

BRAZILIAN SCULPTURE FROM 1920 TO 1990

a Profile



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VICTOR BRECHERET
ERNESTO DE FIORI
BRUNO GIORGI
ALFREDO CESCHIATTI
MARIA MARTINS
AMÍLCAR DE CASTRO
FRANZ WEISSMANN
LYGIA CLARK
MARY VIEIRA
SÉRGIO CAMARGO
HÉLIO OITICICA
CACIPORÉ TORRES
LIUBA
NICOLAS VLAVIANOS
FRANS KRAJCBERG
RUBEM VALENTIM
JOSÉ RESENDE
WALTÉRCIO CALDAS
MESTRE DIDI
FRANCISCO BRENNAND



Introduction

With the current exhibit, "Brazilian Sculpture from 1920 to 1990: a Profile," the IDB Cultural Center begins its second five-year period of activities and prepares to welcome the next millennium.

This exhibit is undoubtedly more ambitious in scope than any organized to date by the Center's Visual Arts Program. The juxtaposition of these outstanding works dramatically illustrates the different influences upon Brazilian sculpture and the various directions

this form of expression has taken in Brazil since the 1920s. In particular, the exhibit emphasizes those features that give Brazilian sculpture its personal and international character.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Brazilian Ministry of Culture, as well as many Brazilian companies, for their combined efforts on behalf of the Cultural Center through generous contributions to the project, which made this exhibit possible.

Ana María Coronel de Rodríguez
Director, Cultural Center

The Modern Development of Brazilian Sculpture

The evolution of 20th-century Brazilian sculpture appears more influenced by European than by Latin American culture, a fact which reflects certain transformations in sensibility across the modern industrialized world. While that does not exclude other cultural influences, Brazil until recent times had more direct ties with Europe than with the rest of the continent, and not only in artistic fields.

European customs have long been accepted by countries of the Southern Cone such as Uruguay and Argentina. Yet Brazil has used the Western model in rather unorthodox ways, although the dominant cultural trends usually have appeared to side with the governing class.

From its beginnings in 1922 (taking the Week of Modern Art in São Paulo as a reference point), Brazilian modernism assumed many forms, most associated with figurative expression, that were similar to those of modern European sculpture. These forms became the basis for thematic differences, which allowed various creators to channel the freedom they had acquired in Europe. Lacking a strong pre-Columbian legacy (like that of Peru or Mexico), Brazil was open to current influences—and, like other parts of the “New World,” reinventing itself with cultural infusions from practically all corners of the earth. The early Brazilian modernists adopted, and then redesigned at will, the complex historical and conceptual framework of Western European sculpture.

Consequently Brazilian sculpture shows inventiveness and extraordinary imagination that are quite independent of the formal assumptions traditional to Western art. Yet because many artists incorporated certain styles that were later catalogued by historians and assigned curious names, it is now difficult to characterize the works in simpler terms.

The leading Brazilian sculptors are international: from Brecheret to Krajcberg, their achievements parallel those of a broader modern tradition that broke through regional conventions, beginning with Picasso. Brazilian sculptural production reflects a desire to appropriate, rather than emulate, Western traditions—a necessary step toward any transformation.

Out of a romantic desire to fuse its self-image somehow with the social and cultural realities of the masses, the Brazilian intellectual vanguard of the twenties produced the Modern Art Week of 1922. Such recognition of the masses allowed alternative outlets for artistic expression, but did not necessarily exclude European traditions (as occurred in Mexico or in the Andean countries).

Much has been written about what “the Week” of 1922 meant culturally for Brazil and by extension, for Latin America. The Brazilian vanguard had achieved a certain independence, and the participating artists recognized a need to “find themselves” culturally. Their model was the mechanism used by Picasso in his first Cubist paintings, when he

introduced components (such as African figures) that were foreign to the Western tradition of painting. In his case, these components were “borrowed,” but in Brazil there was no excuse for failure to incorporate other cultural sources into artistic statements, whether the purists in Coimbra liked it or not.

The freedom that characterized European art in the late 19th and early 20th centuries was partly motivated by a second “discovery” of other cultures. Although these cultures were relatively familiar, they were ill-esteemed and undervalued in every aspect by Westerners. The attitude of Paul Gauguin toward Polynesia, and the impact of his work in Paris, exemplify this attempt to view life afresh through “cultural immersion.” The European vanguard came to accept such expressions with a generosity that was not entirely disinterested.

Thus European artistic models, substantially modified by the discovery of the “exotic beauty” of other cultures, brought the Brazilian vanguard to the delayed realization that within its very midst was the key to a definition of what Emanuel Araujo calls “an identity in profile.” Of course, a deeper connection exists between Europe and the Brazilian phenomenon of modernity: artists such as Victor Brecheret, Ernesto de Fiori, and Bruno Giorgi are legitimate heirs of European models, although with differing intensity.

By 1922, Degas and Matisse in Paris had taken Rodin’s principles to their potential and logical extremes, exhausting their possibilities in terms of the traditional qualities of sculpture, summarized by Sir Herbert Read as “sensitivity to volume and mass, the interplay

of hollows and protuberances, the rhythmical articulation of planes and contours, unity of conception...” Picasso had radically altered those principles, however. Between the two extremes were the artists from Maillol to Brancusi; the first Brazilian modernists not only worked with them, but also transferred their ideas into a new reality.

These ideas, together with transformations and interpretations, including aesthetic accommodations of the same principles that were made individually by artists, delineated the reference point that supported more than one generation. The contemporary period of Brazilian sculpture is similar in chronology to that of modern Europe, even if they differed in their process, motivations, and sociocultural intentions, as well as in individual creativity. Otherwise, there would be no explanation for the conception and construction of Brasília, for example. In the project of Brasília, a correlation can more or less be established between the ideas of Le Corbusier and those of Lúcio Costa and Oscar Niemeyer—although that is like offering Michelangelo as an explanation for Rodin. While certain European ideas undoubtedly had influence, they are difficult to reconcile with the product, which in itself indicates what a transformation had occurred.

Beginning in 1951 and in the following decades, the São Paulo Biennial became the most important international forum for Brazil. There many sculptors, including Brazilians, exhibited their innovative contributions side by side; Hélio Oiticica was present, among many others. In contrast with the International Biennial, the national exhibition manifested

certain regional differences. First, abstraction was in open opposition to figuration. Then lyric abstraction emerged in opposition to geometric abstraction. Ultimately geometry itself was divided, and particular characteristics of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, like New York and Paris, were exaggerated. Extraordinary artists appeared on the scene, such as Lygia Clark and Sérgio Camargo. Moreover, European-born artists like Franz Weissmann found fertile ground in Brazil for developing their work and transmitting their ideas to talented students such as Amílcar de Castro.

On the one hand, contemporary Brazilian sculpture remains linked to transformations in classical modernism, to social and technological realities, and to the plastic formalisms of Western traditions, as seen in the works of Mary Vieira, Nicolas Vlavianos, and Caciporé Torres. On the other hand, certain mythical and mystical traditions continue as well. Some of the latter traditions correspond directly to Brazil, and others have arrived as haphazardly as seeds carried by the wind or birds diverted from their flyways. Sculptural expression has established a discourse that overcomes the obstacles set by tradition, that criticizes and emphasizes the incompatibilities between politics and culture, which threaten even the physical integrity of our environment, as Krajcberg's work suggests.

Brazilian sculpture, more than that of other Ibero-American countries, shows the coexistence of the ancient and modern, of the native and foreign. In a setting where cultural diversity is the only common denominator, these elements undergo innovative transforma-

tions. This framework has allowed Brazilian artists to address those universal concerns that the world has finally acknowledged, although not necessarily accepted.

Félix Angel

Curator of the IDB Cultural Center

Brazilian Sculpture: An Identity in Profile

This exhibit is the first outside Brazil to give a panorama of 20th-century Brazilian sculpture from 1920 to 1990. The project's complexity and ambition are justified by the need to establish an approximate profile of our sculpture, its influences, and its formal development. During this period Brazil was a new country and culture, establishing itself through manifold incorporations and developing a kinship, through stronger and closer ties, with Amerindian, African, and European art.

The historical background for Brazilian art ranges from the pre-Cabral period, with Amazonian cultures, to the Colonial period with the Baroque. From this perspective, Brazilian sculpture emerges under the aegis of geometry in its formal materialization: the 20th century framework is essentially constructivist. Might its obstinate construction of lines and forms, its representations of animals and human figures, have some magic origin in the native art of Brazil? In the indigenous art, the graphic narrative of vases, pots, urns, and loincloths achieves geometric abstraction through repetition of lines. There is a certain regularity in the scrolls, which are sometimes executed in relief, indicating a first step in the direction of sculpturing. This same geometric and reductionist execution is found on stone axes, or in anthropomorphic and zoomorphic representations of Indian implements, such as ax blades and rattles.

To take another example, baroque architecture was a significant Portuguese heri-

tage. Yet in Brazil these buildings were fashioned by the hands of African slaves, who worked together with the craft guilds. While European tradition dictated one style, an underground production was creating another form of art, based on purely African representation. As Mariano Carneiro da Cunha observed, these influences are apparent if we compare West African and Bantu art with certain works by Aleijadinho, especially the conventions linked to naturalist representation. Similar elements are found in small pine-knot sculptures produced by slaves in the Paraíba Valley, in São Paulo, in the 19th century, which display the same characteristics of reductionism and a geometry that is clearly African in style. As even Nina Rodrigues recognizes, "... in sculpture the artistic ability of the blacks is revealed with greatest sureness and highest esteem."

