A Rua

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Rio de Janeiro &
The Spirit of the Street

Dieter Roelstraete **(ed.)**

M HKA
Ludion

Contents

Bart De Baere

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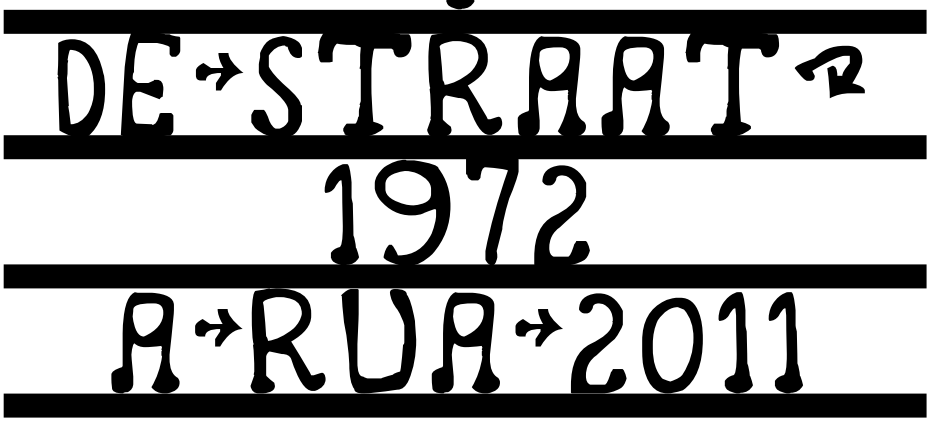

How does a museum end up organizing an exhibition titled The Street*?*

M HKA has long held the belief that art enriches society. Art offers an approach (or set of approaches) to reality that is radically different from those held up and backed by convention. As a consequence, our museum is strongly interested in 'other' insights, 'other' perspectives, also those of art practices fostered by 'other' situations. Although art evidently transcends the local, it is still related to location; implicitly, art takes shape in dialogue with a milieu that determines its experience, and with an artistic tradition that influences its perception. Every such situation allows for the development of its own situation-specific perspectives. Rio de Janeiro is a particularly interesting example of such a situation: historically, it has been home to one of the most influential and important avant-gardes of the Southern Hemisphere, its approach to art a much more totalizing experiential affair than the distinctively distant looking-and-thinking-in-images prevalent in our own Western European context. This makes it all the more remarkable that the current exhibition and its publication form the first attempt ever to give a synthetic overview of Rio de Janeiro's unique contemporary art situation.

When Dieter Roelstraete first suggested, a couple of years ago, that this exhibition take the notion of the street as its point of departure, neither its sociological nor its urbanist meaning took precedence. Already then, the focus was very much on the particularity of certain *artistic* proposals as they develop within, and are conditioned by, a certain situation's cultural potential. In Rio, one crucial determining factor is the street; much as in Vancouver, one comparably crucial factor is the indeterminate 'intertidal' space (and time) between ebb and flow. *A Rua*, Portuguese-written, Brazilian-spoken.

Needless to say, this intuitive apprehension of the street as the central referential term in this 'city report' corroborates our collectively held image of Rio de Janeiro as a city overwhelmingly associated with open-air carnival, with streets peopled by lean and supple bodies perennially on their way to or from the beach, a scene also subtended by the permanent frisson of a potential danger waiting to explode any time. Yet *A Rua* very much departed from art, from thinking about art, in the slipstream of a younger generation of artists and partly centred around the artist-founded gallery A Gentil Carioca – known for its festive receptions on a street corner in downtown Rio and its blind wall that has been turned into an exhibition space – while simultaneously continuing a tradition initiated by some of the city's best-known historical figures such as Hélio Oiticica. Oiticica's *parangolés* (on view in another M HKA exhibition recently) are emblematic in this regard: they are works born from the meeting of Neo-Concrete abstraction with the spirit of carnival, which really only become art when they are used to dance in, and whose title refers to an untranslatable slang word for a situation *between* people that evokes confusion as much as excitement.

Initially, then, *A Rua* was the result of the attentive observation of certain artistic perspectives. Usually, exhibition titles are soon translated (in this case, it would also have meant robbing it of its sensuality), yet this particular exhibition could not possibly ever have been titled simply *De Straat* – for that, after all, was the title of a legendary exhibition organized by Jean Leering in the Van Abbemuseum in nearby Eindhoven in 1972. (And who would *want* to be merely second in line anyway? Second generation, second order, second rate?) That project did depart explicitly from a 'social' idea; Leering strongly believed that the museum had an active part to play in a direct process of social and psychological transformation. *De Straat* expressed this conviction, and Leering used the notion of the street as a reflection of society itself: 'something by, for and belonging to everybody' is how he put it in his introduction.[1] The fact that the project was both initiated and realized in close collaboration with an urbanist[2] also attests to the prevalence, at the time and in that particular context, of the idea of a society that is makable and can be planned systematically – as does the fact that this was an initiative by a publicly funded institution. The

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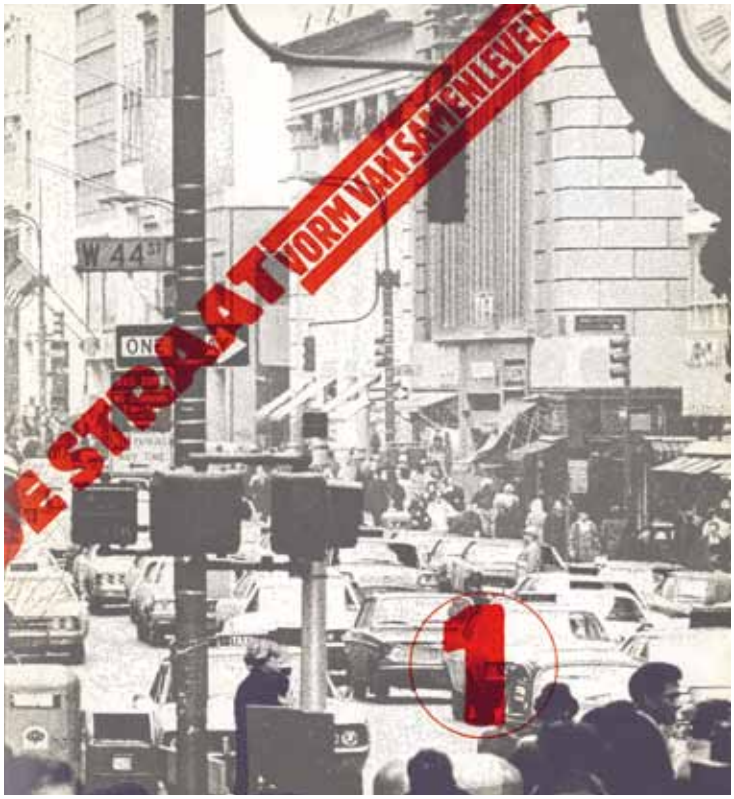
1 Jean Leering, 'Ten Geleide', in Tjeerd Deelstra et al., *De Straat. Vorm van Samenleven*, Eindhoven: Van Abbemuseum, 1972, p. 3.

2 In the early stages of the project, this triumvirate consisted of Leering, Harald Szeemann and Swiss urbanist Peter Gygax; towards its end, they had been replaced by Dutch urbanist Tjeerd Deelstra, curator Jaap Bremer and graphic designer Jan van Toorn.



De Straat: vorm van samenleven.
Van Abbemuseum Eindhoven, 1972

museum wanted to show the citizens how they could participate in the process of thinking their society's structure; how, in Leering's words, 'they can be better outfitted to become more conscious of, and participate more actively in, socially significant phenomena' (never mind that he only identifies people as *users* after having introduced us to the *commissioner* first and the *designer* second).

This is all very different from the possibilities afforded by the street in Rio de Janeiro *anno* 2011. That street does not fall under the system's control or jurisdiction; in fact, it is one of the strongest possible alternatives to the system. Not 'by, for and belonging to' the people, but quite simply *with* people – performatively, without defined or circumscribed roles. In Brazil, the 'classic' dimension of urbanism can be found first and foremost in the formidable apparatus that is São Paulo, its roads and streets functioning very much like conveyor belts, organized around the centralized functions of the built environment. In Rio de Janeiro, on the other hand, the street is both a space and a continuously unfolding heterotopia. At least, that is how art plays out in it, from the sharp-edged, subversive actions during the dictatorship to the carefree, energetic scaling of A Gentil Carioca's outside wall.

It is this idiosyncratic approach that defines much of the urbanist excellence in Rio's rich cultural tradition: precisely the kind of approach that could not possibly have been captured by the systemic approach of *De Straat* in 1972, one that is perhaps intrinsically closest to art – the

art, by the way, that in the end simply disappeared in 1972.[3] Rio, in any case, is a city that any other city in the world ought to pay attention to. She has always been a unique city for sure, characterized by the relationship between beaches and hills, by *favelas* on hillsides right in the heart of the city, and not only in its easily reshuffled marginal zones. Rio is currently readying herself for the type of mega events (the FIFA World Cup final in 2014, the Olympic Games in 2016) that can completely transform a city in global terms. This transformation is evidently not without problems (think of the *Tropa de Elite* films), but is nonetheless informed by a sophisticated conception of urban workings.

Such a conception acknowledges that infrastructure can never really take the upper hand over the human relationships that are the vital part of this equation, and that it is too easy to speak of 'forms of living together' (the subtitle of the 1972 exhibition) – that our thinking should depart instead from an idea of society as an *event*, an event that has its own qualities and logic which the aforementioned infrastructure can only support: society 'happens'. This primacy of the informal event leads on to interesting urbanist reflections and artistic practices, but also to a potential for societal effectiveness marked by less fixed and hierarchical relations between policymakers and their city than we are accustomed to – think of public-policy initiatives like the Programa de Aceleração do Crescimento (PAC) for Rio de Janeiro, or of the importance of bottom-up initiatives such as the Observatório de Favelas.[4]

In the period during which *A Rua* developed further in dialogue with Paulo Herkenhoff (before he considered becoming general coordinator of Europalia Brazil, before he disappeared from it altogether, in circumstances that remain unclear to us), the project not only gained artistic and historical depth, but also became more deeply embedded in these social and societal terms. Ideally, this aspect of our research would have got its own clearly defined place and form within the project. Ideally, it would have been the subject of a series of lectures and colloquia (it is clear that Flanders has a lot to learn from Rio de Janeiro in this respect). But the withdrawal of Paulo Herkenhoff forced us to reconsider and ultimately rescale the project – in addition, matters were not helped by the prolonged lack of clarity and the loss of precious time following the reshuffling of

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3 At the outset, artists such as Robert Barry, Marinus Boezem, Stanley Brouwn, Christo, Jan Dibbets, Event Structure Research Group, GRAV, Hans Haacke, Michael Heizer, Allan Kaprow, Robert Smithson, Ger van Elk and Wolf Vostell were considered and asked to work around the theme of the street.

4 In 2007, a Rio-specific part of the Programa de Aceleração do Crescimento (Programme for Accelerated Economic Growth) focused on three of the city's biggest *favelas* and their integration into the urban fabric. More information on the Observatório de Favelas can be found on http://www.observatoriodefavelas.org.br.

Lygia Pape, *Divisor* (1968, 1990)

organizational responsibilities *in situ*. Very much like *De Straat*, then, *A Rua* is not only a result but as much a series of stations passed through.

This rich indigenous urban and urbanist tradition is now no longer even present in Lygia Pape's reflections on the quality of precariousness in *favela* architecture, which at one point seemed to become a core visual reference within the exhibition (the material that was guiding us in this direction still awaits further development). A *direct* articulation of this tradition now only takes centre stage in the work of Jorge Mario Jáuregui. 'How can we imagine the transformation of a city's energy into social actions for social change?', he asked during our first meeting in August 2010. When working in the *favelas*, he makes a distinction between the private and that which belongs to no one, which is therefore also not what we refer to as the public. Neither society nor the street is determined and defined as such.

There is 'only' energy, and precariousness is one of this energy's primary qualities; this is where subjectivities meet and possibly share their experiences. How very different from the exhibition that was organized in the year I was just twelve years old (and Dieter Roelstraete was born), Jean Leering's heroic feat which we look back upon with great admiration because it wanted to go further than what was (and is) possible; because it wanted to forsake the comforts of the form of art as a reference in order to aim for real social impact; because it failed (like all good things), and failed completely at that, losing sight of the tradition of art from which the project had derived its initial impulse.

A Rua appears potentially much more topical and current; its potential is that of Athenian *demokratia*, very different from our own representative democracy, very different from the 'by, for and belonging to' that is in essence tied to a system of commissioners, designers and

users. Its potential is closer to that of a space of commonality that must be thought through more fully still, not quite private and not quite public.

It would have been something if we had managed to surpass 1972 or even purely perpetuated its spirit in a dignified enough manner (if only because it is so damned wretched always to invoke historical references without ever caring to accept the critical consequences of these references' application to the present moment). This would have been possible if we had been able to fully render our image of the street as a space of lived experience, with its myriad subjective practices that coalesce in fleeting moments of collectivity, and stock this image with concrete examples that would have communicated the sophistication of Rio's urban tissue. That, without a doubt, would have been a great space for art to thrive in, defined by the dialogue between subjective (artistic) intelligence and collective (institutional) intelligence.

This is not the path the project has taken. We have moved further away from Leering's early-1970s phantasmagoria than we sometimes imagined we would. Perhaps the art on view in *A Rua* will take over this task, and what was not systemically turned into representation and discourse will perhaps be evoked by Ernesto Neto's urban soundscape or Lygia Clark's *Cabeça coletiva*. Maybe so – but we shouldn't burden art with these expectations. What remains, and what this book presents to us, is an attentive look at a specific artistic situation in a city that is no longer as hopelessly exotic (to the Western gaze) as it once was; a BRIC metropolis and a city of the future, whose cultural and artistic potentials we can only hope to value more deeply in order to learn from them.

That we must learn to accept brutality as part and parcel of the street (Arthur Omar), for example; that creative processes are born from conversation and dialogue (Rosana Palazyan); that communities are always communities of real people (A Gentil Carioca); that spontaneous communication determines how meaning is made and circulated (Dias and Riedweg); that the street's energy is a fluid one (Claudia Andujar); that we are seized by the moment (Artur Barrio); that 'society' is *everybody*'s society, and can be contributed to by everybody in whatever way he or she sees fit, subjectively rather than individually (Lygia Clark); that the flows and channels of communication constitute a crucial dimension of social space (Antonio Manuel); that the circuits which determine this social space can be grasped and appropriated (Cildo Meireles); that bodily movements must be negotiated (Lygia Pape). All in *A Rua*, thanks to friends, acquaintances, strangers.

And maybe, just maybe this exhibition made in 2011 will approximate the subtitle given to the 1972 concept note after all: 'an analysis of the area in which interpersonal relations take shape within the social organism'.

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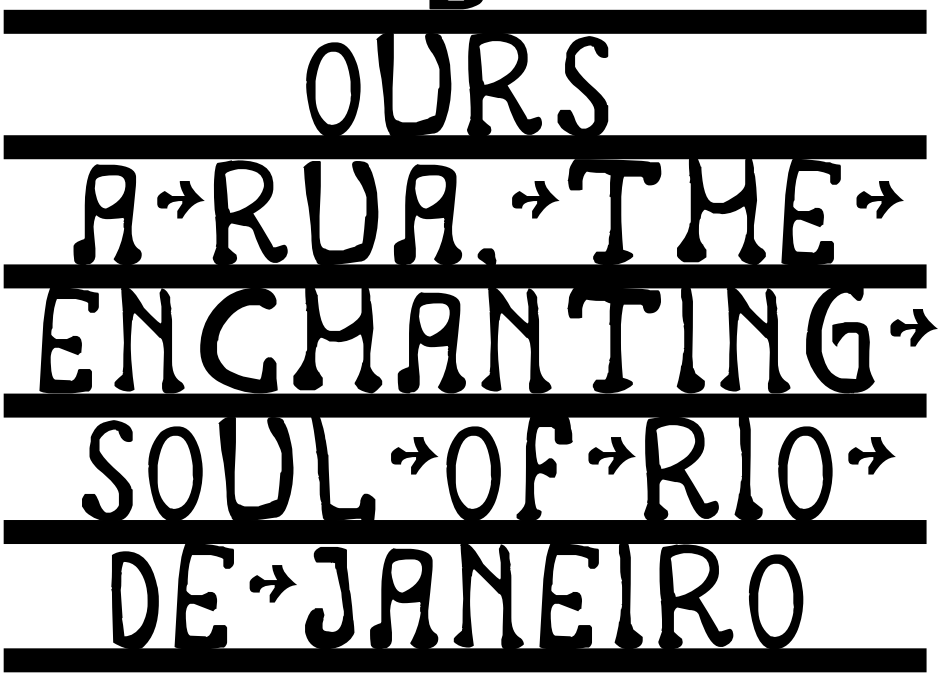

Never should I forget this event
in the life of my fatigued retinas.
Never should I forget that in the middle of the road
there was a stone
there was a stone in the middle of the road
in the middle of the road there was a stone.
– Carlos Drummond de Andrade[1]

Anyone who has ever visited Rio de Janeiro will appreciate that the city's fame as a (or rather, *the*) *cidade maravilhosa* is as much based on the very real marvel of its topography and natural location as it is on cultural capital, demography, engineering *Vernunft* and, last but not least, the cariocas' legendary *joie de vivre*. The pristine sandy beaches of the Atlantic Ocean and Guanabara Bay on the one hand, and the steep, spectacular mountain range covered with rain forest, the fabled *mata atlântica*, on the other hand, leave only a relatively narrow strip of flat land in between to build upon – most of the Zona Sul, with which the city has long been identified (in the tourist imagination first and

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1 Carlos Drummond de Andrade, 'In the Middle of the Road' (trans. Elizabeth Bishop), in *An Anthology of Twentieth-century Brazilian Poetry*, Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1972, p. 89.

foremost[2]), is in fact no more than a couple of street blocks wide. No wonder that this city of natural extremes and cultural contrasts is so often called one of the wonders of the world. It is certainly one of the world's most photographed *and* most picturesque.[3]

Indeed, images of Rio – Cristo Redentor ('Christ the Redeemer') spreading his arms on Corcovado, *sambistas* celebrating Carnival, the mountains named Dois Irmãos at the far end of Ipanema and Leblon beach – are very often what come to mind most readily whenever Brazil is mentioned. No wonder: for much of the country's existence as a Portuguese colony, as an independent empire and as a republic, Rio de Janeiro *was* effectively its capital city and window on the world. It was first 'discovered' by the Portuguese on 1 January 1502, who, believing that Guanabara Bay was the mouth of a mighty river not unlike the Amazon first encountered two years earlier, named the site 'River of January'. Becoming a city proper in 1565, Rio de Janeiro was named the capital of the Portuguese colony of Brazil in 1763. It took over this title from Salvador in Bahia further to the north, which had lost much of its strategic importance after huge gold reserves were found in the province of Minas Gerais in Rio's hinterland (much of Brazil's current economic fortunes remain firmly tied to the country's mineral wealth).

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2 Beyond its compact colonial-era centre, the city of Rio de Janeiro, home to an estimated seven million cariocas, is made up of three distinct 'zonas': *norte* (north), *sul* (south) and *oeste* (west). The Zona Sul encompasses most of the neighbourhoods that are known, for widely varying reasons (beach life, football, music), to many people who have never set foot in Brazil – Botafogo, Copacabana, Flamengo, Gávea, Glória, Ipanema, Leblon… The Zona Norte is overwhelmingly residential and contains most of the city's thousand-plus *favelas*; it rarely makes international headlines (much less captures the tourist imagination) for the right reasons. The sprawling Zona Oeste is Rio's fastest-growing and youngest district, strongly identified with the seaside neighbourhood of Barra da Tijuca; this is where the geographical constraints on urban development, so determining in other parts of the city, matter the least, and consequently also where much of the Olympic action will be concentrated in 2016.

3 Interestingly, the title of the world's most photographed city is an honour that has also been bestowed upon the western Canadian city of Vancouver – considering the photography in question more narrowly as an art practice, for which Vancouver has become especially well known in recent decades (e.g. the work of Roy Arden, Stan Douglas, Rodney Graham, Jeff Wall, Ian Wallace et al.). This internationally acclaimed art scene was the subject, some five years ago, of another exhibition at M HKA, titled *Intertidal*, devoted to rethinking and revaluing the relationship between a city's *genius loci* and its home-grown artistic traditions. Like Rio de Janeiro, Vancouver is a city shaped in large part by the encounter of sea and mountains, creating a unique sense of space that has evidently had some influence on the development of the city's artistic environment and the articulation of the art scene's primary concerns. It is this influence, precisely, that is the subject, to a certain degree, of both the *A Rua* exhibition (and accompanying publication) and the current essay.

The steady stream of gold passing through the harbour also accounted for much of the city's first big building boom, the glorious reminders of which continue to dominate the historical centre to this day (e.g. the Paço Imperial, the Arcos de Lapa, the church of Nossa Senhora da Candelária); in addition, it also ensured that an increasing number of fortune-seeking European immigrants poured into the city. In 1808 Rio briefly became the capital of the Portuguese empire in its entirety – the only capital of a European kingdom ever to be located *outside* Europe – when João VI moved his entire court from Lisbon to the Tropics to escape Napoleon's impending invasion of the Iberian Peninsula. This odd reversal of colonial fortune, which was somewhat replayed just recently when Brazil, experiencing the biggest economic growth spurt in the nation's recent history, offered to buy Portugal's sovereign debt, naturally paved the way for independence, which was finally proclaimed by Pedro I in 1822.

As the worldwide thirst for Brazilian coffee and sugar continued to increase, so, too, did the size of the young nation's capital. Its population passed the 100,000 mark around the time of the proclamation of independence, and the city rapidly expanded southwards to accommodate the desire of its growing middle class for fresh air and breathing space (which was getting increasingly harder to come by northwards *and* inland), spawning the neighbourhoods of Flamengo, Botafogo and Laranjeiras as it snaked along the coast. This marked the beginning of a highly specific, idiosyncratic process of urbanization that had to negotiate the opposing forces of granite and sea, and forced ever-growing numbers of people to live together on ever-smaller surface areas. In 1889 Brazil became a republic, by which time Rio and its environs, a conurbation of half a million inhabitants, ranked among the world's most populous cities – considerably bigger even than São Paulo, the metropolis to the south to which, especially in cultural terms, Rio has long been bound in a relationship of sometimes acrimonious rivalry.

Many of Rio's defining urban features saw the light of day in the boom years of the early twentieth century: the development of the Avenida Rio Branco (still the centre's busiest thoroughfare); the building of the Teatro Municipal downtown and of a railway track up Corcovado mountain (which was to be crowned with the iconic statue of Christ the Redeemer in 1931); and, most importantly perhaps, the construction of a tunnel connecting Botafogo with Copacabana, which would soon after become the city's most glamorous, up-market neighbourhood – a process crowned by the opening, in 1923, of the Copacabana Palace Hotel.[4] Also

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4 A carioca colleague of mine once remarked that it is worth keeping in mind that Rio's urban landscape is as much a cultural – i.e. man-made – *maravilha* as it is a natural one: a city of beaches, forest and mountains, certainly, but also a city of

during this period, a distinctly Brazilian modernism originated – centred primarily, however, in São Paulo, where it became identified with the activities and work of Mário de Andrade, Oswald de Andrade, Ronald de Carvalho, Anita Malfatti, Lasar Segall and the young Flávio de Carvalho.

In Rio's rambunctious cultural scene of the time, one of the defining figures was a journalist named Paulo Barreto, who, as a writer of short stories and quintessential chronicler of city life in the best of Baudelairian traditions, would become known as João do Rio. One of João do Rio's best-known books, *A alma encantadora das ruas* ('The Enchanting Soul of the Streets' – the programmatic opening chapter of which is reprinted in this book), was first published in Paris in 1908; much like the original Parisian *flâneur* who served as his model, João do Rio's favoured, as his literary milieu, the demimonde, the seedy margins of polite society: the prostitutes and petty thieves of Lapa, its nightlife, music halls and gambling dens. A wanderer much more at ease, it seems, in Rio's underworld than in the bourgeois salons that elsewhere harboured and fostered avant-garde culture, João do Rio could thus be viewed as a patron saint (of sorts) of one particularly strong tradition in home-grown carioca culture – a strand in which the proto-situationist tactic of the *dérive*, a passionate, partisan interest in street life, and an acute understanding of the urban poor's own culture mingle and mix.

A literary observer interested in the fate of the swelling masses of urban poor did not have to travel very far to witness the phenomenon's exponential growth in the Rio de Janeiro of the turn of the century. The concentration of economic riches in the Brazilian south-east inevitably drew ever-growing numbers of migrants from the country's impoverished north-east – the so-called *Nordestinos* whose indigenous musical culture would prove so singularly influential in the development of Rio's own signature sound, that of the samba – and with relatively little space to build on in a city marked by spectacularly impractical geographical constraints, the first *favelas* soon saw the light of day, many

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bridges, improbably situated high-rises, highways and tunnels – *and* ferries and their piers: long before the bridge connecting Rio de Janeiro with Niterói across Guanabara Bay was built, much of Rio's commuter traffic was sea-bound (the subject, in a sense, of Ivens Machado's 1976 video piece *Ida e volta numa Barca Rio-Niterói*, on view in the exhibition). Moreover, Rio's engineering genius does not only pertain to the 'formal' city of big public works and private building contractors; it also manifests itself in the 'informal' city of hillside slum dwellings, the improvisational inventiveness and ingenuity of which (not to mention its population's own ideas concerning aesthetics) have long proven to be a powerful source of inspiration for some of Rio's leading artists – not least *because* of the informal city's reliance on improvisation, i.e. on site-specific problem-solving.

occupying hillsides that, much as today, looked right down into the heart of solid middle-class neighbourhoods.[5] Increased immigration, industrialization and urbanization in the 1940s and 1950s only exacerbated these problems – contrasts that only grew starker as Rio de Janeiro saw the dawn of yet another 'golden age' in the field of culture, the appearance of which evidently did much to soften the blow, inflicted soon after, of the city's painful loss of status as both the country's capital and 'first city'. Indeed, right around the time when the bossa nova phenomenon hit the Zona Sul, and when Ipanema beach was for ever enshrined in the nation's collective memory as the home of the eponymous *garota*, President Juscelino Kubitschek moved the capital to the newly built city of Brasilia. Although Rio very much remained, or at least very self-consciously clung on to its status as, the nation's *cultural* capital (if only on the strength of its musical traditions), its political degradation obviously had far-reaching consequences for the cariocas' urbane self-image, presaging a decline that would be accelerated by the establishment of a military dictatorship in 1964 and the worldwide economic crises of the 1970s – all of which were factors that, paradoxically or not, would mingle to provide a prodigiously fertile breeding ground for the development of an artistic culture of radical experimentation that would turn confused, dishevelled Rio de Janeiro into one of the foremost avant-garde art centres of the late 1960s and early 1970s, an era identified with the rise of what has rightfully been called a 'global conceptualism'.[6]

One of the basic principles of the conceptual revolution in art resided in a systematic interrogation of the various institutions of art (i.e. the sites of art's collusion with existing power structures), and this process of erosion and critical subversion very often started out with interrogating its *physical* institutions first and foremost: the school, the studio, the gallery, the museum. The truly worldwide call for the 'dematerialization of the art object' inevitably entailed a devaluation of those spaces

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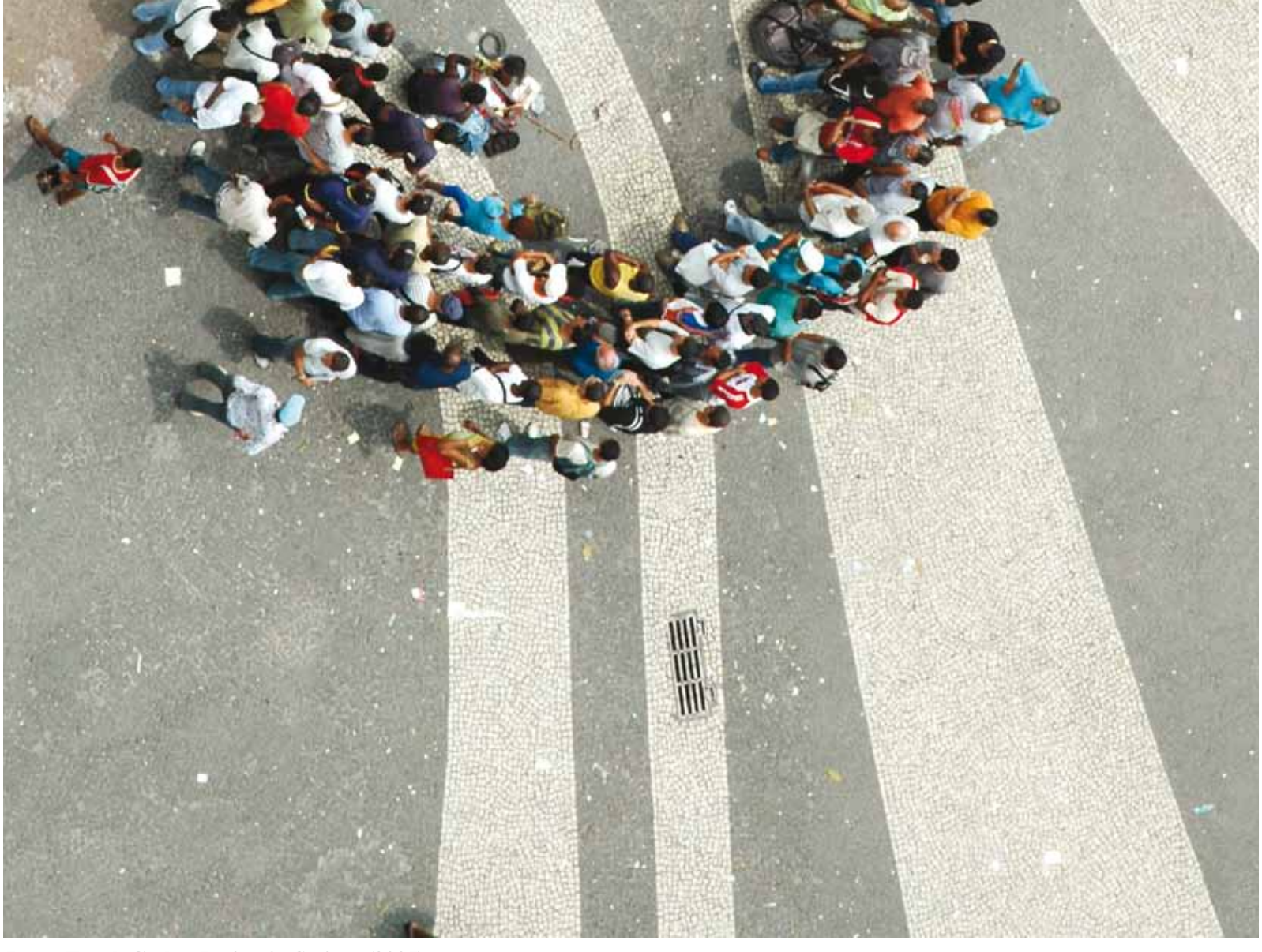
5 The history of Rio's (and Brazil's) *favelas* is evidently much more complicated and long-winded. One key chapter in this history was written in the so-called *quilombos*, small settlements mostly made up of runaway or freed slaves of African descent in the Brazilian outback, the oldest examples of which date back to the seventeenth century. The year 1897 is traditionally given as another signal date in this history, when a returning Republican army unit which had just quashed a rebellion in the Bahian town of Canudos was forced to camp out on a hill called Morro da Providência in the port area of Rio de Janeiro. Their impromptu hillside settlement was named a *favela* in reference to a hardy plant indigenous to Bahia with the same name – a reminder of their military triumph.

