

## **Color and light in the MAM São Paulo collection: the museum's new exhibition showcases a selection of Brazilian abstract art**

*The exhibition **Diálogos com cor e luz** [Dialogues with color and light], curated by Cauê Alves and Fábio Magalhães and held within the Sala Paulo Figueiredo, showcases more than 70 works by artists such as Abraham Palatnik, Alfredo Volpi, Lygia Clark, Tomie Ohtake and Paulo Pasta.*

The Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo [**Museum of Modern Art of São Paulo**] is pleased to present the exhibition **Diálogos com cor e luz** [**Dialogues with color and light**], curated by Cauê Alves and Fábio Magalhães. The show features abstract art in the MAM collection, focusing on the relationship between color and light in Brazilian painting in the second half of the 20th century.

The exhibition is formed of paintings by the artists **Abraham Palatnik, Alfredo Volpi, Almir Mavignier, Amelia Toledo, Arthur Luiz Piza, Cássio Michalany, Hermelindo Fiaminghi, Lothar Charoux, Luiz Aquila, Lygia Clark, Manabu Mabe, Marco Giannotti, Maria Leontina, Maurício Nogueira Lima, Mira Schendel, Paulo Pasta, Rubem Valentim, Sérgio Sister, Takashi Fukushima, Thomaz Ianelli, Tomie Ohtake, Wega Nery and Yolanda Mohalyi.**

“The exhibition deals with chromatic sensitivity, the fields of light vibration and temporality, as well as the construction of spaces and atmosphere based on color”, explains **Cauê Alves**, chief curator at the MAM. “We grouped several generations of artists together in the space, without favoring certain trends or establishing a chronological order. We have mixed time periods and languages in order to encourage our eyes to perceive similarities and differences between the various visual poetics within the different treatments of light and color”, adds **Fábio Magalhães**, fellow curator and member of the advisory board of MAM São Paulo.

The exhibition design, carried out by architect Haron Cohen, divides the Sala Paulo Figueiredo with radial panels, in reference to the color wheel, an optical experiment by Isaac Newton (1643-1727) published in 1707 in his book *Opticks*. In the publication, the English mathematician and physicist demonstrates, through a wheel with seven colors (red, violet, indigo blue, cyan blue, green, yellow and orange), his theory that the white light of the Sun is formed by the colors of the rainbow.

The curatorship seeks to bring color and light to the public as autonomous expressions, as values in themselves and not as something that seeks to represent or appear similar to anything in the real world- for example, the blue of the sky.

“In abstract painting, there are multiple approaches to color and light as a visual language: harmony, disruption, contrast, continuity, complementarity, tonal variation and vibration, among many others. The light establishes tone and plays a part in both the chromatic relationships and in the construction of space”, explains Magalhães.

Abraham Palatnik, in his *Aparelho Cinecromático* (1969/86), presents colored lights in motion, made from lamps and machines, while other artists closer to constructivism and *op art*, such as Hermelindo Fiaminghi, Lothar Charoux and Maurício Nogueira Lima, make use of geometric shapes and more stable colors to structure their compositions. Recurrently, Charoux explores dark backgrounds and shadows from which light rays emerge, while in a more vivid way, as with Almir Mavignier's posters, or in Rubem Valentim's matrix of African symbolism, color structures the composition.

Mira Schendel uses graphic elements in her composition, but, as Alves explains in his curatorial text, she does not surrender the Ecoline or the light of gold leaf in order to deal with more metaphysical issues. The work *Branco* (1995), by Amélia Toledo, captures a light that emanates from the work as the paint meets the texture of the canvas. Arthur Luiz Piza creates light in his engravings through geometric incisions in metal plates; with some resembling mosaics and spilling over into three-dimensional space. Alfredo Volpi, the master of color, especially with his flags and checkered patterns, insinuates movements and glaze on the canvas, causing the squares or rectangles to deform. The luminous green of *Composição* (1953), by Lygia Clark – a work from the beginning of her career, when she first devoted herself to painting – contrasts with the light and dark lines and shapes that float across the canvas.

According to the curator, Maria Leontina and Tomie Ohtake also approach geometry in a sensory way, and color is one of the foundations of their paintings. Leontina makes use of planes of color and movement in order to imprint a temporal dimension onto her work. Ohtake, especially on her large work from 1989, uses irregular contours to form an illuminated circle that pulsates against a deep blue background, indicating the expanding movement of a possible celestial body. Manabu Mabe, Takashi Fukushima, Luiz Aquila and Thomaz Ianelli all approach the formless, a universe of calligraphy, in an abstraction that is sometimes more spontaneous and at other times, more controlled. The movements and gestures evident in their work ensure that light and color remain at the foundation, sustaining the whole. Wega Nery and Yolanda Mohalyi approach their practice with a more expressionist, lyrical and gestural abstraction, even though there may be a design dimension to their work, evident through the rectangular shapes amidst the blur.

