

# Lygia Pape na Santa Úrsula: Por uma Biopolítica Afirmativa da Pedagogia Artística na Ditadura Militar

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**Resumo:** Este artigo analisa a pedagogia artística de Lygia Pape na Santa Úrsula durante a ditadura militar com foco em seu compromisso com a formação de sentidos e consciência social. Isso chama a atenção para os aspectos biopolíticos do ensino de Pape ao engajar seus alunos em uma trajetória diferente da “modernização autoritária” propagada pela ditadura.

**Palavras-chave:** Lygia Pape, Pedagogia Artística, Biopolítica, Ditadura Militar.

## Lygia Pape at Santa Úrsula: Toward an Affirmative Biopolitics of Artistic Pedagogy in the Brazilian Military Dictatorship

**Abstract:** This article analyzes the artistic pedagogy of Lygia Pape at Santa Úrsula during the military dictatorship focusing on her commitment to educating her students' senses and social awareness. This draws attention to the biopolitical aspects of Pape's teaching as she engaged her students on a different trajectory than the “authoritarian modernization” propagated by the dictatorship.

**Keywords:** Lygia Pape, Artistic Pedagogy, Biopolitics, Brazilian Military Dictatorship.

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**Photo 1**

Lygia Pape's students at Santa Úrsula working with a house model. Photograph Marcia Sá Cavalcante Schuback

This photograph (fig 1) from the late 1970s shows a group of architecture students at Santa Úrsula University in Rio de Janeiro building a miniature house model. They have bound sticks to form the house's structure and made a roof of straw. In the foreground lies a wet clump of clay which the students are applying to reinforce the wall. The students are taught an artisan building technique with a long history of use in the Brazilian countryside and, due to urbanization, in low-income communities or "favelas" in the major cities. This photograph thus also highlights the main pedagogical ideas of Brazilian artist Lygia Pape (1927-2004), who taught classes in architecture at Santa Úrsula in the 1970s and 1980s, such as an emphasis on handwork, an interest in local building traditions, and the sensitization of materiality and space.

Today, Pape has acquired fame as a key figure in the Brazilian constructivist avant-garde. Her artistic career, starting with Grupo Frente and Neoconcretism in the 1950s and thereafter developing towards installation art, video art, and performances in urban space, has been a topic for exhibitions and academic publications in Brazil and internationally. The present article

engages with Pape's teaching at Santa Úrsula that occurred during the AI-5 period of the Brazilian military dictatorship, which had suspended habeas corpus for political crimes and closed the National Congress. Pape said that it was her experience of spending months in solitary confinement, where the military police detained her on accusations that, to date, remain unclear, which convinced her to apply for a teaching position (PAPE in MATTAR, 2003, p.82). I will investigate Pape's attempt to put her artistic competence into pedagogic practice focusing on her long-term commitment to educating her students' senses and social awareness. This draws attention to biopolitical aspects of Pape's teaching as she, in my view, engaged her students on a different trajectory than the "authoritarian modernization" (e.g. SCHNEIDER 1972; OLIVEIRA & GOMES 2021) propagated by the military regime. The article, therefore, develops an understanding of the political dimension of Brazilian art under the dictatorship that differs from previous accounts mainly focusing on ephemeral performances and aesthetic guerrilla attacks that transgressed censorship or, in other ways, upset the social order (CALIRMAN 2012; FREITAS 2013).

### **Biopolitics: Michel Foucault in Brazil**

French philosopher Michel Foucault elaborated his notion of biopolitical governance in his 1974 lecture on social medicine at Instituto de Medicina Social da Universidade do Estado da Guanabara (IMS) in Rio de Janeiro. While European philosophers have overlooked the importance of the Brazilian context, closer scrutiny suggests that he chose his lecture topic with care. In the 1960s and 1970s, Foucault lectured several times in Brazil and was also put under surveillance due to his close ties to the political opposition (ROCHA & DE GUIMARAENS 2015, p. 37). At the time of his lectures at IMS, Foucault reflected on this situation in a letter, as he wrote "it has become necessary to sustain a historically coded discourse, [which is] the only possible one. The situation [in Brazil] has worsened significantly since last year" (Ibid, p.21). This makes it tempting to read Foucault's first international lecture on biopolitics as a coded critique against the Brazilian dictatorship, where he, in line with his genealogical methodology, used historical material to work through contemporary issues.

