

# THE MAYOR GALLERY

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## LATIN AMERICAN WORKS ON PAPER

9 JAN - 23 FEB 2018

The Mayor Gallery presents a group show of seven Latin American artists who were either born there or moved to join in the exciting and revolutionary art movements happening in the 50s and 60s. Conceptual and abstract art made in several Latin American countries from the late '50s onwards dealt not only with questions of abstraction and constructivism but also with deeper cultural issues such as colonialism, repressive and dictatorial governments and social inequality. Their art is not just aesthetic expressions of creativity but a form of resistance to censorship and brutal regimes.



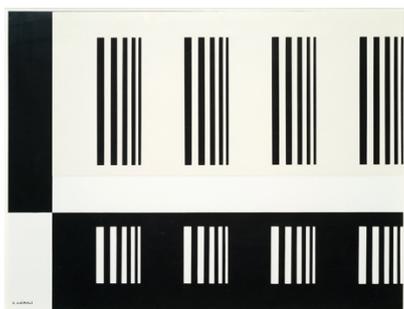
### WIFREDO ARCAJ

(b. 1925 Havana, Cuba - d. 1997 Paris, France)

Early 1950s gouaches on paper, painted in Paris, from the Artist's Estate

Image: Untitled, 1950, gouache on paper, 16.5 x 25 cm

Born in Cuba and trained at Havana's Academia de San Alejandro, Arcay arrived in Paris on a grant in 1949. He quickly assimilated within the milieu of post-Cubist Abstraction and in 1951, at the invitation of André Bloc, the influential editor of the journal *Art d'Aujourd'hui*, Arcay set up a studio at Bloc's villa in Meudon, en countering such luminaries of the historical avant-garde as Jean Arp, Robert and Sonia Delaunay, and Fernand Léger. While celebrated as a printmaker, Arcay painted only through the 1950s and 1960s. He exhibited as part of the Cuban delegation to the São Paulo Biennale (1955) and frequently at Havana's Galería Color-Luz, a pioneering outpost of geometric abstraction. A member of both the Constructivist Groupe Espace, founded by Bloc and Félix Del Marle in 1951, and the short-lived Cuban group Los Diez Pintores Concretos (1959-61), Arcay personified the rich diversity and internationalism of postwar abstraction.



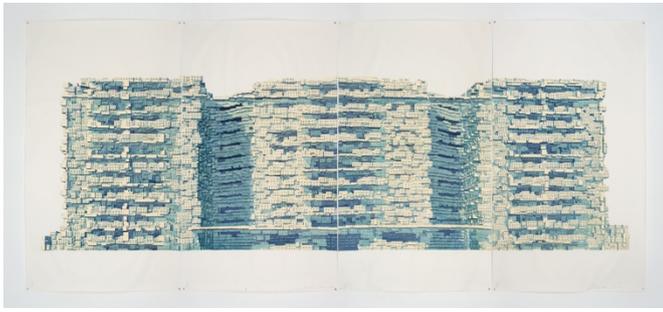
### CARLOS CAIROLI

(b. 1926 Buenos Aires, Argentina - d. 1995 Chartres, France)

1950s to 1970s Collages and ink on paper, made in Paris, from the Artist's Estate

Image: *Rythme*, 1963, collage, 65 x 50 cm

Cairolí studied fine arts in Buenos Aires where he met the artist Torres Garcia who familiarised him with theories of constructivism and the art of Mondrian. Interested by the effects of light on material, he joined the experimental group on spatial research directed by Lucio Fontana, who had returned to Buenos Aires (1946-47). Cairolí moved to Paris in 1952 exhibiting regularly. He participated in *Groupe Espace* created in 1951 by André Bloc and Félix Del Marle, both followers of De Stijl. This new group aimed to pursue in a less utopic approach the neo-plastic ideal of the synthetisation of the arts within an architectural space. Believing in a purer ideology and more universal form of constructivism, Cairolí joined in 1959 the *Groupe Mesure* with Georges Folmer, Luc Peire, François Morellet and Aurelie Nemours. He participated in the international exhibition at the Stedelijk Amsterdam *Experiment in Constructie* in 1962 regrouping the followers of De Stijl, including Jean Gorin, Anthony Hill, Joost Baljeu, Mary Martin and Charles Biederman.



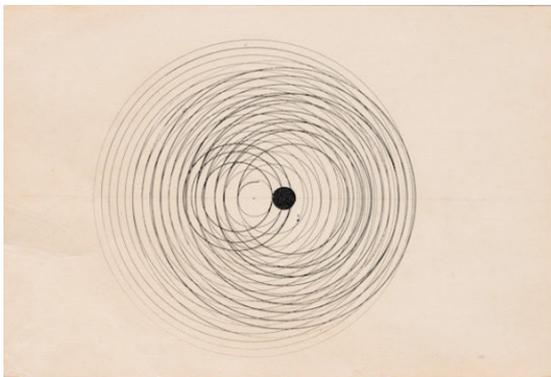
## LOS CARPINTEROS

(Collective founded in 1992 Havana, Cuba)

Exhibition includes the largest watercolour on paper made by the Cuban collective

