

# Porticus

## Artur Lescher at Palais d'Iéna

**First exhibition in France of the Brazilian artist, major figure of abstract art in Latin America, created in dialogue with Auguste Perret's architecture**

Curated by Matthieu Poirier  
CESE, Palais d'Iéna, Paris, 17 - 25 October 2017

With the patronage of the ministry of Cultural Affairs



3d renderings for the Palais d'Iéna exhibition © Artur Lescher studio and Rodrigo Carvalho Pereira

As part of FIAC, the Palais d'Iéna in Paris, headquarters of the Conseil économique, social et environnemental (CESE), is hosting an exhibition for ten days by the Brazilian artist Artur Lescher, who follows Antony Gormley, Francesco Vezzoli and Carlos Cruz-Diez last year.

Shown for the first time in France, Artur Lescher's works come from private and public Brazilian collections or are made in-situ for the event. Presented throughout the 1,500 m2 of the Palais d'Iéna, the sculptures offer an unprecedented dialogue with the modern classicism of the monumental spaces designed by the architect Auguste Perret in the 1930s. The exhibition is sponsored by the ministry of Cultural Affairs and supported by the Galeria Nara Roesler.

## VISITOR INFORMATION

*Porticus* exhibition

17- 25 October 2016

Palais d'Iéna, 9 place d'Iéna, 75016 Paris

Open every day from 12pm to 7pm

Free entry

Press preview and opening 16 October 2017 (by invitation only)

## COMMUNICATION AND MEDIA CONTACTS

L'art en plus - Paris

Virginie Burnet / Margaux Jouannaud

[presse@lartenplus.com](mailto:presse@lartenplus.com)

+33 1 45 53 62 74

With the support of the Galeria Nara Roesler São Paulo | Rio de Janeiro | New York

Lydia de Santis

[lydia@nararoesler.art](mailto:lydia@nararoesler.art)

+55 (11) 2039-5452



**Following in the footsteps of Antony Gormley, Francesco Vezzoli and Carlos Cruz-Diez, Artur Lescher's work is now exhibited within the architecture of the Palais d'Iéna.**

Lescher, born in 1962 in Sao Paulo where he lives and works, has enjoyed considerable recognition across the Atlantic since the 1980s, notably for his attachment to neo-concretism, a major current of abstract art that draws on cognitivism and the phenomenology of perception. This exhibition offers a transversal view of Lescher's oeuvre in terms of its resonance with certain characteristics of Auguste Perret's distinguished building, which was opened in 1939 and is now the headquarters of the Economic, Social and Environmental Council (CESE). **The sculptures and installations presented all come from Brazilian collections or have been made specifically for the exhibition. They enter into dialogue with the modern classicism of Perret's monumental spaces:** the powerful colonnade of the hypostyle hall, the hemicycle, and the staircase. In contact with the aesthetic of Artur Lescher's works, these volumes, though they are interior spaces, reveal themselves to be intrinsically places of great openness, articulacy and energy. By harking back in this way to the initial model of the classical "porticus" and to its democratic aspect, the artist symbolically opens the place up towards the outside, but also, on a more intimate register, towards the perceptual mechanics of the spectator.

**Artur Lescher's sculptural work is, in fact, intrinsically connected to architectural space.** In the present case, it dialogues with a building of remarkable sobriety, but which nonetheless could not be further from the neutral, white-cube setting in which works are routinely exhibited by museums, galleries and art centres. Indeed, the style of the Belgian-French architect is characterized by his use of unrefined, that is to say unadorned or unpainted, materials—such as process-dyed reinforced concrete in various shades of pink. This provides a wide range of textural effects for the eye or the hand, to say nothing of the different metals used for joints, edges, borders and strips. The works of the Brazilian artist act as a powerful echo of these qualities, with their regular shapes, their reflective surfaces and the precisely calculated way they are laid out alongside various measuring instruments such as rulers, plumb lines or styluses. **The crucial role played by these elements goes beyond providing a sophisticated drawing or mere ornament: they shape, structure, rhythm and modulate the overall power of the site, with its rigorous geometry and massive blocks.** For the sculptor, it is a matter of bringing out the materials' relation to the space and, in so doing, exposing their intrinsic properties and uncovering their meaning. For, while the artist rejects any figurative or representational intent in his practice, he conceives of his works as "capsules laden with attributes"—like those of the many works made of metal, which give off reflections and undulations like light on water. Or the way the works are hung, which is conceived of as a landscape of events, constantly renewed as we walk around and change the angle of our gaze.

