



## ALFREDO VOLPI

Lucca, Italy 1896 –  
São Paulo, Brazil 1988

Frieze Masters  
Spotlight

London 2018

Galeria Marilia Razuk and Galeria de Arte Almeida e Dale proudly announce their participation in the 7<sup>th</sup> edition of Frieze Masters, scheduled to take place October 4–7, 2018, in The Regent's Park, London. The joint presentation will focus on works by Brazilian artist Alfredo Volpi as part of Spotlight, which presents recognized bodies of works by 20<sup>th</sup>-century revolutionary figures of the avant-garde around the world. In 2018, Spotlight is again curated by Toby Kamps (Blaffer Art Museum, University of Houston).

The booth will include an accurate selection of artworks from the 1950's and 1960's, considered the most relevant period of the Brazilian painter. Alfredo Volpi was a self-taught artist with a humble background, widely considered one of the most important artists in the history of Brazilian 20<sup>th</sup> century art. His paintings often depart from everyday scenes, that often turn into completely abstract landscapes. Galeria Marilia Razuk and Galeria de Arte Almeida e Dale have been working intensely for the international dissemination of the work of the most consecrated modern Brazilian artists.

by Mário Pedrosa

Originally published as  
“Volpi, 1924–1957,” in Volpi,  
1924–1957, exh. cat. (Rio  
de Janeiro: Museu de Arte  
Moderna, June 1957).

The Brazilian painter, Alfredo Volpi, is more than a “Paulista” from São Paulo — he hails from its industrial immigrant district of Cambuci. He was not born in this neighbourhood, but in Lucca, Italy, in 1896. When he was eighteen months old, his family—an Italian couple with three children—settled in Cambuci. Of São Paulo’s old neighbourhoods, it is one of the few to have resisted progress. For this reason, its former appearance remains largely unchanged.

His father tried his hand at several small businesses but, in São Paulo as in Lucca, he was never a success. At sixteen, the young Alfredo started working in construction as an apprentice muralist. However, after elementary school, he worked as a woodcarver, then as a bookbinder, while his third profession was ultimately the one that made him. When he joined the profession, the pure Art Nouveau “oral” style prevailed among its masters. The year was 1912.

From the day he began carrying pots and buckets of water and whitewash, as well as brushes and ladders for his superiors, Alfredo Volpi was always a conscientious apprentice. He learned how to mix paint and listened attentively to the masters’

teachings when they told him to thicken the paint or thin it, so the oil could be applied more smoothly. From the outset he was working with walls, preparing, plastering and whitewashing them. And his academy was truly the primitive, good school of the wall painter; in no time, the young Volpi was promoted to “decorator” a title he bore with genuine pride for a long time and which allowed him to take on jobs of his own.

In these authentic, simple surroundings in which tradition reigned and the mastery of a good trade was still respected, aesthetic issues were resolved by themselves: every age has its decorative tenets. As mentioned above, his was the age of Art Nouveau and subject matter never varied, where all depended on who had commissioned the work: if the client was Italian, decoration had to be in the Renaissance style, but if French or Brazilian, it had to be Louis XV, while the Turks could not do without the “Moorish” style. A good contractor, Volpi met his clients’ needs to the letter.

Almost nothing remains of these decorations commissioned according to the taste of the period and customer: the explosive progress of São Paulo razed to the ground most of the homes he had painted. These were old-fashioned villas and mini palaces in which the prospering owner insisted on having wall decorations in keeping with the dwelling’s character. Today, arid skyscrapers devoid of fantasy and in which space is parsimoniously used stand where those old, rarely beautiful, but almost always comfortable and invariably spacious houses, once existed. However, in his old Cambuci we discovered an old house in

the Florentine style, where he had decorated the dining room with classical Greco-Roman motifs and a ceiling over a staircase in the Baroque style, with angels parading across the heavens or leaning over parapets.

Years later, when Volpi, by then aware of the existence of other types of painting, began to distinguish himself as an easel painter, a spiteful Frenchman called him “the decorator from Cambuci”. Volpi paid him no mind. But in its popularly authentic sense, the title is truly noble. Indeed, before his name became known outside his neighbourhood—that is, throughout the cosmopolitan city centre, Rio, Brazil and even abroad—Volpi was already a celebrity in his native Cambuci.

He was sixteen when he began to paint at home for fun. His notion of “arts painting” was to paint for his own amusement on small, cheap canvases, rather than being paid to paint on the walls of others. It was then that he experienced his earliest “influences”: the lad would stroll along near-by streets or neighbourhoods, stopping at certain doors or gates to appreciate the landscapes of entrances to homes, terraces and porches. He found them amusing. Thus, it was the anonymous painters of these “entrances” who were his masters.

Indeed, this never changed for him: even in his last Geometric-Concretist period, the artist refused to separate what belongs to a school from what does not, what is erudite from what is not erudite, what one learns “through teaching” from what is learned without knowing how—from life, for example.

Even regarding the geometric forms and subjects of his most recent paintings, he tells us: “You never know where the elements come from”. They come from everywhere, and he makes triangles from weather vanes, circles from domes, and rectangles from little paper flags. For this healthy, jovial, happy man with many adopted children, a wife, and cheerful daughter, with dogs and cats that freely crossed his threshold through the little gate leading off his quiet street, life was truly the supreme teacher.

One may search his work for the influence of renowned modern or old masters. He definitely never opened a foreign art magazine to study photographic reproductions of Picasso, Matisse, Renoir, Van Gogh or Gauguin. In fact, he never needed to seek his solutions in others, nor from within (he is unpretentious) but from around him, in the simple beings that surrounded him, in children (who he said always surprise us), everyday things and tasks.

For a time, his companion and friend was a popular painter from Itanhaém called Souza, from whose landscapes Volpi may have learned to separate the essential from the accessory; one hue from another. Souza and Volpi often painted together on the beaches of Itanhaém. Souza was a simple man. He died in the way he started out: a popular painter; today, we say a “primitive”. Volpi also continued to be what he had always been—a conscientious, simple craftsman, even now as his fame grows and he is on the way to becoming Brazil’s leading contemporary painter and is, at any rate, the artist who catapulted the medium into the future, where it is achieving

a transcendence never before attained in Brazilian art. And he attains the extremes of abstract rationalization, so-called Concretist painting, with no loss of wit; under his brush, the most rigorous geometric subjects are sensitized by a use of colour that functions with precision, purity, and a luminous vibration tempered by a touch of unmistakably personal lyricism.

When, in around 1912, he began to paint “for his own amusement”, Cubism was all the rage in Paris. By 1922, at the time of the Modern Art Week at São Paulo’s Teatro Municipal, Volpi already had ten years of pictorial experience. However, within the capital’s suburban circles he already shined. Perhaps this explains why the event went unnoticed by him, despite how scandalous the manifestations through which modernism descended upon the sleepy São Paulo of the time—the very same city that Mário de Andrade called *Paulicéia desvairada* [Delirious City], in the throes of a literary ecstasy. Volpi the decorator knew nothing of the existence of these great cosmopolitan names of intellectuals and artists, while they were oblivious to the existence of the common glory of Cambuci. Mário de Andrade and Volpi did not meet or appreciate one another until later, when they would drink together until “plastered.”

In the young Volpi’s eyes, two types of painting did not exist, nor was there any division between modernists and traditionalists; there was only painting. And when, at the first show in which his canvases appeared with others and were classified as “Impressionist” he was taken aback. Surely as surprised as M. Jourdain

felt when told he was producing prose. This took place in 1924 in the old Palácio das Indústrias. Professional colleagues—all of them from “civil construction”—also showed their work alongside his. Of his three works shown, one—*Moça costurando* [Young woman sewing]—was purchased by its current owner for the sum of 400,000 Reals. At last, master decorator Volpi was also recognized as a painter. He was then twenty-eight. From that day forth, his life was split into two: on the one hand, the professional master-muralist; on the other, the individual artist, the easel painter.

A master artificer became aware he was also an “artist.” But he realized, perhaps with melancholy, that artificer and artist could no longer coexist, because the different types of clientele each of them served were incompatible. A muralist worked for simple folk. Albeit rich or comfortable, many were former artisans or small businessmen themselves, most of them immigrants; whereas the “new” easel painter had to please a completely different, peevish clientele—some of modest means, others who were rich snobs, intellectuals or demanding amateurs with refined, individualistic tastes. In these, “isms” prevailed; in the others, tradition.

The artist that Volpi is today was shaped and developed within the world of São Paulo artisans of the beginning of the century. When, for this very reason, he was hailed a master, he had truly mastered all the techniques of wall and easel painting without having attended a single school, let alone an “arts” academy. He trained as an artist in the civil construction industry, and then evolved from the pure manual crafts-

manship of stonemasons and foremen to the level of modern architecture in which those who deal with painter-artists are architects, themselves artists.

