

# Politics of Flexible Subjectivity

## The Event-Work of Lygia Clark

Lygia Clark, the Brazilian artist who lived from 1920 to 1988, was principally known for her paintings and sculptures until the late 1990s. Only then did a wider public become aware of the highly singular experimental artistic practices that she created during her last twenty-five years of work.<sup>[1]</sup> Yet as in any artistic practice of this kind, the vestiges of these proposals are scarce. This contributes to maintaining their inaccessibility and neutralizing their disruptive force – even more so in the case of Lygia Clark, given that her work is on the order of an event, which moreover is not only artistic, but also therapeutic and political. What this event consists of and what its force is are inescapable questions for research, if one wishes to grasp the artist's experimental practices in their radicality.

To meet this challenge I will focus on *Estruturação do Self*, or "Structuring of the Self" (1976-88), the last and probably the most accomplished of Lygia Clark's artistic proposals. In a first approach we can say that this work was undertaken through a very precise device (*dispositif*) which abandoned the conventional locations of art and was developed instead in the artist's apartment. In a strange room, something between a studio and a permanent installation, unfolded "sessions" between artist and viewer, mediated by unusual objects scattered about in the space.

These objects, which the artist qualified as "relational," are made of ordinary materials, without any definite form. They have a rich variety of physical qualities, which are often contradictory within the same object – such as light and heavy, cold and hot, etc. – producing a mutable and unstable form. Indeed, in the only text the artist published about this work<sup>[2]</sup> she makes very little reference to their visual qualities, but instead to the sensations they provoke through their greater or lesser body, temperature, weight, pressure, volume, density, texture, etc. Hence the name: the objects are "relational" in their very essence, since they only reveal themselves in their encounter with one's body, or more specifically, with the viewer's body, in a relation with the artist and in the context of an aesthetic experience.

The artist comes closer to the viewer, via the objects and a protocol of experimentation. And the person who was traditionally a viewer – and who has now become a "client," in Lygia Clark's terms – comes to know the art object through the hands of the artist who places it on different parts of his naked body, caressing it, sweeping over it, massaging it, or simply letting it lie there in rest. A special kind of fecund intimacy is established between artist, object and viewer.

Yet other characteristics of the device are equally fundamental: the absence of speech during the session, the fact that the artist only relates with one viewer at a time and for a long period (sometimes for more than a year), punctuated by the regularity of up to three sessions a week. The silence, the focus of attention on an experience with a single person, the affective quality of this attention, the temporality and its rhythm – all these aspects allow the realization of what Lygia Clark offers to the viewer, which she defined as a process of structuring the self.

Why did Lygia Clark call this proposal *Structuring of the Self*? The artist probably used a notion of the "self" inspired by the English psychoanalysts with whom she identified particularly, above all Winnicott. For him the self, or that which produces a feeling of oneself, is never unequivocally defined, but is generated in a continuous process, which happens in what he calls a "potential space," a formless zone between the I and the other where the creative drive is convoked.<sup>[3]</sup> But Lygia Clark was not a disciplined reader in the academic sense. She appropriated philosophical and psychoanalytic concepts in her own way, when they seemed to

reverberate in her intuitions and to help her to elaborate and express them. Given this characteristic of the artist, the question why she named this work *Structuring of the Self* will remain without an answer if we stick to an examination of the concept of the self in the psychoanalytic or philosophical literature. This approach should be replaced by a quite different series of inquiries. What did the notion of the self allow Lygia Clark to elaborate? What definition of this notion can be derived from her artistic practice? What did the artist mean to say by "structuring of the self," and why did she propose to do it? Why did she feel it necessary, in the late 1970s, to bring her work to bear within the dimension of subjectivity and therefore close to the borderline with therapeutic practices? And in what sense would this approach also be political? Why did she choose this particular type of proposal? Finally, in what sense is this work an event? And how can this event be understood in its triple nature, at once artistic, therapeutic and political?

