

**LYGIA CLARK SPANS FOUR DECADES OF THE ARTIST'S WORK WITH FIRST MAJOR U.S. MUSEUM RETROSPECTIVE AT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART**

**Trained Facilitators to Aid Visitors in Creating Intended Experiences of Clark's Works**

***Lygia Clark: The Abandonment of Art, 1948–1988***

May 10–August 24, 2014

The Joan and Preston Robert Tisch Exhibition Gallery, sixth floor, and The Werner and Elaine Dannheisser Gallery, fourth floor

**NEW YORK, April 30, 2014**—The Museum of Modern Art's major retrospective devoted to the art of Lygia Clark (Brazilian, 1920–1988) is the first comprehensive exhibition in North America of her work. On view from May 10 through August 24, 2014, ***Lygia Clark: The Abandonment of Art, 1948–1988*** comprises nearly 300 works, ranging from the late 1940s to the early 1980s, including drawings, paintings, sculptures, and participatory works. Drawn from public and private collections, including MoMA's own, this survey is organized around three key themes: abstraction, Neo-Concretism, and the "abandonment" of art. Each of these axes anchors a significant concept or a constellation of works that mark a definitive step in Clark's career. While Clark's legacy in Brazil is profound, this exhibition draws international attention to her work. By bringing together all parts of her radical production, the exhibition seeks to reinscribe her into current discourses of abstraction, participation, and a therapeutic art practice. *Lygia Clark: The Abandonment of Art, 1948–1988* is organized by Luis Pérez-Oramas, The Estrellita Brodsky Curator of Latin American Art, MoMA; and Connie Butler, Chief Curator, Hammer Museum; with Geanine Gutierrez-Guimarães and Beatriz Rabelo Olivetti, Curatorial Assistants, Department of Drawings and Prints, MoMA.

Lygia Clark trained in Rio de Janeiro and Paris from the late 1940s to the mid-1950s and was a leading abstract artist at the forefront of the Neo-Concretist movement in Brazil, fostering the active participation of spectators through her works. From the late 1960s through the 1970s she created a series of unconventional artworks in parallel to a lengthy psychoanalytic therapy, leading her to develop a series of therapeutic propositions grounded in art. Clark has become a major reference for contemporary artists dealing with the limits of conventional forms of art.

**Abstraction**

*Lygia Clark* is organized chronologically, beginning with Clark's earliest works. From her earliest production, her work was in dialogue with landmark predecessors of modern geometric abstraction, including Paul Klee, Fernand Léger, Piet Mondrian, Vladimir Tatlin, Max Bill, and Georges Vantongerloo. This first group of Clark's paintings and graphic works (1948–59) underscores the breaking of the flat surface and points toward a three-dimensional mode of abstraction.

The first section of the exhibition deals with Clark's discovery of what she called the "organic line," an opening of conceptual—and eventually actual—space within the surface of her work. As seen in her paintings of 1956–57, mainly her series *Superfícies moduladas* (Modulated surfaces), a complex system of juxtaposed planes are separated by very tight gaps—the only "lines" in their compositions—which Clark called *linhas orgânicas* (organic lines). Describing her main objective during this period, Clark wrote, "What I seek is to *compose a space* and not compose in it." Lines floating between planes like creases or voids within the painting would become a central motif in Clark's work of the 1950s and beyond. In her series *Planos em superfícies moduladas* (Planes in modulated surfaces), monochromatic paintings that stress the complexity of their surface, the organic line simultaneously isolates the planes and connects them into a functioning whole.

### **Neo-Concretism**

The following section of the exhibition explores the period embraced by the Neo-Concrete movement (1959–66), a Brazilian vanguard movement that rejected the impersonal and objective quality of concrete abstraction. The Neo-Concretists conceived of their works as existing between art and life, as tools for experiences in the public realm. This section includes most of the final "formal" works done by Clark when she was identified as a Neo-Constructivist artist. For Clark, Neo-Concretism initiated an investigation that led her to a practice beyond the limits of conventional artistic forms.

Around 1960, Clark found a way to unfold the topological investigations of her Neo-Concretist paintings into a three-dimensional repertoire. The result was her series of sculptures known as *Bichos* (Critters). These were the first participatory works by Clark meant to be fully and endlessly reshaped by their interaction with the beholders. In the *Bichos* the organic lines become hinges between panels, allowing the sculpture to be transformed from schematic flatness into a variety of unexpected three-dimensional configurations. Some *Bichos* bear strong resemblance to specific living organisms, as seen in *Caranguejo* (Crab) (1960), while others evoke themes that concerned Clark's artistic investigation, such as *Relógio del sol* (Sundial) (1960). This section also features *O dentro é o fora* (The inside is the outside) (1963) and *O antes é o depois* (The before is the after) (1963), the only two works from the *Bichos* series featuring a continuous and intertwined metal strip without hinges. Works from her subsequent series *Trepantes* (Climbers) (1965) are also included—unhinged metal structures in which stainless steel is bent and twisted into lyrical lines and circular forms.