Thus a profile of 20th century Brazilian sculpture must trace its origins not only to Western traditions, but also to the country's diverse cultures. From the highly erudite and cerebral art forms resulting from European training, to the sacralized and cathartic elements of the most unsophisticated folk art, Brazilian sculpture in its various creative paths has one common feature: it is structured around a geometric and reductionist conception of form in space as construction. Like an instrument, sculpture monitors influences flowing into the configuration of a common identity, an anchor in the changing sea of national art, in a country that accumulates inflows from afar and casts them back transformed and reinvented.

Different currents and expressions may appear in the same scenario: Brazilians drink from European and foreign wells and discover archaic native patterns at home. If some very good artists are excluded from this panorama, it is because a more concise sample was chosen to represent the whole, its unity and its diversity of expression over time.

The exhibit is organized in four sections. First is the sculpture of modernism, through Victor Brecheret. In his work the link of construction has become more visible since the 1920s, after an initial period marked by the influence of Rodin, for example, in *O Ídolo*. Already in Ernesto de Fiori's work the sculptural quality is defined by the search for light and volume which, in the Brazilian scenario, is reinvented in a highly original dialogue. Following Maillol's influence, this search also extends from Bruno Giorgi to Alfredo Ceschiatti, whose sculpture is frankly constructed of concise, rounded, geometrically structured forms.

The break appears with Maria Martins. Her art "belongs to the pure domain of surrealistic transfigurations and moves in the mythical direction of frightening Amazonian realities," as Walter Zanini notes. Martin's work with the masters of Dadaism makes her an exceptional figure in the Brazilian scenario, especially because she attempts to give sculptural expression to native mythologies.

In the second section, we focus on the impact of the concretist movement in Brazil, beginning with *Unidade Tripartida* [Unity in Three Parts] by Max Bill. Its elements resonate in the work of Franz Weissmann, Amílcar de Castro, Mary Vieira, Lygia Clark, Hélio

Oiticica, and Sérgio Camargo, precisely because the Brazilian artist is intuitively a constructor.

The third section, sculpture typical of the 1960s, echoes international influences from the São Paulo Biennials. It includes the work of sculptors like Liuba, Nicolas Vlavianos, and Caciporé Torres. These artists did not abandon geometry, which appears here within an amalgam. They transform a flat structure whose welding and connecting links are geometrically organized and thus much freer. In the work of Liuba, above all, the informal precedes all form, a visceral force realized through geometrical construction.

Finally, the last section emphasizes construction and identity, with expressions that are highly polarizing. They are found in the force of nature of Krajcberg, in the archaic search of Francisco Brennand, in the veneration of ancestors of Mestre Didi, and in the conceptual construction of Rubem Valentim, which acts as a counterpoint to Afro-Brazilian emblematic symbols. In conclusion, there is the work of the thinkers and renovators of the concept of construction and geometry: José Resende and Waltércio Caldas.

Disparate languages, elective affinities, but, at a much deeper level, a subconscious geometry, anchored in the common Brazilian soil, marked by the search for line, volume, and light, as permanent materials of a desire for construction.

Emanoel Araújo

Director of the Pinacoteca
State of São Paulo

The artist

(São Paulo, 1894-1955)

Victor Brecheret studied at the School of Arts and Métiers of São Paulo. At age 19, he learned techniques of sculpture and anatomy from the sculptor Dazzi in Rome, and exhibited for the first time in 1918 at the Scultori Amadori Salon. In 1922, he participated in Modern Art Week in São Paulo, displaying works that became decisive to the Modernist movement.

In Paris, Brecheret frequented the studios of Aristide Maillol, Antoine Bourdelle, Amedeo Modigliani, Fernand Léger, and the writer Blaise Cendrars. Close work with Constantin Brancusi in 1923 led him toward new figuration, with simple finished forms and emphasis on light on the work. In 1930, he



Ídolo, bronze

Matheus D'Aprile Collection

VICTOR BRECHERET

presented three sculptures at the “Exposition of a Modernist House,” organized by Gregori Warchavchik, an event that concluded the revolution begun by the “Week of 22” and gave an impetus to architectural renewal.

In 1950 he participated in the Biennial of Venice and one year later won a prize as the best national sculptor at the First International Biennial of São Paulo, with works on indigenous themes. Brecheret eventually became known as the leading sculptor of São Paulo, producing monumental works that are now city landmarks, such as *Homage to the Duke of Caxias* and *Monument to the Bandeiras*.

The work

Brecheret does not imitate or copy the masters of the past; he is modern in conception and execution. The sculptor does not belong to any “ism” school, and the plastic forms of his fantasy emerge spontaneously and ingenuously from his creative imagination. The sacred serenity of the persons, the discreet grace of the figures, with their “primitive” freshness, the poetry of the outspread, charitable, plaintive hands, the perfect curve from the first of the women figures to the long, delicate feet that end the group, give enchantment and

emotion to the work that excited the Parisian critics and the public of the Salon [in 1924].

Seeing so much admiration and curiosity about this work of art, more than its fairly good reception in the paid publicity, wireless advertisements, official banquets, and embassies, creates the image of a young and lively people emerging on the other side of the Atlantic. It is the best and most intelligent information about what modern Brazil is going to become.

Paulo Prado, 1924

Prado, Paulo. "Resenha do Mês." *Revista do Brasil*, No. 98, pp. 179-182. February 1924. São Paulo.

On exhibit

Ídolo [Idol], c. 1919

Bronze, 37 x 51 x 27.7 cm

Matheus D'Aprile Collection

Tocadora de Guitarra (em pé)

[Guitar Player (standing)], 1923

Bronze, 75 x 21 x 16 cm

Safra Bank Collection

Tocadora de Guitarra (deitada)

[Guitar Player (recumbent)], 1927

Bronze, 23.5 x 47.3 x 18 cm

José Roberto Marcellino dos Santos Collection

Descida da Cruz (Madona e Cristo)

[Descent from the Cross

(Madonna and Christ)], 1920s

Bronze, 70 x 14 x 15 cm

Brazilian Art Museum

Armando Álvares Penteado Foundation

Figura Feminina [Female Figure], 1920s

Bronze, 34.5 x 11 x 24.5 cm

Brazilian Art Museum

Armando Álvares Penteado Foundation

The artist

(Rome, 1884 - São Paulo, 1945)

Ernesto de Fiori studied at the School of Fine Arts of Munich as a young boy. Impressed by the work of Paul Cézanne, he resolved to do no further painting. Instead he began working with sculpture in the Paris of Aristide Maillol, at the turn of the century. A sculptor of the human body in simple considered forms, he worked in clay, a gentle medium for the human spirit.

De Fiori was working in Berlin in 1933 when his atelier was closed by the Nazis. Within the next few years, all his artworks were confiscated. In 1936 he fled Germany for Brazil. Soon after arriving, he presented his first exhibit in São Paulo.



Descanso do Atleta, bronze

Safra Bank Collection

ERNESTO DE FIORI

De Fiori rebelled against the sculpture of his time. He refused to make concessions to public taste, believing that true sculpture is beautiful in itself, not because it represents some idea through approximations. Influenced by the expressionism of Ferdinand Hodler, de Fiori eventually resumed painting. He exhibited at the three May Salons in São Paulo from 1937-1939 and at the Artistic Family Salon held in Rio de Janeiro in 1940. Today he is represented in the main national museums and private collections, and his works can be found in public squares in Europe.

The work

While passing through Berlin in 1914-15, Ernesto de Fiori became involved in the war. Abandoning the front in 1917, he traveled to Zurich, where he resided until March 1920. He did some sculptures in Switzerland, but afterward moved to Berlin, and the greater part of his work was produced in Germany, during the Weimar Republic. He centered his life in that country and resided mainly in the city of Berlin. When Hitler rose to power, de Fiori eventually realized that, as he said in a 1933 article: "However much a citizen feels that he belongs to the State, as an artist he only complies with

the laws of art that God established in his soul.” Three years later, he exiled himself from the Third Reich and traveled to Brazil.

De Fiori’s choice of country was related to the fact that his mother and oldest brother already resided in the capital of São Paulo. He disembarked at the port of Santos in August 1936, and in December of that same year he gave his first exhibit in Brazil, in Guatapar Gallery. Among other works that he previously completed, he showed *Homem em Marcha* [Man on the March], now in the Pinacoteca of the State of São Paulo.

Homem em Marcha (the first title given to the work) is an example that synthesizes the learning of the artist. The figure, constructed on an axis, is distributed in ascending and descending courses that lead the eye of the observer beyond the space of the composition, while at the same time it is recaptured in the gesture of the arms. These tensions extend throughout the work. While one of the legs, slightly flexed, makes a forward movement in a step, an arm is flexed in an opposite movement, which is deliberately asymmetrical and partly compensates for the movement of the leg. Partly, in fact, because the resolution is not immediate. The rhythm is extended to the head: the slightly backward-leaning line it suggests, as well as the turn of the head, makes the harmony complete. It echoes the movement of the leg, which ends in the shifting foot.

Mayra Laudanna - 1996

Laudanna, Mayra, “Expressões do Corpo.” Exhibit held by the Safra Bank. 1996. São Paulo and Brasília.

On exhibit

Descanso do Atleta [Athlete at Rest], 1936

Bronze, 98 x 40 x 56 cm

Safra Bank Collection

Homem Andando [Man Walking], 1937

Bronze, 98 x 40 x 56 cm

Pinacoteca of the State of São Paulo

Mulher Despida [Woman Disrobed], 1938

Bronze, 75 x 47 x 26 cm

Safra Bank Collection

The artist

(São Paulo, 1905 - Rio de Janeiro, 1993)

Bruno Giorgi was born in São Paulo state, the son of an immigrant family who returned to Italy when he was still a child. There he was enrolled in a school of sculpture, but he withdrew, repelled by the focus on anatomical nomenclature. At the end of the 1920s, he was imprisoned for membership in an anti-Fascist resistance movement, and only then returned to sculpting. Claiming the status of a foreigner, he obtained extradition to Brazil.

