

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ALLUSION IN THE WORKS OF THE BRAZILIAN ARTIST ANTONIO MANUEL¹

[Cynthia Marie Canejo](#)

University of North Carolina at Asheville
EEUU-USA

ABSTRACT

Antonio Manuel began to use allusion in his artworks during the dictatorship in Brazil. After the end of military rule, he continued to use concealed references in a unique and personal manner. These covert references have been employed not just to comment on the political situation, but also to address a diverse range of subjects. In choosing an indirect method of making references, he produced open-ended works which allowed for multifarious interpretations. Whether creating geometrically abstract works, manifestations, or installations, Antonio Manuel developed a sense for using allusion in a manner that became an integral part of his repertoire.

Key words: Antonio Manuel, Brazilian art, allusion, Latin America

RESUMEN

Antonio Manuel comenzó a valerse de la alusión en sus obras durante la dictadura en Brasil. Cuando el gobierno militar llegó a su fin, Manuel continuó usando referencias ocultas de manera única y personal. Este tipo de encubrimiento se ha venido empleando no solamente para comentar sobre la situación política, sino también para abordar una amplia gama de temas. Al escoger este método indirecto para referirse a algo, Manuel produjo trabajos abiertos que permitieron múltiples interpretaciones. Bien sea creando obras geométricas abstractas, manifestaciones o instalaciones, Antonio Manuel desarrolló un sentido especial para utilizar la alusión en una manera que se convirtió en parte integral de su repertorio.

Palabras clave: Antonio Manuel, arte brasileño, alusión, Latinoamérica

¹ Funds for this research were provided by the University of North Carolina at Asheville from the Belk Distinguished Professor; University Research Council Intramural Faculty Fellowship; and Department of Art and Art History Travel Funds. Special thanks to the generosity of the artist, Antonio Manuel; the noted Brazilian scholars, Ronaldo Brito and Rodrigo Naves; Ramón Favela, Beverly Adams, George Dexter, Jr, and Gus Frisbee; the archives of the Museu de Arte Moderna, Rio de Janeiro; and the anonymous readers.

1. INTRODUCTION

The use of covert references was a common method of avoiding censorship during the dictatorship in Brazil.² Nevertheless, even after the end of military rule in 1985, Antonio Manuel continued to develop methods for making indirect associations in his artworks.³ While allusions have been employed in his early work to comment on the political situation, the social climate, or economic change, this artist has expanded on their use in later pieces to elicit viewer reactions to a range of subjects from aesthetic trends to abstract concepts.⁴ As warranted by the situation, these allusions can be lyrical, ludic, or confrontational in form. In progressing to the present, the concealed references have grown more multifaceted allowing the artworks to evoke a wider range of meaning. Through veiled references, viewers are inspired to interpret the creations of Antonio Manuel within the given context, ultimately, integrating the intent of the artist, the design of the artwork, and the knowledge and experience of the spectator. Whether creating constructivist-inspired forms or interactive manifestations and installations, I argue that allusion has become a fundamental part of his visual language.

2. A NEWSPAPER LAYOUT AND A CONSTRUCTIVIST AESTHETIC: *THE FLANS*

Antonio Manuel—an artist known for his provocative and poetic works which push the established boundaries of art—began experimenting with new forms, materials, and methods through the transformation of *flans* (thick paper molds used in printing) salvaged from newspaper offices after the morning edition was run.⁵ The earliest *flans* were created between 1967 and 1969, during the heavily repressive years of the military

² The military dictatorship began in 1964. On the period, see Marcelo Ridenti, *O fantasma da revolução brasileira*, (São Paulo: Unesp/Fapesp UNESP, 1993); and Thomas Skidmore, *The Politics of Military Rule in Brazil, 1964-1985* (Oxford University Press, 1990).

³ Born in Portugal, 1947, Antonio Manuel da Silva Oliveira moved to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, with his parents at age five. Despite his Portuguese origins, Brazilian art critics such as Francisco Bittencourt have called him a typical Brazilian. Appearing in the Rio de Janeiro art scene in the 1960s, the artist decided to shorten his name to Antonio Manuel. Over the years, the artist has created artworks that range from tangible two- and three-dimensional compositions to gestures or interventions. His production, embracing nonrepresentational and figurative forms, crosses the lines of conceptual and constructivist art.

⁴ An “allusion” is an implied or indirect reference. On the use of allusion in artworks, see for example, Nicholas Wade, *Visual Allusions: Pictures of Perception*, (New York/London: Routledge, 2017); Roelof Van Straten, *An Introduction to Iconography: Symbols, Allusions and Meaning in the Visual Arts*, (New York/London: Routledge, 2012); William Irwin, “The Aesthetics of Allusion,” *Journal of Value Inquiry* 36 (2002): 521-532; and Stephanie Ross, “Art and Allusion,” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 40.1 (1981): 59-70.

⁵ *Flan* is a French word for the stereotyping matrix used to layout the newspaper page. Normally, this part of the printing process would have been discarded.

regime in Brazil.⁶ Since the artist was capturing images of the student revolts and dissonant military acts of the period, these works relate, to some extent, to the repressive climate.⁷ However, they were not simply political works protesting the military actions since their formal design was equally as important as their fundamental meaning or communication.⁸ Due to the underlying geometric form, these initial *flans* contain the basic elements of a constructivist structural design that becomes fully realized in later works.

On these found objects, the artist blackened-out areas of the existing image and text with ink, remaking the design to fit with his new conception.⁹ With this act, the artist canceled out or censored the written word and portions of the embedded press photographs in order to highlight the actions and accentuate the power of the student protests. In concealing the text under black ink, he may have been commenting on the right to free speech during the intense years of the dictatorship or implying that the power to suppress the news was, in this case, in the hand of the artist.

Between 1973 and 1975, Antonio Manuel gained access to design his own *flans* at the newspaper, *O Dia*; only then was he able to control the entire process.¹⁰ In both layout and message, the *flans* from this period parody the provocative front-page headline of the original sensationalist *O Dia* newspaper.¹¹ With these works, he began introducing a variety of concealed references with the aim of suggesting more than just a political statement and ended up evoking a multiplicity of meaning through allusion.

Distinctly illustrating this type of work is *Bala mata fome* (Bullet Kills Hunger) (1975, Fig. 1). For this *flan*, Antonio Manuel created a headline in which the letters forming

⁶ With the *Ato Institucional N. 5* or AI-5 (Institutional Act No. 5) issued on 13 December 1968, the military government established restrictions including forbidding freedom to vote, shutting down National Congress, and censoring all avenues of artistic communication (the AI-5 is available online: https://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/AIT/ait-05-68.htm).

⁷ On the early works of Antonio Manuel (before 1980), see Elena Shtromberg, *Art Systems: Brazil and the 1970s* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2016); and Claudia Calirman, *Brazilian Art Under Dictatorship: Antonio Manuel, Artur Barrio, and Cildo Meireles* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012).

⁸ For a more comprehensive view of the work in context, see Jardel Dias Cavalcanti, "Artes plásticas: vanguarda e participação política-Brasil anos 60-70" (PhD diss., Universidade Estadual de Campinas, 2005), especially 178-181 and 183-186; and Artur Freitas, "Arte e movimento estudantil: análise de uma obra de Antonio Manuel," *Revista Brasileira de História* 25.49 (2005): 77-97.

⁹ In this way, the *flans* follow from his earliest drawings with black ink on newspaper pages.

¹⁰ Antonio Manuel was able to create unique works at *O Dia* thanks to his friend, Ivan Chagas Freitas, who was the son of the owner (Shtromberg, *Art Systems: Brazil and the 1970s*, 72).

¹¹ The newspaper, *O Dia*, had a high circulation at this time and catered to the general working class public. On the exaggerated headlines of the *O Dia*, see Marialva Barbosa, *História cultural da imprensa Brasil, 1900-2000* (Rio de Janeiro: Mauad Editora Ltda, 2007), 212-219; and Júlio César Montenegro, *Opinião*, 26 December 1975, 21.

each word are in reverse order, *ALAB ATAM EMOF*.¹² In designing this newspaper page, the artist was purposefully goading the viewer by not presenting a straightforward headline; instead, he presents a playful, enticing, and nearly illegible group of letters that may initially seem nonsensical. In fact, *bala mata fome* was one of the prominent slogans on the protest march signs in 1968.¹³ This phrase would have been seen alongside other statements on protest signs in the street, such as *olho por olho* (an eye for an eye) and *luta, luto* (struggle, mourning).¹⁴



Fig. 1. Antonio Manuel (Brazilian, (1948-). *Bala mata fome*, 1975, flan, 53.5 x 38.5 cm (21.2 x 15.2 in.).
Photographer Lula Rodrigues. Courtesy Antonio Manuel.

¹² The fact that the letters are not just mirrored or flipped (as indicated by the position of the letters L, B, E, and F) suggests pre-planning (rather than accidental placement).

¹³ See, for example, the *flan* by Antonio Manuel titled *Correio da manhã*, 1968, in which banners sport the slogans discussed as well as the discussion by Décio Pignatari, "Entrevistas: Décio Pignatari," In Fernando Cocchiarella and Anna Bella Geiger (eds), *Abstracionismo, geométrico e informal: A vanguarda brasileira nos anos cinquenta* (Rio de Janeiro: FUNARTE, 1987), 80.

