Restoring Subjectivity and Brazilian Identity: Lygia Clark’s Therapeutic Practice

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ABSTRACT

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Restoring Subjectivity and Brazilian Identity: Lygia Clark’s Therapeutic Practice

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This thesis examines the oeuvre of Brazilian artist Lygia Clark (1920-1988) with respect to her progressive interest in and inclusion of the viewing subject within the work of art. Responding to the legacy of Portuguese occupation in her home of Brazil, Clark sought out an art that embraced the viewing subject and contributed to their sense of subjectivity. Challenging traditional models of perception, participation, and objecthood, Clark created objects that exceeded the bounds of the autonomous transcendental picture plane. By fracturing the surfaces of her paintings, creating objects that possess an interior and exterior, and by requiring her participants to physically manipulate her work, Clark demonstrated an alternative model of the art object and experience. These experiments took her into the realm of therapy under the influence of psychoanalyst D. W. Winnicott’s work. Expounding upon his theory of the “Transitional Object,” Clark’s later bodies of work operated specifically within the context of the therapeutic, with the intention of nurturing the subjectivity of her participants.

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INTRODUCTION

Life seemed so important to me, infinitely more important that the work of art, because without it where would there be the awareness of the work itself? –Lygia Clark 1964

Lygia Clark’s statement of 1964 encapsulates her ethos; a belief in the criticality of life, and the physical entwinement of art objects and the subject’s sensate self. Driving her practice from 1950 when she began painting and training with Fernand Léger and Isaac Dobrinsky, to the production of large-scale multi-participant therapeutic orchestrations held at the Sorbonne in Paris during the 1970’s; Clark sought out an art that not only embraced the embodied self, but also worked to restore and nurture the participant’s subjectivity. Within this thesis I track and focus upon Lygia Clark’s progressive inclusion of the viewing body within the work of art and her simultaneous challenge to traditional models of perception, participation, and objecthood. This trajectory is posed as an alternative evolution of these artistic terms to that which the American Minimalists proliferated. Ultimately, I consider the participatory strategies developed in her early career specifically for their presaging of her later entrance into psychoanalytic realms of object production. Clark’s dedication to the participating subject reached its apex when she resituated her artistic practice from presentation within the art institution to the realm of psychoanalytic therapy as informed by Melanie Klein and D.W. Winnicott.

Within this thesis I expand upon the broad accounts and analyses of Clark’s work made by her colleagues and contemporaries, while pinpointing the works that speak to her later move into psychoanalytically inspired artistic situations. The sweeping accounts
of Clark’s work, produced by those who knew her, describe Clark’s intentions and her work; yet rarely speak to the actual operation of the art objects themselves and the traditional perceptual models and artistic tropes Clark dissolved. These accounts remain umbilically tied to her own writing and conversations had during her lifetime. There has been very little research that analyzes specific works, and her oeuvre is treated as linearly chronological, punctuated by her mid-career *Bicho* series rather than by reaching its crescendo with her late psychoanalytically driven works. I cite the *Bicho* series as a turning point, yet one in service of her greater project. Therefore, this thesis traces her trajectory, with the intention of establishing the roots of her development of therapeutically charged works. Clark herself participated in psychoanalysis, however, an examination of her own experience stands outside the scope of this thesis. Rather, I have described the psychoanalytic theory she was most interested in, and that manifests most readily in her objects.

In the standard narrative of art history, Clark’s male European contemporaries have grossly overshadowed Lygia Clark and her work. The majority of scholarship on Clark has been produced in Portuguese and situates her within a singular Brazilian context. In this thesis, I take to task restoring Lygia Clark and her oeuvre within the history of Modernism by examining the contributions she made within the realms of perception, object-hood, and participatory practices. Specifically, this paper tracks the continuously present role of the participating individual, and the implications of the participatory strategies she employed.
This thesis takes as its major interlocutors Ferreira Gullar, Brazilian poet and Clark’s colleague, Yve-Alain Bois, art historian and friend of the artist, Guy Brett, critic and friend of the artist, and Suely Rolnik, psychoanalyst and contemporary of the artist. As friends and contemporaries of the artist, the literature produced by these authors examines the artist’s oeuvre in broad strokes, and generally considers her work within the singular Brazilian context. Gullar, an integral member of the Neo-concrete group and great supporter of Clark’s work has produced two major documents, the Neo-Concrete Manifesto, and Theory of the Non-Object. Also discussed in this thesis is his brief trajectory of the artist that situates her within the Brazilian context and highlights her most successful works. Similarly, Guy Brett has published an overview of the artist’s oeuvre, yet devotes a great deal of ink to the formal relationships between Clark’s work and the work of Romantic painter Fransisco Goya, a comparison that emphasizes the seeming monstrosity and strangeness of Clark’s late works, and thus draws attention away from her nurturing intentions. Suely Rolnik, a psychoanalyst, has considered the late work of Lygia Clark within a psychoanalytic context, however her writing hasn’t evaluated the depth of Clark’s relationship with D.W. Winnicott and his theory of the “transitional object,” nor has she focused upon Clark’s objects themselves in depth. The most extensive writing on Clark’s therapeutic practices was produced by Thierry Davilla, whose article accompanied an exhibition on therapeutic art called “Pulse” held at the Art Institute of Boston. This text, while importantly outlining Clark’s therapeutic works, does not consider the important role of her heritage or the depth of her interest in Winnicott,

1 While her heritage and the Brazilian milieu are vital in understanding her work, she must also be considered within a broader spectrum as her work responded to and challenged canonized European painters Piet Mondrian and Kasimir Malevich.
and begins by examining her *Bicho* series. I propose an evaluation of her oeuvre that begins much earlier. Considering the work of these writers, my thesis thus draws out the specific works in Clark’s early career that foreshadow her explicitly psychoanalytic works. I thus seek to examine the interstitial moments in Clark’s oeuvre that collectively situate her as a singular, complex, and innovative artist.

This thesis seeks to understand the monumentality of her oeuvre within a greater context and create a more thorough dialogue between her work and the work of her contemporaries outside of Brazil. Because Clark herself was a prolific writer, and discussed her work at length, this thesis engages a multitude of her journal entries, essays, and letters. To bolster and explore the work of the aforementioned writers, including Clark herself, I draw upon the theoretical work of Judith Butler, Giorgio Agamben, and above all, the psychoanalytic theory of D.W. Winnicott in which Clark herself was invested and to which she overtly responded.

Clark’s embrace of life, of the individual and expressive human subject, arose in part as a response to the milieu of her home of Rio de Janeiro Brazil in the mid 20th century. The country’s long history of Portuguese occupation ended in 1822, and its legacy left modern Brazil within a crisis of collective subjectivity. Searching for a certain “Brazilianess,” artists, critics, and politicians alike sought to both recover and generate a sense of national identity in their respective mediums. Affected personally by the socio-political situation in Brazil, Lygia Clark addressed collective subjectivity via identity.

As the country struggled to solidify a specifically Brazilian identity, its artists took a great interest in the European Avant-Garde including Kasimir Malevich, Paul
Klee, Max Bill, and Piet Mondrian. Work by these artists flooded Brazil, and while their influence is witnessed in the oeuvre of Lygia Clark, she concluded their work to be mechanical in form and production. In her attempt to restore individual expressivity within the work of art, Clark opened the artwork unto the realm of the participating subject. Through the realization of the sensate corporeal body, made possible through physical interactions with her objects, Clark anticipated a reintroduction to and fusion of the subject to the body; a reinstatement of individual identity based on the universalism of explicit uniqueness of individual embodiment. She sought artistic experiences outside the gallery and beyond traditional models of viewing. Her friend and critic Guy Brett wrote: “The evolution of Clark’s work may perhaps be summed up as a radical journey beyond the traditional relationship between artist and spectator.”

Stimulated first by an interest in space and artistic expression, Clark would eventually take her work into the context of the therapeutic, arranging sessions with her participants and objects motivated and inspired by her rising interest in psychoanalysis.

Chapter 1 focuses upon Lygia Clark’s break from and challenge to occularcentric models of perception. Her interests were manifested in objects that over time became more explicitly three-dimensional. Clark was dissatisfied with what she saw as a lack of expressive potential within the flat transcendental picture plane, defined as such by art historian Erwin Panofsky in his text *Perspective as Symbolic Form*. Her rupture of this flatness would initially present itself in the form of fractured and modulated wooden surfaces that allowed for snippets of air and light to penetrate its interstices. Upon allowing the environment access into the physical structure of the work, Clark sought to

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reciprocally allow this physicality entrance into its surroundings and the space of the viewer. Taking a single sheet of metal, Clark folded the material in and upon itself, creating a three-dimensional object that possessed an exterior and interior. This concretizing of the object within space necessitated a model of “viewing” beyond that required for painting upon the planar surface. Terming this and following objects *Casulo*, or *Cocoon* Clark initiated her practice of what have been termed bodily objects, and the welcoming of the object into the space of the viewer.

This chapter builds upon Ferreira Gullar’s examination of her trajectory, and pays special attention to the implications of her rejection of the flat picture plane. Informed by the writing of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Clark and her Brazilian Neo-Concrete colleagues manifested their interest in work beyond the picture plane, utilizing objects to bring about an awareness of bodily inhabitation and occupations of space. A rapid and progressive deconstruction of the flat picture plane would drive her work from the wall to the pedestal, to the floor, and finally into the hands of the viewer. Clark’s practice is compared to that of the American Minimalists who were also greatly informed by phenomenological perception and the writing of Merleau-Ponty. This comparison seeks to characterize Clark’s work, and differentiate it from the vastly different work produced by the Minimalists, including Donald Judd and Frank Stella.

Chapter 2 examines Clark’s *Bicho* (*Beasts*) series, a phase that would prove to be a radical turning point in the artist’s oeuvre. Utilizing hinges and diversely shaped metal plates, Clark created objects reminiscent of her *Casulo* series, yet fully kinetic and intended to be manipulated in the hands of the viewer. The viewer, now fully engaged in
operating the work physically, took on the role of the participant and actively performed the work. By releasing the *Bicho* from what she saw as the confines of the wall, Clark introduced the object to the realm of the viewer. Through one’s physical interaction with these “Beasts,” Clark sought an experience for her participants that engaged their sensate bodies and contributed to a sense of embodied subjectivity. These objects thus operated as apparati; their effects that of engaging the sensate body. Utilizing the definition of the apparatus as described by Giorgio Agamben, one informed by Michel Foucault, the object’s role as a catalyst device serves to characterize its function. Drawing upon Judith Butler’s discussion of the gender performativity, the utilization of the *Bicho* and its role in constructing and nurturing subjectivity is examined as a form of performing the body, and thus constructing subjectivity. Clark’s *Bicho* series is perhaps her most celebrated and collected. Despite this revere, the objects themselves have not yet been evaluated for the way in which they operate as apparati and serve to stimulate the participant’s sense of self. This thesis seeks to describe this operation, and asserts their objecthood not as sculptures as such, but as sculptural apparati.

Chapter 3 explores Lygia Clark’s “propositions;” works composed textually as instructions for the creation of objects and experiences. These “propositions” allotted the participant a greater role in the making and construction of the work, one created out of quotidian materials such as plastic bags, stones, rubber bands, and netting. Utilizing Roland Barthes canonical text *Death of the Author*, this chapter demonstrates the extent to which Clark abdicated from the making of objects and bestowed upon her viewers the opportunity to restoratively create. The “propositions” are discussed in terms of their
presaging of the artist’s phase of therapeutic objects. This chapter concludes by examining the relationship between Clark’s later phases and psychoanalytic practices.

Fueled by her growing interest and participation in psychoanalysis, particularly the work of English psychoanalyst Donald Woods Winnicott, Clark conceived of her objects as therapeutic apparati, and prescribed participatory practices akin to yet radicalized from those invoked by psychoanalysts during therapy sessions. Her bodies of work including *Sensorial Objects* and *Structuring of the Self* both called upon concepts developed and practiced by psychoanalysts, though fully saturated with Clark’s own innovations. Lygia Clark’s participation in and fascination with psychoanalysis has been briefly noted in scholarship, however an examination of the relationship between her *Relational Objects* and D.W. Winnicott’s theory of the *Transitional Object* has not yet been fully engaged. Therefore, this paper reveals the way in which Clark adopted and transformed Winnicott’s theory, producing singular and unparalleled works of art.

With the current proliferation of new media and data driven art forms, it is vital that artwork focused on the human body and its senses maintain a significant role in artistic discourses. Despite the innovations and originality of Clark’s work, she has received little attention in scholarly discourse. Her close friends and colleagues produced the majority of the existing literature on the artist, and few scholars outside of the Brazilian context have broached her work. Additionally, In light of the development of work that has been termed to be “relationally aesthetic” it is vital that Lygia Clark’s innovations in participation and the viewing subject not be subsumed within this category, but differentiated. Lygia Clark’s oeuvre is thus here characterized not as a
harbinger of this mode, but as a specific response to the 1950’s Brazilian milieu and a necessary exploration of the self.
CHAPTER 1: TRANSCENDING PLANARITY: LYGIA CLARK’S TRAJECTORY

TOWARDS THE BODILY OBJECT

A startling green consumes the surface of Lygia Clark’s *Superficie Modulasa no. 5*. (Fig. 1) save for 5 seeming gashes that appear to manifest from within the object itself. These five gashes materialize like gasps of breath, at once destroying the placid planarity of the object while promising a heightened sensorial experience via their rich and unusual materiality. Each gash, accentuated by either black or off-white paint is

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3Research for this chapter began in August of 2009, and the majority of the text was completed by February of 2010. Monica Amor’s article *From Work to Frame, In Between, and Beyond: Lygia Clark and Hélio Oiticica, 1959-1964* was published in the Winter issue of the journal “Grey Room”, becoming available to the public in early March 2010. Amor’s article tackles Lygia Clark and Hélio Oiticica’s abandonment of the flat plane and traditional framing properties, and their subsequent contributions to the development of new forms of object-hood. Because of the perpetually progressive nature of Clark’s oeuvre (progressive in the sense that her works build upon those that came before), both Amor and I include a similar set of objects in our analysis. My selection of art objects was based upon their ingenuity and specificity, as well as the ability of each to effectively demonstrate Lygia Clark’s ultimate investigation into the possible relationships between objects and the human body. Amor’s article nicely outlays the specific milieu of the Brazilian Modernist movement and the revolutionary steps toward participatory practices that both Clark and Oiticica pioneered. Rather than focusing on participation and the “recuperation of subjectivity” as she states in the introduction of her text, Amor seeks to reveal the artists’ monumental abdication of classical models of representation and consequently, perception. Amor however, doesn’t include a discussion of the monumentality of these developments within the context of Modernism as a whole. In light of the scope of this paper, it is necessary to view Clark’s work exclusively, and within a broader spectrum, one that includes the advent of participation, as well as the role of her, at times wavering subjectivity. While briefly mentioning subjectivity, phenomenology, and classical representation, Amor’s text passes over defining the models of each that Clark engaged or refuted. In this chapter I intend to examine the specificity of Clark’s model of perception through analysis of classical representation and perception as established by art historian Erwin Panofsky. Moreover, I intend on demonstrating the significance of her work in relation to the developments of participatory and phenomenologically driven artists in the United States.

4Lygia Clark was born Lygia Pimentel Lins. She married Aluízio Clark Ribeiro at the age of 18, moved from Belo Horizonte to Rio de Janeiro, and later bore three children: Elisabeth, Álvaro, and Eduardo. In 1950, at the age of 30 she moved to Paris with her children to study painting with Fernand Léger and Isaac Dobrinsky. Not two years later she would begin exhibiting. She rapidly began showing internationally and received numerous awards for her work. For an extensive chronological biography of the artist see "Biography." *Lygia Clark*. Barcelona: Fundacio Antoni Tapies, 1998. 351-357.
underscored by a literal break in the painted support. Where each wood panel adjoins another, their physical relationship is marked by a slash of color. Clark thus both destroys and builds up the planar surface to reveal the three-dimensional space modulated and determined by the object itself. Lygia Clark’s 1955 work would be one of many to propel her into radical experimentation with the painted surface that would later manifest into an incorporation of the active body within and partially constituting the work. This chapter builds upon the writing of Ferreira Gullar and Monica Amor, both of whom articulate the significance of the artist’s trajectory and her contributions to establishing alternative forms of object-hood. Through the undoing of the flat pictorial surface Clark subsequently developed of a new model of viewership that embraced the sensate body. This chapter tracks the formation of this model within a broad context that includes the theoretical writings of philosophers Martin Heidegger and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and art historian Erwin Panofsky. Bolstered by these writers, this chapter will illustrate the model of perception formed and activated by Clark and how it is differentiated from that engaged by the American Minimalists. Such a discussion is imperative, in light of her later maneuver towards an art constituted by performative activity via the object as apparatus.