Volpi’s art bears all the marks of this evolution, throughout the long years of honest, effective work in the profession, he passed quite naturally (without realizing) through all the phases of modern painting, from Impressionism to Expressionism, Fauvism to Cubism, all the way to Abstractionism. Although in his current phase he still cherishes the old materials and, perhaps, a preference for tempera (not to mention a fondness for the wall itself)—he no longer adapts his art to the artisanal styles of the civil construction of his youth. This nonetheless proves that a painter’s true school need not be the arts academy or specialized school (far removed from the world of work and production), but the industrial apprenticeship of the day. In his growth as a painter, Volpi recreated the evolution of the artist, who, upon leaving the Middle Ages and Renaissance, the age of guilds, moved on to the modern age of free trade in which guilds were done away with and the separation between “fine” arts and “industrial” arts became clear.

Nevertheless, having started out from the trade of mural decoration, he managed to reach the apex of modern evolution. Perhaps this lent him the purity, artistic ingenuity, the dramatically precarious and rich manual crafting of his material, even in the most abstract or “concrete” compositions of his latest phase.

His tools and materials, however, are the same as those used in artisanal produc-

tion. With them, he was able to see his experiment through to the end. The young artists who follow him today must begin at another, far more complicated level: that of modern industry with its mechanical instruments, new synthetic or plastic materials, so that, with these, they may attain a visuality beyond that of the pure Volpian surfaces with their burning checkerboards or the fascinating diagonals of his *sui generis* “Concretism.”

The current show seeks to impart a sense of the complete works in order to highlight his various different phases. It begins with a sort of naive Impressionism and is followed by a Post-Impressionist modality in which the representation of things begins to be subordinated to a need to structure the composition. Another experience is defined by a certain preference for social themes. The figures are then heavily laid on à la Cézanne, and the almost predominant chiaroscuro disappears little by little giving way to a play of chromatic shades that begin to build the composition. Impressionist—or atmospheric—landscapes and thematic figures lose their modelling and a painting consisting of coloured planes emerges. Finally devoid of modelling, colour becomes the protagonist of his canvases. Yet here and there, sombre, mysterious hues and the charged atmosphere of certain old landscapes resemble the [Oswaldo] Goeldi of haunted houses and ravens. It is curious, this atmospheric affinity Volpi displays at times with the printmaking grandson of [Edvard] Munch.

Bit by bit, after a brief experiment with painting still based on volume, the artist banishes any hint of three-dimensionality

after realizing that “volume destroys colour.” In his artisan’s overalls, the colourist emerges ever more demanding. His planes free themselves from illusionistic convention and become truly concrete on surface planes. The series begin and lead him to the total abandonment of any figurative suggestion. In his seascapes, sea and sky disappear in coloured bands, the roofs of houses become triangles, slopes and streets are transformed into rectangles and windows into squares. Lines that previously served as contours of an apparently sloppy and simple though feigned elegance, areas of colour or now-autonomous figures, all tend toward linearity, and a delectable graphism appears—ingenuously primitive in nature yet, at the same time, highly refined—as if in a calligraphy of “badly drawn lines.”

Volpi disguises his extreme artisanal refinement—and no master of Brazilian painting surpasses him in technical mastery; he is able to paint in all genres and styles, and he is at home with the old resources of academic painting. He is as capable of giving us a perfectly academic nude as he is of surprising us with an admirably crafted and technically precise Madonna in the pure style of the Italian pre-Renaissance. This outsider from Cambuci is also a creator of the mythical Brazilian mulatto woman, which [Emiliano] Di Cavalcanti inaugurated in Brazilian painting. In an evocative suggestion, the children of the owner of *Figura entre cortinas* [Figure among the curtains] named it “*Nêga Fulô*.”

Many still refer to him as a “primitive.” If by this they mean that his affinities lean toward the Italian “primitives,” I agree.

But the same is true of the whole of contemporary sensitivity, which prefers Giotto over Rafael and the mosaics of Ravenna to the Sistine Chapel.

Neither a “naive” nor “primitive” painter, what characterizes him is his artisanal humility—the fruit of a profound pictorial knowledge. Nonetheless, he is as pure and simple as a true man of the people. Even as he constructs a fantastical city with the evocative power of metaphysical painting, he charms us with the childlike weather vanes, dolls, and puppets. Let it not be said, however, that his painting contains only gay and jovial, ingenuous or popular tones; in some canvases, such as Barco [Boat] and Cadeirinha [Little chair], that magical ability of isolating the object renders an atmosphere as dense as any in a canvas by Van Gogh. There is little use highlighting this or that quality or surprise in the painter’s work, for it is as varied and intense as a river.

In 1950, Volpi, together with two painter friends, went to Italy, for the first time. He was fifty-four: a fully-fledged artist who knew what he wanted. Here he found confirmation for what he was attempting to do in his own country.

They spent thirty-five days in Venice. Yet while his companions were doing outdoor paintings of famous landmarks such as the Rialto bridge, Volpi went on fifteen or sixteen private excursions to Padua to contemplate the Giotto in the Scrovegni Chapel. In Arezzo, he discovered Piero della Francesca. But to this day, he confesses with astonishment that, in an exhibition of religious art he attended there, four or five canvases by Magari-

toni led him to forget Piero himself ! Thus, the “primitive” or popular Volpi is less partial to Piero—the patriarch of the Renaissance—than to an artist of much less renown, and a Byzantine one at that; one who is even less condescending with regard to the pleasures of sensory matter and pays less attention to detail and realism in his exteriors than the formidable creator of the frescoes in Arezzo’s Basilica of San Francesco.

Before going to Italy, his painting was already changing to a rigorous bidimensionality—that is, paintings without pure tonal modelling. On his return, his muralist inclinations were reinforced. Yet, with the exception of the brief but convincing experiment of the little chapel of “the Worker Christ” on the Estrada do Vergueiro [Vergueiro Road] in São Paulo—the result of an initiative by a Dominican friar—our modern architects have not taken advantage of them to this day. However, this is not the painter’s loss: posterity can hold them accountable for this scandalous omission.

My Carioca (Rio) brothers, here is Volpi. I thank the Museu de Arte Moderna for presenting him. Posterity shall remember his name. He is the master of his age.

## ALFREDO VOLPI: AT THE CROSSROADS OF BRAZILIAN MODERN ART<sup>1</sup>

by Michael Asbury

In celebration of the São Paulo Biennial’s fiftieth anniversary, the concrete poet Décio Pignatari was commissioned to review the early editions of the event for the *Folha de São Paulo* newspaper in 2001. In the article, Pignatari chose to recall a controversy that arose around the national painting award during the second Biennial in 1953. That Pignatari was asked to review that period comes as no surprise. The first Biennial in 1951 has become, after all, renowned for having awarded Max Bill the international prize for sculpture, a fact that consolidated the significance of the then emergent local abstract geometrical and concrete art groups. The second edition, on the other hand, popularly known as the Guernica Biennial, surveyed, as had never been done before in Brazil, the pioneering efforts of European modernism. Pignatari’s choice to remember how Alfredo Volpi at that prestigious occasion came to share the national painting prize with Di Cavalcanti seems however a little less straight forward. The controversy that the concrete poet recounted is nevertheless highly revealing of the role Volpi would assume within mid-twentieth century Brazilian art: a role that, as this essay and the exhibition that it accompanies will demonstrate, places Volpi at the cross-roads of Brazilian modern art.

---

<sup>1</sup> This title is borrowed from Gonzalo Aguilar’s book *Poesia Concreta Brasileira: as vanguardas na encruzilhada modernista*. São Paulo: EDUSP, 2005



From the very outset of his review, Pignatari's tone is polemical:

At the 2<sup>nd</sup> Biennial, [...] the Juri was composed of a mixture of Brazilians and foreigners. The latter, at the first edition, had concerned themselves with the international prizes, taking little notice of the national representation: the Brazilians were left to share their cake as their taste demanded. Being as such the great [2nd Biennial national painting] prize had already been promised to Di Cavalcanti.<sup>2</sup>

Di Cavalcanti had been one of the most outspoken protestors against the wave of abstraction, as he saw it, uncritically imported into the first Biennial. It was a position informed as much by ideology as a sense of artistic sensibility, one that saw abstraction as complicit with North American cultural policy that acted very much to the detriment of the authentic themes of Brazilian modern art. Such themes had

emerged in São Paulo during the 1920s, becoming nationally consolidated in the 1930s under the all encompassing term *modernismo*. They drew on representations of the Brazilian people, their ethnicities and habits: a genre in which Di Cavalcanti's own work was considered as exemplary. Yet, if *modernismo* had by the 1940s and early 1950s become the accepted institutionalised face of Brazilian modern art, it had also not escaped its detractors. Already in 1942, Mário de Andrade, one of the principle instigators of 1922 São Paulo Modern Art Week, at the occasion of its twentieth anniversary, denounced the spirit of *modernismo* as a product of the benefaction of a particularly decadent sector of São Paulo society: namely the coffee producing landowning elite. For Alfredo Bossi, Mário de Andrade's speech constructed a set of oppositions that, whether sociologically precise or not, juxtaposed the rural 'aristocracy' versus the bourgeoisie, the São Paulo nobility versus Rio de Janeiro's high society, the 'men of the land' versus the immigrants, and the gratuity of decadence versus the good sense of those in economic ascendance.<sup>3</sup> Despite the fact that Mário de Andrade had in 1944 acquired a work by Volpi, at the occasion of his first solo show and written a positive review of that exhibition for the *Folha da Manhã*, such juxtapositions clearly placed Volpi as an artist on the periphery of São Paulo's modernist circles.<sup>4</sup>

