

Michael Asbury and Gilane Tawadros in conversation: Remembering Guy Brett through inIVA and the British Art Scene

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Michael Asbury: Dear Gilane, Yesterday I received an email from Alexandre Sá, inviting me to write an article on Guy Brett for a special dossier which the journal *Concinnitas* (published by the Institute of Art at the State University in Rio de Janeiro) is editing to celebrate Guy's life. As it happens, I have just submitted a long piece on Guy's writing to *Arte e Ensaios* (the journal published by the Fine Arts School at the Federal University in Rio). In the latter, I thought I could have expanded on Guy's relation with inIVA, which I mentioned but not in as much detail as it deserved. I thought this might be an opportunity to address this, especially for a Brazilian public perhaps unaware of Guy's contribution beyond the Brazilian art scene. It seems also timely as Brazilian institutions such as museums and galleries have begun addressing, even if still tentatively, the huge social/racial divide which persists in the country, a divide that has only been exacerbated under the current regime (to call it a government seems inappropriate).

In light of this, and given that you were inIVA's director at the time I met Guy, and indeed not so long after, kindly gave me the opportunity to organise an event on Hélio Oiticica (it was a cd-rom launch which dates it somewhat!), with Guy, Oriana Baddeley, Chris Dercon, Luciano Figueiredo, Katia Maciel and Milton Machado, I wonder whether you would be interested in collaborating with me through an email conversation on Guy's relation with inIVA, the legacies of Stuart Hall and what today would probably be described as the beginning of the decolonial turn in the arts in the UK.

Katia Maciel, who produced that cd-rom at the N-IMAGEM in Rio, went on to edit a book with Guy's writing on Brazilian artists which came out, if I'm not mistaken, around the time inIVA published 'Carnival of Perception', both beautiful collections of Guy's writing. I believe Katia is also contributing to the dossier, so will most likely refer to her own meeting with Guy at that and other occasions. Our conversation will therefore reveal 'the other (side of the) story', so to speak.

Gilane Tawadros: Dear Michael, Thank you so much for your lovely email and invitation. I would be delighted to participate in a conversation as you propose.

MA: That's fantastic! I'm looking forward to hearing your thoughts on the kind of relation and collaboration that existed between Guy Brett and inIVA. For me as a young aspiring scholar in the 1990s there seemed to be, at that time, an admirable, almost symbiotic, relation between the work of

the art critic and inIVA. I should mention too, that within that connection the journal *Third Text* and the monumental work of Stuart Hall seemed all to merge for me. Today, I am now the age Guy was then, I understand that things might not have been as simple as that. If I'm not mistaken Guy was working with inIVA at the time (around late 1997 or early 98) organising the estate of Li Yuan-chia in light of a book to be published on his work and the curation of an exhibition. I cannot begin to imagine how complex the articulations between the individual (Guy as one of the attributed guardians of the estate) and inIVA as an institution might have been. Looking back, it seems clear that inIVA was far more than a library and a research resource centre. Its role in publishing and creating partnerships with established institutions had been crucial.

Forgive me if I sound a little self-indulgent, but I think before we move on to discuss Guy's work and its relation to inIVA, I should perhaps describe how I came across inIVA and through it, met Guy. I think it might be interesting to juxtapose the quite distinct perspectives of the 'regular punter', my own, as the occasional visitor to inIVA's library, and yours, the organisation's director.

I had arrived in London with the expectation of pursuing a PhD, after a few years in Liverpool studying art history on a masters course that Prof David Thistlewood ran in partnership with Tate. Arriving in London my intention had been to compare the articulation of politics within the 1960s avant-gardes in the UK, France and Brazil. I had already come across Oiticica's 1992-94 retrospective exhibition catalogue at the University of Liverpool library, which had intrigued me very much, so I must have been already aware of Guy Brett as a British art critic writing on Brazilian art. I had a few letters of acceptance or interest from two or three universities in London but no offer of funding at that point. My knowledge of post-colonial theory was similar to my financial standing: virtually inexistent! I signed-on and began attending lectures in several places deferring enrolment which would entail the payment of fees which I could not afford. It was in this precarious capacity that I ended up following Jean Fisher's inspiring series of lectures which she delivered to joint cohorts from Middlesex University and The Royal College of Art. Documenta X, curated by Catherine David, had just opened and although I had no means of going to Kassel (I could hardly afford the underground fare to Cockfosters), Jean had brought it up at her lectures focusing particularly on Oiticica's display. During cigarette breaks, Jean had offered me my first informal tutorials on what became my PhD research, which shifted to focus more specifically on Oiticica. She also advised me to

