

IMAGINE BRAZIL

Movements



Movements is a tool designed by **DHC/ART – Education** to encourage in-depth explorations of key concepts evoked by the works presented in the exhibition *IMAGINE BRAZIL*. By highlighting these points of conceptual departure through the document *Movements*, the **DHC/ART** educators intend to inspire dialogue about the exhibition and to encourage visitors to elaborate on the proposed themes with their personal interpretations and reflections. Over time, these *travelling concepts*¹ are subsequently enriched as they inform new contributions to our evolving conversations about art.

Movements also serves as a reminder that an aesthetic experience engages the body – its senses and its movements – as much as the intellect. The body's physical, emotional, and perceptive gestures are intimately linked as we move through the exhibition space and our senses are awakened. The rhythm of our trajectories and changing perspectives also mobilize our vision; images take shape as our memory and imagination are touched by the emerging aesthetic landscape. *Movements* is thus an invitation for the visitor to become immersed – mind and body – into **DHC/ART** exhibitions, thereby developing a rich and dynamic understanding of the works.

¹ Mieke Bal, "Concept", *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities: A Rough Guide*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001).

Context: Anthropophagy



Tunga, *The Bather* (detail), 2014. Iron, steel, resin, ceramics, plaster, and cotton paper. 220 × 150 × 150 cm. © Tunga, Courtesy of the artist and Luhring Augustine, New York.

In 1922, *Modern Art Week* – an avant-garde event in Sao Paulo that included poetry, literature, music and visual arts – marked the emergence of Brazilian modernism. Six years later, the concept of anthropophagy surfaced for the first time in Brazilian poet Oswald de Andrade's 1928 *Anthropophagic Manifesto*. De Andrade's radical poetic text referred to cannibalism, inspired by a Tupinamba ritual¹, as a way to imagine how Brazilian culture could develop a distinct identity through the symbolic absorption and devouring of the dominant culture of the colonizer.

Though dating back to 1928, the manifesto remains a relevant reference point for contemporary Brazilian artists who employ strategies of reappropriation and deconstruction in their practice. For de Andrade, anthropophagic bodies go beyond the surface of the skin – they are forces and intensities, capable of opening and bending in order to swallow Otherness. They leave themselves open to be destabilized and marked by it, creating a new hybrid through a chaotic mingling of the senses. Rolnik argues that anthropophagic subjectivity emerges from “the critical and irreverent devouring of an otherness that is always multiple and variable” and is “constituted by the absence of an absolute and stable identification with any repertoire (...) giving rise to a plasticity of the contours of subjectivity [and] a fluidity in the incorporation of new universes²”.

In theorizing de Andrade's anthropophagic space, Vinkler draws on Kristeva's work, specifically the revolutionary potential of poetic language³. According to Kristeva, it can be used by those located at the margins to shatter a fixed, predetermined role in the patriarchal social order.

The pre-logical, fluid, dismantled and musical language of the poetic – associated with femininity – appropriates patriarchy's dominant discourse – formal, logical, and organized – in order to decompose, subvert, and revitalize it⁴. The *Anthropophagic Manifesto* explores the relationships between these two spaces.

The pictorial works of Thiago Martins de Melo create a whole mythology in which he implicates his wife, himself, other humans, animals, gods, and monsters. These utopian worlds are highly critical of power, in all its forms, that mines Brazilian culture. Place these worlds into dialogue with the mythology of the manifesto, which is inspired by Tupinamba's divinities.

In the work Folds, Adriana Varejão appropriates azulejo tiles, a common façade for Brazilian buildings and imported by Portuguese colonial powers. The tiles crack under the pressure of exposed entrails. How can this work be situated within the anthropophagic project?

¹ Suely Rolnik, «Avoiding False Problems: Politics of the Fluid, Hybrid, and Flexible,» e-flux journal 25 (2011): 1.

² Ibid, 3-4.

³ Beth Joan Vinkler, «The Anthropophagic Mother/Other: Appropriated Identities in Oswald de Andrade's 'Manifesto Antropófago',» Luso-Brazilian Review 34, 1 (1997): 105-111.

⁴ Julia Kristeva, *La révolution du langage poétique* (Paris: Édition du Seuil, 1974).

Content: *Everyday*



Cildo Meireles, *Insertions into Ideological Circuits: Coca-Cola Project*, 1970. Text transfer on glass. 18 × 80 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Galeria Luisa Strina, São Paulo.

As suggested by philosopher Yuriko Saito, everyday aesthetics seeks to “highlight the extraordinary aesthetic potential of the most ordinary everyday experience and, at the same time, to analyze our ordinary aesthetic reaction in its everyday mode”¹. As this philosophical current gains more prominence, so continues artists’ incorporation of the everyday as a conceptual point of departure or material. Banal, ordinary, typical... we may see these descriptors repeat themselves across disciplines, but just as one’s understanding of aesthetic may move beyond the beautiful and the extraordinary, one’s concept of the everyday can move beyond the trivial and ongoing; there are no fixed definitions of either. What *is* certain, however, is that even with a shared understanding of what constitutes the everyday, the *form* that these various objects, symbols, activities, or gestures take is as subjective and varied as our lived experience and socio-historical locations.

