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s u p p l e m e n t

rio de janeiro – saturday, twenty first and sunday twenty second of march nineteen fifty nine

from nineteenth of march to nineteenth of april in the

m u s e u m o f m o d e r n a r t

EXPERIENCE

*amílcar de castro*

*cláudio mello e souza*

*ferreira gullar*

*franz weissmann*

*lygia clark*

*lygia pape*

*reynaldo jardim*

*theon spanúdis*

*rio, march, 1959*

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neoconcretism  
and the sdjb

This exhibition celebrates the 50th anniversary of the Neoconcrete Movement. However, without dismissing the notoriety of artists such as Lygia Clark, Hélio Oiticica and Lygia Pape, the principle focus here is on the Sunday Supplement of the *Jornal do Brasil* newspaper (Suplemento Dominical do Jornal do Brasil – SDJB), whose pages during the course of 1950s, displayed the graphic, poetic and critical interventions of a group of artists and intellectuals who towards the end of that decade would form the Neoconcrete Movement. In fact, the newspaper’s role in both the formation and the development of this influential avant-garde group was crucial, giving them not only a public voice but contributing towards many of their innovative ideas, such as the formal parallels that were established between Neoconcrete poetry, particularly with the book-poem, and the widespread presence of the fold within Neoconcrete three-dimensional works of art. In this development the roles of Reynaldo Jardim, Amílcar de Castro and Ferreira Gullar were fundamental. The partnership between Jardim and de Castro led to the radical graphic restructuring of the newspaper between 1956 and 1960, which this exhibition aims to highlight, while Gullar, already an acclaimed poet and during the course of the 1950s establishing himself as one of the foremost Brazilian art critics and polemicists, added to the sleek page designs uncompromising, intelligent and highly critical articles that would forge the theoretical identity of the Neoconcrete group. If we are to consider the current content of newspaper print, and here I am not even thinking of the tabloid press, it seems hard to believe the level and the breadth of theoretical discussion that a

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EXPERIENCE

Brazilian newspaper, in mid-twentieth century, was able to provoke. In order to understand how this feat was accomplished it is useful to remind ourselves of the fact that Brazil during the 1950s was a country undergoing immense change, where modernity seemed to be the national destiny, and its promised utopia almost within reach. If the connection between the government of President Juscelino Kubitschek (1956-1961), the architectural and urban confidence that brought the construction of the new capital Brasília (1956-1960) and the Neoconcrete Movement (1959-1961), undeniably sets a historical context marked by the ideology of developmentalism – or demonstrates, in the words of the art critic Mário Pedrosa, to what extent Brazil was a ‘country condemned to modernity’ – Neoconcretism itself should not be simplistically reduced to such a historical frame of reference. Although it shared with Brazilian modern architecture a lineage that connected it back to early 20th century European Modernism, its development was very distinct and far less hegemonic. According to Ronaldo Brito, it was a ‘laboratory of aesthetic experimentation’, which suggests a certain detachment from the contemporaneous drives in society.

As we can see in the pages here selected, the prevailing tone of the articles is often one of stubborn defiance in the face of the diverging international tendencies in the art of the time. The attacks against Tashism (see the article by Gullar ‘Critique and Engagement’ 31 October 1959) which appeared as the predominant tendency at the 5<sup>th</sup> São Paulo Biennial are a case in point. If we consider the earlier versions of the Biennial, which from 1951 brought the international art circuit into ‘live contact’ with local artists and intellectuals, constructivist movements had certainly received a warmer reception, but this was far from unanimous. Many important figures, such as Alfred Barr (the founding director of the Museum of Modern Art in New York), could not see how the constructivist tendencies, with their overwhelming reliance on the rational, could possess any relation to life in Latin America. Barr had dismissed works by the Brazilian Concrete artists as being nothing more than Bauhaus exercises, implying the movement was clearly derivative and backward. With hindsight, however, we recognise in those early experiments and those that would follow, particularly with the advent of Neoconcretism, a close relation with theories that would arise in the US around the mid-1960s with the emergence of Minimalism. The relation for instance between Gullar’s ‘Theory of the Non-Object’ (see 19 December 1959) and Donald Judd’s seminal text on Minimalism ‘Specific Objects’ (1965) is uncanny. Neoconcretism as the name suggests was a reaction to the intransigence of Concrete poetry and art. It rejected the idea that a work of art could be predetermined, since this would inevitably dispose of intuition and expression within the creative process. Yet Neoconcretism is also inextricably connected to Concrete art: it was, as will become evident in these pages, an attempt to take it further, beyond those premises determined by its European pioneers. In this sense it is inaugural within the Brazilian context, since by ignoring the perverse desire to be up to date with metropolitan fashions, it stubbornly became the first instance in which genuinely new theoretical propositions within the field of art were able to arise, and thus established an autonomy for the local production which became highly productive for artists of the most diverse tendencies

during the following decades. In short, the constructive tradition in Brazil, to which Neoconcretism belonged, inscribed itself within a set of historical conditions that pertained both to a local political context as well as to the more general post-war re-evaluation of Modernism which affected artists around the world. Ferreira Gullar (Cochiarale and Geiger, 1987) concisely described the legacy that the 1950s left to Brazilian art: *‘The 50s were, in the artistic field, disturbing, polemical and fertile; moreover, they were indicative of a moment of maturity and of an increasingly profound aesthetic experience. While one could say that Brazilian art from the end of the first decade of the twentieth century experienced a phase of renewal and creativity, it did not develop the essential issues that governed the modern artistic tendencies from impressionism onwards. Cubism, Futurism, Dadaism and Surrealism did not possess their true significance when adopted and assimilated by Brazilian artists and critics. It was from the 50s that these questions were placed at the centre of Brazilian art. It lost, in this way, its innocence, and precisely because of this, it experienced the crisis of art at that moment. And this is why it became capable, in some cases, of anticipating European and North American art, responding through theory and practice to that crisis’.* This exhibition brings to a UK audience reproductions of a selection of pages from the SDJB during the 1950s while this facsimile presents some pages relative to the Neoconcrete Movement translated into English. We have attempted to keep these as close

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as possible to the original layout. The project as a whole is the product of a collaborative effort between the University of the Arts Research Centre for Transnational Art Identity and Nation (TrAIN), the Embassy of Brazil in London and the *Jornal do Brasil* (JB). Two doctoral students under my supervision, German Alfonso Adaid and Caroline Menezes carried out research at the *Jornal do Brasil* archives, selecting a series of relevant pages that demonstrate the graphic evolution of the supplement. They acted as research curators in this sense, further contributing to the production of this facsimile in partnership with the Embassy’s Cultural section. As far as the latter is concerned I am truly grateful to the work and assistance provided by Minister Ruy Amaral, the cultural attaché Carlos Pachá and exhibition manager Laura Barbi. The Neoconcrete Experience exhibition would not have been possible without the generous assistance of the *Jornal do Brasil* which allowed us to publish the first collection in English of these landmark texts. I would like to express particular gratitude for the assistance we received from Humberto Tanure and Ana Paula Amorim. I would also like to thank Prof. Ildo Nascimento from the ‘*Universidade Federal Fluminense*’ for sharing his research regarding the development of the *Jornal do Brasil*, particularly his scholarly text ‘*Diagramação, Jogo de Armar: A Arte Aplicada de Amílcar de Castro na Modernização Gráfica do Jornal do Brasil*’ (2004). Finally a special thank you to my friend, Kátia Maciel, who kindly permitted the screening of her documentary ‘*Os Neoconcretos*’ during the exhibition.

*The Neoconcrete Movement was a major contribution from Rio de Janeiro to the Concrete Poetry that was being practiced in São Paulo at the end of the 1950s, a time when poetry was being restructured throughout Brazil. But what was ‘Concrete Poetry’? It was a language conceived by authors such as Décio Pignatari, Haroldo de Campos and Augusto de Campos aimed at achieving a new type of expression based on experimentalist principles; a search for a graphic-visual space that would be capable of valuing the constitutive elements of words, and where, the poetical function was centred around the message. According to its ab latere leader, Augusto de Campos, ‘the new poetry does not present itself as an attempt to overcome the gap between the author and the public. On the contrary: it merges the necessities of the modern world, which is marked by technology and dominated by means of mass communication, coincide with a positive integration of poetry into the industrial world.’ Or, to promote divergence, ‘to make erudite poetry be the kind that most aptly promotes immediate communication with a lay and uncultured reader’. The issue of technique is, therefore, of central relevance to the Concrete project as is the issue of communication. Subsequently what is drastically altered is both the nature and importance of technique as well as what this technique expresses.*

*In 1959 the Rio Concrete artists, led by Ferreira Gullar, launched a dissident movement called ‘Neoconcretismo’, announced in a manifesto published in the Sunday Supplement of the Jornal de Brasil. The supplement had become a speaking platform for poets and painters of the Brazilian avant-garde. At an aesthetic plane, the new movement could be explained by the difference in background of the Carioca group, specifically their spokesman and theoretician, Ferreira Gullar, whose art concepts progressed from the French Surrealist matrix, honed by Cubism and geometrical abstracts - a concept significantly marked by subjectivism. The difference of definition between Concrete and Neoconcrete art would be that the latter had less reason, more soul than the other. It was this spirit that inspired masters of graphic arts, such as Amílcar de Castro and Reynaldo Jardim, with journalistic sensitivity which promoted the first large-scale visual redesign of Jornal do Brasil in 1959 including:*

- 1) typesetting using a single type family
- 2) reappraisal of photography
- 3) creation of a Research Department (1964)

*Jornal do Brasil was also a pioneer in ‘conveying content’ as it also created: The first regular International Politics section; The first Women’s section; The first Music review column; The first Cinema section; The first Carnival section; The first coloured Cartoon section; The first Horseracing column. (It became so important that the Rio Jockey Club launched the Jornal do Brasil Grand Prix in 1896. Eduardo Pacheco used to edit this column about the contests at the racing course); The creation of the first National Humour Hall in 1916, at the Rio de Janeiro Arts and Crafts Lyceum which was attended by distinguished names such as Bambino, Raul Pederneiras, Aníta Malfati amongst others and also the adoption of the Berliner format in 2006 and the creation of the Open Society editorial initiative, which enabled citizens to send their text to be published in a relevant subject section. Over and above all of these changes as well as its pioneering approach, Jornal do Brasil carries forward the same caption that was printed in its first edition on April 9<sup>th</sup> 1891 ‘An attempt to innovate the traditional methods of the press’.*

**Reinaldo Paes Barreto**  
**Director of ‘Jornal do Brasil’**  
**Deputy Chairman of ‘Casa Brasil’**







Fine Arts - Ferreira Gullar

# museum of modern art

## 1<sup>st</sup> neoconcrete

The 1<sup>st</sup> Neoconcrete Exhibition, uniting painting, sculpture, prints, poetry and prose opens in five days (Thursday 19<sup>th</sup>) at Rio's Museum of Modern Art, which thus begins its programme of exhibitions of the year 1959, after showing its collection. Seven artists are participating in this 1<sup>st</sup> Neoconcrete Exhibition with a total of more than 60 works: Lygia Clark, painting; Lygia Pape, printing; Franz Weissmann, sculpture; Amílcar de Castro, sculpture; Reynaldo Jardim, prose and poetry; Theon Spanúdis, poetry; and Ferreira Gullar, poetry. Completing the exhibition's programme, Lygia Pape and Reynaldo Jardim will present, at the Teatro Mesbla, on a date still to be set, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Neoconcrete Ballet. During the exhibition there will be a conference concerning the meaning of the show and the position taken by the participants regarding the problems of Concrete art.

As clarified by the manifesto, which will be published in the exhibition's catalogue, the expression Neoconcrete aims to, above all, mark a new phase of Concrete art, a conscious awareness of problems implied by the 'geometric language' (in fine arts) and by the transyntactic language (in literature), up till now non-formulated or neglected by the theorists and artists of the concrete tendency. This awareness sprung directly from the work of each one of the artists which will participate in the 1<sup>st</sup> Neoconcrete Exhibition and, for this reason, despite the pretension which may be seen in this, they do not hesitate in affirming points of view many times opposite to what was conventionally called concrete art. They do not intend to deny the importance of artists such as Albers or Max Bill, while not subjecting themselves to direct their expressive research within codes or principles dictated by this or that theorist, by this or that artist. It would be dishonest to obscure the debt which the Brazilian artists of the

constructive-geometric tendency owe to the tradition that goes from Neo Plasticism to the Ulm School. But this would not be sufficient reason for, faced with a new perspective opened by the creative process, these artists to underestimate themselves, abandoning their experiences, only to satisfy an external and superficial coherence. On the contrary, to what may appear at first, when these Neoconcrete artists decide to assume the responsibilities of their discoveries and claim them against apparently un-attackable ideas, they are not denying the tradition of Mondrian – Pevsner – Malevitch – Ulm: but rather continuing it, as they open other horizons for it, and recover, within it, values perceived as belonging to the past.

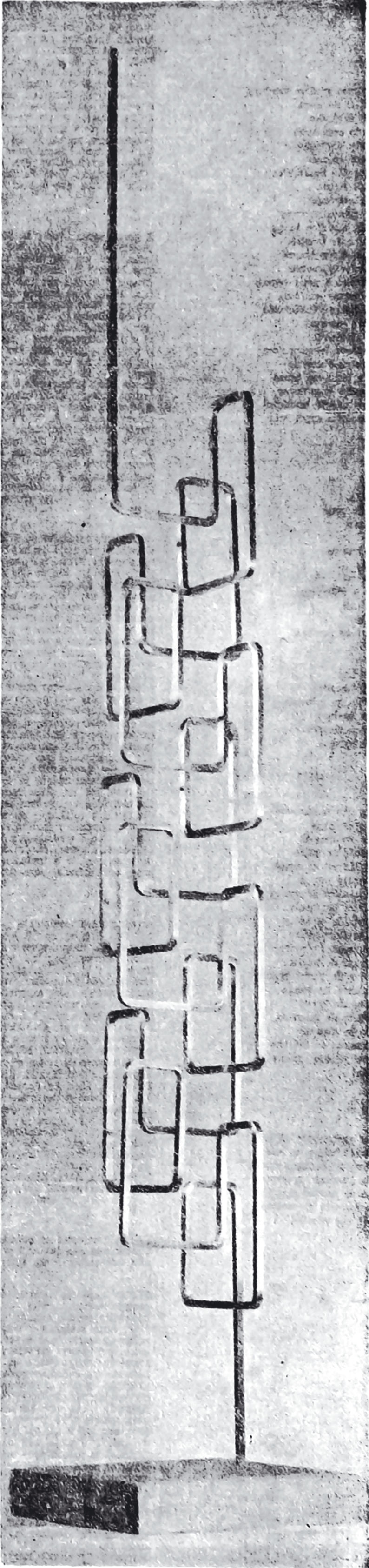
It is true that this position brings into judgement once again works and theories, and that, according to the beliefs of neoconcretists, many of these artworks and theories are shown to be out of date. In general they are works and ideas which correspond to critical phases (in both senses) in which the artist and the theorist seek to overcome certain circumstantial difficulties rather than to create in all plenitude. These works and theories do have their importance. It is necessary, however, not to confuse this importance which was dialectic and is today historical, with the superior importance of the work of art carried out to its full extent. The Neoconcrete Manifesto demonstrates how certain concepts, risen from situations of crisis, were taken literally and placed as cornerstones of Concrete art. Such incomprehension has harmed not only the meaning of concrete language but has led the majority of research carried out in this field to an absolutely sterile direction. What the neoconcretists affirm is that Concrete art got sidetracked

### *The Neoconcrete and the Gestalt*

One important point of the Neoconcrete Manifesto (edited in the catalogue of the 1st Neoconcrete Exhibition at the Rio de Janeiro Museum of Modern Art, MAM -Rio) is that which refers to the insufficiency of the psychology of form (Gestalt Psychology ) to define and comprehend in all its complexity the phenomenon of the work of art. It is not about, evidently, denying the validity of the Gestaltian laws in the field of perceptive experience, where truly the direct method of this psychology opened new possibilities for the comprehension of the structural forms. The limitation of Gestalt, as affirmed and shown by Maurice Merleau-Ponty ('La Structure du Comportement' and 'Phenomenologie de la Perception') is in the interpretation which the theorists of form give to the experiences and tests which they carry out, in other words, the laws that such experiences enabled to objectify in the perceptive field. M. Merleau-Ponty, following a thorough examination of the concept of form, shows that the Gestalt is still a causalist psychology, which obliges it to make use of the concept of 'Isomorphism' to re-establish the unity between the outside and the inside world, between the subject and the object. We do not intend in this short article to go beyond calling people's attention to this important aspect of the new attitude - theory and practice - which the Neoconcrete artists take towards constructive-geometric art. The problem of the Gestalt and of the concept of form claimed by the neo-concretists shall be broached later on this page.

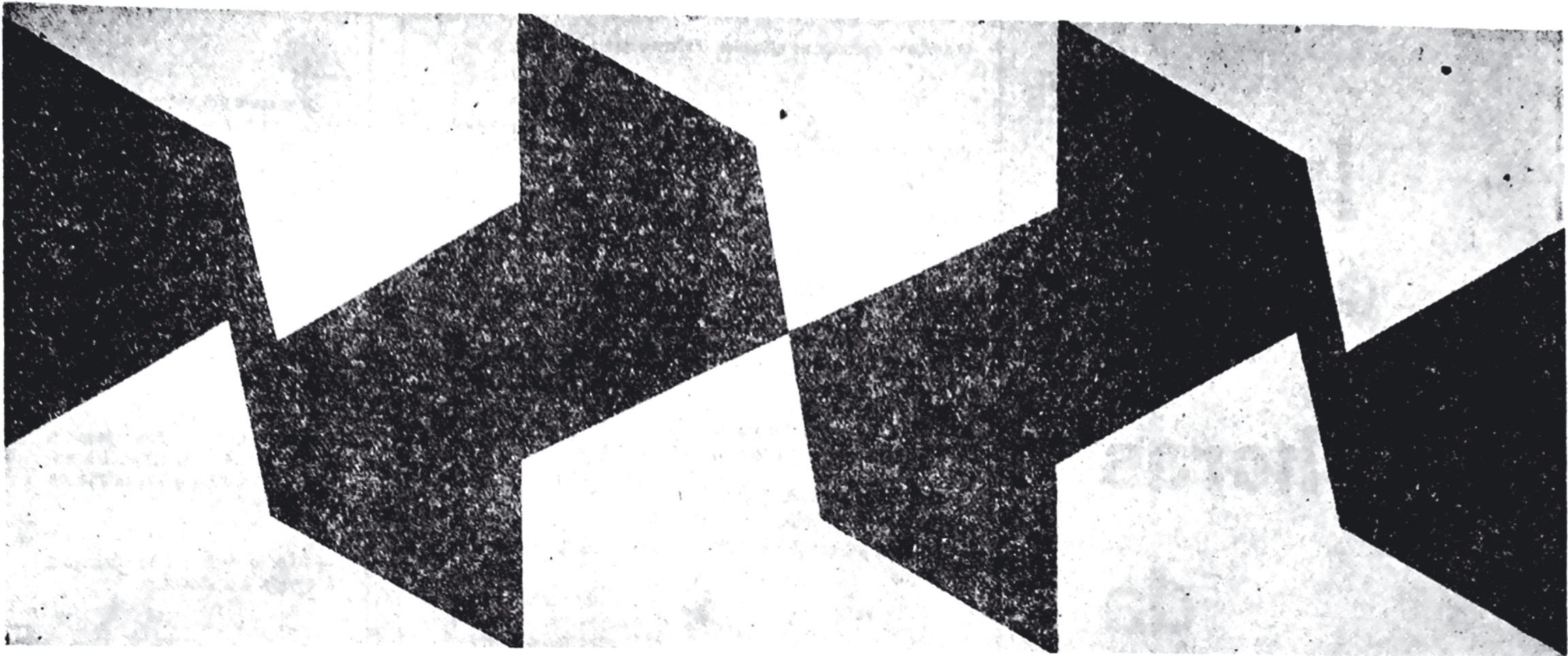
### *Franz Weissmann*

*Born in Austria, but resident in Brazil from the age of 11, becoming a Brazilian citizen. Painted and drew before dedicating himself to sculpture. He was previously a figurative sculptor. Little by little he eliminated the mass of his sculptures and discovered in them the void, the space. At this stage (around 1951) he came into contact with the works of Max Bill, which encouraged him to definitively abandon the figure. He began to sculpt with wire or fine rods. Later he used metal plates cut into regular forms. From his first experiences as a non-figurative sculptor Weissmann distanced himself from Bill's research, being interested in space more than in the surface. Weissmann works directly with space, in other words, he studies his works with small models rather than departing from any mathematical problem. His sculpture has always had (even in the most rigorous and simplified forms) an organic sense. Having won a trip abroad from the *Salão Nacional de Arte Moderna* in 1958, Weissmann will travel to Paris and there he intends to be in touch with Pevsner, who is, in his opinion, the most important contemporary sculptor.*





# Lygia Clark



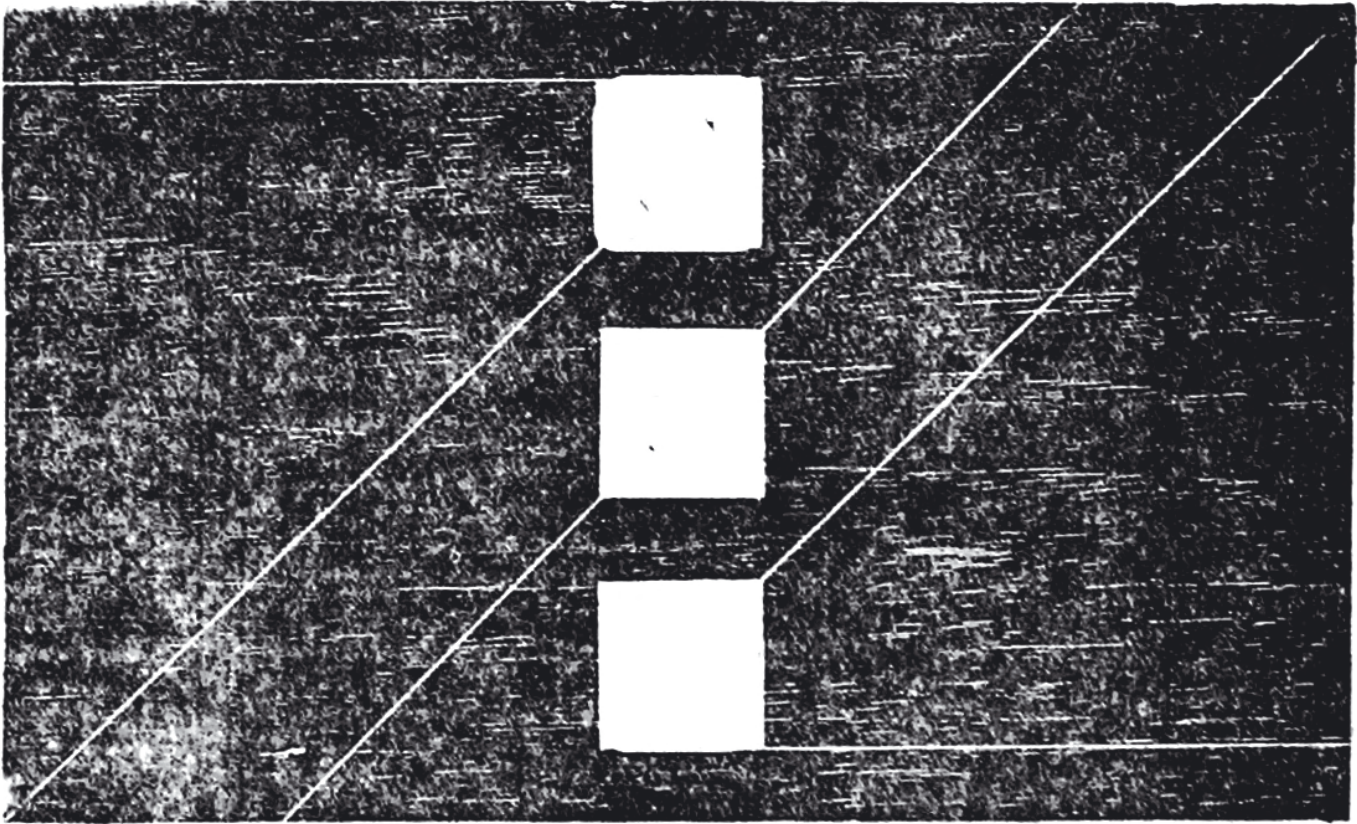
In 1954 she noticed that it was necessary to include the frame in the painting, to go beyond it (the frame). Taking this step – which is proposed to almost every modern painter – Lygia Clark opened a new path for her painting, and it is on this personal path that the importance of her experience resides. It is important to be aware of the fact that L. C. did not start off, theoretically, to overcome the limitation of the frame: she brought the frame into the picture, transformed

it into an expressive form and assimilated it into the painting. This is why, unlike other artists who faced or face similar problems, in L. C.'s paintings there is not the drama of trying to break out of the frame, as frame and painting are integrated into just one unit. We do not find in L.C.'s paintings forms which anxiously attempt to project themselves off the canvas, in a subjective extension. This problem was left behind. Lygia Clark, having integrated the painting

(without a frame) directly into space, composes within space, as if the external space itself opens itself up revealing itself suddenly to our eyes. Unlike, for example, Baertling, in whose pictures the forms attempt to swiftly jump beyond the frame, in Lygia Clark's paintings it is the space which penetrates the picture, invited by the forms themselves that the painting creates. There is no more conflict: picture and space are at the same level.

