

INTRODUCTION

The archaic, in whatever form it comes, challenges 'modern man's originality, his newness in comparison with traditional societies', challenges 'his determination to regard himself as a purely historical being', challenges 'his wish to live in a basically desacralized cosmos' (Eliade, 1995, p. ix).

This research started out with the generic aim of looking into the role of the 'body/mind practices' in the creative process and in the work of the Brazilian Post-Neoconcrete artists and the Japanese Gutai artists. As the analysis progressed, these broad concepts gained a more precise outline, as well as the objects of analysis. To the research, the relevant element in the 'body/mind practice' was the experimental engagement of the body, hence the option for the term 'experimental practice'; and the relevant element in the creative process that comprised those practices was the emergence of 'primordial images'. Thus, the research settled with the purpose of approaching the relation between the experimental practice with the body and the resulting emergence of primordial images.

The works and the periods that prompted this analysis came forth with the overview of the work of these artists and their respective contexts, in the attempt at grasping the deeper motivations of their creative endeavour. As recently as 2004, more than thirty years after their most crucial realizations, in the anthological tome *Art Since 1900* (Krauss et al., 2004, pp. 373-378), the Brazilian Neoconcrete artists and the Gutai artists are addressed simultaneously,

yet ‘posited as evidence of the international ripple effects of Euro-American modernism’ (Tiampo, 2007, p. 705). Given their *sui generis* character, placing them in any categorized trend might prove impossible and, while the number of reasons to pair them in a reflection was high and promising, their blinkered presentation on a publication of worldwide distribution, indicated that, at least for the mainstream, their work would remain largely misunderstood.

In this research, the works under analysis in the cases of Hélio Oiticica and Lygia Clark drift away from the acknowledged frame of the Neoconcretism¹ and share a core, the ‘immanence of the act’², that implies an exploratory presence of the body³, which would arguably justify their further designation as Post-Neoconcretist works⁴: Hélio Oiticica’s environmental experiment, particularly from the *Parangolé (Parangole)* to *Éden (Eden)*, and Lygia Clark’s research with the body, from the *Nostalgia do Corpo (Longing for the Body)* to the *Estruturação do Self (Structuring of the Self)*. While these works claimed from the artists the issuing of written material as a complementary way to communicate the ground

¹ As it was endorsed by Ferreira Gullar, artist and prominent theoretician of the Neoconcretism: based upon the work and thought of Merleau-Ponty, Vladimir Tatlin, Kasimir Malevitch, Piet Mondrian, Joseph Albers, or Max Bill.

² The ‘immanence of the act’ is referred by both artists as a core notion for their pivotal works in the shift from the object to the event: for Clark, in the *Bichos (Animals)*, 1960–63 and in *Caminhando*, 1963 (*Walking*) (Clark, 1997, p. 152, 187) and, for Oiticica, in the *Parangolé* experiment (Figueiredo, 1986, p. 74), and the ‘dance in his experience’ at the Mangueira slum.

³ Lygia Clark, Paris, 1968: ‘In all I do there is really the need of the human body expressing itself, or to unravel it as if it was a primal experience’; in the original version: ‘Em tudo o que faço há realmente necessidade do corpo humano que se expressa, ou para revelá-lo como se fosse uma experiência primeira’ (Figueiredo, 1996, p. 61).

⁴ A designation I adopt, along with Michael Asbury: ‘Gullar has stated that Oiticica considered him as an older brother, and that his respect for the poet was confirmed by the artist’s insistence in constructing Gullar’s ‘Buried Poem’ in his family’s back garden. It is therefore reasonable to assume that Gullar’s disengagement from neoconcretism must have caused a turmoil in the young artist’s mind. Again, Gullar has exemplified this fact by referring to the artist’s impasse when the poet, having abandoned his faith in the ‘possibility of a Brazilian avant-garde’ suggested that all of the neoconcrete production should be destroyed during a final exhibition. If we are to consider that Oiticica’s reference to Gullar in his 1967 essay *Esquema Geral da Nova Objetividade (General Scheme of the New Objectivity)* is indicative of the artist’s enduring respect for the poet – despite the poet’s critical position with regard to contemporary art production, including Oiticica’s own post-neoconcrete production – then it could be assumed that Oiticica’s shift was in part a response to Gullar’s implicit ultimatum: in order to be ethical one needs to turn to politics, the avant-garde cannot be politically engaged due to the autonomous nature of its enquiry’ (Braga, 2008, p. 57).

of their practice (Clark, 1997, p. 276)⁵, with statements in different formats (texts, letters, interviews), nevertheless the theoretical formulations or reflections derived from their creative practice or, in the case of Lygia Clark, also from insights of her inner psychic depths that resonated throughout her creative process. Their work reached increasing international attention from the 1990s onwards, culminating, in the case of Hélio Oiticica, with the acquisition by the Tate Modern of several of his works, including an edition of (*Tropicália*) *Tropicalia*. Hélio Oiticica's premature death in 1980, when he was only 43 years old, interrupted his creative research at the stage of the *Contra-Bólides* (*Counter-Bolides*), in the *Urban Poetic Happenings Nr. 1* and *Nr. 2*, respectively with the *Contra-Bólido Nr.1* (*Counter-Bolide Nr. 1*) at the Caju landfill, and the *Contra-Bólido Nr.2* at the Mangueira hill. Lygia Clark, in turn, carried out her creative research to its last consequences, eventually keeping the 'therapeutic setting'⁶ of the *Estruturação do Self* as its overall outcome, on what might be wrongly assumed as a withdrawal from artistic practice. In both cases, their artistic statement remained uncompromising.

