THE ARTIST AS CURATOR

Hélio Oiticica,
Apocalipopótese, 1968

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Hélio Oiticica, *Apocalipopótese* (1968)

"Parangolé is anti-art par excellence; and I intend to extend the practice of appropriation to things of the world that I come across in the streets, vacant lots, fields, the ambient world—things that are not transportable, but in which I invite the public to participate. This would be a fatal blow to the concept of the museum, art gallery, et cetera, and to the very concept of "exhibition." Either we change or we remain as we are. Museum is the world: the everyday experience. —Hélio Oiticica, 1967[1]

The non-repressive activity that took place there is unique and crucially important in this time of endless repression—when the individual's fundamental aspirations are put down. —Hélio Oiticica, 1968[2]

Schools of samba playing at *Apocalipopótese*, Atêrro do Flamengo, Rio de Janeiro, 1968

In July 1968, while Brazil was under the tightening grip of a military dictatorship, the *Diario de Noticias* in Rio de Janeiro, under the leadership of its art critic, Frederico Morais, announced its sponsorship of an event entitled "A Month of Public Art." The events took place on Saturdays and Sundays at the Japanese Pavilion at the Atêrro—a public park overlooking the sea, not far from the city's Museum of Modern Art.[3] It opened with an exhibition of sculptures by Jackson Ribeiro, continued with art classes and workshops for adults and children, and culminated with a large manifestation entitled *Apocalipopótese,* conceived by Hélio Oiticica with the participation of the audience, a group of samba dancers from Rio, and some of the city's most important artists: Rogério Duarte (Oiticica's close collaborator at the time, who coined the title of the event),[4] Lygia Pape, Antônio Manuel, Samy Matar, Rubens Gerchman, and

1. Hélio Oiticica, "Environmental Program," in *Hélio Oiticica* (Rotterdam: Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, 1992), 103. Originally published in Hélio Oiticica, "Parangolé: Da Anti-Arte as Appropriações Ambientais de Oiticica," *Revista GAM* (Rio de Janeiro) (May 1967): 27–31. Translation slightly modified.

2. Hélio Oiticica, "Dec. 15, 1968," doc. 1622.68, p. 1, Archives Hélio Oiticica / Projeto Hélio Oiticica.

3. Writing on the upcoming event in the press, Morais referred to this area as a natural extension of the museum, appropriate for the public and democratic art that "A Month of Public Art" aimed to advocate for. He framed this public contemporary art as a direct response to the museum, which he considered an ill institution. Morais favored John Dewey's call for the restoration of a continuity between art and those elements of everyday life constitutive of experience. Federico Morais, "Arte na rua: jôgo, rito e participação," *Diario de Noticias* (Rio de Janeiro), July 4, 1968, Caderno 2.

4. Duarte lived in Oiticica's house between May and August of that year.

Luis Carlos Saldanha, among others.[5] Collaborative, prescient, performative, and fluid, *Apocalipopótese* bridged the boundaries between an open, experimental artwork and an ephemeral, collective exhibition. In its undefined character, it reveals much about Oiticica's thoughts and the ways in which his artistic practice challenged the very notion of what constitutes an exhibition.

Described in the press as a "tropical happening,"[6] *Apocalipopótese* took place on August 4, 1968.[7] A document written by Oiticica and Rogério Duarte, printed in the *Diario de Noticias* and as a flier, opened with the question: "What is *Apocalipopótese*?" and with the distinctive semantic ambiguity that guided Oiticica's post-Neo-Concrete work, replied: "Nothing, it still does not mean anything, as is in fact the case with any other word." It continued, in another characteristic association between function and meaning, both of which Oiticica dismissed: "Functionality is the negation of freedom."[8] Morais, who was an advocate of Oiticica's work, in turn replied to the artist's provocation with one of his own: "What does *Apocalipopótese* mean? The meeting of two words: 'apocalypse' and 'apotheosis'? Or the apotheotic hypothesis of apocalypses? Or the apotheoretic apocalypses of the hypothesis? It can be all of that. Or nothing."[9] But despite this allusion to nothingness, and what can be defined as semantic silence as aesthetic choice, the constellation of references that inspired *Apocalipopótese* as a collective performance that assumed the form of a public art exhibit of sorts can be clearly mapped in Oiticica's writings and works from the period.

Since Oiticica's *Parangolés* played such a central role in *Apocalipopótese*, it is useful to address them in order to articulate a reflection about the public and collective dimension of the artist's practice. Conceived in 1964, the *Parangolés* are banners, tents, and capes made of layers of plastic and cloth, sometimes with added photographs and text, painted in bright colors. The capes, to be worn by the artist and others (initially members of the favela of Mangueira and its school of samba), were conceptualized by Oiticica as the epitome and true manifestation of his environmental program (*programa ambiental*) and the embodiment of the concept of anti-art. This resulted from the abandonment of the conventions of painting and sculpture, a collapse of traditional modalities of expression, and instead the favoring of a fusion of color, structures, dance, word, and photography.[10] It involved the collective creation of environments and the participation of the spectator in accord with Oiticica's interest in an anarchic position against decadent and ossified political and social forms.

A document prepared in anticipation of the artist's exhibition at London's Whitechapel Gallery in 1969 lists most of Oiticica's works and public interventions between 1965 and 1968 under the heading "Environmental Manifestations."[11] The first one listed is the artist's presentation of his *Parangolés* in the context of the exhibition *Opinião 65* at the Museum of Modern Art in Rio de Janeiro in August 1965. On this occasion, musicians and dancers of the school of samba Estação Primera de Mangueira, wearing the *Parangolés*, descended on the grounds of the museum and were denied access to the galleries. The public and collective qualities of the *Parangolés* were thus reinforced by their inaugural estrangement from the institution of the museum, which was motivated primarily by the disruptive presence of inhabitants of the favela of Mangueira in a place traditionally reserved for the Brazilian elite. The intermedial quality of the *Parangolés* (outside the categories of painting and sculpture) was ratified here too by their outsider status with respect to the museum. That this act of institutional censorship suited Oiticica just fine is confirmed by the fact that in May 1967, on the second iteration of these works' public presentation, defined now as *Collective Parangolé,* Oiticica went back to Atêrro Park and presented his capes with the participation of Pedro Escosteguy, Rubens Gerchman, Mario Pedrosa, samba dancers, and

5. The year before, Oiticica had been instrumental in the realization of the influential exhibition *New Brazilian Objectivity* at the Museum of Modern Art, where he presented his celebrated installation *Tropicália.* Made of two penetrables, it encouraged the viewer to walk through a labyrinthine structure that echoed the topography of a Brazilian favela. Oiticica had originally intended to include the work of other artists as part of his installation, but in an interview with the critic Mário Barata published on May 15, 1967, he lamented that he had only succeeded in incorporating into the work a selection of poems by his sister-in-law Roberta Oiticica. "Hélio Oiticica Depõe sôbre Tropicália e Parangolés," *Jornal do Commercio* (Rio de Janeiro), May 21, 1967.

6. Vera Pedrosa, "De Capélio a Guevarcália," *Correio da Manhã* (Rio de Janeiro), August 10, 1968.

7. Originally planned for Sunday, July 28, the event was postponed due to rain. See Vera Pedrosa, "De Capélio a Guevarcália," *Correio da Manhã* (Rio de Janeiro), August 10, 1968.

8. Hélio Oiticica, doc. 0145.68, p. 1, Archives Hélio Oiticica / Projeto Hélio Oiticica.

9. Frederico Morais, "Apocalipopótese no atêrro: arte de vanguarda levada o povo," *Diario de Noticias* (Rio de Janeiro), July 26, 1968.

10. Hélio Oiticica, "Parangolé: Da Anti-Arte as Appropriações Ambientais de Oiticica," 28.

11. Hélio Oiticica, doc. 0365.59, p. 11, Archives Hélio Oiticica / Projeto Hélio Oiticica.

Apocalipopótese no Pavilhão JAPONÊS

Que é Apocalipopótese ?

Nada, ainda não significa nada como de resto qualquer outra palavra.

O amor precisa ser inventado.

Porquê ? Qual a utilidade de uma coisa que ainda não existe ?

Segundo alguns a utilidade do corpo de Cristo é de material de construção

(daí os pregos nos pulsos e nos pés) .

A utilidade é a negação da liberdade e a liberdade é a utilidade da negação.

O mau-humor é um péssimo lubrificante.

Eis o corpo . E pur si muove .

Eis a boca. Única explicação de qualquer promessa.

Eis a mão . Raiz de todo desatino .

Domingo 28 de julho de 1968

Promoção Diário de Noticias

Participantes :   passistas
PORTELA - Vinicius, Bidú, Maquário (ritmistas) e a grande passista Nega Pelé

MANGUEIRA - Santa Teresa, Bulau, Nilza, Manga, Mosquito (passistas-ritmistas)

    e Mininha, a grande sambista, que será homenageada .

VILA ISABEL - Mirim (passista-ritmista)

SALGUEIRO - Damásio , César (passistas-ritmistas) e a grande passista

    Narcisa.

Hélio Oiticica - novas capas : Caetelesvelásia (hom. a Caetano, com o auto

    retrato do mesmo por êle) - Guevaluta, Guevarcália, Nirvana ,

    Xoxóba (hom. a Mininha da Mangueira)

Rogério Duarte e Hélio Oiticica - capa Parangolé : Urnamorna , capa-poema .

Rogério Duarte e Antônio Manuel - cabine "Galpão da Ciência" : apresentação

    das ciências humanas e naturais em tôdas as suas alifestações.

    O autor não precisa de que canal êle fará uso.

Lígia Pape - Ovos (participação) e Capélio (capa hon. Hélio Oiticica)

    Participação apocalipopótica direta, fazendo uso do som-ruído.