consult the entire backlog of the *Third Text* journal (something I still advise my own graduate students to do). I can't remember if it was Jean or Jon Bird, who suggested I pay a visit to the library at inIVA.

At inIVA I was warmly welcomed by Ariede Migliavacca, who ran the library at the time. She happened to be Brazilian, so for me it felt a little like home. I had left Brazil in 1988 and had only been back once, so it was nice to be able to speak Portuguese again. It was also Ariede who first introduced me to Guy as he walked hurriedly passed the library one day. He was very busy at that moment, so he asked me to call him a few days later. I don't really remember what we talked about only how nervous I was before that phone call. Very quickly, despite the fact that we were both quite shy, he became more than just a mentor but a friend.

I later applied for a scholarship offered by the then London Institute (now University of the Arts London) and was accepted to pursue a PhD on Oiticica under the supervision of Oriana Baddeley. Oriana had previously collaborated with Gerardo Mosquera on editing an inIVA publication entitled 'Beyond the Fantastic' which questioned the persistent exoticism with which art from Latin America had been presented in exhibitions across Europe and the USA. I guess I would be forgiven for believing, at the time, inIVA was omnipresent within the field of study I had chosen! Perhaps you could begin by responding to my old self, explaining how Stuart Hall, artists such as Rasheed Araeen and Sonia Boyce, and art critics such as Jean Fisher and Guy converged through inIVA. I expect that your own trajectory might have some relation to all of this...

GT: inIVA was launched with a conference at Tate (now Tate Britain) in April 1994 as a new organisation on the British arts scene propelled into existence by the efforts of a group of culturally diverse British artists, curators and critics. Wholly funded from public funds by the Arts Council of Great Britain, inIVA's brief was to promote the work of visual artists from diverse cultural backgrounds from the UK and abroad. Originally named 'the institute of new international visual arts', the conference had been convened to address the question of how a 'new internationalism' could be articulated and, specifically, to explore how this newly-established organisation could define a new paradigm for the visual arts under the rubric of a 'new internationalism' which would expand the narrow focus of the contemporary art discourse at that time.

inIVA emerged in the mid-1990s out of a specific urban and cultural context. Post-colonial Britain, and London in particular, had seen a continuous influx

of migrants from the former British empire in the post-war years. There was (and continues to be) a large concentration of artists in the city which has acted as a magnet for artists arriving in Britain from elsewhere. In the immediate post-war years, there were consecutive waves of artists from the Commonwealth countries coming to London – mainly from Africa, Asia and the Caribbean – including artists such as Aubrey Williams, Frank Bowling and David Medalla who had established the gallery and magazine *Signals* in the mid-1960s.

One of the first projects that inIVA produced was a solo exhibition of David Medalla's work: *The Secret History of the Mondrian Fan Club II, Mondrian in London*. Timed to coincide with a Kala Press monograph by Guy Brett (Kala Press was another venture of the artist Rasheed Araeen), the exhibition comprised both new works as well as a re-staging of earlier works by Medalla. At the same time, inIVA also published a facsimile edition of *Signals* magazine, volumes 1 and 2, 1964 to 1966.

