

Lygia Pape



The Skin of ALL

19.3.–
17.7.2022

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Introduction

The Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen is dedicating the first comprehensive solo exhibition in Germany to the Brazilian avant-garde artist Lygia Pape (1927–2004). Titled “The Skin of ALL,” the exhibition shows her transgressive art which, on the one hand, features an abstract-geometric formal language and, on the other hand, manifested itself as subtle, poetic resistance against the backdrop of a twenty-year dictatorship in Brazil.

Her work, which she developed with an irrepressible joy of experimentation over the span of five decades, is characterized by a wide variety of media and an interdisciplinary approach. In addition to abstract-geometric paintings, drawings, reliefs, and abstract woodcuts, her oeuvre includes ballet compositions, participatory sculptures, and poems as well as experimental films, immersive spatial installations, and collective performances in public spaces.

Lygia Pape, together with Lygia Clark and Hélio Oiticica, was one of the key figures of the Neo-Concrete Movement in Brazil in the 1950s and 1960s. Her specific understanding of a geometric abstraction resulted in a radical reconceptualization of concrete constructivist art, centering on the idea of the open work. In addition to ethical and socio-political issues, Pape included all the senses in her works and turned the passive spectators into active participants.

In the front section of the Klee Halle, the retrospective presents early works from the time of the Grupo Frente and the Neo-Concrete Movement. In the rear section of the exhibition are room-sized installations and video works, almost all of which were created during the military dictatorship (1964–1985). The title of the exhibition “The Skin of ALL” quotes a text by Pape on her work *Divisor* (1968), whose idea of an all-connecting membrane or skin in space can also be applied to many of her other works.

The exhibition presents the multifaceted work of this extraordinary artist and honors her as an enriching voice within a global development of art.

1 Pintura, 1953

Painting

Oil on canvas

Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen. Acquisition 2020

The picture is one of only four oil paintings in Lygia Pape's oeuvre. It marks her artistic beginnings, during which she explored an abstract visual language and color as a sensual means of expression. The pictorial surface is structured by intertwined organic forms on a violet-blue ground. The constructed arrangement is inspired by Concrete Art, which strives for pure, abstract forms that have no reference to the sensual world but are created purely mentally according to geometric-mathematical principles. This art movement exerted great influence on the Brazilian art scene after the end of the authoritarian Vargas dictatorship in 1945.

The painting was executed traditionally in oil on canvas—a technique Pape abandoned after only a short time because she was allergic to the oil paint. Soon after, she turned her back on the classical division of the genre categories of painting, sculpture, and drawing. The early oil painting features aspects that recur in her subsequent work: geometric rigor is broken with the use of color and lively forms.

2 Relevos, 1954–1956

Reliefs

Automotive paint and tempera on wood

Pinturas, 1954–1956

Paintings

Tempera and gouache on wood

The Grupo Frente dealt in depth with geometric abstraction and Concrete Art, embodied by artists such as Kazimir Malevich, Piet Mondrian, and Max Bill. Lines, rectangles, and squares in rich primary colors, as well as black and gray, rise from the white background of Pape's paintings. The color scheme refers to the Dutch De Stijl movement, while the parallel and crossed lines are reminiscent of Malevich.

The young Brazilian art scene was well informed about European modernism, but consciously dealt with this rather freely and formulated an independent response. Pape's *Relevos* and *Pinturas* leave the two-dimensional pictorial plane and protrude into space. Movement on the part

of the viewer is required to fully grasp the shape of the reliefs. The confrontation with space and the viewer would become characteristic of Pape's subsequent work.

3 Tecelares

Weavings
Woodcut on Japanese paper

The *Tecelares*, created between 1953 and 1960, is one of the most important group of works by Pape. The woodcuts marked the transition between the Concrete and Neo-Concrete phases. For these, Pape worked wooden panels with tools and sandpaper. She then colored them with black ink and printed them, usually only once, on slightly transparent rice paper. In the image, the grain lines and other indentations appear white.

