by Elsa Garcia and Hemma Schmutz, Vienna, 12 and 14 September 2000, in Sabine Breitwieser and Luís Camnitzer. *Vivências*, (Vienna: Generali Foundation, 2000), p. 231.

the haute couture of London and Paris where they later lived, yet their formation years took place at the Di Tella. In 1965 they participated in a happening titled *Love and Life* (fig. 19) at the Galería Lirolay, another of the most important platforms for young artists in the city that changed exhibitions every two weeks allowing for a huge possibility of exposure. Upon entering the exhibition the visitors were welcomed by hostesses wearing bright plastic uniforms. The space was filled with exaggerated renditions of popular icons including a portrait of Mae West by Juan Stoppani and another of Bianca Jagger by Nicolas Uriburu. Cancela and Mesejean created a penetrable environment titled *Ticket to Ride*, referencing the Beatles' song. The bright room placed behind yellow curtains was decorated with large naïve paintings that filled the Pop-inspired idyllic space. One of the principal works was again a panel of Jean Shrimpton depicted as an astronaut, happily floating over clouds and flowers.

The invitation to the happening (fig. 19), designed by Cancela and Mesejean, was black, plain and unpretentious – in complete dissonance with the event itself. Their intention was to induce a sense of caution in the viewer, who was invited to celebrate life and love with the underlying awareness of the possibility of death and destruction in the heat of the Cold War and in the wake of the military coup in Argentina. On one hand the floating astronauts invoked progress, modernity and, above all the Space Race between the USSR and the US, the Cold War and the possibility of nuclear annihilation. On the other, icons such as the 'Shrimp' embodied an urgent call for sexual liberation. If landing on the moon represented a 'giant leap for mankind', the miniskirt was 'a giant leap for (woman)kind.' Through the awareness of this underlying unspoken threat, Cancela and Mesejean invite the spectator to rejoice and celebrate. Cancela and Mesejean intimate how a daily choice, such as that of clothing, could resonate within much larger frameworks of global politics and social movements.

In 1966 Lawrence Alloway (then curator at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York) and Otto Hahn, the established North American Pop artist, were invited by Romero Brest to judge the Di Tella yearly awards. Cancela and Mesejean exhibited a triptych depicting celebrity couples (Sony and Cher, Antoine and Karine, Zou-Zou and Benjamin) hovering over crisp baby blue clouds. The paintings were accompanied by the *We Love* manifesto signed by both artists:

Fig. 19

a. Delia Cancel and Pablo Mesejean

*Ticket to Ride*, 1965

Installation views of the exhibition *Love and Life*, Galeria Lirolay, 1965.



b. Detail of painted panel of Jean Shrimpton as astronaut in *Love and Life*, Galeria Lirolay, 1965.



*We love the sunny days, the plants, the Rolling Stones, white stockings, pink, silver, Sony and Cher, Rita and Bob Dylan Tushingam. The skins, the young Saint Laurent and savage look, the songs in fashion, fields, light blue and pink, striped shirts, to take photos, hair, Alice in Wonderland, tanned bodies, colored hats, white faces and happy endings, the sea, dancing, magazines, movies, sable. Ringo and Antoine, clouds, black, bright clothes, baby-girls, girls-the girls, the boys-girls, the girls-boys, the boys-boys.*<sup>194</sup>

Around the same time as the prize, Alfredo Rodriguez Arias, who was working at the CEA, presented a reinterpretation of Bran Stoker's *Dracula* with the collaboration of Cancela, Mesejean, Susana Salgado and Juan Stoppani, at the Di Tella. The production received a positive reception and was reproduced in Caracas, New York, under the invitation of Leo Castelli, and Paris. The most fascinating and innovative aspect of the production was its absurdist and visually 'Pop' approach to a traditionally gothic theme. The collaborating artists sought to enact *Dracula* in reverse, championing the exact opposite of gothic, in their minds Pop. Arias, who was the most tightly connected to the dramatic arts, was known for his 'camp' sculptures, while Delia Cancela and Pablo Mesejean were recognized artists/fashion designers. Susana Salgado had won the 1966 National Prize with an installation of larger than life plastic sunflowers that emanated light. The artists fused art, fashion and theatre in its execution, originating a unique and surprising representation. According to Arias, the point was to 'develop the narrative to the point where it looked like a cartoon.'<sup>195</sup>

One of the itineraries mapped so far thread a narrative concerned with a formal investigation into art's subversive potential (as exemplified by works by Marta Minujín or *Arte de Los Medios*). The other sees artists experimenting across disciplines to include

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<sup>194</sup> Original: 'Nosotros amamos los días de sol, las plantas, los Rolling Stones, las medias blancas, rosas, plateadas, a Sony and Cher, a Rita Tushingam y a Bob Dylan. Las pieles, Saint Laurent y el young savage look, las canciones de moda, el campo, el celeste y el rosa, las camisas a rayas, que nos saquen fotos, los pelos, Alicia en el país de las maravillas, los cuerpos tostados, las gorras color, las caras blancas y los finales felices, el mar, bailar, las revistas, el cine, la cebellina. Ringo y Antoine, las nubes, el negro, las ropas brillantes, las baby-girls, las girls-girls, los boys-girls, las girls-boys, los boys-boys.' reproduced in Rodrigo Alonso, *Imán, Nueva York: arte argentino de los años 60*, (exh. cat., Buenos Aires: Fundación Proa, 2010), n.p.

<sup>195</sup> Original: 'llevar la historia a tal punto que pareciera una historietita. es decir, reduce, sintetice y amplifique una historia popular.' Ibid.





Fig. 21 Eduardo Costa and Juan Risuleio  
*Una Moda Relato*, 1966  
 Four pages reprinted in the Mexican magazine *Caballero*, 1970. Photos  
 by Humberto Rivas and Roberto Alvarado. Model: María Larreta  
 Below two pages of the magazine, and a detail from the following page.

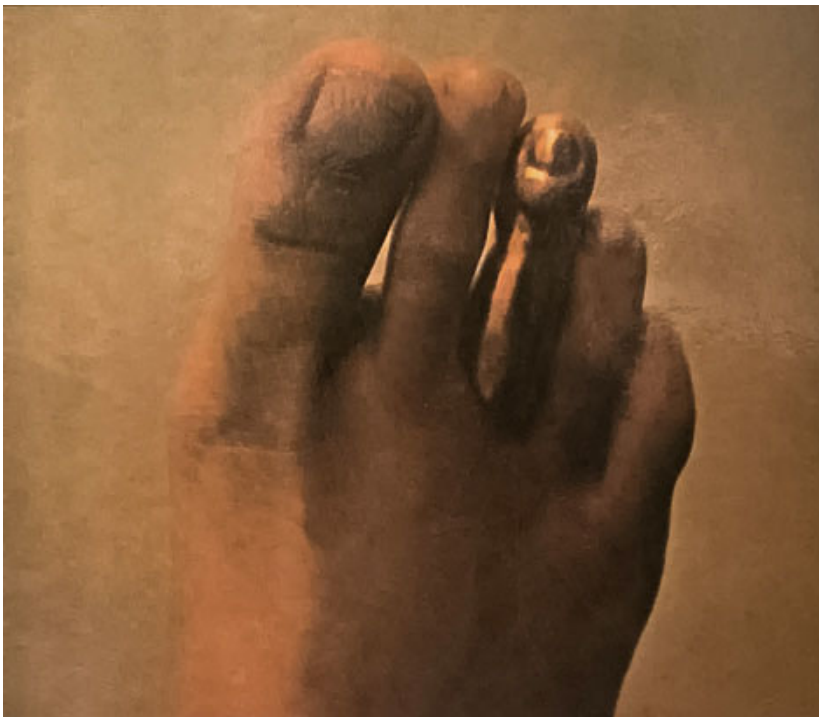


Fig. 22 Eduardo Costa  
*Fashion fiction 1* (Detail), 1968.  
Published in *Vogue*, 1968. Photographs by Richard Avedon. Model:  
Marisa Berenson.





theatre, cinema, industrial design, architecture, fashion with the aim of infiltrating the 'taste' of the city's art consumers. A crucial breaking point that wholly separated these two trajectories, as examined at the end of the previous section, is *Happening para un Jabalí Defunto* (Happening for a dead boar, fig. 20), which for the first time wholly relinquished the art object per se. A further example of this process of redefinition of artistic practices, and a recognised catalyst for successive developments of Argentine art is another work by *Arte de los Medios*. The group had drafted a manifesto in 1966 on *New Artistic Materials*, in which they included the mass media, following McLuhan's indispensable *The Medium is the Message*, published the previous year. Informed by such theories, the group generated a false information circuit with the complicity of newspapers, distributing false advertisements, which included a press release and photographs of venues of where the 'happening' – titled *Happening para un Jabalí Defunto* - was supposed to take place. Generating a commentary on the influence the mass media have on our perception of reality, the group observed how the non-existent happening was fed back into the media, as advertisements and expectation proliferated. The work culminated with the press' recognition of the trickery, which occurred 3-4 months after the first advertisement was published.

Alongside these iterations many artists continued to pursue the 'blurring of art and life' within the realms of domesticity and daily life, often expressed through fashion. Eduardo Costa, member of *Arte de los Medios*, with Juan Risuleo, did not abandon art making created an original visual language by subverting mass media circuits. Taking inspiration from Roland Barthes' *The Fashion System*, Costa and Risuelo created *Una Moda (Relato)* (A fashion [tale] fig. 21). The work consisted in publishing a fictitious fashion article that thoroughly forged the tone and style used in fashion magazines. The items worn by the models on were 'anatomical jewellery' designed by Eduardo Costa, which were unavailable on the market. Of the piece Costa explains:

*We were dealing with a new field for the creation of artworks: fashion texts and photography. The new materiality we encountered was on one hand the same of that of the mass media. On the other, the fact that we did not insert our work in a general magazine but in a fashion magazine, which has a highly formalised linguistic system, and, in a way, is a normative institution of dress, creates a*



*distinction in the materiality of this kind of artwork. The materiality of the fashion magazine is made up of norms.*<sup>196</sup>

One year later, Costa travelled to New York and brought his anatomic jewellery with him. In 1968 they were published in the American Vogue, the fashion magazine par excellence, photographed by Richard Avedon under the name *Fashion Fictions* (fig. 22). Costa's objective was to 'defy fashion' 'to sneak into her and make her think about their fees and Possibilities.'<sup>197</sup>

Roland Barthes' theories expressed in *The Fashion System* (begun in the mid-1960s) further illuminate the value of Costa's anatomic jewellery. In this early study, Barthes observes how fashion magazines occupy a unique position among cultural products, as images are always accompanied by text. Barthes sees a distinction between the images in fashion magazines, or 'image-clothing', which is part of a structure of images and icons, and 'real clothing', which is identified through the details of its physical manufacture. The text, he explains, imposes a code on the 'image-clothing', by forcing portions of the image to become isolated, for example by focusing the gaze on an accessory only (which may be belts, earrings, shoes). Barthes calls these narrow points of concentration 'amputations.' Costa's anatomic jewellery exaggerates the notion of the 'amputation,' in the fashion image. His images impose an overt caesura that plays on the notion of the 'amputation', which in a fashion magazine is represented by a prosthetic golden ear. Costa criticises the abstract notion of fashion and the system does not produce clothing, or women, or art, but blindly feeds into it.

In alignment with the developments in the local art scene, Jorge Romero Brest, altered the Di Tella Institute's modus operandi by replacing the yearly National Award, which offered a cash reward, with *Experiencias Visuales* (visual experiences). For this pioneering event, Romero Brest invited only twelve artists to present twelve 'situations.'

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<sup>196</sup> Original: 'Se trata de un nuevo campo para la creación de obras de arte: el de los textos y fotografías de moda. Esta nueva materialidad es por un lado la misma de los medios de comunicación masiva, pero el hecho de no insertar la obra en un material impreso que incluyera informaciones de toda índole, sino en revistas de moda, que poseen un sistema lingüístico altamente formalizado por un lado, y que es una especie de institución normativa del vestido, crea una distinción en la materialidad de este tipo de obras. La materialidad de las revistas de moda es normativa.' Undated document, Roberto Jacoby's archive, quoted in Herrera, *Pop!* p. 40.

<sup>197</sup> Herrera, *Pop!* p. 41.

Edgardo Giménez exhibited *Ocho Estrellas Negras* (eight black stars, fig. 28), a sequence of eight black wooden five pointed stars with a diameter of almost two meters that were placed across the exhibition space. A play on seriality with the symbol of the star, which had been present since his early works, Giménez's piece suggested a subtle critique of the right wing regime with the image of the star, the logo of the Cuban Revolution, painted black. The black star was widely present also in Cuban magazines and posters that were circulating at the time, most notably by Raúl Martínez and Sandu Darie. The ultimate validation of Giménez's work arrived when the following year the black star motif was replicated onto mass-produced bed sheets by Amat company on 30,000 meters of cloth. This work reveals how, in parallel to raising political awareness, there was a desire to infiltrate domestic or private realms with art through fashion and design for consumption. Another work on display was Dalila Puzzovio's iconic *Dalila Doble Plataforma* shoes (fig. 27), twenty-five platforms displayed in a grid-like vitrine that referenced and parodied the modernist grid. With the objective of infiltrating commercial circuits, Dalila exhibited the shoes at *Grimoldi's* Shoe store, located in a less-than-popular neighbourhood of town, where they could be purchased. Puzzovio sought to 'bring out' the jurors and spectators of the prize from their comfort zone, while simultaneously demystifying the Di Tella as an exclusive exhibition space.

Between *Fashion Fictions*, *Happening para un Jabalí Defunto* and other works discussed so far emerges a tension between what can be decoded through the notions of 'dematerialization of art', in the latter case, and 'consumption of art' in the former. An article that illuminates this dichotomy was written by Oscar Masotta in late 1967, titled *After Pop We Dematerialize* (only published in 1969). The text did not, as might be assumed by a North American or European reader, trace parallels or confirm the canonical text by Lucy Lippard and John Chandler *The Dematerialization of Art* (written in 1967 and published in *Art International*, February 1968). Chandler and Lippard (who further developed this notion in her 1973 book *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972...*) attempted to formulate a criterion to group conceptual art practices through the notion of dematerialization, or the 'de-emphasis' on sculptural, pictorial or object-based works. Masotta, on the other hand, sought to examine how a process of disappearance of art's materiality could take place through the notion of

consumption. Before recording the principal works produced between 1966-1967, Masotta's text opens with the following quotes:

*'He devoured her with his eyes.'* This phrase and so many others of a similar ilk represent reasonably well the illusion common to realism and idealism, according to which to know is to eat.

J.P. Sartre, *Intentionality: A fundamental idea of Husserl's Phenomenology*, 1939<sup>198</sup>

*Today, consumers are the world, the masses. The idea which actually moves the masses is called materialism: nonetheless, dematerialization is the most typical characteristic of the era. Think of correspondence, for example; it grows, the number of letters grows, the amount of paper written on increases, thus the amount of material consumed expands, until the arrival of the telephone brings relief. Then the same phenomenon repeats itself. The result: the network, the supplies grow until they are relieved by the radio. Briefly: material contracts while the process of dematerialization increases steadily. Soporific masses of material are replaced by liberated energy.*

El Lissitzky, *The Future of the Book*, 1926-1927

Sartre's sentence introduces an argument in which Husserl's notion of consciousness as nothing other than consciousness is supported. Sartre counters the statement that 'to know is to eat' by claiming that assimilation, or unity, and consciousness are incompatible entities. The moment knowledge is assimilated and united with consciousness, it ceases to exist, for 'consciousness has no insides.' El Lissitzky further explains that only when a medium has not been fully 'assimilated' it can survive, as once a medium is fully absorbed it is rendered redundant and replaced by technological innovation – a reflection of dematerialization. From these considerations it emerges how dematerialization and consumption become two faces of the same coin. One cannot exist without the other.

In 1968, the intensification of political repression led scholars to examine principally the works that explicitly addressed politics, most notably *Experiencias Visuales '68*, and the event *Tucumán Arde* (Tucumán is Burning).

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<sup>198</sup> Full text available at [http://www.mccoyspace.com/nyu/12\\_s/anarchy/texts/03-Jean-Paul\\_Sartre-Intentionality.pdf](http://www.mccoyspace.com/nyu/12_s/anarchy/texts/03-Jean-Paul_Sartre-Intentionality.pdf)

Despite Romero Brest's caution, *Experiencias Visuales '68*, provoked an outstanding reaction. The exhibition was censored and closed down by the police only a few days after the opening. A crucial work on display was a letter by Pablo Suárez addressed to Romero Brest, which expressed his refusal to participate to the prize, claiming 'these four walls hold the secret to transforming everything inside into art, and art is not dangerous enough.'<sup>199</sup> The work that caused most concern was the work by Roberto Plate, *Sin Título* (fig. 23), which consisted of an empty bathroom stall that the viewer could enter. The work encouraged the public to write their opinions, feelings, and insults on the stall walls, which turned into a vessel for protest. Anonymous graffiti spoke out against the regime. Due to legal charges, the police censored solely that work by placing a policeman in front of it and sealing the entrance to the cubicle with official seals – censure thus became part of the work itself. Romero Brest was forced to eliminate the work from the exhibition, which led all other artists to withdraw their works in protest. Not long after all the exhibiting artists retired their works from the show and destroyed them in a bonfire on the street.

Concurrently, *Tucumán Arde* (fig. 24) was an exposition of political protest that is now considered one of the foremost examples of political activism in art.<sup>200</sup> The event, which took place in November 1968, was the result of an investigation by several Rosario based artists including Graciela Carnevale, Mimí Escandell and Norberto Puzzolo, who sought to denounce the precarious living conditions of workers in the region of Tucumán, who were facing famines and unemployment due to the closure of sugar cane factories by the government--falsely publicised as part of the great industrial developments in the region. Employing the strategies already tested by the Buenos Aires artists, *Tucumán Arde* was first publicised as the first Biennial of Avant-garde Art. Simultaneously, the city was covered by the slogan *Tucumán Arde*, and only at the opening of the show, was the trickery revealed<sup>201</sup>. The exhibition displayed photographic

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<sup>199</sup> Pablo Suárez, 'Letter Addressed to Jorge Romero Brest refusing participation at the 1968 Experiencias Visuales at the ITDT,' quoted in Anna Longoni, 'Action Art in Argentina from 1960: The Body (Ex)posed,' in Deborah Cullen and Maris Bustamante (eds.), *Arte [no es] vida: actions by artists of the Americas 1960-2000*. (exh. cat., New York: El Museo Del Barrio, 2008), p. 90.

<sup>200</sup> Longoni and Mestman. *Del Di Tella a 'Tucumán Arde.'*

<sup>201</sup> Longoni and Mestman describe Tucumán Arde as the 'unmistakeable offspring of media art' in Ana Longoni and Mariano Mestman, 'After Pop We Dematerialize: Oscar

Fig. 23 Roberto Plate  
*Untitled*, 1968  
 Photograph of policemen ceasing the bathroom stalls that comprised the work on display at the *Experiencias Visuales '68*, ITDT, May 1968.



Fig. 24 El Grupo de Artistas de Vanguardia de Rosario  
*Tucumán Arde*, 1968  
 Most surviving images relative to the event are held in the Archive of Graciela Carnevale, Rosario, Argentina.

- a. Stencil first disseminated in the city of Rosario in 1968.



- b. Fictitious posters advertising the 1st Avant-Garde Biennial in Rosario, 1968.



- c. Photograph of the exhibition's opening event, 3 November 1968.



and video documentation of the dire conditions in Tucumán, thus revealing the government's mendacity. The exhibition was closed only five days from the opening, but thousands attended. With the collaboration of Roberto Jacoby and others, *Tucumán Arde* was also re-opened in Santa Fe and Buenos Aires, where it was shut a second and third time by the authorities.

Works associated with ideology and politics such as *Experiencias Visuales '68*, and *Tucumán Arde* have been contextualised within the trajectory of 'argentine conceptualism.' Yet, texts such as *After Pop We Dematerialize* confirm that the notion of consumption was central to local dialectics, especially to the artists close to the Di Tella Institute and its high priest, Jorge Romero Brest. Around the same time when Masotta wrote *After Pop We Dematerialize*, Romero Brest began working on a theory based on the notion of an *Art for Consumption*. In July 1968, at the Hall of Friends of Rosario, Romero Brest presented this paper in a lecture. *Art for Consumption* defended the value of uniting art and consumption, both understood as processes of emotional and physical absorption aimed at the destroying the boundaries between art and being. As Sartre claimed, the moment knowledge is assimilated and united with consciousness it ceases to exist. It therefore follows that the moment art, a form of knowledge and 'taste', is assimilated or consumed it ceases to exist. Art for Consumption challenged traditional notions of art as permanent, transcendental and contemplative, whilst remaining outside of political activism, as exemplified in *Tucumán Arde*. Romero sought to be political in this way, avoiding explicit critique, which ultimately jeopardised the Di Tella Institute's existence as well as the safety and wellbeing of many of its artists.

Romero Brest's intentions were arguably misunderstood and contested. During the lecture, ten artists (many of whom who were involved in *Tucumán Arde*) staged an assault. Defined as a 'simulacrum of an attack,' and a 'collective work,' the event was meticulously staged and enacted: each member had a role, confining Romero Brest to the back of the room, shouting political slogans, switching the lights off and on, opening and closing the doors repeatedly, all whilst a member recited a fiery declaration that vindicated Che's life as the greatest work of art in existence. The assault to the lecture marked a schism in the Argentine art scene, that divided overtly political art and art that was invested in alternative modes of consumption.

The artists' intervention protested against Romero Brest's theory of Art for Consumption, marking the first moment in over two decades when his objectives were not aligned with those of the avant-garde. The Di Tella progressively lost influence. By 1968 most of its funding was withdrawn to avoid clashes with the regime and many artists distanced themselves from Romero Brest to embrace more politically active work.

In an attempt to salvage the CAV, Romero Brest proposed to remodel the institute into a Centre for Theoretical Research, inspired by Rauschenberg's E.A.T (Experimental Centre for Art and Technology founded in 1966), with the addition of theorists to the team of technicians and artists. The centre would promote 'instead of an integration of the arts, an integration of theory and practice,' Romero Brest's attempt to draw artists towards theory.<sup>202</sup> In an interview with the magazine *Analysis* in 1969, Romero Brest discussed his proposals and explained that a centre for theoretical research would not involve the public:

*The public will not participate. I do not think we can aspire to 'take art to the people.' Contemplation is a minority exercise. To appreciate a work of art you have to study, travel, compare. In other words, you have to work. To do so, you need an essential ingredient: leisure.*<sup>203</sup>

In a report titled *Report on the Potential Activities to be Undertaken in the Future of the Visual Arts Centre, Torcuato Di Tella Institute, 15<sup>th</sup> January 1969*, Romero Brest examines the decline in credibility of the Di Tella. He attributes this decline to structural faults of the institution, including the inefficiency in communicating ideas to the public. At the time the principal means through which the Di Tella communicated ideas and plans was through lectures, which in Romero Brest's opinion, had become an obsolete and ineffective method. Furthermore Brest lamented a rejection of moral standards and a 'frenzied search for freedom' that was taking their place. He thus concluded:

*I believe that there is not much point in continuing to organize exhibitions at the Visual Arts Centre (CAV), because, although we might come across works of*

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<sup>202</sup> Romero Brest, *Analysis of the situation of the Centro de Artes Visuales (ITDT)*, 16 March 1970, unpublished report, available on CD Rom with Romero Brest, Giménez, and Arias, *Jorge Romero Brest*.

<sup>203</sup> *El Mandarin Revolucionario*, *Analysis*, no. 420, Buenos Aires, 1-7 April 1969, reproduced in Katzenstein. *Listen, here, now!*, p. 146.



*value, this will always be relative, and increasingly so. For not only are the works of little interest to the public, even to those people who used to find them interesting, but the contemplators actually want to participate themselves, both the young and, I have noticed, the not-so-young. But, as kinetic specialists have already established, this form of participation cannot be sustained precisely because it is so trivial.*<sup>204</sup>

Romero Brest's considerations were the product of a wider state of disillusionment in art also immortalised in the cover of *Primera Plana* n. 333, which proclaimed 'Argentina: la muerte de la pintura' (Argentina: the death of painting) showing a funeral wreath with the inscription 'to painting and its friends.'<sup>205</sup> According to Romero Brest in a text titled (New modalities in art),

*Few people go to museums and galleries, they are instead glued to TV sets and watch movies at the cinema. [...] Painting cannot compete with [the mass media], because paintings are seen as distant: the painting is over there, I am here [...] But if I listen to pop music I feel fulfilled and this dissociation vanishes, the same happens when coloured pictures appear on consumer goods.*<sup>206</sup>

In light of these considerations, Romero Brest proposed to accompany the Centre for Technological Innovation with a magazine that would document the centre's advances and even a company - the Arte Para Consumir S.A. (The art for consumption company) - that would disseminate consumable art objects including clothes, ornaments, posters, slides, films, records, and articles of mass production. Romero Brest argued that 'this would be a legitimate way of contributing to the shaping of popular tastes, as the less well-off classes could have access to these products if sold in supermarkets or other similar shops instead of art galleries.' Furthermore he advocated for the 'acquisition of permanent airspace on radio and TV, as it is the only effective cultural action possible in this day and age.'<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

<sup>205</sup> *Primera Plana*, n. 333, May 1969. Reproduced in Sebastián Carassai, 'The Formation of a Post-Peronist Generation: Intellectuals and Politics in Argentina through the Lens of Contorno (1953–1959),' *The Americas*, Vol. 67, n. 2, October 2010, pp. 219–251.

<sup>206</sup> Jorge Romero Brest, 'Nuevas Modalidades de Arte,' cited in Glusberg et. al. *Edgardo Giménez*, p. 266.

<sup>207</sup> Jorge Romero Brest, 'Documents from the Closure of the Di Tella. Report on the potential activities to be undertaken in the future by the Visual Arts Centre, Torcuato Di

The Centre for Theoretical Research was never created. And the ITDT was completely closed by 1970, mostly due to lack of funding. The Di Tella Industries had greatly suffered from the coup, which forced it to come to terms with its public debt, 90% of the company's total assets. Romero Brest also understood the impossibility to continue the Di Tella's activities during a period of such political tension. He realised that young artists were growing more and more politicised and that it would have been impossible to avoid a politicization of the institute's activities.<sup>208</sup> In 1972 Romero Brest wrote, remembering 1964:

*How I wish you could have sustained optimism eight years later! Then I could foresee the militant shift towards politics of the youngest, almost always the most talented artists, or how that shift would determine the artist planet just short of the void.*<sup>209</sup>

Nevertheless, Romero Brest continued in his pursuit of a Consumable Art - at a distance from the political heat. In 1970, with the collaboration of Giménez, Romero Brest opened the boutique *Fuera de Caja* (Outside of the box), where fine art objects and bric-a-brac by many of the artists that had been involved at the Di Tella were sold (fig. 25).<sup>210</sup> With *Fuera de Caja* Romero Brest's new goal was to shape popular taste through consumable art. Though Andrea Giunta hastily defined it a 'reheated version of the Bauhaus' ideal design, emptied of its forms and principles,<sup>211</sup> Giménez called it an 'art centre for consumption,'<sup>212</sup> where objects 'stood out against the traditional design

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Tella Institute 15th January, 1969, p. 96 of *Romero Brest's Unpublished Papers*, document in the CD included in Giménez et. al., *Jorge Romero Brest*.

<sup>208</sup> Romero Brest explained: 'I have understood the risks involved and the difficulty of putting it into practice. The risks refer to the fact that this kind of promotion would mean accepting the capitalist system—the establishment—committing the ITDT to political action with negative implications, without necessarily permitting it to define itself in political terms.' Ibid, p. 100.

<sup>209</sup>Andrea Giunta, 'Rewriting Modernism: Jorge Romero Brest and the Legitimation of Argentine Art,' in Katzenstein. *Listen, here, now!*, p. 87.

<sup>210</sup> Delia Cancela, Pablo Mesejean, Edgardo Giménez, Eduardo Costa, Dalila Puzzovio were among the artists that sold objects and curious furniture at the shop.

<sup>211</sup> Giunta, *Rewriting Modernism*, p. 89.

<sup>212</sup> Giménez cited in Glusberg et. al. *Edgardo Giménez*, p. 24.

Fig. 25 Edgardo Gimenez  
Poster for the boutique *Furea de Caja*, Florida Street, Buenos Aires,  
1970-1973.



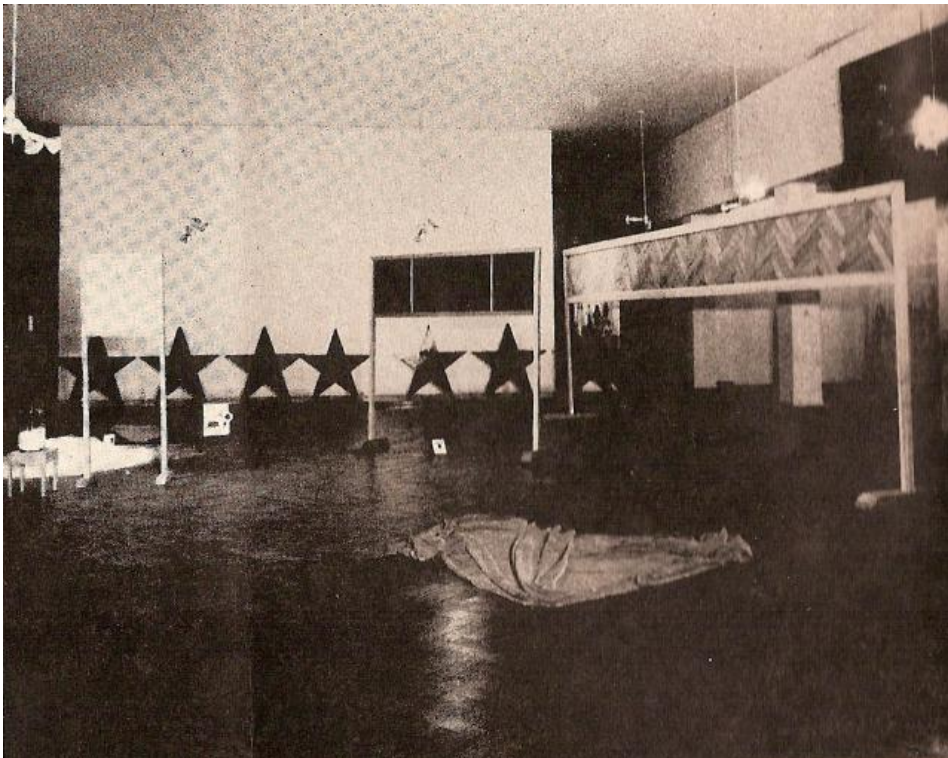
Fig. 26 Héctor Olivera  
*Psexoanálisis*, 1967  
Film still showing actress Libertad Leblanc.  
Set design by Edgardo Gimenez.



Fig. 27 Dalila Puzzovio  
*Dalila Doble Plataforma*, 1967  
25 pairs of acrylic and leather shoes and lighting  
100 x 100 x 30 cm  
Installation view at the II Di Tella International Prize, May 1967.



Fig. 28 Edgardo Giménez  
*8 estrellas negras*, 1967  
Installation view at the exhibition *Experiencias Visuales '67*, ITDT, May 1967.



principles of productiveness and usefulness.<sup>213</sup> Romero Brest thought of it as a place where everyday life was not ruled by psychological and social stereotypes, and where any object could be turned into art – in absolute keeping with some of the core postulates of Pop internationally.

*Fuera de Caja* was not isolated, but rather symptomatic of a phenomenon that counterbalanced the politicization of art practices after the Di Tella. One of the beacons of ‘transgressive chic’ in 1968 was architect Osvaldo Giesso’s *La Flor de San Telmo*, a store that sold music, posters, clothing and objects for the home, many of which were produced by artists.<sup>214</sup> Giesso described the store as an alternative exhibition space, designed to make art accessible to the public, comparable to London’s Carnaby Street.

Another important phenomenon, which is mostly ignored through literature – if not within Giménez’s self-published catalogues – is the appearance of Pop films, characterised by over the top flamboyant set designs, costumes and storylines. One of the most striking examples is the film *Psexoanalysis* (1967), the first film directed by Héctor Oliveira, which parodied therapy group sessions, in vogue among the Argentinean elite. With set designs by Giménez and Costumes by Puzzovio (fig. 26), the film portrayed in a hilariously hyperbolic manner the fantasies of each member of the analysis group, which as the film progresses become intertwined with one another. One of the most striking scenes shows a middle aged woman (Libertad Leblanc) in carnival attire, with plumes on her head and a rhinestone bikini, and gliding down a monumental staircase with a chimpanzee: her new husband. Oliveira’s film was poignant in the Argentine context, as psychoanalysis was becoming integral to the day to day. Manuel Vazquez Montalbán – a famous humourist and writer – included it among the great Argentine clichés together with tango and the disappeared. Considering the connection between the diffusion of psychoanalysis and Oscar Masotta, who had played an instrumental role in the dissemination of Lacanian theories in the country and all over the Southern Cone (he founded the Escuela Freudiana de Buenos Aires modelled after

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<sup>213</sup> Ibid. p. 266.

<sup>214</sup> Cancela, Mesejean designed jersey dresses, Margarita Paksa produced ‘special objects’ including relaxing eggs and Eduardo Costa sold his anatomic jewellery. There had been other short-lived boutiques including *La Mordedura Tierna*, *Dedé*, *La Oveja Boba*.



Lacan's own *École Freudienne de Paris* in 1974), the use of Pop as the aesthetic of the film seems more than appropriate.<sup>215</sup>

Though *Fuera de Caja* or *Psexoanalysis* appeared at the end of the ITDT, they point towards the start of a new chapter in Argentine art. Current historiography places *Tucumán Arde* as the culmination of a process of radicalisation in art practices that stemmed from the Di Tella.<sup>216</sup> However most artists (Roberto Jacoby, Graciela Carnevale, Norberto Puzzolo among others) withdrew from art making after this event for years, proving to be a cultural cul-de-sac. The alternative projects that Jorge Romero Brest envisioned after 1968, on the contrary, provided a continuative path for the Di Tella artists, especially through his notion of 'Art for Consumption.' Certainly, the international gaze moved away from Argentina, as major players such as Minujín transferred to New York, and institutional support changed,<sup>217</sup> no longer providing the spotlight for the artists once close to the ITDT. Nevertheless, further research into how multidisciplinary practices developed can reveal the multiple futures that the Pop

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<sup>215</sup> According to Philip Derbyshire, who studied the history of psychoanalysis in Argentina, argues that Masotta 'was emblematic of the sorts of response that a whole generation of Argentine intellectuals made to the extended crisis of hegemony.' Philip Derbyshire, 'Who was Oscar Masotta? Psychoanalysis in Argentina', *Radical Philosophy*, vol.158, November–December 2009.

An additional text that offers some outstandingly interesting insights on Oscar Masotta's responsibility in disseminating Lacanian theories is Geof Schullenberger's paper 'Oscar Masotta and the Decentering of Psychoanalysis,' in which he argues that Masotta's often criticised reading of Lacan – fractured and at times contradictory – reflected the dilemma of 'reading from the periphery,' understood as something by definition decentred. Schullenberger also cleverly traces the influence of Jorge Luís Borges in Lacan's maturation, claiming that Lacan's arrival to Argentina via Masotta, was in fact the completion of a full blown global cycle.

<sup>216</sup> These scholars include Longoni, Giunta, Mestman, and Luís Camnitzer.

<sup>217</sup> In 1969, as the Di Tella was shutting down, a new privately funded center for art begun its activities. Funded by entrepreneur Jorge Glusberg (who had made a fortune with the lighting company Modulor that thrived on government contracts), the Centro de Arte y Comunicación (CAyC) became a vital center for conceptual art in Buenos Aires, to some extent continuing the work started by Romero Brest – though the two figures were known to be somewhat antagonists in the local scene. Though CayC promoted numerous exhibition of Latin American Art locally and internationally, not many of the Di Tella artists participated in its activities (only Roberto Jacoby, Marta Minujín, and David Lamelas appear in CAyC's numerous publications). Glusberg, in fact, largely promoted the *Grupo de los trece* (group of thirteen), later known as the CAyC group, which included Glusberg himself.

Fig. 29

- a. Narcisa Hirsch with Marie Louise Alemann and Walther Mejía  
*La Marabunta*, 1967.  
Happening and performance filmed by Raymundo Gleyzer, Teatro  
Coliseo, Buenos Aires, 31 October 1967.



- b. Narcisa Hirsch with the skeleton prop used before the staging of *La Marabunta*, 1967.



experience unlocked in the Argentine milieu – psychoanalysis being only the tip of the iceberg.

A work that provides a conclusive commentary on the synthesis between art, consumption and dematerialization is *La Marabunta* (fig. 29), a performance by Narcisa Hirsch in collaboration with Marie Louise Alemann and Walther Mejía filmed by director Raymundo Gleyzer, that took place on 31 October 1967 at the popular Teatro Coliseo in Buenos Aires – not coincidentally on Halloween night.

*La Marabunta* shows the three artists building a 3m long articulated plaster skeleton in Hirsch's studio. As they bring the work to completion they gradually use fruit, sandwiches, olives and live chickens and pigeons caged in its thoracic cage, as the skeleton's flesh, gradually 'bringing it to life.' Placed on a long table covered by a chequered tablecloth, the now corpulent body is offered to an audience gathered at the middle-class hotspot, the Coliseo theatre in Buenos Aires, almost as a sacrificial victim. Instantly, the work attracts everybody's attention as they start feasting on the carcass' flesh and interior of livestock. The audience, recognisably from the upper middle classes, is filmed filling their pockets, purses and carrier bags, slowly devouring the body, until nothing but the original skeleton, now dismembered, mortified, is left on the scene. The frantic consumption of the audience, compared to predatory ants, more and more voracious throughout the sequence, is simultaneously comical and disturbing, bringing forward a pronounced satire of bourgeois decadence.

Narcisa Hirsch had begun working with experimental film and performance after viewing the films by Jonas Mekas, the New York based Lithuanian artist close to the Fluxus movement, at the Instituto Di Tella in 1965. Hirsch was tightly embedded within the milieu and was close friends with Edgardo Giménez who also painted her portrait, which appeared in several of her successive films. *La Marabunta* employs the strategies belonging to conceptual experimental film, yet clearly interlinks to her very contemporaneous concern for art and consumption. It is through the works of artists like Narcisa, who were able to synthesise the uppermost concerns of her time, that we see how only the intersections of art, politics and fashion provided the stimulus for the continuation of Argentine art.



## Chapter 2: Brazil

Differently from Argentina, Pop art tendencies in Brazil were not quickly defined as such in their contemporary context. Although critics occasionally referenced the style in the commentary of works in the mid-sixties, the terminology that prevailed among them (until the 1967 'Pop' São Paulo Biennial, remembered as such for the extensive display of New York Pop artists' works) was New Figuration/*Nouvelle Figuration* or New Realism. Among the artists included in these groupings were Geraldo de Barros, Wesley Duke Lee, Nelson Leirner, Antônio Dias, Claudio Tozzi, Carlos Vergara, Wanda Pimentel, Anna Maria Maiolino, and Rubens Gerchman, to name a few. What distinguished them within the Brazilian cultural milieu was their re-appropriation of a figurative lexicon: a decisive break from Geometric Abstraction, which had oriented the avant-garde since the fifties. In Rio de Janeiro Geometric Abstraction was promoted by critics and adopted by artists such as Ivan Serpa,<sup>218</sup> Abraham Palatnik, Hélio Oiticica and Lygia Clark, while Waldemar Cordeiro, Concrete poets Augusto and Haroldo de Campos and Décio Pignatari emerged as key figures in São Paulo. *Nova Figuração*, on

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<sup>218</sup> Ivan Serpa was a key figure in fostering a young avant-garde carioca. Beginning as a printmaker, his works adopted a graphic aesthetic, which incisively inspired the work of many of his students at the beginning of the sixties. Later in the decade, he also reverted to an expressionistic figurative mode, noted for its dark and visceral subject matter, which sought to reflect the violence perpetrated by the military regime.

the other hand, emerged in both cities within a younger generation in the early sixties. Sensitised by an acute change in official policies after the military coup of 1964, which legitimised and consolidated a reliance on foreign investment and in the explosion of imported products within urban centres, the artists sought to reflect critically on everyday life through the adoption of a widely intelligible aesthetic to those outside of the art world.<sup>219</sup>

Across Brazil, and in São Paulo especially, there was a lack of exhibition platforms for young artists besides yearly Salons supported by private enterprises or regional authorities. This is why it was a primary concern for artists to engage the viewer in a productive dialogue with the work of art. Though in Rio de Janeiro the scarcity of exhibition spaces was also an issue, the presence of enlightened gallerists such as Jean Boghici or the Galeria Petite and the independent studios organised by the Museum of Modern Art, facilitated contact between institutions and young practitioners.

The first neo-figurative group of artists was established in 1965 when Dias, Pedro Escosteguy, Carlos Vergara, Gerchman and Roberto Magalhães formed the *Grupo Neo-Realista*. Maintaining an open format, the group sought to institute new forms of communication with the public, imbuing the work of art with social significance. Inspired by the influence exerted by tendencies such as *Cinema Novo*,<sup>220</sup> the group aimed to trigger change and social awareness within the art world. The group's first exhibition took place at the Galeria G-4, owned by Boghici at the time, in April 1966, titled *PARE*. Mário Schenberg wrote that the quintet was 'probably the most expressive

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<sup>219</sup> Artists in this period sought more direct and faster communication, which came with a sacrifice of quality. The audience to which this new art was directed was not engaged successfully. See Paulo Roberto De Oliveira Reis, *Exposicoes de Arte: Vanguardia e politica entre os anos 1965-1970*, (PhD Thesis, Curitiba: Universita Federal de Parana, 2005), and Ferreira Gullar, A. M. Carlos and Heloisa B. Hollanda, *Patrulhas ideologicas*, (São Paulo: ed. Brasiliense, 1980), p. 62.

<sup>220</sup> Cinema Novo (New Cinema) was a vital cultural phenomenon in the early sixties in Brazil. Led by figures including Glauber Rocha, and Nelson Pereira dos Santos, it focused on themes such as social inequality in Brazil and South America, life in the favelas, and political repression, manifesting particular alignments with French New Wave cinema and Italian Neorealism. In Brazil Cinema Novo had unexpected influence and success, succeeding in inciting greater reflection from both the authorities and the public on the poorer strata of society.

group within the current Brazilian art movement.<sup>221</sup> In 1967 many artists joined the Neo-Realists to sign the *Declaração de Princípios Básicos da Vanguarda* (Declaration of the Basic Principles of the Avant-Garde).<sup>222</sup>

The Neo-Realist declaration can be viewed as one of the outcomes of an artistic path that sought to unify art with social purpose. Between 1964 and 1968, the period of greater intensity of production for this group of artists, overlaps with what has been historicised as the Pop moment in Brazil, and Neo Realism was often exchanged for Pop (pertinent scholarship is examined in the coming paragraphs). The dates that bracket such production respectively relate to the military coup and the extra-constitutional Institutional Act N. 5, which marked the intensification of state repression by legitimising censorship, federal intervention and abolishing *Habeas Corpus*. These years generally appear as the transition between the widely celebrated Concrete and Neo-Concrete moments in São Paulo and Rio (though the movements dissipated already by 1961, their legacy remained vivid), and the more conceptual art practices that emerged in the 1970s - epitomised by the practice of well-known artists such as Cildo Meireles. This period *in between*, during which artists sought to align their subject matter with popular themes, encloses this investigation. The label of Pop provides a lens through which, from an Anglo-American standpoint – by no means an imposed category, but a mere departure point - we may develop the contemporary significance of this phenomenon.

Among the contemporary academic voices that have recognised Pop as a significant theme in Brazilian art, are Cacilda Teixeira da Costa, Paulo Sergio Duarte, Sônia Salzstein, Paulo Herkenhoff and Paulo Augusto Ribeiro. Teixeira curated a key exhibition that triggered a reflection on the role of Pop is *Approximations of the Pop Spirit, 1963-1968* at the Museum of Modern Art in Rio de Janeiro in 2004. She based her analysis on the understanding that Pop was never defined as a singular movement, because it pulled together broad ranging figurative styles including *Nouvelle Figuration*, *Nouveau Realisme*, Neo-Dada and *Otra Figuración*. She adopted the notion of a 'Pop

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<sup>221</sup> Mário Schenberg, "A exposição do grupo Neo-Realista," in: Mário Schenberg, *Pensando a arte*, (São Paulo: Nova Stella, 1988).

<sup>222</sup> "Declaração de princípios básicos da vanguarda," in Hélio Oiticica et. al., *Nova Objetividade Brasileira*, (exh. cat., Rio de Janeiro: Museum of Modern Art, 1967).

spirit' to play on this plurality of movements. Her conception of Pop in Brazil is largely informed by Oswald de Andrade's notion of *antropofagia*, according to which Brazilian identity is the product of the ingestion and re-elaboration of foreign influences (this was a persistent theme for many artists). Teixeira referred to New York as Pop's seedbed implying a delayed temporality in its 'sprouting' within alternative contexts.<sup>223</sup>

The catalogue focuses on specific events from the late 1950s to the late 1960s with particular attention to the work of Waldemar Cordeiro, Antônio Dias, Wesley Duke Lee and Nelson Leirner. It departs from an analysis of how the Neo-Concrete Movement 'established the relationship between art and life and the viewer's bodily interaction with the artwork, as priorities.'<sup>224</sup> It then traces the development of a 'Pop Spirit' through the notions of participation and corporeality - original components that highlight the movement's separation from its foreign counterparts. Paulo Augusto Ribeiro, who contributed an extensive chronology, traced the polarised relationship between abstract and figurative tendencies from the inauguration of the Museums of Modern art in Rio and São Paulo, respectively in 1949 and 1948. Specifically, the first exhibition held at the Museum of Modern Art in São Paulo *Do Figuracionismo ao Abstracionismo* (From Figuration to Abstraction) encapsulates this debate.

Paulo Sergio Duarte, in his book *The 60s Brazilian Avant-garde*, looked at the dialogue between Brazilian and foreign art practices, including Arte Povera and Pop, in the 1960s. Duarte explicitly addressed the narrow fragment of Brazilian culture that was impacted by radio, television, mass consumption, urbanization: a phenomenon he termed as 'the urban imperative.'<sup>225</sup> His analysis of this context pivots on the works of a handful of male artists (with a few exceptions), and aims to discredit all claims of derivation. In order to clarify distinctions, he constructs an imaginary museum where the history of XX century art within the Western canon and in Brazil is placed in dialogue. A core separation is marked between Brazilian Pop, New Figuration (in its international

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<sup>223</sup> Cacilda Teixeira da Costa (ed.), *Aproximações Do Espírito Pop, 1963-1968*, (São Paulo: Museo de Arte Moderna, 2003), p. 151.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid. p. 150.

<sup>225</sup> Duarte importantly points out that the "refined, modernising effect, therefore, that we noticed in the '50s was felt only by an extremely small proportion of society." In Paulo S. Duarte, *The '60s: Transformations of Art in Brazil*, (Rio de Janeiro: Campos Gerais, 1998), p. 30.

iterations), and US Pop, which he attributes to the structure of the art system, diametrically opposite in either country:

*The US artist works inside a well structured art system. The market (galleries and auction houses), institutions (museums and universities) and information agencies (specialized periodicals and book publishers) are organized and quite capable to fulfil their role. In a situation such as this, the artist's objective - independently of his will - is primarily aesthetic, and his attempts perform changes and ruptures inside that system. [...] the situation of the Brazilian artist is diametrically opposite: in its best instances Nova Figuração did portray that difference in worlds, a difference that is much more than just a quantitative problem that lets itself be read as a gap.<sup>226</sup>*

Duarte sees this 'gap' as the manifestation of a Brazilian inadequacy, a lack of development, which is visible through the production of outdoor works: ones that sought to engage directly with society without the necessary mediation of galleries or museums (the art system). Many artists, feeling alienated by the official art apparatus, intervened within the public domain, not only to gain visibility but to amplify the reach of their message to those who were themselves alienated from the art world.

A further voice in the discussion of Pop in Brazil is Paulo Herkenhoff, who organised the previously mentioned exhibition (co-curated with Argentine Rodrigo Alonso) *Un Arte de Contradiciones: Pop Realismos y Política, Argentina y Brasil, 1960-1970s*, at Buenos Aires' Fundacion PROA in 2012. The exhibition places Pop in between notions of 'ambiguity and contradiction' or 'the gap in South America between the media-driven exaltation of consumerism, on the one hand, and the political and socio-economic realities of its inhabitants, on the other.'<sup>227</sup> Within this framework the works of Argentine and Brazilian artists were placed in dialogue on the basis of a return to figuration (used interchangeably with realism), a reflection on the socio-political situation in both countries, and the use of new media that mirrored the proliferation of the mass media.

In the introduction to the catalogue Herkenhoff describes Pop as one of the tools used by artists to address the crisis in subjectivity that took place in the 1960s in

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<sup>226</sup> Ibid. p. 33.

<sup>227</sup> Adriana Rosenberg, *About the Exhibition. Art of Contradictions. Pop, Realisms and Politics. Brazil – Argentina 1960*, Online introduction to the exhibition. <http://proa.org/eng/exhibition-pop.php>

response to the technological innovations that altered the pace of everyday life, in combination with the political events of the decade that implied a connection between Pop, the media and, during the military dictatorship, state censorship. Additionally, Herkenhoff points out the polarised ideological myths that perpetuated certain dualisms in Latin America that constituted popular culture during the Cold War: on the one hand that of Che Guevara and the miracle of the Cuban Revolution, on the other Coca-Cola as the symbol of multinationals, capitalism, and 'progress,' also with its connotations of Yankee imperialism.

Herkenhoff previously offered a further perspective on Pop in his *Incomplete Glossary of sources in Latin American Art*, defining it as 'paternalism, obscurantism, populism in blind regionalism' listing as its catalysts anti-consumption, poverty, hunger, anti-communication (counter-informational circuits) and censorship. This definition implies a critical stance against capitalism, consumption and the mass media, while highlighting a perspective of 'underdevelopment,' suggested by the issues of poverty and hunger. Pop thus reflects the cultural and political ambiguities of the sixties, becoming a fertile catalyst for their discussion and re-evaluation.

This sampling of sources creates a consensus over the form and specification of Pop-related art practices in Brazil. The genealogy that emerges has been largely fractured, yet two main interwoven trajectories emerge: the first line of enquiry reflects on the social conditions that catalysed a shift towards 'Pop,' which was defined by an idea of urban popular culture torn between a national and an imported ethos. An example of the conflicting relationship between local and foreign is offered by the São Paulo Biennial, which oftentimes triggered debates over the derivative nature of local artworks seen alongside their international counterparts. The second narrative relates more strongly to the artistic breakthroughs ushered by Pop or New Realism, such as the active involvement of the spectator. Understood both in emotive and physical senses, said involvement had deep roots in the Concrete and Neo-Concrete phenomena of the 1950s. As we will see, it also had wider implications in terms of a redefinition of values, and morality, also in the form of gender erosion. Many works produced with a Pop ethos, in fact, promoted a visceral engagement with art, at times even erotic, in order to unsettle and revive the very flesh of the spectator. It is important to note that within this

framework the participation of the spectator was specifically devolved towards social engagement. Such mode of participation sought to mobilise and sensitise audiences outside of the restricted art circuit to the local political situation and to multiple social problematics.<sup>228</sup>

The following section provides a baseline genealogy of events that contextualise Pop in Brazil. Beginning with an examination of the intellectual questions confronted by Concretism and Neo-Concretism - such as art's social mission, its involvement with politics, and the issue of autonomy - the chapter addresses the emergence of figurative or new realist artistic practices. This analysis brings to the fore how Concretism's and Neo-Concretism's legacies, though often overemphasised in Brazilian post-war art, played an important part in inspiring artists to see participation as integral to the artworks they were producing. Through international exhibitions and the São Paulo Biennial, the text explains the infiltration of imported aesthetics and terminologies, and assesses their adequacy and significance for artists and criticism then and now.

The second half of the chapter examines the cultural debates that Pop spurred locally. The works of artists including Teresinha Soares, Regina Vater, Anna Maria Maiolino, Ana Bella Geiger, Rubens Gerchman, Antônio Dias and Wesley Duke Lee, reveal the increasing necessity to activate the body through differing stratagems, which included resorting to the visual language of the mass media, ultimately named Pop. The chapter's objective, aligned with the thesis', is to arrive at a new understanding of Pop, with consideration for artistic practices outside its existing canon in Brazil, and a clearer definition of why this may be an important label for the retrieval of lost or hidden histories of the 1960s.

## **2.a Tracing motives: Concrete and Neo-Concrete Groups 1955-1960**

In 1955, the newly formed group of artists Grupo Frente held an exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art (MAM-RJ). Including Hélio Oiticica, Lygia Clark, Lygia Pape, Ivan Serpa, Abraham Palatnik (who was not a member as such, but participated in the

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<sup>228</sup> There is a core difference with the participation pursued by Allan Kaprow, for example, and other Argentine artists such as *Arte de Los Medios*, whose works gave prevalence to an exploration of the medium itself.

exhibition) among others, the group was not united by a homogeneous style, but on the contrary by a common mission to revolutionise and regenerate art. In the catalogue text, Mário Pedrosa, the group's flagship critic, stated their opposition to a paternalistic society ruled by lazy elites. He highlighted the 'high social mission' that defined their practice in the pursuit of 'transforming men, educating them to engage the senses with fullness and to model their own emotions.'<sup>229</sup>

Pedrosa's text presents similarities with Walter Benjamin's *The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction* (1936) and more broadly to Frankfurt school philosophy, which he had studied during a brief period at the University of Berlin in 1937. Back in Brazil, Pedrosa disseminated such theories (also informed by the Bauhaus), contributing to the replacement of Brazilian *modernismo* - epitomised by Candido Portinari, Tarsila do Amaral, Emiliano di Cavalcanti, Anita Malfatti among others – with abstraction. In this context Pedrosa's text puts forward the idea that art should permeate society and acquire a social role. It also advocates for art's total autonomy in alignment with Benjamin's claim that once art and state politics intertwine, the result is the oppression of the proletariat and ultimately Fascist Warfare. Yet, while Benjamin advocated that art should be political and polemical towards the state (not aligned with it), Pedrosa understood art as autonomous with respect to official policy: he saw art's radicalism not in its relationship to political agendas, but in the radicalism of its postulates.

Nonetheless, Pedrosa's description of the concrete works by Lygia Clark (fig. 30), further suggests an interesting connection with Benjamin's thought. Establishing a link between the aesthetics of modernist architecture and her concrete painting, Pedrosa suggests, 'a whole building, being a live organism, participates in the very creative process, in the very aspiration to synthesise simultaneously and un-dividedly beauty and functionality.'<sup>230</sup> This statement invites juxtapositions with Benjamin's claim that the spectator experiences architectural space in a passive way, as he inhabits it. Architecture thus becomes a crucial tool for shaping the aesthetic consciousness of the population. Pedrosa sees this synthesis (between geometry/architecture and sensitivity)

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<sup>229</sup> Mário Pedrosa, *Grupo Frente*, (exh. cat. Rio de Janeiro: MAM, 1955).

<sup>230</sup> Original: 'tudo um edificio que è um organismo vivo, participa do mesmo pensamento criador, do mesmo espirito de sintese que aspira, ao mesmo tempo e inseparavelmento ao funcional e ao belo.' Pedrosa, *Grupo Frente*.



Fig. 30 Lygia Clark  
*Planos em superfície modulada*, 1957  
Collage, cardboard  
20.2 x 30.5 cm

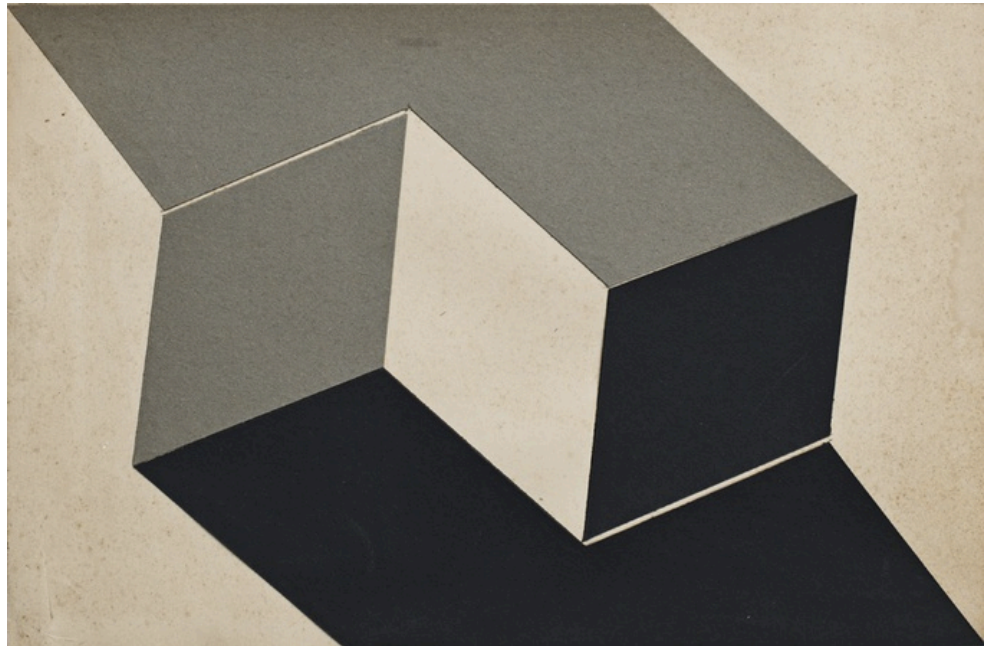


Fig. 31 Candido Portinari  
*Tiradentes* (Detail), 1948-1949  
Tempera on canvas  
309 x 1767 cm



as the key in shaping values. In addition he relates this to manufacture and industrialization as key processes:

*Modern industry needs the indispensable and urgent collaboration of artists, at the cost of never rising to the cultural exigencies of the society it serves. Without this collaboration, it will never overcome the wicked and solely utilitarian belief system within which it operates, failing to ennoble our civilization with the formal quality (perfect synthesis of function and refinement) of its products...*<sup>231</sup>

This argument reveals the specific tendency in Brazilian Concretism to look for ways to reshape cultural values, encapsulated in this exhibition. Pedrosa had changed his view in regards to how art should engage society and politics after writing on Candido Portinari's work (fig. 31).<sup>232</sup> Previously he supported the modernist approach towards political themes, mostly anecdotal and never explicit. After 1949, he increasingly turned to abstract tendencies, which supported the idea that art should engage social and political questions, meanwhile remaining independent of politics per se. Concretism was not dogmatically attached to those Bauhaus teachings geared towards art's absolute autonomy, but more oriented towards the interweaving of art and society.<sup>233</sup> Paulo Sergio Duarte attributed the differences between the European and Brazilian Concretism to artists' 'active engagement of the body,'<sup>234</sup> and to the international influence of action painting. The late Jackson Pollock was, in fact,

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<sup>231</sup> Original: 'Todos colaboram nesse dissecar da material [...]. Essas atividades aproximam assim os seus membros das atividades praticas produtivas, o que a manha poderá trazer, para os produtos industrias sensível melhoria de qualidade. A indústria moderna precisa da imprescindível e inadiável colaboração dos artistas, sob pena de jamais elevar-se a altura das exigências culturais da sociedade a que serve. Sem essa colaboração, ela não ultrapassara nunca o âmbito desse empirismo mesquinho e meramente utilitário em que trabalha, não alcançando enobrecer a nossa civilização com qualidade formal (perfeita síntese funcional e plástica) de seus artigos como o fizeram em relação ao seu tempo, as atividades artesanais das grandes épocas criadoras do passado, assim, por exemplo, o artesanato medieval.' Ibid.

<sup>232</sup> Mário Pedrosa, "O painel de Tiradentes," *Correio da Manhã*, Rio de Janeiro, August 1949, reproduced in Otilia Otilla (ed.), and Mário Pedrosa, *Acadêmicos e modernos*, (São Paulo: Edusp, 1998), pp. 175-181.

<sup>233</sup> It is important to note in this context that Pedrosa was indeed a crucial theoretical referent for the group, but also Waldemar Cordeiro, widely referenced in the coming pages, wrote copiously on the issue at stake here.

<sup>234</sup>Duarte, *The '60s*, p. 33.

protagonist at the IV São Paulo Biennial in 1957, having an important influence on the local milieu.

