


SWEET SIXTIES:
SPECTERS
AND SPIRITS OF
A PARALLEL
AVANT-GARDE

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NORTHEASTERNIZED MODERNISM:
 NOTES ON AN EMANCIPATORY
 MODERNIST CONSTELLATION IN BRAZIL



Tanks in front of the Bahia Museum of Modern Art, Salvador da Bahia, 1964. Photographer unknown. From Marcelo Carvahlo Ferraz, ed., *Lina Bo Bardi* (São Paulo, 1993), p. 141

by Catrin Seeffranz

Material Subversivo

In July 1964, tanks were parked in front of the Museu de Arte Moderna (MAMB), the museum of modern art in Bahia that had been established in the half burnt-down theater Teatro Castro Alves. Military forces guarded and celebrated the opening of an anticommunist propaganda exhibition, *Material Subversivo*, which united confiscated material of the Brazilian and global left and was intended to prove why the recent military coup was necessary to prevent Brazil from becoming a second Moscow.

Now the setting for the “documentation” of a Marxist world conspiracy, a few weeks earlier the museum under the direction of Lina Bo Bardi together with a strictly transdisciplinary “turma,” a motley crew of collaborators, had been a place for rather innovative artistic, curatorial, and educational drafts—without doubt *material subversivo*. Bo Bardi was forced to choose between subordinating her work to the, as she wrote, “holy cultural and museological goals” of the new regime, or retreating. She submitted a telegram of demission a few weeks later. The museum was converted—into a “place of cheap folklore and souvenirs for tourists,” as she sardonically remarked some years later.¹

1. Lina Bo Bardi, “Bahia. Museu de Arte Moderna,” in *Mirante das Artes* 6 (1967), unpaginated [translated]. To be precise: the transformation took place slowly. In 1966 the museum hosted the first biennial in Bahia, with a choice of contemporary critical artists. The next edition in 1968 was shut down just after the opening, one of the incidents that led to boycott of the 10th São Paulo Biennial and the project of a counter-biennial (1969) by exiled Latin American artists. See Claudia Calirman, *Brazilian Art under Dictatorship: Antonio Manuel, Artur Barrio, and Cildo Meireles* (Durham, NC, 2012); Michael Asbury, “When Art Spoke to Power,” in *Art in America* (June 2012); Mirtes Marins de Oliveira, “Art under a Diagrammatic Perspective: Brazilian Artistic Production in the 1960s and 70s,” in *Afterall* (February 28, 2013), <http://www.afterall.org/online/art-under-a-diagrammatic-perspective-brazilian-artistic-production-in-the-1960s-and-70s> (accessed October 10, 2013).

In fact the effects of the coming to power of the military regime on the field of culture were less immediate than the drastic picture implies. The machinery of repression was consolidating slowly, professionalizing the politics of power gradually, until the establishment in 1968 of the law AI-5 that disempowered the courts, legitimized persecution and censorship and forced the left to flee or fight underground.² Nevertheless, 1964 constitutes a violent break, fundamentally altering political and cultural conditions and relations, particularly the relations between state and culture, politicians, artists and intellectuals, which in the era of optimistic democratization in the 1950s had been characterized by “*accordos productivos*,” productive alliances and accords, not without some ambivalence.³

The occupation of the museum disrupted and somehow destroyed a modernist experimental playground in the marginalized and impoverished northeast of Brazil. This was a constellation of *modernismo nordestinizado*, a northeasternized modernism that programmatically departed from the South in a geopolitical sense.⁴

This specific configuration has been described as the “prehistory” of Tropicália,⁵ as (to sum up recurring motives of a critical discourse) a provincial, exotic, dry but nonetheless fertile (especially as far as music is concerned, black Bahia definitely has the *ginga*⁶), notoriously marginalized and more or less subtly racialized backland of the canonic articulations of Brazilian modernism and conceptualism, of Cinema Novo, Tropicália, and neo-concretismo. I would rather propose that the backland was made into a mainland, and looking at the *avant-garde na Bahia* as a very specific, productive constellation in its own right.⁷ And that this modernist backland experiment should be located within broader contexts and continuities that make its particularities, potentialities, and contradictions visible.

