

## Myra Landau: Rhythm, Space and Time

Opening Reception: Friday September 14, 6-9 pm

Exhibition runs through October 27, 2018

Gallery Hours: Tuesday to Saturday 11-6 pm

Henrique Faria Fine Art is pleased to present *Rhythm, Space and Time*, Myra Landau's (1926-2018) first solo exhibition with the gallery and in the United States. Bringing together a selection of paintings, drawings, works on paper and artist books, this exhibition looks at how Landau consistently treated the themes of rhythm, space and time across various media and supports throughout her life. In 1965, Landau started titling her works *Ritmos*, or rhythms, which she built up using repetitions of line and form, sometimes staccato and sharp, other times loose and flowing. The consistent use of the title, *Ritmo*, alludes to the way her lines, or *rayas* as the artist called them, and geometric figures punctuate the space of the canvas or paper and interact with her use of vibrant color to create sensations of movement, taking the viewer on a visual journey that begins and ends in different places.

Landau's optic exploration of rhythm encouraged her to experiment with, and expand upon, actual sheet music. Her 1983 drawing *Partituras (Scores)* and artist book *Cuaderno partituras (Scorebook)*, which uses the score for the song "Mon Coeur Est Plein de Vous" ("My Heart is Full of You") by Emile Nerini as its direct support, both take the monochromatic geometry of musical notation as a starting point for Landau's cascade of crosshatching and intersecting lines and insertion of bright color. Here the already abstract form of music is further extricated from meaning as clef bars are filled in, individual notes are transformed into enigmatic symbols and the words of the song are obscured and camouflaged by Landau's marks. Landau's tackling of musical strictures, though opposing the visual movements of the time, echoed the increasing popularity of Free Jazz and improvisational styles of music making that eschewed the rigidity of pre-composed sounds and progressions in favor of music made in the moment. While Landau's preferred aesthetic was geometric, she infused it with the freedom of gesture and the flair of individuality as it is emphasized in the titles of paintings *Ritmo de ópera (Opera Rhythm, 1984)* and *A procura da liberdade de arte (The Pursuit of the Freedom of Art, 1973)*.

Landau's expressive lines and figures have generated comparisons with kinetic and Op Art. Using curator Guy Brett's definition of the kinetic, that being "static works that are radical and dynamic in their formal structures", Stellweg likens Landau's work to that of Gego, Mira Schendel and Agnes Martin, who each pushed the visual boundaries of repetition and the graphic through an "insistence on the line" and a foundation in geometric abstraction. Playing with the form of the book, Landau created several artist notebooks that opened as accordions, with phrases, lines and colorful forms that stretch on for pages and become animated with the opening and closing of the books. Landau's books were made to be manipulated, to be read as well as seen and felt, as she played with binding materials, featured different types and qualities of paper (including the indigenous Mexican *amate* paper and corkwood) and used words and forms almost interchangeably.

Many of her works, especially her artist books, feature heartfelt dedications to loved ones, demonstrating how the artist valued community and connection and how she was continually inspired by her love for her family and her love of life. Landau never intended for her work to be separate from that.

**Myra Landau** (Bucharest, Romania, 1926 - Alkmaar, The Netherlands, 2018) was a self-taught artist and art researcher. The Landau family fled Romania in April of 1940, fearing persecution from fascist forces. In November of 1940, the family finally arrived in Rio de Janeiro, when Myra was 13 years of age. In Brazil, Landau met artists Emiliano Di Cavalcanti, Wesley Duke Lee, João Câmara, Sérgio Camargo, Antônio Dias and others who motivated her to paint. At first working in a figurative style, she eventually turned to abstraction, developing a style of her own. In the 1960s, Landau discovered a new metal engraving technique called metal relief. She also honed her own painting style by applying pastel directly on raw linen, and was the first Latin American abstract woman artist to use movements of free geometrical lines, which as of 1965 she called *Rhythms*. While living in Mexico City, Landau was part of the *Salón Independiente*, an activist group of art professionals who protested the 1968 Tlatelolco student massacre orchestrated by the Mexican government. Political activism remained important to Landau throughout her life. In 1974, she moved to Jalapa, Veracruz to become a professor at the Faculty of Visual Arts at the Universidad Veracruzana and, in 1975 she was promoted as a full-time researcher for the Institute of Aesthetics and Artistic Creation. In 1994 she followed her family to Italy, moving to Israel in 2010 and finally to The Netherlands in 2016. All those years she never stopped painting and drawing. She also wrote assiduously, producing numerous artist books. Landau had more than sixty individual exhibitions during her lifetime. The most important were presented at the Museum of Modern Art in Mexico City, in 1974 and 1987, respectively. She also participated in at least 150 group exhibitions in Mexico, France, Italy, Brazil, Chile, Spain, the United States and Cuba. She passed away on July 14, 2018.

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