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Neo-Pop in Brazil: When Pop Art Addressed Politics

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NEO-POP IN BRAZIL: WHEN POP ART ADDRESSED POLITICS

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the Art and Design Department
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Master in Art History
at
Lindenwood University

By

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ABSTRACT

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Larissa Couto Rogoski, Master of Art History, 2021

Thesis Directed by: Dr. Matthew Bailey

Abstract

After the consolidation of Pop Art in the 1960s, the American movement started to be incorporated and interpreted, on its own terms, outside the United States. In Latin America, Brazilian artists created their own "pop language." Based on qualitative, critical, postcolonial readings of various texts and works of art, I argue that Neo-Pop art in Brazil can be understood as incorporated under the Brazilian concept of "anthropophagic culture." The term "anthropophagy," as defined by Gazi Islam, "marks moments of intercultural contact, where devouring the other at once acknowledges an appetitive desire for appropriation and an aggressive process of deconstruction."[1] Anthropophagy has been used in Brazil since its Modern period and influenced how Brazilian artists interpreted foreign art and appropriated artistic styles.[2] Anthropophagic artistic productions are identified in Brazil as an ambiguous juxtaposition of different stages of capitalist development, creating art that mixes modern content with an archaic content, for example.[3] I argue that one of the styles that was appropriated through anthropophagy was "Pop Art," which in Brazil received a different treatment when compared to its roots in Europe and the United States. Brazilian Neo-Pop Art was more politically direct and

[1] Gazi Islam, "Can the Subaltern Eat? Anthropophagic Culture as a Brazilian Lens on Post-Colonial Theory," *Organization*, 19 (2011), 163. https://doi.org/10.1177/1350508411429396

[2] Bernardo Ricupero, "Original and Copy in Brazilian Anthropophagy," *Sociologia e Antropologia*, no. 3 (2018).

[3] Kobena Maercer, ed., *Pop Art and Vernacular Cultures* (London: The MIT Press, 2007), 102-103.

more openly critical of America's way of life and influence on the politics of Brazil (an influence that had ushered in years of dictatorship). The influence of Umberto Eco's idea of the "open work" also marks an important difference between Brazilian Neo-Pop and American Pop.[4] The Brazilian artists I am calling Neo-Pop were not simply copying or celebrating American Pop Art. Instead, they were creating a distinctly Brazilian Neo-Pop Art language. It is still recognizably Pop, but anthropophagically adapted to a new cultural context.

[4] Umberto Eco, *Open Work* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989).

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Dedication

To Florence

Table of Contents

List of Figures

Introduction

The goal of this work is to analyze Pop Art in such a way as to demonstrate a distinctly Brazilian representation (or "language") of Pop: what I will call Brazilian Neo-Pop.[5] From a theoretical perspective, I will seek to replace the common structuralist/Marxist interpretation of the (lack of) Pop Art in Brazil with a more inclusive postcolonial approach. These structuralist and postcolonial approaches will be discussed in more detail but put simply, I argue against the (structuralist) view that Pop Art can only exist in countries with a sufficiently advanced form of capitalism (such as the United States). I hope to demonstrate that there exists in Brazil art that is recognizably Pop. Of course, that does not mean the Pop in Brazil is identical with that in the U.S. or the United Kingdom (thus, my use of "Neo-Pop").

For example, a major difference between American Pop and Brazilian Neo-Pop, I argue, is that in Brazil, the optimism and consumerism that scholars (often) believed to be glorified in Pop were "anthropophagically" (a concept to be discussed) reinterpreted by Brazilian artists, creating Neo-Pop works. An important part of the transition from Pop to Brazilian Neo-Pop involved following a broader Latin American inclination to adjust Pop by dealing with different political contexts. In Brazil, this results in a form of Pop that is more politically active and more openly critical of American culture. However, before I discuss the concept of Neo-Pop (or the theoretical approach I am taking) in detail, we must first get clear about the concept of Pop Art in general, which I will do for the rest of this introduction.

American Pop Art was born in the 1950s and 1960s when Abstract Expressionism was the dominating artistic force in the United States. Abstract expressionism was a movement that

[5] I will argue for my use of "Neo-Pop" in Section II.

aimed to free art from subject matter, creating something some would call "true" American art. Clement Greenberg, the Abstract Expressionism enthusiast that praised Jackson Pollock, argued that the work of American Abstract Expressionist artists, "constitute the first manifestation of American art to draw a standing protest at home as well as serious attention from Europe, where, though deplored more often than praised, they have already influenced an important part of the avant-garde."[6]

As a reaction to Abstract Expressionism, Pop tried to blur the line between "high" and "low" art. As a result, art critics such as Greenberg did not seem to understand Pop as art, since, from its beginning, Pop Art represented the return of the subject matter.[7] However, that subject matter (as Lucy R. Lippard argues) was depicted through the lenses of consumerism, celebrity cult, or a parody of the ideal.[8] So the subject matter has returned, but in a new way. It tries to blend "high" art with so called "low art" such as advertising. So how should we understand Pop Art? To understand the category of Pop, there are a number of different concepts to consider. Most importantly, we need to understand Pop's relationship to realism and to Dada.

Although Pop is sometimes referred to as "New Realism," the use of realism (the attempt to realistically depict real-world objects, as opposed to expressionistic works, for example) alone does not, I believe, suffice to define Pop. Importantly, Pop is also a style that mimics advertisements and commercial art, meaning that while the objects or figure are comprehensible (in a realistic sense), there is a change in scale, color, or atmosphere that does not allow one to

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[6] Clement Greenberg, "American-Type Painting," in *Art and Culture* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989), 209.

[7] The term Pop Art was first used in 1958 by Lawrence Alloway, a British critic, to designate American mass-media pop culture.

[8] Lucy R. Lippard, *Pop Art* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1968), 9.

see it as a natural representation of reality. As an example, consider Andy Warhol's *Marilyn Monroe,* 1967 (Fig. 1).

Thus, the formal attributes of Pop do not conform perfectly with those of realism. The defined lines and shadows, bright colors, and compositions do not appear merely as realism, but give a sense of familiarity to the work. They communicate using common objects or images known by many viewers, who are thus able to understand the subject. The objects offered "cannot escape recognition, the objects themselves seem a bit slanderous, and the man himself, when appears, does not conceal his lineage from the personalities of advertising posters."[9] The manipulation of images by Pop artists also makes it difficult for them to be called naturalistic. The images are transformed to be recognizable, but not "realistic," "thus the goal of Pop Art is not simply to present, but to transform the image of our contemporary American consumer economy into ambivalent and provocative forms."[10]

Due to its subversive use of mass media images, mass consumption products, and its appearance as a visual comment on the society it is immersed in, some critics think that Pop Art is closer to the Dada movement than it would be to realism. The comparison to Dada can be seen in Marcel Duchamp's (1887-1968) ready-mades, which—like many Pop Art works—seem to feature little work or expression by the artist himself. Duchamp's *Bicycle Wheel,* 1913 (Fig. 2) is the first ready-made in art history. It is a bicycle wheel (as the title aptly describes) that is exhibited mounted upside-down on a wooden stool. Andre Bréton defined ready-mades as a

[9] Carl I. Belz, "Pop Art and the American Experience," *Chicago Review* 17, no. 1 (1964): 107. doi:10.2307/25293848.

[10] John Sandberg, "Some Traditional Aspects of Pop Art," *Art Journal* 26, no. 3 (1967): 231. doi:10.2307/774918.

"material furnished by chance made the focus of attention."[11] Duchamp's ready-mades served to question the concept of authorship, since he chose to barely modify the objects. However, what most influenced Warhol's famous Pop Art works, such as the *Brillo Box*, 1964 (Fig. 3), was the historical and critical reception of Duchamp's ready-mades by the art community (rather than the works themselves). Duchamp's ready-mades were not well-received by the art community, but his conceptualist notion of art made Pop artists like Warhol possible. In the 50 years between Duchamp and Warhol's work, viewers and critics became more used to the idea of an intellectual (rather than material) definition of art.

Dadaism was understood as embracing nihilism and absurdity as main concepts. Dada artists reacted to the world around them with works that did not allow any understanding or rationalization. These Pop predecessors reacted with irony and hostility (which Pop also did), but without giving the audience a safe route of comprehension. Their work became a dialectical movement between the absurd and rational experiment. In contrast, Pop Art was not understood as a nihilistic movement. It was seen as having a positive, even optimistic, outlook on post-war culture (especially consumer culture). Therefore, Pop Art can be distinguished (despite some overlap) both from realistic works, and from the nihilistic works of Dadaism.

What can be said about Pop is that the use of reproduction in the movement (the work itself is often made by someone other than the artist), turns Pop Art into another type of conceptual art (in line with Duchamp's conceptualism). Pop Art can also be seen as influenced by Surrealism and Cubism. Surrealism allows humorous creations that sometimes lack political critique (in contrast with Dada, which often features political critiques). This humor, and also an

[11] J. H. Matthews, *Andre Breton: Sketch for an Early Portrait* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1986), 75.

element of the bizarre, are features that Pop assimilated from Surrealism. While some artists of the Dada movement used art (or anti-art, as they would put it) to deal with World War I, for example (with ironic and chaotic performances, assemblages, or collages), Pop Art did not often engage in direct critique against American capitalism—at least not as assertively as Dada artists.

The relationship between American Pop and American culture is a difficult one. Starting with Lucy R. Lippard's seminal 1966 book *Pop Art*, it has been traditional to see Pop as optimistic and celebratory of American culture and American post-war consumerism.[12] As a result, many scholars assume that Pop Art in the United States did not have a direct engagement with sociological conditions. The audience is understood as having room to interpret the meanings of the works, as well as the author's use of superficially bright-colored and commercial forms (for example). There has been some objection to this optimistic view since Lippard's work, and one can certainly see certain artists as being more critical of American culture or taking a more direct political stance. However, as recently as 2012, Bradford Collins argues that "while many commentators now conclude that Pop in general was actually a critical development," it remains true that "the majority of writers on the subject continue to believe that Pop as a whole was affirmative" of American consumer culture, rather than a form of political critique.[13]

Part of the reason for Pop's lack of explicit cultural critique is that, even when depicting hostility and irony, it uses shared public feelings with its audience that emerge from the common (even nostalgic) objects. The concept of "irony" is often associated with Pop Art. Irony is not

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[12] Lucy R. Lippard, *Pop Art* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1968). Original edition published 1966.

[13] Bradford R. Collins, *Pop Art: The Independent Group to Neo-Pop, 1952-90* (New York: Phaidon, 2012), 9-10. While one could disagree with Collins' assessment of the field, I will follow Collins in this matter.

synonymous with humor here, although irony can be humorous, or even funny. Irony, as a rhetorical instrument is “an attitude, or a perspective on the world (that is, "being ironic"). In other words, irony as an attitude opens the possibility of human emotion, even toward the inhuman objects that occupy our dwellings.”[14] Irony, thus, is the acceptance of ambiguity, even about objects. The ambiguity leaves the viewer with freedom of interpretation, rather than making a clear argument with the work or delivering a clear message about the subject matter, for example. As a result, the audience is often left to wonder if the work is critiquing or celebrating the culture and objects it depicts. Consider again Warhol’s *Brillo Box*, 1964 (Fig. 3). Is his exacting reproduction of the box of Brillo pads a celebration of consumer capitalism? Or is it a critique? The work itself, and the artist, remain ironic (accepting ambiguity).

Sheena Wagstaff provides insight into this ironic stance, when she writes about the mass-produced images of capitalism being used by artists as a means for what she calls “comic relief.” She argues that the artists are trying to deconstruct their cultural system to provoke thoughts on the real and counterfeit. These artists are praising the cultural emptiness (of consumerism, for example) that would otherwise destroy them.[15] The work is ambiguous, in the first place, by choosing commonplace industrial artifacts as a subject matter. This provokes the audience to ask why this particular thing was being transfigured into art. But also, some of the ambiguity is communicated through irony, in other words, laughter. Pop art, thus, uses the familiarity of the object or figure to look into its own culture, symbols, cults, and myths. Because of this familiarity the message can be plural, unlike in the case of advertising (and publicity, mass

[14] Valerie R. Renegar and Charles E. Goehring, “A/In (Further) Defense of Irony,” *JAC*, no. 1/2 (2013), 316.

[15] Jennifer Higgie, *The Artist’s Joke* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2007), 79-80.

media, and so on). In these cases, the message is simple, direct, and should call for action (mostly to buy an item or lifestyle). In Pop art, despite sharing commonalities with commercial art, however, the call to consumerism is not the only possible interpretation. This leaves the viewer with critical possibilities about how to define or interpret the work.

Given the ironic/ambiguous nature of Pop Art, and how closely it is intertwined with its cultural context, an interesting question is: can Pop Art exist outside of the United States? Does Pop Art only make sense in the culture it was first created in? This thesis seeks to address that question. To do so, it will focus specifically on the context of Brazilian art and artists in the 1960s.

The term Pop is not normally encountered in Brazilian art history, with potential Pop works in the Brazilian context usually labelled instead under "New Figuration," a more general term used to address the new interest by Brazilian artists in figuration, or the subject matter. The reasons for this seeming lack of Brazilian Pop are complex. Firstly, Brazilian scholars often analyze art in relation to socioeconomics, following the structuralist tendencies of the field as well as the Marxism common for Brazilian scholars. If one follows these Structuralist/Marxist methodologies, Pop could be seen as a (perhaps problematic) reaffirmation of American culture and beliefs. As we shall see, some structuralists (such as the Brazilian critic Mario Pedrosa), even argue that Pop Art is impossible in a country that does not have a sufficiently developed capitalist economy.

Potential Neo-Pop Brazilian artists, moreover, would not usually self-proclaim themselves as Pop. There may be multiple reasons for this hesitance, but a major one is that in Brazilian "Neo-Pop," the use of commercial art of American products and symbols was seen as a

sign of American influence in the culture and art.[16] This is true not only of American brands, but also of a positive reception of a certain "American way of life." A potential celebration of American culture was criticized by many who, instead, aimed for a unique Brazilian identity in culture and artistic movements. Likewise, American critics "had harshly criticized many Latin American artists because of their apparently unconditional acceptance of international currents in modern art, seeing the art as a continuance of colonial domination."[17] There was therefore both internal and external pressure not to be seen as accepting colonial or cultural domination. The political reasons for this hesitance will be discussed in more detail in Section III of this work.

Brazilian artists, I will argue, did not copy the Pop style, but rather reintroduced it in the Brazilian context, while offering a critique against the Americanized Brazilian culture that followed American intervention in the country during the 1960s (and the following dictatorship). Although Brazil was never an American colony, it was seen, during the 1960s and following years, that the United States had a colonial influence in the culture, society, and economics of the Latin American country. Because of this colonial relationship, Neo-Pop in Brazil can be usefully investigated via a postcolonial methodology. This methodology also allows for the addition of Latin American voices to the European and American legacy of Pop Art, revealing how the language of Pop was not limited to Europe and the United States, but existed, on its own terms, in other countries and cultures. Thus, the methodology applied in this thesis will be qualitative and postcolonial.

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[16] Caetano Veloso, *Verdade Tropical*, (Sao Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1997), 265.

[17] Fabiana Serviddio, "Exhibiting Identity: Latin America Between the Imaginary and the Real." *Journal of Social History* 44, no. 2 (2010): 490.

Using this methodology, I argue that Neo-Pop artists in Brazil were not only using American Pop to criticize foreign influence but were also adding a uniquely Brazilian language to Pop Art, which I will call Brazilian Neo-Pop. I believe that there are three major components that distinguish Brazilian Neo-Pop from American Pop. The first is the Brazilian postcolonial "anthropophagic" approach to culture. The second is the influence of Umberto Eco's concept of the "open work." And the third is an increased willingness to be politically engaged (and, as a result, more openly critical of American intervention on Brazilian politics and culture). All of these features will be explained and expanded upon in the course of this thesis (especially in Section IV).

Perhaps the primary difference between American Pop and Brazilian Neo-Pop is the introduction of the Brazilian concept of anthropophagy (which is a central component of Brazil's postcolonial self-understanding). Brazil's colonial history is different from that of the U.S., and its relation to the U.S. is complicated. Postcolonialism (and anthropophagy) is used here to argue that Brazilian culture appropriated Pop but did not create derivative works. Instead, Neo-Pop was in dialogue with both local and global cultural conditions. The Brazilian artists I am calling Neo-Pop were not mere copies of American artists or styles, but created, in an anthropophagic context, their own manifestation of a style that is influenced by the language and subject matter of Pop. This is true despite arising in a different socio-cultural context and with different intentions. The anthropophagic method is how Brazilian artists comprehend the process of assimilating foreign influence through the anthropophagic method. The artist "eats" the dominant culture/art and adds local art influences, symbols, or narratives. The Brazilian artists deals with foreign influence while creating something for a Brazilian audience (and in dialogue with a local art history).