The *avant-garde na Bahia* was a kind of collective experiment, dedicated to fathom and boost the political potentialities of art for the transformation of society. This was to take place less through individual artistic practices and more through a collective labor-of-reshaping and reinventing institutions. It was an effort clearly directed to education and dissemination and to an alliance with *o povo*, the marginalized mass the protagonists more or less romantically or ideologically identified with. Looking back at the happenings of 1964, three years later Bo Bardi, in a text ironically named “*Cinco anos entre os brancos*” [Five Years under the Whites],

2. See Calirman, *Brazilian Art under Dictatorship*; Asbury, “When Art Spoke to Power”; de Oliveira, “Art under a Diagrammatic Perspective” (see note 1).

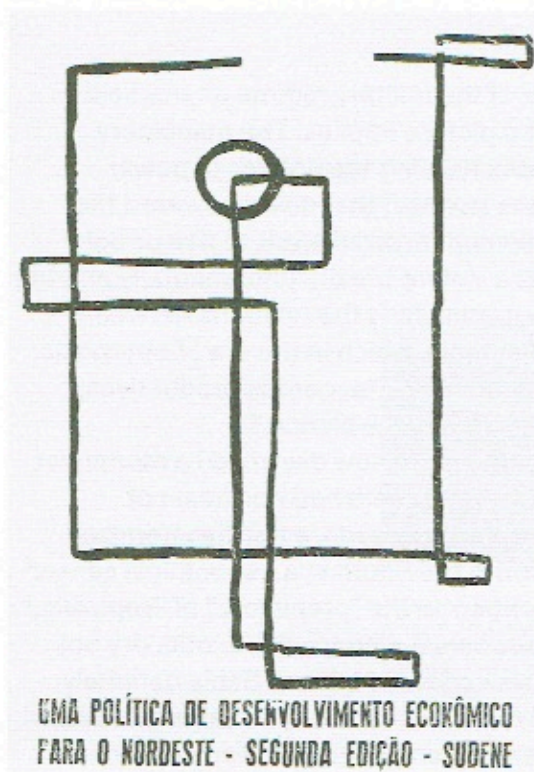
3. Maria Pedrosa, *Política das artes* [Politics of the Arts] (São Paulo, 1995), p. 217.

4. This refers to Boaventura de Souza Santos’s de-colonial concept of departing from the South.

5. Gonzalo Aguilar, “Concretos nos trópicos” [Concretists in the Tropics], extract from *Poesia Concreta Brasileira* [Concrete Poetry in Brazil] (2005), http://tropicália.com.br/en/cubioticamente_atraidos/visoes_estrangeiras/concretos-no-tropico (accessed October 18, 2013).

6. “Having the *ginga*” means knowing how to dance and move, some kind of incorporated knowledge and feeling, questionably associated with Afro-Brazilians. In this context it is also a reference to Michael Asbury’s critique of the projective discourse about Hélio Oiticica’s street credibility. See Michael Asbury, “Hélio não Tinha *Ginga* (Hélio Couldn’t Dance),” in Paula Braga, ed., *Fios soltos: A arte de Hélio Oiticica* [Loose Threads: The Art of Hélio Oiticica] (São Paulo, 2008), pp. 27–52.

7. As has only been done until now by Antonio Risério in his book *Avant-garde na Bahia* (São Paulo, 1995), which gives an important overview of the movement.



Book cover, *Uma política de desenvolvimento econômico para o Nordeste* [A Politics of Economic Disengagement for the Northeast] (Recife, 1967). Bibliotheca Celso Furtado archive



"Bahia: Museu de Arte Moderna por Lina Bo" [Bahia: Museum of Modern Art by Lina Bo]. From *Journal Mirante das Artes* 6, 1967

gave a sharp analysis of the incidents of that year and the preceding "efforts of liberation" and "way out of cultural colonialism." She outlined the concepts for the "movement of a real modern culture," based on the "experience of the popular," not to be mistaken for folklore.⁸ An involvement with the popular formed the basis of her work over the decades—in architectural, curatorial, museological, artistic, and political terms.⁹ This was an involvement with a production of things wrested from precariousness—be it shelters, oil lamps, or toys—that "test the limitations of deprivation," as Bo Bardi herself put it in one of her most influential Nordeste manifestos.¹⁰ This highly politicized movement is based on the recognition of a "poor culture," a poorness and precariousness her exhibitions (as well as films by her ally Glauber Rocha) expose and accuse¹¹—from the perspective of making the exploited