In the 1980s, Britain saw the emergence of a new generation of artists, writers and intellectuals, born and brought up in the UK but who came from different cultural backgrounds and who developed new ideas and practices which would have profound effects upon British culture as a whole. The idea of a settled, homogeneous, mainstream identity that could be easily invoked for the nation and society was being challenged by a number of wholly different artists, musicians, writers and filmmakers. Articulating a spectrum of new social, cultural and artistic connections which criss-crossed the city and transgressed racial boundaries, London's creative heterogeneity and cultural miscegenation found form in the works of a new generation of artists, writers and film-makers.

Probably the most important theoretician and critical thinker of this cultural conjuncture was the sociologist Stuart Hall who was at the vanguard of establishing the new discipline of cultural studies.

I took up my new post as inIVA's first Director two days before the conference at the Tate Gallery. Not long after that, I convinced Stuart Hall to act as temporary Chair of inIVA. We worked together for over eleven years as Director and Chair of inIVA in what was one of the most creative and productive partnerships of my career.

MA: You mentioned inIVA as growing out of a generation of artists, writers and film-makers in the 1980s, who were born in the UK with diverse cultural

heritages, whose parents and/or grandparents had migrated from the so-called Commonwealth countries.

By the way, the term 'commonwealth' bothers me profoundly as it is a form of disguise of Britain's imperial legacy, the source of so many ongoing conflicts and disputes around the world today. It is also worth noting the huge sacrifices made by the so-called Windrush generation (after the ship that brought one of the first Caribbean) British citizens to aid with the post-war reconstruction, given the labour shortage. Stuart Hall writes beautifully about the terrible deception of those arriving in Britain, how they (as well as himself) were confronted by a deeply racist society. Sadly, that is something that still persists to this day, as the recent events around Brexit, football and in many ways also the pandemic have demonstrated. So, there is nothing common about the wealth of the nation, as that term suggests. Indeed, the way in which the current government has treated many of those citizens, with deportations and the racist 'hostile environment' discourse that fuelled the push towards Brexit. Such a despicable context ultimately arises from an absurd sense of innate superiority and has nothing to do with the commonality of wealth.

Artists such as Steve McQueen, Eddie Chambers, Sonia Boyce, were not only producing work that drew on different cultural perspectives, but emerged very much in contrast to the Thatcherite, brash, rude, white and market oriented YBAs. Young British Artists, the very denomination already presupposed a problematic sense of nation which, I imagine, inIVA with its stress on internationalism, sought to counteract. I mention the YBAs because they stand out as an example of the contradictions that encapsulated the notions of multiculturalism brought forward by Tony Blair's 'new labour' victory over the Tories in 1997. I am thinking how certain exhibitions that took place in England in the preceding (Thatcher) years, namely Rasheed's 'The Other Story', Dawn Ades' 'Art in Latin America' and Guy's 'Transcontinental', amongst others, stood out as a form of resistance to that homogenising sense of Britishness and the isolationism that it implied. Also, how that particular sense of Britishness ran side by side, but rarely interconnected, with the concurrent rhetoric of Britain as a multicultural nation. David Medalla's and Guy's work with Signals in the 1960s may seem at first as an unlikely precedent, but it went to the core of demystifying those very ideals of 'Britishness' that would later be invoked, such as the nostalgia for the swinging sixties that seemed to never cease to be conjured over the course of the 1990s. Rasheed's role here was also crucial in this sense, from the Black Phoenix journal (which I believe was how he first came into contact

with Guy still in the 1970s) to *Third Text*, from his work as an artist, curator, and (how can I put it) agent provocateur.

It seemed that inIVA sought to bring all this energy together, which ranged from Stuart Hall's cultural studies approach to Rasheed's editorial and curatorial work and the whole range of artists who had become politicised through confrontation with what could only be described as the institutional racism of the arts establishment. Guy became caught up in this movement I am guessing because his work represented both a historical exception to the norm, with the advent of *Signals* for example, and as an active participant engaged with the art of that moment (the 1980s and 90s).