Likewise, the primacy of practice over theory seems to be a matter of principle in the Gutai group, with the group's central aim at 'bringing life to matter'⁷ attained by the implication of the body for a creative outcome, and with the overt and unabashed disregard for discursive reasoning in what concerned content in the work of art. Also partly because of Yoshihara's visionary initiative

⁵ The importance of a measure of 'communication', implied in the creative event, is asserted by Lygia Clark in regard to the 'propositions' that she had conceived from 1967-68 ('proposições vivenciais', 'living propositions'), and carried further in 1971, during her period of the *Pensamento mudo* (*Mute thought*): '... I went to Holland, to Utrecht, to make the propositions (...) they filmed it all but the communication was a total crap. I returned in a great crisis, because if I don't create anymore and, on top of that, I can't communicate what I've created, that is too much!' (See Chapter I, note 143).

⁶ Designation used by Lula Wanderlei in the video-documentary *Lygia Clark. A Memória do Corpo*. (*Lygia Clark. The Memory of the Body*) (1984) directed by Mário Carneiro.

⁷ Jiro Yoshihara stated in the Gutai Art Manifest: 'Under the cloak of an intellectual aim, the materials have been completely murdered and can no longer speak to us' (Shoichi, 2004, p. 84).

in finding different exhibition settings, the artistic practices of the group were pioneering not only in the Japanese post-war avant-garde development and throughout the 1960s, but also in the global context of artistic practice, as their acknowledgement by Allan Kaprow in as early as 1966 shows (Kaprow, 1966, p. 211-225)⁸. Thus, the analysis of the Gutai practice was centred in Jiro Yoshihara and his orchestration of the more experimental years of the group, from 1954 to 1958, with particular interest in the work of Kazuo Shiraga, Akira Kanayama, Atsuko Tanaka, Sadamasa Motonaga, Saburo Murakami, Tsuruko Yamasaki, and Yoshihara himself. With the rise of international interest in the work of the Gutai group from the 1980s onwards, and especially throughout the 1990s, their historiography has been gradually established. Nevertheless, still in 2002, Koichi Kawasaki⁹, a frequent curator of Gutai group exhibitions, referred that the activity of the Gutai group was yet to be understood ‘in relation to the creative power of human beings’ (Kawasaki, 2003, p. 151)¹⁰.

This thesis aims to bring an understanding of the artistic practice of these two groups of artists ‘in relation to the creative power of human beings’. It consists of the research on a pattern of archaic imagery, that of ‘absolute beginning’, which both groups have in common. This shared pattern of imagery upholds their experimental endeavour as the enactment of a coherent, vital bond between artist, matter, and the accomplishment of the creative drive. It is also evidence of their systematic and uncompromising quest for the new, both in the work of art and in the creative process. The recurrence of archaic imagery of ‘absolute beginning’ is present in the ultimate iconographic layers of their artwork, as well as in the written record of the rich inner occurrences undergone

⁸ Even if wrongly taking their work as ‘happenings’. See Chapter III, note 57.

⁹ Koichi Kawasaki is a curator at the Hyogo Prefectural Museum, Kobe, Japan.

¹⁰ Kawasaki, Koichi et al., Oliva, Achile B. ed. (2003) *Art Tribes*. Skira.

throughout the stages of their creative process. The recurrence of archaic imagery of ‘absolute beginning’ reveals that the vital bond (between artist, matter, and the accomplishment of the creative drive) stands for a universal collective set of human aspirations. It also expresses the existential situations that are representative of this set of human aspirations, such as the longing for an unconditioned state, for fulfilment, or unification. Furthermore, it reflects an embodied emancipatory psycho-physiological resource, which is intrinsic to the human generative potential, indeed a creative teleology – namely the ascension of the *kundaliní* energy, that I explain further ahead in this introduction.

Thus, this research contributes with new elements to the reading of the experimental avant-garde enterprise of these artists. In the case of Lygia Clark, three aspects emerged from the analysis of her imagery. The first is the persistence of the image of ‘the full void’, its successive activation at each stage of her work, seemingly expressing the situation of creative accomplishment. The second aspect is the pivotal occurrence of images typical of archaic traditions of ‘initiation of medicine men’ during her psychic crisis in Carboneras (Spain). This imagery preceded and originated the artist’s development of collective experiments with the body. The successive phases of experiments within this development would significantly follow the very pattern of ‘initiation of medicine men’ – dismemberment, reconstruction, and fusion in the collective. This development already bore an ultimate therapeutic purpose, coherently leading to the last of her propositions, the *Estruturação do Self*. The third aspect emerged with the reading of that final proposition as a therapeutic setting, as a set of procedures that enable the reverting of symptoms into symbols. Addressing the impasse of psychic crises, the one-to-one sessions of the *Estruturação do Self* caused, in the patient, the emergence of images that seemingly re-established

psychic parity and, namely, the integration of the feminine principle. In the case of Hélio Oiticica, three aspects also arose from the research. Firstly, the relevance of the ‘origin myth’, comprising the pattern of images whereby an ‘exemplary action’ prompts not merely every new creation but specifically ‘a new order of creation’. This provided a vision into his set of works *Bólides* (*Bolides*) and *Contra-Bólides* (*Counter-Bolides*). The second aspect relates to the ‘tendency towards the concrete’ assisting the experimental engagement of the body, an attribute that would mark the use of the *Parangolé* capes and Oiticica’s subsequent environmental experiment named ‘total *Parangolé*-living. The third aspect relates to the enactment of episodes of ‘initiatory death’ as the means to attain a reorganization of the sense experience. This feature allows for a greater understanding of the environments Oiticica created for the exploration of behaviour, such as *Tropicália* (*Tropicalia*) and *Éden* (*Eden*). These spaces can thus be regarded as dwellings for carrying out the annihilation of a current mode of being, through the return to the unconditioned and the pursuit of a state of latency. In the case of the Gutai artists, the research brought forward two complementary aspects of Jiro Yoshihara’s eagerness for a new aesthetics. The first concentrates, on the one hand, on his contempt for theoretical reasoning and his determination to observe a direct contact with the material, prompting the emerging physicality of the Gutai artists through the choice of innovative exhibition settings. The second, on the other hand, is related to his ‘extraordinary intuition’¹¹ in ensuring the enactment of the vital bond between artist, matter and the accomplishment of the creative drive. This, as I argue, places the Gutai creative enterprise within the tradition that originated the

¹¹ Expression that Alfred Pacquement used to entitle his article on the catalogue of the exhibition *Le Japon des Avant-Gardes*, at the Centre George Pompidou, Paris, in 1986.

