



## Small Format Paintings and Drawings by Alfredo Volpi Are Exhibited at MAM

*Curated by Aracy Amaral with Paulo Portella Filho as assistant, the show presents 74 works in small dimension that served as studies before the artist painted his great canvases.*

*The works, from between the 1930s and 1970s, belong to Ladi Biezus's collection*

To show a different facet of such an acclaimed artist, recognized as a great master in Brazilian painting in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century: this is one of the objectives of the **Volpi: pequenos formatos** [Volpi: Small Formats] that Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo presents from June 20. Seventy four works by Alfredo Volpi (1896-1988) will be exhibited, among canvases and drawings on paper and tiles, done in smaller dimensions, 30 x 20 cm (12'x 8') on average, which served as studies before he painted his larger works.

Curated by Aracy Amaral and Paulo Portella Filho as assistant, the exhibition comprises paintings made from the late 1930s to the late 1970s, covering his initial Impressionist period, of his homes phase, his period of geometric abstractionism of façades until his final phases, such as his “small popular banners” and his ogives. “All the richness of Volpi's chromatic studies revealed through the selection as a facet that is not always accessible to the regard of people in the newer generations who are interested; they will be able to appreciate a little of the intimacy of the work process of this great painter,” says the curator.

According to Portella, the works are exhibited in a chronological orientation in order to favor comprehension of the temporal development of the artist's language. “Volpi's production has distinct thematic references as time passes. Obeying this natural sequence, the artist's youth works are presented first, with scenes of urban daily life in the Cambuci District, in São Paulo, works that already point to his commitment to color and spatial organization,” he says. “We can also notice that human figures, present in this period, fade from his production.”

Next, works from the 1940s are displayed, characterized by urban and marine landscapes from the towns of Mogi das Cruzes and Itanhaém (places that were important for the artist), as well as children and religious-themed images. Going ahead with the exhibition's flow, the 1950s, 60s, and 70s focus on non-figurative and geometric works. "In this segment we find his famous paintings of houses and architectonic façades signaling reduction to not realistic, formal essentiality," Portella adds.

Conceived by architect Vasco Caldeira, the exhibition setting of Sala Paulo Figueiredo [Paulo Figueiredo Room] highlights works aiming at favoring rigor and simplicity. Presented in small groups, intercalated with texts from the curators, there are works in tempera paint on paper, card stock and canvas; oil on wood and card stock; gouache on paper; drawing on card stock; pastel on card stock; paint on tile; and oil on canvas glued to card stock. The paintings are framed and the drawings are in a window with the set of tiles. This exhibition is sponsored by Banco Bradesco.

### **Highlights and Differentials**

Among the works displayed there, we highlight eight graphite drawings that, according to collector Ladi Biezus, undeniable worked as studies before executing a painting. "Those drafts were so good people would beg to buy them," the collector explains. "I myself bought a few on the market, but because they were made with graphite pencil, unfortunately, the drawings sublimate, so they fade, which is a pity, because they are gorgeous." The drawings exhibited belong to different decades; one of them is from the 1940s—which is a study for tiles—as well as three from the 1950s; plus three from the 1960s, and, finally, two from the 1970s.

Another differential in this show is the exhibition of four paintings on tiles that Volpi produced in the 1940s for, *Osirarte*, Paulo Rossi Osir's tile company, that executed commissions for architects and artists. In order to fulfill orders and expand the market, Osir had the collaboration of experts for this artisanal work. [Mario Zanini](#) was the first to integrate the team, followed by [Alfredo Volpi](#), who became a kind of "boss" in the workshop by solving visual and technical issues. At the time, the process utilized was that of low enamel, in which the painting was made on non-enameled tiles. Later, the drawing was made on the porous surface, which would absorb paints extremely quickly and required highly precise traces.

An important fact was that Volpi would not date his works, but his production has very distinct specific periods. Thus, experts refer to them as coming from specific decades. "Experts study

the master's works in order to try to date them”, says Portella. “However, this identification process is highly complex because Volpi would often turn back to previously studied themes, thus dislocating them in time. Therefore, we often see distinctions such as ‘production from the early 1960s’ or ‘mid-1950s’ and also ‘late 1970s’.”

### **Ladi Biezus Collection**

This collector, trained as an engineer, started his collection when he set up his apartment and decided to decorate it with architectonic-styled works. Thus, in an event honoring Tarsila do Amaral, he met Volpi and started to visit his studio. His collection, therefore, started with his acquisition of a marine painting. Then it was a canvas with black and purple-toned “small popular banners”, until he attained the great number of works he possesses today, from all production periods by the artist, from small to large dimensions, exhibited side by side at Ladi Biezus home.

At first, the collector favored paintings from the late 1940s, in which marine landscapes were pictured. Later, façades were the high points of his collection, for their metaphysical, almost somber character, with few colors and shapes. The “small popular banners” from the 1960s, became his favorite because they were more colorful and childish. Today, this collector considers himself to be as affectionate of small studies because they picture innocence and free tries to get it right. “It was an irresistible attraction because the smaller canvases communicate a moment of creation and total spontaneity without any kind of solemnity, where innocence and a more playful Volpi predominate,” he remembers.

Ladi Biezus also remembers that he never pressured Volpi to paint any specific thing or to make commissions. That is why most of the paintings he owns did not come directly from the artist but, rather, were bought in the market, including the studies that are the focus of this exhibition. “Volpi suffered extreme pressure from marchands and collectors, but he had huge autonomy, he would paint for whoever and however he wished, with his personal rigor and color explosions that were unique to him,” he remembers.

### **Plan Your Visit:**

#### ***Volpi: pequenos formatos***

Curators: Aracy Amaral and Paulo Portella Filho (assistant)

Location: Sala Paulo Figueiredo (Paulo Figueiredo Room)

Opening: June 20 (Monday) at 8 pm

Visitation: Until December 18

Tickets: R\$ 6.00 – free on Sundays

Location: Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo

Address: Parque do Ibirapuera (av. Pedro Álvares Cabral, s/nº - Portão 3)

Tuesdays to Sundays, from 10:00 am to 5:30 pm (the museum closes at 6 pm)

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Parking available (Zona Azul parking permit: R\$ 5 for 2h)

Handicapped access/AC

Restaurant/café

## **Media Inquiries**

### **Conteúdo Comunicação**

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