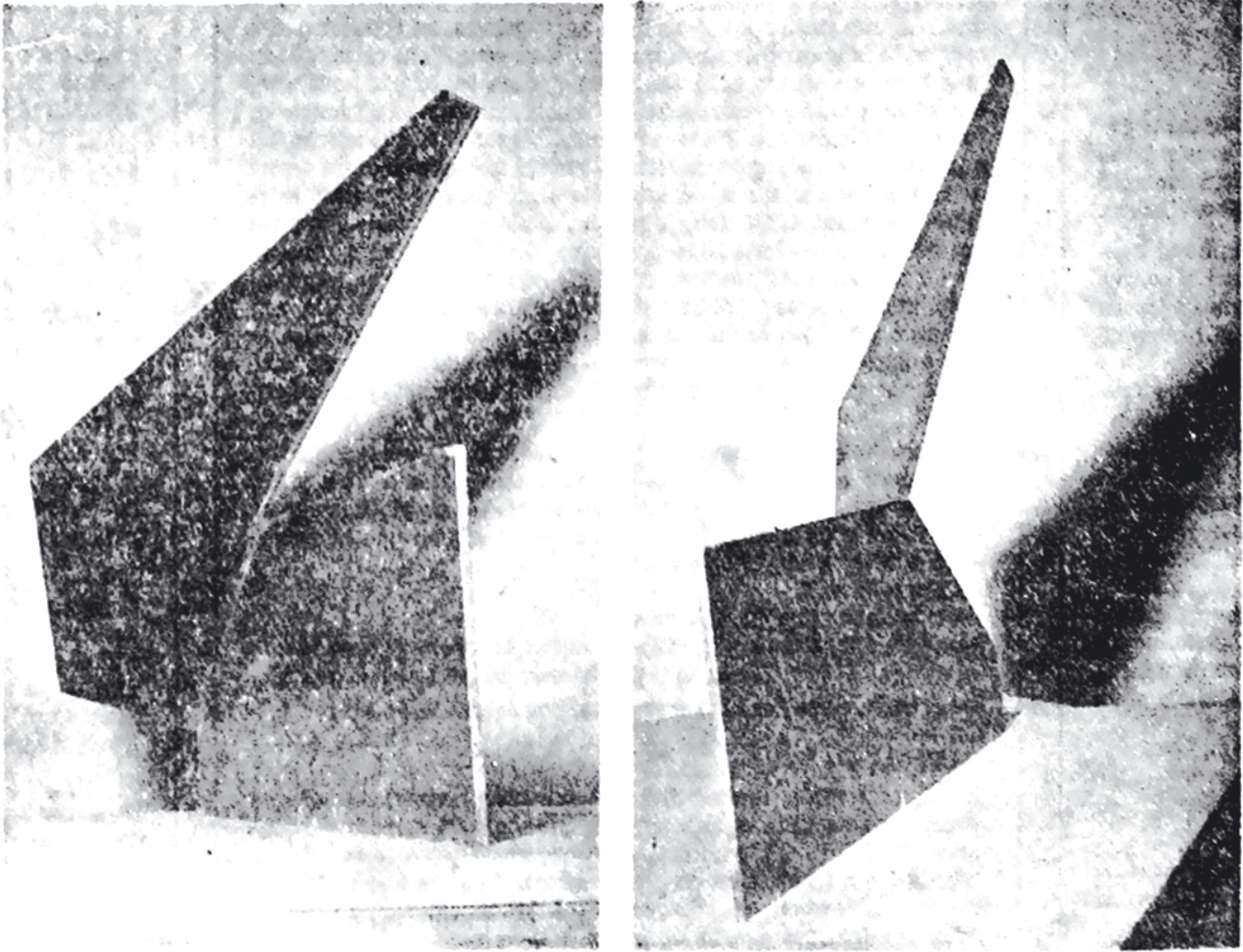
# e x h i b i t i o n

from its fertile path, and it is necessary to lead it back to it, on other foundations, with another vision of its problematic. Based on this aspect, they have no doubt in proclaiming the international importance of this position taking. It is not about, evidently, being the first to do so. It is obvious that, if the Concrete artists launch a manifesto defending a new position regarding Concrete art, it's because – in the extent of their information - it deals with an attitude to be placed into practice. If tomorrow someone tells us that, in Europe or in the East, a group of artists has already done the same thing, we will not be surprised nor consider ourselves cheated. On the contrary, we will be happy to see our disposition towards a need of this era. Ultimately, Neoconcrete artists consider as obsolete the majority of theories which have up till now attempted to explain Concrete art, or at least think that they do not correspond to what they do and what they intend to do. Hence there is the expression 'Neoconcrete'. The case of the poets is no different, who by July 1957 had already broken away from the São Paulo wing of the movement, due to aesthetic reasons. From 1957 till now, differences have deepened, and the position of the Rio group has shown itself fruitful and inventive. Nowadays, in relation to exterior similarities – diminishing all the time – the neoconcretes explore an entirely new field within language: non-discursive and conduct their research in the sense of giving value to verbal 'time' and to expression as an existential fact. The poets, like the Neoconcrete artists disconnect themselves fully from the mechanical-imitative pretensions of the concretists from São Paulo. The 1<sup>st</sup> Neoconcrete Exhibition - the works and the manifesto – will demonstrate with greater clarity what we have mentioned here.



## Lygia Pape

*Lygia Pape has worked patiently for several years to find, within the rigorous language of geometric forms, her way as an engraver. In other words, L. P. has stripped engraving of most of its traditional values to make it a precise and gentle tool to deliver a new visual message. Since 1956, this determination, this trust in craft, has begun to produce the first positive results. However, Lygia Pape did not stop there. She continues researching, within a purposely reduced vocabulary, to reach more complex compositions where rigour transcends into tension and drama: it is the phase of great composed black planes, almost always directed from the periphery to the centre of the rectangle, in an action instantly caught. In her last phase, Lygia Pape eliminates the tense forms to allow space – time to involve the great solitary forms, full of strength.*



## Amílcar de Castro

*Amílcar is an artist of rigour. But this is a rigour internal to both himself and his work and whose exercise is itself the basic condition of its existence. This rigour must not therefore be confused with the false rigour of the methods which aim only for the external and superficial coherence of the forms. Rigour, in Amílcar de Castro's sculpture is above all an unrelenting necessity to touch the essential, stripping the form of all and any element which is not directly compromised by the structure. However, what gives the dramatic dimension to his art is the conflict which establishes itself between this formal requirement and the lyrical impulse which through such dimension he wishes to express. And it is in this manner, within the tensest and exact construction, there is always a virtual movement to animate it, a surface which rises to flight. Amílcar sustains this battle on several fronts, by several means, but always seeking this synthesis, which if not definitely carried out, is neither seen as impossible: it is the dialectic nourishment of invention. Amílcar de Castro exhibits now, in this 1<sup>st</sup> Neoconcrete Exhibition, after almost ten years of silence, only broken in 1953, when he participated with a work at the 2<sup>nd</sup> São Paulo Biennial.*



to understand Mondrian's painting according to his theories, we are obliged to choose between two things: Either the prophecy of art's total integration into the daily life of individuals seems feasible and we recognise, in the artist's works, the first steps in this direction, or this integration appears to be more and more remote, and his work leads to frustration.

Either the vertical and the horizontal planes are the fundamental rhythms of the universe and the work of Mondrian is the application of a universal principle, or the principle is flawed and his work is founded on illusion. Mondrian's work prevails nevertheless, alive and fertile, in spite of such theoretical contradictions. There would be no point in seeing Mondrian as the destroyer of surface, the plane and line, if we are not aware of the new space which this destruction creates. The same can be said of Vantongerloo and Pevsner. It does not matter what mathematical equations are to be found at the root of a sculpture or a painting by Vantongerloo. It is only when someone perceives and experiences the work of art, that its rhythms and colours have meaning. Whether

or not Pevsner used figures of descriptive geometry as his starting-point is without interest, if placed alongside the new space that his sculptures give birth to and the cosmic-organic expression which his works reveal. It would be interesting, from the cultural stand point, to determine approximations between artistic objects and scientific instruments and between the intuition of the artist and the objective thought of the physicist and the engineer. But, from the aesthetic point of view, the interesting thing about art is that it transcends such external considerations and creates and reveals a universe of existential significance, all at the same time. For having recognized the primacy of pure sensibility in art, Malevich, spared his theoretical definitions from the rational and mechanical limitations, while giving his painting a transcendental dimension, which ensured him a notable contemporariness. But Malevich paid dearly for the courage he showed in simultaneously opposing figurativism and mechanistic abstraction. To date,

certain rationalist theoreticians have considered him to be a simpleton who had never understood properly the true meaning of Neo Plasticism ... Actually, Malevich had already expressed, in this painting, a lack of satisfaction, a will to transcend the rational and the sensorial, that today is manifested in irreproachable manner.

Neoconcretism, born out of the need to express the complex reality of modern humanity inside the structural language of the new plasticity, denies the legitimacy of scientific and positivist attitudes in art and supersedes the problem of expression, while incorporating a new 'verbal' dimension created by non-figurative constructive art. Rationalism steals from art its autonomy and substitutes the unique and intransferable qualities of the artwork for notions of scientific objectivity. Therefore, the concepts of form, space, time and structure — which in the artistic language are bound to an existential, emotional and affective significance — are confused with the theoretical applications of these

concepts in science. Actually, in the name of those preconceptions that philosophers today denounce (M. Merleau-Ponty, E. Cassirer, S. Langer) - and that are no longer upheld in any intellectual field beginning with modern biology, which now has gone beyond Pavlovian mechanicism — the Concrete rationalists continue to view the human being as a machine and seek to limit their art to the expression of this theoretical reality. We do not conceive an artwork neither as a 'machine' nor as an 'object', but as a 'quasi-corpus', i.e., a being whose reality is not limited to the exterior relations of its elements; a being decomposable for analysis, that only reveals itself totally upon a direct phenomenological approach. We believe that the work of art surpasses the material mechanism on which it is based, not because of some unearthly virtue, but because it transcends mechanical relationships (sought by the Gestalt) and creates for itself a tacit significance (Merleau-Ponty) that it raises for the first time. If we had to seek an equivalence for the artwork, we would not be able

# n e o c o n c r e t e

The expression 'Neoconcrete' indicates the new attitude towards non-figurative 'geometrical art' (Neo Plasticism, Constructivism, Suprematism, the Ulm School) and particularly, towards Concrete art that has become driven by a dangerously rationalist exacerbation. Working in the fields of painting, sculpture, printing and literature, the artists in this 1<sup>st</sup> Neoconcrete Exhibition have been drawn together by the power of their own experience, in the contingency of reviewing theoretical positions previously taken in relation to Concrete art, since it does not 'understand' satisfactorily the expressive possibilities which opened through these experiences. Born with Cubism from a reaction to the Impressionist dissolution of pictorial language, it was only natural that so-called Geometric art placed itself in complete opposition to the technical and allusive easiness of current trends in painting. While offering a broad perspective for objective thought, the latest achievements of physics and mechanics supposedly stimulate,

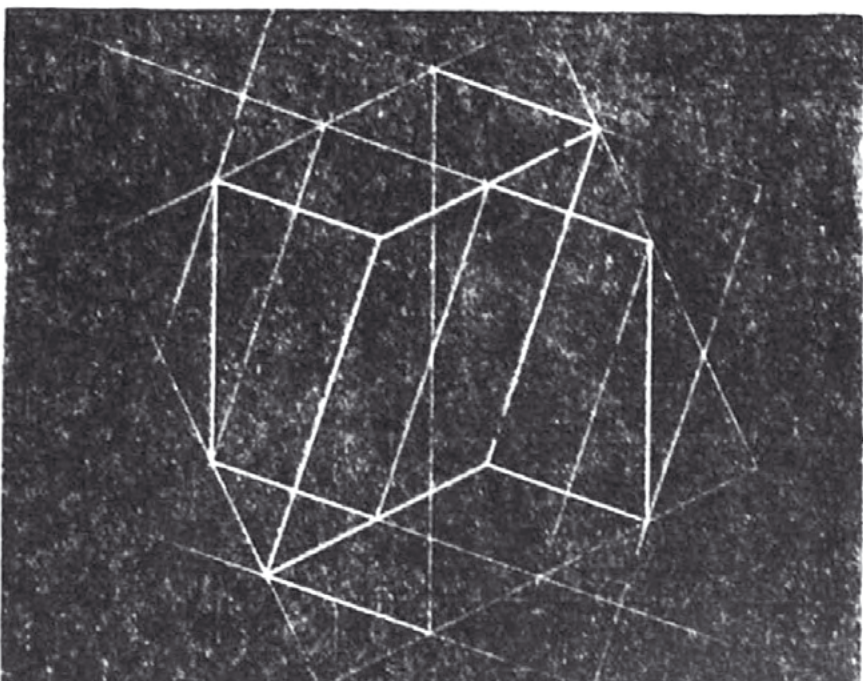
in the followers of this revolution, a tendency toward an increasingly greater rationalisation of the processes and purposes of painting. Mechanical notions of constructing works of art invaded the language of painters and sculptors, who, in turn, provoke equally radical reactions of retrograde character, as for example Magic Realism or the irrational nature of Dada and Surrealism. Undoubtedly, however, there is no doubt that, grounded on theories that advocate the objectivity of science and the precision of mechanics, true artists — for example, Mondrian and Pevsner — have constructed their work and, in their struggle with expression, surpassed the limits of theory. But the oeuvre of these artists has been interpreted from the point of view of theoretical principles which their own artistic production, in fact, has denied. Now we propose a reinterpretation of Neo Plasticism, Constructivism and other similar movements based on their achievements in terms of expression and the precedent of production over theory. If we want



PEVSNER



MAX BILL

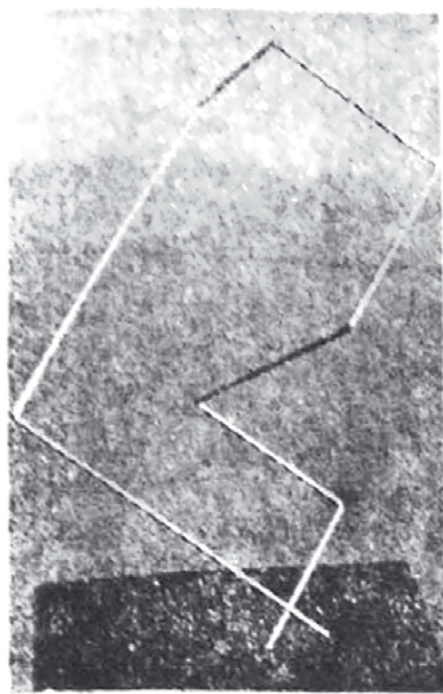


ALBERS



MALEVITCH

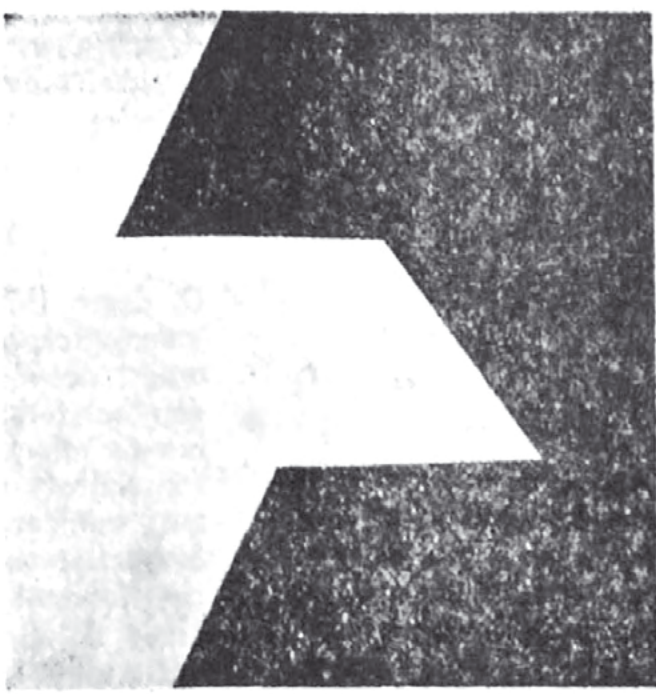




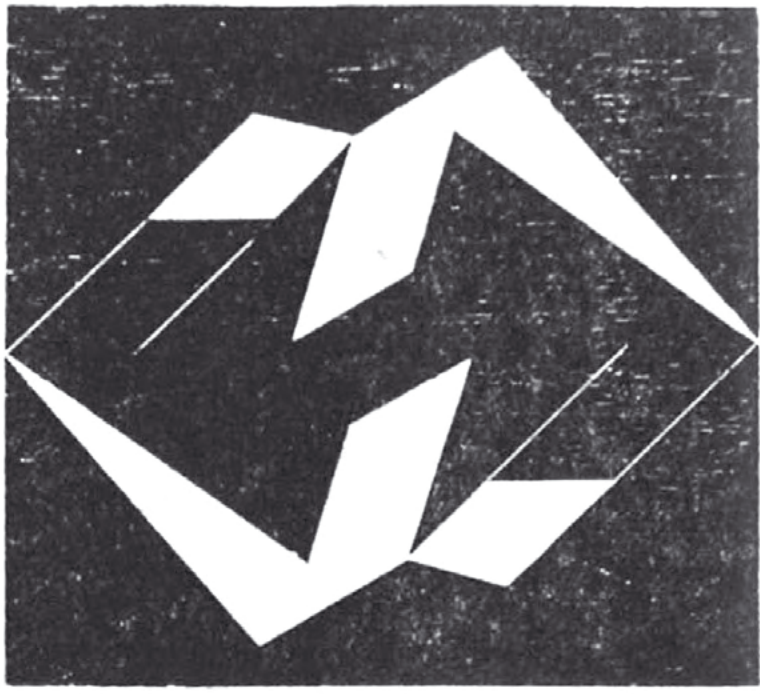
FRANZ WEISSMANN



AMÍLCAR DE CASTRO



LYGIA CLARK



LYGIA PAPE

# m a n i f e s t o

to find it neither in a machine nor in any objectively perceived object, but in living organisms, according to S. Langer and V. Weidlé. However, such a comparison would still not be able to adequately express the specific reality of the aesthetic organism. The objective notions of time, space, form, structure, colour, etc. are not sufficient in themselves to comprehend a work of art and to explain its ‘reality’, because the work does not limit itself to occupying a particular place in objective space. Instead, it transcends this space while creating in it a new significance. The difficulty of using precise terminology to express a world that does not render itself to such notions has induced art criticism to an indiscriminate use of words, which betray the complexity of the artwork. The influence of science and technology has also impressed the art scene, to the extent that today, roles are inverted and certain artists dazzled by this terminology attempt to perform art in reverse manner: they try to make art starting from these objective notions, which they

apply to their creative practice. Inevitably, artists who proceed in such manner only illustrate a priori notions. After all, they are bound by a method that prescribes to them, beforehand, the result of their work. By refraining from intuitive creation and limiting themselves to painting with an objective body, the rationalist Concrete artists request from themselves as well as the spectator a simple reaction of stimulus and a reflexive response: they speak to the eye as an instrument rather than a human channel capable of interaction with the world, that could gain from and give itself to the world. They speak to the machine-eye and not to the body-eye. It is because a work of art transcends mechanical space, that notions of cause and effect completely lose their effectiveness. Moreover, notions of time, space, form, colour – that did not exist beforehand, as notions for the artwork – are so intensely integrated that it would be impossible to speak about them in decomposable terms. Neoconcrete art asserts the absolute

integration of these elements and believes that the ‘geometric’ vocabulary it utilises can render the expression of complex human realities as proved by a number of the artworks created by Mondrian, Malevich, Pevsner, Gabo, Sofie Tauber-Arp, etc. Even if these artists themselves sometimes mistook the concept of expressive form for the notion of mechanical form, it must be clear that, in art language, the so-called geometric forms totally lose the objective character of geometry to turn into vehicles for the imagination. The Gestalt, given that it is a causal psychology, is also insufficient to allow us to understand a phenomenon which dissolves space and form as causally determined realities and creates a new time and ‘spatialisation of the artistic creation’. By ‘spatialisation of the work of art’ , we mean that the work of art continuously makes itself present, that it is always beginning the same impulse that generated it and that this work had spawned. And if this description leads us back to the primary and thorough

experience of the real, it is because Neoconcrete art aims at nothing less than to rekindle this experience. Neoconcrete art lays the foundations for a new expressive space. This position is equally valid for Neoconcrete poetry, which denounces, in Concrete poetry, the same mechanical objectivism as in painting. Concrete rationalist poets have also instituted the imitation of the machine as an ideal of their art. According to them, space and time are also nothing but external relations between words-objects. Well, if this were so, the page is reduced to a graphic space and the word, to an element included in this space. As in painting, the visual is reduced in this case to the optical and the poem does not surpass the graphic dimensions. Neoconcrete poetry rejects such spurious notions and, faithful to the nature of language itself, affirms the poem as a temporal being. The word unfolds its complex significant nature in time, not in space. A page for Neoconcrete poetry is the spatialisation of verbal time: it is a pause, silence, time.

It is obvious that we do not mean to return to the concept of time in discursive poetry, because while this language flows easily, with Neoconcrete poetry language opens itself in duration. Consequently, in contrast to rationalist Concretism, which takes the word as an object and transforms it into a mere optical sign, Neoconcrete poetry reasserts its condition of ‘verbal expression’ that is to say, it presents reality in a human way. In Neoconcrete poetry, language does not flow away, it is enduring. Likewise, while, opening a new field to expressive experience, Neoconcrete prose recovers language as a flow, overcoming its syntactic contingencies and giving a new amplified meaning to certain solutions, which were up to now wrongly considered as poetry. So, in painting as well as in poetry, prose, sculpture and engraving, Neoconcrete art reaffirms the independence of artistic creation in the face of objective knowledge (science) and practical knowledge (ethics, politics, industry, etc.). The participants in the 1<sup>st</sup> Neoconcrete Exhibition do not constitute a ‘group’. They are not bound by dogmatic principles. The evident affinity of the research that each of them develops in diverse fields has approximated them and brought them together to this exhibition. First of all, their commitment is above all to their own particular experience and they will remain together for as long as the deep affinity that brought them together lasts.



The problem of sensibility in art, as in everything else, is extremely delicate, because most of the time it is reduced to a play on words or to purely subjective appreciations that escape from any more thorough form of control or verification. For this same reason, when dealing with old aesthetic categories such as ‘the beautiful’, ‘the tragic’, ‘the sublime’, Croce used to laugh and respond: ‘the sublime? It is everything you want it to be’ (1).

Something similar happens when we hear: John is sensitive; James is not. Most of the time when we try to dig deeper into the sentence, nothing more positive or concrete is reached.

Each person understands the concept of sensibility as they wish, in the way that pleases them. ‘INGRES is not sensitive; DELACROIX is too sensitive’. And we ask ourselves why? We discover that what it all boils down to is that the person in question does not like INGRES’ linear design and adores the exotic and colourful figures of the latter; in other words, it is this person who is not sensitive to the fineness or the delicacy of the line, as this person is only touched by the eloquence or the vivacity of the colours. But if we go beyond, seeking to know the temperament or the life of both protagonists, we arrive at amazing conclusions. Therefore, INGRES, before being the Pontiff of the conservative academicism of Neoclassicism, was also part of the opposition movement due to his romantic upheaval with DELACROIX, as while he was living in Italy, according to what we are told by Louis Réau, in the great **History of Art** by ANDRE MICHEL, ‘the future high priest of the cult of RAPHAEL had let himself be seduced by the pre-Raphaelites, he had acquired a taste for the somewhat acid nature of the primitives: FILIPPO LIPPI and PISANELO’. The historian also informs us that ‘his small historical paintings painted in the manner of the old lampshades, lead him to being treated as a gothic (sic) and even Chinese by the critics linked to David’. (2). In short, he was a suspect figure to the neoclassical orthodoxy. Southern, he gave himself romantically, as is known, to his famous violin, accompanied by his fiancée, with whom he later broke up due to ... painting. And, not without reason, one of the first criticisms made about him in France was that of ‘wanting painting to regress four centuries, as with JEAN DE BRUGES’. However, this man, with DAVID’s death, is proclaimed the pope of Neoclassicism in open warfare with the new barbarians, the romantics, who against Greece and Rome set up the medieval pavilion.

DELACROIX, for his part, descended from an important family, from whom he absorbed a huge disdain for the things of his time. Street performances shocked him.

His only painting concerning a more or less contemporary episode – **Liberty leading the people** – is a conventional work, allegoric, full of literature, a mere illustration of some mediocre verses by the mediocre AUGUSTE BARBIER. As a matter of fact, he was more curious about books than about life itself. And thus most of his compositions are about themes taken from books, by DANTE, BYRON, SHAKESPEARE, WALTER SCOTT. He himself wrote: ‘I have no sympathy for the present time, the ideas my contemporaries are impassioned about leave me feeling cold, all my preferences go towards the past’. (3)

The human sympathy of INGRES is more evident than that of his tempestuous rival, as can be seen in the admirable portraits he left us of his contemporaries, whereas the latter, according to what the historian previously mentioned tells us, ‘for more than twenty years he will explore, like an inexhaustible mine, his African sketches and watercolours. The work manner of this ‘romantic’, violent

and impulsive was all brain work, he himself confesses it: ‘In terms of compositions already wholly decided upon and perfectly ready to be carried out, I have work for two human existences, and in relation to the projects of every kind, in other words, in relation to material to rightfully occupy the spirit and the hand, I have enough for four hundred years’. (4) Not only was he a highly educated man, an assiduous reader, and armed with general ideas, but also regarding the quality of artist he was much more intellectual than INGRES.

He, who was truly academic in the great compositions, failed by Raphael’s spirit of allegory and imitation who inspired him, who was opaque to colours, showed a proven sensibility evidenced in the isolated figures, in the portraits, where, finding himself, he could give himself up to the drawing and through this reveal the incomparably sensitive quality of his line. The other, however, all temperament, was in spite of this a cerebral, paradoxically clumsy when drawing, and even more paradoxically, sensitive to colours, whose violent shades were his preference.

The historical example above might not be perfect, but it has the advantage of being randomly chosen, on the impulse of a first idea. There exists, without doubt, ‘sensibility’ painting and ‘non-sensibility’, or more ‘intellectual’ painting. The creative process for both is identical deep down, and not always or almost never is the painter of the former ‘hotter’, more temperamental, romantic, or of a greater sensibility than the latter. Who has more ‘sensibility’, RAFAEL or TICIANO? Who is colder, MONET or CEZANNE? These questions shock, but it is due to the historical retreat, because in truth they represent exactly a foolish but so persistent squabble, which continues to this very day in certain vanguard circles, among fans of an abstractionism of imprecise, non-geometric forms, of colourful spots and an abstractionism of regular geometric forms and clear outlines. While the latter are accused of lack of sensibility, the others are accused of making an only sensitive painting, of a low mental level.

In an effort to better determine this annoying quarrel concerning sensibility in Concrete art and the constructivists, a young Parisian painter thus put the issue to me: sensibility should be the driving force, or it will not be.

