

## On the Symbolic Atlas of Thought of Paola Anziché

I would like to take the film, and the archive presented here on the tables, as an opportunity to talk to you about what is hidden behind the work of Paola. I have entitled my intervention “On the symbolic atlas of thought of Paola Anziché”, as I want to introduce you to the system of knowledge upon which her works are built, and give you some keys to understand and consult her archive.

To start off, I'll just say a few words on her work. We can resume Paola's artistic research by three basic principles.

The first one is interaction. Interaction happens between the body and the artwork, which can take the shape of an object, a sculpture or an installation. As Paola says, her works have “to be seen with hands”: manipulation of her works is really important for apprehending them.

The second principle is the experience of the space. Often her sculptures are portable architectures to be manipulated according to one's whims. When she makes installations, spectators are being asked to enter and play. The physical contact with her artworks allows the body to explore new gestures and to experiment new sensations in relationship with the environment. By this exploration, the spectator discovers states of mind that normally he or she doesn't feel.

The third aspect of her work is a collective dimension. Her works have often to be manipulated by different persons. The experience of the works and of the environment is more intense when collective.

To those three aspects, we can add a new one which emerged when Paola met the work of Lygia Clark. Indeed, I think that what interested her in Clark's research, more than in the research of other artists, for example Franz Erhard Walther or James Lee Byars, was a collective apprehension that manifested in Lygia Clark's work on the boundary of a ritual or a cathartic and therapeutic dimension.

Artistic research by Lygia Clark was loudly inspired by Freud and Lacan theories, but also by animist beliefs of her country. Lively cultural background of Brazil and artistic practices of the Sixties and Seventies reveal to be really important to apprehend Paola's work.

Her first contact with Lygia Clark's work was a picture representing an action made by two persons with the help of the work Biological Architecture. Biological Architecture is made by a plastic canvas, whose extremities are weaved jute bags. Lygia Clark asked people to place their legs inside jute bags and then try to embrace other people into the plastic canvas. What was happening during this action? Was it a performance, a play, or something else?

Paola's researches around the work of Lygia Clark proved to be really hard because of the absence of documentation, especially around this period of her career that Paola wanted to explore: that is to say the lessons that Lygia Clark gave to the Faculty of Plastic Arts and Sciences of Art at La Sorbonne in Paris. This lack of documentation is due to the fact that the works of Lygia Clark are less objects than collective situations that were created by people. So these experiences are really ephemeral, and very few pictures have been taken to document them.

So, researches Paola's researches became almost all a network of encounters with people which collaborated with Lygia Clark, trying to reconstitute the personality of the artist and the means of her

work. That's why the film is structured part as a documentary (interview with ancient students or collaborators) and part as a reconstitution of what was happening during the lessons of Lygia Clark at la Sorbonne.

This network of encounters has been mapped by Paola in her archive, which is presented here on the tables. This archive shows the process of research by Paola. It starts from an obsession, obsession to identify with Lygia Clark's personality, and to collect in a fetishist way all objects recalling her. But it is also, in my opinion, a way to pass on, by these significant objects, clues allowing everyone to reconstruct its own experience of the work of Lygia Clark. In fact, when displayed, this archive acts less as an archive than an atlas (intended in the significant power of Aby Warburg's Atlas of Mnemosyne), a network of knowledge build from images, documentation, part of Clark's objects, etc.

This network of knowledge is weaved approaching the personality of Lygia Clark by people who knew her: we can see a text by Yves Alain Bois, a picture of Suely Rolnik or Alexandra Clark, copies of magazines of the Sixties, catalogues, etc (foto). This archive is important because it weaves a symbolic architecture around the figure of Lygia Clark, her historical and artistic context and reflects a system of connection of persons who knew her and that Paola met and with whom she spoke. Traces of Lygia Clark are important in the archive as well as in the film.

In a recent self-published booklet Paola weaves a map of her encounters around the film, which are associated with those she made during her residence in Brazil, in Rio de Janeiro.

I would like to analyze here this publication, since it is a great opportunity to go deeper inside the creative process.

This publication is made of 6 plates, in the footsteps of Paola when she traveled to Brazil. I want to consider it not in its natural order, but in a much more representative, in my opinion, way that would follow the development of her work.

Here is the last plate: Archive n. 6: People. It is a map, or a network of all encounters that Paola made in Brazil. The network related to the film shows connections of Paola with the family of Lygia Clark, which provided her with images for the interviews of old students and collaborators of Lygia Clark in the film. We can see also her contact with Suely Rolnik. Suely Rolnik is a psychoanalyst who has started to collect "oral archives" around Lygia Clark, shooting interviews with people that knew her.

In Paola's map there is also a geographical itinerary in Brazil: Rio de Janeiro, Sao Paulo that lead us to follow the traces of Paola on the traces of Brazilian art: Hélio Oiticica, Flavio de Carvalho. These two artists have also been important for the apprehension of the Sixties Brazilian avant-garde. Carvalho's researches on experiencing the architectural space and Oiticica's collective performances have definitely nourished Paola's work.

