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A racialized and gendered reading of Maria Lídia Magliani's art

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Introduction to the Field of Gendered Research

Beforehand, I launch our initial concern regarding the scarce academic works related to black Brazilian women in the visual arts. In the view of Pollock, demanding the consideration of women in art history not only transforms what is studied but also questions the discipline on a political level. The theory emphasizes that women were not excluded due to mere bias or prejudice, but rather because of the structural sexism inherent in most disciplines, which actively contributed to the production and hierarchization of gender. What we learn about the world and its people, about knowledge, adheres to an ideological pattern consistent with the social order. In other words, feminist studies have not only dealt with women but with social systems and the ideological frameworks that supported men's domination over women within other mutually influential regimes of power, especially class and race (Pollock, 1988, p. 20).

We agree with Simioni when she pointed out that the study of exclusion represents a political agenda, a concern about the presence of the female sex in quantitative indicators. This agenda, focused on female inclusion in society, is important and has driven the visibility of female artists. However, thinking in terms of gender goes beyond that; it requires working with the social meanings of masculinity and femininity, with discourses/images that permeate bodies, and with analyses of institutions and social practices. According to the historian, we should not believe that a balanced presence of women in institutions, museums, private collections, and the art market would necessarily lead to a broader process of social, political, and cultural equality (Simioni, 2022, p. 317).

Continuing the dialogue with Pollock, understanding how artistic practices were conducted, as well as their meanings and social effects, requires a dual approach. First, social practice must be situated as part of social struggles among class, race, and gender, articulating it with other sites of representation. In feminist interventions in art history, secondly, we must analyze how any practice functions, what it signifies, what it produces, how it produces, and for whom. Semiotic analysis is also important as it provides the necessary tools for describing how images, languages, or any other system of meanings are produced. The theorist encouraged us to think that a psychoanalytic analysis of the production and sexualization of subjectivity generated new ways of understanding the role of cultural activities in the production of meaning and social themes (Pollock, 1988,

p. 30).

Pollock engaged with a community of researchers who challenged the dominant paradigms of art history, emphasizing that there were ethnocentric and Eurocentric paradigms among them. She urged us to work on the stance of Black artists, both male and female, from the past and contemporary. She also elicited us to interpret and document these themes. The researcher argued that race should be recognized as one of the central axes of our analysis of societies that are not only bourgeois but also imperialist and colonizing. She acknowledged that this concern was not outlined in her book but was evident in the conflicts of those engaged in struggles centered on such issues (Pollock, 1988, p. 46).

Historically, women had difficulty gaining access to the Brazilian art scene until the mid-19th century. Ana Paula Simioni conducted research on women artists before 1922 to understand the presence of women in art. She highlighted some award-winning academic artists like Abigail de Andrade, Berthe Worms, and Georgina Albuquerque, as well as sculptors Nicolina Vaz de Assis Pinto do Couto and Julieta Franca. Simioni emphasized the challenges they faced in building their professional careers, noting that it was only in 1892 that women gained access to the National Academy of Fine Arts and higher education courses. Unlike the common image of women in Brazilian modernism, there was an erasure of artists prior to 1920. This exclusion resulted from misogynistic discourses that attributed inferiority and amateurism to women (Tvardovskas, 2015, p. 55).

The recognition of Tarsila do Amaral and Anita Malfatti at the 1922 Week of Modern Art contributed to establishing the importance of women in the realm of Brazilian visual arts, and it led to the belief that there would be no distinction between male and female artists. The presence of these two artists in the media and historiography seemed to confirm that Brazil did not have gender issues in the art field.

However, as Maria Laura Rosa noted in her book “Compartir el mundo, la experiencia de las mujeres y el arte”, the landscape is being reevaluated by recent studies dedicated to Brazilian academic production. She explained that the notion of exceptional women inherently carries gender asymmetries, assuming the existence of a mass of ordinary women. In fact, women artists, viewed as exceptional, were differentiated because they were considered to possess unique qualities. As Rosa explains, attributing talents to some women implies that others, namely ordinary women, are not exceptional. Therefore, these studies that treated women as exceptional, instead of dispelling the idea

of inferiority commonly associated with the female sex, ended up reinforcing prevailing prejudices (Rosa, 2018, p. 197).

In the case of Brazil, it is known that the country did not embrace the expansion of education for women during the republican era. Some sectors of the elite chose to create private *ateliers*. Politicians recognized the Academy as a public space in various senses of the term, synonymous with official, state-sponsored, free, and theoretically universally accessible without discrimination based on class, gender, or race. A system was established, divided between public schools aimed at a male audience and private *ateliers* aimed at a female audience. These divisions were the result of a long history of neglect regarding education, including artistic and female education. This situation was symptomatic in the Republic and orchestrated by politicians and educational authorities to maintain and perpetuate certain gender and class differences. This system was inherited from earlier times, institutionalized separate spaces for men and women, and renewed and modernized gender and race inequalities.

Maria Laura Rosa raised important questions for the analysis in this article when she stated that it is time to change the categories of our collections and open them up to new symbolizations that incorporate not only the history of women but also new social subjects, incorporating other readings focused on the decolonization of images, revisiting the canon, incorporating race, mestizaje, blackness, childhood, among other readings (Rosa, 2018, p. 197).

As Rosa pointed out, Latin America is a complex place to discuss feminisms. The diversity and the historical, social, and ethnic particularities that characterize the region have led feminisms to develop their own nuances that defy narrow interpretations. The same author informs us that the poverty and marginalization of indigenous and Afro-Latin peoples in this contemporary era have their roots in socio-economic factors. Ethnic-racial discrimination played a central role as a source of exclusion for Black and Indigenous populations. The illiteracy experienced by Indigenous and Afro-Latin women also determined their lack of participation in "representative" democracy. Afro-Latin women gained the right to vote only in the first half of the 20th century. In countries like Bolivia, Peru, and Guatemala, the Indigenous population exceeded 50% of the voting population during the first half of the 20th century. As a result, women's entry into the public sphere was marked by their ethnic and class status (Rosa, 2018, p. 198).

On the other hand, many artists in the 1970s aligned with feminist movements and their approaches without actively participating in them. These white and mixed-race

women belonged to the middle class, as in the case of Argentina. Their class positions allowed them to establish connections with feminist art centers, primarily in the United States, France, and Italy, and to read literature in other languages, facilitating the development of approaches that address local issues. During the 1970s, the dynamics of these Latin American countries led to greater diversity in women's movements and, consequently, their ethnic and class diversity. To further complicate the issue of artistic political practice, we highlight the statement made by the artist Mónica Mayer in 1978: "If something confirms this moment, it is that if we intend to create revolutionary art in political terms, it must first be in artistic terms". Many artists in the 1970s introduced experimental languages, often incorporating the body into their work (Rosa, 2018, p. 198).

As explained by Luana Tvardovskas, in Anglo-American countries, feminist thinking about the history of art reached its 40th year and emerged alongside the feminist movement from 1970 onwards. European writers made significant contributions to this field in dialogue with sociology and politics. In these countries, various researchers attempted to understand the absence of female artists in art history canons and to recover their names, seeking to equalize their discourse and value their productions. In her text 'Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" (1971), art historian Linda Nochlin posed uncomfortable questions that exposed the difficulties women faced in entering academic discourse. Nochlin elaborated the thesis that the invisibility of female artists in art history was the result of power discourses produced from a male perspective. Following Nochlin's texts, female historians further questioned the power and knowledge strategies within the discipline itself that justified the exclusion of women from the field of arts. Among other issues, women inquired about the relationship between the construction of female subjectivity in relation to creativity, the modes of cultural production, and the use of art as a space for social transformation (Tvardovskas, 2015, p. 11).

According to Maria Laura Rosa, Argentina and Mexico had artists who emerged from the same women's movement, but this was not evident in Brazil. She considered it of great importance to acknowledge artistic works that took a critical stance on various situations affecting women, even if the artists were not part of women's movements or did not identify as feminists. In this perspective, in addition to the artists' self-designation, their works exposed criticisms of domesticity, the oppression of the female beauty ideal, and patriarchal culture, in line with the feminist struggles in Brazil during the 1970s and

1980s.

In Brazil, the second wave of feminism developed during a long dictatorship (1964-1985) that reshaped the country's political and economic relationships over two decades. It was from 1968 on that restrictions deepened, civil and political rights were effectively nullified by Institutional Act AI-5. This act legitimized censorship along with severe measures of national security. In this context, feminist groups, which had been forming since the late 1960s, aligned with leftist groups in the fight against authoritarianism. There were also connections between feminists, leftist groups, and progressive sectors of the Church, particularly liberation theology. The struggle for freedom of expression was linked to women's rights, and this had an impact on the art of Wanda Pimentel, Anna Bella Geiger, Anna Maria Maiolino, Regina Walter, and others who joined feminist movements.

There are several hypotheses that can be put forth to analyze the specificities of the art-feminism nexus in Brazil. Research conducted so far has not found artists who emerged from feminist movements or who were directly associated with them. The political peculiarities of Brazil overshadowed leftist groups, within which many women were involved in the dual militancy. As noted by Maria Joana Pedro, “fighting for women's liberation in Brazil within the left, in the midst of the military dictatorship, prevented Brazilian feminism from being similar to the project that was developing in Europe or the United States” (Rosa, 2018, p. 197).