Japanese performative arts, such as it is described in the traditional literature of the ‘origin myth’, namely the ‘myth of the rock cave’ in association with the creation of *Noh*, *kagura* and *waka* (Breen, 2011, pp. 129-167).

The two groups of artists never met. However, the 9th edition of the Tokyo Biennial, in 1967, included a work by Hélio Oiticica, the *Bolide B40-66*, *Appropriation – Box Nr. 3* (fig. 1), and two of Jiro Yoshihara’s *White Circles* (fig. 2)¹². Other than this, they were subjects of the French journal *Robho*¹³, issue 5/6, in 1971, whose director, Jean Clay, was a friend of Lygia Clark. Adding to their common caricatural trait as ‘peripheral’ (Krauss et al., 2004, pp. 373-378), there are more significant affinities between them. They were painters that shifted into experimental practices, in what Guy Brett called, concerning the Brazilian artists, a ‘radical leap’ (Ades, 1989). In this, they adopted a concrete ludic engagement between the material and the body, which is paradigmatic, in the case of Clark, on the *Objetos Relacionais* (*Relational Objects*) for the *Estruturação do Self*; in the case of Oiticica, on the *Parangolé* garment; in the case of Kazuo Shiraga, on his *Challenge to the Mud* or his paintings with the feet; or, in the case of Atsuko Tanaka, on her stripping during the Gutai Art Using the Stage. The ‘concreteness’ of that ludic relation substantiates the continuum of matter and energy between the body and the material, while withdrawing all discursive content from the work of art, that is, the conventions of language, of representation and, ultimately, of meaning. Grasping sense becomes a strictly

¹² Other artists that showed on the 9th Tokyo Biennale were Rubens Gerchman, with the painting *Box to live in – Air*, Mauricio Nogueira Lima, with the painting *Ahhh!*, and Nelson Leirner. On the catalogue of the exhibition, the critic Ichiro Haryu wrote: ‘Unfolding a graceful and erotic fantasy Brazil’s Nelson Leirner, while parodying Fontana’s paintings and noted sculptures presented a nonchalant “anti-art” (National Museum of Art of Tokyo, 9th Tokyo Biennale, 1967).

¹³ *Robho*, nr. 5/6, 1971, edited by Julien Blaine and Jean Clay, with a double title *Enfin du nouveau*, and *Quelques aspects de l’art bourgeois*; in this issue, Jiro Yoshihara writes *Sur L’Art Gutai*, pp. 54-60; the theme *Unité du Champ Perceptif*, pp. 38-43, presents the work of Lygia Clark and Hélio Oiticica, and the theme *Fusion Generalisée*, pp. 12-19, presents works by Lygia Clark with a text by David Medalla, *Participe present. L’art the Lygia Clark*.

experimental issue, any meaning unattainable without the concrete experience lived by means of the body. Finally, they shared the relentless intent of ‘creating the new’: this pursuit is explicitly stated in Yoshihara’s utterance ‘Create what has never been done before!’ (Tiampo, 2007, p. 689), and is implicit on the view about the art of the 1960s of both Clark and Oiticica, criticising the search for ‘originality for the sake of originality’ within a ‘dead art’¹⁴.

While the factor of apprehending the sense of the work by means of the body is seemingly an attribute of performance in general, when added to the pursuit of the new, of ‘a new order of work of art’ (Oiticica, 1993, p. 223), or of ‘something in the order of creation’, according to Yoshihara (Junji, 1999, p. 171), gains a specificity of intent, a purposefulness, that leads all the experimental effort, in a great economy of means, to a degree of accuracy and a degree of subtlety that completely dismiss catharsis, chaos, chance or arbitrariness, even if, by the nature of an actual event, a measure of imponderability is necessarily involved, or if the physical impetuosity may be suggestive of random violence. For this reason, almost without exception, the ‘events’ conceived by these artists are thoroughly planned but impossible to rehearse, and are never inhuman. On the contrary, the pathos that they generate aims at a ‘suspension of disbelief’, a fascination that, ultimately, entails the occurrence of the ‘numinous’¹⁵. Perhaps the first distinctive feature of the ‘radical avant-garde’, or ‘experimental avant-

¹⁴ Clark: ‘the art defended by Restany is a dead art (...) you see in them all a search for originality for originality’s sake (...) absolutely a different kind of naturalism of a very bad quality’ (Clark, 1998, p. 34); Oiticica: ‘the so-called Italian *povera arte* is made with the most advanced means; it is the sublimation of poverty, but in a visual anecdotal way (...) the capitalization of the idea of poverty’ (Clark, 1998, p. 54).

