

Royal Academy of Arts

# Radical Geometry

Modern Art of South America  
from the Patricia Phelps de  
Cisneros Collection



Large  
Print

List of Works

1

Do not remove from gallery

# Audio points for 1



Main commentary



Descriptive commentary



Introduction

Uruguay and Argentina



Joaquín Torres-García,  
Constructive Composition 16  
(cat. 4)



Juan Melé  
Irregular Frame No. 2 (cat. 5)



Raúl Lozza

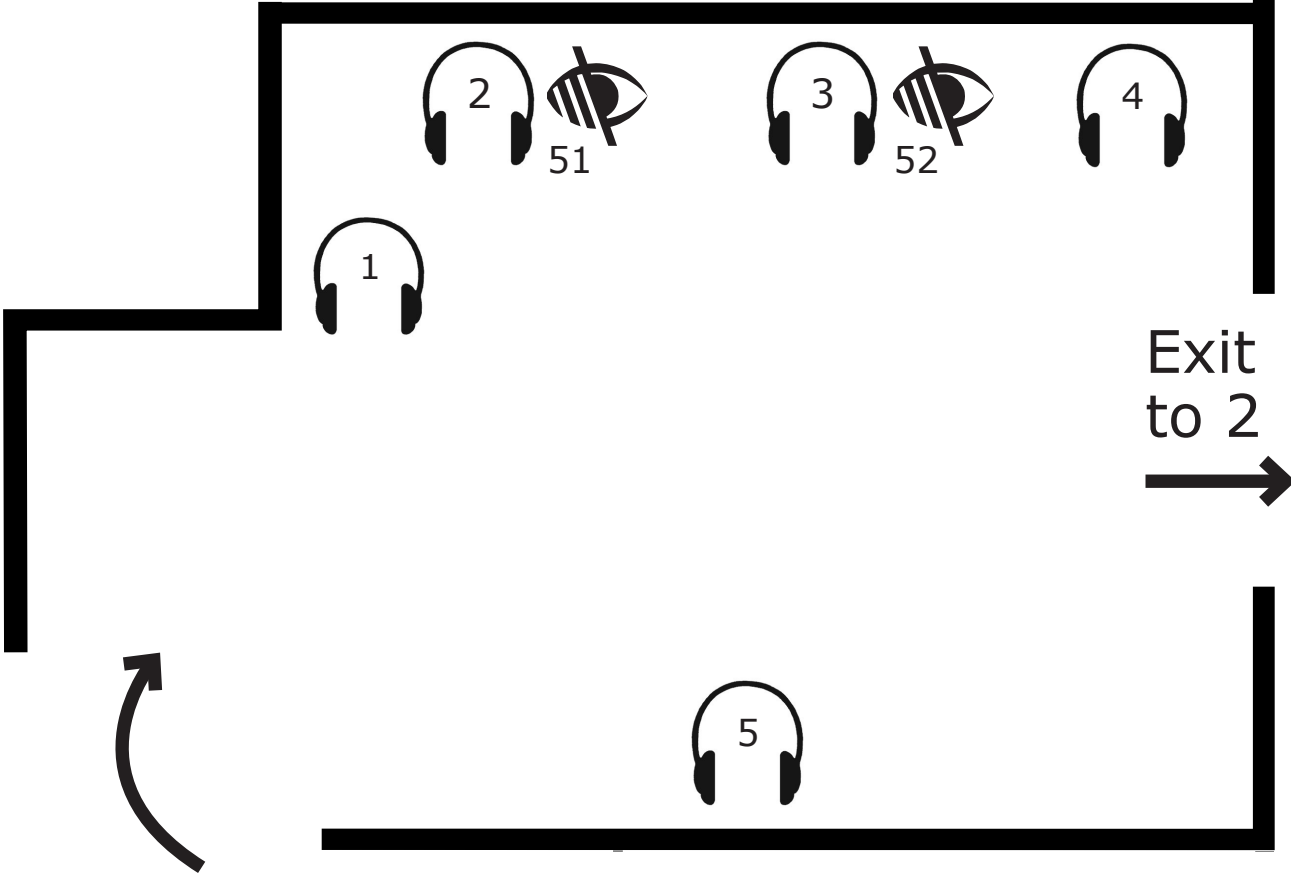
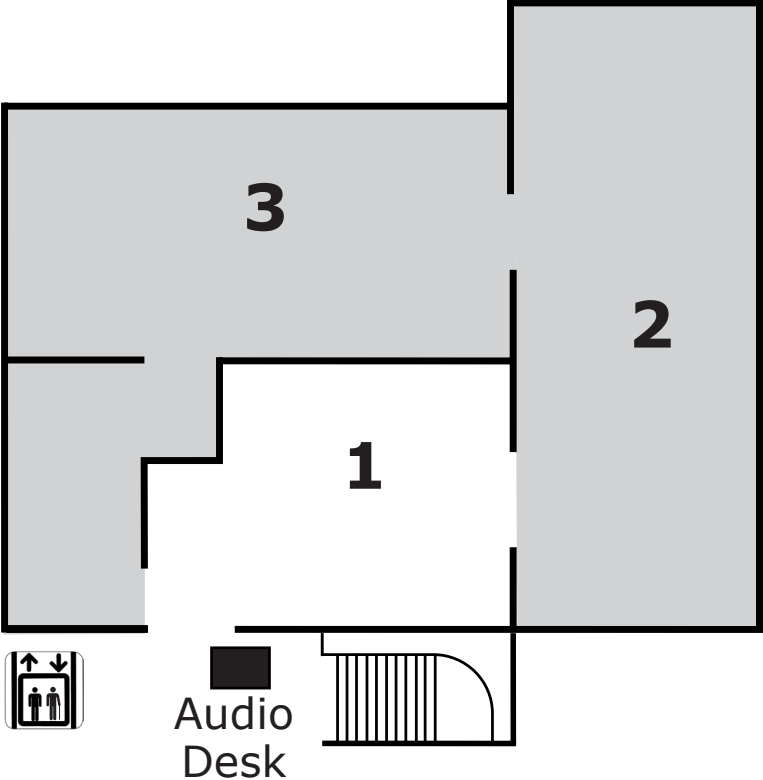
Relief No. 30 (cat. 8)