In his lecture, Foucault (2002, p.134-156) analyzes the functions of social medicine (now known as public health) and urban planning as biopolitical

instruments for regulating the circulation of natural elements (water, air, etcetera) and the population. This exemplifies Foucault's understanding of biopolitical power as "productive" rather than repressive, as these reforms effectively managed to diminish the spread of endemics and raised the living standard in urban environments. However, Foucault claims that the historical entanglement of social medicine and urban planning also resulted in a novel view of poverty and contributed to the fear of the potentially revolting proletariat. This was used as a backdrop, he argues, "to organize the urban corporate body in a coherent and homogenous way, to govern it by a single, well-regulated authority" (Ibid p.143). While poverty earlier had been comprehended as an integral part of the urban ecosystem that secured the availability of low-priced manual labor, the modern biopolitical rationality that developed in Europe in the 18<sup>th</sup> century established the image of poorer areas as a health threat to the general population. The demolition of these areas was legitimized as a surgical procedure necessary for sustaining public health, which interestingly also characterized the Brazilian military regime's "hygienic" approach to the phenomenon of urban poverty in the 1960s and 1970s (PRADO VALLADARES, 2019; OLIVEIRA & GOMES, 2021). While Pape probably did not attend Foucault's lecture, it is noteworthy that she addressed similar concerns in her teaching by focusing on the existential and poetic values of a spatial organization associated with marginalized groups.

Whereas modern biopolitics is often understood to produce a normative individuality through disciplinary techniques for monitoring and regulating a given population, *affirmative biopolitics* has been introduced to explain oppositional practices within a biopolitical field. This article uses the term in line with the philosopher Roberto Esposito (2008, see also TIERNEY 2016), for whom affirmative biopolitics is said to engender forms of life with a potential to resist or transform modes of dominance. My main argument is thus that Pape as a university teacher opposed the uniformization of the urban environment that the military regime and its local authorities in Rio de Janeiro sought to realize. Instead of identifying minoritarian ways of living as erroneous or threatening to the general public, she encouraged her students to acknowledge these as vital for both architecture and life.

## Pape at Santa Ursula: Becoming Human in the Face of the Urban Poor

From 1974 to 1984, Pape taught the courses Plástica I-IV and Metodologia visual as part of the architecture program at Santa Úrsula. This article focuses on Plástica, as this was the main course and the one my informants most often mentioned.<sup>2</sup> While “plastic” in art commonly refers to modeling in three dimensions, Pape’s teaching stressed its connection to sight and, ultimately, to a mode of existence. On top of a paper that deals with the basic foundations for her course, Pape (n.d., “Universidade Santa Úrsula, Vice-Reitoria Acadêmica Departamento: Análise e Representação da Forma, Curso de Arquitetura Disciplina: Plástica I”) scribbled “Creativity: to feel + to think (space),” followed by an arrow pointing at the phrase “a critical vision of architectonic space.” (I) The same document contains a rough plan for the course of Plástica I, focusing on general themes such as crafting materials, theory, and excursions. At the bottom of the page, Pape wrote, “The complete human: five senses + concepts,” which suggests that she sought to affect her students at a sensorial and existential level.

Pape’s teaching aims resemble those at the Bauhaus (MARTINS 2015, p.365), which similarly pursued what art historian Julia Secklehner (2019) calls a “becoming human” through an emphasis on multisensory perception and meditative awareness. Pape was certainly aware of the Bauhaus and had possibly been exposed to some of its pedagogic exercises earlier in her career (NELSON, 2019). However, a closer reference to her was the Neoconcrete critique of a mechanical approach to human subjectivity as “a machine among other machines” (GULLAR ET AL, 2013, p.71) that the group substituted for a phenomenological understanding of eyesight as “a human tool to apprehend the world and surrender to it.” (Ibid, p.72). While Pape emphasized a similar approach as a teacher and cautioned against the instrumentalization of architecture in market-oriented engineering, her exercises undermined the Neoconcrete dualism between humans and machines. The philosopher Marcia Sá Cavalcante Schuback (2018) draws attention to this when speaking about an excursion with a city bus that she did as Pape’s student in the 1970s:

2 This article is based on in-depth interviews with six of Pape’s former colleagues and students at Santa Úrsula conducted in 2016-2017. These interviews were in Portuguese, lasted between 45 and 60 minutes, and centered on the informants’ memories of having experienced Pape’s classes. While these interviews do not provide a representative account of Pape’s teaching, they indicate some of her basic pedagogic ideas and exercises.

