

Perserverance

1920. In the small town of Paraisópolis, in the interior of Minas Gerais, Amilcar de Castro was born. He was the first son of Judge Amilcar Augusto de Castro and Maria Nazareth. One day, a huge storm drowned Paraisopolis. Lightning and thunder came from all sides. Suddenly, lightning stroke the judge's house it the middle and set it on fire. The house was destroyed. But Amilcar, eight months old at the time, slept peacefully. And he only woke up when his mother took him out of the crib. He overcame this challenge by chance, but the next ones he would overcome due to his constant belief and perseverance.

Judge Amilcar de Castro built a brilliant career as a judge and professor at the Faculty of Law of UFMG - Federal University of Minas Gerais. He published books, was appointed President of the State Court of Justice and, due to great competence, left his name down in history.

1935. Judge Amilcar was transferred to Belo Horizonte, where he remained until the end of his life. Maria Nazareth had already died and, with five children, he counted on his mother to organize family life.

Counseled by his father, Amilcar entered the Faculty of Law of the UFMG in 1940 and graduated in 1945. The script seemed to be traced, the future already determined, and the eldest son of the illustrious jurist would likely follow the same footsteps.

A planned and drawn path that gradually became reality. But, judges are not very good at drawing. And in the second year of college, something happened that completely modified all of that: Amilcar met Guignard and entered the Guignard School to attend his classes. And from then on the unpredictable, divergences and turbulences became present in the house on 51 Guajararas Street, residence of the Amilcares.

Amilcar already had an interest in the arts, but the meeting with Guignard catalyzed it. The conversations with the Master, the freedom to have open and independent thoughts, all the possibilities allowing him to risk and to engage as he saw fit and whenever he wanted to, expressing in paper his feelings and becoming aware that he kept in himself the tools for his own creations, were remarkable and definitive experiences. All very different from the world of laws, where there was no room for the freedom to create, let alone to experience the act of creativity.

Living in these two worlds, diverse and distinct, was the first challenge placed on his path. Amilcar graduated in Law, as his father wanted, but at the same time and for seven years, he attended the Guignard School almost daily.

The Master did not really teach how to draw or paint. He was essentially a friend. And he had a sense about what each one was capable of. He imposed strict discipline on the students, but wisely led them to achieve the best results at work. This established a relationship of camaraderie and trust, which were very important in helping Amilcar believe that he could redirect his life and follow the arts. And that's what he did

About Guignard he wrote:

"Taught to draw in pencil 7, 8, 9H.

*This method of drawing brought the taste for the well done.
No shadows.
For what is sensitive, without sentimental exaggeration.
For direct communication without adjectives or excess
This is what gave us the understanding about the line.
Itself, the way to follow, the rhythm.
That, which separates and values the spaces.
Which is strength and gentleness at the same time.
Without intermediaries.
The necessary music.
Solo of time contained in the precision of space.
Plots and weaves a web of poetry,
A trail of light over an Ouro Preto that awakens now.
This was done with absolute talent and wisdom. Great Master. "*

Amilcar de Castro



Amilcar de Castro
1947 – charcoal on paper - 40 x 60cm

Rômulo Fialdini

Rio de Janeiro

1952. He married Dorcilia Garcia Caldeira and, in the same year, moved to Rio de Janeiro, the city of friends, discoveries and achievements.

During the almost twenty years he lived in Rio, Amilcar worked in magazines and newspapers of the time (A Cigarra, O Cruzeiro, Manchete, Jornal do Brasil) doing the layout, the graphic organization of the communication vehicles. The restructuring of JB was the main achievement of the artist in this area. For many years JB was a reference in graphic organization and, even today, it is a milestone in the history of graphic design in the country.

In parallel Amilcar developed his work, his experiences in drawings and sculptures. He made friends with artists Ferreira Gullar (his colleague in Manchete and Jornal do Brasil), Helio Oiticica, Lygia Clark, Aloisio Carvão, Reinaldo Jardim, Lygia Pape, Willys de Castro and Franz Weissmann, a friend from the time at the Guignard School. This group always met in the house of critic Mario Pedrosa and conversations were always focused on art, directions and purposes, ruptures with academic thinking and the emergence of new paths and possibilities for Brazilian art.

Max Bill participated and won the Grand Prize of the First International Biennial of São Paulo - 1951, with his work "Tripartite Unit". In 1953 he returns to Brazil and holds a conference at MAM-Rio.