Anthropophagy does not demand the resulting work have political meanings or messages. However, the anthropophagic act or process is inherently political in a sense. It involves a cultural, economic, and political context in which one party is "underdeveloped," or relates to a more dominant culture. So, it is a question of cultural identity. What does it mean to be Brazilian, in the context of this broader context? I argue that, in the case of Brazilian Neo-Pop Art, political meanings will play a large role, due to the complex political relationship between Brazil and America.

To make the case for the existence of a Brazilian Neo-Pop Art, this thesis will be divided into multiple sections. Firstly, I will provide a literature review and methodology section to outline some of the relevant research on this topic. In the second section, I will define the terms I am using and clarify my usage of "Neo-Pop" art. In the next section, I will briefly outline the American influence on Brazilian politics during the 20th century (and thus describe the political context for the Brazilian reception of American Pop Art). Section IV will discuss early Pop Art in Brazil, focusing on Waldemar Cordeiro and his "Popcretos" in the early 1960s. Cordeiro was the only Brazilian artist, at that time, to openly admit the influence of American Pop in his work. To understand Cordeiro's approach to "Pop Art + Concrete Art," the section will turn to Umberto Eco's concept of the "open work" and Oswald de Andrade's concept of "anthropophagy." The next section will provide a detailed description of two important 1965 exhibitions that grew out of Cordeiro and his influence: *Opinião 65* and *Propostas 65* (exhibitions that are certainly Pop influenced and, I argue, already Neo-Pop). These important exhibitions would cause a rupture with the Concrete and Neo-Concrete movements (from the 1950s) and pave the way for the IX São Paulo Biennial in 1967 (the first formal international Pop Art exhibition in Brazil, featuring American artists). The conclusion of the thesis makes

some general observations about the style of Neo-Pop in Brazil. It compares and contrasts Brazilian Neo-Pop with the Pop works created in America and Europe, as exemplified by works from artists such as Cildo Meireles and Hélio Oiticica.

I. Literature Review/ Methodology

Because Pop is often at the center of the debate about technique (or lack of), scholars dealing with Pop need to address formalistic characteristics to not only define the style but also to approach the frequent discussion about copying and originality. Bradford R. Collins, for example, spends part of his analysis diving into the formal aspects of Pop.[18] Collins refers to Roy Lichtenstein's work, noting the influence of Japanese prints. Collins argues that Lichtenstein was not merely copying comic book illustrations but demonstrating how to elevate them to a high art level.

Pop Art, especially in the United States, has been analyzed under formalist and structuralist methodologies that often refer to the style as Postmodern, especially in contrast to Modern art. Such structuralist methods often focus on the symbols that Pop Art portrays, arguing that they are used as a way to interpret the consumerist culture that created them. For example, structuralist authors such as Lucy R. Lippard interpreted symbols such as the Campbell's Soup Cans or an image of Marylin Monroe as a brighter/optimistic way to look at a post-war world. Lippard notices a celebration of pop culture in these consumer symbols. She also notes the younger orientation of Pop artists, seeing Pop as a generational art that was part of its culture, in both creation and reception.[19]

Structuralist methodology was also employed in the Brazilian academy and art criticism during the 1960s and, to this day, many scholars still rely on the methodology to analyze art in relation to structures of power and its societal implications. A Marxist approach is also common

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[18] Bradford R. Collins, *Pop Art: The Independent Group to Neo-Pop, 1952-90* (New York: Phaidon, 2012), 103-104.

[19] Lucy R. Lippard, *Pop Art* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1968), 9.

in the Brazilian academy, because (as we shall see in the context of Neo-Pop) many critics and intellectuals in Brazil during the 1960s would be occupied with the socio-economic applications of art and its call for change. Art was understood as a product of its social context. Because of this, the Brazilian relationship to American Pop Art was complex.

One of Pop Art's most prominent Brazilian critics was Mario Pedrosa, who understood Pop Art as anti-art that conformed to the canon and was a style that inspired conformism and optimism.[20] Pedrosa would call Neo-Pop artists "Popistas of Underdevelopment." The term was a juxtaposition of (Pop) American capitalism with (the Underdevelopment of) Brazil's economic status: "[the American Pop] aptly reflected the pervasiveness of an already established consumer culture; [Brazilian Pop] meanwhile, reflected the effects of foreign investment and economic growth, and of Brazil's rapid transition toward that financial model."[21]

Anti-Pop attitudes in Brazil often argue for Pop as a strictly American movement. As Alexandre Pedro de Medeiros describes, critics might deny the creation of Pop outside of the Anglophone context by looking at Pop works through the lenses of pseudomorphism—a definition given by Erwin Panofsky to works that (even if identical in form) are different at a genetic level, or carry a distinguished ethos.[22] The main theme of the cautionary discourse is that, during the 1960s, Brazil was not the stage of an optimistic post-war context but stood at the doors of dictatorship and anything other than a reaction to this political event could not exist.[23]

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[20] Gloria and Paulo Herkenhoff Ferreira. *Mario Pedrosa: Primary Documents* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2015), 200.

[21] Sofia Gotti, "Popau, Pop, or an 'American Way of Living'?" *ARTMargins* 5, no. 2 (2016): 109.

[22] Alexandre Pedro de Medeiros, "The Limits of the Global Pop and its Exhibitions: a Brazilian Critique to the Expanded Pop" *Modos*, no. 3 (2018): 57.

[23] Marcos and Mariana Martins Villaca Napolitano, "Tropicalismo: As reliquias do Brasil em debate," *Revista Brasileira de Historia*, no. 35 (1998), 61.

Even if the 1960s started with Tropicalia and its bright and vivid representations in music and in the art of Hélio Oiticica, the decade would end with the heroes of the movement victims of censorship.[24]

Pop Art is a difficult movement to define. According to Natalia de la Rosa, to think about Pop Art in Latin America is to assume the relation of the US with the rest of the continent. Rosa writes that Pop Art works in Latin America "are works that respond and exhibit an extreme condition of capitalism by claiming an alternative where theory, like art, sought to merge with life."[25] Latin American artists wanted to modify the conditions of capitalism according to their place. With the same idea, Oscar Masotta observes Pop Art as a movement that uses images, or Pop images, as codes that can be cracked in multiple ways and are subject to local cultures.[26]

Luis Camnitzer had a contrary understanding of the Pop Art made in Brazil, Argentina, and Colombia. According to Camnitzer, Pop is a movement and not something that can be appropriated, causing vernacular Pop art such as seen in Brazil to be a folklorized version of the formal movement developed in New York.[27]Against Camnitzer's argument, Camila Maroja will affirm that, instead of a movement, Pop Art in Latin America is better understood as a verb with which art is created—using a shared visual language, the final meaning of which is defined by the insertion in a given culture.[28]

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[24] Celso Favaretto, *Tropicalia, Alegoria, Alegria* (Sao Paulo: Atelie Editorial, 1995), 23.

[25] Esther Gabara, ed. *Pop America: 1965 – 1975* (Durham: Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University, 2019), 163.

[26] Gabara, 46.

[27] Gabara, 49.

[28] Gabara, 51.

In Brazil specifically, Sonia Salzstein describes how Pop became associated with a battle of "ideological configurations."[29] The digestion of Pop by anthropophagic artists, observes Salzstein, meant an irreverent attitude toward once-revered institutions of bourgeois society—not only artistic institutions, but also the institution of the public sphere. We can now return to Mario Pedrosa's argument about the status of Brazilian capitalist stage as "underdeveloped." For Pedrosa, Brazil was unable to produce Pop Art. Pop Art, in his understanding, was closely related to stages of capitalism, and Brazil, as a pre-industrial economy being pervaded by capitalism, could not create Pop that was not derivative.[30]

Pedrosa's argument, I believe, can be addressed by taking into consideration Salzstein's argument that the underdeveloped status of Brazil was already the result of capitalist expansion. If to make Pop one should be capitalist, Brazil was easily a candidate, despite not representing the same level of development as the United States. Salzstein describes art in Brazil in the 1950s as following the ideals of the Brazilian-left that endorsed a national-developmentalist project. In the 1960s, especially after the military coup in 1964, this experience of modernity in Brazil would become more mature, she suggests. In other words, the political and cultural synthesis that the art from the 1950s aimed for would mature through engaging its opposite. Rather than synthesis, contradictions arose that allowed the bizarre and pathos to be expressed.[31]

Salzstein does not develop the concept of pathos that she notices in the 1960s in Brazil, but it seems fair to affirm that the choice for other styles that admit the subject matter (such as Pop Art) allowed some pathos, or experience, or even suffering, to be dealt with in art. This was

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[29] Kobena Maercer, ed., *Pop Art and Vernacular Cultures* (London: The MIT Press, 2007), 95.

[30] Gloria and Paulo Herkenhoff Ferreira. *Mario Pedrosa: Primary Documents* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2015), 199-201.

[31] Kobena Maercer, ed., *Pop Art and Vernacular Cultures* (London: The MIT Press, 2007), 102.

also introduced into art by the rupture from movements (based on manifestos and group/collectives of artists) that diluted their individualism to adapt to the collective intentions of their art.

American Pop is seen by scholars such as Cecile Whiting as addressing consumer culture in a dubious fashion—according to Whiting, it is unclear whether the work is criticizing consumer culture or complicit with it.[32] However, the majority of scholars, according to Bradford Collins, see Pop as an affirmation of consumer culture. From this position, however, Collins warns that it is difficult to differentiate Pop Art from popular culture, making Pop Art works indiscernible from cultural artifacts.[33] For example, there would be no discernable distance between Warhol's Brillo Box and the "real" commercial product.

I believe that this issue (of Pop Art's ambiguous relationship to the broader culture) is avoided in the Brazilian approach to Neo-Pop. The Brazilian appropriation of Pop was done in conjunction with the modern Brazilian idea of cultural anthropophagy. To understand the impact of the concept of anthropophagy in Brazil, consider Oswald de Andrade's seminal 1928 text *Anthropophagic Manifest,* which claims to offer a new orientation in Brazilian culture. Andrade argues for the negation of truth as acknowledged by the "canon," or the Eurocentric version that invents what is (high) culture and what is primitive. Andrade's manifesto is a calling to this former colony of Portugal to do something with what is said about these people, to digest the foreigner's culture and truths in their own terms, adding their own local beliefs and culture. This is also known as the "cannibal manifesto," where the "cannibal" concept is playing with the

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[32] Cecile Whiting, *A Taste for Pop: Pop Art, Gender, and Consumer Culture* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 5.

[33] Bradford R. Collins, *Pop Art: The Independent Group to Neo-Pop, 1952-90* (New York: Phaidon, 2012), 10.

notion of the primitive (as in the natives that had to be catechized by the Catholics), and the idea that those natives were cannibals—alluding to the dangerous and animalistic idea of indigenous tribes that must be saved to become humans.[34]

In art, this concept of anthropophagy started in modern literature and the arts and spread into music and other art forms. The meaning of the anthropophagic concept was that there are no more "pure" Brazilian ideas. We have the facts of what was made by Brazilians and their culture, but without the need for "purity." Through anthropophagy, one assumes the foreign culture so that one can appropriate the culture in one's own terms. Anthropophagy works with materials from an internationalized culture by combining them in a local manner, (perhaps with a farcical tone).[35] It is an intersection of various stages of capitalism, where modern forms are used to deal with archaic content.[36] From a postcolonial perspective, despite predating that postcolonial concept, Andrade wanted to invite the mixing of God and "Guaraci," (the sun god of the Native Brazilian Tupi-Guarani people). He strove to mix foreign culture with the local art, and to create a culture that consumed as a colony (politically or culturally) but created as an independent. [37]

In the research I have done, there are a number of different perspectives on what American Pop Art consists of. Some (Whiting) see American Pop Art as an ambiguous comment on American culture, while others (Lippard) see it as optimistic and largely affirmative. Collins

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[34] Antonio Luciano de Andrade Tosta, "Modern and Postcolonial? Oswald de Andrade's 'Antropofagia' and the Politics of Labeling," *Romance Notes* 51, no. 2 (2011), 220.

[35] Jose Luis de la Nuez, "Late Modernism in Latin America and Positions of the Art Criticism," *Aisthesis*, no. 55 (2014), 198.

[36] Kobena Maercer, ed., *Pop Art and Vernacular Cultures* (London: The MIT Press, 2007), 102-103.

[37] Oswald de Andrade. *Do Pau-Brasil a Antropofagia e as Utopias* (Rio de Janeiro: Civilizacao Brasileira, 1972), 17.

argues that the affirmative position is the dominant interpretation among scholars. Likewise, there are a number of opinions among Brazilian scholars about the possibility of Brazilian Pop Art. Some (Pedrosa, Madeiros) argue against the creation (and even the possibility) of Brazilian Pop Art. Others (Salzstein) see Brazilian Pop as an important development that addresses Brazil's cultural and political struggles (for self-identity, and in relations to the United States) in the 1950s and 1960s. My own work in this thesis will align more with Salzstein, as I will argue that Brazilian Pop Art not only exists, but (as a postcolonial position supports) offers a unique development in Pop Art by introducing the concept of anthropophagy and creating a more explicitly political language for (Neo)-Pop Art.[38]

II. Defining the Nomenclature: Neo, not Post, Pop

Now that I have established a variety of academic positions (both American and Brazilian) on the topic of Pop Art, I would like to turn to my argument. Again, I hope to argue that there exists art in Brazil that is recognizably Pop. However, I believe that Brazilians (because of their particular postcolonial situation, and particular political relation to the United States), created Pop works that, while recognizably Pop, have some important differences. Most importantly, they are more politically active and more openly critical of American culture than American Pop, which is generally understood as either optimistic (or, at times, ambiguous) about American consumer culture. Thus, the form was recognizably Pop, but the content and messages often had important differences. In this section, I hope to explain my use of the term "Neo-Pop,"

[38] I bracket the term Neo because it is my own argument that these works are a "new" Pop language that is recognizably distinct from American Pop (or otherwise). Thus, the brackets are a reminder that the Neo language is my own. In some cases, I may label something as Neo-Pop without such stylistic convention, but this should always be understood as an assertion on my part.

as opposed to a concept such as "Post-Pop." In doing so, I will also provide a brief introduction of how Pop arrived in Brazil, which I will expand upon later in this thesis.

When considering art history, it is common to group artists into broad categories in an attempt to establish broader trends. For example, in "modernism," the ways an artist explored the media was often more important than the message.[39] Because of this, some artists abandoned any form of message in their work. Instead, they highlighted the medium in a formalistic style. For example, we can see this emphasis on the media over the message in Jackson Pollock's work and his action painting. Emphasis on the medium (such as action painting, ready-mades, or performance), is the main interest of many modernists. In the case of Duchamp's ready-mades, his goal as part of the Dada movement is one in which the message was so chaotic that some would say it was non-existent. Modernist movements like Abstract Expressionism focused their work on the medium to the point that it would, perhaps, not even speak to people anymore.

As a reaction to modernist tendencies, Pop artists in the 1950s and 1960s believed that the medium is just as important as the message (unlike modernism, which often neglected the message). For example, Andy Warhol was trying to celebrate the ordinary things and returning to a recognizable subject matter. Pop Art, then, brings back the recognizable subject matter from popular culture, creating a dialogue with everyday life and commercial art to establish a message. Consider again Warhol's *Brillo Box* (Soap Pads), 1964 (Fig. 3). The medium of the work is still important (as in modernism), for example in the construction of the boxes and their replication of commercial products. However, the message is also important, as it draws on recognizable cultural subject matter (rather than pure abstraction). Pop art can thus be understood

[39] Modernism, even more so than other categories, is a broad term that encapsulates many artists and styles. It would perhaps be more accurate to say "modernism(s)."

as a form of "Postmodernism" in the sense that it reacts to modernist trends and represents new directions in the art of the period.

The case of Pop Art as the first known Postmodernism is not the only use of "post" as a reaction against the style/period. For example, Post-Impressionist's such as Vincent Van Gogh and Paul Cezanne were known for reacting against the naturalistic depiction of color and light by Impressionists.[40] The use of the prefix "post" usually has the connotation of "reacting against" in its use in art history, as in the examples of Postmodernism and Post-Impressionism.

