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Image [modified]: *Deixa Falar*. From left to right: Paulo Benjamim de Oliveira (Paulo da Portela), Heitor dos Prazeres, Gilberto Alves, Alcebiádes Barcelos (Bide) and Armando Marçal in the neighborhood Engenho de Dentro. Courtesy Heitor dos Prazeres Filho.

We Write Samba on the Wild Asphalt: Malandragem as Practice of Resistance in the Work of Heitor dos Prazeres and Hélio Oiticica

Escrevemos samba no asfalto selvagem*: malandragem como prática de resistência na obra de Heitor dos Prazeres e Hélio Oiticica

Camilla Querin**

ABSTRACT

The importance of Hélio Oiticica's ascension to the Morro of Mangueira to his career has been extensively studied and mythicized, and the indebtedness of his work to Afro-Brazilian culture has recently started receiving attention. Nevertheless, his oeuvre has not been explored with sufficient attention through the lens of *malandragem*, the use of tricks to outwit people in positions of power and restore a temporary sense of justice. I interpret *malandragem* as a legacy of the resistance enacted by enslaved Africans and their descendants against colonialism, slavery, and oppression. In this paper I analyze the work of an Afro-Brazilian artist from a previous generation, Heitor dos Prazeres, whose work was labeled “naïf” and “primitive” and, thus, ostracized from the history of modern art. Although it might seem unusual to pair the work of a figurative painter like dos Prazeres with that of Oiticica, an artist who not only never produced representational art, but even declared the death of traditional painting and dedicated his career to transposing the medium into space and time, in fact the culture of *malandragem* brings the two oeuvres together. Painter and samba composer, dos Prazeres was profoundly consequential in establishing the foundations of the cultural environment that Oiticica would draw from in the 1960s, where samba is just one aspect. Heitor dos Prazeres used *malandragem* to bend social barriers and infiltrate a hostile cultural world during the Estado Novo (1937-1945) and the following decades. His tactics should be considered precursors to the strategies that artists working under the military dictatorship (1964-1985) would enact to express dissent, as in the case of Hélio Oiticica.

KEY WORDS

Malandragem. Afro-Brazilian culture. Dictatorships. Carnival. Samba.

RESUMO

A importância da subida ao Morro da Mangueira na carreira de Hélio Oiticica foi consideravelmente estudada e transformada em mito enquanto a dívida de seu trabalho em relação à cultura Afro-Brasileira começou recentemente a receber atenção. No entanto, o conjunto da sua obra não foi minuciosamente examinado através da lente da malandragem, do uso de truques para enganar pessoas em posições de poder e restaurar uma noção temporária de justiça. Interpreto a malandragem como um legado da resistência dos escravizados africanos e seus descendentes contra o colonialismo, a escravidão, e a opressão. Neste artigo, analiso a obra de Heitor dos Prazeres, um artista Afro-Brasileiro da geração anterior, cujo trabalho foi rotulado de “naïf” e “primitivo” e, portanto, apagado da história da arte moderna. Apesar de que pareça inusitado comparar a obra de um pintor figurativo como dos Prazeres com a de Oiticica, um artista que nunca produziu arte representativa, e até mesmo declarou a morte da pintura e dedicou a sua carreira à transposição da pintura no espaço e no tempo, na verdade a cultura da malandragem aproxima as suas obras. Pintor e compositor de sambas, dos Prazeres foi fundamental para estabelecer as referências do ambiente cultural em que Oiticica se inspiraria na década de 1960, no qual o samba é apenas um elemento. Heitor dos Prazeres usou a malandragem para curvar as barreiras sociais e se infiltrar em um mundo cultural hostil durante o Estado Novo (1937-1945) e nas décadas sucessivas. Suas táticas deveriam ser consideradas precursoras das estratégias utilizadas por artistas para expressar dissidência durante a ditadura militar (1964-1985), como no caso de Hélio Oiticica.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Malandragem. Cultura Afro-Brasileira. Ditaduras. Carnaval. Samba.

Between 1970 and 1978 artist Hélio Oiticica (1937-1980) lived in New York City, making a living as a freelance translator and working nights at the All Language company. One night in 1974, Andreas and Thomas Valentin shot a Super-8 video of Oiticica arriving for work. The film shows him entering a smoke-filled office, where the wall clock reads 2 a.m. Wearing red bell-bottoms, a blue shirt, large wrap-around glasses with silver frames and dark lenses, and sporting long hair combed back, he smirks at the

camera. Coffee cup in hand, he adjusts the glasses and strolls down the dull office corridor, flanked by shelves covered in cardboard boxes and piles of paper reams, as if it were a catwalk. Aware that he is being followed, he makes a lewd hand gesture to the camera without even turning to look. He dawdles as he passes coworkers sitting at small desks along the wall. He is in no hurry to get to work. He engages again with the camera, with a sly smile, while approaching the office of Ms. Besner, the supervisor who gives orders to the employees by microphone. Unpreoccupied about interrupting a conversation, he slides between two colleagues who are standing at the door. With his languid saunter, insolent attitude, resistance to authority, and unique sartorial style, Oiticica embodies the *malandro*, or trickster, although transplanted from Rio de Janeiro to New York. This impression is reinforced by the soundtrack to the Valentin brothers' video, with the song "Poema rítmico do malandro"¹(1969) playing in the background². The lyrics, describe the *malandro* as "O dono do mundo", a charismatic bon vivant who descends from the dirt roads of the *morro* to the asphalt of the city to play, dance, gamble and drink all night, yet, will turn violent if provoked, singing "I'll never run, they'll kill me or I'll kill!"³.

Contrary to the *malandro* celebrated in the song, who leaves the poverty of the favela for the bourgeois boulevards of the city center, around 1964 Oiticica took the reverse path, leaving the elegant avenues of Jardim Botânico where he lived with his upper middle-class family to climb the maze of streets of Morro da Mangueira where, borrowing the words of his friend and poet Waly Salomão (2003:55), "fez os batismos da malandragem", he was baptised in *malandragem*. There, he befriended some residents of Mangueira, studied samba dancing, and had his sexual initiation (Oiticica in Salomão, 2003: 109) stepping outside heteronormative social expectations. Oiticica had a particular admiration for the *malandros*, claiming to be close friends with the "SUPER REALEZA DA MALANDRAGEM" (Oiticica, 1976, AHO 172.76) and even have a cryptographed guide of their hiding places in Mangueira, where they found shelter against police raids (Salomão, 2003:

46). At 26, the artist sought to de-intellectualize his practice and go against “o condicionamento burguês” that characterized his upbringing (Oiticica 1965, AHO 120.65), exerting a cultural transgression that few people would have undertaken, and that Oiticica romanticized and mythologized in his own writings⁴. Although many have written about the importance of Oiticica’s experiences in Mangueira to his artistic practice, few have considered how *malandragem*, more specifically, informed his development.



FIGS. 1-2. Left: Still from Andreas and Thomas Valentin’s *All Language* movie, 1974. Courtesy Andreas Valentin. Right: *Deixa Falar*. From left to right: Paulo Benjamim de Oliveira (Paulo da Portela), Heitor dos Prazeres, Gilberto Alves, Alcebíades Barcelos (Bide) and Armando Marçal in the neighborhood Engenho de Dentro. Unknown photographer. Courtesy Heitor dos Prazeres Filho.