Samy Mattar - Apocaliroupas : roupas (Rose, Tineca e   , desfilarão)

    para serem vistas à luz do sol e sob "luz negra" (ultravioleta)

Information for flier and press release of *Apocalipopótese* by Rogério Duarte and Hélio Oiticica, 1968

Miro de Mangueira with *P2 Parangolé Flag 1, Opinião 65*, Museum of Modern Art, Rio de Janeiro, 1965

The poet and composer Torcuato Neto wearing *P4 Parangolé Cape 1* (1964) at *Apocalipopótese*, Atêrro do Flamengo, Rio de Janeiro, 1968

the general public. That same month, an article assembling some of Oiticica's writings entitled "Parangolé: From Anti-Art to the Environmental Appropriations of Oiticica" proposed the notion of appropriation in regard to "things in the world." These non-portable "things" would invite viewer participation. They could be housed in industrial pavilions if shelter was required or simply placed in abandoned parks and lots. "This would be a fatal blow to the concept of the museum, the art gallery, even the notion of exhibition," Oiticica wrote. Aspiring to make the everyday experience constitutive of his malleable and expansive aesthetics, he wrote, "Museum is the world."[12]

Hélio Oiticica (on the ground) and the poet Torquato Neto with the artist's *Parangolés* as part of the exhibition *Eden*, Whitechapel Gallery, London, 1969

The *Parangolé*, then, was more than just a crucial artwork within the artist's oeuvre; it provided him with a logic to reflect on the position of his work within the institutional context and beyond, allowing him to develop alternative modes of display in which the performative is central. Indeed, in 1965 Oiticica identified two modalities of participation associated with the *Parangolé* cape: one in which, by looking at (watching) the unfolding of the cape, we become aware of its objective (spatial and temporal) constitution, and another in which participation is of an experiential-subjective nature (wearing). The two modes are important for the completion of a cycle (wearing-watching) that is defined as an "intermediary" stage arguably superseded by the presence of a plurality of participants—that is, more than one pair of subjects interacting. Oiticica continued: "Here, environmental space-time transforms into a 'work-environment' totality."[13] Thus the establishment of a growing network of relations between the *Parangolé* and the outside world determined the "total experience of the work." He added, introducing the plural: "These work-participant nuclei, when related in a particular environment (in an exhibition, for example), create an 'environmental-system' *Parangolé,* which in turn can be watched by other external participants."[14]

This text, distributed on the occasion of the *Opinião 65* exhibition, famously describes the operative aspects of the *Parangolé* in such a way that its display becomes an integral component of the logic of the work. That is to say, the structure of the exhibition, which the *Parangolé* led Oiticica to rethink, was conceived as a possible conduit for a collective artistic experience that also aspired to become an environmental situation existing outside the limitations of the object and the confines of the institution.

12. Hélio Oiticica, "Parangolé: Da Anti-Arte as Appropriações Ambientais de Oiticica," 28. In an interview in 1967 with the critic Mário Barata, when asked about a possible participation of the *Parangolé* in the Bienal de São Paulo, Oiticica dissociated his work from the notion of the happening (which he saw as operating under and against a traditional concept of art) and likened it more to an attempt to facilitate collective creativity in the streets. He called this attempt anti-art—an oppositional platform against the normative aspects of the biennial: "Them, the biennials, either move toward wider, collective proposals or will fall into a sort of universal academicism, a sort of UN of the arts, which would be terrible and has begun to take place." "Hélio Oiticica Depõe sôbre Tropicália e Parangolés," *Jornal do Commercio*.

13. Hélio Oiticica, "Anotações sobre o Parangolé" (November 1964). Originally reprinted in Hélio Oiticica, *Aspiro ao grande labirinto,* eds. Luciano Figueiredo, Lygia Pape, and Waly Salomão (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Rocco, 1986), 71.

14. Ibid., 72.

Apocalipopótese aimed to make its potential spectators active participants, to move beyond the conventions of the exhibition as a site for display and contemplation while challenging the distinction between artist and audience.

Accordingly, in 1968, in the opening paragraph of a text entitled "The Work, Its Object Character, Its Behavior," Oiticica addressed what he considered the insufficient quality of museums and galleries, at odds with the experimental art of the period. By way of example he cited the work of Piet Mondrian, whose presentation in museums—behind glass, framed, and hung in impeccable galleries—aestheticized a practice that seemed much more alive when seen in photographs of the artist's studio. From Mondrian, Oiticica took the idea of "work-totality," but he also warned against the unqualified imposition of this totality of the work upon any context whatsoever. For Oiticica, a new art of environments and experiential participation posed the question of the "work-site" or the "place-site-context-work open to participation" (*lugar-recinto-contexto-obra aberta à participação*).[15] This environmental art would grow out of a specific context and could not simply be relocated to a museum. However, cautiously drawing from Kurt Schwitters's *Merzbau* (1923–37), Oiticica rejected the idea of privileging the site, aestheticizing it. Instead he underlined the notion of openness, the discovery of the everyday, of unconditioned human behavior. The artist, Oiticica wrote, "proposes behavioral open structures; it even proposes to propose, which is more important."[16]

This inquiry into the nature of the art object had been unleashed during the Neo-Concrete phase (1959–61) and was initially best expressed in the poet Ferreira Gullar's concept of the nonobject. In 1963 Oiticica borrowed from the critic Mario Pedrosa the term "transobject" (coined in 1960) to talk about his *Bolides*.[17] By 1968 Oiticica was privileging another contribution to this lively Brazilian conversation around the nature of the art object: Rogério Duarte's notion of the "probject" (*probjeto*). As Oiticica recounted in a 1969 text written in English (and several others from that period), Duarte, an intellectual, artist, and graphic designer who would become close to the Carioca artist, had formulated that concept in relation to Oiticica's work and that of Lygia Pape. The text referred specifically to Pape's egg work (*Trio do embalo maluco* [Crazy Rocking Trio], 1968), boxes wrapped in white, blue, and red paper that audiences could enter and break through, and with which she participated in *Apocalipopótese*. According to Oiticica, "probject" referred to the "probabilities of the object," the object as a probability: "not the result of one probability, but the potentiality for a probability." These could be many, he clarified. Insisting on the plural, he wrote: "Here the probability is a collective term that can turn out into many things." The name, he wrote, had arrived just in time, as it suited his distrust in the work of art as static, timeless, closed, self-sufficient, and representative of an idea (thus also the notion of anti-art mobilized in those years). "Probject" accounted instead for an emphasis on process and duration, or *vivências* (life experiences), which here Oiticica defined as an affective configuration: feelings that emerge with ideas, "and the participation in those ideas as they are communicated into propositions."[18]

An article published in 1968 entitled "The Object, Aspects of the Problem of the Object" was an attempt to elucidate what the abandonment of traditional mediums (painting, sculpture) meant for the Brazilian artistic milieu and how it affected the modes of circulation of resultant experimental practices. Oiticica indicated that a turn to objects was linked to the act of creation conceived as a process (rather than to the notion of representation): "Appropriated objects, metaphoric objects, structural objects, objects that demand to be manipulated, etc., are born. We turn our attention to action[s] on the environment, where objects exist as signals and not simply as works: that character of

15. Hélio Oiticica, "A obra, seu caráter objetal, o comportamento" (December 1, 1968). Reprinted in Hélio Oiticica, *Aspiro ao grande labirinto*, 119.

16. Ibid., 120.

17. Hélio Oiticica, "Bólides" (October 29, 1963), in *Aspiro ao grande labirinto*, 63–65.

18. Hélio Oiticica, "Apocalipopótesis," doc. 0534.69, p. 1, Archives Hélio Oiticica / Projeto Hélio Oiticica; original text in English.

signal is absorbed and transformed as well in the elapsing of experiences since now it is the *action* or a *behavioral exercise* that becomes important." The object was thus a trigger, and it did not necessarily imply a traditional materiality. A scream, a sound, wrote Oiticica, could be considered an object. It is a discovery of the world in each instant. He added that this discovery of the world was also a discovery "of the ethical, social, political dimension of man, to wit, of life as a perpetual creative manifestation."[19]
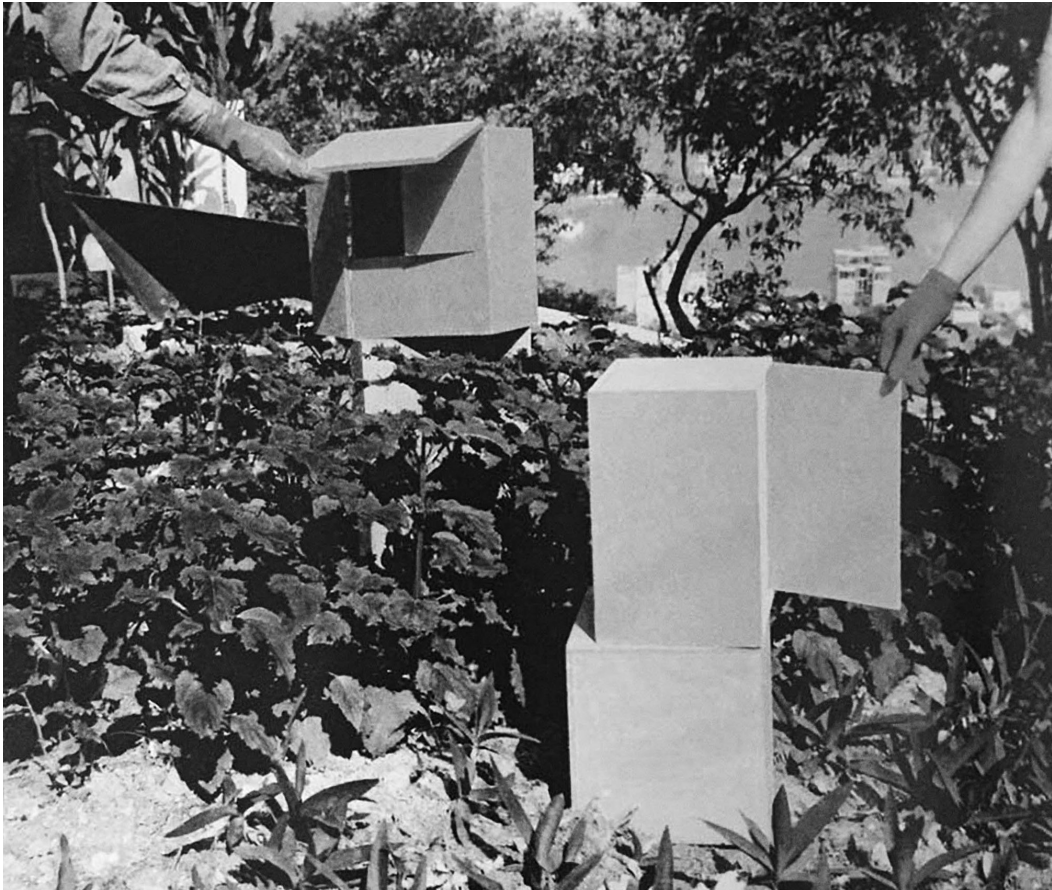
Demonstration of *B 01 Bólide caixa 01 Cartesiano* and *B 02 caixa 02 Platônico* (both 1963), on the patio of Oiticica's home-studio, Rio di Jainero, ca. 1964