In the wake of the first São Paulo Biennial – an event brought by the enterprising spirit of another Italian immigrant, Cicillo Matarazo – the concrete art group launched its Ruptura Manifesto in 1952

<sup>2</sup> Pignatari, Décio. Desvio para o concreto: Especial para a Folha, CADERNO ESPECIAL 2 Página: Especial-12, *Folha de São Paulo*, Edição: Nacional May 20, 2001

<sup>3</sup> Bossi, Alfredo. O Movimento Modernista de Mário de Andrade, *Revista Coloquio-Letras*, Portugal 1972, reprinted in: *Revista Literatura e Sociedade*, n.7, 2007, p.300

<sup>4</sup> Mammi, Lorenzo. *Volpi*. São Paulo: Cosac Naify, p.25

leaving little to be imagined as to their position towards the earlier generation of São Paulo modernists. Characteristically, Pignatari's review attacked in particular the Brazilian artistic commission at the second Biennial, amongst which key figures from *modernismo* were present. The concrete poet thus continues:

Yet the Brazilian group [of jurors] had not counted with the ethical integrity of Herbert Read, that great name of art criticism and literature from England (also a poet), who is said to have argued: 'If there is someone here who should receive a prize it is Alfredo Volpi'. Utter national shock. Read was ready to go to the press to denounce the plot. In the end, the prize was conceded to both, with Read insisting that Volpi's name appeared first.<sup>5</sup>

We may speculate that Volpi's painting had caught the eye of the British art critic given Read's admiration of an artist such as Alfred Wallis (1855-1942): a naïf painter from St. Ives who was 'discovered' by Ben Nicholson and Kit Wood in the Cornish fishing village in 1928. Read was so impressed by that self-taught painter that he included in his ground-breaking publication 'Art Now' (1933) an illustration of one of Wallis' paintings, *Harbour* (1933), a painting that Nicholson had acquired. However, beyond

the sensibility of the gaze of an art critic, as we will see, it would be highly reductive to compare Wallis with Volpi.

Read's intervention nevertheless, as Pignatari suggested, had a significant impact on Volpi's rise in the esteem of the local art circuit: literally from the São Paulo cultural periphery to one in which he was hailed as the great master of Brazilian art.

The art critic Mário Pedrosa, himself not directly associated with the *modernismo* movement but a member of the jury at the second Biennial, contributed significantly to such a shift. Pedrosa would organise a Volpi retrospective in 1957 in which he described the artist as the 'Brazilian master of his time'. Four years later, Pedrosa dedicated a special gallery to Volpi at the 6th Biennial in 1961, when as director of the Museum of Modern Art in São Paulo, as was then customary practice, he had acted as the event's artistic director, or curator in today's terminology.

Of course, Pedrosa's interest in Volpi was not simply a consequence of the recognition and respect for the British art critic, yet he shared with Read an interest in affirming the intuitive and untrained character of the artist. Volpi would represent for Pedrosa a critical link within the theoretical paradigm he had been developing since his studies on Gestalt Psychology – developed in his thesis 'The Affective Nature of Form in the Work of Art' of 1949 – and his political views on the nature and the possibilities of art's role within society. Pignatari himself appears to sympathise with Pedrosa's position when he reviewed Volpi's work at the National Exhibition of Concrete art of 1956:

<sup>5</sup> Pignatari, Décio. Desvio para o concreto. op. cit.

Volpi ignores what might be, theoretically, 'gestalt', 'topography', and such things: this fact constitutes an excellent element in proving the 'theory of pure visuality' – one of the principles that inform the concretist movement.<sup>6</sup>

If, for Pedrosa, abstraction ran against the implicit legacy of socialist realism present within the figurative modernist tradition in Brazil, it did so precisely because it pertained to an art historical genealogy that ran back to the revolutionary work of the Russian avant-garde. However, Pedrosa's paradigm for art transcended the partisanship of 'isms'. He identified, for instance, the limitations of the notion of art's autonomy, he suggested that constructivist-oriented abstraction tended towards an overly technicist approach as well as being critical of the subjective character of creativity defended by the likes of Andre Breton.

Yet Pedrosa's general approach was affirmative, equally and concurrently defending abstraction, the art of the concretists, that

of the indigenous peoples as well as that of the interns of psychiatric hospitals. Within such a broad scope, Volpi would become a paradigmatic artist that bridged the intuitive with the constructive, the spontaneous with the learned.

Like Wallis, Volpi was a self-taught artist of modest background. However, Volpi's painting of popular local themes, for which he received much recognition, such as those of house façades, festive flags and bunting, with their simple geometrical compositions, are often wrongly assumed to be naïf. Invoking the relation between Volpi and the concrete art group, Pignatari in his 2001 review was keen to undo such a preconception – one that Read might have fallen victim to and Pedrosa, to a certain extent, had encouraged:

It was from that point that the São Paulo concrete art group (to which I belonged), under the leadership of Waldemar Cordeiro, became enamoured with admiration for Volpi, who I audaciously and polemically considered and still consider, as the 'first and last great Brazilian painter' who the ignorant, in the American fashion call the 'painter of little flags'.<sup>7</sup>

In Portuguese the term for 'bunting' does not exist, instead the diminutive of flag is used. Here Pignatari might have been using a rhetorical play on words, one that concurrently aligned Volpi and by extension the concrete art group with an anti-American position, one that remained distinct from the Brazilianist themes reminiscent of *modernismo*. These were

6 Pignatari, Décio. A Exposição de Arte Concreta e Volpi, *Suplemento Dominical do Jornal de Brasil*, 19/01/1957. Reprinted in: Augusto de Campos, Décio Pignatari, Haroldo de Campos (eds). *Teoria da Poesia Concreta: textos críticos e manifestos 1950–1960*. São Paulo: Livraria Duas Cidades, p.60

7 Pignatari, Décio. Desvio para o concreto. op. cit.

not the kind of flags that Jasper Johns, for example, would later produce. They did not have the pretension of addressing the nation. Instead, Volpi's little flags reflected a subjective vision of a particular local Brazil, one that was nevertheless expressed in an absolutely modern language.

In this respect, Read's statement that accompanied the British section at the 1953 São Paulo Biennial seems perhaps more revealing of the significance that Volpi's work would, in hindsight, represent for the Brazilians. That is to say, the notion of the universalism of modern art, so strongly defended by art critics such as Read and Pedrosa, was nevertheless inseparable from the national character and individual sensibilities as well as the art historical analysis based on the direct transmission of influence.

One will note the influence [amongst the British artists] of the School of Paris, yet each one contributes with something strongly individual. It is therefore doubtful that there is something that could be considered characteristically British – the

modern movement can hardly be placed within the artificial limits of nationality: it is a universal phenomenon yet universal in its individualism. The individuals learn with one another, but they learn how to best express their own vision of reality. Each one of these artists can be proud of having created their own symbolic forms, within the modern idiom.<sup>8</sup>

As art historian Lorenzo Mammi has suggested, Volpi's mature work stemmed from a divergent genealogical line compared to the French, post-cubist, sources of Brazilian *modernismo*. Mammi emphasises Volpi's early work as a product of a gradual process of formal enquiry, one that to a large extent took place through practice and observation rather than formal art historical study.<sup>9</sup>

Tracing Volpi's early trajectory Rodrigo Naves states how the artist was not as isolated as Pedrosa had implied. Instead, Naves states how Volpi had direct contact with events considered as historical marks of Brazilian modernism and contact with artistic and intellectual circles.<sup>10</sup> Such a fact is corroborated by Mammi who notes that Volpi attended the 1917 controversial exhibition of expressionist paintings by Anita Malfatti as well as Filippo Tommaso Marinetti's 1926 public address in São Paulo. During the 1920s Volpi, as Mammi argues, had already suppressed in his painting the desire to merely reproduce nature but was already engaged with romanticist, impressionist and later expressionist genres. Such work earned him the Gold Medal at the 1928 Salon at the Italiche Museum of Fine

8 Read, Herbert. Great Britain section, *Bienal de São Paulo*, exhibition catalogue, São Paulo, 1953

9 Mammi, Lorenzo. *Volpi*. op. cit. p.14

10 Naves, Rodrigo. A Complexidade de Volpi. *Novos Estudos*, Vol. 4, São Paulo, July, 2008



Arts for artists of Italian descent. Italian art from Giotto to that of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, together with a working class and lower middle class network of Italian artists living in São Paulo is said to have informed Volpi's long apprenticeship in fine art.<sup>11</sup>

The participation within the local Salons continued with varying success and in the 1930s Volpi integrated the circle of the Santa Helena group: an artist studio composed of artists many of which of Italian origins. Key protagonists of *modernismo* would occasionally participate in meetings organised by the group, figures such as Sérgio Millet, Bruno Giorgi, Lasar Segall and Tarsila do Amaral. In 1938 Volpi had the opportunity to see the work of Joseph Albers, an artist he claimed to have always admired. Several accounts also state how Volpi had absorbed the work of Cezanne at the occasion of the exhibition of French Art 'From David to Picasso' held in 1940 in São Paulo. Volpi is also said to have been influenced by artists such as Oswaldo Goeldi, considered as a unique figure of expressionist sensibility within Brazilian art. Lasar Segall, the Lithuanian expressionist who became a central figure within the 1920s São Paulo modern art movement, also held a significant role in Volpi's formation.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> See: Mammi, Lorenzo. *Volpi*. op. cit.

