



## Toward a Common Configurative Impulse Em direção a um impulso configurativo comum

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**Imagem:** Emygdio de Barros, *Universal*, 1948. Oil on canvas, 104 x 108 cm. Courtesy Museu de Imagens do Inconsciente.

## Toward a Common Configurative Impulse

Em direção a um impulso configurativo comum

Kaira M. Cabañas\*

### Abstract

Brazilian art critic Mário Pedrosa's theorization of art's affective power, whereby the relational contract with the spectator is neither rational nor purely visual but is infused with feeling, was decisive for understandings of geometric abstraction as *expressive* in the 1950s. "Toward a Common Configurative Impulse" turns to another modernism, nestled alongside the geometric ones that would come to define the aesthetic of artists associated with Concrete Art in these years. Beyond Concrete Art, Pedrosa's modernism also encompassed the creative production of diverse practitioners, among them, popular artists, self-taught artists and psychiatric patients (the latter is the subject of my book *Learning from Madness: Brazilian Modernism and Global Contemporary Art*). With this in mind, this essay tracks the historical and discursive origins for such an inclusive modernism and how Pedrosa's embrace of different artistic subjectivities calls for a necessary shift in the historiography of Brazilian modernism at mid-century.

### Keywords

Mário Pedrosa. Concrete Art. Self-taught art. Psychiatry. Gestaltung.

### Resumo

A teorização do crítico de arte brasileiro Mário Pedrosa sobre o poder afetivo da arte, segundo a qual o contrato relacional com o espectador não é nem racional nem puramente visual, mas impregnado de sentimento, foi decisiva para a compreensão da abstração geométrica como expressiva, nos anos 1950. "Em direção a um impulso configurativo comum" volta-se para outro modernismo, aninhado ao lado dos geométricos que viriam a definir a estética dos artistas associados à Arte Concreta, naqueles anos. Além da Arte Concreta, o modernismo de Pedrosa também englobou a produção criativa de diversos praticantes, entre eles, artistas populares, artistas autodidatas e pacientes psiquiátricos (este último é o tema de meu livro *Learning from Madness: Brazilian Modernism and Global Contemporary Art*). Com isso em mente, este texto investiga as origens históricas e discursivas deste modernismo inclusivo e como a adoção de Pedrosa de diferentes subjetividades artísticas exige uma mudança na historiografia do modernismo brasileiro em meados do século.

### Palavras-chave

Mário Pedrosa. Arte concreta. Arte virgem. Psiquiatria. Gestaltung.



In the same way that the child, the schizophrenic, the artist, cannot contemplate anything without emotion... the majority of the rest of us see everything without being moved.  
Mário Pedrosa, "Forma e personalidade," 1951

I accept as art the work of the alienated, children, and primitive.  
Lygia Pape, *Jornal do Brasil*, 1959



Fig. 1. Artists gathered at the home of Mário Pedrosa, c. 1953. From left to right: Geraldo de Barros, Abraham Palatnik, Mário Pedrosa, Lidia Prati, Tomás Maldonado, Almir Mavignier, and Ivan Serpa. In background: Emygdio de Barros's painting, *Tarde de temporal* (Stormy afternoon), c. 1950. Coleção Mário Pedrosa. Acervo da Fundação Biblioteca Nacional, Brasil.

In the late 1940s and 1950s, abstract painter and educator Ivan Serpa and other artists would often gather at Mário Pedrosa's home. A photograph from the early 1950s shows precisely such a gathering [fig. 1]. From right to left, we see Geraldo de Barros (standing), Abraham Palatnik, Pedrosa, Lidia "Lidy" Prati, Tomás Maldonado, Almir Mavignier, and Serpa. Prati and Maldonado were both founding

members of the Asociación Arte Concreto-Invención movement in Buenos Aires in 1944. The photograph likely dates from 1953, when both Prati and Maldonado participated in the exhibition *Grupo de artistas modernos argentinos* at the Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro (MAM RJ). With the exception of Palatnik who turned to the production of chromo-kinetic work, all the artists present in this image became deeply invested in the tenets of constructivism and concrete art as a way of affirming the reality of painting, at times marrying it to a political agenda, as in the case of Maldonado's Marxism. In Brazil and other countries across the South American continent, the 1950s was a time when developmentalism, a constructive visual language, and national identity came together to project an image of a modern nation.