In 1936, Giorgi joined the Spanish Republican forces. They gave him a Paris studio as a front, to be a safe house for exiled Italians headed for Spain. In Paris he enrolled in a course with Aristide Maillol and frequented the



Maternidade, patinated bronze
Safra Bank Collection

BRUNO GIORGI

Grande Chaumière Academy, among other places. In 1939, after Franco's victory, he returned to Brazil to devote himself to sculpture.

From Maillol, Bruno Giorgi learned a major principle of sculpture: to occupy three-dimensional space in its entirety, without subverting the primary knowledge of form, or anatomy. In the 1940s he employed a more linear treatment, and abandoned the earlier quality of repose he had appreciated in Maillol. In 1960 he executed the *Monument to the Candangos* and, in 1967, *The Meteorite*, in Carrara marble. Both sculptures are landmarks of the city of Brasília.

The work

How, on "such inert and rigid material," can a sculptor envisage and create a nude, with all the vibrancy it requires? Paul Valéry asked himself. Then he attempted an answer: "Despite the inertia of the material and the abstraction of the form, a man with a deep understanding of both can unite them so successfully that his work ultimately approximates the living essence... and radiates this mysterious feeling that comes over us in the presence of things whose modeling and being result from the same necessity."¹

This vibrant communication of the living body... emerges in the anthological contribution of Bruno Giorgi in the 1940s. All the same, he took note of contemporary sculpture, in particular the work of the giant Henry Moore. This influence, which emerged at the end of the 1940s, can be clearly seen in *Operários* [Laborers] and *Monumento dos Trabalhadores* [Monument to Workers], dated 1947 and 1949, respectively. After that time, Bruno Giorgi altered his works. The sculptural mass acquired a lightness achieved by hollow planes. Space became form through organic movement that arises in its pieces with an innovative rhythm, such as *São Jorge* [Saint George] in the Museum of Contemporary Art of the University of São Paulo. Empty spaces became part of his vocabulary as much as masses, and were given equal value. Although already far from the sweet sensuality of *A Montanha* [Mountain] in 1942, gradually the visceral expressivity of *Cristo* [Christ] in 1945 and of *Resistência e Revolta* [Resistance and Revolt] gives way to a search for synthesis. Emphasis on the vertically inclined line finds its maximum expression in *Candangos* in 1960, for the Praça dos Três Poderes in Brasília. *Dom Quixote* [Don Quixote] (1958-64) and *Guerreiro* [Warrior] (1958) are also part of this phase, much to the taste for stylization of the 1950s, which extends to maximum geometrization, in *Cacique* [Head Man] (1958-64).

Aracy Amaral - 1991

Amaral, Aracy. "Anotações a Propósito de Bruno Giorgi." Catalogue of the Artist, Skultura Gallery. August, 1991. São Paulo.

¹ Valéry, Paul. *Degas, Manet, Morisot - The Collected Works of Paul Valéry*. Jackson Matthews, ed. Volume 12. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1989, pp. 199-201.

On exhibit

Juventude [Youth], 1944-45

Patinated bronze, 143 x 58 x 32 cm

Safra Bank Collection

Maternidade [Maternity], 1948

Patinated bronze

35 x 19.5 x 24.5 cm

Safra Bank Collection

Revolta [Revolt], 1948

Bronze

54 x 22 x 12 cm

Private Collection

Mulher penteando o cabelo

[Woman Combing Her Hair], 1957

Patinated bronze, 41.5 x 20 x 30.5 cm

Safra Bank Collection

The artist

(Minas Gerais, 1918)

The sculptures of Alfredo Ceschiatti are ever present in the architectonic landscape of Oscar Niemeyer.

After winning a travel prize in 1945, Ceschiatti left Minas Gerais for Europe to study the great Renaissance artists, who had always influenced him. There he came to know the works of Max Bill, Henri Laurens, Manzù, and above all, of Maillol—whose work, according to Ceschiatti, “rediscovered Greece for the world.”

His sculptures are remarkable for their balance and perfect proportions, the result of his coherent intuition and technique. His female forms, nude and pure, are contrasted



Contorcionista, green patinated bronze

Safra Bank Collection

ALFREDO CESCHIATTI

with dramatic drapes. Nonetheless, Ceschiatti's public sculptures have come to symbolize his work: *Angels and Evangelists* in the Cathedral of Brasília and *Monument to the Pracinhas* in Rio de Janeiro.

The work

Through an extremely personal vision, Ceschiatti sears and immortalizes moments of high poetry, tension, and strong plastic connotation, in which there is always a latent, continuous rhythmical pulse. ...with dignity and nobility, his sculptures rise from their pedestals or descend from the ceiling in suspension—static yet full of interior movement, materializing into women, intensely dramatic Biblical figures and scenes, saints, angels, animals, ballerinas, acrobats, and imposing historical or legendary personages. These bodies have an organization of their own, in which the arrangement

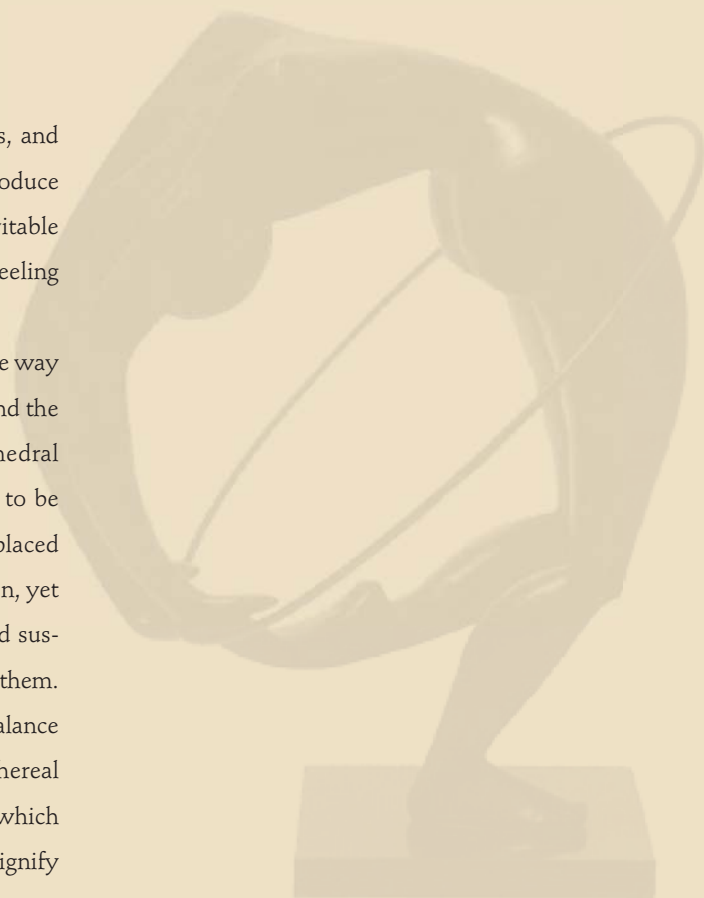
of volumes, the movement of members, and the perfect proportions between parts produce a balanced and personal effect, an inevitable consequence of intuition and aesthetic feeling allied with an excellent technique.

An example of this balance is the way in which the miniaturized *Evangelistas* and the gigantic angels suspended in the Cathedral of Brasília emerged unscathed. In order to be exhibited, they had to be mutilated and placed on wooden bases in an unnatural position, yet without losing the feeling of “flight” and suspension and the qualities that distinguish them. Another example of this uncommon balance and lightness is found in the almost ethereal figuration of his ballerinas and acrobats, which transcend their material and bodies to signify movement itself.

According to the basic principle of sculpture, Ceschiatti perpetuates his volumes in a single passage, without interruptions in the line of their contour, masterfully imbuing forms in bronze and stone with sensuality, poetry, and musicality.

Sheila Leirner, 1976

Leirner, Sheila. Catalogue of the Artist. São Paulo Museum of Modern Art. May 1976.



On exhibit

Contorcionista [Contortionist], 1952

Green patinated bronze, 54 x 46 x 46 cm

Safra Bank Collection

Guanabara, 1960s

Green patinated bronze, 62 x 167 x 46 cm

Safra Bank Collection

Mulher com Maçã [Woman with Apple], 1963

Green patinated bronze, 145 x 46 x 33 cm

Safra Bank Collection

The artist

(Minas Gerais, 1900 - Rio de Janeiro, 1973)

In 1926, while living in Ecuador, Maria Martins began to sculpt in wood. Through later studies in Japan, she learned other techniques and materials. In 1939 she completed her studies in Belgium with Oscar Jesper. After moving to the United States, she worked closely with Marcel Duchamp, Alexander Calder, Yves Tanguy, and Piet Mondrian.

In 1941 she exhibited at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., and from 1942 to 1946 she held various solo exhibits in the Valentine Gallery in New York. In Brazil, she exhibited her work at the São Paulo Museum of Modern Art in 1959. She participated actively in the initial São Paulo Biennials and



Impossível, bronze

Joaquim Millan Collection

MARIA MARTINS

helped to found Rio de Janeiro's Museum of Modern Art. In 1955 she received the sculpture prize in the Third São Paulo Biennial.

Her themes, derived from surrealism, adhere to a model of anti-academic sculpture that revives Brazilian nature and myths. Introductions to her works are signed by André Breton and by the poets Benjamin Péret and Murilo Mendes.

