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The Body's Contagious Memory

Lygia Clark's Return to the Museum

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> *I will give a personal example: I consider poetry to be one of the most important components of human existence, not so much in terms of value, but rather as a functional element. We should prescribe poetry in the same way as vitamins.*
> *Félix Guattari, São Paulo, 1982*[1]

The trajectory of the Brazilian artist Lygia Clark occupies a singular place in the movement of institutional critique that developed in the 1960s and 1970s. At the time, artists from many different countries focused their research on the institutional power that the so-called "art system" brought to bear on their works: from the spaces accorded them to the categories whereby the (official) history of art described them, by way of the media employed, the genres recognized, among other elements. Revealing, problematizing and overcoming such limitations became a major

orientation of artistic practice, indeed, the precondition of its poetic force – of the artwork's very vitality, from which emanates its power to critically intervene in reality.

In Brazil, the critique of artistic institutions appeared at the outset of the 1960s in especially vigorous practices, intensifying throughout the decade; and it unfolded within a wider counter-cultural movement that persisted even after 1964 when the military dictatorship fell upon the country. Nonetheless, at the close of the 1960s it began to weaken, due to the wounds inflicted on the forces of creation by the increasing virulence of the dictatorship after the promulgation of Institutional Act Number 5, known as AI5, in December of 1968[2]. Many artists were forced into exile, either by the threat of imprisonment or simply because the situation had become intolerable: such was the case of Lygia Clark. As with all collective traumas of this magnitude, the weakening of art's critical force by effect of state terrorism persisted for over a decade after the return of democracy in the early 1980s, when neoliberalism began to take hold in the country. With the exception of a brief period of cultural agitation during the movement for the end of the dictatorship at the outset of the 1980s, only recently has art's critical force been activated by a generation that began to assert itself from the later 1990s onwards, via questions and strategies conceived in light of the problems brought
by the new regime, which by then had been fully installed.

As in similar practices unfolding around the world today, one of the characteristics of the current strategies is an extraterritorial drift, as Brian Holmes pointed out.[3] In the case of Brazil and many other Latin American countries, this drift tends toward a connection with social and political movements (for instance, the São Paulo City Center Squatters Movement, or *Movimento Sem*

Teto do Centro). This does not imply, however, the complete desertion of the artistic institution, with which these practices maintain an unprejudiced relationship, in a fluid dynamic of entries and exits which at each turn re-inject shots of poetic force into its agonizing body, which unleash micro-movements of its critical deterritorialization. This is another characteristic of such practices, differentiating them from the institutional critique of the 1960s and 70s as suggested by Holmes.[4] He qualifies this drift as "extradisciplinary," in order to designate what he describes as a third generation of institutional critique and to distinguish it from the previous generations: the first, of the 1960s and 70s, which he characterizes as "anti-disciplinary," and the second, of the late 1980s and early 90s, which brings the movement of the previous decade to its limit, revealing the dead end that awaits an art directing its critique inside the artistic institution itself. The extradisciplinary trend that arose in the 1990s is a response to this dead end, and to the questions that emerge from the context of neoliberalism, whose international hegemony coincides with the appearance of this generation of artists. But, while detecting this extradisciplinary trend today, Holmes also tries to distinguish it from other tendencies present in the same generation, towards what he describes as "interdisciplinarity" or "indiscipline." With the first, he indicates a similar drift toward other disciplines, but one that is purely discursive, and uses glamorous virtuosity in the attempt to fill an empty discourse, a pastiche entirely devoid of critique, which can easily be digested by the market and is perfectly suited to the new regime's demand for aestheticization. With the second term, he points to the presence in certain contemporary pratices of an undisciplined freedom of experimentation outwardly similar to that of the movements of the 1960s and 1970s, but whose *raison d'être* is really an adaptation to the fluctuating demand for signs characteristic of today's capitalist system. In this context,

as we know, knowledge and creativity have been converted into privileged objects of instrumentalization in the service of the market, leading some to characterize global neoliberalism as "cultural" or "cognitive" capitalism.

The Artist Digests the Object

In 1969, Lygia Clark wrote: "At the very moment when the artist digests the object, he is digested by society which has already found him a title and a bureaucratic function: he will be the future engineer of leisure, an activity that has no effect whatsoever on the equilibrium of social structures."[5] This short text, a kind of prophecy, is proof of her acute lucidity regarding the perverse effects of cultural capitalism in the territory of art, as early as 1969 when the new regime was just barely visible on the horizon, before it became more clearly established from the end of the 1970s on. The forms of critique that Lygia put into action in her proposals over the following two decades would find their resonance only ten years after her death, in the recent extradisciplinary drift undertaken by the new generation. In the face of this obvious resonance, and consequently, of the collective support that was now offered for the artist's critical gesture – which had at the same time been wiped out by the way that her recent work had been incorporated by the market –, I decided to undertake a project for the construction of memory around her artistic trajectory, which I developed from 2002 to 2007. The intention of this project was to create the conditions for reactivating the impact of the work, at the very moment of its return to the institutional terrain of art.