Tomás Maldonado

Development of 14 Themes (cat. 13)

You are  
in 1



Exhibition  
entrance

# Contents for 1

## Page 5

Introduction to the exhibition

## Page 8

Uruguay, Montevideo -  
Argentina, Buenos Aires

## Page 10

List of works: cats 3, 1, 2, 4, 17, 6, 11, 5,  
8, 7, 9, 18, 10, 16, 13, 12, 14, 15

### **Radical Geometry: Modern Art of South America from the Patricia Phelps de Cisneros Collection**

5 July – 28 September 2014

In the Sackler Wing of Galleries, Burlington House.

This exhibition has been organised by the  
Royal Academy of Arts, London.

2009-2016 Season  
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# Introduction

At the beginning of the twentieth century the economic future of several South American countries seemed secure.

Both Argentina and Brazil were hailed as future global financial powerhouses, Uruguay – with its high standard of living, liberal politics and welfare provision – was considered the Switzerland of the region, while Venezuela had access to untold wealth in the 1920s with the discovery of substantial oil deposits.

Immigration had brought a rich diversity of people from across Europe – including Germany, Spain, Italy, Russia, Japan and the Middle East – all of whom were seeking a brighter future, as well as radical and progressive politics, in the New World.

A palpable sense of change was in the air; economic stability coupled with technological innovations heralded a new-found optimism among a generation of artists who saw art as integral to the process of development and socio-political reform.

With the exception of Montevideo, the cities of Buenos Aires, São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and Caracas all looked east across the Atlantic Ocean towards Europe for inspiration. They no longer saw themselves as being on the periphery of the modern world but rather as being an integral part of the changes taking place at the centre.

In Buenos Aires artists were highly politicised, conveying their left-wing views through powerful manifestos and radically inventive art. In Brazil artists worked closely with poets on an intellectual approach to art, while embracing the Gestalt theory of visual perception in which

the eye's response to visual ambiguity is seen as a means of furthering the understanding of human psychology. In Venezuela art was integrated in new buildings to create a synthesis of the arts that simultaneously responded to natural light and movement.

Unless otherwise stated, all works in the exhibition are on loan from the Colección Patricia Phelps de Cisneros

# Uruguay, Montevideo



# Argentina, Buenos Aires

The huge Río de la Plata (River Plate) demarcates the border between Uruguay and Argentina, with their respective capital cities of Montevideo and Buenos Aires sitting on opposite shores of this vast estuary.

In 1934 the Uruguayan artist Joaquín Torres-García returned to Montevideo, the city of his birth, after a prolonged absence spent mainly in France and Spain but which also included the US. Torres-García was determined to fuse his direct engagement of the European avant-garde with pre-Columbian images, drawing particularly on the iconography of the Inca



to create a new American art, a position that he reinforced through numerous writings.

