


Spring 2023

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Recommended Citation

Griffin, Jamesia R., "From Marginal to Modern Culture: A Case Study on Hélio Oiticica and his Aesthetic Contributions to Brazilian National Identity" (2023). *Senior Projects Spring 2023*. 102.

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From Marginal to Modern Culture:
A Case Study on Hélio Oiticica and his Aesthetic Contributions to Brazilian National Identity

Senior Project Submitted to
The Division of Multidisciplinary Studies
Of Bard College

By
Jamesia R. Griffin
May 2023

Abstract

In this essay, I follow the historical trajectory of Helio Oiticica, a visual artist from Brazil's 1960s modern art scene, to explore how attitudes towards his artistic interventions during Brazil's most transformative era affected the social view of "the artist" as a political character. I argue that the historical effectiveness of interventionist art relies on the shifting localized and national social and political identities of the artist. In order to help my reader understand how artists gain historical relevance through interventionist arts, I emphasize contextual and relational modes of analysis to better capture the complex and complicated interactions between historical and sociological phenomena that ultimately work to define the significance of sociopolitical phenomena, including artworks. My research considers *national identity* to contextualize the political value of national culture through non-figurative expressions of art production. Such widely contested definitions of national identity, across multiple disciplines, has led me to investigate the social and political agent that is: the artist. In the first section, *The Compatible Artist* proposes that Hélio Oiticica was politically primed to participate in national identity discourse due to familial and institutional ties prior to his emergence onto Rio's avant-garde scene. The second section *The Co-Oppable Artist* offers that the popular narrative surrounding HO's political interventions is historically maximized precisely due to its aesthetic dual-function as state propaganda and cultural aesthetics in formulating non-figurative expressions of national identity. The final section, *The Controlled Artist*, suggests that HO's artistic legacy in renegotiating Brazil's national imagination underscores the sociopolitical value accredited to artists and their political role in envisioning a controversial cultural synthesis of the nation state.

Introduction

In this project, I perform a case study about Brazilian visual and conceptual artist Hélio Oiticica (1937-1980) to investigate how his artistic interventions during Brazil's most transformative political era affected the social view of “the artist” over time. Hélio Oiticica is one of Brazil's most popular visual artists because his non-figurative take on Brazilian aesthetics influenced the emergence of the countercultural art movement, Tropicalismo, in resistance to military dictatorship in 1964. Scholarship into the international experience of mid-twentieth century art movements has produced historical reflections on Oiticica's works in relation to broader political expressions in Brazilian art culture. However, in recent years, Oiticica's legacy has also received criticism for his appropriation of Afro-Brazilian cultural aesthetics, in turn, complicating the manner in which contemporary research has remembered HO's political role in Brazil's popular history. Nonetheless, Hélio Oiticica (HO) remains a relevant figure in the history of modern Brazil for his visual contribution to postmodern conceptual arts and the politicization of non-figurative aesthetics. As a self-identified artist, I am interested in studying the political capabilities of artistic mediation from a historical perspective because I want to find out how artists socially impact the trajectory of politics and aesthetic culture in their work. What are the social and political conditions that enable artists to be historically remembered? How do artists intervene in local and national politics in their works? And why do artists assist in consolidating the social narrative of national identity? Throughout this essay, I posit that the historical effectiveness of interventionist art relies on the shifting localized and national social identities of “the artist”. To support my argument, I investigate the micro and macro socio-political conditions that enable artists like Hélio Oiticica (HO) to intervene into larger social debates about national identity with his work.

Committed to an interdisciplinary political analysis, this study is informed by several disciplines including postcolonial Third World studies, Latin American national culture histories, Afro-Diasporic national liberation projects, and Brazilian media studies. I have further consulted relevant original historical sources (mostly translated) as well as secondary historical narratives surrounding HO's legacy. For me, the artist, as a social and political actor, is encouraged to assume the social responsibility of communicating and mobilizing the ideas of the social needs of society with the social function of art objects. By observing the dynamic interplay between individual, collective, and institutional expressions of national identity, the use of terms like political identity, art culture, and cultural imagination foregrounds the particularities of relational analysis needed to describe historical events. National identity, across multiple disciplines, serves as a conceptual framework through which the social and political interpretations of 'the artist' assume a national characteristic. In this way, the socio-political contexts wherein historical events center the artist's national identity organizes how they are remembered. This process has enabled me to critically think about how I wish to consolidate my research findings about HO and the general socio-political conditions that catapulted his likeness and work to the forefront of political discourses on national identity in Brazil. I hope to in this way contribute a considerable reframing of the artist's active participation in the politicization of artwork, like HO, and the socio-political contexts in which individuals obtain historical reflection.

To examine the historical impact that particular artist, Hélio Oiticica, had on the renegotiation and consolidation of Brazilian national identity at the height of his career in that country, I follow sociologist Karwat's holistic approach to define the historical significance of socio-political phenomena. This approach upholds contextual and relational modes of analysis needed to detail complicated intersections between political claims, historical accounts and social

phenomena. In addition to Karwat's contribution, I also incorporate Charles Tilly's relational sociological approach to account for both individual and unit solidarity shifts present within the social narrative of Brazil's political relations. In terms of transactions, social ties, interactions and networks of social relations, the observation of political identities serve as a temporal and historical acknowledgement of the ways in which normative configurations exist by forming linkages between identity and relational strategies embedded in the mobilization of social movements. Moreover, these combined models open the possibility of establishing micro and macro connections to interventionist art, the social agency of artists as individual actors, and the broader national interest in canonizing artists. In the methodologies section, I describe in greater detail how I structured my argument through this project.

Methodologies: A Relational and Sociological Approach

Historical sociology reflects the difficulties of accounting for unique temporalities in phenomena through the evaluation of time, events, and narratives. For the historical sociologist, temperamental modes of time (i.e; cycles and pace) allows for a self-regulating view of social processes and its continuity, or lack thereof¹. Meanwhile, in the same effort, scholars often attempt to show implicit uniqueness in the sequence of unfolding events within the constraints of time and space. This attempt suggests that there is a point of entry wherein historical analysis of social life is approachable despite its limitations through a retrospective gaze. Additionally, as elaborated by Theda Skocpol, the conditions for which change is observed in time and space lends itself to the principal responsibility of historical analysis to differentiate between events that enable socio-economic and political transformation from those that fall short of larger

¹ Larry J. Griffin, "Temporality, Events and Explanation in Historical Sociology," *Sociological Methods and Research* 20 (1992): 403-427.

institutional impact². In the case of social revolution, Skocpol argues that class-led upheaval resulting in structural change, in both social and political contexts, are magnified through histories of group opposition within “conflict-ridden societies”³. The challenge of engaging phenomena is best remedied by confining in the construction of standard stories. In the historical model, standard stories incorporate, or at least accommodate, stories in which connected, self-propelled actors, individual or collective, cause events, outcomes, and each other’s actions. History can only interpret social experiences as standard stories from a small number of self-motivated entities interacting within constricted, contiguous time and space. American sociologist Charles Tilly offers that this view on analyzing social process has notable barriers⁴:

People’s construction, negotiation, and deployment of standard stories does a wide variety of social work. That work certainly includes accounting for skinheads and counter-revolutions, but also includes autobiography, self-justification, social movement mobilization, jury deliberation, moral condemnation, cementing of agreements, and documentation of nationalist claims.
(74)

The accumulation of social experiences and interactions into the larger schema of social history is then reframed not only as documented participation in larger social processes but also as a viable historical synthesis of social reality. Under this conception, change, in the retrospective sense, invokes a social renegotiation in the normative configuration and maintenance of power relations. This approach provides an interpretation of the interests and meaning making in relation to individual, collective, and institutional path dependencies and their expected resolve - even now the capabilities of social analysis seem unable to fully consider these normative conventions as such. For instance, in the Brazilian case, histories of Portugal’s colonial rule

² Theda Skocpol, in *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, China and Russia*. (Cambridge UP, 1979).: 51-67 & 118-128.

³ Skocpol, “States and Social Revolutions”, 51-67 & 118-128.

⁴ Charles Tilly, “Micro, Macro, or Megrim?”, in *Stories, identities, and Political Change*. (Rowman & Littlefield, 2002).: 74

involving claims on land and territory, transatlantic slavery, miscegenation, immigration sanctions, and juridical heterogeneity of color reinforce a “modern” contextualization of race by interpreting the ethnic and cultural identity of Brazilians as racially-mixed⁵. In particular, Brazil’s social policy of “racial democracy” has sought to whiten the population through state incentivized transplant of white European immigrants to urbanizing cities post-emancipation⁶. Given that independence from the Portugal empire (1822) preceded emancipation in Brazil, the political suppression and social formations of the slave society remained influential in the construction of a postcolonial nation-state⁷. Furthermore, by undermining the severity of existing formal (institutionalized) and informal (socialized) recognition of color classifications, Brazil’s narrative of racial democracy downplays the frequency in which solidarity and revolt amongst creolized Afro-descendents and Indigenous populations formed before, during, and after emancipation⁸. Overlooking these historical revisions to Brazil’s racial formations would likely result in superimposing the myth of racial democracy into accounts of social life, as opposed to the structural transformations unfolding in interactions where such identities emerge and are negotiated. This does not mean I dismiss the social and political consequences of the Brazilian state’s attempt to actualize this assimilationist narrative into popular history. Indeed, the moment we might consider to be the birth of Brazil in 1889 (with the end of the Empire and the birth of the First Republic) does not mean that the country did not change its oppressive social formations. To this point, I consider a dialectical power struggle between social identities important here— to showcase that ubiquitous conceptions of *identity* and *power relations* present

⁵ Patrick, Wolfe, “Land, Labor, Difference: Elementary Structures of Race”, (American Historical Review, 2001) vol. 106, no. 3, pp. 866-905.

