

Tomás Toledo lecture

00:01 – Many thanks, Patricia. Undoubtedly, the era of the 60s marked a before and after in the new and old schemes of the art world. Movements such as *El Techo de la Ballena* by Círculo Pez Dorado, artists such as Jacobo Borge, Carlos Castillos, Mario Abreu, Régulo Perez, exhibitions like *Homenaje a la Necrofilia*, contributed in a defining way to the intellectual and artistic formation of young Venezuelans. Now we go to another country, Brazil, and I have the pleasure of introducing curator

00:30 - Tomás Toledo: Good morning, I'd like to give a small introduction to the programming directors of the new team at the MASP, who have been in charge of the museum since the end of 2014. I'd like to speak a little about the curatorial and architectural proposals of Lina Bo Bardi for the museum,

01:00 – emphasizing the exhibition *La Mano del Pueblo Brasileiro*, that was organized by Bo Bardi in 1969 and was re-mounted in September 2016. The MASP, founded in 1947, was the first modern museum created in Brazil. It was born with a multidisciplinary purpose to be a museum open to all kinds of artistic manifestations, not focused only on ancient art or modern art, but as a space of education and formation.

01:30 - In this sense, Pietro Maria Bardi, the founding director of the museum and the husband of Lina Bo Bardi, wanted the museum to be an art museum in the widest sense, or in her own words, he said it was necessary to conceive the new museums beyond narrow limits, that they should be organisms in activity, that they shouldn't have a narrow aim to inform but rather to instruct, that they shouldn't be a passive collection of things but

02:00 - a continuous exhibition and an interpretation of civilization. In the words of Bardi, also, the museum should be for everyone, not only for specialists and students, for the distraction of tourists. In this sense, Lina Bo Bardi looked at the museum with the idea that it shouldn't be an intellectual museum, and she didn't want monumental architecture, thought it shouldn't have stairs, that it shouldn't have imperial structures.

02:30 – These intentions she held, which made her somewhat radical, to an extent, made this museum a very important collection for European art in the southern hemisphere, with its Renaissance art and also Brazilian art extraordinarily acquired in the decades of the 40s and 50s by its director. Nevertheless, the MASP only reached its full expression when it was transferred

03:00 - in 1968 to its current site, a building designed by Lina Bo Bardi that faces Avenida Paulista and is one of the major icons of modern Brazilian architecture. The museum on Avenida Paulista is an architectural and urban display of the concept of the museum that the Bo Bardi couple wanted. Within the difficulties of economic architecture, they worked with transparency, with permeability, with an abundance of

03:30 - glass, so that it would not be like a church but would have a public dimension, and the work of the cantilevered slab, they made a huge slab measuring about 1.74 meters. From there you can see the valley looking towards the center of the city, and it is defined by John Cage as the expression of the architecture of liberty. Nevertheless, the museum passed through a dark moment

04:00 - from the 90s till the year 2014 because it lost its architectural and institutional character. It also lost its special characteristics and its initial concepts. With the arrival of the new director a process of institutional renovation and rediscovering of the original architecture was begun. There were a series of walls that blocked the images, they divided

04:30 - the floor plans with plaster and wood. In this sense, it was important to us to once again open up the museum and show everything. This happened during the context of the exhibition called *MASP en proceso*, which was realized on the first floor of the museum and was considered a traditional exhibition with a well-defined list of

05:00 works shown. What did we want to do? We showed the public, as the name suggested, what the process was, that it was being assembled, that the collection was being researched and the museum's architecture was being rediscovered. So, the basement and the museum were opened up to the street and on the first floor works were shown that were not often available for public viewing. This gave a breath of fresh air to collections from different

05:30 - eras and territories, chronologies and genres were mixed, and it was a good stage to show Lina Bo Bardi's glass stands, which had been created for the new building on Avenida Paulista, but had been removed from the second floor since 1996. In this exhibition we showed art from Brazil, art from Italy and art from France.

