

SHORT BIOGRAPHY ADOLPHO LEIRNER

The son of Polish Jewish immigrants who arrived in Brazil in the 1930s, Adolpho Leirner was born in 1935 in the city of São Paulo. In 1953 he went to England to study textile engineering and design. During his four-year stay, he became acquainted with the legacy of the international Constructivist movements of the first half of the 20th century. Upon his return to Brazil in the late 1950s, Leirner focused his attention on Brazilian decorative arts, contemporary art and on Brazilian geometric abstraction. In 1961 he bought his first work of what later would constitute his unique collection: *Em vermelho* [In Red] (1958) by the artist Milton Dacosta (1915–1988). Largely through his direct contact with living artists and influential dealers, he was able to systematically gather exemplary works of these key movements in his country. This collection, today one of the world's most significant collections of Brazilian Concrete-Constructive Art, was acquired by The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston in 2007.

The Leirner Collection comprehensively documents how starting in the early 1950s, artists from the Brazilian avant-garde assimilated and contested the tenets of international Constructivism, developing a unique Concrete-Constructive art. "Collecting is like a love affair. It means making discoveries in a huge game of hide-and-seek. Each and every one of these discoveries represents an important part of my life," says the passionate collector Leirner. Painstakingly assembled since the late 1950s, the collection includes works that trace the beginnings of non-figurative art by artists such as Cícero Dias (1907–2003) and Samson Flexor (1907–1971), as well as works by members of "Grupo ruptura", "Grupo frente" and Neo-Concretismo in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, respectively. The latter of which include such artists as Lygia Clark (1920–1988) and Hélio Oiticica (1937–1980), rediscovered in recent years by the international art world and honoured with large solo exhibitions.

"Dimensions of Constructive Art in Brazil" will enable a broad public to gain fascinating and informative insights into the development of Concrete-Constructive art in Brazil, while simultaneously revealing so far little-known cross-connections and artistic dialogues with Swiss concrete art.

The exhibition directly ties in with Haus Konstruktiv's incorporation of art history initiated with the grand jubilee exhibition "max bill 100" (winter 2008/09): the reconstruction of the first Bill retrospective from 1951 in São Paulo already showed how the artistic exchange between concrete artists working in Europe and Brazil intensified from the 1950s onwards with Max Bill as a central figure.

Accompanying the exhibition, is the major publication *Building on a Construct: The Adolpho Leirner Collection of Brazilian Constructive Art at the MFAH*. Edited by Héctor Olea and Mari Carmen Ramírez of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (distributed by Yale University Press), the volume assesses the research of avant-garde artists and groups of Concrete and Neoconcrete tendencies in post-War Brazilian art, and generates updated frameworks and new lines of investigation for the interpretation of these interrelated tendencies. It comprises of thirteen essays that were commissioned by a group of distinguished artists, critics, and scholars from Brazil and the United States. The publication was designed by the noted Brazilian designer and artist Alexandre Wollner.

The main sponsor of "Dimensions of Constructive Art in Brazil" is Crédit Agricole Suisse Private Bank. Haus Konstruktiv would like to also thank the Art Mentor Foundation Lucerne, the Stanley Thomas Johnson Foundation and Welti-Furrer for their support and the sustained support received from its friends, patrons and donors, as well as, from Stadt Zürich/Kultur, the Canton Zurich and patron partners Crédit Agricole Suisse Private Bank and Zurich Group.