⁶ For more on racial democracy in Brazil see: George Reid Andrews, “Brazilian Racial Democracy, 1900-90: An American Counterpoint.” *Journal of Contemporary History* 31, no. 3 (1996): 483–507.

⁷ Amílcar, Cabral, “National Liberation and Culture.” *Transition*, no. 45 (1974): 12–17.

⁸ Kim D. Butler, “Up from Slavery: Afro-Brazilian Activism in São Paulo, 1888-1938.” (*The Americas* 49, no. 2 1992): 179–180.

themselves along accepted and politicized standard stories for they presume the motives and end goal for change. Even so, among Afro-Brazilians, organized opposition against “racial democracy” across Brazil involve various contextual, cultural and social indicators beyond the racialization of color in diversified pockets of society⁹.

Furthermore, Tilly admits that grasping *identity* edges on the elevation of one presumed identity over one another or the emergence of multiple at the same time, in both private and public representations¹⁰. Therefore, linking social relations on the basis of identity (as a unit of measure) becomes even more impossible for its fluidity is situational. Tilly does not put forward a methodological process to stamp his sociological argument – likely due to static found in popular methodological, technical and literary models. How would one go about positioning identity in the context of social networking between social actors? Can one’s exposure to a multitude of micro interactions through social analysis pull out the causal factors of macro transformations in our social history? The answers to these questions are beyond the scope of this project, however, for me, these contributions outline how I approach the challenge of organizing micro and macro processes for the sake of providing a clear basis from which I build a methodological process. Serious consideration of such interplay recenters political identities as viable references in examining relational ties. The implied linkage between micro and macro social processes render the performance of particular historical and relational pathways to exist within the theoretical propositions of political discourse.

Tilly suggests that few social processes actually have causal structures that conform to the logical requirements of standard stories and typically rest on extensive if not usually implicit

⁹ Kim D. Butler, “From Black History to Diasporan History: Brazilian Abolition in Afro-Atlantic Context.” (*African Studies Review* 43, 2000): 129–30.

¹⁰ Tilly, “Micro, Macro, or Megrim?”, 74.

institutional foundations and previous histories¹¹. Implicit institutional foundations and previous histories allots a relational framework to contextualize standard stories appropriately. In the examination of network ties amongst collectives or publicly-recognized groups, identities magnify and change as a determinant of social interactions and individual/collective transactions while navigating public life. Relational connections locates the development of contextual awareness wherein meaning-making (via interactions) and actions (via transactions) foster structural change. Theoretical consideration of the sociological model, relational realism, as modified from Tilly, seeks both individual and unit solidarity shifts, forming linkages between *identity* and relational strategies– a vacancy evident in historical analysis. This sentiment is seconded by Benedict Anderson in *Imagined Communities* where he elaborates¹²:

No sober contemporary analyst, viewing these conditions [class struggle, nationalism and revolution] objectively, would in either case have predicted the revolutions soon to follow, or their wrecked triumphs. What made them possible, in the end [according to historical eye of modern statehood] was ‘planning revolution’ and ‘imagining the nation’. (158)

To this point, the political conditions that spark revolution do so not to drastically dismantle social and relational ties at a local level necessarily, but to subject the movement to institutionalized means – to reproduce itself in all spheres of public life. Accordingly, a particular group's needs are therefore identified, essentialized, and supported society-wide in order to turn over a new leaf, or in this case, a new regime of sorts addressed in their ideas of progress. The construction of political identity, then, offers a public and relational understanding of collectivized identity through which social actors “form organizational structures at the same time as they shape individual behavior”. Assessing the conditions under which political identities

¹¹ Tilly, “Micro, Macro, or Megrim?”, 74.

¹² Benedict Anderson, “The Angel of History”, in *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, (2016): 158.

recognize or repress certain identities for the sake of expressing political action is part of this deployment. As a result, political identities allow social relations to bend and gain direction in changing historical and institutional contexts, thus preserving social relevance both at an individual and institutional level.

Alas, part of this research expands to the junction of two interconnected features of observing historical conditions as they arrive in and out of the narrative of national progress: social and political phenomena. There are essentially three fundamental features of social phenomena best understood as simultaneous processes emphasized by Karwat in *Political Values as Ideas of Social Needs*; it is argued that from these coinciding features that some social phenomena may be viewed as political phenomena. Social phenomena is understood to be the present approach to politics and lays a special emphasis on viewing phenomena in the light of social needs¹³. The society-wide significance of phenomena is its importance for the satisfaction of the needs of the society as a whole, i.e., the creation, reproduction, and consolidation of conditions for the existence and development of society as a whole¹⁴. In critique of historical materialism, to which such research can narrowly achieve, I refer to Miroslaw Karwat's efforts to garner what historical materialism considers significant features responsible for the "political character" of social phenomena. Thus, I have developed three fundamental historical observations (3Cs) that can be referenced in an effort to define the political character of social phenomenon and that will ultimately bring forward compelling relational intersections woven throughout this project. For now, the criteria is as follows:

¹³ Miroslaw Karwat. "Political Values as Ideas of Social Needs." *International Political Science Review / Revue Internationale de Science Politique* 3, no. 2 (1982): 198–204.

¹⁴ Miroslaw Karwat, "*Political Values as Ideas of Social Needs*", :201

1. The **Compatibility Factor**; in order for social phenomena to be reflected historically, it must emerge alongside a “compatible” political climate that deems its relevance necessary to generate political discourse in the ideas of needs within society as a whole.
2. The **Co-Opable Factor**; in order for social phenomena to be reflected historically, it must gain a social following beyond the scope of its original ideas for the needs of a particular social class, making itself open to being co-opted by larger groups in the hopes of earning widespread attention.
3. The **Controlled Factor**; in order for social phenomena to be reflected historically, it must entangle its political character into the existing power structure within society as a whole. This ensures that social phenomenon is only able to embellish the existing conditions of power/class struggle in the name of progress to obtain historical reflection.

This interpretive process is more sensitive to the ways in which popular phenomena has (1) shaped its social relevance to the contemporary day and (2) negotiated historical and political value attached to these changing positionalities over time. The research questions I initially disclosed gives greater mobility in the analysis of the socio-political conditions that molds the narrative of “the artist” as a politicized character of popular cultural production.

All information I have encountered about historical events unfolding and surfacing over time and space is the only remotely acceptable manner to engage with what I “know” about Hélio’s life, Brazil’s political histories (from a perspective outside of Brazil), and social movements (as identified in many Western perspectives of political change); I must be sensitive to this limitation. Little actual knowledge of Brazilian Portuguese and the evolution of the Brazilian Portuguese language completely limits deeper critical and contextual understandings in the moments of subtle dialectical shifts (let alone contextualized by secondary sources) and the challenge of defining the conditions by which transformation may be observed in retrospect. Nor can I disregard how I managed to access literature and histories related to HO’s political moment, and therefore my research is only capable of analyzing “identities” via

multidisciplinary works. Simply put, I lack the positionality to construct, in full detail, the complexities between the known and the unknown details lived throughout the realities framed by prior historical accounts. The ambitious attempt for me and other scholars to narrowly frame such nuanced socio-historical manifestations across time and space. Despite this, the historical discontinuities and their inherent manipulation to the framing of historical timelines open the possibilities to organize a critical yet limited snapshot of a particular time/space as political identities transform. To do so, I plan to spotlight Hélio Oiticica's political interventions in the earliest and most well-known of his artistic involvements in Rio de Janeiro. I focus a large part of my research on Oiticica's socio-political entanglement in avant garde neo-concretism in Rio, his political works inspired by local Afro-Brazilian culture in Mangueira's *favelas*, and the historical and cultural impact of Tropicália on Brazil's national imagination. Using these three moments, one can integrate the story of Hélio Oiticica at his ascension of modernizing discourse in Rio to inform his interventions.

The “Compatible” Artist: Identifying the Political Origins of Hélio Oiticica

In this section, I suggest that HO was politically and socio-economically advantaged in the power structures of the first republic of Brazil by way of his relational ties to Brazilian politics. I shortly reference HO's most popular involvements in Rio de Janeiro's avant garde scene to showcase the lack of research disclosing the social conditioning of his upbringing and its impact on his later works. I then trace HO's childhood through an examination of the Oiticica family's socio-political status in Rio. In doing so, I track HO's father José Oiticica Filho's participation in early modern Brazilian arts production - a social characteristic of the intellectual class during the repressive years of the Vargas Era. To this end, I amplify the intellectual origins

of modern arts via *antropofagia*, theorized by Brazilian poet Oswald de Andrade, as a conceptual tool to center intellectualized artists in the state's projection of cultural hybridity in nationalist propaganda.

Who was Helio Oiticica?