06:00 - This cycle of exhibitions was structured upon three bases. First, to explore the collection, recovering and re-mounting expositions put together by Lina Bo Bardi, and to present documents from the museum's historic and photographic archives that could tell the trajectory and the history of the works that were being presented. The part of art from Italy showed the museum's inaugural exposition in 1947, which was in the center of Sao Paulo.

06:30 - There, Bo Bardi exhibited paintings that had been taken from the walls where they hung and placed upon metal tubes. Think about that image. With this, she revealed the influence of rationalist post-war Italian architecture and this is how it happened in the exhibition halls of the Palazzo Bianco in Genoa. For the part of art from France

07:00 - the museum's second configuration was recreated, this from its site on Calle 7 de Abril during the 1950s. Here we see the original version from 1947. Here we can see an

example of how documents were exhibited: they were put into a hierarchy, which opened new doors for the visitor, giving the public contact with content

07:30 - that was often kept out of sight. For example, purchase receipts, letters about changes of authorship and also images of works that were arriving in Brazil, by boat or by plane, in the 40s and 50s. The proposal was to consider the work not only in its historical or social context within art history, but in its social and political relationships with the museum, with Sao Paulo and with Brazil.

08:04 - Here, in the part of art from Brazil, they returned to the disposition established by Bo Bardi during a short period between 1957 and 1959, during which time the museum was transferred to another building belonging to the Fundação Armando Albores Penteado. Here, the paintings were hung on long panels that were far from the floor and that did not

08:30 - completely block the site's original architecture. Speaking of the museum's holdings, the following exhibitions intended to explore the MASP's collection and the production of the European and Latin American cannon, trying to create a production that was neither European nor of the cannon. For this, what did we do? For example, the collection of Max Rhodia was presented, with its 79 pieces of clothing, with images.

09:00 – For example, artists such as Hércules Barsotti, Willys de Castro, Aldemir Martins, Nelson Leirner and Alfredo Volpi, were presented, along with a series of drawings that were produced between the 50s and 60s by patients of the Hospital Psiquiátrico de Juqueri, these were donated to the museum by Dr. Osorio César, the hospital's director and the husband of Tarcila do Amaral. Another curatorial direction that developed in this new phase of the museum was

09:30 - to present different stories that were multiple, diverse and plural, in addition to traditional narratives. For example, in *Historias de la Infancia* multiple and diverse representations of childhood were presented, all from different eras, territories and schools. From African, Asian, Brazilian and European art to art from the Cusco School, including sacred, Baroque, academic, modern, contemporary and also so-called popular art, likewise drawings made by

10:00 – children. We can see here two works from the collection that opened the exhibition: Renoir's famous portrait of the two Cahen de Anvers sisters, known as *Rosa y Azul*, representing childhood in a bourgeois French family of the 19th century, which hung next to Bárbara Wagner's photograph representing two children on Brasília Teimosa beach, located in a very humble part of the city of Recife, which shows popular Brazil

10:30 - in the decade of the 2000s, contrasting the production of the European cannon. On the other hand, the new curatorial program of the museum developed from a critical reflection, not only from the collection and museographic practices but also from the

historical part of the exhibit. In this sense, three shows were remarkable for the way they signified the inaugural period of the museum on Avenida Paulista. We have *Exposición, de larga duración* at the Pinacoteca, the art gallery

11:00 - on the second floor, another individual show that was called *Playgrounds*, by the artist Nelson Leirner, in the free space, and *La Mano del Pueblo Brasileño*. These three exhibitions that I've just named as taking place at the Pinacoteca can be understood as a set, a concept, a project and a program of the museum that, though it was announced in 1969, was not realized nor even

11:30 - developed during the history of the museum. So, an important path opened, which seems relevant, singular and particular as it would become an important direction that could be developed by the museum's curators. Then, we chose these three exhibitions so they could be re-articulated, rethought, re-dimensioned as a point of departure for a new concept, to mount and stage