In Buenos Aires, Torres-García was seen as romantic and anachronistic. Young artists thirsted for a new modern visual language with which to express their optimism for the future and reflect their youthful vitality. The majority of these artists, such as Carmelo Arden Quin, Gyula Kosice, Juan Melé, Tomás Maldonado and Rhod Rothfuss, were Marxists who saw art as a fundamental element of the changing urban socio-political landscape, capturing their radical ideas in manifestos and proclamations.

Despite having never been to Europe, they embraced the clean, modern aesthetic that defined the machine age and the rise of the proletariat, and formed the groups Asociación Arte Concreto-Invención (Concrete-Invention Art Association) and Arte Madí to articulate these views.

For them art was a fundamental component of social revolution where even signing an artwork was seen as decadent and bourgeois.

In 1944, Rothfuss published an article in the journal 'Arturo', decrying the restrictive nature of the traditional rectangular picture frame. Once liberated from established conventions, paintings, he argued, could be placed into dynamic new compositions.

**List of works (clockwise in order of hang)**

**3**

**Joaquín Torres-García**

**Construction in White and Black,  
1938**

Oil on paper mounted on wood

The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of Patricia Phelps de Cisneros in honour of David Rockefeller.

**1**

## **Joaquín Torres-García**

Constructive with  
Superimposed Wood, 1932

Oil on wood

**2**

## **Joaquín Torres-García**

Constructive Painting, 1931

Oil on canvas

**4**



**Joaquín  
Torres-García**

Constructive Composition 16,  
1943

Oil on cardboard

**17**

**Enio Iommi**

Interrupted Continuity, 1946

Iron

**6**

**Rhod Rothfuss**

Yellow Quadrilateral, 1955

Paint on wood

**11**

**Carmelo Arden Quin**

Trio No. 2, 1951

Lacquer on plywood

**5**

**Juan Melé**

Irregular Frame No. 2, 1946

Oil on plywood



**8**



**Raúl Lozza**

Relief No. 30, 1946

Oil on plywood and painted metal

**7**

**Juan Alberto Molenberg**

Composition, 1946

Oil on acrylic on plywood

**9**

**Raúl Lozza**

Invention No. 150, 1948

Oil on plywood

# 18

## Gyula Kosice

### Mobile Articulated Sculpture, 1948

Brass

The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of Patricia Phelps de Cisneros in honour of Jay Levenson

The metal bands that make up this interactive work came from Kosice's design workshop, where they were originally used to reinforce leather handbags.

The sculpture is not intended to have any specific shape, nor to stand on its own; it comes into being when manipulated by the viewer, as shown by the artist in the adjacent video. In a constant state of change, this interactive work challenges the convention of sculpture as static object.

Video © Colección Patricia Phelps de Cisneros / © Gyula Kosice

**10**

**Tomás Maldonado**

Development of a Triangle,  
1949

Oil on canvas

**16**

**Alfredo Hlito**

Development of a Theme, 1952

Oil on canvas

**13**

**Tomás Maldonado**



Development of 14 Themes,  
1951–52

Oil on canvas



**12**

**Tomás Maldonado**

Composition 208, 1951

Oil on canvas

**14**

**Alfredo Hlito**

Chromatic Rhythms III, 1949

Oil on canvas

**15**

**Alfredo Hlito**

Chromatic Rhythms II, 1947

Oil on canvas

# Your feedback, please

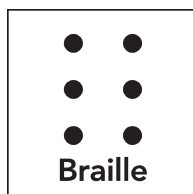
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Thank you.

Molly Bretton, Access Officer



**InTouch**  **at the RA**

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# Radical Geometry

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Large  
Print

List of Works

2

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# Audio points for 2



Main commentary



Descriptive commentary



Room Introduction, Brazil



Geraldo de Barros

Diagonal Function (cat. 20)



Franz Weissmann

Neo-Concrete Column (cat. 25)



Lygia Clark

Cocoon No. 2 (cat. 28)



Lygia Clark

Machine – Medium (cat. 34)