In the complex compositions of the *Tecelares*, the strict geometric forms contrast strongly with the lively structure of the wood. The irregularity of the material lends the lines a graphic gesture. With the *Tecelares*, Pape began to thwart the strict principles of Concretism and was already working toward a more open, Neo-Concrete direction.

The *Tecelares* vary in their compositional design. Initially, triangular structures dominate, followed by more even structures in which forms appear only through fine incisions, and little white space remains. Pape often worked with axial or point reflections. For several woodcuts, she used organic or semicircular forms reminiscent of architect Oscar Niemeyer's design elements for the new Brazilian capital Brasília, although they predate his designs. In others, the unprinted white surface transforms into negative space. The black works, in which fine parallel white lines run through the picture like an inverted "U," resemble Frank Stella's famous *Black Paintings*, although here as well, Pape's version predates his.

The title *Tecelares* is borrowed from the Portuguese word for "weaving." A new, woven space emerges from thin threads or, in this case, lines. This textile association also plays a role in later works.

4 Desenhos

Drawings
Ink on Japanese paper

The *Desenhos* are reminiscent of the *Tecelares* in their form and coloration; they are, however, not printed, but rather precisely drawn with ink. As a result of their technical precision, they are closer to Concretism than the

woodblock prints that were created at the same time. Different phases can be distinguished in the *Desenhos*. In 1956–1957, Pape accentuated rectangular forms from parallel lines by shifting them slightly. To the extent that the lines seem like lines of text or music paper, with small gaps and variations, the *Desenhos* evoke associations with poetry and music. Both are genres that accompanied Pape throughout her life.

However, some of the drawings, which are very typical of the period, are also reminiscent of similar works by Anni Albers or Agnes Martin, as well of as the illusionistic effects of Op Art. In others, Pape bundled and scattered similar shapes, so that one is tempted to recognize architectural plans or urban structures. In a work from 1961, in which bundles of lines cross and intersect, there is a connection to the later *Ttéias* (No. 20) spun from thin metal threads.

5 Ballet neoconcreto I, 1958

Neo-Concrete Ballet I
Performance at Serralves Museum of Contemporary Art
in Porto, Portugal, 2000
Digital video, color, sound, 19'43"

Ballet neoconcreto II, 1959

Neo-Concrete Ballet II
Performance at Serralves Museum of Contemporary Art
in Porto, Portugal, 2000
Digital video, color, sound, 5'12"

Performed at the Teatro Copacabana Palace in Rio de Janeiro in 1958, the choreography of *Ballet neoconcreto I* is based on a poem by Reynaldo Jardim (1926–2011). This consists solely of the words *olho* (eye) and *alvo* (target), with white cylinders representing "eyes" and orange parallel-epipeds standing for "targets." The shapes move back and forth on the stage to minimalist piano music, forming groups, retreating, or stepping out. Dramatic lighting sets the scene for the dance. The ballet of forms does without any visible human involvement because the dancers are hidden in the geometric bodies. One year later, in 1959, Pape performed a second ballet as a dance of a pink square and a pink-blue rectangle.

As the two ballets were being created, Pape became increasingly involved with concrete poetry, which was also reflected in her first book objects and poems from the same period. In the ballets, there is a clear turn toward form in space. For the Neo-Concrete artists, geometry, one of

the cornerstones of Concrete Art, continued to play a role, but they also wanted to incorporate space, time, form, and color, as well as the body, into their works. They thus increasingly broke loose from the classical media of art, such as painting, printing, and sculpture and instead worked with space, which included the viewers with all their senses. The two ballets were performed again, including as part of Pape's exhibition at the Serralves Museum of Contemporary Art in Porto in 2000.

6 Livro da criação, 1959

Book of Creation

Gouache and tempera on paperboard

Guilherme Teixeira Collection

The *Livro da criação* stands paradigmatically for the Neo-Concrete work of art that liberates itself from static form. Pape abandoned the flat space of the canvas and created a three-dimensional book object. It narrates the creation of the world in sixteen episodes, like a visual poem without words. Pape developed abstract spatial forms from the flat square, which, together with the bright symbolic colors, illustrate the individual episodes.