¹⁵ I use the term numinous in accordance with Jung: ‘the *numinosum* [is] a dynamic agency or effect not caused by an arbitrary act of will. (...) The *numinosum* – whatever its cause may be – is an experience of the subject independent of his will. (...) The *numinosum* is either a quality belonging to a visible object or the influence of an invisible presence that causes a peculiar alteration of consciousness (Jung, 1990, p. 489-490); see Chapter I, note 68. It can also be understood as *kami*, the Japanese term to signify the quality of extraordinary possessed by something: ‘according to ancient usage whatever seemed strikingly impressive, possessed the quality of excellence, or inspired a feeling of awe was called *kami*’ (Harris, 2001, p. 14).

garde'¹⁶, is the generative power that resides in the pursuit of the new by means of the body, even if mediated by the concrete allure and protean serendipity of matter that is external to the body, as a facilitator of the experience. As a result of this very primal bond between artist, matter and creative drive, converging in the work, these artists expected to cumulatively experience the creative potency, exert the creative command and re-enact the original creation, in a 'mythical pattern' of 'absolute beginning' (Eliade, 1995, p. 60)¹⁷, which they expressed in cryptic terms such as the 'full-void' in the case of Clark¹⁸ (Clark, 1997, pp. 111-113), the 'total act of being' in the case of Oiticica¹⁹ (Figueiredo, 1986, p. 74), the

¹⁶ I use the designations 'radical avant-garde' and 'experimental avant-garde' as equivalents. I use the term 'radical' with three senses: 1. to imply the 'radical leap' that Guy Brett referred when synthesizing the shift from painting to exploratory work with the body, a disciplinary rupture and its epistemological implications (Ades, 1989); 2. to express the likely result of the experimental use of the body in the pursuit of the new, an ontological rupture rooted in a psychophysiological change, in a re-organization of the sense-experience and its epistemological implications; the experimental use of the body, under these circumstances, affects the deeper structures of the 'embodied core consciousness', through the essential bodily systems, homeostatic, kinaesthetic and proprioceptive, suspending the 'extended consciousness' (related with the awareness of the past and the future, and with the ability to master language) and retrieving a 'pre-linguistic core', a 'radical' bodily level (Damásio, 1999) (see Chapter II, note 44); 3. to stress the fact that the experimental use of the body has a concrete character, in the sense that Eliade speaks of a 'tendency to the concrete' (in relation to the practical Hindu philosophy of Yoga), in which the 'experience' is 'based almost entirely on immediate, concrete data, still hardly separated from their physiological substratum' (Eliade, 1990, p. 144), a tendency that '[emphasizes] the necessity for direct experience, for realization, for practice (...) a tendency toward the act, toward experimental verification' (Eliade, 1990, p. 40), which dismisses all speculation, placing the individual in a 'radical' present. These three aspects are not unlike the stance that Clark, Oiticica, or the Gutai took in their creative practice.

¹⁷ Eliade uses the expression 'absolute beginning' to synthesize the array of images that express a 'return to the origin', placing man at 'the creative time', 'the Great Time', participating in a reenactment of 'the original creation' with all that it implies – regeneration and new creation: 'It would be impossible to overstress the tendency – observable in every society, however highly developed – to bring back that time, mythical time, the Great Time. For this bringing back is effected without exception by every rite and every significant act' (Eliade, 1971, p. 395). Eliade further explains the mythical pattern of the 'absolute beginning': 'In the dialectic that made all these homologies possible, we discern the emotion of primitive man discovering the life of the spirit. The newness of the spiritual life, its autonomy, could find no better expression than the images of an "absolute beginning", images whose structure is anthropocosmic, deriving at once from embryology and from cosmogony' (Eliade, 1995, p. 60). See Chapter III, Return to the Origin, 1. The embryo, 2. The merging of all forms.

¹⁸ In the text *O Vazio Pleno (The full-void)*: '... consciousness of the plenitude of the full-void (inner time) (...) in art, we go in search of the void (from which we came) and, when we find it ascribed with value, we find our inner time'.

¹⁹ In the text *A dança na minha experiência (Dance on my experience)*: 'What interests me is the "total act of being" that I experience here in me – not partially total acts, but a "total act of life", irreversible, the unbalance for the balance of the being'.

‘unified condition of the spirit and body’ in the case of Shiraga²⁰ (Shinichiro, 1993, p. 27), or an ‘immutable meaning’ in the case of Kanayama²¹ (Tiampo, 2004, p. 106).

The contrast between, on one side, the ‘concreteness’ of the creative process and the artistic work, based in a direct experience of the body and the material and, on the other side, the subjective degree of the statements issued to describe the creative accomplishment is striking – the latter also conveying conspicuous and significant images of unification and absolute permanence, that is, primal intuitions, providing the key for an iconological interpretation²². The cryptic character of the ‘existential situations’ (Eliade, 1977, p. 12)²³ described by the artists was, for me, the first indication that, due to the specific combination of factors on their creative endeavour, the imagery that emerged had a primeval character; it unravelled an intrinsic knowledge or information, that was evinced through the concise, plain and powerful arrangements typical of primordial images²⁴. Perhaps the second distinctive feature of the ‘radical’ or ‘experimental

²⁰ ‘The quality of which I speak here is (...) the unified condition of the spirit and body which is acquired through living and is founded on the body we are born with’.

²¹ In the text *About the bell work*: ‘When ideas of painting and sculpture are expanded to the extent that they reveal an unknown dimension, immutable meaning is revealed in anticipation of a new era’.

²² In the three stages of the iconological methodology exposed in Panofsky’s classical *Meaning in the Visual Arts* he distinguishes iconography from iconology, and considers that the stage of iconological interpretation, the third stage, uses what he calls a ‘synthetic intuition (familiarity with the essential tendencies of the human mind)’. The first stage, that of the primary or natural subject matter, is still a pre-iconographical description, regarding the objective plastic content, the facts and expression making the forms, that he calls the ‘world of artistic motifs’; the second stage, or the ‘secondary or conventional subject matter’, is the iconographical analysis, requiring the knowledge of literary sources to elucidate the ‘world of images, stories and allegories’; and the third stage, that of the iconological interpretation through a ‘synthetic intuition’, into the ‘intrinsic meaning or content’ and the ‘world of the “symbolical” values’, assisted by the ‘history of cultural symptoms or “symbols”’.

²³ The term ‘existential situation’ was borrowed from Mircea Eliade, who uses it to state that the approach to symbols, myths and rites, other than being ‘inseparable from profound dramas enacted in the unconscious’, also regards those images as ‘the privileged expressions of the existential situations of peoples belonging to various types of society’.