However, I do not wish to argue that the artists I am calling Neo-Pop are "reacting against" Pop or trying to introduce a brand-new artistic style. Therefore, instead of "post-Pop," the term that I believe better describes the Brazilian works influenced by Pop artists is "Neo-Pop." Neo, meaning new, is a better description of how artists outside the United States were, and are, using the language of Pop. These artists use symbols, color, in similar ways to American Pop. They dialogue with commercial art and popular culture in similar ways as well. They are expressing, I believe, not a reaction against Pop Art, but new ways of implementing the Pop language.

What is known as Pop Art, then, can be found in: the similarities of theme, use of color, scale, and the appropriation of mass consumerism into art. The style of Pop is easily read and attractive to the viewer. Europe, Latin America, and Japan incorporated the American style of Pop in their own terms. One of the first places in which Pop became Neo-Pop was Latin America, which began to occur as early as the 1960s. In 1964, Argentinian Nicolas Garcia

[40] Caroline Boyle-Turner, "Post-impressionism," *Oxford Art Online*, 2003, https://www.oxfordartonline.com/groveart/view/10.1093/gao/9781884446054.001.0001/oao-9781884446054-e-7000068996.

Uriburu's series of buses was one of the first works to be recognized as a regional Pop, or "Pop lunfardo."[41]

As a part of the broader Latin American adoption of Pop, Pop artists were becoming influential in Brazil as well. However, as we have already discussed in the last section, the Brazilian relationship to American Pop was complex. The American Pop that was known in Brazil was often seen as disconnected from its political dimension. For example, one of the most influential art critics in Brazil in the 1960s was Mario Pedrosa (1900-1981), an ex-Trotskyist and a Stalinist dissident. He was a brave defender of the abstract-concrete poetics that flourished in Brazil from 1948 forward. His ideas became public in the fine arts section of: the *Correio da Manhã* newspaper, to which he contributed articles from 1947 to 1952; the *Tribuna da Imprensa* newspaper from 1950 to 1954; and, later, from 1957 to 1971, the *Jornal do Brasil* newspaper. Pedrosa was against any Pop Art influence in Brazilian art and could be understood as a Brazilian Clement Greenberg. He was dismissive of Pop Art as art and praised the antecessor movement that, in Brazil, was the Concrete movement.

Pedrosa would react against the influence of Pop Art in Brazil, stating that in an underdeveloped country, such as Brazil in the 1960s, Pop Art would celebrate capitalism and the American way of life, which he believed would alienate the people from their own culture.[42] Pedrosa would also observe that an underdeveloped country could not even make Pop Art, due to not being at the same stage of capitalism as the United States. Pedrosa understood Pop artists as

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[41] Esther Gabara, ed. *Pop America: 1965 – 1975* (Durham: Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University, 2019), 162.

[42] Gloria Ferreira and Paulo Herkenhoff, *Mario Pedrosa: Primary Documents* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2015), 199.

"technicians of mass production" and conformists. This contradicted Pedrosa's expectations that art should serve politics as a means to call for social change.

Pedrosa's view of American pop as largely ambiguous (or even optimistic) about American culture is in line with many American critics, as we have discussed.[43] Of course, one can disagree with Pedrosa (and Collins), and point to American Pop which does seem to be more politically active. After all, the ambiguity and irony that Pop works presented certainly caused a debate about political optimism in the postwar art made in the United States. Perhaps Pedrosa's dismissal does not comprehend the complexity of Pop works that are comfortable leaving the viewer with an ambiguous message, as we have discussed with Warhol's, *Brillo Box* (Soap Pads), 1964 (Fig. 3), for example. To consider whether Pedrosa was being fair to American Pop, an interesting example to consider is Robert Indiana's *USA 666*, 1964 (Fig. 4). If we consider Pedrosa's comments about the work, do we find them to be entirely fair?

USA 666 depicts a black and yellow abstract commercial sign, reminiscent of highway signs, with the words/commands EAT, HUG, ERR, and DIE (his definition of the American dream). The equal-armed cross symbolizes the warning signs seen on highways, indicating a change ahead. These words (yellow) rest on black backgrounds, beneath the (black) letters "USA," indicating the space in which the words might be understood as commands. Indiana writes that "if it's a subject I feel intensely about then it will mostly certainly contain the color black."[44] One can see these words as a poem representing the cycle of life, all around the central panel marked "USA 666." USA 666 had a personal reference to Indiana, because that was the

[43] Collins, *Pop Art: The Independent Group to Neo-Pop*, 10

[44] "Post War and Contemporary Art Evening Sale: Robert Indiana," *Christie's*, https://www.christies.com/en/lot/lot-5074071 (accessed June 29, 2021).

location of a Phillips 66 sign, the highway leading to the West where his adoptive father, Earl Clarke, abandoned him and his mother.

How does Pedrosa understand this work? Taking the word "eat" into consideration, Pedrosa would say that, according to Indiana, the word meant life. As a mother feeds a child, it is an act of love and kindness.[45] According to Pedrosa, this serves as a confession about the use of advertising techniques to motivate consumption. The technique of using an imperative message is seen here by Pedrosa as similar to an advertising slogan. However, one could say that the work seems closer to a highway sign in order to indicate, directly, a message such as "stop." Pedrosa's conclusion about promoting consumption seems vague because the word "eat" can, indeed, mean to consume. But consumption might not be related to consumerism, as Pedrosa ponders, but to consume as a means to live, to nurture.

One could see the word "eat" as fulfilling a necessary act: "USA EAT." As Roy Lichtenstein affirms, "Pop Art looks out into the world; it appears to accept its environment, which is not good or bad, but different, another state of mind."[46] If the highway sign aspect of the work is taken into consideration, one might see it as a warning message about what comes ahead. "Eat" is expected, just as it is to "die." There is a feeling of certainty and even impending doom that blurs the individual. The sign speaks to a community, the USA. The words with three letters represent a country, a geopolitical agreement comparable to the agreement to call certain landscapes by numbers, such as 66, or Route 66.

[45] Gloria Ferreira and Paulo Herkenhoff, *Mario Pedrosa: Primary Documents* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2015), 200.

[46] Ferreira, 200.

The sign warns about the continuation of the journey. The viewer stands staring at the sign (as a driver) with, hopefully, awareness of what the words mean, what the shape and colors represent, and what action is expected of them. However, unlike a driver, the viewer does not complete the action right away. But along their life, they see a destiny that will happen, fulfilling the American dream created by Indiana. That seems in many ways direct and survivalist instead of an advertisement for consumption as Pedrosa understood. There was an admiration for urban life in some Pop artists that confused critics such as Pedrosa. He believed that if one looks at life to make art, one should only address it with criticism to highlight its problems (specifically socio-economics problems). In Indiana's work, for example, the "politics" is not about a message of change, but an admiration of life as it is that is. In its own way, this is also political and even poetic.

Of course, *USA 666*, like many Pop works, invites different interpretations. One might disagree with Pedrosa, Collins, and others like them, about the political intention of different Pop artists. But it remains true that American Pop was seen by many in Brazil as lacking a clear political messaging. This led some, like Pedrosa, to dismiss or distance themselves from Pop. For others, who I will call Neo-Pop, it led them to create Pop works with more explicit political messages. To understand why there were anti-Pop sentiments in the Brazilian academy, and why political engagement was seen as such an important metric for Brazilian art, it is important to understand the political situation of Brazil in the 1960s. In particular, given that Pop Art was coming in large part from America, we need to understand the complex political relationship between American and Brazil in the 1960s.

III. American Influence in Brazilian Politics

To understand the mindset of critics such as Pedrosa, as well as Brazilian artists who were influenced by American Pop, it is important to understand the political situation in Brazil leading up to the arrival of Pop in the 1960s. The preoccupation of Brazilian Neo-Pop artists with political messaging (in a way not seen in American Pop) can only be understood within the political context of Brazil at the time.

The United States began its "Good Neighbor" policy with Brazil in 1934. This policy emphasized cultural exchange, and officially endorsed the Brazilian President-turned-dictator Getulio Vargas (who became President in 1934, before assuming dictatorial power from 1937-45). The Good Neighbor policy even targeted textbooks in the United States in an attempt to describe Brazil as a resourceful country, rich in products like coffee and rubber. The American presence in Latin American culture was vastly expanded during the 1940s, with the creation of the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs (OCIAA).[47]

In the post-World War II era, Brazilian military trained by U. S. officers became increasingly wary of Vargas' authoritarianism. In 1945, when Vargas planned to cancel the elections to prolong his presidency, the military forced Vargas' resignation and oversaw a new democratic presidential election in Brazil. Two years later, in 1947, Brazil signed the Rio Pact

[47] Darlene J. Sadlier, *Brazil Imagined: 1500 to Present* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008), 210-213. The OCIAA had the goal of taking over the media of Latin America by giving tax exemption American corporate advertisements that cooperated with the OCIAA. During World War II, German films did not reach South America, and the OCIAA successfully established a film monopoly and spread propaganda for the Allied cause in Brazil. Brazilian propaganda films were also shown in the United States, often emphasizing the richness of Brazilian natural resources. For more information, see: Antonio Pedro Tota, *The Seduction of Brazil* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009), *37.*

(Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance), which allied Brazil with the U.S. against the Soviet Union.

The U.S. goal of containing communism led, in 1947, to the National Security Act and the publication of the famous "X article" by diplomat George Kennan. These reinforced the importance of Latin American support, because of its raw materials and its votes in the United Nations. Latin American also represented the last strategic area to support the U.S. if Europe became anti-American. Kennan stipulated two mechanisms of containment: economic aid to allies and regime overthrow in "indulgent" governments.[48] This second "mechanism of containment" in particular would have an influence in Brazil.

In 1961, Brazilian president Janio Quadros resigned unexpectedly, leaving his Vice-President, Joao Goulart, to assume the presidency.[49] The Kennedy administration was suspicious of Goulart as early as 1961 and began working against him, including preparing elements in Brazil for a potential coup. The codename given to the plan to prevent Brazil from following China or Cuba into communism was "Operation Brother Sam." In 1962 President John F. Kennedy's brother Bobby met with Goulart in Brazil. Bobby Kennedy expressed concern about

[48] Anthony W. Pereira, "The US Role in the 1964 Coup in Brazil: A Reassessment," *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 37, no. 1 (2016) https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/blar.12518

[49] Goulart at the time was on a diplomatic trip to China. The army was already suspicious of his leftist tendencies and planned to not allow him to swear-in as president. Leonel Brizola, governor of the state Rio Grande do Sul, mobilized the state's force in support of Goulart, a campaign called "legalism," which caused Goulart to become president under a parliamentary system (to reduce his powers as president).

The U.S. did not issue any condemnation to the attempt to deny Goulart the presidency. J. P. Netto argues that in 1962, with Goulart not endorsing the U.S. position on the invasion of Cuba, Goulart caused the U.S. to become alert about his plans for Brazil – especially after the excitement on the left caused by the Cuban revolution. J. P. Netto, *Pequena História da Ditadura Brasileira (1964–1985)* (Cortez: São Paulo, 2014), 74-75.

the lack of support from Brazil about the Cuban revolution, and Kennedy formed a negative opinion of Goulart.[50]

In March 1964 Goulart announced the Basic Reforms, a plan involving agricultural, financial, electoral, and educational reforms aimed at the plight of the poor. The Reforms called for voting rights for the illiterate, among other changes. The Basic Reforms were not endorsed by certain elements of the Brazilian military and were seen by the U.S. as dangerously communist. As a result, the Johnson administration would then implement "Operation Brother Sam," coordinating the uprising of anti-Goulart elements of the Brazilian armed forces and providing them with an aircraft carrier loaded with arms and ammunition.[51] On March 31, 1964, the coup began. Goulart fled to Rio Grande do Sul, the presidency was declared vacant, and he was forced to admit defeat.[52] Without confrontation, the military forces established a "Supreme Command of the Revolution" and Goulart leaves Brazil to exile in Uruguay.[53] On April 2, Operation Brother Sam was deactivated, and the US government recognized the new dictatorial government of Brazil.

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[50] At a meeting in March 1963 at the White House, Bobby Kennedy urged the U.S. to remove anti-US and leftist politicians from the cabinet in Brazil. Kennedy would warn that "[Goulart] cannot have it both ways, cannot have the communists and put them in important positions and make speeches criticising the United States and at the same time get 225- [2]50 million dollars from the United States. He cannot have it both ways. He has got to really make the choice because you don't have any choice about it." See: White House, *Excerpts from John F. Kennedy's conversation regarding Brazil with US Ambassador to Brazil Lincoln Gordon on Friday 8 March 1963, Meeting 77.1*, President's Office Files, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, Boston, 7–9.

[51] Office of the Historian, 198 *Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Brazil*, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-1968, vol. XXXI, South and Central America; Mexico, 1964, 435. https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v31/d198

[52] Matias Spektor, "The United States and the 1964 Brazilian Military Coup," *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Latin American History*, April 26, 2018. DOI: 10.1093/acrefore/9780199366439.013.551 (accessed June 29, 2021)

[53] "Joao Goulart", *Brazil, Five Centuries of Change*, https://library.brown.edu/create/fivecenturiesofchange/chapters/chapter-6/presidents/joao-goulart/ (accessed June 29, 2021).

The American intervention in the Brazilian government was criticized by leftists in Brazil. However, they also criticized the spread of American culture that started in the 1940s with the OCIAA monopoly of American movies in Brazil and became stronger and more consolidated in other areas of culture. These were signs of cultural imperialism that many Brazilians saw as alienating. After the military coup in 1964, the swift American recognition of the new dictatorial government caused leftists to despise "Americanisms." Of course, they did not know at the time the extent of the American involvement in the coup.

However, even if they were critics of the American intervention, artists were always aware of foreign influence in their art (although some would only admit European influences). As artists such as Caetano Veloso, a Brazilian musician that helped shape the Tropicalia movement (alongside the visual artist Hélio Oiticica), noticed, it was impossible to avoid American influence in Brazilian culture. In Brazil, we joke that one could be a leftist and still drink Coca-Cola. This feeling of pervasive cultural influence led some artists to refuse admitting any American influence, while others would accept it as inevitable. After all, Brazilian artistic identity was far from pure. "Pure" Brazilian art would mean assuming the art of the indigenous peoples. This was something Brazilian artists from the 1960s would understand as folklorization, which they were not interested in (they wanted to be Brazilian but did not to see themselves as connected to a "primitive" culture in this sense).

Groups (such as alliances of workers and students) mobilized against the dictatorship, which resulted in a further implementation of stronger, more violent, civil restrictions. This in turn led to revolutionary forces to oppose the regime. In 1968, the "hardline forces within the military regime gained control of the state apparatus and, in the fifth of a series of institutional acts (Ato Institucional 5, or simply AI-5) dissolved congress, suspended habeas corpus, and

established a regime of strict censorship over journalistic media and cultural production."[54]

Claudia Calirman, explaining the official Neo-Pop that started in 1967 in Brazil, observes that the political climate of tension under the dictatorship in Brazil (especially after 1968 with the institutional act number 5 and the increase in violence), made artists turn their attention to political activism. They were dealing with the problems of a society under a dictatorship.[55] As a result, Brazilian artists were more influenced by Pop works that made sense within their political context. For example, Calirman explains that Brazilian artists were more influenced by Warhol's more "morbid" (or political) works such as the series *Red Race Riot*, from 1963 (Fig. 5). *Red Race* Riot depicted police attacks against civil rights activists in Birmingham, Alabama.

We can see the influence of *Red Race Riot* in Antonio Manuel's *Repressao outra vez – Eis o saldo* (Repression Again – Here is the Consequence), from 1968 (Fig. 6). Manuel's work involves five monumental panels covered by a black cloth, with a white string on top of them. When lifted, the black cloth reveals orange/red-ish reproductions of newspaper pages with photographs of police brutality against protestors of the dictatorship. On one of the silkscreens in red tone the viewer reads: "eis o saldo: garoto morto, morreu um estudante," or "here is the consequence: dead boy, dies a student." Most of the people that went to protests during the dictatorship were artists, journalists, and students. The responses to the protests were brutal, the armed forces (with full military equipment) treated protesters as war enemies, although the students were known for not carrying guns or weapons.

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[54] Christopher Dunn, "'Experimentar O Experimental': Avant-garde, Cultura Marginal, and Counterculture in Brazil, 1968-72." *Luso-Brazilian Review* 50, no. 1 (2013): 230.

[55] Claudia Calirman, *Brazilian Art under dictatorship: Antonio Manuel, Artur Barrio, and Cildo Meireles* (London: Duke University Press, 2012), 15-16.

