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Art, Education and Oppressive Systems

Art under Brazilian Dictatorship and Freirean Pedagogy – a reflection

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Abstract

What does art look like under conditions of dictatorship and what might be a way to liberation? Oppressive systems do not embrace freedom of speech, nor do they allow for dialogue. How can change happen if there is no free exchange of thoughts? In this dissertation, the attempt has been made to answer these questions by focusing on Paulo Freire's ideas in relation to the artworks of Antonio Manuel and Cildo Meireles. All three of them were affected by the Brazilian dictatorship which lasted between the years 1964 to 1985, representing the harshest time in Brazilian modern history. The so-called 'Leading Years' were followed by censorship, established in 1968 through the Institutional Act #5. Antonio Manuel and Cildo Meireles are artists of the 'Generation AI-5', who despite censorship found ways to create critical artworks and initiate discussions. To be able to do that, critical thinking is necessary. Paulo Freire – an author and educator who was forced to leave Brazil because he was considered a threat to the military regime – created a concept called *problem-posing education* and taught his students to question oppressive situations. He was of the opinion, that only through critical thinking oppressed beings could liberate themselves and change their surroundings.

Keywords

Art, Dictatorship, Oppression, Brazil, Cildo Meireles, Antonio Manuel, Paulo Freire

Introduction

Our global world is a synergetic system, in which the change of each element influences the whole. While in the European Union (EU) freedom and democratic behaviour is understood as the greatest good, it shows its limits around discussions about border politics and the autonomy of countries. According to articles, european countries like Poland – whose politics positions itself against LGBTQIA+¹ people – or Hungary – Orban attempted to rule by decree during the Corona-Pandemic – push fascist ideologies and create an aura of fear.² By analysing history, such behaviour often led to restrictions – in the media, arts, education system and in the end in daily life too. Since we live in a Union, it will have influence on the rest of the EU. By observing these events I questioned myself how oppressive systems are being implemented, how they can survive and if it is possible to recognize them in advance and to shut down the process. When oppressive systems are implemented, what are the tools of liberation and which roles does Art – a medium which allows different ways of expression– and education have?

Actions change under oppressive situations. Thinking and artistic activities deal directly or indirectly with social situations leaving residues in objects and documents that provide an insight into that time, behind. The often misquoted and incomplete phrase by Hegel, *‘We learn from history’*³, comes to mind, but how much do people actually learn, and does it not happen that they rediscover themselves in situations they already knew about, or at least read about? In the end we must not forget the role of violence, an oppressive tool which is used to push ideologies, or when nothing else works. This poses the question: is it possible to break out of this violent cycle? Is there any guidance to anticipate events, or does the success of breaking out of a situation lie in developing new methods? In my opinion, the concept of *problem-posing education* by Freire, which will be explained later in detail, can be a tool of liberation.

¹ **LGBTQIA+** – A common abbreviation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Pansexual, Transgender, Genderqueer, Queer, Intersexed, Agender, Asexual, and Ally community. Gender and Sexuality Student Services, “LGBTQIA+ Terminology,” University of Illinois, accessed 09/24/ 2020, <https://www.uis.edu/gendersexualitystudentservices/about/lgbtqaterminology/>.

² Marc Santora, “Poland’s Populists Pick a New Top Enemy: Gay People,” *The New York Times*, 04/07/2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/07/world/europe/poland-gay-rights.html>;
Shaun Walker, “Hungarian government to end Orbán's rule-by-decree legislation,” *The Guardian*, 05/26/2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/26/hungarian-government-to-end-orbans-rule-by-decree-legislation-emergency-coronavirus>.

³‘We learn from history that we do not learn from history.’ is misquoted. Hegel actually said: ‘What experience and history teach is this — that people and governments never have learned anything from history, or acted on principles deduced from it.’ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, 2001, *The Philosophy of History*, Ontario: Batoche Books, 19.

Initially, at the beginning of my research I asked myself which role ‘art’ had under different dictatorships. Based on an Austrian context, in which I grew up in, the words ‘art’ and ‘dictatorship’ are often taken to mean *art during the Second World War*. Because of my Iranian roots, I observed that when a person deals with ‘art’ and ‘dictatorship’ in relation to Iran, then they discover a very contemporary practice. The Iranian political situation poses particular challenges to many Iranian artists. In Iran, while artistically expressing oneself, it is demanded of artists to be in conformity with the regime, even if one is to exercise criticism in the subtext of a work. In a democratic surrounding, all censorship is being seen as contrary to the democratic principles. In 1969, Ernst Fischer wrote stated ‘Art must do nothing, yet can do everything’,⁴ but in contexts such as Iran, those who do not censor themselves or know how to help themselves under these circumstances are quickly deprived of the practice of art.

During my research, I recognized parallels of the contemporary practice of art in Iran, in writings about art under the Brazilian Dictatorship. Brazilian artists went through a similar situation when the military took over in 1964 and the political situation changed. Stated by Claudia Calirman, it led to a period in which the artists not only intervened and resisted, but also tried to reconfigure the roles of the viewers. This included questioning the art market and the power and legitimacy of art institutions.⁵

In the following chapters the conditions leading to a dictatorship in Brazil and the influence of censorship on the cultural field will be discussed. Briefly, the military dictatorship in Brazil lasted for two decades. During this period, wide-ranging and diverse artistic works were created, some of them will be introduced and explained later.

The book *Brazilian Art under Dictatorship* (2012) by Claudia Calirman has been used as a main resource for this essay, one of the only books being available in English language and narrating in detail about this topic. She describes how the Brazilian artists Antonio Manuel, Artur Barrio and Cildo Meireles developed innovative artistic techniques, using their bodies, available materials and metaphoric language to respond to the repression and censorship under the Brazilian dictatorship. Another artist who criticized the regime through art was Mira Schendel. She protested by participating at the ‘X São Paulo Bienal’ (1969), instead of boycotting the exhibition.

⁴ Ernst Fischer, “Die Kunst muss nichts und darf alles,” *Neues Forum* (186/187), 1969, 458-461.

⁵ Claudia Calirman, *Brazilian Art under Dictatorship*. (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2012), 8.

In my opinion, the only way to have innovative ideas is being able to think critically. The importance of ‘critical thinking’ is explained in Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1996). He was a Brazilian author and educator who developed the concept of *problem-posing education*, a humanist and liberating practice that provides subjects – affected by oppression – with the possibility or tools to fight for their emancipation.⁶ In this dissertation you can find further explanation in the chapter ‘Solution: Problem-posing education over banking education’.

Freire stresses, in order to practice freedom, a dialogic process is needed, and that communication cannot happen without dialogue. He also states that without communication there cannot be a true education.⁷ Critical thinking allows ‘reading between the lines’ when, for example, censorship does not allow free expression. Under oppressive conditions a discussion can be enabled through art. But this only can happen when the viewers are able to question given conditions, which is just possible through critical thinking. In my opinion, oppressive politics follow the agenda to educate people to be uncritical – the opposite of democratic behaviour. Problem-posing education can lead to (self-) empowerment and to change in a society. Freire’s book has been used in this context to remind us of this existing knowledge, a resource which is available for education.