Lygia Clark embarked on her path as an artist in 1947. Her first thirteen years were dedicated to painting and sculpture, but as early as 1963, with *Caminhando*, her investigation took a radically

innovative turn that proved irreversible, moving towards the creation of proposals that depended on the process that they mobilized in the body of the participants as the basis of their realization. But what exactly did these proposals consist of?

Lygia Clark's experimental practices are generally understood as multisensorial experiences, whose importance lies in overcoming the reduction of artistic research to the field of the gaze. However, if on the one hand the exploration of the whole range of sense organs was an issue of the time, shared in fact by Clark, still the artist's work went further: the focus of her investigation consisted in mobilizing the two capacities inherent in each of the senses. I refer to the capacities of perception and sensation that allow us to apprehend the otherness of the world, respectively as a map of forms on which we project representations, or as a diagram of forces that affect all the senses in their capacity for resonance.

The figures of subject and object only exist for the first capacity, which indeed supposes their existence, and maintains them in a relation of exteriority to each other; whereas for the second, the other is a plastic multiplicity of forces that pulses in our sensible texture, thus becoming part of our very selves in a kind of fusion. The tension between these two irreducibly paradoxical capacities of the sensible is what summons up and lends impetus to the creative imagination (that is, the exercise of thought), which, in its turn, unleashes becomings of oneself and the environment in singular and non-parallel directions, driven on by the effects of their encounters.[6]

Since she set out on her particular path, Lygia Clark's artistic experimentation sought to mobilize in the receivers of her proposals this resonant apprehension of the world, as well as its paradox in relation to perception, in a attempt to affirm the

creative imagination that this differential puts into motion, and its transformative effects. The work would no longer be cut short in the spatial finitude of the object; it could now be realized as temporality, in an experience in which the object is unreified in order to become again a field of living forces that affect the world and are affected by it, bringing about a continuous process of differentiation. This was her way of resisting the tendency of the artistic institution to neutralize the potential of creation by means of the reification of its product, reducing it to a fetishized object. The artist has indeed *digested the object*: the work becomes *event*, action upon reality, transformation of it.

This question was already present in Lygia Clark's pictorial and sculptural strategies.[7] However, after 1963, the work could no longer exist anywhere but in the receiver's experience, outside which the objects are converted into a kind of nullity, resisting any desire of fetishization by their very principle. The next-to-last step was taken in the work developed with her students at Sorbonne, where the artist taught from 1972 to 1976.[8] At this point she chose to exile herself from the institutional territory of the artistic discipline, migrating to the University in the context of post-68 Paris, where it became more viable to introduce otherness and time into her proposals, which had formerly been banished from the art world. But here it became apparent that the experience that her objects presuppose and mobilize as the very basis of their expressivity run up against certain subjective barriers in the participants. These are raised by the fantasmatics inscribed in the memory of the body, resulting from the traumas experienced in past attempts to establish this kind of sensible relation with the world – attempts which have been inhibited by a lack of reverberation in a surrounding milieu inhospitable to this quality of relation with the otherness of the world (which can be even worse

in dictatorial regimes, where this kind of relation becomes object of humiliation, prohibition or punishment, as in the dictatorship that ruled Brazil in the 1960s and 70s). At this point Lygia Clark became aware that the fulfilment of one of the central questions of her artistic research – the reactivation of this quality of *aesthetic experience* in the receivers of her creations – was not at all self-evident. I refer to the capacity of letting oneself be affected by the forces of the objects created by the artist and the environment in which these were experienced; but above all, as a consequence, the capacity of letting oneself be affected by the forces of the environment of one's daily life. It is in the face of this deadlock that the artist created *Structuring of the Self*, the last gesture of her oeuvre, which unfolded after her definitive return to Rio de Janeiro in 1976.