Yes, sensibility is the driving force in everything man does, in everything he acts upon, or in everything he discovers through his creative imagination, in every domain, including politics and science. It is not a prerogative only of artists. The most fruitful scientists have to make use of considerable sensibility, of a large amount of intellectual finesse, and a lot of inventive imagination when, based on their experiences, which never result from a simple logical chain of arguments, they manage to formulate hypotheses, disprove theories and unveil horizons. It is for this reason that it strikes us as absurd to discuss whether or not a work, above all an artistic work – and one of quality, as can be seen – expresses sensibility.

However much the habit of extrinsic rationalism wants to make us believe that a gesture, an action, a thought resulting from pure neutral cerebral effort, attached to the rules of deductive thinking to biological fatality, the primary sensory reaction, the spontaneous organizing force of the perceptive apparatus, the awakening of the sensitive memory, the interaction, after all, of the entire psychic complex placed in movement do not permit this absolute separation between the logical discursive process in search of an abstract and transferable conclusion and the subjective-emotive complex which is the ego. Not only the artist but also the philosopher, the scientist, the politician are beings motivated by sensibility. As with all products of mental activity, the work of art participates in the symbolic nature of human thinking. Only its symbolic essence is very different from that of the discursive verbal symbol.

The work of art reaches the true neutrality between the subject and the thing denoted by it, and this is impossible in the symbolic form of art. In this there is no former, previous object that translates itself into a symbolic sign; to the artist the object is an inexistent emotional value before the work is carried out, but which inserts itself into this, and only in this takes shape. Therefore a feeling is formed which is not

distinguished in the artist, which does not intrinsically belong to his soul or to his temperament. In actual fact, it really does not express any state of the soul or uncertain sentimental preoccupation which impels the creator to give it form. The artist, on carrying out the work, does not communicate to the public at all what is going on inside him, as the contrary would be to equate the artistic form to a traffic sign which warns of a bend ahead on the road.

What the work of art does express is something universal and permanent, not expressed until then, and which the spectator receives and collects in a way that is different from a telegram or postal message that a child sends to his father, the husband to his wife, one friend to another, a group to another group, the government to the citizens etc. What it brings is the realisation of an unknown experience, a new symbolic organisation, perceptive or imaginative. As it is never a proposition, whatever its classification by movement, trend or style, what it gives us, to be authentic, is always from the domain of the intuitive forms of thinking and feeling. Another distinctive trace of the work of art is that its forms have never existed before the work did, if otherwise we would have to admit that the Greek creators, as a condition of being able to write their tragedies, had themselves experienced their heroes feelings – Edipo or Electra, Antigona or Jocasta – the same happening with SHAKESPEARE or DANTE or GOETHE or RACINE in relation to the characters they created. Here in Brazil we are used to mentioning as something to be greatly admired the fact that EUCLIDES DA CUNHA was able to describe in a magnificent way a ‘stampede’ which he had never seen.

What the artist does is not a consequence of some irrepressible impulse to express what is going on inside him; this is an important element in the formation of personality, but rather it has to do with a psychic act a long time prior to the aesthetic act of creation. The desire to communicate is, without doubt, an absolute condition of every living being.

However, it does not enter constitutively in the making of the work of art, which is created on a much higher plane of intellectual complexity. The work of art is the sensitive or imaginary objectification of a conception, of a feeling that comes, thus and for the first time, to be understood by men, enriching their experiences. The artist only organised for us, for our understanding, for our contemplation, a form-object, an object-feeling, a feeling-imagination. And this form is presented to us not as a communication of something precise which existed and continues to exist out there, in the world outside, or in a well determined little corner of the artist’s inner world, but as an apparition which pauses, with a finished structure, and which repeats itself fully and always suddenly, each time we enter into contact with it. SUZANNE LANGER in her last book **Feeling and Form** – gives an admirable definition to this essentially cognitive function of the work of art: ‘Formulate our conceptions of feeling and our conceptions of visual, factual and audible reality together’. And she adds that the work of art ‘gives us forms of imagination and forms of feeling inseparably: in other words, clarifies and organizes the intuition itself. And it is due to this that it has the strength of a revelation and inspires a feeling of profound intellectual satisfaction, although it does not manifest any conscious intellectual work (reasoning)’.

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Note from the editor – Today we published the first part of an initial chapter of a brand new study by Mário Pedrosa called ‘Problematics of Contemporary Art’. The work is dated 1954 but, as the readers will be able to certify, it broaches entirely up to date problems of the present moment in Brazilian art, when these permanent problems resurface.

In the centre pages of the SDJB (SSJB) the reader will find another – next Saturday – part of the series ‘just before the book’ which Walmyr Ayala has been executing so efficiently. This time we will have the advertised interview with Murilo Mendes, making up one of the most important documents ever released by us.

A ‘show’ of tales in today’s edition: Judith Grossman, Vera Pedrosa, José Carlos Oliveira, Nélson Coelho. Four fairly different styles, an effort to go beyond the simple discursive can be noticed in some of them.

A map containing the musical development of contemporary music is being translated for the SDJB by Maria Inês Duque Estrada. With this translation we shall begin a series of articles about the musical tendencies of our time, starting with atonality.

On the 16<sup>th</sup> July, Thursday, a debate will take place at the SDJB’s editorial office about ‘The Language of Prose’. 17h.

Regarding the French Film Festival, promoted by the Modern Art Museum, we shall give it ample coverage, as happened with the American Film Festival.

Nélson Coelho, promises us a complete report on the 8<sup>th</sup> São Paulo Art Salon of Modern Art from São Paulo. We anxiously await.

We request all the poets committed to the revaluation of the expressive means of poetic language, to all whose experiences are related to neoconcretism to send us their works.

We are considering organising a national anthology of Neoconcrete poetry and this will depend on the quality of work sent to this publication in the ‘*espaço*’ collection.

Reynaldo Jardim

Mário Pedrosa

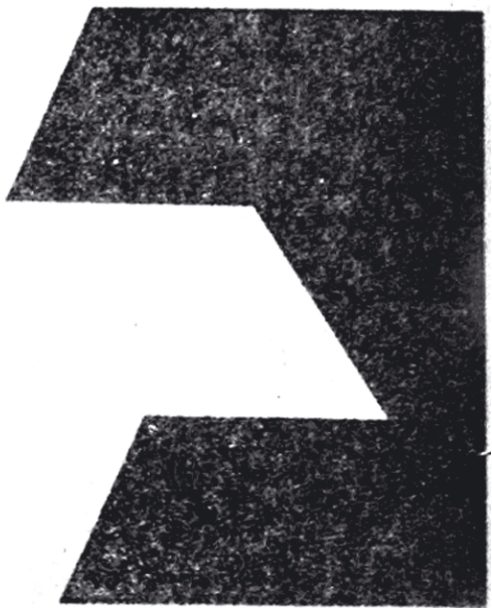
(1) B. Croce  
(2) L. Reau – A.M.  
(3) Delacroix – Cit. p. Reau.  
(4) Delacroix – Cit. p. L. Reau



Fine Arts

Ferreira Gullar

This article was written last March especially for the magazine *“Módulo”* on architecture and art, which published it in the 13<sup>th</sup> edition, still on sale today. Next week we shall continue the series of articles that we have been publishing about the evolution of contemporary painting. Having concluded Cubism, we shall now turn to Futurism



Lygia Clark

external relation of the parts: it concerns a time imitated from mechanical movements.

For the neoconcretists the page is not a space a priori within which the poem will be composed. It participates intimately in the poem's birth, of its structure emerges in the poem, and the poem on it, in a duration that has nothing to do with mechanical movement. The Neoconcrete poets recapture poetry as a temporal realisation, faithful to this essential condition of verbal expression. It is not about returning to the verse, to discursive language, but about expressing a dimensionless or multidimensional temporality. We move away from the objectivist expression and construction in order to create within a wider, deeper objectivity, which is the fountain itself of all knowledge. Here the poem's motor is not an automatism of formal external factors which vision relates. The poem's motor is the word itself, with its energy which spreads in every direction and establishes verbal time. Neoconcrete poetry has no intention of creating structures that themselves suffice as visual forms, but to free the word

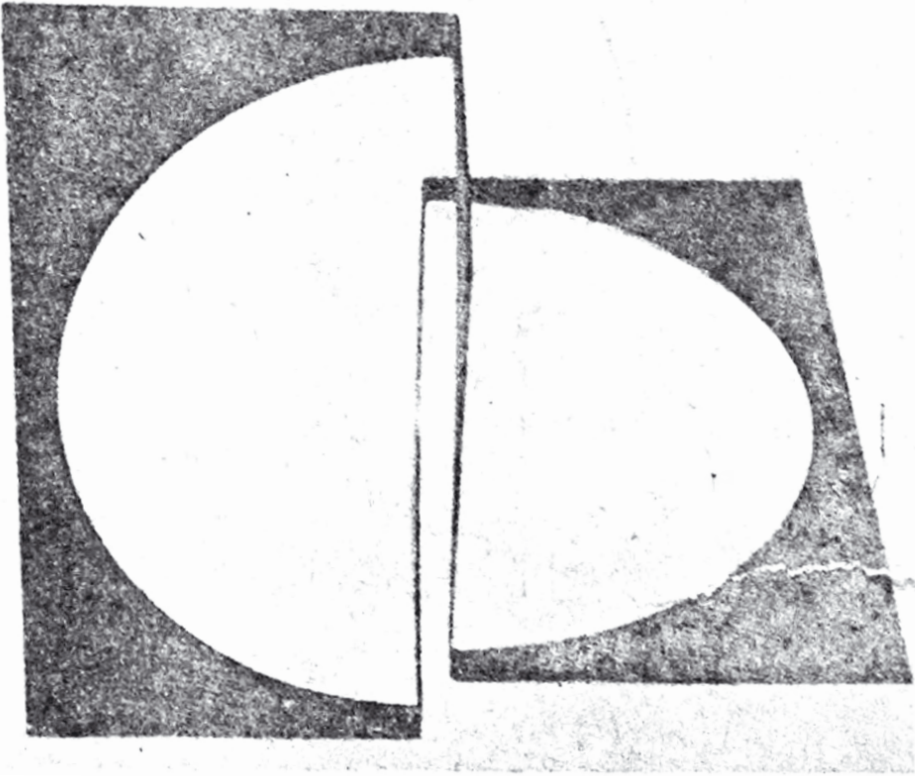
from its syntactic limitations, opening to it a new expressive field. Neoconcrete poetry is not a poetry of space but rather a poetry of time; it is not a poetry of mechanical time, but instead verbal time, of duration. As Theon Spanúdis says: 'it is the time itself of poetic existence that substantiates itself in live space'.

The Neoconcrete poets' position, as we can see, is absolutely non-dogmatic. They are not concerned about establishing principles or rules of composition. On the contrary it is about getting rid of the rules and the dogmas, freeing up the field of transyntactic verbal expression. Proof of the productivity of such a position is, for example, in the possibilities that it will open to a new kind of narrative initiated by Reynaldo Jardim and to which he gave the name 'prose'. The distinction between Neoconcrete prose and poetry is what Reynaldo Jardim himself tells us: 'Poetry: state one and only, first state, fact without unwinding, non-sequence of action, expression of only one global and total take, integral object, unbreakable, unfoldable, but whole in each time/ moment of this unfolding, vital impossibility of history, anecdote. Sphere. Neither before nor after. Capture and register of a time in time. Prose: serial states, unfoldable, facts or fact unwinding, sequence of action, expressions of various takes, dependent and interlinked objects to form the total object. Neoconcrete prose: the conquest of a narrative prose without the use of worn-out elements of discursive syntax (even, I repeat, when concealed by counterpoints, interior monologue, breaking of the narrative thread, inversion of the order of events, intemperance, etc'. Reynaldo Jardim clarifies further, referring to the first 'proses' he published in the Sunday Supplement of the JORNAL DO BRASIL on December 21<sup>st</sup> 1958: 'in the first experiences here presented the narrative thread is above the text. It is not exposed because it is not necessary. The story is not told, it is shown'.

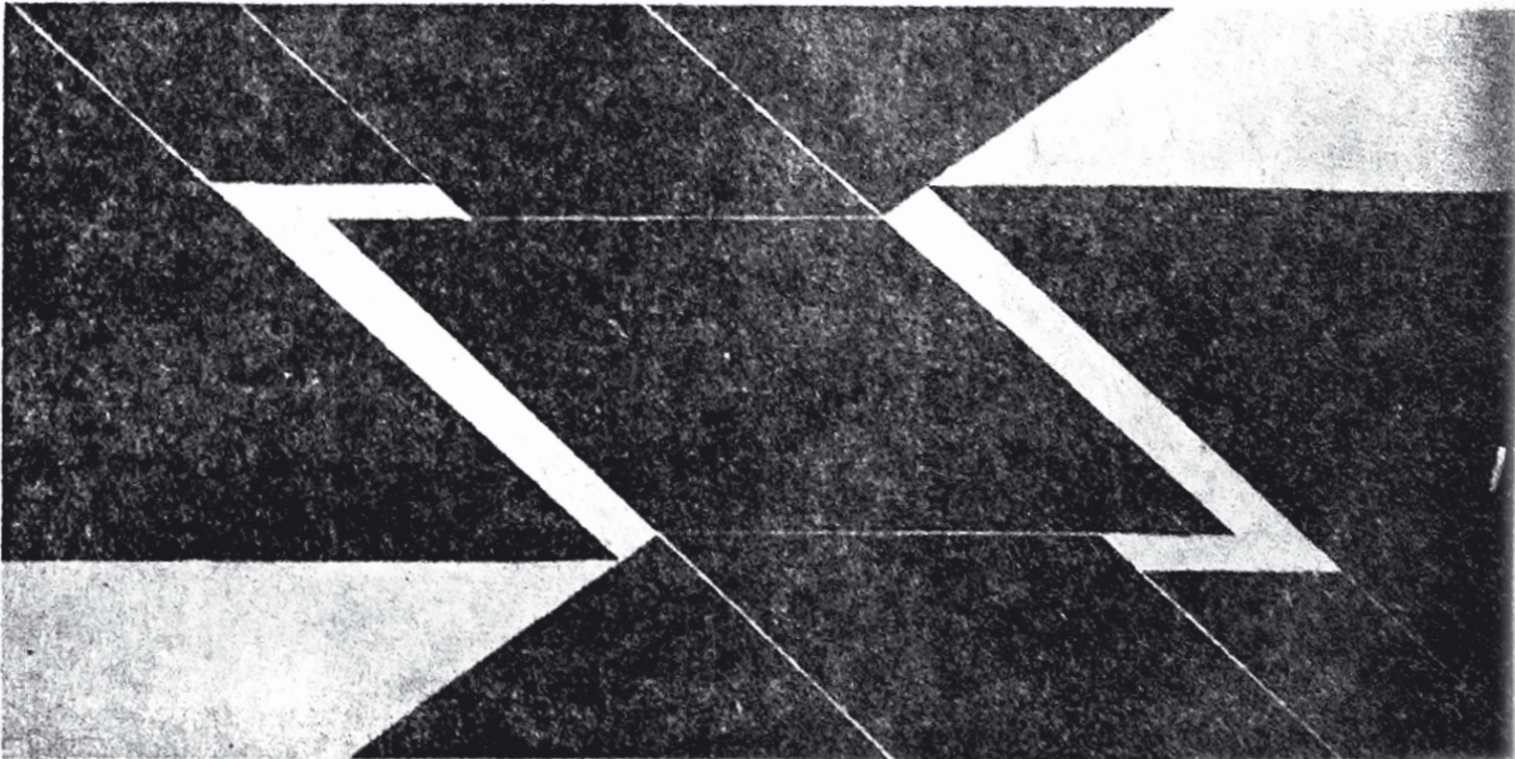
that he create the poem according to a pre-existing mathematical structure. Meanwhile, the painter Lygia Clark, pursuing her experiences with the 'modulated surface' and 'organic line', was freeing her painting of all mechanistic traces. On our side, Reynaldo Jardim, Spanúdis and I sought an expression in poetry that went beyond mere geometric organisation. Our works lead us to reconsider the concepts of space, time, structure, etc, used by geometric non-figurative art theorists. We understood then that our position implied a revision of such concepts as our paintings and our poems could not be 'understood' with them. The same was happening with Weissmann and Amílcar de Castro's sculptures and Lygia Pape's prints. The manifesto that we wrote and published in the 1<sup>st</sup> Neoconcrete Exhibition's catalogue defined our position concerning the problems of Concrete art in particular and of contemporary art in general. The manifesto states at a certain point: 'the Neoconcrete, born of a need to express, within the structural language of the new plasticity, modern man's complex reality, denies the validity of the positivist and scientific attitudes in art and replaces the problem of expression, incorporating the new 'verbal' dimensions created by the constructive non-figurative art'. Neoconcrete art's main characteristic is therefore to make Concrete art's geometrical vocabulary become expressive. In reality, it is a new vocabulary, as until now, with a few exceptions such as Mondrian, Pevsner and Malevich, Concrete art has tended to maintain its language within a dangerous rationalist objectivism. The extreme mark of this tendency finds itself in the São Paulo group, for which the notions of time, space, structure, in art are the same as in science. The neoconcretists deny this identity which, from their point of view, removes art from the category of means of knowledge and independent creative language. For the neoconcretists, the work of art is 'a being whose reality does not expend itself in the external relations of its elements' and that 'only gives itself fully to a direct, phenomenological approach'. Because of this, objective notions of time, space and structure cannot be applied to such a reality, rather organic than mechanic. The work of art being an expression of a human world, of individuals and not machines, the time, space and structure which compose it (and which are constituted in it) cannot be abstract notions valid only for scientific objectivity or for rational thought. The direct experience of the world teaches us that, in perception the world is an ambiguous field and pregnant with a non-thetic meaning, a meaning that is inherent to the man-world relation itself. In this natural experience of things, time, space, form and structure are an existential totality – that is, given as meaning and not as cause and effect relationships. The work of art, naturally inserted into the dimension of this experience, cannot be understood outside of it. Neither will the artist's work make sense, provided that he moves away from this zone where they create 'with lights off' (Mário Pedrosa), to carry out the work, from outside, like a technician or a scientist.

#### ORGANIC FORM

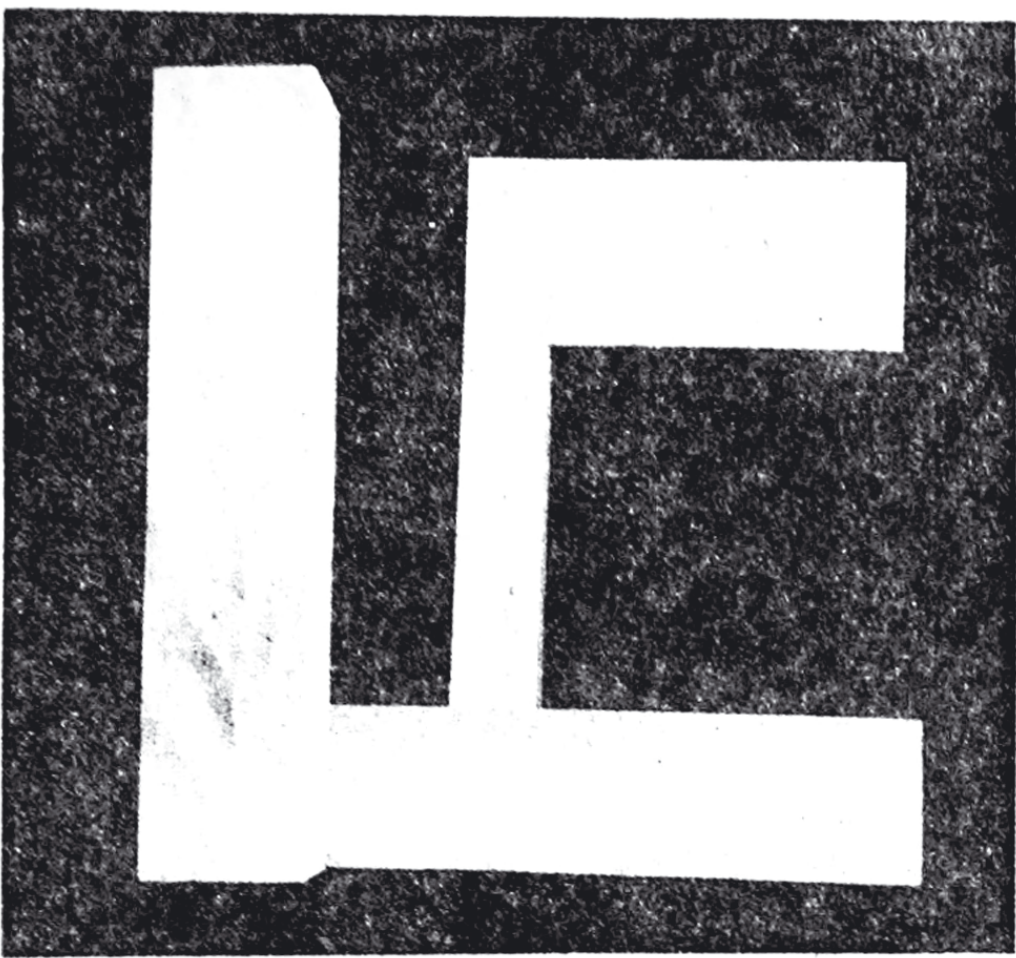
How can such a position – let's call it an existential position – be manifested in the Neoconcrete work of art? Before anything else, by the rejection of the serial form and of purely optical effects, which oblige us to have with the painting (or poem) the distant relationship of a mere spectator. The neoconcretist, going beyond this superficial level of perception, creates organic time-spacial structures like a concretion of its own interior impulse from which the work was born. The dialogue which is established between the work and the public is carried out in the field of internal experiences; the work speaks to the intimacy of man and not just to his sensorial exterior. The difference between an expression of a serial form and of a Neoconcrete organic form was well defined by Lygia Clark in an interview with the Sunday Supplement of the JORNAL DO BRASIL. She says: 'Faced with a serial composition, there is the spectator and the work. He places himself far from it and remains there, taking note of the space, using each form as a departure and arrival point. The spectator takes note of a mechanical space (time). My aim was to make the spectator participate actively in this expressed space, penetrating it and being penetrated by it. Seeing it less in a mental-optimal way, and feeling it also in an organic manner'. The serial form presupposes a discontinuity



Franz Weissman



Lygia Pape



Amílcar de Castro

The first experiments carried out in Brazil in the field of Concrete art date from 1951, when the critic Mário Pedrosa, questioning official Brazilian art, opened the way to a renovation of our visual vocabulary. Two artists first heard this appeal for a pure pictorial language: Ivan Serpa and Almir Mavignier. Yet, in the 1<sup>st</sup> São Paulo Biennial (1951), Serpa received the national prize for best young painter, with a Concrete painting. This 1<sup>st</sup> São Paulo Biennial, like the second (1953), was decisively important to the development of Concrete art among us, and thereafter in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro groups of young artists were formed that gave themselves up to exploring abstract geometrical forms. Décio Vieira, Aloísio Carvão, João José, Lygia Pape, Hélio and César Otíicica gathered with Serpa. Meanwhile in São Paulo Geraldo de Barros and Waldemar Cordeiro were forming another group. From this effervescence other artists arose, such as the sculptors Franz Weissmann and Amílcar de Castro, and the painter Lygia Clark, who was arriving from Europe. It is important to note that the Concrete artists from Rio, although they were always in touch with the others, dedicated themselves to an intuitive and differentiated research, while those from São Paulo, right from the start, lent towards a dogmatic position which culminated in a kind of systematisation of the expressive values and processes. On the occasion of the 1<sup>st</sup> National Exhibition of Concrete Art (1956-1957) the difference between the two groups was glaring. This exhibition launched the first experiences of the Concrete poets who, themselves, presented two varying positions concerning the creative work, being up to the trio Augusto and Haroldo de Campos, Décio Pignatari, from São Paulo, the same rationalist and objectivist of the painters lead by Waldemar Cordeiro. Later a manifesto signed by Reynaldo Jardim, Oliveira Bastos and myself, published in the Sunday Supplement of the JORNAL DO BRASIL (23/6/1957) explained the difference between the Concrete poets from São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, the latter claiming in opposition to the São Paulo dogmatism, a non-dogmatic position and a replacing of intuition in the centre of poetic work. These two positions, from 1957 until now, have become more accentuated, more defined, increasing the difference between the two groups, between the two tendencies. In March 1959, the visual artists and poets of the Rio group got together in an exhibition at Rio de Janeiro's Museum of Modern Art to mark a new position concerning Concrete art, a position which had already been implied in the collective exhibition of 1956/57. They gave the name 'Neoconcrete Art' to this new position, in a manifesto signed by Amílcar de Castro, Ferreira Gullar, Franz Weissman, Lygia Clark, Lygia Pape, Reynaldo Jardim and Theon Spanúdis. However, so that the evolution of Concrete art to Neoconcrete can be well grasped, it is necessary to closely examine the concretist movement from the 1<sup>st</sup> National Exhibition of Concrete Art.

#### ART AS A 'PRODUCT'

In issue number 20 of the magazine AD (Art and Decoration), December 1956, was published an article-manifesto by Waldemar Cordeiro, defining the position of the group of Concrete artists from São Paulo. In this article Cordeiro states that 'object and sensibility find, within the avant-guard, a new correlation, that comes to place in a realist manner, the process called catharsis wanting to indicate by this term the moment of transformation of the objective into subjective, from the material into the spiritual, from the practical into theoretical'. This thought becomes clearer later when he says that 'art, in short, is not an expression but a product'. Despite affirming in the article that art is 'the object of an expression' and that 'art is different from pure thought because it is material and from ordinary things because it is thought'. In reality the manifesto's main meaning resides above all in the concept of works of art 'as objects which possess historical value in man's social life', of the work of art as a product. But an artistic product? This would only be exchanging one term for another. Cordeiro really affirms that a work of art is a product of the age. It is not an expression but the fruit of an inevitable coincidence between individual mechanism and social mechanism.

This mechanical concept both of society and of man is what allows him to presume that an art carried out without any subjective participation, will find its expression at a later date. Still within this mechanistic notion he proposes a new dimension for painting: time as movement.

We are trying to extract, in this interpretation, Cordeiro's constant line of thought in this article. It is true that on many points his statements deny the concept of art we have just presented. But these assertions contradict the manifesto's main points.