His works, ideas and thoughts find Brazilian artists and art in a moment of divergence with what existed, searching for something new and strong enough to break way from everything that existed until then. In this effervescent broth Max Bill's theory of concrete art falls like a spark in gasoline. And Brazilian Art reinvents itself.

In São Paulo, the group led by Waldemar Cordeiro is closer to the ideas and concepts of *concretism*. And in Rio de Janeiro, artists propose another track, where the emotion of doing, the traits of the individuality of the artist, the feelings and the creation of each one is always present in the work. One where intuitive geometry can prevail over the rigor of mathematics.

1956/1957. The 1st National Exhibition of Concrete Art happened with the participation of Amilcar and other artists from Rio. A little later the *concrete* artists from São Paulo presented themselves at MAM-Rio and the *neo concretes*, in São Paulo. The differences became evident, with criticism from both sides. This duality, this struggle for art and its paths, strengthened Brazilian art itself, which then began to value and to pay attention to its artists, their creativities and new proposals. And in order to make *Neoconcrete* thoughts clear and public in 1959, the SDJB - Sunday Supplement of Jornal do Brasil, published the *Manifesto Neoconcreto*, written by Ferreira Gullar and signed by Amilcar de Castro, Claudio Mello e Souza, Franz Weissmann, Lygia Clark, Helio Oiticica, Lygia Pape, Reynaldo Jardim, Theon Spanudis and Ferreira Gullar himself.

Max Bill believed in a certain amount of subordination of art to science.

"I state again that, in architecture, everything must have its logic, its immediate function, nothing can be useless. Any line, any flat surface

should have a function that can be defended and explained. This does not mean that you are confusing art with science. In concrete art it would be the same thing: in executing a work, the concrete artist always starts from an abstract idea, from an almost geometric generating scheme. It projects it into two dimensions and, gradually, like an algebra theorem, the form develops itself. "

Max Bill

The *Neoconcrete Manifesto* disagreed, and among all the foundations therein stated: "... neoconcrete art establishes a new "expressive space. "

The divergences are evident in Amilcar's words.

*"Discovery
is
to discover through feelings
That walking towards identity
Is a path
only
for the walker
who believes in the freedom of the path "*

Amilcar de Castro

*"Sculpture
Is the discovery of form
of silence
where light holds shadow
and moves"*

Amilcar de Castro

From there, concretes and neo concretes realize the biggest, the major, and most important change in the scenario and in the History of Brazilian Art. And future generations receive the gift of open doors to the freedom of experimenting, proposing and creating whatever they want.

Amilcar continues with his experiments and begins his works in iron. In the beginning they were cut and welded sculptures, where the plate was cut into pieces that, welded in position determined by the artist, created the volume and the space of the work.



50's - iron

He also makes some pieces in wood.