While dedicated to upholding a Brazilian identity (See footnote #2), many young artists were interested in the possibilities of abstraction and propagating, as Lygia Clark

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5I use the term “bodily” to describe specific objects created by Clark that operate with an interior/exterior. These objects also possess certain qualities akin to the functioning of the human body, such as breath and kinetic movement. The “bodily” object will be further discussed in chapters 2 and 3 of this essay. In this essay I reference a variety of texts written by Ferreira Gullar, and one in particular by Monica Amor. See footnote number 1 for a brief description of Amor’s text.
would state: “the universal development of art.” The early 1950’s would bring exhibitions of work into Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo by Max Bill, Kasimir Malevich, Paul Klee, the Russian Constructivists, and the Bauhaus group. Simultaneous to the introduction of these European artists to Brazil was the rich growth of groups in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo who adopted and expounded upon Concretism. The Grupa Ruptura, based in São Paulo and formed in 1952, manifested their interest in “all experiences which tend towards the renewing of the essential values of visual art.” They professed the “exhaustion” of illusionism on the picture plane and called for new forms

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2. Swiss artist Max Bill would be an especially influential figure for the development of abstraction in Brazil. He would hold particular interest for Lygia Clark. As noted below, Bill won the grand prize for sculpture at the inaugural Biennial in São Paulo in 1951, solidifying his popularity in Brazil. His entry and winning piece *Tripartite Unity* is a large stainless steel sculpture modeled after a mobius strip. His influence would be witnessed later in works by Lygia Clark such as *Hand Dialogue* and the *Bicho* series, both of which will be discussed further in this essay. While Clark was informed by Max Bill, ultimately she disliked his use of reason and mechanicity; opting for forms that held the possibility for “expression,” a trait she was intent upon residing within her work.
7 Ibid, 2. In the late 1940’s and 1950’s, Brazil experienced rapid growth economically, socially, and artistically, particularly in the cities of Rio de Janiero and São Paulo. Brasilia, the newly established capital of Brazil was constructed, bringing wealth and the Brazilian people from the coasts into the heart of the country. With this new modern city came the prolific production of the visual arts, poetry, critical writing, and cinema. An emphasis on regional identity was giving way to a unified country, both geographically and culturally. With the desire to preserve and enrich their own history, Brazil saw the opening of numerous art institutions. The Museo de Arte was opened in 1947 in São Paulo, and was followed by Museos de Arte Moderna in both São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. In 1951 the São Paulo Bienal was inaugurated, where Swiss Concrete artist Max Bill would take the international prize for sculpture. As scholar Mary Schneider Enriquez states, the revere evidenced for Bill’s analytical work speaks to the country’s interest in Concretism, which would captivate Brazilian artists. The exhibition would prove incredibly influential, witnessed by the formation of further Concretist factions in Rio de Janiero and São Paulo. Until the introduction and development of Concretism in Brazil, the country had celebrated regionalist neo-realism; championed by artists like Candido Portinari and Di Cavalcanti who were both known for their large-scale, vibrant figurative works.
and principles of art that spoke to expression, space/time, movement, and material.\textsuperscript{9}

Utilizing the visual vocabulary of geometric abstraction, the group was interested in the integration of art and life, structuring themselves upon the theories and work of Piet Mondrian. Lygia Clark played an integral role in the rapid development of Brazilian Modernism, when, returning to Brazil in 1952 she quickly adopted the abstracted geometric language, abandoning her earlier figurative methods. Two years later, she would join a group of young artists including Lygia Pape and Hélio Oiticica in Rio de Janeiro. Together they formed the Grupo Frente, holding similar beliefs to the Grupo Ruptura. Both groups soon dissolved, with what would become the most influential faction forming in Rio de Janeiro in 1959; the Neo-Concretists.

Spearheading the Neo-Concrete group, Ferreira Gullar was a central figure in their establishment and provided the theoretical framework for the group through two documents; the \textit{Manifesto Concreto}, and the \textit{Teoria do Nao-Objeto}.\textsuperscript{10} Gullar was an established poet, publishing his first collection of poems in 1949.\textsuperscript{11} In 1957, Gullar began submitting critical writings to the \textit{Jornal de Brasil}, the position enabling him an avenue in which to publish both the \textit{Neo-Concrete Manifesto} and \textit{Theory of the Non-Object}.\textsuperscript{12} Gullar was well versed in philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s writings, and utilized his

\textsuperscript{9}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{10}Ferreira Gullar is the pen name of José Ribimar Ferreira. A thorough discussion of both documents will take place later in this chapter.
\textsuperscript{11}\textit{A Small Anthology of Contemporary Lusophone Poets: (Some Concrete Examples)} Carlos Drummond et al. \textit{World Literature Today}, Vol. 53, No. 1, The Three Worlds of Lusophone Literature (Winter, 1979), pp. 57-68 Published by: University of Oklahoma.
model of phenomenology in articulating the philosophical foundations of the Neo-Concrete group. Merleau-Ponty published *Phénoménologie de la Perception* in 1945, providing both Gullar and Clark text from which to articulate their attitudes towards perception. In his text, Merleau-Ponty describes perception as not limited to cognitive processes but through a subjective personal experience of one’s own body and its engagement with space and objects. Thus the body does not solely experience and perceive the world through systematic objective means, but via an intertwining of individual sensate and cognitive practices. For Merleau-Ponty, this method of perception is exclusive to the perceptive framework outlined by René Descartes who infamously wrote: “I think, therefore I am,” giving precedence to cognitive activity in the formulation of subjectivity. Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological theory would dovetail with Clark’s process of reorienting the perception of art objects from the purely visual, to that which was dependant upon the viewer/participant’s movement, proximity, and touch.

The depiction of virtual space versus the physical modulation of actual space was a formal problem that occupied Lygia Clark for the entirety of her career. According to Ferreira Gullar, Clark unveiled her new spatial experimentations in 1958 at an exhibition in São Paulo. Gullar, present at the show, penned an accompanying text that divided Clark’s painting into two distinct periods. Into her first period Gullar placed her framed

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geometric abstract paintings on canvas, of which there are many and of great variety. Her second period took form with a change in material and method; canvas and paintbrush gave way to wooden plates and a spray pistol. This vast exchange of material and method underscored the artist’s new interest in physical versus pictorial space. For Clark, the model of the support was unstable, evolving rapidly from a surface on which to create an additional fictive space, to a form with which to modulate and reveal its surroundings.

The root of Clark’s experimentation with literal space can be traced to her conception of the “organic line”; thus realized to engender what she called a “concrete expressional space” and discussed in her article aptly titled: “Lygia Clark and the Concrete Expressional Space.” Here the artist strikes a strong divide between what she labels “seriated” forms and “organic, expressional space.” In a more prosaic sense, Clark was intent upon the return of unpredictability and individuality within the work; the possibility for human emotional expression. She saw this as lost in Concrete art, seeing the space represented by seriated forms dead and mechanical. Her intent was to remedy this problem by exposing the three-dimensionality of the support, i.e. the canvas and by calling attention to the new space modulated and revealed by this material thickness. Key to regaining organicity and expression within a work was the possibility for space and eventually bodies to penetrate it. This possibility was initiated by Clark’s organic line, wherein she invented the “line space.”

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15 Lygia Clark "Lygia Clark and the Concrete Expressional Space." *Lygia Clark*. Barcelona: Fundacio Antoni Tapies, 1998. 83-86. Print. 83. Clark’s career can be read as relatively linear and perpetually progressive. Ferreira Gullar adamantly describes her work as linear, however Richard Basbaum questions Gullar’s assessment, noting that contemporary readers are more apt to visualize a chaotic and organic, creative process.
Clark’s discovery and employment of the organic line occurred accidently as she was captivated by the visual relationship between a collage and its passé-partout, the surrounding paper or cardboard mat separating the surface of the work from its frame. “I was taken by this line, making paintings (still then using canvas and frame) in which the concern was bursting the nucleus of the painting bringing its color back into the frame.”\textsuperscript{16} By embracing the frame as a plastic material, it was thus disinvested with framing properties and allowed to act as a compositional element of the painting itself. This simple shift in the role of the passé-partout subtly altered the work, allowing its status as a three-dimensional object in space to become evident; thus disallowing for a totally planar reading of the surface. Clark saw this shift as an eruption of the centrality of the picture plane, a reevaluation and dismissal of the preciousness and umbilicus of the canvas within a protective and mediating frame. Here Clark would dismantle the status of the picture plane as window unto another world, enlightening her viewers of the preciousness and potentiality of the materials themselves, rather than that which they referenced.

For Clark, the organic line appeared at the convergence of two individual surfaces, be they a doorframe and its jam, or a collage and its passé-partout. She stressed the organicity of its creation, framing it as a non mark-made or intentionally composed line, but one appearing as the \textit{result} of the physical relationship between two objects; the line itself being the slice of air or shadow created by the intersection of objects. In her writing, Clark frequently alludes to her desire to design architectural spaces. As though working backward, she made small-scale architectural maquettes in a modeler’s\textsuperscript{16} Ibid. Original parentheses.
workshop where she apprenticed in 1956. These three-sided maquettes utilize the visual repertoire seen in Clark’s paintings, however each compositional element has been considered in conjunction with the function of the domestic space itself. Doorways surprisingly appear where we would expect Clark’s organic line; geometric shapes have leapt from the surface to take on a new role as bench or table. In essence, Clark has taken each example of the organic line and literally opened it into space. Moreover, she has literally transported the viewer as opposed to and other than the artwork, and into the very nucleolus of its structure. The viewer would be able to maneuver within the space, moving in and out of the organic line itself. From these maquettes Clark would attempt to translate the viewer’s occupation of space unto a small wall-hung work of art that maintained a visual affiliation with “painting.”

Clark’s series’ *Breaking the Frame* and *Discovery of the Organic Line* (Figs. 2-3) both dating to 1954 exemplify her early attempts at manifesting the organic line within individual art works. While these works remained “framed” Clark disturbed the frame’s status as a neutral intermediary space between the work and the viewer and further included it as a compositional element. She achieved this disruption through several methods. Maquettes from the *Breaking of the Frame* series feature geometric forms interjecting the frame, either extending from, or existing independently from the expected center of the work. *Composition no. 5* (Fig. 4) of the series for example, features a black passé-partout whose consistency and strength is broken by a layer of green paint over the lower left-hand corner. The passé-partout “frames” a nearly monochrome curtain of green punctuated at its corner by a small piercing red rectangle that itself is mirrored and
framed by no less than 4 layers of encompassing rectangles. What then becomes the focal point work is the red punctum that hovers within its many frames. The result is an unbalanced, unpredictable challenge put toward the historically powerful and static role given to the frame. Clark’s experimentation would carry her work for the entirety of her career, indeed Brazilian artist and scholar Ricardo Basbaum stated: “…Lygia Clark invented the organic line in 1954, she had no way of suspecting that this gesture would prove to be decisive for the development of contemporary art and thought. After all, several of the trends of post World War II period through the 1960’s were intent on finding an escape from the linearity of dialectics.”17

Also meditating on the status of the frame was American artist Eva Hesse whose seminal 1966 work *Hang-Up* (Fig. 5) would follow more than 10 years after Lygia Clark began her *Breaking the Frame* series. Measuring 6 x 7 feet, the steel and wood frame hovers upon the wall; its structure wrapped with cords and ropes, as though weak and bandaged.18 From this wounded body protrudes a long thin malleable rod that swoops from the top of the frame out into the space before it, only to be reigned in once more. The frame, its historical properties as a protective barrier between the artwork and the viewer, here protects nothing. The cherished interior is nothing but the gallery wall. Lucy Lippard suggests that the protruding metal rod acts like a drawn line escaping from the flat surface, at once signaling the death of the plane, to quote Clark, and the frame as

17Basbaum, "Within the Organic Line," 87.
18Lippard, 56. Hesse saw *Hang-Up* as one of her most successful works stating: “It is the most ridiculous structure that I ever made and that is why it is really good. It has a kind of depth I don’t always achieve and that it the kind of depth or soul or absurdity or life or meaning or feeling or intellect that I want to get at.”
outmoded. If Eva Hesse has demonstrated the death of the plane, it was Lygia Clark, 10 years before who revealed the potentiality for its death by destroying it from within. Where Hesse bandages the remaining power of the frame, Clark exposed its decline by first including it as part of the work and later by rendering it unnecessary.

Clark’s “escape from the linearity of dialectics” would occur through a physical relationship with the art object heightened through an emphasized physicality and presence of the object itself. Eventually, this physical relationship would develop into the tactile, responsive, and participatory. The organic line held such power for Clark because rather than existing in fictive space, it existed in real space and was physically tangible. It was the very structure of the work within space. In reference to Clark’s organic line, Ferreira Gullar wrote: “Lygia Clark had managed in just a few short years to transform an apparently formal problem within the picture’s protected surface into a matter that questions the very nature of the artwork in relation to real space.”

Gullar’s response to Clark suggests the monumentality of the artist’s research and production. His view of the relationship between the canvas and frame pitted each against the other, a rivalry solved within Clark’s work. As he suggests, Clark’s investigation into space ultimately resituated not only her own work, but it served as a subtle interrogation and demystification of the comprehensive status of artwork as exterior to the space of the viewer. From here on out, Clark’s work would operate outside of the realm assigned to the wall and within a frame, thus functioning within the corporeal interactive world.

19 Ibid.
“Actual space” is what Clark was striving to reveal in her series *Planos en superficie modulada* (Planes in Modulated Surface). Fictive space presented to the viewer as mediated by a frame was purely “optico-mental,” thus lacking the bodily, phenomenological response desired by Clark. In achieving a relationship with actual space, she rid her work of the frame, propagating a more direct relationship between the body and the object itself. Rather than existing within the mediating frame, the work existed within the realm of real space, the space of the spectator and the spectator’s body. The removal of the frame altered the work’s object hood, forcing spectators to consider the depth of the plane and its three-dimensionality while instantaneously opening the work to modes of experience beyond frontal opticality. The depth of the object was no longer a support for a planar composition but an equal player in the object’s physical occupation of space. This unification and non-hierarchical assemblage of forms treads closely to a description of the gestalt, a term familiar to the Neo-Concretists. Rudolf Arnheim describes gestalt theory as a method of perception in which the totality of the object is perceived and comprehended as an indivisible whole. Lygia Clark commented on the gestalt in her 1958 work entitled *Egg* (Fig. 6). Using nitro-cellulose on wood, Clark displaces all expectations of a perfect circular form by running a white strip around the perimeter of the black circle. The disruption occurs when the white perimeter falls short of fully encircling the object. Viewers are left with a shape that begins to protrude

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21Clark, "Lygia Clark and the Concrete Expressional Space," 84. Clark described two types of space in her essay on the concrete expressional space. The space engendered by seriated form involved a distinct and separate relationship between the work and the spectator. She resolved this “distant” relationship through experimentation with depth of the plane and later with heightened three-dimensionality of her work. This physicality provided for a space the viewing body could penetrate physically, not only visually.
from the geometric form the eye wishes to complete and view as circular. This method is antagonistic to the “atomistic” approach wherein objects are viewed and analyzed according to their disparate parts: “(Gestalt theory) uses as its method…the description of the structural features, the whole qualities of ‘systems’, i.e., of those natural things or happenings in which the character and function of any part is determined by the total situation.”

The author uses the term “organism” as a metaphor, rehearsing its complex makeup as akin to that of gestalten objects. While these objects posses a mysterious system of functioning, they are perceived as whole structures, not the single elements that compose them. The gestalt’s “wholeness” is in part constituted by its relationship to the ground. The ground provides a neutral space upon which the gestalt’s figure, or form is defined. Taking into consideration Clark’s *Planes in Modulated Surface* series, the relationship between the compositional elements can’t be organized hierarchically; making a relationship between figure and ground impossible. She thus does away with the binary, creating a total object, as would please the gestaltists, but does so without operating within their laws. Composition is always at play in the series’ thus discussed, and her work would soon take on temporal, kinetic, tactile, and agent properties further distinguishing them from gestalt objects.

Clark’s research of 1954 manifested physically two years later with her series *Planes in Modulated Surface*. (Fig. 7) The series marks Clark’s crystallization of the notion of “real space.” These objects began as explorations of pictorial space, with Clark

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23See Michael Asbury’s *Neoconcretism and Minimalism: On Ferreira Gullar’s Theory of the Non-Object* for a comparative discussion of the use of both Gestalt theory and Phenomenology in Minimalist and Neo-Concrete objects.
intending them to serve not as individual works of art, but as an “experimental field to be
later integrated into an environment.” The finished unframed works were constructed
with industrial paint on wood plates; assembled by abutting each plate to another. Paulo
Herkenhoff commented: “Without a frame, nothing separates the Clarkian pictorial space
from the world, and now the air which penetrates it is the same as that which we
breathe.” Thus the physical mass of the plates themselves, and the unassuming cleaves
which appear at their convergence formulate a tangible modulation of space. A close
examination of the work would reveal to spectators the physical depth of the object upon
the wall, a relationship thus stimulated by not only a visual response but by a bodily
reaction—a sense of the mass of the object as akin to the physicality of the body.

In 1983 Lygia Clark wrote a short article entitled The Death of the Plane. While
the article was completed roughly 30 years after her production of the Planes in
Modulated Surface series, the artist articulated her intention of leaving the canvas. Using
poetic and metaphoric language, Clark stated that the plane is a construct of man; one that
has lead to the creation of the square. These constructions were created to give man a
sense of balance, though for Clark, a false sense “arbitrarily marking out limits in space,
the plane gives man a totally false and rational idea of his own reality.” Clark here
rehearses for her readers the deceptive qualities of the plane as a site for the
reconstruction of reality—though one according to Erwin Panofsky, as false and abstract.