The Artworld under the Brazilian dictatorship

Artistic production is influenced by the circumstances to which artists are exposed. In this dissertation the attempt has been made to analyse the artistic production of Brazilian artists under the dictatorship.

Calirman describes that the military dictatorship (1964 - 1985) and the realities to which Brazilian artists were exposed on a daily basis, made self-censorship a tool in their practice. It was unclear what was forbidden and what was allowed. The artists had to explore the borders and feared punishment. In order to fall under the radar, artists tried to erase any trace of authorship from their works. This led to a metaphorical language that was not dogmatic, but

⁶ In his book which is based on autobiographical elements, Paulo Freire made it his mission to dedicate his life to the fight against hunger. He perfected a method for teaching illiterate people, giving them a tool in order to be able to free themselves of further oppressive life-conditions. However, Freire could not practice without problems and limitations; his developed methodology posed a threat to the old order, and after being imprisoned because of the consequences of the military coup in 1964, he left the country and went to Chile. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, (London: Penguin Books, 1970), 9,13.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 74.

rather anarchic, allowing them to express themselves under these circumstances.⁸ Practices which are used by Iranian artists too, especially when producing critical artworks.

In Paulo Fausto's *A Concise History of Brazil* (1999) it is explained that in Brazil, before the coup d'état, the left-wing president Joao Goulart ran in office. He was overthrown by the military on 31 March 1964. The goals of the newly established military regime were to reform Brazil's capitalism, modernize the country, free it from corruption and to fight against communism.⁹ However, according to Calirman and contrary to what one might think, creative production was not immediately stopped, and the period of mistrust led to anarchic practices. These were sometimes aggressive – for example animals were sacrificed as a metaphor for the killing of political prisoners – but there were also forms of artistic intervention that were not apparent at first glance. This raises the question of how artistic innovation – finding new artistic expressions – and the political agenda can be reconciled in a country under censorship.¹⁰

To give an insight about art under the Brazilian dictatorship the artworks of Antonio Manuel and Cildo Meireles – both had a similar approach – will be discussed. The two artists worked during the suppressive times in Brazil and set signs against right-wing politics. Calirman explains the circumstances in which the artists found themselves and the way they intervened against the political situation.

Under the military regime, in the late 1960s and early 1970s it could be observed, that many artists and intellectuals produced 'ethically and politically significant' cultural productions, which were not necessarily nationalistic or ideologically oriented.¹¹

Note on Violence

Violent structures were present since the establishment of the 'new' Brazilian regime and throughout the whole dictatorship. In the book *On Violence* (2007) various theoretical writings on violence are analysed and explained by the editors Lawrence and Karim. It is noted, that Hegel, Engels, Marx and Fanon reflected on violence as a structure while Foucault asserts, that violence already '*begins in the conscious actions of human beings*' and '*does not exist prior to*

⁸ Calirman, *Brazilian Art under Dictatorship*, 2.

⁹ Boris Fausto, *A Concise History of Brazil*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 273.

¹⁰ Calirman, *Brazilian Art under Dictatorship*, 2,4.

¹¹ It should not be forgotten, that it is not easy to identify how artistic works were perceived by an audience during that time. Calirman researched and compiled narratives of censored exhibitions by interviewing artists and curators to provide a picture of the artworld during the most repressive period (1968 and 1975) of the military dictatorship. Calirman, *Brazilian Art under Dictatorship*, 8.

structure'. As I have understood, it means that an action which is repeated by a human being turns into a practise, which then is implemented and further taught by institutions and this generates a cycle.¹² It is important to bear in mind, that theories of violence cannot be generalized and are written in a historic context.

The Brazilian author Freire cites Frantz Fanon in his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1968) in order to examine oppressive structures. The psychiatrist and philosopher Frantz Fanon was working during the Algerian war of Independence (1954 - 1962) in a French hospital in Algeria. Being personally affected by oppressive conditions he started analysing the effects of colonialism on colonized countries, which he documented in his book *The Wretched of the earth* (1961) in detail. Briefly discussing the question of violence, he believed the colonized bodies must engage in violent acts to liberate themselves from oppression. But he also explained that once violence '*has been initiated, it takes its own course and produces more violence*'. Fanon also raises the question: '*Is violence necessary at times, and if so, does it, or can it, put an end to further violence?*'¹³ The acts of liberation are described by Paulo Freire as *violent looking* but he expresses, that violence is never generated by the oppressed in the first place, but by the oppressors and hence liberation creates love, not violence. In order to be able to put an end to a violent cycle, Paulo Freire introduces the concept of ***problem-posing education*** and insists, that only dialogue can produce change. I will elaborate on this in more detail later in the essay.

Brazilian Art 1964 to 1985

This essay examines Brazilian art during the military dictatorship, which lasted from 1964 to 1985 and its influence on the cultural production. Even though, by that time, it was not the only country in South America under dictatorship, as the only Portuguese-speaking country on the continent its artistic production has been treated separately from the rest of Latin America.¹⁴ To comprehend under which conditions the Brazilian artists produced art, it is important to know about some historical events. In the history of modern Brazil, the military dictatorship is described as the harshest time, marked by fear and injustice.¹⁵

¹² Bruce B Lawrence and Aisha Karim, *On Violence: A Reader*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007), 5-7

¹³ *Ibid.*, 78.

¹⁴ Calirman, *Brazilian Art under Dictatorship*, 152.

¹⁵ According to records more than 50,000 people were in prison and about 7000 people were in exile. An ongoing project, initiated by the families of the victims of the military regime, documents that more than 436

Censorship - The Ato Insitutional #5

Calirman discusses the art practices of Brazilian artists which were influenced by oppressive conditions under the dictatorship. For instance, they were affected by the *Ato Institucional #5* (Institutional Act #5), also known as *AI-5*; a decree which restricted the art and cultural production of Brazil.¹⁶

Between the military coup (1964) and the introduction of the AI-5 (1968), the cultural output of the left was not particularly limited. According to the literary critic Roberto Schwarz (1969), the country was even affected by a cultural hegemony of the left.¹⁷ When the *Institutional Act #5* was put into force on the 13 December 1968, the circumstances changed. The National Congress was closed, habeas corpus¹⁸ was banned, demonstrations were not allowed, and generally the autonomy of civilians was limited.¹⁹

The severity of the consternation differed according to media production.²⁰ The newspapers, radio and television, but also the Brazilian theatre and music industry were affected by drastic controls.²¹ Authors, poets, intellectuals and performers had to flee into exile, or went to jail. Unlike the media the visual arts were not subject to strictly defined censorship criteria and the actual extent of censored artworks are not known.²²

people also died or disappeared during this period. Comissão da Verdade “Relatório - Tomo II: Dossiê Ditadura: Mortos e Desaparecidos Políticos no Brasil (1964-1985),” (São Paulo, 2014), https://www.plural.jor.br/documentosrevelados/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/ii_tomo_dossie-ditadura-mortos-e-desaparecidos-politicos-no-brasil-1964-1985-2.pdf.

