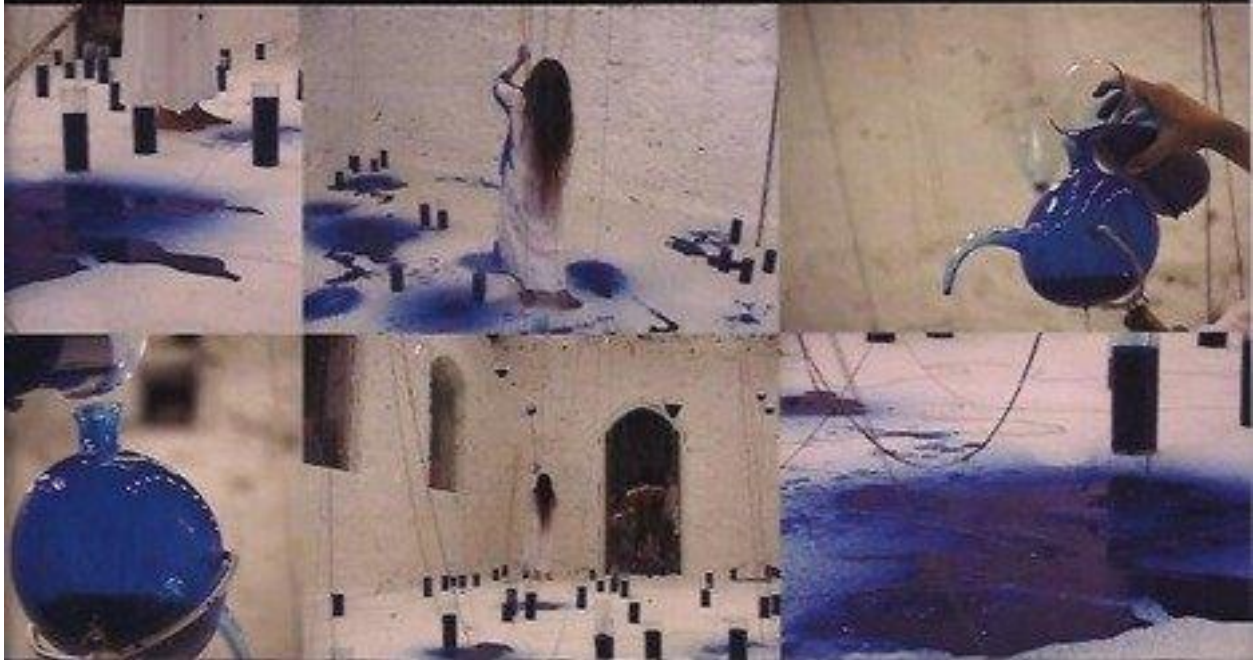


# ART IN BRAZIL

1950 - 2011



**habit[A]ction=*abyme***

Sonia Salcedo

The module 'Construction and Deconstruction of Brazilian Art' investigates those artistic segments that exploded at the beginning of the 1990s, in which space is a nucleus of processes and the notion of place is a boundary between the real and the imaginary. It is a reflection on recent national artistic production in dialogue with the 'historic process', or history in process, of Brazilian art.

Its organising principle is the idea of the 'dislimits' between art and living space – space should be understood here as mental/imaginary, material/constructed and virtual/deconstructed and/or dematerialised. A selection that potentiates this concept unites poetics in miscegenation, a characteristic of recent artistic production in the face of the realities of the contemporary world, and defines an exhibition design of diffuse directions and axes around three nuclei: pictorial, projectional and technological.

Devoid of chronological linearity, this module shows works rooted in Brazil's extensive territory, not as a national artistic panorama, but as the stage for an art that is naturally contemporary; privileging dialogue among various languages and spatial ideas, it takes up an aesthetic reflection: the concept of space in the contemporary world. Myriad artists have their production wrapped up in this issue. Many will be cited. But, between essence and existence, the question remains: what might the ideal curatorship be?

Here, through exemplary works involving pictorial space – touching on the graphic, the sculptural, the objectual, the installational, the interventionist, the restorative, the performative, the technological – the curatorial decision entails poetic and conceptual reciprocities with neighbouring curatorships, notably The Constructivist Will and the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s.

While modernity conquered a new space through objectuality, post-modernity will make that space inseparable from time. Subsequent to its perception, art

gradually came to incorporate the temporality of its experimentation. And not only that. In addition to subject and space being inseparable, the limits between subject and object also became indistinguishable, and did so in response to the plurality of codes recreated by the artistic experimentalism of the 1970s, exacerbating honest Duchampian re-readings that were, at the time, almost two decades old.

After the resurgence of painting, the so-called pictorial 'swan song', a near-unison poetics of the 1980s generation, a sort of *déjà-vu* 'pluralist-avant-garde' took over art starting in the 1990s, directing it to take on a fourth *imaginal* dimensionality.<sup>1</sup> That strategy of submitting oneself to what is exterior and of contaminating that exteriority in a strategy of aesthetic construction and deconstruction, a characteristic of the propositions of the 1960s and 1970s, reappeared on the eve of the twenty-first century.