6 Cf. the exhibition *Global Conceptualism: Points of Origin, 1950–1980*, organized at the Queens Museum of Art in New York in 1999, in which a number of key artists whose work is also included in *A Rua* took part.



Joana Traub Csekö, *Rodas da Carioca* (2005)

of art whose economy and ecology so clearly depended on the production of *objects*, leading whole armies of artists in major urban centres around the world to leave their studios behind and shift the radius of their practice to these urban centres' often deserted or deteriorated public spaces (in North America, in particular, the emergence of conceptual art and its appeal to publicness or 'publicity' cannot be divorced from the twin phenomena of so-called white flight and suburbanization – both the spatial obverse and rough analogue, in truth, of *favela* spread). Out of these circumstances emerged the conceptual vogue for actions, gestures and performances, fleeting interventions in the public sphere – the ghost of the Situationist International evidently loomed large here, as did so many other spectres exuding the spirit of May '68 – in which the artist's body became a privileged site of artistic production.

Another critique of the institutional archipelago encircling the reigning conception of art was aimed at the existing educational system on the one hand, and at the art market that was serviced by this educational system on the other; this double critique culminated in the militant stance of radical deskilling and a conscious cultivation of a 'poverty' of material means (the specifically Italian phenomenon of Arte Povera most literally and programmatically articulated this strand within the conceptual art revolution, proving that its revolt did not merely demand dematerialization, but also, and more importantly perhaps, a *different*, more ethically charged understanding of the material world). In its confrontational drive to storm the various citadels of power, finally, this amalgamation of art movements – not just concept art, but also body art, earth art, performance art, eventually also video art – so emphatically motivated by the desire to dissolve art into life (again), was also an eminently political affair, and it is no coincidence that the global reach of conceptualism made itself especially felt in those corners of the globe where freedom of speech, let alone freedom of artistic expression, was far from a self-evident constitutional given. For a variety of reasons that do not need to be explained in too much detail, the Rio de Janeiro of the mid-to-late 1960s was eminently equipped to become a hotbed of the kind of conceptual art activity that was characterized by all the above elements, but one factor that does deserve highlighting is related to the city's unique geography, the effects this had on the density of habitation, and the very different meaning the notion of *proximity* acquired because of these unique circumstances.

Anyone who has not only visited Rio de Janeiro (we strongly recommend flying into and/or out of Santos Dumont airport) but has also spent some time in São Paulo will not only understand why the mostly amicable rivalry between both metropolises occasionally degrades into a petty, resentment-fuelled mud fight; he or she will also appreciate

how vastly different both cities are, how vastly different their sense of space is – and how vastly different much of the art that is being produced locally, in response to, or conditioned by, these very particular, highly differentiated spatial circumstances. Having first visited both cities in June 2004, and having started preparatory research for the current exhibition project in earnest in April 2010, I have often thought – and recounted this thought to anyone interested in hearing more about the direction my research was taking – how an exhibition of art from São Paulo could not possibly ever have been called *A Rua*, and this for the simple reason that São Paulo doesn't really *have* streets (*ruas* – I am, of course, exaggerating for the sake of curatorial argument). São Paulo has roads, highways and lots of traffic, yes, but not (again, relatively speaking) a lot of real 'streets' – that is to say, nothing much that resembles the street as we know it, however intuitively, from our shared cultural imagination, as that highly specified *social* space that is the quintessentially *modern* site of the encounter, where I leave the bubble of privacy (interior, interiority) to partake in public life (exterior, exteriority). (Needless to add here that in *A Rua*'s conception of the street, the latter is not primarily considered as a structural fact of architecture or even urbanity; the street is perhaps more 'place' than 'space', more organic than technical, and so on.)

One could say, by way of reductive comparison, that the artistic and/or cultural life in (and of) São Paulo is lived and made productive in these bubbles primarily: the car, the apartment, the gated community, the gallery, the studio (meteorological factors obviously play a huge role in this, too, as do geological ones[7]) – and this obviously has great repercussions for the city's (tremendous) cultural production. If anything, São Paulo may well be the economic powerhouse it is *because* of its much better developed infrastructure of 'bubbles' conducive to the right kind of work ethic: a city of skyscrapers and cars, a city of galleries and studios and of the roads (again, not really streets) that connect them. Rio de Janeiro, however, is *all* street. People live

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7 Any first-time visitor to São Paulo will invariably be struck by the city's truly gargantuan scale, its sprawling expansion unimpeded by the kind of natural constraints that have had such a distinctive effect on the development of Rio de Janeiro's cityscape: the São Paulo metropolitan region, home to a staggering 20 million people, spreads out across 8,000 square kilometres of mostly gently undulating land; in Rio de Janeiro, nearly 15 million people live together in a metropolitan region almost half that size. One important qualification that has to be added to this admittedly problematic comparison between Rio and São Paulo is that São Paulo's well-known and flourishing graffiti scene has made a huge impact on the local art world, showing that 'street'art does play an important role in Paulista cultural production.

packed together in densely populated neighbourhoods where sizable private or semi-private living and/or working spaces are luxuries that in a great many cases only the happy few can afford. Indeed, egged on by the remarkable economic boom of recent years – a key element in which has been the discovery just outside Rio of a huge oil field, which will inevitably be called upon to pay for the extravagances of both the 2014 FIFA World Cup *and* the 2016 Olympic Games[8] – real estate prices in the city's prime (i.e. Zona Sul) neighbourhoods are now among the world's highest, and living spaces often correspondingly cramped. Helped along by the blessings of a tropical climate, these factors have been instrumental in establishing a type of street life rarely found elsewhere, and the cariocas' hereditary passion for a life lived *outside*, on the beach, in corner bars (*botequins* or *pés-sujos*[9]), in public squares, on the street, has informed and to a clear degree even shaped great swathes of local art history. It could be conjectured, for instance, that the great exodus that characterized so much avant-garde art practice of the late 1960s and early 1970s – the aforementioned 'leaving behind' of studio and gallery space alike – was given a defining carioca twist by Rio's unique spatial economy, with the scarcity and modesty of the private 'bubbles' or capsules referred to above providing an extra incentive, if any was needed still, for the artistic exploration of public – that is, *shared* – spaces. And so the street, which had, of course, long been an arena for political *action* (the agon and/or agora that is so crucial to the functioning of democracy) and a site for social *interaction* (the 'space of the encounter'), became a stage for aesthetic, artistic, cultural experimentation – an extension of both the studio and gallery space, or a site of creation, production and exhibition in its own right.[10]

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8 The so-called Tupi oil field, located some 250 kilometres off the coast of Rio de Janeiro, was discovered in 2006 – the biggest discovery of its kind in thirty years. This astounding find was bested, a mere two years later, by the discovery of a natural gas and oil field thought to contain as much as *five* times the amount of oil estimated to be held in the Tupi field – the world's third largest oil reserve. Not surprisingly, these finds, along with the unquenchable thirst of the Chinese economy for the kind of natural resources that Brazil is so abundantly blessed with (anything from gold and iron ore to orange juice and soy) have had a tremendous impact on Brazil's national confidence as well as, less directly but just as inevitably, on Brazilian art and culture.

9 Corner bars occupy a nodal position in the social life of this city of neighbourhoods, and street corners and intersections have duly made their appearance in some important artworks, the best known of which are Hélio Oiticica's penetrable *Nas quebradas* (1979) and Cildo Meireles' *Virtual Spaces: Corners* (1968).

10 It is interesting to consider Bruce Nauman's classic epiphany from the late 1960s in this context, namely, 'if I was an artist and I was in the studio, then whatever

Lygia Pape, *Espaços imantados* (1968)

This is a historical trajectory followed by many of the artists whose work is on view in *A Rua* – and who in many cases started out producing more or less conventional 'studio' work – such as Artur Barrio, whose various *situações*, made during the darkest years of the military regime (which, it must be added, was less draconian in its ways of exercising power than that of neighbouring Argentina or Chile), carry an overtly political charge; Lygia Clark, whose exploration of tactility and touch, like that of Hélio Oiticica, must be understood in part as a response to the very real fact of 'proximity' that is such a defining feature of Rio's everyday life, where physical contact between strangers is often simply more difficult to avoid; Antonio Manuel and Cildo Meireles, whose interest in circuits and circulation (expressed in their *De 0 a 24 horas* and *Inserções em circuitos ideológicos*, respectively) helped to expand the notion of public space to also include flows of information and trade; the talismanic Hélio Oiticica, whose *parangolés* continued the development co-initiated by Clark, and whose interest in the heterogeneity of public space led him to explore the heterotopian potential of the *favela*; Lygia Pape, who actually took her architecture students on research trips to these same *favelas*, and whose iconic *Divisor* (1968) continues to stand as the ultimate 'street' performance… This studio-to-street move signals a paradigm shift that continues to shape and guide much contemporary art practice in Rio de Janeiro as exemplified by the work of Ricardo Basbaum, standing squarely in the participatory

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I was doing in the studio must be art,' and replace 'studio' with 'street' in this formula: viewed thus, Nauman and his Brazilian contemporaries represent two sides of the same coin – that of Concept Art's conflicted 'politics of publicity', as Alexander Alberro put it.

tradition ushered in by Clark and Oiticica; Maurício Dias and Walter Riedweg, whose work perhaps best captures the spirit of the original bard of carioca street life, João do Rio; Guga Ferraz and Alexandre Vogler, whose post-situationist interventions in the urban fabric are strongly influenced by the development of more recent 'street' arts or contemporary urban folk arts such as graffiti and the like; Paula Trope, whose work deals with issues concerning childhood and exclusion, and who developed the *Sem Simpatia* (No Jive) series in collaboration with youths involved in the *Morrinho Project*, a pivotal initiative (largely driven by Trope herself) in the artistic emancipation of one particular *favela*'s pre-teen and teenage population.

Here, a concluding remark concerning the part played by the *favela* in both these assorted practices and the exhibition project in particular is in order. As can be gauged from both the exhibition and the accompanying book, *favelas* and *favela* cultures are a major concern throughout: they are present in the work of Paula Trope, Artur Omar, Lucia Laguna (herself a resident of the legendary Zona Norte *bairro* of Mangueira, home to one of the city's oldest and best-known samba schools) and the architect-urbanist Jorge Mario Jáuregui, who has been at the forefront of *favela* redevelopment in recent years. Jáuregui's sustained engagement with the *favelas* of the Zona Norte is the subject of the interview included in the present publication, and the aesthetics of the *favela* as well as its indigenous cultural potential are discussed at greater length still in the contribution of Paola Berenstein Jacques. This may all seem rather incongruous for an urban phenomenon that appears devoid of 'real' streets: the *favela* is a warren of provisional-looking, self-made structures built on top of each other or leaning into each other with hardly any space left between them – just enough to let people brush past each other. Paths, yes, but streets, hardly – and certainly no roads. So what exactly is an exhibition titled *A Rua* trying to 'learn' from this street-less heterotopia, to paraphrase a stock formula from the history of architectural theory, and to drag in the venerable Michel Foucault along with it?[11] First of all, that

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11 It is worth reiterating Foucault's well-known argument here for its relevance with regard to our current debate: 'First, there are the utopias. Utopias are emplacements having no real place. They are emplacements that maintain a general relation of direct or inverse analogy with the real space of society. They are society perfected or the reverse of society, but in any case these utopias are spaces that are fundamentally and essentially unreal. There are also, and probably in every culture, in every civilization, real places, actual places, places which are designed into the very institution of society, which are sorts of actually realized utopias in which the real emplacements that can be found within the culture are, at the same time, represented, contested, and reversed, sorts of places that are

the street as *A Rua* sees it is not to be understood architecturally or even urbanistically, as a physical space defined primarily by buildings, commerce and traffic. The street, in *A Rua*'s understanding of the concept, is a mental space first and foremost – and primordially a *social* one, which is why the *favela*, known for its tremendous social energy and sense of community, may perhaps be more of a 'street' than, say, the Avenida Presidente Vargas in Centro or the Rua Mário Ribeiro north of Leblon; this is also the reason why Rio's famed beaches are often regarded as streets, not so very different (though of course they are, *qualitatively*) from the Avenida Atlântica or Avenida Vieira Souto that run parallel to them.

Speaking of qualities and qualifications, in the aforementioned conversation with Jorge Mario Jáuregui, a definition of the city is given that includes the following quality: '[a city is] made up of relationships between people who do not know each other'. This, of course, is also true, in essence, of the street. Whereas our private homes (or studios) may be the site of the encounter with those (or that which) we know, the street is the site of the encounter with those (or that which) we don't know: the primal scene of man's most basic exchanges, but also the closest approximation of the blank slate presupposed by all artistic creation or creative activity – *if* we agree, that is, that art, the 'experimental exercise of freedom', *is* an exploration of the unknown, a bringing-into-existence of that which does not exist yet for people we do not know yet.[12] If Rio de Janeiro is known both for its street life *and* the art that feeds off it – the relationship that is at the heart of *A Rua* – it is also justly famed for the wealth of social interactions (only a tiny fraction of which are 'artistic' or 'aesthetic') that its uniquely porous and organic sense of space enables, its streets

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***outside* all places, although they are actually localizable. Because they are utterly different from all the emplacements that they reflect or refer to, I shall call these places "heterotopias" as opposed to utopias.' Michel Foucault, 'Different Spaces', in *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, ed. James D. Faubion, New York: The New Press, 1999, p. 179 (my emphasis, DR). Art has been understood historically as one such heterotopia in relation to the utopia of capital-S Society; likewise the so-called informal city of the *favela* could be viewed as a heterotopia opposite or alongside the utopia of the formal city – and the street, that which is 'outside all places', as a heterotopia opposite or alongside the utopia of urban space's functional disciplining.**

12 The phrase 'experimental exercise of freedom' – probably one of the best definitions of art to be had out there – was originally coined by the influential Brazilian art critic Mário Pedrosa to describe the expansive post-studio practice of Lygia Clark, Hélio Oiticica et al. at the beginning of the 1970s. It is also the title of an exhibition organized at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles in 2000 that featured their work alongside that of Gego (née Gertrud Goldschmidt) and Mira Schendel.

constituting a public realm in the truest sense (open, shared) of that oft-casualized, corroded term. And what the art made in it may be teaching us, or at least encouraging us to do, is this: to ensure that the street, this most emblematic of public spaces (once again, broadly considered!), remains public, open, shared – *ours*.

3
THE STREET

This text was first presented as a lecture and subsequently printed in the Rio de Janeiro-based newspaper Gazeta de Notícias *on 29 October 1905. It was reprinted in 1908 in a lection of essays titled* A alma encantadora das ruas*, published in Paris by Garnier. The following translation of* A Rua *was done by Mark Carlyon, who also provided the notes.*

This translation first appeared in the bilingual anthology of João do Rio's writings A alma encantadora das ruas – The Enchanting Soul of the Streets*, published in the* Coleção River of January series *by Cidade Viva in 2010.*

I love the street. I would not reveal to you a feeling of such an intimate nature did I not consider, had I not reason to consider, that this love, such absolute, such exaggerated love, is shared by you all. We are brothers, we feel alike, we feel akin in the towns, in the villages, in the settlements; not because we suffer from afflictions and irritations, the law and the police, but because the love of the street unites us, levels us, brings us together. This is indeed the unassailable, indissoluble feeling that alone, like life itself, survives the ages and the eras. Everything is transformed, everything changes – love, hate, selfishness. Smiles are bitterer today; irony more painful. The centuries pass, slip away, taking with them the futile occurrences and momentous events. All that persists and remains, the ever-growing legacy of generations, is the love of the street.

The street! What is the street? In the streets of Montmartre a song has her say:

Je suis la rue, femme éternellement verte,
Je n'ai jamais trouvé d'autre carrière ouverte
Sinon d'être la rue, et, de tout temps, depuis
Que ce pénible monde est monde, je la suis…[1]

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1 **'I am the street, woman forever alive / I've never found another way to survive / Except be the street; since the very first stir / Of this grievous world, I have been her…'**

Truth and double entendre![2] The dictionaries say: 'Street, from the Latin *ruga*, "furrow". Space between the houses and settlements where people pass and walk about.' Domingos Vieira[3] quotes from the Ordinances:[4] 'Publicke streetes and higheways of antiquitie and ye navigable rivers, ye naturall richesse that floweth ever and at everie tyme, thereon serving as ye publicke streetes and higheways'. The obscurity of grammar and the law! Dictionaries are only thought to provide easy access to absolute knowledge by those who have never used them. I opened the first, I opened the second; I opened ten, twenty encyclopaedias; I perused tomes of special interest. For them the street was merely a line of façades along which one walks in inhabited places.

But the street is more than that, the street is a component of life in the cities; the street has soul! In Benares or in Amsterdam, in London or Buenos Aires, under every differing sky, in every sundry clime, it is the street that is the refuge of the poor. The wretches do not feel completely deprived of the help of the gods as long as, before their eyes, one street opens into another. The street acclaims the mediocre, the luckless, the paupers of art. It does not pay to hear Tamagno,[5] the avaricious lion, bellow high-pitched tenor notes, or to acknowledge in the ageing Patti[6] the fragile remnants of an old and legendary voice. But rather it applauds the hungry street performers who hoarsely declaim for its entertainment, and for their food. The street is generous. It denounces neither poverty, nor crime, nor frenzy. The street is the transformer of languages. The Cândido de Figueiredos[7] of this world exhaust themselves inventing little rules to incarcerate expressions; but the language of the streets cries out against them. The street continues, killing nouns, transforming the meaning of words, imposing on the dictionaries the

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2 The double entendre is contained in the word *carrière*, which, as well as 'career', can mean 'course' or 'way'.

3 Dr Domingos Vieira – Friar of the Discalced Augustinian Hermits and author of the *Great Portuguese Dictionary or Thesaurus of the Portuguese Language* with the dedication 'To His Majesty Dom Pedro II, Emperor of Brazil, 1 March 1872'. The work continues to be a much-quoted source of reference.

4 The Ordinances – or *Orders* – were judicial decisions and norms issued by the Portuguese monarchy that served as the basis of Portuguese law between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries.

5 Francesco Tamagno (1851–1905) – Italian tenor famed for his trumpet-like tone in Verdi roles and considered the greatest *tenore de forza* of his day; his repertoire included the title role in Carlos Gomes' *O Guarani* (1870).

6 Adelina Patti (1843–1919) – Italian soprano famed for her *coloratura* roles in Rossini, Donizetti and Bellini. She was the most highly paid singer of her day, appearing at Covent Garden in twenty-five consecutive seasons.

7 António Cândido de Figueiredo (1846–1925) – Portuguese writer and philologist, whose *New Dictionary of the Portuguese Language* (1899) is still a much-quoted source of reference.

Augusto Malta, *Largo da Sé (atual Largo de São Francisco de Paula)*, 1909

terms it invents, creating the jargon that will become the standard legacy of the lexicons of tomorrow.

For the civilized animal the street is the epitome of all human comfort. It gives him light, luxury, well-being, convenience and even recollections of nature with the rustling of leaves and the trilling of birds.

The street is born, as is Man, with a sob, with a spasm. There is human sweat in the mortar of its paving stones. Every house that is built is made from the exhaustive effort of many souls; you must have seen stone-layers and masons, lifting the stones for the façades, covered with sweat, singing a tune so mournful it sounds more like a choking sob. The street feels in its bones the poverty from which it emerged, and thus it is the most egalitarian, the most socialist, the most levelling of all human works. Every jest, every platitude was created by the street. It was she who made the majesty of maxims, axioms and proverbs; by her was the immortal Callinus[8] baptised.

Without the consent of the street, the wise do not pass; and the charlatans that flatter her, that epitomize her triviality, are cast aside at the first opportunity and blown away like bubbles of soap. The street is a

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8 Callinus – Mid-seventh-century BCE poet from Ephesus; the earliest known Greek elegiac poet.

perennial picture of ingenuousness. It commits crimes; at night it goes crazy and trembles with delirious fevers. For it, as for children, the dawn is always beautiful; for it there is no sad awakening; when the sun rises and it opens its eyes, oblivious of its own actions, it is – with the rapture of life renewed, the chirruping of the birds, the thrill of the street sellers' cries – so modest, so clean, so jaunty, that it seems to be prattling with the sky and with the angels…

The street makes celebrities and it makes rebellions, and the street has created a universal type; a type that lives in every aspect of the city, in every detail, in every square; a diabolical type that is part gnome and part sylph of the forest; a type that is ever-changing, made of laughter and tears, of brazen tricks and reckless crimes, of neglect and of incomparable philosophy; an odd, ambiguous type, with feline leaps and razor-sharp laughs; a prodigious child with more knowledge and scepticism than old men of seventy winters, but whose ingenuousness is perennial; the voice that invents the pernicious nicknames for the powerful, but lives free of cares; a creature who begs as if it were natural to beg, applauds when he has nothing to gain and can laugh candidly after experiencing all the ills of the city; gold dust that turns into mud and then into gold again – the street created the Boy!

We have but scanty knowledge of these things. To understand the psychology of the street, to bask in its delights as one basks in the heat of the sun or the glow of the moon is not enough. One must have the vagabond spirit, full of unhealthy curiosity and be driven by a relentless, inexplicable desire: one must be what is called a *flâneur*[9] and practise the most interesting of sports – the art of strolling. Is this a tiring pursuit?

For the initiated, it has always been a great delight. Horace's muse did nothing but stroll through the streets of Rome. Sterne[10] and Hoffmann[11]

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9 *Flâneur* – loosely translated 'strolling spectator'. Balzac gives this definition: 'Flâner est une science, c'est la gastronomie de l'œil. Se promener, c'est végéter; flâner, c'est vivre… Flâner, c'est jouir, c'est recueillir des traits d'esprit, c'est admirer des sublimes tableaux de malheur, d'amour, de joie, des portraits gracieux ou grotesques; c'est plonger ses regards au fond de mille existences: jeune, c'est tout désirer, tout posséder; vieillard, c'est vivre de la vie des jeunes gens, c'est épouser leurs passions.' [*Flâner* is a science, it is the gastronomy of the eye. To walk is to vegetate; *flâner* is to live. *Flâner* is to enjoy, to gather up the traits of the human mind, to admire the sublime tableaux of misery, love, joy, the gracious or grotesque portraits of human life; it is to delve into the heart of a thousand lives: for the young, it is to desire everything, to possess everything; for the old, it is to live the life of the young, to marry oneself to their passions.]

10 Laurence Sterne (1713–68) – Irish-born English novelist and Anglican clergyman, renowned as the author of *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*.

11 E.T.A. Hoffmann (1776–1822) – German Romantic author of fantasy and horror; composer, music critic and draftsman; subject of Offenbach's opera *The*

proclaimed its great worth, and Balzac's greatest discoveries were all made while strolling. *Flâner*! Here is a verb that is universal, that has no place in dictionaries, that belongs to no language! What does it mean? It means to be a vagabond; to gape, to reflect, to comment; to have the virus of observation combined with the virus of loitering.

Flâner is to wander around, morning, noon and night; mix with the throngs of people, admire the boy with the mouth organ there on the corner; join the lads that follow the Cassino[12] fighter dressed as an Arab, mingle with the groups in the squares gathered in front of the magic lanterns;[13] converse with the singers of popular songs in the alleyways of Saúde[14] after hearing the greatest tenor of the Lyric[15] in a dreadful old-fashioned opera, applauded by dilettanti in evening dress; admire the chalk figures painted on walls in front of the houses after accompanying a famous painter to see his great canvas, paid for by the State; it is to be doing nothing and find it entirely necessary to go to some dismal place; then to decide not to go, on a simple whim, because you hear something that makes you smile, see an interesting face, or a young couple in love whose laughter causes envy.

Is it loitering? Perhaps. *Flâner* is the art of intelligent strolling. There is nothing like futility to make one artistic. So the idle *flâneur* always has ten thousand things on his mind; necessary, indispensable things that can be put off for ever. From a high window like Paul Adam[16] he admires the kaleidoscopic whirl of life that is epitomized in the delirium of the Street; in the doorway of a café, like Poe in 'The Man of the Crowd',[17]

***Tales of Hoffmann*. A key author of the Romantic Movement whose stories had tremendous influence throughout the nineteenth century.**

12 Cassino – name of the theatre that stood on the current site of the Teatro Carlos Gomes in Praça Tiradentes (*see* n. 42).

13 Magic lantern – a device used for projecting and magnifying images mounted on slides.

14 Saúde – district of the old town, between the Central Station and the docks; known as the 'Blood-red District' (O Bairro Rubro) 'where murder is normal' ('onde o assassinato é natural').

15 The Lyric Theatre – previously called the Imperial Theatre of São Pedro de Alcântara, the Lyric was the most important theatre in Rio until the opening of the Theatro Municipal in 1909, where foreign performers, including Tamagno and Patti, appeared. It was here, in October 1905, the month that this chronicle was published, that Sarah Bernhardt injured her leg after her jump at the end of Sardou's *Tosca*; the mattress she was to fall on had been removed. The wound developed gangrene and the entire leg had to be amputated in 1915.

16 Paul Adam (1862–1920) – French novelist whose *Les Demoiselles Goubert* (co-authored by Jean Moréas) marked the transition between Naturalism and Symbolism in French literature.

17 'The Man of the Crowd' (1840) – a short story by Edgar Allan Poe in which a nameless narrator follows a man through the crowded streets of London.

he dedicates himself to the practice of guessing the professions, the preoccupations and even the crimes of the passers-by.

He is a kind of secret agent, in the manner of Sherlock Holmes, without the improprieties of our national secret agents. You may meet him on a beautiful night, or on a vile one. He will not be able to tell you where he has come from, what he is doing or where he is going. Will you inevitably think that a murderer stands before you? Poor fellow! The *flâneur* is a nice chap, with a cheerful, egalitarian soul, who speaks kindly to rich and poor alike; because he knows the hidden faces of both, and the more he sees the more he becomes convinced of the uselessness of anger and of the need for forgiveness.

The *flâneur* is almost always ingenuous. He stops to watch the street fights, he is the eternal outsider at every ball, he wants to know the cake-seller's story; he is simply in wonder of it all. And knowing every street, every alley, every cul-de-sac, knowing a part of their story as one knows the story of one's friends (or the part they tell), he ends up with the vague idea that the whole spectacle of the city was specially made for his personal delectation. The balloon that goes up at midday from the hill at Castelo goes up for his pleasure; the bands that play in the squares play for his delight; if in some distant alley there is a serenade with plaintive guitars, they are there for his entertainment. And from seeing so much that others only barely suspect, the *flâneur* reflects. The observations have been stored in the sensitive part of his brain; the comments, the remarks, the scenes reverberate through his cortex. Then the *flâneur* draws a conclusion: see him as he conceives a magnificent law for his own exclusive use; see him philosophizing; see him painting the thoughts, the face, the soul of the streets; and marvel at the futility of the world and at the inconceivable futility of the pedestrians of the poetry of observation…

I was once, a little, this complex type, and perhaps that is why every street is for me a living, immovable being.

Balzac said that the streets of Paris have human characteristics. The streets of all cities do; they have lives and destinies, just like people.

Why are they born? From the need to expand the great social beehives, from commercial interests, they say. But nobody knows. One bright day they align a plot of rough terrain, slice off a stretch of garden, fill in a piece of marshland, and there it is: a new street has been born. It was born to evolve, to take its first tentative steps, to prattle, to grow, to become an individual. Deep inside men are aware of this similarity, and just as one says of a strapping young lad: 'Who would ever believe I saw this boy crawl on all fours?' They murmur: 'Who would ever believe that ten years ago there was only one house in this street?'

Once, as we turned into Rua Senador Dantas, a well-known gentleman was unable to contain himself: 'It is impossible to walk around here without remembering old age is at hand. When I first came to Rio this street had only two houses in the old garden of the Convent, and I used to drink beer at the Old Guard for twenty cents!' I smiled; but this important person, poor fellow, spoke as if he were recollecting the first teething troubles of a great hefty man, whose teeth could now bite their way through the pockets of an entire society. It was his nostalgia for the past; his recollection of how things began.

Is there anything more moving than the beginning of a street? Going to see it in the outskirts! At first, just grass; a branch connecting two arteries. Unawares, half a dozen people walk along it. One day they fence off a plot of land. Next the foundations of a house appear. Then of another and of yet another. A streetlamp shines with a tremulous light, showing the street no longer goes off to bed as soon as night falls. Three or four residents declare the place to be salubrious or tranquil. The street sellers arrive as if entering a new territory to be conquered. The first complaint appears in the papers about the mud or the grass. This is the baptism. Police records show that burglars have entered one of the gardens. This is the first night of celebrity, which demands paving the street or extending the tramline. And, all unawares, very clear, very personal, a new topographic individual emerges from the memory of the process; an individual that has a face and a soul.

Some streets are roguish, others austere; some are pretentious, others laugh at the passers-by; and, like man, they are led by destiny, mysteriously; it has them born under a good star or a bad sign, gives them triumphs and woes and kills them off at the end of an allotted time.

Oh yes! Streets have souls! There are honest streets, ambiguous streets, sinister streets, noble streets; delicate, tragic, depraved, pure, infamous streets; streets with no history, streets so old that they alone can tell the story of a whole town; warrior streets, rebellious, fearful, melancholy, snobbish streets; aristocratic streets, loving streets, cowardly streets, with never a drop of blood…

Look at the Rua do Ouvidor:[18] always blowing its own trumpet, exaggerating, lying, pushing its nose into everyone's business, but then fleeing, pulling the metal shutters down at the slightest sign of danger. This infernal alleyway of posturing, of vanity and envy is specialized in bravado. It infallibly supports the opposition; it invented the rumour, the terrifying 'Have you heard…?' and the prudent 'Close up shop!' At

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18 Rua do Ouvidor – the word *ouvidor*, of which the literal translation is 'listener', referred to the post of Senior Justice of the Peace, a key political appointment; the author puns on the two meanings.

first it was called Desvio do Mar,[19] and it continues to display its deviations to the many fine people who pass along it. At the time when its grandest buildings were rented out at the modest sum of ten thousand *reis*, it was called the Rua dos Gadelhas.[20] It could still be called that as a tribute to the prodigious number of pretentious poets who infest it with hair and verses. One day it was decided to call it the Ouvidor without consulting the Congress. It was named as a slander, praised as an insult, and applauded, because it was right that a place where everyone talks should be given the name of 'The Listener'.[21] It seems that each of the previous names anticipated one of the moral flaws of today's irresponsible, futile artery.

The Rua da Misericórdia,[22] on the other hand, with its gloomy boarding houses, the poverty, the dank mouldy corridors, the calamitous state of the old houses all falling to pieces, is perpetually doleful. It was the first street in Rio. From her we all came; along her passed devious viceroys, avaricious courtiers, naked slaves, the sedan chairs bearing the masters. There squalor thrived; there the first flower of Jesuit influence bloomed. Defeated Indians, Negroes in irons – ignorant, bestial subjugation – the first utterance of the city was a cry for mercy, a death-rattle, a great wail of grief hurled at the heavens. From her the city sprouted, in the bygone splendour of the Largo do Paço;[23] from her flowed the humble alleyways, as from a body that bleeds, and the squares along the seafront, like clots in the blood. Despite the cries of the whipped and the labours of those wretched few, throughout the centuries it has always been doleful, and so anguished, so sincere and real in its pain, that neither flattering patriots nor governments, no one, no one, has ever remembered to remove from the corners that silent prayer, that cry of the old beggar-woman: 'Mercy!'[24]

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19 Desvio do Mar – literally translated: 'Ocean Detour'; the prime meaning of the word *desvio* is 'deviation'. The author puns on the two meanings.

20 Rua das Gadelhas – literally translated: 'Street of the Scruffy Long-hairs'. The author applies the name to the poets he refers to as *nefelibata*; the prime meaning of this word is 'head in the clouds', but it can also refer to a pretentious style of writing that shows complete disregard for the rules.