¹⁶ Calirman, *Brazilian Art under Dictatorship*, 4.

¹⁷ Roberto Schwarz, “Culture and Politics in Brazil (1964-1969),” (1969) <https://readingtheperiphery.org/schwarz/>.

¹⁸ **Habeas corpus**, an ancient common-law writ issued by a court or judge directing one who holds another in custody to produce the person before the court for some specified purpose. The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, “Habeas corpus,” accessed 09/24/2020, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/habeas-corpus>.

¹⁹ See Edmilson Costa, “Remembering the Years of Lead under Brazil’s military rule: AI-5 never again!” (Liberation School, 2019), <https://liberationschool.org/remembering-the-years-of-lead-under-brazils-military-rule-ai-5-never-again/>.

²⁰ The mediums were controlled by the regime and many editors and producers were arrested. Roberto Schwarz, *Culture and Politics in Brazil*.

²¹ According to the journalist Zuenir Ventura, more than 500 songs, 500 films, 450 plays and 200 books were censored during this period. Costa, *Rememberng the years of Lead*.

²² Calirman, *Brazilian Art under Dictatorship*, 149.

First censorships in the visual arts

Claudia Calirman dedicates a great part of her book to the circumstances of the censorship. During the Brazilian dictatorship the censorship criteria of the mass media were announced directly and comprehensibly. This didn't happen for the visual arts. Visual artists had to explore the borders of possibilities while the government understood art as irrelevant. Nevertheless, it happened, that single works of art were censored or whole exhibitions cancelled. The reasons were usually not transparently communicated, leading to confusion.²³ In order to understand the arbitrariness of the strategies, this chapter discusses some works of art which were affected by censorship.

The first documented artistic work to be censored, even before AI-5 was introduced, was *Domingo das Bandeiras* (Flag Sunday) (1967), a project by Nelson Leirner and Flávio Motta. Sofia Gotti (2016) gives in her article an overview about the art project. The project took place twice, showing flags with symbols of Brazilian culture, including the logos of Brazilian soccer teams or religious icons. The first time it was presented, the flags were hanging in a busy district of São Paulo, criticizing the exclusivity of galleries and museums.²⁴ Calirman completes that the military interpreted the action as provocative and the police stopped the undertaking, since the artists did not have a property permit. The flags were confiscated, the participants were chased away, and the initiators were fined.²⁵ One year later, the action was repeated with new flags. One flag that received the most attention was designed by Hélio Oiticica. He used a picture from a newspaper and combined it with the sentence 'Seja marginal, seja herói' ('Be an Outcast, Be a Hero') (plate 1).²⁶

The first official closing of an exhibition happened at the 'II National Biennial of Bahia' (December 1968) and Calirman explains the circumstances which led to it.²⁷ Among the works on display there was a 4-meter-long panel by Antonio Manuel; a red canvas with black silk-screen prints, showing reproduced newspaper pictures, as well as headlines about the street riots

²³ Calirman, *Brazilian Art under Dictatorship*, 17-25.

²⁴ Sofia Gotti, "Popau, Pop or an "American way of living?" An introduction to Aracy Amaral's "From Stamps to Bubbles," *ARTMargins*, (2016), https://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/pdf/10.1162/ARTM_a_00150, 113.

²⁵ Calirman, *Brazilian Art under Dictatorship*, 18

²⁶ The picture showed the criminal Alcir Figueira da Silva, who, instead of being convicted of a bank robbery, preferred to commit suicide. Gotti, *Popau, Pop or an 'American way of living?'*, 113.

²⁷ Twenty-four hours after the Governor of Bahia, Luiz Vianna Filho, held a speech, the exhibition was closed. The oppressing forces argued, that the exhibition was showing erotic and obvious political content. Allegedly, Filho said in his speech that all young art has to be revolutionary and that art is characterized by freedom. Calirman, *Brazilian Art under Dictatorship*, 21.

where the police clashed with the students.²⁸ Calirman writes that the work disappeared and Manuel later found out that it was burned by the military. Another ten exhibited works were confiscated by the Federal Police.²⁹ Manuel described in a letter that his return trip after the exhibition was very dramatic and he feared being arrested. Since the regime would act arbitrarily and not give warnings in advance, many visual artists started to practice self-censorship to avoid hardships.³⁰

Ato Insitucional #5 and its influence on Biennales

A place where artistic exchange happened, and artists were updated about the newest trends were the Biennales. According to Calirman, since the economic circumstances made it difficult for Brazilian artists to travel, these events were a source of inspiration. Between 1950 and the early 1960s several biennials were held in Brazil.³¹

The São Paulo Biennial, which is founded after the Venice Biennial (established in 1895), is the second oldest art biennial in the world.³² Briefly summarizing Calirmans writings, the Sao Paulo Biennial's had a huge influence on the Latin-American artistic community and the first one was held in 1951. For the 'X São Paulo Biennial' in 1969 many international participants were invited but because of the censorship-practices of the regime, most of them decided to boycott the event as an act of criticism.³³

Pre-Paris Biennial

The arbitrary censorships by the regime caused several problems, sometimes whole exhibitions got cancelled. For example, the 'Pre-Paris Biennial' (May 1969) which was planned at the MAM/RJ³⁴ could not take place. Calirman provides the explanation that the museum had been instructed to not exhibit any political or ideological works and to consult the Minister before, but they failed to do so. As a result, the military blocked the doors before the opening.³⁵

²⁸ See Costa, *Remembering the Years of Lead*.

²⁹ Calirman, *Brazilian Art under Dictatorship*, 21.

³⁰ Antonio Manuel, "Exhibition does not respect the memory of the violence and emptiness generated in 1968," *Journal of 100 Days* (3rd Bahia Biennial, 2014), 15.

³¹ Calirman, *Brazilian Art under Dictatorship*, 13.

³² Biennial Foundation, accessed 09/24/2020. <https://www.biennialfoundation.org/biennials/sao-paolo-biennial/>.

³³ Calirman, *Brazilian Art under Dictatorship*, 13.

³⁴ Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro

³⁵ This event functioned as a preview for the 'VI Youth Paris Biennial' (October to November 1969) but it did not even have the chance to open to the public. Calirman, *Brazilian Art under Dictatorship*, 22, 23.