¹⁴ The words *luta*, *luto* (or sometimes reversed *luto*, *luta*) relate to a prominent slogan—"in mourning, the struggle begins" (*neste luto começa a luta*)—used in a sense of rebellion against the military who were responsible for the death of an innocent student (see Victoria Langlard, *Speaking of Flowers: Student Movements and the Making and Remembering of 1968 in Military Brazil* [Durham/London: Duke University Press, 2013], 107-165, especially 118).

A specific incidence that took place on March 28, 1968, brought about the expression *bala mata fome*. Students in Rio de Janeiro organized a demonstration to put an end to the poor quality of food in the government-funded student restaurant. The military police began to advance when, suddenly, their leader (a lieutenant) shot and killed an unarmed young man, Edson Luís de Lima Souto, at point-blank range. The students responded by throwing sticks and stones, and the clash escalated. Initially, the phrase was posed as a question—*bala mata fome?* (bullet kills hunger?)—casting doubt on the ethics of this military act.¹⁵ As news of this conflict spread, 100,000 people took to the streets in protest.¹⁶ As the first major march against the military regime, this action provoked a nationwide student movement. Unfortunately, this event also led to even stronger repression by the government.¹⁷

The embossed words above the photo-engraving on Antonio Manuel's *flan* are *pão nosso de cada dia* (our daily bread). On one hand, this familiar line from the Lord's Prayer, "give us this day our daily bread," could have been used here to comment ironically on the military crackdown on student demands for better food.¹⁸ The use of this phrase may have been designed to bring to mind a repressed state that was not intended in the original Lord's Prayer and, consequently, could have been a veiled attempt to address the current political situation.¹⁹ On the other hand, we must consider that, as noted by the renowned Brazilian critic Ronaldo Brito, the *flans* transcend their socio-political themes through their method of communication:

¹⁵ Augustinho, Aline Michele Nascimento. "A memória, o grupo e o ator: ligações e tensões acerca da formação da identidade do militante estudantil de 1968." (2015): 310-f., <https://repositorio.unesp.br/bitstream/handle/11449/134116/000855993.pdf?sequence=1>, accessed 25 March 2020.

¹⁶ The *Passeata dos Cem Mil* (March of the 100,000) took place 26 June 1968. For the background on this march, see Langlard, *Speaking of Flowers*, 144-145; and Maria Ribeiro do Valle, "As representações da violência nos episódios estudantis de 1968," *Mediações* 13.1-2 (2008): 34-53, here 40.

¹⁷ "Institutional Act No. 5, the strictest instance of government repression and the culmination of a series of decrees mandating surveillance, censorship, and centralized authority during the military regime, was issued in December 1968. While not directly the result of student protests, the act came in response to a general sense of upheaval put into motion by the march in Rio de Janeiro and other demonstrations." James N. Green, et al., "The Rise of Student Movements": <https://library.brown.edu/create/fivecenturiesofchange/chapters/chapter-7/student-movement/>, accessed 16 June 2019.

¹⁸ The Lord's Prayer, spoken by Christ in the Sermon on the Mount, is found in the New Testament: Matthew 6:9-13.

¹⁹ See relevant lines from the Lord's Prayer: *O pão nosso de cada dia nos dai hoje* (Give us this day our daily bread); *Assim como nós perdoamos os nossos devedores*; (As we forgive those who trespass against us); *E não nos deixes cair em tentação* (And lead us not into temptation); *Mas livrai-nos do mal* (But deliver us from evil).

The affective identification of Antonio Manuel's lyricism with the mass media clearly says much about his communicative inclination. For many years the newspaper was his real muse, in the original sense of the term...what inspired and triggered his poetic verve was the fact that the world appeared to him as a linguistic montage, open to a virtually infinite number of combinations...nothing could be more eloquent, in terms of eagerness to commune with the public, than this precocious elective affinity with the primary raw material of modernity, the newspaper.²⁰

Brito stressed that Antonio Manuel's *flans* are significant for their ability to poetically communicate through a modern method of mass communication. That is, in using the newspaper layout, the artist was interested in extending the works beyond the socio-political message to put emphasis on the reorganization of the constructed page. Using the newspaper as a base, Antonio Manuel employs a montage of words and visuals in a poetic manner that allows for more open-ended interpretations of the work. This underlying compositional framework of the newspaper layout becomes stronger and more compelling as his works progress.

While the design of the *flan* entitled *Bala mata fome* alludes directly to the newspaper by emulating both its style and form (through appropriating the newspaper headline and columns), other references in the work are not explicitly revealed. That is, the artist may depict representational images but he does not clearly indicate the significance of the objects to each other or to the work overall.²¹ As Stacy Magedanz observed, "The author may supply the allusion, but only the reader can activate it."²² In other words, the reader/viewer must make an effort to decipher the meaning.

On examining the work in more detail, it may occur to us that the sense of the phrase "bullets kill hunger" is dark and evocative, implying that being shot to death frees one from any future need for food or worries about starvation. Over and above this bleak conclusion, the word *bala* in the title can mean either "bullet" or "(hard) candy;" hence, the headline could also read: "Candy Kills Hunger." The central image on the *flan* is a photo-engraving of wrapped balls of hard-candies lying next to shiny new bullets. In drawing our attention to the distinction between candy and bullets, a sense of black humor becomes apparent in the juxtaposition of the tasty and pleasant sweets with the

²⁰ Ronaldo Brito, "Fluido labrinto," In *Antonio Manuel*, exh. cat., trans. Paulo Henrique Britto (Rio de Janeiro: Centro de Arte Hélio Oiticica, 1997), 67.

²¹ On artworks that use suggestive images, see Irwin, "The Aesthetics of Allusion," 524.

²² Stacy Magedanz, "Allusion as Form: The Wasteland and Moulin Rouge!," *Orbis Litterarum* 61.2 (2006): 160-179, here 163.

metal projectiles responsible for the frightful shootings in the street.²³ The work seems to intensify the apprehension in the viewer through the unexpected and dark association.

With the early *flans*, the artist set up a formal system that he continues to develop. The design of the *flans*, in imitating a public mass-produced and distributed medium as a base (i.e., the newspaper layout), is a non-traditional format. The works are, thus, created outside of established contemporary art forms. In subsequent works, the newspaper layout becomes a way for the artist to dialogue with developments of geometric abstraction through emphasizing the modular arrangement of the page. While Antonio Manuel aimed to challenge the traditional system with his works, the design was equally as important to his developing aesthetic trajectory.

Similar to *Bala mata fome*, the *flan* with the headline *Poema classificado* (Classified Poem) (1975) (Fig. 2) emulates the arrangement of the newspaper page. With a thickness like handmade paper and a color of softened butter, this *flan* has a physical beauty that is unexpected in a newspaper image. In works like this one, the artist was able to leave the surface un-manipulated; that is, the page is entirely embossed and un-inked—not even the headline is printed in black. In highlighting aesthetic design, this work references the art world over the political content apparent in other *flans*.

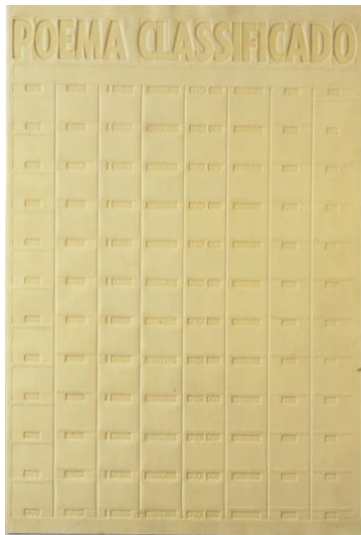


Fig. 2. Antonio Manuel (Brazilian, (1948-). *Poema Classificado*, 1975, *flan*, 55 x 37.5 cm (21.7 x 14.8 in.). Photographer Lula Rodrigues. Courtesy Antonio Manuel.

²³ Works using dark or black humor present taboo or distressing topics with humor often intending to evoke concern or angst in the viewer. On Antonio Manuel's incorporation of black humor, see Francisco Bittencourt, "A aventura de Antonio Manuel," *Tribuna da Imprensa*, Rio de Janeiro, 17 November 1975. "Dark humor can be an excellent response to a crisis, because through it we are able to understand the true meaning of a problem and use humor as an adaptive response." (Helena José [et al], "A Factor-Analytic Study of the Multidimensional Sense of Humor Scale with a Portuguese Sample," *North American Journal of Psychology* [2007]: 595-610, here 597-98).

Below the headline, a word or phrase is repeated in each of the columns. Antonio Manuel has emphasized the importance of the placement and interrelation of these subheadings.²⁴ *Corpo* (body) refers to the body of the text, while *grafico* (graphic) and *espaço cheio* (filled space) address the design. *8 colunas* (columns) describes the typical modern layout of the news page. By placing *ponto* (point) next to *final*, the artist suggests *ponto final* which in Portuguese could simply refer to the final punctuation mark at the end of a sentence; or, may indicate the “ultimate stop” which may imply the limits of tolerance in a poetic, rather than purely political, sense.

