

**The endless breath**  
**Politics of being in the work of Anna Maria Maiolino**

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AJJJJJJJJJ  
HAAAAAAAAAA  
in  
out  
alive  
AJJJJJJJJ  
HAAAAAAAAAA  
air  
I inhale  
life-body  
I exhale  
I pass through the window of the world  
AJJJJJJJJ  
HAAAAAAAAAA  
I inhale  
I exhale  
rhythm  
vital breath  
AJJJJJJJJ  
I inhale  
  
darkness ensues  
silence

Anna Maria Maiolino, Rio de Janeiro, 1971

1. Grunts

On 19 February 2018, Anna Maria Maiolino reflected on the recurrent intensities and processes in her life and works in front of an audience of more than 300 people, mostly under 30-year-olds.<sup>1</sup> “My work makes spirals around some constant concerns: everyday life, subjectivity, the feminine, the political, the ethical,” she said while presenting signs of these spirals, manifested most explicitly through the alternance between different media and procedures employed over the course of her career. The finale of this lecture, which had alternated between reading and improvisation, involved the presentation of some videos made in recent years.

One of them, *Um dia* [One Day], drew the evening to a close like a twist in the Möbius loop of the temporalities of Maiolino’s work.<sup>2</sup> This Super-8 video was filmed in 1976, digitalized in 2000 and only sounded and assembled in 2014. The images were primarily captured at the Quinta do Boa Vista, in Rio de Janeiro’s Zona Norte. We see the statue of Pedro II installed in front of the National Museum, which decades later would blaze in the tragic fire of 2 September 2018. Then, the giant image of Christ the Redeemer, looming upside-down against the backdrop of an aerial view of the unmistakable Guanabara Bay, which according to Lévy-Strauss resembled a toothless mouth.<sup>3</sup> The main part of the video then goes on to show an exercise routine of young soldiers, who represented the military wing of the dictatorial regime (1964-1985)<sup>4</sup> and who, since a federal decree passed in February 2018, have once again been an everyday presence on the streets of Rio de Janeiro. Military parades feature, not without a certain degree of irony, intertwined with the graceful movement of the gorilla from the Quinta zoo. The sounds added to the montage consist of whistles, tweets, grunts and chirps, which begin by inferring some unrestrained energy subverting the harsh air of the monuments

portrayed in the initial frames of the film and end by reiterating the parallelism of the soldiers' pathetic mechanism vis-à-vis the charismatic exhibitionism of the caged ape.

Although the audio-visual assemblage of the work may be defined as a simple essay on ordinary and political matters, there is something in the temporality of its creation that hinders its definitive comprehension. Firstly, what stopped Maiolino from publishing it as soon as she had completed the filming, in the heat of the moment? Moreover, why now, in 2014, has the work emerged and found its definitive form?

The second question stems from the intuition that structures Maiolino's relationship with her time. In 2014 she was witnessing signs of the fragile social order in Brazil and its immature democratic institutions crumbling. Anyone who was following the news at the time saw how street protests took hold of the country in June 2013, how several agents gambled on the local and global economic crisis and the deep contradictions to which progressive sectors of Brazil delved to stir a state of exception atmosphere, the unforeseeable consequences of which have been proliferating ever since, to an increasingly abrupt and traumatic extent. The fire at the National Museum of the Quinta da Boa Vista, the federal intervention with military presence in Rio de Janeiro, the arrest of the former president Lula, the public execution of Marielle Franco and the country's shift to the extreme right are the most comprehensive allegories for this process, which was in some form foreseen by the art that launched Maiolino back to the dark images of Brazil's military dictatorship years.

The answer to the first question is more complex. We will need to take a long detour.

## 2. Gargles

Apart from the years of academic study at the Escuela Nacional de Bellas Artes Cristóbal Rojas, in Caracas, Maiolino's effective immersion into art came about in Rio de Janeiro, from 1961. Shortly after starting to attend courses and ateliers of the Escola Nacional de Belas Artes do Rio de Janeiro, she joined a discussion network with artists like Rubens Gerchman, Antonio Dias and Roberto Magalhães. As a member of this generation, she participated in *Opinião 66* (1966) and *Nova Objetividade Brasileira* (1967)<sup>5</sup>, two of the iconic exhibitions of that which became known as New Figuration.

