

UNIVERSITY OF ANTWERP
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION STUDIES
VISUAL AND DIGITAL CULTURES RESEARCH CENTER
RESEARCH FUNDED BY CAPES SCHOLARSHIP - MINISTRY OF
EDUCATION OF BRAZIL

"PAINTING CINEMATIC ART:
A STUDY ON ABSTRACTION, EXPRESSION AND EXPERIMENTALISM IN
VISUAL ARTS AND CINEMA FROM BRAZIL, 1922 - 1931 AND 1950 - 1968"

THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR IN FILM STUDIES
AND VISUAL CULTURE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ANTWERP TO BE
DEFENDED BY

JULIANA FROEHLICH

SUPERVISOR: PHILIPPE MEERS

ANTWERP, 2018



Universiteit
Antwerpen



University
of Antwerp

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CINEMATIC ART PAINTING

A STUDY ON ABSTRACTION,
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Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor in Film Studies and Visual Culture
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Juliana Froehlich

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This research project was funded by CAPES (Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento
de Pessoal de Nível Superior) – Ministry of Education of Brazil (June 2015-December
2018)

Antwerp, 2018

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Acknowledgments

A PhD thesis is concretely made by one single individual. However, for this to be possible, the researcher needs financial support, collaborative work, criticism, friendships and a community around him/her. The process of my research and final thesis is made of people who supported and helped me through it. Thus, I would like to make their presence here.

First of all, I would like to thank CAPES Scholarship for financially supporting this research and the development of this thesis for three and a half years. This research was possible due to my full-time dedication to this research, which is the result of the financial support of the Brazilian scholarship. It is also important to thank my technician at CAPES Mayara Neves who always helped me and answered to all my questions promptly throughout this process.

My supervisor Philippe Meers guided this research as well as my professional growth. He promptly responded to all my bureaucratic demands. He was always there for me whenever I needed to submit an abstract to a conference or a questionnaire or letter to CAPES scholarship. For that, I am very grateful. However, most of all, I would like to thank him for teaching me how to deal with the diversity of thought and criticism. This thesis and my professional skills improved thanks to him and his very generous readings.

My committee members Paolo Favero, Daniel Biltreyst, and Cristian Borges fed this thesis with fruitful comments, critiques and bibliographical references. I would like to thank the committee members for the attentive and dedicated reading and discussions. In the same vein, I would like to thank the other jury members, Miriam De Rosa and Gertjan Willems for their dedicated reading and insightful comments.

Still, from the University of Antwerp, I would like to thank all the staff members that helped me with all my paperwork throughout these four years. All the ViDi members, especially, Aleit Veenstra, Ryan Frisk, Reuben Ross, Viktor Baskin, Chernelle Lambert, Ángel Custódio, Carlos Lloga Sanz, Lígia Lavielle, Jasper Vanhaelemesch, Gustavo Racy, Natalie Kowalik, Rob Jacobs, Eva Theunissen, Vijai Patchineelam, Matthias De Groof, Gintarė Kudžmaitė, and Terezia Porubcanska for the fabulous theoretical discussions that we had so many times. And, most of all, for all the help and friendship we shared, even though we had to say goodbye at some point. The same applies to the lovely friends and colleagues from the Communication department Nicola Brajato, Marion Wasserbauer, Lukasz Szulc, and Danielle Raeymaekers. Not to forget Song Seung Hyun who shared many great moments with Gustavo and me and who patiently read and discussed Maurice Merleau-Ponty with me.

The most productive thing for my professional growth and the development of my research were the conferences I could attend in Europe and Brazil. During Socine 2016 I had a proficuous discussion with two colleagues about my research; Geraldo Blay and Símplicio Neto. I want to thank both of them for their contributions, particularly Geraldo Blay who gave me a digitalized copy of the VHS of the film *Limite* (1931) by Mário Peixoto and his master thesis about the film.

From 2015 until 2018 I could attend all NECS editions in Lodz 2015, Potsdam 2016, Paris 2017, and Amsterdam 2018. Since 2016 I attended as part of the workgroup CCVA – Cinema and Contemporary visual arts. CCVA was coordinated by Miriam De Rosa until 2017 when Patricia Nogueira shared the coordination with Miriam. I would like to thank Miriam for promoting, sustaining and keeping this workgroup together and promoting a continuous collaborative and group work. Collaborative and collective work is crucial for research, art, cinema, and knowledge in general. It is in the discussion arena that knowledge is built. Also, I would like to thank Patrícia Nogueira and João Leal for conceiving and organizing the first meeting of CCVA outside NECS that happened at the University of Porto in November 2018.

Furthermore, I would like to thank my great colleagues from NECS Alba Giménez, Halbe Kuipers and Christian Sancto as well as Madalena Miranda from CCVA with whom I could discuss theirs and my own research in the few encounters we had in 2017 and 2018.

Geographical distance meant very little to the relationship with my friends and family living in Brazil. I want to thank deeply Andrea Feldon, Cristina Bonfiglioli, and Helena Julio Rizzi for the emotional and theoretical support, as they repeatedly said that I was capable of achieving this and helped me through difficult times, even though they were so far. Without their support, I could not have made considerable progress — also, Cassia Hosni whom many times talked to me and helped me finding PDFs or digitalizing books. I would like to thank my dear friends for their support Ruy Ludovice and Alice Lino. A very big thank you to my dear Brazilian friends living in Europe Camila Köhler and Be (Beatriz Forti). Camila and her partner Maarten van Hoek many times warmly welcomed me and Gustavo in their home and came to stay with us. Moreover, Andreia Feldon's parents Henri and Michelle Feldon thank you for the friendship and support.

My parents Vera Lucia Soibelman and Augusto Froehlich supported all my decisions even though it was hard for them seeing me go so faraway. I would like to thank both of them for the constant help throughout these years and for helping me making possible for me to be a PhD. As well as my father's partner Cristina Knapp and her family for taking such good care of my father and supporting me.

My mother, as she knows well, is one of the most intimate people to me and knows very precisely sometimes what I need to hear to continue growing and to make life quite practical and not so complicated. I am privileged to have a mother that is a hard worker doctor that inspired me to pursue my professional career and personal aspirations.

I also want to thank my aunt and cousins Claudia Vigna, Flávia Vigna and Júlio Vigna for their support. Along with my mother's extra family of friends Sônia and Cordélia Sawaya, Mário Hirschheimer, Ricardo Caraffa, Jarina Pinto, Ivolette Almeida, Maria Inês e Fernando Valery, Mária da Glória Gonçalves, Adriana Fernandez, Rosinha (especially for all the consultancy during my illness in 2016).

Thank you Sueli Aparecida, my therapist for so many years patiently listening to me and for embarking with me in this adventure at a distance. Technology made possible that we could continue our work.

The cover of this book was conceived by Flávia Vigna and Andrea Feldon. The abstract in Dutch by Jasper Vanhaelemeesch and revised by Kasper Jan Jo Swerts.

My partner in life is also my best friend and colleague, Gustavo Racy, with whom I learn daily to be a better person, a better professor, a better researcher, and a better partner. I would like to thank him for standing by me while he was himself in the exact same stage of his career pursuing his PhD here at the University of Antwerp. I look forward to our next adventure together. I am sure it will be fantastic as it was these hard but fulfilling four years. I want to thank his supportive and loving family that embraced me as their own, his father Joaquim Racy, his mother Paula Racy, his sister Vivien Racy and her husband Fernando Hacker along with their merry son Artur, who gave Gustavo and me so many smiles, laughter, hugs, and kisses.

I want to dedicate my thesis to my uncle Otávio Froehlich and my grandmother Eudócia Froehlich, who passed away while I was pursuing my PhD in Antwerp. Both of them were my inspirations in life and in Academia, as they were University professors themselves.

Abstract

This doctoral thesis concerns the relationship between cinema and the visual arts in Brazil, specifically painting. My predominant concern is to analyze the *form* of artworks and films in search of authorial gestures. To this end, the conceptual preoccupations of this study center upon the interrelated notions of abstraction, the experimental, and expression. Such notions crucially undergird the understanding of modern and avant-garde art and cinema. Additionally, I suggest with this study an interpretation of phenomenological approaches by artists and filmmakers to their world. Thus, I propose to investigate *phenomenologically* the chosen motifs of the artists in question, assessing their selection of specific expressive conduits in painting, installations, and moving images. This phenomenological approach to aesthetics originates in Maurice Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of modern art, especially in three essays *Cézanne's Doubt* (1945), *Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence* (1952), and *Eye and Mind* (1961). In those texts, the philosopher discusses the relationship between author and work, as based on the notion of expression, as well as the distinction between classical painting and modern painting, and modern painting as the expression of thought. Among my guiding questions are the following: if Western art has shifted paradigms in painting, then in what sense is cinematic art in dialogue with those transformations? Thus, how does expression in modern and avant-garde painting dialogue with expression in modern and avant-garde cinema? Moreover, how did Brazilian artists and filmmakers make advances with regard to modern and avant-garde art and cinema? According to the aim of this thesis, these questions govern the theoretical and methodological discussion of Chapters 1 to 4, as well as the analysis of visual works and films in Chapters 5 to 7. I interpret cinema on the same footing as painting (Le Grice, 1977). However, for this to be well-motivated and at all propitious, in the chapters dedicated to the analyses of films, I interpret films on an equal footing with paintings and visual artworks that derived from the experimentations with painting. The first of such films is the paradigmatic *Limite | Limit* (1931) by Mário Peixoto, the only avant-garde film made in Brazil during the 1920s and 30s, which went unmentioned by the modernist movement. Peixoto's only film is studied here alongside three paintings by Tarsila do Amaral, in addition to Fernand Léger's only film, *Ballet Mécanique* (1924), which is similarly grounded in abstraction. My study of *Limite* hopes to situate it between European avant-garde, abstract cinema and Brazilian modernism.

Moreover, this thesis examines Brazilian avant-garde and modern art and cinema in the 1950s and 60s in a similar vein. To this extent, this study brings together abstraction in painting, installations, and the participatory artworks of Lygia Clark, Lygia Pape, and Hélio Oiticica, in tandem with modern Brazilian cinema, specifically the films of Glauber Rocha (the leading filmmaker of the Cinema Novo movement), and Ozualdo Candeias (hailing from the Cinema Marginal movement). The modern films analyzed in this study are: *Pátio* (1959), and *Terra em Transe* | *Entranced Earth* (1967) by Glauber Rocha; and *A margem* | *The Margin* (1967) by Ozualdo Candeias.

*Eu, brasileiro, confesso
Minha culpa, meu pecado
Meu sonho desesperado
Meu bem guardado segredo
Minha aflição*

*Eu, brasileiro, confesso
Minha culpa, meu segredo
Pão seco de cada dia
Tropical melancolia
Negra solidão*

*Aqui é o fim do mundo
Aqui é o fim do mundo
Aqui é o fim do mundo*

*Aqui, o Terceiro Mundo
Pede a bênção e vai dormir
Entre cascatas, palmeiras
Araçás e bananeiras
Ao canto da juriti*

*Aqui, meu pânico e glória
Aqui, meu laço e cadeia
Conheço bem minha história
Começa na lua cheia
E termina antes do fim*

*Aqui é o fim do mundo
Aqui é o fim do mundo
Aqui é o fim do mundo*

*Minha terra tem palmeiras
Onde sopra o vento forte
Da fome, do medo e muito
Principalmente da morte
Olelê, lalá*

*A bomba explode lá fora
E agora, o que vou temer?
Oh, yes, nós temos banana
Até pra dar e vender
Olelê, lalá*

*Aqui é o fim do mundo
Aqui é o fim do mundo
Aqui é o fim do mundo*

Marginália II
Gilberto Gil and Torquato Neto

1968

Introduction

In 2006, while I was attending my second year of undergraduate studies in psychology at the University of São Paulo, I became interested in theories that investigated what we commonly understand as the artistic process of creation in the visual arts.¹ Processes of invention and the renewal of visual forms fascinated me owing to their ability to express what is unattainable in speech (Merleau-Ponty, 1952/1992). Then, during my Master's degree in 2011, in addition to researching the artistic process of a young contemporary artist and her progress on the art circuit, I studied cinema. My interest in cinema began with a postgraduate course called *Cinema, video and contemporary art: possible dialogues*. At the time, I was intrigued by the numerous ways in which cinema and painting dialogued *formally*, in addition to the possible resemblance between modes of expression in modern and avant-garde cinema and modern and avant-garde painting. Since 2006, the way I have read, understood, and interpreted, variously, artworks, the creative process, and the gestures of their creators has been guided by the account of phenomenology given by Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1945/2012, 1945/1993). Against this formative background, my doctoral thesis combines research in the visual arts and cinema with a phenomenological approach to modern and contemporary art (Câmara, 2005).

The aim of this doctoral thesis is to connect modern and avant-garde cinema with modern and avant-garde painting, considering artworks and films as the expressions of their makers. In order to do this, I will predominantly be analyzing the *form* taken by artworks and films, since this, I believe, points to the authorial gestures² that created them. As I began to approach the relationship between cinema and painting, I noticed that studies of Brazilian cinema rarely connected painting and

¹ For further studies on creative processes and the process of creation see: Salles, 2006, 2009; Heidegger, 2010; Andriolo, 2005; Freire, 1999; Aranha, 1992, 1991, 2009; Merleau-Ponty, 1945/1993, 1952/1992, 1962/1993.

² See introduction and Chapter 1.

cinema through formal analysis. Thus, in response to this lacuna, the thesis is centered on the Brazilian context.

According to Merleau-Ponty (1945/1993, 1961/1993), the modern painter approaches the world and expresses his/her perception of phenomena according to their own corporal scheme, namely their flesh. Modern art evolved the form traditionally taken by painting in favor of expression. If classical art was intended to represent the world according to formal principals, modern art, by changing the artistic form, enabled one to express their perception of the world (Gombrich, 1954, Argan, 2008). Osvaldo Fontes Filho (2005) and José Bettencourt da Câmara (2005), developing Merleau-Ponty's understanding of modern art, remark on the dissolution of representational space in the work of art, as well as the change in the artist's methodological paradigm. As Fontes Filho affirms:

If the modern painting no longer reports to the real as its *raison d'être*, if it no longer represents the real but presents itself as 'self-figurative', therefore, it is a new competence that is imposed, implied in the tortuous paths of an incarnate experience, beyond illusionist scenographies (Fontes Filho, 2005, p. 108, own translation)³.

Fontes Filho mentions in the passage above the crucial change in the method and purpose of modern painting, which consisted in abandoning a concern with representationalism and the illusory aspect of classical painting. Changes in painting methods altered forms of expression. According to Merleau-Ponty, in Western art, these changes began with the painter Paul Cézanne (1839-1906). Cézanne's brush strokes transformed the geometric, mathematical forms of classical art (such as the use of cones, spheres, and cylinders) into organic forms and gestures. Cézanne's paradigmatic changes established the first steps towards abstraction in painting. Furthermore, the geometric and mathematical preoccupations of classical painting separated the figure from the background, as well as human bodies from the landscape (Cauquelin, 2007). Thus, Cézanne's brush strokes became geometric forms over the

³ Original text: "Se o quadro moderno não mais reporta ao real como sua razão de ser, se não mais re-presenta o real, mas se apresenta, 'autofigurativo,' é então uma nova competência que se impõe, implicada nos caminhos tortuosos de uma experiência encarnada, para além das cenografias ilusionistas."

canvas, which expressed the uniformity between figure and background. Consequently, with Cézanne and the development of Cubism, the canvas presented its two-dimensional space, mingling the organic and geometric as figures in the same plane.

The process of formal abstraction, which consisted in the dissolution of representational space, began in painting with modern art, particularly those avant-garde artists who radicalized the form in both the European and Brazilian context. This thesis respects the chronology of modern and avant-garde art, as well as avant-garde and modern cinema, maintaining a chronological correspondence between cinema and visual artworks from the 1920s to the 1930s, as well as from the 1950s to the 1960s in the Western context.

As I shall discuss further in Chapters 1 and 2, space, as constructed in classical art, gives an illusion of three dimensions, designed in the two dimensions of the canvas. One of the undertakings of modern painting and its developments towards the avant-garde was to deconstruct this illusion. Modern painting hoped to achieve this by making evident the bi-dimensionality of painting, while addressing the communal space wherein the painting is exhibited (Tassinari, 2001). The convergence of organic and geometric lines and shapes, whether figurative or not, contributed to the appearance of the canvas' bi-dimensionality in modern and avant-garde painting. Those organic and geometric lines and shapes became what we now call abstract art. Abstraction, unlike surrealism, is not based on signs and symbols, or the confusion between the imaginary and the real. It is instead preoccupied with creating other forms without depending on symbology or predetermined signs (Argan, 2008; Greenberg, 1971; Read, 1974, 1982).

Abstract art can therefore be understood as resulting from processes of abstracting and deconstructing the three-dimensional, illusory space of classical art. But if Western art can be said to shift paradigms in painting, in what way is cinema in dialogue with these transformations? That is, how does expression in modern and avant-garde painting communicates those shifts of formal expression to modern and avant-garde cinema? Moreover, how did Brazilian artists and filmmakers go about

developing modern and avant-garde art and cinema? In accordance with the aims of this thesis, these questions will serve to guide the theoretical and methodological discussions of Chapters 1 to 4, as well as presiding over the particular analyses of visual works and films from Chapters 5 to 7. Merleau-Ponty (1945/1993, 1952/1992, 1961/1993), when thinking about modern art as expression, emphasizes how forms conceived in painting can result from the artist *phenomenologically* interpreting his or her world. With this in mind, the crux of this research will be to reveal the possible ways of interpreting modern and/or avant-garde films as works that similarly result from the phenomenological approach of their authors.

To mention the word ‘phenomenology’ in the fields of cinema and the arts is not a novelty. In cinema and film studies, works by Vivian Sobchack (1992) and Laura Marks (2000) are fundamental for thinking about cinema from Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological perspective. These authors also contributed to the expansion of analytical and critical vocabulary with regard to cinema. To this end, these authors instigated what we can call ‘bottom-up’ analyses of cinematic comprehension (Yacavone, 2016, p. 163), establishing new paradigms for understanding the moving image, especially as a phenomenon that speaks to senses beyond the visual (such as smell and touch). For instance, the central contribution of Sobchack (1992) was to defend the fact that film should be considered as having a body of its own.

Indeed, Sobchack (1992) exhaustively examines Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology, and his affiliation with Husserl’s eidetic reduction, as well as Merleau-Ponty’s understanding of language and its dialogue with Lacan’s psychoanalysis. Sobchack (1992) founded, within film studies, the phenomenological understanding of cinema. Furthermore, she identifies and unveils the processes between *author-camera-spectator* and the camera as the ‘eye’ of the world that is filmed. The camera expresses the flesh of the world, as well as the subject who inhabits it. Sobchack develops what Merleau-Ponty spoke of in *Le cinéma et la nouvelle psychologie* (which I discuss in Chapter

1), namely that the film is a cultural thing to be perceived. Therefore, Sobchack defends that the body of the film must be perceived in its totality.

Additionally, Sobchack (1992) examines the unreflective (*irréfléchi*) (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2012) and the pre-reflective (Merleau-Ponty, 2009). The unreflective and pre-reflective are the primary constituents of consciousness, which are prior to discourse (i.e., expressed thought). They amount to consciousness of the world prior to reflection, and the senses constitute them through perception. Thus, the camera as an 'eye' of the world, which is animated by a subject, communicating what constitutes consciousness in its pre-reflective and unreflective state, is cinema's reflection (Sobchack, 1992, p.252). On this understanding, cinema is able to communicate through film the author's pre-reflective consciousness to the viewer's pre-reflective consciousness, in spite of the reflective insertion of the montage. Sobchack's (1992) film phenomenology is concerned with how we phenomenologically perceive a film. She is mostly concerned with how the spectator perceives cinematic art. However, focusing on the mere perception of film leaves undeveloped thoughts about what it would be like to think of the film as an aesthetic form, that is, as art. Therefore, like Yacavone (2016), here I hope to take a step in the direction of the aesthetic phenomenology of cinema.

One limitation of Sobchack's project, at least according to Yacavone, "is that rather than being presented as one useful way of conceiving film viewing experience, [...] it is instead offered as a viable replacement for, and in direct competition with all 'expressivist', 'aesthetic,' and 'formalist' views" (2016, p. 165). Thus, even though Sobchack developed a solid basis for film phenomenology, she did not develop an *aesthetic* phenomenology within cinematic art. Thus, I propose with this thesis to take some steps further with regard to aesthetic phenomenology, namely by approaching painting and cinema on an equal footing. What I would like to suggest in this thesis is an interpretation of phenomenological approaches by artists and filmmakers to their world and the motifs they have chosen as conduits of expression in painting, installations, and moving images.

This thesis will, however, not develop any further Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology nor question its soundness—neither will I rigorously invoke film phenomenology. Nevertheless, I will embark on discussing the relationship between cinema and painting in the Brazilian context, grounded in a phenomenological approach. Thus, I will not analyze further Sobchack or Mark's work in its complexity. As Yacavone (2016) suggests, I intend to examine the aesthetic texts of Merleau-Ponty, contributing to the analysis of expression and how it contains the author's gestures. However, I will not explain how or whether the viewer can or cannot perceive it. In this sense, I propose to approximate expression in modern and avant-garde painting with expression in modern and avant-garde cinema.

Therefore, in accordance with this intertwined subject of painting and cinema, Merleau-Ponty's approach to modern art and painting forms the basis for thinking about the relationship between painting and cinema as the visual expression of subjects who phenomenologically approach the world. The *loci classici* of Merleau-Ponty's account of cinema are *Le cinéma et la nouvelle psychologie* (1945/1966) and *Le monde sensible et le monde de l'expression* (2011). On his account, the essence of cinematic art is concentrated in the notion of *movement* (Rodrigo, 2016). This seminal idea of Merleau-Ponty's is examined by Carbone (2011) and Rodrigo (2016). However, this study proposes a new direction in which to take these thoughts, namely examining how the philosopher connects the modern painter's practice to phenomenology *qua* visual language and expression, and how Merleau-Ponty understood cinema as authorial expression, just like modern painting. This consequently approximates the painting method to the filmmaking method.

The precise location of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's (1908-1961) phenomenological approach to modern art and painting is to be found in three essays: *Cézanne's Doubt* (1945/1993); *Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence* (1952/1992); and *Eye and Mind* (1961/1993). I read these three texts alongside commentators of the same essays, in addition to José Bettencourt Câmara's (2005) *Expressão e Contemporaneidade: A arte moderna segundo Merleau-Ponty*. I also read Merleau-Ponty's

Philosophy of Perception (1945/2012) alongside his own dedicated text on cinema, *Le cinéma et la nouvelle psychologie* (1945/1966), and notes on his 1953 course (given at the Collège de France) entitled, *Le monde sensible et le monde de l'expression* (Merleau-Ponty, 2011).

Precisely in these three essays, *Cézanne's Doubt*, *Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence*, and *Eye and Mind*, the philosopher discusses the relation between author and work, based on the notion of expression, as well as on the distinction between classical painting and modern painting as expressions of thought. As I pointed out above, according to Merleau-Ponty, classical painting and modern painting present distinct methods, which I develop in Chapter 1 through examination of the philosopher's essays. Merleau-Ponty problematizes the complex relationship between author-artwork, essential to the phenomenon of creation, as he discusses the equivalence between the painter, the writer, the filmmaker, and the philosopher.

On my understanding, then, a dedicated examination of these three essays on aesthetics can contribute to the analysis of films, which are categorized, for the most part, as modern and avant-garde, since they break with the representationalism of classical cinema (see Chapters 1 and 2). Thus, Merleau-Ponty's aesthetic essays may contribute to the interpretation of visual expression as a practice of thought, as well as of the presence of authorial gestures in artworks.

Moreover, in these three essays, Merleau-Ponty reveals his understanding of abstraction in painting, whereby the dissolution of the difference between figure and background in painting mirrors the consciousness that is inseparable from the world because consciousness is always the consciousness of something (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2012). Thus, the artwork reflects "as a mirror" consciousness (the incarnate mind) (Merleau-Ponty, 1961/1993). The perception of the world, therefore, constitutes the artwork.

This research is not centered upon the issue of film phenomenology, nor does it pretend to apprehend phenomenology in its totality. It rather concerns how Merleau-

Ponty understood phenomenology within expression in modern art (especially painting). Furthermore, I am concerned with how Merleau-Ponty understood expression and experimentalism with visual forms and abstraction, which are the results of authorial gestures. Lastly, I am interested in how the gestures of an author, expressed in films and visual works, can result in the engagement of the spectator.

Merleau-Ponty's aesthetic texts do not address the notions of the pre-reflective or the unreflective, which are present in *The Visible and the Invisible*, as well as in the *Phenomenology of Perception*. This thesis concentrates on a reading of three essays that focus on the expression of thought, as revealed in the work of art and cinema in its modern and avant-garde aspects. Thus, I position this study around the investigation of creative and inventive processes in the expression of visual artists and filmmakers, thereby concentrating on expressed thought. Nevertheless, as Yacavone (2016) argues, a subject who is able to return to pre-reflective consciousness, whether it is the author or the spectator, through cinematic art also constitutes a reflective and knowledgeable consciousness.

Therefore, this study applies Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological schema to expression in modern art, understanding phenomenological expression to consist in the univocal relation between an incarnate mind and the world. Phenomenological, visual expression opposes classical art's—and science's—representation of reality. Thus, this thesis concentrates on Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, centralizing the non-duality between subject and object and how the artist and filmmaker respectively express their relationship with the world and the reversibility of flesh. Consequently, 'consciousness' does not single out one sense, or a single sensorial aspect, since, for Merleau-Ponty (1945/1966), perception is not "a mosaic of different sensations": it forms a whole in which senses are mutually influential.

This study refers to the phenomenological approach of consciousness as the 'incarnate mind'. In so doing, I intend to emphasize the fact that the body is consciousness, just as consciousness is the body. Therefore, I routinely use the term 'incarnate mind' from Merleau-Ponty's perspective in order to emphasize the fact that

a Being is a single body-mind complex, which can be comprehensively accounted for by the term ‘consciousness’.

The term *expression*, moreover, as applied in this thesis, is in accordance with Merleau-Ponty’s notion of *expression* in his three, aforementioned aesthetic essays. It is important to mention that *expression* does not mean the expression of feelings exclusively. Rather, it means the *expression* of consciousness, owing to which it should not be mistaken for its usage in artistic movements such as “Expressionism”. Thus, *expression* is always thought (*pensée*), since it is the expression of an incarnate mind’s perception and lived experiences (*vivências*) of the world in which that Being dwells. *Vivência*, here translated as lived (but also ‘living’) experience, was often invoked by Brazilian artists during the 1960s. *Vivência* denotes the experience of the world (and artworks) by consciousness itself, and the knowledge garnered from experiencing the world, things, and art. On this understanding, *vivência* incorporates the phenomenological approach to experiences and experimentation.

This thesis proposes to identify and interpret the method of various filmmakers in accordance with the phenomenological method of certain artists, as understood from Merleau-Ponty’s aesthetic essays. Merleau-Ponty uses the French term *pensée*, translated into English as ‘thought’ (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/1993, 1945/2012, 1948/2004, 1952/1992, 1961/1993, 2009). In keeping with this philosophical approach, here I also apply the term *thought* in reference to *expression*, for instance, when thought is expressed visually.

Moreover, I concentrate on thoughts, as well as artists’ and filmmakers’ procedural and methodological choices, which can be brought together in virtue of the works’ form and content. Alexandre Astruc proposes the *camera-pen*, while I propose the *camera-montage-brush*, which is to say, the camera movements and choices of montage as gestures of the author. As Astruc says:

To come to the point: the cinema is quite simply becoming a means of expression, just as all the other arts have been before it, and in particular painting and the novel. After having been successively a fairground attraction, an amusement analogous to boulevard theatre, or a means of preserving the images of an era, it is gradually becoming a language. By language, I mean a form in which and by which an artist can express his thoughts, however abstract they may be, or translate his obsessions exactly as he does in the contemporary essay or novel. That is why I would like to call this new age of cinema the age of *camera-stylo* (camera-pen) [...]. Direction is no longer a means of illustrating or presenting a scene, but a true act of writing (Astruc, 1948).

Merleau-Ponty relates the practice of the writer to that of the painter, just as Astruc draws a line from writing to cinema. In like fashion, this research draws a line from visual works (specifically painting and its developments into *propositions*⁴ and installations) to cinema. As Yacavone explains: “[as] in all art, there is no recipe for creating this perceptual and expressive unity and sense of formal necessity, which resists rational definition, and depends upon de experimentation and intuition of filmmakers” (Yacavone, 2016, p. 178). The author, the visual artist, and the filmmaker in modern and avant-garde art express their gestures in visual works as experimentations with form.

Furthermore, this study contextualizes the procedures of modern and avant-garde art in Brazil, as well as the process of modern and avant-garde cinema. With regard to avant-garde painting, I will explain how it was transformed and radicalized by four artists: Tarsila do Amaral (1886-1973); Lygia Pape (1927-2004); Lygia Clark (1920-1988); and Hélio Oiticica (1937-1988). I also present the methods of two crucial painters, who influenced the Brazilian artists, namely, Fernand Léger (1881-1955) and Piet Mondrian (1872-1944). Regarding avant-garde cinema, the only Brazilian film analyzed here is *Limite | Limit* (1931) by Mário Peixoto (1908-1992). Concerning modern cinema, I concentrate on two filmmakers: Glauber Rocha (1939-1981) and Ozualdo Candeias (1922-2007), who respectively represent the movements Cinema Novo and Cinema Marginal.

⁴ ‘Proposition’ is a translation of the word *proposição* in Portuguese (which Oiticica (1969) also translates as ‘propositions’). ‘Propositions’ are artworks that Brazilian artists made as invitations and suggestions to spectators to take part in them. This notion is further developed in chapter 4.

Therefore, this thesis is not about the art and cinema movements per se, but about paintings and films as the visual expressions of subjects. I will focus only on the process of painting, particularly as the four Brazilian painters mentioned above transformed it. This also explains why I do not present different approaches to the notion of ‘Anthropophagy’ and ‘Brazilianness’, which preoccupied Brazilian artists. Additionally, Lygia Pape, Lygia Clark, and Hélio Oiticica transformed painting into propositions and installations. Thus, when referring to their works, I will be using the terms ‘visual arts’ and ‘artworks’.

Both cinema and painting are expressions that communicate to subjects, as Merleau-Ponty notes, that they are part of the cultural world, which is perceived along with things and other Beings (Merleau-Ponty, 1948/2004). Thus, this thesis mentions the spectator/viewer, the subject for whom the artworks and films exist. This does not mean these works are *about* the spectator, nor how he/she experiences films and paintings. On the contrary, this thesis is concerned with the creative subject, examining their gestures as they present themselves in films and artworks. Furthermore, I am concerned with how the artists and filmmakers construct a dialogue with the spectator through their expression in films, paintings, and installations—whether intentionally or not. Therefore, this study does not address theories of spectatorship as in Staiger (2000) and Hagener (2007); neither does it consider the politics of the spectator, as discussed in Rancière (2009) and Bourriaud (2002). Instead, I keep to what the artist and filmmakers said and wrote about communication and engagement with the spectator, as well as what the films and artwork are intended to propose.

Lygia Pape, Lygia Clark, and Hélio Oiticica made propositions to the ‘spectator’ to become a ‘participant’ of the artwork during the 1960s. Thus, I will apply in this thesis the term ‘spectator’ in reference to the subject who perceives artworks and films. The subject is a participant only when he/she decides to take part in the work. Oiticica calls the artworks *propositions* (Oiticica, 1969) precisely to ‘propose’ to the ‘spectator’ to become a ‘participant’: it is his/her choice to become one or not. This movement from passive to active consciousness (sc. incarnate mind), as well as

the mobilization of other senses beyond vision in accessing painting, is relevant and part of my argument when addressing modern cinema in Brazil. Merleau-Ponty refers to the individual who accesses artworks as both ‘spectator’ (Merleau-Ponty, 1948/2004) and ‘viewer’ (Merleau-Ponty, 1961/1993), because vision constitutes thought just as much as all the other senses, and the painter transforms the world into painting, which is visual expression. Therefore, the term ‘spectator’, as applied in this thesis, encompasses the term ‘viewer’.

Lastly, while giving most attention to the theoretical discussion of painting and the visual arts, I nevertheless expect to place cinema (films) on the same understanding of formal abstraction as the visual arts due to their sharing in the dissolution of representational space and time (Bordwell et al., 2005). Consequently, I will not develop in this text what is *proper* to any particular narrative, or how the filmmaker constructed it. However, I *will* focus on aspects that render a work discontinuous, and its medium evident, as well as the phenomenological practice at work. As Jacobs explains: “[as] an academic phenomenon, film studies usually developed within the context of departments of literature or communication studies outside the realm of art historical research” (Jacobs, 2011, p. ix). Therefore, this thesis expects to approximate and place film analysis and cinema alongside art history and visual-aesthetics. Consequently, the theoretical literature explicated here primarily concerns the visual arts, especially painting, and is the ground from which my film analyses grow. Thus, I propose here, from theories of visual arts, how is it possible to conceive of cinema and films (Aumont, 1998, 2011; Jacobs, 2011). Finally, I expect to enlarge upon the possibilities of film analysis and criticism, generalizing from what we can learn from the phenomenological approach to the visual arts and painting, thereby distancing this discussion from discussions of cinema that are primarily concerned with drama, theater, and literary analysis.

Therefore, it is possible to unpack the aims of this research into the following broader points: (1) understanding possible approaches to painting and its developments on an equal footing with cinema in the Brazilian context; (2) defining

formal processes of abstraction in avant-garde and modern painting and cinema; (3) developing possible contributions to Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of modern art, as understood from the perspective of his three aesthetic essays, as mentioned above; (4) discussing expression, experimentation, and abstraction according to modern and avant-garde art and cinema, as well as Merleau-Ponty's texts; (5) considering Brazilian contributions to the dialogue between cinema and painting; and (6) explaining how the expression of Brazilian artists through artistic propositions is equivalent to the propositions of modern filmmakers in Brazil.

0.1 – Introductory notes

These notes are intended to clarify central notions in this thesis, thus making clear the imbricated relationship between the artist, filmmaker, and what is expressed in the visual artwork or film. These central notions are as follows: consciousness; subject; body; gesture; space; expression; living experience; and landscape. The visual artwork and film are expressions of subjects. Thus, the expression and the author have a fundamental relationship. In addition to these notions, I shall state what I understand to be abstraction, experimental, avant-garde and modern art, as well as avant-garde and modern cinema, respecting the chronologies and visual processes of cinema and painting. This introductory note is an initial development of what I propose by these terms: it is not intended to account for the philosophy and historicity of these notions.

As I mentioned before, I will not present a re-reading of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, in which terms such as consciousness, perception, subject, body, thought, space, and time are central and essential. Each of these terms in Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological philosophy is developed in his texts. Therefore, I will highlight the concepts presented in the *Phenomenology of Perception* and the three essays that I address in Chapter 1. Here, I heed the reading of José Bettencourt Câmara (2005), who recognizes in the philosopher a philosophy of modern art that implies

these notions. Furthermore, Câmara (2005) comments that Merleau-Ponty's remarks on modern art bespeak a phenomenological approach to aesthetic thought.

Notions of consciousness, body, space, gesture, landscape, expression, and living experience

For Merleau-Ponty, consciousness is always consciousness *of* something. Thus, consciousness is a body that perceives and moves in the world (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2012, 1945/1993, 1952/1992, 1961/1993, Câmara, 2005, Sobchack, 1992). Consciousness exists only in a relationship with things and with the world. Pre-reflective and unreflective processes constitute consciousness, as well as reflection (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2012). As Câmara remarks: "it is the intentionality proper to a body that reaches the consciousness of itself and the world in which it emerges that previously presupposes the idea of a subject" (Câmara, 2005, 114, own translation)⁵. Therefore, consciousness, as the subject, is a mind incarnated in a human body. Consciousness itself consists in the body's primordial intentionality. When I refer to the term 'consciousness', it necessarily implicates the body. Indeed, consciousness is only consciousness *because* it has a body and intentionality, given its bodily connection. As Merleau-Ponty explains: "[h]ere, for the first time, we come across the idea that rather than a mind and a body, man is a mind with a body, a Being who can only get to the truth of things because its body is, as it were, embedded in those things" (Merleau-Ponty, 1948/2004, p. 56).

The subject, as understood by classical science, specifically the Cartesian Cogito, is distant from the world and supposedly universal (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2012, 1945/1993, 1952/1992, 1961/1993, 1948/2004). However, according to Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, consciousness exists as an individual body in the world with others (Câmara, 2005, p. 117). Bodily consciousness perceives the world

⁵ Original text: "é da intencionalidade própria de um corpo que chega à consciência de si e do mundo em que emerge que antes pressupõe a ideia de sujeito."

and things as one individual Being. This individual perception constitutes the subject. The body has the central role in the constitution of consciousness, bringing with it the perception of the world, things, and other Beings. The body as consciousness is also the subject's 'connection' with the world.⁶ As Merleau-Ponty explains: “[at] the core of the subject, space and perception in general mark the fact of his birth, the perpetual contribution of his corporeality, and a communication with the world [...]” (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2012, p. 265).

Consciousness expresses itself through thought, which then forms expression. For Merleau-Ponty, speech (written or spoken) is language and expression, just as painting. Therefore, painting is visual thought, as speech is thought. What I propose, especially in Chapters 1 and 2, is precisely to understand cinematic art as visual thought and expression of an incarnate mind, which is a Being-in-the-world-with-others (Merleau-Ponty, 1961/1993, 1952/1992, 1945/1993). I expect to construct this account of cinematic art by beginning with an examination of what Merleau-Ponty develops with regard to expression in modern painting. Merleau-Ponty states about expression:

[w]e shall here understand expression or expressivity as the property of a phenomenon, by its internal arrangement, to make known the other Being that is not or has never been given. The apparatus, the artwork, expresses the man in this sense. The work of the mind or the canvas too (but more complex): they express the subject in speaking of things or of the world as well, so that here there is not only a person who expresses him/herself in the product but it is the product that expresses the world, the subject making him/herself felt by the appearance of this relation: It is in the second sense that the perception is expression, expression of the world, and the expression testifies as human only in so far as it encloses this emergence of a truth of the world (Merleau-Ponty, 2011, p. 48, own translation).⁷

Therefore, expression, as Merleau-Ponty understands it, implicates at the same time the subject, the world, and the subject's bodily perception of the world in

⁶ The incarnate mind is the subject.

⁷ Original text: “On entendra ici par expression ou expressivité la propriété qu’a un phénomène, par son agencement interne, d’en faire connaître un autre qui n’est pas ou même n’a jamais été donné. L’outil, l’ouvrage, exprime l’homme en ce sens. L’ouvrage de l’esprit ou le tableau aussi, mais plus complexe: ils expriment l’homme en parlant des choses ou du monde aussi bien, de sorte qu’ici il y a non seulement homme qui s’exprime dans produit mais par ailleurs produit qui exprime le monde, l’homme s’attestant par l’apparition de ce rapport: C’est au second sens que la perception est expression, expression du monde, et elle s’atteste comme humaine seulement en tant qu’elle enferme cette émergence d’une vérité du monde.”

which he/she dwells. The human body has a central role, both in perception and expression. As an indivisible unity, the subject (of modern thought) is at the same time perceptive and expressive through the same body. Thus, as Câmara concludes: “Merleau-Ponty advances in this domain resumes to two main themes: that of the unity that the body represents and that which concerns the nature of its expressive space” (Câmara, 2005, p. 123, own translation).⁸ Thus, when I intend to reflect on expression here, I also refer to the human body, consciousness, thought, the world, and the perception of this world by a subject. Merleau-Ponty emphasizes the relationship between body and artwork because the artwork is the *expression* of the body (that is, it is thought).

As Tilley explains: “Merleau-Ponty argues that the human body provides the fundamental mediation point between thought and the world” (1997, p.13-14). Tilley, in referring to the idea of the body being a ‘mediation’ between consciousness and the world, refers to the fact that the subject and the world influence each other. Merleau-Ponty intends to “safeguard the world's belonging to the subject and the subject to himself” (Câmara, 2005, p. 119, own translation).⁹ Thus, the world constitutes the subject and the subject expresses him/herself in the same world. Moreover, this relation always presupposes an ambiguity, not a distinction (Merleau-Ponty, 2011). The relationship between incarnate subject and world is a relation of reflexivity, which Merleau-Ponty locates in the notion of ‘Flesh’. It is a notion that is present in *The Visible and the Invisible* and *Eye and Mind*. As the philosopher remarks: “[things] are an annex or prolongation of itself; they are incrustated in its flesh, they are part of its full definition; the world is made of the very stuff of the body” (Merleau-Ponty, 1961/1993, p. 125).

The world of things, for Merleau-Ponty, will no longer be the world of objects: phenomenology overcomes the Cartesian dualism of subject-object. Consequently, it is not assumed that anything other than the subject is an object.

⁸ Original text: “Merleau-Ponty avança neste domínio resumir-se em dois grandes temas: o da unidade que o corpo representa e o que concerne à sua natureza de espaço expressivo.”

⁹ Original text: “salvaguardar a pertença do mundo ao sujeito e do sujeito a ele mesmo.”

Classical science distances itself from the world by approaching it as an object separate from the subject. Thus, an 'objective' thought is within the epistemology of classical science. Modern thought, as suggested by Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, is not based on this distinction. The world of things and others constitute consciousness (the subject) and the subject is a constituent part of the same world. Regarding this relation, Tilley remarks:

Notions of 'object' and 'subject', 'nature' and 'consciousness' are dialectically related moments of a totality which is constituted through the Being of the body in the world. The body constitutes a way of relating to, perceiving and understanding the world. It is the manner in which a subjective attitude comes to both know and express itself. Perceptual consciousness is not just a matter of thought about the world, but stems from bodily presence and bodily orientation in relation to it (Tilley, 1997, p. 14).

Therefore, the body is consciousness and embraces the continuation between the subject and the world of things. The subject perceives this world not as an object, but as a part of his Being, expressing (visually and/or in speech) this perceptual and carnal relation. Thus, as this phenomenological construct is exercised, expression owes nothing to Cartesian cause and effect relations. As Saint-Aubert remarks: “[to] reflect in thought cannot mean to coincide with the object precisely because thought is reflection, re-turn, re-conquest, or re-recovery” (Saint-Aubert, 2011, p. 45, own translation).

Moreover, as Câmara notes: “The body thinks, not because consciousness animates it, but because it thinks *as* consciousness. The body is defined by its expressive dimension not by its physical dimension” (Câmara, 2005, p. 125, own translation).¹⁰ Since the body is defined according to its expressive dimension, I suggest in this thesis to analyze those expressions in search of the body (which also implies consciousness and the subject). Although we might not find objective answers, as we would expect from the classical sciences, we can nevertheless find some subjective evidence of phenomenology as it extends to artworks.

¹⁰ Original text: “O corpo pensa, não porque é animado pela consciência, mas porque ele pensa como consciência. O corpo se defini pela dimensão expressiva não pela sua dimensão física.”

The body is, “therefore, one of the determining elements of a phenomenological aesthetic, as our author (Merleau-Ponty) understands it: the affirmation of the body as a fruitful matrix of expression in general, and of art in particular” (Câmara, 2005, p. 126).¹¹ The body, this matrix of expression and perception, is a mobile matrix. As Merleau-Ponty says: “we can also say that we are conscious because we are mobile or we are mobile because we are conscious” (Merleau-Ponty in Saint-Aubert, 2011, p. 32).¹² The body exists and moves in time and space. Its essence of mobile-Being (Merleau-Ponty, 1961/1993) is both moved by consciousness and moves consciousness.

For the notion of space, as for the notion of body, Merleau-Ponty dedicates an entire section of his *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945/2012). Space, for Merleau-Ponty, does not correspond with what classical science and painting delimit in three dimensions. Therefore, space is not determined by dimensions of depth, height, and breadth. Rather, it is determined by how the body experiences it. For instance, an experienced depth should determine space, as *lived experience* by the body: “[...] the vertical and the horizontal are themselves defined ultimately by our body’s best hold on the world. As relations between objects, breadth and height are derived, whereas in their originary sense they are also “existential” dimensions” (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2012, p. 279). Therefore, for example, the living experience of the incarnate mind will give form to space in painting.

The notion of space, like that of the body, is examined within modern art by Merleau-Ponty as visual expression. In modern painting, space is expressed through bodily experience, and the bi-dimensionality of the canvas supports expression of space. Space, as expressed in modern art, is experienced by the subject. Thus, it does not function as a scheme to guide a body in three dimensions. Classical painting constructed the illusion of depth from a mathematical understanding of the canvas.

¹¹ Original text: “É este, pois, um dos elementos determinantes duma estética fenomenológica, como a entende o nosso autor (Merleau-Ponty): a afirmação do corpo enquanto matriz fecunda da expressão, em geral, e da arte, em particular.”

¹² Original text: “on peut dire également que nous sommes conscients parce que nous sommes mobiles ou que nous sommes mobiles parce que nous sommes conscients.”

Modern painting, by contrast, dissolves this illusion by making apparent the two-dimensionality of the canvas, expressing how the body experiences space. In Merleau-Ponty's words: "[the] classical painters were unconsciously themselves; the modern painter wants first of all to be original, and for him his power of expression is identical to his individual difference" (Merleau-Ponty, 1992, p.51).

Depth, for Merleau-Ponty, is that which the body experiences as it moves through space and time. There are no delimitations, nor measurements, or even distinctions. Therefore, modern art, by dissolving painting's three-dimensional, illusory space, also dissolves the idea that space is necessarily something represented in painting. Modern art, as modern thought, suggests us to return to experiential space, which is *lived experience* (*vivido*), particularly through the space expressed on canvas, sculpture, or installation.

Brazilian artists and filmmakers of the 1950s and 60s, suggested to the public to live experience the artwork's space, as we shall see in Chapters 4, 6, and 7. The thought expressed by the subject who 'sees himself' in the world with others finds, in the formal openness of modern and avant-garde art, such as painting and cinema, the possibility for actively engaging the spectator. I will be referring to the space of artwork and film as the space expressed by the artist and filmmaker as they perceive and experience it. The space of the modern artwork, as Tassinari (2001) understands it, is opened up to common space. Thus, modern pictorial space is not restricted to the space of the work alone; it embraces the space wherein it is displayed. What I suggest is that we also think about modern and avant-garde film's space in the same way as modern art's space. Within the domain of cinema, I will refer to the landscape and architectural spaces that are framed alongside human bodies. These are the spaces chosen by the filmmaker to figure in the film. On this point, as Edgar and Sedgwick explain: "[the] concept of architecture can cover all types of construction (housing, temples, office blocks and so on), or it may be used in opposition to building, in order to focus upon construction that is intended to be more prestigious or impressive" (Edgar & Sedgwick, 2002, p. 23). Accordingly, the term "architectural space", as I use

it here, accords with the standard use of the term. However, I also use it to emphasize constructed space in particular, with which the human bodies interact in films.

Merleau-Ponty, in “articulating the theme of the body to that of painting, [does] not forget the gesture, the movement of the body in space, as essential determinations of the body itself” (Câmara, 2005, p. 137, own translation).¹³ The gesture is the essential movement of the body, which is proper to a subject that is *generated* by the body in space and time. The gesture of the body is thought and is the same as that which originates the painting. It is also true that gestures construct the classical painting. However, such gestures were directed towards the representation of a world, rather than being moved by the very experience of the world, as Merleau-Ponty theorized about modern art (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/1993, 1952/1992, 1961/1993).

The incarnate mind (sc. consciousness) expresses itself and moves through gestures. The gesture is present in speech and amounts to a mute gesture in painting. The gesture “[is] the silence of the body in the birth of primordial expression” (Câmara, 2005, p. 129, own translation).¹⁴ Thus, the gesture expresses what is most primordial in the relation of the subject to his/her world. Thus, gestures constitute the most primordial perceptions (Merleau-Ponty, 1961/1993). Furthermore, gestures have meaning, namely primordial meaning. And so it is to this primordial gesture of expression that Sobchack grounds communication between the pre-reflectiveness of the author and the pre-reflective gesture of the spectator (Sobchack, 1992). Finally, this gesture, which is primordial, is the expression of perception and thereby thought. Indeed, as remarks Merleau-Ponty: “[...] it is through expression [...] [that] thought becomes our own” (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2012, p. 183).

Painting is an expression of the artist’s gestures. In Câmara’s words, this amounts to “[...] more than the closed universe of the artist’s subjectivity [...] it is his

¹³ Original text: “articulando o tema do corpo ao da pintura, não esquecerá o gesto, movimento do corpo no espaço, determinação essencial do corpo próprio.”

¹⁴ Original text: “[é] esse silêncio do corpo no trabalho de parto da expressão primordial”.

encounter with the world, with the things that are given to us in the work of art - never a pure subjectivity, but an existence *de facto*” (Câmara, 2005, p. 141, own translation).¹⁵ For Merleau-Ponty, meanwhile, the gestures of the artist *make* the modern painting. Indeed, they make the painting *modern*. These are the gestures of a body that is in the world with others. Flusser (2014) in conceiving the gesture of painting translates the intrinsic existential relationship between painter, painting and the gesture of painting that Merleau-Ponty foresaw in modern painting, Flusser suggests: “[t]his is to say that the gesture shows the one who is analyzing it that he must enter into the gesture if he wants to resolve the *enigma*. The understanding of the gesture must be an understanding of self” (Flusser, 2014, pp. 65-66, author’s italics). Thus, the gesture of painting presents the enigma of painting itself that is intrinsic related to the self, to the Being (Merleau-Ponty, 1961/1993). Such gestures construct the spatiotemporality of painting, just as they can express the landscape, other Beings, and human bodies.

According to Cauquelin (2007), the landscape in painting emerges with the Renaissance, where it forms the background of the painting, affording the artwork the illusion of depth. Landscape in Renaissance painting contextualizes a theme and presents itself as a “domesticated nature” (Cauquelin, 2007). In Western culture, landscape painting became an autonomous genre, particularly in the 17th century, with Dutch painters painting nature, the sky, clouds, and the mountains (Gombrich, 1954). Nature, therefore, is the theme of landscape painting. The landscape can also stand for sentiment and feelings, as it did for the 19th-century Romantics (Gombrich, 1954). At the end of the 19th century, and in the 20th century, urban and mechanical elements became themes of painting as something belonging to the landscape, as with Fernand Léger, whom I discuss in Chapter 2. Fernand Léger equated the plasticity of landscapes and human bodies with the plasticity of machines and cities.

I have composed above a small panorama of the landscape in painting in order to introduce the idea that ‘landscape’ belongs to the way the subject expresses

¹⁵ Original text: “[...] mais do que o universo fechado da subjectividade do artista, é o seu encontro com o mundo, com as coisas, que na obra de arte se nos dá – nunca uma subjectividade pura, mas uma existencia de fato”.

his/her surroundings, his/her world, and his/her space. As Simmel indicates: “Nature, which in its deep being and meaning knows nothing of individuality, is transfigured into an individuated ‘landscape’ by the human gaze that divides things up and forms the separated parts into specific unities” (Simmel, 2007, p. 22). Therefore, the notion of landscape in painting, which I will also apply to cinema, implies elements of both nature and city, such as streets, bridges, and houses. These are the elements of the world in which the subject dwells; the subject being an incarnate mind who expresses, through his/her gestures, his/her body, world, as well as space and time.

Câmara (2005) remarks: “[w]e do not have a body, we are a body” (Câmara, 2005, p.122, own translation).¹⁶ The body that we have, and how it exists, appear in modern painting as the insertion of elements referring to a human body. The human body, its elements, and the abstractions of bodily elements in painting may indicate the imbricated relationship between the subject and the world he/she inhabits. Consequently, the world that the painter (and the filmmaker) dwells in is not restricted to his/her house, but every space and place in which she/he finds him/herself in. This is because one’s body is one’s home, as Merleau-Ponty (1961/1993) remarked. Organic shapes or lines in painting sometimes express the human body, animals, and nature. However, Lygia Clark, for example, renders organic a set of geometric planes in her series *Bichos | Creatures* (1961) (Illustrations 27 and 74), creating a geometric body.

In modern art, pictorial space is no longer the space of representation. Thus, there is no longer an illusion of depth. When forms are expressed over the canvas, they communicate the experience of space itself, of the body in space, as well as the body with other bodies. Owing to this, “[it] is possible, then, to speak of an ontology of modern pictorial space, no more of representation-reproduction of the volume of bodies, but of the disposition of bodies as existing in space and time” (Fontes Filho, 2005 p. 113, own translation).¹⁷ The space occupied and constituted by modern painting always remains unfinished: it bespeaks an ever-unfolding process. Moreover,

¹⁶ Original text: “Não temos um corpo, somos um corpo.”

¹⁷ Original text: “É possível então falar, a propósito de uma ontologia do espaço pictorial moderno, não mais de representação-reprodução da volumetria dos corpos, mas da disposição dos corpos em acontecimento.”

as Wiskus remarks: “[the] unseen forms the theme of the painting, and what Cézanne offers to his viewer is a canvas that teems with life because the viewer is implicated in the landscape” (Wiskus, 2013, p.20). Therefore, modern and avant-garde art after Cézanne has included the spectator in its continual process: inviting them to dwell within the same landscape. The possibilities of the artwork remain open, owing to which it presents itself as an ongoing process, existing in forms both on and around the canvas.

Fontes Filho (2005) uses the term ‘rhythm’ to explain the process by which the modern artist, according to Merleau-Ponty, transforms through painting his/her world, as well as the space through which they move. Rhythm, as Fontes Filho explains, “has no place in space: it implies space; it opens up space as its articulation” (Fontes Filho, 2005, p.114, own translation).¹⁸ Therefore, space, as expressed in painting, is constituted by rhythm. Owing to this, it is possible to affirm that space in modern art implies movement. Consequently, modern painting’s (and art’s) space is opened up to communal space, at least as Tassinari (2001) conceives of the term with his concept “space at work”, which I develop in Chapter 2. Likewise, space and the landscape in modern painting are conceived from the subject’s living experience (*vivência*), which is to say their incarnate mind, as Merleau-Ponty understood it. Or, as Cézanne understood it, the landscape is internal, coming from within (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/1993, Câmara, 2005). Cézanne’s landscape, as we shall see in Chapters 1 and 2, creates itself *through* the artist. Câmara comments: “in the rhythm of forms that appropriate the rhythm of the very gestures that originated them, in the living logic of the movement that fecundated them” (Câmara, 2005, p. 138, own translation).¹⁹ The artist’s gestures that arise out of his encounter with his world give *form* to the landscape over the canvas.

¹⁸ Original text: “o ritmo não tem lugar no espaço: ele implica o espaço; ele abre o espaço enquanto sua articulação”.

¹⁹ Original text: “[...] no ritmo de formas que assumem o ritmo dos próprios gestos que as geraram, na lógica viva do movimento que as fecundou.”

Modern and avant-garde art artists researched the two-dimensionality of the canvas, expressing their perception of the world beyond the rules of representation. One of the results of this research for modern and avant-garde painting was that volumes were reduced to geometric and organic forms, becoming abstracted forms on the canvas. For some artists, the encounter between geometric and organic forms was reduced to lines, as in the examples of Paul Klee and Wassily Kandinsky. Tim Ingold describes how Kandinsky phenomenologically conceived of abstraction:

The staging, on Kandinsky's insistence, was unequivocally 'abstract'. This is not to say, however, that it was devoid of content. Quite to the contrary, by 'abstraction', Kandinsky meant the removal from the work of art of all those figurative elements that otherwise imprison it or conceal its true nature from us, and that are incidental to its existence as art, so as to release it into the fullness of being. In music this means removing any sounds that could be construed as imitative or programmatic; in painting, it means casting aside the illusion that to see a painting is to see what it is a painting of. If anything is empty of content, it is the image that serves only to represent an external object but that lacks any life of its own (Ingold, 2010, p. 21).

Ingold, in the passage above, summarizes the abstraction that I will be addressing throughout this text. It is abstraction as a process of dissolving representation, thereby allowing the expression of the subject's living experience (*vivenciado*) of the world with others. Moreover, abstract painting saw the artwork's space sprawl into the communal space of the spectator. In addition, the geometric and organic were seen as expressions of the artist's experience as an incarnate mind in the world. The following note describes this process as it occurs on the canvas and how it will be transposed onto cinema.

To sum up, in invoking any one of the following notions herewith (viz., consciousness, body, space, time, perception, subject, world, and landscape), I also intend to imply the others. As Cauquelin remarks:

A permanent revolution waves the pair comprehend-see. I comprehend because I see, and as I see, the more I only see through and with the help of what I comprehend that I must see in what I see. [...] The question of painting does not cease to raise the question of this confrontation (comprehend-see), in a compact dialectic (2007, p. 85).²⁰

Thus, the dialectical process of seeing and comprehending what the painter and filmmaker see, is also their visual practices. In mentioning one of notions above, I intend to emphasize one aspect of a Being's existence and one aspect or element of visual expression (whether in painting or film). Consciousness is a body that moves in time and space, and which constitutes its world in conjunction with things and other beings that inhabit the same world. This incarnate mind perceives the world, which is also the consciousness that is expressed in paintings, installations, and films. Visual expression, as perceived by spectators, is the artists' and filmmakers' thought in visual form. I have presented in this introductory note a simplified scheme of the notions that are employed in this complex process, which involves the perception of the world and visual expression attending the comprehension of the world by an incarnate mind.

Notions of abstraction, avant-garde, modern, and the experimental in painting and cinema

As I will explain in Chapters 1 and 2, modern painting instigated processes of abstraction, disrupting representational space in the 19th century, which the avant-garde radicalized into abstract art in the 20th century. Both modern and avant-garde art oppose the naturalistic, representational, and illusory aspects of classical art. Avant-garde cinema became a category alongside advances in traditional and classical cinema (Ghali, 1995) in the first half of the 20th century. Avant-garde cinema opposed classical cinema and appeared, chronologically, before modern cinema (Ghali, 1995; Kovács, 2007).

²⁰ Original text: "Uma constante revolução agita o par compreender-ver. Compreendo porque vejo, e à medida que vejo, mais só vejo por meio e com o auxílio do que compreendo que é preciso ver naquilo que vejo. [...] A questão da pintura não cessa de suscitar a questão desse confronto, numa dialética compacta."

Modern cinema is approached here chronologically as well. This means that by ‘modern cinema’ I am referring to films made after World War II, and consequently as a reaction to the illustrative aspect of classical cinematic style and its standard representational form. Furthermore, the films of modern cinema were conceived beyond the cinema industry, typically using low budgets (Kovács, 2007; Xavier, 2008). Thus, modern cinema incorporates and assembles the form of both classical and avant-garde film, characteristically taking the form of non-representational moving images. In modern and avant-garde cinema, experimentation with cinematographic language, as in painting, sustains a degree of liberty within the form, thereby enabling improvisation and the expression of the subject, of their perception of the world (as in auteur films). Hence, modern cinema, like modern art, sat between the extremes of classical cinema and avant-garde cinema, combining both extremes in a modern narrative expression, which tended to be (but was not necessarily) non-representational. In modern cinema, there tends to be a plot that is disrupted and invented as the film is being shot, as well as during its editing. Therefore, modern and avant-garde cinema is characterized in this research in the same vein as modern and avant-garde painting, that is, with degrees of abstraction thanks to the dissolution of representational space, causal relations, and an aesthetic that opposes classical cinema and classical art. Therefore, modern and avant-garde cinema abstract and *express* the world, prescinding from *representing* it in visual expression, while nonetheless experimenting with visual language. So, what do I mean by the terms ‘non-representational’, ‘abstraction’, and ‘experimental’?

Merleau-Ponty (1945/1993, 1945/2012, 1952/1992, 1961/1993) contrasts the representational in classical painting with the non-representationalism of modern painting. The author also contrasts the duality of subject and object in classical art with the phenomenological approach to the world by the modern painter. Accordingly, this thesis contrasts classical cinema’s style of representing space and time, and the cause-effect relations maintained by the film form, (Bordwell et al., 2005; Xavier, 2008) with the non-representational aesthetic of modern and avant-garde cinema (Aumont, 2008, 2011; Ghali, 1995; Xavier, 2008).

Abstraction lies at the center of the contrast between representational and non-representational painting and film (Greenberg, 1971; Ghali, 1995; Argan 2008, Boys et al., 2013). Abstraction in painting (and film) “is a matter of degree” (Hobbis, 1987, p. 97). Hobbis (1987) argues that representational painting, like classical art, abstracts elements from reality to compose a representation *of* that reality. Moreover, representation in painting is concerned with the illusion of three-dimensions on a two-dimensional plane. As Hobbis explains: “[it] is clear that this is an illusion since it requires the beholder to treat the picture’s surface as something to be looked through into a space not continuous with real space” (Hobbis, 1987, p. 108). Therefore, classical painting is characterized by the representation of reality and its expectation to construct illusory space. This illusory depth over the canvas is a space that is distinct and separable from ‘real common space’. Additionally, the causal relations between figures and the background in classical painting guarantee this illusionary representation (Cauquelin, 2007; Gombrich, 1954, Merleau-Ponty, 1952/1992, 1961/1993). Moreover, objects, bodies, and the landscape are separated from one another but are nonetheless connected through causal relations within the painting, i.e., what is called the *diegesis* of the painting. A painting must have illusive causal relations and referentiality to count as a representation of reality (Cauquelin, 2007; Hobbis, 1987; Merleau-Ponty, 1952/1992, 1961/1993). Similarly, classical cinematic style constructs cause-effect relations representing space and time. Classical cinematic style represents space and time from an idealized point of view, as in classical painting. As a result, they achieve both ‘realism’ and ‘naturalism’ (Bordwell et al., 2005; Xavier, 2008).

Modern painting likewise abstracts elements from reality (as Merleau-Ponty (1952/1992; 1961/1993) says, modern painting expresses a perception of reality) in non-representational form. Abstraction in modern and avant-garde painting results from experiments with the medium, which disrupt representational space and open up possibilities for subjective expression (*viz.* the artist’s), while introducing the ‘appearance’ of the surface of the canvas (Chipp, 1968; Argan, 2008). Accordingly, Hobbis (1987) states that abstraction in modern art results in more general forms.

Modern painting's formal abstraction can contain figures that are mingled and indistinguishable from the ground, with those figures being more generic than representational figures, which are distinct (and distinguishable) from the background in classical painting. Furthermore, modern art reminds the spectator that the painting *is* a painting, rather than reality. In modern and avant-garde painting, elements are abstracted from reality in a non-representational form, since they are subjective expressions of reality, which do not heed rules of representation. As Hobbis elaborates: “[the] abstractness of the painting is a matter of it presenting us with abstractions from material reality, just as figurative art does, though at a different and much higher level of generality” (Hobbis, 1987, p. 102). Thus, modern and avant-garde painting allows for the development of experimentation with abstraction as non-representational space into the radical form of abstract art. Correspondingly, in this thesis I understand the term ‘abstraction’ as the dissolution of representational space (and time), as well as the openness of form. Additionally, abstraction makes the medium visible to the spectator. Therefore, abstraction is a process *characteristic* of the form.

There are two extremes regarding the act of abstracting in painting and the visual arts: (1) representational space (and, additionally, *time* in cinema); and (2) abstract art (and abstract cinema). Modern and avant-garde paintings might contain figures. However, in non-representation, non-illusory space, the medium and technique become subjects in themselves. They are visible to the spectator. However, the radical, extreme end of abstraction in painting neither contains nor presents figures, not even geometrical figures. Indeed, the canvas might well be the only figure presented. Therefore, the thesis skirts around the process of formal abstraction, or simply abstraction, as well as abstract art and cinema, which are equally visual expressions that experiment with the medium, breaking with the illusionary aspect of representation.

Noureddine Ghali (1995) analyzes French avant-garde cinema produced between the early 1900s and the 1930s with regard to their different conceptions of ‘narrative’. Avant-gardist cinema in France was fighting against classicism, as Ghali

explains: “[t]he fight against the traditional subject in the films is, thus, necessary and goes hand in hand with the emergence of works without intrigue, without anecdote, in a word films without a classical scenario” (1995, p. 261, own translation).²¹ Therefore, avant-gardist filmmakers opposed the traditional narrative of classical cinema (Ghali, 1995). Moreover, avant-garde cinema expected to eliminate “drama” and its spatiotemporal continuity (Ghali, 1995, p. 260). Ghali observes that in avant-garde cinema there are different types of narrative based on discontinuity and connections between objects or abstract images. A narrative constructed by discontinuity and fragmentation creates degrees of formal abstraction, moving it towards abstract cinema. Ghali divides the practice of the avant-garde into those films *with*, and those *without*, intrigue, anecdote, story, and action (Ghali, 1995). He concludes that all films, irrespective of their degree of abstraction, have a *trame*, a general scenario. The connections between moving images create this *trame*. He says: “This *trame* (of abstract films) is certainly not consistent with that proposed by the traditional scenario, but it is still a structure of another type since it weaves the links of visual type and not of a dramatic type” (Ghali, 1987, p. 272, own translation).²² Therefore, since abstract cinema is absent of drama, it might as well also be absent of characters and text.

Hence, the less narratives of avant-garde films are constrained by representational space and time and causal relations, the more abstract they are in general.²³ As with the figure in painting: the fewer representational aspects it has, the more abstract it is. Moreover, abstract cinema, like abstract painting, connotes the complete absence of classical narratives, whereby the medium becomes purely expressive. Furthermore, “[t]his type of film (classical cinema) appropriates from literature and theater its dramatic continuity” (Ghali, 1995, p. 258, own translation).²⁴

²¹ Original text: “Le combat contre le sujet traditionnel dans les films s’avère ainsi nécessaire et va de pair avec l’éclosion d’œuvres sans intrigue, sans anecdote, en un mot sans scénario Classique.”

²² Original text: “Cette trame n’est certes pas conforme à celle que propose le scénario traditionnel, mais c’est tout de même une trame quoique d’un autre type puisqu’elle tisse des liens d’ordre visuel et non pas de type dramatique.”

²³ ‘General’ here means the plurality of points of view and the non-assumption of just one standard viewpoint.

²⁴ Original text: “Ce type de film emprunte à la littérature et au théâtre sa continuité dramatique.”

The radicalism of avant-garde cinema relies on the “death” of the traditional scenario (sc. screenplay) with storylines and characters, eliminating the drama (Le Grice, 1977; Lawder, 1975). As Ghali remarks: “[the] storytelling, an element of literary and theatrical origin, is the enemy of avant-garde filmmakers” (Ghali, 1995, p. 258, own translation).²⁵ From the less radical dissolution of representation to the most abstract films of the French avant-garde, Ghali finds a common denominator, namely the rejection of characters and representational, dramatic stories. Therefore,

abstract cinema requires a real re-education of the spectator’s eye and the spirit; thus, that he can once again be able to appreciate the beauty in the interplay of forms and in between those forms, without looking for and carrying any literary meaning (1987, pp. 273-274, own translation).²⁶

The same can be said for abstract painting, which Ghali claims *defines* abstract cinema. Accordingly, the dissolution of representational space in modern and avant-garde painting, like the dissolution of the figure within the background, is in line with avant-garde cinema’s elimination of classical cinema’s dramatic, literary, and theatrical references. Lastly, Ghali observes that the avant-garde in France died with the arrival of the talkies in 1930. However, in Brazil, such films were still being made, as *Limite* | *Limit* (1931) by Mário Peixoto, which forms the subject of this thesis’s fifth chapter.

Against this background, I propose to broaden the notion of abstraction, as applied to cinema, based on the process of formal abstraction in painting. Abstraction is the result of experimentations with visual language (painting and cinema), achieved within the categories of modern and avant-garde art, which are non-representational. Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944), Paul Klee (1879-1940), Juan Miró (1893-1983), and Tarsila do Amaral (1886-1973) made abstract paintings with figures. But what makes these artists’ paintings *abstract* is not the absence or presence of figures, but the abandonment of classical art rules, as well as the absence of representational space (that is, the absence of three-dimensionality in the figures and background). These artists express

²⁵ Original text: “La narration, élément d’origine littéraire et théâtrale, voilà l’ennemi selon les réalisateurs d’avant-garde.”

²⁶ Original text: “Le cinéma abstrait demande ainsi une véritable rééducation de l’œil et de l’esprit du spectateur afin que celui-ci redevienne apte à apprécier la beauté dans le jeu des formes entre elles sans se soucier d’une quelconque signification littéraire.”

the unity (non-distinction) of figure and background, the appearance of the surface of the canvas (especially its flatness), and the method of conceiving those canvases. The modern and avant-garde artist does not preconceive: they conceive (as exemplified in Cézanne's method of painting, analyzed in Chapters 1 and 2). A film, a moving image, for it to be modern, avant-gardist, or even abstract does not need to be absent of narrative: it suffices that the film's narrative is non-representational. As Ghali remarks: "it is the death of the classical or academic scenario and the birth of a new type of scenario that refuses, among other things, anthropocentrism (Ghali, 1995, pp. 272-273, own translation).²⁷

In this text, modern and avant-garde cinema does not represent space and time as classic cinema does. The aesthetic of modern and avant-garde cinema that I will be addressing in this thesis is in accordance with modern and avant-garde painting. Avant-garde and modern cinema presents the medium as part of the film through "deframings" (Bonitzer, 2000), producing temporal displacement through the use of montage, constructing discontinued and non-linear narratives, or not constructing any narrative at all. Consequently, the films of the avant-garde or modern movement do not establish causal relations between scenes, shots, scenery, or characters; second, they are characteristically fragmentary and do not foreclose meanings and interpretations; finally, such films render their media 'apparent', whereby the surface of the screen is evident to the spectator. This opposition towards representational space and time in both painting and cinema is therefore epitomized in notions of abstraction, the avant-garde, modernism, and the experimental.

As for the terms 'experimental' and 'experimentation', they are intrinsically related to the process of formal abstraction in painting. Experimentations with painting, which Cézanne inaugurates as processes of expressing perception in the direction of abstraction, and the dissolution of representational space, are carried on by Léger and Mondrian, who respectively influenced Brazilian painters. Therefore, in

²⁷ Original text : "on ne peut pas dire à proprement parler qu'il y a des films sans scénario si l'on considère que tout film même le plus abstrait d'entre tous abéit à une trame. [...] Il s'agit alors de la mort du scénario classique ou académique et de la naissance d'un scénario de type nouveau qui refuse entre autres l'anthropocentrisme."

what follows I approximate experimentations with the painting medium (and its attendant techniques) to filmmaking. Films that are called ‘experimental’ are often associated with, or indeed *named*, *avant-garde* (Sitney, 2000), owing to their concern with purely visual aspects, or movement in the case of cinema (Deleuze, 1983; Kovács, 2007). According to Kovács (2007), in French terminology, ‘experimental’ is associated with the circulation of non-commercial films, “whose main concern is not to tell a story or to represent a piece of “real life” but to concentrate on and exploit the possibilities of the formal aspects of the cinematic medium” (Kovács, 2007, p. 27). Furthermore, the term ‘avant-garde’ in 1920’s France replaced the term ‘experimental’ (Ghali, 1987). Accordingly, North American historiography uses the term ‘avant-garde’ to refer to films that experiment with cinema, and provide alternatives to narrative films (Kovács, 2007, p. 27). Thus, there is an intrinsic relation between the terms ‘experimental’, ‘avant-garde’, and ‘modern’ (as well as ‘underground’, with regard to cinema) (Kovács, 2007, p. 27). Additionally, Machado (2010) indicates that ‘the experimental’ is conceptualized by its non-standard and unusual characteristics outside of cinematic genres, but also its experimentalism with cinematographic art. The experimental emphasizes “the experience [and] discovery of new possibilities” (Machado, 2010, p. 25).²⁸

The experimental, within the logic of *avant-garde* and modern art, dissolves and breaks with representational space and time in cinema, making the medium evident. The experimental attitude in painting developed into fully-fledged artistic propositions with Hélio Oiticica in the 1960s, which included the spectator in the living experience (*vivência*) of the artwork. Thus, the experimental, for Oiticica, meant the spectator’s experiment with the artwork.

Expression, in both cinema and painting in Brazil, added degrees of abstraction. The *avant-gardist* and most radical transformations within painting were made in the 1950s and 60s in Brazil, even though 1920’s modernism was already seen

²⁸ Original text: “[...] a ênfase desse tipo de produção está na experiência, no sentido científico de descoberta de possibilidades novas.”

as radical within society. The only avant-garde film made in 1931 almost disappeared, and at that point painters were not concerned with films. Artists and filmmakers of the 1950s and 60s, by contrast, enjoyed a closer relationship, sharing a concern with the local landscape and its inhabitants. The purest abstraction in Brazilian art came in the form of the Concrete movement, which had a phenomenological side that combined painting with propositions to its spectators, especially in the Neoconcrete movement. Therefore, in the case of Brazilian art and cinema, notions of abstraction, experimentalism, modernism, and the avant-garde were founded in the discussion I present above. However, they offer something else, which I will be discussing through this thesis.

The aforementioned key terms are united through abstraction, especially in their rejection of representation. Finally, the films and artworks analyzed in this thesis are responsible for the necessary combination of these notions. Furthermore, their form and methods of approaching the world, and expressing this approach through fragments of human bodies, landscapes, and architectural spaces, also encourage the connection of the foregoing terms to Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of modern art.

0.2 - Structure of the thesis

Chapter 1, entitled *Painting and the moving image: expression, abstraction, and experimentation in Maurice Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of modern art*, examines the relationship between cinema and painting, contextualizing the possible contribution of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of modern art in his three aesthetic essays: *Cézanne's Doubt*, *Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence*; and *Eye and Mind*. Furthermore, it examines how these essays contribute to the discourse between abstraction and experimentalism in avant-garde and modern art and cinema, which are visual expressions. Therefore, it examines interpretative possibilities, originating in Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of modern art, regarding how the modern and avant-garde filmmaker may express in moving images what painters express through visual abstraction.

Merleau-Ponty contrasted the method of modern painting and phenomenology with classical painting and classical science's approach to the world. Therefore, to contextualize cinema in the same '*merleau-pontynian*' move, the chapter distinguishes classical cinematic style from modern and avant-garde cinematic style, as different modes of expression. If classical cinema, like classical art, demands pre-conceived rules and methods for constructing films, the latter, as modern and avant-garde art, either confounds rules or conceives of films without pre-established rules. If classical cinematic style established a representational form of space and time, modern and avant-garde cinema prescind from representing; they rather *express*, and produce other forms of expression beyond the representational.

The parameters of classical cinematic style appointed here are those aligned with both classical art and sciences, thereby reducing them to certain aspects as defined by Bordwell et al. (2005), and Xavier (2008). Thus, classical cinematic style is here presented as the 'other' of modern and avant-garde cinema, because this study further develops the notions of the avant-garde and the modern in both the arts and cinema. This study focuses on the form of expression and the non-duality between subject and object proposed by the filmmaker, as aligned with modern and avant-garde painters. Consequently, I focus on how human bodies are expressed within their worldly dwellings, their landscapes, as well as the elements 'surrounding' them.

Lastly, Chapter 1 presents research on visual arts and cinema from and in Brazil, explaining my selection of those Brazilian films to be analyzed in Chapters 5, 6, and 7. Thus, Chapters 5, 6, and 7 connect visual artworks and films made in Brazil by Brazilian artists. Regarding this specificity, the Brazilian visual arts and Brazilian cinema constantly refer to, assume, or criticize an idea of the national, or of 'Brazilianness', which this thesis will problematize. With the exception of Chapter 2, each of the other chapters is concerned with the Brazilian context, its artists, filmmakers, films, and artworks.

In the first chapter, as in this introduction, I mention the concepts of modern and avant-garde art and cinema, which are developed further in their specificity in

Chapters 2, 3, and 4. Avant-garde art, avant-garde cinema, and modern cinema are developments of modern art. Thus, Chapter 2, entitled *Modern art, avant-garde art, and avant-garde films: The process of abstraction and experimentalism*, initially discusses the parameters that define modern and avant-garde art and the process of abstraction in painting. Chapter 2 presents the process of formal abstraction as disrupting and dissolving three-dimensional, representational space, given that it opens up the possibilities of expression in two-dimensions. Furthermore, it introduces the expression of perception in three painters: the paradigmatic painter of modern art, Paul Cézanne, the cubist Fernand Léger (1881-1955), and neoplasticist, Piet Mondrian (1872-1944). These three were the Western European painters who influenced the Brazilian painters highlighted in this thesis.

In Chapter 2, following the introduction of modern art and abstraction in painting, I discuss the possible, general conceptualizations of avant-garde art and avant-garde cinema, defining the aesthetic parameters of these notions, upon which this thesis is based, in accordance with Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological understanding of modern art. Lastly, I focus upon how abstraction was introduced in avant-garde cinema, primarily by painters.

Chapter 3, entitled *Modern and Avant-garde art in Brazil: 1920's modernism and the 1950s and 1960s abstract art*, composes a panorama of the absorption of European modern and avant-garde art by Brazilian artists. It emphasizes Tarsila do Amaral's painting and her central role in the modernist movement of the 1920s, as well as the relations between cinema and the visual arts in the 1920s, as well as Brazilian abstract art of the 1950s and 60s. Furthermore, the chapter briefly contextualizes some political changes that 'affected' visual-artistic and cinematic production. However, it is in Chapter 4 that I introduce the political context of the 1950s and 60s.

Modernism in the Brazilian visual arts is approached in the form of a continuum from the 1910s until the 1970s (Chiarelli, 2010; A. Fabris, 2010; Favaretto, 2011, 2013; Simioni, 2013). Thus, it was not purely a movement of the 1910s, 1920s, and 1930s, like the historical avant-garde in Europe. Additionally, Favaretto (2013) and

Brito (1999) suggest that the most radical phase of Brazilian modernism corresponded with the 1950s and 1960s, when the avant-garde took a radical turn with regard to the artwork's form, namely in the direction of abstraction and spectatorial engagement. Consequently, I propose here a chronological division into three generations regarding the process of abstraction in painting. The first generation includes the period from 1917 until 1931, comprehending Anita Malfatti's (1889-1864) exhibition in 1917, the Modern Art Week of 1922, the *Pau-Brasil* manifesto of 1924, the Anthropophagite Manifesto of 1928, Tarsila do Amaral's main production, and Mário Peixoto's avant-garde film *Limite* (1931). The second phase is between 1930 and 1945, corresponding to the Vargas Era (1930-1945), and a concern with the maintenance of figurative painting and regional themes (Fabris, 2002). This thesis does not expand on this second phase. Finally, the third phase, from 1945 until the 1970s (approximately), comprehends the inauguration of museums and the launch of the art market in Brazil, the insurgence of the Concrete and Neoconcrete movements, which introduced abstract art into Brazil, and the Brazilian modern cinema movements, Cinema Novo and Cinema Marginal.

Multiple artistic languages constitute modernism in Brazil (Fabris, 2002, pp. 43-44). Therefore, this research focuses on visual artworks, particularly the paintings considered "modern" in Brazil. Certainly, there were confluences between disciplines, such as literature affecting painting, music affecting poetry, and vice-versa. However, this study's efforts are directed to understanding the pictorial and compositional aspects of modernist, visual arts in relation to European avant-garde painting.

Thus, Chapter 3 of this thesis contextualizes visual arts in Brazilian modernism into three phases, with an emphasis on the first and third phases. Furthermore, it introduces the relationship between 1920s modernist artists and cinematic art, as well as the abstract art of the Concrete and Neoconcrete movements. The difference between these latter two movements is relevant because they approached painting in opposite directions. The artists of the 1950s and 60s that I emphasize in this thesis, respectively Lygia Pape, Lygia Clark, and Hélio Oiticica, were

part of *Grupo Frente* and Neoconcretism. Consequently, Chapter 3 outlines the theoretical and contextual fundamentals of Chapter 5, but also Chapter 6, owing to the context of abstract painting's aesthetics in both *Grupo Frente* and Neoconcretism.

Following the context introduced in Chapter 3, Chapter 4, entitled *Abstract Avant-Garde and Modern Cinema in Brazil: how artists and filmmakers experimented with the form*, discusses the transformations of abstraction in painting, which resulted from experimentations with form and technique that Lygia Pape, Lygia Clark, and Hélio Oiticica were responsible for from the mid-1950s until 1968. I examine in each artist's trajectory how their experimentation with abstract painting reached into real three-dimensional space and time, courting spectatorial engagement. Following that, I shall discuss how the concepts of *proposition*, *open artworks*, and adversity were understood and subsequently expressed in these artists' works. Chapter 4 also briefly introduces the political context of the 1950s and 60s in Brazil. Lastly, it defines modern Brazilian cinema, as well as describing the aesthetics of Cinema Novo and Cinema Marginal, and the confluence of the 1950's and 60's Brazilian avant-garde with modern Brazilian cinema. Therefore, Chapter 4 is largely dedicated to showing how this thesis understands abstract painting and the experimental attitude of these artists. In particular, I am interested to show how these artists' expressive outputs are associated with the kindred attitudes of Glauber Rocha and Ozualdo Candeias, at least with regard to their methods of filmmaking (analyzed in Chapters 6 and 7). Cinema Novo and Cinema Marginal are further developed in Chapters 6 and 7, respectively. Consequently, Chapter 4 provides a theoretical basis for Chapters 6 and 7. It is relevant to mention, moreover, that Chapters 5, 6, and 7 are dedicated to the films' analyses alongside visual artworks. As a consequence, artworks and films share the same relevance in these chapters, because films are examined in relation to paintings, installations, and propositions, meaning that the economy of the text seeks to find a balance between film and artworks. Therefore, as in a film, there is a sequence to be followed in each of the chapters dedicated to film and artwork analyses.

Chapter 5 presents the first film analysis: *Limite* (1931) by Mário Peixoto. *Limite* fits the avant-garde's proposals of rupture and novelty. Owing to this, I intend to identify, within the film, characteristics pertinent to the discussion of modernism, modern art, and avant-garde cinema. My study of the film expects to place it between European avant-garde abstract film and Brazilian modernism, as if forming a 'missing link' between the two. Moreover, *Limite* could be aligned with the historical avant-garde, along with its motifs of the Brazilian territory and its people. As Stam put it: "‘Pure’ cinema could be inspired by dreams, as with Epstein, or music, as with Abel Gance and Germaine Dulac in France, and Mario Peixoto in Brazil, all of whom spoke of film as essentially rhythm, or better, a ‘visual symphony made of rhythmic images’" (Stam, 2000, p. 37).

Therefore, Chapter 5, entitled *Mario Peixoto's Limite | Limit (1931). Between avant-garde and modernism: the cinematographic expression through abstraction and experimentalism*, examines those aspects of the avant-garde and 'modernist' film of *Limite | Limit (1931)* that concern abstraction in a non-linear, non-representational film, experimenting with framings, camera movements, and phenomenological expression through human bodies and the landscape. *Limite's* analysis is the last topic of the chapter. This is because the film is conceived with reference to Tarsila do Amaral's painting method and Fernand Léger's cubist filmmaking. Owing to this, I first introduce the painting method of Tarsila do Amaral, referring to three of her paintings, *Estrada de Ferro Central do Brasil (E.F.C.B.) | Brazil's Central Railway (1924)*, *Abaporu (1928)*, and *Antropofagia | Anthropophagy (1929)*. I do this to establish the aesthetic of modernist painting style that I will similarly examine in *Limite*. Following this analysis of Tarsila's paintings, I turn to Léger's only film, *Ballet Mécanique (1924)*, in order to unpack the painter's method of making an abstract, avant-garde film, and explaining its connection to *Limite*. Thus, my interest here does not concern the influences operating between artworks and films, but the mode of visual expression to be found in film and artworks. What we call the artist's or filmmaker's 'aesthetic' consists in their particular mode of combining form and content. Indeed, this thesis approximates painting to filmmaking, at least regarding the process of abstraction, based on experimentations surrounding the medium in

hand. Therefore, several avant-garde films, from filmmakers and artists such as Dziga Vertov (1896-1954), Serguei Eisenstein (1898-1948), Germaine Dulac (1882-1942), Jean Epstein (1897-1953), and Dimitri Kirsanoff (1899-1957), as well as the German expressionism of Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau (1888-1931) and Robert Wiene (1873-1938), influenced Mário Peixoto, and are present in *Limite* as analyses (Avellar (2011); Korfmann (2007); Mello (1996); and Xavier (2008)). Nevertheless, these influences will not be developed further in this thesis. They are, however, relevant in defining *Limite* as an avant-garde film. Still, I propose to examine the aesthetic aspects of films and paintings in order to connect them on grounds of their experimentation with visual language, as well as their expressing a phenomenological approach to the world in their methods of conceiving the painted and moving image.

Furthermore, Chapter 6, *Glauber Rocha, Grupo Frente, Neoconcrete and Tropicália (1967): Cinematic abstract thought in Pátio (1959) and Terra em transe | Entranced Earth (1967)*, is dedicated to two films of the most prominent filmmaker associated with the Cinema Novo movement: Glauber Rocha. As with *Limite*, I will not focus on Rocha's influences, as expressed in his films. I will focus on Rocha's formal abstraction and experimentation with cinematographic language in relation to the abstract art of the 1950s and 60s in Brazil. I examine two of his films in Chapter 6, namely *Pátio* (1959) and *Terra em transe* (1967). Before analyzing the films, I briefly introduce the main aesthetic elements of Cinema Novo and how Glauber Rocha relates to the movement. In contrast to Chapter 5, I begin by analyzing the films' form, in particular its use of framing and "deframing", as well as camera movements and the montage. My analysis of *Pátio* focuses on the way that intrinsic relations between human bodies and the landscape and architectural spaces are expressed. In addition, I concentrate on the abstraction of human bodies, the landscape and its surrounding spaces into organic and geometric lines and forms, which approximates abstraction in painting. I especially emphasize, to this end, artists' endeavors to bring painting into common space, thereby engaging the spectator's bodily experience. In this analysis, I focus on the following artworks: *Relevo em vermelho e azul | Grupo Frente Frente Group | Relief and red and blue* (1955/56) by Lygia Pape; *Untitled - Grupo Frente* (1956) by Hélio Oiticica; *Bichos*

| *Creatures* (1960) by Lygia Clark; and Núcleo NC6 | *Nucleus NC6* (1960/63) by Hélio Oiticica.

The move from film to artworks is retained in my analysis of *Terra e transe*, whereby I analyze aspects surrounding the narrative, for instance, the selection of internal and external spaces in which to frame key characters, and the suggestion of the tropics, implied by the use of the landscape, which altogether results in a labyrinthine film form. This, as I explain, bears similarities to the labyrinthine form proposed by Hélio Oiticica in his installation, *Tropicália* (1967). Even though the artworks are discussed after the films, the films are analyzed from the perspective of paintings that are brought into common space, as discussed in Chapter 4.

Finally, Chapter 7, entitled *Ozualdo Candeias's A margem | The margin (1967) and propositional artworks of Lygia Pape, Lygia Clark, and Hélio Oiticica: common space, landscape and body in the abstract experimental precariousness*, is dedicated to Ozualdo Candeias' first, fictional feature film, *A margem*, focusing on precariousness (Dezeuze, 2006, 2013; Teles, 2006) and adversity (Dezeuze, 2006, 2013; Oiticica, 2007), as made explicit in the film's aesthetic. Additionally, Chapter 7 examines the experimental attitude of the filmmaker, which invites the spectator to become a participant, as well as abstract elements of landscape, architectural spaces, and bodies, which expresses the non-duality between subject and world. The chapter first presents what precariousness, abstraction, and experimentalism can mean in *A margem*, as well as how the film's method is similar to the propositional artworks of Lygia Pape, Lygia Clark, and Hélio Oiticica, who similarly tackle the themes of precariousness and ephemerality.

Before constructing the discourse of *A margem*, Chapter 7 introduces the aesthetic characteristics of Cinema Marginal, and how Ozualdo Candeias and *A margem* relate to the movement. This follows a similar procedure as in Chapter 6 with Rocha. Lastly, I analyze the film, importing the premises of Chapter 4, that is, focusing on the model propounded by the following propositional artworks: *Roda dos Prazeres | Wheel of Delights* (1968) by Lygia Pape; *Máscaras Sensoriais | Sensorial Masks* (1967) by Lygia Clark;

and the *B 33 Bólido caixa 18, Caixa poema 02 “Homenagem a Cara de Cavallo”* | *B33 Box Bólido 18, Box Poem 02 “Homage to Horse Face (1966) by Hélio Oiticica.*

The shape of an oak tree seems to provide a fruitful and faithful metaphor for the structure of this thesis. For, the oak tree has a short and thick trunk, while at the same time having abundant, large branches and leaves—the plant spreading multiple thick and deep roots beneath the soil. Therefore, for the plant to be able to expand its branches and leaves, it needs to ground itself profoundly, grounded within the soil. Analogously, to be able to connect Brazilian cinema to Brazilian painting in their process of abstraction, this thesis presents the context and theory that are the roots of the films’ analyses, which ‘feed’ those contributions by connecting films to paintings in the Brazilian context. The theory discussed in Chapters 1, 2, 3, and 4 are the roots of Chapters 5, 6, and 7, in turn nurturing them. Chapters 1 to 4 form the thesis’ base. The first four chapters are dedicated to the theoretical discussion of painting and cinema, modern and avant-garde art and cinema, the process of abstraction, the Brazilian context of cinema and artistic discussion, from which Chapters 5, 6, and 7 develop.

With this study, I would like to invite the reader to entrain the profundity of the processes of creation in cinema and painting, just as the artists and filmmakers here described conceived of them. This implicates a system immersed in subjective consciousness, which variously invites us to sense, live, and experience visual expression. Moreover, the artworks and films here analyzed incite us to see a world of lines, bodies, and materials presented in artworks and moving images, but which are nevertheless part of our own dwelling in the world.

Chapter 1 - Painting and the moving image: expression, abstraction, and experimentation in Maurice Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of modern art

This first chapter examines the research's epistemology regarding the choice and validity of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology and philosophy of modern art, in particular his contribution to theoretical and critical approaches to the relationship between cinema and painting. This chapter aims to examine how Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of modern painting, encapsulated in three essays in particular, can contribute to the study and interpretation of films that are categorized as avant-garde and modern. Fundamentally, Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of modern art might contribute to the correspondence between expression in painting and expression in filmmaking in these categories, which is the aim of the research. This thesis does not expect to account for the complexity of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's philosophy and phenomenology. Thus, I will primarily discuss three conceptual axes within his phenomenology in *Cézanne's Doubt* (1945), *Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence* (1952), and *Eye and Mind* (1961). These three axes can be respectively called: expression; experimentalism; and abstraction. These are also the axes on which the relationship between cinema and painting is built. Before addressing Merleau-Ponty's essays, I will explain the relationship between cinema and painting as modern art. Lastly, concerning the cultural context of the relationship between cinema and painting, this chapter describes the research's focus on films and visual artworks made in Brazil, as well as by Brazilian artists and filmmakers.

Let me discuss cinema and painting as the expressions of subjects. This study does not handle all cinematic styles, but rather moving images that are non-linear, non-narrative, or have discontinued narratives (Ghali, 1995). Thus, this study will focus on films that are *not* representational, or naturalistic, which do not create an illusion (because this study is concerned with films that instead *rupture* illusion and experiment with the medium (Ghali, 1995; Hobbs, 1987), as discussed in the introduction. In the same way, the paintings and visual artworks, which also preoccupy this thesis, rupture

illusion, breaking with naturalistic effects, likewise do not apply representational rules, and experiment with the medium.

Linear films that narrate stories constructing cause and effect relations between images and sounds within a representational space and time are called classical (Bazin, 1951/1967; Bordwell, Staiger, & Thompson, 2005; Bordwell & Thompson, 2008). Classical cinematic style is naturalistic and creates illusory space and time through cinematographic procedures, such as scenery, fixed angles of framing, continual editing, close-ups, camera movements, intertitles, and voice-over. The classical cinematic style of narration is illusionary because it conceals the medium, making it 'invisible' for the spectator and thereby representing reality from a unique point of view, namely that of an 'idealized', or general, spectator (Bordwell et al., 2005). Moreover, filmmakers have standardized rules and methods to construct classical narrative films, which means they should follow a basic structure for every film. Consequently, classical style in cinema is a standardized form and a "dominant aesthetic" (Xavier, 2008a, p. 38).

Cinema is not the only art that constructs narratives through a representational form. Literature, theater, and paintings narrate and represent, and they can do so in an illusory and representational form. Indeed, classical Renaissance paintings,²⁹ for example, compose a visual illusion representing 'reality' through a mathematical conception of the canvas. In classical painting, as in classical cinema, the medium becomes 'invisible' and standardized. Consequently, classical paintings guide the spectator through compositional lines to one 'idealized' point of view. Furthermore, in classical painting the two-dimensionality of the canvas 'appears' to be three dimensional,³⁰ thereby appearing to constitute 'real' space and reality. These

²⁹ Classical painting here is painting done with the rules of perspective in Renaissance art, which is the same notion Merleau-Ponty applies (Albera, 2013; da Câmara, 2005; Merleau-Ponty, 1945/1993, 1952/1992, 1961/1993). However, in art history, 'Classical art' can also refer to Antiquity (Gombrich, 1951; Hauser, 1951/2005).

³⁰ Merleau-Ponty (1945/2012, 1993b) argues that the three-dimensional 'reality' in classical painting is a theoretical construction about how one should perceive the world. The world is not three-dimensional. The section 'space' in the *Phenomenology of Perception* discusses 'depth' phenomenologically, which does not correspond to the classical conception in science and painting.

cause and effect relations — which are mathematically constructed — are called *trompe l'oeil*.