21 'The Listener' – that is, the Ouvidor.

22 Rua da Misericórdia – literally translated: 'Street of Mercy' (the idea of divine mercy is implicit).

23 Largo do Paço – literally translated: 'Palace Square', where the first royal palace was located. Despite being renamed Praça XV de Novembro as a tribute to the founding of the Republic, with its palace where three generations of monarchs held court, there is nowhere in Rio more associated with the monarchy. During the Republic it was used as the Central Post Office; the Paço was restored in the 1980s and is now a museum.

24 Mercy! – *Misericórdia!* (the name of the street).

There are streets that change location, cut through hills and end up in places that people had never imagined before – the Rua do Ourives;[25] there are streets that were once dishonest but ended up mending their ways – the Rua da Quitanda.[26] This street was obsessed with changing its name. It was called Açougue Velho,[27] Inácio Castanheira, Sucusarrará,[28] Tomé da Silva and heaven knows what else. Even Canto do Tabaqueiro.[29] It ended up as the Quitanda do Marisco,[30] but like certain individuals who adjust their name according to their position, it dropped the *marisco* and became simply Quitanda. There are streets, traditional strongholds of the aristocracy, that sail along like conservative matrons – the Rua das Laranjeiras;[31] there are sinister streets where you pass with a shiver, sensing the threat of imminent death – such as the Largo do Moura. It has always been sinister. The mortuary was there and, before that, the gallows. First the hanging, then the autopsy. After the killing, the gruesome old square, with its soul of Troppmann[32] and of Jack,[33] avariciously, for years on end, kept the bodies of all the wretches who were murdered or committed suicide; to gloat over, to label, to dissect.

The stench of crime is frightening. So is Prainha.[34] Even today, opened up and widened with new buildings and the constant buzz of commerce, it still conveys a vague impression of horror. At night the darkness is deeper, the lights are redder, the shadows longer. Why should this street have such an ominous air? Oh! Because it was always evil; because the dungeons were always there; there the wretched slaves laboured in the first salt warehouses; because there too the gallows spread death!

But there are other streets that are born intimate, familiar, incapable of taking a single step without all the neighbours knowing. Such are

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25 Rua do Ourives – literally translated: 'Goldsmiths' Street' or 'Jewellers' Street'.

26 Rua da Quitanda – 'Market Street'.

27 Açougue Velho – 'The Old Butcher's Shop'.

28 Sucusarrará – legend has it that it was nicknamed after an English doctor who specialized in haemorrhoids set up his clinic there, promising his clients in broken Portuguese: '*Su* – "your" – *cu* – "arsehole" – *sarrará* – "will heal"'.

29 Canto do Tabaqueiro –'Tobacconist's Corner'.

30 Quitanda do Marisco – 'Mussel Market'.

31 Rua das Laranjeiras – 'The Street of the Orange Trees' or 'Orange Groves'; today a main traffic route providing access to the Rebouças tunnel.

32 Jean-Baptiste Troppmann (1849–70) – a 21-year-old mechanic who was found guilty of murdering an entire family at a sensational trial in Paris; the Russian novelist Turgenev was present when he was guillotined on 17 January 1870.

33 Jack the Ripper.

34 Prainha – literally translated: 'Little Beach' – was the seafront that was remodelled into the square which marked the beginning of the Avenida Central.

the streets of Santa Teresa. A gentleman alights at Curvelo, walks to the Largo do França and, on the way back, all the streets ask what he wants there, if his intentions are good, and other uncivil intrusions. In general, people seek the mystery of the mountains to conceal an outing with amorous intent. The streets of Santa Teresa discover the rendezvous and fall about laughing, proclaiming it to the four winds. One of the streets, in fact, more gossipy and frivolous than the others, decided to call itself the Rua do Amor[35] and there it stands, in the parish of São José. Is it really a place chosen by Eros, the decadent god? Perhaps not. In the parish of Engenho Velho, there is a street called Feliz Lembrança[36] which, according to the worthy opinion of anonymous verse, it seems not to have:

In the Street of the Happy Memory
I escaped by the skin of my teeth
From being sent to the pillory.
What idea could be more indiscreet
Than giving that name to the street!

There are streets that fawn on people, like Goriot[37] or Shylock, offering them loans with interest and concealing their identity as they meekly pay the usurer. Have you forgotten the Rua do Sacramento, the street of the pawnshops? An enchanting, delicate breeze always filled the air. In front of the church, old houses, the homes of traditional families. In the Treasury, behind the iron railings, one or two men with nothing to do. And it was there that people pawned their jewels, that poor anguished creatures brought the last of their possessions, their very souls choked with sobs; it was there that all the passions surged and all the woes, whose only remedy was money…

There are streets for orators, streets for rallies – as the Largo do Capim has always been; the Largo de São Francisco; streets of tranquil bourgeois cheer that seem to smile with honesty – the Rua de Haddock Lobo; streets where we don't dare to go without looking over our shoulder to see if we're being watched – the Travessa da Barreira; melancholic streets with the sadness of poets; streets of dubious pleasures near the centre of the town, yet far removed from it; streets of romantic passion, made for moonlight and maidens with golden hair.

Have you ever spent the night awake listening to the secrets of the streets? Have you ever felt the mystery, the slumber, the vices, the ideas of the different neighbourhoods?

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35 Rua do Amor – 'Love Street'.
36 Feliz Lembrança – 'Happy Recollection'.
37 Goriot – the elderly, doting central character of Balzac's novel *Le Père Goriot*; one of the *Scènes de la vie privée* of his novel sequence *La Comédie humaine*.

The soul of the street is only entirely perceptible late at night. There are places where one passes by as if one were being pushed, pursued, hurried along – there are the streets where our footfalls resound, reverberate, seem to grow louder, cry out, and then turn themselves into alien footsteps in close pursuit. There are others which shroud themselves in mystery as soon as night falls – the Largo do Paço. This square was the first of the city's splendours. Through it, with the pomp of canopies and gold and purple baldaquins, passed the processions of the Burial, the Resurrection, the Via Dolorosa; there, alongside the Praia do Peixe,[38] thatched huts and simple vegetation, the first luxuries were disembarked and tradesmen first aspired to higher things. The square, despite the reforms, seems to have kept its tradition of sleeping early. At night, nothing revives it, nothing wakes it up. Like a sigh, a tremendous struggle dies within it, the light fights on against the darkness, even the streetlamps seem drowsy; and the shadows creep past – the rags of existence, craving an early end – thieves with no shelter, starving immigrants… Leave this square; go to the Misericórdia, parts of the town that evoke the sombre Amsterdam of Rembrandt. There are men on mats sleeping in the street as if they were at home. We are not dismayed. We are thoughtful. The Beco da Música[39] or the Beco da Fidalga[40] have the spirit of the streets of Naples, of Florence, the streets of Portugal, the streets of Africa, and even, if we believe in the fantasy of Herodotus,[41] the streets of ancient Egypt. And why? Because they are streets near the sea, streets that have travelled, streets with a vision of other horizons. I entered one of the squalid hovels that are part of their entrails. You will see Chinamen made drunk with opium, sailors made brutal with drink, sorceresses wailing sinister songs; all the strangeness of the life of a port. And these narrow streets, these dark alleyways, have all the treachery of the oceans, all the misery of the immigrants and the vice, the immeasurable vice, of the sea and of the colonies…

If streets are living beings, then they think; they have ideas, philosophy and religion. There are completely Catholic streets, Protestant streets, free-thinking streets and even streets with no religion. Trafalgar Square, the great humorist Jerome used to say, has no defined theological opinion. The same can be said of the Place de la Concorde in Paris, or of

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38 Praia do Peixe – literally translated: 'Fish Beach', implying a beach where fish were caught or sold.

39 Beco da Música – 'Music Alley'.

40 Beco da Fidalga – 'Noblewoman's Alley'.

41 Herodotus (c. 484 – c. 425 BCE) – Greek historian, regarded in Western culture as 'the Father of History'.

Praça Tiradentes.[42] Is there any more brainless creature than the Largo do Rocio? It ought to be respectable and austere. There, Pedro I,[43] mounted on a handsome steed and with a handsome gesture, held up the charter of independence for the people to see, feigning a shout that he never gave. Well, then: there is no more rowdy, less serious fellow than the old ex-Largo do Rocio. Its religious sentiments oscillate between depravation and the roulette wheel. Fortunately, there are streets that redeem the association of bricks and mortar by their worship and fervour. Rua Benjamin Constant is one of them; a tremendous example of the religious profusion in our midst. Solemn, dignified, it has three temples and seems to be saying with the circumspection and inner conviction of certain gentlemen known to us all: 'I do charity work for the Sacred Heart, I believe in God, in prayer, in amulets and I am only not a Positivist[44] because it's too late to change my beliefs. But I admire Teixeira Mendes;[45] I have great respect for him…'

We, men of nervous disposition, from time to time feel goose pimples on our flesh; stabs of pain; a touch that does not exist; the certainty

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42 Praça Tiradentes – previously called the Largo do Rocio ('Grazing Ground Square') – was the city's most elegant square until the end of the nineteenth century. It was renamed by the Republicans after Joaquim José da Silva Xavier (1746–92), nicknamed 'Tiradentes' ('Pull-teeth'), the only conspirator of the independence plot of 1789 (the Minas Disloyalty) to be executed. He was hanged and quartered on 21 April 1792. The day is a national holiday.

43 Pedro I (1798–1834) – first Emperor of Brazil and, for seven months, twenty-eight days King of Portugal. He became Prince Regent of Brazil after his father, Dom João VI, returned to Portugal. On 12 October 1822, he declared the independence of Brazil, supposedly raising his sword and shouting 'Independence or Death!' This is how he is depicted in the statue in the square; the writer adheres to the Republican opinion that the event never actually occurred. In 1831, Dom Pedro returned to Portugal and engaged in a civil war (1832–34) for the throne with his brother Dom Miguel, leaving the crown of Brazil to his son, the five-year-old Prince Regent, Dom Pedro II.

44 Positivism, the philosophy developed by Auguste Comte (1798–1857) that discarded metaphysics, holding that every rationally justifiable assertion can be scientifically proven, had been adopted as a counterpart to the Roman Catholic ethos by Republicans and liberals alike, ironically becoming a pseudo-religion with its own church, preaching solidarity between men and a belief in progress. Its slogan 'Love as the principle, Order as the means, Progress as the end' profoundly influenced the Brazilian military, leading them to espouse the abolitionist cause and to intervene in State affairs in 1889, with the foundation of the Republic. João do Rio's father, Coelho Barreto, a teacher of mechanics and astronomy, was an orthodox Positivist who had his son baptized in the Positivist Church.

45 Raimundo Teixeira Mendes (1855–1927) – Brazilian philosopher, mathematician and Positivist who adopted the Comtean slogan 'Order and Progress' (excluding the Love) as the national motto which he inscribed on the Brazilian Republican flag of his design.

that someone is calling our name. The streets, too, have their turmoil, their haunted houses; there are even streets possessed by the devil. In São Luís do Maranhão there is a sleepwalkers' street, nothing like as tedious as the well-known opera of that name. The street is the Rua de Santa Ana, the Lady Macbeth of topography. A horrible crime was committed there. At ten o'clock a somnambulistic torpor descends on the street and it resounds with terrible cries of 'Blood! Blood!'

At least these streets show what they think. Perhaps the others are even more frenzied, but, like ordinary men, they keep their extravagant thoughts to themselves. Who would dare compute the evil, the unmentionable things that the most honest of citizens thinks in a single minute? There are streets that are devious and hypocritical too, with the soul of Tartuffe[46] and Iago. That is why the great sorcerers of Central Africa who from the scorching deserts brought sacks of gold dust and great, magnificent monkeys to the British towns on the coast have a strange song that is as good as a maxim from Cato:[47]

O di ti a uê, chê
F'u, a uá ny
Odé, odá, bi ejô
Sa lo dê

A maxim which in Yoruba, the Esperanto of the primitive hordes, means only this: Street made for gatherings. Street like snake. Has poison. Flee from street!

But the essential, really significant thing is that the street is the prime cause of the diversity of urban types. There is an interesting book by E. Demolins,[48] *Comment la route crée le type social*; a revolution in the teaching of geography. 'The primal, decisive cause of racial diversity', he says, 'is the street, the path that men followed. It was the street that created race and the social type. The great highways of the globe were, undeniably, the powerful distilleries that transformed the peoples. The trails that led across the great steppes of Asia, the Siberian tundra, the savannahs of America or the African forests, unconsciously but inexorably created the Tartar-Mongol, the Eskimo-Lapp, the redskin, the Indian, the Negro.'

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46 Tartuffe – the scheming, hypocritical central character of Molière's comedy *Tartuffe, ou l'Imposteur* (1664).

47 The *Catonis Disticha* – a Latin collection of proverbial wisdom and morality by an unknown third- or fourth-century-CE author called Dionysius Cato – between the Middle Ages and the eighteenth century, it was widely used as a Latin textbook and moral standard.

48 Edmond Demolins (1852–1907) – a French educator, founder of L'École des Roches, and author of *À quoi tient la supériorité des Anglo-Saxons?* (1897).

The street is the civilization of the road. Where the great highway ends, the street begins; thus the street is to the city what the road is to the world. In essence, it is the start, the cause of the small clusters of people of identical race. There are many places in the world where the villages are simply called 'Street'. Later, when they grow and expand, they add the complement to the noun 'street' that distinguishes it from the others – the name of a saint whom the majority worship or a feature of the local topography. This is commonplace in Portugal. In the district of Minho there is a village of 700 inhabitants with the modest name of Rua São Jorge,[49] another in the district of Douro called Rua da Lapela[50] and there are even villages called Rua de Cima[51] and Rua de Baixo.[52]

In the big cities the street creates its own type; it moulds the morale of its inhabitants and mysteriously imbues them with tastes, customs, habits, manners and political opinions. All of you must have heard or said something like this: 'How those girls smell of the Cidade Nova!' It's not only the Cidade Nova, the gods be praised! There are girls with the smell of Botafogo, of Haddock Lobo, of Vila Isabel; and there are old ladies who are precisely the same, and gentlemen, too. The street infallibly creates its urban type as the highway created the social type. We all know the type of young man from Largo do Machado: hair *à l'américaine*, loose-fitting English-style clothes, in his large hand a tiny pocket handkerchief, walking stick, pretensions to foreign languages, trousers with turn-ups like Edward VII and all the snobbishness in the world. This same young man, of identical age and background, is utterly different in the Largo do Estácio. The boots are pointed, the clothes close-fitting, the handkerchief in the inside pocket of his jacket, hair with a military cut and lots of oil. If we go to the Largo do Depósito, this same young man will be using a black silk handkerchief, with a padded jacket collar, short topcoat and the baggy trousers currently worn by aeroplane pilots.

For these three young men of the same age, born of the same respected class, sometimes even related, there is no school, no transient influence, no academy that will change their preference for a certain colour of tie, the food they eat, the expressions they use, the ideas – because every street has its own stock of expressions, ideas and tastes. The folk from Botafogo go to the first nights at the Lyric, even when they don't have the money. The folk from Haddock Lobo have the money, but hardly ever

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49 Rua São Jorge – 'St George Street'.

50 Rua da Lapela – 'Lapel Street'.

51 Rua de Cima – 'High Street', in the sense of a street that runs above, such as along a hilltop.

52 Rua de Baixo – 'Low Street', in the sense of a street that runs below, such as at the foot of a hill.

Marcel Gautherot, *Carnaval* (Rio de Janeiro, c. 1954)

go to the Lyric. The inhabitants of Tijuca applaud Sarah Bernhardt[53] as a theatrical prodigy. The inhabitants of Saúde are devoted to Dias Braga.[54] The young ladies of Laranjeiras dance to the sound of waltzes by Strauss and Berger, recalling the casinos of the Riviera and the splendour of the kursaals.[55] The girls at the balls in Catumbi know only the latest tunes of Mr Aurélio Cavalcante.[56] Their conversations are different, their love is different, their ideals are different; even courtship, that delightful first

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53 Sarah Bernhardt (1844–1923) – 'The Divine Sarah', French courtesan and legendary stage actress who has been called 'the most famous actress in the history of the world'. Her most celebrated role was the title role of *La Dame aux Camélias* (Alexandre Dumas *fils*), which she performed more than 3,000 times. Bernhardt made three visits to Brazil: in June 1886, June 1893 and October 1905 (*see* n. 15), where she moved in the same social circle as João do Rio, whom she knew personally. In Paris in 1896 she premiered Oscar Wilde's *Salome*, which had been banned in England and was later translated and published in Brazil by João do Rio.

54 Dias Braga – an actor of the Brazilian Belle Époque, famed for his interpretation of Jack the Ripper.

55 Kursaals – the elegant public halls for visitors at the aristocratic health spas in Germany.

phase of the marital eclipse, that intermediary stage when attraction merges with desire, is entirely different. In Botafogo, in the shade of the trees in the park or beneath a great doorway, Juliet awaits her Romeo, graceful and solitary; in Haddock Lobo, she gabbles in groups on the pavement; and in the humble homes of the Cidade Nova, after working the whole day long dreaming of this ephemeral hour, she leans her pretty bosom from the window…

Oh, yes! The street makes the individual; we know it all too well. A person who has spent half of his life in the Rua do Pau Ferro will never get used to the Rua Marquês de Abrantes! Intellectuals are aware of the deep effect the environment has on them, although they feel it less intensely. I once knew an elegant baron of the empire, a diplomat on permanent leave, who was forced through necessity to accept from a certain property owner a room in a run-down mews off the Rua Bom Jardim. The wretched man, with his Beau Brummell[57] poses, monocle always stuck in his eye, was the talk of the street. Regardless of his greeting the ladies and complimenting the gentlemen, no one ever treated him with anything but a wary mistrust. The baron felt desperate; his life was reduced to a single pleasure. He would take the tram to Botafogo, light a cigar and walk around, proud and elegant, his old double-breasted coat buttoned up, the amber knob of his walking stick gleaming… He was back in his neighbourhood. 'Even the paving stones know me!' he used to say.

The paving stones! The paving stones are the armour of the street, the resistance that it offers to the new passer-by. Consider! Have you ever walked along a street in the outskirts for the first time without a certain hesitancy in your step, as if unconsciously getting used to the terrain? If you reflect on these subtleties that life creates, you will understand the reason why poor people restrict their whole lives to the street where they live, and why certain popular characters are only really popular in certain city blocks.

The streets are so human, live so intensely and mould their inhabitants to such an extent, that there are even streets that fight with each other. The young layabouts from one look suspiciously at those from another as though they were foes. In 1805, a century ago, it was the same: the thugs from the Praia[58] weren't allowed into Santa Luzia. At

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56 Aurélio Cavalcante – maestro and composer of popular songs in the 1890s and early twentieth century, composer of the Muchacha Waltz.

57 George Bryan Brummell (1778–1840) – English dandy and arbiter of men's fashion during the Regency. He claimed to take five hours to dress and recommended that boots be polished with champagne.

58 Praia – in this case the Beach of Santa Luzia, now land-filled.

election time, more by the sword than the pen, Largo do Machadinho and Rua Pedro Américo were irreconcilable foes. It has now reached the point that they call themselves People. There are the People of the Rua do Senado, the People of the Travessa[59] of that name, the People of Catumbi. Any night one may hear from a group of little ruffians armed with sticks: 'Let's go! The People of the Travessa are on our side.' It's the Rua do Senado, in alliance with the Travessa, going to give a thrashing to the Rua Frei Caneca…

As in antiquity, men of varying degrees of distinction used to take the name of the town where they were born – Thales of Miletus,[60] Lucian of Samosata,[61] Epicharmus of Alexandria[62] – the leading racketeers of today add the name of their street to their Christian names. There is José of the Senado, Juca of Harmonia, Lindinho of Castelo, and recently, two men who have become notorious for their criminal activities, Carlito and Cardosinho, have managed to scare an entire city full of Carlitos and Cardosinhos, merely because they are Carlito and Cardosinho of Saúde. Is this just a local phenomenon? No, a hundred times no! In Paris, the Ville-Lumière, the gangs of murderers frequently adopt the name of the street where they gather; in London there are streets in ill-starred neighbourhoods where the same practice prevails and even in the history of Byzantium there were streets that were so belligerent that the inhabitants added their names to theirs, like an insignia.

As do the street characters today.

I had the pleasure of meeting two of these characters in whom the psychological influence of the street was more than usually evident: the 'Father of the Child'[63] and the 'Frog'.

The Father of the Child was away from his native territory and in decline. This repugnant creature had become famous for his depravity in the Rua do Ouvidor. When I saw him, ill, in the seedy bars of Rua Frei Caneca, he was no longer in his street, and therefore no longer notorious. The boys no longer laughed at him, he wasn't followed and the foul creature discussed government corruption in the bars like any normal human being. I only discovered his notoriety when I saw him back in the

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59 Travessa – a narrow street that runs perpendicularly between two broader ones.

60 Thales of Miletus (624–546 BCE) – a pre-Socratic Greek philosopher from Miletus in Asia Minor, one of the Seven Sages of Greece. Aristotle regarded him as the first philosopher in the Greek tradition; Bertrand Russell wrote: 'Western philosophy begins with Thales.'

61 Lucian of Samosata (c. 125–after 180 CE) – an Assyrian rhetorician and satirist who wrote in Greek; noted for his wit and sarcasm.

62 Epicharmus (c. 540–c. 450 BCE) – Greek dramatist and philosopher called Epicharmus of Kos or Syracuse; the reference to Alexandria is unclear.

63 Father of the Child – an inventor of stories is implicit in the nickname.

Marcel Gautherot, *Carnaval* (Rio de Janeiro, c. 1954)

Rua do Ouvidor, covered in ribbons, booed at, hurling insults with unbelievable, revolting effrontery. With the Frog it was the other way round. In the Rua do Ouvidor she was merely an old black woman. In Rua Frei Caneca she was the delight, the extravagance, the distraction of the street. The children ran after her and threw stones; the tradesmen came to their doorways; all the windows lit up with laughter. And why? Because these people are the laughter of the streets, and just as no two people laugh alike, there are no two streets whose laughter is the same.

If for urban man the street is what the highway was for social man, it is clear that the greatest concern of the city dweller, inseparable from all other ideas, is the street. We are always thinking of the street. From our most tender years it epitomizes our every ideal; the most confused, the most antagonistic, the strangest; from general concepts like notions of freedom and defamation to private concepts: aspirations for money, happiness and love. Instinctively, when a child begins to crawl, it has but one idea: to go into the street! Before it can even speak they start to scare it: if you go to the street, the bogeyman will get you! If you go out, you'll get a spanking! The effect? None at all! Just one glimpse of an open door and the toddler forgets all about bogeymen and spankings!

Getting out is only the sole preoccupation of children up to a certain age. Next they go out alone. And by the time we have tired of this pleasure, the street has become our very existence. In the street we do business; speak ill of our neighbours; change our ideas and convictions, suffer hardships and disappointments; and in the street Man experiences the greatest of all emotions:

When you meet love in the street
Without knowing…

'I'll throw you out into the street!' yells father to son at the height of his fury.

The street has become the expression of the greatest calamity.

'Come outside. Come into the street if you're a man!'

The street has become a fighting arena in place of the medieval field for the tournament.

'He's more shameless than the stones on the street!'

An exclamation that expresses the most complete lack of scruples.

'He's as old as a street!'

Perhaps a mistaken idea, as there are streets that die young.

Sometimes the street is a weapon that wounds or is used as praise, depending on the opinion one has of it.

'My dear, my son is so well behaved. He already goes out on the street on his own…'

'Have you heard about Alice's son? What a disgrace! He even goes out on the street alone!'

And the street, impassive, becomes the mystery, the outrage, the horror…

The politicians live in the midst of the street, whether here, in China, in France or in Timbuktu; presidents, kings and popes live in terror of being surprised on the street – by a bomb or by a revolt; chiefs of police are forever bewitched by the street; all those who want to rise, to scale the futile, fickle peak of glory, crave the blessing of the street, the approbation of the public highway, and there is a vast area of nervous pathology that is specialized in treating the diseases produced by the street; from neurasthenia to raving madness. This is because the street has become an obsession, the depository of all our ambitions.

In his desire to earn greater wealth and greater fame, Man needed to engage the street. So he began to give speeches in the public squares; speeches which, from the time of remotest antiquity to today's political rallies in front of the statue of José Bonifácio,[64] have always spoken of generous, lofty, noble things. One fine day the street proclaimed a great truth: that words are carried away by the wind. Terrified, we at once invented the sandwich-man, the walking adver-

tisement; while he slept, with a lot of glue and a lot of ingenuousness, we had him covered with posters proclaiming the best conserves, the most delicious dessert, the most austere political ideal, the most generous wine; not only printed in letters but with allegorical figures, to save him the trouble of reading, to flatter his ignorance, to make him happy. And as if the poster, the magic lantern, the sandwich-man, were not enough, cautiously, step by step, we decided to join their stories together and we created the newspaper – this extraordinary never-ending novella in instalments, made up of truths, lies, flattery, insults and the fantasies of the Gaboriaus[65] that live within us all…

Does the street have an aesthetic, as Bulls affirms? Yes, it does. Because the most famous actresses, the most popular orators, the most powerful strongmen, the most vaunted products, never stop trying to please it; and from this ephemeral pride, the art of the street emerged in multi-coloured glory. The fear of being ignored created for everyone a different garb, filled them with stone gargoyles, like cruel fairies whose wishes must be satisfied, with sundry dresses, motley colours, paper fripperies, the incandescent glow of the windows with their gleaming ever-changing colours; it gave them a never-ending deification, a sacrificial rite awaiting the miracle of profit or of popularity.

The aesthetic, the decoration of the streets, is the result of the respect and the fear we have for them…

In the human spirit the street has become an image that is associated with every emotion and serves for every comparison. A glance at the anonymous verses reveals this incontestable truth. It is almost always in the street that one speaks ill of one's neighbour. Let's look at a collection of songs. The idea is there:

Farewell to the street that is straight,
The street of discontent,
Where neither the judge nor the clerk
Come to court to hear your lament.

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64 José Bonifácio de Andrada e Silva (1763–1838) – known as 'the Father of Independence' – led the military repression of the resistance to the separation from Portugal. He later fell out with the emperor Dom Pedro I because of what the Emperor considered the excessive decentralization of the constitution he proposed and was sent into exile in France. When the rift was mended, he returned to Brazil and was appointed tutor to the young Prince Regent, Dom Pedro II (n. 43).

65 Émile Gaboriau (1835–73) – French writer and originator of the detective novel genre with *L'Affaire Lerouge* (1866). His later character Inspector Lecoq influenced Conan Doyle in the creation of Sherlock Holmes.

Very discontent, in fact, perhaps intended for singers who have an axe to grind. But when a lover wants to describe the anguish of his heart, he finds the perfect comparison:

My heart is a street
Where my love does not pass,
Way of Sorrows, replete
With disaster, alas!

And if it's description you want, there are countless examples:

In the street of my love
You cannot make love;
In the day the old women remark,
At night all the dogs start to bark.

And it is touching to remember that dreamer who, standing at his lover's window and desiring to achieve the impossible to make her happy, can only murmur this gentle refrain:

If this street belonged to me
I'd have it paved with sparkling gems
For my love to see.

The people observe as well, and say more in one verse than all of us with our attempts to impress in glittering prose. I will always remember a guitarist singing with tears in his voice as though confronted by inexorable fate:

The Bella Vista is blind
Beautiful Street is bad-tempered and plain
Straight Street is out of its mind
And Soap Street is dirty again…

The whole psychology of the buildings and their setting in just four lines!

The street even captivates the minds of the mad. In the asylums where they live, crazy to get back to it, I found plans for ideal streets, and street singers, one of whom went so far as to give me a long poem which started like this:

The street…
Goes on and on, before my feet…
Wait! Complicated, complicated, damn
The naked
Street!

These ideas are reflected in the religions, in the sacred books, in the art of every era; ever more keenly, with ever greater sensitivity.

In the literature of today the street is the inspiration of all the great writers; from Victor Hugo, Balzac and Dickens, to the epics of Zola; from the exoticism of Banville[66] to the humour of Mark Twain. There is no modern writer who has not serenaded the street. The idealists even exaggerate it and today, owing without doubt to the socialist movement, there is a wealth of literature depicting the plaintive soul of the street. The more refined poets, with morbid inspiration, address certain parts of the street. As the Romantics praised the feet, the eyes, the mouth and other parts of their lovers' body, they serenade the demeanour of empty houses or, like Rodenbach,[67] of gas lights:

Le dimanche, en semaine, et par tous les temps
L'un est debout, un autre, il semble, s'agenouille.
Et chacun se sent seul comme dans une foule.
Les revérbères des banlieues
Sont des cages où des oiseaux déplient leurs queues.[68]

The street cries, the pavements, and there was even one, Mário Pederneiras,[69] who gave us this extremely subtle, admirable perception of the city's trees:

With what aggrieved enchantment
With what sad yearning
Is my heart oppressed
By the alien look of these trees of the street.
And yet they of nature's profusion
Are a city's only illusion!
The urban trees
In general keep their counsel, aloof
From all the joys and lavish cheers
Of country peers.

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66 Théodore Faullain de Banville (1823–91) – French Parnassian poet; the reference is to his *Odes funambulesques* (1857) dedicated to Victor Hugo. The writer uses the word *funambulesco*, meaning 'fantastic' or 'exotic', derived from the noun *funâmbulo* ('tightrope walker').

67 Georges Raymond Constantin Rodenbach (1855–98) – Belgian Symbolist poet and novelist, who evokes the town as a living being in his best-known work *Bruges-la-Morte* (1892), on which Korngold based his opera *Die tote Stadt*.

68 'On Sundays, every week, and all the time / One seems to stand, the other kneel / And each one feels alone, as in a crowd / Suburban street lamps; they are things / Like cages where the birds spread out their wings.'

69 Mário Veloso Paranhos Pederneiras (1867–1915) – a Brazilian poet from Rio de Janeiro. His work is influenced by the French Symbolists and marked by simple themes taken from everyday life.

To not an inkling of the peace and tenderness
Of those wide laconic sylvan morns
Or to verdant grace of fruits, or to music from the nest
Do these city trees attest.

Modern writers no longer restrict themselves to writing about the ever-changing aspects of the street, to a step-by-step analysis of the physical and moral profile of every one. They go further, dreaming of an ideal street, as they used to dream of a better world. William Morris,[70] for example, in *News from Nowhere,*[71] imagined a rarefied socialist street, with magnificent buildings, without beggars and without money. Rimbaud, in the *Illuminations*, conceived a street from Babel, reproducing in the buildings, beneath a leaden sky, all the classical wonders of its architecture. Bellamy,[72] in *Looking Backward*,[73] envisioned complexes of great department stores; and today, among these streets of dreams which Gustave Kahn[74] considers streets of a utopia that may one day exist, is the strange and infernal alleyway described by Wells[75] in *The Shape of Things to Come*;[76] a street where everything will depend on all-powerful unions, where everything will be electric, where men, the slaves of half a dozen, will be like the links of a single chain, dragged along as they labour.

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70 William Morris (1834–96) – English architect, furniture and textile designer, artist, writer and socialist associated with the Pre-Raphaelite movement. Throughout his life he wrote and published poetry, fiction and translations of ancient and medieval texts.

71 *News from Nowhere* (1890) – a classic work by William Morris set in a future society based on common ownership and democratic control of the means of production with no private property, no big cities, no authority, no monetary system, no divorce, no courts, no prisons and no class system. The agrarian society functions because the people find pleasure in nature, and therefore in their work.

72 Edward Bellamy (1850–98) – American author and socialist, best known for his utopian novel *Looking Backward*.

73 *Looking Backward* (1888) – a utopian novel by Edward Bellamy that describes a young man who falls asleep in 1887 and wakes up in 2000 to find the USA has become a socialist utopia.

