



Introduction. Abstract Art in Brazil: New Perspectives

Apresentação. Arte abstrata no Brasil: novas perspectivas

Ana Gonçalves Magalhães

Adele Nelson

Como citar:

MAGALHÃES, A. G.; NELSON, A. Introduction. Abstract Art in Brazil: New Perspectives. **MODOS: Revista de História da Arte**, Campinas, SP, v. 5, n. 1, p. 105–113, 2021. DOI: 10.20396/modos.v5i1.8664175. Disponível em: <<https://periodicos.sbu.unicamp.br/ojs/index.php/mod/article/view/8664175>>.

Imagem: Fotografia da Exposição do *Grupo Ruptura* no Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo, 1952. *Folha da Noite*, 17 dez. 1952. Fonte: Arquivo da Família Cordeiro.

Introduction. Abstract Art in Brazil: New Perspectives*

Apresentação. Arte abstrata no Brasil: novas perspectivas

Ana Gonçalves Magalhães**

Adele Nelson***

Abstract

In this introduction, we present some of the elements that guided both the formulation of the concepts of this dossier on abstract art in Brazil and our first reflections on the articles by invited authors and those submitted to the open call. Our main aim was to gather a collection of articles that would bring original research and approaches, focusing on aspects yet to be dealt with in the existing scholarship. The contributions brought to light analysis of artworks and women artists yet to be duly considered, as well as unpublished case studies focused outside the artistic milieu of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo and on lyrical abstraction in the country – topics still largely neglected by the consolidated historiography.

Keywords

Art in Brazil. Abstract art. Art and politics. Women artists.

Resumo

Apresentamos a seguir alguns elementos que orientaram, tanto a formulação da chamada para este dossiê sobre arte abstrata no Brasil, quanto nossas primeiras reflexões sobre os artigos dos autores convidados e daqueles selecionados por via da chamada aberta. Nosso principal objetivo era o de ter um conjunto de artigos que trouxessem pesquisas e abordagens originais, enfocando aspectos ainda não tratados pela historiografia no assunto. Neste sentido, as contribuições trouxeram à luz análises de obras e artistas mulheres ainda por serem devidamente consideradas, bem como casos inéditos fora do eixo Rio-São Paulo e na abordagem da abstração lírica no país – temas ainda largamente negligenciados pela historiografia consolidada.

Palavras-chave

Arte no Brasil. Arte abstrata. Arte e política. Artistas mulheres.

Modernist art of the 1930s and 1940s and abstract practices of the 1950s are typically treated as separate topics. In the study of mid-century Brazilian art, the discipline of art history and its dependence on teleological, mappable associations between style and periodization has emphasized a rupture after 1945 and blunted the understanding of the continuities and transformations between the art and politics of the Estado Novo dictatorship and those of Brazil's democratization following World War II. The social and activist collaborations between artistic groups with different stylistic commitments can already be observed during the three editions of the Salão de Maio (1937-1939) in São Paulo. It was precisely at the second edition in 1938, when artist Flávio de Carvalho undertook the organization of the exhibition, that the alliances across divergent aesthetics emerged, ranging from realism to nonobjective abstraction. During a long trip to Europe in 1934, which he started in England, Carvalho came into fruitful contact with the group of artist Ben Nicholson and art critic Herbert Read. Carvalho subsequently invited them to take part in the salon, and a large presence of artists linked to Concrete art groups in England, France, and Germany was a defining element of the exhibition. There was no aesthetic art critical response to these trends at the time, but the role these groups played in anti-fascist movements was widely noted¹. The display of art world opposition to authoritarianism coincided domestically with President Getúlio Vargas' growing sympathy for both his fascist and Nazi peers, and the creation of a presidential committee to review all residential visas for European immigrants of Jewish descent in September 1938, which by then was already restricted to 20 visas a year².

The creation of the Clube dos Artistas e Amigos da Arte in 1945 continued the practice of collective activism by São Paulo artists, albeit in a democratic context. The club served as a gathering place and advocate for artists and was tied to both the elite art world, with figures like Sérgio Milliet and Rino Levi playing founding roles there and at the Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo (MAM SP). It also involved the artists active in the Grupo Santa Helena and Família Artística Paulista, some of whom were working-class, self-taught artists and recent European and Japanese immigrants and first-generation descents³. Russian immigrant Pola Rezende, a realist artist and playwright, was emblematic of the club's membership.