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24 Clark, "Lygia Clark and the Concrete Expressional Space," 84.
25 Herkenhoff, 38.
27 In her article From Work to Frame, In Between and Beyond: Lygia Clark and Hélio Oiticica 1959-1964 Monica Amor cites Clark’s destruction of planarity as a subtle suppression of the
In his 1927 defining essay *Perspective as Symbolic Form* Panofsky dismantles the concept of perspectival mimesis as true and objective representation of nature, but as an abstracted emblem and product of the culture in which it was produced. Informed by German philosopher Ernst Cassirer, Panofsky adopted the term “symbolic form” and described it as a form “in which spiritual meaning is attached to a concrete, material sign and intrinsically given to this sign.”²⁸ In other words, Panofsky describes the meaning, the intellectual associations given to and inherently recognized in a specific sign. Key to Panofsky’s essay was an examination of the nature of vision and perception itself. He viewed the picture plane as a cross-section of the horizontal visual pyramid, which extends from the eyes, ultimately converging at the vanishing point in the picture.²⁹ Because the illusion of the vanishing point does not have an “end,” the viewer senses an infinite continuation of space within the frame. Indeed Panofsky opens his text with the Latin meaning of *perspectiva* as “seeing through.” Underscoring this definition is philosopher Sheldon Nodelman’s conception of the picture plane as a window into an alternate space.³⁰ As Clark believed, the plane as window was meant to instill balance within the viewer, as a reflection of the world in which they lived. However, as both

²⁹See Panofsky’s *Perspective as Symbolic Form* for illustrations of the “visual pyramid” and its relationship to the viewer and the picture plane.
³⁰Panofsky, 41. Panofsky quotes Nodelman in his 1966 essay “Structural Analysis in Art and Anthropology.”
Clark and Panofsky would determine—such a true reflection was impossible given human perceptive capabilities.

Artists mobilized this rational geometrical construction, that is, the use of single-point perspective, initially during the early European Renaissance. Its functionally is dependant upon a static single eye, and doesn’t take into account the “roving” nature of two human eyes. Mathematically rendered, one-point perspective images create a homogenous window-like space; one that can only be viewed from a frontal fixed location. Because of the dependence on a fixed vanishing point, the picture appears to be infinite within its borders. This infinity is only visible if the viewer stands at the correct viewing position; directly opposite the object. In reference to the creation of an expressional organic space, she stated:

I am once again aware of the difference between the space expressed by the seriated form and the other space. Faced with a seriated composition, there is the spectator and the work. He is distant from it and remains so, becoming aware of the space, using each form as a starting point and a point of arrival. The spectator becomes aware of mechanical space (time). My objective was to make the spectator participate actively in this expressed space, penetrating within it and being penetrated by it.31

The artist’s cogent analysis of viewership in this passage demonstrate the inflexible relationship instantiated by a phallic mode of vision, which consequently generates a relationship of opposition and visual penetration versus an unfolding visual digestion of the object. Her emphasis on participation is worth noting, both as a harbinger of her later participatory work, and in the progressive thinking expressed by the recognition and application of a new form of perception.

31Clark, "Lygia Clark and the," 84-85.
In demonstrating perspective as a symbolic form, Panofsky iterates for the reader the fallacies of perspective, specifically the disparity between human perception and the systematic mimetic spatial homogeneity of perspectival images: “In fact these two premises are rather bold abstractions from reality, if by ‘reality’ we mean the actual subjective optical impression. For the structure of an infinite, unchanging, and homogeneous space—in short, a purely mathematical space—is quite unlike the structure of psychophysiological space: ‘perception does not know the concept of infinity’.” Thus Panofsky charges perspective with abstraction, a distortion of objective vision slated to appear as an objective vision of an alternate space. Moreover, Panofsky marks perspective as “modern” enforcing the idea that only a specifically modern populace could comprehend its structure or, bravely stated, the “world.” What Panofsky thus describes is a unique, culturally specific perspective, or vision of the world played out upon the flat picture plane. Thus, from the period of the renaissance and forward, the flat picture plane will be charged with the notion of an exterior illusionistic, however, seemingly accurate and “real” world. As a result of the homogeneous “otherness” of the world represented in the image, the materiality and flatness of the plane is lost.

While Panofsky cites the failure of perspective in its inability to be objective, Clark sees its greatest shortfall in the creation of oppositions. The plane dictates human space by forcing the body to organize a front and back, top and bottom, right and left. This set of oppositions, for Clark, was fractured, and destroyed unity of the human, physically, and “spiritually”. It is this article that Clark attacks the plane as window; the work of art as transcendental. She states:

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32 Panofsky, 41.
The square would take on a magical meaning when the artist considered it to be the bearer of a total vision of the universe. But the plane is dead. The philosophical concept that man projected upon it no longer satisfies him, just like the idea of a God outside man... It was also this interjection which made the rectangle explode from the painting. We swallow this shattered rectangle, we absorb it. Before, when the artist stood before the rectangle, he projected himself upon it and in this projection carried the transcendence to the surface. To demolish the plane as a support for expression is to become aware of the unit as a living and organic whole. 33

Clark’s words speak volumes to Martin Heidegger’s Age of the World Picture. The German philosopher wrote that the ability for man to reproduce the “world” upon the picture plane enacted his domination over it: “In such producing, man contends for the position in which he can be that particular being who gives the measure and draws up the guidelines for everything that is.”34 By mapping the world through perspective, man has conquered it. Clark would articulate this notion in other words: describing the plane as a mirror of man’s spirituality, completely other to man himself. In Heidegger’s thinking, man’s ability to manifest the world via the picture plane (and to him the very existence of the world) is dependent upon man as mediator. This mediation ensures the subjectivity of man; man as realizer of the “world”. Again for Clark, this realization occurs through man’s recognition of himself through mirroring. As noted, the artist found the problematic plane as detrimental to one’s sense of unity (physically, psychologically, spiritually), and to integrate one into the space of the artwork would be to unify and repair this “shattering.” Through modulating the surface of the work, Clark disallowed for projection of reality outside of man; disallowed for a fictive vision of the universe.

The object itself was thus considered part of reality, operating within the reality of the viewer. To quote Clark, rather than viewing the work, participants absorbed it. Surface took on a role not for projection but for defining the space that surrounded it.

In 1959 Clark embarked on the creation of a series of tin objects that she called Casulo or Cocoons. Geometric in form and strikingly black and white, the wall-hung Cocoons behave like paintings, and yet reach out horizontally through folds and pockets into three-dimensional space toward the viewer, enacting Clark’s next logical step in reaching unity of artistic and bodily space. Casulo, (Fig. 8) dating to 1959 is constructed of nitrocellulose and a single sheet of tin. Using malleable metal rather than wood, Clark had more freedom to manipulate its form. While the work’s firm, flat support remained tethered to the wall, reciting the tradition of painting, Clark folded the tin in upon itself creating an interior and exterior. These folded wings cast gentle shadows upon the white interior of the structure, at once physical and visual markers of the depth and interiority of the object’s construction. A continuation of her early experiments modeling surface, the Casulo attempts to destroy the plane by bursting its flatness and thus the possibility for projective qualities.

Along with challenging art historical conceptions of space and the picture plane, the outward projection of the Cocoon would serve as a physical invitation for interaction. In viewing Casulo curiosity would compel one to peer into its folds, stoop below the object, and pace before it, absorbing the full physicality of the work. Thus, the Cocoons broke free of the flat picture plane, resisting ocularcentricity, instead existing within a fusion of relief sculpture and painting. Lygia Clark’s contemporaries would dub such
works “non-objects,” as their object-hood couldn’t be easily or concretely defined. In 1959 Clark hosted a dinner party at her home in Rio de Janeiro. Upon presenting her friends with her work, most likely a form of the *Casulo* series, Ferreira Gullar rejected the suggestion that they be labeled reliefs and remarked: “It’s not a painting, it’s not sculpture, it’s an object.” Not long after this declaration, Gullar published the *Theory of the Non-Object*, stating: “The expression ‘non-object’ does not intend to describe a negative object nor any other thing that may be opposite to material objects. The non-object is not an anti-object but a special object through which a synthesis of sensorial and mental experiences is intended to take place.” That same year, Gullar would author the *Neo-Concretist Manifesto*, where Clark’s, and all Neo-Concrete objects would be redefined as “almost bodies.” The necessity for the creation of a new term to describe Clark’s work emphasizes the radicality and ingenuity of her forms and thinking. The artist’s branding of the work *Casulo* is a subtle gesture that solidified her envisaging of the forms as body-like and semi-animate. An “almost body,” moreover a cocoon, alludes to potentiality, growth, and temporality; all of which would become seminal aspects of her later endeavors.

Clark was one of many artists who felt contemporary forms of artistic production lacked the capability to fully express the multitudinous capacity of human experience. Thus she and several of her contemporaries came together to form the Neo-Concrete

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36 Ibid, 2.
The Neo-Concretist Manifesto was authored by Ferreira Gullar, and signed by artists Lygia Clark, Amilcar de Castro, Franz Weissmann, and Lygia Pape. Joining them were poet Reynaldo Jardim, and psychoanalyst and poet Theon Spanudis. They hesitated to describe themselves as a group or movement with a singular set of concerns; instead they found similitude in a broad set of interests that resisted contemporaneous discursive realms. While they had a rich theoretical structure, they stressed the value of objects and sought out structural forms that accommodated temporal and expressive strategies. On art objects, the Manifesto states:

> We neither consider the work of art a ‘machine’ nor an ‘object’, but rather, an *almost-body*, which is to say, a being whose reality is not exhausted in the external relationship between its elements; a being which, even while not decomposable into parts through analysis, *only delivers itself up wholly through a direct, phenomenological approach.*

The artists located themselves as indebted to but decidedly against schools of geometric abstraction. They took Swiss artist Max Bill as the ambassador of Concretism, revering him yet critiquing what they saw as expressionless rationalism in his work:

> “Working as painters…to reevaluate the theoretical positions adopted by *art concret* up until now—in the sense that none of these allow for a satisfying response to the expressive possibilities onto which our experiences open.”

They therefore sought a new language of forms with which to generate a space of expression, one capable of moving beyond rationality and mechanicity. Gullar praised Piet Mondrian, wishing to activate a reinterpretation of his work that placed the expressiveness and plentitude of his objects

39Ibid, 93. Italics original.
40Ibid, 91. Italics original. Also see footnote #2 for Max Bill’s role in the development of Neo-Concretism.
before his numerous theories. Gullar found the multitude of writings produced by Mondrian often contradicted his work: “Either the vertical and horizontal truly constitute the fundamental rhythms of the universe, and Mondrian’s work derives from the application of this universal principle; or if this principle is false, and then the work labors under an illusion.” Despite Gullar’s wavering, he saw within Mondrian’s work the creation of a new space via the destruction of “surface, of the plane, and of the line.” These musings lead Gullar to perhaps the most significant aspect of the manifesto; his articulation of the existence of art at the precise moment that it transcends its own physicality. Citing Kasimir Malevich as a herald of contemporary transcendentalism, Gullar lauds the artist’s ability to reject both the figure and mechanistic geometry; thus executing a work that operated within the visual vocabulary of geometric abstraction, however, imbued with a sense of transcendental sensation. Utilizing Malevich’s model of painting, the Neo-Concretists described their work as addressing the “complex reality of modern man” which they saw as impossible through subscription to the Concrete or Constructivist models of art that engaged rationality and mechanization.

41 Maria Del Carmen Suescun Pozas’ text Lygia Clark and the European Tradition: Tracing the Appearance of a Different Space is an excellent thesis that examines the relationship between Lygia Clark’s Bicho series, the influence of Mondrian, and the writings of Ferreira Gullar and Maurice-Merleau Ponty. Pozas looks at the specific ways Clark carried on the work of Mondrian as well as her departures from it. For the purposes of this thesis, an in depth examination of the relationship between the work of Clark and Mondrian is infeasible, therefore this author suggests a close reading of Pozas’ work.

42 Ibid, 92 Italics original.

43 Ibid, Italics original.

44 Ibid, Italics original. While Gullar sees strength in Malevich’s dichotomous formalism, he notes the criticism the artist received; “…theoreticians consider him a naïf who would have never really understood the true meaning of the new plastic order.”
As noted, Gullar labeled Neo-Concrete objects “almost bodies.” Most importantly, the works were identified as such to denote the temporal interactive charge within each object. Meaning is not encapsulated within the object but actualized by its relationship with the participant. They physicality of the object was merely a support structure for the phenomenological interaction which it drove. It is therefore temporal and reciprocal, processes termed by Gullar as “spatialization.” This term describes the activity of the object, meaning the perpetual birth and rebirth of the relationship between the object and the participant. As Gullar stated: “And if this description also takes us back to a primal-total-experience of the real, it’s because Neo-concrete art wants in fact to recreate this experience. Neo-concrete art wants to found a new, expressive ‘space’.”45 This temporal and perpetual evolutionary quality of “spatialization” according to Gullar’s thinking, held viewers within the present; stimulating an experience of their own physical subjectivity within a specific moment, as though experiencing it for the first time. The unfolding of time and space is a logic used to maintain an active interaction. He here distinguishes between the transcendental properties of the illusionistic picture plane and the immediate and ephemeral sensorial awareness provoked by the use of Neo-Concrete works.

Piet Mondrian died in 1944, yet despite never meeting, Lygia Clark took him as her confidant. She was well versed in his writing, and thought of herself as continuing the efforts he expressed in his own work, the specifics of which she did not divulge. Mondrian did however play an important role in the Neo-Concrete Manifesto as noted earlier in this essay. The Neo-Concretists disbanded in 1961, Clark expressing her

dissatisfaction with the group’s direction as early as May of 1959. This same year she penned a passionate letter to Mondrian imploring him to give her strength to come through her loneliness and dissatisfaction with the Neo-Concrete group. It was in this letter that she described a distancing of many of the members of the group from their initial affinities. Clark however, continued to produce work within the theoretical bounds of their manifesto. The mature manifestation of Neo-Concrete theory would be actuated by her *Bicho* series, dating to the 1960’s.

Clark’s treatment of space and object hood holds a surprising similarity to the developments of what would come to be termed Minimalism in the United States in the early 1960’s. Donald Judd, pioneer of American Minimalism found himself at an impasse when, like Lygia Clark, his objects existed outside established boundaries of painting and sculpture. When Clark’s works were labeled (by Ferreira Gullar) “non-objects,” or “special objects,” Judd began using the term “specific-objects.” While both artists employed strikingly similar themes of physicality and destruction of the frame, it will become clear that the motives of each were vastly different, and moreover, that the intended results of their objects were exclusive. Furthermore, the visual relationships that exist between the Neo-Concrete group and Donald Judd were not born of influence, but of the cross-cultural treatment of what was seen as a problem within Modernism as a whole.

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Clark, "The Death of the Plane," 115. Clark penned this fictional letter to Piet Mondrian just two months after signing the Neo-Concrete Manifesto. She described her sadness in weighing the solitude of leaving the group with remaining faithful to her convictions. She believed that the other members of the group were more interested in developing a cohesive group identity rather than remaining true to their original work. She authored the letter to Mondrian because she felt that she was continuing his own work.
The dissolution of the figure would be of prominent importance for postwar American and European painters, an endeavor that would aid in the development of the Minimalist object. Like Clark, American painter Frank Stella’s series of “Black Paintings” vigorously deny the figure/ground relationship. *Die Fahne Hoch* (Flags on High) (Fig. 9), dating to 1959, is a large black canvas; white lines in the shape of a cross methodically ripple on the surface. A close examination will reveal the white stripes to be the canvas itself. The marks—that seemed so alive and agent are ultimately the support for the somber black enamel. This compositional reversal recalls Lygia Clark’s *Forms on Modulated Surface* series’ in which the artist crafted a set of geometric forms incapable of being read hierarchically. Moreover, Stella’s thick 3 inch deep canvas stretcher posed the object out from the wall—its physicality and sculptural qualities unavoidable.

Simultaneous to the abdication of the figure would be an obsession of material and the process of painting, as seen in works by Robert Ryman, Jasper Johns, and Lucio Fontana. The seeming exhaustion of the picture plane led painters to indulge in practices unprecedented within the history of painting. The specificity of painting and sculpture, the very characteristics that identified them as such were blurring. Thus, it can be suggested that the trajectory of art had ascended to a crucial restaging of categorization seen internationally.