The *malandro*, as Brazilian archetype, emerged between the 19th and 20th centuries in Rio de Janeiro in reaction to the degrading working and living conditions available to the Afro-Brazilian population following the abolition of slavery and the ideology of *branqueamento*, which favored White European immigrants over African descendants with the purpose of whitening and bringing a “civilizing’ influence on the population”

(Shaw, 2007: 89). The trickster figure is not unique to Brazil. Cultural theorist Babacar M'Baye (2021) writes that it is one of the most widespread archetypes of Pan-African cultures and “symbolize[s] the harsh conditions of millions of people of African descent due to brutal historical forces such as slavery, colonialism, and other oppressions”. Over time, the African trickster persona blended with Indigenous and European trickster traditions in the Americas⁵. These trickster practices enabled the enslaved, of both African and Indigenous descent, to express resistance and surreptitiously defy domination. And while, *malandragem*, the use of tricks to outwit people in positions of power and restore a temporary sense of justice, is certainly a legacy of the resistance enacted by enslaved Africans and their descendants for at least five centuries, it is also intimately related to Exú, an extremely important deity in the Afro-Brazilian religious pantheon. In both Candomblé and Umbanda, Exú serves the fundamental role of messenger between the world of the living and that of the *orixás*, and has many of the same qualities as the *malandro*. As the deity of the crossroads that incorporates notions of change, Exú at once subverts and maintains borders and boundaries between morality and immorality, good and evil, to guide the believers and keep the order established by Olorum, the Supreme God⁶.

Of course, Oiticica was not the first artist to impersonate the *malandro*. Heitor dos Prazeres (1898-1966), an artist from a previous generation, represents the *boêmio-malandro*, one who is always oscillating, or *gingando*, between the bohemian world and that of *malandragem* (Lirio and dos Prazeres Filho, 2003: 29). He was a samba composer, a “bamba among the bambas”⁷, the life of carnival parties. Concerned with style, he was always elegantly dressed in suits he tailored himself. He expressed his passion for women through lyrics and paintings, and his fortunes and affairs were reported by journalists and friends. Although most of his life revolved around Praça Onze and Mangue, in the port area of Rio de Janeiro, he was

cosmopolitan in that he moved between different environments, from *batuque* to ballets, from elegant salons with a middle-class, international clientele, to carnival parades, mingling with different social classes. A skilled *capoeirista*, dos Prazeres was known as the “capoeira dos bons”, so feared that his adversaries often chose not to confront him⁸. With the typical duality of *malandros*, dos Prazeres had a double life, one dedicated to *malandragem*, the other spent working as newspaper seller, carpenter, typographer, shoemaker, tailor, eventually as a civil servant in the Ministry of Education and Culture, and at the National Radio to provide for his large family. Aside from the legendary anecdotes, dos Prazeres was multi-talented, writing songs that celebrated *malandragem*, and repeatedly depicting *malandros* in his paintings.

Although it might seem unusual to pair the work of a figurative painter like dos Prazeres with that of Oiticica, an artist who not only never produced representational art, but even declared the death of traditional painting and dedicated his career to transposing the medium into space and time, in fact the culture of *malandragem* brings the two oeuvres together. Dos Prazeres used *malandragem* to infiltrate a hostile cultural and social environment that relegated his artwork to the derisive categories of “naïf” and “primitive”. With chicanery, he exploited these same labels to shake the hegemonic art system. His tactics should be considered precursors to the strategies that artists working under the military dictatorship (1964-1985) would enact decades later to express dissent, as in the case of Hélio Oiticica⁹. Similar to Exú, who moves between seemingly incompatible spheres, artists living under repressive political conditions worked both in and outside of the institutions they critiqued, devising creative solutions to preserve their ethical position against the dominant order. While the *malandro* has received scholarly attention in music, literature, theater, cinema, popular culture and anthropology, this figure has barely been acknowledged within the visual arts. In what follows, I consider how the

work of a seemingly minor artist from a previous generation, Heitor dos Prazeres, was profoundly consequential in establishing the foundations of the cultural environment that Oiticica would draw from in the 1960s.

Two dictatorships

Dos Prazeres began seriously dedicating himself to painting around 1937, the year which saw the beginning of the Estado Novo, the authoritarian regime that lasted until 1945 under the rule of President Getúlio Vargas. Although Afro-Brazilians had begun to infiltrate and permeate the mainstream cultural scene through their creativity and perseverance, official attitudes towards Afro-Brazilian culture began changing as the Vargas government created specific policies to build a strong and recognizable national identity¹⁰. This marked a change from earlier times, when prejudice against Afro-descendants was so ingrained that the government forbade and persecuted all cultural manifestations, such as samba, and *capoeira*, which had been criminalized since the 16th century. Scholars Lisa Shaw and Ruben George Oliven explain that the Vargas regime transformed manifestations of “ethnic identity”, such as carnival, samba, and *capoeira*, into symbols of national identity, thus attenuating their power as practices of dissent and resistance. Anthropologist and historian Lilia Schwarcz (1995: 55) calls this a process of “desafricanização”. Nevertheless, not every aspect of Afro-Brazilian culture was accepted and absorbed by the state. Syncretic religions, such as Candomblé and Umbanda, were still disapproved of. Furthermore, the *malandro*, by then an extremely popular character, could not be tolerated by a government that co-opted the urban proletariat and supported an ideology of strong work ethic and productivity. As part of its strategy, in 1939, the regime launched the Departamento de Imprensa e Propaganda (DIP). According to composer and author Sérgio Cabral (1975),

the DIP became so all-encompassing that it controlled all of the popular music played on Brazilian radio. One of the agency's goals was to redirect samba composers away from exalting *malandragem*, and encourage them to praise labor. Like other cultural symbols, the *malandro* did not disappear completely but was momentarily tamed.

Dos Prazeres, thus, began his career in the visual arts under such circumstances. His canvases are celebrations of precisely the Afro-Brazilian culture that the government first repressed and then co-opted: scenes of dances, popular and religious festivities, children's games, and the quotidian existence of the Afro-Brazilian population. If on the one hand the artist shrewdly exploited this new interest in Afro-Brazilian culture, which likely increased the commissions from a middle-class clientele, on the other he defied it, by continuing to represent aspects of his culture that the regime had neither absorbed nor accepted: the Afro-Brazilian religions and *malandragem*.

Artworks that the artist produced during the Estado Novo and their reproductions are rare¹¹. Nevertheless, it is important to notice, as visual artist and art educator Glauceia Helena de Britto (2018) remarked, that as his career progressed, and especially starting from the 1950s, dos Prazeres depicted only Black people in his paintings, with skin-tone variations that demonstrate his political posture and his intent in representing his community not as monolithic, showing instead the diversity of the Afro-Brazilian population. By only representing people of African descent engaged in those cultural manifestations that the government had co-opted, he challenged the very principle of “desafricanização”. The *malandros* would continue to populate his canvases until the end of his life in 1966. By then, Brazil was already being ruled by another dictatorship, and many artists adopted *malandragem* as a strategy to circulate subversive messages within the repressive regime and the conservative artistic institutions. Through this, they produced many works that celebrate and memorialize the figure

of the *malandro* as symbol of survival and resistance.



FIGS. 3-4. Left: Heitor dos Prazeres, *Jogadores de sinuca*, 1963, oil on canvas, 50 x 60 cm. Courtesy Heitor dos Prazeres Filho. Right: Hélio Oiticica, Antônio Manuel, Lygia Pape, Nildo, Delegado and friends in a snooker bar in Mangueira, Rio de Janeiro. Photographer: Andreas Valentin, 1979. Courtesy Andreas Valentin.