<sup>12</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.* p. 105

Such a brief summary of Volpi's artistic trajectory prior to his 'discovery' by Herbert Read in 1953 suggests an artist with a solid foundation and awareness of 20th century movements with significant connections with the local artistic milieu.

It is however one of Mammi's remarks that would place Volpi more in relation with the sophistication of a Ben Nicholson rather than with the naïf painter Alfred Wallis. In the late 1930s Volpi began frequenting the coastal town of Itanhaém where he came across the work of naïf painter Emigliano de Souza. This encounter became one of the sources for his stylistic shift which can be noted in the paintings of house façades and later with the introduction of the bunting motif.<sup>13</sup> Volpi's work did not progress in a linear fashion, several distinct themes and 'styles' were worked on concurrently. What is certain is that such shifts in Volpi's technique and compositions, as can be noted with the adoption of naïf-like motifs following his encounter with the works of Emigliano de Souza, or in the switch in technique from oil on canvas to tempera, were taken consciously, as opposed to being the product of the whims of an untrained, intuitive artist.

Volpi over the course of the 1950s, whether due to the adulation or a sincere aesthetic identification, approximated himself to concrete art. Yet he did so arguably contradicting the very premises of the movement. Concrete art emerged, after all, from Theo van Doesburg's rejection of the notion of art abstracting from nature that was already implicit within the cubist legacy. The flag, the graphic mechanism through which Volpi's work

integrates the concrete visual vocabulary, is at one and the same time the iconic abstracted symbol that would thus deny an association with concrete art. The flag in Volpi's work thus possesses an ambivalent role. It is a pivot through which the artist oscillates between representation and direct, concrete, geometric form.

Pedrosa's emphasis on Volpi's progression from the craftsmanship of his profession as a painter-decorator to that of the professional artist hints at a possible reason for the concrete art group's interest in the artist from Cambuci – the working-class and lower-middle-class São Paulo neighbourhood where Volpi lived for most of his life.<sup>14</sup> Waldemar Cordeiro, the spokesman for the concrete art group in São Paulo, himself an artist of Italian origin, drew on Gramscian Marxist theory to argue that the simplicity of the concrete geometric visual language held a direct appeal that transcended erudition.

It is true that Volpi did produce work that to all intents and purposes could be described as concrete art. Such is the case of *Composição Concreta Branca e Vermelha* (Concrete Composition in White and Red) of 1955, one of the rare works that is titled and dated, a work Pignatari described as follows:

<sup>14</sup> See: Pedrosa's essay on Volpi, reprinted in this catalogue.

<sup>15</sup> Pignatari, Décio. A Exposição de Arte Concreta e Volpi, op. cit. p. 60

The dynamic structure in his extraordinary chequered painting in white and red, where a refraction phenomenon takes place through the interference of the elements (that reconcile themselves at the centre of the rectangular picture: the incidence of the eye), confers the same white two diverse qualities. This work is precisely a concretist work, even if for Volpi, probably it does not matter which 'ism' it belongs to.<sup>15</sup>

Other works by Volpi from the mid to the second half of the 1950s present clear constructivist-oriented compositions. This suggests an undisputed alignment with the concrete art group, as can be verified in several examples present in this exhibition. Volpi's participation in the First Exhibition of Concrete Art, held at the Museum of Modern Art in São Paulo in 1956, which travelled to Rio de Janeiro the following year, attests the level of his integration within that group. His inclusion in that exhibition raises nevertheless some interesting issues with regard to the consensual narratives on the concrete and later neoconcrete movements in Brazil.

Pignatari's description of Composition in White and Red is in this sense somewhat discordant with orthodox definitions of concrete art. By dismissing the process through which the artist achieved the composition, Pignatari inadvertently associates Volpi with what would become a central tenet within the neoconcrete discourse: one which called for the sole critical focus on the finished work, rather than the process which led to it.

The dichotomy between the mathematical basis ruling concrete art production is often juxtaposed with the more intuitive approach pursued by the neoconcrete artists who published their manifesto in 1959: a divergence that was evidenced at the national concrete art exhibition.

Volpi's role within that exhibition was naturally ambivalent and therefore all the more

---

**16** Naves, Rodrigo. A Complexidade de Volpi. *Novos Estudos*, Vol. 4, São Paulo, July, 2008

In the original:

Talvez a maioria das pinturas de Volpi influenciadas pelo construtivismo se aproxime mais da estética concretista. Contudo, vários outros trabalhos apresentam soluções [...] bem mais afeitas às preocupações dos neoconcretistas.

**17** Ibid.

In the original:

Penso ser praticamente impossível considerar os Bólides de pigmento de Hélio Oiticica sem pensar nessas telas que mal ocultam os pigmentos que a compuseram. Amílcar de Castro julgava Volpi o maior artista brasileiro e acredito que suas esculturas de corte e desdobramento devem muito às passagens tonais do pintos. E a lista poderia ir longe: as dobras dos Bichos de Lygia Clark, o Cubocor de Aluísio Carvão, certos desdobramentos de Franz Weissmann, as Xilografias de Lygia Pape e suas implicações, ao mesmo tempo, manuais e geométricas etc

art historically significant. This fact did not escape the attention of Rodrigo Naves who argued that:

Perhaps most of Volpi's oeuvre within the constructive art's sphere of influence is closer to the aestheticism of concrete art. Several other works, however, feature solutions [...] which imply a deeper involvement with neoconcrete art.<sup>16</sup>

For Naves the complexity of Volpi's work reveals the very contradictions present within that optimistic moment of rapid industrialisation of the nation. His stubborn artisan processes that combined sophisticated colourist and formal skills with the most unpretentious themes and motifs, his very personal incorporation of the modernist tradition, would have a profound impact on a generation of artists that followed. Naves concludes his study by arguing that:

To the best of my knowledge, it is almost impossible to consider Hélio Oiticica's pigmented Bólides series (1963–67) without acknowledging the influence of Volpi's canvases, in which the pigments are barely hidden. Moreover, Amílcar de Castro used to consider Volpi the top Brazilian artist, and I believe de Castro's displaced-cutout sculptures owe a debt to Volpi's tonal passages. The becomes endless: the foldings of the Bichos series (1960–63) by Lygia Clark; Aluísio Carvão's paradigmatic Grupo Frente Cubocor (1960); certain

expansions unfolded in Franz Weissmann's sculptures; Lygia Pape's woodcuts of Tecelares series (1955–59), and this involves their simultaneous manual and geometric implications, and so on and so forth.<sup>17</sup>

Volpi certainly did not distinguish his friends according to artistic affiliations. Over the turn of the decade, from the 1950s to the 1960s, he was as close to concretists as to neoconcretists. The extent to which his work approached concrete art or the impact it had on subsequent neoconcrete experiments, as Naves convincingly suggests, is not the principle issue at stake here.

The complexity, to use Naves' terminology, that envelops both Volpi's work and persona, serves a more disruptive purpose as I see it. It brings into disarray the art historical orthodoxies that emphasise the apparently irreconcilable dichotomies between Modernismo and the Brazilian constructivist avant-gardes, between concrete art and neoconcretism, between the erudite and the popular in contemporary art. Perhaps Pedrosa was not wrong to affirm Volpi's position as a social outsider. Volpi emerged from his peripheral migrant condition to find his rightful place in a country beginning to come to terms with its own 'other' self. The 1960s saw a shift in cultural practice that turned the constructivist avant-gardes towards the popular culture, one in which artists became interested once again in the customs, festivities and the spontaneous creative spirit of the Brazilian people. That effervescent moment, so brutally interrupted by the Mil-

itary coup of 1964, hailed Volpi as the extraordinary painter who was at one and the same time a man of the people: a rare fact in Brazil to this day. Volpi in his simple but sophisticated aesthetic consistency, along an artistic career that spanned most of the twentieth century, traversed *modernismo* and the constructivist avant-gardes to find his place in the foundation of Brazilian contemporary art. This is the unique place that Volpi holds, one at the crossroads of Brazilian modern art.