A submitted artwork, which was unfavourable to the representatives of the dictatorship, was *Repressão outra vez - Eis o saldo* (1968) by Antonio Manuel (plate 2). As described by Calirman, the work was similar to the submission for the 'Bahia Festival', it was a panel with red paint and black silkscreen prints. This time five single panels, each covered with a black cloth were on display. From a distance, the panels seemed like abstract geometric shapes; black surfaces with white dividing lines. If you got closer, you could see that the white lines were actually cords. The audience could manipulate the work by pulling them, whereupon the black cloths rose, and the red canvases underneath came to shine. On the red surfaces, black images were shown, which were taken from the front page of the newspaper *São Paulo Última Hora*. They showed the police's clashes with the students.³⁶

In her book, Calirman often discusses parallels between Antonio Manuel's and Andy Warhol's work. She shows that Manuel imitated Warhol's artistic practice, using repetitions, seriality and saturated colours. The contrast of printed black newspaper clippings on a saturated background created a visual shock.³⁷ Manuel knew how to make use of these elements and left a lasting impression with his artwork. The poetic words of Paulo Filho on his work were: "*The pull of string and a black curtain unveils the tragic news, the beautiful funereal standard of rebelliousness.*"³⁸

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The X São Paulo Bienal

The closing of exhibitions became a practice under the Brazilian dictatorship and international positions recognized the oppressive political situation in Brazil. As stated by Claudia Calirman, the 'X São Paulo Bienal' (1969) took place after the introduction of the Institutional Act #5 and experienced a boycott, which had an impact on the further artistic production in Latin America.³⁹

Calirman resumes and explains that the Brazilian artist Hélio Oiticica wrote a letter to the French delegation on 10 June 1969 asking them to withdraw their participation, six days later a historic meeting was held at the Paris City Museum of Modern art to discuss the participation

³⁶ Calirman, *Brazilian Art under Dictatorship*, 16

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Paulo Venancio Filho, "Ato/Fato," in *Fatos Antonio Manuel*, by Antonio Manuel, (Sao Paulo: Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil, 2007), 24.

³⁹ Calirman, *Brazilian Art under Dictatorship*, 16

of France. Other countries also withdrew their participation. As a reason, they stated they did not want to support a country without a free press.⁴⁰

Opposing positions had the opinion that a strategic participation would be more meaningful than boycotting the Biennial. One such representative was Mira Schendel, who positioned herself with her installation *Ondas paradas de probabilidade - Antigo Testamento, Livro dos Reis I, 19* (Still Waves of Probability - Old Testament, Book of Kings I, 19) (1969).⁴¹ In 2013 the São Paulo Biennial's Blog published an article about Schendel's work, providing details about the installation, which consisted of a 5m² surface and thousands of nylon threads attached to the ceiling floated above a height of three meters in the room. Since the threads were unexpectedly longer than the height of the room, they formed a curve on the floor.⁴² The installation was accompanied by a biblical text.⁴³ Today this work is understood in a political context and is associated with *public silence* and '*the sense of abandonment felt during the dictatorship*'.⁴⁴ Calirman provides the information about Mira Schendel, who wrote in her diary about the aesthetics of the work and the attempt to make the invisible visible.⁴⁵ A strategy which Antonio Manuel and Cildo Meireles also followed and which I will discuss in the next chapter. It was not until 1979, when the government pardoned political prisoners, that the events surrounding the 'X São Paulo Bienal' were published.⁴⁶

Two Brazilian artists – one critical thought

*It was a time marked by uncertainty and upheaval, by shifting boundaries and unspoken fear, but also one ripe for new trends in the visual arts that would shake archaic structures and forge fresh modes of artistic expression.*⁴⁷

⁴⁰ Calirman, *Brazilian Art under Dictatorship*, 25, 30

⁴¹ Ibid, 34

⁴² Bienal de São Paulo, "ONDAS PARADAS DE PROBABILIDADE," accessed 09/24/2020, <http://www.bienal.org.br/post/305>.

⁴³ '*And a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire still a small voice.*

And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave. And, behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, "What does thou here, Elijah?"

Luis Enrique Perez-Oramas, Leon Ferrari & Mira Schendel, "Tangled Alphabets", exhibition catalogue, (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2009), 39.

⁴⁴ Calirman, *Brazilian Art under Dictatorship*, 34.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 24.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 35

In this chapter I will introduce some artworks of Antonio Manuel and Cildo Meireles and I attempt to point out similarities between their artistic practice. I will also try to relate the artworks to ideas of Paulo Freire. The two artists belonged to the 'Generation AI-5' and were affected by restrictions, a result of the Brazilian dictatorship. Their artistic production consists of highly political works, criticizing the regime. According to Calirman, both positioned themselves against the right-winged ideologies and generated critical and political discussions through their art.⁴⁸ Bearing in mind Paulo Freire's ideas, this was a way to resist and to free themselves of oppression.

Antonio Manuel is an artist who, in a time of repression, committed himself to the *experimental exercise of freedom*.⁴⁹ His works were recognizable since he had an own visual language and, on the report of Calirman, they were often subject to censorship, sometimes even led to closures of entire exhibitions.

In order to avoid conflicts and to prevent such circumstances, Manuel's publicity agent Aroldo Araújo took precautions as the installation *Soy loco por ti* (1969) (plate 3) was exhibited in the 'Salão da Bussola' by seeking the opinion of a priest and a general.⁵⁰

Calirman gives in her book an overview of the artwork. The installation consisted of wood, cloth, plastic, grass, and a rope. Manuel re-used stylistic elements he had used in *Repressão outra vez - Eis o saldo* (1968) and the work had a participatory component. A bed made of grass (approximately king-size) was presented, and at the head of the bed a black cloth with an appliquéd rope hung vertically on the wall. The audience had the opportunity to get into the bed and pull on the rope. When they did so, the cloth rose, and it reminded of a tent. Also, a bright red map of Latin America on a black background became visible.⁵¹

The reviewers, at first thought that the work was subversive. In their view, the black cloth was a reference to the anarchist flag and the map of Latin America reminded them of the communist flag. After some consideration, however, they announced that Manuel's work did not need to be removed.⁵² Manuel's strength was to make ambiguous art, with multiple layers, in order to challenge the audience.

⁴⁸ Calirman, *Brazilian Art under Dictatorship*, 38.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 78.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 62.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 61.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 62.

Challenge as an artistic practice

Antonio Manuel did not only defy an audience but also institutions. In the book *Brazilian Art under Dictatorship* it is written that the artist caused a sensation at the opening night of the 'XIX National Salon of Modern Art' (1970) at MAM/RJ, an exhibition in which his artistic participation was denied. He applied with his work *O corpo é a obra* (The Body is the Work) (1970).