A photograph that appeared in the evening edition of a daily São Paulo newspaper in 1952 bridges the figurative artistic groups of the 1930s and 1940s and the emergence of nonobjective abstraction in the 1950s⁴. In it, a model stands in the Grupo Ruptura exhibition at MAM SP previewing a clothing design to be unveiled at the gala of the Clube dos Artistas e Amigos da Arte, where the premier of one of Rezende's play was also to occur. In the years prior, the Clube dos Artistas served as a site of protest against the advent of MAM SP as a hegemonic cultural force⁵. The modern art museum, initially envisioned in the late 1930s as an antiauthoritarian beacon by opposition intellectuals in a dictatorial context, ultimately functioned as a private, decidedly elite entity backed by substantial public monies⁶. At the club in 1950-51, a cross-section of artists of different generations, political affiliations, and diverse stylistic approaches, including young abstract artists that would form Grupo Ruptura, collectively argued that MAM SP was improperly excluding artists from its decision-making processes in its organization of the Brazilian representation to the Venice Biennale and the newly established São Paulo Bienal. Rather than the purported seismic break between old and new art the group declared in its manifesto, the photograph and its context signal the intellectual, social, and political ties between artists practicing abstraction, realism, and their hybrids.

The image also affords a clarifying glimpse at the gendered and racialized envisioning of the consumers and producers of abstraction. Like a larger array of related photographs that appeared in a review of the Grupo Ruptura exhibition a few days before, it deployed the image of the white female consumer of

abstract art⁷. In the articles illustrated by these photographs, the women proclaimed their incomprehension of the group's manifesto, as well as the paintings themselves, and the reporter concluded that the models constituted "a beautiful show of perfectly figurative art in the midst of the harmonized, colorful charades of the 'Rupture' group"⁸. The young society belles are cast as naive and vapid and their supposed ignorance is played for laughs, and not, as had been the case of the reviews of the first Bienal, the grounds for a diatribe about the lack of seriousness among the privileged classes in Brazil⁹. While uncertain about the merits of the displayed art, the extended photographic record of the women's attendance of the exhibition demonstrates the cachet that abstract art held with the elite. Coincident with the sexist casting of the audience for abstraction, a markedly different image of the producer of abstract art circulated: the hardworking male striver. The seven male European-descendant artists of Grupo Ruptura, dressed in suits and ties and engaged in debate at public events and bars, were presented in the media as public thinkers, even civil leaders¹⁰.

Barbara Weinstein examines the myth of Brazil as a racial democracy, purportedly without racial prejudice, at mid-century. She focuses on how the consolidation of this ideology coexisted with earlier racist theories of progress through whitening and demonstrates that the assertion of the economic and cultural exceptionalism of São Paulo allowed the expression of an association between whiteness and civilization¹¹. She argues that "racialized images of modernity and progress have deeply informed discriminatory policies and practices" in the country¹². Denise Ferreira da Silva theorizes the extricable linkage of the racialized and gendered character of the Brazilian democratic subject bracketed by "the whitening thesis" and racial democracy, noting that both narratives are dependent on miscegenation and "the appropriation of the non-European (colonized or enslaved) female subject" by the European¹³.

To say that visual artists and art institutions were imbricated in these processes would be decided understatement. In their studies of Brazilian citizenship, Brodwyn Fischer and James Holston examine what Holston calls the "disjunction" between idealized political citizenship and inequitable, unjust, and violent civil citizenship¹⁴. Fischer notes the purported universality of the democracy inscribed into Brazilian mid-century law (with the notable exception of disenfranchisement of illiterates, but without race-based discrimination and with reforms to gender discrimination, including women's suffrage in 1932)¹⁵. The protagonists of the postwar establishment of a host of modern art institutions and the emergence of nonobjective abstraction, consisting of art patrons, artists, and writers, were, with few exceptions, the privileged – educated and largely white, although from a range of class, ethnic, and regional identities – and were not subjected to disenfranchisement or violence by the state. They were, instead, the favored subjects and agents of the reimagining of the individual and society following World War II as Brazil experienced an expansion of the urban middle class. This dossier aims to ask about, but by no means resolves, how the study of postwar art can begin to account not just for the aspirations and ideals of abstraction's adherents, but also the ways in which the theorization, production, and reception of the style *acted* in the public sphere, reinforcing or challenging social injustice.