ART  
WORKS

Frieze Masters  
Spotlight

London 2018

ALFREDO  
VOLPI

Untitled, 1950's

Tempera on canvas  
73 x 54 cm



ALFREDO  
VOLPI

Untitled, late 1950's

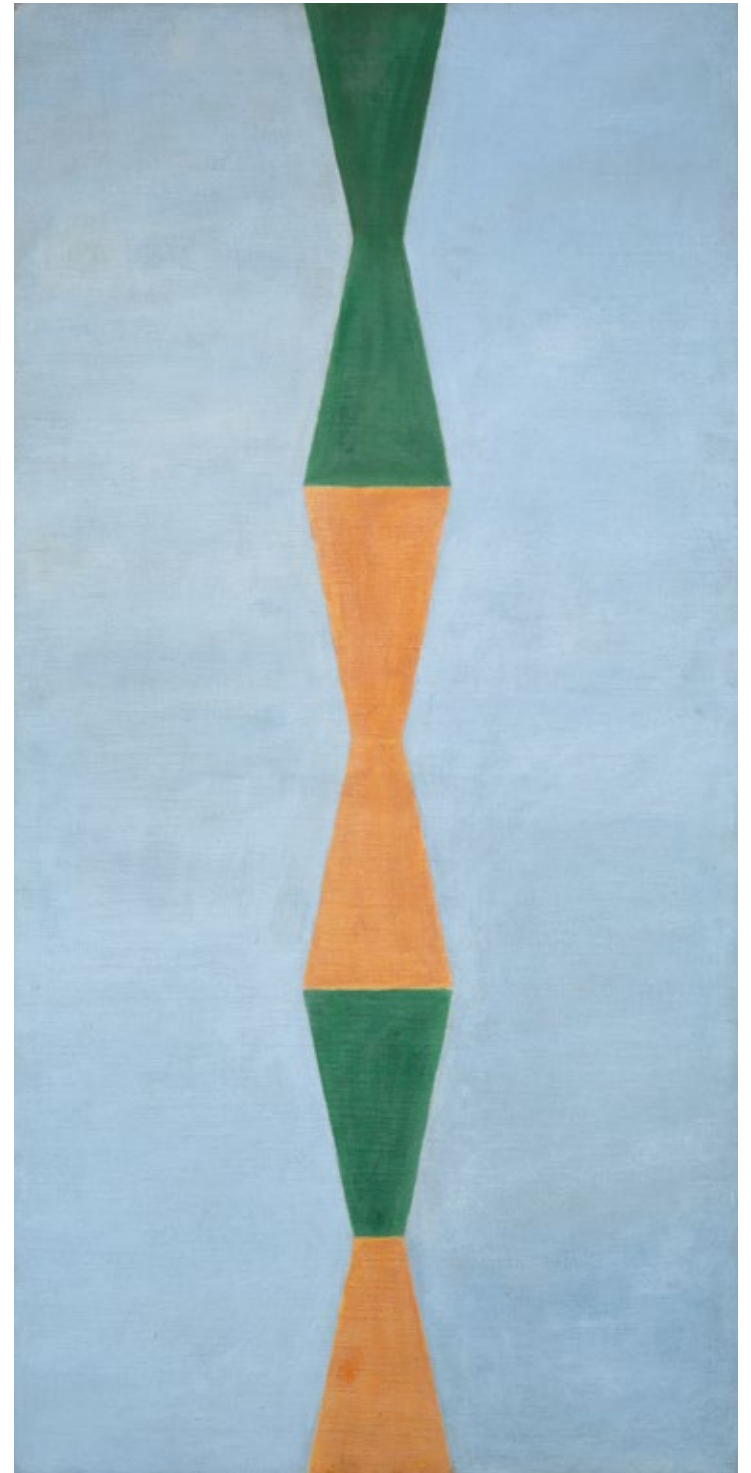
Tempera on canvas  
72 x 48,7 cm



ALFREDO  
VOLPI

Untitled, 1957

Tempera on canvas  
117 x 57 cm

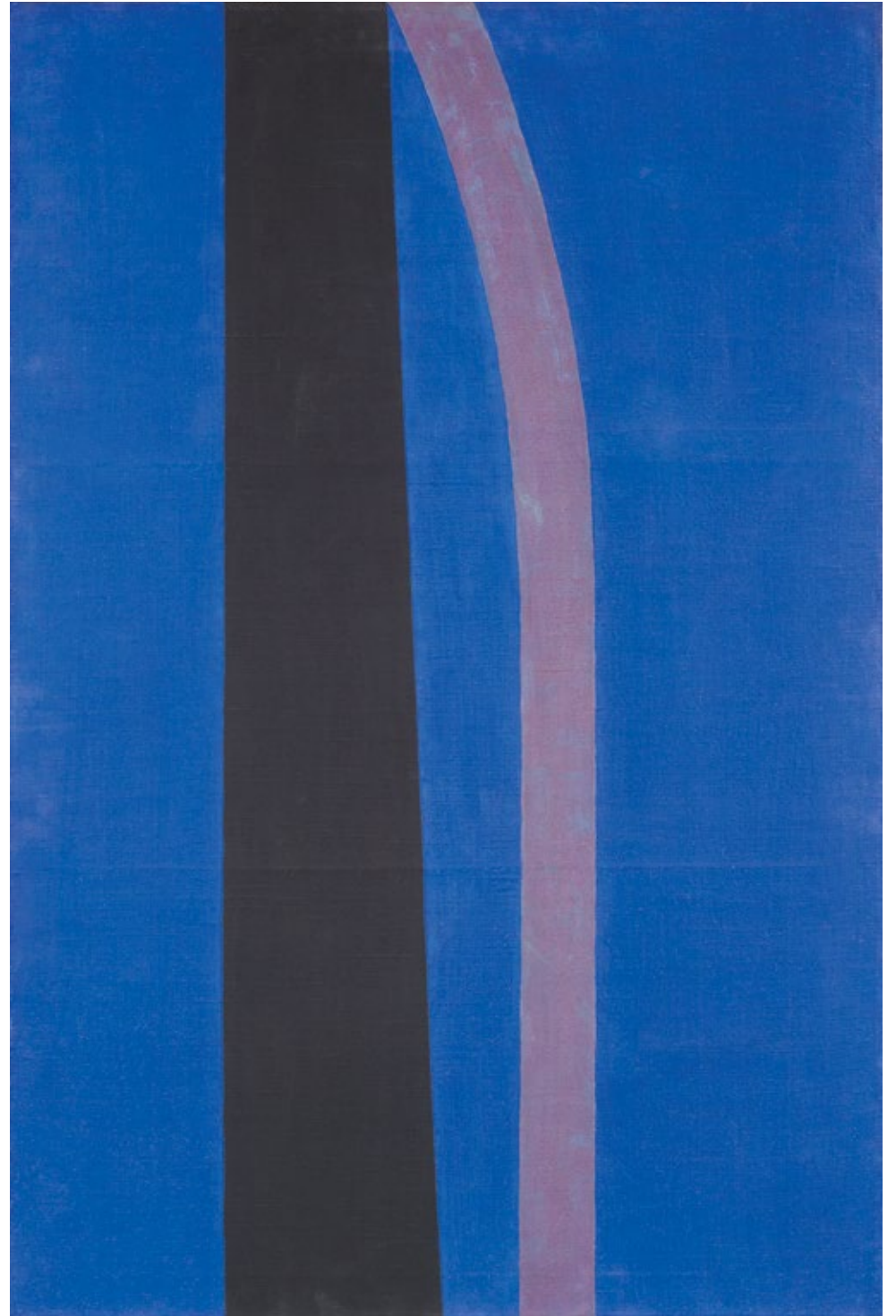




ALFREDO  
VOLPI

Untitled, 1959

Tempera on canvas  
105 x 70 cm



ALFREDO  
VOLPI

Untitled, 1964

Tempera on canvas  
54,5 x 15,1 cm



ALFREDO  
VOLPI

Untitled, 1960's

Tempera on wood  
46 x 31 cm







ALFREDO  
VOLPI

Untitled, 1960's

Tempera on canvas  
33 x 24 cm

ALFREDO  
VOLPI

Untitled, 1960's

Tempera on wood  
33 x 24 cm





ALFREDO  
VOLPI

Untitled, 1960's

Tempera on canvas  
32 x 47 cm





ALFREDO  
VOLPI

Untitled, late 1960's

Tempera on canvas  
34,4 x 71,1 cm





ALFREDO  
VOLPI

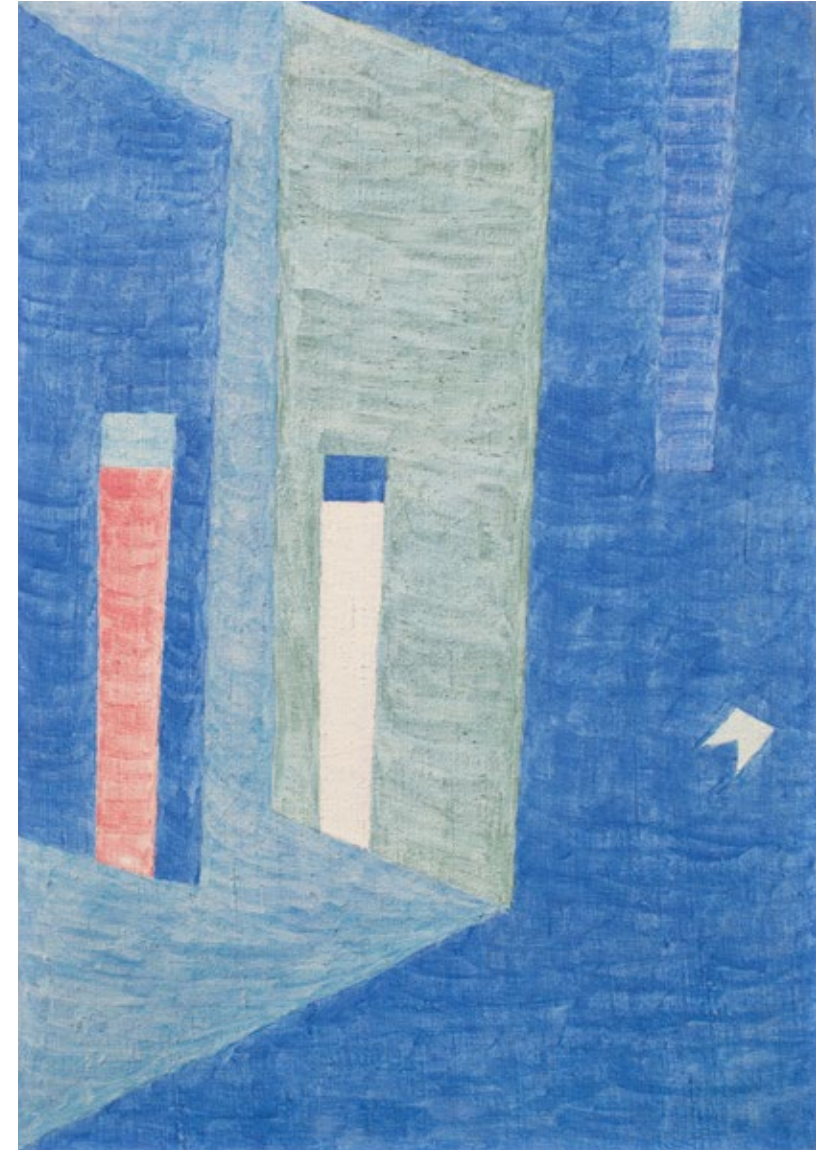
Untitled, 1960's

Tempera on canvas  
33 x 24,3 cm

ALFREDO  
VOLPI

Untitled, 1960's

Tempera on canvas  
72 x 48 cm







ALFREDO  
VOLPI

Untitled, 1960's

Tempera on canvas  
72 x 48 cm



ALFREDO  
VOLPI

Untitled, 1960's

Tempera on canvas  
26,5 x 36,5 cm

ALFREDO  
VOLPI

Untitled, 1960's

Tempera on canvas  
43 x 33 cm



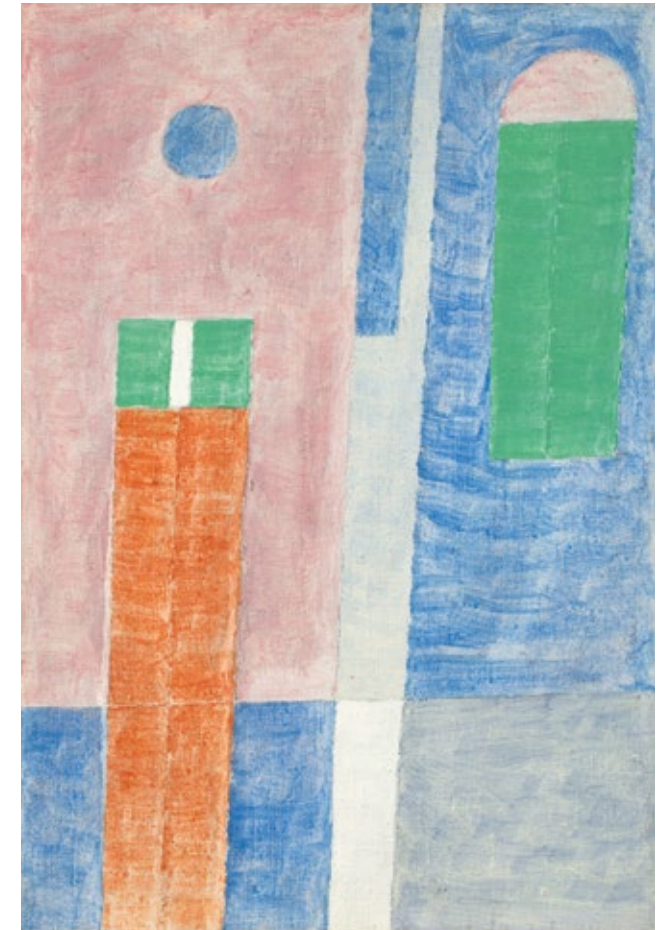




ALFREDO  
VOLPI

Untitled, late 1960's

Tempera on canvas  
71,5 x 36,5 cm



ALFREDO  
VOLPI

Untitled, 1970's

Tempera on canvas  
47 x 32,4 cm



ALFREDO  
VOLPI

Untitled, 1970's

Tempera on canvas  
33 x 24 cm

ALFREDO  
VOLPI

Untitled, 1970's

Tempera on canvas  
48,5 x 70 cm







ALFREDO  
VOLPI

Untitled, 1970's

Tempera on canvas  
24,5 x 33 cm

Alfredo Volpi  
(1896 – 1988)

**Alfredo Volpi was born in Lucca, Italy, on 14th April 1896.**

He was the third child of Ludovico di Luigi and Giuseppa Gasparini.

In October 1898, the Volpi family immigrated to Brazil.

1911-1914

Alfredo attended school until 12 years of age, when he began working in the binding section of a typographic shop. He then became an assistant decorative painter for residences and was soon promoted to “decorator”.

He produced his first paintings on wood and cardboard: small landscapes and everyday scenes.

1918-1925

With the artist Orlando Tarquínio, he painted a decorative mural for the Military Hospital in São Paulo. Orlando encourages Volpi to paint. Volpi then participated in the *Segunda Exposição Geral de Belas Artes da Sociedade Paulista de Belas Artes* (Second General Exhibition of Fine Arts of the Paulista Society of Fine Arts).

1927

Met Benedita da Conceição (Judite), whom he married in 1943.