12:00 - them again, beginning with the curators' work. For example, the glass stands are one of Lina Bo Bardi's most radical initial projects for the museum. They were placed in the Pinacoteca of the second floor in a space that had many windows that went from the floor to the ceiling, and upon these stands the paintings were placed,

12:30 - along with a transparent glass plate upon which the plaques for each work were placed so that the public could read and have some interaction with the images of the shown works. The political dimension of Bo Bardi's proposals are suggested by the open gallery that is transparent, fluid, permeable and offers multiple possibilities of access and interpretation. There is no hierarchy, there is no predetermined path,

13:00 - only that the visitor can walk through that take the path that most appeals and thus have a familiarity with the works that are closest, or that most draw him or her in. Additionally, the stands and the paintings are placed in rows and with their plaques at the entrance of the Pinacoteca, allowing the public to have

13:30 - first contact with the artworks themselves and afterwards to see the authorial, historic, geographic, cultural and technical content of the works. In the original configuration of the exhibition with the stands by Lina Bo Bardi and Pietro Maria Bardi, they organized the works by school and region, that is to say, they were hung with more rigor. Recently, we hung them in

14:00 – chronological order, in a sinuous route, as if it were a small resistor, slightly electrical, I would say. This organization doesn't coincide with the chronology of art history, nor with the schools, their movements, and it does not obligate the public to follow a determined path, rather the spatial transparency of the open floor plan where the stands are leads visitors to create their own routes,

14:24 - their own paths. It allows them to take unexpected detours, to have some dialog with Asian art, African art, Brazilian or European art. The current exhibition is called *Acervo en transformación*, that is, it's always transforming. It focuses on figurative art that reflects the history of the collection and the interests of the Bardi couple, who resisted the predominant hegemony of the abstract tradition

14:58 - in Brazil in the 40s and 50s. All this has to do with the relationship with the United States and their Good Neighbor policy during the Cold War, there we see a defense, as Mario Pedrosa said, of Brazilian abstract art. With the exhibition *Playgrounds* that I mentioned earlier, in the free space that you are seeing, Nelson Leirner presented sculptures with which the public could interact.

15:26 - They explore the relationship between the public and the private, what is inside and outside, and the museum is open to the street, to the reality of the city. For the exhibition *Playgrounds* in 2016, six new projects were sought, for which calls were made to Céline Condorelli, Ernesto Neto, Grupo Contrafilé, O Grupo Inteiro, Rasheed Araeen and Yto Barrada, and the participation and commitment of the public was sought

15:54 - in the museum and its surroundings. The exhibition *La Mano del Pueblo Brasileño* was the first temporary exhibition of the recently inaugurated MASP on Avenida Paulista. The show was organized by Lina Bo Bardi together with Pietro Maria Bardi, the filmmaker Glauber Rocha and theater director Martim Gonçalves. It opened to the public in April 1969 and it presented a selection of around 1,000 objects

16:26 - from Brazil's vast material culture, for example, from regions from the northeast to the south of the country. The new staging of *La Mano del Pueblo Brasileño* does not try to be an exact reconstruction, but a new staging that shows adaptations with a list of works and following directions and concepts of the original 1969 show which featured

16:56 – furniture, tools, utensils, machinery, musical instruments, decorations, toys, textiles, clothing, animal imagery, religious objects, paintings and sculptures. In the research process we consulted the museum's historical archives and did not find a complete list of works nor a detailed museographic project. For that reason we made a new inventory of objects based on photographic registries and

17:26 - lists of collectors and museums who loaned work to the exhibit. We sought out the people who loaned the original works, as well as other institutions and collections in São Paulo, in Rio de Janeiro, Niterói, Belo Horizonte and Recife. Within the archives that were part of the research, we gave importance to the works that were similar to those we found, in which the kinds of objects from the original show,

17:56 - which displayed nearly a thousand pieces, were respected. The new staging had 975 works, of which 44 had participated in the original show. The exhibition *La Mano del Pueblo Brasileño* is taken as a case study and is seen as a radical show that deals with

territories, hierarchies and standards between objects and productions. What did it seek to do? It's an opportunity to display to the public a bit of this production,

18:26 - to stimulate that reflection and the debate about the status of the museum and art history. In this sense, I'm not interested here in understanding the significance of that moment in history and of the inauguration of the museum to find new directions and reinforce the presence of *La Mano del Pueblo Brasileiro* at the museum.

