

# Capturing Brazil

Faulconer Gallery exhibit illustrates the urban Brazilian experience

by **Amanda Davis**  
 Staff Writer

Towers of vibrantly colored and transparent shapes emerge from the floor like huge columns of rock candy. Curving wooden sculptures vaguely resembling furniture careen at unexpected angles. A skateboard bears dozens of tiny human and animal figures, as if enacting a skater version of the Noah's ark story.

In past weeks, these curiosities have been visible through the windows of the Faulconer Gallery. Of course, they are more than simple curiosities. These and other works of art will be showcased in the new exhibition opening tonight, *Layers of Brazilian Art*.

The show, curated by Faulconer Gallery Director Lesley Wright, includes over 60 pieces by 24 artists whose work encompasses four decades of Brazilian art. According to Wright, a category as broad as "Brazilian art" encompasses more than just a geographical area.

"Given that we're living in a global world, a lot of the artists are very sophisticated and know a great deal about international art. It's not like they're just living in Brazil and not aware of what's happening in the

world," Wright said. "One of the big puzzles for me was how do I find art that's 'Brazilian?' So I ended up just looking for the best art that they're showing in Brazil by Brazilian artists, not necessarily picking art that looked quintessentially *Brazilian*, because how would you do that anymore?"

The decision to focus on Brazilian art was influenced by Grinnell alumnus and trustee Gregg Narber '68. Narber, who is on the Board of Trustees' Fine Arts Committee, studied as an exchange student in Rio de Janeiro and subsequently lived and worked in São Paulo.

When the Fine Arts Committee was planning an exhibition for 2003, Narber suggested contemporary Brazilian art and offered to act as a guide and host in Brazil.

As the title of the exhibition implies, the pieces themselves entail many layers of meaning. Wright pointed out several pieces that are physically composed of layers such as the rock candy-like sculptures, sculptures actually made of a conglomeration of transparent objects. They are called *Coluna de Transparência (Columns of Transparency)*.

Another dimension of the show's multiple layers involves the artists themselves. "I could have just chosen to do the youngest, most current artists,"

Wright said, "but I found that so many of them had studied under the artists who are now the older ones, that you couldn't really tell the story without having both some of the older generation and the younger . . . so there's a layering of generations as well."

When selecting pieces for the exhibit, one of the Brazilian aspects that Wright sought to capture was the country's urban energy. "I wanted to really announce from the beginning that this is not about jungle Brazil," she said. "This is about city Brazil."

The exhibit includes the work of some very "playful" artists, Wright said. To illustrate, she highlighted the Noah's ark skateboard, which is actually called *Missamóvel*, translated to mean "portable mass."

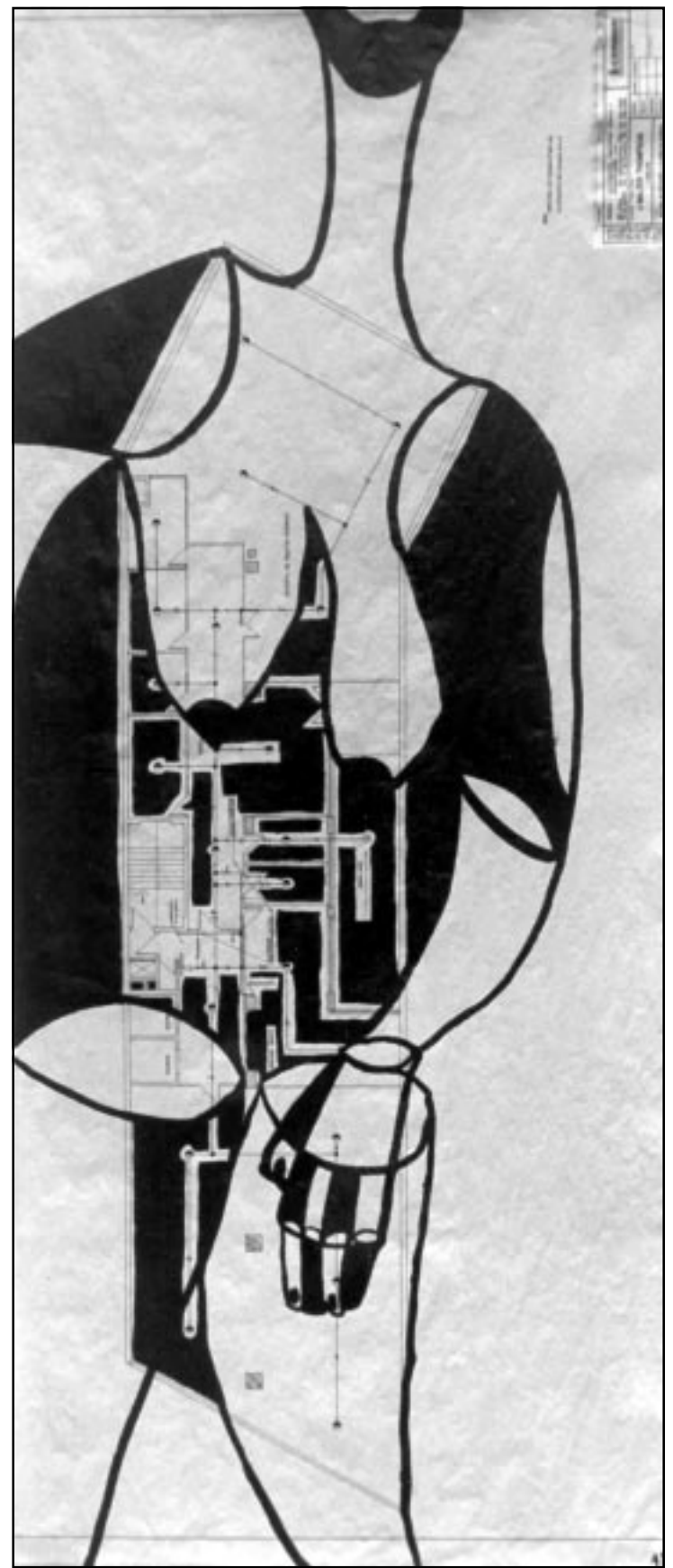
The figurines on the skateboard include both Mickey Mouse and a dashboard Jesus, symbols of the diverse influences on Brazilian art ranging from religion to commercialism.