Brazil had artists who expressed critical views on domesticity and the issue of stereotypes related to female beauty without fully integrating into feminist activism. Video artists Rita Moreira and Norma Bahia Pontes were in New York in the 1970s, which led them to become directly involved in the Women's Liberation Movement. The extensive series “Envolvimento” developed by Wanda Pimentel, native of Rio de Janeiro, between 1968 and 1980, was generally interpreted by Brazilian critics as a denunciation of the dehumanization caused by industrial objects in daily life. However, a close look at the feminist context allows us to link these works to the questioning of domesticity carried out by feminists (Rosa, 2018, p. 197). Wanda Pimentel, for example, criticized the mechanized and impersonal world at a time when mass media and spectacular aesthetics embodied in television were prevailing over silence and intimacy. The title of her work, “Existência” (Existence), suggested a commentary on the human experience in the world and its relationship with the surrounding objects. The oppressive spaces presented by Pimentel were linked to critiques of household appliances, domesticity, and beauty

stereotypes. These reflections were also present in the work “El Mundo de la Mujer” by Argentine artist María Luisa Bemberg and, why not say, in the series by Maria Lídia Magliani.

Images and objects are forms, not subjects, in Maria Lídia Magliani's art

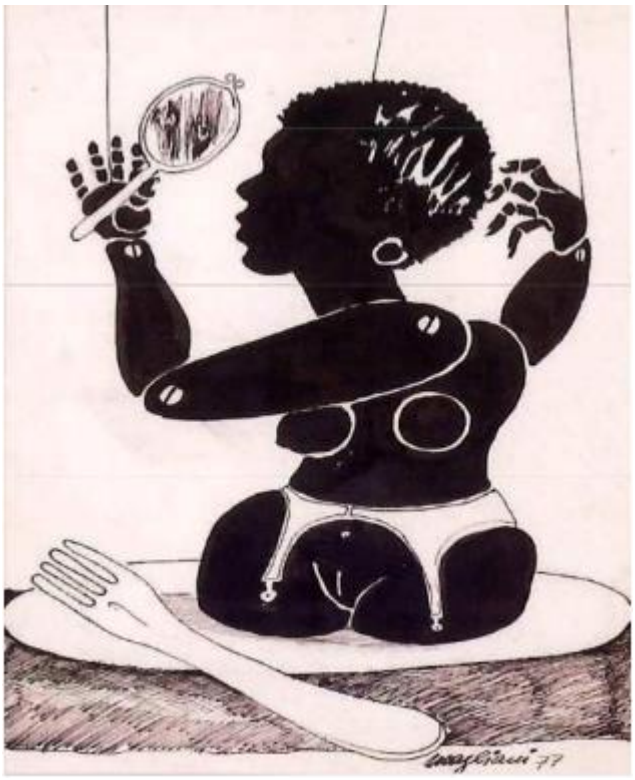
Image 1 – Untitled, no year

Source: Catalog of the Exhibition at the Iberê Camargo Foundation, 2022, v. 2, p. 57

Image 2 – Photograph of Maria Lídia Magliani

Source: https://falafeminina.com.br/maria-lidia-magliani/

Image 3 – Untitled work from, 1977



Source: https://www.nonada.com.br/2021/11/a-trajetoria-de-maria-lidia-magliani-artista-pioneira-que-questionou-as-imposicoes-ao-corpo-feminino/

How could we explain this black female figure in Maria Lídia's production? This image reminds us of a body (puppet) intersected - a black woman without legs and with life - admiring herself in the mirror at the moment she seems to be arranged on a tray or a plate of food, in the marionette mode? How can we activate a racial grammar to interpret Magliani's works? As Paul Veyne explains succinctly:

> The soul is not a thinking substance, and for those who are not Cartesian, the unconscious presents no difficulty. An artist does not know that he applies the visual grammar of his time, that it is present implicitly in his creation. He has no awareness of having assimilated it during the years of his education (...) Of course, the individual remains, ontologically, a decisive instance: if the artist submits to a visual grammar, he could also choose not to submit. This grammar is in every artist, but it is also elaborated by him. For this reason, it is not historically inexplicable; it did not arise from the caprice of a collective agent intellect (...) in the Averroist manner (Veyne, 2011).

With this text, we intend to reflect on some questions that emerged in a seminar focused on Magliani's work, especially the notion of racialization embedded in readings related to the artist's productions. The seminar took place between March 19 and 21, 2022,

at the Iberê Camargo Foundation and the Ling Institute. We watched the seminar on YouTube and then transcribed the material. The Iberê Camargo Foundation seminar brought together 13 experts to discuss Magliani's work. In addition to the seminar, a large and unprecedented exhibition in homage to the artist Maria Lídia Magliani took place. The exhibition, which is still ongoing as we write this text, was curated by Denise Mattar (SP) and Gustavo Possamai (RS) and brought together more than 200 works from more than 60 collections, including Brazil's major museums such as the Museum of Art of Rio, Afro-Brazil Museum, Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo, Museum of Modern Art of São Paulo, MAC-USP, MAC-RS, Santa Catarina Art Museum, MARGS, Leopoldo Gotuzzo Art Museum (Pelotas), and Vera Chaves Barcellos Foundation (Viamão) (Barcelos, 2022). We discovered that the artist produced continuously and also burned, tore, and destroyed works that did not correspond to what she wanted to express. Magliani herself stated that what she tore from canvases in her life would be enough "to make about five solo exhibitions" (Iberê Camargo Foundation, 2022).

As narrated by the journalist Angélica de Moraes, the curator Denise Mattar did a mapping work of the territory by creating a clear and delineated cartography of Magliani's work, finally constructing an exhibition to redeem a debt that Brazilian art history owes to Magliani's work. The first conversation, involving friends and experts in Magliani's work, took place on March 19 at the Iberê Camargo Foundation and was divided into three sections, starting with the art curator Denise Mattar and cultural journalist Angélica de Moraes. This stage included the presence of the gallery owner Tina Zappoli, visual artist and coordinator of the Magliani Nucleus Júlio Castro, and visual artist Maria José Boaventura. The second round of discussions occurred on March 21 at the Ling Institute, also segmented into three parts. The event began with presentations by journalists Paulo Gasparotto, Juarez Fonseca, and Omar L. de Barros Filho, and then gathered art dealer Renato Rosa, painter Romanita Disconzi, journalist Antônio Hohlfeldt, theater director Luís Artur Nunes, and playwright Julio Zanotta Vieira.

In the 1950s, or in 1955, the nine-year-old girl Magliani, from the poor Sarandi neighborhood of Porto Alegre, drew attention with her box of paints in hand, apron, and easel, walking with her family for picnics in the surroundings and looking for landscapes to paint. She had already scandalized her neighbors by drawing charcoal pictures on the boards of the surrounding fences of long-haired nude women. At that time, she was four years old and confessed to the authorship with great pride.

Maria Lídia Magliani (1946-2012) was a black woman who graduated in visual

arts from the Institute of Arts-UFRGS in 1967. In 1969, the artist attended the lithography course at the Atelier Livre of Porto Alegre City Hall. The artist worked in drawing, printmaking, scenography, created illustrations for newspapers in Porto Alegre and São Paulo, and designed book covers and posters. Magliani was involved in theater, acting in plays like "La Celestina", by Rojas, "As Criadas", by Jean Genet, and "O Neguinho Pastoreio", by Delmar Mancuso. In the testimonies collected at the seminar, organized by the Iberê Camargo Foundation, her colleagues stated that Magliani, in the 1970s, devoted herself intensely to theater, where she did a lot of different things; designed costumes, acted, and created programs for the theater. Maria Lídia illustrated the program for the play "Toda Nudez Será Castigada", by Nelson Rodrigues, directed by her friend Renato Rosa. The articles of the time emphasized that she had a strong stage presence. In 1977, she moved to Rio de Janeiro, where she later passed away. In 1980, she moved to São Paulo and went through Minas Gerais. Printmaking was an important technique for the artist, who did not have the means to maintain her own studio.

Renato Rosa, an art dealer, informed us that he closely followed Magliani's work, that is, her entire evolution, from her first exhibition in 1965, held at the Espaço Gallery (RS). So when they began to do theater, they found shelter to develop their dreams in that time of hippie love and "with hope of defeating the darkness", referring to the dictatorship. One of the plays that Rosa did with Magliani was "As Criadas", by Jean Genet, a play that Rosa did not want to do because the director, Miguel Grant, wanted to use a black choir for the play. At that time, as Renato Rosa narrated, Maria Lídia and Rosa were "harassed by the poet Oliveira Silveira".[1] For Silveira, both Magliani and Renato Rosa would be crucial to the cause he was defending because they had prominence in Porto Alegre society. Oliveira Silveira had a thesis that Rio Grande do Sul, South Africa, and Alabama were extreme points, and in these points, the great racial revolution would explode. (Iberê Camargo Foundation Seminar, 2022).

[1] Oliveira Silveira was a Brazilian poet (1941-2009), born in the rural area of Rosário do Sul (RS), with a degree in Literature from the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS). He was one of the founders of the Grupo Palmares, where he conceived National Black Consciousness Day (November 20). He was an award-winning poet, a high school Portuguese and Literature teacher, a journalist, and a Black Movement activist, participating in groups such as Razão Negra and the Comissão Gaúcha de Folclore. He also served as an advisor to the Special Secretariat for the Promotion of Racial Equality of the Presidency of the Republic (SEPPIR/PR). Oliveira Silveira published articles and reports in publications like the Movimento Negro Unificado newspaper and contributed to collective works such as the essay "Vinte de Novembro: História e Conteúdo" (November 20: History and Content), published in the book "Educação e Ações Afirmativas" (Education and Affirmative Actions) organized by Petronilha Gonçalves.