Yet what I am drawn to in this photograph is the painting in the background and its figurative-impressionistic style, which is contrary to the dominant aesthetic of the artists pictured below. Hanging on the wall is a work by Emygdio de Barros, a mental health patient at the Centro Psiquiátrico Nacional Pedro II<sup>1</sup>. Pedrosa's living room was a place where artists not only discussed contemporary art but also such seemingly incompatible fields as Gestalt psychology, which informed the decade's turn to concrete art, and the art of psychiatric patients. Pedrosa was also one of the primary interlocutors for the artists of Rio-based Grupo Frente, who counted Serpa among its members in addition to Lygia Pape, Lygia Clark, and, later, Elisa Martins da Silveira (a naïf painter) and Hélio Oiticica. In order to account for the specificity of Pedrosa's engagement with psychiatric patients' work, and how Emygdio's painting made it from the asylum into a cultural elite's home, we must turn to Pedrosa's close friend and collaborator, the psychiatrist Nise da Silveira<sup>2</sup>.

Dr. Silveira began work as a psychiatrist at the Centro Psiquiátrico Nacional in the Rio neighborhood of Engenho de Dentro in 1944. In the course of her career, she was repeatedly referred to as a "rebellious psychiatrist" who developed alternative therapeutic models for her patients and constantly advocated for better conditions in the hospitals. Dr. Silveira drew early inspiration from the writing of dissident Surrealist Antonin Artaud – from whence her repeated citation of the phrase "the innumerable states of being" derives – and eventually Carl Jung. In 1946, in collaboration with Mavignier, she opened a painting studio for her patients at the hospital, a studio that continues its activities to this day<sup>3</sup>. From September 1946 to November 1951, Mavignier worked as the studio monitor and played a crucial role in establishing its daily routine. Recent studies in the field of occupational therapy have emphasized how the presence of an artist likely aided in obtaining better aesthetic results in the patients' work, developing what I call an "assisted" modernism<sup>4</sup>.

It was on the occasion of an exhibition of the patients' work at the Associação Brasileira de Imprensa that Pedrosa delivered his first lecture on the so-called art of the insane. "Arte, necessidade vital" (Art, vital necessity) opens with the line: "The trouble with understanding the problem that brings us together here today is a conceptualization of art that centuries of bad tradition have implanted in our minds". He describes how the public often seeks an art that offers realist representations and consequently its incredulity toward modernist abstraction. The tale he tells is a familiar one, with the exception that he seamlessly segues to his observation of their "even greater incomprehension in light of an experiment such as the exhibition currently on view". When referring to the patients' work, Pedrosa maintains, "it must be said that what is lacking in these embryonic samples of art ... is productive will [*vontade realizadora*]; that terrible, almost inhuman will that vanquished inner chaos itself in Van Gogh, imposing a formal organization". While he observes a lack of formal resistance in the patients' work he nonetheless claims that they "possess the same nature as the works of the world's great artists". Moreover, given visual art's non-verbal means of production, he identifies art as "the only means still left to them [the

patients] for communicating with us in depth”<sup>5</sup>. In 1947, when initially approaching these works, Pedrosa’s writing was indebted to a quasi-psychological language with repeated references to this art as a “revealer of the soul” with a “penetrating force [that] provides access as far as the abyss of souls with troubled consciousness”. He similarly affirms how “all subjective art is deeply symbolic, it is expressed in an adult or child ‘artist,’ primitive or civilized, mentally abnormal or normal”<sup>6</sup>. Tellingly, he evokes how such exteriorizations of the unconscious are at the origin of surrealist conceptions in art.

Critics who later turned to the collected volume of Pedrosa’s writings and lectures also titled *Arte, necessidade vital* (1949) commended its singularity but largely remained silent about the lecture that gave the publication its name. In his column “As artes” in the Rio newspaper *Diário carioca*, critic Antonio Bento explains how “we must receive as a rare thing a book of such quality” and highlights Pedrosa’s masterful accounts on various modern artists – from Candido Portinari to Alexander Calder<sup>7</sup>. Pietro Maria Bardi, director of the Museu de Arte de São Paulo (MASP), also endorsed the book and its author: “if there is a writer in Brazil who is dedicated to the study of the problem of the arts ... with intelligence and, above all, contemporary vision, it is Mário Pedrosa”. Bardi continues, “There is always an elegance of formulation [*de constatação*] in Pedrosa’s way of observing”<sup>8</sup>.