To respond to these questions, two detours will be necessary. The first will concern the concept of the event in its relations with the process of subjectivation. And the second, a genealogy of the dominant politics of subjectivation that was taking form at time when Lygia Clark created *Structuring of the Self*. Only after this long inquiry will we have all the materials needed to return to her proposal and to situate the singular force with which it worked through the problems of its time.

### The Event

Knowing and relating to the otherness of the world as matter implies the activation of different potentials of subjectivity in its sensible dimension, depending on whether the matter-world is grasped primarily as an outline of forms, or as a field of forces. Knowing the world as form calls upon perception, which is carried out by the empirical exercise of sensibility; whereas knowing the world as force calls on sensation, which is carried out by the intensive exercise of sensibility. The latter is engendered in the encounter between the body as a field of forces – constituted by the nervous energies that course through it – and the forces of the world that affect it. In this relation to the world as a field of forces, new blocks of sensation pulse within the body-subjectivity as it is affected by fresh experiences of the world's varied and variable otherness.

"Perception" and "sensation" refer to different powers of the sensible body. The perception of the other brings his or her formal existence to subjectivity (an existence translated into representations which are visual, auditory, etc.), while sensation brings the living presence of the other, which cannot be represented or described but only expressed, in a process requiring an invention – a process of individuation through which a singularity is manifested (such as a way of being, feeling or thinking, a form of sociability, a territory of existence, but also a work of art).

Between these two modes of apprehending the world there is an invincible disparity. This paradox is constitutive of human sensibility, the source of its dynamics, the driving force par excellence of the processes of subjectivation – triggering the inexhaustible movements of creation and recreation of the reality of oneself and the world. The reason why is that the paradox ultimately places the current forms of reality in check, as they become an obstacle to the integration of new connections of desire that provoke the emergence of a fresh block of sensations. Those current forms then cease to be the guides and conductors of the process, they are drained of vitality and lose their meaning. A crisis of subjectivity sets in, exerting pressure, arousing feelings of astonishment and dread, causing vertigo.

To respond to this uncomfortable pressure, life is mobilized within subjectivity as the power of invention and action. The feeling of astonishment and dread forces the expression of a new configuration of existence, a new figuration of oneself, the world and the relations between

them – which is what mobilizes the power of creation (the artistic affect). The same feeling also forces one to act so that the new configuration can assert itself in existence and inscribe itself within the reigning map as a shared reality, without which the process cannot be fulfilled – which is what mobilizes the power of action (the political affect, both in its constructive aspect and in its resistance to oppressive forces).

The "event" is the culmination of this process, it is precisely the passage from a virtual, intensive reality to an actual, empirical reality, unleashed by the disparity between those two experiences of otherness: it is the creation of a world, it is what puts the world to work.

In the relation to the world as form, as mediated by representations, subjectivity orients itself in the space of its empirical actuality and recognizes itself within the corresponding cartography of representations; in the relation to the world as a field of forces, subjectivity orients itself within the diagram of sensations, which are the effect of the irreducible living presence of the other; whereas in the relation to paradox between those two sensible experiences, subjectivity orients itself within the temporality of its vital pulsation – in other words, it orients itself as event, its becoming-other.

This process makes any and all forms of subjectivity into ephemeral configurations in an unstable balance. Thus the politics of subjectivation are elastic, they shift and transform – they emerge as a function of new sensible diagrams and the existing cartographies' loss of meaning; thus they vary along with the sociocultural contexts, of which they are the sensible and existential consistency. What determines their specificity is, among other factors, their politics of cognition: the place that is occupied by the two modes of sensible approach to the world, and the plasticity of their transduction (that is, of the process whereby one kind of energy changes into another, in this case, from intensive to empirical).

How then can these considerations be used to problematize the dominant politics of subjectivation in the late 1970s and early '80s, when Lygia Clark practiced *Structuring of the Self*?

### **Genealogy of the Politics of Subjectivation of the late 1970s**

Answering this question requires going back a decade, to the late 1960s and early '70s, when the long bankruptcy on which the so-called modern subject had embarked – a process of decline that began at the close of the nineteenth century – reached its nadir and provoked an important social, cultural and political crisis. When I speak of the modern subject I am referring to the figure of the "individual" with its belief in the possibility to control nature, things and oneself by will and reason, under the command of the ego. On what politics of cognition does that crisis-ridden model of subjectivity depend?

