



Lygia Clark's *Couple*  
(1969) at *Lygia Clark:  
The Abandonment of  
Art, 1948-1988*, MOMA,  
New York, 2014.  
Photo: Byron Smith  
for the *New York Times*

ANDRÉ LEPECKI

## DECOLONIZING THE CURATORIAL

This essay is a very close rendition of a talk I delivered at a 2015 conference in Munich as part of the “Show Me the World” project. It has all the defects and all the advantages of such mode of delivery: it is driven by a kind of circumstantial impetus, in a writing style that has more of the affirmative tone of a manifesto than of paused scholarship. Thus, some concepts (for instance, the aesthetic regime of the arts, *vivência*) and some historical background (the complexities of Lygia Clark’s artistic life), even though fully referenced, are not fully explained for the sake of time and focus. For this, I apologize to the reader—I realize those defects in scholarship are perhaps not justifiable in a peer-reviewed journal; however, there is something to be said about the manifesto-like mode of delivery (particularly in the essay’s first part) as being in itself the result of careful pondering, to deliver a force, that, in itself, I find to be both theoretically and politically coherent and needed. The essay’s title says it all; its goal is not without some high ambitions: to decolonize the curatorial. What remains implicit is that such an act of decolonization has been performed, historically and currently, by very particular objects, actions, and propositions that indeed resist if not subvert altogether the economy circle of *creation* → *curation* → *display* → *perception* → *valuation* → (*more or less*) *creation* that defines the regime of artistic production. In mapping a possible disruption of such economy, as in relating it to a rationality linked, nonmetaphorically, to colonial logic, I feel obliged to write here what I said in Munich as opening remarks before I started reading my paper that fall 2015. What I said then was more or less this:

While preparing my talk, I started to ponder on the two notions that the organizers of the event had asked us all (scholars, artists, programmers, and curators from around the planet) to discuss for three days: “to show,” and “the world.” I could not help but consider that our gathering on the politics of showing the world would take place in a museum that had been projected by architect Paul Troost under the direct guidance of Adolf Hitler to be the first major display of Nazi ideology and propaganda, a museum that had held the infamous Degenerate Art exhibition of 1937. Haunted by that his-

tory, and by the fact that ideologies (whatever they might be) always need to build for themselves their privileged apparatuses of showing their visions of the world, I started to consider what is the exact function of curating in relation to certainly ideological acts of museological “showing” in contemporaneity—given the deeply complex relations between curation (understood as the management of the modes of visibility, valuation, and discursive life of objects, including, but not limited to, art works) and normative-evidentiary politics of presence, particularly in the current context of “the world” we are living in at the moment.

I was also intrigued by that first-person singular pronoun inserted in the event’s title, that “me” demanding the world to be shown to him or her and thus turning the title into a very odd imperative. Given all of these factors, in preparing my talk for the conference, I started to think about the notion of curation in relationship to its



Joseph Goebbels  
at the exhibition  
*Degenerate Art*, Haus  
der Kunst, Berlin,  
1938.

Photo courtesy  
of German Federal  
Archives

etymological links to offering cure, to attending, to taking care of. These are always considered positive affects in the practice of curation. But I was also thinking about curating as related to its more recent meaning of being the management of collectible objects, the indexing of archival memories, and the creative implementation of economies of display and of experience economies. In this tension between attending and collecting, a tension of management and economy, of embracing every single object under its very particular mode of intensive care, where the artwork is shown to the public under the imperative demand of the first-person pronoun *me*, with more or less thick, more or less subtle, but ever-present blanket of meaning and good intentions, it suddenly occurred to me that perhaps what we need at this moment, when the curatorial turn has affirmed itself across the humanities and across all sorts of art forms it had usually been unrelated to, particularly in live performance (dance, theater, performance art, music, sound art, etc., are all now curated, and no longer programmed), that what was interesting to me was to think about artworks and objects that perhaps do not want to be curated: they do not want to be taken care of; they have no need to be taken care of and actually live and thrive and insist on existing without care.

Furthermore, I started to think that the objects and works that usually pose a real political challenge to the situation of the world, to the very logic and irrational reasoning of the functioning of the world, even though coming from artists and their proposals, ontologically resist the curatorial and its apparatuses. And, by doing so, they resist accepting to be captured by normative (even if highly creative and well intended, highly thoughtful and historically grounded) logics of care. Thus, the whole impetus behind



Lygia Clark's  
*Matchbox Structures*  
(1964), MOMA,  
New York, 2014.  
Photo: Byron Smith  
for the *New York Times*

this essay is to arrive at those objects that, in their very own materiality and mode of existence as objects, indeed as art objects, remain outside the curatorial, challenging its good intentions and the very stability of the economies of presence and valuation still called “art.”

