

LISSON GALLERY

Press Release

Distribuidx

Curated by César García-Alvarez

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504 West 24th Street, New York

Lisson Gallery is pleased to present *Distribuidx*, a group exhibition conceived as a conversation between the late Hélio Oiticica and a group of intergenerational artists with varying relationships to Latin America. The presentation is curated by César García-Alvarez, the Executive & Artistic Director of The Mistake Room in Los Angeles.

Born in Rio de Janeiro, Oiticica is perhaps one of the most consequential artists of the postwar period. When considering his legacy scholars and curators tread between two narratives. The first traces his pioneering advances in abstraction, sculpture, environmental installation, performance, and film, while the second details his role as a countercultural figure who challenged established discursive, social, and institutional structures. What binds these different stories is Oiticica's life-long impulse for invention. Whether it was writing about states of liberation, or visually stretching the bounds of a pictorial plane with tilting shapes, or reorienting architecture through traversable works, Oiticica was deeply committed to going beyond things that were in order to create things that could be.

Invention is inherently a spatial act for bringing something into being forces a rearrangement of all that exists in order to accommodate for what's been made. That act also compels bodies to become more than just forms in space—turning them into participants of its creation. As such, bodies are imagined as porous to the world; moldable by experiences and thus constantly transforming. This concept was key for Oiticica and fueled his questioning of notions of representation.

From abandoning the two-dimensional plane, to shattering the boundary between object and viewer, to convening people to generate experiential scapes, the trajectory of Oiticica's practice is arguably a space-making one, or as the late scholar José Esteban Muñoz deemed, a world-making one. His ideas are the score that structures *Distribuidx*. Not a portrait of the artist illustrated by the work of others, the exhibition is informed by Alfred Gell's theory of distributed personhood that asserts we are not bound to our physicality but exist in all things that bear witness to our existence. In this show Oiticica's intellectual contributions mark his presence—conversing with artists who also challenge conceptions of space, the body, representation, and in turn, identity.

A focused selection of Oiticica's early works on paper open the exhibition—functioning like a key to his space-making endeavors. What follows are three sections: Forms, Ambiences, Embodiments. In each of them, artists use material and conceptual strategies to dismantle taxonomizing structures that confine their work to their subjecthood. Across their practices identity shifts and becomes difficult to index; allowing us to consider it as a changing terrain composed of layered histories, geographies, and circumstances.

In Forms artists challenge space as a given by highlighting its constructed quality and inherent malleability. Sculptures and panels made with organic materials through collaborative building processes expose space's physical precarity and its dependence on bodies to assemble and sustain it. Mobilizing color, wall drawings, paintings, and photographic images, they intervene architecture to assert the ways objects domesticate bodies and how bodies act upon space and

reconfigure its state and function. As a system that defines, positions, and orients, space is an integral mechanism of categorization. Here, artists unsettle its perceived neutrality and representational behavior.

In *Ambiences*, artists rebel in the situationness of selfhood. Using aging materials, ready-mades, and other found forms and employing techniques of appropriation, assemblage, craft, and industrial production, artists trouble the finite character of artworks. Works gain a sense of expanded objecthood as they blur the bounds between mediums and hint at elements that comprise them beyond their physicality—proposing themselves as arrangements of relations and actions that must be activated. Viewers become participants and each encounter with a work becomes a distinct state of being—reminding us of the situational nature of identity.

In *Embodiments*, bodies are imagined as spaces, or worlds, in their own right. In immersive works that hint at gatherings and others that portray non-conforming, hybrid corporealities, artists affirm the impossibility of defining subjects through prescribed categories; advancing a persistent rebuke of exhausted approaches to representation.

At a moment when the geographic, conceptual, and linguistic bounds around Latinx Art are tensely debated, Oiticica's inventive drive becomes a powerful tool to imagine an alternate framework of engagement that unsettles the defining impulse of art history. Collectively, the artists in this show grapple with a restlessness that gifts us glimpses into what it means remake ourselves consistently while existing at the crossroads of many pasts, places, and experiences.

A special presentation from Hélio Oiticica and Neville D'Almeida's *Cosmococas* series is on view next door at 508 West 24th Street through August 12. The presentation marks the 50th anniversary of the creation of the pioneering body of work.

About Lisson Gallery

Lisson Gallery is one of the most influential and longest-running international contemporary art galleries in the world. Today the gallery supports and promotes the work of more than 60 international artists across spaces in London, New York, Los Angeles, Shanghai and Beijing. Established in 1967 by Nicholas Logsdail, Lisson Gallery pioneered the early careers of important Minimal and Conceptual artists, such as Art & Language, Carl Andre, Daniel Buren, Donald Judd, John Latham, Sol LeWitt, Richard Long and Robert Ryman among many others. It still works with many of these artists as well as others of that generation from Carmen Herrera to the renowned estate of Leon Polk Smith. In its second decade the gallery introduced significant British sculptors to the public for the first time, including Tony Cragg, Richard Deacon, Anish Kapoor, Shirazeh Houshiary and Julian Opie. Since 2000, the gallery has gone on to represent many more leading international artists such as Marina Abramović, Ai Weiwei, John Akomfrah, Susan Hiller, Tatsuo Miyajima and Sean Scully. It is also responsible for raising the international profile of a younger generation of artists led by Cory Arcangel, Ryan Gander, Van Hanos, Hugh Hayden, Haroon Mirza, Laure Prouvost, Pedro Reyes, Wael Shawky and Cheyney Thompson.

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