Hélio Oiticica

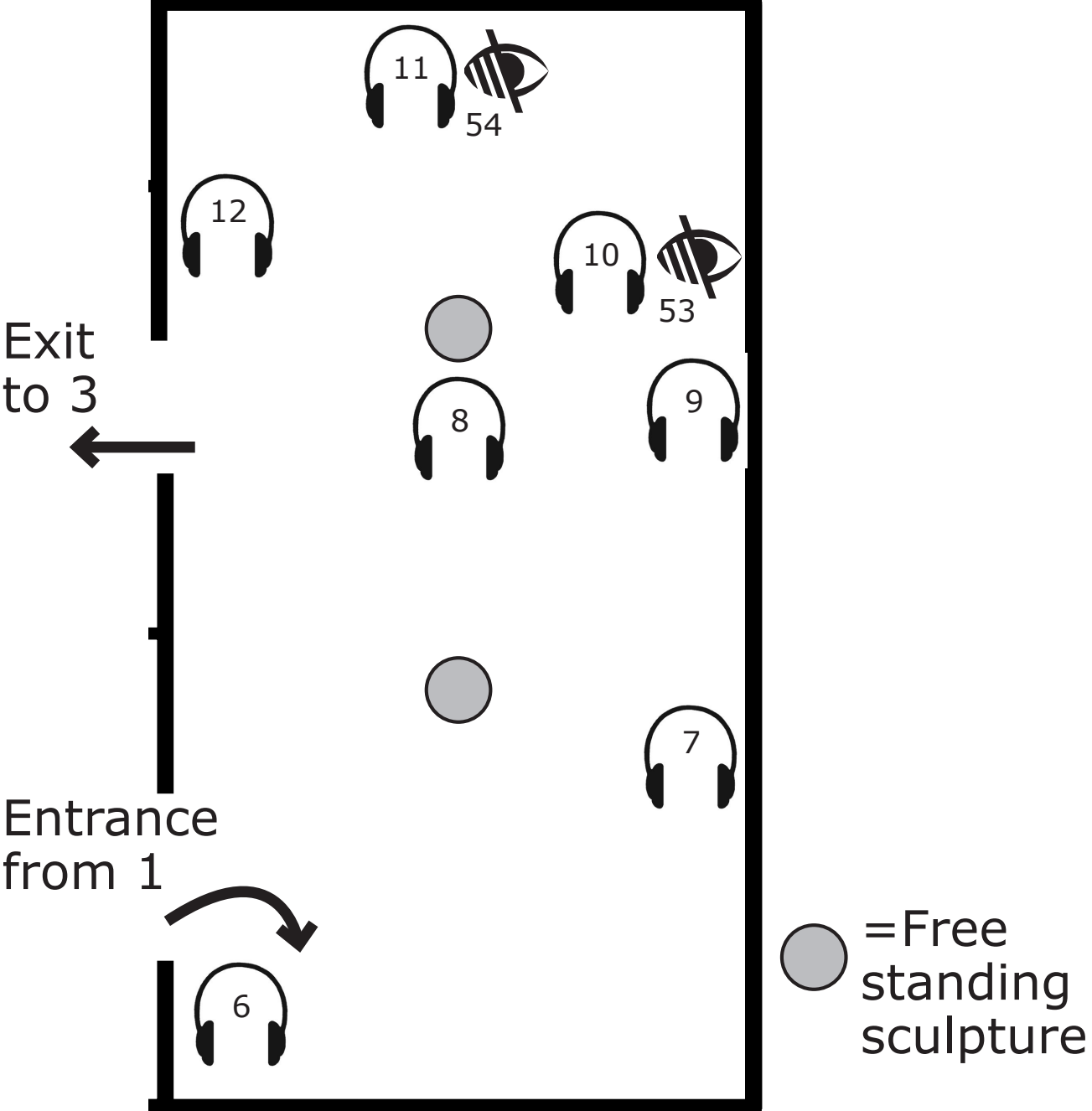
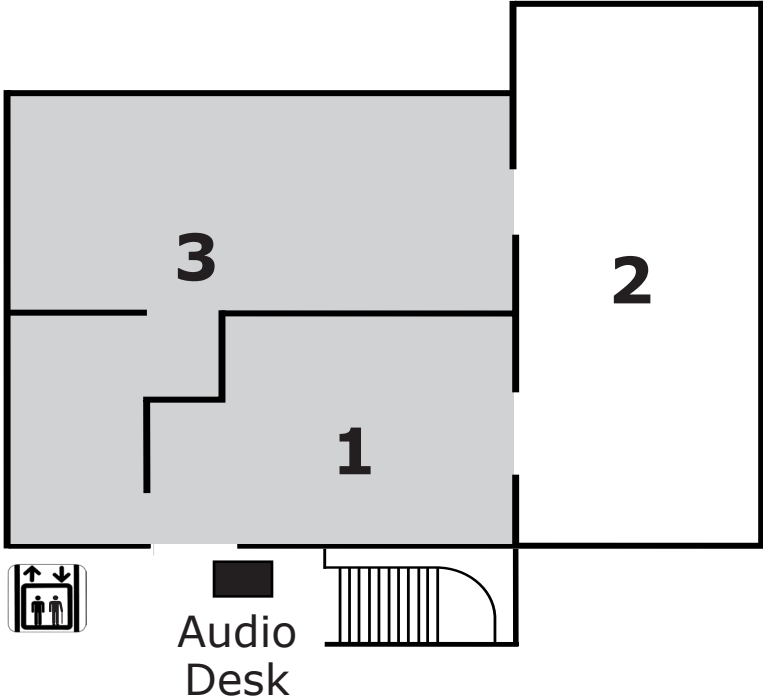
Painting 9 (cat. 48)