²⁴ The notion of ‘primordial image’ was adopted from Carl Gustav Jung’s analytical psychology: ‘I call the image *primordial* when it possesses an *archaic* character. I speak of its archaic character when the image is in striking accord with familiar mythological motifs. It then expresses material primarily derived from the collective unconscious, and indicates at the same time that the factors

avant-garde' is the recurrence of primordial images, particularly of the pattern of 'absolute beginning', not merely fulfilling the condition that the avant-gardes extol for creation, but building the enigmatic purposefulness and the sheer vitality of the work itself, as I explain further below.

The large theoretical frame devised at the start of this research included authors from the neurosciences, cognitive sciences, psychology, phenomenology, theory of art and of culture, and history of art, aiming at an all-encompassing survey. Yet, it was through Mircea Eliade's vast record and analysis of patterns of images (Eliade, 1971), and their correspondent 'existential situations', that it was possible to identify the more recurrent image in the work of these artists, that of the 'conjunction of the opposites' (or 'union of the polarities'), as well as its correspondent existential situation, that of the 'restoration of the original time' (or 'restoration of the creative time', or simply 'return to the origin'), within the pattern of 'absolute beginning'. This certainly fitted the endeavour of an artistic avant-garde, not only for its fundamental search for the new, but also for the radical means used to attain it: a creative process not merely to create the new but to establish a new order of creation. With Eliade (and also with Jung) I was able to argue that the primordial images and their array of renderings aim at reconnecting – 'religere'²⁵ – man with the purposefulness of his experience, for

influencing the conscious situation of the moment are collective rather than personal'. Jung defines a mythological motif as 'a continually effective and recurrent expression that reawakens certain psychic experiences or else formulates them in an appropriate way' (Jung, 1990, p. 263).

²⁵ Jung and Eliade agree on the role of the archetype concerning what might be acknowledged as the religious attitude: 'religious ideas do not, in psychological reality, rest solely upon tradition and faith, but originate with the archetypes, the "careful consideration" of which – religere – constitutes the essence of religion' (Jung, 1990, p. 93); 'religious life and all the creations that spring from it, are dominated by what one may call 'the tendency toward the archetype' however many and varied are the components that go to make up any religious creation (any divine form, rite, myth or cult) their expression tends constantly to revert to an archetype' (Eliade, 1958, p. 58). An archetype 'can be conceived as a mnemonic deposit, an imprint or engram, which has arisen through the condensation of countless processes of a similar kind' (Jung, 1990, p. 263).

they establish, empirically and immediately, the coherence between the deeper layers of unconscious knowledge and the awareness of the present.

The analytical psychology of Carl Gustav Jung was essential to explain the process through which this reconnection occurs: his comprehensive conception of psychic energy; the dynamics of the process of individuation, with the archetype as the counterpart of instinct, defining the basic human psychic conflict; the formation of the symbol enabling the parity of the conflicting parts in psyche and the resulting emergence of primordial images. It had become clear that the more significant references to the research acknowledged a certain type of 'existential situation', of relationship between the body, the mind and the environment, and, more importantly, approached empirically a comprehensive concept of psychic energy, directly concerned with the creative drive and, thus, with the purposefulness of the creative accomplishment. Coming across the work of the Brazilian psychiatrist Nise da Silveira²⁶ was decisive for this research, for I took hold of her method of interpretation, that draws on the iconology of Erwin Panofsky, while understanding the specificities of the creative drive, given that she worked with schizophrenic patients in a therapy based on creative activities. Silveira's verification of an iconographic progression towards more archaic symbols in the artistic production of her patients, and her interpretation of their archetypal imagery, their sequences of primordial images, enabled me to envisage the avant-garde's experimental work and practice as renderings of those concise and plain pre-figurations. Silveira's use of Jung's theory was exemplary for my analysis of the creative process of these artists: it brought my attention to the process of the formation of the symbol according to Jung and its

²⁶ Nise da Silveira (b. Maceió, 15 February 1906, d. Rio de Janeiro, 30 October 1999). See Chapter I, note 15. Jungian psychiatrist whose main practice was held at the STOR (Seção de Terapêutica Ocupacional), Section of Occupational Therapy, at the Centro Psiquiátrico Nacional de D. Pedro II (National Psychiatric Centre D. Pedro II), Engenho de Dentro, Rio de Janeiro.

embedment in the process of individuation, from which I departed to characterize the experimental practice as a set of procedures that revert the symptom into a symbol, allowing for the further advancement of the process of individuation.

The use of documental sources, in the case of Hélio Oiticica, was facilitated by the fact that his writings are catalogued and partially available online, and access to his artwork and non-published material is granted by his relatives at the Projeto HO, in Rio de Janeiro. In Lygia Clark's case, the attempts to consult her diary, as well as to have wider access to her clinical notes on the sessions of the *Estruturação do Self* were not successful, although the material that was available provided a sufficient amount of detailed inner imagery to fundament the interpretation I was pursuing. In both cases, I opted to translate any material in quotations that had not been previously translated from the available sources into the English language, placing text in its original Portuguese version in the footnotes. In the case of the Gutai group, most of the available sources, which were in several languages, were surveyed (English, French, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese), as well as translations provided in academic theses, such as small fragments of the momentous Jiro Yoshihara's *Autobiography of My Heart*. However, most of the material from periodicals – in which promising interviews given throughout the years by the several artists who were the protagonists of the most experimental years of the Gutai activity – is still exclusively in the Japanese language. When confronting the same quotations on the Gutai group, or of their statements, in English summaries provided by Japanese publications and in publications from other nationalities, I found substantial differences and specify, in footnotes, which version I used.