The book with its loose square pages only becomes activated when it is held in one's hands and it is unfolded. As in the theory of the Non-Object by Pape's colleague Ferreira Gullar (1930–2016), the artistic effect is created by the convergence of mental and sensory experience. Pape strove to engage all the senses of the viewer—or rather, the user. The narrative of the book is created individually in the mind of each user. The title *Livro da criação* refers to both the artist's and the user's creative act, as well as to the Biblical story of creation.

Due to its fragility, Pape presented the *Livro da criação* in subsequent exhibitions after its initial presentation through photographs that placed the book in the urban space in relation to similar forms, as well as through a film. An accompanying poem describes the creation of the world and the course of human development.

7 Livro do tempo, 1961–1963

Book of Time

Tempera and acrylic on wood

For her enormous wall-filling work *Livro do tempo*, Pape developed 365 variations from the form of the square, which refer to the days of a year. In each case, she took away parts of the basic shape and added them

elsewhere. Pape painted the wooden squares with tempera paint in the primary colors (red, yellow, and blue), as well as in orange, black, and white. The work can be hung in a strict grid or in a so-called exploding version that expands on all sides.

As in *Livro da criação*, each panel—that is to say, each day—tells a new story. From a same starting point, time allows countless unique variations to emerge. The individual pieces can be read either as abstracted images from reality, as symbols, or simply as pure geometric games. Although Pape used an abstract formal language, she established an open reference to the world through the title.

8 Caixa das baratas, 1967

Box of Cockroaches

Acrylic, mirror, mummified roaches

Collection Fundação de Serralves – Museu de Arte Contemporânea, Porto, Portugal. Acquisition 2006

Caixa das formigas, 1967

Box of Ants

Super 8 film, converted to digital, color, sound, 1'00"

After years of economic and cultural awakening beginning in 1945, a military dictatorship was established in Brazil in 1964. Pape initially worked increasingly in the field of graphic arts, especially together with the avant-garde Cinema Novo. It was not until 1967 that she returned to the visual arts, showing the work *Caixa das baratas* as part of the exhibition *Nova objetividade brasileira* (New Brazilian Objectivity) organized by Hélio Oiticica (1937–1980). Pape understood this as a critique of the museum, in which art was mummified—that is to say, exhibited in a state of stasis. In the context of the dictatorship, Pape and her colleagues related their works more strongly than before to the political and social circumstances.

The stringently lined-up insects in Pape's work are reminiscent of natural history collections. In several versions of *Caixa das baratas*, the backing is reflective, so that viewers see their image amid the cockroaches. In the original exhibition, Pape showed the box together with the *Caixa das formigas*, in which live ants run around and eat a raw piece of meat. Next to it is the phrase *A gula ou a luxúria?* (Gluttony or Lust?), indicating a lustful, almost erotic play with art. For Pape, the one box figuratively embodied the dead art in the museum, while the other embodied the living art outside it.

9 Divisor, 1967

Divider

Performance at Favela da Cabeça, Rio de Janeiro, 1967
Super 8 film, converted to digital, color, no sound, 3'36"

Divider, 1968/1990

Divider

Performance with children at Museo de Arte Moderna,
Rio de Janeiro, 1990
Digitalized photograph

Pape's works changed radically from 1967 onward, increasingly incorporating her environment. With the exhibition *Nova objetividade brasileira*, she began to work intensively again in the field of art and devoted herself to new media such as film and performance.

Originally, Pape had planned the work *Divisor* for an interior space in which people would stick their heads through evenly spaced slits in a large white cloth. But since this could not be realized, she took the cloth to the favela Chácara de Cabeça, close to her studio, where she gave it to children to play with. She recorded this first activation in a film, in which she herself can also be seen.

The children seize the cloth and intuitively discover what it was designed for. They form a new collective being that moves and is simultaneously connected and separated by a common skin. Later, Pape also had the piece activated with adults at various venues around the city. *Divisor* developed into a metaphor for the politicized masses in the streets, protesting against the dictatorship at that time.