I hope that I have demonstrated, based on this brief history, that the Brazilian relationship to the United States was very politically and culturally complex. Many artists resented American intervention in Brazil and the U.S. support for the violent dictatorship. As a result, some artists and critics distanced themselves from American Pop Art and denied any association with it. However, there were some Brazilian artists who openly admitted the influence of Pop on their work. The earliest and most influential of these was Waldemar Cordeiro, the artist who in many ways marks the creation of a Brazilian Neo-Pop language.

IV. Waldemar Cordeiro's Popcretos

Neo-Pop will would start in Brazil with Waldemar Cordeiro with his creations called "Popcretos." Cordeiro was the only Brazilian artist to admit the influence of American Pop in his work without addressing the risks of an "American celebration" in making Pop influenced art. Cordeiro, an Italian-Brazilian artist, understood Pop as part of the international scene in which American art such as Pop was changing the way Brazilian artists reacted to the angst caused by political tension. Cordeiro's Popcretos were a clear expression of Neo-Pop under Brazilian terms. They anthropophagically admit the foreigner (American Pop), while digesting it to make local art with local meanings, intentions, and criticism.

The first formal Pop exhibition of American artists would not occur in Brazil until 1967, but that does not mean that Brazilians were unaware of Pop prior to that. During this early (pre-1967) period, Brazilian artists primarily had contact with American and British Pop artists through traveling, or through art magazines. Waldemar Cordeiro would be one of the first artists to have contact with Pop Art while traveling to Italy and would, in 1964, create works that I argue are recognizably Neo-Pop. To understand Cordeiro's early work, it is important to understand two influences. The first is Oswald de Andrade's anthropophagic manifesto (first

created in 1928). This manifesto would be central for Brazilian modernism in general, but we are interested particularly in the Concrete and Neo-Concrete art movements (which Cordeiro was a member of). The expression of these movements in Brazil were influenced by the concept of anthropophagy, as was Cordeiro himself. The other influence necessary for understanding Cordeiro's development is the Italian philosopher and novelist Umberto Eco. In particular, Cordeiro was influenced by Eco's 1962 *Open Work*.[56] In order to understand how Cordeiro came to create his Popcretos, we must first understand these influences.

The *Manifesto Antropófago* (Anthropophagic Manifest), created by Oswald de Andrade in 1928, did not propose a model, but rather a process-like attitude. It was based on the rehabilitation of the primitive concept of "life as devouring" the elements from other cultures to incorporate them into Brazilian culture. The term "anthropophagy," as defined by Gazi Islam, "marks moments of intercultural contact, where devouring the other at once acknowledges an appetitive desire for appropriation and an aggressive process of deconstruction."[57] Anthropophagy has been used in Brazil since its Modern period and influenced how Brazilian artists interpreted foreign art and appropriated artistic styles.[58] Anthropophagic artistic productions are identified in Brazil as an ambiguous juxtaposition of different stages of capitalist development, creating art that mixes modern content with an archaic content.[59]

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[56] Umberto Eco, *Open Work* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989).

[57] Gazi Islam, "Can the Subaltern Eat? Anthropophagic Culture as a Brazilian Lens on Post-Colonial Theory," *Organization*, 19 (2011), 163. https://doi.org/10.1177/1350508411429396

[58] Bernardo Ricupero, "Original and Copy in Brazilian Anthropophagy," *Sociologia e Antropologia*, no. 3 (2018).

[59] Kobena Maercer, ed., *Pop Art and Vernacular Cultures* (London: The MIT Press, 2007), 102-103.

Between the original proposal of Oswald de Andrade (1928) and its re-interpretation in the 1960s (with Neo-Pop and Tropicália, for example), something crucial happened: the emergence, consolidation, and crisis of the Brazilian abstract-concrete avant-garde movements of the 1950s. The anthropophagic method was assimilated by the unfolding of the Concrete (São Paulo) and Neo-Concrete (Rio de Janeiro) avant-garde movements. Concrete art is known for its abstraction, geometric forms, and for rejecting any meaning or symbolism outside of the brute existence of the work itself. Cordeiro was the co-founder of a São Paulo group of Concrete artists, and one of the primary theorists behind the movement.

However, by the 1960s, the pure formal experimentation of the Concrete and Neo-Concrete movements in the postwar period was being left behind, by artists such as Cordeiro, to look for new influences, especially in the urban scene and urban icons.[60] In Brazilian terms, to process this anthropophagic response to Concretism one should imagine, in the example given by Cordeiro, a Cadillac in the middle of an Amazonian indigenous tribe. Cordeiro explained that to understand this composition, one needs to comprehend the meanings of these things as value. Life, says Cordeiro, is natural and artificial, the objects created without the intention of making art are part of a visual manifestation interchangeable with art. Challenging this visual reality, things should carry semantics; the Cadillac in the Amazon tribe opens a new horizon of reality. The consumption of the cultural object (the Cadillac) is understood as a natural stage. This foreign object can have a meaning and values that can mirror everyday life, when given new meanings through the composition.[61]

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[60] Analivia Cordeiro, *Waldemar Cordeiro: Fantasia Exata* (Sao Paulo: Itau Cultural, 2014), 345.

[61] Cordeiro, 48.

The second major influence on Cordeiro's development of the Popcretos is the work of Umberto Eco's, particularly his theory of the "open work." The introduction to the Harvard University Press edition of *Open Work* describes Eco's concept of ambiguity and the "open work" as follows:

> The deliberate and systematic ambiguity of the open work is associated by Eco with a well-known feature of modern art, namely its high degree of formal innovation. Ambiguity, for Eco, is the product of the contravention of established conventions of expression: the less conventional forms of expression are, the more scope they allow for interpretation and therefore the more ambiguous they can be said to be. In traditional art, contraventions occurred only within very definite limits, and forms of expression remained substantially conventional; its ambiguity, therefore, was of a clearly circumscribed kind. In the modern open work, on the other hand, the contravention of conventions is far more radical, and it is this that gives it its very high degree of ambiguity; since ordinary rules of expression no longer apply, the scope for interpretation becomes enormous.[62]

Eco's emphasis on the ambiguity of the open work was important for Cordeiro's move away from the Concrete movement. His quest for more "open" works that worked against conventions and allowed for broad and complex interpretation pushed him more in the direction of Pop.

Otilia Arantes observes the influence of Eco in Brazilian art criticism during the 1960s.[63] She notes that, for artists and critics like Cordeiro, Hélio Oiticica, and Ferreira Gullar, Eco's structuralist idea of the "open work," served as a theoretical horizon on what could be done with the avant-garde. It called on them to create open works that invite the viewer's participation. As Gullar would claim, ambiguity should be the main theme that should occupy artists. An open work has an ambiguous message with plural meanings; it has multiple possibilities coexisting in

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[62] Eco, Open Work, xi. The passage continues: "Moreover, conventional forms of expression convey conventional meanings, and conventional meanings are parts of a conventional view of the world. Thus, according to Eco, traditional art confirms conventional views of the world, whereas the modern open work implicitly denies them."

[63] Otilia Arantes, "De *Opinião 65* a XVIII Bienal," *Documents of Latin American and Latino Art* (1986), 75.

one signified. Art critic Mario Barata observes that as a result Eco's influence, there was an unexpected shift in Brazilian art.[64] The new artistic plan and the viewer's participation made engaging with the work more direct and easier for viewers to comprehend the symbolic and linguistic meanings.

As Cordeiro would emphasize, the open work, Neo-Pop, Realism, and the entire paradigm of artistic expression of that time tried to eradicate the authoritarianism of the cultural industry. Following Eco's philosophy, they used symbols and language from the institutionalized culture to start a war against it. This is how Cordeiro and the participants in the exhibitions that marked the 1960s, in Brazil such as *Opinião 65*, understood their place as avant-garde artists.[65]

For example, Cordeiro's *Opera Aperta*, 1963 (Fig. 7), also called *Ambiguity*, depicts an oil painting with small, squared mirrors attached in four rows. The mirrors work as sentences on the paper, all distributed into lines with small gaps between them, representing, visually, the urge to turn visual art into words (or theory). Eco's work, which Cordeiro says influenced him (he even reproduces the title in his work), deals precisely with this interest in interpreting art and bringing art into a debate. [66] The mirrors also work as windows seen from afar, in which the viewer, upon approaching the work, can have their image, although fragmented, reflected. This creates a provocative "open" ambiguity, or what Eco would see as a "participatory encounter," between the audience and the work. The open work is interested in art that can be both:

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[64] Mario Barata, "Vanguarda no Museu Moderno," *Documents of Latin American and Latino Art* (1967). https://icaa.mfah.org/s/en/item/1110489#?c=&m=&s=&cv=&xywh=-1091%2C-1%2C4730%2C3300. Barata is writing about the exhibition *Nova Objetividade* in 1967, but he sees this change as being in effect at least since the 1965 *Opinião 65* exposition.

[65] Waldemar Cordeiro, "Realismo: Musa da Vinganca e da Tristeza," *Documents of Latin American and Latino Art* (1965), 552. https://icaa.mfah.org/s/en/item/1110839#?c=&m=&s=&cv=&xywh=-727%2C0%2C3153%2C2199

[66] *Opera Aperta* is the Italian title of Eco's text, commonly translated into English as "Open Work."

celebratory and depreciative, ironic and political, meaningful (intended to be comprehended) yet complex. It admits plural interpretations all at once.[67]

Cordeiro's *Opera Aperta* does not look similar to other Pop works at first glance. This was something of a "proto-Popcreto," as the word "Popcreto" would only be created in 1964. What I am calling Cordeiro's Neo-Pop would only be fully established in 1964 with his Popcretos, but in his *Opera Aperta* we can already see his interest in introducing ready-mades. This is seen here in the choice of mirrors that reflect the outside world onto its canvas. Cordeiro's question about what art can be and how common places can be transfigured is his call for change. Change not only in art, but (following the local expectations for art) as a force for cultural change. The change does not need to be political in the sense of a message for the government. It promotes changes in culture to embrace the viewer as a critical thinker, not having to be guided toward one political agenda.

A few months after the establishment the military dictatorship, Waldemar Cordeiro would exhibit a series at the Art Exhibit at IAB (São Paulo, June 1964) that Augusto de Campos (the Brazilian Concrete poet) would baptize as "Espetaculos Popcretos," or "Popcreto Spectacles."[68] According to the poet, Cordeiro's works had a Concrete structure, but one that had anthropophagously swallowed the experience of American Pop Art.

Campos described Cordeiro's Popcretos (Pop Art plus Concrete Art) as containing "worthless utilitarian objects, pieces of furniture and scraps from automobiles [that] commanded

[67] Umberto Eco. *Obra aberta* (São Paulo: Editora Perspectiva, 1971), 22.

[68] Augusto de Campos (1931-) was one of the founders of Concrete poetry in Brazil along with Haroldo de Campos and Decio Pignatari with whom he created the literary magazine *Noigandres.* That is seen as the beginning of the Concrete movement in Brazil in 1952. The style "Popcreto" will be addressed in the Portuguese form, without translating it as "Popcrete," or "Pop-Crete" to keep the Brazilian identity of Cordeiro's style.

the new harvest of objects-dejects."[69] Campos exhibited alongside Cordeiro his *anarconcreto* poem-posters that he explained as "verbal and nonverbal splinters derided the military dictatorship installed in March that year."[70] Cordeiro's Popcretos were a call to action to artists to "re-semanticize" Concretism.[71]

In this exhibition, Cordeiro would present a work with the title *Popcreto para um Popcritico*, 1964 (Fig. 8), in which a red painted wood has a hoe resting vertically on its surface. Through dots, the surfaces reveal photographs of hair, mouth, and noses that, because of the small apertures, seem to look at the viewer without allowing the viewer to see a face or recognize something human (other than fragments). The choice of a random object alludes to the ready-mades that Cordeiro introduced to his hybrid of Concretism and Pop Art.

In *Popcreto para um Popcritico*, "popcreto" appears in the title, carrying the weight of Cordeiro's artistic shift in his title as the amalgamation of Concretism plus Pop Art. This is followed by the explanation "popcritico," translated as "critical pop." This work can be a statement about the new art that Cordeiro would venture into, Popcreto. The eye that peaks through the holes is that of a viewer/art critic that cannot gaze into the entire dimension of the work. The viewer/art critic stands behind a theoretical "jail" that is seen in the third plan for this work. First, we see the hoe, then the red metal with holes, and, finally, we see fragments of a human presence in photographic images.

The red that separates the ready-made object from the human representation is vibrant and oppresses the work. It is as if the color is the protagonist; it is the red that the viewer

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[69] Analivia Cordeiro, *Waldemar Cordeiro: Fantasia Exata* (Sao Paulo: Itau Cultural, 2014), 466.

[70] Cordeiro, 466.

[71] "Waldemar Cordeiro: Popcreto," *Waldemar Cordeiro*, https://www.waldemarcordeiro.com/popcreto (accessed June 06, 2021.)

remembers after leaving the presence of this work. The red, however, can be understood as politically symbolic (as a reference to Communism, for example). The ready-made with the red surface reminds us of the Soviet Union's flag (Fig. 9). Cordeiro's use of the color red here can guide us to the local political debate about Marxism in art criticism at the time while also referencing (perhaps), a political stance from Cordeiro himself.

The use of a hoe instead of a hammer or sickle (as seen in the Soviet flag) could be symbolically representing a rural Brazil that is not part of the progress that the urban centers were experiencing. The dialectic of urban and rural is also part of this work. In the end, the Marxism of Cordeiro expressed in his art was different than what some critics would expect (without a clear, straightforward message, leaving space for diverse interpretations). Perhaps the politics of this Popcreto was presented as a dialogue with critics such as Mario Pedrosa (the famous critic of Pop that could be alluded to by the Popcritico part of the title). Perhaps the work speaks against the Marxism of critics like Pedrosa. Cordeiro is provoking, presenting the red "jail" that one can only peek through. Through his choice for ready-mades, Cordeiro would see a return to the world, to the things that are recognizable and serve as symbols, such as a hoe representing rural work.[72]

Is there anything Pop about these works, beyond their title? Popcretos are small in scale and not colorful, using mass-media images and readymades with a painted canvas. Scholars such as Oscar Svanelid, observed the influence of Robert Rauschenberg's work on Cordeiro work (in fact, Cordeiro had contact with Rauschenberg during his time in Paris in 1963). Svanelid argues that Cordeiro obtains his idea of antagonistic thoughts (which Svanelid describes as a "revolt"),

[72] The hoe would become one of the symbols for the Agrarian Reform in Brazil because the tool was often mentioned in speeches by rural leaders as a symbol of their work in the rural areas.

from Rauschenberg. In *Contra-Mao*, or Wrong Way, 1964 (Fig. 10) Cordeiro breaks the rules of Concrete, providing a divided image that in black and white seems to only reveal itself in fragments, resisting any single interpretation.[73] The fragments that Svanelid calls a revolt is Cordeiro's interest in breaking the symbols apart (like the dismembered star), to force new meanings. This plurality of possible meanings is also Cordeiro embracing Eco's concept of the open work.

To further consider the presence of Pop language in Cordeiro's Popcretos, we can turn to Max Bense, a German philosopher that was famous among students in Brazil at the time. Cordeiro showed demonstrated appreciation for his work, sending Bense photographs of his Popcretos. Bense was intrigued by the new way Cordeiro was utilizing Pop (mixing it with Concrete art) and would try to define Cordeiro's Popcreto as analytically as possible. Bense separated what was Pop from what was Concrete. For the Pop elements of the Popcretos, he listed the following: the use of everyday objects (banality), the material, disorder, and practical usability. For the opposing Concrete influences, he identified: the use of mathematical figures, the ideal (Platonic), order, and theoretical consumption.[74] This logical differentiation, breaking apart the contents of Cordeiro's Popcretos, can sound reductionist, but can also help us to comprehend what Cordeiro was trying to mix. These opposing elements are brought together in the work without relieving their tension in the object. Popcretos are not a harmonious work, but, rather, an explicit tension between rational ideas (Concrete) and common objects (Pop).

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[73] Julia Buenaventura Valencia de Cayses, "Isto nao e uma obra: Arte e ditadura," *Estudos Avancados*, no. 80 (2014): 118.

[74] Max Bense, "Max Bense: Carta-prefacio" in Analivia Cordeiro, *Waldemar Cordeiro* (Sao Paulo: Galeria Brito Cimino, 2001).

Despite his own use of the term Pop to title his Popcretos, Cordeiro's work would be received as belonging to a variety of alternative titles: New Figuration, New Realism, New Objectivity, or Carioca Realism.[75] However, the artist himself would incorporate Pop as the constitution of his work and as part of his new stage in his career. From 1963, when he observes the changes in global art towards a new nature (being represented as industrial). He started to elaborate on what he called the next stage of art (at least at a personal level) and worked to understand his own relationship to labels and movements such as New Figuration or New Realism.