8. Lina Bo Bardi, "Cinco anos entre os brancos," in Silvana Rubino and Marina Grinover, eds., *Lina por escrito: Textos escolhidos de Lina Bo Bardi, 1943–1991* [Lina in Writing: Selected Texts of Lina Bo Bardi, 1943–1991] (São Paulo, 2009), pp. 130–36 [translated].

9. See Kiki Mazzucchelli, "Arquitetura pobre: Lina Bo Bardi e o vernacular brasileiro" [Poor Architecture: Lina Bo Bardi and the Brazilian Vernacular], in *marcelina | artista-arquiteta* 6 (2011), pp. 26–41.

10. Lina Bo Bardi, *Stones against Diamonds* (London, 2013) p. 71.

11. See Roger Buerger, "This Exhibition Is an Accusation: The Grammar of Display According to Lina Bo Bardi," in *Afterall* 26 (spring 2011), <http://www.afterall.org/journal/issue.26/this-exhibition-is-an-accusation-the-grammar-of-display-according-to-lina-bo-bardi1> (accessed October 10, 2013).

and outlawed the political subject for transformation. Bo Bardi declared this a movement against “cultural underdevelopment,” an ironic reference to the dominant politics of developmentalism she and the *avant-garde na Bahia* in general were ambivalently related to.¹²

One of Bo Bardi’s didactical tableaux displays visually the political, social, and cultural coordinates that defined the genealogy of *modernismo nordestinizado*. Quite polemically, the montage describes the status quo in the extremely impoverished and exploited northeast, affected by fierce asymmetries and latent conflicts. It is a contested geopolitical region, starved out by the *grande seca*, the big drought, but most of all by hundreds of years of exploitation and extraction. The authoritarian Estado Novo in the 1930s put the northeast on the map of modernization (most of all culturally), but now, in the late 1950s, it was at the very center of the politics of developmentalism and the object of an elaborated master plan, known as Sudene, to modernize the backland.¹³ Sudene also had a branch for art, Artene, a project Bo Bardi supported despite its technocratic approach.

The small elite that gained profit through the work of millions of slaves and field workers formed the “classe cultural”¹⁴ Bo Bardi and her allies (part of the cultural class themselves) stood up against this in order to find “a way out of cultural colonialism,” which hegemonically secured power relations. Ironically and significantly it is the “nova elite modernizante,”¹⁵ the new modernizing elite connected to the local and national government, that recruited artists to modernize the cultural institutions of Bahia (especially Salvador), a group of mostly European immigrants, stranded in Brazil, selected according to Aguilar “by the criteria of high modernism.”¹⁶

Most of these artists were recruited by the newly established university and its rector Edgar Santos, competing in a way with the innovative universities of São Paulo and Brasília. Apart from Bo Bardi, they appointed the theater director and adviser Martim Gonçalves, the musicologists Hans Kollreuter and Walter Smetak, and the choreographer Yanka Rudzka, and they supported a number of scientists, mainly anthropologists like Pierre Verger. They also founded the Centro de Estudos Afro-Orientais [Center for Afro-Oriental Studies], obviously trying to link urban modernism and popular, black, or indigenous cultures, passionately explored and mapped by different protagonists. The crew of immigrants together with some Bahian “natives” like filmmaker Glauber Rocha or designer Rogério Duarte realized “in a concentrated form and in a short period of time a notable series of revolutionary interventions in cultural life.”¹⁷

12. Bo Bardi, “Cinco anos entre os brancos,” p. 130 (see note 8)

13. On the one hand because in 1958 there was a devastating hunger crisis, leading to deprivation like in the “Fourth World” [Celso Furtado]; on the other hand, because Bahia was gaining industrial relevance after the discovery of petroleum. In 1953 this became a national business with the foundation of Petrobras.

