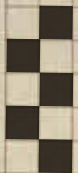


art  
exchange

León Ferrari  
Hudnilson Jr

ESCALA  
Essex Collection of Art from Latin America

ART OF  
DIS-  
PER-  
SION





***'In uniform societies, art's job is dispersion. In a market and a system that looks to expand itself, art should not retreat into exclusive uses and original techniques; it should introduce, through expansion and multiplication, using the most routine techniques, a sense of the ephemeral and the plural'***

Nestor García Canclini,  
*Art is Made in Photocopies*, 1982

***'Xerography in São Paulo was always about an insistence to disseminate, circulate and, ultimately, connect [...] with others at the margins'***

Mari Rodríguez Binnie,  
*Dissident Bodies*, 2019

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Exhibition curators:  
Dr Sarah Demelo  
and Diego Chocano

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Art of Dispersion brings together the work of León Ferrari and Hudinilson Jr, two seminal artists from Brazil's oft-overlooked Xerography movement of the 1970s–1980s, a movement which appropriated commercial printing techniques such as Xerox photocopying to create and reproduce artworks. This exhibition examines how their artworks served simultaneously as a means for institutional critique and as a means towards socio-political emancipation. Despite their repeated collaboration throughout this period, this is the first exhibition to focus exclusively on their works.

Xerox introduced photocopiers to Brazil in 1966 as part of a bureaucratic military regime's attempt to modernise Brazil. By the late 1970s, artists co-opted this technology, seeing in its capacity for mass reproduction a source for political and institutional resistance. Artists such as Ferrari and Hudinilson Jr attempted to use the photocopier, by making limitless copies of their works, as a tool for the democratisation of art; a way for the masses to experience it outside of codified art spaces.

These artists, however, were not only interested in institutional critique. With these techniques, they saw the radical potential to bypass censorship and bring light to oppression occurring in Brazil's military dictatorship. Artists created works which were radical by the very nature of their reproducibility – the technology of photocopying allowed the works, and their radical messages, to be circulated outside the gallery and therefore beyond the reach of the government, creating alternative networks of communication.

The purpose of this dispersive strategy, in which artworks were reproduced *ad infinitum*, extended beyond self-referential, institutional critique to a socio-political sphere – a key characteristic of Latin American Conceptualism. Despite this, works from the Xerography movement are notably underrepresented within the region's well-explored canon of conceptualist art practices.

The rise of authoritarianism and censorship in Brazil within the last five years has created renewed interest in this movement, however this field of study is still nascent. Drawing from work held in ESCALA, this exhibition will take up the call by scholars and curators for further, more focused, study to be carried out on Xerography from Brazil by focusing on two of its most prolific practitioners. It situates their practice within Latin American Conceptualism, ultimately arguing for a place for Xerography within the canon.

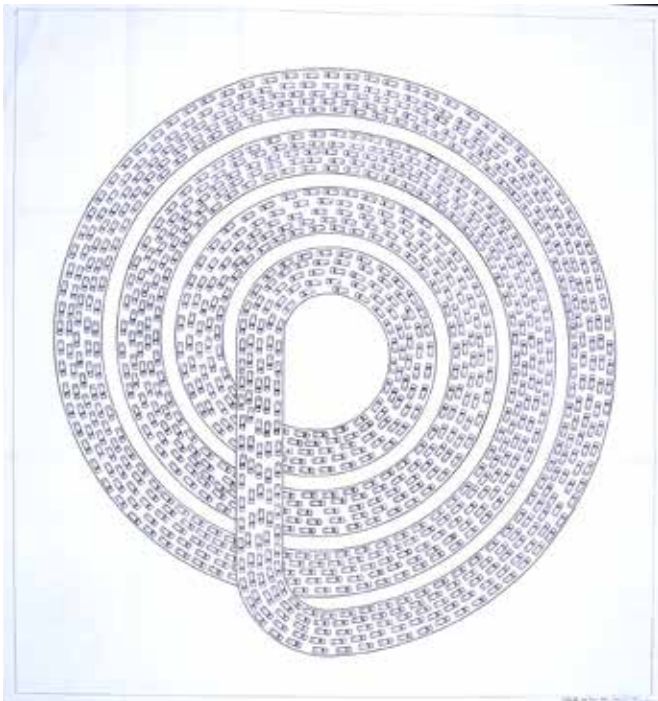
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**León Ferrari**  
***Autopista del sur / Southern motorway***  
**(1982/2000)**

Diazotype on paper

*Autopista del sur* is part of Ferrari's *Architectures of Madness*, a series of prints which take the form of architectural plans. Made during the years of his exile in São Paulo, Brazil, Ferrari took inspiration from the megalopolis and the bureaucracy of Brazil's military government to create narratives of distressing chaos.

This print depicts an endless road in the form of a spiral packed solid with cars, with no beginning and no end. The work takes its title from the short story by Argentine writer Julio Cortázar describing the absurdity of a peculiar circumstance in which hundreds of cars get trapped for months in a traffic jam.