Source: https://www.ufrgs.br/oliveirasilveira/.

Rosa and Magliani didn't like that speech, they reacted and ran away from Oliveira Silveira. Neither of them were militants. Despite not denying themselves as black, they saw themselves "on a broader level" and didn't want to be reduced to the "ghetto of a handful of people", they wanted to mix, "conquer more and more space".

At that moment, they were invited to join the chorus of Jean Genet's play in a garage on Santo Antônio Street in the Bonfim neighborhood in Porto Alegre. During the play, Rosa acted as a sort of chorus leader, directing the actions of the chorus. Maria Lídia was his co-star, and the couple simulated a love relationship, making noise with the zinc sheets. Rosa and Magliani covered the voices of the actresses on stage, including Araci Esteves, Vargas Stopos, and Simone Fontoura. In reality, what Magliani and Rosa did in the play was to cover the voices of the actresses, and the production did not pay them any fees. Therefore, the two artists used the noise of the zinc chorus as a form of protest.

Years later, in 1970, Maria Lídia starred in "O Negrinho do Pastoreio", directed by Ildemar Mancuso, and participated in "La Celestina", directed by Luiz Arthur Nunes. As Renato Rosa narrated, this was Maria Lídia's involvement in the theater. Another interesting testimony to consider in thinking about Magliani's role in the theater was given by director Luiz Arthur Nunes. He said he couldn't remember the exact moment he met Magliani, but it was in the late 1960s when they were young aspiring artists. In this context, they took their first steps in the various art forms: Magliani in the visual arts, Caio Fernando Abreu in literature, and Luiz Arthur Nunes in theater (Seminar at Fundação Iberê Camargo, 2022).

Luiz Nunes said that theater was always close to Magliani. He considered that Magliani's personal image, as well as her themes and compositions, formed intensely theatrical paintings. The same can be said about Caio Fernando, whose fiction was often filled with theatricality. Caio acted in several productions in Porto Alegre, wrote several plays, which justified the publication of the "Teatro Completo de Caio Fernando Abreu" (Complete Theater of Caio Fernando Abreu). Maria Lídia also worked as an actress and designed sets and costumes featured in the exhibition at Fundação Iberê. Nunes believed that Magliani was an interesting figure on stage. She was beautiful, slender, and knew how to use her physical attributes.

> Looking back, while she worked as an actress, her talent as a visual artist, which always focused on the human figure, instinctively guided her to create expressive images with her own body. Thus, the actress and the visual artist merged. This brings us back to the idea of a vocation to offer herself as a spectacle, performing in life, sometimes as an existentialist muse, other times

> as the lady in lilac, and on the stage as the characters in the plays. This is the essence of the theater actor's craft: giving oneself to the audience as a spectacle, and Maria Lídia Magliani mastered this (Seminar at Fundação Iberê Camargo, 2022).

Magliani worked as an illustrator in the 1970s for newspapers in Porto Alegre, and when she moved to São Paulo (SP), she returned to this field once more. From 1980 to 1989, she produced art in São Paulo, and in 1985, she exhibited at the São Paulo Biennial. In 1982, she gave private painting lessons, and in 1985, she taught at Santa Marcelina University. She didn't earn much from her teaching activities and found them exhausting. The artist would have preferred to make a living solely from her art and complained about the lack of a professional art market in Brazil. It appears that Magliani was the breadwinner for her family, and gallery owner Tina Zappoli stated that the decline in sales of the artist's works was partly due to her wandering lifestyle and not being able to manage her finances during the "fat times". In letters exchanged with her friend Renato Rosa in 2006, the artist complained about being in a miserable place, referring to São Paulo, without friends and lacking the means to pay for her food and transportation (Vargas, 2020, p. 139). At the seminar hosted by Fundação Iberê Camargo[2], Denise Mattar stated that Magliani often lamented her inability to "monetize her own work", something that continues to be an issue for artists today (Seminar at Fundação Iberê Camargo, 2022).

Denise Mattar also recounted that in 1993, the artist Iberê Camargo stated in an interview with Veja magazine, "I wasn't born to play with figures, to make trinkets; I paint because life hurts". Mattar believed that this statement could have been written by Maria Lídia, whose work, in many aspects, converges with Iberê's. Both artists chose an expressionist style and were unconcerned with being in or out of fashion. During her research for the exhibition about Magliani, Mattar found a letter from Iberê Camargo to Magliani in which he said, "We both have the same goal, the same ideal, and the same devotion". Thus, with reference to the Magliani exhibition at Fundação Iberê Camargo, "We have the blessing of the owner of the house" (Seminar at Fundação Iberê Camargo, 2022).

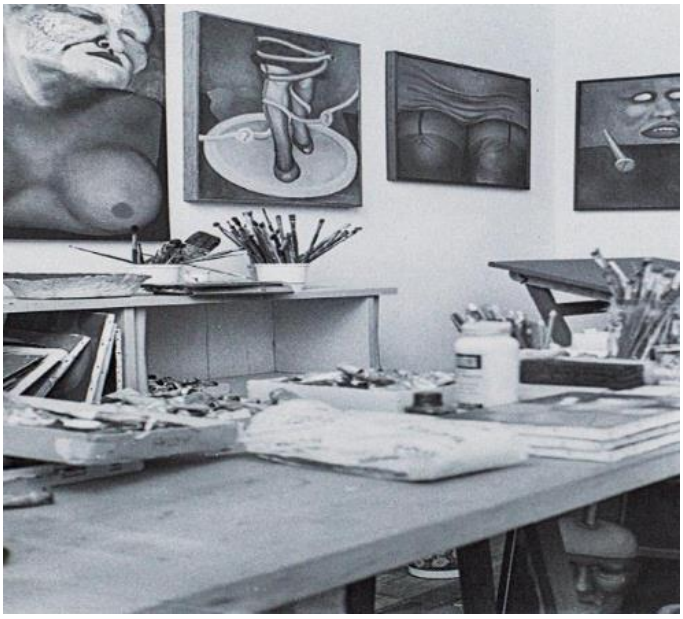
Angélica de Moraes, while reading a work by Magliani, considered that the high emotional voltage themes characterize a modern sense of tragedy, "but also the

[2] Link to the first meeting of the seminar on Magliani and her work:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3reHW0Hky1o: link do segundo encontro do mesmo seminário https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R3lAFMCLuY0

contemporary perception of the dead-end". She emphasized that Magliani's art is an expression of loneliness, abandonment, romantic mismatches, and reveals the crushing weight that stifles and wounds unshared emotions. (Seminar at Fundação Iberê Camargo, 2022)

The artist worked as an illustrator and created several series such as "Anotações para uma história" (Notes for a Story), "Objetos de Cena" (Scene Objects), "Brinquedos de armar" (Toys to Assemble), and "Cartas" (Letters). In some of these series, the artist combined collage with painting and presented figures in a state of oppression, with their mouths covered, as a metaphor for the absence of freedom. In the work, characters appear tied up in strings and objects as if they were in an experimental condition, suggesting a lack of freedom and thought. These figures convey a sense of loneliness, even when they are in the company of others (Vargas, 2020, p. 133).

Image 4 – Studio, untitled, undated



Source: Catalog of the exhibition at the Fundação Iberê Camargo, v. 1, p. 26

As per Rosane Vargas explains, Magliani produced continuously for five decades and turned human beings and social and individual issues into raw materials. Oppression, loneliness in urban centers, and the physical and emotional degradation of the human being were at the heart of Maria Lídia's vast production. Thus, the artist highlighted twisted, deformed, tied, and imprisoned figures in everyday life, and even when she addressed sensuality, she explored its oppressive and controlling symbols. From the beginning of her career, sparsely detailed, geometric human figures with elongated heads

and necks were central to the artist's works. Words were also present in the texts she illustrated, the letters she exchanged with friends, as well as in her poems. For Magliani, the artwork should be the sole source of dialogue with the viewer. The work should communicate without the artist's subsequent mediation and would be the "only form of writing concretized by color" (Vargas, 2020, p. 133). Magliani expressed her discomfort with the need to explain her work:

> I don't separate the artist from the person. I am all but a knot – my choice is to paint; I wouldn't know how to be otherwise. Apparently, I did and do many other things, but, in reality, they are all parts of one thing: painting. All I want at this moment is to paint, and I have difficulty understanding why there is so much talk about a language that doesn't belong to the world of words. I don't understand the need for words to authenticate or explain an image, one language depending on the other. I think it's important when people talk about what my work stirs in each person, regardless of their culture or background. It's me who wants to ask, not to explain. It's not me who has answers, but maybe each of us finds their own, as long as they listen and keep asking. I prefer to listen, to know how others see, and to know in what way or to what extent I am adding or not. My language is the image, the form, the search for my own alphabet through color. What I think and develop is in my work, and what I try to decode is redundant. My word is my music, my dance is there; if it's not clear, it's because I haven't known how to convey, or others haven't known how to see. I do my part and want those who live with the result to show me how it affects them, to present their own conclusions. An exchange? Your eye - my hand (My language - Vargas, 2020, p. 133).

