“We are at the beginning of a new language.” This was the Brazilian artist Hélio Oiticica writing in 1969 about the possibilities of a behavioral art. For him, the shift from visual aesthetics to synthetic, polysensorial experimentation was part of a larger rearticulation of the work of art: from one that proposed a merely metaphoric structure, or “model of life,” to one that treated “conflicts” within existing behavior as the generative material of the work. If the first remained confined to what Oiticica called “distant Utopias,” the second conceived of the work as a practice of transformative change seated within the present, in the “building up of everyday life.” The “new language” to which he refers was, thus, a language for the construction of behavior itself.
In 1973 Oiticica collaborated with the Brazilian filmmaker Neville D’Almeida to create a series of filmic scores for expanded cinema environments called Block-Experiences in Cosmococa—Program in Progress or Cosmococas, for short, which embody this new behavioral art (figs. 1–2). Structured around a repertoire of slides projected within a given space and premised on the ingestion of cocaine (the material pictured in the slides themselves), these "quasi-cinemas," as Oiticica called them, mobilize the viewer’s behavior as content integrated within the filmic apparatus as a whole. Time is the key element to this conceit. For if the distant Utopias of previous art were unable to locate the work of art in the present, in the exigencies of situated behavior and actual life, Oiticica and D’Almeida’s Cosmococas depend on the unfolding of the participant’s embodied time to set the new language of their cinematic instrument in motion.

And yet the Cosmococas are also works strangely out of time. Invented in secret in the privacy of Oiticica’s New York loft in the early 1970s, they were not shown as works of art until 1992, twelve years after Oiticica’s death, when the first and third in the series—CC1 Trashiscapes and CC3 Maileryn—were exhibited as part of the first traveling retrospective of the artist’s work. Prior to that exhibition, Oiticica’s New York sojourn was little analyzed due to the perceived paucity of his artistic production between the years 1970 and 1978. The 1992 presentation of the Cosmococas was revelatory in this regard: not only did these quasi-cinemas demonstrate the continuity and conceptual elaboration of key aesthetic concerns within Oiticica’s work (the vertiginous passage from painterly to narcotic “pigment” in service of the sensorial is surely the most striking of these animating threads), they indicated the artist’s pointed engagement with the avant-garde artistic culture of New York. While Oiticica’s move to that city came close on the heels of his successful participation in the epochal Information exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, he failed to surface in any other significant exhibition in the United States over the next several years. Oiticica’s letters and diaries indicate his awareness of New York’s experimental film and performance scene: he enthused on Andy Warhol’s films; he saw works by Vito Acconci, Dennis Oppenheim, Walter De Maria, Stan Brakhage, Scott Burton; he considered taking a film course with Jonas Mekas; his encounter with Jack Smith’s slide show performances, above all, was seminal. Yet traces of his presence within the New York art world remain scant at best. This relative invisibility must be counterposed with Oiticica’s galvanizing role within a vibrant Brazilian counterculture formed by way of a steady stream of artists, musicians, and muses who passed through his New York loft and an even more copious torrent of letters the artist sent to friends, curators, and colleagues at home and in exile. Nevertheless, Oiticica’s effective absence from the New York art scene—even more despite the fact that the Cosmococas evince compelling resonances with contemporaneous developments within it—is a pointed reminder that artistic practice and the history of art often do not coincide.

Indeed, while the recovery of the Cosmococas as a signal landmark within Oiticica’s oeuvre has allowed for a new evaluation of such critical issues as the pictorial image, the role of reproductive technology, the social construction of the environment, and the strategic operation of the score within his work as a whole, this recovery is also one conditioned by points of reference newly established by both the relational and global turns of contemporary art. Thus, if the first public appearance of the Cosmococas in 1992 filled a lacuna within the historical reception of Oiticica’s own practice, it likewise provided an alternate and conveniently transnational genealogy for artists such as Rirkrit Tiravanija and Liam Gillick, whose works likewise staged participatory environments in which elements of relaxation, distraction, consumption, and contingency were key. According to Nicolas Bourriaud, whose 1998 Esthétique Relationelle has provided a defining, if much critiqued, articulation of these new practices, “relational art” aimed to recuperate a space of authentic intersubjective exchange from the monetization of social relations brought about by the late capitalist service economy. Oiticica’s prescient exploration of immersive participatory environments offers a compelling progenitor to the experiential emphasis of these late twentieth-century artworks.
Yet this retroactive affinity remains ill-equipped to account for the radically divergent investments of a participatory practice poised at the outer limits of the utopian impulse of the 1960s. By 1973, this impulse had shed its exuberant optimism, as Oiticica’s own critique of distant Utopias bears out. Yet it continued to sustain the kind of explosive experimentation that compelled Oiticica to proclaim, “I want to create a language” in 1970; to declare, “My life has transformed itself into a montage of simultaneous things” in 1971; to teach a class at the 92nd Street Y in 1972 in which “the negation of verbal-discursive expression” was an explicit goal; and to understand the *Cosmococas* of 1973 as the concretization and synthesis of these various, unwieldy desires. Thus, if the gallery-based encounters of recent relational practices depend on the demarcating frame of the art world in order to create temporary and contingent micro-utopias for the recuperation of preexisting, albeit threatened, modes of sociality, Oiticica and D’Almeida’s *Cosmococas* remained committed to the wholesale reinvention of behavior as part and parcel of a splitting of cinematic form. That the *Cosmococas* were so embedded in their time, so entrenched within the particularities of a life lived amidst illegal drugs, artistic exchange, the physicality of habitation, and the exigencies of work that they circumvented the art world altogether is highly significant in this regard. The contemporary status of the *Cosmococas* as works of art is thus beside the point; what matters is the degree to which their propositional character can be understood—and experienced—as an instrument that conditions and inflects behavior at large.

How can we comprehend the radical nature of the *Cosmococas*’ new language of behavior? To begin, we would have to ask what was at stake in the very notion of language—and its deconstruction—for Oiticica and D’Almeida circa 1973. Here we might consider a rather unlikely comparison: on the one hand, a page from Oiticica’s notebook from October 1969 outlining a participatory theater piece in which spoken variations of words encourage improvised verbal free play; on the other, a photograph from 1963 showing a participant in a literacy program developed by the influential Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (figs. 3–4). Written in various colors to suggest a play of voices overlapping and reverberating against one another, the words in Oiticica’s script are libidinal fragments set in motion through the operations of the Freudian slip. Lip, Stick, Stuck, Soft, Rock, Sock, Frock, Kiss, Bliss…. One word melding into and generating the next, the language imagined, and imagined forth on Oiticica’s notebook page is produced through the operations of collective desire.

