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IVERSITY IN THE ARTIST'S
EXHIBITION TRAJECTORY:
THE CASE OF HÉLIO OITICICA

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ABSTRACT

The paper analyzes the exhibition history of the artist Hélio Oiticica and adopts as a starting point his international reception. It aims to study how the artwork and the artist become valuable, and how it changes over the time. How are the career strategies of a successful artist built? And what is the importance of an art exhibition in this process? The exhibition of Hélio Oiticica's artwork was conceived in three periods: the first when the artist was alive (1965-1980), and directly acted as a curator of his own exhibitions; the second period (around 1980-90) concerns the big events and exhibitions that traveled around America and Europe; and the third period, from the 2000s until today, when the artworks were bought by museums, institutions and international private collections. The critical examination of the international reception of Brazilian art intends to expand the comprehension of contemporary art practices, such as the multiple influences that may contribute to the value of an art object, intensifying the production of an artist. This research identifies the persons involved with Hélio Oiticica's work – critics, independent curators, collectors, art dealers and artists.

KEYWORDS

Exhibition. Hélio Oiticica. Brazilian art. Art market. Curatorship.

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VARIÁVEIS DE UMA TRAJETÓRIA EXPOSITIVA: O CASO HÉLIO OITICICA

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RESUMO

O artigo analisa a trajetória expositiva de Hélio Oiticica e adota como ponto de partida sua projeção internacional, com a finalidade de investigar o interesse por um artista, e as oscilações de sua recepção ao longo do tempo. De que maneira são construídas as estratégias que incidem no valor de uma trajetória artística? E qual o peso e efeito de uma exposição neste processo? O percurso expositivo de Hélio Oiticica foi compreendido em três momentos: o primeiro quando o artista era vivo (1965-1980) e agiu diretamente nas escolhas e montagens dos eventos que participou, atuando como artista e curador; o segundo momento (aproximadamente entre 1980-90), caracterizado por grandiosos eventos que circularam entre América do Norte e Europa, e o terceiro, a partir dos anos 2000 até os dias atuais, quando sua produção passa a pertencer a acervos de museus e coleções internacionais. O estudo contribui para a compreensão do campo da arte e diversas variáveis que incidem no processo de reconhecimento de uma carreira artística, seja potencializando sua difusão como também contribuindo para a intensificação de sua produção, e identifica atores que compõem este circuito, nomeadamente estrangeiros – críticos; curadores, independentes ou ligados a instituições; colecionadores; marchands; artistas.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Exposições. Oiticica, Hélio (1937-1980). Internacional. Valor. Recepção.

INTRODUCTION

The reception of an artist and his work involves a set of dynamic, disruptive and discordant relations, the conflict of ideas and memories – consolidated or blurred. The artist leaves traces on his works, actions, texts and memories, which often traverses through a wide and complex route to reach the public. The trajectories of the work, where it is inserted and how it was presented, all variables central to the reception, involve fragilities and resistances of a field under constant transformation.

This work is part of the thesis ¹ that investigates Hélio Oiticica's reception over the course of the exhibitions in order to disclose the variables that take place in recognizing an artistic production. The assessment of the main international exhibitions served as a structuring axis to discuss the trajectory and perception of his production in different periods, from the mesh of relationships established in life, the trajectory after his death, until the present days. The analysis of the exhibition trajectory over the course of its reception examines the role of the events in order to understand his propositions.

Hélio Oiticica produced a sizable artistic production, portrayed in an experimental aspect both in the use of materials and supports, as well as in the exhibition modes and how the relationships between space, work and the public were presented. In general, the artistic context in the 1960s and 1970s responded to the need to express by reacting to repression in order to demystify the object through experimental practice, nonconformism and possible languages within participatory art. According to Celso Favaretto, "*in anti-art manifestations what is essential is the participants' confrontation with situations.*" (1990, p. 153). In general, there was interest in the public's behavioral aspect, in raising awareness and releasing fantasies, in sensitizing viewers and dislocating them from that place and common sense. Consequently, artistic practices can be considered as reflective practices.²

The denial to venerate the artistic object in proposals that reconceptualize, disintegrate and recreate its image underlies the work of Hélio Oiticica. In addition to idealizing an aesthetic universe, Oiticica intended to transform the participants, "*providing them with propositions open to an imaginative exercise*", in order to "*unsettle the individual*", aimed at "*targeting his ethical-social behavior*", according to Favaretto (1990, p. 152)³. Hélio Oiticica developed his proposals in series, numbered and classified, actions ranging from "behavioral propositions" to "environmental manifestation directives", or an experimental exercise ⁴, such as an extensive program, a term also used by the artist himself, to synthesize the scope of his production with greater accuracy:

