

**Simone Osthoff** (br/us)  
 Pennsylvania State University  
 Associate Professor Critical Studies  
 sxo11@email.psu.edu



**Women, Art, and  
Technology in Brazil**

This paper surveys both pioneer accomplishments and contemporary works by Brazilian women media artists since the early 1960s. Their works range from electro-acoustic music to neon light, holography, cinema, experimental film, video, photography, kinetic and multimedia performances and installations, virtual worlds, and Web-based cultural activism. Beginning with a discussion of the controversial issue of gender in Brazil, the essay weaves



**Fig. 1: Jocy de Oliveira in 1964 performing Winter Music by John Cage on a showboat on the Mississippi river. Photo: James Rackwitz, courtesy of the artist.**



Fig. 2: Anna Bella Geiger 1974 video *Passagens [Passages]* is a twelve-minute series of stairways in loop that the artist ascends indefinitely. Photo: courtesy of the artist.

social, aesthetic, and epistemological concerns. As a general rule, these artists did not explore women's issues as a project nor were they interested in feminist questions per se. Nevertheless, women artists contributed to the advancement of media arts with both personal and critical perspectives. This overview, despite the inclusion of a large number of artists (more than forty), is by no means a complete survey, but rather an early assessment, which will hopefully instigate new research.

The paper is divided into eight parts, which are organized chronologically and as much as possible according to media. The introduction gives an overview of feminism in twentieth-century Brazilian art. Part one examines three pioneers from the 1960s: Jocy de Oliveira [Fig. 1], Sulamita Mairesnes, and Tereza Simões. They are early visionaries still waiting to receive further critical evaluation and historical recognition. Part two focuses on Cinema and the role of women directors throughout the twentieth century. This section is based on an earlier assessment from 1982, followed by a consideration of the increasing number of women directors since then. Part three analyses the area known as "Almost Cinema"—the moving image in the visual arts, in which women were always prominent. It includes among other pioneers from the early 1970s, Lygia Pape, Anna Bella Geiger [Fig. 2], Iole de Freitas, Leticia Parente and Regina Silveira. Part four examines the work of Sandra Kogut focusing on her award winning 1991 video "Parabolic People" [Fig. 3]. Part five probes Rosângela Rennó's "Universal Archives" along with issues of appropriation, memory and history in photographic installations. Part



Fig. 3: Sandra Kogut 1991 video *Parabolic People* is a forty-minute collage of footage taken in the streets of Dakar, Moscow, New York, Tokyo, Paris, and Rio de Janeiro. Photo: courtesy of the artist.

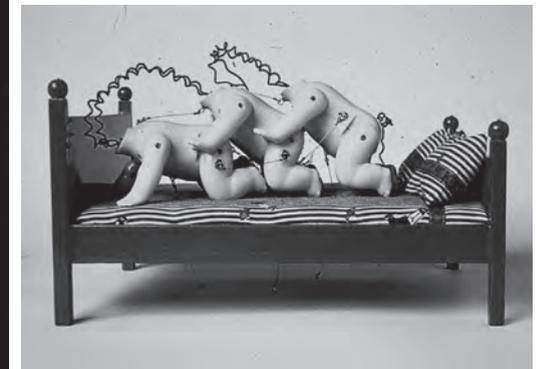


Fig. 4: Marcia X 1995 installation *Os Kaminhas Sutrinhas* [meaning in Portuguese "the little Kama Sutrás"] includes twenty-eight doll beds (each 17 x 30 x 22 cm) and as many as sixty battery-operated crawling baby dolls connected by wiring and coupled according to positions of the Kama Sutra. Photo: Vicente de Mello, courtesy of the artist.

six focuses on the sexually charged low-tech-high-impact gadgets of the performance/installation artist Marcia X whose career ended prematurely [Fig. 4]. Part seven concentrates upon the multimedia performances and installations of Artemis Moroni, Simone Michelin, Bia Medeiros and Diana Domingues. Part eight looks at computer generated worlds and the use of the Internet as site and medium. It includes the works of Tania Fraga, Rejane Spitz, Suzete Venturelli, Giselle Beiguelman, and Patricia Canetti.

#### References

- Canongia, Ligia (1981) *Quase-Cinema*. Rio de Janeiro: Funarte.
- Holanda, Heloisa B., ed., 1989, *Quase Catálogo 1: Realizadoras de Cinema no Brasil (1930-1988)*. Rio de Janeiro: UFRJ and MIS.
- Holanda, Heloisa B., ed., 1991, *Quase Catálogo 2: Artistas Plásticas no Rio de Janeiro 1975-1985*. Rio de Janeiro: FUNARTE.
- Machado, Arlindo (1996) "Video Art: The Brazilian Adventure," *Leonardo*, Vol. 29, no. 3, 225-231.
- Munerato, E. and Oliveira, M. (1982) *As Musas da Matiné*. Rio de Janeiro: Rioarte.