Active from 1954 till his death in 1980, Hélio Oiticica (1937-1980) was a visual artist, painter, performance artist, sculptor, and theorist from Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Generally speaking, his pieces include Penetrables (1960-61), free-standing enterable booths, Paranogles (1964-67), wearable interactive garments, and Tropicália (1967-68), an participatory installation where spectators were encouraged to indulge in the myth of a “non-representational” tropic landscapes staged inside gallery walls. First displayed at the Museum of Modern Art Rio, Tropicália would become an ever-present aesthetic character of HO's participatory approach. The resulting popularity of the installation is often credited for inspiring Brazil's countercultural movement, Tropicalismo, in the 1970s. Literary and historical scholarship about the early life of Hélio Oiticica is quite scarce. Much attention has been granted towards both his aesthetic and political contributions to (post)modern Brazilian artistry yet discussion about his upbringing lacks coverage. The challenge is that most literature about Hélio Oiticica has required an analysis of Oiticica's life to begin when he was a teen studying under Ivan Serpa, renowned Brazilian artist and educator, at the Museum of Modern Art (MAM Rio) where from 1949 till 1952 he taught painting, sculpture, and art theory. Mario Pedrosa, Serpa's most vocal critic and interpreter, emphasized in his writings that Serpa combined a focus on experimentation with instruction in technical and compositional know-how, arguing that he countered “academic preconceptions” while at the same time improving his students' ability to manipulate materials

and organize forms and marks within a composition¹⁵. To foster investigations of form and color, Serpa regularly invited students to open studios where he'd discuss his pedagogy in terms of its openness to experimentation within a “Brazilian” context as opposed to modern European expressions of the time (as practiced in São Paulo). Hélio Oiticica and his brother César studied with Serpa in 1954 and continued to attend open studio sessions, later exhibiting mixed media works alongside others involved in Grupo Frente, a smaller collective, including some experimental prints made by Hélio composed of carbon paper impressions and gouache on cardboard.

HO's most notable works are his earliest, commonly associated with his key involvement in the Neo Concrete Movement (NCM, 1959–61) where his experimentations with color, spatial forms, and participatory concepts would forge politicized aesthetic traditions in his later works and Brazilian pop culture as a whole. NCM splintered off from the larger Concrete Art (or non-figurative ‘geometric’ compositions) in Latin America and in other parts of the world. The collective of Brazilian artists sprung from Rio de Janeiro's Grupo Frente (1952-1964) in direct challenge to the concrete ideals championed by sister group Grupo Ruptura in São Paulo. While the Rio concretists manifested themselves more spontaneously, with an emphasis on phenomenological reform to the rigid expressions of concretism, São Paulo concretists were characterized by a more objective and rigorous elaboration on geometric presentations. Ivan Serpa, co-founder of Grupo Frente, along with members Hélio Oiticica, Aluisio Carvão, Lygia Clark, and Lygia Pape explored non-figurative geometric abstractions while simultaneously evoking organic marking techniques. Ferreira Gullar, poet and art critic, would later encourage a few members from Grupo Frente to reject the pure rationalist approach of concrete art and

¹⁵ Adele Nelson, “Ivan Serpa, Lygia Clark, and the Bauhaus in Brazil - Articles.” *Bauhaus Imaginista Journal*, (2018): 3

embraced a more theoretical and emotional art¹⁶. With Gullar's direction, HO's creative achievements seem to have made NCM become a major catalyst for the emergence of conceptual art in Rio de Janeiro and the greater Brazilian art scene. All in all, the general historical timeline follows HO's first appearances with the collective as opposed to the origins of his personhood which may provide better context for his legacy.

What little detail is accessible or known about Oiticica's younger years and their possible impact on his interventions should not be understated here. Oiticica's lack of origin story within historical material greatly frames the retrospective gaze upon his political interventions and associated creative narrative in the eye of history. According to popular history, HO's emergence onto Rio's modern art scene rests predominantly on the prestigious opportunity to study under Serpa at the then newly established MAM Rio with his brother Caesar; this point of entry seems odd to me. Considering such foundational details may be helpful in establishing a starting position for his creative endeavors to permeate local popularity, then spread to national audiences and eventually gaining international success. Let's consider Oiticica's early life through familial relations to understand why his specific positionality prior to his creations are rarely disclosed and how this may impact his mainstream social history.

Underscoring HO 's Early Years: The Oiticica Family and and Their Political Ties

Other than his interest in painting and theater, what is known about Oiticica's childhood revolves mostly around his father's career. José Oiticica Filho (1906-1964) was an esteemed engineer, mathematics teacher, entomologist and photographer, the eldest son of José Rodrigues Leite Oiticica (1882-1957), professor, poet, translator and editor of the anarchist newspaper *Ação*

¹⁶ Ferreira Gullar, "Manifesto Neoconcreto · ICAA Documents Project · ICAA/MFAH." Originally published in *Jornal do Brasil: Suplemento Dominical* (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil) (1959)

Direta [Direct Action], also the son of Brazilian senator Francisco de Paula Leite e Oiticica¹⁷.

José Rodrigues Leite Oiticica (José Sr.) would relocate around the Southeastern region of Brazil throughout his lifetime, regularly pursued and put on house arrest by Brazilian authorities for allegedly conspiring against the State. Despite his continuous arrests, José Sr. is reported to have strongly influenced his grandchildren's intellectual spirit.

José Sr.'s son, José Oiticica Filho (JOF) was educated at home, an apparent tradition in the Oiticica family likely due to their familial background in government affairs in Rio within the upper-middle class of society. Additionally, there is no record or document in the consulted files proving JOF's attendance at any primary or secondary school either, however, he had apparently graduated from the National School of Engineering in 1930 and began teaching mathematics at the Jacobina and Pedro II schools, at the National Faculty of Medicine and the University College throughout his adult life.¹⁸

On July 6th, 1937, José and wife Ângela Santos Oiticica (1903-1972) welcomed Hélio as their firstborn, shortly followed by two more sons, Caesar and Claudio. Hélio and his siblings, like his father, would not be enrolled in formal institutions for their education, but rather taught by their parents. The only time Hélio would officially enroll in school would be during a two year period when the family lived years in Washington DC. After receiving a fellowship from the Guggenheim Foundation in 1947, JOF relocated his family to the United States to work at the Smithsonian Institute. When Hélio arrived in America in 1947, he was about 10 years old and attended Thomson Elementary School in DC where they had settled¹⁹. Though a small portion of his life, Oiticica's life story doesn't necessarily bombard this period with terrible or

¹⁷ "Biography of José Oiticica (1906-1964).", published by *Projeto Hélio Oiticica Art Center – Projeto Hélio Oiticica*, 2022, projetooho.com.br/pt/bio_jo/.

¹⁸ For José Oiticica Filho and Hélio Oiticica biographies see "Biography of José Oiticica (1906-1964)." and "Biography of Hélio Oiticica (1937-1980)."

¹⁹ *Projeto Hélio Oiticica*, "Biography of Hélio Oiticica (1937-1980)."

extraordinary events, at least not explicitly. Nonetheless, the direct emphasis on this particular historical plotpoint may underscore, for some, a pivotal moment in the development of his artistic philosophies and a predisposition towards an international life in the aftermath of his creations as Oiticica and his family are alleged to have visited numerous museums and art galleries in those years; the family would return to Rio in July 1950.

Being aware of Hélio 's educational background, or perhaps, lack of formal institutionalized education, sheds light on two predicaments. The first situation regards the larger question of the relevancy of the two years he lived in the United States as a child. As aforementioned, the undercarriage of Oiticica's work is duly supported by both Brazilian and international audiences. Therefore, in retrospect, an emphasis on the international scope of Oiticica's career and the opportunities associated with such global range may be helpful to contextualize his impact. But, HO's years in the U.S. during his childhood remains to be an odd historical detail to outweigh some other relevant contributions of his predominant upbringing in Rio. The second predicament follows the prior sentiments which involve his socio-economic vantage point in Rio de Janeiro. Outside of those two years in Washington, D.C, Hélio lived in Rio, the whereabouts aren't specified, yet this city is considered both his literal and artistic birthplace. Rio de Janeiro was the colonial capital of Brazil in 1763 and was the capital of an independent state from 1822 until 1960, then the national capital was moved to the new city of Brasília. Therefore, the political and industrial dimensions of the country's metropolis at the time of Hélio's birth plays an important role in the socio-spatial realities of his upbringing, particularly during the early to mid-twentieth century where Brazil underwent several rapid transformations.

For example, Hélio was born in 1937, the same year that his grandfather, José Sr., would be arrested once again by state authorities. The reasoning behind José's arrest is largely unknown, but, with respect to his outwardly anarchist publications, it would be fair to conclude that his run-in with Estado Novo ("New State") officers had not yet ceased. It should also be noted that the suspension of all political parties under then President Getúlio Vargas would follow Hélio's birth, marking the beginnings of the Estado Novo Dictatorship declared the following year²⁰. Often characterized as the start of the "Vargas Era", Vargas had risen to power under a provisional presidency in 1930, after losing the national presidential election, thereafter participating in an armed insurrection, ending the Old Republic and ushering in the First Republic of Brazil. In the attempt to reconfigure Brazil's national character from republic to modern nation-state, Vargas supported populist organizations championing an unified national image amongst the Brazilian masses through intensive industrialization in the emerging working class. Such influences expound on the cultivation of 'modernity' in the guise of democracy²¹. Despite this sentiment, cultural and intellectual productions of the developing nation began to conceptualize romantic yet coded manifestations of colonial histories applied to developmental ideals of the daily lives of Brazilians²². With respect to Oiticica's family origins and the period of state modernization of Rio de Janeiro wherein Hélio would later participate, I wish to interlock these histories in relation to a nationalistic political ideology encapsulated in the program of intellectual and artistic production under Vargas' Estado Novo regime.

In the following section, I consider the historical explanation of *antropofagia* as theorized by Brazilian poet and polemicist Oswald de Andrade as a major ideological and

²⁰ For more on Vargas Dictatorship in Brazil see, Putnam, Samuel. "Vargas Dictatorship in Brazil." *Science & Society* 5, no. 2 (1941): 97–116.