Lygia [Pape] told us [...] to meet at the end station of the bus line Urca-Lins that binds together the lovely and beautiful Urca district in the south zone of Rio de Janeiro with Lins, a suburb in the city's northern zone. This trajectory takes around one and a half hours to travel. The socio-economic difference between these urban vicinities is pronounced. The elegance between the Urca area, which contains the Sugarloaf Mountain – the famous tourist attraction – and a military academy and bourgeois villas, contrasts with Lins, a working-class area surrounded by favelas where poverty is visible. We met at seven o'clock at the bus station where the line starts and ends. [Pape's] exercise was for us to direct our gazes toward the lines that the rooftops formed against the receding sky. Lygia wanted us to read the city set out from the "threshold" that emerged from the [rooftops of] skyscrapers, improvised houses, favela shafts, and the sky rather than focus on these constructions. She wanted us to see how these lines developed during the bus trip [and how they together formed] our "travel line" that was supposed to turn the gaze towards itself (CAVALCANTE SCHUBACK 2018).

By abstracting lines from the stream of impressions passing outside the bus window, Pape's exercise, as recalled by Cavalcante Schuback, established a perspective on the Rio de Janeiro cityscape that interlinked the human gaze with the machinic rhythm of accelerations and breaks. Moreover, Cavalcante Schuback reveals how the lines formed a "threshold" between the buildings and the sky, as well as between poor and affluent neighborhoods. She describes the bus trip as a circular movement connecting the center and periphery, which translates the horizontal trajectory through the city into the vertical and hierarchical parameter of social class. This established a topological and kinetic perspective linked to the phenomenological world of a working-class commuter for whom class did not appear as an abstract category but as a movement in space. In this sense, teaching architecture was, for Pape, synonymous with working through the sensory and geometric form of urban segregation from an embodied perspective associated with marginalized groups.

The significance of class is also apparent in an exercise described by Mario Fraga (2017), who studied Pape's pedagogical ideas before succeeding her as the Plástica teacher at Santa Úrsula in 1984. Fraga remembers a learning activity where students analyzed a specific urban area through interviews and site visits. They were told to survey the architecture of buildings and observe the ephemeral dynamics of the streets. The latter was also a focus for Pape's film *Espaços Imantados* (Magnetised Spaces) from 1968, which documented and appropriated the "magnetization" of urban space enacted by street vendors and performance artists (OSORIO, 2006, p. 582-583). Particularly, Fraga remembers a class that focused on a city park in the southern zone of Rio de Janeiro:

We met [homeless] people [...] and spoke with them about their inhabited spaces. [I remember] one person who walked around with many bags which he opened at night to fold out a type of protection that provided him with a place to sleep, and another who had set up a more permanent construction with chairs and even a television. [We learned that] many had a house in the periphery of Rio, but so as not to have to pay for the train- or bus ticket home, they slept [in the park] and then woke up to go to work the next day (FRAGA 2017).

This exercise, in which Pape's architect students encountered perspectives of homeless individuals, made a Rio de Janeiro city park emerge as a vexed network of stories and movements that revealed the hardship imposed on the urban working class. There is a similarity with the culture geographer Doreen Massey's (2005, p. 9) well-rehearsed theory of space as a multitude of "stories-so-far," which can potentially undermine the official discourse in city planning. Indeed, by zooming in on the issue of homelessness, Pape's lesson problematized the military dictatorship's propaganda of an "economic miracle" used to legitimize its hold of power. Whereas the Brazilian economy grew significantly in the early 1970s, the absence of social reforms quickly widened income gaps. Pape encouraged her students to acknowledge the subaltern stories about urban spaces that conveyed the rear end of the so-called economic miracle. While linking with the teaching aim of humanizing the architect, Pape clearly no longer agreed with the Neoconcrete proposal of "surrendering" to the world rather than transforming it. Instead, her students were meant to understand the constructive solutions to the problem of homelessness as integral to and possibly even as an inspiration for their future architectural practice.