By introducing the word *massificadas*, the artist refers to specific aspects of the newspaper (such as massification or standardization).²⁵ Moreover, the location of *corpo* alongside *grafico* highlights the “graphic body” or the visual graphic design overall. In employing *redundante* (redundant), the artist could be addressing the unnecessary or unused aspects of the newspaper; however, “redundant” also suggests useless, superfluous, or inessential properties and could hint at the difficulties related to concurrent social hardships during the military rule (e.g., unemployed or unwanted masses). We should, however, be careful in focusing on political aspects since, as will be discussed, this work alludes to a range of aesthetic subjects. Through the interdependence of layout, images, and text, the artwork activates our system for visual recognition of words and objects; however, the ability to infer meaning would be limited by the knowledge or disposition of the reader/viewer.²⁶

The title, *Poema classificado/Classified Poem*, brings together two seemingly incongruous words.²⁷ Since the word or phrase in each column relates to some aspect of the newspaper setup or printing process, the first word in the title, “classified,” seems to allude to the classified section—namely, the “classified ads” or “want ads.” Even so, looking at the repeated columns emptied of content, a less apparent meaning of the title arises. Across the entire newspaper page, the information that should be in the columns has been omitted; thus, it is not available to the viewer. In other words, the news articles have been classified; that is to say, the text is censored, confidential, or off the record and not for publication.

This censoring of information could be an oblique reference to the current official practice under the restrictions on artistic creativity and freedom of the press during the dictatorship. Be that as it may, the work suggests aspects other than simply the concurrent political circumstances. As I will show in the following paragraphs, a more

²⁴ Antonio Manuel, email communication with the author, 13 July 2016.

²⁵ *Massificada* could also suggest commodification or mass-produced.

²⁶ According to William Irwin, “Allusions typically draw on information not readily available to every member of a cultural and linguistic community” (“The Aesthetics of Allusion,” 521).

²⁷ As noted by Irwin (“What Is an Allusion?,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 59.3 [2001]: 287-297, here 288), allusions often employ a “playful use of language.”

comprehensive reading would take into account the visual connections or clues, the geometrically abstract design and layout, and the lyrical and ludic aspects of the work.

The use of the second word in the title, “poem,” alludes to the fact that *Poema classificado/Classified Poem* was created in the context of constructivist developments in Brazil.²⁸ As noted by the São Paulo Concrete poets in the *Pilot-Plan for Concrete Poetry*, the formation of a Concrete poem creates an “ideogram” (a graphic symbol or image that represents an idea or concept).²⁹ Key qualities cited for a Concrete poem include “similitude” (similarity or visual repetition), “proximity,” “brevity,”³⁰ and “rhythm” as well as “isomorphism” (the correspondence or similarity between form/structure and content).³¹ All of these characteristics are reflected in Antonio Manuel’s *Poema classificado*. A specific example would be the division of the page of the *flan* into eight columns which constructs a poem that reflects its subject matter through the form. Consequently, in relating the visual arrangement to the message, this work synthesizes the parodical design of the newspaper page with another type of space: the visual setup and language of a Concrete poem.³²

²⁸ Initially, the Dutch artist Theo van Doesburg coined the term “Art Concrèt” in 1930 to refer to abstract art which lacks representational qualities (i.e., using non-figurative elements). However, in 1936, the Swiss artist/architect, Max Bill, introduced a new concept of Concrete Art based on geometric elements and mathematics that was brought to Brazil. Consequently, the Brazilian Concrete art movements that developed in the early 1950s, in both São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, espoused non-figurative geometric abstraction.

²⁹ From the *Pilot Plan*: “Ideogram: appeal to nonverbal communication.” An online translation is available: <https://www.ubu.com/papers/noigandres01.html>

³⁰ Augusto de Campos emphasized the need for brevity; that is, “the reduction of language to a minimalist substratum” (Roland Greene, “From Dante to the Post-Concrete: An Interview with Augusto de Campos”, *The Harvard Library Bulletin* 3.2 [Summer 1992]), URL: www.ubu.com/papers/greene02.html, accessed 6 June 2019.

³¹ Charles A. Perrone, “From Noigandres to ‘Milagre da Alegria’: The Concrete Poets and Contemporary Brazilian Popular Music,” *Latin American Music Review/Revista de Música Latinoamericana* 6.1 (1985): 58-79, here 58. From the *Pilot Plan*: “The Concrete poem communicates its own structure: structure-content” (Mary Ellen Solt, *Concrete Poetry: A World View* [Bloomington/London: Indiana UP, 1971], 71-72; see also Augusto de Campos, Décio Pignatari, and Haroldo de Campos, *Teoria da Poesia concreta: textos críticos e manifestos, 1950-1960* (São Paulo: Edições Invenção, 1965). The three São Paulo Concrete poets are Décio Pignatari and the brothers Haroldo and Augusto de Campos. There have been multiple connections between these poets and the artist; for example, Antonio Manuel met Pignatari in 1973 when the poet wrote the text for the artist’s newspaper insertion, *0 às 24 horas*. Antonio Manuel was, in turn, influenced by the work of the Concrete poets.

³² The artist’s intent to produce a poetic work is not only implied by his use of “poem” in the title but also clarified in his words, “In the 1973 to 75 flans, I actually created the flan, inventing the headlines, diagramming the photos and texts as visual poems.” (Beverly Adams, “Interview: Antonio Manuel,” In *Antonio Manuel: I Want to Act, Not Represent!* [New York: Americas Society and São Paulo: Associação para o Patronato Contemporâneo, 2011], 102-117, here 111).

The modular layout underlying this *flan* can be further illuminated by contrasting it with the structural reorganization of the pages of the largest public newspaper in Rio de Janeiro, the *Jornal do Brasil* in 1956. Two Neoconcrete artists were largely responsible for the changes: ³³ Reynaldo Jardim renovated the *Suplemento Dominical* (Sunday Supplement);³⁴ and Amílcar de Castro modernized the main sections.³⁵ Specifically, the newspaper page was reconfigured to create a dynamic geometric design using a constructivist grid of aesthetically arranged blocks of images and text divided by white space (in contrast to the former text-packed layout of repeated vertical columns separated by vertical lines).³⁶ The changes in typography and the overall plan for this newspaper were in line with the general optimism of the late 1950s. Constructivist ideas were being regenerated in Brazil, and geometric abstraction (non-representational art) was seen as a sign of modernization and progress.³⁷

With the *flans*, Antonio Manuel was working with forms similar to those of Jardim and Castro but during a later period of disenchantment with the positive connotations of the progressive ideology reflected in the reform of the *Jornal do Brasil*. It is not surprising

³³ The Neoconcretismo group was formed as the Rio Concrete artists became dissatisfied with the rationalist direction taken by Concrete works in São Paulo. While continuing to work with geometric abstraction, these artists supported the development of more emotional (leaning toward the human element) and phenomenological artworks which encouraged spectator creativity and involvement. Hélio Oiticica, Lygia Clark, and Lygia Pape are three of the well-known artists from the Neoconcrete movement. For a clarification of the tenets, see Ronaldo Brito, *Neoconcretismo: vértice e ruptura do projeto construtivo brasileiro* (Rio de Janeiro: FUNARTE/Inap, 1985).

³⁴ Jardim discusses their roles in "Interview with Reynaldo Jardim" In *Preto no branco: A arte gráfica de Amílcar de Castro*, Yanet Aguilera (ed), trans. Natália Giossa Fujita, (São Paulo: Discurso Editorial; Belo Horizonte: Editora UFMG, 2005), 168.

³⁵ It is often cited that Amílcar de Castro worked with Jânio de Frietas (editor-in-chief from 1958 to 1961) and Reynaldo Jardim to design the new layout in a modern graphic style; however, as Alzira Alves de Abreu suggests, we may need to reconsider the work as a group effort (« Um novo olhar sobre os jornalistas. Os depoimentos orais », *Sur le journalisme, About journalism, Sobre jornalismo* 1.1 [2012]: 96-104). See also Daniel Trench and André Stolarski, "A Notícia e o diagrama: Entrevista inédita com Amílcar de Castro," *Revista Novos Estudos* 78 (2007):131-143; and Washington Días Lessa, "Amilcar de Castro e a reforma do Jornal do Brasil," In *Dois Estudos de Comunicação Visual* (Rio: Editora UFRJ, 1995). On the work of Amílcar de Castro, see Rodrigo Naves, *A forma difícil. Ensaio sobre arte brasileira* (São Paulo: Editora Ática, 1996).

³⁶ For an example of this innovative newspaper design, see the "Neoconcrete Manifesto" (*Manifesto Neoconcreto*) published in *Jornal do Brasil* created by Amilcar de Castro, Reynaldo Jardim, and Ferreira Gullar (*Suplemento Dominical*, March 21-22, 1959, https://icaa.mfah.org/s/en/item/1110328_-?c=&m=&s=&cv=&xywh=-1673,0,5895,3299

³⁷ On the *Jornal do Brasil*, see Ana Paula Goulart Ribeiro, *Imprensa e História no Rio de Janeiro dos anos 1950*, (Rio de Janeiro: E-Papers Serviços Editoriais, Ltda., 2007), 153-164 and 265-277; Ivana Barreto, "As realidades do jornalismo cultural no Brasil," *Contemporânea* 4.2 (2006): 65-73; Marieta de Moraes Ferreira, "A reforma do Jornal do Brasil," In *A imprensa em transição: o jornalismo brasileiro nos anos 50*, Alzira Alves de Abreu (et al), (Rio de Janeiro: Editora da FGV, 1996); and Paulo Sérgio Duarte, "Amílcar de Castro ou a aventura da coerência," *Novos Estudos*, 28 (Oct 1990): 152-58, here 156.

that he incorporates a certain amount of disdain for the purity and idealism of the original Neoconcrete tenets.³⁸ As a result, he conveys a more confrontational attitude in the works by visually and conceptually manipulating the images, headlines, and text within the page.