Donald Judd’s fervent writing bears many similarities to the principles of the Neo-Concrete group. At stake for both was a distinction between illusionistic space and real space. Both saw the birth of a new breed of object as essential and resulting from the “death” of painting. In his seminal essay *Specific Objects*, Judd declared: “The main
thing wrong with painting is that it is a rectangular plane placed flat against the wall. A rectangle is a shape itself; it is obviously the whole shape; it determines and limits the arrangement of whatever is on or inside of it."47 Thus both Clark and Judd employed elements of painting, yet rejected forms of mediation that removed the object from a metaphoric space of illusionism and into real space. Planarity had lost its power for both artists. Aside from forms of mediating presentation, wholeness and indivisibility of the objects of themselves became integral to their status as non/special-objects. One commonality existing throughout the work of Judd and Clark is an organization of form expressed in such a way as to be divisible into as few parts as possible. Judd celebrated the gestalt, which he saw emerging in Frank Stella’s paintings, because the solidity of the form resisted anthropomorphic readings, and thus the object’s materiality was emphasized. For both artists, this total object occupied a more powerful and stimulating role in the relationship with the spectator. Donald Judd believed that working in the three dimensions:

…the gets rid of the problem of illusionism and of literal space, space in and around marks and colors—which is riddance of one of the salient and most objectionable relics of European art. The several limits of painting are no longer present. A work can be as powerful as it can be thought to be. Actual space is intrinsically more powerful and specific than paint on a flat surface.48

Judd displayed his mature work unframed, yet often on the wall, directly on the floor, yet untouchable. While a bodily interaction was encouraged, the objects were stationary and in a sense monumental—a tactile relationship would inhibit their drama and

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power. An untitled work dating to 1964 (Fig. 10) shares qualities with both painting and sculpture. Using galvanized iron and lacquer, Judd attached the boxy rectangular object to the wall at its short side, the length of the object unexpectedly and perhaps awkwardly jutting out into the bodily space of the viewer. A smooth semi-circular shape has been scooped from the length of the pristine flatness of the “top” of the object, lending a sense of gravity, iterating the intentional horizontal positioning of the object. The composition of the object ensures the impossibility of a figural reading and yet the physical space occupied by the object lends it a significant presence in the space.

Like Clark’s *Forms on Modulated Surface*, Judd’s object forces viewers to reposition their bodies, to ambulate before the object, and to bring attention to their physical relationship with the object and the space it and they inhabit, the mantra of Minimalist art. This object, among many others, hovers precariously between sculpture, painting, and theater, maintaining a mysterious function. They seem to operate as spectator objects, labored over by the eyes and contemplated. However, with rejection of mediation devices, the large-scale of his objects, and their status as gestalts, Judd encouraged a phenomenological relationship with his objects. In considering Lygia Clark’s objects, a different mode of viewing is employed. A photograph dating to 1965, taken at the Signals Gallery in London shows two Bichos displayed on pedestals, and one directly on the ground below. Another photograph (Fig. 11), taken three years later at the Venice Biennale reveals an array of work displayed on pedestals, tables, the gallery walls, and the gallery floor. These photographs demonstrate the struggle on behalf of Clark and the curators in displaying these new “objects.” On the floor, the objects occupy
the same space as the participant, and take on a bodily role. Both the Neo-Concretists and
the Minimalists employed this integration of the object into the viewer’s space and yet as
Paulo Herkenhoff states, the Neo-Concretists took the relationship between the senses
and the object to a level that the Minimalist object could not sustain.\(^{49}\) Herkenhoff
describes the Neo-Concrete object as one that *reveals* and *encourages* the plurality and
possible perceptive qualities of the senses, whereas he views the Minimalist object as
simply *reaffirming* through experience the bodily role in perception. Part of this disparity
lies within the scale and shape of the objects.\(^{50}\)

The Minimalist object, typically formed as large systematic gestalts, mirror the
architectural space in which they are housed. Through engagement with the object, the
body senses itself within the space, boundaries marked by rational, predictable objects.
The Neo-Concrete object, through virtue of a smaller scale, unpredictability, and the
multitude of formal outcomes, possesses an ability to manifest surprising interactions that
take the viewer/participant beyond recognition of their physical location within a space.
Perhaps the most important distinction between Minimalist objects and those of Lygia
Clark was the introduction of tactility as an experiential quality as seen in her *Bicho*
series. Lygia Clark’s transition from figural painting to the temporal bodily object was
surprisingly rapid and logically conceived.\(^{51}\) Poetically, she first disinvested the picture

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\(^{49}\) Paulo Herkenhoff. "Divergent Parallels: Toward a Comparative Study of Neo-Concretism and
Minimalism." *Geometric Abstraction Latin American Art from the Patricia Phelps de Cisneros

\(^{50}\) Ibid.

\(^{51}\) I use the term logical to define the artist’s oeuvre as teleological and consistently progressive.
This progress is that which includes the viewing body within the artwork, as was Clark’s
foremost desire after leaving the canvas. This is not to say that her oeuvre was produced linearly,
plane of figuration and illusionism only to reinvest it with its own bodily properties. This reversal was key for Clark’s conception of the object as operative and agent. This ingenious rupture of the traditional laws of the art object would set her apart from her contemporaries and begin a new period in her oeuvre.

but that her concern for the body drove her practice and was an integral aspect of her work as a whole.
CHAPTER TWO: THE AGENT OBJECT MEETS THE PARTICIPANT

“The Bicho was born when I was trying to make a Contra-revelo and not a Casulo…It was when folding one of the parts of this Contra-revelo (a painted and modulated wooden object), and doing the same with the division, that I noticed the two free parts in space.”52

Like many of Clark’s works, the Bicho series (Figs. 12-13) developed organically when she realized the possibilities the material and form provided. The Bichos, which translate roughly from Portuguese to “animals,” “critters,” or “beasts” in English, were composed of numerous flat, typically aluminum plates joined by one or multiple hinges. Through the lightweight material and relatively small scale, the Bichos could easily be lifted from the floor and held in the hands.53 This action was exactly what Clark anticipated; the Bichos were to be handled and manipulated by the viewer/participant; the work of art itself occurring as this interaction. Indeed Clark would not have deemed the object as fully formed until physically manipulated by the participant. The series would mark the first instance in Clark’s oeuvre where participation in the functioning of the work was integral to its complete formation.

This chapter will track the inception and integration of performative strategies in the Bicho series with special regard to the objects as apparati, as discussed by Giorgio Agamben in his text What is an Apparatus?54 Furthermore, the performative and

53 Clark designed smaller handheld Bichos (some of which are dated to 1966) labeled “Bicho de bolso” or “pocket animal.”
54 The Bichos are one series of many to be constructed with hinged plates of metal. Similarly created works include Bicho ponta (Pointed animal), Invertebrado (Invertebrate), Caranguerjo (Crab), Metamorfose I (Metamorphosis I), and Relógio de dol (Sundial). These are typically
ritualistic quality of the actions involved in operating the objects will be compared to the ritualistic practices of American painter Jackson Pollock with the intention of revealing the discrete properties of Clark’s work.

Likening the *Bicho’s* hinge to a dorsal fin, conch, insect, or shellfish, Clark attributed a set of animal-like structural characteristics to the object. It had seemingly limitless possibilities for physical form, and yet was grounded in its own mechanical construction. In 1960 she wrote: “When I am asked how many movements the *Beast* can execute, I reply: ‘I have no idea, nor do you; but the beast knows…””. Clark’s remark speaks to the *Bicho’s* agent anthropomorphic investment and the potentiality for the object to operate with the participant, and yet because of its unpredictable movements, beyond the participant’s control. Clark’s confidant acceptance of her own not knowing speaks to the precarious and often-surprising nature of the objects. Each *Bicho*, for Clark, was an organic body imbued with the potential for agency. Therefore as the viewer or participant manipulated the appendages of the *Bicho*, it would react accordingly per its physical makeup: allowing or disallowing specific movements. Commenting on the *Bicho* series in 1983, Clark wrote: “In the relationship between you and the *Bicho* there are two types of movement. The first one, made by you, is purely external. The second one, made by the *Bicho*, is produced by the dynamics of its own expressiveness.” As Clark states, the first touch to the metal body of the *Bicho* sparked within it a life, one that would thus allow or deny movement. With each turn of the metal plates, the intended manipulation by the...
participant will either be met with a straining pull upon its hinges, or a release and swing of the plate. She goes on: “This relationship between the man and the Bicho, previously metaphorical, becomes real.” Clark here speaks to the ability of the Bicho to operate in real time with the viewer; the actions or events are enacted rather than referenced by the artwork.

An aluminum Bicho, (Fig. 13) dating to 1960 and in the collection of the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis is constructed of 16 hinged plates. The plates vary in size and shape; some rounded while others are sharply squared off. With each twist of the Bicho, its composition is completely reorganized. While no single position appears “correct”, each settling of the arrangement appears complete and comfortable. This Bicho has no central hinge, and finding the core of the object seems impossible. Nevertheless, it is a complete unified object. On this, Clark stated: “The Beast is not composed of independent forms whose development one could pursue indefinitely at one’s own will, as in a game. To the contrary: its parts work together harmoniously as in a real organism.” Logistically each individual plate is dependent on its adjoining plate, their functionality contingent upon on their integrated relationship. The object, in its composition is indivisible, hearkening back to the Neo-Concrete interest in the gestalt; an object that possesses no individual parts and is perceived of as an indivisible whole. This is reminiscent of and can be traced back to “Death of the Plane” and “Casulo” when Clark rejected the illusionistic model of the support and gifted her objects the capacity for bodily occupations of space. A front, back, top, or bottom, suggests a “correct” position,

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57 Ibid.
and a location for which to view the object. It also suggests a situation in which to not view the object; a part of the work hidden from view that perpetuates an illusionistic quality. For Clark, the *Bicho’s* bodily, organic, and totalizing characteristics ensured its identity as an object within the same space as the viewer/participant. No aspect of the object was hidden from view, entitling the participant an intimate and honest dialogue with the work.

While Clark’s *Bichos* are inanimate objects, she considered them semi-agent bodies; with the interaction between the *Bicho* and the participant a thoroughly physical and reciprocal one. The object worked in tandem with the participant; its material body reacting to touch. When not under the manipulation of a participant, the *Bicho* is a neutral body, whose agency is dormant but enacted by the direct physical contact of the participant. Clark’s friend and colleague Mário Pedrosa remarked:

> Sometimes the work moves about like an insect, or else the idea of a strange machine for constructing space is suggested. They are fabulous architectonic units which are designed in the air. The spatial articulation, which is extremely rich, shows us, from this or that angle of vision, from the other side of the polyhedral planes, spatial projections which cannot be transposed by unobstructed vision…

In his brief comment, Pedrosa illuminates the capacity of the *Bicho* to demarcate space. As the planes of the *Bicho* sweep through the air, they create “volumes in space” and reverberating ghostly echoes of these movements. When the *Bicho*’s limbs are

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60 Suely Rolnik. “Molding a Contemporary Soul: The Empty-Full of Lygia Clark”. In *The Experimental Exercise of Freedom*, edited by Susan Martin and Alma Ruiz, 57-110. Los Angeles:
situated and resituated, they pass through the air seemingly drawing or sculpting space. Clark envisioned a “kind of embrace between two living entities” with the relationship between the object and participant a physical and tangible one, rather than the virtual or metaphorical relationships seen traditionally in painting and sculpture.\textsuperscript{61} Clark has bequeathed agency to the object, plucking the object from its passive virtual world and inserting it into the pulsating real.

Clark’s \textit{Bicho} series upset the stable binary relationship between the object and spectator as such. Because of the object’s agent charge and the viewer’s new role as active participant, it is necessary to reevaluate the tripartite relationship surrounding the \textit{Bicho} and the roles of each. At the time of their creation, the \textit{Bichos} as objects stood outside discursive parameters. They have thus received numerous identities within scholarship, ranging, as noted earlier from non-objects, to sculpture, to vibrating objects. Not wishing to add yet another term to this list, the \textit{Bichos} will here be discussed within a framework of operational possibilities; focusing on what they can \textit{do} versus what they \textit{are}.

It is possible to construct a set of working criteria with which to characterize the \textit{Bicho} series utilizing Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben’s essay entitled \textit{What is an Apparatus?} published in 2009. Agamben introduces his discussion by first citing Michel Foucault’s use of apparatus. Foucault uses the term “dispositive,” one that originated from the Latin term dispositio, which is the translation of the Greek word oikonomia

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\textsuperscript{61}Bois, “Nostalgia,” 97.
meaning the “administration” or governance of the home.\textsuperscript{62} Agamben extracts from Foucault’s writing three main points. The first describes the apparatus as “virtually anything” including prisons, factories, computers, cigarettes, and most significantly, language itself. However, to keep from allowing virtually everything from being termed an apparatus, his second and third points iterate the constancy with which apparati elucidate and maintain relationships of power and knowledge through “concrete strategic functioning.”\textsuperscript{63} Here Agamben singles out the trademark of the apparatus; its essential capacity to function purposively, the feature that manifests itself so readily within the \textit{Bicho}. Foucault’s examples, including laws, architecture, and discourses all propose a discreet function on which they are predicated.

With Foucault’s model of the apparatus in mind, we can turn to Agamben’s concise summary: “The term ‘apparatus’ designates that in which, and through which, one realizes a pure activity of governance devoid of any foundation in being. This is the reason why apparatuses must always imply a process of subjectification, that is to say, they must produce their subject.”\textsuperscript{64} Here Agamben inscribes the apparatus with an exterior power, one outside of “being,” \textit{impressed upon} the individual. Thus one’s making hands or seeing eyes cannot be termed apparati. Because of this impression and shaping, the apparatus plays a role in constructing one’s subjectivity. Agamben takes Foucault’s version of the apparatus, and loosens its parameters, while maintaining that at its core the apparatus is effective. Therefore, he divides all things into two categories,


\textsuperscript{63} Ibid, 3.

\textsuperscript{64} Ibid, 11.
human beings and apparatuses. To clarify, he states: “...I shall call an apparatus literally anything that has in some way the capacity to capture, orient, determine, intercept, model, control, or secure the gestures, behaviors, opinions, or discourse of living beings.”\textsuperscript{65} At the intersection of the being and the apparatus lies the formation of the subject. Through the use of such apparati as maps, language, and telephones, the life processes and experiences of one are modeled. Subjectivity is thus in constant flux and dependent upon the intermediary of the apparatus to operate within a particular culture, which consequently is also formed by apparati. Under Agamben’s definition, all art objects can be assumed within the term apparatus, for they have the capacity to “capture,” “determine,” and “control.” Clark’s works however, operate as significantly more active apparati-their engagement stimulated by tactile, kinetic, and temporal participation. This is not to say that traditional painting and sculpture lack an effective quality, but that the viewer’s engagement and reception of the objects are of a more passive and contemplative tone. Clark’s Bicho’s require physical action and drive on the part of the participant; an engagement that goes beyond the visual and cognitive relationship engendered by such traditional methods.

In defining as much as possible the tendencies of the art object to function as apparati, it may be useful to utilize Foucault and Agamben’s description of the apparatus as network. The apparati present in the creation and reception of an artwork could be dissected at infinitum. It is precisely this breadth of material, concept, and historicity that gives artwork its identity as a special object. What is at stake for the object to operate as an apparatus is the inherent ability to arouse a response. Because of the multitudinous

\textsuperscript{65}Ibid. 14.
responsive and interpretive possibilities, the art object operates within the same realm as language and music. Therefore, a definition of the art object as apparatus can be more effectively narrowed down to what it can do, rather than what it is. Indeed Maria Del Carmen Suescun Pozas, in her text *Lygia Clark and the European Tradition: Tracing the Appearance of a Different Space* characterized the *Bicho*’s “being” as within the experience thus garnered from it: “Its ‘being’ is to be found in its ‘engaging’ quality, its only *being* is through that ‘engaging’ process.” The *Bicho* is thus activated through physical experience, however, considering the object as an apparatus takes into consideration its own physical properties.

Utilizing Agamben’s definition, the *Bicho* as apparatus shapes the subjectivity of those who engage it. Therefore it is necessary to briefly turn to Lygia Clark’s conception of the modern Brazilian subject. Her preoccupation with the body is evidenced within the entirety of her oeuvre. Clark preferred to be seen as an international artist rather than specifically Brazilian, however her work is marked by modern Brazilian conceptions of the body, subjectivity, and identity. Despite her hesitancy in being labeled a Brazilian artist, she would state that her work could have only been made by a Brazilian. Indeed Clark’s work can be read as embedded within the legacy of the national struggle for “Brasilidade” or a modern sense of “Brazilianess,” a concept that arose during the first regime of Brazilian dictator Getúlio Vargas. The first regime, from 1930 to 1945 saw the persistent and widespread struggle for production and management of a specifically

Brazilian culture. Among the politicians and bureaucrats were artists, writers, and critics. Considered one of the most prominent Modernist writers during Vargas’ first regime was poet Oswald de Andrade. He, along with his contemporary artists and writers “sought to revive and Brazilianize Brazilian culture through dynamic and unscripted combinations of region and nation, tradition and modernity, Europe and the New World, order with chaos.” In 1928, de Andrade published the Manifesto Antropófago (Cannibalist Manifesto) in São Paulo. While aggressive in its title and cryptic in its prose, the document was intentionally playful and humorous. The manifesto is centered upon locating a specific Modern Brazilian identity in the wake of the country’s Portuguese occupation. Organized by a series of short declarative statements, the poet asserts that

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67 See Pozas’ text for a discussion of the Instituto Superior de Estudos Brasileiros, or the Higher Institute of Brazilian Studies. According to Pozas, the institute was intent upon restoring a specific Brazilian identity through culture, one that was both “personal” and “national,” and was thought to consolidate a national identity. See pages 38-45 for Pozas’ consideration of Clark’s role within this cultural rehabilitation.