²¹ Leslie Bethell, "Populism in Brazil." In *Brazil: Essays on History and Politics*. University of London Press, (2018): 178

²² Leslie Bary, "Oswald de Andrade's 'Cannibalist Manifesto.'" *Latin American Literary Review* 19, no. 38 (1991): 35–37.

cultural contribution to modern statehood in 1930s Brazil. I, therefore, position *antropofagia* at the center of Brazil's nationalist imagination to situate a theoretical framework of cultural hybridity relevant to the political images of Brazilian-ness. I choose to engage with the primary text [translated by Leslie Bary] in this manner to underscore post-colonial Latin American scholarship and the on-going investigation into Andrade's historical influence on Brazil's sense of modernity in the twentieth century. I offer that Vargas' fascination with national discourses on cultural relations impacted artist interventions in politicizing Brazilian culture through the cultural paradigm model described by Andrade. In doing so, I hope to demonstrate how the interplay between cultural aesthetics within the arts scene and the relational proximity to political life provide a historical trajectory that led to HO's involvement in NCM*.

The Cultural Dimensions of the Estado Novo Dictatorship: Brazilian Propaganda and The Involvement of the Intellectual Class

Oswald de Andrade's theories of cultural "cannibalism", or *antropofagia*, first appeared in the inaugural issue of São Paulo cultural review *Revista de antropofagia* in May of 1928. *Cannibal Manifesto* (1928), Andrade openly declares the ideological basis to which the Brazilian modernist project would model its ideal political framework, opening: "Cannibalism alone unites us. Socially. Economically. Philosophically".²³ Andrade goes on to formulate, through literary and historical references, a metaphorical cultural figure that consumes the ethnic heterogeneity of the nation and its potentiality to harmonize the claims of national progress. When exploring the immediate dimensions of ethnic diversity in Brazil, anthropophagy is the motto of a modernist cultural movement articulating the urge to ingest the culture of the

²³Oswald de Andrade, and Leslie Bary. "Cannibalist Manifesto." *Latin American Literary Review* 19, no. 38 (1991): 38.

colonizer and digest it in terms of its own inversion. To devour or “absorb” the many cultures of Brazil’s complexions, Andrade coins *antropofagia* to envision the racial complexities of identity created by Brazil’s social reality into the suggestion of a new harmonious modern state culture.

Born into a bourgeois family in São Paulo, Andrade helped fund and host exhibitions for up-and-coming urban collectives he felt embodied a stylized presentation of *antropofagia* ideals.²⁴ Andrade proclaims that figurative cannibalism may produce the sum of multicultural identities within Brazil to be reimagined as a liberating and modernizing byproduct.²⁵ To this respect, Andrade’s romantic theories legitimized the cultural ideals of a modernized Brazil into a unifying “essence” to inform cultural renewal through the incorporation of cannibal-like devouring of colonial histories and the embodiment of its modern aspirations. So, it would be appropriate to consider *antropofagia*, first, as a historical metaphor passed down by colonial accounts of indigenous fetishization and the enslavement of black peoples, then as a theoretical figure in exemplifying the national reality of Brazil’s racial heterogeneity after emancipation. In observation of Brazil’s colonial histories, cannibalism has served, since the beginning of Portuguese domination of Brazil, as a historical reference to ritualistic practices of some Amerindian tribes of the Northern region of the landmass that is contemporarily known as Brazil, namely the Tupinambás.²⁶ These ritualistic practices serve not only as metaphorical reference to Tupi society, but also as a principle distinction between primitivism and civilization as understood through Portuguese imperialist worldview.²⁷ This interpretive model of literature, as described by Bary, enabled Brazil to defensively self-affirm its apparent heterogeneity (as it had been in much of Latin America during the 19th century) against European political and

²⁴ Amaral, Aracy, and Kim Mrazek Hastings. “Stages in the Formation of Brazil’s Cultural Profile.” *The Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts* 21 (1995): 9–25.

²⁵ Andrade, Bary. “Cannibalist Manifesto”, 43

²⁶ For more on the historical colonial figure referenced here see: Amy J. Buono, “Historicity, Achronicity, and the Materiality of Cultures in Colonial Brazil.” *Getty Research Journal*, no. 7 (2015): 19–34.

²⁷ Rogério Budasz, “Of Cannibals and The Recycling of Otherness.” *Music & Letters* 87, no. 1 (2006): 3.

cultural hegemony in the cultivation of a distinctly counter hegemonic yet united Brazilian form; *antropofagia*, indeed, is built on this juxtaposition. Brazil's marginality in relation to European cultural modes also foreground the assumption of a desirable formation of “cultural roots”— the generation of a powerful product of a particular cultural paradigm wherein *antropofagia* would simultaneously contest and support colonialist constructions of Brazilian culture. Thus, the national character of Brazilian identity invokes hybridization or assimilationist sentiments— as described: “the permanent transformation of the taboo into a totem,”-- from a controversial circumstance to a favorable amalgamation²⁸. This formulation aims to acknowledge a multiplicity of Indigenous, African and Portuguese cultural intersections to propel a national situation of Brazilian statehood – a goal coinciding with state leaders so dependent on such heterogeneous social realities to mobilize modernity in all areas of public life. In tandem with a romantic interpretation of Brazil’s racial relations, the newly proposed national reality for urbanizing Brazilians began to swell with diverse representations of political engagement and collective organizing in the 1930s.

Getúlio Vargas gained popularity at the time as a populist governor from Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil's southernmost state. An economic nationalist who favored industrial development and liberal reforms, Vargas championed accelerated developmental strategies towards urbanization across major exporting regions in southern Brazil. Vargas had drastically shifted the social dimensions of political identity in his first seven years as president – encouraging the sentiments of integralist ideologies, most historically aligned with Plinio Salgado, Brazilian writer, politician and leader of Brazil’s Integralist Action (AIB), a mass mobilization of Brazilian fascists founded in 1932²⁹. By 1934, a new constitution granted the central government greater

²⁸ Andrade, Bary. “Cannibalist Manifesto.”, 40

²⁹ Leandro Pereira Gonçalves, and Odilon Caldeira Neto. “Brazilian Integralism and the Corporatist Intellectual Triad.” *Portuguese Studies* 32, no. 2 (2016): 228–33.

authority and developed institutions to solidify the nation's modern image. Against this backdrop, Rafael Rossotto Ioris identifies Brazil's developmental ideals at this time to be an agent of political turbulence amongst different urbanizing segments of society as differing views on what national development could offer towards the poor and working class loomed³⁰:

The industrial growth, urban regeneration and artistic creativity of the period would be all but restricted to a minority of the population, especially those living in the wealthier parts of the large cities in the Southeast Region. Furthermore, the alleged unity around national development that purportedly characterized the period would not be capable of disguising the intense process of class differentiation and uneven development that eventually culminated in the institutional rupture of the early 1960s which heralded twenty-one long years of military dictatorship. (412)

The Estado Novo dictatorship was issued during the rule of President Vargas, initiated by a new constitution in November 1937. It is reported that anticipated political upheaval for Brazil's disenfranchised became undermined by national industrialization projects that commenced in nationalist economic interest and performed towards internationalist observers, particularly in view of Western imperialist powers such as the US. For instance, the establishment of The Department of Press and Propaganda (DIP, departamento de imprensa e propaganda) in 1939 by Vargas' regime is one of the most blatant platforms in the publication of national development that linked intellectual and artistic creations in direct favor to his authoritarian rule³¹. DIP gave shape to a complex propaganda apparatus designed to embody Brazil's modern imagination in forms geared towards both national and international audiences. Communication technologies such as print media and radio broadcasting instigated the projection of political investments in

³⁰Rafael Roosotto Ioris Antonio, Augusto Rossotto Ioris, "Assessing development and the idea of development in the 1950s in Brazil", *Brazilian Journal of Political Economy*, vol . 33, no 3, July-September/2013),.: 411-426

³¹ Steven Sloan, "Racial Identity in the 1930s Urban Landscape in the Novels of Jorge Amado, Jose Lins de Rego and Lucio Cardoso", in *African, Lusophone, and Afro-Hispanic Cultural Dialogue*, Newcastle upon Tyne, Cambridge scholars (2018) :64

institutionalized images of national progress. Between Brazil's supposed leader figure and 'the people' (most notably the urbanizing working class), *Brasilidade* (Brazilian-ness) centralized urban development via mass mediascapes to override social reckoning within Brazil's postcolonial image. The most prominent function of DIP involved the maintenance of public and intellectual discourses regarding state control. Per Vargas' request, assimilationist visions of modernity through cultural, technical and scientific works and for expenses incurred³². Such strategies broadly integrated both public and private sectors of every-day urban life into the socio-political disputes of the state. In addition to the massive flows of urbanization and state censorship of public tensions under Estado Novo, especially against minorities, most works published by DIP gave little attention to the political and social turmoil experienced throughout urbanization. Those who integrated their version of modernity with the national image of Vargas as Brazil's modernizing leader often received more promising social mobility in national publications. Thus, one may identify a bubbling sentiment in favor of political corporatism that began to characterize and consume the masses of Brazil in its many intersections of public-facing media. To support this sentiment, the domestic market was to be favored via periodical wage increases and by offering subsidized investments to consumers of public services, such as transportation, energy, and communication networks to speak to an urban Brazilian image despite its quasi-fascist ideological framework³³.

On June 2 1940, the Brazilian government signed an agreement with the United States aimed at "a complete exchange of official publications between the United States and Brazil"³⁴.