74 Gustave Kahn (1859–1936) – French Symbolist poet, playwright, novelist, literary and art critic; he experimented with and claimed to have invented the term *vers libre* (free verse).

75 Herbert George Wells (1866–1946) – known as H. G. Wells, English science-fiction writer; along with Jules Verne referred to as 'The Father of Science Fiction'; an outspoken socialist and pacifist, he became increasingly political and didactic in his later works.

76 *The Shape of Things to Come* (1933) – a science-fiction story by H. G. Wells set between 1933 and 2106, dominated by Wells' belief in a world state as the solution to the problems of humanity.

But who is immune to dreaming about the street? On the painter's palette, in the poet's soul, in the mind of the masses, its influence is inexorable. Who invented the advertisement? The street! Who invented the caricature? The street! And where do all the emotions of the city find their outlet? In the street! Thus has the great poet Bilac[77] expressed its deepest pain:

Along the haunted avenue of heartache and distress
See the sad procession on its weeping way progress,
Where daily walk the souls deprived of love and happiness.

And a certain Arab poet, recognizing with the prescience of the bards that only the street is able to give us both absolute suffering and absolute happiness, wrote his celebrated *Hymn to the Laughter at the Break of Dawn*; the silver laughter of the children, the pearly laughter of the women, the deep laughter of the men, forming a whole of such harmony that even the birds' song was filled with the laughter of the trees and the great canopy of the sky was streaked with gold from the massive laughter of the sun…

In this possibly futile eulogy, I have considered the street as a living being, so powerful that it manages, unawares, to modify man and make him its perpetual delirious slave; and I have even shown that the street is the inspiration of the most intense and most expressive urban art. The street also has its quota of blood and suffering that has become a universal symbol.

But there is another street, built of imagination and distress; an abject, evil street, detested and detestable, which we enter against our will, where to tread is to be ignominiously dragged along through the scum of a city and its people. There everyone jostles and vociferates; everyone, whether they come from the Street of Happiness or the Street of Peace, on foot from the backstreets of the Saco do Alferes[78] or by motorcar from the wealthy neighbourhoods, meets there and there they trudge along, in sobs, railing against life and against the world. But with all its imprecations and its rancour, in the pattern of the city streets it goes all but unobserved. It is a murky, veiled street, shrouded in darkness, with palaces of pain and hovels of tears; whose existence is not revealed by a sign on the corner but by a vague apprehension, a relentless feeling

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77 Olavo Brás Martins dos Guimarães Bilac (1865–1918) – Brazilian writer and journalist, consecrated as the country's most important Parnassian poet with the publication of his *Poems* in 1888; like João do Rio he was a member of the Brazilian Academy of Letters and a regular contributor to the *Gazeta de Notícias*.

78 Saco do Alferes – a *saco* is a small inlet or cove; *alferes* means 'second lieutenant'. The location, referred to here to exemplify a poor neighbourhood, is now a part of the landfill covered by the Flamengo Park, opposite the Gloria Hotel.

Rio de Janeiro, August 1957. Rua Primeiro de Março no Centro do Rio de Janeiro

of anguish; from which you will never succeed in averting your steps. I scoured the maps of Athens, of Rome, of Nineveh and Babylon, the maps of ancient cities. Bath houses, canals, fountains, hanging gardens, places for business, places for love, places for worshipping the gods, all have disappeared. Look at the maps of modern cities. Over the centuries the transformation has been almost complete. The streets are perishable, like men. This other, however, this terrible street, known and hated by us all, which we daily walk along, this is everlasting; like envy, like infamy, like fear. When Jerusalem shone at the height of its splendour, it already existed. While in Athens artists and athletes received ovations, while in Rome the crowd applauded triumphant gladiators and dissolute emperors, in the street of torment it spat opprobrium and wept its innocence. Carthage had such a street, and even today Paris, New York, Berlin have theirs; severing their happiness, sullying their splendour, defiling all their triumphs and all their beauty. Which of you has not unexpectedly turned the corner that conceals this street? If you have wept, if you have been vilified, if you have been wounded by the talk behind your back, you can be sure that you have entered that tenebrous way! Ah! Don't try to avoid it. You will never succeed. The more you try to get free of it, the more it

will make you suffer. And never expect the world to improve as long as it exists. It is not a street where only a few of us suffer; it is the never-ending street that crosses cities, countries, continents, that runs from pole to pole; where all ideals are slashed to pieces, every truth insulted, where Epaminondas[79] suffered and along which Jesus walked. Perhaps when the world has ended, when all the stars have been put out and the cosmos plunged in darkness; perhaps it will still exist, its ominous sobs echoing in total ruin; street of tears, street of despair – never-ending Via Dolorosa.

João Paulo Emilio Cristovão dos Santos Coelho Barreto, better known under his *nom de plume* João do Rio, was born in Rio de Janeiro in 1881 and died there, aged 39, in 1921. He was a prolific journalist and playwright whose chronicles and essays appeared in Rio's *Gazeta de Noticias* and *O Dia*, and the journals *Atlantida*, *O Paiz* and *A Patria*. He was elected to the Brazilian Academy of Letters in 1910. Today, a nondescript street in Botafogo is named after him.

79 Epaminondas (c. 410–362 BCE) – Theban general and statesman who broke Spartan military power and transformed the city-state of Thebes. Cicero called him 'the first man of Greece'. The author places him alongside Jesus in the Street of Bitterness because, twenty-seven years after his death, Thebes was obliterated by Alexander the Great, and everything he had achieved was destroyed.

4 THE AESTHETICS OF THE FAVELA

This is a translation of Paola Berenstein Jacques, 'Estética das favelas', *Arquitextos* 78 (June 2001). This text has been partially published as 'The Aesthetics of the Favela: The Case of an Extreme', in Jorge Fiore and Kim Thornton, *Transforming Cities: Design in the* Favelas *of Rio de Janeiro*, London: AA Publications, 2001.

Fortunately, the issue that is at stake today is no longer related to the removal and relocation of the *favela* populations to the furthest areas of the city. Today, the right to urbanization is understood to be an acquired and undeniable right; that is, the issue is no longer simply social and political, but must necessarily be seen in its cultural and aesthetical dimension. Discussions about cultural and especially aesthetic issues in the *favelas* have always been taboo, even though we know that samba and Carnival (as well as several other popular and religious festivals) – icons of our popular culture – have flourished in these spaces and are directly linked to them, and that, at the same time, several *favelas* have already been removed, as they were considered 'anti-aesthetical'.

On the other hand, many artists – some of them residents of the *favela* itself and others living in the so-called city proper – and even foreigners have been influenced by, and sought inspiration in, the 'architecture' of the *favelas*. In addition to being part of our cultural and artistic heritage, the *favelas* have been forged through a uniquely colloquial architectural and urbanistic process, which not only differs from – or can even be considered contrary to – the traditional device of

Paula Trope with the collaboration of Marcos Vinicius Clemente Ferreira, member of the *Morrinho Project. Começo do Baile* [*Beginning of the Funk ball*]. *Morro do Salgueiro* [*Salgueiro Hill*], *Morrinho* [*Little Hill*], 2004. Diptych. From the *Sem simpatia* [*No Jive*] series, 2004/2005

scholarly architectural and urbanistic projects, but also constitutes its own aesthetics, an aesthetics of the *favelas*, which is entirely different from that of the so-called city proper, having its own peculiar characteristics. From the most extreme instances – where *favelas* were removed and its inhabitants relocated to modernistic, Cartesian housing projects – to the milder present-day cases – where so-called postmodernist architects have begun to intervene in the existing *favelas*, with the purpose of transforming them into neighbourhoods – the rational logic of architects and urbanists is still prioritized, resulting in an imposition of their own aesthetics, which in most cases is that of the so-called city proper. In other words, the *favela* must become a proper neighbourhood so that a better integration between the *favelas* and the rest of the city can be achieved.

But haven't the *favelas* been part of the city for more than a century? Is this formal integration really necessary? Doesn't this amount to an authoritarian imposition of a formalist aesthetic aimed at standardizing the urban fabric? Why not accept once and for all the aesthetics of the *favelas* without the aesthetical, architectonic and urbanistic impositions of present-day urbanization projects, which end up causing the destruction of the original architectonic and urban fabric of the *favela*, creating impersonal spaces (spaces that are often not appropriated by the local population, and quickly abandoned and left to deteriorate)? Why is the neighbourhood always the model to be followed, to the detriment of the culturally and formally inventive and rich *favela* 'pattern'?[1] Why not try to *follow* the *favela* pattern, with an attempt to learn from its formal

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1 The concept of 'pattern' is here used according to the definition given by Kevin Lynch in *Good City Form*, Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1981.

complexity and richness? It would be interesting to see this different form of intervention, inspired by the *favelas*, implemented in the city proper (especially around its outer limits and borders).

Three Conceptual Figures

The conceptual figures developed in this section are an attempt to dissect what I call the aesthetics of the *favelas*, that is, the aesthetics of these contrasting spaces or 'other spaces' – 'heterotopies' (See Foucault[2]) – built and inhabited by the 'other' (the non-architect). Until not so long ago, the singularity or, better still, the otherness of these so-called 'informal' or 'primitive' spaces was totally despised by architects and urbanists. The *favelas* have their own spatial identity (even though they differ from each other), while at the same time being part of the city as a whole, of its urban landscape. In order to intervene in this spatio-temporal universe, which is completely different from the rest of the city, it is imperative that we understand this difference a little better. Some of the basic characteristics of the *favelas*' spatio-temporal nature (other than the space itself, temporality is the main agent of this difference) may be exemplified by three conceptual figures (and not just spatial metaphors), on three different levels (here introduced in a synthetic and schematic fashion).

1. *Fragment (from the body to architecture)*

This results from the observation of shanties, of the fragmentary way of building in the *favelas*, based on the idea of shelter, which is entirely different from the architectural practice developed by architects. The shanties that make up the *favelas* are initially built from fragments of heteroclite materials randomly found by the builder. Therefore, shanties are formally fragmented. The first goal of the builder – who is almost always the resident himself, who builds with the help of friends and neighbours (i.e. the collective mobilization principle) – is to shelter himself and his family.

This first shelter is almost always precarious, but it already contains the foundation for its future evolution. From the moment the resident finds or buys more adequate materials, he replaces the old ones and begins to expand the shanty. A shanty is never based upon a previously established construction project; the found materials make up the foundation of the construction, which will be contingent upon chance and

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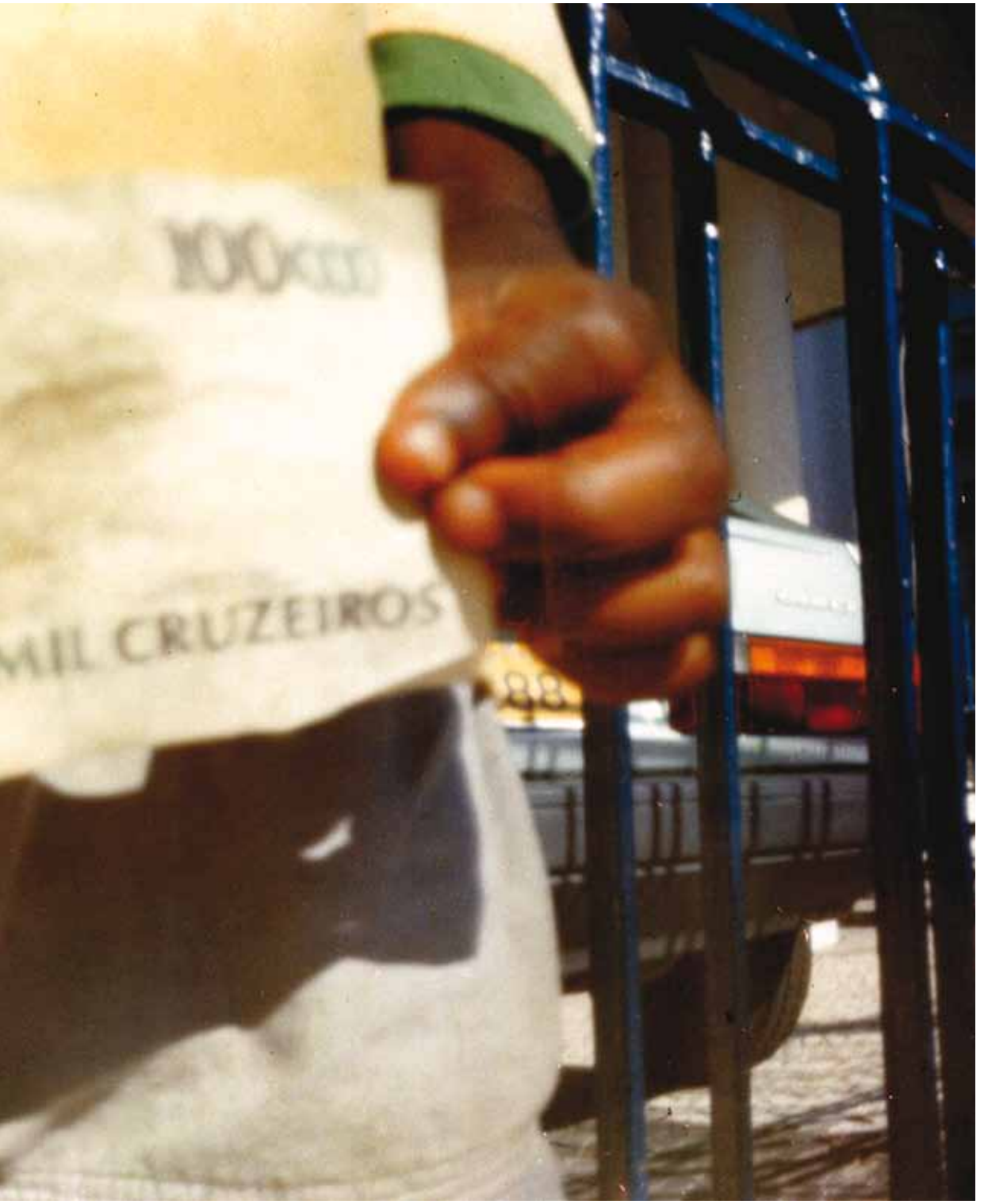
2 Michel Foucault, 'Des espaces autres', *Architecture, Mouvement, Continuité* 5 (Oct. 1984).

Paula Trope, with the collaboration of Muller.
***S/Titulo (o dinheiro)* [*Untitled (Money)*], 1993**
Diptych. From the series *Os Meninhos* [*The Boys*], 1993/1994

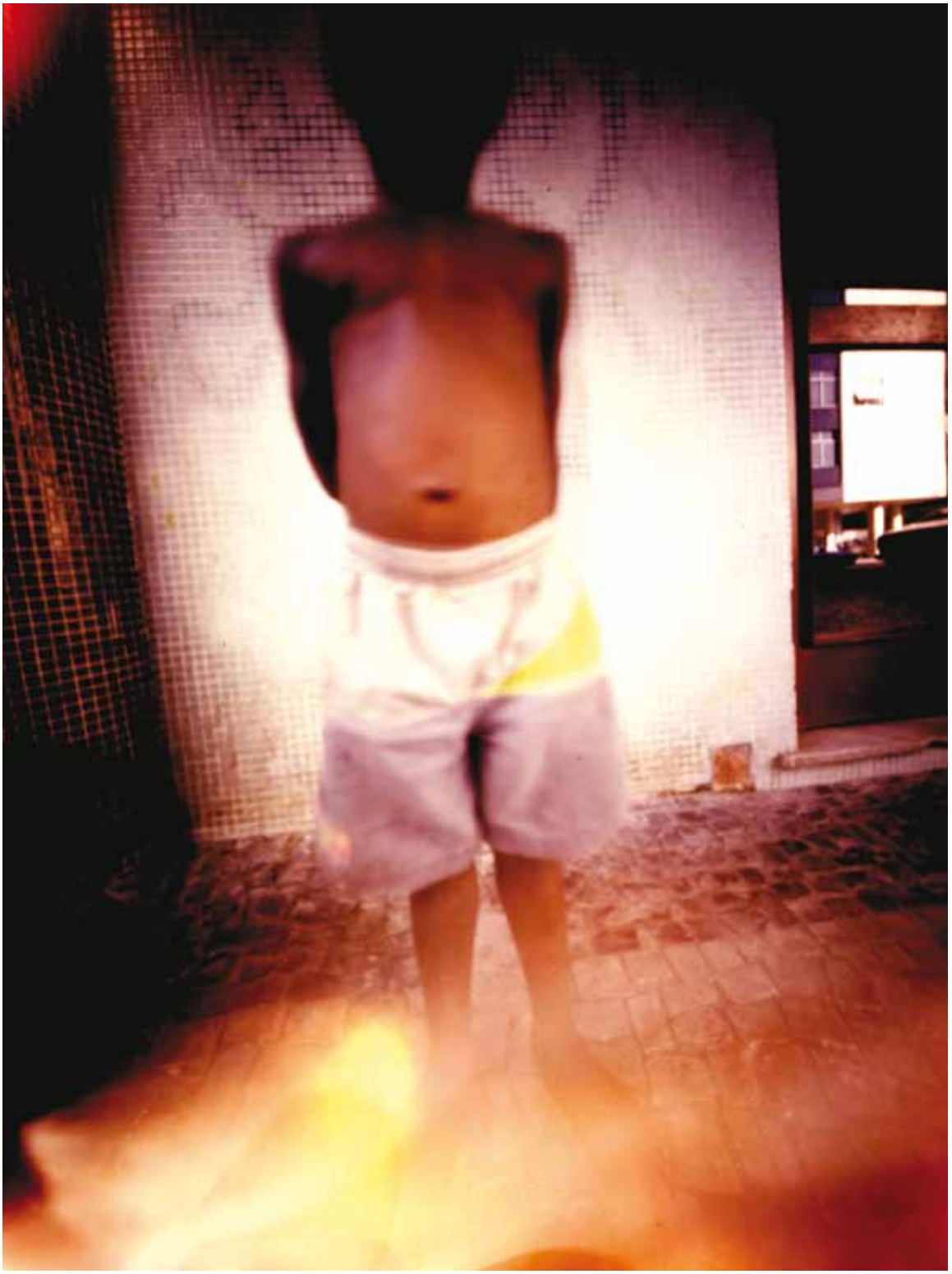

MIL CRUZEIROS

the necessity of finding new materials, or upon the ability to buy them. The shanty is constantly evolving, until it becomes a brick house, but even then the construction never ends, and houses are under constant renovation. Even though they are less fragmented than wooden shanties, the new brick houses are also fragmentary, since they are constantly being transformed. Construction is an everyday reality, perpetually unfinished.

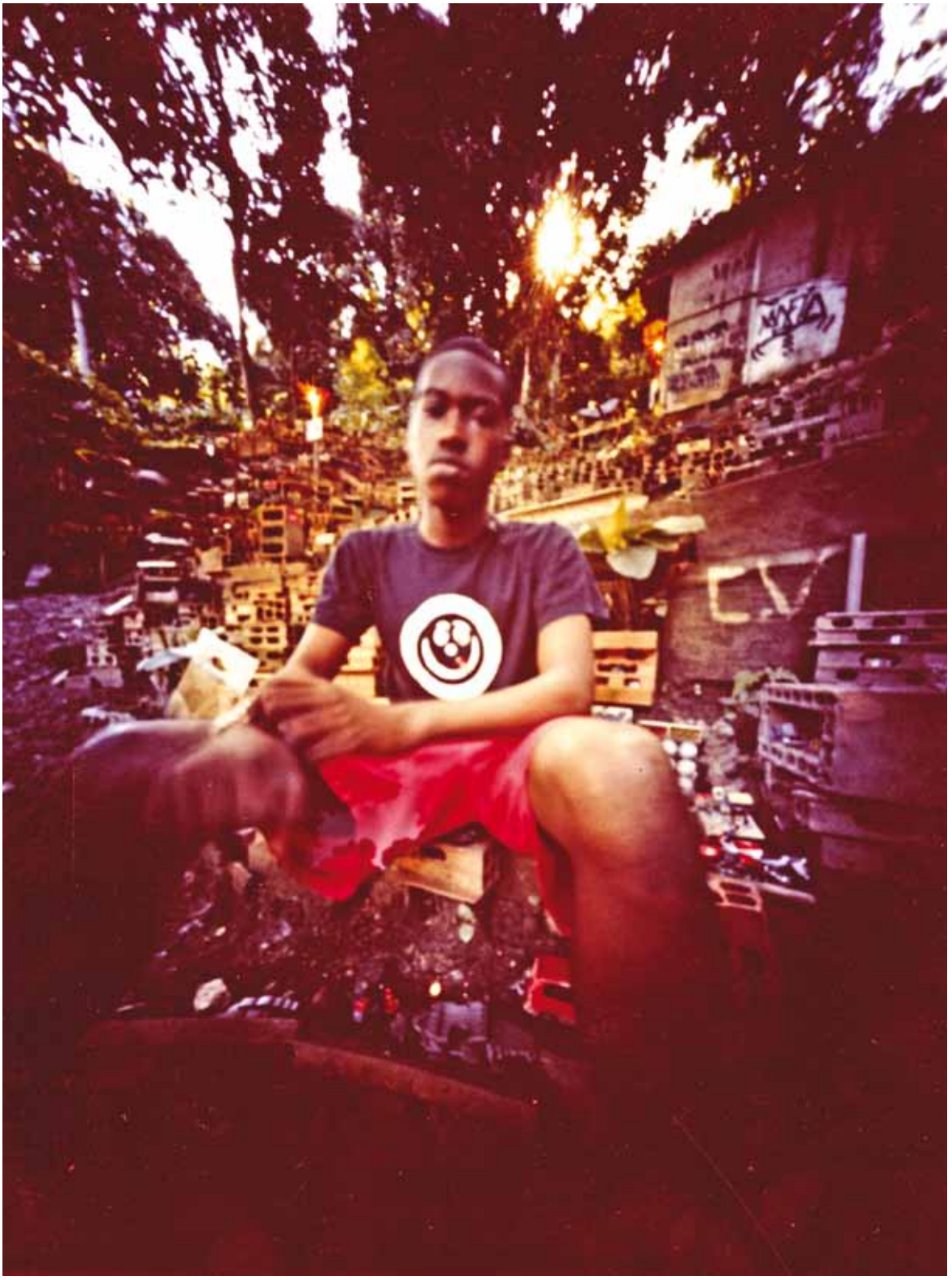
A conventional architecture – that is, an architecture executed by architects – encompasses a project created before the construction begins, and it is this project that determines the end, the full stop that concludes the construction. When there is no project, the construction does not have a predetermined form, and thus it never ends, always remaining unfinished. Instead of architecture, the building practice in the *favelas* – associated with random chance and the unfinished – looks more like 'bricolage'.[3] Unlike architects, those practising bricolage do not aim for an objective, nor do they look for unity; they act in a fragmentary fashion, through the comings and goings of a non-planned, empiric activity. Bricolage might be said to be an architecture based on chance, an architecture devoid of a project. The final form is a result of the building process itself, and the main goal of the builder is to create a shelter. To shelter means to cover, to wrap in order to protect, to conceal. In other words, it means building an inside area into which one can enter, a delimitation between the outside and the inside. This separation exists on several levels, starting with the body itself: first, there is clothing; then, the shelter, the house, the neighbourhood, the city, etc. The main difference between sheltering in bricolage and inhabiting in architecture is a temporal one, since sheltering relates to something temporary and provisory, while inhabiting, on the contrary, pertains to something that is durable and permanent. It is like the difference between going through and being. A shelter is temporary even if it lasts for ever, while a habitation is durable even if it tumbles down tomorrow. But even when not conceived as such, a shelter has the potential to become a habitation: in each shelter there is an immanent sense of becoming-a-habitation.

The most significant distinction in the way *favela* builders and architects treat space relates to temporality, since sheltering and inhabiting imply a completely different spatio-temporal process. It is as if architects spatialize time, and *favela* builders temporalize space. This opposition becomes clear when we compare the way architects conceive space – always starting from a project, with spatial and formal

3 Claude Lévi-Strauss, *La Pensée sauvage*, Paris: Plon, 1962.



Paula Trope, with the collaboration of Muller. ***Muller, aos 8 anos, guardador de carros*** **[*Muller, 8 years old, car guard*]. *Ipanema*, *Rio de Janeiro*, 1993**
Diptych. From the series *Os Meninos* [*The Boys*], 1993/1994



Paula Trope, with the collaboraion of Marcos Vinicius Clemente Ferreira, member of the Morrinho Project. Marcos Vinicius Clemente Ferreira *(Negão), aos 16 anos* [*16 years old*].
***Vila Pereira da Silva (Pereirão Hill), Rio de Janeiro*, 2004**
Diptych. From the *Sem simpatia* [*No Jive*] series, 2004/2005

projections for a near future – and the way *favelas* are built – where there is never a pre-established project, and the formal outline of the future construction begins to appear only when the construction process is well underway, and, even then, is never fixed or predefined, as is the case in a traditional project. In most cases, the practice of creating a project also implies a rationalization of the construction as well as a simplification of the space by the use of scale models or modules – that is, a reproduction of the space itself. This does not happen in the *favelas*, since the idea of a previously established project does not exist, and each shanty is inevitably different from every other.

2. *Maze (from architecture to the urban)*

This observation is based on the study of shanty clusters, of the *favela's* maze-like building process, understood through the idea of a path, of the experience of the spontaneous urban space, which is very different from the space designed by urbanists. When we move from the scale of the individual shelter to that of the shelter cluster, of the free spaces between shanties that form the *favela*'s narrow streets and alleys, the image of a maze comes almost naturally to the mind of a 'foreigner' penetrating the meanders of the *favela* for the first time. In addition to actually being shaped like a maze, the *favela*'s inner pathways and fragmentary perspectives always produce a maze-like sensation in the always fragmentary perspectives that produce an odd feeling. Getting lost is part of the spatial experience of the maze/*favela*, and, in order to avoid that, one must have a guide (a local), who acts like Ariadne's thread. Even in the case of architects or urbanists, 'foreigners' can easily get lost in the face of the uncertainty of the *favela*'s pathways (any turn might lead to a dead end), since they do not have its blueprint with them (which in most cases does not exist).

Therein lies the big difference between the *favela* and the mythical Greek labyrinth designed by Daedalus, the architect: the *favela* does not have a previously made blueprint; none has been drawn or projected. The *favela*/maze is much more complex because it is not static, finished; it is always being transformed. No *favela* blueprint is ever final – there can only be momentary blueprints, and they are always made afterwards. The analogy with the Greek myth can be taken to an extreme if we think of the inevitable kites flying over the *favelas* as a tribute to Icarus – Daedalus' son – who died while trying to escape the maze by flying… According to *favela* folklore, kites are used as warning signals to drug dealers, who may be seen as Minotaurs hidden within the *favela*/maze, hunted down by policemen who see themselves as Theseuses. In the *favela*/maze, the myth, like the *favela* itself, remakes itself continuously: young men are sacrificed like the Athenians, while

the residents/Ariadnes continue to weave – without the help of the architects/Daedaluses – this great unplanned, collective structure.

The *favela*'s urban fabric is malleable and flexible: the route determines the pathways. Unlike traditional urban planning, which determines the tracing beforehand, the streets of the *favela* (as well as all public spaces) are determined exclusively by use. A crucial difference with respect to planned cities concerns the relationship between public and private spaces: in the *favelas*, these spaces are also inextricably connected. During the day, narrow streets become the continuation of houses, semi-private spaces, while most houses with open doors also become semi-public spaces. The idea of the *favela* as a big collective house is one often held by the local population. Streets and alleys are almost always extremely narrow and intricate, which intensifies the maze-like sensation, generating considerable physical proximity, which in turn produces all kinds of intermingling.

Climbing up a *favela* is a singular experience of spatial perception: right from the start, one discovers a different walking rhythm, a sensual sway imposed by the path itself. When you stroll around the *favela*, you discover how it is that the children born in this space begin to dance the samba even before they can walk upright. In fact, people seldom walk in a straight line in the *favelas* – it is impossible not to recall the famous quote by Le Corbusier: 'The curved street is the way of asses; the straight street the way of men.'[4] And the analogy continues, since the myth of the maze is also connected to dance. After slaying the Minotaur, Theseus celebrates his victory by dancing a choreography whose bodily movements mimicked the meanderings of the Cretan maze. Dancing the samba is the best representation of the maze-like experience of strolling around a *favela*, which is the opposite of the modern urban experience, especially in city streets that have been rationally designed (the samba dancer's zigzag-like moves along the straight Sambadrome demonstrate this quite well).

The big difference between the *favela*'s improvised and spontaneous maze and the cities designed by architects and urbanists – especially the ones planned *ex nihilo* – is an inversion of urban design and planning practice: in cities or urban spaces that have been thoroughly planned, blueprints are drawn up during the project stage, before the actual city appears, while in the *favela*'s maze-like spaces, the opposite occurs: blueprints are made only afterwards, their drawing based on an already existing space (cartographies). The main characteristic of the *favela*'s urban space is its maze-like, surprise-filled urban

4 Le Corbusier, *Urbanisme*, Paris: Éditions G. Grés et Cie, 1925.

fabric, which results in a spatial perception that is almost impossible to predict, or obtain through a traditional urban project that automatically eliminates the mystery of the experience itself – an essential particularity of the maze.

3. *Rhizome (from the urban to the territory)*

This conceptual figure relates to the wild occupation of the land by shanty clusters, and especially to the *favelas*' rhizomic growth that forms new urban territories; it is based on the concept of community, set apart from any urban or territorial planning. As the botanical etymology of the term *favela* (*Jatropha phyllacantha*) indicates, *favelas* are 'organic' formations that are shaped by the 'wild' occupation of vast plots of land. The invasion of empty spaces itself characterizes an act of demarcation and consequently also a process of territorialization. The shanty clusters appear in the middle of the city, in between its conventional neighbourhoods, just like the weeds that grow in the middle of pavements and cobblestones, creating enclaves, micro-territories within larger ones.

The invasion of a plot of land to build shelters creates a new urban territory, a citadel within the city, usually with its own laws. *Favelas* develop like the thicket that grows naturally in empty city lots; shanties, like weeds, begin to appear along the borders, and quickly end up taking over the entire free space. This kind of occupation generates a situation that is the opposite of what happens in conventional cities, since in the *favelas*, in most cases, the outskirts of the occupied lots are more valued and older than the geographical centre. *Favelas* are non-centric, or, rather, eccentric. The outskirts, the borders that separate the *favela* from the city proper, then, work symbolically as a 'centre', concentrating most of the commerce and services. In addition, *favelas* overflow the city lots they occupy, especially because of the many relationships they establish with the rest of the city: mainly cultural and collective exchanges, but also, in a more subtle way, because of individual relationships. A lot of the people who live in the *favelas* work in the city proper, sometimes as domestic employees – that is, in traditional apartment buildings located in the adjacent formal neighbourhoods.

The territorialization, then, happens on three different levels: the occupation of an empty plot of land; the situation of these plots inside the city; and the relationships *favela* residents have with one another, based on a strong idea of community, as well as the way they relate to those living in the city 'proper'. These three levels follow what could be called the 'rhizome weed logic', as opposed to the 'tree-root logic' of the planned cities. As Christopher Alexander puts it, we already

know that 'the city is not a tree',[5] as modernist urbanists intended it to be when they planned their cities based on a rational system (a tree structure). In the postmodern Alexandrian critique, cities planned by architects and urbanists (deemed artificial) follow the tree logic, an order that is simple and binary, while vernacular and spontaneous cities (deemed natural) follow a semi-lattice logic, which can be said to be a more complex, multiple order. The *favelas* follow an even more complex 'logic', since they are constantly in (trans)formation, never stop growing (first horizontally and then vertically), and, above all, are not fixed like traditional cities, whether planned or unplanned.