The white cloth touches on the question of the white canvas in modern art, perforated as in the work of Lucio Fontana and carried into space in the spirit of Neo-Concretism.

10 O ovo, 1967

The Egg

Performance at the beach of Barra da Tijuca, Rio de Janeiro, 1967
Super 8 film, converted to digital, color, sound, 1'35"

The film shows a square egg on a beach from which a person hatches: Lygia Pape herself. The work consists of a wooden frame around which a plastic film has been stretched, which is torn from the inside by the person

enclosed within it. Pape activated the work with changing participants at various locations in the urban space. She conceived the work so that it could be reproduced anywhere and by anyone without her direct involvement.

Pape filmed the action on the beach for documentation purposes. With this setting, associations with utopian, untouched nature are evoked. The egg symbolically stands for the new human being who, after a phase of maturation or metamorphosis in the egg, breaks through the membrane and is born anew. In the context of dictatorship, *O ovo* explores the limits of what can be done publicly and agrees on an ambiguous expression. Everyone can become a new subject participatorily qua (re)birth. The square egg, however, also symbolizes the Neo-Concrete breaking out of geometry and the "white cube," the white-walled exhibition space.

11 Roda dos prazeres, 1967

Wheel of Pleasures

Performance at the beach of Barra da Tijuca, Rio de Janeiro, 1967
Super 8 film, converted to digital, color, sound, 1'52"

Roda dos prazeres, 1967/2022

Wheel of Pleasures

Porcelain vessels, droppers, water, flavorings, food coloring

Bowls of colored water arranged in a circle form the *Roda dos prazeres*. The audience is invited to drip the liquids into their mouths with the help of pipettes. What at first seems like a cheerful game changes abruptly when the water touches the tongue. Some of the liquids, which look like candy, actually taste disgustingly sour, bitter, or spicy. With this work, Pape strove to bring about an ambivalence in the senses: the eye and tongue perceive two sensations that do not match. The artist stated that the most radical experience would be if one of the bowls contained poison. Pape realized the work several times and, as with *O ovo* (No.10), it was intended to be installed anywhere, independent of her personal involvement. In the video documentation on the beach, Pape herself can be seen performing it. The circular arrangement of the bowls is reminiscent of the geometric works from the beginning of her creative career.

12 La nouvelle création, 1967

The New Creation

35 mm / 16 mm film, converted to digital, color, sound, 0'50"

The film was made for a competition held on the occasion of *Expo 67* in Montreal, Canada. The task was to make a universally understandable film on the subject of "Terre des Hommes" (Land of People). In Pape's fifty-second video, with which she won the competition, an astronaut slowly exits a space capsule to which he is still connected by a hose, as if by an umbilical cord. The black-and-white image turns blood red and a baby's cry resounds.

For the film, Pape used material from the US space agency NASA, whose expeditions into outer space kept the world in suspense at the time. *Expo 67* was themed "Man and his World," and the various national pavilions and contributions were dedicated to the technological domination of nature. Pape paralleled the technological opening of outer space with the arrival of a new human. As with *O ovo* and *Divisor*, Pape was interested in the ambivalent moment between connection and disconnection, in which the infant is born but is still connected to its mother. The metaphors of birth and "creation," or constant reinvention, recur here. The astronaut, like the artist, explores a new space: outer space.

13 Favela da Maré, 1974–1976

Super 8 film, converted to digital, color, no sound, 5'12"

In 1972, Pape began teaching in the Department of Architecture and Urbanism at the University of Santa Úrsula. She used unusual teaching methods and visited various favelas in Rio de Janeiro with her students, most of whom belonged to the middle and upper classes. She wanted to show them the inventive architecture and aesthetics of the favelas, which Pape saw as genuinely artistic.