In the years of 1964 and 1965, Cordeiro produced two important documents published by the *Habitat* magazine: one responding to art critic Jose Geraldo Vieira by defending the New Figuration, and a second text, "Realism: Revenge Muse and Grief," in which he abandons New Figuration and affirms that a better term would be Realism. He sees his Popcretos, for example, as representative of this new Realism.

In the open letter to Vieira, Cordeiro affirmed that the new figuration has nothing to do with figuration; rather, New Figuration is a new "poetics" (in Eco's sense).[76] After fifteen years of impersonal objectivity in visual language (in the Concrete movement) New Figuration is

[75] Carioca: person/thing born/from the city of Rio de Janeiro.

[76] *The Open Work* by Umberto Eco was an influence on Cordeiro's thought and art and, as the introduction to the second Brazilian edition of *The Open Work* by Umberto Eco describes the poetic concept: "What is meant by 'poetic'? The lode that since the Russian formalists goes up to today's descendants of the structuralism of Prague understands by 'poetics' the study of linguistic structures of a literary work. Valéry, in Première Leçon du Cours de Poétique, by extending the meaning of the term to all artistic genres, spoke of a study of the artistic practice. [...] We understand 'poetics' in a sense more connected to the classical meaning: not as a coercive system of standards (the Ars Poetica as an absolute standard), but rather as an operational program that the artist proposes to himself at a time, the work project to perform as it is understood, explicitly or implicitly, by the artist. Either explicitly or implicitly: indeed, a search on the poetics (and a history of poetics; and therefore, a cultural history seen through the standpoint of the poetics) is based on the statements expressed by the artists [...] or in the analysis of the work structures so that, the way the work is done, we can deduce the way it wanted to be made." Umberto Eco, *Obra aberta* (São Paulo: Editora Perspectiva, 1971), 24-25.

about intentionality. New Figuration does not "represent" reality, but "presents" it following a new method: New Figuration does not present bare materials but things (with semantic context). Cordeiro would call this objectivation of things a semantic unity. Cordeiro gives an example of this unity, observing that a cannon is not only a large cylinder but also a weapon that kills.[77] In this, Cordeiro's understanding of New Figuration agrees with the interests of the time (as expressed by critic Ferreira Gullar and other artists such as Hélio Oiticica, for example), that art should be interested in a "new humanism."[78] It should provide meaning and context for human affairs, as opposed to a rational play of form.

Finally, Cordeiro affirms that the New Figuration will exterminate its adversary, figuration, with the final weapon of referential meaning. In this way, it will anthropophagically digest the enemy. One year before this open letter (in a text about the VII São Paulo Biennial in 1963) Cordeiro had already announced New Figuration as a means to fight individual alienation. In this brief text, Cordeiro affirmed a new period in art that he noticed at a global level in Pop Art, *Nouveaux Realistes*, and in the New Figuration presented by the artists at the 1963 Biennial. This new period he called a semantic period, or New Figuration.[79] The semantic period was part of a process that had a syntax period, a pragmatic period, and evolved into semantics (or: the

[77] Waldemar Cordeiro, "Novas Tendencias e Nova Figuracao," *Documents of Latin American and Latino Art* (1964). https://icaa.mfah.org/s/en/item/1110840#?c=&m=&s=&cv=&xywh=-1116%2C0%2C3930%2C2199

[78] The idea of a new humanism in Brazil was shared by many artists such as Waldemar Cordeiro and poet and art critic Ferreira Gullar. This "new humanism" was understood as what all artists should seek: a democratic and socialist form of humanism that they found in Jean Paul Sartre's *Existentialism Is a Humanism* (1946). In Gullar's interpretation of Sartre's work, and through his own work as a poet, Gullar would affirm that art should value man and his interaction with nature and life without seeking the divine.

[79] Waldemar Cordeiro, "VII Bienal 'Nova Figuracao' Denuncia a Alienacao do Individuo," *Documents of Latin American and Latino Art* (1963). https://icaa.mfah.org/s/en/item/1110842#?c=&m=&s=&cv=&xywh=-1091%2C-1%2C4730%2C3300

sign as things). Cordeiro observed that these different periods signal different stages of capitalism (as Roberto Schwarz agrees).[80]

Cordeiro described New Figuration as immediate materiality with a social function that used anti-art objects as criticism of the *beaux arts* form. Although Cordeiro did not define the term *beaux art*s in his writing, it is a common term to use when referring to art made in France or art made in Brazil with French influence. New Figuration was seeking new meanings and a more active spectator (active with the work of art, and against the political superstructure). The world that interested New Figuration was that of industrial production (an interest similar to the interest in nature from other art movements). It was interested in readymade objects with human significance, taken from the everyday experience of the view. Cordeiro noticed that the alienation of consumerism comes from the desire for possessing the thing. But under the gaze of New Figuration, the thing/object, was an element to be transformed. It was transformed in information and sign and message. Consumer objects (mirrors, hoes, and so on) are now presented not as consumer objects, but as vehicles of meaning.

In Cordeiro's second *Habitat* publication of 1965, "Realism: Revenge Muse and Grief," Cordeiro distanced himself from New Figuration. He assumes Pop Art as a form of Realism, through his Popcretos. He addressed the new forms of Realism in modern art such as Pop Art, New Realism, and in his own "Popcretos." Cordeiro stood with this New Realism, arguing that abstract art, and the Concrete art that he helped to establish in Brazil, is a naturalist materialism. He argued that art should bring man together by presenting things directly, as expressive signs, and forming a new language. New Realism, Cordeiro would affirm, dealt with the problem of morality, industrial revolution, image dominion, visual language, and the new humanism. With

[80] Roberto Schwarz, *O pai de familia* (Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1978), 74.

the failure of technological utopias, he saw social and individual problems worsening with technical progress.[81] Concrete art, according to Cordeiro, was the construction of an artificial visual language in a postwar context that needed a visual language valid at the universal level, aiming at the structure of perception. Cordeiro then affirms that this New Realism has nothing to do with New Figuration, because New Realism is the direct representation of things of the serial industrial production.[82]

Cordeiro would mark Brazilian art with his Popcretos. I believe that Popcretos are an early expression of Neo-Pop in Brazil. He self-consciously accepts American Pop Art, but he anthropophagically combines it with his own experiences and his own Concrete style. His Popcretos are not as explicitly critical of American culture (and cultural imperialism) as the Neo-Pop that would follow him. However, we can already see the need to respond to the political situation of the dictatorship, and an increase in the use of political objects and symbols—as in the Marxist commentary we interpreted in *Popcreto para um Popcritico*, 1964 (Fig. 8).

Now that I have discussed Cordeiro's influential early adoption of Pop with his Popcretos, I would like to track the development of Neo-Pop (that comes largely out of Cordeiro's work and influence on the scene). Two 1965 exhibitions that Cordeiro was involved with (*Opinião 65* and *Propostas 65*) would be instrumental in developing the Brazilian Neo-Pop language. During this early period, Neo-Pop in Brazil would develop organically, coming from figures (like Cordeiro) that had been exposed to Pop in their travels or in magazines. It would not be until 1967, with the IX São Paulo Biennial, that American Pop can be said to have officially arrived in Brazil in a formal way. However, as I have already argued with Cordeiro, Neo-Pop

[81] Cordeiro, 46.

[82] Cordeiro, 47.

was already developing in Brazil before 1967. In the next section, I hope to track the development of Brazilian Neo-Pop from Cordeiro to the Biennial.

V. Exhibition *Opinião* 65

In this section, I will primarily discuss the influential *Opinião 65* exhibition, which I argue marks an important step in the development of Brazilian Neo-Pop. First, I will provide context for the exhibition and describe the intentions with which it was created. Then I will describe several of the artworks that featured, demonstrating the (Neo)-Pop Art tendencies they displayed. Then I will describe several reactions to the exhibition, demonstrating how the exhibition was understood as conne

During the 1960s, American Pop Art started to be introduced in other countries, although sometimes under different labels. As we have seen with Cordeiro in Brazil, for example, Pop was introduced as "New Figuration."[83] It was understood as a shift from Neo-Concretism, an abstract movement established as the peak of national art during the 1950s that now, in the 1960s, started to lose its character as the predominant style among serious Brazilian artists.

During the exhibition *Opinião 65* (Opinion 65) in 1965, many artists started to explore a Neo-Pop style to deal with their local concerns. As I have already established, due to the recent dictatorship, those concerns were largely political. Despite having different approaches than what was seen in figurative art, Pop Art reintroduced the figurative amidst an abstract tradition already consolidated in the United States. The same was true in Brazil, with the transition from

[83]"New Figuration" is often used as a general term in Brazil to avoid admitting the direct influence from Nouveau Realism or Pop Art. In the case of Pop Art specifically, the political relation to the U.S. plays a role in the avoidance of the term Pop Art, as we have discussed.

the Concrete movement to Pop Art. Thus, Pop Art served to liberate artists from the dominance of abstraction (in both America and Brazil).

Brazilian artists, both young and already established, were looking for new figurative styles in the 1960s to make art with critical interpretations of urban life.[84] New Figuration began taking shape in 1964, with the Paris exhibition *Mythologies Quotidiennes*, or Everyday Mythologies. That exhibition influenced Ceres Franco, the organizer of *Opinião 65*, to think about a Brazilian exhibition with artists interested in New Figuration. It was the *Opinião 65* exhibition that would introduce Pop Art to Brazil and push the country to move away from abstraction.

Opinião 65 was an exhibition with twenty-nine artists (Brazilians, Argentinians, and other nationalities). Because the artists in *Opinião 65* were not American, some would argue that the historical introduction of Pop Art in Brazil would not occur until the 1967 IX Sao Paulo Art Biennial (where American Pop artists would have their works exhibited in Brazil for the first time). *Opinião 65*, however, marked the introduction of New Figuration/Realism and the rise of political messages seeking to grapple with the recent dictatorship. I argue (following other thinkers to be discussed below) that *Opinião 65* already demonstrates the presence of Pop in Brazil. Further, I believe that we can see here the features of Brazilian Neo-Pop that I have already identified in Cordeiro, such as: the political messages of the works, the influence of Eco's open work, and the continued Brazilian anthropophagic postcolonial process of interpreting and reconstituting foreign cultural objects.

[84] Paulo Marcondes Ferreira Soares, "Art and Politics in Brazil – The 1960's: Questions of Art and Social Participation." *Estudos de Sociologia,* no. 17 (2011). https://periodicos.ufpe.br/revistas/revsocio/article/view/235218/28243

Ceres Franco, organizer of the exhibition *Opinião 65*, described the event as a rupture exhibition, which is an interesting choice of words.[85] Waldemar Cordeiro was one of the artists included in *Opinião 65*. In particular, examples of his Concrete Art phase were shown as the contrast with what the New Figuration art was "rupturing" from. This language of "rupture" is a reference to Cordeiro's own 1952 text the "Manifesto Ruptura" (Rupture Manifest). In this, Cordeiro calls for the Concrete movement's rupture from figurative painting. In it, he condemns any kind of figurative art and any form of expression, whether individual or symbolic. The Concrete movement understood art experiences as based on values such as space-time, movement, and matter. According to the manifesto, "knowledge is based on concepts" and "clear and certain principles" that position art far above subjective opinion.[86] Thus, Franco is making a bit of a joke, using Cordeiro's words from thirteen years ago to poke fun at him. In 1952 he called for a rupture with figuration, and now he is calling for a rupture from that rupture (and thus back to figuration: a New Figuration).

This rupture was understood by contemporaries as a break from abstract art, especially the successful Neo-Concretism that Brazilian artists devoted their careers to and dominated the landscape in the 1950s. This exhibition was commemorative of the fourth centenary of the Museum of Modern Art in Rio de Janeiro. Opening one year after the beginning of dictatorship, the exhibition was a breath of fresh air/art in the city. If featured Brazilians such as Waldemar Cordeiro and Antonio Dias, as well as artists from France, Spain, Argentina, England, and

[85] Ceres Franco, "Opinião 65," *Documents of Latin American and Latino Art* (1965). https://icaa.mfah.org/s/en/item/1090499#?c=&m=&s=&cv=&xywh=-1671%2C-346%2C5540%2C3777

[86] Waldemar Cordeiro, "Ruptura," *Documents of Latin American and Latino Art* (1952). https://icaa.mfah.org/s/en/item/771349#?c=&m=&s=&cv=&xywh=-865%2C0%2C3230%2C2253

Hungry. Franco would describe these works as part of the international interest in Realism and Figuration as seen in American Pop Art and European Nouveau Realism.

Franco called the art being made by young artists (and the new art that she opted for exhibiting: with Nouveaux Realism and Pop Art influences) “young painting.” Franco defined this style of art as concerned with everyday life, returning to society, culture that melts into art, and urban. She described this “young painting” as a cult of everyday myths (recalling her inspiration from the Paris exhibition *Mythologies Quotidiennes*). She also observed the enthusiasm and critical spirit of European young artists. Franco made a distinction between foreign and Brazilian artists, mentioning foreign artists as more individualistic in their career, while Brazilian artists were sharing a feeling of hope. Even though Franco did not develop this sentiment of hope, it seems related to the opinionated/critical spirit of the exhibition. An exhibition that survived among the tensions of censorship and dictatorship.

Franco observed common themes in the works of the exhibit: man’s different relationships with machine, technological development in society and art, and the industrial revolution and the idea of progress. This idea of progress was the main aspect of the 1950s in Brazil. There was an optimism about Brazil and the progress of its culture; that what started in the 1920s would end in the 1950s with the elaboration of Brazilian Neo-Concretism. Considered the national art in essence in agreement with artists and scholars such as Cordeiro. Works in the exhibition included photographic processes, assemblage, and Oiticica’s parangoles. There were examples of Concrete art with Ivan Serpa and Cordeiro. There were works concerned with the “man” in artists such as Roberto Magalhães and Jose Jardiel. And there was the work of Jon Christofori, the pioneer of New Figuration. The “opinion” that named the *Opinião 65* exhibition

signaled the variety of comments that the artists wanted to make about the rupture represented by New Figuration (and also, opinions about the dictatorship).

One artist that had his work exhibited at *Opinião 65* was Roberto Magalhães, with *Obra sem titulo,* 1965 (Fig. 11). In the work, there is a soldier with a gun in profile with a swastika on his beret and his mouth open, with sharp teeth, as if yelling. The Maltese Cross on the lapel of this soldier is evocative of the Order of Christ in Brazil, an order instituted by emperor Pedro I of Brazil in 1822 with religious and state interests. To this day, the Maltese Cross is a common symbol in Brazil (it is even associated with a soccer team from Rio de Janeiro). In Magalhães' work, the symbols of the swastika, the Maltese Cross, and the army elements remind the viewer of the dictatorship that was happening.[87] In Magalhães' work there is no pop culture symbol such as a movie star; popular culture is being demonstrated through the military symbols.

Magalhães would also present a self-portrait with three half-faces: *Self-Portrait in Three Phases,* 1965 (Fig. 12). In this self-portrait we see three half-painted faces that seem closer to masks than to the human figure. His self-portraits are part of a series in which he used serigraphy, or silkscreen printing, a technique introduced by advertising and used in art by Pop artists. This technique connects Magalhães with the idea of a character, not what would be expected by a self-portrait. We can understand this not as a single work, but as part of a series with his other work, *Talking Self-Portrait*, 1965 (Fig. 13). In *Talking Self-Portrait*, the artist seems not to express Pop via a style, but instead with his choice of technique and the theme of the artist. Seen as part of a serial narrative, *Self-Portrait in Three Phases* reflects a change in the

[87] The military coup in Brazil did not have any close connection with European Nazism or Fascism. However, the terms "Nazi" or "fascist" are used as adjective by people to define dictators. The sociological mistake is a popular reaction against the use of censorship, torture, populist speeches, and military intervention by a government. Not every dictatorship is connected to fascism or Nazism, but the adjective is used still today to explain the Brazilian conservative government that commemorates the anniversary of the military coup in the country.

figure, a transformation, as if he is a super-hero changing into their costume. In *Three Phases,* his repetition of the face is notable, as Warhol would also make similar choices in his *Marilyn Monroe* (Fig. 1) two years after Magalhães, in 1967. The face is the symbol, the changing aspect is a face/mask without a body that stares, emptied, soulless in a self-portrait. It reveals nothing of the artist as a person but speaks loudly of society.