18:48 - When we leave aside the first European works, what we are doing is like a decolonization. What is it we are doing? We want to dissolve the possible distinctions between art, artisan craft, and artifact and to group together what they have in common, as with the work of men and the work of women. So, a painting by Portinari, or by Renoir, or a work such as a chair, can be considered an artwork.

19:26 - In the article from the newspaper *O Estado de São Paulo*, Bo Bardi developed this proposal, saying, "I want to clarify that with the project of the museum my intention was to destroy that rarefied air that always circulates in a museum and to present a work of art as that: work, as a prophecy of work that is at the reach of everyone." Among the distinct productions of different cultural and regional matrices of Brazil I'd like to point out a few nuclei. For example, here

19:56 - we can see that of indigenous artifacts as decoration. This indigenous presence was not so strong in the original exhibition and when we remounted it we saw that we could bring more objects such as benches or hammocks, showing a little of Brazilian culture. Notice here the artifacts of feathers from indigenous Brazilian towns. Another

20:26 - important nucleus that comes from the domestic universe is that of the wooden spoons and the kitchen utensils, of different sizes, that were made long ago with woodcarving or metal working techniques. There is a display of them here with a rather peculiar nature, and we see a great friction between the modern and the ancient so that it can be observed by the

20:56 - public. Another nucleus that was very important to the exhibit was works in ceramic, we can see here a series of ceramics popular in the northeast of Brazil, a sculptural production that is rather genuine to Brazil. We have here polychrome wood that tells the everyday story of this region of the country. Look at this ceramic work displayed in 1969 and now part of the 2016 exhibit. This was one of the

21:26 - objects we managed to recover and show in the 2016 exhibit so that you can see it. Another important nucleus of the exhibition was the objects of cattle herders, cattle herding clothing from northeastern Brazil of those who work with cows, who live in a very dry part of the country and have a tough job. So look at this, here we have

21:56 - baggage, all the clothes they use, this is from 1969. Here we see the presence of the group of Afro-Brazilian spiritual and religious objects, from belief systems like Umbanda and Candomblé. Umbanda is more syncretic and has some overlap with Catholicism, while Candomblé is more purely original and has

22:26 - Yoruba influences. Here we have some dolls that have to do with the Orishas and with other spiritual objects in general. Look, here we have some displays of Catholic objects and in the background objects from Afro-Brazilian culture; see the images from 1969.

22:56 - And finally, the animal-like images that also represent religious belief systems and that are used as the prows on boats upon the São Francisco river. they are made in polychrome wood and represent anthropomorphic figures that show fantastical versions of men and women, lions, horses and dogs. They are used on all the boats on the São Francisco river as protection from water spirits

23:26 - that could be in the river, putting the lives of the sailors in danger. Afterwards, they fell into disuse because the boats began to use gasoline and forgot about the water spirits. Look at the original version here. This is a very interesting artist named Agnaldo Manoel dos Santos, from Bahía, he was the assistant to a great sculptor

23:56- of this animal-oriented culture. We see here images in which Afro-Brazilian images are mixed with animal-like ones. Here we have images of Brazilian sculptors, look how in the back we see the image of Our Lady, a Virgin, mixed in with the Afro-Brazilian images. Here we can see the end of this exhibition,

24:26 - with this pyramid of ex-votos, which are emotive images. For example, people who are sick make a promise, and afterwards, when they have received grace, when their favor is granted, they make this imane in wood and bring it to the image of Christ. We can also see these patchwork quilts that are hung on the wall, which were bought by Lina Bo Bardi when she traveled to the northeast of