Classical cinema and classical painting have methods in common, namely the invisibility of the medium,³¹ and narration through a representational and naturalistic style that respects rules and pre-conceived methods of “(audio)visual expression” (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/1966). Classical cinema, Bordwell argues, has a “narrative logic” using causal relations, constructing “the representation of time and the representation of space” (Bordwell et al., 2005, p. 11). There are fixed rules that guarantee a representational structure, giving little space for improvisation and experimentalism. Therefore, a structure blueprint comes before the act of filming. In the style of classical cinema, there is an *objective form* to achieve and a linguistic structure to maintain. Furthermore, each of the objective, method, and form precede the filming and editing of a film. As Bordwell attest about the classical cinema style in Hollywood film production:

[...] film studio resemble the monastery's scriptorium, the site of the transcription and transmission of countless narratives; that unity is a basic attribute of film form; that the Hollywood film purports to be 'realistic' in both an Aristotelian sense (truth to the probable) and a naturalistic one (truth to historical fact); that the Hollywood film strives to conceal its artifice through techniques of continuity and 'invisible' storytelling; that the film should be comprehensible and unambiguous; and that it possesses a fundamental emotional appeal that transcends class and nation. Reiterated tirelessly for at least seventy years, such precepts suggest that Hollywood practitioners recognized themselves as creating a distinct approach to film form and technique that we can justly label 'classical' (Bordwell et al., 2005, p. 3).

Therefore, films made in the classical style are representational and naturalistic. Classical painting, as classical cinematic style, is grounded in the laws of perspective (Panofsky, 1970, 1991): the painter paints *objectively*. Classical painters hope

³¹ I am not going to theorize about how cinema feeds itself with the imagery or symbolism of painting, as does, for example, the film *Passion* (1982) by Jean-Luc Godard, or *Van Gogh* (1948) by Alain Resnais. I shall, however, theorize about how cinema, by employing cinematic procedures, thinks and puts into practice certain methods, just as painting does.

to construct a representation of reality. Thus, their paintings are both realistic and naturalistic.

Merleau-Ponty (1961/1993), in line with his phenomenology of perception (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2012), understands classical Renaissance painting as visual thought analogous to classical science epistemology, in which the subject is separated from the world. Classical painting, like classical science, has methods and theories *about* the world, not *with it*. Thus, Cartesian duality (sc. the subject considered apart from the object) provides a method for the classical painter (Merleau-Ponty, 1961/1993), just as “classical science clung to a feeling for the opaqueness of the world, and it expected through its constructions to get back into the world” (Merleau-Ponty, 1961/1993, p. 121). Thus, classical painting is distant from the world that it represents. Classical painters present a mathematical idea of the world and things within a “norm”, or standardized, aesthetic. Thus, with Merleau-Ponty, I argue that classical cinematic style is based on the same duality and epistemology of classical painting and classical science.

On the other hand, Merleau-Ponty (1945/1993, 1952/1992, 1961/1993) understands modern art and the modern painter’s method as the *phenomenological* method of visual expression. Since “the world no longer stands before him (modern painter) through representation; [...] it is the painter to whom the things of the world give birth by a sort of concentration or coming-to-itself of the visible” (Merleau-Ponty, 1961/1993). The modern painter does not represent the world: he/she paints it as he/she perceives it. In opposition to the classical painter, the modern painter expresses the world he/she perceives with no formal preconceptions and does not assume a single point of view, but infinite possibilities of viewpoints.

The modern painter abandons the laws of perspective, breaking with illusion and opening up possibilities for experimenting with the medium and technique. The modern painter does not base his/her method on the Cartesian duality of subject and object. For Merleau-Ponty, the modern painter is an incarnate mind in the world, and the landscape (including nature and objects) and other beings are painted through him,

and the painting is *conceived* but not *pre-conceived*. Accordingly, I expect to highlight the relationship between modern art and expression that Merleau-Ponty mentions in his three aesthetic essays. Thus, I hope to contribute to the understanding of abstraction and experimentalism of cinematographic language in avant-garde and modern cinema as styles the adherence to which do not consist in filmmakers following pre-established rules. This understanding thereby conceives of films as modern paintings.

Owing to this, I will focus on modern and avant-garde art and their relation to modern and avant-garde cinematic methods, based on readings of Merleau-Ponty's aesthetic texts: *Cézanne's Doubt*; *Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence*; and *Eye and Mind*. Moreover, I will explain how denominating, on equal footing, paintings and films as modern, avant-gardist, experimental, and abstract could enrich the vocabulary with which we think, theorize about, and criticize cinema that is not classical, and accordingly does not follow "laws" of representation. I am not suggesting a substitution of categories of "film analysis", criticism, or film theories, but an additional method that approximates the painting method to the filmmaking method, from visual arts theories and criticism. This thesis does not seek meanings and symbols in the interpretation of films but rather hopes to interpret the modes of cinematographic language from its final cinematic form. As Smith puts it: "In the case of corporeal gesture, it is the human body that provides the generality of signifier; the common perceived world furnishes a background of signified referents." (Smith, 1993, p. 1995). Consequently, this thesis does not address the studies of cinema's semiotics and semiology (Metz, 1971/1991).

Films and artworks are expressions of subjects (respectively artists, authors, and filmmakers). Owing to this, artworks are things³² that *contain* subjectivity in their form, matter, and content. They are expressions of the perception of the world, that is, of things. The process of expression is based on the univocal relation between an incarnated mind (consciousness) and reality (world). Consequently, the approach of my

³² Merleau-Ponty, as non-dualist philosopher and phenomenologist, does not use the term 'object', but the term 'thing(s)'. This thesis uses 'things' as well, referring to 'things in the world that dwell with the subject (Being)'.

research studies artists' and filmmakers' methods and methodology from formal and content 'analysis' of the artworks and films, since they are expressions of subjects' perception of the world containing their gestures. "[T]he phenomenological approach is not meant to be an exterior analysis 'applied' to the film; [...] it is a description of both the intentional efforts of the film-makers and an analysis of the nature of film [...]" (Penley & Bergstrom, 1978, p. 116). For us — the analysts, theorists, and critics of film and artworks — "the sensible world (is) displaced through the world of expression, [...] we apply our eyes to invisible cultural things, we articulate the visible according to significations that transcend it – but that was already at work in it [in the visual work of art]" (Merleau-Ponty, 2011, p. 170, own translation).³³ Thus, the method of expression is present in artists' and filmmakers'³⁴ work.

1.1 Painting and cinema as modern art

Before examining Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of modern art, it is relevant to explain the 'nature' of the connection that I am making between cinema and painting. There is not a 'nationality' of this proximity, but European and North American theory and practice have connected cinema and painting since the beginning of the 20th century. For instance, painters made films, such as Fernand Léger (1881-1955), Hans Richter (1888-1976), Robert Bresson (1901-1999), and Andy Warhol (1928-1987). Meanwhile, filmmakers made 'moving paintings', such as Viking Eggeling (1880-1925), Stan Brakhage (1933-2003), Len Lye (1901-1980), and Harry Smith (1923-1991). Moreover, painters incorporated cinematographic language into their paintings, such as Giacomo Balla (1871-1958) and Fernand Léger. Moreover, films documented painting in 'action', such as *The Mystery of Picasso* (1956) by Henri-Georges Clouzot, *Van Gogh*

³³ Original text: "Le monde sensible déplacé par monde de l'expression qui s'installe en lui, nous appliquons nos yeux à choses culturelles invisibles, nous articulons le visible selon significations qui le transcendent - mais qui étaient déjà à l'œuvre en lui."

³⁴ Cinema is, for the most part, a collective process. However, following the Cahiers du cinéma's *politique des auteurs*, I am considering the director of the film as the films' author, and therefore responsible for the film's conception, directing others towards his expression.

(1948) by Alain Resnais, *Henri Matisse* (1946) by François Campaux, and *Jackson Pollock 51* (1951) by Hans Namuth.

Cinema criticism associated the practice of painting to that of filmmaking, particularly in French criticism, with Germaine Dulac (1882-1942), René Clair (1898-1981), Blaise Cendrars (1887-1961), Eric Rohmer (1920-2010), and Jean-Luc Godard (1930-), as well as filmmakers and theorists of Structural and Underground Cinema, such as Adam Sitney (1944-) and Malcolm Le Grice (1940-). In Brazil, for instance, Glauber Rocha made drawings of his films (Avellar, 1995b) and filmed the funeral of the painter Di Cavalcanti in *Di Cavalcanti* (1977). The painters Lygia Pape and Hélio Oiticica furthermore made films entitled *Carnival in Rio* (1974) and *Agripina é Roma Manhattan* (1972). Therefore, the proximity and influence of cinema and painting is hardly novel.

When examining films about paintings, André Bazin (1951/1967) separates the world inside and outside of the “frame” of paintings and cinema, or, to be more precise, he analyzes documentaries such as *Van Gogh* (1948) by Alain Resnais, which narrates the painter’s life, *through* his paintings. Bazin (1951/1967) recognizes in this cinematic ‘genre’ the combination of the two different arts: cinema and painting. For Bazin (1951/1967), the difference between painting and cinema relies on the nature of the frame.

In painting, the “frame polarizes space inwards”, thus the movement is centripetal. As in cinema, the frame functions as a “mask” over reality and the movement inside the frame points towards the outside of the frame. Thus, the movement of the cinema screen frame is centrifugal. The movements Bazin (1951/1967) described in paintings are centered on a vanishing point (as in classical representational paintings) and they have the “frame as in the object-frame” (Aumont, 2011). The centrifugal movement of cinema relies on the “frame as a mask” (Aumont, 2011) over the reality that moves towards a narrative between images. Therefore, Bazin (1951/1967) is not considering modern paintings in which there is no vanishing point or “frame object”, whereby the painting is an object in itself and does not represent

the world (see Chapter 2). Further, Bazin (1951/1967) does not consider films that are not narrative or non-linear, nor fragmentary.

Jacques Aumont (2011) accepts Bazin's (1951/1967) arguments about the frame in painting, as well as the cinematic screen frame. However, Aumont (2011) expands on the similarities and the relationship of both languages, taking into account modern and avant-garde paintings that keep the 'square' format of the canvas. Aumont (2011) explains that both cinema and painting share the geometric limit of the frame, as photography does as well, which is called the "frame-limit". Aumont (2011) categorizes as "frame-object" the frame in classical paintings, which limit and separate the 'world' of the painting from the 'world' (space) surrounding the painting. The "frame-object" and the "frame-limit" can be a "frame-window" to the world (Aumont mobilizes the idea of the Italian Renaissance painter and architecture, Leon Batista Alberti (1404 -1472), that a painting is a window to the world).

Aumont (2011) mentions mainly classical figurative paintings that narrate stories: they "talk", he claims. Classical paintings might use the edge of the canvas to indicate a space "out of the frame" similar to cinematographic techniques that indicate a space "out of the frame". The space out of the frame, in both painting and cinema, is part of the narrative and the diegesis that "happens" inside the frame. Accordingly, for Aumont (2011), the space outside of the frame is constitutive of the virtual world in the painting and the film, therefore, it is 'in-the-field' of the narrative but out of the shot field. The frame in cinema is never a closed system, says Deleuze (1983): the more the frame "is thin, the off-field better achieves its other function, which is to introduce trans-spatiality and spirituality into the system that is never perfectly closed" (Deleuze, 1983, p. 31, own translation).³⁵ Thus, the frame in cinema includes a virtual space that is not necessarily inside the frame. The "frame-limit" in classical cinema refers to virtual space as in classical painting. Modern cinema, however, like modern painting,

³⁵ Original text: "Mais plus il (le cadre) est ténu, mieux le hors-champ réalise son autre fonction, qui est d'introduire du trans-spatial et du spirituel dans le système qui n'est jamais parfaitement clos."

focuses on the 'flatness' of the image, referring to the space that is 'real' as an image (sc. two-dimensional).

Therefore, classical cinema has similar methods of representation within moving images to that of classical paintings. As Aumont puts it: "the edges (limits) in cinema images are always permeable inside a narrative and to the narrative" (Aumont, 2011). For Aumont (2011), cinema and painting share (that is, have in common) the same geometrical limit, that is, a 'cultural limit'. The limit for the cinema screen is the cinema *dispositif*, which is a dark room with a white screen, onto which moving images are projected.

At this point, it is important to highlight that even though Aumont (2011) restricts 'the' cinema to the conservative *dispositif*, where an "immobile spectator" sits down, this *dispositif* is "a theoretical model dated to modernity", which makes reference to the "aspiration to look (gaze) at the screen", that is, to looking at paintings, or at visual artworks and moving images (Aumont, 2011, pp. 61-64). Vision is thought of here as an incarnate mind (consciousness). Furthermore, Aumont (2011) mentions that the square-like canvas hanging on the wall is one of the most "stable representations" in Western culture. Thus, 'seeing' paintings is a similar action to 'seeing' moving images. This theoretical understanding of the 'vision', namely the 'mobile vision' of Aumont (2011), is grounded in Merleau-Ponty's notion of the vision of an incarnate mind or 'Being' in the world with others, which at the same time sees and is seen, touches and is touched (Merleau-Ponty, 1961/1993). The methodology of this thesis is grounded in the same theoretical understanding that Aumont (2011) has of Merleau-Ponty (1945/1993, 1952/1992, 1961/1993, 2009, 2011, 1945/2012). On that account, seeing/perceiving is thinking. Additionally, visual expression is the expression of thought.

Returning to the parallel between classical cinema style and classical paintings, Aumont (2011) states that classical cinematic style centralizes the images so as to centralize the narrative point of view. Centralizing an image in classical cinema means to locate the center of the frame (the vanishing point of the image) in the 'central

figure' of the narrative, making the "fiction depth" appear instead of the "surface of the real" (Aumont, 2011, p. 129). However, modern cinema might equally rely on narratives that 'de-frame' their images or shots. Modern cinema decentralizes the images and the narrative, which makes the frame appear. As Aumont writes: "the frame marks its existence" and "decentralizes the symbolic order" (Aumont, 2011). Thus, as the frame marks its existence in the film, the medium is not invisible anymore as the filmmaker's method or gestures. Furthermore, in modern cinema, the 'maker' is present in the film, thereby disrupting representational schemes.

Owing to this, modern cinema constitutes an 'ongoing' cinematic composition (Aumont, 2011) and does not delimit meanings. Aumont (2011) mentions Pascal Bonitzer's theories about "deframing", largely within narrative, modern cinematic style, which is non-linear and breaks classical cinema's stylistic illusions. Pascal Bonitzer (2000) conceptualizes *deframing* in cinema as the breaking of representational space, as is typified in modern figurative and two-dimensional paintings, such as in works of Cubism and Surrealism. He says: "I should like to concentrate on the process that I call, for lack of a better term, *deframing*. It involves something quite different from the 'oblique view' of classical painting" (Bonitzer, 2000, p. 198).

Bonitzer (2000) connects modern painting to modern cinema based on the "deframing" of both, especially "through their deployment of unusual and frustrating framings Antonioni, Duras and Straub are likewise painters" (Bonitzer, 2000, p. 200). Bonitzer elaborates that, "[the] unmastered space of modern art is similarly replete with lacunae, with solicitations of the hidden and the invisible" (Bonitzer, 2000, p. 198). Thus, Bonitzer (2000) approximates the method of the modern painter to the method of the modern filmmaker with regard to how they 'use' the "frame-limit". Because neither frames the central vanishing point (owing to which there is no centrality around the image), their narratives lack centrality and continuity — there are only gaps. Bonitzer highlights the fact that deframing is "framing the lacuna", the gap, which, according to Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology and philosophy of modern art, is

constitutive of expression (Johnson, 1993; Merleau-Ponty, 1952/1992, 2011; Saint Aubert, 2011). Merleau-Ponty refers to the ‘gap’ (*écart*) as the ‘background’ of speech, and, in modern paintings, the background is part of the discourse of the whole painting, itself being a figure as well. To this end, modern paintings subvert the relations between figure and background. The lacunae for Merleau-Ponty, though invisible, are in any case visible. I will return to this point later in the chapter.

Bonitzer (2000), like Aumont (2011), focuses on two-dimensional paintings and two-dimensional moving images. However, what about paintings that extrapolate the surface of the canvas and/or remove the frame, thereby incorporating the space around them? Moreover, what about paintings that do not make references to a “virtual” or fictional space? Or avant-garde paintings that are “spatial”, which are placed within spaces such as Vladimir Tatlin’s *Counter-Reliefs* (1914-1916),³⁶ or Brazilian Neoconcrete ‘paintings’, such as Hélio Oiticica’s penetrables (*penetráveis*), which include *Núcleo NC6* (1963), and Lygia Clark’s *Bichos* series (1960)?³⁷ What about abstract, geometrical paintings such as Piet Mondrian’s compositions?³⁸ Do they have a parallel in cinema, that is, in moving images?

Aumont (2011) focuses on modern European and North American cinema, mentioning a few examples of Asian films. Therefore, I hope to further broaden Aumont’s (2011) theoretical approach to cinema and painting to include Brazilian avant-gardist and modern visual arts, as well as avant-garde cinema and modern films. I shall do this by considering the process of abstraction and experimentalism (and the experimental attitude); axes that dissolve the illusory space and time of representationalism.

This thesis applies Aumont’s (2011) notions of cinematic *dispositif*,³⁹ “frame-object”, and “frame-limit”, because abstraction in painting and cinema mobilizes

³⁶ Tatlin’s *Counter reliefs* were colored surfaces assembled on the corners of the exhibition room. They were spatial paintings.

³⁷ I describe them as their process of construction coming from abstraction in painting in Chapter 4.

³⁸ I discuss Piet Mondrian’s conception of painting in Chapter 2.

³⁹ As Merleau-Ponty says: cinema is “a cultural thing” (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/1966, 1952/1992)

painting and images outside of the “frame-limit”, as well as completely abandoning the “frame-object” given the experimentation with the medium. Moreover, I am assuming Bonitzer’s (2000) notion of “deframing” as it applies to modern and avant-garde cinema, as well as Aumont’s (2011) conception of modern cinema, which “decentralizes the symbolic order”. Lastly, the primary connection between cinema and painting concerns the method of *disrupting* classical representation. This disruption contributes to abstraction and experimentation with the medium. Additionally, as I will approach from Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological perspective, modern and avant-garde cinema and paintings are thoughts, and *ipso facto* expressions of a Being (Câmara, 2005; Fontes Filho, 2005; Furlan & Furlan, 2005; Merleau-Ponty, 1945/1993, 1952/1992, 1961/1993, 2011; Rodrigo, 2016; Saint Aubert, 2011).

Consequently, this thesis is not about the kind of cinema exhibited in the art gallery space or other cinematic *dispositifs*, such as 3D or virtual reality (VR). It rather concerns the cinema that, like painting, troubles its specificity as a visual expression that makes others (viz., spectators) think beyond it, remembering the spectator of the medium and recommending access to other senses besides vision. Therefore, I argue that modern cinema, as modern art, can constitute phenomenological expression, as Merleau-Ponty conceives of it. As Galen A. Johnson (1993) explains: “Merleau-Ponty’s painting selections indicate the progress of his interest in painting toward more abstract forms of expression in which the integrity of the canvas as a two-dimensional surface is more prominent” (1993, p. 40). Abstraction constitutes a central form in painting and cinema for this research. Thus, I will argue next, following Lambert Wiesing (2016), why Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology is relevant when thinking about formal abstraction in both painting and cinema.

The approach of this thesis to the interpretation of films and visual artworks follows a formalist theoretical framework, based on Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological approach to modern art. Hence, I approach film as Merleau-Ponty approaches painting. Both painting and film constitute visual expressions of the subject. This thesis associates the method of the painter with the method of the

filmmaker in the film analysis. I will examine this practice, as well as the relationship between the phenomenological approach of a painter to the phenomenological approach of a filmmaker in their respective processes of abstraction. Thus, while my approach is formalist, I do not refer to formalist analyses, as strictly proposed by Bordwell (1985; 2005; 2008) or Xavier (2012), for instance. This is because I am analyzing films that do not have a classical style, but are rather avant-gardist or modern, based as they are on experimental practice and abstraction. Classical cinema, just as classical science, is based on cause and effect relations in the film, often incorporating a teleological aspect. However, modern and avant-gardist films might break with such relations. Ultimately, “not only is the ‘art’ of film itself little developed in plastic terms, but [...] most of the major critics of cinema have a strong literary bias, being more at home with narrative, dramatic, symbolist or surrealist forms” (Le Grice, 1977, p. 74). Therefore, I will be approximating the analyses of film to the analyses of paintings and the various developments in painting practices within the visual arts.

Lambert Wiesing (2016) examines the formal method of “analysis” of abstract images and argues that Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology and philosophy of art are consistent with the approach to formally abstract images. Primarily, Wiesing examines Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological contribution to Husserl’s *époché* (meaning the suspension of judgment and its attendant phenomenological reduction), which approximates the subject, who investigates, to the ‘object’, which is studied (Wiesing, 2016, p. 158). With *époché*, the philosopher, scientist, humanist, artist, or filmmaker suspends his/her preconceptions of a thing (whether it be a tree or speech), and describes it as it is presented. This praxis, when applied to the analysis of moving images and paintings, is formalist. This is because it first and foremost describes the form, suspending the projection of previous representational narratives or symbols that are ‘naturally’ disseminated throughout culture. As Wiesing notes, “[the] principle of phenomenological reduction consists of artificially abandoning the natural attitude so as to gain a new perspective on the object” (Wiesing, 2016, p. 158).⁴⁰ Furthermore,

⁴⁰ About the epoch as a method, precisely, Wiesing describes the difference from the Cartesian method: “If Husserl’s concept of epoch, at first glance recalls Descartes’s concept of methodical doubt, the formulation ‘for

this praxis in visual arts and cinema (especially the modern and avant-garde, which are concerned with abstraction) makes the form appear as part of the discourse, recalling that the “thing produced” is neither reality nor the world, but an expression of such things.

The formal phenomenological analysis of formal abstraction and abstract images (moving images and paintings) allows the critic, theorist, and analyst to present ‘readings’ that do not correspond with fixed rules of interpretation, and take into considerations the ‘way’ and the method whereby the subject conceives of formal abstraction and the abstract image. “For phenomenology shows that reduction does not necessarily destroy the sense of something, but can, on the contrary, bring sense to light that was not thematized” (Wiesing, 2016, p. 173). For example, in analyzing a cubist painting, such as *La Ville* (1919) by Fernand Léger (Illustration 03), first the analyst should describe the formal approaches, such as the use of color, presence of organic or straight lines and how they are applied on canvas, and how the abstraction might be gestures or expression of houses, trees, or human bodies. This approach contrasts with looking for “recognizable” objects, or conventions, such as “man” when seeing forms that appear “to be” human bodies (as one does when regarding classical paintings).⁴¹ There are no characters in the painting if the painting does not refer to them on its surface or in its title. Indeed, the same can be said about moving images. It is important to always remember that the image is a “language”, and as such an expression of a subject, *not* the representation of the world. Merleau-Ponty approximates the essence of the image to the essence of the drawing and the painting as a visual expression in opposition to classical art’s laws of perspective and the pictorial representation of the world.

phenomenological analysis’ marks the crucial difference. Husserl is not attempting to overcome the state of epoch, by means of phenomenological analysis, but rather to work out from this state. With Descartes, on the other hand, methodical doubt is there to be overcome. In his meditations, Descartes even deliberately adopts the position of a radical skeptic, and doubts the validity of every belief in existence; but the goal of this doubt consists in finding a foundation on which to build an assertion of existence. Descartes wants to leave the pure immanence of consciousness behind – and to do it as quickly as possible. But Husserl’s goal in bracketing out natural belief in the existence of the world is to stop focusing on what a recognized object is, and concentrate instead on how it is given, that is, to allow structures of consciousness to show themselves and become potential objects of phenomenological description” (Wiesing, 2016, pp. 158-159).

⁴¹ Moreover, classical paintings intend to represent “objects”.

The word 'image' is in bad repute because we have thoughtlessly believed that a drawing was a tracing, a copy, a second thing, and that the mental image was such a drawing, belonging among our private bric-a-brac. But if in fact it is nothing of the kind, then neither the drawing nor the painting belongs to the in-itself any more than the image does. They are the inside of the outside and the outside of the inside, which the duplicity of feeling [*le sentir*] makes possible (Merleau-Ponty, 1961/1993, p. 126).

Image, therefore, is the expression of the reversibility of the Being. It is the expression of the "senses" and the interpretation of the world by a creator, an author that is part of the imbricated relation with the world. Visual thought expresses the reversibility of seeing and being seen, of touching and being touched, and abstraction is as much an expression as any other. In summary, it is not about referring to a philosophy of the image's condition or concept but emphasizing the relation between picturing and composition in painting, as in drawing to cinema.

Let us return to the painting *La Ville* (Illustration 03), which presents cylinders, squares, and circles painted in black, indicating volume thanks to the difference in tonality inside of the geometrical forms. These forms are abstractions of the human body, rather than representations of the human body. The same can be said about the elements of a city landscape on the canvas. When the image is entirely abstract—to the point of figures being absent, as in Piet Mondrian's compositions—the analyst can describe the lines, the colors and their proportions, and how the painting is positioned in space (as well as the fact that some paintings do not have a "frame-object"). The interpretation, therefore, of such a description might include how the colors have been applied, and the use of the surface of the painting, reaching the point whereby the painting *itself* is the motif.

Wiesing argues that formal aesthetics is concerned with the image, that is to say, the *conception* of such an image. Thus, formal abstraction and abstract images are subjects in themselves, which do not make reference to a representation of the world, owing to which they cannot be said to construct visual illusions (as in three-dimensional space).

The abstract image is not a sign for an object, but [...] only a possible sign that is not completely realized. It is a sign for another sign, an image about the way an objective image could be structured. Instead of real fish, only a net is painted, with which possible fish could possibly be caught. Instead of describing an objective reality, which could also be fictional, but which is a reality nevertheless, the abstract image describes possible ways reality could be represented and experienced (Wiesing, 2016, p. 176).

In an abstract image, visible reality does disappear, but the interpretation of visible reality does not; on the contrary, interpretation becomes the only thing that is visible (Wiesing, 2016, p. 177).

The passage above, therefore, confirms the premise of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology regarding the process of abstraction and abstract images as phenomenological expressions. Thus, for Wiesing, at least according to this thesis, "the abstract image⁴² is to be interpreted here in connection with Merleau-Ponty, as a realized form of phenomenological reduction by means of painting" (Wiesing, 2016). Since the modern painter and the modern and avant-gardist filmmaker⁴³ might interrogate the world with their judgment suspended, the image becomes their visual expression of perception, which is not based on rules of representation of space and time, they merely interpret what is sensible.

Thus, abstraction in visual expressions, such as abstract images, can be apprehended with openness. This is because the abstraction of visual expressions does not enclose meaning, nor make direct reference to a representational system. Further, this abstraction constitutes an 'interpretation' of reality, while also expressing a phenomenological approach to the world and its objects (*viz.*, things). This line of thought corroborates the argument that abstraction, and abstract art in the form of painting and cinema, expresses reality (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/1993, 1952/1992, 1961/1993). On this point, Alberto Tassinari (2001) calls attention to the difference between the classical and modern image, in particular the fact that the function of the classical image is to create an illusion. Modern art and modern imagery are not based on a referent and therefore do not construct representational space (*trompe d'oeil*). To the contrary, they communicate through the senses. Accordingly, it does not matter

⁴² For Wiesing, the abstract image is not necessarily absent of all figures.

⁴³ For the options of modernism and the avant-garde in visual arts and cinema, see the Introduction and Chapter 2 of this thesis.

whether this art consists in abstract figures or, indeed, abstract aspects of the painting technique itself, such as color, line, or surface (Tassinari, 2001, pp. 99-101).

This thesis focuses on abstraction as the subject of visual thinking owing to the importance of acknowledging that it “is the reconstruction of a pictorial understanding that allows for images not to be used as signs for things that are absent. It tries to answer the question of what one can see in an image when one is not seeing depicted objects” (Wiesing, 2016, p. 5). Furthermore, in this thesis I endeavor to answer the question of what one can actually *see* in moving images when one is not perceiving linear nor continual narratives within a representational form or narrative at all. Thus, a formal aesthetic analysis is fundamental to this study in order to describe the gestures of the maker and their method for achieving abstraction.

Additionally, Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology proposes the non-separation of subject and object (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2012), as well as the non-distinction between object and subject, whereby abstraction can be the expression of that univocal relation with the world, since it breaks with representation. As Wiesing explains, “Merleau-Ponty [...] takes hold of reduction as the very method with which to recognize an unrecognized reality between subject and object – or better said: a reality that is subjective and objective to the same extent” (Wiesing, 2016, p. 170). Thus, I will argue later in this thesis with Merleau-Ponty’s texts, namely his view that the artist’s phenomenological approach and the expression are the result of the non-duality between ‘subject and the world’, based on the body and the contribution of the senses (especially vision) to the intellect (thought). As Wiesing argues:

Phenomenology – one could speak of a new form of ontology – is to investigate realities that subvert the subject-object duality. Merleau-Ponty finds two great topics for his intra-ontology: visibility and the body. Both phenomena are, for Merleau-Ponty, an answer to the question of what bridges the duality of consciousness and being (Wiesing, 2016, p. 170).

Furthermore, Wiesing states that Merleau-Ponty contributes, especially in his late essays (*Cézanne’s Doubt*, *Indirect Languages and Voices of Silence* and *Eye and Mind*), to the possibility of an eidetic reduction in visual arts (as well as other languages, given

Merleau-Ponty's understanding of 'expression'). Therefore, on the phenomenological, formalist approach, one should 'bracket out' or suspend the judgment of the referent and dedicate oneself to describing and interpreting the visual artwork, the image, or the film in itself, in an approximation to it *not* as a distant object, but as an expression of a subject.

The formal elements of painting and its development towards installation and participatory work, which this research highlights according to theoretical rubrics (Chapters 2, 3 and 4), are to be described and interpreted alongside cinematographic case studies. The elements highlighted herewith are the surface, plane, canvas, frame, color, drawing, time, space, movement, and the body as developed by the painter/artist, as well as the openness to the spectator. Furthermore, the components emphasized in this study of cinematographic language are, respectively, the surface of the screen, the planes (two-dimensionality), editing (montage), sound (music) (as well as silence), frame (sc. framing and deframing), camera movements in relation to the body, and the elements of the landscape, in addition to the film's 'openness'.

Therefore, in accordance with Wiesing (2016), this text applies the term 'image', understanding it to mean 'visual thinking' and 'visual language'. In its turn, visual thinking is based on visual arts, which countenances innumerable possibilities of visual abstraction made possible with the developments of modern and avant-garde art. Technology and technique do not define abstraction. This is because abstraction is the expression of *a* reality, not *the* representation of *the* reality. Owing to this, abstraction amounts to an open form of experimentation in unlimited directions, independently of techniques employed. In accordance with what Wiesing states:

[The] discovery of new technologies for producing images does not in itself explain why a new pictorial form comes into being. Abstract images needed no technical invention at all, for the abstract image works with the traditional means of the easel picture [...]. To put it another way: images, works of art in particular, come to be on the basis of a particular conception of the image. Someone who thinks an image can only be an image if it is possible to recognize an object on it will hardly be in a position to make use of available technical possibilities to produce an abstract image. Someone who thinks a film must tell a story will not make a video clip using computer animation. So we can say technical possibilities can have an impact on the production of new image forms only if the pictorial understanding that in a logical sense permits it is already in place. Philosophical aesthetics affects the production of images by establishing the conceptual conditions in which the new images become thinkable (Wiesing, 2016, p. 3).

Following Wiesing, it is not of utmost relevance that this research be concerned with the differences in techniques or technology when theorizing or criticizing experimentation and abstraction in cinema and painting. What *is* relevant, however, is “how” individual experiments with language can express one’s consciousness of the world (da Câmara, 2005; Merleau-Ponty, 1945/1993, 1952/1992, 1961/1993, 2011, 1945/2012).

Lastly, Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy has been widely investigated in film (and art studies) as ‘film phenomenology’ (Ferencz-Flatz & Hanich, 2016). Film phenomenology was developed in the decades after the philosopher’s death and also refers to other phenomenological philosophers, including Martin Heidegger, Edmund Husserl, and Jean-Paul Sartre. Film phenomenology focuses on viewers’ experiences, but does not provide either an objective, methodological, nor theoretical framework for this thesis. According to Ferencz-Flatz and Hanich, “the narrow definition [of film phenomenology] might ultimately be preferable because it designates film phenomenology more unmistakably as an attempt that describes invariant structures of film viewer’s lived experience when watching moving images in a cinema or elsewhere” (Ferencz-Flatz & Hanich, 2016, p. 13). The study and analysis of Merleau-Ponty’s texts on aesthetics (primarily painting, which is incidentally also the subject of this research) by commentators contributes further to cinematic thinking. This kind of commentary might be neither applicable nor appropriate to all kind of films, but is relevant to those that do not concern the illusionist or naturalistic form, which incorporate the medium

and are conceived *from* the world. Modern and avant-garde films, which are constructed out of the openness of improvisation and adversity, result in an open form from the perspective of the spectator (a claim I develop in Chapters 2 and 4). Thus, this research is not about doing film phenomenology, but instead constitutes a phenomenological approach to phenomenological, abstract, visual thinking and expression in both the visual arts and cinema from the creator's 'invisible' perspective in the art and film works, which are their expression. "The word 'invisible' is perfectly chosen. The lines of visible things are doubled by a lining of invisibility that is in the visible" (Johnson, 1993, p. 52-53). Finally, this thesis neither questions nor addresses the films' nor artworks' own phenomenological *essence*, but it considers, solely from visual expression, the phenomenological essence of the artist or filmmaker's method.

1.2 Expression, experimentation, and abstraction: Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of modern painting

Notwithstanding arguments about purity and impurity, cinema has consolidated itself as an art. Moreover, as an artistic language, cinema has developed its own visual knowledge. The film stands out as an art form and an expression; however, cinematic thought is close to, and has points of contact with, other forms of art, including painting and poetry. I have hitherto argued that the visual arts (including cinema) constitute thoughts and knowledge about the world, which can be interpreted according to Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology and philosophy of art. Indeed, as he writes in 1960: "There is no vision without thinking".

Merleau-Ponty wrote a single essay dedicated to cinema,⁴⁴ *Le cinéma et la nouvelle psychologie* (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/1966), as the result of a lecture given in 1945 at the *Institut des Hautes Études Cinématographiques* (IDHEC) in Paris. In this text, Merleau-Ponty interpretes cinematic thinking in accordance with a newly-developed

⁴⁴ Published three times with some differences between them. Indeed, François Albera analyzes and 're-publishes' them in *Maurice Merleau-Ponty et le cinéma* (Albera, 2013).

psychological theory: *Gestalt theory* of perception. In general terms, the *Gestalt theory* claims that a subject perceives the world as a whole, not as the combination of parts or the combination of different senses into a cognitive center, thereby opposing classical psychology (Carbone, 2015; Yacavone, 2016). For Merleau-Ponty (1945/1966), the “cinematic art is a temporal Gestalt” (Carbone, 2015; Xavier, 2008a). Thus, when a subject perceives a film, he/she does so not as a “mosaic of sensations”, but as one whole experience of all the senses united through images moving in space and time. Merleau-Ponty (1966) suggests that cinema is an audiovisual language⁴⁵ that expresses perception, as theorized by new psychology. Merleau-Ponty acknowledges the specificities of cinema as being a temporal art form (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/1966, p. 61 and 67), exploring how the study of the cinematic form as an audiovisual language (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/1966, p. 68) can further contribute to the philosophy of perception.⁴⁶

Le cinéma et la nouvelle psychologie is a text in which Merleau-Ponty dialogues with contemporaneous (i.e., of the 1930s and 1940s) studies on psychologies of cinema, or cinema’s psychology,⁴⁷ just as André Malraux examines in an article published in 1940 called *Esquisse d’une psychologie du cinéma* (Albera, 2013, p. 148), which

⁴⁵ Christian Metz designed a method and theory, based on linguistic semiotics and semiology, to approach cinema as an audiovisual language that should comprise any film style, because “non-narrative films are governed essentially by the same semiological mechanisms that govern the ‘feature films’ (Metz, 1971/1991, p. 144). Therefore, within Metz semiotician/semiological approach, cinema has syntagmatic structures, e.g., denotation, connotation, etc., just like a written and spoken language. Furthermore, both cinema and linguistics share grammatical structures and relations of significant and signifier. However, Merleau-Ponty, coming from a psychological and phenomenological approach, examines the possibilities of expression in written and spoken language (speech) in relation to perception and consciousness. For instance, when Merleau-Ponty says that painting is a “mute language” (Merleau-Ponty, 1952/1992), he is maintaining the specificity of painting while at the same time approximating the process of expression in both speech and painting. The act of making a painting is similar to that of producing a text. The philosopher does not apply or refer to possible linguistic relations between significant, signifier, and meaning from speech to painting as semiotics do (Albera, 2013; da Câmara, 2005; Fontes Filho, 2005; Furlan & Furlan, 2005; Johnson, 1993; Merleau-Ponty, 1945/1966, 1945/1993, 1952/1992, 1962/1993, 2009, 2011, 1945/2012; Rodrigo, 2016; Saint Aubert, 2011; Smith, 1993). For Merleau-Ponty, painting, sculpture, music, and cinema are expressions of Beings (consciousness). Cinema as painting is a cultural “thing” (not object), which is expressed by an incarnate consciousness, which is then perceived by others. It has its specificity as an audiovisual language (expression) and is not necessarily speech even though they are in the realm of expression. Following Merleau-Ponty, I will be addressing cinema as audiovisual language and visual expression.

⁴⁶ As Merleau-Ponty emphasizes: “Or, le cinéma est particulièrement apte à faire paraître l’union de l’esprit et du corps, de l’esprit et du monde et l’expression de l’un dans l’autre” (Maurice Merleau-Ponty in Albera, 2013, p. 151).

⁴⁷ Jean Mitry deepened the psychology of cinema later in 1963/1965 (Xavier, 2008a, p. 91) in the book, *Esthétique et psychologie du cinéma*.

Merleau-Ponty cites in his text about cinema. Thus, Merleau-Ponty's work regarding cinema as a language seems to be the argument for *Gestalt theory* and phenomenology.

The only text dedicated to cinema published during Merleau-Ponty's lifetime seems to be a development of *Phenomenology of Perception* (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2012), thanks to parallels with prevailing psychological theory. Additionally, Merleau-Ponty's work on cinema does not amount to a phenomenology of film, but nevertheless promotes the idea that film can express a phenomenological relation with the world, which a creator conceives in moving images. *Le cinéma et la nouvelle psychologie* is the only essay in which Merleau-Ponty examines cinema and its specificity (Carbone, 2015). Thus, for film-phenomenology and phenomenological approaches to cinema's perception, this essay is central. However, in order to analyze avant-garde and modern films, I recommend the investigation of the philosopher's essays in which he develops the role of modern painting in accordance with his phenomenology. This will involve exploring those essays that help us to think about and analyze films as "moving paintings", as well as thinking about the creation of cinema in the same way we think about the production of paintings. This is largely because our aim here concerns the relationship between cinema and painting. Moreover, films are cultural things, like paintings and novels; they are expressions to be "perceived" by the spectator (Merleau-Ponty, 1948/2004).

The film's author, the subject who creates film, expresses perception. Accordingly, in *Le cinéma et la nouvelle psychologie*, Merleau-Ponty comprehends the practice of the writer and the philosopher as corresponding to the filmmaker's practice. Likewise, in his aesthetic essays, the philosopher comprehends the writer and the philosopher's expression as corresponding to the painter's expression. Thus, *these equivalences indicate proximities between cinema and painting as the expressions of subjects.*

Merleau-Ponty (1945/1966) makes reference to only narrative films, associating cinema with literature and radio, and affirming that films "tell" stories. Merleau-Ponty argues that narrative, like classical cinematic style (Bordwell et al.,

2005), is concerned with the representation of reality and, therefore, the film is elusive—it is an illusion (Maurice Merleau-Ponty in Albera, 2013, p. 149). What about non-narrative cinema, or films that do not narrate stories? Moreover, what about those films that construct their narratives in discontinuity and non-linearity, breaking with the representation of space and time? Upon these questions I shall comment, following Merleau-Ponty's respective aesthetic essays: *Cézanne's Doubt*; *Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence*; and *Eye and Mind*. I will be focusing on: (1) Paul Cézanne's paradigmatically modern painting method (also developed in Chapter 2); (2) modern and classical art's epistemological differences; (3) the central role of consciousness (incarnate mind) in phenomenological expression; and, finally, (4) the perception attributed to consciousness that *becomes* gesture and expression in writing, painting, and filmmaking.

This doctoral research contributes to the debate between visual arts and cinema, and, in the former case, particularly painting and its developments. Owing to this, those of Merleau-Ponty's essays that address and interrogate modern painting and visual arts provide significant and useful contributions to the analysis and interpretation of avant-garde and modern films as modes of visual thought. Moreover, these essays point to possible connections between modern and avant-garde art and cinema from the aforementioned conceptual axes of expression, consciousness, and abstraction.

In his three essays, Merleau-Ponty's preoccupation in the domain of visual art is painting, discussing primarily the phenomenological painting method of the modern painter (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/1993, 1952/1992, 1961/1993). The modern painter's abandonment of preconceived schemes in painting, rejecting expressions of thoughts conceived from a univocal relationship with the world, as well as changes in painting methods, made possible advances towards abstraction, which did not enclose signification and boasted multifarious, open meanings. Thus, these three aesthetic essays may indicate a request from the perspective of the visual arts to better reflect on abstraction in non-narrative cinema and non-linear narrative films.

In *Cézanne's Doubt*, Merleau-Ponty (1945/1993) investigates the relationship Cézanne had with the perceived world, commenting on Cézanne's works and reflecting on the artist's approach to his painting's *motifs*. The philosopher describes Cézanne's visual thinking and method of painting using the artist's paintings themselves, the context in which Cézanne indeed thought out his visual expressions, as well as Cézanne's writings. Hence, Merleau-Ponty perceives, in the gestures expressed in Cézanne's paintings, a subject's phenomenological presence, emphasizing the role of the body in not only *perceiving*, nor being a 'mosaic of sensations', but in *constructing* and *expressing* thought. Merleau-Ponty develops these claims from the way Cézanne expresses perception. Cézanne expressed the landscape, which was his motif. The landscape itself moved the painter to express his encounter onto the canvas. Cézanne opened painting up to the world. Indeed, the world is expressed in the painting through his every gestures. Cézanne surrenders to the world, and, in this encounter, he produces his gestures on the canvas. Therefore, the artist no longer represents a landscape; he *expresses* a landscape. This break with representation in painting resulted formally in the 'release' of the painter's gestures. This formal result is present in two dimensions on the canvas, whereby gestures and brushstrokes dissolve rigid forms. This methodological approach of Cézanne brought abstraction to modern painting. Cézanne's method is also examined in Chapter 2, as well as its development by other artists, viz., Fernand Léger and Piet Mondrian.

The philosopher focuses on Cézanne's modifications of the painting method. Still, it is crucial to emphasize that Cézanne does not change the method of painting on account of using different materials, i.e., canvas, oil painting, and brushes, for Cézanne employs each of these utensils. It is Cézanne's method, that is, the *way* he painted, that broke with the Impressionists' obsession with light and the atmosphere of the landscape. Moreover, Cézanne overcame classical painting's dissociated and dominant relationship with the object (and the world). As Merleau-Ponty (1945/1993) argues, Cézanne expected to return to the object (that is, to things) not through rules of representation and its geometry, nor the pre-established schemes of perspective, but through the way things 'existed' (that is, the ontology of 'things'). As the artist says:

“The landscape thinks itself in me” (Cézanne in Merleau-Ponty, 1945/1993, p. 67). Cézanne searched for nature’s ontology in order to paint it, not to represent it. The painter’s concern with nature’s ontology resulted in the application of a method of perceiving a body that ‘communicates’ it through visual language (viz., painting). Furthermore, Cézanne inaugurated artists’, as well as the artworks’ autonomy, as pointed out by José Bettencourt da Camara: “[a]ll of his work [Cézanne’s] proclaims the artist’s emancipation from the hindrances of the old representational aesthetic” (Câmara, 2005, p. 167, own translation).⁴⁸

Merleau-Ponty describes Cézanne’s painting as a modern method of thinking, knowing, and expressing the world. Perception and expression are united in the painter’s methodology, since subjects’ bodies are made of the same stuff as the world in which the subject dwells. Merleau-Ponty writes: “‘Conception’ cannot precede ‘execution.’ Before expression, there is nothing but a vague fever, and only the work itself, completed and understood, will prove that there was *something* rather than *nothing* to be found there” (Merleau-Ponty, 1996a, p. 69). Therefore, the expression is executed by way of gestures at the moment they are made. As such, they cannot be *preconceived*: expression can only become conception *after* it was conceived from a phenomenological perspective in modern art.

According to Merleau-Ponty, Cézanne wanted to paint what he actually ‘saw’ (and experienced), and furthermore to express that the artist needed to break with both impressionism and representationalism in painting. As Cézanne returns to things (and the landscape) itself, the artist paints without outlining things on the canvas: the colors shape the surface of the canvas, not line drawings. Consequently, every brush stroke is a movement of thought, not a scientific thought based on cause and effect as in classical science and thereto classical painting, but based on an “incarnated mind in the world” thought (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/1993). Cézanne’s works “[...] trust us ‘into the presence of the world of lived experience’ in a way *not otherwise available* to the intellect” (Yacavone, 2016, p. 176, author’s italics). Cézanne’s method of painting is

⁴⁸ Original text: “Toda sua obra proclama a emancipação do artista das peias da velha estética de representação.”

not born inside the laboratory, with precise formulas and models, but is rather grounded in the perception and expression of the world (that is, in his lived experience).

Merleau-Ponty refers to Cézanne's movement of the brush over the canvas as the movement of thought. Thus, Cézanne's movements in conceiving a painting are not random: every stroke of the brush is a movement of thought, that is, of visual language. Moreover, the gesture that created the modern artwork is completed in the viewer's incarnate mind, as the painting reverberates therewith (Merleau-Ponty, 1961/1993).

Merleau-Ponty is prompted to emphasize the relevance of gesture in Cézanne's work given the fact that the artist no longer draws outlines, and that the colors, and the relations between them, give shape.⁴⁹ In Merleau-Ponty's words: "In giving up the outline Cézanne was abandoning himself to the chaos of sensation" (1945/1993, p. 63). This "abandoning" of the painter to perception forms the basis for abstraction in modern art (a claim I develop in Chapter 2). Cézanne's way of painting in the context of Western art opens up possibilities for thinking about the reality on the canvas, that is, the reality expressed using formal abstraction. Thus, abstraction is a conceived expression of reality, carried out by modern and avant-garde artists, who opposes representationalism. Furthermore, modern art 'exposed' the medium, making the medium itself a 'thing', and thereby a subject: it was now not merely the medium of the representational space. To this end, the painter was "pursuing reality without giving up the sensuous surface" of the canvas (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/1993, p. 63).

Additionally, 'things' in the world are not 'objects' in the sense of classical science and classical arts; they are subjects that are not separable from the artist, for they constitute the artist, and this is why they are 'bodily' expressed. They are part of the artist's subjectivity throughout the artist's perception as a whole, and not separated into different units of sense. As Merleau-Ponty puts it: "Art is not imitation, nor is it

⁴⁹ The same process of applying color to construct shapes in employed by the Brazilian painter Tarsila do Amaral, as discussed in Chapter 3.

something manufactured according to the wishes of instinct or good taste. It is a process of expression” (1945/1993, pp. 67-68). Art being expression *intrinsically* associates it with the subject to whom its creation is owed.

Arguably, the primary argument in *Cézanne’s Doubt* concerns the dialectical nature, that is, the in-between, of the artworks’ and the author’s life, because *that* life created *those* works and the works *carry* that life’s meaning. The paradox is not intended to be soluble: the interpenetration of life and artwork contributes to theorizing about visual artworks. Therefore, this thesis also addresses and incorporates the artist and filmmaker’s theory of his/her work. José Bettencourt da Câmara resumes the dialectic between determination and freedom in the creative process of the artist and the relation of creation to the artist’s life:

Merleau-Ponty finds the right path, which the dialectical understanding of freedom guarantees: the 'misery of empirical life' does not prevent the artist from exercising his 'creative freedom.' In short, life and work, in reversible movement, interpenetrate each other. In fact, Merleau-Ponty remains dialectical about this relation. Although we may consider that he ends up attributing priority to the 'intention of the work,' to the artist's project, which becomes subordinated to the artist's life, to some extent (Câmara, 2005, p. 176, own translation).⁵⁰

Merleau-Ponty outlines, especially in Cézanne’s case, the dialectics of the artist and his/her works. However, as Câmara indicates above, Merleau-Ponty assumes the dependency of the visual works on the artist who created them. Furthermore, an artwork is the result of a subject’s gesture and intentions (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2012).

Concluding in *Cézanne’s Doubt*, Merleau-Ponty examines modern painting and its paradigmatic painter to unveil the possibilities of modern expression. The philosopher assesses Cézanne’s expression of the perceived landscape as abandoning laws of representation and impression. The depth of the canvas is the depth constructed by the gestures of his body. The movement of the body, that is, the gestures presiding over the canvas, are similar to the gestures of the writer present in

⁵⁰ Original text: “Merleau-Ponty encontra a justa via que um entendimento dialéctico da liberdade lhe garante: a ‘miséria da vida empírica’ não obsta ao exercício da efectiva ‘liberdade criadora’ do artista. Em suma, vida e obra, em movimento reversível, interpenetram-se. Com efeito, Merleau-Ponty mantém-se dialéctico na questão, ainda que possamos considerar que acaba por atribuir anterioridade à ‘intenção da obra’, isto é, ao projecto do artista, a que, até certo ponto, passa a vida a subordinar-se”.

the writer's text. Lastly, the life and the work are one single expression of a Being, which suggests that the author's thoughts are present *in* the visual artwork.

Merleau-Ponty understands Cézanne's approach to painting *phenomenologically*, which is the same approach that this thesis examines in modern and avant-garde film. Therefore, in modern and avant-garde moving images, understood as *expressions*, the author expresses his gestures of phenomenologically dwelling in his world. These gestures are present in the choice of framing, just as the moves of the camera and editing can be likened to the gestures of the modern painter, as *camera-montage-brush*. Despite the impossible substitution of the brush, paints, and canvas to the camera (Aumont, 2011), the gestures of the filmmaker are present in the film from the choice of the framing to the selection of actors or human bodies present in the moving images, as the gestures of the writer are present in the text. Moreover, “[i]n a theoretical sense, there is no reason why the plastic arts – painting and sculpture or music – should not have emerged as the dominant formal basis for cinematic culture” (Le Grice, 1977, p.7).

The three filmmakers focused upon in this thesis had a close relationship with the camera. Mário Peixoto chose every camera movement, as well as the framing of the landscape and bodies, in *Limite* (1931). Meanwhile, Glauber Rocha moved behind the camera almost as he was holding it himself (not least because he shouted to the actors from behind the camera). And finally, Ozualdo Candeias filmed and edited the images himself in *A margem* (1967). Therefore, their gestures are present in the analysis, according to the idea that Merleau-Ponty dialectically presents between an artist's life and his visual expression. They are related, but one does not fixedly determine the other.

Merleau-Ponty in the essay *Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence* defines painting as a language, albeit mute, which contains one's expression of one's world. Thus, painting constitutes thought and knowledge, in which, as in writing, there is the style and gestures of its author. “For each painter, style is the system of equivalences that he makes for himself for the work which manifests the world he sees” (Merleau-Ponty, 1952/1992, p. 54). Thus, an incarnate mind creates the work of art by

movements of the body, gestures that fulfill a style, leaving traces on the artwork (whether speech, painting, sculpture, film). There is a subject constantly present in the expressed 'thing,' in the artwork (in accordance with the argument presented in *Cézanne's Doubt*).

The gesture of each brush stroke contains variables consolidated into expression. The gestures of the brush are thoughts, 'bodily thoughts', if you will. As the painter moves the brush to compose a painting, it is possible to assume that the filmmaker moves the camera and images (in the montage) to compose a film, as *camera-montage-brush*. The filmmaker chooses what is going to be inside the frame and how, as well as how those camera movements are brought together in the editing process. In the same way, the painter chooses inside and outside of the canvas, as the painting leaves the frame or alternatively includes it. Therefore, there is not simply an analogy between the modern painter and filmmaker: there is a stronger equivalence of their respective movements of thought, as these thoughts get expressed visually. As Merleau-Ponty remarks about the gesture of the modern artist present in the artwork:

The accomplished work is thus not the work which exists in itself like a thing, but the work which reaches its viewer and invites him to take up the gesture which created it and, skipping the intermediaries, to rejoin, without any guide other than a movement of the invented line (an almost incorporeal trace), the silent world of the painter, henceforth uttered and accessible (Merleau-Ponty, 1952/1992, p. 51).

Thus, a visual thought is an endless process with the other. Modern paintings, as modern and avant-garde moving images, have forms, matter, and media that are open to the spectator's contribution (as discussed in the following chapters 2, 4, 5, 6, and 7).

Written and spoken language (sc. speech) contains in its meaning the author's gestures, in other words, his or her corporal scheme. "The corporeal scheme is essentially the ground of the praxis, a pre-objective spatiality and against which the current objects of action are drawn [...]" (Saint Aubert, 2011, p. 29).⁵¹ In speech, in order to access meaning, one should consider the movements of the Being (Merleau-

⁵¹ Original text : "Le schéma corporel est essentiellement fond d'une praxis, spatialité pré-objective et sur fond de laquelle se dessinent les objets actuels de l'action [...]"

Ponty, 1952/1992, p. 42). This finds similarities with the painter's brush strokes, which visually express a meaning that is not necessarily accommodated by the relation between sign and signifier but rather finds its meaning in the experimentations of the subject as an incarnate mind. Furthermore, neither speech nor painting expresses a thought entirely, since "it is in others that expression takes on its relief and really becomes signification" (Merleau-Ponty, 1952/1992, p. 52). Thus, there is no pure nor fixed meaning in expression (Merleau-Ponty, 1948/2004). Expression in modern painting contains the gestures of its painters, which 'reverberate' in the spectator.

Merleau-Ponty (1952/1992) claims that speech is not only made up of sounds and signs, but also of silence. Silence, the absence, gap or lacuna (*écart*) between words and sentences composes speech and contributes towards meaning. As Merleau-Ponty explains: "The absence of a sign can be a sign, and expression is not the adjustment of an element of discourse to each element of meaning, but an operation of language upon language which suddenly is thrown out of focus towards its meaning" (1952/1992, p. 44). Silence is the 'background' of speech. It belongs to the meaning of the speech, and they co-exist and influence one another. In a similar vein, then, why would one separate figure and background in painting, as classical painting does? If the world's perception consists in a univocal relation between a subject and the perceiving world, why would a Being express the world in parts? Thus, as silences are gestures of the Being, just as words are, the background should occupy the same plane in the painting. Classical painting, like classical cinema, separates the figures from their world, the objects from their subjects (Câmara, 2005; Merleau-Ponty, 1945/1993, 1952/1992, 2009, 2011, 1945/2012). Classical thinking separates subjects from their worlds as two entirely distinct entities. Modern art accomplishes in painting the inclusion of the background into the same plane as figures, thereby merging or jettisoning the difference between the geometrical and the organic. Modern art (like modern and avant-garde cinema) expresses the subjects as the world, and also the world as perceived by subjects. Therefore, modern art expresses in the artwork's form the univocal relation between the artist and his/her world. Consequently, the gap, which in classical painting separated figure and the background (sc. subject and the world), in

modern painting becomes ‘figure’. This lacuna, as in speech, has the same relevance in the modern painting. Thus, the gestures express it. For instance, in *Montaigne Sainte-Victoire* (Illustrations 01 and 02), Cézanne’s gestures in green are the same as those in blue. The continuity of brush strokes are only interrupted by differences in tonality. There is not a drawing or assertive line dividing figure from the background. Everything in these paintings exists on the same plane, including the gap between one brush stroke and the next, between one color and another.

Modern painting communicates the artist’s reality using abstract figures, or alternatively with abstractions absent of figures. As the silence ‘speaks’ within speech, the forms (and in between the forms) in a painting constitute expression, considering that there is no “...*complete* expression [...] all language is indirect or allusive – that it is, if you wish, silence” (Merleau-Ponty, 1952/1992, p. 43). In accordance with the “phenomenology of the silence and of the gap”⁵² (Merleau-Ponty, 1952/1992; Saint Aubert, 2011), modern and avant-garde cinema, as modern paintings, bring the absence, the invisible, the ‘background’, onto the same ‘plane’ as the figures, disrupting the representational illusions of classical cinema. Classical cinema is filled with gaps in-between scenes and silences (diegetic or not, as in silent cinema), but it ‘hides’ them as classical paintings do (Wiskus, 2013, p. 13). Modern and avant-garde cinema ‘speak’ with lacunae through the adoption of discontinuity in the narrative, through the adoption of improvisation, and the concern with expression, “it is not a question of a finite sum of signs, but of an open field or of a new organ of human culture” (Merleau-Ponty, 1952/1992, p. 59). In cinema, as well as in painting, gestures are open to the other in both abstract and experimental form; there are neither any fixed ‘meanings’ nor interpretations.

Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence is furthermore a text where Merleau-Ponty goes into greater depth regarding the differences between classical and modern art. In the essay, the philosopher describes the work of the painter who seeks to paint

⁵² In 1953, in the course at Collège de France, Merleau-Ponty introduces the “motif de l’écart” (Saint Aubert, 2011, p. 18), which was already announced in the essay, *Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence*, written in 1952.

the world (or rather *transform* the world) into visual art beyond pre-established models, going further by exploring the motifs, techniques, and the painting itself. The process of abstraction in painting is to present to one's perception of the world something that is not based on pre-established models for comparison. As Merleau-Ponty rightly notes, "[the] perception of classical painters already depended upon their culture, and our culture can still give form to our perception of the visible" (1952/1992, p. 48). But experimentation with the painting technique made possible the expression of the visible in abstraction, as well as the expression of the gestures of an incarnate mind, as Merleau-Ponty argues:

How would the painter or poet express anything other than his encounter with the world? What does abstract art itself speak of, if not of a negation or refusal of the world? Now austerity and the obsession with geometrical surfaces and forms (or the obsession with infusoria and microbes; for the interdict put upon life, curiously enough, begins only with the Metazoon) still have an odor of life, even if it is a shameful or despairing life. Thus the painting always says something. It is a new system of equivalences which demands precisely this particular upheaval, and it is in the name of a *truer* relation between things that their ordinary ties are broken" (Merleau-Ponty, 1952/1992, p. 56).

For Merleau-Ponty (1945/1966) (and this thesis), cinema is language: audiovisual language. Thus, painting is a language just like writing. Therefore, films are a subject's expression; they are thoughts and knowledge about the world (sc. reality). Modern and avant-garde cinema may be as abstract as a Mark Rothko or Paul Klee painting. Abstract and experimental films relate to the spectator's reality, not through cause and effect relations nor perspective lines directing the gaze in representational space, but through experimentations of technique that *express* reality rather than *representing* it. "Modern painting, like modern thought generally, obliges us to admit a truth which does not resemble things, which is without any external model and without any predestined instruments of expression, and is nevertheless truth" (Merleau-Ponty, 1952/1992, p. 57). Therefore, I argue that as with modern and avant-garde painting, both modern and avant-garde cinema are expressions of incarnate minds in the world with others (Merleau-Ponty, 1961/1993), absent of external models.

In *Eye and Mind*, Merleau-Ponty (1961/1993) creates an opposition between modern art and classical science with regard to the empirical method of constructing knowledge. The classical sciences (and classical art along with them) are distant from the world and things because the classical sciences approach the world as an object separated from the subject. In Merleau-Ponty's words: "Science manipulates things and gives up living in them. Operating within its own realm, it makes its constructs of things; operating upon these variables to effect whatever transformations are permitted by their definition [...]" (Merleau-Ponty, 1961/1993, p. 121).

The philosopher concentrates on the enigma of vision based on the mindset of modern art and painting. The connections between perception, vision, body, movements, gestures, expression, language and knowledge are interwoven in the modern painter's work and methods. Hence, Merleau-Ponty problematizes the classical-scientific way of approaching knowledge and the world, because "only the painter is entitled to look at everything without being obliged to appraise what he sees [...] It is lending his body to the world that the artist changes the world into painting" (Merleau-Ponty, 1961/1993, p. 123).

The modern painter transforms the world into painting, that is, into a visual language. "The painter's line is an expression of a particular color or thing but also is a transcendent line tracing the *Wesen* (essence) of things" (Johnson, 1993, p. 53). Thus, painting constitutes the knowledge of an incarnate mind; it constitutes the thoughts of the 'eye', and the movements of a Being are there for others to see and experience with their consciousness. Modern art opens up a path of possibilities for the painter to question vision, to interrogate the world itself and things, once there are no schemes to be followed, nor any perspectives to fit the world into; truth becomes a question, not a certainty. The painting method of modern art (and the avant-garde), which began with Cézanne, affected the relationship between the world and the medium. The medium was not the realm of representation and illusion of a world anymore. It was the expression of the subject's perception and interpretation of the world; part of his own 'flesh'. The notion of "Flesh" is introduced in Merleau-Ponty's unfinished *The Visible*

and the Invisible and is employed in *Eye and Mind*. This notion is a development of what, in *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty refers to as ‘carnal’ (Johnson, 1993). ‘Flesh’ implies the reversibility of the artist’s seeing and being seen, touching and being touched. Thus, the artist does not merely see: he is also seen as a ‘body’. The artist touches and is touched by himself included. Consequently, the modern painter, in conceiving painting, expresses existence as Flesh: “[this] doubling with difference (*écart*) between self and world is the meaning of Flesh (Johnson, 1993, p. 49). Merleau-Ponty writes:

All flesh, and even that of the world, radiates beyond itself. But whether or not one is, depending on the era and the “school,” attached more to manifest movement or the monumental, the art of painting is never altogether outside time, because it is always within the carnal (Merleau-Ponty, 1961/1993, p. 145).

Thus, painting is the expression of the carnal, the incarnate mind. In modern art, the medium and the technique are part of the visual artwork. They are part of the artist’s world as well. Therefore, they are part of painting. The experimentations with the medium are present; they are constitutive of the artwork. Furthermore, medium, matter, motif, and form in modern painting are processes open to other subjects. Since, for the modern painter, the medium does not construct an illusion of depth, it is the space itself as he or she perceives it. Additionally, Merleau-Ponty (1993b) argues that depth does not amount to the three dimensions of classical painting. Rather, depth is that which the “flesh” perceives, and is made possible by the reversibility of the incarnate mind, that is, the mind that is a body.

Depth thus understood is, rather, the experience of the reversibility of dimensions, of a global “locality” in which everything is in the same place at the same time, a locality from which height, width, and depth are abstracted, a voluminosity we express in a word when we say that a thing is there. In pursuing depth, what Cézanne is seeking is this deflagration of Being, and it is all in the modes of space, and in form as well (Merleau-Ponty, 1961/1993, p. 140).

Classical painting (and classical cinema after it), in accordance with classical sciences, mathematically constructed an objective world that is not the equivalent of the perceived world. Moreover, Merleau-Ponty (1945/1966) argues that perception is not a “mosaic of sensations”. Owing to this, modern painting is aligned with Merleau-

Ponty's notion of the expression of the world perceived, because it has the depth of the Flesh (Wiskus, 2013; Johnson, 1993).

The spectator, reader, or viewer understands silence in speech, as well as the lacuna in the frame, and the absence of representational space, because "quality, light, color, depth, which are there before us, are there only because they awaken an echo in our bodies and because the body welcomes them" (Merleau-Ponty, 1961/1993, p. 125). As in painting, cinema does not require figures, nor linear nor continuous narratives to exist as thought. Thus, cinema demands other interpretations beyond the standard approach, which is based on literature and theater drama (Le Grice, 1977).

The effort of modern painting has been directed not so much toward choosing between line and color, or even between figurative depiction and the creation of signs as it has been toward multiplying the systems of equivalences, toward severing their adherence to the envelope of things (Merleau-Ponty, 1961/1993, p. 142).

Merleau-Ponty, in *Eye and Mind*, explains modern painting's undertaking to express the phenomenon of the interwoven relationship between the 'stuff' of the world as the same stuff of the body.

As in *Cézanne's Doubt* and *Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence*, Merleau-Ponty in *Eye and Mind* argues that modern painting establishes a phenomenological relation with the world, with reality. The modern painter's method of experimenting with form is embedded in an incarnate body in the world, which exists with others. Thus, "things are an annex or prolongation of itself (body); they are incrustated in its flesh, they are part of its full definition; the world is made of the very stuff of the body" (Merleau-Ponty, 1961/1993, p. 125).

In *Eye and Mind*, vision is thought. Consequently, visual expression is the expression of consciousness. Every movement of the mind implicates a subject's body, and the bodily movements implicate the subject's mind. This univocal existence of a Being is concentrated in the reversibility of the notion of "flesh", which Merleau-Ponty introduces in *Eye and Mind*. The reversibility relies on the simultaneity of the subject who sees and is visible, who is heard and hears, who touches and is touched by others

and oneself (Merleau-Ponty, 1961/1993, p. 124). Therefore, such reversibility is not merely of the painter, but also of the spectator. Indeed, communication is established by the experience of the 'Flesh' of both whom experience the world, things, and cultural objects.

About the painting technique, Merleau-Ponty writes: "every technique is a 'technique of the body,' illustrating and amplifying the metaphysical structure of the body" (Merleau-Ponty, 1961/1993, p. 129). The painter's body is inscribed in the painting; his instruments are not extensions or props to measure reality. They are chosen, moved, and inscribed by a body in a carnal relation to its world. Therefore, consciousness moves the medium, sustaining the expression of reality. The whole conception of a film, from the first idea to the editing room, is the technique of the body: just as the painter moves the brush, the filmmaker 'moves' the *camera-montage-brush*. *The creation of cinema can establish a carnal relation with the world that it portrays; reversibility is present on the screen as it is on the canvas.*

Merleau-Ponty remarks: "After all, the world is around me, not in front of me" (Merleau-Ponty, 1961/1993, p. 138). Thus, the surface of the screen (just like the surface of the canvas) has the body's profoundness. For instance, the avant-garde film *Limite/Limit* (1931), by Mário Peixoto, through the movements of the camera, the framing, and montage connect bodies and bodily fragments with the landscape, suggesting a phenomenological relationship with the world. As "[t]he body is both the soul's native space, and the matrix of every other existing space" (Merleau-Ponty, 1961/1993, p. 136).

Regarding the phenomenological framework, one should mention that the category of place is intrinsic related to that of space, as well as the notion of dwelling. The place has a central role in space's perception, consequently has a fundamental role in the subject's perception of the world. Thus, the expression of space is related to place. However, as Merleau-Ponty (1961/1993, 1952/1992, 1945/1993, 1945/2012) and Tassinari (2001) focus on the notion space, I will also be concentrating on it.

Furthermore, I will not develop any specificity of locality, to be able to maintain the openness of the thesis to other contexts.”

Merleau-Ponty distinguishes classical art and modern art in the three essays addressed here (primarily in *Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence*). The main difference between the classical and modern is the former’s concern with the “representation” of the world and the laws and geometry of “perspective”. In accordance with Merleau-Ponty’s distinction, classical art presents rules, formulae, and pre-established forms of representing the world (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/1993, 1952/1992, 1961/1993, 1945/2012). In classical cinema, moreover, there are also rules: formulas with which to construct characters, narratives, images and scenery that can represent reality in fiction. Thus, there are pre-established forms for shooting, framing, and editing (Bordwell, 1985; Bordwell et al., 2005).

Modern and avant-garde visual arts aim to establish in each work a way of addressing and creating a “perception” of the world, transforming it into visual language and exploring that visual language itself. As the modern artist breaks with the laws of representation and perspective, the modern and avant-garde filmmaker breaks with the laws of representation in the narrative and editing of classical cinema style. Modern and avant-garde cinema establishes an expression with no fixed, pre-constituted models and genres, thereby experimenting with the surface, technique, motif, framing, and montage.

Regarding the disruption of visual representation, naturalistic, and realistic illusions, Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy of modern art seems to contribute to the affinities between the practices of painting and filmmaking understood as visual expressions. Merleau-Ponty (1952/1992, 1961/1993) understands the written practices of the philosopher and writer as equivalent to the painter’s practice, which is the expression of consciousness (viz., thought). Cinema, like painting and writing, is the expression of thought. In modern and avant-garde cinema, as in modern painting, filmmakers transform the world into audible moving images. Thus, films might have in their form the subject’s gestures (*camera-montage-brush*).

Abstraction plays a central role in modern and avant-garde painting, disrupting representation and rendering the author's gestures present in the artwork. Abstraction in painting sustains and allows the presence of the gestures within the artwork. The movements of the Being can 'appear'. Thus, in films that are fragmented, discontinuous, whereby the medium and the gestures of the author are evident, abstraction could also play a central role in expression. Furthermore, the time and space created in those films that tend towards abstraction boast the 'depth' of consciousness. Therefore, abstract film, or abstract visual thinking in films, can be aligned with abstract thinking in painting.

Lastly, in the three aesthetic essays examined above, Merleau-Ponty acknowledges the disruption and dissolution of representational space in modern painting through the method of visual expression of the modern painter. Moreover, the modern painter's expression is the overcoming of the dual relation between subject and object, therefore expressing the intertwined phenomenological relation between the subject and the world. Therefore, this thesis, by bringing together painting and cinema in a Brazilian context, expects to interrogate and examine modern and avant-garde filmmakers' methods, which are expressed in films through the intertwined phenomenological relation between the subject and the world, which replaces the representational form of space and time of classical cinema with experimentation and abstraction.

1.3 Focus on visual arts and cinema from Brazil

A premise of this doctoral study is to centralize the relationship between modern and avant-garde cinema and painting in Brazilian artworks, artists, filmmakers, and theorists. First, in the chapters to come, I hope to follow Brazilian academics such as Tassinari (2001) and Xavier (1978, 2001, 2008a, 2012) when addressing visual arts and cinema theory. Therefore, the bibliography of my thesis is aligned with this premise, and largely follows authors based in Brazil and/or in the Portuguese language.

Consequently, the reader will notice that, in addressing the Brazilian context, the references of this thesis are predominantly Brazilian (and/or written in Portuguese language), and the Portuguese version of the quotations is present in the footnotes. It should be noted, in addition, that the bibliography concerning the relation between painting and cinema is largely European and North American, and as such does not mention, in general, Brazilian films and artworks.

Nevertheless, centering on Brazil requires continual reference to European and North American art and cinema theory, since the artists, despite their concern with the 'national', also established a constant dialogue with the international, Western scene (especially artists and filmmakers). The *Anthropophagite Manifesto* (1928), written by Oswald de Andrade, and the text of Paulo Emílio Salles Gomes's *Cinema: trajetória no subdesenvolvimento* (1973), are examples of theories that translate the national, cultural tension and the ambiguity of "Brazilianness", which I examine in Chapters 3 and 4.

A paradigmatic film in the literature on Brazilian cinema history and theory is *Limite/Limit* (1931) by Mário Peixoto. It is the only avant-garde film made in Brazil and is not mentioned by the modernist movement in Brazil (Avellar, 2011; Bernardet, 2002; Korfmann, 2007; Mello, 1996). Even though the film was conceived and produced with influences from the European avant-garde, as well as avant-garde cinema references (after all, Peixoto conceived of the idea for the film in Paris and wrote a critique about his film, signing as Sergei Eisenstein (Mello, 1996)), the film was made in Brazil in a local landscape, and with a small crew. *Limite* was never released commercially after it was made, but it was seen by and conserved by few people. For the generation of filmmakers in Brazil in the 1950s and 60s, *Limite* was lost, but it remained mythical within avant-garde film made in Brazil by a Brazilian filmmaker. This paradigmatic case led to questions such as: what defines *Limite* as an avant-garde film? What is the definition of avant-garde cinema? Is it possible to understand *Limite* as a modernist film, or, indeed, as an abstract film?

These questions presided over the scholarship for theoretical approaches to avant-garde and modern art in parallel with Brazilian modernism. Brazilians

historicized and theorized extensively in Brazil about avant-garde art, modern art, and modernism, which have relations to European avant-garde and modern art. Therefore, before I present the Brazilian avant-garde movements within modernism and the context of art and cinema in Chapters 3 and 4, in Chapter 2 I design the theoretical framework for the modern and avant-garde in visual arts and cinema, as well as the process of abstraction and abstract art, which in turn consist in a development of what I have examined in the present chapter.

Among the main painters of modernism in 1920's Brazil was Tarsila do Amaral, who had direct contact with Cubism in Paris. She studied with Fernand Léger in 1923 and, a year later, Léger produced the film *Ballet Mécanique* with Dudley Murphy. Therefore, Tarsila's modern painting, which also illustrated the *Anthropophagite Manifesto* in 1928, constitutes a modernist reference in Brazilian visual arts (viz., painting), which I connect to *Limite* in order to interpret the film as modernist. Mario Peixoto's only film is studied here, alongside Tarsila's paintings and Léger's cubist and avant-garde film *Ballet Mécanique*, which is based on abstraction. *Limite* has been previously analyzed in relation to the European avant-garde, respectively, the French avant-garde, German expressionist cinema, and Soviet films by Eisenstein and Vertov (Avellar, 2003; Bernardet, 2002; Korfmann, 2007; Machado Jr., 2009; Rocha, 2003; Xavier, 2008a; Bullot, 1995).

Moreover, this thesis examines Brazilian avant-garde and modern art and cinema in the 1950s and 1960s in a similar vein. It brings together abstraction in painting, installations, non-objects (Gullar, 2014), and participatory works with modern Brazilian cinema. Brazilian modern and avant-garde art of the 1950s and 1960s was the most radical with regard to form (Bernardet, 2002; Favaretto, 2013), with abstraction and abstract art forming the basis of painting and the development of participatory art in the 1960s (aligned with the abstract European avant-garde of the 1920s and 1930s). The two artistic movements in the 1950s, which included abstract art in opposition with a tradition of figurativism in modern art, are *Concretism* and *Neoconcretism*. Within these movements, the artists Lygia Pape, Lygia Clark, and Hélio Oiticica matured their

visual artworks from abstraction in painting into works of installation, non-objects, and propositional artworks (also called *open artworks*). Thus, their trajectory as visual artists from *Grupo Frente* in 1950s, which questioned the medium of painting, until their participatory works of 1967/8 are discussed and examined in Chapter 4. Their descriptions of their respective trajectories enhanced the understanding of abstraction and experimentation in painting for these artists, which I relate to the practices of modern cinema.

Grupo Frente and Neoconcretism promoted abstraction in painting from a subject's visual expression within the parameters of free experimentation with the medium, which largely resulted in tensions between geometric and organic elements of forms in abstract art. To this end, the non-visible (sc. invisible) (Johnson, 1993, pp. 52-53), and the existent gap (see pages 72 to 76 of this chapter) between geometric and organic elements, constituted the abstraction in Neoconcretism. Furthermore, Lygia Clark, Lygia Pape, and Hélio Oiticica experimented with painting as well to point of making public to the spectator the works' ongoing creation. In this vein, the artworks of their style mentioned here, from the 1950s and early 1960s, are based on a dialectic between the geometric and the organic, constituting an expression of a "carnal relation with the world" (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/1993, 1952/1992, 1961/1993, 2011). Moreover, the phenomenological openness of their works relies on aspects of participation and adversity, which are mobilized by the three artists in 1960s, in order to include the spectator in the work's process, and changing the spectator through the *living experience* (*vivência*) of the artwork. Their artworks express the precariousness and the ephemeral experience of such visual and "bodily conceptualisms".

Cinema Novo and Cinema Marginal are 'movements' that represent modern cinema in Brazil. Cinema Novo includes films made at the end of the 1950s, but are mostly of the 1960s, whereas Cinema Marginal includes films made by the end 1960s, but mostly the 1970s. Since abstraction, experimentation, and expression are core concepts within this research, they prevail over the choice of films and artworks made in this thesis. Thus, non-representational films, such as the avant-garde film *Limite*, are

invoked in association with abstraction and experimentation methodologies in Brazilian painting. Thus, the films that correspond to those concepts from Brazilian Modern Cinema are *Pátio* (1959) and *Terra em Transe* (1967) by Glauber Rocha, and *A margem* (1967) by Ozualdo Candeias. Glauber Rocha is the featured filmmaker from Cinema Novo, who promoted the movement inside and outside of Brazil. *Pátio* is his first, “concrete” film. Therefore, it is interpreted in relation to Lygia Pape, Lygia Clark, and Hélio Oiticica’s paintings from the Concrete period (or the *Grupo Frente*) and the Neoconcrete. *Terra em Transe* is Glauber Rocha’s most iconic film that, with Hélio Oiticica’s *Penetrável* (installation) *Tropicália* (1967), formed the starting point for the *Tropicália* movement, thus *Terra em Transe* is connected to Oiticica’s installation. Finally, Ozualdo Candeias is part of Cinema Marginal and one of its precursors with the film *A margem/The margin*. The film’s experimentalism, precariousness, and “openness” is approached in tandem with the works of Lygia Pape, Lygia Clark, and Hélio Oiticica, who, in the same period, developed abstraction in participatory works involving space, time, and the spectator’s body.

1.4 The matter of the national or ‘Brazilianness’

In one way or another, Brazilian modern and avant-garde artists and filmmakers dealt with the idea of expressing some Brazilian culture and/or Brazilian reality. For example, 1920s modernism combined the avant-garde form with Brazilian motifs. Cinema Novo wanted to express Brazilian social reality. Some problematized the national with use of local landscapes and stereotypes, or considered the multiplicity of “Brazilianness”, of which Glauber Rocha’s film *Terra em Transe* and Hélio Oiticica’s *Tropicália* are examples. Therefore, “Brazilianness” (Brazil’s national identity(ies)) is, in this study, problematized through artworks and films. Artists, filmmakers, and intellectuals often questioned the representation of a national ideal in visual arts and cinema, rather than presenting a solution or definition. Furthermore, in several visual artworks and films, ideas of the national were used to oppose dictatorial regimes or foreign production present within the Brazilian cultural scene. The theoretical chapters

of this thesis, dedicated to Brazilian art and cinema, argue about the developments of abstraction, experimentation, as well as modern and avant-garde concepts in both visual art and cinema, discussing how the notion of 'Brazil' was mobilized by its artists. As Asbury remarks, "[the] fact is that Brazil is a nation formed by the colonial experience and the later arrival of migrants from around the world would in itself justify a critical analysis of the question of national art" (2012, p. 144).

Additionally, problematizing this idea is crucial to the fact that this thesis was developed in a European context. Therefore, this thesis needs to textually present topics and critiques in the Brazilian context, which are also relevant to the interpretation of artists' and filmmakers' attempts at experimentation and expression. Asbury comments the following about the reception of Brazilian avant-garde and modern art outside of Brazil in the contemporary art field:

Whatever the case, a paradoxical situation emerges where belongingness is both denied and affirmed. This contradiction lies in the fact that those theories belong to a historical moment when to think of an avant-garde in the periphery meant to question the implicit eurocentrism within the ideal of universality in modern art. Today, with concepts such as the avant-garde and the universal generally discredited, the rhetoric that legitimizes Brazilian contemporary art, for instance within the global scene, invokes those same theories, not to overcome a sense of disparity but in order to affirm a particular local accent, as has been argued by Moacir dos Anjos, or, as Mosquera put it, as a way of making art that differentiates itself from that in other geographical regions. Belonging has become in this way replaced by differentiation (Asbury, 2012, p. 142).

Accordingly, even though this thesis focuses on artists and filmmakers born and/or based in Brazil (as well as films and visual artworks made in Brazil), this study focuses on the contributions of these works of art and their subjects to theories regarding the relationship between visual arts (painting) and cinema, focusing especially on abstraction and the phenomenological approach of the artist and filmmaker. The context that this thesis examines, particularly in its theoretical chapters (Ch. 3 and 4), is to be considered within the artists' and filmmakers' practices, as well as re-affirming and bringing Brazilian theorists into those arguments. Furthermore, "the discussion of art in terms of the nation becomes in this sense essential for the development of art historical discourses that would begin to untangle the myths created around a

production whose primary significance is considered to reside in its international reception” (Asbury, 2012, p. 147). The national is relevant to position the contextual and theoretical discussion from Brazil, resisting the “primitive”, surrealist, and exotic gaze of Europe or North-America when interpreting the marginal arts and cinema. Thus, the ‘Brazilianness’ of artworks and films is neither defined nor resolved here. Moreover, the national context and discussion presented here once again refers to some local matters influencing the works, but which does not define them as such.

In conclusion, this chapter laid down the pillars of this research regarding the relationship between painting and cinema in the Brazilian context. The crux of this relationship concerns the modern painter’s method and how they conceptualize expression. Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy of modern art, in accordance with his phenomenology, contributes significantly to the understanding of expression, experimentation, and abstraction in modern and avant-garde cinema, focusing on the subject who makes visual artworks. Merleau-Ponty, in the three essays examined here, offers new ways of interpreting modern and avant-garde films, focusing on the gestures of the maker that are present in the artwork. This way of interpreting film does not focus on representation, but on the phenomenological approach of the author and their expression. Merleau-Ponty recommends thinking about the ‘in between’ (the gap between painting and painter) as the movements of a Being (sc. expression) in his/her relationship with the world. Moreover, Merleau-Ponty points to the idea that abstraction in painting expresses the opening up of ‘depth’ in the incarnate mind (sc. subject), where there are no causal relations to be found.

Accordingly, the next chapter discusses and introduces how three modern and avant-garde artists (who influenced Brazilian artists) conceived of painting (or cinema, in Léger’s case) and indeed *painted* in the way that Merleau-Ponty’s conceives, viz. as a mode of phenomenological expression. Moreover, how these artists developed abstraction through experimentalism, as Merleau-Ponty suggests, is examined here. To contextualize these artists and Brazilian art, I will introduce the concepts of modern art and the avant-garde in the next chapter. Thus, avant-garde cinema is positioned in

relation to the aforementioned context and phenomenological expression. Avant-garde cinema and the process of abstraction that was incorporated into Brazilian visual arts and cinema is discussed in the following chapter. Additionally, I elaborate on the phenomenological nature of certain artists' and filmmakers' processes of abstraction, following on from my introduction to this mode of expression in this chapter.

Chapter 2 - Modern art, Avant-Garde art, and Avant-Garde films. The process of abstraction and experimentalism

In the previous chapter, I invoked the relevance of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of modern art and modern painting, in line with his phenomenology of perception, to interpret films, commonly categorized as avant-garde, modern, and experimental cinema. With this background in place, this chapter proceeds to narrate several key concepts of this thesis. Respectively, these are: modern art⁵³ and abstract avant-garde art; and avant-garde cinema. Furthermore, I shall be exploring in what follows how these categories in visual arts and cinema break with representation, continuity, and indexicality (understood as a process of abstraction), which I will apply to Brazilian painting and cinematic thought. This chapter emphasizes three modern European artists who were crucial to the development of the processes of abstraction and experimentation in painting, who are moreover salient to the Brazilian painters highlighted in Chapters 3 and 4. Thus, the European painters that produced the most significant changes in painting's move towards abstraction include the paradigmatic painter of modern art, Paul Cézanne, the cubist Fernand Léger, and lastly Piet Mondrian. Regarding avant-garde cinema and abstraction, this chapter emphasizes the connections between cinema and painting, especially for those painters who made abstract films, and how those artists express the process of abstraction in cinema.

Even though this thesis focuses on film and artworks made in Brazil, it is important to emphasize the extent to which European art and cinema influenced Brazilians filmmakers and artists. Owing to this, the notions of modern and avant-garde art are embedded in the artistic discourse of the art and cinema circuit in Brazil, which I will discuss in Chapters 3 and 4. This chapter shall discuss the notions of avant-garde and modern art, especially abstraction in the visual arts, particularly within painting and cinema. Abstraction is the central aesthetic output of visual expression,

⁵³ As mentioned in the introduction, modern art "contains" avant-garde art. Avant-garde painting radicalized the aesthetic proposals of modern painting.

which this thesis develops from both the theory and study cases, as mentioned in the introduction.

The process of abstraction regarding content and form in painting and cinema (respectively visual languages)⁵⁴ dissolves the representation of the world, expressing the non-duality between subject and object, thereby opening up avenues of unlimited formal possibility. As Léger remarks, “[in] this new phase, the freedom of composition becomes infinite [...] The object which was locked inside the subject becomes free, this pure color which could not assert itself will come out” (2009, p. 188, own translation).⁵⁵ The abandonment of classical art’s placement of the subject over the object, as well as founding a new equivalence between subject and object, was an objective of modern art. Indeed, this thesis argues that this proved especially relevant to thinking about cinema in its non-representational form.

In order to theorize about visual language, especially with regard to the visual arts and cinema, theorists, critics, and philosophers (or even the painters or filmmakers themselves) may classify and divide works into notions, categories, and concepts, such as ‘modern art’ and ‘avant-garde art’. Considering that these two notions are important and extensively analyzed, it is critical to contextualize to which modern art and avant-garde art I am referring, and how they penetrate Brazilian notions of avant-garde and modern art. Therefore, this thesis does not expect to define or to expand on the theory, philosophy, or history. It rather hopes to present the theoretical framework of modern and avant-garde art, thereby enabling a better comprehension of the aesthetic aspects of abstraction in both visual art and cinema, as addressed in the films’ analyses.

⁵⁴ I use the term ‘visual language’, understood as visual expression and visual thought, in line with Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological thought about painting.

⁵⁵ Original text: “Dans cette nouvelle phase, la liberté de composition dévient infinie [...]. Cet objet qui était enfermé dans le sujet dévient libre, cette couleur pure qui ne pouvait s’affirmer va sortir.”

2.1. Modern art and abstraction



Illustration 01 – *Montagne Sainte-Victoire*, (1890). Paul Cézanne | 65 cm x 95,2 cm | oil on canvas.
Retrieved from: <https://www.wikiart.org/en/paul-cezanne/mont-sainte-victoire-1890>.
Accessed: 30/05/2018.



Illustration 02 – *Montagne Sainte-Victoire* (1906) Paul Cézanne | unknown measures | oil on canvas
Retrieved from: <https://www.wikiart.org/en/paul-cezanne/mont-sainte-victoire>.
Accessed: 30/05/2018.

Modern art was synonymous with innovation (Argan, 2008; Baudelaire, 2010; Read, 1982). After the term ‘modern’, the term ‘avant-garde’ in art referred to both innovation and radicalism (Bürger, 1984; H. Foster, 1994; Read, 1982). The same can be said about cinema. These terms also correspond with experiments with the form and the possibilities of abstraction in artistic expression. Firstly, I will discuss here the changes in modern art and modern painting that avant-gardist painting perpetuated. Thus, in saying that a painting is *avant-garde* we mean that it is necessarily modern, but saying that a painting is modern does not necessarily mean it is avant-gardist.

Jacques Aumont (2008) is skeptical about the term “modern” when referring to cinema. However, the author embraces the concept of modern art. Despite the use of the term ‘modern’ referring to something new, it also contains an aesthetic, historical, and philosophical conception of art. It contains what art history divided in movements, such as Impressionism and Expressionism. Furthermore, modern art upset the classical composition in artistic languages, such as painting. Therefore, modern art generated the first movements to disrupt naturalism and representation. Modern art destabilized the materials and methods of painting, e.g., the frame, canvas, space, landscape, color, drawing, paint, brush, and easel.

Art history (Argan & Masini, 2008; Chiarelli, 1995; Gombrich, 1951; Zanini, 1983) and the philosophy of modern art (Benjamin, 2008; Greenberg, 1971; Read, 1982; Tassinari, 2001; Zanini, 1983) locate modern art in the mid-19th century following the birth of Impressionism. The term ‘modern’⁵⁶ as applied to painting, and thereby the visual arts, is mostly associated with Charles Baudelaire (Baudelaire, 2010; Benjamin, 2006), who was a prominent art critic in the mid-19th century. The socio-economic context of the mid-19th century influenced not just Impressionism and radicalism in expression, but also the appearance of the art critic and the ‘figure’ of the artist. Both Giulio Carlo Argan (2008) and Hebert Read (1982) argue that the Industrial Revolution contributed to the exclusion of the artist from the economic

⁵⁶ Regarding the term “modern”, as Kovács (2007) explains, it was first used in the 17th century to differentiate between contemporary and ancient poetry. In any case, this research concentrates on modern art as applied to the visual expression.

process, becoming the “impersonation” of anti-bourgeois values while at the same time being bourgeois himself. As Argan remarks:

The artist-character has a *raison d'être*; he embodies the artistic vocation that the industrial rich bourgeoisie is sure to possess, but at the same time would need to sacrifice the categorical imperative of business. The artists of explicit fame generally declare themselves in opposition to the capitalist bourgeoisie, no longer for ideological reasons, but because their beautiful souls are disturbed by the materialism of the business. Also, the bourgeoisie itself expects that the artists to proclaim themselves as anti-bourgeois, [...] (Argan, 2008, p. 208 and 212 own translation).⁵⁷

Consequently, the artist, painter, and filmmaker (subjects who are the *makers*, *the authors*) are relevant elements in the criticism and theory of modern and avant-garde art, which Merleau-Ponty broaches dialectically in relation with expression in painting (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/1993, 1952/1992, 1961/1993). Meanwhile, Argan (2008), Renato Poggioli (1968), and Peter Bürger (1984) (the latter two with regard to the avant-garde) focus on the socio-economic context in order to analyze the artwork and artists. However, since this thesis focuses on artworks as well as films, in addition to the artists' theories and essays, it stands alongside the theoretical and philosophical perspective of Merleau-Ponty (1945/1993, 1952/1992, 1961/1993), as discussed in Chapter 1, as well as in Read (1982).

Read (1982) affirms that, by only infrequently addressing or focusing his theory on socio-economic considerations, this does not mean he *denies* the connection between art and its socio-economic context. The context is simply not his objective. Thus, in accordance with Read (1982; 1974), the context is not the central aspect examined in artworks and films. It is nevertheless discussed and examined in Chapters 3 and 4 of this thesis, whereby I contextualize the theoretical discussion and the various dialogues and oppositions that artists established with certain political regimes. Nonetheless, the objective of this research is to concentrate on the works' aesthetic form and content.

⁵⁷ Original text: “O artista-personagem tem uma razão de ser: ele encarna a vocação artística que a rica burguesia industrial tem certeza de possuir, mas ao mesmo tempo de precisar, a contragosto sacrificar o imperativo categórico dos negócios. Os artistas de fama explícita geralmente se declaram contrários à burguesia capitalista, não mais por razões ideológicas, e sim porque suas belas almas são perturbadas pelo materialismo dos negócios, sendo a própria burguesia que os quer anti-burgueses, [...]”

Modern art brought to light the figure of the artist in an intrinsic relationship with his/her style (Merleau-Ponty, 1952/1992). The subject and the artwork became almost synonymous, meaning that painting can be referred to as ‘a Pollock’ or ‘a Klee’, for example. The individual’s contribution to an artistic movement, and the developments of a specific visual language, are essential for studying, exploring, and analyzing in theoretical depth. Thus, in modern and avant-garde theory (and in modern and avant-garde cinema), the artist’s writings and theories about their own practice are mobilized to elucidate a technique or a relation towards the world and reality. The author is the work, and the work is its author, which in general contrasts with classical art (viz., the Renaissance), whereby the artist should master the perspective technique (Panofsky, 1991) in order to produce visual expression, and sustain his style.⁵⁸ Due to this, I will highlight the artists’ contribution to modern and avant-garde art in their respective processes of experimentalism and abstraction, beginning with the paradigmatic modern painter, Paul Cézanne.

Paul Cézanne’s painting method is paradigmatic in Western modern art, as Merleau-Ponty (1945/1993) explains. Cézanne’s thoughts on the method of painting abstract forms with geometrical brush strokes subverted the logic of naturalism and representational art. Cézanne expresses the relation of the subject⁵⁹ with the world *phenomenologically*. That is, Cézanne phenomenologically works, in the sense that both subject and object are part of the same painting’s expression, transforming the existence and perception of the world *into* expression. Impressionists, Expressionists, and *Fauves* only based their practice on the subject’s perception of the object, or the emotional and mythical experience, in order to oppose the representationalism and naturalism of classical art. After Cézanne, the visual world could be both perception and expression, expression and perception. As Read puts it: “The first part of his (artist’s) action is perceptive, the second is expressive, but it is not possible in practice

⁵⁸ In classical painting, as in classical cinema, the author’s style is also present in the work. It is, however, subjected to the laws of perspective and the separation between object and subject.

⁵⁹ Subjectivity in modern art was resumed mostly by Expressionist painters, such as Van Gogh and Munch.

to separate these two processes: the artist expresses what he perceives; he perceives what he expresses” (Read, 1974, p. 12).

Clement Greenberg (1971) analyzes Cézanne’s method of painting, focusing on the artist’s paintings. Greenberg affirms that Cézanne gave structure to Impressionism, seeking “pictorial unity”. To this end, Cézanne added volume to the figures that Impressionism was transforming into the ethereal atmosphere of light. Since Cézanne did not preconceive but merely conceived his painting from the world, every brush stroke was relevant to rendering form as content. Greenberg points out that Cézanne’s brush strokes became a “mosaic” of colored squares, drawing the spectator’s attention to the surface of the painting, and, thereto, the technique and medium (Illustrations 01 and 02).