Lygia Clark's  
*Modulated Space*  
series (1958), MOMA,  
New York, 2014.  
Photo: Byron Smith  
for the *New York Times*



I am interested in objects, practices, propositions, and acts that have nothing to show to a “me” that demands that things must be made visible to perception. I advance that such objects do exist in the world, even in our world, and that they are made by artists and, of course, have much to offer perception and intellection, but mostly they have much to offer to sensation, to affect, to life, to thought, and to a deeper politics. In their singularities, those objects require, demand, offer, open up an altogether different logic for curating. What these objects do, in their integrity and wild living, is to offer to art and to curation decolonizing lines of flight. They are less objects than they are things, thus proposing audiences that are less subjects than things that feel, to use Mario Perniola’s expression.<sup>1</sup> Thus the title of this essay, which I will now, (re)begin.

I would like to start by proposing thirteen premises on the conditions that currently condition the making and curating art, and therefore currently condition the situation under which the “world” has to be “shown.” These premises are both epistemological clarifications and cartographic assessments. I see them as axiomatic propositions, statements of fact to be placed in space as one distributes vitrines in a gallery. Boring vitrines, made to be passed by without a glance, or smashed with a hammer.

1. The decolonizing movement must be careful in regard to the expression *post-colonial*, since the *post* in *postcolonial* suggests that colonialism is a situation of the past, therefore hiding the current state of a renewed, expanded, and hyperactive colonialist rationality sustaining contemporary political and economic power and their modes of subjectivization.

2. In this sense, even if today, jurisdictionally speaking, the former political formations that linked European nation-states and their colonies in the southern and eastern parts of the globe are no longer in place, the relations between nation-states today (between former colonizing powers, former colonized territories) remain those where the primacy of colonialist logic remains hegemonic, dominant. Moreover, the very logic

of biopolitical management and exploitative plundering that characterizes colonialist (non)governance and rationality is now being diverted toward what is still called, for lack of a better word, the Western nation-state.

3. It is impossible to think about the development of capitalism without thinking about the codevelopment of colonialism. One is the other's backside. One is the other's logic in deep correspondence. The many transformations of capitalism over the past centuries (mercantilist capitalism, industrial capitalism, Fordist capitalism, liberal capitalism, neoliberal capitalism, affective capitalism, etc.) are but reflections and inflections of the many transformations endured by colonialism and its modes.

4. The primary principle and first technology binding capitalism and colonialism is that crucial necropolitical invention, the slave, or "the commodity that speaks," to use Fred Moten's expression.<sup>2</sup>

5. Slavery is not only a regime of interpersonal servitude and exploitation (exploitation of labor, of life, of reproductive capacities, of sex, and of desire) but also an entire political technology of subjectivization, one that captures the entire system of conceiving life and its values, life and its agents, life and its objects, and through this capturing transforms all use value into what Michel Serres calls "abuse value."<sup>3</sup>