Every arrangement of the program is designated by a word or expression which, poetic and strange, indicates the nature of the proposition and the procedures involved. An irreducible symbol of the difference, each name delimits an area of action. Metaesquemas, Invenções, bilaterais, Relevos Espaciais, Núcleos, Penetráveis, Bólides, Parangolés, Manifestações Ambientais, Apropriações, Tropicália, Supressensorial, Crelazer, Probjeto, Apocalipopótese, Eden, Ninhos, Barracão, Não-Narrativas, Subterrânia, Delírio Ambulatório, Contra Bólides are designations of

¹The doctoral thesis Elos and Assimetrias on the reception of Hélio Oiticica, defended in 2014 under the guidance of Prof. Dr. Agnaldo Farias at FAU-USP, available at: <http://www.teses.usp.br/teses/disponiveis/16/16133/tde-25072014-092309/pt-br.php>. The research was granted with CNPq and CAPES PSDE financial aids.

²The text Celso Favaretto, "Aesthetic nonconformity, social nonconformity, Hélio Oiticica", originally published in the *Journal Gaia*, SP, USP, 1989. Later republished in the journal *Educação e Filosofia*. Universidade Federal de Uberlândia, v. 4, n. 8, Jan-Jun. 1990, p. 151-158.

³Idem II.

⁴In this article, to classify the diversity and complexity of this set, as well as an analysis of every stage/program and its association with the philosophy or artists is not an easy task, considering the well conducted analyses by scholars on Hélio Oiticica such as Celso Favaretto (1992), Luciano Figueiredo (2007), Glória Ferreira (FUNARTE, 1986), Guy Brett (2007), Catherine David (BRETT, 1992), Paula Braga (2008), and many others pointed out in the literature bibliography.

progressive experimental intensities, indispensable in the proposals, such as color, time, structure, body, participation. (FAVARETTO, 1992, p. 17)

This program, when revealed, should disclose every effort and analysis of the artist, his production as a process, such as a network connected and interconnected in stages. The fragmentation or partial exposure of this set in fact inhibits and eschews the complexity and depth with which he approached questions related to color, form and space, so dear to the artist. When the production was assembled by the collection, the set to be exhibited had strength and force, the amount of works sent to the exhibitions allowed understanding the process and all the in-depth research developed in a serial sequence, in most of the propositions by Hélio Oiticica. After this compilation was dispersed in the collections, and after the partial destruction of the collection⁵, in the fire, one wonders if it is possible to exhibit the set and the meaning of its potential transgressor.

The pre-eminent position of Hélio Oiticica, Lygia and Mira Schendel, according to the critic Rodrigo Naves (2002, p. 14) was definitely formalized with the XXII Biennial of São Paulo, in 1994. However, for the international critics⁶ the retrospective exhibition Hélio Oiticica, displayed from 1992 to 1994 in Europe and the United States, coupled with the *Documenta X* of Catherine David in 1997 and the São Paulo Biennial of 1998, were the main events that emphasized these artists' point of view.

The exhibition trajectory of Hélio Oiticica can be understood here by three stages, in chronological order: The first refers to the period of the artist while alive, which includes the period corresponding to the first exhibitions outside Brazil (1965), until the year of his death (1980); the second is characterized by large exhibitions widely circulated in Europe and the United States, the exhibition *Brazil Projects* (1988), in the late 1980s, the exhibitions of *Latin American Art*, the Retrospective *Hélio Oiticica*, the *Documenta X* and the *Biennial of Havana*, which occurred in the 1990s; a relevant period for the work to be appreciated as a whole; and the third stage, when his works are bought by museums, institutions and international collectors, selected as the major exhibitions in the United States, in the 2000s, the exhibitions *Brazil Body and Soul*, *Beyond Geometry*, *Quase-Cinemas and Tropicália*, were analyzed by the curators' testimonies, questioning aspects related to the then current perception of Hélio Oiticica.

FIRST PHASE – HO CROSSING THE OCEAN

The first insertion of Hélio Oiticica outside Brazil was the *Bólido Methamorphosis*, exhibited in the *Signals* gallery in London in 1965, when the artist first made contact with the art critic Guy Brett, and the members involved with *Signals*, such as Paul Keeler and the artist David Medalla, whose contact resulted in the publication of the first texts of Hélio Oiticica abroad. Oiticica's contact with Guy Brett and David Medalla was established through the Brazilian artist Sérgio Camargo. This meeting resulted in the paradigmatic exhibition at the Whitechapel Gallery in London, in 1969, four years after the first contact in 1965 (BRETT; FIGUEIREDO, 2007, p. 11).