69 Edwin Williamson. *The Penguin History of Latin America*. New York: Penguin, 1992. Print. Brazil was originally occupied by Portugal in 1500 and would be titled “The Island of the True Cross”, later to be termed “Portuguese America”. Sugar was the most lucrative export of the colony and aided in the development of the Portuguese foothold on the continent. To ensure productivity of the sugar plantations, the Portuguese settlers enslaved the indigenous peoples, dissolving the relatively stable and mutually productive relationship between them. Jesuit missionaries were sent from Portugal, with the intention of maintaining the relationship between the indigenous people and the Portuguese settlers along with spreading Christianity and “European ways”. With the onslaught of European diseases brought in by the settlers, the Portuguese soon began importing African slaves who were already immune to European diseases. The demographics in Brazil during the 16th and 17th century were thus very diverse and lead to a heightened sensitivity to race and cultural identification. Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo developed strongly, while many indigenous people were pushed to the outskirts of the country. As Edwin Williamson states: “By the middle of the eighteenth century, when the notion of the ‘noble savage’ had been made fashionable by the European Enlightenment, the Indian had become an exotic figure to most Brazilians.” (174) Brazil would see its liberation more than 300 years after its occupation on September 7th 1822. Pedro II would lead an interim monarchy, and in 1889 the country would be declared a republic. The country would continue to be haunted politically, culturally, and socially by the occupation.
Brazil cannibalizes or digests European culture, absorbing her strengths while maintaining a sense of native Brazilian identity. “Cannibalism alone unites us.”\(^{70}\) De Andrade refers to the indigenous people of Brazil, who during warfare, killed and consumed their combatants; at act that they believed imbued them with the strength and power of the cannibalized peoples. As a well-known facet of the life and practices of the indigenous people, de Andrade utilized this epitomized Brazilian practice to extract and create anew a binding Brazilian trait. Along with this history of bodily digestion, the poet speaks directly of the crisis of subjectivity when he states: “The spirit refuses to conceive a spirit without a body. Anthropomorphism. Need for the cannibalistic vaccine. To maintain our equilibrium, against meridian religions. And against outside inquisitions.”\(^{71}\) Commenting on this declaration, scholar Leslie Bary describes meridian religions as those based upon salvation and the dichotomous pairings of body and soul, and native and foreign. De Andrade is thus calling for unification of the individual, incorporating the ever-penetrating modern Europe while remaining, as stated, allegiant to the history of indigenous Latin Americans. Leslie Bary draws attention to de Andrade’s consistent determination to undo binaries established since the occupation. “Civilization/barbarism, modern/primitive, and original/derivative” are dichotomies the poet seeks to transcend through the reinvention of Brazilian identity.\(^{72}\) While de Andrade’s canonical manifesto had been linked to Clark’s later work, particularly the 1973 piece *Baba antropofágica* (Cannibalistic Slobber) wherein a group of participants suck on cotton threads and then


\(^{71}\)Ibid. 39.

\(^{72}\)Ibid. 35.
drape them upon the body of another like a cocoon, Clark’s early experimentations speak to, albeit subtly, to de Andrade’s overarching declaration that Brazilian’s develop a sense of Brazilian selfhood.

Working within the wake of this crisis of subjectivity, Lygia Clark’s model of the body was one marked by fracturing and a critical uncertainty of national identity. While she sought to speak of and to people universally, her work was also informed by her own personal crises of subjectivity. Suffering from periodic depression, the status of Clark’s own subjectivity drove her practice, evidenced in her many emotional writings wherein she calls for spiritual balance and a connection to reality. Indeed while her writings address not only Brazilians but the world at large, they are seeded by her personal struggles. She saw within herself the problems that faced the modern population, that of the “full-emptiness.” For Clark this term described the relationship between a form or body and its “interior time.” This interior time is contrasted by external time, which is exteriorly impressed upon man through monotonous and predictable repetitive everyday activities that are performed without thought. Thus, for Clark, the participant was static, engrained in a perpetual routine, and distanced from a total experience of living. These ameliorating previous experiences, for Clark would be relived through participation with her objects.

While repetition was a factor in the functioning of the Bicho objects, each instance was fresh and unpredictable. In a letter to her friend Hélio Oiticica, Clark wrote: “What I want is to avoid schematizing anything, and each day eat a new ‘pear’, to see if

it’s good or not…for me it is not about the moment of chance but the ‘fruit’ of the moment. Fruit in the fruit sense, such is the flavour and the sensuality of eating.”

Utilizing bodily digestion as a metaphor for the experience produced through manipulating a Bicho, Clark emphasizes the role of sensate bodily engagement and the specificity of each experiential iteration. She was less concerned with the inherent chance, or unpredictability of the experience, but in the richness and texture of the experience. Because the Bicho has so many formal possibilities, each experience is different from the last, predictability impossible, and constant attention to the act necessary.

Like the empty-full, Clark incorporates many binaries in her theory of the Bicho: the inside/outside, the present/future, and face/reverse. She saw each of these relationships as present in the subject and perpetually shifting. Ideally for Clark, these binaries would fuse together, and it was through the act that this unification could occur. In her text “On the Act” Clark compares herself with her last manifestation of the Bicho, titled O dentro é o fora (The Inside is the Outside) (Fig. 14). The object, unhinged, is comprised of a single strip of modulated metal. Like the hinged Bichos, the object possesses no core, instead two round “ends” are connected by thick ribbon-like appendages. The object is thus unified, and has no identifiable front, back, inside, or outside. She viewed the object as a living being, open and receptive to formal modulation and penetration by the participant. She stated: “In his dialogue with my work O dentro é o fora the active subject re-encounters his own precarious nature. He also-like the Bicho-

does not have a static physiognomy which defines him.” Clark refers to perpetually and constantly formed subjectivity via the awakening and attentive act. The act, in this context meaning the manipulation of the object gives meaning both to the object as well as the subject, though that meaning is unique for each participant. The object is thus re-formed by the modulating participant, a metaphor for the modulation of subjectivity at the hands of apparati.

At the heart of Agamben’s discussion of the apparatus is the nurturing and formation of subjectivity. As he considered subjectivity to be shaped by apparati, Judith Butler’s essay *Performative Acts and Gender Constitution* will describe the process of gendered subject formation via apparatic acts. With gender specifically at hand, she describes the processes involved in the constitution of one’s own identity: “…gender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceed; rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time—an identity instituted through a stylized repetition of acts.” Thus, gender in not interiorly inherent or static, but perpetually affirmed and reaffirmed through the temporal performing of actions. As Agamben described subjectivity as perpetually constructed via the operation of apparati, so too does Butler conceive of gender as being formed by repetitive acts, these acts acting (as Agamben would attest to) as apparati. Inherently temporal, the constitution of gender, or selfhood is always in flux and always in the process of being constituted. Therefore, gender, or selfhood is not always already present, (Butler uses the terms “interior essence”) but gradually *formed* and reformed throughout time. She states: “Merleau-

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Ponty maintains not only that the body is an historical idea but a set of possibilities to be continually realized. In claiming that the body is a historical idea, Merleau-Ponty means that it gains its meaning through a concrete and historically mediated expression in the world.⁷⁷ The subject must enact, must continuously “do” his own body to effectively reproduce the gendered self.

Butler makes note that gender acts are shared and a “collective action.” By this she means that gender-constituting acts are marked by their own history and culture, in other words, what constitutes the female gender is a historical and cultural set of characteristics that continues to constantly evolve. While there is room for individuality within the performance, enacting gender is dependant upon a web bound up historically, culturally, and socially. Thus, gender’s constitution is a repetitive reproduction of acts that give the appearance of an innate gender. The subject must continually enact these performances to maintain their gendered self. Butler believes that because of the depth of socially engrained gendered acts, the constitution of gender is not performed voluntarily, but also not impressed upon agentless bodies. It seems as though to operate prescriptively. Butler likens the subjective performing body to a stage actor, who can interpret a script as he or she chooses. She places the actor as always already on stage, with nothing to do but act.⁷⁸

By Agamben’s definition, one’s subjectivity is constantly and perpetually shaped by apparati. They are the mediating devices that allow people to function within the world. The apparatic potentialities of the Bicho are many and are outside of the ritualistic

⁷⁷Butler, 521.
performances engrained in the social weave. In 1960, Clark wrote: “When man plays with the *Bichos* he begins the adventure of being disconnected from this ethical concept and learns this disconnection, with everything that is fixed and dead. He plays with life, he identifies himself with it, feeling it in its totality, participating in a unique and total moment, he exists.”\(^{79}\) From her first sentence Clark declares the energetic and activating qualities of the *Bicho*. At the core of the operation was an awakening of the bodily inhabitation of the participant stimulated by manipulation of an object that mimics movements of the human body itself. At once the *Bicho* activates physical rituals that are at the most basic levels of human embodiment; among them are grasping, movement, touch, embracing, lifting, looking. At the same time however, these rituals are otherwise in any other situation, only engaged in performing an additional task. They are supplementary to the performance of a greater action. The *Bicho* thus engages the participant in his or her own body, essentially “doing” the body for the sake of recognizing the possibilities of its doing. Lest sounding mechanical, the “doing” of the body is inherently, as Clark and Butler note, personal, precarious, and fraught with subtle individuality.

Artistically, Lygia Clark saw within her work a ritualistic connection to action painting, specifically the process of American painter Jackson Pollock. In 1960, she commented on this relationship, and while drawing out similarities in their production, she criticized him for limiting expression to the physical creation of the work, leaving the viewer as spectator. In her text, Clark describes two types of ritual or enactment. The first, in her own case, involves herself as the creator, the object, and the participant;

where the gesture “is the very dialogue of the work with the spectator.”\textsuperscript{80} Her role as creator holds the least power in this three-part relationship. For Pollock, however, the ritual is an intimate performance between the artist and the canvas; with the ensuing work still catering to an occularcentric model of viewership. Viewers are not privy to the enactment of the ritual, nor invited to participate. Clark’s work too, was intimate, however, the generated relationship was between the participant and the object. The participant’s experience with the \textit{Bicho} was meant to be performed relatively privately, without a spectatorship. Again, she emphasized physical interaction, not the observation or visual study of the objects, or of one’s interaction with them. For Clark, action painting fails ritually, as the physical gesture begins to overtake the subtle performative. Hans Namuth’s photographs of Jackson Pollock, (Fig. 15) taken in 1950, show the artist’s placement of the unframed canvas directly on the floor of his studio. Their placement and large scale require Pollock to lean, reach, and step completely onto and within the painting surface. With his arms outstretched, the photographs capture the theatricality of Pollock’s gestures, the blurred paint stick suspended in the air, and seductive richness of the pooling glossy veins of paint. Harold Rosenberg, in his text \textit{The American Action Painters} describes Pollock’s and his successors’ canvases “as an arena in which to act-rather than as a space in which to produce, redesign, analyse or ‘express’ an object, actual or imagined. What was to go on the canvas was not a picture but an event.”\textsuperscript{81} Echoing Clark’s many proclamations that art step away from its traditional role as representor

\textsuperscript{80}Lygia Clark, “On the Ritual,” 122.

Rosenberg highlights the advent of the singular event, its temporality and unrepeatability—the authenticity of the moment. Rosenberg continues by describing the canvases produced by action painters not as compositions but as residual traces of the events themselves. If Pollock’s objects stand as traces of the events that took place, then for Clark the trace survives within her participants. Ultimately, she would view the reverberations of meaning as residing within the participant rather than the object.

The Clarkian ritual, rather than existing in the creation of an object, takes place in the intimate physical interaction between the participant and the object. In both artist’s cases, the object is controlled, mastered over by its participant; however, there are several authorial roles in Clark’s model. As creator of the object, Clark has dictated its composition and the forms in which it can take. While many potential forms exist, the Bicho’s possible formations are not unlimited. Thus Clark maintains her authority over the situation, working in tandem with the participant’s own manipulation of the object and the physicality of the object itself. Clark saw the inclusion of the participant as elucidating a vastly different experience from that of observation: “What this gesture adds is of great importance, as it makes the common man immediately understand the life of its inner meaning…The spectator no longer projects himself…he lives the work.”

Clark here differentiates between the ritualistic experience provided by one of her objects, and those provided by Pollock’s paintings that ultimately cater to occularcentric reception. Being part of the actualization of the artwork, in the case of the Bicho, the physical operation of the object is completely revealed. This is not to say that the participant’s experience is prescribed, but that the possible actions they can take are

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provided to them transparently. The result is an intimate relationship between the object and the participant with a myriad of ritualistic possibilities and outcomes thus ensuring that no two experiences are the same. Commenting on the act, Clark wrote: “Only the instant of the act is alive. In it the future being is inscribed. The instant of the act is the only living reality in ourselves.”\textsuperscript{83} Once Pollock’s initial act is complete, the viewer cannot live within it. Pollock’s presence and sole authority render viewers apposed to and distanced from the work. When Rosenberg asserts: “The new painting (Abstract Expressionism) has broken down every distinction between art and life,” he speaks solely of the artist and the medium; the viewer playing no role in the functioning of the work.\textsuperscript{84}

Rosenberg saw Pollock’s paintings as inseparable from his own biography—moment in his existence captured by the canvas. The \textit{Bichos}, rather than capture a moment, work to conjure one, serving as catalysts for an experience distinct from yet engrained in the experience of everyday life. At the same time however, the \textit{Bichos} do not exist as blank anonymous mechanical objects, they are very much imbued with Clark’s rich artistic and personal history, evidenced in part by the formal and operative similarity in their ancestors, the \textit{Cocoons} and \textit{Forms on Modulated Surface}. With the advent of the introduction of the participant, Clark believed she was “giving the spectator the possibility of creating a work of art from it, of feeling its owner.”\textsuperscript{85} Each time it was engaged, the \textit{Bicho} was remade anew, however subtle traces of its physical manipulation remain. Circular scrapes surrounding the \textit{Bicho}’s hinges betray its many rotations. Specks

\textsuperscript{84}Rosenberg, 3. Parenthesis added by the author.
and dents pepper the once smooth and pristine metal. While these silent marks of history reveal the presence of the manipulator, they will always remain anonymous. Thus the participant takes part in the ritual and trace making, in a sense taking on Jackson Pollock’s expressive role while remaining guided by Lygia Clark’s direction.

In 1963 Clark completed her last iteration of the metal Bicho. While she would later experiment with similar forms, for instance her Terpantes (Obra Mole) (Fig. 16), or Grubs (Soft Work) (Fig. 17) which were soft spineless iterations of the Bicho, they remained relatively tied to the pedestal and the gallery. Experimenting with setting, Clark placed Trepantes in the trees and cascading over rocks, but such display and interaction was infeasible for the long term. The Bichos and Trepantes inherent problem was the ability of the objects to stand alone as autonomous artworks. While Clark saw them as incomplete while not in use, their striking forms catered too easily to gallery display and for Clark, the integration of art and life went far beyond the gallery walls. Indeed the Bichos today are often encased in glass and elevated to the pedestal, remaining incomplete. After her Bicho phase, Clark would ameliorate this problem by creating work in which its very structure depended upon the human body as support. She would select plastics, stones, string, and her own breath as materials, ensuring that object’s life was dependant upon the subject’s.
CHAPTER 3: LYGIA CLARK'S RESTORATIVE PRACTICES

Make the *Caminhando* yourself with the white strip of paper around the book, cut it across its width, twist it and glue it in order to get a Moebius strip. Then take a pair of scissors, stick a point into the surface and cut it along its length. Take care not to go into the already cut part—which would separate the strip into two pieces. When you have done completely round the Moebius strip, choose between cutting to the right or the left of the cut already made. This notion of choice is decisive, and within it resides the only meaning in this experiment.  

A series of 5 photographs (Fig. 18) taken in 1963 document an iteration of Lygia Clark’s *Caminhando* (roughly translated to “walking” or “trailing”). She is seen seated, with scissors in her right hand, and what is at first a thick bandage-like paper mobius strip. In each following image, the mobius strip becomes twisted and contorted, growing longer and thinner with the slicing of the blades. This gentle mutilation continues until the strip has spilled over Clark’s lap and onto the floor, and she can no longer cut into the strip without breaking the circle. *Caminhando* is then complete. This work, which Clark described as a “proposition” would initiate a new phase in the artist’s oeuvre, one that would drive the rest of her career. From hereon out, she incorporated a variety of quotidian materials, preferring mass manufactured items like plastic bags, textiles, and rubber tubing rather than the conventional artistic materials of her early oeuvre. Along with proposing to her viewership that they produce objects, these raw products, readily available and cheaply obtained, opened the realm of art making to all of her viewership. Her democratization of material and process ensured a democratic art that simultaneously resisted what she saw as the confines of the gallery.