Due to circumstances in the late 1970s and onwards, when the history of Brazilian art began to gain a more consolidated narrative, this generation's entire legacy remained under-represented and scarcely debated, despite its importance and complexity.<sup>6</sup> In brief, one could say that this generation, which had already emerged from under the dictatorship's heavy boot, was defined firstly by ethical rather than aesthetic principles. A key idea inherent to their attitude was "opinion", which not by chance was adopted as the name of exhibitions, a music show, theatre group, theatre festival and newspaper. Opinion is a focal point for countless artists in the most varied fields of work, all committed to expressing themselves in an immediate, spontaneous and discursive manner. Through ethical commitment, vigorous urgency and collective potential, opinion translated through art offered an escape route when traditional forms of political exercise (public demonstration and party) had been banned by the dictatorship. Furthermore, it was aligned to the global trend of the youth subculture of seeking alternative modes by which to make a stand and meet up.

In Brazil, this movement of opinion (and of New Figuration) occurred between 1964 and 1968 – when Institutional Act number 5 (AI-5) suspended the constitutional right of freedom of expression and thus criminalized opinion itself. Maiolino was not only amidst these events but actually collaborated with them through her art.

Among her works most in keeping with the new figuration approach, one can highlight *Psiiuu!...* (1967), presented at the *Nova Objetividade Brasileira* exhibition and later destroyed. There are no recordings or photographs of this sculpture, but the artist's description talks of a 68 cm-high papier mâché ear stuffed with a pink-dyed fabric. Against the backdrop of the dictatorship, this giant ear, presented in an experimental exhibition which advocated a critical, socially and politically engaged art, signalled the latent surveillance and censorship that would soon afflict the entire cultural scene. A year earlier, Maiolino had produced the relief painting *O Herói* [The Hero] (1966)<sup>7</sup>, a parody of the military haughtiness expressed by an over-decorated, suited and booted skeleton boasting a sash, medals and shiny buttons. In 1968 at the *Flags in General Osório Square* happening (Rio de Janeiro, 1968), Maiolino joined the group of artists who printed flags and banners to fill the public space with poetic messages of resistance and irony. In that context, her screen print *flag Alta Tensão I* [High Tension I] (1968) pervaded the premises of two works cited here: a skull was positioned at the centre of a kind of target, where the words "alta tensão" ("high tension") indicated the high risk situation that artists and the general public were in.

These, however, are works of exception. The main group of works produced by Maiolino in the 1960s showcases her experimentation in wood engraving, with a visual repertoire that touches on the popular imaginary realm of cordel literature, anecdotal prose typical of the Northeast of Brazil, and the visual legacy of Oswaldo Goeldi, in which contrasts between black and

white (with red and yellow spots) take on a lugubrious meaning.<sup>8</sup> In this aspect, her prints present apparently prosaic scenes, yet imbued with conflict as a result of the intensely cut lines in the wooden block and the raw compositions. Rarely have a butcher, a blessing and a romantic date<sup>9</sup> been so impregnated with “high tension” as in Maiolino’s images.

Despite this, it is hard to understand such images as clear examples of the opinion as practiced by the New Figuration. Both the domesticity of her scenes and the choice to use extemporaneous references to mass culture diverge from the work by most artists of that generation.<sup>10</sup>

Witness, for example, the wood engraving *Glu... glu... glu...* (1967). A human-shaped body cuts a white silhouette against a black background. The face is dominated by gaping open mouth. Directly below or in front of the figure is a red area which would seem to resemble a table upon which a lavish meal is spread. At the bottom of the image, white grooves define the spatiality of a tiled space at the centre of which is a toilet: a scatological double for the digestive system. Which dilemmas can be found in this peculiar figure? The table is set, but the person is nothing more than a mouth connected to an evacuation apparatus. *Glu... glu... glu...*, eats and defecates, once, twice, three times...