As Magliani stated, her work aimed to express her human condition. Despite significant financial difficulties, she made visible the personal universe of an artist who lived and created within the context of restricted civil rights and the gradual political opening of the country. Writer Sergius Gonzaga made the following remarks about the issues explored by the artist:

> Magliani's art has the density of an oppressive nightmare. I think these works should be seen from another angle: that we discover in them the allegory of our time, a kind of metaphor for a period of deformation and debasement of the human being. To a historical universe of authoritarianism, violence, corruption, and impunity corresponds an art open to the caricature, the ugly, the sordid. A revealing art, despite its symbolic language, the degree of objectification to which we were subjected - Magliani's beings necessarily refer us to the reality that made them possible. What we call social art. In short, never seek adornment for the dining room in Magliani. The color where the eyes and consciousness of the objects she produces rest is charged with such visceral force, possesses such a denunciatory charge that it precludes bourgeois delight or indifference. To know Magliani's art is to predispose oneself to injury (Gonzaga, 1979).

Like many other artists, Magliani lived through the period of dictatorship and produced works within a context that specialized critics consider as political art. In Brazil,

artists like Antonio Dias, Artur Barrio, Hélio Oiticica, Cildo Meireles, Lygia Pape, and Anna Bella Geiger, among others, also denounced the experience of horror and the hardening of the military regime. The military dictatorship lasted for 21 years, from 1964 to 1985, and the period of increased repression (1969-1974) forced several artists to leave Brazil. The military regime promoted violent acts such as torture and assassinations, as well as censorship of the media, including the artistic community. Therefore, some artists abandoned their art and engaged in political activism.

Starting in the 1980s, various feminist movements gained strength in Latin America, as did urban and rural workers' movements, black movements, gay movements, and ecological movements, all of which began to claim spaces for dialogue in democratic construction. The political opening brought a new perspective to the art market, providing greater creative and thematic freedom. As argued by Tvardovskas, to this day, the number of art critics and curators who incorporate the specificities of women's artistic creation, particularly their proposals for the political debate on the construction of public spheres and subjectivities, remains limited. The historian stated that the discourses of art critics and historians have discredited the artistic production of these new social actors. The concept of political art was associated with the activism of the 1960s, and the new ways of discussing and reflecting on contemporary challenges were stigmatized as depoliticized. Thus, the art produced in the 1990s, for example, which incorporated "subjective" themes like the body and sexuality, was derogatorily called "pink art" and "*light* art" (Tvardovskas, 2015, p. 206).

Although she did not identify as an activist, the artist contributed illustrations to alternative press, such as the newspaper *Versus* (1975-1978), a publication that opposed the dictatorship. She also contributed to the magazine *Tição* (1978-1982), which addressed issues of racism. It is worth noting that the artist participated in exhibitions with a racial focus. She was part of the exhibition "*Três Pintos Negros*" in Porto Alegre, along with artists J. Altair and Paulo Chimendes. Magliani also participated in the exhibition "*A Mão Afro-brasileira*" (1988) at the Museum of Modern Art in São Paulo, an exhibition organized by the artist Emanoel Araújo. In 2015, Magliani and Rosana Paulino were part of the exhibition "*Territórios: Artistas Afro-descendentes no Acervo da Pinacoteca*", in São Paulo (Vargas, 2020, p. 141).

Omar Barros Filho, a journalist who worked with Magliani at *Folha da Manhã* of Porto Alegre, in São Paulo, was a reporter for *Jornal da Tarde* and the newspaper *Versus*. Magliani worked throughout the existence of the *Versus* newspaper (São Paulo). Omar

considered *Versus* to be one of the most important newspapers in the Brazilian press at the time, a newspaper that addressed "the issue of the dictatorship and democratic freedoms" and placed Brazil on the map of Latin America. The main focus of the newspaper was to encourage Brazil to look at Latin America with less disdain. Omar Filho recounted that one day, Magliani appeared in the *Versus* newspaper's newsroom, in an old house in Pinheiros, between Rebouças and Teodoro Sampaio, carrying a folder "loaded with images and illustrations" to be published in *Versus*, comprising about 29 or 30 images. Some of these images were published in the *Versus* newspaper.

During the dictatorship, the situation was quite complicated, and, according to Filho, Magliani was a "lucid and conscious woman". For him, bringing the drawings to the *Versus* newsroom was not just a political act; it was "a political manifesto", especially because the newspaper, more than any other, paid a lot of attention to the issue of the liberation of African countries such as Mozambique, Angola, Guinea-Bissau, countries that experienced revolutions against colonialism and white hegemony. In other words, the fact that Magliani went to the newspaper to deliver the images to Omar represented, for him, an act of courage in the face of the military dictatorship. Magliani signed her illustrations. Omar concluded that this action by the artist eliminates the discussion about whether Magliani was politicized or not. He believes there is some confusion in interpreting this issue, considering that she might not have been part of a partisan politics but shared a "human and humanitarian vision that politics should have" (Seminário da Fundação Iberê Camargo, 2022).

After Magliani's visit, a group of black journalists was created. In *Versus*, the journalists established a newspaper called *Afro Latino América*, and this group became the nucleus of the Unified Black Movement (MNU). In Omar Filho's words, the MNU changed the Brazilian state's policy toward the black population. The *Afro Latino América* newspaper was relaunched, including by the Perseu Abramo Foundation. The *fac símile* edition of this newspaper reproduced what had been previously published about the movement with Magliani's complicity, as Filho emphasized. The journalist made the following point about Magliani's illustrations: "Those who look at Magliani's drawings know that when the drawing addressed injustice, she depicted characters from the plays she drew as Black". During this time, Black individuals were marginalized in the Brazilian press. So, Maria Lídia characterized her characters as Black. Omar believed that art critics have poorly written and reflected on the racial issue in Magliani's work and understood that even if the artist had said, "I don't want to be called black", it doesn't

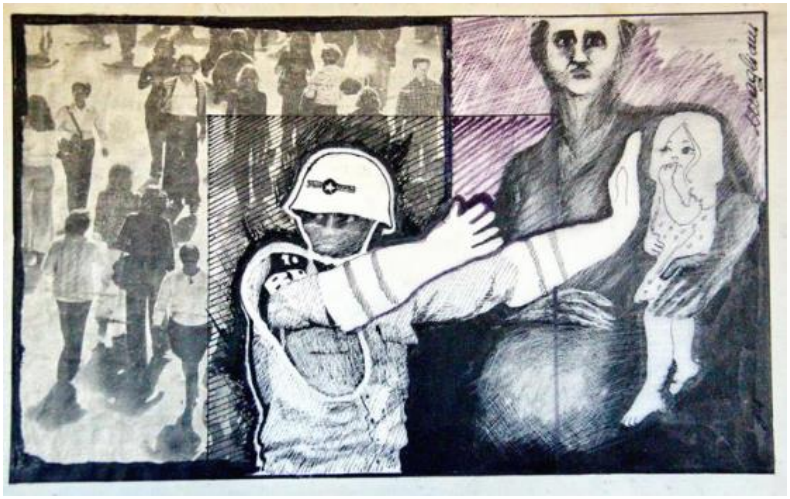
prevent us from racializing her work.

It's worth noting that Lélia Gonzales and Maria Lídia Magliani were both involved with the "*Mulherio*" newspaper, which was of great importance to the national feminist movement. While academic research often highlights the role of the significant intellectual and activist Gonzalez, Pamela Guimarães da Silva noted that Lélia Gonzalez was the only woman on the editorial board of the "*Mulherio*" newspaper and wrote a column called "*Negra*", which consisted of five articles published between 1981 and 1982 (Guimarães, 2012, p. 195). We still lack research that reveals whether there were any connections between Maria Lídia and Lélia Gonzalez. The "*Mulherio*" newspaper addressed political topics such as the Diretas Já movement, the 1982 elections, discussions about the Constituent Assembly, as well as issues related to domestic democracy, women's status in the labor market, sexuality, and abortion. Luanda Dalmazo wrote that Maria Lídia Magliani was not indifferent to social issues. She produced content for activist newspapers, opposing the military regime and supporting the Black movement. In 1982, she created illustrations advocating for women's causes, for the "*Mulherio*" newspaper. (Dalmazo, 2018).

To provide information about the situation of women in Brazil, researchers from the Fundação Carlos Chagas (São Paulo) founded the "*Mulherio*" newspaper in 1980, which existed from 1981 to 1988, when it became "*Nexo, Informação e Cultura*" (Nexus, Information and Culture). In the sixth issue, there was a section on violence that featured work by Magliani. Many artists at that time did not identify as feminists, but they engaged with feminist issues in their work or addressed feminist concerns. During the military dictatorship, given other priorities, criticism and the media propagated the stereotype that feminist art was limited to nudity and associated this feminist art with more radical works by American artists like Hannah Wilke and Carolee Scheemann. (Dalmazo, 2018, p. 36).

In the illustration that Magliani created for the "*Mulherio*" newspaper, she emphasized the issue of violence. In it, we can see a woman being squeezed by a hand that represents men, society, patriarchy, capitalist pressures of beauty, and consumerism. The illustration portrays a woman trapped, in an expression of torment and outcry. The illustration accompanied a text by Inês Castilho that discusses issues such as rape, victim-blaming, the difficulties of reporting the crime, and the traumas caused by such violation (Dalmazo, 2018, p. 37). It's also worth noting that Angélica de Moraes informed us that Magliani was a reader of Angela Davis.