Sustaining the illusion of control over the turbulences of life depends on a certain status of the empirical and intensive exercises of the sensible. On the one hand, there is a hyperactivation of the empirical exercise: subjectivity tends to move exclusively within the limits of its current territory and the outlines of its corresponding cartography, which are reified. On the other hand, there is an anesthesia of the intensive exercise of the sensible: with this, the experience of the paradox between the new sensations and the current cartography is denied and repressed, and in that process, the cause of the feelings of loss of meaning, astonishment and dread becomes unknown. As a consequence, the powers of creation and action naturally brought into play by the experience of the loss of references are dissociated from sensation – that is, from the effects of the living presence of the other, the signs that they ask one to decipher, and their critical force with respect to the reigning orientations.

The result is a hypertrophy of the ego: it oversteps its primary function, which is to guide

subjectivity through the meanders of the map of representations, and claims the power of command over the processes of creating new forms of social and subjective life, of providing oneself a subjective consistency. This gives rise to a feeling of oneself as spatialized and totalized, detached from the world and from temporality – hence the idea of individual, with its interiority and its supposedly unitary identity. A kind of somnambulism of the living dimension of subjectivity (that is, of one's own body affected by the world's body in its otherness) installs itself as the dominant politic of subjectivation that took form between the seventeenth and the nineteenth centuries.

This is the figure of subjectivity that begins to enter its decline at the end of nineteenth century, in a process that will be completed after WWII. The causes for this breakdown have been widely studied and we need not go into them here. Yet there is an aspect to be noted for our purposes: from the late nineteenth century onwards, subjectivity is increasingly exposed to a greater and more swiftly changing diversity of worlds than it had formerly known, exceeding what it had equipped itself for psychically. A negotiation between the virtual and the actual becomes necessary in order to incorporate the new sensible states that are ceaselessly engendered, and that can no longer be contained in their state of repression, as they had been in the modern politics of subjectivation. A new strategy of desire begins to emerge. I will call it "flexible subjectivity" in reference to a notion proposed by Brian Holmes,<sup>[4]</sup> which I will develop here in the sense of its psychodynamics. From the end of nineteenth century and throughout the first half of the twentieth century, this figure appeared primarily among the artistic and the intellectual vanguard.

Beginning in the 1950s, and more intensively in the 1960s and early '70s, this flexible subjectivity overflowed the cultural vanguard, to take on a palpable presence among an entire generation. A movement of massive disidentification with the dominant model of society was unleashed among broad sectors of mostly middle-class youth throughout the world. The forces of desire, creation and action, intensely mobilized by the crisis, were invested into audacious existential experimentation, in a radical rupture from the establishment. Flexible subjectivity was adopted as a politics of desire by a wide range of people, who began to desert the current ways of life and trace alternative cartographies – a process supported and made possible by its broad collective extension.

A series of aspects characterize the new politics of subjectivation. These aspects include the activation of the intensive exercise of the sensible and the emergence of an instance of subjectivity whose function is exactly that of marking the dissonance between the effects of the two exercises of the sensible, as well as the inadequacy of empirical maps and the need to create others, each time that life indicates or requires it as a condition for maintaining its processuality. Would this not be the instance that Lygia Clark calls the "self"?

With a functioning self, subjectivity is led to develop its nomadic potential: the freedom of letting go of the territories to which it is accustomed, negotiating between sets of references, making other articulations, setting up other territories. To do this the ego must also upgrade its cognitive capacity, so as to learn how to move within new cartographies. Yet there are many different politics of the creation of territories: for this process to unfold in the direction of life's movement it is necessary to create them on the basis of the urgencies indicated by the sensations. It is the self that orients this process through its condition as interface between the virtual diagram and the actual map, complementing its function as an alarm indicating that a shift between the two planes is necessary with its other function as the operator of this transduction. In this politics, the self replaces the ego as the guide of the processes of subjectivation – as the organizing instance of oneself, and therefore, that which supplies subjective consistency. What forms is a type of subjectivity that embodies the paradox that constitutes it as temporality – in other words, a processual subjectivity that is multiplicity and becoming.