Concretism's mode of social engagement is illustrated by two manifestos written by the foremost exponents of Concretism: the *Noigandres* Group (Concrete poets Décio Pignatari, Haroldo and Augusto de Campos) and the *Grupo Ruptura* (Waldemar Cordeiro and others). The *Ruptura Manifesto*, published in 1952, repudiated figuration in all its forms and advocated for the abandonment of any individualistic or subjective form of expression. Severing the continuity between the art of the present and that of the past, the Manifesto sought to promulgate new essential values of art around 'space-time, movement and matter.'<sup>235</sup> The document understood art as a means of knowing concepts via deduction. It added that any judgment about art is 'above opinion,' because art's understanding depends on prior knowledge. In 1958 the *Noigandres* literati also signed a Manifesto. The document outlined the conceptual, historical and theoretical guidelines of Concrete Poetry, placing it in relation to Chinese ideograms, Gestalt philosophy, linguistics, and electronic music, advocating for the total autonomy of language, where the word (visual sign) was considered independently of its referent.<sup>236</sup> The commonalities between the two texts lie within the notion of art's autonomy and a rupture with the art of the past. Neither admits figuration, subjectivity or individuality to play a part in artistic creation, but view the work as the materialization of a rational manipulation of information.

The first time artists from Rio and São Paulo exhibited together was in 1956 for the *Exposição Nacional de Arte Concreta*, (National Exhibition of Concrete Art) held at the MAM-SP and one year later at the MAM-RJ. From this exhibition the differences between São Paulo and Rio Concretists became apparent. The works by Rio de Janeiro

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<sup>235</sup> Lothar Charroux, Waldemar Cordeiro, Geraldo de Barros, Kazmer, Féjer, Leopoldo, Haar, Luiz Sacilotto and Anatol, Wladyslaw. "Ruptura," 1952, *Manifestoes*, Adolpho Leirner Archives at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. Available on <http://icaadocs.mfah.org/icaadocs/THEARCHIVE/FullRecord/tabid/88/doc/771349/language/en-US/Default.aspx> Last accessed 17 August 2016.

<sup>236</sup> Augusto de Campos, Haroldo de Campos and Décio Pignatari, "Plano-pilôto para poesia concreta," *Noigandres* (São Paulo), no. 4, 1958.

artists were described as ‘Concretism at the beach,’<sup>237</sup> in turn, the São Paulo Concretists were criticised for their excessive dogmatism in the observation of formal rules. A discordant approach towards visual language is what determined the division between Concrete and later Neo-Concrete tendencies. When their differences became irreconcilable a schism occurred in 1959 when Ferreira Gullar - leftist intellectual poet and journalist, close to the Rio de Janeiro Concretists – published the *Neo-Concrete Manifesto* in the Sunday supplement of the *Jornal do Brasil* (which later became a key platform for the legitimisation of the Neo-Concrete group). In the *Neo-Concrete Manifesto* Gullar states the importance of the ‘power of expression’ over the ‘theories’ on which artists based their works.<sup>238</sup> He explains the need to ‘express the complex reality of modern humanity inside the structural language of new plasticity’ and condemns scientific and positivist attitudes, which excluded the existential and emotional aspects of art, for ‘[robbing] art of its autonomy.’

*We do not conceive of a work of art as a ‘machine’ or as an ‘object,’ but as a ‘quasi-corpus,’ (quasi-body), that is to say, something which amounts to more than the sum of its constituent elements; something which analysis may break down into various elements but which can only be understood phenomenologically.*<sup>239</sup>

Gullar’s manifesto is greatly connected to Pedrosa’s earlier text.<sup>240</sup> Both exalt the need to defend art’s autonomy. While Pedrosa uses the connection between concrete art and architecture to approach the theme of engaging the viewer in space - beyond the

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<sup>237</sup> Mosqueira, Gerardo, “Brazil: Disarranging Concretism,” paper delivered at *Postwar: Arte between the Pacific and the Atlantic*, conference at the Haus Der Kunst, Munich, May 22<sup>nd</sup> 2014.

<sup>238</sup> Ferreira Gullar, “Theory of the Non-Object,” reproduced in Michael Asbury, “Neo-Concretism and Minimalism: on Ferreira Gullar’s Theory of the Non-Object,” in Kobena Mercer (ed.), *Cosmopolitan Modernisms*, (London, New York: InIVA / MIT press, 2005), p. 170-173.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid.

<sup>240</sup> Pedrosa often organized gatherings at his home in Rio de Janeiro, where his library was made available to young intellectuals including Ferreira Gullar, his pupil in art history and philosophy. Nevertheless, Gullar waited for Pedrosa to leave the city before publishing the manifesto. Ibid.

canvas' two dimensional plane - Gullar uses the term 'spatialization' to explain how the work 'makes itself present:'

*By spatialization, we mean that the work of art continuously makes itself present, in a dynamic reaction with the impulse that generated it and of which it is already the origin.<sup>241</sup>*

In December that same year, Gullar published a further article supporting the Neo-Concrete artists, titled *Theory of the Non-Object*. Establishing a history of the shifting characteristics attributed to the object by Impressionists, Cubist, Constructivist, and Surrealists, Gullar provides a definition of the current status of the object as a non-object, describing it as 'not an anti-object but a special object through which a synthesis of sensorial and mental experiences is intended to take place.' Gullar argues that the non-object belongs to neither the denominations of painting or sculpture. He continues explaining,

*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.<sup>242</sup>*

Gullar's statement suggests that the break from any previous definitions of the art object equates to accomplishing it outside of the conventional cultural frame that contains the artist. The 'spatial' object becomes a form *sui generis*, which does not exist in reference to any 'artistic conventions.' This passage further implies a disassociation from a socio-political moment, by stressing the artist's prerogative to liberate him/herself from a cultural (as opposed to a social or political) frame. This position distances the *Theory of the Non-Object* from the aforementioned text by Pedrosa. In this sense the latter's text is more aligned to the São Paulo Concrete artists, who sought to influence architecture, design and, ultimately, society through art. Historian Ronaldo Brito in his

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<sup>241</sup> Ferreira Gullar, "Theory of the Non-Object," reproduced in Asbury, "Neo-Concretism and Minimalism," p. 170-173.

<sup>242</sup> Gullar, Ferreira, "Theory of the Non-Object," quoted in Asbury, "Neo-Concretism and Minimalism," p. 174.

commentary of Gullar's article,<sup>243</sup> observes how Neo-Concretism's 'abdication of politics' is a stark marker of its difference from Concretism. For Brito the former was intrinsically connected to humanism and philosophy, yet alien to the socio-political context. Conversely, in the case of Concretism, the movement is deeply connected with 'economics' and progress, seeking to influence society through aesthetics. It is interesting to observe how this tendency developed contemporaneously to the construction of Brasilia. While being the embodiment of the modernist utopia rooted in the 1930s, influenced by Le Corbusier and his notion of Purism, the new capital also materialised President Juscelino Kubitschek's 'fifty years of progress in five'<sup>244</sup> (fig. 32). Although the appointed architect Oscar Niemeyer and his colleagues chose to adorn the city with strongholds of the old guard of figurative painters – including Candido Portinari – there was a dialogic synchronicity with the Concretists' hope to influence and capture the socio-political climate of the time.

The construction of Brasilia also encapsulated the driving force of developmentalist ideology – not unlike in Argentina during the Frondizi Administration. Since after the Second World War and the collapse of Getulio Vargas' administration, Brazil had undergone a succession of contrasting governments that oscillated between 'nationalist economics' (promoted by Vargas) and surrogates of developmentalism, which incentivised foreign investment. A brief summary of the political context aids in understanding the economic policies that established a bond of economic inferiority with the United States, the disruptive explosion of Capitalism for local economics, and the connection between developmentalism and nationalism, which supported developmentalist ideology until its culpabilities became undeniable.

Vargas had been a dictator in Brazil from 1930 to 1945, a period during which he successfully conciliated the interests of the bourgeoisie, the agrarian sector and the new industrial middle classes, adopting nationalist economics, a policy centred on protecting national industries from multinationals, seen as an obstacle to endemic development. After the war the global appeal for free markets and liberalism led to the collapse of the dictatorship and the formation of political parties. A constitution was written in 1946, the

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<sup>243</sup>Ronaldo Brito, *Neo-Concretismo: Vértice e Ruptura do Projeto Construtivo Brasileiro*, (Rio de Janeiro: Marcos Marcondes, 1975).

<sup>244</sup> This was the electoral slogan adopted by President Kubitschek, in power between 1956-1961.

Fig. 32 Juscelino Kubitschek on the cover of *Time Magazine*, 13 February 1956.





right to strike was restored and foreign investment and exportation was liberated. After only four years, Vargas was able to resume power and to re-implement economic nationalism. In 1951 he founded Petrobras, the national Brazilian oil company, seeking to reduce dependency on foreign industries. By 1954, his protectionist policies earned him repeated hostility from the UDN (National Democratic Union) and the military. The events that followed ultimately led to Vargas' suicide – a statement of innocence and indignation against the army.

After Vargas' death, Kubitschek (Social Democratic Party) took the reins of the government and achieved political stability by exploiting populist strategies. He erected the myth of progress, adhering to the dialectics of salvation that supported Developmentalism, according to which, only if you modernise according to the rules of capitalism, you will be able to overcome the underdeveloped condition that chains you to poverty.<sup>245</sup> His plan to diversify and expand Brazilian economy was based on thirty-one goals amongst which was the transfer of Brazil's capital from Rio de Janeiro to Brasilia, constructed at the exact centre of the country *ex novo*. Kubitschek replaced Vargas' economic nationalism with Developmentalism, which also called on the propelling power of nationalism. Mário Pedrosa, in a conference on the current state of Brazilian culture in 1968 commented that 'the theory of developmentalism was grounded in nationalism, but it did not predict any internal friction.'<sup>246</sup> This was meant in the sense that Kubitschek's Developmentalism sought to promote a new sentiment of Brazilianness that would transcend regional identities and rivalries. Brasilia was envisioned to belong equally to all Brazilians.

Core to Kubitschek's policies was the promotion of foreign investment. Although arguably necessary to 'open' Brazil's borders to 'modernity,' these policies suffocated

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<sup>245</sup> I am indebted to the point relating to the dialectics of salvation inherent in the very concept of modernity in Latin America to Walter Mignolo, as discussed in the introduction. The broader context of developmentalism is clearly studied by Joel Wolfe, in "Populism and Developmentalism," in Thomas H. Holloway (ed.), *A Companion to Latin American History*, (Malden, MA; Oxford: Blackwell publishing, c.2011), pp. 347-364.

Wolfe explained that Kubitschek 'crafted a highly nationalistic message of Brazilian-based economic growth that not only avoided demonizing foreign capital but depended upon it.' p. 356.

<sup>246</sup>Mário Pedrosa, et. al., *Introducao a realidade Brasileira*, (Rio de Janeiro: Cadernos Brasileiros, 1968), p. 20.



weaker domestic industry favouring inflation. Despite pressures from the IMF, worried by the country's unstable currency, Kubitschek persevered with Developmentalism, ready to pay any price before achieving the level of modernization he was aiming for. Based on the directive of 'consumption for consumption,' he gave in to the demands of foreign multinationals, increasingly penalising local industrial and agrarian businesses. The urban industrial classes were developing at the expense of the rural ones, which had once been the backbone of Brazilian economy.<sup>247</sup>

The inauguration of Brasilia represented a moment of climax in Kubitschek's developmentalist project. Despite his populist efforts, the soaring stratification of Brazilian society left people disillusioned. Kubitschek's failed re-election crystallised a moment of transformation at the turn of the 1960s, when the nationalist faith in industrial development dissipated as a consequence of the economic crisis that ensued after the accelerated modernization of the 1950s. One of the many consequences of this state of crisis was the military coup of 1964.

At this stage, the achievements of Neo-Concretism in the early 1960s need clarification: certainly, the artists succeeded in renewing the geometric language, revitalising the constructivist proposal. In addition, Neo-Concretism conquered a broader autonomy in the face of dominant cultural models - represented by geometric abstraction<sup>248</sup> - starting a new direction in local contemporary production.<sup>249</sup> Yet, the different postulates upheld by the Concretists and the Neo-Concretists in regards to art's role within politics, 'ruptured' the Brazilian constructivist project, simultaneously to when developmentalist ideology began losing its credibility (Brito acutely titles his study on the Neo-Concrete phenomenon as the *Peak and Rupture of the Brazilian Constructivist project*).

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<sup>247</sup> The outmoded development of industry that marked the late fifties in concomitance with Kubitschek's developmentalist policies, was never fully completed, leaving the country further fractured between rural and industrial power. One of the most evident issues that continue to this day is the North/South divide in Brazil. While the South thrives on the industry inherited from this period, the North is still predominantly tied to agriculture, and is invariably poorer, and lacking in infrastructure.

<sup>248</sup> Brito explains that Constructivism in Brazil was the 'first articulate and intelligent contact with the transformations processed by modern art on the dominant schemes,' Brito, *Neo-Concretismo: Vértice e Ruptura do Projeto Construtivo Brasileiro*, p. 99.

<sup>249</sup> Orthodox constructivism was more connected to the important legacy of Max Bill - see footnote 226.

The principal transformation triggered by Neo-Concretism lies in a refocusing of art production from the formulaic dogmatism of Concretism to a more humanistic perspective – one determined by the adoption of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology. Humanism took the form of *sensitization* and *dramatization* in Neo-Concrete tendencies, paving the way for a new approach towards art in the 1960s. Despite the establishment of such achievements in the realm of culture, the Constructivist project only resolved a limited portion of the Brazilian quest for a national art form. In describing the controversial success of Concretism, Brito writes:

*Latin American vanguards and constructivism responded to this ambiguous desire: that of ascending into the developed world to try to emancipate itself from that same world. There is a certain infantilism to this position, a neurotic desire for revenge: to attain the power of the father and immediately reject him.*

Within this framework, Concretism appears as an attempt (perhaps failed) to become emancipated culturally, standing against the pervasive Eurocentric academicism that defined cultural institutions until the 1950s (soon after the inauguration of both the Museums of Modern Art in Rio and São Paulo in 1948 and 1949 respectively). Brito then continues:

*...the position of vanguard at the interior of art's development did not signify the breaking away from the circle of ignorance (this should be interpreted as non-politicising) in which class positions lock the cultural agents. Once again the dominant idealism prevailed over a materialistic cultural action.*<sup>250</sup>

With this claim Brito explains that in a context of backwardness, Neo-Concretism – whose artists largely belonged to the upper-middle classes - occupied a lateral position, which made its cultural insertions 'markedly aristocratic.' In the absence of a market-confrontation, in combination with its withdrawal from politics, the Neo-Concrete artists occupied a deliberately marginal position in relation to the wider socio-political concerns of the country.<sup>251</sup> This cult of marginality places Neo-Concretism in direct

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<sup>250</sup> Ibid. p 104.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid. 'The relationship with the market (representative of 'reality for art's subjects) is, as a last resort, a politicising one,' p. 107.

opposition to the constructivist project. This divergence greatly influenced later artistic production, finding its place within the genealogy I am mapping out here.

The following section builds on the notion that the Concrete and Neo-Concrete phenomena informed distinct participative languages that appeared in Rio, São Paulo and subsequently in other cities in Brazil. Neo-Concretism's a-politics was soon eliminated in favour of greater social and political engagement – engendered by the very participative tendencies that Neo-Concretism experimented with. Conversely, Concretism's rigour was soon renegotiated and expanded, giving continuation to concerns for social mobilization, yet with increased formal fluidity (albeit different from Neo-Concretism's). Although certain outcomes of these movements are highlighted in order to provide a genealogy of events leading up to Pop, it is not to say that there was a linear progression from Concretism and Neo-Concretism to Pop. Undoubtedly, artists in the mid-sixties were aware of the achievements of said styles – some of multiple sources of inspiration.

## **2.b Differing Perspectives: Content Over Style After 1961.**

In Rio de Janeiro, Neo-Concretism's disconnection from the 'reality' of the market, caused it to occupy a lateral position as it concerned only a restricted 'aristocracy.' After exhibiting together in Bahia in 1959 and Rio in 1960, by 1961, the group disbanded, Gullar distanced himself from the artists becoming increasingly a fervent Marxist, leaving an ambiguous vacuum within the Rio art scene. Its lasting legacy endured thanks to artists' experiments with participation. Though perpetually referenced in histories from this period, Lygia Clark's *Bichos* (little animals, insects, or beasts, made from 1960 fig. 33), are emblematic of such experiments with spectator involvement. Sculpture/objects made of geometrical aluminium sheets, connected by hinges that articulate the work's 'body,' *Bichos* turned the viewer into a participant, inviting him/her to manipulate the work. *Bichos* remained compliant to the rules of Concrete art relating geometry, while being also 'corporeal.' Concretism's orthodox bi-dimensional geometric shapes of pure homogenous colour were extracted from the two-dimensional plane and composed into a body. The works also did not follow a mathematical basis but were constructed intuitively. Their contribution to the dialectics

Fig. 33 Lygia Clark  
*Bichos*, 1960 –  
 Aluminum  
 Variable dimensions  
 The photograph shows a *Bicho* being manipulated.

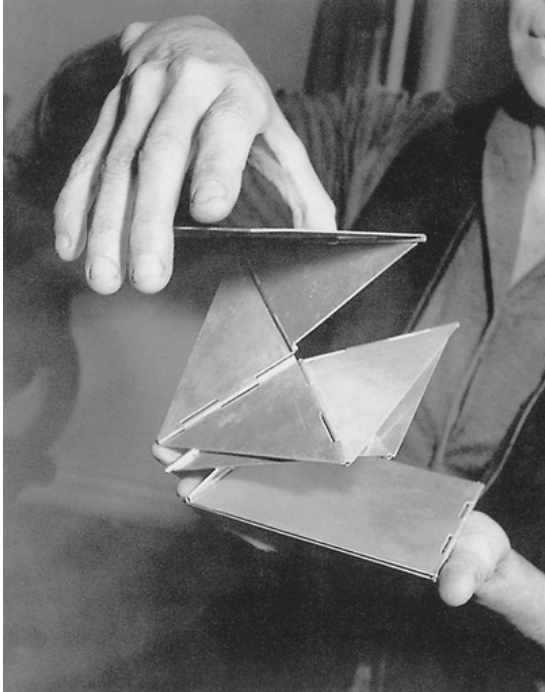


Fig. 34 Hélio Oiticica  
*Tropicália, Pentraves PN 2 'Pureza é um mito' e PN 3 'Imagético'*  
 Wooden frames, cotton fabric, plastic sheets, carpet, nylon fabric,  
 patchouli root, cinnamon sticks, sand, plants, metal, terracotta, brick and  
 other materials  
 Dimensions Displayed: 248 x 1514 x 635 cm  
 Installation view at the MAM-RJ, 1967. Photo by César Oiticica Filho



of Neo-Concretism was immediately recognised and they were awarded the National Sculpture Prize at the VI São Paulo Biennial in 1961 – at a similar time that the group ceased to exist.

Two members of the group that remained very close through their practices and as friends – as demonstrated also by extensive correspondence between them – are Lygia Clark and Hélio Oiticica. One of the most widely exhibited and written about works by Oiticica titled *Tropicália* (fig. 34), is an important example of how the participative languages tested by the Neo-Concretists evolved and ultimately established parallels with the Pop aesthetic that exploded in mid-decade, which also made use of participation. First exhibited at the MAM-RJ in 1967 in the exhibition *Nova Objetividade Brasileira* (New Brazilian Objectivity), *Tropicália* built on the trajectory of extracting surfaces from the two-dimensional canvas, and transforming them into ‘penetrables,’ three-dimensional cabins the spectator could walk into, which invited the viewer to explore physically its meanders. The work was an environment composed of multiple cabins (each titled *PN2* and *PN3*) connected by gravel pathways, sand, and surrounded by plants, coloured panels, hung fabrics bought in marketplaces in Brazil. Each cabin unit contained recognisable elements from everyday life, and popular culture in Brazil, from news clippings, to television sets, to musical compositions, a piano, among other things. Not only did his elements of choice reflect certain aspects of a Brazilian reality, but they also pandered to the stereotype that typified the country internationally – with particular associations to samba, carnival culture, tropical vegetation, and a general climate of exuberance. Above all, the formal quality of the installation was remarkably ‘home made,’ also hinting at what would have been associated to amateurism, unsophistication, and ultimately underdevelopment. Yet, the materials he used were sourced locally, and were hence embedded within the context of the favela – an icon of underdevelopment, an overarching theme in artistic production throughout the decade.

Unlike the Neo-Concrete Group, the Concretists in São Paulo did not formally disband, but rather gradually exchanged their artistic propositions. Waldemar Cordeiro and Wesley Duke Lee (who was absent during the key Concrete years, but soon immersed himself in the city’s artistic milieu) are key figures to examine the transformation of Concrete languages into newer forms. They are also considered in all

texts among the most significant personalities of the Pop moment, helping to clarify further its genealogy.

Waldemar Cordeiro occupied an atypical position within the art scene of São Paulo. Despite his adherence to the Concrete groups *Noigandres* and *Ruptura* in the 1950s, his own investigation into objecthood, his notoriously polemical nature and communist leanings, his works shifted conceptually towards Neo-Concretism and demonstrated a concern for participation. Already in 1961, Cordeiro had begun incorporating into his abstract canvases elements from everyday life, including newspaper clippings, pieces of fabric and mirror fragments. In 1963, Cordeiro exhibited early assemblages at the *Astreia Gallery*, a show that marked a decisive shift from his previous output. Schenberg in the text that accompanied the exhibition, remarked on the freedom and flexibility of Cordeiro's 'Concrete devices,' free of 'the old rigor.'<sup>252</sup> Cordeiro believed that geometry was not relevant to concrete art; the precision of meaning, as opposed to the outlines of the shapes, was of paramount importance. He viewed the content of Concrete art as the synthesis of art's objective. Especially after the stark separation of the Neo-Concretists in Rio de Janeiro, he understood the undeniable socio-political shift that was taking place and how it was affecting the cultural realm. The new historical situation demanded that the role of concrete art should change in order to provide appropriate artistic responses to the problems that contemporaneous culture posed.<sup>253</sup> Additionally, Cordeiro was adamant on reconciling his leftist political views, and his artistic production.

In this context, the artist formulated the notion of a 'semantic concrete art,' that would unite the dogmatism of Concretism, with the semantic value of extant physical objects. The artist justified the use of objects within his canvases, with the notion of a 'participative approximation' that took over mere observation, meaning that his elements

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<sup>252</sup> Mário Schenberg quoted by Jose Augusto Ribeiro in "The 1960s Brazilian Avant-Garde: Proposals and Opinions," in Teixeira da Costa, *Aproximações Do Espírito Pop*, p. 158.

<sup>253</sup> Waldemar Cordeiro, [Produto direto de uma atitude crítica...], (Campinas, Brazil: Galeria Aremar, 1960). Available on <http://icaadocs.mfah.org/icaadocs/THEARCHIVE/FullRecord/tabid/88/doc/1087239/language/en-US/Default.aspx> Last accessed 27 August 2016.

would have been familiar to the viewer, soliciting a reaction.<sup>254</sup> Cordeiro's 'Semantic Concrete art' was theorised as something that required participation supporting concrete poet Decio Pignatari's view that 'all concrete poetry needs is to take the content-semantic-participation leap.'<sup>255</sup> Having researched semantic structures through his proximity to concrete poetry, and in response to Umberto Eco's *Opera Aperta* (1960, fig. 35), Cordeiro investigated how to prompt the viewer to reflect on the country's socio-political situation, through the use of objects (Eco's text also gave the name to one of Cordeiro's works).

Cordeiro's Semantic Concrete works were exhibited in 1964 at the Galeria Atrium. The exhibition is remembered for Augusto de Campo's description of Cordeiro's works as 'Popcretos,' a meeting point between Brazilian Concretism and American Pop art. In the catalogue essay Cordeiro, who still preferred the definition of a Semantic Concrete Art (or semantic popular art), wrote:

*I believe that the question is to reorient the objective principles of art from infrastructure to superstructure, from production sphere to consumption sphere – in displacing research from the rational study of behaviour in the face of optical events to that of behaviour in face of visible facts laden with intentionality and signification within socio-historical contexts. That is to say to switch from perception (Gestalt) to apprehension (Sartre); from icon to communication, from 'pure' stimulus to 'associated' stimulus.<sup>256</sup>*

Cordeiro's proposition suggests a desire to sensitise the viewer making knowledge and potentially reflexivity accessible through the work of art. Cordeiro shifts away from dogmatic Concretism towards a more humanist Concretism, one that reaches into the spectator:

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<sup>254</sup>Aracy Amaral, *Waldemar Cordeiro, Uma Aventura Da Razão*, (São Paulo: Museu de Arte Contemporânea da Universidade de São Paulo, 1986), p 22.

<sup>255</sup> Quoted from a speech given by Decio Pignatari in 1961 at the Brazilian Congress of literary Criticism and history, cited by Jose Augusto Ribeiro in *The 1960s Brazilian Avant-Garde: Proposals and Opinions, in Aproximações Do Espírito Pop, 1963-1968*, p 158

<sup>256</sup> Ibid.

*Concrete art, is not style, but content: the content of art's objectivity. [...] Let's liberate concrete art from the protection of the vestiges of a purity, which is easily isolating, to remake it participative.*<sup>257</sup>

Most importantly, Cordeiro's investigations brought to the fore the term 'Pop', which already at the time, triggered widespread controversy. One of the most controversial works in the exhibition was *Popcreto por um Popcrítico* (Popcrete for a popcritic, fig. 36), which visually recalled a stylised form of the communist symbol of the sickle and hammer. The work was a red squared wooden box of an irregular geometric shape painted red. A hammer hung from its upper section, and through a series of cut out ben-day dots collaged over the wood, the image of an inquisitive face – the artist's own - gazing outwards, could be discerned.

Cordeiro's works bear testament to the rupture of the Concrete experiment and to some of the aesthetic outcomes that derived. Such rupture was caused by the inadequacy of Concrete and Neo-Concrete languages in view of the simultaneous collapse of Kubitschek's Developmentalism. As the political climate shifted, so did artistic concerns. Participation, popular culture and social engagement entered the radar of artist's priorities, radically transforming artistic production, and foregrounding experiments with Pop art.

The particularity of the socio-political climate of São Paulo is further illustrated by *Grande Espectáculo das Artes* (The great spectacle of the arts, 1963), a happening organised by Welsey Duke Lee at the Bar João Sebastião. Lee had just returned to Brazil after an extensive period of travel through Europe and the United States. His practice at the time researched the relationships between men and women, the ritualistic aspects of love and sexual liberation – quite removed from any of the concerns of geometric abstraction. Lee's work shows how a concern with participation, the

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<sup>257</sup> Original: 'Arte concreta, portanto nao è um estilo, mais contenido: o conteúdo da objetividade da arte. [...] Libertemos a arte concreta da tutela das vestais de uma pureza, que è facil isolamento, para torna-la participante.' Cordeiro, [Produto direto de uma atitude crítica...].



Fig. 35 Waldemar Cordeiro  
*Ópera Aperta* 1963  
Oil, mirrors and collage on canvas  
75 x 150 cm

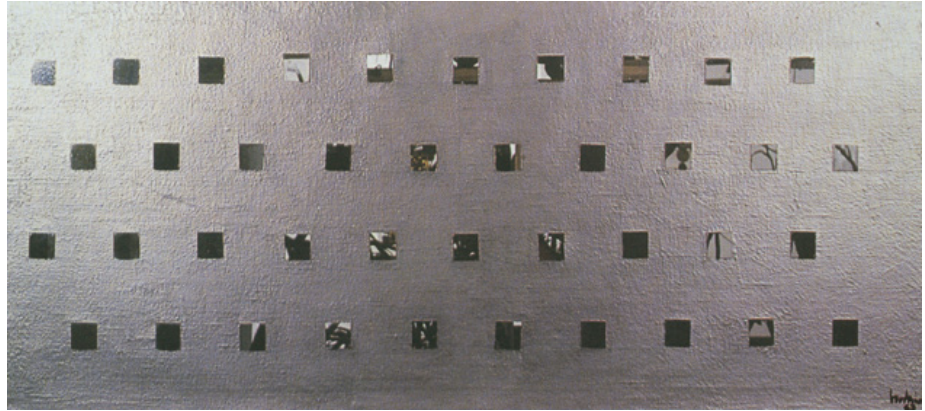
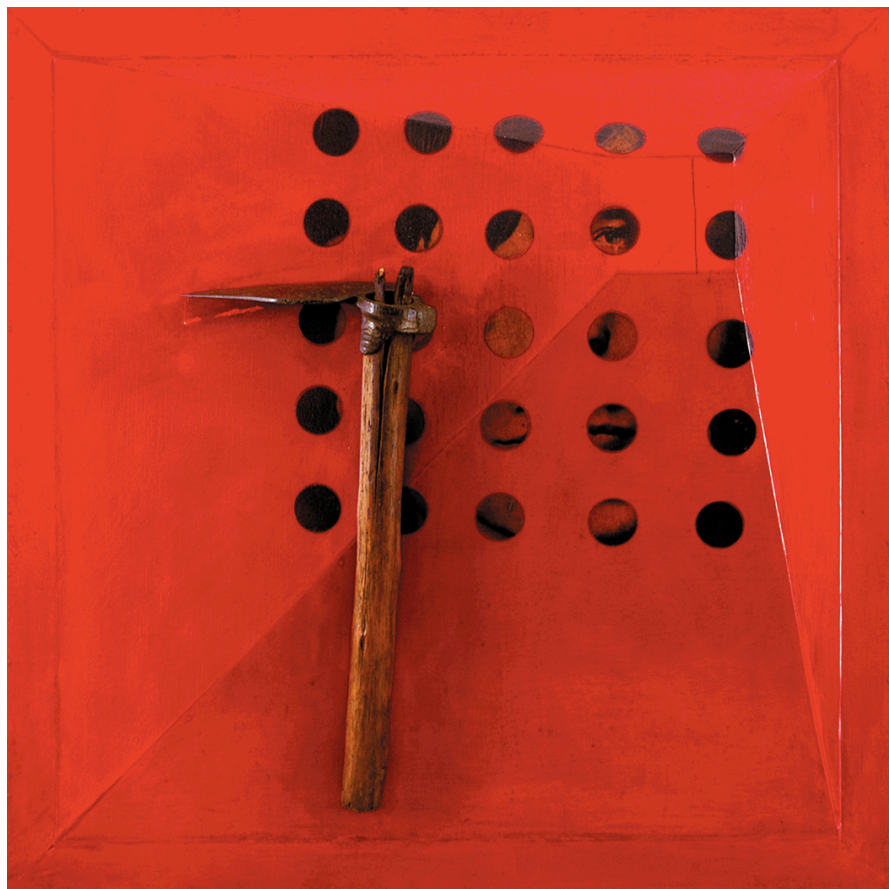


Fig. 36 Waldemar Cordeiro  
*Popcreto por um Popcrítico*, 1964  
Painted wood, collage and hammer  
82 x 82 cm



everyday object and the mass media was not univocally connected to the concretist past, but instead reflected facets of the new socio-political situation.<sup>258</sup>

In 1962 he had started working on a figurative series of pen and Indian ink drawings titled *Ligas* (Garters, 1962-1963) that no gallery would exhibit for being seen as borderline pornographic (fig. 37). The event consisted in several environments. One room was darkened and the visitors were provided with flashlights with which they could illuminate the space, in which they discovered the series *Ligas* exhibited within. In a further room a film by Otto Stupakoff (the well-known fashion photographer, who had photographed the construction of Brasilia upon Oscar Niemeyer's request) was projected. Although now lost, testimonies recall the film showing (actress) Maria Cecília walking in downtown São Paulo wearing couture gowns. Meanwhile, blanks were shot from a toy rifle, and Lydia Chamis (later Lee's wife) performed an inverse strip-tease, dressing in clothes, as opposed to taking them off. Lee sought to create a cohesive environment in which the wholeness of his practice could be perceived by the viewer, in particular his investigation into the ritualistic aspects of love-making and the inherent tension between femininity and masculinity (in reference to Duchamp's *Eros c'est la vie, Rose Selavy*, 1921): themes that Lee continued to develop throughout his practice (fig. 38).<sup>259</sup>

Known as the one of the first happenings in Brazil, *Grande Espectáculo das Artes* presented the synthesis of Lee's practice in a playful and interactive way. Seeking to demystify the eroticism associated with his works, Lee displayed them in a way that was intended to leave no doubts in the spectator's mind as to the legitimacy of his investigation. Selecting the Bar João Sebastião, Lee's artworks had the backdrop of an

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<sup>258</sup> Lee's practice cannot be pinned down as the product of the Concretist years, given that he trained at the Parsons School in New York and spent most of the previous decade travelling across Asia and Europe. His works embody an autonomous and parallel development within the Brazilian cultural milieu, and it is probably this autonomy, which made the works intelligible and fascinating to a younger generation of artists – including Frederico Nasser, Marcello Nitsche or José Resende – who soon gathered around Lee, to learn from his expanded experiences.

<sup>259</sup> Wesley Duke Lee, and Cacilda T. Costa, *Wesley Duke Lee*, (Rio de Janeiro: MEC/FUNARTE, 1980).

An exhaustive article that recounts Lee's happening is Anonymous, "Ligas e cintas proibidas agitam o Bar João Sebastião," *Folha de São Paulo*, São Paulo, 26 October 1963.

informal, yet popular place, which had no explicit associations to the art circuit. The garter drawings were exhibited in the dark, and the choice to illuminate them was in the hands of the viewer, provoked by the ambiguous situation. The references to fashion in the happening, as exemplified by Stupakoff's video, critiqued the libidinal connotations of the mass media's pervasive and inescapable portrayal of women and stereotypical sexuality, suggesting these were perhaps the real culprits of indecency. Lee's happening, is one of the milestones within a genealogy of Brazilian Pop because of its allusions to the mass media, its participative nature, which also relates – though is not connected to - Neo-Concrete objectives.

The works listed in this section are key in understanding the specific mode of spectator participation that developed in Brazil, and which later informed the Pop aesthetic that emerged. Cordeiro, Lee and Oiticica appear in most of the core texts cited in the thesis that suggested a history of Brazilian Pop. Their connection to Concretism and Neo-Concretism, though important, has been emphasised and inscribed as part of a linear progression – for instance in Ribeiro's chronology in *Approximations of the Pop Spirit, 1963-1968*. Though concerns for social involvement and participation emerge as paramount and reveal a connection to 1950s geometric abstraction, each artist's trajectory is distinct and patently independent (particularly in the case of Wesley Duke Lee who was trained abroad). The salient common issue between these works, which is one I have continued to raise throughout the thesis, is a connection to the local socio-political fibre. The issues artists confronted in the fifties, a time defined by developmentalist ideology especially during the Kubitschek era, were wholly distinct to those of a generation of artists in the years leading up to a military dictatorship. This shifting dialogue between artists and their surroundings unlocks the concerns of an époque.

The following section re-examines how political context capsized after Kubitschek's fall from power revealing how consumer culture infiltrated the day to day transforming the visual vocabularies of a generation that saw the collapse of democracy and the establishment of military rule.

Fig. 37

- a. Wesley Duke Lee  
*Série das Ligas*, 1961-1963  
*Ink on paper*  
46 x 61 cm



- b. Wesley Duke Lee  
*Ode Erótica a Lydia*, 1961  
*Ink on paper*  
48 x 63 cm



Fig. 38 *Grande Espectáculo das Artes*  
Photo of the Happening at the João Sebastião Bar, São Paulo, 24  
October 1963.



## 2.c 'Compromising Compromises' with Consumer Culture: New Realism, Figuration and Humanism between 1964-1966

Kubitschek's relentless battle against inflation and his perseverance in supporting foreign investment established a form of dependency on imported technology, infrastructure and cheaper manufactured goods. After the end of Kubitschek's administration, Janio Quadros was elected. Shortly after, he resigned due to internal pressures, and was succeeded by his vice president Joao Goulart, one of Vargas' followers, who was seen as an innocuous politician who had been catapulted into the spotlight by the communist party of Santiago Dantas. In the attempt to appease the nationwide social and political fragmentation, Goulart granted the left political concessions, earning him the distrust of the military, who feared a withdrawal of foreign funds in the already fragile economy. On 1 April 1964 the military, led by Marechal Castelo Branco, deposed Goulart and took control of the Brazilian government. Pedrosa attributed the failure of the modernization process to the disconnection between the social and economic dimensions of development. Within developmentalism, as in hard-lined Concretism, the social element was secondary.<sup>260</sup>

By 1964, Concretism and Neo-Concretism were movements of the past, and new figurative or realist styles began to appear alongside experiments with new materials and techniques. This climate was also fostered by the increased access to travel. Lee and Cordeiro – as world travellers - were considered points of reference by a younger generation seeking broader horizons. Lee had founded the *Realismo Mágico* group with Maria Cecília Gismondi, Bernardo Cid, Otto Stupakoff and Pedro Manuel-Gismondi, among others. *Realismo Mágico* was one of the first symptoms of a renewed interest in the figure, in nature, in symbolism, and folklore - by no means a return to the

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<sup>260</sup> This point is further supported by the case of *Instituto Superior de Estudos Brasileiros* (Higher Institute of Brazilian Studies, ISEB), which was founded in 1955 to promote academically Developmentalist ideology, and was closed down by the military in 1964. Though Kubitschek's government supported the institute, it ultimately failed to have a meaningful impact on cultural circles because its focus was predominantly economic, and the political orientation of its docents was polarised and fractured (increasingly of Marxist leanings - to the military's discontent). Rafael Rossotto Ioris, *Transforming Brazil: A History of National Development in the Postwar Era*, (New York; London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2014), p. 129. Caio Navarro de Toledo, "ISEB Intellectuals, the Left, and Marxism," (transl. Laurence Hallewell), *Latin American Perspectives*, vol. 25, n. 1, January 1998, pp. 109-135.

modernist figuration of Portinari and Di Cavalcanti, but a new type of realism. Cordeiro, who had travelled to Italy, and had been inspired by the Italian Communist Party (flourishing in those years), sought a new trajectory and pushed to renovate the most dogmatic postulates behind Concretism. In response to an article by José Geraldo Veira, which commented on the appearance of a *Nova Figuração* (New Figuration), Cordeiro – who published extensively - wrote an open letter, which supported the growth of this new avenue in Brazilian contemporary art.

*New Figuration had nothing to do with figuration. New Figuration is a completely new poetic. After fifteen years of investigations on the impersonal objectivity of visual language, New Figuration defines intentionality as a "intentionalising consciousness" (Sartre). Intentionality, all in all, not as a subject and even less so in terms of conventional and symbolic representation, but as a (historical) realism constructed within the objective language of contemporary art. [...] I think of intentionalising Concrete art as the conclusion of a process. Departing from grammatical and syntactic concrete art, we arrived at a concrete semantic art. And it will be an intentionalising concrete art that will give the mortal blow to his adversary, figuration, hitting the heart, which is nothing more than referential meaning<sup>261</sup>*

Cordeiro viewed *Nova Figuração* as a consequence of, as opposed to a break with, the Concrete tendencies of the previous decade, triggered by the notion of intentionality. Examining the ‘dissection’ of non-figurative and historic figurative art, Cordeiro recognises that modern artists discovered a ‘syntax (relation between signs) and a pragmatic (relation between signs and the spectator), that freed modern man from the compromising compromises with consumed cultures.’<sup>262</sup>

This last view was published in one of the first exhibitions to formally address *Nova Figuração* as a developing Brazilian style. Coordinated by Cordeiro himself and held at the FAAP (Fundação Armando Álvares Penteado) in late 1965, *Propostas 65* gathered forty-eight ‘Neo Figurative’ artists from both São Paulo and Rio, with works produced since 1963. The term most widely used was *Nova Figuração*, a translation of Michel Ragon’s 1961 term *Nouvelle Figuration*, coined in dialogue with Pierre Restany’s

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<sup>261</sup> Waldemar Cordeiro, *Novas tendências e nova figuração*, São Paulo, *Habitat*, n.77, May/June 1964, p. 56.

<sup>262</sup> Waldemar Cordeiro, *Realismo ao nível da cultura de massa*, in *Propostas 65*, (exh. cat., São Paulo: Fundação Armando Álvares Penteado, 1965).

*Nouveau Realisme* of 1960. Restany, who had visited Brazil the previous year following his trip to Buenos Aires for the ITDT International awards, was able to see a portion of Brazilian *Nova Figuração* and facilitated, with the collaboration of gallerist Jean Boghici and French critic Ceres Franco, to exhibit the works of Rubens Gerchman and Antônio Dias (later winner of the Biennale de Jeune in 1965) in Paris.<sup>263</sup>

Mário Schenberg in his text for the Catalogue of *Propostas 65*, replaces the term figuration with realism, which he considers as the ‘engine’ of global and Brazilian art.<sup>264</sup> Schenberg equates the emergence of realism with the advent of what he defines a ‘new humanism,’ characterised by the synthesis of individual, social, existential and cosmic perspectives. Influenced by his studies in astrophysics and Zen philosophy, which he became familiar with during a trip to Japan, Schenberg believed that the formerly bourgeois and individualistic humanism would be replaced by a democratic and social humanism through which the separation between body and soul would be extinguished. Schenberg’s and Cordeiro’s entries in the catalogue both seem to agree on the intrinsically new contribution of figuration/realism to the Brazilian cultural context. The terminologies that emerge in these texts – realism, figuration, new humanism – exalt the originality of a Brazilian contribution, regardless of an undeniable connection with French definitions. This context allows a dialogic connection with Brazilian *Modernismo*, and *antropofagia* – both notions tightly linked to ideas of cultural renewal, and of re-elaborating foreign influences from within.<sup>265</sup>

The previously mentioned notion *antropofagia* tightly connects to Brazilian modernism as outlined by artist and poet Oswald de Andrade. In 1928 he wrote his most famous text, *Manifesto Antropófago* (Anthropophagic Manifesto). It built on the metaphor of culture as a material export, considering the concurrent effects of imported ideas and vernacular tradition. The renewed interest in experimenting with figurative

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<sup>263</sup> Also because of their success in Paris, both Dias and Gerchmann have taken dominant roles in the history of *Nova Figuração* in Brazil.

<sup>264</sup> Schenberg was not only a crucial voice in art criticism, he was also a leading physicist in Brazil. He travelled extensively worldwide, and had a keen interest in Zen philosophy, which often entered his references in writing. For a good account of Schenberg’s wider interests, and intellectual trajectories see: Lourdes Cedran, *Diálogos com Mário Schenberg* (São Paulo : Nova Stella, 1985).

<sup>265</sup> The most cited phrase from the “Anthropophagic Manifesto” is “Tupi or not Tupi: that is the question,” a tribute both to the Amazonian indigenous tribe that notoriously carries on cannibalistic traditions and to Hamlet’s iconic dilemma.



forms was ultimately inspired from international currents, but re-elaborated by Cordeiro and Lee in and for Brazil. Reiterating Cordeiro's words: 'New Figuration is a completely new poetic. [...] [It] defines intentionality as a "intentionalising consciousness."' <sup>266</sup> The ethos described here, reflects an anthropophagic will, which accompanied the trajectories of many artists, including Cordeiro.

The correlation with French criticism and terminologies had been strengthened further by an exhibition held several months beforehand at the MAM-RJ titled *Opinião 65*, an exhibition, which sought to survey, the most recent developments in contemporary art, including works by a majority of Brazilian (mostly from Rio) and French artists with a selection of Argentinian, Spanish and English contributors. As stated by Ceres Franco twenty years later: 'Opinião 65 had representatives of all tendencies, but the painted figurative image was what dominated then.'<sup>267</sup> Ferreira Gullar – who had wholly distanced himself from the Neo-Concretists for their anti-politics, wrote a review of the exhibition, in which he observed how many works countered an 'aristocratic view that placed art at the margins of life and its problems.' He appreciated how artists were attempting to expand their audiences, and how their work had the potential to awaken political consciousness's.<sup>268</sup>

*Opinião 65* was the first significant exhibition after the military coup, symbolically encapsulating the objectives of the avant-garde after the radical change in administration. *Opinião* shared its name (perhaps not-coincidentally) with a Brazilian popular music concert and performance held in the theatre of the Copacabana Shopping Centre in Rio de Janeiro in December 1964, just months after the military coup. Sponsored by the Arena Theatre and the CPC<sup>269</sup> (Popular Culture Centre of the National Students Union, readily outlawed by the regime) *Opinião* was directed by dramaturge and sociologist Augusto Boal. By denouncing the social issues that had

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<sup>266</sup>Waldemar Cordeiro, *Novas Tendências e Nova Figuração*, p. 56.

<sup>267</sup> <http://enciclopedia.itaucultural.org.br/termo3766/opiniao-65> last accessed 12 June 2016.

<sup>268</sup> Ferreira Gullar, "Opinião 65," *Revista Civilização Brasileira I*, no. 4 (September 1965), 221–25.

<sup>269</sup> The students union had a manifesto written by Carlos Estevan Martins (social scientist) written in the framework of Marxist orthodoxy: 'CPC members chose to be common people, to become an integral part of the mass, to act as the people's army in the cultural front.' Ibid.

sprung following the coup, in particular the misery and poverty that had struck the North East, the exhibition became paradigmatic of social denunciation.<sup>270</sup> The organisers of *Opinão 65*, which both referenced a creative/intellectual voice and a political orientation, established the exhibition's tone as anti-repressive, and 'a rupture with an art of the past.'<sup>271</sup>

One of the most significant outcomes of *Opinão 65* was the establishment of the Neo-Realist Group by Dias, Escosteguy, Vergara, Gerchman and Magalhães, as mentioned previously. Maintaining an open format, the artists called for new forms of communication with the public, allowing for social meaning in figurative language, and sought to have the same impact on the art world that *Cinema Novo* had on Brazilian cinema. These ideas were presented at the inaugural exhibition of the Galeria G-4 in Rio in April 1966 titled *PARE* (Stop). The exhibition space was filled with canvases by the artists alternated with signs with questions painted on them including:

*Does man become that which he eats?*  
*Is man a rational animal?*  
*What is an animal?*  
*Is man hungry?*

At the opening of the show, the spectators were made to enter a wooden structure covered with clear plastic sheets. Once the spectators were inside, the artists spray-painted the structure from outside, until the viewers could no longer see anything, while beans (the primary ingredient of Feijoada, established as the Brazilian national dish during the Vargas regime in an attempt to forge a national culture) were poured over

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<sup>270</sup> Among the most memorable events that took place during the exhibition, was Hèlio Oiticica's irruption into the Museum accompanied by the Samba School of Mangueira, a favela in Rio. The dancers of the school, who were wearing Oiticica's iconic *Parangoles* – works that were only complete once worn – joined the opening of the exhibition, to the great surprise (verging on indignation) of the bourgeois audience. While *Parangoles*, are today among the most well-known works by Oiticica, these were at the time rejected, and misunderstood. Michael Asbury, "Hélio couldn't dance," in *Fórum Permanente: Museu de Arte; entre o público e o privado*, online journal, <http://www.forumpermanente.org/journal/following-loosen-threads-scanning-helio-oiticica-today/helio-couldn2019t-dance/> last accessed 14 October 2014.

<sup>271</sup> Ceres Franco, "Introduction," *Opinão 66*, (exh. cat. Rio de Janeiro: Museo de Arte Moderna, 1966).

them. With the objective of being didactic,<sup>272</sup> the exhibition placed the issue of hunger in relation to *antropofagia* (referenced largely in the poster signs) in order to question the role culture should have given the current socio-political situation. The act of blacking out the spectators from outside the structure evoked censorship as one of the symptoms of oppression.

#### **2.d Popistas of Underdevelopment: from Non-Objects Towards Democratization, 1966-1968**

*Opinão* and *Propostas*, which both had their second editions in 1966, had two principal ramifications. The first relates to the value of the art object and its place within a socially engaged art. The second concerns the notion of democratization, as introduced by the Neo-Realist Group and Schenberg. Dominant historiography views this period through two key events in Rio and São Paulo respectively: the previously mentioned exhibition *Nova Objetividade Brasileira* (MAM-RJ, 1967) and the establishment of REX Gallery & Sons (an artist run commercial gallery that also published a bulletin and had an educational program) by Lee, de Barros, Leirner, together with Frederico Nasser, Carlos Farjado and Resende.

*Nova Objetividade Brasileira* emerged at a point of culmination of a cultural itinerary, which began in 1959 with the publication of the Neo-Concrete Manifesto, in relation to the social function occupied by the art object. A direct successor to *Opinão* and *Propostas*, the exhibition featured the work of forty Brazilian artists,<sup>273</sup> seeking to present a corollary of the artistic tendencies of the decade, ranging from Neo-Concretism, Popcreto, New-Realism and Magic Realism. The exhibition catalogue

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<sup>272</sup> Gerchman recalls: 'the happening was somewhat educational,' in Rubens Gerchman and Armando Freitas Filho, *Rubens Gerchman*, (Rio de Janeiro: Edição FUNARTE, 1978).

<sup>273</sup> The participating artists were: Alberto Aliberti, Aluísio Carvão, Anna Maria Maiolino, Antônio Dias, Antônio Manuel, Avatar Moraes, Carlos Vergara, Carlos Zílio, Ferreira Gullar, Flávio Império, Gastão Manuel Henriques, Geraldo de Barros, Gláuco Rodrigues, Hélio Oiticica, Ivan Serpa, Juvenal Hahne Júnior, Lygia Clark, Lygia Pape, Marcello Nitsche, Maria do Carmo Secco, Maria Helena Chartuni, Maurício Nogueira Lima, Mona Gorovitz, Nelson Leirner, Pedro Escosteguy, Raymundo Colares, Roberta Oiticica, Roberto Magalhães, Rubens Gerchman, Sami Mattar, Sérgio Ferro, Solange Escosteguy, Thereza Simões, Vera Ilce, Waldemar Cordeiro.

featured essays by artists and critics, which addressed the discussions brought forward by the Brazilian avant-garde on the status of the object.<sup>274</sup>

Pivotal among these was the contribution by Helio Oiticica, *Esquema General da Nova Objetividade*, in which he explained new objectivity as defining the current state of Brazilian art, making important distinctions from Pop, Op, Hard-Edge and *Nouveau Realisme*. Oiticica lists its principal characteristics as encompassing:

*1. general constructive will; 2. A move towards the object as easel painting is negated and superseded; 3. The participation of the spectator (bodily, tactile, visual, semantic etc); 4. An engagement with and a position on political social and ethical problems; 5. A tendency towards a collective propositions and consequently the abolition, in the art of today, of "isms" [...]; 6. A revival of, and new manifestations of, the concept of anti-art*<sup>275</sup>

Oiticica's theory responded to and reflected the intentions of many, namely to foster greater experimentation with new techniques, and to renew the prerogatives of art through anti-art, collaboration, and politicisation. This text has a vital role in the historiography of Brazilian art of the 1960s as it summarises the status of the avant-garde of the period. It is important to note, however, that the text does not historicise the various movements as emerging from one another, but rather examines how each of them contributed to an ongoing discussion over the value and placement of art within society.

A further text titled *Declaração de Princípios Básicos da Vanguarda*, also published in the exhibition catalogue, functioned as a manifesto for the Neo Realist movement. Signed by Oiticica, Dias, Carlos Vergara, Gerchman, Lygia Pape, Gláuco Rodrigues, Carlos Zílio, Pedrosa and Maurício Nogueira Lima, among others, the document detailed what avant-garde practice ought to be. Over eight points, it stated that the avant-garde should be a revolutionary movement that 'extends its

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<sup>274</sup> The catalogue included three key texts: diagram by Waldemar Coredeiro mapping the ideas that guided the development of Concrete art; Oiticica's *Esquema General da Nova Objetividade*; a summary of the basic premises of Concretism, Neo-Concretism, Magic Realism, Popcreto, Realism, Gullar's participatory poetry, Cinema Novo, and Grupo Opinião (theatre).

<sup>275</sup> Hélio Oiticica, *General Scheme of the New Objectivity*, reproduced in Carlos Basualdo, *Tropicália: A Revolution in Brazilian Culture (1967-1972)*, (São Paulo: Cosac Naify, 2005).

manifestations to all fields of human sensibility and awareness,' it rejects the art market as 'conditioning content' and it denounces institutionalization, seen as a process by which the very nature of the avant-garde is annulled, and it encouraged the integration of artistic/creative activities within the community. The manifesto also argued for the discovery of new media that 'reduce as objectively as possible everything meant to be changed, from subjective to collective, from pragmatic vision to dialectical awareness.' The statement continues: 'in addition to providing a cultural guideline to the creative activity our movement will adopt all mass communication media, from newspaper to debate, from street to park, from gallery to manufacturing plant, from pamphlet to film, from translator [radio] to television.'<sup>276</sup>

The two texts are complementary: the former deals with the present situation of the avant-garde; the latter examines the rules and guidelines of an avant-garde practice, building on Oiticica's call to be 'viscerally against everything that could be, in sum, cultural political ethical and social conformity,'<sup>277</sup> and advocate for collectivization, occupation of the public space and of the mass media, in order to reach the sensitivity of the spectator.

The São Paulo Biennial that opened the same September is remembered as the 'Pop Biennale' (fig. 39). Before 1967 the press and the local artists hardly used Pop as a term of reference, preferring to use French terminology instead. Showcasing the works of artists including Edward Hopper, Robert Indiana, Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg, James Rosenquist, Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein (US), and Patrick Caulfield, David Hockney, Allen Jones, William Turnbull, Richard Smith (UK), the IX Biennale had important reverberations within the local milieu, especially evident in the press: in the months leading up to its inauguration the US Pavilion's selection of Pop artists had been widely publicised in newspapers, and contributions from the UK, Poland, Switzerland and Italy had also been recognised as part of the Pop momentum. Most importantly the Brazilian contribution to the Biennale featured the work of over 360 artists for a total of over 1400 works, and the prevailing style was consistent with the exhibition *Nova Objetividade Brasileira* held in April the same year. With eight drawings

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<sup>276</sup>Cited by Jose Augusto Ribeiro in *Aproximações Do Espírito Pop*, p 161.

<sup>277</sup> Full text reproduced in Basualdo, *Tropicália*, p. 231.

and five paintings each, Lee and Samson Flexor were the two Brazilian artists with the greatest number of works on display; among the most celebrated names in the press were Gerchman, Dias, Leirner and the young Marcello Nitsche.<sup>278</sup> After the opening of the exhibition and the announcement of the winners (Richard Smith was awarded the grand prize), the press spoke of an Anglo-French triumph over the Americans.<sup>279</sup> Once again, the critics repeatedly stressed the differing terminologies that were to be applied to the various trends showcased in the biennale, ranging from Pop, Op, Kinetic, *Nouveau Realisme*, Realism, and finally *Nova Objetividade*. Despite the tireless repetition of the distinctions between these labels, the term Pop remained the most widely used, perhaps because of its universal literal translatability (deriving from the term popular in most languages). One article went as far as to claim that the ‘conglomerated register’ of fifty countries could be Op and Pop art, and that the Brazilian contribution demonstrated a ‘disillusioned prominence of Pop art,’ which he explained as a champion of ‘democratization of artistic processes,’ and ‘predominant burlesque intention.’<sup>280</sup>

In an article published in December on the works of Dias, considered one of the leading artists of the Neo-Realist Group, Pedrosa used the term to examine how parallel languages to those of the US Pop artists were being used in different ways.

*...when [artists in Brazil adopt] the language or the vehicles of Pop, in them is a native ingenuity, an essential thematic, a way of being uncontrollable that does*

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<sup>278</sup> Mário Schenberg, “A representação Brasileira na IX Bienal de São Paulo,” *Correio da Manhã*, September 27, 1967.

<sup>279</sup> José Geraldo Vieira, “Pop Art da IX Bienal,” *Correio da Manhã*, Rio de Janeiro, September 17, 1967. The preview dossier as a whole included texts by Mário Schenberg, Décio Pignatari, Michel Ragon, Gillo Dorfles and William C. Seitz.

<sup>280</sup> Original: ‘Ora, sendo a Bienal de São Paulo uma confluência da arte de mais de cinquenta países, natural que nela se possa dividir o acêrvo conglomerado em duas pautas: Op art e pop art. Pois até mesmo as diversas outras manifestações objetivas, quer as de ordem concreta quer as de ordem realística sejam elas apresentadas em repertório e em técnica segundo módulos expressionistas, surrealistas, etc., podem como processo e como way of life estratificar-se na forma centripeta do op e na forma centrífuga do pop. Tomemos como exemplo estrangeiro os contingentes da França, da Itália e dos Estados Unidos, e vejamos a conjuntura pop nêles predominante.’ In José Geraldo Vieira, “Pop Art da IX Bienal,” *Correio da Manhã*, Rio de Janeiro, 17 September 1967. The preview dossier as a whole included texts by Mário Schenberg, Décio Pignatari, Michel Ragon, Gillo Dorfles and William C. Seitz.

*not give them the necessary gratuity to embrace, with vivacity, brightness and naturalness any advertising endeavour. Young artists like Gerchman - with his continuous denunciation of the miseries of his hometown and his endless love for the neon lights outside bars (botecos) where regular people go - or Antônio Dias, do not do things in order to publicise the satisfaction of consumerism for the sake of consumerism. The difference to them, Popistas of underdevelopment, is that they choose whom to produce for.<sup>281</sup>*

Dias and Gerchman both drew inspiration from their immediate surroundings, popular culture, oftentimes revealing certain consequences of development in underdeveloped contexts. Consequently, Pedrosa adopted the fitting oxymoron of *Popistas of underdevelopment* to highlight the specifically Brazilian and underdeveloped aspect of their works. He noted how Pop in the United States reflected a cultural identity defined by consumer culture and Capitalism, and how the notion of underdevelopment contradicted US Pop's very matrix. Dias and Gerchman, two figures of reference within the current history of Pop in Brazil, represented *Nova Objetividade Brasileira*, yet engaged with society through popular culture, including music, football or vernacular products like *cordels* (brief stories illustrated by woodcut prints, usually sold cheaply in markets and squares in North-eastern Brazil).

Dias began working with abstraction in the late fifties, after moving to Rio de Janeiro from North-Eastern Brazil. Though his primary media were drawing and creating textures over wood with plaster (as to recreate the texture of city walls onto canvas), he also began experimenting with printmaking, and the aesthetics of the wood block printing techniques used to make *cordels* transpired in his practice (fig. 40). Dias' works from the mid-sixties are distinguished by visceral red, black and white imagery, symbolic of the blood and the dirt of the urban underbelly – references that were accentuated during the early stages of the military dictatorship. Dias' canvases are largely divided in to geometric compartments, perhaps borrowed from the structure of comic books and the iconography of popular graffiti. Within each vignette, Dias inserted images of nuclear clouds, skeleton soldiers, toxic gasses and scattered phalluses. From 1964 onwards, works like *Acidente no Jogo* (Accident in the game, 1964) (fig. 41), also incorporated three-dimensional corporeal elements: a protruding red phallus in the midst of stylised

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<sup>281</sup> Pedrosa, Mário, *Do pop Americano ao sertanejo Dias*, Correio da Manhã, Rio de Janeiro, 29/10/1967.

Fig. 39 North American artists at the IX São Paulo Biennial. Standing: Ellsworth Kelly, Dan Flavin, Joseph Kosuth, Richard Serra, Laurence Weiner, Nassos Daphnis, Jasper Johns, Claes Oldenburg, Salvatore Scarpitta, Richard Artschwager, Cletus Johnson, Mia Westerlund Rosen, Keith Sonnier. Below: Andy Warhol, Robert Rauschenberg, Leo Castelli, James Rosenquist, Edward Ruscha and Robert Barry.





Fig. 40

- a. Antônio Dias  
*Pavão sobre o Poço*, 1962  
 Embossed plaster over wood  
 54 x 62 cm



- b. Antônio Dias  
*Passeata de Protesto*, 1963  
 Mixed media on paper  
 23.5 x 30 cm



skulls and bones, evoking a destructive, yet deeply satirical sexuality. The artist sabotaged commercial culture's semiotic structure forcing viewers to confront the traumas of their environment, the taboo of sexuality and the silenced threat of the military.

Similarly, Gerchman was in line with the culture of the vast majority of the urban population. Samba music, boteco culture, football (on show at the 1967 São Paulo Biennial were his renditions of Pelè with the unmistakable number 10 shirt), religion and celebrity culture, which became indexes of social stratification. One of Gerchman's most iconic works is *Lidoneia, a Gioconda dos suburbios*, a 1964 canvas which depicted a woman (named Lidoneia) encapsulated within an elaborate mirror frame, with the inscription *An Impossible Love, The Beautiful Lindoneia, Died instantly at 18 years of age* (fig. 42).<sup>282</sup> Gerchman's Lidoneia is a working class woman. The image sought to be devoid of the pretension of a portrait, but references a snapshot of a street photographer, while her neutral, rather than enigmatic, expression is unpretentious and simply documents her identity. The image reports a crime of passion. Gerchman's work inspired a popular song of the same name by Caetano Veloso, from the album *Tropicália, ou Panis et Circenses* (Philips, 1968) – for which Gerchman designed the cover (fig. 43). The lyrics speak of the difficulties that 'Lidoneia desaparecida' (missing or forgotten) had to confront in her daily life. Veloso had also participated in the music event *Opinão*, which placed his music within the context of cultural resistance of the military dictatorship.