That language might be constructed through embodied collectivities rather than a priori inscribed is likewise at stake in the photograph of the participant in Freire’s literacy program. Pictured with one arm outstretched, the other holding a child, the man touches the letter a as if to grasp language, to translate the physicality of its mark into his body, and by extension, the body of the child. The man is pointing to what Freire called a “discovery card” for the word TIJOLO (brick) in Portuguese. In Freire’s method, certain highly associative “generative” words were used to stimulate socioeconomic discussions among illiterate participants while demonstrating the relations between spoken and written signifiers. As Freire’s goal was not simply to teach literacy but to effect Marxist politicization, it was crucial that each generative word had a tangible, material relation to the participants’ lives. The word TIJOLO, for example, was used with a group of construction workers. First, the concept brick was represented in a photograph. The participants would identify the image and discuss its significance: the difficulties of manual labor, the price of building materials, the implications of urban reform, and so on. The visual image was then followed by a placard of the written word TIJOLO, and then the same word split into syllables: TI-JO-LO (figs. 5–6). Each syllable was subsequently presented within its phonemic family, sõA-TE-TI-TO-TU, thereby allowing participants to identify the connections between the written phonemes and their syllabic sounds (figs. 7–8). In the next step, participants would create syllabic combinations from the diagrammed phonemes. From the TIJOLO discovery card, for example, one can make the Portuguese words LUTA (struggle); TELA (screen); LOJA (store); and even the phrase TU JÁ LE(S) (you already read) (fig. 9). Although standard literacy was the final goal, Freire’s method prioritized the creative aspect of phonemic combination. As he wrote in 1965, “Acquiring literacy does not involve memorizing sentences, words, or syllables ... but rather an attitude of creation and re-creation, a self-transformation producing a stance of intervention in one’s context.” Participants were therefore encouraged to make as many combinations as they could, even if they resulted in nonsense words. Only after the mechanism of verbal generation was fully absorbed would attention shift to identifying conventional words themselves.
Scene 2

Microphones displayed equally all around, so the voices can be heard everywhere.

LISP LIP
STICK LIPSTICK
STUCK SOFT
STOCK ROCK
SOCK FROG-
FROCK KISS BLISS

Hudson Bay
WAY

Each color indicates an improvised difference of voices: should be characterized by different people. The mimes will perform simultaneously. The acting.

different elements to smell: for instance: grasses, flowers, powder, metals, things: distributed among people.
fig. 4: Paulo Freire, Literacy Workshop, Círculo de Cultura do Gama (DF), Brazil, September 1963. Courtesy Instituto Paulo Freire, São Paulo.

TIJOLO

fig. 5: Example of "discovery card" used by Paulo Freire's literacy programs, illustrating the word TIJOLO (brick).
TI-JO-LO

Fig. 6: Example of "discovery card" used by Paulo Freire's literacy programs, illustrating the word "TIJOLO" (brick).
TA-TE-TI-TO-TU
JA-JE-JI-JO-JU
LA-LE-LI-LO-LU

fig. 7: Example of “discovery card” used by Paulo Freire’s literacy programs, illustrating the word ‘TUJOLO’ (brick).
TIJOLO
TA-TE-TI-TO-TU
JA-JE-JI-JO-JU
LA-LE-LI-LO-LU

Fig. 8: Example of “discovery card” used by Paulo Freire’s literacy programs, illustrating the word TIJOLO (brick).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TIJOLO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LUTA</td>
<td>(struggle)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TELA</td>
<td>(screen)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOJA</td>
<td>(store)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LULA</td>
<td>(squid)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TU JÁ LÊ(S)</td>
<td>(you already read)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
With its emphasis on generating rather than simply recognizing linguistic combinations, Freire's method exhibits several striking affinities to formal experiments conducted by the Brazilian Concrete Poets starting in the mid-1950s and continuing well into the 1970s. In Augusto de Campos's *Colidouescapo* (Collide-a-scape) of 1971, inspired by James Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake*, for example, the loose pages of a book or “poem-object” are recombined to produce actual words as well as motivated neologisms, the book’s fold or spine acting as a physical generator of linguistic production (fig. 10). The structural affinity between de Campos’s work and Freire’s method becomes more explicit in an entry recorded in Oiticica’s notebook in 1972 for a proposed event at the University of São Paulo. For this project, Oiticica imagined an improvised action in which Augusto de Campos was to act as a “propositor” for a participatory verbal game. The poet would, as Oiticica wrote, “use the same method as in his book *Colidouescapo*” to encourage participants to form words, only using placards printed with letters rather than syllables. The result, one imagines, might be similar to both the word-formation exercises of Freire’s workshops and the erotic verbal play of Oiticica’s theater piece of 1969.

Both Oiticica and Freire aimed at the liberation of the subject through notions of participation—for Freire, replacing the teacher-student hierarchy with a collaborative dialogue, and for Oiticica, rejecting performance-viewer structures for open-ended participant situations. In 1967, Oiticica went so far as to suggest that the new role of the artist was to act as an “educator,” a proposer of “unfinished, ‘open’ works” intended for the public at large. A narrow analogy between the two, however, is both reductive and misleading. Freire saw literacy as a means to political and existential freedom or *conscientização*, a neologism of his own creation evoking the process of becoming politically conscious. *Conscientização* was the means by which illiterate workers would become subjects within historical time, the modern time, as Freire saw it, of Brazil’s future. Oiticica’s propositions of the late 1960s and early 1970s, meanwhile, were critically linked to his notion of crelazer, another neologism formed from the Portuguese words *creer* (to believe) and *lazer* (leisure) and the English words *create*, *creativity*, and *laziness*. Inspired in part by Oiticica’s reading of Herbert Marcuse’s *Eros and Civilization*, *crelazer* refers to a form of non-alienated leisure time antithetical to both the capitalist and the Marxist ethos of work. The kind of time Oiticica imagined for the participants of his works, therefore, was neither historical nor cyclical, but suspended, irrational, and shot through with desire. In ideological terms, Oiticica’s and Freire’s projects are deeply incompatible. And yet a comparison of their method reveals a more rudimentary affinity, one that has to do with the elementarization of language and its effects on our lived relationship to sign systems. Indeed, what is most radical about Freire’s and Oiticica’s projects lies not in their rhetoric of “participation” or “liberation,” but the atomization of various kinds of language systems that is brought about as a means to this goal. Freire’s literacy method is based on a process by which linguistic signs are broken down into basic units in turn capable of motivating the production of new signs. The creative aspect of this new sign production is key in giving participants a sense of efficacy. Inspired in part by Oiticica’s reading of Herbert Marcuse’s *Eros and Civilization*, *crelazer* refers to a form of non-alienated leisure time antithetical to both the capitalist and the Marxist ethos of work. The kind of time Oiticica imagined for the participants of his works, therefore, was neither historical nor cyclical, but suspended, irrational, and shot through with desire.

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Oiticica's projects of the late 1960s and early 1970s, by contrast, represent a sustained attempt to use the work of art as a means of suspending various systems in their open states. To make an analogy, he did not seek to access that final, triumphant stage in which Freire's participants acquired literacy and assimilated established language systems into daily behavior. Rather, he sought to sustain a prior moment when signs operated within a radically shifting semiotic ground—a moment when a language system, having been undone, offered up the possibility that it might be remade. Experiments such as his 1972 proposition for Augusto de Campos indicate how Oiticica might have gone about this project within the linguistic realm. But it was in cinema that he found a mechanism to create a state of productive semiotic indeterminacy outside of the realm of the verbal, to mobilize a language of behavior, as he wrote in 1969. 