*'On the day of the exhibition I took a stool and stayed in line waiting for my turn to exhibit my work of art... I offered to be exposed to the public at the museum, for the entire duration of the exhibition.'*⁵³

Calirman continues that his work was rejected under the pretext that an artist should not be in the same room as the jury during their consultation. Manuel acknowledged that he was not the artist, but the work of art. He was then asked who the author of the work was, as he replied, it was his father.⁵⁴ The jury made the excuse that they did not have the right conditions to support him during the exhibition.⁵⁵ *O corpo é a obra* was not accepted and Manuel went to the opening of the exhibition as a visitor. Since the visitors recognized him, a commotion was caused. He took the opportunity to perform an *impromptu act*. He started to take off his clothes and Vera Lúcia followed his protest.⁵⁶ Manuel walked up the stairs, stood on the balustrade and held onto a pole while he positioned himself as a living statue and moved his arm as if he was raising a flag. Calirman's analysis shows, that this representation became a memorable symbol of artistic resistance against the military regime.⁵⁷ According to Freire, liberation can only take place when the oppressed realize they can change their circumstances⁵⁸— and in my opinion, Antonio Manuel's resistive behaviour was a way to liberate himself.

Following Calirman's notes, Manuel had to flee the museum, when the security guards showed up. Subsequently, the police came and blocked the museum; the next day the exhibition was closed. The media reported the event and a discussion about subjectivity and censorship

⁵³ Marcelo Ridente, "Em Busca do Povo Brasileiro" in Calirman, *Brazilian Art under Dictatorship*, 36.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 36.

⁵⁵ Calirman, *Brazilian Art under Dictatorship*, 49. Forty years after Manuel's submission, the exhibition *Marina Abramović: The Artist Is Present* at MoMA (14 March to 31 May 2010) took place; a retrospective and performance recreation of her works. In her main performance, *The Artist is Present* (2010), Abramović sat on an armchair during the opening hours – more than 700 hours in total— and museum visitors were invited to sit across her and watch her in silence. See Holland Cotter, "700-Hour Silent Opera Reaches Finale at MoMA," (2010), <https://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/31/arts/design/31diva.html>.

⁵⁶ Lúcia was a life-model at the National School of Fine Arts.

⁵⁷ Calirman, *Brazilian Art under Dictatorship*, 38.

⁵⁸ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 47.

took place. After this incident, Manuel was no longer allowed to enter the MAM/RJ and his participation in official salons was denied for two years. Brazil was in the most severe phase under the military dictatorship and artists had already started self-censorship. But since they could not produce for a market, they experimented a lot and tried to find new ways of expression.⁵⁹

As reported by Calirman, Manuel was banned from the public salons for two years and an exhibition with his works was announced for 1973 at the 'sala experimental' of the MAM/RJ. All of his submitted works except *O bode* (The Goat) (1972) were rejected. In Portuguese, *bode* means 'goat' and 'bad vibes', which increased the interpretative power of the work; a black goat sitting on a red circle painted on the museum floor. During the military government, there were several artists who used or even sacrificed animals as a metaphor, to depict the horror carried out by the regime.⁶⁰

Subject to heavy censorship, Manuel did not tolerate the museum's reaction. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* Freire explains the importance of 'self-empowerment' and writes, that the oppressed have to reflect on suppressive conditions and accept that they can be an active part in the change.⁶¹ As stated by Calirman, Manuel contacted the newspaper *O Jornal* (Rio de Janeiro) and asked them to publish his censored works.⁶² My impression is, that as a practice of liberation, Manuel made it possible to present his art through mass media. According to the concept of problem-posing education, he became aware of the fact, that the world is not a static reality but one which is transformable and he took the opportunity to generate change.⁶³ He also managed to criticize the museum and the regime by making use of circulation systems.

Another artist who dealt with circulating systems was Cildo Meireles. His artistic practice shows parallels to Antonio Manuel's. Calirman dedicated him a chapter in her book. Meireles made his debut on the international art scene in 1970 when he participated in an exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, New York. Many of his works were conceptual and had a political component. His working method became more radical as the regime increased its repressive practices around 1970.⁶⁴

⁵⁹ Calirman, *Brazilian Art under Dictatorship*, 63.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 74.

⁶¹ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 50.

⁶² The editor, Washington Noaves, gave Manuel the art section of the Sunday Edition (15 July 1973). It consisted of six pages and the publication had a circulation of 60,000 copies. The title of the Arts and Leisure supplement was *Exposição de Antonio Manuel - De 0 a 24 Horas* (Exhibition of Antonio Manuel - From 0 to 24 Hours). Calirman, *Brazilian Art under Dictatorship*, 63.

⁶³ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 64.

⁶⁴ Calirman, *Brazilian Art under Dictatorship*, 114.

The surrounding environment of the artists was an inspiration for his artistic production which becomes visible in *Cruzeiro do Sul* (Southern Cross) (1960 to 1970). Explained by author, this work thematized the colonization of the Brazilian indigenous population by the missionary Jesuits. For his 9mm cube sculpture *Cruzeiro do Sul*, Meireles used soft pinewood and hard oak which potentially carried an explosive energy.⁶⁵ The confrontation with the indigenous population was a concern to his family and influenced by leftist thought, Meireles dedicated his art to the minorities of Brazil.⁶⁶ At this point, I think it is important to explain the difference of *cultural invasion* and *cultural synthesis* as stated by Freire. *Cultural invasion* means when an actor enters ‘another world’ and invades it with his own ideologies. Related to Meireles he would have acted invasive, by appropriating indigenous rituals for his personal benefit. *Cultural Synthesis* on the opposite means when the actor comes from ‘another world’ in order ‘to learn with the people, about the people’s world’.⁶⁷ It is true that Meireles made use of indigenous knowledge for his work but as I have understood it, under the definition of *cultural synthesis*, he did it to support the indigenous people instead of exploiting them.

Dialogue opportunities through art

Like Antonio Manuel, Cildo Meireles also used animals for his artistic practice, as captured by Calirman. One of his related artworks was presented at the exhibition ‘Do Corpo á Terra’ (17 to 21 April 1970). The event is remembered by many who have visited it, since strong regime-critical artworks were on display.⁶⁸

Meireles’ installation, consisting of a wooden stake driven into the ground, is reminiscent of funeral pyres that were erected to burn witches in the middle ages. *Tiradentes: Totem-monumento ao preso político* (Tiradentes: Totem-Monument to the Political Prisoners) (1970) also consisted of a thermometer fixed on the top of the 2.5-meter-long stake, a white cloth lying on the ground, and chickens tied to the stake; doused with gasoline. During the performance

⁶⁵ For the Tulpi-Indians, oak and pine are materials with divine power and not just simple natural elements. When these two types of wood are rubbed together, they create a fire; for the Tulpi-Indians it is the manifestation of their deities. Ibid., 117.

⁶⁶ Meireles father was a government official involved with the Indian's right movement and brought the murderers of a genocide against the indigenous population to the court. His uncle helped the Indians gain control over their land and his uncle's son worked with the them in the 1960s to protect their land. Cildo Meireles Interview with the author, 7 August 2002 **quoted in** Calirman, *Brazilian Art under Dictatorship*, 117.