The new focus of research became the memory of trauma and of its fantasies/phantoms, whose mobilization would now cease to be a mere side-effect of the proposals and come instead to occupy the very nerve center of her new device. Clark sought to explore the power those objects had to bring this memory to the surface and "treat it" (an operation she designated as "vomiting the fantasmatics"). It is therefore the very logic of her investigation that led her to invent her last artistic proposal, to which a deliberately therapeutic dimension was added. The artist received each person individually for one-hour sessions, one to three times a week, over a period of months, and, in certain cases, for more than one year. Her relationship with the receiver, mediated by the objects, had become indispensable for the realization of the artwork: it was on the basis of her sensations of the living presence of the other in her own "resonant body,"[9] in the course of each session, that the artist progressively defined the singular use of the *Relational Objects*.[10] This very quality of opening to the other is

what she was able to provoke in those who participated in her work. In this therapeutic-poetic laboratory, the work was realized in the gradually forming consistency of this quality of the relation to otherness within the subjectivity of its receivers.

Searching for this relational quality was probably the way that Lygia Clark found to move from the politics of subjectivation marked by an already dominant individualism, as it presented itself – and increasingly presents itself – on the terrain of art: the pair formed by the hapless artist in a state of narcissistic delight and the spectator/consumer in a state of sensuous anaesthesia. In this sense, the notion of "relationality," the marrow of the thinking poetics of Lygia Clark's work, could be useful to us as another lens to differentiate attitudes in the apparently similar propositions that are proliferate today, in addition to the distinctions that Holmes proposes between the trend toward "extradisciplinary" critique on the one hand, and the a-critical trends of "interdisciplinarity" and "indiscipline."

Inside the institutional circuit, the proposals that have been qualified and theorized as "relational"[11] (including those placed beneath the rubrics of "interactivity," "participation of the spectator" and others) often reduce themselves to a sterile exercise in entertainment contributing to the neutralization of aesthetic experience – the affair of *engineers of leisure*, to paraphrase Lygia Clark. This is a "trend" that perfectly matches the taste of cognitive capitalism, expanding in the same direction and at exactly the same rhythm and speed. Such practices establish a relationship of exteriority between the body and the world, where everything remains in the same place and the attention is *entertained*, immersed in a state of *distraction* that renders subjectivity insensible to the effects of the forces shaking up the environment around it. Thus the supposed indiscipline of such proposals, like

the sterile interdisciplinarity of the discursive flourishes that generally accompany them, constitute the privileged means for the production of an easily manipulated subjectivity.

Poetics "and" Politics

In this sense we can consider that, at least in their intention, the situation of the so-called "extradisciplinary" practices is quite different. They are characterized by a deliberate movement of outbound drifting, which carries them beyond the frontiers of the artistic circuit and even at counter-current to it. I refer in particular to proposals infiltrate the most tense interstices of the cities, as often in Latin America. In this movement, artists often come close to militant practices. But what brings artists nearer to activists in in this new context? What do their practices have in common? And what differentiates them even in their intersection?

Activist and artistic actions have in common the fact of constituting two manners of confronting the tensions of social life at the points where its dynamics of transformation are blocked. Both aim at the liberation of life's mobility, which makes them essential activities for the *health* of a society – that is to say, the affirmation of its inventive potential for change, when it becomes necessary. But the orders of tension that each one confronts are distinct, along with the operations of this confrontation and the subjective faculties that they involve.

The characteristically activist operation, with its macropolitical potential, intervenes in the tensions that arise in visible, stratified reality, between the poles of conflict in the distribution of places established by the dominant cartography within a given social context (conflicts of class, race, gender, etc.). Activist intervention

is inscribed in the heart of these conflicts, situating itself at the position of the oppressed and/or the exploited, with the aim of fighting for a more just configuration of society. Whereas the characteristic operation of artistic intervention, with its micropolitical potential, acts on the tension of the paradoxical dynamic located between the dominant cartography with its relative stability, on the one hand, and on the other, the sensible reality in continuous change, the product of the living presence of otherness that ceaselessly affects our bodies. Such changes tense up the current cartography, until they finally produce collapses of meaning. These become manifest in crises of subjectivity that impell the artist to create, so as to lend expressivity to the sensible reality that generates this tension. Artistic intervention is inscribed in the performative plane – whether visual, musical, verbal or otherwise – carrying out irreversible changes in the reigning cartography. Becoming embodied in artistic creations, those changes make them into the bearers of a contagious power at the moment of their reception. As Guattari writes: "When an idea is valid, when a work of art corresponds to a genuine mutation, articles explaining it in the press or on TV aren't necessary. It's transmitted directly, as fast as the Japanese flu."[12] In short: with activism we find ourselves facing the tensions inherent to conflicts on the level of the cartography of visible and utterable reality (the plane of stratification that delimits subjects, objects and their representations); with art we face the tensions between this plane and the one already foreshadowed in the diagram of sensible reality, invisible and unutterable (the plane of flows, intensities, sensations and becomings). The first one convokes mainly perception, and the second one, sensation.