In his 1964 book *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, Marshall McLuhan famously claimed that “the ‘content’ of any medium is always another medium.” Similarly, the arrival of a new dominant medium impacts the sensorial habits formed by a previous one. The prioritization of the single sense of sight in the high-definition culture of print, for example, is reversed in the wake of the low-definition medium of television, which entails multisensorial experience and a new kind of participatory response. For Oiticica, who was enthusiastically reading *Understanding Media* in November of 1971, McLuhan's formulation provided a radically new articulation of the relation between sensorial experience and behavioral codes. His response was a series of filmic experiments including the *Cosmococas*, in which the medium of film is rerouted through the television's “participatory” form. In these experiments, quasi-cinematic elements are offered up to the viewer in a manner akin to the combinatory phonemic components of Freire's discovery card. It is here, in the suspended literacy of a potential medium, that Oiticica's language systems take their most provocative form.

Oiticica's earliest experiences with film in Rio de Janeiro in the late 1960s explicitly link cinema with behavior. In 1968, he appeared in Glauber Rocha's *Câncer*, an experimental film based on improvised acting and dialogue shot in Oiticica's front yard (fig. 11). *Câncer* had no plot as such. Rather, it used the temporal extension of the long take to transform the set into a pressurized container for social interaction among the film's participants, many of whom, like Oiticica, were not professional actors. The film's transgressive potential lay in the creation of an indeterminate zone in which social behavior moved in and out of fictional self-representation. This zone was made particularly tense by racial and class divisions amongst the actors, the violent nature of the film's plot, and the necessity to improvise without the relief of the cut. As Rocha wrote about the film, “I was looking to make a technical experience, regarding the problem of the resistance of duration in the cinematographic take.” Once the actual filming ended, however, *Câncer* became less an experiment in social interaction than a representation of this social interaction recorded and preserved on a celluloid strip. For Oiticica, the challenge would be to maintain the transgressive aspect of improvisation as an active cinematic content—one that the viewer could not only watch, but actually feel.
In 1970, Oiticica moved to New York and became increasingly interested in experimental film. Although he had great admiration for members of the American underground, he vigorously objected to the tendency to treat cinema as either a primarily optical or “pure” art. He thought that Jonas Mekas’s recently opened Anthology Film Archives, for example, was a “horrible place,” and found it impossible to imagine how a “new mode of seeing” might emerge from its claustrophobic environment (fig. 12). He objected specifically to the theater seating, which prevented viewers from seeing their neighbors by limiting their visual field to the screen ahead in what its designer, the filmmaker Peter Kubelka, called “a machine for seeing.” For Oiticica, a truly experimental cinema would not extend an essentialist filmic legacy of formal innovation, but disintegrate cinema as an art form as such. It would become an “instrument” rather than an “art.”

In his opinion, certain films of the Brazilian underground, notably Neville D’Almeida’s *Mangue-Bangue* of 1971, had already started to move in this direction. As Oiticica wrote of the film in 1974, “MANGUE-BANGUE is a limit exactly because, by not holding to the former cinema/function form, and at the same time by not ‘proposing new ways or solutions for the movies,’ it makes cinema into an instrument, similarly to its function within TV.” Cinema’s disintegration into an “instrument” thus allowed it to become closer to the decidedly non-artistic and “cool” medium of television, a hypothesis indebted to Oiticica’s contemporaneous reading of McLuhan. Unlike high-definition “hot” media such as print and radio that communicate intensely through a single sense, McLuhan considered television a polysensorial and, above all, tactile medium whose “mosaic image demands social completion and dialogue.” The television image, for example, is made up of a field of dots that project colored light toward the viewer, unlike film, where the light source is projected from behind the viewer onto the screen. As a low-definition medium, television is conducive to “process” and what McLuhan called “do-it-yourself-ness.” By contrast, film, like print, relies on conventions of linear sequence that demand “a high level of literacy.” This literacy, in turn, implied for McLuhan a certain level of passivity on the part of the audience. As he wrote, “the film audience, like the book reader, accepts mere sequence as rational. Whatever the camera turns to, the audience accepts. We are transported to another world.”

For Oiticica, Brazilian underground cinema’s rupture with this “typographic linearity” through discontinuous, mosaiclike structures pointed toward a fundamental retooling of the filmic medium. As Oiticica wrote of D’Almeida’s *Mangue-Bangue*, “the camera work … acts as a sensorial glove for touching-probing-circulating: explode then into SLIDES … fragments as consequence.” Oiticica explicitly counterposed this fragmentation with the literacy presumed by the linear, typographic progression of film. In a letter to Brazilian filmmaker Ivan Cardosa and several other friends in 1971, he cited a passage from McLuhan’s chapter on movies in which the media theorist imagines the possibility of a nonlinear cinema marked by a strategy of montage. For Oiticica, this was precisely the implication of the films of Júlio Bressane, another underground Brazilian filmmaker, who in the words of poet and critic Haroldo de Campos, sought “to strangle the verbal language of cinema.” The rupturing of linear sequence through montage or the still-frames of slides thus suggested what we might call a deliterate film, one from which a cinematic language might be reconstructed as something that was no longer cinema at all.
There are several realized and proposed projects that fall under the rubric of the quasi-cinemas, Oiticica’s term for his own foray into the disintegration of filmic form. Oiticica first used the term to describe Jack Smith’s *Travelogue to Atlantis*, one of the slide-show events the American artist held in his loft in 1971. Oiticica was electrified by the performance, and soon after wrote to poet Waly Salomão, “it was a kind of quasi-cinema, for me as much cinema as anything one might imagine …” Two years later, in 1973, Oiticica collaborated with D’Almeida to produce their own version of a “quasi-cinema” in a series of slide-show environments they called *Cosmococas*, designated with the abbreviation CC (figs. 13–14). As Oiticica wrote around this time, “JACK SMITH was its precursor: he extracted from his cinema not a naturalistic vision imitating appearance but a sense of fragmented narrative … mirror shatters: the slides displaced ambience by a non-specific time duration and by the continuous relocation of the projector framing and reframing the projection on walls-ceiling-floor.”