⁵In October 2009, the fire in the family home, which housed the Oiticica collection, destroyed 90% of the artworks, which undoubtedly puts into question the effective preservation conditions of the works. The Brazilian media covered in detail the sad episode, for more details on the facts see: <http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/folha/cotidiano/ult95u639678.shtml>. Also ALAMBERT, Francisco. The Oiticica Fire. *Ari Journal* (New York, 1960), v. 68, p. 113-114, 2009.

⁶The critics interviewed during the doctoral research that revealed this position were: Carlos Basualdo, Edward Sullivan, Gabriela Rangel, Gabriel Perez-Barreiro, Irene Small, Luis Perez-Oramas, Lynn Zelevansky, Mari Carmen Ramirez.

⁷Kynaston McShine, before organizing the *Information* exhibition at MoMA-NY in 1970, had organized the exhibition *Primary Structures* in the Jewish Museum of Nova York in 1966, which drew attention to an art form, later known as “minimal art”.

The *Whitechapel Experience* (1969), as the artist liked to call it, was a very important moment for Hélio Oiticica’s development and intellectual maturity; he was free to propose, create and assemble his works in a single space. It was a stimulating institutional relationship because the gallery, which had the resources, gave Hélio Oiticica complete freedom to execute his proposals and achieve his ideals. The exhibition was widely publicized, received television coverage and had a significant audience. The artist acquired self-confidence; the exhibition was a great stimulus for his investigations, as recorded in the numerous letters he wrote, and documented in the PHO digital archive (Projeto Hélio Oiticica). Although he also received negative reviews in British newspapers during the exhibition (GOSLING, 1969), the reception of the artwork in London was very different from what was reported in Brazil. There, different opinions divided the public that visited the exhibition; some critics were skeptical of the artist’s intentions (MULLINS, 1969a, 1969b) and the statements of Paul Overly (OVERLY, 1969) and Guy Brett (BRETT, 1969), who defended and justified the propositions of the unknown South American artist.

The exhibition in London and the discussions surrounding it resulted in the dissemination of his work in other countries. Because of the visibility of the *Whitechapel Experience*, Hélio Oiticica was invited to participate in the exhibition *Information* at the *Museum of Modern Art* (MoMA) in New York the following year, organized by Kynaston Mcshine⁷. In the list of artists who would participate in the exhibition, Hélio Oiticica was present from the beginning with the following statement next to his name: *Environmental artist with solo exhibition at the Whitechapel gallery in London* (MCSHINE, 17 nov.1969a). The first contact between the curator Kynaston Mcshine and Hélio Oiticica was established in London, when he sent some slides of his works and photos of the exhibition to the curator.

Hélio Oiticica arrived in New York with his passport stamped by the solo exhibition in the respected British institution, the *Whitechapel Gallery*. In New York, Hélio Oiticica’s exhibition experience was quite different, *Information* was a group exhibition made up of a large number of artists participating with innovative and provocative works. Initially, Hélio Oiticica proposed projecting a film in one setting, then he changed his proposal. Kynaston Mcshine sent him a written telex: *Think Tropicália* (MCSHINE, 1970) and his response was the *Ninhos*, a more elaborate version of the proposal carried out in a workshop at the University of Essex, a production he executed soon after the end of his solo exhibition at the *Whitechapel Gallery*.

In the exhibition *Information*, in New York in 1970, the *Ninhos* was overshadowed by other more controversial direct, provocative and political artwork, as for instance the work of Hans Haacke, and the Olivetti machine, which showed movies at the very entrance of the exhibition, which had an immense effect on the public. Hélio Oiticica proposed the *Ninhos* – a structure with wooden beams that formed a set with nine beds, one beside the other, separated by the cloth material. The photographs of the exhibition show people relaxed and playing in the niches proposed by the artist. In the reports published, Hélio Oiticica was presented to the public as the author of spaces in which the *public could lie down*. The exhibition *Information* was very controversial, it faced challenges and generated discussions within the museum, according to the documents

consulted in MoMA's collection, such as the letters exchanged between directors and curators, and also harsh criticism and comments about the exhibition content⁸. Currently, *Information* is considered a paradigmatic exhibition, important for the History of Art – the first conceptual art exhibition in the United States. Hélio Oiticica was in New York for the exhibition *Information*, in July 1970, when he was awarded a Guggenheim Foundation grant. He moved to New York in December 1970 and remained until 1978. While preparing for his trip, he envisioned a new way of living, still in Brazil he thought about building a space, a version of the *Ninhos*, which he proposed to MoMA, he envisaged a space where he could live and receive guests in his apartment, he did not want a conventional way of life, he wanted to build and live his proposals in new spatialities.

