



Experiencia Art in Brazil 1958 - 2000 at the Museum of Modern Art in Oxford

Pictures: Andy Cooper

Artistic riches of Brazil

You can be a passive observer at the latest exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in Oxford. Or you can interact with several of the exhibits — the choice is yours. Like so many of MOMA's shows, *Experiment Experiencia — Art in Brazil 1958-2000* gives us a chance to involve ourselves with the work.

This dynamic exhibition, which embodies the very spirit of Brazil, displays the work of 18 artists, many showing in Britain for the first time. The pieces were selected from a far larger show in Brazil by the exhibition's curator Astrid Brown, who sees them as work which reflect lived experience (*experiencia*), borne out of a move away from the art of geometric abstraction seen in the early 1950s.

She says they offer a more organic way of working that often relies on the viewer's physical participation to give it meaning. To this end, the museum has several works together in what can loosely be described as an interactive area. It is here that we can pull up the black blind that hangs within Antonio Manuel's installation *I am crazy for you* (1969), and expose a reproduction of Latin America which acts as a backdrop for the bed of straw below. Unless the viewer is prepared to act and move the black curtain, they will miss the symbolic picture of Latin America. They will miss even more if they don't lie on the bed. The artist says this work sums up the passion and feeling he has about Brazil, and that the straw bed is for people to lie on, and feel safe, as we did when we curled up in sweetly smelling hay as children.

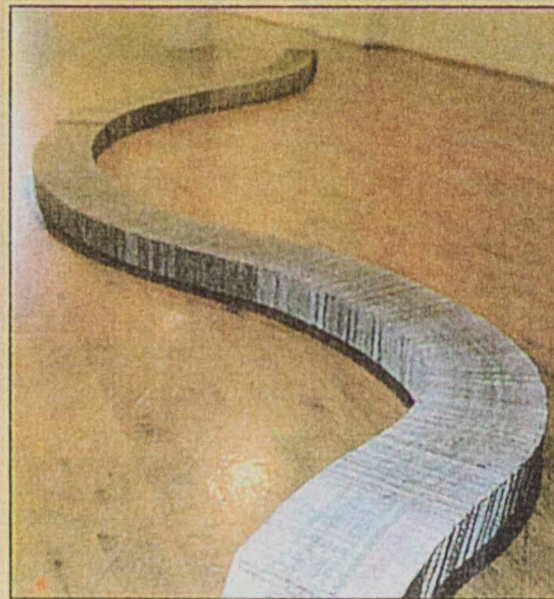
In the same room, a video shows films of people dancing. This video becomes our guide to other works within the room, namely a collection of brightly coloured gowns and capes, created by the late Helio Oiticica which the museum is happy for us to try on. Just as we are encouraged to dance a little too while wearing them and so bring them to life.

In Oiticica's work, colour is the primary structural element from which all changes take place, from structure to light, from light to experience, and on to the body and from the body to life. He was both artist and academic with a great social conscience who chose to live along side Rio's slum district. He became increasingly concerned with issues of community and cultural performances.

His Parangoles, as they are called, were made to be worn or held up and used in conjunction with the human body to help us appreciate the fusion between art and life.



Marisa Abate and paper dress



All the One Hundreds by Jac Leirner

Astrid sees these exhibits as having great historical significance, as they reveal a transition from two-dimensional to three-dimensional art and on to things we wear before Brazilian art moved on yet again,

this time towards the diverse sculptures created more recently, which are displayed in MOMA's upper gallery.

"Oiticica wanted to make art accessible. He also wanted us to see the connections," she explained, adding that one of the things that excites her about these works is the artist's willingness to try different materials.

"Take *Cortina de Macas*, the piece made from fresh apples which will slowly change during the exhibition as decay sets in. This was created just five years ago by Lygia Pape, an artist who is now 70," she said.

Then there's the black nylon net used to form Carmela Gross's *A Negra*, which came out of the 1970s, made partly as a celebration of all the positive aspects that came over with the slaves. This powerful piece was made to be moved to different sights, which means that MOMA staff may well change its position from time to time as the artist would have wished. This work is not figurative, yet you get the feeling a figure is about to come out from under all that black nylon net which gives the piece such an enormous presence.