Greenberg understands that Cézanne was “painting the sculptural impressionism” owing to the painter’s concern with volume. However, as with Read (1947; 1982) and Merleau-Ponty (1996a), Greenberg emphasizes Cézanne’s higher concern with the *motif*, which he thought should be presented as a whole, not as parts of light or as preconceptions of space in three dimensions.

A common element to Cézanne, Signac, and Van Gogh was the decomposition of the natural resemblance, or of the “motif,” to highlight the process of aggregation, the structure of the painted image. In fact they painted with detached and sharp brushstrokes, arranged with a certain order or rhythm, which give the sense of the concrete matter, of the color and of the image’s material construction (Argan, 2008, p. 232 own translation).⁶⁰

Thus, similarly with Van Gogh, Cézanne’s canvas became more of a surface than a single perspective’s view of the mountain, Saint-Victoire⁶¹ (Illustrations 01 and 02). Cézanne broke with the illusion⁶² of “the nature”, of “the landscape”, constructing

⁶⁰ Original text: “Um elemento comum a Cézanne, Signac e Van Gogh era a decomposição da aparência natural, ou do ‘motivo’, para pôr em evidência o processo de agregação, a estrutura da imagem pintada: com efeito, eles pintam com pinceladas destacadas, nítidas, dispostas com certa ordem ou ritmo, que dão a ideia da matéria concreta, da cor e construção material da imagem”.

⁶¹ This reference is to the series of paintings Cézanne did of the mountain, *Saint-Victoire*.

⁶² Particularly, the illusion at work in the *trompe d’oeil* method in painting. The spectator is not aware of the structure of the artwork or the technique. The spectator thinks she/he sees “reality” in the painting, however that is just a construction, a dispositive as any other. In classical cinema, the editing, framing, and the narrative also

the experience of the world as a univocal relation with the subject expressed in painting. Cézanne was the most radical in changing tradition from within the empirical method of painting things and the landscape. Cézanne's method transformed the relationship with the spectator, making evident the phenomenological relation with the world by communicating it through painting. There is geometry in Cézanne's method of painting and constructing compositions, but that geometry was not preconceived: it was conceived as a way of giving expression to the landscape through the painter (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/1993). The geometry exists in the movement of the brush, and is conceived exactly as it is being expressed. Therefore, the geometry expressed by some modern and avant-garde painters, as with Cézanne, is conceived from a phenomenological, non-dual relation with the world, since the subject is not *apart* from things. Furthermore, it is Cézanne's method of phenomenological realism that simultaneously exposes the medium and transforms perception into visual expression, which formed the starting point of Cubism and abstraction in painting.

Read (1982) remarks that Cézanne returned to the object. Cézanne did not aim for the isolation of elements such as light, space, and nature, but focused on the relation between these aspects as a totality. As Read notes, this occurs because “a landscape by Cézanne begins with no preconceptions – nothing but the direct contact of eye and nature, and the ‘composition’ is determined by what happens ‘in the eye’” (1982, p. 32). Instigated by Cézanne, modern art enabled a phenomenological relation between subject-object, subject-world, and subject-nature, which modified the relation the artist had with his/her *motif* and the visual language of his/her choosing. Cézanne does not paint representations of what he perceives; he rather *expresses* what his consciousness perceives—his ‘eye’. Additionally, Cézanne's method begins with an experimental attitude to “relate art and reality” (Read, 1982, p. 28). Cézanne experiments with the technique, transforming the painting method.

construct effects of illusion and the spectator is not conscious of the technique, indeed he is not supposed to be (Xavier, 2008a).

Therefore, concentrating on modern art's break away from classical art, as exemplified in Cézanne's method of painting, it is possible to state that modern art opened up a process of experimentation with the medium, within the logic expressing the Being's phenomenological dwelling. This, in turn, expresses the perceptions of an incarnate mind. The result on the canvas is the dissolution of three-dimensional illusion, whereby the medium now communicates the depth of the painting, conceived without mathematics. The dissolution of representational space and the geometry expressed through perception, not through rules of perspective, gave rise to abstraction, which persisted throughout modern and avant-garde art.

Greenberg (1971) also recognizes abstraction in pictorial composition, focusing on Cézanne's efforts: "[think] of the effort of abstraction and of eyesight necessary to analyze every part of every motif into its smallest negotiable plane" (Greenberg, 1971, p. 58). Furthermore, Read (1974) understands Cézanne's method as the basis for abstraction in expression: "[the] result is what Cézanne himself called an 'abstraction, an incomplete representation of the field of vision, a 'cone,' as it were, into which the objects focused fall with a sense of order or cohesion" (Read, 1974, p. 18). Therefore, this study argues, with Greenberg and Read, that Cézanne's method of painting treated the landscape as a subject and conceived of painting following a non-Cartesian relation with the world, promoting the process of abstraction in modern and avant-garde painting.

Beginning with Cézanne, the paradigmatic painter of modern art and abstraction, it is possible to establish the first steps that disrupted classical art in the context of fin de siècle Europe.⁶³ Following in these footsteps, Cubism yielded Juan Gris (1887-1927), Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), Albert Gleizes (1881-1953), André Lhote (1885-1962), and George Braque (1882-1963). Furthermore, Fernand Léger in the 1910s moved painting in the direction of abstraction, breaking with the rules of perspective. Cubism approached the flat (two-dimensional) surface of the canvas, as part of expression, making the medium apparent. Cubism is modern art, and a

⁶³ Tassinari (2001, p.28) claims the beginning of modern art to be around the 1870s.

representative of the historical avant-garde (Greenberg, 1971; Merleau-Ponty, 1945/1993, 1952/1993; Read, 1974, 1982). European, historical avant-garde artists and movements in the first half of the 20th century originated the radicalism of the form and the innovations within visual arts that characterize ‘avant-garde aesthetics’ (Bürger, 1984; H. Foster, 1996), which includes avant-garde cinema (Ghali, 1995). After World War II, visual artists who continued the experimentation and research of the historical avant-garde can be called ‘neo-avant-gardes’. Therefore, this thesis, when referring to the term ‘avant-garde’ or ‘avant-gardist’, is referring to that artistic research, that is, both the historical avant-garde and neo-avant-garde.

Before establishing the particularities and theory about the avant-garde, as well as its radicalism as part of modern art, I shall discuss the modern artworks’ space in the notion of *espaço em obra* (Tassinari, 2001). *Espaço em obra* developed by Alberto Tassinari (2001) is relevant to this research, contributing to the theorization of cinema as openwork. Tassinari (2001) investigates openwork in his book, *O Espaço Moderno*, as a potential, more general way of characterizing space in modern art (as expressed primarily in paintings and sculptures), since the representational space of classical art was overturned in modern art.

Classical art’s distinctive space is that which is constructed with perspectival laws and is fundamentally illusory (Tassinari, 2001). Furthermore, the very purpose of classical art was to represent the world. Thus, three-dimensional space, as seen in classical paintings, is not ‘space itself’ (Tassinari, 2001, p. 19): it is a virtual space, which is separated from the space of the common world (Tassinari, 2001). Modern art, meanwhile, opens up other possibilities of space that are not virtual. In disclosing the painting’s process of creation, as well as dissolving representational (sc. virtual) space, modern painting’s space is continuous with that of the common world. It is this space that Tassinari (2001) transforms into a fully-fledged, conceptual notion. What Tassinari develops is a flexible and open notion, just like the concept of modern art itself,

namely the notion of *espaço em obra*, or *space at work*,⁶⁴ in which the space constituting modern and avant-garde artwork is continually at work. Thus, the *space at work* of the modern artwork at the same time makes visible, respectively, the production process and the artistic method of expression, and is open to the “world’s common space”. In Tassinari’s own words: “[the] modern space emerges as a territory of continual action, where the effect can show itself as an ongoing process” (2001, p. 44 own translation).⁶⁵ Thus, modern and avant-garde artistic methods open up innumerable possibilities for artists to break, not just *with* traditional forms and techniques, but also with the traditional *supports* (such as the pedestal, frame, and canvas). The artist breaks with tradition through experimentations with media. Formal abstraction relies on that same process of experimentation. In a similar vein, Vilém Flusser (2014) locates the separation of the tri-partition ontology, deontology and methodology in work practices (including art) when history emerges. The author divides history in three phases and explains how each phase emphasized one aspect of the tri-partition, in his words:

During its first phase (antiquity and the Middle Ages), history emphasizes the way the world should be; that is, people work to realize a value—ethical, political, religious, practical, in short, “in good faith.” During its second phase (modernity), it emphasizes the discovery of being in the world; that is, people work epistemologically, scientifically, experimentally, and theoretically, in short, “without faith.” During its third phase (the present), it emphasizes methods; that is, people work technically, functionally, efficiently, strategically, and cybernetically [...] (Flusser, 2014, p.10).

As Tassinari’s division between classical and modern art, Flusser’s history phases are schematic. Further, Tassinari’s scheme is concerned with expression of space, as Flusser is concerned with the expression of values. However, they seem to agree that the modern artwork is focused on the research and experimentation. Therefore, the experimentalism and research of visual knowledge in modern and avant-garde art and cinema also seem to be in line with what Flusser defines.

⁶⁴ I tried to maintain the same ambiguity of the Portuguese expression in which *em obras* means ‘in the process of being done’, therefore, open to being part of communal space. Tassinari says: “[p]or meio da locução “em obra”, um espaço em obra possui um significado assemelhado, com a diferença de que uma obra de arte moderna, na grande maioria dos casos, não é algo incompleto, inacabado, mas algo pronto que pode ser visto como ainda se fazendo” (Tassinari, 2001, pp. 59-60).

⁶⁵ Original text: “O espaço moderno surge, desse modo, como um território do fazer, onde o efeito pode mostrar-se ainda como que se fazendo.”

Modern artists aimed for the autonomy of their work. Their artwork, according to Tassinari, opened up communication between the “space of the world” and the “space of the artwork”, owing to the constitutive aspect of *the space at work* in modern art. Therefore, the space of the modern artwork is not entirely apart from the space in common⁶⁶ with the world (Tassinari, 2001), as it was in classical art. For example, Piet Mondrian’s removal of the frame from his paintings, and Vladimir Tatlin’s spatial painting in his counter-reliefs (1914-1916), ‘apply’ the *space at work*. Thus, the painting exists within the place that it is displayed, mobilizing the surrounding space. Tassinari explains: “A contemporary (modern) artwork does not transform the world in art, but on the contrary, it requests to the space of the common world to install itself in that space as art” (Tassinari, 2001, p. 76, own translation).⁶⁷ The *space at work* in modern art is constantly in dialogue with the space of the common world—it is open to it. The space at work is open because it is an open process, for it does not enclose the artwork in itself. It is not virtual.

Tassinari considers that there is a period that constitutes the formation of modern art, of which Cézanne is a part, and also a period of development⁶⁸ of modern art’s formation. The developmental period of modern art is presided over by artists such as Fernand Léger and Marcel Duchamp. Accordingly, first, modern art formed its establishment and matrix at the end of the 19th century, and properly developed at the beginning of the 20th century. Thus, the historical avant-gardes are responsible for the period of formation. The distinction between the “formation” and “development” of modern art indicates that aesthetic changes happened gradually in the visual arts.⁶⁹ Nevertheless, modern art is constituted by movements, therefore, by artists and their successive breaks with classical painting, that is, with its naturalism and representationalism.

⁶⁶ Tassinari understands modern art as driving towards everyday life, viz., the movement most often associated with avant-garde art.

⁶⁷ Original text: “Uma obra contemporânea não transforma o mundo em arte, mas ao contrário, solicita o espaço do mundo comum para nele se instaurar como arte.”

⁶⁸ Periods of formation and development are constitutive of Renaissance and Medieval art, too.

⁶⁹ Including Brazilian modernism, notably, the painter Tarsila do Amaral.

For Tassinari, Cubism transformed the artwork's space, since the Cubism of the 1910s corresponded with the development of the modern art matrix, as it was formed in the 19th century. Nonetheless, it is important to remember that Cézanne “revolutionized” the painting method (Read, 1974).

Furthermore, the dispute between modern and classical art relies on the break with a single vision of reality (namely, the ‘vanishing point’), the single representational vision that geometrically preconceives a visual model of reality. Modern art introduced new possibilities for conceiving of the expression of the world, where subject and world can be a whole, continuous entity. Consequently, the painting could express the indistinct relation between Being and world. It is significant here to spell out the importance of the dissolution of classical art and, with it, the single viewpoint perspective of reality, as well as the dissolution of traditional forms in painting composition and visual languages, as well as support for modern artists (Fontes Filho, 2005).

Tassinari affirms that modern art is, from the beginning, *anti-naturalistic*. As Tassinari explains, deconstructing naturalism “was the main assignment of modern art and modern art achieved it” (Tassinari, 2001, p. 21 own translation).⁷⁰ The “break” with classical art carried out by modern art (brought to the limit by avant-garde art) was intended to seal the autonomy of art, thereby returning it to life praxis. The bringing down of classical art's naturalism and illusion by modern art made possible experimentation, abstraction, and the expression of subjects' perceptions of the world.

Therefore, as introduced in the previous chapter, classical cinematic style has the objective of creating representational space and time within a narrative. The naturalistic and illusionary effects (and affections) result from casual relations, which are essential to classical cinema. These illusory and naturalistic effects are broken and disrupted by modern and avant-garde cinema (Ghali, 1995; Xavier, 2008a), which, like modern and avant-garde art, break with laws of classical art representation. Moreover,

⁷⁰ Original text: “Destruir, - destruir o naturalismo – era a principal tarefa da arte moderna, e acabou por consolidá-la”.

modern and avant-garde cinema experiments with form, creating non-representational films that do not intend to represent reality. Instead, they *express* reality. Furthermore, modern and avant-garde cinematic practices open up the possibility of infinite viewpoints, which are not limited to a single or standard version of the world. Thus, in accordance to Tassinari (2001), it is possible to claim that the space of avant-gardist and modern film is the *space at work*. Modern and avant-garde cinema's space is also open to the spectator, thereby incorporating the common space of the world. The *space at work* in cinema is present when the moving image invites the common world's space to be part of that same space. This can happen when moving images “de-frame”, decentralize, fragment, or push the frame-limit beyond that of the screen.

Additionally, in classical art, as in medieval art, there was one specific meaning in a painting given by the *motif* and its symbols (Argan, 2008; Gombrich, 1951; Panofsky, 1970; Tassinari, 2001), which configured different genres. With modern art, opacity is permitted, and the artwork's meaning is continually being made, as Tassinari's (2001) notion of *space at work*⁷¹ in modern art indicates. Modern and avant-garde art and cinema reconnect people to a plurality of interpretations of reality through a non-representational form of space and time.

Historical avant-garde movements, such as Cubism, Futurism, Dada, Neoplasticism, and Constructivism, radicalized modern art's break with classicalism. Therefore, avant-garde artworks constituted an aesthetic revolution in art. In Read's words: “The modern movement in the arts which began to reveal itself in the first decade of the (20th) century was fundamentally revolutionary, and it affected all the arts” (1982, p. 45). As argued above, avant-garde art, as with modern art, operates in formal distinction from, and by disruption with, tradition. I now turn to this topic.

⁷¹ The notion of the ‘experimental’ in modern and avant-garde art contains the same ‘openness’ as the notion of *space at work*.

2.2 Avant-Garde art and abstraction



Illustration 03 – *La Ville | The city*, (1919). Fernand Léger | 230,5 x 297 cm | oil on canvas
Retrieved from: <https://www.wikiart.org/en/fernand-leger/the-%D1%81ity-1919-1/> Accessed: 30/05/2018



Illustration 04 – *Les Eléments Mécaniques*, (1918-1923). Fernand Léger | 211x167,5 cm | oil on canvas.
Retrieved from: <https://www.wikiart.org/en/fernand-leger/mechanical-compositions-1923/> . Accessed: 30/05/2018



Illustration 05 – *Grey Tree*, (1912). Piet Mondrian | 78,5x107,5 cm | oil on canvas.
Retrieved from: <https://www.wikiart.org/en/piet-mondrian/the-gray-tree-1911/> . Accessed: 30/05/2018.



Illustration 06 – *Still life with Ginger Jar II*, (1912). Piet Mondrian | 91,5x120cm | oil on canvas.
Retrieved at: <https://www.wikiart.org/en/piet-mondrian/still-life-with-gingerpot-2-1912/> . Accessed: 30/05/2018.

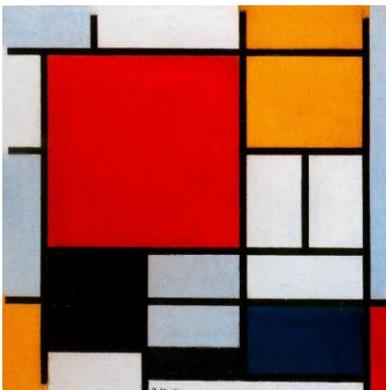


Illustration 07 – *Composition with Red, Yellow, Blue and Black*, (1921). Piet Mondrian | 59,5x59,5cm | oil on canvas.
Retrieved at: <https://www.wikiart.org/en/piet-mondrian/composition-with-large-red-plane-yellow-black-gray-and-blue-1921/> . Accessed: 30/05/2018.

Chronologically located at the beginning of the 20th century in Europe, the historical avant-garde (Bürger, 1984; H. Foster, 1996; Poggioli, 1968) consisted in a conjunction of artistic movements that broke with the traditional, classical aesthetic of representation. The historical avant-garde questioned and dismantled the traditional (sc. classical) visual forms in literature, painting, architecture, and sculpture (sc. the fine arts), proposing new perspectives on artistic languages. Artists of the historical avant-garde aimed to secure the autonomy of the artwork in relation to the art circuit, and furthermore wanted to exercise the liberty of creating artworks. Peter Bürger (1984), Renato Poggioli (1968), and Hal Foster (1996) affirm that the historical avant-garde intended to break with the “tradition”, which was represented by the art institutions (such as salons and museums), as well as with the traditional artistic languages (prevailing in the discourse on fine arts). Thus, the theory of the avant-garde is concerned with the chief movements of the early 20th century, as well as with the aesthetic characteristics of innovation and new artistic languages. The procedures and attitudes of the historical avant-garde defined ‘avant-gardist aesthetics’, which in turn influenced Brazilian modernism in all of its phases, but were also transformed by it.

Both Poggioli (1968) and Bürger (1984) analyze the avant-garde within a socio-economic context. They claim that the concept of avant-garde art was attached to modern art and modern society at the beginning of the 20th century. Thus, the avant-garde is part of modern art. The first author, Poggioli, investigates those notions associated with the avant-garde, such as activism, antagonism, experimentalism, and hunger for novelty, which reflect placing value in the future. The latter, Bürger, defined avant-garde art in relative terms (in particular with comparative reference to bourgeois society), from which he assessed avant-garde artworks and their putative autonomy.

From a Marxist perspective, Bürger’s *Theory of Avant-garde* (1984) states that the propositions of the avant-garde movements (that is, including both the historical and neo-avant-garde) failed in being part of everyday life. Despite the avant-garde’s lack of success in establishing the autonomy of the artwork (independent, that is, from the art circuit), along with failing to produce changes in society, the question “what is

art?”), as proposed by the avant-garde, instituted the category of ‘artwork’, as Bürger argues.

Bürger furthermore probes the category of ‘artwork’, aligned largely with Theodor Adorno (1994) and Walter Benjamin (2008). The category of ‘artwork’, in the nomenclature of avant-garde art, mobilized novelty, shock, chance, allegory, and montage. This combination of concepts is deeply embedded in the notion of avant-garde art and forms the basis for avant-gardist aesthetics (Bürger, 1984). Bürger conceptualizes the notion of the ‘neo-avant-garde’, which denotes post-World War II artistic production, which also embraces the historical avant-garde’s failure to bring art back into the “life praxis”. For Bürger, neo-avant-garde art institutionalizes avant-garde art. In his words: “[neo-avant-gardist] art is autonomous art in the full sense of the term, which means that it negates the avant-gardist intention of returning art to the praxis of life” (1984, p. 58). Hence, the avant-garde, when applied to visual arts (including painting and cinema), conveys visual expressions that experiment with media and language, favoring the innovation of form in the creation of autonomous artworks.

H. Foster (1996) adopts Bürger’s (1984) avant-garde vocabulary, including the division between the historical avant-gardes from the pre-World War II period, and the neo-avant-garde from post-World War II period in Europe and North America. However, H. Foster does not agree with Bürger’s diagnosis of the failure of the avant-gardist radical aesthetic. Based on psychoanalytic theory and terminology, H. Foster defines historical avant-garde artworks psychoanalytically as a *trauma* to the art circuit and the historical “symbolic order” (H. Foster, 1994). Since historical avant-garde proposals were traumatic, they could not be fully accomplished. Thus, as H. Foster sees it, historical avant-garde art had its repetition and return in the form of the *neo-avant-garde*. He elaborates: “[on] this analogy (of a trauma) the avant-garde work is never historically effective or fully significant in its initial moments. It cannot be because it is traumatic – a hole in the symbolic order of its time that is not prepared for it [...]” (H. Foster, 1996, p. 29).

Foster understands that the artists (sc. the subjects) are those who are responsible for constructing and guiding theories of modernism. Thus, the author finds in psychoanalyzes the theory of the subject *per se*, that is, the *grounds* for the notion ‘neo-avant-garde’, as the repetition and return to the historical avant-garde through, respectively, the artist’s proposals and artwork’s aesthetics. The neo-avant-garde consists in the repetition of the historical avant-garde’s trauma; of formal standards of art, such as monochrome in abstract painting, as well as Dada’s shock and nonsensical qualities. It is significant to notice that both the historical and neo-avant-garde are avant-garde art on Foster’s view, and the work of art is the center of such a theory, just as it is for this thesis.

Foster’s examples of neo-avant-garde artists and artworks are restricted to the context of the USA between the 1950s and 60s. Abstract Expressionism, developed predominantly in the New York School during the 1940s and 50s, is understood as modern art, but not as an avant-garde movement. This meant that, for Foster, despite being a modern art movement, it was not as radical as avant-gardism. Consequently, the term ‘neo-avant-garde’ operates as a variant term, with roots in European, historical avant-garde movements, such as Dadaism and Constructivism, which excluded North American modernist painting from the 1940s and 50s. The neo-avant-garde in Europe and North America is the European historical avant-garde’s reprise (H. Foster, 1996, p. 8). For Foster, artworks, such as *Les Demoiselles d’Avignon* (1907) and *Cabaret Voltaire* (1916), were so radical that the art system and society suffered a trauma, which the art system and society tried to *repress*, and, as a result, what was repressed returned as repetition. As Foster explains: “[on] this model, if the historical avant-garde was repressed institutionally, it was repeated in the first neo-avant-garde rather than, in the Freudian distinction, recollected [...]” (H. Foster, 1996, p. 21). Moreover, Foster identifies in the neo-avant-garde the importance of feminist and post-colonial material circulating as avant-garde art.

Following Foster’s diagnosis of the division within the modern art of the two avant-gardes, it is relevant to think about Brazilian modernism’s respective phases,

particularly the first and third phases. The third Brazilian modernist phase can be understood as neo-avant-garde in the Brazilian context, opening up Foster's theory to a broader set of artists, artworks, and propositions. It is essential to consider that the return to the historical avant-garde occurred from different perspectives with respect to Brazilian artists of the 1950s and 60s, since they began their production from historical avant-garde propositions.

The considerations discussed until this point are central for reflecting on the categories of cinema such as avant-garde, modern, experimental, and abstract. Before addressing this notion in cinema, and to which notion of avant-garde cinema this thesis refers, I should highlight the movements and artists that developed the process of abstraction in the historical avant-garde and modern art in the first half of the 20th century, who influenced Brazilian artists as well as their style and aesthetic.

To sum up, this thesis approaches the term 'modern art' based on a disruption of the logic of the subject over the object in art, and the dissolution of the representational system, which is naturalistic and based on the laws of perspective. Cézanne took the first steps in the direction of overcoming the separation between subject and the world. Along with his painting method, he opened up possibilities of formal abstraction regarding space and figure. To this end, we can assume that both the historical avant-garde and neo-avant-garde art amount to modern art in its most radical form. Among the movements that were part of the avant-garde, which contributed to the abstraction of space and figure, as well as the research of the two-dimensions of the canvas, this research emphasizes Cubism, as exemplified in Fernand Léger's work, and Neoplasticism, as developed by Piet Mondrian, because their approach to painting accords with Cézanne's phenomenological method of painting. Furthermore, Léger and Mondrian influenced Brazilian modernism.⁷² Additionally, Fernand Léger and Brazilian modern painter, Tarsila do Amaral, influenced each other.

⁷² Brazilian modernism is also associated with Futurism (Fabris, 1994). However, the focus of this thesis is on abstraction in painting and cinema. Thus, the movements grounded in the abstract project are the focus of this research and text.

Indeed, Léger was responsible, along with Dudley Murphy, for the avant-garde film *Ballet Mécanique*.

Neoplasticism, and specifically Piet Mondrian's abstract ideas and processes, formed the basis for Brazilian modern and avant-garde artists in the 1950s and 60s, particularly Lygia Clark, Lygia Pape, and Hélio Oiticica. Furthermore, Soviet⁷³ Constructivism, as in Kasimir Malevich's works, provided a significant reference point for Hélio Oiticica. Lygia Clark, Lygia Pape, and Hélio Oiticica's notions of abstraction in painting will be addressed in detail later in Chapter 4.

Cubism, as modern and avant-garde art, has several names and styles related to it, and it morphed throughout its first decades of existence. In Western modern art, Cubism was responsible for abstraction's development and dispersal. As Chipp remarks: "Cubism is in fact, the immediate source of the formalist stream of abstract and non-figurative painting that has dominated the art of the twentieth century" (1968, p. 193). Essentially, Cubism explored aesthetically the difference between planes in space, but as part of the same geometrical surface, whereby every aspect of reality could have the same relevance within the composition on the canvas, making possible the object as a subject in its own right, using just singular combinations of lines and colors. With Cubism, the surface of the canvas became evident; it appears as part of the painting composition (a slogan for which is: "this is a painting not the world's representation"). Within Cubism, the two-dimensional aspect of painting is exposed, enabling new interpretations and influences of the figures painted there. The abstract figures, in turn, "flirt" with forms that are something "in between" symbols, therefore, not clearly presenting a symbolic resemblance and suggesting ambiguity of meanings through forms (Read, 1982), and they play with the idea of a "whole," or "completed," composition. Thus, "never before in the history of modern art, beings and their surrounding spaces had been open to each other in the same intensity" (Tassinari, 2001, p. 34, own translation).⁷⁴ Thus, despite carrying indications of "figures", cubist

⁷³ Artists originate from USSR-influenced Brazilian culture, too.

⁷⁴ Original text: "Nunca antes na história da arte moderna os seres e seus espaços circundantes tinham se aberto uns para os outros em igual intensidade".

paintings did not “represent” reality, dissolving figure and background into a single expression.

Léger’s Cubist painting was no different. The world of beings, machines, and landscapes is painted at once over the canvas. All elements have the same relevance on the canvas, and the painting is relevant as a subject in itself (Léger, 2009, p. 190). The canvas appears as a surface of abstracted organic and colored forms. In between the figurative and the non-figurative, Léger’s work from 1911 until the 1930s gives an impulse to an abstraction populated by forms and planes whereby one cannot distinguish between figure and background, or even between figures. Sometimes it is possible to hear what one sees from the forms on the canvas, as in the painting *La ville* (1919) (Illustration 03), which echoes the noises of the city. To this end, a painting may evoke one’s perception of the motif as a living experience and thereto a phenomenological one, which Léger called *réalisme*/realism.⁷⁵ Since its modern origins, abstraction was about the real, the world one’s dwells in, as its incalculable perceptions of it (Léger, 2009), thereby opposing representation.

Greenberg (1971), in a text of 1954 entitled *Master Léger*, comments on Léger’s cubist paintings from 1912 onwards. Greenberg takes Léger’s cubism to be the counterpart to artworks by Pablo Picasso and George Braque, with regard to their different approaches to geometry, planes, and straight lines on the surface of the canvas, as well as the choice of colors applied to the canvas. If Picasso and Braque’s lines were purely geometric and straight, Léger, by contrast, admitted organic lines in between the planes. Léger applied strong solid and pure colors; Braque and Picasso adhered to a less contrastive palette, predominated by pastel tones. As Greenberg remarks:

And the way Léger modeled his roundnesses – with primary blues, reds or greens switched around highlighted axes of crusty white laid on so dry and summarily that the burlap ground showed through – caused these roundnesses to be felt simultaneously as both curved and flattened planes (Greenberg, 1971, p. 99).

⁷⁵ Léger called this “*réalisme de conception*”, or *conception realism*.

Organic lines and pure colors in Léger's paintings are present in his early work and after World War I, for example, *La Femme en bleu* (1912), *Le Mécanicien* (1920), and *Nature morte* (1922). Similar characteristics are present in Tarsila do Amaral's painting after her second stay in Paris in 1923. Léger's pictorial space embraced color in a single surface, in which abstraction becomes prominent (Greenberg, 1971, p. 101). Even though Léger's paintings still betray evident differences between figures and forms, there was little distinction between figures and background; the figures occupying the same two-dimensional plane. These particularities of Léger's paintings changed during and after World War II, because the painter's universe became populated by almost only human figures, i.e., *Adam et Eve* (1935-39), and the series of paintings *Les Constructeurs* (1950).

Particularly after World War I, Léger outgrew an interest in the machine and its plastic possibilities as a motif. Fernand Léger wrote about his wonderment with the organic character of the industry, which drove him to consider the machine as a motif as relevant as any other (Illustration 04). His defense was that the machine's plastic character should be transformed into a painting. As a man of his time, like the Futurists, Léger propounded "modernity's machinery" as a motif, as well as one's perception of the machine. In his own words: "the mechanical element is a means, not an end. I [Léger] just consider it as a primary plastic material, as the element of a landscape or a still life" (2009, p. 61, own translation).⁷⁶

It seems that the early Léger praised the machine for its plastic value in a similar way that Cézanne approached landscape. The machine has, at the same time, the power of eliminating humanity (as in war), and enhancing human activities for the future. Furthermore, the machine is a "plastic object", an "object" that is part of the reality that constitutes the "subject" (Léger, 2009). Human bodies, things, nature, and machines are one world in Léger's process of painting and abstraction. As Greenberg remarks: "Léger's art has, for the time being, succeeded better than any other, I

⁷⁶ Original text: "L'élément mécanique n'est qu'un moyen et non un but. Je le considère simplement 'matière première' plastique comme les élément d'un paysage ou d'une nature morte".

daresay, in making the rawness and inertness of matter wholly relevant to human feeling” (1971, p. 98). Thus, once the machine is part of the world, it is part of expression. The literature regarding the influence of speed and machines, as well as the spirit of the “new” 20th century in expression, is vast (Argan & Masini, 2008; Aumont, 2008; Batista, Lopez, & De Lima, 1972; Charney & Schwartz, 2001; Clark & Salzstein, 2007; Lawder, 1975; Stangos, 1981; Xavier, 1978). Likewise, the modernist movement in Brazil claimed and demanded the modernization of culture along with the modernization of places and commercial relations. Moreover, Léger as other European artists and Brazilian modernists, like Mário de Andrade and Oswald de Andrade, saw cinema as the tool of the modern cultural world, the artistic expression of the new, and, most importantly, of the speed afforded by the machine (M. Fabris, 2010; Xavier, 1978).

In correspondence with Hans Richter (1888-1976), Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968), and Francis Picabia (1879-1953), in Léger’s *Ballet Mécanique* (1924) cinema is approached in the same way as painting, notwithstanding the medium’s specificity. Furthermore, the screen sustains the projection of a whole moving composition in space and time. *Ballet Mécanique* (1924) is Léger’s eulogy, in film form, to the plastic value of the machine, which will also be the subject of Chapter 5.

Cubist principles encouraged further experimentations in the direction of abstract art across several movements, among them Neoplasticism and *De Stijl* in the Netherlands, mainly via Piet Mondrian. Neoplasticism was as pluralistic a movement as any other. The leading artists of the movement, which lasted from 1917 until 1931, were Piet Mondrian, Theo van Doesburg (1883-1931), Bart van der Leek (1876-1958), and Gerrit Rietveld (1888-1964). *De Stijl* is the name of the journal that disseminated the principles of the movement, which also goes by the name ‘Neoplasticism’ (Frampton, 1983). The movement had a philosophical basis, influenced by M. H. J. Schoenmaekers, who understood mathematics as a plastic value, revealing a mystical connection to nature and the universe. Thus, there was a combination of science and spirituality in the task of painting. The mathematical aspect of Neoplasticism is one of

the chief references to the Concrete movement in Brazil, but Piet Mondrian's work and theory constitutes a point of departure from, and a counterpart dialogue to, the phenomenological approach of Neo-Concretism, individually to the artists Hélio Oiticica, Lygia Clark, and Lygia Pape.

Piet Mondrian, at the dawn of the 20th century, dedicated his initial paintings to landscapes, owing to his studies at, and influence from, The Hague School (Milner, 2002). Contact with Cubism in Paris between 1911 and 14⁷⁷ modified Mondrian's painting method. He began to combine abstraction with landscapes. This combination of his early work and Cubism is manifest in the series of tree paintings he did between 1911 and 13: *Tree* (1911-12); *Composition with Trees II* (1912); *Grey Tree* (1912) (Illustration 05); *Apple Tree in Flower* (1912); and *Tree* (1912). One can see throughout this period Mondrian's process of dissolving figures, as well as the prominence and prevailing presence of black vertical and horizontal lines, which later became the core of Mondrian's visual expression.

Milner (2002) points out that Mondrian's first cubist-style paintings constituted studies of Cézanne's method. The paintings *Still Life with Ginger Jar I* (1911-12) and *Still Life with Ginger Jar II* (1912) (Illustration 06) bear witness to this. As Milner explains: "It is scarcely surprising that Mondrian's new Parisian paintings responded precisely to Cubist practice approached first and foremost via a study of Cézanne" (2002, p. 92). One can observe Mondrian's proximity with Cubist painting, especially concerning abstraction, during the artist's stay in Paris, where he also became acquainted with Fernand Léger. In the same direction as Cézanne and Léger's painting methods, Mondrian dedicated his expression to the "reality of the motif" (Read, 1974, p. 196), that is, to the object and its reality. As Jaffé explains, "he strove to express and to render visible, by means of his paintings, the very essence of reality, which was only hidden and distracted by accidental form" (1956, p. 42). Mondrian phenomenologically

⁷⁷ It was a fruitful period for Cubism, not just regarding the production of paintings, but also with texts and critiques that defined and endorsed the movement.

abstracted the world into painting. In painting, he transformed the concrete experience of things.

Mondrian's conceptions of abstraction and nature have mythical grounds (Jaffé, 1956, p. 114), in which the natural essence of an object, like a tree, was connected to the universe, which, in turn, would be present in the paintings. In Mondrian's own words: "The balanced relation is the one in which, through its unity, expresses the harmony and the universal in differentiation, in plurality, in the individual – therefore, in the natural" (2008, p. 31, own translation).⁷⁸ Despite the profound philosophical grounds of Mondrian's work during the *De Stijl* period, the artist took one simple, but radical, step with regard to painting, namely removing the frame (the "object-frame"). The painting remained over the canvas in two dimensions, but he attempted to bring painting outside of the canvas, as he affirms below:

As far as I know, I was the first one to bring the painting forward from the frame, rather than set it within the frame [...] To move the picture into our surroundings and give it real existence, has been my ideal since I came to abstract painting (Mondrian in Chipp, 1968, p. 363).

Therefore, in removing the frame, the canvas's space continued into the space in which it was exhibited. Owing to this, one can understand Mondrian's paintings in accordance with Tassinari's (2001) notion of *space at work*. In particular, Mondrian's compositions in blue, red, and yellow from the 1920s and 30s (Illustration 07) are constituted by a *space at work*:

Mondrian's painting method developed Cézanne's painting method (Jaffé, 1956), who said that the landscape "thought through him" (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/1993, p. 67). According to Mondrian: "[...] [in] Neoplasticism the interconnection of spirit and life is intact – and we see Neoplasticism not as a denial of the complete life, but as a conciliation of material and spiritual duality" (Mondrian, 2008, p. 32 own translation).⁷⁹ Therefore, in respectively Cézanne, Léger, and

⁷⁸ Original text: "A relação equilibrada é aquela pela qual a unidade, a harmonia e o universal se expressam na diferenciação, na pluralidade, no individual – enfim no natural".

⁷⁹ Original text: "[...] no neoplasticismo está intacto o vínculo entre o espírito e a vida – e veremos, então, o neoplasticismo não como negação da vida plena, mas como a conciliação da dualidade de matéria e espírito."

Mondrian's visual expression, things were thought through the incarnate mind of the artist. Owing to this, their paintings are not representations and illusions, but the abstract expression of perception.

Thus, Mondrian and Léger (Léger, 2009) conceived of abstract painting as expression, whereby the painter is not detached from the world of which he/she is a part, and that phenomenological relations should be expressed. Furthermore, Mondrian's use of colors during his cubist period goes in a similar direction to Léger's use of pure colors, which later became the core colors of Mondrian's painting – red, blue, and yellow in composition with gray, white, and black. Lastly, the surface of the canvas, in its two-dimensionality and flatness, was part of Mondrian's process of abstraction. For Mondrian, as for Léger, the painting boasts a complete existence of its own. Therefore, they are not symbols or signs to be interpreted. Moreover, their paintings are not representations of ideas. Rather, *their paintings are expressions of their lived experiences (vivências) in the world in which they dwelt.*

2.3 Avant-Garde cinema and abstraction

There was a direct relation between *De Stijl* and the painter and filmmaker, Hans Richter, concerning the research and development of abstraction into abstract painting and cinema. Richter published texts in the *De Stijl* journal. He also worked towards producing abstract cinema, grounding most of his theory and practice in music, as the series of films' titles indicates (*Rhythmus 21* (1921) (Illustration 08), *Rhythmus 23* (1923), and *Rhythmus 25* (1925)). Moreover, Richter as a painter understood the screen's surface as the canvas's surface (Hoffmann, 1998). Thus, Richter understood film composition in the same way as painting composition, both being influenced by musical composition. Although Richter conceived of abstraction in cinema from the rhythm of music, he also had concerns with the form and use of colors, a concern he shared with Theo van Doesburg. Furthermore, Richter worked with Swedish artist, Viking Eggeling (1880-1925), during the 1920s when both

collaborated with the *De Stijl* journal and Theo van Doesburg. Both Richter and Eggeling conceived of abstract art as a universal language in cinema.

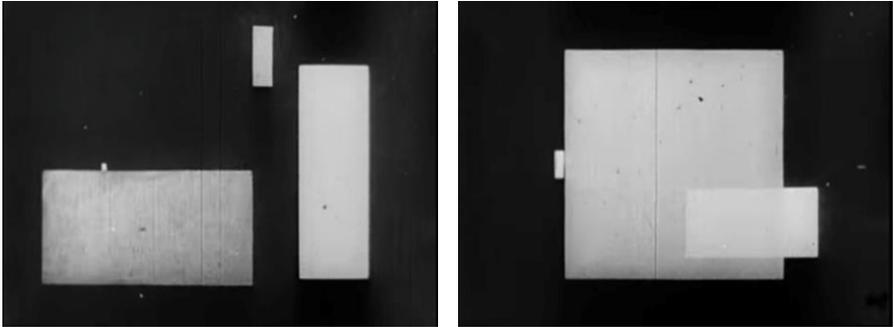


Illustration 08 – *Rythmus 21* (1921), Hans Richter

Abstraction made the painting medium evident in a way that all the elements contributing to the form, such as color, lines, the canvas's surface and frame, became visible elements expressing the world. Likewise, abstraction in cinema contributed to the process of making the projector screen's two-dimensionality evident. Thus, cinema's abstract compositions did not represent the world. It made evident the flatness of the screen, which is also part of the moving forms projected over it, as in Richter and Eggeling's films (which involved a similar process to Animation film) (Le Grice, 1977; Xavier, 2008a). Abstraction, for these two artists, is mainly based on abstracted forms, sometimes geometric, and sometimes even organic. For example, *Rythmus 21* (Illustration 08) is a film composed of geometrical forms, similar to the early paintings of the *De Stijl* movement. Richter primarily worked with abstract geometrical forms and black and white film, prescinding from inserting color. Furthermore, the films address the nature of the frame. In *Rythmus 21*, “[...] Richter develops a concept entirely deduced from the film's frame (or almost entirely – a single diagonal line appears in the film). There is thus no more difference between the nature of the screen and the nature of the images projected onto it” (Bois et al., 2013, pp. 45-46).

The following film, *Rhythmus 23*, is black and white even though Richter wanted to color it in. The last film, *Rhythmus 25*, was colored, photogram by photogram, and the only copy made was lost (Hoffmann, 1998). There is an essential aspect of experimentation in Richter's films, in the sense that he pursued, to the limit, the possibilities afforded by the film medium. Later films, such as *Filmstudie*|*Film Study* (1926) and *Vormittagsspuk*|*Ghosts Before Breakfast* (1928), were grounded in the photographic aspect of the image in order to disrupt its indexicality, either by making forms abstract with light, framing, camera movements, or montage (editing) in a surrealistic and nonsensical form. Richter composed abstract films by experimenting with the medium, thereby radicalizing the process of abstraction by eliminating both the representational and indexical aspects of cinema.

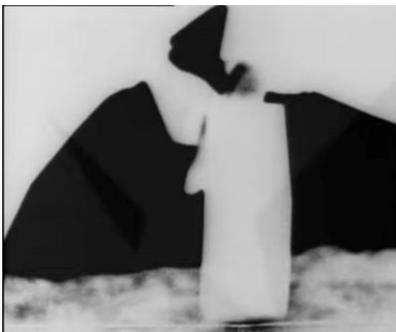


Illustration 09 – *Filmstudie* (1926), Hans Richter

Richter (1951) defines experimentalism in film as being associated with the avant-garde film aesthetic and acknowledges the initial avant-garde experiments in films in the 1920s decade. Richter defines the avant-garde film of the 1920s as follows:

The story of these individual artists, at the beginning of the twenties, under the name of *avantgarde*, can be properly read as a history of the conscious attempt to overcome reproduction and to arrive at the free use of the means of cinematographic expression. This movement spread over Europe and was sustained for the greatest part by modern painters who, in their own field, had broken away from the conventional: Eggeling, Léger. Duchamp, Man Ray, Picabia, Ruttman, Brugière, Len Lye, Cocteau, myself and others (Richter, 1951, p. 159).

In the passage above, Richter associates the basis of avant-garde film with painting in saying that “modern painters” sustained the experimentalism of filmmaking. Furthermore, avant-garde film’s experimentalism broke cinema free from its bases in literature and theater. Avant-garde cinema, as avant-garde art, is an expression that disrupts representational space and time, as well as the causal relations of cinema. Richter correlates avant-garde film with experimental film in continuity with historical avant-garde art and experimentalism in painting. Thus, avant-garde films, like avant-garde painting, perpetuated the tenets of modern art, as proposed by painters like Cézanne. As Richter remarks: “Problems in modern art lead directly into the film. Organization and orchestration of form, color, the dynamics of motion, simultaneity, were problems with which Cézanne, the cubists, the futurists had to deal” (1951, p. 160).

Moreover, following that definition, Richter (1951) refers to North American filmmakers of the 1940s as continuing the avant-garde filmmaking of the 1920s. North American films made in the mid-1940s, as well as underground cinema of the 1960s and 70s, can be denominated as avant-garde cinema in tandem with Soviet filmmakers, such as Vertov and Eisenstein. Thus, what does ‘avant-garde cinema’ mean? I will introduce some authorial definitions of avant-garde cinema, focusing on aesthetic aspects that contribute to what I will be addressing as avant-garde cinema and abstraction in cinematic art. The avant-garde’s experimentalism and disruption of representational space and time in cinema is present in the films analyzed in Chapters 5, 6, and 7, in both avant-garde and modern films.

Cinema in its early age (that is, early cinema) passed through conceptualizations of its form, specificity, and essence (Stam, 2000), as well as considerations of whether or not it was art at all. Perhaps after Ricciotto Canudo’s (1923/1988) affirmation and conceptualization of cinema as the *seventh art*, deliberations about the artistic aspect of cinema began to be resolved. Nevertheless, cinema and film delineated their realm as modes of artistic expression and thought. Still, it is an art, as many others, which is mingled with other arts such as music,

theater, literature, dance, and painting, of which French theory and criticism of the early 20th century discusses. As Stam reflects: “With many specialized film journals and important figures, France became a privileged site of reflection on both commercial and avant-garde cinema” (Stam, 2000, p. 34).

Among the prevailing topics of early 20th century filmmakers, critics, and theorists were cinema’s essence, the notion of the avant-garde, and innovations of cinematographic language. These cultural intellectuals included Jean Epstein (1897-1953), Abel Gance (1889-1981), Louis Delluc (1890-1924), Riccioto Canudo (1877-1923), Léon Moussinac (1890-1964), Jean Cocteau (1889-1963), Germaine Dulac (1882-1942), Robert Desnos (1900-1945), and René Clair (1898-1981). In the search for the essence of cinematographic language, some authors defended its “purity” in relation to other arts. Stam, for example, argues that purity in avant-garde cinema “... implied a rejection of plots” (Stam, 2000, p. 38). However, Ghali (1995) insists that the French avant-garde did not reject plots, but rather narratives and cinema as illustrations of literature or history. Until World War II, in parallel with discussions about cinema’s essence, the distinction between commercial and avant-garde cinema was constituted on the basis of circulation, production, and aesthetic differences they might betray. Moreover, several modern and historical avant-garde art movements in visual arts, such as Futurism and Cubism, detected in cinema the language of modernity.

The notion of avant-garde film is most often associated with the modern and avant-garde movements of the early 20th century. Furthermore, the “aesthetic” of avant-garde cinema is grounded in different theories. It can be defined by its circulation and marginality in relation to commercial cinema (Hagener, 2007), or its audiences, its period, its experimentalism (Bordwell & Thompson, 2008; Ghali, 1995), or by its aesthetic and mode of cinematographic language, regarding either abstraction or purity. Dulac suggests a use for the term ‘avant-garde’ in cinema: “we can use the term ‘avant-garde’ for any film whose technique, employed with a view to a renewed expressiveness of image and sound, breaks with established traditions to search out, in

strictly visual and auditory realm, new emotional chords” (Dulac, 1925/1978, p. 43). Dulac’s definition summarizes the definition of avant-garde cinema for this research, which is also theorized about by Ghali (1995).

Noureddine Ghali (1995) examines avant-garde cinema in accordance with avant-garde art, understanding the former in the light of the latter as cinematographic expression that takes an innovative approach to visual language, thereby radically experimenting with the medium. Embracing the military origins of the term ‘avant-garde’, Ghali (1995) states that avant-garde artists and filmmakers open up a path for the next flocks of artists and filmmakers to advance in the battlefield of art and cinema. Furthermore, “[t]he avant-garde was the profound exploration of all the cinematographic possibilities, and this term replaces the term ‘experimental’, which is more general” (Ghali, 1995, p.34, own translation).⁸⁰ Therefore, ‘avant-garde’ denotes a rupture with traditional cinema along with innovations in cinematographic language. Ghali divides avant-garde cinema in France chronologically into *two* avant-gardes. The first period of avant-garde lasts from 1919 until 1924, corresponding with the end of World War I, as well as the deaths of Louis Delluc and Ricciotto Canudo. The first period was also when the term ‘avant-garde’ began to circulate, subsequently designating films. Aesthetically, the ‘first avant-garde cinema’ is “narrative avant-garde”, which fought for the consolidation of cinema as an art (Ghali, 1995, p. 46-47).

The second avant-garde, from 1924 until 1930, comprises the period after Delluc and Canudo’s deaths, and the arrival of ‘the talkies’ in France. In this period, avant-garde cinema was consolidated in opposition to “traditional narrative cinema” (Ghali, 1995, p. 47). Avant-garde cinema of this ‘second wave’ became “truly independent and free from the cinematographic industry” (Ghali, 1995, p. 48). Filmmakers and theorists, such as Germaine Dulac, Fernand Léger, Man Ray (1890-1976), and Dimitri Kirsanoff, were part of this more radical wave. For Ghali, the avant-garde died with the arrival of the talkies in France. Ghali’s division of French

⁸⁰ Original text : “L’“avant-garde” a été une profonde exploration de toutes les possibilités cinématographique et ce terme remplace dans les années vingt le terme ‘expérimental’ qui est d’un emploi plus général.”

avant-garde cinema is relevant to this research because it acknowledges that avant-garde cinema in this second wave in France embraced experimentalism and radicalism in the expression of the visual language, in addition to disrupting traditional narrative. Furthermore, Ghali examines the different approaches of narrative, history, anecdote, and plot, which the French avant-garde propounds, as mentioned in the introduction to this thesis. The ideas and aesthetic innovations of the second French avant-garde were incorporated into modern cinema along with Soviet cinema of the first half of the 20th century (Xavier, 2008a).

François Albera (2005), meanwhile, concentrates on the term ‘avant-garde’, in particular its meaning within the arts, and moreover the peculiarities of films made by avant-garde artists and filmmakers. The author presents a panorama of studies of the term in Europe and the USA. Among the differences, similarities, and uses of the terms ‘avant-garde’ and ‘modern’, the author defends the “central role of cinema in the experimentation and research of the avant-garde, being a modern language “per se”” (Albera, 2005, p. 6). Albera focuses on defining avant-garde art as having a political claim, meaning that the avant-garde is a politically-engaged position in relation to the artistic field (Albera, 2005, p. 7). Albera understands avant-garde art and cinema as engaged directly in political matters, being a political position within the arts. In his view, avant-garde art and cinema are the politics within the artistic field; this position should incorporate a certain marginality and subversive character. Therefore, Albera refers to Brazilian Cinema Novo as avant-garde rather than modern cinema, opposing what states Xavier (2001). This thesis, in accordance with Xavier (2001), categorizes ‘Cinema Novo’ and ‘Cinema Marginal’ as modern cinema that approached narrative cinema with avant-gardist methods and aesthetics.

Albera begins with the historical avant-garde and identifies a “repetition” of the avant-garde campaign after World War II with *cinema situationiste*, and the political aspect of 1960s cinema. After World War II, avant-garde films for Albera formed a second wave of the avant-garde position, as established alongside the historical avant-garde. In this sense, Albera’s avant-garde cinematic theory could be related to the

notion of neo-avant-garde (Bürger, 1984; H. Foster, 1996), but the author focuses on the political aspect of the films and their filmmakers' positions, not aesthetics. Furthermore, Albera and Ghali disagree in their approaches to avant-garde cinema.

There is a political aspect to avant-garde art and cinema, which addresses topics and motifs politically. However, merely focusing on that aspect might narrow the aesthetic possibilities and interpretations. As Read explains:

We must guard against interpreting 'social conditions' in a sense narrowly economic or political. The artist's awareness of these conditions rarely assumes a politically conscious form, and certainly there is no correlation to be made between such consciousness in the artist and his degree of originality. Courbet, Pissarro, William Morris – these are the politically conscious artists and they have an important place in the history of modern art. But a more important place is taken by artists like Cézanne, Gauguin and Matisse, whose awareness of the social context of their work was never expressed in a political formula (Read, 1982, p. 20).

Therefore, in accordance with Read (in the passage cited above) and Ghali (1995), I propose a broader notion of modern and avant-garde art and cinema, which includes experimentations with the medium and formal contributions to the dissolution of representational space and time and causal relations in cinema. Albera makes a distinction between cinema *in the avant-garde* and *avant-garde* cinema, which is also present in Bürger (1984), for instance. This means that there were artists interested in cinema as a representative of modernity, as well as artists who embraced cinematographic language as visual expression. Therefore, from Albera's standpoint, avant-garde cinema is only going to be 'avant-garde' depending on the places where the film circulates and its audiences, not necessarily in its relation to the world, or the constant construction of the notion of truth in filmmaking, as in art-making, such as painting.

In a similar direction, Stam, Porton, and Goldsmith (2015) define 'avant-garde cinema' as a political position under the concepts of the radical and subversive, making avant-garde cinema revolutionary in political terms. Hence, Stam, Porton, and Goldsmith (2015) divide cinema into two avant-gardes: one politically more to the left; the other tending towards the political right. Thus, representatives of radical avant-

garde cinema include the Soviet filmmakers Dziga Vertov and Sergei Eisenstein, owing to their concern with changing reality through filmmaking. Stam, Porton, and Goldsmith (2015), as Albera mentions, hail from the second wave of avant-garde and new wave cinema in Europe and Latin America (Stam et al., 2015, pp. 108-110).

Accordingly, Sergei Eisenstein and Dziga Vertov are the examples of a completely revolutionary and subversive avant-garde in political terms. Their film forms and concepts aligned with the Soviet Revolution, expecting to change individuals and politics through film. The subversion of naturalism from within, and the construction of an editing discourse (sc. montage) based on the conflict of images in Eisenstein's montage of attractions (and the documental camera of Vertov's "kino-eye"), both opposed the illusion of naturalism and changed the perception of film's meaning and discourse (Xavier, 2008a). Eisenstein's theory and cinema reaches deep political and discursive layers in film, in a dramatic space. Vertov, on the other hand, relied on the machine's ability to "see" reality, and montage as the essence of cinema making. Additionally, for Vertov, there should be a rhythm to the montage, just as in music, in which intervals are present (Stam, 2000, pp. 44-45).

Although avant-garde cinema might be related to marginality and subverting the norm, these categories do not exhaustively address the formal aspects of different manifestations of avant-garde cinema as a whole (except Soviet cinema, which appears to fulfill it). For the sake of addressing avant-garde cinema *broadly*, I am focusing on a definition aligned with Ghali's (1995) second avant-garde cinema in France, which intends to dissolve narrative representational aspects, aligned with painting, as well as H. Foster (1994, 1996, 2015) and Bürger's (1984) definition of avant-garde aesthetics. This is because they understand the formal aspect of avant-garde artworks (painting, installations, or moving images) as either including a "direct political formula" or not, which may also include a socio-economic context, as examined by Ismail Xavier (2008a).

For Xavier (2008a), avant-garde cinema as avant-garde art opposes the naturalistic illusion of the commercial and standardized film form, thereto, *classical*

cinematic style. In the following, I will present how Xavier (2008a) approaches the avant-garde *aesthetically*, that is, in line with the definition that this research takes to be theoretically broader and therefore capable of embracing the Brazilian avant-garde film *Limite* (1931), as well as modern cinema of the 1950s and 60s.

Xavier (2008a) synthesizes both avant-garde cinema and avant-garde art into: “[...] an aesthetics that, strictly speaking, is anti-realist, the realistic was either conceived in the Renaissance or because, in classical narrative, the realism is judged by the criteria of a chronological, linear narration dominated by the logic of common sense” (Xavier, 2008a, p. 100, own translation).⁸¹ Therefore, in accordance with Xavier (2008a), Ghali (1995), and Hans Richter (1951), we can claim that avant-garde cinema is a notion that refers to a conjunction of films from the same context of historical avant-garde art (Bürger, 1984; H. Foster, 1996). Additionally, despite its internal differences, avant-garde cinema, as both avant-garde and modern art, is characterized by its opposition to, and resistance towards, classical cinematic style, which is realistic, illusory, and naturalistic.

Therefore, avant-garde cinema assumes experimentalism, abstraction, non-linearity, and discloses the cinematographic process (that is to say, the technique *appears* in the film’s composition), eliminating the illusionist effect, which hopes to conceal the medium. Hence, avant-garde cinema denies illusion in cinema, which assumes a standardized construction of reality and produces one ideal point of view in a linear and continued narrative (Xavier, 2008a). This corresponds with Ghali’s (1995) definition of narrative in avant-garde cinema (as discussed in the Introduction).

Notice that aesthetic opposition towards traditional and commercial art can be subversive and radical, but not exclusively. For instance, Hans Richter’s *Ghosts before breakfast* (1926) is politically radical and subversive, as well as being formally Surrealist.

⁸¹ Original text: “Em suma, falar das propostas da vanguarda, significa falar de uma estética que, a rigor, somente é anti-realista porque constituída na Renascença ou porque no plano narrativo, julgada com os critérios de uma narração linear cronológica, dominada pela lógica do senso comum.”

In addition, Eisenstein's montage theory and films were not merely avant-garde art but constituted "cinema aesthetics" in their own right (Xavier, 2008a).

Xavier (2008a) divides avant-garde cinema according to its aesthetics, blending the films from different periods from the 1920s until the 70s because the author focuses specifically on the understanding of aesthetic discourse. Xavier (2008a) focuses on avant-garde cinema in Europe and North America, mentioning very few Brazilian filmmakers with regard to realism or modern cinema. The first tendency of avant-garde cinema, which Xavier (2008a) brings attention to, is expressionist, more specifically German expressionism, of which Robert Weine's film *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920) and Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927) are examples. This tendency essentially constructed the scenery against the laws of perspective, and its pre-stylization broke with the illusion of naturalism in the background of a narrative. The narrative in expressionist cinema is linear within the causal relations of space and time. Nevertheless, the background, characters, and motif topics stand against it, creating an ambiguous and "obscure" ambiance (Xavier, 2008a).

A second tendency of avant-garde cinema is towards poetic and pure cinema, of which French filmmakers contributed the most, such as Jean Epstein and Germaine Dulac. Their poetic cinema supposedly combines man and world's nature into one expressive language that *is* cinema. As Xavier puts it: "What is important is each unique image and its generating power of a new experience of the sensible. Cinema is an instrument of a new lyricism, and its language is poetic, precisely because it is part of nature" (2008a, p. 103, own translation).⁸² In this sense, poetic cinema seems to be in line with modern art's non-distinction between the subject and object in the world, and therefore in line with abstraction's process in the visual arts (like Léger's). To this end, there is an existential concern regarding the human and the world as a whole, where time and space dissolve and the film breaks with a naturalistic rhythm, moving towards other possibilities in order to expand the existence of the film's rhythm.

⁸² Original text: "O importante é cada imagem singular e seu poder gerador de uma nova experiência do mundo sensível. O cinema é instrumento de um novo lirismo e sua linguagem é poética justamente porque ele faz parte da natureza."

Hence, the film's composition should focus on editing and close-ups in order to bring about the existential character in and of the film.

According to Xavier (2008a), the current of pure cinema is correlated with abstract cinema, and probably the most radical in opposition to naturalism. Pure cinema “not only proclaims the dissolution of the narrative or the elimination of the dramatic space; [...] and takes as cinema's only reality, the dynamics of light and its geometrical and rhythmic effects on the surface of the screen” (Xavier, 2008a, p. 104, own translation).⁸³ Hans Richter, Viking Eggeling, and Germaine Dulac made films in the 1920s and 30s based on such premises. Pure and abstract cinema dissolves the narrative, figures, and the representation of time and space, whereby the flatness of the screen is prominent, and the techniques, processes, and medium are almost entirely exposed.

Xavier (2008a), as Ghali (1995), identifies another avant-garde tendency that saw the film as an object, which constituted a development of formal abstraction in cinema. The painting of the celluloid functioned as the painting of the canvas, being based on a relationship with the world. To this end, the film should be a subject (thing) in itself, as in abstract painting. Xavier (2008a) bases his system on the specificity of the form and the aesthetic of cinema. Thus, he jumps to 1950s and 60s avant-garde cinema not only in Europe, but also in North America, highlighting artists such as Jonas Mekas (1922-), Stan Brakhage (1933-2003), and Peter Kulbelka (1934-), as exemplifying the tendency that sees the film as a subject in itself.

Fernand Léger and Dudley Murphy's *Ballet Mécanique* (1924) constitutes, for Xavier, the figurative and realist shift in abstract film, which places the machine at the film's center. A machine is an object like any other: part of the world, which should have its plastic value expressed, as aforementioned in this chapter. Jean Epstein, in

⁸³ Original text: “Não só proclama a dissolução da narrativa ou a eliminação do espaço dramático; exige a supressão de qualquer vestígio mimético, [...] e toma como única realidade a dinâmica da luz e seus efeitos geométricos e rítmicos na superfície da tela.”

turn, places the machine at the center, but remarks that the camera has its own “intelligence” (Xavier, 2008a, p. 108) or “anima” (Epstein, 1947).

Another branch of avant-garde cinema is surrealistic; its main example in filmmaking being Luis Buñuel and his film with Salvador Dalí, *Un chien Andalou* (1928), which is also associated with the Surrealist movement. In the same manner, a film with a dreamlike form is *Entr'acte* (1924) by Francis Picabia and René Clair, which inclines towards being Dadaist. Xavier then approximates both films to certain affinities, such as “[...] the aggression to common sense, the cultivation of humor allied with irony in opposition to bourgeois conventions and standard aesthetic rules [...]” (Xavier, 2008a, p. 113, own translation).⁸⁴ The surrealistic tendency, similarly with abstract cinema, is based on a discontinuity and break with representational space and time, while following the imagination or dream flux against social representations and symbolism, thereby intending to subvert standard bourgeois society. Even though surrealism is an avant-garde aesthetic in both painting and cinema, this thesis does not unpack its specificity.

The archetypal image of poetic cinema finds its expression in Maya Deren. For Deren, cinema should be a mythological experience founded in an archetypal image, in Carl Jung’s sense. Maya Deren’s position on cinema stands between the realism of the photographic image, as established by Bazin (1967), and non-realistic drama (sc. naturalistic) cinema. There is a realism about the image, but cinema can trouble naturalism into a mythological image concerning film form and composition, throughout what Maya Deren calls “double exposure”, as based on the verticality of time. As Xavier remarks, Deren manipulated “reality” in the editing process (Xavier, 2008a, p. 117).

Lastly, Xavier (2008a) categorizes the USA’s underground films, made between the 1940s and 70s, as the cinema of “visionary gaze”.⁸⁵ Xavier (2008a)

⁸⁴ Original text: “[...] a agressão ao senso comum, o cultivo do humor aliado à ironia frente às convenções burguesas e às regras estéticas vigentes [...]”

⁸⁵ This reference is to Adam Sitney’s book, “*Visionary film: the American avant-garde*, first edition from 1974 (Sitney, 2002).

associates with “visionary gaze”, filmmakers such as Stan Brakhage, Michael Snow (1928-), and the artist Andy Warhol (1928-1987), among others, who focused on the anti-realism and anti-naturalism of filmmaking. Underground or visionary cinema foresaw a “new epistemology” in cinema making, operating mainly in film form. Therefore, underground filmmakers in the USA, called spectators’ “attention to the surface of the screen”, abandoning perspectival space. They brought up the banalities of everyday life as the main content of a film, revealing its mechanistic character. They used “absolute continuity”, where the film’s teleology is no other than the present time of the moving image, and they had an intellectual, phenomenological (related to Vertov and Eisenstein) approach. As Xavier remarks, the “pure perception” of an aspect of the world should be thought of and filmed (Xavier, 2008a, pp. 118-125). Xavier (2008a) furthermore draws a correlation between underground filmmakers and their films to Pop Art and Abstract Expressionism, the USA’s primary artistic movements. With regard to Pop Art, Xavier focuses on Andy Warhol, who used different techniques, from painting to cinema.

Xavier (2008a) connects underground cinema and Abstract Expressionism’s methods, a relation that is not as direct as it is with Pop Art, as in the example of Andy Warhol. Abstract Expressionism, as a painting movement, was interested in exploring the specificity of language, the mark of the gesture of the painter, the surface of the canvas, and the depth of the medium. Xavier associates cinema and painting through the gesture of both paintbrush and the filmmaker’s movements, as well as uses of the camera, the celluloid, and the image. As suggested in this thesis, he approximates the equivalence of the artists’ gestures to the filmmakers’ *camera-montage-brush*. Therefore, Xavier connects the thinking and methods of Abstract Expressionism in painting to the thinking and methods of “visionary cinema”, a similar approximation to what this thesis proposes. Xavier says:

The filmmaker transforms the object into a vestige of his gesture like the abstract expressionist painter (action painting). The image does not represent a fictional world but points to the gesture that left its marks, its directions, intensity, hesitations, and style. The filmmaker does not work with paints but tries to do the same with the camera, the light, and the instruments to manipulate images, as the editing. The hero of abstract expressionist films is the man behind the camera, just like in our dreams where we are always the great protagonists of the fiction that we offer ourselves. It is the gaze that matters, and the filmmaker's effort is focused on our recognition of his experience of exploration with the camera turned into an extension of his body (Xavier, 2008a, p. 120, own translation).⁸⁶

In this passage, Xavier presents the relationship of the painting practice to the filmmaking practice within the USA's avant-garde, in both painting and cinema. Abstract Expressionism, in painting and visionary cinema, contains in its form the mark of the gestures of the author.

Abstract expressionism in cinema can vary from the abstract forms and colors in the picture, to the method of thinking in the filmmaking, editing, framing, and camera movements. The abstractionist tendency in underground cinema and Abstract Expressionism follows modern art's notion of visually expressing a subject's thought about the world, which contributes to communication through a specific language, such as film and painting. Therefore, in avant-garde (and modern) art and cinema, the figure and ideas of the artists and filmmakers can be relevant for interpreting their method and expression. Abstraction seems to approximate cinema and visual arts from the artists' and filmmakers' theories, as well as their relation towards motif and formalist aspects.

Avant-garde art constrained the concept of avant-garde cinema either owing to their bases in the political and revolutionary aspects of avant-garde art, or by their aesthetic characteristics. Nevertheless, following Xavier (2008a) and Ghali's (1995) systematization and definitions, it is possible to find aesthetic methods in common within modern and avant-garde art and avant-garde cinema. Avant-garde films tend to

⁸⁶ Original text: "Tal como o pintor expressionista abstrato (action painting) o cineasta transforma o objeto (filme) em vestígio do seu gesto: a imagem não representa um mundo ficcional mas aponta para o gesto que nela deixou suas marcas, suas direções, intensidade, hesitações e estilo. O cineasta não trabalha com tintas mas procura fazer o mesmo com a câmera, a luz e os instrumentos de manipulação da imagem que o processo de montagem oferece. O herói dos filmes expressionistas abstratos é o homem atrás da câmera, tal com em nossos sonhos onde somos sempre grandes protagonistas da ficção que oferecemos. É o olhar que interessa, e o seu esforço está voltado para o nosso reconhecimento de sua experiência de exploração com a câmera transformada numa extensão do corpo"

be non-linear films, incorporating the medium as part of the work, making evident its technique of framing, treatment of the surface of the screen, celluloid, and the camera or projector's machinery. Furthermore, avant-garde cinema breaks with the illusionist aspect of narrative (sc. classical) cinema through abstract geometric forms (pure cinema), abstraction of figures and narrative (poetic and abstract cinema) or with the editing (surrealist). Manifestly, avant-garde cinema considered the frame, not as a continuation of reality, nor the window to the world as in classical painting and cinema, but *as an object (subject) in itself*.

The process of abstraction in cinema constitutes the possibility of expressing phenomenological thought. The reality of the medium is present in the perception of reality. The experimental aspect of such cinematography appears as a component of its definition, in the sense that experimenting with the technique, machine, form, and content produces new possibilities of filmic thinking and methods for making films. Both avant-garde visual artists and avant-garde filmmakers produced avant-garde cinema, developing their essential cinematic thinking in opposition to both naturalistic cinema and the aesthetics of classical cinema.

From trends noted by Xavier (2008a), abstraction and pure cinema indicate fundamental relations with abstraction in painting. To this end, Fernand Léger, Hans Richter, Viking Eggeling, and Stan Brakhage exemplify thought about cinematographic language in parallel with modern and avant-garde painting, such as Cubist, Constructivist, Neoplasticist, and action painting. Abstract art and formal abstraction, in painting and cinema, can express the non-duality of the subject-object relation.

Abstraction in avant-garde cinema was conceived of, and theorized about, as opposing the photographic aspect of cinema, assuming its realistic effects, as well as the dissolution of representational space and time within a narrative (or not, as the case may be). Therefore, “beginning in the 1920s, the emergence of abstraction in film appeared as an apparatus (*dispositif*) of resistance [...] that rejects photography's prior determination of film” (Philippe-Alain Michaud in Bois et al., 2013, p. 45). This is particularly salient when it comes to abstraction in avant-garde cinema, of which Hans

Richter, Walter Ruttmann, Man Ray, and Viking Eggeling's (Illustration 10) films from the 1920s, and Fernand Leger's *Ballet Mécanique* are common examples (Bois et al., 2013; S. Foster, 1998; Graf & Scheunemann, 2007; Le Grice, 1977; Xavier, 2008a). These filmmakers began their visual production as painters, and then established an intrinsic relationship between painting, drawing, and film.

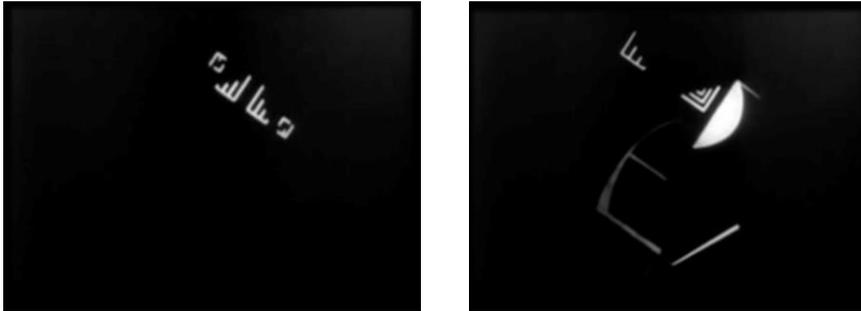


Illustration 10 – *Diagonal Symphony* (1924), Viking Eggeling.

Malcolm Le Grice (1977) questions why cinematic theory grounded cinema's formal basis in photography, theater, and literature, rather than in the visual arts. He remarks: "In a theoretical sense, there is no reason why the plastic arts – painting and sculpture or music – should not have emerged as the dominant formal basis for cinematic culture" (Le Grice, 1977, p. 7). Furthermore, in thinking about abstraction in cinema, Le Grice returns to Cézanne's painting method and the reciprocal influence of painters and cinema.

Le Grice (1977) acknowledges two possibilities for experimenting with the medium, which abstract painting commenced as the basis for thinking about cinema in abstract terms. He explains that, "[...] the first stems from considering painterly form as diagrammatic rather than pictorial representation, the second from the direct perceptual response to the material and form of the work as an object itself" (Le Grice, 1977, p. 15). Therefore, as the process of formal abstraction in painting, abstraction in cinema—while referential—is not representational, and consequently, the medium (in both cinema and painting) is equally a subject as any motif (Le Grice, 1977). Thus, modern and avant-garde painting, and the process of abstraction within painting,

might be relevant for thinking, analyzing, and theorizing about modern and avant-garde cinema. Films do not need to represent reality as classical cinema does: they can experiment with the cinematic art without the need to build any narrative or causal relations within the narrative. In doing so, a film can be abstract in form, creating a polysemy of content, as soon as it ceases to make every aspect approached evident and didactic. Hence, abstract film, or abstract visual thinking in films, can be aligned with abstract thinking in painting.

Furthermore, in avant-garde cinema, artists and filmmakers researched abstraction from the photographic aspect of cinematographic thinking. Films such as Man Ray's *Le retour à la Raison* (1923) (Illustration 11), Hans Richter's *Film Study* (1925), Henri Chomette's *Jeux des reflets et de la vitesse*, (1923), and Fernand Léger's *Ballet Mécanique* (1924) separate the objects from their "specific identity", thereby constructing "abstract shapes" (Le Grice, 1977, pp. 35-37) either through the process of exposing the celluloid, or via choices in framing and camera movement. Regarding Man Ray's film, Le Grice points out that the materiality of the film is prominent and part of the film's composition. He claims that, "[as] an extension of this area of awareness, it becomes impossible to separate the material aspects of constructing the work" (Le Grice, 1977, p. 35).

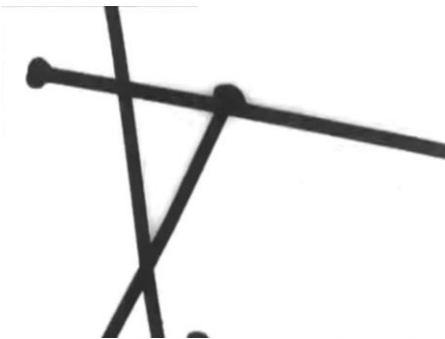


Illustration 11 – *Le retour à la raison* (1924), Man Ray.



In addition to Le Grice's reading of abstraction from the photographic aspect of cinema, Philippe Alain Michaud (2013) mentions improvization in the film's composition, which Man Ray relies on as a means for frustrating the referentiality and indexicality of the photographic image (Philippe-Alain Michaud in Bois et al., 2013, p. 48). Avant-garde art and avant-garde cinema of the 1920s and 30s questioned the assumption that cinema is fundamentally "real" owing to the indexicality⁸⁷ of the photographic image. Michaud on Richter's film *Rhythmus 21*, fundamentally considers how abstraction and experimentalism in film deal with reality:

This is not, mind you, the indexicality that, for Roland Barthes or Rosalind Krauss, attaches itself to the photographic image as witness to or deposit of what has been, but an effect of indexicality *hic et nunc*, one that brings forth, through the very appearance of an image, the filmic apparatus in its presence and opacity. In this regard, the inaugural moment of abstraction that plays itself out in *Rhythmus 21* will be inscribed in a lasting way into the experimental tradition, which can undoubtedly be defined as such on the basis of this hypothesis about the existence of film: according to the experimental tradition, film does not show reality, it describes itself through images of reality (Philippe-Alain Michaud in Bois et al., 2013, p. 46).

This passage seems to contain the core argument for experimentalism in abstract, avant-garde film, since it isolates the question about whether the film and cinematographic language are real or not, replacing it with endless questions regarding what reality is. Moreover, avant-garde, abstract films make the medium appear as a visual language. As Michaud asserts "...film does not show reality, it describes itself through images of reality (Michaud in Bois et al., 2013, p. 46).

Avant-garde films from the 1920s, which are documental (such as the city symphony *Berlin, Symphony of a Great City* (1927) by Walter Ruttmann, Dziga Vertov's *Man with the movie camera* (1929), and Alberto Cavalcanti's film about Paris *Rien que les heures* (1926) are neither mentioned by Le Grice (1977) nor Xavier (2008a) but nonetheless construct abstract relations between the scenes captured from the city in the editing and the fusion of images. Le Grice highlights the radical action of documental abstract films, commenting on their composition and cinematographic discourse, exemplified in Vertov's *Man with the movie camera*.

⁸⁷ In 1920s cinema, the film is based on celluloid, which is the same basis for the photography of the period.

Lawder (1975), moreover, separates avant-garde cinema into two inclinations: one geometric and abstract, the other surrealist. Similarly with Xavier (2008a) and Le Grice (1977), at least with regard to abstraction in avant-garde cinema theory, Lawder (1975) mentions other historical avant-garde movements that are not concerned with the surface of the screen, such as Dadaism and Surrealism. Those movements were concerned with the imagery of the dreaming process, that is, of the unconscious or the nonsensical, expecting to shock the spectator by creating new sensibilities from and about the cinematographic language. Some examples include: *Entr'acte* (1924) by René Clair; *Étude cinématographique sur une arabesque* | *Arabesque* (1929) and *La Coquille et le Clergyman* | *The Seashell and the Clergyman* (1928) by Gemaine Dulac; *Glace a trois faces* | *The three sided mirror* (1927) and *La chute de la maison Usber* | *The Fall of the House of Usber* (1928) by Jean Epstein; and *Un chien andalou* (1929) by Salvador Dalí and Luis Buñuel.

Another case, probably sitting between Dadaism, Surrealism, and Abstraction, is Marcel Duchamp. The artist not only invented the notion of the ready-made as art, but also worked with different artistic languages, such as painting, sculpture, installation, photography, and film (Michelson, 1979). These respective languages influenced one other in the artist's unique way of thinking about conceptual art, meaning, and communication in visual arts, especially through the idea of the "art coefficient." Therefore, Duchamp's experiments in cinema, particularly in his film *Anemic cinema* (1926) (Illustration 12), can be interpreted as a conceptual work, but also as nonsense, as in Dadaist, abstract, or surrealist artworks. Overall, Duchamp's *Anemic Cinema*, as the anagram of the title, experiments with several languages that are at once written, visual, and moving, thanks to the hypnotic effect of the form's repetition.

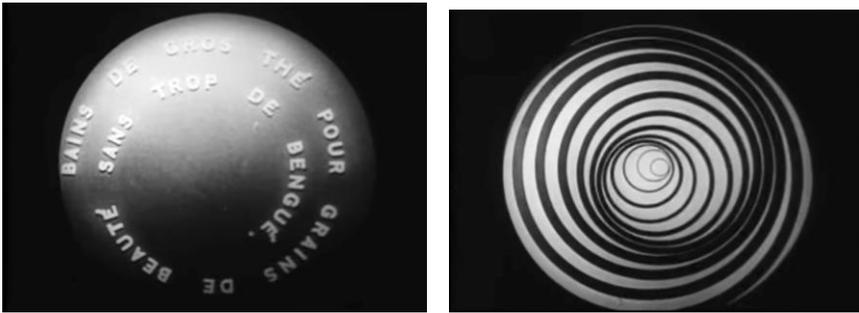


Illustration 12 – *Anemic Cinema* (1926), Marcel Duchamp.

Lastly, abstraction in avant-garde cinema and painting can have an influence and relation with music, based on rhythm. The essence of music is sound, of painting it is color, and of cinema it is the moving image (Lawder, 1975). Robert Delaunay (1885-1941), Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944), and Paul Klee (1879-1940) are representative painters who, based on the structure of music, conceived their abstract paintings. Additionally, musical rhythms influenced most of Richter, Eggeling, and Walter Ruttmann's abstractions in cinema.

In conclusion, then, modern art, as examined here, is a broader notion than avant-garde art; the 'avant-garde' constituting the radical aesthetic action of modern art, which in turn is associated with movements within the historical and neo-avant-garde (Bürger, 1984; H. Foster, 1996). Avant-garde art might imply a political position, relating to the marginality of the artist, and aesthetic concerns with the socio-economic and political context, with the further aim of subverting the art system, as well rehabilitating the autonomy of the artwork and a concern with the life praxis. Overall, modern and avant-garde art and cinema imply fundamental concerns with anti-naturalism and anti-representationalism.

Avant-garde cinema is based on the categories of avant-garde art and the movements of the historical avant-garde, such as Surrealism, Dadaism, and Constructivism, in addition to the political position it might have. Nevertheless, avant-garde cinema is anti-naturalistic, anti-illusionistic, and opposes the standard viewpoint of classical cinematic style. Thus, a concern with reality constitutes a constant question

rather than an assertion. As Read puts it: “By now the position we have reached in our argument is this: that which we call reality is a chain of images by man; whose personal existence must be affirmed before he proceeds with his invention. Reality is man-made and the maker is the image-maker, the poet” (1982, pp. 95-96).

Formal abstraction, in cinema and painting, gives visibility to technique. Owing to this, the technique is rendered apparent in the artwork, invariantly breaking with the effects of illusion. Furthermore, the space of the work can be understood through the general notion of the *space at work* of modern art, as proposed by Tassinari (2001). This opens up the space of avant-garde films and artworks to their surroundings (to the common space), that is, the space of the work and that of the spectator.

Finally, abstraction in (avant-garde) cinema opposes the photographic, theatrical, and the dramatic fundamentals of cinema, which formed the basis for classical cinematic style. The theory, history, and criticism of the historical avant-garde and modern art construct aesthetic proximities and continuities between painting and cinema, especially concerning abstraction. A crucial aspect of formal abstraction in painting and cinema is the conceived expression of reality, which opposes the preconceptions of the classical. To this end, in abstraction the subject expresses his/her existence and his/her perception of the world, not as a preconceived idea of what reality is or should be. Owing to this, modern and avant-garde art and cinema communicate the equivalence between subject and object visually, as argued in the previous chapter, namely as a phenomenological position in relation to the world in which the subject dwells (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2012). This explains why Le Grice (1977) returns to Cézanne’s method of painting in order to reflect on abstraction in filmmaking

In the next chapter, I will discuss the context and progression of the avant-garde and abstraction within the visual arts in Brazil in the three phases of modernism. I shall emphasize the first and third phases, owing to their incorporation of abstract processes in painting. Furthermore, I will discuss how avant-garde proposals from

European artists were incorporated into the modernist movement and modernist paintings, mentioning the relation between modernists and cinema. Lastly, I will contextualize the radical process of abstraction within the Concrete and Neoconcrete movements.

Chapter 3 – Modern and Avant-Garde art in Brazil: 1920's modernism and the 1950s and 1960s abstract art

The objective of this chapter is to present the theory and context of modernism in Brazil, focusing on its first (1917-1931) and third (1945-1970) phases. The first phase was responsible for the inception of modern and avant-garde art in Brazil, which in painting corresponds with the process of formal abstraction. The second phase (1930-1945) consisted in mostly regional themes, perpetuating the proposals of the first phase. Owing to this, I will briefly explain the second phase in this chapter. The third phase, however, was responsible for the most radical changes with regard to abstraction in the process of painting. Furthermore, this chapter discusses the context and connections between the visual arts and cinema in Brazil, and their relations to the theory of modern and avant-garde art and cinema, as presented in Chapter 2.

From the modernist movement of the 1920s, I emphasize, first, Anita Malfatti's exhibition in 1917; second, the *Modern Art Week* of 1922; third, the *Anthropophagite Manifesto*, written in 1928; and lastly, Tarsila do Amaral's painting, focusing on the painter's production in the 1920s and abstractionism. As for the third phase in the 1950s and 60s, this chapter presents the theory and context of abstractionism in both the Concrete and Neoconcrete movements, as well as the relevance of the artists Lygia Pape, Lygia Clark, and Hélio Oiticica, to whom I dedicate most of Chapter 4.

One can affirm that, at least since the establishment of the *Academia Imperial de Belas Artes do Rio de Janeiro* during the 19th century (created in 1816 and inaugurated in 1826), Brazilian painting stood between a European form and a search for an 'identity' concerned with symbolic Brazilian motifs. The modernist movement of the 1920s inherited the ambiguity of the European form with Brazilian motifs (Chiarelli, 1995). Any painter educated in the first half of the 19th century at the *Academia Imperial*,

generally speaking painted historical scenes and was concerned with the representation of national character. Brazilian national character was, for the academic painter, represented through myths, stereotypes, and the idealization of the indigenous people (incorporating a romantic idea of Brazilian origins), e.g., the painting *Moema* (1866) by Victor Meirelles (1832-1903) (Pereira, 2012) (Illustration 13). In the second half of the 19th century, some artists chose to paint the local landscape and people instead of dealing with stereotypical models inside the studio. The movement of going to the landscape to paint caused disruptions with regard to the color palette, as well as the representation of landscape elements and people on the canvas.

By contrast with Cézanne, Europe Impressionism, and Expressionism, which respectively modified classical methods of painting and classical art, Academic Brazilian painters, such as José Ferraz de Almeida Jr. (1850-1899), were only altering their thematic choices in Brazilian painting. Therefore, Brazilian Academic painters were not concerned with altering the representational language of classical painting. Some Academic painters, such as Almeida Jr., moved away from the studio and urban space to the countryside, focusing on the countryside landscape and people. They combined classical painting's method of representation with gestures and features of the rural worker in the São Paulo's countryside (Souza, 2010), as evidenced in the painting *Caipira cortando tabaco* | *Caipira cutting tobacco* (1893) (Illustration 14). Their method was based on an illusionist and classical representational perspective, which was therefore Academic.⁸⁸ However, their motifs were much less idealistic. Moreover, the Academic painters, who were educated at the Brazilian Academy of Rio de Janeiro during the second half of the 19th century, took small steps in the direction of modern art, at least regarding formal qualities, owing to the artists' travels in Europe. However, the main rupture of that generation within the Brazilian context regarded their choice of content, and the use of narrative in the painting composition (Souza, 2010).

⁸⁸ Pereira remarks: *Academic is not a style, but a specific method of artistic teaching and production, characterized by respect for a certain system of norms.* "Acadêmico não é um estilo, mas um modo específico de ensino e produção artísticos, caracterizado pelo respeito a um sistema determinado de normas" (Pereira, 2012, p. 90). Thus, academic painting in this context is classical painting produced by painters in the Academy of Fine Arts.



Illustration 13 – *Moema* (1866), Victor Meirelles | 129x190 cm | oil on canvas.
Retrieved from: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Victor_Meirelles_-_Moema.jpg.
Accessed: 17/06/2018.

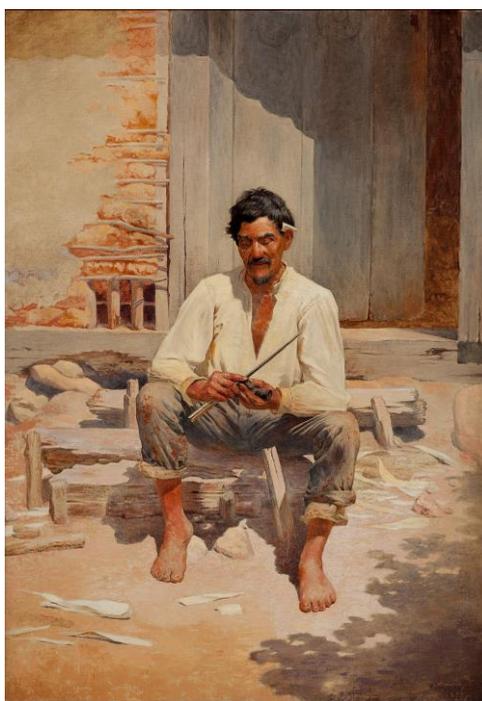


Illustration 14 - *Caipira cortando tabaco* | *Caipira cutting tobacco* (1893), José Ferraz de Almeida Jr.
| 202x141 cm | oil on canvas.
Retrieved from: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Almeida_J%C3%BAnior_-_Caipira_Cutting_Tobacco_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg. Accessed: 17/06/2018.

At the beginning of the 20th century, like Brazilian Academic painters, modernist artists (among them writers, painters, architects, and musicians) went to Europe to study, work, or complete their artistic research and formative education. They were either financed by themselves and their families, or alternatively by the State, who distributed Scholarships. In this way, artists could improve their skills abroad, in a similar way to the Academic painters at the end of the 19th century. Europe was a key reference for Brazilian painters, whether Academic or not; thus, their formal education was European. To the extent that they produced so-called “Brazilian art”, Brazilian modernists and Academic painters would rely on “Brazilian” content and motifs.

The nationalist character of the *Academia Imperial* was related to novel ideas about an independent empire. Brazil declared independence from Portugal in 1822, and the Brazilian Empire lasted until 1889, when they proclaimed the creation of the Republic. The search for “Brazilian origins”, or a “Brazilian identity”, was a project of the State assigned to the Fine Arts Academy. Hence, both the Academy and the State accepted and reinforced the painters’ decision to paint local, rural, and “typical” Brazilian people and landscapes in the second half of the 19th century. After all, they were aiming for national representation. As Pereira explains: “It was not about a choice between tradition and modernity, but of using them both in a way in which they could be useful to a greater cultural project: the building of a young nation and its national identity”(Pereira, 2012, p. 102, own translation).⁸⁹

The Brazilian modernist movement of the 1920s saw through the Academy’s national project, which involved addressing ‘national’ elements and ‘national’ culture. Moreover, the modernist movement was aligned with the world’s nationalist wave of the post-World War I period. As Amaral declares, it is “possible to say that the 1920s modernism represents the culmination of France’s influence, initiated with the implementation of the so-called French Mission in the second half of the 19th

⁸⁹ Original text: “[...] portanto, não se tratava de escolher entre a tradição e a modernidade, mas, sim, de dispor das duas, naquilo que elas poderiam ser úteis a um projeto cultural maior: a construção de uma jovem nação e sua identidade nacional [...]”

century” (Amaral, 2010, p. 20, own translation).⁹⁰ Nevertheless, the Brazilian modernist movement of the 1920s was responsible for establishing modern and avant-garde art proposals in Brazil, opposing the valorization of European classical canons (Amaral, 1998; Chiarelli, 1995). Therefore, European painting methods and visual thinking from the 19th century until the mid-1950s influenced visual language in Brazil, while, at the same time, artists questioned what was national.

Additionally, apart from Europe, other relations were established with the rest of America. For instance, during the 1930s and 40s, Mexican muralists influenced the visual arts. After World War II, Brazilian artists, along with the rest of America, kept connections with Europe—both East and West. An underground correspondence with Eastern Europe occurred mainly during the civil-military regime (1964-1985), when Brazilian artists either maintained relations through mail art with artists under other regimes, as Cristina Freire (2017) examines, or while other Brazilian artists lived exiled in Europe (especially France, Germany, and Italy), or in the USA (Jaremtchuk, 2008). Therefore, while Brazilian modern art thematized, and was inspired by, local elements, it seems to be in constant dialogue with other localities, seeking international recognition for an artistic production beyond the local.

As classical, modern, and the historical avant-garde’s proposals reached Brazil through artists, writers, and intellectuals (who went to Europe to study), this caused the recollection of cultural references and artworks. Vicente Rego Monteiro (1899-1970), Tarsila do Amaral (1886-1973), Anita Malfatti (1889-1964), Oswald de Andrade (1890-1954), Emiliano Di Cavalcanti (1897-1976), and Graça Aranha (1868-1931) (*inter alia*), who suffused the Modernist movement in Brazil with those ideas, did part of their study and work in Europe (mostly between the 1910s and 30s). These artists came into contact with principles from Surrealism, Dadaism, Cubism, Futurism, and Expressionism in Europe. Thus, one could say that the proposals of the historical avant-garde were part of the Brazilian context within Modernism in Brazil. In general,

⁹⁰ Original text: “Atualmente podemos dizer que o modernismo dos anos 1920 representa a culminação da influência da França, iniciada com a implantação da chamada Missão Francesa, na segunda década do século XIX.”

the first generation, or the modernism of the 1920s, was centered around the development of a Brazilian modern and avant-garde art, which, in painting, opposed Academic artistic production, which sought formal changes and experimentations with the medium. The *Anthropophagite Manifesto* (1928) belongs to this generation, as well as the main disruptions and steps toward abstraction that Tarsila do Amaral conducted. For the second generation, nationalist and local aspects were the primary concern of artistic production, also owing to the Vargas Era (1930-1945), which reinforced nationalist art, electing, for instance, Candido Portinari (1903-1962) as the representative Brazilian painter and muralist,⁹¹ as mentioned in the introduction. Finally, the third generation, influenced by a growing market and the opening of art museums, as well as the “creation” of the first Art Biennial in 1951,⁹² incorporated abstract art as visual language (sculpture, painting, installation, and architecture, while concrete poetry also developed a visual guise).

The modern and avant-garde’s absorption in 1920s Brazil was anti-naturalistic and intended to introduce modernity, modernization, and the rupture within traditions in theory and criticism in Brazil. The center for the propagation of modern art and the modernist movement was São Paulo. During that time, São Paulo had gone through recent industrialization and growth, thanks to the coffee market, which contributed to the adoption of projects of metropolitan renovation. Thus, contributing to the foundation of modern examples from the city. As Amaral explains:

⁹¹ Inspired by the Mexican muralist movement.

⁹² Pereira highlights the turn in the art of the 1950s in Brazil: *This character of idealization - which in our case is not metaphysical but of a social and political nature - seems to have lasted until about the 1950s, when a new concept of nation and, above all, a new concept of the relation to the world was forged. Then, Brazil’s previous idealization projects will be strongly questioned and rejected.* “Este caráter de idealização – que, no nosso caso, não é metafísico, mas de cunho social e político – parece perdurar mais ou menos até os anos 1950, quando um novo conceito de nação e, sobretudo, um novo conceito de relação com o mundo serão forjados. Então, os projetos anteriores de idealização do Brasil vão ser fortemente questionados e rejeitados” (2012, pp. 92-93).

“[elitist] or not, the modernist movement passed its message on. Moreover, it could only have existed in São Paulo. An entrepreneurial state throughout its history, and particularly rich in the twentieth-century due to coffee, industry, agriculture, and its cultural institutions and University, from the 1930s until today” (Amaral, 1998, p. 17, own translation).⁹³

According to Annateresa Fabris (1994), moreover, who concentrates her approach on literature, the modernists of the 1920s had an initial moment based on Futurist⁹⁴ ideas, emphasizing the “new”, the machine, speed, and urban life. These ideas were peddled in order to oppose the tradition of naturalism and realism that, in Brazil, was based on Parnassianism and regionalism. Furthermore, the city of São Paulo was the urban and modern exemplar for modernist writers owing to its configuration and qualities of the modern city and modern life in the 1920s. Painting focused on the formal changes in the direction of Cubism and Expressionism, exploring the local landscape and its people.

Despite the conservative aspect of promoting ‘national’ themes, as in avant-garde art, the modernist movement of the 1920s also encouraged the “new” and the present time. This was in opposition to the traditions of the past, as the modernist magazine *Klaxon* stated in its first issue in 1922, signed by the editorial team:

KLAXON know that life exists. And, advised by Pascal, aims at the present.
KLAXON will not be concerned with being new, but of being modern. This is the great law of novelty.
KLAXON knows that humanity exists. Thus, it is internationalist. This does exempt
KLAXON and its Brazilian members from dying for the integrity of the nation.
KLAXON knows that progress exists. Therefore, without disowning the past, it walks forward, always, always [...] (*Klaxon*, 1922, pp. 1-2, own translation).⁹⁵

⁹³ Original text: “Elitista ou não, o movimento modernista deu seu recado. E é claro só seria possível existir em São Paulo, Estado empreendedor ao longo de sua história, e rico em particular no século XX, pelo café, pela indústria, pela agricultura, por suas instituições culturais e Universidade, dos anos 30 até hoje.”