1933

Participated in the *XXXIX Exposição Geral de Belas Artes* (XXXIX General Exhibition of Fine Arts), receiving a Bronze Medal. Met Francisco Rebolo.

1934

Participated in the *1º Salão Paulista de Belas Artes* (First Paulista Salon of Fine Arts). Attends live model painting sessions at the Palacete Santa Helena, with Rebolo, Zanini, Manoel Martins, Humberto Rosa, Pennacchi, Bonadei and Clóvis Graciano, among others. Together, these artists painted scenes of the outskirts of São Paulo. The name, *Grupo Santa Helena*, was coined only in 1941 by critic Sérgio Milliet.

1935

Exhibited at the *III Salão Paulista de Belas Artes* and was awarded a Bronze Medal.

Painted landscapes, portraits and still-life paintings with impressionist features.



## 1936

Participated in the *Exposição de pequenos quadros* (Small Pictures Exhibition) at the *Sociedade Paulista de Belas Artes*, and the *IV Salão Paulista de Belas Artes*.

## 1937

Took part in the *1a Exposição da Família Artística Paulista* (First Exhibition of the Paulista Artistic Family). Recently arrived from Europe, Bruno Giorgi admired Volpi's work and introduces him to Sérgio Milliet. Met Ernesto de Fiori.

## 1938

Painted the chapel of the Morganti plant, in Piracicaba. Participated in the *2o Salão de Maio* (*Second May Salon*), in São Paulo city and the *IV Salão do Sindicato dos Artistas Plásticos* (*IV Salon of the Union of Visual Artists*), São Paulo.

## 1939

Participated in the *II Salão da Família Artística Paulista* and the *V Salão do Sindicato dos Artistas Plásticos*, São Paulo. Travelled to Itanhaém on weekends to meet Judite, who for medical reasons had moved to the beach town. There he met naïf painter Emygdio de Souza.

In Itanhaém, he began to pursue an entirely personal path in his art.

## 1940

Participated in the *III Salão da Família Artística Paulista* and the *XLVI Salão Nacional de Belas Artes*, both in Rio de Janeiro. Exhibited his work at the *VI Salão do Sindicato dos Artistas Plásticos*, SP, and the *Salão de Belas Artes*, in Rio Grande do Sul (RS).

## 1941

Visited the *Exposição de Arte Francesa* (French Art Exhibition) where he admired works by Van Gogh, Cézanne, Dufy and Matisse, among others. Participated in the *1o Salão de Arte da Feira Nacional de Indústrias* (First Art Salon of the National Industries Fair), SP.

Awarded a Silver Medal at the *XLVII Salão Nacional de Belas Artes*, Rio de Janeiro (RJ), and first prize in a contest organized by the SPHAN (National Historic and Artistic Heritage Service).