*Cosmococas* 1–5 consist of scripts for slide-show events Oiticica and D’Almeida conceived in five independent sessions between March and August 1973 in Babylonests, Oiticica’s name for his New York loft. Oiticica went on to create four additional scripts within the *Cosmococa* series. The basic structure of these works, however, emerged from the collaborative sessions he shared with D’Almeida in the spring and summer of 1973. While none of the *Cosmococas* were exhibited or performed in Oiticica’s lifetime outside the context of his own apartment, his notebook entries give clear indication that he and D’Almeida imagined distributing the *Cosmococas* as a multiple, a kind of portable cinema one could transport in a box (fig. 15). Since they essentially consist of a script, a slide sequence, projectors, and a series of props, the works could be installed in a variety of situations, from a swimming pool to a garden to a loft.
In the Cosmococas, the two-dimensional image that structures the traditional film theater is replaced with a dynamic three-dimensional environment. In *CC5 Hendrixwar*, for example, five slide carousels mounted in different locations project a random sequence of the same thirty-four...
The Cosmicocas are not so different from an elaborated form of hanging out, and indeed, this is a large part of their explicit intent. But the Cosmicocas, I would argue, are also cinemas in a more traditional sense; that is, they operate according to a specific cinematic apparatus, the functioning of which is key to their social concept. In his influential 1970 article “Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus,” French film critic Jean-Louis Baudry argues that the traditional space of the film theater is based on a model of the camera obscura. In this model, the viewer’s body is rendered immobile so as to allow him to identify not with his body, but the camera and its all-seeing, transcendental eye. The mechanism of projection, meanwhile, remains hidden, thus concealing the very ideological and material machinery that allows filmic illusion to take place. In the Cosmicocas, the fixed vision of the camera obscura is replaced with a thick three-dimensional space. Within this environment, the mechanism of projection is fully revealed and becomes an interactive element of the work. The illusory deep space of the camera’s perspectival vision, meanwhile, is replaced with a disorienting play of flat surfaces pictured within the Cosmicocas slides themselves. In these slides, book jackets, record covers, and photographs reiterate the flat surface of the wall and its material status as an image support, thus canceling any residual identification of the filmic image as a window to the real. Instead, that mimetic yet highly mediated construction of reality is redirected toward the interior of the cinematic space and that which occurs between its multiple screens.

At the most basic level, the Cosmicocas are about signs in transit. Signs in transit appear in their most literal incarnation in the form of cocaine, a substance that functions within the slides as a plastic material, mark-maker, and muse: here spread out as a pigment, there shaped into a graphic symbol, and somewhere, presumably, snorted up the nose. This “off-screen” transit is the ultimate realization of the Cosmicocas’ participant viewing, an analogy reiterated in the work’s mise en abyme of surface stimuli. The flat objects upon which the cocaine appears within the frame anticipate the literal support of the wall upon which the slides are projected. The cocaine itself mimics the source of projected light, materializing its reflective qualities as well as its inverted relation to the photographic. The narcotic ingestion of cocaine through the nose, meanwhile, rewrites the optical ingestion of the filmic image, providing the Cosmicocas participant with a new kind of intensity control. In antithesis to the transcendent eye of the camera obscura, as analyzed by Baudry, the Cosmicocas offer vision filtered through the body, a debasement of cinematic opticality celebrated in Buberl’s homage to Luis Buñuel’s Un Chien Andalou (fig. 18). Re-creating the famous eye-and-razor sequence of that 1929 Surrealist film on New York Times Magazine cover picturing the Spanish filmmaker himself, Oiticica and D’Almeida revisit Buñuel’s collapse of the filmic cut with that of the knife. Their reconfigured cut, traced out in an elegant line of cocaine across Buñuel’s unblinking eye, is no longer an emblem of film’s optical illusion, but is destined to disappear up a quasi-cinematic nose. Freud, himself a connoisseur of cocaine, posited the founding of civilization on man’s rise from the horizontal position of the animal to the erect position of the human. This shift established a new hierarchy of sensory perception, reprioritizing the primary sense from smell to sight. The Cosmicocas regress from this elevated position, dispensing with the hegemony of the eye by inviting the viewer to “see” with his nose.
According to D’Almeida, cinema consists of the film environment (the theater); the film projection (the use of light to throw an image upon a screen); and the film language, or linguagem (a sequence of pictures in continuous succession). In the Cosmococas, each aspect is isolated and reconfigured in modified form: viewing shifts to the horizontal plane of leisurely relaxation, the projected image multiplies across available surfaces, and film’s “continuous” moving image fragments into discontinuous still frames. In the initial phase of syllabic free-play in Freire’s literacy method, the Cosmococas treat filmic language as an open system by splitting it into parts and allowing for their recombination. In so doing, however, the Cosmococas bring about a mutation within the cinematic apparatus itself.

Film’s reality effect rests on two things: the mimetic character of its photographic basis and its ability to convey temporal continuity through a sequence of still frames. By preserving the discontinuity of these photographic frames in a series of slides, Oiticica and D’Almeida reveal film’s material foundation in objectified form. As in the initial phase of syllabic free-play in Freire’s literacy method, the Cosmococas unlock filmic illusion by revealing its components as a set of discrete combinatory elements. Film’s photographic basis is returned in the form of the photograph as a thing. This occurs at a technical level vis-à-vis the use of the slide, and at what might be called a narrative level vis-à-vis the image within the slide’s frame. In CC5 Hendrixwar, for example, lines of coke are drawn across a record cover of Hendrix’s album War Heroes, tracing a graphic mask across the rock star’s face in what Oiticica and D’Almeida called a mancoquilagem, a neologism joining the Portuguese words for makeup, mask, cocaine, and the name of the Inca ruler Manco Capac (figs. 19–20). This mask is a semiotic pun on the idea of doing drugs off an ostensible symbol of drugs, Hendrix himself. It visualizes, in the form of real objects, the abstract circuit of representation that equates Hendrix and drugs through the immaterial relay of photographic signs. The slides alternate between images that display the album cover as the two-dimensional image of Hendrix’s face and the album cover as a three-dimensional object, the very surface on which the drugs rest.

If film’s photographic basis is objectified in the form of the photograph as a thing, film’s temporal basis is objectified in the form of self-enclosed moments of time, or what Oiticica called “moment-frames.” Each photographic impression that makes up the sequence of Cosmococa slides retains its discrete identity, occupying a physically distinct space upon the wall. And although the activity pictured within the slides occurs in duration—a duration marked by the shifting patterns of cocaine—the Cosmococas’ random projection of still frames splinters this time into fragments without linear progression. The temporal continuity lacking in the quasi-cinema’s projected image, however, does not disappear. Rather, it is returned in another form—that of our own time—our actual temporal experience with the Cosmococa environment itself. The Cosmococa thus invert the time structure of traditional cinema. It is no longer the immobilized body that experiences the projected time of the filmic image; rather, the projected image offers momentary but static vignettes while the body of the viewer experiences continuous duration.