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86 Lygia Clark. "Caminhando." *Lygia Clark*. Barcelona: Fundacio Antoni Tapies, 1998. Print. 151. Clark’s interest in the mobius strip stems from the work of Swiss architect and artist Max Bill (discussed in chapter 1). Bill frequently utilized the form of the mobius strip, producing a multitude of sculptural works such as *Endless Ribbon* (Fig. 19) 1935.
The work would take place via a “proposition;” Clark’s directions thus navigate the participant through a sensorial experience engendered by the creation, utilization, and at times, destruction of the object. While the physical act and the experience that ensued were vital for the production of the work, the nature of the objects themselves should not be overlooked. Extending the participatory economy of the *Bicho* further, *Caminhando* releases the work’s object-hood from autonomy and stasis, the conditions for strict visual perception. As a “proposition,” the work was presented to whom Clark would now address as the “spectator-author.” By giving her viewership nearly entire productive authority over the work’s outcome, Clark strove for an experiential act that through singular and unrepeatable iterations produced a unique “fusion” of the participating body, the act, and the physical objects thus engaged. The “object” begins as a paper mobius strip, and results in a pile of discarded strings. Thus, contrary to the structure of the *Bicho*, the object did not remain as structured while not in use. For Clark, it is the few moments between, the simultaneous construction of the work and deconstruction of the object that exists as the work of art. This interstice between the virginity of the raw material and its subsequent destruction, while short and seemingly mundane, was for Clark, pregnant with a unique poetic re-fusion of the physical body with one’s subjectivity. Fueled by her interest and participation in psychoanalysis, particularly that of English child psychoanalyst D.W. Winnicott, Clark would come to view her practice not as art as such, but as a therapeutic experience. Clark was expressly concerned with the reestablishment of expressivity of the individual. Through this reconnection Clark

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87 Lygia Clark, "Caminhando," 151.
sought for her participants a sense of collectivity, established via the universal condition of individuated bodily inhabitation.

This chapter will first examine Clark’s sensorial objects, including *Caminhando* and *Pedra a er*, tracking the artist’s transition from the quasi-autonomous *Bicho* to the fully-fledged dependence upon the human body of her later objects. For Clark’s practice, this co-dependence also revealed to her the therapeutic effects made possible through the utilization of the objects, an aspect of the work that continued and became the focus of her later phases. This discussion will be followed by an analysis of Clark’s later experimentations with a group of works she called “relational objects;” those that were utilized during the phase of her oeuvre she entitled *Structuring of the Self*. The “relational objects” will be examined in light of Clark’s interest in and dedication to the work of psychoanalyst D.W. Winnicott, particularly his theory of the “Transitional Object.” While the influence of psychoanalysis upon Clark’s late work has been noted in scholarship, the specific relationship between her work and the writing of psychoanalyst Donald Woods Winnicott has not yet been fully explored. This chapter takes to task the tremendous impact of psychoanalysis upon Lygia Clark’s material choices, conceptual framework, and process from the years 1963 until her death in 1988.

While operative similarities appear between the *Bicho* series and *Caminhando*, including those of performativity and tactile experience, Clark initiated a great shift in the authorial and material qualities of her work with the latter’s development. She stated: “When an artist uses an object from daily life (a ready-made object), he intends to give this object a poetic power. My *Caminhando* [Walking] is very different. In its case there
is no need for the object: It is the act which engenders the poetry." Clark here underscores the disinvestment of meaning, what she would call poetry, within the physical object of *Caminhando*, and its consequential reinstatement within the individual. Her utilization of readymade or quotidian objects stemmed from her ever-present intention of reintroducing art into life and opening the realm of making to her viewership at large. Her interests lay not in the individual materials themselves, but in the possibilities they put forth when combined or manipulated. Thus, Clark employed readymade objects for their accessibility, their relationship to life and the everyday, and as noted in her text, not for a Duchampian investment of poetry.

To produce *Caminhando* one must mimic the photographs of Clark herself: sit down with scissors in one hand, the mobius strip in the other. Because of the fragility of the paper strips, participants must have their full attention upon the process of slicing the strip apart. Thus the participant is simultaneously forced and freed to concentrate solely on the task, the physical movements of the body and the decision making process of where to cut next. Gone is the contemplative gaze upon an object and thus instated is the necessity for meditation on one’s own physical movement and the unique actions of the individual body. The work of art was thus inextricably linked to the body and as Clark stated: “…he (the participant) lives the work and, in living out its nature he lives within himself.” At this moment, Clark announced the object as artwork as arbitrary; it would now take on the role of a mediating device. With this revelation in the identity of the object came a reidentification of the artist; who would also take on the role of intercessor:

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We are the proposers: We are the mold, it is up to you to breathe the meaning of our existence into it. We are the proposers: Our proposition is that of dialogue. Alone we do not exist. We are at your mercy. We are the proposers: We have buried the work of art as such and we call upon so that thought may survive through your action. We are the proposers: We do not propose you with either the past nor the future, but the now.\textsuperscript{90}

Written in 1968, Clark’s proclamation, while asserting a new identity for the artist, accordingly asserts an evolution of the task of the viewer/participant. Her close friend and art historian Yve-Alain Bois described an entirely new vernacular for the artist’s work; “object” and “ beholder” had given way to “proposition” and “participant;” terms that would only become more complex and conceptually distant from their original meaning.\textsuperscript{91} Clark’s evolving conception of the art object would finally escape the bounds of the autonomous, tangible entity. As a proposer, Clark textually structured work, shaped the initiation of, or to use her terminology, \textit{modulated} a physical situation. It is to this matrix that the participant brings and consequentially reconnects to the organicity, individuality, and sensate body possessed. Clark’s propositions such as \textit{Pedra e ar} (Stone

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{90} Lygia Clark, "Livro-obra," 233. Clark’s telling word choices “breathe” and “survive” denote the bodily engagement expected of the participant.
\item \textsuperscript{91} Yve-Alain Bois. "Some Latin Americans in Paris." Geometric Abstraction: Latin American Art from the Patricia Phelps De Cisneros Collection = Abstracción Geométrica: Arte Latinoamericano En La Colección Patricia Phelps De Cisneros. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Art Museums, 2001. 77-104. Print. 93. In a 2005 interview with art historian Jane de Almeida, Bois described his relationship with Lygia Clark, one that for Bois began at the age of 16. Meeting Clark in Paris upon her return from the Venice Biennale, where she had exhibited, Bois recalls Clark as seeming very depressed: “her ex-husband had just died.” He also states that she appeared “traumatized by the commercialism she had witnessed in Venice and also it was a politically complicated moment in 68.” Despite finding Clark in this state of unhappiness, Bois saw a rapid transformation when she began opening boxes and explaining her objects to him. Clark’s great excitement as witnessed by Bois attests to Clark’s confidence in their ability to heal. Moreover, it demonstrates the artist’s own relationship to her objects, and thus her use of them. Bois’ comments on this experience will be discussed later within this chapter. For the full interview with Bois, see an electronic copy at the website of Jane de Almeida: www.janedealmedia.com. Also see Bois comments on Clark in "Nostalgia of the Body." \textit{October} 69: 85-109. Print.
\end{itemize}
and Air) (Fig. 20), and Respire comigo (Breathe with Me) (Fig. 21) require the participant to literally construct or alter an object, however, aside from this assembly and more importantly, she anticipated a dialogue between the participant and the created object. Clark’s short document simultaneously announces the death of the art object for her practice and the birth of the proposition. Disappointed by the viewing passivity so easily engendered by the Bicho series, propositions left the participant, who chose to participate, with no option but to engage in the production and utilization of the work.

Clark’s text We are the Proposers dovetails significantly with the thesis of Roland Barthes’ Death of the Author, also written in 1968. Barthes’ declares that through the writing of a text, or in the case of art making, the production of an object, an immediate disconnection occurs between that which is produced, and the producer. The link between the personal history, expression, intention, and individuality of the producer is severed from that which is made. He states that writing is “that neutral, composite,

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92 In a letter to her friend and colleague Hélio Oiticica, Clark wrote: “Since Caminhando [Walking, 1963], the object for me has lost its significance, and if I still use it, it is so that it becomes a mediator for participation. With the sensorial gloves, for example, it gives the measure of the act and the miraculous character of the gesture, with its spontaneity, which seems to have been forgotten. In all that I do, there really is the necessity of the human body, so that it expresses itself or is revealed as in a first [primary] experience.” While Clark insists on the importance of the body, it should also be noted that the object, in its various forms, continues to be an important part of her practice. The implications of the relationship between the viewing/participating body and the object will be explored more thoroughly throughout this chapter. For the full text see: Lygia Clark. "26 October 1968." Letter to Hélio Oiticica. 26 Oct. 1968. Participation. London: Whitechapel, 2006. 110-11. Print.110. Brackets original.

93 Lygia Clark believed that the best way to disseminate her work was to perform it in the streets, thus engaging the public. Most often, her propositions were performed by herself and her students at the Sorbonne in Paris, where she taught.

94 Roland Barthes was Yve-Alain Bois’ mentor at L’Ecole des Hautes Etudes in Paris. Through the connection of Yve-Alain Bois, it is possible that Clark was familiar with Barthes’ writing though this author has yet to encounter and documentation of such a relationship.

oblique space where our subject slips away; the negative where all identity is lost, starting with the very identity of the body of writing.96 Because the producer is severed from the text, disallowed from dictating its reception, there is a heightened sense of control allotted to the reader. Moreover, Barthes deems that attempts to discover a final, conclusive meaning of a text or artwork impossible.97 If one considers the space of art production in line with that of writing, Clark’s “propositions” as text themselves first operate as such. Her words are a framework for interpretation that is further bolstered by the interpretive qualities of the objects constructed based upon this textual matrix. Slated as instructions, Clark’s “proposals” operate differently than narratives, declarations, or questions. The reader ostensibly consumes a narratival text, whereas an instructional work demands the reader to react and act, to do something. The “proposals” are thus multitudinous matrices that function through layers of expectations on the part of the producer, and reactions on the part of the participant.

In his essay, Barthes describes the expectations of the reader: “The explanation of a work is always sought in the man or woman who produced it, as if it were always in the end, through the more or less transparent allegory of the fiction, the voice of a single person, the author ‘confiding’ in us.”98 Clark disturbs the relationship of the confidant by providing not declarative texts, but seemingly imperative ones. More than being completed by the reader, the texts are enacted, or to use Barthes’ terminology, “performed” by the reader. This notion becomes doubly compacted by the expectation that readers physically act upon the text, in a very literal sense. Moreover, Clark suggests

96 Barthes, 41.

98 Ibid, 42. Italics original.
or demands physical actions. Barthes states that writing can no longer operate as a record or depiction, but is activated only when read or performed by the reader. A text is thus not a “line of words releasing a single ‘theological’ meaning…” but an amalgamation of all previous texts.99 A selection of terms brought together to form a new sentence. It is thus, for Barthes that a text is only fully manifested or realized upon its reader’s digestion. In reference to ephemeral works like Caminhando, scholar Thierry Davila wrote: “They are not supposed to contain or fix or record any artistic, psychological, physical, or human truth. They can be described not as works of truth but rather as events or experiments in living and producing, which have nothing to do with the categories of truth and falsehood.”100 Like Barthes’ notion of writing, so too do Clark’s works operate without a single or concrete meaning. Any meaning that is generated becomes so through the relationship between the object and the participant. Furthermore, to a text or artwork, the reader/participant brings the entirety of his or her own history and subjectivity, making their reading of the text and the ensuing meaning, singular. Such is the operation of the Bicho, and as will be discussed, a model Clark draws upon for the operation of her “relational objects.”

The relationship between Clark’s work, from the inception of the Bicho series, and psychology, has been noted throughout this paper.101 While the artist underwent

99 Ibid, 43-44.
psychoanalysis herself, with such French analysts as Pierre Fedida, and Daniel Lagache, an exhaustive examination of her own experience stands outside of the scope of this paper. Therefore, this chapter will continue by examining the intended functionality and conceptual parameters of Clark’s works that draw from and run parallel to specific objects and phenomena as discussed by psychoanalyst D.W. Winnicott. Specifically, *Pedra a er, Caminhando, and Baba antropofágica;* works that span from 1963 to 1973. It is the English psychoanalyst’s theory of *Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena* that courses most significantly throughout this phase of Clark’s oeuvre.

Donald Woods Winnicott trained in medicine, attending Jesus College in Cambridge as a young man. Upon receiving a book written by the Austrian psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud from a friend whilst in the hospital with a lung abscess, Winnicott developed an intense interest in psychoanalysis that would propel and occupy the entirety of his long career. He graduated from medical school in 1920, and specialized his practice in children’s medicine. For both educational and personal artists whose work can be described as therapeutic. Thierry Davila, curator at the Musee D’Art Contemporain De Bordeaux included a short text (37-43) outlining Clark’s therapeutic practices. The author traces Clark’s therapeutic work to the *Bicho* series, and the establishment of an “open work” as described by Umberto Eco, within her oeuvre. While the *Bicho* series was an integral moment in her development of a therapeutic practice, the early traces of such interest lie in her dissolution of the flat plane, and the involvement of the physical body in the functioning of the work. Clark’s first step in therapeutic practice thus began with a rejection of perception via a “disembodied eye.” While Davila’s overview is important in laying out the trajectory of objects that speak to a therapeutic practice, his text does not include a discussion of the role of Clark’s Brazilian heritage.

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102 "Interview with Yve-Alain Bois." Interview by Jane De Almeida. *Jane De Almeida.* http://www.janedealmeida.com/ 2005. Web. Here Bois lists Daniel Lagache and Pierre Fedida as Clark’s Parisian psychoanalysts. It is noted by Yve-Alain Bois that she always saw “very well-known analysts” in Paris. Documentation showing her involvement in psychoanalysis outside of Paris has not yet been found by this author.


reasons, he sought out a psychoanalyst for himself in 1923. He was 27 and recently married. He chose the analyst James Strachey, who, with his wife Alix, had participated in analysis with Sigmund Freud in Vienna.\textsuperscript{105} Winnicott continued analysis with Strachey for 10 years, and would have him supervise his own work during that period.\textsuperscript{106} His training in child psychology was under the supervision of Melanie Klein, and in 1936 he became a member of the British Psycho-analytic Society.\textsuperscript{107} F. Robert Rodman, in his biography of Winnicott attributes Winnicott’s “independence of mind” and innovative conceptions of child development to the rapid and concentrated development of psychoanalysis in Vienna and Great Britain. Winnicott was thus working within a group of canonical psychoanalysts including Melanie Klein, Anna Freud, Carl Jung, and Masud Khan.

In his text \textit{Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena} the thesis of which was developed in 1951, Winnicott calls attention to what he saw as an inadequate breakdown of “human nature” into two parts; those being the internal reality of the individual and the external reality of the individual, a throwback to the Cartesian model of the body and subjectivity. Thus Winnicott suggests the consideration of a third aspect of human nature, that of experience. He states: “My claim is that if there is a need for this double statement (that of the inner and outer reality), there is also need for a triple one: the third part of the life of a human being, a part that we cannot ignore, is an intermediate

\textsuperscript{105} Ibid, 5.
\textsuperscript{106} Ibid, 70.
\textsuperscript{107} Ibid, 77.
area of *experiencing*, to which inner reality and external life both contribute."\(^{108}\) Winnicott’s astute statement recalls Clark’s aspirations for *Caminhando*; that through the physical experience of the act, that which was dependent upon the deciding and agent participant, the participant would sense unification of self, or as Winnicott would articulate it, a unification of one’s human nature. This model of subjectivity appears to be one that Clark drew from and that impacted her work most significantly.

It is within the utilization of D.W.Winnicott’s “transitional object,” within the experience with that object, that the psychoanalyst cites the development of the child’s relationship to that of the world outside. Winnicott claims a tripartite development in the child’s relationship with objects. This relationship develops until the child is aware of the outside world and its existence as exterior to the infant himself. As an infant, the child first uses its own fists or fingers to stimulate itself, to sense its own body.\(^{109}\) This stimulation may be erotogenic, and as Winnicott states, an action that satisfies the child’s instinct to stimulate itself.\(^{110}\) Within a few months, the child begins to recognize objects as outside of the self and take on a “not-me” possession. Winnicott cites this “not-me” possession as typically a soft toy, such as a teddy bear, but its significance is that it is a special and cherished object. Between these two phases, according to Winnicott, lies the “transitional object” which stands symbolically for a part-object, most often as the mother’s breast. Here, Winnicott demonstrates his interest in the work of psychoanalyst Melanie Klein, who originated the theory of the “part-object,” the part of the body,

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\(^{109}\) Winnicott, 1.

\(^{110}\) Winnicott, 2.
usually the breast of the mother that is separated from the body as a whole and invested with a special power. The child designated the full breast as “good” and the drained breast “bad.” Klein believed that the interrelation of the objects and the self constituted an “inner world” or “internalized object” that the child unconsciously felt “to be concretely inside himself.”\textsuperscript{111} It is this relationship, that of the interior and external role of the object that Winnicott places the significance of the “transitional object.”

Winnicott describes the “transition object” as possessive of 7 “special qualities.”\textsuperscript{112} Firstly, the infant takes possession of the object for him or herself. The objects can take many forms; Winnicott notes the use of blankets or string in his text. Such objects are then lovingly cuddled and “mutilated,” the mutilation, ranging from hugging and caressing to being mouthed and sucked on, are symptomatic of this loving. The object should not be changed by anyone other than the infant him/herself, denoting the object’s possession by only the infant. The object must “survive instinctual loving, and also hating and, if it be a feature, pure aggression.”\textsuperscript{113}

Key to the “transitional object” is a subtle anthropomorphism. Winnicott suggests that the object must appear to possess “vitality” or have a “reality” of its own. Therefore, it must give off a sense of warmth, have a pleasurable and stimulating texture, or in its construction have the ability to move or be moved kinetically. Furthermore, for the infant, the object stems not from within the child, nor from without, but is perceived as partially invested by his or her own body. The last condition of the “transitional object” is


\textsuperscript{112} Winnicott, 5.