His appetite will never be sated. His presence supplants the domestic setting of the meal and indicates the impregnable lack of being. His dilemma, after all, neither begins nor ends with the specific problem of hunger caused by the accumulation of income accentuated by the military regime’s economic policy. This refers to a human condition: to human misery and hope.

Anna Maria Maiolino shares with her generation the prevalent ethics of aesthetics, but differs from them in the extent to which her addressing of time spills over the immediate role of opinion.

### 3. Screams

A mouth that devours, a body that excretes. In, out. This summary of the human being outlined for the first time in *Glu...glu... glu...* reappears several times throughout Maiolino’s career.

One of those times is in 1978. When the potentially interesting proposal of the 1<sup>st</sup> Latin American Biennial is publicly announced with the folkloric and paternalist angle of the theme “Myths and Magic”,<sup>11</sup> a group of artists gathered by Hélio Oiticica and Ivald Granato invented and promoted a parody protest event entitled *Mitos Vadios* [Vagrant Myths]. Anna Maria Maiolino took part in the collective happening with *Monumento à fome* [Monument to Hunger] and *Estado escatológico* [Scatological State], two installations composed of cheap materials.

The former consists of a square table covered by a black cloth, on which a bag of rice and a bag of beans are placed, tied together by a black ribbon. The latter is a line of objects hanging on the wall: five rolls of toilet paper, arranged from the most expensive to the cheapest, following by a cloth, a newspaper and a fig leaf.<sup>12</sup>

Eating and defecation appear once more. They are referred to not entirely by representation or metaphor. The essential operation here is that of the metonym, the figure of speech that produces meaning through association of elements, by perceptibly substituting parts of specific semantic fields.<sup>13</sup> For hunger, food. For Brazil, rice and beans. For monument, the table. For faeces, the toilet paper. For poverty, the cloth, the newspaper and the leaf.

Unlike the metaphor, the metonym dispenses of the narrative. It engages through the contact with pieces of materials, indicative of actions and fragments of ideas. It is, therefore, the fundamental tool of Maiolino’s poetry, montage, *repente*,<sup>14</sup> editing, edification, cuisine... it is the resource at the heart of her artistic trajectory, whether in her videos, sculptures, drawings, performances or installations.

In 1970s Brazil, traumatised by the most brutal years of the military dictatorship, Maiolino used metonyms to weave another mode of conceiving the shattered public sphere that longed for ideas of redemocratization. During the enforcement of AI-5 (1968-1975) the regime not only criminalized opinion but also assassinated hundreds of citizens, placed hundreds of thousands of others under surveillance and systematically censored art, culture, education and the press.

This is made very clear in Maiolino’s Super-8 films, especially *In-Out*, *Antropofagia* (1973-4), *X* (1974), *Y* (1974) and *Ad Hoc* (1982), all of which result from the next framing of concrete gestures with no affectation. Bodies torn apart. The rhythm of their movements is linked to the rhythm of the montage.<sup>15</sup> The sounds, in turn, have their own tempo. There are no characters or storyline, just as there is no performance or enactment per se – at least not in the sense of a complete gesture that dispenses of the montage to produce meaning.

The camera cuts, the montage associates. A metonym, but a metonym for what? For the political being that lives in a state of exception, but still has a body that pulsates, wants, doubts, trembles, swallows, breathes, orgasms, screams and looks – even with eyes closed, like in X, or blindfolded, like in Y.

Y consists of fragments and instants of a female face, blindfolded and mouth gaping. The sound is sharp, but does not coincide with the movement of the image. The image of the woman breathes an ambivalence in which screams transmute alternately into orgasm, crying, laughter and other spasms. Thus, a single work depicts an image of despair of the repressed and of the body's untameable power.

#### 4. Whispers

*Aos poucos...* [Little by Little] was the title of a solo exhibition of Anna Maria Maiolino's work at the Petite Galerie, in Rio de Janeiro, in 1976. Although little comment was made by the critics at the time, this was one of the most important Brazilian exhibitions of a political nature of the latter half of the decade. The show was a poetic mourning and a language invention. At the centre of the space Maiolino assembled the installation *Solitário ou Paciência* (1976). On a raised floor, a black table and chairs brought cards arranged in a game of patients, that someone might try to complete, but would never succeed, because there were some cards missing, removed by the artist to transform this individual pastime into a tragic allegory for the task of rearranging a society that had lost lives to State violence.