Pape was particularly fascinated by the Favela da Maré, about which she made a film in 1972. The favela had been built on stilts at the edge of the sea and adapted to the tides through structural tricks. The film shows the structures of the houses and the lives of their inhabitants. For Pape, they were "artist-inventors" who dealt with space freely and without being guided by rigid principles. The film functions like a Möbius strip that has no inside and no outside. It first plays backward, then turns and plays forward. The orientation between inside and outside, as well as on the winding wooden walkways between the houses, becomes blurred.

14 Carnival in Rio, 1974

Super 8 film, converted to digital, color, sound, 9'16"

Wampirou, 1974

Super 8 film, converted to digital, color, sound, 18'33"

Arenas calientes, 1974

Hot Sands

Super 8 film, converted to digital, color, sound, 20'00"

Our Parents "Fossilis", 1974

Super 8 film, converted to digital, color, sound, 6'59"

In the 1970s, the political situation came to a head, and political purges were on the agenda. In 1973, Pape was also imprisoned and tortured for three months for supposedly helping government critics but was ultimately acquitted. The following year, she made several Super 8 films revolving around radical political themes.

For *Carnival in Rio*, Pape used a handheld camera to document the spontaneous street carnival. A polyphonic, lively procession of imaginatively dressed people, some carrying sad signs such as "Miss Poverty," passes by the camera. At the end of the film, military police vans drive up and abruptly interrupt the goings-on.

In *Wampirou*, the artist-vampire Wamp, played by Antônio Manuel (b.1947), prowls along the beach and through the empty city in broad daylight. He is celebrating a banquet where he attacks and bites those present—embodied by the artist Lygia Clark (1920–1988), the poet Waly Salomão (1943–2003), and Pape herself. Wamp lies in a bed surrounded by Western consumer items and dreams of a female vampire. An art dealer comes to Wamp, tricks him, and steals his vampire identity. With this ironic-anarchistic film, Pape reflected on the relationship between the artist and the art market.

In *Our Parents "Fossilis"*, various romanticizing postcard motifs of indigenous people, created for the exoticizing gaze of tourists, alternate in succession. This is accompanied by voices and a song in an indigenous language. Increasingly, the people depicted no longer appear as "savages" but rather as people with a rich cultural tradition. With the title, Pape criticized the commercialization and exploitative destruction of indigenous cultures, which she considered herself as belonging to as a Brazilian artist.

In *Arenas calientes*, several Palestinians are stuck in the desert, exploring the surroundings. They subsist on gasoline they find on their forays. At the end of the film, we see an advertisement for the American oil company ESSO and documentary footage of armed Arab fighters. Shot with an unsteady handheld camera in the dunes of Ipanema, the video has the character of an experimental play between the actors and the camera.

15 *A mão do povo*, 1975

The Hand of the People

16 mm film, converted to digital, color, sound, 11'40"

Commissioned by the Brazilian Ministry of Education, the film focuses on Brazilian craftsmanship and popular culture. Images of ceramics from the Jequitinhonha Valley and geometric kilts from Minas Gerais mix with impressions of an urban market. There, industrial products such as beverage cans are handcrafted into flowers or cars. Finally, one sees entirely industrially produced decorative objects. Pape was concerned with appreciating and learning from handmade traditional things and objects in the face of imperialist consumer culture. She observed the loss of identity that often accompanies a move from the countryside to the city and inhibits active making and creating.

Beginning in the mid-1970s, Pape and other artists increasingly explored Brazil's indigenous and Black cultures. This search, especially by women artists, for their own Brazilian identity was simultaneously directed against the nationalism of the dictatorship and American imperialism. With works such as *A mão do povo*, Pape practiced what can be understood today as appropriation, but also as solidarity with the marginalized, among whom she counted herself performatively in various statements. She drew on indigenous practices such as weaving or anthropophagic rituals and transferred these into her own formal language.

16 *Eat Me:* *A gula ou a luxúria?*, 1975

Eat Me: Gluttony or Lust?