Our scholarship is invested in reconstructing the complex climate in which art and institutions functioned in mid-century and postwar in the cities of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo¹⁶. As such, we begin by pointing to the interstitial nature of the postwar avant-garde and its participation in the conceptions of Brazilian citizenship codified during the autocratic and democratic facets of the middle of the twentieth century. In taking seriously the projects by artists and intellectuals in a postcolonial nation, we argue, one must account for the objectives and effects of those initiatives in regard to both local and international contexts.

We also share commitments to the synthesis of archival research from Brazilian and international repositories and close consideration of the materials and techniques of works of art.

Today, Brazilian postwar abstract practices occupy a vaulted place in Euro-American accounts of Latin American art, a hypervisibility that has rightly been criticized¹⁷. There are many threads to this critique. The international attention to Neo-Concretism, in particular, overshadows consideration of art not engaged with the group's geometric and interactive principles. Since the 1990s, this focus has cooperated with, on one hand, the visibility of a select number of regionally affluent and predominantly South American countries and a cast of largely white artists operating in large cities and, on the other hand, the valorization of art production intelligible to histories centered on European and U.S. art. In fact, the promotion of Neo-Concretism and Brazilian Concrete art at large can be traced back to the late 1950s, when Brazilian diplomatic organisms supported a series of exhibitions promoting these artists in the international context, hand in hand with the presentation of Brasília as the new capital city of the country¹⁸. These conditions devalue and erase – in the imaginaries of the Global North and the Global South – cultural makers outside of narrow geographic, racial, and cultural confines. Furthermore, the practices of nonobjective abstraction in Brazil, and Latin America, were heterogeneous beyond the most researched trajectories, from Concrete art to participatory and kinetic practices. The study of gestural, informal, or lyrical abstraction has suffered, as has examination of the large bodies of visual cultures and histories artists drew on in favor of the distillation of a lineage in the art and ideas of figures like Max Bill, Kazimir Malevich, and Piet Mondrian. Even within art fitting the retrospectively applied category of geometric abstraction, exclusions are marked, as with the case of the absence of Colombian art from dominant transnational accounts of the style.

Prior to the groundswell of literature and exhibitions on Brazilian geometric abstraction over the last several decades, it was Brazilian thinkers who turned scholarly attention to the São Paulo Bienal, the country's modern art museums, and the postwar history of art in Brazil. The question of why abstraction – and its expanded form: what caused the shift from the dominance of social realism before World War II to the ascendancy of geometric abstraction thereafter? – motivated this foundational art historical scholarship in the 1970s¹⁹. At its root, the pursuit of a cause for the emergence of nonobjective abstraction seeks to defend against claims that Brazilian and Latin American postwar abstraction was a latter-day, derivative replaying of the innovations of the European historical avant-garde of the 1910s and 1920s. Alfred H. Barr, Jr., founding director of the Museum of Modern Art, New York, infamously implied as much in his dismissal of works by Brazilian artists in 1957 as “Bauhaus exercises”²⁰. Indeed, the lack of attention to gestural abstraction (and its relationship or lack thereof to U.S. Abstract Expressionism) at this foundational moment in the discipline of art history in the Brazilian academy may have been tied to the decolonial motivations of an intellectual elite opposed to the U.S.-supported military dictatorship²¹. These theorists and historians sought to craft narratives of Brazilian art predicated not on derivation and influence, but on theoretical and archival attention to the social history of Brazil.