wood - 1951

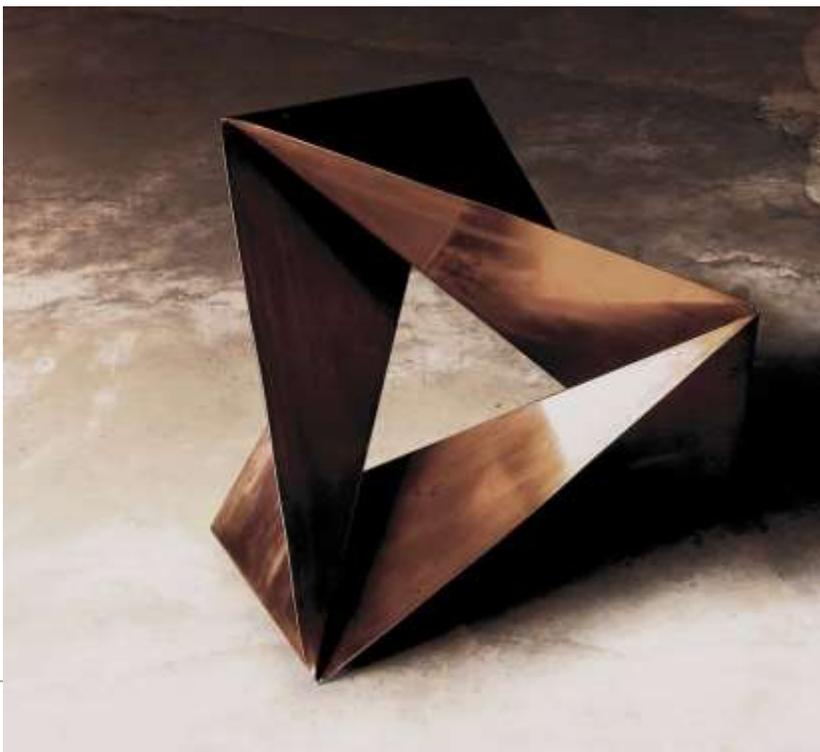
Denise Andrade



wood - 1952

Denise Andrade

But the landmark, the starting point from which the artist, should we say, conceptualizes and organizes the thought of creating sculptures, is the work of 1952, executed in copper. With it he won the prize of the II São Paulo Biennial in 1953.



Some things can be observed in this piece that, unexpectedly and contradictorily, at least at first glance, rather than approaching, creates a departure from what would be the artist's striking production of cut and fold sculptures.

Starting with the material, copper, which was used only this one time and was replaced by iron, and later, by corten steel. The latter being more rigid, offered the support which allowed to increase the size of the pieces without risking deformations of the sheet.

Another question that is observed here is the shape. The cut and fold sculptures are always open. Open in the sense that shapes do not close in on themselves, on the contrary, they open to space as if in search of light.

This "star" is in opposition to that thought. The form is closed in itself, creating a single interior space. That's where it keeps the light.

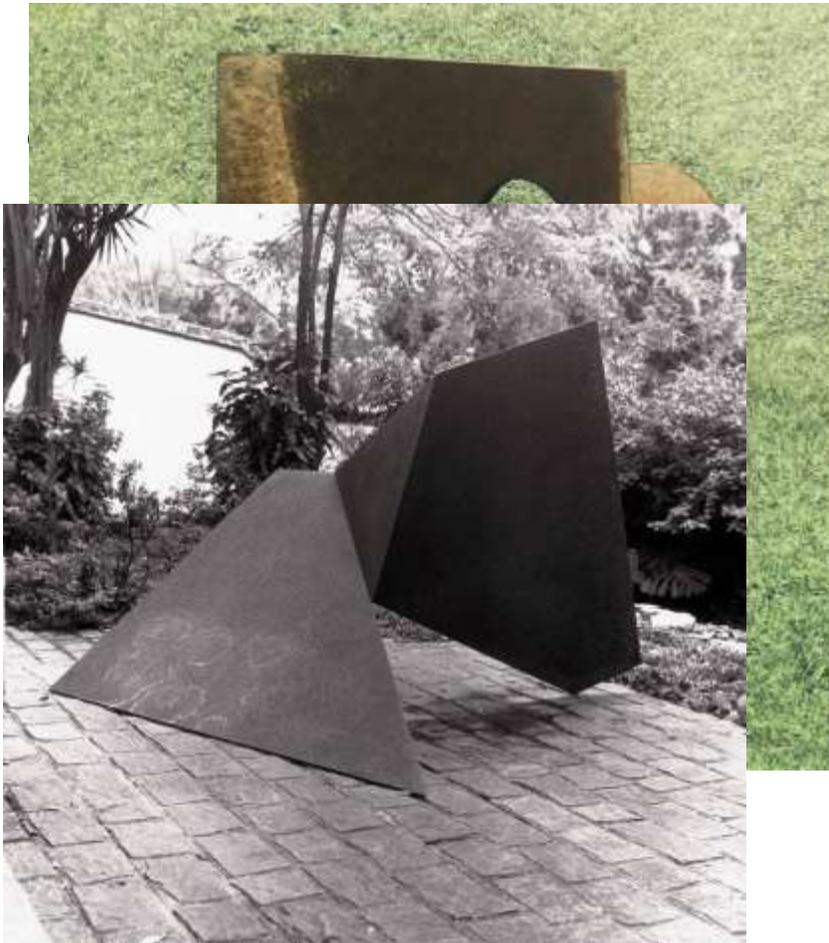
And concluding these observations, this "star" does not have the cut. By cutting and folding flat plates, Amilcar created his art in space. Over time he made variations, but the cut and fold, as well as the black and white of his canvases, contain the force and nature of his thinking.