In addition to the *favelas*' spatial complexity, we must also consider their temporal complexity. There is a basic difference in the way they are rooted. The planned city, the tree-city, is strongly rooted in a root system, an image of order; the unplanned (or partially planned) city, the bush-city, works according to a rootlet system that is not as simple or as orderly; and the *favela* would be the weed-city, following the rhizome system,[6] which is even more complex. Ginger is a rhizome, as are weeds. The weed-rhizome system is the opposite of the tree-root system (and of the bush-rootlet system, which still retains an arborescent structure) because of its multiplicity, non-centricity (or eccentricity), instability and constant movement. The main difference between the planned occupation and the wild occupation in the *favelas*, then, relates to the root type, the first one fixed, the second open, with a huge potential for transformation. Every territorial planning that is imposed is based on a fixed demarcation – that is, on the interruption of pre-existing movements.

Favela: A Space-Movement

The three conceptual figures briefly introduced here are connected to each other by way of the idea of movement in the *favelas*. Consequently, the aesthetic that results from these fragmented, maze-like, rhizomatic spaces is a spatial aesthetic of movement, or, better yet, a space-movement. This space-movement is not just connected to the physical space itself, but primarily to the movement of the path, to the experience of walking it, and, at the same time, to the movement of the transforming space itself. The space-movement is directly linked to its actors (the subjects of the action), who are not only those who move within those spaces, but also those who build and continuously transform

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5 Christopher Alexander, 'A City Is Not a Tree', *Architectural Forum* (Apr. 1965).
6 Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Mille plateaux*, Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1980.

them. In the case of the *favelas*, these two agents can be combined into one: the resident who is also the builder of his own space. The idea itself of space-movement requires the concept of action or, better still, the participation of the users. Unlike spaces that are practically static and fixed (planned, designed and finished), in the space-movement the passive user (spectator) always becomes the actor (and/or co-author) and the participant.

If we want to preserve the *favelas*' identity and aesthetical specificity, we must encourage the idea of participation wherever *favelas* are being urbanized, while at the same time preserving the space-movements. This idea is a paradox: how can we preserve that which moves; how can movement become a patrimony? When it comes to *favelas*, if there is any kind of patrimonial intention (in the sense of preserving the cultural and aesthetical identity of these spaces) during urbanization, we should not be worried about preserving their architecture, their shanties, their urbanism, or their narrow streets; instead, we should try to preserve their movement, generated through their actors: the residents. Whenever they attempt to urbanize the *favelas*, architects and urbanists should follow the movements that have already been started by the local residents; this way, instead of fixing spaces through the creation of boring, ordinary formal neighbourhoods, we will be able to preserve the already-existing movement – that is, the life itself of the *favelas* (which is almost always much more intense and communal than that observed in formal neighbourhoods).

However, these professionals usually try to fight precisely against this 'natural' movement, supposedly in the interests of establishing 'order'. But why not try to manage this movement, directing it towards an aesthetical and even functional purpose (i.e. a technical one), without necessarily imposing a pre-established, conventional project? As it has already been established here, the conventional project is the great weapon architects and urbanists like to use against the 'natural' movement in the *favelas* – that is, against the fragment, the maze and the rhizome. In this case, the project shuts down the immanent potentialities of what already exists, fixating forms beforehand, inhibiting unpredicted actions and, above all, hampering real participation. In order to preserve the space-movement, we must try to act without a conventional project, using micro-interventions – minimal interventions that follow the natural and spontaneous flow already existing in the *favela*. This means respecting the differences in this vernacular and popular architecture and urbanism, as we preserve their – fragmentary, maze-like, rhizomatic – characteristics, following the aesthetic that has already been established by the residents themselves, instead of trying to impose the aesthetics and logic of a scholarly architecture and

urbanism (which were not conceived or adapted *a posteriori* for this type of urban situation).

Architect-urbanists who want to intervene in these different, already existing urbanities, in these new urban situations already built with their own identity, should take on a new role: they should become like 'maestros' who simply conduct the different actors, managing the movement 'flows' that already exist. And, what is most important, architect-urbanists should make subtle, barely visible interventions, without building real 'architectonic works', without caring about their formal architect's 'signature'; in other words, the work should not have a clear 'authorship', and should thus become collective and anonymous, like the *favela* itself. In order for that to happen, architect-urbanists need only let go of a certain demiurgic posturing (in the Platonic sense of the term), so that, in a more humble fashion, they are able to follow the process already started by the residents.

It is possible to 'urbanize' and yet preserve the *favela*s' otherness at the same time, through a certain methodology of action (minimum intervention), without a conventional project, and with inspiration drawn from the *favelas*' own aesthetics. Moreover, this different kind of intervention – fragmentary, maze-like and rhizomatic – can be useful even in the so-called city proper, especially in its liminal cases (the *favela* is just one of them): everywhere, that is, where architecture and urbanism's traditional methods have not worked for quite some time.

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A Conversation with Jorge Mario Jáuregui

5 INTER→ SECTIONS→AND BIFURCATIONS

You are originally from Buenos Aires, Argentina, but have lived and worked in Rio de Janeiro for more than thirty years, during which time I'm sure you've seen both the city and the country go through massive changes. Can you tell us a little bit about the first impression Rio made on you, and how it changed your perspective on things in the field of architecture and urban planning?

Basically, the first change was one of personality rather than perspective: in Argentina I had been a political-technical militant, and in Brazil I became a technical-political participant – conditions here were very different and required I do so. My entire theoretical training took place here, working through modernism and postmodernism to deconstruction and post-structuralism, without having to deal with the pressures of political action that were so much stronger in Argentina. The constraints of the political situation in Argentina were not very favourable to reflection; paradoxically, I was only able to create enough space for theoretical reflection when I came to Brazil (I'm calling this paradoxical because, in principle, Brazil and Rio in particular are not associated with this). Early on, I got involved in various study groups devoted to discussing issues of public space in the very concrete circumstances such as they existed in Guanabara Bay, in the neighbourhood of Botafogo, in the port area, etc.

Of course, I quickly came to realize how *different* public space was in a city like Rio from what I was used to see in Argentina, and the primary difference could be explained, I believe, by way of the contrast between the Argentine tango and the Brazilian samba. They are two basic rhythms that,

> in my opinion, translate the basic difference between two ways of life: rather introverted and internalized in Argentina, compared to a much more extroverted and expansive manner in Brazil (obviously the city's more favourable climatic conditions plays a key role in this). In Rio, in particular, exterior space is used as an extension of interior space, and the presence of the *beach* evidently plays a very important role in all of this – especially in the formation of the character of the city's inhabitants. A megacity with a beach at its very centre obviously establishes a very particular condition for reimagining the possible uses of public space (I'll come back to this point in a little while).
>
> Another key factor is the way the body relates to its surroundings – and it is important to note that we are speaking of an *exposed* body here, the body on display and open to the elements in a way that is simply unimaginable in cities like Buenos Aires, Madrid, New York or Paris, for example. Argentine bar culture, for instance, is much more intimate than anything you're likely to come across here, and therefore perhaps more favourable to fostering love and romance, or to initiating political discussion… Here, life very much passes in front of your eyes while you're sitting outside, in a bar or on the beach. Local urban conditions are simply not geared towards stimulating reflection in the same way as elsewhere; for instance, you can't really reflect on the beach.

It is true that you hardly see people read on the beach like they often do elsewhere…

> Perhaps. Anyway, Rio does offer a myriad of possible uses of its spaces, and more than elsewhere one either chooses to actively engage or retract from it. Take the 24-hour life of Copacabana, for instance, which is perhaps one of Rio's most interesting neighbourhoods because it is so mixed and plainly democratic (there are *favelas*, middle-class and upper-class sections of Copacabana, and tourists, all within spitting distance of each other – and here, the mere facts of geography of course play a crucial role): this is where the civil quality of the Brazilian way of life appears most clearly in public. There are public squares, for instance, with little clusters of devices for working out that are used around the clock, by people of all ages; even at three o'clock in the morning you'll find someone doing their fitness routine there. Of course, this is also connected with the cariocas' slightly exhibitionist streak –

something we remarked upon already when we mentioned the body-on-display…

Anyway, these varied uses naturally affect the way the city functions. Take the downtown city centre, for instance, which easily strikes one as strangely inexpressive and does not group a lot of important functions: when you go there, you realize that the *real* city centre is the beach. In many respects, that's where the carioca organizes his or her life, rather than, say, in relationship to his or her job. For this is what the traditional city centre is about, and hardly anything else: work – and, as soon as the working day is done, it completely empties out and turns lifeless. Life really unfolds in other parts of the city: on the beaches or in the neighbourhoods that line the beach, in older city quarters like Lapa…

Now these observations all lead to a process of reimagining a city's relationship with its public space – and that's what occupies me above all else: it's one of the core questions of city life at the beginning of the twenty-first century. What is a city after all? One answer could be: a special relation between city, urbanity and public space. A spatial configuration established by certain constructions, inhabited by a large number of people, defined by its density and heterogeneity, and made up of relationships between people who do not know each other. Urbanity is a way of life characterized by mobility and agitation, and by the proliferation of a myriad of possible relationships, not just between people, but also between different uses of its space – public space being precisely *that* densely layered surface network of all kinds of intersections, crossings and bifurcations.

What is interesting is that traditional cities like Paris, New York and Madrid have clearly defined public spaces, whereas Rio does not have much to show in terms of public space in the conventional urban sense. Public squares, for instance, are either empty or don't signify much; here again, the beach emerges as an approximation of public space: it is one type of public space, but obviously a highly specific one, governed by certain social rules. The notion of public space is closely connected to that of the public domain: it is a forum where the public can express its approval or rejection of certain proposed policies – and that is not something that is so easily imagined or even enacted on the beach. The only public manifestation that can be imagined to take place on the beach is a party, like the famous *réveillon* for example.

Can you tell us a little bit more about the project you're currently undertaking in the Manguinhos neighbourhood of Rio de Janeiro's Zona Norte? Because that very much revolves around the creation of a public space where formerly no such thing existed, and no such thing could even have been imagined.

> Yes, the Zona Norte is home to some of Rio's poorest, most degraded neighbourhoods; there, you'll find that the notion of the broken city really makes sense. I am working on a project, *Rambla de Manguinhos*, that is looking to re-establish connections between two adjacent entities that have been living in a state of isolation for many years, separated from each other by a strip of no man's land (clustered around a suburban train line) that was literally called the Gaza Strip – that's how dangerous it was. The infrastructural questions that the project, which involves the elevation of the train tracks to create a new promenade-like public space, seeks to address concern issues of access and accessibility, of movement and mobility, but there are also aesthetic and social questions, and these are the most important. For the core of the *Rambla de Manguinhos* project, which has been conceived on a large, metropolitan scale, is really a matter of connecting, of establishing relations and relationships; that is one reason why the project reminds me of a remark Hélio Oiticica once made with regards to Brazilian culture in general. He proposed we imagine Brazil as 'loose cables in a field of possibilities' – cables that I seek to connect through my projects. This may in turn be connected with the long-standing view of Brazil as a country of the future, full of possibilities that are waiting to be mined, full of relations that are waiting to be established. The *Rambla* is my attempt at forging such a connection – a situation in which I am an interlocutor, a partner in dialogue and exchange, as much as an architect.

You've been working in poor and low-income neighbourhoods for quite some time now, which I'm sure has been a very instructive experience. Could you tell us what – to paraphrase a well-known formula from the history of architectural theory, and also in reference to the work of Paola Berenstein Jacques – you have 'learned' from the *favelas*?

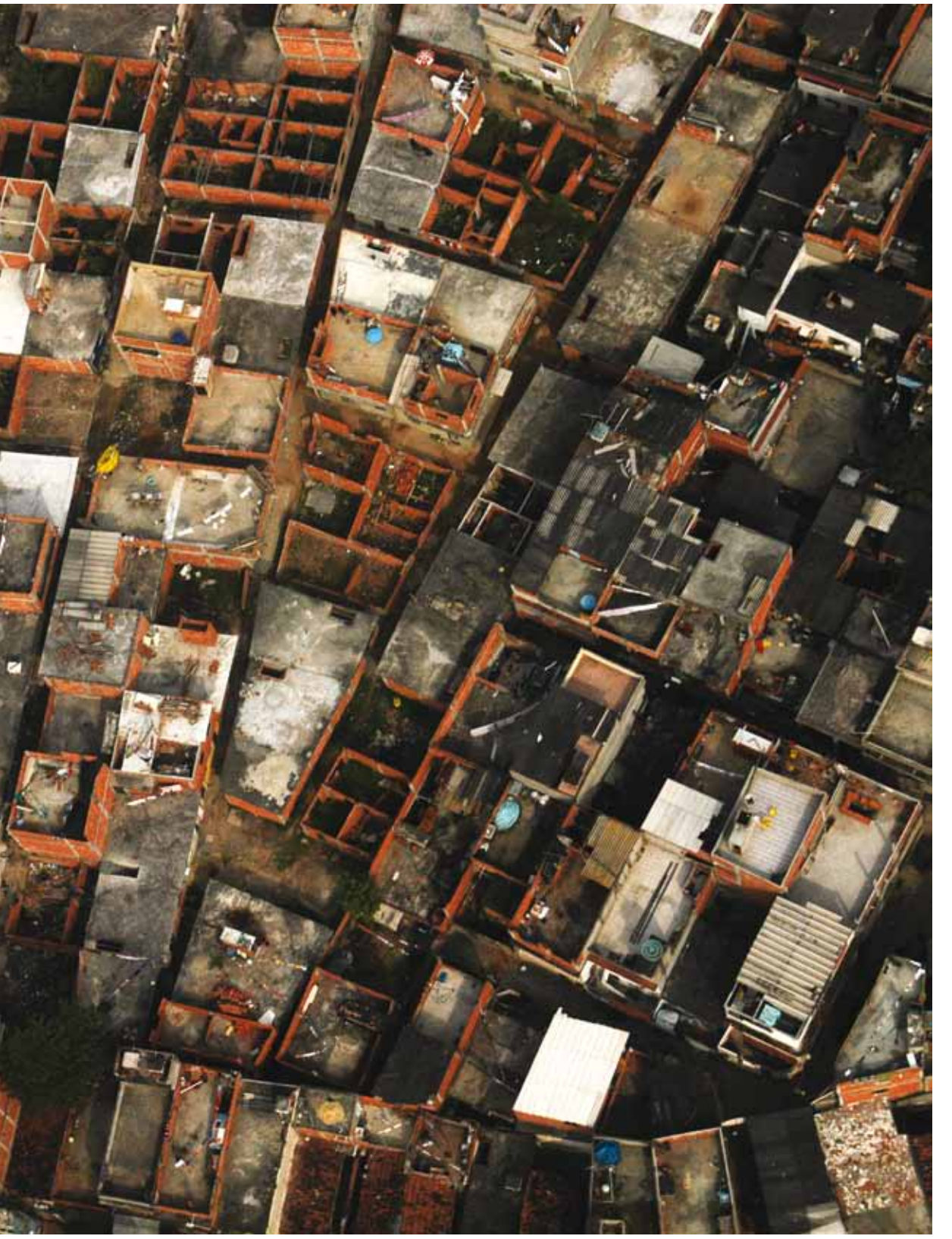
> Many things… and they are evidently very different from what you learn working in the formal city, where architectural practice very often boils down to the application of established models that are passed along through university education. Yet the *favela* is very much an informal city, the workings of which are by definition unknown to the academically trained

architect – which is also the reason why until recently it wasn't even an object considered worthy of reflection. Working in the *favela* does not only require the development of a new practice; it also requires a new kind of thinking, one that seeks to engage with what one could call (in the words of Zuenir Ventura) the broken city and re-establish relations between its fragments. One theoretical model or set of models that has been particularly helpful in developing this new thought derives from the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze, which has been very influential in Brazil for quite some time now. A Deleuzian would define a city as something that is made up of various passing fluxes: music, painting, sculpture and architecture; movement and time… Such fluxes are not easily measured; it is a matter of *quality* rather than *quantity*, of qualification rather than quantification.

Now to go back to the issue at hand: the first thing you notice when you visit or work in a *favela* is what it lacks – and it lacks, or appears to lack, pretty much everything: services, infrastructure, public space…

Having visited one *favela* close to the city centre, I was struck by the lack of *roads*, or rather streets – an interesting observation to be making when you're working on an exhibition project titled *A Rua*.

Yes, and this is clearly connected to the problem of accessibility – merely entering the *favela* can be a daunting prospect because of the lack of clear access. What does stand out, however, among so many experiences of lacking, is what the *favela does* have, and has in abundance, too: a tremendous energy, and a wealth of social ties. For instance, you quickly find out that there is no such thing as suicide in the *favela*: it seems practically impossible. The *favela* is in a constant state of flux, and it is impossible to stand back from it and get depressed pondering one's lack of perspective living *in* the *favela*. Of course, this is not to say that there aren't any problems in the *favelas*, far from it; clearly, there are plenty of problems, gigantic ones, and the actual lack of perspective was definitely one of them before the project started to take shape. But the social energy of the *favela* is such that depression cannot really take a hold there. The question of the architect-urbanist entering in and engaging with the *favela*, then, is very quickly brought down to this: how do I tap into this tremendous reservoir of social energy? How can it be captured and put to use, for instance in the transformation of the formal city that we all know so well?



Where depression *is* a problem…

Precisely. And the point is to apply this new-found knowledge of the informal city to the problems of the formal city, to treat informality as a source of inspiration and imagination for the transformation of all kinds of existing urban restrictions and limitations.

But how do you *apply* this knowledge? Can it be imposed?

This is where, for me at least, the lessons of psychoanalysis come into play. It is not the psychoanalyst's task merely to interpret a given symptom; it is his job to listen and somehow manipulate this symptom – you could compare it with a surfer looking to tap into the energy of a wave coming his way. Now, with regard to the informal city, the architect-analyst's duty is primarily this: trying to provoke connections between what one could call popular intelligence and his own 'institutional' intelligence. In this dyad, the architect represents both the formal city and public power, carrying around a type of intelligence that must be connected with that of the *favela* dweller – and the meeting of those two types has certainly been the Manguinhos project's biggest challenge.

The Freudian method of free association between different variables can be applied to the *favela* to that effect precisely: when you visit a *favela* it is both inevitable and essential that you start out with talking and listening to its residents, that a connection is established in whatever way possible – this ultimately enables you to listen to the other's *desires*, which I believe to be the most important demand made upon the architect-urbanist as a social worker: a fundamental openness that requires the shedding of many prejudices and preconceptions, and a readiness to listen to the real questions that are being asked of you. Of course, in the beginning there is always going to be a healthy dose of distrust on the part of the local population – but that can easily be dispelled, for instance by merely walking around a neighbourhood, by *dérive* and *flânerie* if you like: as Walter Benjamin already noted so many years ago, we get to know a city as much through our feet as through our eyes.

I believe this is what I have come to value above all in this process of 'learning from the *favela*': the way in which established subject positions and subjectivities must be renegotiated to enter into a connection – one that is very different from the conventional method of connecting with, say, someone who wants to put up an office building in the city. If you are dealing

> with a client hailing from the private sector or the institutional sphere, there is very rarely as much freedom as when you're engaging with the population of a *favela*, where the field of possibilities appears to be much larger, and much more open. There, the architect is basically around to help the *favela* dweller imagine his or her latent desires – which are only divulged to him in a real conversation (there is an element of psychoanalytic transfer at work in this process as well). I want to conclude here by saying that in the *favela*, the architect basically enters a zone of endless becomings: new conditions of life, new urban conditions, new conditions of relating to each other and the self…

Hence the attraction that these informal urban zones hold for artists – they are essential zones, not just of learning, but also of invention. What would you answer to the question, however, as to what *we* can learn from the *favelas*? And with 'we', I mean the highly specific urban context of north-western Europe where the *A Rua* exhibition will be on view.

> For me, this question is related to the function of *beauty*. I remember walking around Manguinhos some time ago and some of the people who live there came up to me complaining about the *ugliness* of the *favela*. This made me realize how deeply rooted the claim to the right to beauty really is: residents of the *favela* do not only demand better infrastructure, better transportation, better access (for the immobilization of the *favela* population is one of its biggest problems) and better housing; they want beauty, too. And beauty, in my view, could function as the *favela*'s social cement, as a cohesive, connective factor – which is what gives the Manguinhos project in particular its *cultural* dimension, meaning that it isn't just a matter of intervening on a *technical* level or on the level of merely economic, quantifiable questions…

One of the things that I have really enjoyed while talking to various artists and thinkers in the city is the way in which certain theories, a lot of them derived from post-war French thought, have a much greater practical purchase here in Brazil than they have in the context of their origins – the philosophy of thinkers like Deleuze and Guattari in particular or Michel de Certeau are brought to life in everyday cultural practice in ways that are very different from the canonizing treatment they are inevitably made subject to in the Northern Atlantic academic or para-academic context. The rhizome, for instance, is a concept that is often too easily and casually bandied about in much 'northern' discourse, while here in Brazil it really means something much more concrete.

This probably has to do with the fact that so many of the situations in which those concepts can or could be applied very often require *action*, the more immediate the better. In confronting the *favela*, one is forced to absorb certain concepts very quickly, and base one's actions upon them. The instable circumstances of *favela* living, where everything is always in transit and in flux, require that concepts be looked at with a view as to their possible *use*, which is not always what the academically trained mind will care about at first. And it is true that the concept of the rhizome in particular is very useful here: it leads us to think about the extremely ramified associations that can be established with regards to creation, always departing from the complex socio-spatial conditions that are at work in a determined place and culture.

A Conversation with Ernesto Neto

6 FIGURES AND GROUNDS

Can you tell us something about the relationship between your work (and/or working method) and your everyday environs? How would you say your work developed in response to, or in dialogue with, a highly specific urban environment such as Rio's?

I was asked a similar question some time ago, and the answer went something like this: I come from a place that is defined by the horizontality and the infinity of the sea and the verticality and eternity of the mountains. And in between lies the very finite city of Rio de Janeiro. Rio is a city of edges and borders: it borders the sea, it's hemmed in by mountains, it ends at the edges of the bay or the lagoon… And if you look at how old the mountains are… You know, Rio is, of course, a densely urbanized place, a real city – but nature is much more present here than in many other cities on earth, and much more intensely so, too. So you're inevitably led to look at the human presence with a dose of relativism: sure, humans are capable of serious things – but look at that mountain in the back there… The Dois Irmãos mountains at the far end of Ipanema and Leblon, or Corcovado for instance, it's almost as if they're telling us to take it easy – they've been there for a long time, they have seen many things happen… I think that's an important element for culture generally here.

Another thing that has been significant for the development of my work in particular, in terms of cultural contrast, is the river-like nature of Rio's urban development. The city basically flows wherever it can; it finds its way around every natural obstacle that has been put in its path, streaming from north to south, between mountains and sea. And then there are also the *favelas*, of course, slowly climbing up the hills, like a rising tide of water… But, of course, beyond those natural factors, or maybe precisely because of them, the most interesting thing about Rio de Janeiro is its people: how they

relate to each other, how they move and adapt… It is always said that cariocas are a very relaxed bunch, that they feel very comfortable – they are actually very tense, maybe because so much life takes place outside: people have to share the city, share its streets. For instance, there are many more bars in Rio – places whose chairs spill onto the streets – than clubs, which are essentially private places. Cariocas in general are not 'home sweet home'-type of people: life is outside. Where the wild things are, so to speak. And I mean 'wild' in the sense suggested by the proximity between rich and poor neighbourhoods, the very real living together of rich and poor.

And then, of course, there is the beach…

Which basically functions as a huge park – it's Rio's most public space. On a Saturday or Sunday, when hundreds of thousands of people crowd together on a narrow strip of sand between the ocean and the city, they come together to share that space – and they do so with very few clothes on, shedding many of the cultural barriers that are part of everyday life. There is hardly any tension; that, I think, shows the strength of the city's social fabric. This is not to say that the beach doesn't have its own social organization, of course – Rio's beaches are famous for their so-called *postos*, where different groups of people gather to stake out a certain territory. But still, the basic mode of social exchange is very open – and the number of policemen always markedly limited; it's very rare for something really ugly to happen. Somehow every weekend a passing utopian moment is created…

And, of course, wherever people gather in such huge numbers, some kind of trade is quick to establish itself. The informal commerce that takes place on the beach is a fantastically interesting phenomenon, but unfortunately a new city government has started to crack down on it. You used to be able to eat all kinds of snacks that were prepared on the spot, for instance by people lugging around very well-designed and stylish little ovens, but that's now being outlawed – meaning that the only thing you can still (legally) buy is Doritos or Cheetos or some other kind of industrially processed junk… There are many more instances of such attempts to discipline and regiment beach life (one attempt also concerns the regulation of the sale of coconuts), and to me it feels as if they want to 'Europeanize' or 'Westernize' the beach… It's often the first thing that comes to my mind when I'm standing on a

> square somewhere in a European city: where's the guy selling beer cans? Or when I'm standing in Rotterdam, seven o'clock in the evening on a weekday: where is everybody?

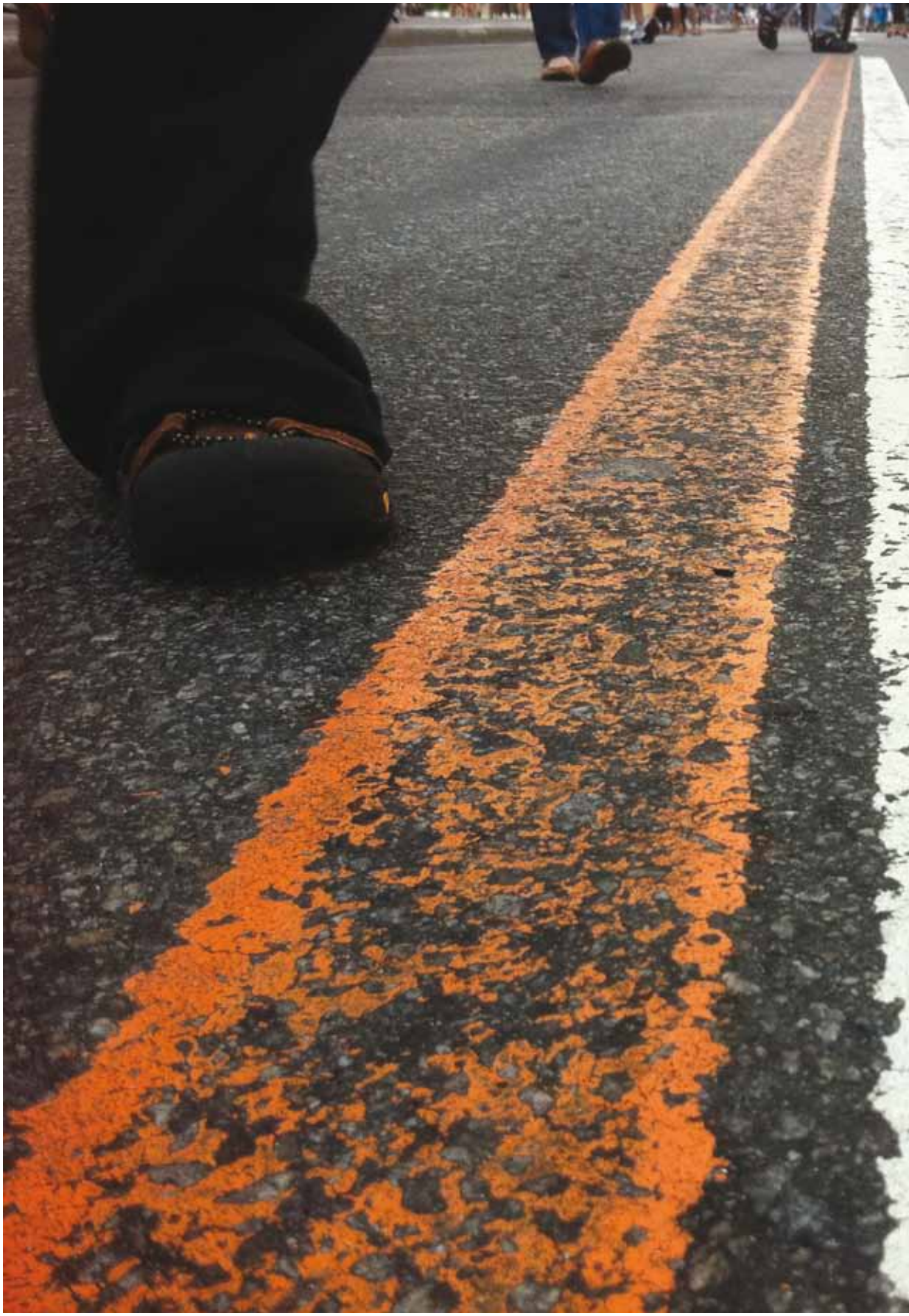
You have actually made a video that could be read as an ode to the street vendor, in which you basically record the art of cutting open a coconut.

> The street seller and the beach vendor are interesting figures because they are intermediaries; they mediate between the State (in the 'Western' sense as governed by laws and rules, but without the Western State's strong tradition, unfortunately, of health care and education) and society at large, between the legal and illegal, the formal and informal. Theirs is not the sanctified knowledge of the universities, but it's knowledge nonetheless. And if you look at their little stands and stalls: a bunch of ropes, some plastic bags, some wooden sticks to prop things up and that's that – you have a shop. In some crucial aspects, much of my work does not differ very much from what they do – it's just bigger, sometimes enormous, yet still it comes out of three or four little boxes full of cheap stuff. Those street vendors can be real design geniuses… There is a very finely tuned intelligence at work in what they do, and I don't think we should just think of it as merely 'precarious'. Is it so much more sophisticated or refined to assemble something using hundreds of bolts and screws? I'm not so sure… In any case some of the structures you see erected on the street can be amazingly sophisticated – and of course there is a poetical quality to it, too. They may *appear* poorly constructed (i.e. visually), but they're actually pretty refined. Like a bird landing on a branch only to fly off again. That's where I try to find poetry – I'm not interested in joining the church of technology.
>
> But to go back to the beach (always go back to the beach): you stake out your little spot, lay down your *canga* [the light, multifunctional Brazilian version of our beach towel, DR], put a handful of sand inside the *canga*, pick it up and there you go – another Ernesto Neto piece.

No discussion of the culture/nature dynamic can be complete, of course, without mentioning the jungle: it's staring down at us from all sides.

> The jungle – let me tell you an anecdote that is going to lead us towards it. The first time I went to Mexico to see the

Ernesto Neto, *A Rua*, 2011



Ernesto Neto, *A Rua*, 2011

> remains of their Aztec and Maya cultures, I was blown away; it made me rethink the history of sculpture as we know it, descending from Egypt and ancient Greece primarily. Pharaonic Egypt was a man-made desert culture in which the relationship between figure and ground was easily defined – a world ruled by sharp contrasts between the horizontal and the vertical, in which a monotheistic vision of a god above and men below was perhaps more easily developed than elsewhere. Greece may have been a little greener, but not much: it's a country of rocks and sea – a mineral place. Now, when you go to Yucatán and come across these huge sculptures and architectural structures that have become completely overgrown, gobbled up by the surrounding jungle, you realize how very different 'nature' must have been to the Maya from what it was for the Egyptians: full of life, abundant, extreme even. Nature is essentially chaotic – a riot of relations and connections, as you can see when you walk around the Floresta da Tijuca: plants living on plants living on other plants, ivies and vines snaking around trees trying to reach for the light… It may look impossibly chaotic, but it makes sense. And in some way or other I always think this is also true with regard to how Brazil (or Latin America in general) functions: like much of its indigenous nature, it looks like a chaotic riot of events and impulses, but deep down it does make sense. If this is all very different from the way things work in Europe, I think it has something to do with the relationship between figure and ground: too rigorously defined, too clearly delineated, not enough room for negotiation. Whereas it is this negotiation, precisely, that is so key to Brazilian life and culture – and it is certainly important in the way I conceive of the sculptural problem of figure and background. Here, what lies between the figure and the background is basically this: the jungle. In which everything, indeed, is 'connected'.

