

Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato

September 12–November 9, 2024
5-6/F, H Queen's,
80 Queen's Road Central,
Central
Hong Kong



Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato, *Sem titulo (Untitled)*, 1977
Courtesy David Zwirner

David Zwirner is pleased to present an exhibition of paintings by Brazilian artist Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato (1900–1995), on view at the gallery's Hong Kong location. Marking the artist's third solo exhibition with the gallery and the first presentation of his work in Asia, this exhibition coincides with Lorenzato's inclusion in the 60th Venice Biennale, organized by curator Adriano Pedrosa, on view through November 24, 2024.

Among the foremost Brazilian artists of his generation, Lorenzato developed a singular body of paintings centered on his fastidious observations of everyday subjects in his hometown of Belo Horizonte—including favelas, semi-urban landscapes, and scenes of agriculture and rural industry. Lorenzato's distinctive compositions are characterized by reduced geometric forms and densely textured surfaces that the artist achieved through the use of richly colored self-made pigments applied with brushes and enhanced with combs and forks. Imbued with an assured freedom of expression, these canvases masterfully capture the vitality of the artist's surroundings as well as the colors and textures of the natural world. As Rodrigo Moura, Lorenzato scholar and chief curator at El Museo del Barrio, New York, notes, "Lorenzato's paintings are not only born out of the desire to construct his own reality but also to contain the other dimensions that coexist within it, such as gesture, nature, and silence."¹

Spanning the last three decades of Lorenzato's career, the works in this exhibition embody many of the primary concerns of the artist's mature oeuvre in both subject matter and form. Paintings on view include depictions of vernacular architecture, pastoral landscapes, and quotidian figurative scenes that call on

¹ Rodrigo Moura, *Lorenzato*, trans. Pedro Vainer (New York: KMEC Books; São Paulo: Ubu Editora, 2023), p. 31.

Lorenzato's lived experience. Of particular prominence in this presentation are paintings of favelas—working-class shantytowns that have become familiar, even quintessential images of informal urbanity and rural culture in Brazil—which as a whole constitute Lorenzato's largest body of work and earned the artist early fame, due in part to the commercial popularity of Brazilian modern art focused on the subject. He had personally witnessed the construction of a favela near his home in an area used for the reforestation of eucalyptus trees; the subject, both architectural and personal, provided the artist a generative space for formal experimentation.

Moura elaborates: "Lorenzato's *Favelas* are the construction site of his ever-developing modernity. In these paintings, we find geometric blocks, flat concrete slabs, parapets or platbands, primary-colored rectangles, and rhomboid shapes set against red skies. These elements recur on successive planes, all of which ignore the theory and practice of perspective.... The paintings convey an unsystematic body of thought in which the Eurocentric canon, represented by Italian Renaissance painting—Lorenzato's spiritual matrix—is transfigured by a specific, Global South social experience. Modern architecture appears in a reprocessed form in suburban houses built by suburban contractors, and their styles resonate in Lorenzato's facades. This marginal modernity, built on social injustice and unplanned urbanization, is depicted through bold shapes and bright colors."²

Other paintings in the exhibition showcase Lorenzato's long-standing preoccupation with landscape—ranging from vast rural horizons of sun, sky, and land to close-up nature studies wherein tree branches or a single plant fill the entire picture plane. These works exemplify his restrained formal approach combined with his signature treatment of texture and color. As art historian Claudia Giannetti Nölle observes, "Especially through his ability to represent reality, he is able to transform or metamorphose elements of nature or human figures, conferring upon them a magical quality that can only be achieved through genuine abstraction of real forms and figures. His method of capturing everyday life and expressing it in drawings or oil paintings goes well beyond mere simplification.... The image seems to go through a process of distillation. He eschews finer details and focuses instead on the essential lines which make up the image he observes."³

Seen together, these works express an important crosscurrent between Brazilian art and broader modernist movements of the twentieth century. While he kept on hand a worn copy of painter Giorgio Vasari's famous sixteenth-century book on artists of the Italian Renaissance and was known to express admiration for painters such as Cézanne, Van Gogh, Monet, and Manet, Lorenzato operated as a singular and distinctly Brazilian artist—albeit with European roots. Often using geometric shapes to suggest objects in real space, his paintings show a visual parallel to the work of Italian-born Brazilian modernist painter Alfredo Volpi (1896–1988), who similarly painted everyday subjects in São Paulo. Lorenzato's position as a working-class artist—an atypical identity in Brazilian cultural circles until the later decades of the twentieth century—set him apart, both for his perspective on the rural vernacular and for his influence on local contemporaries. Legendary in his hometown, Lorenzato created work that was collected by fellow artists in Belo Horizonte, who introduced it to new audiences in São Paulo when they moved to the urban center in the 1990s, bringing wider awareness to the artist's oeuvre.

Recent critical and institutional attention to Lorenzato's work has expanded the appreciation of his art far beyond the regional recognition it received during his lifetime. This exhibition celebrates Lorenzato's contribution to a global modernist canon, in which the nuances and textures of the artist's intimate compositions can be considered alongside the universality of his colorful language.

² Ibid., p. 21.

³ Claudia Giannetti Nölle, *Lorenzato: 90 Anos*. Exh. cat. (Belo Horizonte: Manoel Macedo Galeria de Arte, 1990), n.p.

Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato was born in 1900 to Italian parents who immigrated to Brazil in the last decade of the nineteenth century. In 1920, the artist moved with his parents to Italy, where he worked various construction and painting jobs on and off throughout Europe. Though he studied for a brief period at the Reale Accademia delle Arti in Vicenza in 1925, Lorenzato was mostly self-taught, and he developed his technical proficiency in painting through a job restoring frescoes in Rome, having previously worked as a mural painter in Brazil.

Lorenzato permanently returned to Belo Horizonte in 1948, and after sustaining an injury to his leg in 1956, he committed himself to painting full time. In 1964, he had his first solo exhibition at the Minas Tênis Clube in Belo Horizonte, followed by his inclusion in two group shows there the following year and a second solo exhibition in 1967. In the decades following, his work was exhibited in solo and group exhibitions in Brazil, including a retrospective exhibition at the Museu de Arte da Pampulha, Belo Horizonte, in 1995—the year of the artist’s death. In 1972, Lorenzato represented Brazil in the 3rd Triennial of Self-Taught Art in Bratislava, Czechoslovakia.

In 2019, Lorenzato’s first solo exhibition outside of Brazil was presented at David Zwirner London. In 2022, the artist’s work was included in the major group exhibition *Histórias brasileiras* at Museu de Arte de São Paulo, curated by Adriano Pedrosa, which was part of a two-year program at the museum celebrating the bicentennial of Brazilian independence. Lorenzato is included in the 60th Venice Biennale, *Stranieri Ovunque—Foreigners Everywhere*, organized by Pedrosa and on view through November 24, 2024.

Lorenzato’s work is represented in public collections internationally, including Fundação Clóvis Salgado, Belo Horizonte; Museu de Arte da Pampulha, Belo Horizonte; Museu de Arte de São Paulo; Nouveau Musée National de Monaco; Pinacoteca de São Paulo; and Universidade Federal de Viçosa, Brazil.

In 2023, with the support of Brazilian cultural institute Itaú Cultural, the Projeto Lorenzato was established with the mission of identifying and digitally cataloguing the artist’s work.

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