Antonio Dias would participate in the exhibition with his *Nota sobre a Morte Imprevista,* 1965 (Fig. 14). An anti-frame in rhombus shape with objects that invade the physical space of real life. The work crosses the border between comic book and reality, denying the limits of the frame. The object (excrement) lures the viewer without giving itself to the touch, as it is kept behind glass. Dias exhibited a work that would not only participate in the new paradigm being built (New Figuration) but he also utilized his brushstroke in a comic book style that resisted any narrative. The theme of violence (the dictatorial violence) is combined in this anti-frame of cartoon skulls, explosions, dismemberment, and other violent imagery. It seems familiar due to the comic book style and the separated squares that bring an order that is as confusing as it is frustrating. The comic style panels indicate a narrative frame, but the panels themselves do not conform to this frame. The anti-narrative explodes in the object, crossing the border into the space of the real (as the bottom panel emerges out of the cartoon and into reality). It is as if the violence were not contained in the work but is now also an act that incites the viewer, presenting physical filth. The characters are dismembered, with bones and red blood assembled in an unidentified figure without continuation. From any perspective, even if the viewer could turn the painting in an attempt to comprehend the situation, only one thing would remain: the excrement. As a result of the violent act, or even as an annunciation of its arrival, the object is the only presence that matters, it is the focal point.

Now that we have examined some of the works that featured in the exhibition, we can see how contemporary (and later) critics understood the works of *Opinião 65*. As we shall see, the exhibition was already understood as drawing on Pop influences. One of the contemporary voices to provide support for *Opinião 65* was the critic Ferreira Gullar, who praised the exhibition as a breath of new humanism, with artists being interested in the world, not absorbed by their own life and problems.[88] He also noted the influence of Pop Art in the exhibition (although it was not formally called a Pop Art exhibition). Gullar observed that he did not see any "masterpiece," in the sense of a genius use of craft and technique. However, he notes that these artists were not occupied with this, but rather sought to present a new direction for Brazilian art.[89] He saw the artists' world view as an interest in human life and the problems of man and society.[90]

Remember that Ceres Franco, the organizer of the exhibition, claimed that this exhibition was meant to break with the art of the past, specifically abstract art and the Neo-Concretism that had flourished and dominated Brazilian art during the 1950s. This motivated her to bring artists influenced by new movements such as American Pop Art and European Nouveau Realism into the exhibition. Gullar agreed with Franco about this rupture, seeing the exhibition as part of a process to exhaust the basic elements that had supported art from Impressionism until then. With the Concretism of the 1950s, abstract art and life were so distant from each other that, with *Opinião 65*, Gullar found a new interest in (and a revival of) everyday life. Artists were returning

[88] See footnote 77 for more on Gullar's concept of "new humanism."

[89] Ferreira Gullar, "Opinião 65," *Documents of Latin American and Latino Art* (1965), 223-224. https://icaa.mfah.org/s/en/item/1090530#?c=&m=&s=&cv=&xywh=-545%2C0%2C2364%2C1649

[90] Gullar, 221-222.

to life and, thus, figuration. Gullar agrees with the title of the exhibition, that it successfully delivered the artists' opinions. Further, he saw it as part of an internationalization of art that would locate Brazil among other countries (such as United States and France), in a return of figuration and realism. Gullar called this a Brazilian critical realism.[91]

Otilia Arantes, in her article "De Opiniao 65 a XVIII Bienal" (From Opinion 65 to the XVIII São Paulo Art Biennial), gave a thorough description of Brazilian art from 1965 until 1986. Arantes observed three stages of avant-garde in Brazil: cubo-futurism, from 1917 to 1932; abstract/concrete, from 1945 to 1960; and dadaism/pop from 1965 to 1969 (possibly 1974).[92] It is notable that she places the end of Concretism and the beginning of Pop in 1965 (and not 1967 with the formal debut of American Pop artists at the IX São Paulo Biennial). In 1965, with the abandonment of Concretism, Brazilian artists were interested in art as synonymous with politics; and art that had an aggressive position against conformism. Anti-art was understood as realism, experimentalism, active participation of the spectator, and political impact (or social change).[93]

Arantes observed that, in the 60s, artists in Brazil absorbed (ate) technological resources and international art while questioning the introjection or rejection of national traditions (anthropophagy).[94] Waldemar Cordeiro, Hélio Oiticica, and other artists in theater, music, and other arts saw the act of creating art in Brazil as a means to oppose folklorization (they did not want Brazilian art to simple be a reproduction of folk/local art).[95] These artists wanted to locate

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[91] Gullar, 221-224.

[92] Otilia Arantes, "De Opinião *65* a XVIII Bienal," *Documents of Latin American and Latino Art* (1986), 71. https://icaa.mfah.org/s/en/item/1110641#?c=&m=&s=&cv=&xywh=-837%2C0%2C2947%2C1649

[93]Arantes, 71.

[94] Arantes, 71.

[95] Weslley Fontenele, "Sobre Nao Folclorizar o Popular: Reinterpretando as Culturas ditas Populares via Torquato Neto," *Revista Brasileira de Estudos da Presenca*, no. 4 (2018): 800.

Brazil in the universal context. They wanted to overcome the delay in Brazilian development in art, trying to represent Brazil as a country able to create art (even amidst poverty and labeled as underdeveloped).[96]

Arantes wrote that the influence of Pop Art on Brazilian artists was undeniable. However, they were not only replicating contemporary reality with its myths and symbols but creating a new language in Brazilian terms. She argues that Brazilian (Neo)-Pop artists such as Wesley Duke Lee and Geraldo de Barros (she cites Oiticica as Pop as well), had a distinguished style in comparison to American artists.[97]

One example that Arantes uses to demonstrate the distinct (Neo)-Pop language being developed in Brazil is the work of Mauricio Nogueria de Lima, a participant of the Concrete Rupture movement (alongside Cordeiro). In 1964, he exhibited works with traffic symbols, as seen in *Nao entre a esquerda* (Fig. 15), or "*Do Not Turn Left*." In *Do Not Turn Left*, he would use words as a concrete poem with a bold "no" in lowercase (as was common in this style) across the top. He also has the traffic symbol of a vertical arrow pointing left with a red circle surrounding it and a red line crossing out the black arrow (a symbol of negation commonly understood by drivers). One of the texts reads: "entre pelo cano," a Brazilian expression that means "to go to jail" (left), and "conservem-se a direita," keep right (right). These two uses of text in this poster add a political tone to the work, with references to right and leftwing politics. The text warns "do not turn left" because of the recent dictatorship that was already beginning to oppress leftists, especially artists.

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[96] Arantes, 76-77.

[97] As I have stated previously, I am here bracketing Neo because I do not wish to push my own terminology on to Arantes. However, the distinct Brazilian Pop language she is describing is what I wish to argue should be understood as Neo-Pop.

Arantes observes that this work demonstrates how the Neo-Concrete Lima was moving to a fresh (Neo)-Pop style. For example, the work deals with reality (a return to humanistic home/society), uses symbols, short texts/imperative, and irony. Arantes argues that these artists (such as Lima and the artists at *Opinião 65*) wished to reveal the everyday reality regulated by the laws of consumerism and what she called (borrowing Mario Pedrosa's concept) "infra-reality," using materials combining past and ultramodern objects.[98]

Another later scholar who observed the presence of (Neo)-Pop language at *Opinião 65* is Luiz Renato Martins, in his 2017 book *The Long Roots of Formalism in Brazil*. Martins claims that artists such as Antonio Dias "kidnapped Pop art, which was appropriated, devoured and swallowed up, if I may insist, by a new 'cannibal'—to recall the terms of the 'Cannibalist Manifesto."[99] He adds that the artists at *Opinião 65* performed a "reinterpretation of Pop art, inflecting it with a Brazilian and politicised bias."[100]

In 1965, artists connected by this new interest in figuration and realism (and influenced by Pop Art), another exhibition, *Propostas 65,* in São Paulo. This exhibition would serve to continue the move toward New Figuration and the development of Brazilian Neo-Pop that *Opinião 65* started.[101] For example, Cordeiro and Angelo de Aquino would bring together artists that participated in the *Opinião 65,* joined by others that were not present in the Rio de Janeiro exhibition.

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[98] Arantes, 72.

[99] Luiz Renato Martins, *The Long Roots of Formalism in Brazil* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2017), 95.

[100] Martins, *The Long Roots of Formalism*, 119.

[101] *Opinião 65* opened in August of 1965 and *Propostas 65* in December of the same year.

Mauricio Nogueira Lima presented a bright colored painting in red and yellow of The Beatles, the *Atomic Beatles*, 1965 (Fig. 16). The text reads paul, george, john, and ringo (all in lowercase). The work is an appropriation of mass culture idols and is reminiscent of the American Pop Art language, with the use of a cult of celebrity, bright colors, simple and evenly distributed images, and a composition that appears as the cover of an album or magazine. The difference is that Lima integrated their names so as to differentiate them, exploring their individuality against simply "The Beatles." The "atomic" in the title refers to their "explosive" presence in the media and the massive effect they had on music during that period. Lima would continue his Neo-Pop later in the decade, and in 1969 will paint his own Marylin, *Marilyn Monroe* (Fig. 17). Lima is one of the Neo-Pop Brazilian artists that has shown the most direct influence of American Pop in his work. Cordeiro would describe *Propostas 65* as exhibiting artists enslaved by traditional languages and others proficient in the new languages. Lima belongs to the second category.

Art critic Sergio Ferro wrote that this new Brazilian way of painting in *Propostas 65* would use any instrument available to react to reality and its many problems. Without one unified style or an elegant language, *Propostas 65* presented a plural expression of realism and a fearless (anthropophagic) appropriation of methods, such as Magical Realism, New Figuration, and Pop. Ferro says the exhibition demonstrates that reality is impossible to comprehend and that it cannot be accessed through only one type of knowledge—or art.[102]

The pluralism affirmed by Ferro was not only found in the many expressions of similar themes and worries, but also in the use of styles. Nelson Lerner exhibited *Object no 2*, 1965 (Fig.

[102] Sergio Ferro, "Vale Tudo" *Documents of Latin American and Latino Art* (1965). https://icaa.mfah.org/s/en/item/1090648#?c=&m=&s=&cv=&xywh=-727%2C0%2C3153%2C2199

18) a candy dispenser commonly used in bodegas in Brazil. Cordeiro would briefly address the work in the exhibition catalogue with the single word "popcreto," affirming that Lerner had created a Popcreto. For Cordeiro, as we have discussed, in a Popcreto "the object (ready-made) is built, and it builds a space that is no longer the physical space. The disintegration of the space of the physical object is also a semantic disintegration, destruction of conventionalities, and, on the other hand, a semantic construction, the construction of a new meaning."[103] In other words, the candy dispenser, or object number 2, is given a new meaning; it is taken from the common place and emptied out from its everyday purpose to become an art object. The purpose of the object is not given in its title, as it now becomes part of a serial process of objects turned into art by the artist. Cordeiro's Popcretos allow readymades to not only confuse art enthusiasts, but to instruct the viewer in the search for meaning. *Object no 2* also recalls Wayne Thiebaud's work, which in the American West Coast would explore the themes of food and consumerism. In his work, cakes, milkshakes, jukeboxes, and candy dispensers are painted in a study of color and as a communication of the contemporary culture of the 1960s.

Pop Art would only be official in the country after the IX São Paulo Biennial in 1967. This Biennial would mark the first Pop Art exhibition in Brazil. This exhibition was organized by the Smithsonian Institute and was the American contribution to the IX Biennial. In this event, there were two exhibitions, "Environment USA 1957 – 1967," with works by Robert Rauschenberg, Edward Ruscha, Roy Lichtenstein, Claes Oldenburg, Andy Warhol, and others, and "Edward Hopper: Retrospective." William C. Seitz, organizer of the exhibitions, affirmed that he chose Hopper to demonstrate a disenchanted parallel between American life in the 1920s

[103] "Waldemar Cordeiro: Popcreto," *Waldemar Cordeiro*, https://www.waldemarcordeiro.com/popcreto (accessed June 06, 2021.)

and the 1960s. Seitz said that he aimed to show Pop Art beyond its celebration of consumerism, opting for exhibiting works such as Jasper Johns' *Three Flags,* Ruscha's *Gas Station*, Rauschenberg's *Buffalo II*, and Warhol's *Death and Disaster Series.*[104] We can only speculate as to why he would choose these works to present American Pop to Brazil, but perhaps he understood that Brazilian artists would not be receptive to the celebratory/optimistic strands of American Pop (of the kind that Lippard saw as defining for Pop).

As critics and scholars such as Gullar, Arantes, and Martins have argued, since *Opinião 65*, Pop Art in Brazil was more than a simple reproduction of the Pop style in a different country. With this exhibition, Pop Art had its start already as a Neo-Pop. It was not against or counter to the American style (as in a "Post-Pop). Instead, it was adding (or directly addressing) its local political and sociological intentions. The Neo-Pop exhibited at *Opinião 65* and *Propostas 65* was already shaped by Brazilian artists according to the country's political bias.

Pop Art was never a style that artists shared with the same ideology or intentions. As a non-monolithic style, Pop Art always had a variable and diverse life according to each artist. Considering the politics of Pop in American artists (such as in works by Robert Indiana) and the Neo-Pop of Brazilian artists such as Cordeiro or Dias, for example, the complexity of Pop can be seen on an individual basis.

However, what can be broadly said about the Neo-Pop language in Brazil (as seen at *Opinião 65* and *Propostas 65*) is that it was not only more directly political, but the politics were different than that in the United States (given the dictatorship and the political turmoil). Additionally, this difference in postcolonial situation required the use of different methods and

[104] Luiz Camillo Osorio, "Flipping Pop," *MAM* (Sao Paulo: Instituto MESA, 2019), 8.

concepts. For example, Brazilian Neo-Pop Art is heavily influenced by Andrade's concept of anthropophagy and Eco's concept of the open work. Thus, not only is the content of Brazilian Neo-Pop noticeably different from American Pop (more political and critical of American interventionism), but the formal approach of the artists is also informed by different concepts (anthropophagy, the open work). In this section, I have attempted to trace the development of those three general features of Brazilian Neo-Pop as they developed out of Cordeiro's work, through the 1965 *Opinião* and *Propostas* exhibitions, and up to the debut of American Pop in Brazil in 1967.

In the concluding section, I will compare and contrast Brazilian Neo-Pop with the Pop works created in America and Europe, as exemplified by works from artists such as Cildo Meireles, Marcello Nitsche, and Hélio Oiticica. Oiticica is a good example of a Brazilian artist who avoided the label of Pop for personal and political reasons (despite its seeming influence on his work. On the other hand, Meireles and Marcello Nitsche both demonstrate a more self-conscious adoption of American Pop. For that reason, their work provides helpful insights on the differences between the American Pop and Brazilian Neo-Pop languages, as we can observe how they re-interpreted work by American artists such as Warhol.

Conclusion

The thesis of this work (as stated in the introduction) was to reintroduce Pop Art in such a way as to include a distinctly Brazilian representation of Pop: as Brazilian Neo-Pop. I have sought to demonstrate that, in Brazil, the optimism and consumerism that scholars believed to be glorified in Pop were "anthropophagically" reinterpreted by Brazilian artists who created Neo-Pop "open works." An important part of this process involved following a broader Latin American inclination to adjust Pop by dealing with different political contexts: in Brazil, this meant, in large part, dealing with the influence of American politics and culture, especially in light of the 1964 military coup that occurred even as Pop Art was being introduced in Brazil.

In 1965, one year after Brazil's military coup and Cordeiro's Popcretos, two exhibitions would cause a rupture with the Neo-Concrete movement from the 1950s, *Opinião 65* and *Propostas* 65 (in Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo, respectively). At the *Opinião 65* and *Propostas 65,* Pop Art would be understood as an influence on artists such as Waldemar Cordeiro, the Italo-Brazilian artist that was already established as a famous and influential artist in Brazil due to his presence in the Concrete and Neo-Concrete movements. Cordeiro would, in 1965, participate in both exhibitions: at *Opinião 65* his work was exhibited to represent the Neo-concrete movement, as a means of distinguishing the new styles that were being introduced in Brazil such as Pop Art. Cordeiro himself would organize *Propostas 65* to exhibit, alongside other artists, his artistic shift into Neo-Pop, or what he would call "popcreto."

If *Opinião 65* started the debate about new interests in art and presented young and already known artists side-by-side, *Propostas 65* was received as a warning about what art meant then. The polemical essence of *Opinião 65* served to prepare the public and critics for what was about to unveil: *Propostas 65*. With *Nova Objetividade* in 1967 (an exhibition organized by the

well-known artist Hélio Oiticica), the debate continued among Brazilian artists admitting an evolution of ideas and styles. These new ideas served as instruments, Sergio Ferro argues, to represent the new reality that unfolded and that would shift again, soon, with the oppressions of dictatorship. While artists such as Carlos Vergara would make guerrilla art and refused any influence outside of Europe, artists such as Cordeiro would see this attitude as a resistance to learn the new languages that were being used. Cordeiro, a visionary, adapted to the new languages and created his own.