Image 5 – untitled, undated



Source: https://www.nonada.com.br/2021/11/a-trajetoria-de-maria-lidia-magliani-artista-pioneira-que-questionou-as-imposicoes-ao-corpo-feminino/

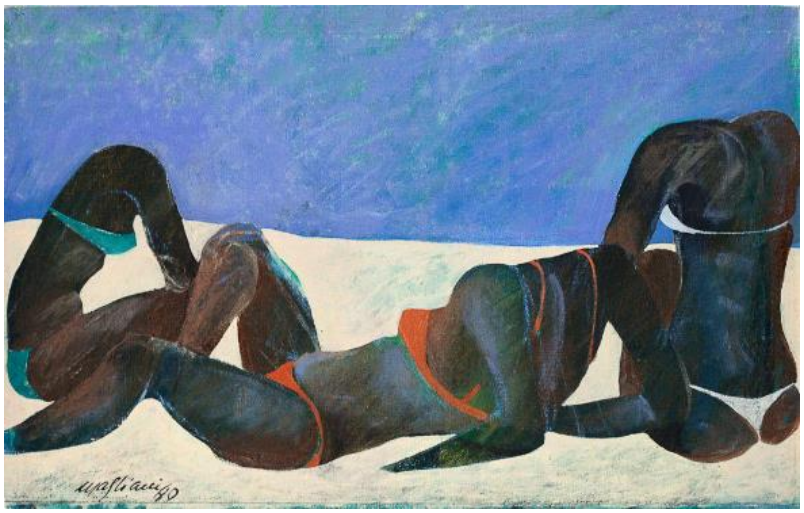
Image 6 – Reproduction from the 1982 Mulherio Newspaper, illustration by Maria Lídia Magliani

Source: Jornal Mulherio de 1982

A portion of Magliani's work allows us to address the issue of the solitude of the body, a representation that is sometimes female and black. The artwork with three headless black female bodies from 1970, untitled, depicted on white sands, invites us to contemplate the imagery of the myth of black female hypersexuality and bears resemblance to depictions of black women's bodies by the artist Hector Bernabó Carybé. Isis Abreu argued that Magliani's work was a reflection of herself, of the ideas that shaped her throughout her life, including issues of Black identity and ecology. From this standpoint, the artist positioned herself as a political subject who questioned the feminine elements in the social imaginary. In the words of Isis Abreu, in the Blogueiras Negras website, "it's as if her headless women or her overweight women aimed to break free from

the solitary muteness of centuries of oppression of Black femininity" (Abreu, 2017).

Image 7 – Artwork by Maria Lídia Magliani, untitled, 1970



Source: The Pinacoteca Aldo Locatelli Collection is located in Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil.
https://www.estudiodezenove.com/izis-abreu.html

In the work "*A dívida impagável*" by Denise Ferreira da Silva, she teaches us to think about the black female body by discussing the perspective of the formula *racial Body = value + excess*. In this subtopic, she asks whether the female body can guide the reading of the colonialism, capitalism, and patriarchy triad. In these concepts, she argues, operate global ethical-juridical structures and their instruments, such as human rights programs. Ferreira further expands our reflections on the body by arguing that she does not address the sexual as a social category, a common approach in texts on the black female body. In her view, this approach limits a broader matrix analysis, in this case, an analysis related to the power apparatus when the body is rejected as a possible site of political existence. She understands that the female sexual body, within modern knowledge, is seen as a more prolific signifier of excess. In the version of historical materialism, this body has and is determinant of profit value, meaning that black people and other workers do not have a place in the ethical-political self-narratives of colonial and national (post-colonial) legal-economic architectures. Therefore, the sociologist traces the unrepresentable female sexual body as a figuration of excess, considering that both nationally and globally, this body was and is exposed, without resolution or apology, to the violence of racial/colonial subjugation (Ferreira, 2019, p. 62).

In another part of the text, while elucidating the black body as a producer of political existence and demystifying the central role of the Black subject as the generator

of violence in historical scenes, she explains that, using the tools of reason, the black feminist poet must look beyond thought, where historicity, mapped by the tools of universal reason, has always produced violence. She reminds us that the force of the signification of "blackness" hindered our attempts to reveal the immorality of total violence, which was responsible for ensuring the expropriation of the productive capacity of the black and enslaved body (Ferreira, 2019, p. 62). In Denise Ferreira's thesis, the black body expresses the equation "racial other - surplus value". She noted that women's bodies entered narratives about racial violence in the legal, economic, and ethical records of conquest, slavery, and patriarchy, meaning they are part of narratives of domination, servitude, marriage, and rape. Therefore, the sexuality of the female body refers to power that does not correspond to sovereign power. In Fanon's narrative, it is colonial power that appears as the generator of violence. In this sense, the female body is and has always been—already defined as a symbolic and economic fact—as an object, another, and a commodity (Ferreira, 2019, p. 62).

We also understand that there is no single black female imaginary or a global female experience. Therefore, we can inquire about Magliani's female imaginary. As early as 1980, the Black feminist movement, known as Geledés (Instituto de Mulher Negra de São Paulo), fought for rights and denounced violence against their bodies and subjectivities. They also aimed to affirm Afro-Brazilian experience and culture and provide support to women who were victims of domestic violence. Suely Carneiro, while presenting the role played by black feminists, emphasized that the struggle of black women against gender oppression brought new contours to feminist and anti-racist political action. The new feminist and anti-racist perspective, by integrating the tradition and the fight of the feminist and anti-racist movements, affirmed a new political identity based on being a Black woman. The Black movement of the 1980s exposed the contradictions resulting from the variables of race, class, and gender, promoting a synthesis of the struggles raised by both Black and women's movements.

As Luana Tvardovskas pointed out, in Brazilian culture, the bodies of Black women were systematically targeted by brutal and sexist discourses. Artist Rosana Paulino, for example, reacted to these models by marking her art with "traces of revolt", to use Tadeu Chiarelli's expression. Perhaps the expression "traces of revolt" is not suitable for thinking about the Black bodies depicted by Magliani. Here, we attempt not to use the grammar of the colonial counter-narrative to interpret Magliani's works. We also make an effort not to demand from the artist an activism that even white and mixed-

race women, with time and international experience of struggle, have not been able to undertake in Brazil.

In further dialogue with Denise Ferreira da Silva, we find ideas that allow us to understand Magliani's resistance to racialize her works, perhaps trying to avoid the role of the artist as a "native informant", as a subject of empirical anthropology, or to construct a poetic approach that problematizes the ideal of humanity. In the text "*Estado Bruto*", Denise Ferreira suggests that cognoscibility could refer to the position of the contemporary global art appreciator. In other words, in this case:

> the appreciator can occupy the position of transparency, while the artist (as well as the forms and matter of the work) would occupy the position of enunciation of the subject as the affectable self, that is, the racial/global subaltern produced by the tools of raciality (racial and cultural difference). In other words, the artist would occupy the enunciation position denounced by Spivak as the "native informant", either by finding in the work a form (social or cultural) that implies knowledge of diversity or by attributing the vacated purpose of expressing other dimensions of what is unified under the idea of the human (Ferreira, 2019, p. 48).

As Denise explained, when embarking on creative work, the first step of a Black feminist poetics is to identify and dissolve the operations of separability in defining the transparent subject. The step toward decomposition involves exposing the modalities of Kantian grammar. For Denise, this grammar targets the links (implicit or explicit) between art and its ideal of humanity. Artistic perspectives, such as Rancière's aesthetic regime based on notions of equality, along with Kant's ideal of humanity, do not provide a starting point for reflecting on work that is not taken as the expression of that ideal.

During a lecture at the "*Pemba Residência Preta, Arte Brasileira, Racialização e Dissidência*" event at Sesc[3], Denise Ferreira da Silva was asked by Patrícia Alves about her views on the relationship between aesthetics and decoloniality and the potential repercussions for reorganizing an art system. Denise Ferreira responded that we are seeing European countries, especially former colonizers, developing artistic works as part of a decolonial policy. She emphasized that she did not know if decoloniality has the capacity to explode the art system and change it. She believes that it might be possible if artists radicalize and has seen artistic proposals moving in this direction. In conceptual terms, Ferreira stressed that she does not often use the term decoloniality in her research because she works at the level of philosophical thought and activates decoloniality as a task, as an

[3] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W6hFYZCL4u8

impossibility since decoloniality demands radical changes at the core of society.

However, she believes that if decolonization is applied in the direction of justice and begins to guide everything we do in society, then she will believe that decolonization can change things. (Ferreira, 2022)

The performance "*Axexê da Negra ou Descanso das Mulheres que Mereciam ser Amadas*" by artist Renata Felinto is a work that promotes this approach to decolonization. This work can be read as a ritualization of aesthetic practices and experiences carried out by a Black artist. In it, Felinto performed "the burial of the collective spirituality of Black women" who were wet nurses in slave-owning Brazil. During the performance, the artist buries the photo of "*A Negra*" by Tarsila do Amaral as a critique of the reverence given by the history of Brazilian art to modernist models that carry within them the racist genesis of the slave-owning elites and a Eurocentric epistemology. As noted by Fernanda Carrera and Daniel Meirinho, the affective ritual makes us think about the abducted and violated lives of Black women who deserved to be loved in body and soul. Following the rituals of Candomblé, the ritual allows us to consider the burial of stereotypes and stigmas reinforced by the images of control over Black figures that adorn the homes of traditional Brazilian families. As Carrera and Meirinho explained, "In a reverse anthropophagic movement, the artist symbolically proposes the return to the earth (of the Black body) in a process of reterritorialization of subjects who share knowledge, resistance, and beliefs in transformation" (Carrera; Meirinho, 2020, p. 78).