I'd like to retrace our steps a bit and come back to the issue of horizontalism, which has popped up in many of the conversations we have had with people in the city. One of the things that is important in stressing horizontality over verticality relates back to the issue of hierarchy: for a dialogical space to be truly open and egalitarian, it has to operate on a horizontal plane…

> And that's precisely what they're trying to undo by disciplining street life and beach life, I think. All with an eye on making profit, of course, because that is what everything

boils down to… Now, as to this point you're making about the space of dialogue: the beach is an exemplarily democratic space – and that's precisely the reason why most rich people hate it.

How do you as an artist function in this rather complex picture? And how would you circumscribe your contribution to this complexity?

My work is essentially relational – it comes out of the tension of relating. This tension generates sculpture much as it generates society. What I've been interested in more recently is creating spaces for people, parks, squares, etc. That is to say, that's what I think I'm doing. And I'm interested in a model of organic, natural growth to achieve this, in which 'nature' is not some foreign force that is external to us. And, of course, I reason as a sculptor first and foremost, which means I think about weight. Weight is what grounds us: it's what makes us be somewhere rather than just anywhere.

It's interesting that you should be thinking about squares or public plazas in a city that does not seem to have much use for them… People don't really seem to gather in plazas much – they are always on the go, passing through.

You're right – I guess the beach is our square… Street corners are often much more interesting places than the plaza that the streets lead up to. The corner where two streets meet is also where people meet, which is why there are so many corner bars here. Still, I would really like to design a square someday. Or maybe just run a bar! In any case, I'm very interested in how people come together, where and when they gather, and how architecture shapes that experience. Or how space determines that experience more generally – how people move through space, that's an infinitely interesting topic. As a sculptor, I'm always attracted to the image of crowd behaviour: how people interact and behave, what spontaneous groupings they form, how these groups and crowds morph and mutate. Or just to observe the patterns of people moving around a little party on the beach – all these elements, which are essentially just forms, filter into my work for sure. A party can really look like a living sculpture sometimes, and I'm still figuring out how to make a work that actually looks or feels like that, where the beads or sand or spice of the earlier works are replaced by real, living beings. That will take the idea of interactivity to a whole new level – for that, in the end, is

another essential component of my work: the invitation to interact, more specifically to touch. And this again takes us back to the beach (I'll say it once again: always the beach), because the beach is such a sensuous place, the place where the sense of touch becomes privileged above all others…

A Conversation with Ricardo Basbaum

7 CONTACT AND→CONTRAMINATION

You weren't actually born in Rio, were you?

> No, I was born in São Paulo. But I've been here for a very long time – longer than I ever lived in São Paulo. I moved here in 1977…

Well, those are two very different cities, and my first question concerns the specificity of a given urban space – how it shapes, determines or conditions artistic practice. I can imagine that working in a highly specific urban environment such as Rio must have had some formative influence on the development of your practice, or on the development of *New Bases for Personality* [*NBP*], the project that your practice has partly come to be associated with.

> I only lived in São Paulo till I was sixteen; in a sense I became an artist here, in Rio. My work developed in direct relation to the city, but also to certain historical aspects of the art that has been made here over time – which, as you know, is of course a very concrete presence (or a Neo-Concrete presence if you will), and strongly connected to how people *behave* more generally. Rio is very much a city that is turned outwards, or towards the exterior; life here takes place in the street, out in the open (people's behaviour is therefore always, in a sense, public), and that is also true of my practice – my work opens up to an outside. Of course there is also an interior aspect that plays into this, which has to do with a certain psychology or subjectivity that is directly related to the senses. But then again the sense of touch in particular plays an important role here, and this once again turns things towards the outside…

When did the project *Would You Like to Participate in an Artistic Experience?* begin, in fact?

> In 1994. Ironically, however, I was living in London at the time… But the shape of the object that is at the heart of the project started to emerge in my work around 1991, right when I first began to feel the need to take my work in a different direction, so to speak. That's when I started the *New Bases for Personality* project, which is linked to a specific shape that keeps being repeated. I was interested in repetitive imagery: an image that could be repeated indefinitely, anchoring itself in people's memory, moving freely and rapidly through communication networks – almost like a virus. What happened in 1994 is that I decided to let the shape materialize as a 'domestic' object, so that it could literally be taken home. And there one could do whatever one felt like with it – a standard ingredient of participatory practice, you could say. Right from the beginning, the project also included a diagram – a drawing that traced the circuitry through which the object was circulating, but that could also operate as a source of information on the various 'uses' of the object. So the object in a sense both created and represented a social network… Of course, I immediately realized that this would be a long-term project: it would take a long time for people to become aware of the object, grow an interest in it. So when I came back to Brazil in 1994 it took a couple of years for the work to get moving – but by 2000 the project's second phase had already been inaugurated. Once the work started to move around by itself, I really did no longer need to do much any more; my role was reduced to that of merely organizing the object's circulation. And then *Documenta 12* came along… which meant that the scale of the project could be expanded considerably – I had *twenty* new objects produced just for that exhibition, and they travelled just about everywhere. Still, the project's internal conflict stayed the same throughout: the speed with which the *image* of the object travelled around the (art) world on the one hand, and the slowness of this heavy, slightly unwieldy physical object on the other. Or many people wanting it, and there only being one object around… I'm interested in this tension between the dematerialization that is implied by the drawings and the diagrams, and the materiality of the object as such, and I really only started to realize the nature of this tension when *Documenta* took off: all of a sudden I would get fifty emails a day from all over the world requesting the object, while there were only twenty available etc.

Another tension that seems to reside in the project has to do with something you brought up earlier with regard to the Brazilian avant-garde art tradition and its well-known emphasis on tactility and the sensuous – think of the hugely influential work of Lygia Clark or of Hélio Oiticica's *parangolés*, for instance… 'Softness' was a big deal in their work – not a quality that comes to mind in the context of your work, where touch nonetheless plays a crucial role.

> This paradox is precisely what interests me – the coldness of the object…

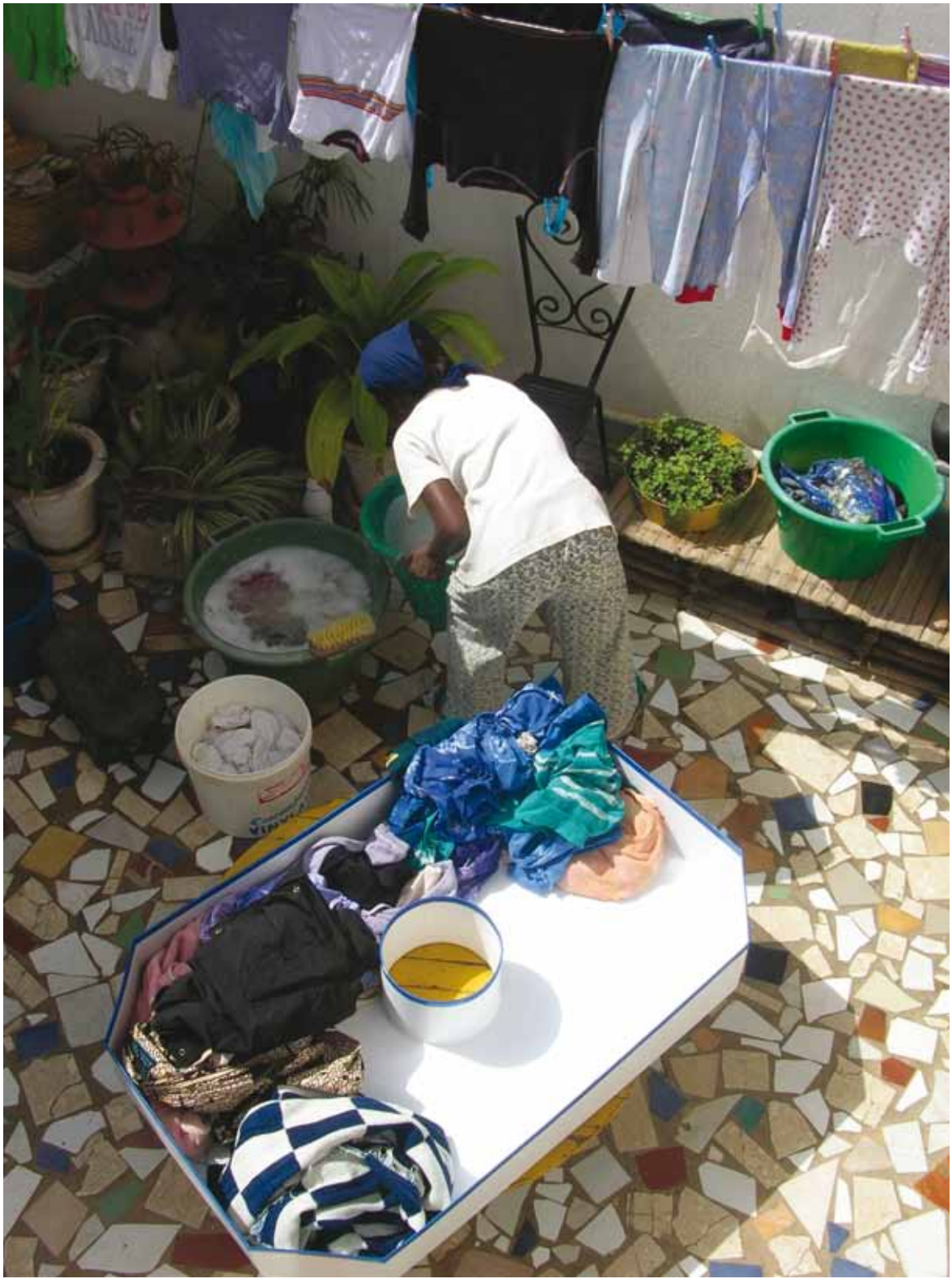
Contrasting with the warmness of human interaction…

> Yes, and the occasional charge of it being 'too cerebral'… Muntadas once remarked about my work that it hovers between the artistic traditions of Rio and São Paulo: Rio prides itself on its Neo-Concrete tradition of a more fully physical art practice, while São Paulo is more technologically oriented and given to planning. Well, in between is an interesting place to be. As a result, my work stands out about from the local landscape, but this difference is precisely what attracts me. There is an element of seduction to the work, but there is also something violent about it. In this sense the deliberate coldness of the object is meant to provoke people – it's meant to pinch them, wake them up from the torpor of certain artistic expectations. Which is not so different from what Lygia Clark did… Only, here it is not so much a matter of coming closer, and the violence (or the very idea of contamination and contagion, of the viral spread of imagery) that is somehow implied in the object may well be a sign of the times… I don't know…

That's an interesting point. Any project that unfolds over such a long period of time will become a record of the changes that the society in which it unfolds has gone through.

> Undoubtedly. And of course my project comes out of a very different context than the work of Clark or Oiticica, whose ideas about participation were clearly driven by the utopian spirit of the times, by the belief in the emancipatory potential of the work. If I tell people that they can do whatever they want with the object, it means that it's really up to them whether they allow themselves to be transformed by the project or not. I believe in the power of art, transformative or otherwise – just not in the same way as artists from earlier generations did. Art has to open up to other fields if it wants to achieve anything, or intervene in any way at all in the world –

Ricardo Basbaum, *Would You like to Participate in an Artistic Experience?*, work in progress since 1994 (participant: Karin Schneider, New York, 2010)



Ricardo Basbaum, *Would You Like to Participate in an Artistic Experience?*, work in progress since 1994, 2007

it's a joint venture that requires the mobilization of sociology, politics, biology, etc.

You know, I was schooled and started to work in the early 1980s, the glory years of a particularly commercialized type of art – a rather shallow affair, with very little time for discourse. And my work reacted to the dominant culture: it is a *discursive* project, meant to get people talking, make them think. Its movement and mobility are tied to this discursive dimension – which lends it something of a Deleuzian charge.

Perhaps the criticism of your work as being too cerebral has to do with an ongoing anti-discursive sentiment in the mainstream of Brazilian art…

That is related, indeed, to the traditional estimation of the culture of the body. But I think this is changing, and universities, MA programmes for young artists, etc. are definitely playing a crucial role in this process. Also the increased interest, among younger artists, in magazines and publications seems to signal an attitudinal shift. No, that was definitely the worst part of Brazilian art in the 1980s (which, incidentally, was also the time when the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari started to make its first inroads into the cultural scene): this deep distrust of words, of concepts – the anti-intellectual impulse. Which so clearly runs counter to all of the achievements of the avant-garde of the 1960s…

Can we talk a little bit more about the inside/outside, interior/exterior dialectic that we touched upon earlier? Two words, or concepts, that come up rather regularly when discussing certain aspects of local art practice are the membrane and the notion of the porous: the organic penetrability of borders and boundaries. And certain metaphors of artistic production also keep coming up – such as weaving or interlacing, for instance…

First of all, it is important to point out that I have always remained a bit of a lateral agent here – I've lived here for a *long* time and I'm not planning to go back to São Paulo or anywhere else, but I still live a sort of lateral life here, as I do not want to be a 'mainstream artist' in the standard sense, allowing the public construction of one's image as an artist to be part of my work, and I actually enjoy that feeling, this deep ambivalence. And ambiguity is of course important for what I do. Now, what's so particular about this city is that, as an artist or cultural producer, you simply *have* to go outside – we've mentioned this before. And you'll find that the public 'scene'

here makes for a very interesting environment – don't forget that what happens in Rio is very easily and quickly made to resonate in the rest of the country.

It's the foremost stage in Brazil.

Precisely. Now, of course São Paulo has long been a tremendous power centre in its own right, but what I like about Rio specifically is not just how culture is *produced* here, but also how it is *spread*, distributed. São Paulo is much more controlled (*and* controlling) and efficient, whereas the nature of Rio's urban fabric just makes for a much more organic experience of culture. People express themselves much more publicly here – especially when it comes down to pleasure! Even looking at the way bus drivers manoeuvre through the city – there's clearly an element of perverse pleasure in there. Perhaps it's just a passing phase in the development of the city, but still… Or if you consider pop music, for instance – how little time it takes for *favela* slang to travel down the hills into the city centre…

Which brings us to the issue of proximity: some *favelas* are within spitting distance of the 'formal' city core. Here, too, it seems to make sense to think of borders as eminently porous membrane-like demarcations.

And that in turn helps to explain the peculiar nature of Rio's 'institutional' landscape: many of the formal institutions don't function terribly well, which means that a lot of the city's artistic and cultural activity takes place in what you could call the para-institutional sphere, where a lot of really interesting things can happen. And here's another interesting paradox: things forcibly happen 'outside', but are not necessarily more visible – and that's a good way to characterize my own work. There is a connection here with the Neo-Concrete movement of the 1950s, by the way: in the seemingly contradictory combination of geometry and the rhetoric of contact and touch in the production of a new subjectivity. The same contradiction also informs Hélio Oiticica's notion of a 'constructive will', the *vontade construtiva*: doesn't the very idea of will contradict the rationality of construction? But, of course, the investment in such contradictions is one of the most important (and contemporary) aspects of his work. And I guess the same dialectic of will and construction percolates into my own work, where a very static, inflexible piece of art becomes the object of a strangely contagious desire…

> But to return to your question concerning the outside: seeing as so much of the *NBP* project revolves around the simple acts of contact and communication, it is obvious that my work relies heavily on the undermining of certain borders and boundaries. The project requires that I myself open up to the outside world – without, however, disappearing as an artist altogether: the artist has to remain present as a subject himself, open to the possibility of being surprised by people's responses and reactions to the work, and be able to rebuild himself according to the development and the reception of the proposal. There is an economy of the disappearance of the artist at play here that has to be negotiated all the time.

You said something really interesting there with regard to the weird ambiguities of Rio's institutional (or para-institutional) landscape: things that happen outside are not necessarily more visible, and that may perhaps be their point. This makes me think of the broader discussion of the public sphere as such, as the space where the relentless drive towards the reification and commodification of just about everything can be resisted still, for commodification essentially relies on reducing things to that which can be seen, grasped, and thereby also bought – domesticated and brought back *indefinitely* into the private sphere. Whereas your object only ever *passes* through these private worlds – and makes those worlds public again.

Daniella Géo

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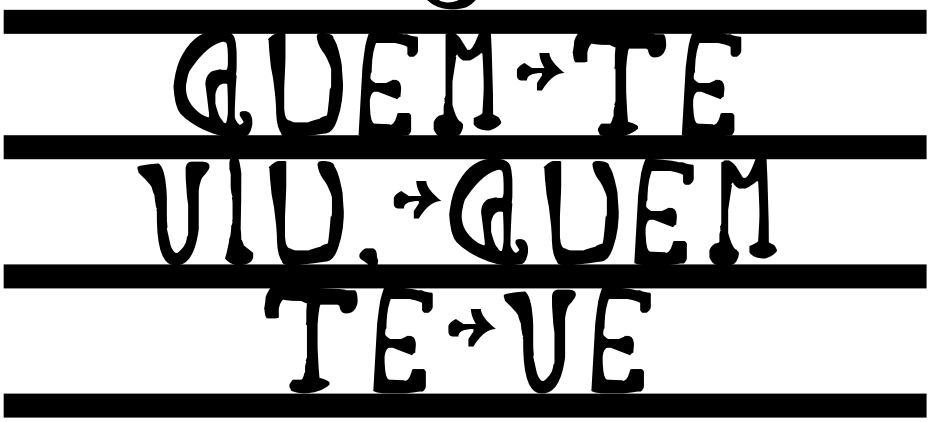

A photograph – one of a number of pictures censored by the military regime – emerged in 1982,[1] seizing the climate of political reopening to become known as the image that summarized the historical event it represented, namely, the March of the One Hundred Thousand (Passeata dos cem mil) in 1968. It depicts a crowd, united by a common interest in ending repression and overflowing the limits of the picture's frame, which is crowned by a banner exclaiming 'Down with the dictatorship. Power to the people.' In addition to making evident the collective nature of the action and designating as dictatorial a system of government that had been initiated to be provisional,[2] the photograph reveals the emerging confidence of a significant portion of the student movement in the viability of a revolution of the 'masses', grounded in different leftist theories and nurtured by the increasing participation of the population in the protests against authoritarianism.

The same Avenida Rio Branco in the centre of the city of Rio de Janeiro that in 1943 was opened up to accommodate the samba school

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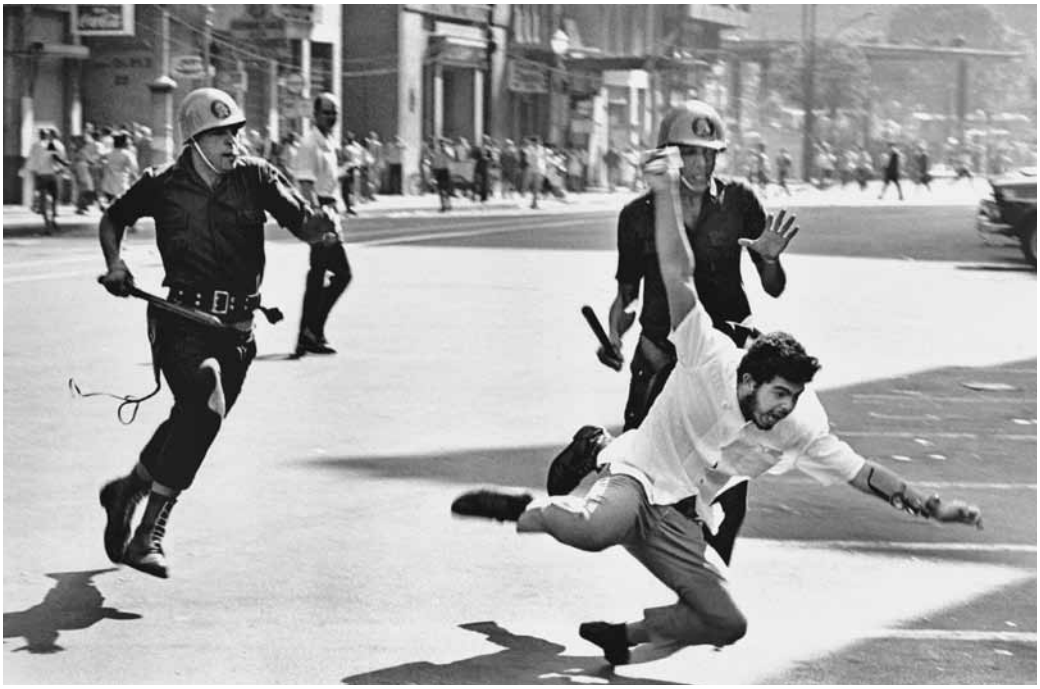
1 The photograph in question was first published in 1982 in the first of the six monographic books authored by Evandro Teixeira, entitled *Evandro Teixeira – Fotojornalismo* (Rio de Janeiro: Ed. Jb, 1982). Later, this photograph gave rise to a new project, for which Teixeira sought to locate sixty-eight of the protesters portrayed in that image. It resulted in the publication of the book *68: Destinos – Passeata dos cem mil* (Ed. Textual, 2008), which happened to coincide with the fortieth anniversary of the march.

2 The 1964 coup initially carried the promise of holding democratic elections in late 1965. However, the military junta that took power imposed a dictatorial regime, with the presidency of the Republic rotating among some of its own representatives.



Evandro Teixeira, *Queda e morte do Estudande de Medicina* (Fall and Death of the Medical Student)

parades,[3] partly because of the União Nacional dos Estudantes (UNE – National Union of Students) involvement, was occupied on 26 June 1968 by about one hundred thousand people in what would become the largest public demonstration against the regime, organized by the student movement to repudiate the government's abuse of power and use of force. Students, recent college graduates, professors, intellectuals, artists, members of the clergy, workers, civil servants, attorneys, political dissidents and others peacefully marched together that afternoon without a large police presence. Considering the potential of the population's political unity, the military government – which had declared itself in favour of democratic order – was alarmed by the size and organization of the authorized demonstration: it numbered twice as many participants as the largest demonstration up to that point, which had taken place less than a month before and had been violently subdued. Thus, Evandro Teixeira's photograph, shot for the following day's edition of the *Jornal do Brasil*,[4] was replaced by another image in which

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3 Partly owing to the involvement of the UNE and egged on by the samba schools' demands, the parade was held for the first time on Avenida Rio Branco in 1943; in the past it had been the exclusive redoubt of middle- and upper-class Carnival presentations. Fernandes Nelson da Nobrega, *Escolas de samba: sujeitos celebrantes e objetos celebrados*. Rio de Janeiro, 1928–49. Vol. 3, Secretaria das Culturas, 2001, p. 123.

4 At the time, the *Jornal do Brasil*, published in Rio de Janeiro, was one of the most important national newspapers. Its graphic reform, designed by Concrete artist Amilcar de Castro in 1957 and with the aim of, among other things, emphasizing the use of photography, was considered a milestone in Brazilian journalism.

the posters could hardly be read, and the promise of popular revolution that bloomed in the minds of the student movement suffered a setback. Nine days after the event, all street demonstrations were banned under penalty of total repression by federal troops, which made the staging of subsequent protests well-nigh impossible. At the same time, the press became much more tightly censored for having allegedly contributed to the escalation of the conflict as well as for the sudden shift in popular sympathy in favour of the students, thanks to what the regime perceived to be the excessive publicizing of the protests and, above all, the visibility offered by the photographs.

Indeed, in the context of the state of emergency in which written discourse was more heavily controlled, photojournalism indirectly played the fundamental role of visually expressing to a larger or smaller extent what had been distorted or silenced, whether by obstruction, decision or inability. Through the implicit criticism, embedded in a number of images, of government protocol, as well as by the traces of repressive policies revealed by the photographs taken during the student demonstrations, photojournalism established itself as a strategic cultural instrument with a wide reach and – in the sense that the photographs were the product of an author – a certain autonomy.[5]

Even though, because of its subtlety, the allegorical nature of such criticism may have escaped the perception of many – the military and a large number of readers among them – these photographs nevertheless created a certain feeling of estrangement and/or propagated a rather unflattering portrait of official power. On the one hand, a photographic image documenting the actions of coercive force vis-à-vis a public demonstration – as in the photograph of two truncheon-wielding military policemen chasing a stumbling young man trying to flee the action[6]– could be perceived in two ways: either the police were simply

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Although it made room for debate among artists and intellectuals, many of whom hailed from the left, its publishing company did not have the same political orientation – a scenario repeated among the vast majority of publications.

5 It is relevant to consider here the newspapers' increased appreciation of photography, and of the profession of the photographer, at this time, something that had already occurred in the magazine world during the 1940s and 1950s. Following in the footsteps of the *Jornal do Brasil*'s pioneering spirit, newspapers began, from the late 1950s on, to give more space to photography both on their front pages and inside; starting in 1962, they also began crediting the photographer. Maria Beatriz R. de V. Coelho, 'O campo da fotografia profissional no Brasil', *Varia História* 22/5 (Jan.–June 2006), pp. 79-99.

6 The picture described is by Evandro Teixeira, who recalls he was unable to take more than one photograph, as other military police officers immediately made towards him and forced him to flee. The photo was taken during what became known as 'Bloody Friday' (Sexta-feira Sangrenta), on 21 June 1968. Violently

reining in a subversive element, or a student was the victim of police brutality. On the other hand, taken together with so many others, this photograph also exposed the situation of abnormality and restlessness or, better still, the atmosphere of struggle that was taking over the city and the country – a situation that the government intended to cover up. More than ever before, photojournalism fulfilled the task of conveying the feeling of being witness to, as well as of having access to, the Real in a way that a text – even if free – could not.

Also, some photographs overtly assumed a stance of opposition to the government by imprinting the photographer's choice of a moment of manifest misconduct by the powers that be. More than simply operating as evidence, these photographs became a site of resistance, thus assuming responsibility for denouncing the increasingly despotic character of the system that had been put into place. This is the case, for example, in Teixeira's photograph, taken during the event that became known as 'Bloody Friday', of a slight young man surrounded by eight military police officers: grabbed by the collar of his coat, he is kicked in the stomach by one policeman while the others (that, at least, is what their body language seems to be suggesting) seem to be on the verge of doing the same. Such evidence of institutionalized violence and its disproportionate use against students and members of the general public in many successive demonstrations since 1965[7] became one channel – and one that was not without risk[8] – through which the photographer was able to report what was happening in certain public spaces in the light of day.

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kept at bay by military police, who even resorted to the use of firearms, students who had been protesting in front of the building of the Ministry of Education in central Rio de Janeiro unexpectedly received the support of onlookers, who joined the students' resistance to the police's harsh repression. In addition, employees and residents of buildings in the area also tried to stop the police action, throwing water, office supplies and all kinds of objects at them from the windows overlooking the avenue. Although most students fled when the police started to shoot, some bystanders and students continued to fight on until the evening. The conflict resulted in twenty-eight fatalities (among them a policeman who had been hit by an object hurled from a building), as well as hundreds of injuries.

7 **The first public demonstration against the regime took place in 1965 and was organized by right-wing sections of the student movement. Following the measures subsequently taken by the government and the violent repression of the student demonstrations, more and more protests broke out in 1966. From then on, the left wing of the student movement definitively assumed its leadership. Maria Ribeiro do Valle, *1968: O diálogo é a violência. Movimento estudantil e ditadura militar no Brasil*, Campinas: Ed. Unicamp, 1999.**

8 **Photojournalists caught in action were typically beaten and had their equipment destroyed. Albert Jacob, for example, another prominent photojournalist, who at the time also worked for the *Jornal do Brasil*, was allegedly hit by a sabre and had a number of ribs broken and his camera destroyed. Teixeira himself reported that**

Evandro Teixeira, *Passeata dos cem mil, 1968* (March of the One Hundred Thousand, 1968), 1968

And let us not forget the potential of such images to rouse the imagination as to what was going on in the regime's organs of control and security, particularly in an era marked by anti-communist paranoia and marred by countless arrests from which not all detainees were to return.

Teixeira and other fellow photojournalists portrayed the two sides of the confrontation between the police and the student movement in different episodes, thus obeying the principle of impartiality supposedly proper to journalistic conduct. However, in documenting the duality itself, the photographer was already revealing his alignment with the opposition, as the sheer fact of censorship implied the construction and reproduction of a biased reality in which such representations could have no place. Moreover, the commitment to the defence of freedom – whether of the individual or of the press – was reaffirmed at every instant in which the photojournalists decided to direct their cameras at situations in which the discrepancies between the actions of the aforementioned parties were plain to see,[9] in particular where this concerned the violation of civil and universal rights – a practice that was

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military police shot at him and another colleague from the newspaper during the aforementioned Bloody Friday.

9 During these clashes, the student movement made use of whatever its members could find along the way, such as stones and sticks, and tipped over and set fire to police cars. For its part, the military police repeatedly used firearms and began using sabres again, along with truncheons, tear gas and high-pressure water jets. Do Valle, *1968*.

Evandro Teixeira, *A queda do batedor da FAB, Rio de Janeiro* (Fall from the Motorcycle), 1965

eventually legitimized by the so-called Institutional Act No. 5 (AI-5),[10] on 13 December 1968.

Within the combative stance that many professionals adopted, the photographic act consolidated itself as an act of power, since it was the very 'coup'[11] that severed the Real from its continuum of reality which simultaneously transformed this Real into a potentially ideological image that was subject to the articulations of its author and the collective processes of production of information from which it originated. It is possible that many photographers were simply trying to do their jobs correctly, 'covering' the events to the fullest, looking for the 'good' picture and capturing something 'in the act' – a quality highly valued in the field[12] – all the while negotiating the various limitations imposed on them by the conflict situations they found themselves in (one of which

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10 The Fifth Institutional Act introduced by the military regime closed the National Congress and suspended constitutional rights, among other decrees, giving full power to the government. The AI-5 was in place for ten years, until the slow and gradual process of political reopening was initiated in 1978, finally ending the military era in 1985.

11 This is a term used by Philippe Dubois, who says that 'any photograph is a coup'. Philippe Dubois, *O ato fotográfico e outros ensaios*, 6th edn, Campinas: Papirus, 2003, p. 162.

12 At that time, many photojournalists traded their Rolleiflex cameras for Leicas, allowing for greater mobility, speed and discretion, which led to an increased value placed on so-called 'pristine' images. The notion of 'the decisive moment' as coined by Cartier-Bresson, as well as its aesthetic, was highly influential at the time, along with Eugene Smith's exploration of light contrast. At the same time,

was the necessity of (re)acting quickly). Nevertheless, even if not all of them fully understood their political role or appreciated the fact that their actions and choices responded to intuitive impulses or aesthetic and cultural demands, as well as to certain expectations concerning the image as a news product, by opting for one particular moment and not another, for one type of lens and not another, for one specific perspective and not another, and so on, the photographer was mobilized by inclinations and intentions that reflected his political self as well as his attitude towards things, his 'being-in-the-world' in Merleau-Ponty's sense of the term. Consciously or not, in its compulsive repetition[13] the coup struck by the photojournalist was itself an act of resistance and persistence endowed with the power to create images that refuted those desired by the State.

Today the iconography that took shape around the marches and street demonstrations all across Brazil and in Rio de Janeiro in particular is inseparable from the political and cultural history of the period. It is probably the most striking of all the photographic documentation of the time, not the least because, individually, some of these photographs represent true turning points in the history of Brazil. More importantly, this iconography by and large formed the prevailing image of the military regime, along with the standard repertory of protocol imagery, during the entire era of the dictatorship. As an interlocutor between the real and the referential, the actual and the potential, as well as between street and home, public and private, macro and micro, and so on, photojournalism, as a privileged cultural medium and product, may not have been able to reject completely the image regime longed for by the government – in which the latter fancied itself the saviour of democracy and the promoter of order and progress[14] – but it was at least able to

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the black-and-white Tri-X 400 ASA film, created by Kodak in 1954, provided greater latitude, favouring the use of ambient light found in different situations.