14. Bo Bardi, “Cinco anos entre os brancos,” p. 130 (see note 8).

15. Risério, *Avant-garde na Bahia*, p. 21 (see note 7).

16. Aguilar, “Concretos nos trópico” (see note 5).

17. Risério, *Avant-garde na Bahia*, p. 13 (see note 7) [translated].

The leading paradigm for the intervention was a scratch which can be deciphered on the blackboard in Bo Bardi's montage: "Ezwola scola"—escola, school.¹⁸ The *avant-garde na Bahia* was shaped by an educational touch, if not educational turn, like many Latin American conceptualisms in general, as Camnitzer has pointed out.¹⁹ This turn to pedagogy in Bahian modernism was no doubt in tune with the common sense of a leftist government poled to modernization through education, but—at least in most of its articulations—it also challenged and undermined the premises and tales of progress, often drastically, as in Rocha's filmic allegories of bad government.

Northeasternized and pedagogized *modernismo* was inspired by contemporary schools of critical pedagogy, by Anísio Teixeira and Paulo Freire, by the Movimento de Cultura Popular trying to politicize and alphabetize the working class, by the student movement and their Centro Popular de Cultura, and by the theories of Antonio Gramsci or Mário Pedrosa, an influential Brazilian Marxist critic. In short, by a cultural left that was questioning concepts of hegemonic culture and attempting to develop a critical practice.

In practice this meant building bridges between different social spheres and defined fields, between art, universities, social movements, trade unions (which were becoming stronger—the coup of 1964 was partly a response to this), building improvised spaces. Most of all it meant building schools, with, like Rocha, the utopia of a "popular university" in mind.²⁰ In fact, some of the bridges turned out to be rather fragile, the notorious fragmentation of the left.

It also meant developing forms of collaboration and collectivity, not giving a damn about professional borders. Rocha took part in the exhibition *Nordeste*; Bo Bardi worked on the set of Glauber's 1964 film *Deus e o diabo na terra do sol* [Black God, White Devil]; scriptwriter and theater director Martim Gonçalves curated the exhibition on Bahia at the São Paulo Biennial and taught at the school in the Museu de Arte Popular; Walter Smetak had Tom Zé, Gilberto Gil, and Gaetano Veloso in his seminar on twelve-tone music and showed his sounding objects at the emblematic neo-concrete exhibition *Nova Objetividade Brasileira*.

A film set was built in a museum, which was built in a burnt-down theater, while the theater moved to the university and the streets of Bahia. Old masters, black baroque sculptor Alejandrinho, Degas, Corbusier, Mario Cravo, John Cage—in the schools of the *avant-garde na Bahia* the curriculum attempted to establish something like a transnational literacy (Spivak), undermining the dominant "cultural colonialism" that Rocha, Bo Bardi, and the others militantly fought against.

18. Written on the blackboard is also: "Por amor de Deus. Merda" [For God's sake. Shit].

19. Louis Camnitzer, *Conceptualism in Latin American Art: Didactics of Liberation* (Austin, TX, 2007).

20. Glauber Rocha, "MAMB não é museu: é escola em 'movimento' por uma arte que não seja desligada do homem" [NAMB Is Not a Museum: It Is a "Moving" School for Art That Is Not Separated from the People], in *Jornal da Bahia* (September 21, 1960), unpaginated.



Ex-voto. Legno di agave, altezza 35 cm.
Canindé, São Francisco de Chagas,
Ceará. Foto Oscar Savio

Ex-voto, undated. Agave wood, 35 cm in height. From São Francisco de Chagas parish in Canindé, Ceará. Photograph Oscar Savio. Line Bo Bardi archive

Rogério Duarte, who made the poster for *Deus e o diabo na terra do sol*, summed all this praxis up in a slogan: “Descompartmentalizava tudo”—everything was “de-arranged,” dismantled.²¹

Alphabetizing the Museum

What was de-arranged or dismantled with consequence and with radicalism was the symbolic order of the field of art and its institutions, observable in the transformations of the theater, or, maybe more significantly, the museum. This process was considerable in the museological and curatorial interventions by Bo Bardi and her *turma*, which have gained much attention and recognition in recent years, though often neglecting the collective aspect of her work.²² These interventions disturbed a whole range of orders pervading the museum which had made it a place of contemplation, harmony, and hegemony. They conceived it as a field of conflict and of cultural war, trying out different forms of appropriation, expropriation, and redistribution.