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**León Ferrari**  
***Pasarela / Footbridge***  
**(1981/2000)**

Diazotype on paper

As in *Autopista del Sur*, Ferrari finds inspiration in the maddening traffic of the megalopolis to create a narrative of distressing chaos. Each of Ferrari's plans were reproduced using heliography – an architectural practice – in order to create infinite numbers of the same original. Reflecting Ferrari's desire to make access to these architectures unlimited, and thus to excise any material value from their status as works of art, Ferrari folded each reproduced plan and sent it through the post.

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**León Ferrari**  
***Cidade / City***  
**(1980/2000)**

Diazotype on paper

*Cidade* depicts a set of subversive architectures filled with anonymous, chaotically behaving characters. Ferrari signals the absurdity of modern life and the complex relationship between madness and order that is a part of it.

Although inspired by São Paulo, with its vast network of roads, bridges, and spaghetti junctions; filled with queues of traffic and innumerable people, this plan also acts as a critique of the established parameters of order and their relation to political power.

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**León Ferrari**  
***Bairro / Neighbourhood* (1980/2000)**

Diazotype on paper

Bairro is one of the larger plans within the *Arquitecturas de la locura* (Architecture of Madness) series and appears to zoom in upon one section of *Cidade*. The artist employs readymade printing stamps to create labyrinthine networks of streets and blocks; there is even a roundabout complete with a meeting taking place at its centre, with bureaucrats seated around a large conference table.

The faceless, anonymous bodies in this monumental print stand in stark contrast to Hudinilson Jr's intimate depictions of his own body.

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**León Ferrari**  
***Rua / Road* (1980/2000)**

Diazotype on paper

From the same series as *Cidade* and *Bairro*, *Rua* depicts a section of an imaginary city. This is a birds-eye perspective on a dwarfed city, hundreds of impossible situations are seen from above. This street contains corridors and rooms displaying fragments of hectic but incomprehensible life: rooms with beds at the centre are converted into places of pilgrimage or corporate meeting rooms; rows of people queue up to arrive while other rows of people seem to be simply waiting for something to happen.

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**León Ferrari**  
***Cruzamento / Crossing* (1981/2000)**

Diazotype on paper

Ferrari again uses readymade characters representing men and women, seen from above and posed as if walking. Their repetition creates an improbable situation, with diminutive people walking vertically and horizontally in a cross-like formation.

Occasionally provoking criticism and censorship, Ferrari has used icons and references to Christianity throughout his career and this particular image evokes not only a physical 'crossing' but also the foremost symbol of Christianity: The Cross.

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**LEÓN FERRARI (1920–2013)**

Ferrari is regarded as one of Latin America's most significant contemporary conceptual artists.

Born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, Ferrari did not receive formal artistic training, but studied engineering at the University of Buenos Aires (1938–1947). Ferrari began to produce works that were politically active in intent but distinctly visual in composition. In 1965, he submitted the controversial sculpture *La Civilización Occidental y Cristiana* for exhibition in Argentina. This work, depicting Christ crucified on a US bomber, was censored from the show. In 1976, at the start of the military dictatorship in Argentina, Ferrari and his family were forced into exile in Brazil. While living in São Paulo, he created architectural plans to be reproduced using heliography and began to experiment with media such as photocopy, mail art, and video.

Ferrari's exploration of new media was linked to his involvement with a group of Brazilian artists, including Regina Silveira, Julio Plaza, Carmela Gross, Alex Flemming, and Hudinilson Jr. From 1984, Ferrari made periodic return visits to Buenos Aires, finally settling there in 1991. His work has been shown in over fifty international solo exhibitions and a large number of group shows around the world.

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**Hudinilson Jr**  
***Caderno de referência no***  
**58 / *Reference Notebook number***  
**58 (2001)**

Mixed media/book

Hudinilson Jr's work defies ready classification, and this piece is no different. It can be read as archival ephemera: the journal features the artist's daily appointments, pornographic material, and cut-outs of celebrities he admired. It can also be read as art – a work of collage that follows the ideology of many young Brazilian artists at the time: using the materials that were readily accessible, like magazines and newspapers.

It is telling that shortly after acquiring a series of these *cadernos*, the Museum of Modern Art in New York re-categorised it from archival material to a work of fine art.




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**Hudinilson Jr**  
***Sem título, from the series Espelha-***  
***me / Untitled, from the series Mirror-***  
***Me (1980s)***

Xerography on paper

A fixation with one's own image is a recurring theme in Hudinilson Jr's work and this piece, from a series titled 'Mirror-me' is undoubtedly a reference to Narcissus, the mythological figure who fell in love with his own reflection, by which Hudinilson Jr was deeply intrigued. The artist's oeuvre largely consists of photocopied images of his own body and consequentially, his work has been interpreted primarily as acts of autoeroticism and an exploration of vanity.

A focus on the medium, and the context within which this artwork was made provides a more nuanced reading. The military regime promoted an image of its citizens as heteronormative and obedient. Hudinilson Jr appropriates a symbol of the state's bureaucracy, the photocopier, to multiply his 'politically subversive body... reproducing what allegedly could not be procreated: his queer body.'<sup>1</sup> This dispersive strategy of multiplication is therefore not simply an exercise in vanity, it is an act of queer subversion.