This categorical refutation of the representational nature and ontological certainty of the art object had developed in Oiticica's work out of a phenomenological inquiry into the uncodified, unconditioned, non-conceptualized possibilities of the artwork: the so-called "first apparition" that Gullar's nonobject aspired to be. In 1968, the probject and the processes that it favored (*vivências*, feelings) were to oppose "any kind of oppressive system."[20] This is an important point. Language, representation, concepts, categories, theories, (and consequently institutions) were increasingly seen by Oiticica (and his Neo-Concrete peers Gullar, Clark, and Pape) as repressive. By 1968 Brazilian society was experiencing the full force of an oppressive military regime that had been in place since 1964. The systemic form of repression was unleashed partly by the death of the sixteen-year-old student Édson Luis de Lima Souto in confrontation with military police on March 28, 1968. The following month, during a mass dedicated to him, Rogério Duarte was apprehended by the police, imprisoned, and tortured. By December, Oiticica's own celebration of marginality, his famous banner with the image of the dead body of the bandit Cara de Cavalo (shot in a confrontation with the police) and the words "Be an outlaw be a hero," was censored during a concert by Caetano Veloso at the Sucata nightclub in Rio de Janeiro. Veloso and Gilberto Gil would be imprisoned as a result. That same month, all constitutional guarantees were annulled by the infamous AI-5 (Institutional Act no. 5), which brought to Brazil the end of the Festive Left.

19. Hélio Oiticica, "O Objeto, instancias do problema do objeto," *Revista GAM* 15, (1968): 26–27.

20. Ibid.

Hélio Oiticica manipulating his *B11 Box Bólide 9* (1964) on the patio of his home-studio, Rio de Janeiro

The term "Festive Left" emerged in relation to a post-1964 artistic intelligentsia and a large population of students who turned enthusiastically toward forms of spectacle, as if "the issues of the moment required new mediums, more efficient in uniting the public," writes Heloísa Buarque de Hollanda in her assessment of the period.[21] This "festive" politics was partly a response, she adds, to the serious and self-righteous tone of the CPC (Centers for Popular Culture), a cultural initiative that embraced a hard-core Communist agenda and privileged folk art. The Festive Left articulated instead a less evidently antagonistic aesthetic that, however, did not lack an informed critical dimension. By 1968, Oiticica, an avid reader of both Friedrich Nietzsche and Herbert Marcuse, had also begun to formulate a reflection on the notions of alienated work and leisure, which reinforced his concept of creative freedom as a challenge to the established order.

Apocalipopótese's festive, anarchic, collective, interdisciplinary, spontaneous character responded to this desire to generate creativity and stimulate the imagination through collective participation—a participation that involved the awakening of the senses. Oiticica would come to call *Apocalipopótese* the first "probjectal manifestation."[22] All this was informed by a rejection of representation and codified meanings. Thus, the "environmental manifestations" in which Oiticica was involved in the 1960s were to be acts, or rather collections of actions, and not representations or narratives. Pushing further the utopian élan that this pre-codified world implied, Oiticica spoke of participation as disinterested (not instrumental), as if the events were to provide new templates for life outside the oppressive structures of bourgeois culture and militarized society.

21. Heloísa Buarque de Hollanda, *Impressões de Viagem: CPC, vanguarda e desbunde: 1960/70* (Rio de Janiero: Aeroplano, 2005), 32.

22. Hélio Oiticica, "Apocalipopotesis," doc. 0534.69, p. 2, Archives Hélio Oiticica / Projeto Hélio Oiticica; original text in English.

Although *Apocalipopótese* did not necessarily follow a script, it certainly reflected some attempt at organization of the kind deployed when putting together an exhibition.

A document in Oiticica's archive (written in collaboration with Duarte) seems to have operated as both press release and checklist. The statement of intent was quite elusive, as the few words cited above indicate, and the checklist, which enumerated artists and their works, apparently fluctuated quite a bit. For example, a presentation of trained dogs by Duarte is not mentioned, nor are Antonio Manuel's hot urns (*Urnas Quentes*) or Roberto Lannari's vinyl sculptures, all of which were accounted for in the press and appear in the film that documented the public manifestation and was originally conceived as one of its components.[23] This and several other documents written by Oiticica to reflect on the event, as well as significant articles published in the press, confirm that a presentation of new *Parangolés,* most worn by major *sambistas, passistas,* and *ritmistas* from Rio, constituted the central spine of *Apocalipopótese.*[24] In the press release the participants were listed first, separately from the *Parangolés,* which were listed next. A note written by Morais in *Diario de Noticias* confirms that *Apocalipopótese* included poets, visual artists, concrete and electronic music, fashion, cinema, and 14 of the best *sambistas* of Rio.[25]

The first *Parangolés* of 1964–65 had been conceived in the context of the favela of Mangueira, but also its school of samba. That samba and carnival became associated in Oiticica's mind with opposition to the repressive and oppressive normativity of bourgeois culture is clear from a text from 1965 entitled "Dance in My Experience," where he spoke of a vital need for "de-intellectualization" and "marginalization."[26] He discussed what he referred to as the Dionysian dimension of dance, a euphoric form of performativity antagonistic to the static image and to representation, which provided a link between individual and collective expression, downplaying the classical notion of authorship.

As had happened on the occasion of the exhibition *Opinião 65* and in the presentation of Oiticica's *Collective Parangolé* in 1967 at Atêrro, with *Apocalipopótese* the artist seems to have departed from the specificity of samba for a complete rethinking of the nature of display. This time, the audience and the *sambistas,* who had been denied entry into the museum in 1965, acquired the role of protagonists. Against the restricting confines of the museum as a preserve for the Brazilian elite, a zone of control where meaning is agreed upon by a select group, *Apocalipopótese* was to take place outside, in a public space, where signification would have to be negotiated collectively, primarily by experiencing the manifestation. Not only are the names of dancers and musicians listed in the "checklist" of the event, but Nininha de Mangueira, observed Oiticica, "will be honored." It was as if *Apocalipopótese* galvanized a series of anti-aesthetic gestures that were unfamiliar to the rarified space of the Museum of Modern Art: popular culture, interdisciplinarity, ephemerality, collective production, collective participation. Indeed, one of the most distinctive features of the event was its collaborative dynamics. Aside from his own capes—*Caetelesvelásia* (an homage to the singer Caetano Veloso), *Guevaluta, Guevarcália, Nirvana,* and *Xoxôba* (an homage to Nininha de Mangueira)—Oiticica realized two with Duarte: *Urnamorna* and a poem-cape. Lygia Pape, appropriating Oiticica's invention and in his honor, realized a cape entitled *Capélio* made of multiple textures and colors that produced sound while worn and in movement. Pape's eggs also involved the *sambistas,* as several of them demonstrated for the audience how to interact with these structures. Covered with colored paper, several cubes were penetrated and broken through so as to invoke the act of creation.[27]

Antonio Manuel also produced pieces that encouraged interaction and relinquished normative modalities of artistic reception. His *Urnas Quentes* were wooden boxes that the audience was invited to destroy to dig out messages that alluded to

23. Raymundo Amado, director, *APOCALIPOPÓTESE* (alternate title: *GUERRA E PAZ*), 1968, Brazil, with music by Caetano Veloso. Original running time 15 minutes.