Though Pedrosa envisioned a dialogue between Pop and Gerchman, the latter suffered from such speculations. In 1966 he stated in an interview:

*It is time we put an end to this nonsensical perception that we have been influenced by US pop art. A few US pop artists such as Larry Rivers, Jasper Johns, Claes Oldenburg are important for us, indeed, in the sense that they revealed the potential use of new materials and subject matters; however, their influence has been exerted individually, not as a group or school. I have been to New York and have seen the 'pop' they are doing there. I think it is poor, decadent, even*<sup>283</sup>

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<sup>282</sup> Original: 'Um amor impossível. A bela Lindoneia. De 18 anos morreu instantaneamente.'

<sup>283</sup> Rubens Gerchman quoted by Jose Augusto Ribeiro in *Aproximações Do Espírito Pop*, p. 158.

Fig. 41 Antônio Dias with his work *Nota Sobre a Morte Imprevista*, 1964



Fig. 42 *Rubens Gerchman*  
*A Béla Lidonéia*, 1966  
 Acrylic, glass and collage on wood  
 90 x 90 cm

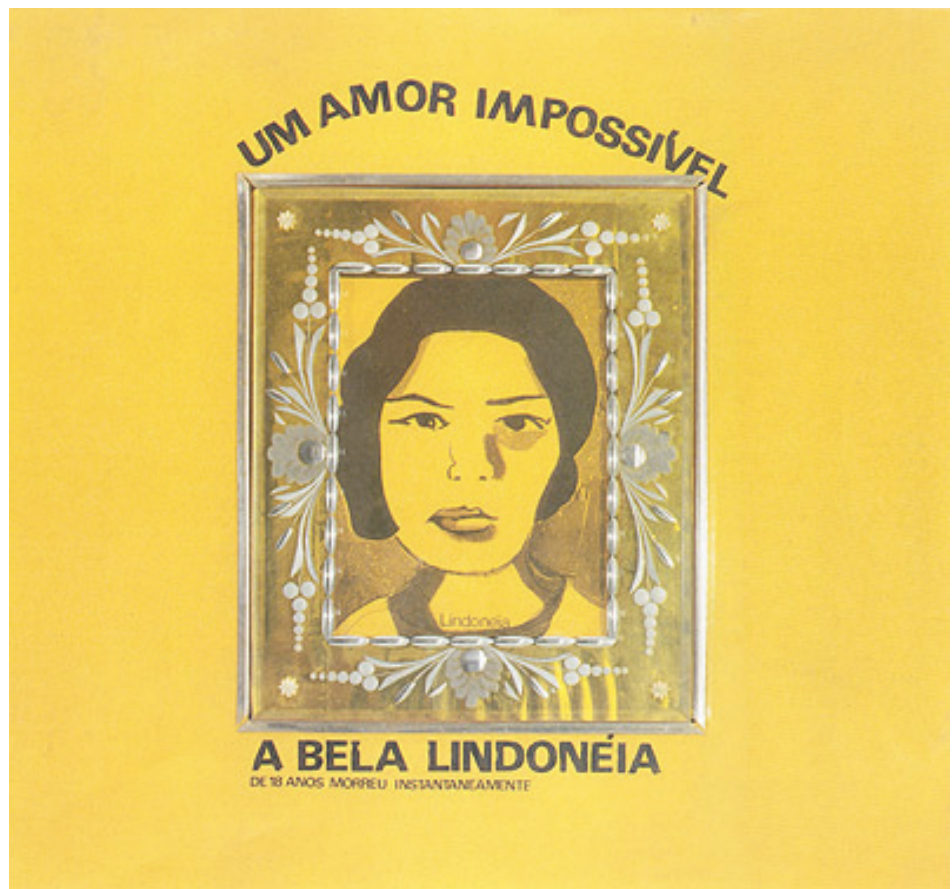




Fig. 43 Cover of the vinyl record by Caetano Veloso, Gilberto Gil, Gal Costa, Os Mutantes, titled *Tropicalia*, (Philips Universal, 1968). Design by Rubens Gerchman



The malaise associated with Pop – an attitude shared by many other than Gerchman<sup>284</sup> - relates to an anxiety towards derivation. This sentiment was further heightened by the failure of Developmentalism. Kubitschek's policies had inspired great nationalist fervour. Yet, when his project failed and Brazil was struck by an economic crisis, excitement for the future was replaced by nostalgia for traditional Brazilian values (or their myth). Aracy Amaral explained this historical moment by claiming that the idealised vision of such brazilianness, was being purged by what she defined as an 'American way of living,' marking a generational divide between young artists eager to become attuned with international currents, and older ones who yearned traditional culture.<sup>285</sup> The resulting ethos was one of duality towards imported trends, of both admiration and intolerance, which largely summarised the malaise Pop evoked.

The generational shift that occurred in parallel with the change in the nationalist message catalysed a re-formulation of *Nova Figuração*, which – as stated by Cordeiro in 1963 – was a completely new language. The formation of REX Gallery and Sons, poignantly illustrates how this reformulation occurred, and how the art system, and its audience received it. REX sought to open the possibilities of art for a younger generation, tracing the outlines of a space outside of the gallery/museum circuit. The gallery was the product of the collaboration of Lee, Leirner and de Barros, who worked with younger artists including Carmela Gross, Nitsche, José Resende and Federico Nasser. The REX cast metal insignia was forged in the style of a bank's suggesting that the art that could be bought inside was an investment, or a bond purchased directly from culture. Despite the success of its public program and of its bi-monthly bulletin, centred on international art, the initiative only ran for one year due to the artists' lack of business acumen. Despite their financial shortcomings, the REX experiment is still widely referenced as a courageous and unique statement against the dominant trends in Brazilian art at the time.

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<sup>284</sup> A valuable resource that supports the general adversity towards any affiliation to Pop is the collection of interviews edited in Frigeri and Morgan, *The World Goes Pop*, pp. 123-173.

<sup>285</sup>Aracy Amaral, "Dos Carimbos á bolha," *O Estado de São Paulo*, Literary Supplement, São Paulo, 27 April 1968.

The closing exhibition of the gallery displayed works by Leirner, which the visitors were encouraged to steal away for the duration of the opening. The theft was not made easy as many works were chained to the walls, or complex to reach. Regardless of the hurdles, the gallery was empty in less than one hour. This episode is a key example of the process of democratization of the art object that was taking place in those years. Despite the unique positioning of REX within the cultural milieu, at the opening of the space in June 1966, the American NET (national educational television) had interviewed Lee as the foremost representative of the gallery. After elucidating Lee's North American lineage, the voiceover explains, 'Wesley Duke Lee is in his mid-thirties and is one of the most important people in Brazil because of the quality of his work. [...] painting was nothing in Brazil until Lee's work and that of his students appeared.' The over voice finally added, 'it has come to the point where the Brazilian government quite literally exports him along with coffee and bossa nova.'<sup>286</sup>

The ambivalent position occupied by REX as both a beacon of anti-establishmentarianism and a celebrated ally of the government for US television (the US persisted in dominating the Brazilian economy), greatly complicates its history, and it remains to be questioned whether democratization was in fact one of the Gallery's objectives. Nevertheless, REX's efforts and in-depth engagement with the redefinition of contemporary art places it at a nodal junction within this narrative.<sup>287</sup> Of their four quarterly bulletins, one was entirely dedicated to Pop (fig. 44). The articles included one by Argentine Luís Felipe Noé who discussed the relations between Pop in the US and in his native Buenos Aires. Besides having an educational intent, the bulletins dealt with the legacies of foreign art on contemporary production, both locally and abroad, demonstrating REX's value in enhancing discussion within the São Paulo intellectuals, and younger artists.

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<sup>286</sup> *The Creative Person*, American television Program showing an interview with Wesley Duke Lee on the occasion of the opening of Rex Gallery and Sons in São Paulo in June 1966. Lane Slate (producer and director) *The Creative Person*, NET (national educational television). Instituto Wesley Duke Lee, São Paulo.

<sup>287</sup> For a thorough analysis of the REX phenomenon see: Fernanda Lopes, *A Experiência Rex: 'éramos O Time Do Rei,'* (São Paulo: Alameda, 2009).

Over the past fifteen years scholars have predominantly examined the works of the Neo-Realist generation, which strongly opposed any US-driven 'Pop' influence, in connection with this term, proving its application grossly problematic. The narrative they constructed examines these events, which have been mainly illustrated with the canvases produced by male artists, most notably Dias, Gerchman, Leirner, Cordeiro and Lee. Further artists who populate the pages of this history (Mauricio Nogueira Lima, Geraldo de Barros, Raymundo Collares, Carlos Zílio) have not received the same amount of attention as the aforementioned group, yet their contemporaneous trajectories facilitate simplified groupings within a Neo-Realist discourse. In addition, a whole chapter on this history of women artists working with Pop is largely missing. Although artists such as Wanda Pimentel, Teresinha Soares, Regina Vater, Lotus Lobo, Judith Lauand have been recognised with solo exhibitions in Brazil, even in recent years, their works have been wholly excluded from larger surveys concerning Pop. A vital example of this is Anna Maria Maiolino, whose work is internationally recognised today, although it was hardly given prominence during the sixties in Brazil. Maiolino's work in this period is pivotal as it explicitly addressed (among other things) the important legacies of anthropophagy, it was influenced by traditional woodblock printing, while also reflecting on the role of women in Brazilian society.

Many of the missing narratives surrounding Pop belong to the period after the IX São Paulo Biennial (1967), when the term Pop began to circulate more freely in Brazil. All these accounts are extensions of the artistic enquiries elucidated so far, in particular the concern for a reconciliation of the legacies of the past, with the popularization and democratization of the work of art, and an increasing reliance on mediated imagery.

With the circulation of Pop as a term of reference (the fact that it was used does not mean its premises were emulated by artists) the style of *Nova Figuração* took a further step towards a visual language that perhaps can be understood as a contemporaneous approximation and subversion of Pop – as Cacilda Teixeira described the works between 1964-1968. What REX, *Nova Objetividade* and the São Paulo Biennial of 1967 established, was a deeper understanding of Pop as a phenomenon related to technology, new media, new investigations into the realm of viewer participation which was not solely linked to the United States, but to France, England, and much of the rest of Western and Eastern Europe at the time. What I've

described so far as a *malaise* towards the connotations of Pop as a symptom of cultural imperialism, was somehow fused with a desire to enter in dialogue with international affairs. Pedrosa's use of the definition 'Popsitas of underdevelopment' relates to this inclination towards an acceptance of the term as Pop, but not quite, stated by the addendum 'of underdevelopment.'

## 2.e 'Art for Everyone, Available to Everyone:' Aracy Amaral Against Pop

The previous section established how Pop in Brazil began to seep into the national lexicon after the IX São Paulo Biennial, and how the resistance towards this cultural label gradually diminished. The second part of this chapter seeks to investigate how Pop manifested within the local context, how it was understood, and how it can be re-examined from a contemporary standpoint. At first, the correlation between ludic art, Pop and Americanization is examined through the key article *Dos Carimbos à Bolha* (*From the Stamps to the Bubbles*, 1968) by Aracy A. Amaral published in the literary supplement of the newspaper O Estado de São Paulo. The debate progresses on the notion of Pop as pornography, understood in opposition to eroticism, in texts by Marta Traba and Susan Sontag. As these relationships are exposed and untangled, the text relies on a sample of works to test the validity of such vocabularies, unearthing connections that associate them with wider narratives in South America and elsewhere. As such, the process of reconciliation with wider XX century movements, and narratives, sees a potential resolution through this contested term.

Aracy Amaral, in the article *From Stamps to Bubbles*, expresses her deep discontent with a younger generation that was so eager to renounce a 'Brazilian Reality' for an 'American way of living.' The text reflects on the repercussions of the IX Biennial, exposing the complexities of the socio-political context and confronting the issue of Americanization, epitomized by Pop. Amaral critiques the IX biennial for its overabundance of works by young artists, lacking in the quality and sophistication of US Pop, by contrast fluent in the 'language of consumerism.' The issue of imitation is at stake, and the works of art are harshly tested against a rigorous understanding of a Brazilian art history, rooted in a myriad of vernacular traditions. In *From Stamps to Bubbles*, Amaral notes an increasing approximation with Pop, and she references the



Fig. 44

- c. *Rex Time* n.1. São Paulo, 3 June 1966, p. 3.
- d. *Rex Time* n.4. São Paulo, 10 March 1967, p. 2.



Fig. 45 Rubens Gerchman  
*O Altar*, 1967  
Plywood, acrylic, and pillows

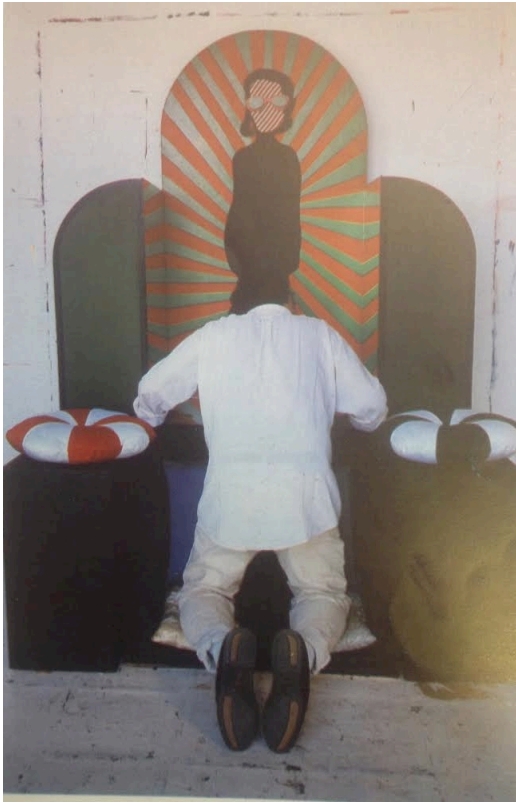


Fig. 46 Nelson Leirner  
*Adoração (Um altar por Roberto Carlos)*, 1967  
Iron turnstile, velvet, religious images, painted canvas and neon  
260 x 262 cm



'environmental tendencies' that were taking shape in Brazil, a response to a general will to disseminate the work of art to a broader portion of the public.<sup>288</sup>

At the IX São Paulo Biennial several artists exhibited interactive objects/environments. Gerchman exhibited *O Altar (Agora Dobre os Joelhos)* (The altar, now bend your knees), (fig. 45), a humorous and colourful *prie-dieu*, adorned with pillows, which replaced the crucifix with the image of a celebrity. Gerchman's work appears in dialogue with Nelson Leirner's *Adoração (Altar por Roberto Carlos)*, 1966 (Adoration, altar for Roberto Carlos, fig. 46), a penetrable sculpture/environment, made of three main elements: a yellow turnstile to enter the work, a red curtain that hid its contents from plain sight, and within it a neon lit shrine with the image of Roberto Carlos, the iconic pop rock singer, songwriter and actor, also known as *O Rei* (The King, as was his own idol Elvis Presley or footballer Pelè). Both works use religious ritual as a parody of social norms and celebrity culture, yet with the objective to engage a wider portion of the public through what Amaral defined as a 'ludic approach,' and one of the key characteristics of *Nova Objetividade*. The colourful and eye-catching features of the works attracted spectators, and the approachability of their themes encouraged wider engagement.

Amongst Amaral's references, which express the ludic aspect of participatory objects are two collective works known as *Domingo das Bandeiras* (Flag Sunday, fig. 47) and *Carimbos* (Stamps, fig. 48), which have seldom been examined in print, if not only in passing.<sup>289</sup> In the winter of 1967, Leirner, Flávio Motta (professor at the University of Sao Paulo), and his students amongst whom was Marcello Nitsche, planned to distribute silkscreened flags and banners, on the streets of São Paulo: a

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<sup>288</sup> The São Paulo based Czech philosopher Vilem Flusser, soon after the opening of the Biennale, published an article in which he re-examined Johan Huizinga's popular dictum *homo ludens*. In the article Flusser references the works presented in the biennial, which avail themselves of this notion, yet fail to achieve a significant communication, as the system these works operate by is far too ample to allow for a concise and clear formulation. Villem Flusser, 'Jogos,' Literary Supplement, *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 23 November 1967, and Villem Flusser, 'Generalidades, Misticismo e Sedução', *O Globo*, Literary Supplement, Rio de Janeiro, 20 January 1968.

<sup>289</sup> The Centro Municipal de Arte Hélio Oiticica has restaged the event *Flag Sunday* on October 4, 2014 in the Tiradentes Square in Rio de Janeiro. *Stamps* are held in the Roger Wright Collection in São Paulo and have never been re-exhibited outside of the collection.



Fig. 47 *Bandeiras na Praça General Osório, Ipanema, Rio de Janeiro, 18 February 1968. Photos by Evandro Teixeira.*



democratizing gesture designed to rebel against the exclusive gallery and museum apparatus. This form of antagonism towards the market was being voiced in São Paulo by the artists of REX Gallery & Sons, who waged war against the art system that impeded the development of a young art and the formation of an effective collection of Brazilian national art, because of lacking in exhibition platforms, publications and bold critics.<sup>290</sup>

The authorities prematurely ended the event by confiscating the banners and dispersing its participants. Despite the hostility solicited by *Domingo das Bandeiras*, Leirner and Motta, with the added cooperation of Carlos Sciar, Oiticica, Vergara, Farnese de Andrade, Gerchman, Dias and other Rio de Janeiro artists, were able to re-stage the event the following year. Cloaked by the clamour of the Carnival, the artists gathered in the General Osorio Square in Rio on 18 February 1968. Each of the participating artists designed a flag, which referenced a mixture of themes as football (Gerchman and Leirner), still life painting (Sciar), Cordel literature (Dias),<sup>291</sup> political resistance (Oiticica, Samuel Spiegl). Among the flags that circulated most widely was Oiticica's *Seja marginal, seja herói* (Be an outcast, be a hero). In keeping with a method he had used in the past, Oiticica based his image on one he found in a newspaper of the thief Alcir Figueira da Silva, who decided to commit suicide rather than face arrest after a bank robbery (Oiticica had previously used newspaper images of victims of the armed forces, such as the bandit Cara de Cavalo, killed by the police who fabricated the circumstances of his death). Figueira da Silva's story was little remembered because it did not receive much attention from the media. Yet it was precisely this 'marginality' that, for Oiticica, underscored how the media could only draw attention to a fraction of the crimes perpetrated by officials during that difficult time, and thus the extent to which the regime instilled fear into people's minds. With a similar polemical tone, Anna Maria Maiolino presented a flag with the words *Alta Tensão* (High tension); Cláudio Tozzi a re-mastered image of Che Guevara. As the banners were put on display, the Banda de Ipanema and the Mangueira Samba School joined the event, merging the demonstration with the carnival celebrations.

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<sup>290</sup> 'Warning: it is war.' *Rex Time*, n.1. São Paulo, 3 June 1966.

<sup>291</sup> Cordels, which literally means strings, are brief stories or poems illustrated by woodcut prints, usually sold cheaply in markets and squares in North-eastern Brazil.

Fig. 48 *Carimbos*, 1967  
13 wood and rubber stamps  
From top left to right by: de Barros, Leirner, Imperio, Assunção, Torres,  
Katz, Motta, Gross, Gruber, Tozzi, Nitsche, Szpigel, Gonzaga.





The following week Scilar united the artists once again, this time to sell their banners at bargain prices, between 40 and 60 Cruzeiros Novos (the equivalent of USD 12-18 at the time). Members of the public were invited to write comments about the banners and to deposit these in urns that, by resembling ballot boxes, were also symbols for democracy. The whole event was designed to approach as broad an audience as possible and to sensitize it to the potential of art to mobilize the public. Scilar devised the urn system as the last phase of Flag Sunday, seeking to encourage the public to examine what the flags stood for. Moreover, the act of placing opinions into an urn sealed a critical connection with Brazil's dictatorship, which did not permit democratic elections.

*Carimbos*, is a series of thirteen giant stamps (approximately A4), each one designed by a different artist, including Flavio Motta, Claudio Tozzi, Marcello Nitsche, Carmela Gross and Nelson Leirner. The stamps were exhibited at the IV Salão de Arte Moderna do Distrito Federal, in the Teatro Nacional Cláudio Santoro in Brasília, where the artists distributed to the public sheets of paper printed with the stamps. Each one presented an image greatly associated with a singular artist's practice resulting in a highly varied visual sample. Claudio Tozzi reproduced the image of one of his previous works of a chop (a draft beer) with the slogan 'I drink chop, she thinks about marriage;' while Luís Gonzaga presented a re-elaboration of Warhol's 'do it yourself' paintings, perhaps commenting on the persistent focus on technique, one of the most substantial sources of criticism of Brazil's room at the São Paulo Biennial.<sup>292</sup> Other images recalled political issues presenting the footprint of a military boot (Marcello Nitsche), or a closed fist (Carmela Gross). *Carimbos* had similar objectives to those of the *Domingo das Bandeiras*. Both works/events sought to be open and available to a wider public. Their collaboration strengthened their democratizing suit, while each artist was able to maintain their visual language uncompromised.

Works such as *Domingo das Bandeiras* or *Carimbos*, were considered within Pop's orbit because of their receptiveness towards imported culture. This negative understanding of Pop as the product of Americanization underpins once more how the

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<sup>292</sup> These include: Aracy Amaral, 'Arte Sem Educação e/ou o Brasil visto de afora' and Mário Schenberg, 'Representação Brasileira na IX Biennial de São Paulo,' *Correio da Manhã*, São Paulo, September 27, 1967.

issue was conspicuous. Dominant rhetoric seeks to underline the importance of non-derivation when using imported terminologies. A genealogical study of a given artistic current reveals its embeddedness within a specific milieu, yet the recognition and acceptance of influence as the result of economic or technological development is wrongly associated with what is foreign or other solely. In the case of Pop in Brazil what was demonised as Americanisation was the symptom of what was happening during the 1960s in major urban centres worldwide, as a product of technological innovation and industrialization.

In the final section of the article Amaral examined and praised 26-year-old Marcello Nitsche's work *Bolha* (*Bubble*, 1968). While at university, Nitsche worked as an engraver, and only in the mid sixties became increasingly drawn to painting, under the growing influence of the Neo-Figurative movement and the aesthetics of Pop art. After the military coup in 1964, Nitsche's works began to reference overtly political themes such as the financial relationship that tied Brazil to the United States and the Vietnam War. Between 1966-1967 he frequented the REX Gallery where he participated in a group show alongside other young promises, with whom he collaborated in the realization of both *Carimbos* and also in *Domingo das Bandeiras*. The time he spent alongside the REX artists greatly informed his later output, especially in terms of spectator participation and the construction of environments. In 1967 Nitsche participated in *Nova Objetividade Brasileira* exhibition in Rio, and at the IX Biennial, Nitsche exhibited, among other works, *Mata Mosca* (Fly swatter, 1967), a larger than life papier-mâché hand holding a swatter. *Bolha*, discussed in Amaral's article, represents a moment of culmination and rupture in Nitsche's artistic trajectory. Exhibited at the Art-Art Gallery in São Paulo, *Bolha* was a large-scale contraption, which every hour on the hour was put into operation. What at first appeared to be a large piece of red synthetic fabric resting on the ground, transformed into a bubble. As it was slowly filled with air, it grew into the space occupying most of it, and forcing the viewers to press against the walls of the gallery. Amaral highlights the work's '[impressively relevant political connotations] in this moment of nervous tension for young people across the country.'<sup>293</sup>

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<sup>293</sup> Aracy A. Amaral, "Dos Carimbos á Bolha."



By highlighting the work of Nitsche, Amaral also demonstrated her appreciation for the corporeal and erotic presence of the work of art, explaining the transcendental value of combining a ludic/participatory sentiment with an erotic one:

*As [the Bubble] slowly grew, the public was instantly attracted, becoming increasingly aware of a desire to touch it, to dominate it, following the peak phase of its physical might. Even the noise of the machine that accompanies the 'growth' of the work up to its 'orgasm' is greatly important from the perspective of communication, transmitting to all those present the vibration of its erotic genital evolution, already a sexualised form when at rest and until its moment of climax.<sup>294</sup>*

Amaral highlights the importance of the physical experience of the work, and the feeling it produced within the spectator's body. Nitsche's work both captured the sense of tension that permeated cultural life due to the regime's oppressive presence, and the physical erotic feelings it elicited. This juxtaposition allows a reference to Freud's pleasure principle by which desire rises in order to escape or replace a sense of pain or trauma, which Nitsche's work cleverly plays upon. *Bubble* parallels the sense of fear or oppression caused by the regime, with one of excitement and desire.

Amaral's critique of *Domingo das Bandeiras* or *Carimbos* reveals her hostility towards Pop as the symptom of the loss of local culture, yet her appraisal of Nitsche's *Bolha*, suggests a greater propensity or approval of Art as Erotic and Political. Of the works that Nitsche made in the late sixties, *Bolha* is the least Pop of all, lacking the most notable figurative elements. Amaral's discussion of Pop, art in the public space, 'ludic approaches,' and her conclusive arrival to the notion of eroticism, opens further avenues of investigation, and within this thesis an examination of Pop's use and relevance within art history in Brazil.

## **2.f Between Erotic art, Pornography, and a Ludic Approach: a 'State of Alert' in Brazilian Art**

A reading of *From Stamps to Bubble*, sheds light on how the work of young artists under the aegis of Pop is decoded under three aspects: the first two, tightly

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<sup>294</sup> Ibid.

connected to the *Nova Objetividade* are participation and a 'ludic approach;' the third, revealed through Marcello Nitsche's *Bubble*, is connected to eroticism. Another writer who shared Amaral's view is Marta Traba. In her book *Dos Décadas Vulnerables en las Artes Plásticas Latinoamericanas, 1950-1970* (Two Vulnerable Decades in Latin American Plastic Arts - first published in 1973) she traces the connections between Pop, Ludic and Erotic art.<sup>295</sup> Like Amaral, Traba emerges as a pessimistic interpreter of Latin American Art of the 1960s and 1970s, condemning the weak position of local artists, too eager to evade their 'peripheral' predicament, by sacrificing their vernacular languages and customs in favour of imported ones. Voicing her alarm in regards to the exponential loss of local traditions Traba writes:

*[The 1960s] are the epoch when Latin American art paid tribute. It is no coincidence that this obligation marches parallel to the 'generous' offensive camouflaged under the name Alliance for Progress, to the easy universal sympathy that radiates from the 'Kennedy style,' to the increased greed with which US shareholders purchase the mixed or national companies in the continent, to the hand stretched out to the dictatorships, to the distribution of loans that mortgage the future of our countries, to the instant suffocation of any attempt of independence (Santo Domingo, Bay of Pigs) and the fixed blockade against the Cuban Revolution.*<sup>296</sup>

This passage underlines Traba's hostility towards Americanization, both cultural and ideological. This perspective continues to inform her analysis of the ludic aspect present in North American and European art, described by Pierre Restany as the result of fetishisation of the object, and to the solicitation of participation as a programmed activity.<sup>297</sup> Considering the object as the void product of useless inventions, such as Duchamp's iron with nails made for Man Ray, Traba considers it a fetish, with no sincere cultural value. In this context she highlights: 'The contribution that Latin America may give to Ludic art is justly rooted in its differing nature, in its interpretation via real

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<sup>295</sup> Marta Traba, Andrea Giunta (ed.), *Dos décadas vulnerables en las artes plásticas latinoamericanas, 1950-1970*, (Buenos Aires: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 2005).

<sup>296</sup> Ibid. p.205.

<sup>297</sup> Original: 'El arte-juego recurre al fetichismo puro del objeto, a los ritos múltiples que son susceptibles de engendrar la comunicación active del espectador, a las nociones de control y de relevo de la voluntad en el seno de una actividad programada.' Ibid. p. 99.

mythical elements, with magical contexts that arise from the Andean, Central American or Caribbean cultures, from which they derive.<sup>298</sup>

Traba continually places North American and Latin American art in opposition in the attempt to salvage local iterations from being absorbed by imported standards. Her analysis of the characteristics of local art practices is fractured between those that keep faith to national identity and those influenced by international currents. Both groups appear to be 'levelled' respectively by internationalism and by what she defines as a 'syndrome' that triggered a state of alert within the plastic arts. Its symptoms manifested in three ways: a return of drawing as a preferred technique, the nationalization of Pop as a local anaesthetising rhetoric, and a valuing of Eroticism as a counterpoint to Pop, and alienation. Traba claims that drawing represents the explicit renunciation of painting, sculpture, happening and environments, which she equates to the refusal to participate in the 'avant-garde circus,' dependent on spectacle and sensationalism (this point will not be further elaborated as it strays from the main argument).<sup>299</sup> She then concedes that the 'invasion' of Pop in the 1960s (a 'poster-age') had acquired local meaning, as it became a vital prerogative of the artwork to become absorbable without obstacles.<sup>300</sup> In this context, Erotic art is seen in diametrical opposition to Pop, because it does not provide 'explicit or concrete imagery,' and a relation to sexuality is not marked expressly – therefore it is not readily intelligible. According to Traba, while in the United States the notion of eroticism connected to the free representation of sexuality and a tolerance towards pornography, in Latin America eroticism was more of an innuendo or an undercurrent, which signified simultaneously a degree of independence from the United States, and an unusual attempt to sublimate sexuality.<sup>301</sup>

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<sup>298</sup> 'El aporte que Latinoamérica puede dar a el lúdico radica, justamente, en su diversa naturaleza, en su interpretación con elementos míticos reales, con contextos mágicos que afloran de las culturas andinas, centroamericanas o caribes de donde provienen.' Translation: 'Ludic art recurs to the pure fetish of the object, to the multiple rituals that are susceptible to engender the active communication of the spectator, to the notions of control and relief of the will in the context of a programmed activity.' Ibid. p. 101.

<sup>299</sup> Ibid. p.206.

<sup>300</sup> Ibid. p.215.

<sup>301</sup> Original: Eroticism is a 'subsentido que responde a un proceso mental, a una interferencia entre significados expresados. Dentro de un análisis estructuralista, el erotismo correspondería a la metonimia, es decir, al deslizamiento de significados entre uno y otro soporte lingüístico. [...] es el mas esfuerzo de la cultura por destruir la falsa

The contrast between eroticism and pornography is a nodal point in her discussion, as it embodies the tensions and differences that she sees between US and local iterations. In the context of Pop this is heightened for similar reasons, as she sees comparable dynamics in place (in light of the 'poster-age'), yet with different manifestations and references – more subtle in the Latin continent. The disjunction between Pop and Erotic art is further expanded in another text on the works of Cuban artist Zilia Sánchez, where she writes:

*Pornography is to eroticism what 'kitsch' is to art: it uses the effects of eroticism and it thrives upon them. [...] It's impossible to claim that the sensations invoked by 'Antígona,' are the same ones that the sustained contemplation of the pornographic images in a film by Andy Warhol may give off, because the eroticism in the work by Zilia Sánchez seeks to persuade and convince in the same way in which Warhol's pornography seeks to strike and impact.<sup>302</sup>*

Most notable among the films made by Warhol – the Pop artist *par excellence* – is *Blow Job*, 1964, which hinted at male sex by shooting the face of a young man, presumably whilst being pleased by another who never appears in the frame. The contrast established between such films and the Erotic works by Sánchez - which also explicitly invoke the anatomy of female genitalia - marks the difference between erotic art and pornography. This narrow distinction reflects the differences in Latin American and US Pop.

Combining the views of Amaral and Traba, one of the conclusions that may be drawn is that the increasing reliance on imported culture gave rise to a fracture in the plastic arts. On one hand, artists who were faithful to local languages produced works that were charged with eroticism. On the other, artists who were increasingly willing to align themselves to international currents, manifest through a ubiquitous 'poster-age,' produced works that were more pornographic. A common denominator between these is a ludic property, which pervades the pornographic artefact as a reverberation of

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alianza 'civilización-represión', que en nuestro continente debía plantearse bajo los términos mas adecuados de 'subdesarrollo-represión'. ' She claims that eroticism is a 'subtext that responds to a mental process, to an interference between explicit meanings,' p. 220.

<sup>302</sup> Marta Traba, 'El erotismo y la comunicación,' in *Zona de Carga y Descarga*, San Juan, Puerto Rico, November – December 1972, p.11.

'kitsch,' and the erotic one as a trigger for participation. Another important aspect of the arguments outlined so far, is the qualitative interpretation that undermines the value of pornography in all its forms.

A vital contributor to the definition of pornography in art is Susan Sontag, who also addresses the relationships between eroticism, pornography and comedy, which to some degree is an extension of the 'ludic approach' discussed so far. Sontag firstly distinguishes between three kinds of pornography: the first is an 'item in social history,' or a phenomenon that surged in North America and in Western Europe during the XIX century; the second is a psychological phenomenon which emerges from forms of sexual deficiency; the third, which she concerns herself with, is a 'minor but interesting modality within the arts.'<sup>303</sup> Sontag's intellectual discussion on the value of pornography as art – a term, which extends to both literature and the plastic arts – reaches several junctions, which are of particular relevance in the context of Brazilian art, especially in terms of reassessing the value of pornography as art per se. She observes how pornography as a literary genre, for example, is a form of knowledge, which does not have to be necessarily linked to the 'festering legacy of Christian sexual repression and to sheer psychological ignorance.' She continues:

*...these ancient disabilities being now compounded by more proximate historical events, the impact of drastic dislocations in traditional modes of family and political order and unsettling change in the roles of sexes (the problem of pornography is one of the 'dilemmas of a society in transition' [Paul] Goodman said in an essay several years ago).*<sup>304</sup>

Sontag seeks to uproot the 'tenacious clichés' surrounding pornography in order to reveal its potency as a form of knowledge, which only becomes dangerous when used by psychologically unprepared individuals, like most forms of knowledge available.<sup>305</sup> In this way Sontag divorces pornography from traditionalism in a productive way. So the damming position of people like Traba or Amaral can begin to be renegotiated, and can

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<sup>303</sup> Elizabeth Hardwick (ed.), *A Susan Sontag Reader*, (New York: Random House, 1983), p.205.

<sup>304</sup> Ibid. p. 207.

<sup>305</sup> Ibid.

begin to reveal valuable facets of a cultural moment. Sontag further reflects on the parallelisms between the format of comedy and of pornography: both genres, in complete contrast to tragedy, deny any form of deep emotion or trauma. For instance, in comedy or satire the characters do not manifest the emotional depth of suffering. Similarly, the characters in pornography exist within a perpetual tableau where nothing truly ever happens, and the characters never learn from experience. Sontag juxtaposes Voltaire's *Candide* with de Sade's *120 Days of Sodom*: Candide undergoes no change throughout the novel regardless of his adventures and encounters; the tortured and sodomised characters in de Sade's novel somehow are always magically cured of their wounds, and their psychological state never alters. Another aspect that this comparison reveals is the potential for political satire within pornography, which is also most usually placed in relation with blasphemy and sin, challenges to the authority and righteousness of the church. Often the terminology used in religious and pornographic texts is also analogous (for example the terms passion, ecstasy). Finally, Sontag points out how pornography does not pertain to Oriental religious sculpture or erotic art, as the premises of eroticism completely differ from those of pornography inasmuch as eroticism does not embody an extreme, but rather is a suggestion and an innuendo – as Traba also states in her text on Zilia Sánchez.

Sontag's reflections on pornography in relation to comedy still permit a re-evaluation of what Traba deems so crude and worthless. If Pop is indeed pornographic (Traba), but also connected to a 'ludic approach' (Amaral), then its disassociation from Eroticism, which is related to the ludic in *Nova Objetividade*, can be reconsidered. Brazilian Pop, connected to *Nova Objetividade*, is certainly not the same as North American Pop, yet it is neither purely erotic as Oriental artefacts are considered. In the following section I will examine the works by artists connected to *Nova Objetividade*, Erotic Art and Pop, to highlight the overlaps that exists between these labels as well as to provide an alternative reading of Pop art practices in Brazil, through the lens of eroticism/pornography as one. Given their common traits, ludic and sexual are useful adjectives to describe many of these. Iterations of Pop in Brazil and in the West (particularly the US) are not equated, but merely placed in dialogue, in order to focus their historical value.

## 2.g Ludic Sexuality in Works by Wesley Duke Lee, Claudio Tozzi, and Rubens Gerchman

From within the thesis, one of the first examples that come to mind when thinking about eroticism, pornography and Pop is the already mentioned works by Wesley Duke Lee, *Ligas*. The original inspiration for this work, evident within Lee's writings and interviews, was an exploration of the amorous relationships between men and women.<sup>306</sup> The series sought to evince a sexualised representation of women by treating the body as a landscape relinquishing any subjective or erotic innuendo via this physical synaesthesia through which the body is substituted with the landscape. Despite having been exhibited at the Galleria Sistina in Milan in 1963, no gallery in Brazil accepted them due to their borderline pornographic content. Undignified by such backwardness (Lee understood the art scene to be unprepared for such works<sup>307</sup>) he organised an exhibition in collaboration with friends – the *Grande Espectáculo das Artes*, at the João Sebastião Bar in São Paulo. This event is particularly significant for three reasons: firstly because of the connection between Lee's oeuvre and Pop, established by numerous exhibitions as a consequence of the imagery drawn from the mass media which featured in his works; secondly the now internationally acknowledged allegations that his works might be pornographic; lastly, the humorous atmosphere of the 'spectacle,' which sought to demystify their pornographic content. Lee's *Ligas* thus embody the issue at stake regarding the local validity of Pop. By treating the body as landscape Lee activates a process of de-personalisation, which approximates his imagery to pornography: exaggerated curves, lines and clearly outlined anatomies may invoke pornographic personas. His training in the US also highlights this connection with explicit imagery. However, by approaching the body from the romantic standpoint of Love, and from the notion of lovemaking as a spiritual, natural activity, Lee's dialectic is closer to Oriental philosophies, and accordingly, to the

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<sup>306</sup>See Cacilda T. Costa, *Wesley Duke Lee*, (Rio de Janeiro: MEC/FUNARTE, 1980); Anonymous, "Mulher e Paisagem Confundem-se na Pintura de Wesley Duke Lee," *A Nação*, 6 November 1963; Anonymous, *Espectáculo de protesto de pintores causa conflito numa Boate de São Paulo*, Unknown newspaper, October 1963, Wesley Duke Lee Institute Archives; Anonymous, "Elegia para um Artista Vivo," *Correio da Manhã*, 11 January 1964.

<sup>307</sup> Lane Slate (producer and director) *The Creative Person*, NET (national educational television).

notion of eroticism as defined by Traba and Sontag. His direct confrontation of sexual liberation, not in terms of tolerance of libertinism, but in relation to communication and communion between men and women, places his practice (and consequently Pop's legitimacy) in a more productive and meaningful frame.

The notion of communion between men and women is also present in his environment *Trápezio o uma Confissão* (Trapeze or a confession, fig. 49), a work exhibited at the 1966 Venice Biennial, which Lee considered as the apex of his investigation in male/female relations. Inspired by Kurt Schwitters's *Merzhaus*, *Trápezio* is an immersive cubic environment constructed of acrylic and wooden panels suspended from the ceiling that represent aspects of human intimacy. The title *Trápezio o uma Confissão* reflects two layers of the work's meaning. 'Trapeze' refers to an Italian song titled *Acrobats* that inspired the male and female archetypal silhouettes suspended above ground and connected by transparent ropes on the green and yellow acrylic sheets. 'Confession' refers to the effect the work has on the viewer. Placed between the two figures, the spectator is cross-examined. The intimate space dissipates inhibitions leaving the viewer with no choice but to confess his/her secrets. The work incorporated a sound machine that produced a monotonous and consistent noise further isolating the viewer's perception.

The two works examined so far are emblematic of Lee's wider practice and support the hypothesis that the polarity between pornography and eroticism might be inconsequential and simplistic, while a combination of the two reveals important facets of contemporaneous Brazilian culture – including the process of cultural renewal informed by modernization and foreign investment, the influence of Japanese and other oriental cultures (the product of vast immigration), the shifting gender roles that were increasingly changing traditionalism, and the melancholic adversity towards such changes. In addition, Lee's experiments within the context of REX Gallery & Sons denote his will to disseminate art to wider segments of the public, by availing himself of humour and participation. Regardless of the merit of REX's ambitions, the art produced by the avant-garde in the sixties was in its very essence elitist, as those who produced it and consumed it were almost invariably upper middle class. Traba called democratization in art a 'vain rhetoric,' while Amaral a 'fairly traditional notion of



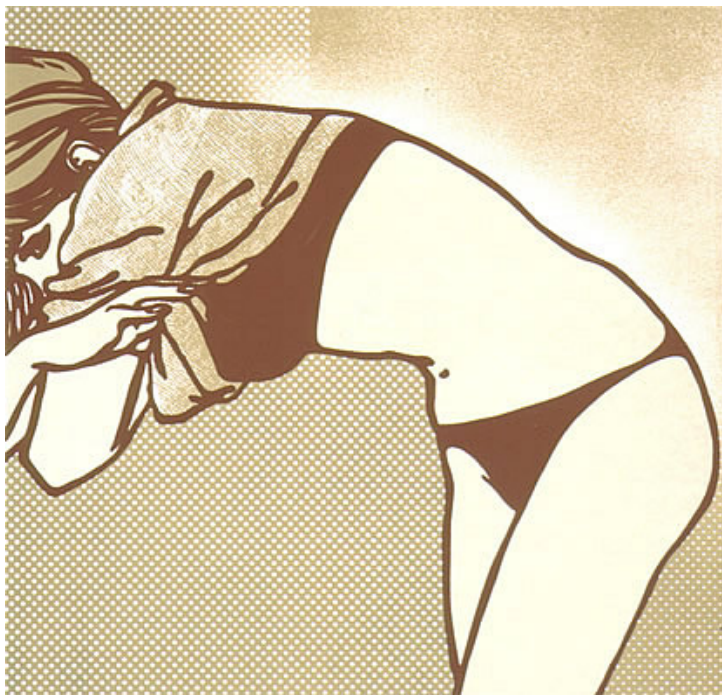
Fig. 49 Wesley Duke Lee  
*Trápizio o uma Confissão*, 1966  
Aluminium, cloth and plastic, graphite and oil paint on canvas, steel cable  
and cloth rope



Fig. 50 Rubens Gerchman  
*Use Para Ser Querida por Todos*, 1966-1967  
 Silkscreen on canvas  
 30 x 45 cm



Fig. 51 Cláudio Tozzi  
*Tirando a roupa (1º matriz)*,  
 Silkscreen on paper  
 48 x 66 cm



utopia.<sup>308</sup> This considered, Lee's works, like most works examined in this text, bare testimony to a restricted view of Brazilian culture – one pertinent only to the urban elites.

A series of drawings, elaborations of *Ligas*, produced in 1965 were included in an exhibition on the theme of erotic art in Brazil titled *O Preço da Sedução: do Espartilho ao Silicone* (The price of seduction: from corsets to silicone), held at the Itaú bank's cultural centre in 2004. The curators of the exhibition set out to trace how the ideal of feminine beauty transformed over the previous five decades, treating beauty as a social construct. Arranged in chronological order, the exhibition section that examined the period between 1960-1980 titled it *Os Anos Rebeldes*, (The rebel years) contextualises its pieces in direct relation to North American Pop. Most works featured in this section were by male artists; of thirteen, only three women were included (Wanda Pimentel, Lygia Pape, Madalena Schwartz). Claudio Tozzi, Rubens Gerchman, Ubirajara Ribeiro, all depicted women in bras, playing on the sexy advertisements in women's magazines, with slight alterations to the slogans to give them a semblance of contestation. A work by Gerchman titled *Use Para Ser Querida por Todos* (Use it to be Loved by All, 1966, fig. 50) is divided into two sections, the upper one with a series of female silhouettes, with no distinctive features and uniform grey bodies above the shoulders, wearing the same bra. Below, the repeated face of a man (equally anonymous), is gazing upwards with a neutral or aestheticized expression.

Claudio Tozzi also produced several silkscreens, also depicting faceless women revealing their bras while undressing, using Ben-Day dots in the background and black outlines for the figure (fig. 51). Although these works appear to be against the objectification of women in the media, the question remains whether these works are sufficiently critical to build an argument against the very phenomenon they depict, or whether they fall into the kind of pornography criticised by Traba. Works by Gerchman and Tozzi have been already examined in the context of ludic or participative art, which forms an important segment of their practice also situating them within *Nova Objetividade* within its overlaps with Pop. Their experiments with the image of women in bras, hints of a temporary adhesion to the 'American way of living' dreaded by Amaral,

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<sup>308</sup> Aracy Amaral, 'Dos Carimbos á Bolha.'

and establishes with greater clarity a distinction with the works by Wesley Duke Lee, much more extreme but persuasive in their genre.

This exhibition substantiates Traba's argument in relation to the connections between Pop and pornography, yet its limited approach, which excludes the work of a wider sample of artists, strengthens the necessity for deeper analyses. In particular, the works by women on the theme of Erotic or Pop art are vastly underrepresented. Amongst these, one of the most significant contributors is Teresinha Soares, whose works have not been included in any exhibitions on Pop related tendencies in Brazil before Tate Modern's *The World Goes Pop*. Her practice reveals the tensions between Pop, Erotic and Ludic art, heightening its rootedness within Brazilian popular culture, both vernacular and so-called imported.

## 2.h An Erotic Case Study: Physical and Dialectical Encounters Exposed Through the Works of Teresinha Soares

Advancing from a career in literature and acting, Soares began her fine arts training at the Universidad Mineira das Artes in Belo Horizonte in 1965; the following year, she moved to Rio de Janeiro to study engraving at the independent studios organised by the Museum of Modern Art. Working with printmaking, painting and object/sculptures made of wood (later also complemented by performance), Soares' works were distinguished by a hard-edge aesthetic, which connected her to *Nova Objetividade*.<sup>309</sup> Throughout her practice, she explored the power and limitations of femininity in a continuous effort against chauvinism and repression. Because of the delicacy of these themes during the initial stages of the military dictatorship in Brazil, Soares' critique emerged through an exaggerated and humorous language. By 1967 she was celebrated in the national press as the new artistic revelation from Minas Gerais and her works were exhibited widely. Soares' practice emerges at the crossroads of several styles and genres, namely *Nova Objetividade*, Erotic art, Ludic art, and Pop.

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<sup>309</sup> Though *Nova Objetividade* did not have a specific aesthetic per se, the works on display at the IX São Paulo Biennial (where Soares did not exhibit), though heterogeneous in style, had been categorized under the umbrella term of New Objectivity, which related to the avant-garde production principally in São Paulo and Rio.

At the end of the 1960s Soares was working outside groupings or definitions, occupying a very singular space within the avant-garde. Yet this did not mean that critics did not attempt to categorise her practice. Her works spurred widespread controversy and journalists wrote that she was the most widely ‘massacred’ artist in Brazil, due to the overtly ‘realistic’ themes and images presented in her works, to the eyes of a *society* - a term used in Portuguese to describe a snobbish elite.<sup>310</sup> Other headlines asked ‘Who’s Afraid of Teresinha Soares?’<sup>311</sup> an ironic wordplay on Walt Disney’s three little pigs song ‘Who’s Afraid of the big bad wolf?’ (or perhaps Edward Albee’s 1966 play ‘Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?’ reflecting her fearlessness and disillusion). Allegations were also made that Soares was, in fact, a lesbian.<sup>312</sup> Despite such criticisms, at her first solo presentation in Belo Horizonte in 1967 at the Guignard Gallery, the street was closed off because of the multitude of people who attended the event, enlivened by the exhibition of such uninhibited artworks. Frederico Morais, the esteemed critic, artist and also one of Soares’ teachers, stated in the introduction text to the exhibition, ‘She produces as if possessed by the devil,’<sup>313</sup> alluding her provocative charisma. Among the works on paper she exhibited were the series of silkscreens *Um Homem e uma Mulher* (A Man and a Woman, fig. 52), which pictured in red, yellow, black and green, intertwined masculine and feminine figures discernible by singular definite elements as a profile, breasts, hearts or embracing limbs.

The first tendency Soares was largely associated with was *Nova Objetividade*. In 1967, Soares had moved for a period to Rio, in order to participate in the renowned workshop led by printmaker Ivan Serpa at the Museum of Modern Art, where she met artists Rubens Gerchman, Ana Maria Maiolino, Antônio Dias and others, gradually

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<sup>310</sup> A headline read: ‘ela provocou a ira de uma parceira do ‘society’ mineiro com o seu realismo’, cited in “Pintora da *Society* vai Expor em SP,” *Diario de São Paulo*, 1 Caderno, 30 June 1968.

<sup>311</sup> Henry Correa de Araujo, “Quem Tem Medo de Teresinha Soares?” *Estado de Minas*, Belo Horizonte, 11 August 1973.

<sup>312</sup> In a recent interview Soares recounted an article published in the *Jornal do Brasil* titled ‘Minas não há Mais’, in which a well-known writer and catholic Bishop heavily attacked her work *Graves*, also accusing her of being a lesbian – a misreading of an inscription of the installation that translated reads: ‘Lettuces were planted over me and I ate them all.’ Sofia Gotti, “Eroticism, humour and Graves: A conversation with Teresinha Soares,” *N.paradoxa*, London, vol. 36, July 2015.

<sup>313</sup> Frederico Morais, *Teresinha Soares. Caixas Óleos*, (Belo Horizonte: Galeria Guignard, May 1967), p. 2.

securing her place within the avant-garde. In the group exhibition *Box-Form*, held at Rio de Janeiro's Galerie Petite, Soares presented one of her earliest sculptures in wood titled *Caixa de Fazer Amor* (A Box to Make Love In, fig. 53). The exhibition, considered a vital precursor of *Nova Objetividade*, gathered the works of artists that were working with wooden 'boxes,' including Gerchman, and Oiticica. *Caixa de Fazer Amor*, one of the very few surviving sculptures, is a wooden cube painted in green, red and yellow, with two faces intertwined in the shape of a heart above it, and a whole mechanical apparatus within it equipped with a meat mincer that viewers were meant to operate. The box was fitted with a bottle of Dragon Vaseline, and a stuffed fabric heart; its very form and interactivity aligned Soares' formal concerns to those of the avant-garde in Rio and São Paulo.

In the introductory text of Soares' first solo exhibition in São Paulo, held at the Art-Art Gallery, Mário Schenberg stated, 'Her works fully draw from art's fundamental objective: live communication.'<sup>314</sup> Schenberg added that she was 'One of the most interesting personalities tied to *Nova Objetividade*.'<sup>315</sup> Among the works she exhibited were a series of drawings and layered wood wall pieces, *Montagens do filme virgem* (Montage of virgin films, fig. 54), and a floor piece titled, *Roberto Carlos, Canta por Nós* (Roberto Carlos, sing for us, fig. 55), a tribute to the iconic singer also featured in Leirner's altar exhibited at the IX Biennial. The *Montagens do filme virgem* series approached themes related to cultural perceptions of women. One work in particular, titled *Pecados Capitais* (Deathly sins), represents the sins of gluttony, lust and envy, three sins perhaps most canonically associated to women. The work, a painted composition of superimposed wooden panels, showed three frames of a film reel containing images of red lips, of exposed breasts, and of a male profile observing a naked woman's bust. The bodies are de-personalised, only partially represented, missing limbs, and never fully showing facial features. The imagery of the film reel,

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<sup>314</sup> Original: 'Os seus trabalhos atingem plenamente o objetivo fundamental da arte: comunicação viva. Mesmo as suas deficiências técnicas são incorporadas ao linguagem e contribuem para ilhe dar autenticidade e marca pessoal. Ela é dotada de uma inteligência sumamente maliciosa.' Undated newspaper clipping, Archive of the Teresinha Soares, Belo Horizonte.

<sup>315</sup> Original: 'uma das personalidades mais interessantes ligadas ao movimento da Nova Objetividade' cited in in Geraldo Ferraz, "Arte para frente de Teresinha Soares," *Diario de Minas*, 23 June 1968.



Fig. 52 Teresinha Soares  
*Um Homem e uma Mulher, Homage to Calude Lelouch*  
Silkscreen on paper  
33 x 41 cm



Fig. 53 Teresinha Soares  
*Caixa de Fazer Amor*, 1967  
Photo by Miguel Aun, 2011



Fig. 54 Teresinha Soares  
*Montagens do Filme Virgem*, 1968  
 Paint on plywood  
 40 65 cm



Fig. 55 Teresinha Soares  
*Roberto Carlos, Canta por Nós*, 1968  
 Newspaper Clipping from the artist's archive c.1968





which Soares often used in her paintings, adds to a sense of fetishisation of the female body evident in cinema, television and commercial photography. In addition it reflects the alienating effect produced by the media, and the decreased empathy of people exposed to commercialised imagery, a theme which reappears frequently in her works (especially in regards to images shown of the war in Vietnam, which gradually lost all effect on viewers).<sup>316</sup> For the first time in her practice time Soares called religious beliefs into question. The state of Minas Gerais in southern Brazil, where she was born, is still considered one of the most traditional and catholic. By inserting religious references she did the unspeakable for a woman of her rank and origin. Yet the idiosyncratic relationship between the work's themes, of profanity and sexual provocation, produces the effects of parody, which markedly lightens the overall tone of the work.

The work *Roberto Carlos, Canta por Nós* consisted of a three meter long rosary made of plywood cut-outs, in which each bead was replaced with a hat, an umbrella, a shoe: the traces of a crowd; the cross, instead of picturing the crucified image of Jesus Christ, showed fragments of the body of Roberto Carlos: in the centre his lips singing, then his hands holding a microphone, on the bottom the images of naked feet, intertwined, perhaps in the act of making love. The whole piece was placed around a red heart-shaped pillow – the heart being a recurrent presence in her works on paper – on which viewers could rest. Perhaps, a space for religious contemplation of 'The King'.

In 1967 Soares also participated in the IX São Paulo Biennial, and, as the term began to circulate more freely, consequently a 'Pop influence' was established also in Soares' works.<sup>317</sup> In April 1968 she also participated in the exhibition *O Artista Brasileiro e a Iconografia de Massa* (The Brazilian Artist and Mass Iconography), organised by her former professor Frederico Morais, at the Faculdade de Desenho Industrial in Rio de

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<sup>316</sup> A series of three works also presented in this exhibition was the *Série Vietnã* (Vietnam Series). The three works bore titles: *Guerra é Guerra, Vamos a Sambar* (War is war, let's Samba), which commented on the use of War imagery to anesthetize empathy; *Morra usando as legítimas alpargatas* (Die wearing the legitimate espadrilles), which reference also an advertising campaign from a shoe manufacturer in North-Eastern Brazil that used images of warfare in Vietnam to publicise their sandals; *Morrem Tantos Homens e eu Aqui Tão Só* (So many men die and I am here so lonely), which expressed Soares' empathy for the loneliness of the women separated from their partners because of war.

<sup>317</sup> Geraldo Ferraz, "A Tematica do sexo subjetiva," *Estado de São Paulo*, 4 July 1968.

Janeiro, which encouraged an in-depth reflection on the impact the mass media was having on Brazilian artistic production, establishing further connections with Pop.

During a panel discussion at the XI São Paulo Biennial, Soares labelled her own practice as ‘an erotic art of contestation.’ Due to the increasing violence perpetrated by the regime, an international boycott had led many artists to withdraw works from the biennial in protest. During the meeting, Soares voiced her position contrary to boycott, which she viewed as a nihilistic act of compliance.<sup>318</sup> The politicisation evident in her works had recently gained further momentum with the exhibition *Do Corpo à Terra* (From body to earth), also organised by Frederico Morais. Taking place in the municipal park of Belo Horizonte, seen as an extension of the museum of fine arts, the event occurred simultaneously with another indoor exhibition titled *Objeto e Participação* (Object and participation). The exhibition’s premise – as discussed by Morais in recent texts - was to examine and redefine the role of the art object for the Brazilian avant-garde.<sup>319</sup>

In addition, Morais’ ideas in regards to recent production in Brazil had been expressed in an article titled *Contra a Arte Afluente: o Corpo é o Motor da Obra*, (Against an Affluent Art: the Body is the Work’s Engine) in which he provided the definition of a ‘guerrilla art,’<sup>320</sup> understood as an art of enunciation, of liberation and of self-assertion - especially following the enforcement of the infamous 1968 Institutional Act n. 5, which had reduced the Congress’ powers, enhanced censorship measures, abolished the *Habeas Corpus*, and legalised torture. In the statement printed on a flier (leafleting was the principal mode of communication for cinemas, football games and theatres) that was distributed all over the city, as the sole tool for publicity, Morais wrote, setting the tone for the exhibition:

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<sup>318</sup> Teresinha Soares, “Bienal VI-Vida,” *Estado de Minas*, Belo Horizonte, 10 September 1971.

<sup>319</sup> Frederico Morais, *Do Corpo à Terra - Um Marco Radical na Arte Brasileira*, online text supplement for the online platform of the exhibition *Neoavanguardias*, Belo Horizonte, 2007. [http://www.itaucultural.org.br/corpoaterra/texto\\_curador.pdf](http://www.itaucultural.org.br/corpoaterra/texto_curador.pdf) last accesses 20 May 2015.

<sup>320</sup> Frederico Morais, ‘Contra uma arte afluyente: o corpo é o motor da obra’, *Voces*, Belo Horizonte, February 1970.

*From art to anti-art, from modern to post-modern, from avant-garde art to counter-art, the opening is always greater. Art's horizon today is open, yet inaccurate. Situations, events, rituals or celebrations - art cannot be distinguished clearly from either life or the everyday. [...] The life that pulses within your body - that is art. Your environment - that is art. The psychophysical rhythms - that is art. Intrauterine life - that is art...*<sup>321</sup>

Morais saw art as a situation, a ritual, ultimately a weapon and artists as Guerrilleros. A firm supporter of Soares' work from its inception in Belo Horizonte in 1965, he thought of her as a trooper for women, who used her own body as a weapon of contestation. In *Objeto e Participação*, Soares exhibited the work *Ela me deu bola (Camas)* (translated as *She hit on me (BEDS)*; in Portuguese *ela me deu bola*, literally *she gave me the ball* is a slang expression to indicate that a woman accepted advances from a man). *BEDS* (fig. 56) was comprised of three modular wooden beds, which invited the spectator to lounge and enjoy. Each mattress was painted in the colours of a Brazilian team (National, Flamengo and Clube Atletico Mineiro); each bed frame was adorned with hinged shutters carved in the shapes of nude female bodies, which were only visible when closed. On their interior, Soares painted the portraits of footballers Pelé, Yustrich and Tostão, rendered in a red demoniac flair. In an interview about this work Soares stated, 'There are those who put people to bed. I put beds in art.'<sup>322</sup> Soares' bed is a space for encounter, union, and separation, with its infinite associations.<sup>323</sup> By juxtaposing this symbol with the colours of football, a vital presence within Brazilian popular culture as well as all-male culture, and the female nude silhouette found on its

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<sup>321</sup> Original: 'Da arte à antiarte, do moderno ao pós-moderno, da arte de vanguarda à contra-arte a abertura é sempre maior. O horizonte da arte, hoje, é aberto, impreciso. Situações, eventos, rituais ou celebrações - a arte não se distingue mais, nitidamente, da vida e do cotidiano. [...] A vida que bate no seu corpo - eis a arte. O seu ambiente - eis a arte. Os ritmos psicofísicos - eis a arte. A vida intra-uterina - eis a arte. A supra-sensorialidade - eis a arte. Imaginar - eis a arte. O pneuma - eis a arte. A apropriação de objetos e de áreas - eis a arte. O puro gesto apropriativo de situações humanas ou vivências poéticas - eis a arte.' Reprinted in Frederico Moraes, *Do Corpo à Terra - Um Marco Radical na Arte Brasileira*, 2007.

<sup>322</sup> Original: 'tem gente que poe gente na cama. Eu ponho as camas na arte.' Marisa Raja Garbaglia, "Ela Ganha Todas as Biennais de Exentricidade," *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, July 1971.

<sup>323</sup> Marília A. Ribeiro, 'Fiz do Meu Corpo a Minha própria Arte: Entrevista - Teresinha Soares,' *REV. URMG*, Belo Horizonte, v.19, n.1 e 2, January/December 2012, pp.130-139.

Fig. 56 Teresinha Soares  
*Ele me deu a Bola (CAMAS)*, 1970  
Plywood, mattresses and acrylic

a.



b.



flipside, Soare's beds become a vehicle for contestation – and not coincidentally they had wheels.