Up to now, the adoption of procedures that level historic configuration – legacy of the end of 'isms' – confers such layers of ambivalence on artistic production as: visible and intelligible, eternal and ephemeral, image and form, scene and visuals, experience and consciousness. By these means, the questioning spurs on our expositive arguments.

Why is art today so interested in exploring architecture? Is it a metaphor for the current world? How do we think about architecture in the face of the absence of the limits that define contemporary culture while transgressing the idea of space (physicality, thought, body)? Belonging to the realm of habitation, although not all constructions are habitable, what distinguishes architecture and art in this 'dwelling ... of mortals on the earth'??<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> P. Vauday, *La peinture et l'image: y a-t-il une peinture sans image?* Paris: Pleins Veux, 2002.

<sup>2</sup> M. Heidegger, 'Building, Dwelling, Thinking.' In *Poetry, Language, Thought*, Albert Hofstadter trans. New York: Harper & Row, 1971, p. 146.

If the world is in permanent movement, we can understand art as something that accompanies these kinetics, as an operation related to life and, therefore, to culture. In the Brazilian case, this issue implies an aesthetic distinctively its own: being process/living space> culture> politics> history.

It seems obvious to say that current art drinks at the spring of our multiculturalism. Despite distances having become smaller because of globalisation and poetic crossings being real, Brazilian artistic production possesses – still – a variety of accents.

Returning to the São Paulo of the 1920s, we come across the desire to build a Brazilian cultural identity. At that time, it was about a collective action to propel forwards a national will to free our culture from European legacies – a historical fact that signalled the cusp of an art in response to recently acquired cultural self-esteem. Thus a new discourse emerged and with it a new palette, a new space ...

In the Old World, modernism was based on questioning the methods characteristic of specific disciplines in the effort to generate a project for a common dwelling, one desirous of universality. In Brazil, conversely, the modern project yearned to understand the regional specificities of a country with continental dimensions, one that was, as such, the possessor of geographical diversities – climate, race, language, and so on. In the consciousness of this multiplicity of our living space is reflected – still today – a processual art (understood here as such).

This conclusion – taken as the inheritance of our belated modernism, and made possible thanks to the historical distancing of nearly a century – expands our understanding of our miscegenated poetics, until now yoked to the experimentalism of Brazil's constructivist avant-gardes.

Nevertheless, multiculturalism reflects the idea of the work of art as a social interstice – the theoretical horizon of human interaction and its respective social contexts, tied to the rise of a worldwide urban culture and its cultural

applicability. The same spirit that animates the cities in its changing dynamics surrounds domestic and artistic objects. That is, there is a reciprocity between art object and city context. If, for the latter, there is a duration to be experienced, the same holds true for art. The latter was always relational,<sup>3</sup> always foundational of discussions. Even now, when it is analogous to lucky encounters, politics is the same way, problematising the sphere of relationships.

On the relationship between this mix of cultures and contemporary art, it is worth reiterating that the diversity of languages and origins, reunited in the group collected in this module, restates the idea of poetic interlinkages through various accents.

That is an important feature of this expository module, given that its approach tries to present the most recent Brazilian visual thinking, which has been absolved for a long time from explicit themes or commitments to a certain cultural subservience arising from political and social realities. Therefore, the interest of its scope, converging on ideas of the dislimits between art and living space, merely reduces the image of Brazilian production to origins in its territory that are more internationally disseminated, such as those of its main urban centres. The aim here is to show Brazilian artistic accents not as tropical exoticness charged with colonial flavour, but as the convergence of a miscegenated poetics.

Many of our artistic tendencies, contrary to the idea of globalisation that propels the contemporary world, feed off regionalist roots. Although, thus nourished, they align themselves with the thrust for universality common to this century, the new tendencies respond to a cosmopolitan decentralisation.

If until the middle of the last century Brazilian art was forged thanks to the cultural effervescence of urban centres, as was the example of the Rio – São Paulo corridor, at the turn of this millennium many other Brazilian cities – such as those

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<sup>3</sup> N. Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*. S. Pleasance and F. Woods, with M. Copeland, trans. Dijon: Les Presses du réel, [2004] c. 2002.

represented here by their artists – gave rise to nuclei of contemporary production that were structured by regional accents.

This raises some questions: what are the references of Brazilian art, both currently and generally? What guides its alignment with international production?

Brazilian artistic maturity, in its current expression, carries in itself something distinct from that order that belongs to it as its geography: a creative drive in the midst of cultural freshness – a fact that establishes a two-way path with the entire system of art ... it is not by the force of chance that we are here.

The kind of enthusiasm that moves us gives us a double desire for poetic confrontation: the political and the philosophical.

David Cury's explorations with painting – he pulverises it, according to a logic of distension, into an explosion of small adhesive points on the wall – extend themselves into plastic, aesthetical and even political space, as for example when he relates the massacre in Corumbiara to the one in Columbine.<sup>4</sup> Analogously, Ricardo Aleixo picks up the idea of expansion through painting via a performative body notation that expands the chromatic issues stemming from written and spoken pictorial images, and thereby addresses both the visual and the racial order.