⁹⁴ Even though 1920s modernism had Futurist aspirations, they denied any relation to Italian Futurism, as promoted by Marinetti, refusing any relations or aspirations of Fascist ideas (Amaral, 1998).

⁹⁵ Original text: “KLAXON sabe que a vida existe. E, aconselhado por Pascal, visa o presente. KLAXON não se preocupará de ser novo, mas de ser actual. Essa é a grande lei da novidade. KLAXON sabe que a humanidade existe. Por isso é internacionalista. O que não impede que, pela integridade da pátria, KLAXON morra e seus membros brasileiros morram [...] KLAXON sabe que o progresso existe. Por isso, sem renegar o passado, caminha para deante, sempre, sempre [...]”

Therefore, for the modernist movement of the 1920s, there was a dispute with tradition, which for modernist painters consisted in a break from, and disruption of, the representational and naturalistic aspects of classical art.

Brazilian artists during the 1920s were in contact with modern and avant-garde art movements, which were already formed and in their developmental phases (Tassinari, 2001). Tadeu Chiarelli (1995) and Fabris (2002) refer to these phases in the European context as the “return to order period” of the historical avant-garde. In the “return to order period”, painting consistently referred to classical art, whereby European artists focused on the local and traditional (Chiarelli, 2010). Chiarelli (2010), for example, focuses on the conservative aspect of modernism. A. Fabris (2010), on the other hand, argues in favor of the international avant-garde attitude and aesthetic of the 1920s modernist movement. The modernism of the 1920s in Brazil might have been “late”, betraying conservative aspects (especially concerning the persistent search for the national in painting). Nevertheless, it was inscribed in modern art as well as in avant-garde theory.

This thesis, following A. Fabris (2010), reinforces the claim that the modernist movement of the 1920s in Brazil, as with all artistic manifestations, opened up a path in culture for the two generations after them, in particular, radicalism and abstraction concerning painting. As changes in the visual arts occurred throughout the 20th century, the art institutions of Brazil also changed, bringing exhibitions and accommodating developments. Regarding cinema, the modernist movement of the 1920s promoted it as the expression of modernity; foreign films were the main objects of the modernist’s focus, as this chapter will examine.

3.1 *Semana de 22*, Anthropophagy, and Tarsila do Amaral

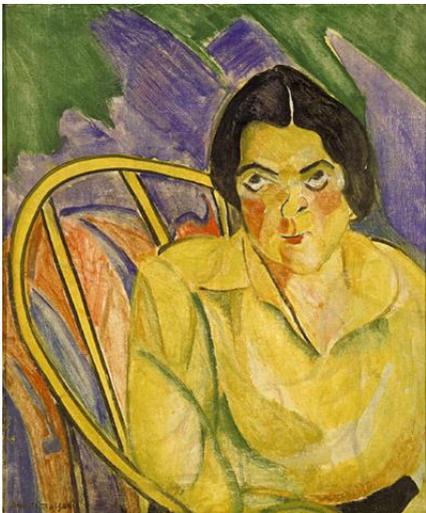


Illustration 15 – *A Boba*, (1915). Anita Malfatti | 61x50,6 cm | oil on canvas.
Retrieved from: <https://www.wikiart.org/en/anita-malfatti/a-boba-1916>.
Accessed: 17/06/2018.

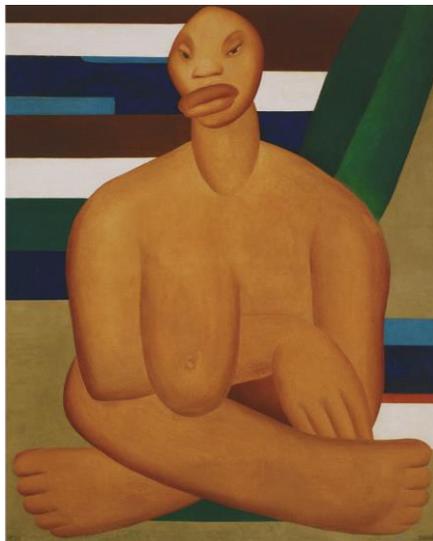


Illustration 16 – *A Negra | The Black Woman*, (1923). Tarsila do Amaral | 100x80 cm | oil on canvas.
Retrieved from: <http://tarsiladoamaral.com.br/obra/inicio-do-cubismo-1923/>.
Accessed: 17/06/2018.



Illustration 17 – *O morro da favela* (1924). Tarsila do Amaral | 64,5x76 cm | oil on canvas.
Retrieved from: <http://tarsiladoamaral.com.br/obra/pau-brasil-1924-1928/>.
Accessed: 17/06/2018.

The commotion surrounding modern and avant-garde art in Brazilian visual arts began in the 1910s. During this decade, Oswald de Andrade came back from his stay in Italy, where he came into contact with Futurism in 1915, and Anita Malfatti returned from her respective stays in Berlin and New York.⁹⁶ Malfatti's notorious exhibition of modern paintings happened in 1917 and 18. Malfatti's paintings at the exhibition were affiliated to the aesthetics of Impressionism, Expressionism, *Fauvism*, and Cubism. Among Malfatti's portraits, *Homem Amarelo* (1915-1916), *Estudante Russa* (1915), and *A boba* (1915) (Illustration 15), for instance, she confused the background and figure through colors and sinuous lines; her painting method not at all classical, which explains why there was no need to place a figure within three-dimensional space.

The two-dimensionality of the canvas became evident through the use of colors, the colors themselves being audaciously linked to sensations and feelings, which became a "shock" for some spectators, among them writer and critic, Monteiro Lobato (1882-1948). Lobato's critique of Malfatti's exhibition was ruthless in criticizing the subjectivity expressed through the painting method on the canvases. Lobato's critique demonstrated the conservatism of the art circuit. After all, until Malfatti's paintings exhibition, paintings followed the classical canon of representational composition of space and causal relations. Lobato wrote in his critique:

All arts are ruled by immutable principles, fundamental laws that do not depend on time or latitude. The measures of proportion and balance, in form or color, stem from what we call feeling [...]. Nonetheless, seduced by the theories Malfatti calls modern art, she penetrated the domains of highly discussible impressionism and puts all her talent on the service of a new type of caricature (Monteiro, 1972, pp. 45-46, own translation).⁹⁷

Oswald de Andrade, a crucial modernist writer and theorist, wrote a text in response to Lobato's critique, contemporaneous with Malfatti's *finissage*. Oswald de Andrade denounced and criticized the traditionalist, classical understanding of

⁹⁶ Of particular note was her meeting Juan Gris and Marcel Duchamp (Malfatti, 1972).

⁹⁷ Original text: "Todas as artes são regidas por princípios imutáveis, leis fundamentais que não dependem do tempo nem da latitude. As medidas de proporção e equilíbrio, na forma ou na cor, decorrem do que chamamos sentir [...]. Entretanto, seduzida pelas teorias do que ela chama arte moderna, penetrou nos domínios dum impressionismo discutibilíssimo, e põe todo o seu talento a serviço duma nova espécie de caricatura."

Brazilian art criticism, as well as the public, who neither encouraged their own progression nor that of criticism more broadly. Oswald de Andrade wrote:

Her canvases shock the photographic prejudice that is usually what the public brings in spirit to our painting exhibitions [...]. Where is reality? They will ask looking at the works of extravagant impression that Malfatti exhibits. Reality exists even in the most fantastic creative boldness, and this is precisely what saves them (O. Andrade, 1918, own translation).⁹⁸

Oswald de Andrade's main argument opposing naturalism and classical art is based on the relation between visual expression and reality. Oswald de Andrade's position is in keeping with modern and avant-garde art. Furthermore, his critique accords with Fernand Léger and Piet Mondrian's theories of painting, as mentioned in the previous chapter. The subject's dwelling and the conceived expression (sc. which opposes the pre-conceived perspectival scheme) in painting was present in Brazilian early modernist paintings of the 1910s, such as Malfatti's, and was defended by the modernist movement. Therefore, European modern art and avant-garde aesthetics were present in the first steps of Brazilian modernism.

The absorption of modern and avant-garde art aesthetics in Brazil culminated with the *Semana de Arte Moderna* or *Semana de 22* (*Modern Art Week* or *Week of 22*) in February 1922 at *Teatro Municipal de São Paulo* (*São Paulo's Municipal Theater*), in the city of São Paulo (the so-called 'modernized city' of Brazil). The central ideas of modernism in Brazil were exhibited during this week, involving different artistic languages, such as visual arts, poetry, music, and dance. Brazilian cinema was not part of the modernist movement of the 1920s, neither was a visual language explored by Brazilian painters of that period, in contrast with the European historical avant-garde movements.

The 1920s modernists proposed a "new" artistic field that should not imitate European classical culture. On the contrary, the artist should innovate Brazilian culture with European avant-garde influences. The *Week of 1922* was presided over by

⁹⁸ Original text: "As suas telas chocam o preconceito photographico que geralmente se leva no espírito para nossas exposições de pintura... Onde está a realidade perguntarão, nos trabalhos de extravagante impressão que ela expõe: A realidade existe mesmo nos mais fantásticos arrojados creadores e é isso justamente o que os salva."

intellectuals, artists, and writers, such as Menotti del Picchia (1892-1988), Graça Aranha, Emiliano Di Cavalcanti (1897-1976), Mário de Andrade (1893-1945), and Oswald de Andrade. Coffee oligarchy⁹⁹ men financed the *Modern Art Week*. This oligarchy was one of the conservative sectors of Brazilian society at the time. Consequently, while the *Modern Art Week* hoped to introduce modernity into culture, it still needed to cope with the traditional and conservative upper class of Brazilian society.

The event occurred over three days in February 1922: the 13th, 15th, and 17th. Additionally, there was an exhibition at *Teatro Municipal de São Paulo*'s main hall, showcasing engravings, drawings, architectural projects, sculptures, and paintings. During those three evenings in February 1922, artists, intellectuals, and writers gave lectures, talks, and read aloud poems inside the theater, promoting modern art.¹⁰⁰ Moreover, on the Theater's stage, there were modern music concerts and dance performances. One concert is particularly remembered for the "shocking" fact that Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887-1959) (modernist musician, composer, and probably the featured artist of the week) performed his piano compositions wearing sandals (Korfmann & Nogueira, 2004, p. 125). However, Villa-Lobos did not do this to provoke the public; he needed to wear the sandals due to a wound on his foot. As Gonçalves recounts: "[...] Villa said that, before leaving Rio to São Paulo, he had his feet attacked by a 'brute manifestation of uric acid' that made him leave limping" (2012, p. 316, own translation).¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Amaral lists the people who were financially supporting the modernists in the 1920s, she says: *The group (of artists who aspired a radical and anti-academic change), supported by young writers and scholars, like the poets Mário de Andrade, Oswald de Andrade, Manuel Bandeira, Menotti del Picchia, Sérgio Milliet, Rubens Borba de Moraes, had socially and financially powerful sponsors, like Paulo Prado, Graça Aranha, and Olívia Guedes Penteadó.* "O grupo (de artistas que aspiravam conseguir uma alteração radical e antiacadêmicos), apoiado por jovens literatos e estudiosos, como os poetas Mário de Andrade, Oswald de Andrade, Manuel Bandeira, Menotti del Picchia, Sérgio Milliet, Rubens Borba de Moraes, entre outros, tiveram patrocinadores social e financeiramente poderosos, com Paulo Prado, Graça Aranha e, mais tarde, dona Olívia Guedes penteadó" (2010, p. 21).

¹⁰⁰ The details of the *Modern Art Week*'s program and the social actors, besides the artists, involved in the *Week of 22*, are described in *1922: A semana que não terminou* (Gonçalves, 2012).

¹⁰¹ Original text: "[...] Villa contou que, antes de deixar o Rio rumo a São Paulo, for a atacado nos pés por uma 'bruta manifestação de ácido úrico', que o fez partir capengando."

The public reacted in conflicting ways to the events of *Modern Art Week*; some applauded, while others shouted boos and manifested disapproval of the performances and lectures. Similar reactions were heard and seen at the visual arts exhibition's hall. The whole event reverberated, with newspapers publishing critiques, stories, and narratives about the performances and the public's reaction.¹⁰²

Aracy Amaral (the essential theorist of Brazilian modernism) dedicated a book to contextualizing the plastic arts (painting, sculpture, and architecture) before and during the *Modern Art Week*, called *Artes Plásticas na Semana de 22* (1998). Amaral (1998) examines the socio-economic context, as well as the production of plastic arts during the 1910s and 20s, as well as the visual artists who participated in the *Week of 22*. The *Modern Art Week* was the pivotal modern art event that disturbed the art circuit in Brazil. Curiously, however, there are only a few mentions of the exhibition, and little register of the artworks' disposition in the Theater's main hall (Amaral, 1998). Amaral observes: "on the other hand, this silence of the press over the exhibition indicates complete indifference to the intellectual milieu in regard to both the works exhibited and to the art object itself" (1998, p. 142, own translation).¹⁰³ Moreover, the visual artworks exhibited at the *Modern Art Week* did not possess aesthetic unity; one could just as well relate the artworks to Cubism, Impressionism, or Futurism. Nonetheless, the artworks' common ground consisted in promoting the modern and avant-garde in Brazilian visual arts. Prominent, modernist painter, Tarsila do Amaral, did not exhibit at the *Week of 1922* owing to her stay in Paris during the period. The *Modern Art Week's* objectives were to:

denounce the presence of the past in the cultural production of a consistent modern city (São Paulo); propose possible centers of urban poetics; emphasize the need for a new code in which modernization and modernism found each other, forging modernity (A. Fabris, 2010, pp. 22-23, own translation).¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Maria Eugênia Boaventura (2000) organized them in the book, *22 por 22: A semana de arte moderna vista por seus contemporâneos*.

¹⁰³ Original text: "Por outro lado, esse silêncio da imprensa sobre a exposição indica também indiferença total do meio ambiente intelectual em relação às obras expostas ou pelo objeto artístico em si."

¹⁰⁴ Original text: "É esse embate entre dois olhares, entre duas concepções que está na base do escândalo da Semana de Arte Moderna e que define suas peculiaridades congeniais aos objetivos perseguidos: denunciar a presença do passado na produção cultural de uma cidade materialmente moderna, propor os núcleos possíveis de

Therefore, the artists and intellectuals of the first modernist generation paved the way for an avant-garde aesthetic and culture in Brazil, working against a substantial traditional opposition, not just inside the visual art academy or literary field, but more broadly in society. The modernism of the 1920s had to struggle against a society comprised of provincial conservatives. As aforementioned, in painting, for example, it was expected for the painter to use sober and classical themes, applying pastel colors in a naturalistic, representational form. Before the development of modernism in Brazil, some painters were allowed to paint regional figures in a different light, as did the painter Almeida Junior. Otherwise, they risked seeming impressionistic in their use of light and the brush, like Eliseu Visconti (1866-1944) (Souza, 2009, p. 310), whereby their references should be classical rather than modern.

The 1920s movement's prominent writers and intellectuals, Oswald de Andrade and Mário de Andrade, made efforts towards bringing into their texts and manifestos European avant-garde ideas to ground modern art and avant-gardist ideas in Brazil. In so doing, they designed a path that accommodated several social demands breaking with old models. Thus, as aforementioned in this chapter, the movement's core was composed of two aspects combined: (1) European avant-garde influences (thereby maintaining connections with Europe); and (2) Brazilian motifs and a significant concern with Brazilian popular culture and Brazilian people.¹⁰⁵ Mário de Andrade alluded that, "[...] Brazilian art had to realize itself in taking distance from classical art while conserving inevitable connections with Europe in its full development" (Souza, 2009, p. 319, own translation).¹⁰⁶ For Mário de Andrade, on the one hand, Brazil was supposed to find the path its "own" culture while becoming distanced from European classicism (Souza, 2009, p. 319). On the other hand, Brazil was not supposed to lose all of its European influences. Instead, Brazilian culture should overcome, precisely, classical European art. Accordingly, 1920s Brazilian

uma poética urbana, apontar para a necessidade de um código novo no qual a modernização e o modernismo se encontrassem para forjar a modernidade."

¹⁰⁵ Brazilian avant-garde proposals, within modernism, radically changed the forms and motifs of visual arts.

¹⁰⁶ Original text: "[...] a arte brasileira tinha que se realizar no afastamento da arte clássica, embora conservando com a Europa as ligações inevitáveis para seu desenvolvimento."

modernist painting expected to break with the representational space of classical art as well as the pre-conceived method that relied on laws of perspective.

Supporting Brazilian identity and Brazilian production, in the manifesto *Poesia Pau Brasil* (1924), Oswald de Andrade affirms that it was time to produce poetry to export and legitimize national production. However, the nationalist character of the movement should have been a “temporary solution” (Souza, 2009, p. 314), as Mário de Andrade foresaw. This character was pragmatic, not programmatic. Hence, Brazilian artists, throughout the decades of the 20th century, should not have relentlessly defended it. Furthermore, it was this nationalist aspect of the movement that helped in the acceptance of the modernist movement by society in the 1920s. This aspect also helped some artists to succeed in the movement, such as Tarsila do Amaral and Di Cavalcanti (Souza, 2009, p. 344), because they painted Brazil's landscape, architecture, and people with an avant-gardist form.

While, on the one hand, the 19th century's changes in the painting method and approaches in Europe (with Cézanne and other modern artists) consisted in a process of understanding the subtleties of expression in visual language and visual thinking, on the other hand, 19th century painting in Brazil consisted in a process of locating new, local motifs. Thus, Brazilian art and painting, until the beginning of the 20th century, conserved the classical artistic form and thereto the representation of reality.

The historical avant-garde in Europe broke with the traditional painting method, reconceiving the medium, along with other artistic languages, originating a *trauma* (H. Foster, 1996). Accordingly, one could say that the modernist movement of the 1920s in Brazil was also a *trauma* (a notion suggested by Foster (1996), as examined in Chapter 2) since the 1920s movement broke with the symbolic order of traditional and conservative Brazilian arts and society. For instance, 1920s modern paintings in Brazil broke with classical composition, representational space on the canvas, and the illusory mathematical effect of the medium, expressing subjective relations with reality.

Furthermore, A. Fabris (2010) acknowledges the similarities between 1920s Brazilian modernism and the proposals of the historical avant-garde, focusing on the role of Brazilian artists, who actively, through their radical aesthetics and actions, proposed political praxis. Fabris (2010) identifies modern art's relation between criticism and artists (as mentioned in Chapter 2) in Brazilian modern art, of which the cases of Anita Malfatti and Monteiro Lobato are examples. Finally, Fabris acknowledges that Brazilian modern painting opposed classical representation, realism, and naturalism. Therefore, 1920s modernism could also be understood as a *trauma* (H. Foster, 1996).

Theorists and historians of Brazilian art, such as Tadeu Chiarelli (1995, 2010), indicate that in 1920's Brazilian modernism visual arts were conservative with regard to the form, at least in comparison with European avant-garde art or even to some Brazilian painters of the 19th century. Chiarelli argues that 1920's modernist painting was conservative because Brazilian painters had contact with the European avant-gardist painting of the "return to order period". Moreover, Aracy Amaral (2010) and Gilda de Mello e Souza (2009) mention that the modernist artists of the *Modern Art Week* in 1922 needed the involvement of the dominant social class in the week; consequently, the *Week of 22* was modestly radical, and the visual arts were "acceptable" to a Brazilian bourgeoisie. Nevertheless, the *Week of 22*, and the painting practices that came after it, broke with traditional and classical art. Accordingly, Fabris argues:

Little does it matter, in this logic, that the works exhibited were immature or approximately modern. What mattered was parading a consolidated taste, announcing what was to come through a restless and interrogative present. The Modern Art Week presented a strategy that, doubtlessly bothers, as the boeing reserved to the writers on the second day of the festival, and the polemic that took hold of the newspapers during the event – and sometimes even a month later – attest. What must be highlighted is that such demonstrations, although not modern in purist terms, are perceived as modern within the environment to which they are directed (A. Fabris, 2010, p. 22, own translation).¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁷ Original text: "Pouco importa nessa lógica que as obras apresentadas fossem imaturas ou aproximadamente modernas. O que importava era desfilar um gosto consolidado, anunciar o porvir a partir de um presente inquieto e interrogador, estratégia que, sem dúvida, incomoda, como demonstram a vaia reservada aos escritores no

Therefore, even though expressions and theories of 1920s modernism did not correspond with the avant-garde in Europe, they still constituted modern art and avant-garde art themselves, if not by European, but Brazilian, standards. Moreover, the ambiguous and contradictory notion of ‘national’ that was present in painting already in the 19th century was “used” by 1920s Brazilian modernism as acceptable to the public, critics, and local bourgeoisie. This strategy sustained the opposition with Europe, thereby attempting to distance Brazil from its colonial relations.

Brazilian modern painting in its first generation incorporated the proposals and aesthetics of avant-garde and modern art into ideas of the ‘national’. One of the feature painters of the 1920s modernist movement was the painter Tarsila do Amaral, who could formally align with European avant-garde and express Brazilian ‘reality’. Although Tarsila do Amaral did not exhibit at the *Modern Art Week*, she propounded modern art proposals in her painting, as well as painting the main figure of the *Anthropophagite Movement*, the *Abaporu* (1928) (Illustration 35).

Tarsila do Amaral was born in 1886 in the countryside of São Paulo state to a family of landowners and coffee plantations, which were formerly sugarcane plantations cultivated by slaves¹⁰⁸ until the end of the 19th century. Tarsila grew up surrounded by an organic landscape comprising hills, trees, stones, fruits, and animals, an environment to which the painter returns in the 1920s, and which provides a central motif of her artwork (Amaral, 2003). Along with the rural landscape, France was part of Tarsila’s childhood, as Amaral says: “Almost as in a triptych, we can gather the three strongest sensations of the first years of her life: the landscape, the farm, and France” (Amaral, 2003, p. 34, own translation).¹⁰⁹ Furthermore, elements from her childhood are brought up by the artist when discussing and writing about her own artistic process, as well as when she mentions the “Brazilianness” of her motifs and influences.

segundo festival e a polêmica que toma conta dos jornais durante o evento e, em alguns casos, ainda um mês mais tarde. O que deve ser sublinhado é que tais manifestações, embora não modernas em termos puristas, são percebidas como modernas pelo ambiente ao qual se dirigem.”

¹⁰⁸ Slavery was abolished in Brazil in 1888 with the Aurea Law, as signed by Isabel, Princess Imperial of Brazil.

¹⁰⁹ Original text: “Quase como num tríptico, podemos reunir as três sensações mais fortes dos primeiros anos de sua vida: a paisagem, a fazenda e a França”.

In the 1910s decade, Tarsila practiced painting in her studio in the city of São Paulo using an academic painting method. In the year of 1920, Tarsila traveled to Paris to study painting as well as to visit exhibitions and museums. There, Tarsila became acquainted with the experimentations of modern painting. Throughout the first period of her stay in Paris, from 1920 until 1922, Tarsila studied painting, first in the Académie Julien and afterwards with Emile Renard, with whom she practiced painting with more liberty (Amaral, 2003). It was back in Rio de Janeiro in 1922 (after the *Modern Art Week*) that Tarsila incorporated modern and avant-garde art and anti-naturalism into her painting method, travelling for a second stay in Paris in 1923. The year 1923 was crucial because Tarsila studied with Cubist artists, André Lhote, Fernand Léger, and Albert Gleizes. Additionally, it was with the Cubists and French influences that Tarsila decided to return to local Brazilian motifs. As Amaral explains: “A result of these connections would be the splendid painting of Tarsila in which, during this decade, united the constructive concern (influenced by her masters, Lhote, Gleizes and Léger), with a profoundly Brazilian sensibility, expressed in the warmth and atmosphere of her canvases” (2010, p. 22, own translation).¹¹⁰

If Tarsila’s paintings until 1922 were produced based on precise academic methods, after her contact with Cubism the painter not only experimented with the two-dimensionality of the canvas, but moreover probed the possibilities of volume using pure and intense colors and organic lines. This was in a similar vein to Léger’s cubism, which included organic lines, the filling in of forms with pure colors, and different uses of volumetric shapes. Aracy Amaral (2003) mentions the ‘legerian’ method that Tarsila adhered to, after *A Negra* (1923). She remarks: “[t]here follows a series of studies [...] geometric studies of syntheses, quite similar to those done by Léger, as the experimentation with the thin technique of the great painter – which

¹¹⁰ Original text: “Resultado destes contatos seria a esplêndida pintura de Tarsila, em que, nessa década, a preocupação construtiva (influência de seus mestres Lhote, Gleizes e Léger) se unia a uma sensibilidade profundamente brasileira, o que se refletia no calor e na atmosfera de suas telas.”

Tarsila would incorporate definitely in her work” (Amaral, 2003, p. 121, own translation).¹¹¹

Tarsila’s paintings, like Léger’s paintings, are abstractions. I will argue, as I examine Tarsila’s paintings in Chapter 5, that they can be construed as “abstraction painting concepts” based on her phenomenological approach to reality, expressing her perception of the world through two-dimensional figures and space. Tarsila emphasizes non-representational space in her paintings through the dimensions and distributions of abstracted figures on the canvas, that is, a two-dimensional (flat) surface, as well as thanks to her use of colors, which combine geometric and organic forms. The title of the painting indicates the conceptual abstraction she expressed.

Tarsila’s first emblematic painting of the period after studying with Léger is *A Negra* (1923) (in English the title could be *The Black Woman*) (Illustration 16), in which cubist abstraction is united with Brazilian motifs and a “monumentality of the figure” in relation to the size of the canvas (Amaral, 2003, pp. 120-121). In *A Negra*, the central, monumental figure of the composition has elements abstracted from a woman’s body, such as one full, pendulous breast, arms, a neck, head with a face, one full arm, part of one hand, two parts of two legs, and suggestions of feet. The legs and partial arms indicate that the figure is sitting with crossed arms and legs. The indication of a sitting position connects the figure with the base of the canvas. The base gives the figure support. The elements around the ‘womanistic’ figure are flattened by the use of geometrical motifs (particularly stripes), horizontally orientated in dark and light blue, dark brown, red, one dark green, and white. Diagonally, the painter placed a volumetric green figure that suggests a banana tree leaf. The structure of *A Negra* is present in Tarsila’s Anthropophagic paintings in the late 1920s, such as *Abaporu* (1928) and *Antropofagia* (1929), in which the elements and colors surrounding the humanistic figure mingles with it.

¹¹¹ Original text: “Segue-se uma série de estudos, [...] estudos geométricos de síntese, bastante próximos de Léger, como a experimentar a técnica lisa do grande pintor – e que Tarsila incorporaria definitivamente em seu trabalho.”

The abstraction in Tarsila's painting of the 1920s is related to both the landscape and human body, not merely the surface of the canvas. While Léger nominated machines and urban landscapes to be expressed over his canvas, Tarsila's plastic values, in general, seemed to compose the organic elements of the landscape. Sometimes there are elements of machines and urban elements, as in *São Paulo* (1924). The painter chooses elements from her perception of landscape and human bodies, which she combines in the painting composition along with specific colors. Chiarelli (2010) comments on the question of the real in modern painting in Brazil, pointing to the use of the surface of the canvas and composition in Tarsila's modernist painting: "[...] the painter structures her composition from the two-dimensional plane and its lines of strength, submitting the theme of the painting to the painting properly speaking" (Chiarelli, 2010, p. 52, own translation).¹¹² Hence, for Tarsila, as for Léger, the painting is an object in itself, not a representation. Furthermore, the pictorial space in her painting is non-representational: it has the *space at work* of modern art (Tassinari, 2001) (see Chapter 2). Tarsila conceived of her compositions within the canvas' surface and frame, whereby the abstracted elements are part of the same two-dimensional plane, which therefore do not distinguish between front and back, as in *São Paulo (Gazô)* (1924), *Paisagem com Touro* (1925), *Morro da Favela* (1924) (Illustration 17), and *O Mamoeiro* (1925).

After her stay in Paris, returning to Brazil in 1924, Tarsila travelled to the states of Rio de Janeiro and Minas Gerais with Oswald de Andrade, Olívia Guedes Penteadó (1872-1934), Mário de Andrade, Oswald de Andrade Filho (1914-1972), and Blaise Cendrars (1887-1961). The latter was a crucial supporter and promoter of Brazilian modernism in Europe, who visited Brazil at the beginning of 1924 and was acquainted with Paulo Prado (1869-1943) and the modernist artists. This trip helped Tarsila's project of studying the landscape and 'people', on which she based her modern Brazilian painting. Indeed, Tarsila created modern art from 'Brazilian' motifs.

¹¹² Original text: "[...] a pintora estrutura sua composição a partir do plano bidimensional e das suas linhas de força, submetendo o tema do quadro à pintura propriamente dita."

The trip to Minas Gerais state revived in Tarsila her fascination with the colors of street fairs and popular public celebrations. Indeed, she decided to apply such a palette to her work. Previously, this had been rejected by Brazilian art. As Tarsila affirms, they were “[...] taught [...] to be ugly and *caipiras*. I followed the habit of the tasteful [...] But later, I avenged the oppression, passing them (the colors) to my canvases: pure blue, violet-rose, live-yellow, singing-green; all in more or less strong gradations” (Tarsila Amaral in Amaral, 2003, p. 150, own translation).¹¹³ Tarsila’s process of painting during the 1920s was experimental, bearing witness to the improvisation with the choice of elements and colors for each canvas.

Tarsila often worked on drawings from the landscape before beginning to paint the canvas, and she probably painted inside the studio. However, her perception¹¹⁴ of local colors, landscapes, and people is expressed in her 1920s paintings in Brazil. Brazil’s landscapes and people are painted from a relation with them, in opposition to the preconceived method of painting academically the same motifs, as in 19th century Academic painting.

Cubism, and, in tandem, abstraction (as proposed by Léger), is grounded in an equivalent relation between the object and subject; an expression of the artist’s relation with the world she/he dwells in. This is the reason why, for Léger, the machine—so ubiquitous in modern life—should be a motif as pertinent as any other. Tarsila’s paintings combined the exploration of the surface of the canvas and two-dimensionality in order to compose abstract figures, particularly emphasizing Brazilian colors and themes. She painted the world she dwelled in. Just as Cézanne went back to his hometown to paint the landscape, Tarsila returned to the colors of her childhood, as well as those of her family’s farm. Furthermore, abstraction in Tarsila transforms the extraction of the parts of a landscape, creating a visual landscape of its own, as Léger defended to be modern, cubist, and avant-garde art.

¹¹³ Original text: “Ensinaram-me depois que eram feias e caipiras. Segui o ramerão do gosto apurado [...]. Mas depois vinguei-me da opressão, passando-as (cores) para as minhas telas: azul puríssimo, rosa violáceo, amarelo vivo, verde cantante, tudo em gradações mais ou menos fortes [...]”

¹¹⁴ Aracy Amaral (2003) emphasizes Tarsila’s metaphysical and surrealist aspects.

From 1924 until 1928, Tarsila's paintings were mostly concerned with combining the proposals of avant-garde art with elements of Brazilian landscapes and human bodies, giving emphasis to local colors as perceived and expressed by Tarsila. That period can be referred to as the painter's *Pau-Brasil's* phase, in accordance with Oswald de Andrade's *Poesia Pau-Brasil* Manifesto. Tarsila in 1926 convened her first individual exhibition in Paris at the Percier Gallery (Rue de la Boetie), presenting collections of paintings that she called *Pau Brasil*. The painting *Estrada de Ferro Central do Brasil* (1924) is an authentic example of that phase, as examined and analyzed in Chapter 5, along with *Abaporu* (1928), *Antropofagia* (1929), and the film *Limite* (1931).

The *Pau-Brasil* manifesto, written by Oswald de Andrade, promoted Brazilian poetry in Brazil and its dissemination. The *Pau-Brasil* manifesto features the use of colloquial language in poetry, experimentation, and invention against the naturalistic structures, realistic descriptions, as well as narration, aligned with Brazilian culture. Oswald de Andrade writes:

One single struggle – the struggle for the pathway. Let us divide: importation poetry. And Pau-Brasil poetry, the exportation poetry [...] The work against naturalist detail – through synthesis; against Romantic morbidity – for the geometrician balance and for technical finishing; against copy, for invention and surprise (O. Andrade, 1978, pp. 6-8, own translation).¹¹⁵

The modernist project of promoting the national continued after the *Modern Art Week* through the publication of books, texts, critiques, magazines (such as *Klaxon*), besides other artistic languages. The manifesto *Poesia Pau-Brasil* is one of them. It instigates not just the changes in poetry and narrative, but also tries to stimulate internal production as well as its consumption. Therefore, it is possible “to detect, in the germinative moments of modernism, the will for structuring a theoretical platform from which the artist presents and discusses his/her own poetics” (A. Fabris, 2010, p. 21, own translation).¹¹⁶ Brazilian literature, according to Oswald de Andrade

¹¹⁵ Original text: “Uma única luta – a luta pelo caminho. Dividamos: Poesia de importação. E a Poesia Pau-Brasil, de exportação [...]. O trabalho contra o detalhe naturalista – pela síntese; contra a morbidez romântica – pelo equilíbrio geométrico e pelo acabamento técnico; contra a cópia, pela invenção e pela surpresa.”

¹¹⁶ Original text: “[...] é possível, no entanto, detectar nos momentos germinais do modernismo o desejo de estruturar uma plataforma teórica a partir da qual o artista apresenta e discute a própria poética.”

in 1924, should embrace the language spoken on the streets and its “capacity to invent”, in a similar way that Tarsila embraced colors, landscapes, and bodies.

There was, in 1920s Brazilian modernism, inevitably an attempt to understand a Brazilian “essence”, which should be present in the cultural production of literature and visual arts. Possibly the most fruitful attempt at defining Brazilian culture was (and still is) the *Manifesto Antropófago* | *Anthropophagite Manifesto* (1928), in which Oswald de Andrade and Raoul Bopp identify a visceral exploration of cultures that are transformed into one. The act of devouring influences and transforming them into something else finds, in the metaphor of the cannibal act of eating the totems, an analogy to how Brazilian culture constantly “eats” every other culture, as Oswald de Andrade affirms in the manifesto, *Anthropophagy: Absorption of the sacred enemy* (O. Andrade, 2015, p. 229).

Paulo Emilio Salles Gomes (1916-1977), historian and critic of cinema and literature, as well as essayist, professor, cinema theorist, and creator of Brazilian Cinemateca in 1973, wrote *Cinema: Trajetória no Subdesenvolvimento*, a seminal text that historically summarizes the process of Brazilian cinema. In this text, he remarks that Brazil does not have ‘an original culture’ that was oppressed, because it consists in all cultures who lived in the territory combined. This is entirely different, he says, from, for example, the Indian culture, because India has a fundamental culture that was oppressed by the British Empire. Therefore, “[w]e (Brazilians) are neither Europeans nor North Americans. Lacking an original culture, nothing is foreign to us because everything is. The painful construction of ourselves develops within the rarefied dialectic of not being and being someone else” (Salles Gomes, 1973/2002, p. 487, own translation).¹¹⁷ In Brazilian *Anthropophagy*, there is no replacement of cultures, but a tension between the popular, the regional, and the foreign (Favaretto, 2013). Furthermore, as Lyra (2018) affirms, what Oswald de Andrade conceived was an

¹¹⁷ Original text: “Não somos europeus nem americanos do norte, mas destituídos de cultura original, nada nos é estrangeiro, pois tudo o é. A penosa construção de nós mesmos se desenvolve na dialética rarefeita entre o não ser e o ser outro.”

anthropophagite subjectivity of Brazilians, more than a definition of a Brazilian identity.

Both Manifesto da *Poesia Pau-Brasil* (1924) and *Antropófago*,¹¹⁸ written by Oswald de Andrade (the latter also conceived by Raoul Bopp), expressed the characteristics of modernism and its importance to the Brazilian artistic and literary field, as well as defining how Brazilian culture is an outcome of different cultural combinations and a constant invention of origins. As Korfmann & Nogueira argues: “[in] contrast to this aggressive and provocative tone and its intended shock effect, the Brazilian Anthropophagy, [...] was above all directed for a cultural synthesis or symbioses of diverse ethnical and historical elements” (2004, p. 131). Thus, the Brazilian *Anthropophagy* consisted in an act of eating what you love, admire and/or fear, thereby incorporating and transforming it into something “new”, which describes the Brazilian cultural process in both a figurative and material way.

Accordingly, there is a mutual influence between visual arts and literature. Tarsila’s painting *Abaporu* (1928) (Illustration 35) influenced Oswald de Andrade and Raoul Bopp to write the *Manifesto Antropófago* and, after the manifesto, Tarsila painted the *Antropofagia* (1929) (Illustration 36). *Abaporu*, the title of Tarsila’s painting, means, in the Tupi language, “the man who eats people”, and the drawing of the painting was published with the *Anthropophagite Manifesto* in the magazine *Revista de Antropofagia*, which was edited in 1928 and 1929 by Raul Bopp and Antonio de Alcantara Machado. Tarsila understands Oswald de Andrade and Raoul Bopp’s manifesto as a combination of a concept and her own ongoing abstraction of elements, including landscapes and bodies. In both *Abaporu* and the *Anthropophagite Manifesto*, the body is a medium of the incorporation of others and also an expression of this embedment of the other in thought; the body is a thinking body. Both painting and text are consciousness; they are thoughts addressing the influences of others through the carnal word “eating”.

¹¹⁸ ‘Anthropophagy’, repeated several times in the Anthropophagite Manifesto, was not restricted to the use of Brazilian modernism, because Dada had already expressed it at the magazine *Cannibale*. The manifesto *Cannibale* was read “in darkness, by André Breton at the great Dada soirée of the Théâtre de l’Œuvre, March 27, 1920” (Korfmann & Nogueira, 2004, p. 131). Thus, Dada’s *Cannibale Manifesto* is a directed incorporation of the European avant-garde movement in modernism.

It is meaningful that, since the 19th century, painting in Brazil was concerned with ‘national’ content, so as to represent it through stereotypes and myths about origins (also associated with indigenous representations) (Pereira, 2012). At the end of the 19th century, the same concern with the national in classical painting focused on the regional landscape, people, and rural workers (Almeida Jr. being the main example). The modernist movement of the 1920s continued to look for national content in the modern and avant-gardist form. The *Anthropophagite Manifesto* and Tarsila’s paintings, even though bringing understanding about a possible definition of a Brazilian essence, opened up even more about its non-definition. Thus, ‘Brazilian’ can take an infinite multitude of forms, in which the locality and people play a central role.¹¹⁹ Notions of “the national” and “Brazilianness” always betrayed an intrinsic ambiguity. The idea of ‘national’ and the affirmation of a possible identity stand against the ‘invasion’ of a foreign culture, while at the same time Brazil combines multiple cultures, most of them foreigners.

Overall, in examining Tarsila do Amaral’s 1920s painting process one might find affinities with cubist space and Cubism’s archetypal relationship with the object in painting, since landscapes and bodies are thought of as subjects in themselves, owing to which the space on the canvas does not represent reality but expresses the artist’s perception. Moreover, Tarsila do Amaral’s paintings are abstractions of an intrinsic relationship with the local motif. Tassinari brings out the crucial role Cubism had to play in modern art, particularly as a matrix for other movements (Tassinari, 2001, p. 34), as it was for modern painters in Brazil, such as Tarsila do Amaral.

Tarsila’s painting can be understood as modern art, given the way she combined several social interests, but also since her painting process is in line with

¹¹⁹ The concern with the landscape was present in painting during the 19th century and indicated a theme for the future generations, as Pereira remarks: *It is clear that the idea of the territory played an important role in the creation of the national symbolism. The territory’s knowledge and the recording of its landscapes are the main tasks that were taken. On the one hand, by the artists. On the other, by the naturalists - whose expeditions were naturally approved of, and, in some cases, supported by the State.*

“Então, é claro que a ideia do território teve um papel importante na criação da simbologia nacional. O conhecimento do território e o registro das suas paisagens são as tarefas principais que foram tomadas, de um lado, pelos artistas e, por outro lado, pelos naturalistas – cujas expedições foram naturalmente autorizadas e, em alguns casos, apoiadas pelo Estado” (Pereira, 2012, p. 103).

modern and avant-garde artistic developments of the medium and their associated questions about art and its place in society. Tarsila discussed modern art with fellow artists, and actively worked towards a theory of modern art and modern painting in Brazil, as well as avant-garde art contributing to a process of abstraction in painting and the visual arts. As Tassinari explains: “[i]f it is possible to distinguish generic spatial schemes from one another, it is also necessary to emphasize that they are in the threshold of a process of abstraction” (2001, p. 66, own translation).¹²⁰

As aforementioned, the objective of this research is to relate modern and avant-garde painting and cinema, particularly with regard to abstraction, in Brazil. Thus, in what follows there is a brief theoretical overview regarding how the modernist movement positioned cinema as a visual language, while examining the lack of engagement between modernists and filmmakers in Brazil.

3.2 Cinema and the 1920s modernism in Brazil

Xavier (1978) examines the relationship that 1920s modernism had with cinema, focusing on the writings of the movement’s main theorist and intellectual, Mário de Andrade,¹²¹ as well as the modernist magazine already mentioned, viz. *Klaxon*. Although the magazine in its eight volumes published mainly critiques about Charlie Chaplin and the films of Von Stroheim, in its second edition, it published Mário de Andrade’s critique of the Brazilian film *Do Rio a São Paulo para casar* (1922b), directed by José Medina. Mário de Andrade refers to *Do Rio a São Paulo para casar* (1922) as a piece of Brazilian narrative cinema, which “*macaqueia* (imitates as a monkey does)” the films of the United States. In his words: “It is necessary to understand the North Americans in order not to monkey them around” (M. Andrade, 1922b, p. 16, own translation).¹²² José Medina (1894-1980), like other Brazilian filmmakers, focused on

¹²⁰ Original text: “Se é possível distinguir esquemas espaciais genéricos uns dos outros também é preciso salientar que eles estão no limiar de um processo de abstração.”

¹²¹ Mário de Andrade was a musicologist, poet, novelist, critic, historian, and folklorist.

¹²² Original text: “É preciso compreender os norte-americanos não macaqueá-los.”

reproducing the hegemonic cinematographic method of the North Americans, who flooded Brazil with films at the beginning of the 20th century (and long after that). Curiously, *Exemplo Regenerador* (1919), possibly the first Brazilian fiction film to present a self-reflexive character, was mentioned as an experimental film by Medina, but ‘experimental’ here meant ‘experimenting with continuity’ (Bernardet, 2002):

‘Experiment’ in *Exemplo Regenerador* means that the shooting is not anymore done by frames attached to the theater language but, in the terminology of that time, means “continuity.” Plainly said, Brazilian cinema was trying to assimilate Griffith’s editing, putting itself in the path of what would later become the classical cinematographic narrative (Bernardet, 2002, p. 267 own translation).

Thus, although Mário de Andrade (1922b) indicates the importance of making films in Brazil about Brazilian habits, the writer nonetheless criticizes the total assimilation of “Yankee” cinema (M. Fabris, 2010).

Xavier (1978) comments on other modernist magazines, such as *Revista Festa* (published from 1927 until 1935 in Rio de Janeiro), which establishes the difference between pure cinema and popular cinema (Xavier, 1978, p. 146). The author also mentions that *Revista de Antropofagia* (mentioned above) did not address cinema, remarking that, “there were no articles dedicated to cinema” (Xavier, 1978, p. 147). The magazine in Brazil that *was* concerned with Brazilian cinema was not modernist, namely *Cinearte*, founded in 1926 by Adhemar Gonzaga and Pedro Lima, which published critics, theory, and nationalist defenses of Brazilian cinema until 1946. In 1930, with the beginning of Getúlio Vargas’s government, the magazine demanded governmental policies to protect Brazilian production and investment in cinema, as aligned with State propaganda (Almeida, 1999).

Anyhow, the modernists, Mário de Andrade and Guilherme de Almeida (1890-1969), dedicated articles and chronicles to films in newspapers and books during 1920 and 1930s, most of them about foreign films. Mário de Andrade (1922a) indicated that cinema should be independent of theater and literature. Mário de Andrade valued the exploration of the expressivity that cinema afforded. As Xavier explains: “[he] [Mário de Andrade] would not love cinema due exclusively to the

image's reproductive power, neither for the cult of the "primitivism" of its "language", but for that in which in cinema would be the expression of an artistic personality" (Xavier, 1978, p. 142, own translation).¹²³

Mariarosaria Fabris (2010) summarizes the context of cinema making, watching, screening, and thinking in Brazil in the 1920s, as well as modernist writers' and intellectuals' interest in the "new" art. With Xavier (1978), she mentions and quotes Mário de Andrade's writings, claiming that he recognizes cinema as art beyond literature and theater. Cinema was a matter of purity for Mário de Andrade. Additionally, Mariarosaria Fabris refers to the fact that modernist literature was influenced by cinematographic language (M. Fabris, 2010, p. 98).

Xavier (1978) points out that Mário de Andrade emphasizes cinema's dynamism and "poetic polyphony", which makes cinema the art of time, rather than mere visuality (Xavier, 1978, p. 162). To this end, Mario de Andrade was aligned with the French critique mentioned in Chapter 2. Furthermore, Mário de Andrade read the French cinematic theorists, such as Jean Epstein, Louis Delluc, and Ricciotto Canudo in the magazine *Esprit Nouveau* (Xavier, 1978), inspiring the ideas articulated about cinematographic language in the modernist magazine *Klaxon*:

In many moments, the journal (*Klaxon*), hits the same keys (as Epstein and Delluc), i.e., cinema is art, not entertainment; as an art, it should be grounded exclusively in the powers of image, in its rhythm with no appeal to explanatory signs, and have in action the main support for signification. Simplicity and coherence are mandatory, and the revelation of 'characters' should be the work of situations and the mimicry of actors, "natural" in representation (Xavier, 1978, p. 154, own translation).¹²⁴

Regardless, *Klaxon* neither promoted Brazilian cinema nor Brazilian avant-garde cinema, but foreign films (as well as Charlie Chaplin's films) were mentioned.

¹²³ Original text: "Ele (Mário de Andrade) não amaria o cinema por força exclusiva do poder reprodutor de imagem, nem pelo culto do 'primitivismo' de sua 'linguagem', mas por aquilo que nele seria expressão de uma personalidade artística."

¹²⁴ Original text: "Em muitos momentos, a revista (*klaxon*) bate nas mesmas teclas (que Epstein e Delluc): cinema é arte e não passatempo; como arte, deve basear-se exclusivamente nos poderes da imagem em no seu ritmo, sem apelo a letreiros explicativos e tendo a ação com principal suporte das significações; simplicidade e coerência são obrigatórios e a revelação dos 'caracteres' deve ser obra das situações e da mímica dos atores, 'naturais' na representação."

At the beginning of the 20th century, filmmaking was centralized in two cities: São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. However, cinematic production was also occurring beyond São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro during the 1920s (although this lasted only a short duration, and bore witness to only a small number of films), including the cities of Recife, Porto Alegre, and Cataguases. This period was called the Regional Cycle.

As part of the Regional Cycle, in the city of Cataguases in Minas Gerais state, Humberto Mauro¹²⁵ (1897-1983) began making films. Humberto Mauro's first film, *Thesouro Perdido* (1927), is very much inspired by Henry King's *Tol'abel David* (1921). While it had a different plot, it maintained a similar dynamism between the characters and shot similar angles (L. C. Araújo, 2011). The difference was that Mauro largely shot in the countryside, with local countryside characters. The modernist magazine *Verde* (1927-29), from Minas Gerais, was the only one to publish a critique of one of Humberto Mauro's first films, *Thesouro Perdido*. Nevertheless, in general, the modernists were not concerned with Brazilian cinema, and, at the same time, Brazilian filmmakers were not expecting to 'be modernists' either.

The modernists from Cataguases, as those from all over Brazil, perhaps with the exception of Mario de Andrade and Menotti Del Picchia, ignored national cinema at the same time that the Brazilian filmmakers of that time, with the exception of Mário Peixoto – himself also a modern poet – did not even know that modernism existed (Salles Gomes, 1974, p. 173, own translation).¹²⁶

In the Cinema Novo movement (Alex Viary in Rocha, 2003, pp. 183-184), Humberto Mauro is considered the point of departure of genuine Brazilian cinema. Glauber Rocha (1939-1981), feature filmmaker of modern cinema in Brazil and the Cinema Novo movement (discussed in the next chapter), dedicates a long chapter of his book *Revisão Crítica do Cinema Brasileiro* to Humberto Mauro's cinema-making and thought. Rocha suggests the following: “[this] way we believe that at the moment the most efficient politics is to study Mauro and in this process rethinks Brazilian cinema,

¹²⁵ Humberto Mauro was the filmmaker identified by Glauber Rocha as the first Brazilian director to shoot Brazilian films.

¹²⁶ Original text: “Os modernistas de Cataguases como os de todo o Brasil, talvez com as únicas exceções de Mário de Andrade e Menotti Del Picchia, ignoraram o cinema nacional, ao mesmo tempo que os cineastas brasileiros daquele tempo, excetuando Mário Peixoto – também poeta moderno – não sabiam sequer que o modernismo existia.”

not in formulas, but in film terms as man's expression" (Glauber Rocha in Avellar, 1995b, p. 55 own translation). To this end, Rocha acknowledges Mauro's relevance to cinematic thought and expression in Brazil in the first half of the 20th century.

After the Regional Cycle, Humberto Mauro was invited by Adhemar Gonzaga (the same producer of *Chanchadas* in the 1940s) to work in the studio *Cinedia* in Rio de Janeiro. With Gonzaga, Humberto Mauro directed two films in the 1930s that are picked out by Rocha (2003): *Lábios sem Beijos* (1930) and *Ganga Bruta* (1933). About *Ganga Bruta*, Rocha wrote: "Mauro, although ideologically diffused, made a politics without demagogy. He obtains the real picture of Brazil – which is, through the alienation of customs sociologically mystified by Romanticism. In this frame, he does not hide the violence of misery" (Rocha, 2003, p. 53, own translation).¹²⁷ Rocha adds that Mauro's films are "[...] visual expressions of problems" (Glauber Rocha in Avellar, 1995b, p. 55), referring to the fact that, although the film focuses on the drama of a rich family, Mauro shot a construction site and social workers. Mauro is also an example of a filmmaker who used minimal resources and a low budget to make cinema. The lack of financial resources to do films was (and still is) a constant adverse condition to several Brazilian filmmakers. Avellar comments, "[...] we learn, with Mauro, that the best Brazilian films are done with minimal resources" (1995b, p. 55).

At the beginning of the 20th century, there was one main influence in Brazilian commercial cinema from the avant-garde: the city symphonies. São Paulo, the model city of modernity in Brazil (and the city that embraced the *Modern Art Week* in 1922), was the object of a city symphony called *São Paulo, A Symphonia da Metrópole* (1929) directed by the Hungarians Adalberto Kemeny and Rudolf Rex Lustig. However, in a different direction from *Berlin, Symphony of a Great City* (1929) by Walter Ruttmann and *Man with the Movie Camera* (1929) by Dziga Vertov, *São Paulo, A Symphonia da Metrópole* was commissioned and produced to promote São Paulo as a modern city. São Paulo, as a city, exemplified industrialization and progress. However, the film's

¹²⁷ Original text: "Mauro, embora ideologicamente difuso, faz uma política despida de demagogia. Obtém o quadro real do Brasil – que é, pela alienação dos costumes, sociologicamente mistificado de romantismo. Neste quadro não esconde a violência da miséria."

form is banal and standardized, as criticized by Otávio Farias. He writes: “[as] a documentary, it is worthless. As a film of rhythm, even less” (Otávio de Farias in Viany, 1959, p. 47, own translation).¹²⁸ There are no experiments within the film process: every shot is calculated and preconceived to show the elements of the city that indicate progress, showing that São Paulo was the city of the future, owing to which the film bore similarities to institutional film (Correia, 2014).

Only figures of the elite are filmed in São Paulo, fiction or not, embarking and leaving from vehicles, always automobiles! [...] Horses, tilburies, wagons, or even the traditional donkey-pulled trams, existent since 1872 and still current then, are almost extirpated from the filmic landscape (Rubens Machado Jr. in Correia, 2014, p. 139, own translation).¹²⁹

In the passage above, Rubens Machado highlights the absence of rural elements that were in fact still part of São Paulo at the time the film was made. Thus, Machado demonstrates the aim of portraying São Paulo as a complete modern and mechanized city.

Cinema was being produced in Brazil in the 1920s and 30s. However, this cinema was based on representational narratives, and mostly documental standards. Additionally, there were no visual artists exploring cinematographic language, complementary to their artistic practices, and there were no filmmakers painting, for instance. At this time, experimentalism was related to the adaptation of continuity through representational rules, as sought by José Medina, or when dealing with the few financial resources available to shoot, as in the example of Humberto Mauro. Humberto Mauro, owing to the local conditions of filming and the privation of cinema studios, developed some experimentalism in shooting. However, Mauro maintained representationalism and the causal relations of narrative. Brazilian films of the 1920s and 30s adapted North American films to Brazil’s contextual themes, indicating complete assimilation to North American representational standards. Brazilian filmmakers imitated North American films, especially with some “epidermal forms”.

¹²⁸ Original text: “Como documentário, não presta. Como filme de ritmo, muito menos.”

¹²⁹ Original text: “Apenas figuras de elite são filmadas em São Paulo, ficção ou não, embarcando e saído de veículos, mas são sempre automóveis! [...] são quase extirpados da paisagem filmica cavalos, carroças tilburis ou mesmo o tradicional serviço de bondes puxados por burros, em atividade desde 1872 e ainda existentes então.”

As Jean-Claude Bernardet puts it, the filmmakers imitated “not the basic elements of the dramatic structure, but the ambiance elements, gestures, happy ending, and chasing scenes” (Jean-Claude Bernardet in L. C. d. Araújo, 2011, p. 35). *Limite* (1931) seems to be the exception as an avant-garde film (that is, in being non-representational).

By the time Mário Peixoto finished *Limite*, the film did not have commercial circulation. Consequently, the film was not theorized about, nor criticized, by modernists. Furthermore, modernist artists and intellectuals were not concerned to seek out the marginal cinema circuit at the time. However, the cinema club, *Chaplin-Club*, and associated magazine, FAN, tried to call attention to the film. The *Chaplin-Club* was completely dedicated to thought about cinematic aesthetics, thereby “establishing a game of formal delimitations, the club detached from the socio-cultural context a strip of interests that are at once specific and independent – those of cinema and its purely aesthetical dimension [...]” (Xavier, 1978, p. 206, own translation).¹³⁰ Inspired by the French ‘cine-clubs’, the marginal existence of *Chaplin-Club* made possible the circulation of cinematic aesthetic theories and thereby the survival of *Limite*. Plínio Sussekind Rocha, member of the *Chaplin-Club*, was the person responsible for the survival of *Limite*. He kept a copy of the film, which he screened several times for students. When the film was losing its integrality, he and (mainly) Saulo Pereira Mello took care of the film’s restoration.

Apart from *Limite*, there seems not to exist other avant-garde films made in Brazil, or films done in the same vein as Fernand Léger, Viking Eggeling, Hans Richter, or Walter Ruttmann’s films concerning abstraction. Therefore, I dedicate Chapter 5 to discussing the possibilities of *Limite* as a modernist and avant-garde film in relation to abstraction. Several critics define *Limite* as an avant-garde film. As presented in Chapter 2, avant-garde cinema can refer to a conjunction of films that are experimental, unengaged with the commercial circuit, but instead concerned with the film medium, and unconcerned with any linearity or narrative, as well as not

¹³⁰ Original text: “Estabelecendo um jogo de delimitações formais, o clube recorta do contexto sociocultural uma fatia de interesses específicos e independentes – os do cinema e sua dimensão puramente estética – que constitui o espaço de sua intervenção [...]”

composing representational space and time as in classical cinema. In Mello's words: "*Limite's* montage (editing) is not classical, although there are passages in the classical sense, [...]. In general, however, *Limite* rejects the simple linearity: for this reason, uses a lot of fusions and the lengthy images where the action ceases entirely, therefore not demanding formally any continuity" (Mello, 1996, p. 67). Thus, *Limite* bears the hallmarks of an avant-gardist film.

3.3 Brief comment on 1930s and 1940s modernism



Illustration 18 – *Os retirantes*, (1944). Candido Portinari | 190x180 cm | oil on canvas. | Photo: João Musa
Retrieved from: <http://masp.org.br/acervo/obra/retirantes>.
Accessed: 17/06/2018.

The second generation of modern art in Brazil deepened the involvement with local and regional issues. With the new Republic¹³¹ and Vargas Era, both nationalist ideas promoted by the State, as well as critiques against the State, were combined in the artworks of painters such as Candido Portinari (1903-1962), Alfredo Volpi (1896-1988), and Flavio de Carvalho (1899-1973), as well as in the writings of Graciliano Ramos (1892-1953), Carlos Drummond de Andrade (1902-1987), and João Guimarães Rosa (1908-1967), among others. Additionally, in the 1930s, and at the beginning of the 1940s, artists were less concerned with the “international avant-gardes and were more concerned with the popular and the local society (the social)” (Amaral, 2010, p. 20).¹³² Consequently, non-representational painting maintained the use of figures in order to denounce social injustice and to portray “Brazilian people”, as well as propagating the modern art aesthetic. Therefore, through the exaggeration of certain aspects of the figure, they denounced societal inequalities and misery.

During the 1930s¹³³ and 40s, the dry season in Northeast Brazil, along with the lack of infrastructural solutions, forced the population to migrate and seek other places to work and live (Neves, 2001). Therefore, the return to local political problems proved a constant struggle to expose Brazil’s socio-economic issues. Candido Portinari, named by Vargas as the official painter of the State, contributed to the criticism of the same government that elected him official state painter in his paintings of the 1940s. *Os Retirantes* (1944) (Illustration 18) is a melancholic portrayal of a migrant family living under miserable conditions and hunger. As Pereira explains: “during the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s, it is exactly this universe of the life of the

¹³¹ “Era Vargas” refers to the period that Getúlio Vargas (1882-1954) was president of Brazil.

¹³² Original text: “Ao mesmo tempo, na década dos anos 1930 e no começo dos anos 1940 pode se assinalar uma importância menor das vanguardas internacionais e uma preocupação maior pelo popular e o social.”

¹³³ Additionally, it was during the 1930s decade that the main books about the country’s formation were written, as Favaretto reminds: *In the 1930s, the construction of ‘images of Brazil’ were motivated by the first great books of interpretation of the country: Gilberto Freire’s Casa Grande and Senzala; Raízes do Brasil, by Sérgio Buarque de Holanda and Formação do Brasil Contemporâneo by Caio Prado Junior.* “Na década de 30, a construção de ‘imagens do Brasil’ será a motivação dos primeiros grandes livros de interpretação do país: *Casa Grande e Senzala*, de Gilberto Freire; *Raízes do Brasil*, de Sérgio Buarque de Holanda e *Formação do Brasil Contemporâneo* de Caio Prado Junior.” (Favaretto, 2013, p. 3).

common man which will be called forth to the first plane of Brazilian modernism” (Pereira, 2012, p. 105, own translation).¹³⁴

Amaral (2010) synthesizes the modernist movement in Brazil from 1920s until the 1950s, focusing on the formal development of paintings and changes in the art market. Predominantly throughout the 1940s and 50s, Brazil incorporated more and more modern and avant-garde art, with exhibition salons and the instigation of the art museum in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. During those decades, the art circuit in Brazil grew, and four essential art institutions were created, opening space for exhibitions and giving visibility to artists from Brazil. These art institutions included: the *Museu de Arte de São Paulo*, founded in 1948 by Francisco Assis Chateaubriand (1892-1968); and *Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo*, inaugurated in 1949 by Francisco Antonio Paulo Matarazzo Sobrinho (1898-1977). Matarazzo Sobrinho (also known as Ciccilio Matarazzo) was responsible for the first Art Biennale in São Paulo in 1951, as well as the creation of the *Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro* with a group of business executives in 1948. The *Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro* in the 1960s and 70s promoted both iconic exhibitions, such as *Opinião 65* (1965), and artists from Rio de Janeiro. According to Amaral (2010, 1977) and Ronaldo Brito (1999), these institutions were responsible for the internationalization of the Brazilian art circuit and the insertion of radical and constructive abstract art in Brazil during the 1950s.

Abstract art, as well as historical avant-garde abstract movements such as Neoplasticism, the Bauhaus, Constructivism, the Ulm School, and the modern art of 1920s in Brazil, as well as a desire for internationalization of visual arts production, greatly influenced artists in the 1950s and 60s. This generation of artists was supported by recently created art institutions, as well as art critics like Mário Pedrosa. Abstract art was stimulated in visual arts during the 1950s and 60s in Brazil.

¹³⁴ Original text: “Só mesmo então a representação da população pobre adquire um tom verdadeiramente narrativo. Mais tarde, durante as décadas de 1920, 1930 e 1940, é exatamente esse universo da vida do homem comum que será chamado para o primeiro plano do modernismo brasileiro.”

3.4 1950's and 1960's abstract Avant-Garde art: Concrete and Neoconcrete

The third generation of the modernist movement brought together the visual arts, cinema, literature (sc. concrete poetry), theater, and music. Finally, Brazilian (modern) cinema was included as part of the avant-garde movement in Brazil, which culminated in the *Tropicalist movement* (Favaretto, 1996) at the end of the 1960s. Brazilian cinema in the 1950s and 60s circulated new proposals regarding the resumption of the concept of *anthropophagy*, as well as ideas from the 1920s, which recommended the combination of foreign influences with more popular manifestations.

If we want to think about a relation between modernism and cinema in Brazil, we have to jump into the 1960s decade. From Cinema Novo, it is said that it effectuated, in relation to cinematographic language, an operation analogous to modernism, which was opposing naturalism and the *Parnassianism* movements (Bernadet, 2002, p. 269, own translation).¹³⁵

The radicalism of the third modernist generation in visual arts focused on form, Concretism and Neoconcretism having reclaimed European historical avant-garde abstract art as their main references against nationalist, figurative artists from former generations. Equally, Brazilian cinema “cannibalized” Italian neo-realism, the Soviets’ formal experimentation, the French avant-garde cinema and the Nouvelle Vague proposals. Those European aesthetic models were used to question Brazilian national character and expose the contradictions in Brazil’s process of modernization.

[...] only in the 1950s and 1960s the proposals of the first modernist generation were radicalized exposing the ambiguities of the modernization process by the critique-creative exploration of the relations between modernity and tradition, centered in most part in the important theme of “cultural encounter” (Favaretto, 2013, p. 3).

The European avant-garde, specifically abstract art, as proposed by Piet Mondrian, Kasimir Malevich, and the Bauhaus, influenced the Concrete movement in 1950's Brazil. The revival of European abstract art from the 1920s and 30s is related to

¹³⁵ Original text: “Se quisermos pensar numa relação entre Modernismo e cinema no Brasil, temos que pular para a década de sessenta. Do Cinema Novo se disse que efetuou, em relação à linguagem cinematográfica, operação análoga à do Modernismo, que se opunha ao naturalismo e parnasianismo.”

the awarding of the first international prize at the 1° Biennale of Sao Paulo in 1951 to Max Bill's (a former Bauhaus student) for his sculpture *Tripartite Unit* (Clüver, 2006, p. 168). Furthermore, the Constructivist and Concretist project in Brazil rallied against the “representative national system”, which was carried out by artists such as Candido Portinari and Di Cavalcanti (Brito, 1999, pp. 12-13).

The avant-gardist movement, Concretism, comprised two groups: *Ruptura* and *Frente*. The first, from São Paulo; the latter, Rio de Janeiro. Their main exhibitions and manifestos transpired in the first half of the 1950s. As in the modernist movement of the 1920s, poetry and visual arts were combined at the first Concrete art exhibition in 1956: *I Exposicao Nacional de Arte Concreta*. Nevertheless, the exhibition also denoted the beginning of a rupture between both groups from São Paulo and Rio. Indeed, the exhibition made clear their formal differences. A dispute with regard to defining what ‘concrete art’ was meant to be began with Waldemar Cordeiro’s critique in 1957 (Cordeiro, 1977).

Formally, Concretism was based on the principles of *Gestalt theory* (Brito, 1999, p. 41), and a formal abstraction in which the spectator was mathematically and objectively engaged in the perception of the visual art form, thus expecting the spectator’s objectivity and analytical rationality in accessing the artwork. Lorenzo Mammí (2010), examining in depth Concrete visual art’s planar formal concerns of the early 1950s, explains the complexity of the composition beyond its pure mathematical structure:

At first contact, concrete work of this period presents a simple form, almost banal, perfectly balanced. It is only after a more detailed analysis that the observer discovers that the general balance is given by a sum of dislocations and that the symmetry of the ensemble is the result of an asymmetric treatment of its parts. [...] Extremely civilized, concrete aesthetics presupposes, from the observer, the ability for a structural analysis analogous to that of the work’s author (Mammí, 2010, p. 91, own translation).¹³⁶

¹³⁶ Original text: “No primeiro contato, uma obra concreta desse período apresenta uma forma simples, quase banal, perfeitamente equilibrada. É apenas por uma análise mais detalhada que o observador descobre que o equilíbrio em geral é dado por um somatório de deslocamentos e que a simetria do conjunto é resultado de um tratamento assimétrico das partes[...]. Extremamente civilizada, a estética concreta pressupõe do observador uma

Consequently, *Grupo Ruptura* conceived of the artwork objectively, as an object separated from both the subject who produces it, and a subject who perceives it. It is an artwork to be perceived from a Cartesian perspective (Merleau-Ponty, 1961/1993). *Grupo Ruptura* thought that Concretism and abstraction in the visual arts should be founded on mathematical procedures, in order to produce a visual artwork where the subject was non-existent, with the artwork being amenable to replication with instructions. The group from São Paulo was based on art's objectivity, despite the rupture with naturalism, realism, and representation. As Cocchiarale & Geiger explains: “[this] objectivity has precise plastic consequences, whose limits are also theoretically defined [...]” (2004, p. 18, own translation).¹³⁷

Therefore, Concretism for *Ruptura* was completely based on objectivity, which was demonstrated in the visual artwork's final form. *Grupo Frente*,¹³⁸ however, was grounded in the possibilities of expression and an entangled relation between world, artists, artwork, and spectator, not separating existence into objectiveness and pure rationality (in a Cartesian sense). *Frente* did not enclose itself in a formal structure to paint or sculpt; the artwork should be based on “freedom of creation” (Pedrosa, 2004, p. 231). *Frente*, like its descendent Neoconcretism, had an approach aligned with Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology. Thus, spontaneity and heterogeneity were present in the group from Rio de Janeiro, these characteristics being rejected by the *paulista*¹³⁹ group (Cunha, 1994, p. 41). Concretist and Neoconcretist aesthetics and theory developed in opposite aesthetic directions from 1956.

As mentioned above, poems were exhibited in the *I Exposicao Nacional de Arte Concreta* in 1956. Concrete Poetry opposed representationalism, naturalism, and metrics. The poets from both Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo also split after the

capacidade de análise estrutural análoga a do autor da obra. A obra concreta é uma imagem mental que se torna sensível para ser compartilhada. Por isso ela é essencialmente planar.”

¹³⁷ Original text: “Essa objetividade tem consequências plásticas precisas, cujos limites também estão definidos teoricamente.”

¹³⁸ In 1952, the artist Ivan Serpa's started an “open studio/atelier” at the Museum of Modern Art in Rio de Janeiro, with some of his students from this practice (such as Lygia Pape, Lygia Clark, and Helio Oiticica) formed in 1954 *Grupo Frente*. Their first exhibition in Rio was in 1955 (Brito, 1999; Cunha, 1994).

¹³⁹ *Paulista* is a name used to refer to something or someone originally from São Paulo state.

exhibition, alongside the associated visual artists. From São Paulo, Décio Pignatari (1927-2012), Haroldo de Campos (1929-2003), and Augusto de Campos (1931-) were the leading poets. Moreover, they were writers and intellectuals who shaped the following generations and decades with regard to literature, poetry, and translation. The same applies to the key theorist and poet of the Neoconcrete movement: Ferreira Gullar (1930-2016). Concrete poetry (until 1956, when both groups came together) was influenced by modern literature, as represented by Stéphane Mallarmé and James Joyce, who rethought metrics into ideograms of sound blocks in a spatiotemporal (Clüver, 2006, p. 173) composition associated with visual presentation as conceived of in the concrete visual arts. Hence, the “[...] words in concrete poetry act as autonomous objects” (Pignatari, 1975, p. 34, own translation).¹⁴⁰

Haroldo de Campos, in 1957, following the rupture of the groups, defended the *paulista* group’s position on Concrete poetry, summarizing that the content of the poem is its structure and that poetry, like the visual arts, should be conceived of from mathematical and objective principles (Campos, 2004). Likewise, the *carioca*¹⁴¹ group signed the text in 1957 defending intuition as constitutive of poetry in opposition to the pure rationality of the *paulista* group: “[the] concrete poem must be equivalent to a daily experience - affective, intuitive - so that it does not become mere *illustration*, in the field of language that scientifically catalogues laws” (Gullar, Bastos, & Jardim, 2004, p. 230, own translation, author’s italics).¹⁴² Neither of the two concrete groups, *Frente* or *Ruptura*, is more relevant than the other. This research focuses on abstraction as the expression of the non-distinction between object and subject, which the group from Rio de Janeiro and its descendent Neoconcretism (also based on Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology) pursued in its theory. Additionally, “[t]he Neoconcrete movement is the main link between the concrete thematic of the 1950s and the Brazilian avant-garde

¹⁴⁰ Original text: “[...] as palavras nessa poesia atuam como objetos autônomos.”

¹⁴¹ *Carioca* is a name used to refer to something or someone originally from Rio de Janeiro state.

¹⁴² Original text: “O poema concreto deve valer como uma experiência cotidiana – afetiva, intuitiva – a fim de que não se torne mera *ilustração*, no campo da linguagem, de leis científicas catalogadas.”

of the 1970s, viz. conceptual and performative” (Mammi, 2010, p. 86, own translation).¹⁴³

In 1959, the group of artists from Rio de Janeiro formed the Neoconcrete movement. Neoconcrete’s main rupture was to completely abolish the positivist, pragmatic, and objective aspects of Concretism, envisioning the possibilities of expressing emotions and an organism’s life in opposition to the machine, as well as experimentalism instead of pragmatic and preconceived ideas about the artwork. As stated in the manifesto written in 1959 by the poet Ferreira Gullar (and signed by the artists Amilcar de Castro, Lygia Clark, Reynaldo Jardim, Claudio de Mello e Souza, Lygia Pape, Theon Spanudis, and Franz Weissmann):

[t]he Neoconcrete, once born from a need to express the complex reality of modern man through new plastic’s structural language, denies the validity of scientific and positivist attitudes in art, and restores the problem of expression while incorporating new ‘verbal’ dimensions created by constructive non-figurative art (Gullar, 1959, p. 5 own translation).¹⁴⁴

Neoconcrete movement was active with exhibitions until 1961 (“Grupo Neoconcreto”, 2017); it’s essential artistic project theorized by Ferreira Gullar in the *Neoconcrete Manifesto* (1959), as in the text *Teoria do não-objeto* (Gullar, 1959). Neoconcrete artists, Lygia Clark, Lygia Pape, and Hélio Oiticica, based their own artistic projects on similar abstract questions regarding painting and the common space. The complexity of Neoconcrete painting and its artists experimentations relied on the basis of painting that became *non-objects*, installations and propositions which included the common space and the spectator’s body.

The Neoconcrete movement stretched the boundaries between artistic languages and concepts, doing something local while at the same time international. The national essence, the national characterization of art, was not part of their

¹⁴³ Original text: “O movimento neoconcreto, inclusive, é o principal elo entre as temáticas concretas da década de 1950 e a vanguarda brasileira dos anos 1970, conceitual e performática.”

¹⁴⁴ Original text: O Neoconcreto, nascido de uma necessidade de exprimir a complexa realidade do homem moderno dentro da linguagem estrutural da nova plástica, nega a validade das atitudes cientificistas e positivistas em arte e repõe o problema da expressão, incorporando as novas dimensões ‘verbais’ criadas pela arte não-figurativa construtiva.”

program or even that of Concretism. The artists had an artistic field that had been changed by the efforts of modernists from the first generation, and they were fighting a field that was only giving space to figurative painters. Their desire was to invent “new” approaches to the surface of the painting, as in abstract art (Cocchiarale & Geiger, 2004, p. 19).

The movement’s concern was related to “art” itself, that is, with painting itself and expanding the limits of the *medium*. Their endeavors consisted in building thought and knowledge around the painting—bringing painting into common space and the spectator’s body—as well as bringing the spectator into the visual work, in order to experiment with it. Based on expression in abstract works, Neoconcretism paved the way for radical experimentation in the visual arts in an international, avant-garde spirit. Concrete poetry was responsible for the exportation of Brazilian poetry more broadly, as Oswald de Andrade had hoped for and prophesied. Poetry’s correspondent in the visual arts was Neoconcretism, which thereby internationalized Brazilian visual arts. Both Concrete poetry and Neoconcrete visual arts did not rely on the “Brazilianness” argument, as the first generation needed to.

Lygia Clark, Lygia Pape, and Hélio Oiticica repositioned abstraction, painting, and artistic practices in the 1960s and 70s. They began working “together” in Ivan Serpa’s course at MAM in Rio during the 1950s, exhibiting first with *Grupo Frente* and later with Neoconcrete. Eileen Cunha (1994) identifies experimentalism, abstraction, and expression in their early works from the 1950s with *Grupo Frente*. The three aforementioned artists questioned and defied painting limits in the 1950s, combining experimentation, appropriation, proposition, expression, and abstraction throughout the 1960s and 70s. The painting was the fundamental visual language in these three artists’ works. Even though their artworks developed into *non-objects* (Gullar, 1959), installations, and participatory works, they had a *constitutional* relationship with painting, which thereto implied a constitutive relation with color, space, landscape, body, line, canvas, support, and the frame. The conceptualization of these artists’ trajectories during the 1950s and 60s is further developed in the next chapter, aligned with notions

of neo-avant-garde art, abstraction, expression, proposition, and open artworks, as associated with modern cinema in Brazil. Furthermore, these artists' processes can be aligned with that of filmmakers. Notice, for instance, that in the 1950s, Nelson Pereira dos Santos (1928-2018) was also shooting his first films in Rio de Janeiro, focusing on the specificity of the slums, using actors from the local community. Nelson Pereira dos Santos, the Cinema Novo movement, and Cinema Marginal respectively characterized the origins of modern cinema in Brazil (Xavier, 2001).

During the 1950s the visual arts abandoned its central concern with national elements, indeed “[...] some groups of artists left aside that preconceived need for national creation in favor of a production willing to build itself through a direct dialogue with the issues of contemporary international art” (Chiarelli, 1995, p. 17, own translation).¹⁴⁵ 1960's Brazilian popular culture is addressed in Lygia Pape's and Hélio Oiticica's visual artworks as well as the search for international forms of art within the Brazilian context.

Lastly, it is pertinent to make a final reference at the end of this chapter to Mário Pedrosa (1900-1981), who was an art critic, theorist, and intellectual. Pedrosa combined political activism and art criticism from a Marxist perspective (Mari, 2006). He was a central figure who theorized about the artistic practices of the artists from Rio, among them Lygia Pape, Lygia Clark, Hélio Oiticica, Abraham Palatinik (1928-), Antonio Manuel (1947-), and Cildo Meireles (1948-). Mário Pedrosa aligned theoretically with these artists and Ferreira Gullar. They proposed and defended the freedom to invent new forms in visual arts, as it was the case of the propositional artworks of the Neoconcrete artists. Additionally, in general, Mário Pedrosa did not make reference to “Brazilianness” (Arantes, 2004) when criticizing and theorizing about these artists' works.

¹⁴⁵ Original text: “[...] alguns grupos de artistas irão deixando de lado aquela necessidade preconcebida de criação nacional a favor de uma produção disposta a se construir através de um diálogo direto com as questões da arte contemporânea internacional.”

The next chapter is dedicated to describing the conceptions of abstraction in painting, which the artists Lygia Pape, Lygia Clark, and Hélio Oiticica developed in their approaches, moving away from two-dimensional paintings towards paintings in space, and finally into tangible pieces, which could be penetrated and inhabited by the spectator. Thus, in these artists' latter pieces, the spectator is meant to move towards the active position of participant. The connection of the pieces within each artist's trajectory is crucial to understanding to which kind of phenomenological abstraction in painting I am referring, and how this is connected to the practice of filmmakers from both Cinema Novo and Cinema Marginal. Thus, after describing these artists' visual trajectory, as well as their conceptions of abstraction, I will return to modern cinema in Brazil, as well as Cinema Novo and Cinema Marginal.

Chapter 4 – Abstract Avant-Garde and Modern Cinema in Brazil: how artists and filmmakers experimented with the form

This fourth chapter discusses the avant-garde art of the 1950s and 60s in Brazil. I will describe various conceptions of abstraction in painting, particularly as developed by the artists Lygia Pape, Lygia Clark, and Hélio Oiticica in their respective trajectories. This development in the concept of abstraction bore witness to a passage from two-dimensional paintings towards paintings in common space, as well as tangible, penetrable, and inhabitable pieces from the perspective of the spectator, who as a result progresses from a passive spectatorial position, to one that is active, and participatory. Additionally, the connection of the pieces within each artist's trajectory is crucial to understanding which kind of abstraction in painting I am referring to, and moreover how this is connected to filmmakers' practices within both Cinema Novo and Cinema Marginal. Thus, after describing the trajectory and conception of abstraction of each artist, I will return to the topic of modern cinema in Brazil (respectively comprising Cinema Novo and Cinema Marginal), focusing on each movement's aesthetic proposals. Furthermore, the role of two filmmakers in particular (Glauber Rocha and Ozualdo Candeias) will be analyzed in Chapters 6 and 7.

The modernism of the 1920s in Brazil, especially as it was exhibited in the *Modern Art Week* of 1922, at the time troubled the art circuit and provincial society. The modernism of the 1920s definitively set into motion avant-garde and modern artistic thought, form, practice, and choices of motifs. Consequently, 1920's Brazilian modernism could be interpreted as a *trauma* (H. Foster, 1996) to the Academy of Fine Arts and society, but not strictly opposed to the institutions of the museum. This is because, until the late 1940s, the Brazilian art circuit was rather rudimentary and art institutions were not fully constituted (Amaral, 2010). The second generation of modernism in Brazil was concerned with regional and local matters, being the generation that promoted most of the radical changes in literature. In painting, artists continued the project of the first generation, based on figurative elements, in a modern

art form. The third generation, which spans the 1950s and 60s, reclaimed the proposals of 1920's modernism, such as the radical avant-garde project of bringing art into life praxis, abstraction, experimentalism, and *Anthropophagy*. The third generation is considered the most radical in visual arts and cinema (Favaretto, 2013).

Thus, considering the relation Foster (1996) constructs from the psychoanalytical notions of *trauma* and *repetition* between the avant-garde and neo-avant-garde,¹⁴⁶ could the third generation of modernism in Brazil be understood as neo-avant-garde?

Foster understands the notion of the neo-avant-garde as a repetition of the avant-garde after World War II, that is, once the historical avant-garde traumatizes the art circuit and the historical “symbolic order” (H. Foster, 1994) of the first three decades of the 20th century. Foster analyzes artworks from the USA and European context, therefore leaving aside Brazilian modernism of the 1920s and 50s. Brazilian modernism could be interpreted similarly, since the *Week of Modern Art* in 1922 constituted a traumatic event that produced its own repetition in the 1950s and 60s in the form of abstract art. The first generation paved the way, culturally, for the following two generations, as A. Fabris (2010) claims, understanding 1920's modernism as an avant-garde movement that promoted radical changes in the art circuit and artistic production.

Sérgio Martins (2013) refers to artistic production in Brazil from 1949 until 1979 as ‘avant-gardist’. Martins (2013) criticizes Foster's theory of both the avant-garde and neo-avant-garde as being “provincial” (Martins, 2013, p. 3). This is because Foster only discusses the repression of the avant-garde by the art institutions. Furthermore, Foster repositions minimalism as the “crux” of the neo-avant-garde in relation to the white cube and art institutions. Art was being institutionalized in museums in Brazil by the end of the 1940s. Therefore, visual arts in Brazil fought against different institutions such as the academy, representative figurativism, and national identity, as

¹⁴⁶ See Chapter 2.

promoted by the State. Martins (2013) calls attention to the fact that Foster leaves aside the Brazilian avant-garde. Furthermore, Brazilian artworks could disturb Foster's linear approach that connects the readymade, Dadaism, and Cubism to Pop Art and Minimalism. From that critique, Martins (2013) considers the Brazilian avant-garde of the second half of the 20th century a "leftover" from a historical perspective, which should be approached methodologically from a perspective of discontinuity.

Martins (2013) saw greater prospects for the artworks and theoretical production of the period from 1949 and 1979 in Brazil. He highlights abstraction and its development into participatory art. The author begins with the Neoconcrete movement and the *Theory of the non-object* written by Ferreira Gullar in 1959, which emerges when Gullar first sees and manipulates Lygia Clark's series *Bichos|Creatures* (1960) (Martins, 2013, p. 19). The series *Bichos* (Illustrations 27 and 74) was developed from an experimental and phenomenological approach to the canvas's internal and external relations. Martins remarks on the relevance that painting has with regard to Lygia Clark's, as well as Hélio Oiticica's, trajectory:

There is the incredible assumption that these sculptures originate in a movement that is strictly analogous to that of the neoconcretist history of modernist painting: the passage from the two-dimensional plane to three-dimensional space. It may be unsurprising that Clark's trajectory from her Cocoons and Counter-Reliefs toward the Bichos (and it is worth recalling that this is the avowed site of Gullar's encounter with his primordial non-object) practically invites such a reading, or that Oiticica would cast his own neoconcrete production as the "transition of color from painting into space"—both were originally painters, after all (Martins, 2013, p. 43).

Concretism and Neoconcretism were artistic movements centered on abstraction in the visual arts, as already mentioned in the previous chapter. Neoconcretism, however, was the phenomenological counterpart of Concretism. As Brito puts it, Neoconcretism "[...] was not interested in a politicized cultural attitude, its desire was for an advanced position within the learning process its revolution was within the limits of art and 'mankind'" (1999, p. 75). Neoconcrete artists, between the end of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s, practiced a phenomenological abstraction, in which the expression of a subject's existence formed part of the

artwork. The Neoconcrete movement's phenomenological basis was in line with the study of abstraction in painting and its development into "non-objects", as well as installations (Brito, 1999; Gullar, 2014). Thus, just as the artists and their *Manifesto Neoconcreto* (1959) proposed, Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology provided the essential epistemology for thinking about the Brazilian visual arts of this period, in particular concerning Lygia Pape, Lygia Clark, and Hélio Oiticica. These artists respectively practiced a phenomenological approach to the world, expressing it in the artworks, in accordance with Paul Cézanne, Piet Mondrian, Hans Richter, and Fernand Léger's approach, as introduced in Chapter 2. Furthermore, their phenomenological approach to the world allowed those artists to 'freely' experiment beyond the limits of painting.

The artistic development of Neoconcretism's ideas took different turns depending on the artist. The trajectory of the three artists that this research examines begins in 1954 and extends until 1967/8 with the emergence of the *Tropicália* movement (Favaretto, 1996). Therefore, this dissertation broaches *Tropicália* when analyzing (in Chapter 6) Oiticica's artwork *Tropicália* (1967), which has entitled the 'multi-artistic movement', alongside Glauber Rocha's film *Terra em Transe* (1967). Lygia Pape, Lygia Clark, and Hélio Oiticica began their expression in the visual arts with abstraction in painting. Thus, painting has a fundamental role in the further developments of their artistic practices.

In these three artists' writings from the period, they are seen in dialogue with abstract artists, such as Mondrian and Malevich (Clark, 1960; Oiticica, 2013; Oiticica, Figueiredo, Pape, & Salomão, 1986). Hence, exposing the core notion of the *non-object*, as developed by Ferreira Gullar in 1959, as well as the political context of the 1950s and 60s in Brazil, reoriented these artists' production. With this background, this chapter looks into the developments of these artists' works from the *Grupo Frente* period until 1967/8. The sequences of these artists' works expect to demonstrate the connections between abstraction, expression, and the experimental attitude, axes that are possibly in line with modern Brazilian cinema, which may thereby be fruitful in the films' respective analyses.

Gullar (Asbury, 2005)¹⁴⁷ in *Theory of Non-object* follows up on the discussion between Concrete and Neoconcrete art, theorizing and finding a critical category in which Neoconcrete artworks could dialogue beyond the specificity of the medium. Gullar connected the methodology and reception of the visual works by artists from Rio de Janeiro via the aesthetic notion of *non-object* artwork. According to Gullar's definition: "[the] non-object is not an anti-object but a special object through which a synthesis of sensorial and mental experiences is intended to take place. It is a transparent body in terms of phenomenological knowledge [...]" (Ferreira Gullar in Asbury, 2005, p. 170). Therefore, the *non-object*, as proposed by the Neoconcrete artists, is by definition a phenomenological artistic approach, which is in itself a phenomenological artwork, that is, a *non-object*. The expression of these artists invited the spectator to approach the world in the same way, that is, when encountering *non-objects*. Ferreira Gullar designates the *non-object* as that which survives the dissolution of representation by modern painters:

This frame was a mediator between fiction and reality, a bridge and barrier, protecting the picture, the fictitious space, while also facilitating its communications with the external, real, space. Thus when painting radically abandons representation - as in the case of Mondrian, Malevich and his followers - the frame loses its meaning. The erection of a metaphorical space within a well-protected corner of the world no longer being necessary, it is now the case of establishing the work of art within the space of reality (Ferreira Gullar in Asbury, 2005, p. 171).

Thus, as Ferreira Gullar presents in the passage above, Neoconcrete art and the experimentations proposed by Lygia Pape, Lygia Clark, and Hélio Oiticica are, to the spectator, based on the premises grounding abstraction in painting. For these artists, the specificity of the medium was transformed into further visual expressions containing the space, namely 'common real space', rather than the virtual three-dimensions of representation. Moreover, Neoconcrete (and the associated artists' works from the 1960s) can be understood alongside Tassinari's (2001) notion of *space at work*, a concept that is essential to modern art (as discussed in Chapter 2).

¹⁴⁷ Gullar's *Teoria do não objeto* as mentioned in the previous chapter was published in Brazil in 1959. However, Asbury (2005) published a translation of the text with his article. Thus, I am quoting Asbury's translation of the text.

Gullar (2005) mentions the relation between painting and ‘real space’, connecting sculpture and painting in modern and avant-garde art owing to their respective dissolution of traditional forms, i.e., the mass and the pedestal in sculpture, and the rupture of the frame in painting. For Gullar, modern and avant-garde artworks cannot be adequately described by the traditional categories of art history, theory, and criticism. He states:

To rupture the frame and to eliminate the base are not in fact merely questions of a technical or physical nature: they pertain to an effort by the artist to liberate himself from the conventional cultural frame, to retrieve that desert, mentioned by Malevich, in which the work of art appears for the first time freed from any signification outside the event of its own appearance (Ferreira Gullar in Asbury, 2005, p. 173).

Therefore, for an artwork to exist autonomously, it should be formally independent of traditional cultural “frames”, such as the pedestal and the frame itself. This is because these “frames” separate the life of the artwork from the life praxis or the real.¹⁴⁸ The artwork should exist by being a *non-object*, belonging to an experience of continuity between common space, time, and the spectator’s body. Léger was among the first to delineate, in the 1920s, that the painting should be a subject and thing in itself not a representation of objects. Therefore, the abstract intention of dissolving representational space and thereby the forms over the canvas, as well as inventing (Oiticica, 1972) others, takes a radical turn in the avant-garde art of 1960’s Brazil.

Asbury (2005) compares Minimalist theories with Ferreira Gullar’s theory of the *non-object*. Asbury examines the reference that Gullar and Donald Judd make to phenomenological thought, which focuses on the artwork and its surrounding, common space. Presenting a comparison between the context of Minimalism in the USA and the Brazilian Neoconcrete context, Asbury (2005) demonstrates that the critiques and theoretical disputes in Brazil were quite similar to those taking place in the USA. Additionally, Asbury criticizes H. Foster (1996) for being provincial and not including other artistic productions outside of the USA and Europe. Asbury (2005)

¹⁴⁸ In accordance with Gullar’s thinking of modern art, it is possible to affirm that modern cinema broke with the “frame limit”, as well as the centrality of the frame.

understands that the neo-avant-garde, and Minimalism along with it, maintains the avant-gardist criticism of art inside the institution, thereby offering criticism from within the institution. However, the practices of the three artists highlighted here (Lygia Pape, Lygia Clark, and Hélio Oiticica) went beyond the sphere of art institutions. As Asbury affirms: “[the] radical Neoconcrete artists, and particularly Oiticica, transformed the work’s phenomenological character, its relation with the viewer, into a participative element that eventually transcended the domain of the institution of art [...]” (Asbury, 2005, p. 186).

H. Foster (1996) argues that the artworks of the post-World War II period by artists in the USA “return to the real”. In making this claim, H. Foster (1996) mobilizes Jacques Lacan’s notion of the ‘real’ (H. Foster, 1996, pp. 127-166). On the one hand, Minimalism in the USA addressed the real through a phenomenological understanding, which inserted the artwork into common space. On the other hand, Pop Art, whose chief proponent was Andy Warhol, instituted a *traumatic realism* (H. Foster, 1996, p. 130), referring to Warhol’s use of seriality and repetition of traumatic images in a way to empty them of meaning. As Foster explains: “repetition serves to *screen* the real understood as traumatic. But this very need also *points* to the real, and at this point the real *ruptures* the screen of repetition” (H. Foster, 1996, p. 132).

The screen that Foster is concerned with refers to the technique of silkscreening, using mass media images, a technique not employed by any of the three Brazilian artists I focus on here. Nevertheless, their works developed in the direction of touching the real, just as the real touched them in a phenomenological way, but not necessarily psychoanalytically. The Neoconcrete and the works of Lygia Clark, Lygia Pape, and Hélio Oiticica during the 1960s continued on the path of abstraction to the extent that they breached common space, even including the spectator’s bodily involvement. While some of Oiticica’s *Bólides* and *Penetráveis* (Favaretto, 1992) contained photographs and television images, the works did not address the ‘real’ through images.

Lygia Clark, Lygia Pape, and Hélio Oiticica's concern with reality was developed in their early works of abstraction in *Grupo Frente*. Abstraction became a matter of space, time, and body, as ways to change, subvert, and disturb social reality and spectatorial engagement, especially in their artworks of the 1960s and 70s. Dealing with 'Brazilian social reality' was another aim of Cinema Novo. Cinema Marginal disturbed the 'real' through "deconstructive films" (Ramos, 1987; Xavier, 2012). This thesis, therefore, expects to relate cinema to the visual arts of the 1950s and 60s through abstraction as it reaches the real, common space in installations and participatory works, as well as through cinematographic thinking, which, in experimental abstract expression, invites or provokes the spectator into taking part in the film's existential unfolding.

The 1950s and 60s were essentially polarized decades with regard to the possibilities and promotion of contemporary art and cinema, owing to their diverse political contexts. In 1955, Juscelino Kubitschek (JK) (1902-1976) was elected president with João Goulart (Jango) (1918-1976) as vice president. For the next five years, JK tried to implement and develop industrialization in Brazil, hoping for its modernization with the slogan "50 years in 5", with the birth of a central capital, Brasília. As Martins explains:

[...] industrialization would be gaining momentum under the popular (or rather populist) and optimistic presidency of Juscelino Kubitschek, whose "fifty years in five" slogan, coupled with the promise of a new, modernist capital—Brasília—would provide the cue for a widespread understanding of modernization as a sweeping force against a provincial and archaic past (Martins, 2013, p. 27)

This optimism about modernization was not equally shared among the Brazilian population. For instance, while São Paulo saw an economic boost with the implementation of several automobile industries,¹⁴⁹ this economic upturn was not seen in the other states (Martins, 2013). Salzstein (2011), for instance, examines how the inconsistencies with regard to economic optimism in an underdeveloped country provided material for artists and filmmakers, who were part of a middle class, such as

¹⁴⁹ The industrialization of São Paulo and its consequences is the topic of the film *São Paulo Sociedade Anônima* (1965) by Sergio Person.

the Neoconcrete artists and Cinema Novo filmmakers. It seems that the country's apparent optimism about modernization was, “[...] for Oiticica, Pedrosa and many others, the same differential of the Brazilian experience at that moment, a privileged observatory of the self-deception of modernity” (Salzstein, 2011, p. 110, own translation).¹⁵⁰

In general, the arts seemed to be destined to denounce the precariousness, underdevelopment, and the inequalities reigning over the country. The state promoted the planning and construction of the capital, Brasília, which was to represent cultural and socio-economic modernization.¹⁵¹ However, several intellectuals and artists evinced skepticism about Brasília and the modernization process in Brazil, among them being Mario Pedrosa, Giulio Carlo Argan, and Hélio Oiticica (Salzstein, 2011). As Salzstein claims: “[naturally], Brasília is the metaphor, par excellence, of the problematic Brazilian modernity” (Salzstein, 2011, p. 109, own translation).¹⁵²

The 1960s, then, was marked by a violent turn, with the coup in 1964 commencing 20 years of civil-military dictatorship in Brazil. Xavier resumes the period after the coup as a “moment when defeat and disillusionment gave rise to the concrete experience of history as a field of contradictions in the form of progress, continuity, and defeated in the form of disaster, discontinuity” (Xavier, 2012, p. 15, own translation)¹⁵³. In 1961, Jango was elected president, but never finished his mandate. In 1964, military forces took power in Brazil, and, after that, military presidents ruled the country. As soon as the coup took place, the military presidents began to institute restrictions. There were two fundamental political restrictions. The first involved the existence of only two political parties in congress; the second was the creation of *Atos*

¹⁵⁰ Original text: “Parece que tal exoterismo era, para Oiticica, Pedrosa e tantos outros, o diferencial mesmo da experiência brasileira naquele momento. Um observatório privilegiado dos autoenganos da modernidade.”