The *malandro* has two contradictory images: one is positive and presents him as a well-humored character, who elicits sympathy, who uses cunning as a weapon for survival against the adversities of life and to obtain advantages, often illicit. The other is negative and associates *malandragem* with the refusal to work, with vagabondage, and potential criminality. Hélio Oiticica was attracted to these values and wrote: “I have always liked that which is forbidden, the life of *malandragem* that represents adventure, the life of people who live in an intense and immediate way because they are at risk. I spent much of my life visiting my friends in prison” (Oiticica in Salomão: 47). The artist produced works to honor these friends, such as *B33 Bólide caixa 18 caixa-poema 2*, *Homenagem à Cara de Cavalo* (1966), a tribute to his friend Cara de Cavalo, *a pé-de-chinelo* (Salomão, 2003: 43), an inconsequential outlaw who lived of expedients, and who was brutally murdered by the police after being accused of killing the police officer Milton Le Cocq. Other artworks, such as *P11 Parangolé-capa 7, Sexo e violência, é isso que me agrada* (1966) from the same year, extol the rebelliousness of

illicit life in the face of an authoritarian regime that had declared open the hunt for criminals with the slogan “Bandido bom é bandido morto”. Besides these direct references, “with the *malandragem do morro*, [Hélio Oiticica] learned the value of sinuous ambiguity” (Salomão, 2003: 52), an attitude he would exploit over time to challenge both art institutions and social norms.

Carnival at the Biennial

In 1951, the São Paulo Biennial was conceived as a Eurocentric cultural project aimed at placing Brazil within the world map of the most important artistic events and promoting the image of a modernizing country. The prizes awarded at the first iteration rewarded artists working in a range of styles. Most famously, Swiss artist Max Bill received first international prize for sculpture with his stainless-steel *Tripartite Unity* (1948-49), an abstract work based on the mathematical principle of the Möbius strip¹². However, dos Prazeres, was also recognized by the judges, winning the third national prize for the small oil painting *Moenda* (Mill)¹³. The stylistic discrepancies are made especially evident in the exhibition catalog, where they occupy facing pages. Dos Prazeres’s canvases are celebrations of Afro-Brazilian culture and identity, depicting local urban and rural environments, real and imagined. Contrary to geometric abstract artworks, the racial stratification of Brazilian society is blatant in the work of dos Prazeres, which contrasts with representations that tend to exoticize his community, produced by modernist artists like Emiliano di Cavalcanti, Tarsila do Amaral, Anita Malfatti and Candido Portinari, artists who, despite depicting similar themes, in light of their academic training, social class, and skin color, were never considered primitive or popular.

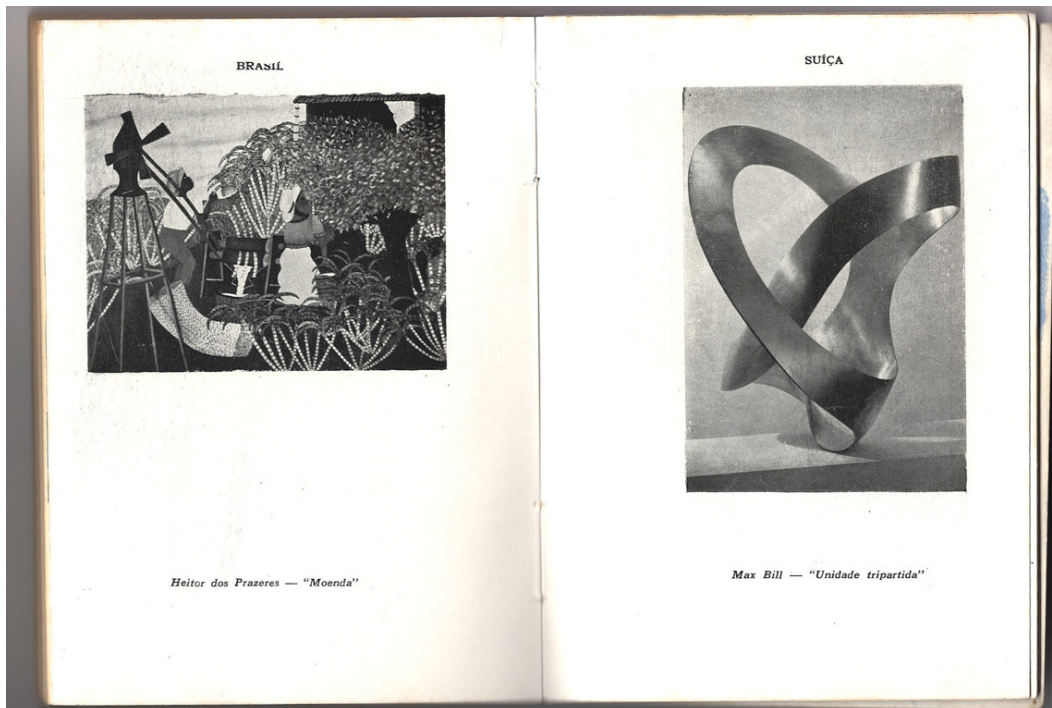


FIG. 5. Catalogue of the first São Paulo Biennial, 1951, second edition, p. 224-225.
 Courtesy Fundação Bienal de São Paulo.

Heitor dos Prazeres was a self-taught figurative painter who began painting consistently in his forties. Art criticism fossilized his work in the categories of “primitive”, “popular”, and “naïf”¹⁴, all linked to ideas of static tradition incapable of change, thus excluding the artist from the history of modern art. A reassessment of popular culture, motivated by the resurgence of discussions about national cultural identity in the 1950s, likely prompted the selection of a work by a so-called “primitive” artist for a national prize at the first Biennial¹⁵. *Moenda* depicts an Afro-Brazilian woman and man working at a sugarcane mill in the countryside. A very labor-intensive crop, sugar both boosted the Atlantic slave trade at the beginning of the colonial period and delayed its abolition in Brazil in the late 19th century (Galloway, 1971: 586). Dos Prazeres’s canvas, thus, is a clear reference to Brazil’s colonial past and its reliance on slave labor to propel the economy, with its history

of inhumane exploitation of Africans and their descendants. According to curators K. Dian Kriz, Susan Danforth and Elena Daniele, in print culture the mill signifies white ingenuity¹⁶. In fact, the Portuguese word “engenho”, which literally means mill, signifies also ingenuity and the plantation owner is called “senhor de engenho”, or master of ingenuity. *Moenda*, instead, is a painting by an artist of African descent depicting the history of exploitation of his people and who was labeled “ingênuo” by his contemporaries. *Ingênuo*, which literally translates as ingenuous, in juridical language denotes the child of enslaved parents who is born free, thus close to dos Prazeres’s family history. The painting shows the contradictions of Brazilian society, contraposing the utopia that a small elite aspired to, to the reality of much of the population. In the painting, the work tools that the couple carries, a bucket and a hoe, are hardly industrial. The “white gold” is pouring from the roller mill into a wooden tub, while the sugar cane that grows all around seems to engulf them. The woman and man do not look at the liquid, and turn their backs to the viewers, to suggest that the sugary substance will not sweeten their hard labor. They are wearing straw hats and have rolled-up sleeves to signify the backbreaking nature of the toil. Dos Prazeres contributes to the history of Brazilian art with its numerous depictions of sugarcane mills, and yet offers a more dignified portrayal of the laborers than in traditional depictions. Newspaper articles reported, with patronizing tones, that the award caused much surprise¹⁷. When it was made public that the dos Prazeres was a low-ranking civil servant, the Minister of Education and Culture Simões Filho promised to promote him to a position befitting his artistic vocation. The artist was invited to meet the President of the Republic, Getúlio Vargas, who recommended that the “humble servant” be provided with every possible means to support his artistic inclination.

