

LUHRING AUGUSTINE

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Willys de Castro

February 4 – March 11, 2017

Opening reception: Friday, February 3, 2017, 6–8 pm

Luhring Augustine is pleased to announce an exhibition of works by the Brazilian artist Willys de Castro (1926 – 1988), featuring a selection of early gouaches and concrete poems, as well as *Objetos ativos (Active objects)*, the works for which he is best known.

A founding member of the Neoconcrete movement, de Castro worked alongside contemporaries such as Lygia Clark, Hélio Oiticica, and Lygia Pape in formulating an approach to geometric abstraction centered on the phenomenological experience of the viewer. For these artists, a complete reading of an artwork transcended its fixed visual properties, encouraging instead a means of perception meant for the entire body. The curator Gabriel Pérez-Barreiro has noted, “Few artists have explored the delicate relationship between form and perception in greater depth than Willys de Castro. His achievements, modest in scale, but great in significance, summarize and embody with exquisite exactitude one of the key questions of twentieth century art: how to create simple forms with complex consequences.”

De Castro’s *Active objects* consist of geometric compositions most commonly painted on canvas-covered strips of wood. His decision to hang these structures perpendicular to the wall had groundbreaking implications, most notably in blurring their status as paintings. By reorienting the frontal axis along the object’s narrowest edge, de Castro introduced a sculptural dimensionality to these works, which complicated their apprehension from any single vantage point. His experiments with figure-ground relationships as well as positive and negative space enacted dialogues of rhythm and color across adjacent and opposing surfaces. In order to fully grasp his system of mirroring and counterbalance, one must move back and forth before the object, bridging together mental images of its distinct facets. While some of the artists in de Castro’s circle created artworks that invited physical manipulation, he was able to highlight the individual subjectivity of each viewer by transferring a form of authorship without requiring alteration of the work itself.

De Castro’s desire to push the boundaries of painting can be traced back to his early gouaches and concrete poems of the 1950s. In these works, overlapping geometric forms appear to break up the two-dimensional plane of his compositions, while the use of language introduces an external verbal component that becomes inextricable from the visual. Each compositional element is carefully mapped out according to a mathematical logic, offering distinct and valuable insight into de Castro’s meticulous design aesthetic and essentialist point of view.

Born in Uberlândia, Minas Gerais, de Castro is among the most influential figures within the legacy of Brazilian modernism. Recent surveys of his work were held at the Instituto de Arte Contemporânea, São Paulo in 2016; Royal Academy of London in 2014; and Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo in 2012. His work is featured in the permanent collections of institutions worldwide, including the Museu de Arte de São Paulo; Museu de Arte Moderna Rio de Janeiro; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Blanton Museum of Art, Austin; and Museum of Modern Art, New York.

This exhibition was first presented at Cecilia Brunson Projects, London (October 8 – December 9, 2016), and was accompanied by a catalogue with texts by the artist, Gabriel Pérez-Barreiro, and Rodrigo Naves. Galeria de Arte Almeida e Dale, São Paulo and Galeria Marília Razuk, São Paulo were important collaborators in organizing this show.

For further information about the artist, please contact Donald Johnson Montenegro at 212.206.9100 or via email at donald@luhringaugustine.com. For press requests, please contact Caroline Burghardt at 718.386.2745 or via email at caroline@luhringaugustine.com.