It was also the first setting at which some of the Super-8 films mentioned here were screened and the debut image of the series *Fotopoemacção* [Photopoemaction].<sup>16</sup> In that series, the photographs condense the description of a performance carried out to be recorded through one or more images – a common exploit among the conceptual artists of the time. The difference – which explains the skilfully composed title, infiltrating the notion of poem residing between the poles of photography and action – is that the images and actions did not bear a simple relation fitting the narrative of the successive frames, but rather a mutual necessity ruled by synthetic metonymic precision. *Por um fio* [By a Thread] (1976) and *Piccolo Mondo* (1982) are perfect examples of this operation; a kind of transmutation from concrete poetry into beyond the written word.

Great malice is not required to understand the critical meaning of a photopoemaction such as *É o que sobra* [What is left over] (1974), not only in the context of the dictatorship, but also of domestic treatment of the female sex.<sup>17</sup> Meanwhile, the photopoemaction *Aos poucos...* [Little by Little] (1974), which lent its name to the exhibition the Petite Galerie, inhabits a dual threshold. Produced parallel to the filming of Y, this sequence of four photographs describes successive stages of a black blindfold sliding over the artist's face, resembling the stages of an eclipse. The cloth covering slides like a sign of the impediment imposed by the circumstances of that time, or like a timeless allegory for the self-imposed anaesthesia of feelings in the conformation of subjectivities. Likewise, one can interpret the sequence like a gradual release or a closing cycle, depending on whether you read the stack of images from top down or from bottom up, respectively.

This overlapping of ambivalences, social-existential and repression-return, produces the effect of a secret. Instead of opinion cast into the wind and hoisted like a flag, the sense is whispered here: an acute suggestion that something which is not well may be transformed, little by little.

The contrary and the equal. Duplicity in a single body. This has been the primary aesthetic and ethical issue in Maiolino's artwork since her stay in New York (1968-1971).<sup>18</sup> It was with this group of works on paper that Maiolino delved deep into forms of encoding the poetic message. *Secret poem* (1971) brought to light a gesture of erasing the lack of differentiation of the letter, which transforms a word game about intersubjectivity into a censured message.<sup>19</sup> The drawings with cuts, tears and stitches, like *Entre os dois* [Between the Two] (1972) and the series *Projetos construídos* [Constructed Projects] (1973-1975) and *Buracos/Desenhos objetos* [Holes/Drawing Objects] (1972-1976), materialize the line as trauma, fissure on the surface of the ego that glimpses an unnamed significant. *Mapas mentais* [Mental Maps] (1971-1976), in turn, outline on the abstract plane of territorial control, with its boundaries and vectors, the problems of spelling out oneself, with one's hiatuses and desires, or vice versa.

Of the latter, we must highlight *Capítulo I* and *Capítulo II* [Chapter I and Chapter II] (1971/1999 and 1974/1999, respectively). Their web of perpendicular lines establish a field that can be grasped not only as a system of cartographic coordinates, but also as a board of a game of life.<sup>20</sup> Fundamental passages in Maiolino's role as a woman are distinguished by her children's names, just as her permanent condition of foreigner are stamped by moves between continents, countries and cities; various cross-hatched lines act as graphic signs of interludes or zones of conflict, accompanied by words like war, hunger, hate, melancholy, happiness, anguish, separation, pain, refuge, disease and panic. The three final words in the second work are: certainty, fate and POETRY.

One can observe from the 1976 photographs that works like these, which someone in passing may interpret as strictly autobiographical, were shown almost right in front of *Alma negra da América Latina – Uma situação geográfica* [Black soul of Latin America – A geographic situation] (1976), a mental map in which the silhouette of the continent cut into the wood reiterates the procedure performed on paper in *Holes/Drawing Objects*. Completely black, the work cemented the sense of mourning that pervaded the exhibition, in reference to how people’s democratic rights had been suspended in a large part of the continent and the slavery-based colonial past that tainted Latin American countries with black blood.