\textsuperscript{113} Ibid.
its eventual “decathectation;” the child will gradually lose interest in it—thus it is not taken away from the child, but suffers a slow decay and abandonment by the child—because it has lost its meaning.

Clark’s adoption of elements of the transitional object are evident in *Pedra a er*; “I assembled a large number of worthless materials which, when grasped, rediscovered by the touch, induced a stimulating trauma.” Clark’s “trauma,” the stimulating experience which resounded so significantly in the artist, would become the type of experience she strove to create for her participants, and that she intended to generate in the majority of her works following *Pedra a er*. Since her renounce of the flat plane Clark worked continuously for the dissolution of the mind/body dialectic, one set in place by 17th century French philosopher René Descartes, a model that “three centuries of philosophical thought has attempted to overcome or reconcile.” Alternatively, Clark operated with a model of subjectivity informed by and exhibiting the influence of psychoanalysts Sigmund Freud, Donald Woods Winnicott, and philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Through the work created during this phase of her oeuvre, the necessity for physical participation was revealed in the healing properties of the works produced. What was at stake for Clark in the years between 1963, at the inception of *Caminhando* until her death in 1988 was strengthening her participant’s relationships with their own bodies, and thus contributing to the nurturing of their

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114 Lygia Clark, “To Capture,” 188.
subjectivity, that which Clark conceived of as continuously generated through experience.

*Pedra e ar* was first performed in 1966, and according to Clark, her first “on the body.” To produce *Pedra e ar*, the participant is to take a plastic bag, a rubber band, and a small stone. First, the bag is inflated with participant’s own breath, a poetic harbinger of Clark’s later assertion that participants *breathe* life into her propositions.\(^\text{116}\) The bag is then tied off with the rubber band, leaving just enough slack in the bag so that the plastic is relaxed. Next, the stone is placed at the corner seam of the bag, cushioned within a pocket of the plastic and the air beneath it. The object is then held between the hands. At this moment, the membranous plastic reacts to the intake of one’s breath, the subtle muscular tics of the fingers, and the pressure of the embracing palms. The beads of moisture from the exhalation into the bag cling to the plastic’s interior, an ephemeral index of the participant’s bodily contribution to the making of the work. All of these intentional and unintentional bodily gestures are transferred to the plastic skin, which in turn gently models the precariously balanced stone.\(^\text{117}\) Indeed, in response to this work,

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\(^\text{116}\) Lygia Clark, "Livro-obra," 233. It was in her text “We are the Proposers” that Clark declared the necessity that participants *breathe* life into the work. Clark as a proposer created the “mold”. It is significant that Clark used the word breathe, emphasizing the very physicality of the ensuing participation.

\(^\text{117}\) Bois, "Nostalgia of the Body," 87. Bois is referring to his first meeting with Clark in her Paris apartment, wherein she showed him many of her works. *Stone and Air* particularly stood out to him. He recalled feeling the heat of her breath still within the plastic bag as he manipulated it. Yve-Alain Bois would refer to this moment as though watching the birth of a small animal. His biologically termed reaction to the work speaks to its seeming organicity and agency. Clark’s selection of inorganic and mass produced materials seems at odds with her desire for organicism, and yet the delicate plastic skin inflates to mimic some type of body, the warmth from the participant’s breath resonates within the plastic, and the subtle breath-like responsive movements of the bag all denote elements of the organic body. Still, the object was not intended to emulate an animal; indeed Clark was uninterested in creating works of representation. Rather, the object produced, maintained an affinity with the faculties of the human body.
writer Thierry Davila stated: “These objects did no go into action until they became part of the body that discovered them.”\textsuperscript{118} The gravity of the relationship between the participant and the object was such that the object seems to literally become part, or an appendage of the participant. This work originated while Clark was recovering from a wrist injury. In a short essay titled \textit{To Capture a Fragment of Suspended Time} she states that her fractured wrist had to be coated in a hot paste.\textsuperscript{119} To protect the injury, her wrist was wrapped in a plastic bag tied with an elastic band. Spontaneously, she removed the bag, and created the work on the spot. \textit{Pedra e ar} developed out of materials used to heal, and the conceptual function of the work would continue to operate restoratively, though in a manner not strictly physical, but predicated upon physical interaction.

Possession of \textit{Pedra e ar} begins at the object’s creation. Because the work cannot sustain itself outside of the participant’s engagement, one individual always possesses it; it must be remade to be possessed by another. The work “survives” the ritualistic gentle mutilation at the hand of the participant; the squeezing, rubbing, and inflation of the object which gives it shape and purpose. In its ability to “breathe” with the participant, and as witnessed by Yve-Alain Bois, the work seems to move like a small birthing animal. Requisite for a “transitional object,” \textit{Pedra e ar} moves with subtle anthropomorphism and feels semi-agent-reacting with and against the movements of the participant. Winnicott’s insistence on the origination of the object as between that of the infant and the outside are enacted in Clark’s selection of quotidian materials that required assembly and the inflation of the object with the participant’s own breath. The object, in

\begin{enumerate}
\item[\textsuperscript{118}] Davila, 39.
\item[\textsuperscript{119}] Lygia Clark, "To Capture," 188.
\end{enumerate}
its state as *Pedra a er*, is not sustained on its own, nor does it come from within the participant; its meaning is developed at the conjunction of the two.\footnote{Thierry Davila notes in his text *The Therapeutic Relationship: Lygia Clark* that it is precisely the “openness” of Clark’s works that take them beyond a “transitional” or “part” object (41). Davila cites the “transitional” or “part” object as propagating “sedimentation” in its lack of openness. Clark however, was interested in restoring a sense of subjectivity within her participants. As Clark’s “relational objects” are fleeting, as has been noted of Winnicott, so too are the “transitional objects.” A certain restoration or rebuilding is inherent in the use of either object, as is an ephemerality.}

Reverberating throughout Clark’s process was the necessity of restoring a modern Brazilian identity within her participants.\footnote{See chapter 2 for a discussion of modern Brazilian subjectivity.} In his short text on Lygia Clark, Paulo Herkenhoff outlines the milieu in which Clark worked as thus: “…faced with the 1964 dictatorship, she (Clark) replaced the model of the great Russian Utopia with the idealization of the possibilities of art, taken as a process of collective individualizing and integration in a process of intersubjectivity.”\footnote{Herkenhoff, 45. Parentheses added by the author for clarification.} As Herkenhoff describes, collectivity was established via universal individualism. Bodily inhabitation is specifically unique to each self-conscious individual. As Judith Butler states in her text *Restaging the Universal: Hegemony and the Limits of Formalism*: “What is universal is therefore what pertains to every person, but it is not everything that pertains to every person.”\footnote{Judith Butler, “Restaging the Universal.” *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality: Contemporary Dialogues on the Left*. London: Verso, 2000. Print. 17.} Therefore, the individual exists inside and outside the bounds of universality. The condition of embodiment is universal, however, the nature of that embodiment is specific. It is thus the performing of individuality that locates one within the universal context. To quote Hegel, as Butler has: “The individual in his individual work already unconsciously
performs a universal work…” Clark’s object, the subject already performs a universal act. Clark sought to address collectivity and Brazilian identity by furnishing her participants with the tools to become aware of their sensate selves and consequentially their individuality. These tools took the form of propositions to create small objects, and then later in the forms of large-scale multi-participant interactive situations. Key to this restoration was the embrace of the individual sensate body, one whose perception is beyond that of the purely visual. Thus, her work would always include objects and experiences that stimulated the body.

Clark’s vast oeuvre of essays and texts chronologically increase in their focus upon the rediscovery of one’s own sensate body, in part due to the political situation in Brazil as discussed in chapter 2, and also due to her increasing interest in psychoanalysis and the healing properties of objects. 1983, she wrote: “…de-personalization-…is one of the characteristics of our time. If the loss of individuality is in a certain way imposed upon modern man, the artist offers him a return, and the chance to find himself.” Clark saw daily life as “automated,” devoid of expression and spontaneity. For Clark, the body had become a mere empty vehicle, disconnected from man’s creative and spontaneous interior self. Clark’s thinking was likely informed by Winnicott, who 10 years earlier published an article articulating the disconnection between the subject and

\[124\] Ibid, 20.
\[126\] Ibid, 151.
the body that he termed a “depersonalization.”127 He stated: “The basis of a self forms on
the fact of the body which, being alive, not only has shape, but which also functions.”128
The relationship between the self and the “functioning” body was “personalized” and
healthy. Thus, if Clark was to strengthen the participant’s relationships with their sensate
selves, an emphasis not only on the phenomenological physicality of the body, but on it’s
pulsating active faculties were necessary. Furthermore: “If the last century brought the
awareness of the death of God, we feel in our time, in man, the death of the individuality
which gave meaning to life. It is necessary to find a new meaning which will give man
his integrity. This meaning cannot be made up of mythical values which are external to
it.”129 She speaks of a once powerful and self-affirming spiritually that has, in modern
Brazil, dissolved, and left man without a sense of individuality and expressiveness, two
characteristics that for Clark were integral for the establishment and maintenance of a
unified and fulfilled self. She thus calls for the marriage of subject and object, or self and
body. *Caminhando*, in its ability to unify subject and object through the act, achieved, for
Clark this desired renewal of the total self.

Mari Carmen Ramírez notes in the text *Vital Structures: Constructive Nexus in
South America* that while participants ostensibly drew out the “subjectivity of the
structure-in dynamic, magical, or ritual terms-[that it] does not imply an emphasis on the

128 Ibid, 270.
individuality of the artist or participant subject.” What Ramirez notes, is that while in the production of *Caminhando*, one’s movements are specifically theirs; they are the movements of every other individual as well. *Caminhando* had the unique effect of existing as both intimately ephemeral and a prescriptively universal. Any individual could complete it at any time and, and yet no two iterations of the act would be the same. It is this singularity and individuality possessed universally, which for Clark bound one within collectivity.

After experiencing the profound implications of the isolation of her hand during the recovery from her wrist injury, Clark adopted that isolation and emphasis on parts of the body for her practice as witnessed in *Pedra a er*. In the efforts of reproducing this awareness, she developed works centered upon the isolation and performance of quotidian gestures within the framework of the ritualistic act. In response to *Caminhando*, she stated: “I ask myself whether after the experience of the *Caminhando* we do not become more aware of the gestures we make—even the most commonplace ones.”

While works such *Pedra a er* were structured as events to be enacted, the content of the event is performed “everyday, all the time”. In her text “On the Suppression of the Object (Notes)” Clark recalls this phase of her work and speaks of the individual works as “decompositions” of the body into parts, referencing the Kleinien “part-object.” When touched and manipulated, she anticipated the viewer as instantly able to relate the

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132 Ibid.
movement or operation of that object as akin to the organic physicality of their own body. *Pedra a er,* through its capacity to hold the breath of the participant, behaves like the lungs which inflated it. The mimicking of life-like properties of the objects within this phase, mirrored that faculty of the body. Thus, participants enact a variation of *Pedra e ar* simply through the act of breathing. “The first time I heard that breath (the proposition is called *Respire comigo*) [Breathe with me], my awareness of my own breathing obsessed me for several suffocating hours, whilst an unknown energy seemed to be born within me.” For Clark, these situations were a type of ritual, though a “ritual without myth.” Devoid of any spiritual connection, as rituals, they were enacted on and for the healing of body, privileging it and necessitating it as a site for meditation.135

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135 She addressed such rituals in her text “Breviary of the Body”. The title identifies it as a collection of prayers or rituals, and thus it reads like a meditative stream of consciousness. She describes various parts of *her* body and *the* body in its expressivity and physical potentiality: “The mouth which opens in a spasm, letting out the cry which announces the birth, in the act of swallowing a soul, which closes voraciously in its corresponding fullness…” For the full text, see the book: *Lygia Clark.* Barcelona: Fundacio Antoni Tapies, 1998. Print. Ritualistic meditation can be seen as one pole in what Guy Brett terms the “paradoxical” identity of Clark’s works that operate through the isolation of body parts. Brett suggests that the seeming “monstrosity” of Clarks work plays largely in one’s attraction to them. Drawing upon de Andrade’s *Cannibalist Manifesto* and an iconographic similarity to works by Spanish painter Fransisco Goya, Brett attributes to Clark’s work a subtle violence or allusion to torture, witnessed in the restriction and bondage of body parts. Brett specifically cites her *Máscara sensorial* (Sensorial Masks) (Figs 30-31). These works were designed as hooded masks and contained a variety of materials intended to stimulate not only the participant’s vision, but also their senses of smell, touch, and hearing. While a certain strangeness is evident in works like *Máscara sensorial,* elements of monstrosity or torture are overturned by agency of the participant, and the underlying aim of healing. Indeed it is precisely the strangeness, or unfamiliarity with the physical positions and stimulations garnered by the objects and garments that they function. In other words, it is through the re-contextualization of the body and the senses that they are privileged and worked upon. It was necessary for Clark to re-contextualize the performative space and the body to bring one’s attention to it.
Clark came to believe that subjectivity was nurtured not through strict internal means or by the impression of life exterior to it, but through experience; that which is dependent upon the interior body and exterior life. In response to Lygia Clark’s employment of the event and its relationship to subjectivity, Suely Rolnik wrote:

Knowing and relating to the otherness of the world as matter implies the activation of different potentials of subjectivity in its sensible dimension, depending on whether the matter-world is grasped primarily as an outline of forms, or as a field of forces. Knowing the world as form calls upon perception, which is carried out by the empirical exercise of sensibility; whereas knowing the world as force calls on sensation, which is carried out by the intensive exercise of sensibility...In this relation to the world as a field of forces, new blocks of sensation pulse within the body-subjectivity as it is affected by fresh experiences of the world’s varied and variable otherness.136

Speaking of Clark, Rolnik outlines the distinctness each of perception and sensation. Perceptual grasping of the world achieves an awareness of the existence of the world’s forms, what Rolnik terms a formal apprehension. This perception “of the other” generates a conception of the self that can be represented, one akin to the gestalt. Her assertions here seem to be predicated on strictly visual perception. Alternatively, sensational awareness perpetuates that which is expressible, activated and responsive to the agency of the other within the world. It is a process that requires tactile engagement with others and objects in the world. For Rolnik, it is the cavernous space between these two poles that exists the event, the event which links the perceptual dichotomy. Lula Wanderly, a Brazilian psychologist, described Clark’s “Relational Objects” with similar language, stating that they depend “not on a sensorial outlining of shape nor some quality

of surface, but [on] something that dilutes the notion of surface and makes the object to be lived in an ‘imaginary inwardness of the body’ where it finds signification. This is where the frontier is broken between body and object.”\textsuperscript{137} For both writers, physical sensation and a breach of surface are integral aspects of the nurturing of one’s subjectivity and for the functioning of Clark’s late work. Such a model goes beyond the Lacanian theory of recognition of the gestalt form of the human body in the construction of one’s self and identity, what he termed the “Mirror Stage.”\textsuperscript{138} The interior of the body, and the variations within contribute to a richer understanding and perception of self. This interior is primarily comprised of the idea of the bodily interior, not exclusively the actual physicality of the interior organs, what Clark would call the phantasm of the body. In \textit{Pedra a er}, an interior is quite literally created through the inflation of a plastic bag. This interior is further disturbed and made literal by the residual organic moisture left by the participant. While the piece is certainly visually stimulating, it is the trace of hot breath and the slick plastic that would likely, as both writers suggest, resonate more deeply with participants.

Informed by Winnicott’s essay, Clark developed the term “Relational Objects” and called upon them in a short text. She describes the object as having no “specific

\textsuperscript{137} Guy Brett. "Lygia Clark: In Search of the Body." \textit{Art in America} 82.7: 56-108. Print. Brett quotes Lula Wanderly’s text in his text in his short discussion on the shifting roles of the artist and participant.

\textsuperscript{138} Grosz, 40. Grosz discusses Lacanian “mirror stage” and its function in the development of subjectivity in children. She describes the mirror stage as the child’s recognition of itself in the mirror as a whole entity, as a gestalt form. She states: “It is a lived corporeal identity that is at stake: the mirror stage functions to ‘establish a relation between the organism and its reality or, as they say, between the innenwelt and the umwelt.’” It is a perceived image of the self as an outline or “mapping” of form. The term mirror, meaning reflection, also denotes a visual apprehension of the self—a recognition of the self through visual confirmation of existence.
nature” in itself, thus allowing for a variety of formal manifestations.\(^{139}\) The objects typically included materials such as pillows, blankets, panty hose, stones, seeds, and plastic bags, and were arranged in numerous ways.\(^{140}\) In response to their development and their therapeutic potentiality, she wrote:

For two years I have been carrying out experiences in the use of “relational objects” for therapeutic ends. At the beginning I used them applying Sapir’s method, which I went through in Paris: Relaxation based on verbal induction; one session a week. I gradually abandoned induction, beginning to use only my own materials…The process becomes therapeutic through the regularity of the sessions which allows the progressive elaboration of the phantasmatic provoked by the potentialities of the “relational objects”. In manipulating the “relational object,” the subject lives out a pre-verbal image. The “relational object” directly touches the subject’s nucleus.