¹⁵¹ The constructions in Brasília are discussed in the short documentary film made by Joaquim Pedro Andrade, *Brasília – contradições de uma cidade nova* (1968).

¹⁵² Original text: “Naturalmente é Brasília — e o debate que envolve sua criação, em meio a uma intensa disputa ideológica sobre o que poderia significar uma “arquitetura moderna” naquele pós-guerra, ainda por cima em um país “periférico” — a metáfora por excelência do lugar problemático da modernidade brasileira.”

¹⁵³ Original text: “É o momento em que a derrota efetiva e as desilusões dão ensejo à experiência concreta da história como um campo de contradições na forma do progresso, continuidade e pelos vencidos na forma no desastre, descontinuidade” (Xavier, 2012, p. 15).

Institucionais (AI) (Institutional Acts). These institutional acts altered the country's Constitution. During the first three years of the regime, the population responded with protests. Some sections of the left began an armed resistance (the parties were *Aliança de Libertação Nacional*, the *Movimento Revolucionário 8 de outubro*, and *Vanguarda Popular Revolucionária*). Furthermore, artists and filmmakers openly criticized the military regime. In 1967, music festivals and the *Tropicália* movement were considering the last resorts for opposing the regime and nationalist politics. The year 1967 was when artists all over the country strongly invested in artworks, concerts, performances, and films, manifesting resistance in opposition to the dictatorial regime.

Finally, after a speech by Rio de Janeiro's state Governor against the armed forces in 1968, the military president, General Artur Costa e Silva, lost support from the Congress for the removal of the Governor, and as a result Costa e Silva instituted the AI-5 (Fausto, 1995): Institutional Act Number Five. This gave complete power to the president, licencing interference in states and cities, as well as for shutting down congress and persecuting political opponents, such as communists. As a consequence, there was no freedom of speech, and artworks considered subversive were taken out of circulation, which included their censorship in newspapers, theater plays, exhibitions, films and television programs (Fausto, 1995). Owing to their persecution, many artists, filmmakers, and intellectuals were imprisoned and tortured (at least those who resisted), and many sought exile in other countries. From 1964 to 1968, the angle of many artists and filmmakers was marked by their intention to work with society in order to resist the regime, as well as to engage or provoke spectators with films and artworks. Several artists and their works resorted to popular culture and Anthropophagy to oppose military nationalism (Amaral, 1981; Favaretto, 2013; Machado, 2008; Puppo & Albuquerque, 2002; Xavier, 2001, 2012). As Machado explains:

This group of extra-institutionalized-space propositions sought to make artistic production collective and expand the public of art, not only because the events that they promoted were free and performed during the weekends. These public actions were accompanied by a playful element, or an attempt of celebration by the meeting, by the collectivity, and by the proposal of active participation of the spectators (inheritance of the Neoconcrete Movement) and that can be seen as a form of resistance to the current repression (Machado, 2008, pp. 40-41).¹⁵⁴

Thus, the artists who were part of Neoconcretism were already working towards a relationship with the spectator, inserting paintings into common space, time, and body. Even before part of society united against the civil-military regime, Neoconcrete artists were proposing artworks that depended on the spectator's engagement, thereby connecting artists, artworks, and society.

From expression in abstraction at the end of the 1960s, Lygia Pape, Lygia Clark, and Hélio Oiticica suffused political elements into their phenomenological propositions. Therefore, they included the spectator in the artworks' process—a process through which one could experience transformation and social engagement. The experimental attitude of abstract painting opened up the works to the spectator's own experimentalism (creating *vivências* with the spectator), and the inclusion of the spectator in work.

Abstraction was the fundamental form of experimentalism and radicalism in 1960's propositional artworks, which were intended to function as pieces of resistance, giving visibility to the 'margins'. Modern cinema in Brazil seems to have taken a very similar direction to the visual arts, bearing correlations between expression in abstraction and experimentalism of the form. Modern cinema in Brazil evidenced a direct connection with the real and reality, and furthermore political resistance and visibility of the margins, corresponding with Cinema Novo and Cinema Marginal's processes.

¹⁵⁴ Original text: "Esse grupo de proposições extra-espço institucionalizado buscou coletivizar a produção artística e ampliar o público de arte, não apenas pelos eventos serem gratuitos e realizados durante os finais de semana. Acompanhava essas investidas um lado lúdico, ou uma tentativa de celebração pela reunião, pela coletividade e pela proposta de participação ativa dos espectadores (herança do Movimento Neoconcreto) e que pode ser encarado como forma de resistência à repressão de então."

The process that connects abstraction and experimentalism in the expression of 1950's and 60's Brazilian visual arts, which is also associated with Brazilian modern cinema, is based on the understanding of Lygia Clark, Lygia Pape, and Hélio Oiticica's approach in their artworks and their self-declared theoretical approaches. Their works are connected from the relation of the notions of abstraction, experimentalism, lived experiences (*vivências*), and expression, which are mobilized here from Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, as presented in the Introduction and in Chapter 1. The text describes each artist's (Lygia Clark, Lygia Pape, and Hélio Oiticica) process following the developments of abstraction in painting in the direction of installations and propositional works throughout the period of 1954-1967. The line constructed from their work is in chronological order.

4.1 Lygia Pape: the abstract body

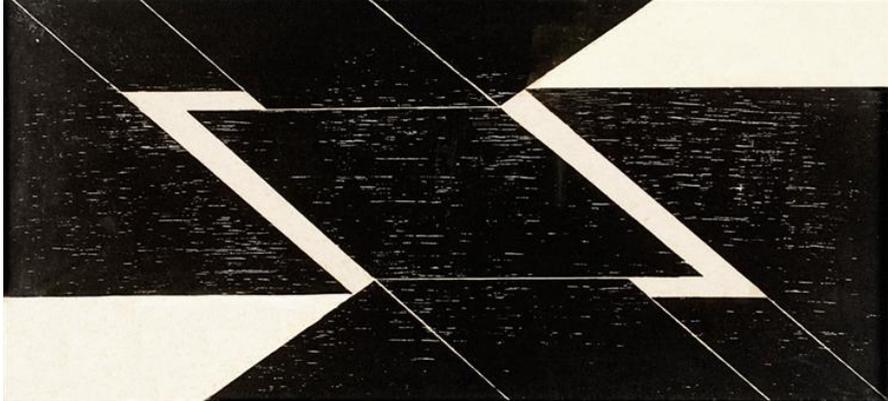


Illustration 19 –*Tecelares* (1955). Lygia Pape | 43,5x31cm | woodcut on Japanese paper
Retrieved from: <https://www.wikiart.org/en/lygia-pape/tecelar-1955/>.
Accessed: 17/06/2018.

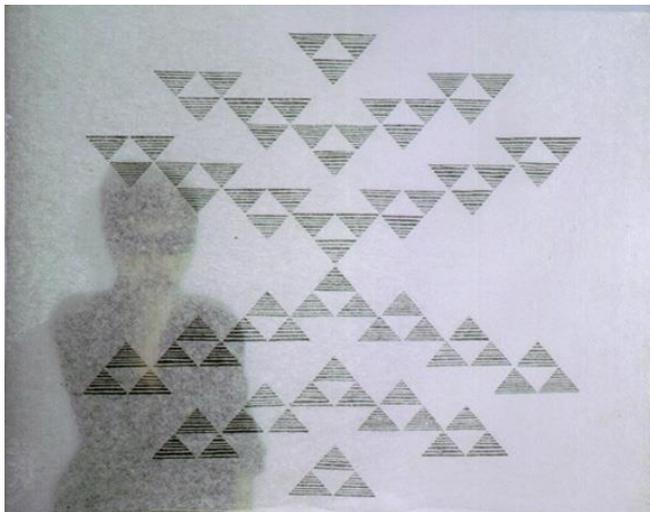


Illustration 20 –*Tecelares*, (1955). Lygia Pape | 60x45cm | woodcut on Japanese paper
Retrieved at: <https://www.wikiart.org/pt/lygia-pape/lygia-pape-and-tecelar-1955/>.
Accessed: 17/06/2018.

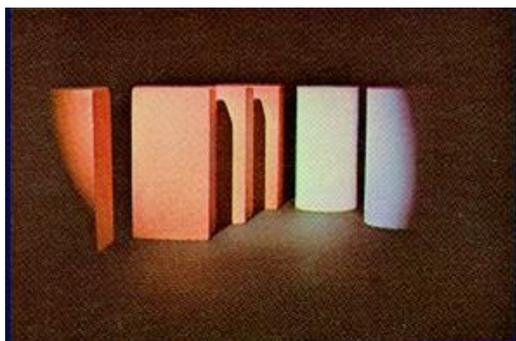


Illustration 21 – *Ballet Neoconcreto #1*, (1958). Lygia Pape | variable dimensions | wood, cloth and dancers.
Retrieved from:
<http://enciclopedia.itaucultural.org.br/obra24694/bale-neoconcreto-i>.
Accessed: 22/05/ 2018.

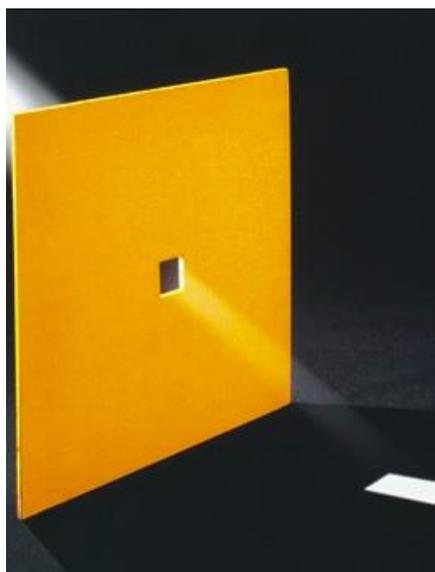


Illustration 22 – *Livro da Criação – Luz*, (1960). Lygia Pape | variable dimensions | Gouache on cardboard. Photo: Paula Pape.
Retrieved from: <http://www.lygiapape.org.br/en/contato.php>.
Accessed: 17/06/2018.



Illustration 23 – *Ovo*, (1967), Lygia Pape | 80x80x80cm | wood painted with temper, polypropylene.
Retrieved from: <https://www.wikiart.org/en/lygia-pape/the-egg-1967>.
Accessed: 17/06/2018.

Lygia Pape had a long career as an artist and intellectual. Parallel to her visual work, she was a researcher and professor at the School of Fine Arts of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro. Pape also taught courses at the Museum of Modern Art in Rio de Janeiro and Semiotics at the University Santa Úrsula. Pape's visual works have been the object of countless exhibitions,¹⁵⁵ studies, and books, which she has in common with Lygia Clark and Hélio Oiticica. As Candela, Ferreira, Martins, and Rajchman elaborate, Lygia Pape was, “[a] crucial figure in modern and contemporary Brazilian art, [...] commonly associated with Hélio Oiticica and Lygia Clark as the central protagonists of the Neoconcrete movement,[...] proposing the fusion of the artistic object with the life experience” (2017, p. 2). Pape began her artistic career working with oils, but abandoned the medium upon her intoxication with it, forcing her to explore other techniques (Cunha, 1994, p. 44). Until her death in 2004, Pape explored various visual languages, among them film. As explained above, this thesis will focus on Pape's output from 1954 until 1967, drawing a line connecting expression and experiments in abstract painting with experimentation and propositional works involving abstract elements and the spectator's body, understood as modern and avant-garde art. I will connect Lygia Clark and Hélio Oiticica's artworks from the same period in a similar way.

Pape began her visual practice with Ivan Serpa's course in the early 1950s. By 1954, she was part of *Grupo Frente*. Describing her work, Candela explains: “[on] a neutral white background, she painted combinations of lines, stripes, and squares, mainly in primary colors (red, blue, and yellow) or black [...] Pape also sought a pure universal vocabulary that would relate to a reality beyond its objective surface” (Candela et al., 2017, p. 4). Moreover, Candela associates this production to Malevich's constructivism. Pape's abstraction in painting is in dialogue with Malevich's use of neutral white backgrounds, as well as with Mondrian's understanding of colors, and the “expansion” of painting into communal space. The pieces *Frente Group* | *Relief and blue*

¹⁵⁵ The Met Breuer held Lygia Pape's latest retrospective in 2017. Along with the exhibition, there was a three day conference with talks about her work that can be accessed at: <https://www.metmuseum.org/metmedia/video/lectures/lygia-pape-symposium-morning>.

and black (1955 – 1956) and *Frente Group | Relief and red and blue* (1955 – 1956) (the latter examined in Chapter 6, Illustration 72) are works that abolish the frame completely through the composition of geometrical shapes, lines, and reliefs with primary colors and black, as well as painting the lateral surface of the canvas with one of the colors of the canvas, thus, painting in the ‘real space.’ As Candela elaborates: “[on] *Relevo (Relief)* from 1955, the sides are painted bright blue to contrast with the white on the front, heightening the autonomy of the work, which optically looks like a protuberance on the wall” (Candela et al., 2017, p. 4). Such an approach to the canvas did not just completely abolish representation, but also implied that the spectator should approach the artwork as *subject*, that is, as being part of the same “world” (Merleau-Ponty, 1961/1993).

After the *Reliefs*, Pape began working with wood engravings. She made a series of engravings throughout 1955 until 1960. The artist named this series some decades later, in 1979, *Tecelares* (a name that refers to weaving stars). In the same vein as the previous painting series, the engravings were based on geometrical forms, which incorporate the texture of the wood on the print. The only color used was black, in which one can see the wood’s veins along with the massive black geometrical forms, a combination of the wood’s organic lines and the cut of the wood in geometrical and straight lines, for which the artist was responsible (Cunha, 1994, p. 44). The technique of engraving serves the purpose of abstraction: combining the organic body of the wood with the paper receiving the printing (Illustration 19). The geometric forms carved into the wood, transformed into printed forms, absorb the materiality of the wood. This thereby dilutes the boundaries between, respectively, the surface of the artwork and common space, the artist and spectator’s body, and colors.

Tecelares sustains the spatial research of painting, as the geometrical forms incorporate the limits of the Japanese paper (Illustration 19). Furthermore, the Japanese paper is translucent, including the space surrounding the artwork (Illustration 20). As Pape puts it: “[space] being warped; yarn weaving space; the principle of ambiguity, no privileged position for a base or bottom [...], surface pared down to

black as colour, and the wood's pores acting as vibration to the point of reaching total white" (Lygia Pape in Candela et al., 2017, p. 5). The straight line carved on the wood gives shape to the geometrical forms and constructs nearly a complementary relation between black and white, presence and absence. At the same time, one sees the linearity of the straight lines and the discontinuity between the forms, because the artist inserts a gap between geometrical forms (Illustrations 19 and 20). This gap is also the artist's gesture. The *Tecelares* are part of *Grupo Frente* period, and, in keeping with the essence of the group, consisted in a phenomenological approach, in which common, real space is constitutive of the visual artwork, as well as the spectator's body. Lygia Pape was entirely conscious of the form and research she was pursuing, for she did not work at random (Cunha, 1994): to the contrary, Pape's experimentalism was rigorous.

As part of the Neoconcrete movement, on August 18th 1958 Pape staged *Ballet Neoconcreto #1*, a ballet performed exclusively by geometrical figures on the stage.

[F]our white cylindrical structures, each two meters tall and eighty centimeters in diameter, to represent the word *albo*, and four orange parallelepiped volumes of similar dimensions for *alvo*. Eight dancers remained hidden inside the geometric volumes throughout the performance, using small airholes to breathe, while dramatic lighting and piano music of Gabriel Artusi enlivened the austere choreography on the bare stage, combination space and time body inside the form (Candela et al., 2017, pp. 6-7).

The abstract geometrical forms moved as they were carried by human bodies, which are never seen. Thus, the 'moving bodies' in the ballet are the massive geometrical forms. *Ballet Neoconcreto #1* (Illustration 21) assembles the organic presence of the geometrical and the geometrical existence of the organic, creating a tension between linearity and discontinuity. Lygia Pape transforms painting into moving bodies that integrated the organic and the geometric, as the artist states: "The neoconcrete experience gave us an organic integration, dynamizing space and transmitting values equal to the positive-negative. The space of the stage became two-dimensional planes

that were interpenetrated and isolated by the development of the choreography, in alternating rhythms” (Lygia Pape in Amaral, 1977, p. 281, own translation)¹⁵⁶.

Moreover, the use of different lighting effects over the moving forms made their perception switch from two to three dimensions. Pape comments: “The light transforms the solids and the stage’s space itself into luminous structures. The colors, and its variations in intensity and rhythmic projection, accentuate and mark those space-form tensions within a formal purity, which consists in a more universal language (Lygia Pape in Amaral, 1977, p. 281, own translation).¹⁵⁷ Pape calls the possibility of a universal language within abstraction a “formal purity”. A very similar direction of thought was supported by Hans Richter and Viking Eggeling in the 1920s. In Richter’s words: “[every] person would have to react to such a language and for the very reason that it was based on the human ability to see and record” (Hans Richter in Hoffmann, 1998, p. 75).

The pinnacle of Pape’s contribution to Neoconcretism consisted in *Livro da Criação* (*Book of creation*) (1959/1960). This took the form of a book with no cover, composed of 16 abstract cardboard pop-up gouache-colored detached pages, whereby each page had its own title, such as *No início era tudo água* (*In the Beginning it Was All Water*), *O homem descobriu o fogo* (*Man Discovered Fire*), and *O homem descobriu que o sol era o centro do sistema planetário* (*Man Discovered that the Sun Was the Centre of the Planetary System*). The idea was that the spectator should manipulate the pages, among them some are folded, some unfolded. The page entitled *Luz* (*Light*) (Illustration 22) should be held against sunlight, while the square page, covered in bright yellow, has a small central square passage through which the light passes. The idea, then, is that *Livro da Criação* is *recreated* through the spectator’s manipulation, whereby each page’s phenomenological

¹⁵⁶ Original text: “A experiência neoconcreta, dinamizando o espaço, transmitindo valores iguais ao positivo-negativo, nos dá uma integração orgânica [...]. O espaço do palco se transforma em planos bidimensionais que se interpenetram e se isolam pelo próprio desenvolver da coreografia em ritmos alternados.”

¹⁵⁷ Original text: “A luz transforma os sólidos e o próprio espaço em estruturas luminosas. A cor e a suas variações de intensidade e projeção ritmada acentua e marca aquelas tensões de espaço-forma dentro de uma pureza formal: linguagem mais universal.”

character involves time and space, through which the book is thereby discovered (Candela et al., 2017, p. 8).

At the beginning of the 1960s, with the dissolution of the Neoconcrete movement, Pape turned to design. To this end, she created posters and title credits for Cinema Novo films, among them *Vidas Secas* (1963), directed by Nelson Pereira dos Santos, as well as the logo for Museum of Modern Art of Rio de Janeiro (MAM-RJ). In 1967—a critical year for the arts in Brazil—Pape returned to the visual arts, employing the abstraction of the 1950s, creating a living experience (*vivência*) for the spectator (already initiated in 1959 with the *Livro da Criação*). Phenomenological experimentations with abstraction, as carried out in the 1950s and early 1960s, were transformed into propositions¹⁵⁸ to be experimented with by the spectator, which aligns with Hélio Oiticica and Lygia Clark's works from the same period.

In 1967 and 1968—intense years of dictatorial repression in Brazil—Lygia Pape intensively produced participatory works, alongside Lygia Clark and, even more so, Hélio Oiticica. The artwork *Ovo* (*Egg*) (1967), presented at the happening that took place at the *Aterro do Flamengo* in Rio de Janeiro called *Apocalipópótese*¹⁵⁹ in 1968, was a participatory work developed for a public space (that is, an outdoor art institution). *Ovo* consisted of colored cubes made of thin plastic, and, from inside the cube, people ruptured the cube's plastic cover with a performance.

Owing to increasing censorship after the coup in 1964, artists sought alternatives when presenting their artworks, hoping thereby to engage a broader audience beyond the museum walls (Machado, 2008). *Ovo* (Illustration 23) consists in the coexistence of a geometrical and organic body in which the organic breaks the

¹⁵⁸ The notion of 'proposition' is connected to experimental, participation, open-work, and anti-art works (Clark, Pedrosa, & Gullar, 1980; Oiticica, 1969, 1972, 2007; Osorio, 2006). This will be developed here after documenting each artist's group of works.

¹⁵⁹ "The expression 'Apocalipópótese' was invented by the artist Rogério Duarte, in the words of the poet Waly Solomon, to evoke consensual deviation. Something like the 'revelation of a new hypothesis'. Several artists participated in the collective manifestation 'Apocalipópótese', that closed the event, 'A month of public art', in the *Aterro do Flamengo*" (Machado, 2008, p. 107). "A expressão 'Apocalipópótese' foi inventada pelo artista Rogério Duarte para, nas palavras do poeta Waly Salomão, evocar ao desvio consensual, algo como a 'revelação de uma nova hipótese' [...]. Da manifestação coletiva 'Apocalipópótese', que encerrou o evento 'Um mês de arte pública' no Aterro do Flamengo, participaram diversos artistas"

walls of the geometric. The coexistence (or tension, in the case of *Ovo*) of the organic and the geometric seems to form the basis of expression in abstraction for Pape, as an abstract body. Furthermore, *Ovo* can be interpreted as a revision of the *Ballet Neoconcreto* #1.

The subjects in and outside of *Ovo* can experience and experiment with the individual versus the collective, and as well as witnessing a “rebirth”. As Machado explains, the artwork’s intention: “[...] people should [be] ‘reborn’ after breaking the eggshell in a performative act [...] they experience the shelter sensation, of individual protection, and as rupturing the plastic people meet the new, the collective space” (Machado, 2008, p. 108, own translation)¹⁶⁰. What furthermore seems to be relevant is the fact that abstraction, along with the tension between organic and geometric, is constitutive of Pape’s propositional works. These tensions were already present in the artist’s works from the 1950s.

Even in 1967, Lygia Pape developed the participatory installation, *Roda dos Prazeres* | *Wheel of Delights* (Illustration 100), which I analyze in Chapter 7. *Roda dos Prazeres* is a proposition that presumes the bodily involvement of those participants who take part in the work. Directly in *Roda dos Prazeres*, painting abstraction is brought to the participant’s body.

The process presented here in these works is not an evolution or an attempt to analyze all of Pape’s works from the period (nor do I attempt this for Lygia Clark and Hélio Oiticica’s works), but draws a line from these works that connects phenomenological experience and experimentation in and with abstraction. Therefore, the phenomenological conception of the artwork through abstraction passes from the artist to the spectator’s consciousness (their incarnate mind). On Pape’s approach, experimentation on the side of the artist becomes the experimentation of the spectator

¹⁶⁰ Original text: “Cubos com arestas de madeira, cobertos por uma fina película de plástico azul, vermelho ou branco, dos quais as pessoas deveriam ‘nascer’, ao romper a ‘casca’ num ato performático. Na ocasião ele foi apresentado pelo ‘trio do embalo maluco’, composto por Oiticica, Nildo e Santa Tereza, passista da Mangueira, que experimentaram a sensação de abrigo, da proteção, do individual, e do romper o plástico e conhecer de novo o espaço coletivo.”

with the medium. Furthermore, the expression of abstraction in these works is grounded in both the bodies of the artists and the spectators, in which colors, lines, and geometry are inscribed.

4.2 Lygia Clark: painting inside out



Illustration 24 - *Composição n. 5 – Quebra da moldura*, (1954). Lygia Clark | 106,5x91cm | oil on canvas and wood.
Retrieved at:
<http://www.lainvencionconcreta.org/en/artwork/113/>.
Accessed: 17/06/2018.



Illustration 25 – *Planos em superfície modulada nº5*, (1957). Lygia Clark | 80x70cm | Industrial paint on wood.
Retrieved at:
<http://www.mac.usp.br/mac/templates/projetos/seculoxx/modulo3/frente/clark/outras.html>.
Accessed: 17/06/2018.

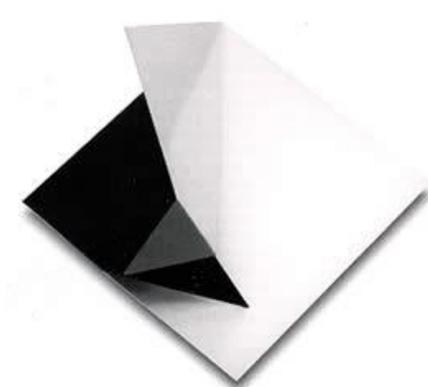


Illustration 26 – *Casulo* (1959). Lygia Clark | 42,5x42,5x26cm | Industrial paint on metal.
Retrieved at:
<http://www.mac.usp.br/mac/templates/projetos/seculoxx/modulo3/frente/clark/outras.html>.
Accessed: 17/06/2018

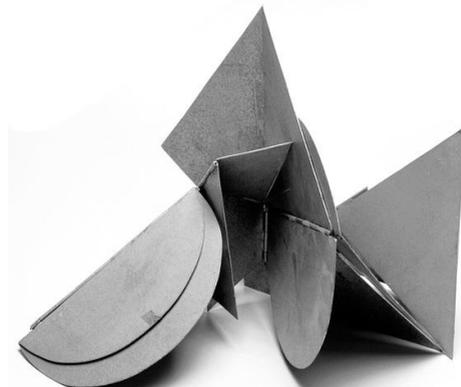


Illustration 27 - *Bicho*, (1960). Lygia Clark | variable dimensions | aluminum.
Retrieved at: <https://www.wikiart.org/en/lygia-clark/bicho-1960>.
Accessed: 17/06/2018.

Lygia Clark began her visual artistic studies alongside the landscaper and architect Roberto Burle Marx (1909-1994) in 1947. In the early 1950s, Clark travels to Paris where she also studies with Fernand Léger. In 1953, the artist began Ivan Serpa's course at the Museum of Modern Art in Rio de Janeiro (MAM-RJ), and, in 1954,¹⁶¹ Clark joined *Grupo Frente* with Lygia Pape and Hélio Oiticica.

Like Pape and Oiticica, Lygia Clark was involved in Neoconcretism until its dissolution. Following its dissolution, Clark also developed abstract painting in the direction of common space and the spectator, that is, into living experience propositions, called *vivências*. Clark's work at the end of the 1960s and the early 70s is designated her 'therapeutic' phase, since it comprises relational objects and group performances (Brett, 1987; Rolnik, 1999).

Clark's trajectory as a visual artist begins with painting. She began to work with abstract painting between the 1940s and 50s, establishing clear connections with both Kazimir Malevich and Piet Mondrian's artistic works. Thus, in her early works, Clark profoundly relates with those constitutive elements of the painted language, such as the line, frame, plane, and the surface. Clark's first radical step was to insert the frame's shape *within* the painting, creating 'corners' on the surface of the canvas. As Gullar explains: "Lygia Clark tries in 1954 to include the frame-object inside the canvas; she begins to invert the order of values and constraints" (Gullar et al., 1980, p. 9, own translation).¹⁶² With this gesture, Clark disrupts the frame, as exemplified in *Composição n. 5 – Quebra da moldura / Composition n.5 – Frame break* (1954) (Illustration 24):

The artist constructs a line from the encounter of surfaces, a line that she names "organic line". Clark assembles pieces of painted wood like architectural or window corners, where architectural space becomes surface and surface becomes architectural space. Gullar continues: "The organic line is space, in a limit between

¹⁶¹ Lygia Clark was one of the artists representing Brazil at the Venice Biennial in 1954 (Cunha, 1994).

¹⁶² Original text: "Lygia Clark em 1954, para 'incluir' a moldura no quadro, ela começa a inverter toda essa ordem de valores e compromissos."

pieces of surfaces that constitute the entire surface.” (Gullar et al., 1980, p. 12, own translation).¹⁶³ The organic line is the element that organizes the painting and is applied to the series entitled *Planos de Superfície Modulada/Planes in modulated surface* (1957) (Illustration 25). Finally, in *Casulo/Cocoon* (1959), as well as in the series *Contra Relevos/Counter Reliefs* (1959), the surface of the painting becomes the space in itself, the real space, not merely representational space (Gullar, Clark, & Pedrosa, 1980, p. 7, own translation).¹⁶⁴

Clark’s paintings and visual research are based on investigating painting and understanding the painting as a ‘subject’ in itself. The artwork should reach into common space, as well as the artist and spectator’s temporal and bodily manifestations, surpassing the virtuality of representation (Gullar, Clark, & Pedrosa, 1980). From 1954 until 1958, Clark subverted the notion of the painting’s ‘inside’ and ‘outside’, front and back. Moreover, the structure of the back of the canvas is reverted into its front.¹⁶⁵ Thus, during this period, Clark’s compositions became only ‘frames’, as evidenced in *Composition n.5 – Frame break* (Illustration 24).

The group of paintings done in 1957, *Planos em superfície modulada* (Illustration 25), plays with the organicity of straight lines and geometrical forms in black, white, and shades of gray. Made of pieces of wood and industrial painting, *Planos em superfície modulada* collapses the surface of the canvas and eliminates the *frame-object* of the painting (Brett, 1987; Cunha, 1994; Gullar et al., 1980). Essentially, both the organic and geometric in abstraction for Clark surpass the patterns of inside and outside, figure and background. To this end, Clark experiments with painting *inside out*, thereby expressing a correlation with an incarnate mind (Merleau-Ponty, 1961/1993, 2011). In 1959, the two-dimensional painting disappears and the composition *becomes* three-dimensional, not merely alluding to three-dimensions, but *in concreto* three-dimensions,

¹⁶³ Original text: “A linha orgânica, limite entre os pedaços de superfície que compõem a superfície inteira, é espaço.”

¹⁶⁴ In this other passage, *it is a painting that does not exist in a metaphorical space, but in the 'real' space, as a happening of it.* “É uma pintura que não se passa num espaço metafórico, mas no espaço ‘real’ mesmo, como um acontecimento dele” (Gullar, Clark, & Pedrosa, 1980, p. 7). Gullar defines the artwork’s space as the real space, in opposition to the virtual space. The modern and avant-garde artwork space is continuously ‘happening’.

¹⁶⁵ The background of the paintings became figure.

as in *Casulos/Cocoons* (Illustration 26) and *Contra-relevo/Counter-Relief*. Thus, Lygia Clark, like Lygia Pape, ruptures the boundaries between organic and geometric, between straight and organic lines, and, indeed, two-dimensional painting itself.

Clark's experimentations with abstraction transformed painting into visual language beyond the two dimensions of the canvas. As a form of consciousness, the painting has no front and back, nor an inside or outside. The first *non-object* of Neoconcretism is Clark's series *Bichos/Creatures* (1960) (Illustration 27 and 74). In this series of artworks, the line, surface, canvas, plane, and frame were transformed into a series of propositions to be touched and handled by the spectator. Clark "always begins a work from a previous structure and her first *Creatures* appeared directly from the *Counter-Relief*" (Gullar et al., 1980, p. 18, own translation).¹⁶⁶ *Bichos*, like Pape's *Livro da Criação*, constituted the zenith of Clark's contribution to the Neoconcrete movement. Clark's series *Bichos* (also analyzed in Chapter 6) are pieces made of polished metal plates, joined by hinges. These plates have unique geometrical shapes, and, when manipulated, take several forms. The *Bicho* is made of cold and rigid material. However, upon manipulation, it becomes a moving-being (*ser movente*). Clark materializes the experience of things (non-objects) through the subject who manipulates it, and vice versa. On Gullar's understanding: "[the] difference in the artistic technique is that it is no longer the line that unfolds, but the plane that unfolds in space [...]. In general, there is not even inside out in these spatial entities" (Gullar et al., 1980, p. 21, own translation).¹⁶⁷

The Möbius strip, especially its intrinsic characteristic of not having a front or back, fascinated Clark (Dezeuze, 2013). The Möbius strip influenced her work since *Casulos* in 1959 (Amor, 2010, p. 26), as well as her further experimentations with painting. Her abstract art was directed towards the inversion and confusion of front and back, inside and outside, a preoccupation in continued evidence in the series, *Bichos*

¹⁶⁶ Original text: "Ela parte sempre de uma estrutura prévia, e o primeiro de seus bichos surgiu diretamente do contra-relevo em losango."

¹⁶⁷ Original text: "A grande diferença no plano técnico artístico é que nela não é mais a linha que se desenrola, mas o plano no espaço [...]. Em geral não há mesmo avesso nessas entidades espaciais."

(Gullar et al., 1980, p. 17). Clark investigates the Möbius strip itself in her work of 1964, *Caminbando/Going* (Illustration 98), which consists in an experimentation that constructs a Möbius strip out of paper, cutting it in the middle, whereby the scissors “go” through the strip until there is no more paper to cut. On Brett’s analysis of this composition: “[at] the moment she made her *Going* proposition in 1960, downplaying the ‘object’ in favor of the spectator’s bodily action, she felt an enormous sense of release from previous demarcations between oneself, other people, the world” (Brett, 1987, p. 67).

Lygia Clark’s phenomenological approach to abstraction in painting, as well as her experiments with the medium, saw her developing geometrical lines into organic lines. For instance, Clark combined the geometric and organic planes in *Bichos*, which comprises organic geometric Beings that are manipulated by the spectator. The notion of continuous space that arises when painting continues into the surrounding (sc. common) space (Tassinari, 2001), and the constant inversion of inside and outside present in *Casulos* and *Contra-relevos*, is proposed to the spectator in order to create and experience him/herself in *Bichos* and *Caminbando*. Clark clarifies the phenomenological (and, therefore, *carnal*) relation between consciousness and the world throughout her propositional works, especially in *Bichos* and *Caminbando*:

In a dialogue with my work 'inside-out', the active subject finds his own precariousness. The subject too - like the Creature - does not have a fixed physiognomy defining him [...]. Now space belongs to time continually metamorphosed by the action. Subject-object are identified in themselves essentially in the act (Clark in Gullar et al., 1980, p. 24, own translation).¹⁶⁸

In 1967, Clark composes a series of masks called *Máscaras Sensoriais/Sensorial Masks* (which I analyze in detail in Chapter 7). These masks are made of different colored fabrics that cover the individual’s head completely. The participant who gets inside the sensorial mask acts through the mediation of the mask. Thus, subject and ‘object’ are one entity, whereby one influences the other.

¹⁶⁸ Original text: “No seu diálogo com minha obra ‘dentro-fora’, o sujeito ativo encontra sua própria precariedade. Também ele - como o Bicho - não tem a fisionomia estática que o define [...]. Agora o espaço pertence ao tempo continuamente metamorfoseado pela ação. Sujeito-objeto se identificam essencialmente no ato.”

The line, surface, planes, frame, space, body, the organic and geometric, as well as the inversion of inside and outside (and front and back), are core aspects of Clark's visual research. First, she ruptured the frame, as well as the surrounding common space between paintings and spectators. Then, the works become non-objects to be manipulated, and, finally, her artworks become propositional, living experiences of the spectator, in which the inside and outside of the spectator and artwork's body are understood as one whole body of work. As modern and avant-garde art, Clark expresses abstraction phenomenologically through the active participation of the spectator, who should perceive the artworks outside of any causal relations. Additionally, the continuity between painting and common space through an organic line was transformed into continuity between the artwork and spectator (subject) in an experience of geometrical discontinuity in *Bichos*, for instance—or a discontinuity of the act, as in *Caminbando*. Therefore, the completely univocal relationship of inside and outside, front and back, oneself and the other, Being and the world, were essential to Clark's abstract expression and her further experimentations and propositions between the 1950s and 60s.

4.3 Hélio Oiticica: color in time, space, and body

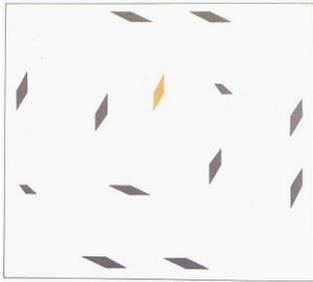


Illustration 28 - *Seco 27* (1957). Hélio Oiticica | 40x43cm | Gouache on cardboard
Reproduction: Favaretto, 2015, p.71.



Illustration 29 - *Invenção nº 04*, (1959-1962). Hélio Oiticica | 30x30cm | oil and resin mixtures on wood, fiber board.
Reproduction: Ramírez, Figueiredo, & Oiticica, 2007, p. 229.

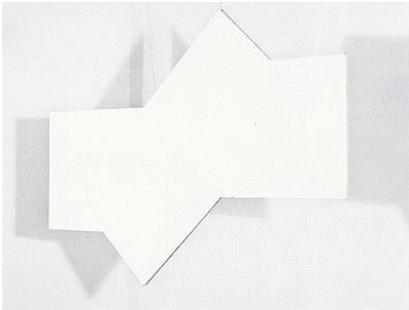


Illustration 30 - *Bilateral Clássico*, (1959). Hélio Oiticica | 101x123,5x1,3cm | oil-casein emulsion on wood fiber board.
Retrieved from:
<http://enciclopedia.itaucultural.org.br/obra9647/bilateral>
Accessed: 28/05/2018

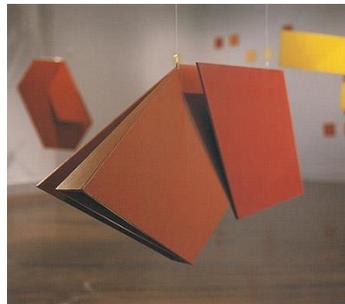


Illustration 31 - *Relevo espacial (vermelho)*, (1959). Hélio Oiticica | 150x62x15,5x | polyvinyl acetate resin on plywood.
Retrieved from:
<http://enciclopedia.itaucultural.org.br/obra66408/relevo-especial>. Accessed: 28/05/2018



Illustration 32 - *B30 Bólido Caixa 17, o Poema Bólido 1, do meu sangue / do meu suor / este amor viverá*, (1965/1966). Hélio Oiticica | variable dimensions | mixte technique. Retrieved from:
<http://enciclopedia.itaucultural.org.br/obra66330/b30-bolide-caixa-17-b30-bolide-caixa-17-poema-bolide-1-do-meu-sangue-do-meu-suor-este-amor-vivera> Accessed: 28/05/2018.



Illustration 33 - *Parangole P15, Capa 11, Incorporo a Revolta*, (1967). Hélio Oiticica | variable dimension | mixte technique.
Retrieved from :
<http://enciclopedia.itaucultural.org.br/obra12915/parangole-p15-capa-11-incorporo-a-revolta> Accessed: 28/05/2018.

Hélio Oiticica joined Ivan Serpa's group at MAM-RJ in 1954. Moreover, in 1955, at only 18 years old, he exhibited for the first time with *Grupo Frente* (Cunha, 1994). Oiticica's visual research, like his contemporaries Lygia Pape and Lygia Clark, began with questioning and experimenting with abstraction in painting. Oiticica expanded and disrupted the frame, combining the organic and geometric, based primarily on the use of color. Oiticica's compositions from the *Grupo Frente* period, and later Neoconcretism, are constructed around color. Moreover, 'mobile' geometric forms are developed from the exploration of color. The essence of color in painting, which Oiticica carries along his trajectory, began life in a direct dialogue with Malevich's Constructivism and Mondrian's Neoplasticism¹⁶⁹ (Favaretto, 2015).

Oiticica divided his artworks into groups of specific experimentations with one aspect of color, space, time, body, and/or proposition. For instance, the group of paintings from 1955 to 1956, associated with *Grupo Frente*, are called *Grupo Frente* and they take the form of oil paintings and gouache over cardboard, in which Oiticica "[...] saturates the planes of color in a clear neoplastic research, or else he arranges colored geometric forms on white ground, repositing Malevich" (Favaretto, 2015, p. 51, own translation).¹⁷⁰ In his *Grupo Frente* paintings and gouaches, Oiticica develops painting's mobility and organicity, associating similar tonalities or pure colors in geometric forms, which almost permeate one another, as exemplified in the painting *Untitled - Grupo Frente* (1956) (Illustration 73), which is comprised of red stripes with similar tonalities (analyzed in Chapter 6). On Oiticica's understanding of visual expression, abstract art constitutes carnal conceptualism or an embodied concept, which is evident throughout his travails as a visual artist (Oiticica et al., 1986).

Oiticica furthermore pursued, in the 1950s, research that consisted in inserting painting into common space. Painting should exist in real space, not in the

¹⁶⁹ Favaretto allocates Oiticica's work with Cézanne, he says: *Continuous with Cézanne's work - investigating the relations between surface and representation, between painting and things -, valuing, above all, the surface's processes.* "Continuou o empenho de Cézanne – investigar as relações entre superfície e representação, entre pintura e as coisas -, valorizando, sobretudo, os processos de superfície (2015, p. 31).

¹⁷⁰ Original text: "[...] satura os planos de cor em pesquisa claramente neoplasticista, ou então dispõe formas geométricas coloridas sobre fundo branco, repropõe Malevich."

same way as sculpture or architecture, but as painting (in line with Clark and Pape). Between 1957 and 1958, Oiticica developed the series of gouache paintings called *Metaesquemas* and *Secos*, which constituted his turning-point towards the project of paintings that reach common space beyond the confines of the frame and canvas. According to Cunha: “[through] the ‘dissection of space,’ as [Oiticica] himself referred to this phase, [he] transformed planes into lines, exhausting all possible options in his spatial research, until the painting over the canvas dies” (Cunha, 1994, p. 47, own translation).¹⁷¹

Oiticica mobilizes color to break with the frame, exploring the canvas’s plane and surface to conquer the space surrounding it. To the same end, Clark focused on the line, plane and surface, while Pape combined color and geometric structures over the canvas. Indeed, as Cunha observes, “[the] truth is that Oiticica, Pape, and Clark intensely researched the two-dimensional space until the point they left the two-dimensions of the canvas for the exterior space” (Cunha, 1994, p. 47, own translation).¹⁷² The three artists during the 1950s brought painting to the “concrete real” common space of the world. Oiticica highlights the gouache *Seco 27* (1957) (Illustration 28) for its ‘structural dilution’ in the composition, which already flirted with real space (*ambiente*) (Cunha, 1994; Favaretto, 2015). Favaretto (2015) indicates that Oiticica’s hope was to achieve real space and the “‘invention state’, which were present in the *Seco 27* and the following series, *Metaesquemas*.

In 1959, Oiticica produced a series called *Invenções*.¹⁷³ The artworks of this series are monochromatic oil paintings in which the totality of the canvas sustains the

¹⁷¹ Original text: “Através da ‘dissecação do espaço’, como ele mesmo se referiu a essa fase, Hélio vai transformando planos em linhas, esgotando todas as possibilidades possíveis desta pesquisa espacial, até que aparentemente a pintura sobre a tela morre.”

¹⁷² Original text: “A verdade é que tanto Hélio quanto L. Pape e L. Clark pesquisavam intensamente o espaço bidimensional, até que saíram dele para o espaço exterior.”

¹⁷³ The notion of invention and experimentation are core notions in Hélio Oiticica’s visual research and artistic project. As he remarks: *For me, it was an ever-greater abolition of meaning structures until I came to what I consider to be pure invention. ‘Penetráveis,’ ‘Núcleos,’ ‘Bóldes,’ and ‘Parangolés’ were the path to the discovery of what I call the state of invention [...] There is no idea separated from the object, never existed, what exists is invention.* “Para mim, foi uma abolição cada vez maior de estruturas de significados, até eu chegar ao que considero a invenção pura. ‘Penetráveis’, ‘Núcleos’, ‘Bóldes’ e ‘Parangolés’ foram o caminho para a descoberta do que eu chamo de estado de invenção[...]. Não existe ideia separada do objeto, nunca existiu, o que existe é a invenção” (Hélio Oiticica in Cardoso, 1985, p. 48).

“body of the color”. Oiticica’s *Invenções* are canvases painted on both the front and back with the same color. These canvases should be hanged at a distant from the wall in such a way that it is possible to see the color beyond the two-dimensional space of the canvas, as one moves, scrutinizing the canvases from different angles (Illustration 29). Favaretto (2015) argues that the *Invenções* paintings consist in a “matrix of the investigation of the ‘structure-color in space and in time’” (Favaretto, 2015, p. 57). These investigations and experimentations of time and space in painting colors through geometric forms continued with the respective series *Bilaterais*, *Relevos Espaciais*, and *Nucleos*, produced at the end of 1959 and the beginning of 1960. As the artist himself explains: “[after] one has left the field of representation and broken away from the painting – and the ‘flatness of the painting’ is discovered – the concept of time provides a new dimension and new possibilities for creation” (Hélio Oiticica in Ramírez, Figueiredo, & Oiticica, 2007, p. 174).

Bilaterais, *Relevos*, and *Nucleos*¹⁷⁴ correspond with Oiticica’s Neoconcrete phase; the latter moreover corresponding with the height of Oiticica’s contribution to the movement. *Bilaterais* are irregular geometric wooden monochromatic objects that are hanged in the exhibitions space, and, as the name indicates, it has two sides (Illustration 30). *Relevos Espaciais* are three-dimensional geometric monochromatic *non-objects* that hang in the exhibition space. While they are a development of the structure of color in time and space (Illustration 31), they also include folds. *Relevos Espaciais* corresponds conceptually and formally with Clark’s *Casulos* and *Contra-relevos* as well as Pape’s *Livro da Criação*.

All three artists included folds in order to insert other planes and real space into their canvases. The phenomenological experience of color is expressed throughout Oiticica’s artworks (and, for him, *conceptualized*) as a whole experience of a

¹⁷⁴ About the series of *Nucleos* and *Penetrables*, Favaretto acknowledges the structural change in these works into propositions, he says: *In Oiticica, the structural necessity loosens; the field is invaded by actions, by life. The neoplastic - constructivist matrix metamorphosis; what is within the frame, or virtually in Núcleos and Penetráveis, is explicit, favoring the opening of propositions.*

“Em Oiticica, a necessidade estrutural solta-se; o campo é invadido por ações, pela vida. A matriz neoplástica – construtivista sofre metamorfose; o que está dentro do quadro, ou virtualmente em Núcleos e Penetráveis, explicita-se, privilegiando a abertura das proposições” (Favaretto, 1993, p. 31).

“consciousness in the world with others”, in line with Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy. As Oiticica writes:

Colour is, therefore, meaning, as are the other elements of the work; a vehicle for *vivências* of all sorts (*vivencia* is understood here in an all encompassing sense and not in the term’s vitalist sense). The genesis of the work of art is so connected to and communicated by the artist that it is no longer possible to separate substance from spirit, for as Merleau-Ponty has underscored, substance and spirit are dialectics of a single phenomenon. (Oiticica, 2013, p. 77).

Bilaterais and *Relevos espaciais* were units of colored, wooden, geometric “bodies” hanging in the exhibition space, whereas *Núcleos* combined these two previous series in installations of suspended warm-colored, wooden geometric forms. Instead of units there are several meticulous geometric forms hanging in a labyrinthine space. The group of installations called *Núcleos* is an experiment involving the “color’s nuclei”. *Núcleos* made possible the spectator’s access to the core, the center, and the essence of color in space and time. Oiticica conceives the combination between color and structure as the essence of this series, he says: “Color and structure are inseparable here, as are space and time; and the fusion of these four elements (which I consider to be dimensions of a single phenomenon) takes place within the work” (Oiticica, 2013, p. 73). This, therefore constituted a living experience (*vivência*) with color’s formal discontinuity (owing to the separated planes of color hanging in common space beyond the wall, forming an installation that the spectator should get in and walk inside).

Oiticica’s *Núcleos* series was initiated in 1960, within his broader project of so-called ‘nuclear painting’, representing in his trajectory the turning point for the *Penetráveis*, of which the installation *Tropicália* (1967) is part. For instance, *Núcleo NC6* (1960/63) (Illustration 75) is a combination of previous *Núcleos*, consisting of wooden boards/plates covered with bright yellow paint suspended by nylon wires at different heights, forming a labyrinth. Like Pape’s *Livro da Criação*, the spectator should take part in the work, accessing it with his/her own body. In this way, the spectator accesses the color’s core in a phenomenological space and time. Oiticica, in this work, places the body within the painting, inside of the color and, like Clark and Pape, materializes

relations between what is seen and who sees it (Merleau-Ponty, 2004), between straight and moving lines, and the organic and geometric. As Favaretto remarks:

Field of tensions, space is 'organized'. In this organic space, the plastic relations are transformed into living experiences (*vivências*): living experiences of color, living experiences of the aesthetics of the daily space. Converging everything to the realization of a space destined to experiences in which also the participants are transformed [...]. Thus, the aesthetics of movement and involvement is a poetic of the gesture, which stands out to make-appear, to manifest, to signify a new artistic attitude (Favaretto, 2015, p. 67, own translation).¹⁷⁵

Núcleos (as *Livro da Criação* and *Bichos*) is the beginning of the spectator's engagement and contribution to the artwork's existence. Moreover, it involves a dialogue between artist and those who engage in the artwork. The installation, *Penetráveis*, develops out of *Núcleos* and the spectator's involvement in the artworks.

In 1963, parallel to the development of *Núcleos*, the series *Penetráveis*, and *Parangolés* (Illustration 33), Oiticica's experiments with color in space and time, developed into the creation of a series of participatory, appropriated¹⁷⁶ objects called "*Bólides*". Sônia Salzstein defines the series of 'objects' named *Bólides* as "a generic concept applied to diverse objects taken from everyday life, such as glass and plastic bottles, or wooden boxes filled with earth, liquids and other sensuous materials" (Salzstein, 1994, p. 75 n.10). The color perpetrated by the spectator who enters both *Núcleos* and *Penetráveis* can be touched, carried, smelled, and listened to with the *Bólides*. Color is experienced beyond the visual (Oiticica et al., 1986, p. 111) with *Bólides*. Most

¹⁷⁵ Original text: "Campo de tensões, o espaço é 'organizado'. Neste, as relações plásticas são transformadas em vivências: vivência da cor, vivência do espaço cotidiano estetizado, confluindo tudo para a efetivação de um espaço destinado a experiências em que também os participantes se transformam [...] Assim, a estética do movimento e do envolvimento é uma poética do gesto, que ressalta fazer-aparecer, o manifestar, o significar uma nova atitude artística".

¹⁷⁶ Oiticica explains the *Bólides*: *In my experience I have a program and I have begun what I call "appropriations": I find an 'object' or an 'object ensemble' made by parts or not, and from it I take possession as something that has for me any meaning, that is, I transform it into a work: [...] for me the object has acquired an autonomous structure – I find in it something fixed, a meaning that I want to expose the signification; this work will later acquire an infinite number of meanings that are added, that are added by the general participation.* "Na minha experiência tenho um programa e já iniciei o que chamo de 'apropriações': acho um 'objeto' ou 'conjunto objeto' formado de partes ou não, e dele tomo posse como algo que possui para mim um significado qualquer, isto é, transformo-o em obra: [...] para mim adquiriu objeto uma estrutura autônoma – acho nele algo fixo, um significado que quero expor a significação; esta obra vai adquirir depois n significados que se acrescentem, que se somam pela participação geral [...]" (Oiticica, 1966, p.1). Oiticica appropriated objects in order to implicate the participant in that signification, not necessarily change or directly question the art institutions, as did Duchamp.

of the *Bólides* are boxes, bags, cans, and bowls that carry diverse materials such as sand, water, sea shelves, and dirt.

Angela Loeb (2011) conducted a systematic study of the *Bólides*, as well as focusing on the system of numbers and titles used in these pieces. There are around 70 pieces that are categorized as *Bólides*, dated from 1963 until 1980 (Loeb, 2011, p. 51). Loeb (2011), like Favaretto (2015) and Oiticica (1986) himself, understands *Bólides* as *transobjects* as well as appropriations. Oiticica refers to *Bólides* as *transobjects* that are transcendental procedures with pre-existent objects, appropriated and re-created by the artist and the spectator. In Oiticica's words:

[w]hat I do by transforming the objects found in the streets into a work is not a mere 'lyrism' of the object or placing it outside the daily life; but in taking it in its transcendental character I incorporate it into an aesthetic idea making it part of the genesis of the work (Oiticica et al., 1986, p. 65, own translation).¹⁷⁷

Therefore, these objects are the transit within the world as are the subjects who touch them (that is, these objects are the transcendental aspect of the word). *Bólides* were objects found on the streets of Rio de Janeiro, or objects made of materials found in Rio de Janeiro, or the *Mangueira* shantytowns,¹⁷⁸ which Oiticica began to visit in the 1960s (Asbury, 2008; Celso Favaretto, 2015; Loeb, 2011). The artist's research centered on the phenomenological method of expressing the perception of colors so as to include the spectator in its core, original propositions, as based on the appropriation of materials and the experience of both *ambiente* (the environment) and the social. This complex relationship between 'bodily conceptualism', appropriation, proposition, and living experience developed from the freedom of experimenting with abstraction. As Favaretto explains: "[differentiated] and extended in Oiticica's program, appropriation appears already focused on the "possession of the environment world" and not as the possession of objects"

¹⁷⁷ Original text: "O que faço ao transformá-lo numa obra não é a simples 'lirificação' do objeto ou situá-lo fora do cotidiano, mas incorporá-lo a uma ideia estética fazê-lo parte da gênese da obra, tomando ele assim um caráter transcendental."

¹⁷⁸ Lygia Pape sometimes went with Hélio Oiticica (Machado, 2008).

(Favaretto, 2015, 92, own translation).¹⁷⁹ *Bólides*, as well as *Penetráveis* and *Parangolés*, are part of Oiticica's *Manifestações Ambientais*, which are artworks that have a basis in the autonomy of the artwork, which expects a direct contribution from the spectator:

It seems to me that the meaning of all these attitudes is deeply linked to the will to restore the plasticity of human autonomous actions to an anonymous sociability. Let us look at the aforementioned *Parangolés*, clothing which the artist optimizes in their sensorial and affective aspects, and whose performance consists in incorporating, now with total liberty, the body's organic expenditures in its social existence; there are also the *Bólides*, coarse, wooden, painted boxes, sacks, commercial glass or plastic bottles, filled with sand, earth, pigments, liquids, that invite a free manipulation, imposing the constituent force of subjectivity upon the very normative realm of social objects. I would like to call attention to the disconcerting, almost ingenious availability with which, for instance, these *Bólides* and *Parangolés* spring up around us, displaying a kind of social naturalism which makes them self-sufficient, and which exempts them from having to prove their aesthetic nature (Salzstein, 1994, p. 127).

Finally, in April 1967, inside the exhibition *Nova Objetividade Brasileira*, Oiticica conceives the *Penetrável Tropicália* (Illustration 87), based on the notion of *Anthropophagy* developed by Oswald de Andrade in 1928 with Tarsila do Amaral and Raoul Bopp. The installation (which was to be penetrated) is an environment constructed with plants, little rocks, araras (macaws), a television set, cloths, and colored wood sides. In *Tropicália*, “as the spectators enter the work, a number of different elements come into view, but they lack any clear sense of articulation with one another” (Martins, 2013, p. 65). Thematically, this *Penetrável* deals with incongruous ideas and stereotypes of Brazil and its identity. The thesis will go deeper into this work in Chapter 6. *Tropicália* resumes Oiticica's idea about appropriated propositions and the environmental project, as based on expression in abstraction and an understanding of color in space and time (once the spectator moves through the installation's space), which exercises the autonomy of art, as well as the social practice in art.

¹⁷⁹ Original text: “Diferenciada e estendida no programa de Oiticica a apropriação comparece já voltada para a ‘posse do mundo ambiente’ e não como posse de objetos.”

4.4 Propositions, open artworks, and adversity

At the beginning of the 1960s, as part of the Neoconcrete movement, Pape, Clark, and Oiticica developed abstraction out of questions and experiments with painting as their form of visual expression. Combining the geometrical and the organic, as well as researching the painting medium with the end of making it part of communal real space, uniquely marked their visual expressions. They raised painting up to a three-dimensional abstract form that expected the participation of the spectator, as mentioned above, with regard to *Livro da Criação* by Pape, *Bichos* by Clark, and respectively *Bilaterais*, *Relevos espaciais*, and *Núcleos* by Oiticica. These artworks exist only when they are manipulated (*Bichos* and *Book of Creation*) or penetrated (*Núcleos*). Owing to this, as soon as the abstraction reached common space, the spectator's body and involvement began to be part of the artwork; the artwork is not fully realized until the spectator experiences it.

Upon the dissolution of the Neoconcrete movement, the three artists continued with their artistic research, making developments towards the common space and spectator's bodily engagement. Their artworks were to ascend to being propositions of living experiences (*vivências*). The three artists theorized about what artistic, participatory propositions should amount to, as well as the idea of participatory artworks in their relation to bodily, living experiences (*vivências*). As Martins claims, the participatory propositions of these artists "should not be taken as the predecessors of contemporary (1980s-2010s) practices where participation is fetishized" (Martins, 2013, p. 73).

Oiticica formally conceptualized, producing a theory about, their (his, Clark's, and Pape's) artistic propositions from the 1960s, which included the works mentioned above. Experiments with abstraction developed into what Oiticica defined as 'propositional *openworks*'. Such propositional *openworks* should be seen, approached, touched, dwelled in or upon, or entered by the spectator (who becomes a participant) in order to experience the artwork, and in experiencing *complete*, the works. The notion of *openwork*, as characterized by Hélio Oiticica (2007), is based on the concept of anti-

art, which should overcome the idea of the artistic object, because the institution could not accommodate such works. Furthermore, *openworks* consist in constant and endless processes of creation, with each spectator taking part in the propositions. The openness of artworks is already present in the *Grupo Frente* phase of the three artists, as manifested primarily on the painted canvas. In the 1960s, after the *Grupo Frente* period, the artworks incorporated the body of the spectator into the work's existence. Thus, the *anti-art*, *open artwork* should be understood as a living experience, which should involve the spectator's phenomenological engagement, thereby surpassing the classical division between subject and object in the visual arts. As Oiticica affirms: "no use having 'participation,' or 'propositions,' if they do not relate to a complete change of the objectal relation; the same with that which could be considered 'sensorial' participation" (Oiticica, 1969, p. 5, author's underlines). Therefore, Clark, Pape, and Oiticica, were avant-garde artists who at once combined abstraction, experimentation, and the senses through living experiences of propositional open artworks. Indeed, their respective expressions presuppose an overcoming of the duality between subject and object in the experience of reality, the world, and art.

The *openwork* should be understood as a proposal made to the spectator to take part in the artwork's existence, which amounts to the living experiencing (*vivenciando*) of the work. On Oiticica's definition, based on Merleau-Ponty: "[...] the appeal to the senses, which can be 'multi-focal' concentration, becomes important as a way towards this behavioral absorption: smell-sight-taste-hearing and touch mingle into that which Merleau-Ponty once defined as 'body's general symbolics'" (Oiticica, 1969, p. 1). Therefore, the *open artworks* of Pape, Clark, and Oiticica, from the 1960s onwards, were not merely symbolic works onto which spectators were intended to project their own symbolism. Vehemently, these open artworks do not suggest that the spectator only complete meanings that the artworks possibly convey. Indeed, it is not only the semiotic meaning (Eco, 1989) that is open to the spectator, but is the "consciousness of a totality of the relations individual-world as a whole action" (Oiticica, 1969, p. 1). Thus, these artists' open propositions are open to interpretations beyond semiotic meanings; they are open to actions and sensorial interactions.

Moreover, the openness of the work is based on discontinuity, and the propositions refute any didacticism. Consequently, *open artworks* are inclusive; they propose new experiences to their spectators, not via causal relations but their unique experiential openness. Furthermore, the spectator/participant plays a role in the work. This is because individual experience gets involved in the work, thereby contributing to its existence. Lastly, the participants should themselves be changed by experimenting with the artworks, whose full realization involves the spectator's lived experience (*nivencia*). Oiticica implicates the artist's disposition in selecting and inventing *openworks*, based on the relationship between subject and object, which overcomes a classical dichotomy, thereby being aligned with a phenomenological approach to the world. Thus, the openness of the artist leads to the artwork's openness. As Oiticica himself remarks: "this experience, in its profound dialectics, already finds, in what I do in my work, an important position of the subject-object problem" (Oiticica et al., 1986, p. 64, own translation).¹⁸⁰

The inclusion of common space, time, and spectators' bodies is based on the openness of artwork, which expects the participation of the spectator in the artwork's ongoing process. These works are grounded in principles of abstraction, expression, and experimental(ism), as well as the autonomy of the artwork in relation to the art institution and its possible insertion into life praxis. Furthermore, the openness of the artwork (sc. the artwork *qua* proposal to the spectator) was a direct response to a political regime. These three artists' propositions compose a plurality of attempts to change social reality through art. The artworks' propositions bore a reflexive aspect in which, as the participant took part and changed the artwork, he/she should in turn *be changed* by the artwork. As Tassinari explains, the *space at work* of the artwork "[...] has a spatiality immanent to the world in common. It does not transcend it, it only draws bridges to an aesthetic experience that goes from the world to the world itself" (Tassinari, 2001, p. 91, own translation).¹⁸¹ The possibility of changing the other

¹⁸⁰Original text: "[...] essa experiência, na sua dialética profunda, já funda, no que faço, na minha obra, uma posição importante do problema sujeito-objeto."

¹⁸¹Original text: "Um espaço em obra possui uma espacialidade imanente ao mundo em comum. Não o transcende, apenas traça pontes para uma experiência estética que vai do mundo ao próprio mundo."

through visual artworks was understood as a possible way of altering social reality, which some filmmakers of Cinema Novo, such as Glauber Rocha and Leon Hirszman, further conceptualized during the 1950s and 1960s.

Filmmakers and artists from the end of the 1950s until early 1970s shared a concern with the ‘real’ (rather than a representation of the real) and social reality. Some filmmakers of modern Brazilian cinema problematized social reality to the spectator in a discontinued, experimental, and abstracted form in order to reach the real (as well as changing it). Xavier acknowledges the relationship between modern cinema and visual arts, mainly during the 1960s and 70s, he says:

The films of the period between 1967 and 1970 that I analyzed in this book had, in common with theater and visual arts, the idea of provoking the spectator as well as the rupture with the regime and contemplation (museological) or consumption (industrial) of the images and staging, stating the imperative of participation which, in the visual arts, meant a break with the surface of the canvas, the passage to the gesture, the behavioral provocation. Cinema, which had to work within the limits of the screen surface, defines new relations and requires new ways of constructing their effects based on fragmentation, collage, juxtaposition, and gestures that break protocol, disorient (Xavier, 2012, pp. 11-12).¹⁸²

Therefore, the appeal to the spectator to become active and aware of the social reality was done in some films through the form, as it is the case of Glauber Rocha.

An artwork’s and film’s basis in openness also changes the other through which the artwork is actively experienced, thus precluding the spectator/participant being led through any representation of reality or representational visual discourse. Artistic production in 1960’s Brazil included this openness to the spectator’s contribution in the ongoing process of the artwork. As Favaretto explains: “[diverse],

¹⁸² Original text: “Os filmes do período entre 1967 e 1970 que analisei neste livro tiveram, em comum com o teatro e as artes visuais, o senso de uma provocação ao espectador, a ruptura com o regime e contemplação (museológica) ou de consumo (industrial) das imagens e encenações, afirmando o imperativo de participação que, nas artes visuais, significou uma ruptura com a superfície da tela, a passagem ao gesto, a provocação comportamental [...]. O cinema, que tinha de trabalhar dentro dos limites da tela-superfície, define novas relações e requer novos modos de construir seus efeitos apoiados na fragmentação, colagem, justaposição e nos gestos que quebram o protocolo, desorientam.”

though some closely linked, all artistic productions converged in term of project and language, in the desire for modernity and in ways of producing social signification” (2007, p. 84, own translation).¹⁸³

Furthermore, the experimental and the adverse are common conditions for artists and filmmakers. For Oiticica, being experimental does not merely translate as ‘experimental art’, but “loose energy lines that grow into an unlimited number of possibilities” (Oiticica, 1972, p. 5, own translation).¹⁸⁴ Therefore, experimentalism as proposed by Oiticica is not restricted to a specific art nor an aesthetic characteristic, but to a conjunction of attitudes of the individual, and to a method and the possibility for “inventing” new modes of artistic production and participation, in resistance to tradition and adversity. The “experimental attitude” or “experimental method” is directly related to the artistic-productive context, which is similarly prevailed over by conditions of “adversity”. Oiticica claims: “Da adversidade vivemos!”(Oiticica, 2007, p. 231).¹⁸⁵ As Dezeuze explains: similarly with “the anthropophagic process, (adversity) can serve as a model for integrating, through ingestion, external influences with an accepted Brazilian reality in order to create, through digestion, a new experience. This is how ‘living’ in adversity can become ‘thriving’ on adversity” (Dezeuze, 2006, p. 242).

Brazilian cinema throughout its history has been dealing with the socio-economic context of an underdeveloped country where the basis for making films is a lack of financial resources, particularly if the production is neither industrial nor commercial. Therefore, Brazilian film actually incorporates precariousness into filmmaking (Jean-Claude Bernardet, 2002; Jean-Claude Bernardet, 2003, 2007, 2009; Salles Gomes, 1986, 2002; Xavier, 2001, 2007, 2012). In order to deal with such precariousness in making films, improvisation and an experimental attitude (Oiticica, 1972) were commonly invoked among filmmakers. Paulo Emílio Salles Gomes

¹⁸³ Original text: “Diversas, porém algumas estreitamente vinculadas, todas convergiam no projeto e na linguagem, no desejo de modernidade e nos modos de produzir a significação social.”

¹⁸⁴ Original text: “[E]m suma o experimental não é ‘arte experimental’ os fios soltos do experimental são energias que brotam para um número aberto de possibilidades no brasil há fios soltos num campo de possibilidades: porque não explorá-los.”

¹⁸⁵ “In Adversity, we thrive!”

“emphasized in 1973 that both Cinema Novo and Cinema Marginal movements were two good examples of creation in adversity” (Xavier, 2001, p. 10, own translation).¹⁸⁶ Xavier notes, furthermore, the distinctively Brazilian “impulse to make cinema”, and moreover the Brazilian persistency in “[inventing] alternatives capable of generating survival in an adverse context” (Xavier, 2001, p. 13, own translation).¹⁸⁷

The path constructed here, which started with the artworks and concepts of Lygia Clark, Lygia Pape, and Hélio Oiticica, indicates a possible rubric for analyzing films from the same period. To this end, the proceeding film analyses will also consider the fundamental tenets of abstraction, namely the openness of the artwork, as based on discontinuity and the negation of didactics which results from overcoming the representationalism, naturalism, and illusoriness of classical art. It seems that certain experimentations in cinema methodologically align with the visual experiments of the aforementioned artists, such as conquering the real and space itself, as well as the concreteness of the experience expressed in the work, which thereby becomes the experience of the spectator, who can themselves share in the artwork’s experimentalism as a way of ‘thriving on adversity’. The abstraction, the autonomy of the artwork, and the inscription of the real are also present in modern Brazilian films.

4.5 Brazilian Modern Cinema

French cinema’s criticism of *Cahier du Cinéma* conceptualized modern cinema along the same lines as the notion of modern art during the 1950s (Kovács, 2007, pp. 38-39). Thus, the category ‘modern cinema’ appears after World War II, mainly the notion of modern cinema in opposition to classical cinema appears after World War II (Kovács, 2007, p. 21). Modern films combine classical cinematic style with the avant-garde. While modern films are narratives, their representation of space and time does

¹⁸⁶ Original text: Paulo Emilio, em 1973, destaca o Cinema Novo e o Cinema Marginal como dois bons exemplos de criação na adversidade.”

¹⁸⁷ Original text: “No Brasil, [...] o impulso de fazer cinema e a invenção de alternativas capazes e gerar sobrevivências no contexto desfavorável persistem.”

not define the narrative; the medium appears through the use of “deframings” (Bonitzer, 2000), and the montage is not concerned with continuity. Furthermore, the improvisation of modern film is possible throughout the whole process, enabling the filmmakers to experiment with cinematographic language.

The aesthetic of modern films is manifested in, respectively, Italian Neo-realism (see especially Roberto Rossellini, Vittorio De Sica, Cesare Zavattini, Luchino Visconti, Giuseppe De Santis, Federico Fellini), Robert Bresson’s *cinematographe*, and certain Hollywood directors like Orson Welles and Alfred Hitchcock, who subverted the classical cinematic discourse by experimenting with the form. Those films and filmmakers laid down the fundamentals for the fight against traditional filmmaking in France and heeding “author politics” (De Baecque, 2010), in which the film director is the author of the film and constructs his/her own style of filmmaking and thinking. (Astruc, 1948). Kovács (2007) historicizes the concept of “modern cinema” in Europe, which is a complex notion that cinema theorists seem to have broadened, especially after the ‘new waves’. There are particularities and styles allocated to certain cinema theorists and philosophers and their nationalities. However, the notion of modern cinema as defined here and in Chapter 1 takes this to include films made after World War II, which are non-representational and authorial.

Similarly, modern Brazilian cinema from the 1950s until the 1970s was aligned with modern European style, owing to being inspired by European author politics and avant-gardist cinema. Modern filmmakers in Brazil fought against the flood of Hollywood films, opposing the industrialization of cinema and its prevailing classical style. Owing to this, Brazilian filmmakers sought to focus on Brazilian social ‘reality’; films ought to tell those stories that were not being told from Brazilian culture and Brazilian social reality. The focus on ‘reality’ was influenced by the direct cinematic methods of Neorealism and Jean Rouch. Additionally, modern cinema is associated with the avant-garde owing to its incorporation of certain avant-gardist procedures, such as exploring cinematographically ways of looking for an essence of cinema, as well as the exploration of space and time without being obliged to tell a story, in films

of different lengths (Smith, 2000, p.19), which could be fragmentary and non-representational.

Against this background, modern cinema should be understood as referring to a conjunction of films that did not correspond with the classical narrative style of film. Occasionally, modern cinema in fact worked *against* the classical form in order to engender in the audience reflections on the dispositive, as well as on the social realities that the film portrays.¹⁸⁸ In the Brazilian context, modern cinema also corresponded with the post-World War II period. These films are routinely associated with terms such as ‘experimental’, ‘underground’, and ‘art films’ (Kovács, 2007; Parente, 1994; Xavier, 2012). One can assume, then, that modern Brazilian cinema contributed pioneering films through the movements Cinema Novo and Cinema Marginal. Additionally, aesthetically modern cinematic style in Brazilian cinema “is associated with discontinuity, a plurality of focus, collage, fragmentation among other effects created by a montage that makes itself visible” (Xavier, 2012, p. 38, own translation).¹⁸⁹ Lastly, modern Brazilian cinema embraced adversity. The precarious circumstances of making films became part of their aesthetic.

As Xavier (2001) indicates, the origins of modern cinema in Brazil arrive with Nelson Pereira dos Santos “in [...] dialogue with the Italian Neo-realism and Brazilian writers” (Xavier, 2001, p. 9). Nelson Pereira dos Santos was an influential figure for the crucial modern cinema movement, Cinema Novo. Among the influences of Cinema Novo were: the French Nouvelle Vague; author politics; Pasolini’s cinema poetry; Sergei Eisenstein dialectics; Jean Rouch’s Cinéma vérité; and the European avant-garde cinema of 1920s (Avellar, 1995a, 1995b; Rocha, 2003b, 2004; Saraceni, 1993; Viany, 1999; Xavier, 2001, 2012). A set of European references and styles are key, creative sources for modern cinema in Brazil. Thus, foreign cinema, especially

¹⁸⁸ The modern cinema ‘space’ can be understood in the same vein as the modern art space, as Tassinari suggests: *Modern space emerges as the territory of doing, where the effect can still be seen as being done.* “O espaço moderno surge, desse modo, como um território do fazer, onde o efeito pode mostrar-se ainda como que se fazendo” (Tassinari, 2001, p. 44).

¹⁸⁹ Original text: “No terreno da visualidade em geral, o estilo alegórico moderno é associado à descontinuidade, pluralidade de focos, colagem, fragmentação ou outros efeitos criados pela montagem ‘que se faz ver.’”

European, provided a rich, referential source for modern Brazilian filmmakers. However, European cinema did not so much as provide a ‘model’ for Brazilian filmmakers, in the way that early American cinema provided crucial blueprints for directors such as José Medina (as elaborated on in Chapter 3).

Modern cinema in Brazil was broader than Cinema Novo (or Cinema Marginal). Indeed, directors such as Walter Hugo Khouri (1929-2003) and Jorge Bodanzky (1942-) were not associated with any movement. Nevertheless, their films (which were being made until the 1980s) could be considered Modern Cinema in the Brazilian context. Still, Cinema Novo and Cinema Marginal brought together a plurality of experimentations and filmmakers, who made films with a diversity of styles, which converged with the avant-garde visual arts of the period. According to Xavier: “authors politics, low-budget films, and the renewal of cinematographic language, are essential traits that mark modern cinema, which opposed the classical cinematic style more intensively than industrial cinema” (Xavier, 2001, pp. 14-15, own translation).¹⁹⁰

Brazilian modern cinema, like other visual-artistic expressions of the period that were aligned with Brazilian modernism and avant-garde art, was concerned with the national aspect of cultural and visual production. The national was a recurring theme and *leitmotif* that had a strong relevance within the Cinema Novo movement. Concerning its European influences, Cinema Novo had a similar understanding to 1920’s modernism, in which cinema was intended to combine the modern, avant-garde form with Brazilian reality. The national, in general, was a thematic preoccupation of popular culture and social criticism, but it was nonetheless thematically ambiguous and underdefined, as argued in the previous chapter. The nation’s culture, and the discussion of a plural identity based on popular culture, placed some films from the 1950s and 1960s between a criticism of nationalism while at the same time contributing to it, as Xavier states:

¹⁹⁰ Original text: “[...] política dos autores’, os filmes de baixo orçamento e a renovação da linguagem, traços que marcam o cinema moderno, por oposição ao clássico e mais plenamente industrial.”

In the 1960s, although the axis of cultural discussion was political, the matter of 'national character' was present in different ways. In Cinema Novo, it was ambiguous in the movement's relationship with religion, football, and popular feasts [...]. There was, on the one hand, the idea that certain typically national practices were forms of alienation. On the other hand, there was a certain care for these same cultural practices that developed from a direct experience with these cultural practices and from the lack of confidence in the process of technical and economic modernization as it happened in the country (Xavier, 2001, p. 21, own translation).¹⁹¹

Brazil's national discourse and motifs in the arts are often ambiguous and problematic. Because at the same time, the references to popular culture of Brazil and local stereotypes can increase and feed nationalist ideas and refute nationalism. Thus, "with Cinema Novo, returning to what is Brazilian did not mean describing local customs, but to have a Brazilian society with critical vision, to analyze its contradictions through a sociological perspective" (Bernardet, 2009, p. 107, own translation).¹⁹² In general, as in Cinema Novo, modern Brazilian cinema, and modernism and avant-garde art of the 1920s and 1950s-1960s, fought against a fixed stereotype of national identity (as anthropophagy) and nationalist politics, resisting imitations of foreign models or themes and the molding of them to fit the Brazilian context.

¹⁹¹ Original text: Nos anos 1960, embora o eixo da discussão cultural fosse político, esta questão do 'caráter nacional' se fez presente de diferentes formas, e o Cinema Novo foi ambíguo na sua relação com a religião, o futebol e a festa popular [...]. Havia de um lado, a ideia de que certas práticas tipicamente nacionais eram formas de alienação; de outro, havia certo zelo por estas mesmas práticas culturais que derivava de uma vivência direta destes traços de cultura e, por outro lado, da falta de confiança no processo de modernização técnico-econômica tal como ocorria."

¹⁹² Original text: "[...] com o Cinema Novo, voltar-se para o Brasil não significa mais descrever costumes locais, mas sim ter uma sociedade brasileira com uma visão crítica, analisar suas contradições numa perspectiva sociológica."

4.6 Cinema Novo

The discussion surrounding Cinema Novo's name¹⁹³ in Brazil appeared in newspapers. Originating in the last years of the 1950s, and existing until the early 1970s, Cinema Novo was based on a discussion around author's politics in grounding its original, aesthetic proposal, as well as the refusal of industrial film production, mainly the Vera Cruz industry in São Paulo. As Rocha wrote: "[t]o become new – o kynema needs to break with the structures of the dominant kyneztyka" (Rocha, 2004, p.36, own translation).¹⁹⁴ Therefore, it was a movement of rupture with an institution. This cinema, considered new, was based mainly on the output of filmmakers such as Nelson Pereira do Santos (proto-Cinema Novo), Glauber Rocha, Ruy Guerra (1931-), Leon Hirszman (1937-1987), Carlos Diegues (1940-), Paulo Cesar Saraceni (1932-2012), and Joaquim Pedro de Andrade (1932-1988).

This rupture was primarily a matter of anti-imperialist, anti-industrial cinema, as well as the review of the Brazilian film imagery:

In Brazil, *Cinema Novo* is a matter of truth and not of photographism. To us, camera is an eye over the world, the tracking is an instrument of knowledge, the montage is not demagogy but punctuation of our ambitious discourse about human and social reality of Brazil! This is a manifesto (Rocha, 2004, p.52, own translation, author's underline).¹⁹⁵

In the extract above, Rocha resumes the main aesthetic ideas of the movement. Cinema Novo changed throughout the 1960s decade. During the first 4 years of the 1960s it became a form of Brazilian art thanks to the wave of optimism in the early 1960s. After the military coup in 1964, and, after that, the AI-5 in 1968 switched the aim of the filmmakers. The early years of the movement were dedicated to creating a "new aesthetic" of Brazilian cinema, as aforementioned, and, in order to do so, experimentation was fundamental to the filmmaker's expression. The handheld

¹⁹³ Before the filmmakers of Cinema Novo were named this way, they tried to define themselves in a manifesto, later remembered as "manifesto bola-bola" (Rocha, 2004, pp. 50-51).

¹⁹⁴ Original text: "Para chegar a ser novo – o kynema precisa romper com as estruturas da kyneztyka dominate."

¹⁹⁵ Original text: "No Brasil o *cinema novo* é uma questão de verdade e não de fotografismo. Para nós a camera é um olho sobre o mundo, o *travelling* é um instrumento de conhecimento, a montagem não é demagogia mas pontuação do nosso ambicioso discurso sobre a realidade humana e social do Brasil! Isto é quase um manifesto."

camera (Xavier, 2001) became not just a technical procedure but also a slogan: “uma camera na mão e uma ideia na cabeça” (Rocha, 2004). The handheld camera gave, at the same time, fluidity, rawness, and abstraction in proximity to “reality”, making possible improvisation as one was filming. The aesthetic propounded the engagement of the spectator in films such as *Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol* | *Black God, White Devil* (1964), *Vidas Secas* | *Baren Lives* (1963), *Os Fuzis* | *The Guns* (1963), and *Os cafajestes* | *The uncrupulous ones* (1962).

Cinema Novo embodies such an axiom not only because it has the courage to stand at the center of social relations and face the decisive facts, but also because it understands that cinema is a self-knowledge, an exploration of the possibilities of “being in the world”, which does not accept a prior definition. Furthermore, it requires constant renewal of its risks in the face of an unpredictable reality. The question of truth in cinema is far from being summed up to the application of a grid of knowledge obtained in the books of sociology (Ismail Xavier in Rocha, 2003a, p. 16, own translation).¹⁹⁶

Thus, as Xavier mentions in the passage above, Cinema Novo’s filmmakers wanted to be directly engaged with the world and were open to embrace improvisation. After the coup of 1964, the struggle of *cinemanovistas*¹⁹⁷ was to re-adjust the modernity in the film form to didactically represent space and time (as in classical cinema), to ‘communicate’ with the spectator, but not all filmmakers adhered to that, nor would they combine certain didactics with modern form. As Xavier explains: “[from] 1965 to 1968, the demand for communication with the public and the simultaneous impulse of authorial modernity marked a clear oscillation in the posture of Cinema Novo” (Xavier, 2001).¹⁹⁸ The filmmakers who were part of Cinema Novo had, each one of them, their particular view and style regarding cinematographic language and its influences. For example, Joaquim Pedro was attached to national themes and literature, and most of his films were made based on books such as *Padre e a moça* (1966) and *Macunaima* (1969). Ruy Guerra, meanwhile, took the “sertão” wave

¹⁹⁶ Original text: “O cinema novo encarna tal axioma não só porque tem a coragem de se postar no centro das relações sociais e encarar os fatos decisivos, mas também porque entende que cinema é um autoconhecimento, uma exploração das possibilidades de “estar no mundo” que não comporta definição prévia, e requer a renovação constante dos seus riscos diante de uma realidade imprevisível. A questão da verdade no cinema está longe de se resumir à aplicação de uma grade de conhecimento obtida nos livros de sociologia.”

¹⁹⁷ This name was used to designate Cinema Novo’s filmmakers in Portuguese.

¹⁹⁸ Original text: “De 1965 a 1968, a demanda de comunicação e o simultâneo impulso de modernidade autoral marcaram uma nítida oscilação na postura do Cinema Novo.”

with *Os Fuzis*, and Paulo Cesar Saraceni resumed the melancholic and impotent mood of the political situation in *O desafio* (1964).

Glauber Rocha¹⁹⁹ was the most prominent filmmaker, film critic, theorist, and promoter of Cinema Novo. Rocha's trajectory is marked by his activism comprising cinematic practice and politics (as evidenced in his interviews, texts, critiques, and manifestos). He was, at the same time, the creator of a complex, laborious, and enigmatic film form, which is sometimes associated with his Hunger Aesthetic manifesto (*A Estética da Fome*, 1965) (Rocha, 2004), as well as The Aesthetic of Dream manifesto (*A Estética do Sonho*, 1971) (Rocha, 2004), among his other textual works. Rocha was the object of extensive studies in Brazil and other countries. This thesis dedicates one chapter (Chapter 6) to two of his films. The first is *Pátio* (1959), Rocha's first short, avant-garde film. I also focus on his third, iconic feature film, *Terra em Transe* (1967). Both films mentioned here are paralleled by artworks of the same period, thereby bringing new light into the analyzes of Rocha's films from a visual arts perspective. To this end, I focus on abstract experimentation, understood as a phenomenological approach to filmmaking, an approach that is amenable to the formal experimentations exhibited in both films.

Terra em Transe influenced a generation of artists from different fields and different parts of the country, and, along with *Tropicália* by Oiticica, formed the essence of the Tropicalist movement (Xavier, 2001). Thus, this thesis dedicates Chapter 6 to Rocha *Pátio* and *Terra em transe*, thereby further developing the discourse on Cinema Novo and Rocha's film style, understood to express modern cinematic style, aligned with construing experimentation and abstraction through a phenomenological method of film-making.

¹⁹⁹ Paulo Emilio Salles Gomes calls Glauber Rocha 'a prophet' (Gardies et al., 1991).

4.7 Cinema Marginal

Fernão Ramos (1987) remarks on the challenge of defining Cinema Marginal as a movement, or indeed citing the common characteristics of a group of films and filmmakers. Nevertheless, the author understands that there is an ‘organicity’ among the films of Cinema Marginal, which are seen as a ‘reaction’ to the passivity of the audience and to Cinema Novo (Ramos, 1987, pp. 13-14). The word ‘marginal’ relates to the film’s circulation, as well as the filmmakers’ role in society, and the films’ typical form and motifs (Ramos, 1987). Ramos (1987) identifies common themes in the *diegesis* of the films, such as humor, mockery, appeal to the abject, and marginal characters. The films are aligned with a modern cinematic aesthetic in opposition to classical cinema’s penchant for representation, as well as its illusional and naturalistic aspects.

Although the films of Cinema Marginal present an indication of narrative, they are fragmentary and have no concern in leading the spectator (Ramos, 1987, p. 43). Additionally, the filmmakers did not seek any commercial distribution of the films. The anarchic attitude of these films is radical, as were their aesthetics, and they resist categorization. Their structure consists in non-structure, an intrinsic logic that is based on improvisation, experimentation, mockery of the audience. Ismael Xavier comments that the general aesthetic of the films is that of the *trash* (*estética do lixo*) and the *kitsch* (Xavier, 2001, 2012), but also they exhibit “formal precision” (Xavier, 2012). Moreover, Xavier (2012) relates their “trash” aesthetics to precariousness.

As in Cinema Novo, in Cinema Marginal the camera is handheld in the majority of the films. The prevailing aesthetic of Cinema Marginal’s radicalism is related to the political unrest the country was enduring, most notably after the AI-5, which saw the installation of political and civilian persecution, with arrests and torture. Uchôa attributes the origins of the movement in São Paulo to its association with state repression:

It is a group of filmmakers and critics, who assembled at the *Luz* neighborhood (in São Paulo) beginning in 1968 – among them were, Carlos Reichenbach, José Agrippino de Paula, Jairo Ferreira, Rogério Sganzerla, João Batista de Andrade, João Callegaro, and Ozualdo Candeias. In contact with actors and technicians of Luz's region, these filmmakers created a heterogeneous production marked by aesthetic violence, by despair, and by the consciousness of failure in front of the political incapacity of intervention in a country in a state of siege. Their answer to military repression develops in a radical disenchantment with the elimination of utopias and, sometimes, with a scatological performance with the presence of screams and vomit. In general terms, one realizes a crudity of the gaze that reprocesses the kitsch of the cultural industry in ascension, the jollity of sexual adventures in the city of Santos, the intellectuals' universe in crisis, the perambulations without destiny and also physical and urban deformities²⁰⁰ (Uchôa, 2013b, p. 6 own translation).²⁰¹

The emblematic film of Cinema Marginal is *O bandido da luz vermelha* | *The red light Bandit* (1968) by Rogério Sganzerla, the first film bearing the hallmarks of Cinema Marginal, and indicative of innovation with its “avant-garde attitude” (Xavier, 2012, p. 34), thus taking a different direction from Cinema Novo. The bandit figure is the center of the film. Thus, the film hero is a marginal figure who kills, robs, and rapes indiscriminately and dies at the end. His lover is a prostitute who runs away with him. The film has a radio broadcaster as voice over, narrating some of the attacks and events affecting the bandit. Furthermore, the radio superimposes some of the dialogues, or rather indicates dialogues. Xavier analyzes the film in detail in *Alegorias do Subdesenvolvimento: Cinema Novo, Tropicalismo e Cinema Marginal* (2012),²⁰² commenting on the layers of sound: “[...] the multiplicity of focuses of narrative is explicit in the sound track, in which the bandit's voice off confronts two other voices”(Xavier, 2012, p. 26, own translation).²⁰³ Apart from the apparent narrative, the bandit is continually

²⁰⁰ Adding to that list of filmmakers: Andrea Tonacci (1944-2016), Julio Bressane (1946-), José Mojica Marins (1936-), Elyseu Visconti (1939-2012), and Neville d'Almeida (1941-).

²⁰¹ Original text: “Trata-se de um grupo de cineastas e críticos, que se concentra no bairro da Luz, a partir de 1968 – entre eles, Carlos Reichenbach, José Agrippino de Paula, Jairo Ferreira, Rogério Sganzerla, João Batista de Andrade, João Callegaro e Ozualdo Candeias, entre outros. Em contato com atores e técnicos da região, tais cineastas dão origem a uma produção heterogênea, marcada pela violência estética, pelo desespero e pela conscientização do fracasso, diante da incapacidade de intervenção política num país em estado de sítio. Sua resposta à repressão military desdobra-se num desencanto radical, com a eliminação das utopias e, às vezes, a encenação escatológica, eivada por berros e vômitos. Em termos gerais, percebe-se uma crueza do olhar, que reprocessa o kitsch da indústria cultural em ascensão, a curtição das aventuras sexuais na baixada santista, o universo dos intelectuais em crise, as perambulações sem destino, e também as deformidades físicas e urbanas.”

²⁰² This book was first published in English: Xavier, I. (1997). *Allegories of Underdevelopment: Aesthetics and Politics in Brazilian Modern Cinema*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press. About the filmmaker Glauber Rocha, there is the edition in French: Xavier, I. (2008). *Glauber Rocha et l'esthétique de la faim*. Paris: L'Harmattan.

²⁰³ Original text: “[...] a multiplicidade de focos narrativos se explicita na faixa sonora, em que a fala over do bandido se confronta a de duas outras vozes.”

moving through the city and the detritus, the garbage, the filth, and slums. The handheld camera offers the film's composition a close relationship with the bandit's body and his marginal existence in the world. *O bandido da luz vermelha* was a shocking film constituted by revolutionary choices in motif and the strict, conscious manipulation of a fragmentary narrative.

O bandido da luz vermelha was not the first film to use a handheld camera in filming the margins of the metropolis and urban space: Ozualdo Candeias in 1967 shot *A Margin/The margin*, which some theorists consider to be the first film of Cinema Marginal (Ferreira, 1986; Puppo & Albuquerque, 2002; Ramos, 1987; A. A. Teles, 2006; Â. A. Teles, 2007; Uchôa, 2013a, 2013b). Ozualdo Candeias' first attempts at making films were motivated by alleged UFO appearances in the state of Minas Gerais in Brazil. While he never witnessed a flying saucer, by going to Minas Gerais to shoot films, he began to learn about cinematographic language, remarking: “[seeing] the flying saucer? I never did. But I have learned about doing cinema” (Ozualdo Candeias in Puppo & Albuquerque, 2002, p. 16, own translation).²⁰⁴

Conscious of every step taken in his films—from the first idea to the final editorial choice—Ozualdo Candeias created a unique ensemble of newsreels, documentaries, and fictions of short, medium, and feature lengths, which Ângela Aparecida Teles (2007) identifies as “an aesthetic of the precariousness”. For instance, in *A margem*, Ozualdo Candeias portrays bodies in precarious conditions, which elucidates the spirit of resistance that attends living in precarious circumstances, that is, thriving in adversity. Candeias had few resources to work with but was open to experimenting with, and indeed *incorporating*, the conditions of filming into the film itself, thus making use of the openness to adversity in constructing the film. Finally, the film form invites the spectator to participate in the film's process of meaning, therefore rendering the film an *open artwork*. In this vein, Chapter 7 of this thesis will be dedicated to *A margem* and its potential relations to Lygia Pape, Lygia Clark, and Helio Oiticica's artworks.

²⁰⁴ Original text: “Topar com disco voador não topei, mas aprendi tudo isso em cinema.”

In conclusion, Aumont (2008), when connecting modern painting to modern cinema, restricts himself to the European and North American context, quoting and relating artists and filmmakers from those contexts. As he explains: “[what] remains of cinematographic modernism is the investment in its radicality, its intensification and its critical exacerbation of the *frame* [...]” (Aumont, 2008, p. 61 own translation).²⁰⁵ Therefore, Aumont mentions that modern cinema’s radicalism is attached to the use and abuse of the “frame”, similarly with the theories of Ferreira Gullar (1959a, 2014), whose focus is on the frame in painting and the artists who worked with abstract painting in Brazil. Thus, if one considers Neoconcretism and its developments at the end of the 1960s, it is possible to align them with modern Brazilian cinema, once both possessed a formal methodology concerned with common, real space and human body, as well as social reality.

The proceeding Chapters, 5, 6, and 7, are dedicated to case studies of Brazilian filmmakers, whose work follows Brazilian painters to the extent that they adopted the same experimental and phenomenological approach in creating modern and avant-garde films. In the next chapter, I focus on the analysis of *Limite* (1931) by Mário Peixoto, connecting this to Tarsila do Amaral’s modern abstract paintings and the Cubist film *Ballet Mécanique* (1924) by Léger. Following this exposition, in Chapter 6 I examine Rocha’s trajectory at the end of the 1950s and 1960s (until 1967), focusing on his avant-gardist film *Pátio* and the labyrinthine film *Terra em transe*, to which I connect both Rocha’s film practice and the works of Neoconcrete artists, as well as *Tropicália*, Hélio Oiticica’s *penetráveis*. Lastly, Chapter 7 is completely dedicated to Ozualdo Candeias’ *A margem* and Candeias’ filmmaking, which I connect to Lygia Pape, Lygia Clark, and Hélio Oiticica’s propositional *openworks*.

²⁰⁵ Original text: “O que subsiste do modernismo cinematográfico é, então, o investimento de sua radicalidade, de sua intensificação e de sua exacerbção críticas no *quadro* [...]”