This shift in the politics of desire is what provoked a serious subjective, social and cultural crisis that threatened the existing economic and political regime. In the face of this situation, the power structure needed new strategies to reassert itself and regain control. This would be achieved in the late 1970s and early '80s, exactly when Lygia Clark proposed the *Structuring of the Self*. The flowing fountain of creative force mobilized by deterritorialization and crisis would be instrumentalized by capital, which seized upon the social proliferation of flexible subjectivity itself – not only its functional principle, but also the forms of critique which it manifested and the modes of existence which it had invented over the course of two decades. As in the martial arts of the Far East, where one does not attack the enemy's strength but rather uses it against him, the inventions of the 1960s and early '70s were to serve as the formula and fuel of the new regime.

### **Global Reality Show**

In the late 1970s, transnational finance capitalism took on its full dimensions, becoming what we may call, with Toni Negri and Michael Hardt,<sup>[5]</sup> "cognitive," "cultural" or "cultural-informational" capitalism, stressing that the labor power from which surplus value is now primarily extracted is no longer the mechanical force of the proletariat, but instead the power of knowledge and invention of a new productive class, which some authors call the "cognitariat." But how is this invention power siphoned off?

An idea of Maurizio Lazzarato,<sup>[6]</sup> which I will interpret from the viewpoint of the politics of desire, could help answer this question. Lazzarato points to an important difference between industrial capitalism and the entrepreneurial capitalism that was spreading across the planet at that time. Instead of objects in the Fordist factory, what the new regime fundamentally produces is the "creation of worlds." These are image-worlds fabricated by advertising and mass culture, conveyed by the media, serving to prepare the cultural, subjective and social ground for the implantation of markets.

In the late 1970s, subjectivities were exposed to an intensifying deterritorialization, principally because of a powerful deployment of the technologies of communication at a distance and the necessity of adaptation to a market which changed at an ever more rapid rate. But the radical change is introduced by the fact that the subjective effect of deterritorialization produced by the image-worlds of capital is no longer of the same nature. This difference constitutes one of the principle aspects of the politics of subjectivation that emerged at that time.

The chain that constitutes this capitalist world-factory includes three types of producers, who are instrumentalized in their labor power of intelligence, knowledge and creativity, but also of belief, spontaneity, sociability, affective presence, etc. The first are the creators, a series of new productive sectors such as advertising (and all the different professionals it involves), consulting, head-hunters, marketing departments, personnel managers, etc. Those are the strategic equipment for a new kind of war that we are all living through since that period, which Maurizio Lazzarato calls "a planetary aesthetic war." A war that takes place over the ready-to-wear worlds created by capital, in the ferocious competition between machines of expression rivaling with each other to conquer the market of subjectivities thrown into crisis. For it is not enough to create image-worlds; they must also have the power to seduce, so that the subjectivities chose them as models for their remapping and concretize them in their everyday life. Indeed, in order for them to move the market, these worlds born in the form of advertising campaigns – whose reality is only one of imagery, a reality of signs – must ultimately be built in social life.

Here intervenes the second type of producers of the chain: the consumers, those who actualize its reality in empirical existence, and thus simultaneously become producers of the regime. They must have great cognitive agility to catch and select the plurality of worlds that never

cease being released into the air all at once; an athletic mobility of the ego to leap from one world to the other; a plasticity in resculpting themselves according to the parameters of a new mode of being specific to each ready-to-wear world. With the labor force of these subjective powers the consumers participate in the production of the worlds created by capital, concretizing them in empirical reality.

To this end, another whole new series of professionals comes into existence, who are the third type of producers of the capitalist world-factory: personal trainers, personal stylists, clothing stylists, fashion consultants, dermatologists, plastic surgeons, estheticians, designers, interior architects, self-help writers, etc. Their major business is advisory, it consists in selling their work to the consumers to help them to achieve this new kind of flexible subjectivity.