From the beginning of his career, the artist created a network of contacts that he maintained throughout his life: in Brazil, they were artists, critics and colleagues, and when he lived in London and New York, he internationalized and expanded this network of contacts. This group of people, with whom he related, contributed to the posthumous reception of his production, especially when he began to circulate outside Brazil, in the late 1980s. In New York, Hélio Oiticica was not able to build his Central Park project, but he fought for it and kept in touch with the influential people he met, such as Kynaston McShine, Lucy Lippard, Jaqueline Barnitz, John Perrault, Dore Ashton. In the many letters he sent to people, some requested recommendations for the renewal of his grant, others were to get a Green Card, or asking for support to enable his urban intervention proposal. During the period he lived in New York, he maintained regular contact with Brazil, through letters exchanged with Brazilian critics such as Mario Pedrosa, Aracy Amaral, Roberto Pontual and Frederico Morais. His contact with family and friends was through daily and weekly letters in which he recounted his everyday routine, the underground film sessions of Jack Smith, his meetings with interesting people, his projects, expectations and frustrations experienced in New York. Upon returning to Brazil, in 1978, Hélio Oiticica was fully connected to the local artistic milieu; he arrived full of plans, projects, invitations and many partners; he performed collective works with various artists, such as *Kleemania*, *Barracão*, *acontecimentos poéticos urbanos*, etc.

Hélio Oiticica's stay abroad contributed to the posthumous reception of his work in the 1990s, he began a network of contacts during his life, which expanded even after his death. And his resume has two exhibitions in renowned institutions, the solo exhibition in London, *Whitechapel Gallery*, and the collective exhibition in New York at MoMA. An immersion in the documents of Hélio Oiticica: letters, clippings, published texts enabled to identify the size of the network he established and the constant communication with artists, thinkers and critics. The written material and documents he left also contributed to the dissemination and interest for his work by researchers and students, 20 years later, more precisely in the 1990s. Although Hélio Oiticica did not participate actively in exhibitions and in art galleries, he was producing, exchanging information and contacting artists, critics, writers and poets, such as Lucy Lippard (at parties), Dore Ashton, Jaqueline Barnitz, John Perreault and definitely Guy Brett.

⁸ Regarding the Information Exhibition at the MoMA and internal discussions that occurred before and during the exhibition see article: RUGGIERO, Amanda Saba. Information Helio Oiticica at MoMA in New York in 1970. In: Arqumuseus 4º Seminário Internacional de Museografia e arquitetura de museus (4th International Seminar on Museography and Museum Architecture). 2014. Rio de Janeiro. Anais. UFRJ. Available at: http://arqumuseus.arq.br/seminario2014/transferencias/eixo02_cultura_e_exposicoes/e02-amanda_saba_ruggiero.pdf

⁹The Inhotim Institute built the Cosmococa Gallery in 2008, a project by the Architects Associates office. The gallery has five rooms for the Cosmococa series, a project conceived by Hélio Oiticica in partnership with the filmmaker Neville d'Almeida. The rooms are connected by a central hall, located in an expansion area of the Institute, amidst exuberant nature carefully reconstructed and maintained by the park.

¹⁰Luciano Figueiredo, visual artist, lives in Rio de Janeiro. He was a colleague of HO and was involved with the Hélio Oiticica collection since his death in 1980, and participated directly in the HO collection projects.

¹¹Luciano Figueiredo HO was the front of the HO Project, Curator Catherine David (*Galerie nationale du Jeu de Paume* in Paris), Guy Brett and collaborators in Spain (*Fundació Antoni Tàpies* in Barcelona), Portugal (*Centro de Arte Moderna da Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian* in Lisbon) and the US (*Walker Art Center* in Minneapolis).

Mediated by Silviano Santiago, Hélio Oiticica held a conference at the Albright Knox gallery in Buffalo (SANTIAGO, 1998). Through the artist's documents and testimonies, it can be seen that he was very pleased with this way of exhibiting his work. It was a lecture in which he presented slides, in which he spoke and projected images of his works. The Buffalo conference was a response to how he confronted some institutional and market aspects, although he was in agreement with the sale of his works in Brazil, allowing his brother to take care of the sales of the meta-schemes, in the gallery Ralph Camargo in SP. It is necessary to emphasize the exhibition outline the artist chose, which showed the entire artwork, through images projected via a slide projector in a two-dimensional plane, an exhibition/lecture. More relevant than having the pieces exposed, his choice was to exhibit his process, and the sequence of "programs" that made up his biography until that time. This is an episode that reaffirms the artist's conviction not to highlight his production with the condition of the work or traditional artistic object, but rather to incite the awareness and the experience of the public confronted with his experiments.