Aracy Amaral's 1977 landmark exhibition *Projeto construtivo brasileiro na arte (1950–1962)* and Ronaldo Brito's essays of the mid-1970s, later published as a book, were sharply criticized in some corners as favoring Neo-Concretism and understanding the immediate postwar period as being a mere incubator for the movement's inauguration in 1959²². As Camila Maroja has argued, Frederico Moraes, in writings of the late 1970s, and exhibition projects curated by Roberto Pontual charted an expansive, interconnected Latin American history of abstraction and provided a roadmap for the formation of a Latin American canon centered on geometric abstraction²³. Another important early study of the history of Brazilian abstraction, the 1987 anthology of interviews and primary sources assembled by Fernando

Cocchiarale and Anna Bella Geiger, built on and subtly contested the terms set by Amaral, Brito, Morais, and Pontual²⁴. It included informal and geometric abstraction and sought to account for a diversity of abstract practices, including those that were not organized by artist groups, manifestos, and consolidated critical apparatuses, albeit like the earlier studies limited to Rio and São Paulo.

The articles in this dossier respond to critiques of the hypervisibility of Brazilian geometric abstraction. They also draw on and contest the ideas formulated in the 1970s and 1980s about the postwar era as well as those of Mário Pedrosa, Ferreira Gullar, and other key art critics from mid-century. Authors offer in-depth examinations of abstract practices outside Rio and São Paulo; the institutional and pedagogical contexts of lyrical abstraction; and women artists often relegated to footnotes or summary acknowledgment. Others examine key art critical concepts and debates, elucidate transnational contexts, and reveal the heterogeneity of artistic production highlighted at important events.

Inspired by the historiographic and methodological questions outlined above, several of the invited contributors included here spoke as a part of a panel titled “Reconstructing Complexity: Art in Brazil at Mid-Century and after World War II” at the 2016 Brazilian Studies Association (BRASA) International Congress at Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island. The conversations at the session, with papers by scholars of Brazilian art based in Brazil and the United States, examined the elided relationships between art, design, and institutions of the 1930s and 1940s and the 1950s; the political and social stakes of nonobjective abstraction postwar; the privileging of certain transnational dialogues to the exclusion of others; and the interconnected debates of citizenship and the role of the artist during and following the Estado Novo dictatorship. The BRASA congress, with its interdisciplinary focus, bilingual proceedings, and collegiality, proved a stimulating environment where participants could speak with nuance about specific historical and political conditions typically impossible in a conference outside Brazil. An expanded, double session titled “Art and Its Institutions: Revising Histories of Mid-Century and Postwar Brazilian Art”, was to convene at the 2020 BRASA International Congress at the University of Texas at Austin, but the congress was canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic²⁵.

Concurrent with the organization of the ultimately unrealized 2020 conference, we were invited to coedit a special dossier for MODOS. We elected to use the opportunity to expand the BRASA scholarly dialogues to assemble new scholarship on the artists, groups, and institutional and critical interlocutors of experimentation with geometric and nongeometric abstract languages in the middle of the twentieth century in Brazil, inviting submissions from the BRASA speakers and others, and accepting articles via the call for papers.

Taken together, the following twelve essays attest to the vitality of the study of postwar Brazilian art and point to some of the subfield’s potentials and blind spots. Among the articles is a shared approach to research: rather than rely on inherited knowledge and assumptions, the texts are grounded in the published and unpublished documents and artworks from the mid-century. Featured in many of the included texts is the study of artworks at the Museu de Arte Contemporânea da Universidade de São Paulo (MAC USP), the university art museum that holds the historical collection of MAM-SP and the prize-winning works from the São Paulo Bienal from 1951 to 1963, and period texts made widely accessible in the groundbreaking digital *hemeroteca* (periodical library) of the Biblioteca Nacional, as well as research in numerous institutional and personal archives. Rather than attempt to write summaries of each text, we will now consider selections from the dossier as they have in different ways helped us

formulate two crucial questions: How were practices of abstraction mobilized and consolidated? What politics informed the theorization, production, and reception of abstract art and its practitioners?

Neglecting shopworn narratives of postwar abstraction – such as the purported diametrical differences between Concretism in Rio and São Paulo and an understanding of art of the late 1950s predicated solely on the fallout from the *Exposição nacional de arte concreta* (1956–57) and inception of the Neo-Concrete movement – the authors together chart complex and varied pictures of Brazilian abstraction. This includes Vera Beatriz Siqueira’s analysis of how the label abstract came to be applied to the paintings of Roberto Burle Marx and Heloisa Espada’s revision of our understanding of the Swiss delegation to the first São Paulo Bienal (1951), previously understood a bastion of Concrete art, revealed instead to be a stylistically diverse display.