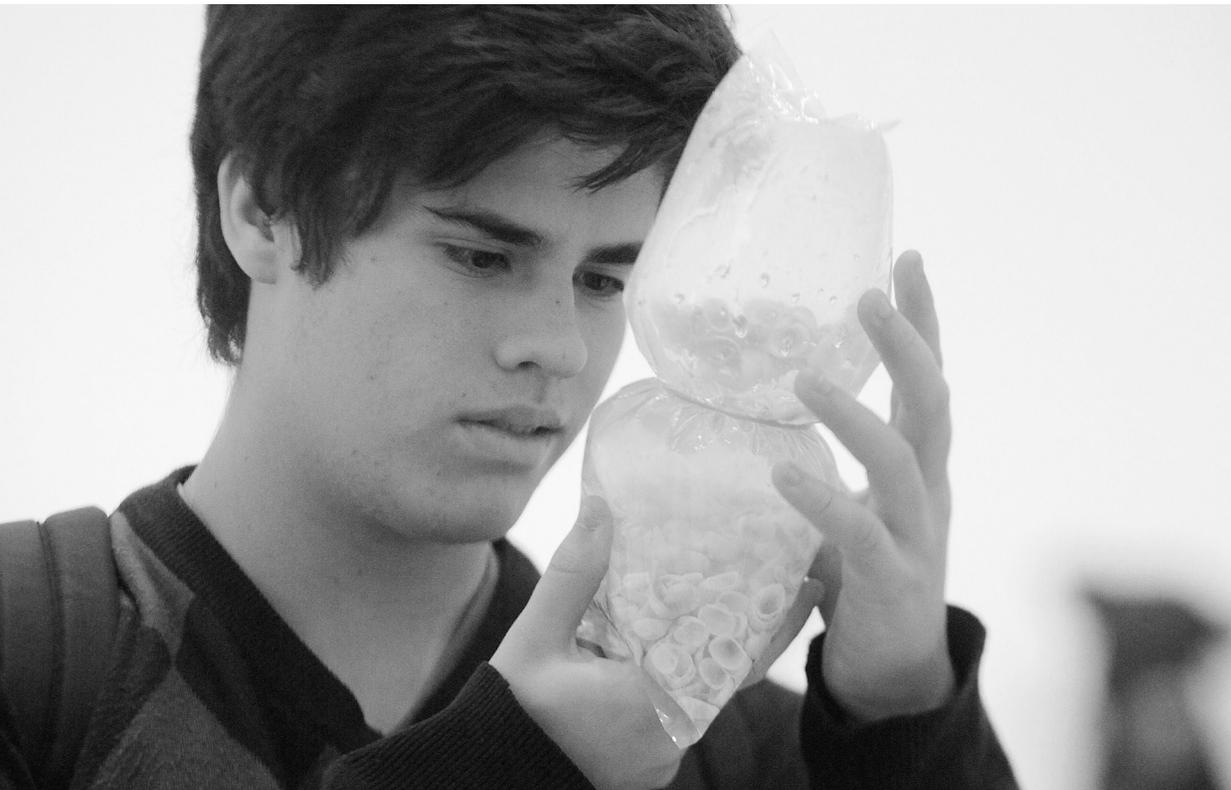
6. The current metamorphosis of the colonialist-capitalist assemblage has received the name *neoliberalism*. Its most recent effects percolate in the endless wars and more or less carelessly targeted killings taking place in the Middle East under the name of democratic freedom since the inception of neoliberalism in the early 1980s as the hegemonic logic fueling both the rationality and the corporealities of Western power. Here, political scientist Wendy Brown reminds us that neoliberal policies were first implemented in despotic and dictatorial regimes in the 1960s and early 1970s, and that neoliberalism's first steps took place in economic experiments imposed by the International Monetary Fund and World Bank in Western-aligned Latin American and African countries during the 1960s and 1970s, precisely as ways to block real decolonizing or anticapitalist becomings—thus demonstrating how neoliberal necropolitics does not require democracy at all in order to thrive.<sup>4</sup> Think of the economic policies implemented by the infamous "Chicago Boys" in Chile (economists trained at the University of Chicago under Milton Friedman and Arnold Harberger) during Augusto Pinochet's murderous dictatorship in the early 1970s. Think of Margaret Thatcher, one of the major figures behind Western neoliberalism, who until Pinochet's death hosted the former dictator in her own home, calling him a good friend and honorable man, to whom "Britain was greatly indebted."<sup>5</sup>

7. It is impossible to delink neoliberal "political economy" and its "distinct mode of reason, of the production of subjects, of 'conduct of conduct', and as a scheme of valuation,"<sup>6</sup> from the increased phenomena of endemic warfare in the Middle East; from the rise of concentration camps in the West (whether these camps are for migrants

and refugees displaced by the most recent colonial adventures that have shaped Euro-American policies for centuries, or for that new legal category for bare life, the “enemy combatant”); from the legal assassinations of Western citizens by their own governments thanks to executive fiat or secret presidential orders; or from the overwhelming surveillance of the very citizens of the enlightened, reasonable, and free West. This endemic logic of always rationalized and always “reasonable” brutality for the sake of security reminds us (as Paul Gilroy has, in his book *Postcolonial Melancholia*) that the colony (and not the camp, as Giorgio Agamben posits) is indeed the *nomos* of neoliberal Western democracy.<sup>7</sup>

8. So, if this is the scenario, if this is the situation conditioning the conditions of existence, of living life, experiencing death, making love, creating art, curating exhibitions, consuming, and participating, then what does it mean to decolonize? It means to affirm a logic of living and a desire for collective sociability that are altogether different in their ways of establishing relations between subjects, between objects and subjects, between matters and subjects, between matters and matters, between human animals and nonhuman animals, between life and death, life and art, death and art, in order to bring about other logics of existence—modes of existence as the insistence to openly fight against what Katherine McKittrick and Sylvia Wynter have called “the imperial and colonial liberal monohumanist premises” of existence.<sup>8</sup>

Lygia Clark's  
*Water and Seashells*  
(1970), MOMA, New  
York, 2014. Photo:  
Byron Smith for the  
*New York Times*



9. In this struggle, could something like art and something like curating still be the answers for all of these challenges, for all of these questions that the world, our world, our contemporaneity, pretty much everywhere, throws at us, particularly given the fact that this reality, this situation, is also being made by us, even at the moment when we sit here, maybe even because we are at this moment sitting here? Moreover, could something like live art (dance, performance, body art, theater, music) and the curation of live art be the answer, have the answer, or at least build or name or enact some weapons to fight the situation? If we decide to answer these questions affirmatively, then how does a curator cowork, or coimagine, or colabor along with the works and artists putting their bodies (and bodies of work) on the line, to precipitate the advent of another logic of relation between live art objects and their publics?