### Anthropophagic Teaching Strategies

In the 1970s and 1980s, Pape was not just a teacher but also a student of philosophy. The title of her MA thesis *Catiti Catiti: na Terra dos Brasis* (1980), comes from a Tupi poem reproduced in the writer Oswald de Andrade's (in)famous anthropophagic manifest from 1928. Like many Brazilian artists at the time, Pape was inspired by anthropophagism, defined by art historian Sérgio B. Martins as "a symbolic avant-garde procedure whereby foreign cultural references were not to be simply opposed, but rather internalised and redeployed by local artists and thinkers." (MARTINS, 2013, p. 51) In her thesis, Pape (1980) discusses anthropophagy from the perspective of art critic and theorist Mário Pedrosa, who emer-

ged as a leading figure in the Brazilian modern art scene in the 1950s and 1960s. However, in the 1970s, when Pedrosa lived exiled in Chile, he had lost hope in the emancipatory potential of modern art, which he believed had ossified into a status marker for the cosmopolitan elite (PEDROSA, 2015, p. 551-559). At the outset of her thesis, Pape emphasized this shift by quoting a passage from Pedrosa's article "Discurso aos tupiniquins ou nambás" from 1977, where he draws attention to the "[peripheral] areas with its artisan workshops and insufficiently paid labor that outlines the anonymous struggle for creation, for authentic inventions, [and] for collectivity." (PEDROSA IN PAPE, 1980, p.2) This encouraged Brazilian artists to distance themselves from European art, Pape argued, and transform their practices in dialogue with local references. She further elaborates on this in an analysis of the spatiality of favela shafts:

[The constructions in these communities often constitute] an all-in-all space [*quarto-tudo*] or, better, a space cube that changes function after quotidian events. Bedroom at night, living room during the day, corridor or kitchen, TV room or even nursery and storage [...] These constructions disturb the perspective of space in [normative] engineering (PAPE 1980, p. 60)

Pape's description of the low-income household set out from Favela da Maré, which she also visited with her students and portrayed in a super eight film. Her analysis reads as an anthropophagic view of cubic space modeled on the shaft instead of being analyzed from the perspective of European cubism, which had been a starting point for Neoconcretism. In this way, Pape also undermined the Eurocentrism of her Neoconcrete artist book *Livro da Arquitetura* (1959-1960) which contains three-dimensional models of, i.e., classicist and baroque architecture but lacks local references.

In our interview, Dinah Guimaraens gives further insight into how Pape expected her students to adopt an anthropophagic view of architecture:

When encountering the [poor Rio de Janeiro] suburbs [Pape's idea was that we] should come to grasp what made us so numb in our relationship to architecture and way of life, for example, we perceived a completely different notion of "neighborhood" than that found among us in the Rio de Janeiro elite. We were then supposed to reflect on integrating these experiences (GUIMARAENS, 2017).

In this case, Pape encouraged her students to "internalize" the spatial and existential values in favela architecture and social life as the backbone



of their architectural practices. This counterposed the institutional discrimination against the urban poor, with its vast majority of Afro-Brazilians, endorsed by the military regime in Rio de Janeiro (OLIVEIRA PIRES, 2018). In the course description of Plástica, Pape (Plástica I, n.d) stressed the importance of “poetic elements” and requested her students to discuss these departing from the excursions they had made to Rio de Janeiro peripheries. As an obligatory reading, the students were given the philosopher Gaston Bachelard’s *La Poétique de l’espace* (1957, first Portuguese edition in 1970), in which he meditates on the poetic spaces of his childhood home, a spacious villa in the picturesque French countryside. Bachelard meditates on the poetics of small spaces (the inside of drawers, the attic, etcetera) but his dreamy images of a bourgeois home contrast with the ones that Pape’s students encountered among the urban poor. Instead of negating the significance of Bachelard’s theory, Pape stressed its importance for acknowledging the spatial poetics that she meant could be observed in low-income communities in Rio de Janeiro which simultaneously undermined the epistemological privilege of his French idyll.