Lygia Pape

Untitled (from the series 'Weaving')  
(cat. 36)

You are  
in 2



# Contents for 2

## Page 5

Brazil: São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro

## Page 8

List of works: cats 24, 30, 43, 22, 26, 19, 23, 21, 20, 27, 31, 32, 34, 28, 29, 33, 45, 46, 44, 48, 42, 47, 50, 35, 36, 37, 41, 39, 38, 40, 25, 49

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# Brazil, São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro



The inaugural São Paulo Biennial exhibition, the first of its kind outside Venice, was held in 1951.

Designed as a showcase for Brazilian and international artists, it signalled Brazil's intention to become a global cultural force, indivisible from its economic ambitions, while simultaneously challenging the hegemony of Europe and the US.

Out of this, in 1952, emerged Grupo Ruptura (Rupture Group), a group of São Paulo artists – including Waldemar Cordeiro, Geraldo de Barros and, later, Judith Lauand – many of whom also worked as industrial or graphic designers.

Central to their work, referred to as Concrete Art, was a precision that captured a machine-aesthetic that subconsciously reflected the city's dominant industrial strength and to which they applied mathematical principles and the Gestalt theory of visual perception developed by psychologists in Germany in the 1920s.

The flawless industrial finish of the work produced by these artists was painstakingly achieved by hand and was designed deliberately to confound and astonish the viewer.

In Rio de Janeiro, capital of Brazil until the inauguration of Brasília in 1960, artists rejected the approach of their compatriots in São Paulo in favour of what they called Neo-Concrete Art. Grupo Frente (Frente Group), a group formed in 1954, included the artists Lygia Clark, Hélio Oiticica, Lygia Pape and Franz Weissmann.

Initially they made similarly reductive work before becoming more experimental.

Clark, Oiticica and Pape, in particular, eschewed static objects such as painting and conventional sculpture and created work that depended on the physical participation of the viewer, in individual works or in larger conceptual environments, such as Oiticica's installation, 'Eden', shown at the Whitechapel Gallery, London, in 1969.

**List of works (anti clockwise in order of hang)**

**24**

**Aluísio Carvão**

**Construction 6, 1955**

Acrylic on plywood

The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Promised gift of Patricia Phelps de Cisneros through the Latin American and Caribbean Fund in honor of Peter Reed.

**30**

**Lygia Clark**

**Composition, 1953**

Oil on canvas

**43**

**Hélio Oiticica**

Red Monochrome, c. 1959

Oil on plywood

**22**

**Hermelindo Fiaminghi**

Alternated 2, 1957

Lacquer on chipboard

**26**

**Luiz Sacilotto**

Concretion 58, 1958

Enamel on metal and acrylic on plywood

**19**

**Waldemar Cordeiro**

Visible Idea, 1956

Acrylic on plywood

**23**

**Judith Lauand**

Concrete 61, 1957

Synthetic paint on plywood

**21**

**Hermelindo Fiaminghi**

Sectional No. 1, 1958

Enamel on wood

**20**

**Geraldo de Barros**

Diagonal Function, 1952

Lacquer on plywood



**27**

**Lygia Clark**

Counter Relief No. 1, 1958

Industrial paint on plywood

**31**

**Lygia Clark**

Monument to All Situations,  
1962

Aluminium

# 32

## Lygia Clark

Radar – Small, 1960,  
(executed in 1984)

Aluminium

# 34

## Lygia Clark

Machine – Medium, 1962

Aluminium with gold patina

Clark's series of Bichos (Creatures) were specifically created as interactive works. The hinges between the different planes allow the component parts to be opened, folded and reconfigured in different permutations. As the series title suggests, the artist thought of the Bichos as living organisms, actively in playful dialogue with the spectator.





