

Coosje van Bruggen, and Valentine Perfume explodes with love

bullient proclamation of love in the Serralves parkland. Its carefully controlled ardour makes it possible to ignore. But *Valentine Perfume's* seeming spontaneity is deceptive. It only emerged after a period of trial and error. The artists struggled to produce a model of a sculpture for the large entrance of the Italian pavilion at the 1997 Venice Biennale. At that stage, they knew it would be based on a perfume bottle solution only came, however, when Oldenburg began working a variation of the model as a perfume bottle gift for van Bruggen, transforming the principal elements into heart-shaped forms. The sculpture came together — but only by balancing the perfume bottle on the bulb in the most precarious manner imaginable.

in a gravity-defying dance with each other. The bottle appears to be on the point of falling off the bulb beneath, and yet somehow these two tilting performers retain their poise. The striations running across their surfaces, made by cutting the expanded polystyrene slabs with a hot wire, give them an almost geological sense of texture. They look like continents caught up in an unstable yet exultant relationship.

As if to make *Valentine Perfume* even more ecstatic, the small heart-shaped nozzle at the top of the bottle emits a white spray. It streams upwards to the trees and sky, unfurling like a delicate, wind-blown banner that affirms the exuberance of love.

● Down Liquidamber Lane: Sculpture in a Park, Coosje van Bruggen and Valentine Perfume

Forever samba

EXHIBITIONS Brazil has one of the hottest art scenes on the planet. **John Russell Taylor** joins the party

Any faintly art-oriented European visiting Brazil will be struck by how much art there is around — and how little we know about it. For once this is no bad thing: the artists have such an eager market at home they have little need for us tourists. All the same, globalisation is not to be resisted, and little by little some of the more advanced artists have been turning up in Europe.

The *Century City* show at Tate Modern earlier this year picked Rio as one of its global art capitals, selecting the years 1950-64 as the crucial moment. This year at the Venice Biennale two major figures of the current avant garde, Ernesto Neto and Tunga, are featured. And for once London, so often laggard in the promotion of cutting-edge art from abroad, does not have so much to be ashamed of: in the Sixties two leading avant-gardists of the day, Mira Schendel and Sergio Camargo, had their earliest European showings at the Signals Gallery.

Still, there is so much to learn and, usually, so little chance of learning it. But help is at hand. Last year in Sao Paulo, Latin America's biggest art exposition, *Rediscovery*, embraced all aspects of Brazilian art from primitive to post-modern. This year much of it comes to Britain, albeit in bits and pieces. In October, Oxford, Cambridge and London will host shows with a Brazilian theme. Meanwhile, at the Museum of Modern Art, Oxford, there is *Experiment Experiencia*.