If art, in its extraterritorial drift, comes closer to activism in the context of cultural capitalism, this is due to the blockage of its own

political potential, caused by the new regime. This blockage is the product of the mercantile-media logic imposed on the artistic terrain, which acts inside it and outside it. Inside the artistic terrain, the operation is more obvious: it consists in linking artistic practices to the logos of businesses, thus adding "cultural power" that increases its seductiveness on the market. And the same holds for cities, which today use the Museums of Contemporary Art and their ostentatious architecture as one of their major instruments of power for inserting themselves onto the stage of global capitalism, thus making them more attractive poles for investment. It is no doubt because they feel the need to confront the oppression of domination and exploitation on their own terrain, which result from the specific relation between capital and culture under neoliberalism, that artists began to opt for extradisciplinary strategies, adding a macropolitical dimension to their actions.

Meanwhile, the blockage of the critical potential of creation also occurs outside its own terrain, not only because the mercantile-media logic takes the forces of creation as one of its major sources for the extraction of surplus value, but above all because it requires their instrumentalization to constitute what I will call here an "imagosphere" that today covers the entire planet – a continuous layer of images that places itself as a filter between the world and our eyes, which become blind to the tense pulsation of reality. Such blindness, added to the a-critical identification with such images, which occurs among the most diverse strata of the population across the entire planet, is precisely what makes the subjectivities ready for submission to the designs of the market, thus rendering it possible to recruit all their vital forces for the hypermachine of capitalist production. Because social life is the final destination of the inventive force instrumentalized in this way – systematically taken out of its course and channeled into the

production of the intoxicating imagosphere – social life is precisely the place which many artists have chosen to set up their critical devices, when they are driven out of the equally suffocating terrain of artistic institutions. In this exodus, other means of artistic production and also other territories of life are created (thus the tendency to organize into collectives and to maintain relationships with other such collectives, sometimes gathering around common aims in the cultural or political terrain, then returning to autonomy again). In these new territories there is again fresh air for both the resonant relationship with living otherness (that is, aesthetic experience) and for the artist's freedom of creating according to the tensions raised by the affects of the world in his body – which runs up against many barriers on the terrain of art.

The macropolitical dimension that is activated in this kind of artistic practice brings it closer to social movements in the resistance to the current regime's perversion. Such approximation finds reciprocity in the social movements, which, in their turn, are led to incorporate a micropolitical dimension to their activism, traditionally limited to macropolitics. This happens because in the new regime, economic domination and exploitation find one of their main weapons, if not "the" weapon, in the manipulation of subjectivity carried out via the image. Their struggle, however, ceases to be limited to the plane of political economy, to encompass the planes of the economy of desire and the politics of the image. Thus the collaboration between artists and activists often imposes itself in the present time as a necessary condition in order to carry out the work of critical intervention that each one undertakes in a specific sphere of reality, and their encounter produces effects of *transversality* in their respective terrains.

The Relational Lens

Having identified the extraterritorial drift according to the cartography that Holmes has offered, we can now trace its outlines more precisely. It is necessary to differentiate attitudes also in that drift. In the context of cultural capitalism, artists share with activists the same foci of tension in reality; but the most striking artistic practices of intervention in public life are not those that end up merging completely with the activist practices to which they have drawn closer – reducing their field of action to macropolitics, running the risk of becoming strictly pedagogical, illustrative and pamphleteering. Instead the most striking artistic practices of intervention in public life are the ones that assert the characteristic political potential of art.

Here again the notion of "relationality," as defined in Lygia Clark's proposals, can serve us as a lens. In this drift toward public life, the artistic interventions that preserve their micropolitical potential are those made on the basis of the ways the tensions of cultural capitalism affect the body of the artist; and it is this quality of relation with the present that such actions try to call up in their receivers. The more precise their language is, the greater their power to liberate expression and its images from their perverse use. Thus they favor other uses of images, other forms of reception but also of expression, which can introduce new politics of subjectivity and its relation to the world – that is, new configurations of the unconscious in the social field, which break from the dominant references. In other words, what this kind of practice can elicit in those who receive it is not simply the consciousness of domination and exploitation in its visible, macropolitical side, which activism brings. What it can elicit is, instead, the experience of these relations in one's own body, its invisible, unconscious, micropolitical side, which intervenes in the process of subjectivation exactly where it becomes captive. Thus it becomes

impossible to ignore the unease that this preverse cartography provokes in us. This can lead us to break the spell of the neoliberal imagosphere power over our eyes, thus awakening their resonant capacity from its longsuffering hibernation. In this way a greater precision of focus is gained for an effective resistance on the macropolitical plane as well. This resistance, instead, is weakened when everything relative to social life is exclusively reduced to macropolitics, making the artists who work on this terrain into mere scenographers, graphic designers and/or publicists of activism (and in that way lending strength to the reactive forces that predominate on the institutional terrain of art, lending them arguments to justify their separation form reality and depoliticization).