These artists were very aware of the colonialities of art and culture, distrusting both in a fundamental and productive way, and they were aware of the symbolic and epistemic violence of institutions such as the museum. They decided to constantly trouble the institution of the museum, and its institutional whiteness—to a certain extent, and with certain limits, as when

21. Sergio Cohn, ed., *Rogério Duarte* (Rio de Janeiro, 2009), p. 218.

22. See Buergel, “This Exhibition Is an Accusation” (see note 11); Mazzucchelli, “Arquitetura pobre” (see note 9); Lisette Lagnado, “Shifts in the Dérive: Experiences, Journeys and Morphologies,” in Lisette Lagnado, ed., *drifts and derivations: experiences, journeys and morphologies* (Madrid, 2010), pp. 53–72.

they claimed curatorial power but did not reflect their own desire for the Other, the poor, the black, the indigenous Brazil.

One of the curatorial strategies was to overflow and overwhelm the museum with the popular, with the precarious, fathoming the borders of art, craft, artifact, and kitsch. To trouble the institution by placing the marginalized, repressed, and abject in the center of the cathedral, confronting the "classe cultural" with cautiously processed *lixo*, rubbish turned into usable, ingenious objects.

Bo Bardi and her allies worked on different levels on the transformation of the institutional body, metaphorically and practically, through implementing foreign bodies—"tough, dry, hard to digest" was how she put it.²³ She produced an inflation of "space invaders,"²⁴ symbolized by the mass of her beloved ex-votos, metonymies for the black, poor bodies that are not designated, not intended, not welcome in the church of art, at least as long as they are not aesthetically controlled, disciplined. The marginalized material these artists brought into the museum was never *made* for the museum; it remained alien, weird to it, never concealing the violence of the production or of the transfer. This stuff does not *belong* to the museum, it *questions* the museum.

Trying to educate the first nations, the natives of the museum, the cultural class, at least as much as the underprivileged, the *avant-garde na Bahia* was enthusiastic for education. They loved the smell of school, dramatically.

The Smell of a School

In 1951 Bo Bardi wrote:

Let us start with the schools. If there is anything to do to change people, educate them. [. . .] Build schools, build schools, build schools—well, build them! What is missing is the burning interest for this issue, the drama in it. The school issue needs to be dramatized, made alive, up-to-date, an everyday issue. [. . .] A school is a *school*—with the smell of a school, all the aspects of a school one will always remember as *school*.²⁵

In Bo Bardi's museum there was no aversion against the smell of a school, the smell of sweaty collective effort, an aversion that is very common in the contemporary educational turn in curating.²⁶ On the contrary, they made an effort to dramatize the museum as a school and to create learning situations—inside the

23. Bo Bardi, *Stones against Diamonds*, p. 89 (see note 10).

24. Nirmal Puwar, *Space Invaders: Race, Gender and Bodies out of Place* (London, 2004).

25. Lina Bo Bardi, "Em primeiro: Escolas" (First and Foremost: Schools), in *habitat* 4 (1951), unpaginated [translated].

26. See Carmen Mörsch, "Alliances for Unlearning," in *Afterall* 26 (spring 2011), <http://www.afterall.org/journal/issue.26/alliances-for-unlearning-on-the-possibility-of-future-collaborations-between-gallery-educa> (accessed October 18, 2013).



