

# GALERIA MILLAN

## Lidia Lisbôa - Acordelados

Curated by: Thiago de Paula Souza

At the age of six, while living with her family in Guaíra, in the extreme west of Paraná, Lidia Lisbôa secretly collected leaves from the pigeon pea plants her parents grew in the backyard. In one of the bedrooms of the house, she surreptitiously and carefully hung each of the leaves on the metal frame of the old campana bed of a cousin of her mother's. Apprehensive and surprised by the girl's play, Paizinho, as he was known among family members, asked Lidia's mother to pay attention to the behavior and upbringing of the young girl, because for him, that gesture added to a series of other attitudes and revealed that the girl was different from the other children.

Almost thirty years later, in the late 1990s, Lídia was already living in São Paulo, when she received a visit from Paizinho at her home, a space that also served as her studio. When he came across the fabrics, strings, threads, clay and all the other materials and instruments used by her to create her works, he surprised her by recounting, for the first time, that curious event, and ended the story with: "Now I understand."

This is just one of the many stories that Lídia Lisbôa has shared with me since we started to think about how we could work together. This anecdote is not meant to say that Lisbôa was already an artist and exercised her creative skills since she was a child, and that Paizinho was perhaps the first to notice such characteristics – however, it is a possibility. What caught my attention from the very first time I heard the story is its epilogue-like quality: the meeting in the studio, followed by Paizinho's account and his epiphany when he realized that Lídia was an artist.

It was also after some visits to Lidia Lisbôa's studio, no longer the one from the 1990s, but where she currently lives and works in downtown São Paulo, that I began to understand the dimension of her poetics while watching her in action.

Working with different techniques and media, from performance to sculpture and in a broad dialogue between past and present, Lídia revisits her memories of childhood and adolescence, family experiences and her early years in the São Paulo art circuit, as starting points for the construction of her practice. *Lidia Lisbôa: Acordelados* mirrors these stories and looks at the artist's practice based on cord making, a motif that structures her works, whether in textile sculptures, ceramics, bronze or drawings. The main focus of the exhibition falls on two of its series: *Tetas que deram de mamar ao mundo* [Tits that breastfed the world], and *Cupinzeiros* [Termite Mounds].

In the very first room of Galeria Millan three large textile structures hang vertically from the ceiling. They are part of the series *Tetas que deram de mamar ao mundo*, a group of works that the artist has been developing for over ten years. Produced on the occasion of

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the exhibition, their shapes allude to breasts and the weight of the social and historical role played by the female gender in the construction of our world, as the title suggests.

They are monumental crochet sculptures and at their wider ends, four strings function as supports for the suspension of the works, in addition to acting as the bases of the process of making the sculptures themselves. Instead of using string or wool, as is usually the case with crochet pieces, Lidia cuts different fabrics into strips and uses them as if they were threads. That is, after transforming the fabrics into strips, with the help of a bamboo needle, she makes the initial loop and begins creating the first stitches that help her in the construction of the ropes. She first weaves together the different strands that will help build a flat base frame. Then, maintaining the same points, the structure acquires a ring shape, as the weight of the piece stretches it, widening the points of its base. The artist follows the same process of stitching and weaving until the funneling of the other end, which touches the ground through a central rope, which reveals the continuity of the material and the structural line of the entire piece. The visible stitches—the artist does not bother to hide its seams—reveal a surface full of knots.

As for the quality of the materials, Lídia works with synthetic and organic fabrics. The artist uses satin, translucent and matte fabrics, balancing lightness, shine and opacity. The use of wrinkly, grainy and rougher fabrics produces small reliefs on the irregular surfaces of the pieces. The colors are generally soft: shades of brown and gray stand out, marking transition zones in the composition of the sculptures, breaking an almost monochromatic chain, composed especially by varying tones of white—from warmer tones like yellowish and beige, to colder tones, like gray. These different properties that make up her weaves allow her to build a cohesive network of textures that directly affect the visual aspects of the sculpture and the visitor's perception.

In the second room, we highlight the series *Cupinzeiros*, the oldest and most emblematic of the artist's career. These sculptures began to be produced by Lisbôa in the late 1990s. She often talks about her interest—almost an obsession—in termite mounds during her childhood and her mother's repeated pleas not to go anywhere near them. While fascinated by them, the girl never dared touch one, and she does not seek merely to represent the shape of the structures that house the termite nests, but—through her techno-poetics, initially materialized by the use of clay—to re-elaborate the presence of elements that made up the landscapes of her childhood.

As in the series *Tetas que deram de mamar ao mundo*, this group of works is composed of a succession of layers (in this case, clay ropes), the result of a process of manual modeling and repetition of an action. However, its funneling occurs in an upward direction, like a stalagmite, from floor to ceiling. For the production of each ceramic piece, Lisbôa separates the necessary amount of material from the clay blocks, and with her hands presses the clay, creating uniform rolls, which are gradually gathered, one overlapping the other, in a coil. With her fingers, she prints a kind of stamp on the rolled clay while it is still wet, producing a pattern on the surface. Lisbôa presents *Cupinzeiros* in the color white for the first time.

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In the same way as in the crochet pieces, which demand a sequence to give body to the sculpture, at each encounter between the clay cords, the fingers squeeze and unite them one in the other, successively forming the structure and giving volume and shape to the pieces. In addition to the *Cupinzeiros* in ceramics, produced in different periods of the artist's career, the exhibition also features a group of *Cupinzeiros* (2021), in bronze, a work from the *Cordão Umbilical* series, a sculpture formed by wire strands and buttons, and a series of drawings (*Memórias de renda*, 2020).

For the first time Lidia Lisbôa develops works using metal. If the *Cupinzeiros* in ceramics are unique pieces, the use of bronze points to other possibilities of reproducibility of the work and makes us speculate not only about the artist's interest in exercising her sculptural techniques in other materials, but also about her desire for temporal expansion and on the durability of her works. Finally, by mirroring the structure and form of her most iconic series, the drawings mark the artist's return to two-dimensionality and appear as points of intersection between textile sculptures and her ceramic and bronze works.