Cordeiro's works, and those of the other artists of his group, represent many other clarifying elements of their position in relation to Concrete art. Their paintings, almost without exception, represent geometric 'ideas' to which the artists give concretion. All the pictorial elements are used objectively to build this 'idea'. Colour in this painting is merely indicative element of a form, of a place. The painters themselves affirm that they could use other colours instead of those, without the 'idea' of the painting being altered. What does this mean? It means that this painting avoids any existential contamination, whether subjective or hedonist. We could thus affirm that we are dealing with a purely mental art. However Cordeiro refutes this alternative. There is no other alternative, therefore, apart from admitting that these artists intend to build structures which explore the

'geometric possibilities of our eye' establishing a direct relation of stimulus and reflection. They admit that man is a mechanism, void of any transcendental significance, who finds meaning only outside of himself, in the social environment, in the era. But from where do the era and the society take their meaning, given the fact that it is not the individual who lends it meaning? Within this scheme the era's meaning would only be found in the 'direction' which history impresses on social structures. In the final analysis this would be the content of the work of art which, to deserve it, did away with any and all personal attribute. The examination could be taken further, to the point of proving the separation which one such theory establishes between person and individual. Our purpose here is only to define the concept of art that the São Paulo group sustained in the 1<sup>st</sup> National Exhibition of Concrete Art.

#### POEM WITHOUT POET

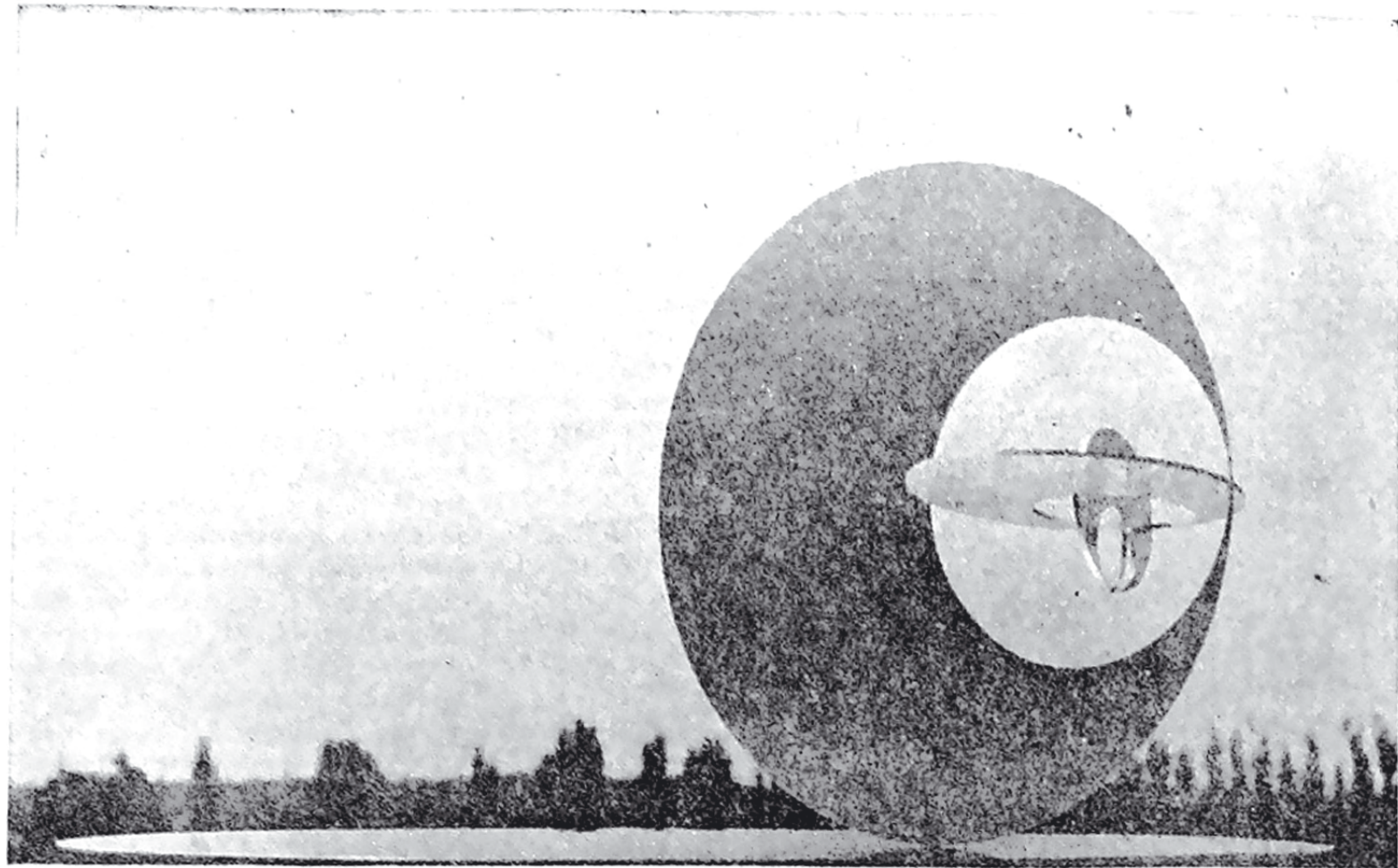
Let us see now what the thesis of the São Paulo poets was. In this same issue of 'AD', Décio Pignatari, Haroldo and Augusto de Campos published short professions of faith in which they define their concept of Concrete poetry. Pignatari affirms that the verse is in crisis because it obliges the reader to take a false attitude, 'leaving him tied to the logical bonds of language'. Concrete poetry, then, would break these bonds, using space 'as a relational element of structure'. This poetry's aim would be 'faster communication', such as that we are given by neon ads and cartoon strips. Movement would also be in the poem, which would be a dynamic structure, having the ideogram as its foundation. To these poets poetry would also become an object, a 'consumer industrial product of consummation/realisation' rethinking the expression and subjectivity. Pignatari states: 'Concrete poetry severs with the symbol, the myth. With the mystery. The more lucid intellectual work to a clearer intuition'. He affirms that 'renouncing the dispute of the absolute we stay in the magnetic field of the perennial relative. The chromicrometification of chance, the control, the cybernetics'. For these poets the poem regulates itself as if gifted with 'feed-back'. In the São Paulo poets' conception, the new poetry should become 'a general art of language', comprising propaganda, press, radio, television. They also believe that free of any subjective allusion this poetry will be popular, easier to comprehend, at the same time as giving the word all its expressive force of a 'vêvivocovisual object', Haroldo de Campos even affirms that it is 'a new art of expression' which 'demands a new optic, acoustic, syntax, morphology and lexicon'. In summary 'Concrete poetry' is the appropriate language to the contemporary creative mind.

As can be seen, in the case of both the poets and the painters, the ultimate justification of an artistic creation is its synchronisation with the era, which is the only thing to give it meaning. These poets believe that language as we know it is an important vehicle for expressing the complex contemporary reality and that it becomes indispensable to adapt it to the new expressive needs. This reality, to which they allude, is the reality that science and mechanics erected, within which individual values lose any meaning. Due to this, the first step towards renovating language is to bring it as close as possible to the characteristic of this new world; the poem should not express more than a structural relation, above all optical, related by the words' formal elements. The poem will regulate itself, almost build itself, repelling any less objective intervention, that draws the poet away from the condition of simple 'technician'. The poem will be constructed according to the Gestaltian laws of proximity and similarity – affirm the São Paulo poets. Nevertheless, how can we know that it simply is not possible to build anything outside of these laws – not even perceive – we should interpret this statement in the following manner: it is not the poet himself who constructs the poem, as it is the own perceptive laws themselves that determine its structure. I avoid examining the possibility of a similar phenomenon, it being up to me only to observe that that statement coincides with the same negation of the artist as an individual capable of establishing a new meaning in the world. In this sense we can understand the statement that such poetry is made especially for our time. The 1<sup>st</sup> National Exhibition of Concrete Art was held successively in São Paulo (Modern Art Museum, December), and in Rio (Ministry of Education, February), having a wide repercussion in the press. The painters Aloísio Carvão, Hermelindo Fiaminghi, Judite Lauand, Mauricio Nogueira Lima, Rubem M. Ludolf, César Otíicica, Hélio Otíicica, Luís Sacilotto, Alfredo Volpi, Décio Vieira, Alexandre Wollner, Lygia Clark, Waldemar Cordeiro, João S. Costa and Ivan Serpa, the designer Lothar Charoux, the printer Lygia Pape, the sculptors Casimiro Féjer and Franz Weissmann, the poets Ronaldo Azeredo, Wladimir Dias Pino, Augusto and Haroldo Campos, Décio Pignatari and Ferreira Gullar participated in the exhibition.

#### NEOCONCRETE

From the 1<sup>st</sup> National Exhibition of Concrete Art onwards the initial differences between the Rio and the São Paulo group became accentuated. The São Paulo painters continued with their proposal to only speak to the optical, creating visual tensions and vibrations at the surface. The poets took their intention of entirely eliminating the poet from the creation of the poem to an extreme, having even proposed to Haroldo de Campos



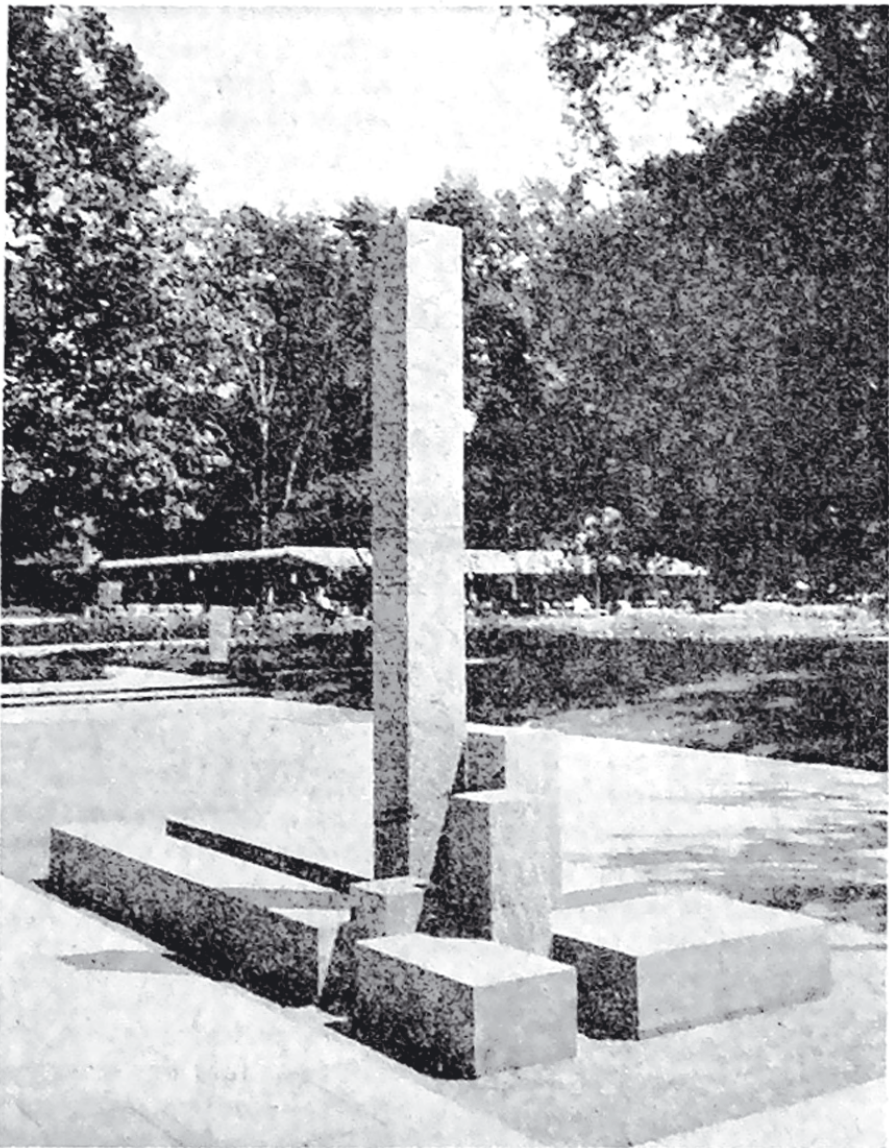


Sculpture (aluminum anodized)

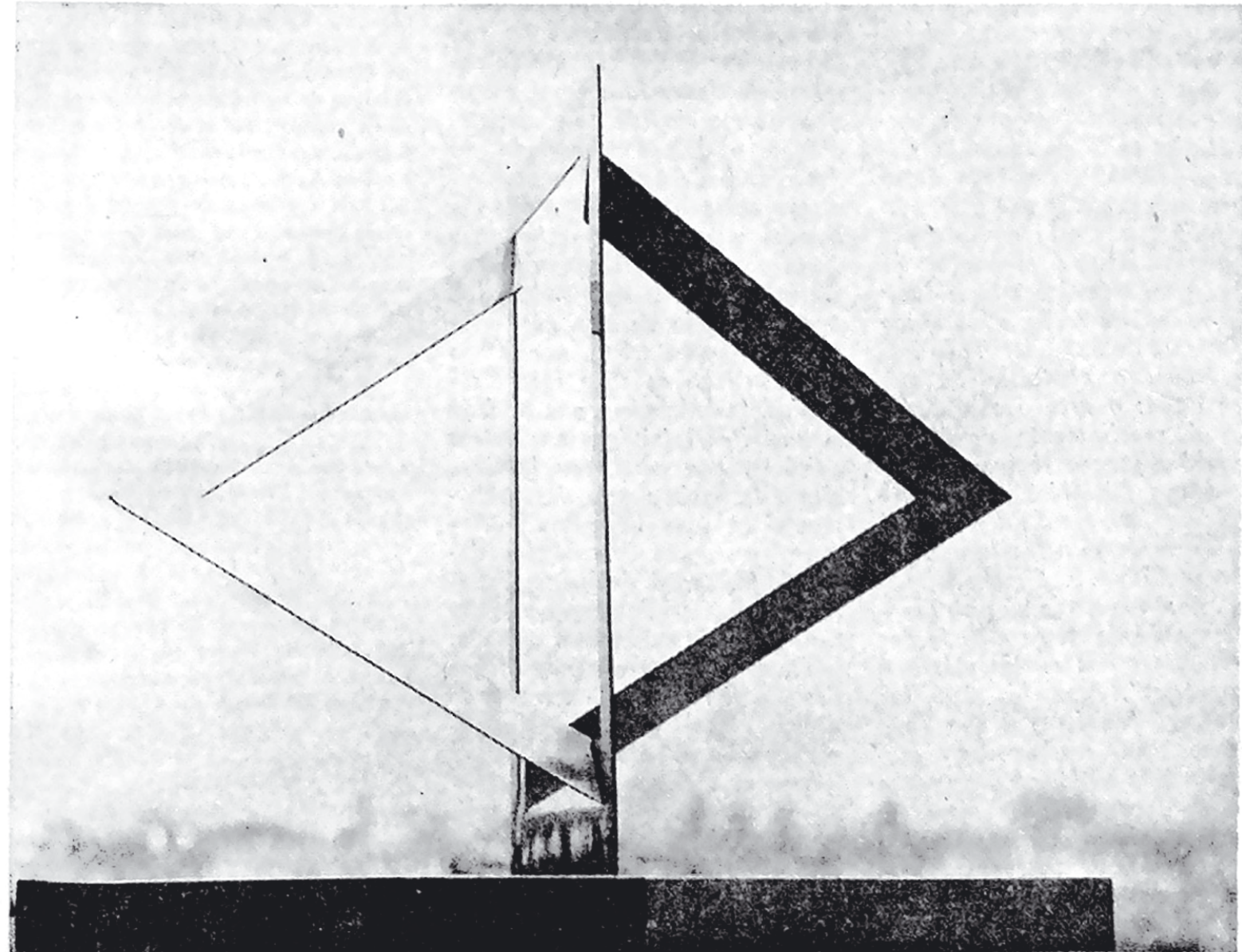
Mary Vieira - who is much better known in Europe than in Brazil - is from Minas Gerais. She has been living in Zurich since 1951, visited Brazil in 1956 and has returned now to attend the Critics International Congress which took place, a short while ago, in Brasília, São Paulo and Rio. Mary is also linked to Brasília, not only by her enthusiasm, but also by services rendered. It was Mary who planned and organised the Brasília Exhibition (the first exhibition about the Brazilian Capital in Europe) in the Brazilian Pavilion at Berlin's International Architecture Exhibition (Interbau) in 1957. Before her departure to Europe, she worked organising stands at commercial and industrial exhibitions, such as the Belo Horizonte Samples Fair, the pavilion of the state of Minas Gerais at the International Exhibition of Industry and Commerce in Quitandinha, among others. Mary Vieira's aim was, with these jobs, to make enough money to go and study and work in Europe: which was what she did at the end of 1951. Arriving in Zurich she dedicated herself to sculpture. She approached Max Bill, who at that time directed the Superior School of Form in Ulm, but never attended any courses at that school. Firstly, she was influenced by the work of that Swiss sculptor but little by little she found her own personal language. She had some exhibitions: in 1952 she exhibited with the Aliança Group, from Switzerland, in Hellmhaus; in 1954 she participated in the exhibition of Architecture, Printing and Sculpture, in the Kunstgewerbe-schule; in 1955 she exhibited in Leverkusen, in Germany; in December and January (1958-59) she held her own exhibition in the Gallery of Modern Art, Basel. Starting from the concretist concept of sculpture, Mary Vieira has been developing her expression in a more ample sense, not dogmatic, within a formal language which is rigorous without losing out on invention and fantasy. It is an optimistic art, committed to internal expression.

## s u n d a y s u p p l e m e n t

J O R N A L D O B R A S I L , Saturday, 17<sup>th</sup> October 1959



Elevated Cross (granite). Made for an exhibition of gardens and sculpture in Zurich



Sculpture (stainless steel)

## Statement

## Synthesis

## of the Arts

-What do you think of the Ulm School today?

- Ulm never really happened; it just remained a school

- Has Concrete art died?

- It depends what you understand by Concrete art. If Concrete art is perceived as a way in which a person can accomplish what they are deep down, it has not died. The false concepts concerning Concrete art have died.

- For you, what is Concrete art?

- It is the fulfilment of an idea which did not previously exist in the material world. A non-deductive expression and that due to this materialises itself externally to the artist. Concrete art does not allude to any reality outside of man, but to his interior. Neither can it restrict itself to optical effects.

- And Tachisme?

- Its defenders state that Tachisme portrays the present era, chaotic and catastrophic. But this is, in reality, its limitation, because it concerns an art that does not propose anything, only reflection. It is the opposite of Concrete art as I understand it - and which is closer to what you call 'Neoconcrete' - as this art, at the moment it seeks interior order, proposes a new reality, a new world. I believe that we can only emerge from the chaos in which the present world finds itself by organising ourselves on the inside; and this is essential because it is not man's destiny to live in chaos. If we artists do not contribute by giving internal satisfaction to man, we have failed in our mission. In this sense I believe in the social function of the artist and perceive art as a seed of a social renovation.

- You had no exhibits at the 5<sup>th</sup> São Paulo Biennial — why not?

- I did not receive the registration forms and when I asked for them, they replied that there were no further places. It was a shame. I am sorry about the possible happiness I may have given someone with my works which did not happen. I had five brand new sculptures to exhibit at the 5<sup>th</sup> Biennial.

- Do you intend to exhibit in Brazil?

- My works are available to anyone who wishes to exhibit them here. For my part I would be very happy as I believe that in Brazil there is a public for this.

- I am not referring, obviously, to people with a lack of cultural appreciation, people with prejudice. I am referring to people who are simple, straightforward and those who are truly well educated - these people receive things with more modesty .

## Art is

## the seed

## of

## social

## renovation

*Carola Welcker, a Swiss art critic, is gathering a series of statements from artists (painters, sculptors and architects) concerning the problem of the synthesis of the arts. Here follows the statement that Mary Vieira wrote for the CW poll.*

*What leads us today to talk about the integration of the arts?*

*The reason is in the need that we have to establish harmony between ourselves and the world which surrounds us.*

*A path to obtain this involves integrating the various parts of our lives, according to the social conditions of our time.*

*This integration which in the past was carried out in an evident and natural manner, was undone by the development of technique, but life demands of us, today, the reintegration in a new manner.*

*We have, on the one hand, reason, as a necessity, on the other hand, the demand for emotion (pure art) freed in relation to the practical function.*

*As an example of the first, let us take Architecture, and for the second Sculpture - the union of both signifies integration.*

*Architecture, by means of reason, determines space; Sculpture begins with the problem of space. By space, we mean its universal concept, of which our physical space, in other words, the material space, is a special case; another special case would be the mathematical concept of space.*

*From the concept of space we pass on to the concept of form.*

*Space and form encounter each other not only in nature but in all of man's creations, space and form are realities, wherever man is.*

*In urbanism or an architectural complex the piece of land in question should be in harmony (or disharmony) with man's creation (architecture, lighting, traffic), considering the function and the beauty as a service to humanity.*

*Integration begins between the architecture and the place where it will be created; between the sculpture and the place - the piece of land - where it will be placed. First as free elements and then related to each other, to which we give the name urbanism.*

*In Architecture, where function and beauty are united, no other attribute is necessary, it is complete in itself. This architecture is that which arises from the function to determine the space, from space to determine the material, - and the form is the result. If this space really represents its function, if the material corresponds exactly to the necessity of space, the form as a result should be exact, therefore beautiful.*

*In the Sculpture of our time, space becomes visible through the material in the form.*

*Here the determining factor is not the function, but rather the pure idea (pure artistic idea).*

*Sculpture is none other than space, which through movement in time, becomes form. In architecture as in sculpture, form is the result.*

*The quality of form in architecture, where function is the starting point, is different from the quality of form in sculpture, where the pure artistic idea is determinant. Architecture aims to satisfy the needs of men, as a physical body overall, while sculpture responds to his spiritual demands.*

*Thus man finds in architecture and in sculpture (in functional arts and pure arts), the tranquillity which his soul yearns for, both are requirements of life. Only when these two realities, already integrated in themselves, integrate themselves into urbanism (city, neighbourhood, residential complex or wherever the human being resides) in function of man as body - spirit, only then will we integrate art as our time demands it.*

*This is social art: to offer man the elements which he needs to re-establish within himself the integration of body - spirit according to his own needs.*







# Theory of the non-object

Ferreira Gullar

The expression ‘non-object’ (1) does not intend to describe a negative object nor any other thing that may be opposite to material objects. The non-object is not an anti-object but a special object through which a synthesis of sensorial and mental experiences is intended to take place. It is a transparent body in terms of phenomenological knowledge: while being entirely perceptible it leaves no trace. It is a pure appearance. All true works of art are in fact non-objects, if this denomination is now adopted it is to enable an emphasis on the problems of current art from a new angle.

## THE DEATH OF PAINTING

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

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

The object that is pulverised in the cubist picture is the painted object, the represented object. In short, it is painting that lies dying there, dislocated in search of a new structure, a new form of being, a new significance. Yet in these pictures (synthetic phase, hermetic phase) there are not only dislocated cubes, abstract planes: there are also signs, arabesques, collage, numbers, letters, sand, textiles, nails, etc. These elements are indicative of the presence of two opposing forces: one which attempts relentlessly to rid itself of all and any contamination with the object; the other is characteristic of the return of the object as sign, for which it is necessary to maintain the space, the pictorial environment born out of the representation of the object. The latter could be associated with the so-called abstract painting, of sign and matter, which persists today in Tachism.

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

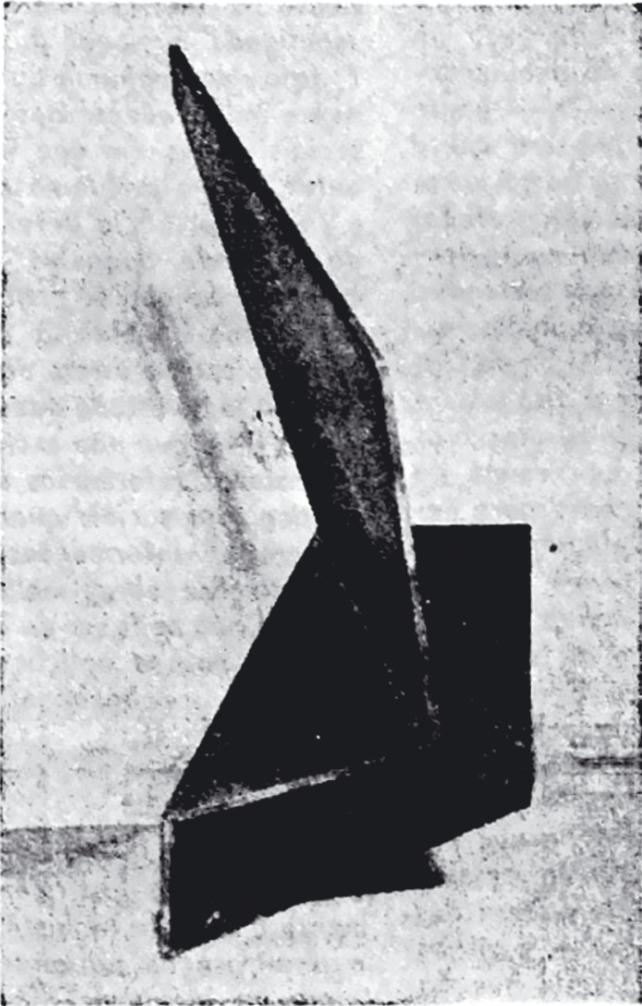
The problem Mondrian set himself could not be solved by theory. He attempted to destroy the plane with the use of great black lines which cut the canvas from one edge to the other – indicating that it relates to the external space – yet these lines still oppose themselves to a background and the contradiction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

## THE WORK OF ART AND THE OBJECT

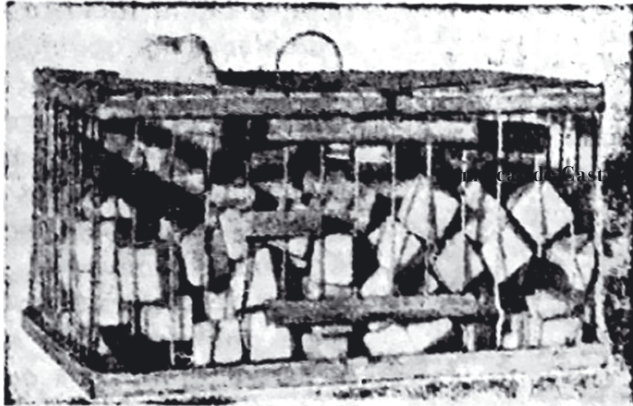
For the traditional painter, the white canvas was merely the material support on to which he would sketch the suggestion of natural space. Subsequently, this suggested space, this metaphor of the world, would be surrounded by a frame that had as a fundamental function of bringing the painting into the world. This frame was the mediator between fiction and reality, a bridge and barrier, protecting the picture, the fictitious space, while also facilitating its communication with the external, real, space. Thus when painting radically abandons representation – as in the case of Mondrian, Malevich and his followers – the frame loses its meaning. The erection of a metaphorical space within

a well-protected corner of the world no longer being necessary, it is now the case of establishing the work of art within the space of reality, lending to this space, through the apparition of the work – this special object – significance and transcendence.