Kaira M. Cabañas and María Amalia García zero in on nonabstract, othered practices highly valorized by abstraction’s adherents, grappling with the ideas underpinning inclusive modernisms that coexisted with dogmatism and formalism. Cabañas challenges us to consider “how Pedrosa’s turn to the art of psychiatric patients allowed him to disidentify in part with a rationalist outlook and the elite cultural environment in Brazil” and calls for further study “to account for how these patient-artists – men and women whose psychopathological identification often converged with race and class discrimination – became central to this particular history of modern art in Brazil.” García offers a close analysis of Brazilian, Argentine, and Venezuelan art magazines to theorize the modernist tenets by which abstract artists and writers incorporated vernacular culture, ranging from pre-Columbian, indigenous, and rural productions, into the imaginaries they constructed.

A large number of contributors foreground women artists, some internationally acknowledged innovators – Anna Bella Geiger, Lygia Pape, and Sophie Taeuber-Arp – and others celebrated figures domestically – Maria Leontina and Fayga Ostrower. Also examined are artists who warrant the in-depth scholarly study and contextualization offered here: Edith Bering, Estela Campos, Judith Lauand, Yolanda Mohalyi, and Jandyra Waters. Talita Trizoli calls on us to recognize the impact of sexism on the professional opportunities of abstract women artists. Ana Avelar and Regina Teixeira de Barros coincide in not only noting the importance of Sheila Brannigan, a now forgotten lyrical abstract painter, but also insisting on a more complex and multi-actor institutional landscape that helped usher in the development of abstraction in Rio and São Paulo. They identify female and Jewish, Eastern European-descendant leaders in the art scene (augmenting the predominantly male, Christian, Western European-descendant pantheon of known figures), reveal institutional structures that supported lyrical abstract practices, and shed new light on the policies and erasures that occurred at entities like the São Paulo Bienal. Gil Vieira Costa provides an in-depth examination of the institutions and artists in Belém, identifying Campos as a figure who was active in Rio and Pará’s capital city and documenting the widespread concern with Gestalt theory among Brazilian artists in mid-century.

Examination of pedagogy allows several authors to upend ossified narratives about postwar abstraction. Sérgio Martins shows how Pape, though a lauded artist in multiple vanguard contexts from the 1950s through the 1970s, “is often at odds in her work with the typically avant-garde ethos of wiping the slate in order to affirm a new beginning,” noting, for example, her skepticism of Gullar’s theory of the non-object. Martins views as emblematic of Pape’s experimentation her unorthodox approach to teaching – what she called her “anticlasses” – and her adoption in the 1950s of woodcut printing, a medium then “most often associated either with the popular tradition of *cordel* literature from the Brazilian Northeast or with an expressionist vein, represented in the work of the great – albeit unorthodox printmaker

Oswaldo Goeldi". Among the precedents for Pape's nontraditional teaching were Ivan Serpa's pioneering instruction at the Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro (MAM Rio) as well as the printmaking workshop Ostrower initiated at the same institution that Avelar studies.

Together as a whole, the articles included here offer new possibilities to understand the Brazilian artistic debates on abstract art. In addition, they deal with the complexities embedded in the radical shifts the country faced in the aftermath of World War II. Not only have the authors chosen new approaches to their topics – gender studies, the interconnections between art and psychiatry, relations between art and design, among others – but they also ventured to deal with a fabric that goes beyond the aesthetic reading of the artworks mentioned, considering the works as having social and political dimensions. Finally, they show how modern art was instrumental in the making of Brazil's image as a modernized society during the 20th century, and make us reflect on why being modern was key in the international game of nations. We hope that this collection of essays serves as a didactic tool to question the global narrative of modern art as an ever-progressive trajectory towards abstraction, and foster a younger generation of scholars to pursue new roads.

Notes

* We would like thank Emerson Dionisio Gomes de Oliveira for his generous collaboration on the realization of the dossier. We also express our gratitude to Libby Hruska for her feedback on the English version of our introduction. In addition to the scholars whose articles we are delighted to include in the dossier, conversations with Adrian Anagnost, Aleca Le Blanc, and Edith Wolfe informed our thinking.