This process gives rise to a self-for-sale that commercializes its power to signal the dissonance between the virtual and the actual in order to produce the worlds of capital, either as creator, consumer or advisor. A showroom-type flexible subjectivity is embodied here: what is exposed to the other – reduced to the condition of spectator/consumer – are the elements of the latest fashionable worlds and the ability and speed to incorporate them, in a kind of marketing or advertising campaign for oneself. But what is so seductive about the ready-to-wear worlds created by capital and what differentiates them from actual, concrete worlds?

The answer to this last question leaps out before our eyes, if we can cut through the thick veil of images that mesmerizes the empirical exercise of our visual sensibility and obfuscates its intensive one. We can then see that what seduces is the image of self-confidence, prestige and power of the characters inhabiting these image-worlds, as though they had resolved the paradox, forever rejoining the ranks of the supposedly "guaranteed."<sup>[7]</sup> In other words, what seduces about the image-worlds created by capital is, basically, the illusion they convey that there exist worlds whose people would never experience fragility and feelings of vertigo, or who would at least have the power to avoid them or to control the disquiet they provoke, living a kind of hedonistic existence, smooth and without turbulence, eternally stable. This illusion bears the promise that access to such a life is possible, and even more, that it depends only on the incorporation of the worlds created by capital. A perverse relation sets itself up between the subjectivity of the receiver/consumer and these image-characters.

The glamour of these privileged people and the fact that, as media beings, they are inaccessible in their very nature, is interpreted by the receiver as a sign of their superiority. As in a perverse relationship where the seduced idealizes the arrogant indifference of the seducer – instead of seeing it as a sign of his narcissistic poverty and his incapacity to be affected by the other – the receiver/consumer of these characters feels disqualified and excluded from their world. Identified with this image-being and taking it as a model in the hope of one day becoming worthy of belonging to its world, consumer subjectivity begins wishing to resemble it, placing itself in a position of submission and perpetual demand for recognition. This desire remaining unsatisfied by definition, the hope is short-lived. The feeling of exclusion always returns and, to free itself of this feeling, subjectivity submits even more, continually mobilizing its forces to a higher degree, in a breakneck race to find ready-to-wear worlds to be embodied and concretized.

This mendacious promise constitutes the fundamental myth of integrated world capitalism<sup>[8]</sup> – the driving force of its politics of subjectivation, the difference that it introduces in the contemporary experience of deterritorialization. The illusion that upheld the structure of the modern subject takes on a new formulation here. It is transvalued and attains the apex of its credibility in the religion of cultural capitalism. A monotheistic religion whose scenario is basically the same as in all the religions of this tradition: there exists an all-powerful God who promises paradise, with the difference that capital is in the role of God and the paradise that it promises is within this life and not beyond it. The glamorous guaranteed beings of the worlds of

advertising and mass-culture entertainment are the saints of a commercial pantheon – "superstars" that glitter in the image-sky above the heads of everyone, announcing the possibility to join them.

The belief in the religious promise of a capitalistic paradise is what sustains the successful instrumentalization of subjective powers. The feeling of humiliation that this belief produces and the hope to one day "make it" and escape exclusion mobilizes the desire to realize the ready-to-wear worlds offered on the market. It is through this dynamic that subjectivity becomes the active producer of these worlds: a voluntary servitude that is not achieved through repression or obedience to a moral code, as in the traditional monotheistic religions where access to paradise depends on virtue. Here, the code does not exist, but on the contrary, the more original the world that the corporation conveys, the greater its power to compete, understanding originality in this context as a mere artifice of image that differentiates one world from all the rest. This difference is what seduces, since its embodiment would make the consumer into a being distinct from and above all the others – which is essential in this politics of relation to the other, because it feeds the illusion of being nearer to the imaginary pantheon.