In 1963, Clark made a work titled *Caminhando* (Walking) by twisting a strip of paper 180 degrees, gluing its ends together to create a Möbius strip (a circular form that appears to have two sides but actually has only one), and cutting around and around its length until it was too thin to cut further. This was the first of Clark's "propositions"—works that spectators were invited to

take part in creating, thus becoming more than simply spectators. In the words of the artist, “the work is the act.”

### **The Abandonment of Art**

Between 1966 and 1988, a period that coincided with a personal crisis and subsequent long sojourn of exile in Europe, Clark achieved a radical conclusion to the concepts and practices that she had confronted during the 1960s. During this time, she made very simple objects out of ordinary things such as gloves, plastic bags, stones, seashells, water, elastics, and fabric. These “sensorial objects” were designed to make possible a different awareness of our bodies, our perceptual capabilities, and our mental and physical constraints. Clark’s repertoire of sensorial objects, all based on ready-made and transformed everyday tools, was meant to be activated in both contact and coordination with our body and organic functions. By matching our gestures with these simple objects, Clark intended to project an organic dimension over inert and industrial materials.

Ultimately, Clark’s research drove her to profoundly question the status and utility of conventional works of art as means of expression. Claiming to abandon art making, she created a practice using materials applied directly to the body, engaging with her subjects in a very direct way. Among the propositions (as she called them) featured in this last section of the exhibition are works generally considered “biological architectures” and other experiential or “relational objects” from the early 1970s, which are shown here alongside original and replica devices that Clark conceived in order to allow the audience to approach relational experiences. It is only now, after her death, that this last chapter may be read in terms of the histories of happenings, performance, and public engagement as a radical form of art making.

In 1968 Clark created her landmark installation *A casa é o corpo: penetração, ovulação, germinação, expulsão* (The house is the body: penetration, ovulation, germination, expulsion) for the Venice Biennale, which is on view on the fourth floor as part of the exhibition. *A casa é o corpo* is Lygia Clark’s only environmental work, and as the title phrase indicates, Clark imagined *A casa é o corpo* as a device allowing a fully immersive corporeal experience within its walls to mimic a birthing process. The installation is a three-compartment structure spatially separated by a large bubble of plastic suspended from the ceiling, so that viewers move through a series of sensations. On entering or “penetrating” (penetração), the spectator encounters a dark room with a soft landing; then follows towards “ovulation” (ovulação), where one enters a compartment filled with a variety of soft, spherical materials (balloons, balls of rubber and Styrofoam); next is “germination” (germinação), where the participant enters an open, transparent space in the shape of a teardrop (small and spherical); and finally “expulsion” (expulsão), where one exits through fine threads or “hairs” and encounters a deforming mirror to see oneself. *A casa é o corpo* is recreated on the Museum’s fourth floor gallery adjacent to the painting and sculpture galleries and is open during museum hours for activation by the public.

Trained facilitators will be in the galleries during select hours to aid visitors in creating the intended sensorial and relational experiences using replicas. These works include *Caminhando* (Walking); *Pedra e ar* (Stone and air) (1966), *Respire comigo* (Breathe with me) (1966), *Diálogo de mãos* (Dialogue of hands) (1966), *Máscaras sensoriais* (Sensorial masks) (1967), *Óculos* (Goggles) (1968) and *Diálogo de óculos* (Dialogue of goggles) (1968), *Estruturas vivas* (Live structures) (1969), and *Rede de elásticos* (Elastic net) (1974). Other select replicas of Clark's works may be manipulated by visitors at any time during museum hours. Additionally, the more complex and immersive propositions by Clark, such as *Canibalismo* (Cannibalism) (1973), *Viagem* (Voyage) (1973), *Túnel* (Tunnel) (1973), *Baba antropofágica* (Anthropophagic slobber) (1973), and others, including *Estruturação do self* (Structuring of the self) (1976–88), will be activated weekly, encouraging the audience to encounter these actions in the galleries spontaneously.

#### **SPONSORSHIP:**

Major support for the exhibition is provided by Ricardo and Susana Steinbruch, The Modern Women's Fund, Patricia Phelps de Cisneros, Jerry I. Speyer and Katherine G. Farley, Vicky and Joseph Safra Foundation, and the Diane and Bruce Halle Foundation.

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The related film series is supported by Richard I. Kandel.