<sup>1</sup> M Rodriguez Binnie 'Dissident Bodies: Materialising Xerographic Experimentation in São Paulo, 1970-1985.' *Third Text* (2019) 33:6, pp. 759-760.

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**Hudinilson Jr**  
***Sem título, from the series Zona de tensão /***  
***Untitled from the series Tension Zone (1980)***

Xerography on paper

The series *Zona de tensão* (tension zone) shows Hudinilson at his most overtly political. The most emblematic work of this series features an inked depiction of a penis with the words *pinto não pode* (cocks not allowed) stamped at the bottom, referencing the Brazilian military regime's censorship and repression of queerness. In this work, the artist doubles down on his appropriation of government technology, adding the rubber stamp, emblematic of government bureaucracy, to his practice.

In this untitled piece, Hudinilson Jr is similarly provocative, documenting his intimate performances with the photocopier, resulting in explicit images in which the artist simulates sexual pleasure. Illicit images such as these would have been reproduced through the photocopier and sent, primarily via mail, to artists and the public.

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**Hudinilson Jr**  
***Sem título / Untitled (1986)***

Xerography on paper

This artwork is another clear example of Brazilian Xerography's appropriation of state tools to disseminate subversive messaging. The wording in the work translates to 'certified copy of the original' referencing state identification documents. This playful 'ID' includes what one might expect to see in such documents – his fingerprints and a photograph of his face. The artist also includes images of his chest, his penis as well as a stamp of the name 'Narcissus,' a name with which the artist would often sign his artworks.

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**Hudinilson Jr**  
***Sem título / Untitled (1980/2009)***

Collage on paper

Throughout the military regime, young artists were forced to work with material and subject matter that reflected Brazil's lived reality and their limited resources. Many artists began working with magazines and newspapers, considered to be tools of the state, appropriating the media's imagery to comment on matters such as nationalism, gender roles, and the repression of homosexuality.

This collage features classical depictions of men's bodies, a recurring motif in Hudinilson Jr's work, alongside pornographic images of men. The more violent imagery takes centre stage – at once an unapologetic expression of sexual desires that deviate from societal norms and an allusion to the dangers that these desires present in an authoritarian society.

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**HUDINILSON JR (1957–2013)**

Hudinilson Jr is a multimedia artist considered to be one of the most important Brazilian artists of his generation.

Hudinilson Jr was an integral part of the Xerography movement in São Paulo, staging intimate performances with Xerox machines to create images that complicated traditional notions of abstraction and figuration. Although best known for his photocopy work, the artist also worked in performance, installation, graffiti and curated several exhibitions throughout the 1970s–1980s.

Hudinilson Jr died in 2013 at the age of 57. His work is in the permanent collections of institutions including the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Reina Sofía Museum and the São Paulo Museum of Art.

ESCALA is proud to be the first public collection in the UK to acquire his work.

# PUBLIC

# PRO- GRAMME

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## Lunchtime tour with curators Dr Sarah Demelo and Diego Chocano

25 February 2022

13:00 – 13:40

Art Exchange

Join Dr Sarah Demelo and Diego Chocano for a discussion on the history of Xerography in Brazil. The curators will examine the exhibition's artworks, its themes and the renewed importance of León Ferrari and Hudinilson Jr's work in Brazil's current political context. Alongside this, they will be discussing Hudinilson Jr's radical queer xerography as one which confronted the repressive and homophobic Brazilian dictatorship at that time

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## **EXPLICIT: The haptic visuality of Hudinilson Jr.'s desires, politics, and detours with Paulo Miyada**

17 March 2022

17:30 – 18:30

Via Zoom

The curator and researcher Paulo Miyada will talk about the life and work of Hudinilson Jr (São Paulo, 1957-2013), a radical artist who explored multiple media while experimenting with his own image, body, and performativity. A pioneer in using Xerography as an artistic tool, Hudinilson Jr. turned this archetypical bureaucratic device into a sensual gadget that produced a sort of haptic visuality by multiplying, fragmenting, overlapping, and enlarging the male body. His work can also be addressed as a constant (and queer) defiance of the moral and political normative that was violently reinforced by Brazilian society of his time.

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## Connecting at the margins: a discussion with Dr Eve Kalyva and Alice David

24 March 2022

17:30 – 18:30

Art Exchange

In this session, Dr Eve Kalyva (University of Kent) and Alice David (Courtauld Institute of Art) discuss the strategies employed to circulate art and ideas in the Xerography and Heliography movements of the 1970s – 1980s in São Paulo, Brazil. Dr Kalyva, a scholar on the work of Ferrari, will contextualise the artist's practice during this period, in which the artist migrated to Brazil to escape a military dictatorship in his native Argentina.

David will discuss her ongoing research into the countercultural artistic practices of 1970s – 1980s São Paulo with a focus on Hudinilson Jr. Together, they will discuss the roles both artists played within Xerography, an important but underexamined conceptual movement in Brazil.

The talk will be moderated by the exhibition's curators, Dr Sarah Demelo and Diego Chocano.

For more information about the artists and artworks in ESCALA, please see our fully digitised online catalogue: [www.escala.org.uk](http://www.escala.org.uk)

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