21.9.09

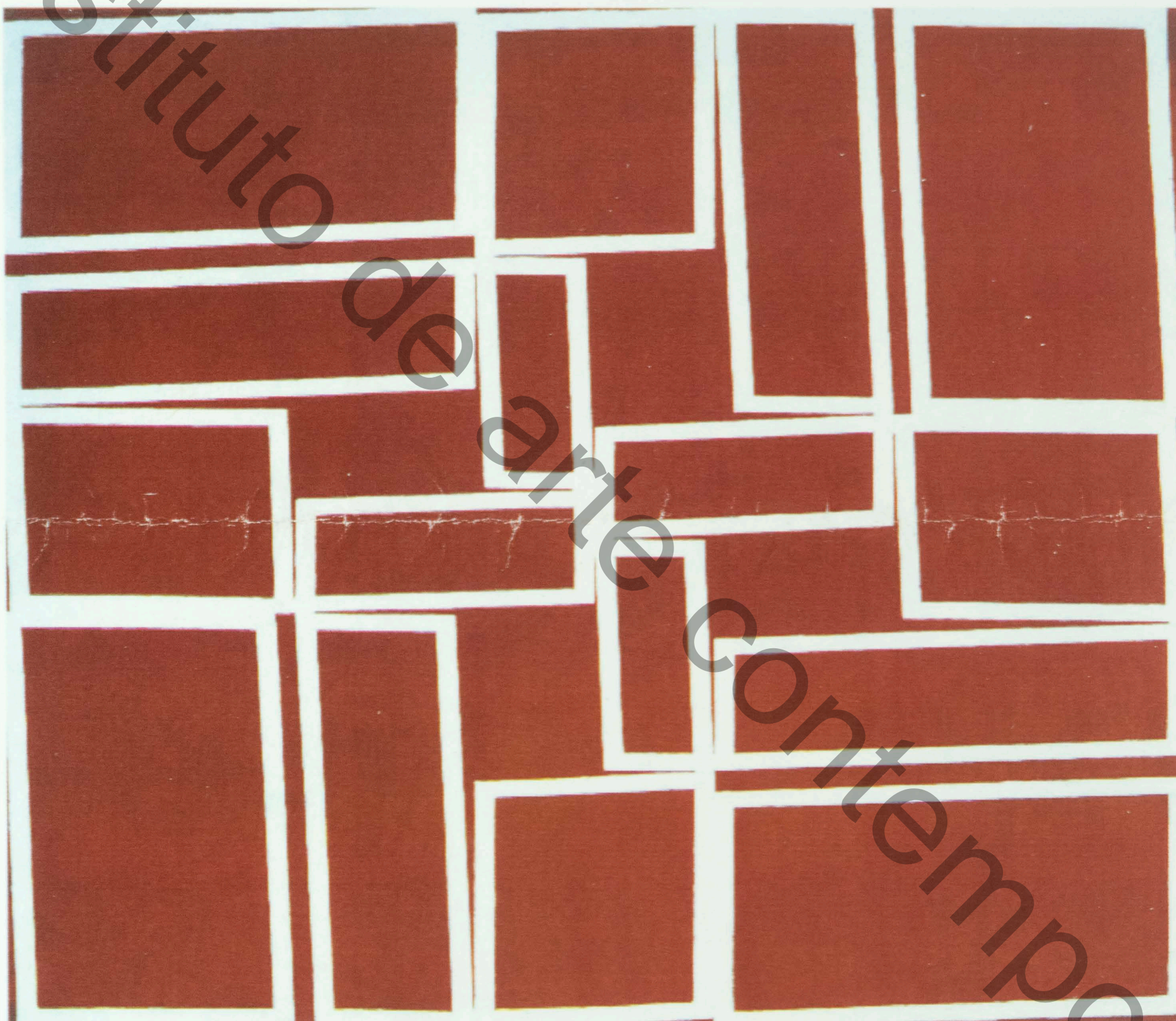
Contact: Christina von Rotenhan / c.vonrotenhan@hauskonstruktiv.ch / T +41 (0)44 217 70 82 /
F +41 (0)44 217 70 90

PRESS RELEASE

Dimensions of Constructive Art in Brazil: The Adolpho Leirner Collection

19 November 2009 through 21 February 2010

Exhibition opening: 18 November, 6 pm



Hélio Oiticica, Vermelho cortando o branco, 1958. Oil on canvas, 52 x 60 cm.

