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**Pedrosa, Mário Xavier de Andrade**

Born: 1900 -- Timbaúba, Pernambuco, Brazil; Died: 1981 -- Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

While the Brazilian scholar Mário Pedrosa is known internationally as an art critic, his influence extends far beyond his writing on art. As an outspoken militant, Pedrosa was actively involved in politics throughout his life to the degree that he was not only arrested but also exiled from Brazil several times. In the artistic field, he has emphasised the importance of abstract art and persistently promoted constructivist art, particularly the **Concrete** and **Neoconcrete** movements. He broke new ground in showing how Gestalt psychological theories enhance the phenomenological perception of artworks. Moreover, his interest in art which extended beyond traditional ideas led to his support of artists creating works that involved an active spectator. Over the years, he backed artists including **Hélio Oiticia** and **Lygia Clark**, in their pursuit of collective art and encouraged them to create new ways to expand on the concept of anti-art. One of Pedrosa’s greatest achievements was the creation of social circles of art and politics that were based on common interest and fostered a sense of pride, community, and comradery. Through his discussions and critical writings ( for publications such as the *Correio da Manhã* newspaper in the late 1940s and 50s and later for the *Jornal do Brasil*), he was able to strongly affect the perspective of Brazilian modern artists, the nature of artworks, and interrelated events, especially in Rio de Janeiro.

Pedrosa completed his thesis at the Faculdade de Arquitetura do Rio de Janeiro on Gestalt Theory and aesthetic perception, entitled ‘Da natureza afetiva da forma na obra de arte’ (On the Affective Nature of Form in the Work of Art), in 1949. It was published as *Arte, forma e personalidade: 3 estudos* (Art, Shape, and Personality: 3 Studies)in 1979*.* His formulations brought gestalt precepts specifically to bear on problems of art and perception while taking into account the universality of experience as well as the response of the individual viewer.

Mário Pedrosa’s view of the changes taking place in the art of his contemporaries led him to declare the end of modern art and coin the term “post-modern art” in 1966 prior to use by other international scholars. In his text, “Arte ambiental, arte pós-moderna, Hélio Oiticica” (Ambiental Art, Post-Modern Art, Hélio Oiticica), Pedrosa noted that, in contrast to Brazil’s involvement in the modern era, “this time Brazil is participating not as a modest follower but as a precursor.” In other words, Brazilian artists played a leading role in post-modern art. In the works of artists such as Oiticia, Clark, **Lygia Pape**, or **Antonio Manuel**, the spectator is no longer passive, the senses are stimulated, and the connection between art and society is encouraged.

Exiled in 1937 during the Brazilian *Estado Novo* and the dictatorship of Getúlio Vargas, Pedrosa resided in Paris until he moved to New York in1938. Returning to Brazil in 1940, he was arrested and deported back to the US. Pedrosa was exiled again during the military takeover in Brazil in 1964. Believing in revolutionary action, Pedrosa wrote two books on the political situation in Brazil published in 1966: *A Opção Imperialista* (*The Imperialist Option*), and *A Opção Brasileira* (*The Brazilian Option*). After the military established the *Ato Institucional* Nº 5 (*AI-5* or Institutional Act No. 5 which placed restrictions on freedom while ending political resistance and censoring the press as well as all avenues of artistic communication) in 1968 and issued a warrant for his arrest in 1970, Pedrosa became a political refugee (self-exiled) in Chile. When Salvador Allende was overthrown, he went to Mexico, then Paris. When the arrest warrant issued against him was revoked in 1977, he returned to Brazil.

With an interest and enthusiasm for works that connected politics, art, and society through interactive manifestations and experimentation, Pedrosa brought into play his now-famous phrase, "o exercício experimental da liberdade” (the experimental exercise of freedom) which was an enthusiastic response to the radical artworks of Brazilian artist, Antonio Manuel, and later, was used in support of the work of a number of artists pushing against established conventions, such as Oiticica and Clark. Pedrosa was defending the freedom of the artist to create. His idea, at the time, was that art was able to transform individual as well as collective consciousness; that is, ultimately, through offering a new way of viewing the world, art had the power to change the social structure and revolutionize society.

**Further Reading:**

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