The collision of art with the world operates, then, transversally. Whether through the restorative poetry<sup>5</sup> of Gê Orthof, who deals with life and memory – passing through installational pictorialism; or of Elizabeth Jobim, who stretches the plane

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<sup>4</sup> *Corumbiara não é Columbine (Corumbiara is not Columbine)*, an intervention by David Cury, critically ties the execution of an unknown number of landless workers by gunmen and military officials contracted by farmers in Corumbiara, in the state of Rondônia, in 1995, with the assassination of thirteen students and professors by two upper-middle-class adolescents in Columbine, in the state of Colorado, in 1999.

<sup>5</sup> See L. Lagnado, 'A instauração: um conceito entre instalação e performance'. In R. Basbaum, ed. *Arte contemporânea brasileira: texturas, dicções, ficções, extratégias*. Rio de Janeiro: Rios Ambiciosos, 2001, pp. 371-6.

of reflection of her canvases to the order of architecture; or of Zalinda Cartaxo, who appropriates architectonic space as the medium of her painting; or of Henrique Oliveira, who constructs an exacerbating mass of real architectural scale until he arrives at the technological virtuality of digital space; or of Luiz Duva, in which images captured through the precariousness of portable slides reach the sensorial sphere; or of Anaisa Franco, who by means of sophisticated robotic technology burns in the field of animation – through all of these, we confirm the artistic search for living space. Not forgetting Eduardo Kac, whose experiments deal with the area of genetics.

The dissolution of borders between aesthetic categories is not an urgent issue today. It speaks to history, especially to the avant-gardes of the beginning of the twentieth century and, later, to the artistic experimentation of the 1960s and 1970s, which moved freely among and across categories in its effort to expand the poetic field. If, in the past, art had been moved by a socio-political context that propelled it towards actions transgressive of every sort of order – of its condition as a marketable commodity, for example – the issues that motivate art today appear more focused on aspects related to living space, understood more as a philosophical than as an strictly transgressive space.

Yes: what place is this?

Throughout the 1990s, art showed greater interest in the spectators and, in so doing, directed itself to a new relationship with space,<sup>6</sup> sensually flirting with it.

In Brazil, neoconcretism, by breaking away from the frame and the base and launching painting and sculpture into space, gave rise to the idea of the dislimit:<sup>7</sup> the realisation of the work started to happen outside the conventional parameters

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<sup>6</sup> J. Schulz-Dornburg, *Arte y arquitectura: nuevas afinidades (Art and Architecture: New Affinities)*. Barcelona: Gustavo Gili, 2000.

<sup>7</sup> F. Gullar, 'Theory of the Non-object,' reprinted in this volume, pp. XX–xx. See p. XX for what Gullar calls the *necessidade de deslimite*, which A. J. Shellhorse renders as 'the necessity of undoing-limits'.

of art and, thus, started to be created as an integral and fundamental part of space. The same is true for the spectators: by means of their (inter)action, they became indistinguishable from that work-space. It was only a short time later, however, that these same spectators became a kind of link for what, these days, is understood as instauration.<sup>8</sup>

It is worth noting that minimalist experiments operated similarly, opening the field of reflection to other fronts, much as *arte povera* was doing at more or less the same time. It is curious to note that a certain verve for universality is revealed as a *Leitmotiv* of the art in separate hemispheres. It seems legitimate that its origin should reside in constructivism, as the womb of the modern project.

It may be observed, however, that while international modernism sought to be the project for a rational life, one striving for progress and order, it is safe to say that, in Brazil, the Bauhaus Utopia seems to have found fertile ground under the sign of a, shall we say, opposite rationality, so that its unfolding, as a process, took place in the midst of cultural disorder. Contrary to the negative predictions about this Brazilian reality of continental scope, the freshness of our culture favoured the blooming of a creative vitality that bequeathed to our history a hybrid art, for which architecture is an important reference to contemporary experience. Not just that. Our geographical and environmental diversities also laid the foundation for the gestation and construction of a Brazilian artistic vision.

It's not by chance that, from the desire for construction to that for deconstruction, arises a sophisticated and riveting production, possessing the much sought after universality of art, as exemplified by Volpi, Weissmann, Goeldi, Guignard, Iberê and Sérgio Camargo, da Costa, Amilcar ... as well as by Cordeiro, Clark, Oiticica, Cildo, Waltercio, Tunga ... and also by Iole, Felix, Resende, Neto, Damasceno ...

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<sup>8</sup> Lagnado, 'A instauração,' p. 371-76.

Brazilian aesthetic experiments are notorious for their interest in research of a special kind – a fact amply exemplified in the production of the artists just mentioned. This fact not only informs the curatorial selection for this exhibition, it also seems to delineate those reflections that seek to understand that art in the light of today's world. A world *en abyme*!<sup>9</sup> Bigger and smaller. Fast ...