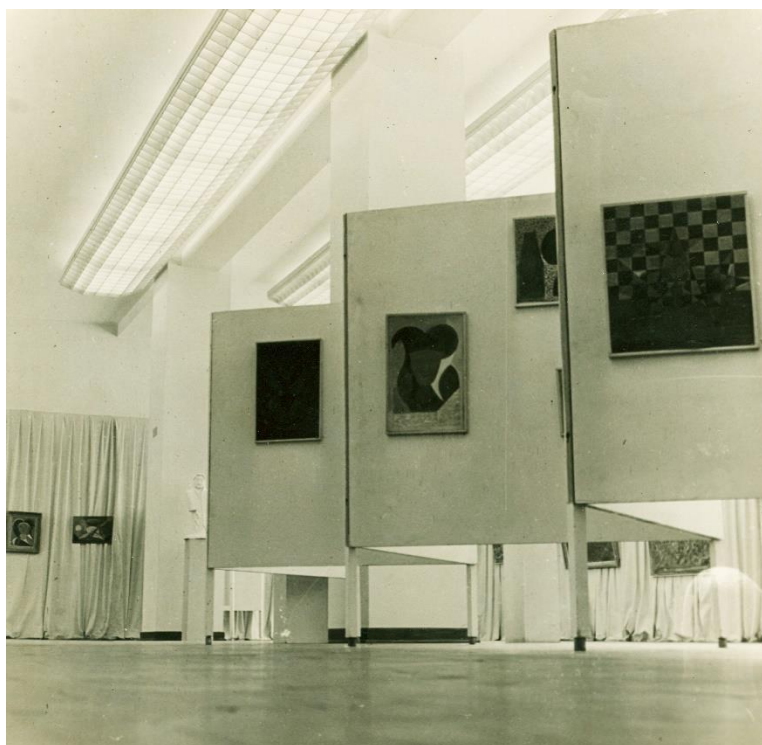


Fig. 2. *9 artistas de Engenho de Dentro do Rio de Janeiro*, Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo, 1949. Exhibition view.  
Courtesy Museu de Imagens do Inconsciente.

In his 1947 lecture Pedrosa had spoken of the patients’ work as “documents” and as “embryonic samples,” at a moment when the debates surrounding the patients’ work had only just begun. It was on account of the exhibition *9 artistas de Engenho de Dentro do Rio de Janeiro* (9 artists from Rio de Janeiro’s Engenho de Dentro), and thus the works’ exhibition at the Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo (MAM SP), that Pedrosa was faced with reimagining the status of the patients’ works in relation to



modern art and with it the role of the artist. As its title suggests, the exhibition represented the work of nine patients (Adelina Gomes, Carlos Pertuis, Emygdio de Barros, José Goulart, Kleber Leal Pessoa, Lúcio, Raphael Domingues, Vicente, Wilson Nascimento) and included 179 works across various mediums [fig. 2]. Between 9 *artistas'* opening in São Paulo in October 1949 and its closing at its second venue, the Câmara Distrital do Rio de Janeiro, in January 1950, approximately twenty articles appeared in the press, with some critics such as Quirino Campofiorito questioning the work's framing as art (Bôas, 2008). It was in this contentious context that Pedrosa first introduced the term *virgem* (virgin, naïve, or unschooled) to designate the patients' creative production. His article "Pintores de arte virgem" was published on March 19, 1950, a few months after 9 *artistas'* installment in Rio [fig. 3]<sup>9</sup>. Here he draws upon the inaugural work of art historian and psychiatrist Hans Prinzhorn, and does so in a way that would come to shape the discursive contours of his next major essay, "Forma e personalidade" (Form and personality, 1951).



Fig. 3. Mário Pedrosa, "Pintores de arte virgem," *Correio da Manhã*, March 19, 1950. Fundo Mário Pedrosa. Centro de Documentação e Memória da Universidade Estadual Paulista (UNESP).

Prinzhorn's *Bildnerei der Geisteskranken* (Artistry of the Mentally Ill, 1922) remains exceptional, both in its published presentation and subsequent reception. Bound in black linen with white embossed lettering, it runs 350 pages and contains more than 187 illustrations. Prior to its publication no other book had

included such extensive visual documentation of psychiatric patients' art with such high quality. In the 1920s it very quickly became the Paris-based Surrealists' "Picture Bible". In it Prinzhorn argued against psychoanalytic interpretations that focused on the symbolism produced by an individual under analysis, interpretations that, for him, are "interesting only for their contents and have been inconsequential as configurations" (Prinzhorn, [1922], 1995: 262). Prinzhorn instead proposed six urges, or drives, for configuration. The primary urge, however, remained that of expression, of which picture making is one outcome<sup>10</sup>. He also engaged in comparative analysis of the patients' work, juxtaposing it to the art of children, the so-called primitive, as well as art historical masters. Key to Pedrosa's reception of Prinzhorn's study was his discussion of how the expressive urge is manifest in a "configurative" power shared by all, one that survives in the mentally ill despite the disintegrated personality.