Meanwhile, to the left and to the right of *Black soul*...were two supposedly abstract object drawings, in which the support was torn lengthways and recomposed in the assembly of box-frames, thus establishing a tortured landscape, which might be both intimate and social.<sup>21</sup>

In this tangle of works that result from a unique explosion of invention, Maiolino moulded her poetics of space, where the internal and external bleed into one another like the coming and going of the ocean tide. The understanding was therefore consolidated that if there is politics it is because existence itself perpetually establishes it. The political being. Being, political. Being.

#### 4.1. Whispers, still

Before moving on, it is necessary to listen more carefully to the final seconds of *Y*. A female voice whispers hurried, slightly overlapping, fragments. They are lost appeals, echoes of calls that Maiolino has introduced almost at a subliminal level. Her invented wording is freely inspired by the vigorously minimalist writing of Samuel Beckett, with a sociological nod to Machado de Assis. Her insertion in the montage anticipates the publication of *Ad Hoc*, which also superimposes breathless speech over the image of a part of the body in motion.<sup>23</sup>

— Courage! Courage!  
— Where the simplest honesty was called courage;  
— Ana Vieira Ruiz, a nanny goat, who lives by doing laundry;  
— Manuel da Costa Ataíde, a Creole;  
— Manuel da Gama, who lives by the art of painting;  
— Ana Teodora de Castro, a brown woman, who lives by weaving;  
— Francisco da Silva Maciel, who still lives by his art, music;  
— Courage... courage...  
— Never say never.

In view of this, what is there left to say? Perhaps just to ask oneself how courage is born.

#### 5. Exhalations

Making art like one who serves the table. The idea is not as unusual as it may seem. In its anthropological roots, art stems from the field of the gift and sacrifice, where there are no rigid boundaries between magic, politics, education, philosophy, art and food. In every case, there is an ethical and antieconomic soul-bound bond, willing to offer the best of what lies within.

Maiolino, of Italian Catholic origin, and born in wartime, has since a young age understood the nexus between the division of food, the distribution of hunger and the communion of an idea. This, incidentally, is the main lesson that she shows she learned from her family cultural base.

Distributing hunger means dividing what is lacking as the greatest gesture of recognising oneself in the other. This was her main theme in the first edition of the installation-happening *Arroz & Feijão* [Rice & Beans]. In 1979, Maiolino joined a group of artists which formed to occupy a room in the *Aliança Francesa* building in the Botafogo district of Rio de Janeiro. According to the artist, working as a group in this setting proved a challenge, because the channels of dialogue were obstructed by all the years during which the artists, as citizens, had lived behind masks to defend themselves against repression. Faced with a context in which even words were lacking, Maiolino, in her first individual exhibition in the space, presented the installation *Rice & Beans*. There was a long central table with a black tablecloth and six places serving plates of earth containing germinated rice and bean seeds. In the four corners of the space, smaller square tables, each with four sets of cutlery and a plate, serving rice and beans prepared by the artist. The surrounding walls were entirely covered with insistent notes referencing the estimate that “one third of the human

race overeats while two thirds starve to death.”<sup>26</sup>

Art’s place, therefore, was treated as a place of distribution, while the artists themselves (the majority of the visiting public and the collective body that occupied the space) were posited as a metonym for misery. With such prosaicness and transplanted into the exhibition environment, the action gained ritualistic traits. Life affirmation through the perseverance of the shoots – and of the artists, who fed on them.

Maiolino’s kitchen temporarily became an extension of her workshop while executing this proposal, and the happening generated other fruits. From the early 1980s onwards, her graphic production flowed into the cycles of repetition and persistence common to preparing food. In the series Aleph (1982) and Signos [Signs] (1983), Maiolino started to multiply lines and distribute points like someone separating raw beans.<sup>27</sup>

In the halftone hand-drawn mesh, commas, like moons, and points, like holes, are meticulously accumulated. This is the embryo of the artist’s mature drawing and painting, which has flourished to this day. In a paradox often found in creative processes, control offers chance a privileged space. In Sem título [No title] (1982) from the Aleph series, for instance, a comma marks each of the 1,092 modules defined by the rectangular grid. All, except one. The square that is left blank is the punctum of the work, that which pierces us and confirms, by means of the contradiction, the monumentality of the repeated gesture. In Dois movimentos [Two movements], from the same series and year, there is also only one of the 1,042 squares which, instead of containing two commas, contains only one. This could be due to an accident caused by the human hand of an artist who lives and breathes, despite her serial attitude. Nonetheless, the force of this error was soon perceived by Maiolino, who has devoted great effort to choreographing errors, uncontrolled and random acts of paint and hand.