#### **PUBLICATION:**

*Lygia Clark: The Abandonment of Art, 1948–1988* is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue by Cornelia Butler and Luis Pérez-Oramas, with essays by Sergio Bessa, Eleonora Fabião, Briony Fer, Geanine Gutierrez-Guimarães, André Lepecki, Zeuler Lima, Christine Macel, and Frederico de Oliveira Coelho. Examining Clark's oeuvre from her early abstract compositions to the "biological architectures" and "relational objects" she created late in her career, this is the most comprehensive volume on the artist available in English. Three sections focus on crucial phases of her career—Abstraction, Neo-Concretism, and The Abandonment of Art—identifying significant concepts and momentous works and shedding light on the circumstances of her artistic life. Featuring a considerable selection of previously unpublished writings by Clark, it is an indispensable source of primary documents for scholars of 20th-century art history. Hardcover. 9.5" w x 12" h. 336 pages; 400 illustrations. ISBN: 978-0-87070-890-9. \$75. Published by The Museum of Modern Art and available at MoMA Stores and online at [MoMAStore.org](https://www.moma.org). Distributed to the trade through ARTBOOK|D.A.P. in the United State and Canada, and through Thames & Hudson outside the United States and Canada.

#### **EXHIBITION FACILITATORS:**

Trained facilitators will be in the galleries to aid visitors in creating the sensorial and relational experiences developed by Clark during the following hours throughout the run of the exhibition:  
Saturdays, 11:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m.

Sundays, 1:00–4:00 p.m.

Mondays, 2:00–5:00 p.m.

Tuesdays, 12:00–3:00 p.m.  
Wednesdays, 2:00–5:00 p.m.  
Thursdays, 12:00–3:00 p.m.  
Fridays, 2:00–5:00 p.m.

**AUDIO TOUR:**

The audio tour accompanying the exhibition features commentaries by exhibition curators Cornelia Butler and Luis Pérez-Oramas, as well as quotes by Lygia Clark. The audio is available at the Museum on the MoMA Audio+ mobile guide, and also on the MoMA app in the iTunes app store, and at [MoMA.org/audio](http://MoMA.org/audio) and [MoMA.org/m](http://MoMA.org/m). MoMA Audio+ is sponsored by Bloomberg.

**FILM SERIES:**

***On the Edge: Brazilian Film Experiments of the 1960s and Early 1970s***

May 10–July 24, 2014

The Roy and Niuta Titus Theaters

Please see *On the Edge* screening schedule or visit [MoMA.org/film](http://MoMA.org/film) for details.

**MoMA STUDIO: BREATHE WITH ME**

May 16–June 29, 2014

The Lewis B. and Dorothy Cullman Education and Research Building, mezzanine

Thursdays, Saturdays, and Sundays, 1:00–5:00 p.m., Fridays, 1:00–8:00 p.m.

Please see Lygia Clark Programs press release for full details.

**WORKSHOPS, EVENTS, AND RELATED PUBLIC PROGRAMMING:**

Please see Lygia Clark Programs press release for full details.

**MoMA CLASSES:**

**Lygia Clark: Objects, Bodies and Other Matters**

Tuesdays, June 17 and 24 and July 1, 6:30–8:45 p.m.

Please see Lygia Clark Programs press release for full details.

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**Press Contacts:** Sara Beth Walsh, (212) 708-9747 or [sarabeth\\_walsh@moma.org](mailto:sarabeth_walsh@moma.org)  
Margaret Doyle, (212) 408-6400 or [margaret\\_doyle@moma.org](mailto:margaret_doyle@moma.org)

**For downloadable high-resolution images, register at [MoMA.org/press](http://MoMA.org/press).**

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**Public Information:**

The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, NY 10019, (212) 708-9400, [MoMA.org](http://MoMA.org). Hours: Saturday through Thursday, 10:30 a.m.–5:30 p.m. Friday, 10:30 a.m.–8:00 p.m. Museum Admission: \$25 adults; \$18 seniors, 65 years and over with I.D.; \$14 full-time students with current I.D. Free, members and children 16 and under. (Includes admittance to Museum galleries and film programs). Free admission during Uniqlo Free Friday Nights: Fridays, 4:00 p.m.–8:00 p.m. [MoMA.org](http://MoMA.org): No service charge for tickets ordered on [MoMA.org](http://MoMA.org). Tickets purchased online may be printed out and presented at the Museum without waiting in line. (Includes admittance to Museum galleries and film programs). Film and After Hours Program Admission: \$12 adults; \$10 seniors, 65 years and over with I.D.; \$8 full-time students with current I.D. The price of an After Hours Program Admission ticket may be applied toward the price of a Museum admission ticket or MoMA Membership within 30 days.

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