Similar to other artists during the dictatorship, Antonio Manuel developed methods of allusion in order to avoid detection of politically relevant subject matter.³⁹ It must be noted, however, that covert references were not required for other non-political references including aesthetic allusion. Rather, I suggest that Antonio Manuel developed a sense for using allusion (even beyond repressive situations) in a poetic manner that became an essential aspect of his later work.

3. CONFRONTING CONSERVATISM IN THE MUSEUM

O corpo é a obra (The Body Is the Work) took place in 1970 (Fig. 3). Antonio Manuel had proposed his body as a work of art using his own measurements as the dimensions of the piece but had been rejected by the jurors of the XIX Salão Nacional de Arte Moderna. Arriving at the Museo de Arte Moderna (Museum of Modern Art), Rio de Janeiro (MAM-Rio), on the day of the exhibition opening and perceiving that his proposed work would have surpassed in conception those on the floors and walls, he disrobed and began to strike sculptural poses in the museum space.⁴⁰

This artistic intervention should not be considered as simply an artistic rebellion related to the dictatorship. Antonio Manuel's work relates to a wider context during this

³⁸ Antonio Manuel was influenced by his early encounter, developing friendship, and direct interaction with the three Neoconcrete artists—Oiticica, Pape, and Clark—whose work had grown out of the constructivist tradition (toward the incorporation of emotion and the organic). Although Antonio Manuel's work tends to retain constructivist elements, the late date of his encounter with these artists seems to have allowed him to keep a certain critical distance from the Neoconcrete postulates and, for this reason, his production has remained unique.

³⁹ This manner of alluding indirectly, rather than explicitly confronting issues, was characteristic of visual artists, musicians, directors, and poets during the period. On the interactions of these artists, see Cynthia Canejo, "The Resurgence of Anthropophagy: Tropicália, Tropicalismo and Hélio Oiticica," *Third Text*, 18.1 (2004): 61–68; Christopher Dunn, *Brutality Garden: Tropicália and the Emergence of a Brazilian Counterculture* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2001); Ismail Xavier, *Alegorias do subdesenvolvimento: Cinema Novo, Tropicalismo, Cinema Marginal*, (São Paulo: Editora Brasiliense, 1993); and David George, *The Modern Brazilian Stage*, (Austin: UT Press, 1992).

⁴⁰ The consequence of Antonio Manuel's act was a two-year suspension from exhibitions. Antonio Manuel was accompanied by a young woman, Vera Lúcia Santos, who partially disrobed. For a transcription of documents and presentation of cartoons with caricatures of the incident from contemporary newspapers, see Renan Marcondes, "Espaços de Ajuste, Corpos em Ajuste: Validação, Nomeação e a Transformação de um Corpo em Obra," *eRevista Performatus*, 2.9 (Mar. 2014), URL: <https://performatus.com.br/estudos/antonio-manuel/>, accessed 16 June 2019. On *O corpo é a obra*, see Alessandra Monachesi Ribeiro, "Antonio Manuel: corpo, memória e morte," *ARS* (São Paulo) 6.11 (2008): 78–97.

period in Brazil. Especially, we must consider contemporary contestations of museum restrictions.⁴¹ In spite of the military takeover in 1964, artists had already attempted to open up the tightly closed world of the Brazilian museum. In 1965, Hélio Oiticica had presented a manifestation of *parangoles* (in this case, capes) worn by samba dancers at the MAM-Rio.⁴² The director of the museum, wanting to keep order and conformity in the institution, forced the work outside the museum walls. In spite of earlier attempts at change including the above-mentioned event by Oiticica, the system was still quite rigid when Antonio Manuel presented his work in 1970. In regard to *O corpo é a obra*, the artist has clarified:

I was concerned with confronting the art system and institutions such as museums and art galleries, which promoted repression or cultural censorship, banning the pieces they judged not to have aesthetic value...the idea was to create a parallel language free from the corruption of the institutions, which neither met our needs nor gave space to our works.⁴³

While alluding to the censorship of, or restrictions on, artistic production during the contemporary political situation, this work also distinctly emphasizes the need to change the current conservative attitudes in art institutions. In other words, Antonio Manuel challenged the limited access given to non-traditional works in official Brazilian exhibitions during the period.

O corpo é a obra took place after the military government had established the Institutional Act No. 5 (AI-5) in 1968 that restricted artistic expression. Due to the tense climate that followed, Oiticica and other outspoken artists would have been exiled from the country by 1970.⁴⁴ Of a younger generation, Antonio Manuel was one of several artists remaining in the country who were aggressive and radical. These artists, although not a group, were sometimes labeled by journalists as the *AI-5 Geração* (AI-5 Generation) or

⁴¹ Ronaldo Brito, "Os Gestos de Manuel," *Opinião*, 14 November 1975, 22. See also Cynthia Canejo, "Gestos Efêmeros e obras tangíveis: A trajetória de Antonio Manuel," *Novos Estudos*, 76 (Nov 2006): 265-274.

⁴² On Hélio Oiticica's work, see Luciano Figueiredo, "The Other Malady," *Third Text* 8.28-29 (1994): 105-116. On the provocative aspects of Antonio Manuel's works, see Isabela Marques Fuchs, "Provocação e participação: a evocação do momento presente em 'Urnas Quentes' de Antonio Manuel: (1968)," *Revista Ciclos* 4.8 (2017): 92-101.

⁴³ Antonio Manuel, In *Antonio Manuel: Interview with Lúcia Carneiro and Ileana Pradilla*, trans. Lya Valeria Grizzo Serignolli, <https://www.pharosart.org/Docs/InterviewwithAntonioManuel2.doc>, accessed 21 February 2019.

⁴⁴ Among the Brazilian artists who were living outside of the country (whether forcibly exiled or self-exiled) were Antonio Dias, Rubens Gerchman, Lygia Clark, Caetano Veloso, Gilberto Gil, Torquato Neto, Glauber Rocha, and José Celso. A number of artists who remained in Brazil were arrested and imprisoned including Carlos Zilio.

Marginais (Marginals).⁴⁵ Antonio Manuel did not leave Brazil during the dictatorship since he was not actively persecuted by the police. Instead, he was inspired to find alternative methods of construction and exposure for his works that could sidestep detection or censorship.



Fig. 3. Antonio Manuel (Brazilian, (1948-). *O corpo é a obra*, 1970. Museu de Arte Moderna, Rio de Janeiro.
Photograph. courtesy Antonio Manuel

Antonio Manuel's rebellious action in *O corpo é a obra* makes sense in the context of new developments by artists working beyond the limitations of Neoconcrete art. By 1969, Lygia Clark and Hélio Oiticica expanded on participation in attempting to motivate the creativity of the participant and elevate the value of the spectator's interaction. Their goal was to eliminate the division between the art object, the viewer, and the surrounding environment, ultimately leaning toward a renewed connection between art and life. Antonio Manuel's action takes the propositions of Clark and Oiticica one step further in

⁴⁵ These artists included Antonio Manuel, Raimundo Colares, Artur Barrio, Cildo Meireles, and Waly Salomão. On the rise of the counterculture and alternative production and lifestyles in Brazil during the dictatorship, see Christopher Dunn, *Contracultura: Alternative Arts and Social Transformation in Authoritarian Brazil* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016). For a more inclusive discussion of artists and contra-art related to alternative arts in Brazil, see, for example, Diana Vaz de Jesus, "Apropriação e inserção na contra-arte da geração AI-5," MA thesis, Universidade Estadual Paulista, 2010; and Artur Freitas, "Contra-arte: vanguarda, conceitualismo e arte de guerrilha - 1969-1973" (PhD diss, Universidade Federal do Paraná, 2007).

dispensing with the art object entirely: the action is the work. "It is life itself," Mário Pedrosa maintained, "One cannot discuss a work made anymore, but a creative action...that which Antonio is doing is the experimental exercise of liberty."⁴⁶

Visually, the poses of Antonio Manuel in the museum bring to mind famous sculptural works of the past, thus, he would be referencing the subject of art and aesthetics.⁴⁷ Moreover, the live presentation of his nude body in motion contrasts with the static stone statues presented in traditional museum exhibitions. Considered both internationally and individually, his act alludes to the proliferation of contemporary aspects of body art and performance in the United States and Europe while including a personal interpretation in exhibiting his own nude body as a work of art.⁴⁸

O corpo é a obra was a multifaceted intervention that exceeds a simple political reading. Alluding to abstract concepts including openness or freedom of expression, the work calls attention to contemporary problems with exhibition display in Brazil by suggesting the need to allow access to more progressive developments in the conservative official museum exhibits. In this way, the work challenges the rigid position apparent in sanctioned Brazilian exhibitions that eschewed progressive trends during a period when international artistic performances or happenings would have been prevalent in the contemporary art world.⁴⁹

4. SPECTATOR PARTICIPATION IN A SETTING OUTSIDE THE MUSEUM

The *ambiental* piece, *Frutos do espaço* (Fruits of the Space, Fig. 4), originally took place outdoors in Catacumba Park, Rio de Janeiro, in 1980.⁵⁰ Iron framework structures

⁴⁶ Mário Pedrosa, excerpts from his comments on *O corpo é a obra* In *Antonio Manuel*, exh. cat., trans. Paulo Henrique Britto (Rio de Janeiro: Centro de Arte Hélio Oiticica, 1997), 73; and "Objetos, flans, jornais, e filmes," *A Gazeta*, 15 January 1976. "The experimental exercise of liberty" was a classic phrase coined by the influential writer Pedrosa in regard to works of the 1960s and 70s – including those of Oiticica and Clark. Clark was also pushing works beyond traditions and, in the 1970s at the Sorbonne, Paris, her works became more interactive with student participants and eventually lacked a final art object.