The work

The volumes in her [early] sculpture, in bronze, polished metal, or wood, have no consistency, articulation, or hierarchy of planes. They tend to match one another, and are treated as if they were merely a smooth or porous surface. In subsequent phases, the solid volumes are emptied; gaps open up in them and the surrounding space tends to penetrate them. That is when the best sculpture is done. Then she gives us a texture woven of branches, lianas, and tree trunks, where the sensuality of the chosen material, which is porous, greenish, and has the consistency of rotten wood, expresses

its tortured spirit more plastically and with fewer outbursts of feeling.

Mário Pedrosa, 1957

Pedrosa, Mario. *Jornal do Brasil*, April 27, 1957, Rio de Janeiro

The work of Maria naively expresses this disorder [derived from the reality of Brazil in the 1950s] in two types of figuration. The first appears as the mythical subconscious of the Brazilian soul itself, arising from the tortuous effort at materialization made by a generous and exuberant nature. The second, breaking out like the unrepressed psychological subconscious, shamelessly conveys the almost rhetorical transcription of its images. Both express belief in the ability to achieve an immediate materialization of the overflowing subconscious, a primordial nature that is going to establish itself as an unfathomable viscosity in an ordered, controlled world. Because of this lack of moderation, this near-inelegance, Mário Pedrosa noted the absence of monumentality in her sculpture. She aspires to something grand and majestic, but she is lacerated by the impossibility of the very grandeur of her discourse. Therefore, she always lives on this threshold, always one step on this side or that of sculpture.

Sonia Salzstein and Ivo Mesquita, 1987

Sonia Salzstein and Ivo Mesquita. *Imaginários Singulares*. XIX Biennial of São Paulo. October/December, 1987.

On exhibit

Impossível [Impossible], 1945

Bronze, 180 x 170 x 110 cm

Joaquim Millan Collection

The artist

(Minas Gerais, 1920)

In 1942, Amílcar de Castro studied design with Alberto da Veiga Guignard and concurrently did figurative sculpture with Franz Weissmann. At the beginning of the 1950s, influenced by Max Bill's work, he abandoned figuration and began to transform the plane by cutting and folding, actions modeled in paper and finalized in iron.

Amílcar participated in exhibits of the "concrete movement" in São Paulo and in 1959 signed the "Neo-Concrete Manifesto." In 1960, he participated in the *Konkrete Kunst* show in Zurich. After winning a prize from the Salon of Modern Art, he traveled to the United States in 1968 and exhibited in New York. On return,



Sem Título, iron

Artist's Private Collection

AMÍLCAR DE CASTRO

he began to give classes at the Federal University of Minas Gerais.

Amílcar begins with geometry and rigorous division of the plane. This same concise and efficient technique can be found in the designs, pictures, and ceramics he began to execute in 1991. A notable layout artist, he revolutionized Brazilian newspaper design by changing the layout of the *Jornal do Brasil* in 1962.

The work

With imposing vitality, Amílcar graphically recorded variations on the same theme in dozens of drawings, in serials of work, on the surface of sheets of iron 7.2 cm thick. This gesture is characteristic of his contribution, like the infinite compositions of a Morandi. His trajectory includes speculations and studies, but they do not impair the sureness of course by which we readily identify the pieces of Amílcar de Castro. Concern for attacking the compact, cubical iron block has emerged more recently. Now, his action on the material is taking dense form in dovetailings of positive and negative,

of male and female, or in the juxtaposition of pieces through linear cutouts, in formal dialogue with their circumstances, returning to the interior of their own concreteness. Here is the dominant geometrization, in the insinuated articulation of the parts. ...The environmental dialogue of piece/sculpture with space has ended, and the artist is returning to an introverted and intellectual analysis ...of the enigma of possibilities for altering plastic solutions. Perhaps it seems facile to mention the relationship that Amílcar de Castro has with his raw material, iron. But we always respect his commitment to the product of his land, industrialized in its rigidity, yet simultaneously denuded of any detestable regionalism.

Aracy Amaral, 1988

Amaral, Aracy. "Amílcar de Castro: O Vigor da Expressividade Fundada na Geometria." Catalogue of the artist. Paulo Vasconcelos Gallery. May 1988. São Paulo.

On exhibit

Sem Título [Untitled], 1988

Iron, 50.5 x 25 x 7.6 cm

Artist's Private Collection

Sem Título [Untitled], 1988

Iron, 30 x 50 x 7.6 cm

Artist's Private Collection

Sem Título [Untitled], 1988

Iron, 32 x 32 x 8 cm

Artist's Private Collection

The artist

(Austria, 1914)

Franz Weissmann moved to Brazil with his family in 1924. He studied at the School of Fine Arts in Rio de Janeiro in the early 1940s. A member of the *Grupo Frente* in the 1950s, he participated in the National Exposition of Concrete Art in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo in 1956-57. In 1960, he was in the *Konkrete Kunst* show in Zurich. In 1971, he was a guest at the Biennial of Open-Air Sculpture in the city of Antwerp.

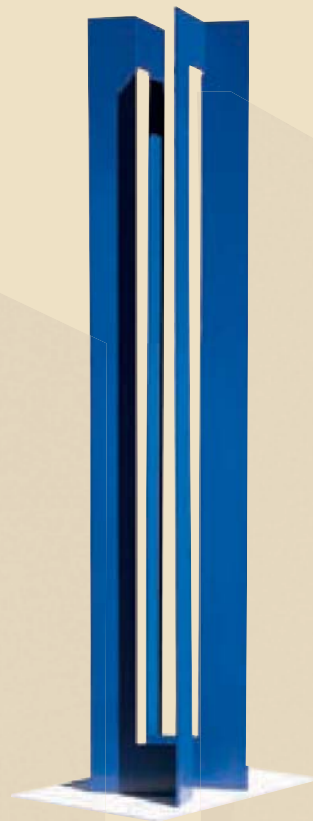
In the 1970s and 1980s Weissmann received various national and foreign prizes, including several at the São Paulo Biennials. In 1993 he won the Ministry of Culture's National Prize for Art. His works are in the collection

Coluna Essencialista

(quatro lâminas)

Painted steel

Artist's Private Collection



FRANZ WEISSMANN

of São Paulo's Museum of Modern Art, among other museums, and in private collections. His sculpture, well suited to urban spaces, can be visited in the gardens of the Museum of Modern Art and on the patio of the Latin America Memorial in São Paulo. He presently lives and works in Rio de Janeiro.

The work

Franz Weissmann, Austrian by birth and Brazilian by choice, has joined this family of radical transformers of material. These transformers are recoverers of space, the inner space of the thing, the compact mass. They began by perforating it and discovering matter as a kind of space and vice versa. In this way, the mass-space opposition became a dialectical relationship that opened up a field of unlimited possibilities for the sculptor.

In this line of inquiry, Weissmann found his own way, which he has been deepening and enriching over 30 years. From radical

rejection of mass and its reduction to mere indications in space, he proceeded to create a true poetics of space, turning to the present and to the future.

Where once there was mass, now there is emptiness, indeterminate space, and it is within that space that the sculpture of Franz Weissmann emerges, like a plant. As it emerges, it creates a new space, a human space within the boundary of natural space. A delicate transfiguration, which seems to seek the just mean of natural space... of man and nature, of the imaginary and the real, without violence. A poetics of space that is, at the same time, an ethics of expression: a minimum of resources so that, without emphasis, poetry, beauty, and ultimately the human spirit are constructed outside man, in the air, here, now, in the common space of the city. An audacious exercise of freedom in which the artist incessantly puts himself to the test: empty space offers him all directions and accepts all and every form. Without a figurative reference point, without *a priori* demarcations, he is dedicated solely to his capacity to intuit the potential significance of abstract form in abstract space: that is to say, to make them concrete and insert them in social space as an aesthetic expression.

Ferreira Gullar (early 1980s)

Gullar, Ferreira. "Uma Poética do Espaço." Catalogue of the Artist. Aktuell Gallery. September 1980. Rio de Janeiro.

On exhibit

Coluna Essencialista (quatro lâminas)

[Essentialist Column (four plates)], 1975

Painted steel, 250 x 50 x 50 cm

Artist's Private Collection

Coluna Essencialista (duas lâminas)

[Essentialist Column (two plates)], 1985

Painted steel, 225 x 33 x 22 cm

Artist's Private Collection

Lâmina Dobrada (L) [Folded Plate (L)], 1985

Painted steel, 90 x 80 x 30 cm

Artist's Private Collection

The artist

(Belo Horizonte, 1920 - Rio de Janeiro, 1988)

Beginning in 1947, Lygia Clark studied painting in Rio de Janeiro with Burle Marx. In the 1950s she traveled to Paris, where she worked with Fernand Léger, Dobrinsky, and Arpad Szenes. In 1954, as a member of the *Grupo Frente*, she began constructivist painting, restricted to the use of black and white in industrial paint. She participated in the National Exposition of Concrete Art in Rio de Janeiro and signed the Neo-Concrete Manifesto.

By folding the plane into three-dimensional joints, Clark initially created *Cocoons and Climbers*. Eventually she prepared a series of works called *Bichos* in 1960, which invite the spectator to act directly on the work



Bicho: Caranguejo Duplo, aluminum with hinges
Pinacoteca of the State of São Paulo

LYGIA CLARK

by manipulating its jointed components. After 1964, she emphasized the poetics of the body, with works involving sensory experiments. While teaching at the Sorbonne from 1970 to 1975, she proposed exercises in sensitization; thus she created the so-called *objetos relacionais* (relational objects) with therapeutical uses.

Clark participated in group shows at the New York Museum of Modern Art (1960), at the Organization of American States in Washington, D.C. (1962), in the Signals London exposition (1965), and in other art salons and international shows.

The work (*Os Bichos*)

The name *Bichos* was given to my most recent works because of their essentially organic character. The way I found to unite the planes, a hinge, reminds me of a backbone.