10. In a recent essay, which I am still trying to figure out whether I read correctly, Maurizio Lazzarato, commenting on Jacques Rancière's notion of the "aesthetic regime of the arts" (which is the only one, if you remember Rancière's tripartition of artistic regimes, where art and politics share one common element which is dissensus), states bluntly: "The aesthetic regime of the arts—precisely where we no longer are."<sup>9</sup> As I said, I am not totally sure of what Lazzarato actually means by this short affirmation, but I will agree with the sentence nevertheless, or use this sentence nevertheless, to say that, indeed, this concept or understanding of the relations between art and politics is indeed totally insufficient to respond to, account for, and go against the premises of "the imperial and colonial liberal monohumanism" of our times, to invoke once again McKittrick and Wynter.<sup>10</sup> I am taking here the liberty to overread, and perhaps even misread, what Lazzarato might have wanted to say with his sentence. I am over- or misreading him to say that, yes, to make an art object so that it merely redistributes the senses, so that it troubles the relation between what is sayable and what is visible (first about what is artistically given to view, and hopefully later on to the social sphere) is clearly no longer enough in our situation.<sup>11</sup> Why? Because the system of objects within the aesthetic regime of the arts remains entrapped, encased, imprisoned by, and subjected to the general system of colonialist subjectivization, of course, neoliberal style, that is, filled with little freedoms and exciting pornopharmacological fluxes, surprising rearrangements around sense and sense, but still living in the generalized field of meaning and rationality conditioning the conditions of liberal, colonial monohumanism. And, if the system of objects remains the same, it follows that the system of subjects remains entrapped in the same logic of mutual copossession, since, as Moten reminds us, "while subjectivity is defined by the subject's possession of itself and its objects, it is troubled by a dispossessive force objects exert such that the subject seems to be possessed—infused, deformed—by the object it possesses."<sup>12</sup> This dynamic is what keeps the aesthetic object (even a live one) in its proper place. Because this is what an object does, according to the American philosopher of ethics Silvia Benso, in her book *The Face of Things*: an object is "an endless reproduction and confirmation of the manipulative abilities of the subject."<sup>13</sup>

11. So what is the style of neoliberal imperial colonialism that both manipulates and is manipulated by contemporary hegemonic monohumanism and its aesthetic objects? It is the style that finds in the reinforcement of identity as representation a way to perform unquestioned institutional good intentions. In other words, under institutional goodwill the quiet reification of colonialist identity politics becomes one of the major ways that curation, as an art of neoliberal inclusion, is set to work. It works not to promote any radical or antinormative potentialities in the works presented, not for the sake of the potentiality and radical alternatives for living and existing performed by works and artists; rather, institutional good intentions perform that essential task for the colonialist rationality: to demonstrate and perform a certain image of inclusive democratic goodwill in the art houses of the ever well-meaning and yet relentlessly racist Western centers of power.

12. So, to decolonize curatorial imagination is to end the ways systems of objects and subjects (even after the official end of colonialism as a political regime) keep colonialist logic in place. We can invoke here Jack Halberstam explaining how Moten understands Frantz Fanon as “wanting ‘not the end of colonialism’—or not just the end of colonialism—‘but the end of the standpoint from which colonialism makes sense.’”<sup>14</sup> And what would not make sense from the standpoint of curatorial logic? To replace objects by *things*. Once again, Silvia Benso is helpful: “Only if things are recognized in their own peculiar alterity which does not submit, because it cannot be submissible, to the categories of the subject, can any ecological project” (and here the ecological stands for a planetary ethical-political project absolutely outside of the logic that make exploitative colonial-capitalism possible) “be grounded on something more profound and fundamental than the fortuitous occurrence of subjects of good will.”<sup>15</sup>