If so doing, the Cosmococas depart from the perceptual-ontological model established first in Warhol’s early films, and later in the structuralist films of the American avant-garde. If in Warhol’s Sleep or Michael Snow’s Wavelength, the duration that unfolds within the filmic image upon the screen provides an analogue for the viewer’s own cognitive and perceptual processes, the Cosmococas imply a single film occurring across two simultaneous registers: that seen as image and that experienced as lived fact. The two elements responsible for film’s realistic illusion are thus disengaged and split apart. The photographic element is projected onto the walls, while the temporal element becomes the province of the viewer within the spatial environment. What might be called “filmic representation” occurs between the two. This is, in the end, what defines the structure of Oiticica and D’Almeida’s quasi-cinemas: the creation of a filmic environment whose film is only physically possible with the participation of its viewers.
The Cosmococas do not seek to do away with the cinematic apparatus, but rather to invert its consequences, preserving its dreamworld and fantasy, its mechanisms of identification and desire. Indeed, the Cosmococas install viewers in a unique cinematic apparatus of their own making, the process of which is the ultimate content of every Cosmococa “film.” In a slide from CC8 Mr. 8 or D of Dada for instance, a mirror establishes a one-frame suture in which we gaze upon a man’s reflected image as if it were our own (fig. 21). The mirror is the most basic mechanism by which a subject is returned to itself as representation. And because it registers, without bias, everything that passes before it, the mirror is also a kind of absolute temporal machine—a movie camera that records everything but leaves no trace. The supreme pun of the Cosmococas is that cocaine is often snorted off a mirror. Every flat surface within the Cosmococas, then, from those pictured within the slides to the walls upon which the slides are projected, acts as a kind of virtual mirror, reflecting not our own image, but a heightened awareness of our behavior in time. In the Cosmococas, cinema is reconstituted as a temporal container for bodily action in which the representational status of the projected image is shared with the bodies of its participants. Far from positing embodied experience as an authentic, primordial “real,” the Cosmococas suggest that the liberating potential of participation lies in a process of coming-into-representation itself.
Here the early Greek alphabet is noteworthy. Each simple sound is represented in Greek by a single graphic sign, and each sign always stands for the same simple sound. The Greek alphabet was an ingenious discovery that was later handed down to the Romans. In the transcription of *bárbaros* ‘barbarian,’ each letter corresponds to a homogeneous beat:

\[
\begin{align*}
B & A & P & B & A & P & O & \Sigma \\
\end{align*}
\]

In the drawing above, the horizontal line stands for the phonetic chain, and the short vertical bars indicate passage from one sound to another. In the early Greek alphabet there are no complex

\[
\begin{align*}
T & I & J & O & L & O \\
\end{align*}
\]
Although each auditory impression is unique, the passage from one unit to the next is virtually imperceptible when we experience the sounds as we normally do, in time. Every spoken word is thus like the unrolling of a mini-film, each auditory impression a photographic frame, its phonetic action meaningless without the whole. The radical political aspect of Freire’s literacy program was to locate the participant within the system of linguistic production, and in so doing, give them agency within the system itself (fig. 23). The radical political aspect of Oiticica and D’Almeida’s “deliterate” cinemas, by contrast, was to give the participant the system’s time.
Here, in some ways, is the real paradox of that expiring moment of the late 1960s and the dream of participation to which it so tightly held. In Freire's model, the political urgency of expanding literacy required instrumentalization, and so language returned to its closed state. In Oiticica and D'Almeida's model, the refusal of instrumentalization created a permanently open system, but a cinematic instrument about which few would know for some twenty years. Indeed, if the Cosmococas provided for the “invention” of time, as Oiticica wrote of CC3 Hendrixwar, time was also measured in seconds and minutes and hours during the graveyard shift of the artist's nighttime job. Because Oiticica, in fact, produced language for hire in New York, working nights as a translator, twisting one language into another in compressed containers of time: time measured out in dollars and cents, in language as labor, and in words as alienated value. Time, in 1973, was not Oiticica’s, although perhaps it was on his side. Time rather, was something to be captured, to be extended against itself, against the structure of work, the resistance of the body and its physical demands (fig. 24).