Because of all this, this first sculpture is apparently off the curve, as if it were an exception within the set. However, it is this one who generated everything that came later. The discovery of the fold was critical. It is this one who will give character and vigor to the work of Amilcar. Balance and unbalance will be tested and attained, with the angles and positioning of the fold, which will also define and determine the shape of the empty space, which will be filled of light as inaugurated in the "star."



1956 - steel - 100 x 130 x 135cm

Pedro Franciosi



60's -steel - 125 x 150 x 150 x 0,7cm

Pedro Franciosi



60's - steel - Ø 60 x 2,5cm

Pedro Franciosi



60's - steel - 40 x 33 x 0,8cm

Denise Andrade



60's - steel - 100 x 105 x 2,5cm

Pedro Franciosi

New York - stainless steel

1967. Amilcar wins the Guggenheim Scholarship and leaves for New York, where he will remain until 1972. And he faces yet another great challenge in his career: impossibilities of the time prevent him from obtaining material and labor to continue the work in Corten steel .

This forced him to research for other possible materials. And he chose stainless steel.

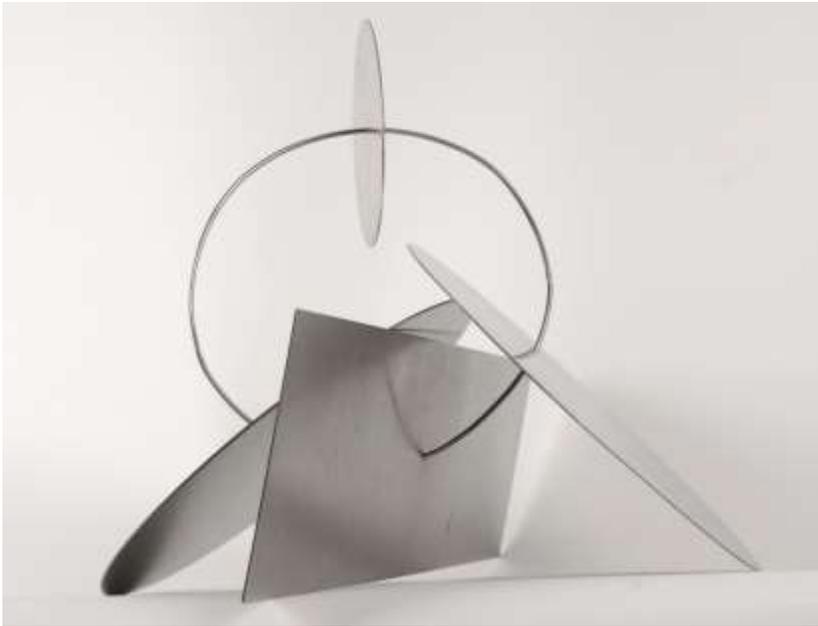
And surprisingly he redirected his work to the unusual. He set aside the cut and fold and developed what he called "keychains." Pieces cut into stainless steel plates, in different sizes and shapes, were attached to a circular ring, like "keys on a keychain".

Stainless steel reflects light. Taking advantage of this feature of the material, the sculptures of this stage do not keep or invite light into their space. Instead, they spread the light creating shadows and reflections that invite the gaze into the interior of the work. The diverse and loose shapes create a latent state of imbalance, a constant challenge to gravity.

These sculptures, like poetry, reveal themselves slowly and unhurriedly, in another time, other than that of the immediate. Interlaced with light, intriguing and disobedient to the obvious and innovative in conception, where imbalance is challenged and is, at the same time, a participant of the work. And balance is a surprise.

Amilcar believes, moves on and wins for the second time the Guggenheim Scholarship award, with works displayed at exhibitions in New York.

60's - stainless steel



60's - stainless steel



60's - stainless steel



60's - stainless steel

Cut and fold

In the 60's Amilcar had already started the research and development of cut and fold sculptures. He drew and, on paperboard, studied future pieces. And the cutting, simple gesture of everyday was forever embedded in the artist's doing.

Cut and fold. Simple gestures that undo the paralysis of the plate, transforming it into something present in space, with shape, movements, forces, light and balance.

