

Cotter, Holland
“Review: ‘Empty House Casa Vazia’ Highlights Brazilian Artists”
The New York Times.
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‘Empty House Casa Vazia’

Luhring Augustine
531 West 24th Street, Chelsea
Through next Friday

Despite increased exposure, New York’s relationship with Latin American modernism (as well as with the modernisms of Asia and Africa) stays stuck in the getting-to-know-you stages. Interestingly chosen exhibitions like “Empty House Casa Vazia” in mainstream galleries like Luhring Augustine could help deepen familiarity.

Organized by Donald Johnson Montenegro and Lucrecia Zappi, this show places the work of 18 Brazilian artists spanning generations on a historical and stylistic continuum. The earliest — Lygia Clark, Hélio Oiticica, Lygia Pape and Mira Schendel — came of age in the 1950s and ’60s. They inherited certain early European modern styles reflecting clean-lined, hard-edged utopianism, from which they derived their



JOHN BERENS/LUHRING AUGUSTINE, NEW YORK

“Empty House Casa Vazia,” at Luhring Augustine, features works by 18 Brazilian artists from several generations.

own organic, interactive, often politically loaded Neo-Concrete variations. They in turn inspired younger artists, most based in São Paulo or Rio de Janeiro.

Among them, abstraction is a

common language, minimal-minded in the case of “drawings” made from vertical strips of bronze or iron by Paulo Monteiro, Fernanda Gomes and Marcius Galan, and in paintings by Alex-

andre da Cunha that use clothing as a canvas. Erika Verzutti has an eye for the surrealist potential of vegetal forms. Installations by Adriano Costa and Rodrigo Matheus make deft, complicated use of unfixed space.

Group shows are in some ways a cop-out; galleries can get away with not giving a vote of confidence to anyone in particular. What this exhibition has going for it is beauty — over all, it looks great — and a glimpse of at least one artist we don’t see often, Raymundo Colares (1944-1986), who lived a troubled life in a Brazil under military rule and died in a fire in a psychiatric hospital. He created, among other things, brilliant-colored, multilayered cut-paper books designed to be picked up, leafed through and presumably carried away. Their complexity and touch-friendly lightness sets the tone for this companionable show, and makes a case for breaking it down into more than a few solos.

HOLLAND COTTER