

Presentation of the individual exhibition: Painting Hotel Nacional Gallery, Brasilia, 1967

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This is Athos Bulcão's first painting exhibition in Brasilia. The mural in marble at the entrance of the Congress, the great trellis, the mural and the flooring of the new Itamaraty building, the tiles of the Igrejinha (Little Church) and the Hotel are the most well-known examples of his work (which come from the times of the Pampulha Art Museum), during a long collaboration with the architect, Oscar Niemeyer. But what is shown now is his return to painting pictures. A year ago, one could already recall that the previous works of Athos Bulcão – the photomontage, a true lyrical explosion of his interior world, and the composition of disciplined and concrete decor for architecture – instead of the contrary, naturally lead him to his new painting. But, while Athos deliberately postponed this exhibition, his friends could follow the subtle variations that operated in his paintings, both in the form and themes. Both the painting, at times more spontaneous, other times extremely elaborate, and the actual figurative composition effectively underwent decisive experiences. Over the same background, more or less rich in execution, but always unlimited, without beginning, nor horizon, nor end, the figures of an almost obsessive affinity at times displayed in frames, at other times reorganized into more dynamic groups, until they were condensed like symbols, into the trio Homem-Cidade-Pássaro (Man-City-Bird) symptomatically attached by threads. But Athos returned to his masked pieces, with unusual physiognomy, whose mute gestures, while magical and dramatic, belong to the timeless space, which they define.

Before the present perspectives of art criticism, the position of Athos Bulcão is independent and courageous. His work, free of prejudices that flow like counterfeit, in the sophisticated environment of mentors and merchants of the avant-garde, with certain candidness, reminds one that the freedom of individual creation was the only common trace to the precursors of contemporary art. Aesthetics, Sociology, the Psychology of Perception, and the most recent notions on Information and Communication – theoretical disciplines of application to the study of forms, and their meaning and their social relationships – inverted the creative process. There is nothing more suspect, in an accelerated and heterogeneous civilization like ours, than a previously deciphered art or a vanguard, foreseen and preconceived by the social environment it will come to amaze. There is also nothing more suspect than individual expression submitted to recipes or custom made. Far from the oscillations of fashion and the mistaken naiveté of those that follow scientific vulgarizations in the illusion of accompanying technological progress, Athos Bulcão is tranquilly at the margin of the official currents, but belongs to the true history of painters. Recognizing, even with the most extreme precision, the values of color, space and the techniques that he uses, he does what the most authentic artists have always done: he forgets the doubtful authority of the critics and gives form to his own world, one of invention and imagination.