

INHABITED

28.05.26 — 17.07.26

SONIA GOMES



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.

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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. 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.

“

Sometimes I think my work might look like my insides because it's extremely visceral. [...] I think if I haven't been doing what I do, I would have gone crazy or I might have been in trouble because I can't live without it, so I discovered life through art.

”

SONIA GOMES

Sonia GOMES



Sonia Gomes (b. 1948, Caetanópolis, Brazil) is a Brazilian artist who lives and works in São Paulo. She developed her practice outside formal academic training, drawing on personal experience and material knowledge rooted in everyday life. Before dedicating herself fully to art, Gomes worked in various professional contexts, including the textile and fashion industries, which continue to shape her approach to material and construction.

Working primarily with textiles, Gomes creates sculptural assemblages from discarded fabrics, clothing and found objects. Her process is based on collecting, cutting, tying and stitching materials, often without preliminary sketches; which allows forms to emerge through direct engagement. While her practice engages with traditions of craft, she repositions these techniques within a contemporary sculptural context.

Gomes' work is shaped by personal memory, cultural heritage and broader histories of labor and material circulation in Brazil. The use of worn and repurposed fabrics carries traces of previous lives, embedding her works with narrative and emotional resonance. Without adhering to a fixed iconography, her practice explores themes of transformation, resilience and the relationship between body, material and space.

Her work has been presented in major international exhibitions, including the 56th Venice Biennale (2015) and the 57th Venice Biennale (2017). She has held solo exhibitions at institutions such as the Museu de Arte de São Paulo (MASP) and has participated in group exhibitions at institutions including the Pinacoteca de São Paulo and international museums and foundations. Her work is held in significant public and private collections, contributing to her recognition as a key figure in contemporary Brazilian art.



Sonia **GOMES**

Patua, 2005

Hose, metal, fabrics, wool and linen

67 x 37 x 29 cm

14 5/8 x 25 5/8 x 11 3/8 in.

(SGO-01)

Price (excl. VAT): 115'000 ^{USD}

Sonia Gomes's sculptural practice is rooted in transformation and memory. Working primarily with discarded or donated textiles—garments, lace, embroidery and everyday fabrics. Each fragment carries traces of a previous life, and rather than concealing these histories, Gomes reactivates them, creating works that function as intimate archives of lived experience. Her sculptures are both tactile and emotional, balancing fragility and density while evoking the presence of something deeply human and embodied.

The **Patuá** series, to which this work belongs, draws on Afro-Brazilian spiritual traditions, where “patuá” refers to protective amulets. Gomes reinterprets this idea through abstract form: bundled, wrapped and suspended elements that suggest containment, protection and inner energy. These works are not literal objects of ritual, but they carry a symbolic charge, appearing as if they hold memory, spirit, or personal history within their layered structures.

Gomes's process is intuitive and responsive. Rather than imposing a fixed design, she allows the materials themselves to guide the composition, resulting in forms that feel both spontaneous and carefully resolved. The tension between control and improvisation is central to her work, giving each piece a sense of movement and life. Her sculptures often hover between categories—neither purely object nor body, neither entirely abstract nor fully narrative.

By elevating techniques traditionally associated with craft and domestic labor, Gomes challenges established hierarchies within contemporary art. Her work speaks to themes of identity, resilience, and invisibility, particularly within an Afro-Brazilian context, while remaining open and universal in its emotional impact. Each piece becomes a singular presence—at once personal and collective, material and symbolic.



Provenance

Sandra e Marcio, Belo Horizonte
Private Collection

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.