The time that Oiticica did not spend working he often spent writing, firing off a stream of articles, propositions, and letters: pages pounded out on his typewriter with an obsession as compulsive, and certainly as creative, as his love affair with cocaine (figs. 25–27). These texts were circulated amongst friends in Brazil, where they created a virtual public sphere compensating for the absence of Oiticica’s physical body, and an underground information exchange operating beneath the censors of Brazil’s repressive military regime. Language, for Oiticica, was inextricable from time. And so its disintegration and reimagination were also shot through with the urgency to communicate, to be seated within a private, singular body but also extend beyond this body into the social sphere. Ultimately, the deliterate cinema of the Cosmococas must be seen as the conjunction of these competing drives. As Oiticica scribbled in his notebook in 1973, “Time is on my side” (fig. 28).
babylon : febr. 23,7l : terça gorda : ivan, sidiny, barrote, kide : what are you doing today ? ; no terceiro de carnaval : são 11 da noite ou mais ; o rádio, que irradia coltrane, mick, airplane, está agora dando war news : chove hoje em babilônia, mas nada parou : está quente ; estou aqui : um loft destinado a coisas ainda vazias, mas que deverão surgir, não do nada : de tudo o que deve crescer : 81 , SECOND AVENUE , LOFT 4 , NEW YORK , NY 10003 - telefone : (manhattan area code 212) 777 7427 ; antes de nada, vou logo me desculpando : o troço que deveria ter sido enviado por vários motivos não deu pê , e agora mais que nada por precaução, depois de casos que , soube, aconteceram : simplesmente 207 brasileiros foram banidos de new york em dezembro : claro que muitos por outros motivos, mas pegaram gente mesmo sem terem enviado com remetente (ninguém é tão otário assim) ; portanto , creio não valer menos a pena a jogada ; segundo, porque é difícil arranjar algo que preste, a não ser que se conheça alguém em que se confie com por cento, o que não e o caso : há uns carras do chelsea que são mais é papo otário ; a rute (ela telefonou pra vocês, ou o quê? ; escrevem contando) parece que levou algo, não sei, mas não deve ter sido muito bom, ou foi ? agora o rádio foi desligado ; mícuel colocou o gravador ; ainda não temo record player (talvez next month) : os gastos têm sido terríveis, o que não significa que não haja dinheiro ; estou instalando tudo : além de ter que esperar e esperar pelos acontecimentos : tudo é complicado ou simples em babilônia ; calculei e descenhei (construção) 6 ninhos : simplesmente há 3 semanas espero que o tal marcheiro apareça com orçamento da coisa ; resolvi não esperar e vou sim簡單 comprar e eu mesmo cortar e tudo (comprei drill, serrote, tudo que é preciso) ; vamos instalar quarto escuro (míguel rio branco está aqui, e é com equipamento dele que nos instalemos) ; vou comprar super 8 sem com esta semana : com conselhos de afonso beato não quero dar mancada, entrei num curso da nyu (new york university) sobre film production : quero saber de tudo ; como sempre ; é bacana ; pois as informações são das mais preciosas em primeira mão, sobre equipamento e tudo, além de ser uma vez por semana (até maio) ; penso em fazer experiências num outro curso práctico do jonas mekas (cinemasta muito conhecido, experimental, aqui) ; ele dirige o anthology film archives, um lugar horrível onde projetam filmes antológicos, principalmente experimentais ; o lugar é horrível pela instalação que deveria ser experimental sobre um novo modo de ver : mas , para mim, é um modo que não me interessa ; o lugar é todo preto, sente-se de um modo que só se vê a tela, pois as cadeiras têm orlas, como bergeries modernas, de modo que você se isola do vizinho ; sinto a pior claustrofobia ; parece que tudo parou, e não entendo porque seria essa a melhor maneira de se ver filmes ; dá sono ; hoje fomos lá ver filmes do stan brakhage ; há coisas geniais, outras very boring (apesar de bem boringes) ; já havia visto algumas em londres ; o que vi de muito bom, genial essa semana, foi um filme antigo de warhol : harlott : mario montez arraza, travestido : aparecem ele-ela, uma mulher que segura um gato branco todo o tempo , dois gay cats leaning on the sofa ; marco, que é "casado" com a mulher do gato por conveniência (no tape tudo é ditto-improvisado de modo mais genial) ; come bananas que são despachadas com mãos enluvadas durante toda a duração do filme ; carmen miranda é citada no filme, chiquita basina ou banana (não me lembro se fazem ou não a distorção) ; aquela, de chapéu tutti-frutti ; carmen é ainda the image , rainha também gay , soube de ela em havana, ela não estava performing naquele dia, e era o dia em que morreu (é lindo, absoluto o tape-serom) ; warhol é mesmo o rei do supernaturalismo : supernaturalismo, segundo morrisey, é o que define e é mesmo o cinema warhol : não há truque nem joke menor ; a repetição-repetição tem um sentido estrutural muito acima de qualquer posição naturalista : o que morri-sey chama de supernaturalismo, é isso : é estrutural de um feeling maior : est e kis (vi mes passado) não são a continua repetição de alguém comendo ou de beijos, nem soma : supersoma maybe ; em harlott o tape é construído paralelo-
superposto; chelsea até hoje (adiante falo sobre o filme unedited que vi), é a criação de um superdiálogo: falatório encima de falatório improvisado ou não, invencão e descoberta dos atores-performers como algo vivo, supra; gay-trip warhol: sabem, descobri que a revolução gay, de certo modo, foi começada por warhol, no sentido de que seus filmes representam a derrocada do "machismo", que é hoje em todas as vanguardas assumido como fascista: o mito do herói macho-americano caí por terra, etc. (mick-performer faz isso também na pop); o filme unedited é brilhante todo o tempo: ela, garota, é o detetive polk (sobrenome dela mesmo) que procura descobrir evidências do transsexualismo situacional; ela devoa os "homens", ela inventa o sexo; jackie curtis aparece (não é tão grande quanto holly woodlawn, que aparece em trash (depois falo) mas tem um make-up geral fantástico): namora brigit: brigit (em chelsea girls ela já era a melhor) fala e fala, nunca deixa de ser genial: é ela, o filme é a experiência dela. trash é o filme do morrissey, prod. warhol, comercial: é lindo: comercialização gay-underground (superficialmente) mais a rigor, é de certo modo o cop-out (entrega, no meu sentido) de tudo o que chelsea-warhol-girls representam: é uma espécie de identificação de uma marginatividade com um beco sem saída: toda park avenue pergunta: já viu trash, pensando serem hips: sentindo-se convence com algo marginal: levar uma atividade marginal a um nível burguês: esse lado racional é assumido em trash, o que não impede a fan-tástica sensibilidade de morrissey mais atores (joe dallesandro, jane forth e principalmente holly woodlawn) de se mostrarem como os melhores mesmo; uma entrevista terrível de morrissey no fusion confirma todo esse cop-out side do filme, dele e das teorias das outras drug-gay-warhol-cinema: warhol nos deixa supera isso tudo pelo que foi feito e fundado. fu i ver no fillmore (que é a dois pequenos blocos daqui, na mesma cidade; de janela, olhando-se para a esquerda, uptown, ve-se a marquise suflante de perto) east; taj mahal e chambers brothers: ambos arrançantes: o drumer dos chambers e genio puro; o som de ambas atuações e dos grandes clássicos; não vi mais nada no fillmore: quis ir ver small faces, mas estava lotado e nem tentei; mas, próximomente verei o que valha a pena; estou farto de sem puritano-branco: não sei, é algo que sinto aqui: falta algo na pop aflouente; claro que grandeza musical técnica, jamais, quero ver se começa essa semana, filmagem de um super 8 (composto de umas 10 ou mais partes de 3mins: logo, 30 mins.) com primo short; estrutura muita ideia, mas estava mudando muito coisa; não há uma forma estrutura definitiva ainda, apesar de eu saber o que queria: cada vez mais, estar em casa me inspira a trabalhar; como era ai, ou não era, nos últimos tempos: fiz muito ou não fiz: não acredito em definitivo em produzir e cima de produto, palpeável, de arte, etc.: também não acredito em "cru"; curtição dissolvida: curtir, get stoned, e pronto: fácil demais; racional, em última instância; um geforce mais rigoroso deveria ser feito em tudo: não só a busca de uma experiência maior, fora de um contexto de hábitos diários, amizades, etc., mas tentar realmente criar num sentido total a new-world-sensuous (senso-mundo); não sei, é algo que sinto: tudo se me parece chato e tendendo ao convencional: descobrir deveria ser um estado permanente ou que-se, de modo que a ideia mesmo de permanência se tornasse relativamente; não-tebã, há uma excessiva facilidade e dúvida quanto a iniciativas em muitos campos arte-intelecto, etc.; aqui, nem se fala: perplexidade-chauvinismo, etc.: há, é claro, uma formidável vitalidade que atudo resiste: explosão. os artistas locais estão fascinados pela ideia de "performance", que muitas das vezes é mau teatro ou cria excessiva distância entre espectador-performer, etc. estou meio cansado agora, depois contímno essa carta; vou dormir e ler.
hoje já é 26, sexta; estive doente ontem e hoje; ontem, senti-me tão mal que corri prum hospital (pronto socorro): deram-me injeção, remédio, ordem pra não comer: só cha e biscoito; mas, hoje me senti melhor (acham que é virus, sei lá de que, pois tudo aqui são virus e pollution do ar); agora já é de n-oite; comi lentilhas com arroz, e me sinto mais forte, pois só cha não dá; creio que tudo isso foi por causa de um preparado de limpeza que usei puro, pra limpar banheira: aminia; pensei, ontem, que estivesse envenenado, pois sentia gosto de amêndoas na boca e vomitava sem parar. but i am here and con-
tinuo a escrever pra vocês; estou lendo um livro sobre contra-cultura alta-
mente; tem coisas bons, outras discutíveis, de um liberalismo pra lá de rea-
cionalismo; penso em mandar; vocês leem inglês, afinal? acho bem lerem bastan-
te e fazerem cursos; esse livro põe a clara um lado blasé de festivais, mas as
cenas chegaram as conclusões preconcebidas e muito duras, com ar de liberalis-
mo, que muitas vezes chateiam. compramos madeira; miguel está montando o
quarto escuro; montaremos ninfas essa semana; só espero ficar mais forte.
façam favor de escrever mesmo, contando tudo; tudo; a opinião de vocês me in-
teresse demais: young groovy kids. vergera me escreveu contando sobre os
filmes dele com vocês: como ficaram? aqui, no novo endereço não tenho rece-
bidado quase nada; please, não deixe a ninguém, pois sei de gente a bessa que
veem pra cá. e vocês, que planos tem? as notícias das bonecas cineastas na
europa tem sido as mais loucas; mas parece que tudo tem resultado em filmes,
o que é um alívio; mas a briga foi feia mesmo e creio ser muito difícil uma
reconciliação; foco da grossa, como eu pensei. betty bomba e outros fil-
mes, foram exibidos ai? quem me falou disso foi reivindo amado. a exposi-
ção do gerchman foi bem badalada: não tanto quanto se esperava, mas creio
que possa vir a dar resultados bons pra ele; no momento ele anda bem desespe-
rado com pouco dinheiro; a ana, mulher dele, vai pro rio com as crianças em
março, e ele vai subalugar o loft para um cara, e ficar morando lá também;
envio pra vocês o catálogo que tem um texto meu, que adoro; digam o que acha-
ram. ah, não: creio que o próprio gerchman enviou (para endereço do ivan);
digam se receberam, pois senão envio daqui. o marco pedroso é que passou há
mais de um mês por aqui rumo a índia; na volta (está em paris agora), vai fi-
car uma semana chez moi; ele está animadíssimo com a coisa no chile, e traba-
ilha com ministerio de cultura; acho que talvez vá lá (eu e outros) para algo,
se enviarem passagem e estadia, etc. (se bem que se fique fichado depois).
voou fazer cartezinhos de fotos minhas-loft-ambiente da second ave., etc.;
daqui, hoje, ouço o movimento do fillmore: fleetwood mac e van morrison;
hoje e manhã; estou pensando em ir ver johnny winter e elvin bishop group
mais allman brothers, 12 março; van morrison, pensei em ir, mas doente as-
sim (maybe tomorrow). há um ruído incrível, que já é uma espécie de paisa-
gem newyorkiana: tlaclua, de uma bolsa de plexiglas, cada uma amarrada em
extremidades de um mesmo fio, com que as pessoas brincam, como se fôssem yo-
ys, só que batendo uma na outra, em um determinado modo: daqui de cima só
se ouve isso; esse brinquedo aumenta ainda o clima de agressividade em "brin-
queados" aqui: as crianças parecem feras brincando, uma loucura. foi bom
adiar o começo do meu filme; vou mesmo comprar a super 8 e além disso posso
reformular muitas ideias; na realidade adiei, porque gorgo mautner furou (i-
zeva querendo participar, o que planejai com esse fito, depois fica em divi-
da, ou sei lá o que); na realidade acho que nem sabe o que quero e faço); a-
gora estou reformulando tudo de outro modo, que me agrade mais; não posso de
pender de pessoas irresponsáveis. estou aqui com catálogo, escolhendo coi-
sas pra comprar; afonso arranja com preço menor, ou compra em segunda mão
com garantia longa, o que é bem mais barato e funciona também; meus queri-
dos, escrevam que vou me despejar aqui. depois mando mais news. be groovy.
i dig you all. love