24. Many of those works had been made in preparation for Oiticica's upcoming exhibition at Whitechapel Gallery in London in February 1969. Oiticica left for the UK with Torcuato Neto the preceding December.
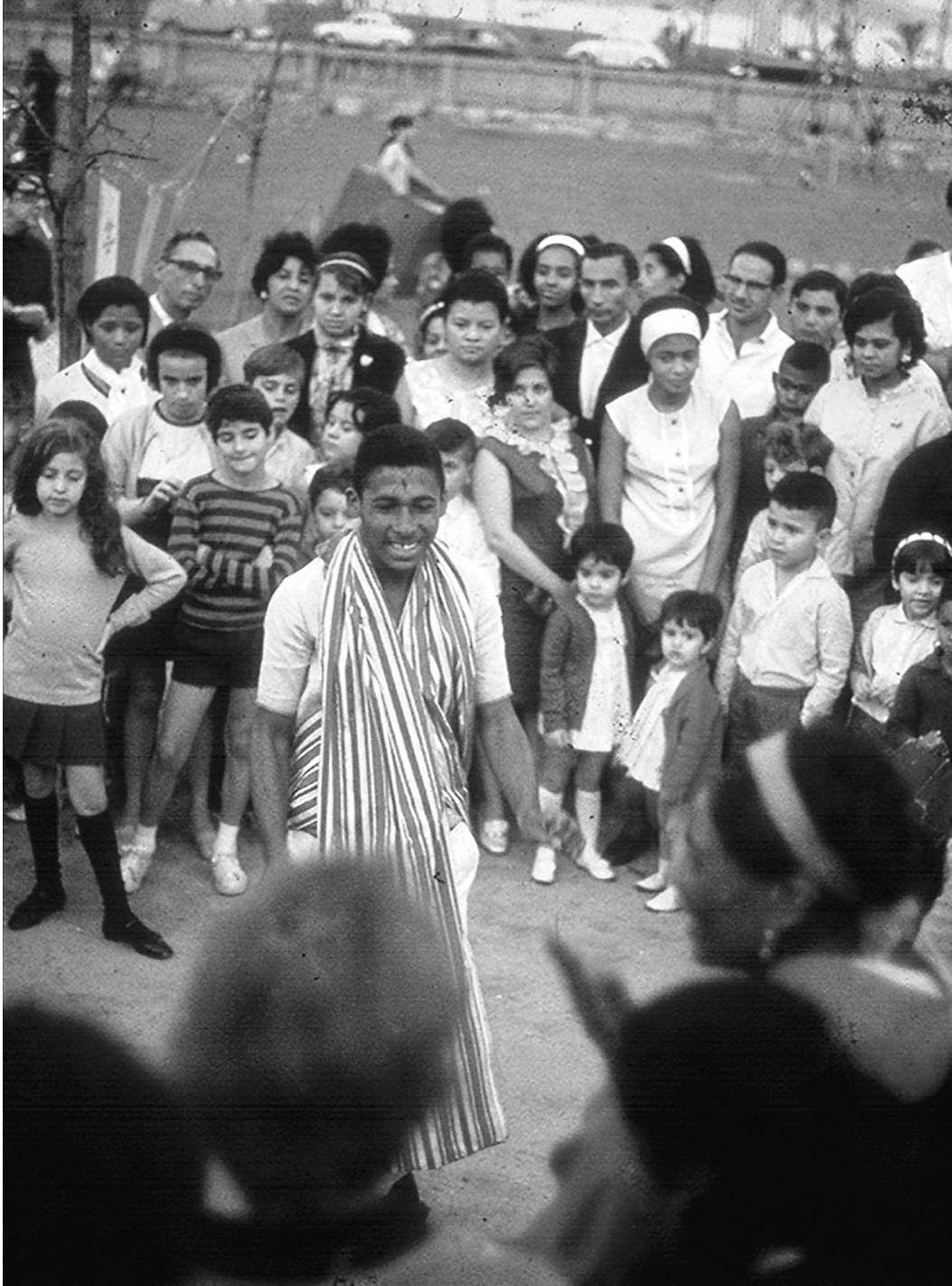
25. The event was postponed due to rain.

26. Hélio Oiticica, "A dança na minha experiência," in *Aspiro ao grande labirinto,* 74.

27. Vera Pedrosa, "De Capélio a Guevarcália."

Installation view of *Nova Objetividade Brasileira*, Museu de Arte Moderna, Rio de Janeiro, 1967, showing *Tropicália* with *Penetráveis PN 2* and *PN 3* (1967)

Samba dancer Mininha Xoxoba dancing and wearing *P25 Parangolé Cape 21 Xoxoba* (1968) at *Apocalipopótese*, Atêrro do Flamengo, Rio de Janeiro, 1968

the local political situation, for example "Long life to the weapons of the insurgents." Inside some of these there were also drawings, which people could take with them, poems, and newspaper cutouts. No doubt by 1968 the experience of astonishment, outside categories and concepts, to which Neo-Concretism had aspired had been rendered a problematic aspiration by the brutality of the military dictatorship, the suffocating expansion of the culture industry, and contemporary revolutionary aspirations. Operating beyond the aesthetic realm of perceptions, Oiticica's work was to have a "global sense" (*sentido global*) indicative of a socio-ethical position.[28]

Two previous exhibitions in the nearby Museum of Modern Art—*Opinião 65* in August 1965 and *New Brazilian Objectivity* in April 1967—had initiated a conversation

28. "Hélio Oiticica Depõe sôbre Tropicália e Parangolés," *Jornal do Commercio.*

about the relation between images and politics in contemporary Brazil. In both of them, Oiticica had presented "environmental manifestations": his first *Parangolés* in 1965 and his *Tropicália* installation in 1967. The latter was a programmatic attempt to rethink the position of contemporary art in Brazil and Brazilian identity through a reconsideration of the image. "I wanted to make of this penetrable an exercise of the 'image' in all its possible forms,"[29] Oiticica wrote. The labyrinthine penetrable assemblage incorporated plants, pebbles, sand, a parrot, and objects made of wood. By accessing the penetrables, the viewer/participant became sensorially engaged with the images-clichés, now embodied in a dislocated materiality and trajectory at the end of which was to be found a functioning TV monitor.[30]

The *Parangolés* presented during *Apocalipopótese* continued this reflection on the image. Images and language were to be reconfigured in this dedicated search for an alternative to static representation. At the height of a continental enthusiasm for the Cuban Revolution, the image of Ché Guevara in the so-called *Guevarcália* cape could only invoke this emancipatory tension that *Apocalipopótese* aimed to enact. As Oiticica observed, this cape, made with a florid fabric on one side and white cotton fabric on the other, bore the image of Ché painted and embroidered in sequins. There was, the artist wrote, a desire to link Guevara and his "ultra-tropical image" with the florid tunic and the sequins common in the costumes of the school of samba. *Caetelesvelásia* featured yellow nylon mesh with an enlarged portrait of his friend Caetano Veloso, then a rising star, and *Nirvana*, another collaboration, bore the image of a child from Biafra painted by Antonio Manuel.

These images were to be framed within the logic of the probject and put into movement by the wearers of the *Parangolés*, assuming modes of display that refuted the static role they perform in representation. Integrated into the logic of the *Parangolé*, they escaped the commemorative space of portraiture and also the communicative space of the news. Instead, Oiticica aspired to make them "suprasensorial," to reveal them and conceal them,[31] to ambivalently put them "out of play" and thus outside normative media consumption. Presented at a symposium in Brasília in December of 1967, partly as a consequence of the reception of *Tropicália* in the media and the association of its name with the emerging trend of Tropicalism in Brazilian culture, the "supra-sensorial" focused on the "life experience" embodied in the work, beyond the image, and thus outside bourgeois consumption. The objects, the images, the sounds of *Apocalipopótese* were to be liberated from normative constraints in order to unleash probabilities, furnishing the individual "with propositions which are open to his imaginative, interior exercise."[32]

A lengthy and revealing letter from Oiticica to Clark dated October 15, 1968, indicates that his earlier embrace of the outcast, developed in the context of the favela, had become by that time an ideological position against the increasingly brutal "terrorism of the right" (*terrorismo de direita*).[33] The latter, as the critic Roberto Schwartz observed in 1969, involved a series of dramatic side effects: "the massive return of everything that modernization had left behind; it was the revenge of the provinces, of small proprietors, of sexual and religious prudery, of small-time lawyers, etc."[34] Oiticica invoked in this letter Herbert Marcuse's *Eros and Civilization*, and mobilized terms familiar to an intercontinental generation (in Europe and the Americas) aspiring to revolt: freedom, marginality, alienated and non-alienated work, repression, censorship. That last, observed Oiticica, was being deployed, viciously, against the theatrical productions of José Celso Martinez Corrêa (to whom *Apocalipopótese* was dedicated), which Schwarz described in terms of insult, brutality, scandal, outrageous offence, and attack on the audience.[35] In the letter Oiticica credited Duarte with inventing the term *Apocalipopótese* as a new concept for a type of mediating object for participation.[36] Not

29. Hélio Oiticica, doc. 0365.59, p. 8, Archives Hélio Oiticica / Projeto Hélio Oiticica.

30. Anthropophagy, following the modernist poet Oswald de Andrade's formulation of that term in 1928, involves the ingestion of culturally diverse elements to deliver un-pure hybrids that defy stagnant identity.

31. Michael Asbury, "Flans, Urnas Quentes and the Radicalism of a Cordial Man," in *Antonio Manuel. I Want to Act Not Represent!* (New York: Americas Society, 2011), 37.

32. Hélio Oiticica, "Appearance of the Supra-Sensorial" (1967), in *Hélio Oiticica* (Rotterdam: Witte de With, 1992), 128.

33. Letter from Hélio Oiticica to Lygia Clark, October 15, 1968, in *Lygia Clark-Hélio Oiticica, Cartas 1964–1974,* ed. Luciano Figueiredo (Rio de Janeiro: Editora UFRJ, 1996), 49.

34. Roberto Schwarz, "Culture and Politics in Brazil, 1964–1969," in *Misplaced Ideas. Essays on Brazilian Culture* (London, New York: Verso, 1992), 136–37.

35. Ibid., 151.

36. For more on Duarte, see *Rogério Duarte: Marginalia 1,* eds. Manuel Raeder, Mariana Castillo Deball, Sophie von Olfers, and Rogério Duarte (Berlin: Bom Dia Boa Tarde Boa Noite Verlag, 2013).

political participation, as with some theater of the period related to the traditional left, but liberating participation—non-instrumental participation aimed at the forging of radical subjectivity outside norms and social constraints.