The very organization of the metal plates determines the positions of the *Bicho*, which seem unlimited at first sight. When I am asked what possibilities of movement there are, I usually reply "I don't know, and you don't know, but it knows." *Bichos* have no wrong side.

Each *Bicho* is an organic entity that reveals itself in its totality within its internal

time of expression. It has affinities with mollusks and shells. It is a living organism, an essentially acting work. Total, existential interaction is established between you. In the relationship between you and the *Bicho* there is no passivity on either part. It is a kind of body-to-body event between two living entities.

In this dialogue, the *Bicho* has its own well-defined responses to the stimuli of the spectator. The previously metaphorical relationship of man with *Bicho* becomes real. The *Bicho* has its own defined circuit of movements that react to the stimuli of the subject. It is not composed of isolated static forms that can be manipulated indefinitely at will, like a game: on the contrary, its parts are functionally related among themselves as in a true organism, and the movement of these parts is interdependent.

There are two types of movement in the relationship established between you and it. The first, purely exterior, is what you do; the second, unique to the *Bicho*, is determined by the interior dynamics of its own expressiveness. The first movement (what you do) does not characterize the *Bicho*, because your movement is not part of it. The coordination of the gesture of the spectator with the immediate response of the *Bicho* is what characterizes this new relationship, which is only possible precisely because the *Bicho* has a movement of its own, a life of its own.

Lygia Clark - 1960

Clark, Lygia. Catalogue of the Artist. Bonino Gallery. October 1960.
Rio de Janeiro

On exhibit

Bicho: Caranguejo Duplo [Animal: Paired Crabs], 1961
Aluminum with hinges, 53 x 59 x 53 cm
Pinacoteca of the State of São Paulo

Bicho [Animal], 1960s
Aluminum with hinges, 18 x 36 x 20 cm
Ladi Bieus Collection

Bichos [Animals], 1960s
Aluminum with hinges, 31 x 30 x 35 cm
Hércules Barsotti Collection

The artist

(São Paulo, 1927)

In 1944, Mary Vieira began studying with Alberto da Veiga Guignard in Belo Horizonte. Three years later she received the prize of the Salon of Young Brazilian Artists in that city. In the 1950s, she moved to Switzerland to perfect her technique with Max Bill, and she exhibited in 1955 at the Neuchâtel Museum. In 1959, she participated in the Fifth Biennial of Open-Air Sculpture in the city of Antwerp.

In 1966, Vieira received the Marinetti International Prize at the Réalités Nouvelles Salon of the Paris Museum of Modern Art. In the 35th Biennial of Venice, she presented her *Polivolumes*, one of which can be seen in the Palácio dos Arcos in Brasília.

Polivolume

Côncavo-Convexo

Anodized aluminum

Brazilian Art Museum

Armando Álvares

Penteado Foundation



MARY VIEIRA

Vieira has been invited to various São Paulo Biennials and institutional shows, and her work consistently wins prizes. She now resides in Basel, Switzerland.

The work

Mary Vieira has prepared some model sculptures that are part of the modern environment but surpass it: they confirm the human gift of freedom that, although conditioned by space and time, already proposes the invention of an area of synthesis (earth, air, matter, calculation, ellipse, energy, geometry) in which many problems and cultural contrasts are reabsorbed as subject is harmonized with object.

These Venice sculptures, *Polivolumes*, in anodized aluminum, are characterized not only by force in construction, singularity of lines, fantasy in rigidity, and exemplary tech-

nical execution, but also by the cargo of poetic freedom that they launch. In the world of today, threatened and tormented by the fury of a total tragedy, these sculptures define themselves as inhabitants of a territory without borders, having achieved a high level of civilization while repelling terror and brute force.

When I saw them, and touched them, for they are composable and accept participation by the enjoyer, I felt the weight of history lifted from me for a few minutes, and my true identity as a poet was conferred upon me through them. I adopted them immediately as sisters and cousins in a world that I had scarcely glimpsed, where discipline emerges, ex officio, from the mental development of every one and where we can encounter disturbing images, but without any aspect of anguish or bloodshed.

Murilo Mendes, 1970

Mendes, Murilo. Catalogue of the Artist. 1970. Rome

On exhibit

Polivolume Côncavo-Convexo

[Concave-Convex Polyvolume], 1948/1967

Anodized aluminum, height: 200 cm, diameter: 36 cm

Brazilian Art Museum

Armando Álvares Penteado Foundation

The artist

(Rio de Janeiro, 1930 - 1990)

In 1946, Sérgio Camargo began his studies at the Altamira Academy in Buenos Aires, with Pettorutti and Lucio Fontana. Two years later, at the age of 18, he traveled to Europe, where he met Constantin Brancusi and Hans Arp and studied philosophy with Gaston Bachelard. In the mid-1950s he abandoned figuration and began to explore geometric volumes in monochromatic reliefs.

While living in Paris in 1961, Camargo studied with Pierre Francastel. Two years later he won the sculpture prize at the Paris Biennial. He then worked alternately in Paris and in Massa, Italy. In 1966 he participated in the Biennial of Venice.



Sem Título, Carrara marble

Artist's Estate

SÉRGIO CAMARGO

On return to Brazil, Camargo executed the panel of the Palácio dos Arcos in Brasilia and was invited to the Kassel *Documenta*, a quadrennial exposition of contemporary art held in Germany. He participated in various individual shows in Brazilian and international museums and galleries, and in the São Paulo Biennials, and returned to the Biennial of Venice in 1984.

The work

The sculptures of Camargo are not a sum of forms or a theory of figures and images that advance; instead they sprout or grow out of proportion. Their meaning and contours are negated by previously defined boundaries. The discontinuity of the surfaces tends to dematerialize them, so that the unique, true material of which they are made expands and fills these structures with something immaterial... , that is to say, light. The white in which the reliefs are painted is what captures, seizes, apprehends the material. The material receives a sort of patina, but paradoxically does not allow

itself to be defined by an extension into those contours, and the whole is buried merely as a memory, an aesthetic connotation. The shadows come with the light, and the reliefs that are nothingness exchange the visual for the tactile. The work [becomes] a game and a structure, touchable and untouchable, limit and limitless, light and shade.

These plastic structures of Camargo are a negation of form. In reality they do not contain the parts that form the whole. Contrary to what might be thought, the material is more present than the contour, although the element... that makes it, that fills it... with substance, is light, and not solids coordinated by parameters that determine the field. Idea, rather than form, drives the plastic structures of Camargo's art and causes its permanent openness and enigmatic communicative force.

Mário Pedrosa - 1975

Pedrosa, Mário. "A Escultura de Camargo." Catalogue of the Artist. Museum of Modern Art. May/June, 1975. Rio de Janeiro.

On exhibit

Coluna [Column], 1970s

Carrara marble, prototype

Caracas Museum of Modern Art

65.5 x 17 x 5 cm

Artist's Estate

Sem Título [Untitled], 1979

Carrara marble, 30 x 40 x 38 cm

Artist's Estate

Sem Título [Untitled], 1985

Carrara marble, 124 x 11 x 11 cm

Artist's Estate

The artist

(Rio de Janeiro, 1937–1980)

In 1954 Hélio Oiticica studied painting with Ivan Serpa, at Rio de Janeiro's Museum of Modern Art. A member of the *Grupo Frente*, he participated in the First Brazilian Exposition of Concrete Art in the Museum of Modern Art in 1956 and in São Paulo's Museum of Modern Art in 1957. Two years later he renounced concretist orthodoxy. Abandoning the two-dimensional structure of the canvas, he freed himself from the restrictions of color, through the use of space. His "space reliefs" date from this era: suspended three-dimensional plates manipulated by the spectator, together with his first "penetrable" labyrinths where colors follow one another in chromatic rhythms.



Relevo Espacial, model

Painted wood

Hélio Oiticica Arts Center

HÉLIO OITICICA

In 1960 he exhibited at the *Konkrete Kunst* show in Zurich. Since that time, his art has increasingly placed the spectator in interaction with the work. His so-called "*parangolés*," involving paraders from the Mangueira Samba School, was featured in the *Opinion '65* show at Rio de Janeiro's Museum of Modern Art. In 1965 he had an individual show at Whitechapel Gallery in London. From 1970 to 1978 he worked in New York as a Guggenheim Foundation scholar. Since 1992, a retrospective exhibit of his work, organized by the Hélio Oiticica Foundation, has been traveling to international museums of modern art.

The work

Bounded and unbounded at the same time, place and non-place, the edenic space-time invented by Oiticica is a magnetic field of seduction, where the spectator and enjoyer (walking, penetrating, titillating senses of smell and touch) begins by removing shoes and socks, as in an oriental ceremony... then plunges his feet into welcoming water, lying down in the shade of a cabana, in the cozy red-lit darkness, where the enigmatic scent envelops him [...]; ultimately, he lets himself be resensitized by the closeness of leaves and abrasive rubbing/treading on the floor, by a new exhibition, in a

state of primal, iconic innocence, in the nude
and in raw material: which gives him then,
like touch, like contact, like an accusing shock,
semiotic secondariness [...]

Haroldo de Campos, 1992

Campos, Haroldo de. "O músico da matéria. O artista Hélio Oiticica renunciou ao quadro, incorporou a dança e criou o 'parangolé'." *Folha de São Paulo*. February 16, 1992. São Paulo.

On exhibit

Relevo Espacial [Spacial Relief], model, 1959

Construction, single edition, 1991

Painted wood, 75 x 145 cm

Hélio Oiticica Arts Center

Relevo Espacial [Spacial Relief], model, 1959

Construction, single edition, 1991

Painted wood, 80 x 100 cm

Hélio Oiticica Arts Center

The artist

(São Paulo, 1932)

At the age of 19, Caciporé Torres participated in the First São Paulo Biennial and won a prize to travel to Europe. For two years he frequented the studios of Marino Marini and Alexander Calder. At age 20 he participated in the 26th Biennial of Venice.