24:56 - Brazil. We wanted then to establish this relationship among the indigenous, the religious and the quilts that Lina Bo Bardi acquired during her travels. Look here at this image of the 1969 show with the same quilts there. Here we see a section of textile machinery, the mills for

25:26 - sugarcane, for corn. Brazil had a long period of slavery up to abolition in 1968 and all this machinery was used with slave labor. See here the original exhibition, it was a much larger exhibit and what we were able to recover for the 2016 show. Here we have a sketch by

25:56 - Lina Bo Bardi, she organized exhibits link this. What we want to point out is the simplicity, the wooden walls, which were considered objects, and that give the exhibition the feel of a popular fair, of a market. That's what she called it. This was an

26:26 - exhibition she did in 1965 with objects from the northeast, before *La Mano del Pueblo Brasileño*, and it was very important to her story. One can see all these objects as if they were for sale at a market or a popular fair, which shows the difference between how objects are shown in a normal exhibition

26:56 - and how they are shown at the MASP of Brasil. What are we saying with this? Despite the beauty we see, there is also a uniformity among the social forms and that's taken into account for the works of social character, for example, the pots that are not strictly for cooking, they are not always

27:26 - for work, rather they serve as objects of observation. What am I saying? We think of the work of exhibitions together with other artists and I want to make a brief presentation of the exhibitions that we done by Bo Bardi, or by other

27:56 - artists that participated in those projects. For example, this was the first that was done in 1959, here is *Bahía Ibirapuera* in 1969. This is 1965, *Nordeste em Roma*, which was presented in the National Gallery of Modern Art in Rome but could not be inaugurated. That violence generated repercussions at the time and led the architect

28:26 - Bruno Zevi to write an article in the newspaper. This was titled *Caixote de Arte Popular* from 1978, *El Diseño en Brasil, Caipiras Capiasu Pau Pique*, from 1982 to 1984 both at the SESC Pompeii, the cultural center that was designed by Bo Bardi. Look, here we see

28:56 - the collaboration of Pierre Bergé. This is a nucleus of exhibitions that we organized in parallel to upado eche exhibit based on other exhibits related to the theme of popular work. This is a good perspective on the museography of popular work that has widened in Brazil. This is an exhibit of a contemporary Brazilian artist named Thiago Honório, and Brazilian sculptor.

29:26 - Jonathas de Andrade, for a new popular Brazilian furniture. And here, speaking a little about works from the museum's collection and also about those who work on the glass stands, we want to bring new productions, new exhibitions, from Europe or other places, and which also bring

29:56 - artists outside of modernist traditions, that is to say, popular artists, because we really like to be able to work with this kind of artist, self-taught, from humble origins, outside of the academic system, who want to participate, who are also interested in this. Here you see the work of Mario Pedrosa, a very interesting work. This is another work by Agostinho Batista

30:26 - de Freitas; notice how he uses painting, hair and a range of materials that are not traditionally used. For example, this was a young man who sale his paintings at a popular market in downtown Sao Paulo and now we include him in the museum's exhibits. Pre-Columbian art, here we have

30:56 - indigenous culture, look how here are the glass stands, as you can see, used to display sculptures and pitchers from Marajoara culture, as it's said in Portuguese. Here we see an Italian painter named Rafael. Here we have a series of paintings and the presence of indigenous art, notice here

31:26 - the glass stands and those elements that were in the previous exhibitions and that we intend to maintain in the future. And finally, genuine and expressive objects, that can enter the collection of the museum and be presented on the second floor together with the other works the museum presents. I'd like to end my presentation

31:56 - speaking of, examining the recent history of the country because it articulates the need to see a new history of art in Brazil. The balance of popular Brazilian civilization is necessary, even if it seems dim in the light of high culture, because this balance is not the balance of folklore, which is always protected with paternalism, rather we're talking about

32:26 - what we call *Aleijadinho* and about Brazilian culture that was not there when the French Artistic Mission happened. We are talking about the northeast, about skin, about those who live in small cities, about the *negrito*, the *indio*, about those masses who must be here. Thank you.