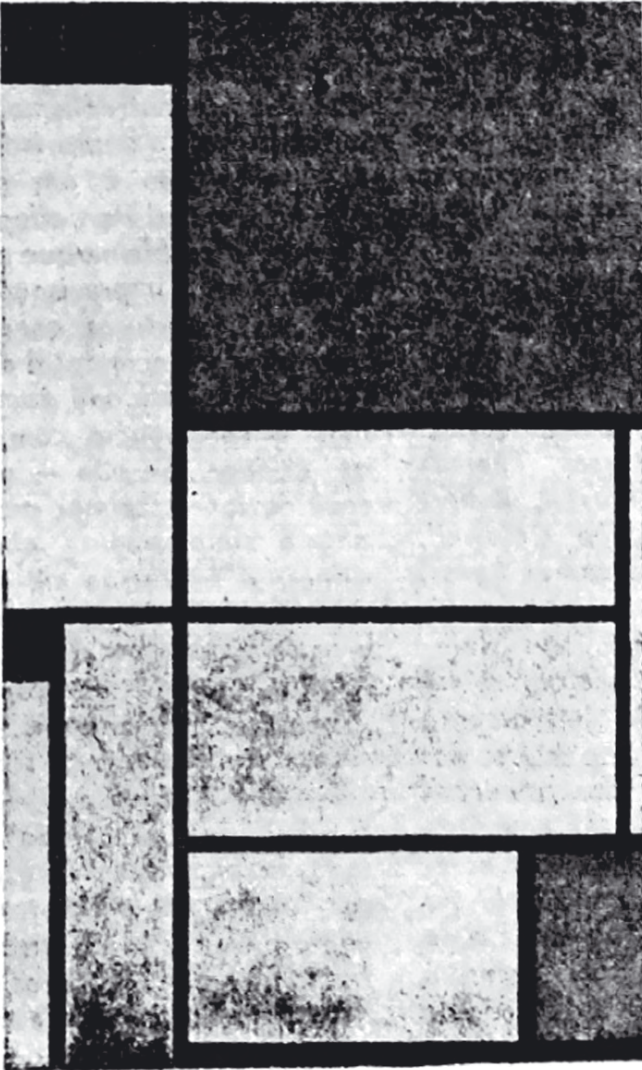
It is a fact that things occurred with a certain level of sluggishness, equivocations and deviations. These were undoubtedly inevitable and necessary. The use of collage, sand and other elements taken from the real, already signal the necessity to substitute fiction by reality. When the dadaist Kurt Schwitters later builds the Merzbau – made from objects and fragments he found in the streets – it is once again the same intention which has further developed, now freed from the frame, and in real space. At this point it becomes difficult to distinguish the work of art from the real objects. Indicative of this mutual overflow between the work of art and the object is Marcel Duchamp’s notorious blague, submitted to the Independents’ Exhibition in New York in 1917, a fountain-urinal of the kind used in bar toilets. The ready-made technique was adopted by the surrealists. It consists of revealing the object, dislocated from its usual function, thus



Amílcar de Castro



Marcel Duchamp. Ready Made 1921



Mondrian. Painting

establishing new relationships between it and the other objects. This process of transfiguration of the object is limited by the fact that it is grounded not so much in the formal qualities of the object but in its connection with the object’s quotidian use. Soon that obscurity that is characteristic of the thing returns to envelop the work, bringing it back to the common level. On this front, the artists were defeated by the object.

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

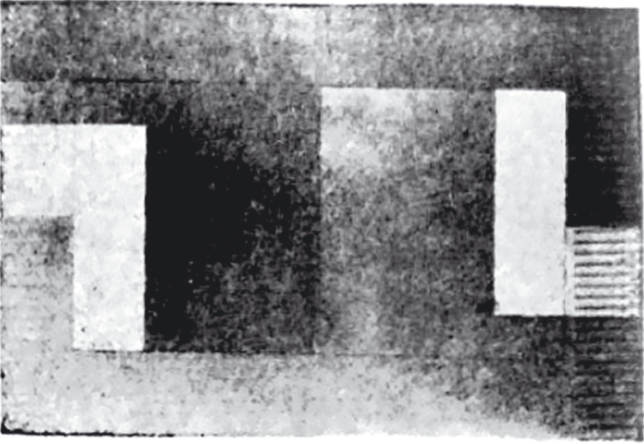
The path followed by the Russian avant-garde has proved to be more profound. Tatlin’s and Rodchenko’s counter-reliefs, together with Malevich’s Suprematist architecture, are indicative of a coherent revolution from the represented space towards real space, from represented forms towards created forms.

The same fight against the object can be seen in modern sculpture from Cubism onwards. With Vantongerloo (de Stijl) the figure disappears completely; with the Russian constructivists (Tatlin, Pevsner, Gabo), mass is eliminated and the sculpture is divested of its condition of thing. Similarly, if non-representational painting is attracted towards the orbit of objects, this force is exerted with far greater intensity amongst non-figurative sculpture. Transformed into object, sculpture rids itself of its most common characteristic: mass. But this is not all. The base – sculpture’s equivalent to the painting’s frame – is eliminated. Vantongerloo and Moholy-Nagy attempted to create sculptures that would inhabit space without a support. They intended to eliminate weight from sculpture, another fundamental characteristic of the object. What can be thus verified is that while painting, freed from its representational intentions, tends to abandon the surface to take place in space, thus approaching sculpture, the latter liberates itself from the figure, the base and of its mass, therefore maintaining very little affinity with what traditionally has been denominated as sculpture. In fact, there is more affinity between a counter-relief by Tatlin and a sculpture by Pevsner than between a Maillol and a Rodin or Fidiás. The same could be said of a painting by Lygia Clark and a sculpture by Amílcar de Castro. From which we can conclude that current painting and sculpture are converging towards a common point, distancing themselves from their origins. They become special objects – non-objects – for which the denominations painting and sculpture perhaps no longer apply.

## PRIMARY FORMULATION

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

Putting the question in these terms demonstrates how the Tachiste and Informel experiments in painting and sculpture are conservative and reactionary in nature. The artists of these tendencies continue to make use



L. Clark, Modulated Surface



Malevitch. Suprematist Architecture



Tatlin. Counter-relief

of those conventional supports. With them the process is contrary: rather than rupturing the frame so that the work can pour out into the world, they keep the frame, the picture, the conventional space, and put the world (its raw material) within it. They part from the supposition that what is within the frame is the picture, the work of art. It is obvious that with this they also reveal the end of such a convention, but without announcing a future path.

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

(1) The term non-object, my suggestion, was adopted by Lygia Clark to designate her late works that are constructions built directly in space. However, the sense of the term is not restricted to naming specific works because non-objects are also sculptures by Amílcar de Castro and Franz Weissman, the latest works by Hélio Oiticica, Aloísio Carvão and Décio Vieira as well as the book-poems of the Neoconcrete poets.

s u n d a y

s u p p l e m e n t

J O R N A L D O B R A S I L

Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> of December 1959

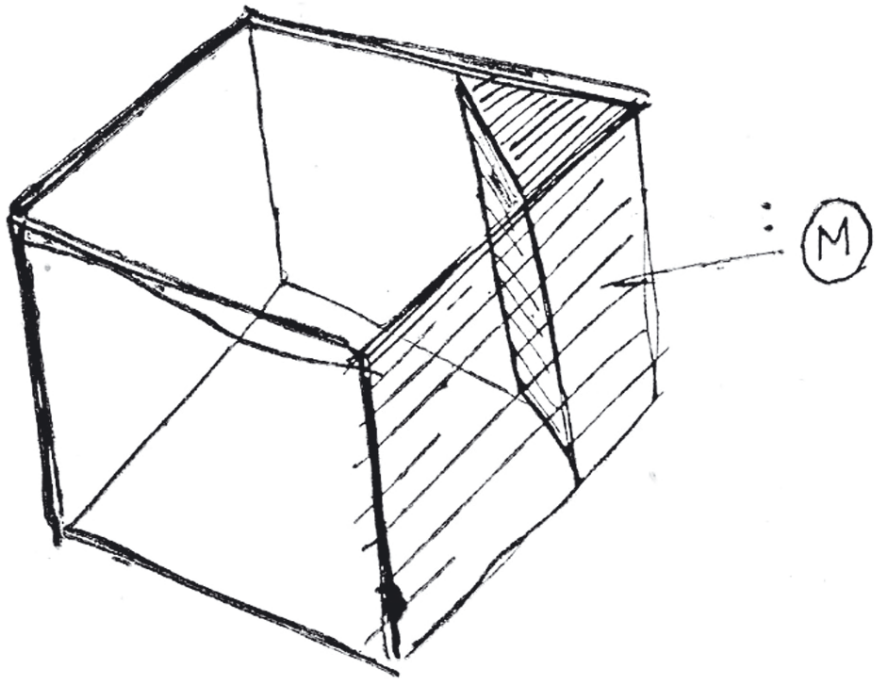






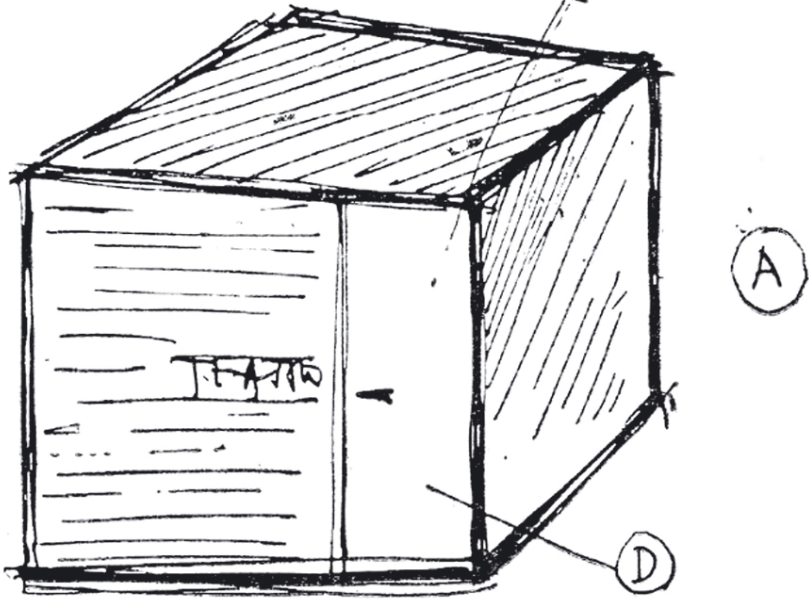
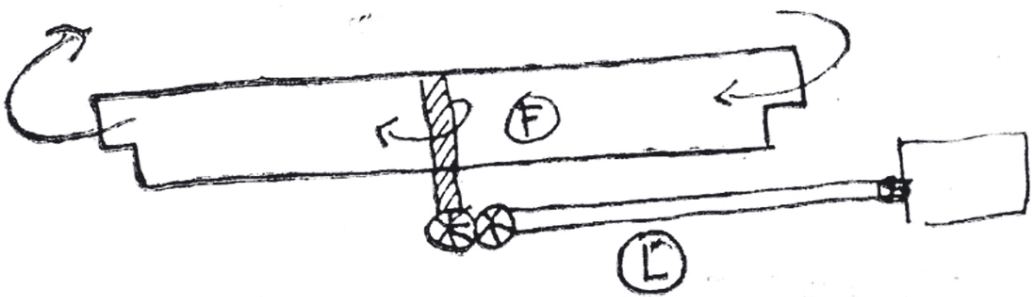
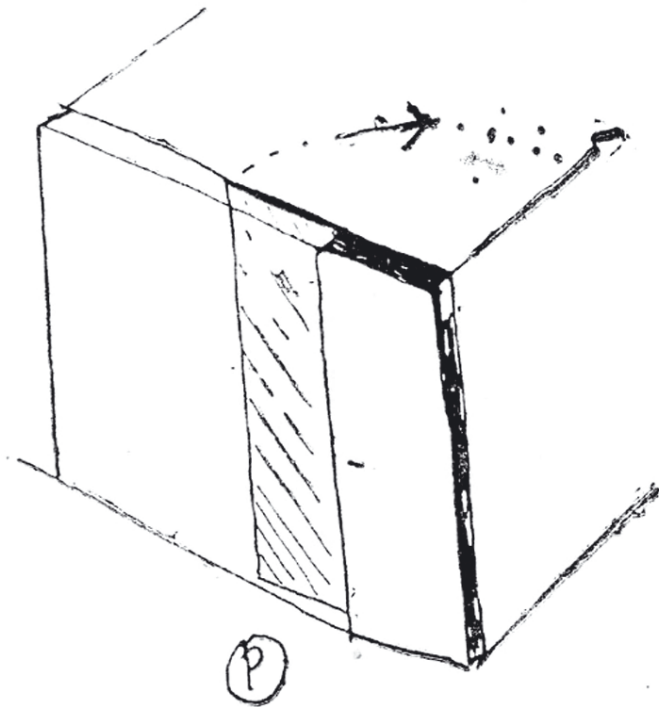
1. I am providing instructions for anybody who wishes to carry out the aesthetic construction of this which I am naming *integral theatre*: the stagnation of the evolutionary process of theatre as art, the natural debasement that a play undergoes interpreted by directors and actors; the need of a theatre that keeps itself integral, (which could be always performed on any day, at any time, as it was created); the subordination of theatre to literature and the need for it to become an autonomous art; new theatre, new architecture.
2. I am thus providing anybody who wishes to build an Integral Theatre with some necessary instructions by means of sketches illustrated on these pages:

A — External view of the Integral Theatre: a cube (sides of 4 to 6 metres)

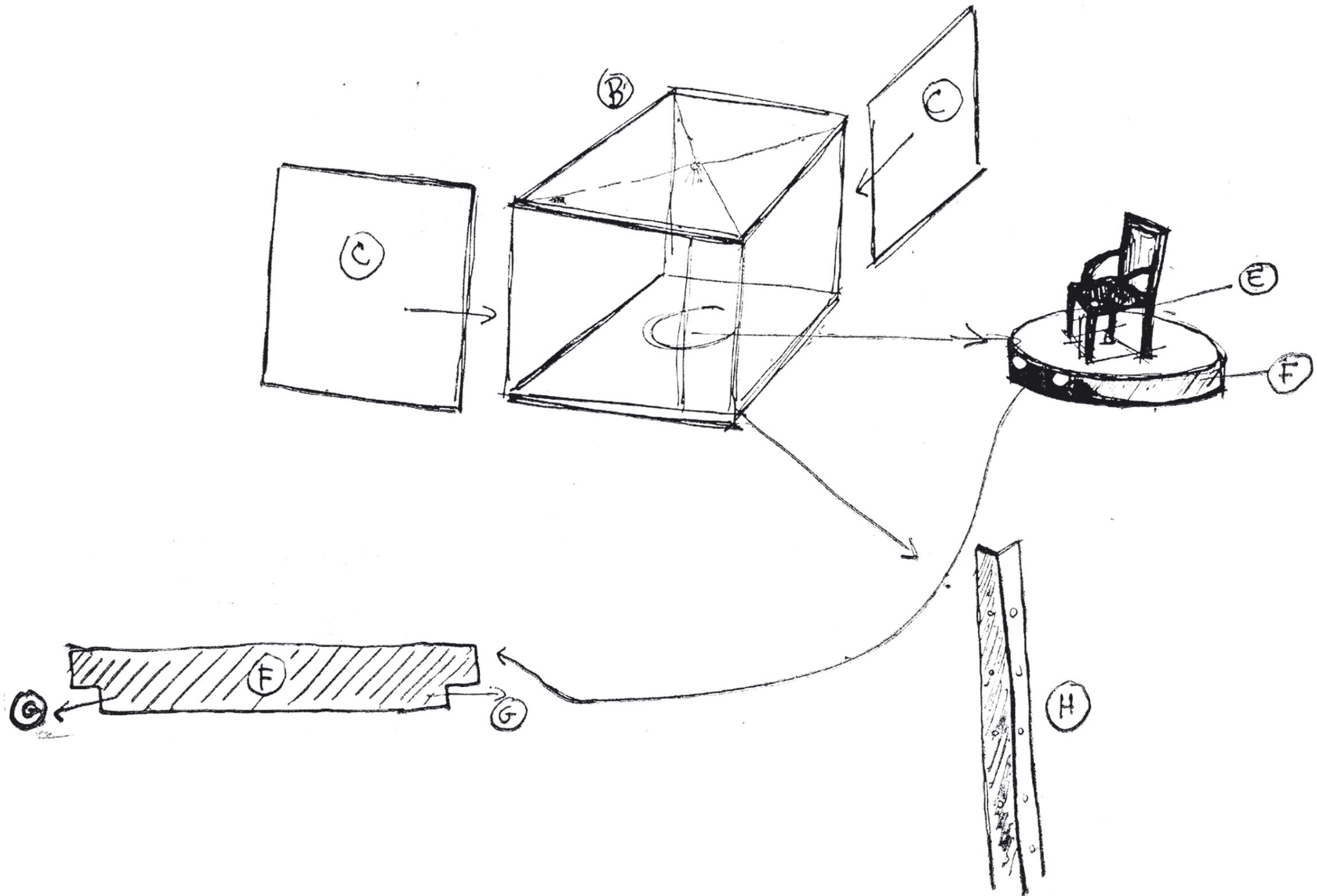


- B — Structure of the Cube (metal or wood) fitted in a way that walls and roof can be removed: word, colour and design on the walls which constitute the dramatic action.
- C — Removable wall.
- D — Entrance door.
- E — Chair placed in the centre of the theatre.
- F — Gyrating platform onto which the chair is fixed: only a single spectator is allowed to see the play at any time.
- G — Ventilation gaps.
- H — Detail of one of the supports for the cubic structure. Note the openings where the moveable walls should be fitted.
- I — Spot-lights placed on the platform (F) shed light on the walls. The colour and the intensity of the lights vary according to the play.
- J — The open cube. In planning a play, it is advisable to consider this vision in order to maintain unity.
- L — Platform, view of the mechanism that activates the gyrating platform. The engine (if noisy) should be placed outside the theatre.

- M — Additional walls can be fitted inside the theatre. They can be translucent so that lighting effects can be created.
- N — The spectator himself can activate the platform by pressing a button on the arms of the chair. The same process applies to the spot-lights.
- O — On entering, the spectator should only see the chair, lit from above.
- P — For the gap between the door and wall not to be visible, the internal edge of the door can be made wider.



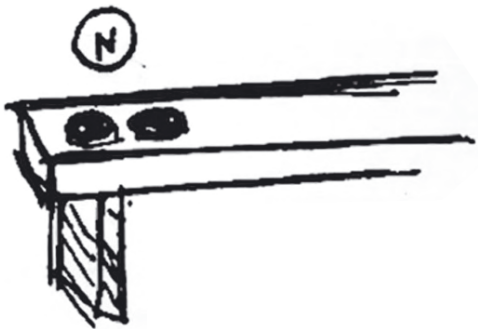
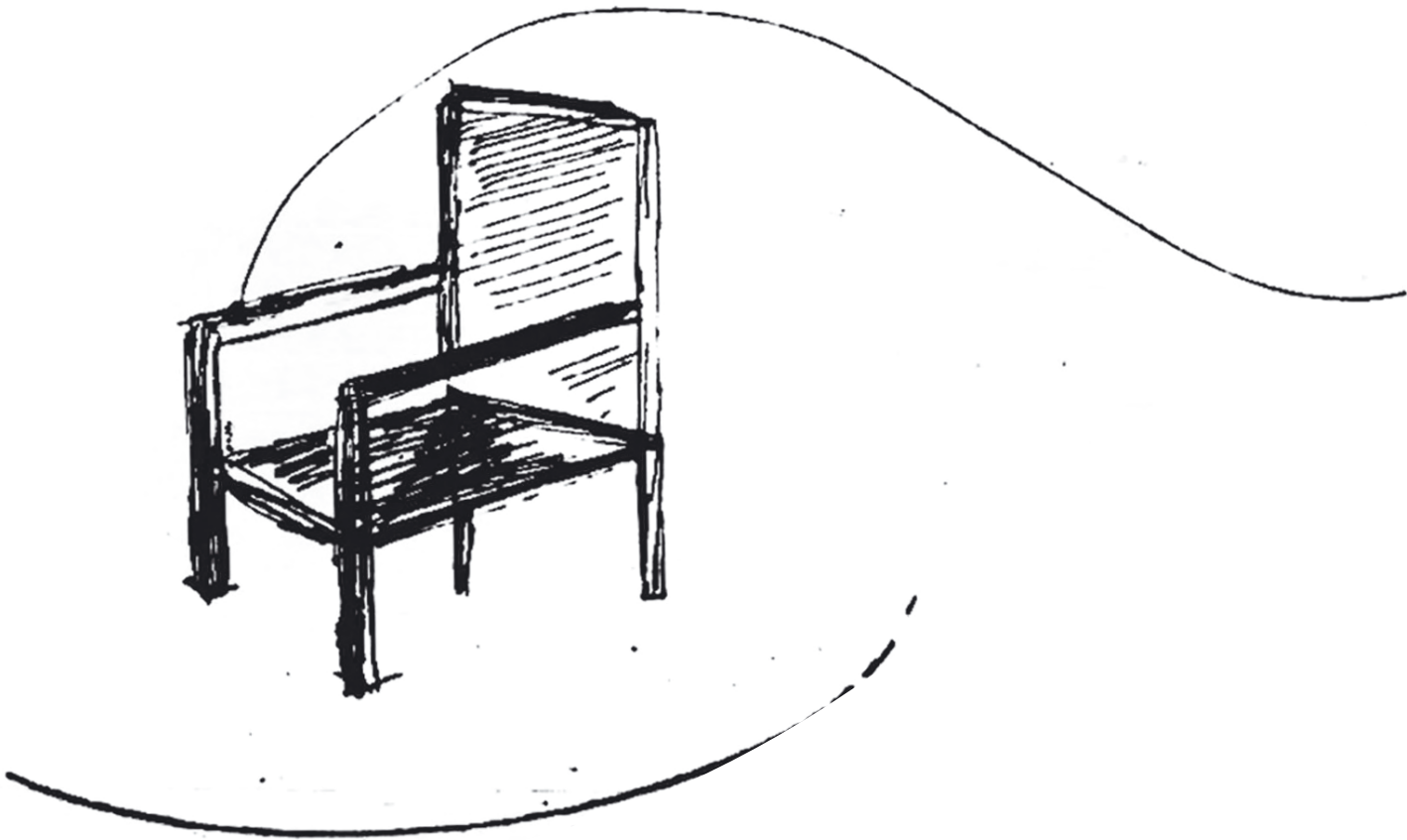
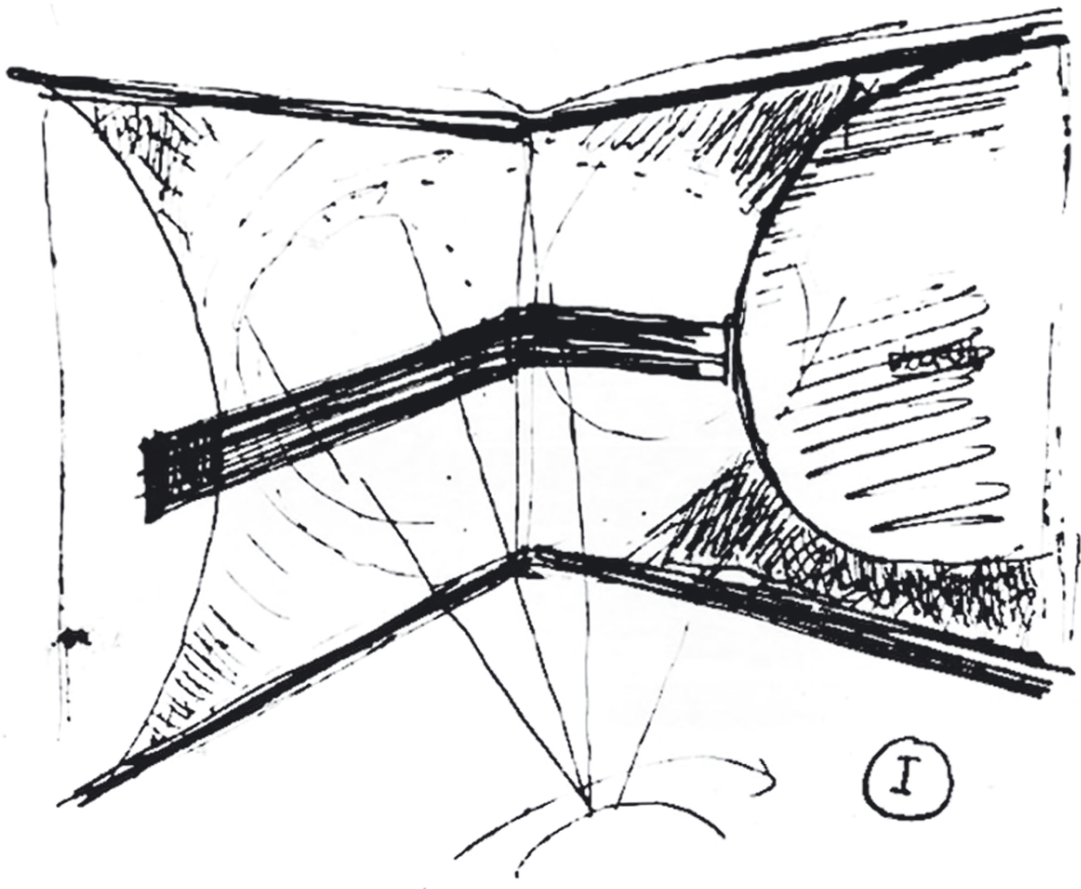
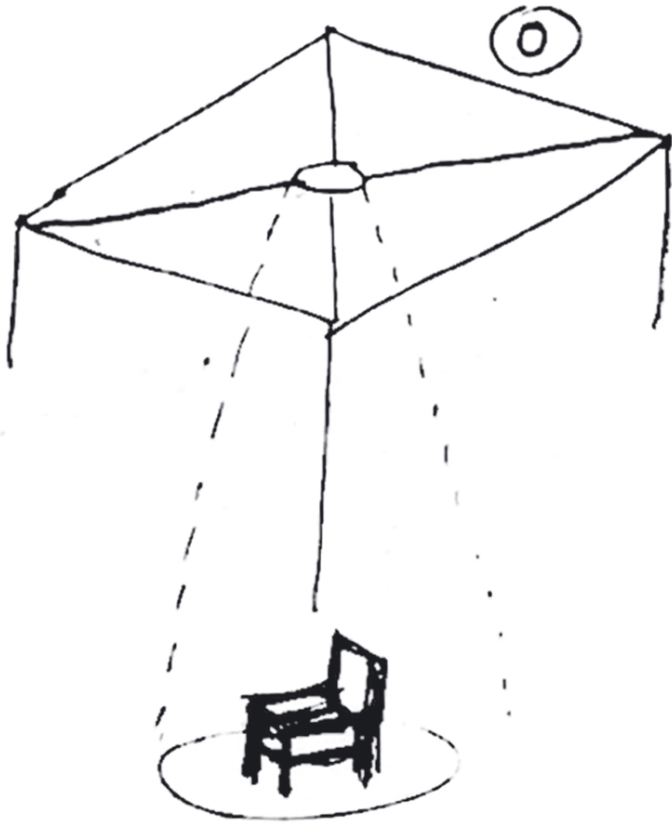
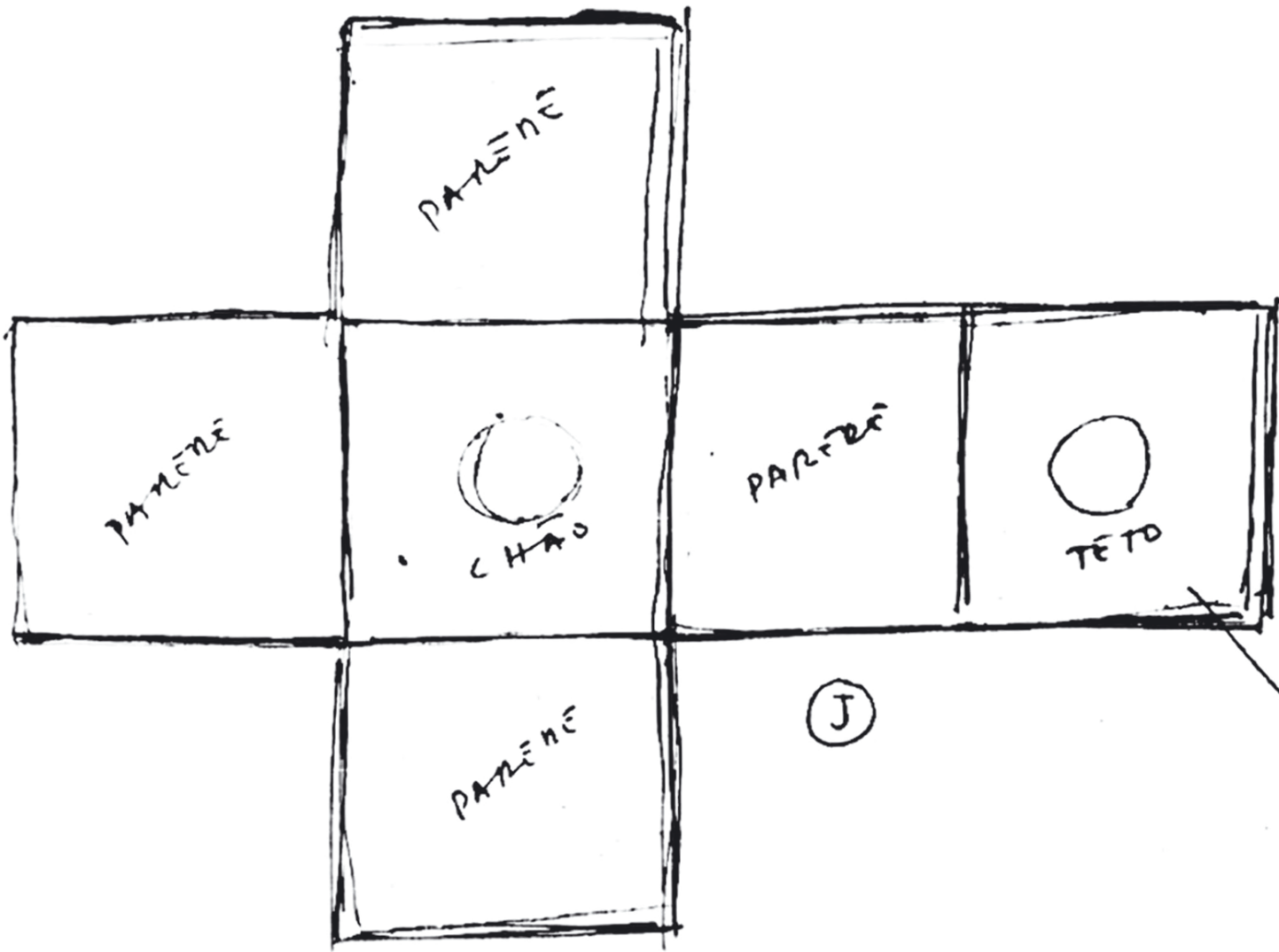
non-object: theatre