The main problem in applying Bachelard’s theory to the favela is that it risked aestheticizing poverty. Art historian Katarina Wadstein Macleod (2018, p.15-17) remarks that Bachelard presupposes a home devoid of violence and traumas. While Bachelard provided Pape’s students with a theory for affirming the poetics of urban poverty, it could hardly be used to account for more prosaic elements such as racial discrimination, police oppression, and domestic violence. This also actualizes a contemporary critique against the Brazilian anthropophagic movement that appropriated minoritarian forms of subjectivity linked to black and Indigenous cultures in ways that defused the artistic and political agency of these groups (e.g. CLAVO 2016, DINIZ DE MOURA, 2020). For Pape, the urban poor entered as a field of reference for a radicalized architectural practice. Yet she did little to undermine the institutional exclusion of these groups from the private university where she worked.<sup>3</sup>

3 Santa Ursula is a private university administered by the Ursuline order. It was founded in 1939 but only received university status in the 1970s. This was arguably a consequence of the educational reforms issued by the military regime in the late 1960s that emphasized the necessity for expanding Brazil’s higher education, particularly at private universities. In Rio de Janeiro, private universities represented the most significant growth of students within architecture education (BENDJOUYA GUTIERREZ 2013, p.22-25).

Nonetheless, Pape's teaching can be seen to have challenged the official discourse at the time that, in accordance with Foucault's lecture on biopolitical governance, targeted urban poverty as a sanitarian problem and a matter of the police (PRADO VALLADARES, 2019; OLIVEIRA & GOMES, 2021). In the 1970s and 1980s, the military regime's "modernization" program demolished approximately 30 000 households in the Rio de Janeiro favelas. The residents were encouraged to move to large-scale zones of public housing projects set in the peripheries such as Vila Kennedy and Vila Aliança, named in tribute to American investments in the Brazilian program for urban development (PRADO VALLARES, 2019, p.31). These projects mainly consisted of prefabricated modular blocks and, as the architect historians Maria Alice Junqueira Bastos and Ruth Verde Zein suggest (2011, p.164-165), primarily responded to the interests of the financial market as these failed to assemble a network of social institutions and public transportation. In an examination, Pape ("Questionário Plástica IV", n.d) encouraged her students to formulate a critique against this type of "mass architecture" that, in her view, "strives towards standardization and results in a visual and structural scarcity." Instead, the students were asked to sketch more "poetic" solutions for low-income households. This examination did not only test theoretical and practical knowledge but also the student's political orientation, as the "correct" answer was probably one that proposed a direction for urban development that differed from the standardized housing program of the military regime.

### **Tangible Utopias**

Despite her sociopolitical pathos, Pape seems not to have been a particularly charismatic lecturer. One of her former students describes her as distanced and absent, even somewhat "cold." (INFORMANT, 2016) Her classes were not teacher-oriented but regularly focused on the material placed at the table. "Whereas other subjects had the chairs turned towards the teacher," the same informant told me, "[Pape's classroom] consisted of a large table where we sat at tiny stools so that we faced each other. She [Pape] sat by the table, gave us some exercise, and disappeared only to return occasionally." (INFORMANT, 2016) Some students complained about the lack of orientation and support structure at Pape's classes, while others, such as Chico Cunha, appreciated what was seen as an experimental and playful pedagogical approach:

Pape gave us some material. [She could, for example,] ask you to buy barbecue sticks [...] and construct a house. Then she said no more. So, from this point, you were left on your own. Either you developed something or killed time doing nothing at all. But okay, let's say that you stand there with these instructions. What do you mean by a house? Should it have one or two floors? Or do you want me to construct an entire building from this material [Laughter]? Your mind is filled with thousand questions; in my view, her [pedagogic] method consisted of not answering them (CUNHA 2017).

Whereas students who failed to understand Pape's assignment or doubted the worth of resolving it were left behind, Cunha remembers that her classroom, at least for him, opened "a space where you could have visions, daydream and construct utopias" (CUNHA 2017). In other words, Pape's teaching revitalized his sentiment of unbounded possibilities. In his seminal study, *As universidades e o regime militar: Cultura política Brasileira e modernização autoritária* (2014), historian Rodrigo Patta Sá Motta analyses the educational reforms made by the dictatorship, which aimed at installing an authoritarian model for higher education. These set out to strengthen the authority of the teachers, who were regulated by a national system of surveillance, and diminish the democratic participation of students. Architectural education was targeted as a critical area due to its significance for the national construction industry. The regime also systematized the curriculum in ways later criticized for instrumentalizing architecture education within a market-oriented paradigm (RHEINGANTZ, 2003, 50-53; BENDJOUYA GUTIERREZ, 2013, 34-36). What Cunha describes as "utopias" could be understood as inherent in Pape's pedagogic vision of setting up a non-authoritarian learning environment where students could "daydream" rather than engage in career-focused self-discipline. In that way, she revealed to them that the military regime's program for authoritarian modernization had not yet been fully realized and that alternatives existed for those who did not wish to operate as cogs in the national construction industry.