Image: *Edificio Rio Mar*, 2016, watercolour on paper, 200 x 452 cm

Marco Antonio Castillo Valdes, Dagoberto Rodríguez Sánchez and Alexandre Arrechea Jesus Zambrano (left in 2003) are the Cuban founders of the collective living and working between Havana and Madrid and have created some of the most important work to emerge from Latin America in the past decade. Merging architecture, design, and sculpture, their elegant and mordantly humorous work negotiates between the functional and the nonfunctional, drawing inspiration from the physical world—particularly that of architectural constructions; cities, buildings, and swimming pools. ‘Edificio Rio-Mar’ shown here is a large-scale reproduction of the infamous luxury apartment building in Havana that is now almost derelict. At a time when Cuba was introduced to the International Art World, in part by the birth of the Havana Biennial, the collective has had much success with many solo and group exhibitions in the USA, Canada, Cuba, Mexico, Colombia, Brazil, Argentina, Europe, the UK (V&A, Parasol unit), Hong-Kong. Their work is held by many major Museums, Foundations and important private collections around the world including MOMA, New York, The Tate, London, and the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid, Spain.



## WALDEMAR CORDEIRO

(b. 1925 Rome, Italy - d. 1973 São Paulo, Brazil)

Rare 1940s early '50s Concrete pen and ink on paper from the Artist's Estate

Image: Untitled, c.1950, ink on paper, 10.5 x 15.5 cm

Arriving in Brazil in 1946 Cordeiro settled in São Paulo in the following year initially working as a journalist, art critic and newspaper caricaturist. In 1949, Cordeiro participated in *From Figurativism to Abstractionism*, at the newly opened São Paulo Museum of Modern Art where abstraction gained institutional backing. He participated in the first São Paulo International Biennial in 1951 and in various subsequent ones. Cordeiro was Communist, his politics and art theory combined making him a proponent of art as a fundamental element of the social transformation process, firmly believing art should be accessible to all, rejecting the hedonistic idea of ‘art for art’s sake’. He promoted these ideals through public art projects and his landscape design company. As he wrote in the manifest of *Grupo Ruptura* founded in 1952 “Modern Art is not ignorance. We are against ignorance “. He followed closely Max Bill’s Concrete Art concepts and studied Visual Gestalt principles. Cordeiro wanted to produce a new Rational art through the use of simple elements; line and colour. From 1965 to 1968 he created work based on the principles of *Opera Aperta* (Umberto Eco) in the New Tendencies movement. Later, from 1969 to 1973 he introduced Computer Art to Latin America, a movement he called *Arteonica* which was for him a logical progression of Concrete Art.



## HAMLET LAVASTIDA

(b. 1983 Havana, Cuba)

The political “Prophylactic Life” paper cut-out series

Image: Vida Profilactica 19, 2014, ed. ½, X-Acto knife cut out paper drawing, 100 x 70 cm

Hamlet Lavastida is a political activist by way of his art. The provocative, boundary-pushing artist thrives on highlighting the distinctly Cuban spirit of cultural resistance. His work reconstructs old Cuban political and military propaganda. Using an X-Acto knife and paper the artist delicately and skilfully appropriates the logos of institutions taken as sacred as the Communist Party of Cuba (PCC), the Ministry of the Interior (MININT) or the infamous Military Units to Aid Production (UMAP) revealing the absurdity of these historic brands and at the same time examines and demystifies the tools of propaganda. Issues such as cultural policy, design, public sphere, archeology and historiography are addressed from different media such as video, collages, performances, public interventions and installations. Hamlet’s work has been exhibited widely, including at the Artium Museum in Spain, the Laznia Centre for Contemporary Art in Poland, and the Liverpool Biennial Festival of Contemporary Art.



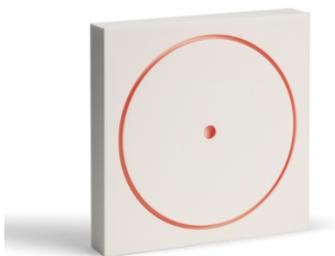
## MIRA SCHENDEL

(b. 1919 Zürich, Switzerland - d. 1988 São Paulo, Brazil)

Early 1960s Concrete pen and watercolour works including the Mandala Series

Image: Untitled, 1964, graphite on rice paper, 47 x 23 cm

Schendel settled in São Paulo in 1953, where she married Knut Schendel, and where she lived and worked until her death in 1988. Schendel is considered one of the most important and influential Latin American artists of the twentieth century. While having contributed to the Concretist and Neoconcretist movements that stormed the Brazilian avant-garde, she was never associated with a single movement but her work contained elements of Lettrism, Color Field painting and early conceptual art. Schendel’s early experience of cultural, geographic and linguistic displacement is evident in her work, as is her interest in religion and philosophy. Tate Modern in London staged the first international full retrospective of her work in 2013.



## LUIS TOMASELLO

(b. 1915 La Plata, Argentina - d. 2014 Paris, France)

Image: El Arquero de la Luz (The Archer of Light) 10 embossed cards within a silkscreen printed Plexiglas box, ed. of 50, 24 x 24 x 8 cm

Tomasello, a leading representative of Latin American Kinetic art, worked extensively in Paris from the late 1950s onwards exhibiting with Galerie Denise René, alongside Victor Vasarely and Jesús Rafael Soto. Tomasello studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Buenos Aires, and began as a Concrete artist, looking to Mondrian for inspiration. It was after settling in Paris in 1957, however, that he began working in relief, moving away from the linear nature of geometric abstraction, directing his interest to form and colour effects: ‘I went to relief as an experience and in that process, I discovered the wonderful world of light. The reflection of colour on the surface fascinated me and that is what I’ve worked in from that time on.’