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GÉOMÉTRIES INSTABLES

written by Camila Bechelany

In March 2022, Brazil celebrates the centenary of São Paulo Modern Art Week and the bicentenary of the country's independence. The week offers a symbolic point of reference: through its impact, this event contributed to the development of mythologies that underpinned the modernist project of building a national identity. The moment is therefore propitious for an examination of recent history, in the light of which we are allowed to reflect on the effectiveness of these identitarian fictions and to redefine the very term of "modernity". However, Brazilian art cannot be reduced to a single definition, as the cultural production of the country is so complex and diverse.

Géométries Instables offers a reflection on the correspondences and relationships between different generations of Brazilian artists, based on formal and conceptual proposals. The exhibition is based on recent works by André Komatsu, Jonathas de Andrade and Marcelo Cidade. The works of these contemporary Brazilian artists enter into dialogue with a selection of works by eight emblematic artists, active from the post-war period. These works are linked by their interest in the history of Brazil and the dialogue that they sometimes maintained with the classic trajectories of Brazilian modernism, as well as with some of the dominant artistic currents internationally in the 20th century - minimalism and conceptual art - which can be identified in some of the works presented.

In 1925, the Brazilian artist Vicente do Rego Monteiro (1899-1970) published in Paris *Quelques visages de Paris*, an illustrated book of poetry which adopts the unusual point of view of an indigenous chief discovering the streets of the French capital for the first time. He draws the places he visits as a tourist, as he sees them. As Rego Monteiro did almost a hundred years ago, today we offer an inversion of points of view, and we take the place of the Parisian flâneur to tell different stories of the city, of Brazilian "civilization". The main difference is that the city we see today offers a real mix, which no longer results only from colonization imposed from the outside towards the tropics. André Komatsu, Jonathas de Andrade and Marcelo Cidade observe Brazilian reality in its complexity, as a space of encounters and conflicts, where monuments are also ruins.

Just like Rego Monteiro at the beginning of the 20th century, the artists presented here have managed to combine a very Eurocentric artistic training - notably marked by the history of French art - with a Latin American cultural history whose indigenous production represents a part capital city. For the artists, the distance from home, abroad, only makes the mixture of Brazilian cultures more evident. Among the works on display, we find pieces by Antonio Bandeira, Antonio Dias and Sergio Camargo, artists whose career has taken place in Paris. Between the end of the 19th century and the middle of the 20th century, the city was one of the main destinations for at least three generations of Brazilian artists. Several artists have established ties in this city and have engaged in important

collaborations for their careers. Whether it's the first modernists like Rego Monteiro or Candido Portinari, Tarsila do Amaral and Victor Brecheret, or artists more interested in abstraction like Antonio Bandeira, Sergio Camargo and Lygia Clark, or again, in the 1960s and 1970, artists linked to conceptual art, such as Antonio Dias and Carlos Zílio, exiled in France to flee the military dictatorship in Brazil.

We can relate the research carried out by artists linked to the constructivist tendencies of Brazilian art - such as Judith Lauand, Franz Weissman, Sergio Camargo, Raymundo Colares and Cildo Meireles - to the formal issues of the flat and geometric surfaces found in Marcelo Cidade and André Komatsu, notably in works such as *Geometria do colapso* and *Massa falida*. In these works, ordinary materials from the landscape of large cities, loaded with meanings, are used as so many grid surfaces of space. However, these grids remain flexible, and accept a form of movement, which is also found in the dancing forms of Lauand's paintings and in the "gibis" of Colares. The "gibis" (comics) are object-books, produced by Colares from 1968 in which he produces sequences of alternating shapes and colors from a research around the folds and colors of the paper. These can be manipulated by the viewer and the cutouts offer a series of surprises, revealing at the same time the playful dimension of the work. These works are also the means by which Colares pays tribute to certain artists, notably Piet Mondrian (1872-1944).

A trait that unites this group of artists chosen to be presented alongside De Andrade, Cidade and Komatsu is the way in which they have maintained the experimental nature of their practice throughout their careers. These artists show a modernism that radically departs from European and American narratives of art history. In this deep difference, they drew the material of a fruitful difference. For Sergio Martins, "they were modernists, but far from modernism. Europeans and North Americans may experience a similar feeling when discovering Brazilian avant-garde art; the unexpected familiarity of the works makes them all the more unknown." At a time when innovation is seen as exhausted and when overcoming modern heritage is advocated, the works of Komatsu, Cidade and De Andrade trace a trajectory in which the conflicting relationship - but always attentive - to a pre-existing tradition is at the source of an innovative and unique approach.