© The Adolpho Leirner Collection of Brazilian Constructive Art at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston und Projeto Hélio Oiticica

Haus Konstruktiv completes its exhibition programme for 2009 with the presentation of one of the most significant collections of Brazilian Concrete-Constructive art: "Dimensions of Constructive Art in Brazil" showcases for the first time in Europe "The Adolpho Leirner Collection of Brazilian Constructive Art at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston". Although individual works from Mr. Adolpho Leirner (born, 1935 in São Paulo) have been shown frequently in the past years, this will be the first time the entire Adolpho Leirner collection is exhibited outside of Brazil or the United States. The exhibition is organized in cooperation with the MFAH, which owns the Adolpho Leirner collection since 2007.

haus

konstruktiv

Eraldo Serpa
Rua Juruviara, 104
Rio de Janeiro 20735-150
RJ Brazil

Zurich, 23 October 2009

Dear Eraldo Serpa!

I cordially invite you to attend the opening of two extraordinary exhibitions at Haus Konstruktiv. On three floors, we are exhibiting the impressive collection of Brazilian concrete and constructive art brought together by the collector Adolpho Leirner, who lives in São Paulo.

Many years ago, I met the artist Betty Leirner, Adolpho's daughter, who lives and works in Basel. She told me many fascinating things about the fruitful relationship between Switzerland and Brazil, between Max Bill and São Paulo. It was also Betty Leirner who gave us our first insight into her father's significant collection. In the subsequent personal discussions with Adolpho Leirner, it soon became clear that Haus Konstruktiv, due to its own history and specific purpose, simply *had* to present this extensive, art-historically important collection to a broad public.

When the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston acquired this collection in 2007, my dear colleague Mari Carmen Ramírez (Wortham Curator of Latin American Art and Director of the International Center for the Arts of the Americas at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston) actively supported us in ensuring that Haus Konstruktiv will now have the great honour of being the first museum in Europe to present this collection.

In parallel to this exhibition, we are presenting another highlight which encompasses two floors: as part of our "Visionary Collection" series, we are exhibiting works by Rita Ernst under the title "Painting, concrete". This exhibition is based on an intensive exploration of the oeuvre of this artist, who lives and works in Zurich and Trapani (Sicily). While Rita Ernst sees herself as a follower of traditional concrete art, she has nevertheless developed a highly unique and distinctive style, influenced by the themes of contemporary painting.

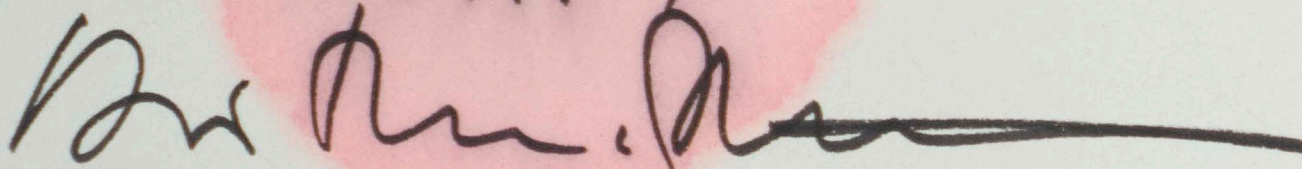
Alongside large-format paintings which have never been exhibited before, Rita Ernst is also, for the very first time, developing a comprehensive "think tank" in one of the cabinets: a type of thought factory with sketches, drawings, notes and originals, which is to shed light on the complex nature of her artistic process.

Both exhibitions are accompanied by in-depth and fascinating public guided tours, a broad museum-based educational programme for youths and adults, a talk with Elisabeth Walther, a concert with Collegium Novum Zurich and a film screening with a panel discussion on the new film portrait of Rita Ernst. More information can be found on www.hauskonstruktiv.ch

In addition, Daros Exhibitions at Limmatstrasse 268 is presenting the exhibition "Anywhere Is My Land" on the Brazilian artist Antonio Dias until 7/2/2010.

I would be delighted to have the opportunity to welcome you to Haus Konstruktiv on the opening evening!

Kind regards,



Dorothea Strauss
Director, Haus Konstruktiv