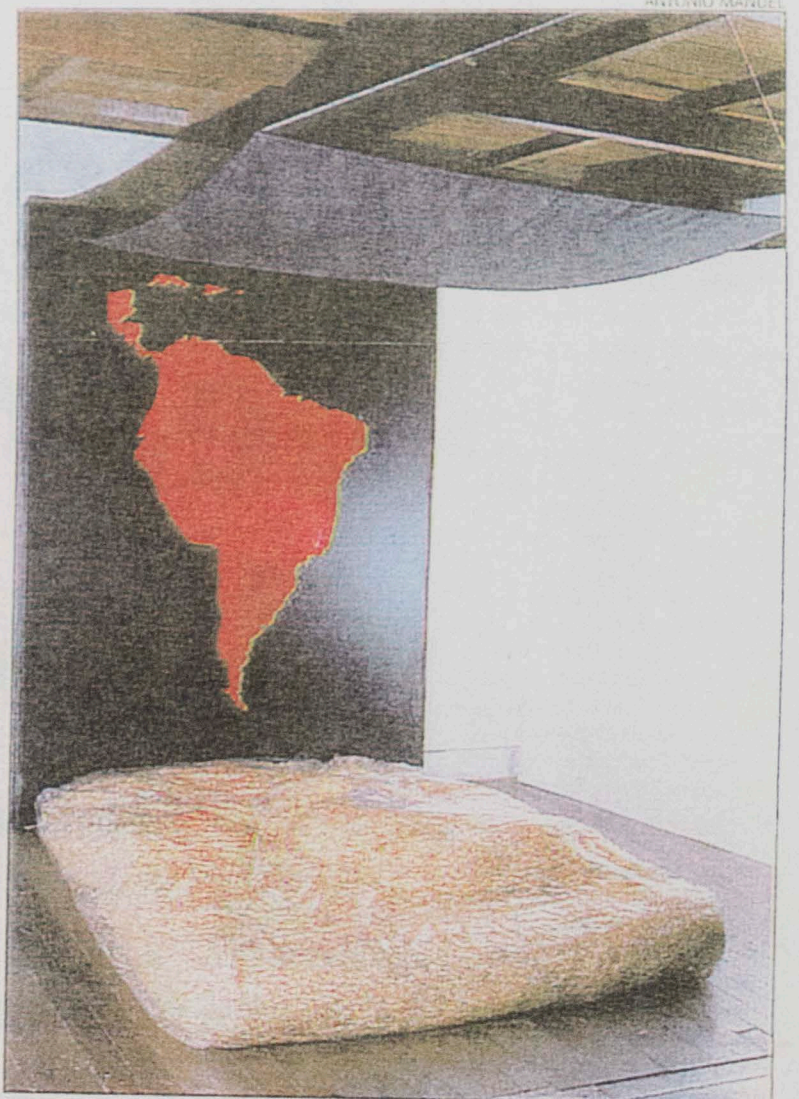
It is a bold move. Far from easing us in by way of the familiar, the organisers have elected to jump the most advanced art on us first. Right at the beginning are Helio Oiticica's *Parangolés*, cape-like fabric forms in brilliant colours. One is invited not only to admire them, but to put them on and move around as wearing them imperatively dictates. Nearby is António Manuel's *Soy loco por ti*, a bed of straw with a black fabric backing and a toggle hanging down in front. Pull the toggle and the black backing rises, canopy-like, to reveal another black sheet with a map of Latin America cut into it, which pulses scarlet.

Both these works date from the Sixties, and the beginning of this phase of Brazilian experimental art with the so-called Neo-Concrete group. In fact, as it gradually emerges, the show covers three distinct generations, though each evolves out of the one before, and at least one figure, Lygia Pape, spans all three.

Pape is probably best known for her *Divisor* of 1968, photographically represented here, which consisted of a piece of white cloth 20 metres square, with slits cut in it through which heads projected while those beneath moved this way and that, individually or collectively, to create an extraordinary effect of human vitality and diversity. Also, in a large glass case, is Jose Damasceno's *The Next Presage*, in which a human dummy is slung like a very taut hammock in the middle of the space, supported by dozens of pure white cords. Nearby, on a wall, hangs an untitled soft sculpture by Ernesto Neto, currently the darling of Venice, which looks as though a painting by Matta or Wifredo Lam has sprung into three-dimensional life.

It also sets the mind racing through vague recollections of earlier South American Surrealism, or the Magic Realism of much recent Latin literature, which has specialised in giving the essentially implausible a local habitation and a name. The show is a roller-coaster ride through the psyche of a nation, as discomposing as it is exhilarating. And just round the corner, at the Ashmolean, is the present touring venue for Ana-Maria Pacheco's latest prints and the large sculptural group she made during her National Gallery residency.

Pacheco is our own resident Brazilian — resident to such effect that sometimes one forgets she is Brazilian. But in the context of Brazil-in-Oxford she is unmistakably in her element.



António Manuel's *Crazy for You*, a symphony in wood, cloth and straw



LATE OPENING

WEDNESDAY, SATURDAY AND SUNDAY UNTIL 9PM

Vermeer AND THE DELFT SCHOOL

UNTIL 16 SEPTEMBER

ERNST & YOUNG NATIONAL GALLERY