It's true that, together with the speed of new technologies, the sense of time tends to disappear and with it the traditional notion of place, making the social order synonymous with lack of contact. This type of abyss seems to suggest digital culture as an alternative to interpersonal intimacy or proximity. Might we be facing a new avant-garde code? And would this one be capable of transforming the world, as the avant-gardes of the past had wanted to do?

The idea of abyss engages a reflection about our contemporary *being-in-the-world*. That is our question!

These days, distances are narrowing and the expansion of knowledge is a fact in sync with the digital technologies replacing analogical ones. Could such a logic lead to overcoming the concept of place as an experience? And, at the same time, could it have consequences for the understanding of space? How are we to understand the anxiety for the monumental that continues to besiege art, cajoling it to overcome limits?

The fluidity of spaces these days takes us back to rapid circulation and impersonal dislocations – places in which one cannot distinguish identity, relationships or history. Worlds of an individuality that is solitary, passing, provisional, ephemeral ... non-places, characteristic of supermodernity.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> A reservation is made here regarding the use of the expression *en abyme*. In Derrida, for example, it indicates an indeterminateness that localises a work inscribed in a *future* that offers infinite readings. Its reflection (historically, even) is, consequently, aporetic.

<sup>10</sup> M. Augé, *Non-places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*. J. Howe, trans. London and New York: Verso, 1995.

Such reflections on places touch on the issue of space specifically. Space is 'practiced place':<sup>11</sup> people turn space into place. Similarly, passers-by transform geographically defined streets (urban space) into places. In sum, while place is the organisation of elements, space is the animation of places.

The movement converges for the coexistence of worlds. Modernity, especially Baudelaire's, is proof of that. Dislocations of vision, image play and cuts in consciousness were modern forms of solitude. Today, it is in the anonymity of non-place that one experiences the communion of human destinies. To escape the oppression of place seems like liberty. However, in reality it is an 'experience – without real historical precedent – of solitary individuality combined with non-human mediation ... between the individual and the public authority,'<sup>12</sup> thanks to its relationship with space, image, consumption ...

The proliferation of non-places, the experience of which is significant in their 'power of attraction, inversely proportional to territorial attraction, to the gravitational pull of place and tradition',<sup>13</sup> is taken as a symptom of so-called supermodernity: a phenomenon notably sensitive to the acceleration of history and the reduction of the planet.

In today's world, places and spaces mix and interpenetrate, just like places and non-places – which repel and attract each other, as do transit and domicile, word and image, communion and solitude .... They are, then, dislimits, which fleetingly express (de)territorialisations in space – as slits, crevices, openings. Between

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<sup>11</sup> M. de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*. S. Rendall, trans. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002, p. 117.

<sup>12</sup> Augé, *Non-places*, pp. 117–18.

<sup>13</sup> Augé, *Non-places*, 118.

places... abysses... innocuous spaces? No! As *punctum*:<sup>14</sup> it is a place of power where everything, subsequent to the dimensional, converges.

Contemporary abysses are mirrored in an art produced in (by means of and thanks to) a world in pieces.<sup>15</sup> There is a *Leitmotiv* for this expository module, which seeks to investigate various forms of miscegenation – regional, poetic, and so on – through those segments manifest in today’s artistic production: pictorial, procedural and technological.

Painting is ground zero in this investigation/reinvention owing to the fact that its nature is space. During the Renaissance, space is taken as projective/representation; later, with romanticism, it is taken as pictorial/representational reality; further on, in modernity, it is seen as a space of reflection/experimentation; and, finally, currently, as a poetic distension around reality. A fragmented reality, in which the idea of the abyss is analogous to pictorial poetics, in its sense of passage<sup>16</sup> – as in the contemporary world composed of multiple layers or plateaus, or of between-images that emerge from the void only to return to it.

In spite of the line of time – characteristic of the plot – interconnections of planes and intervals are, consequently, established as space. A space that is plane and project, image and process, continent and content, habit, habitation, distended action – that is, here, a construction in abyss, a concept established with contemporaneity.

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<sup>14</sup> See R. Barthes, *Camera Lucida*. R. Howard, trans. New York: Hill and Wang, 1981.

<sup>15</sup> See V. Burgin, ‘The City in Pieces’. In *In/different Spaces: Place and Memory in Visual Culture*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996, pp. 139–58.

<sup>16</sup> N. B. Peixoto, ‘Passagens da imagem: pintura, fotografia, cinema, arquitetura’. In A. Parente, ed. *Imagem máquina: a era das tecnologias virtuais*. Rio de Janeiro: Editora 34, 1993, pp. 237–52.

Heidegger claims that we build as we dwell.<sup>17</sup> Dwelling (being and existing on the earth) is something that comes from the daily experience of humans. According to Burgin, 'the body contains the very generating principle of the building'.<sup>18</sup> The body is not only contained in the building. The building is already contained in the body. Proof of this, according to the author, are the designs of anthropomorphic cities from the Renaissance.

The permeability between body and space is comparable to the modern dialectic between interior and exterior, as exemplified by the glass boxes of Mies Van de Rohe, which also, in relation to living space, determine the multiple directions and diffuse axes of circulation and spatial experimentation of his architecture.