Considerations:

1. As the spectator enters the chamber of the theatre (as he comes in, on his own, into a dark compartment, without knowing what to expect), he is already in an emotional situation. He is alone and it is only he alone that is going to experience this theatrical adventure. He will be performing a ritual. Sitting down and allowing the whole organism of which he is a part to drop upon him. There is silence. There can be music but its source cannot be located. He will not be electrocuted. But he must live through an essential time.
2. During the time that the action takes place the spectator is disconnected from the conventional world, from day-to-day realities. It will be a cleansing moment. He should experience the core of an artwork.
3. The whole of the cubic space of the theatre is a component of the dramatic action. The spectator is crossed by the action that polarises and sets him in motion.



4. It is not advisable for the spectator to rise from the chair while the spectacle lasts (I use the term spectacle as I lack another more precise one). It would be really odd if somebody in a cube were to be walking to and from while a chair gyrates non-stop. Even more so with the spot-lights directed towards gyrating platform projecting their lights there. One could be lead to madness by this. The best way is to remain seated and bear the universe.
5. The Integral Theatre will be part of the Neoconcrete exhibition to be held in the second half of this year (1960).

6. In addition to the first spectacle that will be produced by the signatory, the Integral Theatre will be putting on productions by Ferreira Gullar, Amílcar de Castro. It will commission productions from Lygia Clark, Paulo Francis, José Carlos Oliveira, Gianni Ratto, Flávio Rangel, Oscar Niemeyer, Mário Pedrosa.



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Journal do Brasil - Saturday - Sunday

27, 28

February

1960

Just as off-set, rotogravure etc, did not make any contribution to the deepening of graphic arts, but did to the qualitative and quantitative processes of the reproduction of originals, the cinemascope, the panoramic screen, etc, did not contribute in any way to giving greater depth to cinema as an expression of art. In both cases we are dealing with a resource that is external to the essence of these arts, motivated by industrial and commercial needs. It seems to me to be necessary to study the problem of cinema from its *raison d'être*, so that it can be given an expressive independence of pure creation and no longer be a simple recreation and copy of reality, whichever that may be, realist or unrealist.

It also seems to me that the camera is responsible for cinema's situation, as the recorder of realities fabricated or documented, as filming is always subject to setting forms, however selected they may be, already defined before they become cinema forms.

This conditioning to a reality external to cinema itself gives justification to those who consider the documentary the only legitimate expression of the cinema that is out there. And a document is not art. Until kinetic photography is reinvented as art, it will be threatening the purity of cinema.

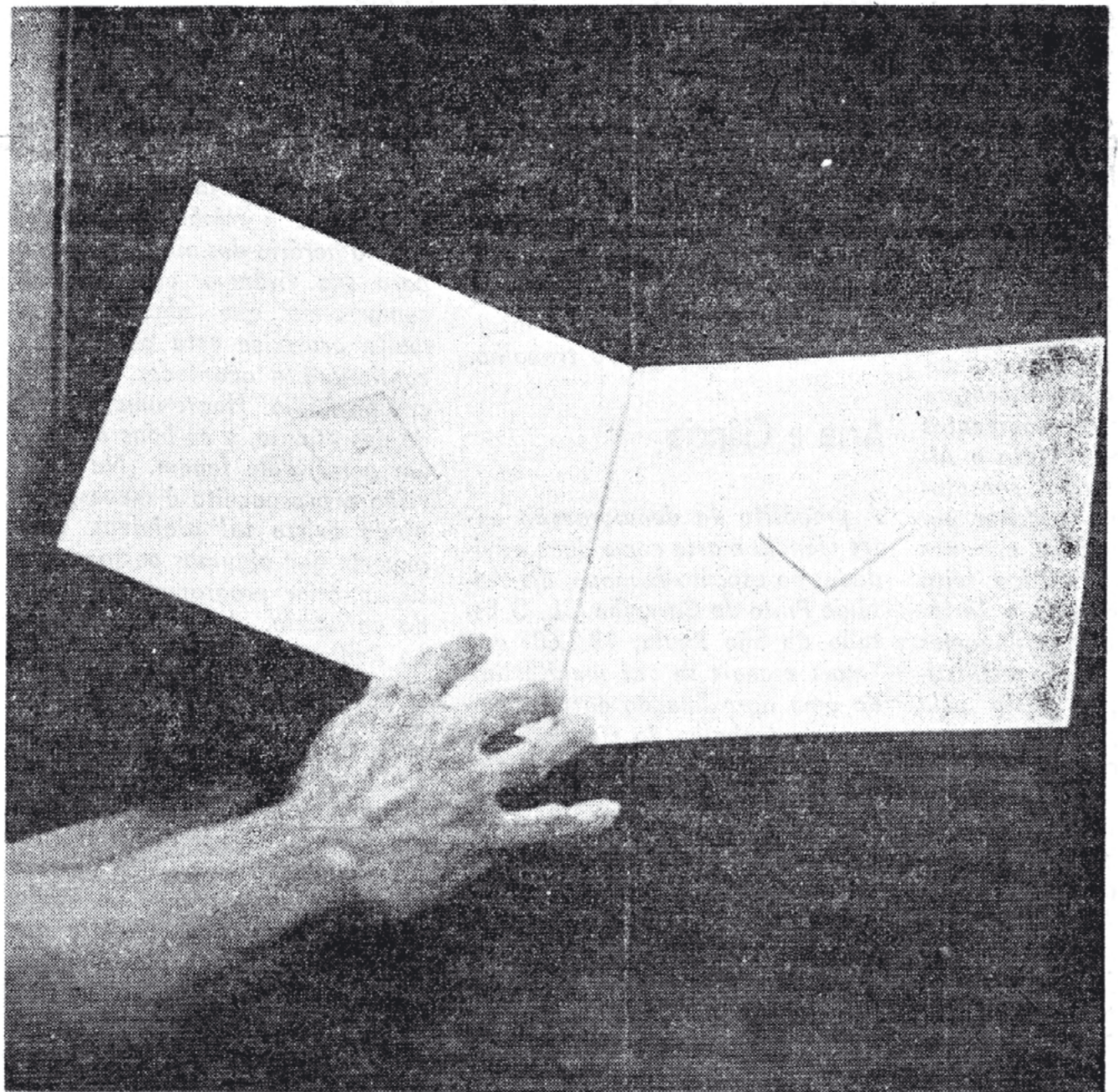
There is the open field of animated cartoons which enables cinema as a purer creative expression. However – the reason why is unknown – cartoons became limited to stories for mere children's entertainment. The people from Upa attempted to advance a little but all they did was modernize the cartoon or tell stories with more daring characters and strong colours. Other experiments (more positive) were carried out with the recording of the figure directly on the film without using the camera. But these experiences did not go beyond the field of optical amusement.

It is necessary to rethink cinema. To rethink it no longer in terms of photography in movement: the thing is cinematography and not cinema-photography.

It is also important to be aware of the fact that we are on the terrain of graphic arts and to consider that this graphic condition can be outdated in the sense of a purely cine-poetic, cine-plastic, or cine-verbal creation. Rethink cinema without prejudices of history, camera, photograph, frameworks, actors etc.

Rethink cinema as art and not as entertainment; cinema and not literature. Replace it in its pre-history so that from that starting point it can arrive at a point in which it can be compared – on level of aesthetic importance – with the other arts which are already autonomous in their expression

This note is an invitation to the debate.



Reynaldo Jardim

CINEMA: IT IS NECESSARY TO RETHINK

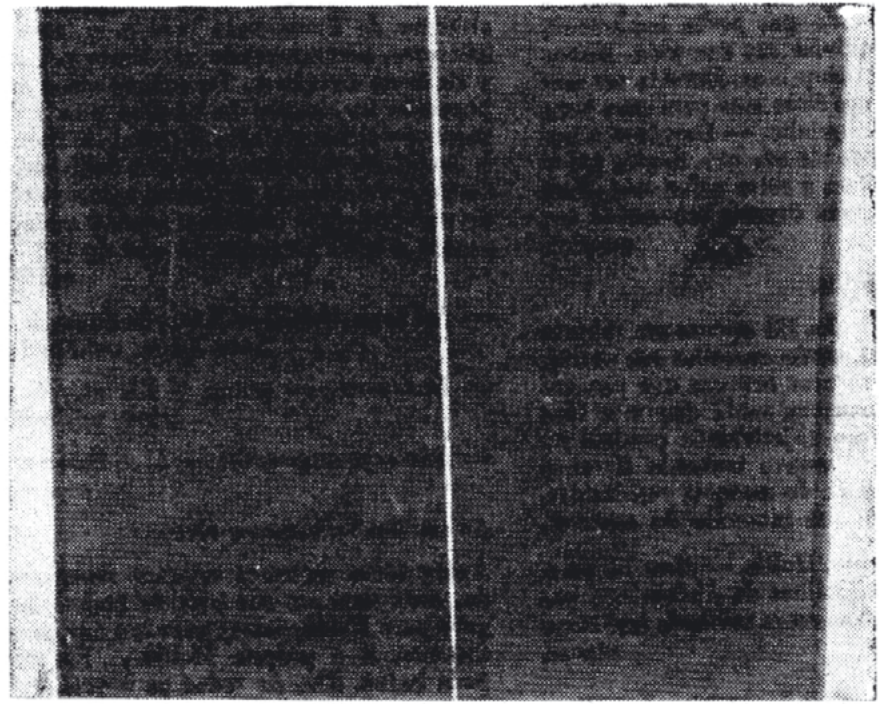
note from the editor

On pages 4 and 5, Ferreira Gullar presents his latest works in the field of poetry — verbal non-objects which, consisting of the search for a 'place' for the word, can no longer be published in the newspaper. Each poem is a specific place for a determined word. To keep SDJB readers up to date with what is going on in the field of Neoconcrete poetry we have resorted to the use of photography. But see for yourselves what the poet has to say and show.



# Non-object:

F e r r e i r a      G u l l a r



1

The search for a non-syntactic but organic expression was always the preoccupation of the poets who, in June 1957, created an independent, non-orthodox branch within the movement of Concrete poetry. In the manifesto of separation we already declared to that epoch: 'we intend to create a new habitat for words'.

These poets worked accordingly and later better defined their theoretical position and adopted, the denomination Neoconcrete art for their experiments, including within it the works of fine artists who defend, in their field, a similar point of view. This affinity, already shown in previous works, brought the Neoconcrete artists closer in such a way that a spontaneous collaboration became possible between them, an exchange of experiences between painters, sculptors and poets. It would honestly be impossible to determine up until what point any of the group members influenced the others without receiving anything from them in return. This is an important fact, and on these terms, a first in Brazilian art.

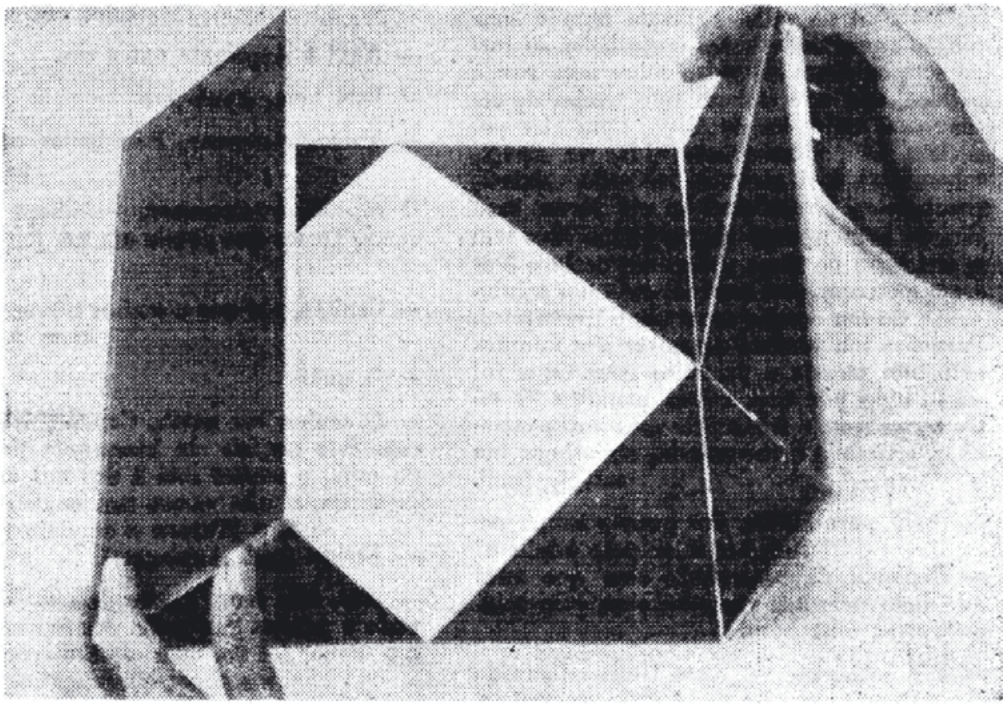
From using the page as time, as duration, irradiation field of the word, created for it and by it, we passed onto the poem-book, where the need to absorb the book as a support to integrate it totally into the verbal expression was defined, the book was no longer just a place to deposit the poem, but now a participant in the intimate structure of the poem, to also be the poem, poem-book, book-poem. With this the material object was consumed in the expression.

The denomination of non-object could already have been given to this experience, but the name only came later.

The works we reveal today on these pages were born directly from the book-poems and maintain – on a freer design, perhaps – their fundamental characteristics: the integration word – support and manoeuvrability. Like the book-poem, these non-objects require the manual participation of the reader, and in such a way this participation is essential because without it the poem would not be created. The gesture is integrated in the verbal expression and the poem also speaks through it. In some of these non-objects I used colour, and for this reason and due to the important role played on them by the visual elements, the reader would tend to approach them to painting, to relief and to sculpture. In reality, these verbal non-objects maintain an essential difference in relation to those means of fine art expression. Not only is the election and organisation of these elements carried out, according to a verbal intention, but also the presence of words lends them a meaning and an expression which modifies the pure visual experience belonging to the said fine arts.

Neither do the works which we are now publishing here mean a surpassing of what was done before by the Neoconcrete poets. This is one of the many paths which, we are convinced, Neoconcrete poetry has opened with its searches. If with this we remove ourselves even more from poetry's usual processes, it is that our interest is directed towards expression in its wider meaning, not minding if this expression fits or not within the limits of a determined kind.

# poetry

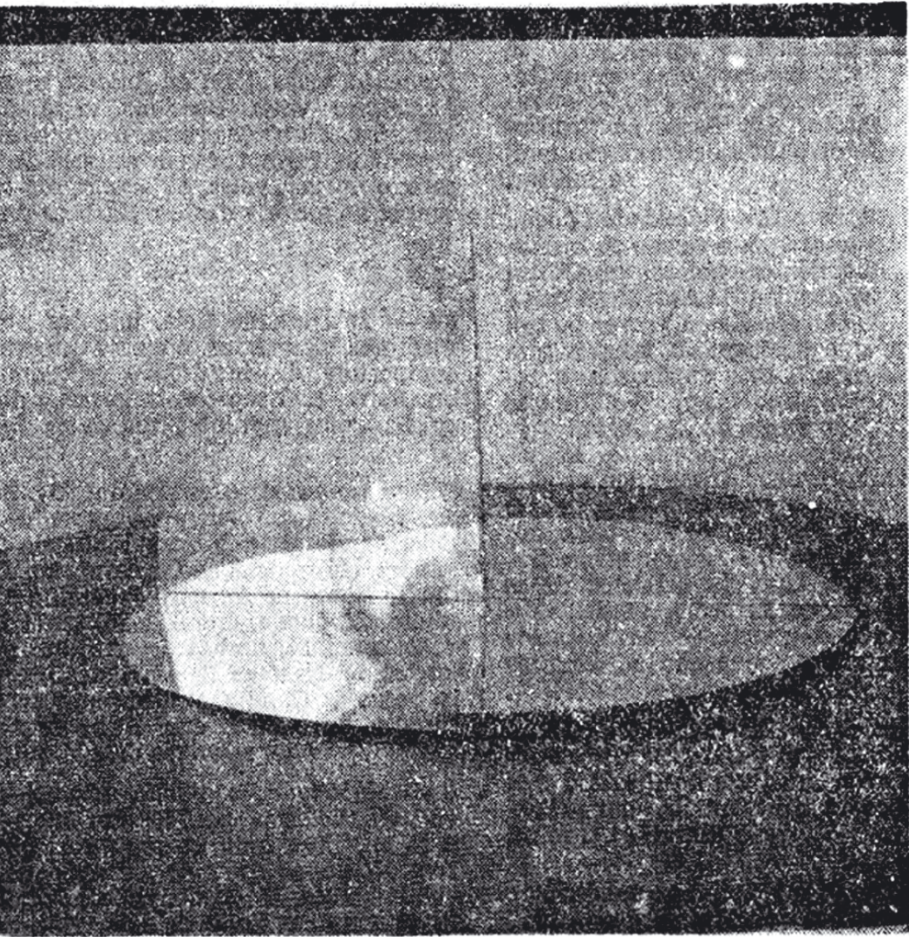
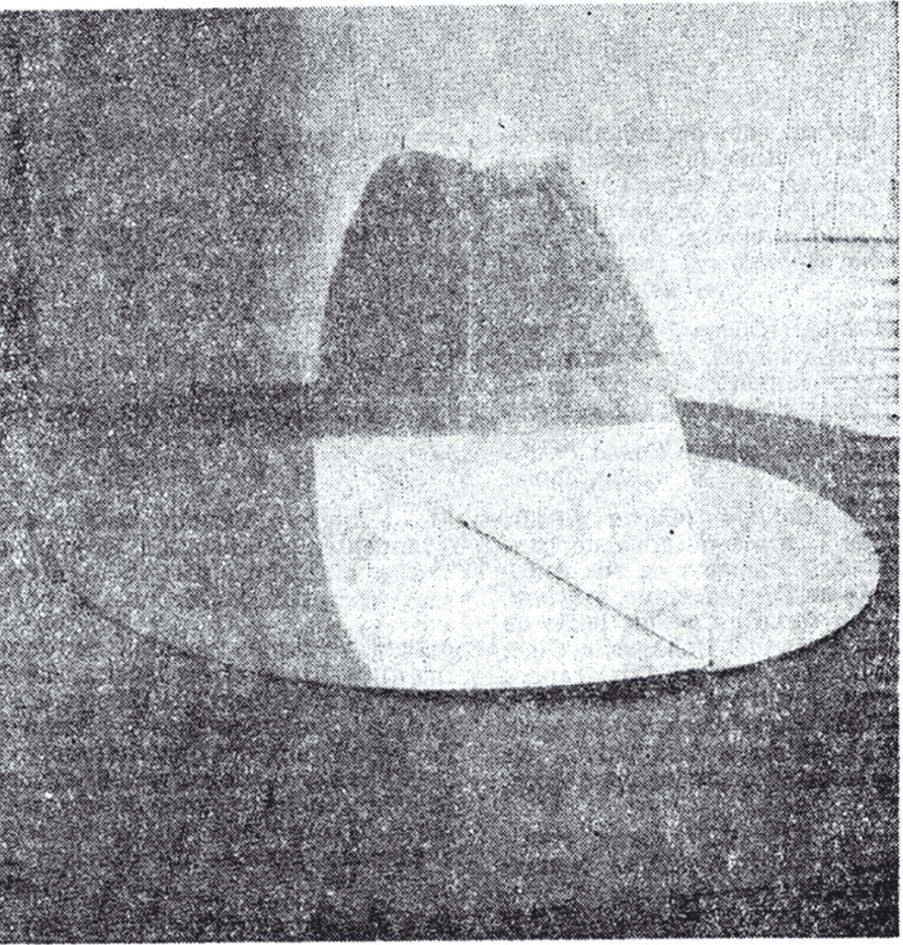
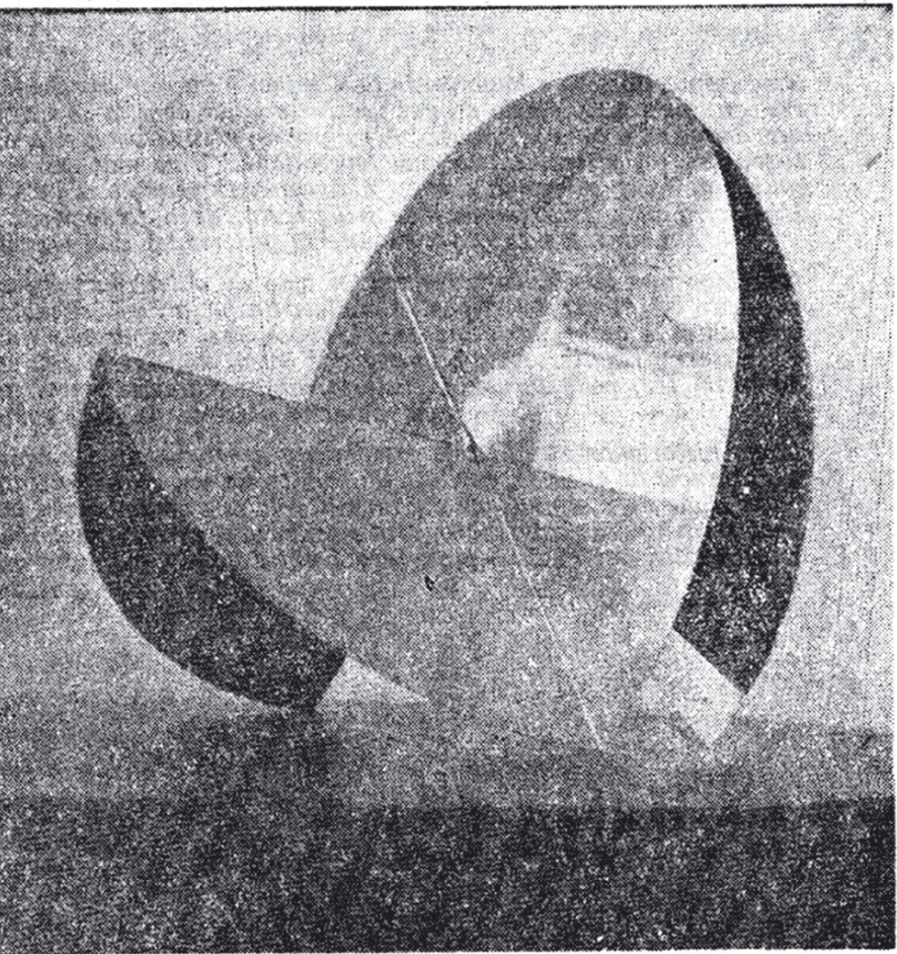
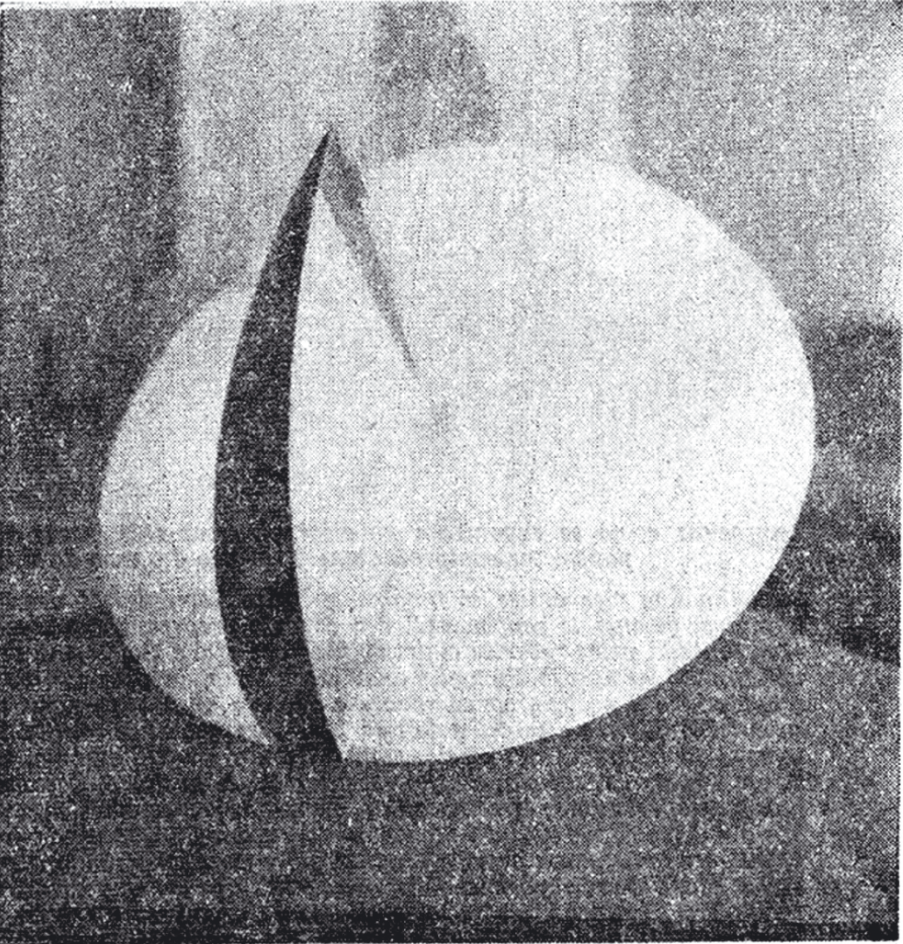


