Following World War II, political and economic elites in Brazil utilized cultural diplomacy to project the developing nation onto the world’s stage. Art patrons, artists, and critics were highly visible subjects and agents of a reimagining of Brazilian citizenship. These protagonists were, with few exceptions, privileged, educated, and white. Abstract artists were celebrated as nonconformists who modeled engaged civil participation. Emergent white-collar middle-class men like Geraldo de Barros and affluent women like Lygia Clark were touted as public thinkers, though not without tensions. Self-taught artists, some Afro-descendant, were also elevated, but as a subsidiary to abstraction – papering over racial inequalities. This talk will analyze the importance of exhibitionary and pedagogical institutions in the development of not only abstract art, but also social identities in postwar Brazil.