Talita Trizoli recognized the imagery influence of Fellini's cinema with his obese matriarchal women, as well as the medieval grotesqueness in Magliani's production. It is worth noting that the depictions in Magliani's paintings and drawings had a convergence with her physical structure, which reinforces the idea of an exchange of affections and defects with the images. So, even when the artist chose to intensify the condition of a grotesque body through the depiction of obese figures, she emitted her critical power. These ideas can be problematized in the interview she gave herself:

> Maria Lídia, who in the previous series, "Passantes", emphasized the movement of the character, approaching their agile, thin, dynamic physical type, is now accentuating the obese type, which gives the idea of elasticity. The artist says: "Well, I really want this squashing. I think the rounded shape gives an idea of the grotesque that I want to explore. In this sense, it continues to be a self-portrait, but now it is more of an inner vision. All of us can be fat and unlikeable monsters like those ladies. It's like a reflection but a mirror from the inside out. Those who were frightened by my previous exhibition, don't be afraid anymore. I don't want you to recognize yourselves, it's important. My mother, for example, recognizes it externally because she is fat and thinks that all fat people are a portrait of her. But what I paint is not the portrait of anyone

specifically, even though it can be that of many people. It's also one of the possibilities of being us, our inner portrait" (Trizoli, 2018, p. 161).

Image 8 – Untitled, undated

Source: Catalog of the Iberê Camargo Foundation, 2022, v. 2, p. 33.

Image 9 – Untitled, 1978

Source: Catalog of the Iberê Camargo Foundation, 2022, v. 2, p. 36.

Denise Mattar reported that Magliani's sister, Graça Magliani, spoke with the educational team of the Iberê Camargo Foundation's exhibition and mentioned that the figurative series of nude, overweight women represented their mother, Eugenia Magliani. She mentioned that Maria Lídia would ask her mother to pose nude for her drawings, and her mother would respond, "Look, I'll obey you, my daughter, you're a bit crazy, so I better obey". In the 1970s, Magliani's paintings and drawings often featured nude, voluptuous female bodies, often fragmented, emphasizing breasts, buttocks, thighs, vulva, abdomen, sometimes intersected by everyday objects like forks, knives, and glasses. With the artwork "*Elas*", the artist won the Acquisition Prize of the First Drawing Week of Rio Grande do Sul.

As the artist explained, the series "*Elas*" was meant to be a kind of "interior portrait of each of us", with the intention of making the overweight women suffocate the viewer. Later on, she aimed to make these figures function as mirrors. She used a kind of musical poetry to express the meaning of her series with overweight women: "It's a mood like that song by Belchior ('A Palo Seco'): 'I want this crooked singing/ to fall like a knife/ on you'" (Iberê Camargo Foundation, 2022, p. 10).

The grotesque elements that characterize part of Magliani's aesthetic categories were present in the system of representation of modernist artists. According to Giulia Crippa, the grotesque is a category inscribed in art history, defined by the presence of strange, fantastic, and unreal elements. These elements are combined in the construction of aspects of reality while also revealing a distancing from it. The grotesque often engages in dialogue with the comic category, and it represents "the unnatural through the strange, the fantastic, and the surprising". (Simioni, 2022, p. 70)

Crippa suggested that the works of artists like Frida Kahlo, Tarsila do Amaral, and Tamara de Lempicka can be read through the lens of the grotesque. Simioni argued that the category of the grotesque is historically situated and concurred with Crippa, noting that in the works of the aforementioned artists, the female body is taken as a space for discussion and problematization of dominant discourses on femininity, beauty, sexuality, and eroticism. In these representations, the bodies are not in a passive condition or simply as erotic objects meant for the male gaze.

Several artists adopted nudity as a strategy to enter the field as moderns. In Mexico, Frida Kahlo and Maria Izquierdo worked in this direction in the 1930s. Both were wives of painters; Kahlo was married to Diego Rivera, and Maria Izquierdo was married to Rufino Tamayo. They adopted Tehuana clothing as a way to emphasize the

traditions of ancestral indigenous peoples and chose to work on the body as a medium for political discourse. Frida chose to work on the body in a referential way, while Tamayo canceled her identity in favor of a more abstract and collective representation, emphasizing her own mixed racial identity. Racial elements were present in the color and volumetric aspects of the body in Tamayo's artwork "*Alegoría del Trabajo*", as well as in the facial features of the female figure. "According to Zavalla, a specialist in the artist's production, her participation in Mexican modernism involved a critical interpretation of tradition in a gendered reading" (Simioni, 2022, p. 76).

Luana Tvardovskas, while discussing readings of the artist Alice Neel, prompted us to think about the "dismantling of identities" in Magliani's works, including those related to Black female identities. The historian explained that some female artists, when working with the body, intensified the dismantling of identities while expressing complex levels of self-invention. Therefore, we can observe a deconstruction of the body as a critique of rationalism, as seen in various surrealist artists' works. The movement of deconstruction also leads to the fragmentation of gender categories. "If women have been historically defined around their bodies as incapable of rationality, this focus on one's own body does not indicate, as one might think, a depoliticization of artistic discourses but a new political understanding of spaces of intimacy" (Tvardovskas, 2015, p. 204). These ideas allowed us to consider the fragmentation of the category of Black women in Magliani's works, as well as a dialogue with images that deny humanity and superimpose the bodies of Black women.

Returning to the topic of the body, Ana Paula Simioni explained that building a career as a modern artist meant developing negotiation strategies in relation to social expectations of femininity. Artists had to master the techniques and themes of modern times. Artists mastered a central theme, which was painting nudes. Understanding the artist's relationship with the representation of the human body is important for modern artists. This point, as Simioni says, laid the groundwork for the birth of feminist art historiography. Linda Nochlin, cited by Simioni, argued that women's absence from art history is linked to their exclusion from the academic system, and, on the other hand, women played a central role as live models and were relegated to less valued modalities such as genre painting, landscapes, or still lifes. Painting landscapes or still lifes was seen as amateurish (Simioni, 2022, p. 53).

The body was viewed through moral prohibitions that pursued women. Consequently, female sexuality was perceived as dangerous and inappropriate for the

"weaker sex". On the other hand, in the 19th century, the female body was the subject of representations and productions that reinforced virtues, projected heroic imagery, and created lascivious fantasies. In 19th-century art, it was from the 1870s that the painting of nudes invaded the salons. Simioni identified four typologies related to women artists and the representation of the nude female body. The first was linked to avant-garde strategies, exemplified by Suzanne Valadon and Jaqueline Marval. Suzanne Valadon drew and painted female nudes like her male colleagues and masters such as Renoir, Toulouse-Lautrec, and Degas. With Degas, she shared an interest in common body positions and intimate character. The movements derived from everyday activities such as bathing, combing hair, and undressing (Simioni, 2022, p. 54).

Various women artists acted in Paris between 1900 and 1945 by addressing the issue of the body. Beyond painting, the body was also a theme in performing arts and dance. Josephine Baker, for instance, conquered Europe and the United States, becoming the first internationally renowned Black artist with bodily expressions that raised questions about the intersection of gender and race within the context of colonial domination. A group of artists used the body as a medium for transgression, which is what we know today as performance art. We must remember artists like Mercedes Baptista (1921-2014), who was born in northern Rio de Janeiro and had lessons in classical ballet and folk dance at the school of dancer Eros Volússia, known for her exploration of folk dances.

Mercedes Baptista performed in the Dance Corps of Theatro Municipal and gained recognition for her exploration of various rhythms and dances, including maracatu, candomblé, jongo, frevo, capoeira, samba, cafezal, congo, among others. She also attended the dance school of the dancer and anthropologist Katherine Dunham (1950), who nourished Mercedes with African dances and contemporary ballet. Subsequently, the dancer founded her Afro-Brazilian dance company. In the 1960s, she collaborated on the parade of the Salgueiro Samba School in Rio de Janeiro and was a choreographer for the Vanguard Commission. Mercedes also dedicated herself to teaching, serving as a dance teacher at the School of Dance of Teatro Municipal in Rio de Janeiro. In the United States, she conducted a dance course at the *Connecticut Center in New York*. Her life story was depicted in Lilian Solá's documentary, "*Balé Pé no Chão - A dança afro de Mercedes Baptista*" (Barefoot Ballet - The Afro Dance of Mercedes Baptista).

Magliani, in the text from the Fundação Iberê Camargo catalog, shared some

thoughts about recognizing herself as a Black woman and criticized those who believed she should be an activist Black artist, as highlighted in this passage:

> Your problem is cultural; you are too distant from your origins, 'assuming' that you are Black, you must (ARG!) have a defined political role, a position within the context (I'm choking on laughter while remembering these things), your painting shows a bourgeois influence, a dangerous alienation that serves the values of capitalism. You are perverted by the values of white society. I'm taking you to a dance hall! (Iberê Camargo Foundation, 2022).

This quote appeared shortly after the sentence "Characters in the painting: well-intentioned friend, disinterested critic, starry-eyed gallery owners, colleagues with varying intentions", as if Magliani had heard such criticisms about her not being recognized as Black from one of the "characters in the painting", or perhaps from a "well-intentioned friend". She reaffirmed that others were attempting to control her person and artistic production. "The form of racism that I suffer most acutely (not now, for a very, very long time), in addition to domestic and daily racism, is the one that starts from the premise that, being Black, I am "naturally" incapable of managing my life, my work, my ideas and, therefore, 'need to be protected'. Directed". (Iberê Camargo Foundation, 2022).