Chapter 5 - Mário Peixoto's *Limite* | *Limit* (1931). Between Avant-Garde and modernism: cinematographic expression through abstraction and experimentalism

This chapter analyzes the film *Limite*|*Limit*, the only film completed by the writer and poet Mário Peixoto. *Limite* is associated with the European avant-garde, being the Brazilian exemplar of an avant-garde film (A. Machado, 2010; Avellar, 2003; Bernardet, 2002; Korfmann, 2007; Machado Jr., 2009; Mello, 1996; Rocha, 2003; Xavier, 2008a). Thus, what are the aesthetic aspects of *Limite* that qualify it as avant-garde? Is *Limite* an abstract film? With these questions in mind, this chapter examines *Limite*'s formal aspects in relation to the formal aspects and methods of Tarsila do Amaral's paintings, as well as the cubist film *Ballet Mécanique*, in order to approximate the modern and avant-gardist process of abstraction in painting and film to *Limite*'s method of filmmaking. Both Tarsila and Léger express in their painting the world they perceive, thereby breaking with laws of representation and perspective. The same applies to *Ballet Mécanique*, whose experimentalism through cinema expresses phenomenologically the thought of things and bodies.

Limite was shot in 1930 and first screened in 1931. It was never released commercially (Avellar, 2011, p. 12). Mário Peixoto was acquainted with Octavio de Faria and Plínio Sussekind Rocha, who were members of the cinema club *Chaplin Club* and critics of *O Fan* magazine (Korfmann, 2007; Xavier, 1978). Sussekind Rocha organized *Limite*'s first screening on May 17th 1931 at *Cinema Capitólio* in Cinelândia, Rio de Janeiro, and continued to screen the film at least once a year at the National Faculty of Philosophy. By 1954 the original copy had been lost, after which Sussekind Rocha asked Saulo Pereira de Mello to take care of the restoration and preservation of the remaining copy (until then preserved by *Limite*'s photographer, Edgar Brazil) (Avellar, 2011, pp. 12-13).

Octávio de Faria published a seminal critique of *Limite* in 1931.²⁰⁶ In his commentary, de Faria defends *Limite* as an ‘international’ film rather than a ‘Brazilian’ film, given that it is not concerned with its locality. He ends his critique by writing, “*Limite* is not a national film that must be seen. *Limite* is a great film that deserves to be studied because of several cinematographic questions it generates” (Octávio de Faria in Rocha, 2003, p. 64, own translation).²⁰⁷ Moreover, Saulo Pereira de Mello refers to *Limite* as a unique (*insólita*) work in both the national and international context (Mello, 1996, p. 13). Mário Peixoto’s film was preserved and acclaimed by a small circle of critics at the time of its few first screenings. Incongruously, the main artists and writers of the 1920s modernist movement did not comment on the film (Bernardet, 2002; Xavier, 1978). Furthermore, the main formal avant-gardist ideas of 1920’s modernism gave space to the ‘new wave’ of national and regional themes in the visual arts and literature in 1931. Owing to the ‘disconnection’ of the 1920s modernist movement with Brazilian cinema, and with the filmmaking practice (after all, no visual artist associated with the movement made films), this research inquires as to which of *Limite*’s characteristics qualify it as a modernist film. Is what characterizes *Limite* as a modernism film that it bears productive or methodological similarities with modernist painting, rather than being concerned with portraying ‘Brazilianness’?

This chapter aims to examine the questions mentioned above, aligning *Limite* with the aesthetics of avant-garde cinema and modernism, based primarily on concerns about abstraction in painting and cinema. We can consider the film to be a possible missing ‘link’, or a connection that came later, between European avant-garde cinema and 1920’s modernism. To establish the validity of this connection, my first step will be to describe and interpret Tarsila do Amaral’s²⁰⁸ painting method and abstraction in, respectively, her *Pau-Brasil* and *Anthropophagic* phases, which correspond to 1920’s modernism, following her studies with cubist painter, Fernand Léger. The study of

²⁰⁶ Glauber Rocha published the same critique in his book, *Revisão crítica do Cinema Brasileiro* (2003).

²⁰⁷ Original text: “Limite não é um filme nacional que deve ser visto. É um grande filme que merece ser estudado nas diversas questões de ‘cinema’ que levanta.”

²⁰⁸ Since Tarsila do Amaral has the same last name as her main theorist Aracy Amaral, here I will be referring to the painter and artist by her first name, “Tarsila”.

Tarsila's abstraction focuses on the analysis of three paintings: *Estrada de Ferro Central do Brasil* (1924); *Abaporu* (1928); and *Antropofagia* (1929). Chapter 3 of this thesis explained Tarsila's central role within the modernist movement and her accommodation of both avant-garde proposals and Brazilian motifs. Thus, these three paintings meld abstraction with Brazilian landscape motifs, i.e., colors and countryside houses as well as the *Anthropophagite Manifesto's* conceptual abstraction.²⁰⁹

Secondly, Léger's cubist and avant-garde film *Ballet Mécanique* (1924), made with Dudley Murphy, is described and interpreted as revealing the cubist painter's filmmaking method. *Ballet Mécanique* is an example of cubist and avant-garde film. To this end, it combines abstraction and avant-garde cinematic procedures, experimenting with the medium and non-linearity, as well as the absence of representational narrative (Ghali, 1995). In addition, it should be borne in mind that Léger was Tarsila's painting tutor and colleague.

Léger's abstraction in film, and Tarsila's abstraction in painting, indicates a possible interpretation of *Limite* as being an avant-garde and modernist film. *Limite* is the result of Peixoto's experimentations with the medium that expresses his perception of world and time (Roizman, 2003). Peixoto composes a film centered on rhythms that create abstract conceptual images through framing, montage, and camera movements. Additionally, the film neither presents a linear narrative nor representational space and time, but rather a sensual experience from the connections of human bodies to the elements of the landscape and architectural spaces (Avellar, 2011; Korfmann, 2007; Mello, 1996; Roizman, 2003). Roizman argues the proximity of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology regarding cinema and painting, that he also refers to *Limite*:

²⁰⁹ The terminology of 'conceptual abstract painting' and 'abstract cinematographic concept' that I will apply throughout this chapter refers to my interpretation of formalist and methodological procedures of modern and avant-garde artists and filmmakers who work with figures and concepts as conceiving abstraction. Therefore, the composition is an expressed idea (concept) of things, bodies, movements, and spaces conceived phenomenologically. In short, there is a relation between visual and written language, which is not based on cause and effect relations, nor signs or symbols, but constitutes a phenomenological approach to visual expression.

In the 20th century, the interest in expressing, capturing, and thinking about the proximity of visible reality in painting, photography, and cinema developed in parallel to the central question of the consciousness of reality and the "gaze" of things in philosophy. The philosophical question of consciousness and the gaze over the world was the foundation of the phenomenological interrogation itself. Merleau-Ponty grounds in the assertion that we are a bodily consciousness, that is, all knowledge is accomplished by the experience of the body within the sensible, the perception of the world (Roizman, 2003, p. 7, own translation).²¹⁰

Therefore, aligned with the visual expressions of abstract forms in painting and cinema, *Limite phenomenologically* expresses the world as conceived by Peixoto. As already mentioned in previous chapters, this thesis focuses on the aesthetic aspects that relate films and artworks. Thus, I emphasize here the descriptions, and interpretations, of paintings and both films, *Ballet Mécanique* and *Limite*, in order to reflect on the artists' and filmmakers' methods of visual expression with regard to experimentalism and abstraction.²¹¹

²¹⁰ Original text: "O interesse em expressar, captar e pensar a proximidade da realidade visível na pintura, na fotografia e no cinema caminhou paralelamente, no século XX, à questão central da consciência da realidade e do "olhar" sobre as coisas na filosofia, e foi o fundamento da própria interrogação fenomenológica. Merleau-Ponty partiu da afirmação de que somos uma consciência encarnada num corpo, ou seja, todo conhecimento é realizado pela experiência desse corpo junto ao sensível, ao mundo."

²¹¹ *Limite's* context, its reception in Brazil, its relation to other films in Brazil and Europe, and each of the film's screenings, as well as the people surrounding Mário Peixoto during the period of the film shooting, are not examined in depth in this thesis.

5.1 Tarsila do Amaral's abstraction of landscape and bodies: *Estrada de Ferro Central do Brasil (E.F.C.B.)* | *Brazil's Central Railway* (1924), *Abaporu* (1928), and *Antropofagia* | *Anthropophagy* (1929)



Illustration 34: *Estrada de Ferro Central do Brasil (E.F.C.B.)*, (1924). Tarsila do Amaral | 142x100,2 cm | oil on canvas. Retrieved from: <http://tarsiladoamaral.com.br/obra/pau-brasil-1924-1928/>. Accessed: 17/06/2018.



Illustration 35 - *Abaporu*, (1928). Tarsila do Amaral | 85x73cm | oil on canvas. Retrieved from: <http://tarsiladoamaral.com.br/obra/antropofagica-1928-1930/>. Accessed: 17/06/2018.



Illustration 36 -*Antropofagia*, (1929). Tarsila Amaral | 79x101cm | oil on canvas. Retrieved at: <http://tarsiladoamaral.com.br/obra/antropofagica-1928-1930/>. Accessed: 17/06/2018/

Tarsila do Amaral went to Paris in 1923 to study with modern and avant-garde artists, with the aim of learning their painting method. She had begun to develop her own avant-gardist aesthetic just after the *Modern Art Week* of 1922. The cubists and Tarsila approached the surface of the canvas not as a medium to represent a world, adhering to rules of perspective, but as a medium for expressing perceptions of the world.²¹² To this end, Tarsila painted aspects of her lived experience (*vivências*) (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/1993).²¹³ Tarsila cultivated the cubist method, which demanded the rigorous discipline of “geometric synthesis studies” (Amaral, 2003, p. 121). Thus, every brush stroke was a ‘bodily’, living experience, while also being conceptual, since, as Merleau-Ponty held, the artwork of the body is the artwork of the mind (Merleau-Ponty, 1961/1993).

In Tarsila’s modernist paintings, the lines and colors are conceived from a cubist perspective, which therefore meant from the perspective of the canvas’s two-dimensionality, as opposed to an illusionist perspective. Tarsila paints the surface of the canvas with essential figures, which are results of “geometric syntheses” and syntheses of organic lines. In Tarsila’s paintings, “Léger’s machinery becomes organic, wild – and as domestic as a pet cat. In the midst of a soft chiaroscuro, even these extravagant singularities gain shelter, warmth” (Naves, 1996, pp. 13-14, own translation).²¹⁴ Tarsila’s paintings have figures reduced to a minimum of form and a maximum of color. The modernist Tarsila scrutinized every corner of the picture’s surface and two-dimensionality with colors that construct elementary figures (a method that says, ‘this is a painting, not reality or its representation, but nonetheless something that has aspects of reality because it is my expression of such’).

Tarsila drew on paper before painting on the canvas (Amaral, 2003). However, in her paintings, the distribution of tonalities and colors’ nuances inside and in-between figures are responsible for marking a distinction between forms—lines do

²¹² Conceived in opposition to the pre-conceived expressions of classical artists.

²¹³ As already discussed in Chapters 2 and 3 of this thesis.

²¹⁴ Original text: “O maquinismo de Léger se organiciza, torna-se selvagem – e caseiro como um gato de estimação. Em meio ao claro-escuro suave até essas singularidades extravagantes ganham abrigo, aconchego.”

not accomplish the distinction. Nonetheless, Tarsila's essential figures have defined limits. At the same time, Tarsila paints the figurative elements close to one another, as if one were the continuation of the other. To this extent, she mingles the figures in the composition. Tarsila does not dissolve figures themselves, but their independence over the surface, bringing the 'gap' between background and foreground onto the same plane as the figures. Owing to this, there is no difference between figures and background. This bears similarities with Leger's pictorial space, which embraced color as one surface, whereby abstraction became prominent in relation to figures (Greenberg, 1971, p. 101), while nevertheless creating evident differences between forms.

Tarsila's abstraction is figurative, and colors determine the figures. In Tassinari's words: "[if] it is possible to distinguish generic spatial schemes one from another it is also important to mention that they are on the threshold of the abstract process" (Tassinari, 2001, p. 66, own translation).²¹⁵ Hence, the painter's process of abstraction dissolves the perspectival geometry that expresses figures from within their colors in two-dimensional space. The world expressed on the canvas is one whole, particular experience communicating how colors and figures are abstractions of living experiences (*vivências*). Tarsila's modernist paintings communicate that the canvas does not represent houses, trees, people. Rather, her painting sustains 'bodily ideas', that is, phenomenological concepts expressed through colors. Accordingly, in this chapter, when the text mentions an object's name in a painting or a film, it is not as a representation of the objects themselves, but consists instead in phenomenological concepts developed by a univocal relation of the artist with his/her world. These notions amount to painted abstractions, a reduction of the world's perception into a few simple lines, colors, and figures, which are expressed from a reversible relation of a Being with the world. As Johnson reminds us commenting Merleau-Ponty's aesthetics: "The reversibility of subject and object that the painter experiences is exemplified in our own bodies as a fundamental manifestation of Being" (Johnson, 1993, p. 48).

²¹⁵ Original text: "Se é possível distinguir esquemas espaciais genéricos uns dos outros também é preciso salientar que eles estão no limiar de um processo de abstração."

In the paintings, *Estrada de Ferro Central do Brasil (E.F.C.B)* (1924), *Abaporu* (1928), and *Antropofagia* (1929), the figures are positioned in relation to the base of the canvas. The bottom of the canvas is a fundament from which the composition starts. The composition of the painting indicates a base at the bottom of the canvas. However, it does not separate figure and background but in fact blends them on a vertical surface. Tarsila makes evident the two-dimensionality of the canvases, as Léger does. The paintings *E.F.C.B.*, *Abaporu*, and *Antropofagia* are divided at the bottom and top following the verticality of the composition, as well as the distribution of colors and figures on the canvas. This division is in accordance with Cattani's (1991) analysis of Tarsila's painting, *Carnaval em Madureira* (1922).

Estrada de Ferro Central do Brasil (1924) (Illustration 34), a painting from Tarsila's *Poesia Pau Brasil* phase, shows elementary figures of railways and a village landscape. *E.F.C.B.* portrays abstracted figures that respectively indicate roads, telegraph poles, electricity poles, trains, stop signs, and grids. It furthermore presents indications of a church top, houses and their façades, windows, rooftops, trees, palm trees (tropical trees), and curved volumes in beige, grey, and green, which suggest mountains. *E.F.C.B.* seems to be a vertical, panoramic view reduced to pure colors and simple forms. On the bottom of the canvas, Tarsila applied a beige tone that contrasts with the grey of sinuous 'paths' and figures, which are painted in black, white, and orange. The beige, isolated small figures dominate the bottom of the canvas. The middle of the canvas is 'cut' by a half-circle filled with grids, all drawn with black lines, and the inside of this half-circle is painted with a grey tone. On top of the half circle's structure, there is a terracotta rectangle with three smaller blue rectangles within. Finally, on top of the terracotta rectangle, there is a trapezium painted in a darker tonality. The geometrical figures, as well as the color combination, indicate a geometric abstraction of a house.

The geometric, terracotta figure (an abstraction of a house), which sits atop the grid structure, share the middle of the canvas. On both sides, there are other gridded structures and green curved forms. The green is applied as a pure color on the edges of

the form, getting lighter (i.e., mixed with white) towards the center, indicating the volume of curved, organic forms. This reaffirms that colors and forms *combined* construct distinct figures that are connected to each other in the composition. Still, in the middle of the canvas, there is the top of an electric pole, and a smaller house, as well as an organic green form, beside the terracotta 'house', which indicates a tropical tree, either a palm or banana tree. One could argue that the figures on the painting are fragments (elements) of the landscape. Amaral (2003) mentions that the trip Tarsila made to Minas Gerais state influenced her choice of colors and motifs, which derived from the city's landscape (Amaral, 2003, p. 150).

At the top of *E.F.C.B.*'s canvas, there is a set of houses in white, blue, yellow, and red. There are also tropical tree tops, as well as the top of a church and a pole. Tarsila's painting method produces figures with visible limits that are part of the same two-dimensional plane. The figures have outlined limits and are mingled in a way that one cannot discriminate which is the 'figure' and which is the background. Thus, the composition does not have the depth of a classical painting. As Merleau-Ponty explains: "[depth] thus understood is, rather, the experience of the reversibility of dimensions, of a global 'locality' in which height, width, and depth are abstracted, a volumosity we express in a word when we say a thing is *there*" (Merleau-Ponty, 1961/1993, p. 140). Tarsila's *E.F.C.B* expresses a rigorous experimentation with abstracting the world over the canvas.

Tarsila combines elements from reality, from the world, on the two-dimensional surface of the canvas. She controls the limits of the frame, creating a conceptual picture in several of her modernist paintings. 'Conceptual', however, does not refer to an idea, a discourse, signs, symbols, nor to certain stereotypes, but a living experience in the world whereby every single element is expressed from a bodily, lived experience (sc. phenomenological experience)²¹⁶ of Brazil's landscape. *Estrada de Ferro Central do Brasil* does not 'represent' or 'suggest' an illusion of an existent railway, but

²¹⁶ The body is stressed in order to refer to the fact that the artist's bodily experience, the perception of the flesh, is present in the painting method and over the canvas, and thus in the artist's gestures over the canvas.

how a central railway in Brazil fuses with nature. Aligned with the modernist movement, Tarsila painted the Brazilian “territory”, the colored world in which she dwelt. In the same vein as Léger, who designated the plasticity of the machine, Tarsila propounds the plasticity of Brazil’s landscape.

Thus, returning to Brazil in December 1923, Tarsila was in Rio de Janeiro during carnival and in the Minas Gerais’s countryside on her Easter holidays. She visited these places in order to ‘rediscover’ the pure, naive Brazil with its popular manifestations, considering it more ‘authentic’ than the modern city which was beginning to emerge (Cattani, 1991, p. 33, own translation).²¹⁷

Abaporu (1928) (Illustration 35) is an abstraction that sits between landscape painting and portraiture. Does this mean it is a landscape portrayed through bodily fragments? One notices that the painting has some aspects in harmony with one another, despite their proportions. There is one foot, one leg, one whole arm, one half-arm, a back, a neck, and a head, which has two eyes, a nose, and short hair. The most visually prominent body parts are the foot and the hand, which touches the green base. The abstract body, pictured in a seated position, is almost the same size as the green figure, which indicates a tree or cactus. Both the body and tree nearly touch the full yellow circle (likely indicating the sun) on the top of the canvas. The head lies gently on the half arm. The hand and the foot appear to indicate the figure’s relation to the land, upon which it appears to be sitting; it does not do anything but rest, relying on the land at the bottom. The figure and background in this painting are inseparable from its top and bottom.

Perhaps we can divide *Abaporu* into two: (1) the bottom of the canvas, whereby a green mass fuses with a foot and a hand; and (2) part of a tree moving towards the top of the canvas where bodily elements and tree fragments connect to the blue surroundings, in which there is a yellow circle. *Abaporu* constitutes a conceptual painting of a movement that foresaw a cultural and national identity within the *Anthropophagite Manifesto*. *Abaporu* is the body that is the landscape and the landscape

²¹⁷ Original text: “Assim, voltando ao Brasil em dezembro de 1923, Tarsila esteve no ano seguinte no carnaval do Rio de Janeiro e na Páscoa no interior de Minas Gerais, visando ‘redescobrir’ o Brasil puro, ingênuo, com suas manifestações populares, considerando mais ‘autêntico’ que a cidade moderna que começava a surgir.”

that is the body, thus a phenomenological painting. The landscape is conceived through the body, owing to which the flesh of the body is shared with that of the landscape (Merleau-Ponty, 1961/1993).

Abaporu, which in the Tupi language means “the man who eats people”, has a strong relation to its world, its land. Fragments of a human-like figure and elements from the landscape are proportionally almost as one. Though different from the cannibal drawings of the 16th century, the “Brazilian” who eats other people does nothing else but rely on its land. Thus, there it rests. *Abaporu* makes the motifs of body and landscape equivalent over the canvas; they are connected. *E.F.C.B.* is a composition comprised of fragments of the landscape, and there are no body parts present. As such, it is a conceptual abstraction of a landscape, where there is no apparent difference between figure and background, proximity and distance (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/1993, 1961/1993).

Antropofagia (Illustration 36) appears to combine paintings elements from Tarsila’s other works, namely *Abaporu* and *A Negra*²¹⁸ (Illustration 16). *Antropofagia* has figures with body parts, as in the other two paintings, which sit both in side and frontal profile with a round form that suggests a pendulous breast, as well as organic landscape elements, such as the tree leaf. The body carrying the breast has a torso with a head, one leg, and a foot. The second body has a head continuous with its neck and torso, one whole arm, one leg, and one foot. The abstraction of human figures merges with the green organic forms, which one can interpret as trees and a banana tree leaf, similar to the houses at the top of *E.F.C.B.* One cannot tell where one body begins and the other ends. Still, we can assume there to be two bodies, given the presence of two faceless heads.

Tarsila equally distributes elements over the canvas’s surface. The bottom is painted green where the two feet reach. Apart from the orange outline of the feet, there is no limitation indicating where the bodies begin and the ground ends, and vice-

²¹⁸ *A Negra* is described in Chapter 3 of this thesis.

versa. A banana tree leaf is painted in the lighter tonality of green, which is similar to the one at the bottom of the canvas, which stands out from the other green forms. On the top of the canvas, there is a yellow circle filled with yellow diagonal lines from the edges of the circle to the center, again, this may be a sun. Near the front of the body, Tarsila places a red stripe that touches a 'plant' and a 'leg'. Tarsila's painting seems to play with the confusion between limit and continuity, between painted motif and expressing a phenomenological relation with the world, in which there is no 'figure' and background, since they are part of the same lived experience.

The paintings *Estrada de Ferro Central do Brasil*, *Antropofagia*, and *Abaporu* present elements of the landscape and bodies with titles accommodating their motifs. These 'abstract painting concepts' dissolve "[...] iconographic content and [make] the surface appear as such" (Bois et al., 2013, p. 48). Tarsila's concern with, and contribution to, a growing 'nativism' (Amaral, 2003, p. 166) in the modernist movement relied on synthesizing the organic and geometric from landscape and bodily elements with a conceptual abstraction (her chosen painting method). Moreover, her contribution is constrained and influenced by adopting 'local' colors, about which the artist regularly commented, while other influences included contemporaneous modernist writers in Brazil and France (where she put on her first individual exhibition in 1926) (Amaral, 2003). Finally, one could argue that the idea of "Brazilian" art and culture in Tarsila's paintings consists in the connection between body and land, or body and landscape, just as Merleau-Ponty (1961/1993) remarked that the projections of the Being constitute space.

Tarsila establishes a base for the frame thanks to her approach to the bottom of the canvas. Consequently, she vertically divides the painting's surface, without causal relations. The employment of the canvas's two-dimensionality opens it up to different understandings, among them being the phenomenological interpretation of depth, namely, the depth of a Being's projections in space: "[the] visible world and the world of my motor projects are both total parts of the same Being" (Merleau-Ponty, 1961/1993, p. 124). Thus, depth is not that of representational three-dimensional

space, but the depth as experienced by the artist, that is, as he/she transforms it into two dimensions.

Accordingly, one might propose that the ‘division’ of the canvas’ surface, the size and proportion of the forms, as well as the contrasting colors in the composition, ‘function’ as the “close-up” in filmmaking. Considering the whole painting composition, Tarsila’s painting method (at least in the tree paintings analyzed here) constructs “focuses”. Tarsila’s cubist tutor and colleague, Fernand Léger, was a cinema enthusiast and, before making films himself, he incorporated cinematographic language procedures into his painting. This is known as his “simultanist painting” after World War I (Green, 1976, p. 166):

Léger’s disruptive and always sudden pictorial ‘cuts’ from element to element and image to image in the *J’ai Tué* illustrations obviously paralleled the process of cinema cutting, while his isolation of images like the helmet and rifle gave them an intensified significance, which obviously paralleled, possibly even echoed with conscious intent, the process of cinematic isolation by close-up. (Green, 1976, p. 166)

Therefore, the cinematic art influenced Léger’s painting and visual thinking, likely contributing to the definition and connection between figures in his paintings produced between the World Wars. Léger associates painting and cinema in opposition to theater and literature:

Subject, literature, and sentimentality are all negative qualities which weigh down the current cinema-in sum, qualities which bring it into competition with the theater. True cinema involves the image of the object which is totally unfamiliar to our eyes and which is in itself moving, if you know how to present it (Léger, 1993, p. 373).

Moreover, Léger, in essentially constructing a moving image of objects (things), created a film essentially composed of fragments and close-ups (Ghali, 1995). The close-ups fragment the objects, imbuing them with the subjectivity of the maker. Therefore, as Léger applies the close-up, thereby fragmenting things, he expresses his own perception of them. Furthermore, he connects body parts and mechanical parts in the whole film composition as dwelling in the same world. With this background, as Ghali remarks, the film *Ballet Mécanique*: “is mostly based on objects and fragments of

objects. For the first time a film was built on the pure performance of objects seen in close-up, individualized” (Ghali, 1995, p. 237, own translation).²¹⁹

Classical cinema and representational narratives of space and time apply the close-up to faces and objects, which has the effect of increasing and contributing to the drama and the text. As Bordwell and Thompson (2008) explain: “The close-up is traditionally the shot showing just the head, hands, feet, or a small object. It emphasizes facial expression, the details of a gesture or a significant object” (Bordwell & Thompson, 2008, p. 191) in the narrative. Aumont (2001) defines the use of close-up in alignment with the French avant-garde artists and filmmakers, such as Germaine Dulac, Jean Epstein, Léon Moussinac, and René Clair, as a procedure associated with a psychological effect. About this, Aumont elaborates: “The close-up is seen as the image par excellence that produces a psychic distance specific to cinema, encompassing a sense of staggering proximity” (Aumont, 2001, p. 172). However, in Léger’s film, *Ballet Mécanique*, the close-up is applied as in abstract cubist painting along with the editing. Moreover, it is neither part of the narrative nor a psychological effect. On the contrary, it “frustrates the referentiality of the photographic image” (Bois et al., 2013, p. 48), dissolving “[...] the iconographic content of the shot and to make the surface appear as such” (Bois et al., 2013, p. 48). It is in like fashion that Peixoto’s *Limite* employs close-ups.

5.2 *Ballet Mécanique* (1924): Fernand Léger’s machines and bodies as abstract film

Fernand Léger, by 1923-1924 a well-known painter, masterminded, filmed, and edited *Ballet Mécanique*, having been approached by American cameraman, Dudley Murphy. *Ballet Mécanique* combines Léger’s cubist tendencies, in particular Cubism’s preoccupation with the two-dimensionality of the canvas/screen, the synthesis of

²¹⁹ Original text: “[...] est en grande partie fondé sur des objets et des fragments d’objets. Pour la première fois on réalisait un film bâti sur le seul jeu des objets vus en gros plan, individualisés.”

geometrical forms, fragmentation, object understood as subject, the machine's plastic aspect, and movement between images (Green, 1976; Lawder, 1975; Léger, 2009; Lista, 1997; Xavier, 2008a). There are several similarities between the film's shots and some of Léger's paintings (Lawder, 1975). *Ballet Mécanique* is an avant-garde and abstract film (Bois et al., 2013; Ghali, 1995; Lawder, 1975; Xavier, 2008a), in which machines are a motif, just as they are in Léger's paintings. The abstract, avant-garde aesthetic of *Ballet Mécanique* can be attributed to Léger's method of framing objects, his experimentalism with cinematographic language, the editing that produces the film's rhythm,²²⁰ and the objects in being treated as subjects.

After World War I, between 1917 and 1919, Léger was already experimenting with the machine's plastic value in painting as a motif, as well as with "man-machine". "Man-machine" refers to figures composed of human body parts combined with mechanical elements or movements, as part of his synthetic geometric style (Green, 1976). For Léger, the machine is a "beautiful" plastic matter, owing to which art should likewise attain to that "beauty". Nevertheless, as Léger emphasizes: "[t]he mechanical element is only a mean not an end. I consider it simply plastic 'raw material,' like the elements of a landscape or a still life" (Léger in Turvey, 2002, p. 47). Thus, the machines and their elements ought to be painted and filmed just as other objects and bodies. As in Léger's paintings between the World Wars, all of the elements have the same relevance on the canvas and belong to the same plastic category. They are raw materials to be worked over the canvas and, in film, to be worked across moving images.²²¹

The writer Blaise Cendrars was Léger's close friend and a cinema enthusiast. Furthermore, Blaise Cendrars was a solid supporter of the Brazilian modernist movement of the 1920s. Both Tarsila do Amaral and Fernand Léger illustrated Cendrars's poems (Amaral, 2003; Green, 1976). Cendrars and Léger shared an interest in cinema, and, previous to Léger's experience of producing film himself, Cendrars

²²⁰ Here, 'rhythm' is understood as Saulo Pereira de Mello defines it when analyzing *Limite*, he says that the rhythm in cinema is a regularity that is constant and offers a permanence principle (Mello, 2014, p. 85).

²²¹ There is movement between images and within the images.

influenced the painter in his “simultanist style” (Green, 1976). The writer and painter praised Abel Gance’s film *La Roue* | *The Wheel* (1923), especially the film’s title sequence, which focuses on the trains and the train derailing, which drains the drama and accentuates the machine’s plastic value. As Green argues:

He (Léger) ignored the ‘dramatic’ and ‘sentimental’ themes, whose existence he did however acknowledge, to focus on the ‘plastic’ theme contained almost exclusively in the first sections of the film (*La Roue*) in no way suggesting that anyone but Gance was responsible for them. For Léger, film is not theater, and its significance therefore is not literary but is found in ‘the project image’ – that alone is its *raison d’être* (Green, 1976, p. 276).

Therefore, Léger apprehended cinema from the screen’s ‘surface’, in which moving images are projected and combined in their two-dimensional aspects. Cinema, like painting, supports the expression of connections between man/machine and object/man as a single unit, sharing the same ‘stuff’ (Merleau-Ponty, 1961/1993). The absence of classical representation, in both Léger’s cinema and painting, makes possible an extensive number of experimentations and abstractions, which, in Léger’s painting and filmmaking method, involved exploring the machine’s plastic value, as well as the mechanization of human bodies.

Ballet Mécanique is an abstract mechanical dance, in which the machines’ movements constitute a spectacle, as in a dance, whereby the machine’s rhythm dictates the pace for the movements of human body parts and the object’s fragments. As Lista explains: “The ‘cinematism’ of the geometric forms on the plane, which function as an abstract spectacle except with anthropomorphic connotations, influenced many other artists a little later” (Lista, 1997, p. 36, own translation).²²² Not by chance, after 1920 Léger produced sceneries for dance and theater performances. In 1921, the artist worked with the dance company, *Ballet Suédois*, producing their costumes and scenery for the performance entitled *Skating ring*, based on Ricciotto Canudo’s poem of the same name (Lista, 1997).

²²² Original text : “Le cinétisme des formes géométriques sur ce plan, en fonction d’un spectacle abstrait, mais à connotation anthropomorphe, devait attirer un peu plus tard bien d’autres artistes.”

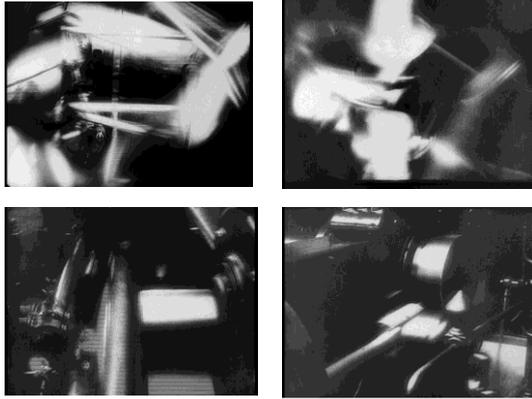


Illustration 37 - Machines, in *Ballet Mécanique* (Fernand Léger and Dudley Murphy, 1924).

In *Ballet Mécanique*, the rhythm of the machines dictates the human body's rhythm. After all, in 1920s modernity, machines were part of a Being's landscape (their reality or world). Moreover, the film's title, *Ballet Mécanique* [*Mechanical Ballet*], encapsulates Léger's visual conception of the film (just as Tarsila do Amaral's titles captured her modernist paintings). Thus, for Léger, the title and sequences between machine and body (or fragments of objects) function as 'abstract cinema concepts', that is, ideas comprising reality's (the world's) abstractions on the screen's surface.

Ballet Mécanique has a "frame" separate from the screen's "frame limit". The "frame limit" being the formal limit of the image²²³ (Aumont, 2011; Bazin, 1991). Thus, the film has a virtual, synthetic 'conceptual' frame. Two moving images constitute the conceptual frame and are the 'concept' of the film. They sit at the beginning and end of the film, so as to enclose the film's composition. Roizman (2003) names the "opening and closure" conceptual images as "allegorical images", referring specifically to *Limite*. *Ballet Mécanique*'s frame is the figure of the 'mechanized' Charlot | Chaplin (Illustration 38), and the woman on the swing (Illustration 39). Lawder (1975) mentions that the image of the woman on a swing functions as a *carte postale en mouvement*, as Léger calls it, which "[establishes] a rhythm, and the content of the image is of incidental importance" (Lawder, 1975, p. 136).

²²³ In Portuguese, it is possible to differentiate between two types of frames in cinema using two different words: *quadro* and *moldura*. 'Quadro' refers to the whole picture, and to the painting, as an object. Whereas, 'moldura' is the object that delimits the canvas, and, in cinema, the formal square that delimits the screen.

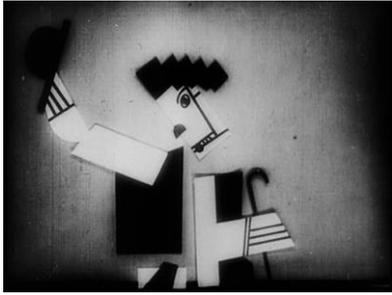


Illustration 38 – ‘Mechanical’ Charlot, in *Ballet Mécanique*



Illustration 39 – Woman on a swing, in *Ballet Mécanique*

The cubist, fragmented, mechanical ‘Charlot’, as well as the woman on the swing, form the frame of the film since they establish both the ‘bodily concepts’ present in the film’s composition and rhythm. The woman on the swing sustains the pace of the film, which variously becomes faster and slower, but never stops. The woman on the swing stands for the repetitive movements and pace of machines (Illustration 37). The round pendulum (Illustration 40) that serves to reflect Fernand Léger and Dudley Murphy also move repetitively as the woman on the swing. The film’s rhythm is as fast as the swing or the movements of the machine. The editing (sc. montage) determines the film’s rhythm as well as the abstraction of the figures. Lista (1997) refers to *Ballet Mécanique* as a film based on editing (sc. montage). In the author’s words, *Ballet Mécanique* “[surpasses] the aesthetics of cinema-painting, Léger’s experimental research attempt to empower the specificity of cinematographic language, by exposing, in particular, the montage mechanism, opposed to the narrative, as an expressive alibi” (Lista, 1997, p. 58, own translation).²²⁴

Lista (1997) furthermore argues that Léger’s experimentation with montage in *Ballet Mécanique* constitutes the core of the “Léger’s filmmaking method, which performs in an opposite direction of “narrative cinema””. Consequently, the film repudiates classical cinematic style. As a cubist painter, Léger experiments with the medium, making the cinematographic language appear as essential part of the film’s composition. The camera is static; the objects, machines, and bodies perform for the

²²⁴ Original text : “Dépassant l’esthétique de la ciné-peinture, la recherche expérimentale de Léger tente d’investir la spécificité linguistique du cinéma, en mettant à nu, notamment, le mécanisme du montage opposé au narratum comme alibi expressif.”

camera, which then become the fundamentals of the film's rhythm, along with the editing.



Illustration 40 – Pendulum, in *Ballet Mécanique*.

In this direction, “organic life like the inert object, the moving matter or the geometrical figure, become in *Ballet Mécanique* rhythmic mechanisms. They are concrete and abstract forms carried away in a movement of plastic order, which prevents any linear progression” (Lista, 1997, p. 58, own translation).²²⁵ Therefore, *Ballet Mécanique* produces a repetitive rhythm in which the object becomes almost a pure form. The sequence with the shoe and the hat is an example (Illustration 41) of an abstract form resulting from the rhythm of the editing. This is also true of the inclusion of geometrical white forms: a triangle, circle, and square. Léger underscores the absence of narrative and linearity, grounding his and Dudley Murphy's film in rhythm: “No scenario. The interactions of rhythmic images that is all” (Férand Léger in Green, 1976, p. 281). Finally, the film's rhythm is “created by the succession of images” (Green, 1976, p. 279).

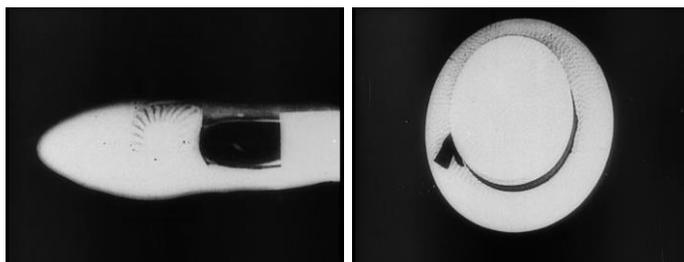


Illustration 41 – Shoe and hat, in *Ballet Mécanique*.

²²⁵ Original text: “La vie organique comme l'objet inerte, la matière mobile ou la figure géométrique y deviennent mécanismes rythmés, formes à la fois concrètes et abstraites, emportées dans un mouvement d'ordre plastique qui s'interdit toute progression linéaire.”

Just as the woman on the swing synthesizes the film's rhythm, Charlot's conceptual image synthesizes the mechanization of human bodies, or, as Lawder (1975) indicates, it is the "anthropomorphization" of machines and objects. It is relevant to mention that Charlie Chaplin for Léger was "the first to turn the actor into an object" (Green, 1976, p. 276). *Ballet Mécanique*, as its title states, transforms every element into a machine. For instance, the peculiar framing and the editing mechanize Kiki's²²⁶ head, eyes, mouth, and smile, the effect of which serializes movements of human parts (Illustration 42). Thus, it is possible to affirm that *Ballet Mécanique* mechanizes human bodies through a repetitive rhythm, rather than anthropomorphizing machines and objects. The body machine becomes the machine body once they both dwell in the same world (Merleau-Ponty, 1961/1993). For instance, the sequence of Kiki's eyes in close-up, opening and closing amidst two machines with a piston moving repeatedly, as well as the sequence of the lady with the laundry coming up and down a staircase (Illustration 43), moreover contributes to the mechanization of bodily movements. In other words, *Ballet Mécanique* presents human bodies and body parts in their mechanical state (Lista, 1997, p. 38).

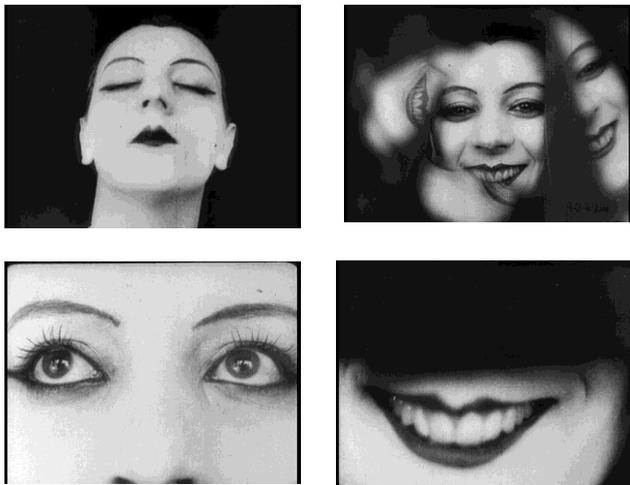


Illustration 42 – Kiki's head and face details, in *Ballet Mécanique*.

²²⁶ Kiki de Montparnasse was Alice Prin's (1901-1953) artistic name. She was an actress, model, singer, and painter.

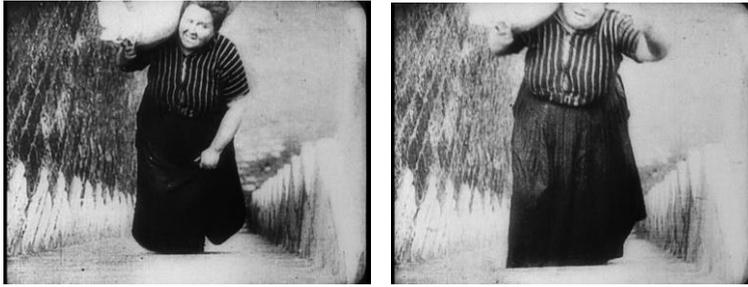


Illustration 43 – Woman on the staircase, in *Ballet Mécanique*.

Lastly, *Ballet Mécanique* fragments bodies, machines, and objects through the use of close-up, mirrors, and boards. The individual images are elementary figures of machines, the camera exploring bodies, objects, landscapes, and signs (regarding the sequence of the title “on a volé un collier de perles de 5 millions” followed by the number 0), and their two-dimensional aspect as forms over a canvas. As Bois et al, remarks:

In *Ballet Mécanique*, Léger substitutes a unique, singular point of view with a multiplicity of angles, fragmenting the illusion of spatial continuity. The image is composed rhythmically; ornamental motifs are indefinitely altered, repeated, and exchanged. As if creating a temporal collage, Léger uses overlays, wipes, and freeze-frames to dissolve the iconographic content of the shot and to make the surface appear as such (Bois et al., 2013, p. 48).

The close-up fragments the bodies and the machine into pieces, as pieces of one whole mechanical ballet perceived by the spectator as a whole unit. Thus, both framings and editing are abstract because they make evident the two-dimensional space of the screen, expressing one’s perception of the world that subverts the rules of narrative, representation, or a singular point of view. Thus, *Ballet Mécanique*’s composition, which consists in elementary parts of machines, bodies, objects, and signs, accords with Léger’s painted compositions, as well as Tarsila’s modernist paintings (especially the three paintings mentioned above).

Tarsila’s modern abstraction, as exemplified in *E.F.C.B.*, *Abaporu*, and *Antropofagia*, as well as Fernand Leger’s film *Ballet Mécanique*, combine visual abstraction with conceptual, bodily understanding, whereby the title of the works plays a

significant role. In Tarsila's paintings, the landscape is the principal figure in relation to the body, just as machines are connected to bodies for Léger. Both Tarsila and Léger draw attention to the two-dimensional aspect of the screen and the canvas in their work, not hiding that their work constitutes an expression of the world. The use of proportions in Tarsila's paintings can be associated with Léger's use of close-ups. Tarsila's phenomenological approach to some of Brazil's landscapes secured her status as a modernist painter, since she could combine the avant-garde aesthetic with "Brazilian" motifs. Tarsila renounced the national, idealized and stereotyped representationalism that characterized Brazilian academic painters. Nonetheless, Tarsila was also concerned to distinguish the national aspect of modern art. Likewise, Mário Peixoto's *Limite* seems to be in-between the aesthetic of avant-garde film and modernist concerns with the 'local' motif, that is, a nativism with regard to thinking about the landscape in relation to bodies.

5.3 *Limite* (1931): abstract cinematic thinking of landscape and bodies

Mário Peixoto financed, wrote, and directed *Limite* with borrowed cameras and a small crew in Mangaratiba, Rio de Janeiro state. This arrangement gave Peixoto liberty to create and direct *Limite* (Nelson Pereira dos Santos in S. Machado, 2001). Peixoto began to shoot a second film with Carmen Santos (1904-1952):²²⁷ *Onde a terra acaba* | *At the edge of the earth* (1933). However, they had to suspend the shooting of this second film, owing to which Peixoto abandoned the project. Nonetheless, Carmen Santos kept the film's title, shooting another film written and directed by Otávio Gabus Mendes (1906-1946). Following the disappointment with Carmen Santos, Peixoto never shot another film, but instead wrote several essays, short stories, poetry, and a novel in six volumes called *O inútil de cada um* (Avellar, 2011; Korfmann; S. Machado, 2012; Mello, 1996).

²²⁷ Carmen Santos was an actress, film director, and a pioneering female film producer in the 1930s.

Peixoto visited Paris and London in 1929 when he had the idea of making *Limite* from a newspaper photograph (Illustration 44). The film shows at the beginning and the end the image of a woman's head between two male hands in handcuffs (Illustration 45). This image functions as an abstract conceptual image of the film, or, as Saulo Pereira de Mello (1996) describes it, a “proto-image”, and its *leitmotif* (Korfmann, 2007), in a similar fashion to *Ballet Mécanique*'s frame. Saulo Pereira de Mello mentions: “[all] the images in the film are a metamorphosis of the fundamental image or parts of it” (Mello, 1996, p. 38, own translation).²²⁸ Thus, *Limite*'s fundamental image conceptualizes the film's form in alignment with its title, ‘limit.’ The tied hands enclose the woman's head, attesting to an external limitation. However, both hands and head dissolve into a black surrounding.



Illustration 44 - Photo by André Kertész: VU magazine, 1929.



Illustration 45 - The woman in between male handcuffed hands, in *Limite* (Mário Peixoto, 1931).

Limite, as *Ballet Mécanique*, has a “frame”, which is delineated by two conceptual images. The first to appear after the credits is a hilltop with vultures on it, the hilltop occupying only the bottom of the screen (Illustration 46), where a woman's head with male handcuffed hands fuses with the hilltop (Illustration 47). These two images are reprised at the film's finale, just before the ending is announced. As mentioned above, Roizman (2003) refers to both images as the “frame” of the film, but also as an allegorical statement announcing the narrative. On the other hand, *Limite* has a ‘proto-narrative’ (Mello, 1996), with no linearity, and heavy experimentation with form and photography in the direction of abstraction. As Avellar remarks: “*Limite* is

²²⁸ Original text: “Todas as imagens do filme são metamorfoses da imagem protéica ou de partes dela [...]”

not a narrative film, says Saulo (Pereira de Mello), it was born directly from a scenario [...]. From the beginning it was a list of shots: a scenario” (2011, p.36, own translation).²²⁹ Accordingly, a *trame* (scenario) (Ghali, 1995) constitutes *Limite*, but does so non-representationally.



Illustration 46 - Vultures on hilltop, in *Limite*



Illustration 47 - Fusion of conceptual image top into hilltop, in *Limite*.

Limite does not follow a linear plot, but there is nonetheless a regular synopsis of the film available, which says it is a film about three fugitives, one man (man number 1) and two women (woman number 1, and woman number 2), who are on a boat, lost in the middle of the ocean. Once in the boat, and with no expectation of finding land, they think about their pasts and past actions. As Mello explains: “[the] three stories’ are the ‘development’ of the film: they express, amplify and develop the theme, but not in a classical narrative way” (Mello, 1996, p. 34, own translation).²³⁰ It is apt that the people and bodies filmed are not named. Indeed, the film’s credits associate the actors’ names only with their genders and order of appearance (man and woman, numbers 1 and 2).

Following *Limite*’s central conceptual image (viz., a woman’s head between male handcuffed hands) comes a close-up of the handcuffed closed hands—just the hands and the handcuffs. Infinite empty blackness surrounds the closed fists and the tight handcuffs. Subsequently, we see a close-up of the woman’s eyes—just her eyes. The camera gets so close to the woman’s face that one can see the pores of her skin. The eyes are ‘free’ from the handcuffs, and they expand throughout the frame, as if limitless. Furthermore, the surface of the sea, which reflects the blazing and sparkling

²²⁹ Original text: “Limite não é um filme narrativo, observa Saulo (Pereira de Mello), ‘nasceu diretamente com cenário – com uma decupagem: não existiu nem argumento nem história a ser decupada. Desde o início foi uma lista de *shots*: um cenário.”

²³⁰ Original text: “As ‘três histórias’ são um ‘desenvolvimento’ do filme: exprimem, ampliam e desenvolvem o tema, mas não narrativamente.”

sunlight, fuses with and then dissolves the close-up of the woman's eyes (Illustration 48).



Illustration 48 - Sequence of handcuffed hands, eyes, and sea surface, in *Limite*.

The position of the camera and the framing dismantle perspectival proportions of bodies and landscape elements, enabling the exploration of seemingly unlimited and infinite space as portrayed in *Limite*. Peixoto films bodies, objects, and elements of the landscape from unusual angles. He does this so that they seem lost in an endless road, or an endless sea, a mass of grass, a mass of water, or an infinite sky. Furthermore, body parts are surrounded by a uniform matter (Illustration 49). Moreover, the framing emphasizes limits, edges, margins, borders, contours, drawing attention to lines that limit, confine, and constrain, in addition to the limitation afforded by the screen's frame (Illustration 50).



Illustration 49 - Segments of unlimited and infinity, in *Limite*.



Illustration 50 - Segment of limits, edges, margins, borders, contours, defining lines that limit, in *Limite*

Limite balances sequences that leak out the screen's *frame-limit* with sequences whereby the screen frame *constitutes* the image. In other words, the camera encloses its motifs. Thus, the initial abstract conceptual images are present in the film as a formal procedure as well as poetic (Mello, 1996). The film's beginning epitomizes its method and aesthetic. The film's frame is an abstraction of the film itself.

The camera positions, as well as the limitations afforded by the frame are not chosen at random. To the contrary, "there is a reason for each framing, for each movement of the machine" (Mello, 1996, p. 30): they are thoughts (Merleau-Ponty, 1961/1993). In *Limite*, the man, both women, their body parts, the objects, and the landscape enjoy the same attention from the camera; they equally dwell within the frame. The structural solidity of the frame does not make the framing restrictive. On the contrary, it offers the film myriad poetic opportunities and openness. As a non-representational film, *Limite* plays with the extension of the camera and the possibilities of framing. The camera moves freely, and this freedom is mostly expressed in opposition to the atmosphere of uselessness that surrounds the three people who are limited by the boat (Mello, 1996, p. 30).

Several critics define *Limite* as an avant-garde film (Avellar, 2003, 2011; Korfmann, 2007; Korfmann & Nogueira, 2004; Mello, 1996; Roizman, 2003; Xavier, 2001, 2008a), which, in general, can refer to a conjunction of films that are experimental, do not engage with the commercial circuit, or are concerned with the film medium, and unpreoccupied with linearity or narrative plotlines. These descriptors are synonymous with what this thesis has included under the umbrella term 'non-representational'. *Limite*, just like European avant-garde films, experiments with the film medium, and, even though Peixoto had written a short plot, the film betrays an indicial narrative and is non-linear. Therefore, *Limite* disrupts representational space and time in the process of abstraction. Additionally, the film experiments with framing and camera movements, to which the photographer Edgar Brazil constructed special supports and props to correspond with Peixoto's ideas for the shots and scenes. Edgar Brazil was responsible for arranging Mário Peixoto's ideas technically. As Peixoto

framed, Edgar filmed at Peixoto's direction. Thus, *Limite* is Peixoto's conception in moving images in the direction of a phenomenological approach to the world. Thus, as Julio Bressane avers: "*Limite* is the most radical film of the French avant-garde, which the French avant-garde never accomplished" (Julio Bressane in Bernardet, 2002, p. 270, own translation).²³¹

Ballet Mécanique is the exemplar of French avant-garde cinema that engages in abstraction, and, like other avant-garde filmmakers, one of Léger's main concerns was the close-up (Ghali, 1995; Green, 1976; Léger, 2009; Lista, 1997). The close-up for Léger creates abstraction and distance from the literary and dramatic aspects of cinema. If there is a constant in *Limite*, the close-up is a candidate. As mentioned above, *Limite* begins with the close-up of a woman's head between male handcuffed hands. This is followed by a close-up of the hands, as well as a close-up of the woman's eyes. As Korfmann and Nogueira elaborate: "[continually], Peixoto focuses on huge close-ups of objects and faces, includes wide shots of landscapes and the sea, and utilizes throughout unusual compositions and camera movements" (Korfmann & Nogueira, 2004, p. 136).

Although the close-up in *Limite* is frequently interpreted as a psychological procedure, which is intended to cause feelings and sensations in the spectator (Avellar, 2011, p. 52), I suggest we interpret the systematic use of close-up and fragmentation of bodies and landscape as abstractions. Similarly with *Ballet Mécanique*, the close-up aims to express the subject's perception of the world non-representationally. Ghali (1995) indicates that the fragmentation of objects and the close-up are intrinsically related in creating the subject's expression. He says: "[the] fragment becomes the pregnant sign of the filmmaker's subjective vision and strongly expresses his emotions, feelings or thoughts" (Ghali, 1995, p. 244, own translation).²³² Furthermore, draining the drama out of the film, this procedure of fragmenting on account of shooting close-ups of things and body parts is largely applied in avant-gardist and modern cinema.

²³¹ Original text: "Limite é o filme mais radical da vanguard francesa, que a vanguard francesa nunca realizou."

²³² Original text: "Le fragment deviant alors le signe prégnant de la vision subjective du réalisateur du film et exprime fortement ses émotions, ses sentiments ou sa pensée."

Limite presents close-ups and fragments of body parts, landscape elements, and objects. It fragments the world into elementary images that coexist in the film's composition as a whole, as *Ballet Mécanique* does with machines, bodies, and objects. *Ballet Mécanique* connects the machine's rhythm to objects and body parts, rendering machines essential to setting the pace of the film. In like fashion, *Limite* associates the rhythm of the landscape—whether the sea or the wind blowing over a tree—to bodily fragments and certain sequences of action. Furthermore, the landscape is a protagonist in *Limite*. Indeed, the landscape's plastic value bears the same relevance as the plastic value of machines in *Ballet Mécanique*. Lastly, both films quote Chaplin—*Limite* shows a sequence of a Chaplin's film screening.

Léger's film travels deep into the concept of machinical form, whereby the framing and different procedures are used either to fragment or to create visual simultaneity. Moreover, the rhythm of the editing in *Ballet Mécanique* is fast and repetitive, following the pace of the machine. Meanwhile, in *Limite*, the fragments of body parts and objects are part of the film's entire composition, and the rhythm is slow. Instead of giving a 'swing' tempo to the composition, Peixoto imbues the film with the slow tempo of the sea, following its slow movements; the sea's image being present at the very beginning of the film after the sequence of the woman's head and the handcuffs. Indeed, the sea is often depicted (Illustration 51). Therefore, the rhythm of *Limite* mirrors the rhythm of waves from a calm ocean, in which the boat floats, carrying man#1, woman#1, and woman#2. Towards the end, the rhythm grows faster, as the editing combines waves breaking into rocks, and shows black clouds in the sky emulating the arrival of a storm.



Illustration 51 - Segments of the sea, in *Limite*.

Stella Senra (2016), in her essay about *Limite*, intends to designate *Limite* as a Brazilian film and visual artwork, despite constantly grouping *Limite* with French avant-garde cinema. Senra divides *Limite* into two image regimes: “images of the land” and “images of the sea”. She mentions that the film’s rhythm is given by nature (Senra, 2016), with the landscape (a Being’s world) constituting *Limite*’s rhythm, which is also fragmented with the bodies. Consequently, Peixoto adjusts the landscape’s rhythm to the film’s rhythm. Peixoto systematically uses close-ups and fusion between images.

Senra attests to the sea’s role in *Limite* as facilitating Peixoto’s experimentalism and abstraction, elaborating on the leitmotif of the sea as follows:

[...] the sea establishes another and new regime of aquatic images, which not only allows the most radical abstraction of the montage, but curiously impregnates the film with its “materiality.” The water comes in relation to the very surface of the screen - the film assuming an unusual experimental character (Senra, 2016, own translation).²³³

Perhaps for this reason this abstraction is capable of operating even a second denudation, or a new abstraction: the screen itself is subtracted as matter and surface to bring forth its other dimension - the screen as light. The sea of light, the abstract sea is the limit of the sea, where the images of the film precipitate, shatter, and extinguish (Senra, 2016, own translation).²³⁴

Korfmann (2007) agrees with Senra (2016), but further identifies *Limite*’s balance between “solid and fluid”, and “concrete object and its abstraction”. This balance, understood as the non-definition or dissolution of things, forms, and time, is also present in Peixoto’s writings. As Korfmann elaborates: “[the] oscillation between fluid and solid, the outstanding and the unidentifiable, between concrete object and abstraction is a basic principle not only of this film but also of his literary work” (Korfmann, 2007, p. 117). Thus, the title *Limite*, similarly with *Ballet Mécanique* and Tarsila’s paintings, is an ‘*abstract cinematographic concept*’, that is, an idea comprising a phenomenological approach to the world, as expressed in avant-garde abstract cinema.

²³³ Original text: “[...] o mar estabelece um outro e novo regime de imagens, aquáticas, que não apenas permitem a abstração mais radical da montagem mas, curiosamente, impregnam o filme da sua maior “materialidade”. A água entra em relação com a própria superfície da tela – o filme assumindo inusitado caráter experimental.”

²³⁴ Original text: “Talvez por isso essa abstração seja capaz de operar ainda um segundo desnudamento, ou uma nova abstração: a própria tela é subtraída enquanto matéria e como superfície para fazer emergir sua outra dimensão – a tela como luz. O mar de luz, o mar abstrato é o limite do mar, onde se precipitam, se estilham e se extinguem as imagens do filme.”

The close-up fragments bodies, the landscape, and objects, transforming them into actions and surfaces of lines, volumes, and textures, rendering them abstract (as in the process of abstraction in modern painting), notably when brought together through editing. The close-ups of hair, grass, and sand emphasize textures (Illustration 52), while the close-ups of trees, electric poles, houses, façades, and objects emphasize lines and volumes. Furthermore, the close-up is the procedure through which the two-dimensionality of the screen is made apparent (Illustration 53). As Korfmann acerts that the visual lines constructed in the film “give the whole movie a very geometrical structure, counterbalanced by moving details such as wheels, handles and of course the movements of the camera itself (2007, pp. 109-110).



Illustration 52 - Segments of texture, in *Limite*.

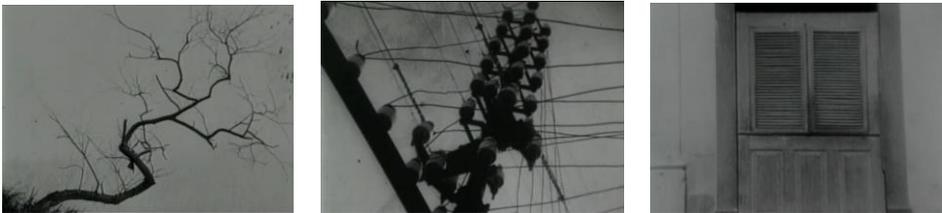


Illustration 53 - Abstraction, in *Limite*.

Additionally, the composition of the horizon is another example of filming towards abstraction, but which is not a close-up. Moreover, the film’s music, which “included compositions by Erik Satie, Claude Debussy, Alexander Borodin, Maurice Ravel, Igor Stravinsky, César Franck, and Sergei Prokofiev” (Korfmann & Nogueira,

2004, p. 137), contributes to the two-dimensionality of the screen and the absence of classical narrative.²³⁵

Limite, like Tarsila's paintings and Léger's film (analyzed above), presents elements of the landscape and bodies, thereby dissolving "the iconographic content and making the surface appear as such" (Bois et al., 2013, p. 48). *Limite* systematically synthesizes organic and geometric aspects of the landscape and bodily elements with the conceptual abstraction of its title, tied together with the film's cadence, which brings it in accordance with Tarsila's modernist abstract paintings. Thus, just as Tarsila explores 'Brazilian landscape colors,' Peixoto extensively explores the local landscape in *Limite* (Senra, 2016).

Curiously, Peixoto chose to frame woman #2 among plants (Illustration 54). Indeed, she is amidst the plants in a similar way that Tarsila's painted bodies are in *Abaporu* and *Antropofagia*. Moreover, Peixoto frames the top of houses just as Tarsila painted the top of *E.F.C.B.*



Illustration 54 - Woman #2 among plants and top of houses with vegetation, in *Limite*

Therefore, *Limite* could be 'incorporated' as a later Brazilian modernist and avant-garde film, given its method of filming the landscape and the bodies of a local Brazilian beach fishermen village (Mangaratiba). *Limite* dedicates long segments to documenting the details of local houses, boats, plants, ruins, and people (Illustration

²³⁵ Korfmann explains that Peixoto wanted to keep the "nature's" sounds, but the technology of the period did not allow that. Korfmann states: "Peixoto's original plan to underline his film with a natural noise soundtrack such as wind, rustling leaves and breaking waves was abandoned due to technical difficulties, and substituted by a record soundtrack chosen by Brutus Pedreira, who plays the pianist in *Limite*, and who was a musician in real life. The chosen musical themes were then played on two alternating record players during the screening, frequently operated by Peixoto and Pedreira" (Korfmann, 2007, p. 110).

55). Furthermore, bodies, objects, and landscapes are mingled inside the frame and within the whole film composition, configuring a phenomenological method of expression in the cinematographic language. The constant presence of image fusions not only contributes to the dissolution of images towards abstract forms, but also dissolves their independence. It is noticeable that there are almost no dry cuts in *Limite*. Hence, *Limite*'s figures, like Tarsila's figures, dwell within the same surface. More strongly, the images depend on each other, but not in the classical sense that constructs a holism of meaning or symbolism, but in the sense of being constituted by the same "stuff", the same carnal (sensuous) experiences (Merleau-Ponty, 1961/1993).



Illustration 55 - Landscape local elements, in *Limite*.

There are two sequences of the film that I shall emphasize next, owing to the method of framing and editing in accordance with phenomenological expression. This is because they emphasize the non-representationism of time and space that connects bodies and space as dwelling in the same two-dimensional, moving image. Instead of creating the dimension of narrative, this creates the dimension of the "carnal" (Merleau-Ponty, 1961/1993), that is, of the incarnate mind in the world with others who share the same "stuff" (Merleau-Ponty, 1961/1993). The first sequence to mention is the one where woman #2 is walking over a sidewalk, passing in front of houses, and she runs into a man; they approach on the street. They are filmed from a high angle shot from an electricity pole, which is also within the frame. There is then a cut, which is preceded by a low angle that is shot precisely between them. As a result of this camera position, the infinite sky occupies the center of the frame, which ends up 'deframing' the bodies in virtue of framing the infiniteness of the sky. Thus, the center of the frame is the 'gap'. The two bodies are seen from above, and together they form a frame for the infinite space between them. They talk briefly. There is a cut, and when they achieve some distance from one another, moving in opposite directions, the

shot is again from the former, high angle shot from an electricity pole. The pole is present in both the high and low angled shots, which inserts lines in relation to the human bodies (Illustration 56).



Illustration 56 - Sequence with woman #2, in *Limite*.

These framings and edits capture a visual thought about objects and bodies within their surroundings. The bodies are embedded first in the street, and after in the sky. Therefore, filming bodies is a matter of perspective: not *Renaissance* perspective, but a modern and phenomenological perspective, whereby they are in relation to the world in which they dwell. Roizman interprets *Limite* as a phenomenological expression, he says:

The surface of the fragmented bodies and the texture of things are equivalent in the framing. The equivalences acquire, in the filmic sequence, in the drama, the sense of indifferenciation between the perishable body and the things in the image, as well as the "fusion" between the vision and the seer. They thematize the phenomenological sense of the co-union between Being and the world, what Merleau-Ponty names as the intertwining, the reversibility, the flesh: the chiasm configured as a thought of filmic action (Roizman, 2003, p. 9, own translation).²³⁶

In accordance with this interpretation, *Limite* is phenomenological just as Merleau-Ponty describes: “[visible] and mobile, my body is among other things. It is one of them. It is held in the fabric of the world and its cohesion is that of a thing” (Merleau-Ponty, 1961/1993, p. 124-125).

²³⁶ Original text: “A superfície dos corpos fragmentados e a textura das coisas equivalem-se no enquadramento. As equivalências adquirem, na sequência filmica, no drama, o sentido de indiferenciação entre o corpo percível e as coisas na imagem, e também a "fundição" entre a visão e o vidente, que tematizam o sentido fenomenológico da co-união entre o ser e o mundo, aquilo que Merleau-Ponty nomeia como sendo o entrecruzamento, a reversibilidade, a carne: o quiasma configurado como pensamento de ação filmica.”

It is not only the particular sequence above that blends bodies with their relative landscape phenomenologically: the second sequence I shall emphasize here is the sequence where woman #1 is escaping from the prison and the guard is helping her. The elements that are framed are feet, legs, and hands alongside window bars, a door being opened, and keys. The camera moves with the woman's body as she flees (Illustration 57). The sequence of images narrates the action and interaction between bodies and things with neither virtual nor representational drama. This sequence focuses on the midst of things *as they move*.



Illustration 57 - Sequence of woman #1 prison scape, in *Limite*

The bodies in *Limite* inhabit the beach, housing materials, fences, wooden windows, the rooftops, plants, the dirt, but, most of all, the sea. These elements are their world.²³⁷ Those elements are also peculiarly *Brazilian* motifs, as portrayed by *Limite* (Illustration 55). The world of water, houses, beaches, streets, plants, hills, and sky contains the land that the people in the boat supposedly remember in the film. As Mello remarks: “[infinitely] Brazilian are the windows, the doors, the walls, the moss, the road, the facades, the alley, the faces at the cinema, the beach’s perspectives, the fishermen that fix their nets, the swinging canoe’s bows, the people that pass” (Mello, 1996, p. 32, own translation).²³⁸

In conclusion, this chapter associates *Limite*, an avant-garde film, with an abstract avant-garde film, *Ballet Mécanique*, in order to think about which methods in avant-garde abstract film might also be present in Peixoto’s film. Léger conceived of abstraction as phenomenology. Therefore, the object—whether machine, body part, or sign—is conceived as a subject, as part of the same world as a Being, sharing the same

²³⁷ The body is not just surrounded by objects or the landscape: it is part of it. In Merleau-Ponty’s terms, they share the same “flesh”.

²³⁸ Original text: “São infinitamente brasileiras as janelas, o beco, as faces no cinema; as perspectivas das praias; os pescadores que concertam suas redes; as proas oscilantes das canoas; as pessoas que passam.”

matter, as Merleau-Ponty remarks: “Things are an annex or prolongation of itself; they are encrusted in its flesh, they are part of its full definition; the world is made of the very stuff of the body” (Merleau-Ponty, 1961/1993, p. 125). Therefore, from thinking about *Ballet Mécanique*, *E.F.C.B.*, *Abaporu*, and *Antropofagia*, we can see that *Limite* exhibits an amalgamation of French avant-garde film and the Brazilian modernist movement, especially with regard to the experimentation with the film medium, as well as abstraction as a way of expressing the phenomenological method.

Limite unites some aspects of Tarsila’s painting and Léger’s film. First, the phenomenological approach to the world within modern artistic expression and thought. *Limite* has “abstract concept” images at its beginning and end (its frame), which extend to the film’s development, as well as its title. *Limite* experiments with the medium, offering unusual angles and the rhythm of landscape elements. As Korfmann elaborates: “[we] also find the same emphasis on film as a medium of form, space, light, and darkness with all of their “atmospheric qualities” (Korfmann, 2007, pp. 115-116). The screen’s surface is constitutive of the film’s visual argument; thus, the two-dimensionality of the screen contributes to the *trame* (Ghali, 1995), and the figures’ abstraction. Furthermore, the ‘flatness’ of the film connects landscapes and bodies, which emerge with the same plastic value.

Secondly, specifically regarding Tarsila’s modernist paintings, *Limite* fragments bodies and landscape elements (that is, it abstracts figures), dismantling classical, perspectival proportions, as well as the portrayal of space and time as in classical narrative. Body parts belong to the land, the sea, to trees and hills. They are of equal relevance in the film. *Limite*, just as *Abaporu* and *Antropofagia*, positions body parts within a landscape. The film’s montage has the effect of relating the sea, the beach, the city, the machines, and the houses to body parts, such as the feet, hands, eyes, and faces. Being an example of Brazilian modernism, the film combines European influences and Brazilian motifs in tension (Favaretto, 2013). The landscape, which *Limite* fragments, is based on a Brazilian locality, in alignment with Tarsila’s method of collecting colors and lines from the Brazilian landscape. As we have seen, Tarsila

combined influences from Cubism with Brazilian motifs in composing and dismantling landscape and bodily figures, the effect of which brings them together. *Limite* exploits similar procedures regarding its avant-garde cinema influences in combination with Brazilian motifs.

Furthermore, as the *Anthropophagite Manifesto* suggests, Brazilian cultural production consists in the combination of many external influences, chief among them the European. Indeed, Peixoto conceived *Limite* in Paris in 1929. Apart from the newspaper photograph that he saw, from which the film's *leitmotif* originates, being in Europe in the 1920s meant that Peixoto could get into contact with several avant-garde films that were being screened in Europe during this time. However, this research is not about unveiling each possible influence that reverberates in *Limite*, since this would take away from Peixoto's original contribution and efforts in conceiving his own avant-gardist film. Nevertheless, as with other Brazilian artists and filmmakers, *Limite* is an act of Anthropophagy, in which Peixoto 'devours' all of the European avant-garde films produced until 1929 (or, at least, those he saw), from which he produces a Brazilian avant-garde film completely embedded in the local, natural landscape and human constructions (houses, boats, fences). The landscape and people's relation to it express the attitude of Brazilian modern art. Moreover, the landscape is not just responsible for giving those three people in the boat the rhythm and tempo of their narrative: the landscape furthermore expresses their existence in all of its complexity (therefore, not merely expressing feelings). As Ghali comments: "[the] filmmakers who can make a landscape breathe are rare. For a landscape acquires a soul, it is necessary first that the director has one" (Ghali, 1995, p. 256, own translation).²³⁹ Thus, like *Abaporu*, in which the landscape breathes like a human being, *Limite's* expression of landscapes and human bodies constitute one whole breathing organism.

²³⁹ Original text : "Les cinéastes qui peuvent faire vivre un paysage sont rares. Pour que le paysage acquière une âme, il faut d'abord que le réalisateur en ait une."

Finally, *Limite*, like *Ballet Mécanique*, imbues the rhythm of the landscape to bodies and the film more broadly. The systematic use of the close-up has the effect of abstracting parts of bodies, objects, and the landscape. *Limite* does not develop a narrative in the classical sense, since it exhibits no linearity, presenting instead abstract, conceptual images, and evident discontinuity between its sequences. Furthermore, the sequences breaks with the illusion of classical cinematic narrative, which deliberately “hides” the medium, as well as the ‘gap’ between images. By contrast, *Limite* includes these lacunae—promoting them to being the film’s essence. *Limite* is an avant-garde, modernist, abstract film. Indeed, “[...] according to the experimental tradition, the film does not show reality; it describes itself through images of reality” (Bois et al., 2013, p. 46).

The next chapter turns to examining two of Glauber Rocha’s films: *Pátio* (1959), and *Terra em transe* (1967). These films are analysed alongside modern visual abstract artworks by Lygia Pape, Lygia Clark, and Hélio Oiticica. The objective of the next chapter, in correspondence with the thesis more broadly and this chapter in particular, is to approximate experimentalism in the process of abstraction in painting to that of cinema-making, both being understood as the phenomenological method of painters and filmmakers.

Chapter 6 - Glauber Rocha, *Grupo Frente*, *Neoconcrete*, and *Tropicália* (1967): Cinematic abstract thought in *Pátio* (1959) and *Terra em transe* (1967)²⁴⁰

This chapter analyzes two films directed and written by the filmmaker Glauber Rocha: *Pátio*²⁴¹ (1959) and *Terra em Transe* | *Entranced Earth*²⁴² (1967). Rocha made his first short-film, *Pátio*, at the end of the 1950s in Salvador, Bahia,²⁴³ editing it with a concrete musical track in Rio de Janeiro city (Rocha, 2004). The end of the 1950s and the early 1960s was a period in which Lygia Pape,²⁴⁴ Lygia Clark, and Hélio Oiticica developed their abstract paintings, “non-objects” (Gullar, 1959), and installations as part of the Concrete (in *Grupo Frente*) and Neoconcrete movements, as discussed in Chapters 3 and 4. In accordance with the contemporaneity of the movements, as well as their form and methods of expression, I propose an analysis of *Pátio*, in particular the way in which it combines elements of architectural spaces, bodies, and landscapes as constituting an expression of abstract thought, which can be fruitfully associated with the formal and methodological aspects of the paintings, non-objects, and installations orchestrated by the aforementioned Concrete and Neoconcrete artists. Like *Limite*, *Pátio* uncovers and compares “[...] right angles, curves and the movements of the human body with elements of nature [...]” (Monzani, 1986, p. 8).

²⁴⁰ Glauber Rocha (1997, 2004) refers to *Pátio* without the article “o”, as the Cinemateca Brasileira catalogued it and the film’s credits present it. However, some theorists re-insert the article, calling the film “O Pátio” (Machado, 2009). Notwithstanding, I will be applying the name as Rocha uses it. So, on my presentation, *Pátio* does not have a definite article in the English translation. However, the name ‘pátio’ could be translated to ‘patio’, ‘terrace’, or ‘rooftop’. *Terra em transe* was entitled in English ‘*Earth in anguish*’ and ‘*Entranced Earth*’, but the most suitable translation is the one suggested by Nagib (2011): ‘*Land in Trance*’. I will be using the films’ titles in Portuguese in this text.

²⁴¹ *Pátio* was shot in 16mm and is around 12 minutes in duration.

²⁴² *Terra em transe* was shot in 35 mm and is around 105 minutes in duration.

²⁴³ Rocha tells the process of post-production of the film:). *Helena Ignez asked the banker, Pamphilo de Carvalho ten Cruzeiros, her fiancé, to make a movie, Pátio. The rest Rosalvo Barbosa Romeu gave through the City Hall. Idea in the head, camera in hand. 35mm Arry Flex. Three lenses. Thousand meters of black and white negative. House of the millionaire Luiz Viana on the slope [...] facing the sea. Solon Barreto Helena Ignez. Photography by José Ribamar and Luiz Paulino. Assistance by Jomard Moniz de Britto and Waldemar Lima. Supported by Paulo Gil. Editing in my house, with Lion's glue with acetone. At the end of 1958, Pátio was filmed and pre-edited. “Helena Ignez pediu ao banqueiro Pamphilo de Carvalho dez contos para que seu noivo fizesse um filme, Pátio. O resto o Rosalvo Barbosa Romeu deu pela Prefeitura. Idéia na cabeça, camera na mão. 35mm Arry Flex. Três lentes. Mil metros de negativo preto e branco. Casa do milionário Luiz Viana na ladeira... diante do mar. Solon Barreto Helena Ignez. Fotografia de José Ribamar e Luiz Paulino. Assistência de Jomard Moniz de Britto e Waldemar Lima. Suporte de Paulo Gil. Montagem em casa, em coladeira do Leão, com acetona. No final de 1958 Pátio estava filmado e pré-montado” (Glauber Rocha in Rocha & Bentes, 1997, p. 339).*

²⁴⁴ Rocha mentions that he showed *Pátio* to Lygia Pape, among others, in Rio de Janeiro (Rocha, 2004, p. 341).

Pátio has neither characters, linearity, nor a story (Monzani, 1986). Instead, the film presents two bodies—one female, another male—who interact with a patio surrounded by tropical plants and the sea. Despite the presence of two actors in the film, they do not speak. The only sound consists in a combination of moans, screams, silences, babbling, drums, sirens, and synthetic music, which, as the credits indicate, is a “montage in concrete music” (Rocha, 1959). Thus, the music and sound reflect the movements of the two bodies over a checkerboard floor, surrounded by a natural tropical landscape. *Pátio* disrupts representational space and time through framings, “deframings” (Bonitzer, 2000), and montage. The film furthermore breaks with causal relations, experimenting with the specificity of cinematographic language (Gerber, 1977), which suggests abstraction (Machado Jr., 2009; Monzani, 1986), as proposed the movements *Grupo Frente* and Neoconcretism. Moreover, Rocha in *Pátio* confronts the “frame limit” (Aumont, 2011), by framing and “deframing”(Bonitzer, 2000) bodies in relation to architectural spaces and the landscape. *Pátio* employs, through cinematographic language, similar methodologies to the visual-artistic abstraction of Lygia Clark, Lygia Pape, and Hélio Oiticica, who each questioned the “frame-limit” in abstract painting, through which they rendered painting sensual, as well as bringing it into communal space and time. Thus, this chapter compares four artworks by the three aforementioned artists to the film *Pátio*. In addition, this chapter highlights *Pátio*’s method of combining organic and geometrical elements, as well its mode of connecting human bodies, the landscape, and the geometrical lines of architectural space through the techniques of framing, deframing, and montage. *Pátio*’s particular form is analyzed here alongside elements and methods exhibited in Pape, Clark, and Oiticica’s artworks. To this end, I unpack how certain modes of expression and experimentation in visual abstraction renders visible the medium, and, at the same time, is performative of phenomenological visual expression (as introduced in Chapter 1).

Terra em transe (1967) is Rocha's third feature film.²⁴⁵ It is a narrative film that portrays the journalist and poet, Paulo Martins, through his political undertakings, oscillations, tribulations, and anguishes in a tropical country called *Eldorado* and its province, *Alecrim*. Paulo Martins vacillates between Porfírio Díaz's conservative political standards and Felipe Vieira's populism, as well as the lovers, Silvia, who works in Porfírio Díaz's sphere, and Sara, an activist associated with Vieira (Machado Jr, 1997). The central character's fraught vacillating between several frustrated political endeavors are reflected in the film's elliptical form, which merges images of the past and present (Machado Jr, 1997; Nagib, 2011; Xavier, 2012). *Terra em transe* is a non-linear film that narrates through "discontinuous tracking, polyphonic soundtrack" (Nagib, 2011, p. 125), framing bodies with elements of the landscape, and disrupting representational space and time. Consequently, the film constructs a relation between architectural spaces, landscapes, and bodies, which are fundamental to the discontinuous narrative. Therefore, I argue that *Terra em transe* presents a labyrinthine film form, consisting in internal and external spaces, rendering apparent the film medium itself as part of the film's discourse, thus in conformity with the modern and avant-garde film form.

Terra em Transe is in keeping with the artistic production of the period, especially with Hélio Oiticica's installation (also known as a "penetrável"),²⁴⁶ *Tropicália* (1967). *Tropicália* was exhibited for the first time in the *Nova Objetividade Brasileira* | *New Brazilian Objectivity* exhibition of 1967. The installation, *Tropicália*, and the film *Terra em transe* became the cornerstones of the *Tropicália* movement, or what is called *Tropicalism*. Oiticica's penetrable and Rocha's *Terra em transe* were publicly shown for the first time one month apart: *Tropicália* in April 1967 and *Terra em transe* in May 1967 (Süssekind, 2007, p. 32). The almost simultaneous emergence of *Tropicália* and *Terra em transe* was not by chance. As Favaretto explains, the simultaneity of Oiticica's installation and Rocha's film, "[...] cannot be reduced to mere chance, but to a convergence of

²⁴⁵ There is almost a decade between *Terra em transe* and *Pátio*. However, their proximity in aesthetic terms will be developed further in part 6.1 of this chapter.

²⁴⁶ As mentioned in Chapter 4, Oiticica conceptualizes his installations as *penetráveis* (penetrables), since they were intended to be penetrated by the spectator.

interests, needs, reciprocity, and aspirations” (Favaretto, 2007, p. 86, own translation).²⁴⁷ Thus, this chapter examines the methods of *Terra em transe*, particularly its method of organizing and conceiving of the moving image, in connection with similar methods invoked by Oiticica in his installation, *Tropicalia*, to the extent that they portray the labyrinthine space.

Oiticica’s *Tropicália* is a labyrinth of constructed spaces, landscapes, textures, and images, forming part of Oiticica’s broader research on what he called ‘environmental art’ and ‘propositions’, which developed from the artist’s experimentations with abstraction in painting. Oiticica refers to *Tropicália* as an “experimental field with images” (Oiticica, 1986), where by “experimental” Oiticica did not mean narrowly “experimental art”, but rather “loose energy lines that grow to an open number of possibilities” (Oiticica, 1972, p. 5). The experimental and experimentalism, as proposed by Oiticica, is not restricted to a specific art nor an aesthetic characteristic. The experimental denotes a method of constantly ‘inventing’ new modes of artistic production and participation in response to tradition and adversity. Oiticica wrote in 1970:

There is no 'experimental art' but *the experimental*. It not only assumes the idea of modernity and avant-garde, but it is also a radical transformation in the field of current concepts-values. It is something that proposes transformations in the behavior-context, which ingests and dissolves the convi-connivance (Oiticica, 1970, p.3)²⁴⁸

Oiticica refers to the experimental as one of the essences of Brazilian modern and avant-garde art, which notably includes the spectator as participant. As the artwork invites the spectator to experiment and experience the artwork, the spectator should be changed by the artwork. Furthermore, as the spectator becomes participant, the artwork also invites the spectator to act in society (as mentioned in Chapter 4). Therefore, what is experimental is a Being’s expression, which includes the spectator in

²⁴⁷ Original text: “A simultaneidade do aparecimento da manifestação ambiental de Oiticica, do filme de Glauber, [...], não pode ser debitada a um simples acaso, mas a um encontro de interesses, necessidades, reciprocidade e aspirações.”

²⁴⁸ Original text: “Não existe ‘arte experimental’ mas o experimental, que não só assume a ideia de modernidade e vanguarda, mas também é transformação radical no campo conceitos-valores vigentes: é algo que propõe transformações no comportamento-contexto, que deglute e dissolve a convi-convivência.”

the artistic process. For example, *Tropicália* only ‘exists’ when the spectator penetrates the artwork’s space by experimenting with it. Exposing the artwork to participative experimentation implicates both the political and phenomenological engagement of the spectator. Furthermore, for the participant experiencing the artwork, this also amounts to the *practice* of the experimental.

In Rocha’s *Terra em transe*, the camera repeatedly moves through interior and exterior spaces, creating a flow from the interior to exterior that is centralized in the actors’ bodies. *Terra em transe* is a non-linear labyrinth of images, landscapes, and bodies, which can be linked with Oiticica’s understanding of the experimental, thanks to its particular form. Moreover, this labyrinthine aspect of space in *Terra em transe* seems to align with Oiticica’s labyrinthine conception in *Tropicália*. This is because, as Xavier notes, “[the] film takes to the limit the tension between searching for a principle of unity that is capable of balancing the will to include everything that favors a fragmented vision” (Xavier, 2001b, own translation).²⁴⁹ The fragmentation of the landscape, architectural spaces, and human bodies in *Terra in Terra* is similar to the fragmentation of the same elements in *Pátio* (Monzani, 1986). Moreover, both films emphasize the two-dimensionality of the screen.

This chapter aims to analyze the film *Terra em transe* alongside the installation, *Tropicália*, owing to their shared labyrinthine aspects, and especially given Oiticica’s preoccupation with abstraction, experimentalism, and propositional art. Here, I only analyze *Terra em transe* in relation to a single artwork of Oiticica’s. This is because they incorporate such density and aesthetic radicalism, that originated Tropicalism. Finally, the cultural movement that bore witness to these examples of installation and film were a resistant reaction to the increasing restrictions and nationalism of the civil-military dictatorship (1964-1985) (as explained in Chapter 4). Before examining *Pátio* and *Terra em Transe*’s relation to visual artworks, I will briefly discuss Rocha’s role in

²⁴⁹ Original text: “Este filme leva ao limite a tensão entre buscar um princípio de unidade capaz de equacionar o todo e a vontade de tudo incluir que favorece uma visão fragmentaria.”

the Cinema Novo movement, in particular his radicalization of the film form, as well as motivating my selection of these two films from Rocha's corpus of works.

6.1 Cinema Novo and Glauber Rocha

Rocha's contribution in the 1960s to the Cinema Novo movement consisted primarily in films, critiques, and texts. The movement constitutes a critical moment in Rocha's trajectory, since there were reciprocal influences and contributions between the filmmaker and the cinema movement. Cinema Novo,²⁵⁰ like the modernism of 1920's Brazil, combined the aesthetic proposals of European cinema with Brazilian popular culture, literature, and social reality (Viány, 1999; Xavier, 2001b, 2007, 2012). Among the European influences on Cinema Novo were: Italian Neorealism's shooting on location with natural light, as well as filming with local people; Eisenstein's montage and activist political cinema; and the *Nouvelle Vague's* author-politics and improvisation.

Paulo Cesar Saraceni, and Rocha after him, affirmed that Cinema Novo had a concern with the truth (Viány, 1999). Thus, Cinema Novo made low budget fictional and documentary films about the 'true' social reality of Brazil in the modern cinematic style. Furthermore, having been influenced by *cinéma vérité*, Italian Neorealism, and authorial cinematic discourse, they touted their slogan to be "an idea in the head and a camera in hand" (Rocha & Bentes, 1997, p. 339, own translation).²⁵¹ Cinema Novo's aesthetic conceptions, in both form and content, were openly against industrial and commercial cinema, which was predominantly made in Brazil by the cinema company *Vera Cruz*, who were responsible for producing stereotypical films of Brazilian culture and characters within classical Hollywood's cinematic style (Viány, 1999; Xavier, 2001b, 2012). Cinema Novo's filmmakers captured people's social reality as never before in Brazilian cinema production (Salles Gomes, 1973/2002).

²⁵⁰ The movement's name was proposed by the critic Ely Azeredo (Viány, 1999).

²⁵¹ Original text: "uma ideia na cabeça e uma camera na mão."

Additionally, the films and filmmakers of Cinema Novo resisted the deluge of North American films on the Brazilian cinema circuit. Cinema Novo expected to guarantee an increase in the number of films made in Brazil by Brazilians, as well as making films with their particular aesthetic, which should be, at the same time, both characteristically Brazilian and characteristically modern (Bernardet, 2009; Salles Gomes, 1973/2002; Xavier, 2001b). In accordance with these premises, the filmmakers sent films to European film festivals expecting to be internationally recognized as filmmakers, who produced innovative cinema *tout court*, not merely 'Brazilian cinema' (Viany, 1999).

The concern with 'national' popular culture and national 'imagery', as I discussed previously, persists in the Brazilian visual arts, owing to which Cinema Novo was not exceptional. However, Cinema Novo's films bespoke a necessary concern with Brazil's social reality, as well as its contradictions (Machado Jr., 2009). This is because the films of Cinema Novo explicitly intended to expose social-economic reality, with the aim of increasing the conscience of the people about it. Thus, Cinema Novo amounted to an aesthetic that was coherent with a political movement that actively 'denounced' the social and economic differences in the country, in tandem with innovations in cinematographic language, which enabled the filmmakers of Cinema Novo to express their subjective style. Rocha was one of the most radical with regard to experimenting with cinematographic language, aligned with the international conception of modern cinema (Bentes, 2007; Rocha, 2004; Xavier, 2001b, 2007, 2012).

The central themes investigated by the films of Cinema Novo ranged from those connected to the incurable misery and hunger that befell the country at the time, to popular regional culture, to Brazilian literature and national figures, such as *Lampião*, as well as to the local urban or hinterland landscape (Viany, 1999; Xavier, 2001b). In that direction, until the civil-military coup of 1964, the Brazilian hinterland and northeastern landscape and social struggle were portrayed in films such as *Os Fuzis | The Guns* (1963) by Rui Guerra, *Mandacaru vermelho* (1961) and *Vidas Secas | Barren Lives* (1963) by Nelson Pereira do Santos, *Porto das caixas* (1962) by Paulo Cesar Saraceni, and

Barravento (1962) and *Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol* | *Black God, White Devil* (1964) by Glauber Rocha. Additionally, films such as *Rio 40 Graus* | *Rio 100 Degrees F.* (1955) and *Rio Zona Norte* (1957) by Nelson Pereira dos Santos, and *Cinco vezes favela* (1962) denounced Rio de Janeiro's social inequality from the perspective of those in the shantytowns. Against this background, Cinema Novo had the impetus to make films about places and populations that were not portrayed in films about Brazil until the mid-1950s.

Cinema Novo assembled a unified and mythical universe that integrated the *sertão*, shantytowns, suburbs, countryside or beach villages, *gafieira*, and soccer stadium. This universe tended to expand, to be complemented, to organize itself in a model of reality, but the process was interrupted in 1964 (Salles Gomes, 1973/2002, p. 489, own translation).²⁵²

The civil-military coup of 1964 propelled Cinema Novo towards a critique of the middle class. Cinema Novo as a movement was composed of several filmmakers, each with his own style (Figuerôa, 2004; Rocha, 2004; Saraceni, 1993; Viany, 1999). Rocha saw 'hunger' and the lack of resources as possible aesthetics, not merely as forming the film's content, but as part of the film form itself (Xavier, 2007, p. 13). As Rocha saw it, hunger and harsh conditions of survival should be cinematographic expressions (that is, phenomenologically, whereby the content constitutes its form). Rocha defended the aesthetic of hunger in his well-known manifesto *Estética da fome* | *The hunger aesthetic*, delivered at the *V Rassegna del Cinema Latino-Americano* in Genova in January 1965. Rocha's revolutionary and radical aesthetic was already present in his films of the early 1960s, but he summarized it in *The hunger aesthetic* manifesto of 1965. Rocha translated a theme, hunger, into a method of filming, and a method of expressing in cinematographic language the subject's dwelling. Thus, Rocha's visual expression during his time as *cinemanovista* is concerned with methodologically expressing the incarnate mind (sc. consciousness) (Merleau-Ponty, 1961/1993), which

²⁵² Original text: "Tomado em conjunto o Cinema Novo monta um universo uno e mítico integrado por sertão, favela, subúrbio, vilarejos do interior ou da praia, gafieira e estádio de futebol. Esse universo tendia a se expandir, a se complementar, a se organizar em modelo para a realidade, mas o processo foi interrompido em 1964."

dwells in an unequal society and bears an intrinsic relation to the “land”,²⁵³ the landscape in which people dwell.

Rocha, in his quest for ‘filming social reality’, accomplishes a phenomenology of space and light, just as Merleau-Ponty remarks about modern painting in *Eye and Mind*: “[no] longer is it a matter of speaking about space and light, but of making space and light, which are there, speak to us” (Merleau-Ponty, 1961/1993, p.138). Rocha lets space and light “speak” for themselves. The landscape and its ‘dry’ light ‘speak’. Avellar states the following about *Black God, White Devil*: “[d]o not let the employment of forms most common to documentary films and the photography in daylight without artificial lightning deceive us. Art here does not imitate life. Art here experiences life” (Avellar, 1995b, p. 91)²⁵⁴. *Black God, White Devil* expresses the world of a dry land and the people living there.

Regarding Rocha’s Cinema Novo phase, one notices, for instance, in *Black God, White Devil* how the bodies are framed in relation to the dry land of the *caatinga*.²⁵⁵ Instead of choosing stereotypical bodies emaciated by famine²⁵⁶ to portray the inhabitants of a desert-like environment in an underdeveloped country, Rocha chooses to frame vigorous, armed bodies who thrive in adversity. Additionally, themes of struggle and physical resistance are present in the narratives of the cowboy, Manuel, and his wife, Rosa, who are fighting and surviving in the arid climate and local war between landowners and workers. Additionally, Rocha manifests living in adversity and precarious conditions through a combination of filmic techniques and montage, including discontinuity, using a handheld camera, employing non-linear narratives, using unusual angles for framing bodies and the landscape, as well as exploiting the intense sunlight (Illustration 58).

²⁵³ Nagib (2011) acknowledges that “[t]he term *terra* (land) connects three Rocha’s films which became known as the trilogy da terra, or ‘land trilogy’, of which Land in Trance is the second part” (Nagib, 2011, p. 132).

²⁵⁴ Original text: “Que o aproveitamento de formas de trabalho comuns aos filmes documentários e que a fotografia à luz do dia, sem iluminação artificial não nos enganem. A arte aqui não imita a vida. A arte aqui vive a vida.”

²⁵⁵ *Caatinga* is a characteristic landscape of the northeast part of Brazil, which is semi-arid with the desert consisting primarily of small, thorny trees that shed their leaves seasonally. Cacti, thick-stemmed plants, thorny bushes, and xerophytic grasses make up the ground layer.

²⁵⁶ As did, for example, the painter Candido Portinari in the painting *Os retirantes* (1944) (Illustration 18).



Illustration 58 – Bodies and landscapes in *Black God, White Devil* (Glauber Rocha, 1964).

Black God, White Devil, and *Barravento*, were narrative and teleological films (Xavier, 1997, 2001a, 2007) in which the representation of time and space stayed faithful to the classical style of cause and effect relations. However, Eisenstein’s vertical montage and his cinema of attractions inspired the framing and montage of both films (Avellar, 1995a; Xavier, 2007). Rocha’s formal, experimental, avant-gardist radicalism was present in his first experimental film, *Pátio*. Rocha says: “I had an avant-gardist conception and did short-films inspired by this, which were *Pátio* (1959) and *Cruz na praça* (1958), films that I did not finish [...]” (Rocha, 2004, p. 110, own translation).²⁵⁷ The location and elements presented in *Pátio*, as well as the non-representational film form, returns in *Terra em transe* (Machado Jr., 2009), which constructs a labyrinthine film from tropical images.

On the one hand, Rocha played a crucial role in the Cinema Novo movement, proposing films aligned with the other filmmakers’ proposals, which denounced Brazilian social reality, also writing critiques and a manifesto, which helped to promote the movement nationally and internationally.²⁵⁸ On the other hand, owing to the aesthetic of his films, Rocha was accused of being distant from popular vocabulary, and of not engaging the films formally in the social revolution, which the movement intended to promote (Bernardet, 2007; Viany, 1999; Xavier, 2007). He was furthermore accused of pursuing a distant, non-didactic form, particularly with the experimentalism and radical form of *Terra em transe*, despite the narrative. Rocha was criticized for “not

²⁵⁷ Original text: Eu tinha uma concepção vanguardista e fiz duas curtas-metragens nesse espírito: foram o *Pátio* (1959) e *Cruz na praça* (1958) filme que não terminei [...].”

²⁵⁸ Cinema that was intended as an export was proposed by Oswald de Andrade in 1924, along with literature, in the Manifesto named *Poesia Pau-Brasil*.