# 28

## Lygia Clark

Cocoon No. 2, 1959

Enamel on aluminium



# 29

## Lygia Clark

Plane on Modulated Surface,  
1957

Collage

# 33

## Lygia Clark

Study for Soft Work, 1964

Industrial rubber

**45**

**Hélio Oiticica**

Metascheme, 1958

Gouache and ink on cardboard

**46**

**Hélio Oiticica**

Metascheme, 1957

Gouache on cardboard

**44**

**Hélio Oiticica**

Untitled (Frente Group), 1955

Gouache on cardboard

**48**

**Hélio Oiticica**

Painting 9, 1959

Oil on canvas



54



11

**42**

**Hélio Oiticica**

Untitled (Frente Group), 1957

Oil on plywood

**47**

**Hélio Oiticica**

Metascheme, 1959

Oil on plywood

# 50

## **Hélio Oiticica**

P 16 Parangolé, Cape 12:  
'We Live from Adversity', 1965  
(reconstructed 1992)

Jute, fabric, wood shavings and plastic materials

# 35

## **Lygia Pape**

Untitled (from the series  
'Weaving'), 1960

Woodcut on paper

# 36

## Lygia Pape

Untitled (from the series  
'Weaving'), 1959

Woodcut on paper



# 37

## Lygia Pape

Untitled (from the series  
'Weaving'), 1959

Woodcut on paper

# 41

## **Willys de Castro**

Active Object (Yellow),  
1959–60

Oil on canvas on plywood

# 39

## **Willys de Castro**

Active Object, 1959

Gouache on paper on wood

# 38

## **Willys de Castro**

Active Object (Red/White Cube),  
1962

Oil on canvas on plywood

# 40

## **Willys de Castro**

Active Object, 1961

Oil on canvas on wood

The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Gift of Patricia Phelps de Cisneros, through the Latin American and Caribbean Fund in honour of Kathy Halbreich

# 25



## **Franz Weissmann**

Neo-Concrete Column, 1957

Painted iron

# 49

## **Hélio Oiticica**

Untitled (from the series  
'Spatial Reliefs'), 1959  
(reconstructed 1991)

Acrylic on plywood



# Your feedback, please

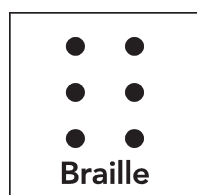
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3

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# Audio points for 3



Main commentary



Descriptive commentary



Room introduction, Venezuela



Alejandro Otero  
Colourhythm 38 (cat. 67)



Jesús Soto  
Homage to Yves Klein (cat. 61)



Jesús Soto  
Displacement of a Luminous Element  
1954 (cat. 60)



Gego  
Decagonal Trunk No. 4 (cat. 73)