⁶⁷ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 161-162.

⁶⁸ Calirman, *Brazilian Art under Dictatorship*, 121.

the pyre was lit. Brazilian artists used animals to depict the brutality of the regime and to commemorate the tortured and dead political prisoners.⁶⁹

Calirman writes, that Meireles' work also had a second narrative level; that of colonial history. According to Fausto, Joaquim José da Silva Xavier was a dentist known as Tiradentes (teeth-puller) who was hanged by the Portuguese in 1792, accusing him of leading a conspiracy movement against the crown. His detached head was displayed in public.⁷⁰ This detail is important for the analysis of Meireles' work in a political context. Calirman stated that Meireles' work can be seen as an analogy to Foucault's writing but assumes, that the artist did not know about the book *Discipline and Punish: The birth of the Prison* (1975).⁷¹

In *Discipline and Punish* Foucault describes throughout the history the practice of punishing criminals and the change from the public spectacle around the bodies to a transformation into a system consisting of discipline, confinement, and surveillance.⁷²

Translated to the artist's work: José da Silva Xavier was publicly humiliated in the eighteenth century. Contrary, the tortures which took place under the military regime happened in closed rooms. The artist wanted to remind about the different oppressive practices throughout history and activate a cultural memory.

If you are an artist in Brazil, you know of at least one friend who is being tortured; if you are one in Argentina, you probably have had a neighbour who has been in jail for having long hair, or not being "dressed" properly; and if you are living in the United States, you may fear that you will be shot at, either in the universities, in your bed, or more formally in Indochina. It may seem too inappropriate, if not absurd, to get up in the morning, walk into a room, and apply dabs of paints from the little tube to a square canvas. What can you as a young artist do that seem relevant and meaningful?⁷³

– McShine

Cildo Meireles took part in the exhibition 'Information' (1970) at MoMa (Museum of Modern Art, New York) and again exhibited works which were politically charged. This time

⁶⁹ Calirman, *Brazilian Art under Dictatorship*, 121.

⁷⁰ Fausto, *A Concise History of Brazil*, 61-62.

⁷¹ Foucault's writings were not available in Brazil until the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s. Calirman, *Brazilian Art under Dictatorship*, 122.

⁷² Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, (trans. Allan Sheridan), (New York: Pantheon Books, 1975).

⁷³ Kynaston McShine, *Information*, (New York: Museum of Modern Art), 138.

he was concerned with circulating systems, the creation of counter-information, and the use of systems to comment on established power structures.⁷⁴

One of his works was *Inserções em circuitos ideológicos: Projeto Coca-Cola* (Insertions into Ideological Circuits: Coca-Cola Project) (1970) (plate 4). Calirman provided also an explanation about his work in her book. With silkscreen printing Meireles manipulated Coca-Cola bottles by inserting messages, following the visual language of the brand. He printed the sentence: *'Inscribe on the bottles critical opinions and send them back into circulation'* and send the bottles back for recycling. When the bottle was empty, it was barely possible to see the messages, but filled with the dark drink, they became visible. Meireles created thousands of modified bottles with political messages and asked consumers to contribute their own statements. Some of his bottles also contained instructions on how to mix a Molotov cocktail. These were often compiled by students and used in street battles against the police.⁷⁵ Meireles found a way to hack the system and spread counter-information, providing liberating instructions and establishing a dialogue.

The works of Meireles moved in an open circulation system and it is not known whether they were recognized as art objects by the recipients. At a time, when opinions could not be expressed freely and the arts were affected by censorship, Meireles created a critical exchange that also anonymized authorship through circulation, as stated by Calirman.⁷⁶ If we relate his artworks to the ideas of Freire, Meireles resisted oppression without physical violence, by manipulating the circulation system. He made use of the concept of problem-posing education by establishing a critical dialogue.

Conclusion

Under the military dictatorship, media such as radio, newspapers, television, as well as theatre, literature and the music industry were strictly controlled. The parameters for censorship were defined, unlike in the visual arts. Visual artists had to sound out the boundaries and sometimes got into difficult situations. In this chapter, I have attempted to discuss some of the works of Antonio Manuel and Cildo Meireles to place them in a political context. Manuel and Meireles developed a metaphorical language and found loopholes to criticize the regime. Calirman describes in her book *Brazilian Art under Dictatorship* how the undefined parameters for the

⁷⁴ McShine, *Information*, 138.

⁷⁵ Calirman, *Brazilian Art under Dictatorship*, 127.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 130.

visual art world triggered an aura of fear, and that the artists thereby committed self-censorship. They found innovative ways to express themselves and created some of the most invigorating artistic form in decades.⁷⁷ But Calirman also emphasizes that the dictatorship should not be praised for stimulating the artists.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ Calirman, *Brazilian Art under Dictatorship*, 149.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 147.

Questions of Pedagogical Resistance

In the preceding chapters we have been informed about some historic events of Brazil, the AI-5 and artworks produced during the dictatorship. Marco Napolitano (2018) explains that the Brazilian conservatives did not support the ‘base reform’ efforts of the president João Goulart, who was considered an extreme leftist, and they started a conspiracy against him. The political crisis led to a coup d’état, which was in the end executed by the military and led to an oppressive era.⁷⁹

In this dissertation, the creative production of artists under oppressive circumstances have been described, showing artistic parallels. We have seen different strategies, which criticized the regime and recognized, that art can be used as a tool for liberation. In order to understand the process of liberation some conditions of oppression will be discussed.

The educative book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1969) written by Paulo Freire deals with the problems of people who are oppressors and those who suffer from oppression. However, Freire’s analysis of the consciousness of the oppressors and the oppressed is only the first of two stages in this pedagogy. It takes into account the behaviour of the people, as well as the view of ‘their’ world and the ethics to which they are subject. The oppressed are contradictory, split beings, thus living a duality which is perceived as a particular dilemma. Their existence takes place in a concrete situation shaped by violence and oppression, and it is necessary to reveal their oppressed reality. Thus, by unveiling, they can commit to the educational practice which will lead to a transformation of their world.⁸⁰

The second stage of humanistic libertarian pedagogy is concerned with the fact that the reality of the oppressed has already been transformed, and thus the ‘pedagogy of the oppressed’ ceases and becomes a ‘pedagogy of all people in the process of liberation’.⁸¹ Freire brings the question of how ‘the oppressed people, as divided, unauthentic beings’, can participate in the development of ‘the pedagogy of their liberation’.⁸²

⁷⁹ Marcos Napolitano, “The Brazilian Military Regime, 1964–1985,” (2018) <https://oxfordre.com/latinamericanhistory/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199366439.001.0001/acrefore-9780199366439-e-413>.

⁸⁰ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 30.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 36.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 30.