Participated in the *I Salão da Osirarte* (First Osirarte Salon), São Paulo.

## 1942

Exhibited at the *XLVIII Salão Nacional de Belas Artes*, RJ, and at the *VII Salão do Sindicato dos Artistas Plásticos*, SP. Met Mário Schenberg, who purchased a seascape of Itanhaém.

## 1943

Married Judite and his daughter Eugênia Maria was born.

Exhibited at the *XLIX Salão Nacional de Belas Artes* and at the *Osirarte* exhibition held at MNBA, both in Rio de Janeiro. Participated in the *Exposição antieixista* (Anti-Axis Exhibition), in São Paulo.

## 1944

Held his first solo exhibition at the Itá Gallery, São Paulo, with an introductory text by Mário Schenberg. Mário de Andrade purchased a seascape.

Participated in the *Exposição de Arte Moderna* (Modern Art Exhibition) in Belo Horizonte, the *IX Salão do Sindicato dos Artistas Plásticos* and a new group exhibition at the Osirarte Atelier. Took part in the *Exposição de pintura moderna brasileira* (*Brazilian Modern Painting Exhibition*) that travels to England.

This marked a period of experimentation: reducing form and beginning the use of tempera.

## 1945

Participated in group exhibitions at the Benedetti Gallery and the Itapetininga Gallery, São Paulo. With other artists, he worked on the decoration for a Carnival Ball where the proceeds were used to found the *Clube dos Artistas e Amigos da Arte* (Artists and Friends of the Arts Club).

## 1946

Opened a solo exhibition at Domus, the first modern art gallery in São Paulo. Participated in group exhibitions in Chile and Argentina. Received the Mário de Andrade Award at the *X Salão do Sindicato dos Artistas Plásticos*, São Paulo.

## 1947

Participated in a group exhibition at the Domus Gallery and at the *XI Salão do Sindicato dos Artistas*, both in São Paulo, and the *Exposición de Osirarte*, in Mendoza, Argentina.

## 1948

Exhibited at the *XII Salão do Sindicato dos Artistas Plásticos* at the Domus Gallery, SP, and in the group exhibition *Art club*, at the Livros de Arte Gallery, São Paulo.

## 1949

Participated in a group exhibition at the headquarters of the *Instituto dos Arquitetos do Brasil* (Architects Institute of Brazil), RJ, and in the *Exposição de pintura paulista* (Paulista Painting Exhibition), also in Rio de Janeiro. Produced two murals for the São Luis Gonzaga Hospital, in São Paulo.

Participated in the *Primeiro Salão Baiano de Belas Artes* (First Bahia Salon of Fine Arts), in Bahia.

## 1950

Participated in the XXV Biennale di Venezia. Travelled to Europe with Mário Zanini and Paulo Rossi Osir, staying for 6 months. He stayed longer in Italy admiring Giotto, Piero della Francesca and Margaritone d'Arezzo.

Began painting facades and accentuates the process of form reduction.

## 1951

Participated in the group exhibition at the Osirarte Atelier. Exhibited at the *I Salão Paulista de Arte Moderna* (First Paulista Salon of Modern Art) and at the *I Biennial of São Paulo*. Produced mural paintings and designed stained glass windows for the Cristo Operário chapel, all in São Paulo. Psychoanalyst and art critic Theon Spanudis discovered Volpi, regularly purchased his works and promoted them among other art critics.

## 1952

Exhibited at the XXVI Biennale di Venezia, receiving the Acquisition award. Participated in the exhibition "Volpi, Zanini, Rossi", at the *Instituto Cultural Ítalo-Brasileiro* (Brazilian-Italian Cultural Institute), São Paulo.

Is awarded a Silver Medal and an Exempt from Jury Certificate at the *1o Salão Nacional de Arte Moderna*, RJ.

## 1953

Participated in the *II Bienal de São Paulo* and received the award as Best National Painter, ex aequo with Di Cavalcanti.

Also received the Acquisition award from Unesco.

## 1954

Participated in the XXVII Biennale di Venezia and the *Exposição Brasileira* (Brazilian Exhibition) at the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna in Rome. Travelled to Bahia with Theon Spanudis.

Produced a series of works inspired by details of Baroque architecture and began to paint masts and flags.

## 1955

Inaugurated his third solo exhibition at the Tenreiro Gallery, São Paulo. Participated in an exhibition at the Carnegie Institute in Pittsburgh; the *III Bienal de São Paulo* and the *IV Salão Paulista de Arte Moderna*.

## 1956

Held a solo exhibition at the MAM-SP (São Paulo Museum of Modern Art). Participated in the exhibition *Quatro mestres, quatro visões: Barsotti, lanelli, Tomie, Volpi* (Four masters, four visions: Barsotti, lanelli, Tomie, Volpi) at the Simões de Assis Art Gallery in Paraná. Was discovered by the concrete artists and mixed with artists and poets, especially Fiaminghi and Décio Vieira. Participates, as an invited artist, in the *1a Exposição Nacional de Arte Concreta* (First National Exhibition of Concrete Art) at the MAM-SP.

Experienced the so-called concrete phase, in which he produced formal solutions with geometric rigor.

## 1957

Participated in the *IV Bienal de São Paulo*. Took part in the *Arte Moderno del Brasil* exhibition which travelled throughout Latin America. Mário Pedrosa organized at the MAM-RJ, the first Volpi retrospective, showing around sixty of his works. Participated in the Rio de Janeiro edition of the *I Exposição de Arte Concreta* at the MEC, RJ.

## 1958

Received the Guggenheim National Award for Brazil. Produced frescoes and designed vestments for the Our Lady of Fátima chapel in Brasília, Federal District, designed by Oscar Niemeyer.

Returned to the theme of facades and small flags.

## 1959

Ottone Zorlini organized an exhibition of Volpi's earlier works. Took part in exhibitions in New York and Tokyo. Opened a solo exhibition at the Gea Gallery, RJ. Took part in the exhibition *Quarenta artistas do Brasil* (Forty artists from Brazil), SP. Participated as a member of the selection jury of the *V Bienal de São Paulo*.

## 1960

Opened a solo exhibition at the São Luiz Gallery, SP. Willys de Castro, designed the catalogue and in the introductory text wrote his famous phrase: "Volpi paints Volpis".

His little flags, along with his facades, masts and boats acquired movement.

## 1961

Honoured with a Special Room at the *VI Bienal de São Paulo*; presenting around ninety of his works; with an introductory text by Mário Schenberg.

## 1962

Participated in the *XXXI Biennale di Venezia*. Held a solo exhibition at the Petite Galerie, RJ. Participated in the *Primera Bienal Americana de Arte*, held in Córdoba and in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The introductory text was by Antônio Bento.

## 1963

Exhibited at the Studium Generale in Stuttgart, Germany, with an introductory text by Max Bense. Participated in an exhibition at the Seta Gallery, SP, and at the gallery of the *Instituto dos Arquitetos do Brasil*, SP. Murilo Mendes organized a solo exhibition at the *Galleria d'Arte della Casa Brasil* in Rome.

## 1964

Participated in the *XXXII Biennale di Venezia*.

## 1965

Held a solo exhibition at the Petite Galerie, RJ.

## 1966

Honoured with a Special Room at the *I Bienal Nacional de Artes Plásticas*, in Bahia; Theon Spanudis wrote the introductory text. Took part in the exhibition *O Grupo Santa Helena hoje* (The Santa Helena Group Today), at the 4 Planetas Art Gallery, SP.

Painted the fresco *Visão de Dom Bosco* (Dom Bosco's Vision) at the Itamaraty Palace in Brasília.

## 1967

Participated in the exhibition *A Família Artística Paulista: trinta anos depois* (The Paulista Artistic Family: 30 Years later), at the Itália Auditorium, SP.

## 1968

Participated in the exhibition *Coleção Tamagni* (Tamagni Collection), at the MAM-SP.

## 1969

Opened the solo exhibition *20 anos (1948-1968) na pintura de Alfredo Volpi* (20 Years (1948-1968) in the paintings of Alfredo Volpi), at the Cosme Velho Gallery, SP. Introductory text by Maria Eugênia Franco.

## 1970

Participated in the *Panorama de Arte Atual Brasileira* (Panorama of Current Brazilian Art) exhibition at the MAM-SP. Received the Best Painter award.

Took part in the exhibition at the Astréia Gallery, SP. Exhibited at the Petite Galerie, RJ, with the introductory text by Clarival do Prado Valladares.

Color began to predominate over form, though he continued to use the same elements: facades, small flags and masts.

## 1971

Exhibited at the Ralph Camargo Gallery, SP, and at the Astréia Gallery, SP. Received the *Golfinho de Ouro* (Golden Dolphin) award for the best exhibition held in 1970.

From the movement conferred to his masts and ribbons, he begins his phase known as kinetics.

## 1972

His wife, Judite, died.