The final issue to be discussed, also the basis of Soares' practice, is Erotic art. The text in which the definition of Erotic art appears most evidently is the introduction to an album of silkscreens titled *Eurótica* (a wordplay between the Portuguese *eu + erotica*, which Soares translated to Eroticism is mine, literally my/me + erotic) by Frederico Morais. The album, which earned her the appellation of 'Brazilian Kamasutra', shows a progression of single line drawings (fig. 57). Sinuous lines begin by representing visual suggestions of sexual acts between men and women. Within the drawings' simplicity phalluses, breasts and limbs are discernible. In the following pages, a crescendo is illustrated by male/female sexual encounters, which transform into encounters between multiple figures, women with women, men with men, until finally the silhouette of a horse intertwined with a woman's also appears. The final image of the album shows spread legs, confused with a horizon, being penetrated by a phallus that turns into a tree – a symbolic image of growth, birth, fertility. In the introduction text Morais interpreted her work as a communion between sexes and praised the freedom with which it reflected both an avant-garde attitude in art and an avant-garde attitude towards sex. Morais relied heavily on Herbert Marcuse's *Eros and Civilization* to explain the necessity to release sexual inhibition in order to retrieve a sense of wholeness lost for the 'excessive sense of spatialisation [...], a result of the social division of labour and industrial revolution'.<sup>324</sup> He also referenced Phyllis and Eberhard Kronhausen's compilation of the first international exhibition of erotic art launched in 1968 to argue that sexual freedom cannot exist without political and economic freedom:

*Erotic art expresses a vital freedom of individual happiness and mental well-being but a sexual freedom cannot exist without a high degree of political and economic freedom. In this sense, the erotic art conveys a real revolutionary message. It requires an extension of freedom not only in the sexual domain, but also in every sphere of social life.*<sup>325</sup>

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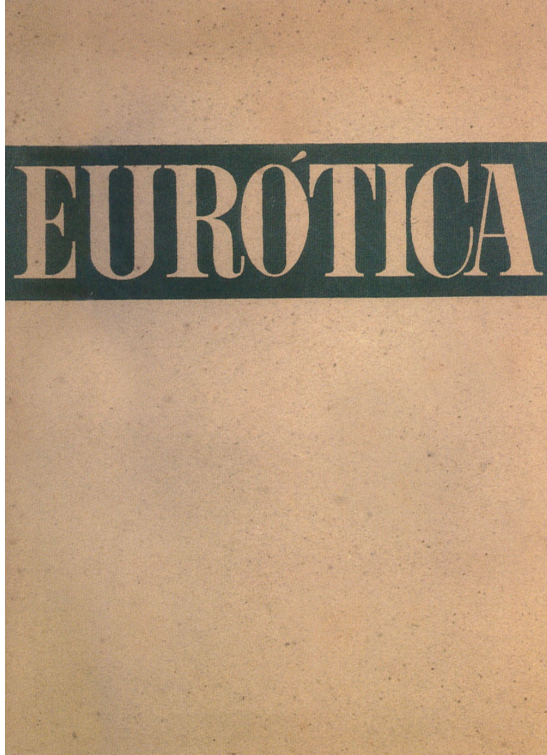
<sup>324</sup> Frederico Morais, presentation text, Teresinha Soares, *Eurótica*, Belo Horizonte, 1970. Translation from archive of Teresinha Soares, Belo Horizonte.

<sup>325</sup> Phyllis and Eberhard Kronhausen quoted by Morais. Ibid.

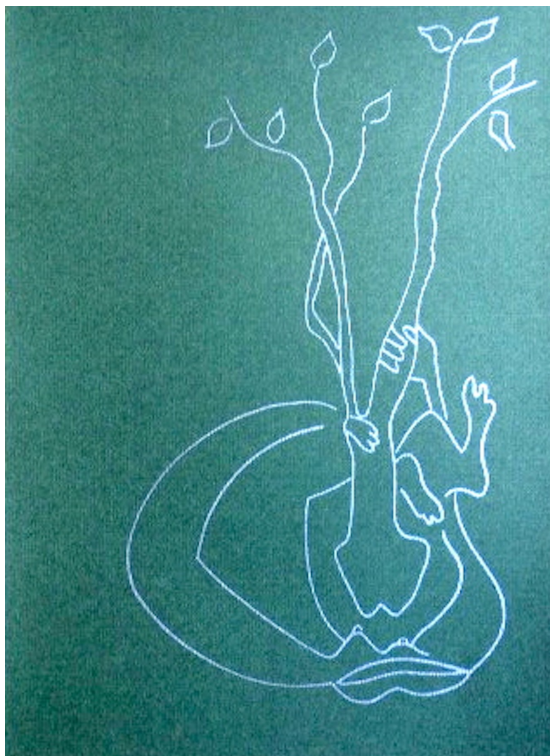


Fig. 57 Teresinha Soares  
*Eurótica*  
Album of silkscreens on paper  
25 x 35 cm

a. Cover of the album



b. Final page of the album



The album *Eurótica*, was exhibited alongside an installation titled *Corpo a Corpo in Corpus Meus* (*Body to body in colour-pus of mine*, 1970), an installation complemented by a performance, at Rio's Galeria Petite in 1971. The sculptural element of the piece was a multi-modular assemblage of white wooden platforms of differing levels over a surface area of twenty-four squared meters. Meant to be observed from an elevated standpoint, the modules reproduced the shapes of naked silhouettes, alternated with male phallic forms. The very structure of the piece allowed for the public's interaction. Invited to take off their shoes and inhabit or circulate within the installation, the labyrinth-like structure enabled encounters and dis-encounters between visitors within its organic shapes. During the happening, which occurred in conjunction with the exhibition's opening, Soares instructed three performers (two women and a man) dressed in black, to dance over the work, enacting love-making, between each other and the structure itself. Meanwhile the images of cells splitting and multiplying was projected over the entire installation and Soares, from the side-lines, read a text by a renowned scientist on the life of sperm from birth until death. Fragments of a poem interjected the artist's oration:

*I'm soiled flesh  
dry-contorted  
exposed-exhausted  
suffered  
I'm a bare island  
enclosed  
by people  
silent, frozen  
I am what I am  
a toy  
playful*

*anything  
taking up space  
finished  
void  
lost  
I'm shadow at night  
light at day  
I'm what I was  
not before  
to then become  
that*

*which happened after.*<sup>326</sup>

The very fragmentation inherent within Soares' poem conveys a sentiment of destruction followed by one of renewal: the imagery of her beaten, soiled, flesh and of shadow versus light, conveys a vision of destruction or defeat. The final verse 'which happened after,' indicates the presence of a future, one that is still uncertain, a symptom of continuation, and perhaps renewal, rebirth, symbolised within the passage from darkness to light: 'I am shadow by night, light by day.' In addition, the collaboration of men and women in the performance, combined with the imagery of the installation, heightened notions of union, and encounter. The sculptural element of *Corpo a Corpo*, presented the linear silhouettes within *Eurotica*, and the interactivity of its platforms, combined with the premeditated performance, complements the notion of encounter and dis-encounter also manifest in the drawings. Soares' Poem further echoes the final message of renewal of rebirth suggested by the album's final page where the body in effect disintegrates in nature, allowing for its rebirth.

Each label considered so far has illuminated a certain trait of Soares' practice. *Nova Objetividade* heightened the formal aspects of her work, the new materials and techniques she engaged with, and the increasing importance attributed to spectator participation. Her inclusion in avant-garde exhibitions also highlighted the prominence of themes related to popular culture, whether appropriated from the mass media, or assimilated through local customs. Soares' own definition of an 'Erotic art of contestation' re-focuses her practice within the fight for women's equal rights, sexual liberation and freedom of expression, where the boundaries between sex and politics are increasingly blurred. The overlaps and convergences between these disparate facets demonstrate the proximity of Pop with Erotic, Ludic and Pornographic art allowing

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<sup>326</sup> Original: Sou carne curtida/seca-contorcida/ exposta-batida/ sofrida/ Sou ilha pelada/ cercada/ de gente/ calada, gelada/ Sou o que sou/ brinquedo/ joguente// qualquer coisa/ ocupando espaço/ finite/ vazia/ perdida/ Sou sombra na noite/ claro no dia/ sou aquilo que não/ foi ainda/ para vir a ser/ aquilo/ que passou depois.  
Reproduced in Teresinha Soares, Carmem M. Rodrigues, Marília A. Ribeiro, Fernando P. Silva (eds.), *Teresinha Soares: Depoimento*, (Belo Horizonte: Editora C/Arte, 2011), p.86.



for an expanded understanding of the value of each of these perspectives, beyond the limiting categorizations that exhibitions such as *The price of Seduction* have suggested.

## 2.i In Search of the Female Body: More Women (Pop) Artists in Brazil

One of the striking aspects in Teresinha Soares' work is her depiction of the female body in graphic, disrobed, and exposed manners. The curves are accentuated, the bodies are mutilated, headless and limbless, and the internal organs are often made visible. Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of the 'lower stratum' and of the 'grotesque body' as sites of decay and simultaneously of renewal and rebirth is also present in her frequent union of the body with nature, akin to the notion of a perpetually growing and regenerating 'mother earth.'<sup>327</sup> Many contemporaries of Soares' also dealt with the image of the dismembered body, and amongst these the most notable are women. Anna Bella Geiger, in the early sixties, produced watercolours and etchings of internal female and male organs (at times sexual). Though often a re-elaboration of Leonardo da Vinci's anatomical studies, her style was more attached to expressionism acquired while studying with Iberê Camargo (fig. 58). Anna Maria Maiolino, in the exhibition *Nova Objetividade Brasileira* exhibited *Glu Glu Glu* (1966, fig. 59), an open-mouthed, red-lipped dismembered framed female figure, with its digestive apparatus in view. This work explicitly references the action of eating, a reflection on the cultural significance of anthropophagy, and the legacies of *modernism*, as discussed at the beginning of the chapter. Maiolino, who was originally from Calabria in Italy, and had grown up in Venezuela, to ultimately settle in Brazil, keenly sought to find her place within her Brazilian milieu. She was indeed challenged for being a woman, and for being married to one of the foremost exponents of the Neo-Realist group, yet her works capture the crossroads of influences and the specific problems that Brazilian artists were confronting in order to reformulate a contemporary, yet unique and localised artistic idiom.

Maiolino's seminal work also encapsulates a widening concern for the effects of mass culture on the realm of domesticity and the subjectivity of women – a theme that was hardly taken on by men, who stopped at commentaries on the objectification of

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<sup>327</sup>Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984).

Fig. 58

- e. Anna Bella Geiger  
*Órgão Ocidental*, 1966  
 Gouache, watercolour and ink on paper  
 32.2 x 21 cm



- f. Anna Bella Geiger  
*A Força do Homem*, 1967  
 Etching, aquatint and collage on paper  
 40 x 35 cm

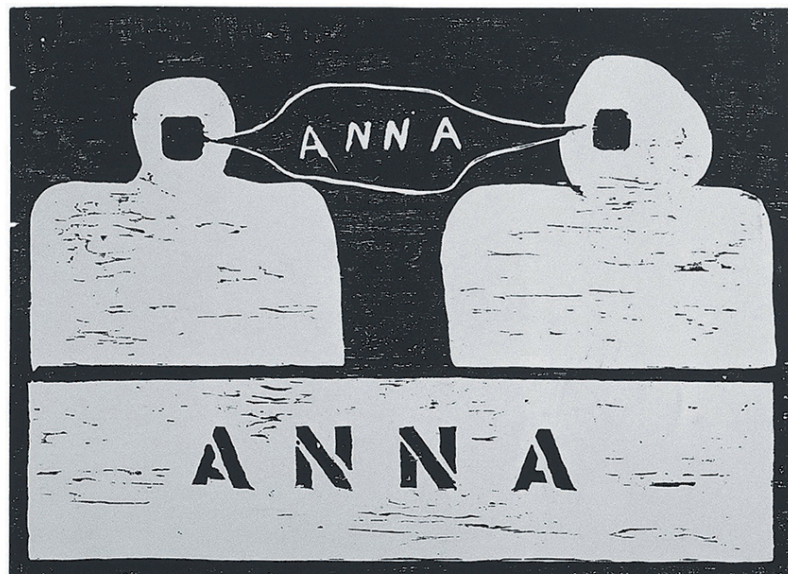


Fig. 59

- g. Anna Maria Maiolino  
*Glu Glu Glu*, 1966  
 Acrylic paint on quilted fabrics  
 110 x 59 x 13 cm



- h. Anna Maria Maiolino  
*Anna*, 1967  
 Woodcut  
 40 x 68 cm



women in the mass media (as observed previously in works by Lee, Tozzi or Gerchman). The marked division between the upper part of the body, contained within a box, and its organs, strengthens the symbolic disconnection between body and mind. The fragmented figure, with its open, toothy mouth and insides, bears witness to the effects of outmoded consumption on subjectivity, left fragile and exposed. *Glu Glu Glu* retains the hard-edge aesthetic of Maiolino's early experiments with woodcutting, a craft that for the artist condensed the multiple facets of Brazilian vernacular culture. The colour and garish quality of the work, made of stuffed upholstery, overrides its grotesque subject matter. Its three-dimensionality provides it with 'flesh' and Eros, pronouncing an increasing sensitivity towards the notion of the body as commodity.

Paulo Herkenhoff commented on Maiolino's commitment to 'viscerality,' which indicated the body's 'expressive intensity, as well as the organic production of meaning.'<sup>328</sup> Herkenhoff continued, 'Through viscerality one sought to give an account of individuals from the perspective of their psychological experience as a way of encouraging political resistance and nonconformity.'<sup>329</sup> The intertwined concepts of viscerality and psychology echo what Bakhtin described as the creative dimension of the Grotesque, where the darkest and revolting functions of the body's 'lower stratum,' are also the site for renewal and rebirth.

In *Glu Glu Glu* the imagery of the body's organs also invokes a separation between bodily and cerebral functions, implying the threat of separation between the two realms. In an interview with Maiolino, Helena Tatay reflected on the striking similarities between this work, and the illustrations found in alchemy books where the alchemists are depicted with their internal organs exposed, their belly opened. Tatay explained:

*For the alchemists, the stomach was a place for vital transformation. The world came in through the mouth, things were transformed in the stomach, and*

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<sup>328</sup> Paulo Herkenhoff, 'Maiolino's Trajectory: a negotiation of difference,' in Catherine de Zehger (ed.), *Anna Maria Maiolino: a life line*, (exh. cat., New York : Drawing Center, 2002), p.328.

<sup>329</sup> Ibid.

*through defecation the vital cycle came full circle, since the corruption of an element could regenerate another.*<sup>330</sup>

Maiolino interpreted this reference as an involuntary allusion to the belly as a site of emotional reason or thought, in contrast to a rational and intellectual mind; a language that sought to denounce the disconnection between the mind and the body. In a prior section of the interview she spoke:

*All my energy was spent trying to become an individual. The existential and art formed one anguished body. My life was dominated by anguish and doubts, although I also wanted to participate in that moment of great political, social and artistic effervescence that was pushing artists to make alliances with the previous generations. [...] For us, approaching the popular meant looking for our roots.*<sup>331</sup>

Maiolino's statement encapsulates her apprehension to find her own individuality, by reflecting on the fractures inherent in her identity as a woman, an immigrant (she was born in Italy and later lived in Venezuela, Brazil, the United States, among other places) and an artist. Not accidentally the term *alchemy* derives from the Greek *khymeia* (*χημεία*), which means to unite, melt together, to attach or reconnect. Unity and the encounter of individuality is manifest through her visual investigations.

Although Maiolino is now one of the most recognised artists in Brazil, her works were initially not considered on equal scale to those of Gerchman (her husband between 1963-1971), and many of them have been lost – for example the large stuffed canvas ear titled *Pssiu!...* (1967, also called *The Ear*) also exhibited in *Nova Objetividade Brasileira*, which reflected on the omnipresent paranoia amongst intellectuals of being intercepted by the military regime whilst speaking on the phone. The plastic, and graphic aesthetic, which approximates her to a Pop discourse, is largely attributed to her training at the Escola Nacional de Bellas Artes with printmaker Oswaldo Goeldi, who taught xylography – a technique, which greatly influenced Antônio Henrique Amaral and Dias among others, referencing the North Eastern *cordels*. Her

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<sup>330</sup> Helena Tatay and Anna Maria Maiolino, *Anna Maria Maiolino*, (London: Koenig, 2011), p.41.

<sup>331</sup> Helena Tatay and Anna Maria Maiolino, *Anna Maria Maiolino*, (London: Koenig, 2011), p.39.

sensitivity to vernacular traditions, and her reflexivity on her position in society as a woman and an immigrant, informed her practice thereafter. She was only able to dedicate herself to art fully after leaving Gerchman in 1971, whilst working for a fabric factory in Rio de Janeiro.

In terms of women's independence, Teresinha Soares was an exception, and the support she received from her husband regardless of the widespread critiques directed at her, was uncommon at the time.<sup>332</sup> Amongst the women artists who had to make a choice between their profession as artists and a traditional conjugal life, was Regina Vater, who was estranged from her father when she decided to pursue art-making, and went to live with a man (who was also ashamed at times to introduce her as his fiancée due to their ambiguous situation).<sup>333</sup> Vater began painting at a very early age at the museum of Modern art in Rio de Janeiro. Her early watercolours and gouaches demonstrate a tendency towards French Nouvelle Figuration (according to Talita Trizoli<sup>334</sup>), yet already by the mid-sixties her works became increasingly graphic, acquiring a decisively commercial aesthetic. One of the earliest images that appear also in Vater's work is the female body with openings in the lower belly, and in the skull. These works from 1963 are titled *Figuras* (Figures, fig. 60), in red or blue, and their exposed anatomies and enlarged bellies, rendered in gentle hues evoke studies on pregnancy. Talita Trizoli frames these works as Vater's 'feminist phase,' a formative moment in her practice. In regards to the outcome of these works he writes:

*Vater breaks with the expressionist traits acquired in Iberê Camargo's studio, seeking thus a plastic language that seizes up the popular character of the female figure, the construction of its image from the media, which was the great promulgator of stereotypes and behavioural patterns in Brazil.*<sup>335</sup>

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<sup>332</sup> Other women artists such as Lygia Clark and Ligia Pape were also lucky to be supported by their families, and as such were able to conduct their practice regardless of market recognition (though neither of them engaged with a Pop aesthetic).

<sup>333</sup> Conversation with the artist in Rio de Janeiro, 23 March 2013.

<sup>334</sup> Talita Trizoli, *Trajetórias de Regina Vater: Por uma crítica feminista da arte brasileira*, (PhD Thesis, Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo, 2011), p.58.

<sup>335</sup> Original: 'Vater rompe então com os traços expressionistas que adquirira no ateliê de Iberê Camargo, procurando assim uma linguagem plástica que apreende-se o caráter popular da figura feminina, a construção de sua imagem a partir dos meios de



Fig. 60 Regina Vater  
*Figuras em Azúl e Vermelho*, 1963  
 Watercolour on paper

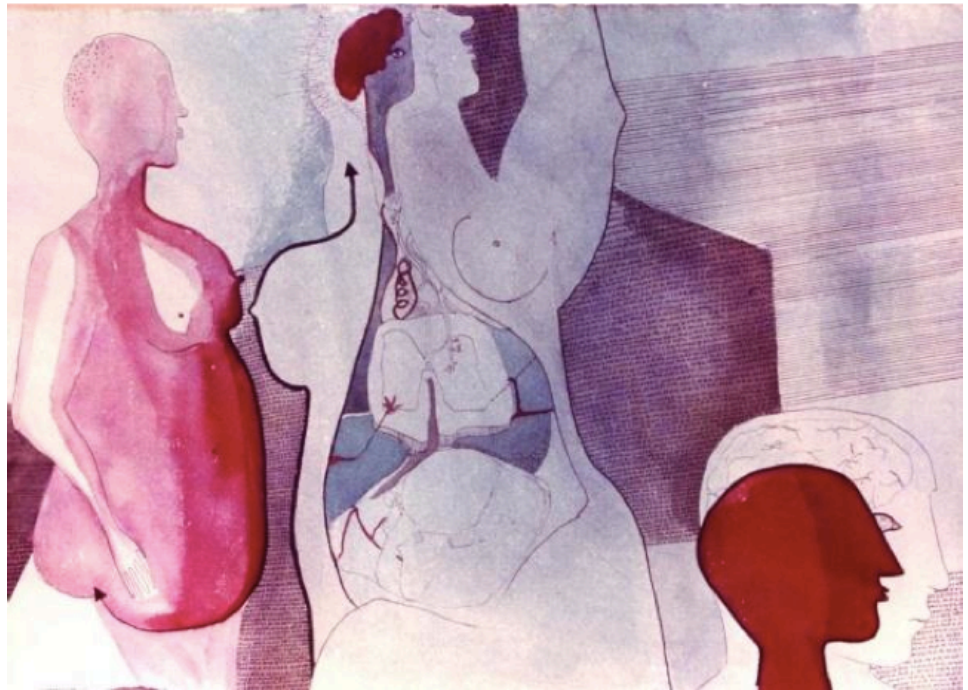
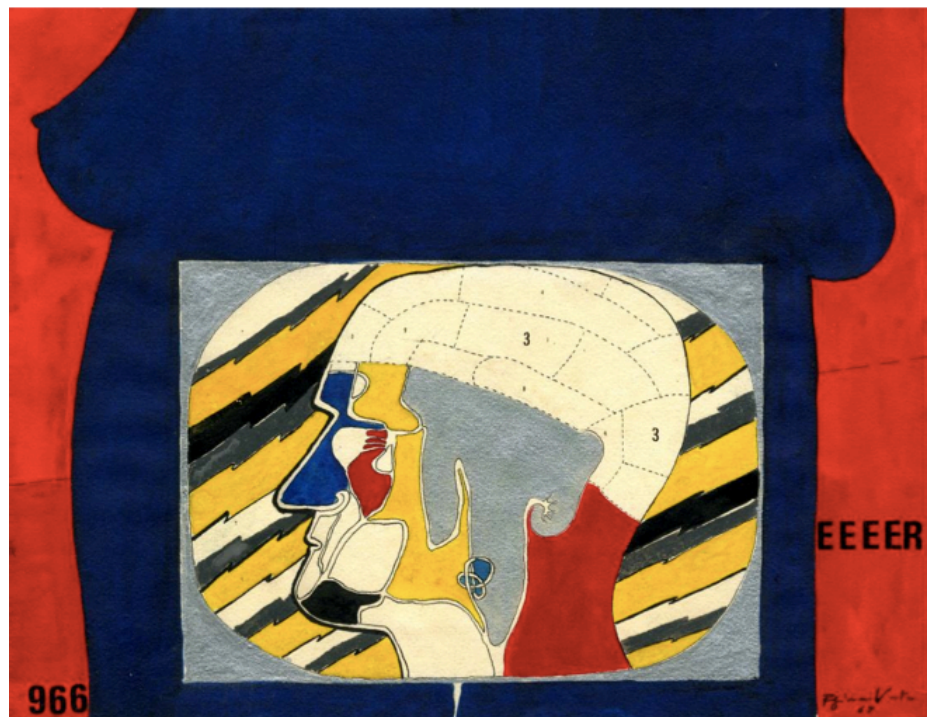


Fig. 61 Regina Vate  
*Dentro do Útero*, 1967  
 Gouache on paper



comunicação, grande difusor então de estereótipos e padrões de comportamento no Brasil.' Trizoli, *Trajetórias de Regina Vater*, pp.70-71.

The successive phase in Vater's oeuvre – evident in a shift towards a more commercial aesthetic – relates to her interest in the concepts at the root of *Tropicália*, the musical and countercultural movement that took its name from an installation by Oiticica in 1967, discussed at the start of the chapter. With *Tropicália*, Oiticica sought to rebrand Brazilian identity through the exaltation of aspects of its popular culture, traditions and common language, intertwining elements of folklore with the spirit of modernization.<sup>336</sup> In an interview Vater also explained the importance of Antônio Dias' works for her practice, the great impact the IX São Paulo Biennial had on her, and the similarities she observed between her women and Tom Wesselman's *Great American Nude Series* (1962-).<sup>337</sup> Yet the body's embeddedness in the landscape is not as a tool to de-sexualise it (as it was for Wesley Duke Lee), but rather one that accentuates its rootedness in the stereotypically Brazilian imagery of the beach and the sun, explaining that 'there is no sin below the equator.'<sup>338</sup>

A representative work of this moment in Vater's oeuvre was presented at the *Biennial de Jeune* in Paris in 1967, titled *Dentro do Útero* (Inside the uterus, fig. 61). The gouache on paper represented on a red background the blue silhouette of a woman's torso and belly. Within the blue body, a rectangle is cut out, appearing almost as an anthropomorphic television screen, which contains a male head in profile. The 'Uterus-TV,' as described by Trizoli, exchanges the feminine reproductive apparatus with a television set, playing on the notion of communication, life, motherhood, and the construction of consciousness. Trizoli writes:

*In this work, the generative ability of the woman is equivalent to the visual fomentation of the television medium, the main form of leisure for the population at the time, and also a vehicle of dissipation of the authoritative discourse of the military regime, which supported traditional and conservative values, in other words, patriarchal.*<sup>339</sup>

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<sup>336</sup> Thanks to her alignment and enthusiasm with the postulates of *Tropicália*, Vater was invited to design the cover the music album *Tropicália ou Panis et Circencis*, which featured music by Gilberto Gil, Caetano Veloso, Tom Zé, Os Mutantes and Gal Costa. Eventually, however, a cover by Rubens Gerchman was selected instead.

<sup>337</sup> Interview between Vater with Trizoli, in Trizoli, *Trajetórias de Regina Vater*, p. 72.

<sup>338</sup> *Ibid*, p. 80.

<sup>339</sup> Original: 'Nesse trabalho, a capacidade geradora da mulher equivale-se a fomentação visual do meio televisivo, principal opção de lazer da população na época,



The parallelism established between military rule and the promulgation of patriarchal values was also addressed in a series of silkscreens from 1968 including *Mulher Avião, Ipanema, Duas Mulheres, Sobre a cabeça os avioes* (fig. 62-63-64). In these works Vater created the echo of a caustic irony by presenting a vision of Brazilian voluptuousness, and of its exotic landscapes, scattered with the bodies of beautiful women and flying phalluses.<sup>340</sup> The airplanes and television sets are synonymous with the industrialization of the sixties, which Trizoli interprets as the result of a male led operation. The airplane therefore becomes a metaphor for masculinity, or a flying phallus that hangs like a threat over the figure's (missing) head. The reproductive organs and the digestive system expand beyond the body's margins, which is reduced to its most basic outlines, and bodily functions. The nude figure encapsulates the notion of feminine identity understood by Vater and her female peers. Vater claims in an interview:

*The women I portray are viewed from a masculine lens, which tends to deform them, reduce them to mere objects of pleasure, mutilating them, by denying essential aspects of their personalities. It is a critique of the marginalisation of the notion of women as human beings endowed with intellect and subjectivity. It is an affirmation of fullness, of a right to the human dimension<sup>341</sup>*

The fragmented figures in the works discussed so far, similarly to the alchemist's bodies, seek to become 'full' and to reconcile their bodies with their minds, their subjectivity and intellect, torn apart by social norms. Many women in the 1960s were

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e também veículo de dissipação do discurso autoritário do regime militar, afirmativo dos valores tradicionais e conservadores, em outras palavras, patriarcal.' Ibid, p. 75.

<sup>340</sup> Regina Vater cria um eco de ironia cáustica nessa visão de volúpia brasileira e sua paisagem exótica permeada por corpos de belas mulheres e falos voadores. Ibid, p. 81.

<sup>341</sup> Original: '*Creio que a minha posição é a de testemunha. Há nela entretanto, uma tonica de revolta, de critica, que é importante – assinala. A mulher que retrato é a vista pelo prisma masculino, que tende a deforma-la, reduzi-la a um mero objeto de prazer, mutilando-a, ao negar aspectos essenciais de sua personalidade. É a critica a esta concepção, que marginaliza a mulher como ser humano dotado de intelectualidade e objetividade. É a afirmação de uma plenitude, do direito à dimensão humana.*' Regina Vater quoted in Anonymous, "Pintora afirma independência do seu sexo," *O Jornal do Estado de Guanabara*, 9 August 1966.

Fig. 62 Regina Vater  
*Mulher Avião*, 1968  
Silkscreen



Fig. 63 Regina Vater  
*Sobre a Cabeça os Aviões*, 1968  
Silkscreen



precluded from participating in relevant aspects of cultural life. The works of Teresinha Soares, Anna Maria Maiolino and Regina Vater are threads of a singular narrative, which breaks from these constrictions. They participate within a discussion on the value of eroticism, pornography and participation, because of the images presented. Simultaneously the iconographies they share illustrate the shifting role of women and the construction of femininity through stereotypical images, in a much more revealing and exposed manner (perhaps more pornographic) than their male peers.

Such investigations can be framed within the process of assertion of woman-as-subject, as opposed to 'other,' as fundamentally explained by Simone de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex*. The sense of inadequacy that these artists felt was caused by the norms imposed by a dominant patriarchy. De Beauvoir explained the problematic issue of the 'Eternal Feminine,' a paradigmatic myth, which contains the multiple stereotypes of women as quintessentially mothers, virgins, or connected to the notions of 'the motherland' and 'nature.' All these aspects succeed in trapping women within impossible ideals which preclude choice, and which contradict the basic existentialist postulate (expressed by Hegel and Jean Paul Sartre) that subjectivity is not pre-determined, but is a construction of self. Expressed through the image of the divided body, the alchemic symbol of the search for unity, the inadequacy of the 'Eternal Feminine' was being resisted and reconfigured. The themes Soares, Maiolino and Vater dealt with were indeed rooted in folklore and local traditions, yet many concerns should not be discerned from wider narratives that relate to universal human conditions.

This chapter has examined the problems associated to Pop as a terminology, how it began to circulate in print, and among artists, and why it was deemed worthy of use then, and today. The overarching argument observes how Pop offered the possibility of reconciliation between the legacies of *modernismo*, and the concrete movements within a contemporary context, where cultural imperialism had to be reckoned with through diverse strategies. Although writers such as Pedrosa, Amaral, Traba, all criticised the use of this term, its very existence tied together disparate phenomena, which overall aid in mapping the essential artistic enquiries and breakthroughs of the decade. Through this investigation, I have found that the desire to engage the body, also by appealing to primary instincts such as the erotic one, sought

to heal the divided subjectivity of the artist and the viewer alike. A Pop aesthetic, and an enquiry into how to deal with imported images, and standards, paved the way for artists' investigations, making it a vital catalyst for further artistic enquiries. These are exemplified by the immersive environments envisioned by Cildo Meireles, or his appropriation of iconic symbols of imperialism – such as the dollar bill, or the coca cola bottle - in his seminal conceptual project *Inserções em circuitos ideológicos* (Insertions into ideological circuits), from 1970. Though Meireles' dialectic is more strongly connected to the legacy of Duchamp and Dada (and ultimately his propositions are conceptual), the Pop years were instrumental in enlivening a debate on the role of the readymade, which certainly left a lasting mark on the cultural scene. In addition, works such as his Coca-Cola bottles have been both included in Pop and Conceptual art exhibitions revealing their twofold connotations for the viewer or interpreter.<sup>342</sup>

Although this is one of the pathways opened by the Pop moment, many artists, ultimately succumbed to what I have described as a *malaise* towards this style. Gerchman, Tozzi, Amaral, and many others took the conceptual interchange in the 1970, however, for reasons that range from the persistence of a military regime, the absence of a market to sustain experimental practices, and the increased difficulty of travel abroad (especially with families), caused the momentum to be lost, and for this chapter of history to be largely forgotten. Current scholarship recognised most of the principal themes the Pop problem presented in Brazil, including the notion of underdevelopment, of pluralism, of cultural imperialism, and a fracture in the collective subjectivity. Duarte, Teixeira da Costa, Salzstein, Herkenhoff, must be credited with the crucial recognition of this overlooked period, which unlocked a myriad of avenues for further investigation. Through this thesis, I have found that the practices of women artists revealed certain depths, untouched in prior writing, which equally only begin to pave the way for additional in depth study, with ramification throughout the South American continent.

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<sup>342</sup> Already mentioned exhibitions that have shown *Insertions into ideological circuits: the Coca-Cola Project* include (but are not limited to) *Un Arte de Contradicciones: Pop, Realismos y Política, Argentina-Brasil 1960-1970s* and *Approximations of the Pop Spirit, 1963-1968*.

## Chapter 3: Peru

This chapter focuses on the emergence of avant-garde art practices in Lima in the 1960s, which historians such as Miguel López, Emilio Tarazona, Sharon Lerner, Alfonso Castrillón Vizcarra and Gustavo Buntinx have frequently pooled under the denomination of Pop. This case study presents a distinct set of issues to those evident in the histories of Brazil or Argentina: although taking place in a similar time frame, the emergence and significance of Pop in Peru reflects the country's own peculiarities. Not only it allows insight into the characteristics of its unique Andean heritage,<sup>343</sup> but it also reveals aspects of Peru's complex relationship with its colonial past - vis-à-vis the total obliteration of the indigenous Inca Empire at the hands of the Spanish conquistadores in the XVI century, and the persistent economic and ideological bonds with countries such as France, the United Kingdom and the United States. The need to reconcile its fractured histories is a leitmotif in Peruvian cultural production. This issue was, in fact, at the core of its nationalist rhetoric since its independence in 1821, and through to our era of investigation, which ends with the collapse of the self-proclaimed Revolutionary Government led by General Juan Francisco Velasco Alvarado in 1975. With particular attention to the shifting meaning of 'Peruvianism,' via the notions of 'indigenism (a cultural and political movement that sought to protect and forward indigenous identity), and 'internationalism,' the chapter assesses Pop art's role in the history of the Peruvian

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<sup>343</sup> Peru's location is a an index of multiple ethnicities, and of distinct customs passed down by the vast population of indigenous descent, which has also conserved an indigenous language, *Quechua* (the second official language of Peru after Spanish).

avant-garde, how it emerged from a specific cultural tradition, and how it ultimately informed later artistic practices during the Revolutionary Government. With a parallel methodology to the previous chapters, this section maps out the current historiography in the field, then sources primary articles from the contemporaneous press, seeking to trace an accurate genealogy of the emergence of this contentious style, locating it within a specific local cultural discourse. This brief introduction presents the main contributors in the field, and provides a brief summary of the chapter's contents.

Although it has not been disseminated internationally, there is a significant historiography of Pop art in Peru. A vital exhibition titled *La Generación Del 68: Entre La Agonia Y La Fiesta De La Modernidad* (The Generation of 68: Between the agony and the party of modernity), held at Lima's Instituto Cultural Peruano in 2003, traced and named artistic practices in the 1960s as Pop.<sup>344</sup> The exhibition features the works of over twenty artists who were associated with the explicitly discerned styles of Pop, Op, Hard Edge and Graphic Art. The catalogue text classifies each artist within a specific terminology and enumerates the other tendencies that informed their practice and their peers' including Surrealism, Informalism, Abstract Expressionism and New Figuration. The exhibition emerges from the curator Alfonso Castrillón Vizcarra's wider study on Peruvian art of the XX century, which he divides by 'generations,' each one distinguished by a particularly representative artistic style. In the case of the 1968 generation (narrowed to those born between 1938 and 1951), Pop is singled out as the key manifestation of Peru's transition from an underdeveloped to a modernised country, a process caught in between a celebration of new cultural models and a traumatic sense of loss and agony for the traditions left behind - as the title suggests. In this context underdevelopment refers to a both economic and cultural condition, which is widely viewed as a weakness of Peru's society as a whole, unable to assert with strength its own national identity, and to develop its own industry and infrastructure without foreign aid.

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<sup>344</sup> Alfonso Castrillón Vizcarra, *La Generación Del 68: Entre La Agonia Y La Fiesta De La Modernidad*, (Lima, Perú: ICPNA, 2003), and Alfonso Castrillón Vizcarra, *Tensiones generacionales: un acercamiento a las generaciones de artistas plásticos peruanos*. (Lima, Perú: Galería ICPNA Miraflores, 2000). The essay regarding the '68 generation is almost identical in both volumes.

Castrillón Vizcarra's contribution greatly relies on texts by Juan Acha<sup>345</sup>- almost unanimously considered the most important critical voice of the decade before his self-imposed exile in Mexico from 1971 – tracing how Pop emerged thanks to the circulation of ideas from North America and Argentina especially. This text provides a valuable chronology of events, yet its strict division into insular subheadings (mostly determined by distinct styles examined separately) betrays the formulation of an inconsistent narrative.

Among the younger historians who have made a considerable effort to individuate historical currents in Peru are Miguel A. López and Emilio Tarazona, often writing in collaboration. A vital text by López, reproduced in the collection catalogue of the Museo de Arte de Lima (MALI) maps out an accurate historiography of the key exhibitions and artists that made up the avant-garde scene in Lima in the 1960s and early 1970s, highlighting how such practices, often self organised and unofficial, constructed the foundations of alternative art in Peru, which had significant continuation in the 1980s.<sup>346</sup> López thus inscribes Pop art within the narrative of subversive practices, which transformed dominant languages into weapons against the power structures they originally stemmed from. In the exhibition *Subversive Practices: Art Under Conditions of Political Repression: Latin America/Eastern Europe*, López and Tarazona included works by Jesús Ruiz Durand, also known as the Andy(no) Warhol (fig. 64),<sup>347</sup> who was employed by Velasco's regime to produce posters to advertise and rouse support for the extensive agrarian reform that was being implemented.

In a further text written by both authors their predominant objective is to retrieve a 'history blocked, lost or severed, not narrated' (here they borrow from Ana Longoni's examination of art practices from the same period in Chile), of the first experimental

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<sup>345</sup> After observing the immutability of colonialist art, the fusion of Spanish baroque and indigenous artefacts, that reflected the rigidity of the inquisition and of colonization, he examines how also in the first hundred years of the republic, Peru suffered a further loss in tradition because of a desire to become more Europeanised (regardless of the fact that Spain was the least 'western' country in Europe).

<sup>346</sup> Miguel A. López, "Cosmopolitan F(r)ictions: Aesthetic and Political Redefinitions of an Idea of the Avant-Garde in the 1960s," in Sharon Lerner (ed.), *Arte Contemporaneo: Colección Museo de Arte de Lima*, (Lima: MALI, 2010).

<sup>347</sup> Marco Antonio Sánchez, "Andy(no) Warhol," *La Republica*, Lima, 11 September 2011. <http://larepublica.pe/11-09-2005/andyno-warhol> Last accessed 20 June 2016.

Fig. 64 Jesú Ruíz Durand  
Advertising poster for the agrarian reform promoted by the Revolutionary Government of General Juan Velasco Alvarado, 1968-19670. The caption reads: 'Comrade, keep your eyes wide open in order to defend our land. The North is revolutionary...And on with production!!!'



Fig. 65 José Sabogal  
*Taita Sullka*, Cusco 1925  
Xylography on paper  
19.9 x 15.1 cm.





impulse of the mid-1960s with the practices of the late 1970s.<sup>348</sup> Tarazona and López seek to rebuild bridges in art history that reconnect contemporary narratives to those of the 1960s, often seen as an isolated moment in art history which ended with the establishment of Juan Velasco Alvarado's dictatorship in 1968. They describe this period not as an 'abrupt cut-off' as it happened in Chile after 1973 coup, but as a 'gradual suspension.'<sup>349</sup>

Another historian who has greatly contributed to the historicization of Pop is Gustavo Buntinx (currently curator and director of the Centro Cultural San Marcos in Lima), who extensively studied the work of Jesús Ruiz Durand and his peers in the late 1960s. Although focusing more on a single artist, Buntinx's essay *Modernidad Andina/Modernidad Cosmopolita* (Andean Modernity/Cosmopolitan Modernity) highlights the connections between the revolutionary government's objectives and those of the avant-garde, analysing the complex relationship that joined these seemingly disconnected spheres.<sup>350</sup> In the only pamphlet of Jesús Ruiz Durand's retrospective exhibition *Utopía y ruinas, Jesús Ruiz Durand: Fragmentos de una retrospectiva. 1966-1987* (Utopias and ruins, Jesús Ruiz Durand: fragments of a retrospective. 1966-1987) at Lima's Museo de Arte del Centro Cultural de San Marcos in 2005, Buntinx examined the connections between politics and culture, stressing the dialogic model of Andean modernity envisioned by Velasco's revolutionary government.

Within these histories my investigation delves into the specific practices offering a through study of the surviving press clippings and photographs that allow us to access this history and to understand how these artists worked together, how Pop emerged both as a terminology and as a spontaneous tendency among young people in Lima.

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<sup>348</sup> Miguel A. López and Emilio Tarazona, "Erosion and Dissolution of the Object in the Peruvian Art of the 1960s. A first barely perceptible tracking coordinates," transl. Graham Thompson in *Papers d'Art 93, Fundació Espais d'Art Contemporani*, Girona, Spain 2007. Available online [http://www.vividradicalmemory.org/html/workshop/bcn\\_Essays/Desgaste\\_López\\_eng.pdf](http://www.vividradicalmemory.org/html/workshop/bcn_Essays/Desgaste_López_eng.pdf) last accessed 20 June 2016.

<sup>349</sup> Ibid. p. 3.

<sup>350</sup> Gustavo Buntinx, "Manodernidad andina / Modernidad cosmopolita. Trances y transiciones en la vanguardia peruana de los años sesenta," in, Enrique Oteiza (ed.), *Cultura y política en los años 60*, (Buenos Aires: Instituto de Investigaciones Gino Germani, Facultad de Ciencias Sociales, Universidad de Buenos Aires, 1997), pp. 267-286.

The first section of this chapter addresses how the differences and contradictions within Peruvian national culture informed artistic production. Such contradictions are encapsulated within the dichotomy of Indigenism vs. Pan-Americanism, a theme widely discussed in the press since the 1920s and still vastly active in the 1960s, when Pop first emerged amongst young artists in Lima. The second section examines the years between 1962-1965, when Lima's political and cultural landscapes underwent significant shifts laying the grounds for the emergence of Pop: symptomatic of a will by young artists to destroy the academicism that stunted the possibility to fully actualise Peruvianism, as the synthesis of local and imported culture termed 'cultural *mestizaje*' (mixing or crossing). The chapter continues to examine the outburst of Pop onto the art scene in 1966 with an exhibition by the newly established group of artists called Arte Nuevo, which went from taking place in an abandoned shoe factory, to the Museo de Lima, ushering a new chapter in the affirmation of the avant-garde in the latter half of the decade. In this context the mass media, known as principal informants of Pop, emerge as a site for political struggle between the avant-garde, and the industrial bourgeoisie supported by the State. The fourth and fifth sections of the chapter trace the evolution of Pop through an analysis of official cultural policy in Peru following the establishment of a self-proclaimed Revolutionary Government in 1968. In the 1970s the definition that is most descriptive of how Pop was historicised, is Pop *Achorado* (pugnacious, belligerent), coined by artist Jesús Ruiz Durand, to describe how the style became associate with a struggle with the regime. Throughout the text Pop emerges as a unique local and endemic style that catalysed unprecedented self-reflection within the creative classes.

### **3.a *Indigenismo* or Panamericanismo?**

This first section of the chapter begins to introduce the specific facets of Peruvian heritage, which informed the struggles of the avant-garde up until the 1960s, and thus impacted the emergence of Pop in Lima. The themes of greater interest relate to how the tensions between imported and vernacular culture inform notions of national identity and nation. Although the general points may be shared among many countries

with a colonial past, how such issues were confronted by politicians, artists and intellectuals, greatly vary from case to case. Beginning with an outline of the role and placement of Indigenism in Latin America this section seeks to allow a glimpse of the literature and personalities that became palimpsests of Peruvian culture in the XX century, therefore introducing the concerns that played within Pop's genealogy.

*Indigenismo* (Indigenism) first appeared as a political movement in Mexico that advocated for indigenous populations, which in many countries constituted the majority of the population. Early *Indigenistas* sought to claim proportional political influence to counter the domination of a minority of European descent in power since the Spanish conquest in the early XVI century. Because Peru and Mexico were the two principal strongholds of the Spanish Empire in Latin America, which both won independence in 1921, the cultural exchanges between the two countries were continuous. In Peru, in fact, *Indigenismo* arrived with little delay. The Aprista Party (Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana, APRA, or American Popular Revolutionary Alliance) was founded in 1924 and was led by Victor Raul Haya de la Torre who at first greatly supported *Indigenismo*: both movements had the common objective to counter the exploitation of indigenous people. (Because of its political affiliations with APRA, among others, *Indigenismo* was always associated to the left-wing).

Within the arts, a desire for emancipation became evident especially in the 1920s and 1930s (after the centenary of Peru's independence in 1921) with the striking emergence of *Indigenismo* as a painterly style. Embodying an effort to reconnect to the true essence of Peruvian culture before the intrusion of colonialism, *Indigenismo* encapsulated a desire to redefine national culture in independent terms, and most importantly to sever the ties that still connected Peru, both culturally and financially, to Europe. The emergence of *Indigenismo Andino* is largely attributed to José Sabogal (fig. 65), one of the first directors of the Escola Nacional de Bellas Artes (founded in 1919 the ENBA was the first to be established after the one in Mexico City). Following a string of generally Francophile predecessors, Sabogal shifted official culture's gaze towards the country itself. *Indigenismo* was a crucial departure point for a discourse on Pop, because it encapsulated the national identity diatribe that importantly informed the output of many of the artists working in the 1960s. Within this context, an analysis of

texts by intellectuals and politicians illuminates the repercussions of *Indigenismo* on Peruvian society.

Amongst the leftist political philosophers who supported *Indigenismo* both as a social and a cultural stance, was José Carlos Mariátegui, a self-taught Marxist (also called the Peruvian Gramsci) and founder of the Peruvian Communist party<sup>351</sup>, who published extensively before his untimely death at 36 years of age. In an early text titled *Peruanicemos el Perú* (Let's Peruvianise Peru) published in 1924, comprised of five short essays, he addressed the significance and connections between nationalism, avant-garde art and indigenous culture, seeking to raise the urgent necessity for the redefinition of Peruvian patriotism.

In *Peruanicemos el Perú* he explained that 'for all our *passatists*,<sup>352</sup> the national began with the colonial,' and that the Indigenous was merely a 'pre-national' sentiment,' regardless of the fact that 4/5 of the population in Peru was of indigenous descent.<sup>353</sup> He continued claiming that the younger generation, in opposition to such 'passatist,' felt a sense of solidarity with the Indio, and that they did not romanticise about the Inca Empire's glories, but rather acknowledged *Indigenismo's* revolutionary potential.<sup>354</sup> As part of a wider agenda concerning the repossession of an indigenous past, Mariátegui saw parallelisms between Marxism and the Inca Empire's successful form of agrarian communism (an economic and social structure reliant on a monarchy, but completely devoid of the notion of private property), and advocated for a synthesis of colonial and indigenous identities. He saw this synthesis as guided by a younger generation eager to redefine the meaning of Peruvian nationalism (he later suggested the term Indo-America, as an alternative to Latin America).<sup>355</sup> The revolutionary indigenism of the

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<sup>351</sup> Mariátegui founded the Peruvian Communist Party in 1928 following an ideological disagreement with Haya de La Torre.

<sup>352</sup> *Pasatistas*, a term which literally translates to passatists, or those who use the past as the principal frame of reference for constructing the future, was also used by Marinetti in the futurist manifesto, which countered 'passatism' in all its forms.

<sup>353</sup> Original: 'lo nacional para todos nuestros pasadistas comienza con lo colonial. Lo indigena es un sentimiento, aunque o lo sea en su tesis lo pre-nacional.' José Carlos Mariátegui, "Peruanicemos el Perú," *Mundial*, Lima, 31 October 1924.

<sup>354</sup> Original: 'No sueña con utopicas restauraciones. Siente el pasado como una raiz, pero no como un programa.' *Ibid.*

<sup>355</sup> José Carlos Mariátegui, '7 ensayos de interpretacion de la realidad peruana,' cited in Gema Areta Marigo, 'J. C. Mariátegui (por Guardar la Esencia),' in Teodosio Fernández,

avant-garde - he wrote – ‘does not dream with utopian renovations. It feels the past as a root, but not as a program.’

With the same nationalist spirit, Mariátegui wrote *7 ensayos de Interpretacion de la Realidad Peruana* (7 Essays of Interpretation on the Peruvian Realty), a mile stone of his theory. In these texts he mapped out how the social and ethnic problematics in Peru influenced its economy, politics and society, placing particular emphasis on the connections between each of these realms. Mariátegui’s understanding of the complex social fibre of his country remained an exemplary departure point for Peruvian (and South American) politicians thereafter. Whilst analysing the political landscape of the early 1970s, the political analyst James M. Malloy observed:

*It would be no exaggeration to say that, by reading Mariátegui, one gets a good sense of the reality Velasco and his colleagues are reacting against, as well as a feeling for the mood of reformism building.<sup>356</sup>*

Another important contribution to the cause of *Indigenismo* made by Mariátegui, is the establishment of the periodical *Amauta*, which he ran from 1926-1930. Conceived as a platform for younger artists and intellectuals to express their views on Peruvian national identity, *Amauta* became a valuable forum of ideas. Among the most renowned supporters of the magazine, Indigenist novelist, and initiator of state funded *Casas de Culturas*<sup>357</sup> across Peru, José Maria Arguedas described *Amauta* as:

*...the magazine that most encouraged the authors and artists who took on Peru as their theme. This is how the Indigenist current began in the arts. [...] All intellectuals in Peru are shocked by the influence gained by this magazine: the Indio and the landscapes of the Andes, have been converted in the preferred*

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Azucena Palacios Alcaine, and Enrique Pato, *El indigenismo americano: actas de las primeras Jornadas sobre Indigenismo*, (Cantoblanco, Madrid: Ediciones de la Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, 2001).

<sup>356</sup> James M. Malloy, “Peru before and after the Coup of 1968,” *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*, Vol. 14, No. 4, Special Issue: *Military and Reform Governments in Latin America*, Nov. 1972, p. 439.

<sup>357</sup> The *Casas de Cultura* were established by General Pérez Godoy military junta in 1962. Their purpose was to safeguard national heritage across Peru’s districts.

*themes of artistic creation. It's a fighting and anti-Hispanic environment. A socialist revolution seems imminent to the readers and redactors of Amauta.*<sup>358</sup>

This statement further supports the claim that *Indigenismo* came as a shock to the elites for whom culture was not meant for wider distribution. An illustrative example of this phenomenon is also cinema, which right up until the 1970s was almost exclusively present in the high-brow neighbourhoods of Lima, and completely absent as a form of entertainment to the masses.<sup>359</sup> *Amauta* and Mariátegui in particular, also received widespread criticism: one of the leaders of the Aprista movement, Raul Haya De la Torre, accused Mariátegui of being 'Europeanised,' and therefore of missing the core values of Peruvian Nationalism. The founder of *Amauta* had in fact spent four years (in total) travelling across Europe; a trip which he acknowledged to have shaped vastly his political consciousness, but which also inspired him to join the Indigenist movement.

In 1928 *Amauta* n. 9 featured side-by-side two articles by Victor Raul Haya de la Torre and Antenor Orrego, two divergent figures in the period's cultural landscape. Orrego, another distinguished writer and philosopher of the Indigenist movement, contributed the article *Americanismo y Peruanismo* in which he evaluated the advantages and disadvantages of each particular stance. This text is of great value in understanding the desire for Pan-Americanism, which largely characterised the first half of the XX century. As part of a young nation, many Peruvian intellectuals felt the need to accept and appropriate the many influences, since the Spanish conquest that made up Peruvian culture. Somehow in antagonism to pure Indigenism, which in many cases sought to retrieve pre-Columbian culture at the expense of more contemporary

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<sup>358</sup>Original: 'La revista *Amauta* instó a los escritores y artistas que tomaran el Peru como tema. Y así fue como se inició la corriente indigenista en las artes [...] Toda la intelectualidad en Peru es sacudida por la influencia de esta revista: el indio y el paisaje andino se convierten en los temas predilectos de la creación artística. Se trata de un ambiente combatiente, antihispanista. La revolución socialista aparece como imminente e fácil para los lectores y redactores de *Amauta*,' José María Arguedas, "El Indigenismo en el Perú," *Clásicos y Contemporáneos en Antropología*, CIESAS-UAM-UIAT Iatoani, vol. 18, 1967, p. 5.

[www.ciesas.edu.mx/publicaciones/Clasicos/00\\_CCA/Articulos\\_CCA/CCA\\_PDF/032\\_AR\\_GUEDAS\\_El\\_indigenismo\\_en\\_el\\_Peru.pdf](http://www.ciesas.edu.mx/publicaciones/Clasicos/00_CCA/Articulos_CCA/CCA_PDF/032_AR_GUEDAS_El_indigenismo_en_el_Peru.pdf) Last accessed June 20 2016.

<sup>359</sup> Jeffrey Middents, *Writing National Cinema Film Journals and Film Culture in Peru*, (Hanover, N.H.: Dartmouth College, 2009).

influences, Pan-Americanism was a synthesis of Indigenism, European culture, and North American culture, increasingly imported thanks to advantageous trade deals.

According to Orrego, Peruvianism was characterised by a ‘misunderstanding’ (*equivoco*) of the real breadth of Peruvian culture. He wrote that the only meaning that Peruvianismo could have corresponded to – as most people understood it – was a retrospective attachment to Inca culture, ‘which should not have for us anything but an archaeological value.’ This type of Peruanismo, he argued, overshadowed ‘the authentic and real Americanism of today which is in full currency.’<sup>360</sup> Unreservedly supporting Americanism, Orrego observed how ‘if we have a vernacular reality it was the tragedy of the Indio in front of the injustice and insolence of the conquistador and of the mestizo, yet this occurs in general in all of the Americas and is not exclusive of Peru.’<sup>361</sup> He stated, ‘to expect a Peruvianism, and Argentinism, a Chileanism in art is honestly foolish.’<sup>362</sup> It’s interesting to note how Orrego sought to relinquish any difference between South American countries, which he seeks to cluster under the same umbrella, ignoring their individual particularities. His dismissal of colonialism’s footprint as something particularly significant in Peru, indicates a resistance towards accepting the traumatic histories that inspired Indigenism in the first place.

Throughout his text Orrego threads the metaphor of South American identity as a decomposing corpse, claiming that ‘the sepulchral atmosphere is undeniable.’<sup>363</sup> He describes how the Americas used to be Europe’s ‘dustbin,’ which originated the current state of decay. Yet like in all vital processes, he writes, this is the beginning of a process of renewal, which was ready to explode. Orrego’s words demonstrate a will to look towards development, and to let go of ancient hurdles. His argument greatly resonates with the objectives of the avant-garde in the 1960s, which was once again confronted

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<sup>360</sup> Original: ‘Que no puede tener ya para nosotros sino una virtualidad arqueologica,’ and ‘el autentico e vivo americanismo de hoy que esta en plena fluencia.’ Antenor Orrego, “Americanismo y peruanismo,” *Amauta*, Lima, no.9, 1928, pp. 5-6.

<sup>361</sup> Original: ‘si habia una realidad vernacular era la tragedia del indio frente a la injusticia y a la insolencia del conquistador y del mestizo, pero esto era general en toda America y no privativo del Peru.’ Ibid.

<sup>362</sup> Original: ‘los pueblos Americanos están llamados a formar un vasto bloque racial, con una cultura y un pensamiento de conjunto y nunca con artes exclusivos y nacionales. Pretender un peruanismo, un argentinismo o un chilenismo en el arte es sencillamente necio.’ Ibid.

<sup>363</sup> Original: ‘El ambiente sepulcral es incuestionable.’ Ibid.

with a stagnant cultural scene. One of the principal goals presented by Miguel López and Emilio Tarazona is to rebuild the bridges that connect artistic practices in the 1960s with the self-organised art initiatives initiated in the 1980s. In a similar manner, texts such as Orrego's provide a vital backdrop for the cultural effervescence that appeared in the 1960s.

Published adjacently was the article by Haya De La Torre titled *Sobre el papel de las clases medias en la lucha por la independencia economica de America Latina* (On the role of the middle classes in the struggle for Latin American economic independence). In stark opposition to the previous text, this brief article attacks foreign imperialism with force, claiming that 'imperialism implies monopoly.' An extremely polemical analysis of the effects of foreign investment in Latin America, the text highlights how its repercussions were not only negative on the working class, but permeated all social strata (excluding the industrial elites). Haya De La Torre writes:

*The format that capitalism takes in our agrarian, and financially colonial countries is the imperialist format. We define imperialism the export of capital from the great industrial centres as England, the United States etc., to economically underdeveloped countries, in order to invest such funds, which will produce because of the cheap labour of their national or native workforces.<sup>364</sup>*

Haya De La Torre used the Standard Oil Company (owned by the Rockefeller family), which boasted oil plants all over the world, as the quintessential exploitative multinational. The price of labour for this company was significantly lower abroad than in the United States, where workers were protected by unions and laws, completely absent in places like Peru, where the cost of labour was fractional (3 or 4 times smaller). Conclusively, he points out that a company like Standard Oil exploited equally the factory worker and the office employee, marking an axis of exploitation across classes.

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<sup>364</sup> Original: 'La forma que el capitalismo toma en nuestros países agrarios en si, y financieramente coloniales, es la forma imperialista. Llamamos imperialismo a la exportación del capital de los grandes centros industriales como Inglaterra, Estados Unidos etc. hacia los países no desarrollados económicamente, con el objeto de invertir en ellos esos capitales y hacerlos producir por el trabajo baratos de los brazos nacionales o nativos.' Raul Haya de La Torre, "Sobre el papel de las clases medias en la lucha por la independencia economica de America Latina," *Amauta*, Lima, no.9, 1928, pp. 5-7.



Haya de La Torre's article was driven by the Aprista movement's political agenda, which sought to rally voters from both the working and middle classes. This article reveals the extent to which American influence was affecting Peruvian politics, economics, and ultimately, everyday life. Haya de La Torre was one of the political leaders of *Indigenismo*, and it is important to consider how his anti-American stance influenced the aims of the new cultural tendencies that were shaping up. It emerges how Pan-Americanism was more a reflection of US foreign policy, as opposed to an endemic desire for unity, which members of the intelligentsia such as Sabogal, seemed to be convinced by.

The juxtaposition of the three articles outlined so far by Mariátegui, Orrego and Haya de la Torre expound the themes that were affecting the formulation of a shared understanding of Peruvian national identity in the twenties. Unlike in Brazilian *modernismo*, for example, where the dream of modernity combined with the notion of anthropophagy represented the driving force behind many cultural currents, Peru's history was still struggling to reconcile its multiple histories (these cross comparisons are further expanded in the thesis' conclusion).

The ideological tug of war presented by these articles, also translated to the sphere of culture: *Indigenismo* soon fell into the hands of an intellectual elite, losing its revolutionary potential and becoming quasi-dogmatic within Lima's fine art academy - especially through the influence of Sabogal, who embodied the academicism of the ENBA. The demand for an art that would focus on cultural origins, drove a younger generation to oppose the academy. In the late 1930s a group known as the *Independientes*<sup>365</sup> embraced new trends in art including Abstraction and Realism (fig. 66). These styles were more attuned with internationalist aspirations, and they appeared at the same time as the debate on Peruvianism was evolving. The leader of the *Independientes* was Ricardo Grau (later director of the ENBA between 1945-1948), who

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<sup>365</sup> Among the group's members were Oscar Allain, Francisco González Gamarra, Sérvulo Gutiérrez, Juan Barreto, Carlos More, Domingo Pantigoso, Víctor Humareda, Carlos Quíspez Asín, Federico Reinoso, Bernardo Rivero, Ricardo Sánchez, Adolfo Winternitz, and Sabino Springett.

Fig. 66 Ricardo Grau  
*Bodegón*, 1945-1950  
Oil on linen  
65 x 70 cm



was in particular opposition to Sabogal.<sup>366</sup> Grau sought to counter pure Indigenism by embracing all styles of painting. Well-known writer and composer Cesar Mirò stated in the catalogue text for their first exhibition that the *Independientes* defined Peruvian art as a fusion of the autochthonous and the creole, between the academic and the audaciously avant-garde. This structure revealed the authentic universalist aspirations of the Peruvian avant-garde.<sup>367</sup>

Sabogal himself picked up the need to alter the dogmatism of *Indigenismo* following a seventy two-day trip to the United States, upon invitation of the Washington-based Peruvian Cultural Centre in early 1943.<sup>368</sup> Although still not convinced by the pluralism advocated by the *Independientes*, he recognised how indigenous culture could project Peru onto the global art stage. On national radio, he spoke about his impressions and his marvel at the museums and technological advancement he witnessed, demonstrating a fervent Pan-American spirit. Sabogal's speech further marks how cultural aspiration increasingly turned to the United States, as opposed to Europe. His speech concludes with the hope for the construction of a museum of indigenous art from the Southern American hemisphere, a cultural centre, equipped with a library that would become a point of reference for all artists, and scholars.

Sabogal's renewed interest in Pan-Americanism bloomed at a time when in the United States indigenous and pre-Columbian art was beginning to be classified as 'Art,' and not as mere 'testaments of history.'<sup>369</sup> A key player in this process was undoubtedly (and yet again) Nelson Rockefeller. During a trip to Venezuela in 1937, he also travelled to Peru where he met with the well-known archaeologist Julio C. Tello. Rockefeller was

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<sup>366</sup> Grau went as far as stating that 'if Sabogal is a painter, I am a fireman.' cited in Vizcarra, *La Generación Del 68*, pp.19-20.