A full set of the official publications of each government's branches, departments, bureaus,

³² For more detailed accounts of DIP's publications see: Tania Regina de Luca, "The Production of the Press and Propaganda Department (DIP) in US collections: a case study" *Revista Brasileira de História*, vol. 31, nº 61 (2011): 273

³³ Ioris, "Assessing development and the idea of development in the 1950s in Brazil": 413.

³⁴ Luca, "The Production of the Press and Propaganda Department": 271

offices, and institutions would be made available to the other, excluding confidential documents. The DIP would later put this agreement in practice by forming an alliance between America's Smithsonian Institute and Brazil's National Book Institute (Instituto Nacional do Livro). Accordingly, DIP had managed to refine and distribute its propaganda output focusing on domestic political discourse (of which censorship was necessary under Vargas's dictatorship) and larger international events including WW2 tensions (when the country's exports of food supplies had accelerated)³⁵. Through this state-regulated system of publication catered towards an international audience, the ripple effect seemed to have been especially evident in Rio where DIP's headquarters was located, offering both social and political proximity to José Oiticica's developing career under Vargas' Dictatorship. JOF had made significant headway in the local and regional academic spheres during this period. He had gradually taken on teaching positions in the field of mathematics and physics at many educational institutions, eventually turning to the nature sciences after Hélió's birth, and producing articles on his entomology research by 1941³⁶. He successfully landed a long career as an expert entomologist at the National Museum in Rio from 1942 till 1964. The use of microphotography in the study of insects moved JOF to illustrate quality pictorial reproductions for his entomological works. Still based in Rio, his work at the National Museum continued as he experimented with photography techniques to bring modern relevance and technologies to his studies. He joined numerous upper-middle class amateur photographers in São Paulo, another modernizing city near Rio, where he got involved in geometric aesthetics and participated in photo exhibitions concerning modernist aesthetic imperatives. His colleagues and fellow amateur photographers had successful careers in the legal, medical, and industrial fields and like JOF had no formal training in the arts. However, the

³⁵Ioris, "Assessing development and the idea of development in the 1950s in Brazil": 411.

³⁶ Projeto Hélió Oiticica, "Biography of Hélió Oiticica (1937-1980)."

photoclub culture in São Paulo played an integral role in shaping the recognition of photography as an art form with the potential of attracting international recognition of emerging Brazilian tastes³⁷. By contributing to modern contextualization of art expression during the time, one gathers the ways in which the medium of photography provided a starting form to obscure and censor the predominance of the intellectual class in producing for state-regulated journals, fashion magazines, portraiture, advertising, and fine arts as executed through forms of nationalized mass media.

For JOF, his major career opportunity came while the shadow of the Estado Novo extended over a newly democratic Brazil. When paralleling José career opportunities following the end of the Estado Novo dictatorship in 1945, and the ousting of Vargas' fifteen years in power, the accessibility to mobility and travel abroad seemed to have been feasible to those who could afford to do so. Latin American republics such as Brazil, Peru and Uruguay were added to the larger scope of Guggenheim Fellowship competition in 1940, one year after Simsontham partnered the DIP³⁸. By the competition of 1951, citizens and permanent residents of any of the Latin American republics were eligible for Fellowships, one year after Vargas was democratically elected president again after winning the 1950 Brazilian general election (five years after the fall of the Estado Novo dictatorship). Between 1945 and 1950, JOF became more active in São Paulo's modern photography scene and received the Guggenheim fellowship to conduct research at the United States National Museum-Smithsonian Institute in D.C. from 1947 till 1950. This leads me to speculate that prior state-sponsored media ties, such as the alliance between Brazilian institutions and the Smithsonian Institute in the U.S. via DIP, can emphasize the benefits, proximity, and complicity to which institutional bias and privileges under Vargas,

³⁷ Alise Tifentale, Introduction to José Oiticica Filho's "Setting the Record Straighter". *ARTMargins* 2019; 8 (2): 105–115.

³⁸ John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, "History" <https://www.gf.org/history/>

even during the intermission stages of political reckoning, positioned the arts and public intellectual status as indicative of modernized Brazil. Growing political conflict led to Vargas's suicide in 1954; following the abrupt end to Vargas' second presidency, in October 1955, Oliveira was elected President of Brazil after having run a successful campaign that promised fifty years of economic growth and development in the five years of his presidential term. By the mid-century, following Vargas, and prolonged through succeeding president Juscelino Kubitschek, national-developmentalism became a political priority for the most influential sectors of government officials and public intellectuals in the period³⁹. Alas, when JOF and his family returned to Rio his career continued to bloom into photography, occasionally inviting a young Hélio to join him at either his photo exhibitions in São Paulo or shadowing him at the National Museum until his death in 1964. By this time, the Modernist concrete museum building at MAM Rio, designed by Affonso Eduardo Reidy (1909-1964), was completed and Hélio had begun to show his first stabs at Concrete works as a minorly featured artist in the larger collective Grupo Frente founded by his teacher Ivan Serpa.

To trace Hélio's early years, I examined the early influences that characterized his socio-political vantage point to situate how he was historically positioned to take the forefront of national identity discourse through his artistic interventions in the Brazilian political imaginary. I believe that investigating the political atmosphere surrounding HO's childhood in Rio can be useful in framing the ways in which artistic interventions with state-sponsored publications fused the arts and state propaganda model of appropriate cultural production helped define the image of racial democracy in Brazil. As laid out in prior sections, the Oiticica family benefited from, and took part in, the emergence of the developing modern art scene in Rio under the Estado Novo dictatorship. Hélio's father actively contributed to the cultivation of the intellectual and

³⁹ Ioris, "Assessing development and the idea of development in the 1950s in Brazil": 420.

political traditions of the First Republic of Brazil as a published entomologist despite having no formal education in his youth due to his grandfather's political legacy. This detail offers a socio-economic vantage to build a narrative of socialization and individual behavior under such particular political realities. A critical point in HO's historical and political genealogy rests in the histories of upper-class privileges in that way of bypassing traditional institutional education, yet attending the most prestigious art school in the country at sixteen. The fact that HO was taught by his parents indicates to me that he had a strong familial conditioning that may reinforce political worldviews through direct contact with a smaller yet advantaged bandwidth of political exposure; this indicates a strong familial conditioning that may be encouraged through early formulations in his political interventions and worldview. Such reinforcements, in conversation with appeasing political attitudes, may appear to do social work and challenge existing macro-politics but rarely stresses the inherent maintenance this claim insinuates to begin with. For instance, JOF's successful photography career during the most transformative yet repressive periods of contemporary Brazilian politics reflects this. HO's father had also created art in the period wherein the integration of artists in stylizing propaganda and publications enabled larger national discourses of modernity, international perceptions and performative culture; this emphasizes the role of artistic interventions in Brazilian media under which socio-political privileges inform the national ideology of a 'distinct' urbanized culture represented in states like Rio and São Paulo. One can stress the role of political relations in the opportunity to align with the established intellectual or creative pathways, whether via family or socioeconomically by gaining access to politicized power structures and social circles. Therefore, in order to observe Hélio's 'dissent' from these intellectualized political affairs of upper-middle class artists, one must grapple with, or at least contextualize, a general overview of the sociopolitical capabilities

of the arts within established political entanglements with cultural producers and how best to engage with those realities in later encounters of social mediations.

The “Co-Opable” Artist: HO’s Explorations in Color and the Myth of Racial Democracy

In the following section, I magnify the philosophical aims that are often highlighted, but seldom addressed in the observation of HO’s works with NCM. Starting with the founding of NCM by Ferreira Gullar, I sketch out the intellectualized objectives of NCM to which HO embodied and is often identified as the movement’s leading artists. Following a brief overview of the movement’s “phenomenological approach”, I survey examples of HO’s early NCM creations to observe how HO’s primary intervention into concrete expressions motivated a pivotal focus in color and space later on. In doing so, I illustrate the socio-spatial, political, and aesthetic conditions leading up to HO’s showcase of Parangolés, one of his most referenced works, along with their related political controversies regarding the peoples involved in his interventions. I hope to reinforce the historical and political implications of incentivizing public participation in national identity discourse in the emergence of HO’s later canonized aesthetic. Notably, I further examine the Brazilian state’s attempt to use HO’s work to aestheticize the myth of racial democracy in the aftermath of the Vargas era as desired through the cultural framework of antropofagia.

HO and the Neo-Concrete Movement: Creating National Identity in New Objects and Spaces

The first Neo-Concrete Exhibition was held in Rio in March 1959. The exhibiting artists included Amilcar de Castro, Ferreira Gullar, Franz Weissmann, Lygia Clark, Lygia Pape, Reynaldo Jardim (journalist of SDJB), and Theon Spanudis⁴⁰. Gullar’s *Neo Concrete Manifesto*

⁴⁰ Ferreira Gullar, "Manifesto Neoconcreto · ICAA Documents Project · ICAA/MFAH."

was originally published in SDJB articulating a critical reaction to earlier constructivist tendencies in Rio and Sao Paulo. Each founding member in attendance signed the artist manifesto, and despite HO's absence in this specific showing, his collaborative relationship with fellow Grupo Frente member Lygia Clark situates NCM in line with the artistic objectives that attracted many of NCM's founding artists⁴¹. The resulting break with concretism in Rio publicly projected a shift in the socio-political dimension of artworks which aimed to express "the complex reality of [the] present-day man" through its elemental and relational features. To distance themselves from the traditions of rigorous geometric arts, the collective influenced Brazilian concrete artists to construct a dynamic expression of materiality, color and structural referencing to produce an overtly Brazilian national art form. The philosophical evolution of NCM gained national popularity for its deconstruction of the traditional planes of painting and effectively introducing an elemental spatialization of pictorial objects to the forefront of modern art discourse in Rio. In particular, HO's explorations with chroma and structural manipulation helped define a vibrant and non-figurative means of expression that would procure mass-media appeal in non-figurative presentations of Brazil's national imagination in the following decades.

