

K20
Press kit
March 17, 2022
page 1/9

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Press kit: Lygia Pape

Lygia Pape. The Skin of ALL
March 19 – July 17, 2022
K20

Press conference and preview
Thursday, March 17, 2022, 11 am, K20

Speakers

- Susanne Gaensheimer, Director Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen
- Paula Pape, President Projeto Lygia Pape
- Isabelle Malz, Curator, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen

	Press text exhibition	2
K21	Supporting program, Opening	6
	Exhibition preview	7

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#K20Pape
#LygiaPape
#K20
#ProjetoLygiaPape

The Kunstsammlung NRW Presents Lygia Pape's First Solo Exhibition in Germany

The Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen is dedicating the first comprehensive solo exhibition to the Brazilian avant-garde artist Lygia Pape (1927–2004). Titled “The Skin of ALL,” the exhibition presents the artist’s multifaceted, transgressive oeuvre, which she developed over five decades.

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 geometric abstraction resulted in a radical new conception of concrete-constructivist art. In addition to ethical and socio-political issues, Lygia Pape made her poetic works fruitful for experimental experiences that involved all the senses.

The exhibition at K20 includes abstract-geometric paintings, drawings, reliefs, unique woodcuts, two ballet compositions, and poems, as well as films, multisensory experiments, collective performances, and immersive spatial installations.

Two repressive periods of dictatorship (1937–1945 and 1964–1985) and a productive period of cultural, urban, and economic modernization characterized the ambivalence of these years in Brazil. With the founding of two major art museums—the Museu de Arte Moderna São Paulo (1947) and the Museu de Arte Moderna Rio de Janeiro (1948)—the establishment of the São Paulo Biennial (1951), and the construction of the new capital Brasília (1956–1960), designed by Lúcio Costa and Oscar Niemeyer, Brazil developed in the mid-twentieth century into a cosmopolitan center of attraction and a lively, transcultural zone beyond the hitherto dominant art metropolises in Europe and the United States.

It was in this climate that Lygia Pape developed her specific understanding of geometric abstraction. She was a member of the Grupo Frente (1954–1956) and of the Neo-Concrete Movement (1959–1961) in Rio de Janeiro together with artists and critics such as Hélio Oiticica, Lygia Clark, Ivan Serpa, Mário Pedrosa, Ferreira Gullar, and Reynaldo Jardim. At the center of her artistic interest was the liberation of the work of art from a static form and the concept of the open work. Pape became preoccupied with the European avant-garde—especially with Piet Mondrian and Kazimir Malevich—as well as with philosophers such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Susanne K. Langer, while at the same time situating herself in the Brazilian cultural tradition with concepts such as anthropophagy. In clear demarcation from a purist, rational orientation of concrete art, as pursued by Max Bill, for example, but also by the Grupo Ruptura in São Paulo, Pape included all the senses in her participatory works and declared the corporeally involved viewers as active participants in the actual creation of her works.

The Liberation of the Work of Art—Lygia Pape and Brazil's Neo-Concrete Movement

The oil painting “Pintura” (1953), acquired by the Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, marks her artistic beginnings, in which Lygia Pape was already exploring an abstract visual language and color as a sensual means of expression. Her subsequent series of abstract geometric paintings, created between 1954 and 1956, dynamize the pictorial space through

a play of free-floating abstract forms and lines on a white ground. The “Relevos” (1954–56), which developed further into the space, involve the viewers as activated participants in the dynamized processes of perception.

Parallel to this, Lygia Pape began to work with the medium of the woodcut in 1953. The so-called “Tecelares” (1953–1960) are one of her most important and largest groups of works of the Neo-Concrete phase. In the abstract, mostly unique woodcuts, the strict geometric forms combine with the sensual qualities of the material and the lively structure of the wood to create exceptional works. Her drawings, created at the same time, also explore ambivalent spatial relationships with their finely drawn ink lines and evoke musical notations with their rhythmic structures, which already anticipate her late “Ttéias” spun from gold and silver threads. With her haptically manipulable “Livro da criação” (1959), which tells the story of the creation of the world, Pape finally liberated the work from static form. Central to the Neo-Concrete phase are also the two interdisciplinary abstract ballets “Ballet neoconcreto I” and “Ballet neoconcreto II” (1958 and 1959), in which geometric forms move in space, as well as her wall-filling “Livro do tempo” (1961–63). For this, she developed variations of 365 abstract reliefs from the shape of the square, sketching the days of a year as a story to be explored subjectively. Her “Livros dos Caminhos” (1963/1976) point as abstract reliefs to the dynamized human assemblages of the “Espaços imantados” (from 1967 onwards), as well as to the collective body in “Divisor” (1967).