16 mm / 35 mm film, converted to digital, color, sound, 6'42"

The video shows a close-up of two lipsticked mouths, one of them with a mustache, both devouring and spitting out small, unidentifiable objects. Pape produced it for the solo exhibition *Eat Me: A gula ou a luxúria?*

(Gluttony or Lust?), held in 1975 and 1976. With it, she explored the objectification of women in consumer society. In editing the film, she applied a strictly conceptual rule and reassembled the individual parts in such a way that the image increasingly pulsates. Alongside moaning sounds, the question "gluttony or lust?" can be heard in various languages. In the exhibition, Pape negotiated what she called the "patriarchal space" of the museum and countered it with another, poetic space that encompasses all the senses.

The activity of devouring and disgorging references the *Manifesto Antropófago* (Anthropophagic Manifesto, 1924) by Oswald de Andrade (1890–1954), which explored the possibility of a postcolonial identity. The term "anthropophagy" refers to rituals of the indigenous Tupinambá people in which they (symbolically) ate their enemies in order to assimilate their positive qualities. De Andrade transferred this idea to the way one deals with colonial European culture. For Brazilian cultural production, it was a matter of devouring it instead of being devoured by it, and then excreting it, digested, as something of its own. This idea continues to shape Brazilian culture to this day.

17 *Catiti-Catiti,* *na terra dos Brasis*, 1978

Catiti-Catiti, on the Land of the Brasis

16 mm film, converted to digital, b/w, sound, 9'46"

Pape's philosophy studies, which she pursued beginning in 1972, led to a graduate thesis that addressed the question of what Brazilian art might encompass in contrast to art from North America and Europe. The text builds on a video work on the Anthropophagic movement in art (No. 16). In the indigenous Tupi language, *catiti-catiti* means "new moon, oh new moon."

The film parodies images and ideas of what Brazil is ostensibly about. The voice of a congressman accompanies exotic images of the beach at Ipanema, the rain forest, and a sawmill. The headline of a newspaper floating in the water announces that the decree of *Ato Institucional No 5*, with which the military junta legitimized censorship and torture in 1968, would henceforth be enforced with even less discretion. One hears texts by Portuguese authors praising the "discovered" country. The poet Luis Otávio Pimentel embodies the three ethnic groups of Brazil, staging himself caricatured as indigenous, white, and Black. The opening and closing motifs refer to famous paintings by the Brazilian artist Tarsila do Amaral (1886–1973). The chess game is an allusion to Marcel Duchamp (1887–1968) as a representative of the European avant-garde. At the end of the

film, the protagonist devours exotic fruit in the spirit of the anthropophagic rituals of the Tupinambá.

The conceptual photograph *Manto tupinambá* (1996–1999) also refers to the Tupinambá, who, before colonization, lived on the site of what is now Rio de Janeiro. The photo depicts a red cloud over the city. The project, which was to be realized by signal rockets, which were classified as military material due to import regulations, was not feasible. The concept photo was all that remained. The Tupinambá tribes made red protective coats from feathers of the scarlet ibis, which Pape saw as a symbol of Brazil's indigenous cultures. The scarlet color also refers to the bloody history of colonization.

18 **Ovos do vento, 1979/2022**

Wind Eggs

Plastic bags, rubber balls, emergency lights

Built with plastic sacks containing rubber balls filled with air, a high wall rises in the exhibition space. Pape showed the work at the Hotel Meridien in Rio de Janeiro in 1979 on the occasion of the inauguration of the Galerie des Arts there. It is illuminated from the inside with a pulsating red emergency light; the interior, however, cannot be entered. The wall of "wind eggs" looks like a well-armored hiding place made of sandbags. In this way, Pape recalled the struggle of the Sandinistas, who overthrew the Somoza dictatorship in Nicaragua that same year. The Sandinista guerrillas were seen in Brazil as a model for possible liberation from dictatorship. The transparency of the bags filled with air adds a paradoxical poetic note to the military image of the sandbags.