Other works contain similarly familiar images arranged to create something more. One work, called *To Be Continued . . . (Latin American Puzzle)*, is composed of images of people and things such as Eva Perón, Carmen Miranda, Che Guavara, guns and fruit. "What the artist has done," Wright explained, "is taken all these images that are all our stereotypes about Latin America . . . and done them as puzzle pieces. And the owner of the puzzle can combine

*Brazilian art, cont. on p. 8*



Installation in progress for "Layers of Brazilian Art."  
 Left: "Dobra" by Regina Silveira (wood).



# Dancing for social justice

by **Katie Mears**  
 Editor-in-Chief

When Jill Peterson '03 and Barbi Rodriguez '02.5 joined dance troupe as first-years, they began a conversation and have sustained it ever since. They've been talking about dance and its potential role in furthering social justice movements. And now, three years later, their conversation will take form.

They don't know exactly what it will look like or where it will take place, but what they do know is what it will be about: the anti-war effort.

They considered other topics—the environment, death penalty, class inequality—but they kept returning to anti-war efforts.

"It's the immediacy of it all," Peterson said. "Everything else we threw around seemed not as urgent. [The war] is what people are talking about and thinking about and what needs to be commented about."

Peterson is taking an independent study entitled "Protest Dance/Theater" with Chris Connolly that will culminate in the

dance. "The goal," she said, "is to look at how art, theater and dance can work together to create images that directly impact or inspire as a form of protest."

Auditions will be held this Sunday and the pair knows exactly who they want in the piece.

"Everyone," Rodriguez said. Peterson agreed.

"We want people against the war," Peterson said.

"People with colds."

"People not afraid of controversy."

"People not afraid of being outrageous."

They say that auditions will be very laid back with a little bit of moving and a little bit of speaking and a little bit of filling out questionnaires about why they're interested

in the project.

Peterson participated in dance troupe her first three years at Grinnell and says she loved it, but felt that she was ready for a change. She feels the same about activism; she was heavily involved here at the beginning of her Grinnell career but has cut back to just FTP. She says she's "dried out."

She said that she sees this project as an ideal combination of both passions. "In staging a dance, you have an amazing amount of power to make that time [in the theater] forward the audience's social consciousness," she said. "You have this stage and you get to put on whatever you want."

Rodriguez was never as involved with

activist causes as Peterson, but she says she's very interested in how dance can be used to affect the audience. "With dance troupe, you don't leave people feeling all that different from when they came in," Rodriguez said. She's excited about the opportunity to infuse dance with political messages.

Whatever the exact form, Rodriguez and Peterson agree that the audience will play a crucial part. Peterson said that the audience's participation might be such that attendees don't even realize they're involved. "The audience can be used as a prop," she said, "where you're sitting and exactly how close."

Rodriguez and Peterson are not yet sure what form the dance will take. The space is still undecided—possibilities range from the steps of the state capitol to a stage in Fine Arts.

Whether it's an actual stage or someplace more abstract, the goal will be the same. "We'll be trying to take advantage of the stage as a space," Peterson said, "to communicate something beyond the dance."

## Auditions

**What:** Try-outs for "Protest Dance/Theater", an independent study by Barbi Rodriguez '02.5 and Jill Peterson '03

**Where:** Flanigan Theater

**When:** This Sunday, 7 to 9 p.m.

**Who:** Everyone is welcome

If you can't make the audition time, email Barbi at [rodriguez@grinnell.edu](mailto:rodriguez@grinnell.edu) or Jill at [petersoj@grinnell.edu](mailto:petersoj@grinnell.edu) to reschedule



## daisy chain

michael andersen and andrew phillips

On January 31, 1990, the first McDonald's opened in Soviet Moscow. Western journalists reported that thousands of locals lined up to spend the equivalent of several days' wages on hamburgers and French fries.

Early last year, the cheapest Big Macs in the world could be found in Argentina and South Africa, where they sold for the equivalent of less than a dollar.