13. In this sense, beyond the occasional and fortuitous goodwill of subjects curating and presenting objects as identitary proxies, and performances of immunized inclusion, we need another logic of curation, decolonized even from the accepted gestures of what it means to be a progressive subject. In this new alogical mode of curating, instead of objects (including performances) and experiences (of performances) we would have instead *things* and *vivências* (the term used by Lygia Clark and Hélio Oiticica to describe the lived experience of experimentation, always linked to both action and speech, the forces of matter and the forces of desire), regarding which neither capitalism and colonialism, and even less neoliberal subjectivity, has any patience for and no desire whatsoever to assimilate. Against all the common assumptions that whatever exists in the world not only might but certainly will be assimilated, colonized, and turned into profit by capitalism, the living experience of the subaltern nevertheless shows us that there are a few *things* that capitalism, neoliberal subjectivity, and colonialist rapacity cannot and will not digest. What? Who? Stefano Harney and Moten answer point blank: “The fat ones. The ones who are out of all compass however precisely they are located.”<sup>16</sup>

Out of compass, out of time, time to invoke now one particularly powerful mode of existence of this excess; an artist and her things whose existence out of compass exactly, rigorously, beautifully, advanced the promise of a decolonized art.



Lygia Clark's *Bichos* (1959-1966), MOMA, New York, 2014.  
Photo: Byron Smith for the *New York Times*

It is well known the extreme difficulty of presenting in museums and other more or less well-defined art contexts (biennials, galleries) the series of works that Lygia Clark started to make from 1964 onward, particularly once Clark started insisting on what she called “propositions”: participatory works where “the act” was the work itself. One of the main difficulties derives from the fact that Clark’s acts do not at all belong to the “experience economy” that also founds neoliberal logic. Rather, as Clark insisted with increased emphasis, the act had to be understood in its most *immanent* dimension. Thus, acts had to be carried out without an audience, without institutional framing marking them as art, and without any object to serve as proof that an art project had taken place. In other words, there would be nothing to be exhibited.

For Clark, there was no difference between the exhibition of art objects and the self-exhibition of subjects experimenting with art—thus her extreme dislike of the genres of body art and performance art, in relation to which she vehemently refused to belong, since she saw these new genres emerging alongside her own artistic trajectory from the 1950s to the 1970s as operating an even more perverse colonization: the artist replaces the object and becomes now the sole object of praise. Exhibiting was precisely what had to be troubled to the very core, since it is predicated on a coformation object-subject that kept their stable relations in place, regardless of the novelty of that relation. Clark’s challenge to the economy of curatorial imagination was beginning. It would reach its apex in the late 1970s and in the 1980s with her relational objects and her therapy practice known as “structuring of the self” on the application of precarious, paradoxical objects<sup>17</sup>—made of plastic bags filled with air or water, shells, pantyhose holding rocks or Ping-Pong balls, a loofah, a flashlight, plastic tubes into which Clark would blow air or make soft noises, small cloth bags filled with sand, and many others—on naked bodies of her patients.

I am interested in the persistence of the essential difficulty of showing or displaying or curating Clark’s relational objects. It is a difficulty that is constantly being reiterated by the most well-informed, well-intentioned, careful and caring curators and institutions, including the most open, experimental, and knowledgeable curators working on Clark’s ideas. And yet, the persistence of Clark’s sensorial and relational works as a *difficult thing*, the status of the relational objects as difficult things to curate, reveal

Lygia Clark's  
*Sensorial Gloves*  
 (1968), MOMA, New  
 York, 2014. Photo:  
 Byron Smith for the  
*New York Times*



that what these works do is not simply to pose yet another difficult intellectual and perceptual challenge to a curator's creativity—like an interesting problem that needs to find its proper (albeit difficult) solution. Rather, the difficulty in curating these works derives from the very fact of their aesthetic singularity; it derives from their *thingness*, their existence in active exteriority to, and radical escape from, regimes of display that subjugate and colonize the relational objects as being Clark's objects and the participants as being the new authors/artists of a Lygia Clark work. Clark's works are difficult exactly because (and to invoke again Moten's quote on the unassimilable ontology and constitutive fugitivity of things) they "are out of all compass however precisely they are located." Thus, we must take seriously the diagnosis made by Suely Rolnik, Brazilian art and cultural critic and Lygia Clark specialist, when she wrote:

Taken back to the display case, and therefore to the pedestal, their freedom to live unattached in the world, to benefit from affective intimacy with the largest possible number and variety of others, was pruned away. For this reason, the first part of the artist's work (from 1948 to 1963) is the best known, with the *Bichos* at its apogee, perhaps because they were the last of Clark's objects *capable of being neutralized by the art system* and of being consumed as simple, inoffensive objects of art, with their value determined solely by the market. Until the end of the artist's life (and even many years after her death), her works from this period, specially the *Bichos*, would

be the ones privileged in countless one-person or group exhibitions and would by the same token constitute the focus of the majority of the studies of her work.<sup>18</sup>

