

INHABITED

28.05.26 — 17.07.26

MESTRE DIDI



L'APPARTEMENT

THEA MONTAUTI d'HARCOURT LYGINOS

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

INHABITED

28.05 – 17.07.2026

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. His paintings, sculptures, and reliefs become sites where making itself is an act of belief—where, as he stated, “there is no salvation outside of making.” Through this process, geometry becomes not only a formal device but a vehicle for spiritual elevation, where symbolic systems are both preserved and transformed. 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 Tadáskia. 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 works are free, they multiply forms, colors, materials devoid of religious purpose.

”

MESTRE DIDI

MESTRE DIDI



Mestre Didi (Deoscóredes Maximiliano dos Santos) was a Brazilian artist, writer and religious leader whose work occupies a central position in the study and dissemination of Afro-Brazilian sacred art, particularly in relation to Yoruba-derived traditions. His practice is deeply rooted in the symbolic, philosophical and ritual systems of Candomblé, establishing a direct continuity between artistic production and religious knowledge.

From the 1960s onward, Mestre Didi developed a sculptural practice that gained recognition in both Brazilian and international contexts. He participated in exhibitions such as the 1st Bienal de Artes Plásticas da Bahia in Salvador in 1966 and the International Exhibition of Afro-Brazilian Art, presented in countries including Nigeria, Ghana and Senegal. Over subsequent decades, his work was included in institutional exhibitions that contributed to the broader visibility of Afro-Brazilian art within global contemporary discourse.

His sculptures are characterized by the use of organic and traditionally significant materials such as wood, leather, straw, beads, cowrie shells and metal—assembled through techniques that evoke ritual objects associated with Yoruba and Afro-Brazilian religious practices. His formal vocabulary incorporates recurring elements including birds, serpents, staffs and symbolic implements, which function as carriers of spiritual and ancestral meaning rather than purely representational forms. While often presented within contemporary art contexts, these works maintain a strong connection to their ritual origins, challenging distinctions between art object and sacred artifact.

In parallel with his sculptural work, Mestre Didi produced a body of written texts addressing Yoruba mythology, ethics and cosmology. His publications form an integral part of his overall practice, reinforcing the transmission and preservation of Afro-Brazilian religious knowledge through both visual and literary means.

His works are held in major Brazilian collections, including the Museu Afro Brasil, the Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro (MAM-RJ), and the Museu de Arte de São Paulo Assis Chateaubriand (MASP), among others. Mestre Didi died in 2013 in Salvador. His work continues to be exhibited internationally and remains central to the recognition of Afro-Brazilian art as both a contemporary practice and a continuation of ancestral knowledge systems.



MESTRE DIDI

Sem título [Untitled], 1970s

Palm tree vein, painted leather, cowrie and beads
91 x 24 x 10 cm
35 5/8 x 9 1/2 x 4 in.
(MDI-01)

Price (excl. VAT): 55'000 ^{USD}



Provenance

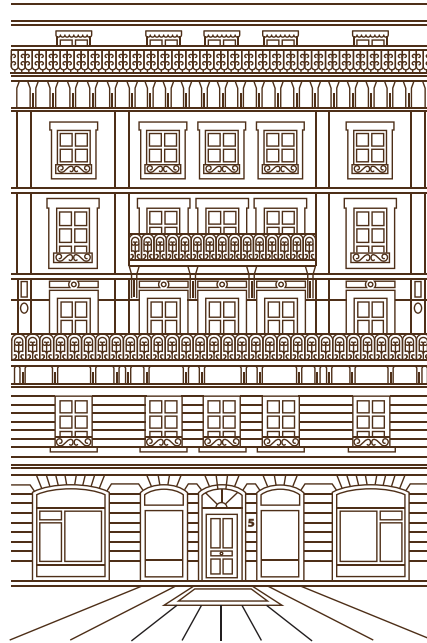
Private Collection, Brazil

Private Collection, Europe



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.