Throughout the thesis, the considerable number of footnotes and their length is only partly due to the fact that in some I present the complete original

Portuguese version of excerpts from which I often quote just shorter parts, along with my own translation into the English language, especially in Chapters I and II. In all other cases, the information presented in the footnotes, though immediately useful and important for a complete understanding of the subject, can nevertheless be consulted after the reading of the corresponding paragraph in the main body of text, in order to allow for a more fluid reading. For the same reason, I opted to place the images of the artists' works (figures) at the end of each chapter, with the exception of those that are part of the discussion on the iconographic progression of a symbol towards archaic figurations, in Chapter I (illustrations on pp. 54-56), placed at the end of the respective topic (entitled *The archetypal image of the conjunction of the opposites*).

The thesis is divided into three chapters, each subdivided into topics. Each chapter concentrates on the artistic endeavour of one particular artist, respectively Lygia Clark, Hélio Oiticica and Jiro Yoshihara (as the mentor of the Gutai group, although several artists of the group are also individually considered). This structure reflects the methodology applied to analyse the inner imagery and its biographical progression in each of the artists. The methodological resources used were, namely, Mircea Eliade's patterns of archaic images, Carl Gustav Jung's formulations of the dynamic of the psyche, and Nise da Silveira's iconological approach to the interpretation of inner imagery. To a certain degree, these resources demanded an individual approach to each of the artists. The nature of their artistic practice, which shifted from painting into experimental practices that were for the most part ephemeral, was substantiated by the iconography of their work, but also in records of statements (interviews, diaries, texts, manifestos) that consistently demonstrated the integrity of the continuum between artist, creative process and work of art, in which the

separation of life from art appears devoid of sense. Notably, any set of methodological resources would have to encompass four complementary aspects of their artistic stance. The first is their avoidance of language in favour of a direct contact with the body. Examples of this are the succession of pioneering outdoor exhibitions and events on the stage through which Jiro Yoshihara challenged himself and the Gutai artists, or the empirical nature of Clark's setting of the *Estruturação do Self*, or the practical use of Oiticica's *Parangolé* capes. The second is their conceptual elusiveness substantiated, for example, in Clark's reservations concerning definitions provided by psychoanalysis, (such as 'neurotic' or 'psychotic'), or Yoshihara's classification of the Gutai works of art merely as 'good' or 'not good'. The third is their dismissal of theoretical considerations or discursive elaborations regarding content in the work of art, implied in Yoshihara's refusal to entitle Gutai's works, or in Clark's unwillingness to disclose a theory that could sustain her 'therapeutic setting' (eventually named as a 'cannibalistic theory'). And, finally, their dislike for the 'clothing of the intellect' (Shoichi, 2004, pp. 84) – its dependence on languages, on representation, and on meaning – remarkably expressed through their playfulness with verbal language, that is, through the combination of words to form new designations, such as the very term 'Gutai', Clark's 'full-void', Oiticica's *Tropicália* or his use of invented words such as *Parangolé*.

Chapter I (*The 'full-void'. Lygia Clark's poetics of embodiment*) is devoted to the analysis of the *Estruturação do Self*, a 'therapeutic setting' aimed at retrieving the 'normal state of the human being, which is the creative state' (Clark, 2005, p. 23), as the outcome of Clark's artistic research. The analysis explores the connection between the work of Lygia Clark and the work of Nise da Silveira, setting out from Silveira's analysis of one her cases, the schizophrenic patient

Octavio Ignacio. One particular series of this patient's artistic production is exemplary of the iconographic progression toward archaic symbols and toward less conscious levels of psyche, as well as of the self-organizing force that responded to his engulfing inner conflict, evinced in the imagery he created. Following Silveira's interpretation, which is centred on the primordial image of the 'conjunction of the opposites' (of which the Clark's 'full-void' is a figuration), and with complementary reasoning and descriptions from both Eliade and Jung, the symbolic transformation in Ignacio's images is unravelled as an utter illustration of the ascension of the *kundaliní*²⁷ (further explained on the next paragraph), depicted both as a physiological process and as an existential situation, the latter presented in utmost archaic symbols of self-accomplishment, or 'return to an unconditioned state'. This exemplary case is used to grasp Lygia Clark's accounts of her own inner imagery and the enduring primordial image within her creative research (the 'conjunction of opposites'), which culminated with the intuitive use of the integration of the two polarities or principles, feminine and masculine, as the ultimate aim of the *Estruturação do Self*.

The *kundaliní*, as a concrete empirical psycho-physiological process, is universal to the human species²⁸. Through the activation of this energy, or its awakening from a dormant state, referred by Mircea Eliade as a 'syndrome', it is

²⁷ *Kundaliní* is a Sanskrit word. '*Kundaliní* is a physical energy, of neurological nature and sexual manifestation. (...) The Freudian concept of libido and the Reichian concept of orgone came very close to the principle and anatomy of the *kundaliní* (...) in a lay term, more understandable, *kundaliní* can be translated simply as sexuality' (DeRose, 2007, 649, 654), translation by me.

²⁸ According to Sonu Shamdasani, 'Jung saw the inner processes, to which yoga gave rise, as universal and the particular methods employed to achieve them as culturally specific', and that 'Jung claimed that the symbolism of *Kundaliní* yoga suggested that the bizarre symptomatology that patients at times presented actually resulted from the awakening of the *Kundaliní*. He argued that knowledge of such symbolism enabled much that would otherwise be seen as the meaningless by-products of a disease process, to be understood as meaningful symbolic processes, and explicated the often peculiar physical localizations of symptoms' (Jung, 1996, p. xxvi). In my thesis, I argue that even if the artists referred to have not accomplished the concrete psycho-physiological process of the ascension of the *kundaliní*, knowledge about it is a patrimony that remains unconscious, to be projected under specific imagery, as I claim to be the case in the artwork I analysed.

possible to attain an unconditioned state, the advancement of consciousness to a stage of ‘cosmicization’, or hyper-consciousness, in Sanskrit ‘*samádhi*’. Despite remaining unconscious in the lay man, the *kundaliní* and the possibility of its awakening are a powerful matrix within the collective unconscious, an archetype that is activated – even if the process is not empirically accomplished – whenever the individual condition demands the reassertion of one’s creative teleology or, for that matter, of Man’s creative teleology. This usually occurs in response to an engulfing inner conflict or trial (for example, in the case of schizophrenic patients) or, as I argue to be the case in the experimental avant-garde endeavour, before a radical creative challenge. Under those circumstances, the images that emerge, archetypal (or primordial), are explicit reminders of that ultimate embodied and inalienable resource, self-empowering, regenerative, emancipatory, soteriological²⁹ - since it stands for the creative power that assists everything created.