Privileging the *Bichos* and not knowing what to do with the relational and sensorial objects is exactly what took place in the recent and otherwise absolutely excellent and indeed superbly curated exhibition *Lygia Clark: The Abandonment of Art* at MOMA in 2014. Curated by Connie Butler and Luis Pérez-Oramas, the exhibition was the first major retrospective of Clark's oeuvre in the United States. It was preceded by at least three years of intense consultation seminars, both in Brazil and in the United States, in which Butler and Pérez-Oramas conducted several high-intensity meetings not only with Clark scholars, collectors, curators but also with visual artists, performance artists, poets, and musicians that either had a history of working with or around Clark or felt they belonged to a kind of heritage of Clark.

I had the good fortune of being invited by the two curators to participate in some of the meetings, as well as to write an essay on Lygia Clark's relation to performance for the exhibition catalog.<sup>19</sup> In the meetings, Butler's and Pérez-Oramas's deep knowledge, understanding, concern regarding the integrity of Clark's oeuvre, and openness to different opinions and critiques were exemplary. They invariably asked participants to offer ideas on how to approach those particularly difficult things—the infamous relational objects, which Clark had created totally outside of any concerns that characterize the “aesthetic regime of the arts” altogether. And collectively, the conclusion was always the same: these are impossible objects for the museum. Their existence takes place outside of curatorial care.

Why are Clark's relational objects so difficult? Because the problem posed by these objects to the art system at large requires a fundamental decolonization. Their nature is indeed essentially offensive to the very gesture of curating them. They remain wild in their singularity. This is derived from the fact that the relational objects are precisely and essentially *nonobjects*—to use the concept Brazilian critic Ferreira Gullar had already used in his 1959 prescient essay on Clark's relentless logic of approaching the object, identifying the demise of objecthood from Clark's works decades before this expulsion's apex, the object's exodus from the realm of the curatorial, in the 1980s.<sup>20</sup>

Now, if the relational objects are indeed nonobjects, it follows that their existence proposes the formation of nonsubjects. Indeed, here lies the absolute resistance of these singular matters and assemblages to “being neutralized by the system of art,” as Rolnik writes.<sup>21</sup> Their resistance, their objection, their offensive against art economies and intensive cares express not a failure in curatorial imagination in finding “the right solution” for the exhibition of the relational objects in exhibition contexts but the sheer insistence of their ontopolitical force *as* nonobjects, their *thingness*—their *wild* thingness. Clark's relational objects do “tel[l] us that there is a wild beyond to the structures

we inhabit and that inhabit us,” to invoke once again Halberstam’s comments on the wild thing.<sup>22</sup>

The relational objects initiate an altogether different logic for objects and subjects to insist in, exist in, the situation that is violently inhospitable to their existence; theirs is a logic that escapes not just the art system but the whole system of subjectivity predicated on the authorial/manipulating subject and the authored/manipulable object that confirms the author’s upper hand, controlling and commanding. Clark’s nonobjects effectively neutralize and even demolish the very premises of the art system: they cannot be digested by it, as much as the art system tries to incorporate them, swallow them, bring them into good care. Why? Because these nonobjects and their related experiences as *vivência* are ontopolitically offensive to the very premises of curatorial reason.

Why do I use such a word, *offensive*? Because it is a word that surfaces on the lips of an art critic emerging from the depths of experiencing those objects on his body, after a session with Clark, as documented in *Memória do Corpo*, a film made a few months before Clark’s death in her small apartment in Copacabana, where Clark had been conducting her therapy sessions since early 1980, by using several of her odd nonobjects on her many patients. Shot in 1984, the thirty-one-minute-long video by Brazilian film director Mário Carneiro documents Clark’s uses of the relational objects in her practice she called “structuring of the self” (the video was premiered at Galeria Paulo Klabin in Rio de Janeiro in that same year). For the purposes of documentation, Clark’s “patient” was the Brazilian art critic Paulo Sérgio Duarte.