2

- 1- The reader is confronted with a black box, with a cut in the middle. He will open it to see what is inside.
- 2- The reader opens the two plates with his hands and finds another white plate fitted into the black square which is under the plates. This white plate (or tablet) is fixed up to half its width, allowing the edges to be seen, which once again require the reader's hand.

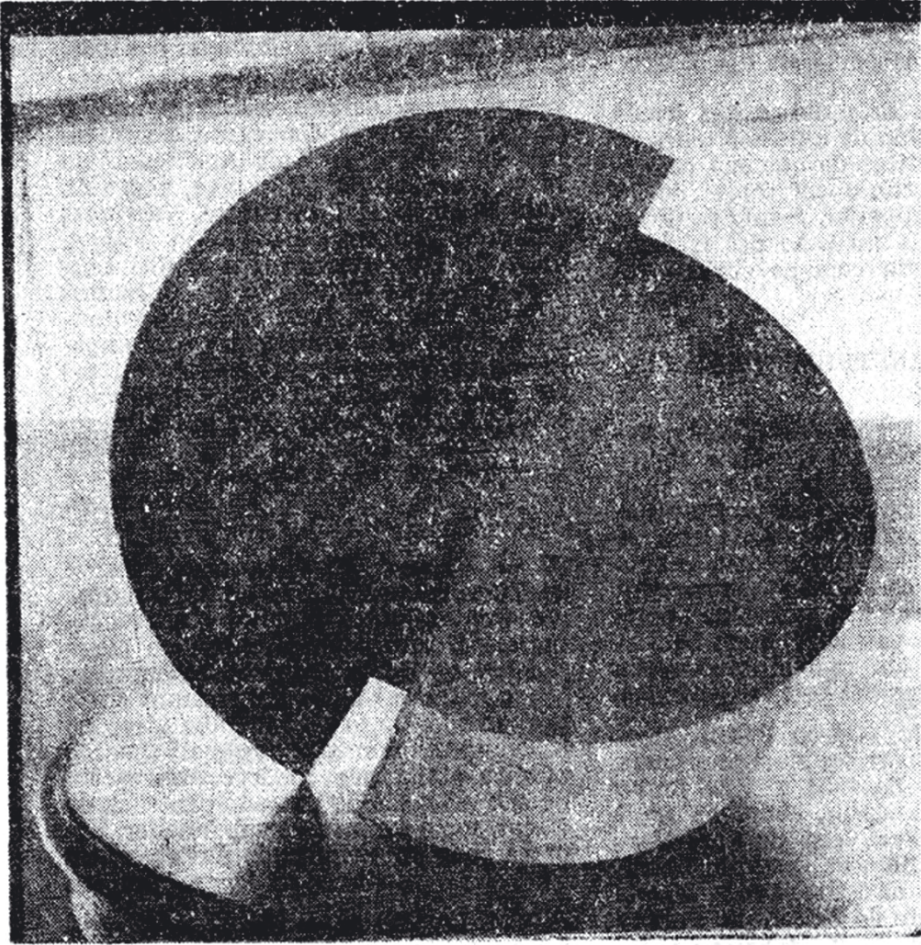


Non-object. Lygia Clark



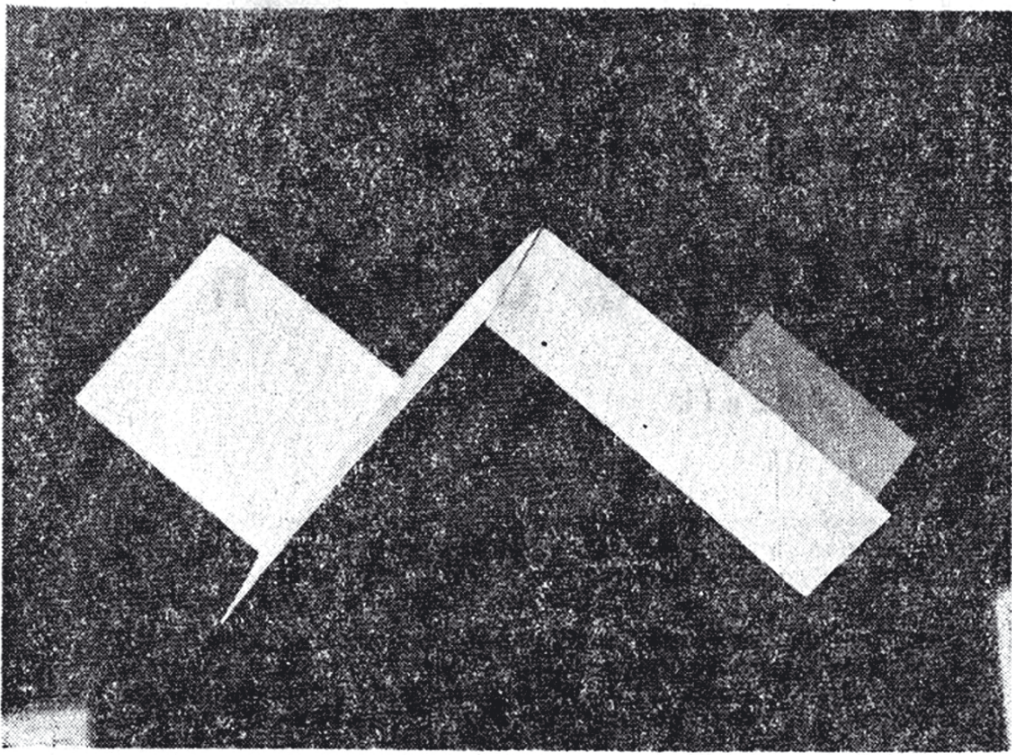
# A dialogue on the non-object

- A - What is a non-object?
- B - It is first important to know what is understood here by object. By object I mean material things like those we find at hand, naturally, linked to everyday designations and uses: a rubber, a pencil, a pear, a shoe, etc. In this condition, the object is exhausted in the references of meaning. On the flip side, we can establish here a primary definition of non-object: the non-object is not exhausted in the references of meaning because it does not belong to the realm of use or verbal designation.
- A - But objects are not exhausted in those references either: Under the name pear, we have a pear with all the material density of a thing.
- B - Yes, when we peel back the cultural order of the words we see objects without names – and we come upon the opacity of the thing. You could say that, in these circumstances, the object becomes something close to what I mean by non-object, but it is precisely herein that lies the fundamental difference between the two: stripped of its name, the object becomes an absurd, opaque presence against which perception founders; without its name, the thing is impenetrable, unapproachable, clearly and insupportably exterior to the subject. The non-object has no such opacity, hence its name: the non-object is transparent to perception, in the sense that it opens itself to it. Here the distinction becomes more precise: it is only via the connotations that the name and use establish between the object that the world of the subject that the object can be apprehended and assimilated by the subject. The object is thus a hybrid of a name and a thing, like two layers superposed upon each other of which only one surrenders to man – the name. The non-object on the other hand, is one, whole, frank. Its relationship with the subject dispenses with all intermediaries. It has a meaning too, but this meaning is immanent to its form, which is pure meaning.
- A - In other words, you're saying that the non-object is a total object, a whole object?
- B - Let's put it in terms of Sartrean



Fine Arts  
Ferreira Gullar

Non-object Amílcar de Castro. Seven phases of the same work.



existential philosophy: while the subject exists for itself, the object, the thing, exists in itself. If we lay aside the implications the philosopher draws from this fundamental contradiction, we can remain with the fact that it reaffirms the opacity of the thing that abides itself and man's perplexity at seeing himself exiled in the midst of such things. The human world is a web of meanings and intensions beneath which lies the opacity of the non-human world, beyond man. The experience of the nameless object is an experience of exile. The struggle to overcome the subject/object dichotomy is the crux of all human knowledge, of all human experience and, particularly, of all production of art. A painter who figures a still-life is not doing anything other than trying to resolve this contradiction. In representing those everyday objects, the artist departs from the conceptual level on which they are usually found in the direction of an aesthetic level on which a new, non-conceptual meaning emerges in them: the meaning immanent to the form.

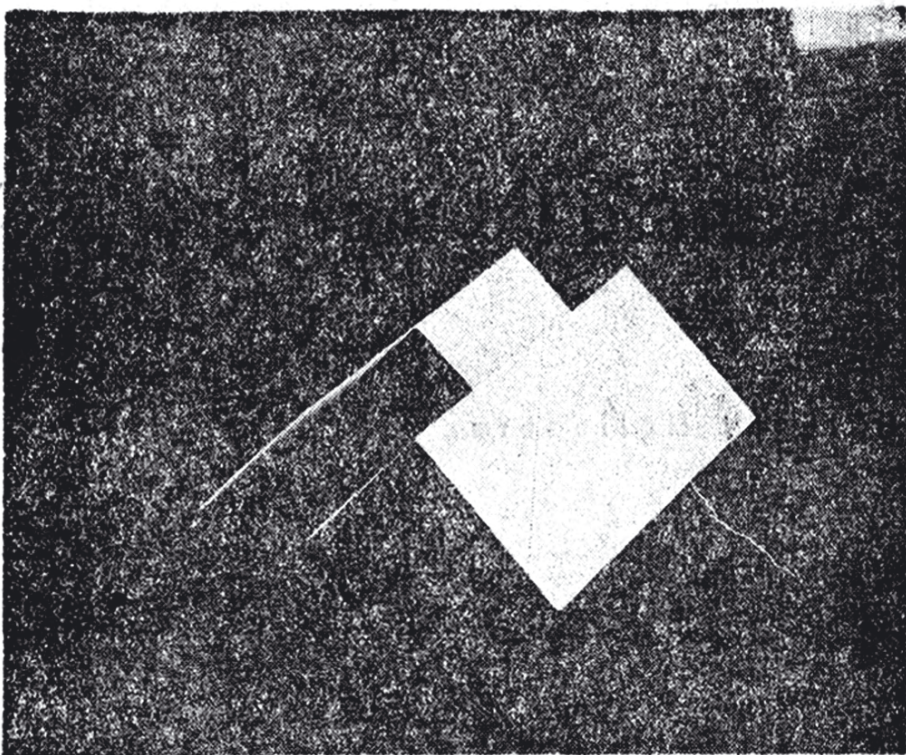
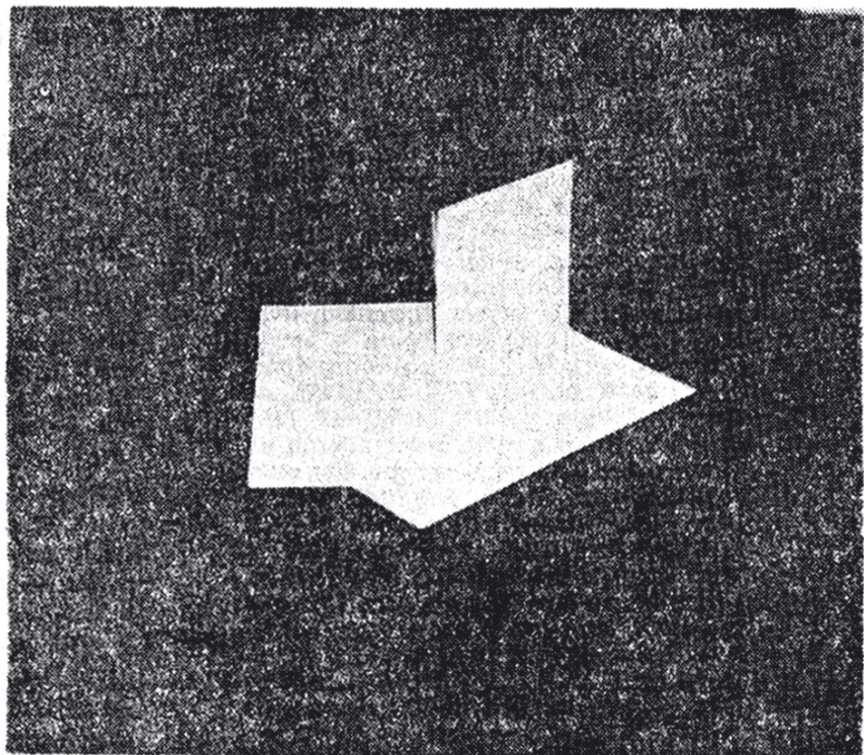
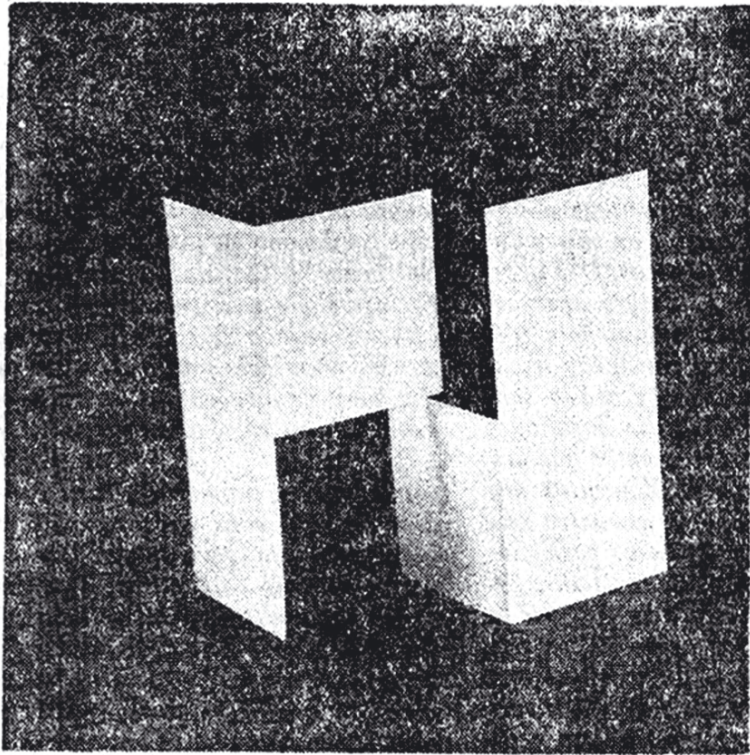
- A - So is still-life a non-object?
- B - No. A represented object is a quasi-object: it is almost as if it were an object; it sheds the garb of the object, but does not attain the status of non-object. In relation to the real object, it is a fictitious object. The non-object is not a representation, but a presentation. If the object lies at one extreme of experience, the non-object lies at the other, and the represented object somewhere in between.
- A - If that is the case, what is the difference between the meaning immanent to the form of the quasi-object and the meaning in the form of the non-object?
- B - The difference resides in the fact that the quasi-object is a representation of a real object while the non-object represents nothing, it simply presences itself. Now, as such, the meaning revealed in the form of one and the other will not be the same in nature. Starting from the real object, the artist who makes a representation of it on the canvas manages to disconnect it from its conceptual relations – transfiguring it in form, colour and spatial situation – but can never

succeed in definitively severing the lashes at the source of its experience: the meaning apprehended in the quasi-object was already immanent to the real object. Nothing of the sort can be said of the non-object, which, as it does not refer to any real object, as it is the primary appearance of a form, grounds its meanings within itself alone.

- A - So one could say that all non-figurative painting is a non-object?
- B - No. The difference between figurative painting and so-called abstract painting is a matter of degree, not nature. Although it attains a greater degree of abstraction, the non-figurative painting is still tied to the problem of object representation.
- A - But how, if the object no longer appears in the work?
- B - Let us take the work of the two great non-figurative painters, Mondrian and Malevich: it is true that the object does not appear in their work but, for Malevich, the black painting on a white background is 'an awareness of the absence of the object', while, for Mondrian, the vertical and horizontal axes are a reduction to the fundamental conflict within nature. In other words, these geometric forms and lines substitute the objects; they are an extreme illusion to them. Even if Mondrian and Malevich do not express this relationship in their theories, it is still there to be seen. Indeed, in both Mondrian and Malevich there remains a fundamental opposition between the geometrical forms and metaphorical background, in other words, vestiges of representation. I say metaphorical because the space there symbolises the space of the world in the same manner as the geometrical forms symbolise objects in a world. As a metaphorical, fictitious space, the work fits naturally within the limits of the canvas, and even if the frame is nothing more than a simple wooden ruler, it is still a frame. There would be little point in removing the frame from these works, as confinement, incommunicability with the space outside, it is the nature of that painted space therein. The same can be said of the works of Kandinsky and followers. Again we have a space of abstract representation that does not exist in the non-object, which is, by definition, not representative, but presentative.

- A - Do you mean to say that the non-object resolves the figure/background contradiction?
- B - This contradiction is beyond resolution on the perceptual level, as the background is a condition of perception itself: everything that is seen is seen against a background. Hence the impasse at which abstract art arrived upon reducing its expressions to the field of pure perception: it runs up against this unsurpassable dualism that repeats, on another plane, the same subject/object dichotomy. With the non-object, as the question of representation is not posed, nor is the figure/background dilemma imposed. The background against which one perceives the non-object is not the metaphorical space of abstract expression, but the real space of the world.
- A - It is therefore the same background as that against we perceive objects, is it not?
- B - In a way, yes. Freed from the base and the frame, the non-object inserts





itself into the space directly, just like an object. But the structural transference of the non-object, which distinguishes it from the object, allows us to say that it transcends the space, not by eluding it (like the object) but by unfolding itself radically in that space. Emerging directly from and of the space, the non-object is at once a working and recasting of that space: it is the permanent rebirth of form in space. This spatial transformation is the very condition of the birth of the non-object.

- A - You spoke of the base and the frame; is eliminating these elements all it takes to make a non-object?
- B - No, just as eliminating the figure is not all it takes to make a good abstract painting. It is not a matter of the material presence or absence of the base or the frame. It is about creating without the support of these elements. In painting and sculpture, the frame and the base respectively condition the artist's expression and are, furthermore, the hallmarks of a specific condition before art. What matters is not simply producing a painting without a frame or a sculpture without a base, but resolving the new problems that are posed when expression no longer has these elements to fall back on.
- A - So what do the frame and base mean?
- B - They mean that the language of the work is representative, even if the forms are abstract (I am referring to the base and frame as elements presupposed by the expression). When the problem of representation is overcome, the frame and the base lose their function. But it is not enough to simply remove them. In the case of sculpture, the base indicates a privileged position, and if the sculpture has no base (materially speaking), but retains that privilege, the problem of the base continues inherent to it, barring it from being a non-object.
- A - We can conclude, therefore, that non-representation is the basic nature of the non-object, so it is still painting or sculpture?
- B - The same considerations as drove us to

the non-object also obliges us to view representation as an element intrinsic to painting and sculpture. Contrary to what people have been saying for the last fifty years or so, contemporary art only managed to overcome the problem of representation in a few exceptional cases. The exceptions - Tatlin's counter reliefs, the suprematist architectures of Malevich - stand outside the definitions of painting, sculpture or architecture. The same can be said of the work of the Neoconcrete group - whence the name non-object. I believe that a truly non-representational art repeals the academic notion of artistic genres. The very concept of art falters if not taken in its acceptance of primary experience.