Irene V. Small is an assistant professor of art and archaeology at Princeton University, where she teaches modern and contemporary art and criticism with a transnational focus and is affiliated with the program in Latin American studies. Her current book project, Hélio Oiticica: Folding the Frame, examines the emergence of a participatory art paradigm in mid-1960s Brazil. Her research has been supported by the Creative Capital/Andy Warhol Foundation Arts Writers Grant, the Getty Research Institute, and the Dedalus Foundation. Her essays and criticism have appeared in publications such as Artforum, Art Asia Pacific, Getty Research Journal, Res: Anthropology and Aesthetics, and Third Text. Small co-curated the 2013 exhibition Blind Field, focused on a young generation of artists in Brazil, organized by the Krannert Art Museum.

ENDNOTES


2. Ibid., 6.
In a letter addressed to Ivan Cardosa and several friends on February 23, 1971, Oiticica wrote: "[Jonas Mekas] dirige o anthology film archives, um lugar horrível onde projetam filmes antológicos, principalmente experimentais, e que não têm nada a ver com cinema experiments, see Michalka," and signified in the epochal movements of prewar modernism was replaced with the free play of the signifier. The second avant-garde, meanwhile, represented by Godard’s post-1968 films, with their use of Situationist International concepts, were interested in the social and political aspects of art, and their films often featured elements of participatory art, including Claire Bishop, ed., The Art of Participation (London: Thames and Hudson, 2008).

Oiticica’s notes refer to a series of propositions; the action in question is Proposition #3, dated October 11, 1972. As Oiticica wrote, "Proposição 3: Augusto de Campos: ou pessoalmente ou instruindo alguém: place[s] for pedagogic experiments such as his 1972 curriculum “Experimentaction.”"

As Freire argued in Pedagogy of the Oppressed (the Pedagogy of the Oppressed, written while in political exile in Chile in 1968, "[by] making it possible for people to enter the historical process as responsible subjects, conscientiously enrolls them in the search for self-affirmation and thus avoids fanaticism." Myra Bergman Ramos, trans. London and New York: Continuum International, 2000, 36.

As Oiticica wrote in his text "CRELIZER" of January 14, 1974, "Não ocupar um lugar específico, no espaço ou no tempo, assim como viver o prazer ou não saber a hora de preguiça, é e pode ser a atividade de alguém que se entrega a uma juventude de informações, e não de资讯, e gestos, e gestos de pessoas que valorizam por algo que não sabem, e que não sabem o que são, e que não sabem o que querem,..."

In his 1975 article "The Two Avant-Gardes," published in X-Screen, Peter Wollen describes a split within advanced European film between the artisanally-made, with its interest in the "ontological autonomy of film," and the "free play of the signifier." The second avant-garde, meanwhile, represented by Godard’s post-1968 films, also looked to a variety of expanded media forms to explore nonverbal as well as non-visual communication, from built works to pedagogic projects such as his 1972 curriculum "Experimentation."
Marcel Broodthaers, in his 1967 work *The five de Dado Cultures* are among many artists’ and filmmakers’ experiments that came to be called “expanded cinema,” which pushed cinema into the realm of performance, environment, and score. The term itself, which he proposed to Carlos Vergara.