Whether accounting for a configurative tendency that results in a visual work characterized by obsessive ornamentation or by symbolic systems, Prinzhorn's conclusion remained the same: these configurations do not present "valid symptoms" of mental illness (1995: 263). Consequently, the configurative urges he identified were of little use in a diagnostic approach that would lead from the patients' images to a specific clinical condition. Crucial here is that rather than claim atavistic regression or a "degenerate" mind as common to the subjects in his study (an association inaugurated by Cesare Lombroso and that found its afterlife in Nazi discourse and exhibitions of "degenerate" art in the 1930s), Prinzhorn's comparative drive holds at bay psychopathological readings of the patients' art by focusing on the work's form and drawing attention to similarities with great artistic creations across time: from Mycenaean artifacts and Hieronymus Bosch to the contemporary work of German Expressionists (1995: 245-262).



Fig. 4. Emygdio de Barros, *Universal*, 1948. Oil on canvas, 104 x 108 cm. Courtesy Museu de Imagens do Inconsciente.

In "Pintores de arte virgem" Pedrosa, echoing Prinzhorn, forcefully claims the value of Dr. Silveira's patients' art independent of clinical biography, just as he similarly upholds their status as unschooled as artists. With regard to Rafael Domingues's work, Pedrosa writes, "It is pure affirmation. It has no subject... with no other purpose than to realize itself in purity, in grace, harmony, finesse". In the case of Emygdio de Barros, he takes note of the paintings' themes, from the Rio neighborhood of Alto da Boa Vista to the Municipal Theater, but claims, "the true protagonist of the picture is, in fact, its sensorial,

physical, more positive element.” For Pedrosa Emygdio’s work was one of “strict pictorial relations,” as evinced by the colors and forms in *Universal* (1948), a painting that illustrates his essay [fig. 4].<sup>11</sup> Indeed, one begins to better understand Pedrosa’s strident formalism in relation to these works when one recalls Prinzhorn’s words: “we cannot say with certainty that any given picture comes from a mentally ill person just because it bears certain traits” (Prinzhorn, [1922], 1995: 265).

What I would like to turn to now, more specifically, is Prinzhorn’s guiding concept throughout his research: *Gestaltung* (configuration). How might this concept have informed Pedrosa’s thinking and approach to the patients’ art and art more broadly? Prinzhorn affirms, “The pictures are attempts at configuration, like ‘art’. We should therefore be able to draw on experiences from the history of art, or rather Gestalt psychology” (Prinzhorn, 1995:4). Here it is important to hold *Gestaltung* – that is, the shaping, fashioning, structuring, or construction – apart from Gestalt understood as shape or form. The former refers to the *process* of creation and the latter to how visual input is perceived. To be sure, Gestalt perception was at the core of Pedrosa’s thinking at this time and was the subject of his 1949 thesis *Da natureza afetiva da forma na obra de arte* (On the affective nature of form in the work of art) with its discussion of good form, figure and ground articulation, and the subordination of parts to the whole – all key concepts for Gestalt psychology and the intellectual triumvirate of Max Wertheimer, Wolfgang Köhler, and Kurt Koffka, on which Pedrosa’s 1949 study relies<sup>12</sup>.

By 1951, however, at the time of the publication of “Forma e personalidade”, Pedrosa’s turn to *Gestaltung* as put forth by Prinzhorn in part helps to explain how in his critical practice he engages what seem like utterly opposed terms: *arte virgem* and the constructive (or concrete) art that defined avant-garde artistic practice at this time and that was often motivated by studies of Gestalt form. But in wake of the controversies surrounding the patients’ work, Pedrosa moved away from the principal Gestalt psychologists and toward the work of developmental psychologist Heinz Werner, as well as Prinzhorn<sup>13</sup>. For Pedrosa what all creative producers share is an impulse to configuration – a will to shaping, forming, creating, constructing – that is neither tied exclusively to a formal style (e.g., realistic, expressionist, abstract) nor reducible to a historical movement (concretism) nor an individual artist’s psychology (as in surrealism). In this way, Pedrosa’s turn to Prinzhorn leads him into a discursive position that allows him to speak to different artistic manifestations and adopt an open attitude toward all creative impulses (*Gestaltung*) rather than posit a foundation exclusive to concrete art in Brazil via his study of Gestalt perception. He affirms in relation to the patients’ work: “Driven by the same impulse as that of thousands of humble people – civil servants, porters, cobblers, gardeners – who anonymously give themselves over to Sunday pastimes [they] make new uncredited objects, paint, sculpt, for the simple pleasure of creating. They are virgin [i.e., unschooled] creators” (Pedrosa, 1979: 97).