Praising Clark's "relational objects" developed in the mid-1960s, Oiticica declared, "But I really do not want the object, what a contradiction! I want the discovery in itself, as under the influence of pot: the discovery from inside, who cares about what, the pleasure of living, sweet or sour, maybe the essential object as a total home with special places to feel the life once lived. . . . That is what attracts me about the experiences: to live, to find."[37] Betraying the pervasive influence of phenomenology on a practice now impacted by the brutality of the military dictatorship, Oiticica compared the Third World to a child that sees everything for the first time. The latter was essential "for a discovery of 'meaning,' to feel and to believe in the existence of the senses: to look for pleasure in the immediacy of the moment."[38] Sequences of children manipulating planes of color, stacking blocks, and moving Roberto Linares's flaccid sculptures in the film documenting the event attest to the persistence of this link between childhood and ludic engagement and creativity. The latter was associated too with popular culture, its rituals and celebrations, "the sensorial, the playful, the environmental," as the narrator of the film indicates.

Action, experience, process, participation—these were the terms of an artistic practice that did away with the conventions of the artwork and the traditional exhibition format as ends in themselves. Instead, Oiticica reconfigured forms and structures to be the vehicles of a participatory endeavor that rejected representation and sought to foreground the production of a non-normative subjectivity. In the context of Brazil in the late 1960s, collective participation and radical subjectivity were projects fraught with perils, a fact amplified by Oiticica's emphasis on precariousness and the insistent abandonment of well-defined boundaries and categories. Alarmed by the furious intensity of young audiences' reactions to Caetano Veloso's appearances, Oiticica doubted and pondered, in another letter to Clark, the unpredictability of this mediating participatory role of the artist, "as if that un-repressive moment would be an opportunity for destruction, which in fact it always is, in some way or another."[39] Accordingly, the film *Apocalipopótese* prominently features children and others destroying Antonio Manuel's *Urnas Quentes* while the voice-over encourages violence, the revelation of misery, at the same time that it invokes an apocalyptic landscape in which popular craft has been replaced by automation and the mass media has transformed our sense of reality.

Reimagining the very notion of the artwork and (in tandem) the exhibition beyond the constraints of the museological institution was an imperative in the face of the dissolution of boundaries that the nonobject had unleashed and the political repression that ensued. The artistic program that had begun with Oiticica's Neo-Concrete experiments found a point of inflection in the *Parangolé* and its deployment in *Apocalipopótese*. The phenomenological intersected the political, and formal experimentation constituted both an attempt to rethink what could possibly become of an artwork conceived as a vehicle for life experience and a collective gesture of maximum freedom in the face of repression. In this sense, *Apocalipopótese* can be considered the most ambitious incarnation of the artist's political program, the most important manifestation of his desire to intervene in the public sphere by aspiring to create a community that would respond to and amplify the horizon of emancipation that his work implied. Fusing work and exhibition, *Apocalipopótese* instituted a space for play at the margins of the museum. Reconfiguring modes of display and circulation through the affective circuits of a non-representational, nonobjectual, environmental manifestation, Oiticica conceived freedom as a collective gesture of possibility.

37. Letter from Hélio Oiticica to Lygia Clark, October 15, 1968, in *Lygia Clark-Hélio Oiticica, Cartas 1964–1974*, 53.

38. Ibid. Morais, writing on the larger event of public interventions before its inauguration, and echoing ideas proposed by Johan Huizinga in *Homo Ludens* (1938), celebrated play, ritual, and leisure as privileged fields of human activity in the face of automated labor. Federico Morais, "Arte na rua: jôgo, rito e participação," *Diario de Noticias* (Rio de Janeiro), July 4, 1968.

39. Letter from Hélio Oiticica to Lygia Clark, November 8, 1968, in *Lygia Clark-Hélio Oiticica, Cartas 1964–1974*, 72.

Elena Filipovic

Mark Leckey,
UniAddDumThs (2014–15)

For one to whom the real world becomes real images, mere images are transformed into real beings—tangible figments which are the efficient motor of trance-like behavior.
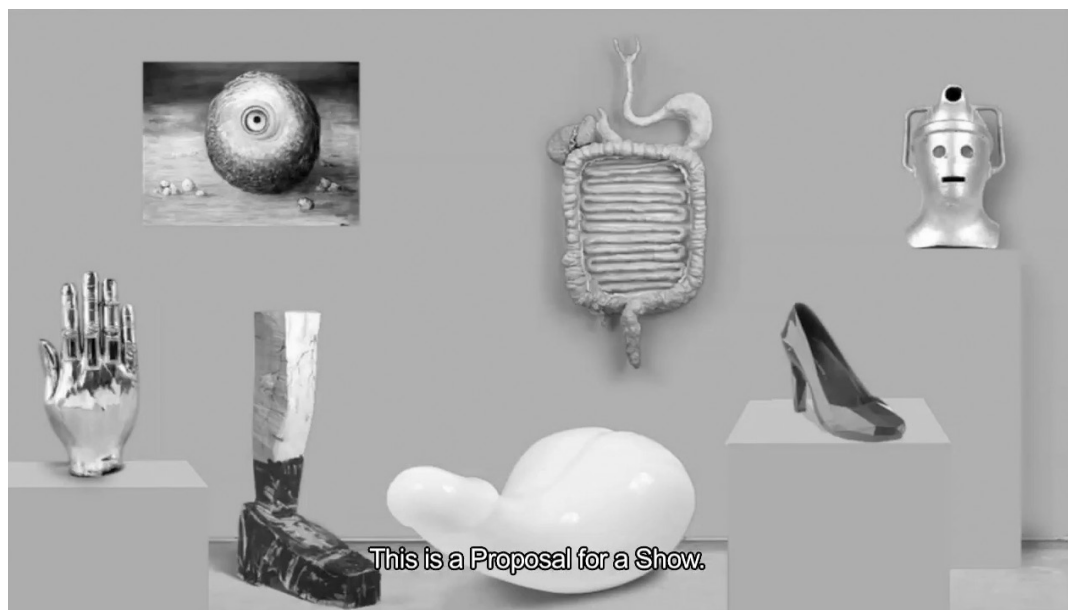—Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle* (1967)

Mark Leckey, *Prp4AShw* (still, 2010–13)

1. The video reminds us of Leckey's fascination with making teasers, trailers, posters, and various by-products that come in advance of (or sometimes in place of) the actual film or project he hopes to make. All are also indelibly connected to his fascination with the machinations of desire created by the circulation and distribution of publicity, announcements, and indeed everything but the thing itself.

2. *The Universal Addressability of Dumb Things* was curated by Mark Leckey and organized by Roger Malbert and Chelsea Pettitt as a Hayward Touring exhibition. It traveled in 2013 to the Bluecoat, Liverpool; Nottingham Contemporary; and De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill-on-sea, England.

3. André Malraux's notion of a *musée imaginaire,* or "museum without walls" (as his American translator put it), seems particularly apt in relation to Leckey's project. Malraux posited that with the advent of new technologies, art reproductions could form a sort of super museum-in-a-book. It is perhaps noteworthy in this context that *Le Musée imaginaire* was developed between 1936 and 1947, just after Walter Benjamin wrote "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technical Reproducibility" and just as Duchamp was starting his own portable museum of reproductions, the *Boîte-en-valise* (1935–41), both of which strongly resonate with Leckey's project.

"This is a proposal for a show. That will bring about the transition of these mockups, here, into real-world things," Mark Leckey's voice says in the video *Prp4AShw* (2010–13), his onscreen finger pointing to digital collages of different parts of a yet-to-be made-exhibition.[1] That "show" would eventually become *The Universal Addressability of Dumb Things*. Three years in the making, it began as a commission from Hayward Touring for Leckey to curate an exhibition that would travel to various venues around England; Richard Wentworth and Tacita Dean were notable earlier participants.[2] His show would be based, Leckey decided, on the contents of his hard drive, which was full of folders overflowing with images that he had collected over years of Internet searches—a digital rival of what, in the material world, hoarders might have in their attics. Each of those many accretions of pixels and megabytes, gathered into folders named "man," "machine," and "animal," corresponded to some real thing in the world. The task of the exhibition organizers working with Leckey was to locate, borrow, or acquire those objects, whatever and wherever they were.

If the artist's computer desktop had long been a kind of "museum without walls," the contents of its folders now took up actual real estate in a series of institutional galleries.[3] For the duration of the exhibition's tour, the virtual became *actual*, presenting itself in the flesh, as it were. And it was a motley pantheon indeed, including some perfectly ordinary and some unbelievably extraordinary things, among

them a mandrake root miraculously bearing a human visage; an Egyptian mummified cat; the first-ever commercially produced electro-mechanical drum machine; a uterus-shaped vase; a thirteenth-century silver reliquary in the shape of a hand; a can of cat food; the i-limb ultra, the most technologically advanced prosthetic hand on the market; a hand-drawn Chippewa political document; a giant, rocking phallus; and a "Squeeze/Hug" machine for hypersensitive people who can't handle human contact. These things and many, many more rubbed shoulders with ancient, modern, and contemporary artworks by William Blake, Louise Bourgeois, Allen Jones, Toyen, Ed Atkins, and Elad Lassry, among others. Archaic exotica, visionary machines, and actual artworks from numerous institutions, estates, and artists around the world convened in idiosyncratic juxtapositions against colorful Leckey-designed backdrops, lending the delirious *Wunderkammer* an almost Surrealistic feel.

