

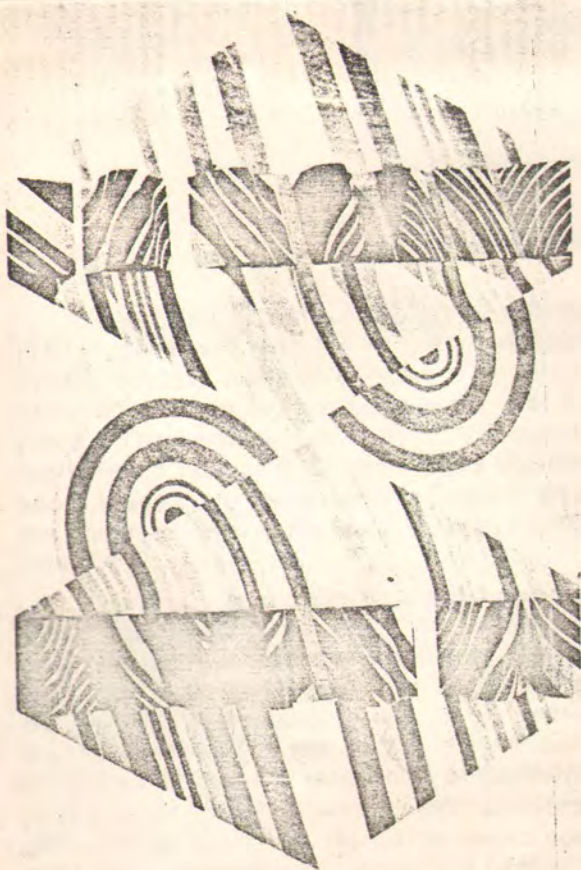
Lydia Okumura
String Piece for Corner and Two Walls
 96" x 270" x 80"
 Tridimensional Drawing in situ by Lydia Okumura

1975

CONTEMPORARY BRAZILIAN PAINTING AND SCULPTURE

This collection of Contemporary Brazilian Painting and Sculpture shows a synthesis of the various aspects of Brazilian art with the sensibilities and traditions of the Portuguese, French, English, Indian, African, and Japanese population of that country. The contemporary Brazilian artists have tackled all the problems familiar to American artists today. They range from action painting to hard edge, from realism to symbolism, and from expressionism to surrealism. However, their symbolic characters are unfamiliar to us and have been expressed in an exotic, elegant and sometimes bazaar manner. Themes from the liturgical art of the Catholic Church, the ritualistic activities of the Africans, and folk crafts of the Indians and the unerring taste of the Japanese pervade the familiar art forms of painting, sculpture and printmaking. These artists have inherited stylistic tendencies from the Portuguese Baroque period, the French Classicism, and the International Style of architecture. Rubens Gerchman, Lygia Clark, Sergio de Camargo, Tomie Ohtake, Niobe Xando, Octavo Arcijb, Reneta Rubim, Yolando Mohalyi and especially Candido Portinari are some of the Brazilian artists whose reputations are established in their country and Europe although they are not generally known to the American public.

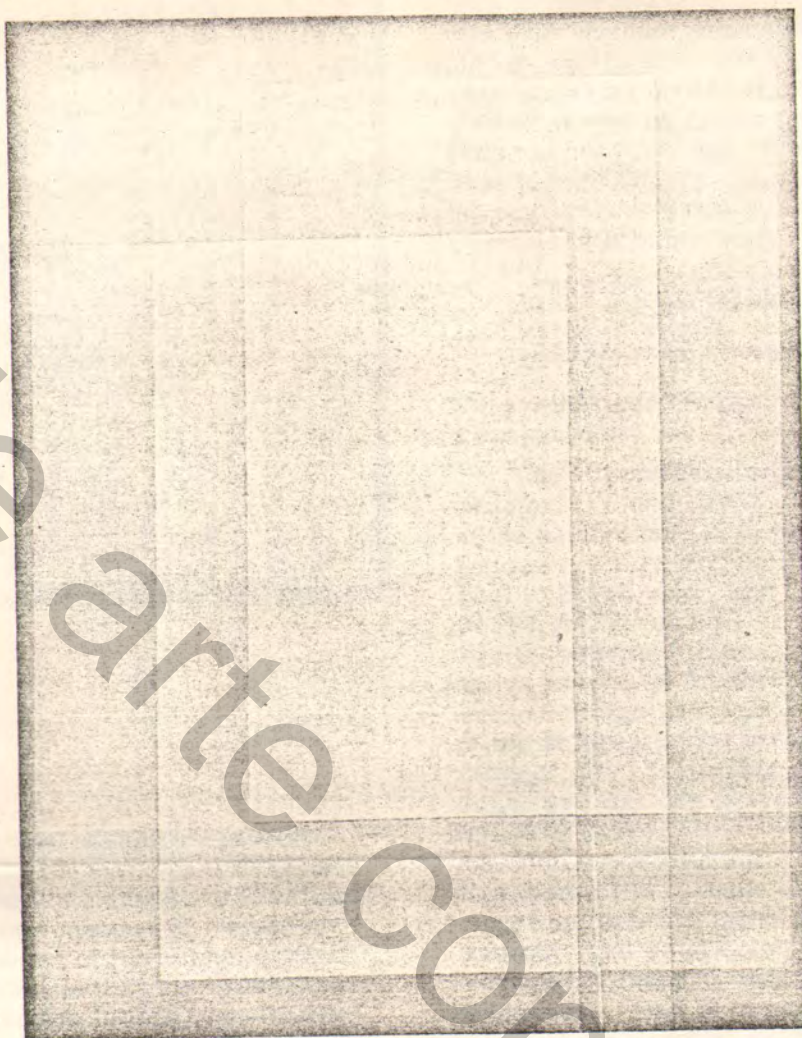
While the earliest Brazilian sculptures (c. 1540) and paintings (from the 17th century) were devoted exclusively to religious subjects that were executed for the most part by monks and missionaries; the Baroque and French Neoclassicism sculptures and paintings combined the European taste with regional tendencies. In the twentieth century, Brazilian painters and sculptors began to develop a distinct personal and national style. They also experimented



