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Artnet News.
May 5, 2017

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Opinion

Lygia Clark’s Abstractions Have Dada Daring

THE DAILY PIC: At Luhring Augustine, Lygia Clark’s mid-century abstractions have roots in much earlier radicalism.

Blake Gopnik

May 5, 2017



©O Mundo de Lygia Clark-Associação Cultural, Rio de Janeiro, courtesy Luhring Augustine, New York and
Alison Jacques Gallery, London

THE DAILY PIC (#1783): On first seeing Lygia Clark’s *Study for Modulated Space*, made in 1958 and now in her solo at [Luhring Augustine](http://www.artnet.com/galleries/luhring-augustine/) (<http://www.artnet.com/galleries/luhring-augustine/>) in New York, I was reminded of a very [early abstraction by Hans Arp](https://www.moma.org/learn/moma_learning/jean-hans-arp-untitled-collage-with-squares-arranged-according-to-the-laws-of-chance-1916-17) (https://www.moma.org/learn/moma_learning/jean-hans-arp-untitled-collage-with-squares-arranged-according-to-the-laws-of-chance-1916-17), which he said he arrived at by letting blue and white squares of paper fall randomly into a pattern. I’m fond of Arp’s 1917 piece because it speaks of just how radical, how Dada, all abstraction seemed at first—but of course it can’t have much to do with Clark’s much more orderly, systematic practice of 40 years later. Or can it? Looking at a few of her famous *Bicho* sculptures at Luhring Augustine, I realized that, in inviting their viewers to reconfigure them, the *Bichos* are ceding control in ways that aren’t that far from Arp and Dada. Rio in ‘60 may not be that far from Zurich in 1917, for any number of cultural, historical and even political reasons.