Participated in group exhibitions "*Semana de 22 - Antecedentes e consequências*" (The Week of 22: Antecedents and Consequences) at the MASP, *Temática brasileira* (Brazilian Themes) at Paço das Artes, SP, and *Grupo Santa Helena: desenhos* (The Santa Helena Group: drawings) at the Azulão Gallery, SP. The Barcinski Gallery in Rio de Janeiro presented *Alfredo Volpi: alguns trabalhos selecionados (1925/1972)* (Alfredo Volpi: some selected works).

The MAM-RJ held an exhibition showing about 200 of the artist's works, with Aracy Amaral's curatorship.

## 1973

Participated in the exhibition *Oito pintores do Grupo Santa Helena* (Eight painters from the Santa Helena Group) at the Uirapuru Gallery, SP. Participated in the *1a Exposição Brasil-Japão de Artes Plásticas* (First Brazil-Japan Exhibition of Fine Arts), SP. Exhibited at the Cosme Velho Gallery, SP.

Received the Anchieta Medal; the title of Grão-Mestre da Ordem do Rio Branco; the Order of Merit from the Italian Republic; the Global Personality from the State Government and an award from the São Paulo Association of Art Critics.

## 1974

Exhibited at the Ipanema Art Gallery, RJ, with the introductory text by José Roberto Teixeira Leite.

Participated in the exhibition *Quatorze artistas do Brasil moderno* (Fourteen artists from modern Brazil) at the MEC, SP.

## 1975

The MAM-SP presented a Volpi retrospective comprising over three hundred works. The introductory text is by Paulo Mendes de Almeida. Participated in the exhibitions *Quarenta anos do Grupo Santa Helena* (40 Years of the Santa Helena Group) at the Paço das Artes, SP, and *O modernismo de 1917 a 1930* (Modernism from 1917 to 1930) at the Lasar Segall Museum, SP.

Received the Pero Vaz de Caminha Medal.

## 1976

Exhibited at the Cosme Velho Gallery, SP, and participated in the exhibition *Os artistas e a Olivetti* (Artists and Olivetti) at the MASP. At the MAC, José Pancetti, from Campinas, held a retrospective *Volpi: a visão essencial* (Volpi: the essential vision), with text and curatorship by Olívio Tavares de Araújo. Held a solo exhibition at the *Instituto dos Arquitetos do Brasil*, RS. Took part in the group exhibitions: *Arte brasileira do século XX: caminhos e tendências* (Brazilian Art in the XX century: paths and trends) at the Arte Global Gallery, SP, and *Brasil - Artistas do século XX* (Brazil - Artists in the XX Century) in Paris.

Participated in the exhibitions *Panorama da Arte Atual Brasileira* (Panorama of Current Brazilian Art) at the MAM-SP, *Coleção Theon Spanudis* (Theon Spanudis Collection) at the MAC-USP, *Os salões* (The Salons) at the Lasar Segall Museum, SP, and *Santeiros Imaginários* (Image Makers) at the Paço das Artes, SP.

Received the Order of Ipiranga and is honored at the Municipal Chamber of São Paulo for his 80th birthday.

## 1977

Participated in the exhibition *Grupo Santa Helena – Grupo Seibi* (Santa Helena Group–Seibi Group) at the Armando Álvares Penteado Foundation, SP. Took part in the exhibition *Projeto construtivo brasileiro na arte* (Brazilian constructive art project) organized by Aracy Amaral, at the *Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo*.

Received the trophy *Global Personality*, the diploma *Bandeirante do Brasil* and the Francisco Matarazzo Sobrinho trophy.

## 1978

Took part in the exhibition *As bienais e a abstração: a década de 50* (Biennials and abstraction: the 1950s decade) at the Lasar Segall Museum, SP. The Cosme Velho Gallery held the exhibition *Alfredo Volpi: construtivismo. Têmperas* (Alfredo Volpi: constructivism. Tempera).

Took part in the exhibition *Arte agora III – América Latina: geometria sensível* (Art now III – Latin America: sensitive geometry), organized by Roberto Pontual.

Received the Giuseppe Garibaldi Legion of Honour medal.

## 1979

Participated in the *XV Bienal de São Paulo*. Exhibited at the Ipanema Gallery, RJ. Took part in group exhibitions: *Coleção Theon Spanudis* at the MAC-USP, *Quatro coloristas: Volpi, Boese, Barsotti, Thomaz* (Four colourists: Volpi, Boese, Barsotti, Thomaz) at the Christina Faria de Paula Gallery, SP, and *Desenhos nos anos 40* (Drawings in the 40s) at the Mário de Andrade Municipal Library, SP.

Volpi surrenders to the delirium of colour in the series known as *Ogivas* (Ogives).

## 1980

Exhibited at the Oswaldo Goeldi Gallery in Brasília, Federal District. The A Ponte Gallery, SP, held the exhibition *Volpi: as pequenas grandes obras* (Volpi: great small works) with an introductory text by Olívio Tavares de Araújo. In Rio de Janeiro, the Acervo Gallery held the exhibition *Têmperas de Alfredo Volpi* (Alfredo Volpi's tempera).

## 1981

Participated in group exhibitions: *Arte transcendente* (Transcendent Art) at the MAM-SP, *Do moderno ao contemporâneo na Coleção Gilberto Chateaubriand* (From modern to contemporary in Gilberto Chateaubriand's Collection) at the MAM-RJ, *Artistas Brasileiros da primeira metade do século XX* (Brazilian artists in the first half of the XX century) at the Pierre Chalita Foundation in Alagoas, *Rebolo e os pintores do Santa Helena* (Rebolo and the Santa Helena painters) at the Dan Gallery, SP. And solo exhibitions: *Volpi metafísico* (Metaphysical Volpi) at the Metrô, SP, and *Os primeiros anos e a década de 20* (The first years and the 1920s) at the Cosme Velho Gallery, SP.

## 1982

Exhibited at the Ipanema Gallery, RJ, and participated in the group exhibitions *Marinhas e Ribeirinhas* (Seascapes and river scenes) at the Lasar Segall Museum, SP, and *Do Modernismo à Bienal* (From Modernism to the Biennial) at the MAM-SP.

## 1984

Participated in the exhibitions *Retrato e auto-retrato da arte brasileira. Coleção Gilberto Chateaubriand* (Portrait and self-portrait of Brazilian art. Gilberto Chateaubriand Collection) at the MAM-SP, *Tradição e Ruptura* (Tradition and Rupture) organized by the Bienal de São Paulo Foundation, *Os Grandes Mestres do Abstracionismo Brasileiro* (The Great Masters of Brazilian Abstractionism) organized by the *Sociedade de Amigos dos Museus do Brasil* (Friends of Brazilian Museums Society) shown in Madrid, Rome, Milan, The Hague, Lisbon, Paris, London, New York and Washington. The Oscar Seráfico Gallery in Brasília, Federal District, held a solo exhibition.

## 1985

Dan Gallery, SP, held the exhibition *Volpi 89 anos* (Volpi, 89 years). The Bonino Gallery, RJ, showed *Alfredo Volpi: 1960–1985*. Took part in the exhibitions: *Obras raras* (Rare Works) at the Ralph Camargo Gallery, *Quatro mestres, quatro visões: Barsotti, Ianelli, Tomie, Volpi* (Four masters, four visions: Barsotti, Ianelli, Tomie, Volpi) at the Simões de Assis Art Gallery in Paraná and a special room “*A arte e seus materiais* (Art and its materials) at the *VIII Salão Nacional de Artes Plásticas*, Funarte, RJ.

The *Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo* held the exhibition *Osirarte* where it presented tiles painted by Volpi.

## 1986

MAC-USP presented the exhibition *Alfredo Volpi: 90 anos. Um Registro documental por Calixto* (Alfredo Volpi: 90 years. A documented record by Calixto). Olívio Tavares de Araújo organized the retrospective *Volpi 90 anos* (Volpi 90 years) at the MAM-SP. Took part in the exhibition *Sete décadas da presença italiana na arte brasileira* (Seven decades of Italian presence in Brazilian art) at the *Paço Imperial do Rio de Janeiro*.

Received the Gabriela Mistral Fine Arts Award from the Organization of American States.

## 1987

The Contorno Gallery, RJ, held the exhibition *A. Volpi – Obras de diferentes décadas* (A. Volpi – Works from different decades). Participated in the show *Modernidade: arte brasileira do século XX* (Modernity: Brazilian art from the XX century) held at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris in France.

## 1988

Took part in the Brazilian version of the exhibition *Modernidade: arte brasileira do século XX* at the MAM-SP, and *Brasiliana: o homem e a terra* (Brasiliana: man and land) at the *Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo*.

**Alfredo Volpi died in São Paulo city on 28th May, 1988.**

Timeline compiled by Denise Mattar from the catalogue: Volpi, MAM-SP, 1972, organized by Aracy Amaral, and based on the timeline prepared by Aida Cordeiro for the book: Volpi, Sonia Salztein, Ed. Campos Gerais – Silvia Roesler, Rio de Janeiro, 2000.





Judite and Volpi. Photo published in *Jornal do Brasil*, beginning of the 50's.