The everyday for certain artists in *IMAGINE BRAZIL* takes myriad forms that challenge similar economic and social structures. Compelling the viewer to re-consider feeling, doing, or being through the everyday, these artists interrogate systems of power and oppression, re-situate history, and create opportunities for connection.

Forty-five years ago, Cildo Meireles was already questioning the sacredness of the art object in his work *Insertions into Ideological Circuits: Coca-Cola Project* (1970) is one of two projects based on, in his words, “the need to create a system for the circulation and exchange of information that did not depend on any kind of centralized control”². Meireles inscribed glass Coca-Cola bottles with

subversive text before putting them back into circulation. In doing so he sought to disrupt established power and ownership structures, and in turn, engage public participation in the flow of messages.

By contrast, Paulo Nazareth’s practice in performance engages with the body in movement. Through the everyday act of walking, he has covered long distances and historically significant routes that put him into closer contact with others and, in doing so, his own hybrid roots. Combining in his installations everyday gestures and objects that imply some kind of human relationship or exchange in the public sphere (trading cards, newspapers, street posters, etc.), Nazareth sheds critical light on the power of outside interests to dictate, among other things, self-perception, cultural identity, and national borders.

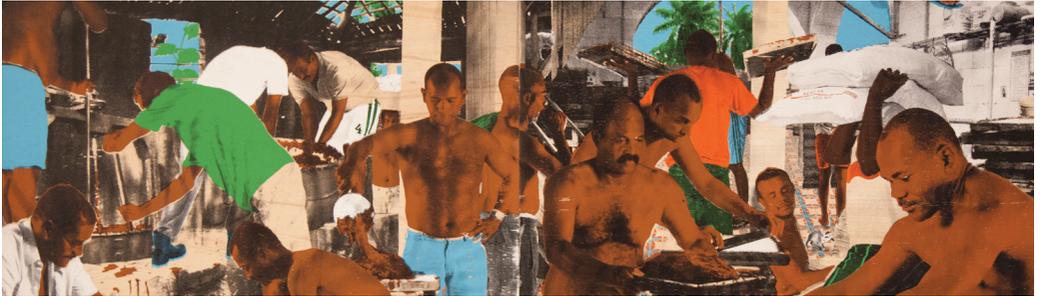
As the category of ‘everyday’ fluctuates depending on context, so does an object’s cultural or ideological weight. What are some examples of objects or gestures that you consider to be everyday? What factors might cause someone else to see them in a different way?

The ongoing realities stemming from colonialism, slavery, dictatorship, and neo-imperialism weigh heavily in the exhibition. In what ways can the use of the everyday objects and gestures allow us to enter into dialogue about the effects of collective trauma, systemic violence, or internalized oppression?

¹ Yuriko Saito, *Everyday Aesthetics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), accessed October 30, 2015, <http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/view/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199278350.001.0001/acprof-9780199278350>.

² Cildo Meireles, “Insertions into Ideological Circuits, 1970-75,” in *Art and Social Change: A Critical Reader*, ed. Charles Esche and Will Bradley (London: Tate Publishing, 2008), 181-186.

Composition: *Heterogeneity*



Jonathas de Andrade, *40 negro bom é um real* (40 black candies for R\$ 1.00), detail, 2013. Silkscreen prints on wood, acrylic engraved boards, riso prints on paper, laser prints on paper, vinyl texts. Variable Dimensions. Courtesy of the artist and Galeria Vermelho, São Paulo.

*Where you want a revolver, I'm a coconut tree
And where you want money, I'm passion
Where you want rest, I'm desire
And where I'm desire, you don't want it'*

- Caetano Veloso, *O Quereres*, 1993 ("To desire")

The desire that Veloso refers to in *O Quereres* is contradictory. It is there, but not when or where it should be – not where the other wants it to be. This incompatibility of expectations leads to a relationship that is ultimately discordant; a relationship based on the principles of heterogeneity.

Heterogeneity is defined as "diverse in character and content"², and "consisting of dissimilar or diverse constituents"³. Heterogeneity is about variability – much like the exhibition *IMAGINE BRAZIL*. Twenty-seven Brazilian artists working in different styles and with different approaches are brought together to form the heterogeneous relationship that is *Imagine Brazil*. At the same time, many of the works in the exhibition – like Veloso's *O Quereres* – reveal their own heterogeneity.