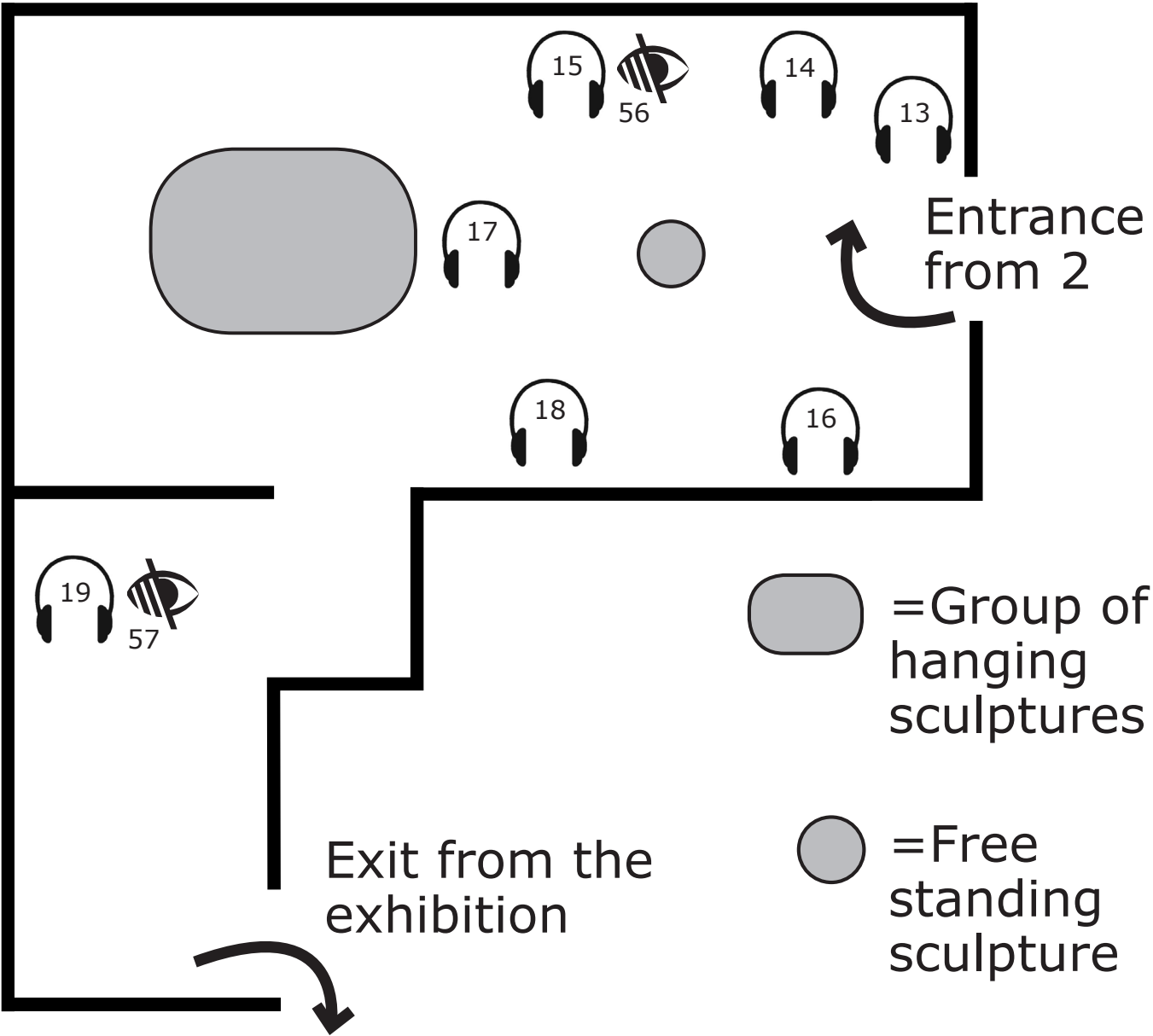
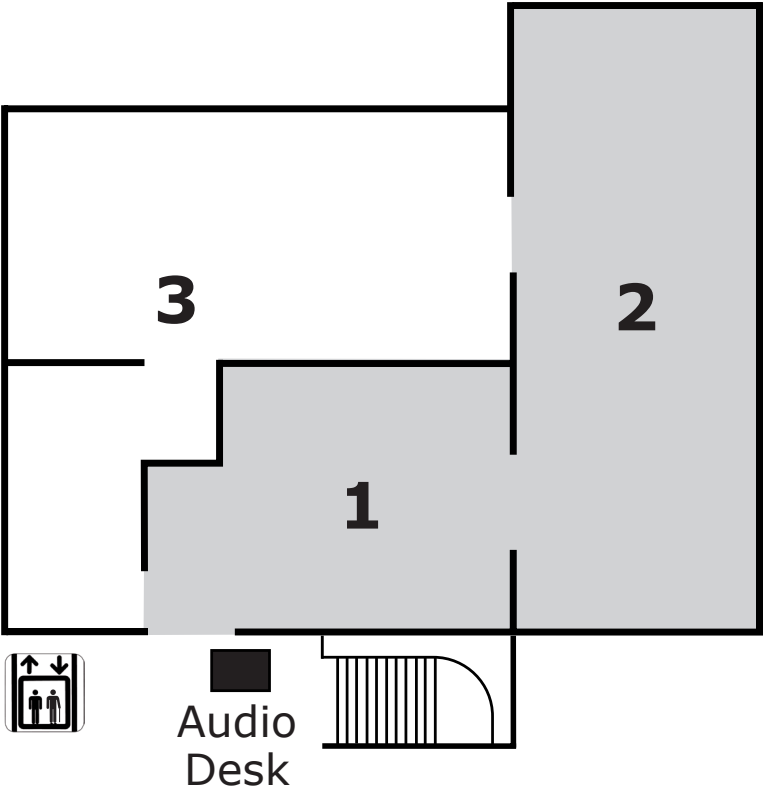


Carlos Cruz-Diez  
Additive Colour (cat. 53)



Carlos Cruz-Diez  
Physichromie No. 500 (cat. 51)

You are  
in 3



# Contents for 3

## Page 5

Venezuela, Caracas

## Page 7

List of works: cats 64, 65, 68, 67, 66, 59, 61, 58, 57, 75, 78, 80, 83, 77, 81, 70, 79, 82, 54, 55, 53, 52, 60, 56, 69, 73, 74, 71, 72, 76, 51

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# Venezuela, Caracas



The construction of a vast new university campus, the University City of Caracas, inspired an emerging group of young Venezuelan artists, including Carlos Cruz-Diez, Alejandro Otero and Jesús Soto. Work began in 1944 under the direction of the visionary Modernist architect Carlos Raúl Villanueva and continued until 1970.