The new context leads to the collaboration between artists and activists which allows going beyond the rift between micro and macropolitics that characterizes the turbid love-hate relation between artistic and political movements throughout the twentieth century, which is responsible for so many defeats of collective transformative attempts. But for this it is necessary to maintain the tension of this irreconcilable difference so that both macro and micropolitical potentials are active and their transversality is retained in the artistic and militant actions that the new situation encourages in both of them, and, by extension, in social life as a whole. A relation marked by an “and” stretched between radically heterogeneous actions, distinct from the relations characterized either by the reduction of one to the other, or by the choice of one “or” the other, or by the hallucination of a synthesis; but also by the supposition of their non-relation, because, as Rancière suggests, “the problem is not to put each one in its place, but to maintain the tension that makes each tend towards the other, a

politics of art and a poetics of politics that can't come together without erasing each other."[13]

Precociously sensitive to this state of things, Lygia Clark opted for the solitude of this extradisciplinary position, but as early as the 1970's, long before it became the object of a collective critical movement on the artistic terrain. The work produced in her drift consisted in the construction of a singular territory, to which the artist gave body step by step throughout her entire trajectory. This construction was completed with *Structuring of the Self*. In this sense, it is important to recognize that Lygia indeed abandoned the field of art and opted for therapy, after her brief passage through the university. This is a strategic decision that should be recognized as such. The issue was that of remaking a body in exile from the institutional territory of art, where her critical potential did not find resonance and tended to fade away into the sterility of a field without otherness (further aggravated by the dictatorship in Brazil). In this migration, the artist reinvented a *public* in the strong sense of subjectivities bearers of an aesthetic experience. The latter had disappeared from the universe of art, where it was replaced with a undifferentiated mass of consumers, destitute of the resonant exercise of their sensibility and whose definition is reduced to a classification in statistically established categories. Lygia built up this new public with her objects and devices, through a relationship with each one of her receivers, having a politics of subjectivation as a goal and duration as a means (the precondition for intervening in this field, which allows her to reintroduce otherness, imaginative creation and becoming). But while Lygia Clark inscribed herself in the movement of extradisciplinary drift that would take on body two decades later, still her gesture was forced to remain in exile, since the territory of art was not yet ready to receive it. In this sense, her oeuvre was

partially stuck in the position of antidisciplinarity that had characterized the movements of her time.

From the viewpoint of the unusual territory that the artist constituted with her oeuvre, aesthetics, therapeutic and politics are revealed as potentials of experience, inseparable in their act of interference in subjective and objective reality. As we saw, this proposal emerged as a subtle act of intervention in the impoverished state of creation and reception of the institutional art circuit, which itself was a symptom of the politics of subjectivation under the new capitalist regime. But that is not all: the reactivation of aesthetic experience that these proposals promoted more broadly constituted an act of therapeutic and political resistance in the tissue of social life, going beyond the frontiers of the field of art and thus throwing its supposed autonomy into crisis. Because of this work, her Brazilian "clients" – as Clark called those who were willing to live out the experience – would be better equipped to deal with the toxic effects that the dictatorial power had provoked in their creative potential, while at the same time avoiding the easy instrumentalization of this force, when it would later be reactivated by the perverse power of the new regime.[14]

This triple potential of Lygia Clark's oeuvre – aesthetic, clinical and political – is what I wished to reactivate with the project of memory mentioned at the beginning, in the face of the haze of forgetfulness that surrounds it. But what does "forgetting" mean in the case of a body of work such as this, which on the contrary has been increasingly celebrated in the international art circuit?

Return to the Museum

Indeed, during Lygia's life and for ten years after her death, her experimental practices did not find any reception in the territory of art. In 1998, the institutional circuit finally recognized the artist's experimental proposals,[15] but from that point forth they were fetishized: either the objects that partook in these objects are just exhibited as such, or the actions are re-enacted before spectators external to them. If the artist had made her work into the digestion of the object in order to reactivate the critical power of artistic experience, the circuit now digested the artist, making of her the engineer of leisure of a future which had already arrived, and which "has no effect whatsoever on the equilibrium of social structures," just as she had predicted. In the best of cases documents are presented, but these only allow the apprehension of such actions fragmentarily and in their mere exteriority, devoid of their "relational" essence.The valiant effort of the artist's critical gesture is thus annulled, making her work into a luxurious delicacy at the banquet of instrumentalization.