The artist could have sent other paintings to the exhibition, like his most popular compositions portraying festivities and dances. Instead, in a choice that is all but “naïf”, he presented *Moenda*, which negates the

developmentalist agenda of the Biennial and Brazilian government and reveals not only the recentness of slavery, but also its legacy, with the lack of improvements in the quality of life and work conditions for a big share of the population, in particular those of Afro-Brazilian descent. Stereotypes that see Africans and their descendants as “primitive”, “simple”, “humble,” and submissive predate the Atlantic slave trade and are long-lasting. They served to justify slavery first, and uneven social opportunities and discrimination after the abolition. These stereotypes contrast with the concurrent characterization of Black people as deceitful, untrustworthy, and cunning. According to sociologist Stuart Hall ([1975] 2021: 171), these ambivalent stereotypes “betray the fact that, though the adapted slave could produce—present— those forms of dependency, submission, and fawning flattery which the slave-owner class constantly required, as a symptom that ‘all is well in the world of slavery,’ [...] [the] total adaptation to unfreedom could *never* be depended on.” In this game of ambivalences, if the enslaved wanted to fool the owners, they had to play-act, “mak[ing] a joke with a straight face or produce one so ambiguous as to be capable of being “read” two-ways, covering one kind of laughter (the laughter of fear, ridicule and contempt) with another” (Hall, [1975], 2021: 171). And so did dos Prazeres on the occasion of the Biennial. Soon after having returned from São Paulo, he launched a song for the upcoming carnival, *Carnaval na Bienal*, recorded by Mary Gonçalves with orchestra and chorus:

Chorus

| | |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Eu vou fantasiar-me de pintor | I'm going to dress up as a painter |
| Eu vou para São Paulo | I'm going to São Paulo |
| Eu vou pra Bienal | I'm going to the Biennial |
| Eu vou ficar bem original | I will be very original |
| E lá eu vou fazer o meu carnaval | And there I will make my carnival |

Solo

| | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Um cavahete oi | An easel oh |
| Uma palheta oi | A palette oh |
| E um modêlo bem original | And a very original model |
| E lá eu vou fazer o meu carnaval | And there I will make my carnival |

This light-hearted carnival march ridicules the art world's pompousness and elitism. The lyrics were divulged in the *Correio da Manhã* in an article tellingly titled "À margem do Museu de Arte Moderna, Carnaval na Bienal" (1952). And because the radio repeatedly broadcasted carnival songs, and in light of their repetitive character, one can picture members of the cultural elite humming this mocking song.

About fifteen years later, there was another attempt to bring carnival to the museum, when Hélio Oiticica paraded through the Museu de Arte Moderna, to the sound of samba with dancers and musicians from Mangueira, all wearing *Parangolé*-capas, at the opening of the exhibition *Opinião 65*. The event caused a big commotion, and the dancers were vehemently kicked out and forced to continue their celebrations outside, leaving the carnival at the margins of the museum. Like dos Prazeres with his canvases, Oiticica infiltrated the art institution with the *Parangolés*. Unlike dos Prazeres, though, Oiticica did not have to recur to subtle tricks to deliver his message. Scholar and artist Cíntia Guedes (2016: 129) argues that Oiticica's gestures of appropriation to bring the favela to the museum reveals the power dynamics through which certain territories – geographical, affective, and identity-related – and their inhabitants are allowed, or not, to enter into art and its institutions:

It is fascination that permeates Hélio's experience in the favela. It is the artist's legitimate engagement with his own life, but it is not by fascination that he is allowed to inhabit spaces in the city that have not always belonged

to him, just as it is not by fascination that the favela arrives at the museum. It is evident that the *passistas* barred in the MAM did not have the same privilege, the favela was not, and still is not, a “condition” that can be dissolved by fascination, at least not completely. Perhaps only a little, from time to time, not collectively, maybe individually or in controlled groups, preferably when invited, maintaining some silences and forgetfulness.

As Guedes explains, it is the paradigm of whiteness in which Oiticica found himself, understood not simply as someone’s skin color, but as the racialized experience of the world which places the White person in a privileged position, what allowed the artist to transit and absorb what the favela generously offered. On the contrary, as a Black artist, dos Prazeres penetrated the hegemonic art world individually, under invitation¹⁸, and yet through his choice of artworks and his samba songs he breached the bailey of silences and forgetfulness, for those willing to listen.

Oiticica was acutely aware of the social stratification of Brazilian society and the urban segregation in Rio de Janeiro. According to Renato Rodrigues da Silva (2005: 226), although he would never fully belong to the community of Mangueira, the *Parangolés* allowed the artist to reach an existential communion with it. Through the *Parangolés*, Oiticica could identify himself with the residents of Mangueira, while they themselves, wearing the capes, could reach or express identities and identifications of their choice. With the *Parangolés* Oiticica attempted to demolish prejudices and stereotypes, bridge gaps, facilitate negotiations among different and racialized classes, and trigger an individual transformation that would result in collective and social change. At the same time, taking into consideration dos Prazeres’s participation in and reaction to the Biennial, it must be underlined that Oiticica was not the first to employ carnivalistic strategies to infiltrate art institutions, exposing their hegemonic ideology from within, and from their outside, too. The song *Carnaval na Bienal* and

the activation of the *Parangolés* outside the Museum walls display strong similarities, not limited to the use of samba music and dance by the artists.

Panos da Costa, Carnival Banners and Parangolés



FIGS. 6-7. Left: Heitor dos Prazeres, *Porta-bandeira e Mestre-sala*, 1960, oil on canvas, 41 x 33 cm, Collection of Otto Grunewalt Ferveira. Courtesy Heitor dos Prazeres Filho. Right: Hélio Oiticica, *Po2 Parangolé-Bandeira 01*, 1964. Photograph by Desdemone Bardin taken at the opening of the exhibition *Opinião 65*, Museu de Arte Moderna, Rio de Janeiro. Courtesy Projeto Hélio Oiticica and Estate of Desdemone Bardin.

The first *Parangolé* that Oiticica produced is *Po1 Parangolé-Estandarte 01* (1964), followed by *Po2 Parangolé-Bandeira 01* (1964). The *Parangolé-Estandarte* and the *Parangolé-Bandeira* require that the spectator dances with them, developing the structure of these works as a “manifestation of color in the environmental space” (Oiticica: 1964, 0471.64). Judging from his writings from this period, it seems that the artist was trying to grapple with these creations. He insisted that the *Parangolés* should not be interpreted based on the materials they are made of nor their resemblance with pre-existing objects, he did not want them to be confused for simple representations or transpositions. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that the way these objects were supposed to be activated by the spectator also recalls their original function. When Oiticica publicly presented the *Parangolés* at the opening of *Opinião 65*, he had planned the presentation as a carnival parade, with a *porta-estandarte* and *porta-bandeira* carrying respectively the *Parangolé-estandarte 01* and the *Parangolé-bandeira 01* and introducing the dancers from the samba school Estação Primeira da Mangueira wearing the *Parangolé-capes*.

The *porta-bandeira* is also the subject of a painting by Heitor dos Prazeres, *Porta-bandeira e Mestre-sala* (1960), a small-scale oil painting portraying a woman and a man rehearsing for carnival celebrations in a quiet street[fig. 6]. They are the couple responsible for carrying and guarding the symbol of the samba school in carnival parades, opening the path for the dancers that follow¹⁹. While the *porta-bandeira* literally carries the flag of the samba school, the *mestre-sala* has the role of protecting the flag-bearer, often lifting the corners of the flag to facilitate the view of the name and symbol of the school. In the painting, the woman is carrying the white and blue flag of the samba school Portela, whose colors were chosen by dos Prazeres, one of its founders. Despite this is a night scene, the white fringes that border the flag make it spark as a halo, and both the figures look in joyful veneration with their chins lifted at the name and symbol

of the school, an eagle with open wings, a little washed out at the center of the flag. We know this is rehearsal because the characters are wearing elegant and yet regular clothes instead of being in full costume with the colors of the samba school. In fact, the official costumes of *mestre-sala* and *porta-bandeira* imitate the sumptuous fashion of the 17th century nobility, with powdered wigs, tiaras and crowns, gloves, long and wide skirt with crinoline, or tailcoat with jabot. According to scholars, the tradition comes from Brazil's colonial times, when African enslaved people had to learn courteous manners to fulfil their duties as servants during dinners and ceremonies. Back in the slave quarters, they would mimic, caricature, and mock this imposed behavior, mixing it with *capoeira* movements and other motions from African dances and rituals (Lourenço, 2009; Brígida, 2010). The tradition of flag-bearer and master of ceremonies thus, come from the ridiculing of the slave owners, and from the appropriation and adaption of party rites. This tradition predates the formation of samba schools, that would officialize these figures.