Villanueva believed in a synthesis of arts and to this end he integrated murals, sculpture, stained glass and other works throughout the campus, working with established international artists such as Jean Arp, Alexander Calder, Wifredo Lam, Henri Laurens, Fernand Léger, Antoine Pevsner and Victor Vasarely, as well as the emerging local artists.

His vision captured the vibrant, modern and, significantly, international vision that Venezuela sought at this time.

In the mid-1940s a group of Venezuelan artists, including Otero, who were resident in Paris, came together to form Los Disidentes (The Dissidents), a group that rejected figurative art and the traditional approaches of teaching art at academies.

As in Argentina and Brazil, abstract art was seen as representative of the future and offered a wealth of opportunity, which Cruz-Diez and Soto embraced. Playing with scale, light and colour, they created optical illusions in their work.

These works challenged the perceptions of what exactly it was that the viewer was looking at – while the work itself was static, it constantly reacted as the viewer moved around; there was no single pictorial plane on which to focus the eye.



Gego (Gertrude Goldschmidt), a refugee from Germany, developed a unique style using wire and found objects to create ethereal sculptures that appeared to be three-dimensional drawings suspended in the air.

These apparently weightless objects move almost imperceptibly, responding to changes in light as well as creating restless shadows.

**List of works (anti clockwise in order of hang)**

# 64

## **Alejandro Otero**

### Study 4, 1952

Gouache, ink and graphite on paper

# 65

## Alejandro Otero

Study 5, 1952

Gouache, ink and graphite on paper

# 68

## Alejandro Otero

Pampatar Board, 1954

Lacquer on wood

# 67

## Alejandro Otero

Colourrhythm 38, 1958

Lacquer on wood



**66**

**Alejandro Otero**

Board 23, 1974

Lacquer on wood

**59**

**Jesús Soto**

Nylon Cube, 1990

Painted nylon

**61**

**Jesús Soto**

Homage to Yves Klein, 1961

Wire, sheet metal and synthetic paint on plywood



# 58

## Jesús Soto

Untitled, 1962

Wire of iron and brass, and synthetic paint on canvas on plywood

# 57

## Jesús Soto

Metallic Vibration, 1962

Wire and synthetic paint on wood

# 75

## Gego

Drawing Without Paper 79/22,  
1979

Steel and metal beads

# 78

## Gego

Square Reticulárea 71/6,  
1971–76

Stainless steel and lead

# 80

## Gego

Untitled  
(from the series Reticuláreas),  
1970

Ink on paper

# 83

## Gego

Drawing Without Paper 86/4,  
c. 1988

Stainless steel and lead

# 77

## Gego

Square Reticulárea 71/6, 1971

Stainless steel and copper

# 81

## Gego

Drawing Without Paper 85/19,  
1985

Stainless steel and copper

**70**

**Gego**

Creature 87-11, 1987

Painted steel and stone

**79**

**Gego**

Untitled, 1967

Ink on paper

**82**

**Gego**

Drawing Without Paper 86/13,  
1986

Iron, aluminium, plastic and wire

# 54

## Carlos Cruz-Diez

Physichromie No. 21, 1960

Casein paint and cardboard on plywood

# 55

## Jesús Soto

Double Transparency, 1956

Acrylic and oil on wood

# 53

## Carlos Cruz-Diez

Additive Colour, 1959

Acrylic on paper





# 52

## Carlos Cruz-Diez

Maquette for an Exterior Wall,  
1954–65

Acrylic on plywood

# 60

## Jesús Soto

Displacement of a Luminous  
Element, 1954

Vinyl dots on acrylic, tempera on board, and wood



# 56

## Jesús Soto

Untitled (maquette for a mural at the Universidad Central de Venezuela), 1952–53

Gouache on plywood

# 69

## Gego

Eight Squares, 1961

Painted iron

# 73

## Gego

Decagonal Trunk No. 4, 1976

Stainless steel and lead



# 74

## Gego

Trunk, 1976

Stainless steel

# 71

## Gego

Reticulárea, 1973–76

Stainless steel, nylon and lead

# 72

## Gego

Flow No. 7, 1971

Iron and aluminium

# 76

## Gego

### Sphere, 1976

Stainless steel

# 51

## Carlos

## Cruz-Diez

### Physichromie No. 500, 1970

Casein paint on PVC and acrylic on plywood sheets



# Your feedback, please

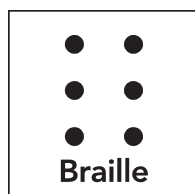
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