While the ‘syndrome’ of the *kundaliní* has been obscured and disguised in the Jewish-Christian culture (just to mention one of the more domineering traditions on the Western context), it constitutes an outstanding reference in the Hindu culture. India developed a millenary psycho-physiological technology³⁰ to master that embodied intrinsic power, Yoga, particularly the Yoga of Tantric lineage³¹. Tantrism emphasizes the experimental use of the body and arguably resides in the roots of Yôga, having originally enabled, by means of its effective

²⁹ Salvational.

³⁰ Arguably developed since the transition from the Paleolithic period to the Neolithic period and, surely, since 3000 BC, 5000 years ago.

³¹ According to DeRose, ‘Yôga is any strictly practical methodology that leads to *samádhi*’ (DeRose, 2007, p. 18); according to Pátañjali (lived in the III century BC), in his *Yôga Sûtra*, ‘Yôga is the suppression of the instability of consciousness’ (DeRose, 1994), and ‘*samádhi* is the goal of Yôga’ (DeRose, 2007, p. 650)

empirical techniques, the attainment of *samádhi*, the goal of Yoga³². Therefore, the election of references for the research pursued scholarly authority on the acknowledgement of the syndrome of the *kundaliní*, primarily with Eliade's and Jung's studies on the subject³³.

The relevance of the subject of the *kundaliní* came forth with the observation, on the work of the Post-Neoconcrete and the Gutai artists, of the recurrence of the pattern of images of 'absolute beginning', the existential situation expressed through figurations of 'the centre of the world' (the circle, the enclosure), 'the change in the mode of being' (the initiatory cabin, the rupture of plane), 'ascension' (flight, the marriage of Heaven and Earth), 'return to the origin' (the embryo, the merging of all forms), 'cosmological solidarity' (the soil in process, germinal luminosities, integration of the feminine principle), and 'the union of polarities', all of them as much projections as reminders of that radically human concrete psycho-physiological process. And, while the resonance of this syndrome may thus be inferred in the majority of the cases of these artists, both Clark and Shiraga explicitly mention Tantrism as a reference in their creative process, albeit with very different scales of importance in each case³⁴. In addition

³² '*Samádhi* is the state of hyperconsciousness and self-knowledge that only Yoga can provide' (DeRose, 2007, p. 51), in the original version: '*Samádhi* é o estado de hipersciência que só o Yôga proporciona'. According to Shivánanda 'no *samádhi* is possible without the *kundaliní*', on the original version, 'nenhum *samádhi* é possível sem a *kundaliní*' (DeRose, 2004, p. 650).

In Chapter I, note 58 to 61 and note 149 give elements on the Hindu tradition of Yôga and of its theoretical correspondent, *Sámkhya*, as well as on Tantra, that may be regarded as the behavioural correspondent of Yôga. In Chapter II, notes 85 and 86 also refer specific aspects of Yoga techniques, with the definition of *samádhi*, among others.

³³ In Chapter I, note 31 describes the work of Eliade, and its relation with the work of Jung. Note 46 describes the work of Silveira and its relation with the work of Jung, as well as her connections to authors from the anti-psychiatric movement. Note 50 explains the divergence between Jung and Freud, while the sub-chapter 'Symbolic transformation' explains the inadequacy of the Freudian psychoanalysis to the purpose of this research.

³⁴ In Chapter I, note 151 follows a quotation on the 'tantric process' by Lygia Clark and presents essential references for a definition of Tantra. In Chapter III, notes 66 and 69 also refer to the Tantric tradition, in this case exploring the coincidence between the arguably remote aboriginal stratum that likely favoured the dissemination of the Tantric Buddhism tradition in Japan, that heavily marked certain *kami* rituals; and note 79, refers a quotation by Kazuo Shiraga, who was a Buddhist monk himself, on the effect of the Tantric techniques on his artistic practice.

to this, the *kami* rites (analysed in relation to the Gutai work) that developed the Japanese artistic and performance traditions of *waka*, *Noh* and *kagura* involved originally the practice of Tantric techniques³⁵.

As a concrete empirical psycho-physiological process, and despite remaining a predominantly unconscious type of knowledge, the syndrome of the ascension of the *kundaliní* is a possibility, an embodied program, which is universal to the human species. It is my thesis, however, that the phenomenon of the ascension of the *kundaliní* is projected in imagery – either through references or figurations of its ultimate liberating aim, or of the workings of its subtle physiology – as a reminder of a power of emancipation that is also universal to human beings. Both in the creative process and in the artistic enterprise – particularly in the avant-garde artistic endeavour, as I argue in my interpretation of the work of Clark, Oiticica, and the Gutai group – the phenomenon of the ascension of the *kundaliní* remains as a projection, as a reminder of that largely unconscious resource, of an ultimate inner power. However audaciously experimental the artistic practices of these artists may have been, or indeed the pursuit or some level of awareness of the psycho-physiological process itself (exemplified in references by both Clark and Shiraga), the thesis I propose comes from my interpretation of their work, and is never directly envisaged by any of the artists. Conscious knowledge and psycho-physiological technologies that enable the guided ascension of the *kundaliní* pertain to the realm of the ancient tradition of Yoga, and are fully developed by its practitioners, which was not the case of any of the artists I studied.