"Mac" hasn't broken the country's 1000 most popular baby names in at least the last 50 years, but in 2001, 6836 newborn American girls and 170 newborn American boys were named "Mackenzie."

Canada's Mackenzie River, the longest in North America, was named for Sir Alexander Mackenzie. Mackenzie, however, referred to it as the "River of Disappointment," because it failed to lead him to a Northwest Passage to the Pacific Ocean.

In August, the journal *Science* reported that the continuing Arctic thaw could finally open a Northwest Passage through the Canadian archipelago in as few as ten years. Ships traveling between Europe and East Asia could cut up to 4,000 miles off their trips.

In 2001, 13,492 ships cut through Panama on their way between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.

The lowest toll ever paid for use of the Panama Canal was 36 cents, by adventurer Richard Halliburton when he swam the canal in 1928.

The myth of extraterrestrial life on Mars resulted in part from an English mistranslation of the work of Italian astronomer Giovanni Schiaparelli, who observed *canali*, or "channels," on the red planet in 1877—but later in his life, Schiaparelli himself became convinced that the structures had been built artificially.

Looking for corporate partners to help publicize John Paul II's 1999 visit to Mexico, the Vatican accepted donations from Frito-Lay in exchange for permission to produce commemorative bags of *papas fritas* bearing the papal coat of arms and containing a tiny photograph of *el papa*. A spokesperson for the snack company said the pun was "purely coincidental."

McDonald's is the largest buyer of potatoes, pork, and beef in the U.S. It is also the world's largest distributor of toys.

## Opening reception to be held tonight

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them in any order he or she wants."

The same artist created the pieces of sculpture resembling furniture. Walking around one of them, Wright pointed out the line of sight in which the piece stopped being vaguely recognizable and became quite clearly a ladder.

"If you stand in the right place it clicks and then you go around it and it's totally abstract," she said. "They're all about perception and what you can represent as reality and what you can't represent."

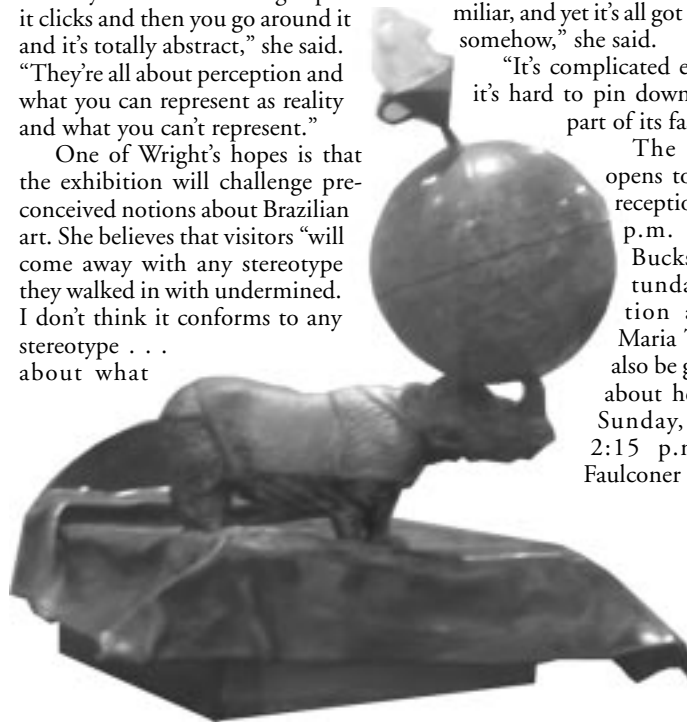
One of Wright's hopes is that the exhibition will challenge preconceived notions about Brazilian art. She believes that visitors "will come away with any stereotype they walked in with undermined. I don't think it conforms to any stereotype . . . about what

we might think Brazilian art would be."

Wright, who has traveled several times in Brazil, also hopes that people coming to the exhibit will get a sense of experiencing its culture first-hand. "I guess I hope [visitors] will have something of the experience I had when I was down there, which is that in some ways, this all seems sort of familiar, and yet it's all got its own spin somehow," she said.

"It's complicated enough that it's hard to pin down, but that's part of its fascination."

The exhibition opens today with a reception from 5-7 p.m. in the Bucksbaum Rotunda. Installation artist Ana Maria Tavares will also be giving a talk about her work on Sunday, Feb. 2 at 2:15 p.m. in the Faulconer Gallery.



## Ana Maria Tavares

### Selected Awards and Fellowships

2002  
Guggenheim Foundation Grant—New York

1990  
Prêmio Brasília de Artes Plásticas.

1984-1986  
Bolsa de Mestrado Capes—Fullbright

### Selected solo shows

2002  
Enrückte Körper—Gur/Txl, Galerievostell, Berlin, Alemanha

2001  
Middelburg Airport Lounge in Middelburg, Holland

1998  
Relax'ovisions, Museu Brasileiro da Escultura, São Paulo, Brazil

## Brazilian Art at Faulconer

Jan. 31 - April 13, 2003  
Sunday-Wednesday 12-5  
Thursday-Saturday 10-8

Opening Reception  
Tonight 5-7 p.m.