Jacques D'Adesky, citing Grada Kilomba, made us consider the paradox of everyday racism. The researcher pointed out that in recent decades, the understanding has spread that race is a false concept, even though we admit that racism continues to be experienced and manifests itself in daily life as an updated form of past colonialism. In this sense, it appears that everyday racism is not a violent event in an individual's biography, and at the same time, the accumulation of violent events reveals a historical pattern of racial abuse, involving not only the horrors of racist violence but also the collective memories of the trauma of slavery (D'Adesky, 2022, p. 154).

The individual exhibition "My Baby Just Cares for Me", by Magliani, was organized by Júlio Castro, who brought artists from *Estúdio Dezenove* and some collectives from Rio de Janeiro for urban art actions in Brussels during the same period as Europalia Brasil. In the brief text from the catalog titled "Não quero ser fatiada", (I don't want to be sliced) we find the expression used by the artist, along with other ideas narrated by Magliani:

> Due to differences in appearance, people have been biting and devouring each other for so long that they no longer remember why or when it started. There are more and more (closed) doors between us. The more the internet connects

> us with the world, the further apart we are from each other. Ghettos are becoming increasingly specific - each one on its own shelf: classified, labeled, tagged, and individually packaged, like slices of cheese. What does 'afro-gaúcho' mean? Like **all plagues that come from the United States (united?)** and are accepted and incorporated by us without question, the need to fragment everything also seems to me imported and unexamined. Why do we have to compartmentalize people according to their origins? And in Brazil, where every family is the product of such varied ancestries? Descending from blacks and whites: Africans, Spaniards, Germans, and Italians. I'm not afro-gaúcha, ibero-gaúcha, teuto-gaúcha, or italo-gaúcha. I'm Brazilian, born in Rio Grande do Sul. That's enough. I don't want to choose a race based on the color of my skin. I don't want to be sliced, divided into portions; I accept myself as a whole (Iberê Camargo Foundation, 2022).

Engaging with the phrase "Like all plagues that come from the United States and are accepted and incorporated by us", we agree with the artist's criticism of American imperialism. However, we also understand that the Afro-American anti-racist struggle can be seen from another perspective, as it has much to teach us, raising awareness of our situation of *apartheid*, sometimes seen as veiled racism. The struggles of Afro-Americans for citizenship, well-being, and survival served as inspiration for black organizations in Brazil, such as the Unified Black Movement Against Racial Discrimination (MNU). Even though we may not agree with compartmentalizing people based on their origins, we cannot deny that we live with divisions of class and race. Reflecting on this has led black organizations and activists to create strategies for implementing public policies. This would be a good point to examine the historical demands of Brazilian black movements and the impact of these demands on the construction of public policies for the black population. So, we continue to explore the issues of blackness and feminism in Magliani's work based on the interview she gave to João Tiburski:

> Tiburski: What about blackness, feminism, and ecology in your work?
>
> Regarding the ideology of blackness, there is a serious misunderstanding: the movement does not deny the white color or any other, it only affirms the rights of the black race, still forgotten even in a mixed-race country, and demands equality for all races. My work expresses or intends to express me as a whole. Therefore, it includes all my discoveries, doubts, and concerns - including feminism, ecology, and blackness. It encompasses all the things that have shaped me up to this point, but I'm not interested in promoting any specific movement. I put my ideas into practice; I don't like proselytism. I'm always interested in the essence of humanity, which is not divisible into creeds, races, and ideologies. Being a person of black color doesn't interfere with my painting in any way, and I don't understand people's concern about this aspect. It's my turn to ask: why does it seem so exceptional that a black person paints? Why is the racial background of white artists never mentioned? Why do they always ask me what it's like to be black and be an artist? Well, it's the same as being any color. The paints cost the same, the framers give the same discount, and the brushes wear out just as quickly for everyone. The difference is made by the media. It's normal to be white, and, therefore, it's natural for white people

> to do everything. But when it comes to a black person, it's treated as something fantastic, a phenomenon - the monkey that paints! I don't like that. (Santos, 1979).

Angélica de Moraes, analyzing Magliani's body of work, reaffirmed that the main focus of Magliani's work is humanity in general and not just a slice of humanity. Expanding on this idea, Angélica explained that Maria Lídia discussed this issue assertively and uncompromisingly. During the seminar at the Iberê Foundation, the journalist made the following narrative to encourage us to think about racialized interpretations of Magliani's works:

> [...] I apologize for delving into this controversial issue, but Magliani is controversial. I observed that she had a very difficult relationship with the leaders of the black movement because the black movement insisted that she should illustrate things, focus only on the racial issue. I'm not saying that it's a small issue. It's perhaps the hottest issue in Brazilian society, but there's a much bigger issue than this. It's the right of a black artist to express herself as a human being in any way she wants. I think she goes a step beyond all this increasing assertion of the inclusion of black culture in Brazilian general culture (...). I wanted to say this: I would be **reductionist and a traitor** if I tried to use her art, Magliani's art, to call for a debate on race. She doesn't just deal with skin; she deals with living flesh. It would be very comfortable to appropriate the timeliness and urgency of racial debates (...). This battle is necessary; I won't diminish the merit of its importance. Magliani cannot be reduced and considered flawed in this kind of issue. She went beyond because, at the moment she asserted herself as an artist, without adjectives, she went further in the struggle, I think. I am speaking from the perspective of a white person... (Iberê Camargo Foundation Seminar, 2022).

We notice a certain restlessness from the audience present at this seminar, especially from Black women, in hearing that we are betraying a black artist by racializing her artistic productions. Those betrayed by history in terms of the racialization of the body were the Black population anywhere in the world. The genocidal events of slavery, colonization, apartheid imprinted the mark of racialization on the Black body, especially when they were judged, by the 19th-century scientific theories, as degenerate. Neusa Maria Pereira, during the Iberê Foundation Seminar, asked journalist Omar Filho if Maria Lídia Magliani had difficulty recognizing herself as Black. We researched who Neusa Pereira was. We found that Neusa is a Brazilian journalist who was part of the Unified Black Movement and works in journalism dedicated to issues of blackness and trans. In 2010, she was responsible for the publication of the "Jornal *Escrita Feminina*", with the aim of reaching marginalized Black women.

We consider that the impact of the racialization of the Black body in Brazilian society is evident in the statistics of the genocide of young Black people and the femicide

faced by Black women. Some of Magliani's friends argued that in Magliani's time, things were more peaceful because “everyone walked together”, trying to say that there were fewer conflicts between Whites and Blacks, almost affirming that it was the time of Brazilian racial democracy. What seems evident to us is that the harmonious atmosphere experienced by Magliani with her friends in the artistic community did not fully reflect the context of racial relations in Brazilian society, which has always been marked by violence and anti-black sentiment.

We found another text in which Magliani talks about the fragmented humanity, racialized art, and the black artist:

> My work has nothing characteristic in that sense. I am concerned with life, with humanity in general. Nothing to do with a specific race, religion, nothing. One thing that is common to everyone. Human essence is the same for all. That's what matters. All the other additions: nationality, color, ideology, creed, sexual preference, football team, all of that is accessory. There are people who have ideas completely contrary to mine, yet I get along with them.
> There is a whole movement of people trying to pigeonhole me as a Black painter. Or that my painting is like this because I'm Black, because it's a protest and such. It's none of that. In fact, my problems of acceptance in this regard, my racism problems, happened more with other blacks than with whites. First, everyone complains, 'we Black people can't achieve anything in life because white people won't allow it.' Then, because white people don't allow it, nobody does anything because White people won't allow it. So, everyone gives up. And they don't do anything. I know there are pressures. But it's not a permanent thing, always: there are racial pressures, just as there are pressures between men and women and vice versa. But it doesn't mean it's all the time, every day. This is also a factor to overcome...
> People come to me and say they wouldn't have the courage to live with one of my paintings. Those who usually buy them are other artists, musicians, teachers, people of the same generation as me who see the identity and agree with my work. I also never considered my art to be popular. No, none of that. I have certain paintings to paint, and how the idea will be presented is another thing, another problem. I can't worry about this issue because there are no conditions for popular art to exist. People are not interested in art. Everyone is in the INPS (social security) line or worried about food. A guy who earns two thousand a month doesn't have the emotional or intellectual space for it. Possibly not even for his own expression. There was a time when carpenters, on weekends, made little toys for their children. Musicians played without commitment. The tinsmith made ornaments for the neighbor. At that time, there was space for occupiable leisure. People went out for walks with their children, people had a free mind to exercise their own type of expression. It doesn't happen anymore. The guy has to think 25 hours a day about how he's going to eat the next day. So, there's no room to think about art. (Iberê Camargo Foundation, 2022)

The following sentence, “There, because White people don't allow it, no one does anything, because white people don't allow it”, allows us to agree with Magliani in the sense of reclaiming and promoting a political stance in our existence, our power of self-determination, and historical protagonism. When asked if she painted Black women,

Magliani responded to Carlos Scarinci in the *Diário do Sul* newspaper in 1987:

> Magliani started her career in 1960 with strong illustrations, but now the central theme is identity, more precisely the identity of genders and not color. She explains: 'I make many figures of masked women from all over the planet. My friends ask me why I don't paint Black people, and I reply that I paint them in color, in the color of no one, not racial color, but color. Not an African woman, nor a Brazilian woman, but the woman.' And when a critic once insisted that her voluptuous female figures be Mama Africa, Magliani replied: 'You know nothing about my work.' She struggles to go beyond the boundaries that others set for her. It is probably for this reason that she is working on the theme of masculinity and femininity. It is a matter that concerns her for both ideological and personal reasons. It transcends racial or national problems. She also grapples with her own identity: 'Some Black people criticize me, saying that my work is not Black, but I don't know how to paint Black. I have seen African art, masks, clothing, jewelry – and it is different. I am not African. It is difficult here in Brazil because some Black artists think they should paint in a way that can be identified with Black art, and others do the same to be considered Black.' At the same time, she supports aspects of black consciousness and explains that 'everything is very mixed here. How does one choose? It depends on circumstances and opportunities. I could choose to be Black, Italian, Spanish, German, Catholic, or Jewish – all are parts of my hereditary background. It is very difficult in Brazil, unlike the United States, where you are no longer separated. All Brazilians have a mixture of races, there were no conditions to separate us. Racism is difficult to expose here, it exists but is very subtle... The sum of everything I am is in my work, and that's what I want to show (Iberê Camargo Foundation, 2022).