<sup>367</sup> Original: 'lo autóctono y lo críollo, lo académico y lo que exhibe audaces líneas vanguardistas, el arte peruano en su expresión y en su íntima raíz y el que aspira ,por su contenido a una connotación universalista...' Catalogue of the 'Exposicion Independiente,' Palacio de la exposicion, Municipalidad de Lima, 1937, cited in Vizcarra, *La Generación Del 68*, pp.19-20.

<sup>368</sup> José Sabogal, 'Impresiones de mi visita a estados Unidos de Norteamérica', *El Día*, 21 March 1943, Radio Nacional, Lima, reproduced in *Obras José Sabogal, Literarias Completas*, (Lima: Ignacio Prado Pastor Editor, 1989), pp. 425-429.

<sup>369</sup> Joanne Pillsbury, "The Pan-American: Nelson Rockefeller and the Arts of ancient Latin America," in Alisa LaGamma, Joanne Pillsbury, Eric Kjellgren, and Yaëlle Biro, *The Nelson A. Rockefeller Vision: Arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas*, (New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin, 2014). p. 20.

passionate about textiles, and importantly contributed to a project of conservation of over 400 mummies (from the second half of the first millennium B.C.) bundled in ancient textiles, which had just been discovered, in exchange for which he was given four specimens. Though his original intention was to donate them to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (MET), these were rejected for inadequate facilities, and ultimately sent to the Natural History Museum. Episodes such as these drove Rockefeller to establish the Museum of Primitive art, in the effort to establish pre-Columbian art as Art, which he succeeded in doing when his collection was donated to, and this time accepted by, the MET in 1976.

Rockefeller's efforts to elevate indigenous and pre-Columbian art cannot be divorced from his Pan-Americanism, particularly evident through his involvement in the Office of Inter-American Relations, a body that had been established during WWII dedicated to facilitate relations across the Americas. His activities in Brazil, outlined in the previous chapter, and the Rockefeller foundation's involvement in countless industrial and cultural initiatives across the continent (for instance at the ITDT in Argentina), further support this point. Rockefeller's intentions, were doubtlessly aligned with wider political agendas stemming from the United States. In 1933 US president Franklin Roosevelt had launched the 'Good Neighbour Policy,' according to which the US ought to behave as a respectful and righteous neighbour to Latin America, establishing amicable, and mutually profitable economic bonds, to be respected and honoured. Another of its stipulations entailed a non-interventionist stance, a manoeuvre that sought to reassure Latin American countries of an abstention in military interference from the US.<sup>370</sup> This policy laid the foundation for the establishment of the Inter-American Fund in 1942, and of the OAS (Organization of American States, known as the Pan-American Union until 1948), which both consolidated economic bonds with many Latin American countries including Peru, further formalised with the Alliance for

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<sup>370</sup> Through such agreements were publicised as mutually beneficial, it soon became apparent - as specified in the coming pages - how the Good Neighbor Policy, as the Marshall Plan, and the IDA ultimately sought to enforce cultural and economic domination by the US.

David Green, *The containment of Latin America. A history of the myths and realities of the good neighbour policy*, (Chicago : Quadrangle Books, 1971).

Progress of 1961. It becomes clear here how Pan-Americanism was as strategic policy largely promoted by the US for its greater advantage.

The political situation of Peru from the 1940s onwards especially (also considering that it joined the allied forces in 1943), largely facilitated the establishment of economic bonds with the US. The US's support, however, was wholly dependent on favourable economic conditions, usually under the aegis of right-wing governments. The political landscape of Peru during the forties and 1950s underscores this connection, and sees on one side of the political spectrum APRA, and on the other the military. The dominance of one over the other, as the political fluctuations of the decade demonstrate, had less to do with democratic elections, and much more with short-term economic gain. The political context is crucial in understanding how the cultural landscape was shifting according to foreign and domestic policies, trade, and economic fluctuations. Such contextual analysis is also important to understand how a Pop aesthetic – which at first may be misinterpreted as derivative – appeared in the local milieu as the reflection of a specific socio-political climate.

After a period of political see-saw between 1941-1945 the APRA party won the elections, yet the military prevented Haya de la Torre from taking office, fearful of jeopardising the influx of foreign capital. Eventually, José Luís Bustamante y Rivero (a democrat who had promptly formed an alliance with the 'apristas') won the presidential seat, and his policies favoured a climate of freedom 'unheard of in the history of Peru.'<sup>371</sup> Although he was able to secure widespread popular support because of his liberal outlook, the influence of APRA over his administration earned him the elite's distrust. Through Bustamante, APRA increasingly promoted social mobilisation against the elites, and a tougher stance towards foreign investment, which was core to the regent class' wealth.<sup>372</sup>

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<sup>371</sup> Julio Cotler, *Clases Estado y Nacion*, (Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 1978), cited in Vizcarra, *Tenciones Generacionales*, p. 79.

<sup>372</sup> Dan Cozart, "The Rise of APRA in Peru: Victor Raúl Haya de La Torre and Inter-American Intellectual Connections, 1918–1935," *THE LATIN AMERICANIST*, vol. 58, issue 1, 2014, p. 77.

And Carol Graham, *Peru's APRA : parties, politics, and the elusive quest for democracy*, (Boulder, Colo.; London: L. Rienner Publishers, 1992).

When it appeared that the economy's stability was threatened by such political situations, a military coup installed General Manuel Arturo Odría Amoretti in 1948, which lasted eight years. In this period of dictatorship, known as the *Ochenio*, economic relations with the United States were cultivated and Peru's embracing of Developmentalism (as in Brazil and Argentina) gave rise to a shift in economic focus from agriculture towards industry. The power once in the hands of an agrarian oligarchy (largely of European descent), moved to a new industrial bourgeoisie, whose interests were aligned with those of the military (and of the United States). In this context, Pan-Americanism materialised as an overarching ethos that promoted such economic decisions during the dictatorship.

Pan-Americanism also materialised in the form of cultural exchange. For instance, in 1943 MoMA initiated an extensive acquisition trip across the continent, and the Pan-American Union fostered significant cultural exchange through a number of travelling exhibitions. Cuban lawyer and art critic José Gómez Sicre was notoriously responsible for the successful cultural exchanges that took place through the Pan-American Union's Visual Arts Unit. In an editorial note he published in the *Visual Arts Bulletin* distributed by the Pan-American Union he stated:

*For the United States what was at stake was the definition of an aesthetic project representing the ideological aspirations of the Western bloc: a model of art practice that puts aside 'indigenisms, pesantrisms, [and] workerisms' and embraces a renewed concept of freedom that can be shared by all the world's nations*<sup>373</sup>

The internationalist aspirations of the time also materialised in the reshaping of Lima's cultural landscape: numerous galleries and museums opened to support a growing bourgeoisie's appetite for culture as a measure for social standing, and development under the aegis of Pan-Americanism itself. The institution of the *Casas de Cultura* across Peru, and the beginning of the periodical *Cultura y Pueblo* are also indicative of this change.

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<sup>373</sup> José Gómez Sicre, "Nota Editorial" *Boletín de Artes Visuales no.5*, Washington DC, Pan American Union, May-December 1959, p. 3, quoted in López, "Cosmopolitan F(r)ictions," pp. 18-19.

Other key institutions that appeared in this period are the national philharmonic orchestra and the ICPNA (Instituto Cultural Peruano Norteamericano) in 1938, the Galeria de la Sociedad de las Bellas Artes in 1941, the Instituto de Cultura, and the esteemed Galeira Bob Gesinus in 1945. Perhaps one of the most important examples is the creation of the Galeria de Lima (later transformed in to the Instituto de Arte Contemporaneo) in 1947 on the initiative of Francisco Moncloa and Jorge Remy, two key personalities in the cultural development of the city. By establishing the Galeria de Lima, Remy and Moncloa not only sought to create a platform for the exhibition of contemporary art, but also to nourish the birth of a market to support younger artists.

Regardless of the efforts by those like Remy and Moncloa, the style that most appealed to the urban bourgeoisie through the late forties and 1950s, was abstraction, seen as the reflection of a developed society, one akin to the United States'. This abrupt shift in taste, previously largely equivalent to nineteenth century European painting, appears logical within a Pan-American project. Peruvian artists hardly had a market prior to the forties, and as demonstrated by the *Independientes* they often felt free to experiment with different styles with no need for singular affiliations.<sup>374</sup> By the end of the decade, abstraction was increasingly a *sine qua non*. The ENBA acted as the officialising site for National art, and was often seen as compliant, and uncritical of dominant structures, thus stunting the transformative potential of the styles it promoted. In *Tensiones Generacionales*, Castrillón Vizcarra observed how the *ochenio* saw painterly styles becoming associated to political parties: who promoted abstraction belonged to a sector of the garaged aristocracy and upper middle classes supporting the right wing and the military government; conversely, those who supported figuration (akin to socialist realism, and by no means commonplace in Lima) were the leftist intellectual bourgeoisie (Salazar Bondy, Pérez Luna and other critics).<sup>375</sup> In agreement with Vizcarra, Tarazona adds that abstraction was intimately connected to the context of the military government and to the influence of the Alliance for Progress. The polarised and politicised division between abstraction and figuration suggested by Castrillón Vizcarra and Tarazona, point to the very urban character of these movements, which

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<sup>374</sup> Vizcarra, *La Generación Del 68*, p. 80.

<sup>375</sup> Vizcarra, *Tensiones Generacionales*, p. 21.

were virtually absent outside Lima. Abstraction had become a *lingua franca*,<sup>376</sup> one that was simply aligned with official policy and remained uncritical of it. This context created the circumstances for a younger avant-garde in the 1960s to resist set categories. The artists in question were largely autodidacts, having distanced themselves from the ENBA.

The *ochenio* ended when Odría, who had lost much support, did not re-candidate himself at the elections in 1956. The frontrunners at the elections were centrist democrat Manuel Prado y Ugarteche (previously president between 1939-1945), and Fernando Belaúnde Terry who had founded the Partido de Acción Popular (Popular Action Party). Prado y Ugarteche won the elections by strategically forming an alliance with APRA, which Odría had proscribed in 1948, and by guarding the trust of the military. As promised to the *apristas*, one of his first actions was to lift the proscription over the party, and to readmit Haya de la Torre back from exile.

The critical voice that most advocated for a modern notion of Peruvian culture, one that would not exclude *Indigenismo* or Internationalism, is Juan Acha's. One of his early articles still published under the pseudonym J. Nahuaca in the important newspaper *El Comercio*, was titled *Conscrición peruana de la pintura* (1958).<sup>377</sup> Acha explained how Peruvian art was suffering under the pressures of nationalist preoccupations, which revealed the internal weakness of local painting, not strong enough to contrast foreign pressures. 'Our artistic tradition' – he writes – 'was greatly

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<sup>376</sup> Tarazona explains: 'entre las varias notas que comentan el evento, un artículo publicado en La Prensa constata la innegable adhesión con la que el estilo se convertía en la lengua franca para las nuevas promociones de creadores visuales: "En los jóvenes aspirantes a artistas —señala— toma el abstraccionismo inquietantes formas de endémico sarampión..."' Emilio Tarazona, *Gloria Gómez-Sánchez: una década de mutaciones (1960 – 1970)*, (exh. Cat. Lima: ICPNA, 2014), p. 5. Available on [https://www.academia.edu/19933310/Gloria\\_G%C3%B3mez-S%C3%A1nchez\\_una\\_d%C3%A9cada\\_de\\_mutaciones\\_1960-1970](https://www.academia.edu/19933310/Gloria_G%C3%B3mez-S%C3%A1nchez_una_d%C3%A9cada_de_mutaciones_1960-1970) Last accessed 28 April 2016.

<sup>377</sup> J. Nahuaca (Juan Acha), "Conscrición peruana de la pintura," *Suplemento Dominical de El Comercio*, Lima, 4 May 1958, p. 9. Reproduced in Vizcarra, *La Generación Del 68*, p. 148.



interrupted, and the ready increase and development of the past few years made painting more susceptible to influences.<sup>378</sup>

Until the late 1950s, the sociological/ethnic/historical reasons behind Peru's aesthetic trajectories shared an insistence on 'Peruvianity (*peruanidad*)' as the 'only viable path for our painting.' Acha uses the notion of a 'sentimental extortion' to detail the condition of painting as something inextricably connected to politics and spirituality. Each painting ought to embody 'a confession, an act of faith,' with the objective to redeem the individual's consciousness. This process encapsulates modern man's pursuit of refuge in an illusory world. The author explains that 'this is how the socio-political ineffectiveness of art is worsened by the sterilization of the essential energies of painting, and by the paralysis of socio-political action itself.'<sup>379</sup> Acha denounced the passivity of Peru's tastemakers, too weak to challenge dominant values. He was in touch with a younger generation, and he recognised the need to alter the pace of cultural production, not for the sake of participating on the global stage, but to allow young artists to lay the foundations for an authentically modern Peru.

Now the question was to identify and stimulate a sentiment of what he termed 'Pan-Peruvianism,' which would sublimate all facets of the country's past. Acha therefore did not advocate for an abandonment of the ethnic references in painting, but for their union to more widely intelligible subjective interiority, which would unite 'Garcilaso with Vallejo' (referring to the celebrated chronicler of the Inca civilization Inca Garcilaso de la Vega and Acha's contemporaneous poet Cesar Vallejo, known as one of the great literary innovators of the twentieth century). He took the example of Sabogal, who adopted an Indigenist style following his travels to Mexico. He claimed that his adoption of set iconography is not able to go beyond the simple issue of technique and expressivity because the images used became symbols of affection towards a culture, as opposed to an effective resolution to an aesthetic problem. He placed in opposition a 'universalist art' (which promotes national human values) and an art of 'evocation' (which sought to be connected to a colonial or pre-Hispanic past) and

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<sup>378</sup> Original: 'Nuestra tradicion artistica, mucho tiempo interrumpida, y el úbito increment y desarrollo de los ultimos anos, hacen de la pintura el arte más susceptible de influencias.' Ibid.

<sup>379</sup> Ibid, p. 149.

explained that ‘the incipient resolution to Indigenism ends up being a metaphor; the loving nationalization of iconography was not enough to provide the desired fruits.’<sup>380</sup>

From Acha’s article it emerges how the greatest objection against contemporary art was a fear of loss, and a reluctance towards change. He saw an overarching aspiration towards universalism, as the antagonist to localism, traditionalism, Indigenism and figuration, which he identified with what could lead to a truthful ‘Peruvianization of painting.’ Although Acha’s views on how to develop and consolidate a simultaneously Peruvian and international aesthetic can be contested, his perspective, unchallenged by contemporary scholars, and consistently published in Peru, reflected and informed the stance adopted by many young artist.

This section has laid out through history and literature the cultural contradictions that characterised Peruvianism from its earliest inception. In art such contradictions materialised in the form of antagonistic artistic styles (from *Indigenismo*, to abstraction to figuration), which, from being fluid and unrestrictive, became increasingly defined and polarised. The political oscillations between the right wing military and nationalist democratic parties such as APRA further highlight the struggle to define Peruvianism. Respectively, the military sought the support of foreign countries such as the USA invariably promoting foreign culture, while nationalist parties sought to counter foreign influence by relying on Indigenism predominantly. The next section will examine a process of ‘Peruvianisation of painting’ as described by Acha, in dialogue with the political trajectories that supported cultural initiatives in the 1960s. In this context, destruction, and reconstruction are reactions to the domination of abstraction (important parallels with Argentina’s progression towards Pop must be recognized here). This process, starting in the early 1960s, reflects the efforts by a class of intellectuals, artists, and writers in the pursuit of asserting an independent and dynamic cultural scene in Lima.

### **3.b Sepulchral Environments: Destruction and Decay After Indigenism, 1962-1966**

By the early 1960s, Lima boasted a remarkable increase in exhibition spaces, collectors and cultural organization (both public and private), and the ‘sepulchral

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<sup>380</sup> Ibid.

atmosphere' noted by Orrego, appeared to have dissipated. Nevertheless, the problematic relations with the foreign influence – particularly with the United States - strongly impacted cultural production and the allocation of funds. Because abstraction, for example, was perceived as symptomatic of 'internationalism,' many artists adopted the style as the recipe for market recognition, for invitations to exhibit abroad, and for greater earnings selling their paintings in USD.<sup>381</sup> One of the most remarkable abstract trends that appeared, was akin to *Informél*, and, to a great extent, mirrored experimental practices that had developed around the same time in Argentina and Brazil, and with a particular connection to Paris or Italy. Figures such as Macedónio de La Torre and Amílcar Salomón, Grau, and others, who were among many who spent years of training abroad.

Like in Argentina, where the exhibition *Arte Destructivo* had a remarkable effect on avant-garde production, destruction is a key word to capture this period's cultural ethos. This section uses destruction as the foremost symptom of a renegotiation of the meaning of Peruvianism, Indigenism, and internationalism, not as contrasting terminologies, but as elements within a unitary idea of national identity. Three exhibitions in particular, which took place on 3, 4, 5 November 1965 examined in this section, encapsulate the impetus to disrupt the status quo, the gradual emergence of a commercial aesthetic, and a growing concern with the effects of consumerism and the mass media on everyday life. Tracing parallels with the political context up to 1966 this section is devoted to connect these three seemingly disparate events in a narrative that leads to the formulation of a controversial aesthetic that was known as Pop.<sup>382</sup>

Following Odría's *Ochenio* in power and an additional six years of right wing rule with Manuel Prado, Peru was newly prepared for civilian elections in 1962. The very tight results saw once again in first place Raul Haya de la Torre with APRA, closely followed by Fernando Belaúnde Terry with his Partido de Acción Popular. After almost a

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<sup>381</sup> Juan Barreto, 'El abstraccionismo se hace Academia,' *Suplemento Dominical de El Comercio*, Lima, 7 January 1962, p.10.

<sup>382</sup> Miguel López and Emilio Tarazona further identify in this period the formation of ideas related to self-organised art and 'alternative' or extra-institutional art that lay the foundations for the experimental practices that appeared thereafter, in particular in the 1980s. López and Tarazona, *Erosion and Dissolution of the Object in the Peruvian Art of the 1960s*. p. 4.

year of political power struggle due to the narrow margins between the two candidates, Belaúnde Terry finally won the presidential seat.

Amongst Belaúnde's foremost concerns were reclaiming Inca traditions of community cooperation in a social democratic context, which placed his party in between a pro agrarian oligarchy right wing and APRA's radical left. Considering that in 1962 Peru's population was 10,520,000 and only 2,221,288 people voted at the general elections (just over 20%), it becomes apparent how the issues confronted by artists, intellectuals, and also by politicians, reflected only a fraction of the concerns of a wider population, which did not participate (or were unable to participate) in the shaping of cultural or national values. For the narrow portion of the population that did participate, the Belaúnde administration inaugurated a period of growth and development, which installed a sense of optimism and cultural effervescence. During his mandate he succeeded in improving infrastructure, social housing, motorways, airports – in full alignment with a developmentalist attitude also present in Argentina and Brazil. His election slogan 'Peru as Doctrine' encapsulated the ideology that supported his administration.

One of the key aspects in Belaúnde's foreign policy was to maintain positive relations with the US, securing foreign investment, and consequently the support of a growing industrial elite. The tight connections with the US were also evident in the personalities involved in the administration of public institutions. For example the IAC directors were Manuel Mujica Gallo and trustee Philip A. Thorndike, had been invited to become part of the Inter-American Honorary Sponsoring Committee of MoMA's International Council, which sought to ensure the circulation of exhibitions between continents. The chairman of this committee was David Rockefeller (Nelson's younger brother) – the very owner of the Standard Oil Company, source of great controversy since the thirties - and his vice president was Peruvian businessman and patron of the arts Manuel Olloa. All members of the committee were responsible to ensure the funding of such exhibitions, which in greater part travelled from (not to) the US.

The IAC showed a great number of exhibitions imported directly from MoMA (nine between 1959-1966), including *Abstract Drawings and Watercolours: USA*, featuring 80 works by 28 artists, selected by Dore Ashton (firm supporter of Abstract Expressionism) in 1963, and *Josef Albers: Homage to the Square*, 36 paintings selected

by Kynaston McShine the same year.<sup>383</sup> One of the shows that followed Albers' was of Argentinian artist Rogelio Posello's geometric abstract canvases, which consolidated further the notion that abstraction was in fact the international *lingua franca*.<sup>384</sup> López argued that Peru's desire for cultural alignment 'ultimately [evinced] that the expectations of international integration underlying the industrial and Developmentalist project were only a mirage of a promising yet unfinished modernity, in a country with a deeply fractured social structure.'<sup>385</sup> Nevertheless, such fractures became mostly visible later in the decade, with a new military coup that overthrew the centrist government in 1968.

The tight connections between foreign policy and the kind of art that was exhibited in public spaces, often caused the exclusion of a younger generation of artists, which had distanced itself from Lima's fine art academy because of its lacking experimentalism. For example the board of the IAC, which acted as the selection committee for the Venice Biennial, only promoted artists who were based in Europe - and therefore were often embedded within foreign cultural milieus - allegedly due to financial restraints. Many artists were thus motivated to enact a rupture with official culture, which is most apparent in three exhibitions of early November 1965 that represent the focus of this section.

The three events took place in such a short time, in honour of Argentine critic and historian Jorge Romero Brest who had come to deliver six lectures on new art practices in Argentina and abroad, upon invitation by several institutions in Lima (his arrival is widely considered pivotal in the cultural development of young artists). Romero

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<sup>383</sup> *Internationally Circulating Exhibitions 1952-2004*, (New York: MoMA, 2004), online document, <https://www.moma.org/momaorg/shared/pdfs/docs/learn/icelist.pdf>. Last accessed 20 June 2016.

<sup>384</sup> Also in Brazil geometric abstraction in the fifties had been accepted as the culmination of Brazilian modernist project because it strayed from the Yankee Abstract expressionism, which was mostly associated to liberal capitalism. In contrast, geometric abstraction recalled Soviet experiments by Malevich or Rodchenko. See Michael Asbury, "The Bienal de São Paulo: between Nationalism and Internationalism," in Stephen Feeke, Regina Teixeira de Barros, Penelope Curtis, Artur Alípio Barrio de Sousa Lopes (eds.), *Espaço aberto/espaco fechado : sites for sculpture in Modern Brazil*, (exh. cat., Leeds : Henry Moore Institute, 2006), p. 74.

<sup>385</sup> López, "Cosmopolitan F(r)ictions," p.20.

Brest's lectures sought to challenge traditional modes of representation and to exalt new media, such as environments and happenings, over painting and sculpture. Of the six presentations, four took place at the Museo de Arte de Lima, under the theme *Very new forms of contemporary visual art*. The first lecture titled *Images and Objects*, was followed by *Light and Geometry, Vindication of Colour* (at the San Marcos University), and *From 'Objects' to 'Environments'*. At the School of fine arts Romero Brest presented *Argentine Art in 1965* and finally, at the Society of Architects, *The problem of integration of the arts*. Each of these lectures served to inject new ideas among Lima's young artists who had little exposure to international trends. Even most of the books in Spanish that circulated were often imported from Buenos Aires, where most of the translating and distribution took place.<sup>386</sup>

Acha greatly shared the didactic spirit that motivated Romero Brest, working towards an expansion of artistic discourse in Lima. In 1964, in fact, Acha had also delivered a series of lectures following his visits to Documenta III and the Venice Biennale, which had importantly initiated discussions on the newest forms of art, including Pop. After abandoning his pseudonym Acha became a pivotal figure thanks to his desire to increase the circulation of information and ideas. Of focal importance among the issues discussed by Acha was the connection between Pop and Neo-Dada, which he established through an analysis of Kurt Schwitters' assemblages, in particular his monumental *Merzhaus* (an immersive work of art that expanded the assemblage in his canvases to a three-dimensional construction), which may have inspired the scale and nature of the three exhibitions examined here.<sup>387</sup>

About these exhibitions leftist critic and intellectual Mirko Lauer wrote that they emerged with a '(...) fairly unthinking character, as a spontaneous and a-critical product of the international circumstances of that time.'<sup>388</sup> Contrarily, López, who sought to re-examine the dematerialised aspects of experimental art practices that emerged in the

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<sup>386</sup> Vizcarra, *Tensiones Generacionales*, p. 80.

<sup>387</sup> Juan Acha, "Kurt Schwitters: Precursor del Pop Art," *El Comercio*, Segunda Sección, Lima, 19 October 1964, p II. The announcement (by Acha in a lecture he gave on Documenta III) that Pop was derivative of Kurt Schwitters' work, established a connection with Neo-Dada, and made Pop more palatable to the young artists in Lima.

<sup>388</sup> Mirko Lauer, *Introducción a la Pintura Peruana del siglo XX*, (Lima: Mosca Azul Editores, 1976), p. 167, cited in López and Tarazona, *Erosion and Dissolution of the Object in the Peruvian Art of the 1960s*. p. 2.

1960s beyond a recognition of the local propagation of Pop, Op, Minimalist or Hard-Edge art, historicised the exhibitions as encapsulating the ‘profound transformation looming in those appearances of a deliberately rough, poor and rabidly ephemeral art.’<sup>389</sup> Although they focused on the ‘alternative’ aspect of such exhibitions, their analysis offers an important reconstruction, elevating them to being landmarks of the artistic achievements of the decade. Within a genealogy of Pop art practices, the exhibitions demonstrate an increased sensitivity towards the influence of the mass media, and artist’s heightened desire to make art participative and involving of the spectator: all elements also present in the Brazilian and Argentine Pop iterations.

The first exhibition that opened in November was titled *Mimuy* and it took place in the basement of the IAC (fig. 67). The single work exhibited in the darkened room, by Mário Acha, Miguel Malatesta, Efraín Montero, was an assemblage of urban debris and what appeared to be rubbish, in the form of a giant figure. The space was bathed in dim reddish lights, and beside the anthropomorphic sculpture was a table with the heads of mannequins suspended around it. Sculptress Marina Núñez del Prado, who was exhibiting works in the IAC’s main space, regarded the work as an ‘unseemly and intolerable accompaniment to the show of her work’ and she demanded the suppression of certain parts of the Environment in the days prior to the opening, threatening to withdraw her own sculptures.<sup>390</sup> The press also manifested certain unease towards the event, which was interpreted as the manifestation of youthful rebellion. An unknown author wrote:

*A mannequin of rods and wires proclaiming its virility with an old horn, seemed to be the representation of the man of the era; beyond it a strange Universe in miniature, full of toys and gewgaws that shuddered every five minutes, jolted by an electrical current, mesmerized those present. All of a sudden a girl next to me in a black leotard and a rope round her neck said: ‘I would like to fry some eggs on the side of a rocket’; ‘It would be more interesting to reach down a star and put it in the kitchen scullery,’ added another; ‘Roses stink when they have tertian,’ commented a boy wearing blue jeans and a checked tie.<sup>391</sup>*

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<sup>389</sup> López, “Cosmopolitan F(r)ictions.” p. 23. For an extensive review of primary sources relating to the three exhibitions examined in this section (and one of the main sources for descriptions of the three exhibitions) see also López and Tarazona, *Erosion and Dissolution of the Object in the Peruvian Art of the 1960s*.

<sup>390</sup> Ibid. p. 7.

<sup>391</sup> Unknown author quoted in Ibid, p. 6.

Fig. 67 Mario Acha, Miguel Malatesta, Efraín Montero, *Mimuy*, 1965. Images of the exhibition at IAC, 3 November 1965.





This section reveals how some did not take *Mimuy* too seriously, but were rather more bemused by the surreal atmosphere it established, and the objects that belonged to an ambiguous denim-wearing youth culture. Acha also reviewed the show providing a thorough appraisal of the display:

*Armatures of wire partially lined with plaster-coated fabric resemble parts of a giant that has been carved up and scattered around the narrow basement. Arms, hands, and trunk are easily recognized, but not the head, which suffers convulsions from time to time, or the derrière. In and on top of each of the parts them the most assorted useless objects have been distributed. And, finally, distributed strategically, two components of small objects, a doll, a coffin and a cabinet.*<sup>392</sup>

The review also recognised the limits of the exhibitions,

*Mimuy is guilty [...] not of an excess of actuality, as many believe, but of the opposite: of its lack. There prevails an already obsolete literary tone: surrealistic surprises and incoherencies. The actual avant-garde is more heterodox: its forms are more direct; the objects rawer and more real; and it abandons manual work. We thus miss the concrete and overwhelming reality of the objects as the basis of the Environment' (Acha, 1965b).*<sup>393</sup>

Acha's notion of the 'actual avant-garde' reveals his propensity towards the ready-made, or 'rawer and more real' objects. He appreciated the strong references to youth culture that imbued the exhibition, yet pushed for greater subtlety in the use of objects, and in a process of de-skilling of the work of art, further removed from traditional media.

The second exhibition that makes up this brief itinerary of rupture is *Escenografía para un Folklore Urbano y Amparo Ambiental para una serie de pinturas sobre la meta-mor-fosis* (Scenography for an urban folklore... and ambient shelter for a series of paintings on meta-mor-phosis) by Luís Arias Vera, held at the Cultura y Libertad Gallery which had opened the same year.<sup>394</sup> The show presented a series of

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<sup>392</sup> Juan Acha, "La ambientación del IAC," *El Comercio*, Lima, 8 November 1965.

<sup>393</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>394</sup> It is interesting to note that Maria José Herrera used the expression *Urban Folklore* to describe Pop art practices in Argentina in Maria José Herrera, *Pop! La Consagración de la Primavera*, (Buenos Aires: Fundación OSDE, 2010), p. 5.

objects and environments that invited the spectator's participation. Arias Vera's objectives were similar to those of *Mimuy*, which sought to involve and perhaps unsettle the spectator. To set the tone for the exhibition, on the opening night the artist hired a pickpocket to rob a handbag from one of the visitors and escape out on the street. A few minutes after the robbery, the artist returned to the gallery holding the handbag. Although the thief was not caught, Arias Vera sought to cause commotion and destabilise the passive audience at such a formal social gathering.<sup>395</sup>

Another interesting aspect of some of the objects included was their sensitivity towards the inclusive and involving aspect of images in advertising on in the media, as well as a pointed critique of consumerism (and consumers). For example, the work *Lima the capital of exchange*, was a huge hut made of cardboard with three perforations, each one marked by product labels or slogans drawn from advertising campaigns. Attracted by the slogans, visitors were invited to peer through the holes and discover objects on display, meant to symbolise the free goods awarded to those who bought repeatedly the same product - the title, in fact, is a play on the advertising campaigns that rewarded the returning customer with free gifts, or discounted offers. The price placed on each prize, however, was much higher than its retail value, pointing to the fact that companies were able to sell more thanks to such commercial stratagems. On the installation was a photograph of the hut taken on the day of the opening with also Mário Acha and Miguel Malatesta, who had inaugurated the *Mimuy* the day before.

*Genio-G-Rama gigante* (Giant genius G-Rama, fig. 68), was a large crossword puzzle, constellated with attractive images drawn from the mass media, which was meant as a parody of the outmoded popularity of crossword puzzles in Peru. It had become customary in Peru to award cash prizes to those who were able to resolve particularly challenging newspaper puzzles printed in newspapers, and ultimately, the popularity of these contests had superseded the lottery's. The prize for solving Arias Vera's puzzle was a picture from the exhibition. The playfulness and participative character of the works listed so far highlights a tension between the alienating effect of consumable images and the inclusive aspect of advertising, which summons interaction.

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<sup>395</sup> Descriptions of Arias Vera's works in the exhibition are mainly sourced from López and Tarazona, *Erosion and Dissolution of the Object in the Peruvian Art of the 1960s*, and Miguel López and Emilio Tarazona, *Accionismo en el Perú (1965-2000). Rastros y fuentes para una primera cronología*, (Lima: Galeria ICPNA San Miguel, 2005).

Fig. 68 Luis Arias Vera  
*Genio G-Rama Gigante*, 1965  
 Installation view of the *Escenografía para un Folklore Urbano y Amparo Ambiental para una serie de pinturas sobre la meta-mor-fosis*. Galeria Cultura y Libertad, 4 November 1965.



Fig. 69 Luis Arias Vera  
*Ah! Y el Chino de la Esquina...?*, 1965-2007  
 Installation view of the exhibition *La Persistencia de lo Effimero*, Spanish Cultural Centre, Lima, 2007. Photo by Eduardo Hirose.



Parody is activated through participation and his works question the role of the gallery space as a site of contemplation vs. a site for action.

Arias Vera's interest in participation is also evident in the creation of environments: *The Procession* invited viewers to walk down a narrow passage painted in purple (the liturgical colour for Advent and Lent, symbolising penitence and mourning for Jesús' death) and lined with incense sticks, evoking religious processions. In addition *Ah! Y el Chino de la Esquina...? (...Ah! /And the Chinese on the corner...? fig. 69)* was a poster that initiated an itinerary marked in yellow arrows that led the visitor outside the gallery, to a shop on the corner of the street owned by a Chinese family.<sup>396</sup>

López and Tarazona, who recount this event in detail, focus their interpretation on the dissolution of the White Cube as one of Arias Vera's primary objectives.<sup>397</sup> They observe:

*The criminal from the slums and the shopkeeper on the corner, converted into substantive parts of the exhibition, thus denoted an attitude that called for a full interaction with the world around us, at the same time dissolving the boundaries of the gallery and of art<sup>398</sup>*

Unlike the organisers of *Mimuy*, Arias Vera produced a catalogue alongside the exhibition, describing the intent of each work. Included was also a passage from Pierre Restany's text *From the Ivory Tower to the Tower of Babel*, an article published the previous year for an exhibition in Rio de Janeiro (Galeria Relevo) of works by Antônio

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<sup>396</sup> Tarazona and López place this work in dialogue with Oscar Bony's *La Familia Obrera*, examining how the work intruded within the gallery space, while Arias Vera opened up the flat space of the gallery to real life.

<sup>397</sup> López and Tarazona's view is often determined by the wider historiographies that they have dealt with relating to dematerialization in Peru, or the lesser and lesser reliance on objects, and the emergence of conceptual practices, actions, environments often documented through photography. Among the texts that address such practices are López and Tarazona, *Accionismo en el Perú (1965-2000)* and López and Tarazona, *Erosion and Dissolution of the Object in the Peruvian Art of the 1960s*.

Another important reference which informed many of the descriptions in this section is Sharon Lerner Rizo-Patrón and Jorge Villacorta Chávez, "Fragmented Corpus."

<sup>398</sup> López and Tarazona, *Erosion and Dissolution of the Object in the Peruvian Art of the 1960s*, p. 12.

Dias.<sup>399</sup> The text also examined and appreciated how traditional media (painting sculpture) were becoming obsolete for art's contemporary prerogatives. He points out the necessity to reconcile the harshness, and crudeness of reality with artistic production through participation, writing:

*For artists today the problem is not to escape the world. [...] The artist of today sets his feet on the ground and seeks the elements of an organic participation in the social body and in its technical, industrial, and urban structures.*<sup>400</sup>

Restany was the international correspondent for the Italian art and architecture magazine *Domus*, and he had published numerous articles on his findings abroad, acquiring notable fame across the continent. Though he only visited Peru in the 1970s (he later became a promoter of Jorge Eielson's work), he was renowned among artists especially working with a Pop/New Realist aesthetic, which explains why Arias Vera would select his text to include in the exhibition catalogue. Through Restany's influence artists in Brazil and Argentina (most notably Dias and Minujin respectively) had gained international exposure. Considering also the arrival of Romero Brest in town (he had a relationship with Restany who'd visited Buenos Aires the previous year), it can be understood how artists sought to create a dialogue with a Pop/New Realist style. Although they developed such aesthetic propositions locally and independently, it was important to create a dialogue with international currents – a desire also highlighted by Acha's ubiquitous lectures and publications.

The following day Gloria Gómez-Sánchez, also a key figure within the Pop art framework that these exhibitions begin to introduce, opened a show at the Solisol Gallery (fig. 70).<sup>401</sup> From the outset Gómez-Sánchez's practice was concerned with a critique of consumption, excess and traditionalism. Thanks to the dark colours she used

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<sup>399</sup> Luís Arias Vera, *Escenografía para un Folklore Urbano y Amparo Ambiental para una serie de pinturas sobre la meta- mor-fosis*.

<sup>400</sup> Original: 'Para os artistas de hoje o problema não é se evadir do mundo. [...] O artista de hoje põe os pés sôbre a terra e procura os elementos de uma participação orgânica no corpo social e em suas estruturas tecnicas, industriais, urbanas.' Pierre Restany, "Da tôrre de marfim à tôrre de Babel," in: *Antonio Dias*, (exh. cat. Rio de Janeiro: Galeria Relevo, 1964), p.[2-3].

<sup>401</sup> For a thorough appraisal of Gloria Gómez-Sánchez's oeuvre, see Emilio Tarazona, *Gloria Gómez-Sánchez*.

Fig. 70 Gloria Gómez-Sánchez  
*Untitled*, 1965.  
 Installation views of the exhibition *Yllomomo*, Galeria Solisol, Lima, 5  
 November 1965.  
 The inscription above the crucifix reads: 'El sublime Yllomomo del amor' (  
 'the sublime Yllomomo of love').

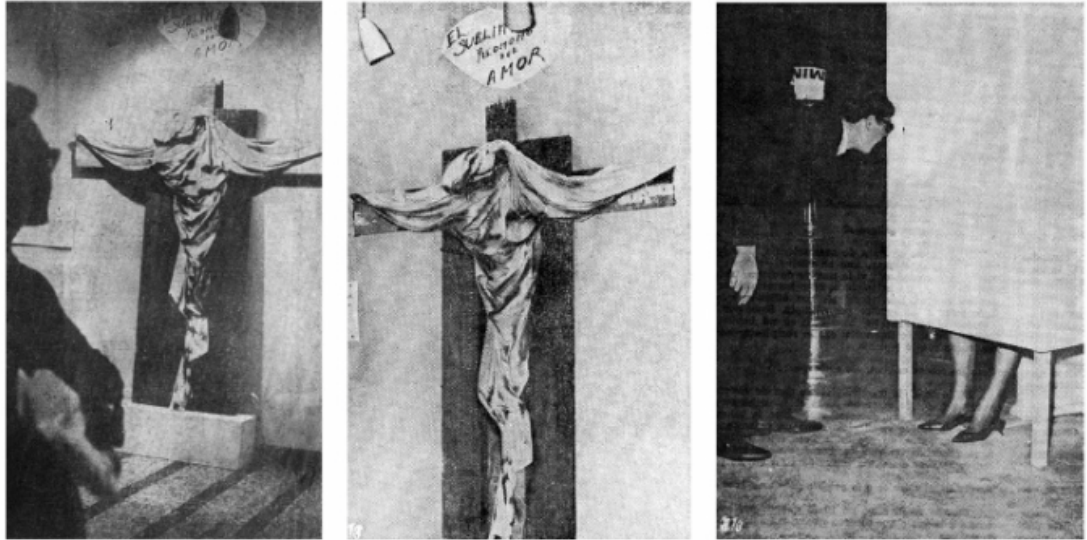


Fig. 71 Gloria Gómez-Sánchez  
*La Muerte de la Pintura*, 1965  
 Assemblage and paint on wood  
 All works by Gómez-Sánchez reported in this list (unless otherwise  
 specified) have been lost or destroyed.



and pessimistic tone that imbued her works, the press used the adjective 'restless' (*inquieta*) to describe her artistic 'vocation'.<sup>402</sup> Gómez-Sánchez's first exhibition at the IAC in 1960 had established her as the first informalist artist in Peru, yet from abstract canvases, which she burned and corroded with fire, acid and tools, her practice veered towards more participative media, also abandoning the use of literary or evocative titles. In 1965 she presented assemblages made of waste, which according to López and Tarazona '[constructed] a kind of visual manifesto against the painter's craft.'<sup>403</sup> Her objects were uncouthly made of metal scraps, plastic, wood, various forms of debris, and everyday objects that 'assailed the still prevailing idea of good taste.'<sup>404</sup> The exhibition was titled *Yllomomo*, an indigenous word for a swamp or mud in Eastern Bolivia (known as the Nación Camba). The word can also refer to a particular flower that grows out of the waste sediment in the water, and floats on its surface. Francisco Bendezú (critic) considered these exhibitions 'false and forced' in a Peruvian context, perhaps because of the aggressiveness of Gómez-Sánchez's message.<sup>405</sup> Other works present in the exhibitions had titles as *Picnel Funeral* (Funeral Paintbrush) or even more explicitly *La Muerte de la Pintura* (The death of painting, fig. 71), which indicate her stance against traditional modes of representation, techniques and supports, and her gesture of destruction in favour of new dialectics.<sup>406</sup> Furthermore, at the entrance of the gallery were statements on the death of the image. In the exhibition catalogue, Acha explained that Gómez-Sánchez was animated by 'an unequivocally subversive behaviour', which sought to dethrone transcendental Art with a capital 'A,' replacing it with action.<sup>407</sup>

Gómez-Sánchez had travelled to Argentina earlier in the decade, which led her to adopt the label 'Informalism' upon her return to Peru, having come into contact with the Argentine Informalists who had organised also the exhibition *Arte Destructivo*. The

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<sup>402</sup>As quoted in Vizcarra, *Tensiones generacionales*, p. 26.

<sup>403</sup>López and Tarazona, *Erosion and Dissolution of the Object in the Peruvian Art of the 1960s*, p. 11.

<sup>404</sup> Ibid. p. 12.

<sup>405</sup> Ibid. p. 12.

<sup>406</sup> Emilio Tarazona, *Gloria Gómez-Sánchez: Una década de mutaciones (1960-1970)*.

<sup>407</sup> Gloria Gómez Sánchez, *Yllomomo*. Another valuable text in the reconstruction of this event is Juan Acha, "Proxima Exposicion: Ambientaciones y Munecones," *El Comercio*, 2 November 1965.

iconography of destruction, present in all three exhibitions, seems like a necessary prerequisite for the development of these narratives. Like in Buenos Aires the *Arte Destructivo* exhibition and later *La Menesunda*. The imagery of Yllomomo, however, introduces an optimistic spirit that defies the sepulchral and destructive symbols presented.

López and Tarazona examine these exhibitions in connection to each other in order to highlight a narrative directed towards dematerialization, which is prevalent in their texts. Their work runs parallel to the history I am trying to reconstruct here, which examines the ideas Pop stemmed from, but by no means lies in contradiction with it. The three exhibitions in question seek to shock and destabilise the viewer, whether through mockery, bemusement or deliberate manipulation by setting the viewer with tasks (for instance in *...Ah! /Y el Chino a la Esquina...?*). In addition they testify to a decreasing reliance on the traditional media of painting and sculpture, and they challenged conventional aesthetic hierarchies. By elevating debris, trash, and advertising images to fine art objects, the three shows destabilised their viewers, mostly members of a new industrial bourgeoisie, who would have still been convinced of the supremacy of 'Yankee-centric' abstract painting (in Acha's words).<sup>408</sup>

The three iterations also have contrasting elements to them. *Mimuy* and *Yllomomo* have in common an aesthetic of destruction, and the productive use of found objects and debris, in the construction of what can be considered immersive environments, as opposed to exhibitions of singular works. Arias Veras' work, on the other hand, demonstrates a keen awareness of the invasion of the mass media within traditional frameworks, whether related to morality in religion (as exposed within his exhibition) or modes of consumption and mass manipulation. Furthermore, while all exhibition renegotiate the value of the fine art object, *Mimuy* and *Yllomomo* seek to destroy the image by burning, torching, ripping and damaging it; Arias Vera elevates the mediated icon to the status of fine art, reproducing them in paintings and installations that aim to recreate the glamorous world of consumption, heightening a tension between icons (signifiers) and objects (signified).

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<sup>408</sup> A term used by Acha in, Juan Acha, *Arte y sociedad, Latinoamérica: sistema de producción*, (México City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1979).



In the three exhibitions examined in this section, the symbols that reappear, through the use of debris and advertising, are those of destruction and manipulation of consciousness. These elements are symptomatic of an important shift in Peruvian society during Belaúnde Terry's administration. His commercial alliances with the United States, which implied the mass influx of foreign products, altered the visual canons promoted by Peru's economy, distancing aesthetic models from those of Indigenism, or even Pan-Americanism, which were increasingly outweighed by foreign ones. In this context, artists such as Arias Vera, Gómez-Sánchez, Mário Acha, Malatesta, and Montero sought to alert the industrialist bourgeoisie (in control of the market and exhibition spaces) to the idiosyncrasies of abstraction. Abstract expressionism was promoted by the US; *Informél* came from France. Hence, in the bourgeois mind, abstraction equated to internationalism. Arias Vera, Gómez-Sánchez and the others wanted to highlight how imported consumer products were *foreign* or *international* by definition, yet they were also a threat to local culture. In this context the proto-Pop and Informal aesthetic of their exhibitions sought to provide an antidote to Yankee-centric models (Abstract Expressionism), while promoting local forms of culture.

Challenging the status quo, such manifestations invited widespread suspicion. Philosopher and journalist Augusto Salazar Bondy (from 1970 vice-president of the Educational reform commission during the Revolutionary Government), attributed an increase in 'urban disturbances' by young people to 'largely imported evils.'<sup>409</sup> Acha in his 1979 volume *Arte y Sociedad en America Latina*, stated that the influence imported culture had on local culture was a residue of a colonial mentality, which '[distorted] the images we have of ourselves and it blurs the understanding of our possibilities of change.'<sup>410</sup> Acha continued to observe how imported images invariably sediment in the mentality of people who either end up associating cultural progress with foreign cultures, and to the distribution and consumption of commercial goods, or to the obsolete notion

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<sup>409</sup>Original: 'Augusto Salazar Bondy supone incluso, en la intensificación de la violencia despertada en los disturbios callejeros, "(...) un mal en buena porción importado", generado como fenómeno en los países desarrollados y en un contexto "(...) marcado por la difusión de la técnica, el dominio de la gran industria y la supeditación completa de la cultura rural a la urbana.'

Augusto Salazar Bondy, "Los rebeldes sin causa," *Oiga* 231, Lima, 7 July 1967, pp. 22-23.

<sup>410</sup> Acha, *Arte y sociedad*, p. 8.

of the artist as creator, gripping on to idealism and spiritualism as catalysts for inspiration.

Authors including Tarazona, López, and Castrillón Vizcarra, identify the early 1960s with a period of antagonism between young artists and more institutionalised entities, including the official gallery circuit. Nevertheless, from 1965 onwards, a larger number of exhibition spaces opened, including galleries as Cultura y Libertad, Solisol, or Quartier Latin, which were able to offer solo presentations to many artists who were outside of the sphere of influence of the ENBA. In addition, many yearly salons were instated, which offered travel grants, and cash prizes (these included Salon de Artes Plasticas de la Universidad mayor de San Marcos, the Adela Investment Prize, the Salon de la Fundación para las Artes).<sup>411</sup> Regrettably, the bourgeoisie whose capital could have supported them financially, failed to recognise emerging talent deemed ‘amateurish.’<sup>412</sup> Juan Manuel Ugarte Eléspuru, director of the ENBA from 1956 – 1973, was dismissive towards younger generations and used the terms *minifalderas* and *excesos capilares* (mini-skirted girls and men with hair excesses), to describe them. Describing the tendencies championed by younger generations, he wrote:

*What young people today call "being cool" or "in vogue," ie, is to place oneself in the shadow of what is considered, in a particular moment, the latest creative manifestation, and, of course, the self-proclaimed final and definitive version of artistic truth. These young people – like the youths of all times – lack the Heraclian consciousness of becoming, by which we reach knowledge when we mature, that "nothing is and everything becomes" as the Ephesian philosopher claimed.*<sup>413</sup>

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<sup>411</sup> A selection of prizes with their cash awards includes: Salon de Artes Plasticas de la Universidad Mayor de San Marcos (up to 35000 Soles cash prize); Escuela de Bellas Artes with funding from Adela Investment (3000 Soles awarded for travel); Salon de la Fundacion para las Artes; Bienale de la Fabrica de Pinturas Tecnoquimicas (30000 Soles).

<sup>412</sup> Juan Manuel Ugarte Eléspuru, *Pintura y escultura en el Perú contemporáneo*, (Lima: Peruarte, 1970).

<sup>413</sup>Original: ‘Es lo que en término de los jovenes de ahora se llama “estar en la onda”, o ‘en la orbita’, vale decir, ponerse al socaire de aquello que se considere, en el momento, como la más reciente manifestación creativa, y, por supuesto, auto-assignándose, también, la última y definitiva version de la verdad artistica. Carecen, estos jóvenes – como las juventud de todos los tiempos – de la conciencia heracliana del devenir, por la cua llegamos a saber cuando maduramos, que “nada es y todo deviene” como afirmaba el filosofo efesio;’ Ibid. p. 112.

The belief stated by Ugarte Eléspuru that many works by younger artists were mere reflections of a short-lived fashion, as opposed to serious artistic enquiry, caused the abandonment of certain artistic styles in order to earn a living. Most works produced throughout the 1960s, in fact, have been lost or irreparably damaged.

In the following years, groups and collectives of young artists proliferated to counterweight an old guard of academic and institutionalised artists. In 1965 two important groups had formed. Taller 406 was the name given to Teresa Burga, Edith Sachs, René Pereira, Winifred Claphal and Luís Zevallos, who worked in the same space in completely heterogeneous styles, yet united to foster experimentation (fig. 72);<sup>414</sup> the Grupo Señal, formed by José Tang, Jaime Dávila, Armando Varela, Emilio Hernández Saavedra, had a more concise style, which they termed 'Abstract Symbolic.'<sup>415</sup> In an interview published in 1966 Jaime Davila explained that the group formed because 'we were motivated by the hope to revive movements that are dormant over here.'<sup>416</sup> It is within this cultural landscape where young artists were seeking to revive 'movements,' meanwhile resolving the inherent contradictions in Peruvian culture, the optimal conditions for a Pop aesthetic to appear were established. As such, the 1960s emerge as a period of transition during which the influence of North America was felt more strongly also due to the policies that facilitated cultural importation. In this context young artists, smaller institutions, and a handful of writers united in the pursuit of reviving Peruvian 'movements,' and to reduce the gap between a more irreverent avant-garde and the more established academics. As it had happened in Argentina, artists approached the themes of destruction, of the mass media, and of inverted aesthetic hierarchies in order to encourage a change in perspective. Although to some extent their efforts were successful in altering perceptions, suspicion towards the younger generations was still widespread, and the task to renew Lima's art scene was far from

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<sup>414</sup> Anonymous, "La Ofensiva Plastica del Taller 406," *La Prensa*, Lima, 17 July 1966.

<sup>415</sup> Señal only exhibited twice more: in Talara (city north of Lima) in April, and at the IAC in May 1966 with the additions of Armando Varela and José Tang. Begoña Ibarra, "Una Buena Señal," *La Prensa*, undated, (1965 circa). Xeroxed copy of original article in MALI Archives.

<sup>416</sup> *Ibid.*

Fig. 72 Anonymous, "La Ofensiva Plástica del Taller 406," La Prensa, Lima, 17 July 1966.



Fig. 73 Symposium on Pop art held at the Art Centre, Lima, August 1963. From the left seated: John Davis (co-director of the space), Juan Acha, Fernando de Szyszlo and Juan Manuel Ugarte Eléspuru.



accomplished. The following section focuses on the emergence of a particular group of artists under the name 'Arte Nuevo' (New Art), who first exhibited together in 1966, and who have been recognised to have had the greatest impact on Lima's art world.

### 3.c Arte Nuevo: A Last Avant-Garde or a New Beginning?

The exhibition of works by the newly established group Arte Nuevo is considered the inaugural moment of Pop art in Lima. The press at the time misread Pop as a direct response to North American influence, perhaps in line with what Ugarte Eléspuru understood as superficial trends exalted by young artists. This section addresses the emergence of Pop both through artistic production and intellectual debates in Lima, examining further whether it was in fact the reflection of an internationalist aspiration, or whether it emerged as a reaction against the established aesthetic canons that dominated the market.

Pop was first discussed at a round table discussion in August 1963 at Art Centre, a space, which had recently opened in Lima (the gathering was due to take place in July initially, but was postponed twice, fig. 73).<sup>417</sup> Among the participants were Ugarte Eléspuru, Acha, and Fernando de Szyszlo. The latter was a well-known abstract painter who had synthesised pre-Columbian iconographies with the syntax of abstract art. In the 1940s he had been an active participant in the indigenist movement, however, years later even he had grown increasingly critical of the generations that followed. In 1962-1963 Szyszlo had been visiting professor at Cornell University and had visited Texas and New York. At the discussion, he explained that as the momentum of Action Painting was subsiding, Pop art was the most contested topic of debate in the United

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<sup>417</sup> Tarazona only mentions this space in the exhibition *Gloria Gómez-Sánchez* (Lima: ICPNA, 2005), p. 6, and I have been unable to gather additional information. Among the articles he cites to support his reconstruction of the event are: Anonymous, "¿Será el Pop Art una moda transitoria?: Un producto del snobismo es 'el arte de las cosas'. Así opina Fernando de Szyszlo," *La Prensa*, Lima, 25 August 1963; Anonymous, "Mesa redonda en *Art Center*" *La Prensa*, Lima, 25 August 1963. The accounts note the remarkable attendance to the event. Colour slides were used, which was a unique occurrence in Lima at the time.

States. Nevertheless he also condemned it for being an 'easy sale' from unscrupulous dealers for unvigilant collectors.<sup>418</sup>

Following the event Pop gradually entered local discourse and it also began to appear in the press. Among the first texts conserved in the MALI archives, is an anonymous article published in 1964, titled *El Pop art Sigue Irritando e Inquietando a Profanos* (Pop continues to irritate and upset outsiders),<sup>419</sup> which commented on Robert Rauschenberg's success at the Venice Biennial, and the scandal it caused especially in the catholic community, which had highly discouraged visiting the US pavilion. The discussions were accentuated following the series of lectures delivered by both Acha and Romero Brest (delivered in November). Eduardo Moll first exhibited a local iteration of Pop, according to López and Castrillón Vizcarra, at the IAC in 1964. Although perceived under the aegis of the style, especially due to the connections Acha established between Pop and Schwitters, Moll's works at this time were assemblages of everyday objects including bicycle wheels, broken telephone receivers, and clippings from newspapers or glossy magazines. This proximity to a Rauschenbergian aesthetic indicates the fluidity of Pop's definition, which still in both Lima and New York caused widespread confusion. The lines dividing tendencies such as Pop, Op, Assemblage and New Realism were increasingly blurred, and even in Castrillón Vizcarra's exhibitions they are all pooled under Pop's wider umbrella.

Among the seminal exhibitions that help trace Pop's development was an exhibition of Op art canvases by Alberto Davila Zavala held at the IAC in December 1965 (fig. 74), which was consistent with its previous exhibitions of Josef Albers and Rogelio Posello. Op, in fact, was a term that began circulating prior to Pop, and which artists began experimenting on while it was still perceived a close relative of abstraction (therefore more easily admitted by the market). An article on the Davila's exhibition, described Op as an art that 'tickled the eyes.'<sup>420</sup> While examining its significance, it also

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<sup>418</sup> This was said in an interview reported in Anonymous, "Identidad, Problema de la Pintura Peruana: Szyszlo," *El Comercio*, Lima, 17 June 1963.

<sup>419</sup> Anonymous, "El pop art sigue irritando e inquietando a profanos," *El Comercio*, Second section, Lima, 19 June 1964. This text is referenced, and reported in part, solely by Tarazona in *Gloria Gómez-Sánchez*, p. 20.

<sup>420</sup> Perez Luna, "Que Es el Op Art?"



Fig. 74 Edgardo Perez Luna, "Que es el Op-Art?: la pintura que hace cosquillas a los ojos causa furor en Lima" *Oiga*, 21 January 1966.



Alberto Davila, el primer op-artista del Perú. Ha expuesto sus creaciones en el IAC.

Este juego de rayas, espirales y cuadrados, fue pintado por Victor Vasarely, el creador del Op-art.

Esta es una prueba del desplazamiento del dibujo y "las cosquillas a los ojos" que producen las imágenes del Op-art.

### ¿QUE ES EL OP-ART?

La pintura que hace "cosquillas a los ojos" causa furor en Lima

Por EDGARDO PEREZ LUNA

HACE pocas semanas, en la inauguración de la exposición de pintura Op-art de Alberto Davila, habida en el IAC, una conocida actriz y recitadora le dijo al expositor: —Alberto, no me gusta tu pintura, porque me mareas, me hace perder el equilibrio—. Davila sonrió, pues le estaban probando el mejor elogio que se le pueda hacer a un artista que cultiva el Op-art.

Efectivamente, desde hace un año en forma oficial un sector del arte mundial se ha dedicado a hacer "cosquillas a los ojos" del espectador. Esta técnica se llama Op-art o pintura óptica y fue creada por el magistral pintor húngaro francés Victor Vasarely. En febrero del año 1965, en el Museo de Arte Moderno de Nueva York, este y un grupo de op-artistas recibieron la consagración definitiva, y fue aceptada sin reservas esta sugestiva modalidad contida en el último grito de la moda en materia de pintura.

**¿Qué es el Op-art?**

En ciertos libros de psicología experimental y obras de miscelánea y entretenimiento, es frecuente encontrar algunas experiencias. Muchos conocen por ejemplo que si dos paralelas son cortadas por rayas convergentes oblicuas, las paralelas "parecen" que se juntasen. También, si a dos discos de igual área se les colocan uno en un fondo negro,

y otro en un fondo blanco, éste "parece" más grande. Igualmente, es muy frecuente un pasatiempo que consiste en mirar una figura por varios minutos y luego voltear la vista hacia una pared gris; la misma imagen "se reproduce" en la pared.

Estos hechos, que participan de una compleja teoría óptica, han sido trasladada al terreno de la estética. El resultado es el Op-art.

Desde el punto de vista artístico, los op-artistas fundamentan su concepción manifestando que han logrado que el dibujo y el color se "muevan" dentro del cuadro.

Josef Albers, uno de los grandes del Op-art (recuerdo en Lima una muestra que denominó "Homenaje al cuadrado") tiene un cuadro que es un cuadrado rojo, rodeado de un cuadrado marrón y éste rodeado de un cuadrado azul. De acuerdo a la teoría de los complementarios, en el que se sustraen los complementarios, en el que se sustraen la gran parte del Op-art, el cuadrado rojo "avanza", se mueve, "se desplaza".

Victor Vasarely, el sumo pontífice del Op-art, tiene un cuadro segmentado en pequeños cuadrados que se van distorsionando en rombos, en elipses y en conos. Si se mira fijamente por espacio de algunos segundos, el cuadro "se mueve" hacia adelante y hacia atrás. La sensación es sorprendente.

Los op-artistas tratan, desde el punto de vista estrictamente estético, de dar mayor expresividad al color y la imagen. Su búsqueda consiste precisamente en hacer vivir de una manera dinámica el color y la línea dentro de sus realizaciones. Quiéjanos que cultiban un arte vital. Muchos suponen, con razón, que crean efectos que trascienden la realidad. Pintan cuadros que se multiplican en la retina del espectador, y sostienen, también con razón, que cada cuadro es tantas veces distinto como veces es visto.

**Antecedentes**

El más inmediato antecedente del Op-art es el inteligente grupo de expresionistas abstractos de Nueva York, formado por: Still, Rothko, Reinhardt, Newman y Gottlieb. Estos, hace muy pocos años fueron los que con mayor calidad y sentido renovador utilizaron los colores puros para provocar vibraciones dentro del pigmento no modificado en la paleta.

Quizás el más remoto antecedente sea el "puntillismo" francés, cultivado por Derain, Signac, y otros.

Los "puntillistas" lograban con pequeñas pinceladas parecidas a comas, juntas, sin yuxtaponer, colores que por sus interacciones inmediatas vibraban de manera extraordinaria y producían efectos y sensaciones "no existentes en el objeto del cuadro".

Oficialmente el Op-art tiene sólo un año de vida. No obstante, Vasarely lo ha cultivado desde hace más o menos diez años.

El Op-art ha causado verdadera sensación. Se ha difundido en pocos meses por el mundo entero y ha influido de manera decisiva en la cosmetología, la decoración y la costura.

Hace pocas semanas hubo en Londres una sensacional demostración de "Moda Op-art". Los trajes de las modelos hacían ciertas concepciones de Vasarely. En Francia, ha habido hace poco una demostración de "Maquillaje Op-art" en el que se hacen las más extrañas y alucinantes creaciones en el rostro femenino.

La revista "Life" en castellano ha publicado en su último número, 12 páginas dedicadas al Op-art y su incribible influencia en diversas manifestaciones de la vida contemporánea.