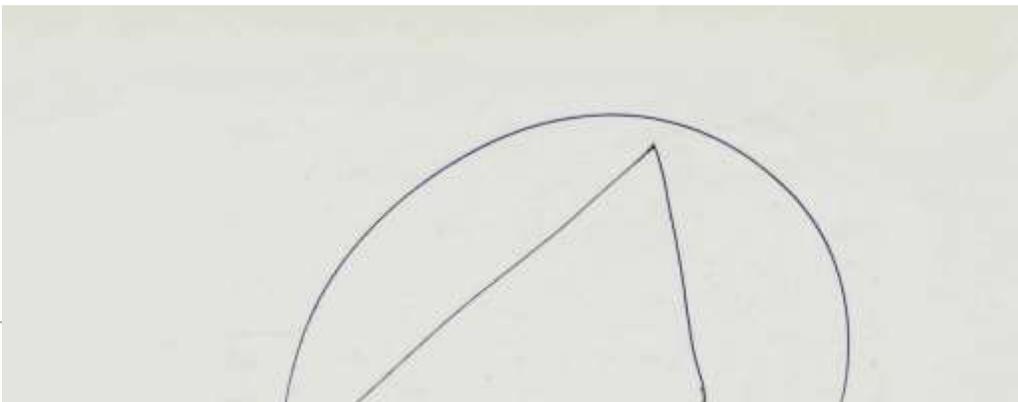
The cutting of the plate opens the sculpture to space.

The folding determines and defines the act.

And like the 8H pencils of Guignard's times, it cannot be erased and it does not accept regrets and misadventures. The folding twists the matter and establishes the dialogue with the light. That fills the space, as if incorporating emptiness in the artist's work. And what we see is the force of shape, the lightness of the piece that sometimes seems ready to fly, the silent harmony, without adjectives and the firm intention of the artist which is revealed there.

Amilcar used to say - "my sculpture leaves no remains".

It leaves no residue and no leftovers, because the original intention always has as its starting point a support already determined in the drawings, studies that preceded the execution of the work. And this basic form will be preserved until the end of the process.



Study for Berlin sculpture

Eduardo Eckenfels

"... I have faith in the shape that leaves no scraps

Which shows itself and says nothing

Like the poet's speech

Which in silence contains the world. "

Amilcar de Castro



Berlin - 1997 - corten steel - Ø 800 x 5cm



Canvas

A stretched fabric without a frame. Black ink. Wide brushes and brooms. And a thought in his head. With quick, practically continuous gestures, Amilcar transferred to the canvas the thought of the moment. And in that instant, from that single instant, everything had to happen. He wanted to start and finish the canvas with a single gesture. As if from nothing he did the whole, in one motion. No drafts, no adjustments and no hesitation. It was as if, before leaving home, he knew all the movements that would be executed in the studio.

They were not the hard pencils of Guignard times, but here, again, the deed is done. Creating and doing walk together to reveal the identity of the artist. Without adjectives or subjectivities, the paintings show the essence of Amilcar de Castro clear and strong.

The sweeping black paint printed on the fabric leave traces and cause the white to appear, interspersing the void spaces. And just as in the empty spaces of the sculptures, these whites become light. Weaving with the blacks a vigorous and unique interlace.

And whenever colors were used, they were only the primaries.

And why?

"Because I am not a painter. I do not have this concern with color, if the blue should be more or less blue, if the red is more there or here. I'm graphic. I use the graphic colors. I do not paint, but draw. "



90's - 600 x 1000cm - acrylic on canvas

Rodrigo de Castro



Life and Art

"That which characterizes an artist is that he looks within himself. Every experience in art is an experience of oneself, it is the knowledge of oneself, it is a search within oneself. You can not make experiments with others. This silence of the inward searching for the origin of things is the great problem of art. Looking for the origin you become an original, and not one wanting to do something different. That's why I think creating comes together with living and that art and life are one and the same. "

Amilcar de Castro

"Always believe and to the end"

Amilcar de Castro

Short sentences. Few words. A wide gesture in the air, as if pushing that end to an *after*, farther and farther away.

And thus it was the artist's doings and achievements.

Always believing in himself, in the certainties of being, as well as in those of not being, the path to his art.

Always believing in doing to accomplish, even if the adversities are many, the values, devalues and anguish, lurking on the insecurities of life.

Believing always and to the end he undertook a work outside of time. Today or at any time, Amilcar de Castro will always surprise and fill our gaze, our soul, with the unusual, the new, the pure art of a master who, wisely, pushed the end to *an after*, far and beyond time.

This is possible only when life and art, mutually attracted, carry out the unusual, the rare and unthinkable.

Rodrigo de Castro