Interestingly, Heitor dos Prazeres, who participated in the creation of several samba schools, has his own version about the origin of the *porta-estandarte*, which in time would be substituted by the *porta-bandeira*. His version adds new nuances to Oiticica's *Parangolés*. Dos Prazeres recounts that in the early days of carnival parties he would go out playing samba with his *cavaquinho*, a small four-string guitar, wearing a *baiana* costume he had designed himself. Looking behind, he would see hundreds of people following him in the frenzy. As part of the costume, he would wear a *pano da costa* of vivid colors on the shoulders, a rectangular cloth that is part of the traditional garments of *baianas*, and other musicians behind him would lift its corners as if it was a flag. In an interview from 1954 with Paulo Medeiros (1954: 49) for the weekly magazine *Manchete*, dos Prazeres talks about the history of the banner:

I have my own theory about the appearance of the banner in the carnival blocks and parades. In the past, when we paraded, we used large ‘panos da costa.’ Dressed up as *baianas*, these shawls indicated the colors of the various clubs. (...) When we went out playing samba, moving in circles, especially in Praça Onze, we lifted up our *panos da costa*. One year, without any formal decision, we exchanged the shawls for the banners. It seems to me, thus, that the real precursors of the banners were the primitive ‘panos da costa’.

The *pano da costa* is a rectangular cloth, measuring on average 200 x 60 centimeters, sometimes striped, often bordered with embroidery or lace, used as a shawl, which, together with the *pano de cabeça*, or turban, is part of the traditional attire of Black women in Bahia. This garment is also part of the ritual clothing used by the women believers, called *filhas de santo*, of Candomblé. Anthropologist Raul Lody (1977: 5) explains that the *pano da costa* is a demarcation-symbol which has a profound social and religious connotation; it indicates the woman’s status as initiated or leader in Afro-Brazilian places of worship, or *terreiros*. Not wearing the *pano da costa* during a ritual is taboo. The *pano da costa* can be of different colors depending on the *orixá*. When, during rituals, a person is incorporated by an *orixá*, other believers grab the *pano da costa* with the appropriate colors, and remove shoes, jewels and other profane clothing of the person being embodied. If the *orixá* is feminine, the *pano* is tied around the bust, if it is a male *orixá*, it is tied over one shoulder or backward. These descriptions recall Oiticica’s *Parangolé-cape*s, some of which are worn around the shoulder and others across the waist²⁰. Color, so relevant to distinguish and honor the different *orixás*, is also central to Oiticica’s conception of “giving body to color” through his creations. Moreover, his *Parangolé-estandarte* does not resemble a typical carnival banner but strikingly looks like a loose *pano da costa* tangled up in two poles.



FIGS. 8-9. Left: Heitor dos Prazeres wearing a *baiana* costume he designed himself, with a *pano da costa* on the shoulder. Unknown photographer. Courtesy Heitor dos Prazeres Filho. Right: Hélio Oiticica, *Po1 Parangolé-Estandarte 01*, 1964. Unknown photographer. Courtesy Projeto Hélio Oiticica.

In his version of the origin of the carnival banner, Heitor dos Prazeres gives a remarkable importance to Afro-Brazilian religious garments and the clothing of the *baianas*. The *panos de costa* are important in trance rituals: when the *orixá* descends into the human being, the person assumes the vestments, tools, attitudes, and gestures of the deity in a complex choreography of role-playing that is often trans-gender and trans-racial. According to Emma Sidgwick (2010: 196), who has written about the idea of incorporation in the work of Oiticica, being incorporated by an *orixá* is a heightened sensory experience that allows the person to experiment with aspects of

the self otherwise inhibited by conformity to social conventions, and thus attain a renewed ‘understanding’ of oneself. In a similar way, the *Parangolés*, which curator Guy Brett termed “transsexual”, with no relation to conventional gender attributes, were meant to free the individual expression of the wearer through a “magical incorporation” (Oiticica, 1965, AHO 0471.64). Music, dance, and garments are vital aspects in religious rituals as well as carnival, another cultural celebration centered in self-transcendence and social union. These manifestations are at the heart of dos Prazeres’s oeuvre as painter and samba composer. Oiticica may have not been aware of dos Prazeres’s theories about the origin of the *estandarte*, but his *Parangolés*, in their multiple manifestations as banners, flags and capes, are indebted to the cultural environment that dos Prazeres contributed to establish, with his music, parades, and cross-dressing heralding the *panos da costa*.

Tia Ciata and Eden

A practitioner of both Candomblé and Umbanda from an early age, Heitor dos Prazeres attended the clandestine *terreiros* of Tia Ciata and other *tias baianas*, women originally from Bahia who played a prominent role in cultivating Afro-Brazilian traditions (Moura, 1983: 94). Musicians, intellectuals, and people tied to the Bahian diaspora in Rio de Janeiro²¹ would gather at her place to worship, play music, dance, and discuss. Dos Prazeres was *Ogã Alabê-Nilu*, the initiated person responsible for playing the sacred drums and singing the ritual music in the *terreiro* of Tia Ciata, thus absorbing the African rhythms that eventually led to the creation of samba. After attending the Catholic mass in the church, it was common for Afro-descendants to gather in the *terreiros* in a continuity of religious celebrations, which allowed them to disguise and keep their beliefs alive (Moura, 1983: 93). The *terreiros*, thus, functioned as cells of resistance to keep Afro-Brazilian culture alive, and

guarantee the social and political organization of the community. Tia Ciata (1854-1924), in particular, exploited the architecture of her house, next to Praça Onze, to resist cultural domination. Because Candomblé and samba were forbidden – the political meaning of drumming was never lost on the dominant classes (Hall, [1975], 2021: 168) – she tricked the police by hosting religious cults and samba musicians in the backyard, where they would use drums, while in the front sitting room of the house she would have a band playing *choro* music or polkas with string and brass instruments, genres that were considered more acceptable. So, in case the police showed up, she would simply say that she was hosting a *choro* gathering while people in the backyard would have time to disperse (Tramonte, 1996: 30). Dos Prazeres, thus, had his musical and religious education, and his initiation to *malandragem* there. As a true polymath, besides composing music and painting, he also wrote poetry. In the poem "No Terreiro de Tia Ciata" (n.d.) he recounts in rhymes and with humor such an event: following a police raid during a *macumba* ceremony, the brazen narrator escapes from a raid exiting from the backyard, corrupting a policeman to vanish unscathed (Lirio and dos Prazeres Filho, 2003: 195).

The artist produced several paintings that depict Candomblé and Umbanda rituals²². The scenes are sheltered in nature, as in *Macumba no mato* (c.1960); in rooms with windows and doors shut as in *Festa de Preto Velho* (1963); or in protected backyards as in *A dança* (1965). This is likely due to the private nature of the rituals, and because these syncretic religions were forbidden, and their practitioners punished with imprisonment, eviction, and confiscation and destruction of sacred objects. In *A dança* (1965) we see a group of people playing and dancing music in the earthen backyard of a house that is surrounded by tall blades of grass. Three *ogãs* are sitting in line on a bench and playing the *atabaques*, sacred drums used in rituals to mark the rhythm of chants and dance, create a connection with the *orixás* and aid the trance and embodiment. The men are wearing white shirts and the

traditional white kufi cap (*filá*) used by Candomblé male priests and believers. Meanwhile, six women enraptured by music are dancing in a circle. They are all wearing a *pano de cabeça*, and a white stiffened skirt covered by another striped cloth of different colors, likely a representation of a *pano da costa*, both components of the traditional garments of *baianas* also required in rituals.