**Llegó al Perú**

Antes del año de su nacimiento oficial, el Op-art ha arribado a las costas del Perú. En la primera sala de Lima, el IAC, el distinguido pintor peruano Alberto Davila expuso hace menos de tres semanas una muestra íntegramente Op-art. Su exposición,

stated that the style's 'official birthplace' was MoMA's exhibition *The Responsive Eye* inaugurated in February the previous year – perhaps seeking to validate the style for the reader. The article conceded that Davila's works were commendable and that he 'represented the most advanced avant-garde of painting.' The author added:

*Many Peruvian painters have been enthused sincerely and emphatically by Op-art, above all new tendencies. A "party Op-art" was held last Saturday, in the large workshop "Artes Plásticas," on the first block of Jiron Carabaya. Op-art make-up and clothing abounded. Undoubtedly, this goes to show the enthusiasm that motivated this new technique that maybe, will last longer than the "action painting," "informalism," "Tachism," "Texturalism," "popism," "happening," "ephemeral environments," etc., that have flooded the attic of today's visual art.<sup>421</sup>*

This article elevates Op above all other tendencies, in great praise of Davila and Luís Zevallos (who had won the prize of the Instituto Cultural Peruano Norteamericano in 1965 also with Op art works, and who is the only other artist mentioned in the text). The other 'techniques' that 'flooded the attic' of art, don't seem to be considered noteworthy, because approached superficially by local artists, if at all. The lack of any record or written history about such styles explains why Op here emerges as a precursor to Pop, considering that Davila and Zevallos both shifted towards that aesthetic soon after. In addition, the author of the article was likely to be aware of the international styles that could be learned about through international publications, but that only had sporadic reflections in the local milieu. In fact, López sees Davila's canvases as 'timid proposals of renewal motivated by the artists' trips abroad,'<sup>422</sup> considering that the artist had travelled to the United States the previous year following his award of the Premio Tecnoquímica. López's perspective, though valid, fails to give credit to Davila's efforts to educate the market on the possibilities of newer artistic

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<sup>421</sup> Original: Muchos pintores peruanos de las nuevas promociones se han entusiasmado sincera y enfáticamente por el Op-art. El sábado último en el amplio taller "Artes Plásticas" de la primera cuadra del Jiron Carabaya se realizó una "fiesta Op-art." Abundó maquillaje y vestido op-artista. Ello es demostrativo, sin duda, del entusiasmo que ha motivado esta técnica nueva que quizás, durará más que los efímeros "action painting," "informalismo," "tachismo," "texturalismo," "popismo," "happening," "ambientación," etc., con que se ha inundado el desván de las artes plásticas del presente. Edgardo Perez Luna, "Que Es el Op Art?" p. 22.

<sup>422</sup> López, 'Cosmopolitan F(r)ictions,' pp. 22-23.



forms. Op in a way was an acceptable midway between abstraction and the graphic aesthetic that came to prevail with the Pop works later in the decade.

Acha defended the fleeting character of certain artistic styles in the conference paper *Does Present-Day Latin American Art Exist as a Distinct Expression? If It Does, on What Terms?*. He understood the necessity to renew artistic propositions, and embarked in an analysis of what constitutes 'uniqueness' in a Latin American context. He argued that, although works can be shaped by historical and geographical notions, the most basic measure of what he called 'distinctiveness' in art 'may equally be either foreign or local.' He also explained how the multicultural and pluralistic fibre of Latin American identity allowed for artists to 'slip effortlessly from one attitude to another,' which allowed them to express what they could or should have been or 'the very process of becoming or wishing to become.'<sup>423</sup> To some extent, Arte Nuevo can be viewed as the manifestation of young artists' wish to become involved in the shaping of Peruvian culture, from which they seemed largely left out.

An episode that heavily suggests the exclusion of young artists from wider art circles occurred in October 1966, when the organisers of the first Lima Biennial, also known as the First American Painting Festival, failed to invite any young artists to exhibit, or even to invite them to the inauguration. Although the reason for this marginalisation was attributed to a lack of time and preparation by the very organisers of the initiative, the reaction it spurred crucially altered Peruvian art.

The American Painting Festival, organised by both the IAC and the Jueves Cultural Association,<sup>424</sup> was held in the same location as the Pacific International Fair, which was the largest trade show in the city. Seeking also to strengthen diplomatic relations between countries, the festival was part of a broader network of biennials called the 'American Biennials,' which had included the Cordoba Biennial (funded by the

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<sup>423</sup> Juan Acha, "Does Present-Day Latin American Art Exist as a Distinct Expression? If It Does, on What Terms?" Paper read at *Speak out! Charla! Bate-Papo!: Contemporary Art and Literature in Latin America*, Symposium organized by Damián Bayón in The University of Texas at Austin, October, 1975. Benson Latin American Collection, Rare Books, The University of Texas at Austin.

<sup>424</sup> The Jueves Cultural Association was a private organization, which began with wealthy patrons meeting on Thursdays to discuss art. The scope of the society eventually expanded becoming an important sponsor of the arts in Lima.

Kaiser Industries) in Argentina.<sup>425</sup> Lacking in the didactic and internationalist scope of Venice or São Paulo, they were part of a Pan-American project initiated by the US. In Lima, José Gómez Sicre, director of the Visual Arts Division of the OAS, had pressurised the organisers of the festival to embrace an anti-communist stance in order to counter the increasingly dangerous ideological tendencies inspired by Cuba.<sup>426</sup> According to López:

*From the organizer's perspective the Festival was an attempt to strengthen the internationalization of the local art scene with the stimulus from the industrial sector and the protection of the diplomatic realm. For younger people, however, this event increased their mistrust regarding the role of international arbiter that the IAC had been playing since the previous decade, and whose members they perceived as out-dated advocates of a bourgeois conception of art and of conservative aesthetics.<sup>427</sup>*

Luís Arias Vera and Jaime Davila had been travelling in Argentina until ten days before the inauguration of the festival. In Cordoba they were invited to exhibit in the American Biennial, and they were able to witness the Anti-Biennial organised by the Di Tella Artists, among others, in an abandoned shoe factory. Inspired by the irreverence of the Argentines, they returned to Lima 'belligerent of spirit,' according to López, and motivated to join forces with other young artists who were already planning a collateral event at the Museo de Arte de Lima.<sup>428</sup> The collaboration of Arias Vera, Davila, Burga, Emilio Hernández Saavedra, Victor Delfín, Gómez-Sánchez, José Tang, Varela, and Zevallos Hetzel produced the landmark exhibition *Arte Nuevo*, which gave the group its name.

Arias Vera exhibited paintings representing enlarged airmail envelopes (fig. 75); José Tang and Zevallos Hetzel geometric paintings; Hernández Saavedra exhibited pictorial volumes with psychedelic features; Delfín created a mural with PVC pipin built into the wall (non-interactive, fig. 76); Gómez-Sánchez had made large papier-mâché dolls titled *Muñecons*, and an environment that involved these titled *Boomerang* (fig.

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<sup>425</sup> For a thorough analysis of the American Biennials see Cristina Rocca, *Las Bienales de Córdoba en los '60: Arte, modernización y guerra fría*, (Córdoba: Editorial FFyH, Universidad Nacional de Córdoba, 2005).

<sup>426</sup> López, 'Cosmopolitan F(r)ictions, p. 42.

<sup>427</sup> Ibid. p. 26.

<sup>428</sup> Ibid.

Fig. 75 Luis Arias Vera  
*Airmail Painting*, 1966-1967  
 Reproduced in *Arte Nuevo*, (exh. cat., Galeria Lirolay, Buenos Aires, 27 March – 8 April 1967).

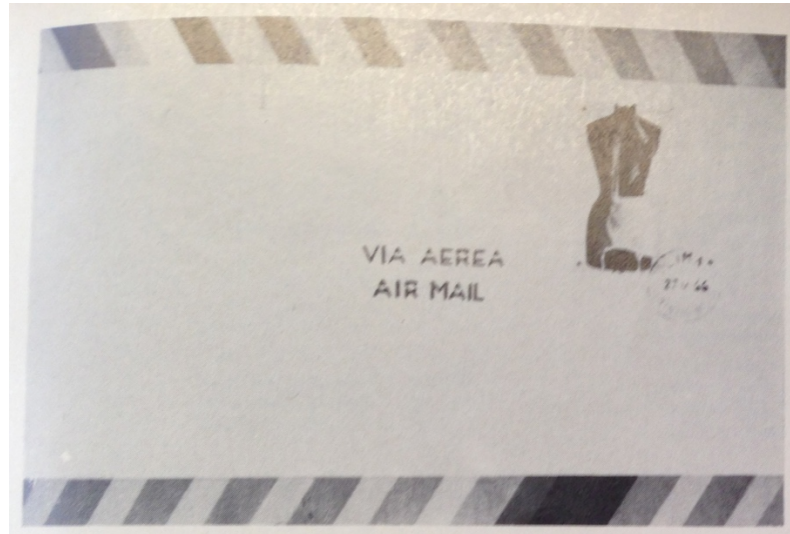


Fig. 76 Newspaper clipping, 1966 (ICAA Docs). Work reported in the photograph is by Victor Delfin.

## Nueva Tendencia Pictórica Se Exhibe Desde Ayer En “El Ombligo de Adán”

Los integrantes del grupo artístico “Arte Nuevo” inauguraron ayer una muestra de sus trabajos más recientes en una nueva Galería: “El Ombligo de Adán”.

Representantes de la nueva tendencia pictórica peruana, los jóvenes artistas, muchos de los cuales son ya conocidos en el extranjero, han contado para la realización de esta muestra con el auspicio del Departamento de Extensión Cultural de la U.N.I.

Luis Arias Vera, Teresa Burga, Jaime Dávila, Victor Delfin, Gloria Gómez Sánchez, Emilio Hernández Saavedra, José Tang, Armando Varela y Luis Zevallos son los representantes de “Arte Nuevo”.

Con el trabajo de todos ellos se ha decorado la nueva Galería ubicada en Carabaya 161, que era antes una casona antigua donde funcionaba un taller de confección de avisos luminosos.

La urgencia de tener un lugar donde exhibir sus trabajos, algunos muy originales en nuestro medio, hizo que, en breves días, el caserón se convirtiera en “El Ombligo de Adán” que será en adelante el centro de exhibición de todos los tra-

78a); Davila showed paintings still akin to a more abstract and surrealist aesthetic; Teresa Burga showed a series of paintings that combined figurative expressionist elements with geometric images and texts (similar to fig. 76 and reproduced in fig. 78b); Armando Varela playful and colourful metal sculptures (fig. 78c).

Their exhibition opened the same day as the festival and the artists produced a statement, which was distributed on flyers at the entrance to the festival (according to López, while Tarazona claimed it was distributed on the site of the festival before its opening date).<sup>429</sup> The text denounced the irregularities in the organization of the event, which included a careless and exclusive selection process, a cursory organization, and the suspicion that the grand prize had been previously arranged. The statement read ‘we are presented as the antithesis of what an Institute of Contemporary Art is supposed to be,’ and it invited the participating artists to withdraw their works.<sup>430</sup> It took place (coincidentally) in an abandoned shoe store beside the government palace, which had been swiftly cleaned up and made into an exhibition space later known as El Ombligo de Adán (Adam’s navel).<sup>431</sup> The busy opening began with a happening by Felipe Buendía who, dressed in tails, with a top hat and a presidential sash, parodied the president by giving a delirious speech filled with empty promises, while being surrounded by D’Onofrio ice cream carts (a reference to traditional cocktails associated to the Bourgeoisie, fig. 79).<sup>432</sup>

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<sup>429</sup> Emilio Tarazona, *La contraproducción del presente: Algunas Ideas sobre la Obra-* Archivo de Teresa Burga, pdf document, pp. 23-24. Available on [https://www.academia.edu/5736879/La\\_contra-producci%C3%B3n\\_del\\_presente.\\_Algunas\\_ideas\\_sobre\\_la\\_obra-archivo\\_de\\_Teresa\\_Burga](https://www.academia.edu/5736879/La_contra-producci%C3%B3n_del_presente._Algunas_ideas_sobre_la_obra-archivo_de_Teresa_Burga) Last accessed 16 August 2016. And López, “Cosmopolitan F(r)ictions,” p. 45.

<sup>430</sup> Original: “[...] [E]l IAC que funge de promotor de las artes de vanguardia ha creado un clima de desconfianza en el medio artístico local por la falta de seriedad de su compromiso con los artistas jóvenes locales [...], por lo que se nos presenta como la antítesis de lo que un Instituto de Arte Contemporáneo se supone debe ser....” Arte Nuevo statement distributed on flyer quoted in Tarazona, *La contraproducción del presente*, p. 24.

<sup>431</sup> The exhibition space’s name ridiculed the theological conviction that nor Adam or Eve had belly buttons, because neither was born from a womb and had an umbilical cord. This play critiqued from the outset traditionalism, and religion, which were guarded by the same elites in Lima, which excluded young artists from mainstream circuits such as the American Painting Festival.

<sup>432</sup> Tarazona, *La contraproducción del presente*.

Fig. 77 Teresa Burga  
*Untitled (BAH)*, 1966  
 Mixed Media, Collage and Acrylic on Masonite  
 122.3 × 73.8 × 5 cm

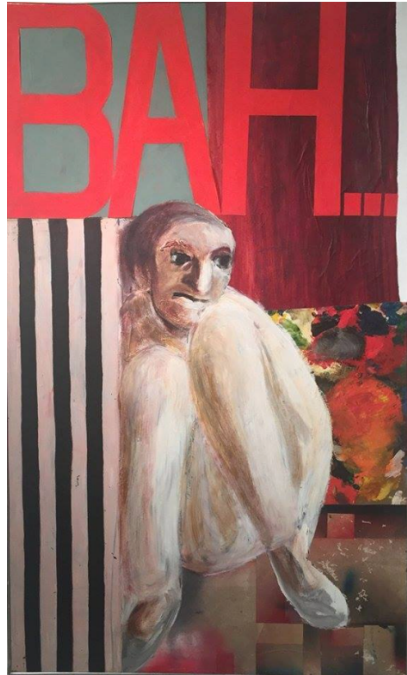
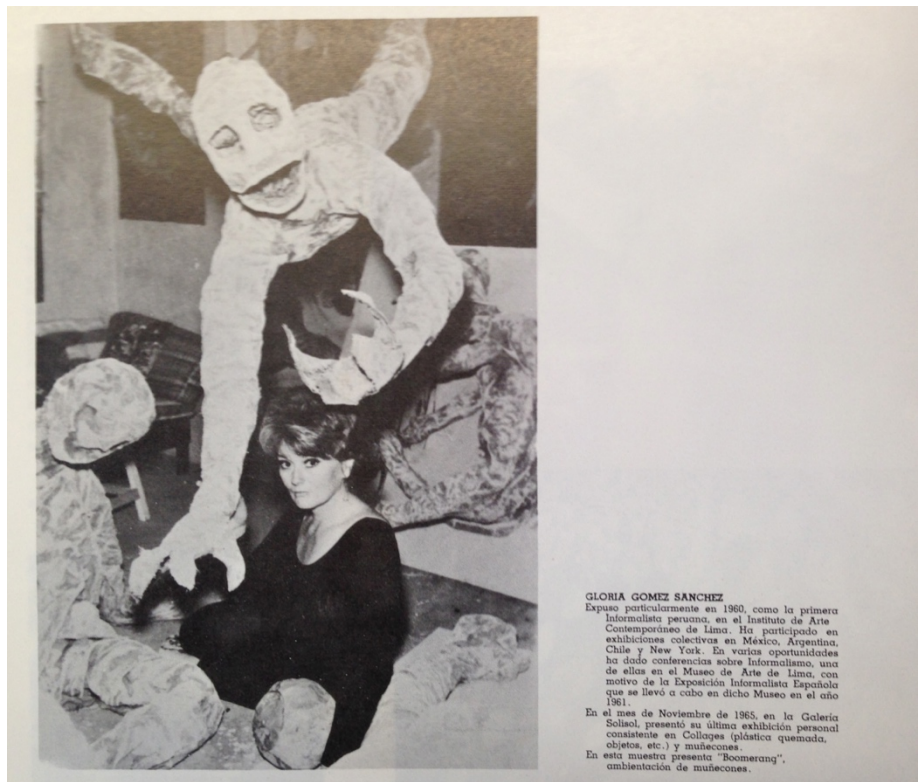
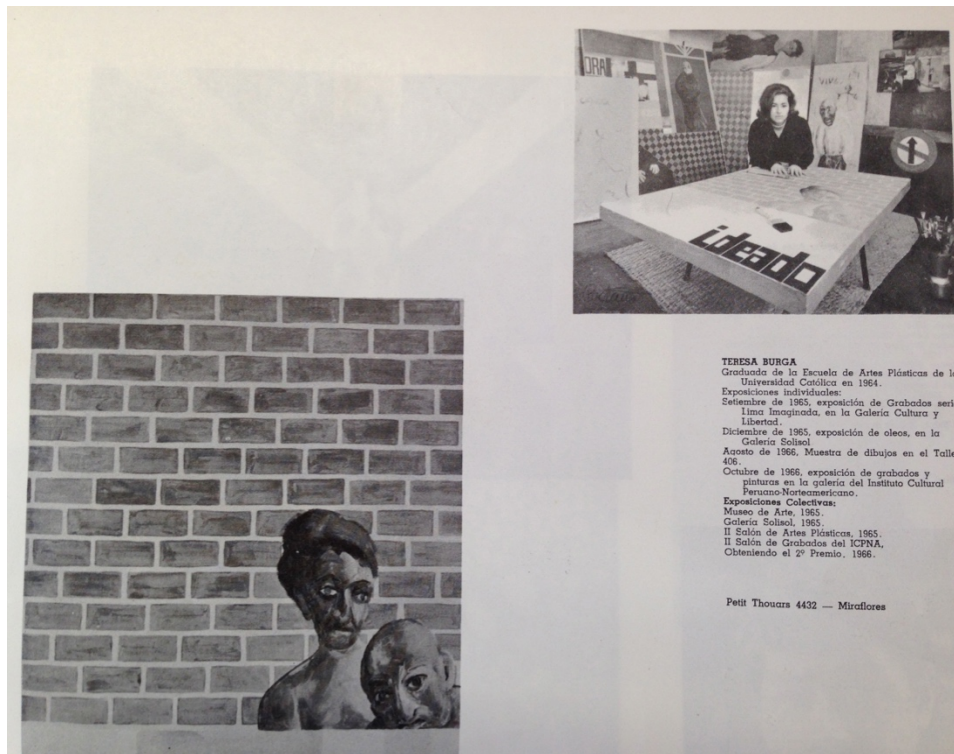


Fig. 78 *Arte Nuevo*, (exh. cat., Lima: Museo de Lima), 1966.  
 i. Spread dedicated to Gloria Gómez-Sánchez and her environment  
*Boomerang* at the original exhibition space for the group's show El  
 Ombligo de Adan.

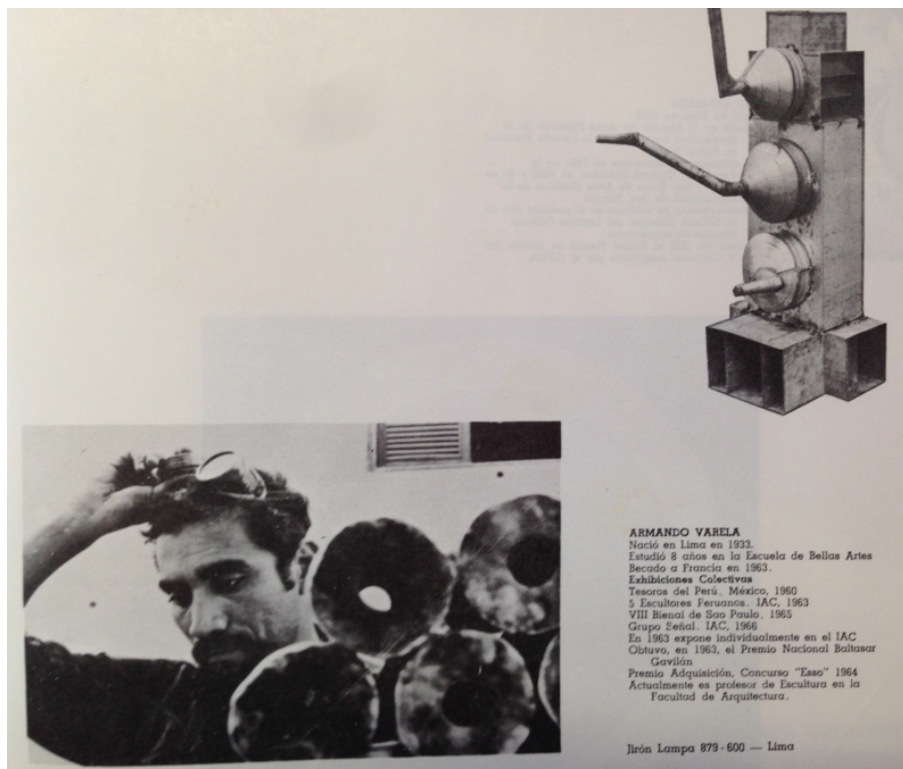




j. Spread dedicated to Teresa Burga.



k. Spread dedicated to Armando Varela.



- I. Works by the artists of the Arte Nuevo group to be re-exhibited at the Museo de Arte de Lima inaugurated on 2 November 1966.



Fig. 79 Anonymous, "Los Adanes del ombligo." *Caretas*, Lima, Perú, n. 341 10-14 November 1966. The article shows images of a performance by Felipe Buendía with an *Airmail Painting* by Luis Arias Vera in the background. In the bottom right corner is a view of Gloria Gómez-Sánchez's installation *Boomerang*.



The jurors of the biennial were Architect Luís Miro Quesada Garland, who was also the owner of the newspaper *El Comercio*, in which Acha published almost exclusively, Venezuelan collector Innocente Palacios, and Jorge Romero Brest, now in Lima for the second time. After the vernissage, Romero Brest visited the Arte Nuevo exhibition and was greatly surprised by the quality of the works on show, which had been excluded from the biennial. According to Hernández Saavedra, Romero Brest considered Arte Nuevo as the ‘second most important movement in Latin America.’<sup>433</sup> His enthusiasm was so evident to cause embarrassment with the administration of the IAC who had invited him. He also publicly announced his disagreement with the decision to award the grand prize to the Chilean surrealist painter Roberto Matta.<sup>434</sup>

Acha’s energetic leadership, Romero Brest’s approval, and artists’ willingness to be active within the Limeña art scene, gathered positive responses from institutions such as the IAC. Because of the success of Arte Nuevo, the exhibition was quickly moved to the Museo de Arte Paseo Colon Lima where it could gain greater visibility. In the catalogue that accompanied the exhibition was included a statement by the artists (different to the one distributed outside of the Festival), outlining their objective:

*In front of a disconcerting but marvellous technological world, we must be reborn: return to being children. This way [...] our imagination – already freed [from imposed standards of morality and conduct] – will know how to make the most of the copious possibilities of artistic creation, the experiences of which we want to share here with the spectator.*

Functioning almost as a manifesto, it denounced ‘an archaic pedagogy that devitalises, that amputates initiative and that coerces liberty of artistic creation.’ The main criticism that was made to the artists was their lack of sophistication, or flawed execution. Because the catalogue was published after the initial show at the Ombligo de Adan, the statement also read:

*At times we demonstrate flaws in execution; they respond to the poverty of the medium. What is important is that the spectator feels our spirit of freedom in the*

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<sup>433</sup> Winston Orrillo, “*El Blow-Up de la pintura, El Boom de las artes plasticas en el Peru,*” *Oiga*, 1966, unknown number, Xerox copy of the original article in the MALL archives, Lima.

<sup>434</sup> López, ‘Cosmopolitan F(r)ictions.’ p. 30.



*artistic conception, and that he shares it. Here it begins, and we prepare further changes.*<sup>435</sup>

The press promptly responded to such a shocking manifestation of youthful avant-gardism. One of the first articles to review the exhibition, published in *El Comercio*, stated great appreciation at first:

*Manifests an innovative spirit. And its breath is not fresh and new in international terms: it is something more primordial, relating to the innovation of our local artistic milieu. It renews it to the extent that this group of young artists formulates concise visual aesthetics and elementary problems that effectively dispute our endemic romanticism, so addicted to the lyrical expression of an intuitive and autobiographical character.*<sup>436</sup>

The article continued to evaluate one by one the contribution of each artists, which revealed a more contradictory and conflicted perspective: Jaime Davila's chromatic experiments and the autonomy of colour in easel painting, were considered not 'objectified' enough to have an optical effect. The curved lines sometimes present in his canvases, however, were understood to have a corporeal effect for 'seeking real space.' Of José Tang's paintings the author explained how 'unfortunately, shortcomings in execution or in materials constrict his talent,' finally concluding that 'in our understanding, these painters [Davila, Tang, and Zevallos too] are missing a greater intellectualization of the issue of colour.' (fig. 80-81). Victor Delfín was seen to occupy an ambiguous space between constructivism and lyrical abstraction, 'in other words, Delfín has not achieved a conceptual or spiritual unity in the diversifying forms.' Varela was also seen as undecided between 'pure geometric shapes on one hand, and the triviality of Paolozzi on the other.' The mention of Paolozzi in this article indicates a broad awareness of the multiple facets of Pop, whether in its American, British or local iterations, which each contributed towards a broader comprehension of the phenomenon.<sup>437</sup>

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<sup>435</sup> *Grupo Arte Nuevo*, (exh. cat. Lima: Museo de Arte Paseo de Colón, 1966).

<sup>436</sup> Anonymous, "Espíritu Renovador: Exposición del Grupo *Arte Nuevo*," *El Comercio*, Lima, 9 November 1966.

<sup>437</sup> As previously noted, Michael Asbury has argued that Pop in Brazil had much more in common with London's Independent Group than the New York Pop artists. This

Fig. 80 Spread dedicated to Jose Tang in *Arte Nuevo*, (exh. cat., Galeria Lirolay, Buenos Aires, 27 March – 8 April 1967).

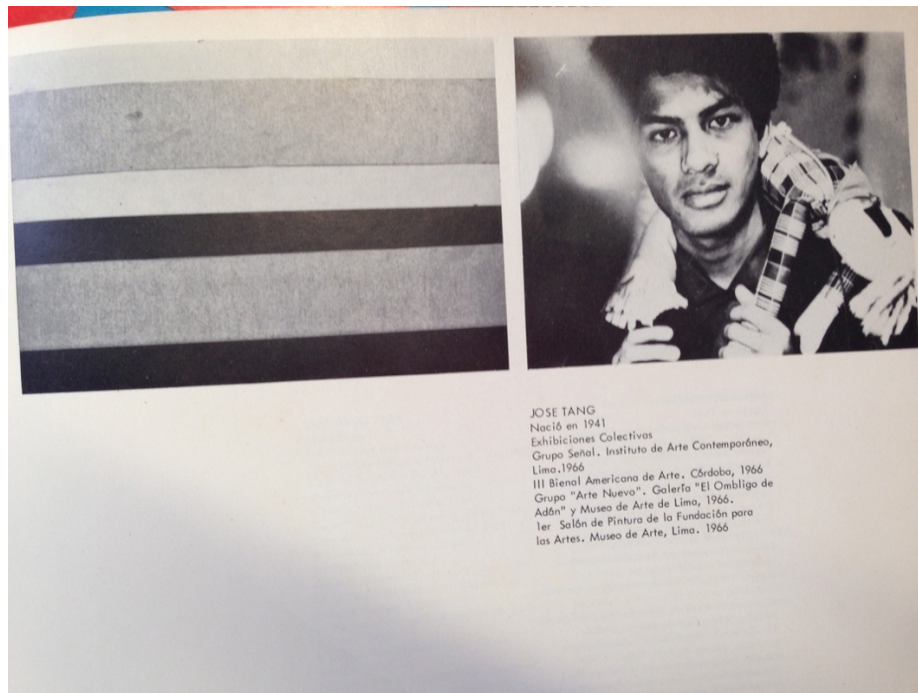
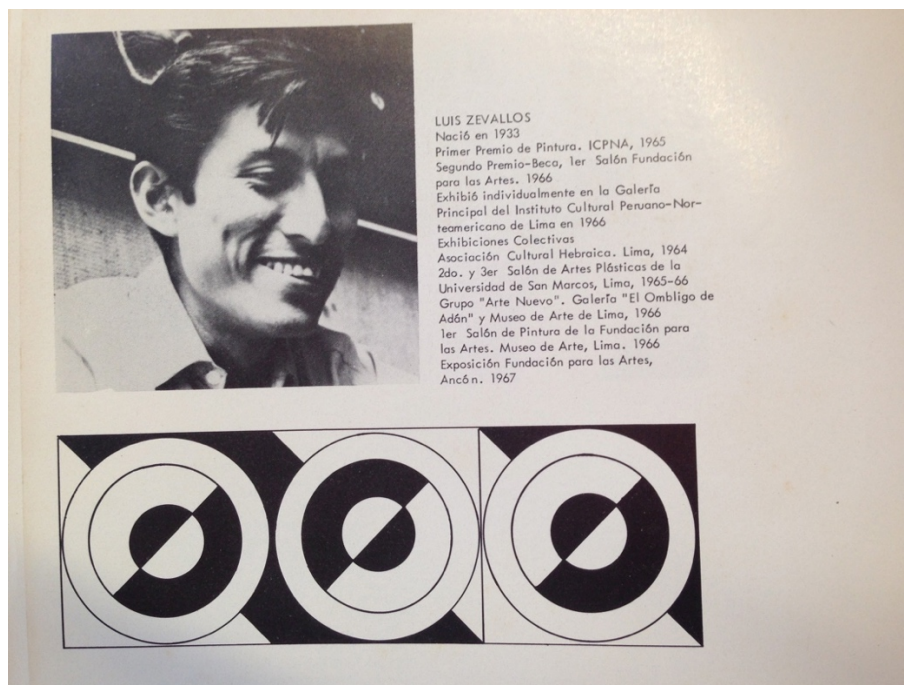


Fig. 81 Spread dedicated to Luis Zevallos in *Arte Nuevo*, (exh. cat., Galeria Lirolay, Buenos Aires, 27 March – 8 April 1967).



consideration easily be extended to the Peruvian context, as illustrated by *Arte Nuevo*'s criticism.

The text demonstrates greater appreciation towards the two women in the exhibition: Burga and Gómez-Sánchez. Burga's canvases are described as having a mixture of geometric elements in the division of space, and realist themes rendered with an expressionist flair, evident in the representation of blurred figures. The author singles out Gómez-Sánchez from the group. He explains that only because her works exaggerated 'her expressionism,' was she aligned with the broader spirit of *despojamento* (disrobing, renewal) of the group. Greater space is given to describing her contribution:

*Beginning with an informalist painting, it continues with canvases made of waste or, if you like, of domestic "junk," followed by the Muñecons (Big Dolls) and the environment. In this instance, a "pop" doll with numbing effect counters its expressionist impetus, disciplining it with better execution, ordering of forms and nobility of materials.<sup>438</sup>*

Finally, also in the works by Arias Vera, seen as the leader of the group, the authors accentuate indecisiveness:

*...chained to the triviality of the object through the envelopes that we are shown today, which are, as it were, detained. He still has to give a definite and clear twist to his discovery. The Air Mail envelopes present Arias Veras with two options: either he places the emphasis on the coloured edges of the paper frames, which would lessen their realism, reducing it to "op," a purely optical effect; or he exalts such realism and creates a "pop" envelope.<sup>439</sup>*

Despite the pronounced critique of every single work in the exhibition, the author concludes that the newspaper is delighted by the emergence of such new tendencies.

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<sup>438</sup> Original: 'Principio con una pintura informalista, continúa con los cuadros de desperdicios o, se si prefiere, de "chatarra" doméstica, y luego los muñecons y la ambientación. Esta vez un muñeco "pop" de efecto anonadante que viene a contrarrestar su ímpetu expresionista, disciplinandola o sea una mejor ejecución, ordenamiento de las formas y nobleza de materiales.' Anonymous, "Espíritu Renovador: Exposición del Grupo *Arte Nuevo*."

<sup>439</sup> 'Ceñido a la trivialidad del objeto, Arias Vera con sus sobres que hoy se nos presentan, por decirlo así, detenidos. Todavía toene por delante darle un giro definitivo y claro a su original hallazgo. Y es que sobre aéreo presenta a Arias Vera dos posibilidades: o pone el acento sobre los colores del rebordes las tramas del papel, lo cual implicaría rebasar la realidad e reducirse al lo *op*, al efecto puramente óptico, o confecciona un sobre *Pop* que significaría exaltar su realidad.' Ibid.

The final sentence stresses the importance of the support of the Museo de Arte and the National Engineering University, which financed the moving of the exhibition from the former shoe store to the museum. The change in location reveals the instant reaction that Arte Nuevo provoked in the organisers of the Biennial, who, especially following Romero Brest's praise, were committed to making do. Less than a month later the Foundation for the Arts launched their first painting salon, where all members of Arte Nuevo participated. The first, second prize and a special mention were awarded to Arias Vera, Zevallos, Davila respectively: 'a symbolic victory of the avant-garde.'<sup>440</sup>

One of the foremost achievements of the Arte Nuevo Group, was how it was able to catalyse widespread cultural discussion amongst the foremost intellectuals in Lima. Because Arte Nuevo's scope was to inject new life into the Peruvian art scene and to revitalise what they perceived as a stagnant atmosphere, many established intellectuals considered it as an affront put forward by untrained, unsophisticated youngsters. This debate was crucially recorded in two newspaper articles in particular from 1966-1967 in which members of the intellectual elite and the artists themselves were invited to discuss on the role of avant-garde art. It is worth quoting from these sources at length to represent the reactions of Lima's cultural players.

In her 1967 article, titled *Pintores Jovenes del Perú: Artistas...Snobs...Impostores?*, Cecilia Bustamante de Ortega reports on a roundtable discussion that took place at the Galeria Cultura y Libertad (25/05/1967) on the theme of contemporary art in Peru, especially in light of the 'disconcerting pictorial experiments' the public had been confronted with recently. In the article were reported the contributions of Ricardo Grau (professor at the ENBA, and abstract painter), Juan Acha, Juan Manuel Ugarte Eléspuru, Alberto Davila, Ricardo Sánchez (20 year professor at ENBA), Luís Arias Vera, Teresa Burga, Edith Sachs, Miguel Angel Cuadros (who ran a well-known workshop) and Ricardo Sánchez (professor at the ENBA for 20 years). Among supporters of a young art stood out Grau:

*When I arrived to Peru 30 years ago, the atmosphere was very different and the historical context confronted me with Indigenism, which was nurtured by a false posture. We made a fabulous leap forward and the spirit of investigation that*

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<sup>440</sup> López, "Cosmopolitan F(r)ictions," p. 30.

*exists is most important. On young painting I think that whichever were its results, it is marching on well. Its successes and failures are necessary.*<sup>441</sup>

Followed by Juan Acha, who argued, 'It is more valuable to fail in the avant-garde than to triumph in the retro-guard. Young people can experiment with what they wish because if they fail they can begin anew.'<sup>442</sup> In an article from the same year<sup>443</sup> he stressed once again how diversity within the avant-garde was an asset, building on what he later defined as the freedom to 'slip effortlessly from one attitude to another.'<sup>444</sup> For Acha such flexibility was necessary to formulate a new vision, which seemed the priority for the younger generation.

Most participants of the roundtable shared the feeling of optimism that Arte Nuevo inspired. It was also in part commented how it was the product of the unprecedented number of travel grants, bursaries and awards available to them. However, especially among the more established representatives of the art academies, there was a distinct fear of it all being the product of mere fashion. Ugarte Eléspuru remarked:

*Young people must continue their work without fearing experimentation [...]. I would remind them that all fashions are dangerous if one does not keep into account that one mustn't become enslaved by it.*<sup>445</sup>

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<sup>441</sup> Original: 'Cuande llegué en Perú hace 30 años el ambiente era muy distinto y una circunstancia histoórica me enfrentó al indigenismo que se alimentaba de postura falsa. Hemos dado un salto fabuloso y el espíritu de investigación que existe es lo más importante. Sobre la pintura joven pienso que, cualesquiera fuesen sus resultados, marcha bien. Sus éxistos y fracasos son necesarios.' in Cecilia Bustamante de Ortega, "Pintores Jovenes del Perú: Artistas...Snobs...Impostores?," *La Prensa*, Lima, 11 June 1967.

<sup>442</sup>Original: 'Más vale fracasar en la vanguardia que triunfar en la retroguardia. Los jovenes pueden experimentar con lo que quieran porque si fracas an pueden comenzar de nuevo.' Ibid.

<sup>443</sup> Juan Acha, "Las artes visuales," *El Comercio*, Lima, 1 January 1967.

<sup>444</sup> Acha, "Does Present-Day Latin American Art Exist as a Distinct Expression? If It Does, on What Terms?"

<sup>445</sup> Original: 'Los jovenes deben hacer su trabajo y no temer la experimentación.[...] Les recordaria que toda moda es peligrosa si no tienen en cuenta que no hay que someterse como un esclavo a ella.' Ibid.

Alberto Davila, in addition to Ugarte Eléspuru's comment, pointed out the superficiality within which certain trends were assimilated:

*Personally, I think that the attitude that is developing right now has already ceased to be valid in Europe and the United States. Here I see much lightness among youths who proclaim themselves painters; they haven't assimilated their apprenticeship properly and are even less oriented by the ideological and cultural motivations of particular movements, which represent profound spiritual currents that are not just fashion. I think painting should be done seriously; a serious work that does not look for the stridency of advertising in replacement of talent.<sup>446</sup>*

Most vocal of the artists present, Luís Arias Vera, with the support of Edith Sachs and Teresa Burga, defended the position of young artists against allegations of superficiality. He stressed the importance of viewer participation, which no other member of the discussion mentioned, as the reflection of a renunciation of subjectivity. He claimed that subjectivity was in fact the culprit of the mythical quality of traditional art, far removed from day to day reality. He explained, 'The avant-garde position is the renunciation of that subjectivity, which turns art into myth, and artists into mythical beings.' Arias Vera marks a clear contrast between subjectivity and objectivity, a notion, which can be traced to his experiments from November 1965, when he first renounced using traditional media, and deliberately embedded unmodified images from the mass media. This is also evident in the statement that accompanied the exhibition of the Arte Nuevo Group, and is also present in the critiques of the ENBA professors that participated in this roundtable. Arias Vera continued:

*The avant-garde is a constant activity because what is alive can be transformed. Apprenticeships pile on things that the avant-garde artist has no need to transcend. [...] We don't feel the necessity to transmit traumas, nor are we interested in projecting ourselves into the future. We are interested in the possibility of a constant joyfulness that we all should experience. Now, even*

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<sup>446</sup> Original: 'Personalmente, pienso que se está realizando ahora una actitud que dejó de ser ya vigente en Europa y los Estados Unidos. Aquí encuentro mucha ligereza para autocalificarse de pintores entre los jóvenes, ni siquiera han asimilado bien su aprendizaje y mucho menos ubicado en razones ideológicas y culturales dentro de movimientos que de por sí representan profundas Corrientes espirituales que no son únicamente moda. Pienso que la pintura debe ser hecha con seriedad, trabajar seriamente sin buscar la estridencia publicitaria reemplazo del talento.' Ibid.

*women's fashion inspires joy. In fact, today's avant-garde art strips off the idea of immanence, and also the public no longer wishes to receive additional subjectivity.*<sup>447</sup>

Arias Vera's comment on the superfluous idea of immanence refers to that renunciation of subjectivity that the avant-garde aimed at. Such renunciation implied an opener art, with less pretences, and a renegotiation of art's role at large: no longer needed to remain through eternity, but timely and relevant in its present moment first. The artist's own envelope paintings reflect the notion of transition and impermanence of messages and information that are merely transported by vessels such as paintings, which are purposefully devoid of any personal mark. The frequently referred to heterogeneity of the works by the Arte Nuevo Group reiterate the importance of multiplicity for cultural renewal.

In a further article, Emilio Hernández Saavedra expressed a similar point with the intent to expose the views of artists from disparate generations. It connects to Arias Vera's in terms of what they thought constituted the objective of contemporary art for a contemporary audience:

*Demagogues seek to drink from the springs of our culture to make art that is born dead. I do not want to look back to "gain inspiration" from something that was current in its own time, just as the most lucid investigations of the avant-garde are current today. Moreover supermarkets seem as interesting as any museum. [...] As for what I do, "pop" painting, I would not call it foreign for having had its first manifestations in London or New York. Pop is above all an attitude that exalts the day-to-day values of triviality, of impersonality.*<sup>448</sup>

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<sup>447</sup> Original: 'La vanguardia es sentido de actividad constante porque lo viviente es factible de transformarse. El aprendizaje significa cargar con una cantidad de cosas, el artista de vanguardia no tiene necesidad de trascender. [...] No tenemos necesidad de transmitir traumas ni nos interesa la proyección en el future, nos interesa la posibilidad de alegría constante que debemos disfrutar todos. Ahora hasta la moda de las mujeres nos incita a la alegría. En realidad, el arte de vanguardia de hoy se Despoja de la idea de perennidad y ademas, el publico ya no desea recibir mas subjetividad.' Ibid.

<sup>448</sup>Original: 'los demagogos pretenden beber de las Fuentes de nuestra cultura para hacer un arte que nace muerto. No me interesa mirar hacia atras e "inspirarme" en algo que en su tiempop fue tan actual como lo son ahora las busquedas mas lucidas de la vanguardia. Por otra parte los supermarkets me parecen tan interesantes como cualquier museo. [...]En cuanto a lo que yo hago, pintura "pop," no la llamaria extranjera por haber tenido sus primeras manifestaciones en Londres y Nueva York. El pop es ante todo una actitud de exaltacion de los valores cotidianos, de la trivialidad, de

Both articles ended with perplexed syntheses of avant-gardism in Peru, which appeared fractured especially between generations. Cecilia Bustamante de Ortega conclusively claimed that ‘the youth of our vanguard artists promises much, yet a profession has to be made of the artist, not of being young.’<sup>449</sup> The second article finally sees the discrepancies and lack of consensus – the ‘frankly antagonistic’ opinions presented – as the very common denominator of a new Peruvian movement – one suspended on the notion of plurality, incongruence, and impermanence. These contributions are vital to shed light on the key discourses that were informing avant-garde practice, and that contributed to its interpretation as dissident, or alternative – particularly in López’s and Tarazona’s views. In addition they reveal younger artists’ process of familiarization with imported terminologies, including Pop, Op, Informalism, used in their widest definitions. The older generation, in contrast, sought greater specificity in such words, and they criticised the will to reconcile certain terminologies, which was seen as a ‘distortion.’<sup>450</sup>

An undeniable merit of Arte Nuevo is the success in rupturing the art scene. What López termed a ‘symbolic victory for the avant-garde’ was in fact a hands down triumph that succeeded in shaking the dominant structure, inviting productive debate on the role of art and its most contemporary situation. Partly because of the great controversy they accumulated, of the success it generated, and of each artist’s increasingly defined personal agenda, Arte Nuevo dissolved by the end of 1967 after an exhibition they held in Buenos Aires at the Galeria Lirolay. Although they no longer exhibited together, a proverbial Pandora’s (Pop) box had opened, and Pop, with a growing number of their declinations began to flourish in Lima’s art scene.

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la impersonalidad.’ Quoted in Orrillo, “*El Blow-Up de la pintura, El Boom de las artes plasticas en el Peru.*”

<sup>449</sup> Original: ‘La juventud de nuestros artistas de vanguardia promote mucho pero hay que hacer profesión de artista, que no de jovenes.’ Quoted in Bustamante de Ortega, “Pintores Jovenes del Perú: Artistas...Snobs...Impostores?”

<sup>450</sup> Miguel Angel Cuadros, also professor at ENBA: ‘Las tres tendencias últimas mas importante: pop, op, arte luminico, plantean tesis distintas y auí en nuestro medio veo que se quieren conciliar distorsionando los postulados de los creadores de estas tendencias.’ Ibid.



### 3.d From Coca-Cola to Inca-Kola: Peruvianising Pop after Arte Nuevo

Arte Nuevo initiated a process of cultural renewal that had important reverberations over the following two years. Because it was deeply associated to Pop - or, as Acha defined it in 1969, a reflexivity towards the banal and the everyday - it continued to generate widespread criticism amongst the most traditionalist members of the cultural scene – this context is not dissimilar from the US' or the UK's a decade earlier. According to Tarazona, the continued distrust between the higher ranks of culture and the younger generations revealed the IAC's (among other institutions) failure to mediate this relationship, and of the persistent narrow mentality of the industrial bourgeoisie.<sup>451</sup> Ultimately this failure also translated to a failure of the Alliance for Progress in encouraging the regent classes to embrace and support cultural change. To some extent these exhibitions were premonitions of the revolution that followed in 1968.

A crucial platform that supported the Arte Nuevo artists was the Cultura y Libertad gallery, a non-for-profit space supported by the Congress for the Liberty of Culture in Paris, founded in 1965, and directed by Jorge Luís Recavarren (a prominent and politically active democratic intellectual). In defence of ideological freedom, one of the leaders of the congress stated, 'Modern freedom began through the recognition of the *habeas corpus*. The slogan of the new resistance against totalitarianism has to be the *habeas anima*, the right of each human being to his/her soul.'<sup>452</sup> Among the issues placed at stake by the younger artists were sexual liberation (Gómez-Sánchez), the objectification of women (Teresa Burga), the meaning of plagiarism in relation to national art (Sergio Zevallos), and the role of mechanical reproduction as the symptom of industrialization (Emilio Saavedra and Arias Vera): all themes that were not confronted within official institutions. Within these trajectories exist common narratives

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<sup>451</sup> In Brazil, the explosion of Modern Art Museums and of the São Paulo Biennial were inextricably connected to the industrial bourgeoisie's interest in seeking foreign investment as a means to facilitate economic alliances with the US especially. In Peru, this phenomenon was also taking place. Industrialists seeking to advance economic agendas, in fact, supported biennials, painting prizes and awards. Nevertheless, such initiatives in Peru failed to involve younger artists, which generated many of the issues addressed in this chapter. For a thorough analysis of the connections between industrialists and art initiatives in Brazil see Asbury, "The Bienal de São Paulo."

<sup>452</sup> Anonymous, 'Cultura y Libertad,' 4 July 1965, no additional information available. Xerox copy of original found in the MALI archives.

Fig. 82 Coca-Cola and Inka Cola



that expose the core problematics of Peruvian culture on the brink of a political revolution in 1968, with General Juan Velasco Alvarado's rise to power. These relate to a necessity to reconnect art with wider portions of the public, and dealing with issues that were closer to the everyday concerns of Peruvians. Among the tools employed by artists to breach the barriers erected by a rigidly stratified society, are *mestizaje* (mixing or crossing) and participation, which artists relied upon to involve the viewer in social activities and interactions with urban or domestic spaces. Although such experiments had been carried out since 1965, the following pages reveal how production subsisted and developed.

Within Arte Nuevo, Gómez-Sánchez and Burga's works, affiliated to the group's scope, sought to dethrone hierarchies and fixed definitions, such as Pop, Informel or Informalism, which the press (as we have seen in the previous section) interpreted as indecisiveness or heterogeneity (besides Acha). Following the dissolution of the group, however, they demonstrated an increasing sensibility towards the depiction of womanhood, which they confronted by creating three-dimensional object/environments.

Gómez-Sánchez was the first member to exhibit solo at the gallery Cultura y Libertad in May 1967. Almost none of her works have survived past the 1960s (with the exception of a few that have been reconstructed after 2007), so most appraisals are drawn from photographs in the press, and scant catalogue images. The pieces that form this show marked a change from her environment *Boomerang* in Arte Nuevo, where an informalist aesthetic still prevailed in the grey scale papier-mâché dolls (fig. 83). The connection with Pop had been established with a series of collages where Gómez-Sánchez experimented with assemblage. In a work found in the catalogue of the Arte Nuevo exposition in Buenos Aires, she painted onto a flat surface the image of a woman politely sitting with her legs held firmly together, wearing a short skirt, but rendered in a naïve style that paralleled cartooned advertising campaigns from the period, with flat surfaces and clear outlines. The figure's face was a model's cut out from a fashion

Fig. 83

- a. Gloria Gómez-Sánchez, Press clippings for her exhibitions at the Galeria Cultura y Libertad, 1967.

El COMERCIO 10-5-67 Pág. 27

## Gloria Gómez Sánchez en "Cultura y Libertad"



Uno de los trabajos de vanguardia de la artista nacional Gloria Gómez Sánchez y que integra la exposición que inaugura hoy en la galería "Cultura y Libertad".

Hoy a las 7 y 30 p.m., se inaugurará la Temporada de 1967, en la Galería "Cultura y Libertad", con la presentación de cuadros y objetos "pop" de Gloria Gómez Sánchez, pintora que siempre ha cultivado el arte de vanguardia e integrante del grupo "Arte Nuevo" que conforman Luis Arias Vera, Teresa Burga, Luis Cevallos, Armando Varela, Emilio Hernández Saavedra y Jaime Dávila.

Hace poco este grupo exhibió una muestra colectiva en la ciudad de Buenos Aires, concitando éxito de público y de crítica.

Hay expectativa en torno a la inauguración de Gloria Gómez Sánchez, quien presentará muy audaces trabajos indicativos de su constante adhesión a las más nuevas corrientes en las artes plásticas.



Obra de Gloria Gómez Sánchez de "Arte Nuevo"

## Mañana Pintora Gómez Sánchez Inicia Muestra de "Arte Nuevo"

El lema "estoy con mi tiempo, sus demandas y sus urgencias", que caracteriza al grupo "Arte Nuevo", volverá a hacerse presente mañana en la inauguración de la muestra de cuadros y objetos de Gloria Gómez Sánchez, en la Galería Cultura y Libertad.

Esta muestra que destaca la actual vanguardia plástica del Perú, fue exhibida colectivamente en la ciudad de Buenos Aires con gran éxito.

Gloria Gómez Sánchez, fue una de las expositoras que concitó grandes elogios del crítico argentino, Jorge Romero Brest, quien la consideró como una artista de gran imaginación.

Esta exposición, que inaugura la temporada en la Galería será el inicio de las exhibiciones de las obras del grupo "Arte Nuevo".

Lo forman, además, Luis Arias Vera, Emilio Hernández, Teresa Burga, Armando Varela, José Tang, Luis Cevallos y Jaime Dávila, quienes están considerados en el mundo del arte como "los niños terribles" de la actual pintura contemporánea del Perú.

La inauguración se efectuará a las 7.30 p.m.

LA PRENSA - 9-5-67

- b. Gloria Gómez-Sánchez  
*La Pipa*, 1967  
Paint and collage on nordex  
120 x 120 cm



- c. The artist with an unknown work, circa 1967.





- d. Gloria Gómez-Sánchez  
*Medias Pares*, 1967  
Painting and collage on nordex



- e. Gloria Gómez-Sánchez  
*Medias Impares*, 1967  
Painting and collage on nordex  
122 x 122 cm approx.



magazine, proportionally smaller to the rest of the body, which allowed for a humoristic and 'imaginative' (according to Romero Brest<sup>453</sup>) overall effect.

Gómez-Sánchez's works still navigated a space between the Pop and Informal aesthetic: while she began pulling images and themes from the mass media embracing a commercial aesthetic, her techniques still owed to her previous works and collages made with grey-scale monochrome leftover materials. From the images that document the paintings, collages and objects on display, a few recurrent motifs appear: the use of dolls and dummies, black and white optical stripes or geometric patterns, playful cartooned female silhouettes and the incorporation of ready-mades (whether photographs or objects). In some of the works the faces of mannequins are applied onto canvases, their bodies made of a trimmed black and white striped surface, also used to fashion sunglasses and other accessories applied on their faces. These works, which at first glance demonstrate an experimental attitude towards materials, techniques and objects, reveal an increasing exploration of the depiction of female bodies, which is also reflected in the use of images from the press – the quintessential site of female objectification. The progression from an informalist aesthetic, towards another increasingly drawn to commercial imagery, reveals the particularity of her engagement with Pop, one reluctant to renounce to her interest in objects and environmental constructions, which she thought of as unique creations – a notion that contradicts the warholian idea of seriality and reproducibility in his oeuvre. In an interview earlier in the decade Gómez declared, '[the informalist painting] is an object in itself. It is what it is. All pictorial works are objects in themselves because they are unique creations.'<sup>454</sup> Following on this trail of thought, all representation first of all, is form, which leads to speculate that Gómez was interested in the media-as object, as form, and in how these could be used to construct object of tactile or sensorial alternate meaning.

The work *Corbata* (Tie, 1968, fig. 84), which was rebuilt in 2007, climaxed Gómez-Sánchez's research into object-hood and participative environments (such as

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<sup>453</sup> Romero Brest cited in "Mañana Pintora Gómez-Sánchez inicia muestra de *Arte Nuevo*," *La Prensa*, Lima, 6 May 1967.

<sup>454</sup>Original: 'El cuadro informalista es un objeto en sí mismo. Es lo que es. Por supuesto que toda obra pictórica es un objeto en si mismo porque es creación unica.'<sup>454</sup> Vizcarra, *La generacion del '68*, p. 26.

Fig. 84 Gloria Gómez-Sánchez  
*Corbata*, 1968  
Paint and collage on wood  
210 x 250 x 50 cm  
Photo of the artist with the work.





the one created for Arte Nuevo). The work was a large-scale wooden panel, lone standing in the manner of a pop-out image in a book. Fusing the aesthetic of her collages, with the cartooned silhouettes and the flat surfaces, the work presented a female figure wearing a tie that fell between her wide open legs to form a chair. The woman's face (a beautiful model wearing a crown of fruit and jewellery made of flowers) was cut out from a magazine. The hands, also extracted from the printed media, were intertwined over the tie right in its middle, appearing almost as a toothed vagina in between her legs.<sup>455</sup>

*Corbata* is Gómez-Sánchez's first work to explicitly confront the issue of feminine objectification, and the shifting power balance between femininity and masculinity. According to Emilio Tarazona, and the artist Enrico Baj, the tie is a symbol of masculinity. Placing it around the neck of a woman is a defiant gesture that recasts it not as a sign of elegance, vanity or professionalism, but almost as a medal, which could be found on a military uniform. Tarazona also interpreted the diamond pattern that covered part of the figure as a reference to the archetypal character of Harlequin in Goldoni's *Commedia dell'Arte*: a servile, yet astute, and tragi-comic persona.

The symbols in Gómez-Sánchez's works reflect an acute sensitivity towards the concerns of the Peruvian avant-garde. Although much of her training took place in Argentina, the use of patterns evokes Op art (dominant earlier in the decade), her use of assemblage recalls her first exploration of Informalism, and the use of magazine clippings and the hard edge outlines, reflect a receptiveness towards the mass-media's influence on art making and Pop and her participation in intellectual debates. By placing a necktie on a female figure depicted in an explicitly erotic and exposed position, may suggest a portrayal of how femininity was changing, especially in a conservative and catholic country such as Peru, where women's place was largely limited to the domestic realm. The woman in her work celebrates her new role with audacity and brazenness, disregarding the criticism of those who might have disapprovingly called her a *minifaldera*. Gómez's *Corbata*, saturates the female body with symbols and references to the point where it transforms into a critical parody of itself. An additional interpretation can suggest that the tie around the figure's head, which almost appears detached from

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<sup>455</sup> This particular interpretation is owed to Emilio Tarazona in *Gloria Gómez-Sánchez*, p. 25.

the rest of the work, is a noose, strangling the object-body constructed by the artist. Tarazona further argued that the work nowhere reinforced dominant models that subjugate women, as domestic goddesses or subdued wives. On the contrary it demonstrated allegiance to a female revolution, much more radical than one represented by 'Twiggy or Mary Quant.'<sup>456</sup> In Lima, such challenges to the dominant patriarchy were unprecedented, and were predictably not commented upon in the press.

Teresa Burga is another artist who worked towards a renegotiation of the role and place of the Peruvian woman in society (this is particularly evident in works she produced in the early 1970s, which had a greater conceptual turn<sup>457</sup>). The canvases she exhibited in Arte Nuevo demonstrated an expressionist sensibility in her human forms, which she complemented with Pop/Op elements, including writing or flat backgrounds. Similarly to Gómez-Sánchez's, Burga's exhibition *Objetos*, at Cultura y Libertad in 1968, marked a turning point in her practice, where the issue of feminine liberation became a central theme.

The six works she exhibited were described in the press as 'sort of assemblages or montages,' which included elements of a bathroom, a boudoir, a bedroom and a small room (similar to those found in shop windows), the fragment of a façade and a card panel of a woman (fig. 85-86).<sup>458</sup> Inspired by images advertising domestic products, which always represented women in domestic environments, Burga constructed women-objects, or female figures that become embedded or absorbed by their domestic

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<sup>456</sup>Original: 'No hay aquí por donde reforzar el modelo promovido que recluye (o recluta) a la mujer a su puesto como de dama de casa, abnegada esposa o ejemplar administradora doméstica, pero tampoco se trata de una simple adhesión —como pareciera en otras piezas— a una revolución femenina (es decir, no necesariamente feminista) cuyos modelos serían solo Twiggy o Mary Quant.' Ibid.

<sup>457</sup> Most notable among these projects is *Perfil de la Mujer Peruana* (Profile of a Peruvian woman), where Burga empirically measured characteristics of her own body, behavior and beliefs with pseudo-empirical methods producing a vast array of charts, diagrams, drawings, and sculptures that summarised what the peruvian woman was understood as (or what she ought to be). For a thorough analysis of this work see Marie-France Cathelat and Teresa Burga, *Perfil de la mujer peruana, 1980-1981*. (Lima: Investigaciones Sociales Artísticas, 1981), and Teresa Burga, Miguel Ángel López and Emilio Tarazona, *Teresa Burga: informes, esquemas, intervalos 17.9.10*, (Lima: ICPNA, 2011).

<sup>458</sup> Juan Acha, "Ambiente expresionista: Muestra de Teresa Burga," *El Comercio*, Lima, 27 July 1967.

Fig. 85 Teresa Burga  
 Untitled, 1967  
 Installation view of the exhibition *Objetos*, Galería Cultura y Libertad,  
 Lima.



Fig. 86 Teresa Burga  
 Exhibition view of *Die Chronologie der Teresa Burga*, Württembergischer  
 Kunstverein Stuttgart, 30 September 2011 – 08 January 2012, including  
 works from the exhibition *Objetos*, Galería Cultura y Libertad, Lima,  
 1967.





surroundings into furniture or architecture. As described by Acha in a review of the show, and more recently by Tarazona,<sup>459</sup> on one side of the exhibition space two bi-dimensional figures cut out of wood were placed against the wall: the first reclining wearing a brightly coloured latex dress; the other standing whilst combing her hair. A further figure made of stuffed fabric was sitting on a chair in a construction that resembled a bathroom. In a corner, hidden behind curtains, was a naked woman assembled over a bed: her body painted on the bedspread, her head in the middle of the headboard, and her breasts on two pillows that elongated sideways to the ground, making up the arms. Burga's women seem to disappear within the furniture, in effect becoming objects, or indiscernible to the viewer as women. The installation confronts the objectification of women and their relation to domesticity, and at last the spectacularisation of domestic intimacy in the media, her original source of inspiration.

In a similar manner to how Gómez-Sánchez's works strayed from a North American conception of Pop via their relationship to uniqueness and objecthood, Burga's furniture comments on the objectification of women not by enhancing or spotlighting certain traits of the female body, but by making them disappear. Both artists attack repression and objectification by not focusing on in the mediated and sexualised image of the body. Juan Acha, who reviewed Burga's show, commented on the tendency of young artists to bring their art closer to reality by relying on everyday objects that involved visual and tactile senses. He insisted that the limited durability of the materials used controverted any pretension towards 'the eternal,' characteristic of traditional notions of art. He praised her use of composition and colour balance, but expressed doubts as to the sufficient potency of her installation. He advised for a greater tension between her objects, which could have been achieved by heightening the 'impersonal realism [of the objects] to contrast the expressionism of her figures.'<sup>460</sup> Many visitors of the exhibition commented with consternation that the works on show could never adorn a living room, and nowhere was there a mention of the subversive message these works sought to elicit.

Besides attesting to the backwardness of Peruvian intellectuals on certain fronts relating to feminist issues, the inability to reflect or recognise such critique was

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<sup>459</sup> Emilio Tarazona, *La Contra-Producción del presente*, p. 27.

<sup>460</sup> Juan Acha, "Ambiente expresionista."

symptomatic of a greater problem. The so-called 'Zevallos plagiarism affair' (explained hereon), is another example of how older artists and intellectuals were oblivious to the changing role of art in society, not only abroad, but also in the lives of the younger generations, in the process of formulating new social purposes for art.

Sergio Zevallos Hetzel's exhibition at Cultura y Libertad (June 1967) included paintings, drawings and collages depicting motors, cars and mechanical parts in grey scale tones (fig. 87). Taking cars and machinery as the subject of painting startled the most conservative visitors, who believed that automobiles did not belong intrinsically to Peruvian culture, and did not produce the same effect as they would in a North American viewer. As ever animated by a defensive spirit, Juan Acha explained in a review:

*[the Peruvian viewer] does not feel it in the same way, surely. Yet for individual reasons, not national ones. It's sufficient to go to "Tacora Motors," a marketplace in the middle of the slums, to realise that automobile pieces are, for the humble man, symbols of progress; they elicit greater hopes of politician's promises. Finally, the number of people who know about cars, is much greater than those who know about art. Bringing trivial forms and objects to the canvas is called "Pop."<sup>461</sup>*

In late 1967 Zevallos was awarded first prize at the Acón Festival with a triptych, each panel depicting the same motorbike travelling at full speed towards the viewer, with alternating colour schemes in grey tones. Once it was found out that the image of the motorcycle had been drawn (in great detail) from a Harley-Davidson motorcycle advertisement found in the American magazine *Hot-Rod*, his victory attracted a tsunami of criticism and indignation.