The hand knows. It knows more than our head is capable of conceiving. It betrays sensations and desires in its involuntary movements, resists rationalized programming and bears the atavistic wisdom of thousands of years of human craft. It is to the hand that we attribute the inexplicable touch of the cook’s beloved recipe. It is also what can be blamed for the recurring forms that humans learned to build from material found in nature. Taking a handful of moist earth and squeezing it through one’s fingers, leaving one’s hand cupped empty. If we roll our fingers over the matter into the shape of this cupped palm we soon form an almost-sphere, or a worm shape. And thus, with the help of the coordinated movement of the whole body, we make doughs, breads, bricks and all sorts of containers for food, blood and the air.

Attention to this lesser knowhow (monumental knowhow, yet deprived of rhetoric) begins for Maiolino inside a kitchen that dwells in her memories, blossoms in her drawings from the early 1980s and is multiplied in her work with clay. Decades of experimentation spanning from 1990 onwards, which converged in the installation Aqui & Lá [Here & There] (documenta 13, 2012) when the clay mixtures returned to the domestic environment, inundating it in a lavish outlay of energy and affection.

An expert in applied mathematics would be required if one wanted an estimate of how many points, lines, commas, worm shapes, mixtures, volumes and things have been imprinted on the world by the hands of Maiolino and her helpers in the past four decades. Hundreds of thousands, millions, tens of millions? Handmade, these things might be created by the artist alone or, as is especially common in the large scale installation, by a range of people who gather to work as a single collective body, in scenes reminiscent of big get togethers to cook for whole towns or to work intensively and happily through the harvest.

Huge quantities, infinite differences in a mass of equals. Vital energy spent. Waste or food. In or out. Inhalation or exhalation. Once more: the opposite and the equal.

## 6. Breaths

Whether or not they are ephemeral, Maiolino’s installations, reliefs and sculptures transform the abject into a signal of vital energy expended. “From hand to mouth,” the Americans say in reference to an infant’s behaviour of swallowing up the world without caring about dirt, the refinement or the scatology of their impulses. For Maiolino, going from hand to mouth is making the exhalation a shareable foodstuff.

Quoting the book of Genesis: “Then the LORD God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.” (Genesis 2:7) Going farther back, we have the Greek concept of pneuma: root of the idea of respiration, breath, soul and spirit.

Anna Maria Maiolino gives form to (moulds) matter like a stable container for her breath. The series of sculptures Emanados [Emanations] (2007) crystallizes this gesture. She allows the glass to be blown, enclosing the shape of a bubble. And then leaves the still hot bubble hanging on a kind of coat hanger, moulding itself to the weight of its void. The delicate formation of these

volumes is tested like a telluric incorporation of the organ-less body furiously desired by Antonin Artaud and laboriously multiplied by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari.

## 7. Apnoea

The title of this essay paraphrases *The Endless Eye*, Jacques Aumont's acclaimed book about the essence of the cinematographic eye.<sup>28</sup> The aim here was to outline Maiolino's artistic development as a poetics of insatiable subsistence.<sup>29</sup>

The medical term for voluntary or involuntary interruption of breathing is apnoea. The whispers, screams, gargles and grunts in Maiolino's work are persistent responses to her apnoea, to the moments when internal or external traumas take her breath (her soul) away. Shortage of air, or cessation of breathing, portrayed most comprehensively in the performance-installation *Entrevidas* [Between Lives] (1981): the walk along the joints in the egg-curdled pavement, the primordial point-commas of nature.