Emanoel Araujo
Tridimensional Color Woodcut
 Courtesy of Brazilian-American Cultural Institute, Inc.
 Washington, D.C.

Jonas dos Santos

La Fiesta de La Carne (Environmental performance at
Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.)
(Photo by Patricia Smith-Fox)



Archangelo Ianelli
Ocre 1974 55'' x 70''
Collection of Banco Real, New York, New York

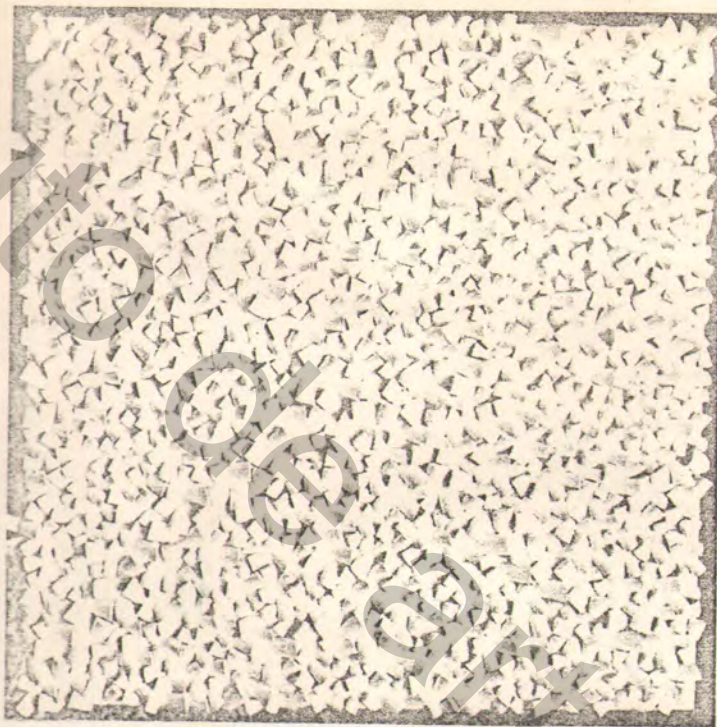
Surrealism, expressionism, abstraction, conceptualism combined with the Brazilian complex of symbolism take many directions. Pop Art's influence can also be seen in Hely Lima's six-foot high wall piece. The combination of old movie posters with the baroque facade of an old cinema building into an assemblage have the authentic popular art look with the undercurrents of Surrealism that is celebrated in Pop Art.

There is a young Brazilian who has been studying at the Corcoran School of Art in Washington the past few years whose work is the synthesis of the Brazilian arts connected with the Catholic Church, the carnival and primitive art. In his works the ancient beliefs in black-magic, the African dance ceremonials, and the pageantry of Catholicism merge in the spirit of the carnival. Anthropomorphic figures, fetish materials, initiation masks combine in ritualistic celebration. Jonas Dos Santos presents *Bird and the Dirt*: works and performances consisting of costumes, props, drawings and sculptures. "The works are strange assemblages of natural

objects combined with the garbage of civilization, such as sticks, tin cans, or parts of store window mannequins — provocative in the juxtaposition of ritual elements from various cultural traditions." Sticks, feathers, stones, animal bones, votive candles, gourds, bags, rags and ribbons merge into a Dada kind of meaning at the non-rational levels of symbolic action.