Escola Parque, Salvador da Bahia. Institute for Artistic and Cultural Heritage of Bahia, 1950. (IPAC) photo archive

museum as well as outside the museum.²⁷ “The modern museum has to be didactic,” Bo Bardi writes, and continues: “These foundations are essential if the museum is not to become petrified, that is, entirely useless [. . .]. So what didactic means should we use? [. . .] A sort of cinematographic commentary.”²⁸

The group conceived a number of so-called didactic exhibitions, dedicated to the canon of classical modernism, conceptualism, and also the architecture of Corbusier or the Amazon communities. Rocha stated: “MAMB is not a museum: it is a school in ‘movement’ for an art which is not detached from man.”²⁹ As students, the school-museum did not primarily address the subalterns notoriously imagined and devalued as being culture-less or culture-distant, who are dragged to the museum in order to be familiarized with the culture they are missing. The usual paternalistic outreach gesture, the ambition to bring people into the museum, is clearly missing in a museological and curatorial discourse free of any evangelical pathos in terms of art and culture.

The more than modest didactic exhibitions, often made from cheap copies and whiteboards, are a northeasternized echo of the famous displays in the MASP, the Museu de Arte São Paulo, where Bo Bardi created the *mar dos cavaletes*, a sea of glass panels, which has become an emblematic image in recent exhibition histories. De-framing the art-works, de-idealizing them, the display achieved something like a democratization of the space, an intensification of the space. It created a togetherness, a closeness of works, and of viewers, and obviously it created a nuisance—in the 1990s the *cavaletes* were scrapped and destroyed. There is a hidden reference in the “sea of panels,” some kind of hidden layer, which tends to be overlooked in recent narrations about modernism, just as the didactic presentation

27. Carla Zollinger, “Lina Bo Bardi and the Bahian Modern Art Museum: museum-school, museum in progress,” in *Lina Bo Bardi: Together*, <http://linabobarditogether.com/2012/09/02/lina-bo-bardi-and-the-bahian-modern-art-museum-museum-school-museum-in-progress/> (accessed October 18, 2013).

28. Bo Bardi, *Stones against Diamonds*, pp. 59–60 (see note 10).

29. Rocha, “MAMB não é museu” (see note 20) [translated].



Formas Naturais [Natural Forms], Bahia Museum of Modern Art (MAMB) opening exhibition 1959. Photograph Marcel Gautherot

on the back of the *caveletes* tends to be erased in the celebratory discourses about Bo Bardi.³⁰

This hidden reference is an image of the Escola Parque in Salvador da Bahia, an experimental and pioneering model school, planned by Anísio Teixeira, an influential Brazilian educationalist and politician. Although within the frame of rather classical liberalism, Teixeira formulated progressive concepts for the transformation of public schooling. Opened in 1950, the Escola Parque was a school with no walls, based on a concept of integrated education, addressing the kids as “the student,” the “worker,” the “citizen,” the “sportsman,” the “artist.” Bo Bardi was enthusiastic about the Escola Parque and used an image of the newly opened school in an article on “School and Life,” where she reflected on the necessity to create “a collective spirit of collaboration” in school.³¹ The military coup of 1964 put an end to the experiment in a way. Teixeira had to retire and was put on trial. But the Escola Parque survived, serving as a paradigm for inclusive educational spaces all over Brazil.

Since 2000 the government has been investing in its preservation. Not surprisingly they are concentrating on the artworks, the rather conventional murals, decorating the experimental space. They are the object of a major governmental restoration project, preserving the heritage, monumentalizing it, and usurping it.

The creative imperative of the smart regimes of cognitive capitalism is a strange echo of the Bahia avant-garde credo: “Des-compartmentalizamos tudo,”—let us de-arrange everything. And again, it is all about education—let us not forget that recent militant protests against the government were also very much about education, and

30. Wendelien van Oldenborgh tried to re-actualize this dimension in her exhibition *Lina Bo Bardi: The Didactic Room* at Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven in 2011. I am grateful for the recent opportunity to discuss some significant myopias related to Bo Bardi with van Oldenborgh.

31. See Lina Bo Bardi, “A escola e a vida” [School and Life], in Rubino and Grinover, *Lina por escrito*, pp. 95–97, here: p. 95 (see note 8).

conditions in primary schools. During a demonstration by public school teachers, the MASP in São Paulo was the object of a *pichação* graffiti attack.