Responding in his newspaper column to the publication of Pedrosa’s “Forma e personalidade,” Bento notes the critic’s shift away from psychoanalytic interpretations toward the formal elements of the work of art. He draws attention to Pedrosa’s discussion of the artistic personality and how Pedrosa frames it in positive relation to “primitives and the alienated”<sup>14</sup>. Another writer goes further, affirming how with this essay Pedrosa moves beyond the limits of the work of art to present a “general vision of man, a profession of faith”<sup>15</sup>. While such faith was indebted to comparative psychology and at times primitivist projections (e.g. the “primitive” are aligned with childhood and thus with an earlier stage of psychological development), one cannot disavow that it was precisely Pedrosa’s unfailing conviction in a common configurative impulse – or what I will call a configurative will – that kept his aesthetic thinking at a critical remove from an image of concrete art indissolubly linked to a rational image of a modern nation in the 1950s<sup>16</sup>. To be sure, Pedrosa engages in a rigorous formalism in the face of the patients’ work but it was



through his embracing approach to creativity, rather than his exclusive support of concrete or geometric forms, that these works became part of the narrative of modernism in Brazil.

Pedrosa's conception of *arte virgem* was also a theorization contemporary with French artist Jean Dubuffet's conception of *art brut* in the late 1940s<sup>17</sup>. Dubuffet coined the term *art brut* in 1945 to designate "Drawings, paintings, all works of art emanating from obscure personalities, maniacs; arising from spontaneous impulses, animated by fantasy, even delirium; and strangers to the beaten track of catalogued art" (*apud* Peiry, 2001:11). Crucial for Dubuffet was that *art brut* should not form part of any tradition, be it primitive art, folk art, naïf art, or children's art, just as any artist with formal training would also be excluded from his conception of an art untainted by official culture and its institutions. *Art brut*, as he explains, has precious little to do with the production of "career intellectuals". Rather, it is an art "unscathed by artistic culture" and one derived from the artists' "own depths" instead of from convention (Dubuffet, 1949, n.p.). At issue for Dubuffet was to affirm an understanding of pure creativity common to both the sane and the insane, whereby he affirms, "the artistic function is identical in all cases, and there is no more an art of the insane than there is an art of dyspeptics or of those with knee problems" (*Ibidem*). That both Dubuffet and Pedrosa share an emphasis on a common creative or configurative impulse is no mere historical coincidence: both were familiar with Prinzhorn's inaugural work. Accordingly, each was resistant to psychopathological studies of patients' art and scientific exhibitions such as the popular 1950 *Exposition internationale d'art psychopathologique* (First international psychopathological exhibition) at the Centre psychiatrique Sainte-Anne in Paris<sup>18</sup>. The two also met in Paris in these years, an encounter that reveals key differences in their respective approaches to the "brut" and to the "virgem"<sup>19</sup>.

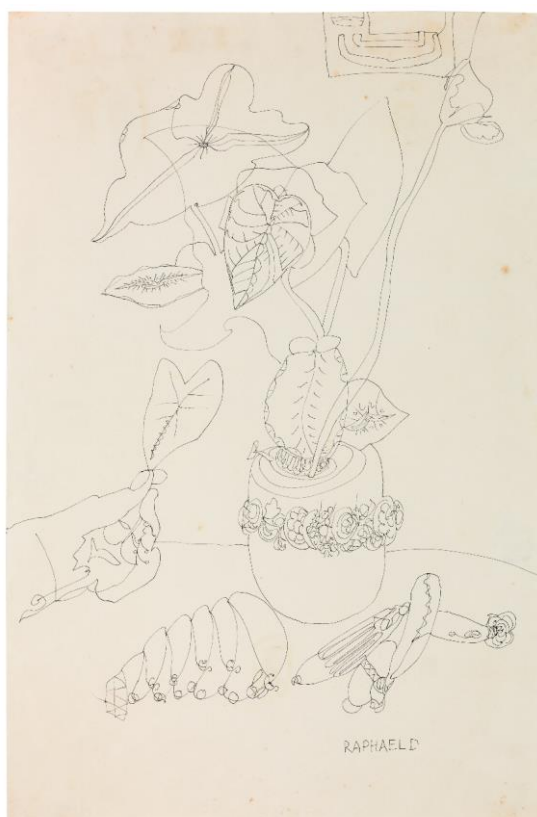


Fig. 5. Raphael Domingues, *Untitled* (Vase of plants with bananas), 1949. Ink on paper, 47.5 x 31.3 cm. Courtesy Museu de Imagens do Inconsciente.

In his column, Bento reports on his and Pedrosa's visit to the Foyer de l'Art Brut in Paris and describes how Dubuffet inveighed against art in museums in favor of "free creation and invention". According to Bento, Pedrosa showed Dubuffet a collection of drawings by Raphael [see fig. 5], whereby the French artist identified Matisse as a possible influence on the work: "'No' – protests Mário Pedrosa – Raphael never saw a Matisse reproduction, he has been ill for many years". But Dubuffet insisted, "'I believe in good faith the information you give me. But something tells me that Raphael knows the work of Matisse'"<sup>20</sup>. A cursory review of what Baptiste Brun tellingly labels Dubuffet's "photographic atlas" (Brun, 2013: 252) of art brut reproductions reveals repeated representations of the distortion of an ideal or natural body, visual distortions that also characterize the works in Dubuffet's actual art brut collection. Thus the issue for Dubuffet was not so much that Raphael's work looks like that of Matisse, but that it did not fit within his very precise, largely figurative, aesthetic investigation in which physical boundaries become creases; borders become openings; bodily contours are excessive or absent; figures and faces demonstrate disjunctions in proportion and scale [see fig. 6].