In *Automóvel*, 2012, Cinthia Marcelle explores relationships between people and their infrastructures; between futility and necessity; between order and dis-order, or rather a re-ordering of order. For 7 minutes and 11 seconds, the viewer is immersed in the heart of a highway with multiple lanes. While this experience may seem mundane and ordinary at first, the film crescendos into a choreographed ballet of cars moving to and fro, stopped in traffic, breaking down, and finally, flashing their hazards in the darkness.

Through various actions that can be seen as playful and serious at the same time, Marcelle dissects concepts like rhythm, symmetry, and movement as allegories for life, work and play. In so doing, she reveals how seemingly opposing, heterogeneous forces are actually parts of an interconnected whole.

An aspect of Montez Magno's artistic exploration is rooted in the structure and perception of languages – but not in their vocalization. Magno's *Madriagais* series from 2009 are based on polyphonic vocal music compositions from 14th century Italy, but his interpretation of these comes forth strictly in formal terms: his madrigals were never meant to be sung. He refers to them instead as "prospective art"⁴, giving them the possibility of life, but with no assurance of completion. This disparity exemplifies the heterogeneous quality of this work, again demonstrating how the most incongruent ideas can be linked to create a relationship of heterogeneity. Much like Veloso's revolver and coconut tree, Marcelle's order and chaos or Magno's unsung musical scores, the ensemble of works in *Imagine Brazil*, while grounded in heterogeneity, also reveal an innate interconnectedness.

What are other works in this exhibition that demonstrate heterogeneous elements in their formal or conceptual framework?

The idea of "prospective art" is rich in interpretive possibilities. What does this concept mean to you? Does it have limitations, and if so, what are they? What, for example, could be included or excluded from this notion?

¹ Victoria Broadus, "O Quereres," Brazilian Lyrics in English, accessed October 15, 2015. <http://lyricalbrazil.com/2012/01/26/o-quereres/>.

² Oxford Dictionaries, Oxford University Press, 2015, accessed October 15, 2015. <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/heterogeneous>.

³ Merriam-Webster Dictionary, Merriam-Webster Inc., 2015. Accessed October 15, 2015. <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/heterogeneous>.

⁴ Ana Maria Maia, "Montez Magno," in *Imagine Brazil*, (Oslo: Astrup Fearnley Museet ; Lyon : Musée d'art contemporain de Lyon, 2013), 79.

Considerations: *Space*



Cinthia Marcelle, *Autómovel* [Automobile], 2012. Video, 7 min. 11 sec. Courtesy of the artist and Galeria Vermelho, São Paulo and Sprovieri Gallery, London.

In *Paris, Capital of the 19th Century*, Walter Benjamin studied arcades, dioramas, world exhibitions, Art Nouveau, the Baudelarian *flâneur*, and Haussmann's urban planning, all in an attempt to better understand how society organized itself at the time. The significance of Benjamin's classic text is twofold: it allowed him to identify the particularities of the Parisian cultural landscape to better envision it as an *ideological capital* of the 19th century. For Benjamin, this spatial reflection was possible not only through the identification of "physical spaces or territories of artistic expression"¹ or the compatibility of these spaces with new ideologies; it also emerged in the "immediacy of the perceptible presence"². Put another way, in order to understand the historical or conceptual significance of a space, it is not enough to theorize it; one must also experience it.

We propose using Benjamin's method to reflect on the deployment of space in *IMAGINE BRAZIL*. Could we envision Brazil – or the image of it that emerges from the exhibition galleries – as a space that is symptomatic of our era? The chosen artists use myriad stylistic and thematic strategies to make visible their relationship to space: Mayana Redin's use of postcards, Rivane Neuenschwander's exploration of empty architecture, the juxtaposition of architectural styles in the sculptures of Rodrigo Matheus, road traffic in Cinthia Marcelle's video, Cildo Miereles' transformation of a consumer object into one of dispute, and Rodrigo Cass' reconfiguration of the everyday object into an art material. These strategies suggest complex relationships to our actual landscape, exposing the tensions between centre and periphery, Brazil

and the West, aesthetic and economic spaces, as well as between the materiality of space and its more abstract qualities. Thus, the exhibition offers more than a panorama of Brazilian contemporary art – it offers a framework for reflecting on the very notion of space in the 21st century as it is both adapted and defined by artistic activity.

What other works in the exhibition do you think consider space in an evocative way?

What are the links between the gallery space and other spaces explored in the various artworks? Do you see a close connection between these spaces? Can the exhibition space be understood as a representation of another kind of space?



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¹ Anahita Grisoni, "Marc Berdet, Fantasmagories du capital. L'Invention de la ville marchandise, Éditions La Découverte, Paris, 2013," *Développement durable et territoires*, 4, 2 (2013), accessed October 22, 2015, <https://developpementdurable.revues.org/9871>.

² Walter Benjamin, "Paris, capitale du 19^e siècle" in *Das Passagen-Werk*. (Frankfurt : Suhrkamp, 1982 [1939]) : 60.