K21

With the establishment of the military dictatorship in 1964, Lygia Pape withdrew from the visual arts for several years and occupied herself with experimental films in the environment of the Cinema Novo, for which she designed opening credits and posters. Under the impression of increasing repression, from 1967 onwards her works developed into the public space as a place for manifestations of collective agency. This is demonstrated by the work “Divisor” (1967), initially performed with children from a favela. “Divisor” was subsequently shown in various contexts and locations and became a metaphor of a socio-political collective body. In the extremely productive phase starting in 1967, films, performances such as “O ovo” (1967), and sensory experiments such as “Roda dos prazeres” (1967) were created. They were conceived as open works that could be reproduced by anyone, anywhere, without the artist. With works such as “Eat Me: A gula ou a luxúria?” (1975), sensory experience were made fruitful as a form of knowledge beyond rational systems of thought. In numerous works, Lygia Pape dealt with the creative potential of popular culture or paid tribute to the inventiveness of the alternative architectural structures of the favelas. These works are also to be seen against the backdrop of socio-political and cultural marginalization and oppression.

“The Skin of ALL” at K20

With “Lygia Pape. The Skin of ALL,” the Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen is placing a Brazilian artist and her work at the center of a comprehensive solo exhibition for the first time in its history. The museum’s contact with Brazil’s art and cultural-political landscape began early on: In the course of a major world tour (1966–1985), the Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen sent the important collection of works by Paul Klee to Brazil as a cultural-political message of a new, democratic post-war Germany. The collection of Klee

works had been acquired by the state of North Rhine-Westphalia in 1960 as an act of reparation for an artist ostracized by the National Socialists. At the height of the military dictatorship, it was first shown at the Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro (June 28 – August 14, 1972)—where Lygia Pape must have seen it—and then at the Museu de Arte de São Paulo (August 20 – September 19, 1972). However, it took fifty-seven years for the Kunstsammlung to dedicate a chapter to Brazilian modernism in the course of the major research and exhibition project “museum global – Microhistories of an Ex-centric Modernism” (2018/19). In 2020, the Kunstsammlung succeeded in acquiring the early painting “Pintura” (1953) by Lygia Pape, which was then exhibited in the immediate vicinity of works by her European and North American contemporaries in the Kunstsammlung’s permanent collection.

The exhibition presents the multifaceted work of this extraordinary artist and honors Pape as an important and enriching voice within a global art development. Thanks to loans from international collections and the artist’s estate as the main lender, Lygia Pape’s unique oeuvre can finally be presented to a broad public in Germany. With this comprehensive exhibition, the Kunstsammlung is taking a further, long overdue step to advance the expansion of the canon of modern and postmodern art historiography of the Global North.

Curator: Isabelle Malz

K21

An exhibition of the Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen in cooperation with the Projeto Lygia Pape.

The exhibition is supported by Schwarzkopf.

Media Partner of the Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen:
Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung

Supported by the Ministry of Culture and Science of the
State of North Rhine-Westphalia

Biography

Born in 1927 in Nova Friburgo in the state of Rio de Janeiro, Lygia Pape grew up there in a middle-class family. She married young and moved to the city of Rio de Janeiro, where she remained for the rest of her life. Pape never completed formal art studies, but as a young woman she was already in contact with other artists.

In 1954, the Grupo Frente was founded, a group of artists, literary figures, and art critics, including Pape, Lygia Clark, and Hélio Oiticica. This group dealt with the “canon” of art history imported from Europe—in particular with geometric abstraction and concrete art. An important point of reference, however, was also the Brazilian modernism of the 1920s and 1930s, and especially the Anthropophagic Movement.

In 1959, the Neo-Concrete Movement emerged from the Grupo Frente. This movement further developed Concretism, the means of which seemed too rationalistic and mechanical.

The Neo-Concrete artists promoted the inclusion of the viewer, space, and the living world. Inasmuch as the group never allowed itself to be usurped by politics and advocated the freedom of art, it is considered the cornerstone of contemporary art in Brazil. In 1961, the group disbanded, and Pape worked for a few years primarily in the field of graphic design for Cinema Novo and a food manufacturer.