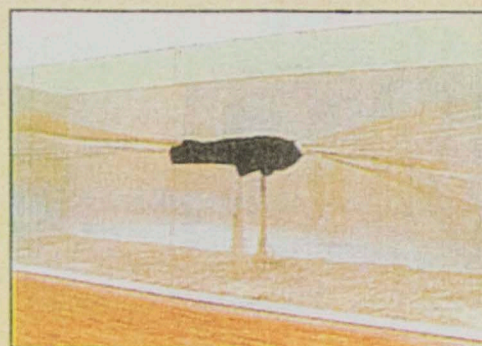
One of Astrid's main aims when putting the show together was to give the viewer a chance to take a journey. And not towards a central Brazilian aesthetic, because she doesn't believe that exists. She sees it as a journey of experimentation which is by no means over.

The director of the museum, Andrew Nairne, says the artists give a kind of energy to their work which crosses over and out into real life. He says the work demands attention: "We could read all the catalogues in the world and never completely get to the bottom of it. These works are hugely impressive. They set their own agenda."

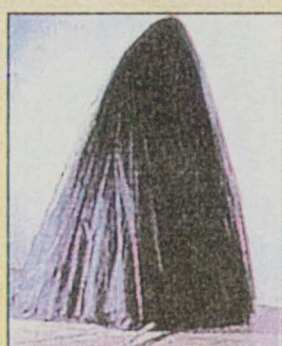
To complement the show (on until October 21), there will be free gallery talks every Thursday at 6.15pm. There will also be a symposium on October 1 in Cafe MOMA to discuss modern Brazilian art, organised in collaboration with the Centre for Brazilian Studies. There will also be workshops for young people this month, detailed on the museum's website www.moma.org.uk.

In October, the Ashmolean Museum continues the Brazilian theme with *Opulence and Devotion*, an exhibition of Brazilian Baroque Art, and *Acts of Faith, Contemporary Brazilian Photography*, curated by the Pitt Rivers Museum. Both will be at the Ashmolean from October 25.

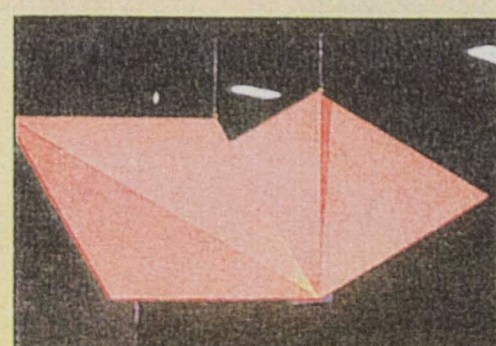
Helen Peacocke



The Next Omen (Experiment on the Visibility of a Dynamic Substance) by José Damasceno, 1997



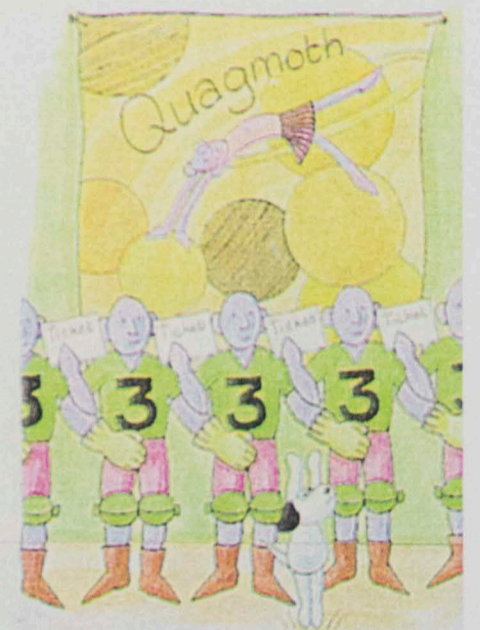
Left, Negress by Carmela Gross, 1988



Right, Spatial Relief by Helio Oiticica, 1959

Eureka

Our weekly brain-teaser by master puzzler Chris Maslank. See next week for the solution.



Drawings: Linda Ben

It is the first anniversary of the formation of the Zircon zargo team. Each player, being a clone, secretly buys each and every one of the other players' ticket to Quagmoth, a Revolutionary Ballet of The Spheres, except for the goalkeeper who, being forgetful, does not buy any. As a result, 1,183 dinglies are spent.

How many men are there in a zargo team and how much are the tickets?

Solution to last week's poet's puzzle

The disguised title of the poem was:

PRETTY FLOWER

For our younger readers



Nipper dreams of founding a ballet. Which of these silhouettes corresponds to the picture of Nippy?

Solution to last week's grub puzzle

Only grubs D and A can make their way out of the pot.

Comments to eureka@puzzlemaster.co.uk

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