

INHABITED

28.05.26 — 17.07.26

HEITOR DOS PRAZERES



L'APPARTEMENT

THEA MONTAUTI d'HARCOURT LYGINOS

Laís Amaral, Jaider Esbell, Sonia Gomes, Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato, Mestre Didi, Paulo Monteiro, Antonio Obá, Heitor dos Prazeres, Chico da Silva, Tadáskia, Rubem Valentim

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The group exhibition, INHABITED, at L'Appartement Gallery brings together the work of eleven Brazilian artists active across the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, tracing a set of shared concerns that persist through time: the

relationship between form and belief, material and memory, abstraction and lived experience. The central idea of the exhibition is that form is never neutral in the Brazilian context. It is always inhabited by something invisible: a belief system, a memory, a lived experience. Across painting, sculpture, and assemblage, form in the Brazilian context operates as a carrier of meaning—shaped by Afro-Brazilian religions, Indigenous cosmologies, and everyday experience. It becomes a site where material and immaterial dimensions intersect, where the visible holds within it systems of belief, ritual, and memory.

Rather than tracing a linear trajectory from modern to contemporary, INHABITED reveals a set of ongoing conversations. Bringing into dialogue key representatives of modern Brazilian art with contemporary artists who draw from and reactivate this legacy, the exhibition considers how artistic practices in Brazil are deeply intertwined with spiritual, cosmological, and vernacular systems of knowledge.

In the works of Mestre Didi and Rubem Valentim, abstraction becomes a structured spiritual language. Drawing from

Candomblé and Yoruba symbolic systems, their practices transform geometry into a coded vocabulary, where repetition, rhythm, and sign articulate systems of belief. Valentim, in particular, took the free-flowing and syncretic universe of popular and spiritual traditions as a starting point to develop a precise and rigorous visual language. Integrating symbols such as the arrow, triangle, circle, and the double-edged axe associated with Candomblé deities, he translated sacred emblems into a refined geometric lexicon.

In his hands, these forms—removed from their ritual context—are reorganised into compositions of striking clarity, where colour and structure attain a sense of balance between the rational and the metaphysical. A deeply religious man who described himself as an “artist-priest,” Valentim understood his practice as a form of spiritual transmission. This lineage finds a contemporary resonance in the work of Antonio Obá, whose practice similarly engages with ritual, symbolism, and the body as sites of spiritual and cultural inscription, reactivating religious imagery within a critical and deeply personal framework.

This relationship between image and cosmology extends into the work of Jaider Esbell and Tadáskía. Engaging with Indigenous and Afro-diasporic perspectives, their practices collapse distinctions between figuration and abstraction, constructing images that operate simultaneously as narrative, map, and symbolic field. Their works propose other ways of seeing and understanding the world, grounded in relational and non-Western epistemologies, where the spiritual and the material are inseparable.

Alongside these practices, artists such as Chico da Silva, Heitor dos Prazeres, and Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato articulate forms of vernacular modernity. Developed outside dominant art historical

frameworks, their works draw from landscape, imagination, and daily life, yet are structured through pattern, repetition, and intuitive systems. In their hands, modernism becomes something lived rather than theorised—rooted in experience rather than ideology, and often shaped by an underlying symbolic and spiritual sensibility embedded in everyday life.

Material itself becomes a site of memory in the work of Sonia Gomes and Laís Amaral. Through processes of accumulation, layering, and transformation, their practices foreground tactility and making as forms of knowledge. Fabric, pigment, and surface retain traces of gesture and time, carrying histories that are both personal and collective, where material becomes a vessel for memory, affect, and spiritual resonance. In parallel, the work of Paulo Monteiro explores the tension between materiality and form through a more restrained and introspective language, where subtle shifts in surface, line, and colour evoke a contemplative engagement with painting as both object and process.

Across these diverse practices, recurring themes emerge: the persistence of symbolic systems, the inseparability of material and meaning, and the continuity of cultural knowledge across generations. What connects these artists is not a shared style, but a shared understanding of form as something inhabited—by memory, by spirituality, and by lived experience.

“

My painting is about things that passed through me, and I passed through them.

”

HEITOR DOS PRAZERES

Heitor dos Prazeres (b. 1898, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil – d. 1966) was a Brazilian painter, composer and cultural figure who combined visual art and popular music, working mostly outside traditional and academic movements. He began his artistic career as a composer and musician, playing a key role in the early development of samba in the first half of the 20th century.

Heitor dos PRAZERES



Prazeres was closely associated with the formation of Rio de Janeiro's samba schools and is recognized as one of the pioneers of organized carnival culture, contributing to the foundation of Mangueira and Portela. His involvement in music informed his visual work, both thematically and structurally, as rhythm, repetition and collective experience became fundamental elements in his compositions. He began painting more consistently in the 1930s, initially producing works that depicted scenes of daily life, festivities and urban culture in Rio's popular neighborhoods.

