

MORÁN MORÁN

DOUBLE LAYERS by TOM BURR

one - Hélio

I've spent a lot of time considering the art of Hélio Oiticica. I've looked at his work for years, vaguely modeling certain gestures of my own in relation to specific objects he made, and events he staged. I've responded with admiration and affection to the intensely vivid colors juxtaposed with the wobbly, somewhat fugitive nature of his forms and structures, this incongruity becoming increasingly pronounced over the timespan of his work, from the 1950s through the late 1970s.

The precise formal clarity that defined the Neo-concrete movement, which Hélio was a part of from an early age, would give way to his more physically and conceptually fluid project: spatially expanded environments; works that could be physically entered, and works that could be worn; his own body performing throughout; Parangolés; Penetrables; architectures of bodies, of his body specifically, but then emanating out from there, to others, to groups, to audiences. Neo-Concrete, it seems to me, crumbled into a generous rubble of subjectivities, fragmented, incomplete, but performing, often dancing.

I had the desire to get closer, to push my work up against his, to question edges-as limits and instead explore the edges of a self or a body of work, as more nebulous in form, capable of blurring and blending into an other, in this case Hélio. I echoed some of his structures and thought patterns and layered them over mine; I confused the two of us. I wanted to dovetail our perceived identities, morph them somehow, and locate a mutual space where we could both reside. Attraction can lead to acts of mimicry and to the sway of influence, of one over another, where you can lose yourself.

The two exhibitions that I made were the result of this affective and mental grappling. They became a chronicle in a sense, of an amorous encounter between Hélio and myself. My worn t-shirts; his Portuguese language; my methods of pinning material and ideas; his brilliant yellow; his Metaesquemas; my version of his Metaesquemas; his Rio de Janeiro; my own body; and so on. I wanted to see where Hélio ended and I began, or like conversation, with one artist completing the other's thought and sometimes talking over each other.

two - Kiko

Kiko Kostadinov made a particular coat. He spent time considering my art, the way I apply pieces of clothing, often my own, to structures, and the specific way I pin those pieces in place, enunciating that exact instance of fastening through the use of conspicuous hardware. Folds and wrinkles, edges and undersides, are significant and revealing, as well as a sustained attention to how things are attached to other things; points of connection and association.

The coat Kiko made pushes up against my work, acknowledging a sort of affinity of concerns - his and mine - around how things are put together, the conditions of construction and attachment made visible and active. I'm drawn to the intersection of banality and specificity in these pieces of clothing, an utter blankness being ruptured by sudden details, often relating to the way they are built, their mechanisms: the pinning, the snapping, the stitching, the hemming. But beyond the shared interest in these physical operations, there is also Kiko's self-conscious act of mimicry that is meaningful here, with his work intentionally resembling mine, with this coat specifically, performing in a sense, as me.

The Burr Snap Coat has a rigid formal architecture, but one that opens up, quite literally, in unanticipated ways. It's emotional in the way it suggests things. For me it's not very different from the way Hélio's Spatial Reliefs from the late 1950s behave: flattened panels that turn or shift to reveal various means of access through apertures and gaps. And if I think about this coat as analogous to a Neo-Concrete object in its precision and simplicity, then Kiko's recent series of augmentations to the coat also mirror for me Hélio's subsequent launch into the expanded form and productive messiness of his Parangolés, Penetrables and performance work. Now, Kiko has added a second surface layer of fragmented rugby shirts on top of the original skin of the coat, bits and pieces of sponsor laden jerseys radically juxtaposed with the tailored nature of the coat-as-substrate. This methodology, of juxtaposition and collage, of layering disparate materials from distinct contexts together, is also my way of working, we have this in common, and it creates a model in a sense of how to communicate together.

Again, attraction can lead to acts of mimicry and a sway of influence, of one over another. When I saw the new rugby/Burr mash ups I felt the desire to get closer. I was struck by the emotive intelligence Kiko had charged the somewhat sober, though highly fetishistic piece of clothing with. I wanted to copy him, or at least absorb the clothing in some way and return his gesture, add gesture to gesture. With my entanglement with Hélio Oiticica, who died in 1980, I played both roles, his and mine. I spoke and I answered myself, as him. With Kiko, though we've never met in the flesh, it's different - he's alive and can talk back, act back. I feel implicated in these procedures of Kiko's, and this exhibition here. I feel exposed as well. I mean, I'm in there in some way, aren't I?