⁴⁷ His poses referenced traditional artworks that would have been recognizable to Brazilian audiences.

⁴⁸ Antonio Manuel was familiar with the developments of body art (a subcategory or offshoot of performance art) during the period. In a sense, his use of the body could be considered similar to those artists who attempt to erase the line between the body and the artwork (rather than the artists who used the body as a canvas on which or with which to create a performance). On the history of body art and performance, see for example, Tracey Warr (ed.), *The Artist's Body: Themes and Movements*, London: Phaidon Press, 2000.

⁴⁹ Generally, the approach of Brazilian museums during this period was conservative in regard to the types of artworks that were chosen to be included in exhibitions.

⁵⁰ While *arte ambiental* is literally translated as "environmental art," the term in fact refers to artworks centered on integrating art, artist, spectator, and environment (i.e., an interactive work). A number of Brazilian artists preferred to use the terms *arte ambiental* and *manifestação* (manifestation) in the 1960s and 70s in order to distinguish their work from contemporary European and American installations,

painted yellow, red, black, or grey were positioned throughout the park.⁵¹ When erected vertically in the park, the two-dimensional underlying geometric works took on a three-dimensional form. As participants navigated between the works, their view to the landscape was framed by the window-like grid of the iron structures.

Catacumba Park had once been the site of a large *favela* on a steep hillside that was highly visible to the central city of Rio below.⁵² Unfortunately for this community, it was situated in a fashionable area surrounding a lagoon. Janice Perlman, urban studies scholar, maintains that “the convenient location, stirring views, and high land value put Catacumba high on the list for favela removal.”⁵³ In 1970, the government had this *favela* demolished, relocated the occupants, and turned the land into a park.



Fig. 4. Antonio Manuel (Brazilian, (1948-). *Frutos do espaço*, 1980/2007, nine forged iron sculptures coated in automobile paint, 220 x 120 cm (86.6 x 47.2 in.) each. Photographer Rômulo Fialdini. Courtesy Antonio Manuel.

performances, and happenings. Antonio Manuel has stated that these Brazilian artists were hoping to separate their work from the direction that they saw the happenings moving (toward spectacle) as well as from the constrictions of the terms themselves (Antonio Manuel, email communication with the author, 21 April 1998). While Antonio Manuel no longer demands their use, the terms are employed here to allow a distinction to be made. This work, *Frutos do espaço*, by Antonio Manuel was part of a series directed by one of the influential critics of the period, Paulo Sergio Duarte, including installations by José Resende, Tunga, Sergio Camargo, and Waltércio Caldas. The figurative sense of “frutos” would be similar to the use of the “fruit” (as a product) in “fruits of our labors” in English.

⁵¹ Antonio Manuel, email communication with the author, 13 July 2012.

⁵² Even though *favelas* often contain low-income housing with limited access to public services, we should avoid pejorative definitions such as “shantytown” or “slum.” Not only are these communities culturally diverse, but some of most acclaimed cultural contributions, such as samba, came from the *favelas* (“Catalytic Communities [CatComm] is an empowerment, communications, think tank, and advocacy NGO working since 2000 in support of Rio’s favelas at the intersection of sustainable community development, human rights, local-global networks, communications, and urban planning,” from “Why We Should Call them Favelas,” <https://catcomm.org/call-them-favelas/> [accessed 7 June 2019]). The *favelas* of Rio de Janeiro are often located on hills.

⁵³ Janice E. Perlman, *Favela: Four Decades of Living on the Edge in Rio de Janeiro* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 66.

“Catacumba” –which means the same as its English cognate “catacomb” – is an underground cemetery, and, ironically, around the park the “skeletal remains of people’s houses” (i.e., the ruins of the foundations) are still visible.⁵⁴ In regard to the demolished *favela*, Brazilian critic Frederico Moraes had poetically referred to *Frutos do espaço* as “a cemetery of sculptures” (*um cemitério de esculturas*).⁵⁵ In the installation, the vertical monuments marked the landscape like tombstones. Hence, through reference to their location and form, the works could allude to abstract ideas such as a sense of impermanence and loss.⁵⁶

Each piece was a mere outline, a bare skeleton of the earlier newspaper pages apparent in the *flans*; albeit, in this situation, the pages are blank and only the outline remains.⁵⁷ As will be elaborated on below, this framework connects the works to constructivism through the modular form.⁵⁸ In the same manner as the *flans*, one could interpret this interactive work simply as the result of the repressive regime since the frameworks of empty newspaper pages seem to refer not only to the news censored by the government but also to the park where the *favela* once stood. However, these works elude a fixed meaning.

Beyond their relation to the news or the torn down *favela*, these works reference modernist concerns. In the vein of the *flans*, the *Frutos do espaço* incorporate the modular layout of non-figurative geometric abstraction apparent in the constructivist layout of a Neoconcrete painting; at the same time, however, they are realized with a twist—in discarding the canvas and constructing the works from the remaining thin rectangular frame.⁵⁹ By re-envisioning constructivist ideas, Antonio Manuel stripped the painting bare and integrated it into the landscape, allowing nature to fill the four corners of the “canvas.”

In another sense, the *Frutos do espaço* confound traditional concepts of the art object in space, since it is no longer possible to distinguish the inside from the outside or the foreground from the background. This interweaving of the work with the space around it was a constructivist concern.⁶⁰ In the catalogue for the exhibition in 1980, Antonio Manuel included a poetic text with this line, “Fixed. Loose. (*Fincadas. Soltas.*) Visible. Invisible. (*Visíveis. Invisíveis.*) Inside. Out. (*Dentro. Fora.*)” that links the work to the pairs

⁵⁴ Ibid, 89.

⁵⁵ Frederico Moraes (“Frutos do espaço: a virtualidade da imagen,” *O Globo*, 7 November 1980.

⁵⁶ A new location would change the implications and references for future installations of the work.

⁵⁷ See also Ronaldo Brito, “Jornais do Espaço: Escultura de Antonio Manuel,” *Módulo*, 62 (1981): 48.

⁵⁸ The nonobjective modern art movement, Constructivism, originated in Russia with the initial aim to construct abstract artworks suitable for an industrialized society using modern technology and materials. An international constructivist ideology developed that emphasized nonfigurative representation often with use of modular or geometric design. The use of “constructivism” in Brazil follows from these ideas using nonrepresentational geometric abstraction.

⁵⁹ Frederico Moraes, “O vazio ocupado pelos frutos do espaço,” *O Globo*, 28 March 1983.

⁶⁰ See for example the three-dimensional works of Neoconcrete artists such as Franz Weissman.

of binary opposites which become interconnected or even indistinguishable in the *Frutos do espaço*.⁶¹

This work could only have happened after artists in Brazil had contested the conventional presentation of works in museum exhibitions and introduced sensory perception and participation. While questioning traditional forms and concepts of art, Antonio Manuel's colleagues—Oiticica, Lygia Clark, and Lygia Pape—increasingly turned to corporeal experience and spectator interaction.⁶² *Frutos do espaço* follows from their works in encouraging viewer participation through involvement of the body and senses.

Finally, Antonio Manuel's interactive work references the Neoconcrete *não-objeto* (non-object) as described in the text, "Theory of the Non-Object" (*Teoria do não-objeto*), 1959, by Ferreira Gullar.⁶³ The term *não-objeto* was employed to describe a special type of object "for which the denominations of painting and sculpture no longer have much propriety" (*para os quais as denominações de pintura e escultura já talvez não tenham muita propriedade*); in other words, by eliminating the distinguishing characteristics of the sculpture (such as the base) and the painting (such as the frame), the non-object becomes an object that no longer fits into traditional categories of art.⁶⁴ As a non-object (neither a traditional two- or three-dimensional artwork), *Frutos do espaço* allows for a phenomenological or sensorial experience (accomplished through spectator action and interaction).⁶⁵

Antonio Manuel alludes to a range of aspects within the design constraints of the *Frutos do espaço*. While the grid-like form directly references the layout of the daily newspaper, the placement and arrangement of the original work complements and emphasizes the location—in this case, the destroyed *favela*. On one hand, through allusion, the empty newspaper image could refer to the political situation. On the other

⁶¹ Antonio Manuel, *Frutos do Espaço*, In *Antonio Manuel: Eis o Saldo: textos, depoimentos e entrevistas*, Rio: FUNARTE, Ministério da Cultura, 2010, 73; and email communication with the artist, 9 September 2019.

⁶² For additional information on the interaction of these and other artists during the period, see Vanessa Rosa Machado, "Lygia Pape: espaços de rupture" (MA thesis, Universidade de São Carlos, São Carlos, 2008); and Marco Antonio Pasqualini de Andrade, "Uma poética ambiental-Cildo Meireles (1963-1970)" (PhD diss., Universidade de São Paulo, 2007).

⁶³ Ferreira Gullar, "Teoria do não-objeto," *Jornal do Brasil*, Suplemento Dominical (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil), 19-20 December 1959. On Gullar and the non-object, see Renato Rodrigues Da Silva, "Ferreira Gullar's Non-Object, or How Neoconcrete Poetry Became One with the World," *Word & Image* 29.3 (2013): 257-272; and Mariola V. Alvarez, "The Anti-Dictionary: Ferreira Gullar's Non-Object Poems," *Nonsite.org* 9 (April 2013), URL: <https://nonsite.org/feature/the-anti-dictionary-ferreira-gullars-non-object-poems>.