We see in Brazilian art the mingling of many different nationalities and the cross-fertilization of different cultures. "*Jonas Santos with the Bird and the Dirt* combines the best of these traditions." (Roy Slade, Director Corcoran Gallery.) His approach of using art objects in a performance-ritual is contemporary yet has traditional roots. The magic and myth of art are combined in performance and presentation — representing the unknown. The changing art forms emerging from the search for meaning through various civilizations challenge the present with echoes of the past and intimations of the future — and this collection of contemporary Brazilian art is variations of the search.

Edith Frohock



Sergio Camargo
Relief No. 234

with cubism and abstraction. Candido Portinari combined in his works the foundations of European art tradition with the emotive elements of Brazilian folklore. The founding of a museum of modern art (1943) and the establishment of the Biennial (1951) in Sao Paulo, brought Brazilian artists international recognition. Portinari, known for his sympathetic portrayal of workers, synthesized the academic European mural techniques and his personal social realism into an art that communicated. Hugo Rodriguez attracted attention with wooden sculpture which combined Pre-Columbian forms with modern abstract organicism. Rodriguez unified modern vitalism with ancient ancestor forms giving substance to his personal vision. Jose Roberto Aguilar mixed calligraphic automatism with symbolic bird shapes. Sergio de Camargo used cylindrical wooden shapes to activate flat surfaces pulling together the optical flicker of lights with a tactile rhythmical surface.

Archangelo Lanelli, speaking as an active participant in the Brazilian Modern Art Movement, said:

We never do our work with the intention of "riding the crest of the wave;" on the contrary, our aim is to investigate through difficulties, and in depth.

Lanelli's paintings are Albers-like formal solutions to color quantitative and qualitative relationships that reflect his debt to Mark Rothko. His hard-edged *Ocre, Blue, Red, and White* are paintings that are the result of constant elaboration on a simple image and motif in an obsessive and exhaustive way that reflects the Surrealistic base of Brazilian art.

Two painters whose works are specifically Surrealistic expressions of the Brazilian temperament

are Octavio Araujo and Theresa Simoes. Araujo's synthesis of Dali-like dream visions with magic symbols transform his small canvas into the complexities of magic. His paintings technically reach back in time and take on the appearance of Flemish oils with luminous glazes on finely painted surfaces. Simoes, on the other hand; uses neon, a technological material, as an unnatural reflection of a natural element giving an exciting echo of light, color and shape to her *Seascape*. Another painter, Niobe Xando, uses folk-art imagery in a monumental scale harmonizing motifs reminiscent of slavery and carnival with elements of a future world.

--masks, loaded with a divine energy, accumulated during centuries, vibrate and seem to wait for the last spark, to set on fire a mad world, which brutalizes them. (Claude Arsene Valet, Paris, 1969.)

She synthesizes the past of Brazil with the future of a contemporary world.

The international aspects of Brazilian art are complex. Yolanda Mohalyi was born in Transylvania in the eastern part of Hungary and attended the Academy of Fine Arts in Budapest. In 1931, she went to Brazil where she became involved in the Modern Art Movement. Tomie Ohtake was born in Kyoto, Japan and is now a Brazilian citizen and an active member of the Seibe Group composed of artist-members of the Japanese colony in Sao Paulo. Many of the artists working in Brazil today have been students of Axl Leskoschek, the Austrian master print-maker who was one of the European artists taking refuge in Brazil in the 1940's. He was "a fine miniaturist and illustrator with keen literary sensibilities, portraitist of acute psychological insight" who taught not only the techniques of modern engraving woodcuts and water-color; but also was a brilliant exemplar of integrity and a guide toward critical consciousness. Part of his comprehensiveness was the result of his "shrewd synthesizing of the social dynamics of man and his 'habitat.'" The Japanese artists whose works are included in the collection are: Okumura, Mabe, Toyota Yutakz, and Takashi Fukushima. Their works combine simplicity of design with the modern painting and sculpting techniques and an intuition of the essentially symbolic function of art.

Unlike the Japanese Brazilian artist works, Rubens Gerchman's constructions on wood are conceptual in attitude. He says that his things are "pocket stuff", and that they are "poems not poetry." His constructions are "serious play with materials and memory." He combines the conceptual artist's concern with the illusive idea which can never be realized fully in the object with equal concern with the mystery of the actuality of the object. Mira Schendel, a self-taught avant-garde artist, synthesizes the various intellectual tendencies of drawing in the 1960's. Her *graphic reductions* are collections of empty spaces, signs, scribbles, words, and fragments. Her refinement of technique and choice of materials include the use of plexiglas "for the sake of its transparency." The validity of her personal conceptual expression was recognized when she received the Gold Medal at the II Triennial of New Delhi, India in 1971.