

# Hélio Oiticica

## *Tropicália, 1967*

Countries of the South emerged in a number of different ways in the 1960s. Brazil, under military dictatorship since the coup in 1964, witnessed major social and student movements attacking new kinds of economic and cultural colonization and supporting a homegrown popular culture, with roots in that specific tropical territory, as opposed to connections with the interests of the countries of the North.



Latin American art at the time was dominated by the neo-concrete, whose coldness and constructivist style seemed to exist in a bubble of unreality within the social agitation gripping the continent. Against this background, *Tropicália* (1967) by Hélio Oiticica (1937-1980) exemplified the attempts to bring a new Latin America to the fore through boundless vitality, appeals to all the senses and attempts to get the spectator actively involved. Defying any museum space that contains it, the mazelike environment is made up of two *Penetrables* (PN2, *Pureza è um mito*, and PN3, *Imagético*) along with plants, sand, wild birds, object-poems, layers of *Parangolé* and a TV set. This environmental installation resulted from a long process of reflection on the part of the artist, bringing together not only his thoughts about the need for an experimental process to get beyond the limits of a painting, but also his exploration and experience of the reality of the *favelas* that had come about through mass urban growth.

The "anthropophagic" thought process, the model for cultural renovation in Latin America through vindication of the *mestizaje*, forms the basis of *Tropicália*, in which symbols of the plural Brazilian culture engulf the spectators, turning them into an integral part of the work. The vital experience and corporeal interaction make the work an environment, an inhabitable neighborhood where new relationships are possible, as opposed to the *favela*, which imposes segregation.

The title of the piece inspired musicians like Gilberto Gil and Caetano Veloso to begin the tropicalist movement, a renewal of Brazilian music through the fusion of elements of *bossa nova*, *fado*, rock & roll and psychedelia.

### New acquisitions

Hélio Oiticica. *Tropicália*, 1967

### Bibliography

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### Links

Projecto Hélio Oiticica:  
<http://www.heliooitica.org.br>

Programa Hélio Oiticica:  
[http://www.itaucultural.org.br/aplicexternas/enciclopedia/ho/home/p\\_home.cfm](http://www.itaucultural.org.br/aplicexternas/enciclopedia/ho/home/p_home.cfm)

