

Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato

April 11–May 24, 2024
34 East 69th Street, New York



Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato, *Sem título (Untitled)*, 1972
Courtesy David Zwirner

Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato
Self-taught painter and sharpshooter

Submits to no school
Nor to this or that trend
Belongs to no clique
Paints whatever tickles his fancy
Amen

—Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato, 1948¹

David Zwirner is pleased to present an exhibition of paintings by Brazilian artist Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato (1900–1995), on view at the gallery's East 69th Street location in New York. Marking Lorenzato's second solo exhibition with the gallery and the second solo presentation of the artist's work in the United States, this exhibition will coincide with his inclusion in the 60th Venice Biennale, organized by curator Adriano Pedrosa (April 20–November 24, 2024).

Among the foremost Brazilian artists of his generation, Lorenzato developed a singular body of paintings centered on his fastidious observations of the everyday subjects he encountered in his hometown of Belo Horizonte—including favelas, semi-urban landscapes, and scenes of agriculture and rural industry.

¹ Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato, 1948, cited in Rodrigo Moura, *Lorenzato*, trans. Pedro Vainer (New York and São Paulo: KMEC Books/Ubu Editora, 2023), p. 14.

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."²

Spanning the last three decades of Lorenzato's career, the paintings in this exhibition embody many of the primary concerns of the artist's mature oeuvre, both in subject matter and form. Depicting scenes 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 the artist's restrained formal approach combined with his signature treatment of texture and color. Also on view will be contemplative still lifes and pastoral figurative scenes whose subject matter points to more personal, domestic aspects of Lorenzato's practice while continuing the artist's formal explorations of pattern and surface.

Writing on Lorenzato's works, 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. The same can be said about his use of color."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 (1511–1574) famous book on Italian artists 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—with European roots. Lorenzato's practice was an amalgamation of Brazilian styles and a unique take on the influence of European art. In this way, his work is linked to the ideology of *antropófago* (anthropophagy), invented by poet Oswald de Andrade and inspired by a 1928 painting by Brazilian artist Tarsila do Amaral (1886–1973). Like Amaral, Lorenzato heeded European styles while avoiding any direct influences—in some ways anticipating the *tropicália* artistic movement that emerged in the late 1960s.

Often using geometric shapes to suggest objects in real space, in his paintings Lorenzato shows a visual parallel to the work of Italian-born Brazilian modernist painter Alfredo Volpi (1896–1988), who similarly emphasized a deep rootedness in a Brazilian culture through painting 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's work 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

² Moura, *Lorenzato*, p. 31.

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

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.

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 from April 20 to 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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