

## **The Cargo-Cult Phenomenon of Geometric Abstraction in Brazil 1947**

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My story is about traveling, about transfér and illusions of power. It is also about a fascination for abstract art by a Brazilian élite who, supported by U.S. and French art interesa will, in order to boost the idea of liberal progress, bring to Latín América a concept of the modém based on the traditional utopian socialist Geometric abstraction. This exchange between France-USA and Brazil will, even if successful, be a difficult and misunderstood one.

The paper discusses the mounting interest shown by a series of élite groups in Latín América for geometric abstraction during and immediately following world was II. It will provide an historical analysis in order to grasp what was at stake in ttits intemational cultural ballet which saw París, New York, Sao Paulo and Rio articulating a defense of modernity through a certain set of paintings and a specific modernist styie, £ar from the prevalent emotional and expressionist type of painting then fashionable in the major centers of the western world, a telling choice, I contend.

My discussion will focus on the problematic introduction of Geometric abstraction into the Brazilian art world, its signification and its vitality as well as its radical transformation in this specific context and its reappearance in Europe in the 1960's under another form, this *time* represented as a Latin American phenomenon dazzling the Parisian art scene.

This example will help understand what is usually at stake in cultural exchanges, and pinpoint the political and ideological discourses traveling through such esthetic constructions never separated from a struggle for power in a wide network of relationships.