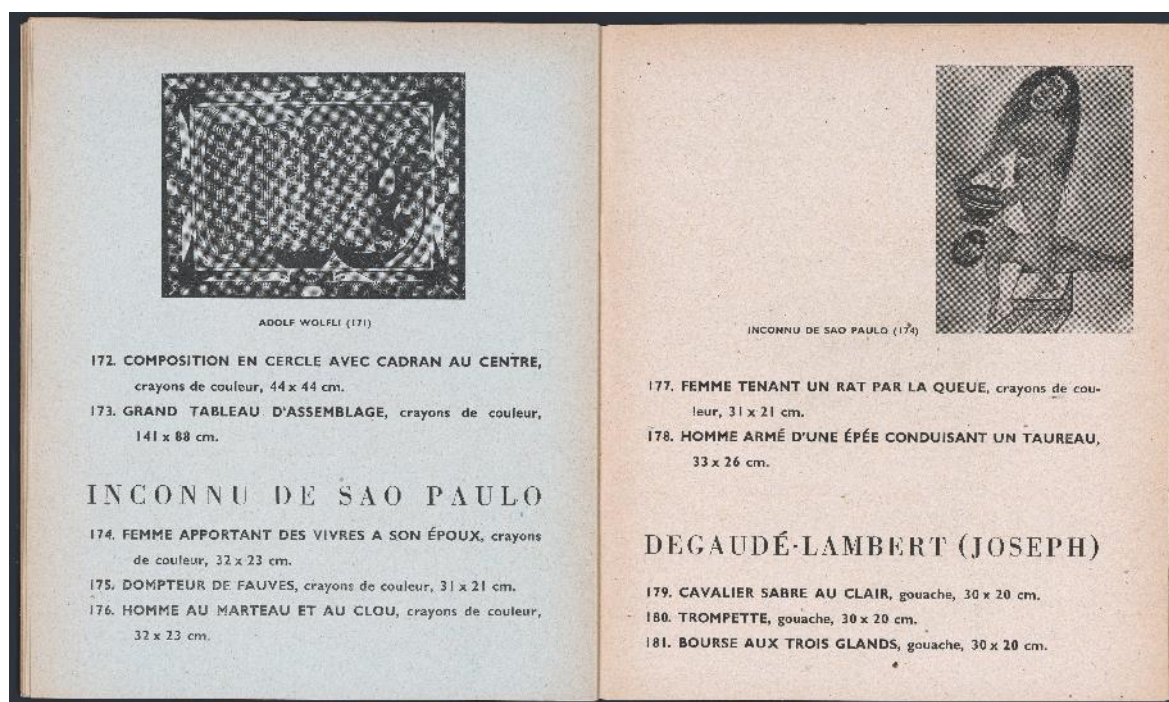


Fig. 6. Jean Dubuffet, *L'art brut préféré aux arts culturels*, published on occasion of the *art brut* exhibition at the Galerie René Drouin, Paris, 1949. Interior page spread. Courtesy private collection.

Just as Dubuffet positions art brut against official artistic culture, vis-à-vis his colleagues in Brazil he unwittingly turns the "brut" into an artistic-cultural and visual criterion for late modernist art as well as psychiatric patients' production. If Dubuffet claims outsider status for this work it ultimately functioned as a European insider avant-garde move. In the late 40s and early 50s, the reception of psychiatric patients' work did not follow the same logic of transgression in Brazil – as the epigraphs to this essay by Pedrosa and Lygia Pape also attest. In Brazil the patients' artistic production was crucial not only to the discourse of modernist abstraction and its institutionalization, in these years it was also regularly exhibited in the very space of the modernist museum.