Despite the disagreements in the British reception regarding the exhibition, the artist's presence in the assembly and throughout the exhibition was important to establish proximity with the public, which was what the artist desired, as well as the means of dissemination. The exhibition in London was a life experience in which he assembled his entire production in a single space. The other exhibitions in New York and in Brazil contributed to his career, intensifying his contacts and establishing institutional relationships, which resonated more intensely in the posthumous trajectory than during his life. Oiticica rejected the traditional model of exhibiting in galleries and institutions when he was in New York and sought to carry out his projects and programs in the city. In the United States he was not able to do so, but when he returned to Brazil, he faced difficulties to carry out projects like the *Barracão*, and performances like *Klemania and Delírio Ambulatório*. He kept the projects in documents and in records that later were constructed and reconstructed, as for example the *Cosmococas*⁹ among other projects in Brazil and abroad.

SECOND PHASE – POSTHUMOUS DIRECTIONS

After the artist's death, his production was exhibited in the 1980s in Brazil, particularly in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro¹⁰. Abroad, the exhibition *Brazil Projects*, at PS1 in New York, displayed a significant number of works of Hélio Oiticica and sparked great interest in many people, as Edward Sullivan said when he saw *Tropicália* for the first time (SULLIVAN, 2013). And in particular, Chris Dercon, who developed the project and enabled the exhibition *Retrospectiva Helio Oiticica*. He assembled a team of collaborators and connoisseurs of Hélio Oiticica, and together¹¹ promoted the colorful and attractive exhibition, displaying an all-embracing set that encompassed all periods of the artist's life, from *bólides*, *núcleos*, *penetráveis*, to *ambientes*.

Guy Brett, mentioned in all of the interviews during the research, contributed to the "translation and dissemination" of Hélio Oiticica to Europeans and

Americans and undoubtedly to other Brazilian artists such as Lygia Clark, Lygia Pape, Sergio Camargo. But in the specific case of Hélio Oiticica, his performance was crucial; the respect for his work, the contact and affinity he established with the artist. The presence of Guy Brett in lectures and seminars in the United States and Europe, together with the published texts, were instrumental in the translation and dissemination of Oiticica, according to the account of the curator Gabriela Rangel¹²:

I was very lucky, as I was visiting New York in the 1990s. I went to MoMA at an event where Guy Brett was going to talk about Oiticica. I was delighted with Guy Brett's description of the work, his critical judgment, and that is when I discovered this artist. I thought: it was like a Joseph Beuys! Just as important! So I decided to study Oiticica more, I bought a book and after that I fell in love with him. (...) I owe Guy Brett for getting to know Oiticica. He had a role, which was to disseminate Oiticica's work. (RANGEL, 2013)

Hélio Oiticica was the cover of *Art in América* and thereafter there were many followers and admirers. Guy Brett, Chris Dercon and Catherine David were important links in the internationalization and diffusion of his production in the 1990s.

The retrospective exhibition *Hélio Oiticica* was a revelation for many, a far-reaching event which, besides assembling a significant number of works, organized and made available a broad and diversified material through the catalog, published in four languages, a document used as a reference to the present day. The retrospective became a successful model, amid the context of large collective exhibitions and the global diffusion of major events such as art biennials. The solo exhibition enabled to understand and appreciate the artist's trajectory, which resulted in the appreciation and diffusion of this production within an international scenario.

The retrospective was the point that changed everything - it was the first time this work was displayed. As the artist made all the blocks, every constellation, every chronology demonstrated, and seen, one could analyze and see why Hélio prepared his work the way he did, how demanding he was and why his work was an integral whole. In fact, his work was a complete set, and he presented it as a chain, a link to the other; his work functions like this. An exhibition of only meta-schemas says very little about his work. When everything is seen up close, one can see the artist, the trajectory, the originality and the process. Without this, one falls into a reduced terrain, which simplifies and does not enrich the reading (FIGUEIREDO, 2013).

While Hélio Oiticica circulated outside Brazil, strategies developed in a national environment for the promotion and sale of Brazilian artists abroad, headed by the banker Edemar Cid Ferreira, that demonstrated its effectiveness (NAVES, 2005). The *Brazilian art* event in New York, in 1995, was a result of this strategy. Regarding Hélio Oiticica's exhibition of *cosmococa*, at the Marian Goodman gallery, there was a positive effect between the work and the context in which it was displayed. This was a remarkable experience, as recorded in Sergio Bessa's testimonial, which also resulted in the interest of the critic Carlos Basualdo¹³ to organize other exhibitions about Hélio Oiticica.

¹² Gabriela Rangel: director and curator of visual arts at the *Americas Society*. She worked as assistant curator of Latin American art and as programming coordinator of the International Center for the Arts of the Americas at the Museum of Fine Arts Houston.