In December 1959, Ferrerira Gullar, founder of NCM, published "Theory of the Non-Object" addressing his concerns about the established concrete movement that briefly flourished in Brazil in the early to mid 1950s. Gullar ultimately demands that extreme rationalism in concrete arts take a major detour into an investigation of the 'non-object' — a painting or sculpture created to evoke both sensory and emotional experiences beyond geometric non-figurative expressions. He argues that particular art objects provide, through a synthesis of sensorial and mental/emotional experiences, a transitory quality intended to take place in the experience of interacting with said art object. This approach allowed for the art object to be

⁴¹ Clark, Lygia, and Yve-Alain Bois. "Nostalgia of the Body." *October* 69 (1994): 88.

reimagined in both conceptual and experiential modes of interaction and defined what would grow into an expression of phenomenological art-making in Brazil's sense of modern art and its participation in social work. Critic Mario Pedrosa, for one, revered that by the mid-fifties, local concrete artists in Rio such as Grupo Frente's younger artists (including HO) had undertaken a revolutionary and regenerative mission, employing a diverse set of elements (lace or transparent materials, letters, and wrapping paper), the use of which approaches industrial production, something which benefits industry, illustrating a promising integration to modern industrialization⁴². However, Gullar's assertion drove many of the Grupo Frente's members to reject the pure rationalist modern approach towards concrete arts and to embrace more theoretical conceptions of modern discourse through artistic means. Following Gullar's essay, he became the movement's main theoretician and followed with exhibitions to push his ideas into wider avenues of social and artistic discourse. Through this declaration, SDJB, for example, became the preferred platform for nationwide publication and debate for the most prominent figures of modern Brazilian poetry and art, particularly in observation of NCM's explorations and for those artists, poets, and critics either associated with or invested in the concrete and neo-concrete movements⁴³. From then, NCM began to formulate what would distinguish Brazilian national identity in the production of experimental arts with a phenomenological and participatory approach at its center.

After joining NCM in 1959, Oiticica first questioned the structural object of the canvas and developed *Inventions* - a monochrome series of small "paintings" suspended along exhibition walls and ceilings. Each hand-painted square was to be displayed along HO's own

⁴² Pedrosa, Mário. "Grupo Frente · ICAA Documents Project · ICAA/MFAH." Originally published in *Acadêmicos e Modernos: textos escolhidos* 3, 245-252. São Paulo: Edusp, 1998.

⁴³ Micheal Asbury, "Neoconcretism and minimalism: on Ferreira Gullar's theory of the non-object", in *Cosmopolitan Modernisms Annotating Art's Histories Series I*, Institute of International Visual Arts ; MIT Press (2005)

imaginary grid in space in an assortment of vibrant red, yellow, orange and pink panels that embodied a deconstruction of the singular plane in which geometric conventions of concretism had previously relied. Non-figurative and non-representational art objects redefined the performance of exhibitions in an attempt to inform a new agency between viewers and artists alike. In other words, the spatial deconstruction of concretism, through its exploration in color and space, captivated a participatory interpretation of Brazilian arts wherein the characteristics of public space, political life and social realities became aware of one another. Monica Amor argues that HO's early political interventions with NCM are compatible with the intellectualization of the artists' role during the period⁴⁴. Within the larger socio-political landscape, HO's first creation with NCM is best defined by its civic entanglements that motivated a transition from the national cultivation of popular culture into an aesthetic performance:

No doubt, the massive urban reconfiguration, the democratic aspirations, and the industrialist policies of president Juscelino Kubitschek (in power from 1956 to 1961) – along with the construction of a new capital city, Brasilia, importing the latest urban standards to the country's remote plains—seemed to indicate as much. The last years of the decade were a time of political, economic, and cultural prosperity that coincided with intellectual optimism for the constitution of a stable public sphere and a solid civic foundation. (26)

By this point, HO would still be working under his father at the National Museum and his art works remained isolated from larger public participation as most of his creations existed in studio space and within gallery walls.⁴⁵ HO's work from the late fifties to early sixties highlights the intellectual optimism shared among his fellow artists of middle to upper socio-economic status. Aforementioned, having joined NCM shortly after securing his first showings with Serpa

⁴⁴ Monica Amor, "From Work to Frame, In Between, and Beyond: Lygia Clark and Hélio Oiticica, 1959–1964." (*Grey Room*, no. 38 2010): 26. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27809416>. 1959-1964

⁴⁵ Irene Small, "Morphology in the Studio: Hélio Oiticica at the Museu Nacional", No. 1 (2009),: 110

at the age of twenty, HO can be observed slowly moving away from the social and political influences of his youth that made him. This socio-political isolation brought on by his immediate circle had driven him to consider other avenues of expression that existed outside the conventions of his prior pieces. By 1960, HO theorized that color pigments, wood planks, fabrics, ropes, and glass all inscribed socio-political potentiality, formed new cultural discourses upon its materiality and function, and reinterpreted the spectator/artist relationship into that of mutual explorers in socio-spatial being⁴⁶. HO's optimism would go on to be elaborated in later manifestations such as Parangolés and Tropicália where, yet again, the larger concern of spatial deconstructions and participatory interactions with art objects contextualized the expression of modern Brazilian art sensibilities with an obstruction of structure and color. NCM, in effect, sprung forward an intellectualization of artworks that uses "geometric" vocabulary to assume the expression of complex human realities into elemental projections⁴⁷. The renegotiation of color and space in HO's *Inventions* can be used to plot the basis for which HO would continue to interlock the projection of national culture and participatory art within his political interventions in Rio. Considering such national optimism bubbling from within Rio's wealthy and intellectualized class, a controversy in the relationship between state suppression of cultural production and the politicization of HO's artworks follows his activity into Mangueira favelas. After NCM's disbandment, the motivations and muses responsible for synthesizing HO's political interventions became very visible in the racialization of modern culture. HO's interest in phenomenology, in this case the phenomenon of Carioca life in modernizing Brazil, inspired a more ambitious dissent into the lived conditions of those targeted by modernizing projects.

⁴⁶André Lepecki "The Non-Time of Lived Experience: The Problem of Color in Hélio Oiticica's Early Works." *Representations*, no. 136 (2016): 85.

⁴⁷ Gullar, "Manifesto Neoconcreto.": 1

Controversies of Color and Space: The Racialized Implications of HO's Interventions

To connect HO's later explorations in color and structural form with Brazil's case of racialized spatial discrimination during urbanization is to outline the socio-political basis upon which his work can be best optimized. Thus, the following section offers that HO's experience in Mangueira's *favelas*, an area often characterized by its Afro-Brazilian population and culture, illustrates the manner in which racialized political tensions are often sidestepped in retrospect to HO's success and his "friends" involvement in popularizing Parangolés and Tropicália. In Mangueira, a neighborhood centered on the northern hills of Rio, HO would find new motivation for his color-action investigations into Brazilian art culture⁴⁸.

I must acknowledge the manner in which '*favela*' will be used to contextualize the matter of racialized spatial discrimination and state expressions of institutionalized racism in modern Brazil's political imaginary. Favelas has its historical origins in the resettlement of descendants of escaped Africans or *Quilombos* (maroons) who resisted the slavery regime and established self-sustaining communities in various areas throughout the country – favelas thus signifies an amalgamation of ethnic, geographic, and cultural features from African, Creole, and Indigenous heritage⁴⁹. In the aftermath of emancipation, the expectation of Brazilian citizenship granted to Afro-Brazilian freemen and quilombos were tacitly undermined as they were subjected to racialized state violence, hyper-surveillance and social ostracism. When Vargas was in power, the displacement and dispossession of favela settlements from central and southern regions of Rio's cityscape became lawful, effectively casting *favelas* as a manifestation of undesired urbanization, synonymous to the existence of shantytowns (an improvised and/or

⁴⁸ Gullar, "Manifesto Neoconcreto": 2

⁴⁹ Gundo Rial y Costas, "Spaces of Insecurity? The 'Favelas' of Rio de Janeiro between Stigmatization and Glorification." *Iberoamericana* (2001-) 11, no. 41 (2011): 115.

deprived housing settlement, often located on the outskirts of larger populations)⁵⁰. The national view of favelas masked the state's political crackdown on upward mobility and political agency of Afro-Brazilians by redressing crime and violence in impoverished neighborhoods to be the ills of inhabitants as opposed to the result of urban modernization. According to claims of racial democracy, Afro-Brazilians enjoyed full equality of opportunity in the absence of overtly discriminatory legislation and racism. Consequently, if Afro-Brazilians had failed to advance politically and/or economically, they were socially depicted to be unable to progress in society due to the alleged inferiority of African blood as once justified claim during enslavement.⁵¹ As previously noted, the myth of racial democracy complicates the manner in which socio-political situations shape histories of national identity in Brazil. In this case, the very existence of favelas in urban space disrupts the Brazilian state's claim of widespread national development and reflects the byproduct of the cultural and political contributions of state-controlled ethnic segregation⁵². In contemporary critique, ethnic segregation in Brazil amplifies histories of slavery, state-sponsored transplant of European immigrants, and juridical heterogeneity of color to frame the narrative of a culturally hybridized social identity dislodged from preexisting structural racism.⁵³ The social image of favelado inhabitants racialized *Afro-brasileiros* (from the north-east and dark skinned) as monolithic symbols of social instability, resource scarcity, violence, and crime-ridden communities in shack-like conditions⁵⁴. Mass media stigmatized urban settlements while simultaneously homogenizing the establishment of localized black social clubs and activist groups, in places like in Mangueira, that had minimized race-based

⁵⁰ Costas, "Spaces of Insecurity?": 117

⁵¹ Butler, "From Black History to Diasporan History: Brazilian Abolition in Afro-Atlantic Context.": 180

⁵² Greg O'Hare and Michael Barke, "The Favelas of Rio de Janeiro: A Temporal and Spatial Analysis." *GeoJournal* 56, no. 3 (2002): 226.