[identifying] with the principles of a pedagogical art to promote consciousness” and for not giving “peace to a certain model and militancy [...] his film brings a radical revision of the presuppositions of the political art of that moment” (Xavier, 2012, p. 123, own translation).²⁵⁹

However, other Cinema Novo filmmakers, such as Nelson Pereira do Santos, Cacá Diegues, Walter Lima Jr., and Leon Hirszman, made films that were more aligned with a representational, didactic, commercial, and popular form. As mentioned before, several filmmakers composed the Cinema Novo movement, and, in promoting the Brazilian truth, they proposed films that intended to encourage the popular, social conscience in Brazil so as to mobilize them to change the country. Cinema Novo’s filmmakers pursued both a certain aesthetic as well as political involvement, especially Rocha. Nevertheless, Rocha proposed a more aggressive form, as he says: “Cinema Novo’s biggest chance and option is precisely this: incorporate Brazilian problematics in a revolutionary aesthetic expression and distress the audience” (Rocha & Bentes, 1997, p. 282, own translation).²⁶⁰

After the coup in 1964, the films associated with Cinema Novo turned their focus towards the inaction and frustration of the social middle class in their efforts to prevent the coup and fight against the regime. *O desafio* | *The Dare* (1965) by Paulo César Saraceni, *Opinião Pública* | *A public opinion* (1966) by Arnaldo Jabor, and Rocha’s *Terra em transe* (1967) are examples of films focusing on exposing the political contradictions of the Brazilian middle class. Therefore, in general, Cinema Novo contributed to Brazilian cinema and cinema internationally, filming social realities and the struggle to thrive in the precarious and harsh conditions of an underdeveloped country, as well as the political contradictions of the middle class, the overall effect of which was the revolutionizing of cinema in its content and form.

²⁵⁹ Original text: “Não identificado com os princípios de uma arte pedagógica de conscientização, Glauber não dá tréguas a todo um modelo e militância; seu filme traz uma revisão radical dos pressupostos da arte política daquele momento.”

²⁶⁰ Original text: “A grande chance e opção do cinema novo é justamente esta: incorporar a problemática brasileira num nível de expressão revolucionária e ferir o público.”

This thesis does not examine Rocha's Cinema Novo films addressing regional and nativist themes. This thesis instead focuses on the radicalism and experimentalism of Rocha's film form, which manifests as abstraction in cinema, in particular his first film *Pátio*, which, methodologically, proved to be his first steps in filmmaking that were consonant with the visual arts of the time. Therefore, *Pátio* is Rocha's experimentation with cinematographic language. At the same time, the film form dialogues with the experimentalism of the abstract art proposed by *Grupo Frente* and Neoconcretism. Accordingly, Rocha's final contribution to Cinema Novo, namely the film *Terra em transe*, is also the film in which he returns to the landscape and bodily elements. In *Terra em transe*, Rocha also returns to the experimentation and discontinuity of his first film, aligned formally with Oiticica's *Tropicália*.

Furthermore, *Terra em transe* constitutes the starting point of a radical approach to cinematic expression, which dismantles narratives, juxtaposes symbolic images, music, and sound, while accumulating layers of formal abstraction, which Rocha defended years later as an aesthetic method in his manifesto, *Esztetyca do sonho | The dream aesthetic*. Rocha performed this manifesto in January 1971 at Columbia University in New York, USA.

In addressing *Pátio* and *Terra em transe*, I expect to connect two strands of a process of abstraction in the cinematic thinking of the filmmaker Glauber Rocha, which I take to be consonant with the abstraction, and process of engagement, of the avant-garde visual artists Lygia Clark, Lygia Pape, and Hélio Oiticica. Moreover, Rocha contributed to modern and avant-garde cinema aesthetics. According to Xavier, Rocha's cinema belongs to:

a set of films that question the subjacent prejudice of a teleology which supposes that the task of the central countries (the United States and European nations) is to produce cutting-edge/innovative artistic experiences, while peripheral countries are suitable only when they bring to the world of literature and cinema the supplement of political content, concentrated with their national themes. Refusing such a premise, Rocha adopted inventiveness over style as a condition of his intervention in the political debate (Xavier, 2007, p. 12, own translation).²⁶¹

²⁶¹ Original text: “[...] o cinema de Glauber integra [...] o elenco de filmes que veio questionar o preconceito subjacente a uma teleologia que supõe ser tarefa dos países centrais (Estados Unidos e nações européias) produzir

Therefore, it is crucial to acknowledge Rocha's development as a filmmaker within the Cinema Novo movement, as well as how the movement contributed to his cinema. However, it is also essential to examine and investigate the further contributions Rocha might have offered to cinematic and visual expression.

6.2 *Pátio* (1959), *Grupo Frente*, and *Neoconcrete*: abstraction through organic and geometric lines

The first Chapter of this thesis investigated the proximities between cinema and painting. There, we learned that the “frame-limit” of the canvas and the cinema screen is a common, formal, and cultural aspect, as Aumont (2011) identifies. Modern and avant-garde painting and cinema experimented with the frame's limit, breaking the limitations of the frame, incorporating it into the visual language by rendering it visible. Thus, the frame-limit itself became a motif of painters and filmmakers. The artists from *Grupo Frente* and Neoconcretism, as well as by Rocha in his first film, *Pátio*, reflected on the shape, use, applications, and limitations of the frame. In approaching the frame-limit in both cinema and painting as manifesting expressive lines, these visual artists and Rocha dissolved it into common space. Thus, their paintings, non-objects, and Rocha's film developed the *space at work*, whose peculiarity Tassinari (2001) emphasized with regard to modern and avant-garde art (as discussed in Chapter 2), claiming that these kinds of artworks are opened up to common space since they experiment with the spatiality of the screen and canvas's two-dimensions.

Modern and the avant-garde art, in their attempts to merge art with everyday life (Bürguer, 1984), removed the structure of the frame, bringing the painting into common space (Tassinari, 2001). Consequently, the spectator experiences and

as experiências artísticas de ponta, enquanto caberia aos países periféricos apenas trazer ao mundo da literatura e do cinema o suplemento de um conteúdo político concentrado na temática nacional das obras. Recusando tal premissa, Glauber fez da invenção de estilo a condição para sua intervenção no debate político.”

participates in the artworks' ongoing process,²⁶² as in Concrete and Neoconcrete artworks. Modern filmmakers, in the vein of avant-garde cinema (Xavier, 1978, 2001b, 2008a), experimented with the *dispositif* (Aumont, 2011), deranging the frame and the framing, which contributed to the two-dimensionality of the moving image, transforming cinema into a visual expression beyond the limits of the diegesis. The experimentations with the “frame-limit”, as directed by the camera's framing and movement, opens up possibilities for abstraction in cinema. Such experimentation with framing is a process that Rocha began in *Pátio*, where bodies, landscapes, and architectural space mutate into a set of lines and volumes. Those elements perform the depth experienced by consciousness in the bodies' dispositions.

Therefore, in approximating the avant-gardist abstract art of Pape, Clark, and Oiticica to Rocha's film *Pátio*, I hope to argue that experimentations with the frame and breaking with the framing in Concrete and Neoconcrete painting, which are expressions of a phenomenological approach, are similar to Rocha's experimentation with the specificity of cinematographic language in *Pátio*. Furthermore, “[...] the potential for abstract cinema had become increasingly apparent through the direction which painting in particular had taken” (Le Grice, 1977, pp. 19-20). Rocha's experimentations with framing, camera movements, and editing construct abstract moving images, as in Neoconcrete abstract painting. Moreover, *Pátio* makes the medium appear while at the same time portraying abstract and constructive (Amaral, 1977; Martins, 2013; Monzani, 1986) relations between human bodies and the landscape. I will first analyze *Pátio*, then I will introduce the possible relationship with the abstract paintings of *Grupo Frente* and Neoconcrete. Notice that the description of the film is the analysis itself, in which I highlight the formal elements that are neither literary nor based on the drama.

²⁶² Martins defines “ongoing process as: “‘process-oriented’, as taking into account previously produced art objects not as enclosed or discrete entities, but as part of an ongoing process, so that the truth of their meaning depends on that relation” (Martins, 2013, p. 60). Thus, the artworks' process is constantly ongoing, in process.

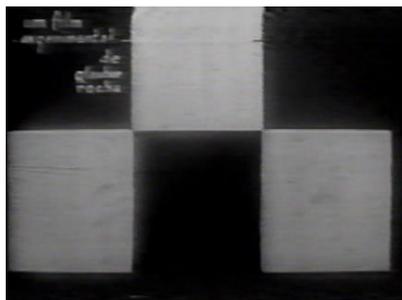


Illustration 59 – Credits, in *Pátio* (Glauber Rocha, 1959)

Pátio's initial credits appear over a black and white square-patterned background (Illustration 59). The same pattern is on the floor, across which two bodies (one female and one male) move. In the first sequence of *Pátio*, the camera shifts from banana tree leaves to the black and white squares, passing diagonally over a pair of shoes. The camera gets closer to the male body, whose arms are half-open, lying on the square-patterned floor. The body is not in the center of the frame, and the hand touches the frame's limit. The angle of the camera shows this body lying on the checkerboard floor, almost dissolving into the geometric lines. There is a cut followed by a close-up of the top of the head and shoulder of the male body, and a piece of the floor on which the body lies (Illustration 60). There is then another cut and a shot with tree branches and small leaves.²⁶³ The following frame consists in a high-angled, diagonal shot of the square-patterned floor, making evident the limit of the sequence of black and white squares. Female and male bodies then step into the screen frame and the camera follows their movements, again employing a high-angled shot. The bodies stop at the square-patterned floor's limit and the camera moves through the line of banana tree leaves that contour the courtyard, once the camera reaches the sea, having arrived at the horizon line (Illustration 61). This first sequence is silent apart from the shot of the branches, which is accompanied by a drumming sound.

²⁶³ Monzani (1986) suggests that this shot is a cinematic quotation of Mário Peixoto's *Limite* (1931).

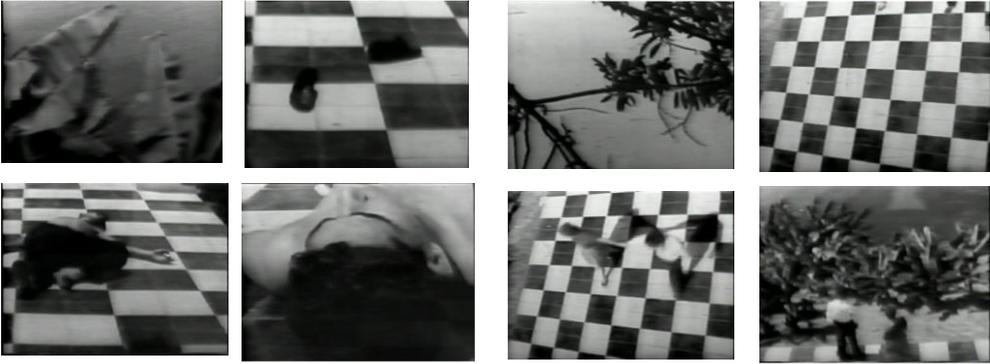


Illustration 60 – First sequence, in *Pátio*

Illustration 61 – First sequence, in *Pátio*

The first minute of this short film contains all of the elements that will be associated with each other throughout the film: the male and female body; the geometric shapes; the plants and the sea. Additionally, in this first minute, the film establishes a dialogue between straight lines and organic lines, which consequently creates a set of lines that act in the same manner that painters express through abstraction in their paintings, dissolving the representation of space and time in the film. Thus, *Pátio* does not introduce any characters or narrative, but rather dismantles the representation of time and three-dimensional space in its moving images. The “concrete music”, as announced in the credits, combines fast drumming music, with minimal, metallic sounds, babblings, moans, and voices that rapidly recite incomprehensible words. The visceral sounds combined with cold metal sounds reflect the connections between human bodies and the organic elements of the landscape with the rigid elements of the architectural space. *Pátio*, through continual “deframings”, centralizes tensions between lines and makes the two dimensions of the screen appear.

The bodies, the floor, the plants, and the horizon are converted into lines, as a consequence of which they become abstract forms, either thanks to movement or the stiffness of the camera. Additionally, the camera de-frames, frames, and re-frames the objects, in order to establish a constructive (Monzani, 1986) relationship—especially by distorting the edges of the “frame-limit”, as well as the limits of the shots.

Therefore, the camera and the editing draw with their movements certain affinities, which are responsible for breaking the limits of the frame. As Rubens Machado explains:

The editing intervenes in a determined moment with tree branches standing against the sky, opposed to the masculine contorted face, increasingly disturbed, directed to the skies. In another moment (of the film), the harmony of the composition between geometry (tiles, sometimes in black, sometimes in white) and bodies (arms, face...) evolves into compositions that put into tension straight and curved lines, architecture and construction versus bodily organicity (Machado, 2009, p. 1, own translation).²⁶⁴

The abstraction of a ‘body’ into a ‘line-body’ occurs in several sequences of the film. For example, the sequence where the male head is looking towards the horizon is shot from the profile—horizontally (Illustration 62). The frame cuts this profile, in the same way that it cuts the limit of the floor, on which the head lies. The frame cuts the leaves of banana trees, and the horizon line delimits the sky and the sea. The line of the frame dialogues with the lines that it frames. Owing to this, the lines form elements of the real converted into abstract forms. Thus, one could say that there are sets of moving/organic lines with fixed/geometric lines and that they expand beyond the “frame-limit.”



Illustration 62 – Male profile, in *Pátio*

Furthermore, in the high-angled, close-up shot, which shows the male head lying on the geometric floor, the head occupies the frame diagonally and moves from one side to the other, revealing the tiles’ straight lines, which are in turn cut by the

²⁶⁴ Original text: “A montagem intercede num dado momento com galhos de árvores circunstantes contra o céu, contrapostos ao esgar masculino crescentemente perturbado, dirigido aos céus. Noutro momento, a harmonia da composição entre geometria (ladrilhos ora em branco, ora em preto) e corpos (braços, face...) evolui para composições tensionando retas e curvas, arquitetura, construção, versus corpos, organicidade.”

head (Illustration 63), which is echoed in the scene where the bodies are seated in relation to the horizon. The bodies form a continuous line that goes from the bodies to the horizon and from the horizon to the bodies (Illustration 64). Furthermore, in the final sequence, the male body stands up and urinates over the leaves, portraying a set of lines once again (Illustration 65). Lastly, the film ends with a background of straight horizontal lines, which are given by a ladder, that the bodies climb with their backs to the camera (Illustration 66).

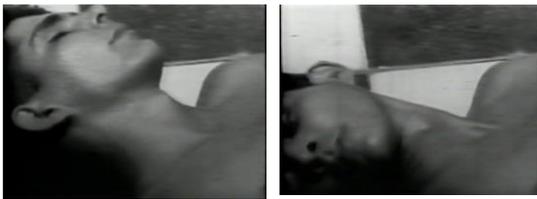


Illustration 63 – Male head over geometric floor, in *Pátio*



Illustration 64 – Bodies and the horizon line, in *Pátio*



Illustration 65 – Male body urinating on a leaf, in *Pátio*

The line in modern painting, Merleau-Ponty remarks, “is no longer a thing or an imitation of a thing. [...] Just as painting has created the latent line, it has made for itself a movement without displacement, a movement by vibration or radiation” (Merleau-Ponty, 1961/1993, p 144). The line in modern painting, as in the paintings of Clark, Pape and Oiticica, is not a *thing*, it is the movement and vibration of contact between bodies and things in the world. Rocha, in *Pátio*, in concentrating the framing on these “vibrating lines” between bodies and the world expresses the carnal existence of the subject and the world. The film also expresses the reversibility of the “flesh” (Merleau-Ponty, 1961/1993), especially when later the two hands touch each other (Illustration 70).

Pátio presents the poetic in the abstract: its composition of organic and geometric lines is abstract like abstract paintings. Fragments of human bodies, the landscape, and architectural spaces are transformed into lines as parts of a whole—parts of the film’s composition—as constructed by the editing. The whole film is composed of close-ups and medium-shots, whereby one sees parts of a whole but never gets a panoramic view. In *Pátio*, the world is the body and the body is the world, as communicated through continuous lines (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/1993, 1961/1993).



Illustration 66 –Bodies climbing the ladder, in *Pátio*

Accordingly, bodies inhabit the limit of the frame and geometric lines move with those lines. An example of this is the segment where a male body lies on the geometric floor, crawling from the edge of the frame to its center. First, the body places its feet inside the frame followed by its upper body. The body writhes within the limit of the frame (Illustration 67). Following this sequence, a male head also appears within the limits of the frame, its contortions appearing and disappearing from view (Illustration 68). Something similar happens with a female body: the camera frames her upper body, head, and arms facing upwards on the ground, her body “curling” on the floor (Illustration 69). Both masculine and feminine forms inhabit the limit of the frame, and what are in the former sequence separated bodies, appear in the next sequence as continuities, extensions.

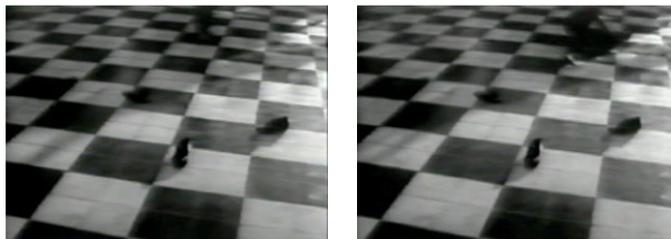


Illustration 67 – Male body dwelling in the limit of the frame, in *Pátio*



Illustration 68 – Male contorted face, in *Pátio*



Illustration 69 – Female body dwelling in limit of the frame, in *Pátio*

In this next sequence, hands emerge from opposite sides of the frame and move over the black and white squares towards each other until they touch and embrace on another in the center of the shot (Illustration 70). Moreover, in the following sequence, bodies lay on the square-patterned floor holding hands, existing once again within the frame-limit. The diagonal shot makes the floor appear larger in relation to the bodies, which are minimized atop it (Illustration 71). This reversibility is what Merleau-Ponty condenses into the notion of ‘flesh’ in *Eye and Mind*. This is expressed routinely in modern painting and is furthermore in evidence in this sequence of *Pátio*. Thus, in this sequence, the reversibility of Beings that are mutually touched and touch, and the reversibility of Beings and the world that is also ‘touched’ and felt, is expressed by Rocha when intertwining the two bodies and the squares of the floor. The stuff of the male body is the same as both the female body and the floor on which they lie. The lines of the recumbent bodies are intertwined with the lines on the floor. The black and white of the image contributes to the merging of bodily lines with straight lines.



Illustration 70 – Hands reaching for each other, in *Pátio*

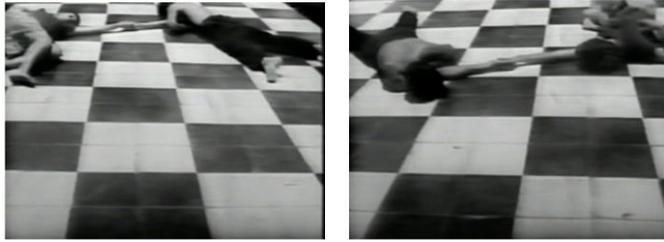


Illustration 71 – Bodies holding hands dwelling in the limit of the frame, in *Pátio*

Pátio works in the direction of abstraction, breaking with the limits of the frame and the shot through uses of camera movements and positions, as well as the editing of elements that the film portrays. Organic lines and geometric lines abstracted from bodies, the landscape, and architectural elements are combined as continuities in a discontinued scenario (*trame*) (Ghali, 1995). Rocha experiments with cinematographic language *phenomenologically*, expressing abstracted lines. This is because, in the film's composition, human bodies, natural elements, and objects have the same importance. There is no duality between figure and background within the shots (Monzani, 1986, p.9)

The two movements in the visual arts, *Grupo Frente* and its descendant, Neoconcrete, were formed by artists who broke with the limits of the surface and frame in painting, in pursuit of a humanist proposition, which involved expression based on experimentalism. Therefore, these movements subverted the relations between background and figure, time and space, body and artwork.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, the *I Exposição Nacional de Arte Concreta* (1st National Exhibition of Concrete Art) in 1956 exhibited artworks by *Grupo Frente* from Rio de Janeiro and *Ruptura* from São Paulo. In the same exhibition, the groups'

disparities became evident. *Grupo Frente* enabled expression in the abstract work while *Grupo Ruptura* understood that the work should be a purely mathematical operation, entirely absent of expression. Hence, already incipient in *Grupo Frente*, Neoconcrete's main rupture consisted in abolishing the positivist aspect of Concretism, owing to which Neoconcretism sought out new possibilities for expressing the life of the organism (Brito, 1999). This chapter highlights two pieces of work from *Grupo Frente*: (1) *Relevo em vermelho e azul - Grupo Frente* (Relief in red and blue) (1955/1956) by Lygia Pape; and (2) *Untitled - Grupo Frente* (1956) by Hélio Oiticica. I also highlight two artworks from Neoconcretism: (1) the series *Bichos | Creatures* (1960) by Lygia Clark; and (2) the penetrable *Núcleo NC6* (1960/63) by Hélio Oiticica.

The painting *Relevo em vermelho e azul - Grupo Frente* (1955/56) by Lygia Pape (Illustration 72) brings the square into communal space, thereby breaking with the painting's two-dimensionality in accordance with questions about painting from the period. The canvas contains 18 elevated squares, which transform visually into cubes. The artist organized the squares symmetrically in four lines and five columns, painting the cubes' frontal surfaces in red and their sides in blue (both pure colors). Pape painted the canvas' background white, and, on the bottom right of the canvas, there is one cube painted all in blue. This entirely blue square is isolated. The laterals of the canvas are painted in red. Consequently, it is a painting about the square, which dissolves the "frame limit" through the use of the geometric form and color, which breaks with the frame, thus extending the limits of the painting and including the space beyond the limitations of the canvas' two dimensions. *Relevo em vermelho e azul* finds in *Pátio* a correspondent in the moving image, which, through (de)framing (Bonitzer, 2000) and camera movements, rehearses 'breaks' with the screen surface's limit, as well as with the limit of the frame. Furthermore, *Pátio* includes bodies over the 'square-like' floor and builds abstraction from the elements it frames. Pape's painting moves the painting into three-dimensions²⁶⁵ through the use of the square, geometrical shape of the "frame-limit" and "frame-object" (Aumont, 2011). Rocha in *Pátio* frames bodies

²⁶⁵ Not as a representation or virtual three-dimensions, but as painting in space.

and the landscape in relation to a square-shaped patterned floor, transforming voluminous bodies and plants into linear two-dimensions on the screen (Illustrations 62-66). In both film and painting, the incorporation of the frame-limit's squared form into the abstract or moving image disrupts the culturally-established "frame-limit" in painting and cinema.

Hélio Oiticica's *Untitled - Grupo Frente* (1956) (Illustration 73) composes vertical stripes placed side-by-side, thereby insinuating their continuity beyond the edges of the picture and expanding the limits of the 'frame'. The stripes on the surface are red, but various tones of red, of which the three central stripes are divided into two by the use of darker and lighter shades of red. The stripe in the center is a lighter shade of red and almost matches the red of the stripe next to it, owing to which the two stripes almost merge into one. Oiticica in this study of color through geometrical forms expresses the organicity of painting and how color's perception is oriented by an incarnate mind (Merleau-Ponty, 1952/1992, 1961/1993), which organically mingles geometrical forms to compose a new form. In Oiticica's own words: "It will only be possible the artist's position, genetical position, phenomenologically, in an expression that is conceived in space and time: the idea is unravel, maintaining a parallel dialogue between the accomplishment and the expression" (Oiticica, 1986, p. 28, own translation).²⁶⁶ Meanwhile, *Pátio*, through "deframings" and close-ups, dissolves and recombines organic and geometrical forms as if they were made of the "same stuff" (Merleau-Ponty, 1961/1993). The sequence in which Rocha frames in close-up two hands reaching for each other over the geometrical background, and then finally holding one another, expresses the organicity of the geometric and the geometry of the fragmented body parts (Illustration 70). Oiticica's painting and Rocha's film respectively bring expression into the mathematical, the sensual into the conceptual: the latter on account of the film's framing; the former through the use of colors and geometric lines.

²⁶⁶ Original text: "Só será possível a posição do artista, posição genética, fenomenologicamente, numa expressão que se realize no espaço e no tempo: a ideia se desfia, mantendo um diálogo paralelo entre a realização e a expressão."

While they took part in the Neoconcrete movement, Lygia Clark, Lygia Pape, and Hélio Oiticica were concerned with expanding the limits of the language of painting through artworks that spectators should experience with the active involvement of their bodies. The artists' efforts aimed to break once and for all with the limits of the frame and the two-dimensional surface, taking the painting's essence into space and bringing the body into the visual artwork (that is, into the painting). Therefore, beginning with expression in abstract works, Neoconcretism expanded the boundaries between artistic languages and concepts, opening up a path for radical experimentation in the visual arts in the spirit of the international avant-garde.

Abstraction in modern and avant-garde painting is characterized by a concern with breaking with the frame and the restriction of the painting to the surface. The insertion of painting into common space, while not thereby amounting to architecture or sculpture, was part of the avant-garde's attempt to blend art with the praxis of everyday life. The Neoconcrete artists broke with both surfaces and the frame limit, giving paintings a new spatiotemporal location. To this end, as Gullar highlights: “[t]o rupture the frame and to eliminate the base are not in fact merely questions of a technical or physical nature: they pertain to an effort by the artist to liberate himself from the conventional cultural frame [...]” (Ferreira Gullar in Asbury, 2014, pp. 173). Correspondingly, Rocha was committed to cinema's emancipation from the “conventional frame of the culture”, as was endemic in his epoch.

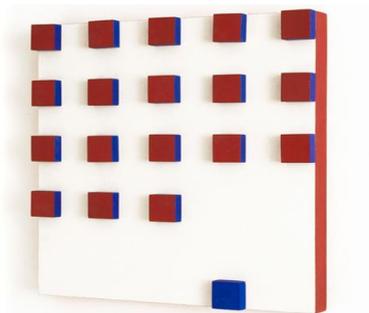


Illustration 72 - *Relevo em vermelho e azul / Grupo Frente*, (1955/56). Lygia Pape | 40x40x3.5cm | Enamel on wood.
Retrieved from: <https://www.wikiart.org/en/lygia-pape/relief-in-red-and-blue-1956/>.
Accessed: 17/06/2018.

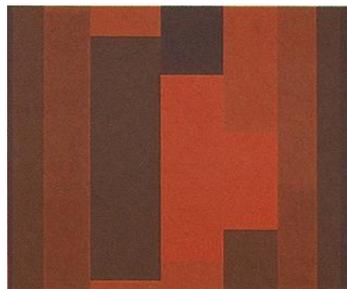


Illustration 73 - *Untitled* - Grupo Frente, (1956). Hélio Oiticica | 43x50cm | gouache on paperboard.
Retrieved from: <http://enciclopedia.itaucultural.org.br/obra20585/grupo-frente>.
Accessed: 18/06/2018



Illustration 74 – *Bichos*, (1967). Lygia Clark | Variable dimensions | Aluminum.
Views and manipulations of the works, in institutional film from the exhibition “Lygia Clark: a retrospective” (2014) at Itaú Cultural Institution.
Retrieved from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lfitsC4m_dY
Accessed: 18/06/2018.

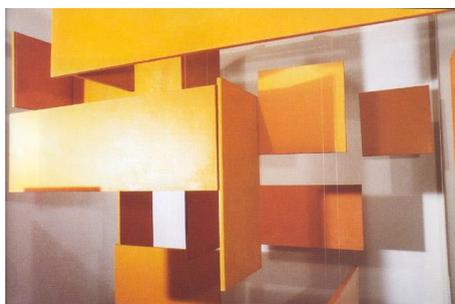


Illustration 74 - *Núcleo NC6*, detail, (1960/63), Hélio Oiticica | variable dimensions | paint on cut wood.
Retrieved from: http://54.232.114.233/extranet/enciclopedia/ho/index.cfm?fuseaction=Detalhe&pesquisa=simples&CD_Verbete=4374 Accessed: 18/06/2018.



Illustration 76 – Body inside *Núcleo NC6*
Retrieved from: http://54.232.114.233/extranet/enciclopedia/ho/index.cfm?fuseaction=Detalhe&pesquisa=simples&CD_Verbete=4374
Accessed: 18/06/2018

This chapter singles out from Neoconcretism the series *Bichos* | *Creatures* (1960) by Clark, and the *Núcleos* (Nuclei)—specifically, the *Núcleo* | *Nucleus* NC6 (1960/1963)—by Oiticica. Both series of works, in their approach and design, broke with the surface of the painting, as well as with the “frame-object”, “frame-limit” (Aumont, 2011), and the traditional squared-form of the artwork. Furthermore, these two series of works exist in their complete form when inhabited by bodies. This means that the work only comes into existence when someone embodies it, at which point the body and abstract geometric forms are organically part of the same Being. This phenomenon is in evidence in *Pátio*, in which the body that crawls on the square-patterned floor, dwelling within the frame, while the camera moves past the lines, ends up directing the spectator to inhabit the continuity of body, landscape, and geometrical lines. Furthermore, these two series of artworks express the reversibility of the ‘flesh’, as conveyed by Merleau-Ponty in *Eye and Mind*, and as expressed in the aforementioned sequence in *Pátio*. The carnality of the *propositions* mirrors the carnality of the bodies. To this extent, the artists and filmmakers mentioned here portray the ‘depth’ of the incarnate mind.

Clark’s series *Bichos* (Illustrations 27 and 74) consists of pieces made of polished metal plates that are joined together by hinges. These plates have unique geometrical shapes, and, when manipulated, take several forms. The *Bicho*’s material is cold and rigid. However, when manipulated, it becomes a moving-being (*ser movente*). This series of moving metal works invites the spectator to engage his/her body through interaction with the artwork. As Clark explains: “in the relationship between you (spectator) and the *Bicho* there is no passivity, neither yours nor its. It happens, a sort of melee between two living entities” (Clark in Amaral, 1977, p. 248, own translation).²⁶⁷ *Pátio* likewise expresses the melee between body and the geometrical surface.

²⁶⁷ Original text: “Na relação que se estabelece entre você e o Bicho não há passividade nem sua nem dele. Acontece, uma espécie de corpo a corpo entre duas entidades vivas.”

When someone manipulates one of the *Bichos*, the individual and *Bicho* form together an “in between” of cold and warm, and of geometric and organic lines. Additionally, the plates’ movement allows continuity in time and space between the *Bicho* and the spectator, the latter becoming a participant in the work. To this extent, Clark materializes the phenomenological encounter of things and subjects. She achieves this through the disruption of the painted surface, through experimenting with abstraction, expressing the phenomenological relationship between subject and things, since the geometrical *Bicho* influences the subject as the subject influences the *Bicho*. This amounts to what Merleau-Ponty called a reflexive relation of the “Flesh” (Merleau-Ponty, 1961/1993, 2009; Saint Aubert, 2011). Likewise, in *Pátio*, a relation is established between geometric lines and organic lines, which rupture the limits of the frame through either framing or deframing, or camera movements. Additionally, the film is no less alive than the *Bicho*. On the contrary, *Pátio* invites the spectator to merge him or herself sensorially with the film, moving across various geometric, cold, and rigid surfaces.

Oiticica’s *Núcleos* series, initiated in 1960 in tandem with his project of so-called ‘nuclear’ painting, represents in his career a turning point towards the *Penetráveis* and the labyrinthine form, of which *Tropicália* is a part. The *Núcleo NC6* (1960/63) (Illustrations 75 and 76) consists of wooden boards/plates covered with bright yellow paint, which are suspended by nylon wires at different heights, forming a labyrinth. This is true of other *Núcleos*, but they differ in color, arrangement, and formatting. *NC6*’s plates have a square or rectangular shape. Similar to Clark’s *Bichos*, *NC6*’s materials are rigid and cold. However, the spectator does not touch the plates, nor manipulates them, but instead *penetrates* them. That is, the spectator penetrates a labyrinth of color. The spectator, or rather *participant*, consequently accesses the color’s core in space and time. Oiticica, in this work, places the body within the painting, within the color, and, like Clark, he materializes relations between what is seen and the person who sees it (Merleau-Ponty, 1961/1993), as well as between fixed and moving lines. Similarly to *Bichos*, as well as Rocha’s *Pátio*.

While these artists pursued expressive and sensorial experimental methods in their abstract works, Rocha was doing the same in film. In Rocha's avant-gardist film, every element is combined to experiment with the possibilities of cinematographic language. Rocha's intention was not to represent reality, but to create through cinema a reality of his own (Merleau-Ponty, 1948/2004, p. 62). The bodies and their parts, as well as the movements between them, compose and direct the film's *trame* (Ghali, 1995). The film's composition unifies plants, trees, branches, buildings, and the sea on the same two-dimensional plane, which amounts to a labyrinth of organic and geometric lines. *Pátio* unites *sensually* and *carnally* the geometric floor, the sea, the wall, the trees, parts of the bodies, and bodies in their entirety (Merleau-Ponty, 1961/1993).

Pátio's camera movements are fluid and move with the bodies it captures. To this end, as Merleau-Ponty remarks: "[every] technique is a 'technique of the body,' illustrating and amplifying the metaphysical structure of the body" (Merleau-Ponty, 1961/1993, p. 129). The alliance between technique and body, of the body behind and in front of the camera, is similar to the first attempts to bring expression, organic lines, and phenomenological practice into abstract visual artworks, which the artists mentioned here were hoping to achieve between the late 1950s and early 1960s.

This chapter brings together visual language procedures, whether cinematic, painted, installed, or *non-object* (Gullar, 1959). In the cinema *dispositif* (Aumont, 2011), it is not possible to rupture the physical frame. Nevertheless, it is possible to problematize the limits of the frame and to use the space within the frame in order to rupture it. Furthermore, the gestures of the body through the *camera-montage-brush* are inscribed into the film's compositions (see Introduction). Classical cinema's use of continuity reveals the virtual permeability of the screen frame (Bordwell, Staiger, & Thompson, 2005; Deleuze, 1983), making it 'invisible'. By contrast, modern and avant-garde cinema renders visible the frame and camera movements as components of the film. The formal experimentation of Rocha's film reverberates thanks to an attempt to transform reality through expression rather than representation. That is, if it is impossible to change reality, one must at least denounce it by broadening structures,

their frames and attendant limitations through visual language. Gullar writes about Oiticica's *Penetráveis*: "the works of art that so radically disagree with values that are in vogue affirm the will of social transformation" (Ferreira Gullar in Amaral, 1977, p. 267, own translation).²⁶⁸ Rocha's films are films that disagree with fashionable values, thereby indicating possible units of social transformation in both content and form. Rocha reveals in his first film a concern with the form and specificity of language, as well as the processes of possible formal abstraction available to filmmakers.

Terra em transe is a narrative film centered on the intellectual Paulo Martins and his dealings with politics. The film is constructed around Martins' inner monologue. Martins narrates the film, which moves backwards and forwards in time, following his memories and lived experiences (*vivências*) (Nagib, 2011; Xavier, 2012). Each character inhabits different spaces, surrounded by specific landscapes (Machado Jr, 1997), which seem to be abstracted from localities, and do not form the film's context. Thus, *Terra em transe* recuperates and revisits the elements of landscapes and bodies, as well as the experimental attitude and dialogue between the movements of the camera and the movements of the body, as in *Pátio*. Therefore, the analysis that this thesis focuses on does not involve the development of characters, their constructions or conflicts, but how Glauber Rocha *formally* undertakes a labyrinthine film, analogous to the central character's lived experience. Thus, my proposal here is to offer a formal interpretation that does not develop or elaborate on the 'drama' in accordance with the context. These analyses can be found in Machado Jr. (1997), while the political context is expounded in, for example, Xavier (2012).

²⁶⁸ Original text: "As obras de arte que discordam tão radicalmente dos valores em voga afirmam a vontade de uma transformação social."

6.3 *Terra em transe/Entranced Earth (1967) and Tropicália (1967): abstraction as a labyrinth*

Terra em transe is Cinema Novo's key film (Gerber, 1977, p. 37), owing to its combining a labyrinthine and discontinued film form with a critique of populism, conservative politics, and the contradictory, ambivalent political position of the intellectual middle class (Xavier, 2012). *Terra em transe* is a narrative film that is neither temporally nor spatially continuous (Bentes, 2007; Nagib, 2011; Xavier, 2012). Because of this, the film is non-representational. The film was a shock that "condensed Cinema Novo's agony and prepared Tropicalism" (Xavier, 2001b, p. 64, own translation)²⁶⁹ in cinema and the arts. Furthermore, *Terra em transe* presented innovative cinematic thinking and criticized the capitalist society and its enterprise in underdeveloped countries. Ultimately, the company *Explint*²⁷⁰ is the monopoly that influences public opinion and puts pressure on the political process in *Eldorado*, the fictional country in *Terra em transe* (Gerber, 1977; Xavier, 2012). The political critique Rocha achieves in the film is analyzed by Xavier (2012), Gerber (1977), and Machado Jr. (1997), as well as Rocha himself (2004), who unpack in detail the political context before and after the coup of 1964. This thesis, apart from brief mentions, will not elaborate on the political context further in the text, since the aim here is to analyze the formal cinematographic choices that Rocha made as a filmmaker with regard to the landscape, architectural spaces, and bodies. Furthermore, I expect to focus on how the labyrinth propounded by Oiticica is also present in *Terra em transe*. This will add another layer of reflection to the film's analysis.

The film allegorically (Xavier, 2012) re-enacts the military coup that took place in Brazil in 1964 as an event that defies reason. In the authors words:

²⁶⁹ Original text: "Terra em transe condensou o Cinema Novo, em agonia. E preparou o tropicalismo."

²⁷⁰ "Explint – Companhia de Explotaciones Internacionales" (Xavier, 2012, p. 108). *Explint* is the multi-national business complex directed by the character Don Julio Fuentes in *Terra em transe*.

Two movements coexist in *Terra em transe*: the linear progression and the circularity of the repetitions. The progression composes the horizontal allegory that condenses the succession of facts and makes Eldorado the representation of the Brazilian scene, hierarchizing agents, spaces, actions to figure an event: the coup of 1964 (Xavier, 2012, p. 106, own translation).²⁷¹

In the film, political actions, the politicians' performances, and Paulo Martins' internal conflicts are juxtaposed (Rocha & Bentes, 1997). Nagib (2011) argues that Martins' state of mind, which gives a trance-like state to camera movements and the fragmented editing, "contaminates all technical aspects of the film: the shaky, gyrating handheld camera, the theatrical *mise-en-scène* in sumptuous palaces in the middle of the jungle, the temporal zigzags, the whole enveloped in the sound of operas" (Nagib, 2011, p. 140). However, it is also imperative to emphasize that Martins' 'inside' and 'outside' form one unique 'trance', which is relevant given that it is not possible to tell whether the political movements influence Martins or whether Martins just interprets them in that way.

Accordingly, *Terra em transe*'s opening aerial sequence introduces the tropical imagery of *Eldorado* with the music of Afro-Brazilian *Candomblé* (Nagib, 2011). The aerial sequence displays the seashore, the mass of vegetation covering the hills near the beach, and the sea that reflects the sunlight (Illustration 77). The scenery of sand, thick vegetation, plants, and intense sunlight returns to the film's exterior and interior shots (Xavier, 2012, p. 113). The elements of the landscape are related to the characters. Furthermore, the characters' bodies are continually presented in relation to those elements. Nagib (2011) and Xavier (2012) connect the *Candomblé* music to the trance-like state that characterizes the central character's state-of-mind, as well as to the aesthetic of the film. However, the vertical montage between images and sound (Xavier, 2012) in *Terra em transe* introduces other kinds of music and sounds, which allude to inebriated, hypnotized, and altered states of mind. Examples of this includes: the jazz music that plays when the central character, Paulo Martins, dances drunk at

²⁷¹ Original text: "Dois movimentos convivem em *Terra em Transe*: a progressão linear e a circularidade das repetições. A progressão compõe a alegoria horizontal que condensa a sucessão dos fatos e faz de Eldorado a representação da cena brasileira, hierarquizando agentes, espaços, ações para figurar um acontecimento: o golpe de 1964."

Fuente's party; the constant, heavy drumming that permeates scenes with Vieira; the nationalist song that plays while Diaz aimlessly points a gun in an internal garden; and the unstoppable machine gun that is juxtaposed with several sequences. The music, the *off-diegesis* sounds, and Martins' voice-over narration and declaiming poetry suggest an intrinsic relationship between man and his land, all in 'trance'. As Bentes remarks: "[this] collage of heterogeneous or disparate elements is only possible due to an exceptional work of montage that structures the narrative in a visual and sound polyphony in which the music alternates afro drumming, Villa-Lobos, jazz" (Bentes, 2007, p. 102, own translation).²⁷² It is possible to argue, therefore, that the *Candomble* music is part of the same universe as the jazz, the Villa-Lobos, the nationalist song, the guns sounds, and the labyrinthine tropical imagery in *Eldorado*.

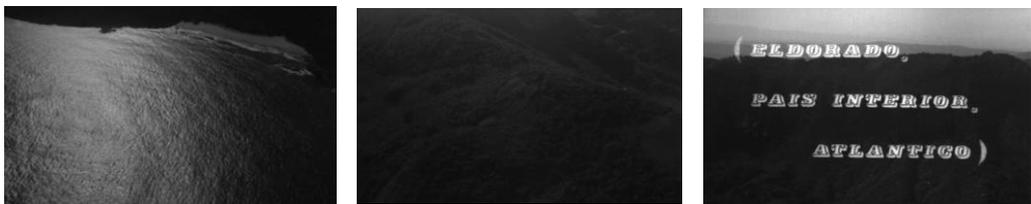


Illustration 77 – Opening sequence in *Terra em transe* (Glauber Rocha, 1967).

I mentioned in the introduction of this chapter that *Terra em transe* narrates Martins' political endeavors, fluctuating between two political tendencies and spheres: (1) the left-wing sphere centered around the populism of Felipe Vieira; and (2) the conservative right-wing centered around Porfirio Díaz. For each political inclination, there is a woman, the activist Sara on the left, and the silent, passive Silvia on the right (Machado Jr, 1997).²⁷³ In the middle, playing the game that suits his economic and business interests, is Julio Fuentes, the owner of the company *Explint*. Rocha places inside the abstract, tropical country *Eldorado*, and its province *Alecrim*, political, economic, professional, and intellectual concepts and characters that push and pull the country and its people as they desire, with no apparent order. Gilda de Mello e Souza emphasizes that Rocha neither

²⁷² Original text: "Essa colagem de elementos heterogêneos ou díspares só é possível por um trabalho excepcional de montagem, estruturando a narrativa numa polifonia visual e sonora em que a trama musical alterna batuques afros, Villa-Lobos, jazz."

²⁷³ Rubens Machado (1997) suggests the two spheres and the spaces related to them, as portrayed the film's poster.

portrays stereotypes nor types, but uses figures (characters) that represent a *significant sample*²⁷⁴ of society. Thus, “Paulo Martins represents the festive left, Sara the real left, Profírio Días the paternalist politics, and Vieira the populist leadership” (Souza, 2009, p. 233, own translation).²⁷⁵

Furthermore, Xavier (2012) argues that the connection between these characters and their actions within the *diegesis* corresponds to a social and historical context. For Xavier (2012), *Terra em transe*'s symbolic internal relations function as an allegory for the historical period, in a similar sense to baroque literature and drama. The author states that allegorical literary and dramatic structures have lacunae that place the spectator in an “analytical position” (Xavier, 2012, p. 32) of being actively engaged in the drama. The allegory is present in several films that were made during the civil-military dictatorship (1964-1985), not only in *Terra em transe*.

About the allegory in *Terra em transe*, Xavier (2012) remarks that it simultaneously presents a clear sense and reference of the historical period, as well as incongruous circumstances, in a discontinued and non-linear form, which makes the camera movements, the framing, and montage visible to the spectator. Thus, tension and ambiguities of form and content encrypt the message in the film (Xavier, 2012, p. 38). The allegory in *Terra em transe*, therefore, relates a discontinued, non-linear aesthetic reflecting social experiences. Additionally, *Terra em transe*'s discontinuity is essential to its narrative structure, which is in accordance with the aesthetics of modern cinema.

Rocha's cinema practice, in general, was based on a revolutionary aesthetic, which thought that the film should engage the spectator both formally, as well as with its political content. *Terra em transe*'s radical form is in accordance with radical actions taken in the film, as Días's political coup takes power by force. Xavier (2012), in his thesis about the allegorical film form in Brazilian cinema, examines *Terra em transe* in all

²⁷⁴ Xavier refers to *Terra em transe* as a “tableau vivant of historical agents” (Xavier, 2012, p. 94).

²⁷⁵ Original text: “Não há mais pessoas nem tipos; cada figura se transforma numa espécie de *amostra significativa*. Assim, Paulo Martins representa a esquerda festiva, Sarah a esquerda real, Porfírio Diaz a política paternalista, Vieira as lideranças populistas.”

its details, including its narrative from a literary perspective, which this text will not develop further.

Xavier comments that an objective (functionalist and Cartesian) analysis of *Terra em transe* is distressing (Xavier, 2012, p. 90), since its form eludes the structure characteristic of classical cinematic narratives and their typical causal relations. One last point I would like to highlight about Xavier's (2012) thesis is that Rocha's film subverts the narrative of the nation as the foundation of people that fragments the tropic and its landscape into factions of a place lacking orderly form. This procedure works in an opposite direction to the 1960's Brazilian nationalist civil-military regime's discourse, which celebrated the tropical landscape as peculiar to the culture, and granting it a unified image (Xavier, 2012, p. 45). Oiticica similarly fragments and dissolves stereotypes and tropical imagery in his penetrable, *Tropicália* (1967).

Rubens Machado Jr. (1997; 2005) examines space in *Terra em transe*, suggesting that the film has a Baroque style owing to the imbricated spatial relations and the exacerbation of specific formal characteristics in the movements of the camera, as well as the proximity and *frontality* of the body. Moreover, Machado argues that Rocha's Baroque style of inserting layers of space and bodies is confusing and excessive. However, the multiple layers are constitutive of Rocha's rigorous thinking. On Machado Jr.'s account: "in the Baroque, the 'appearance of confusion' hides a rigorous discursive geometry, a discourse that entangles us with its strong persuasive appeal" (Machado Jr., 2005, p. 71, own translation).²⁷⁶ In accordance with Xavier (2012), Machado Jr. (1997; 2005) identifies the engagement of the spectator in the film form, in other words, it is the film form itself that invites, or even *demand*s, the spectator to participate in the film's ongoing process. Both Machado (1997; 2005) and Xavier (2012) identify *Eldorado* as an allegory for a Latin-American country or Brazil.

²⁷⁶ Original text: "Como no Barroco, a "aparência de confusão" oculta uma rigorosa geometria discursiva, dialogante, que nos enreda com forte apelo persuasivo."

However, *being* an allegory,²⁷⁷ it is not possible to affirm whether it is either a Latin American country or Brazil itself (Machado Jr., 2005).

This thesis agrees with both Xavier and Machado's reading of *Terra em transe* as allegorical of the historical period and localities. Nevertheless, I focus on Machado's understanding of space and landscape in relation to the actors' (and characters') bodies. Thus, my analysis focuses on how they are framed and move with the camera. This thesis interprets the formal and methodological bodies' movements, as presented with the landscape, and in relation with the camera, as labyrinthine, just as Oiticica conceives of it, that is phenomenological. This means that *Terra em transe* presents an organic abstraction in which the spectator penetrates, moving through spaces, sounds, passages, windows, poetry, and others materials. Consequently, the spectator takes part in the "art(film)work" (Oiticica, 1986). In both the film's and the installation's labyrinth, the spectator finds no causal relations and no unified, orderly imagery, but a labyrinthine living experience (Favaretto, 2015; Oiticica, Figueiredo, Pape, & Salomão, 1986). What this means, as Oiticica remarks is that, "the labyrinthine character [makes] the space organic in an abstract way by smashing the space and giving it a new character of internal tension" (Oiticica, 1986, p. 29, own translation).²⁷⁸

Machado Jr. (1997) acknowledges *Eldorado* (and consequently *Terra em transe*) as an abstraction, claiming that, "in trying to think of the set of spaces of *Terra em transe* as a totality, we arrive at an abstraction formed through an accumulation of images. To this abstraction, the film itself had already given a name: *Eldorado*" (Machado Jr, 1997, p. 27, own translation).²⁷⁹ Therefore, *Eldorado* is a conjunction of moving images of abstract spaces that morph into one abstract country, *Eldorado*, and its province, *Alecrim*. Furthermore, *Terra em transe* alternates between interior and exterior spaces following the actors' bodies. Moreover, the camera movements correspond with the

²⁷⁷ The allegory is something obscure (Machado Jr., 2005).

²⁷⁸ Original text: "[...] o caráter de labirinto, que tende a organizar o espaço de maneira abstrata esfacelando-o e dando-lhe um caráter novo, de tensão interna."

²⁷⁹ Original text: "Tentando pensar o conjunto de espaços de *Terra em transe* como uma totalidade chegamos a uma abstração formada de um certo acúmulo de imagens. A esta abstração, o filme mesmo havia já dado um nome: *Eldorado*."

politicians' inclinations. As Machado Jr. sees it: "mobility and external (spaces) correspond to popular and populist" politics, while the "fixed camera and internal (spaces) correspond to conservative" politics (Machado Jr., 1997, p. 19).

Eldorado's abstract, labyrinthine space emanates from the fact that even though the whole film was shot on location (that is, not inside a studio), there is no reference to the place where it was shot. Rocha avoided tourist locations and covered street signs (Machado Jr., 1997). As Machado Jr. affirms:

In the same way as in the whole film, in the first sequence of Vieira's Palace and in Paulo's escape, Rocha avoids the shots that can be identified as typical of Rio (or any Brazilian big city); nothing emblematic in any case (Machado Jr, 1997, p. 79, own translation).²⁸⁰

These procedures build an abstract, and, at the same time, tropical land. Additionally, there is no urban landscape suggesting a metropolis in *Terra em transe* (Machado Jr., 1997, p. 82). On the contrary, the natural landscape, redolent of the tropics, is present throughout the exterior scenes as well as in the interiors, such as the "fake" landscape painted in Fuentes' office (Illustration 78). Thus, Rocha chose locations in which the tropical landscape, such as plants, forests, beaches, and the sea, was framed with the bodies. The landscape in *Terra em transe* is made of the same "stuff" as the bodies, and the bodies belong to that land in a reflexive, carnal relationship (Merleau-Ponty, 1961/1993). Rocha expresses this audio-visually.

Câmara (2005) remarks the following about painting from Merleau-Ponty's perspective: "we see from a body that is within the world. [...] It is from within the body, that is within the world, as we have said, that the painter paints. [...] It is in this 'internal equivalent' of the world in the body that has an origin, and is based, the painting" (2005, p. 149, own translation).²⁸¹ Rocha films the landscape and architectural spaces in the same way that a painter paints the world and landscape in

²⁸⁰ Original text: "Do mesmo modo que até aqui no filme, ou seja, na primeira sequência do Palácio de Vieira e na escapada de Paulo, como sempre em *Terra em Transe*, evitam-se as tomadas que possam ser identificadas como típicas do Rio (ou de uma grande cidade brasileira qualquer); nada de emblemático em todo caso."

²⁸¹ Original text: "[...] vemos a partir de um corpo que está dentro do mundo. [...] É de dentro do corpo, que está dentro do mundo, como dissemos, que o pintor pinta. [...] É neste 'equivalente interno' do mundo no corpo que tem origem, e se funda, a pintura."

which he lives. The world that is ‘inside’ him is the world that, in a labyrinthian way, constructs each character in *Terra em transe*. Thus, this reflexivity between the Being and his/her world is present in each frame. Furthermore, it is the expression of the world (Merleau-Ponty, 1952/1992).



Illustration 78 – Landscape and bodies framed together, in *Terra em transe*.

As mentioned above, Machado Jr. (1997) identifies in *Terra em transe* two things that concern camera movements and the framing of bodies and spaces: (1) the camera gets very close to the bodies and moves with them through space; and (2) the two opposing politicians are respectively placed in an exterior versus an interior. These two formal procedures contribute to the film’s phenomenological expression and its labyrinthine form, thereby aligning it with Oiticica’s conception of a labyrinth. Accordingly, Vieira, being the ‘man of the people’, is mostly framed in relation to exteriors, and he is constantly in motion thanks to the “mobile camera” that follows him (Illustration 79). Díaz is mostly framed in interiors and moves steadily; the ‘fixed camera’ seems attached to his face and upper body (Illustration 80). When Vieira moves, the camera moves along with and around him, making circular and zigzagging movements. When Díaz moves, however, the camera is fixed on one part of his body while the people and landscapes move around him, or else the camera moves towards and around him in straight lines. Additionally, the light in both exteriors and interiors reflects the political configuration: “the interior as the space of the idealizations finds in the violent contrast of the outer light, as the space of action, the configuration of a concrete problem [...] the light of the mundane political power crushes revolutionary

idealism” (Machado Jr., 1997, p. 100, own translation).²⁸² Thus, the exterior’s light of concrete action encroaches into the interior space of idealization.



Illustration 79 – The framing of Vieira, in *Terra em transe*.



Illustration 80 - The framing of Díaz, in *Terra em transe*.

Vieira is frequently seen among the people, playing the role of an exemplary populist politician, and on his rooftop mansion (*palacete*) in the province, as well as campaigning on the ground below. The people²⁸³ sometimes take the “stand” or lead the scenes, but are immediately shot or physically silenced (Illustration 81). As comments Gilda de Mello e Souza: “Gradually the frames compress people against each other, leaving no gap through which the air circulates; and in oppressive space, men are faced with hatred, face to face, hand to face” (Souza, 2009, p. 237, own translation).²⁸⁴

²⁸² Original text: “O interior como espaço das idealizações encontra no contraste violento da luz exterior, referente ao espaço da ação, a configuração de um problema concreto e histórico vivido pelos personagens e que poderia ser simplificado na fórmula elementar de que ‘no plano da realidade nua e crua, o idealismo revolucionário é esmagado pelo poder político mundano.’”

²⁸³ The actors of the film play main characters and the local people play extras.

²⁸⁴ Original text: “Aos poucos os enquadramentos apertam as pessoas umas contra as outras, não deixando nenhuma brecha por onde o ar circule; e no espaço opressivo os homens se defrontam com o ódio, cara a cara, mão contra o rosto.”



Illustration 81 – Two sequence in which the people lead the action and was silenced either by shot or by being shut physically, in *Terra em transe*.

Otherwise, the people constitute the landscape surrounding Vieira's sphere, along with the natural landscape; they are extras (Didi-Huberman, 2012). Rocha gave leading roles to actors, while local people play the roles of extras. Two scenes are primary examples of the dynamic between the tropical landscape and its people, which form the politicians's world. The first regards Vieira's campaign in the countryside; the second is the big rooftop terrace that is surrounded by tropical landscape (Illustrations 79 and 82). Vieira is always surrounded by one of them.

Asymmetrically, Díaz is alone or surrounded by elements that suggest conservative politics, as well as tokens of economic interest and violence, for example, the gun, the cross, the flag, women, the crown, the internal garden, and the marble halls of his sumptuous residency (Illustrations 80 and 83). Díaz is the conservative politician who is removed from the people, who represents economic and religious interests, as well as violence, since Díaz carries and points the gun, while Vieira never carries guns.



Illustration 82 – Vieira and the people, in *Terra em transe*.



Illustration 83 – Díaz and his elements, in *Terra em transe*.

Consequently, Martins, who remains between the political opponents' conflicting spheres, accordingly fluctuates between the mobile camera and the fixed camera, moving from one space to the other. Martins is inside his apartment, inside Diaz's neoclassical mansion, on Vieira's terrace, inside the newspaper office, at Fuentes' party, at Vieira's campaigns, in the city, and in the middle of the jungle (Illustration 84). He moves between spaces throughout the film's composition. As Xavier remarks: "Paulo is the only one allowed to circulate all the spaces establishing the connections between spaces that are connected to opposite agents and their hierarchical positions. Paulo is the bridge between the distinctive orders that act in the political process" (Xavier, 2012, p. 109, own translation).²⁸⁵ Martins continually moves between interiors, exteriors, landscapes, and people looking for a political way out. His search ultimately returns to its undefined center: himself.



Illustration 84 – Martins in his apartment, in Diaz's house, on Fuentes' rooftop, inside the newspaper office, and among people on Vieira's rooftop, in *Terra em transe*.

Martins exists at the center of abstract space in the labyrinthine *Eldorado*. In the opposite direction of classical cinematic style, in which the subject (both character and spectator) orderly constructs cause and effect relations following a linear representation of space and time (Bordwell et al., 2005), *Terra em transe's* subjects (that is, its creators, characters, and spectators) remain within an ongoing succession of

²⁸⁵ Original text: "Paulo is the only one allowed to circulate all the spaces establishing the connections between spaces that are connected to opposite agents and their hierarchical positions. Paulo makes the bridge between the distinctive orders that act in the political process."

spaces and times (both present and past). The subject is a phenomenological conscience, as proposed by Merleau-Ponty (1945/1993, 1945/2012, 1952/1992, 1961/1993, 2011). This means that the dimensions of space and time are built actively out of a combination of perception and memory, which simultaneously present themselves as consciousness. Therefore, at the center of these relations between space and time is Martins' consciousness, which is an incarnate mind in the world, namely in *Eldorado*. Indeed, alongside Martins is the spectator, who gives himself over to the "chaos of sensation" (Bentes, 2007; Merleau-Ponty, 1945/1993).

The inside of Martins is reflected in the outside. In other words, the *Eldorado* that we see is Martins' *Eldorado*. Therefore, Martins seems to occupy *Terra em transe*'s center. Furthermore, Martins, who sits at the center of political, economic, and social struggles, is middle class. This medial theme follows Martins throughout the film: Rocha casts Martins' death in the middle of the road, in the middle of Díaz's staircase, and at the horizon line with a machine gun in the midst of clouds and sand (Illustration 85). Martins seems to be at the center of the labyrinth, which is made up of spaces and tropical moving images.



Illustration 85 – Paulo Martins' death, in *Terra em transe*.

The image and sound montage, camera movements, and the allocation of bodies in relation to the landscape and architectural spaces reflect the effect between Martins' state of mind and the state of the country. Accordingly, Machado Jr. (1997) suggests that Rocha's spatial *barroquism* (sc. Baroque style) in *Terra em transe* is similar to Baroque²⁸⁶ architecture, which "works with the allusion of interpenetrating spaces"

²⁸⁶ Gombrich defines: "Baroque really means absurd or grotesque, and it was used by men who insisted that the forms of classical building should never have been used or combined, except in the ways adopted by the Greeks

(Machado Jr, 1997, p. 19, own translation).²⁸⁷ Thus, I argue that it is the exploration, interpenetration, and discontinued montage of internal and external spaces, as well as the *Eldorado's* abstract imagery, that construct the formal abstraction and labyrinthine structure of *Terra em transe*. Hence, the film's composition is labyrinthine.

Unifying metaphor, the labyrinth introduces the world as the interweaving of the predictable and the unpredictable. The labyrinth is appropriated to illustrate fragmentary states of dissolution. Mythical form, the labyrinth points to a center, to an order in which the contradictory and the disparate operate (Favaretto, 2015, p. 68, own translation).²⁸⁸

Thus, *Terra em transe*, as a labyrinth, visually combines interior and exterior spaces. The labyrinthine aspect of *Terra em transe* is intrinsically related to its experimentalism and critical film form, which centers around Martins. The labyrinth engages the spectator in its imbricated and non-defined spaces, seeking a way out that recurrently returns to its enigmatic center, namely the entranced Martins. The phenomenological labyrinth of *Terra em transe* is a 'real' living experience (*vivência*), which engages the spectator, thus making evident the real medium of cinema (Nagib, 2011). Borges (2007) propounds the 'labyrinth' as a key notion of filmic composition, mentioning the enigma placed at the center of a labyrinth and its abstract construction as something 'real.' He remarks:

A long, tortuous, passage full of perils and pitfalls, of which, inside, lies something, perhaps a Monster, perhaps treasure, perhaps both. (A labyrinth is) built with an 'acute sense of abstraction,' but allied, however, to a 'desire to translate the abstract into a concrete representation' (Borges, 2007, pp. 16-17, own translation).²⁸⁹

Therefore, the labyrinthine moving image has a challenging, abstract form that is also concrete, while containing a central enigma. Owing to the 'unorderly order'

and Romans. To disregard the strict rules of ancient architecture seemed to these critics a deplorable lapse of taste—whence they labelled the style Baroque. It is not altogether easy for us to appreciate these distinctions" (Gombrich, 1951, p. 288). Rocha's film seems have an excessive use of interpenetrating spaces, in this sense also it could be defined as Baroque.

²⁸⁷ Original text: "[...] que trabalha com a sugestão de espaços interpenetrantes."

²⁸⁸ Original text: "Metáfora unificadora, o labirinto apresenta o mundo como entrelaçamento de previsível e imprevisível, sendo apropriado para figurar estados fragmentários de dissolução. Forma mítica aponta para um centro, para uma ordem em que o contraditório e o díspar operam."

²⁸⁹ Original text: "un passage long, tortueux, plein de périls et d'embûches, au fond duquel gît Quelque Chose, peut-être le Monstre, peut-être le Trésor, peut-être les deux », bâti avec un « sens aigu de l'abstraction », mais allié néanmoins à une « volonté de traduire l'abstrait en une représentation concrète."

of the montage, imbricated spaces, and enigmatic center (occupied by Martins), *Terra em transe* suggests an abstract labyrinth of tropical images, and a tropical, abstract country.

Bonitzer (1982), when connecting the labyrinthine film form to thriller films, firstly recalls the enigmatic aspect of the labyrinth. He then affirms that the labyrinthine enigma of thrillers occurs with the *visage*: “[every] labyrinth implies uneasiness, an enigma relative to the visage” (Bonitzer, 1982, p. 73, own translation).²⁹⁰ Accordingly, the labyrinthine film composition places the enigma of the visage at its center. *Terra em transe* is a frontal film in which the characters are framed frontally, and they speak to the camera for the most part through a close-up of their faces (Illustration 86): As argues Rocha “[those] who can READ a film can see that *Terra em transe* is frontal in its framings, and it is direct, elliptical, in its montage” (Rocha & Bentes, 1997, p. 302, own translation).²⁹¹ Thus, through a labyrinthine film form, *Terra em transe* expresses the enigmatic *frontality* of the visage and the faces’ expressions, which decide the destiny of *Eldorado*. Lastly, Bonitzer (1982) argues that the labyrinth in cinema ends in a desert that virtually dissolves figures into total abstraction. Indeed, *Terra em transe* ends on a desert highway, where the figure of Paulo Martins almost fades into nonexistence (Illustration 85). Therefore, *Terra em transe* is a tropical labyrinth centered upon an enigmatic, ambiguous character amid innumerable visages.



Illustration 86 – Visages, in *Terra em transe*.

²⁹⁰ Original text: “Tout labyrinthe implique une inquiétude, une énigme quant au visage.”

²⁹¹ Original text: “Quem pode LER um filme, pode ver que Terra é frontal nos enquadramentos e direto, elíptico na montagem.”

Bonitzer (1982) examines the labyrinth in classical cinematic style, in which causal relations lead to a comfortable, enlightening, and revealing crescendo of the narrative. However, *Terra em transe*, as a modern, avant-gardist film, which experiments with cinematographic language, neither contains a reassuring center nor an exit whereby the enigma is solved. On the contrary, the film presents several exits, and its center is enigmatic. Furthermore, it is conflicting and ambiguous. As a modern film, *Terra em transe* presents abstract tropical spaces and practically erases the central character's figure into a labyrinthine form, which invites the spectator to take the active position of 'analyst' (Xavier, 2012), enabling them to penetrate *Eldorado's* and Martins' complex internal logic.

The modern cinematic style of *Terra em transe* renders visible the medium, which also makes the film 'real', or concrete. Nagib emphasizes that it is an "irrational" element that makes the reality of the medium evident in the film, remarking: "all collude against logic and favors the exposure of the irrational element inherent to the state of trance, which, being conveyed through manipulation, draws the attention to the medium's material reality" (Nagib, 2011, p. 140). Nagib associates irrationality and the absence of logic to the visibility of the medium, which is contrary to what Rocha intended with his labyrinthine, non-representational film. The filmmaker expected to raise the conscience of political entanglements and social reality (aligned with Cinema Novo) through revolutionary, visible aesthetics, because both form and content should engage the spectator. Through this engagement, the spectator becomes aware of the medium, its 'reality', and the film's discourse. Martins' vacillation and ambivalence derives from the fact that he is conscious of every political turn in *Eldorado* and the spectator who watches him. Lastly, the trance-like aesthetic can be understood as a result of conscienciousness.

Merleau-Ponty (2005; 1945/2012, 1952/1992, 2011) does not separate consciousness and unconscious, because a Being is a conscience in a reversible relation (Flesh) "with the world and with others" (Merleau-Ponty, 1961/1993). Perception and intentionality derive from the Being's consciousness of the world. Additionally, every

experience of a Being is inscribed in his incarnate mind, not in some unconscious or sub-consciousness. Therefore, according to Merleau-Ponty's conception of consciousness without unconsciousness, *Terra em transe* is consciousness to the extent that it is a univocal experience of the subject with his world. Finally, Rocha's revolution of the form does not consist in inventing forms of illusion, but forms of consciousness. Thus, "in the consciousness's understanding, as in the understanding of the body, it is important to retain this identity of the undivided existence that is the subject" (Câmara, 2005, p. 116, own translation).²⁹² The consciousness is always consciousness of something (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2012).

The incarnate mind is an ambiguous consciousness, which does not separate figure and background (Merleau-Ponty, 2011): "[there] is another view of what we see, that places as figure what we place as background [...] that we are open to other perspectives through the background knowing that it can become figure" (Merleau-Ponty, 2011, p. 63). Thus, what defines 'figure' or 'background' is the subject—not distance or the position of things from a phenomenological, non-representational perspective. Moreover, embracing such ambiguity in the art or film form opens up endless interpretative possibilities. Consequently, the ambiguity of consciousness as the ambiguity of the form does not delimit meanings or rules. Rocha offers in *Terra em transe's* labyrinthine center, which is Martins' consciousness, this ambiguity of consciousness, whereby the figure can be the ground, and vice-versa. Furthermore, the film is not the realm of the 'unconscious'. On the contrary, it is the result of the rigorous and meticulous consciousness of a filmmaker in film form. Rocha expresses the ambiguity and reversibility of consciousness.

In *Terra em transe's* composition, Rocha simultaneously, expresses the ambiguity of conscience and the intrinsic, univocal existence of Martins and *Eldorado: Eldorado* as an abstract labyrinthine space with Martins at its enigmatic center.²⁹³

²⁹² Original text: "no entendimento da consciência, como no entendimento do corpo, importa reter essa identidade da existência una e indivisa que é o sujeito."

²⁹³ Gilda de Mello e Souza resumes the formalist choices that result in a delirium-like form, from Martins's perspective, she says: *Carrying on this need for absolute clarity of the characters, Glauber installs each of them into their natural*

Terra em transe constitutes an expression in an abstract, labyrinthine structure of moving images. The film is not chaos but *thought*. Rocha himself defends the consciousness of making the film, as well as the spectator's conscious experience of the film. He remarks: "[who] calls me chaotic is crazy [...] The repetitions are a necessary redundancy, the dialectical reflection of the scene. The film is simultaneous and not parallel. [...] *Terra em transe* is not a metaphorical film. It is a realist film" (Glauber Rocha in Rocha & Bentes, 1997, p. 302, own translation)²⁹⁴. Rocha emphasizes that the film is neither chaotic nor metaphorical: it is *real*. Rocha, among others, is "a great creator of labyrinths in cinema, therefore, is also a great cinema inventor" (Bonitzer, 1982, p. 89).²⁹⁵

Rocha's experimentalism and criticism of the film form accounts for his understanding of the form of revolutionary cinematic art (Rocha, 2004; Rocha & Bentes, 1997; Xavier, 2001b, 2007, 2012), which, he thought, should engage the spectator in an ongoing process of political and tropical labyrinths, comprising exterior and interior spaces. Rocha expected to provoke "a visual punch and produce the 'cine-sensation'" in the same vein as Oiticica's propositions, further "participant was the name given to Oiticica's spectator" (Bentes, 2007, p. 109, own translation).²⁹⁶ Oiticica's *Tropicália* installation and *Terra em transe* have in common their formal reactions to the political regime and the inclusion of the spectator in the work's ongoing process. Oiticica's *Tropicália* combines similar elements to *Terra em transe*, for instance, the

*habitat, like a saint in his niche. Wherever they are, Vieira's true place is the election rally close to the people. For Porfírio Diaz, his place is his golden palace, which never ceases to evoke the Xanadu of Citizen Kane. Fuentes' environment is the nocturnal orgy. Finally, Martins' is the newspaper's office. This schematization is not random. It derives from the very structure of the film itself - it is the structural requirement of closure, which corrects in its readability of the temporal dispersion of the narrative. Likewise, the chaotic appearance of events in delirium is not a formalistic trick. Because the disorder in which they are presented accentuates, in the image, the ideological perplexity of Paulo Martins. "Levando adiante essa necessidade de clareza absoluta das personagens, Glauber instala cada uma delas em seu habitat natural, como um santo no seu nicho. Estejam onde estiverem, o lugar verdadeiro de Vieira é o comício, junto ao povo; o de Porfírio Diaz, o seu palácio dourado, que não deixa de evocar o Xanadu de *Cidadão Kane*; o de Fuentes, a orgia noturna; o de Martins, a redação do jornal. Esta esquematização não é gratuita e decorre da própria estrutura aberta de *Terra em Transe* - é a exigência estrutural de fechamento, que corrige na sua legibilidade a dispersão temporal da narrativa. Da mesma forma, o aparecimento caótico dos acontecimentos no delírio não é um truque formalista, pois a desordem em que se apresentam acentua, no plano da imagem, a perplexidade ideológica de Paulo Martins"* (Souza, 2009, p. 234).

²⁹⁴ Original text: "Quem me chama de caótico é louco [...]. As repetições, é uma redundância necessária, a reflexão dialética sobre a cena. O filme é simultâneo e não paralelo [...]. *Terra* não é metafórico. É um filme realista."

²⁹⁵ Original text: "Les grandes créateurs de labyrinthes, dans le cinéma, sont aussi des grands créateurs de cinéma."

²⁹⁶ Original text: "[...] dar um soco visual, produzir uma cine-sensação, era o que o cinema de Glauber buscava; "participador" era o nome para o espectador de Hélio Oiticica."

labyrinthine form, experimentalism, a contextually critical combination of images, and the engagement of the spectator, the artwork inviting him/her to participate in the ongoing process of the penetrable artwork.



Illustration 87 - *Tropicália*, (1967). Hélio Oiticica | variable dimensions | Plants, sand, birds, and poems. Retrieved at: <http://enciclopedia.itaucultural.org.br/obra66335/tropicalia> Photo by César Oiticica Filho Accessed: 17/06/2018.

Oiticica's *Tropicália* was exhibited for the first time in 1967, having been conceived for the *New Brazilian Objectivity* (*Nova Objetividade Brasileira*) exhibition. *Tropicália*, as described in Chapter 4, is made of sand, wood panels, plants (particularly tropical plants), fabric, gravel, living parrots/macaws, poems, and a television set. The floor of the installation is covered with sand and gravel, the latter of which creates a path for the spectator to follow, but one can still step over the sand around the gravel path (Illustrations 87). There are three vertical structures that form *Tropicália*. One is a metal cage with two living macaws (or parrots) inside; another is made of wooden foundation piles, which form vertical structures against squared walls. These walls are made of colored, painted wood, colored fabric, and plastic bags; the third structure is built with the same materials as the walls, and there is a television switched on in the center. The last two vertical structures are labyrinths. The vertical structures are

surrounded by vases with tropical plants and, among them, poem-objects. The sizes vary depending on where *Tropicália* is set. *Tropicália* is a *penetrable* made of two previous *penetráveis*: PN2 *Pureza é um mito* | PN2 *Purity Is a Myth* (1966); and PN3 *Imagético* | PN3 *Imagetic* (1966-1967). The spectator/participant who penetrates the space provides the orientation of the installation; he/she deciding what facet of the installation appears first and last.

Tropicália is a development of Oiticica's process of constructing color spatiotemporally, whereby the spectator is included in the artwork's space. As Oiticica remarks: "It is as if the project were a reintegration of space and living experiences into this spatio-temporal order and aesthetic order. However, more importantly, as a human sublimation" (Oiticica, 1986, p. 36, own translation).²⁹⁷ Thus, *Tropicália* is perhaps the zenith of Oiticica's *ambiental art* (his environmental program) (Favaretto, 2015), conceived in the year 1967. *Tropicália* adds to previous *penetrables* the visual abstractions of stereotyped objects connected to an idea of Brazil and the tropics: "[the] word *Tropicália*, which heretofore did not exist in the Portuguese language, was coined by Oiticica to define this work. As a Latin word, it signifies 'things tropical, things that are typical of the tropics, the tropical itself'" (Ramírez, Figueiredo, & Oiticica, 2007, p. 118).

Oiticica dislocates and disorganizes the stereotyped imagery in his labyrinthine installation. Thus, tropical plants, tropical birds, sounds, poems, sand textures, and colors, indeed every single element of the installation composes the labyrinthine image that the spectator assembles through penetrating *Tropicália*. Possibly one of the most relevant aspects of *Tropicália* is the dissolution of Brazilian identity inside the labyrinth. As Favaretto explains: "*Tropicália* does not produce a complete idea of Brazil (incomprehensible, irrational, exuberant, absurd, surreal): it shatters an absolute representation. The deep roots rise to the surface and are plucked; Brazil is not

²⁹⁷ Original text: "É como se o projeto fosse uma reintegração do espaço e das vivências cotidianas nessa outra ordem espaço-temporal e estética, mas, o que é mais importante, como uma sublimação humana."

classified as an image” (Favaretto, 1993, p. 38, own translation).²⁹⁸ Therefore, *Tropicália* does not represent Brazil or the tropics. Oiticica and Rocha’s criticism of tropical landscapes went in the opposite direction to the current of 1960’s Brazilian, nationalist, civil-military discourse, which celebrated the tropical landscape as specific to Brazilian culture, thereby unifying its image (Xavier, 2012, p. 45).

Favaretto (1993) affirms that *Tropicália* is a peculiar avant-garde project, not because it was “national”, but because, as modern art, *Tropicália* did not make a distinction between the national and the international. Oiticica’s avant-gardist trajectory in propositional experimental abstract artworks repositions the consciousness and freedom of the spectator, engaging him/her in a participatory position of contributing to an ongoing process of abstraction and expression with others who are not constrained by national identity. In Salzstein’s words: “Oiticica’s great reflective turnabout with regard to this conceptual frame was, shall we say, to have *universalised* the problem of cultural heteronomy, repositing it now as a problem of *emancipation* and *freedom*, relevant to each and every artistic context” (Salzstein, 1994, p. 121).

Moreover, *Tropicália* is the expression of Oiticica’s relationship with the *Mangueira* community, a shantytown in Rio de Janeiro. As a space to be penetrated, *Tropicália* contains elements that Oiticica encountered both in Rio de Janeiro’s city and the *favelas* located in the hills surrounding the city. The colors, fabrics, plastic covers, gravel, sand, and plants are the expression of the subject’s existence in tropical spaces, which the spectator can also experience when he/she enters the installation. As the artist says: “when I walk or propose that people walk inside a Penetrable with sand and gravel I am synthesizing my experience of discovering the street through the act of walking” (Hélio Oiticica in Cardoso, 1985, own translation).²⁹⁹ The locality is

²⁹⁸ Original text: “Tropicália não produz uma ideia totalizadora de Brasil (incompreensível, irracional, exuberante, absurdo, surreal): estilhaça esta representação. As raízes profundas sobem à superfície e são arrancadas; o Brasil não se classifica como imagem.”

²⁹⁹ Original text: “Quando eu ando ou proponho que as pessoas andem dentro de um Penetrável com areia e pedrinhas estou sintetizando a minha experiência da descoberta da rua através do andar, do espaço urbano através do detalhe do andar [...]”

constitutive of the subject, as he/she perdures phenomenologically. The idea of freely penetrating and walking through spaces is in line with what the artist calls *deambular*, or *delírio ambulatório*, which is a combination of *delírio*/delirium and *perambular*/wander. ‘Deambular’ means the act of wandering through the streets of Rio de Janeiro, while gathering parts and experiences in a mystifying image of the city (Cardoso, 1985). “Although the practice of deambular was at the center of his life and work”, claims Anjos (2012, p. 25, own translation), the first time Oiticica made *formal* reference to *delírium ambulatório* was in 1978.³⁰⁰

Both *Tropicália* and *Terra em transe* mobilize attempts to define ‘Brazilianness’, which can be understood as comprising many *non*-Brazilian nationalities, cultures, and expressions as proposed by the concept of Anthropophagy, conceived in 1928 by Oswald de Andrade and Raoul Bopp. However, Rocha and Oiticica’s ‘anthropophagy’ questioned Brazilian identity, national symbols, and popular culture by assembling elements regularly connected to Brazilianness, or to the tropics, in a labyrinthine form with no comfortable position or unity, thus opposing the idea of a single and united ‘national identity’. Additionally, Rocha and Oiticica’s works incorporate a reversible relation, whereby, as one penetrates the latter’s installation and the former’s film, not only does the individual consume the elements presented in the respective artworks, but the penetrable and the film also engulf the individual.

Oiticica and Rocha transformed the Anthropophagite Manifesto through visual expression. Oswald de Andrade’s texts, and 1920’s modernism, as revived by *Tropicalism*, were fundamental to the cultural movement that fought the regime’s nationalism. *Tropicalism* proposed a culture that combined the popular, academic, and traditional, from multifarious sources, into newly-invented forms of expression (Basualdo, 2007a; Favaretto, 1993, 1996, 2011, 2013; Rocha, 2004; Xavier, 2012). As Rocha comments: “We consider 1922 the beginning of a cultural revolution in Brazil.

³⁰⁰ Original text: “embora a prática de deambular estivesse no centro da vida e do trabalho do artista.”

[...] *Tropicalism*, anthropophagy, and their development are the most important thing today in Brazilian culture” (Rocha, 2004, p. 150, own translation).³⁰¹

Therefore, Rocha and Oiticica, at the end of the 1960s, subverted the stereotypes of ‘Brazilian identity’ by inventing artistic and cinematic forms that were internationally radical and revolutionary. *Terra em transe* and *Tropicália* criticize ‘one single national idea’ and engage the spectator in the ongoing, open process of constructing identities. Oiticica affirms that in art there is no creation: what exists is the invention (Cardoso, 1979/1985). For Oiticica, the act of inventing exceeds creating. This is in accordance with his notion of construction, which he thought was only possible through a destructive, experimental attitude. When invention is combined with an experimental attitude, one can produce emancipatory artworks.

Oiticica’s *Tropicália* is an experimental and critical artwork developed out of an abstract, avant-garde conception of art. Oiticica radicalizes the meaning of the avant-garde in the direction of bringing the artwork into the life praxis and engaging the spectator. As Favaretto explains: “Oiticica’s main [achievement] was to place as fundamental in the new field of action that opened the question of the spectator’s participation” (Favaretto, 2015, p. 44, own translation).³⁰² In an avant-gardist spirit, Oiticica removes the “ism” from the experimental, relegating it to the outside of any artistic movement (Favaretto, 2015; Martins, 2013) in order to construct “new” sensibilities (Favaretto, 2015). Thus, avant-garde art should invent, not *create*, new open art forms, whereby the space of the art becomes the *space at work* (Tassinari, 2001), which is open to new contributions, collaborations, meanings, and transformations. Furthermore, the experimental, as conceived by Oiticica, implicates both the experimental attitude of the artist and the spectator/participant, once both parties experience the improvisation that attends penetrating an experimental and abstract space with abstract images. Therefore, I propose that Rocha’s *Terra em transe* should be

³⁰¹ Original text: “Consideramos 1922 como início de uma revolução cultural no Brasil. [...] O tropicalismo, a antropofagia e seu desenvolvimento são a coisa mais importante hoje na cultura brasileira.”

³⁰² Original text: “Um de seus feitos principais foi, sem dúvida, colocar como fundamental para o novo campo de ação que se abria a questão da participação do espectador [...]”

understood as experimental in the same sense as Oiticica conceived of the ‘experimental’.

Rocha in *Terra em transe* “invents” (Oiticica, 1972) an experimental labyrinth of tropical images with an enigmatic center and multiple exits and openings. The radical form opens up the ‘experimentation’, that is, inviting the engagement of the spectator who becomes a participant that shares a living experiencing (*vivenciando*) with the film. Thus, in *Terra em transe*, it not just the content, but the *form* that is political. This is because engaging the spectator in an ongoing process of experimenting with reality through abstraction, as also achieved by Oiticica in *Tropicália*, is political. As Bentes acknowledges:

In the visual arts, Hélio Oiticica’s proposal for the penetrable *Tropicália* (1967), which baptized the movement, already brings the sensory, imaginary, kinetic, and metacritical elements dear to modern cinema, highlighting the language procedures that require a new position of the spectator: on the one hand distant and critical, and on the other hand, simultaneously immersed, devoured by the environment, involved by the spectacle of sensations and ‘attractions’ (Bentes, 2007, p. 99, own translation).³⁰³

Maybe both film and penetrable reflect the labyrinthine structure of the historical period, in which people were looking for a way out, or a center, but political events led them to a feeling uncertain about the future and thereby to build alternative aesthetic structures. Nevertheless, both *Terra em transe* and *Tropicália* are structures of engagement through labyrinthine spaces in both cinema and the visual arts. To this extent, they constitute a new artistic attitude that transforms passivity into the act of thinking.

What is important here is to draw attention to the way those images stage an encounter with the specificity of Brazilian culture. [...] Instead of simply projecting a utopian future, the constructive operates firmly in the present tense, and it does so by internalizing the frictions of its past(s) and by constructing a subject that is drawn into critically sustaining these frictions (Martins, 2013, p. 69).

³⁰³ Original text: “Nas artes plásticas, a proposta de Hélio Oiticica para o penetrável *Tropicália* (1967), que batizou o movimento, já traz os elementos sensoriais, imagéticos, cinéticos e metacríticos caros ao cinema moderno, destacando-se os procedimentos de linguagem que exigem um novo posicionamento do espectador: distante e crítico, por um lado, e simultaneamente imerso, devorado pelo ambiente, siderado pelo espetáculo das sensações e ‘atrações’, por outro.”

In the passage above, Martins examines the installation *Tropicália*. However, Rocha's film does not present utopia as that which keeps the spectator critically in the present. On the contrary, *Tropicália* is a labyrinth of several entrances, exits, and centers. At *Tropicália*'s center is the television, which is switched onto a popular channel. *Tropicália*'s center furthermore does not present answers or a comfortable midpoint to the participant. It rather places the spectator in a reflexive position, one of being able to look at a screen that does not have a fixed image, while also functioning as a mirror (Favaretto, 2015). *Tropicália* deconstructs the spectator's passive position, constructing an active and participatory position, just as *Terra em transe* does.

In consonance with *Terra em transe*, *Tropicália* was conceived from an ambiguous consciousness that dilutes the imagery that the spectator could perceive as Brazilian or as tropical. Furthermore, in the installation, the plastic relations are transformed into living experiences: living experiences of color, and quotidian, aesthetic space. Everything converges in a space destined to house experiences that transforms those who participate (Favaretto, 2015, p. 67, own translation).³⁰⁴ Therefore, the living experience (*vivência*) of the installation modifies the subject who penetrates it. Moreover, the installation becomes the reversible idea of a body implicated in space, abandoned to the "chaos of sensations" (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/1993, 1961/1993). The reversibility of the flesh—of the Being that sees and is seen, that touches and is touched within his/her world (Merleau-Ponty, 1961/1993), and the expression of sensations that Rocha communicates by combining bodies with architectural spaces and landscapes—for Oiticica is present in the form of the installation. *Tropicália*'s form incites in the spectator a connection between his/her consciousness and the world. The form suggests an experience of the body within space and the landscape.

In conclusion, Rocha, when rupturing the "frame-limit" in *Pátio*, already presents a labyrinth of organic and geometrical lines that connect bodies to a tropical

³⁰⁴ Original text: "Neste (Penetrável), as relações plásticas são transformadas em vivências: vivência da cor, vivência do espaço cotidiano estetizado, confluindo tudo para a efetivação de um espaço destinado a experiências e que também os participantes se transformam."

landscape and geometrical construction. Furthermore, there is a predominance of space over time, meaning that the human bodies' interaction with space and the landscape constructs the film's sense of time (Monzani, 1986). The abstraction of the body and the landscape in *Pátio* is an expression of the phenomenological endeavor of experimentalism in cinema, aligned with the experimentation of paintings, such as those by Lygia Pape, Lygia Clark, and Hélio Oiticica. Filmmakers and visual artists exercise a phenomenological method in visual expression. Their expression is the result of consciousness within space and time. The experimental, phenomenological practice at work in the 1950s and early 1960s transformed painting and cinema into propositions at the end of the 1960s, in which the spectator was invited to take an active and critical position. Thus, Rocha's films and the artworks examined in this chapter were open to the spectator.

Rocha so controlled cinematographic language in *Terra em transe* that he was able to simultaneously express the intrinsic relation between a subject and the world while also implicating the spectator in that same relation from the minute that he/she actively took part in the labyrinthine, bodily-spatial moving images. This is because “the labyrinth achieves the passage from the common, established perspective to another passage that is continually invented by the action” (Favaretto, 2015, p. 68, own translation).³⁰⁵ Furthermore, Rocha's formal revolution takes a labyrinthine form, which maintains the enigma and engages the spectator. Consequently, the spectator is not passive, but takes up Oiticica's proposition that invites him or her to be an active participant.

Rocha, Oiticica, Pape, and Clark invented aesthetically a form of art and cinema that engaged the spectator *phenomenologically*, by expressing through abstraction their own relationship with the world in which they live. Moreover, as Basualdo claims, “the dimension of the image should be subordinated to the experiential and experimental aspect, that is, to the living experiencing” (Basualdo, 2007b, p. 21, own

³⁰⁵ Original text: “[...] labirinto efetua a passagem da perspectiva comum, estabelecida, para outra, continuamente inventada pela ação.”

translation).³⁰⁶ Lastly, the modern and avant-gardist aesthetic of the artworks and films addressed here, owing to their non-representational nature, were the result of subjects' experimentations with the form, being at liberty to express living experiences through engagement with abstract forms.

In the next chapter—the final of this thesis—I examine the opening, experimental aspect of Ozualdo Candeias' *A margem* | *The margin* (1967), as well as three works by, respectively, Clark, Pape, and Oiticica, which, through the mobilization of precariousness and adversity, engage the spectator in a lived experience of visual expression. Furthermore, the aforementioned film and artworks mobilize other senses beyond the visual in order to engage the spectator in the artwork's ongoing process and openness.

³⁰⁶ Original text: “[...] a dimensão das imagens, [...], deveria encontrar-se subordinada ao aspect experiencial e, mais propriamente, vivencial das obras [...]”

Chapter 7 – Ozualdo Candeias’s *A margem* | *The margin* (1967) and propositional artworks of Lygia Pape, Lygia Clark, and Hélio Oiticica: space, landscape, and body in the abstract experimental³⁰⁷ precariousness

This final chapter is dedicated to the film *A margem* | *The margin* (1967),³⁰⁸ Ozualdo Candeias’ first fictional feature film. At the time of the film’s production in 1967, Candeias was around 45 years old, having “had at least 12 years of professional experience as documentarist” (Uchôa, 2017, p.2). Candeias wrote, directed, and edited the film. Before focusing predominantly on filmmaking, Candeias divided his time between films and other professional activities, working primarily as a truck driver and auditor for the city hall (Uchôa, 2017, p. 9). He had an unusual trajectory as a filmmaker, and was not as prominent an intellectual as Rocha. His films have a peculiar, unconventional aesthetic, which is typically associated with modern cinema and the Cinema Marginal movement (Machado Jr., 2007b; Ramos, 1987; Uchôa, 2013a, 2013b, 2017). Candeias studied several instructional books about cinema and attended the Cinema Seminar at *Museu de Artes de Sao Paulo – MASP* | *São Paulo Museum of Art* in the 1950s, which brought together central intellectual figures in cinematic thought and production, before the inclusion of film and cinema studies in universities.³⁰⁹

Film critics and cinema theorists have referred to Candeias’ film style and aesthetic as naïve, primitive (Biáfara, 1967), and surrealist (Machado Jr., 2007b). However, in accordance with Uchôa (2013a, 2013b, 2017) and Teles (2006, 2007), this thesis approaches *A margem* as visual expression, as thought, arguing that the film’s contribution to modern and avant-garde aesthetics consists in its experimentalism and adeptness with cinematographic language.

Some film theorists and Brazilian cinema historians consider *A margem* to be the precursor to the confluence of films and filmmakers that defined the Cinema

³⁰⁷ This is in keeping with Hélio Oiticica’s conception of ‘experimental’, as introduced in Chapters 4 and 6.

³⁰⁸ I will use the title in Portuguese, as in the previous chapters.

³⁰⁹ Fábio Uchôa analyzes the MASP Seminar in relation to Ozualdo Candeias’ documentary films in “O Seminário de cinema do Masp e a produção documental de Ozualdo Candeias (1955-66) /The Masp film seminar and the documentary production of Ozualdo Candeias (1955-66).” *Revista FAMECOS* 24, no. 2 (2017): 21.

Marginal movement (Ferreira, 1986; Eugênio Puppo & Albuquerque, 2002; Ramos, 1987; Teles, 2006, 2007; Uchôa, 2013a, 2013b). *A margem* experiments with a non-representational and fragmented narrative, as well as non-fiction and abstract elements (Stam & Johnson, 1982). As the film's title indicates, a riverbank and its surrounding are the locations where the actions of four figures take place. The river is the Tietê (Eugênio Puppo & Albuquerque, 2002, p. 20), which surrounds the city of Sao Paulo, forming a border between the city's center and its periphery. Consequently, the riverbanks are the dwelling place of people who were economically at 'the margins' of the city and of society during the 1950s and 60s (Teles, 2006). Thus, the term 'margin' relates to both landscape and people. The conscious choice of elements within the framing, the long silences and constant motion of the figures (Uchôa, 2013), construct a sensorial and sensual logic of the marginal people's ontology and reality. Accordingly, in the same period that the film was made (1966-1968), the Brazilian visual artists (and former Neoconcrete artists) Lygia Pape, Lygia Clark, and Hélio Oiticica proposed their experimental, participatory works, in which the relation between the spectator's body and common space constituted a living experience (*vivência*) through the senses. *A margem* and these artists' artworks at the end of the 1960s proposed a phenomenological living experience of precariousness³¹⁰ and adversity.

Adversity (Dezeuze, 2013; Oiticica, 2007) and precariousness (Teles, 2006, 2007) characterize both the themes and form of Candeias' films. To this extent, *A margem* is no exception. Candeias made films using very small budgets, shooting under the same conditions as the films' aforementioned motifs. Thus, Candeias made films in conditions of adversity and precariousness, which subsequently formed the basis of Candeias' aesthetic (Teles, 2006). In the case of *A margem*, Candeias borrowed the camera, used remnants of film negatives, and could only pay the actors after resources returned from the film's distribution (Eugênio Puppo & Albuquerque, 2002; Teles, 2006). Likewise in *Zézero* (1974), Candeias used remnants of film negatives and worked

³¹⁰ It is also important to highlight that, in Portuguese, *precariedade* means "precarity" or "precariousness", as well as deficiency, privation, imperfection, or insufficiency. Therefore, this text, in referring to 'precariousness', these meanings are also implied.

with amateur actors. Nevertheless, being conscious of every step taken in his films, from the first idea to the final editorial cut, Ozualdo Candeias created a unique ensemble of newsreels, documentaries, and fictions of short, medium and feature lengths, which Ângela Aparecida Teles (2006, 2007) identifies as “an aesthetic of precariousness”. Teles defines the aesthetic of precariousness in Ozualdo Candeias’ films as “[...] a creative form of rendering problematic the cultural hybridization processes that occurred during the modernization of the city of São Paulo in the second half of the 20th century”. Thus, by producing an aesthetic of precariousness, Candeias expressed “the historical experience of precariousness and the displacement of rural populations, as well as the urban precariousness engendered by the excluding effects of economic modernization” (Teles, 2007, p. 164, own translation).³¹¹

Teles defines Candeias’ work through its context, which includes the relation between countryside and metropolis, specifically the city of São Paulo, where a considerable contingent of countryside migrants went looking for opportunities to work and live between the 1950s and 1980s (Teles, 2007). Ozualdo Candeias made films addressing migration from the countryside and northeastern part of Brazil to the metropolis, especially São Paulo. The short-film, *Zézero* (1974), which paints a portrait of a migrant’s progress in São Paulo, does so while employing an ironic formula (Machado Jr., 2007b). For Teles (2007), precariousness is a socio-economic issue involving status, one’s social mobility, and the cultural hybridization of a marginalized population, which Candeias experienced himself throughout his life and in making his films. Such precariousness is associated with the marginal and peripheral status of a population and is presented aesthetically through the portrayal of specific characters and the few resources available for filming, as well as through experimentations with cinematographic language, which is “constituted inside the premises of the auteur

³¹¹ Original text: “A estética da precariedade elabora uma forma criativa de problematização dos processos de hibridização cultural que se deram ao longo da modernização realizada na cidade de São Paulo na segunda metade do século XX. Nela surge um tempo híbrido constituído pelos saberes tradicionais, pela experiência histórica da precariedade e do deslocamento das populações rurais, e pela precariedade urbana engendrada pela modernização econômica excludente e pelos meios de comunicação de massa.”

cinema and the break with procedures of classical cinematic style” (Teles, 2006, p. 22, own translation).³¹²

In a similar direction, Anna Dezeuze (2013) contextualizes the “precarity” of socio-economic status and invokes precariousness to describe a broader existential state, which is transformed into a positive experience in the artworks of Lygia Clark and Hélio Oiticica (Dezeuze, 2013, p. 227). Dezeuze relates precariousness, from an unstable and insecure socio-economic condition of living, to a broader use, whereby it can be engaged aesthetically and artistically. The author analyzes precariousness in Brazilian artworks from the 1960s onwards, focusing primarily on Clark’s *Caminhando | Going* (1963) (Illustration 98), about which she remarks that the precariousness of an artwork can also indicate a “new idea of existence” (Dezeuze, 2013, p. 227). Therefore, Dezeuze redefines the concept of precariousness, as presented in the discourse of artworks and artists, pointing to how the artistic contributions may reveal positive interpretations of what it *means* to exist precariously. Dezeuze argues that, “[...] these artists (Clark and Oiticica) turned precariousness into an experience of freedom rather than a loss of hope or the impossibility of relating to the world” (Dezeuze, 2013, p. 228).