GT: It's a very important point that Steve McQueen, Sonia Boyce, Eddie Chambers and many others were all born and brought up in the UK. Their parents migrated to Britain in the post-war years, heeding the call to come to the 'mother country' and take up jobs in a Britain still ravaged by the effects of the war and desperate to recruit health and transport workers amongst others. There was of course an earlier generation of artists who migrated to Britain to study and make art - you mention Rasheed Araeen but also Aubrey Williams, Frank Bowling, David Medalla (with whom Guy Brett was a close friend), Kim Lim, F.N. Souza, Balraj Khanna and many others. This generation of artists saw themselves as international modernists, part of the story of modernism and some were embraced briefly by the British art world.

The second generation of artists which included McQueen, Boyce, Chambers, grew up as Black and British and their experiences revealed the fissures that existed (and still exist) in definitions of Britishness which excluded black and brown people who were subject to the effects of persistent racism and discrimination. They discovered that 'there ain't no black in the Union Jack' as the influential thinker and academic Paul Gilroy titled his seminal book. At art school, they had no reference points for being Black British artists and consequently invented a whole new aesthetic language. The Black Art Group was formed in the late 1970s by a small group of art students - Chambers and also Keith Piper, Donald Rodney, Claudette Johnson, Marlene Smith, Sonia Boyce and others who subsequently convened the First National Black Art Convention at Wolverhampton Polytechnic in 1982. This period - the late 1970s and early 1980s - coincided with a rise in racism, racist attacks and discriminatory and sometimes deadly policing. This is the period when Eddie Chambers made a work called *The Destruction of the National Front* (1979-80) which depicted the Union Jack in the shape of a swastika, gradually fracturing and breaking up and alluded to black resistance to the far-right,

racist group, the National Front. Around the same time, artists like Sonia Boyce were deconstructing and critiquing the legacy of British imperialism and colonialism in works such as *Lay back, keep quiet and think of what made Britain so great* (1986).

I would however take issue with your characterisation of the YBAs and the stark distinction you draw between black and white artists in the 1980s and 1990s. First of all, they shared a DIY approach which was forged in the late 1970s when the British economy was profoundly depressed, at the peak of the punk movement, and when both musicians and artists had few commercial opportunities and they self-organised exhibitions (for example, Damien Hirst's *frieze* exhibition in Canary Wharf and also Lubaina Himid's *Thin Black Line* at the ICA). Some of the so-called YBA artists were also exploring questions of identity from the perspective of class and gender. I am thinking here of artists like Mark Wallinger, Gillian Wearing and Michael Landy who studied alongside Steve McQueen and Zarina Bimji at Goldsmiths College.

In this context, I saw inIVA as an artistic, intellectual and political project which drew on the ideas and artworks of two generations of artists and intellectuals in Britain to challenge notions of an insular Britishness and of a narrow Western modernism which failed to take account of modernity, and hence modernism, as a global phenomenon whose roots lay in the displacements of peoples across the world as a consequence of slavery, empire and colonialism.

I met Guy Brett for the first time at one of inIVA's first exhibition openings and he gave me a small gift - a copy of the exhibition catalogue of his 1969 Hélio Oiticica exhibition at the Whitechapel Art Gallery. In that important and understated gesture, Guy was drawing a connection between his work in the preceding years and this new organisation called inIVA, reminding me of the internationalism which had flourished in the 1960s in Britain, influenced so profoundly by art critics like Guy Brett and artists like David Medalla, Rasheed Araeen and Susan Hiller.

MA: It is interesting that Guy would gift you the catalogue of Oiticica's Whitechapel show at that particular moment. Oiticica's exhibition seems to me to have been a turning point in the trajectories of both the artist and the art critic. Years later, recalling that exhibition, Guy would often point out how Bryan Robertson, the director at the Whitechapel, having accepted to host Oiticica's show following the unexpected closure of Signals Gallery, would