Oiticica appears to have met Jack Smith in January 1971 (see Oiticica’s letter to Mary Pedrosa, April 15, 1971 [doc. no. 1101.71 AHO/PHO]), and described attending a performance of his slide-show film *Le Corbeau et le renard* (1975), described the mosaic, interpenetrating field of Andy Warhol’s *Plastic Inevitable (EPI)*, inaugurated a new field within film studies that would come to be known as “apparatus theory.” This field of inquiry, which McLuhan, Understanding Media, 255. As Brandon Joseph has noted, Marshall McLuhan, in *The Medium is the Message* (1964), described the mosaic, interpenetrating field of Andy Warhol’s *Plastic Inevitable (EPI)*, inaugurated a new field within film studies that would come to be known as “apparatus theory.” This field of inquiry, which McLuhan, Understanding Media, 255. 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The use of cocaine as a material within the works, and as an implied prescription for the use of the works, lends the Cosmococos a distinct aura of criminality. The works are often interpreted in light of precisely this transgressive aspect. See, for example, Carlos Basualdo, “Waiting for the Internal Sun: Notes on Hélio Oiticica’s Quasi-Cinemas” in Carlos Basualdo, Hélio Oiticica: Quasi-Cinemas and Paulo Herkenhoff, “Art and Crime/Quasi-Cinema/Quasi-Text/Cosmococa” in Oiticica and D’Almeida, Cosmococas: program–in–progress. As Basualdo argues, “Through the Quasi–cinemós, and specifically the Cosmococos, Oiticica sought to situation itself and his audience–outside the law, understood as the matrix of alienation and this, because the very substance from which the works were made, in the case of the Cosmococos, was precisely one of the most obvious signs—and symbols—of illegality” (150). Although Oiticica’s relationship to marginality and alienation is a critical theme of his work of the mid–to late 1960s and early 1970s, I choose here to concentrate on how the use of cocaine might act to disrupt the classical cinematic apparatus. This model allows us to understand the critical character of the Cosmococos as a work of the works’ structure rather than the identity of its creators or the legality or illegality of its material. It should also be noted that none of the museum or gallery presentations of the works have ever provided cocaine as a prop, as is scripted in Oiticica’s notes.

Oiticica, writing about Mangue-Bangue on July 2 1973, referred to film as “linguagem tão concreta quanto a sua forma concretizada” [language as concrete as its realized form]. As he wrote, “Uando digo q cinema-linguagem pode vir a ser cinema-instrumento quero dizer q as características do cinema como algo formado em palpabilidade: filme, imagens em movimento, etc.” [When I say that cinema-language can come to be a cinema-instrument I mean characteristics of cinema as something as form and in palpability: film, images in movement, etc.]

The use of the Jimi Hendrix album also recalls D’Almeida’s use of posters in his 1967 film Jardim de Guerreiro, which included images of Hendrix as well as Mao, Trotsky, and Che.

Oiticica hints at this connection in his script for his 1967 film Jardim de Guerreiro. As he wrote, “When I say that cinema–linguagem pode vir a ser cinema-instrumento quero dizer q as características do cinema como algo formado em palpabilidade: filme, imagens em movimento, etc.” [When I say that cinema-language can come to be a cinema-instrument I mean characteristics of cinema as something as form and in palpability: film, images in movement, etc.].

The notion of Cosmococos slides as a kind of mirroring device might be distinguished from Christian Metz’s analysis of cinema as a mirror in The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema [1977] excepted in Ronsor, Norattractive, Apparatus, Ideology, 244–278. In Metz’s framework, the cinema is a mirror that repeats the primordial mirror of the infant’s mirror stage, only that it never reflects the subject’s body itself. Rather than seeing an image of self, the subject sees a world of objects. As Metz writes, “In a certain emplacement, the mirror suddenly becomes clear glass” (250). Thus, instead of identifying with the image of our body, we identify with ourselves “as a pure act of perception… as a kind of transcendental subject,” and hence, with the camera (253). In the Cosmococos, the reiteration of the flat support within the slides enforces our exteriority from the projected image; rather than turning to glass and revealing a “world of objects” that resembles our own world, the “mirror” of the Cosmococos turns into an opaque object. The viewer thus identifies not with the transcendental eye, but the embodied nose.

By “representational” I refer here to the mimetic capacities of the mirror, the photograph, and the cinematic image, and their relation to the lived behavior, or performance, of the Cosmococos’ viewers. This should be distinguished from the phantasmagoric “representation” of the spectacle, as analyzed by Guy Debord in his 1967 Lo Société du spectacle, a book Oiticica appears to have read (see, for example, his letter to Ivan Cardosa, November 12, 1971 [doc. no. 0848.71 AHO/PHO]). It bears mentioning that the relation constructed between the body and the mediation of representation in the Cosmococos is significantly different than that which occurs in a work such as Joan Jonas’s Vertical Roll of 1972 or VALIE EXPORT’s performance actions of the late 1960s such as Tapp und Tastkino. While Jonas’s work thematizes the disarticulation of a coherent body, EXPORT functions as a critique of the image of the body as spectacle. Oiticica’s own use of the term “representation” shifts across the course of his writings of the early 1970s. On the one hand, he linked representation to the linearity of narrative as well as a capitalist regime of images; on the other, he suggested that “no resolution can or should be sought in a ‘nostalgia for natural life’ pre-representation.” Any solution to the regime of images was thus through representation itself. As he wrote in his notebook Atba 4/75, “Solution ‘beyond representation’ can only be achieved by existential saturation and consequently dissatisfaction with the world of products of that representation, in which the spectator–relationship is fundamental” (cited in Carlos Basualdo, Hélio Oiticica: Quasi-Cinemas). B. Basualdo, writing about this problem of representation in his essay “Waiting for the Internal Sun: Notes on Hélio Oiticica’s Quasi-Cinemas,” suggests that Oiticica’s resolution was the material of cocaine itself, which, as he writes, is “outside the law, and thus, outside the logic of the spectacle” (152).

Quasi Cinema (Block-Experiment in Cosmococa-Program in Progress). Hélio Oiticica — Neville d’Almeida —. Fecha: 1973. In New York, 1973, the Brazilian artist Hélio Oiticica, together with the film-maker Neville Almeida, conceived several projects entitled Quasi-Cinemas, a series of projections–performances such as Block Experiments in Cosmococa – Programme in Progress (1973). The Cosmococos, numbered CC1 to CC9, are complex environments including synchronised projections with very elaborate sound tracks and specific decoration. Famous figures are projected with lines of cocaine traced over them. Cosmococos is a transitory state or experience. The cocaine takes form and modifies the image, which can become a face-up or a mask. Oiticica calls them ‘pleasure game During his stay in New York, and in collaboration with film-maker Neville D’Almeida, Oiticica conceived Block-Experiments in Cosmococa – program in progress (1973–74), a series of nine ‘supra-sensorial’ environments, each incorporating slide projections, soundtracks, cocaine powder drawings and a set of instructions for visitors. The work is the epitome of what Oiticica called his ‘quasi-cinemas’ and constitutes his desire to merge individual ‘life-experience’ with art. Watch Guy Brett in conversation with Nayia Yiakoumaki, discussing ‘Hélio Oiticica: Whitechapel Experience’ (1969) for the third in our series of talks analysing exhibitions through the personal accounts of the curators responsible for them. Read More >. Supporters.