⁵³ Carlos Hasenbalg and Suellen Huntington. "BRAZILIAN RACIAL DEMOCRACY: REALITY OR MYTH?" *Humboldt Journal of Social Relations* 10, no. 1 (1982): 129-42.

⁵⁴Costas, "Spaces of Insecurity?": 115

discrimination in mass publications. By the turn of the twentieth century, smaller formations of urbanized dance clubs, political organizations and recreational institutions founded by disenfranchised Afro-Brazilians emerged, flourished, and were continuously sabotaged by state law⁵⁵. By the 1960s, as a consequence of political hypervisibility, the vibrant style of *favela* housing architecture and its association to the resettlement of Afro-Brazilians after emancipation made the favelas emblematic to criminality and racialization within the urban imaginary.⁵⁶

Each effort in suppressing the state-legitimized institutionalization of slavery, its remaining class formations, and long-standing socio-spatial inequalities throughout the country became central to imagining modernization in the twentieth century⁵⁷. Samba, as a genre and dance, in many respects, grew from creolized Afro-Brazilian celebration and collectivize around their African heritage and cultural legacy; this practice was publicly banned and criminalized in Rio, especially for Afro-Brazilians, however, the musical style eventually transitioned from being of favelado origins to Brazil's national genre⁵⁸. Here, the linkage between Andrade's *antropofagia* and the coinciding political enforcement of ethnic segregation can be observed in parallel. Modernization fueled the headlong pursuit of reflecting a hybridized conceptualization of Brazilian culture in emerging arts without showing an overtly Afro-Brazilian presence. The motion to absorb cultural/ethnic diversity by state leaders ensure that *Brasilide* was neither distantly of African-descendant or poor, but racially-mixed and intellectually urbanized; and HO was neither Afro-Brazilian or poor, but white, of intellectual genealogy, and seemingly primed to propel such a vision. This is particularly evident considering the barring of dark-skinned

⁵⁵ Daniel S. Lacerda, "Rio de Janeiro and the Divided State: Analyzing the Political Discourse on Favelas." *Discourse & Society* 26, no. 1 (2015): 78.

⁵⁶ Costas, "Spaces of Insecurity?": 117

⁵⁷ Leone Campos de Sousa and Paulo Nascimento. "Brazilian National Identity at a Crossroads: The Myth of Racial Democracy and the Development of Black Identity." *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 19, no. 3/4 (2008): 129–43.

⁵⁸ Robin E. Sheriff, "The Theft of Carnival: National Spectacle and Racial Politics in Rio de Janeiro." *Cultural Anthropology* 14, no. 1 (1999): 3–28.

Afro-Brazilian artists from depicting themselves in modernizing Brazilian discourse misdirected public views so Brazil's image of hybridization and racial democracy remained publically idealized.⁵⁹

Until this point, HO had dedicated three years in NCM to the structural exploration of color motivated works like *Bólides* and *Pentreables* intended to captivate the interactive embodiment of his politically-charged environmental constructions. This mode of expression along with the simultaneous modernizing project in Rio at the time induced a shift in political and artistic philosophies HO adopted. HO used his theoretical concepts to activate the every-day political spectacle of urban life that most in the upper-middle class refused to acknowledge, including himself. His desire to make public interventions with his work effectively resulted in creating a spatially aware nod to Afro-Brazilians living in favela settlements in the mountains of Rio's cityscape. In the distance, the stacked construction of brightly-colored urban settlements along the mountains provided color, structure, space, and "Brazilian-ness" that engaged with the socio-political potentiality of HO's elemental projections. His concepts soon evolved in 1963 when he had initially been invited to the favelas by sculptor Jackson Ribeiro. Once in Mangueira, HO was asked to assist local favelados and others organize carnival, a recurring cultural gathering/festival involving samba dance culture. He had taken a liking to the colorful liveliness of performance theater observed through samba and joined the local samba school in 1964 where he befriended members Nildo, Miro, Jerônimo, Mosquito, Rose, Maria Helena. HO's inclusion in carnival festivities marks the first moments where his work became actualized in movement and evolved self-participation in the performance of color. While participating in samba lessons and eventually earning the title of *passista* (master dancer), HO constructed

⁵⁹ Natasha Pravaz, "Performing Mulata-Ness: The Politics of Cultural Authenticity and Sexuality among Carioca Samba Dancers." *Latin American Perspectives* 39, no. 2 (2012): 117.

Parangolés – roughly-stitched capes, banners and wearable garments intended for both wearer and observer to interact in the spectacle of dance and color.

1964 marks one of the most pivotal years in the politicization of HO's work as the repercussions of his dissent into the Mangueira hills would enact a racialized shift in the political guise of his new social reality. In addition to HO's theory on 'the body of color', the lived expression of being racialized in the case of Afro-Brazilians interjected a coinciding dimension of aestheticizing images of national culture through its spatial and material associations to racial politics in Brazil, especially in Rio after the coup d'état by the Brazilian Armed Forces officially declared the country under military dictatorship, known as Brazil's Fifth Republic (1964–85)⁶⁰. The impending public censorship and state policing of protest motivated HO to unofficially open Opinião 65, an landmark exhibition where he was featured amongst European and Brazilian artists, with a parade of Mangueira samba dancers to premiere his Parangoles at MAM Rio⁶¹. The irruption of poor black and brown favelados dancing towards the museum wearing many variations (some including political phrases) of Parangoles, including Nildo de Mangueira, who is popularly photographed modeling of HO's "I Embody Revolt" Parangole, were forbidden to enter the museum. HO was supposedly disappointed about MAM's response to his fellow passistas but went into the surrounding garden where the festivities continued outdoors instead. Outside MAM, Rio's public viewed Mangueira dancers wearing their cheaply-constructed yet vibrant garbs and expressed the legacies of Afro-Brazilian resistance in full celebration. The public's view of Mangueira residents' and the subsequent eviction from the museum evoked an immediate disruption to the ways in which HO's artistry manifested in the public sphere thus far.

⁶⁰ Flavia M. C. Bastos. "'Tupy or Not Tupy?'" Examining Hybridity in Contemporary Brazilian Art." *Studies in Art Education* 47, no. 2 (2006): 102–17.

⁶¹ Anna Dezeuze. "Tactile Dematerialization, Sensory Politics: Hélio Oiticica's Parangolés." *Art Journal* 63, no. 2 (2004): 58–71.

Many critics, journalists, artists and onlookers applauded his production for its inviting aesthetic character and interactive optimism towards progress. Fernando Cocchiarale reflects on the historical and political importance of Opinião 65 at the beginning of the dictatorship writing⁶²:

Differently from American Pop Art, the New Brazilian Figuration produced, in many cases, through images and objects, veiled emblems of the violent political situation of the country. But we cannot reduce the variety of Brazilian artistic production in the period to merely returning to figurative imagery and to politicalization. The restrictions to freedom, during the dictatorship, produced reactions in almost all social classes, strata, and categories. The artist joined in a sort of front, informally present in the exhibitions “Opinion 65” and “Opinion 66” (MAM, Rio de Janeiro)...and launched in 1967 in the exhibition “New Brazilian Objectivity” (MAM, Rio de Janeiro). (20)

Little documentation qualifies HO’s socialization in the Mangueira area, however, he felt responsibility to reflect and confront the state’s socio-political erasure of Afro-Brazilians' lives under dictatorship. Up until this point, the public role of the intellectualized artist generated a non-figurative model to appease mainstream consumption of national culture propaganda. Modernist aspirations towards developmentalism would have easily redirected HO’s work to favor the dictatorship if HO had forcibly erased Mangueira’s residents from what he had done in prior structural explorations.