Yet another learning activity that Pape termed "working with your hands" stressed the importance of "intuition" and stimulated a multi-sensory approach to materiality and space (PAPE, n.d. "Plástica I"). Fraga recalls an exercise where the students were told to manipulate the material with their eyes shut to gain knowledge of its tactile qualities (FRAGA, 2017). The artist Nelson Felix, who was Pape's student and after that worked as her colleague at Santa Úrsula, speaks about an exercise with similar teaching aims: "[we] went out on campus with only one material: lace. I went to the basketball court and bound the lace to the net of the two baskets

as if [these nets] were its extension. After that, I pulled these toward the court's middle, creating spatial tension" (FELIX, 2016). Pape's teaching also responded to the Neoconcrete view of form and space as "connected to existential, emotive, and affective significance" (GULLAR et al, 2013, p 71) and, in a regular assignment, she asked her students to construct or materialize their feelings of happiness and sadness. While it is possible to determine the point of tension in a net installation such as the one made by Felix, Pape's attention to feelings introduced the arbitrariness of emotional life as a potential architectural starting point. This hints at a similar suggestion of poeticizing the Brazilian construction industry (and its lack of worker rights and security measures) in Chico Buarque's famed song *Construção* (1971) on a migrant worker that constructs with "cement and tears."

#### Photo 2

Photograph of Pape's students building Casa da Sapé, 1970s. Photograph: Lygia Pape. © Projeto Lygia Pape.



Photographs of Pape's classes (fig 2) reveal exercises where students made a full-scale house with a wall structure of bamboo fortified with Eucalypt branches, bricks, and mortar. These exercises actualized the etymological root of "architect," in the Greek word *tekton* (τέκτων), which means builder, craftsman. Soviet Constructivists, an art historical point of departure for Neoconcretism, employed the term to designate what they understood as communist uses of industrial materials (GOUGH, 2005, p.72). Whereas Pape preferred natural to industrial materials, she lingered on the collective dimension of a tectonic construction. Her master thesis explored the relationship between a "constructive drive" and collectivity in dialogue with artist Hélio Oiticica's (1986, p.84) suggestion that a "general constructive will" connected Brazilian avant-garde artists

with local and popular practices. She emphasized the significance of the constructive rationality that emerged in response to economic misery and advised artists and architects to cooperate closely with the urban poor (PAPE, 1980). Particularly, Pape pointed out the communal approach to construction known in Portuguese as *mutirão* as “horizons, pregnant with possibilities.” (Ibid, p.8) The term is thought to derive from the Tupi word *motyrõ*, which designates a joint work and, possibly, the verb *picorõ*: to help. Architect historian Janice Perlman (1976, p. 205-210) points out that favela communities in Rio de Janeiro before the dictatorship had pressured the local government to invest in *mutirões* and drew media attention to this cause, which the military regime after that blocked. However, in the 1970s, the architecture group Quadras launched a social development program in Brás de Pina based on *mutirões* involving residents and architects (Ibid. p.237-238; PRADO VALLADARES, 2019, p.125). This suggests that Pape’s building exercises should not be seen as a nostalgic return to artisan building methods but meant to provide her students with the technical skills required to engage in *mutirões* and, in that way, realize community-based forms of urban development.