This work, just like the series of photopoemactions *Vida Afora* [A Life Line] (1981), synthesises Maiolino's passage in the wake of *Little by Little...*, the great synthesis-show of her apnoea, towards creative gestures with paint and clay which provided an almost infinite outlet for her breath. It is significant that this passage dates from the start of the decade which saw the end of military rule in Brazil, since authoritarianism, war and hunger have been mostly responsible for directly forcing people to stop breathing over the course of Maiolino's political existence.

With that in mind, we can return to the question that remained unanswered at the start of the text. Why was it necessary to wait until 2014 to edit something filmed in 1976?

When she filmed the pathetic military routines at the *Quinta da Boa Vista*, Maiolino was on the verge of embarking on her gradual farewell to the apnoea that had marked her 1970s. Furthermore, producing parody pamphlets, denouncement and opinion had never been her interest. Those images, therefore, naturally had no immediate purpose. It was the crudeness of developments in the last 10 years in Brazil and abroad, that brought a shudder back to Anna Maria Maiolino's everyday life, something readily channelled in the final edition of *One Day* and in works such as the installation *Estado de Exceção* [State of Exception] (2009/2012), an impenetrable cell/box from which anguished calls resonate.<sup>30</sup>

For analogous reasons, a few months ago she also revised the poem *Creia!* [Believe!], which had been composed in Rio de Janeiro in 1976.<sup>31</sup> This essay concludes with an extract from that poem, in the expectation that the future holds smooth breathing for Anna, her near and dear ones, her others and all of us:

but I say:  
my son, indifference is worse than violence  
it will make a stuffed bird of you  
flightless  
it will do you no good lying in a splendid berth  
to the sound of the sea and in the light of the deep sky  
illuminated by the sun of the New World  
in this land giant by nature

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1 Maiolino's lecture, "Aula Magma", marked the launch of her semester-long contemporary art course *Escola Entrópica* at the Instituto Tomie Ohtake. The event was organised by the coordinators of the School: Galciani Neves, Felipe Arruda and me.

2 The Möbius Strip, a physical manifestation of a topological conception of infinitude and indistinction between the inside and outside, is recalled by Maiolino as one of the main learnings from the work and ideas of Lygia Clark, whose pivotal work-happening *Caminhando* [Walking] (1964) involved the virtually infinite cutting along the length of a Möbius strip.

3 As recorded in the book *Tristes Trópicos* (1955) and popularised by the song *O estrangeiro* (1989), by Caetano Veloso.

4 The period of the Military Regime as established by consensus among historians.

5 Both at the Museum of Modern Art of Rio de Janeiro (MAM-RJ).

6 The most consolidated narratives about Brazilian art, drafted in the years of the so-called “democratic opening”, guided both academic research and market initiatives and institutional policies. Based on the rigid categorisation of “modernism – concretism – neo-concretism – self-referential conceptual art – retrieval of painting” they underestimate a large part of 1960s and 1970s art, precisely that which rejects eminently formal interpretations.

7 A version from 2000 can be found today in the collection of the Museu de Arte de São Paulo Assis Chateaubriand (MASP).

8 In relation to the settings in which experimental groups have formed in the history of art history, curator and critic Paulo Herkenhoff highlights that artist Adir Botelho was a key figure at the free atelier of the Escola Nacional de Belas Artes which Maiolino began to attend in the 1960s. Botelho’s mentor, Oswaldo Goeldi, in turn, had established the bases for teaching modern engraving at the school.

9 Açougue [Butcher] (1966), O Bebê [The Baby] (1967) and Ecce Homo (1967), respectively.

10 The most obvious exception is Antonio Henrique Amaral as regards contact with cordel literature, but the themes of the São Paulo artist in those times expounded explicit satirical comment on the politics of the military regime.

11 Also fuelling the dissatisfaction of the artists was the maintenance of a state of self-censorship by the Biennial Foundation, which led to its international boycott in 1969 and ensured its reduced local and international relevance throughout the entire 1970s. The boundaries of the 1st Latin American Biennial were queried at the Meeting of Art Critics of Latin America, held by the Biennial Foundation and conducted by Aracy Amaral in São Paulo, in October 1980 – on this occasion, however, the propositions that sought to give a collaborative, progressive and political sense to the event were suffocated by the opinion of the majority of the participants, who voted to suppress the Latin American focus of the Biennial.