The architecture of Affonso Reidy is a paradigm of the issue in the field of Brazilian art. The glass box of the Rio de Janeiro Museum of Modern Art (MAM–RJ) suggests and stimulates a sensual experience in space, a fact corroborated in the artistic training of a generation of the Brazilian avant-garde, as was that of neoconcretism. But first, this spatial relationship, in the Heideggerian sense, laid the foundation for the geometric abstract thought of pioneering artists, cited earlier, formatting the visual aspect of the modern scene of our art.

This brings up the concept of process in art, a concept intrinsic to the aesthetic experiments of the 1960s and 1970s. It is by means of that concept that one can speak about the relationship between art and living space through the transgression of the conventional, whether public or private.

From there, a reflection on places in art deepens: the concept of traditional *site-specific* art, which considers the physical dimensions of place; oriented *site-specific* art, which considers the cultural coordinates of place; and, further, functional *site-*

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. Heidegger, 'Building, Dwelling, Thinking.'

<sup>18</sup> Burgin, 'The City in Pieces'. In *In/different Spaces*, p. 141.

*specific* art, which is dematerialised and itinerant. We can think about installations, interventions, but also about performances, actions, happenings, and even about postcard or video art.

These days, such experiments unfold in instauration: a concept that presents the world without representing, pastiching or glamorising it, but one that expresses (more than ever) temporality directly: 'intensify duration only while it lasts'.<sup>19</sup> Examples of this may be found in the sonorous art of Romano or Chelipa Ferro. It is work that deals with immateriality and, therefore, makes one see another particularity of the idea of the abyss, through intervals, in-between-spaces, akin in their way to non-spaces relative to the mental/imaginary of the enjoying subject.

Within this ambit, however, forms are built with reference to the technological segment, such as the videos and animations of Anaisa Franco or Luiz Duva, Sonia Andrade, Mariana Manhães and Milton Marques ...

Technoscience is capable of conciliating subject, work, reality and art by joining the physical and mental participation of the spectator. Rather than being a support, technology is a medium capable of making feasible the consciousness of *being-in-the-world*.

If we bear this definition in mind, we understand the importance of Abraham Palatinik in regard to the approach to this module: Palatinik takes on the most traditional medium in the history of art, painting, and substitutes glazes for kinetic and luminous energy, thereby becoming one of the 'pioneers of direct light as a visual medium of expression'.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Lagnado, 'A instauração,' 376.

<sup>20</sup> M. Pedrosa, cited in F. Cocchiarale, 'Notas sobre a exposição: A forma e a imagem técnicas na arte do Rio de Janeiro: 1950-1975'. In F. Cocchiarale *et al.*, eds. *A Forma e imagem técnicas na arte do Rio de Janeiro, 1950-1975*. São Paulo: Paço das Artes, 2002, p. 17.

Nonetheless, other media seem to want to effect the joint activation of mental and virtual spaces, in as much as they bring a relative lyricism to the poetic space between the lines. It is worth remembering that this is a fact yearned for by the exhibition design of the collection in this module as a whole.

These ideas, related to the notion of dislimits, are inherent to the relationship between art and living space, today as well as in the recent past, that the segments brought together for this exhibition wants to present.

But why segments? Are there categories, *still*? How are we to uncover and, thus, understand, through this questioning, the desire to present poetics in miscegenation?

As stated before, we leave pictorial space in direction of the digital, passing through spaces of a procedural character (drawing, sculpture, performance, installations, interventions, instaurations, videos, photography, urban art). But in what sense do we yearn for conviviality among such expressive forms of art?

Familiarity with Brazilian art allows, through the present selection, the reaffirmation of issues developed in the course of our aesthetic experimentations, which, following several factors, and through our creative, natural verve – I repeat – was the motor behind the international artistic degree we have achieved. Painting was fundamental to conquering a new space of national art that, beginning tardily, soon joined hands with aesthetic reflections in the contemporary world as a whole, as is presented here.

Out of step with European aesthetic conquests, Brazilian painting took a while to understand pictorial space as a structure – that is, as no longer mimetic. Our visual investigations, although echoing prolonged academicism, generated a space for the pure expression of Brazilianness. Differently from the artists of the Old World

– who sought new models, as well as forms and images from other cultures, to overcome the crisis of European representation – our painters did not need to look outside their own territory. They did not need to go in search of new visualities, which is what African masks, Japanese engravings or Tahitian exoticism were for the expressionism, impressionism and post-impressionism of the various phases of Paul Gauguin's work. With the exception of Tarsila do Amaral and her *A gare* (*The Train Station*, 1925), understanding of the modern structure of space, as far as Brazilian painting is concerned, was only reached thanks to the emergence of constructivist thought.<sup>21</sup> It is only then that Mondrian's mesh was purified by our artists. However – it may bear repeating – artists such as Volpi and Guignard forged their own, singularly modern, paths.