### Representation as Critique

At Santa Úrsula, Pape introduced “representation” as a relevant topic for architecture education. This differs from her earlier commitment as a Neoconcrete artist for whom the representative dimension of artworks was supposed to have been superseded by an appeal to the concrete and sensorial aspects of the artwork. In the 1960s and 1970s, she also worked with issues of representation as a video artist, and her films play with identities, stereotypes, and Brazilian folklore (FERREIRA, 2017). There are strong connections between her video art and teaching, as in the previously mentioned film *Favela da Maré*, a community where she also took her students. Yet another example is the film *Our Parents: ‘Fossilis’* (1974) which is composed as a montage of postcards showing stereotypes of Amerindian cultures. The original title is in English, yet it only makes sense when read by Brazilians selling the image of their “ancestors” to tourist gringos. Pape’s film pokes at the stereotypical (and misleading) representation of Indigenous culture as the origin of modern Brazilian identity, which hides the history of colonial violence imposed by the Brazilian settler state. Furthermore, *Our Parents: ‘Fossilis’* draws attention

to how the tourism industry has sold the image of Indigenous cultures as the curious and exotic remains of “primitive” cultures frozen in time.

One informant spoke to me about her memories of an exercise in which Pape asked her students to make a collage of postcards and, as in *Our Parents: 'Fossilis'*, manipulate the tourism image of Rio de Janeiro:

Everyone [...] got to choose a postcard from a newspaper stand, buy ten or twenty exemplars of the same image and, after that, make a collage. [The idea was to] experiment with the postcards and examine what happened when they were placed in different constellations. Let's say you had a postcard of Sugarloaf Mountain and put another one [with the same image] in the opposite direction. Then you could start seeing forms that have nothing to do with Sugarloaf Mountain; you see patches of color, blue and dark spots. Pape wanted to remove the eyes [of her students] from the stereotypical reading (INFORMANT 2016).

By manipulating the mass-produced stereotypes of the tourism industry into an abstract collage, Pape established a critical and poetic approach to representation. Her teaching activity reminds me of early abstractionism, which obtained abstract forms and colors from figurative drawings. Whereas Concretists and Neoconcretists argued that abstract art remained at the threshold of the sensible reality articulated in geometric art, Pape recycled its methodology and gave it meaning as a pedagogical exercise revealing the possibility (and curricular obligation) of transcending stereotypical representations of Brazilianness.

The representation of the public sphere was also the theme for the student exhibition that Pape organized at Museu de Arte Moderna, Rio de Janeiro, in 1976. This exhibition was installed at the Sala Experimental, which had recently opened and mainly focused on young artists. The student exhibition was shown parallel to Pape's solo exhibition *Eat Me: a gula ou a luxúria* in a way that explicitly linked her artistic and pedagogic practices. *Eat Me* consisted of a spatial installation focusing on the feminist theme of women as objects of male pleasure and consumption. The red lights and incense that had been installed associated the museum's exhibition space with a brothel. Several vitrines were placed in the room, some covered with black plastic and others filled with female “objects of seduction” such as lipstick, fake hair, make-up, hand mirrors, erotic literature and female nudes. Visitors were offered to buy these objects for a small sum as they heard female voices pronouncing the exhibition title *Eat Me*, which played on the Portuguese description of the sex as the male eating the women, in various languages.

Pape's installation had developed from her earlier artwork *Caixa das formigas*, shown at the Nova Objectividade Brasileira exhibition at MAM-RJ in 1967. This work consists of a glass box with living ants and a diagram with three circles placed upon a mirror. In the middle of the inner circle is a piece of meat for the ants to nibble on. The box also contained the phrase *a gula ou a luxúria* that Pape recycled for her later installation. The objects of seduction displayed in the vitrines appear to nail the female subject, similar to the piece of meat in the glass box. This suggests that the presentation of the seductive objects should not be seen as aspects of femininity but as mirroring the erotic of a patriarchal diagram in which men run around as ants craving dead meat (cf. CALIRMAN, 2014). Whereas the objects represent the deadly sins associated with male desires, Pape left the image of female identity outside of patriarchy suggestively open.