By way of conclusion, I would like to reaffirm how Pedrosa's turn to the art of psychiatric patients allowed him to disidentify in part with a rationalist outlook and the elite cultural environment in Brazil, alliances that are too often repeated in the critical literature at the expense of his varied identifications and aesthetic investments. One could consider Pedrosa's support of *arte virgem* as part of his process of "deintellectualization" – to take up a term later used by his friend, artist Hélio Oiticica – a move to modify his bourgeois conditioning without, however, abandoning a commitment to art (For Oiticica this process meant also maintaining a commitment to what he identified as a "general constructive will" in advanced art<sup>21</sup>). What is more, with his turn to *arte virgem*, a turn that took him outside of elite art spaces and to a psychiatric asylum in the outskirts of Rio, Pedrosa brings attention to visual forms that – thanks to his efforts and those of Silveira – escape the psychiatric archive, the clinical file, which aims to assign subjects to villainous acts or to ascribe madness to errant behaviors. What survives in his art criticism, even when he holds biography and clinical diagnoses at bay, are traces of lives that may have otherwise gone unknown: Adelina Gomes, Carlos Pertuis, Emygdio de Barros, José Goulart, Kleber Leal Pessoa, Lúcio, Raphael Domingues, Vicente, Wilson Nascimento. The visual traces preserved in their creative work exist despite the psychiatric power that aimed to silence these subjects and separate them from the world<sup>22</sup>.

Today, with the rage for "outsider art", the specific historicity and criticality of such creative work and how it informs modernist understandings of creativity is lost when the work is uncritically assimilated to transhistorical styles on the global contemporary exhibition circuit<sup>23</sup>. As a countermeasure, I argue that more interdisciplinary work needs to be done in order to account for how these patient-artists – men and women whose psychopathological identification often converged with race and class discrimination – became central to this particular history of modern art in Brazil, with Pedrosa at its helm. Given Pedrosa's leftist leanings, he would have been attuned to many of the patients' humble and modest class origins. For contemporary art history, one must confront this dynamic of social exclusion coupled with aesthetic inclusion and critically engage how it defamiliarizes the elite narratives often crafted around modern and contemporary art in Brazil.

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## Notas

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<sup>1</sup> At my request, Vera Pedrosa identified this painting in email correspondence with Jay Levenson. She writes, “the painting is by Emygdio de Barros....The title is *Tarde de Temporal*. This painting subsequently disappeared from my parent’s apartment in Ipanema when it was under the care of a relative during the years of my father’s exile from 1970 to 1977. Its destination and present whereabouts are unknown to the family.” Email from Vera Pedrosa to Jay Levenson, April 17, 2015.

<sup>2</sup> In May 1952, Silveira founded the Museu do Imagens do Inconsciente, which, under the committed direction of Luiz Carlos Mello, remains dedicated to the preservation of the patients’ work as a scientific study collection. According to its conception and foundation, patients’ work produced in the hospital’s painting studio (more on this to come) went to the museum collection and was not for sale. In the case of Emygdio de Barros’s painting in Pedrosa’s living room, its presence there can be accounted for by the fact that Emygdio was not interned in the years 1950–1965, living instead with family who took him in. When residing in Teresópolis in the early 50s, Pedrosa and Mavignier would visit Emygdio to check in on him and to be sure he had materials with which to paint. In the course of his internments at Centro Psiquiátrico Nacional Pedro II, and on account of visits to the museum later in life, Emygdio left a legacy of around 3,300 works in the Museu do Imagens do Inconsciente collection. See the brief biography in: (Instituto Moreira Salles, 2012: 198–201).

<sup>3</sup> For an account of Silveira’s pioneering role in alternative psychiatric practices, see the comprehensive volume by Luiz Carlos Mello (2014). Studies on the painting studio at Engenho de Dentro published from within the field of psychology or occupational therapy include Gustavo Henrique Dionisio (2012); Riley and Pompeu e Silva (2012). Sociologist of art Glaucia Villas Bôas (2008) offers a detailed account of the studio and the critical debates surrounding the patients’ work in her article. Beyond the hospital, in 1956 Silveira also cofounded the Casa das Palmeiras, an open rehabilitation institute that uses expressive activities in an outpatient manner. The clients (patients) who frequent the Casa das Palmeiras realize expressive work, which is signed, dated, and archived for further study.

<sup>4</sup> By designating the patients’ work as an “assisted” modernism, I draw attention to the various ways that Mavignier aided the patients’ production: from suggesting models for Raphael’s drawing to providing Emygdio with fresh canvases. With this term, I also make a conceptual nod to Marcel Duchamp’s formulation of the “assisted readymade”. For a discussion of Mavignier’s contributions to the workshop and the patients’ working processes, see (Riley; Pompeu e Silva, 2012). See also my forthcoming, “A Tale of Assisted Modernism: Or How Palatnik’s Castle Collapsed”, in *Abraham Palatnik* (São Paulo: Galeria Nara Roesler, expected 2021).

<sup>5</sup> Mário Pedrosa, “The Vital Need for Art” (1947), reproduced in: (Ferreira; Herkenhoff, 2015). I have chosen to translate the title of this work as “Art, vital necessity”, so as to maintain the emphasis on *necessity*, which I consider key to modernist discourse and the discussion of patients’ art.