In 1953, he received the Acquisition Prize at the Second Biennial of São Paulo, and in the following year he held solo exhibits in the São Paulo Museum of Art and at the Terry Clune Gallery in Sydney, Australia. He left to study art history at the Sorbonne and then established an atelier in Paris. There, he concentrated on perfecting his art and moved definitively toward abstractionism.



A Montanha Azul, sanded, welded steel

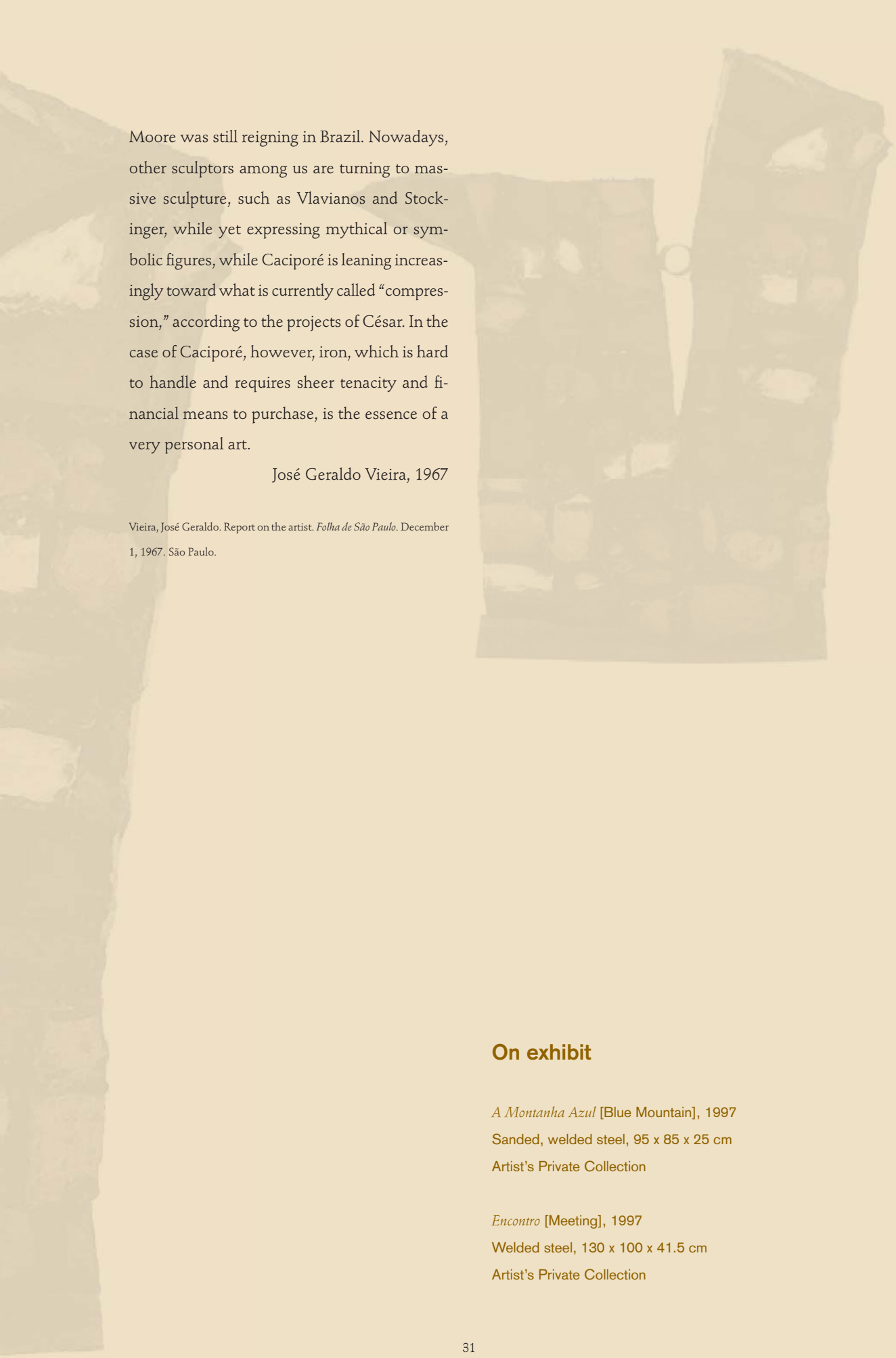
Artist's Private Collection

CACIPORÉ TORRES

Torres returned to Brazil in 1961. At the invitation of Flávio Mota, he accepted a teaching position at the urban planning and architecture school of the Armando Álvares Penteado Foundation. He now teaches there and also at Mackenzie University in São Paulo. In 1980 Torres won the Best Sculpture Prize of the São Paulo Association of Art Critics. He continues to participate in biennials and individual shows in galleries and museums.

The work

Until [Torres'] trip to Europe, he remained expressionist and figurative, and his themes were generally zoomorphic. In Paris, he became more interested in anvil work than in study, and he worked with metals and solids. Nonetheless, chronologically, he was our first sculptor to be interested in the works of Gargallo and Giacometti. When he returned to Brazil, he transferred his technical preferences to the monumental, and he turned away from themes and analogies in order to specialize in compact masses of expensive materials. At that time the influence of the mythological pieces of Henry



Moore was still reigning in Brazil. Nowadays, other sculptors among us are turning to massive sculpture, such as Vlavianos and Stockinger, while yet expressing mythical or symbolic figures, while Caciporé is leaning increasingly toward what is currently called “compression,” according to the projects of César. In the case of Caciporé, however, iron, which is hard to handle and requires sheer tenacity and financial means to purchase, is the essence of a very personal art.

José Geraldo Vieira, 1967

Vieira, José Geraldo. Report on the artist. *Folha de São Paulo*. December 1, 1967. São Paulo.

On exhibit

A Montanha Azul [Blue Mountain], 1997

Sanded, welded steel, 95 x 85 x 25 cm

Artist's Private Collection

Encontro [Meeting], 1997

Welded steel, 130 x 100 x 41.5 cm

Artist's Private Collection

The artist

(Bulgaria, 1923)

Liuba entered the School of Fine Arts in Geneva when her family moved to Switzerland. She studied sculpture with Germaine Richier, first in Zurich and then in Paris from 1946 to 1949, when she came to Brazil. During the next decade, she resided in Paris, where she met Serge Poliakoff, Henri Laurens, Ossip Zadkine, and Maria Elena Vieira da Silva. She retained her studio in São Paulo, however, and became a naturalized Brazilian citizen.

Liuba's first exhibit was held in Domus Gallery, São Paulo, in 1950, and three years later she exhibited in Paris at the Dina Vierny Gallery. Between 1985 and 1988 she exhibited in Japan and in galleries and



Animal Paulistano, bronze

Artist's Private Collection

LIUBA

institutions in Paris, London, and Italy, in addition to participating in various national and foreign biennials.

Liuba works with clay applied and molded to wood structures, which are worked in plaster of Paris and then in bronze. She is also currently experimenting with polyester as a medium.

The work

Art that is visual but above all tactile, elementally plastic, modelling what is derived from form, in the singular sculpture of Liuba, is a product of balance and flight, flying statics. Its model in antiquity finds its unqualified statement in the Victory of Samothrace. These small models fashioned in the plane of realization acquire an intense, live tension. From what recesses has this vibrant potential for communication and receptivity come to the creator and spectator?

The economy of Liuba's means of expression do not need to be emphasized.

Their life is this same economy, which scarcely allows us a crinkling of material on the surface... a tranquil crinkling? silenced by the internal tension reflected in this occupation of space? sensuality enclosed in modesty? The note of life is there, marked by the liberation of what results from what Hersch calls “the coincidence of necessities” (physical, logical, aesthetic, moral), which would make the analysis very long.

The result would be important if we were theorizing about a sculpture: here, however, the fact remains that we are not constructing anything theoretical. On the contrary, we are starting from the living inherent nature of this sculpture and moving toward an understanding of its outward signs, recollecting the received image, making it vibrate and flower in our receptivity. We reflect directly on the effectiveness of this sum of results, its homogenous and indisputable artistic reality. Birds, fish, shells, torsos, wings, and leaves are reborn here in the mobility of living forms derived from the throb of creativity. Sculptures.

Geraldo Ferraz, 1962

Ferraz, Geraldo. Catalogue of the Artist. São Luís Art Gallery. September 1962. São Paulo

On exhibit

Águia [Eagle], 1963

Bronze, 118 x 90 x 70 cm

Artist's Private Collection

Animal Paulistano [São Paulo Animal], 1965

Bronze, 100 x 130 x 100 cm

Artist's Private Collection

The artist

(Greece, 1929)

Nicolas Vlavianos first studied painting in Greece with Costa Eliades. Later, abandoning his law studies, he went to study sculpture at the age of 27 in the studio of Ossip Zadkine and at the Académie du Feu, with Laszlo Szabo, in Paris. Six months later he was working in a studio and learning to weld iron.

Selected to represent Greece at the Sixth Biennial of São Paulo, in 1961, Vlavianos brought his works to Brazil and settled in the country permanently. He gave classes in three-dimensional expression at the Armando Álvares Penteado Foundation, and his works became part of urban spaces and private collections.



Astronauta, welded and polished stainless steel

Artist's Private Collection

NICOLAS VLAVIANOS

In 1975, he received the prize for best sculptor at the Second Biennial of Small Sculpture in Budapest. He made various three-dimensional panels for buildings and exhibited at national and international galleries, in addition to participating many times in São Paulo Biennials.