The unease that this new situation provoked each time I encountered Lygia Clark's oeuvre, locked inside the territory of therapy or reduced to a fetishized bit of nothing in the territory of art, is what imposed the need to invent a strategy that would convey what was at stake in these practices and thereby activate the impact of her gesture, at the very moment of its neutralizing incorporation by the art system.

While the pimping of the critical energy of Lygia Clark's proposals for cultural capitalism surely means its death, equally, to leave them within therapy, stripped of the meaning of the migratory gesture that had characterized them, would mean to confine them to a new discipline, extinguishing the disruptive flame of her drift. As in all exiles, if the territory of therapy had served as a prosthetic body to reactivate the vitality of creation agonizing in the territory of art,

the process would be continued with the return to the latter, on the condition that the body of her oeuvre reinvented and revitalized in exile could radiate its potency there, opening spaces of poetic pulsation. But how to convey an oeuvre that is not visible, since it is carried out within the unlimited temporality of the effects of the relationship that each person establishes with the objects that compose it and with the context established by its device?

To promote a work of memory by means of interviews recorded on film was the pathway I found towards an answer to these questions. The idea was to produce a living record of the effects of the body constituted by Lygia in her exile from art, as they appeared in her cultural and political environment both in Brazil and in France. The goal was to revive the memory of the potentials of these proposals, via an immersion in the sensations they brought forth in lived experience. Yet it would not be enough to limit the interviews to people that were directly linked to Lygia Clark, to her life and/or her work; it was also necessary to produce a memory of the context in which her poetics had its origins and its conditions of possibility, since the intervention in the dominant politics of subjectivation and of relation to the other was in the air of the times and also came forth in other ways in the effervescent counter-cultural atmosphere of the period. It was particularly important to evoke and record the anguishing experience of the abyss that gaped open in Brazil at the time between the macro and micropolitical actions (which manifested themselves in the guerrilla movement and the counter-culture) in a kind of mutual paranoic repulsion. This abyss could now be problematized, as it was beginning to be surpassed. It was necessary to incite people toward a work of elaboration of this intense experience off an entire generation, a work that had been blocked as a result of the

superimposition of the deadly effects of the dictatorship and of neoliberalism on the exercise of thought (task which I would face armed with my thirty years of psychanalytical practice). In short, it was a matter of producing a memory of the bodies that the experience of Lygia Clark's proposals had affected and where it was inscribed, to give it a chance of pulsating in the present, since this ground, transformed over the course of thirty years by the successive generations of institutional critique, was once again potentially fertilizable. The operation would go against the grain of the neutralization of Lygia Clark's work in its return to that territory, initiated by the market itself. The wager was that the reactivation of this memory – especially that of the artist's legacy – and its assemblage with the vigor of the artistic movements revived by the present generation of institutional critique, would have the power to contribute to these new forces the experience of those ancestral poetics which were under a defensive oblivion. In this way they could be reactivated and their questions could be posed again, in confrontation with the present.

The strategy consisted in opening up a concert of paradoxical and heterogeneous voices, marked by the tone of singularity that comes with lived experience, yet dissonant from the timbres we are used to, whether in the fields of art, therapy or politics. Sixty-six persons were interviewed in France, in the USA, and in Brazil.[16] In the course of the filming, Corinne Diserens, who directed the Nantes Musée des Beaux-arts at the time, proposed that we think up an exhibition grounded on this material. Another challenge was now in place: would it be pertinent to bring this oeuvre into the museological space, knowing that Lygia had definitively deserted this territory as early as 1963? If the artist were alive, would she have opted for this double circulation which has become possible once again today? We will never know. Yet there is one thing of

which we can be sure: she would have reacted energetically to the way in which her work had been put back into the museum. But Lygia is no longer among us, and the decision of how to react to this return could only be taken by ourselves. Assuming the responsibility and the risk of this decision, I chose to intervene in the parameters of the transmission of her work, inside the museum itself. But how to transmit work like that of Lygia to this kind of space?