In this context, public life is replaced by a global reality show orchestrated by the cultural-informational capitalism that has taken over the entire planet. A kind of world-wide display screen where people jostle their way toward a possible role as an extra, a fleeting and imaginary place that has to be incessantly administrated, invested and guaranteed, against everything and everyone.

The contemporary politics of subjectivation thus found a way to confront and neutralize the reactivation of public life brought by the social propagation of a flexible subjectivity in the 1960s and early '70s. It embodied flexibility, but only as a more successful way to reinstate the somnambulism of the modern subject and its dissociation from the effects of the living presence of the other.

On one hand, the non-stop creation of noisy new image-worlds forces a hyperstimulation of the paradox between the two exercises of the sensible, and of the suffering it brings; while on the other hand, the dissociation of subjectivity from the cause of this anxiety is pushed to the extreme by the perverse relation established between the consumer and the market, whose driving force is belief in the promise of paradise. The self is therefore instrumentalized by the market in its function as an alarm that signals the necessity of creating new territories, and the ego takes over the management of the forces of creation and action that this alarm convokes in response. But the ego knows only the empirical exercise of the sensible – its primary function being, as we have seen, to guide subjectivity through the cartography of current territories. When it is placed at the command of the processes of creating the cartographies of oneself and the world, the ego has no way to know the causes of the vertigo arising from the experience of the paradox that causes it to lose its references. It tends to interpret its disorientation as the result of a collapse of its very subjectivity, and not only of its current configuration. It then begins to fabricate imaginary reasons that are supposed to explain its distress – hence the feelings of inferiority and exclusion. To protect itself from its unease, it represses the feeling by constructing defensive barriers. Given that this state is mainly mobilized by the ready-to-wear worlds proposed by capital, the most obvious defensive strategy consists in seizing upon their images and trying to fulfill them in existence, in the hopes of overcoming anxiety. Thus the instrumentalization of subjective forces by capital comes full circle. In fact, all the phases of the subjectivation process are used as primary energy for the production of worlds for the market: intensive and empirical sensibility, the unease of the paradox between their two exercises (which is turbo-charged by the market), the pressure that this feeling of unease exerts to realign oneself and the world, and the forces of desire, creation and action that this pressure mobilizes. What begins to take form is the population of hyperactive zombies that will proliferate increasingly across the planet in the last decades of twentieth century and the beginning of

twenty-first, as the models of a winner subjectivity *par excellence*.

The experimentation that had been carried out collectively during the 1960s and early '70s in order to attain emancipation from the alienation of the dominant subjectivity pattern became indistinguishable from its incorporation to the emergent politics of subjectivation under cognitive capitalism. Many of the protagonists of the movements of the previous decades fell into the trap: dazzled by the celebration of their creative force and their transgressive and experimental posture which had formerly been stigmatized and marginalized, dazzled as well by their prestigious image in the media and their high salaries, they became the creators of the worlds produced by capital. But this was not the case of Lygia Clark. On the contrary, in her event-work we can find a response to this politics of instrumentalizing the potential of art.

### **The aesthetic, therapeutic and political event-work of Lygia Clark**

Now at last we can say why, at a precise historical moment, Lygia Clark proposed a practice that consists in structuring the self; and how the work emerges as an event that unfolds in a zone of indiscernability between aesthetics, therapeutics and politics.

Let us begin by inquiring into this work as a therapeutic event: *Structuring of the Self* "treats" the three mainsprings of the politics of subjectivation under cultural capitalism, whose psychopathological effects have been contaminating the planet like a veritable epidemic. On the basis of the description of this politics of subjectivation presented above, one could define a common feature of these three mainsprings: they are three sorts of misunderstandings.