Using stainless steel, Vlavianos works on the basis of drawings that give rise to sculptures or a new series of drawings. His themes have figurative roots, which later become simple reference points. He always works in a central structure, around which formal variations are counterpoised in irregular planes that restore and balance the whole.

The work

The visual forms of Nicolas Vlavianos have regenerated over time but maintain a strong structure by which they can be identified. Just as he is continuously open to the flow of suggestions from the outside world, the sculptor preserves an ordered perception in the search for meanings of his work. The result of this dialectic is the obvious unity of the constructions of different periods underlying the progressive and dynamic profile of each of them.

The choice of certain metals and the manner of handling them shows this unity at once. For a long time we have been accustomed

to recognizing his pieces at the slightest contact. Although he also uses aluminum and brass, stainless steel has been a dominant preference. All these metals go through similar changes involving cutting, folding, dovetailing, overlying bolted plates, autogenous weldings, incisions, and perforations. From these procedures emerge representations of the human figure and of plants, trees, birds, bird-plants, clouds, in addition to figments of freer imagination, in sum, an entire plane of existence of the living being (sometimes exceptional for the sculptural destination) transposed into affective geometric forms. The work becomes individualized, finally, by the cosmic interaction of the images, or rather, by an understanding of their congeneric nature.

Walter Zanini, 1993

Zanini, Walter. "Vlavianos Passado e Presente." Catalogue of the Artist. São Paulo Museum of Art. 1993. São Paulo.



On exhibit

Homem Pássaro [Bird Man] 1975

Welded and brushed stainless steel

254 x 174 x 60 cm

Artist's Private Collection

Astronauta [Astronaut], 1985

Welded and polished stainless steel

133 x 73 x 30.5 cm

Artist's Private Collection

The artist

(Poland, 1921)

Frans Krajcberg, a naturalized Brazilian citizen, began his artistic career in 1945, at the Academy of Stuttgart, under the direction of Willi Baumeister. In 1957, he received the Prize for Painting at the Biennial of São Paulo and the First Prize of the Salon of Modern Art of Rio de Janeiro. Beginning in 1958, he resided in Paris and in the south of Bahia, Brazil. In 1964, when representing Brazil at the Venice Biennial, he received the Prize of the City of Venice. In 1965, he exhibited at the Paris Museum of Modern Art and, in 1968, at the Maeght Foundation in Saint-Paul-de-Vence. In 1970, he participated in the *Brasilianische Tage* show in the Federal Republic of Germany.



Sem Título (Sombra Projetada)

Wood and natural pigments

Artist's Private Collection

FRANS KRAJCBERG

Krajcberg continues to participate in major international shows, such as the FIAC (*Foire internationale d'art contemporain*) and the Inter First Exposition in Stockholm in 1983. He has exhibited at P.S. 1 in New York, and in 1993 at the *Kunsthaus* of Zurich, in addition to national shows and various São Paulo Biennials.

In his works, Krajcberg always uses components of Brazilian flora, particularly tree trunks devastated by forest fires. He has also won recognition and prizes as a painter, photographer, and engraver.

The work

I was born in this world called nature, but it was in Brazil that it had a great impact on me. I understood it. Here I was born a second time, I became conscious of being a man and of participating in life with my sensibility, my work, and my thinking. I feel good this way. (Krajcberg. Catalogue of the Artist, 1955)

It was in Minas, after very close contact with its nature, whose “inner face” he wished to show, that he felt the need to take a decisive leap in his art. He felt that it was not enough to break with the figure in order to reject painting, because the optics continued to

be the optics of the painting on the easel, with all its deficiencies, that date from the Renaissance. Nonetheless, it would not be enough to do abstract art or to replace the tubes of paint with stones.

It was necessary to break with the behavior of the painter itself, the mania for composition and representation of space. If possible, to break with color. It happened when he discovered roots. In them he found the vital element of all nature, its most living force. His contact with nature is not casual or skin-deep, but so familiar that he perceived it from within. For this reason he loves roots and detests flowers. In the root there is the beginning of the cycle of life. The flower is the harbinger of death. That very time when the root is violating the surface of the ground, aggressively, is the time (which is a shout, an affirmation) that he wishes to convey to humankind. Roots that are twisted, misshapen, crushed, eager to free themselves from the mineral soil of Minas Gerais. They are not backyard roots, domesticated in flower beds and watered with a watering can, but secular, anonymous roots with a nervous, almost regressive energy. Roots that he destroyed in order to reinvent them, that he reunites to others to form something new.

Frederico Morais, 1996

Morais, Frederico. *Quatro Mestres Escultores Brasileiros Contemporâneos*. Aracy Amaral (org.), p. 23. Athos Bulcão Foundation. 1996. Brasília.

On exhibit

Sem Título (Sombra Projetada)

[Untitled (Projected Shadow)], 1997

Wood and natural pigments, 222 x 90 x 45 cm

Artist's Private Collection

Sem Título (Sombra Projetada)

[Untitled (Projected Shadow)], 1997

Wood and natural pigments, 102 x 80 x 40 cm

Artist's Private Collection

The artist

(Bahia, 1922–Brasília, 1992)

Rubem Valentim began his artistic career at the age of nine, constructing nativity scenes out of cardboard and painting them in brilliant colors.

Although later trained in dentistry and journalism, he preferred to paint. In 1957, he moved to Rio de Janeiro, and in the early 1960s he won the Travel Prize of the National Salon of Modern Art. From there he went to Rome and participated in the 31st Biennial of Venice. To study Black African art, he traveled to Africa, where he participated in the First Festival of Black African Art of Dakar and in the International Festival of Lagos.

Valentim was invited to exhibit in various São Paulo Biennials. After he moved



Objeto Emblemático No.9, wood painted in acrylic

Artist's Estate

RUBEM VALENTIM

to Brasília, his work acquired a religious dimension. He passed through phases of intense experimentation with color, eventually, with his votive forms, arriving at white combined with three-dimensionalism.

The work

Rubem Valentim was undoubtedly the Brazilian artist who theorized the most about his own work, correctly and intelligently. He defined his project as a search for a “Brazilian scrawl,” a language decidedly anchored in national roots but articulated according to an internationally intelligible syntax. Of the three Brazilian painters who went more deeply into the question (Tarsila and Volpi were the others), only Valentim poses it with the clarity of a theory, contributing to it, brick by brick, reflecting at every step, delineating formal parameters and circumscribing himself to a

universe of deliberately chosen signs. Volpi, as is known, worked on the mere basis of his extraordinary intuition, and Tarsila represents a kind of median between the two.

The internationally intelligible syntax is based on the adoption of geometric abstraction as an expressive system. Valentim is evidently a constructivist artist, in whom order and structure predominate over any emotional impulse at the surface, and the organization of space is the essential rule. Curiously—because at first sight it seems to be a paradox—in Latin America and Brazil constructivism has been a useful trend in which various great artists participated, from Torres Garcia in Uruguay, a world pioneer, to the Brazilians Volpi, Sérgio Camargo, Amílcar de Castro, Franz Weissmann, and so on. In truth, there is no paradox, but it is certainly a kind of rejoinder, of resistance to cultural disorder and tropical entropy.

Olívio Tavares de Araújo, 1992

Araújo, Olívio Tavares de. "Penetrar no Amor e na Magia." Catalogue of the Artist. Pinacoteca of the State of São Paulo. 1993. São Paulo.

On exhibit

Objeto Emblemático No.4

[Emblematic Object No.4], 1969

Wood painted in acrylic, 208 x 74 x 43 cm

Artist's Estate

Objeto Emblemático No.9

[Emblematic Object No.9], 1969

Wood painted in acrylic, 160 x 84 x 25 cm

Artist's Estate

The artist

(São Paulo, 1945)

José Resende studied drawing with Wesley Duke Lee from 1963 to 1965. He was a member of the *Grupo Rex*, together with Carlos Fajardo, Geraldo de Barros, Nelson Leirnes, and Frederico Nasser. In company with Fajardo, Nasser, and Luís Baravelli, also students of Wesley Duke Lee, he co-founded the Brazil School in São Paulo, an important arts teaching center that operated from 1970 to 1974.

Resende was a member of a 1972 Brazilian cultural mission to Paraguay organized by Lívio Abramo, and in 1974 he exhibited at the São Paulo Museum of Art. Trained as an architect, he began teaching architecture in 1976 at the Pontifical Catholic University.

Passante, brass

Artist's Private Collection



JOSÉ RESENDE

In 1985 Resende received the Acquisition Prize of the Fourth Exposition of the Hakone Open-Air Museum in Japan. In recent years he has participated in the Biennial of Venice (1988) and the Kassel *Documenta* (1992), in addition to three International Biennials of São Paulo and individual exhibits in Brazil and the United States.

Resende's sculpture remains linked to the idea of drawing, but takes place in three dimensions, removed from the precepts and preconceptions of construction, concept, or material.

The work

The clear, elegant solution of tense and precarious plastic articulations immediately distinguishes a sculpture by José Resende. The disparity of materials, the use of bonds, knots, and folds as means of support, and the circumstantial position in the environment, all converge to form a positive configuration that testifies to the inexhaustible malleability of space, the essentially plastic availability of the world. It is an intrinsic surprise factor that heightens the sensation of facing an uninhibited lyric capable of assimilating all and any materials, arranging situations that are as diverse and unfore-

seen as they are persuasive, and immediately singularizing them, making them unique, so to speak. In sum, authenticating them through the power and grace of authority.