Beyond the importance of geometric abstraction, the informal<sup>22</sup> was foundational to the expression of painters like Iberê Camargo. With informal abstraction, Brazil sees itself aligned with international visual thought, whose representative, abstract expressionism, emerged in the 1950s from the freshness of an equally new culture: the American. It was at that time that the São Paulo Biennial, by endorsing abstractionism, became the generator of exchange and foment, as well as a vehicle for new investigations in Brazil.

The experiments of Lygia Clark and Hélio Oiticica, for example, sparked a rupture of categories and an understanding of doing as a spatial-temporal extension of *being-in-the-world*; this is the origin of what we are presenting here as 'miscegenated poetics'. However, the transgression of their limits was of such a scale that – with the conceptualism experienced in the 1970s, the dissolution or negation of the work as object, as an opposition front to the instituted system of art – it eventually converged on the resistance of and desire for the pictorial.

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<sup>21</sup> Such an understanding is not separate from a new architecture. It is worth reiterating that modern space enters our culture in the first decades of the twentieth century.

<sup>22</sup> Cocchiarale, 'Notas sobre a exposição', p. 17.

Ronaldo Rego Macedo, Victor Arruda, Ângelo de Aquino, among others, flirted with abstractionisms and set about maintaining expressive painting – and they’ve continued to do so to this very day. See the paintings by Macedo that open this exhibition, with their fleeting shades on small white fields.

The vigour of that gesture is poetically reinvented in the 1980s – in a generation of artists who, through painting, took up again the configuration and, in tow, the materiality of its making. It is not without reason, therefore, that we can say that many of its adherents will work towards a thematic pluralism of living space: Beatriz Milhazes > popular culture, Adriana Varejão > Brazilian history, Paulo Pasta > history of painting, Daniel Senise > archaeological time ...

Imbricated with other art fronts of the past two decades, painting directed itself along various paths, extending itself in spatialities. Independent of *being* or *resting in peace*, the pictorial space seems to be a *becoming*: a world *en abyme* (see note 9).

Historically, in painting as in the arts in general, drawing could be considered an *a priori*. It is hybrid in nature, because it is simultaneously plenitude and emptiness. It is hard not to identify it in the (so-called) spatial arts: it is a project, plan, space, direction, sense, movement, time, rhythm, interval, and so on ... It is part of the day-to-day and is, therefore, continent and content, like architecture and urbanism.

Drawing, by nature, has to be thinking, whether logical or poetic. But, in its concreteness, it is tactile. When autonomous, it is an expressive power, even by not being a gesture or abdicating its traditional media.

Poetic examples capable of extending limits abound in our production. Taking the historical line, we catch a glimpse, through Goeldi’s woodcuts, of drawing as a crossing of the real (memory of the wood) and the imaginary (expressive desire);

in Mira Schendel, we see drawing as time and concept. Later, with the embroidery of Leonilson, we capture its line of woven poetry.

Here, drawing is space under different lines: in the geometric unrolling of the canvases of Elizabeth Jobim; in the iron silhouettes, the 'living beings' almost, articulated in the sculptures of Walter Guerra; in the low technology of Cadú Costa and his arcs, streaked, thanks to the sensors of presence; in the architectural lines traced by Sidnei Tendler; in the pulsing poetry of the utopian architectures of Marcelo Solá.

Drawing, then, is presented as a crossing. As in Guerra's work, the profusion of full and empty structures in José Bechara exemplifies it, but also relates it to sculpture and to installation. This is also true of José Patrício's ludic mosaics, planimetrically constructed with domino tiles. In this respect, the artists from the 1950s and 1960s are the paradigms for the new temporality, plasticity and scale that paved the way for the massive emergence of our contemporary art in the 1970s.

In Brazilian art, as already mentioned, sculpture is intimately related to the modern conquests of painting. In this, artists like Franz Weissmann, Amilcar de Castro and Sérgio Camargo are paradigms of a new temporality, plasticity and scale, paving the way for the work of Waltercio Caldas, Tunga, Iole de Freitas and, later, of José Resende and Nelson Felix, among others currently active.

The introduction of the idea of emptiness to sculpture brought new forms of three-dimensional construction to the artistic realm. Proof of this may be found in Oiticica's work. The *Bólides*, by stretching painting, created a new relationship with space in which the latter became a support of the work. In *Ninhos* (*Nests*), the artist raised conceptual issues concerning Brazil's social context while also introducing another way of enjoying the work: the subject became an integral part of it, in as much as he/she enters it, experiences it, lives it. If the former invades our sensorial space, the latter invites us to enter its environment.

Using neoconcrete examples as intermediary, we can glimpse the expansion of the sculptural field in Brazilian art and, with it, the expansion also of the poetic field. The phenomenological experiments – the ones with the works of Oiticica and Clark as their references – opened new fronts for aesthetic investigations around the body and its living space. It is not by chance that these encroach upon architectural, and by extension urban, logic.

From there arise a good many of the miscegenated practices mentioned earlier, such as instauration, interventions and the like.

Such spatial poetics adhered so thoroughly to artistic forms that, today, the relationships between art and space, or between these two and the subject, have become almost interdependent with the realm of living. There are those whose character is pictorial, sculptural, graphic, auditory, performative, urban/technological (including photography, video, new media), as may be seen in the forms brought together for this show.