To a great extent, Chapter II (*HO | ME. Hélio Oiticica and Mircea Eliade. Tendency toward the concrete. Radical mythology of initiatory pattern*)³⁶, is the

³⁵ See Chapter III, Embodying the creative potency.

identification of the primordial imagery of ‘absolute beginning’ in the work of Hélio Oiticica. Notwithstanding, his paradigmatic works of the *Mangueira experiment* and the *Whitechapel experiment* are, in different ways, exemplary of an ‘initiatory pattern’, respectively with the primordial imagery of ‘flight’, that Haroldo de Campos named ‘hand-glider to ecstasy’, and of ‘initiatory cabin’ or ‘labyrinth’, that, taking from Haroldo de Campos, I named ‘galactic dwellings’; these works are concerned with the verification that, in order to restore, or to return to the ‘creative time’, to an ‘unconditioned state’, it is necessary to abolish the preceding mode of being, the body taken as a primary resource to serve this purpose, both aspects constituting an essential trait of the ‘initiatory pattern’.

In order to fit this intent of modification, or ‘radical change’, the format of the experience that Oiticica designs for the body gives evidence to a ‘tendency toward the concrete’, as Mircea Eliade presented it: as a tendency that ‘[emphasizes] the necessity for direct experience, for realization, for practice (...) a tendency toward the act, toward experimental verification’ (Eliade, 1990, p. 40), ‘based almost entirely on immediate, concrete data, still hardly separated from their physiological substratum’ (Eliade, 1990, p. 144)³⁷. In an initiatory pattern, the concrete procedures enacted by the body draft an ‘initiatory death’, an event that results in a complete re-organization of the sense experience, radically changing the individual, another essential trait of this pattern.

Complementary, I draw an analysis on Oiticica’s ‘will of a new myth’ (Figueiredo, 1986 p.73), the stance that binds his pivotal works in the leap from painting to the act. Following Eliade’s recommendation to dissociate the ‘idea of “myth” from “word” and “fable”³⁸ (...) and connecting it with “sacred action”,

³⁶ Previously published in Braga, 2008, pp. 67-109.

³⁷ See note 15.

³⁸ ‘cf. Homeric use of *mythos*: “word”, “discourse”’.

“significant gesture” and “primeval event” (Eliade, 1971, p. 416), Oiticica’s works are understood not merely as new creations, but as ‘new orders of creation’, thus placing his experiments in the context of the ‘origin myth’, that is, in a ‘radical mythology’, which endows artistic creation with an anthropocosmic attribute, equaled both to the embryonic and the cosmogonic creations.

The core of Chapter III (*Encircling the force of life. Jiro Yoshihara and Gutai*) regards the approach to the innovative practices of the Gutai group through the frame of the traditional *kami* celebrations. Going beyond the iconographic similitude between them, since the resemblance of figurations and circumstances, while suggestive, is not systematic³⁹, the analysis departs from the origin myth that presided the *kami* celebrations that, in turn, developed the Japanese artistic and performance traditions of *waka*, *Noh* and *kagura*. The continuity between the *Kami* celebrations and the Gutai work seemingly resides on the empirical search and accomplishment of an original creative command, allowed by the integrity of the relationship between body and matter, which provides the power of enactment. In the work of the experimental years of the Gutai group, the recurrence and coherence of primordial images belonging to the pattern of

³⁹ The fact that the Gutai exhibitions took place outdoors and ran also during the night, or in the stage, sites typical of *kami* celebrations, as well as the iconographic similitude between some items of *matsuri* festivals and the Gutai works, and the equivalence between the rhythm of the *matsuri* and the Gutai actions, as explained by Ming Tiampo (Tiampo, 2003), are important hints to motivate a deeper analysis on the continuity of the practices of the Gutai group and the *kami* celebrations. In itself, this iconographic reading seems to be as plausible as the interpretation of the experimental work of the Gutai group as a post-war recollection on violence, as Michael Lucken suggests (Lucken, 1999, p. 22): ‘Shimamoto Shozo se souvient dans ses expériences musicales “du vacarme des avions” et des “déflagrations d’explosifs” et, pour peindre, se sert parfois d’un “canon”, qui projette les couleurs sur la toile. Motonaga Sadamasa utilise un “canon à fumée”, dont sorte des volutes blanches et Shiraga Kazuo, pour reprendre le titre d’une oeuvre très célèbre de 1955, où on le vit se rouler dans un tas de mortier, “lutte contre la boue” (tsuchi ni idomu). Nous pourrions aussi placer dans la même perspective le spectacle de bris d’objets proposé para Kanayama Akira lors de la première exposition de “l’art Gutai sur scène” (1957), les spectaculaires panneaux déchirés de Murakami Saburo (1955) ou les parapluies déchiquetés et piétinés de Sumi Yasuo (1956)’.

‘absolute beginning’ is impressive, immediately noticeable if one has learned how to recognize them, as the final entries of the chapter demonstrate⁴⁰.

The result of the enquiry on the relation between the creative process and the engagement of the body in the practices of these artists is condensed in the title of the text of the dissertation, *The Archaic Makes the Avant-Garde*. The research explores the verification that, underlying the experimental, radical search for the new rests an embodied knowledge, universal and original, albeit mostly unconscious: an inner program of emancipation. Projections of these knowledge, its concrete psycho-physiology and its ultimate result, are explicitly evinced in archaic figurations that inexorably re-emerge in splendid suggestions, in the most deeply human way assisting a teleology of creation.

⁴⁰ In the case of the Gutai group, the available sources to confirm the genuineness and recurrence of the imagery in each artist are scarce when compared to the cases of Hélio Oiticica and Lygia Clark, since fundamental sources such as the Gutai journals, that originally comprise a summarized presentation in English, contain statements of the artists which are yet to be translated from the Japanese.