It was only in 1967 that the country would have an exhibition of International Pop artists at the IX Sao Paulo Art Biennial. As such, the Pop Art that arrived in Brazil pre-1967 was via magazines that circulated in art studios and universities and through some artists, such as Cordeiro, that would travel to Europe and have contact with artists (such as his contact with Robert Rauschenberg while visiting exhibitions in Italy).[105]

The influence of American Pop Art in Brazil would be assimilated, taking into consideration the ideology that artists should use art as social criticism and for social change. In order to create Pop Art for a Brazilian audience, artists had to deal with: the American influence in Brazil's culture, politics, and economy; the reaction against this influence by leftists (most of them were themselves artists and art critics); avoiding making derivative Pop Art that would not be in dialogue with the local interests.

Now that I have established (in the last several sections) the history of Pop and Neo-Pop in Brazil, I would like to finish this work with some general comments on the differences

[105] Rauschenberg won the Venice prize for Best Foreign Painting in 1964, around the same time that Cordeiro would be in the country. He had been to the exhibition and became familiar with other Pop artists.

between Neo-Pop in Brazil and the roots of Pop Art in America and Europe. In doing so, I will refer to a number of artists' work as examples to illustrate my points. As Lamoni observes, Brazilian art in the first half of the 1960s meant artists seeking "artistic practices often associated with the creation of spaces of resistance as well as with the discussion of the relation between the artist and the public."[106] This idea of political expression via art emerged from the political tension in the country at the time. In the case of Neo-Pop, in Brazil, one of the main uses of the style was to comment on the American imperialism that influenced the politics of Latin American countries in the sixties and the horrors of dictatorship such as censorship and torture.

In Brazil, as a result of this political climate, scholars, curators, and artists themselves were cautious when dealing with Neo-Pop. Hélio Oiticica was an excellent example of this hesitance to label an artist as Pop. Due to the anti-Pop structuralist interpretation common at the time, artists using graphic arts (such as the flags/banners designed by Oiticica and Antonio Manuel in 1967 and 1968 in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro) were not considered Pop.[107] Even when utilizing the medium of printmaking (as often seen in Pop) such as the print of black ink on cloth in Oiticica's *Be an Outlaw, Be a Hero*, 1967 (Fig. 19), the work is not considered Pop. In *Be an Outlaw, Be a Hero*, Oiticica places the image of the dead body of a common thief from the news, prints it with ink on cloth and adds the "Be an Outlaw, Be a Hero" text underneath the body (disposed as an inverted crucifix). This work was made to participate in Flag Sunday, an urban intervention in São Paulo in which the flags/banners produced by artists would be sold in the street to the passing public. Oiticica, as seen in this work, reappropriated popular culture

[106] Giulia Lamoni, "Unfolding the Present: Some Notes on Brazilian Pop," in *The World Goes Pop* (London: Tate Publishing, 2015), 59.

[107] Artur Freitas, "Arte e movimento estudantil: analise de uma obra de Antonio Manuel," *Revista Brasileira de Historia*, no. 49 (2005), 78.

symbols and images and had mass culture as his focus. Despite this, he was still considered not politically upfront in many of his works. His contribution to Brazilian Pop was not discussed by critics, and the style of Pop was acknowledged only by convergence, as it was common with other artists that used Pop in their style.[108] To avoid the "Americanism" in Pop Art, some Brazilian artists like Oiticica refused the term Pop and, instead, opted for "Nova Objetividade," or "New Objectivity."

Oiticica's New Objectivity did not want to completely abandon the Neo-Concrete (it still aimed at being abstract and conceptual). Political change through art was his goal. To achieve that, Oiticica's work demanded the participation of the spectator. In his work *Parangoles* from 1964 (Fig. 20), banners, tents, and capes painted in bright colors were worn by artist and members of the favela of Mangueira (also a school of samba). The *Parangoles* were an anarchic position against the Brazilian political and social situation of the time.[109] His *Parangoles* from 1967 were a series of anti-art capes made in diverse colors that were to be worn by spectators as a contribution to an art environment (Oiticica believed in the museum being the world, outside the institutionalized art space) that used the space to bring together art and life.[110] Oiticica wanted to turn the environment of the museum into an expression of everyday life and to radically transform societal forces with his work. Oiticica's work, although sometimes admitted as having some convergence with Pop, is not usually considered Neo-Pop. Reasons for this can

[108] Lucila Meirelles, "Jose Agrippino de Paula: artista POP tropicalista," *ARS*, no. 14 (2009), 63.

[109] Monica Amor and Carlos Basualdo, "Hélio Oiticica, Apocalipopotese (1968)," *The Artists as Curator* 8 (2014-15): 04. Published as an insert in Mousse Magazine, no. 49 (2015). http://moussemagaze.iint/taac8-a/

[110] Hélio Oiticica, "Parangole: da Anti-Art as Apropriacoes Ambientais de Oiticica," *Documents of Latin American and Latino Art* (1967). https://icaa.mfah.org/s/en/item/1110631#?c=&m=&s=&cv=&xywh=-727%2C0%2C3153%2C2199

vary: because of his intentions with his art (to create a Brazilian vanguard independent from American or European styles); his environmental exploration with performance art; or his criticizing the Brazilian culture from inside. Despite this, some artists, such as Marcello Nitsche, use the terms New Objectivity and Pop interchangeably.[111]

While Oiticica refused the label of Pop, an example of a more self-aware relationship between (American) Pop and (Brazilian) Neo-Pop can be observed in Warhol's *Green Coca-Cola Bottles,* 1962 (Fig. 21) and in Cildo Meireles' *Insertions into Ideological Circuits: Coca-Cola Project,* 1970 (Fig. 22). Warhol's image depicts seven rows of bluish bottles of Coca Cola. The logo, in red, reads "Coca-Cola" at the bottom. The fading colors and inconsistent display of the same image are indicative of the work not being seen as commercial art, which would need to be more uniform. However, the repetition and the addition of the logo at the bottom can confound the viewer into thinking that it is an advertisement. Intricate artistic reproduction and the language of advertising are a part of Warhol's style. Looking at this image, one does not have a direct interpretation of the theme. Dealing with themes such as consumerism, globalization, and the food industry, Warhol's work can either be seen as praising or criticizing the American brand or way of life. That is not the case in Meireles' *Insertions.*

In Meireles' *Insertions* from 1970, the artist engraved bottles with sayings like "Yankees Go Home" and "Quem Matou Herzog?" (Who Killed Herzog?), referencing the death of journalist Vladimir Herzog, killed while arresting the agencies of political repression in Brazil. It features a mix of English and Portuguese messages. The bottles were redistributed for circulation. These bottles were meant to be "parasites" in the circuit. As Meireles described this

[111] "Artist Interview: Marcello Nitsche," Tate, accessed December 13, 2019, https://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/exhibition/ey-exhibition-world-goes-pop/artist-interview/marcello-nitsche.

work, "they were small, discrete even, but dealing with large scales."[112] Following in Duchamp's footsteps (and Warhol's), these bottles were not created by the artist, but objects distributed that the artist engraved with different sayings. Instead of exhibiting them, Meireles returned them to the public to spread the message in one of the most consumed sodas in the world.

Even though he used Coca-Cola bottles as a form of artistic criticism, Meireles choice of Coca-Cola bottles can be seen following Warhol's tendency to represent ordinary objects. When Warhol chose cans of Campbell's tomato soup to depict in his *Campbell's Soup Cans*, 1961 (Fig. 23) he opted for it because "of his own experience with the product… its use as a compelling symbol of the post-war American supermarket and the culinary shift that it signaled."[113] Meireles, at the same time, utilized an ordinary object that himself had experience with (was familiar with), that marked the influence of American culture in Brazilian habits, and marked a shift in the Brazilian drink of choice. Instead of opting for a Brazilian brand of soda, Meireles adapted the colonial culture into a new interpretation, creating what today could be seen as post-colonial art. In Meireles' *Insertions,* one of his sayings is "'Yankees Go Home;' the open critique of American imperialism is not veiled through the use of an American brand or opening interpretation as to whether it was celebratory of consumer culture. The artist, rather, openly delivered his message against American intervention in national politics, because he was interested in "circuits of exchange that were decentralized and unconstrained, preferring these

[112] "Entrevista com Cildo Meireles," Itau Cultural, accessed December 13, 2019, https://www.itaucultural.org.br/ocupacao/cildo-meireles/cildo/?content_link=4.

[113] Bradford R. Collins, *Pop Art: The Independent Group to Neo-Pop, 1952-90* (New York: Phaidon, 2012), 135.

structures to the closed organization of the art world."[114] The "Neo" aspect of Brazilian Pop is seen in this example. The work acknowledged its own culture and historical tensions rather than reproducing the American style. Thus, it is "Neo," and not only "Pop."

Another characteristic of Brazilian Neo-Pop was the use of subject matter. Neo-Pop works borrowed the commercial style of advertising, going beyond the imagery of mass culture and adding a less subtle political message. As seen in Marcello Nitsche's work *I Want You*, 1966 (Fig. 24), the entire canvas is used to depict a hand pointing its finger to the viewer with a three-dimensional red drop of blood. The image is a reference to the American propaganda poster that said, "I want you for the US army." (Fig. 25) Nitsche said about this work that he "sought to use visual elements of everyday life, practicing a language that the Brazilian people already knew. Based on this language, I inserted a criticism about the system."[115] As in this work, many Brazilian artists found in Neo-Pop refuge to criticize the authoritarian regime. Artists suffered under the dictatorship and were always looking for ways to trick the system. As Nitsche says, he found in American imagery a way to criticize the situation. He did so with elements that did not belong to Brazilian culture, but that Brazilians had enough knowledge about to understand the visual reference.

This blend of Brazilian culture with other elements were not new or belonging uniquely to Neo-Pop, but a concept developed during the Brazilian modernist movement in the 1920s called "anthropophagy." As we have discussed, the cultural concept of anthropophagy, first introduced in 1928 by Oswald de Andrade, influenced how Brazilian artists received foreign art

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[114] Claudia Calirman, *Brazilian Art under dictatorship: Antonio Manuel, Artur Barrio, and Cildo Meireles* (London: Duke University Press, 2012), 127.

[115] "Artist Interview: Marcello Nitsche," Tate, accessed December 13, 2019, https://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/exhibition/ey-exhibition-world-goes-pop/artist-interview/marcello-nitsche.

and appropriated artistic styles. This postcolonial concept allowed Brazilians, via deconstruction and reconstruction, to insert their own Brazilian cultural expression into the cultural objects appropriated (or received) from dominant global cultures.[116] One of the styles that was appropriated through anthropophagy was "Pop Art." In addition to the concept of anthropophagy, Umberto Eco's concept of the open work (and his ideas of ambiguity) would be influential on Waldemar Cordeiro (especially), and through him the subsequent development of Brazilian Neo-Pop.

In Brazil, Pop Art received a different treatment when compared to its roots in Europe and the United States. Brazilian Neo-Pop Art was more politically upfront and critical of America's symbols, way of life, and influence on the politics of Brazil. This is a contrast with American Pop largely seen as either culturally/politically optimistic (for example by Lippard) or ambiguous. Despite this potential change in tone, and despite the reluctance of many Brazilian artists to be labelled as Pop, I believe that authentic Neo-Pop art thrived in Brazil in the 1960s. Neo-Pop played an instrumental role in the way Brazilian artists understood and responded to the tensions and terrors of the dictatorship—a dictatorship that would force many of them to flee the country before the end of the decade.

[116] Patrick Frank, ed. *Readings in Latin American Modern Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 111.

Illustrations

Figure 1. Andy Warhol, *Marilyn Monroe*, 1967. From MoMA. https://www.moma.org/collection/works/61240 (accessed June 01, 2021).

Figure 2. Marcel Duchamp's, *Bicycle Wheel.* 1913. Metal wheel mounted on painted wood stool, 51 x 25 x 16 1/2". The Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art: New York. From The Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art, https://www.moma.org/learn/moma_learning/marcel-duchamp-bicycle-wheel-new-york-1951-third-version-after-lost-original-of-1913/ (accessed December 10, 2019).

Figure 3. Andy Warhol, *Brillo Box* (Soap Pads), 1964. Synthetic polymer paint and silkscreen ink on wood. 17 1/8 x 17 x 14". MoMA. From MoMA, https://www.moma.org/collection/works/81384 (accessed December 11, 2020).

Figure 4. Robert Indiana, *USA 666*, 1964. Oil on canvas. http://robertindiana.com/works/the-sixth-american-dream-usa-666/

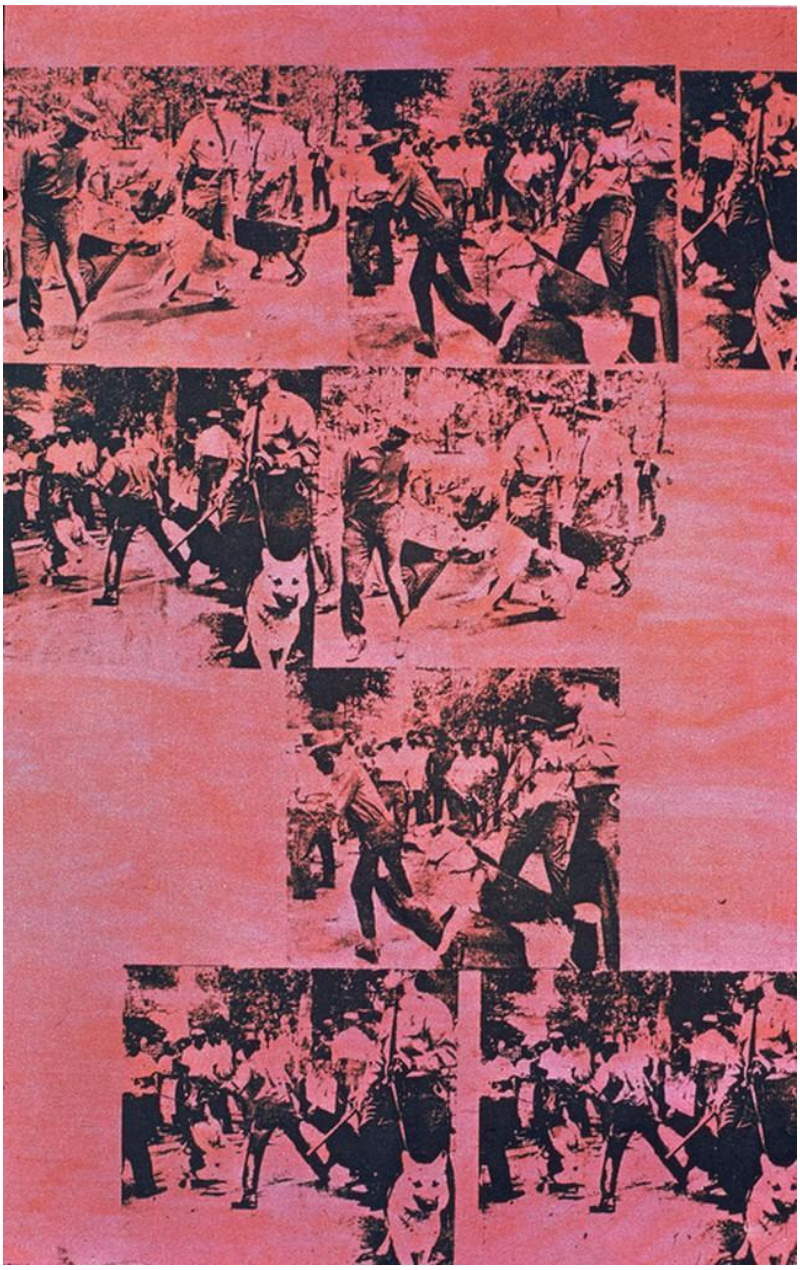

Figure 5. Andy Warhol, *Red Race Riot*, 1963. Mixed Media. From Artstor, https://library.artstor.org/asset/ARTSTOR_103_41822001637469 (accessed December 11, 2020).

Figure 6. Antonio Manuel, Repressao outra vez – Eis o saldo, 1968. Silkscreen. From MAM, https://mam.org.br/acervo/2006-181-manuel-antonio/ (accessed December 11, 2020).