¹³ Carlos Basualdo, Curator of the Fine Arts Museum of Philadelphia, organized the exhibition *Quase-Cinemas and Tropicália*.

¹⁴The exhibitions of the Cisneros collection were not analyzed in this study, but their importance for the dissemination and study of Hélio Oiticica's work in the United States, as well as other Brazilian and Latin American artists should be emphasized. In 2010, the exhibition *Beyond Participation: Hélio Oiticica & Neville d'Almeida in New York* was organized in the art gallery of Hunter College of New York by Jocelyn Meade Elliotte – student of the masters program of that institution.

¹⁵The Article *Nas quebradas de uma obra remontada*, discusses the context of the work and possible unbondings since there is not necessarily a desire to go into and engage more information about a work so the body of work can gain new meanings or none issues that continue beyond many works of contemporary artists: http://www.arquimuseus.arq.br/seminario2016/artigos/e02/e02-amanda_saba_ruggiero.pdf

¹⁶For more details and information on the Houston exhibit and the history of the museum's restoration and involvement with the HO collection, see the chapter *The exhibition Body of Color* (p. 136 to 148) of the thesis by RUGGIERO, Amanda Saba. *Elos and Assimetrias on the reception of Hélio Oiticica*. 2014. Thesis (Doctorate in History and Fundamentals of Architecture and Urbanism) – Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism, University of São Paulo, São Paulo, 2014.

¹⁷<http://www.mfah.org/more-information-helio-oiticica-metaesquema-12/>

¹⁸<http://www.mfah.org/art/100-highlights/vermelho-cortando-o-branco/>

¹⁹<http://www.mfah.org/art/detail/oitica-relevo-espacial-spatial-relief/>

I think it is important to look in depth at some aspects of his work. I was fascinated by Cosmococas when I saw the exhibition at the Marian Goodman gallery in 1995, which showed one of the Cosmococas, Hendrix War, which I loved, and thought it would be interesting viewing this series again, That's why I proposed the Quasi-Cinemas, where I tried to focus on the relationship between HO and the cinema. (BASUALDO, 2013).

The collective exhibitions on Latin America art that circulated in American and European museums in the late 1980s and early 1990s were generally criticized for perpetuating the primitive, the fantastic and the figurative stereotypes, as Mari Carmen Ramirez pointed out in the text *Beyond the fantastic* (RAMIREZ, 1992). Although these exhibitions received some criticism, the large collective Latin American art contributed to the visibility and dissemination of the work of Brazilian artists, especially collectors of Latin American art. In Brazil these events were transmitted by the local media as the conquest and recognition of a national production abroad. The catalogs from these exhibitions repositioned artists and the so-called "official" narratives about productions "South of the Rio Grande."

The inclusion of Oiticica, in a prominent position, with a special room in the X *Documenta* of Kassel in 1997 by the french curator Catherine David, was important, and this aroused the institutional interest along with the market interest for the acquisition of Hélio Oiticica's work, and the work of other Brazilian artists.

Another important aspect was the internal changes that took place at the MoMA of New York, from mid-to-late 1990s. Hélio Oiticica's work entered the permanent collection of the museum, from the donations of Patricia Phelps Cisneros, in 1997, the same year that Hélio Oiticica was in *Documenta X*. After 2000, Hélio Oiticica's work was also displayed in the exhibitions of the Cisneros collection, such as the exhibition *Geometric Abstraction: Latin American art from the Patricia Phelps de Cisneros Collection*, at the Art Museum of Harvard University, Cambridge.¹⁴

After entering the MoMA collection in New York in 1997, there was growing interest by American museums to acquire works of Hélio Oiticica. After the exhibition *Beyond Geometry*, at LACMA in Los Angeles, the museum acquired the installation *Nas quebradas*¹⁵.

There was a history of facts, associated to the Houston Museum, which since the beginning of the project was interested in acquiring the artwork of Hélio Oiticica. All restoration done in the paintings, like meta-schemas, spatial reliefs, was carried out with high technical refinement. In the catalog of the exhibition *Body of Color*, the text on the restoration of the works analyzes in depth every method used by the artist, as well as the sequence of paints, colors and pigments used. This was an innovative and profound work regarding the techniques and methods used by the artist¹⁶.

In the collection of the Houston Museum, the art work of Hélio Oiticica came from the collection of Adolph Leirner, the *Metaesquema 12*¹⁷, the metaesquema *vermelho cortando o branco*¹⁸, and a spatial relief¹⁹. The exhibition *Body of Color* also resulted in the acquisition of works by the *Tate Modern* Museum in London; which

acquired *metaesquemas*, *relevo espaciais*, *bóides* and *Tropicália*, totaling 8 pieces acquired by the museum between 2007 and 2008²⁰, ten years after the acquisition by the MoMA in New York.