13 Dubois notes that 'the compulsion of repetition is something essential to the photographic act: one does not take one picture, except in frustration […]'. Dubois, *O ato fotográfico e outros ensaios*, p. 162.

14 The idea of economic growth served as justification for the continuation of the dictatorship and was energetically propagandized. However, the period of military rule in Brazil witnessed both what was called the 'Brazilian economic miracle' (occurring between 1968 and 1973) and a severe economic collapse that followed its slowdown at the end of the 'miracle' in 1974, culminating in a deep recession in the last period of military rule in the 1980s. Despite the complexity of the determinants of Brazil's economic situation during the dictatorship, it is important to note that, whether in times of crisis or economic development, the historical gap in income distribution only widened, with a substantial increase in the concentration of both income and poverty as a result. From 1980 onwards, following the process of political reopening, several reportage and photo documentary projects began to concentrate on poverty and other social

contribute to the construction of an eloquent alternative. Little remains that is memorable or representative of the regime's official photos, thus neither reinforcing nor worsening the image of brutality engendered by the violations of human rights that we have come to associate with the dictatorship. Exemplary here is the photograph passed out to the press by the military of the body of the journalist Vladimir Herzog, killed in 1975 while he was in DOI-CODI custody,[15] on the same day he had presented himself to the authorities, in response to a subpoena requiring clarification about his relationship with the Brazilian Communist Party.

Likewise, these news photographs helped establish the image of the student movement and the opposition it had set in motion. If, on the one hand, one might get the mistaken impression that popular support was firm and in unison, on the other hand, there is no doubting the activism of the student movement and its importance in the social mobilization against repression (despite internal infighting and differences).[16] Thus, the student movement could be seen as a kind of inverted mirror of the middle class – to which the vast majority of students belonged at the time, and to which apathy and/or conservatism are customarily attributed – and as a counter-image of the romantic, depoliticized youth of the 'iê-iê-iê'.[17]

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ills, subjects rarely shown before. Rodolfo Hoffmann, 'Distribuição de renda e crescimento econômico', *Estudos Avançados* 15/41 (Jan.–Apr. 2001), pp. 67-76; João Ildebrando Bocchi, 'Crise econômica e transição política no Brasil (1974/1984)', *I Encontro nacional de economia clássica e política*, 1996. www.sep.org.br/artigo/1_congresso_old/21x.pdf; Luiz Eduardo Soares, 'Uma interpretação do Brasil para contextualizar a violência', in Carlos Alberto Messeder Pereira, Elizabeth Rondelli, Karl Erik Scholhammer and Micael Herschmann (eds), *Linguagens da violência*, Rio de Janeiro: Rocco, 2000, pp. 23-46.

15 DOI-CODI is short for 'Information Operations Detachment – Centre for Internal Defence Operations'. According to the official version of the time, Herzog hanged himself with the belt of his prison uniform. This situation is depicted in the photograph mentioned above, which eventually challenged the veracity of the official claim by showing that there was not enough height for him to hang himself. In 1978, in an unprecedented action, the Federal Government was blamed for the death of the journalist and ordered to compensate his family.

16 A 1964 law known as the 'Suplicy Law', which had dissolved the UNE and all other student unions and replaced them by organizations directly linked to the Ministry of Education, only served to bring together student groups of different political orientations to fight against the regime.

17 This is a reference to the Brazilian version of international rock music, which, unlike tropicália and, to a lesser extent, bossa nova, did not venture into political commentary but rather concentrated on romantic themes. Also called the Young Guard (Jovem Guarda), the highly successful 'iê-iê-iê' was promoted on a Sunday television show in the second half of the 1960s, and was considered more than just a musical movement.

Evandro Teixeira, *Missa do estudante Edson Luís na Igreja da Candelária* (Mass for Edson Luís at Candelária), 1968

And yet, in addition to the daily photographs of the generals, this iconography offers in reverse an image of the activities of some photo-journalists from the era, especially those related to daily newspapers, such as Evandro Teixeira. Moreover, looking past their status as historical documents, we can better perceive the condition of emergency which the photograph both embodies and captures. These photographs are image-events, not only in their referential content, but also in phenomenological terms[18] – that is to say, in the very process of making the image's appearance possible in the trajectory of the photographer, his advances and setbacks, his preparations and negotiations before, during and after[19] the conflict. In the execution of each photographic act, the body of the photographer became subject to violence and experienced the temporal frenzy of streets in conflict, while imposing the dynamic of his own gestures and movements on it. One had to know when to stop photographing and start running, climb a wall, take shelter in a building, hide a roll of film or pass it on to others. One had to know how not to get caught. In terms of his relationship with space, with the

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18 For a consideration of the phenomenology of certain historical photos that should not be reduced to mere documents, see Georges Didi-Huberman, *Images malgré tout*, Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 2003.

19 For example, Evandro Teixeira recalls that he was once asked to explain the publication of a certain photograph to President Costa e Silva; he also remembers having to 'disappear' regularly, finding refuge in another city until things calmed down.

other, and with his own limitations, the photographer was both changing and being changed by what was happening around him without, perhaps, being able to foresee the significance that every event and every image of such an event would have for the country's history.

Much as the photojournalistic images of the Vietnam War brought awareness to the American public and thus led to increasing anti-war protest, the photojournalistic images of the public confrontation between the military regime and the student movement in Brazil alerted the population and could be said to have encouraged them to join the young people on the streets – which inevitably generated some impact on the unfolding events. Unfortunately, while for the former the consequences were on the whole positive, in the case of the latter the student demonstrations were rapidly crushed by the AI-5, leading many of the students and young intellectuals to go underground and initiate armed struggle.

It should be noted that, although the emerging iconography resulted from strategies of denunciation of the authoritarian forces, one cannot describe the mainstream media's attitude as oppositional – quite to the contrary, in fact. The refusal to be complicitous with the brutal abuse of power and the efforts to circumvent censorship were the result of individual actions and of the cooperation between professionals (photographers, reporters, editors and newsroom managers) who, committed to the defence of democracy, took their own initiatives to alert the public to what was happening outside. These attempts took place both within the country's major publications, where most of them worked, and in newly launched independent publications in various parts of the country that were manifestly opposed to the government. The alternative press[20] found its social moment in this period of the military dictatorship, helped along by the existing press corps' discontent and willingness to engage in comparable activities; the existence of an interested reading public, made up by a significant contingent of university students and alumni in the country;[21] and major technological advances, such as the

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20 The three main factors that led to the proliferation of independent media are noted by the journalist Flávio Aguiar. Aguiar adds that the democratization of the country, culminating in the 1988 Constitution, effectively ended such initiatives. Flávio Aguiar, 'Imprensa alternativa: opinião, movimento e em tempo', in Ana Luiza Martinsa and Tania Regina de Luca (eds), *História da imprensa no Brasil*, São Paulo: Ed. Contexto, 2008, pp. 233-47.

21 The first Brazilian university was officially founded in 1920, although it did not have the necessary credentials to be rated as such; however, it did enable the government to award a Doutor Honoris Causa degree to King Albert I of Belgium during his visit to the country. The first proper Brazilian university was founded only in 1934. Simon Schwartzman, 'A universidade primeira do Brasil: entre

spread of the offset press, which allowed for small, low-cost print runs. The proliferation of the independent press countered the trends holding sway in the traditional media, but the former's readership remained restricted to an audience already predisposed to an independent approach and modest in size compared to the general reading public.

The mainstream press – as a group of privately held, often family-owned news organizations with a wide circulation – not only supported the coup but also – with the exception of the newspaper *Correio da Manhã*[22] in Rio de Janeiro – behaved poorly[23] during the twenty-one years of military dictatorship. The *Correio da Manhã* supported the military coup of 1964, but, when presented with evidence of its authoritarian nature, almost immediately began to criticize it, making its position clear in the process. Closely linked to both major financial groups and the country's (rural and urban) oligarchy and aligned with a Cold War-era American ideology that was radically opposed to any affinity with leftist ideas, the mainstream media strongly supported the fall of the previous administration of President João Goulart, for whom agrarian reform had been a major goal and who had been caricatured as a communist. At the time, the military coup was supported by sectors of the middle class and even by the right wing of the student movement,[24] not to mention those in the Catholic Church who, echoing the media companies' criticism of Goulart, warned of the infiltration of government by communists. Over the course of the military regime, the almost unanimous stance of the mainstream media generally remained the same, expressing a certain polarization due to specific events such as the notorious episode of the murder of the student Edson Luís de Lima Souto by the military police during a protest for the improvement of his

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intelligentsia, padrão internacional e inclusão social', *Estudos Avançados* 20/56 (Jan.–Apr. 2006), pp. 161-89; Maria de Lourdes de A. Fávero, 'O título de doutor honoris causa ao rei dos belgas e a criação da URJ', http://www.sbhe.org.br/novo/congressos/cbhe1/anais/104_maria_lurdes_a.pdf.

22 The *Correio da Manhã* was a newspaper with nationwide circulation that was founded in 1901; it is generally considered one of the most important in the history of Brazil's national press.

23 This has been confirmed by different studies: Aguiar, 'Imprensa alternativa' and do Valle, *1968*; see also Arnaldo Branco's current research on the military dictatorship and censorship of the press.

24 Given the repressive nature of the government, sectors of the right-wing student movement soon moved over to the opposition, ushering in the public protests against the regime. Nevertheless, extreme right-wing students continued to support the government, for instance as protagonists in a violent clash in October 1968 on Rua Maria Antônia in São Paulo against leftist students who were trying to raise funds for a clandestine UNE congress.

university cafeteria[25] – the same event that triggered the series of public demonstrations in 1968. While some publications occasionally opposed the regime, others stuck to positions of support, privileging official discourse, justifying the government's actions and blaming the students as well as the 'subversive' left, and engaging in self-censorship when it came down to reporting facts that could compromise the government – in some cases, the newspapers even collaborated with the government, for example by loaning paper delivery trucks to those involved in repressive activities.[26]

Officially subject to censorship as of the issuing of the AI-2 directive in 1965, it was only as of the institution of AI-5 that some mainstream publications began to oppose the regime. At that moment, marking a new, even darker and more violent phase of the dictatorship which was widely seen as a 'coup within the coup', a new kind of censorship was initiated that imposed even more direct control over journalistic production, with censors occupying newsrooms and the imposition of vetoes on certain subjects as well as on the mention of certain names and terms such as 'torture'. However, criticism in the mainstream media remained discontinuous – a far cry from the systematic criticism in the alternative press, which was inevitably subject to tighter scrutiny still.[27] In addition to the arrests of journalists and eventually also publishers, the dictatorship even sought to restrain advertisers from working with those publications that opposed the government, which is how it ended up shuttering the *Correio da Manhã* and putting another Rio de Janeiro newspaper, the *Última Hora* (a large-circulation alternative paper founded in 1951 that had always supported Goulart and opposed the coup), up for sale.

As with any document, visual or written, of a historic period, and in particular of a moment of conflict and censorship, it is never possible to express with complete accuracy all of the complexities and all of the actions and potentialities[28] that constitute the past. The impossibility of

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25 A number of student protests were aimed more specifically at university reform, while simultaneously criticizing the authoritarian stance of the government.

26 These events have been confirmed by Arnaldo Branco, who is currently conducting extensive research into the military dictatorship and its censorship of the press.

27 The alternative newspapers were forced to send their stories to the federal police in the capital, Brasilia, from which they were sent back cut. Sometimes, only 'remnants' of the original were retained, and new editorial solutions were required. The *Movimento* newspaper in São Paulo, for example, made use of black bars to indicate censored portions of texts. Aguiar, 'Imprensa alternativa'.

28 Paul Ricœur, 'L'Imagination dans le discours et dans l'action', in *Du texte à l'action*, Paris: Le Seuil, 1986, pp. 213-36.

such a complete representation that would transcend different points of view lies in the lack of (authentic) images and narratives of what is relegated to the past. In situations of censorship, such a lack may become a meaningful void. The very inaccessibility of 'hidden' events and of confiscated, destroyed, lost and restricted documents on the one hand, and the dissemination of false information and propagandist manipulations on the other, generate an even greater hiatus in which disinformation strategies can be deployed, and through which reality becomes isolated from language on the one hand, and overwhelmed by it on the other. A large number of news photographs taken during the period of the military dictatorship have never been published or exhibited – rolls of film were confiscated and/or damaged, newsrooms were destroyed, entire files were lost. Meanwhile, the official records has not yet been declassified, nor can we assume that their content has been kept intact. While the ideological propaganda of the military dictatorship has been demystified (although some traces persist), much of the misleading information provided by the military concerning the fate of the dead and the missing, as well as certain political alliances and articulations, have not yet been clarified. And even if the files were soon to be opened (something that is currently being discussed), it would be naive to presume that one day we will be given a fully unobscured view of the organization's backstage workings. What remains unexplained or without confirmation in such a context winds up haunting the history that spawned it, in the end becoming part of that history itself. Moreover, this void, as a site of potentiality, as an extension of history that awaits its writing, invites continuous conjecture and the tentative revival of latent truths. This, in turn, again impacts on history – a history which can thereby be given even greater breadth and weight.

Regardless of what will for ever remain unknown, and even if we take into account that what is available from the news photographs of the time cannot signify everything, many of the violent actions of the military dictatorship have definitively been imprinted in these images – and thus, too, in our collective memory. Neither isolated nor subjugated by the photographic language, the violence of the actions is signified through the very urgency of its representation – both indexically and phenomenologically – making it a document of denunciation as well as an event of resistance on the part both of the student movement and of the authors of these images. Inserted into a dynamic economy of circulation – largely driven by the efforts of Teixeira himself, who authored most of the best-known images, as well as by the recognition that his oeuvre has received – the aforementioned images encourage a periodic exercise in remembering, an *exercice de mémoire*. Such actualizations of history allow the ongoing rescaling of the relationship between the

image, the void and both past and present. Photojournalism not only performed the role of reporting current events; today, it also offers us a living, moving archive as well as a large range of latent images, some of which may still emerge, much as Teixeira's photograph of the March of the One Hundred Thousand did back in 1982.

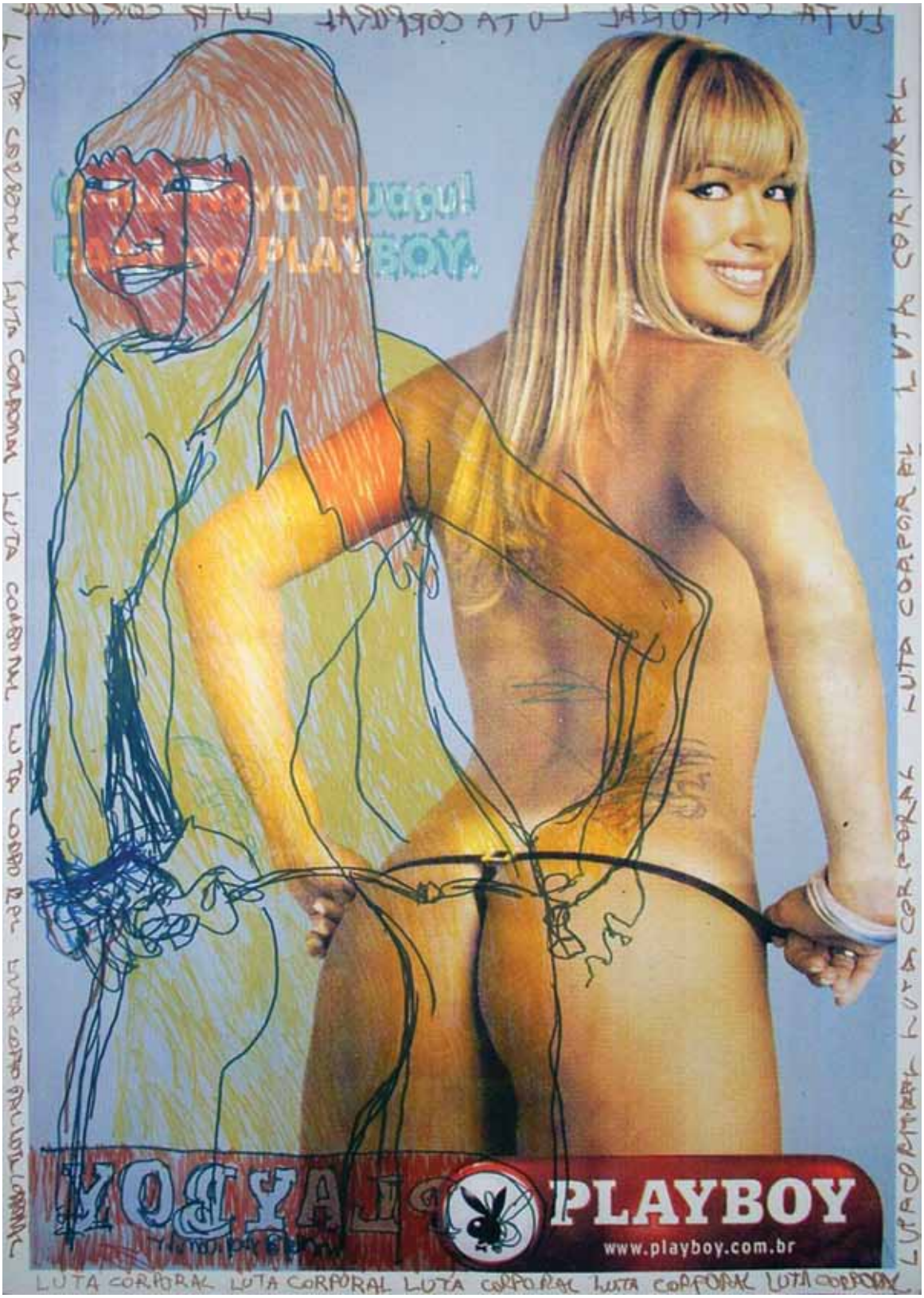
Daniella Géo is a Ph.D. candidate at the Université de la Sorbonne Nouvelle/ Paris III, and holds a Master's Degree from the same institution. She has contributed to a number of publications, including the *American Encyclopedia of Twentieth-Century Photography* (Routledge, 2005), curated various exhibitions, among them the 5e Biennale internationale de la Photographie et des Arts visuels de Liège (co-curator, 2006), and is an A.P.T. Intelligence curatorial advisor. She was born in Rio de Janeiro and is currently based in Antwerp, Belgium.

An overview of artists and artworks in the exhibition

9 ARTISTS. ARTWORKS. PARTICIPANTS. POSITIONS

Alexandre Vogler (b. 1973) is part of a generation of carioca artists whose artistic trajectory is clearly shaped by the gradual dissolution of the boundaries between high and low art in the realm of cultural production, and by the defining experience of the emergence of 'street art' (*affichage*, graffiti, etc.) in this regard in particular. Early on, Vogler's own street-art-inflected practice brought him in contact with Guga Ferraz, with whom he founded the collective Atrocidades Maravilhosas ('Marvellous Cruelties'), an allusion to Rio's tourist moniker as the *cidade maravilhosa* and the reality of quotidian bloodshed it often obscures. In one of his most widely commented upon projects, *Fani Dark* (2007), Vogler appropriated a much-publicized poster of Brazilian *Playboy* model Fani, cataloguing the typical, irreverent 'street' responses to an image of a scantily clad pin-up – a work that inevitably landed the artist in the kind of legal trouble that only served to attract yet more attention to the project in question. For *A Rua*, Vogler has conceived a site-specific piece of 'street' art – a drawing, similar in spirit to the inscriptions archived in the *Fani Dark* project, executed in freshly poured concrete outside the museum.

Alexandre Vogler, *Fani (Canibal)*, 2007; *Fani (Infernal)*, 2007; *Fani (Pileggi)*, 2007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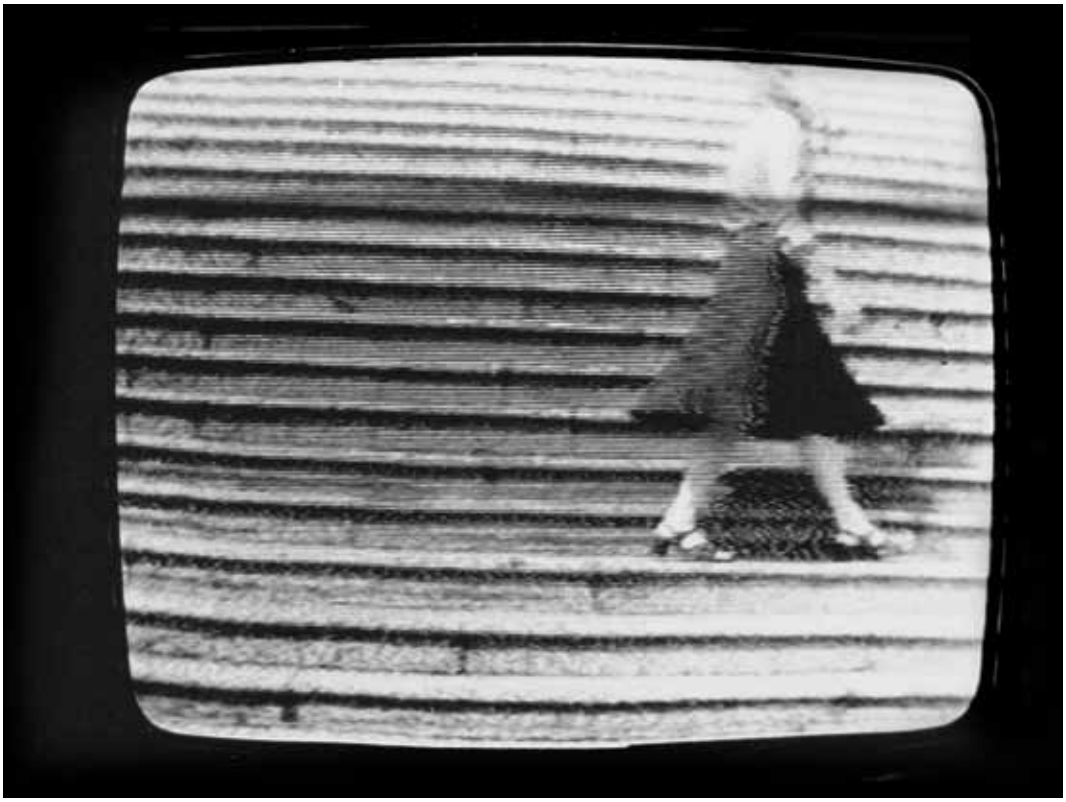
Anna Bella Geiger (b. 1933) is a pioneer in the field of video art, both within Brazil and outside. Frequent trips to (and prolonged stays in) New York in the mid-1970s facilitated her introduction to the youthful medium at a time when that city's thriving downtown scene effectively emerged as video's ground zero – and women artists in particular, for reasons that have been analysed elsewhere, played a crucial part in this revolution. One important series of works made during this period dealt with the act of 'passing through' and passageways – temporary occupations of, or interventions in, a public space that was clearly feeling the consequences of its economic abandonment in the wake of the global crises of the early-to-mid 1970s (primarily economic in New York, compounded by political factors in Brazil). *Passagens* (Passages; 1974) depicts Geiger climbing both the staircase of a house (inside) and the empty stairs of an official-looking building (outside) – menial, repetitive tasks echoing the rites of passage many women artists had to submit themselves to in order to be accepted as artists, a process for which video became a privileged medium indeed.

Anna Bella Geiger, *Passagens I* (still), 1974

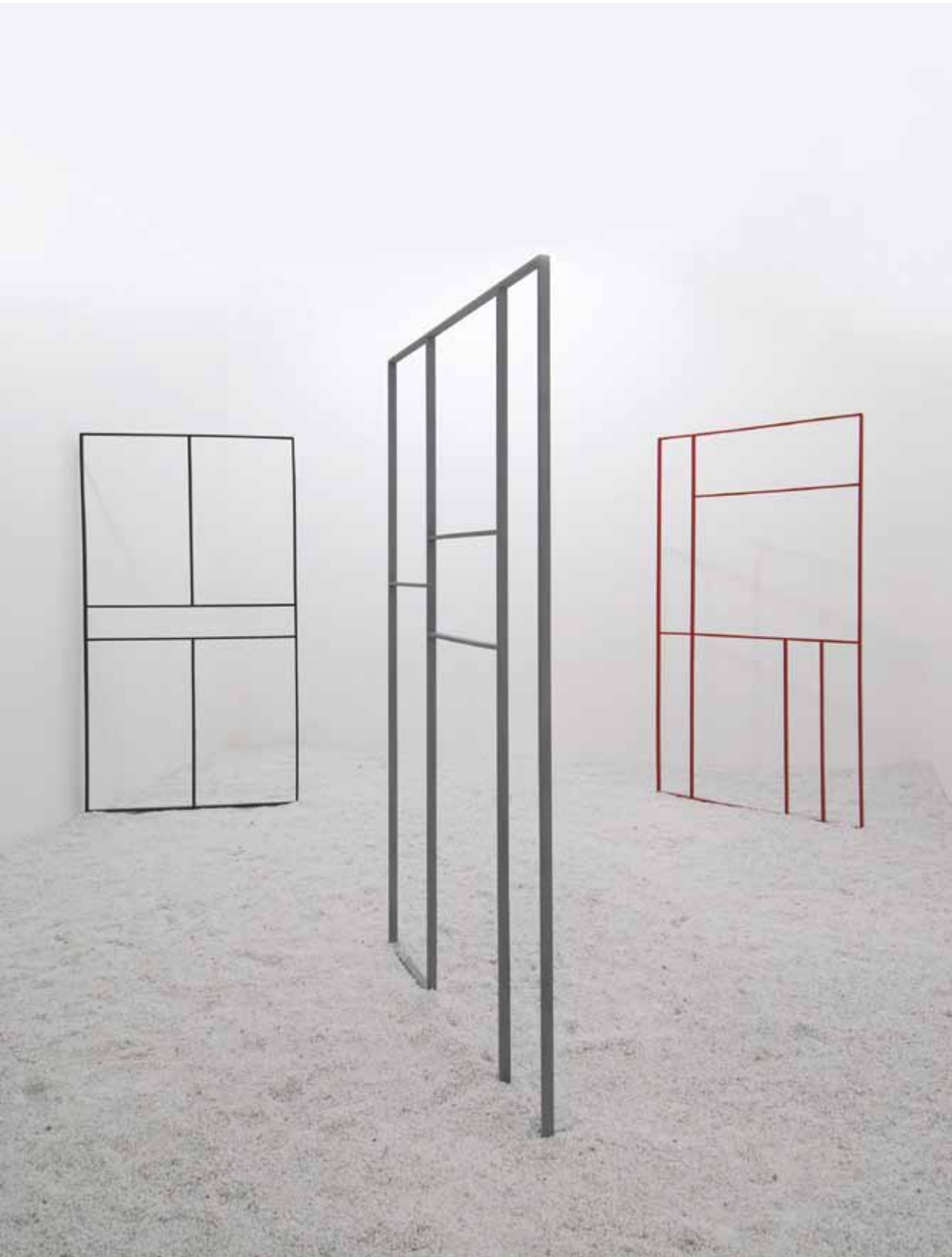


Like that of a growing number of her contemporaries, the work of Italian-born Anna Maria Maiolino (b. 1942) has been the subject, recently, of revived critical and curatorial interest, culminating, for the time being, in a major retrospective exhibition held at the Fundació Antonio Tàpies in Barcelona in 2011. Working in a variety of media ranging from performance and film to photography and installation, her art often conflates poetic form with political content; a neologism coined to describe some of her pieces hints at this poetic sensibility: *fotopoemação*, a hybrid of photography, poem and action. One such action poetically rendered in a photograph is the subject of Maiolino's iconic, oft-reproduced *Entrevidas* (Between Lives) from 1981, a triptych depicting the bare soles of a woman's feet while she is cautiously crossing a stretch of pavement on which hundreds of pale white eggs have been strewn – the embryonic 'lives' referred to in the title. One commentator has noted how 'this work is so densely tactile that you can feel the papery skin of her soles and the grit of the brick paving' – a reading which realigns the work with the hallowed tradition of Brazil's sensuous conceptualism.

Anna Maria Maiolino, *Entrevidas (Between Lives)*, 1981

Portuguese-born Antonio Manuel (b. 1948) is a member of the generation of artists habitually associated with the golden age of Brazilian conceptual art, and his exhibition record is a testament to the intensity of the artistic dialogue in which his work participated alongside that of Artur Barrio, Lygia Clark, Cildo Meireles, Hélio Oiticica and Tunga (to name but the usual suspects). In *O corpo é a obra* (The Body is the Work), a notorious early performance staged at the Rio de Janeiro Museum of Modern Art in 1970, for instance, Manuel appeared stripped naked, presenting his body as one of many artworks on view in this hallowed space of art – naturally, this being Brazil during the darker days of the junta, this was not something the institution's authorities were ready to condone. Soon after, Manuel embarked on an exploration of the concept of 'publicity' (i.e. publicness) that would eventually secure his status as a highly original artist, concentrating on the virtual space of Brazil's newspapers in particular to find a new site for art production and (as one work has it, twenty-four-hour) exhibiting. Manuel's major installation *Frutos de espaço* (Fruits of Space, 1980/2007), on view in *A Rua*, is the most spectacular articulation of this singular interest: the nine painted steel structures that divide the space are in fact based on the layout of a newspaper.

Antonio Manuel, *Frutos de Espaço*, 1980-2007



Arthur Omar (b. 1948) is one of Brazil's leading film artists, moving deftly between the not-so-polar opposites of a more or less conventional approach to documentary and feature film-making on the one hand and radically experimental exercises in moving-image art on the other. The work on view in the exhibition, titled *Massaker!*, was shot in 1997, when Michael Jackson toured Brazil and, during his stopover in Rio de Janeiro, decided to pay a visit to one of the city's countless hillside *favelas*. Omar decided to follow Jackson's voluminous entourage while it slowly made its way up the hill, adding a soundtrack of his own to the record of this improbable procession that includes the rattling of machine guns and other sonic suggestions of the violence that is part of the *favela*'s everyday life (the Rio of the 1990s was a much more violent place than today's Rio). *Massaker!* is screened on the top floor of the museum, thus replicating the original experience of Jackson's ascent; it is indeed a unique feature of Rio's urban condition that some of the city's most prized land (certainly that with the best views of the city) is home to some of its poorest, most vulnerable inhabitants.

Due to legal reasons, it was not possible to depict stills from Arthur Omar's* Massaker *in which Michael Jackson makes an appearance.

The work of Portuguese-born Artur Barrio (b. 1945) occupies a central position in the early stirrings, in the Brazil of the late 1960s and early 1970s, of a radically broadened conception of art in which the street appeared as a primary site of formal experimentation, and some of Barrio's best-known works – also on view, this year, in his solo presentation at the Brazilian pavilion during the Venice Biennial – remain the so-called *situações* ('situations') staged or enacted in the streets of various parts of Rio de Janeiro and/or its suburban environs. One of the most poignant, politically charged examples of these early 'actions' is the enigmatically titled *Situação T/T 1* from 1970, documented on 16-mm film, for which Barrio left an amorphous

Artur Barrio, *Situação…Defl…+S+…Ruas……Abril (1970)*, 1970

blood-stained lump of cloth lying around the bank of a river, much to the distress of the passers-by as well as of the uniformed authorities, whom Barrio was clearly taking aim at through the creation of such jarring situations – this was the era, after all, of politically motivated 'disappearances' of certain dissident elements in the population. In his later work, Barrio moved away from such explicitly political content, but the spirit of site-specificity has remained integral to his work, which continues to be made with poor, often organic, decomposing material – as can be seen in the work he has conceived especially for *A Rua*.