In 1964, the Brazilian President João Goulart was overthrown in a coup supported by the U.S. military, and a military dictatorship was established that lasted until 1985. During this time, artists also suffered persecution and censorship; some of Pape's colleagues went into exile. In 1967, the exhibition "Nova objetividade brasileira" (New Brazilian Objectivity) took place at the Museo de Arte Moderna in Rio de Janeiro, for which Pape produced innovative works. The exhibition became stylistically influential for the musical-cultural movement of Tropicália. Pape's works from 1967 onwards increasingly reacted to the world around them, linking life and art. With performance and video, she took up the new media in which the work of art no longer consisted of an object.

From 1969 onwards, 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 helping opponents of the regime but was ultimately acquitted. In the 1970s, she became intensively involved with Brazilian indigenous art. After the end of the military dictatorship in 1985, she participated in many exhibitions in Brazil and abroad. Lygia Pape died in Rio de Janeiro in 2004.

K21**Publication**

In May 2022, a bilingual (German/English) catalogue rich in material will be published to accompany the exhibition. The book features numerous illustrations and essays by international authors and short texts on key works, as well as texts, letters, and documents from the artist's archive, some of which are being published for the first time.

Edited by Susanne Gaensheimer and Isabelle Malz

With essays by Pauline Bachmann, Briony Fer, Paulo Herkenhoff, Cécile Huber, Isabelle Malz, Paula Pape, Luiza Proença, Tania Rivera, Michelle Farias Sommer, Felipe Scovino
Graphic design: Pascal Storz and Fabian Bremer

Hatje Cantz Verlag

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c. € 44

K20

Press kit
March 17, 2022
page 6/9

Supporting Program

Opening of the exhibition

March 18, 2022, 7 pm

K20

Speakers:

Susanne Gaensheimer, Director of the Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf

Isabel Pfeiffer-Poensgen, Minister of Culture and Science of the German State of North Rhine-Westphalia

Paula Pape, President of the Projeto Lygia Pape

Isabelle Malz, Curator of the exhibition

Please note that seats in the auditorium are limited. Admission begins at 6.30 pm. Current hygiene and safety regulations apply. The program is subject to change without notice.

Art Guides

On Saturdays, Sundays, and public holidays, as well as on KPMG Art Evenings,

Art Guides in the exhibition provide information about the works on view:

Saturdays, Sundays, and public holidays, 2 – 4 pm

1st Wednesday of the month, 4 – 10 pm

K21

Lecture by Luiza Proença – “Spiderings: On Lygia Pape’s Pedagogy Practice”

Wednesday, April 6, 2022, 8 pm, free admission within the frameworks of the KPMG Art Evening; limited number of participants, lecture in English.

Reenactment of Lygia Pape Performance “Divisor” (1968) in Düsseldorf

Wednesday, June 1, 2022, within the frameworks of the KPMG Art Evening; up-to-date information available at: www.kunstsammlung.de

Reading Group

Accompanying the exhibition, there will be a Reading Group in which we will read and discuss key texts and poems by Lygia Pape and her contemporaries.

Fridays, March 25, April 22, May 20, and June 24, 4 – 5.30 pm

K20 meeting point in the foyer. Participation in individual events is possible.

After registration at service@kunstsammlung.de, texts will be sent or can be picked up at the library.

Free admission; under the direction of Christine Breitschopf

Readings

Paula Macedo Weiß will read from her book *Es war einmal in Brasilien* (Once Upon a Time in Brazil).

Sunday, June 12, 2022, 12 pm

Free admission, limited number of participants

K20

Press kit
March 17, 2022
page 7/9

At the end of the exhibition, a reading will take place in July as part of the literary festival "Literarischer Sommer 2022." Up-to-date information available at: www.literarischer-sommer.eu.

Exhibition preview

Shifting Dialogues. Photography from The Walther Collection

Apr 9 – Sep 25, 2022

Press Conference and Preview: April 7, 2022, 12.30 pm, K21

From April 9 to September 25, 2022, the Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen in collaboration with The Walther Collection, will stage the largest-ever presentation in Germany of the Neu-Ulm and New York-based private art foundation.