His paintings focus primarily on representations of Afro-Brazilian social life, including samba gatherings, carnival scenes, religious practices and labor activities. These compositions are characterized by flattened perspectives, bold color contrasts and simplified figures arranged in rhythmic patterns across the pictorial surface. His approach demonstrates a deliberate distance from academic conventions, favoring directness and narrative clarity over formal illusionism.

Although often associated with “naïve” or “popular” art, Prazeres' work resists

strict categorization, as it reflects a complex synthesis of lived experience, cultural memory and formal invention. His practice developed in parallel to dominant modernist circles in Brazil, maintaining an autonomous position while still engaging with broader questions of national identity and representation.

Prazeres gained wider recognition following his participation in the Primeiro Salão de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro in 1931. His work was later exhibited internationally, notably at the Exhibition of Modern Brazilian Painting at the Royal Academy of Arts in London in 1944, where he received an award. Over the course of his career, he remained active both as a painter and as a composer, producing an extensive body of samba compositions alongside his visual work.

His work is held in major public collections in Brazil, including the **Museu Nacional de Belas Artes** in Rio de Janeiro, the **Museu de Arte de São Paulo (MASP)** and the **Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro**. In recent decades, his production has received renewed critical and institutional attention, positioning him as a significant figure in the articulation of Afro-Brazilian cultural identity within 20th Century art.



VILAREJO, 1966

oil on canvas

50 x 60 cm

19 3/4 x 23 5/8 in

(HPA-01)

Signed and dated on lower right

Price (excl. VAT): 85'000 ^{USD}



Provenance

Private collection

Private collection

Vilarejo (1966) belongs to the late production of **Heitor dos Prazeres**. Working primarily in oil on canvas, Prazeres built a visual language grounded in scenes of everyday life within Black communities in Rio de Janeiro, particularly in working-class and culturally active neighborhoods.

Rather than treating painting as a detached observation, his practice is informed by direct participation in the social and cultural environments he depicts. This includes references to samba culture, communal gatherings, street life, and informal social spaces, which are recurrent themes across his body of work. His compositional approach typically relies on simplified figurative structures, flattened spatial organization, and rhythmic distribution of figures, reflecting the influence of musical structures—particularly samba—on his visual thinking.

In **Vilarejo**, these characteristics are expressed through a structured but accessible depiction of collective life in a rural or semi-urban setting. The scene emphasizes interaction between figures and communal presence rather than individual portraiture, aligning with Prazeres' broader interest in representing social cohesion and everyday lived experience. The use of clear contours and organized color areas reinforces legibility and narrative immediacy, consistent with his established pictorial style.

Produced in the final year of the artist's life, the work also sits within the culmination of a practice that was recognized in both national and international contexts during the 1950s and 1960s, including his participation in major exhibitions of modern art and Afro-diasporic cultural forums.

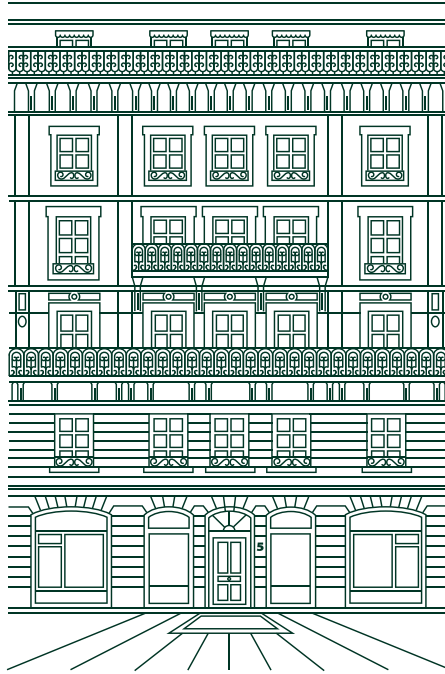


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Sector dos Prazeres

L'APPARTEMENT

THEA MONTAUTI d'HARCOURT LYGINOS



Our overarching ambition is to cultivate a dynamic community that engages both seasoned collectors and younger generations, while revitalising the Geneva art scene.

Founded by Thea Montauti d'Harcourt Lyginos, L'Appartement is a space dedicated to hosting focused exhibitions that highlight specific artists projects and dialogues.

Through diverse exhibitions, collaborations and off-site projects, L'Appartement Gallery, Geneva aims to create a dynamic podium for emerging and established artists worldwide and to create a dialogue between modern, contemporary art and design. At the core of the gallery's vision is the nurturing of emerging talents alongside historically significant artists.

Embracing a modern, hybrid gallery model, L'Appartement seeks to build connections between the art industry and other sectors, thus expanding the influence of art on diverse audiences. Nestled on the second floor of a historic building in Geneva, the gallery offers an intimate setting for collaborative initiatives, involving artists, international galleries and independent curators. Complementing the gallery's presence in Geneva, in July 2026, the gallery will host an off-site exhibition in the cycladic island of Antiparos, curated by Craig Burnett.