Zalinda Cartaxo makes a sort of architectural painting by applying blue pellicle to the skylight. The gesture constitutes a double operation on temporality, first through the tenuous limit between painting and building, and secondly through her interest in space as a box of perspectives. Light and shadow now determine a before and an after.

The proposals by Gê Orthof deal with parallel universes: imagination and construction. In this binomial, oscillating between the micro- and macro-universes, he works intensively on the meaning of the present selection. By creating spaces in the expository place, Orthof weaves metaphors of his memories of his dealing with the world – like nests. In his plastic poetry, the absolutely small confronts the absolutely large.

This confrontation is common to other works. David Cury, for example, in his obstinate construction of small red points, insistently conquers (at once installational and pictorial) space. So too is the intervention by Henrique Oliveira, which transforms brushstrokes into a material as potent as the volume and energy of an ocean, which spills over us, invading our perceptive experience through organic forms that alter our Cartesian spatial consciousness.

Both examples are unfoldings from the processes of our art history. However, while Cury proposes a pulverisation of space *through* and *in* his construction, Oliveira seems to insert a spatial softening analogous to the organicity of the human body. His work takes us back to the experiments of Barrio and Tunga at the beginning of the 1970s, not just because of its carnal structure, but also because of its oneiric visceralness. It is a highway through which we arrive at the object-paintings sewn by Eliane Duarte, which pulse like life-sustaining organs. And, prior to that, the liquefaction of pictorial space is already within scope of Márcia X's performance *Alviceleste*, where she is dressed in alvar whiteness against a sky-floor of aniline blue.<sup>23</sup> The blue of Giotto ... of Klein ... of Volpi ... a blue that expands itself at various and distinct moments of this exhibition. Blue of Jobim, of Macedo, of Cartaxo, of Solá, of Bechara. Ultramarine ... Brazilian baroque ... surroundings in blue ...

This relationship between body and living space, perhaps present in all our civilising process,<sup>24</sup> inherent to architecture and to urbanism, is fundamental to

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<sup>23</sup> Video art authored by the artist Miguel Pachá.

<sup>24</sup> R. Sennett, *Flesh and Stone: The Body in Western Civilization*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1996. Sennett aggregates, for example, self-confident Greek nudity to the Roman belief in the geometry of the body, later embraced by Christian – above all, in the High Middle Ages and Renaissance – as influential elements in socio-political and economic organisation (and, thus, of the form of urban space); to medical discoveries, like the circulatory system, as a primary stimulus; to the experiences of free movement in revolutionary Paris; to imperial London; and to the triumph of individual freedom of movement that was contemporaneous with the rise in metropolises in the nineteenth century. All of this was transformed into a dilemma, until arriving at our times, whose greatest burden is mirrored in multicultural New York, where each body moves without perceiving the presence of the others.

understanding the performances as an unfolding of sculpture and painting.<sup>25</sup> That said, agglutinating in its thought theatrical nuances such as dance, music and poetry, these practices build on the idea of poetic miscegenation, the subject of this curatorial proposal.

Although generic, the term brings us into the proximity of the concept of *dislimit*, which pinpoints work carried out outside the conventional limits of art, that being the condition of its appearance.<sup>26</sup> Not belonging, in effect, to any prior aesthetic categories, performance is born hybrid. In Brazil its practice is determinant of our contemporary avant-garde, which, synchronously with world art, emerges in an entirely personal way, thanks to that practice. Proof of this are the corporeal and temporal experiments of Oiticica, Clark, Antonio Manuel ...

An important element of this selection resides in the fact that the other artistic practices to have arisen from modernism's taxonomy have absorbed the hybrid manner of performative practice. The eternal and the ephemeral seem to unite themselves in the contemporary. Thus, past and present mix in this text, as members of the same plane, without historical hierarchies.

The models that did distinguish art from audience – in the participatory and interactive neoconcrete practices of the 1970s inaugurated by Lygia Pape's *Divisor*, among others – brought forwards the notion of body as work, the humanisation of constructivist language, free from the spectacle model that characterises performance practice in the international context.

In the Romano piece presented in this module, we have art in *dislimit* under two fundamental veins: that of space, for we are here dealing with a work in motion; and that of the body, this being part of the work that, augmented by those

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<sup>25</sup> R. Melim, *Performance nas artes visuais*. Rio de Janeiro: Jorge Zahar Editor, 2008.

<sup>26</sup> Gullar, 'Theory of the Non-object', p. XX in this volume.

neoconcrete principles, is realised thanks to the interaction of the spectator who reacts to a discourse in passing.

The already cited Ricardo Aleixo lends a new perspective to the exhibited works through the practice of performance. His body notation pieces, composed of dance, song and poetry, resembles a spectacle. However, the spectators complete his work, interacting with it, through their voice, their steps, their sounds. Yes! Aleixo captures even our breathing and mixes into our sounds with his videoperformancepoetry under polychromatic lines that are incorporated with bodily evolutions, a swing also realised with his cloak-poem, which bears a distinct resemblance to the visual cloaks of Bispo do Rosário and to Oiticica's *Parangolés*.