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<sup>461</sup> Original: No lo siente de igual manera, por cierto. Pero por razones individuales, y no nacionales. Basta ir a "Tacora Motors," baratillo incrustrando en medio de barriadas, para darnos cuenta de que las piezas de automovil son, para el hombre humile, símbolos de progreso; despiertan mayors esperanzas que las promesas políticas. En última instancia, el número de ersonas que saben de asuntos automovilisticos, es mucho mayor de las que conocen obras de arte. Y esto de llevar las formas y los objetos triviales a la pintura, se denomina "pop." Juan Acha, "Conceptos conservadores: Exposición de L. Zevallos," *El Comercio*, Lima, 4 July 1967.

Fig. 87

- a. Luís Zevallos Hetzel  
*El Motociclista*, 1969 (one of three panels)  
Varnish on nordex  
194 x 154 cm



- b. View of *El Motociclista* triptych at the Casino Nautico de Ancon, February 1969.





Seeking to appease the uproar, Acha published the article *Arte Pop: procedimientos y finalidades*.<sup>462</sup> In the article Acha explained the nature and meaning of Pop clarifying that it drew objects, or images, from the mass media in order to ironically highlight the effect they have on the consciousness of the easily manipulated viewer. In addition Acha argued that those who criticised Zevallos ignored the postulates at the base of Pop and of contemporary art at large and that they allowed themselves to be impeded by the ‘moralist ire that usually defends what is “established.”’<sup>463</sup> He continues:

*Some people, at times object pop for not corresponding to a Peruvian reality. They confuse national aspects with those that concern art directly. If artistic modes constitute the substantial, what has Vargas Llosa’s way of writing have to do with the majority of Peruvian realities? Lichtenstein’s Pop way of painting has little to do with the rural reality in the provinces of North America. The urban reality is the decisive factor.*<sup>464</sup>

With this article Acha clarifies certain key points: first, he highlights the lack of aperture in Lima’s intelligentsia; second, he establishes a distinction between urban and rural subjectivities; third, he reconnects Peruvianism with Americanism through this very distinction. The whole ‘affair,’ rendered patent the fact that most critics and artists in Lima were completely unaware of the thematic behind Pop, or indeed more contemporary art practices.

Others, such as Alfonso Castillon Vizcarra (then director of the IAC) attributed Zevallo’s lapse to a cultural *mestizaje*: artists did not have their own language – besides a pre-columbine one – with which to communicate internationally<sup>465</sup> (perhaps the lack of a personal language was reflected in the fixed mentality of the critics). The harangue

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<sup>462</sup> Juan Acha, “Arte Pop: procedimientos y finalidades,” *El Comercio*, Suplemento Dominical, Lima, 13 April 1969.

<sup>463</sup> ‘Original: ‘Sucede que todos los detractores ignoran lo substancial del pop y del arte actual, y se dejan arrstrar por aquella iracundia moralista con que se suele defender lo establecido.’ Ibid.

<sup>464</sup> Original: ‘Algunos tal vez objeten que el pop no corresponde a la realidad peruana. Confunden los aspectos nacionales con lo que incumbe directamente al arte. Porque si los modos atísticos constituyen lo substancial, qué tiene que ver el modo de escribir de Vargas Llosa con la realidad peruana como mayoría? El mundo pop de pintar de Lichtenstein tampoco tiene que ver con la realidad rural y provincial de Norte America, su país. La realidad urbana es lo decisivo.’ Ibid.

<sup>465</sup> Original: Anonymous, “Plagio o lecita búsqueda de lo bello?” *La Prensa*, Suplemento Dominical, Lima, 13 April 1969.



raised such controversy that *Cultura y Libertad*, fulfilling its mandate to provide a platform of exchange, launched a round-table discussion (23/04/1969) with major critics, artists and writers.<sup>466</sup>

Although Vizcarra saw a *mestizaje* at the base of this controversy, others interpreted it as an asset – an antidote to the obsession with purity and traditionalism expressed by most. Another positive reaction the whole ‘affair’ triggered, was that many artists (besides Acha) sided with Zevallos. Among these was Emilio Hernández Saavedra who, in collaboration with his wife Queta Gaillour produced canvases depicting images taken from American magazines, which were made with airbrushing, a technique also used by Zevallos. Among their most iconic works are a large scale portrait of Twiggy rendered in bright acid colours, of George Harrison playing the guitar, and finally of a woman shooting a pistol, also in bright colours and hard edged lines (fig. 88-89). Saavedra explained, ‘we want to paint like we were painting posters, because we support the depersonalization of painting.’<sup>467</sup>

Due to the similarities in their practices, Saavedra wrote an open letter to *El Comercio* (in defence of Zevallos) where he confessed to be complicit in the deceitful scheme perpetrated by Pop artists, declaring himself guilty of having plagiarised since 1966. He apologised to the ‘guardians of morality and ethics in art,’ and explained that he never intended to call himself an ‘authentic artist’ to the detriment of the ‘serious painters,’ who felt insulted by his art. Finally he denounced also Warhol, Lichtenstein, Rauschenberg, and Indiana for being guilty of his same crime – regardless of the fact that the press had unanimously praised a recent exhibition of their prints at the IAC. On a more serious note Zevallos laments how such petty and backward-looking mentalities,

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<sup>466</sup> Anonymous, “Opiniones divididas motive el debate sobre el pintor Zevallos,” *La Prensa*, April 1969. (No more information available). Xerox copy of original found in the MALI archives.

Against Zevallos – as reported in an article - were critic Guillermo Daly, painters Milner Cahaharinga and Ciro Palacios. The sculptor Piscocoya, and Alberto Davila occupied an ambivalent position claiming that it was indeed plagiarism, but that within new tendencies it was acceptable. Critic Felipe Buendia, Juan Acha, painters Ester Fulle and Luís Cosso supported Zevallos unreservedly.

<sup>467</sup> Original: ‘lo que queremos [es] pintar como en los afiches, porque estamos por la despersonalización de la pintura, y no creemos en mensajes ni nada por el estilo,’ Elvira de Galvez, “Crónicas de vida real: Queta y Emilio, los esposos pintores,” *La Prensa*, Lima, 5 January 1968.

Fig. 88 Emilio Hernández Saavedra and Queta Gaillour  
*Twiggy*, 1967  
Varnish on canvas  
154 x 140 cm



Fig. 89 Emilio Hernández Saavedra and Queta Gaillour  
*Bang Bang*, 1967  
Varnish on canvas  
200 x 140 cm



which sought to safeguard the 'purity of painting' chained Peruvian art to underdevelopment: a single gesture that revealed the dark sarcasm that pervaded his letter.

Lima's young avant-garde importantly reflected a Pop art tendency, which served as a tool to explain and expand many of the transformations and *mestizajes* deemed necessary in the art world. Among the artists who refused this label, but still importantly contributed to its proliferation, is Rafael Hastings. Hastings returned to Peru in 1967 after spending large part of the 1960s travelling in the United States, Europe, studying at the Royal College of Art in London and in Brussels where he obtained a PhD on Pop art. His travels justify his detachment from the Peruvian avant-garde's concern for Pop, yet the works he produced in that period may invite alternative interpretations.

Soon after his arrival in Lima Hastings participated in the collective exhibition at the IAC *4000 Years of Peruvian Painting*, and was invited to exhibit solo there and at the Quartier Latin gallery<sup>468</sup> the following year. Although he distanced himself from Pop per se, his works demonstrated an aesthetic affinity with the style.<sup>469</sup> In *4000 Years of Peruvian Painting* Hastings exhibited a series titled *History of Art* that had been produced in Brussels. Within that series were big wash drawings, some of animals, skeletons or Greek/Roman marble busts: references to what he termed the 'history of representation.'<sup>470</sup> The paintings that were exhibited at the IAC for his solo exhibition, which also consolidated for critics a connection with Pop, were a series of twenty vignettes, enlarged film stills, which he had painted using airbrush with the help of technicians (a technique he thereafter abandoned), in the six weeks prior to the opening. The large-scale painting *Who*, for instance, is a cinemascope of the head of Nosferatu peering from within the canvas, which becomes interchangeable with the

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<sup>468</sup> Quartier Latin took its name from the left bank neighbourhood of Paris between the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> *arrondissements*, also playing with the connotations of the word 'Latin' traceable back to Napoleonic colonialist aspirations, as discussed also in the introduction of this thesis.

<sup>469</sup> In an interview with Miguel López, Hastings expressly distances his works from Pop. Miguel A. López, *Rafael Hastings: el futuro es nuestro y/o por un pasado mejor, 1983-1967*, (Lima: ICPNA, 2014).

<sup>470</sup> Rafael Hastings interviewed by Miguel A. López in Miguel A. López, Max Hernández Calvo, Claudia Benavides Allain, and Florencia Portocarrero, *Rafael Hastings*, p. 47.

silver screen (fig. 90). This show in particular marks an alignment with the Peruvian avant-garde, not only for the technique used in the production of the works, but also for the format of the exhibition itself: during the opening, in the manner of a happening, Hastings invited a band of 'New Juggler Sound' to play. The young crowd that attended the event was dancing, and in the eyes of a consternated conservative spectator, the whole event became a manifestation of youthful rebellion. A review of the exhibition commented:

*Yes, malignantly it occurs to me that if I put a bomb in the IAC I will end the snobbery of Lima; however, who knows, given the vast majority of the art here, the conditions might lead there anyway. I launch the announcement of a sociological study of art in third world countries. Hair, beard, sideburns, sweat, miniskirt, ice creams, Inca Kola, sceptical smiles and many more. I enjoy looking at the large picture formed by this herd. I don't look at Hastings' works.<sup>471</sup>*

The imaginative writer of this review, retold the event orchestrated by the 'enigmatic' Hastings - reportedly smiling complacently while observing the spectators dancing while sipping Inca Kola - as the reflection, or the sublimation in a single exhibition space, of what 'art in third world countries' was becoming.

Hastings' practice became further embedded in the Limeña art scene with his third exhibition at the Quartier Latin Gallery in February 1968. On display were a series of figurative canvases depicting iconic figures that were drawn from photographs in the media. Among these are a clerical figure wearing a biretta (perhaps Pope Paul VI) peering from an obscure window or confessional, and an American Indian wearing a military medal and US flag as a cape, with the words 'tramp' and 'break' embedded in it (fig. 91). Each figure is rendered in black and white on a uniform white background. In a similarly vein to his previous show's opening event, during the opening of the exhibition,

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<sup>471</sup> Original: 'Si, malignamente se me ocurre que si pongo una bomba en el IAC acabo con el esnobismo de Lima; pero tambien, quizás, con gran parte del arte aquí las condiciones conducen a eso. Lanzo el aviso para un estudio de sociología del arte en los países del tercer mundo. Cabelleras, barbas, patillas, sudor, minifalda, heladitos, Inca Kola, sonrisas escepticas y también de las otras. Me divierto mirando este gran cuadro que forma la grey. No miro la pintura de Hastings.' Anonymous, "Exposición a Go-Go," *Oiga*, n. 248, Lima, 17 November 1967, pp. 29-30, reproduced in full in, Miguel A. López, *Hastings: el futuro es nuestro y/o por un pasado mejor, 1983-1967*, p. 89. In López et. al., *Rafael Hastings*, p. 191.

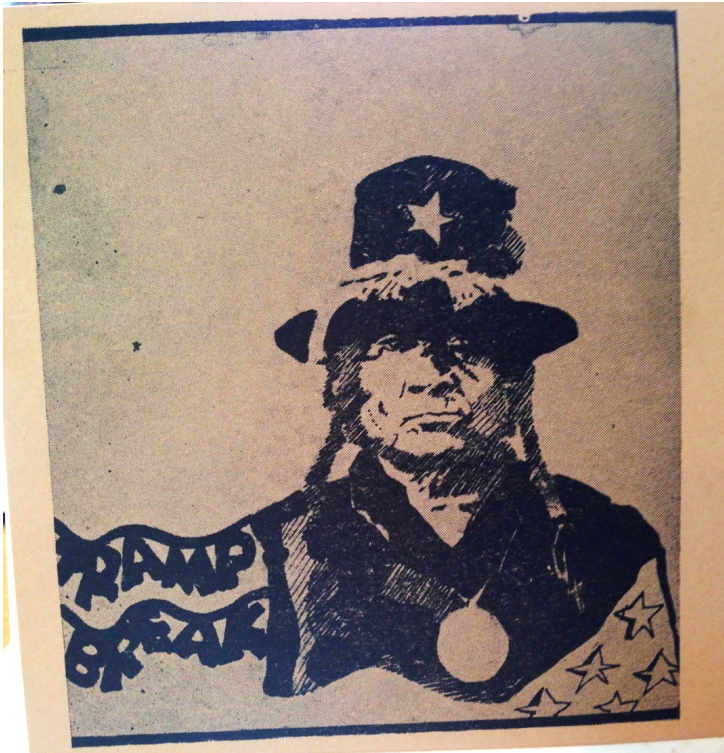
Fig. 90 Rafael Hastings  
*Who?* 1968  
Oil on canvas  
110 x 110



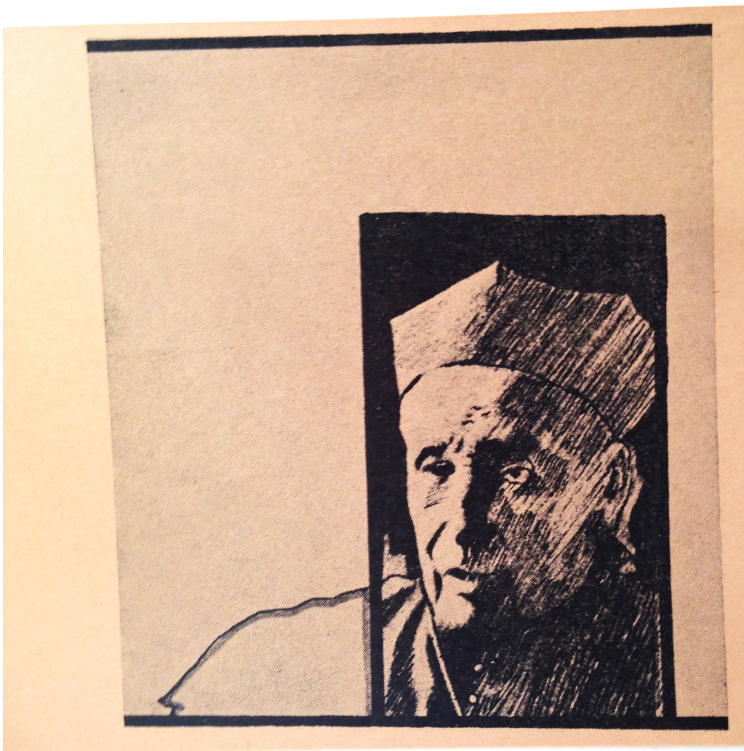


Fig. 91 Rafael Hastings, works reproduced in *Rafael Hastings*, (exhib. cat., Lima, Galeria Quartier Latin, 1968).

a.



b.



the group 'La Flor Carnivora' staged a happening: nearly 60 motorbikes were put in action in the gallery space, a rare and exciting view in Lima at the time.<sup>472</sup> Tarazona accounts for a *finissage* of the same exhibition where Hastings organized a happening based on the fairy tale of Snow White and the Seven Dwarves (fig. 92). According to Tarazona seven motorcyclists rode through what is today known as the Express Way to the district of Chorrillos, to then return to the gallery. One of the motorcyclists accompanied a 'princess,' recognisable for her clothing.<sup>473</sup> Hastings's intention, besides amusing the audience, was to group in a single action 'velocity, eroticism, and violence.'

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The fascination with motor anticipates the works by Zevallos, which also sought to elicit a sense of stupor and excitement in the spectator. At the same time Hastings was organising his exhibition Dennis Hopper's film *The Last Movie* was being filmed in Chinchero, near Cusco. Hopper came to the opening and brought two very handsome Hollywood actors, who participated in the happening and appeared in all the photos. Jean Luc Godard's interpretation of these works is cited in an exhibition catalogue of a later exhibition in London:

*Hastings' works are pieces of life that have jumped out of the system – out of good and bad, beauty and ugliness, right and wrong. By fixing moments of life he stops insisting on "values" – I realise this, perhaps just because I'm aware that it is only the act of painting that he enjoys.*<sup>475</sup>

Godard's quote in the catalogue is paired to a body of work in a similar style to that presented at Quartier Latin (black and white figures over a white background), but this time of supine bodies, which on a second glance reveal themselves to be corpses on a crime scene, laying in small puddles of their own blood. The dynamic is similar to the previous works: the subject matter, controversial or problematic it might be, is treated

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<sup>472</sup> The opening of the exhibition is accounted for in Juan Acha, "Exposición de Hastings."

<sup>473</sup> Tarazona and López, *Accionismo en el Peru*, p. 19.

<sup>474</sup> Luiz A. Meza, "Happening!," *El Comercio*, Suplemento Dominical, Lima, 10 March 1968. Reprinted in full in López et. al., *Rafael Hastings*, p. 191.

<sup>475</sup> Drawn from the catalogue text of Hastings's first solo presentation in Brussels at Racines Gallery, reproduced in *Raphael Hastings, 28<sup>th</sup> March – 19<sup>th</sup> April 1969*, (exh. cat., London: Clytie Jessop Gallery, 1969).

Fig. 92 Rafael Hastings, photographs documenting the happening held at the vernissage of his solo exhibition at the Galeria Quartier Latin, Lima, 1968.





coldly: a detached representation of a fact witnessed or envisioned by the artist, with only small hidden critiques embedded within the composition (for instance the words 'tramp' and 'break' on the Indian's cape). In review of the Quartier Latin exhibition, Acha explained that the figures are drawn from cinematic scenes that Hastings depicted with 'the impersonality of diagrams,' harnessing the sensorial impact of 'close-up cinematography.'<sup>476</sup> Acha further observed:

*Not in vain the televised image is as tactile (McLuhan) as a female semi-nude: the spectator imagines the parts that are covered (or omitted) to unite them with those that are exposed, or vice-versa. [...] Hastings' characters don't overwhelm us for their individualism, or for the novelty of their message, but for their purely visual results.*<sup>477</sup>

From this analysis on the 'tactile' characteristics of Hastings works, it appears how his dialectic was in tune with the broader discussions activated by the Arte Nuevo artists. By isolating the figures and eliminating their context, the works counter the conventional notions of art as 'magical, sacerdotal, noble and elitist,' favouring an egalitarian approach towards objects. Acha observes how 'he does not exhibit his works to show off or to prove his artistic virtues, but to produce sensorial effects; [...] this has to produce more than what it consumes; give more than what it takes.'<sup>478</sup> For the artist himself this consideration extends to a notion of place:

*In some "major areas", the (originally magic, sacerdotal, noble and exclusive; more recently bourgeois and rarely democratic) conventional notions of art are being confronted. These areas are "no man's land" between art and politics, revolution, science and technology. Probably soon "things" that happen in the University of Warsaw in an Amsterdam street or in Canete, Peru, might appear*

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<sup>476</sup> Juan Acha, 'Exposición de Hastings,' *El Comercio*, 16 February 1968.

<sup>477</sup> Original: 'No en vano la imagen televisada es táctil (McLuhan) como un semidesnudo femenino: el espectador imagina las partes cubiertas (u omitidas) para unir las con las percibidas, o viceversa.[...] Los personajes de Hastings nos sobrecogen, no por su individualidad o novedad del mensaje, sino por sus resultados puramente visuales.' Ibid.

<sup>478</sup> Original: 'no expone sus obras para exhibirse o exhibir sus virtudes artísticas, sino para producir efectos sensoriales; [...] este debe producir más de lo que consume; dar más de lo que recibe.' Ibid.

*more important than what still passes for "contemporary art" in New York. But no one in the "art world" is buying this jazz. It just doesn't sell.*<sup>479</sup>

The exhibitions and works listed so far by Hastings, Saavedra and Gaillur, Zevallos, Burga and Gómez-Sánchez, demonstrate a number of common traits, which include a dissatisfaction with the state of art in Peru, and a will to shock viewers or lead them astray from accepted notions of Art. There are several elements to this discussion, echoed by Hastings' defeated claim that this 'jazz' 'doesn't sell:' firstly, many artists (as particularly evident following the plagiarism incident) felt the closed mindedness of the critics and teachers that ruled over the majority of institutions, as a symptom of underdevelopment, and of an inability to accept change; secondly, there was a sense of antagonism from critics and teachers, in respect to artist's invitation to participate or interact with their art works. Two ready examples of how artists succeeded in staging environments, happenings or events that shook visitors' perception, and oftentimes outraged them, are *Mimuy*, as suggested by the incredulous reviewer, or Hasting's Quartier Latin show, which unsettled the reviewer to the point where the art on the walls took a completely secondary role in his appraisal of the exhibition.

The reactions of audience and critics had a twofold outcome. On one hand the works failed to narrow the gap separating them from an older guard of artists who persisted being suspicious, or outright indignant of Pop, and its adjacent styles. On the other they succeeded in being widely covered in the press, and being debated upon in several cultural institutions such as the IAC or the Galeria Cultura y Libertad. To a large extent, Pop had succeeded to enter local discourse from the margins of the accepted canons. The metaphor of Inca Kola is fitting because it's a drink, associated to youth, which has evident references to imported products – Coca-Cola - but seeks to establish a direct relation with the Peruvian consumer's identity. This idea of creating relations

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<sup>479</sup> Original: En algunas "arias mayores", las nociones convencionales de arte (originariamente magico, sacerdotal, noble y exclusivista; más recientemente burgués y raramente democrático) están siendo confrontadas. Estas áreas son "tierra de nadie" entre arte y política, revolución, ciencia y tecnología. Probablemente muy pronto las "cosas" que pasan en la Universidad de Varsovia, en una calle de Amsterdam o en Cañete, Perú, podrian aparecer como más importantes que lo que aún pasa por "arte contemporaneo" en Nueva York. Pero nadie en el "mundillo del arte" está comprando este jazz. No se vende.' Rafael Hastings, undated typewritten text found in the MALI Archives, Hastings' artist file, circa 1970.

between people and objects already had its roots in the November 1965 exhibitions - for example Arias Vera's use of products to sensitise each spectator to advertising's effects. The whole notion of the 'sensorial,' as described by Acha, is linked to the 'participatory,' which in this context means what invites spectators to act within a staged setting or environment (for example the dancing at Hastings' IAC exhibition).

In early 1968, when Belaúnde Terry's demise was still unforeseen, an exhibition was organised by the IAC to be sent to MoMA, titled *Nuevas Tendencias en la Plastica Peruana* (New Tendencies in Peruvian Art), which included works by many of the artists discussed in this section. The exhibition was the result of a visit to the Quartier Latin Gallery by Frederick Weisman (member of MoMA's International committee) and William Lieberman (director of the prints department).<sup>480</sup> In the catalogue text Acha commented on the radicalization of artistic practice noting how the artists of the avant-garde, many of whom were working with a Pop aesthetic, 'relinquish art as a work of genius or a charismatic product [driven by a desire] to approach the artistic possibilities of the industrial world we long for, and sooner or later, will fill the daily life of Latin Americans.'<sup>481</sup>

In this period he saw the avant-garde and the revolution being increasingly intertwined with Peru's cultural renewal. In addition, he progressively supported the view of the avant-garde being indispensable in a third world context because it prevented the 'harmful effects of the desired industrialization and of consumer society.'<sup>482</sup> The following section observes how the socio-political instability – of which Pop itself was symptomatic – gave rise to a revolution in Peru that irrevocably changed the landscape of Peruvian art and society. An important focus lies on the use of the media as a site for political struggle: while earlier in the decade mass media imagery used in art ruffled most feathers, by 1968 the potential of the media in redefining and reshaping cultural identities was understood, not only by artists, but by politicians.

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<sup>480</sup> Anonymous, "Museo de Arte de USA Compra Obras de Peruanos," *Ultima Hora*, Lima, 15 March 1968.

<sup>481</sup> López, "Cosmopolitan F(r)ictions," p. 32.

<sup>482</sup> *Ibid.* p. 33.

### 3.e The Politics of Culture during General Juan Velsaco Alvarado's Revolutionary Government: Avant-Garde Defeatism and Pop Achorado

Beginning with a brief outline of the political circumstances that caused Belaúnde's downfall and the establishment of a military regime self-proclaimed 'Revolutionary Government,' this section uses the peculiar example of Pop to link cultural production and politics. While previously Pop reflected artist's will to redefine art's relationship with society, after 1968<sup>483</sup> its study reveals an exchange of referential frameworks, from internationalism (or Pan-Americanism) to a new vision of Peru endorsed by the regime. The text examines how the new government rallied support from artists willing to participate in the dispersion of its ideological message and it analyses the effects this effort had on avant-garde art. In other words, when the vision of modernity envisioned by Belaúnde was no longer the future, what was the alternative?

Among the most significant examples that provide answers to this question are the posters designed by Jesús Ruiz Durand for an extensive agrarian reform launched in 1969. His posters, which heavily drew imagery from popular culture, poignantly recast the mass media (as the key resource for his Pop visual vocabulary) as a site of confrontation between art and politics. In addition, the effects of the dictatorship are evaluated through a selection of exhibitions, which document the birth of a 'new aesthetic' that rejected previous aesthetics, in favour of more dematerialised or non-objectual projects.

Belaúnde's policies favoured the growth of an urban industrial middle class while weakening the rural oligarchy. In this way, social stratification had improved, but by 1968 inflation was soaring and the mass influx of foreign investment was responsible for the decline of local economies. From 1964, Belaúnde became implicated in a land dispute with US owned International Petroleum Company, which was claiming proprietorship of the La Brea and Pariñas oil fields. Because he was unable to resolve the issue diplomatically, the White House withheld development assistance until he agreed to pay off the IPC. In the eyes of the public the whole episode symbolised how

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<sup>483</sup> According to López. Pop after 1968 encapsulated a 'migration processes' and the 'arrival of Andean sensibility and a new presence of the popular.' *Ibid.* p. 22.

the US exploited Peru. Most importantly, the economic crisis in combination with the IPC incident encapsulated the Alliance for Progress' failure to produce rapid economic development, which discredited the belief that modernization equated to prosperity. Because Belaúnde's commitment to the Alliance for Progress, and the developmentalist ideology it promoted, its collapse left increasing bitterness in the mouths of those who had been optimist supporters of the new regime.<sup>484</sup> According to Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Enzo Faletto, this debacle opened an ideological vacuum that was soon filled by an anti-American sentiment, fuelled by the belief that economic relations with the US were unequal and imperialist.<sup>485</sup>

Legitimised by such distrust, on October 3<sup>rd</sup> 1968 the military deposed and exiled Belaúnde, proclaiming the beginning of the Revolutionary Government of the Armed Forces, under General Velasco's leadership. At first, the *golpe* appeared as the frequent manifestation of the military's watchfulness of the interests of the oligarchy. However, Velasco soon surprised international observers by promising to be nothing short of a revolutionary and a nationalist, and by declaring a zero-tolerance policy towards either right or left wing sectarianism. He sought more equal distribution of wealth, yet promised the oligarchy to safeguard their interests on the condition that they participated in his restructuring projects.<sup>486</sup> He decreed extensive reforms that impacted most aspects of Peruvian life: these included an agrarian reform, which aimed to redistribute land more equally; and an industrial reform, which, in the manner of self-managing socialism, placed a direct line between the workers and the administrative employees of industries.

The end of Belaúnde's presidency and the establishment of the Revolutionary Government, caused an abrupt shift in state policy, which became most visible through Velasco's vast reforms and aggressive foreign policy. The collapse of Belaúnde's developmentalist project left an ideological vacuum that legitimised such changes. in

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<sup>484</sup>Malloy, "Peru before and after the Coup of 1968," p. 441.

<sup>485</sup> Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Enzo Faletto, *Dependencia y Desarrollo en America Latina*, (Lima: 1976), cited in Malloy, "Peru before and after the Coup of 1968," p. 473.

Cardoso and Faletto are pioneering scholars in the field of dependency theory in Latin America. They were among the first to challenge the assumption that capitalist models had to be repeated in or copied by underdeveloped countries.

<sup>486</sup> In the case of landowners, Velasco ensured that all the redistributed lands would be bought from their former owners at fair prices, although forcibly sold.

addition, further space emerged for cultural remodelling. While Developmentalist Peru supported more traditional and academic art forms (in alignment with the OAS and the Alliance for Progress), Velasco's Revolution made way for a new way to understand art alongside politics. A core difference between the two cultural trajectories lies in the official approach towards domestic and foreign policy: for Velasco, fervently anti-American.

One of his first acts as president was to expropriate several holdings of the IPC - a gesture that established thereon his anti-American and protectionist stance: an ideological U-turn from the previous administration, which challenged the United States' hegemony in Latin America. Velasco was the first leader in the region (with the exception of Cuba) to resist, and at times refuse, foreign aid or investment, which often came at the cost of severe economic enslavement. In addition, the government's rejection of being labelled as either communist or capitalist led to Peru's being one of the earliest declarations of Non-Alignment in Latin America in 1971, a position that was further problematized when diplomatic relations with Cuba were re-established in 1972, and an alliance with the Chilean socialist leader Salvador Allende was also announced. The strength of the third-way ideology that drove his policies, succeeded in rallying support from most political orientations, and the economic prosperity that ensued (at least for the first two years) secured his policies' success.

On the one hand, the regime's reformist measures and progressive ideology generated a persecutory and 'highly conservative police climate;' <sup>487</sup> on the other, it quickly succeeded in diffusing Peruvians with a new sense of aspiration, which had vanished during the 1966 economic crisis. The discontent left by Belaúnde's demise powered the new regime's dynamic image, which was fortified by a wave of marketing campaigns that accompanied every reform. Their aim was to disperse intelligible and inclusive political messages, and gradually, a connection between popular imagery and politics became established.

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<sup>487</sup> Miguel A. López, Emilio Tarazona, 'CROSSCURRENT PASSAGES: DISSIDENT TACTICS IN PERUVIAN ART, 1968–1992,' in Hans D. Christ, and Iris Dressler (eds.), *Subversive Practices: Art Under Conditions of Political Repression, 60's - 80's, South America, Europe*, (Ostfildern, Germany: Hatje Cantz, 2010), p. 443.

In this context, the meaning of Peruvianism was still at stake, yet from a different perspective. While previously a gaze towards pre-Columbian and indigenist heritage had guided the research for true Peruvianism, the new regime promoted a new perspective on culture: one that respected tradition, but that took into consideration all aspects of contemporary Peru, from urbanization and the new middle classes, to the lives of *campesinos* (peasant farmers usually of indigenous descent). In light of the regime's focus on the contemporary, the mass media became an important arena for the redefinition of Peruvianism. Previous governments intervened in the cultural realm through the promotion of certain salons, biennials and exhibition spaces, which were often part of wider foreign policy agendas. Conversely, the revolutionary government - inspired by the Cuban model of inclusive revolutionary imagery dispersed by the state - shifted culture's gaze towards the country itself. In other words, it harnessed the potential of art and of the media to promote its own new ideology focused on the future.

The most meaningful example of this phenomenon is the production of advertising posters for the extensive agrarian reform launched in 1969, most notably by Jesús Ruiz Durand. Gustavo Buntinx, who carried out extensive work on this phenomenon, argued that Velasquismo manifested itself not as 'the political interruption of artistic experimentation of the 1960s (as it is usually argued), but as the privileged space for the displaced realization of that avant-garde illusion. Its delayed culmination.'<sup>488</sup> What Buntinx terms the 'the avant-garde illusion' references a will to uproot the static hierarchies guarded by older generations, and to consolidate, and recognise the art produced by the young avant-garde. The avant-garde opposed the elitist notion of the artist in an ivory tower, of status and of academic training. Instead, they hoped to make works that could elicit a genuine response in the viewer: a proposition that ultimately could trigger social change. He explained that the Revolutionary regime rebranded the idea of 'modernity' as something 'popular,' identified with '*lo campesino*.' This refocusing of modernity was a strategy to rally

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<sup>488</sup> Original: 'Cierta velasquismo radical – se demuestra no como la interupción política del experimentalismo artístico de los años sesenta (así se suele argumentar) sino como el espacio privilegiado para la realización desplazada de aquella ilusión vanguardista. Su culminación diferida.' In Gustavo Buntinx, *Utopias y Ruinas, Jesús Ruiz Durand: fragmentos de una retrospectiva*, (exhibition pamphlet., Lima: Centro Cultural De la Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos, 2005). n.p.

support. Creating an image of Peru's future with symbols most people could relate to, guaranteed wider participation, and success. According to Buntinx:

*[The Andean modernity was] a technological form that [did] not supplant ancestral symbolic values but rather it resurrected them; it combined the aesthetics of a radical intelligentsia with that of the "new Indios," and it integrated a cosmopolitan pop sensibility with a certain Peruvian popular culture. [...] This challenge was not commonly resolved with the simplification of its codes, but with their complication, which finally originated this dialogic re-elaboration.* <sup>489</sup>

A dialogic visual propaganda was paramount in the dispersion of the reform's revolutionary message aimed towards modernization and nationalism, also because Velasco's speeches were often difficult to understand for farmers across the country (many of whom only spoke Quechua). The principal aim was to gain public support by popularising politics at its maximum capacity. The state apparatus worked towards decentralizing power structures, by dispersing the revolutionary message through cultural festivals, and publicity.

The reform was publicised through twenty posters that were mass printed in editions of 50,000 to 200,000 and distributed throughout the country. They were produced by the Dirección de Difusión de la Reforma Agraria (Office for Dissemination of the Agrarian Reform, DDRA), which comprised a team of publicists, artists and writers, led by Efraín Ruiz Caro (an experienced journalist from Cusco), including Jesús Ruiz Durand, Mirko Lauer, José Bracamonte, Emilio Hernández Saavedra and José Adolph. Having parallel careers, each contributor participated in the campaign mainly for ideological reasons, which shows the widespread appeal the reform had in its initial stages.<sup>490</sup>

Velasco announced the reform on 24 June, which was the 'Day of the Indio.' In his speech he quoted a catchphrase by the iconic leader of indigenous uprisings in the

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<sup>489</sup> Original: 'forma tecnológica que no suplante sino resucite valores simbólicos ancestrales, articulando estéticamente la intelectualidad radical con los "nuevos indios," integrando la cosmopolita sensibilidad pop a cierta cultura popular peruana. [...] un reto que intent resolverse no por la vía habitual de la simplificación de los códigos, sino mediante una complejización que postula su eventual reelaboración dialógica.' Ibid.

<sup>490</sup> Anna Cant, "Land for Those Who Work It: A Visual Analysis of Agrarian Reform Posters in Velasco's Peru," *Journal of Latin American Studies*, Volume 44, Issue 01, February 2012, p. 14.



XVIII century Tupac Amaru II, 'Campesino, the landowner will no longer eat your poverty,'<sup>491</sup> and from then on, June 24<sup>th</sup> was re-baptised the 'Day of the *Campesino*' (farmer, instead of *Indio*).<sup>492</sup> The reform set out to eradicate *Latifundismo* (the accumulation of land by a rural elite) by redistributing land among self-organized cooperatives. Being the first radical policy implemented by the government, it was an experiment to test the support of the rural populations. In order to avoid completely antagonising the agrarian elite, all expropriations were paid for by the newly established cooperatives, which had the responsibility to repay their debts to the landowners.

In line with the regime's ambitions, the campaign posters produced by Ruiz Durand sought to engage the spectator on a direct scale, situating the political reform within a socially relevant context that encouraged a personal identification with the cause. The posters mostly depicted men and women from rural Peru, announcing their support for the reform through slogans, which conveyed ideas of liberation, empowerment and lack of constraints. Speech bubbles were also used to depict the *campesino* articulating, and not merely receiving, social change. The poster therefore becomes approachable and inclusive fostering aspiration and ambition on the part of the *campesino*, dethroning the imagery of the backward *Indio*, which had persisted among *indigenista* artists. The overall effect was therefore an appeal to an inclusive modernity that capitalized upon the vibrancy of Pop and the sense of dynamism and inclusion these conveyed (fig. 93).

The symbolism in each picture was carefully calibrated for a specific audience, with particular attention to regional differences, and intended to be assimilated instantly by the viewer. Ruiz Durand recognized that a northern sugar cane worker and *mestizo* men would respond to different iconographies and dialects: the term '*compadre*' (god-father/ comrade, fig. 64), for instance, was only used to address the population of northern sugar plantations where there was a stronger history of unionisation; the informal voice of 'tu' was used to encourage a process of egalitarian identification;

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<sup>491</sup> Original: 'Campesino, el Patrón ya no comerá mas tu Pobreza.'

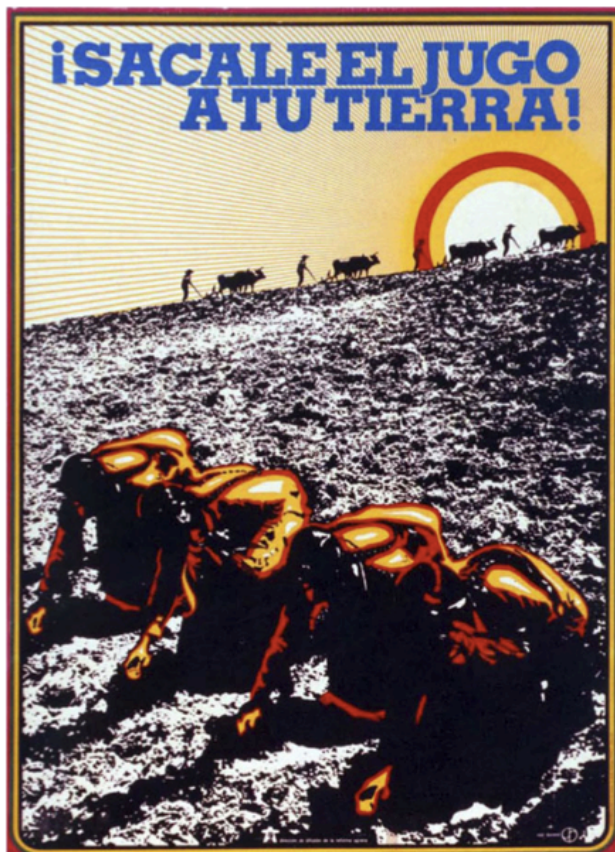
<sup>492</sup> The word *Indio* was first used by the Spanish conquistadores to address the indigenous inhabitants of Peru. It acquired racist connotations especially after Peru's independence, being used by the criollo oligarchy, which sought to maintain control over the indigenous majority. In the 1960s the term continued to be used, but it was increasingly viewed as a racist anachronism.

Fig. 93 Jesus Ruíz Durand, advertising campaign posters for the Agrarian Reform promoted by General Juan Velasco Alvarado's Revolutionary Government and disseminated by the DDRA, 1968-1970.

- m. Previously captioned image with a juxtaposed photograph that inspired the artist in the production of the posters.



- b. 'Take that juice from your land!'



- c. 'Us northern women are the Revolution. You also must be present in creating a revolutionary household!'



- d. 'You are with the Revolution! The Agrarian Reform is returning to you the land that was taken away by elitist landowners. Let's Go!!!' \**Gamonales* is a Peruvian word to indicate the agrarian oligarchies in place from the end of the XIX century until the Agrarian Reform. \**Jatariy* is Quechua for to get up, wake up, get going.





- e. '24 June: Day of the *Campesino*. ' We are free, the revolution is giving us land.'



- f. "The Agrarian Reform needs the growing and free participation of the campesinos. The reform is for them, and they must be the main actors in the process." Velasco.  
'Revolution is Participation. Participation is Revolution.'



details such as the hat, the poncho or the way in which women carried their babies wrapped in textiles were used as key reference points. Each visual element was purposefully chosen to accelerate the targeted viewers' comprehension of each political message. The most poignant image, according to Buntinx, is a poster which had at its centre an incandescent sun that irradiated a red grid that occupied the space, above which an image of Tupac Amaru appeared – 'the great Andean rebel.'<sup>493</sup> He stresses the mythical quality of the images produced by Ruiz Durand, which is the product of a carefully orchestrated system of symbols in reference to Inkarrí (also the name later given to the Government of the Armed forces in 1972) and Tawantinsuyo (an Inca deity).

The inclusion of traditional symbolism in his posters did not overshadow their modern appearance. The overarching aesthetic of the posters was undoubtedly relatable to Pop, Op, and psychedelic, inasmuch as the bright palette, the crisp outlines, the use of speech bubbles, and visual (at time psychedelic) effects evoked advertising campaigns. As Anna Cant observed in a detailed visual analysis of the posters, their overall effect strays from mere advertising into something more dynamic and local, where the 'protagonists' take centre stage:

*Whereas Warhol's bright pinks and yellows are drawn from mass media imagery and invoke ideas of celebrity, fame and glamour, Ruiz Durand's use of the pop art style has an altogether different effect. By depicting indigenous campesinos in a pop art style, the posters inject their protagonists with a feeling of modernity and dynamism.<sup>494</sup>*

The connection between Ruiz Durand's works and Pop was further strengthened by his practice as a painter. Since 1966 he had begun experimenting with Op, which later led him to experiment with Pop and psychedelic techniques. Buntinx observed that Ruiz Durand's canvases, which 'found their precise language in a figuration retrieved from psychedelia and the sparkles of cosmopolitan Pop,' encapsulated the tendency in the avant-garde to become increasingly intertwined with what he termed the 'political avant-garde.'<sup>495</sup> In fact, Ruiz Durand participated in the agrarian reform campaign

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<sup>493</sup> Original: 'el gran rebelde andino.'

<sup>494</sup> Cant, "Land for Those Who Work It," p. 19.

<sup>495</sup> Original: 'Pero esa disciplina conceptual y plastica devendría también en exigencia de una ruptura mas amplia en la que vanguardia artistica e vanguardia politica se

mainly for ideological reasons, and his political views were also apparent in his parallel production. Between 1960 -1970 he painted canvases in his signature Pop/Op/Psychedelic style of a Vietnamese monk burning in protest. At the same time, his interest in international popular culture also manifested itself through depictions of *Miss Commune* (1969, fig. 94), the icon of the German left-wing movement Uschi Obermeier, and Gerome Ragni, the composer of *Hair*. Durand's heterogeneous production demonstrated his interest in redefining Peruvianism without denying an underlying awareness of international youth uprisings.

After a year working at the DDRA, Durand's ambition was to refine his fusion of modern styles of representation and traditional symbolism. As his posters became increasingly radical, several were censored because the *campesinos* were depicted almost as armed revolutionaries.<sup>496</sup> Though the regime sought to promote inclusion, or at least to promulgate the illusion of inclusive participation in its reforms, the last thing it wanted to promote was social unrest against it. Durand's iconic image of Tupac Amaru (fig. 95), for example, had become a symbol for Velasco's revolution, and it was reprinted in the international press and on numerous official publications. The Amaru emblem appealed to the urban and agrarian populations for synthesising a dynamic and modern outlook with the connotations of an indigenous historical figure that stood for independence and power to the people. Regardless of his previous success, his newer renditions of Amaru were no longer acceptable because they emphasised his anti-establishmentarianism and his reliance on violent rebellion. In 1972 Durand left his post (or, according to Buntinx was to some extent coerced into doing so), alongside many of his colleagues. The posters they produced were on one hand too radical for the

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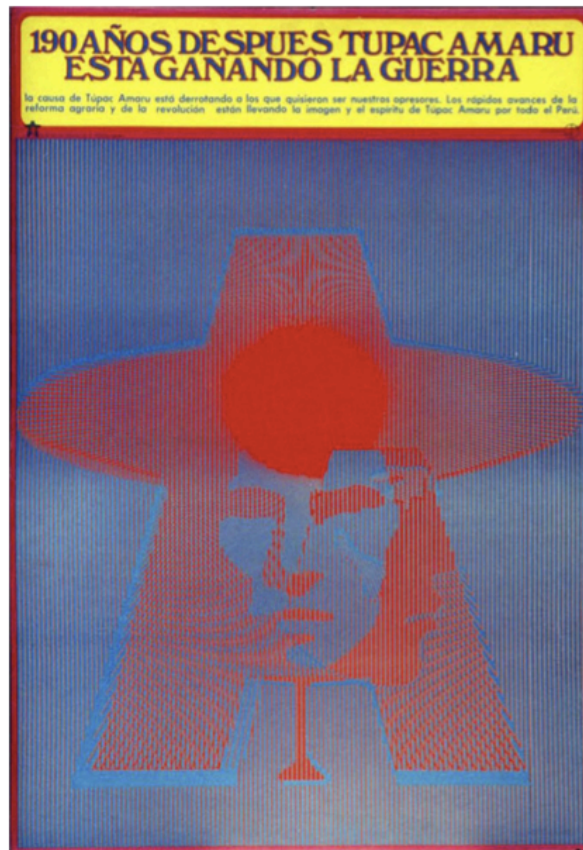
conjugaran. Un salto y un vinculo que a finales de aquella "decada peligrosa" encontraron su lenguaje preciso en la figuración recuperada desde psicodelia y las rutilancias del pop cosmopolita.' Buntinx, *Utopias y Ruinas*, Jesús Ruiz Durand, n.p.

<sup>496</sup>In *Durand's words*: 'The law was made, so they had to hand over the lands in Cusco, in the sugar haciendas, in Huancayo, in the north, in the south, in the centre ... And there were lots of these ceremonies for the handing over of lands. So it was necessary to make pamphlets, to make posters, to make flyers, to take photographs, film, make magazines, etc. But [it had to be done] now, in moments. There was no time to plan: 'Tomorrow we're going to Cusco and we need 5,000 posters, 20,000 posters, 100,000 posters; for the north, for the centre, for the south.' It had to be done in two days, in three days, and to go there as well. So it was a very dynamic thing.' Interview between Anna Cant and Ruiz Durand 30 March 2010 reproduced in Cant, "*Land for Those Who Work It*," p. 14.

Fig. 94 Jesus Ruiz Durand  
*Miss Commune*, 1969  
 Acrylic on triplay  
 122 x 122 cm



Fig. 95 Jesus Ruíz Durand, poster for the anniversary of Tupac Amaru's death. '190 years after, Tupac Amaru is winning the war. Tupac Amaru's cause is defeating those who wanted to be our oppressors. The rapid advancements of the Agrarian Reform and of the Revolution have been raising the image and spirit of Tupac Amaru all over Peru.'



exigencies of the regime and were not disseminated: on occasion of a recent retrospective Durand recalled, 'at that time I gave a picture of Tupac Amaru to a friend in Huancayo. The police did not know what to do with it, and eventually burned it.'<sup>497</sup> On the other hand, the artists and designers felt disillusioned by the broken promises of the regime, and could no longer stomach the futile enthusiasm their posters and campaigns aroused in optimistic farmers.<sup>498</sup>

Ruiz Durand's expulsion from the DDRA, was one of the many episodes that bare testimony to the regime's increasing intolerance towards any form of political polarization. Gradually, the revolutionary fervour elicited in its first two years began to dwindle and the inefficacy of its reforms began to surface. In the case of the agrarian reform, for instance, a lack of cultivable land, technical expertise, and the obstacles posed by prior conflicts between communities greatly slowed down the land redistribution process. In addition, the de-centralised power structures promised by the regime to administer the reform locally, were badly allocated and hindered willing farmers from contributing to the cause.

Cant observed how the 'democratization of culture became a crucial part of the rhetoric used by the government to maintain popularity and gather support for its reforms.' Nevertheless the regime's notion of democratization was limited by the impossibility to activate a critique of the regime itself. Years after the end of the dictatorship Ruiz Durand decided to rename his works from the late 1960s as *Pop Achorado* (pugnacious, according to López's translation, but also confrontational and belligerent).<sup>499</sup> This definition proposes an interesting retroactive interpretation on the cultural production of the time, which oscillated between compliance and defiance of official structures. Ruiz Durand, who worked for the DDRA was confronted with the regime's manipulative agenda in the first person: let the *campesino* be vocal and active,

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<sup>497</sup> Sánchez, "Andy(no) Warhol."

<sup>498</sup> In the 2010 interview with Anna Cant, Durand stated that he left because of a sense of frustration caused by the ineffectiveness of the agrarian reform, and the disappointment caused within the *campesinos* who, convinced by the campaign, were eager to participate in the restructuring of the agrarian sector. Cant, "Land for Those who Work it," p. 33.

<sup>499</sup> The expression *Pop Achorado* appears in Vizcarra's *La Generación Del 68*, and in López, "Cosmopolitan F(r)ictions." Neither text gives a date or a specific source for this denomination.



but forbid any suggestion of armed struggle or intervention against the state apparatus. The language he used was dialogic to the extent that it established a dialogue between the spectator's referential frameworks and the objectives of the campaign, but it was not autonomous of a political agenda, which allowed only a controlled space for artistic experimentation.

A series of exhibitions that took place in the aftermath of the coup, between 1969-1970, reveal how artists who were not collaborating with the regime chose to occupy the cultural 'space' opened by the revolution. Because the regime exploited the mass media, and often the aesthetics of Pop, many artists chose to completely abandon the Pop vocabulary in favour of an increasingly diagrammatic art, which signalled the approach of a conceptual turn in years ahead.

The exhibition *Papel y mas Papel* (Paper and more Paper, fig. 96), held at the Galeria para la Fundación para las Artes in 1969, was the first collective display since 1965 to reject individual authorship, and to make use of a material that from the outset was not meant to survive past the exhibition. Fourteen artists participated producing fourteen objects made exclusively of newspaper pages, which composed the whole exhibition.<sup>500</sup> Each artwork made the information contained in the newspaper pages completely illegible, commenting on the increasing control over the media exercised by the government. Among the works on display were piles of tabloid magazines stacked in tower-like piles (by Acha), others tied together to form giant footballs, a model dressed in clothes fashioned with newspaper pages (by Jorge Bernuy), an installation of pages seemingly being blown away from a neat column.<sup>501</sup> A review of *Papel y Mas Papel*, completely ignoring the political commentary of the exhibition, stated the show's objectives: to demystify and desecrate the work of art in the hierarchy of object; to dethrone the artist as creator and individual author; to dismiss the importance of technique as a sign of distinction, labour and ultimately value. Although these are also true of the exhibition, *Papel y mas Papel* above all encapsulates two additional themes:

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<sup>500</sup> The participating artists were Jorge Bernuy, Mário Acha, Cristina Portocarrero, Luís Zevallos, Emilio Hernández Saavedra, Queta Gaillour, Juan Acha, Hesus Ruiz Durand, Gloria Gómez-Sánchez, José Tang, Jaime Davila, Gilberto Urdy, Rubela Davila and Regina Aprijaskis.

<sup>501</sup> Tarazona, *Gloria Gómez-Sánchez*, p. 56.

Fig. 96 Installation views of the exhibition *Papel y mas Papel*, Jatarí



to redefine the role of art in relation to society and politics, and to question the media's role in this equation. Both issues acquired particular significance given the political events of that year.

In 1969 a new law decree titled the Estatuto Sobre la Libertad de Prensa (Decree on Freedom of Press) prohibited any non-Peruvian national to own a newspaper, marking the intensification of debates on the theme of censorship during the dictatorship. This drastic measure arose following the vast reforms implemented by the Revolutionary Government, which caused the rural and industrial elites to progressively lose their assets. The media therefore became an important stronghold for conservatives, enabling them to salvage their hegemonic power over the masses. In order to simultaneously appease the conservatives and weaken the more radical left wing, the regime became increasingly repressive of independent publications, and several newspaper owners were deported or made to leave their posts, or asked to drastically modify the content of their publications.<sup>502</sup> For instance, Enrique Zileri, co-director of the popular newsmagazine *Caretas*, Masks in English, known for its investigative journalism articles, had been deported to Portugal that year.<sup>503</sup> (As tensions escalated, in 1974 Velasco expropriated all national daily newspapers, which returned to private ownership after his deposition in 1975).

Coincidentally, the following year Gómez-Sánchez produced several photo-collages to illustrate a special issue of *Carretas* dedicated to the decree, which had just been implemented (fig. 97). Her imagery presented portraits of men, which directly addressed the issue of freedom of speech. One of the collages replaced a man's lips with keyholes; another placed a knife right in front of another profile facing the corner of a wall. Another yet, featured on the cover, placed a male arm, truncated from the rest of its absent body if not for a severed mannequin head covered in plaster, signing a blank sheet of paper on a table. The composition was then crowned by a long piece of barbed wire that enveloped the arm, and the head.

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<sup>502</sup> Tarazona, *Gloria Gómez-Sánchez*, p. 56.

<sup>503</sup> *Caretas* was shut down six times between 1968 and 1977, and deported Zileri twice to Portugal and Argentina. Douglas Martin, "Enrique Zileri, Stalwart Publisher in Peru, Dies at 83," *The New York Times*, August 26th, 2014.

[http://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/27/world/americas/enrique-zileri-crusading-publisher-in-peru-dies-at-83.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/27/world/americas/enrique-zileri-crusading-publisher-in-peru-dies-at-83.html?_r=0) Last accessed 29 April 2016.

Fig. 97

- n. Gloria Gómez-Sánchez, Cover design for the magazine *Carretas*, n. 410, Lima, 17-28 February 1970.



- o. Gloria Gómez-Sánchez  
*Untitled*, 1970 (collage for the magazine *Carretas* n. 410)  
 Collage  
 30 x 40 cm



- p. Gloria Gómez-Sánchez  
*Untitled*, 1970 (collage for the magazine *Carretas* n. 410)  
Collage  
30 x 40 cm



Gómez-Sánchez's cover of *Carretas*, is indicative of the regime's intolerance of any form of right or left wing radicalism, and its opposition towards the formation of independent organizations.<sup>504</sup> In 1971 the official organization SINAMOS (the National Support System for Social Mobilization) was launched to encouraged participation and involvement in definition the regime's revolutionary principles. While appearing to promote a democratic model by encouraging first person participation, SINAMOS ultimately reinforced the centralization of state power, and the repression of independent initiatives, impacting all spheres of culture.<sup>505</sup>

In June 1970, two more exhibitions by Hernández Saavedra and Hastings, at Cultura y Libertad and the IAC respectively, exemplify how the former Arte Nuevo artists advocated for a distancing of artistic practice from previous aesthetic principles akin to Pop, and their continued efforts to destabilise the official art scene, and its institution. Although Pop had succeeded in entering more mainstream visual languages – as demonstrated by Ruiz Durand's posters – a space for young artists to continue experimenting seemed lacking, and wider recognition failed to materialize, as the taste that drove the market did not support young artists. In addition the regime's infiltration of artistic practices (and of freedom of expression more generally) risked to nullify its autonomy in spaces such as Cultura y Libertad or the IAC.

Saavedra occupied the exhibition space with photographs and objects that documented the existence of the space itself, including the architectural plan, its location on a map, an invitation to a prior exhibition, the review in a newspaper of another, the photographs of all the gallery employees. Hastings created a diagram made of white postcards, over which he hand wrote a linear evolutionary history of Peruvian art, seeking to critique the persistent sterility of its output, and the obsolete notion of academicism. Both works sought to desecrate ascertained palimpsests of the

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<sup>504</sup> In June 1971 a declaration was published by Velasco titled "We will not hesitate to crush counterrevolutionaries," also on occasion of the establishment of SINAMOS – the National System of Support of Social Mobilization.

<sup>505</sup> Tarazona equates this strategy sustained by the government to Castro's Cuba in Tarazona, *Gloria Gómez-Sánchez*, p. 59.



art world, namely a canonised and fixed understanding of art history, and the sanctity of the gallery/museum as an officialising body.

The critique of institutions initiated by Hastings and Saavedra was furthered by Gómez-Sánchez, who relinquished the practice of art all together. In a final gesture of rebellion against the art system, she exhibited a single work during her solo show at *Cultura y Libertad* (fig. 98): a small white table placed against a white wall, below a panel with the inscription 'The space of this exhibition is your mind's. Make of your life the work of art.'<sup>506</sup> This sentence, which served as a manifesto, was then printed onto paper and stacked on the table for visitors to take home. The imperative 'make of your life the work of art,' suggests the artist's hope that the spectator will complete her proposition, becoming active and conscious in the process, and attesting to the art system's redundancy. Following this event Gómez-Sánchez never exhibited again, putting her own words into practice.

An overview of Durand's poster design, and of the exhibitions organized by the former *Arte Nuevo* artists among others, reveal how Pop lost its appeal for artists after it was adopted by the regime to divulge political messages. The avant-garde Limeña had sought to use it to destabilise Lima's stagnant art scene, to revive the notion of the 'movement,' and to adopt imagery that would reflect the day-to-day and the trivial in contrast to what they perceived as the art academy's fixed traditionalism. Pop at first fostered the notion of cultural *mestizaje* by reconciling local and imported culture into a comprehensive, and fluid issue. With the advent of Velasquismo artists continued to pursue alternative avenues of experimentation, relying less on objects, and at times deliberately alienating themselves from the city's gallery and museum circuit.

In 1970 Juan Manuel Ugarte Eléspuru, in a volume on contemporary art in Peru, had stated the presence of a palpable 'aesthetic of change,' described as '...an order that disorganises its own structural foundations in order to experiment with new orders, similarly to what happens when we move our belongings from one residence to another.'<sup>507</sup> López and Tarazona have historicised this process as a schism within the

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<sup>506</sup> Original: 'El Espacio de esta exposición es el de tu mente. Haz de tu vida la obra.'

<sup>507</sup> Original: 'Allí, su parábola de referente clásico le permite no obstante caracterizar ese momento como el de una "estética de la mudanza" que define como "(...) un orden

Fig. 98 Gloria Gómez-Sánchez  
*Untitled*, 1970  
Table and manifesto, 2007 recreation of the installation at her final solo show at Galeria Cultura y Libertad, 1970.



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que se desorganiza en sus bases estructurales para intentar nuevas ordenaciones, a semejanza de lo que ocurre cuando estamos mudando nuestros enceres de una residencia a otra"; y que en un esfuerzo prospectivo supone no solo el repliegue de un mercado de élite sino el afianzamiento de formas de arte colectivas.' Juan Manuel Ugarte Eléspuru, *Pintura y Escultura en el Perú Contemporáneo*, p. 66.



art scene decoded by a desire for 'dis-intoxication' from former visual paradigms, and have observed the appearance of a 'new aesthetic,' particularly from the most recent graduates of the ENBA.<sup>508</sup> The continued attempts by some artists to engage with the art scene and to counter dominant structures was appreciated by Acha as 'cultural guerrilla,' which he strongly incentivised in his articles from 1969 onwards, and in particular in a series of lectures held that same year. The final section of this chapter examines the ultimate failure of said 'cultural guerrilla' (culminating in Acha's self-imposed exile), and observes the effects of the Revolutionary Government's new cultural policy.

### 3.f Peru's 'New Revolutionary Society' and Pop Achorado's Last Decline

This final section of the chapter examines the lasting effects the Revolutionary Government had on Peruvian culture, and how state-sponsored reformism ultimately reinforced the very bourgeois values that the avant-garde attacked through the mid-1960s. This context continues to be illustrated by a debate over Pop and mass media. In fact, during Velasco's regime, the mass media remained in the hands of an industrial urban bourgeoisie, and when the Revolutionary Government adopted its primary visual language to disperse propagandistic messages, a Pop vocabulary became synonymous with authority. For the government, Pop was synonymous with what was popular, dynamic and immediate. This meant that Pop was not only a battleground between the Revolutionary government and the bourgeoisie, but also for the understanding of what was indeed popular for the majority of Peruvians. Sadly, the political issues at stake led the avant-garde to lose interest in this aesthetic experiment. They hoped to continue a self-reflexive critique of Peruvianism, as shaped by authorities, and had to seek solutions elsewhere.

Three texts in particular shed light on these issues: first, a UNESCO report written by the Peruvian National Institute of Culture on the aims of the Revolutionary

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<sup>508</sup> A new group of artists emerged with the exhibition at Cultura y Libertad titled *Dissarreglo*. Following this show all of the participating artists (like previously the Arte Nuevo ones) were invited to have solo shows at the gallery.

Also interesting Consuelo Rabanal's show of a fluorescent orange line painted at 170cm on all the gallery walls, seeking to transform visitors under UV lights into luminescent figures. Acha wrote a review: Juan Acha, "Oscuridad y fosforescencia. Muestra de C. Rabanal," *El Comercio*, Lima, 3 May 1970, p. 23.

Government between 1968-1975, which reveals how cultural policy was outlined to pilot Peruvian culture (whether cinema, theatre, ballet or fine art); second, the transcription of a series of lectures delivered by Acha in 1969 on the theme of cultural guerrilla; third, a book containing the papers presented at the conference *El Reformismo burgués, 1968-1976* (Bourgeois Reformism, 1968-1976) organised by a group of left wing intellectuals in 1978, which gathers their views on Velasco's rule, examining how it destroyed the credibility of the Peruvian Left.