** Associate Professor in Research in Art, Theory and Criticism, curator and director of the Museum of Contemporary Art of the University of São Paulo (MAC USP). Email: amagalhaes@usp.br. ORCID: <<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2291-428X>>.

*** Assistant Professor of Art History and Associate Director of the Center for Latin American Visual Studies (CLAVIS) in the Department of Art and Art History at the University of Texas at Austin. E-mail: adele.nelson@austin.utexas.edu.

¹ Earlier in the 1930s, Carvalho was also key in founding the Clube dos Artistas Modernos (CAM), where anti-fascist activists and intellectuals were engaged. There was the well-known case of the exhibition of German artist Käthe Kollwitz's works at CAM, and Mário Pedrosa's lecture on her work that was later published in the anti-fascist periodical *O homem livre*.

² The original document of the Decree is dated September 27, 1938, and can be consulted at the Arquivo Nacional in Rio de Janeiro. On the legislation and Brazil's immigration policy, see, for instance, Gilson Moura Castro, *A imigração no Brasil* (Campo Grande: Life Editora, 2012).

³ The image of these artists as working-class members was partly constructed by the art criticism that supported them. As per recent studies, although some of the members of the Santa Helena Group and the Família Artística Paulista belonged to the working-class communities and neighborhoods of the city of São Paulo, their association with the immigrant São Paulo industrial elite is worth noting. See Patrícia Freitas, *O grupo Santa Helena e o universo industrial paulista (1930-1970)* (Master's thesis, Universidade Estadual de Campinas, Instituto de Filosofia e Ciências Humanas, 2011). Accessible at: <<http://www.repositorio.unicamp.br/handle/REPOSIP/281802>>.

⁴ "Dia de gala no Clubinho", *Folha da noite*, December 17, 1952, 5, Arquivo Waldemar Cordeiro.

⁵ On this matter, see Aracy Amaral, *Arte para quê?: a preocupação social na arte brasileira, 1930-1970* (São Paulo: Studio Nobel, 1984).

⁶ Annateresa Fabris tackled this issue, especially regarding the position and manifestations of art critic Sérgio Milliet, who argued that the MAM-SP should be a public museum supported by the municipality of São Paulo. See Annateresa Fabris, "A travessia da arte moderna," in *História e(m) movimento: atas do Seminário MAM 60 Anos* (São Paulo: MAM, 2008). Also see Annateresa Fabris, "A Flash in the Pan that is Really Gold": Considerations on the Inception of the Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo", in *MAM 60*, ed. Annateresa Fabris and Luiz Camillo Osorio (São Paulo: MAM SP, 2008), 14-89.

⁷ "Abstracionismo? Figurativismo ou arte concreta? Elegância em todo o caso...", *Folha da manhã*, December 14, 1952, 17, CD-ROM Waldemar Cordeiro (São Paulo: Analívia Cordeiro and Galeria Brito Cimino, 2010), fig. 5-31.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Serafim, "O reporter na Bienal," *Habitat*, n. 5 (October–December 1951): 6.

¹⁰ See, for example, Ibiapaba Martins, "Ruptura: brigam os artistas," *Última hora* (São Paulo), December 10, 1952, in João Bandeira, *Arte concreta paulista: documentos* (São Paulo: Cosac & Naify, 2002), 51.

¹¹ Barbara Weinstein, *The Color of Modernity: São Paulo and the Making of Race and Nation in Brazil* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), 11-14, 224-32.

¹² Ibid, 14.

¹³ Denise Ferreira da Silva, *Toward a Global Idea of Race* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 223.

¹⁴ Brodwyn Fischer, *Citizenship and Inequality in Twentieth-Century Rio de Janeiro* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008); James Holston, *Insurgent Citizenship: Disjunctions of Democracy and Modernity in Brazil* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008).

¹⁵ Fischer, *Citizenship and Inequality in Twentieth-Century Rio de Janeiro*, 5.

¹⁶ See, for example, Ana Gonçalves Magalhães, *Classicismo moderno. Margherita Sarfatti e a pintura italiana no acervo do MAC USP* (São Paulo: Editorial Alameda, 2016), especially chapter 1; Adele Nelson, *Forming Abstraction: Art and Institutions in Postwar Brazil* (Berkeley: University of California Press, forthcoming January 2022).