The “relational objects” developed directly from Clark’s own verbal therapy, and she found their effects more stimulating than that of “verbal induction.” Again, Clark has determined the significance of tactility in human communication and introspection. She cites the therapeutic aspect of the work as originating in the “regularity” of the sessions, the meditative ritual of the event moving it fully into the realm of the therapeutic. While the physicality of the objects was integral to their functioning, their physicality was meant to address the phantasm of the participant, not a specific physical malady. Clark’s term “phantasm” alludes to one’s envisioning of their interior, or the fantasy/conception of their interior self, what Clark hints at in her allusion to the “pre-verbal” image. The fantasy is not exclusive to the physical interior, but an idea of subjectivity grounded in


\(^{140}\)Gina Ferreira. "Relational Objects" Lygia Clark. Barcelona: Fundacio Antoni Tapies, 1998. Print. 332-333. See this list, compiled by Gina Ferreira for a detailed list of materials and the ways in which they are arranged for various works.
the corporeal body. Through her application of the objects upon the skin of herself or the participant, (Fig. 22) the sensations produced would, for Clark, ground the participant’s subjectivity within them physically. This operated for Clark by reaffirming the individual’s physicality within the world. It was in the specificity of each individual sensation, unique to the participant, where the subjective identity was “elaborated” and confirmed. By applying an object exterior to the body, the relationship between the subject and the exterior world were connected concretely.

In 1923 Sigmund Freud wrote: “A person’s own body, and above all its surface, is a place from which both external and internal perceptions may spring. It is seen like any other object, but to the touch it yields two kinds of sensations, one of which may be equivalent to an internal percept…”141 Freud here cites the essentiality of sensation, and the possibility of an internal perception via external stimulus. Therein lies the power of the “relational objects”; whose physicality, when applied to the flesh of the participant, reaffirmed for the participants the physicality of their own bodies.

In her text *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* Elizabeth Grosz discusses the “double sensation” in emphasizing the privileged role of skin in physical sensation. Double sensations occur when one part of the body stimulates another “exhibiting the interchangeability of active and passive sensations, of those positions of subject and object, mind and body.”142 Grosz suggests that the double sensation creates an interface between the interior body and exterior world. This interface can be intensified when the participant includes an object in bodily stimulation. In *Respire*

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141 Elizabeth A. Grosz *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*. Bloomington [u.a.]: Indiana Univ., 2007. Print. 37.

142 Grosz, “Volatile Bodies,” 36.
**comigo** (Breathe with Me), a work comprised of a single looped tube that produces a sound akin to human breathing, the participant controls an exterior entity which in turn stimulates the skin, among other senses. An exterior object, is thus utilized and controlled by the body to stimulate itself, heightening the participant’s awareness and acknowledgement of that which is exterior to the body. The physical sensations of the fingers stimulating the flesh are very different from the sensations produced when a cold plastic object is used to stimulate the flesh. The exterior object provides an entity outside of the body that occupies outside space, though space shared with the body. The body thus identifies itself as an entity, though a richly sensate entity and “other” or separate from the object. By heightening the awareness of the exterior, the physicality of the interior body beneath the skin is reaffirmed through an identification with the occupation of space and three-dimensionality of the object. As noted, for Clark, subjectivity necessitated a bodily relationship beyond that of a gestalt recognition of the body as described by Jacques Lacan. In response to Clark’s “relational objects,” Suely Rolnik wrote:

> A journey to that beyond representation which was so intense that, out of a question of prudence, Lygia left a little stone in the hand of the receiver/participant throughout the whole session so that he might, like the example of Tom Thumb, find his way back. Back to the familiar, the known, the domestic; back to the form, the image, the human: The ‘proof of reality,’ Lygia would say of this aspect of her ritual.¹⁴³

Clark’s “proof of reality” seems to be predicated upon a grounding object. The stone, embraced in the palm, provides a physical link between the body and the outside world, ‘proving’ to the individual their physical manifestation and occupation of space.

Through the sensation of this interaction, that engendered by the sensate skin, the body feels this connection interiorly. Importantly, agency and control over these gestures lend a sense of power to the individual. Such sensations thus do not “happen” to the individual, but are performed by the individual.

In 1971, Clark wrote: “…I don’t want to be a psychoanalyst, but I want to put my work at the service of people who can make it worth something in this sector.”

*Caminhando* and *Pedra a er* introduced the possibility of therapeutic properties of her art objects. Through these works, the participant was encouraged to rediscover their own physical self, however, it would be her later bodies of work, *Fantasmática del cuerpo* (Phantasmagoria of the Body) and *Estructuración del self* (Structuring of the Self) wherein Clark openly called upon psychoanalysis as the driving force of the work and thus their production was predicated on their ability to heal. Her hesitation in “being” a psychoanalysts likely stems from her insistence on therapeutic tactility, a method not yet embraced by psychoanalysis. Her therapeutic situations were performed with her students at the Sorbonne, where she taught for several years, as well as her own apartment. Like the psychoanalysts who informed her work, Clark took detailed notes of her therapeutic sessions.

Clark’s 1973 work *Baba antropofágica* (Cannibalistic Slobber) (Fig. 23) most readily manifests Winnicott’s theory of the “transitional object.” The work was organized by a grouping of participants who surrounded an additional participant lying on the

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ground. The seated participants were instructed to suck on reels of cotton thread, and when fully saturated, pull the threads from their mouths and drape them upon the body of the individual on the ground who would be encased in a type of cocoon. In a letter to Hélio Oiticica she wrote of this piece: “The thread comes out full of saliva, and the people who are pulling out the thread begin to believe that they are taking out a thread, but then they realize that they are pulling out their very insides.” The near ingestion of threads and their subsequent removal from the interior of the body, though instilled with the fluids of the body, work metaphorically, for Clark, to dissolve the subject/object dichotomy. Clark states that she asks for the “vécu”, which translates from French to English as “live” or “lived.” Through the transfer of the moist cotton strings from the interior body of one individual unto the next, Clark envisioned a transfer of the interior life experience from one to another. This intimate experience also encouraged a community or collectivity throughout the group.

Hearkening back to Oswald de Andrade’s theory of cultural cannibalism; which was for him the way to reach a collective Modern Brazilian identity, Clark literally instructs her participants to seemingly ingest and regurgitate physical material imbued with the metaphoric and physical interiority of themselves. The work breaks down the boundary between the physical interior and exterior of the body. Furthermore, through her conception that the material became imbued with life experience, the work metaphorically absorbed the interiority of one participant and bestowed it upon another. 

*Baba antropofágica* can be characterized as the apex of Clark’s exploration of the

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dissolve of the autonomous object as well as a challenge to the Cartesian model of binary subjectivity. Clark’s contribution to Brazilian subjectivity began at the level of the individual: “This culture will be achieved through a process by means of which man gives himself, making himself the author. All creation results from this form of vomit (bave) or “cannibalism” (repas cannibalique). From this comes much more than communication.”

CONCLUSION

In 1976 Clark ceased her group works, including *Baba Antropofágica* and continued to work on a solely individual basis.  

In these sessions, Clark worked one-on-one with her participants utilizing her “Relational Objects.” While she no longer created works to be shown or performed within an explicitly artistic context, she maintained that she was not a psychotherapist. Of Clark’s practice, Suely Rolnik wrote: “What Lygia Clark proposes is not an abandoning of art, nor even swapping it for clinical practice, but rather to inhabit the tension of their edges.”  

Operating within this “tension,” Clark recognized the healing potential of art objects and processes, activating this potential literally, in a historically unprecedented manner. She opened both realms unto each other, providing following artists with a model for their own experimental and therapeutic practices.

Lygia Clark’s oeuvre encapsulates and challenges numerous fundamental elements of artistic production and reception that are integral to the nature of art itself. For this reason, her work must be resituated within the entire trajectory of Modernism. With this thesis, I proposed an alternative narrative of the evolution of artistic participation, objecthood, and perception, one spearheaded by Clark. Such a narrative is indispensable, given the recent resurge of interest in the three topics above. I have outlined this narrative as it is vital that art historical discourse acknowledge the originary precedents for contemporary meditations on participation, objecthood, and perception, without automatically reverting to a narrative that traces such strategies back to the

American Minimalists. As described in this text, the works of Lygia Clark are deeply entwined with the socio-political environment in Brazil, and specifically Rio de Janeiro. The investment of “Brazilianess” in these works allows them to speak both universality and particularly. Because of their intimate link to Clark herself, they are imbued with a richness and texture unseen in the work of both Donald Judd and Frank Stella. A reinstatement of Clark within the trajectory of Modernism would provide a more richly diverse and compelling evolution of artistic practices. The role of this thesis has been to engage her oeuvre as a whole, yet view it specifically in terms of her path towards the therapeutic usage of art objects. Through intensive analyses of specific works, I have demonstrated the complexity and richness of her oeuvre. Even at the outset of Clark’s practice she was intent upon restoring the expressivity of her subjects. This project changed little during her career, only gaining momentum and emphasis within each object she produced.

This thesis has tracked Lygia Clark’s progressive challenge to traditional models of visual perception, autonomous objecthood, and disembodied participation that were instantiated hundreds of years before her practice. From the rupture of the transcendental picture plane, to the incorporation of the subjective body, to the breach of interior and exterior bodily boundaries, Clark upended the occularcentric model of perception set in place during the European Renaissance and created bodily objects that stimulated the exterior and interior of the participant. In her series Ruptura del marco (Breaking the Frame) Clark’s subtle incision of paint into the work’s framing device produced a monumental disinvestment of power in the device itself. Her gesture simultaneously freed
her from the confines of the frame and deconstructed the transcendentalism of the flat picture plane. Once released from the frame, Clark rapidly produced a series of objects that exponentially incorporated and were contingent upon the viewing subjective body. Expanding upon the writing of Clark’s friend and colleague Ferreira Gullar, this paper has mapped Clark’s explicit response to occularcentric abstract painting.

By revealing the three-dimensionality of her support, and the possibility for an art beyond transcendentalism, Clark operated with a theoretical matrix akin to her contemporaries, the American Minimalists. However, whereas Donald Judd and Frank Stella produced theatrical gestalt forms, the objects remained inextricably linked to the gallery spaces in which they inhabited. The significance of Clark’s contributions to the relationship between objects and viewers lies in the very intimacy and acute bodily engagement thus manifested in the experience. Minimalist objects, in their relationship to the spaces in which they inhabit, do little to increase sensitive awareness of the human body and self. Their size and scale engender relationships of generality and comparison versus the minute and specific discoveries made during interactions with Clark’s *Casulo* or *Bichos*.

It has been necessary within this thesis to characterize the objecthood of Lygia Clark’s *Bichos*, as they occupy a unique moment in her transition between the creation of autonomous static objects and ephemeral temporal performative situations. Furthermore, within the trajectory of art history, the *Bichos* can be located as the singular instance of kinetic ameliorative objects. Standing outside the realm of traditional sculpture, and yet possessing the capacity to exist upon the pedestal, the *Bichos* defied their historical
sculptural precedents. The *Bicho* is ultimately an object that is not structured so that it *can* be manipulated, but structured as such because it *must* be manipulated.

Lygia Clark’s *Bicho* series operated as a catalyst within her oeuvre and proved to be the turning point in her practice. Operating as apparati: effective, mediating objects, the *Bichos* served to stimulate an experience in which the participant became aware of the *performing* of his or her own body. As Judith Butler described the process of “performing” one’s gender as a series of repeated acts, so too do Clark’s objects, through a series of repeated meditative movements, *perform* the body of the participating individual. This performance however, is impossible without the presence of the aware self. For Clark, the *Bicho* itself was a semi-agent body, and reactive to the touch of its participant, however, without the agency of the participant it remains static and inactive. For Clark, this new awareness of the physical self, engendered by the object, contributed to the nurturing of the individual’s subjectivity.

Clark’s own writings bear the extent to which she felt lonely and alienated from others. It was this personal dissatisfaction along with her intention of restoring a universal Brazilian sense of self that propelled her to transition her work into the real of the therapeutic. Lygia Clark’s endeavor to restore interiority within the individual became linked to therapeutic practices when she underwent psychoanalytic therapy herself. Through her own engagement with objects in a therapeutic context, she was profoundly affected, and all but abandoned the production of work and objects to be experienced in an artistic context. As Suely Rolnik noted, Clark’s late work can be located in a
precarious space between the therapeutic and artistic realms, and thus she occupies a singular and radical position within the trajectory of artistic practices.

This thesis has examined Clark’s adoption of psychoanalytic theory and the relationship between her “relational objects” and D.W. Winnicott’s “transitional objects.” Winnicott studied children, and their development of both a recognition and a relationship with the world exterior to themselves. He asserted that the child’s relationship with objects, particularly the first relationship with an object, assisted in the acknowledgement of the body as within although separate from the world around it. Utilizing this theory, Clark introduced a method of therapy that reinstated individual embodiment. Lygia Clark was informed both by Winnicott and psychoanalyst Melanie Klein, however her work maintained specificity to her own innovation and her home of Brazil. Her interest in restorative therapy is expressly linked to Brazil’s crisis of collective identity as witnessed in her work *Baba Antropofágica*. By orchestrating a collective group work, Clark envisaged a transfer of the interiority of one individual unto the next via the transfer of physical material (strings) saturated by his or her own saliva—the interior bodily fluid, a material that transcends the physical boundaries of the body. Regenerating Oswald de Andrade’s *Cannibalist Manifesto*, published in 1928, Clark nearly literalized the performing of a traditional Brazilian ritual, one practiced in the country long before its Portuguese colonization. Clark explicitly enacted the terms of Winnicott’s “transitional objects” as she intended to bestow upon her participants a renewed relationship to the world around them and their own role within that world.
In 1981 and in poor health, Lygia Clark began officiating sessions with Gina Ferreira, and Lula Vanderlei, both practitioners in the field of mental health. Working together with her participants, Clark herself slowly retreated from her therapeutic practice. Her retreat however, did not indicate an end to her work; moreover it realized the potentiality for her process to be engaged by those other than herself. When Lygia Clark first proposed the work *Caminhando* she shifted the authorial roles that had been set in place centuries before.

Curators and scholars now face the challenge of maintaining and exhibiting Clark’s work. As her career progressed, the artist strove to distance herself from artistic institutions, and thus her works do not cater to such a traditionally visual environment. Her *Bicho* series, objects intended for physical manipulation, are now typically displayed on pedestals and behind plexiglass, existing as autonomous static relics, devoid of the meaning Clark intended. Sheltered by plexiglass, they are relegated to a strictly visual and formal presentation, and for Clark such an experience is the antithesis of the work’s meaning. It is therefore the task of her current viewership to resuscitate her work and bring to light the monumentality of her artistic innovation.

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Figure 1: Lygia Clark *Superfície modulada no 5* 1955
Industrial Paint on Wood
Figure 2: Lygia Clark *Querbra da moldura* (Breaking the Frame) Maquette 1954

Card
Figure 3: Lygia Clark *Descoberta da linha orgânica* (Discovery of the organic line)  
1954 Card
Figure 4: Lygia Clark *Composição no 5.* (Composition no 5) 1954
Oil on wood
Figure 5: Eva Hesse *Hang-up* 1966 Multiple Media
Figure 6: Lygia Clark *Egg* 1958
Nitro-cellulose and painted wood
Figure 7: Lygia Clark *Planos en superficie modulada no 5* (Planes in Modulated Surface) 1957 Formica and Industrial Paint on Wood
Figure 8: Lygia Clark *Casulo* 1959
Nitrocellulose on tin
Figure 9: Frank Stella *Die Fahne Hoch* (Flags on High) 1959
Enamel paint on canvas
Figure 10: Donald Judd *Untitled* 1964
Aluminum
Figure 11: Installation view of the Venice Biennale, with Lygia Clark as the Brazilian representative 1968

Figure 12: Lygia Clark *Metamorfose 1* 1960
Aluminum
Figure 13: Lygia Clark *Bicho* 1960
Aluminum
Figure 14: Lygia Clark O dentro é o fora (The Inside is the outside) 1963
Tin
Figure 15: Hans Namuth *Jackson Pollock* 1950
Figure 16: *Estudo para obra mole* (Study for soft work) 1964
Rubber
Figure 17: Lygia Clark *Grub* 1964
Green Rubber
Figure 18: Lygia Clark Documentation of Caminhando (Trailing/Walking)
Proposal date 1963
Figure 19: Max Bill *Endless Ribbon* 1935
Granite
Figure 20: Lygia Clark *Documentation of Pedra a er*
Proposal date 1966
Figure 21: Lygia Clark *Documentation of Respire comigo*
Proposal date 1966
Figure 22: Lygia Clark utilizing her “relational objects” with a participant

Figure 23: Lygia Clark *Baba Antropofágica* (Canniblastic Slobber)
Proposal date 1973