The exhibition brought in a possible response, by means of resorting to the memory that has constituted its central nerve. The films impregnated the exhibited group of objects and documents with living memory, so as to restore meaning to them – that is, aesthetic experience, indissociably clinical and political, lived by those who participated in those actions and in the context where they had taken place. My supposition was that only in this way could the condition of the *dead archive* that characterizes the documents and objects left over from these actions could be overcome, so as to render them elements of a living memory, producing differences in the present.

To this end I relied on my experience with clinical work in the social field, as introduced by psychotherapy and institutional analysis. I had been involved with it in the course of the 1970s and 1980s, when Lygia developed her relational experiments. During those decades, a broad movement of institutional critique had shaken the field of mental health, provoking irreversible ruptures. This was probably the reason why Lygia chose this field for her extraterritorial drift (a period during which the critical movement had fallen quiet in the territory of art, beneath the heavy weight of the art market that reached its apogee in the 1980s). What leads me to guess the reason for this choice is the keen interest that these movements had elicited in Lygia – especially the experience

of institutional psychotherapy undertaken at La Borde, a psychiatric hospital whose clinical director was Guattari, and also its unfolding in schizoanalysis, the fruit of the pyshcoanlyst's collaboration with Deleuze. The artist had avidly read the *Anti-Oedipus*, the first conjoint work by the two authors, at the very moment of its publication in 1972, and there she found a curious syntony with her own investigations.

Injecting Poetry in the Circuit

Finding out whether or not museums permit this kind of critical conflagration may not be the best way of posing the problem. Unlike what the first generation of institutional critique may have thought, there are no regions of reality that are good or evil in themselves, with a supposedly essential identity or morality that would define them once and for all. We have to shift the givens of the problem, as it has recently started to happen. The focus of the question should be ethical: one has to sketch out the diagram of forces that invest each museum at each moment of its existence: from the most poetic forces to those of the most undignified instrumental manipulation. Between the two poles, active and reactive, a changing multiplicity of forces is asserted, at varied and variable degrees of potential, in a constant reordering of the diagrams of power.

There are no ready-made formulas to carry out such an evaluation. For each task, the artists, the critics and the curators can only count on the resonant potentials of their own bodies, making themselves vulnerable to the new problems that pulsate in each context and at each moment, so as to bring them into the visible and/or the utterable. In the case of the curators, for example, such vulnerability serves to sense the artistic proposals that hold the

power to update such up to then virtual problems, thus taking up the ethical responsibility of their function, in full awareness of the political (and clinical) value of the artistic experience. The next step is to seek the place and the strategies of presentation adequate to the singularity of each one of the proposals, so as to create their conditions of transmissibility.

Whether this enterprise is carried out within museological spaces or not depends on their singularity and on the kind of problem that gives rise to it; and if, in certain cases, the museum can be one of the possible sites for such actions, the choice of the adequate institution involves a cartography of the forces at work before one launches any initiative. It is in this way that the properly poetic force can participate in the destiny of a society, contributing so that its vitality can affirm itself in immunity to the seductive call of the market, which proposes an orientation in exclusive accord with its own interests.

The poetic force is one of the voices in the paradoxical polyphony through which are delineated the heterogeneous and unpredictable becomings of public life. These becomings continually reinvent themselves in order to liberate the life from the deadlocks that build up in the infectious zones where the present becomes unbearable. Artists have a fine ear for the inarticulate sounds that reach us from the unutterable, at the points where the dominant cartography frays apart. Their poetry is the incarnation of such sounds, which then can be heard among us. “Revolutionary microprocesses might not necessarily be of the same nature as social relations. For example, an individual’s relation with music or painting can stimulate a totally new process of perception and sensibility,” points out Guattari.[17] And the schizoanalyst recommends: “We should prescribe poetry like vitamins.” Perhaps it is because she produced such generous doses of poetic force that

the legacy of Lygia Clark continues to nourish our critical thought in the present.

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[1] Félix Guattari and Suely Rolnik, *Micropolítica: Cartografias do desejo,* São Paulo, Vozes, 1986; 7th ed. revised and augmented, 2007, p. 269. English translation: *Molecular Revolution in Brazil,* New York: Semiotext/MIT, 2007 (forthcoming). French translation: *Micropolitiques.* Paris: Le Seuil (Les empêcheurs de penser en rond), 2007.

[2] The Institutional Act number 5, announced by the military regime in December 13th 1968, allowed for any action or attitude considered subversives to be punished with imprisonment without recourse to *habeas corpus*.

[3] Cf. Brian Holmes, "L'extradisciplinaire," published on the occasion of a questioning work in collaboration with François Deck in the exhibition *Traversées*, Musée d'art moderne de la Ville de Paris, 2001. Also see by the same author, "L'extradisciplinaire. Vers une nouvelle critique Institutionnelle", Paris, *Multitude*, n. 28, 2007.