The exhibition at K21 presents ground-breaking photography from Africa and the global diaspora that exemplify its conception, history, and significance as an artistic medium at the heart of the extensive The Walther Collection. As a non-profit foundation, The Walther Collection has dedicated itself to the critical understanding of historical and contemporary photography and related media in worldwide exhibitions and academic publications since the early 2000s. Okwui Enwezor (1963 – 2019), one of the most influential curators of recent decades, was instrumental in compiling the collection and presenting it for the first time in 2010. Based on this exhibition, the serial conceptual works by photographers, such as Yto Barrada, Samuel Fosso, David Goldblatt, Seydou Keïta, Santu Mofokeng, Zanele Muholi and Malick Sidibé, form the bedrock of the exhibition: they portray people – presenting and staging themselves in front of the camera – thus addressing complex questions about the colonial gaze, constructions of gender, and social identity. The exhibition examines how identity has been shaped, defined, and perceived over different periods of time.

K21

The exhibition is also dedicated to individual strategies of self-empowerment and self-presentation, as well as to the power of the postcolonial gaze. The criteria of typology and taxonomy are of central importance here, comparable, for example, to the works of August Sander or Bernd and Hilla Becher, which are also part of The Walther Collection. Eventually, the exhibition draws attention to the contradictions and shared concerns of pictorial strategies and artistic projects in Europe and Africa.

The exhibition is conceived in close collaboration with The Walther Collection, supported by curatorial consultant Renee Mussai.

Advised by Contemporary And (C&).

Please note that the press conference of this year's Art Düsseldorf (April 8–10, 2022) will take place on April 7, 2022, at 9.30 am at Areal Böhler, Düsseldorf. A free shuttle service will be provided for media representatives to the press conference at K21 at 12 pm.

Reinhard Mucha**Sep 3, 2022 – Jan 22, 2023****Press conference: September 1, 2022, 11 am**

Reinhard Mucha's work, in terms of its redefinition of sculpture, photography and installation, is considered to be one of the most important positions in contemporary art. At its two locations K20 and K21, the Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen combines installations by Mucha (b. Düsseldorf 1950) in this exhibition that have not been seen for many years, featuring works from each one of his creative phases and thus creating a panorama that spans over forty years of the artist's work. In addition to the installation "Das Deutschlandgerät" (The Germany Device) [2002] 1990, which was reconstructed in K21 from 2002 onwards and was originally made for the German Pavilion at the 1990 Biennale di Venezia, his early seminal work "Wartesaal" (Waiting Room) [1997], [1986] 1979 – 1982 – which has not been shown publicly since *documenta X*, 1997 – will be on view. "Das Figur-Grund Problem in der Architektur des Barock (für dich allein bleibt nur das Grab)" (The Figure-Ground Problem in Baroque Architecture (for You Alone There Remains Only the Grave)), one of the few remaining larger installations of museum furniture and everyday objects, will be realised anew for the first time since 1985 in K20's Grabbehalle,

K21

The exhibition is supported by the Art Mentor Foundation Lucerne and the Kunststiftung NRW.

The exhibitions in the Bel Etage are supported by the Sparda Bank West Foundation for Art, Culture and Society.

Piet Mondrian. Evolution**Oct 29, 2022 – Feb 12, 2023****Press conference: October 27, 2022, 11 am, K20**

The world-renowned painter Piet Mondrian (1872–1944) is famous for his astringent, geometric compositions in black and white with selected primary colour fields in red, blue or yellow. Yet it is not commonly known that the Dutchman opted to paint landscapes and other figurative motifs in his early years as an artist and often staged them with a surprising palette of colours. The Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen delineates Mondrian's artistic path from his early endeavours in painting to his wholly abstract works and traces the connections between the different groups of paintings.

From the beginning of his career as an artist, Mondrian was in search of the ideal composition. In his view, this comprised the perfect balance of all pictorial elements. Mondrian readily came across motifs – windmills, lighthouses, the dunes by the sea and the water, in which farms and rows of trees were reflected – in his homeland. This selection of paintings provides an insight into his work in the studio and his individual experimentation with colours and forms with the aid of Cubist stylistic elements, before turning to pure abstraction at the beginning of the 1920s.

K20

**Press kit
March 17, 2022
page 9/9**

The exhibition is courtesy of the Fondation Beyeler, Riehen/Basel and the Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf, in conjunction with the Kunstmuseum Den Haag.

K21