The student exhibition at Sala Experimental was titled *Sítio do sonho* and included films, conceptual art, photography, and performances (cf. CAVALCANTI, 2006, p. 295; CAVALCANTI, 2017, p.10-11). Several works dealt with the stereotypes and mythology of Rio de Janeiro, which as mentioned above was also a core topic in Pape's teaching. At the opening, the visitors were served drinks by a student dressed as the Rio de Janeiro patron St. Sebastian pierced with arrows. This performance reads as a commentary on the Catholic orientation of Santa Ursula and possibly as a covert critique of the military dictatorship. The martyrdom of St. Sebastian involved the revolt against the Roman authorities, and the image of his death, as he was tortured and beaten to death with cudgels, enabled associations to the police oppression and torture against political adversaries under the dictatorship. Another student's work proposed that the demolition of a modern building in São Paulo, an event shown as a film, should be awarded the prize for best national architecture that year. This work interlinks with the critique against modernization that was a foundation for Pape's teaching and could also be said to refute the regime's authoritarian modernization program, although in a decidedly nihilistic way. Dinah Guimaraen's work proposed to replace public sculptures in Rio de Janeiro representing white men of power with monuments of spiritual entities in the Afro-Brazilian Umbanda religion. This idea derived from an excursion that Guimaraens had done as Pape's student, where she visited a workshop producing figures and textiles used in Umbanda rituals (GUIMARAENS, 2017). She also presented a model for a sculpture of Zé Pelintra represented in Umbanda as a marginalized trickster, whom Brazilian folklore and popular culture often portray as the archetype of the carioca *malandro*.

**Photo 3**

Dinah Guimaraens, model for a sculpture of Zé Pelintra from the exhibition catalogue *Projeto para um espaço carioca*, 1978, Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro. Photograph: Lauro Cavalcanti. © Dinah Guimaraens & Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro.



In 1978 Guimaraens developed her student work into a solo exhibition, *Projeto para um espaço carioca*, also shown at the Sala Experimental of MAM-RJ. She specified her proposal for decolonizing public sculpture, suggesting replacing the first ruler of the Empire of Brazil, Pedro I, with a monument to the warrior deity Ogum and the diplomat baron Rio Branco with Eshu, considered the *orixá* of communication, particularly between the human and spiritual world. Guimaraens also proposed erecting numerous monuments of the female spiritual entity Pomba Gira as “a slow but irreversible occupation [of public space].” (GUIMARAENS, 1978 n.p.) In his review, critic and educator Frederico Morais (1978) compared Guimaraens’ project to the US pop artist Claes Oldenburg’s proposal to monumentalize

everyday objects. From today’s perspective, one also notices a resemblance to current decolonial movements such as Rhodes must Fall and Black Lives Matter, as well as similar activist movements in Brazil, that struggle against public monuments of white colonizers and slave-owners.

In contrast to Oldenburg, who understood the problem of public sculpture as a lack of communication with a public flooded with modern commodities and popular culture, the decolonial critique against historical monuments sets off from the premise that these glorify a history of colonial and racist violence. Whereas Guimaraens proposal interlinks more profoundly with the latter, it suggests the potential of appropriating the symbolic power of public sculpture to manifest the spiritual entities of Umbanda. Her work thus contradicts the racial biopolitics of the military regime that, as we have seen, identified Afro-Brazilians living in poverty as a sanitary problem to be solved by modernizing the urban environment. Instead, Guimaraens proceeds from Pape’s focus on the poetic and visual values associated with minoritarian groups to propose her project (or dream) of a decolonized public space.



## Final remarks

This article has argued for the significance of Pape's artistically informed teaching at Santa Úrsula as a strategy for undermining the authoritarian modernization that characterized the Brazilian military dictatorship. She did so by providing her students with alternatives to pursuing a career path within the large-scale national construction industry or other finance-driven programs for solving the housing issue in urban areas. Pape's teaching focused on developing her student's sensorial and emotive skills that, in her view, were vital for contemporary architecture as well as for the formation of political resistance. These aspects that Neoconcretism associated with nurturing a de-mechanized subject were to Pape closely linked to the capacity for perceiving and engaging with the hardships imposed on the urban poor and other marginalized groups that were made invisible in the regime's propaganda of an economic miracle. Whereas the dictatorship sought to foster the Brazilian population into its authoritarian model, which cannot be separated from a necropolitical drive of eliminating oppositional voices and minoritarian ways of life, Pape recognized the necessity of affirming diverging values. She made her students perceive homelessness and the precarious living situation in low-income communities as social problems but also as experiential fields that retained the means for finding more appropriate solutions. This suggests that Pape devised a career path for her students based on cooperation and respect for minoritarian ways of life in which they were affirmed rather than considered a threat to the general population. In that way, Pape's teaching responded to Foucault's critique of modern biopolitical governance that he, in his 1974 lecture at IMS, understood as attached to a discriminatory and authoritarian policing of urban space.

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