To answer this question, Freire points out that in history violence has never been initiated by the oppressed, since they are the result of violent actions and assumes, no person deliberately seeks to get into a situation where they have to experience violence.⁸³

According to Freire, '*violence is initiated by those who oppress*', because they do not perceive other people as fully-fledged persons.⁸⁴ An act is understood as oppressive if it prevents persons from attaining full humanity. This means that person *B* is prevented by person *A* from seeking self-assertion or from becoming a responsible person.

Stated by Freire, the oppressors look at other people as 'things' and consider the environment as their property, thus treat them with disrespect and exploit them. Those in power want to be left alone and live in peace, but ignore the fact that others fight for their survival. These forms of oppression have been implemented and they are passed on from generation to generation. As a result, the possessive behaviour of the oppressors is reinforced, and change is not possible. By declaring everything around them as objects: '*the earth, property, production, the creations of people, people themselves, time*' they make everything available for themselves.⁸⁵ 'In my opinion, this materialistic approach leads to the urge to always want more, even if it means that others have less. They overlook their privileges and possession is more important to them than ethical behaviour. Freire describes, according to the logic of the powerful, they have the right to own, since they have supposedly earned everything. They justify having little or nothing by saying that the oppressed are lazy, not willing to take risks, or not trying hard enough. However, to prove that they are not completely inhuman, they give and donate. Freire calls this kind of gifts *false generosity* since the dominant class expects the oppressed to be grateful to them and to be content. Care is also taken to ensure that the oppressed do not receive too much, in order to prevent ingratitude and envy. Since the oppressed are perceived as potential enemies, the oppressors control them and refuse to dismantle their destructive behaviour.⁸⁶ A behaviour which can be observed during every dictatorship.

In summary, Freire claims that violence emanates from the oppressors, but that they make the oppressed guilty and define them as violent; especially when they resist and stand up for their rights. It is important to know the definition of oppression, to be able to recognize it and find solutions which lead to liberation. In my opinion, everybody has the duty to free oneself and others from oppressive structures and the first step to do so, is educating oneself.

⁸³ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 37.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 40.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 40-42.

Parameters of Resistance

*It is only the oppressed who, by freeing themselves, can free their oppressors.*⁸⁷

In order to free themselves, the oppressed must resist. This defending, or rebellion is usually not free of violence, but it can, according to Freire, generate love.⁸⁸ By fighting for their right – to be seen as full human beings – the oppressed take away the power of the oppressors. At the same time, they enable the ruling class to regain their humanity, which they have lost in the exercise of oppression.⁸⁹ If we take a look at Meireles work *Insertions into Ideological Circuits* we can see resistance. Meireles tried to manipulate the circulation systems to establish a critical discussion or at least to generate critical thinking.

For both – the oppressor and the oppressed – to be liberated, the struggle of the oppressed is needed, since those in power cannot redeem themselves or others. Freire points out that it is not possible to change the poles, but new ways must be created so that liberation can take place. Actual liberation can only be attained when the dominant class in its constellation is dissolved. It is no longer possible to speak of liberation if these efforts fail and the old forms are continued in new occupation.⁹⁰

Freire points out, that after a successful change there is, among other things, the problem of the dissatisfaction of former rulers. They used to have the possibility to arrange their life according to their wishes, ignoring the fact that others did not even have the most necessary things to survive.⁹¹

Joining Forces and potential problems

Change is often made possible by members of the dominant class (allies) joining the struggle for liberation and creating opportunities for the oppressed that are otherwise denied to them by lack of privileges.⁹² At this point I want to remember about the chapter ‘Challenge as an artistic practice’. Antonio Manuel, as an oppressed being, was refused to present his artworks at the

⁸⁷ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 38.

⁸⁸ Ibid, 38.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 39.

⁹¹ Ibid., 41.

⁹² Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 109.

MAM/RJ, but established by the editor Washington Noaves, he had the opportunity to show his works in the newspaper.

Further, Freire states that the dominant class brings qualities from its oppressive origins and does not trust those who fight. They speak in the name of the oppressed, but do not trust them to think and act; allies also assume to know better what is needed. These actions are followed by paternalism. In order to prevent this behaviour to becoming a practice, and to inhibit old structures from being re-implemented (albeit unconsciously), Freire points out: *'Those who authentically commit themselves to the people must re-examine themselves constantly.'*⁹³

This sentence is very important if we consider the role of education. I believe, that the task of teachers is to teach their students to be independent and be able to think critically. Teachers are not allowed to push ideologies, rather they must provide opportunities for their student to *'critically consider reality'*.⁹⁴ The students, on the other hand, must learn how to use their knowledge without generating new oppressive situations and better, to be a helpful member of society,

Human Duality

Paulo Freire explains what he understands as *human duality*, whereby even led by good intentions, certain situations of oppression occur repeatedly, since people are marked by duality. Referring to the relationship between the oppressors and the oppressed, Freire describes that the oppressed often underestimate themselves and are not aware of their abilities. They don't realize that they have knowledge which they have acquired through their relationship with the environment. Unfortunately, it also happens that they see those in power as omniscient. Since their oppressors always attributed negativity to them, repeatedly making them feel that they *'are not good enough, that they do not know anything, that they are not capable of learning, that they are sick, lazy and unproductive'*, they learned self-abasement.⁹⁵ Such circumstances create a situation of oppressed beings no longer trusting themselves.

As an example, Freire describes that when he began educational projects, it often happened that a topic was discussed, the learners expressed their thoughts but interrupted themselves and apologized to the teacher.⁹⁶

⁹³ Ibid., 42.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 55.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 45.

⁹⁶ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 45.

Liberation and (self-) empowerment means being able to formulate one's own thoughts, to take space for oneself and to be brave enough to turn words into deeds.

Freire also observed the phenomenon that the oppressed admired their oppressors and even imitated them in the hope of liberating themselves. This principle is often observed among the middle-class oppressed, who aspire to be equal to the upper class.⁹⁷ By acting in their own interest and not for the good of the community, they oppress their peers.

'The colonized subject will first train this aggressiveness sedimented in his muscles against his own people. This is the period when black turn on black, and police officers and magistrates don't know which way to turn when faced with the surprising surge of North African criminality. ... The colonist keeps the colonized in a stage of rage, which he prevents from boiling over. ... The muscular tension of the colonized periodically erupts into bloody fighting between tribes, clans and individuals.' – Frantz Fanon⁹⁸

Freire believes that violence can never be generated by the oppressed but is always generated by the oppressors. However, when the oppressed resist, the act of liberation can create an impression of violence, even though they are only fighting for their rights. Freire also quotes Fanon to again draw attention to the duality of the oppressed. He also claims that the oppressors exist within the oppressed. By attacking their commemorates, they are actually indirectly attacking the oppressors.⁹⁹

The oppressed must recognize the vulnerability of their oppressors, otherwise they remain in a state of fear. As long as they are not aware that they can change their circumstances or accept them, they are subject to their own exploitation.