<sup>6</sup> Mário Pedrosa, "Flores do abismo", 1947; clipping in the Arquivo Pessoal Nise da Silveira, Museu de Imagens do Inconsciente, Rio de Janeiro.

<sup>7</sup> Antonio Bento, "Arte necessidade vital, de Mário Pedrosa", April 10, 1949; clipping in the archive of Mário Pedrosa, Acervo da Fundação Biblioteca Nacional – Brasil.

<sup>8</sup> P. M. Bardi, "Pedrosa crítico", January 23, 1950; clipping in the archive of Mário Pedrosa, Acervo da Fundação Biblioteca Nacional – Brasil.

<sup>9</sup> Mário Pedrosa, "Pintores de arte virgem", *Correio da Manhã*, March 19, 1950, 10 & 12.

<sup>10</sup> The six drives Prinzhorn identifies to account for dominant characteristics in the patients' (and all art's) representations include: the drive toward the expression of inner feelings, playfulness in expression, ornamental elaboration, patterned order, obsessive copying, and the development of complex symbolic systems (however, he largely avoided investigating the symbolic implications of works). See (Prinzhorn, 1995: 14).

<sup>11</sup> Mário Pedrosa, "Pintores de arte virgem", *Correio da Manhã*, March 19, 1950.

<sup>12</sup> "Da natureza afetiva da forma na obra de arte" (1949) and "Forma e personalidade" (1951) are published in: (Pedrosa, 1979).

<sup>13</sup> For a discussion of Pedrosa's reception of Heinz Werner, see (Cabañas, 2015).

<sup>14</sup> Antonio Bento, "Forma e personalidade", *Diário carioca*, January 1, 1952; clipping in the archive of Mário Pedrosa, Acervo da Fundação Biblioteca Nacional – Brasil.

<sup>15</sup> A. C. "Forma e personalidade", December 30, 1951; clipping in the archive of Mário Pedrosa, Acervo da Fundação Biblioteca Nacional – Brasil.

<sup>16</sup> I make a case for Pedrosa's support of a non-rational concretism in my "A Strategic Universalist", in *Mário Pedrosa, an Anthology: Primary Documents* (2015), esp. 25–27.

<sup>17</sup> In the interwar and immediate postwar years in Europe modern artists from Paul Klee to the Surrealists harnessed the art of the mentally ill to their own aesthetic ends – be they expressionist, visionary or transgressive – and as a result the work often served as an aesthetic model to follow. See the discussion in (Foster, 2004: 192-223).

<sup>18</sup> This exhibition included approximately 2,000 works created by more than 350 psychiatric patients, and 45 psychiatric collections from seventeen countries were represented, including some of Silveira's patients' work (Volmat, 1956).

<sup>19</sup> It is possible that Pedrosa first learned about *art brut* from French surrealist Benjamin Perét who was then living in Paris and had been married to his sister-in-law. At this time, Dubuffet was in direct contact with Perét about Art Brut, but their dialogue in these years seems to not have been sustained. Perét co-edited with Breton the *Almanach surréaliste du demi-siècle* (1950), in which they lay claim to Surrealism's discovery of asylum art with no mention of Dubuffet's contemporary proposals. In 1951, Breton officially announced his break with the Compagnie de l'Art Brut. See the discussion in: (Brun, 2014: 156-157).

<sup>20</sup> Antonio Bento, "No 'Foyer de l'Art Brut,'" *Diário carioca*, September 25, 1949; clipping in the Arquivo Pessoal Nise da Silveira, Museu de Imagens do Inconsciente, Rio de Janeiro. Paulo Emilio Salles Gomes was also present during this visit.

<sup>21</sup> For a rigorous discussion of Oiticica's "deintellectualization" and commitment to a constructive will in art, see Sérgio B. Martins, Chapter 2 (Martins, 2013: 51–78). Oiticica uses the concept of a "general constructive will" in his "Esquema Geral de Nova Objetividade" (1967), reprinted in *Hélio Oiticica* (Rotterdam: Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art et al., 1992); originally published in the exhibition catalogue *Nova Objetividade Brasileira* (Rio de Janeiro: Museu de Arte Moderna, 1967).

<sup>22</sup> This paragraph is informed by the discussion in Michel Foucault, "Lives of Infamous Men" (1979), in (Foucault, [1994] 2000: 157–175).

<sup>23</sup> Here, I am referencing how in the 2010s, "madness", "outsider", and "self-taught", have become the "new" in the contemporary global circuit. Modern psychiatric patients' work was included in the 11th Lyon Biennial (2011), the 30th Bienal de São Paulo (2012), and the 55th Venice Biennale (2013). I take up these exhibitions of patients' work in the global circuit in "Monolingualism of the Global" (Cabañas, 2018).

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