Cássio Michalany, instead of painting shapes, makes the chassis of his painting highlight the shape of the canvas. With few elements, a single homogeneous color takes center stage in his work. Sérgio Sister draws attention to the surface and his painting explores textures, brightness and luminosity that guide the observer's gaze. Paulo Pasta works with the relationships between tones, colors and lights based on the recurrent column-like shapes in his work.

Through balanced compositions, it is as if time is momentarily suspended, that is, until the depth of color and light is effectively perceived. The paintings by Marco Giannotti, a scholar of color, hover between figuration and abstraction and explore images of windows, railings and structures from which light emanates, seeming as if to come from inside the canvas.

“At a time when discourse and narratives are embedded within artistic production and even colors seem to be dominated by objective political and symbolic meanings, reaffirming its autonomy may seem like a regression. However, dialogues with color and light, as well as links between color with space, structure and time can expand the possibilities of understanding art beyond the here and now and replace the ambiguity, opening up the meaning of art”, reflects Cauê Alves.

Magalhães also recalls that, in the last century, the MAM São Paulo played a significant role in the introduction and dissemination of abstractionist trends in Brazil. “Two examples deserve mention: the museum’s inaugural show, *Do Figurativismo ao Abstracionismo*, held in March 1949 by Léon Degand (1907-1958) – which contradicted its title by bringing together only abstract works, including five canvases by W. Kandinsky –, and the exhibition *Ruptura*, in December 1952, which, with the publication of its manifesto, started the concretist movement in Brazilian art” he says.

Diálogos com cor e luz [*Dialogues with color and light*] is part of a wider program of MAM festivities, with the 75th anniversary of the museum itself and the 30th anniversary of its Jardim de Esculturas [Sculpture Garden].

## About the MAM São Paulo

Founded in 1948, the Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo [Museum of Modern Art of São Paulo] is a non-profit and public interest association. Its collection has more than 5,000 works produced by some of the most notable names, mainly Brazilian, in modern and contemporary art. Both the collection and the exhibitions champion experimentalism, opening up to the plurality of global artistic production and the diversity of interests within contemporary societies.

The museum hosts a wide range of activities, including courses, seminars, lectures, performances, musical shows, video sessions and artistic practices. The content of the exhibitions and activities is accessible to all audiences through guided tours and video guides in Brazilian Sign Language and through audio descriptions of the works. The collection of books, periodicals, documents and audiovisual material comprises 65,000 titles. The exchange with museum libraries in several countries keeps the collection alive.



Located in Ibirapuera Park, the most important green space in São Paulo, the building housing the MAM was adapted by Lina Bo Bardi and in addition to the exhibition rooms it has a studio, library, auditorium, restaurant and a shop where visitors can find design objects, art books and a line of products from the MAM brand. The museum spaces are also visually integrated with the Sculpture Garden, designed by Roberto Burle Marx and Haruyoshi Ono to house works from the collection. All facilities are accessible to visitors with special needs.

**Further Details:**

***Dialogues with color and light*** [an exhibition with Abraham Palatnik, Alfredo Volpi, Almir Mavignier, Amelia Toledo, Arthur Luiz Piza, Cássio Michalany, Hermelindo Fiaminghi, Lothar Charoux, Luiz Aquila, Lygia Clark, Manabu Mabe, Marco Giannotti, Maria Leontina, Maurício Nogueira Lima, Mira Schendel, Paulo Pasta, Rubem Valentim, Sérgio Sister, Takashi Fukushima, Thomaz Ianelli, Tomie Ohtake, Wega Nery and Yolanda Mohalyi]

**Duration:** 2nd of March - 28th of May, 2023.

**Curators:** Cauê Alves and Fábio Magalhães

**Location:** Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo [Museum of Modern Art of São Paulo], the Sala Paulo Figueiredo.

**Address:** Ibirapuera Park (Av. Pedro Álvares Cabral, s/no - Gates 1 and 3)

**Opening Hours:** Tuesday to Sunday, from 10am to 6pm (with last entry at 5:30pm)

**Tickets:** R\$25,00 Full price R\$12,50 Half Price. Entrance is free on Sundays and visitors can pay what they like.

\*Half price for students with identification; low-income youth and the elderly (+60). Free for children under 10 years old; people with disabilities and their caregiver; teachers and directors of the state and municipal public network of São Paulo, with identification; members and students of the MAM; employees of partner companies and museums; members of ICOM, AICA and ABCA with identification; SPTuris employees and employees of the Municipal Secretary of Culture.

Telephone: (11) 5085-1300

Disabled access for the restaurant & café

Air-conditioning

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