later show a certain resistance towards the artist's plans for the disposition of the work in the gallery. The problem for Robertson was the way in which individual works were not highlighted as such, not given their due respect (their aura) as objects of art: a rather surprising posture given that he had been the gallery's director in 1956 when the Whitechapel held 'This is Tomorrow'. Oiticica had proposed an environmental (to use his own terminology) experience, one that went beyond the purely contemplative and so, instead of emphasising individual objects it, integrated them within the overall space. I think it is not by chance that Guy, recalling that exhibition, would repeatedly refer to this disagreement which boiled down to the theoretical perception and nature of the object as art. It was a discussion that was very much of that moment. We are reminded for instance of Donald Judd's essay 'Specific Objects' (1965) and Michael Fried's 'Art and Objecthood' (1967) in relation to it. Robertson himself must have been versed in such approaches having been a great supporter of artists such as Anthony Caro and Phillip King, amongst others. Not that these artists or ideas were ever referred to in relation to Oiticica's show at the time. For Oiticica nevertheless, having emerged as a young artist connected to the neoconcrete group and therefore being himself versed in Ferreira Gullar's theoretical discourses on the 'non-object' (1959), such issues as the dissolution of the object within its surrounding space or the ambivalence between painting and sculpture in recent work, would seem rather old hat, issues from the previous decade. Robertson's questioning must have seemed all the more surprising for the artist in this sense. Of course, apart from the few who remember it, or the rather larger group who later claimed to remember it, by the 1980s and early 90s Oiticica's Whitechapel exhibition had been forgotten by the British art scene. It was only with Oiticica's international recognition which took place over the course of the 1990s, that British institutions began, tentatively at first, expressing an interest in his work. Oiticica's 1992-94 posthumous retrospective never had a UK stop-over, despite several prestigious European museums hosting it. It took another decade, following Catherine David's Documenta X in 1997, which consolidated Oiticica's international reputation, for his work to receive greater attention over here. It was after all only in 2007 that Tate Modern held a major show of his, and even then, it was one conceived by Mari Carmen Ramirez at the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston, Texas. Admittedly, The Barbican had held Carlos Basualdo's 'Tropicália' exhibition the previous year which focused on the wider cultural repercussions of Oiticica's concept in Brazil during the late 1960s. Yet, that too had been conceived elsewhere and London was only a stop in its wider itinerary. That precedent might explain nevertheless why Tate would choose to acquire Oiticica's installation *Tropicália* to integrate

its collection. It has always baffed me why *Eden* was not chosen, after all it had been conceived by the artist especially for The Whitechapel show and therefore holds a far greater relation to the local scene than *Tropicália*. One would imagine that a museum such as Tate would want to emphasise an artist's relation to the local or national art scene. Instead, and to put it bluntly, they opted for parrots and plants, for the work by the artist that is most associated with Brazil, one that although originally critical of the snobbism of the local Brazilian elite, could, in this displaced context, be easily exoticized, transformed into the very thing it sought to dismantle. *Eden*, on the other hand, the participatory environment that Oiticica constructed especially for London with its links to the Sixties, the Exploding Galaxies commune and that caused so much trouble with Bryan Robertson around the question of the object, participation, and so on, was thus overlooked, and for me this was a lost opportunity.

The type of attitude that informed the conservative press when reviewing Oiticica's show back in 1969 – to quote one headline, 'This other and unnecessary eden' – seems to have therefore changed very little. Of course, *Tropicália* is now celebrated rather than condemned or mocked, but there is still an implicit exoticism that arises from its current predicament at Tate Modern, whether with live parrots or flat screen images of them, whether squeezed in a room far too small for it or installed in a wider space. I think that is why Guy liked to draw people's attention to the question of the object, to the fact that this was an artist whose work was as theoretically sophisticated as any British or North American contemporary, a work that despite its culturally specific references, could very much dialogue with that of any contemporary on an equal level. It is interesting to compare for example how Oiticica's work of the 1970s, produced in New York, is sometimes articulated in relation to that local scene, to Jack Smith and marginal/experimental cinema for example, when approached by US scholars and curators. These are generally exceptions to the rule however. The conjunction 'Latin American and Latino art', that in the US seems to have become the disciplinary norm, connects a geographical region, with its complex and exacerbated social and class divisions, with a US ethnic minority (soon to be a majority). Although described as progressive, I see a dangerous simplification here. It seems to me, for example, that the work of Latino artists have a far greater relation to that of other US-based artists compared to wealthy cosmopolitan Latin American such as Sergio Camargo, Lygia Clark or even Oiticica for example. I have written elsewhere about how the concept of hybridity is celebrated in Europe and the US, yet on condition that such contaminated artefacts are

kept at a safe distance, quarantined so to speak, away from the perceived purity of the national canons. I am being provocative of course, but it seems to me that *Tropicália* at Tate, is a good example of such a predicament.