Leckey doesn't like the word "curator." At least not as something to call himself. "This isn't curating, this is aggregating," he declared, almost defiantly, in the catalogue that accompanied the exhibition.[4] To his mind, curated shows are often about "taste," and he never wanted to make a show representing his good (or bad) taste.[5] Instead, *The Universal Addressability of Dumb Things* was driven by the sort of "aggregating" that underlies the whole of the artist's practice, as evidenced in his earliest works, for instance the little-known and rarely screened *Are You Waiting*, the 1996 predecessor to his breakout *Fiorucci Made Me Hardcore* (1999); his meticulously researched lecture performances; or his still-in-progress autobiographical video, *On Pleasure Bent*. For each of these projects, Leckey avidly collected, sampled, and rejigged existing images. Some of his earliest works involved a laborious process of requesting obscure dancehall footage from various sources, from which he culled hallucinatory sequences of throbbing, ecstatic, dancing youth. And later there were the extensive Internet searches that had him sifting though the vast metacode and dematerialized matter of cyberspace that resulted in his 2008–9 lecture *In the Long Tail*.

The Universal Addressability of Dumb Things was the product of a similar process. But more than a testament to the wanderlust of this artist's mind and his proclivities for association, the exhibition was a highly curated enterprise (whether Leckey will admit it or not). As such, it was, as the critic Erik Davis notes, "a specifically *conceptual* assemblage, an analytical zeitgeist probe."[6] In the catalogue, Leckey traced the idea for the show to the process that led to *In the Long Tail. The Universal Addressability of Dumb Things* built a premise, much as that lecture did, that was a question as much as an exploration of a paradox: in an increasingly digitalized world, objects come alive (telephones speak and even have names like Siri; refrigerators remember what you like and need to eat; lights turn on as you approach, et cetera), and yet, for all of this supposed "progress," we seem to be moving ever closer to a kind of premodern, ancestral thinking in which we believe in the almost magical, animistic consciousness of inanimate things. Leckey calls this "techno-animism."[7] He admits, "I'm interested in what happens to objects. As an artist you make things and they go into a gallery and they just sit there, mute. What happens to objects when they begin to be able to respond?"[8] Leckey's own response was an exhibition in which "dumb things come to life, communicating with us and with each other . . . where everything feels alive or at least quasi-alive."[9]

It is no coincidence, perhaps, that throughout the process of thinking about *The Universal Addressability of Dumb Things*, Leckey looked closely at Surrealist display models. Indeed, one can't help seeing parallels between the "voluptuous irrationalism" (Leckey's words) of *The Universal Addressability of Dumb Things* and André Breton's display of his own extremely varied collection at his 42 rue Fontaine

4.   Mark Leckey, "Introduction," in *The Universal Addressability of Dumb Things* (London: Hayward Publishing, 2013), 5.

5.   Mark Leckey in discussion with Daniel Williams, *Seven on Seven* lecture series, Barbican, London, October 27, 2013, http://vimeo.com/80478923.

6.   Erik Davis, "The Thing Is Alive," in *The Universal Addressability of Dumb Things*, 89.

7.   Cited from *Proposal for a Show* (2010), the first of two videos that the artist made to pitch the then-forthcoming exhibition to potential host institutions: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c8QWrLt2ePI.

8.   Mark Leckey in discussion with Daniel Williams, *Seven on Seven* lecture series.

9.   Cited from *Proposal for a Show* (2010). Leckey's history of attempting to coax responses out of the inanimate is long. Consider, for instance, his various *BigBoxStatueActions* (2003–12), arrangements of massive modernist sculptures across from his *SoundSystems* so that the two could "speak" with each other.

Installation view of *The Universal Addressability of Dumb Things*, "Animal" section, Hayward Touring exhibition at Nottingham Contemporary, England, 2013

Installation view of *The Universal Addressability of Dumb Things*, "Monster" section, Hayward Touring exhibition at De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill-on-Sea, England, 2013

Installation view of *The Universal Addressability of Dumb Things*, "Man" section, Hayward Touring exhibition at the Bluecoat, Liverpool, England, 2013

Installation view of *Exposition surréaliste d'objets*, Galerie Charles Ratton, Paris, 1936

apartment. Similarly, the 1936 *Exposition surréaliste d'objets*—a heterogeneous mix of Surrealist constructions, lava formations, mathematical models, African artifacts, found trinkets, and Duchampian readymades—seems to anticipate Leckey's approach. If those displays collapsed the usual hierarchies between objects, eschewing the scientific and classificatory impulses of the Enlightenment museum, so too does Leckey's version and, arguably, so too does the vast global search engine that is the Internet. It makes perfect sense, then, that according to Leckey, the Internet is in fact "a realization of Breton's notion of 'phantom objects,' wherein the hybrid artifacts it shows us are simultaneously imaginary and concrete."[10]

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The spectacular rise of the Internet and contemporary technological advances, from bionics to cybernetics, has created a world that is changing rapidly regarding new materials, and also generating an entirely new sense of materialism. All of this constitutes the backdrop to Leckey's post-digital, late-capitalist exhibition. Call it a bachelor-machine-as-exhibition.[11] Things (real and their avatars) and a longing to touch and possess them—indeed, to find some sort of intimacy with them (as the artist himself would be the first to tell you)—are the gas that fuels this machine. So, too, is a certain promiscuous relationship to originality and an endless desire, as it were, to reproduce. And indeed, from *The Universal Addressability of Dumb Things* emerged the actual subject of this essay: the ambiguous, unpronounceable thing that is *UniAddDumThs* (2014–15). Somewhere between an artist-curated exhibition and an eerie, substitute, life-size copy of an artist-curated exhibition, not to mention paradoxically an artwork in itself, *UniAddDumThs* is ontologically unstable to the extreme. Titled to acknowledge both its filiation with *The Universal Addressability of Dumb Things* and the digital world that made it possible ("UniAddDumThs" reads as a sort of file-name-extension version of the original title, like "jpeg" or "mp3," or even the abbreviated speech of the digital world, with its LOLs and WTFs), it even more profoundly and certainly more troublingly tackles the questions of the real and its simulacrum at the heart of the "original" from which it sprang.

But where exactly is "the real" located for Leckey? And what is the difference between it and its ersatz simulation? Henry James, another Brit from another time, once wrote a short story titled "The Real Thing" about an impeccably mannered aristocratic couple, the Monarchs, who became suddenly destitute and proposed themselves—faces imprinted with the experience of luxury and regal demeanors gained from years of being served—as artists' models for hire.[12] The lady and her husband, the artist at first supposed, were ideal subjects: actual exemplars of the very class he was trying to represent. He soon discovered, however, that the "real thing" didn't make for the most convincing portrait, whereas his usual models, a Cockney servant girl and an Italian immigrant ice-cream vendor, were far better suited to the mimetic representation of nobility. It was a perfect parable for the 19th century: a response to a culture concerned as much with social status as with artifice, concluding that a copy might offer a more convincing experience of "the real" than the actual, authentic real.

A century and a half later, Leckey could be said to be advancing his own Jamesian inquiry into the contemporary real, questioning how its replication (whether actual or virtual, material or immaterial) might affect us more than any "original" could. Hardly a review of his exhibitions or an essay about his practice fails to mention how central to his work are the brands and the stuff of everyday life, as well as the affective associations they provoke. Fiorucci, Samsung, Jeff Koons, Henry Moore,

10. Conversation with the author, July 19, 2014. Breton's notion of "phantom objects" is discussed in his "Discourse on the Paucity of Reality," a source text that Leckey cites in his introduction in *The Universal Addressability of Dumb Things*, 5.

11. Leckey's references to Duchamp over the years have been frequent, including repeated evocations of "bachelor machines" in his lecture performances; the cameo appearance of the *Chocolate Grinder*, an element in the "bachelor's domain" of *The Large Glass*, in the animation *Gorgeousness & Gorgeosity* (2005); the use of a text by Duchamp biographer Calvin Tomkins about *The Large Glass* in the voice-over of his *GreenScreenRefrigeratorAction* (2010–11); and the removal of Leckey's apartment door and its presentation as an artwork titled *7 Windmill Street* (1997–2010), echoing Duchamp's *11 rue Larry* (1927/1963). But perhaps the most explicit reference has been Leckey's proposition (in the 2010 video *Proposal for a Show*) that *The Universal Addressability of Dumb Things* should feature a number of works that either depict *The Large Glass* or depict Duchamp making it. The critic John Cussans perhaps captured it best when he said, "Mark's Ur-machine, the primary pleasure model, as it were, seems to be neither Fiorucci nor Felix, but Duchamp's *Large Glass*. Translucent diagram of impersonal desire, archetypal bachelor machine and future-art engine, it was perhaps the first organ-object and art-thing to strike the artist's fancy in a destiny-shaping way: the primary locus of a paradoxically hyper-personal yet social-machinic rhetoric of the hope for art." John Cussans, "Mark Leckey, Pleasure Model (After Pietz)," in *Mark Leckey: On Pleasure Bent*, 145.

12. "The Real Thing" was first syndicated in 1892 by S. S. McClure in multiple American newspapers and then collected in *The Real Thing and Other Stories* (New York: Macmillan, 1893).

and Felix the Cat are all recognizable "brands"—whether referring to industrially fabricated jeans or refrigerators, "signature" sculptures or a cartoon—and, within Leckey's thinking, stand-ins for their wider cultural significance and embodiments of that ineffable thing called desire. By observing, consuming, and even realizing himself in those brands (remember that it was the Fiorucci clothing brand that made Leckey "hardcore"), the artist recognizes the pull they exert on us. He understands that the real is located as much in the physical nature of objects as in what we project onto them—the fantasies we associate with them, the covetousness they incite, the memories we might attach to them—any of which may or may not have a bearing on the way things "really" are, or ever were.