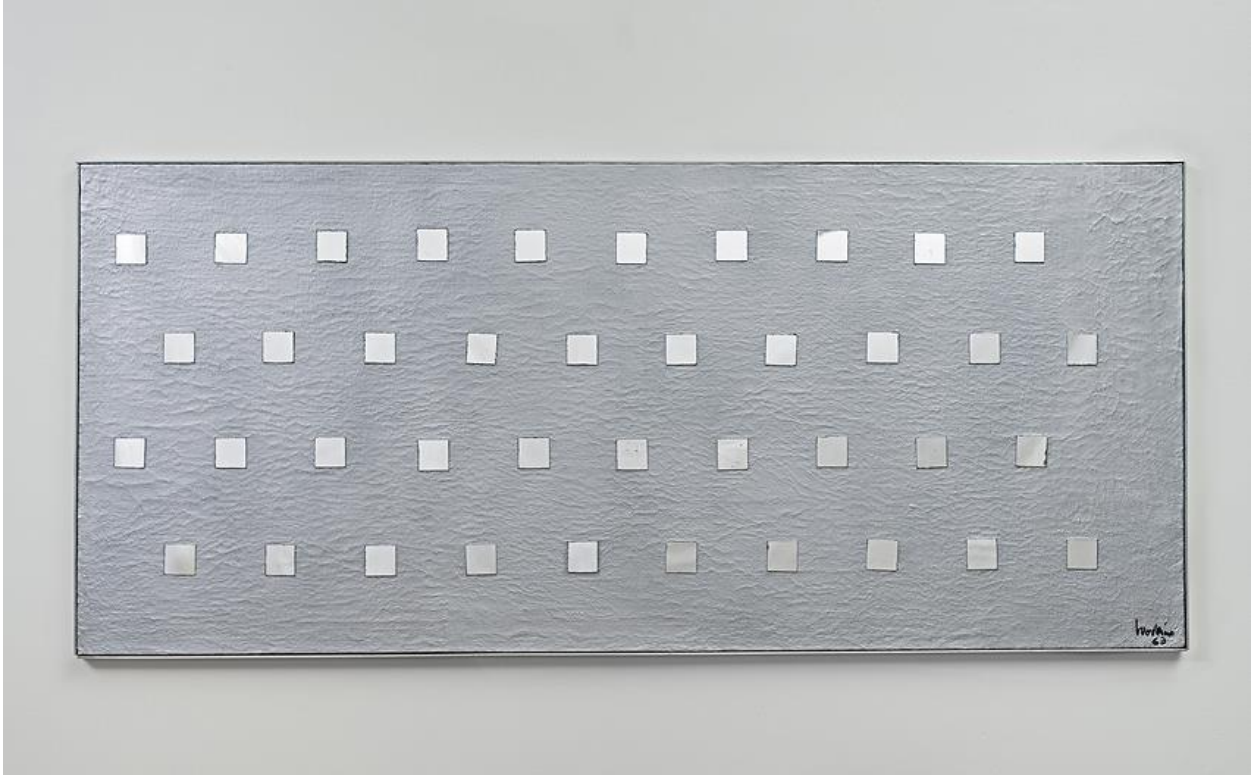

Figure 7. Waldemar Cordeiro, *Opera Aperta*, 1963. 75.00 cm x 150.00 cm. From family archive.

Figure 8. Waldemar Cordeiro, *Popcreto para um Popcritico*, 1964. From private collection Lili e João Avelar, Nova Lima, Minas Gerais, Brazil.

Figure 9. State flag of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics from 1922 to 1991.

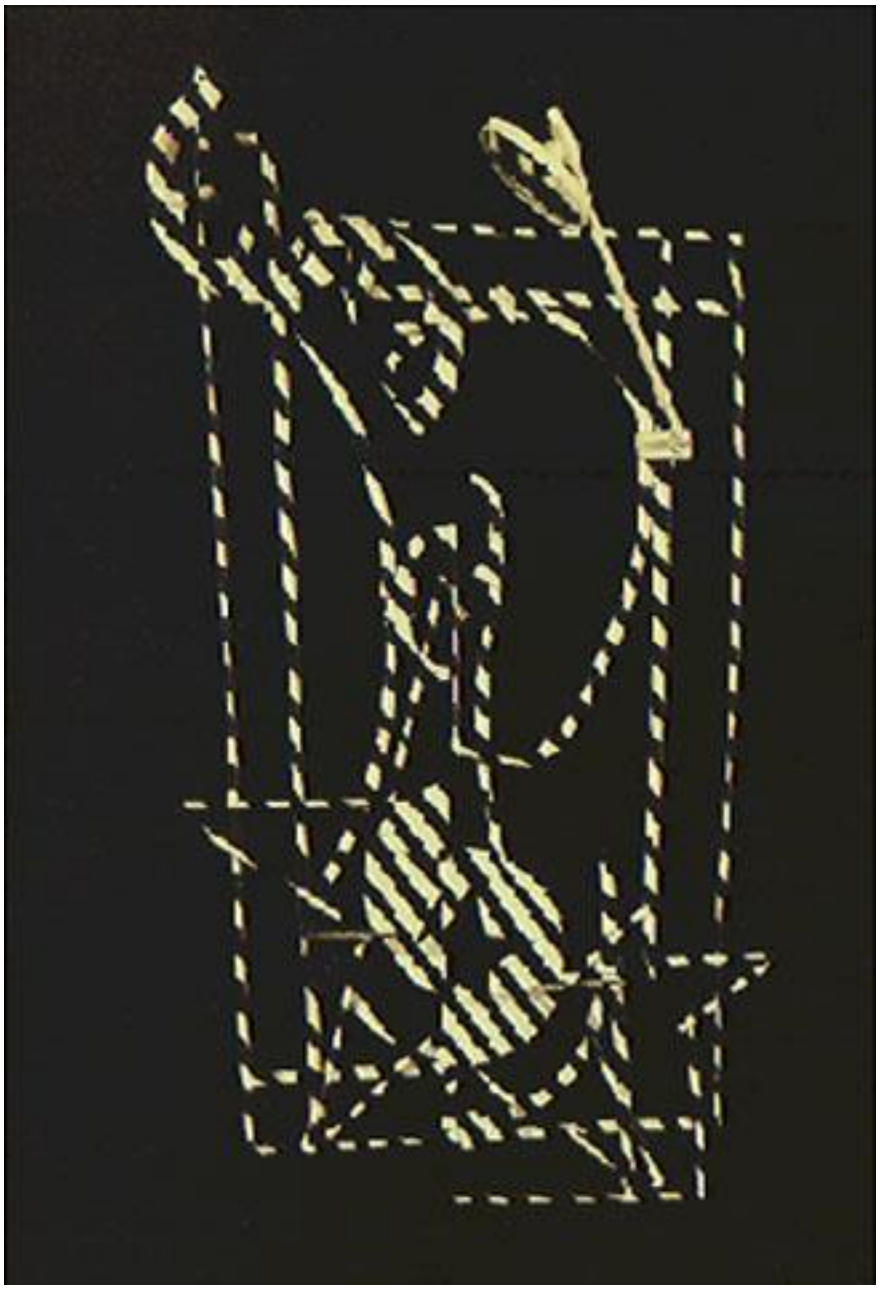

Figure 10. Waldemar Cordeiro, *Contra-Mao*, 1964. From private collection.

Figure 11. Roberto Magalhães, *Obra sem titulo*, 1965. From Pipa, https://www.premiopipa.com/2016/03/opiniao-65-50-anos-depois-reconta-a-historia-da-mostra-que-reuniu-artistas-da-nova-figuracao-brasileira/ (accessed December 11, 2020).

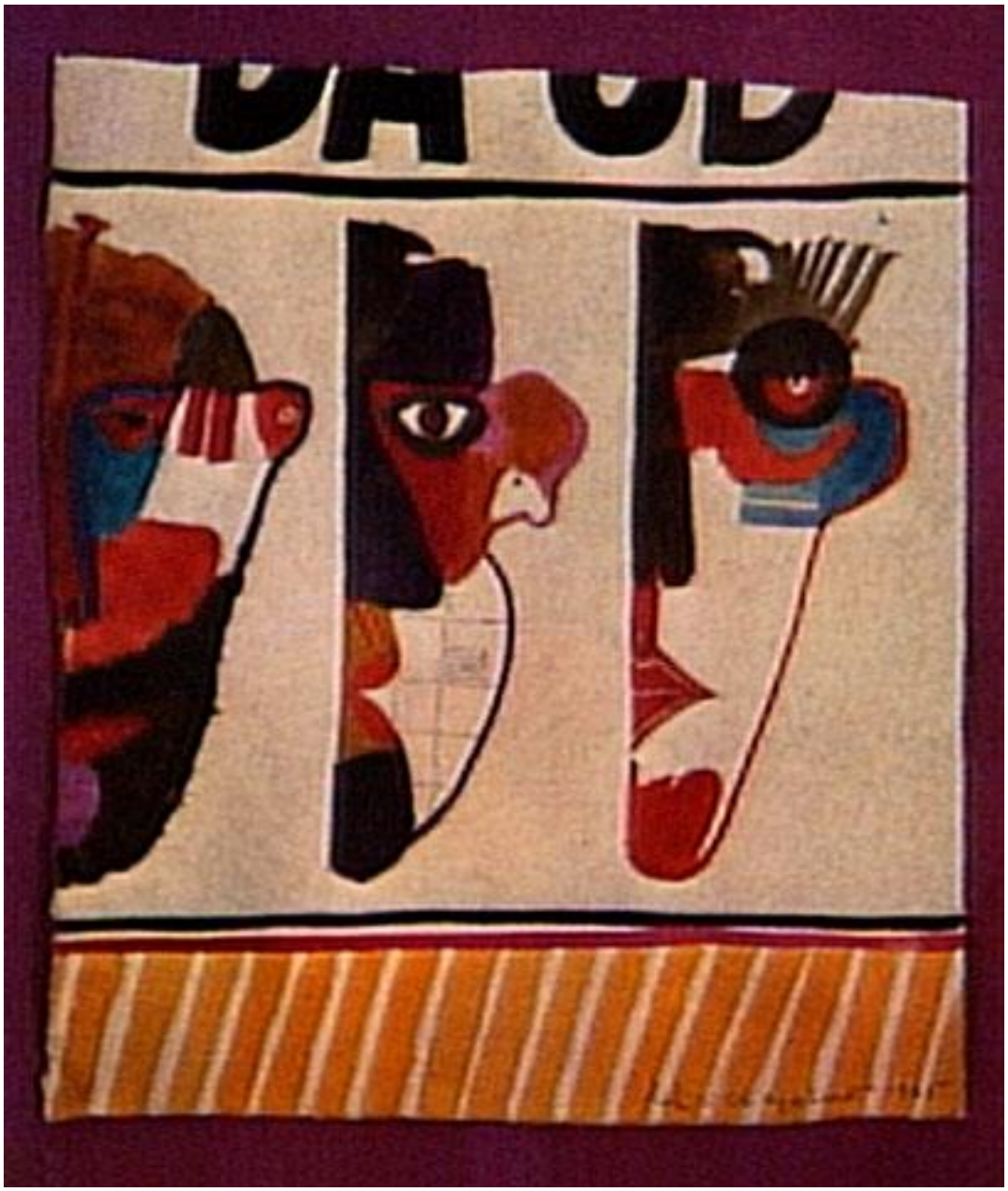

Figure 12. Roberto Magalhães, Self-Portrait in Three Phases, 1965. From MAM-RJ. https://enciclopedia.itaucultural.org.br/obra13093/auto-retrato-em-fases (accessed May 29, 2021).

Figure 13. Roberto Magalhães, *Talking Self-Portrait*, 1965. From private collection.

Figure 14. Antonio Dias, Nota sobre a Morte Imprevista, 1965. From MAM-SP. https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/nota-sobre-a-morte-imprevista-antonio-dias/oAE4O2kZ6Z6b8g (accessed June 10, 2021).

Figure 15. Mauricio Nogueira Lima, *Nao Entre a Esquerda*, 1964. From MAM – SP, https://mam.org.br/acervo/2000-085-nogueira-lima-mauricio/ (accessed June 16, 2021).

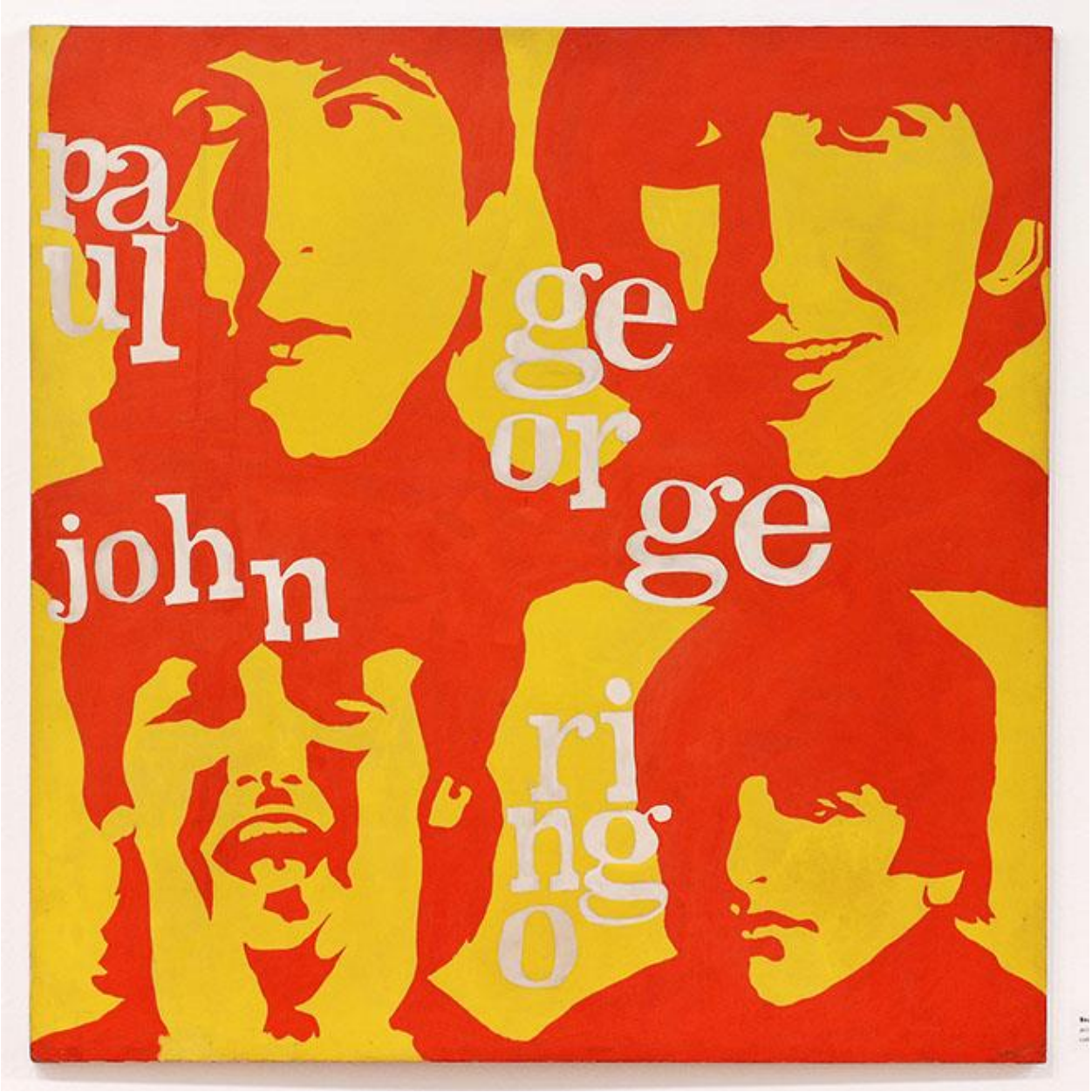

Figure 16. Mauricio Nogueira Lima, *Atomic Beatles*, 1965.
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Figure 17. Mauricio Nogueira Lima, *Marilyn Monroe*, 1969.
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Figure 18. Nelson Lerner, *Object no 2*, 1965. Scanned.

Figure 19. Hélio Oiticica, *Seja marginal, seja heroi* (Be an Outlaw, Be a Hero), 1967. From Philadelphia Museum of Art, https://www.artsy.net/artwork/helio-oiticica-be-an-outlaw-be-a-hero-seja-marginal-seja-heroi (accessed December 11, 2020).

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Figure 24. Marcello Nitsche, *I Want You*, 1966. Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo.

Figure 25. James Montgomery Falgg, *I Want You for U. S. Army*, 1917. https://www.wdl.org/en/item/576/

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