That internationalist modernism in 1950s and 60s Britain, which you mentioned, has been the subject of recent studies by Sonia Boyce and a team of scholars involved in the Black Artists and Modernism (BAM) project. They have produced an incredible body of work that has retrieved that legacy through holdings in public collections. An important spirit of recovery pervades the BAM project. I'm not referring to the art objects themselves (these have been safe, albeit mainly unseen, in the museum vaults all these years), but to their contextual relation with that which was happening at the time of their production. The artists that Sonia and the BAM team have focused on had all meaningful connections with the contemporaneous art scene, the reason why their work entered public collections in the first place. Retracing what those connections were seems as important as retrieving the works, the art objects, from the vaults. I think inIVA was doing something similar but in a more contemporary context, making connections between an internationalist attitude within the art scene and institutions that were only beginning to accept a broader, post-colonial, understanding of what Britishness meant.

I agree with your reprimand therefore! Of course, what became known as the YBAs was far more complex than art produced as a direct reflection of the rise of neoliberal politics and the accompanying individualism, as I seemed to suggest. You were right to call me out on the over-simplification of that particular moment in Britain, particularly in the rather crass distinction between white and black artists. Indeed, you reminded me of how Guy himself had been very critical of the exhibition 'The British Art Scene in the 60s' which ignored the complex cosmopolitanism of 1960s London, of which Signals itself was but one of its multifaceted outcomes. By the way, we may think of Signals too as an artist run, do it yourself kind of institution (albeit with a rather privileged funding source, Paul Keeler's father, which, as it turned out, was also the cause of its demise). It is quite understandable how Guy would identify with the subsequent generation therefore, with how they were being left out from the mainstream institutional narratives, simply because of the colour of their skin or the nationality of their parents, in short, because they did not comply with an antiquated, racist, colonialist sense of national identity.

I suspect there was a certain political radicalism that took hold of Guy in the immediate aftermath of Oiticica's show at the Whitechapel, which led

to his later outlook towards art and life. This may have been a consequence of the time, with the aftermath of May 68 and all that, but I think there was a more profound change in his approach to his work as an art critic at that moment, in the late 1960s. This may have been in part due to his closeness to Mário Pedrosa (a direct consequence of Hélió's show), which would unfold into the campaign for an international boycott of the 1969 edition of the São Paulo Biennial in protest to the censorship and repression perpetrated by the military regime in Brazil since 1964, and all the more so with the hard-line brought in from December 1968. I found quite a few references to this in Guy's archives. From 1970, with Pedrosa in exile in Chile and his involvement in the creation of the Museum of Solidarity, Guy became an important contact in appealing to artists' donations. Such cultural activism intensified following the Pinochet's coup in 1973, in response to which Guy, David Medalla, John Dugger, Cecilia Vicuña and others formed the Artists for Democracy group.

I recently listened to the British Library's oral history archive which holds a long interview with Guy's father, the architect Lionel Brett, the 4th Viscount Esher. During the early 1970s he had been the rector at the Royal College of Art when Artists for Democracy held an exhibition to raise funds for the campaign in support for the Chilean people. One would assume a certain nepotism at play there, in securing that prestigious location, but it was actually quite revealing hearing Lord Esher, so many years later, sound so unforgiving of his son, Guy, who sided with student rebels by agreeing to give a talk on radical art practices during the students' subsequent occupation of the school.