The first misunderstanding is of the other as a living reality. As we have seen, the other in this regime is reduced to the status of a being of representation, a reduction stimulated by the image-worlds imposed by the market. The second misunderstanding is that of the vital pulsation and its rhythm, which tends to lose its pace. The rhythm is composed of a continual sequence of movements, each with its inherent temporality, punctuated by pauses: the opening of sensibility to the world to receive its effects, the intimate absorption of the resulting sensations, the invention of a mode of expression that renders them present, and finally, opening again to share this expression with the other, so as to intervene in the current cartography. The third misunderstanding is of the inexorable character of life's processuality, in its power of differentiation and in the inescapable violence that characterizes it – the demolition of a world when it no longer serves to express the new sensible states that emerge in collective coexistence. The myth of the promise of paradise contributes to the denegation of this active or positive violence of life – our tragic condition. It is this triple misunderstanding that creates the terrain for the perverse instrumentalization of the vital potential and its force of creation. The most frequent contemporary symptoms are psychopathological manifestations of this state of affairs.

How could the structuring of the self treat this triple misunderstanding? Learning to coexist with the other as a living reality tends to be achieved here through a device that renders difficult, or even impossible, the simple recognition of objects. Two characteristics of the relational objects help block this reduction: first the fact that they don't have any defined form, and therefore cannot be apprehended exclusively by the empirical exercise of the sensible; then the fact that these objects, the strategy whereby one has access to them and the context where all that takes place do not correspond to any of the known aesthetic references of the territory of art, and therefore cannot be easily identified on the cartographies of that world. But this alone would not be enough to get beyond the misunderstanding, if the device did not help to reconnect the person who chooses to live out this experience with his body in its potential of being affected by these objects and by the context where the experience unfolds, through the reactivation of the intensive exercise of his sensibility.



This first learning experience leads to the second: learning the rhythm of the vital pulsation, which is made possible here not only by an initiation to the knowledge of virtual reality, but also of its paradox with respect to actual reality. This initiation depends on certain characteristics of *Structuring of the Self* described at the beginning of this text: the specificities of the relational objects, but also the silence, the fact that the experience is offered to one person at a time, and the temporality punctuated by the regularity of sessions. Thus the device creates the conditions needed to live out the paradox, traversing the turbulence, the disorientation and crisis that result from it, but without interpreting this experience in a delirious way and repressing it through defense mechanisms. At this point we come to face the third learning experience, which concerns the tragic sense of life.

Here we approach the frontier with art and politics. Let us first examine the properly artistic nature of this event: the pathology that this device proposes to "heal" is also what contributes to maintaining the instrumentalization of the artist's force of creation, and the blockage of the spectator's aesthetic experience. This instrumentalization and blockage, as well as the fetishization of the object that derives from it, are essential features of the reigning politics of art since the late '70s. How can the structuring of the self collaborate to change the status of the artist, the viewer and the object within the dominant cartography?

The device tends to feint with the instrumentalization of the artist's invention power, given that the latter cannot be separated from the production of the event within the subjectivity of the viewer in his relation to the other, where the work properly speaking is realized. The device also tends to feint with the blockage of the viewer's aesthetic experience, given that it bears on his relation with the object, carrying out a reconnection between his drive to know and the diagram of his sensations. The viewer will only accept to become a "client" of this kind of ritual of initiation if he really desires it and feels confident about it. But if he makes this choice he will not be able to sneak away from living the aesthetic experience: he will be obliged to strip away his position as a mere consumer of this experience, as he usually is in his social strolling through the spaces destined for art. The shift in the status of both artist and viewer that is carried out by this device also establishes the conditions for feinting with the fetishization of the object, conditions reinforced by the physical qualities of the relational objects which render their form always provisional, so that they can never be grasped solely through perception, and even less by a perception limited to vision. In this way, what tends to transform itself is the entire cartography of art that was fully installed at that period.

And where is the political, or rather, the micropolitical nature of this event to be found? The treatment carried out by the structuring of the self helps to eradicate the virus of faith in the supposed paradises promised by cultural-informational capitalism – a myth that feeds parasitically on the most essential potentials of subjectivity. The self that Lygia Clark sought to structure tends to free itself from capture by capital: it comes to orient the creation of cartographies of oneself and the world, and ceases to be a mere adjunct of the ego in the latter's management of this creation, through its reference to the worlds proposed by the market. With this reorientation, the flexible subjectivity on whose formation the artist wished to collaborate ceases to be a showroom-subjectivity or a self-for-sale, producing/consuming the worlds created by capital. In its place, a subjectivity moved by the urgencies indicated in the double exercise of the sensible has a chance to come into being: a subjectivity open to otherness, able to live a shared experience and to construct itself and the world on that basis. Those are the necessary conditions for the reactivation of the political and aesthetic potentials of subjectivity, but also and above all of a public life in the strong sense of the term.