19 **Espaços imantados nas feiras, 1967**

Magnetized Spaces on the Markets

Super 8 film, converted to digital, color, no sound, 8'24"

Espaços imantados, 1968/1982/1995

Magnetized Spaces

Digitalized photograph, ca. 1968

Time and again, Pape drove through the city in a VW Beetle and discovered new places. She compared herself to a spider moving through space, weaving a web. On her tours, she noticed formations in public spaces that she described as "magnetized spaces." In a series of photographs, she captured street vendors or performers whose acts attract people like magnets. The energetic forms fascinated her, and she transferred the metaphor of magnetized space to many other works (such as *Ttéia 1 C*, No. 20). With the film *Espaços imantados nas feiras*, she linked the same observation of magnetized spaces to a market where a wide variety of goods and services are offered for sale or exchanged. The result is a portrait of Rio de Janeiro in the 1960s that is bursting with life.

20 **Ttéia 1 C, 2001/2022**

Silver thread, nails, wood, light

Spun from silver thread, the gigantic installation *Ttéia 1 C* extends between the floor and the ceiling. The strands of thread in the dark room are reminiscent of musical strings, spider silk, waterfalls, or rays of light breaking out of a cloud. In 1978–1979, as part of a seminar with students in Parque Lage, Pape experimented for the first time with threads that they stretched between trees. Pape continued to develop this idea into the large *Ttéia* installations, which exist in both silver and gold thread, until shortly before her death. Only light makes the thread visible and gives the space an almost sacred effect. With minimal use of materials, the work gives rise to considerable volumes and unfolds a great spatial effect. The movement of the viewer is essential in order to experience the light effects and the overlapping of the rays. As in many earlier works, Pape dissolved the pictorial space and created an immediate spatial effect from a simple structure.

The title is a play on words from the Portuguese words *teia* (net) and *teteia*, which colloquially refers to a strange person or thing. The *Ttéias* are reminiscent of the early group of works titled *Tecelares*, which also refer to the weaving of space.

Biography

Born in 1927 in Nova Friburgo in the state of Rio de Janeiro, Pape grew up in a middle-class family. She married young and moved to the city of Rio de Janeiro, where she would reside until the end of her life. Pape never studied art, but already had contact with other artists as a young woman.

In 1954, the Grupo Frente was founded, a group of artists, poets, and art critics that included Pape, Lygia Clark and Hélio Oiticica. The group began to explore the art-historical canon imported from Europe—especially geometric abstraction and Concrete Art. Another important point of reference was the Brazilian modernism of the 1920s and 1930s and especially the anthropophagic movement.

The Neo-Concrete movement emerged from Grupo Frente in 1959, with the aim of going beyond Concrete Art, whose approach the artists found too rationalistic and mechanical. The Neo-Concrete movement, by contrast, sought to integrate the viewer, the space, and the realities of life into the artwork. Advocating for the freedom of art and never letting itself be politically co-opted, the Neo-Concrete movement is regarded as the cornerstone of contemporary art in Brazil. The group disbanded in 1961. Pape then began to design graphic works for the avant-garde Cinema Novo and for a food manufacturer.

In 1964, Brazilian President João Goulart was overthrown in a US military-backed coup d'état and a military dictatorship was established, which would last until 1985. During this period, artists were subject to persecution and censorship, and some of Pape's colleagues went into exile. In 1967, Pape produced novel works for the exhibition *Nova objetividade brasileira* (New Brazilian Objectivity) at the Museu de Arte Moderna in Rio de Janeiro. The exhibition was a seminal moment for the musical and cultural movement known as *Tropicália*. After 1967, Pape increasingly responded to the world around her with her works, linking life and art. She took up the new media of performance and video, in which the work of art no longer consists of an object.

From 1969 she taught at various institutions, for which she developed unusual, experimental teaching methods. In 1973, she was imprisoned and tortured for three months for allegedly aiding opponents of the regime, but was acquitted. In the seventies, Pape engaged intensively with Brazilian indigenous art. After the end of the military dictatorship in 1985, Pape took part in several exhibitions both at home and abroad. Lygia Pape died in 2004 in Rio de Janeiro.

Colophon

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Lygia Pape. The Skin of ALL

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