⁶⁴ Aracy A. Amaral, *Projeto Construtivo Brasileiro na Arte (1950-1962)* (Rio de Janeiro: Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro, 1977), 87. Author's own translation.

⁶⁵ For a reconsideration of phenomenology and the non-object, see Sérgio Bruno Martins, "Phenomenological Openness: Historicist Closure: Revisiting the Theory of the Non-Object," *Third Text* 26.1 (2012): 79-90. On relational objects, see Rebecca Kosick, "On the Matter of the Concept Ferreira Gullar's Relational Poetics," *Luso-Brazilian Review* 54.2 (2017): 108-128.

hand, the works reference specific Neoconcrete principles through aspects of participation and the non-object as well as modernist ideas through the employment of geometric abstraction. Moreover, by setting these works outdoors—especially outside the sanctioned space of the museum—he realizes the desires of contemporary artists who were searching for alternative sites for performances and happenings. Nevertheless, in his reinterpretation of existing forms and ideas, he creates something fresh, experimental, and quite individual.

5. RECENT MANIFESTATIONS OR INTERACTIVE INSTALLATIONS

Antonio Manuel's recent manifestations or installations combine a well-thought-out visual design with a heightened or charged response to a past or present situation.⁶⁶ Two divergent examples will be described. The first is an *ambiental* piece, *Fantasma* (phantom), that was initially installed in 1993 in Brasília (later expanded and exhibited in 1994 at the Instituto Brasil-Estados Unidos [IBEU], Rio de Janeiro), using nearly one thousand lumps of natural charcoal suspended and filling the gallery space (Fig. 5).⁶⁷ The work follows a geometric division using an overhead grid to systematically divide the space from which the irregular dark objects dangle by an imperceptible filament.

In spite of the apparent underlying rigid framework, the assorted sizes and shapes of the natural burnt wood pieces, hung at varying levels, make the work appear less geometric and more organic.⁶⁸ The black forms appear as floating fragments that sway slowly, creating overlapping shadows intermittently blocking and revealing light. This visually stunning design gives the work a tranquil yet playful general appearance.



Fig. 5. Antonio Manuel (Brazilian, (1948-). *Fantasma*, 1994. Installation.

⁶⁶ While some variety has already been discussed in his work overall, it is essential to clarify that Antonio Manuel has worked in more traditional mediums, such as drawing and easel painting (particularly, geometric abstraction) at the same time as he constructed his most powerful *ambiental* pieces, manifestations, and films.

⁶⁷ Michael Asbury and Garo Keheyan (eds), *Antonio Manuel* (Cyprus: Pharos Publishers, 2006), 139.

⁶⁸ These lumps of charcoal do not resemble the machine-made charcoal briquettes available in the United States; instead they are natural in shape.

Burnt wood, wire, photo, and flashlights. Photographer Rômulo Fialdini. Courtesy Antonio Manuel.

On closer inspection, a small photo can be seen on the other side of the precarious impediment of swinging obstacles. Suspended on the far wall, flashlights erratically illuminate the image. Bidden to traverse the striking maze, the visitor enters the pendulant barrier, trying to avoid soiling their clothing with the blackened sooty fragments. Approaching the photo, the image comes into focus (Fig. 6).

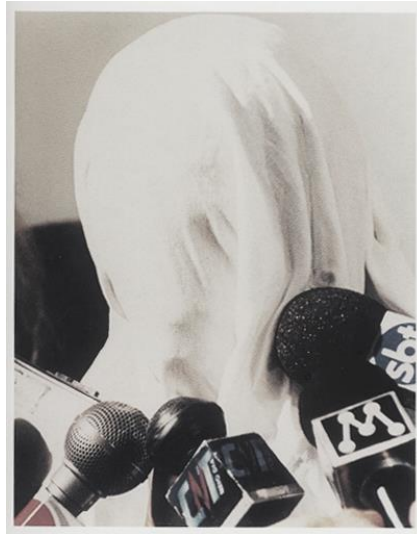


Fig. 6. Photo on the wall. Photo Michel Filho. Courtesy Agência JB and Antonio Manuel.

According to Antonio Manuel:

Torches [flashlights] set at the back of the room attract the viewer to the photo of the Phantom, a hooded person, surrounded on all sides by microphones and tape recorders. The work was ready when I saw, in the *Jornal do Brasil* newspaper, this photo of a witness of a slaughter who had lost his identity and could no longer appear in public.⁶⁹

The title, *Fantasma*, seems to refer to the ghost-like image in the photo: a survivor of the massacre in the streets of the *favela* Vigário Geral carried out by the *esquadrões da morte* ("death squads" or groups of vigilante off-duty policemen) in 1993. This person or phantom in the photo, surrounded by news-press microphones with his face concealed under a white cloth, was present at the bloody encounter and disappeared for his own protection.

⁶⁹ Antonio Manuel, In Carneiro and Pradilla, *Antonio Manuel: Interview*, 2006: doi: <https://www.pharosart.org/Docs/InterviewwithAntonioManuel2.doc>.

In another sense, *Fantasma* could be interpreted as the spirit of the dead or the phantom of the slaughter. The massacre of innocent residents took place by a band of policemen who were retaliating against an earlier incident. As noted by Amnesty International in 1997:

In August 1993, 21 people were killed when a group of hooded and heavily armed men attacked the *favela* of Vigário Geral, Rio de Janeiro. For two hours they shot indiscriminately at local residents. The attack was reportedly carried out in revenge for the killing, two days earlier, of four military police officers who were allegedly murdered by drug traffickers based in the *favela*.⁷⁰

The dismay brought about by perceiving that the *esquadrões da morte* were still active in Brazil at the end of the twentieth century impelled Antonio Manuel to create *Fantasma*. This concern is also apparent in Amnesty International's later report:

In June 2003, Amnesty International was alarmed to discover that, although no individual massacres by police on the scale of Candelária or Vigário Geral are believed to have taken place since then, increasing numbers of unarmed civilians die at the hands of the city's police forces each year.⁷¹

Fantasma, appearing a short time after the slaughter, was a bold statement. In his use of pendent charred wood, a faint reflection of darkness ripples through an otherwise enchanting work, creating an effective response to a horrific event.⁷²

Even though alluding to a specific event, the physical arrangement of the work inspires us to consider possible meaning in a larger sense. In this regard, Guy Brett has suggested that the work "is simultaneously a cosmos and a society, a space through which you weave your way, seeking freedom, and face a dramatic emblem of the disquieted self."⁷³ The effect, according to Esther Emilio Carlos, is like the dispersion of

⁷⁰ "Among the dead were seven men playing cards in a bar and eight members of a family, including a 15-year old girl, killed in their home." Amnesty International, "Brazil: Candelária and Vigário Geral. Justice at a Snail's Pace," 31 May 1997, URL: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR19/011/1997/en>, accessed 2 May 2019.

⁷¹ "Out of the fifty military policemen accused of involvement in the Vigário Geral killings, only two are in prison. None of the survivors or relatives have yet received full compensation from the state." Amnesty International, *Brazil: Rio de Janeiro 2003: Candelária and Vigário Geral 10 years on*, 27 August 2003, opening summary, URL: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr19/015/2003/en/>, accessed 2 May 2019.

⁷² Bryan McCann, *Hard Times in the Marvelous City: From Dictatorship to Democracy in the Favelas of Rio de Janeiro*, (Durham: Duke UP, 2014), 165.

⁷³ Guy Brett, "States of Fear and Freedom," In *Fatos: Antonio Manuel*, exh. cat. (São Paulo: Centro Cultural do Banco do Brasil, 2007), 138.

a meteor shower or “an explosion” where “particles are formed or deformed by the violent speed of the burst.”⁷⁴

Be that as it may, the elegant form and the use of a simple natural materials gives the installation a graceful beauty. Yet, the difficulty in traversing the space (without running into the charcoal pieces) sets obstacles in one’s path. Taken together, the outward elegance and implied inner darkness seems to warn us to be wary that appearances can be deceiving. That is to say, this interactive work hints at a hidden threat that may lurk behind an outward attractiveness.

The second work with a finely tuned response to a past situation is the installation *Ocupações/Descobrimentos* (Occupations/Discoveries), 1998, initially produced for the 500th anniversary of the “discovery” of Brazil by the Portuguese explorer, Pedro Álvares Cabral. In this work, a number of brick walls were constructed in the Museu de Arte Contemporânea, Niteroi (MAC-Niteroi), designed by the Brazilian architect Oscar Niemeyer (Figs. 7 y 8). The walls created barriers which curved in wavelike structures inside a museum that is shaped by organic form; as a result, creating, as Antonio Manuel notes, a “dialogue and integration with the architecture.”⁷⁵



Figs. 7 y 8. Antonio Manuel (Brazilian, (1948-). *Ocupações/Descobrimentos*, 1998/2007, bricks, mortar, and industrial paint. Photographer Rômulo Fialdini. Courtesy Antonio Manuel.

One side of each of the seven walls was smoothly plastered and painted bright and shiny red, yellow, dark grey, or white; while the other side was left unpainted and

⁷⁴ Esther Emilio Carlos, *Antonio Manuel*, exh. cat. (Rio de Janeiro: IBEU, 1994), 3.