FIG.10. Heitor dos Prazeres, *A dança*, 1965, oil on canvas, 54 x 64 cm. Courtesy Heitor dos Prazeres Filho.

Scenes of religious rituals are among the few exceptions in the paintings by the artist where the characters are not wearing shoes²³. The women stand on the tips of their toes, with knees bent, they look up with an arm raised and the other on the waist. The wrinkled hem of the skirts gives the

impression of the waist movement. Because of the vigor of the dance, the *pano de cabeça* of some of them is loosening. These poses, the little shading, and the fact that the ground takes up two thirds of the painting give the impression that the figures are floating. We can peak a view of the interior of the house: behind a red curtain we can see an altar and on its top a cross and a small statue of the Virgin Mary with a blue cape, likely a representation of Nossa Senhora dos Navegantes or Nossa Senhora da Conceição. These Catholic symbols can reference the syncretism of Afro-Brazilian religion that is being celebrated, with the statue of the Virgin being the syncretic representation of the *orixá* Iemanjá, protector of the sea and patron of sailors, considered the mother of other *orixás* and thus a symbol of fertility. Yet, the fact that all the characters look so concentrated on the dance and the men give their backs to these symbols, could be interpreted as if dos Prazeres was pointing to the same *malandragem* used by Tia Ciata, that of displaying the culture of the oppressor in the most visible section of the house, while keeping alive African beliefs in the backyard, in a game of appearances meant at deceiving the authorities.

The *terreiros* of *tias baianas* were places where people learnt about religion, culture, trades, and strategies of survival, and where both communal and individual creation were fostered. Talking about his upbringing, dos Prazeres (apud Moura, 1983: 69) stated: “I am from the time of apprenticeship, which is now difficult. Those who knew more taught [the others], which would engender the formation of groups of people around certain trades that became traditional among the Bahian group in Praça Onze, in the Peo area, in Saúde”. The experience in the *terreiro* of Tia Ciata likely informed the way that dos Prazeres set up his studio in Rua General Pedra, in the neighborhood Saúde. There, the artist painted his canvases, built and decorated musical instruments, composed and rehearsed samba songs with his group, and designed and tailored the dresses they used in shows. As he gained notoriety, he started receiving more and more

commissions for his paintings. In a documentary by Antonio Carlos da Fontoura from 1965 he stated: “The artist who is obliged to go commercial, to meet market demands, lives in chains and ends up dying not doing what he wants”. To respond to these pressing demands, he hired assistants and worked with prototypes. Like in a Renaissance workshop, the assistants painted the general scene, while dos Prazeres took care of the details, finishing the faces, limbs, and clothes. This is something he was blamed for by some critics who saw in this method a lack of originality and who questioned the authorship of the work. Instead, it was communal living that allowed dos Prazeres to put in practice and teach many of the skills that he had learnt.

Communal living, learning, and creating are concepts that would be important also for Hélio Oiticica, who, as a *passista* of the samba school Estação Primeira da Mangueira discerned: “in samba schools nobody knows who did this or that; what matters is the whole, where each one gives everything they have” (Oiticica, [1967] in Jacques, 2011: 37). And in fact the *barracão de escola de samba*, the headquarter of samba schools where people from the community meet to create and rehearse the choreography, produce the costumes and carnival floats, learn the lyrics of the parade song, or *samba-enredo*, in sum where the creative process is shared, seems to have evolved from the *barracão de candomblé*, where the word *barracão* stands as a synonym of *terreiro*.

Besides rehearsing in the *barracão de escola de samba*, Oiticica was also familiar with the Umbanda *terreiro* “Seu Malandrinho” in Mangueira²⁴. It is a telling coincidence the fact that the *terreiro* Oiticica was familiar with was dedicated to Exú, affectionately called Seu Malandrinho (Little Mr. Trickster). These experiences likely led Oiticica to formulate his own idea of *Barracão* as a “collective site” for “experimental communities”, a place where the artist would propose situations or environments requiring the participation of the spectator/participator for their full realization. In a

conceptual concatenation, Oiticica (1969, AHO 0452.69) states that the behavior-structure of *Barracão* led him to “the discovery of *crelazer* as essential to the conclusion of the participation-proposition: the catalysis of the non-oppressive energies, and the proposition of the leisure connected to them”. *Crelazer* is a neologism that Oiticica composed putting together the words *crer* (to believe), *criar* (to create, to raise), and *lazer* (leisure, recreation). The *Barracão*, thus, would be an environment where to experience *crelazer*, a space that allows at once for the expression of collective potentiality and the search for oneself, where he would propose participating propositions and sensorial experiences. The relationship between individuality and collectivity in Oiticica’s project recalls that of religious rituals, where the incorporation of the *orixá* in the believer would not happen if the collectivity was not there to support the trance. The revelations that happen through trance, moreover, guide not only the individual but also the community. “Rhythmic music and dance have been the main introduction to these convictions for me...”, stated Oiticica (1965, AHO 365.69) talking about *crelazer*, in a clear hint to aspects of religious rituals and samba dance.

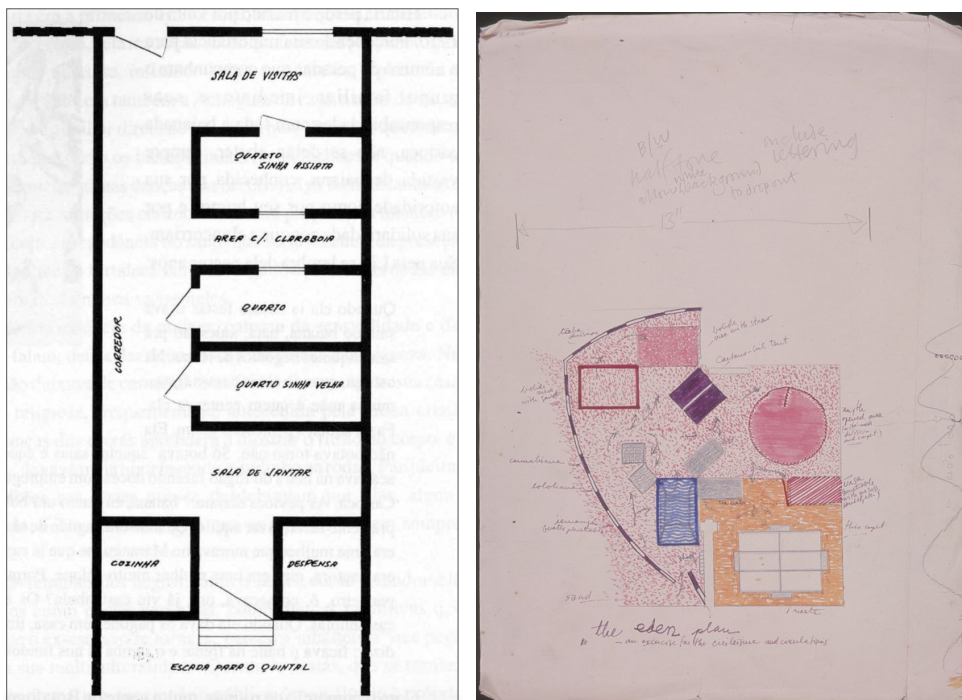
Although he never produced the *Barracão*, he kept referring to it in his writings and the installation *Eden* that he presented at the Whitechapel in London in 1969 is closely associated to this idea. *Eden* consists of a series of *Bólides*, *Ninhos* and *Penetráveis*: structures presenting different materials, such as sand, water, hay, to be experienced sensorially by walking barefoot, lying and crawling²⁵. One of them is a homage to Tia Ciata, demonstrating the important role she played in molding the cultural environment of Rio de Janeiro²⁶. *Penetrável Tia Ciata* is a rectangular structure wrapped in a red plastic sheet, which filters and colors the light coming from the outside. Inside, the environment is enveloped in incense and the visitor is invited to lie on a foam floor. The two *Penetráveis* placed next to it, *Penetrável Iemanjá* with its floor covered with water, and *Lololiana* with leaves, are references to Afro-Brazilian religions. Iemanjá, the *orixá* that dos Prazeres was referring

to in his painting, the protector of the sea, here is symbolized by water. On the other hand, the leaves that cover the floor of the *Penetrável Lololiana* might refer to the multiple uses of leaves in Afro-Brazilian rituals.