Another key figure, along with the likes of Artur Barrio and Anna Maria Maiolino, in the development of conceptual and post-conceptual art in Latin America, Cildo Meireles (b. 1948) is one of Brazil's most highly regarded and widely exhibited artists, whose work has been the subject of major retrospective exhibitions in leading institutions in North America and Europe. Like many of his contemporaries, Meireles came of age in the politically charged era of the military dictatorship, whose tightening grip on public life accelerated the politicization of many active in the field of cultural production – a process that inevitably led many to consider not just how to make political art, but also how to make art politically. It is against this backdrop that Meireles' well-

Cildo Meireles, *Inserções em circuitos ideológicos: 1. Projeto "Coca-Cola"*, 1970

known *Inserções em circuitos ideológicos* (“insertions into ideological circuits”, 1970) must be viewed: images and/or messages printed on such widely circulating objects as coca-cola bottles and bank notes – an unusual medium explored to greater effect still in the infamous *Zero Dolar* and *Zero Cruzeiro* pieces from the inflation-ravaged second half of the seventies.

Cildo Meireles, *Zero Dollar*, 1978

Ernesto Neto (b. 1964), a founding member of A Gentil Carioca (literally, 'The Friendly Carioca') , has long been a household name in the global contemporary art scene, and his instantly recognizable immersive installations have been on view in major art museums and biennials the world over. In many of these large-scale environments Neto, a sculptor through and through, seeks to address the question of coming together – a processual conception of the encounter between self and other, art and life, studio and street, in which all borders must by their very definition remain porous and flexible, transparent and sensually charged. In the work that was especially conceived for *A Rua*, Neto singles out one of Rio's enduring Dionysian myths as his working material, namely the city's world-famous carnival. The title of the work *Saturday, Sunday, Monday* refers to the three days in spring when most of the images on view in this video installation, housed in a tent-like structure, were made – a chronicle of the artist's passage through a city caught in the grip of one of the world's greatest parties. A panoramic view of carioca street life at its most frenzied then, compressed inside one of the artist's signature improvisatory structures, in which the temporary architecture of the stalls of Rio's street vendors can be seen to reverberate.

Ernesto Neto, *Saturday, Sunday, Monday (stills)*, 2011







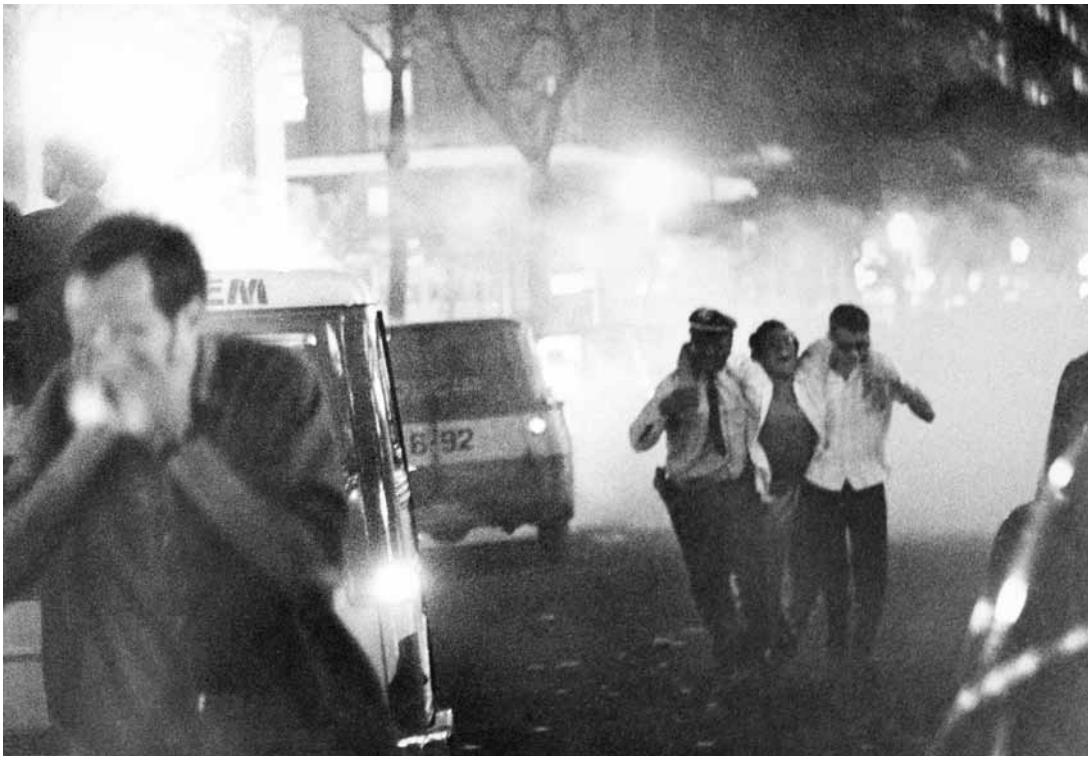







Hurley

Evandro Teixeira (b. 1935) is one of the pioneers of post-war Brazilian photojournalism. Born in the state of Bahia, Teixeira moved to Rio de Janeiro, then still the capital of Brazil, in his early twenties and started working as an apprentice at the influential daily *Diário da Noite*, where he graduated from wedding photography to reporting major geopolitical events. Shortly after, his work started appearing in *Jornal do Brasil*, one of Brazil's oldest and most widely read newspapers, and a dependable platform for opposition voices during the military dictatorship. It is for the pages of this newspaper that Teixeira shot some of his best-known, most enduring and widely exhibited photographs, now on view in *A Rua*: images of the violently suppressed street protests that rocked Rio de Janeiro in the *annus mirabilis* of global popular revolt, 1968. The story of these photographs and the charged milieu in which they emerged is the subject of an essay by Daniella Geo published elsewhere in this book.



Evandro Teixeira, Sexta-feira Sangrenta na cidade (Bloody Friday in the City), 1968

Gabriel & Tiago Primo (b. 1988 and 1982) are two artist brothers who are today best known for the project they developed for the exterior wall of A Gentil Carioca in downtown Rio, titled *À parede* (To the Wall). Whether the title of the work should be read as homage (*dedicated* to the wall of Rua Gonçalves Ledo 17) or as a mere matter-of-fact-styled stating of the piece's physical reality (*attached* to the wall of Rua Gonçalves Ledo 17) is up to us to decide: the video documentation of the work shows both brothers scaling the aforementioned wall, where, for a couple of weeks in the late summer of 2009, they actually lived (ate, slept) and worked, spending their time lying in hammocks or sitting on chairs behind desks that had been ingenuously attached to the blind wall of A Gentil Carioca. Having been asked what had bothered them most in this experimental take on street living, the brothers are said to have answered: 'drunks keeping us awake at night trying to tell us the stories of their lives – and the rain'. The video documentation of their performance that is on view in *A Rua* is set to a blistering hardcore punk soundtrack, adding yet another 'street' edge to the event.

Gabriel & Thiago Primo, *A Parede*, 2009

Born in a bustling Rio suburb named Tijuca in 1976, Guga Ferraz is a prominent member of an emerging generation of artists whose interest in street life and street culture has been shaped definitively by the 1990s boom of 'street' arts such as graffiti and *affichage*, and some of Ferraz's best-known works tap into the situationist spirit of this art of urban interventions, often commenting on the latent violence of Brazilian street life: the black-and-white *Galdino* posters depicting an Amazonian Indian chieftain; traffic signs to which flame-like red stickers have been glued, turning a banal carioca *ônibus* into a witness to civil war; a street map of Rio pockmarked by the same red flames, titled *Roma di Nero* (i.e. the Rome of the Emperor Nero). The work with which Ferraz will be most strongly associated for some time to come, however, is a more benign affair, and was conceived specifically for the blind wall of the A Gentil Carioca art space in downtown Rio: the *Cidade Dormitório* (Dormitory City), a huge, eight-tiered bunk bed that was actually used for sleeping by some of the neighbourhood's homeless people when it was installed there in the spring of 2007. This 'sculpture' has now been brought to Antwerp to be installed outside the museum, inevitably rendered dysfunctional by Belgium's decidedly untropical climate.

Guga Ferraz, *Galdino*, 2008

Guga Ferraz, *Cidade Dormitório*, 2007

Taken together, as is so often the case, Hélio Oiticica (1937–80), Lygia Clark and Lygia Pape constitute something like a Holy Trinity of Brazilian conceptual art, Oiticica's stature in particular enhanced by the protean qualities of his tragically short life. As the influential maker of the iconic, widely exhibited *parangolés* (wearable artworks resembling capes; the Portuguese word *parangolé* is slang for a sudden outburst of confusion or excitement) and a master of fleeting gestures and luminous touches, Oiticica is perhaps less commonly remembered today for his lifelong interest in architecture, and in the improvisational 'an-architecture' of the *favelas* – where Oiticica went to live in the second half of the 1960s, becoming a celebrated samba dancer in the process – in particular. The work on view in *A Rua*, *Nas quebradas* (one of his so-called *penetrables*, dating from the late 1970s, and a work only rarely seen outside Brazil), clearly attests to the programmatic nature of this interest, centring upon the bodily experience of a porous, organically built environment – not essentially different, then, than that of the body imagined in his *parangolés*, 'use' objects much like his later sculptural environments.

Hélio Oiticica, *Nas quebradas*, 1979

Ivens Machado (b. 1942) is primarily known for his work in sculpture, the best-known example of which is a public sculpture resembling a triumphal arch erected at the intersection of Rua Urugaiana, one of downtown Rio's main shopping arteries, and Largo de Carioca, the centre's busiest and biggest plaza. Executed in colourless concrete, the arch echoes the artist's long-standing interest in the use of either 'poor' or brute materials, some natural, some man-made (glass, stone, wood), as well as in an iconography that focuses on images of violence, power and control; in another well-known piece, Machado poured a blob of concrete in the shape of his home country and spiked it with shards of glass. A lesser-known aspect of Machado's practice is his work in film and video, the first explorations of which date back to the mid-1970s. One of his most important early works in the medium (or rather, a 2007 remake of a 1979 original now for ever lost) is on view in this exhibition, recording the 30-minute trip aboard the ferry that connects Rio de Janeiro with Niteroi on the other side of Guanabara Bay – a major artery no longer used as intensively as thirty years ago, as a 13-kilometre bridge now serves to guide most traffic across the bay.

Ivens Machado, *Sem titulo*, 1997

Ivens Machado, *Ida e Volta numa Barca Rio-Niterói*, 1976/2008

Joana Traub Csekö (b. 1978) is one of the youngest participants in *A Rua*. Interestingly, however – and perhaps this shouldn't come as much of a surprise, given the heightened historical awareness that has become the hallmark of so much of her contemporaries' work – her concerns are often historical in nature, and some of her photographs thereby assume an elegiac, melancholy tone. Befitting the investigative slant of her photo-projects, many of Csekö's works are conceived in a serial or sequential manner, and this is also true of the photo suites included in *A Rua*. In the black-and-white *Pedras Portuguesas* (Portuguese Cobblestones; 2005), she takes a close look at the Portuguese mosaics that are such a common feature of Rio de Janeiro's streetscape, tracing their gradual corruption over time as they are worn out, destroyed and restored again, mostly with little regard for their original design. In *Rodas da Carioca* (Circles of Carioca, 2005), Csekö records the organically accruing and dissolving shapes of crowds of onlookers passing through Largo da Carioca, downtown Rio's busiest square – a work that brings to mind Lygia Pape's *Espaços Imantados* (Magnetized Spaces) of the late 1960s.

Joana Traub Csekö, *Pedras Portuguesas*, 2005








Jorge Mario Jáuregui (b. 1948) was born in Argentina but relocated to Brazil in the late 1970s, where he quickly established himself as a key participant in the debate that, years later, would pave the way for the *Favela Bairro* project, a massive government-funded urban development scheme that sought to turn the blighted *favelas* of Rio de Janeiro (and elsewhere) into fully functioning *bairros*. In the case of long-suffering neighbourhoods like Manguinhos and Complexo do Alemão, this has resulted in the design and construction of community centres, libraries and new traffic arteries such as a cable railway in the case of Complexo do Alemão, a formerly inaccessible *favela* perched on a hilltop in the Zona Norte, and a pedestrian walkway, or *rambla*, underneath an elevated train line in Manguinhos – the ambitious, large-scale redevelopment project that is being presented in *A Rua*. Not surprisingly, Jáuregui's acute awareness of the *favelas*' own aesthetic, as well as of its desire for a beauty or aesthetic of its own, has led to the formulation of an architectural program that has attracted the attention of powerful segments of the global art world: his work has been included in *Documenta 12* as well as, more recently, a survey exhibition of socially engaged architecture organized at MoMA in New York.

Jorge Mario Jáuregui, *Rambla Manguinhos (Complexo de Manguinhos)*, under construction

The early work of Laura Lima (b. 1971), who is a founding member of A Gentil Carioca along with Marcio Botner and Ernesto Neto, is clearly rooted in an artistic tradition of performance and 'body' art that reaches back to the experiments with touch and tactility initiated by Lygia Clark and Hélio Oiticica in the late 1960s and early 1970s – a tradition which Lima succeeded in updating and making her own by adding the qualitative twist of gender. In her more recent work, Lima has moved away from this thoroughly mapped, crowded terrain and turned to a type of installation art that weds her interest in the static, two-dimensional nature of painting (see her well-known 'mask' paintings) to an ongoing involvement with the dynamic, three-dimensional reality of both sculpture and performance or theatre. *Pássaros* (Birds, 2008) is one of Lima's largest such installations to date: a cluster of some 70 single paintings of birds suspended in space at various angles to resemble a cloud of feathered animals circling above our heads. The reference to Alfred Hitchcock's classic film *The Birds* may be obvious, but the aviary mass can also be looked upon more benevolently, as a colourful feature of urban life in a city only too aware of the precarious cultural–natural balance to which it owes its existence.

Laura Lima, *Pássaros*, 2008

Lucia Laguna (b. 1941) is a unique personality in an artistic landscape blessed with a prodigious helping of unique personalities, and in her case quite a bit of what is singular in her work and working method derives from the place she calls home: Mangueira, one of Rio's most venerated popular neighbourhoods in the Zona Norte, a huge part of the city almost unfailingly overlooked by visitors because of its poverty, its apparently unplanned character, and its reputation for crime – indeed, Mangueira is home to some of the city's oldest *favelas* and, as such, is often considered to be the birthplace of the proletarian art form known as samba, Rio's great gift to music. Laguna's paintings can be divided into two different categories, the very boundaries of which are, of course, continually challenged by the paintings themselves: the landscape or exterior view (as seen from her studio window) on the one hand, and the still life or interior view on the other. One way in which these boundaries are blurred (and abstraction subsequently emerges) involves Laguna's occasional scavenging trips into the surrounding streets, from which she often brings back small quantities of (paper) waste which she then arranges on the studio floor as inspiration for her still lifes.

Lucia Laguna, *Paisagem n°48*, 2011

Lucia Laguna, *Paisagem n°35*, 2011

As is the case with the oeuvre of her contemporary Hélio Oiticica, it can occasionally seem as if the groundbreaking work of Lygia Clark (1920–88) casts too long a shadow over Brazilian contemporary art for both its own and the latter's good; Clark's exploration of the tactile, performative register of conceptual art in particular has proven mightily influential. 'Relational' long before this quality was canonized as an 'aesthetic', Clark's practice leaned heavily on collaboration and cooperation, often involving her students in the process, as was the case with the *Cabeça coletiva* (Collective Head) from 1975, originally a tiered wooden structure to which all kinds of objects were attached and that was then taken outside, where it was paraded around as a hat of sorts by the students, who would encourage passers-by to interact with the work (for example, by taking objects and adding others in return). Like the famous *Divisor* of her namesake Lygia Pape, the work's realization required some coordination, and has since been re-realized on a number of occasions, proving that the established avant-garde myth of the auratic 'original' was quick to give way (for a number of interlinked reasons) to a more sophisticated, contemporary notion of 'use' in the Brazilian art scene of the 1960s and 1970s.

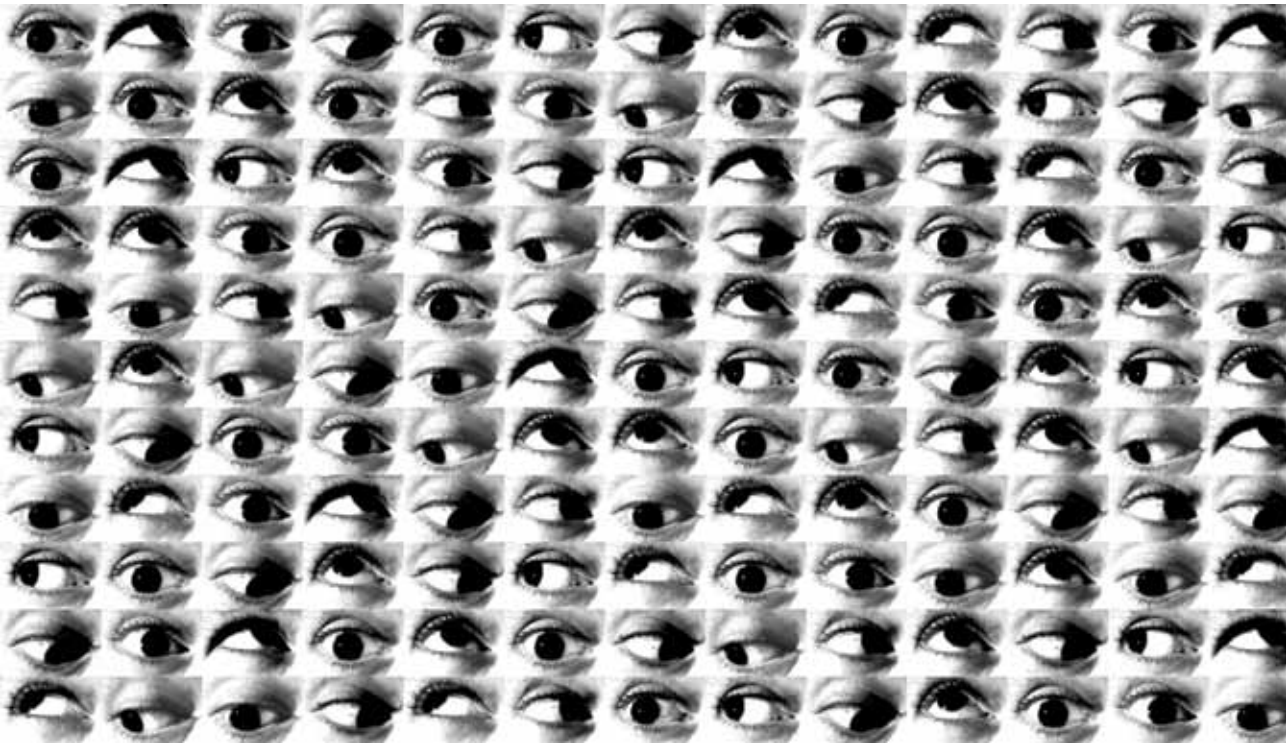
Lygia Clark, *Cabeça Coletiva*, 1975

Although Lygia Pape (1927–2004) was a major figure in Brazilian art for much of her fifty-year career, it is only more recently (to be more precise, alas: since her death only a few years ago) that her work has garnered the international recognition it so obviously deserves – a process crowned, at the time of writing, by major retrospective exhibitions at the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía in Madrid and the Serpentine Gallery in London. Some of Pape's best-known works, such as the *Divisor*, have become manifesto-like icons of an art movement intent on exploring the aesthetic, creative potential of social interactions in public spaces. In another series of works from the late 1960s, *Espaços Imantados* (Magnetized Spaces), Pape's lifelong interest in architecture (innovatively, she took her architecture students on tours of the *favelas*) can be seen to filter through her photographic observations of crowd behaviour. A large-scale installation of more recent vintage, *DNA* (2003), is now on view in *A Rua*: an imaginary landscape made up of 60 enamelled white bowls filled with coloured water on little islands of rice and black beans – the aesthetic of the everyday in its purest, soulful form.

Lygia Pape, *DNA*, 2007

Marcio Botner (b. 1970) is a founding member, along with his contemporaries Laura Lima and Ernesto Neto, of the artist-run-space-turned-private-gallery A Gentil Carioca, located in the heart of Rio's Saara district, home to a bustling street market that is one of the downtown area's main popular attractions. In fact, it would hardly be an exaggeration to state that the founding and ongoing success of A Gentil Carioca has been an important factor in the cultural revitalization of this once-edgy (and still very colourful) *bairro*. One of A Gentil Carioca's signature curatorial statements is their exhibition program of works created specifically for the blind exterior wall of the nineteenth-century house that has been the gallery's home for eight years now, and it is the work created by Botner (in collaboration with Pedro Agilson) in response to this very public context that is being shown in *A Rua*: the artist's blinking eye (the artist's own body often features prominently in Botner's work), shown on a monitor lodged inside a hole in the wall, overlooking the streets of Rio.

Marcio Botner in collaboration with Pedro Agilson, *Parede Cega (Blind Wall)*, 2006



The videos and video installations of Maurício Dias & Walter Riedweg (b. 1964 and 1955) have been widely exhibited internationally, and their *Funk Staden* (2007) – a work based on an early European account of life among the indigenous peoples of Brazil, made in collaboration with the *baile funk*-loving youths of a *favela* in Rio de Janeiro – in particular was one of the highlights of the last Documenta. One of the defining features of much of their work is its heightened awareness of the medium-specific conditions of its own production – an investment in the notion of the 'apparatus' that is often critically charged. In their twelve-part installation *Malas para Marcel* (Suitcases for Marcel; 2007), for instance, twelve short video films are shown on little monitors tucked away inside twelve small suitcases, each film depicting the odyssey-like route taken by its respective suitcase through the streets of Rio de Janeiro. Tipping its hat to Marcel Duchamp's famous *Boîte-en-valise*, the work resembles both a calendar and a diaristic account of the 'social life of objects'. The situationist spirit of the suitcases' seemingly aimless drifting through Rio's urban jungle inevitably brings to mind the writings of João do Rio, a key reference in another work by Dias & Riedweg, in the early stages of development at the time of writing.

Maurício Diaz & Walter Riedweg, *Malas Para Marcel* (stills), 2006

Although Spanish-born photographer and film-maker Miguel Rio Branco (b. 1946) has been a Magnum correspondent for more than thirty years, his visual style is fiercely personal and far removed from the reigning standards of official photojournalism; Rio Branco's signature use of colour, in particular, sets his work apart from much of that of his colleagues in both the film and photography world. Dramatic colour contrasts and chiaroscuro often serve to highlight the unsettling, carnal rawness of the (street) life he has chosen to portray since venturing into the impoverished (but, crucially, no less lively) *bairros* of many of Brazil's big cities since the late 1970s, as can be witnessed in the justly celebrated *Nada levarei quando morrer, Aqueles que me devem cobrarei no Inferno* (which may be translated as 'I'll take nothing with me when I die, and those who owe me I'll charge in Hell') from 1981, an alternately lyrical and brutal film essay 'documenting' life among the drug dealers, pimps, prostitutes and stray dogs in the crumbling Pelourinho neighbourhood of Salvador, Bahia. Rio Branco's well-known photographic sequence of two young boys engaged in a capoeira routine, titled *Blue Tango*, has been chosen as the campaign image for *A Rua* – street life at its most energetic and energizing.

Miguel Rio Branco, *Nada levarei quando morrer, Aqueles que me devem cobrarei no Inferno*, 1980

Much like the work of her colleague and peer Rosana Palazyan, Paula Trope's forays into photography tend to zoom in on one emblematic subject in particular: the legions of impoverished kids who call Rio's numerous *favelas* home and who are an unmistakable, unmissable part of Rio's often-times riotous street life. Born in Rio de Janeiro in 1962, Trope certainly takes great pains to make these children the *subjects* of her projects rather than mere *objects*, turning projects that appear to operate within the confines of relational aesthetics and comparable participatory art projects into true feats of social ethics. *A Rua* brings together a number of works from Trope's *Os Meninos* (*The Boys*, 1993/1994) project: large-scale photographic portraits of street children that are accompanied by photographs taken by the same children using a pinhole camera; the resulting diptychs or triptychs are truly collaborative works. In another project on view in the exhibition, *Sem simpatia* (*No Jive*, 2004/2005), the viewer catches a glimpse of an urban planning project photographed by Trope in collaboration with the creators of the *Morrinho* project in a *favela* called Morro do Pereirão (with the youngsters sharing in the proceeds of the work's eventual sale). Some of us may be familiar with the *Morrinho* project as one of the standout public artworks at the Venice Biennial in 2007, and Trope's photographic account of it certainly offers the viewer a privileged look into what Paola Berenstein Jacques has called the 'aesthetics of the *favela*'.

Paula Trope, with the collaboration of Muller. *Muller, aos 8 anos, guardador de carros* [*Muller, 8 years old, car keeper*]. *Ipanema*, *Rio de Janeiro*, 1993 Diptych. From the series *Os Meninos* [*The Boys*], 1993/1994


VINDO

An accomplished writer as well as educator and organizer, Ricardo Basbaum (b. 1961) is an artist whose complex and multifaceted work has come to be identified over the years with two intertwined projects: *New Bases for Personality* (or *NBP*) on the one hand, and *Would You Like to Participate in an Artistic Experience?* on the other, with the latter becoming especially well known internationally through its inclusion in *Documenta 12* in 2007 (closer to home, the project was also on view at a Brazil-themed exhibition at the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen in Rotterdam). The central element in this project is a mid-sized steel object that is circulated among people who 'want to be part of an artistic experience', and whose handling of the object in question is documented in an ever-growing archive of materially based interactions. The object's stark, sterile anti-aesthetic complicates the project's inevitable alignment with a tradition of sensuousness and tactility in Brazilian art that goes back to Hélio Oiticica's *parangolés* and Lygia Clark's masks, and Basbaum's interest in the ambiguous veneer of objectivity that typifies the very idea of a 'social science' is further highlighted in his extensive use of diagrams and statistics.

Ricardo Basbaum, *Would You Like to Participate in an Artistic Experience?*, work in progress since 1994

Bridging the generational gap between artists such as Anna Maria Maiolino and Artur Barrio on the one hand, and Alexandre Vogler and Guga Ferraz on the other, Ronald Duarte (b. 1962) has played a key role in the preservation of carioca art's critical attachment to the idea of the street (*rua*) as a quintessentially public space of artistic creation and aesthetic experience. One of Duarte's best-known works, *Nimbo Oxalá*, will be performed at the opening of the exhibition in Antwerp, and the documentation of this performance will then be on view in *A Rua*; it involves a minimum of twelve performers, standing in a circle facing each other, each armed with a fire extinguisher which they empty out in well-choreographed unison, producing a huge white cloud of (non-toxic) smoke in the process. Duarte is a seasoned aficionado of *candomblé*, a syncretic amalgamation of Afro-Brazilian religious practices that has strong roots in the State of Salvador in particular, and *Nimbo Oxalá* partly echoes the established *candomblé* ritual of purification by fire – a kind of inaugural rite performed as a ceremonial blessing of sorts, so that the spirits look benevolently upon *A Rua*.

Ronald Duarte, *Nimbo Oxalá*, 2004








In many of her works, which involve a wide range of media, Rosana Palazyan (b. 1963) explores the margins of society – that is to say, that which (or, more importantly still, those who) society has decided to single out as its margins (or "marginals"). In an impressive installation titled *The Garden of Weeds* that was on view at the Casa França Brasil in Rio de Janeiro in 2010, the spectral figure of society's undesirable other was imagined as an armada of *weeds*: "lesser" plants that are considered a nuisance by those who have the power to do so.The fate of these and other pariahs has long preocuppied Palazyan. … *Uma história que você nunca mais esqueceu?* (A story that you never forgot?) from 2001 is a series of seven drawings based on the 'unforgettable' stories told to the artist by teenagers who were at the time held in one of Rio's many correctional facilities, the titles of which recount the basic premise of the stories in question; one example is a title that has been translated as follows: 'I would kill my father, so he had to leave home. I don't regret it. I'd lay down my life for my mother.' The work is accompanied by a small pillow installed in the middle of the exhibition space on which one of these terrible scenes ('when I was a kid my father used to beat my mother up') has been given delicate sculptural form.

"…on that day I thought to stop, but I can't, my bit is smoking grass and trademark clothes…"

"… my friend died in my place… In this life it's just me and myself alone. You don't need to be a mugger or anything - if you hang out with me, you're dead…"

"… I would kill my father, so he had to leave home. I don't regret it. I'd lay down my life for my mother…"

"… I was eleven, when they killed my mom, so I got into this crooked life…"

Rosana Palazyan, Drawings from the series *…uma história que você nunca mais esqueceu?*, 2000-2001

Simone Michelin (b. 1956) is one of the leading lights of Brazil's thriving media arts scene, and her explorations of the multisensorial reality of aesthetic experience are perfectly suited to express the many ambiguities and complexities of contemporary life in the tropical metropolis. Michelin's emblematic *O espírito do Rio* (The Spirit of Rio; 2007) was clearly conceived as an ode to the indomitable spirit of her hometown, all the while steering clear of the reductive logic of the mere document: the video's four chapters appear only tangentially related, strengthening the suggestion that we are witnessing someone's *dream* of a city rather than city life itself. The video opens with scenes of a masked ball, originally shot in Rio's famous art academy in the Parque Lage in 2004 (the occasion in fact being a performance by Laura Lima); another chapter is set in the historic hillside district of Santa Teresa, where many artists continue to live; tellingly, *O espírito do Rio* concludes with footage shot during the 2007 Carnival, when the parades were asked to respond to the year's chosen theme of 'the future' – making Michelin's record of the event seem all the more archaeological in retrospect. The resulting fractured panorama of the city at play reveals the spirit of Rio as essentially hallucinatory.

Simone Michelin, *The Spirit of Rio* (stills), 2007

Waltercio Caldas (b. 1946) is an artist known primarily for his work in sculpture, the defining features of which are the use of certain signature materials on the one hand (wire, marble, glass, chromed steel – characterizable as elegant, precious, 'rich'), and a peerless mastery of the art form's medium-specific language on the other (balance and gravity; opacity v. transparency; lightness of touch v. the weight of historical reference). In recent years, Caldas has increasingly turned towards an examination of the history of art in which Velázquez's paradigmatic *Las Meninas* in particular has assumed a central role. The book and the arts of the book constitute an important platform for these investigations, and it is only fitting that Caldas should have been involved in a recent publishing venture centred upon the literary legacy of João do Rio, the early twentieth century's premier chronicler of carioca street life. Caldas has produced four collages to act as illustrations for a volume of João do Rio's selected writings titled *A alma encantadora das ruas* (The Enchanting Soul of the Streets), from which the long prose piece titled 'A Rua', reproduced elsewhere in this book, is taken. These collages, truly signature Caldas sculptures in paper – complete with a fine interplay between the two dimensions of the printed page and the three dimensions of sculptural space – are on view in *A Rua*.

Waltercio Caldas, from *A alma encantadora das ruas*, 2010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A note on typography

All titles in this book are set in a font based on the work of the legendary carioca street artist José Datrino, better known under his alias Profeta Gentileza (1917–1996). From the 1980s onwards, he began to adorn various pillars and walls around Rio de Janeiro with spiritual mottoes, musings and slogans, the best known of which is "Gentileza Gera Gentileza" ("kindness breeds kindness"), which over the years has become one of the city's informal adages, reproduced on t-shirts, tote bags and bumper stickers alike. Today, most of Gentileza's writings are concentrated in the traffic-clogged area around Rodoviária Novo Rio, close to the old harbour. The Gentileza typeface was digitized by Jirka De Preter & Dick Pape

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Miguel Rio Branco, *Blue Tango* (1984)

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Richard Venlet, *Rio de Janeiro: Sambadromo*, 2010