

the idea of creating new media for different interpretations and spaces.

It is important to highlight in this exhibition two publications: *Reduchamp* (1976) and *Poética política* (1977) both by S.T.R.I.P., the Portuguese acronym for the Union of Workers in the Fine Arts or Poetic Industries. These examples help us understand how, in fact, publishing was for Julio Plaza a field for experimentation for language and represented the potential for inter-media work, which gave the artist what he was seeking: a non-official communication channel and an exhibition space in itself.

Graphic design and visual communication became important tools in Julio Plaza's work. Between 1967 and 1969, in one of his Brazilian sojourns before settling definitively there, he had studied at the Escola Superior de Desenho Industrial (ESDI) in Rio de Janeiro. It was there that he met the concrete poets Augusto de Campos, Haroldo de Campos, and Décio Pignatari, and developed an abiding interest in Concrete aesthetics.

Julio Plaza's video work also underscore his will to experiment with the technology available in the 1970s. The videos featured in the show were especially restored for the occasion.

The context created by the curator brings into relief Plaza's innovative poetics in the field of conceptual art.

Lisbeth Rebollo Gonçalves

## Rochelle Costi

Luciana Brito Gallery

Encountering a photograph by Rochelle Costi often produces a shift in our rela-

tionship with space: you become either Gulliver-like, or like one of the protagonists of *Land of the Giants*, the famous serial from the 1960s where a crew of humans arrive on a planet where everything is of outsize proportions. In sum, Costi is able to make the image alter, with its scale, the size of the observer, who thus sees one of his or her childhood dreams fulfilled: to be enormous and look upon the world from above, mountains as tiny piles of sawdust of sand; or to be tiny and look at a tempera jar as one looks at a barrel.

These shifts in scale are always accompanied by the disposition of the photograph or of the object on the wall; yet, there is an "out of context" here: Rochelle Costi plays constantly with the viewer's body, who will have to crane up their neck in order to fully spy a given image. And I use the verb "to spy" here advisedly, because the work of this artist, besides changing the size of who looks at it, is able to transform every observer into a spy, always trying to find out how is it that an everyday object is suddenly rendered strange, or, vice versa, how a strange object is made normal.

But let's go step by step. Curated by Ricardo Resende, Costi's most recent exhibition at Luciana Brito Gallery is divided in two sections. The first section, titled *All the time*, is a panoramic of her work covering more than two decades. The second section, *Common Place*, consists of a series of photographs made in 2013.

Composed like an installation, *All the Time* is a unit in itself; this is to say, works from different periods and years form a coherent whole, rather than a series of independent images, as is often the case with a retrospective exhibition. Along the lateral walls, like a cabinet of curiosities, are

the photographs and a few objects, while the front wall holds a clock which, instead of numbers, sports on its face the letters of the show's title and a single, giant hand ticking second by second.

This cabinet is interesting in that it provides an opportunity to see several relevant works gathered in dialog, and, moreover, because here Costi is presenting a collection of her own oeuvre.

In an extensive interview with Ivo Mesquita, in 2005, the artist said that she "understands the art of taking photographs as a collector's gesture," while defining collecting as an "exercise in delimitation," like "picking peas from a soup." In this way, this work she formerly did in the world, choosing a few shots from among myriad possibilities, is now, in 2013, what she does with her own production.

Delimiting and ordering a fragment of her own oeuvre resulted in a kind of puzzle that brings forth several constants, communicating threads that run along her entire career. Among them, the work with scale I mentioned at the beginning of this article; an interest in mass-produced objects, such as stickers, glasses with old brand names, plastic mats, objects that are all part of the collective imagination and involve a shared nostalgia, as there is no greater epiphany that encountering a no-longer-marketed brand of soda from one's childhood. In the same way, the artist points out intrinsic orders within our everyday chaos, from the arrangement of merchandise in a compact miscellany, to the specific patternings of a given wallpaper or a 1970s tile floor. Finally, there is the question of intimacy, of a private place, which Rochelle Costi is able to open for the viewer in series like *Rooms*, presented at the 24<sup>th</sup> São Paulo Biennial in 1998.

The installation of these photographs, which share a marked vanishing point and a practically natural scale, has a degree of specificity: they are almost at floor level, which generates an interplay with the viewer as they integrate to their bodies and invite them to enter the images as if they were extensions of the site. A positional effect that at the time Costi discussed with curators Paulo Herkenhoff and Adriano Pedrosa, and with architect Paulo Mendes da Rocha.