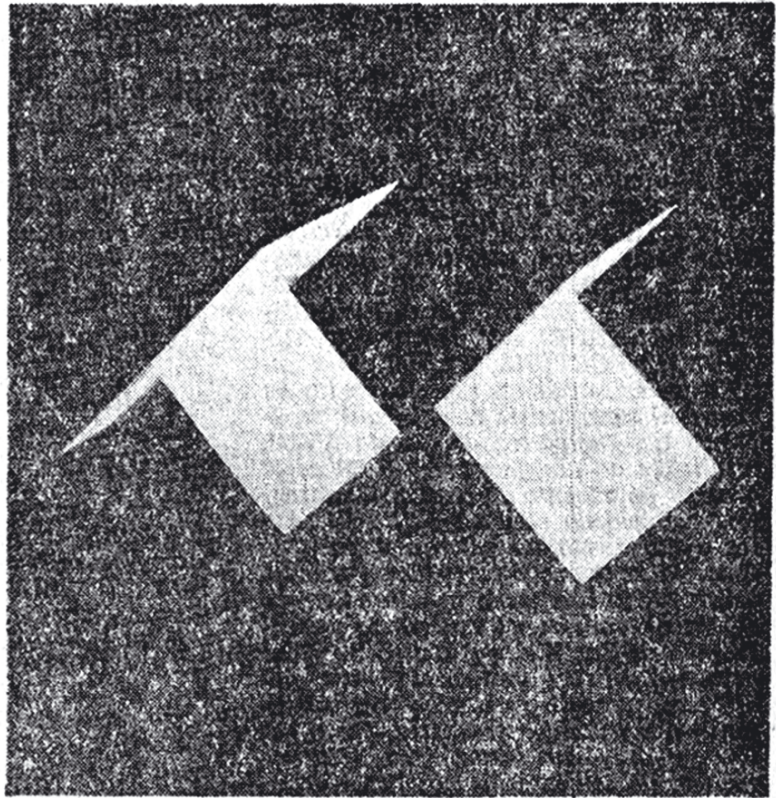
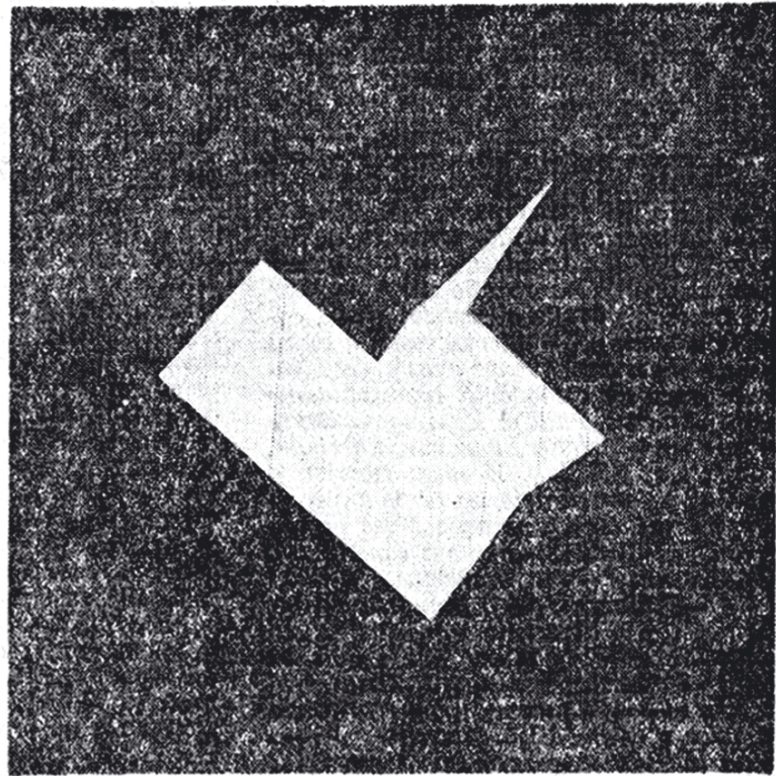
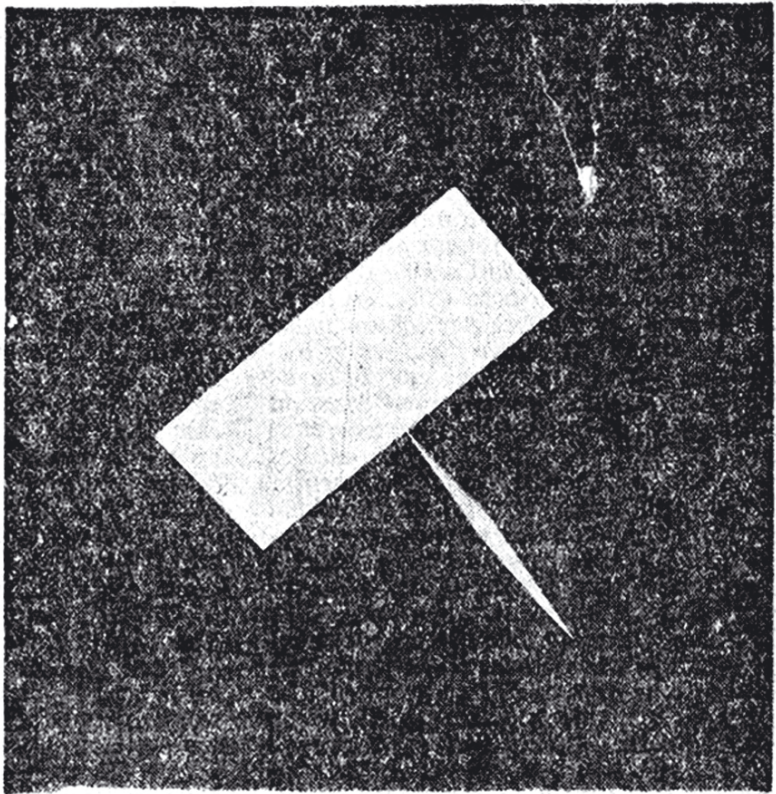
- A - In other words, in your opinion, painting and sculpture are finished...
- B - Or perhaps they never really existed. At least in modern times, all artists work at the very limits of their art, trying to surpass it. It is always anti-art. What matters to Brancusi - whether he knows it or not - was not making the sculpture, but the sculpture itself. Contradictorily, in order to make sculpture he distanced himself more and more from what we knew of as a sculpture. The same can be said of Pevsner, Vantongerloo, Picasso, Mondrian, Kandinsky, Malevich, Pollock, etc. what the artist seeks in painting (or sculpture) is already a preconceived world that needs to be surpassed. Which brings us to the here and now, a time in which the artist is no longer concerned with making painting or sculpture through which he re-encounter primary experience of the world: the colours, the forms, the space do not pertain to this or that artistic language, but to the lived and indeterminate experience of man. To deal directly with these elements, beyond the institutional perimeters of art, is to formulate them for the first time. Which bring us to another fundamental difference between the painting and the non-object: the former derives from an effort on the part of the artist to chip away at the already conceptual world of artistic language - it comes from the outside in - from common meaning to a new meaning: the non-object,

on the other hand bursts from the inside out, from non-meaning toward meaning.

How exactly does poetry fit into the theory of the non-object?

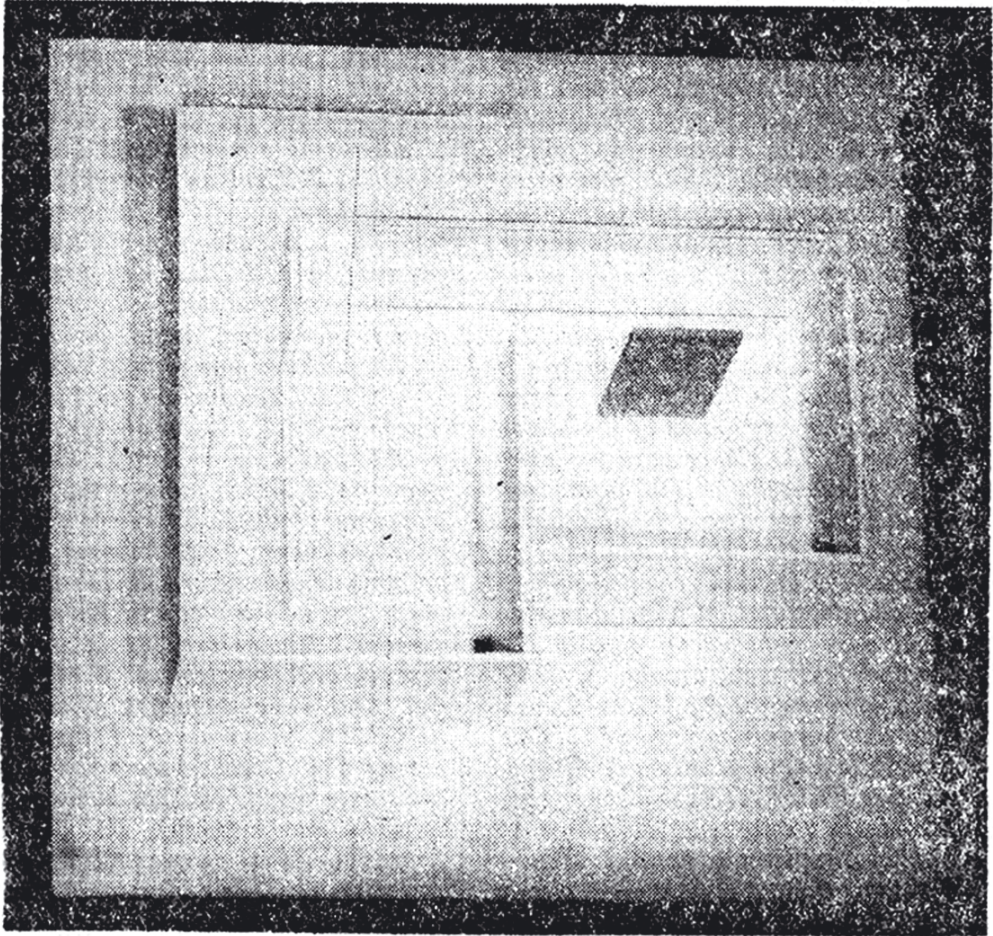
- A - The poet also strives for primary experience of the world, he also works at the limit of poetic language.
- B - In modern times we have seen the destruction of the fixed forms of the stanza and verse in a shift toward free-verse. However, free-verse itself became a stereotyped instrument: it mangled syntax and took up the word as its primary element. Just as colour shook free of painting, the word freed itself from poetry. The poet has the word, but no longer has a pre-established aesthetic in which to skilfully place it. He finds himself faced with the word armed only with undefined possibilities. What matters is not producing a poem - or even a non-object - but to reveal how much of the world is deposited in the world.
- A - You have written that, when it comes to poetry, the non-object is the search for a place for the word. What do you mean by that?
- B - The word is either in a sentence - where it loses its individuality - or in the dictionary, where it is alone and mutilated, given as mere denotation. The verbal non-object is the anti-dictionary: it is the place where the isolated word irradiates its entire charge. The visual elements married to it there serve the function of rendering explicit, of intensifying and concretising the multivocality the word contains.
- A - Is there, then, a fusion of painting, relief, sculpture and poetry?
- B - I don't think so. Planes, forms and colours are elements of reality prior to any belonging to artistic language. In the non-object, plastic elements are not used in the same way as in painting or sculpture. They are chosen according to a verbal intent, that is, just as a traditional poet invites and repels words in producing his poem, the Neoconcrete poet invites not only words, but also forms, colours and movements, on a level at which the verbal and plastic languages interpenetrate. No-one ignores the fact that no experience is restricted to any one of the five senses (as man perceives with their totality), or that the senses decipher one another in 'the general symbolism of the body' (M. Ponty).

- A - Must the non-object have movement?
- B - At this stage, let me make clear that it is not my intention here to say what the non-object should or should not be, only to describe what already exists, what has already been done. Most of the existing non-objects imply, in some form or other, the viewer or reader's movement in relation to it. The viewer/reader is invited to use the non-object. Mere contemplation is not enough to reveal the sense of the work - the reader/viewer must move from contemplation to action. However, the product of this action is the work itself, because this use, which is foreseen in the structure of the work, is absorbed by it, revealing it and becoming part of its meaning. The non-object is conceived in time: it is an immobility open to mobility that is open to an open immobility. The contemplation leads to action, which in turn leads to further contemplation. Before, the viewer/reader, the non-



Non-object Amílcar de Castro. Seven phases of the same work.

Non-object. Hélio Oiticica. Colour in space



object presents itself as incomplete, though possessed of and offering the means of its completion. The viewer/reader acts, but the time of that action does not flow, does not transcend the work, does not get lost somewhere beyond it: it incorporates itself within it, it lasts. The action does not consume the work, it enriches it, as after the action, the work is more than it was before - and this second contemplation already contains, besides the form seen for the first time,

a past in which the viewer/reader and the work melded together: the former pouring its time into the latter. The non-object claims the viewer/reader (if he can still be described as either), not as passive witness to its existence, but as condition of its making. Without him, the work would exist only as mere potential, waiting for the human gesture that will let it be.



Next Thursday, 17, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Neoconcrete Exhibition will be inaugurated at the Exhibition Hall of the Ministry of Education (now Cultural Palace). The artists of this movement intend to show to the public the results of more than a year’s work in various fields of expression, from visual arts to literature and to theatre. Thirteen artists will participate in the exhibition, with a variable number of works, most of which have not been exhibited in Rio de Janeiro before. This exhibition reveals, among other things, that the Neoconcrete group has not just renewed itself but has also grown, as it was made up of only seven names at the time of the 1<sup>st</sup> Neoconcrete Exhibition held in March 1959 in the Museum of Modern Art in Rio de Janeiro. The exhibitors this time will be: Aloísio Carvão, Amílcar de Castro, Cláudio Melo e Souza, Décio Vieira, Ferreira Gullar, Franz Weissmann, Hélio Oiticica, Hercules Barsotti, Lygia Clark, Lygia Pape, Osmar Dillon, Reynaldo Jardim, Roberto Pontual and Willys de Castro.

Neoconcretism, born out of the need to express the complex reality of modern humanity inside the structural language of the new plasticity, denies the legitimacy of scientific and positivist attitudes in art and supersedes the problem of expression, while incorporating a new ‘verbal’ dimension created by non-figurative constructive art. Rationalism steals from art its autonomy and substitutes the unique and non-transferable qualities of the artwork for notions of scientific objectivity. Therefore, the concepts of form, space, time and structure – which in the

artistic language are bound to an existential, emotional and affective significance – are confused with the theoretical applications of these concepts in the science. We do not conceive an artwork either as a ‘machine’ or as an ‘object’, but as a ‘quasi-corpus’, i.e. a being whose reality is not limited to the exterior relations of its elements; a being decomposable for analysis, which only reveals itself totally when a direct phenomenological approach is taken. We believe that the work of art surpasses the material mechanism

on which it is based, not because of some unearthly virtue, but because it transcends mechanical relationships (sought by the Gestalt) and creates for itself a tacit significance (Merleau-Ponty) that it brings up for the first time. If we had to seek for a simile for the artwork, we would not be able to find it either in a machine or in any objectively perceived object, but in living organisms, according to S. Langer and V. Weidlé. However, such a comparison would still not be able adequately to express the specific reality of the aesthetic organism. The objective notions of time, space, form, structure, colour, etc are not sufficient in themselves to comprehend a work of art and to explain its ‘reality’, because the work does not limit itself to occupying a particular place in objective space. Instead it transcends this space while creating in it a new significance. The difficulty of using precise terminology to express a world that does not render itself to such notions has induced art criticism to an indiscriminate use of words, which betray the complexity of the artwork. The influence of science and technology has also impressed the art scene, to the extent that today, roles are inverted and certain artists dazzled by this terminology attempt to perform art in reverse manner: they try to make art starting from these objective notions, which they apply to their creative practice. The Gestalt, given that it is

Inevitably, artists who proceed in such a manner only illustrate a priori notions. After all, they are bound by a method that prescribes to them, beforehand, the result of their work. By refraining from intuitive creation

and limiting themselves to painting with an objective body, the rationalist Concrete artists request from themselves, as well as from the spectator, a simple reaction of stimulus and reflexive response: they speak to the eye as an instrument rather than a human channel capable of interaction with the world, that could gained from and give itself to the world. They speak to the machine-eye and not to the body-eye.

of art’ we mean that the work of art continuously makes itself present, that it is always beginning the same impulse that generated it and that this work had spawned. And if this description leads us back to the primary and thorough experience of the real, it is because Neoconcrete art aims to do nothing less than rekindle this experience. Neoconcrete art lays the foundations for a new expressive space. This position is equally valid for Neoconcrete poetry, which denounces, in Concrete poetry, the same mechanical objectivism as in painting. Concrete rationalist poets have also instituted the imitation of the machine as an ideal of their art: for them, space and time are also nothing but external relations between words-objects. Well, if this were so, the page is reduced to a graphic space and the word to an element included in this space. As in painting, here the visual is reduced to the optical and the poem does

not surpass the graphic dimensions. Neoconcrete poetry rejects such spurious notions and, faithful to the nature of language itself, affirms the poem as a temporal being. The word unfolds its complex significant nature in time, not in space. A page in Neoconcrete poetry is the spatialisation of verbal time: it is a pause, silence, time. It is obvious that we do not mean to return to the concept of time given by discursive poetry, because while this language flows easily, in Neoconcrete poetry language opens itself in duration. Consequently, in contrast to rationalist Concretism, which takes the word as an object and transforms it into a mere optical signal, Neoconcrete poetry reasserts its condition of ‘verbal expression’ – that is to say, it presents reality in a human way. In Neoconcrete poetry, language does not flow away, it is enduring.

From the Neoconcrete Manifesto, March 1959

At the time of the 1<sup>st</sup> Neoconcrete Exhibition the critics, in general, could not distinguish between the Neoconcrete and the Concrete positions, tending to consider the difference between the two movements as only nominal. However, the Neoconcretists affirmed in their manifesto that they were opposed to the rationalist and scientificist that dominated concretism and indicated an expression which was at the same time constructed and free, rigorous and inventive, within which the artist would re-acquire the rights to imagination and to poetic creation.

It was around the same time that the Tachisme wave began to break upon the Brazilian coast. The first heralds of the new faith arrived at Rio de Janeiro’s international airport (Galeão) with the magic formula in their pockets. International art magazines had already forewarned the critics, and they, most of whom had been opposed to Concrete art, rubbed their hands together in glee at the chance of a retaliation. One of these critics, commenting on the Neoconcrete Manifesto, affirmed that, at the present time, only two positions were possible: the concretist and the tachiste. The neoconcrete option was, for him, a false path, apparently, which would not yield any result.

However, the Concrete experience had reached saturation point. The artists who made up the Neoconcrete group – almost all had come from the concretist experience – knew this, and not just by chance: they knew because they had given themselves up to that experience with passion, because they had put its ideas and possibilities to test. On arriving at a certain point they understood the need to go beyond the frontiers marked off by the concretists’ aesthetics. It was not about purely and simply denying Concrete art but instead giving it a continuation, extracting from it the inevitable consequences. This was not understood on that occasion, and this is a natural incomprehension in a country where the problems of art were never set out with the necessary clarity and depth. Up until now, with the exception of some artists of a very rare creative personality, we have been waiting for the international order of the day. If this phenomenon is inevitable up to a certain point, and especially in a country without an artistic tradition such as ours, we cannot, however, deny a still-living experience, interrupt the development of an expression, because fashion has changed. The neoconcretists were certain there was an experience to continue and go deeper into, and gave themselves up to this work even though, all around them, everyone else was certain the only possible art was Tachisme. Or none at all.

Nowadays, not a very long time later, the tachiste fever seems to have diminished incredibly. Some names, which the wave lifted sharply to a great height, are not keeping themselves very firmly up at the top. There is once again silence in the arraial - and many people must be waiting for a new hurricane to start to blow from the Atlantic to stir the sensibilities. But – who knows? – the climate may be more favourable to the appreciation of Neoconcrete works. They demonstrate, at least, that the exacerbated subjectivity and the gesticulating delirium are not the only fountains from which contemporary art can drink. And that, possibly, they are not the best.















*Jornal do Brasil* (JB) is one of the oldest daily newspapers in circulation in Brazil. Launched in 1891, it originally consisted almost entirely of advertisements, only changing its format in the late 1950s. Until then the front page had been a grid of different-sized rectangles in which readers were offered various products and services. These were supposedly laid out in alphabetical order, but in the first column, before the ordered list commenced, there were advertisements for kitchen staff aimed specifically at ‘female cooks’ (*cozinheiras*’ in Portuguese), which explains why until the mid-1950s the newspaper, was known as the ‘*Jornal das Cozinheiras*’ (Newspaper of Female Cooks). The JB then underwent a revolutionary change going on to become the country’s most prestigious national newspaper and a respected source of information for political and cultural debate.

Following the deaths of the JB’s director, José Pires do Rio, and its proprietor, Count Pereira Carneiro, it was taken over by Countess Maurina Dunshee of Abranches Pereira Carneiro, assisted by her son-in-law Manuel Francisco of Nascimento Brito, at that time the director of the JB radio station and a member of the board of directors. In order to improve the editorial profile of the JB they employed new journalists and acquired the most technologically advanced graphic equipment available in Brazil during the 1950s. However, although the quality of the writing improved, reading the JB remained an arduous task: the front page still had columns of adverts and the inside pages, where the articles could be found, were divided by horizontal and vertical lines that separated the articles from the advertisements, often inappropriately fragmenting texts. It became apparent that the renovation work would have to include the replacement of outdated graphic design. Despite the fact that this process was gradual and only fully achieved in the late 1950s, it would eventually influence graphic designers worldwide. The ‘experimental field’ where this great transformation took place was the new Sunday Supplement, the ‘*Suplemento Dominical do Jornal do Brasil*’ (SDJB), first published in June 1956. The driving force behind the SDJB was the poet and journalist Reynaldo Jardim. He persuaded Countess

Pereira Carneiro to create the supplement, which under the subtitle ‘Female Pages’ was at first clearly dedicated to female readers. With the space guaranteed and with total freedom of expression, Jardim slowly modified the Supplement’s content until it became the most remarkable cultural publication of the period. Jardim, born in São Paulo in 1926, had been the director of Radio JB, where he would broadcast a Sunday literature review, also called ‘*Suplemento Dominical*’. Upon hearing his programme the Countess invited him to choose a modern poem every Sunday to be published in the newspaper. Jardim did not limit himself to choosing a poem, he wrote news and book reviews, and eventually his poetry ‘box’ became a much appreciated column on literature. This was the first step towards the *Suplemento Dominical*, and upon becoming its editor Jardim would use a similar tactic of gradual innovation. In a statement for the JB Archive he recalled that:

*‘The main strategy at the beginning was not about producing high-quality texts but to gain terrain. We quickly guaranteed a substantial amount of space and I started to bring on board collaborators who enriched the quality of what was published in the supplement. (Jornal do Brasil, 07/04/2002,CPDOC-JB)’*

Jardim’s diverse team was composed mainly of promising young intellectuals who would go on to have a great impact on art and culture. The supplement’s collaborators included drama critic Bárbara Heliodora, concrete poets Décio Pignatari, Augusto and Haroldo de Campos, philosopher Sérgio Paulo Rouanet, journalist Paulo Francis and filmmaker Glauber Rocha, to name a few. Some had their own regular columns while others were commissioned for special features. Among this selection of thinkers one in particular deserves special attention: Ferreira Gullar. Born in 1930 in the northeastern state of Maranhão, by his early 20s Gullar was already considered a pioneering poet. In 1953 he launched a book of poems ‘*A Luta Corporal*’ (Bodily Struggle) whose inventive graphic form of poetry attracted the attention of the concrete poets Augusto and Haroldo de Campos and Décio Pignatari. It is possible that through their support and recommendation Gullar was invited to be a part of the *Suplemento Dominical*, where he began to write art theory and criticism. He became editor of the ‘Fine Arts’ section alongside art critic Oliveira Bastos. This focused on aesthetic and ideological issues in the visual arts, covering the Brazilian and international scenes. After his divergence from the Concrete poets in São Paulo, and having been encouraged by Reynaldo Jardim, Gullar transformed his section of the supplement into an ‘ideological pamphlet’ for the Neoconcrete Movement. The ‘Neoconcrete Manifesto’ and the ‘Theory of the Non-Object’ are examples of seminal texts by Gullar that hugely influenced the course of art in Brazil over the following decades. Absolutely committed to the Neoconcrete group, he persuaded the directors of the newspaper to allow a make-over of the supplement’s graphic design and invited Amílcar de Castro (born in Minas Gerais in 1920) to undertake the task.

Another key figure within the pages of the SDJB was Mário Pedrosa, born in Pernambuco in 1900, who by the mid 1950s was an internationally respected art critic (vice-president of the International Association of Art Critics, in fact) and a renowned left-wing intellectual and activist. The editor-in-chief of the JB reserved a special section of the publication for ‘Visual Arts’ where Pedrosa would write referring directly to the reader, about the most abstract matters and what mattered most about abstract art. His arrival at the JB was celebrated by Jardim and Gullar on 17<sup>th</sup> January 1957 with a large note informing readers that ‘Mário Pedrosa is working at the JB’ and emphasising that not only would they republish some of his essays in the supplement but would also invite the highly admired art critic to participate in the debates in their section of the JB.

Pedrosa called his critical approach ‘the revolution of sensibility’, claiming that a revolution that reached the essence of human-beings, their souls, could only take place when humanity acquired new eyes and new senses to embrace the transformations - whether technological or scientific - that were increasingly part of contemporary life. Through his discourse he called attention to the urgency of proposing ‘bursts of sensibility’ which would offer the means by which humanity could better comprehend and reformulate its own senses. In his essay ‘Problematic of Sensibility’ he wrote:

*‘Yes, sensibility is the driving force in everything man does, in everything he acts upon, or in everything he discovers through his creative imagination, in every domain, including politics and science. It is not a prerogative only of artists. The most fruitful scientists have to make use of considerable sensibility, of a large amount of intellectual finesse, and a lot of inventive imagination when, based on their experiences, which never result from a simple logical chain of arguments, they manage to formulate hypotheses, disprove theories and unveil horizons’.* (Jornal do Brasil, 12/07/1959, SDJB)

Following in the same path as his ‘The Revolution of Sensibility’, Pedrosa created a polemic regarding the clash between Realist and Abstract art, a theme which would occupy his column for a long time. He believed it was the abstract artist who was responsible for increasing the field of human language. The artist’s work allowed isolation, specification and a particularisation of the as-yet unknown or little-observed angles of this visuality, which, in constant movement, framed the contemporaneous day-to-day. In this manner the great ‘revolution of sensibility’ could only be reached by means of abstract works of art as they were responsible for making contemporary man turn away from his ambiguous collective individuality and find ways of embracing the transformations resulting from science and technology.

When Pedrosa died the JB published an article with the headline ‘The pioneer of art criticism in Brazil’ which included many statements about the old art critic in which many individuals expressed their admiration for him. Under the title ‘A lesson in Grandeur’, Gullar described how important Pedrosa had been to his generation:

*‘When I met him, he was the one who had introduced Concrete art to Brazil. And through him I became committed to defending this movement and began to read things related to Concrete art and to the aesthetic vision which intuited those concerns. At the time the fruitful question which it raised was the problem of the meaning of forms, “the expressiveness of the form independent of the form which it assumed”’. (Jornal do Brasil, 06/11/81, Caderno B)*

Pedrosa’s words certainly also had an impact on Amílcar de Castro. Both began working for the JB in 1957. Castro at this time was working for the magazine Manchete as a graphic designer. He had arrived in Rio de Janeiro from Belo Horizonte in 1952 to further his career as a fine artist, but his initial lack of financial success meant he needed alternative employment. Already known on the art scene, and having previously met the SDJB group, he was the right person to undertake the graphic restructuring Jardim and Gullar were so keen to achieve — a transformation that would eventually spread to the rest of the newspaper.

Castro’s first act was to ‘clean’ the pages, clearing away the divisive, ornamental lines that had served no real purpose. He aimed to attain a blank space where the text could be ‘built’ as a geometric form. Photographs would be regarded as elements of the page and not merely illustrations of the text. The typographical style also became a part of the composition. Castro soon realized that text did not necessarily have to be horizontal in order to be readable, so he rotated many subtitles and headlines into a vertical position.

As a member of the Neoconcrete Movement he was compelled to bring its influence to bear on the creation of the new format for the JB. The space for news increased, as did the number of pages. The editorials and the use of a modern page layout became of equally importance. Then, in June 1959, Castro’s innovative design reached the front page of the JB, putting the classified advertisements into an L- shaped column, opening space for headlines and breaks, and establishing the new format throughout the entire newspaper. None of this could have been achieved without the ‘experimental space’ of the SDJB. The innovative content, which mixed fine arts, literature, science, and other subjects, facilitated the boldness in the design, with tendencies based upon Neoconcrete art. In this way the SDJB marked a golden era for the development of cultural journalism, with articles on the subject of culture gaining their own exclusive space in a national newspaper. September 1959 saw the introduction of the Caderno B, which in spite of being derived from the SDJB that at this time although maintaining its name, was now published on Saturdays, emerged with its own identity, with the ‘B’ printed in upper case at the top of its front page. It was the first daily section of a Brazilian newspaper dedicated exclusively to culture and entertainment, and became the paradigm for culture sections in the Brazilian press from then onwards. It is worthwhile remembering that after the creation of ‘B’ the visual arts column by Pedrosa and the fine arts column by Gullar were transferred to that section. In 1961 the last edition of the SDJB was published, leaving the ‘B’ as the inheritor of the cultural section developed in the supplement.

CAROLINE MENEZES & GERMAN ALFONSO NUNES ADAID

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