One thing is for sure: *modernismo nordestinizado* (or *pedagogizado*) was more convinced about education than art. The relevance of art, culture, and the museum was not a given fact for the *avant-garde na Bahia*, which took a position resolutely against the Western and bourgeois credo that believes in art and culture and insists on knowing what deserves the insignia art and culture. Rather than settling back in such shady certainties, hard work has to be done to build this relevance. This was something Bo Bardi and her *turma* attempted in Bahia: “For five years we tried to build a necessity, justifying the activities, on a territory where the priorities cannot be art.”³²

Ambivalent Territorializations of the Backland

Paradoxically Bahia got on the map of modernism, because it was seen as “a territory where the priorities cannot be art,” because it was notoriously conceived of as a backland of the world of art. The *avant-garde na Bahia* programmatically put this backland on the map, and put the black land of art on the map—the visual archive of the Black Atlantic, the diaspora and transfers caused by colonialism and slavery, the black histories of exploitation and resistance—even though the *avant-garde* protagonists were all white, all privileged, and mostly immigrants from Europe. These protagonists of the *avant-garde na Bahia* northeasternized themselves smoothly, suspiciously smoothly, not reflecting their libidinous identification with the black, indigenous, subaltern Brazil.

Modernismo nordestinizado was entangled in a very complex and more than ambivalent process of inventing the northeast³³ and also “re-inventing Blackness in Bahia,”³⁴ where “informing oppositional black identities overlaps with the constraining notion of Bahianess promoted by the government and the tourist industry.”³⁵ The re-Africanization and northeasternization started with the nationalist territorialization of the neglected backland and was reinforced in the democratic era the *avant-garde na Bahia* was associated with. The military regime then transformed Bahia into a “living museum” of Blackness, where the “black inhabitants were moved out so that black history could be turned into a commodity.”³⁶ This was a violent process contested by the self-organized black movement consolidating in the 1970s.

It is somehow paradoxical that the modernization and colonization of the backland led to the “discovery” of the “blackland,” often from “above,” where neo-colonization, musealization, regulation, and commodification built a weird joint venture (still working in neoliberal regimes). *Modernismo nordestinizado* and its aesthetic and political intervention into the “territory where the priorities cannot be

32. Bo Bardi, “Bahia. Museu de Arte Moderna” (see note 1).

33. See Durval Muniz de Albuquerque Junior’s study *A invenção do Nordeste e outras artes* [The Invention of the Northeast and Other Arts] (São Paulo, 2011).

34. Patrícia de Santana Pinho, *Mama Africa: Reinventing Blackness in Bahia* (Durham, NC, 2010).

35. *Ibid.*, p. 269.

36. Anadelia Romo, *Brazil’s Living Museum: Race, Reform, and Tradition in Bahia* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2010), p. 163.



Maxilo Hasson, colored sketch for a carnival dancer in the city of São Paulo, SPAM (Pro-Modern Art Society), 1933. Lasar Segall archive

art” should be situated within the history and continuity of these ambivalent *geo-political* territorializations of the backland and the *artistic* conquests, accompanying, contesting, affirming, negotiating the complex processes of modernization.

These ambivalent annexations build a connecting line, also an often hidden color line, in the “errant modernisms” of Brazil and Latin America,³⁷ a productive practice emerging from a postcolonial condition, reflecting it, while being entangled in colonialities itself—an ambivalence the most daring articulations of classical *modernismo*, like the Antropofágico movement, reveal already.

Facing the darker side of these continuities, the entanglements of modernism and modernization and the geopolitical and aesthetic colonization of the backlands seem productive and decisive, precisely when trying to reveal and reflate the emancipatory potentials sublated in the histories of modernism—when trying to capture and spell out the difference to hegemonic modernism the *avant-garde na Bahia* was proposing to unlearn.³⁸

37. See Esther Gabara, *Errant Modernism* (Durham, NC, 2008).

38. This seems even more important considering the current regressive appropriations of the politically committed *avant-gardes* of the 1960s within neoliberal regimes, and also within a global art circuit. Just an example: the *avant-garde na Bahia*, especially Bo Bardi, is a reference in the master plan of the cultural ministry that aims to promote creative industries in Brazil.