¹⁷ See, for example, Kaira M. Cabañas, "If the Grid Is the New Palm Tree of Latin American Art," *Oxford Art Journal* 33, n. 3 (2010): 365-83; Mónica Amor, *Theories of the Nonobject: Argentina, Brazil, Venezuela, 1944-1969* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2016), 7-11; Mariola V. Alvarez and Ana M. Franco, "Introduction," in *New Geographies of Abstract Art in Postwar Latin America*, ed. Mariola V. Alvarez and Ana M. Franco (London: Routledge, 2019), 1-7.

¹⁸ This can be identified in the participation of Brazil in the Interbau exhibition in Berlin, in 1957, and a touring exhibition on Brazilian modern art in Europe that took place between 1959 and 1960, culminating in the survey exhibition curated by Swiss artist Max Bill in Zurich (*Konkrete Kunst - 50 Jahre Entwicklung*), to which Bill invited a group of Concrete and Neo-Concrete Brazilian artists. For a study on the reception of their work in Europe, see, for instance, Susanne Neubauer, "1959-1968: Lygia Clark and the Brazilian Avant-garde in Germany and Switzerland, a Survey," *Transnational Latin American Art: From 1950 to the Present International Emerging Scholars Research Forum*, The University of Texas at Austin, 2009. For analysis of the role of Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro in Brazil's foreign cultural policy, see Maria Amalia Garcia, *Abstract Crossings: Cultural Exchange between Argentina and Brazil* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2019), 200-9; Aleca Le Blanc, "Incendiary Objects: An Episodic History of the Museu de Arte Moderna, Rio de Janeiro", in *Art Museums of Latin America: Structuring Representation*, ed. Michele Greet and Gina McDaniel Tarver (New York: Routledge, 2018), 59-72.

¹⁹ Key texts include: Ronaldo Brito, "Neoconcretismo," *Malasartes* 3 (April-June 1976): 9-13; Aracy A. Amaral, ed., *Projeto construtivo brasileiro na arte (1950-1962)* (Rio: MAM Rio; São Paulo: Pinacoteca, 1977); Ronaldo Brito, *Neoconcretismo: vértice e ruptura do projeto construtivo brasileiro* (Rio: Funarte, 1985); Aracy A. Amaral, *Arte para quê? A preocupação social na arte brasileira, 1930-1970*, op. cit., 229-71. Ferreira Gullar and Mário Pedrosa also emphasized this question and influenced the approaches of Brito, Amaral, and others. In 2015, Pinacoteca do Estado reedited a facsimile version of Amaral's *Projeto construtivo brasileiro na arte*.

²⁰ C.A., "Conversa com Alfred Barr Jr.," *O estado de São Paulo*, September 28, 1957. On Barr's participation in the jury of the 4th São Paulo Bienal, see Ana Cândida de Avelar, "Controversies of a Juror: Alfred Barr at the 4th São Paulo Bienal", *Third Text*, 26, n. 1 (January 2012), 29-39, DOI: [10.1080/09528822.2012.641220](https://doi.org/10.1080/09528822.2012.641220)

²¹ In this sense, and in addition to Amaral and Brito, see: Carlos Zilio, *A querela do Brasil: a questão da identidade da arte brasileira: a obra de Tarsila, Di Cavalcanti e Portinari, 1922-1945* (Rio: Funarte, 1982).

²² See, for example, Décio Pignatari, "A vingança de Aracy Pape" (1977), in Glória Ferreira, *Crítica de arte no Brasil: temáticas contemporâneas* (Rio de Janeiro: Funarte, 2006), 89-92.

²³ Camila Maroja, "Vontade construtiva: Latin America's Geometric Abstract Identity", in *New Geographies of Abstract Art in Postwar Latin America*, 225-39.

²⁴ Fernando Cocchiarella and Anna Bella Geiger, eds., *Abstracionismo geométrico e informal: a vanguarda brasileira nos anos cinquenta* (Rio de Janeiro: Funarte, 1987).

²⁵ So too was a viewing of Brazilian artworks at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, with the session participants and other scholars attending the congress.

Text received in January 2021.