But if "the real thing" stands at least partly for something authentic and true, it should be said that Leckey has never shied away from its opposite: inauthenticity, copies, avatars, the fungible (a term he particularly likes), simulacra, counterfeits. The real and its simulation tangle doggedly, repeatedly, in Leckey's work. His perfectly shiny copy of Koons's *Rabbit* (itself a copy of an infinitely reproducible balloon object) is set in the meticulously faked backdrop of Leckey's 7 Windmill Street apartment for *Made in 'Eaven* (2004). A simulation of the same apartment, and its progressive undoing, appears in *Shades of Destructors* (2005). The transvestite annarose's attributes of an excessive and contrived femininity appear in various pieces, including *me and annarose* (2008). The imperceptible movements between an actual and a CGI drum animate the film *Pearl Vision* (2012). The list could go on.

Maybe it started with Leckey being a "casual" as a teen. To be a casual in the 1980s was to self-consciously pose as something you weren't: a moneyed youth, from a "good" family, with a golf or polo club to go to. Leckey and other casuals, mostly hooligans and street kids, were playing at having money through wearing the signs of it, for instance the designer leisurewear of Ellesse and Lacoste. The police were sometimes fooled (society, too), and this subversion of high and low appealed to the young Leckey. This autobiographical detail comes up again and again in interviews or essays about him, slipped in like a trivial but amusing fact. It is often associated with the artist's abiding interest in the popular—from the pastimes of ravers and the sartorial taste of youth culture to the elaborate homemade sound systems used in street parties—as the foundation of his work, as opposed to high-art forms or theory-backed ideas. And it surely *is* evidence of that. But I cannot help also reading into this "casual" anecdote that all along Leckey has been interested in the way culture relates to both the real *and* its imitation, and that simulation sits at the core of how he once practiced life and now practices art.

The artist has built an oeuvre in which his longing to possess things (or even somehow *consume* them, bodily, as the nature of his own language suggests: he often speaks of "assimilating" and "incorporating")[13] often leads him to *reproduce* them. This is the explicit motivation for making films that centrally feature, for instance, a simulation of Koons's *Rabbit* or the equally covetable drum in *Pearl Vision*. In the latter film, Leckey progressively undresses in front of the object of his desire. The camera pans as the artist's bare crotch and the drum (moving seamlessly from real to CGI copy) meld evocatively, alluding to an almost sexual collusion. I cannot help thinking of the claim made in relation to Francis Picabia (and one could say the same of Picabia's close friend Marcel Duchamp) that "reproduction . . . never remained simply a mechanical process; it was conceived, instead, as both machinic *and* bodily, both technical and corporeal, with reproduction understood in its full sexual sense, marching indeed to the drum beat of desire and the bodily drives."[14] This double sense of "reproduction" is equally applicable to Leckey.

13. It is noteworthy that Leckey is clear about not wanting to "appropriate these things" but instead wants to "assimilate them, join them somehow." Conversation with the author on July 20, 2014. A reading of the complex subjectivity in Leckey's work is explored in Patrizia Dander's text "The Desire for Things," in *Mark Leckey: On Pleasure Bent*, 72–79.
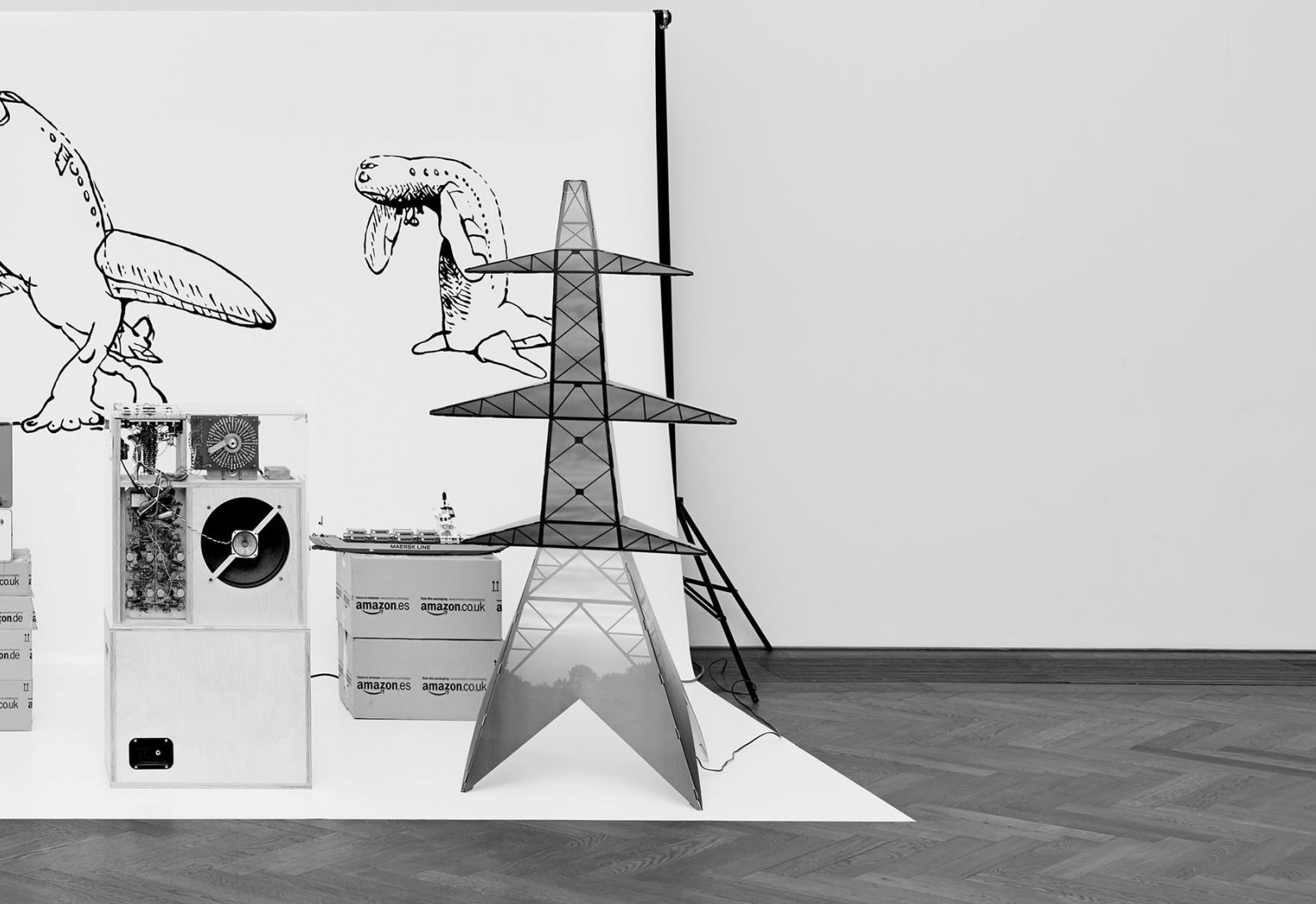
14. George Baker, *The Artwork Caught by the Tail* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007), 69.

Installation views of *UniAddDumThs* (2014–15, showing "Man" section above and "Animal" section below), Kunsthalle Basel, 2015

Installation view of *UniAddDumThs* (2014–15, showing "Machine" section), Kunsthalle Basel, 2015

Maybe the relationship between a seemingly libidinal yearning to gain proximity to the real and the impulse to reproduce the real is not as peculiar as it may sound. And perhaps this relationship is only magnified in our contemporary condition, where the borders between the real and its virtual manifestation are ever more porous. The possibility of endlessly replicating objects as digital information brings into the realm of attainability access to, and seeming possession of, previously unattainable things. Leckey seems to be both subject to this condition and astutely aware of its implications: "You are sitting at your desktop or laptop and you have an array of tools at hand: hardware and software, camera, scanner, printer, Final Cut . . . as well as access to a huge archive of material through Google, Getty Images, etc. . . . They augment the body, extend it outwards: my voluptuous body (sitting at the desk) with all its carnal need for sensual knowledge. And it's sitting there making and watching this stuff, producing and consuming it: *prosuming*."[15]

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Having thrown open the floodgates of his hard drive and watched as digital bits and bytes summoned forth actual atoms and matter, materializing in a slew of undeniably real things, Leckey welcomed, organized, and installed them again and again during the exhibition tour of *The Universal Addressability of Dumb Things*. Yet I can't help suspecting that he was most fulfilled when the show was still yet to be made, when he was busy collecting all those jpegs and mpegs that constituted the potential contents of the show. Or maybe he was most in his element when he mocked them up and announced, repeatedly, almost chorus-like, in a YouTube video that "This Is a Proposal for a Show" while the actual artifacts were not yet physically present before him. After having curated his strange assemblage of objects, Leckey admitted that he was slightly disillusioned. However physical, however supposedly imbued with the sensuous presence of the "real," the artifacts in the show seemed to him not any more evocative than the digital images. The originals felt distant.

It could be that the original objects' pesky *aura* was at fault. Whereas the various artifacts did not enchant Leckey with the nebulous, charismatic allure that Walter Benjamin attached to the term (or, rather, they didn't enchant any more than their mere digital images did), the artist's feeling of disappointed estrangement from the originals suggests that at least one of the key characterizations of aura as "the unique apparition of distance, no matter how near" might have been all too operative.[16] For Benjamin, writing in the late 1930s in the midst of paradigmatic technological shifts, advances in reproductive technologies were changing the relationship between original and copy, causing the demise of aura, with its distancing effect. Leckey, on the other hand, seemed to want to rid himself of this notion of aura altogether and to generate a different kind of aura in its stead. While Benjamin declared that awe arises through distance, Leckey was apparently after awe by way of proximity. After all, he yearned to touch the original objects, to know them in an intimate way, neither of which was possible either literally (lending museum rules being what they are) or figuratively. The only way to achieve this desired proximity, he reasoned, was to make copies. Consequently, already during the run of *The Universal Addressability of Dumb Things*, he began the task of recording the dimensional contours of many of the objects with a 3D scanner, made possible through the recent proliferation of that technology.[17]

When asked to think about including (which is to say, redoing) *The Universal Addressability of Dumb Things* as part of a large-scale survey exhibition of his work, Leckey provocatively proposed instead to construct physical copies, or "dupes," as he likes to say, of many of its artifacts based on the 3D scans or other high-resolution

15. Kari Rittenbach, "Chrome & Flesh: An Interview with Mark Leckey," *Rhizome,* December 17, 2012, http://rhizome.org/editorial/2012/dec/17/mark-leckey/.