Guy spent much of the 1970s writing about popular expressions in art in different parts of the world. What strikes me about this period is that his subjects are all from far-away places: the Arpilleras in Chile; Congolese paintings depicting the colonial trauma; Chinese peasant painters, drawings by the survivors of Hiroshima. Maybe I am wrong, but I would speculate that his return to subject matters closer to home, to artists from different places who happened to live in Britain, or those whose parents came to live here in the aftermath of WWII, as you mentioned, was a consequence of his own post-colonial turn. Edward Said had published *Orientalism* in 1978 and it is also around this time that Guy comes across Rasheed Araeen, contributes to *Black Phoenix* and so forth. Although increasingly, particularly from the 1990s onwards he would be engaged in projects that recalled those artists

he had worked with during the 1960s, during his kinetic art and *Signals* phase, his ongoing involvement with contemporary art seemed to travel effortlessly between work produced in distant lands and that emerging from his most immediate circle of friends. Looking through the book inIVA published on his writing, 'A Carnival of Perception', this seems to come across quite strongly.

GT: You bring up so many interesting and important points Michael, I don't know quite where to begin my response. Let me start with Guy's disagreement with Bryan Robertson which is so revealing to me of Guy's extraordinary abilities as a writer and curator and from which I learnt and absorbed so much. In my view, Guy had an acute sensitivity and critical insight into the intentions of the artists he worked with and admired which enabled him to 'get under the skin' of what the artist was making and communicating. One could say that Bryan Robertson's approach revealed a certain 'academic connoisseurship' which fetishised the artwork as a unique object and went against the grain of what Oiticica and others were doing by developing a radical art practice which sought to dissolve the hierarchies of knowledge and experience, as well as that between artist and audience.

Bryan Robertson's resistance to accepting such a radical artistic practice and a different way of seeing and making on the part of Oiticica was something I myself experienced numerous times as Director of inIVA when we collaborated with established institutions like the Whitechapel Art Gallery, the Hayward Gallery, Tate and many others. These institutions appeared to open their doors to showing artists from different countries and of different cultural backgrounds but when it came to selecting and installing the works for exhibition, writing the press releases and exhibition essays, there was an impulse to position these artists' works in particular ways: as exotic, as marginal, as other. It was a continuous and exhausting struggle to challenge these simplifications and dismissals. One of the reasons why publishing was such a key strand of inIVA's work - we published over 50 titles during my tenure as Director - was to build an intellectual and discursive framework which we hoped would re-frame and re-construct the canon, both national and international. Books like Guy's 'A Carnival of Perception' and Jean Fisher's 'Vampire in the Text' as well as our re-publication of the *Signals* magazines and anthologies such as 'Beyond the Fantastic', the 'Annotating Art Histories' series (which you worked on Michael!) and 'Reading the Contemporary' were important rebuttals to the racist and colonial framings that institutions wanted to perpetuate.

As you point out, Guy pushed against this impulse in his extraordinary body of writings and also in the way he curated exhibitions by allowing the artworks to breathe, to occupy their own intellectual and aesthetic space on their own terms and to invite the audience to interact with the artworks on an equal footing. Guy curated the first major exhibition of the work of Li Yuan-chia (an inIVA exhibition at Camden Art Centre) and I remember watching Guy install Li's kinetic sculptures with such enormous care and precision alongside Li Yuan-chia's hand-tinted photographic self-portraits which had never been exhibited previously. The show was extraordinarily beautiful but also playful. I have no doubt that Guy's close relationships with artists - Hélio Oiticica, David Medalla, Rasheed Araeen, Aubrey Williams, Rose English and many others - were formative relationships not only in forging Guy's artistic sensibility but also in opening up a body of experiences and political struggles which shaped his world-view.

At this present conjuncture, we are witnessing a new phase of political and cultural struggle which is seeking to reverse the gains made by artists and intellectuals in recent years, taking us back to narrow nationalist and reactionary agendas which hark back nostalgically to an invented, and apparently 'uncomplicated' imperial and cultural past. Now more than ever, we need to re-examine the critical legacy of Guy Brett and the artists and ideas that he championed, and like Guy, we need to take the side of the rebels, unapologetically.

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