

ABOVE ALL, THEY HAD NO FEAR OF VERTIGO
3Nós3 – Rafael França – Hudinilson Jr. – Mario Ramiro
Curated by Raphael Gyax

October 28 – December 17, 2022

Opening: Friday, October 28, 6 – 8 pm

Zahnradstrasse 21, 8005 Zurich

Galerie Peter Kilchmann is pleased to present *Above All, They Had No Fear of Vertigo*, a group exhibition curated by Raphael Gyax: For the first time, works by Brazilian artists Rafael França (1957-91), Hudinilson Jr. (1957-2013), and Mario Ramiro (b. 1957), as well as collaborative works by the collective 3Nós3 (1979-82), founded by the three artists, will be shown in an exhibition in Switzerland. The exhibition ties in with one of the gallery's programmatic pillars: its focus on the Latin American art scene. The positions shown belong to the generation of artists who became active under Brazil's repressive military dictatorship in the late 1970s and whose works heralded the political turnaround in the 1980s.

The 1964 military coup, supported by the U.S. government, heralds a dark decade in Brazil's history.¹ The years before General Humberto Castelo Branco was appointed head of the dictatorial military government were marked by economic and political crises: The frequently changing governments increasingly aggravated the social situation in the country with reforms and counter-reforms. They drove Brazil into a disastrous national debt and were thus responsible for the unsettled political situation throughout the country. Between 1961-64, João Goulart, as president of the state, tried to fight social injustices with various campaigns. Among other things, he tried to promote literacy and to combat the unjust distribution of land with a land reform. His efforts came to a halt with the overthrow of the government in 1964, and the newly installed military government deliberately deprived undesirable individuals of political rights while arresting and murdering opposition figures. The civil liberties of the Brazilian people were severely restricted for over a decade into the early 1980s. In the early 1980s, the military government significantly weakened repression until free elections were finally allowed in 1985, partly due to a lack of options from within the military cadre and already in the midst of an economic crisis with galloping inflation.

Against the backdrop of restrictions on freedom of expression in the 1970s and early 1980s, it was difficult for Brazilian artists to criticize the ruling repressive system, as any form of criticism was muzzled or punished with torture and even murder. Often, representatives of the first generation of "dissident" artists, such as Anna Bella Geiger (*1933) or Cildo Meireles (*1948), resorted to artistic strategies that moved in the field of the performative and deliberately left as few material "traces" as possible.² These strategies were also of central importance for the following generation. With the advent of photocopying machines, the artistic scope of action was further expanded. The inexpensive process, with its potential for endless duplication, left a lasting mark on the individual practices of all three artists: for Hudinilson Jr., the interest in xerography lasted throughout his artistic career. Among other things, the direct mode of production allowed for a more intimate engagement with one's own body than, say, photography or painting. The handiness of the resulting works facilitated their transport, as it were, especially abroad, since they could be sent by mail (often referred also as "mail art.")

Rafael França and Mario Ramiro, who studied together at the University of São Paulo, met Hudinilson Jr. at a joint underground exhibition. Based on their common interest in direct

¹ See. Andreas Novy, *Brasilien: Die Unordnung der Peripherie*, Hamburg: Promedia, 2001.

² In recent years, several major exhibition projects have addressed this theme such as: *The Edge of Things: Dissident Art Under Repressive Regimes* (2019), Broad Museum, Los Angeles; *Resistance Performed – Aesthetic Strategies under Repressive Regimes in Latin America* (2015), Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Zurich; *Subversive Practices: Art under Conditions of Political Repression* (2009), Württembergischer Kunstverein, Stuttgart.

contact with the public, the three artists began to meet and exchange artistic ideas in greater depth. From 1979 to 1982, the three young artists joined together as a collective under the name 3Nós3 and carried out a series of artistic interventions in the public space of the city. The collective is part of a broader movement in the 1970s in which Brazilian artists increasingly attempted to break the boundaries between art and life in public space, taking increasingly greater risks. A selection of 3Nós3's interventions is shown in the exhibition in the form of posters like in public space. For them, photographic documentation formed a central part of their interventionist practice, as the photographs could circulate in other media channels beyond the intervention itself.

In addition to the works of the collective, the exhibition features individual works by the three artists. The selection in Hudinilson Jr. and Mario Ramiro focuses on the period of the late 1970s and early 1980s in the field of xerography. Rafael França's individual artistic practice is presented through three video works created from the 1980s through the early 1990s. His work experienced an abrupt caesura due to his untimely death as a result of AIDS. Thus, a quote from his last video work, *Prelude to An Announced Death* (1991), which will also be on view in the exhibition, serves as the exhibition title. The video ends with the combative announcement that paraphrases the artistic stance of these three positions: "Above all, they had no fear of vertigo."³

For more information about the exhibition please contact Matheus Vo Ngoc: matheus@peterkilchmann.com

³ The exhibition is a chapter of a series of exhibitions based on the research "Queer Abstraction in Contemporary Art", which was supported with an initial research grant by Pro Helvetia, Schweizer Kulturstiftung.