An analysis of the three texts juxtaposed speaks to the role of artists and intellectuals before the coup, and their reaction to it. Before 1968 artists kept resisting the stagnant art system in Lima, but still failed to gain wide exposure or market recognition. With the revolution it seemed that recognition would have emerged, but instead the 'revolution' consolidated the existing structures, and its apparent reformism was ultimately orchestrated to maintain the urban industrial bourgeoisies in power.

The dossier on cultural policy in Peru prepared by the National Institute of Culture, published in 1977, reflects how the revolutionary government perceived culture prior to 1968, and how it reformulated its cultural policy, stating its objectives, in the years between 1968-1975. The document begins with preliminary considerations on the definition of 'culture' in a country like Peru, which is stated as 'the sum total of the ways in which a given society expresses itself and acts its customs and institutions, its beliefs and myths, its family organization, its tools, weapons, clothing, forms of government, meals, songs, funerary practices, etc.'<sup>509</sup> In short, 'the very fabric of daily life, and nothing that occurs in life is extraneous to it.'<sup>510</sup> In a sense, it outlines how to use culture as part of a populist agenda: a discussion that reveals some of the motives behind the regime's adoption of Pop as the official style for propaganda.

The document lists a series of misconceptions about culture that existed before the coup in 1968, namely the beliefs that culture played no role in the affirmation of the individual within a given community; that culture was an elitist activity inaccessible to

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<sup>509</sup> *Cultural Policy in Peru prepared by the National Institute of Culture*, (Paris: UNESCO, 1977), p. 11.

<sup>510</sup> Speech by the Peruvian Minister of Education, General Ramón Miranda Ampuero, at the National Institute of Culture, Lima, 7 January 1976. Ibid. p 11.

most people; that the production of cultural goods could be lucrative in a consumer society; and finally that when culture became subversive it had to be hated and crushed.

The text then continues to clarify the issues at the base of a new cultural policy, including the meaning of popular culture, the role of the mass media, and ways in which aspiration and innovation could be encouraged across the country. The document explains the need for a 'new Peruvian man' to build a 'new revolutionary society,' which thrives on decolonization of culture (understood as a rejection of all forms of foreign domination), on anti-imperialism, and on the rejection of 'commercial as well as State forms of control, which are equally pernicious ways of stifling free cultural expression [than monopolistic concentration of power].<sup>511</sup> In other words, 'a cultural policy should be founded on the principles of freedom and social justice.'<sup>512</sup> The dossier optimistically proposes the key idea of a social democracy based on participation, and of a 'cultural democracy through participation,' by which all members of society are encouraged to participate and contribute to national culture freely and without 'the oppressive model of a centralized and paternalistic public administration.' It continues, '[The new Peruvian men will] receive the esteem which pre-Revolutionary society denied them.'<sup>513</sup>

After an almost twenty page introduction to the aims and objectives of Peru's new cultural policy, the document betrays most points regarding absolute individual freedom, and minimum State intervention:

*We shall have to mobilize all our forces, including the State institutions directly concerned with culture, the mass communication media, local governments, the various public sectors, the basic community bodies, etc., so that they may each play their new roles in the emancipating action which the practical application of a revolutionary cultural policy requires.*<sup>514</sup>

This statement begins to contradict the State's abstention from interference by already asserting the necessity for its mobilization in the mass media, in local governments etc. In addition, it states that 'budgetary ceilings' should not be considered as obstacles, and that the full potential and spirit of each individual in the community

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<sup>511</sup> Ibid. p. 14.

<sup>512</sup> Ibid. p. 15.

<sup>513</sup> Ibid. p. 19.

<sup>514</sup> Ibid. p. 19.

should be taken advantage of instead,<sup>515</sup> pointing to the fact that there was little or no budget to fund regional cultural initiatives. This had already occurred with the Casas de Cultura (houses of culture) established in 1962 by the military junta, and later transformed into the National Institute of Culture in 1972 (author of this document, and active to the present day). The original Casa de Cultura was opened in Lima, and its director José Maria Arguedas (editor of the periodical *Cultura y Pueblo*, culture and people), had facilitated the creation of Casas de Cultura across Peru's districts, with the aim of safeguarding national heritage. Due to a lack of funding, and a lack of qualified personnel the Casas de Cultura in the provinces were generally highly ineffective, and they failed to regulate or safeguard natural and cultural patrimonies, and rarely ever fostered public participation.<sup>516</sup>

Towards the end of the dossier, the intent of the government to become fully involved in the reshaping of cultural models is expressed through clear plans of how the State intended to deliberately use the mass media:

*[The mass media] should stimulate everyday creative activity by the promotion of new values, the critical assessment of known and accepted values, and knowledge and recognition of the cultural achievements of both past and present, as well as more direct contacts, on a large scale, with the cultural achievements of the whole world. This makes it even more important that those responsible for the use of the mass media should see that they do not distort the cultural heritage either universal or Peruvian and, as has happened in many cases, become vehicles of alienation and 'de-education'. A certain type of information which we receive from international press agencies and certain television series are instances of this.*<sup>517</sup>

What a reading of this publication offers is a concrete view on the clearly formulated plans of the Revolutionary Government for Peruvian culture, which had little to do with absolute freedom of expression, self-realization, or participation, as initially hoped for in the document itself.

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<sup>515</sup> Ibid. p. 20.

<sup>516</sup> Henry Cleere, *Approaches to the Archaeological Heritage*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 111.

<sup>517</sup> *Cultural Policy in Peru prepared by the National Institute of Culture*, p. 21.

The second text, which offers a perspective on the state of Peruvian culture during Velasquismo is Acha's *Nuevas Referencias Sociológicas de las Artes Visuales: Mass Media, Lenguajes, Represiones y Grupos* (New sociological references in the visual arts: Mass Media, Language, Repressions and Groups), which he delivered as a conference in Lima in 1969. Acha organised the event following his second trip to Europe, once again to visit the Venice Biennale and Documenta, seeking to allow 'greater focus, order, comprehension of current visual-artistic manifestations (as it is the critic's obligation), we propose to present a study on the recent cycles of human thought, which shed new light on the work of art.'<sup>518</sup> Assuming the role of the political agitator (largely inspired by Marcuse whose theories he largely drew on and agreed with throughout the conference), he intended to empower young artists to produce social change by establishing a systematic connection between artistic production and political consciousness.<sup>519</sup>

The conference was organised around four principal themes: the mass media according to Marshall McLuhan, and Harold Innis; Structuralism from the perspectives of Ferdinand de Saussure, Claude Levi-Strauss and Roland Barthes; Modern man and society with Herbert Marcuse and Friedrich Schiller; and finally an excursus on the benefits of Group dynamics in the context of art's consumption and distribution.

An examination of the value of Pop art for Peruvian society formed an important part of Acha's discussion. He explained that it was a crucial tool to contrast the oligarchy's control over the media, and to unmask the deceitful neutrality of art:

*Today, after the popularization of Marcuse, it is easy to register the protest of the affirmation of Pop [...]. We have to accept political life as the struggle for the monopoly and oligopoly of the mass media. [...] To control the mass communication media means to control the knowledge and social organization...*

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<sup>518</sup> Miguel A. López and Emilio Tarazona, *Temas de Arte Peruano 3: Juan Acha y la Guerrilla Cultural, 1969-1970*, (Lima: Centro estudios de la Universidad de San Marcos, 2007), pp. 20-21.

<sup>519</sup> This point is shared by López and Tarazona as explained in *Ibid.* p. 9.

<sup>520</sup> Original: 'Hoy despues de la popularizacion de Marcuse es facil registrar la protesta de la afirmacion del pop. [...] Habria que aceptar la vida politica como una lucha por el monopolio y oligopolio de los mass media. [...] controlar los medios de comunicacion significa controlar el conocimiento y la organizacion social...(continued). In Juan Acha, "Nuevas Referencias sociológicas de las artes visuales: Mass media, lenguajes,

His acute perspective on how Pop could be used subversively is made further relevant after a reading of the UNESCO dossier on official cultural policy in those years, and it sheds further light on how the mass media were a battleground between a controlling regime, and a generation that hoped to initiate a cultural revolution.

The event, which was widely attended, foregrounded what Acha theorised as the ‘cultural guerrilla,’ and later as a ‘revolutionary awakening,’ through which artists in Lima were encouraged to participate in the regime sponsored ‘democratization of culture.’<sup>521</sup> In an article published in 1970 titled *La Revolución Cultural* (The cultural revolution), he explains the importance of young artists as ushers of social change, in line with his belief that avant-garde art is fundamental to counter the negative effects of a consumer society. He wrote:

*The recent law of industries [(by which all workers were meant to take part in the administration of factories)] has destroyed all doubt: we are witnessing the awakening of a revolutionary spirit; we are headed towards socio-economic justice, which will supposedly shape a new mind-set. [...] Not even the most radical transformation of socioeconomic structures will be enough to alter the foundations of the human mind-set and, therefore, of society. Such a change must necessarily go hand in hand with a cultural and sexual revolution, just as young people all over the world have been proposing for the last two years.*<sup>522</sup>

Acha’s text, enforces the sense of optimism and social change, which pervaded many cultural producers in the early years of the revolution, before an economic crisis ensued as a consequence of many of Velasco’s policies and reforms, and state control over the press and freedom of expression had severely intensified. His important role as a cultural agitator of the avant-garde, however, was prematurely cut short. In 1971, as the regime was becoming increasingly oppressive of youth manifestations, Acha was arrested for allegedly distributing drugs to a group of young artists at a party. Before being absolved, he spent approximately two weeks in prison, which left him outraged,

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represiones y grupos,” Lima, 1969, reproduced in López and Tarazona, *Temas de Arte Peruano* 3, p. 27-28.

<sup>521</sup> López and Tarazona, *Temas de Arte Peruano*, pp. 38-39.

<sup>522</sup> Juan Acha, ‘La revolución cultural,’ in *Oiga*, n. 386, Lima, 14 August 1970, pp. 29-31. Quoted in López and Tarazona, “Crosscurrent passages: dissident tactics in Peruvian art, 1968-1992,” in Christ, and Dressler, *Subversive Practices*, p. 490.

disappointed, and scarred. That year the critic who had been at the centre of cultural debates for over a decade went into self-imposed exile to Mexico City, where he continued being an active contributor to the cultural scene there, never to return to his home country.

The third document that finalises a picture of the effects of cultural policy in Peru during Velasco's Revolutionary Government, gathers the papers presented at the conference *El Reformismo Burgués (1968-1976)*, in book form, edited by Mirko Lauer, who had also moderated the discussion.<sup>523</sup> His introduction was written in the manner of a summary of the book's intent:

*It has to be considered how the oppressive character of the radical bourgeois reformism concretised by Velasco's program, was disconcerting for almost all of the Peruvian left. In the course of nearly a decade, various sectors had to learn, often painfully, that they were not dealing with a coup, or fascism, or a revolution in its popular sense, but precisely with a process of reforms undertaken by a sector of the bourgeoisie in order to adapt the economic physiognomy of the country to its own social and cultural needs.*<sup>524</sup>

This text offers an oppositional perspective to many views that nostalgically recount the dictatorship as a positive beginning in what later escalated in one of the most violent regimes in South America. It reveals how a large portion of the city's intellectuals were subjected to the ideological propaganda of the regime, which at first succeeded in convincing even the most sceptical intellectuals (including Lauer himself who was involved in the DDRA) to align themselves with the regime's agenda. It further explains in detail how the policies that at first seemed positive and revolutionary implemented by

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<sup>523</sup> Mirko Lauer, Félix Arias Schreiber, Gustavo Espinoza, Ricardo Letts, Carlos Malpica, Francisco Moncloa, Felipe Portocarrero, *El Reformismo burgués (1968-1976)*, Debate Socialista 2., (Lima: Mosca Azul Editores, 1978).

<sup>524</sup> Original: 'Un rasgo a tener en cuenta del reformismo burgués radical concretado en el programa de gobierno velasquista fue su carácter opresivo, y por tanto desconcertante para la casi totalidad de la izquierda peruana. En el curso de casi un decenio los diversos sectores debieron aprender, a menudo penosamente, que no se trataba de un cuartelazo más, ni de un fascismo, ni de una revolución en el sentido popular del término, sino precisamente de un proceso de reformas emprendido por un sector de la burguesía con el objeto de adecuar a sus necesidades la fisonomía económica social y cultural del país.' Mirko Lauer et. al., *El Reformismo burgués*, p. 8.

Fig. 99 *Contacta* poster, 1972



Fig. 100 Members of the Arte Nuevo Group. From left to right: Gómez-Sánchez, Varela, Arias Vera, Hernández Saavedra, Zevallos Hetzel, Burga, Davila, Tang.





Velasco – including the agrarian and industrial reforms – led to a deeply seeded economic crisis, which entrenched class, and racial divisions across the country. Though most of the commentary is of financial and political nature, the book’s analyses extend to the realm of culture, where a sense of disillusionment and defeatism afflicted a large segment of the creative class.

Among the most important examples cited by Lauer was *Contacta: Festival de Arte Total* (Contacta: Total Art Festival), launched by the IAC with the full support of SINAMOS. The event invited the indiscriminate and uncensored participation of artists, musicians, poets, and dancers. It offered round-table discussions, forums, workshops, theatre, which were free and open to the public. The event was widely attended, and for its second edition in 1972, artists and craftsmen were offered the opportunity to exhibit their work in dialogue. Its objective – in alignment with the UNESCO dossier – was to ‘support artistic mobilization, with the aim to integrate artists in a process of social integration, actively participating in the creative process and eliminating the cultural monopoly directed by a minority.’<sup>525</sup> The dominant critique against this initiative was that it discouraged artists from the ENBA from participating, for not wanting their works to be equated to crafts (still considered lower in the hierarchy). In addition, many members of the avant-garde chose not to participate because of the State’s support of the event, which had begun purging intellectuals (as made evident also by Acha’s arrest). Ultimately, the industrial bourgeoisie that remained in power, did not support a local art scene. Gradually, many of the spaces and galleries that had opened in the 1960s had to close, while many of the artists who had populated them found alternative careers.

The three texts examined in this section show the intent, the reception and the outcome of the Revolutionary Government’s cultural policy from the three very distinct viewpoints: an official body’s, a central intellectual figure, a group of left wing

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<sup>525</sup> Original: ‘Se espera de este modo apoyar la movilización de carácter artístico con el fin de integrar al artista en la interacción social, participando activamente en el proceso creativo y eliminando el monopolio cultural dirigido por una minoría.’ Anonymous, “Arte e pueblo se dieron la mano en contacta 72!,” *Expresso*, Lima, 31 July 1972, p.2.

intellectuals and activists. From the outset, the Revolutionary Government sought to restructure in full the way cultural policy was approached. First by reformulating the hierarchy that excluded many forms of popular culture from the shaping of national culture; second by making cultural institutions as inclusive as possible; and third by divulging worthy cultural models through the mass media (television, radio, magazines, advertising) as to discourage any reliance on imported values, deemed alienating or dis-educational. Acha's conference and persistent support of a 'revolutionary awakening' in the avant-garde reflects his eagerness to make artists active participants in the reshaping of culture as advocated by the regime, and beyond, by using avant-garde practice as a weapon against the negative effects of a consumer society. His arrest and self-imposed exile testify to the ultimate impossibility of sustaining an avant-garde practice during Velasco's regime. Finally, this sense of defeatism is consolidated by the conference *El Reformismo Burgués*, which denounces not only the failure of the economic and political reforms of the Revolutionary Government, but also attests to the suffocation of autonomous cultural activity due to the regime's oppression.

As explained at the end of the previous section with exhibitions such as *Papel y mas Papel*, and solo shows by Gómez-Sánchez, Hastings, and Saavedra, the art scene was irreversibly changing in response to the shifting climate, and to the regime's appropriation of Pop as its style for propaganda. From being a site for contestation and rebellion against academicism, the mass media became a tool for political manipulation, leaving artists with no choice but to alter completely their visual language. In addition, the regime's focus on participation to include people in the revolution – as exemplified by the *Contacta* Festivals (fig. 99), and SINAMOS - also prevented many artists from continuing to pursue that avenue, previously an important element in the exploration of Pop, and in the creation of environments since November 1965.

## Conclusion

When it comes to making conclusive remarks to a study of this length and breadth, it is important to extract and develop the common traits that have emerged between each chapter. Though the period I have focused upon is roughly the same in each country - between 1960 and 1970, with a forty-year retrospective view to the beginning of modernism in the continent - each individual history is hugely disparate, and drawing collective conclusions contradicts the importance attributed throughout the thesis to contextual specificity. Extracting common traits, as opposed to conclusions, reflects the very process that launched this investigation: to choose an issue that relates to humanist, or universalist concerns, and observe how it was addressed differently in each milieu, treating Pop as a lens, not as a restrictive movement. This approach permits to maintain specificity, while observing commonalities. The references made to Mari Carmen Ramírez's use of Adorno's idea of the 'constellation' in the introduction, continue to aid the formulation of a structure for such considerations. This thesis' objective to unpack and weave the history of Pop in Latin America within broader narratives, largely runs parallel to Ramírez's overarching mission to detect the patterns of mutual influence and response in which art practices in the region engage.

As such, this conclusion traces the connections between the elements of a constellation, 'suns' – in D. H. Lawrence's definition – that are entirely independent worlds, coexisting within a same whole. The starting point for this section is a summary of the histories traced in each chapter, followed by an examination of the common

themes they present. These relate to the legacy of colonialism and the formulation of national identity; the relationship between avant-garde art and underdevelopment; the role of participation and the ludic in the understanding of Pop in the region; the important input of women, which has been widely overlooked – most themes which pick up on the initial problematics undertaken in the introduction.

The chapter focusing on Pop art practices in Argentina, as the first chapter in the thesis, and the first field of research, departed from the assumption that Pop in the country was legitimately called so, because of the vast array of publications that supported this claim. The chapter traced the genealogy of this term, while considering the international influences that were reaching Buenos Aires through publications, and the international travel of a few omnipresent key players – ranging from Jorge Romero Brest, Oscar Masotta to Marta Minujin. The chapter begins by tracing the principal concerns of Argentine art, at a time when culture was seeking to advance at the same rate as the economy. The Peronist administration saw avant-garde practice as ‘morbid,’ hindering young artists from securing any recognition. Being largely excluded from official art circuits (and markets) artists began to seek the involvement of larger portions of the population. With the collaboration of intellectuals such as Jorge Romero Brest, modern art history in support of the avant-garde began to be disseminated to wider audiences (through seminars and journal publications). The literature that circulated exposed the tensions felt towards high art, still imbued with the legacies of colonialism in the form of Eurocentrism. The works by *Madistas* and *Informalistas* from the 1950s reveal how objects were being transformed into vehicles for experience, and how the notion that art should be contemplated was being overcome.

The following section took this idea further and examined the first environments that appeared in Buenos Aires, merging the concerns of *Informalismo* - always cognisant of Michel Tapié's *Un art autre's* claims to universalism - with those of cultural renewal via a process of creative destruction. As evident through an analysis of the 1961 exhibition *Arte Destructivo*, the mode of destruction employed by artists, was distinguished by a participative vein, a call for spectators to become involved, and to be shocked by what lay in front of them. The latter development hinges on two aspects: the desire to make objects participative, and the increasing interest in the selling techniques

of the mass media, a last resort for avant-garde artists to involve and *sell*. The two key works, *Colchones* by Minujin, and *Por Que Son Tan Geniales?* By Gimenez, Puzzovio and Squirru, shed lights on how the debate on the value of objects evolved, meanwhile bringing attention to how artists began to occupy and interact with public space – a theme that echoed throughout the chapter.

Within this context, the chapter expanded on the stellar appearance of the ITDT, with Romero Brest in command, and the explosion of the Pop phenomenon, as inscribed in Argentine art history books from Masotta's *El "Pop-Art"* to more contemporary texts by Longoni, Giunta, Alonso, Herrera among others. Examining a connection between the policies of the Frondizi administration and the SIAM Corporation's ownership of the ITDT highlighted the controversies at the base of its existence, in order to critique, though not to dismiss, the validation and originality attributed to the Pop phenomenon. Because the terminology used at the time was also unclear, and at times confused, the section examined the additional terms 'camp,' 'lunfardo,' and 'imaginistas,' to reach a more precise definition of what Pop in Argentina might have meant for artists then and now.

The chapter concludes by contesting the mainstream narrative that Pop art practices either succumbed alongside the ITDT, or transformed into political activism – as if the works previously produced had been devoid of a political charge. Besides examining the outcomes of several artists' trajectories, which have largely been overlooked, the section observed the theoretical strands that sprouted during the Di Tella's demise, including that of *Art for Consumption*, which provided significantly more avenues for artists to continue practicing art locally.

Moving on to Brazil, the chapter had to deal with a highly distinct set of issues due to the comparatively broad historiography that had been produced on Brazilian art since modernism due to the fame acquired by artists as Tarsíla do Amaral, Hélio Oiticica or Lygia Clark, whose practices have become almost synonymous with Latin American art generally. The first section of the chapter was devoted to surveying the historiography on Pop in Brazil produced from the late 1990s to the present day, in order to address its incongruences and inadequacies. The principal outcome of the literary review was the realization that no author had dedicated sufficient attention to the

genealogy of the Pop practices he/she was addressing. Additionally the debate over the use of certain terminologies to categorise artworks, extremely vivid in Brazil during the latter half of the sixties, was not focused upon at length. Another stark issue with existing literature was the absence of women artists from most exhibitions and texts.

In light of these problematics, the chapter sought to rewrite a history of Pop in Brazil with particular attention to its local genealogy – mostly divorced from its development in the United States and Western Europe – and to the practice of women artists. The chapter first focused on the legacy of Concretism, and Neo-Concretism, which are always emphasised texts about Brazilian contemporary art, once again reflecting the posthumous international fame of Oiticica and Clark (the two main players of the latter movement). In keeping with certain outcomes of the chapter on Argentina, this section revealed how artists from the heterogeneous Grupo Frente sought to subvert aesthetic hierarchies in order to make art more accessible to wider audiences. In addition, they were concerned with art's 'social mission' in educating the masses. Successively, the Concrete and Neo-Concrete groups carried on with this ethos – albeit with varying degrees of formal freedom. The establishment of the São Paulo Biennial, the construction of the new capital Brasilia by modernist architect Oscar Niemeyer, consolidated geometric abstraction as the style that went hand in hand with the developmentalist ideology promoted by President Kubitscheck – the master puppeteer behind the outmoded, and ultimately damaging economic boom of the late fifties. In this context, artists were eager to involve and become involved in the reshaping of national values entailed by socio-economic shifts. As such, artists began to evaluate alternatives to render the art object inclusive, or interactive. Ferreira Gullar's 1959 article *Theory of the Non-Object*, consecrated the tensions towards objects as static inanimate elitist products, versus interactive subtle symbols that stimulated one's senses.

While in the 1950s politics and artistic practice were striving to progress at the same pace, the patent collapse of the developmentalist dream in the early 1960s culminated in a military coup in 1964. The section of the chapter dedicated to this complex moment recorded the emergence of alternative languages that could reflect a Brazilian 'reality' as opposed to a Brazilian 'dream.' The exhibitions *Propostas '65* and *Opiñão '55* were set as benchmarks for the formulation of new artistic idioms, which are the first to seem to establish a dialogue with a western conception of Pop art. These

include Neo Realism and *Popcreto*: new languages that do not merely represent a return to a figurative vocabulary, but encapsulate a whole new take on figuration itself. These particular iterations were linked to participation, a distinctive feature of the Pop art practices that emerged thereafter.

The term Pop began to appear particularly following the 1967 São Paulo Biennial, which the chapter marked as a crucial turning point in the artistic production of the sixties. This section surveyed the alternative terminologies that critics and artists came up with to interpret the original and complex art forms that were emerging simultaneously – as widely demonstrated by the enormously heterogeneous Brazilian room at the biennial. To disentangle the multiple strains that confused definitions, the chapter relied on Aracy Amaral's analysis of the works *Domingo das Bandeiras* (the collective action carried out in Sao Paulo then Rio in 1968), and of *Carimbos* (the set of stamps each designed by an artists). These collective works had the common objective to democratise art, rendering it cheap, accessible, and interactive (all artists had also participated in the biennial). Amaral counterpointed them with Marcello Nitsche's *Bolha*, a giant inflatable bubble, intended to inflate and deflate hourly, and to occupy the majority of the room it was in at the peak of its inflation. Amaral notes how, though highly visually dissimilar, also *Bolha* sought to make its message as easily intelligible as possible. The crucial difference was the way its message was communicated. While the former two employed a visual and intellectualised language to convey their message, the latter, operated on a physical and sensorial level, which required no interpretation or willingness to understand.

This analysis led the chapter to its crux: the identification through the theories of Marta Traba of three aspects that distinguish Brazilian artistic production in that period, namely the Ludic or participatory, the Pop(ular), the erotic. The identification of these three aspects unlocked what was termed a 'state of alert' in Brazilian Pop, which many scholars have simplistically identified as Pop, without recognising its multifaceted definition. As such the chapter reveals how Pop within this tripartite scheme, reflects the dilemmas of a society in transition from living in a modernist utopia to confronting the traumas of a military dictatorship.

The narrative concluded with an analysis of works that explicitly responded to the Ludic/Erotic paradigm under the aegis of Pop. The new canon of Pop in Brazil that

resulted is vastly populated by women artists, contrarily to most texts in the field. Works by Teresinha Soares, Regina Vater, Wanda Pimentel, Wesley Duke Lee and others revealed the complexities and depths invoked by their adoption of a Pop/Erotic/Ludic style, which is most reflexive on their local milieu, while establishing a productive dialogue with imported styles.

The final chapter of the thesis examined Peruvian art in the 1960s, departing from an awareness of the Pop-affiliated *Arte Nuevo* phenomenon, which took off in Lima in 1966. Like the previous two chapters, the section began with a literary review of 1960s art history in Peru, conspicuously dominated by a handful of scholars. The scarcity of sources, however good, only offered partial perspectives on the decade and seldom went in depth into the legitimacy of Pop as a terminology, or into the reasons for its emergence. The texts – specifically by Castrillon Vizcarra – historicised movements as insular occurrences, and their rootedness in Peru's tradition is not emphasised: an endeavour that became the chapter's very objective.

The first section examined the historical debates surrounding national identity, considering the country's uniquely fractured history, and the ongoing struggles to reconcile indigenous and creole identities. After examining the birth and role of indigenism – both a political and cultural movement - particularly through the texts of José Carlos Mariátegui, I found the ideological tension between Indigenism and Pan-Americanism to encapsulate most accurately the meaning of Peruvianism in the thirties, forties and fifties. In this context the influence of North American foreign policy was made clear, not only by reviewing Roosevelt's 'Good Neighbour Policy,' but also by examining the role played by figures such as Nelson Rockefeller and institutions as MoMA during their respective acquisition trips down South. Stressing the political and economic motivations behind Odría's *ochenio*, and considering the gradual shift towards Developmentalism during the Belaúnde administration explained the polarised climate of Peruvian politics, which had reverberations in culture. The pervasive sense of division between nationalist and internationalist policies drove artists to seek affiliations to defined categories or movements, which even within the indigenist or independent currents since the twenties had remained fluid and unrestrictive. Within this context, the chapter focused on three exhibitions in 1964, which had in common the objective to



dismantle or destroy all existing cultural models – remainders of the ‘sepulchral environment’ that the country found itself in. Exhibitions by Mário Acha, Efrain Montero, Miguel Malatesta, Luís Arias Vera (who had trained in Paris), and Gloria Gómez-Sánchez (just returned from Buenos Aires) inaugurated a new chapter in Peruvian art history, which was accompanied ostensibly by critic Juan Acha’s texts.

The chapter traced the trajectories of these artists, which develop into Peruvian Pop. Emphasising how the younger avant-garde sought to move away from rigid judgement of an older guard of practitioners, *Arte Nuevo* was introduced and explained as the first step towards the reconciliation of restrictive nationalism, and oppressive internationalism. The text drew extensively on primary resources in this case to grasp the ongoing cultural debates in Lima, which received *Arte Nuevo* with a mixture of contempt for its frivolity and hope for its potential. Though *Arte Nuevo* per se did not survive 1967, its artists continued to work, oftentimes with Juan Acha’s support. An analysis of their works revealed how they were reflecting on the effects of the mass media and of imported mass-produced products on their national identity, which largely justifies their affiliation to Pop. Simultaneously it emerged how artists valued objects – both as consumer goods and as objects of contemplation – differently in their art. This is particularly evident in works by Burga and Gómez-Sánchez whose powerful treatment of furniture in the portrayal of women was misunderstood at the time. Though it shared a crisp aesthetic with North American Pop, it hardly employed a similar mode of critique through ‘ironic celebration of excess’ (using Marta Traba’s definition). On the contrary, their objects existed in the tension between the alienating effect of consumer culture and a role assigned to women within a typically catholic Peruvian patriarchy, where the object was not a celebration but rather a disappearance or a reliquary of fragmented bodies, forced to be visually appealing through their enslavement by the media. In addition, the element of spectator participation was important in their works demonstrating greater alignment with the Pop practices examined throughout the thesis.

Pop was largely a misunderstood language coming from young artists who sought to enter in dialogue with older artists and institutions. This portion of the chapter highlighted their successes in nationalising the accessibility of Pop. Cognisant of Pop’s potential, the Revolutionary Government established in 1967 quickly appropriated its strategies, and at first, many artists were eager to participate in its radical reforms. The

strongest example of this is Jesus Ruiz Durand who designed Pop posters to promote the agrarian reform between 1968 and 1970 with a considerable degree of success. As it became blatant how the reforms were wholly ineffective and ultimately served to maintain the elites in power while keeping at bay the malcontent among the masses, artists began to withdraw from government initiatives. In Ruíz Durand's words, Pop became *achorado*. The final segment of the chapter evaluates the long-term impact of the Pop phenomenon in light of the Regime's hijacking of its legacy. A reading of Juan Acha's definition of Cultural Guerrilla, paired with other texts reveals how Pop had broken the barriers dividing high art and popular culture also thanks to the regime's input through the poster production, but also through festivals such as *Contacta*. Another outcome was the ushering of dematerialization – a reading also brought forward by Tarazona and López – and the abandonment of art making by many artists.

After these summaries, certain key common themes emerge, and they may be divided into the following five general categories, addressed through the lens of Pop:

**1) The legacies of colonialism in the formulation of national identity as the synthesis of modernity and folk culture**

Argentine national identity was widely informed by its connections to Europe. Europeans built Buenos Aires following European canons, and the very phrase 'the Paris of South America' invoked its bond to the old world. A similar observation can be made of Rio de Janeiro, home to the Portuguese crown between 1808 and 1822, and most major cities in Brazil and Peru. In tune with some of the most basic humanist questions related to belonging, South American countries strove to resolve the a priori displacement in their national culture. Some emblematic examples of such attempts can be found in Jorge Romero Brest's writings, which typify Argentine culture in relation to European artistic movements, namely *Informél*, Surrealism, Constructivism and others. Oswald de Andrade in Brazil came up with an original poetic language to capture the multiplicity of Brazilian culture, which he paired with the notion of anthropophagy. In Peru, José Carlos Mariáteguí crucially reflected on how to reconcile the legacies of the Spanish reign with the propositions upheld by *Indigenismo* for a new Peruvian society. These texts, which initiate cultural debate in each chapter, form part of

a much broader phenomenon, which informs what Walter D. Mignolo theorised as the 'dialectics of salvation,' that define the project of modernity in Latin America – explained in the introduction. According to Mignolo, colonialist (or developed) countries, promoted modernity in so-called developing countries, promulgating the message that modernization equated to salvation, happiness and prosperity for all. This paradigm did little to prompt cultural or economic emancipation, because of a widespread disregard for contextual specificities, and ultimately led to the failure of modernization according to Western standards.<sup>526</sup> The fostering of local know-how and technological advancement was overshadowed by quick profit, ultimately promoting exploitation by foreign companies. These themes greatly resonate in the texts by Romero Brest, de Andrade and Mariateguá, demonstrating how the issue was already paramount at the time they were writing.

The dialectic of salvation in the modernising project of Latin America is a constituent element in the genealogy of Pop art practices in the region, when considering Pop's relation to folklore and the forging of national identity. The Gramscian definition of folklore sees it as reflection of class differences found in the 'moral of the people' - which includes a set of beliefs, ethical stands and values also connected to religion or superstition. He claimed that certain elements of folklore coming from the masses, which were not tied to ancient traditions, but had the possibility to be forward thinking, could help lead society ahead. More than any other style before it, Pop in the region pulled themes, imagery and techniques from folklore in its widest forms, seeking to destabilise certain pillars tied to taste or traditionalism. For example, the Di Tella Artists, *La Menesunda*, *Microsucesos*, succeeded in generating an ethical scandal in the local milieu – not merely to raise eyebrows caused by abstraction beforehand. The *Pops* sought to reconfigure culture by offering new perspectives on what it could mean to be Argentine in the 1960s, and they did so by exhibiting multiple facets of culture with total disregard of set cultural hierarchies.

In a similar vein, the Brazilians on show at the 1967 São Paulo Biennial grouped under the *Nova Objetividade* denomination were equally eager to reinvent art in

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<sup>526</sup> Néstor García Canclini, "Modernity after postmodernity," in Gerardo Mosquera (ed.), *Beyond the Fantastic: Contemporary Art Criticism from Latin America*, (London: The Institute of International Visual Arts, 1996), pp. 42-43.

response to the multiple facets that made up Brazilian culture – from football, to soap operas, to *cordels*. Conversely, the Peruvian *Arte Nuevo* artists achieved the extraordinary by being invited into the Museo de Lima to re-exhibit the works made for the exhibition organised in protest against the Festival de Lima. The case of Jesús Ruiz Durand's Pop posters is further illustrative of this phenomenon in light of what Sontag declared about Cuban revolutionary Pop posters: 'becoming international [was] Cuba's indigenous path to cultural revolution.' Ruiz Durand's posters were not only internationalist in its aesthetic, but exceptionally accurate in its details relating to local culture.

Though the capsizing of aesthetic hierarchies was a widespread phenomenon globally, and clear parallelisms can be drawn that feed into the centre-periphery paradigm, a discussion on the role of the avant-garde in places like Western Europe or the USA versus Latin America recasts the Pop phenomenon within a unique setting.

## 2) The connections between the avant-garde and underdevelopment

The struggle to formulate a national idea of culture brings the discussion to question how the centre-periphery or call and response dependency models can be understood or explained with the aid of the 'dialectics of salvation' which are still in place when countries are cast as 'underdeveloped.' In Western Europe and in the United States avant-garde practice was largely supported by the bourgeoisie, while simultaneously the avant-garde was by definition anti-bourgeois. As discussed by T. J. Clark and Pierre Bordieu, in Western Europe after the French Revolution, the (haute) bourgeoisie differentiated itself from the aristocracy by supporting the avant-garde so to place itself at the forefront of taste and as the system's dominating and forward thinking class.<sup>527</sup> This structure was incongruous in Latin America because of the novelty of bourgeois classes, which only started expanding to significant numbers well into the XX century. The practical consequence for the Latin American avant-garde was that the class it was resisting was an elite of European descent, which did not strive to acquire

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<sup>527</sup> For thorough analyses of the relationship between the bourgeoisie and the avant-garde see T. J. Clark, *The Absolute Bourgeois: Artists and Politics in France, 1848-1851*, (Greenwich, Conn: New York Graphic Society, 1973) and Pierre Bordieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984).

their works, but was instead interested in European art. The lack of financial support largely isolated artists who were eager to enter the taste-making equation. Though many artists belonged to the upper middle classes (enabling them to continue practicing for a time regardless of market recognition), their production was incongruous to the mainstream taste of the time, reflecting also the paradigmatic *youthful rebellion* that characterised the 1960s worldwide.

As explained in the introduction through texts by Gullar, Canclini or Traba, the issue of underdevelopment was an important source for discussion. Within the thesis, Pop functions as a catalyst for this debate as it operates within the avant-garde dynamic I just described. In addition, Pop responded to the multiplicity of influences that made up local culture and it visually reflected imported aesthetics, lingering in what Gullar described as the fluid multiplicity of local cultures that together allow a glimpse of the constantly shifting notion of internationalism. Equating avant-garde practice in countries with such different levels of development is a ultimately unfruitful. The specificity of each context is the most interesting aspect of the research, and only within incongruences lie potential generalizations.

Ready examples of the role played out by the avant-garde in relation to the dominant system are collaborative works such as *La Menesunda*, *Por Que Son Tan Geniales?*, *Microsucesos*, or even the film *Psexoanalysis*. Each piece reproduced facets of contemporary culture with a satirical vein, seeking to criticise the regent classes' indifference to their work, when it came to purchasing it. *La Menesunda* was envisioned to be dismantled, *Por Que Son Tan Geniales?* was meant to be short lived, *Microsucesos* 'happened' just once. Their ephemerality functioned as a critique of an exclusive art system, yet the imagery they used, drawn from urban culture (the scents of fried foods in *La Menesunda*), mass culture (the miniskirt and Shrimpy in *La Siempre Viva Liquidida*), and their reflexivity towards the socio-cultural climate of their time, fits in Gullar's definition of localism as a form of internationalism for the Latin American avant-garde. The works produced by the *Pops* was far more responsive to a specific climate than the Informalist works of the late fifties, or the concrete works prior to that.

In Brazil, Dias, Gerchman, Leirner, Soares, to name a few, played with popular culture drawing from comic books, football, pop music, television. The paramount objective – as also demonstrated by the collective works heavily criticized by Amaral

*Domingo das Bandeiras* and *Carimbos* – was to include wider audiences by drawing on the imagery that would have been most familiar to them, whether religious, political or taken from the media. Though such concerns run parallel to those of artists in Argentina, the works produced by Brazilian artists were not ephemeral, or made to be dismantled as the Argentinean ones. It seems the primary objective among the Brazilian avant-garde was to make the work available to wider audiences *physically*, whether through the dissemination of cheap artifacts, or through the transmission of a physical or emotive sensation through an object or installation (Leirner's *Altar por Roberto Carlos*, Nitsche's *Bolha* are key examples).

In Peru, differently still from the previous case studies, the new middle class that had emerged by the mid-fifties fostered the establishment of exhibition spaces for young local artists. Though this secured a certain financial support for the avant-garde, the principal issue was a generational divide, which impeded the art system from being truly inclusive and successful in supporting new practices. This point was illustrated by the three exhibitions of November 1965, which were housed in new exhibition spaces, but were heavily criticized by older artists, critics and by the faculty at the ENBA. In addition, the omnipresent debates on the meaning of Peruvianism, Indigenism and Pan-Americanism highlight the multiplicity of influences that artists had to reckon with, justifying the wide plethora of styles that characterized Peruvian art until the mid-fifties when artists felt the need to submit to clearer styles and guidelines. The heterogeneity of works produced, however, supports Gullar's view that multiplicity is an avenue into internationalism. From the informalist paintings by Gloria Gómez-Sánchez, to her papier-mâché puppets and her Pop collages, or from Arias Vera's airmail paintings, to his cross-word interactive pieces, to Burga's furniture females, these works demonstrate an incredibly wide range of influences and genealogies, though the pervasive aesthetic of popular culture provides a useful umbrella to understand this specific moment of Peruvian culture.

In order to establish a global vision in a cultural moment, it's important to pick up elements of contemporary culture and to weave them with personal experience. Teresa Burga's women, for example, are the synthesis of a discontent with the general objectification of women that was promulgated by the media. Yet they are also the product of highly personal experiences derived from a life in an extremely catholic

patriarchal society. In a similar way, Gómez-Sánchez's works are highly biographical in nature: many of the furniture pieces she incorporated in her three-dimensional works came from her childhood, and had specific connotations related to her upbringing and her family. Such propositions seem antagonistic perhaps to works that draw their subject matter from television, football or the mass media: universal themes, which most people were exposed to equally.

In light of these similarities and convergences, the issue of underdevelopment for avant-garde practice is a structure for understanding local art. Underdevelopment helps define artistic practices because of its connections to the bourgeoisie and the market, influencing whether art ought to address certain socio-political or personal themes.

### **3) The appearance of a participatory language and the desire to widen art's audience**

A key theme that emerges is participation - a concern for most artists examined throughout the thesis. Reconnecting with the hope to reach wider audiences, breaking free from an exclusive market run by a Eurocentric elite, participation appeared in different forms in all three countries. Most notably, it was evident in happenings and environments in Argentina, and participative objects, non-objects or sculpture environments in Brazil and Peru. Participation tightly connects to the notion of the art object's dematerialization and its replacement with semiotic (in Peru the latest installations by Hastings or Gómez-Sánchez) or immersive propositions (environments in Argentina, or sculptural installations in Brazil). In order to distance themselves from an ominous art system, artists sought to redefine the purpose and role of objects. Mari Carmen Ramírez analyses the issue surrounding dematerialization in the *Global Conceptualism* exhibition catalogue. Pointing out the differences between European and North American Conceptual art with its Latin American counterpart she notes:

*Latin American artists inverted [the principle of dematerialization] through a recovery of the object, in the form of the mass-produced Duchampian Readymade, which is the vehicle of their conceptual program. [...] The inversion of North American Conceptual art's analytic proposition can be attributed to these artists' explorations*

*of the implications of Duchamp's legacy, which had already been investigated, with different results, by both Conceptual and Pop art.*<sup>528</sup>

Ramírez connects the Duchampian readymade with Pop in terms of how it (Pop) sources readymade images, and repurposes them to challenge aesthetic hierarchies – among Duchamp's principal objectives. Observing that Conceptualism in North America reduced the readymade to an 'analysis of the self-reflexive or self-referential qualities of the object,' she stated that Pop in turn '[exalted] marketable commodities.' She continues by explaining that such attitudes in North America denoted a 'passive attitude toward the prevailing system,' marking the primary difference with Latin America where 'politically engaged' artists sought to subvert such system. This consideration, however, does not solely extend to politically engaged artists, but permeates the ethos of revolt and renewal against the exclusive art system inherent in underdevelopment as discussed so far. The connection between underdevelopment, participation and then dematerialization is a vital one to trace the unique value of the art object in each region.

The lens of Pop poignantly reveals such characteristics, and to a large extent helps dismiss the idea that most art practices in the sixties and seventies were in fact 'politically engaged,' or ideological in nature as Ramírez claims. Though much of the Pop works examined in the thesis are cognisant of political issues, many also do not address them explicitly for fear of being purged by the regime, or their objective is not to be dissident. For instance, Ruiz Durand's posters produced for the DDRA were politically aligned with the Revolutionary government, though they still used inclusive and participative strategies of communication. Simultaneously, they were commissioned by the regime with the idea of countering the elite and involving wider audiences in political administration (whether their objective was truthful or not is beside the point in this case), they were distributed for free as artefacts, and also functioned as propaganda.

Conversely, works such as the *Serie Vietna* by Teresinha Soares, or the Neo Realist canvases by Antônio Dias produced in the mid-sixties, commented on the horrors of warfare and played against the dictatorship in Brazil without being openly inflammatory,

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<sup>528</sup> Mari Carmen Ramírez, "Blue Print Circuits: Conceptual art and Politics in Latin America," in Aldo Rasmussen (ed.), *Latin American artists of the twentieth century*, (exh. cat., New York: MOMA, 1993), p. 159.



which in 1968 might have jeopardised their production altogether. Works by Eduardo Costa, Edgardo Giménez or Narcisa Hirsch in Argentina were not part of the strict itinerary mapped out by Giunta and Longoni, which determines conditions of ‘revolutionary emergency’ that left no choice but to become ‘non-metaphorical’ political activists. In this context, alongside underdevelopment, participation and dematerialization there is a further crucial dimension that characterizes Pop in the region tied to humour and the ludic. This element, recognised by Amaral and Traba among others, is an important characteristic, which was both used as a precautionary measure to lighten the weight of certain references to war, politics and suffering, but also was a pervasive spirit in art production at the time. Castrillón Vizcarra typified this sentiment in the title *Entre la Agonia y la Fiesta* indicating how a festive spirit was used to counter the agony of war, oppression and dictatorship. Amaral saw the ludic as a key component in the works produced within the overlapping definitions of *Nova Objetividade* and Pop. In turn, Traba thought of Pop, erotic and ludic as three intertwined dominant themes in 1960s art production. Such considerations demonstrate how active political engagement – though very important in many ways – was not the only avenue for artistic development, and on the contrary it has been often overemphasised.

#### **4) The interference of dictatorial regimes within the cultural sphere, and the ways in which art took a political turn**

This fourth observation that connects the three chapters in the thesis relates to artists’ political engagement. The focus of this connection is not how art and political activism became increasingly connected, but how the proximity of institutional support, foreign investment and economic and domestic policy influenced culture. Many artists indeed confronted political themes in their works, though, considering the clear historiographies that have focused considerably on the radicalization of artistic practices at the end of the sixties in South America, the thesis had established how often these have been overemphasised causing overarching definitions of art in the region as political. Canclini has argued that the ‘Machiavellian conspiracies’ involving multinationals, foreign diplomats and governments distract from the intrinsic complexities generated by modernization in terms of infrastructure, education and

'premature' urbanization.<sup>529</sup> However, it is vital to both recognise the local ramifications of development and to critique the overarching perspective that most art during military rule was politically dissident. Throughout the chapters the names of companies such as ESSO, Standard Oil, Kaiser, Ford, Shell appear time and again in concomitance with cash prizes for the arts, institutional funding, study abroad packages, the organization of biennials. Such patronage promoted certain cultural strands over others that indicated any sympathy with communist aesthetics, particularly Socialist Realism.<sup>530</sup> Nevertheless, artists often reacted against this phenomenon, and in the case of Peru the 'dissident' artists were ultimately rewarded for their protest. Artists were not always denouncing the regimes, but mostly the administration, which at times did not deliberately exclude them, but rather was ignorant of them. This divide is attributable to a generational asynchrony, or to a defect in the structure of the art system itself caused by the formation of 'premature metropolises,' and of bourgeoisies that did not provide the adequate channels of communication and support for sustained avant-garde practice.

In Argentina the Di Tella's operations were wholly suspended on the SIAM corporation's alliance with the state, and on external funding from the Rockefeller and Ford foundations. When Romero Brest and the Di Tella artists organised the Anti-Biennial (titled The First Argentine Festival of Contemporary Forms) in Cordoba to protest their exclusion from the III Biennial of American Art funded by the Kaiser Industries, their exclusion was not spurred by political obscurantism, though the coup d'état had just happened.<sup>531</sup> The context was distinct to *Tucuman Arde*, which was uncontestedly a paradigmatic example of political activism, or of the *Experiencias Visuales '68*, which displayed works that spoke out explicitly against the dictatorship.

In Peru, the explosion of *Arte Nuevo* occurred when the group had been excluded by the Festival de Lima, another initiative mostly funded by foreign investors. Their protest ultimately led to a visible inclusion within the art system – or a significant attempt – which however failed to consolidate a market for such production for the lacking and elitist art system in place. Another example can be found in the intrusion of the

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<sup>529</sup> Garcia Canclini, "Modernity after postmodernity," p. 42.

<sup>530</sup> Ibid, p. 43.

<sup>531</sup> Giunta, *Avant-Garde, Internationalism and Politics*, p. 225-226.

Revolutionary Government in the administration of the press and in the subsidy of public art initiatives (such as the *Contacta* festivals and the *Casas de Cultura*). These, marked state interference in any autonomous form of art production, leading many artists to renounce art making not because of an overtly anti-establishment sentiment, but because of the lack of exhibition platforms. Conversely, the unjust arrest of Juan Acha gives indication of the regime's intolerance towards 'political agitators,' which Acha was seen as.<sup>532</sup>

In Brazil, political themes within Pop-related works are ubiquitous, though these did not involve activism. Among the most cited examples that verge on activism is Cildo Meireles' *Insertions into Ideological Circuits*, which infiltrated existing systems of circulation with dissident messages. Though Meireles' proposition occupies the conceptualism label much more comfortably than the Pop one, his reliance on Coca-Cola's iconicity has earned him widespread inclusion into exhibitions dealing with Pop. Another example is *Domingo das Bandeiras*, which succeeded in dispersing some dissident messages through art (though not all the banners contained messages commenting on the political situation). Similarly to Argentina or Peru, the connections between institutions and foreign investment in Brazil were pervasive. For example, the São Paulo Biennial was exclusively reliant on private patronage until 1961 when president Jânio Quadros endorsed it.<sup>533</sup> In addition, the Museums of Modern Art in Rio and São Paulo had been established with the help of Nelson Rockefeller and New York's MoMA. It is apparent how corporate sponsors were highly invested in supporting cultural initiatives to increment business relations – particularly from the US. The media was also instrumental in piloting the outlook of popular culture across all social strata.<sup>534</sup> In fact, private companies such as Rede Globo had the monopoly of television, radio, and even soap operas. The State, the media, markets and foreign investment were thus deeply interwoven. The United States' financial influence over Brazil manifested itself most clearly through its support of the military dictatorship, which fell in alignment with its economic interests.

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<sup>532</sup> López and Tarazona, *Temas de Arte Peruano 3*.

<sup>533</sup> Isobel Whitelegg, "The Bienal Internacional de São Paulo: a concise history, 1951-2014," *Perspective Online*, n. 2, 2013, Available on <http://perspective.revues.org/3902> Last accessed 25 August 2016.

<sup>534</sup> Garcia Canclini, "Modernity after postmodernity," p. 43.

Political engagement in in the field of Pop art practices in Brazil Argentina and Peru is present though not the defining characteristic of the style, and it risks pigeonholing the entire phenomenon within a very limited historiography. Considering the political element as but one of the important issues addressed by Pop practices, allows far greater breadth to the investigation, and multiple avenues to dismantle the canon that limited its interpretation.

##### 5) The strength of women artist's works in the field of Pop

Martha Rosler claimed 'there was no space for women in Pop...no room for the voicing of a different, "truly" female, subjectivity.'<sup>535</sup> Yet throughout the thesis, the work of women Pop artists has repeatedly appeared in many cases with some of the most poignant examples of how Pop in the region captured many of the dilemmas that defined culture, also succeeding in rupturing certain oppressive social norms or idiosyncrasies upheld by official structures (whether religion, tradition, or the government). Rosler typically wrote from a North American perspective where the exclusion of women from the arbitrarily so-called 'hard-core' group of Pop artists has been object of contestation for over a decade.<sup>536</sup>

Third wave feminists have made considerable efforts to expand the boundaries of feminist art, and to prove how artists with feminist concerns were present in many major movements, though have been largely obscured within a misogynist art history.<sup>537</sup> In the field of women Pop artists one of the most active and valuable contributors has been Kalliopi Minioudaki who has endeavoured, not only to retrieve the histories of numerous women Pop artists working internationally, but also to recast their work within a proto-feminist framework. Minioudaki presents the issue of female Pop as a 'longstanding

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<sup>535</sup> Martha Rosler, "The Figure of the Artist. The Figure of the Woman," in: *Decoys and Disruptions: Selected Writings, 1975-2001*, (New York: MIT Press and ICP, 2004), pp. 99-100, quoted by Kalliopi Minioudaki, "Other(s)' Pop: The Return of the Repressed of two discourses," in *Power Up: Female Pop Art*, (exh. cat., Vienna: Dumont/Vienna Kunsthalle, 2010), p. 135.

<sup>536</sup> Lippard, *Pop*.

<sup>537</sup> Kalliopi Minioudaki, "Pop Proto-Feminisms: Beyond the Paradox of the Woman Pop Artist," in Sid Sachs and Kalliopi Minioudaki (eds.), *Seductive Subversion: Women Pop Artists 1958-1968*, (exh. cat., Philadelphia: University of the Arts, New York and London: Abbeville Press, 2010), pp. 90-143.

oxymoron:<sup>538</sup> a contradiction in terms for both first wave feminists who made it a priority to critique the misogyny of mass culture and Pop, and orthodox critics who based their theories on a handful of male artists' works.<sup>539</sup> Feminists often mistook the critical nature of Pop as complicity with the sexism of pop culture. Critics, on the other hand, identified the 'cool' and depersonalised style of New York male artist's works and the mechanised techniques they employed, as the two criteria for the (mis-)identification of Pop.

The effort to include women artists within an expanded Pop canon parallels the endeavor to include artists from outside North America and Western Europe. Of Minujin and Puzzovio in Buenos Aires, Minioudaki explains that '[their participative objects] fought art's commodification and challenged the autonomy of the artwork and upper-class taste, while still evoking the world of fashion, commerce, and urban reality in a Pop manner.'<sup>540</sup>

Within the thesis, many works by women artists eager to participate in the renegotiation of sexuality and liberation underpin what Minioudaki termed 'proto-feminist sexual politics.'<sup>541</sup> Puzzovio and Minujin took ownership of their bodies by appearing flamboyant, encouraging physical participation with their works, and by exposing themselves as other women did not dare to at the time (two symbolic works in this case may be Puzzovio's 6m long self-portrait in a bikini exhibited at the ITDT in 1966, or Minujin's corporeal *Colchones*, with clear erotic innuendos).

In Brazil the most notable female Pop artist whose works invoke proto-feminist themes is Teresinha Soares, whose provocative imagery and unconventional (at times feminine) techniques, underpinned her as a 'bad-girl' in Brazil, attracting an uproar from the press and the public alike. Soares' performances could also be interpreted through Amelia Jones' notion of 'radical narcissism' by which she exposed her body tackling the issue of the woman-as-image without renouncing the pleasures and perks of pop culture

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<sup>538</sup> Kalliopi Minioudaki, "Other(s') Pop: The Return of the Repressed of two discourses," in Angela Stief et. al., *Power Up: Female Pop Art*, (exh. cat., Vienna: Dumont/Vienna Kunsthalle, 2010), p. 135.

<sup>539</sup> Kalliopi Minioudaki, "Female Pop Art. An Introduction, or *The Next Great Moment in History is Ours*," in *Power Up: Female Pop Art*.

<sup>540</sup> Ibid.

<sup>541</sup> Minioudaki, "Other(s') Pop," p. 141.

and of eroticism:<sup>542</sup> a powerful reclamation of minds and bodies by the women that suffered objectification in the media and often by society. Maiolino's *Glu Glu Glu* presented the dismembered female body recomposed, sewn together and stuffed. Though her techniques and gender have excluded her from the Pop 'hard-core' in Brazil and abroad, her reflexivity towards the effects of the mass media and her technical roots in Brazilian culture, to name a few, place her as a vital contributor of this Pop chapter. Vater, who also decomposed and exposed the inner workings of her body in drawings, paintings, and later, performance, took ownership of the representation of her body unashamed by the confines of mediated images. Pimientel timidly cast away truncated limbs in the corners of her paintings as disruptive mementos of her own naked presence, always left on the margins.

In Peru, Burga and Gómez-Sánchez provide the most powerful examples of how they were navigating Lima's male driven milieu. Both artists embedded furniture in their depiction of women – as Beatriz Gonzalez also did at a similar time in Colombia – but imbuing their works with intimacy and refusing the 'cool' impersonality of many of their male peers. Their works reflected on objectification by turning women into furniture, or installations where the viewer was invited to enter in contact, whether lying, sitting on or being surrounded by the works. Their objects embraced and involved the viewers so as to exalt an intimate relationship with them.

The female artists that have been examined in the thesis are but a small number of the many more contributors to this field, and collectively they support the research's scope to prove the importance behind the expansion of Pop's canon. Their works reveal the 'warm' character Pop, which as examined in the introduction, permits the inclusion of works made with multiple media, and sees the inclusion of the body as a radical instrument for emancipation, reclaiming ownership of eroticism and sexuality, yet never shying away from the matrices of oppression (such as the mass media).

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<sup>542</sup> Amelia Jones, "The Rhetoric of the Pose: Hannah Wilke and Radical Narcissism of the Feminist Body Art," in *Body Art: Performing the Subject*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), pp. 151-197.

### **Last remarks: Locating Pop within expanded narratives**

The themes that connect each chapter define Pop as a wide-ranging movement, which though never fully historicized at length before, reveals the common concerns of a generation, while reflecting the specificities of each context it appeared in. Pop is not limited by a specific medium or technique, and it is visually recognized by the bright palette, by the experimentalism inherent in its production, and by the ideas it conceptually challenged. Pop sought to create a space for the sublimation of an authentic and all-encompassing national identity informed by a pluralistic and collective visual culture that would be national and international at once. Pop succeeded in destabilizing accepted orders and hierarchies rupturing its respective art scenes, and clashing against older generations. It also provides a pointed lens into the political maneuvers that influenced artistic production, without overemphasizing its political engagement, still present to differing degrees. Finally, Pop also enabled a proto-feminist attack of accepted gender roles, particularly through the media's perpetration of women's objectification, which male and female artists endeavored to dismantle.

What emerges once outlined the sphere of Pop's influence, is how artists across the region adopted commercial culture as their subject matter, while becoming increasingly reliant on a participatory language, whether through the creation of environments or the promotion of happenings. Among the reasons for this dualistic trajectory is the overarching condition of underdevelopment and marginalization palpable especially in urban areas thanks to the images promoted by the media. In addition, the symptoms of development's failure, evident in political and economic instability, and in deepening social stratification, set the stage for a crisis of identification. Artists could not see themselves represented within political establishments, within official institutions, in universities, and such cultural exclusion led many to create meeting places through their art where culture and audiences could begin a process of subjective identification – meaning a correspondence of what is seen externally (the reflection of contemporary society), and what is perceived emotionally and internally (the perception of what society is in relation to one's upbringing, knowledge and cultural references).<sup>543</sup>

Paulo Herkenhoff had explained this phenomenon by describing the Latin American subjectivity as being 'torn between the popular myths of Che Guevara and Coca-Cola,'

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<sup>543</sup> Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*.

which aptly condenses the contradictions that characterized the sociopolitical contexts in the region. The mediated image was a tool to expose the contradictions of life in underdeveloped regions, and it is widely reflected in the wide-ranging art practices in this thesis. Artists looked for answers to the fractures in their local cultures within objects, cultural artifacts, whether Coca-Cola bottles or magazine advertisements. The torn subjectivity identified by Herkenhoff is echoed by Romero Brest's description of his feelings in response to Pop at the 1964 Venice Biennial, where he felt 'orphaned' by his own self.<sup>544</sup> The fracture in identity that caused one part of the self to abandon the other left orphaned, poetically captures the Pop's complexity (in the introduction this notion was also expressed with the aid of Lacanian theories).

If South American Pop artists drew on the mass media hoping to achieve a sense of reconciliation with their fractured subjectivity - between their mind and their body - their North American peers resorted to mediated images as 'vehicles to dissect the commodification of art under capitalism.'<sup>545</sup> This last definition, borrowed from Mari Carmen Ramírez, places in relation the trajectories of Pop and Conceptualism, as two seemingly sequential strands in art history, which both have built on the legacies of the Duchampian readymade reduced to 'analysis of the self-reflexive or self-referential qualities of the object' in the case of conceptualism and in an 'exaltation of marketable commodities' in the case of Pop. Ramírez's history of Conceptual art in South America pivots around the idea of the Duchampian readymade which, '[in the Latin American work], is always charged with meanings related to its functions within a larger social circuit.'

Throughout the thesis I have avoided comparative analyses in order to altogether distance the focus of the discussion from the issue of imitation or derivation. However, as Ramírez suggests in the case of Conceptual art and Pop, the readymade is a common denominator, which binds the Pop propositions examined in the thesis with its North American counterparts. While in the United States readymade images were used to critique or exalt the commodification of art in a capitalist consumerist society, in South America, the image was the simulacrum of a form of capitalism and development that

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<sup>544</sup> Romero Brest, *Report and Reflection on Pop Art*, in Katzenstein. *Listen, Here, Now!* p. 168.

<sup>545</sup> Ramírez, "Blue Print Circuits," p. 159.



did not materialize, causing a deep and conscious sense of orphanage – to borrow Romero Brest's expression once again – and fostering interest in active participation.

Within Adorno's 'negative dialectic' system, each constituent element of a constellation exists simultaneously in agreement and contradiction. Pop constellations internationally highlight the disparities between the imagery promoted by superstructures and still assimilated by individuals (advertising, television, political propaganda, nationalist dialectics), versus existing daily realities and desires (traditions, economic dependency, consumer culture). The Pop moment worldwide exceeds any classification imposed upon it, and while identitarian thought may seek to resolve its inherent contradictions, only a form of thinking 'rid of a compulsion to dominate through conceptual identification' could lead to a reconciliation between humans and their surroundings – finally overcoming the mind-body problems, the fractured subjectivities, the incongruous social conditions, and the inconsistent references, all at the departure point of this discussion. Pop as an international phenomenon emerged autonomously in each location, reflecting specifically on its context. Yet in all its iterations it captured the societal contradictions that exist in each country offering a valuable lens for the interpretation of how a decade's complexities have continued being relevant to this day.

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