In my understanding, the artists presented here tried to find ways of liberating themselves through art. Was it Meireles who used circulating systems to express himself or Manuel, who challenged the institutions by his performance. Both took their courage and found ways to fight against the regime.

Liberation and Self-Empowerment

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, (transl. Richard Philcox), (New York: Grove Press, 2004), 14-17. Freire also cites Fanon with an translation from 1968.

⁹⁹ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 45.

As an act of self-empowerment, and to explain the problems involved in the book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* provides an example where armed farmers had taken over a latifundium. For tactical reasons they decided to take the landowner hostage, but nobody dared to accompany him. Freire describes this may have been due to the terrifying presence of the owner, or to the fact that the act of resistance caused feelings of guilt in the oppressed.¹⁰⁰

The emotional dependence leads to a vicious circle and to a behaviour which Erich Fromm describes as *necrophilious behaviour*.¹⁰¹ It leads to a deconstruction of the life of the oppressed. Through the conversations Freire had with the peasants, he came to the conclusion that most of them were unable to express their wishes. Instead of standing up to their supervisors, they took out their frustration on their children or women by shouting at them or even beating them. They did not rebel or defend themselves against their bosses because they felt them to be superior.¹⁰²

For liberation to take place, the oppressed must realize that their circumstances are changeable. Only when they organize themselves, they begin to recognize their strengths and start to believe in them. But Freire points out: '*This discovery cannot be purely intellectual but must involve action; nor can it be limited to mere activism, but must include serious reflection: only then will it be a practice.*'¹⁰³ Through the symbiosis of reflection and action, independence can be achieved.

Solution: Problem-posing education over banking education

With his concept of *problem-posing education*, Freire proposes that the oppressed can critically look at their lived existence and realize that the world is not static but a constantly transforming construct. In contrast, the *banking model of education*, a term defined by Freire, follows the agenda to contribute ready-made knowledge to students, instead of empowering them to think critically or question the subject material. While dialogue is not possible in *banking education*, discussions are a central component of *problem-posing education*.¹⁰⁴ Freire describes that in order to be able to conduct a dialogue, critical thinking is necessary, and this kind of thinking can only be promoted through dialogue. Without dialogue there would be no communication and without communication there is no true education.¹⁰⁵ The roots of the liberating pedagogy

¹⁰⁰ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 45-46.

¹⁰¹ Erich Fromm, *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*, (London: Random House, 1973), 337.

¹⁰² Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 47

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 52-57.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 74.

are in creativity and stimulate a reflection on reality that makes learners perceive themselves as authentic beings who can change their environment.¹⁰⁶ All the artists mentioned in the previous chapters made use of critical thinking instead of propaganda or at least tried to establish a discussion during oppressive conditions.

General Conclusion

The military dictatorship (1964 - 1985) is considered as one of the harshest times in Brazilian modernity. Created by a coup, the militant regime held on to power for decades and did not allow free expression. The Institutional Act #5 restricted freedom of speech, passed human rights and created an aura of fear. Many intellectuals and artists were arrested or had to flee; live in Exile. It was not possible to conduct a dialogue. Oppression was the order of the day. Antonio Manuel, Cildo Meireles and Paulo Freire experienced these times. While Manuel and Meireles remained in Brazil, Freire fled to Chile after his arrest. As an educator and author, he wrote many critical texts, including *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. The book explains the relationship of oppressors and the oppressed. For liberation to take place, Freire presents solutions. One concept is called *problem-posing education*, of which dialogue is the most important part. He also describes that dialogue is '*radically necessary*' for an authentic revolution and distinguishes it from a military coup. Antonio Manuel and Cildo Meirles looked for possibilities to stimulate discussions and facilitate dialogues with their artistic works. Through metaphorical language, clever productions and hacking, they achieved their goal.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 64-65.

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Picture Credits



Plate 1 . Hélio Oiticica, Banner "*seja marginal, seja herói*" (Be an Outlaw, Be a Hero) (1968). Silkscreen, rayon. Courtesy of Projeto Hélio Oiticica, Rio de Janeiro. Photo: César Oiticica Filho.

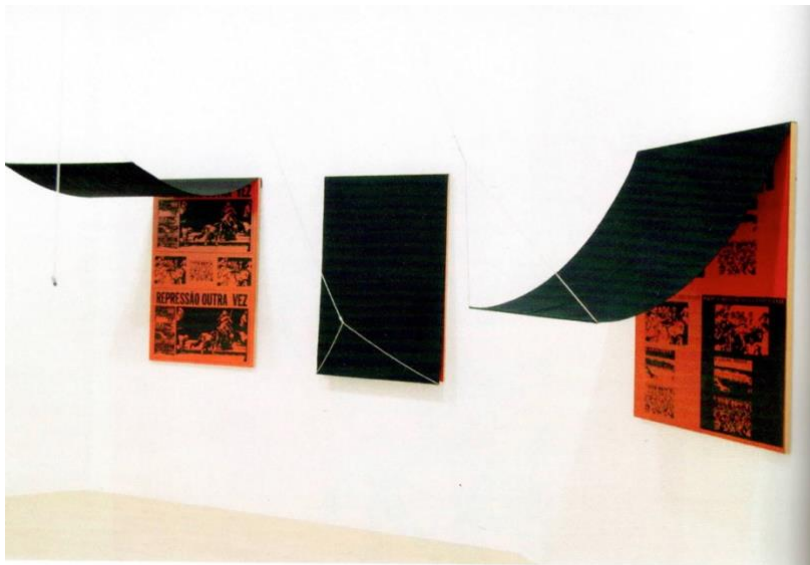


Plate 2. Antonio Manuel, *Repressão outra vez — Eis o saldo* (Repression Again— Here is the Consequence) (1968). Wood, cloth rope, silkscreen. Courtesy of the artist. Photo: Pedro Oswaldo Cruz.



Plate 3. Antonio Manuel, *Soy loco por ti* (I Am Crazy for You) (1969). Wood, cloth, plastic, straw, rope. Courtesy of Galeria Nara Roesler, São Paulo. Photo: A. Caetano.



Plate 4. Cildo Meireles, *Inserções em circuitos ideológicos: Projeto Coca-Cola* (Insertions into Ideological Circuits: Coca-Cola Project) (1970). Coca-Cola bottles, transfer text on glass. Courtesy of the artist. Photo: Wilton Montenegro.

Declaration of Academic Integrity

Hereby, I declare that I have composed the presented paper independently on my own and without any other resources than the ones indicated. All thoughts taken directly or indirectly from external sources are properly denoted as such.

This paper has neither been previously submitted to another authority nor has it been published yet.

Vienna, 06/10/2020

Place, Date

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Nargol Gharahshir', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Nargol Gharahshir

Name + Signature