Another important element in this map is candomblé. Following her film on Lygia Clark, Paola won a residence in Rio de Janeiro. Arriving in Brazil, she imbibed herself of the Brazilian atmosphere, she was then introduced in several candomblé parties. She also took part in a party in homage to the popular Brazilian singer Clara Nunes. Once a year, on the 1<sup>st</sup> of November, a group of Candomblé musicians meet in the São João Batista cemetery in Rio de Janeiro. They adorn the singer's grave with yellow and white flowers and sing her songs. Paola took part in the ritual, and she relayed it in the

video A Clara, focusing her attention on details (movement of the hands, clothes, objects, etc.) that are of great importance for the rite and its cathartic dimension.

Here is the second plate I would like to show you, Archive n.1: Objects, is more similar to the archive you can see here in the tables: through the objects we can feel the travelogue of her Brazilian trip. Objects are significant; they tell the story of a nation, of its cultural traditions, of its landscape and nature. All these objects draw a mental symbolic map: little stones, berries, little papers with contact details or notes, a magazine about Flavio de Carvalho, a bark, or a floral fabric you can see also on the tables of the Lygia Clark's archive. We can imagine the system of relationships of Paola, the growing of her process of creation and research, her trip.

In Archive n. 5: Situations, Paola combines the map of relationships with images. This plate tells us about a Brazil of people and rites, of nature and music, of religion and culture, where Paola's wanderings are grafted. One note tells us more about her visit to Tijuca forest in Rio de Janeiro, Burle Marx Jardin, and Jardin Botanico in Rio de Janeiro.

These tropical gardens are also really important in the next plate: Archive n. 2: Nature A. Pictures, taken in the forest, show some vegetal species. We can also see Paola wearing a huge leaf. Here starts, in my opinion, a new project of the artist: the diagram links religion to spirituality, spirituality to candomblé and candomblé to the natural medicine using medical herbs. Coming back in Italy she will create I Maggi. There is a sort of little branches, where leafs are made using copper or madras fabrics. They talk about ancient habits of an archaic and rural world that celebrated the spring by adorning the branches with colored ribbons. The choice of madras fabrics to fabricate the ribbons is also significant: this fabric is used by Creole women since European colonization.

Madras are also been used by Paola in another installation, Choreographica Madras. There is a curtain made by vertical strips of fabric of about 15 or 20 cm wide. This work inserts into the exhibition space by creating a joyful redundancy to the architecture, playing with the space. We can recognize here the same interest in space and color present in the architectures of Flavio de Carvalho.

This interest of Paola has been explored also by painting colored strips upon the store windows of the Gallery of Modern Art in Turin. Touches of color change the experience of the exhibition space.

Let's return to the booklet. A second plate about nature, Archive n.3: Nature B shows other vegetal species. The artist is taken in a picture when wearing a huge leaf. The structure of this leaf is really architectural, it became a shelter, a personal home, a garment, a roof.

"Roofs to be worn": this is a description made by Paola of another recent series of works, called Yurte. Similar to the huge leafs, they are personal architectures, objects that spectators can wear. They also tell stories. The first is the one told by the material used to fabricate them: jute bags that were previously coffee bags. The title and the form of the sculptures tell the story of nomadic tents, but they are also homage to a manual savoir-faire.

The diagram on the plate also annotates other important elements: percussion, trance and dance.

By these elements the diagram refers to magical society (see the word Amuleti, amulets), to the dance as a therapeutic instrument, and opens to the relationship between candomblé and the south Italian phenomenon of the tarantism through the thought of Georges Lapassade.

The magic world is brought together in Archive n. 4: Sources. Here, the works of Freud (I would remind you that psychoanalysis was really important for Lygia Clark) are associated to books about ritual traditions, to ethnologic and anthropologic studies, to the singer Clara Nunes and her link to candomblé.

I would like to spend more time exploring with you all the images system that Paola wanted to show us in this publication. I might stay for hours to follow Paola's traces, and every time I made research on her work I find the sense of a new diagram. Unfortunately we don't have so much time for exploring new clues. But my aim was to show you how these networks of thought are important in weaving a relationship in Paola's work from Culture with a capital C and cultures and their traditions and social meanings.

I also would like to draw attention on some aspects of the young artistic creation and its loudly interest to reshape the links between Culture and cultures.

It seems to me that the artistic landscape has changed in the last ten-fifteen years, from a relational aesthetic as theorized by Nicolas Bourriaud to another reflection about the otherness. Nicolas Bourriaud speaks about relational aesthetic in these terms: "a set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context, rather than an independent and private space"<sup>1</sup>.

The question of otherness, in its cultural and social meaning, shifts today into an inner goal where the other is considered as an "other in us" – a personal, complex, system of cross-references between our biological and cultural origins and the cognitive background we develop in linking to other cultures. Many artists of today are involved in mechanisms of transmission of knowledge, of a memory where their own personal experience is grafted to experiences of other cultures. The difference from the relational aesthetic is that artists appropriate and live cultures of situations that are distant from their original background. Their works act as a reminder of a collective memory.

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<sup>1</sup> Bourriaud, Nicolas, *Relational Aesthetics*, Paris: Les Presses du reel, 1998, p.113