I would like to concentrate on one striking moment when Duarte is starting to come out of the long therapy session, in which the patient eventually lies covered by the very peculiar and paradoxical relational objects on a large and very soft bed, and begins to share with Clark his *vivência*—that is, starts to verbalize the sensations he had throughout the session, what Clark called the expression of the “phantasmatics.” After commenting on the effects of a drop of honey Clark had inserted between his lips sometime during the session, Duarte, a man whose extreme care with words made his fame as an art critic, continues to describe his experience with the relational objects. He starts a sentence but stops right after pronouncing just the first word; he pauses, ponders, eyes still shut while lying almost totally naked on the large bed. His pause takes a few long seconds, and finally he says: “Eu não sei se ofende a eles chamar eles de ‘coisa,’ mas todas as vezes que eles estão passando em cima de mim eu era sobretudo pele, sobretudo superfície. Muito bom isso.” (I don’t know if it offends them to call them “things,” but every time that they are passing over me I was [*sic*] above all skin, above all surface. That’s very good.)

“*I don’t know if it offends them to call them ‘things.’*” It is this critical declension of Clark’s famous *relational objects* (the way the objects are known, cataloged) into *things*, performed by the art critic, carefully, cautiously, that I find absolutely crucial. His words

are totally accurate. The polite hesitation showed by Duarte in pondering whether by calling the objects *things* he was offending them actually reveals the aggregating and fugitive simultaneous double-decolonizing movement operated by things. If Duarte is polite, the thing's move away from its objecthood is not polite at all: it is actually an offensive offense of things against a whole system of rationalized curatorial and art-historical inscriptions, since it is precisely thanks to their paradoxical motions away from objecthood, and therefore away from affirming subjecthood, that things stop serving both subjectivity *and* objectivity and advance another kind of relational potentiality, a new understanding of life totally away from the daily repertoire of predetermined actions, desires, thoughts, and habitus.

The reconcretion of the work of art as the work of thingly fugitivity toward a more potent living, a move that Clark had already announced as early as 1956 in a lecture at the Escola de Arquitetura of the Federal University of Minas Gerais in her native city of Belo Horizonte (two years before Allan Kaprow announced a "new concrete art" in which "all of life" would be at hand as material), required a double dissolution, a double becoming imperceptible: "The work of art once again takes on the sense of anonymity" and "the artist thus abdicates something of his personality," as Clark wrote in her 1965 text (published for the first time in 1982–83), "On the Magic of the Object."<sup>23</sup> Here, we find ourselves before a radically different vision of art, in which what is at stake is not Kaprow's blurring of art and life, to use Jeff Kelley's famous expression on Kaprow's work,<sup>24</sup> but a total dissolution of the central figure that creates the binary: the artist as exceptional object of praise.

The artwork's thingliness accompanies an antiepidectic understanding of the artist's presence and subjectivity, but this understanding must also be extended to the participant, in what Annette Leddy (in a different context) called a "person-eliminative approach" to art.<sup>25</sup> Anticipating Roberto Esposito's insight that "the person is not to be conceived of as the only form within which life is destined to flow,"<sup>26</sup> Clark both theorized and practiced a positive understanding of the impersonal against "a romantic attitude by the artist who still needs an object, *even if he is the object*, in order to deny it" as she writes so clearly in the early 1970s.<sup>27</sup>

The unassimilable thing's force, its offense to a whole art system, which is also a whole system of subjectivity, finds its ultimate expression in the curious option not to show the iconic and rarely seen film *Memória do Corpo* in the MOMA exhibition (it had been shown, for instance, in Catherine David's 1997 *documentaX*). The absence of this important film in an exhibition that tried so hard to include the experiential-participatory dimension of Clark's work (and, moreover, the film that would indicate clearly to the MOMA public what the "abandonment of art" that titled the MOMA exhibition actually meant for Clark—the abandonment of a whole logic of existence that keeps in place the violent colonizations of body and thought precisely as long as art exists under the regime of the object-subject relation) already indicates the problems

that the thing, the *offensive* thing, the always fugitive thing poses to curating. I believe it is not only that the relational objects are indeed wild things. In being wild things, they recast Clark's subjectivity itself, casting her into the side of noncuratable artists as well. Clark is then also a nonsubject, thanks to her daring, to her integrity, to her refusal to participate in a whole logic that still keeps in place the situation that makes our world showable to an endlessly demanding "me, me, me, me." Her position is transparently clear in the film. Her firm logic is as wild as the relational objects she holds, caresses, puts on her body, puts on Duarte's body, gives voice to. In that, Clark partakes of the nature of things. Neither posthuman nor neohuman, neither parahuman nor prehuman, the *offense of things* names an act of insubordinate interanimation, revealing what is always underlying those dyads: an ongoing revolt against the colonizing entrapments of subjectivity and objectivity, the organic and the inorganic, art and life.