16. See Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility and Other Writings on Media*, eds. Michael Jennings, Thomas Y. Levin, and Brigid Doherty (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008).

17. Having gone from his desktop digital images to real things and then back to the digital, Leckey's process unwittingly enacts media theorist Robin Sloane's idea of the "flip-flop," a process of "pushing a work of art or craft from the physical world to the digital world and back again—maybe more than once." See Mark Leckey in discussion with Daniel Williams, *Seven on Seven* lecture series.

images that he had already made.[18] This, he figured, would allow him to access and assimilate the contents of *The Universal Addressability of Dumb Things* in a way that he never could with the real stuff. *UniAddDumThs* resulted, an exhibition comprised of various 3D printed copies, 2D cardboard standees, photographic reproductions, and other forms of replicas of a selection of the artifacts once shown in *The Universal Addressability of Dumb Things*.[19] Following the logic of the project, if an object that had been included in *The Universal Addressability of Dumb Things* was not unique to begin with (as was the case with the commercially available Wurlitzer drum machine or United Nude shoe), then its "original" or another purchased version of the same could be presented among the various other copied things in *UniAddDumThs*. The wondrous and banal, ancient and hypermodern, high and low that characterized *The Universal Addressability of Dumb Things* were thus brought together again in a new ersatz form.

Take the "animal" section as an example. It includes Leckey's favorite mascot of the televisual, the cartoon character Felix the Cat, represented by a giant Chinese-made inflatable version of the feline (a copy of the copy that was in the

Installation view of *UniAddDumThs* (2014–15, showing detail of "Animal" section), Kunsthalle Basel, 2015

18.   As the curator of Leckey's first large-scale survey exhibition, *Lending Enchantment to Vulgar Materials*, my proposition to the artist to include *The Universal Addressability of Dumb Things* in the show was admittedly unusual. Artists' solo exhibitions (and certainly those of artists still alive) are most often comprised of art that artists have "authored" but not their curatorial work, despite the fact that the latter might provide privileged access to the artist's thinking and practice.

19.   The first iteration of *UniAddDumbThs* opened as part of *Lending Enchantment to Vulgar Materials*, organized by WIELS, Brussels, 2014. *UniAddDumbThs*, alone, was presented at Kunsthalle Basel in 2015. Many of the copies for *UniAddDumbThs* were produced live, with working 3D printers on display, as part of the performative-production-as-exhibition project *Mark Leckey: A Month of Making* at Gavin Brown's enterprise, New York, in 2013.

original show); a homemade fake of an Egyptian mummified cat; an eBay-purchased "Woofer," a speaker in the form of a dog's torso; and a painting of various beastly creatures in the forest by the Renaissance master Piero di Cosimo, represented through a cheap reproduction on a vinyl backdrop (in which even the visible Kodak color scale testifies to it being a mediated version of itself). The transmutation of the exhibition from digital files (on the artist's hard drive) to real (in *The Universal Addressability of Dumb Things*) and then from that "real" to its simulacrum (*UniAddDumThs*) follows the appeal made by the Hungarian artist Karoly Tamkó Sirató, author of the "Dimensionist Manifesto" of 1936 (which Leckey cites in *In the Long Tail*), for sculpture to be "vaporized" such that "rigid matter is abolished and replaced by gauzefied materials." Thus even the scenography of the exhibition became, progressively, as *UniAddDumThs* toured, a form of "vaporized" copy: whereas *The Universal Addressability of Dumb Things* involved custom-built wooden display structures corresponding to each of Leckey's main subject categories ("man," "machine," and "animal" with a subsection "monster"), in *UniAddDumThs* these became instead printed

vinyl backdrops suspended from metal rods, with floating inflatable lighting over-head—a softer, more seemingly airy and ad hoc version. Almost "gauzified" was the effect Leckey said he was going for .

With *UniAddDumThs*, Leckey reverted the "real" borrowed artworks of *The Universal Addressability of Dumb Things* back to their status as digital information (from whence they started out on his computer desktop) to create a new exhibition of ontologically liminal stuff. The contents were both avatars of the digital repro-duction technologies that brought them into being and indexical traces of the actual real-world things that they were meant to reference and re-present. Reproducing the original objects convincingly, or faithfully, was not the point. As Leckey would tell you, "Mimicry is about a conviction of surface over true essence."[20] It is this "true es-sence" that he was prepared to dispense with, all the while paradoxically seeking, in that "conviction of surface," a true communion with both the originals on which the copies were based and the immaterial digital presence they occupied in their trans-lation between worlds.

Installation view of *UniAddDumThs* (2014–15, showing detail of "Man" section), Kunsthalle Basel, 2015

Hollow or flat, oddly textured, and often looking like the cheap substitutes they are, Leckey likes that his "dupes" appeared weirdly lifeless as they sit there, be-longing as much, if not more, to the digital as the material world. This might also ex-plain the hybrid objects he includes in *UniAddDumThs*: 3D prints of any two original objects "mashed up," as the terminology goes, to become one new monstrous artifact. In other words, the artist is at no pains to hide his process or feign that the things are the authentic real. Their status as mere copies was made yet more evident given that alongside them, Leckey included (in the first iteration of *UniAddDumThs*) a single "original" borrowed object: a shimmering, obdurate, and undeniably precious hand-shaped 13th-century silver reliquary. The hand piece stood as the only truly auratic thing in Leckey's artwork-as-ersatz-exhibition. It is was much an ur-representation of the real (the relic containing a bit of actual saintly bone fragment) as a metaphor for the digital (literally, the digits of the hand) as a symbol of the longing to touch things that undergirded the project from the start. The real, the digital, and desire lie at the very center of nearly all of Leckey's work.

20. Conversation with the author, July 20, 2014.

If *The Universal Addressability of Dumb Things* was an exhibition curated by Leckey, its copy, *UniAddDumThs*, is also one, while at the same time being something like a total artwork authored by Leckey, deliberating and revealing the potentially slippery status of the artist-curated exhibition. A 21st-century, cyber-boosted redux of the ideas so central to Duchamp's portable museum of copies of his own works in the *Boîte-en-valise* (itself a kind of artist-curated exhibition), *UniAddDumThs* raises new questions for our time about aura, authenticity, originality, and authorship.[21] And if Leckey's project inevitably inscribes itself in a lineage of inquiry that spans several centuries (running from James to Malraux, Benjamin, and Duchamp to Leckey), *UniAddDumThs* invariably also offers its own curious take on what the real and its replication can mean to us in a post-digital age.

Not more than a decade before James wrote "The Real Thing," Gustave Flaubert had been writing his own satire, *Bouvard and Pécuchet* (published posthumously in 1881). In it, two hapless copy clerks abandon their professions, buy a farm, and embark on various enterprises so as to be more in touch with the "real world," only to find reality utterly incommensurate with the various books and instruction manuals they read about it. After a series of comical failures, they give up and return to their previous line of work, fastidiously copying every book they can get their hands on (deeming them finally more real than the world around them). Speaking of the duo, Michel Foucault posited that "they will occupy themselves by copying books, copying their own books, copying every book, and unquestionably they will copy *Bouvard and Pécuchet*. Because to copy is *to do* nothing; it is *to be* the books being copied."[22] So it is with Leckey.

Instead of books, everything available on the Internet—which is to say, almost anything ever made or thought—was fodder for *The Universal Addressability of Dumb Things*, which in turn became fodder for reproduction in and as *UniAddDumThs*. The latter dispenses with the impulse to originate and to author—the impulse *to do*—and instead is the product of a yearning for an intimacy with, *to be*, even, the artifacts collected in the original exhibition. And even if the production of the replica components still might not have led to the true bodily union to which Leckey aspired, we cannot forget that bachelor machines notoriously fail in their quest for consummation. Thus it hardly matters one way or another, because in the process their mechanisms churn, keeping alive the endless pursuit of reproduction and the circulation of desire.

21. A fascination with reproduction lay at the center of Duchamp's entire oeuvre, arguably serving as both the central motor and main output of *his* promiscuous machine, perhaps nowhere more explicitly visible than in the *Boîte-en-valise*. For more on that, see my book *The Apparently Marginal Activities of Marcel Duchamp* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, forthcoming). Problematizing exactly those notions of authenticity, aura, originality, and authorship of the artwork that bedeviled art and its history well into modernity, Duchamp's *Boîte-en-valise* finds an interesting contemporary pendant in Leckey's version of the artwork-as-ersatz-exhibition.

22. Michel Foucault, "Fantasia of the Library" (1964), in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice, Selected Essays and Interviews,* ed. Donald F. Bouchard, trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977), 109.

THE ARTIST AS CURATOR
Issue #8

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This is issue #8 of a serial publication that examines a profoundly influential but still under-studied phenomenon, a history that has yet to be written: the fundamental role artists have played as curators. Taking that ontologically ambiguous thing we call "the exhibition" as a critical medium, artists have often in the process radically rethought the conventional form of the exhibition as such. This project is about precisely those exhibitions. Each edition of *Mousse* over two years and ten issues will contain a new installment closely examining one historic and one more recent seminal artist-curated exhibition, spanning a period from the postwar to the present.

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