There was criticism about *Documenta X*, regarding how Hélio Oiticica's *parangolés* were exposed: as static and untouchable objects without offering the public the real dimension of the artist's work (AMARANTE, 1997).²¹ Different from Kassel's *Documenta X*, the Havana Biennial displayed the *parangolés* differently, according to Edward Sullivan²² and Irene Small, who were at the Biennial, their assessment was singular because replicas were constructed and the public was able to put on the garments.

I am interested in Oiticica's work, in particular the works related to public participation, such as the parangolés. The opening of the Havana Biennial was striking, especially when I saw a procession of children in the street wearing parangolés and dancing. To see this aspect of his work in the situation desired by the artist, in the streets, as in the samba schools, sparked my interest in this multifaceted artist, who produced cinema and painting. I also love his geometrical production, the initial work, many of his works have been exhibited in Houston, Body of Color was spectacular (SULLIVAN, 2013).

The posthumous directions of Hélio Oiticica's exhibition trajectory used the solo exhibition as primary source and diffuser of his production, with the graphic material prepared in four languages, a respected team of curators visiting renowned international institutions.

Added to the exhibition events, the unified collection and the extensive collection, although facing maintenance and processing difficulties, remained intact (with no damages and losses caused by the fire), under the care of the family and also the artist and colleague Luciano Figueiredo. When market interest focused more intensely on Oiticica's production, two forces acted on his legacy, on the one hand greater interest and exposure of the artist in various institutions, events and galleries in Europe and the United States, and on the other hand, the fragmentation of the programmatic set conceived by the artist, disseminated and present in the collections of North American museums and later European museums.

THE THIRD PHASE – FROM THE EXHIBITIONS TO THE COLLECTIONS

The exhibition *Brazil Body and Soul* (2001), at the Guggenheim, according to Edward Sullivan (SULLIVAN, 2013), originated from the proposal of the exhibition set *Brazil + 500 anos (2000)*²³, but with modifications and the addition of other works; it was a project executed in partnership with the Brazilian team and the Guggenheim museum team. Two aspects were criticized regarding the exhibition *Brazil + 500*: the first was regarding the overspending on temporary events, given that most museum institutions of the country do not have the resources, do not get collections for their artwork collections and are in constant financial crisis; second, the scenography of the exhibition dispersed in the

²⁰ <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks?aid=7730&ap=1&wp=1&wv=grid>

²¹ Some photos of the exhibition room with the works by Hélio Oiticica are available at the website: http://universes-in-universe.de/doc/oiticica/e_oitic1.htm. The photographs have texts on the *bóides* and *parangolés* of Edward Sullivan

²² Edward Sullivan, Professor at the Institute of Fine Arts and College of Arts and Sciences-NY, New York.

²³ The exhibition brought together approximately 15 thousand works divided in 13 modules, assembled in four buildings at the *parque Ibirapuera*: the Biennial pavilion, *Pinacoteca*, *Oca* and *Cinecaverna*, built especially for the exhibition.

²⁴ Luiz Perez-Oramas, Curator of Latin American Art at MoMA, New York.

background, the interest and focus on the artistic object, the excessive setting that did not focus much interest on the works, but rather on the exhibition scenario. There is a big difference when this exhibition pattern takes place in a country in which its museums have their collections in good conditions and have acquisition funds. Therefore, the criticism raised by Adriano Pedrosa was more focused on this internal context, which Brazil was facing, than on the set or selection exhibited at the Guggenheim Museum in 2001. (PEDROSA, 2002)

The *Tropicália* exhibition started its exhibition route at the Chicago Museum of Contemporary Art (2005), then went to the Barbican Gallery in London (2006), the Bronx Museum, in New York (2006) and the Modern Art Museum of Rio de Janeiro (2007); funded by *Brazil Connects*, but which went bankrupt in 2006, which prevented the exhibition from coming to the Oca space in Ibirapuera park in São Paulo, as planned initially and as Carlos Basualdo stated during an interview (BASUALDO, 2013). For some interviewees, the subject was difficult for the American public to understand, because they were not familiar with all elements of the Brazilian culture and, in the view of others, it was an excellent opportunity for the American public to get to know Hélio Oiticica's *Tropicália* installation. In this sense Luis Perez-Oramas²⁴ points to an important detail:

I feel uncertain regarding the tropicalist use of Hélio Oiticica in the international circulation of tropicalism in the 1990s, as if tropicália were everything. As an example, I can mention the Bronx museum exhibition, and do not understand why the exhibition used the video of the parangolés which was recorded at the Biennial of Havana, where people danced the parangolé to the sound of salsa. It's not about the problem of dancing to the sound of salsa, but there is a moment when cultural distinctions are lost, and the common American believes that's how it is with salsa, and samba has nothing to do with salsa. (PEREZ-ORAMAS, 2013).