⁷⁵ Antonio Manuel, email communication with the author, 14 November 2017. Since this is a “site-specific” work, the meanings or allusions shift as the location changes (Michael Asbury, “Antonio Manuel: Occupations/Discoveries,” In *Antonio Manuel*, Michael Asbury and Garo Keheyan [eds], exh. cat. [Cyprus: Pharos Publishers, 2006], 20-51, here 47).

unplastered rough terracotta brick. Once the mortar was set, Antonio Manuel started breaking open passages with a sledgehammer for spectators to peer or travel through. "When one makes the journey in one direction, the work recalls colonial houses, their colors and textures. In the opposite direction, one only sees bricks evident without any plaster; another reality, that is also Brazil," noted the artist, "In this journey, we have, then, the well-finished, [and] the *work in progress*" with "walls blocking the way and, at the same time, being broken open."⁷⁶ That is to say, the glossy painted walls represent the cultured or refined construction in Brazil, whereas the coarse unfinished walls suggest a simpler or even rougher existence.

In the interpretation of Michael Asbury, *Ocupações/Descobrimientos* relates to "South Americans who became culturally divided by the legacy of colonialism." While Brazil was initially isolated, the country evolved by absorbing multiple influences. "In this sense the perforations in the installation's walls could be read as a comment on the impossibility of absolute cultural isolation."⁷⁷ Brito had earlier suggested that, "It is as if Antonio Manuel is reactivating the initial urge of the discoveries, the uncertainty of their routes, their dramatic emphasis, ultimately, the basic restlessness that drove them on."⁷⁸ Alternatively, Guy Brett has proposed that the holes could suggest divergent ideas: in one sense, the force needed to break through the walls can be read as violent and, consequently, seen as a violation; in another sense, one could interpret the breach as opening up the walls, in the sense of a new liberation.⁷⁹

Following from these ideas, the rupture of the walls could allude to the colonial passage, the past occupation of Brazil by the Portuguese, a violation, a liberation, or the connections between Brazil and other countries. Antonio Manuel's actions could be therefore interpreted as: poetically rupturing the symbolic walls built up by the colonizer or pushing aside the cultural remains left behind by colonization. The work is able to inspire a range of reactions and interpretations from more negative to positive depending on the interpretation of the spectator.

In any case, the symbolism in physically penetrating the walls opens new passages to surprising views that entice the viewer to traverse or navigate to the other side. As noted by Antonio Manuel, this work relates to the desire "to break down and question barriers."⁸⁰ In this sense, he has designed a work that transgresses boundaries. On one

⁷⁶ Antonio Manuel, In *Antonio Manuel: Entrevista a Lúcia Carneiro e Ileana Pradilla* (Rio de Janeiro: Lacerda Editores, 1999), 57. Note that the phrase, "work in progress," was in English in the original Portuguese text.

⁷⁷ Michael Asbury, "Antonio Manuel: Occupations/Discoveries," 21.

⁷⁸ Ronaldo Brito, "Lírica Física," In *Antonio Manuel*, exh. cat., trans. Sofia Gomes, Michael Greer, and Peter Ingham (Porto: Fundação Serralves, 2001), 31.

⁷⁹ Brett, "States of Fear and Freedom," 138-39.

⁸⁰ Antonio Manuel, interview with Beverly Adams, "Interview: Antonio Manuel," In *Antonio Manuel: I Want to Act, Not Represent!* (New York: Americas Society and São Paulo: Associação para o Patronato Contemporâneo), 2011, 117.

hand, the rupturing of walls brings together people and spaces previously separated. On the other hand, since the spectator is free to participate in the expedition, the setup of the work would encourage individuals not only to find a way to dissolve impediments but also to create their own paths.⁸¹

Despite the fact that *Ocupações/Descobrimentos* is related to the colonial discovery and occupation, the work is not dark or ominous in appearance. For the participant, bright colors add an appealing visual aspect to the investigation. To some extent, the walls emulate geometric abstractions (in the rectangular forms and pure colors), although organic shapes (such as the curved walls or ruptured holes) have also been introduced. The work is multifaceted; the physicality of the work highlights the use of the senses of sight, touch, and hearing while the methods of construction and destruction allude to architecture in Brazil (through the use of terracotta bricks as well as in the contrast of the rough and smooth opposing sides of the walls).

These two recent works, *Fantasma* and *Ocupações/Descobrimentos*, were both initiated in response to specific past situations – whether the actions of twentieth-century death squads or the colonial infiltration – and could be considered political works; yet, as I have pointed out, each work can elicit multiple and interconnected interpretations from the active spectators. These ambiental pieces appear inviting but contain references to a controversial confrontation or conflict (including the control or domination by one group). As interactive installations, they encourage the participant to venture forward, experience the environment, and discover. As noted by Magedanz, “One advantage of the allusive form is its ability to produce a playful conversation involving the artist, the audience, and the materials of culture.”⁸² In making their journey and reflecting on the allusions and the experience, the observer essentially collaborates with the artist to create their own unique sense of the artwork.

Informed by a mixture of modernist and contemporary developments, Antonio Manuel’s artworks have varied over time from geometric to organic, from two-dimensional to three-dimensional, and from drawings to manifestations and performances. Whether the content is political, lyrical, ludic, or provocative, these pieces engage the viewer and evoke diverse responses. His creative allusions encourage the viewer to participate in the construction of meaning; thus, his work brings together the artist’s conception and design with the spectator’s experience and interpretation.

Antonio Manuel began to use allusion during the early years of the dictatorship. He continued to expand on methods for using concealed references in a unique and personal manner. Covert references allow the artist to create a work that can have both specific cultural significance (related to particular events and actions) and wide-ranging

⁸¹ Even though Antonio Manuel’s work was designed for the anniversary of the arrival of Cabral in Brazil, the meaning is not necessarily relegated only to the colonial past. The use of allusion allows the sense of the work to traverse periods.

⁸² Magedanz, “Allusion as Form,” 170.

implications (that can be many-sided and interconnected). In choosing an indirect method of making references, rather than an explicit or didactic approach, he allowed his creations to become multifarious. As I have maintained, Antonio Manuel developed a sense for using allusion in a manner that became an indispensable part of his repertoire.

6. WORKS CITED

- Abreu, Alzira Alves de. « Um novo olhar sobre os jornalistas. Os depoimentos orais », *Sur le journalisme, About journalism, Sobre jornalismo* 1.1 (2012): 96-104.
- Abreu, Alzira Alves de (et al). *A imprensa em transição: o jornalismo brasileiro nos anos 50*, Rio de Janeiro: Editora da FGV, 1996.
- Adams, Beverly. "Interview: Antonio Manuel." In *Antonio Manuel: I Want to Act, Not Represent!* New York: Americas Society and São Paulo: Associação para o Patronato Contemporâneo, 2011, 102-117.
- Alvarez, Mariola V. "The Anti-Dictionary: Ferreira Gullar's Non-Object Poems," *Nonsite.org* 9 (April 2013), <https://nonsite.org/feature/the-anti-dictionary-ferreira-gullars-non-object-poems>
- Amaral, Aracy A. *Projeto Construtivo Brasileiro na Arte (1950-1962)*. Rio de Janeiro: Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro, 1977.
- Amnesty International, "Brazil: Rio de Janeiro 2003: Candelária and Vigário Geral 10 years on." 27 August 2003, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr19/015/2003/en/>, accessed 2 May 2019.
- . "Brazil: Candelária and Vigário Geral. Justice at a Snail's Pace." 31 May 1997, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR19/011/1997/en>, accessed 2 May 2019.
- Andrade, Marco Antonio Pasqualini de. "Uma poética ambiental-Cildo Meireles (1963-1970)." PhD diss., Universidade de São Paulo, 2007.
- Antonio Manuel*. Trans. Sofia Gomes, Michael Greer, and Peter Ingham. Porto: Fundação Serralves, 2001.
- Antonio Manuel*. Trans. Paulo Henrique Britto. Rio de Janeiro: Centro de Arte Hélio Oiticica, 1997.
- Antonio Manuel: Eis o Saldo: textos, depoimentos e entrevistas*. Rio: FUNARTE, Ministério da Cultura, 2010.
- Asbury, Michael and Garo Keheyian (eds). *Antonio Manuel*. Cyprus: Pharos Publishers, 2006.
- Augustinho, Aline Michele Nascimento. "A memória, o grupo e o ator: ligações e tensões acerca da formação da identidade do militante estudantil de 1968." (2015): 310-f., <https://repositorio.unesp.br/bitstream/handle/11449/134116/000855993.pdf?sequence=1>, accessed 25 March 2020.