*Structuring of the Self* seems to have prepared the subjectivity of Lygia Clark's clients to be more disposed for this shift, even if the change is slight and subtle. But this small change is quite important, before the mobilizing power of a flexible subjectivity for sale, of the type

imposed by cognitive capitalism in its transnational extension.

We could situate the principal force of this proposal as an artistic response, on the frontier of politics and of therapeutic practice, to the perverse politics of subjectivation that was establishing itself at that period. And this response does not entail a return to the politics of identity dating back before the 1960's and early '70s, but instead takes up again the process of creating a flexible subjectivity as a collective movement, which began at that time and was interrupted and diverted from its goals through its instrumentalization by integrated world capitalism. What is most surprising is that Lygia Clark grasped this perversion at the very moment of its emergence at late 1970s and early '80s, and even more, was able to elaborate such a precocious path of response.

Would this not be the essential meaning of that strange encounter between the artist and the naked viewer that Lygia Clark insisted on practicing across this entire period, in *Structuring of the Self*? This singular and powerful poetic-political consultancy was the last and probably the most subtle artistic solution created by Lygia Clark to face the questions of her time. The disruptive power of this confrontation, which was certainly at work from the first to the last gesture in her trajectory as an artist, offers us a possible key to its greatest critical force.

*Translated from the Portuguese by Brian Holmes*

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[1] I am referring to the first retrospective and catalogue of Lygia Clark's entire oeuvre, organized in 1997. After its inauguration at the Antoni Tapiès Foundation (Barcelona, 1997) the exhibition traveled to the following institutions: MAC de Marseille (Marseille, 1998); Serralves Foundation (Porto, 1998); Palais des Beaux Arts (Brussels, 1998); Paço Imperial (Rio de Janeiro, 1998-99).

[2] "Objetos relacionais," text written by Lygia Clark in collaboration with Suely Rolnik, in *Lygia Clark* (Rio de Janeiro: Funarte, collection "Arte Brasileira Contemporânea," 1980).

[3] Cf. in particular D.W. Winnicott, *Playing and Reality* (London: Tavistock Publications Ltd, 1971).

[4] Cf. Brian Holmes, "The Flexible Personality," in *Hieroglyphs of the Future* (Zagreb: WHW/Arkzin, 2002), online at: .

[5] Negri, Toni and Hardt, Michael, *Empire* (Cambridge Mass: Harvard University Press, 2000).

[6] Cf. Lazzarato, Maurizio, "Créer des mondes: Capitalisme contemporain et guerres 'esthétiques'" in *Multitudes* 15, special issue: « Art Contemporain: La recherche du dehors, » Paris, Fall 2003. A revised version of this text has been included under the title « Entreprise et Néomonadologie », in Lazzarato, Maurizio, *Les Révolutions du Capitalisme* (Paris: Les Empêcheurs de penser en rond, Le Seuil, 2004).

[7] Cf. I'm referring to the notion proposed by various tendencies within Autonomia Operaia in the 1970s in Italy, before being taken up and further elaborated by Félix Guattari. See Guattari, Félix e Rolnik, Suely, *Micropolítica. Cartografias do desejo* (Petrópolis: Vozes [1986: pp.187-190] 7th ed. revisited, 2005). Forthcoming in English: *Schizo-analysis in Brazil* (New York:

Semiotext/MIT, 2005).

[8] "Integrated World Capitalism" (Capitalisme mondial intégré – CMI) is a term coined by Félix Guattari as early as the late 1960s as an alternative to the term "globalization," which he considered to be excessively generic and which serves to hide the fundamentally economic, specifically capitalist and neoliberal senses of the phenomenon of internationalization which began to be installed at that period.