At first glance, the work of Suely Farhy, presented in video, could seem mere intervention. But she moves beyond that idea to take advantage of the neoconcretist indistinction between public and work. The action of the spectator/passers-by is what gives the work, *Vida (Life)*, its singularity and concreteness in urban space; its invisibility as a consequence of the 'collective body' is the expression of time *as* and *in* life (city soul).

A different proposition occurs in the idealisations of Chelva Ferro, who deals with the tenuous limits between artistic practices and affirms hybrid actions as an event or happening, almost a spectacle.

Urban art, especially in this module, is intimately tied to video art and to photography, because it returns to time. And, as such, it returns, even, to painting. The city as support, as plane of action and of sense. City of mass, thickness, layers. City of Pollock. Anonymity, multitude without contact. Augé's non-place or Benjamin's solitude ... the labyrinth of Oiticica, who bequeathed to us the poetic

sense of his in-between-spaces. The melancholic abysses of Efrain de Almeida, or the labyrinthine but sweet abysses of Caetano Dias' heads of sugar.

The city as abyss is, moreover, a fusion of temporal traces. Refraction, light, fragments: a city-photograph.

The desire for the orderly arrangement of the world amid cultural disorder is expressed with the photographic poetry of Geraldo de Barros in the 1950s, in which bits of shade, luminous fragments of the urban world, result in concrete compositions, in geometric abstraction. At roughly the same time, Athos Bulcão treats those fragments as layers of ambivalence and absurdity ... His photo collages are like the museum of a world in pieces, in which one cannot see a difference between time and space.

That artistic moment in Brazil created the historic basis capable of founding the current context of contemporary photography as art; since the start of the 1990s, this has had a great many adherents. Contemporary artistic production understands photography not as a form of capturing the real, but as a way of constructing new realities. Examples here (among others) are Rosângela Rennó, Vik Muniz, Paula Tropic, Marcos Chaves, Enrica Bernadelli and Vicente de Mello.

This new understanding of the photographic apparatus, of its medium and language, has contributed even more to stretching the poetic limits of art. The works that result from this understanding that, through photography, transgress the segments – pictorial, procedural, technological – gathered under this curatorship, and result in abysses.

In the work of Albano Afonso and Marcelo Silveira, what we find, much as in the 1950s, is a reflection about the world, and particularly about the conditions of living it, however differently. Like their contemporaries cited above, Afonso and

Silveira seem to launch, through photography, a philosophical questioning of *being-in-the-world* – here, as place: an in-between-space, thickness, depth, painting

...

As with today's photography, video art levels time and space while also uncovering new dimensions. In the middle of the military regime's dictatorship, in the 1970s, video arose as a partner of performance. It consisted, then, of a language only possible in private environments. The fact that video art was born in Brazil as a vehicle to transgress political limits does not change the fact that it is, today – in the wake of pioneering artists like Sonia Andrade, Anna Bella Geiger, Letícia Parente, Fernando Cocchiarale, Ivens Machado and others – a language of dislimit.

Here, video is presented as integral to miscegenated poetics, for example in the sensorial works of Luiz Duva or in the performative painting of Márcia X as captured by the lens of Miguel Pachá.<sup>27</sup> It resides, in its essence, in the luminous spatial-temporal poetry, in the water over druses, of Sonia Andrade. Indeed, it can even be found animating the objects of Mariana Manhães, who creates unutterable machines.

To go on at length about new image technologies, such as the one used in the low-tech machine book by Milton Marques, which simulates life and destruction, implies repeating names that have already been cited here, some more than once – not surprisingly, given the quantity of crossings that their works represent. This brings us to concepts that make up our selection and that carry out and further our reflection about the dislimits – as abyss – between art and living space.

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<sup>27</sup> Miguel Pachá (Petropolis, Brazil, 1966). Photography and video are an extension of his research in painting. Working on the contemporary art scene in Rio, he is the author of *O Milagrinho* (a video shown at Tunga's retrospective exhibition at the Jeu de Paume, Paris, in 2002), and he has recorded the following Márcia X performances: *Pancake* (2002), *Cair em si* (*Fall on Oneself*, 2002), *Ex-Maquina* (2003), *Ação de Graças* (*Thanksgiving*, 2003), *Lavou a alma com coca-cola* (*Soul Washed with Coca-Cola*, 2003), and *Alviceleste* (2003).

From the 1990s to today, new technical and scientific discoveries have transformed, and continue to transform, our understanding of space, which had once been thought of as four-dimensional. Today, altering perception and the ways of relating the subject to the world, space is multidimensional. The form and reach of images, each day in greater profusion, launch new ways of thinking and feeling, making us seem at once bigger and smaller in relation to the world. Let's put it this way: there's something sublime in contemporary art.

On the aesthetic dislimits of our time, I ask – as Rilke did as he stood in front of a cage of lions – 'Who knows where liberty is – this way or that?'



**12.10.2011**  
**15.01.2012**

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