## NOTES

1. Mario Perniola, *The Sex Appeal of the Inorganic* (New York: Continuum, 2004).
2. Fred Moten, *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003); Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study* (New York: Minor Compositions, 2013).
3. Michel Serres and Lawrence R. Schehr, *The Parasite* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 80.
4. Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Zone, 2015).
5. For an account see "Thatcher Stands by Pinochet," BBC News, 1999 : <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/304516.stm>. Robin Harris, former member of Thatcher's policy team, also defended Thatcher's "respect" and sense of "debt" to Pinochet: "[Thatcher] also took a positive view of Pinochet's 17 years in power. There was certainly great violence. But the loss of life, most of which occurred in the first months when a civil war raged, was less than in other similar situations." Harris concludes his article for *The Telegraph* with these astonishing words: "Margaret Thatcher has nothing to be ashamed of in defending Augusto Pinochet, when others refused to do so. But he was lucky to find such a champion." (Robin Harris, "Thatcher Always Honoured Britain's Debt to Pinochet," *The Telegraph*, December 13, 2006, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/personal-view/3635244/Thatcher-always-honoured-Britains-debt-to-Pinochet.html>.)
6. Ibid.
7. Paul Gilroy, *Postcolonial Melancholia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006). Giorgio Agamben, *Homo sacer: sovereign power and bare life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).
8. Katherine McKittrick, *Sylvia Wynter: On Being Human as Praxis* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), 13.
9. Maurizio Lazzarato, "Art, Work, and Politics in Disciplinary Societies and Societies of Security," in *Spheres of Action: Art and Politics*, ed. Éric Alliez and Peter Osborne

- (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011), 42. For Rancière's views on the relation between aesthetics and politics predicted not their shared dissensus, see: Jacques Rancière, "Ten Theses on Politics," in *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics* (New York: Continuum Press; 2010) and Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics. The Distribution of the Sensible*. (New York: Continuum Press, 2004).
10. McKittrick, *Sylvia Wynter*, 13.
  11. Lazzarato, "Art, Work, and Politics," 42.
  12. Moten, *In the Break*, 1.
  13. Silvia Benso, *The Face of Things: A Different Side of Ethics* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2000), xxxiii.
  14. Jack Halberstam, quoted in Harney and Moten, *Undercommons*, 8.
  15. Benso, *Face of Things*, xx.
  16. Harney and Moten, *Undercommons*, 52.
  17. On Clark's work as paradoxical practice, see Eleonora Fabião, "The Making of a Body: Lygia Clark's *Anthropophagic Slobber*," in *Lygia Clark*, ed. Connie Butler and Luis Peres-Oramas (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2014).
  18. Suely Rolnik, "Molding a Contemporary Soul: The Empty-Full of Lygia Clark," in *The Experimental Exercise of Freedom*, ed. Rina Carvajal (Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art, 2000), 73–74; emphasis added.
  19. Once the exhibition opened, Eleonora Fabião (who also participated in one meeting held by Pérez-Oramas and Butler in Rio de Janeiro, and was also invited by them to contribute as well with an essay to the MOMA catalog) and I were invited to coteach a workshop on Lygia Clark's participatory approach to art at MOMA's education department.
  20. Ferreira Gullar [1959], "Teoria do Não-objeto," in *Experiência Neoconcreta* (São Paulo: Cosac Naify, 2007), 90–94.
  21. Suely Rolnik, "Molding a Contemporary Soul: The Empty-Full of Lygia Clark," in *The Experimental Exercise of Freedom*, ed. Rina Carvajal (Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art, 2000).
  22. Halberstam, quoted in Harney and Moten, *Undercommons*, 7.
  23. Lygia Clark, "On the Magic of the Object," *Lygia Clark* exhibition catalogue (Barcelona: Fundacion Tàpies, 1998 [1965]), 152–54.
  24. Even though I was never able to find a text by Kaprow where he uses this exact formulation, a very close one can be found in his 1966 book *Assemblages, Environments, and Happenings*: "The dividing line between art and life should remain as fluid and indistinct as possible." See Allan Kaprow, *Assemblage, Environments, and Happenings* (New York: H. N. Abrams, 1966), 190. See also Allan Kaprow and Jeff Kelley, *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life: Allan Kaprow*, ed. Jeff Kelley (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).
  25. Annette Leddy, "Intimate: The Allan Kaprow Papers," in *Allan Kaprow: Art as Life*, ed. Eva Meyer-Hermann, Andrew Perchuk, and Stephanie Rosenthal (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2008), 43.
  26. Roberto Esposito, *The Third Person* (New York: Polity Books, 2011) 140.
  27. Lygia Clark, "On the Suppression of the Object (notes)," *Lygia Clark* exhibition catalogue (Barcelona: Fundacion Tàpies, 1998 [1975]), 265.