In contrast, HO’s socio-spatial challenge with local favelados emerges in a countercultural stance against the myth of racial democracy and its public mediations in political matters. HO's display of the “body of color” did not completely distance himself from the intellectualized presentation of artwork but rather used its conceptual frame to publicize Afro-Brazilian resistance to ongoing assimilation tactics perpetuated by institutionalized discrimination. The debut of *Paranogles* at Opinião 65 was performance released onto the public

⁶² Fernando Cocchiarale, “About Artists Films”, in *Filmes de artista: Brasil 1965- 1980*, Rio de Janeiro: Oi Futuro: Metr polis Produ  es Culturais (2007): 20

sphere to serve the function of those black and brown bodies who gave the garments cultural life. In consequence, HO's work also served as a complicated presentation of national identity and representation within the Brazilian art scene at the time. Being involved in the samba dance culture, HO became an intellectualized catalyst for breaking the contextual structure of concrete ideals with performance. Once he was able to incorporate himself into the lifestyles of Manguera samba dancers, his theoretical responsibilities presented a political spectacle of public-facing and visually accessible publication. In short, demonstrating the embodiment of non-figurative constructions of color and space with favelado communities integrated Mangueria Afro-Brazilian culture into the national expressions of non-figurative high art. As opposed to problematizing the stigmatization of *favela* inhabitants in national media, the intercultural appeal of HO's Parangoles alluded to an image of racial democracy that coincided with populist efforts to assimilate Afro-Brazilians into Rio's city politics in the 1960s⁶³. Oiticica's overarching concern with the Parangole series is not just the representation of dynamic cultural and political injustice but a performative politics of inclusion – the favela meaning the museum: as with aesthetics he entertains and 'ethical' anthropophagic policy of incorporation⁶⁴. On one hand, Afro-Brazilians welcomed Helio into samba culture and introduced him to a presentation of color and dance that set in motion an image of African-derived cultural works to the Brazilian art world. On the other hand, HO helped culturally imagine the participatory integration of Mangueria's cultural histories into the larger national discourse of modern art through its spatial decontextualization. Rather, Parangolés manipulates the state's criminalization and exoticification of favela settlements, samba music and the people who live and create in those spaces by making them undeniably hypervisible to state law. The national investment in the propagandic model of

⁶³ Costas, "Spaces of Insecurity?": 117

⁶⁴ Karl Posso. "An Ethics of Displaying Affection: Hélio Oiticica's Expressions of Joy and Togetherness." *Portuguese Studies* 29, no. 1 (2013): 44–77.

racial diversity fostered a socio-political environment that prioritized the dispossessing of cultural aesthetics in exchange for non-figurative modernity⁶⁵. In effect, those subjected to political and cultural distortion are, in turn, mythologized as muses for national progress, but still publicly prohibited to do so.

The “Controllable” Artist: Questioning HO’s Canonized Aesthetic

I close this project with ‘The Controllable Artist’; this section is an attempt to think through the linked narratives of individual, collective, and institutional censorship of countercultural movements, such as Tropicalism, that would gain inspiration from HO’s political interventions. By also appropriating the social relationship state’s ideal image of national culture and propaganda, the political character of social phenomena, in this case, the survival of social marginalization and the need to express political agency is to be contextualized through historical reflection. My final thoughts on HO and his artistic works opens a historical reflection of HO’s 1967 installation *Tropicalia* and underscores the sociopolitical value accredited to the figure of ‘the artist’ and their political roles in envisioning a cultural hybridization of the nation state. In addition, it is important to clarify what is visible to the eye of history is not what is known or visible. I do not make light of the suppression, elimination and silencing of potential agitators from public and political life in the realm of historical recounting — this washing of peoples and knowledge is fundamental to the ways in which state censorship produces its own justification through this normalized practice. So far, this approach has marked the historical boundary for national identity in the spotlight on shifting expressions of political identity and its relationship to the context of its existing power structures.

⁶⁵ Cyriaco Lopes, “THE ‘CÃO MULATO’ IN CONTEXT: CONCEPT AND PRESENCE OF THE MULATTO IN BRAZILIAN ART.” *Source: Notes in the History of Art* 31, no. 3 (2012): 43–52.

Tropicália to Tropicalismo: Appropriating Resistance and Marginal Arts in Popular Culture?

I would like to conclude this project by reiterating my political analysis of HO's interventions as those points demonstrate an excellent case study of both micro (localized) and macro (national) processes of the shifting political character of social phenomena in historical reflection. Each section of this essay magnifies the role of the artists' relational shifts between local and national interests conflate and renegotiate the political discontinuities upon which their creation relies on for public appeal.

Firstly, the Compatible Artist section established the historical context in which popular notions about HO's legacy was suspended and further discusses the historical situation that supports the political and social capabilities of the modern Brazilian artists prior to HO's upbringing. So, what are social and political conditions that enable artists to be historically remembered? I find that HO's immediate exposure to the intellectual class (via family relations) and the subsequent access to institutional networks (via media coverage and funding) designated the political capabilities of Brazilian art to the forefront of national public debate in state-favorable and state-sponsored publications. The resulting urban imaginary cultivated by modern Brazilian intellectual thought at the time, which included HO's father's artistic contributions, helped situate artists' work along the cultural nexus of nationalist and assimilationist propaganda. Here, the contextual framework that organized modernization and the development of nationalist propaganda supported how HO's future interventions fit into the larger socio-political interplay of political and aesthetic discourse in 1960s Brazil.

Secondly, the Co-opable Artist denoted the elevation of a new political and/or artistic optimism towards the socio-political needs of a localized social group that was maximized

beyond the scope of its own presentation. So, how do artists intervene in both local and national politics with their works? While involved in NCM, Helio contributed to the non-figurative uses of color and space that paralleled the intellectualized public image of modern high art, thus the trajectory of Brazilian arts as a distinctive national image manifested within various levels of social discourse that contributed to the social work of defining national identity. The institutional investment into the works of the modern artists, especially in urban space, exemplifies the dual regulation of local/national social realities that sprung forward and reflects the ideological claims of political and aesthetic harmony. In this case, artists were expected to have a relatively good grasp on the institutional desires, expectations and social capabilities to platform their work - essentially to ensure that the immediate function of the work speaks to or coincides with the status quo that enables artists to assume publicity. The space in which HO positions himself is the political mediation between marginalized cultural figures and the institutional promise of mass publication. For instance, when Parangolés premiered at MAM Rio, Mangueira's cultural expressions (carnaval, samba) were banned and criminalized by the state so effectively banning favelados from entering the museum space was simply one example of widespread censorship throughout Rio de Janeiro. Here, the manner in which HO's receives blatant rejection from his alma mater seemingly unveiled the conventions of institutionalized racism that barred the social recognition of Afro-Brazilian cultural art forms. Not only does HO co-opt his friends' performance of color in resistance to social injustice, but he also adopts the institutional proposition of informing cultural elevation as observed through the platforming of his work in later installation Tropicália. Evidently, HO had successfully incorporated his friends into modern art discourse and planned to expand his presentations in the following years. Yet, the optimism of the day for freedom and joy led Brazil into a twenty-one long year dictatorship.

After the popular debut of Parangolés, HO begins to plan Tropicália (1967) where he appropriates the non-figurative favela aesthetics and uses non-figurative representations of favelado aesthetics to welcome museum-goers to casually walk, lounge, and rest in a curated scene of a “Brazilian” tropical backyard. The indoor galley space at MAM Rio was staged to evoke the warped fantasy of white sand beaches, parrot bird sounds, colorful fabrics of blissful paradise.⁶⁶ HO’s environmental appropriation of favela settlements, in addition to two enterable labyrinth structures called Penetrables, openly scandalize the relationship between emblematic presentations of “Brazilness” and public perception of the art object.. So, why do artists assist in consolidating the social narrative of national identity? HO begins to associate the marginalized position of “the artist” in society with the marginalization of favela communities to further distance himself from projection of “excessive intellectualization”.⁶⁷ Tropicália purposely disrupts the sensory interactions made with the stereotypical display of tropical paradise, inviting the individual to whom the work is addressed to complete the meanings proposed by it—it is thus open to interpretation of ‘new’ Brazilian objectivity. In a 1968 diary entry, HO notes that his installation aims to define the New Brazilian Objectivity exhibition by devouring the spectator into “the most anthropophagic work in Brazilian art”.⁶⁸ The element of spectator participation in HO’s work orchestrates a subtle critique, on the inviting non-figurative images of Brazil’s national culture as “cliche” or “mythical” representations of nationhood. Thus, the active participation of spectators can either appropriate or recognize romantic undertones from their own socio-political vantage point. As such, by conforming to the society-wide political subjectship, it is neither an expression of the needs of Mangueria’s favelas, nor of the needs of

⁶⁶ Bastos, “‘Tupy or Not Tupy?’ Examining Hybridity in Contemporary Brazilian Art.”:109

⁶⁷ Helio Oiticica, et al. “General Scheme of the New Objectivity”, in *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*, MIT Press (1999): 1-3

⁶⁸ Bastos, “‘Tupy or Not Tupy?’ Examining Hybridity in Contemporary Brazilian Art.”:110

modern Brazilian art culture, but an expression of the class' notion and knowledge of marginalized peoples and the underlying resistance against cultural erasure and political suppression in the artwork⁶⁹. To this result, HO's anthropophagic performance brings forward the multisensory pleasure of consuming idealized national aesthetics. HO straddles neo-anthropofagia expressions – reflecting active self-censorship of state violence presented and intentionally mythologized in the curated Brazilian paradise. He effectively popularized the political and environmental disembodiment of Brazil's national culture into a motif of romantic symbols of Brazil's modern paradise.

Finally, to end, the Controllable Artist section signifies that the existing political dynamics in Rio displays a power imbalance between the force of centralized state dictatorship and the hypervisibility of criminalized favelados. HO's intervention would not have attracted as much momentum had it not been for his appropriation of marginalized art, i.e. Mangueira culture is already perpetuated in the state's stigmatization of marginalized peoples and art. HO's institutional entanglements in the relations, interactions, and especially, the struggle between intellectual elites and favelados groups is remarkably controlled within the status quo of state cultural investments. The state was able to hijack marginalized culture through the popular culture created around the erasure of favelados and HO, in effect, helped mask the modernist project by co-opt Afro-Brazilian cultural resistance into pleasurable and digestible elements of national culture. The social narrative describing his work in a way identifies and reflects the political value granted toward those projection the state's preferred developmental image of progress.

⁶⁹ Bueno, Amy J. "Historicity, Achronicity, and the Materiality of Cultures in Colonial Brazil." *Getty Research Journal*, no. 7 (2015): 19–34.

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