12 The parallel between Glu... glu... glu... and the works presented in Mitos Vadios had already been noted by Catherine de Zegher, in her seminal essay “Ciao bella: Uma migrante por dentro e por fora”, published in DE ZEGHER, Catherine. Anna Maria Maiolino – Vida afora. New York: The Drawing Center, 2002.

13 See JAKOBSON, Roman. “Dois aspectos da linguagem e dois tipos de afasia”, in Linguística e comunicação. São Paulo: Cultrix, 1975.

14 Kind of sung poetry typical of the northeast region of Brazil, in which the artist improvises verses and rhymes with emphasis on the clash between similar sounding words with opposite meanings, with sarcastic, humourous or romantic effects.

15 As regards montage, experimentation in films by Brazilian artists in the 1970s was primarily expounded by Anna Maria Maiolino and Antonio Dias.

16 The work Aos Poucos... was reproduced on the exhibition invitation.

17 It is worth recalling that even in the 1990s one of the most popular Brazilian television comedy shows carried the catchphrase: “Shut up, Magda!” Repeated ad nauseum to a wife who was considered stupid, this command perpetuated the lesson of silencing women at home. A recent UN study shows that 40% of all femicides in Latin America and the Caribbean occur in Brazil: 2,800 cases were recorded in the country in 2017.

18 Specifically, the beginning of this production is associated to her scholarship and attendance at the Pratt University Graphics Center and the New York Graphic Workshop in 1971, a cycle interrupted by her return to Brazil in the same year.

19 The censored poem contains the words, originally written in Italian: “I + you / body + body / body to body / body in body / lost individuality / dual structure body / encounter / I + you / new body”.

20 There is a special relationship between these works and the installation Em lugar de... [In place of... ] (1980), which spatializes a map-board, placing the visitor as an actor in this hybrid territory between the subjective and the political.

21 The expression “tortured landscape” is borrowed here from This Tortured Earth (1942-1943), Isamu Noguchi’s bronze piece that embodies the caustic idea of building the topography of a park through the aerial bombing of a previously flat landscape.



22 The recorded voice is that of Márcia Taborda.

23 In this case, inspired by the writings of Antonin Artaud, an intense record of the catastrophe of subjectivity in an era of instrumentalized life.

24 For one year, Maiolino and fellow artists Amélia Toledo, Luiz Ferreira, Maria do Carmo Secco, Maria Luiza Saddi, Mauro Kleiman, Osmar Fonseca and Rogério Luz used the room as a studio and exhibition space.

25 The difficulty in achieving dialogue which would mark the whole process of resuming democracy and the following decades was brought into focus in Maiolino's performance and photomontage *O mascarado* [The Masquerade] (1979), presented at the curtain raiser exhibition of the collective occupation of the Aliança Francesa room.

26 Poetic memorial of the installation *Arroz & Feijão* [Rice & Beans] (1979).

27 An explanation of this reference may be required for younger readers, who have grown up in a world of super-processed foods. For thousands of years, eating beans, rice and other grains depended on a preliminary preparation whereby the patient hands and eyes separated the good beans from the bad, before leaving the beans to soak in order to facilitate their cooking and subsequent digestion.

28 Original version: AUMONT, Jaques. *L'Œil interminable*. Paris: Librairie Séguier, 1989.

29 A maxim employed by Maiolino in several conversations is applicable here: "I don't want anything and I want everything." On another occasion it could be pertinent to appraise Maiolino's voracious and dispossessed proposition as a maternal transubstantiation of Glauber Rocha's aesthetics of hunger.

30 Not by chance, both of these works underpinned Maiolino's presence in the collective exhibition *imannam*, presented alongside Laura Lima and Ana Linnemann at Pivô (São Paulo) from April to June 2018.

31 This revision was for the publication of the catalogue of the *AI-5 50 Anos – Ainda não terminou de acabar* exhibition, held from September to November 2018 at the Instituto Tomie Ohtake, in São Paulo. A publicação, que apresenta o poema como introdução, mapeia a produção cultural durante a ditadura militar brasileira e será impressa em março de 2019.