It's worth reflecting, considering the phrase "everything is very mixed here", that there is indeed no racial purity among populations. However, our mixed heritage didn't erase our blackness; black bodies are still identified as black, especially in everyday scenes of racism. Even if Magliani recognized her other identity facets beyond being Black, we can consider that dark-skinned Black women are seen primarily in terms of their African heritage? In Brazil, when we approach the icons of Black identity, marked by skin color, hair, and noses, we are treated as Black in the negative sense of the term. Ultimately, the Black race operates in the social world, occupying the peripheries of this universe. In her text "Solidão", (Loneliness) we find more reflections from the artist herself, expressing how she thought about the issue of the Black artist's loneliness. In her words:

> What I would like to know is if this loneliness is truly broken when one has an exhibition, for instance. What worries me is that this loneliness, in my case, has various implications. For example: the fact that people expected me to be a primitive artist may mean that this path should be mine simply because I'm black. In Brazil, racism exists in a very subtle way; it manifests at a very faded level of paternalism, but it does exist, and we feel it. As almost all primitive artists are black, and I'm black, they wanted me to be a primitive artist. That way, I would receive help, I would enter the art market, etc. And then, on the other hand, those of my own race also isolate me because I don't convey pro-black messages in my paintings. So, you see, I'm isolated from both sides: for

> white people, I should be black, for black people, I appear to be white. In the end, all I really want to do is paint - it seems like no one wants to give me a chance (Iberê Camargo Foundation, 2022).

The artist complained about being criticized because her paintings do not reflect racial issues, and she positioned herself as follows: “I criticize all repression, whether it's racist, physical, sexual, or class-based. Just because I'm black doesn't mean I will only address the problems of my race. That would be accepting a division I don't agree with. My concern is with people, whether they are white or black, rich or poor, heterosexual or homosexual”. Magliani referred to engaged art as decorative art, as seen in her reflections: “I believe in the validity of decorative art; it provides conditions for people to feel good. However, my path is different. I seek to express a worldview, an awareness of reality. I don't want, with this, to adopt a professorial stance; I'm just providing a starting point for discussions, for an awakening”. (Iberê Camargo Foundation, 2022).

When talking about the construction of her painting career, Magliani commented on racial barriers and pointed out the existence of a “black paranoia” as a result of racism:

> When someone manages to break through all the barriers – the racial problem, plus the economic problem, plus the internal problem of black paranoia, seeing everything as racism; when you manage to overcome everything and do what you want, what happens? Then, the whole black community says, 'She sold out to the whites. She's white.' It's ridiculous. People get lost in incredible discussions. On the one hand, black people use you as a myth because you're the one who succeeded – so you have an obligation to be a myth. And on the other hand, those who want to impose on you the obligation to 'elevate your brothers of color.' Since you've made it, you have to help others. And there are black people who think you've gone down all the steps because you sold out to the whites. There's always someone who's going to think something. Let them think. I'm not going to waste time on discussions because they're very circular, they don't get anywhere. And because, while you're discussing this kind of thing, it seems like you're taking action. I prefer to stay here, quietly, with my paintbrush, which is my action. That's my action. It's not about arguing in group meetings. My action is painting. And I paint.
> I used to tell people who stopped me on the street that they could do it too, they just had to want it. If you have the desire, do it! Freedom is also exercised, right... If, on the other hand, this was the reason, there's a bigger one. Then we get into a topic I don't like very much, which is the famous issue of racial prejudice. Suddenly, I become a very rare exception, you know? There's a whole set of things expected from a black woman. The most positive thing is for her to be a shop assistant or a nurse. Then, a black woman painter appears, which, for many people, seems exotic. In reality, they are revealing a very significant prejudice. So, it creates folklore that I sometimes find very amusing. Sometimes, it deeply irritates me. But I don't worry so much about it. (Iberê Camargo Foundation, 2022).

We do not consider that engaged or racialized art is inferior to non-racialized art. An important question we could raise in this debate is whether activist artists did not

deeply discuss humanity in their works by addressing Blackness. Looking at the Harlem Renaissance movement, for example, we can see that the thematization of Blackness involved affirming the humanity of African Americans and their own ancestry in that context of racism and racial unrest. In Brazil, for instance, can we think that Wilson Tibério, an engaged artist, fragmented his art by "racializing" it? Why did the art critics downplay the importance of engaged art so much in this seminar on Magliani?

In the Harlem art movement, African American intellectuals and artists argued that most Black visual artists did not portray Black themes in their work. They avoided doing so for several reasons. The central reason was that White patrons were not interested in and dismissed the racial issue. In this context, the development of a Black patron audience for the artistic class was slow. Like Magliani, African American women artists such as Augusta Savage and Meta Fuller, while depicting racial issues since they worked as illustrators for The Crisis and the Urban League's Opportunity, also criticized the role of engaged artists. In literature, this issue was also hotly debated. Prominent female writers addressed the issue of engagement in artistic work. Jessie Fauset, for example, who collaborated with activist and intellectual William Edward Du Bois, constructed a character in her first novel "There is Confusion" who encouraged her friend to create Black art. When asked why, the protagonist responded, "Because I am... don't you think I want to shed?... by no means. But I want to show it to the world. Of course, I'm Black, but first American. Why shouldn't I speak to all of America?"

Du Bois, for example, in his 1926 article "Africa's Answer", tended to connect the arts of Africa and the diaspora and believed that the sense of beauty was a gift that Africa gave to the world. To him, the "primitive art of Africa" was one of the best expressions of the human soul of all time. George Robert Arthur, an African American associate of the *Fundo Para o Bem Estar Negro* (Fund for Black Welfare), wrote these words to Augusta Savage, asking her to continue portraying Black people:

> I hope you will continue to work mainly with black models. I also hope that you try to develop something original, born of a deep spirituality that, as a Black woman, you must feel when portraying modern Black themes. I also hope you don't get too imbued with European standards of technique, they will kill the other something that in my opinion some Black person will eventually give to American art, perhaps in sculpture, perhaps in music, painting, or literature. Anyway, learn the culture and technique of other races, but don't simply be a copy of them at the cost of your own originality. In my opinion, there is only one field in which the Black has an equal opportunity to the white man in American life, and that is art. If he follows even the standards of white Americans, who sometimes copied them from Europe, then at best, the Black can only be a copy of a copy. Perhaps this is why so much bad work is put out

by our men (May 28th, 1930) (Herzog, 2014, p. 20).

Augusta Savage, when reflecting on the depictions of her Black Amazons, said that it was African in sentiment, modern in design, and, among other things, original. The work "*Divinité Nègre*" was one of the few works produced as a direct response to Alain Locke, a philosopher and patron of the arts, who encouraged her to take African American art as inspiration. However, Savage would later assert that she was against the theory that African American black people should produce African art. She shared the following view: "For 300 years we had the same cultural background, the same system, the same standard of beauty as white Americans. In art schools, we used the same Greek artistic models. We studied the small mouth, the proportions of facial features. It is impossible to return to primitive art for our models". Savage added that "there are certain inherent traits and characteristics that often occur in the work of black artists that can approach the primitive, including a sense of rhythm and spontaneous imagination". "*Divinité Nègre*" also appeared as a Buddha in the leg pose and with multiple limbs as in Hindu culture. It seems that Savage invented her own African divinity using multiple sources.

Initially, we felt some discomfort in writing an article to promote a racialized debate about the art of Maria Lídia, not to go against the artist's anti-militant stance or to respect her memory and her artistic production that we admire so much. Then, Pollock also taught us that we cannot reinforce the idea of the sanctity of artists or art as an inexplicable sphere. In this sense, she said that general culture is permeated with ideas about the individual nature of creativity, about how genius overcomes social obstacles, about art as an inexplicable, almost magical sphere that should be venerated and not analyzed. These myths were produced by art history ideologies and then disseminated through TV channels, popular art books, and biographies of the lives of some artists, such as "*Lujuria de Vivir*" about Van Gogh, or "*La Agonía y el Éxtasis*" about Michelangelo. Pollock provided the following explanation for this idea: "Taking from the bourgeoisie not its art, but its concept of art, is the precondition of a revolutionary debate" (Pollock, 1988, p. 57).

As Rosane Vargas explained, citing Griselda Pollock, it is common for female artists to bear the weight of being "women artists", as the word "woman" is generally seen negatively. Lucy Lippard understands that art has no gender, although artists fall within the gender category. In comparative terms, we can say that art has no race or ethnicity, but artists are seen through these categories. In other words, being a female

artist carries weight in society, just as the racial burden weighs on black artists. Recognition was important for Magliani, just as it was important not to be placed in "little drawers" (Vargas, 2020, 140).

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