[4] The participation of 13 São Paulo collectives in the *IX Havana Biennale*, under the title of *Território São Paulo*, is one among countless examples of the back and forth movements in the institutional art field by young Brazilian artists (http://www.bienalhabana.cult.cu/protagonicas/proyectos/proyecto.php?idb=9&&idpy=23).

[5] Lygia Clark, "L'homme structure vivante d'une architecture biologique et celulaire," in *Robho*, n. 5-6, París, 1971 (a facsimile of

the journal has been published in Suely Rolnik and Corinne Diserens (eds), *Lygia Clark, de l'oeuvre à l'événement: Nous sommes le moule, à vous de donner o souffle*, cat., Nantes: Musée de Beaux-Arts de Nantes, 2005. Brazilian version: *Lygia Clark, da obra ao acontecimento: Somos o molde, a você cabe o sopro,* São Paulo: Pinacoteca del Estado de São Paulo, 2006. The text is available in Spanish in a reedition entitled "El cuerpo es la casa: sexualidad, invasión del 'territorio' individual," in Manuel J. Borja Villel and Nuria Enguita Mayo (eds), *Lygia Clark,* cat., Fondació Antoni Tàpies, Barcelona, 1997, pp. 247-248.

[6] For further information on the double capacity of the sensibility and its paradox, as well as its central presence in the poetics of Lygia Clark, see Suely Rolnik, "D'une cure pour temps dénués de poésie," in *Lygia Clark, de l'oeuvre à l'événement*, V. Suely Rolnik, "Terapêutica para tempos desprovidos de poesia" / "D'une cure pour temps dénués de poésie", ibid., pp. 13-26.

[7] See Suely Rolnik,"Molding a Contemporary Soul: The Empty-Full of Lygia Clark". In: Rina Carvajal y Alma Ruiz (Eds.). *The Experimental Exercise of Freedom: Lygia Clark, Gego, Mathias Goeritz, Hélio Oiticica and Mira Schendel*. Los Angeles: The Museum of Contemporary Art, 1999. p. 55-108.

[8] Lygia Clark was a teacher at the recently founded U.F.R. d'Arts Plastiques et Science de l'Art de l'Université de Paris I, the Sorbonne (a school known as St. Charles).

[9] *Corpo vibrátil* or "resonant body" is a notion that I have been working on since 1987, when I first proposed it in my doctoral thesis, published as a book in 1989 (*Cartografia Sentimental: Transformações contemporâneas do desejo,* new edition, Porto Alegre: Sulina, 2006; 3th ed. 2007). This concept designates the capacity of

all sense organs to allow themselves to be affected by otherness. It indicates that the whole body has this power to resonate to the forces of the world.

[10] *Relational objects* is the generic name that Lygia Clark has attributed to the objects that had migrated from earlier propositions into the *Structuring of the Self*, or that she had created specially towards this aim.

[11] See esp. Nicolas Bourriaud, *Esthétique Relationnelle*, Presses du Réel, Dijon, France. 2002.

[12] Félix Guattari and Suely Rolnik, *Micropolítica. Cartografias do desejo.* op. cit. p. 132.

[13] Jacques Rancière, "Est-ce que l'art resiste à quelque chose?" lecture delivered at the fifth Simposio Internacional de Filosofia – Nietzsche y Deleuze, "Arte y Resistencia," Fortaleza (CE), 8-12/11/2004.

[14] See Suely Rolnik, "Geopolítica da cafetinagem" / "The geopolitics of pimping," in *Rizoma.net*, electronic magazine, *Documenta 12 Magazine Project*, 2006.

[15] I refer to the room reserved for some of Lygia Clark's experimental propositions at Documenta X, and, above all, to the traveling retrospective exhibition of her work organized by the Fundació Antoni Tapiès, which was shown in other European musuems and in Rio de Janeiro.

[16] Twenty DVDs, bearing French subtitles and accompanied by a booklet, will constitute a box-set issued in an edition of 500 in France, which will be freely distributed to cultural and educational institutions and sold in bookshops. Furthermore, 53 of the 65

filmed interviews will be available, in edited as well as unedited form, at the Musée de Beaux-Arts in Nantes, France. The realisation of this project was made possible with the support of said museum, as well as the Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication and Le Fresnoy - Studio national des arts contémporains..

[17] Félix Guattari and Suely Rolnik, *Micropolítica: Cartografias do desejo,* op. cit. p. 56.