Although much is said in Brazil about the international reception that considers Hélio Oiticica starting from simple and often formalist associations, or alleges only the mythical aspect of discovering the "favelas" and other simplistic historical associations. The exhibition is the moment when the work has a direct encounter with the public. The importance and power of an exhibition event can shape or arouse greater public interest for the artist. These are variables that depend on the format, exhibition size, curatorial choices, and context. Here, the curator points to another aspect of contemporary exhibitions:

I always have a feeling that environments, Édem, and ask to what extent are the reconstructions of these environments not their fetishization, to what extent were these not acts, which could only exist with the living artist and not an architecture that is a ruin, in the sense that a ruin is a soulless architecture, what is left of the building when the soul departs, I often feel that the reconstructions of these environments related to Hélio survive like a ruin, they are like the building without soul, I sometimes wonder if it wouldn't be better to photograph or find another way, but then there is the question of the market (PEREZ-ORAMAS, 2013).

The interest in the aspects of his production – the use of color and space, interactivity with the public – are enticing. Hélio Oiticica wrote texts in English and much has been translated. He lived in New York for 8 years during his career; this detail adds another identification factor by the American public. American

museums absorbed, more quickly, and were more interested in acquiring the works Hélio Oiticica, which is inserted into a larger strategy, a policy to form Latin American art collections. This importance is represented in the collections and major public collections in the United States, such as MoMA, LACMA, MFAH, and in private collections such as the Cisneros collection, Halle.

He produced his work that way and did not sell it in life, an artist needs to sell, and in the case of Hélio Oiticica, he was anti everything, anti market, anti gallery, anti exposure, his extreme radicalism, but it was thanks to this that 99% of his work was not sold. Because he did not adhere to the market, because he did not want to, he wanted to keep his artwork and keep it all together. This is not my subjectivity; this is all recorded in his documents. The fact that everything is together is why we can study everything, he had everything at hand. Today much has been sold, and is scattered, the family sold much, and there was the fire that destroyed much, I still don't know the degree of the destruction, what was destroyed, but I saw the debris and the destruction was significant. (FIGUEIREDO, 2013)

²⁵ Lynn Zelevansky, Director of the Carnegie Museum of Pittsburgh, was the curator of the show *Beyond Geometry* (2004).

The art market and the growing financial value reached by the works places Hélio Oiticica as one of the artists of great interest. The frequency of annual exhibitions of his works in the North American scenario, especially in New York, by the *Lelong* gallery, representative of Hélio Oiticica, performs periodic exhibitions since 2004.

Hélio Oiticica is part of a select group of Brazilian artists that have numerous exhibitions outside Brazil. Is there an exhibition exhaustion of his work? There are various opinions, some believe that the works have been exhibited few times, while others believe that his production remains in many exhibitions, this does not indicate exhaustion, but rather a sense of predilection, wide acceptance and legibility that the international public established with his production. The Carnegie Museum of Art, of Pittsburgh, in partnership with the Whitney Museum of American Art, of New York, organized a big exhibition about Hélio Oiticica, inaugurated in the spring of 2016 in Pittsburg USA, curated by Lynn Zelevansky²⁵:

There has never been a comprehensive display of Oiticica, that's why I'm doing this. And because there has never been a big exhibition of Hélio Oiticica in the major metropolitan areas of the United States, where much of the art critic is produced, which has more power and a greater artistic community residing there. Houston is a large community, but not like New York, Los Angeles or Chicago (ZELEVANSKY, 2013).

Therefore, all of the activities recorded, retrieved during the research, from the mesh of people and institutions involved, plus the intrinsic quality of the artistic production, provide the broad reception and the importance of the exhibition in order to disseminate the artist. In the case of Hélio Oiticica, the moment his production was exposed jointly and in a comprehensive manner, it favored the reception of his work, both in life and posthumously. Today, this assembly is scattered, therefore hindering the process to reassemble and assess the entire set of artwork, which results in new readings and reinterpretations.

It is very difficult to imagine an exhibition of Hélio Oiticica today with the same quality that existed in the past, if the monochromatic slides were burned, there is a gap, it can no longer be brought back today (FIGUEIREDO, 2013)

The dispersal in institutional and private collections reveals the weaknesses of the cultural apparatus and the policies of national collections regarding its preservation at the expense of market interests. This raises the challenge curators and institutions are face with, how to exhibit without losing the critical potential prepared by the artist?

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