A kind of contemporary virtuosity that does not lie in any skill or illusionist genius, produces pieces that rapidly and decidedly involve us in paradoxical maneuvers, maneuvers which appear bent upon adding a playful dimension to the physical world. In a certain sense, they encourage the reintensification of modern freedom. They do so in a manner that is fairly effective because it is spontaneous. Each sculpture is the exercise book for facing and overcoming obstacles, fears, and preconceptions that impede the achievement of an emancipated life. Attracted solely by conflicts, challenges, and dilemmas, the work of José Resende begins by recognizing that the real cannot be reduced to ideal models. As he resolves them clearly and almost inevitably, he meanwhile reaffirms his confidence in modern aesthetic reason and in its aspiration to participate effectively in building the future.

Ronaldo Brito, 1992

Brito, Ronaldo. "Exercício do Mundo." Catalogue of the Artist. Demibold, 1992. Rio de Janeiro.

On exhibit

Passante [Passer-by], 1995

Brass, 178 x 14 x 50 cm

Artist's Private Collection

Passante, 1995

Coppered iron, 178 x 14 x 50 cm

Artist's Private Collection

Passante, 1995

Iron and asphalt, 178 x 14 x 50 cm

Artist's Private Collection

The artist

(Rio de Janeiro, 1946)

Waltércio Caldas studied painting with Ivan Serpa at the Museum of Modern Art in 1965. Two years later he exhibited in a collective exhibit at Gea Gallery, Rio de Janeiro. He won his first individual prize, at the Museum of Modern Art in 1973: the Art Critics Association prize for the best exhibit. He exhibited at the São Paulo Museum of Art in 1975 and at the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisbon, in 1982.

Caldas has served on the editorial staff of *Revista Malasartes*. He represented Brazil in the Kassel *Documenta* in 1992, and continues to participate in various individual exhibits and biennials of São Paulo.



Dissipatori 1, polished metal

Artist's Private Collection

WALTÉRCIO CALDAS

The work

We seek the classic, the stable and wise conductor of history, a standard, a frame of reference. From contemporary art we anticipate a single condition: its experimental character, temporary provocation, the apposition of the instant of perception when insight occurs, as psychology formerly used to define it. Above all, we expect the transmission of knowledge that slightly expands a culture characterized by a glut of information, by the velocity of its actualization, by its conflict-ridden diversity. These two opposite faces, the classical stability and the experimental character of contempo-

rary art, can only rarely be reunited through a precious talent and intelligence. This encounter, which we cannot lose, is found in the works of Waltércio Caldas.

Communicating vessels, the first lesson of the physical, can be transformed into an *objet d'art* and transmit other knowledge to us. So familiar and at the same time so strange, a strange figure, a portrait of a monad, its self-sufficiency is disturbing to reason. This volume, a place in space, is almost a drawing, even without bringing with it any memory of the plane. A circuit of tubes containing liquid retains its opposite in its airtight material: absolute transparency in the delicate sum of its components: air, alcohol, and glass in the traditional presentation of the three states of matter. Everything in almost nothing.

Temperate and at the same time provocative, as the operations of Waltércio contrast with the noisy and stupid spectacle of the world around them.

Paulo Sergio Duarte, 1994

Duarte, Paulo Sergio. "Interrogações Construtivas." Catalogue of the Artist. Raquel Arnaud Art Room. October/November, 1994. São Paulo.

On exhibit

Dissipatori 1, 1987

Polished metal, diameter: 200 x 20 cm

Artist's Private Collection

Godard, 1988

Painted metal, 110 x 40 cm

Gabinete de Arte Raquel Arnaud

The artist

(Bahia, 1917)

In 1925, at eight years of age, Mestre Didi was initiated into the Afro-Brazilian cult in Bahia. At nineteen, he was ordained a high priest of the Obaluaê cult in Salvador, Bahia. During his youth he learned from the elders to understand and manipulate forms, objects, and emblems that personify sacred entities.

In 1964, he held an individual exhibit at Ralf Gallery in Salvador, Bahia, and in Bonino Gallery, Rio de Janeiro. In 1965, he established the Afro-Brazilian Section of the Foundation of Modern Art in Salvador. Hired by UNESCO in 1966, he traveled to West Africa to do comparative research on Brazil and Africa, and became a member of the Institute of Afro-Brazilian



Opá Ejô Merim

Palm fiber, conch shells,
leather, and filaments of natural
beads and glass

Collection of the Artist

MESTRE DIDI

Religious Studies of the University of Ibadan, Nigeria. In 1968-69, he was the curator for two special exhibits at International Expositions of Afro-Brazilian Art — at the Museum of Antiquities in Lagos, Nigeria, and at the National Museum of Ghana, in Acra.

Mestre Didi has exhibited in Lagos, Ingelheim, Paris, at the UNESCO Palace, and in London, and authored books and studies on African culture in Brazil and in Latin America. In the 1980s, he exhibited in New York, London, and at the Georges Pompidou Center in Paris. In 1996, his work was given a Special Room in the International Biennial of São Paulo.

The work

Mestre Didi is an artist-priest. Through aesthetic creation, he expresses deep intimacy with his existential universe, where an African veneration of ancestors and an African world view combine with his experience with life in Bahia. Completely integrated into the *nagô* universe of Yoruba origin, he reveals in his work a mythical, formal, material inspiration. The Yoruba-influenced language in which he expresses himself is a discourse on the experience of the sacred, manifested through a formal symbolism of aesthetic nature.

Mestre Didi has created ritual objects since his childhood and adolescence. He was initiated into the cult of the *orixá* Obaluaê, who together with the *orixás* Nanã and Oxumaré are earth deities, the major inspiration of his work. Confirmed by the famous *ialorixá* Aninha, he was prepared for the position and invested with responsibility for giving continuity to the inherited tradition of the house of Obaluaê. As a priest, he was charged with making and sacralizing all the ritual emblems of his cult and thereby preserving this fundamental vestige of Africa. His works are marked by a deep awareness, almost genetically incorporated, of the relationship of man with the earth.

Mestre Didi is laden with the experience, breath, and respiration of the oldest to the newest, from generation to generation, converting his personal history into this capacity to transcend. He intentionally communicates, beyond his own life, the mythical energy of the artist-priest. His work conveys a feeling of timelessness, because it expresses the anteriority of origin combined with the vital impulse of constant regeneration. Integrated to the core in the African-Brazilian *nagô* universe, he grew and, through successive initiations, acquired a deeper knowledge of the transcendent mysteries of life and death, the secrets of identifications with ancestral spirits, the *eguns*, and with sacred beings, the *orixás*.

Juana Elbein dos Santos, 1991

Santos, Juana Elbein dos. "Mestre Didi: Tradição e Contemporaneidade." Catalogue of the XXIII International Biennial of São Paulo. October/December, 1996. São Paulo

On exhibit

Opá Ejô Merim [Staff of Four Snakes], 1993

Palm fiber, conch shells, leather, and filaments of natural beads and glass

141 x 65 cm

Collection of the Artist

Egin Awô [Spear of the Mystery]], 1994

Palm fiber, conch shells, leather, and filaments of natural beads and glass

157 x 46 cm

Collection of the Artist

Opá Osanyin Gbegá [A Tree without Branches], 1994

Palm fiber, conch shells, leather, and filaments of natural beads and glass

128 x 52 cm

Collection of the Artist

Oguë Arolé Ati Ejô Ninu Igbô [Forest of Mythical Hunter with Snake], two pieces, 1995

Palm fiber, conch shells, leather, and filaments of natural beads and glass

148 x 23 x 27 cm;

dimension of the Snake: 75 x 40 x 13 cm

Collection of the Artist

The artist

(Pernambuco, 1927)

Francisco Brennand began painting studies with Álvaro Amorim, and in 1947 and 1948 he received the First Prize of the Museum of the State of Pernambuco. In the following year he traveled to Europe, where he studied with Lothe and Léger and became fascinated with the work of Gaudí. In 1953, he was a trainee in a faience factory in Umbria.

When he returned to Brazil, Brennand transformed an old family home in Engenho São Francisco into a museum and studio suitable for ceramic work.

Since that time, Brennand has held various exhibits in national and international galleries and institutions and exhibited in the

Pássaro Roca

Ceramic

Nara Roesler Collection



FRANCISCO BRENNAND

Special Room at the Biennial of Bahia. His sculptures can be seen in various public places in Brazil and abroad.

The work

With the porcelain plaques from his father's plant, Francisco Brennand made a beautiful sequence of works, which are rarely seen, where he drew fishes, fruits, flowers, and female figures. In the paintings of the following period, during the 1960s, there appear suggestions of forms that begin to transform themselves in ceramic a little later. In this work his technical conquests are very important. The richness of the shades in the ceramic is obtained by variations in temperature when firing the pieces. Brennand achieves difficult combinations. The quality of the textures is varied. For

example, he includes ceramic materials that melt at different temperatures to enrich the texture of some figures. In ceramics, transitions from reds to ochers, or from rose to blue or green, require great technical precision in controlling the secrets of the firing. In addition to its opulent forms, the work of Brennand is a display of absolute mastery in controlling the material of the clay, for which he creates a mixture of various argils in combination, and the temperatures that enable him to create opaqueness and brilliancy, smooth textures and rough surfaces, as well as an enormous variety of colors.

Near the city of Recife in Pernambuco, Brennand constructed a rare set of figures around his studio, a series that he continues to develop. Using allegorical references, he often returns to reinterpret particular themes. Much of his work appears as a mélange of panels, reliefs, ceramic objects and sculptures. By analyzing each separately, however, one can begin to perceive the dynamic of the whole.

Casimiro Xavier de Mendonça, 1989

Mendonça, Casimiro Xavier. "Segredos do Fogo." Catalogue of the Brennand Exhibit. Nara Roesler Gallery. October 1989. São Paulo

On exhibit

Pássaro [Bird] 1983

Ceramic, 100 x 30 x 45 cm

Nara Roesler Collection

Pássaro Roca [Rock Bird] 1983

Ceramic, 186 x 52 x 29 cm

Nara Roesler Collection

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