I would suggest a similarity between *Eden*, which Irene Small (2016: 103) defines an “environment for the reawakening and discharge of creative energies suppressed by contemporary society”, with the house of Tia Ciata. As explained above, Tia Ciata used the different rooms in her house to host a variety of activities, leaving those forbidden to the backyard. Besides playing music and participating in religious rituals, people from different backgrounds gathered there because she was a renown *feiticeira*²⁷ and *quituteira*²⁸. People turned to her for medical treatments as well as for her cuisine. Moreover, she produced *baiana* dresses that were sought after by the middle class for carnival costumes. Analyzing the blueprint of the house, Roberto Conduru (2010: 192) notices that this long structure is typical of common houses (“residências menores”) built in Brazil between 1850 and 1900. He argues that their architectural limitations, such as poor illumination, did not prevent these constructions for being reinvented daily according to the use, including religious rituals. The house of Tia Ciata can be considered a versatile environment where people could listen to different music genres, play music and dance, smell and consume the food used in ritual and that for sale on the streets, be in dark rooms, or in the sunlit yard. Similarly, with *Eden* Oiticica invites the visitors to move between different environments where the senses and creativity are activated.

Oiticica began experimenting with the *Ninhos* within art institutions, before adopting them as structural cells in his apartment. When he moved to New York City in 1971, he transformed his loft on Second Avenue in a space for leisure, creative activities, debates, social and sexual relations. He divided the space into six different *Ninhos*, compartments within which different activities took place, from film editing to photo development, from writing to artistic discussions, and where the television was constantly on

and the phone busy. There, Oiticica gave shelter to people from the artistic and queer community, some dwelling for long periods and others for short stays. With the *Ninhos*, thus, Oiticica attempted to transpose to his daily life those radical collective experimentations, necessary for survival, that he had experienced in the *barracão de escola de samba*, in the *terreiro* Seu Malandrinho, and in the Morro da Mangueira more in general, and that were legacy of a daily and collective culture of resistance enacted by disenfranchised and predominantly Black segments of the population. From this perspective, *crelazer* becomes a political attitude closely related to *malandragem*: the refusal of productive work and alienating entertainment. The artist (1969, AHO 0486.69) stated: “Creleisure is the non-repressive leisure, opposed to diverted oppressive leisure thinking: a new unconditioned way to battle oppressive systematic ways of life”.



FIGS.11-12. Left: Blueprint of the house of Tia Ciata. Archive of Francisco Duarte. Source: Roberto M. Moura, *Tia Ciata e a Pequena África no Rio de Janeiro*. Rio de Janeiro: Secretaria Municipal de Cultura, Departamento Geral de Documentação e Informação Cultural, Divisão de Editoração, 1995. Right: Hélio Oiticica, “The Eden Plan,” published in the catalogue for Whitechapel Experience, April 1969. Courtesy Projeto Hélio Oiticica.

Conclusions – We Write Samba on the Wild Asphalt

Samba music, a passion they shared and that accompanied them throughout their lives, was played at the funeral of both Heitor dos Prazeres (his composition *Pierrô Apaixonado*) and Hélio Oiticica (*Toque para Oxossi* composed by Padeirinho, nickname for Osvaldo Vitalino de Oliveira). It is not clear if the two ever crossed path in museum galleries or samba rehearsals in Mangueira, nor is this relevant for the argument of this essay. Both artists operated under authoritarian regimes and used *malandragem* to infiltrate and destabilize dominant orders in the social and the art worlds, from the São Paulo Biennial to *Opinião 65*, from Rio de Janeiro to New York, from the National Radio to the dusty office of Ms. Besner at the All Language company.

Samba, dance, carnival, ludic elements, rituality, and communitarian experience are aspects present in the work of both artists. Ricardo Cravo Albin (in Lirio and dos Prazeres, 2003: 177), director of the Museu da Imagem e do Som who recorded an oral history with dos Prazeres stated:

Heitor and his companions participated in the extraordinary adventure of the birth of samba schools, when the schools truly reaffirmed all that voluptuousness of Zumbi, summoning people. The quilombos of samba schools were all virtually Black, imposing a new cultural manifestation. What war is more prominent than the war of putting people together, not around bloody weapons, but around the joy and confirmation of rhythms that invigorate the Brazilian soul? I believe that, in this configuration, Heitor was a great marshal of Zumbi, together with Cartola and Paulo da Portela.

Dos Prazeres, the composer and the painter, was indeed a trailblazer who with his musical and painterly compositions brought together and gave voice to his community. Like Zumbi, seventeenth century abolitionist,

leader of Quilombo dos Palmares, one of the largest fugitive communities resisting against slavery, and like Tia Ciata, guardian of Afro-Brazilian culture and mobilizer of her community, he implanted the seeds for new revolutions to come.

Some of the fruits would be harvested by Oiticica, an artist who did not suffer from racial discrimination, but spoke against it and against a brutal regime that would unleash a violent campaign against the Afro-Brazilian population that lasts to these days. He and dos Prazeres wrote samba on the wild asphalt, leaving an enduring mark on Rio de Janeiro's streets and the art world's avenues.



FIGS. 13-14. Left: Heitor dos Prazeres, *Os músicos*, undated, oil on canvas 38 x 46 cm. Courtesy Heitor dos Prazeres Filho. Right: Mosquito da Mangueira dancing while wearing the *P10 Parangolé capa 06 Homagem a Mosquito* (1965), next to *B17 Bólido vidro 05 Homagem a Mondrian* (1965), Rio de Janeiro, 1966. Photographer: Claudio Oiticica. Courtesy Projeto Hélio Oiticica.

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Notes

* The expression is taken from the song "Poema rítmico do malandro" (1969) mentioned in the essay. It is from the album *Alucinolândia* by Zito Righi e seu conjunto, featuring singer Sônia Santos, author of the lyrics. All translations are by the author, unless otherwise noted. I would like to express my gratitude to the editors of the dossier, Roberto Conduru and Arthur Valle, as well as to Aleca Le Blanc for their generous comments and suggestions. I am grateful to the artists and archivists who provided image rights, in particular Andreas Valentin, Heitor dos Prazeres Filho, Ariane Figueiredo, and Ana Paula Marques. This paper benefited tremendously from conversations at the MAC USP/ Getty Foundation webinar CURATORIAL PRACTICES: Critical Curating and Decolonial Studies in Visual Arts - African Diasporas in the Americas, October 4-8, 2021, organized by Ana Magalhães and Rosana Paulino, as well as the course "Religião, símbolo e poder afro-brasileiro na formação da cultura nacional" taught by Professor Vagner Gonçalves da Silva and organized by the Museu de Arte de São Paulo (MASP Escola) in October and November 2021.

** Camilla Querin is Ph.D. candidate in the Department of the History of Art at the University of California, Riverside. Email: cquer001@ucr.edu. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6816-4659>.