Accordingly, Dezeuze grounds Lygia Clark’s notion of precariousness in her visual artistic practices, but also includes Hélio Oiticica’s notion of adversity, mentioned in the propositional and experimental aspects of *open artworks* of anti-art (*obras abertas da anti-arte*) (Oiticica, 2007) (see Chapter 4) as a way of resisting and surmounting precarious living conditions. The participant who takes part in *Caminhando*, or Hélio Oiticica’s *Bólides* and *Parangolés*, for example, experiences the work as an act, thereby contributing to the work’s process. Furthermore, the living experience (*vivência*) of the work changes the participant.

Pape, Clark, and Oiticica questioned the form of painting. This particular visual language awakened in each of them a “drive” towards common space, time, and

³¹² Original text: “A estética da precariedade foi constituída dentro das premissas do cinema de autor e do rompimento com procedimentos da narrativa clássica do cinema.”

the spectator's body, which, at the end of the 1960s, was combined with everyday life and its objects. These artists' visual works, installations, and propositions conceptually converged throughout the decades, especially from the 1960s onwards, when the works became *open artworks*, as well as propositions to be approached, touched, entered, and seen by the spectator/participant.³¹³

As introduced in Chapter 4, the *anti-art open artwork* is a living experience (*vivência*), which, most of the time, implicates the spectator's body and surpasses the classical division between subject and object in visual art. As Oiticica remarks: “[it is] no use having ‘participation’, or ‘propositions’, if they do not relate to a complete change of the objectal relation; the same with that which could be considered ‘sensorial’ participation” (Oiticica, 1969, p. 5).

Against this background, the present chapter examines the alliance between the precariousness and the experimental, abstraction and the incarnate mind's expression, and spectatorial engagement in adversity in *A margem*, as well as three artworks created at the end of the 1960s. The works selected are: *Roda dos Prazeres | Wheel of Delights* (1968) by Lygia Pape; *Máscaras Sensoriais | Sensorial Masks* (1967) by Lygia Clark; and *B 33 Bólíde caixa 18, Caixa poema 02 “Homenagem a Cara de Cavalo” | B33 Box Bólíde 18, Box Poem 02 “Homage to Horse Face”* (1966) by Hélio Oiticica, the latter also being mentioned by Anna Dezeuze (2013).

Ultimately, this chapter examines adversity and precariousness presented as *aesthetics*. It furthermore examines the method of expression, which, through relations of space, body, reality, and abstraction, constructs an experimental practice that engages the spectator in the ongoing, open process of the visual and cinematic artwork. This analysis will reveal the relations between cinematic and visual artworks,

³¹³ Oiticica defines the anti-art as: *The definition of anti-art implies the establishment of an experimental world where the spectator is able to enlarge his/her imaginative field, creating himself as part of this world, or be asked to do so through the displacement of what is designated as art, of the rational, intellectual field, to the [...] living experience.* “[a] definição de antiarte implica a instauração de um mundo experimental onde o indivíduo possa ampliar seu campo imaginativo, criar ele próprio parte desse mundo, ou ser solicitado a isso, através do ‘deslocamento do que se designa como arte, do campo intelectual racional, para o [...] vivencial’” (Loeb, 2010, p. 68). Thus, it is implicated in Oiticica's notion of art the living experience of the artwork by the spectator.

thanks to considering both visual artworks and film as forms of language and expression (Merleau-Ponty, 1952/1992, 1961/1993, 2011).

Before analyzing *A margem* alongside Pape, Clark, and Oiticica's visual-artistic propositions, I will briefly describe the connections between Ozualdo Candeias, Cinema Marginal, and modern cinema. While this thesis is not dedicated to Candeias' career motivations and films, it is worth contextualizing Candeias' *A margem*, given the connection between his methodology and aesthetic to those of visual artists, a relation that it is the purpose of this study to analyze.

7.1 *A margem*: Cinema Marginal and Modern Cinema

As mentioned in Chapter 4, *O Bandido da Luz Vermelha* | *The Redlight Bandit* (1968), directed by Rogério Sganzerla, was the film that defined the general aesthetic standards of Cinema Marginal, the movement that opposed the films and filmmakers of the Cinema Novo movement. Cinema Marginal began in São Paulo's central region, *Boca do lixo*. *O Bandido da Luz Vermelha* was shot in São Paulo, where Sganzerla began his career and where *Boca do Lixo* cinema (meaning "Mouth of Garbage")³¹⁴ and its characteristics began to emerge (Ramos, 1987). Sganzerla, like Candeias, Carlos Reichenbach, and José Mojica Marins (among others), came together and made films with producers of that region in São Paulo. For context, *Boca do Lixo* was near the *Luz* train station, between *Rua do Triunfo* and *Rua Vitoria*.

Between the 1950s and 70s, the *Boca do Lixo* region consisted of two central train and bus stations, *Luz* and *Julio Prestes*, which connected that area to the rest of the city and most parts of the state. Owing to this, the film producers established their offices there, since it was easier and cheaper to distribute negatives and films from that area. Subsequently, this region became a center for filmmaking and distribution. Moreover, because the area was densely concentrated with people, many hotels, as well

³¹⁴ "Mouth of Garbage or Garbage Zone whence one of the labels for Underground Cinema – Mouth of Garbage Cinema" (Stam & Johnson, 1982, p. 313).

as prostitutes and attendant criminal and illegal activities, prevailed in the region. Bentinho, one of the actors in *A margem*, comments on the conviviality between filmmakers and criminals:

Rua do Triunfo's cinema was basically located in one block of about 250 meters square, with four bars: cinema professionals frequented two of them, and the other two were frequented by bandits who gave protection to cinema producers in case some other careless criminal attempted a scam against someone whom they knew. The respect was mutual, and the prostitutes were our friends (Bentinho in Eugênio Puppo & Albuquerque, 2002, p. 50, own translation).³¹⁵

Thus, filmmakers, producers, and cinema technicians existed alongside prostitutes and criminals, as well as beggars and other members of the impoverished population (Sternheim, 2005). During the 1970s, the region mainly produced a genre called *Pornochanchas*, which were erotic comedies that became popular in Brazil at the time. As Uchôa remarks: “the *Boca do Lixo* is recognized as the production center of erotic comedies, a cinematographic genre stimulated by the laws of mandatory screenings (of Brazilian cinema), influenced by censorship, and was a genre typical of an industrialized culture” (Uchôa, 2013a, p. 12, own translation).³¹⁶ Indeed, *Boca do Lixo* was the birthplace of Cinema Marginal's defining aesthetic and themes.

The films of Cinema Marginal began in São Paulo with the filmmakers Candeias and Sganzerla. The producers and technicians, who were located at *Boca do Lixo* (Ramos, 1987; Uchôa, 2013a), produced and distributed their films, but the aesthetic characteristics of *O Bandido da Luz Vermelha* and *A margem* spread throughout the country at the end of the 1960s and beginning of the 1970s. Cinema Marginal does not refer to an organized movement but to a conjunction of films and filmmakers from different parts of Brazil, such as São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Minas Gerais, and Bahia, who made films between 1968 and 1973 (Ramos, 1987), that is, throughout the civil-military dictatorship.

³¹⁵ Original text: “O cinema da rua do Triunfo se resumia a um quarteirão de uns 250 metros, com quatro bares: dois frequentados pelos profissionais de cinema, e dois por bandidos que davam proteção a eles, caso algum meliante desavisado tentasse qualquer golpe contra quem eles conheciam. O respeito era mútuo e as prostitutas amigas.”

³¹⁶ Original text: “A partir do final dos anos 1960 e ao longo dos 1970, a Boca do Lixo se afirma como pólo produtor de comédias eróticas, um gênero cinematográfico estimulado pelas leis de obrigatoriedade de exibição, influenciado pela censura e típico de uma cultura industrializada.”

Cinema Marginal films were an aggressive and ironical reaction to, respectively, Cinema Novo's intellectualist films, the bourgeoisie, and the civil-military regime. Sganzerla comments in 1969: "I tried to make free cinema, which is exactly what Cinema Novo tried to do, and, in my opinion, failed to do" (Sganzerla in Canuto, 2007, p. 37, own translation).³¹⁷ The films of Cinema Marginal were conceived in response to aesthetic concerns introduced by Cinema Novo, such as peripheral populations, precarious living conditions, and the handheld camera. However, as Cinema Novo became a standardized film form, financed by the government through the *Embrafilme*,³¹⁸ and maintained the focus on Brazilian literature and an intellectual approach, Cinema Marginal persisted in experimenting with cinematographic expression, thereto incorporating popular media, such as radio and television (Vieira, 2000, p. 173). Moreover, Cinema Marginal kept precariousness in the film form itself. This was achieved thanks to the filmmakers making apparent, "the marks of economic oppression, inscribing into the films themselves – by inaudible grating sound and grainy images – the very precariousness of their own production" (Stam & Johnson, 1982, p. 312).

Despite uniting old ideas from Cinema Novo, including the use of the handheld camera, the mantra of "an idea in the head", together with non-industrial production and sticking to a minimal budget (Ramos, 1987, pp. 27-28), the films associated with Cinema Marginal had no concern with pricking the people's conscience, nor did Cinema Marginal care to address larger audiences. On the contrary, the films were screened to a marginal circuit. As Ramos explains, Cinema Marginal bore witness to a "production centered around the unrestricted possibilities of authorial expression and a total detachment with the exhibition circuit" (Ramos, 1987, p. 97, own translation).³¹⁹ Marginality and the term 'marginal' is normally associated with violence, poverty, and criminality, but was turned, through the films of Cinema

³¹⁷ Original text: "Tento fazer um cinema livre, exatamente aquele que o Cinema Novo tentou fazer e que, a meu ver, está fracassado."

³¹⁸ This film producer and distributor was financed by the state, having been created in 1969 and closed down in 1990.

³¹⁹ Original text: "[...] uma produção centrada nas possibilidades ilimitadas de expressão do autor e um total desvinculamento com o vínculo da exibição".

Marginal, into a positive aspect of making films with liberty. This was because the filmmakers had no obligation to please the spectator or the commercial circuit (Ramos, 1987, p. 30). Additionally, instead of “talking to the spectator”, Cinema Marginal opted “to slap the audience in its face” (Stam & Johnson, 1982, p. 311). Rocha referred to Cinema Marginal’s films as *udigrudi*, in reference to North American underground cinema and the underground circulation of films, as well as denoting a combination of kitsch and popular motifs (Machado Jr., 2007a; Ramos, 1987; Xavier, 2012).

The phrase, “when there is nothing we can do, we ridicule. We make fun of things and ridicule ourselves” (Dunn, 2018),³²⁰ is enunciated by the bandit and central character in *O Bandido da Luç Vermelha*. This statement encapsulates the essence of Cinema Marginal (Ramos, 1987). In the face of the horrors of the regime, there was nothing left to do but deride (*avacalhar*). The lack of concern with the spectator, as well as the acceptance of ‘independence’ from the commercial circuit, provided filmmakers with more liberty to make films, in spite of the regime’s incessant censorship. On the other hand, the fear and horror triggered by the dictatorial regime also became content for the films. During the period when marginal films were made, the regime was at its most repressive phase (after AI-5, as mentioned in Chapter 4), in response to which Cinema Marginal filmmakers combined horror with irony and playfulness (Xavier, 2012; Ramos, 1987).

Ramos (1987) identifies a recurrent polarity present in the films designated as ‘Cinema Marginal’, namely “fun and horror”³²¹ (Ramos, 1987, p. 31). Films that were examples of this combination of fun and horror included the following: *O Bandido da luç vermelha* and *Nosferato no Brasil | Nosferatu in Brazil* (1971) by Ivan Cardoso; *Hitler no III mundo | Hitler in the III world* (1968) by José Agripino de Paula; *Meteorango Kid, o Herói Intergalático | Meteorango Kid, the Intergalactic Hero* (1969) by André Luiz de Oliveira; *O anjo nasceu | The angel was born* (1969) by Júlio Bressane; and *Os monstros do Babaloo | The*

³²⁰ The original line in Portuguese: “Quando a gente não pode fazer nada a gente avacalha e se escolhamaba” (Sganzerla, 1968).

³²¹ These words translate as *curtição* and *horror* in Portuguese. *Curtição*, which Ramos (1987) identifies in the majority of Cinema Marginal’s films, is translated by Christopher Dunn (2018) as, “the playful pursuit of pleasure and sensual joy.”

Babaloo monsters (1970) by Elyseu Visconti. These two themes—fun and horror—were combined in non-linear narratives, sometimes as aspects of the same character in an absent or unclear diegesis. Marginal films questioned the classical narrative, cinematic genres, and the illusionary aspect of classical cinematic style. What interested the filmmakers was “the expression of the immeasurable, signified through lacerating screams repeated in a convulsive way” (Ramos, 1987, p. 119, own translation),³²² the aim of which was to provoke and irritate the spectator. For Ramos (1987), horror was mostly presented in relation to the body and its various excretions.

Ramos (1987) and Xavier (2012) remark on the common aesthetic procedures given the narrative and diegesis of the films. Both authors emphasize, as aesthetic preoccupations of Cinema Marginal: violence; aggression; parody; kitsch; irony; the abject (in most cases related to violence); the assimilation of mass media, such as radio and television; the confusion between classical cinema genres, like thriller and comedy (also related to the combination between fun and horror); and nudity. Cinema Marginal films combined, in a radical and violent form, the kitsch, the grotesque, the popular, and eroticism. For example, Marginal films, in general, “sacrificed the narrative” in favor of long scenes comprising “a face, a landscape, a scream, or even an episode of emesis” (Ramos, 1987, p. 139, own translation).³²³ Cinema Marginal films do not develop their fictions in a narrative within representational space and time (Ramos, 1987), that is, in accordance with modern cinematic style and auteur style.

Additionally, Cinema Marginal films recurrently present trash as both a theme and a formal quality. The trashy aesthetic arose as a result of both poor conditions and poor taste, as in B circuit films (Ramos, 1987; Xavier, 2012). The urban environment³²⁴ and industrial society provided the elements of garbage and residue, which are present in the films, as well as the combination of a low budget and aesthetics of

³²² Original text: “O que interessa na narrativa é a expressão do incomensurável, significado através de berros lacerantes, repetidos de forma convulsiva.”

³²³ Original text: “A narrativa marginal, de forma geral, costuma sacrificar o desenvolvimento linear da ação para se fixar demoradamente num rosto, numa paisagem, num berro, ou até mesmo num vômito.”

³²⁴ Thus, in general, Cinema Marginal is placed in urban areas and the metropolis.

precariousness. Cinema Marginal films portrayed people and things who became industrial, urban residues of society. Furthermore, for Cinema Marginal,

Cinema Novo had become bourgeois and was transformed into a respectable commodity. It was too cautious about the subjects of the films and experimentation with cinematographic language [...] Cinema Marginal rejected a 'well-done cinema' in favor of a 'dirty screen' of garbage aesthetics. A trash style, as formulated, seemed much more appropriate to a postcolonial country, which transited between the detritus of a world dominated by First World capitalist monopoly (Vieira, 2000, p. 171, own translation).³²⁵

Therefore, Cinema Marginal, or *udigrudi*, was also referred to as the Cinema of *Lixo* (*Garbage/Trash*). Moreover, the reference to garbage indicated the location where the films came from, namely the *Boca do Lixo*.

Lastly, figures of the 'marginalized' became central to Cinema Marginal (Stam & Johnson, 1982; Xavier, 2012). These figures includes those excluded from society for social, economic, or political reasons, such as criminals, shantytown communities, prostitutes, rebellious youths from bourgeois families, and impoverished migrants from the countryside moving into the metropolis. These kinds of people and characters frequently wander about in Cinema Marginal films (Ramos, 1987, p. 30).

Xavier (2001) does not acknowledge *A margem* as a representative of the movement, especially owing to the redemption and sublimation of the film's characters. Ramos (1987) agrees with Xavier (2001), stating that *A margem* differs from the rest of the films associated with Cinema Marginal owing to its lack of irony and fun, but "searches for the sublime in the abject". These qualities were "absent dimensions" (Ramos, 1987, p. 88) in the films that came after *A margem*. Moreover, Ramos points out, especially with regard to the combination of the flowers and bride in the dumpster (Ramos, 1987, p. 88), that the sublime is a fundamental characteristic of *A margem*. However, Ramos (1987) does not identify any homogeneity in the movement. Furthermore, *A margem* is mentioned in interviews as the archetypal

³²⁵ Original text: "[...] para o cinema *udigrudi* o Cinema Novo havia se aburguesado, transformado em mercadoria respeitável, cauteloso tanto em relação ao temas tratados quanto à experimentação com a linguagem cinematográfica [...]. rejeitando um 'cinema bem feito' em favor de uma 'tela suja', de uma estética do lixo'. Um estilo do lixo, conforme formulado, parecia muito mais apropriado a um país pós-colonial, que transitava entre os detritos de um mundo dominado pelo capitalismo de monopólio do Primeiro Mundo."

example of “*Filme do lixo*” (that is, a garbage film). Therefore, Ramos (1987) recognizes *A margem* alongside *O Bandido da Luz Vermelha* as films that commenced Cinema Marginal. Indeed, Jairo Ferreira named Ozualdo Candeias the most marginal among the marginal filmmakers (Ferreira, 1986).

Johnson and Stam (1982) affirm that “the first indisputably Underground film, both in its production methods and in its thematic, was Ozualdo Candeias’s prophetically titled *A margem*” (Stam & Johnson, 1982, p. 312). Therefore, the authors take *A margem* to be the starting point, and the most exemplary film, of Cinema Marginal owing to the characters’ marginalized positions, the garbage, and the impoverished conditions both *portrayed* by the film and in which the film was made. Indeed, the film’s title was later applied to the movement. Furthermore, Ângela José (2007) acknowledges *A margem* as a cornerstone of Cinema Marginal, emphasizing the marginalized figures in the film, such as prostitutes and the violence they endure. José explains:

When we re-read Cinema Marginal, reviewing its themes and characters, such as *A margem* by Ozualdo Candeias, the pioneering film of this cinematography, which displayed prostitutes and truck drivers in strange love stories; we see that these films depict the universe of those excluded from Brazilian society, where violence and absurdity are part of daily life (José, 2007, p. 160, own translation).³²⁶

Nevertheless, *A margem* is related to Cinema Marginal both with regard to its content and aesthetics. The film’s general aesthetics, concerning space and the landscape, are trashy, while the buildings are either under construction or being demolished. Violence is present in the film. For example, there are three physical fights, one resulting in death; there is a scene in which harassment is insinuated. Moreover, all the characters die, some in more violent ways than others. However, the film also has a less aggressive and violent form, which does not rely on parody or

³²⁶ Original text: “Ao refazermos uma releitura do cinema marginal, revendo seus temas e seus personagens, como *À margem*, de Ozualdo Candeias, filme marco desta cinematografia, que mostrava prostitutas e caminhoneiros em esquisitas histórias de amor, vemos que esses filmes retratam o universo dos excluídos da sociedade brasileira, onde a violência e o absurdo fazem parte do cotidiano.”

grotesque aspects of garbage and trash. Thus, Candeias does not construct a universe of moving images that are aggressive by *themselves* in *A margem*.

Candeias constructs and frames human bodies in relation to the landscape and architectural spaces in his method of framing and editing. The bodies are rarely framed in interiors (Machado Jr., 2007b), but are constantly in contact with plants, construction materials, and the river. In *A margem*, as in most of his feature films, Candeias worked predominantly with non-actors or amateurs.³²⁷

Candeias' fictional feature films, made after *A margem*, dialogue with the irony and parody of Cinema Marginal, such as in *Meu nome é Tonbo | My name is Tonbo* (1969) and *A herança | The legacy* (1970), which approximate the filmmaker to the movement. Additionally, Candeias was often at *Boca do Lixo*. The producers from the region distributed his films, and the people from the region acted or worked in his films. Candeias even made two short documentaries about *Boca do Lixo: Uma rua chama Triunfo 1969/70 | A street named Triunfo 1969/70* (1971), and *Uma rua chamada Triunfo 1970/71 | A street named Triunfo 1970/71* (1971). Therefore, Candeias at least gravitates towards Cinema Marginal, sometimes being completely attached to the movement, other times playing an ambiguous character who belongs to the movement but also has a very authorial and particular cinema style. Consequently, Candeias “has an individual style of experimentation, which establishes ambiguous relations with the films of the period, in a process where forms and themes are appropriated and re-contextualized” (Uchôa, 2013a, p. 12, own translation).³²⁸

Nonetheless, *A margem* is an example of a modern³²⁹ film that experiments with cinematographic language, creating an ethereal narrative that combines bodies and

³²⁷ Three of the four main actors in *A margem* were professionals. Mário Benvenuti (1926-1993) was the most well known at the time, then Bentinho (1937-) and Lucy Rangel (date of birth unknown) (Eugênio Puppo & Albuquerque, 2002).

³²⁸ Original text: “Chega-se então à ideia de um estilo individual, em experimentação, que estabelece relações ambíguas com os filmes do período, num processo onde formas e temas são apropriados e re-contextualizados.”

³²⁹ Furthermore, Candeias proposed with his films to the spectator to have a critical position, as Teles remarks: *Such a premise of cinema as a producer of reality is in tune with the procedures of modern cinema and Candeias practiced it in his productions. This is because the director did not bother to make a realistic fiction; did not try to hide the presence of the camera and allowed himself to construct the most absurd situations, provoking in the spectator a critical position in front of the images he created.*

landscapes in their processes of construction and destruction. In *A margem*, nature and industry, the ordinary and extraordinary exist together at the margins. Both Uchôa (2013a) and Teles (2006) categorize Candeias' films, and *A margem* among them, as modern cinema. Uchôa emphasizes the experimental and the aspects of auteur cinema, while Teles identifies the films' aesthetic with Italian Neorealism, especially regarding Candeias' approach to 'reality'. Furthermore, his "concern with reality, as presented in the cinema, is inserted in the discussions and controversies raised by modern cinema that, in different ways and through several filmmakers, questioned the classical narrative" (Teles, 2006, p. 166, own translation).³³⁰

The "reality" that Candeias approaches in *A margem* and other fictional films, such as *A Opção ou As rosas da estrada* | *The Option or the roses of the road* (1981), is identified by Teles (2006) as an aesthetic of precariousness, which also forms the themes of the films. The use of documental images inserts reality through real depictions of precariousness and adversity. As Teles elaborates: "[the] aesthetic of precariousness is constructed through images of reality, of misery, of the deprivation, and contingency from the perspective of the poor migrant. This was the truth that the cinema of Candeias sought to problematize" (Teles, 2006, p. 174, own translation).³³¹

In accordance with Teles (2006) and Uchôa (2013a), this thesis approaches *A margem* as a modern film in which the medium is evident in its precariousness, framings, and camera movements, as well as the constant improvisation and freedom of the filmmaking. In Teles' words: "[the] director did not want to make a realistic fiction; he did not expect to hide the presence of the camera and allowed himself to construct the most absurd situations in order to provoke in the spectator a critical

"Tal premissa do cinema como produtor de realidade está afinada com os procedimentos do cinema moderno e foi exercitada por Candeias em suas produções, pois o diretor não se preocupava em realizar uma ficção realista; não procurava esconder a presença da câmera e se permitia construir as situações mais absurdas, no sentido de provocar no espectador uma postura crítica diante das imagens que criava" (Teles, 2006, p. 167).

³³⁰ Original text: "Mas essa preocupação com a realidade a ser apresentada no cinema está inserida nas discussões e polémicas suscitadas pelo cinema moderno que, de diferentes formas e por meio de vários cineastas, questionou a narrativa clássica."

³³¹ Original text: "A estética da precariedade construiu imgeticamente a realidade da miséria, da privação e da contingência a partir da perspectiva do migrante pobre. Essa foi a verdade que o cinema de Candeias buscou problematizar."

attitude” (Teles, 2006, p. 167, own translation).³³² Candeias did not write a plot to follow (Eugênio Puppo & Albuquerque, 2002) and did not compose *A margem* following representational rules of time and space. The film has a non-linear narrative portraying the ephemeral aspects of life at the margins. Additionally, *A margem* is the expression of the author’s lived experience (*vivência*) at the margins (Teles, 2006), thereby portraying the phenomenological aspects (as discussed in Chapter 1 from Merleau-Ponty perspective) of precarity.

The following topic of this chapter examines *A margem* as a modern and non-representational film that experimented with cinematographic language in its precariousness and adversity. Furthermore, I will argue that *A margem* is an *open artwork*, thereby aligning it with the visual arts of the period, particularly as produced by by Lygia Pape, Lygia Clark, and Hélio Oiticica, as mentioned above and in Chapter 4.

7.2 *A margem*: space, landscape, and body in abstract experimental precariousness



Illustration 88 – Film Credits, in *A margem* (Ouzaldo Candeias, 1967).

³³² Original text: “[...] pois o diretor não se preocupava em realizar uma ficção realista; não procurava esconder a presença da câmera e se permitia construir as situações mais absurdas, no sentido de provocar no espectador uma postura crítica diante das imagens que criava.”

In *A margem*, the main character is a riverbank (*margem*) and its inhabitants. The river forms the boundary to the big city. Therefore, the inhabitants and individuals filmed by Ozualdo Candeias are the ‘marginals’ *of* and *at* the margins; people who thrive on the fringe. *A margem* “gives a series of direct and sympathetic portraits of people stuck on the fringe” (Cutler, 2014). Candeias abstract elements of society’s fringes alongside elements of the semi-urban landscape. As he remarks: “I looked for an approach between the real and the abstract to present my characters and tell their ‘drama,’ purposely avoiding the objective without many omissions of the real” (Candeias in Fonseca, 1968, p. 25, own translation).³³³

The film is not a documentary but nevertheless portrays documental images of São Paulo in the 1960s (Teles, 2006), showing both the periphery where the River Tiete flows as well as the city center (Illustration 89). For Teles (2006), Candeias’ films are a hybrid sitting between fiction and documentary. This is because Candeias filmed exteriors, on location,³³⁴ a result from a lack of resources. Candeias is exemplary of a filmmaker who did the most with the poor conditions he had; the camera was his main instrument to express his world, as Godard remarks: “is to do what you can and not what you want. To do what you want out of what you can, to do what you want out of what you have and not dream about doing the impossible” (Godard, 2014, p. 18). Candeias combines such premises in *A margem*.

³³³ Original text: “Para cada pessoa, a linguagem deve ser distinta, assim sendo, pelas razões acima, procurei uma maneira entre o real e o abstrato, para apresentar os meus personagens e contar o seu ‘drama’, fugindo propositadamente do objetivo sem muita omissão do real.”

³³⁴ In accordance with Italian Neorealist aesthetics.



Illustration 89 – Documental images of São Paulo, in *A margem*.

A margem lacks a linear narrative, and only shows the actions of four people. The camera follows four individuals who rarely speak and are not given names. Despite being nameless, these individuals are introduced at the beginning of the film. The camera frames two individuals at the river's margins and the other two over a small bridge, from the inside of a boat (Illustration 90). They all cross this bridge routinely throughout the film. The four individuals, who are followed by the camera throughout the film, are also romantic couples. The first couple comprises a man wearing a suit and a woman who becomes a bride; the second comprises a psychologically-disabled man and a woman who works selling coffee downtown.



Illustration 90 – Opening sequence, in *A margem*

There is a woman in the same boat as the camera that is filming the four individuals. After passing the bridge, the boat stops and the woman gets off the boat.

She looks at the four individuals, and the camera makes a close-up of their faces. At the end of the film, after the four of them have died, they sit inside the boat with the woman, and the camera frames, from inside the boat, the five individuals, moving away from the bridge and the riverbanks (Illustration 91). The woman who comes and leaves with the boat is interpreted as a mythical death, as Charon: a ferrywoman that carries the souls of the recently deceased (E. Puppo, 2008; Uchôa, 2013a) (Illustration 92).



Illustration 91 – Five individuals inside the boat, in *A margem*.



Illustration 92 – Ferrywoman, in *A margem*.

A margem portrays four lives coming to their end in a discontinued narrative between scenes. Their lives are marked by a beginning and an ending, respectively indicated by the arrival and departure of the boat. The actions of the individuals are presented as they happen, in a flow of a ‘constant present’. They ‘live’ scene-by-scene, one succeeding the other. The composition of the film suggests the ephemeral, the transitory. Moreover, the constant motion of the bodies and the camera evokes a continuous present. The individuals are constantly passing, walking, and running

through the landscape, ruins, streets, and architectural spaces (Illustration 93). The camera follows them with constant tracking shots, passing over their bodies from feet to head and head to feet, and moving from medium shots to close-ups.

The people in the film live, walk, act, and eat in improvised, impoverished conditions with transitory, unstable, and ephemeral materials, food, and things, which are in various stages of dissolution. The same is true of their clothing. The individuals wear rotting, dirty clothes. The fabric has the same visual appearance as the landscape and the buildings, which are either in ruins or in the process of construction. Ozualdo Candeias' expression of the fringe and the marginal consists in exhibiting an intrinsic relation between the fabric (sc. stuff) of the body, the fabric that it carries (the clothes), and the fabric of the world in which it dwells. Candeias expresses the fabric of the world as the same as that of the body's (Merleau-Ponty, 1961/1993, p. 125). Accordingly, as Cézanne's brush strokes made possible for the landscape to be painted through him (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/1993, Câmara, 2005), Candeias movements—as in *camera-montage-brush*—made possible for the fringes to be portrayed through him.

Thus, *A margem* constitutes a living experience (*vivência*) of precariousness, adversity, and ephemerality. It does this by expressing a univocal relation between bodies and the landscape and places in which they perdure spatiotemporally.



Illustration 93 – Individuals constantly moving through the landscape and spaces, in *A margem*

Uchôa (2013) designates the constant motion of bodies in *A margem* as *perambulação*, meaning the movement of wandering aimlessly: coming from nowhere and going nowhere³³⁵. The precariousness of *A margem* is exhibited by a landscape that comprises houses made out of improvised, poor, and crumbling materials, and ruins of houses and a church, construction sites, wild grasses, and trash (garbage). Furthermore, precariousness is conveyed through the aimless wandering of bodies, as well as the ephemeral and momentary actions of the four central characters. Indeed, the precariousness here indicates ephemerality, of accessing the eternal present, and of processes of dissolution and disappearing (mirroring the fate of the four people whom the camera follows).

Additionally, the conditions and resources that Candeias had recourse to were themselves precarious and limited. Therefore, the film's location (the reality/the world) afforded all the materials Candeias needed. Two essential things come together in Candeias' expression in *A margem*: (1) the univocal relation that he establishes with the world he films; and (2) the precariousness and adversity of the world that constitute the film's aesthetic.

Candeias was not attached to any preconceived ideas about what the film should be; it was to unfold as an artistic work in its process of being made. As he states:

The only thing I know is that I don't take the scripts out at the moment of filming. There is a reason for that: it is not to show off, it is because in the place I am filming I begin to have ideas (Ozualdo Candeias in Puppo & Albuquerque, 2002, p. 28, own translation).³³⁶

³³⁵ Furthermore, Uchôa defines this aimless wander as part of the modern film aesthetic, he says: *Firstly, wandering can be thought of as a "walking without a purpose", a purely physical event, which opposes the drama existent in classical cinema. In modern cinema, such practice tends to dissolve the relations between cause and effect, paying attention to the simple movement. Finally, leading to the construction of a space.* "Num primeiro momento, a perambulação pode ser pensada como um "andar a esmo", evento puramente físico, que se opõe à dramatização existente no cinema clássico. No cinema moderno, tal prática tende à dissolução das relações entre causa e efeito, atentando ao simples movimento, levando à construção de um espaço" (Uchôa, 2013a, p. 13).

³³⁶ Original text: "Quase sempre os troços que eu invento têm um pouco disso: eu saio na rua e tropeço nas coisas. Umas eu chuto e outras não, eu levo pra casa. Só o que eu sei é que eu não levo os roteiros pra passear na hora de filmar. Isso tem uma razão: não é para dar uma de bom, é que no local de filmagem eu passo a ter algumas ideias."

Candeias' choice to frame the river's margins, and following each individual's steps, was a conscious choice. The camera follows bodies that pass through, step on, and extend over the river's margins, and try to "overcome" the wild grasses. Candeias frames ruins of ancient buildings being 'devoured' by the grass and buildings under construction, denoting works in progress, just as the film too is an ever-unfolding work in progress.

There is an evident cohesiveness and coherence between what is being framed and constructed by the editing and shooting conditions. After all, these qualities are mutually influential. Therefore, in *A margem*, "there is no break at all in this circuit; it is impossible to say that here nature ends and the human being or expression begins" (Merleau-Ponty, 1961/1993, p. 147). Consequently, Candeias proposes that the spectator take part in the world he is filming and that is also his own. Merleau-Ponty in *Cézanne's Doubt*, when questioning the relation between painter, artwork, and viewer (spectator), states:

The painter can do no more than construct an image; he must wait for this image to come to life for other people. When it does, the work of art will have united these separate lives; it will no longer exist in only one of them like a stubborn dream or a persistent delirium, nor will it exist in only space as a colored piece of canvas. It will dwell undivided in several minds, with a claim on every possible mind like a perennial acquisition (Merleau-Ponty, 1952/1993, p.70).

The most the painter can create is an image. Similarly, all the filmmaker can make is a composition of *moving* images. I would like to call attention to what Merleau-Ponty identifies as the 'dwelling' of the artwork of a subject within another, which can transform the spectator. All that Candeias wanted to make was an unpretentious film, focusing on 'the margins', though ultimately fictionalized. And he achieved this. The film, therefore, *contains* his expressive gestures, which emanated from his encounter with that world. Consequently, that same world is then awakened in the spectator. What Candeias achieves in *A Margem* is that "the margin" he perceives also forms part of the spectatorial experience; the spectator succeeding in sharing in that same perception.

Candeias arrived at the idea of making *A margem* after reading the news about a bride who was jilted at the altar, and subsequently never took off her wedding dress. This abstract, conceptual image³³⁷ is present in film's composition (Illustration 94). Indeed, the newspaper story is what motivates Candeias to film. However, the connection between the filmmaker and the place in which he is filming - and *what* indeed is being filmed - is what constructs the film. Accordingly, Candeias extirpates any sense of a storyline, refraining from imposing any preconceived rules about film, onto *A margem*.



Illustration 94 – Bride, in *A margem*.

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As Candeias remarks:

What motivated me was this woman with the veil, that she never took it off again. The rest of the film: I invented it. I used to walk at Tiete riverbanks. I lived there [...]. What is more important is how I invent these silly things, we stumble around them, right? (Ozualdo Candeias in Puppo & Albuquerque, 2002, p. 28, own translation).³³⁸

Candeias works with an experimental attitude. His process in *A margem* (as in most of his films) is based on experimenting with the conditions available at the

³³⁷ As discussed in Chapter 5.

³³⁸ Original text: “O que me motivou foi essa mulher do véu, que ela não tirou mais. O resto do filme (eu inventei) é que eu andava lá pela beirada do Tiete, morei ali O que é importante é com eu invento as besteiras, a gente tropeça com elas por aí, né?” (Puppo & Albuquerque, 2002, p. 28).

moment of shooting, as well as experimenting with the editing until the film reaches and reveals its final form. As Cutler explains: “[the] film feels fresh partly because it was invented moment to moment. Its sequences flow intuitively, resulting in story progressions that often feel more rhythmic than narrative” (Cutler, 2014). Thus, the film’s rhythm and narrative are given by the present moment, the ephemeral, in which Candeias was filming, whereby transitory moments are connected scene-by-scene through the relation of landscape to bodies. Candeias’ experimental attitude constructs an open film, through which the spectator is invited to take an active position, experiencing life at the ‘margins’, on the fringes of society.

There are few interior spaces in the film and few scenes in the dark of the night. The majority of the moments are embedded in the tension between construction works and nature, captured under intense sunlight. Therefore, the bodies are framed and “deframed” (Bonitzer, 2000) with the landscape, indicating an intrinsic existence of landscape, spaces, and people; they mutually construct one another (Illustration 95). Furthermore, the individuals’ bodies are predominantly framed with the landscape, either in close-ups or in wide shots.



Illustration 95 – Bodies and the landscape, in *A margem*.

Feet, hands, and faces touch the ground, the grass, the dirt, and the crowd in close-ups (Illustration 96). In the wide shots, they are immersed in trees, trash, houses, ruins, and construction materials (Illustrations 95 and 97). Thus, Candeias establishes an intrinsic relation between individuals' bodies and their surroundings through camera movements, framings, and "deframings". Candeias' experimental attitude with the location and the individuals' bodies is constitutive of the film's composition, and proposes that the spectator take part in this relationship with the 'margins'. It is not about *telling* the spectator what to think, but *inviting* the spectator to experience for him/herself as he/she follows the fragmented, abstracted actions of these individuals. Therefore, Candeias invites the spectator to continue what his own artistic gesture commenced. For a filmmaker, as for an artist, it is not enough "to create and express an idea; they must also awaken the experiences which will make their idea take root in the consciousness of others" (Merleau-Ponty, 1952/1993, p.70).



Illustration 96 – Bodies and the landscape, in *A margem*.



Illustration 97 – Wide shots, in *A margem*

The camera positions and movements are close to the bodies, which are embedded in their surrounding spaces and landscapes. The river, its borders with plants, constructions in progress, ruins, slums, cars, and roads are shot in relation to bodily positions. Nonetheless, bodies, the landscape, and space share the same

relevance in the frame. Thus, the framing and the editing visually connect the bodies and the landscape in a carnal relation (Merleau-Ponty, 1961/1993, p. 130).

Moreover, the basis of the film is discontinuity as well as constant movement (Uchôa, 2013). The film's form and rhythm, constituted by the choices of framing and camera movements, are based on a sensorial relation between bodies and the landscape, constructed from an abstraction of reality as an open artwork, similar to what Brazilian avant-garde visual artists proposed at the end of the 1960s. The *open artwork* should be approached, touched, dwelled in, entered, and seen by the spectator/participant in order to both *experience* and *complete* the works. Additionally, this notion is in accordance with Tassinari's *space at work* (2001). The film's space is continually under construction: it is an ongoing process. Owing to this, it does not have limitations.

A margem can be understood as an open work. This becomes most apparent when we consider the composition of the film, which offers to the spectator the possibility of completing, appropriating, and living experiencing the ephemeral existence on the fringe. Thus, Candeias expresses what he perceives and experiences, proposing that the spectator take part in the film as a living experience (*vivência*). Furthermore, the ephemeral and transitory dwelling portrayed in *A margem* are expressions of an intrinsic relation between the filmmaker and his world. Cinema as visual art "is not imitation, nor is it something manufactured according to the wishes of instinct or good taste. It is a process of expression" (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/1993, pp. 67-68). The living experience of the marginal's existence becomes the film's aesthetic and an opening for the spectator. *A margem* proposes to the spectator to actively follow the film as an ephemeral, living experience of precariousness, as its characters are constantly in motion, in action, in communion with the landscape and things. Candeias portrays the precariousness of the fringes, evoking the precariousness of existence itself.

Correspondingly, Dezeuze (2013), examining Clark's work *Caminhando | Going* (1963) (Illustration 98), elaborates on the "positive" outcome of the lived experience

(*vivência*) of precariousness as an artistic proposition, which engages the spectator in ephemeral artworks in order that they themselves experience that precariousness. Clark, Pape, and Oiticica transform precariousness and adversity into a “positive” experience, inciting the spectator to be a participant in the lived experience (*vivenciar*) of the present, being inventive in adversity, and part of the artwork’s open and ongoing process. *Caminbando*, as Rolnik (1999) emphasizes, is a turning point in Lygia Clark’s trajectory. From *Caminbando* onwards, the body of the spectator becomes the core of Clark’s propositions; the works exist as a body exists with and in them. Clark’s series *Bichos* (Illustrations 27 and 74) already established this relationship with the spectators’ body. However, *Caminbando* not only exists when inhabited by a body but is also made from appropriated, precarious materials. Similarly, later in the 1960s, Clark made a series of masks called *Máscaras Sensoriais* | *Sensorial masks* (1967) (Illustration 99). These masks are made of different colored fabrics that cover the individual’s head completely. The masks have holes for the eyes, but, for each mask, there is a material either covering or changing the vision through these eye passages, such as mirrors or wires. Depending on the mask, one will find different smells, coming from small sacs inside the mask, which are filled with herbs or essences. Additionally, there are materials, such as sand, that interfere with the participant’s hearing.



Illustration 98 - Clark making a *Caminhando*, (1963) with paper and scissors | Performance views. Six black and white exhibition prints. Retrieved from: http://post.at.moma.org/content_items/1005-part-1-lygia-clark-at-the-border-of-art Accessed: 18/06/2018.



Illustration 99 - *Máscaras sensoriais*, (1967). Lygia Clark | 50x 65 cm each | Cloth and Several Materials
Retrieved from: <https://www.wikiart.org/en/lygia-clark/m-scaras-sensoriais-1967/>.
Accessed: 19/06/2018.

Máscaras Sensoriais resumes the problematics of inside versus outside, front and back, of Clark's early works, which involved abstract art and the surface in painting (see Chapter 4). The masks function to 'filter' the participant's cranial senses. The mask can suggest to the wearer different perceptions, as well as a connection to bodily senses beyond the head, thereby connecting the mind to the body as a whole by experiencing the work and completing it. *Máscaras Sensoriais* prompts the participant to recall that conscious living involves the experience of the body. As Oiticica emphasizes about this artwork: "[...] she is proposing, through a simple sensorial act, a possibility for a re-informed consciousness of the body as something *alive*, as if discovered for the first time, thus proposing also a new *relation* between individual consciousness of 'one's body' [...]" (Oiticica, 1969, p.3, author's italics). Furthermore, the masks are supposed to be experienced by the spectator who becomes a participant, since *Máscaras Sensoriais* are open works to be experienced. Lastly, the masks' materiality is precarious and ephemeral, since they are only accessed and experienced at the present moment.

Lygia Pape's *Roda dos Prazeres* (1968) (Illustration 100), when exhibited in an art institution, is constituted by 15 medium-sized white bowls placed next to each other on the floor in a form of a wheel. Each bowl is filled with a flavored, colored liquid (the colors are green, blue, red, orange, and yellow). Next to each bowl, there is a small, white plate with a dropper. The participant is supposed to fill the dropper with

the colored liquid of his/her choosing and taste it. The tastes vary from bitter to acidic to sweet. Most often exhibited within art institutions, *Roda dos Prazeres* can be constructed and experimented with by anyone who is willing to experience it. As Pape suggests, *Roda dos Prazeres* can be made by anyone at home (Pape in Machado, 2008, p. 122).

Roda dos Prazeres is a proposition that presumes the bodily involvement of its participants. Color overcomes the canvas's surface in Pape's early works (as examined in Chapters 4 and 6) in a piece that is presented as something to *taste*. Here, color becomes something to eat. *Roda dos Prazeres* constitutes the living experience (*vivência*) of the possibilities that color can provide. Painting abstraction is brought to, even *into*, the participant's body. Thus, *Roda dos Prazeres* constitutes an experimental, propositional, and open work.

Besides the “deceptive” aspect of the work, in which the eye is seduced by a color that may have an awful taste, the work also has a constructive aspect, to the extent that it invites one to constantly experiment, trying different colors and having different reactions. Additionally, the individual's decisions are made in the present moment, as she/he experiences the piece. Furthermore, *Roda dos Prazeres* is made of appropriated, precarious materials. As Machado explains: “[against] the advances of consumption, now Pape and her colleagues investigated the precariousness idea of another kind of appropriation, of revalorization and/or transformation of objects mass produced by the industry” (Machado, 2008, p. 125 own translation).³³⁹ Camilo Osorio summarizes the precariousness of Pape's propositions, such as *Roda dos Prazeres*:

Rigor, silence, seduction and precariousness were combined in the poetic construction of her work, lending it a sort of tragic optimism, an almost metaphysical belief in Brazil's capacity to invent itself [...]. In her work, there is a desire for dialogue with and the inclusion of those who have lived historically on the margins, an invisible part of our reality (Osorio, 2006, p. 583).

³³⁹ Original text: “Contra o avanço do consumismo, agora Pape e seus companheiros investigavam a ideia de precariedade, de outro tipo de apropriação, de revalorização e/ou transformação desses objetos produzidos em massa pela indústria.”

Therefore, *Roda dos Prazeres* combines the activation of the senses, the experimental, abstraction, and the openness of the work with precariousness as a proposal to the spectator that she/he take part in the work, partaking in the lived experiencing (*vivenciando*) of the work in the present, in line with the ephemeral precariousness of life at the fringes.



Illustration 100 - *Roda dos Prazeres*, (1967). Lygia Pape | Variable dimensions | porcelain, anilines, flavors, droppers.
Retrieved from: <https://www.wikiart.org/en/lygia-pape/wheel-of-delights-1967/>
Accessed: 19/06/2018.



Illustration 101 - *B33 Bólide caixa 18, Caixa poema 02 "Homenagem a Cara de Cavalo"*, (1966). Hélio Oiticica. | variable dimensions | wood, photography, nylon, acrylic, plastic and pigments.
Reproduction: Ramírez, Figueiredo, & Oiticica, 2007, p.118.

During the 1960s, Hélio Oiticica's experiments with color in space and time developed into the creation of a series of participatory and appropriated³⁴⁰ objects called "*Bólides*" (as introduced in Chapter 4). *B33 Bólido Caixa 18, Caixa Poema 02 "Homenagem a Cara de Cavalo"* | *B33 Box Bólido 18, Box Poem 02 "Homage to Horse Face* (1966) (Illustration 101) reveals a particular engagement of the artist with social margins and their inhabitants. *B33 Bólido caixa 18* is a rectangular box made of wood with no top. It is vertically positioned, where the four, internal vertical faces show a photograph of Oiticica's friend and criminal, *Cara de Cavalo*, recumbent, having being shot by the Rio de Janeiro state police. One of the vertical box's sides is open and lying flat, a red nylon transparent piece of fabric connects the open side with the opposite, standing side, thus forming a red veil, which covers the photos and the insides of the open box. On the bottom of the box, surrounded by photographs, there is a plastic bag filled with dark orange sand and on this plastic bag is written: "Here it is and will be! Contemplate Its Heroic Silence."³⁴¹ The plastic bag filled with sand lies inside the box over a grid. The participant can remove the veil and manipulate the plastic bag.

Bólido B33, like the other *Bólides*, only exists if it is touched, moved and reflected on (in the sense that *B33* is a *conceptual* piece, it is a piece of *bodily* conceptualism). As the spectator unveils the box, he/she sees the images of the dead man and picks up the plastic bag with the poem. *Bólido B33* is a work based on color, image, spatial, poetic, temporal, and political aspects, which are elaborated through the spectators' engagement with the work. Like *Roda dos Prazeres* and *Máscaras Sensoriais*, *Bólido B33* combines experimentation, abstraction, and precariousness in a propositional

³⁴⁰ Oiticica's notion of appropriations is based on the transformation of things into participatory artworks. Thus, something that for him might have one meaning, as it appropriated by the artists, it has several other meanings where the participant takes part in the artwork. As the artist remarks: *In my experience, I have a program and I have begun what I call "appropriations": I find an 'object' or an 'object ensemble' made by parts or not, and from it I take possession as something that has for me any meaning, that is, I transform it into a work: [...] for me the object has acquired an autonomous structure – I find in it something fixed, a meaning that I want to expose the signification; this work will later acquire an infinite number of meanings that are added, that are added by general participation.* "Na minha experiência tenho um programa e já iniciei o que chamo de 'apropriações': acho um 'objeto' ou 'conjunto objeto' formado de partes ou não, e dele tomo posse como algo que possui para mim um significado qualquer, isto é, transformo-o em obra: ... para mim adquiriu objeto uma estrutura autônoma – acho nele algo fixo, um significado que quero expor a significação; esta obra vai adquirir depois n significados que se acrescentem, que se somam pela participação geral [...]" (Oiticica, 1966, p.1).

³⁴¹ Original text: "Aqui está e ficará! Contemplai Seu Silêncio Heróico."

open work. Oiticica, through living experience (*vivência*), transmogrifies experimentation from painted abstraction to political, phenomenological engagement of those who decide whether or not to experience the artwork. To this extent, Oiticica's work is like Candeias' *A margem*, which, through a phenomenological approach to the body and the landscape, likewise constructs an open work.

Moreover, like *Roda dos Prazeres* and *Máscaras sensoriais*, *Bólide B33* is made of precarious materials, which emphasize the precariousness of living in/at the margins of the society, as well as its silencing. Instead of instigating violence (*Cara de cavalo*—Manoel Moreira's nickname—was a criminal), the *Bólide B33* recurrently brings into the present moment the precariousness of existence at the margins.

The allusion and presence of marginal figures in Oiticica's works, [...] [in] a certain way, are symptomatic of a repressive and dictatorial context in Brazil in the second half of the 1960s. Therefore, they should not be easily understood as eulogies to the outlaw or to indiscriminate violence. Above all, Oiticica's adoption of the marginality ideology indicates an individual freedom defense, of free and transgressor behavior, which is not consensual (Loeb, 2011, p. 67, own translation).³⁴²

Therefore, *Roda dos Prazeres*, *Máscaras sensoriais*, and *Bólide B33* combine appropriated, precarious materials and objects in propositional open artworks, which the spectator contributes to by taking part in the work's creative process, being part of a lived experience (*vivência*). Likewise, the participant can be altered by these propositions through their carnal, bodily experience of ephemeral works in real time. These three works, especially *Bólide B33*, problematize the precariousness of marginal existence as a way of resisting and exercising freedom in the artworks' form. This was also the aim of Cinema Marginal.

The participant of these three artworks experiences precariousness and the ephemeral through the senses. The participant is not supposed to 'understand' causal relations that lead to precariousness, but rather to merely experience the existence of

³⁴² Original text: "A alusão à marginalidade e à presença de figuras marginais nessa produção [...]. Em certa medida, são sintomáticas no contexto repressor e ditatorial do Brasil da segunda metade da década de 1960. Não devem, portanto, ser facilmente entendidas como apologias ao 'bandido' ou à violência indiscriminada. Antes de tudo, a adoção do ideário da marginalidade por Oiticica indica a defesa da liberdade do indivíduo, de um comportamento livre e transgressor, não consensual."

adversity and precariousness through a phenomenological, open artwork. Consequently, the spectator should be changed by their participation. Accordingly, Candeias' *A margem*, by experimenting with cinematographic language in a non-representational film form, presents existence at society's margins through the phenomenological connection of human bodies to the precariousness of their world. Candeias had few resources to work with but was open to experimenting and incorporating the conditions of filming, thereby using adversity in the very construction of the film. Consequently, Candeias' openness is present in *A margem*, inviting the spectator to experience the precariousness of dwelling in the social margins.

In conclusion, then, Clark, Pape, and Oiticica's experimentations at the end of the 1960s explored the possibilities of changing the collective by transforming abstract painting through living experiences (*vivências*), through propositions. It is important to highlight that these artists' *anti-art open artworks* had no didactic implication: the artists did not tell the spectator what to experience, which had the effect of annihilating any causal relations.

Furthermore, for Pape, Clark, and Oiticica, the proposition constituted a constant process with which every individual should take part (rendering themselves participant) in the work, thereby completing it. Owing to this, the participant is part of the creative process of the work. Thus, the *anti-art open artwork* is a proposition that changes through time and is based on the present, since the work is a living experience, which, most of the time, implicates the individual's body. Therefore, Clark, Pape, and Oiticica combined at once abstraction, experimentation, and the senses by enabling the lived experiences of propositional, open works. Their expressions presupposed an overcoming of the subject-object duality by experiencing reality, the world, and art (Oiticica, 1969).

Each of these artists mobilized precariousness through the activation of consciousness in a phenomenological sense, activated through the senses. It was in this way that the artworks engaged the individual's incarnate mind. Likewise, *A margem*

proposes to the spectator a living experience (*vivência*) of ‘marginal’ existence through experimental abstraction in the form of film, making precariousness into a film aesthetic (namely the film’s form and content). Candeias, as I explained in the analysis above, connects bodies phenomenologically to the landscape, to their world (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/1993, 1952/1992, 1961/1993). Saint-Aubert explains the “lived experience” of the world, which a subject can express in painting from Merleau-Ponty’s perspective, whereby the artwork is a ‘quasi-presence’ of the world experienced by the artists. In his words: “[...] the thing takes possession of my body to be perceived, by imposing its own style, and I am able in return to give it flesh by my flesh, to give it 'a quasi presence' in its absence” (Saint-Aubert, 2011, p. 16).³⁴³

Relying on improvisation during the film’s shooting, as well as the possibilities that the world (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/1993) gave him, Candeias edited a film about the precariousness of life on the river’s margins, proposing that the spectator take an active position, enabling her to experience such precariousness.

The whole country was pushed towards the margin, reduced to be a spectator; it was time to give to the public the chance to leave the spectatorial position of the outside to take part in the creative activity. It is the beginning of the collective expression, wrote Hélio Oiticica [...]. (Bernadet in Puppo & Albuquerque, 2002, p. 37, own translation).³⁴⁴

Therefore, as Hélio Oiticica proposed, and as presented in the visual works of Clark and Pape, adversity feeds creativity and experimentation for Candeias. Precariousness is a material to be appropriated and turned into material for thinking sensuously, resisting the precarious conditions of the present, as Candeias’ *A margem* does. As Dezeuze explains, “Oiticica repeatedly celebrated the transformation of precariousness into strength, a process nowhere more visible than in the architecture of the *favelas*, which embodies human creativity and invention arising from the most dire circumstances” (Dezeuze, 2004, p. 69). In filming the ephemerality and

³⁴³ Original text: “la chose ‘prend possession de mon corps pour se faire percevoir de lui’ en lui imposant son proper style, et je suis capable en retour de lui donner chair par ma chair, de lui redonner ‘une quasi présence’ en son absence.”

³⁴⁴ Original text: “Todo país empurrado para a margem, reduzido a espectador; chegou a ‘hora de dar ao público a chance de deixar de ser público espectador de fora para participar da atividade criadora. E o começo de uma expressão coletiva’, escrevia Hélio Oiticica [...]”

precariousness of existence, Candeias, resisting such circumstances, composed a film of pure invention, as Jairo Ferreira (1986) conceived it, in the sense that Oiticica suggests (see Oiticica, 1972 and Chapter 4).

Furthermore, the margins' inhabitants make the most of their existence at the present moment as a result of the precarious conditions of living. Precariousness in *A margem* is connected to the present time and its materiality. Precariousness becomes a way of living: an existential mode. This existential mode is moreover evoked given that the four individuals, who are followed by the camera, die, which emphasizes the "presentification" of marginal existence. Other aspects of note are the materials and the landscape's appropriation by the individuals filmed, as well as the filmmaker who uses those conditions to build an *open film*. *A margem* can be understood as an open work, as established by Oiticica, because the composition of the film does not didactically circumscribe meaning *in itself*, but rather offers the spectator the possibility of completing, appropriating, living, and experiencing the film. Thus, the living experience (*vivência*) of the marginal's precariousness becomes the film's aesthetic, and opens up space for the spectator to become a participant.

Finally, *A margem* is not a film that represents space and time. It rather simply *presents* time from the living experience of the world. Candeias conceived the film as it was being made. The experimental attitude of the filmmaker resulted in abstracting elements from the landscape and bodies as they dwell at the fringes. Thus, as Le Grice notes: "[though] non-representational in the pictorial sense, abstract work is not necessarily non-referential" (Le Grice, 1977, p. 15). The abstract is no less real than the representational: an illusory and representational film does not contemplate more reality than the abstract film. In Câmara's words, "[the] truth of the expression, of the art, should identify itself with the truth of world itself" (Câmara, 2005, p. 73). Candeias' *A margem* is thus an expression of the phenomenological relation with the fringes, as proposed by modern and avant-garde art, through abstraction and phenomenological experience. About his conception of cinema, Candeias says:

I am, if I am not mistaken, by those who think that cinema is something serious and very expensive, to become only a 'spectacle,' without other consequences. I think that to the spectacle we should add another dimension, which 'dimension', in my view, is the man. When talking about man, it would be difficult not to talk about their problems. I am not against; I do not like the cinema that is only a spectacle [...] (Candeias in Fonseca, 1968, p. 23, own translation).³⁴⁵

Therefore, Candeias conceives a film directly pertaining to the human condition, that is, the dimension of an incarnate mind in the world with others (Merleau-Ponty, 1961/1993).

³⁴⁵ Original text: “Sou, se não me engano, daqueles que acham que o cinema é coisa muito séria e de custo muito alto, para que se faça dele somente um ‘espetáculo’, sem outras consequências. Acho que ao espetáculo se deve acrescentar uma outra qualquer dimensão, e a ‘dimensão’, a meu ver, é o homem. Quando se fala em homem, difícil seria não se falar de seus problemas. Não sou contra, somente não gosto do cinema só espetáculo [...]”

Conclusion

This thesis has sought to demonstrate a possible relationship between the visual arts and cinema based on the artworks of artists and filmmakers from Brazil. Predominantly, I have approached this relationship by foregrounding authorial, formal choices and methods of expression, focusing on abstraction and experimentalism. This analysis furthermore gave priority to a phenomenological approach to the world (in accordance with Merleau-Ponty), thereby throwing light on the acts of authorial expression that preoccupy this study. My development of this aesthetic phenomenology concentrated on the visual form, whether of the painted or moving image. My motivation for proposing an aesthetic phenomenology was enunciated in the introduction, and is in accordance with the aesthetic phenomenology proposed by Yacavone (2016) and, mostly, Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1961/1993, 1952/1992, 1945/1993). Yacavone (2016) identifies limitations to Sobchack's (1992) film phenomenology, and suggested that new studies, combining phenomenology and cinema, should focus on the aesthetics of cinema, whereby cinema is approached on the same footing as art. Hence, here I decided to present the arguments of the philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty regarding artistic expression in modern painting and art.

My argument is centered on the process of creation/expression, as the philosopher examines the relation between artist and artwork. Furthermore, his essays indicate how modern art opposes representationalism, his phenomenology contributing to the interpretation of forms of expression in modern and avant-garde cinema and painting. I identified in the texts of Merleau-Ponty (1945/1993, 1952/1992, 1961/1993) a line connecting the practice of the writer, the painter, and the filmmaker. Lastly, in accordance with this study's aim of analyzing formal abstraction in avant-garde painting and cinema, *merleau-pontian* phenomenology indicates approaches to, and interpretations of, formal abstraction, as suggested by Wiesing (2016).

Given the analyses presented in Chapters 5, 6, and 7, it is possible to note a similarity with the bottom-up analysis suggested by Marks (2000) and Sobchack (1992). However, in accordance with the proposals of Le Grice (1977), Jacobs (2011), Aumont (2011), Léger (2009), Richter (1951), Ghali (1995), and Yacavone (2016), I approached cinematic art as visual art, mostly in line with painting. As such, I emphasized the visual and methodological aspects of the films that had their equivalents in painting and visual arts. Thus, methods pertaining to modern and avant-garde art provided interpretative keys for modern and avant-garde films. Consequently, my discussion departs from more traditional aesthetic analyses that focus upon the text, drama, and photographic aspects of films.

For my purposes, it was crucial to highlight 1920's modernism, which was a movement that produced a trauma in the visual arts circuit, as explained by H. Foster (1996) and A. Fabris (2002, 2010). It was also relevant to point out how the *Week of 22* established a break with the canons of visual art in Brazil. Furthermore, it was significant to explain the distance between the respective practices of painting and cinema during the first generation of modernism in Brazil. Hence, identifying the exclusion of Peixoto's film, *Limite*, of both cinema circuit and the avant-garde visual arts circuit during the period of the first modernist generation.

Another relevant matter raised by this study came with the formal analysis of Tarsila do Amaral's paintings. There are few formal analyses of Tarsila's paintings, Cattani (1991) being one of them. Tarsila's main commentator, Aracy Amaral (1998, 2003, 2010), was mostly concerned with the artist's production as a whole, as well as the context in which she worked. Furthermore, I emphasized the abstractionist aspects of Tarsila's paintings, touching upon what the artist learned from Cubism, as well as her commitment to Brazil's landscape. Therefore, this thesis presented a contribution to the formal analysis of Tarsila's paintings.

The avant-garde film *Limite* has been studied within and beyond Brazil, but the bibliography consulted for this thesis did not present a formal discussion alongside the pictorial proposals hailing from the Brazilian modernist movement. *Limite's* analysis

by Mello (1996, 2014), Avellar (2011), Korffman (2007), Roizman (2003), and Senra (2016) provided essential axes from which to interpret the film as a mode of phenomenological expression. Moreover, these authors' analyses of the film indicated how the filmmaker dealt with themes that were understood as nativist and nationalist during the 1920s and 30s, namely the landscape and popular constructions. Additionally, in the bibliographical research, it was possible to locate indicatives of the similarities between *Limite* and Léger's *Ballet Mécanique*, as it is mentioned in Erik Bullot's article *A propos de Limite* (1995, p. 130). Previous analyses of *Limite* allocated it in relation to the European avant-garde, mostly regarding literary and poetic aspect or the photographic aspect of cinema (Avellar, 2003; Bernardet, 2002; Korffmann, 2007; Machado Jr., 2009; Rocha, 2003; Xavier, 2008a, Bullot, 1995, Senra 2016). Thus, these authors mention the relationship between *Limite* and *Ballet Mécanique* based on premises of literature and photography. Accordingly, what my analysis suggests is to approach their similarities based on painting and visual arts methods.

Pátio, Rocha's first short film, was analyzed in Chapter 6. In order to analyze *Pátio* on an equal footing with visual artworks of the period, I kept in mind the suggestion of Monzani (1986), who saw a visual kinship between *Pátio* and *Limite*, categorizing *Pátio* as *constructivist*, and so in line with the abstract painting of the period. Thus, I departed from Machado Jr.'s (2009) analysis of *Pátio*, which focused upon the film's narrative, in spite of the film furnishing no obvious opportunities for such analysis. Monzani (1986) provided the basis for approximating the formal choices of Rocha with the Neoconcrete artists, especially Lygia Clark and Hélio Oiticica. However, regarding the film, *Terra em transe*, which has been subject to many analyses, I centered on Machado Jr.'s (1997, 2005) interpretation of space in the film, as analogous to the formal structure proposed by Oiticica in *Tropicália*. These two works, *Terra in transe* and *Tropicália*, are commonly mentioned together as catalysts for Brazilian Tropicalism, as in Basualdo (2007), Favaretto (2013), and Bentes (2007). However, a formal study of both, as that which I perform in this thesis, was not hitherto available in the research literature.

Finally, following the suggestion made by Uchôa (2013a, 2013b), I analyzed the film *A margem* by Candeias on an equal footing with the visual arts of the period. I categorized, with Uchôa (2013a, 2013b) and Teles (2006, 2007), *A margem* as an experimental, modern film, moving away from any interpretation of Candeias as ‘primitive’ filmmaker as suggested by Bíafora (1967) and Machado Jr. (2007a, 2007b). Thus, I designated *A margem* as one of the films that originated the Cinema Marginal movement, together with *O bandido da Luz Vermelha* (Ramos, 1987; Xavier, 2012). Furthermore, I interpreted the film’s form as an open artwork, inviting through its aesthetic the spectator’s reflection upon his/her own existential ephemerality.

Chapter 1 discussed the possibility of interpreting modern and avant-garde cinema using the rubric suggested by Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of modern art, based on notions of expression, abstraction, and the experimental. Furthermore, it discussed how modes of expression in modern and avant-garde art find their equivalents in modern and avant-garde cinema, a point that is made sharper by focusing on visual, formal aspects in the films’ analyses. Lastly, Chapter 1 explained what form the relationship between cinema and painting took in the Brazilian context. Chapter 2 then introduced developments in the aesthetics of modern and avant-garde art and cinema in the European and North American context, which infiltrated Brazilian visual arts and cinema. Moreover, I argued in Chapter 2 how experimentation with both media and form facilitated the process of formal abstraction.

Chapter 3 introduced the Brazilian context, in particular its aesthetic and political aspects as they relate to the avant-garde visual arts and cinema in the first and third generations of modernism. Chapter 4 drew a line connecting the Brazilian abstract avant-garde, which developed painting into *propositions* and open artworks, so as to include the spectator in the artwork’s ongoing process. Additionally, I argued how the abstract avant-garde was aligned with modern Brazilian cinema regarding its formal procedures. Chapter 5 discussed how the film *Limite* could formally constitute both a modernist and an abstract, avant-garde film, sitting in between Tarsila do Amaral’s paintings and the film *Ballet Mécanique*, given its focus on ways of expressing

phenomenologically the relationship between bodies, the landscape, and architectural spaces. Chapter 6 added to existing studies of Glauber Rocha's films a formal analysis of his avant-gardist film *Pátio*, and the labyrinthine aspects of *Terra em Transe* (as Oiticica conceived of it in his *Tropicália*). Moreover, Chapter 6 emphasized an approach to elements of the landscape, bodies, as well as architectural and communal spaces, in accordance with *Limite* and *A margem*. Finally, Chapter 7 underlined Ozualdo Candeias' method of portraying precariousness and adversity through landscapes and bodies, in a similar vein to the Brazilian artists Lygia Pape, Lygia Clark, and Hélio Oiticica. Moreover, I discussed how Candeias produced a film that engages the spectator through the senses, owing to his experimentation with cinematic art, expressing his phenomenological relationship with the fringes of society.

The Brazilian, modernist painter, Tarsila do Amaral, transformed the landscape and its people into colors and general abstract forms. Tarsila's paintings did not establish relations of figure and background but of *verticality*. Her paintings have a base, a ground. The colors of the Brazilian landscape literally *inform* Tarsila's Brazilian modernism. She transformed her dwelling place into colorful paintings, whereby organic and geometric forms constitute a whole unity. It is possible to say that the "landscape thought through Tarsila" (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/1993), rendering her painting's *phenomenological* expressions of Brazil's characteristic colors.

Similar to Tarsila do Amaral's paintings, the landscape of Mangaratiba is embodied in *Limite*. Mário Peixoto, in giving *Limite* the rhythm of the sea, demonstrated that consciousness is his world from a phenomenological perspective. In other words, the living experience of being at sea provides the form for his central motif. Furthermore, not only did Peixoto live by the sea after his film, but, by the time he shot *Limite*, he had just experienced months at sea, travelling from Brazil to Europe and then back to Brazil. *Limite's* scenario, or *trame* (Ghali, 1995), opposes the traditional dramatic scenario. *Limite's* scenario, by contrast, consists merely in the space and time of a boat at sea, and what its rhythm can offer to consciousness. The images, sequences, and gestures of the bodies form one whole composition consisting of

limitations, limits, edges, borders, lines of bodies, and elements of the landscape. Finally, like Tarsila's paintings, Peixoto's film is Brazilian, owing to its conceptual abstraction of the landscape and its avant-gardist form, characteristics that are afforded by its non-representationalism and phenomenological method.

During the 1950s, painting was Lygia Clark, Lygia Pape, and Hélio Oiticica's primary means of expression. Each of these artists investigated one particularity of painting, developing it in several directions, as discussed in Chapter 4. For example, Clark subverted the inside and outside of the canvas, as well as its front and its back, until the painting was no longer a matter of two-dimensions, and its geometric lines became organic. Pape, meanwhile, defied the distinctions between geometric and organic forms, introducing light into three-dimensional paintings. Oiticica, moreover, investigated the materiality of color by bringing the spectator into its core. Regardless of the different forms these artists developed from painting, they all approached painting as having a body of its own. Thus, their motif, the painting artwork, had a body and that body was abstracted into geometric and organic lines, into moving planes and labyrinthine installations. In the 1960s, their living experience with painting became *non-objects* (see Chapter 4), and these 'painting entities' invited the spectator to experiment with painting as well. Clark, Pape, and Oiticica reminded the spectator that a painting should be the experience of the real, not the *illusion* of the real, thereby allowing the spectator to be involved in the ongoing process of the paintings.

Clark, Pape, and Oiticica's *propositions* of the early 1960s became, at the end of that decade, open artworks. Their first experimentations were already open since the artwork's space was the modern space: the *space at work*. The openness of the installations and other artworks of the end of the 1960s encouraged the spectator to become a participant in the artwork's ongoing process, the propositions inviting the spectator to be an active part of the artwork to the same extent as the artist—even as creative and inventive as the artist. Additionally, the openness of their artworks relied on their form. Indeed, the invitation for the spectator to participate owes itself to the

form of the work. Thus, the form of the artwork must be transformed in order to transform the world in which it exists.

Similarly, Rocha, like other filmmakers of the Cinema Novo movement, expected to create a revolutionary aesthetic that could transform social reality. However, Rocha was probably the one who most transformed cinematographic language through his experimentations and avant-gardist attitude. *Pátio*, in its method of combining human bodies, architectural spaces, and the landscape on the two-dimensional screen, gave the film its non-representational, avant-gardist aesthetic. *Pátio* flattened volumetric bodies and landscape features, rendering them continuous with the geometry of the patio. The fragmentation of things and bodies, sometimes using close-ups, provides a continuous reminder of phenomenological experience. In other words, these fragmented parts are not perceived separately: they are perceived as something in its entirety. Therefore, a continuous line, made out of fragmented things and bodies, is the consistent element that forms a unity. The line of the body is the line of the plants; the line of the floor is the line of the plants; and the line of the stairs is the line of the bodies.

In *Terra em Transe*, Rocha repeats the motif of fragmented of bodies using architectural spaces and a landscape that constructs a labyrinthine, abstract narrative. The faces, however, are the most relevant facets of the labyrinth. Furthermore, *Terra em Transe*'s labyrinthine narrative is centered on the character Paulo Martins, who also forms *Eldorado*'s consciousness. Thus, *Eldorado* is Paulo Martins' *Eldorado*. Consequently, *Terra em transe* portrays its characters within their landscape and architectural spaces. On the one hand, the rigid posture of Diaz constitutes the rigidity of internal spaces, with their internal geometric lines, implying neoclassical and functionalist architecture. On the other hand, Vieira's mobility and uncertain position are in accordance with the moving bodies and tropical landscape surrounding him. *Tropicália*, Oiticica's penetrable, likewise mingles rigid structures with poetry and organic elements.

Additionally, *Tropicália* and *Terra em Transe* mobilize tropical landscapes, disintegrating stereotypes. Tropical imagery becomes abstract in the labyrinthine form, opposing any integral imagery that the civil-military regime of the period was trying to 'sell'. Furthermore, they resist any stereotyped reference to Brazil. The form taken by both the film and Oiticica's penetrable installation are of *living experiences* of the tropics and the dismantled idea 'a Brazil'. Again, the human body and landscape literally *inform* the films and installations.

This intrinsic relationship between human bodies and the landscape is viscerally expressed in *A margem*. The characters continually shift with the landscape and its precariousness. The visual aspects of bodies and the landscape, their texture, nuances, constitutions, as well as the impoverishment and adversity, coexist in moving images. Candeias' experimental attitude transformed the world he experienced into moving images. Moreover, *A margem's* discontinued narrative evokes the constant 'present' of the characters. *A margem* exemplifies the expression of precariousness to such an extent that the experience of that precariousness and adversity were not merely meant to be *symbolized* but 'lived' by the spectator. Thus, Candeias' open film invites the spectator to live experience those ephemeral conditions. Furthermore, Candeias abstracts pieces of reality to compose the abstraction that is *A margem*. The film is a collection of abstract actions of characters, as well as abstractions of places through which they move during the film.

In *A margem*, the gestures of the camera, combined with the gestures of bodies, which are framed by the camera, emphasize senses beyond the visual. The adversity and precariousness of the film and artworks' aesthetics, as discussed in Chapter 7, bring adversity and precariousness to the participant/spectator's senses. Thus, the spectator experiences them, and is conscious of them, thanks to the phenomenological approach to the world proposed by Candeias and those artists. Moreover, Candeias, Clark, Oiticica, and Pape transformed adversity and precariousness into the formal liberty of expression.

The non-representational aspects of modern and avant-garde cinema and painting gave more freedom to the ‘maker’, enabling the expression of his/her perception of the world in which he/she dwells. This freedom is also reflected in the experimental attitude that relates the medium with the spectator. Rocha in his *Aesthetic of Dream* manifesto, recalling his experience with Brazil’s civil-military repression and international criticism, writes: “[i]n between internal repression and international repercussions I have learned the most significant lesson: the artist must maintain his Freedom in any circumstances” (Rocha, 2004, p. 248, own translation).³⁴⁶ Therefore, despite the pressures of the circuit, and the demand for a specific type of cinema and visual art, the artist and filmmaker should exercise their freedom of expression without the trappings of any pre-conceived rules. Likewise, artistic and cinematic forms should heed such liberty.

The main characteristics of Brazilian modern and avant-garde filmmakers and visual artists, as approached here, are based on four pillars: (1) the landscape; (2) architectural and communal spaces; (3) the human body; and (4) the living experience (*vivência*). Artists’ and filmmakers’ perceptions and living experience of the landscape, space, and the body are visually expressed and open to the spectator. Thus, the living experience of the painter or filmmaker becomes a living experience for the spectator in the form of artworks and films.

Overall, this research contributed to analyses of the relationship between cinema and painting in the Brazilian context, suggesting possible approaches for analyzing painting, installations, *propositions*, and films alongside one another. Furthermore, I examined how the formal choices of both visual artists and filmmakers might reflect their gestures, as well as their dwelling in the world. Additionally, I suggested how formal abstraction conveys expression and experimentalism. Lastly, I highlighted the respective relevance of the landscape, human bodies, as well as

³⁴⁶ Original text: “Entre a repressão interna e a repercussão internacional aprendi a melhor lição: o artista deve manter sua Liberdade diante de qualquer circunstância”.

architectural and communal spaces in modern Brazilian and avant-garde cinema and visual artworks.

Two crucial pillars of this research contribute to cinema studies, and specifically Brazilian cinema studies and visual arts. The first is the interpretation of Merleau-Ponty's aesthetic essays; the second is the relationship developed between visual arts and cinema in the Brazilian context. Consequently, both are organically connected through notions of abstraction, experimentalism, and expression. Therefore, connections between modern and avant-garde art, and modern and avant-garde cinema, through their processes of abstraction is innovative, as is the study of the connections between Brazilian visual arts and cinema.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of modern art (cf. introduction and Chapter 1) contributes to analyzing the proximities between painting practices and filmmaking practices as modes of visual expression, focusing on the disruption of both representation and naturalistic illusions. Merleau-Ponty (1952/1992, 1961/1993) understands the writing practice of the philosopher and writer as equivalent to the painter's practice, which is consciousness's expression.

This thesis connected painting and cinema through forms containing the subjects' gestures, amounting to the expression of the world in which they dwell. Thus, it endeavored, through its approach to both painting and cinema, to locate those authorial gestures that are taken up and perpetuated by the spectator. Furthermore, this thesis argues that abstraction plays a central role in modern and avant-garde cinema and painting since it opens up the artwork's pictorial space, as well as its possibilities of experimentalism. Most of all, they propose new forms for the spectator to think with.

Thus, Brazilian artists and filmmakers, through adversity, anthropophagy, inventiveness, and invoking an experimental attitude, mobilized abstraction in order to radicalize the experience of the form. The form taken by Brazilian modern and avant-garde artworks and films are also grounded in the collective aspect in which the

spectator plays a role, namely that he/she should not think *from* it but *with* it. As such, both maker and spectator are responsible for visual expression.

The four Brazilian films analyzed herewith, namely, *Limite*, *Pátio*, *Terra em transe*, and *A margem*, open up further discussions regarding the relationship between painting and cinema in the Brazilian context. Additionally, this study contributes to approximations between the methods of avant-garde and modern artists and filmmakers when analyzing form. The movements and gestures of the maker are present in the artwork and films as invitations to others to continue, to subvert, to create, and furthermore, to invent. As Oiticica remarked: “There is not an idea separated from the artwork, never existed, what exists is invention” (Hélio Oiticica in Cardoso, 1985, p. 48).³⁴⁷ The gestures that compose films and artworks are in a constant state of “invention”, coining new forms and new ways to engage the other in the same process of invention.

“Thus”, as Favaretto explains, “the aesthetic of the movement and the involvement is the poetic of the gesture, that emphasize the make-appear, to manifest, and to signify a new artistic attitude” (Favaretto, 2015, p. 67).³⁴⁸ The painters and filmmakers of Brazil, through formal abstraction, proposed a new artistic attitude to the spectator, emphasizing the land, which is their Being’s “home”—where body and environment continuously influence one another. So, formal abstraction in Brazil finds its way through architectural spaces, landscapes, and the human body.

For this research and doctoral thesis, it was possible to analyze four films and visual works of art. The relationship between paintings, installations, *propositions*, and films developed here could, of course, be extended to other films and artworks by the same artists and filmmakers, as well as others. Some theories and notions have had to become schematized or reduced, since it was necessary to maintain the intersection between several disciplines, and to maintain an approach between cinema and painting.

³⁴⁷ Original text: “Não existe ideia separada do objeto, nunca existiu, o que existe é a invenção”.

³⁴⁸ Original text: “Assim a estética do movimento e do envolvimento é uma poética do gesto, que ressalta fazer-aparecer, o manifestar, o significar uma nova atitude artística”.

This research primarily investigated the formal relationship between painting and cinema. Owing to this aim, the socio-political and economic contexts in which the filmmakers and artists worked and dialogued was not approached in depth. This omission was a methodological choice, given that other authors in Brazil have already done so.

This study was also circumscribed to unpacking the notions of expression, experimentalism, gestures, and abstraction in Merleau-Ponty's aesthetic essays. My focus on the philosopher's texts that deal with modern art was a decision that sought to guarantee philosophical commitment. Moreover, it was a methodological decision to not compare this aesthetic phenomenology with the work of Sobchack (1992) and Marks (2000). Furthermore, I decided not to compare expression in painting and cinema from Merleau-Ponty's perspective with other philosophers of phenomenology, such as Martin Heidegger (2010) and his text on the origins of artworks. Finally, an essential notion in a *merleau-pontian* philosophy of modern painting and movement is the gap (*écart*). The concept of the gap, or lacuna, was not developed in depth in my film and artwork analyses.

This research delineates subjects, films, and visual artworks, as well as notions of the avant-garde, the experimental, as well as modernism and abstraction. Therefore, this thesis is an invitation for others to continue analyzing films from other perspectives beyond their textual and dramatic aspects. Furthermore, I hope with this thesis to encourage other discussions regarding the contribution that art history and the philosophy of painting could bring to film and cinema studies, which are not restricted to the museum or gallery.

Even though this thesis is concentrated in the Brazilian context within mostly the first half of the 20th century, the notions I mobilize of expression, abstraction, and experimentalism could be useful to address contemporary artworks that are motivated by the phenomenological approach of the world. Thus, despite the specificity of the technique artworks of sound installations, digital media or interactive artworks could be analyzed in the same direction I suggested with these terms, as to overcome the representationalism in

visual expression. Furthermore, the authorial gesture as present in the artwork that solicits the spectator to be part of both work and the author's thinking could be a relevant discussion for contemporary practices in both cinema and visual arts.

With regard to my conclusion, as well as contributions and limitations, the first suggestion for further research concerns film analyses. Therefore, in further studies, paintings, installations, and *propositions* should also be analyzed as having a body of their own, as Sobchack's (1992) film phenomenology suggests. Moreover, for further research, in the analysis of films' and artworks' forms, it would be instructive to explain how the ideological or political persuasions of the filmmaker or artist could be expressed. Or, rather, how phenomenological expression could formally express the political commitments of its creator. In order to develop this line of enquiry, it would be essential to mingle formal analyses with archival research.

As far as context is concerned, this research was explicitly confined to Brazil. Therefore, for further studies, it would be an important step to study, on an equal footing, other avant-garde and modern films and paintings from other contexts, such as Europe and other Latin American countries, so as to expand and develop on the relationship between forms of expression in modern and avant-garde cinema and visual arts. Lastly, this research points out the necessity of further studies regarding the differences between representation and expression in cinema.

Thus, this research painted cinema with gestures, expressions, and abstractions. It put Brazilian production on the map of cinema studies and painting, drawing new horizons of research in what should now appear to be a fruitful relationship between expression in cinema and painting.

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Filmography

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- Andrade, J. P. (Director and Producer) & Barreto, L.C. (Producer). (1966). *O padre e a moça* | *The Priest and the Girl*. Brazil.
- Andrade, J. P. (Director and Producer) & Eckstein, K. M. (Producer). (1969). *Macunaíma*. Brazil.
- Andrade, J.P., Borges, M., Diegues, C., Farias, M. & Hirszman, Leon. (Directors) & Farias, M.; Hirszman, L.(Producers) (1962). *Cinco vezes favela*. Brazil.
- Bressane, J. (Director and Producer). (1969). *O anjo nasceu* | *The angel was born*. Brazil.
- Buñuel, L. & Dalí, S. (Directors) & Buñuel, L. (Producer). (1929). *Un chien Andalou* | *An Andalusian Dog*. France.
- Campaux, F. (Director) & Artus, M. (Producer). (1946). *Henri Matisse*. France.
- Candeias, O. (Director and Producer). (1967). *A margem* | *The Margin*. Brazil.
- Candeias, O. (Director) & Cervantes, M. A.; Lima, N. (Producer). (1969). *Meu nome é Tonho* | *My name is Tonho*. Brazil.
- Candeias, O. (Director) & Rillo, C.; Cury, A. A.; Fernandes, O.; Roveda, V. (Producers). (1970). *A herança* | *The legacy*. Brazil.
- Candeias, O. (Director and Producer). (1971). *Uma rua chama Triunfo 1969/70* | *A street named Triunfo 1969/70*. Brazil.
- Candeias, O. (Director and Producer). (1971). *Uma rua chamada Triunfo 1970/71* | *A street named Triunfo 1970/71*. Brazil.
- Candeias, O. (Director and Producer). (1974). *Zézero*. Brazil.
- Candeias, O. (Director and Producer) & Risonho, Z.; Fontaine, A.; Petri, R.; Roveda, V. (Producers). (1981). *AOpção ou As rosas da estrada* | *TheOption or the roses of the road*. Brazil.
- Cardoso, I. (Director and Producer). (1971). *Nosferato no Brasil* | *Nosferatu in Brazil*. Brazil.
- Cavalcanti, A. (Director) & Braunberger, P. (Producer). (1926). *Rien que les heures* | *Nothing but time*. France.
- Chomette, H. (Director). (1923). *Jeux des reflets et de la vitesse*. France.
- Clair, R. (Director) & Maré R. (Producer). (1924). *Entr'acte*. France.
- Clouzot, H.-G. (Director and Producer). (1956). *Le Mystère Picasso* | *The Mystery of Picasso*. France.
- Duchamp, M. (Director). (1926). *Anemic Cinema*. France.
- Dulac, G. (Director and Producer). (1928). *La Coquille et le Clergyman* | *The Seashell and the Clergyman*. France.
- Dulac, G. (Director). (1929). *Étude cinématographique sur une arabesque* | *Arabesque*. France.
- Epstein, J. (Director and Producer). (1927). *Glace a trois faces* | *The three sided mirror*. France.
- Epstein, J. (Director and Producer). (1928). *La chute de la maison Usber* | *The Fall of the House of Usber*. France.
- Eggeling, V. (Director). (1924). *Diagonal Symphony*. Germany.
- Gance, A. (Director) & Pathé, C. (Producer). (1923). *La Roue* | *The Wheel*. France.
- Guerra, R. (Director). (1962). *Os cafajestes* | *The unscrupulous ones*. Brazil.
- Guerra, R. (Director) & Barbosa, J. (Producer). (1963). *Os Fuzis* | *The Guns*. Brazil.
- Jabor, A. (Director and Producer) & Lima, J. C.; Corrêa, J. C. S.; Santos, N. P. (1966). *Opinião Pública* | *A public opinion*. Brazil.
- King, H. (Director and Producer). (1921). *Tol'abel David*. USA.
- Lang, F. (Director) & Pommer, E. (Producer). (1927). *Metropolis*. Germany.
- Léger, F. & Murphy, D. (Directors). (1924). *Ballet Mécanique*. France.

- Lustig, R. R. & Kemeny, A. (Directors and Producer). (1929). *São Paulo, A Synphonia da Metrópole* | *São Paulo, A Metropolitan Symphonie*. Brazil.
- Machado, S. (Director) & Zangrandi, R. F. (Producer). (2001). *Onde a terra acaba* | *At the edge of the earth*. Brazil.
- Man, R. (Director). (1923). *Le retour à la raison* | *Return to reason*. France.
- Mauro, H. (Director) & Barros, A. C.; Domingues, H. C. (Producer). (1927). *Thesouro Predido*. Brazil.
- Mauro, H. (Director) & Gonzaga, A. (Producer). (1930). *Lábios sem Beijos*. Brazil.
- Mauro, H. (Director) & Gonzaga, A. (Producer). (1933). *Ganga Bruta*. Brazil.
- Mendes, O. (Director) & Santos, C. (Producer). (1933). *Onde a terra acaba*. Brazil.
- Medina, J. (Director) & Rossi, G. (Producer). (1919). *Exemplo Regenerador*. Brazil.
- Medina, J. (Director). (1922). *Do Rio a São Paulo para casar*. Brazil.
- Namuth, H. (Director). (1951). *Jackson Pollock 51*. USA.
- Oitica, H. (Director). (1972). *Agripina é Roma Manhatan*. USA.
- Oliveira, A. L. (Director). (1969). *Meteorango Kid, o Herói Intergalático* | *Meteorango Kid, the Intergalactic Hero*. Brazil.
- Pape, L. (Director). (1974). *Carnival in Rio*. Brazil.
- Peixoto, M. (Director and Producer). (1931). *Limite* | *Limit*. Brazil.
- Pereira dos Santos, N. (Director and Producer). (1955). *Rio 40 Graus* | *Rio 100 Degrees F*. Brazil.
- Pereira dos Santos, N. (Director and Producer). (1957). *Rio Zona Norte*. Brazil.
- Pereira dos Santos, N. (Director and Producer) & Trelles, D. (Producer). (1961). *Mandacaru vermelho*. Brazil.
- Pereira dos Santos, N. (Director) & Barreto, L. C.; Richers, H.; Trelles, D. (Producer). (1963). *Vidas Secas* | *Barren Lives*. Brazil.
- Person, S. (Director) & Gouvêa, R. M. (Producer). (1965). *São Paulo Sociedade Anônima*. Brazil.
- Resnais, A. (Director) & Braunberger, P. (Producer). (1948). *Van Gogh*. France.
- Richter, H. (Director). (1921). *Rhythmus 21*. Germany.
- Richter, H. (Director). (1923). *Rhythmus 23*. Germany.
- Richter, H. (Director). (1925). *Rhythmus 25*. Germany.
- Richter, H. (Director). (1926). *Filmstudie* | *Film Study*. Germany.
- Richter, H. (Director). (1928). *Vormittagsspuk* | *Ghosts Before Breakfast*. Germany.
- Rocha, G. (Director). (1959). *Pátio*. Brazil.
- Rocha, G. (Director) & Schindler, R.; Braga N. (Producer). (1962). *Barravento*. Brazil.
- Rocha, G. (Director) & Mendes, L. A. (Producer). (1964). *Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol* | *Black God, White Devil*. Brazil.
- Rocha, G. (Director and Producer) & Barreto, L. C.; Diegues, C.; Reis, W. R. Viana, Z. (Producer). (1967). *Terra em transe* | *Entranced Earth*. Brazil.
- Rocha, G. (Director). (1977). *Di Cavalcanti*. Brazil.
- Ruttman, W. (Director). (1927). *Berlin, Sinfonie einer Großstadt* | *Berlin, Symphony of a Great City*. Germany.
- Saraceni, P. C. (Director) & Freitas, E. S. (Producer). (1962). *Porto das caixas*. Brazil.
- Saraceni, P. C. (Director) & Fioriani, M. (Producer). (1964). *O desafio* | *The Dare*. Brazil.
- Sganzerla, R. (Director and Producer) & Reis, J. A.; Cordeiro, J. C. (Producers) (1968). *O bandido da luz vermelha* | *The red light bandit*. Brazil.
- Weine, R. (Director) & Pommer, E.; Meinert, R. (Producer). (1920). *Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari* | *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*. Germany.
- Vertov, D. (Director). (1929). *Chelovek s kinoapparatom* | *Man with a Movie Camera*. URSS.
- Visconti, E. (Director and Producer). (1970). *Os monstros do Babaloo* | *The Babaloo monsters*. Brazil.

Dutch Abstract

Deze doctoraats thesis bespreekt de relatie tussen cinema en beeldende kunst in Brazilië, met een focus op schilderkunst. De kern van het onderzoek ligt in het achterhalen van de auteurs' beweegredenen via een analyse van diens kunstwerken en films. Daartoe legt het conceptuele aspect van de studie zich toe op intergerelateerde begrippen als abstractie, expressie en het experimentele, noties die het begrip van moderne en avant-garde kunst en cinema kritisch onderschrijven. Deze studie verbindt zich er ook toe fenomenologische benaderingen van de werkelijkheid door kunstenaars en filmmakers te interpreteren. Op fenomenologische wijze bestudeer ik de gekozen motieven van de betreffende artiesten door middel van een beoordeling van hun selectieprocessen van specifieke expressieve leidraden in schilderijen, installaties en bewegend beeld. Deze benadering van esthetiek vindt zijn oorsprong in de filosofie van moderne kunst door Maurice Merleau-Ponty, vooral in de drie essays *Cézanne's Doubt* (1945), *Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence* (1952) en *Eye and Mind* (1961). In die teksten bespreekt de filosoof de expressieve relatie tussen auteurs en hun werk, evenals het onderscheid tussen de klassieke en moderne schilderkunst, en moderne schilderkunst als uitdrukking van het denken. De richtvragen zijn de volgende: als de Westerse kunst paradigma's heeft veranderd in de schilderkunst, in welke zin dialogueert de filmkunst dan met die veranderingen? Hoe treedt de notie van expressie in moderne en avant-gardistische schilderkunst in dialoog met moderne en avant-gardistische cinema? Hoe hebben Braziliaanse kunstenaars en filmmakers vooruitgang geboekt met betrekking tot moderne en avant-gardistische kunst en cinema? Volgens het vooropgestelde doel van dit proefschrift bepalen deze vragen de theoretische en methodologische bespreking van de eerste vier hoofdstukken, evenals de analyse van de visuele werken en films in de hoofdstukken vijf tot en met zeven. Cinema wordt gelijkwaardig geïnterpreteerd als schilderkunst (Le Grice, 1977). Om dit te motiveren in de hoofdstukken toegewijd aan filmanalyse beschouw ik films als gelijkwaardig aan schilderijen en visuele kunst die afgeleid werd van schilderexperimenten. De eerste van dergelijke films is het paradigmatische *Limite | Limit* (1931) van Mário Peixoto, de enige avant-gardistische film gemaakt in Brazilië in de jaren twintig en dertig en toch nooit vernoemd door de modernistische beweging. Peixoto's enige film wordt hier bestudeerd samen met drie schilderijen van Tarsila do Amaral, in aanvulling op de enige film van Fernand Léger, *Ballet*

Mécanique (1924), die op gelijkaardige wijze in abstractie geaard is. Mijn studie situeert *Limite* op het raakvlak tussen de Europese avant-garde, abstracte cinema en het Braziliaanse modernisme. Bovendien onderzoekt dit proefschrift de Braziliaanse avant-garde, moderne kunst en cinema in de jaren vijftig en zestig op gelijkaardige wijze. In deze mate brengt dit onderzoek abstractie samen in schilderkunst, installaties en de participatieve kunstwerken van Lygia Clark, Lygia Pape en Hélio Oiticica in tandem met de moderne Braziliaanse cinema, met name de films van Glauber Rocha (de leidende filmmaker van de *Cinema Novo* beweging) en Ozualdo Candeias (afkomstig van de *Cinema Marginal*-beweging). De volgende moderne films werden geanalyseerd in dit onderzoek: *Pátio* (1959) en *Terra em Transe* | *Entranced Earth* (1967) van Glauber Rocha, en *A margem* | *The Margin* (1967) van Ozualdo Candeias.