- Barbosa, Marialva. *História cultural da imprensa Brasil, 1900-2000*. Rio de Janeiro: Mauad Editora Ltda, 2007.
- Barreto, Ivana. "As realidades do jornalismo cultural no Brasil," *Contemporânea* 4.2 (2006): 65-73.
- Bittencourt, Francisco. "A aventura de Antonio Manuel," *Tribuna da Imprensa*, Rio de Janeiro, 17 November 1975.
- Brett, Guy. "States of Fear and Freedom," In *Fatos: Antonio Manuel*. São Paulo: Centro Cultural do Banco do Brasil, 2007.
- Brito, Ronaldo. "Lírica Física," In *Antonio Manuel*. Trans. Sofia Gomes, Michael Greer, and Peter Ingham. Porto: Fundação Serralves, 2001.
- . "Fluido labirinto," In *Antonio Manuel*. Trans. Paulo Henrique Britto. Rio de Janeiro: Centro de Arte Hélio Oiticica, 1997.
- . *Neonconcretismo: vértice e ruptura do projeto construtivo brasileiro*. Rio de Janeiro: FUNARTE/Inap, 1985.
- . "Jornais do Espaço: Escultura de Antonio Manuel," *Módulo*, 62 (1981): 48.
- . "Os Gestos de Manuel," *Opinião*, 14 November 1975.
- Calirman, Claudia. *Brazilian Art Under Dictatorship: Antonio Manuel, Artur Barrio, and Cildo Meireles*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2012.
- Campos, Augusto de, Décio Pignatari, and Haroldo de Campos. *Teoria da Poesia concreta: textos críticos e manifestos, 1950-1960*. São Paulo: Edições Invenção, 1965.
- Canejo, Cynthia. "The Resurgence of Anthropophagy: Tropicália, Tropicalismo and Hélio Oiticica," *Third Text*, 18.1 (2004): 61-68;
- . "Gestos Efêmeros e obras tangíveis: A trajetória de Antonio Manuel." *Novos Estudos*, 76 (Nov 2006): 265-274.
- Carlos, Esther Emilio. *Antonio Manuel*, Rio de Janeiro: IBEU, 1994.
- Cavalcanti, Jardel Dias. "Artes plásticas: vanguarda e participação política-Brasil anos 60-70." PhD diss., Universidade Estadual de Campinas, 2005.
- Cocchiarale, Fernando and Anna Bella Geiger (eds). *Abstractionismo, geométrico e informal: A vanguarda brasileira nos anos cinqüenta*. Rio de Janeiro: FUNARTE, 1987.
- Duarte, Paulo Sergio. "Amílcar de Castro ou a aventura da coerência." *Novos Estudos*, 28 (Oct 1990): 152-58.
- Dunn, Christopher. *Contracultura: Alternative Arts and Social Transformation in Authoritarian Brazil*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016.
- . *Brutality Garden: Tropicália and the Emergence of a Brazilian Counterculture*. Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2001.
- Fatos: Antonio Manuel*. São Paulo: Centro Cultural do Banco do Brasil, 2007.
- Ferreira, Marieta de Moraes. "A reforma do Jornal do Brasil," In *A imprensa em transição: o jornalismo brasileiro nos anos 50*, Alzira Alves Abreu (et al). Rio de Janeiro: Editora da FGV, 1996.
- Figueiredo, Luciano. "The Other Malady." *Third Text* 8.28-29 (1994): 105-116.

- Freitas, Artur. "Contra-arte: vanguarda, conceitualismo e arte de guerrilha – 1969-1973" PhD diss, Universidade Federal do Paraná, 2007.
- . "Arte e movimento estudantil: análise de uma obra de Antonio Manuel." *Revista Brasileira de História* 25.49 (2005): 77-97.
- Fuchs, Isabela Marques. "Provocação e participação: a evocação do momento presente em 'Urnas Quentes' de Antonio Manuel: (1968)." *Revista Ciclos* 4.8 (2017): 92-101.
- George, David. *The Modern Brazilian Stage*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992.
- Green, James N. (et al.), "The Rise of Student Movements": <https://library.brown.edu/create/fivecenturiesofchange/chapters/chapter-7/student-movement/>, accessed 16 June 2019.
- Greene, Roland. "From Dante to the Post-Concrete: An Interview with Augusto de Campos", *The Harvard Library Bulletin* 3.2 (Summer 1992), <http://www.ubu.com/papers/greene02.html>, accessed 6 June 2019
- Gullar, Ferreira. "Teoria do não-objeto." *Jornal do Brasil*. Suplemento Dominical (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil), 19-20 December 1959.
- Irwin, William. "The Aesthetics of Allusion," *Journal of Value Inquiry* 36 (2002): 521-532.
- Jardim, Reynaldo. "Interview with Reynaldo Jardim" In *Preto no branco: A arte gráfica de Amílcar de Castro*, Yanet Aguilera (ed), trans. Natália Giossa Fujita. São Paulo: Discurso Editorial; Belo Horizonte: Editora UFMG, 2005.
- Jesus, Diana Vaz de. "Apropriação e inserção na contra-arte da geração AI-5," MA thesis, Universidade Estadual Paulista, 2010.
- José, Helena (et al). "A Factor-Analytic Study of the Multidimensional Sense of Humor Scale with a Portuguese Sample," *North American Journal of Psychology* (2007): 595-610.
- Kosick, Rebecca. "On the Matter of the Concept Ferreira Gullar's Relational Poetics," *Luso-Brazilian Review* 54.2 (2017): 108-128.
- Langlard, Victoria. *Speaking of Flowers: Student Movements and the Making and Remembering of 1968 in Military Brazil*. Durham/London: Duke University Press, 2013.
- Lessa, Washington Días. "Amílcar de Castro e a reforma do Jornal do Brasil." In *Dois Estudos de Comunicação Visual*. Rio: Editora UFRJ, 1995.
- Machado, Vanessa Rosa. "Lygia Pape: espaços de rupture." MA thesis, Universidade de São Carlos, São Carlos, 2008.
- Magedanz, Stacy. "Allusion as Form: The Wasteland and Moulin Rouge!," *Orbis Litterarum* 61.2 (2006): 160-179.
- Manuel, Antonio. In *Antonio Manuel: Interview with Lúcia Carneiro and Ileana Pradilla*, trans. Lya Valeria Grizzo Serignolli, <https://www.pharosart.org/Docs/InterviewwithAntonioManuel2.doc>, accessed 21 February 2019.

- Marcondes, Renan. "Espaços de Ajuste, Corpos em Ajuste: Validação, Nomeação e a Transformação de um Corpo em Obra," *eRevista Performatus*, 2.9 (Mar. 2014), <https://performatus.com.br/estudos/antonio-manuel/>, accessed 16 June 2019.
- Martins, Sérgio Bruno. "Phenomenological Openness: Historicist Closure: Revisiting the Theory of the Non-Object," *Third Text* 26.1 (2012): 79-90.
- McCann, Bryan. *Hard Times in the Marvelous City: From Dictatorship to Democracy in the Favelas of Rio de Janeiro*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2014.
- Montenegro, Júlio César. *Opinião*, 26 December 1975.
- Morais, Frederico. "O vazio ocupado pelos frutos do espaço," *O Globo*, 28 March 1983.
- . "Frutos do espaço: a virtualidade da imagen," *O Globo*, 7 November 1980.
- Naves, Rodrigo. *A forma difícil. Ensaios sobre arte brasileira*. São Paulo: Editora Ática, 1996.
- Pedrosa, Mário. "Objetos, flans, jornais, e filmes," *A Gazeta*, 15 January 1976.
- Perlman, Janice E. *Favela: Four Decades of Living on the Edge in Rio de Janeiro*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Perrone, Charles A. "From Noigandres to 'Milagre da Alegria': The Concrete Poets and Contemporary Brazilian Popular Music." *Latin American Music Review/Revista de Música Latinoamericana* 6.1 (1985): 58-79.
- Pignatari, Décio. "Entrevistas: Décio Pignatari," In Fernando Cocchiarella and Anna Bella Geiger (eds), *Abstracionismo, geométrico e informal: A vanguarda brasileira nos anos cinqüenta*. Rio de Janeiro: FUNARTE, 1987.
- Ribeiro, Alessandra Monachesi. "Antonio Manuel: corpo, memória e morte," *ARS* (São Paulo) 6.11 (2008): 78-97.
- Ribeiro, Ana Paula Goulart. *Imprensa e História no Rio de Janeiro dos anos 1950*. Rio de Janeiro: E-Papers Serviços Editoriais, Ltda., 2007.
- Ridenti, Marcelo. *O fantasma da revolução brasileira*. São Paulo: Unesp/Fapesp UNESP, 1993.
- Ross, Stephanie. "Art and Allusion," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 40.1 (1981): 59-70.
- Shtromberg, Elena. *Art Systems: Brazil and the 1970s*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2016.
- Silva, Renato Rodrigues da. "Ferreira Gullar's Non-Object, or How Neoconcrete Poetry Became One with the World," *Word & Image* 29.3 (2013): 257-272.
- Skidmore, Thomas. *The Politics of Military Rule in Brazil, 1964-1985*. Oxford University Press, 1990.
- Solt, Mary Ellen. *Concrete Poetry: A World View*. Bloomington/London: Indiana University Press, 1971.
- Trench, Daniel, and André Stolarski. "A Notícia e o diagrama: Entrevista inédita com Amílcar de Castro." *Revista Novos Estudos* 78 (2007): 131-143.
- Valle, Maria Ribeiro do. "As representações da violência nos episódios estudantis de 1968," *Mediações* 13.1-2 (2008): 34-53.

- Van Straten, Roelof. *An Introduction to Iconography: Symbols, Allusions and Meaning in the Visual Arts*. New York/London: Routledge, 2012.
- Wade, Nicholas. *Visual Allusions: Pictures of Perception*. New York/London: Routledge, 2017.
- Warr, Tracey (ed.), *The Artist's Body: Themes and Movements*, London: Phaidon Press, 2000.
- Xavier, Ismail. *Alegorias do subdesenvolvimento: Cinema Novo, Tropicalismo, Cinema Marginal*. São Paulo: Editora Brasiliense, 1993.