1 See note 1.

2 The original soundtrack of the film consists in the voice of Ms. Besner reading a letter. The song "Poema rítmico do malandro" was added to a later version produced in 2013 for the exhibition *Call Me Helium* that took place at the Centro Cultural Correios, Rio de Janeiro, May 10 - July 13, 2014. Interview with Andreas Valentin, December 15, 2021.

- 3 “Se pensam que é fácil levar essa vida / enganam-se, caros, posição atrevida / é demais o cansaço, terrível e duro / jogar o baralho, jogar capoeira / fazer samba à toa, beber noite inteira! / Que vida mais besta, que coisa mais linda / ser bamba no morro, ser sambista de fato / dizer: "nunca corro, me matam ou mato!”
- 4 See Asbury (2008).
- 5 In terms of a blending of traditions, for Brazil we can think of Saci Pererê, a prankster from the Tupi-Guarani mythology which interestingly transformed into a Black character over time, and that of Pedro Malasartes, an Iberian trickster figure that has become part of the Brazilian folklore.
- 6 Olorum, also known as Olodumare, is the creator of the *orixás* and gave them the task of creating and controlling the world. For more on Afro-Brazilian mythologies see Prandi (2021).
- 7 The term *bamba* comes from the Quimbundo word *mbamba*, meaning master, the one who has a great expertise in something, “aquele que tem gingado”, the one who has gingado, the one who sways, and by extension the one who knows how to dance, who moves sensuously and self-confidently. *Bamba* also means “bom de briga”, a skilled *capoeirista*. The word *bamba* is also used as synonym of the word “bambúrrio”, meaning luck in the game, chance, casualty, unexpected luck. The difficulty of defining a word of so numerous meanings might recall the word *parangolé*, also used in the *gíria*, the slang, in Brazil
- 8 “Heitor dos Prazeres,” Portal Geledés, June 27, 2009. Accessed June 5, 2021. Online at: <https://www.geledes.org.br/heitor-dos-prazeres/>.
- 9 My dissertation looks at the years of Brazil’s military dictatorship (1964-1985), and I make the case that artists embodied the *malandro* to better understand the clandestine conceptual practices they devised to express opposition and eschew censorship. See Camilla Querin, *Dialectics of Malandragem: The art of Resistance in 1960s-1980s’ Brazil* (Ph.D. Diss, The University of California, Riverside, projected 2022).
- 10 In 1932, for example, Rio de Janeiro’s carnival receives sponsorship from the government and becomes a national festival. Starting from 1935 samba schools are recognized, legalized and required to register under the name of Grêmio Recreativo Escola de Samba. Parades are made official and financed by the State. Samba schools are asked to collaborate to the official patriotic propaganda, and to stimulate the popular love for the country’s national symbols and the national glories. See Oliven (1983), and Shaw (1998).
- 11 Examples are: *St. John’s Day* (1942), Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; *Caminho da Roça* (1942), and *Na Roça* (1942), Museu de Arte Moderna, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.
- 12 For more on the reception of Bill’s work in Brazil: Lammert (2010), and Brito (1999).
- 13 With *Moenda*, dos Prazeres won the third national prize for painting (Prêmio Toddy de Aquisição). Besides *Moenda*, he presented two other oil paintings: *Calango* (Calango is the name of a dance typical of the state of Minas Gerais) and *Feira Livre*.
- 14 For more on the labeling of Heitor dos Prazeres as a “primitive” painter see Geraldo (2021), and D’Avila (2009).
- 15 Lina Bo Bardi particularly contributed to the valorization of popular culture with exhibitions she curated, such as *Vitrine das Formas* (1950) at the Museum of Art of São Paulo (MASP); *Bahia*, part of the Fifth International São Paulo Biennial (1959); and the Museu de Arte Popular in Salvador, Bahia, in 1963. Another important figure for the debate on popular culture was Ferreira Gullar, who directed

- the Centro Popular de Cultura in Rio de Janeiro from 1962 to 1964.
- 16 Sugar and the Visual Imagination in the Atlantic World, circa 1600-1860. The John Carter Brown Library, 2013. https://www.brown.edu/Facilities/John_Carter_Brown_Library/exhibitions/sugar/pages/mill.html
- 17 See, for example, “Heitor dos Prazeres, Terceiro Prêmio da Bienal”, *Correio da manhã*, Rio de Janeiro, October 26, 1951, 7; “No Catete o Pintor-Contínuo do Ministério da Educação”, *Correio da manhã*, Rio de Janeiro, October 30, 1951, 4; and “Contínuo do Ministério da Educação recebe o Terceiro Prêmio da Primeira Bienal”, Rio de Janeiro, *Última Hora*, October 24, 1951, 2.
- 18 After submitting his works at the first Biennial, he was invited to exhibit in a special room at the second iteration of the event in 1953, and was invited to produce the costumes and choreography for the celebrations of the fourth centennial of the city of São Paulo.
- 19 *Mestre-sala* and *porta-bandeira* are adaptations of similar figures in other carioca popular celebrations, such as the *porta-estandarte* (standard-bearer) and the *baliza* (beacon).
- 20 Roberto Conduru comments on the similarity between Hélio Oiticica’s *Parangolés* and clothes used by Eguns, ancestral spirits that are worshipped in *terreiros* of Afro-Brazilian religions of yorubá origin, in his book *Arte Afro-Brasileira* (2007: 83), noticing, though, that the *Parangolés* are far from being religious garments.
- 21 The expression “Bahian diaspora” denotes the migration of Afro-Brazilian people from the state of Bahia to southern urban areas, in particular Rio de Janeiro, after the abolition of slavery, and in particular in the first decades of the 20th century. These people brought with them their traditions, contributing to the formation of the *carioca* cultural life.
- 22 Dos Prazeres recorded songs that are *pontos de Candomblé* and *pontos de Umbanda*, songs inspired by sacred rhythms and lyrics. See, for example, the album *Macumba* from 1955.
- 23 During colonial times, the enslaved were forbidden from owning and wearing shoes. In his canvases, dos Prazeres makes a point of always representing his characters wearing shoes, which he paints meticulously in every detail. Paintings of religious ceremonies are among the few exceptions. In fact, shoes and daily garments must be removed when taking part in rites.
- 24 In a letter to Martine Barrat Oiticica writes that they were shooting the movie HO by Ivan Cardoso, with some scenes filmed in the *terreiro* “Seu Malandrinho” in Mangueira. The soundtrack would also include some *pontos de Umbanda* (ritual songs). These scenes were cut from the final version of the movie. See Oiticica to Barrat, May 23, 1979, 0085.79. The letter includes also the proposal for *A ronda da morte* (Death’s Patrol).
- 25 Eden consists of two *Bólides* (*Bólido-área 1* and *Bólido-área 2* with hay); six *Penetráveis* (“Iemanjá”, “Lololiana”, “Cannabiana”, “Tia Ciata”, “Ursa”, and the *Penetrável* “Tenda Caetano-Gil”); two *Ninhos* and two *Núclei* (Área-aberta-do-mito).
- 26 Tia Ciata is known as the matriarch of samba. Her backyard is where samba songs were composed, rehearsed, improved, where the genre was born, where songs would become popular before they were presented at carnivals, to the public, before radio. The first samba song ever recorded, *Pelo telephone* by Donga and Mauro de Almeida, was recorded in her house at the end of 1916, and became a hit in the carnival of 1917.
- 27 Feiticeira literally means witch. It is used derogatively to refer to priestess of Afro-Brazilian religions, accused of practicing black magic.

28 A *quituteira* is a seller of *quitutes*, delicacies. Very often the *quituteiras* are women from Bahia who sell regional recipes in the street, recognizable for their traditional clothes.

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