The second section, *Common Place*, is comprised of recent photographs that force

**Rochelle Costi.** *Greenwood*, from the *Common Place* series, 2013. C-print with methacrylate. Ed 1/3. 15 ¾ x 43 ¾ in. (40 x 110 cm.).



us to stop and consider, more than once, what we are seeing. Dislocated objects or points of view that are strange to the viewer, such as a family of mushrooms growing inside a tiny hole in the middle of a paved road, an image of overwhelming beauty. Or the view of a giant forest under whose trees one is tempted to run but which, upon closer inspection, turns out to be a vine—perhaps a tomato—supported by thin wooden rods that at first sight we mistake for tree trunks. Nevertheless, once the ruse is revealed, no viewer would change the vine for the forest; rather, we will all opt to become very small to enter that *landscape*.

**Julia Buenaventura**

### Gisela Eichbaum

Berenice Arvani Gallery

São Paulo's Berenice Arvani Gallery presented, between November and December of 2013, the largest-ever retrospective of the prolific German-born Brazilian artist Gisela Eichbaum's six-decade career. The show was curated by Carlos Suster Abdalla. The show was also an opportunity for the launch of *Canções sem Palavras / Songs Without Words*, a bilingual book edited by Abdalla, featuring an unpublished text by Alvaro Machado and reproduction of critical texts by a variety of world art figures, among them Maria Bardi and Mario Schenberg. The publication also features, alongside the 55 works included in the exhibition, over 100 other works by the artists from different periods. The title harks back to a small book published by the artist in 1986, inspired by Felix Mendelssohn's piano piece of the same title. The exhibition covers all the periods of the Eichbaum's work, from her first exercises, heavily influenced by expressionism, to the abstractions that made her name.

Eichbaum's connection with music was lifelong. Born in Mannheim in 1920, she immigrated to Brazil in 1935 with her parents, both musicians who made their living teaching their art. Eichbaum herself learned the piano and often demonstrated her skill in parties organized at her home with the presence of many internationally renowned artists. As a career, however, she chose to transform the rhythms and melodies that interested her into brushstrokes and graphic elements. The development of her oeuvre

displays a careful effort towards abstraction, achieved step by step, with discipline and drive, as though the artist moved on to the next phase only when she was satisfied with the results of the previous one and pushed forward driven by the search for new challenges. Nothing is abrupt. On the contrary, Eichbaum's transitions are fluid and retain always an essential core: in her case, draftsmanship. Her earliest works, from the 1940s, evince the influence of Expressionism, a forceful movement in Europe during the first decades of the Twentieth Century. In *Terra Brasília*, Eichbaum connects with artists who had a similar language, such as Karl Plattner, Lasar Segall, and Yolanda Mohalyi, the latter a close friend with whom Eichbaum collaborated closely in several projects.

In the artist's trajectory, some elements remained constant across a variety of techniques and themes. Mainly, the tracing of drawing lines, which are present throughout her entire oeuvre. Initially they were there to structure the composition, as in *Desperation* or *Girl with doll*, two watercolors from 1944, or *The Adoration of the Magi*, a gouache from 1957. In later abstract works, the line gains autonomy and status as a protagonist, in strong monochrome graphics that exert different rhythms and intensities. Always, her traces are omnipresent from watercolors to gouaches to experiments that combine colors, China inks, and ball-points. Paper was her preferred support, despite having also worked with oil on canvas. The formats of her works are discreet, in a scale that is welcoming for the viewer, who can relate to them in a closer and more human, perhaps more empathetic, way.

Gisela Eichbaum's colors go through a gradual intensification; at first, her palette is softened, dominated by discreet combinations of pastel hues, some earthen tones, that refer to the colors of her native Germany. As the tropical landscape is assimilated, the artist added colors that are bolder, saturated, and contrasting with each other. Yet even when she uses a more intense palette, Eichbaum's paintings display a certain melancholy, a colorful melancholy present in her portraits and figurative works with unsmiling or faceless characters, cityscapes, and titles like *Keep silent* or *The Empty Table*. Already in her abstract works we find an element that



**Gisela Eichbaum.** *Small Bay With Boats and City Background*, 1959. Gouache on paper. 25 ½ x 18 ¾ in. (65 x 48 cm.).

cannot be fully apprehended, as though those "fantasy landscapes" belonged to the realm of dreams and appeared to our eyes half-diaphanous, half-ethereal, clearly utopian.

Young Gisela, the daughter of Hans and Lene Bruch, two master pianists, came with her father to São Paulo in 1935 to join Lene, who was Jewish and had fled a political situation where "mixed marriages" were prosecuted and which was on the verge of turning murderous. She frequented Yolanda Mohaly's studio—the two became close friends—and the São Paulo Abstraction Atelier, founded by Samson Flexor. Throughout a career spanning almost six decades, Eichbaum received several awards, participated in three São Paulo biennials and many salons and group exhibitions in Brazil and abroad, and more than 25 solo shows. She died in São Paulo in 1996. Her legacy is that of a road followed with persistence, moving away from figurativism not under the pressures of the fashionable but by the natural maturation of her own expressive language.

**Sylvia Werneck**