**The main quality of Artur Lescher's pared-down, finely crafted works is that they produce a tangible field force—a magnetic field, one might say, considering the metals he uses (copper, brass, and others). But it is, above all, a perceptual matter.** Indeed, his works aim to connect and articulate the various spaces and materials in Perret's momentous building. Although their formal qualities make the works autonomous objects conducive to pure contemplation, they nonetheless become catalysts that modify our reading of the architecture. They also reveal the polarity of our vision, make us sensitive to the way our eyes and our bodies are steered by the invisible but efficient forces that arise from the tension between the architecture and the sculpture, the environment and the object—reminding us, incidentally, that the Palais d'Iéna, until 1955, was a Public Works museum and used to exhibit tools, instruments and machines.

I was keen therefore that the Palais d'Iéna—whose powerful geometry prompted Emmanuel de Thubert in 1939 to say "This is where duration is"—, should accommodate the subtle mechanical equilibrium of Artur Lescher's works; like, for example, his Pendulums, which evoke instruments that purportedly reveal magnetic sources or hypnotize a subject. Their elongated symmetry and overhead suspension have the

effect of modulating the surrounding space, and inscribing their geometry on that of the place. As for Perret's monumental staircase, it is transformed by a serrated pedestal, bearing, not as one might justifiably expect, a sculpture but, Brancusi-like, other identical pedestals gradually diminishing in size. The resulting effect is that the stern sensuality of the staircase becomes an instrument for speculation, like variations of point of view and on the traditional relationship between pedestal and artwork, height and value, power and submission. Another work specially created by the artist for the hemicycle will also interrogates that relationship.

As mentioned above, Artur Lescher's works are composed essentially of wood, brass, textile, stone or copper that are carefully designed—one hesitates to say "machined" as it would distract from the profound craftsmanship of their author's method. **In their central symmetry and their delicate openwork, the elongated conical form of some of them echoes Perret's massive**, multifaceted columns, with which they co-exist in various different ways in the immense hypostyle hall of the Palais d'Iéna. Incidentally, Perret modelled the way his columns gradually taper towards the top on the trunk of a palm tree. An imposing sculpture made of wood and grey felt involves a similar principle. It considers the rhythmic and continuous flow of printing as an echo of a wave in the water or a sound wave. Artur Lescher's sculpture can be thought of as the transmitter or the fruit of a piece of writing. But it is not a usual writing, that aims at discourse and unambiguousness. On the contrary, it is never fixed, definitive or authoritarian; it is spatial, fluctuating and Heraclitean—as it is formulated, it dissolves away under the eyes of the beholder.

Artur Lescher's artistic language, although radically abstract, lends itself to semantic resonance and interpretation. In this respect, every one of his works is the bearer of a strange symbolic tension: for example when the artist points out the formal proximity of their slender forms to the upper parts of religious buildings or to... missile heads. **Initially trained in philosophy, Lescher refers us both to the strength of the aesthetic experience and to its fleeting quality.** He also reminds us of the imperatives of exchange and dialogue that lie within every construction, whether it be aesthetic or religious, social, economic or, in the primary sense of the word, environmental; in other words, calling for a full understanding of what surrounds us, whether near at hand or far away.

*Matthieu Poirier, curator*

## About Artur Lescher

Artur Lescher (b. 1962, São Paulo, Brazil) lives and works in São Paulo.

Lescher studied philosophy at PUC-São Paulo in 1983. His work showcases the tangible qualities of object and their interaction with architecture. His preference is for one-piece objects, suspended and subject to the force of gravity, creating a tension with the proportions of the space and object. Using different materials such as metal, stone, wood, brass and copper, he evokes familiar volumes and designs but removed from their usual function.

Lescher gained recognition after participating in the 19th Biennial of São Paulo, in 1987, in which he presented *Aerólitos* (Aerolites), a work consisting of two 11-meter-long balloons, one in the biennial pavilion and the other in an external area, which conversed with one another. In separating the window frames and windows of the building, with these balloons, Lescher revealed the allegedly neutral space of the building. Often drawing inspiration from Modernist architects, in 2002, he created *Indoor Landscape* for the 25th Biennial de São Paulo, comprising two regular-shaped modules set on the floor, one made of wood and the other made of tarpaulin and water, which create a space of attrition inside the building designed by Oscar Niemeyer.

In 2013, he participated of "Projeto Octógono" at the Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo with "Inabsência" (In absence): an enormous dome descending from the atrium ceiling, which dialogued with the initial project of Ramos de Azevedo, architect of the building constructed in 1905.

He participated in the 1987 and 2002 editions of the Biennial of São Paulo and in the 2005 Mercosul Biennial, in Porto Alegre, Brazil.

## About Matthieu Poirier

Art historian Matthieu Poirier holds a PhD in art history from Paris-Sorbonne University, where has worked as a lecturer. He was Professor of Art History in Schools of Fine Arts (Rouen and Angoulême) and Research Fellow at the German Center for Art History. As a specialist in Perceptual, Optical and Kinetic Art, he was recently the curator of, amongst other exhibitions, "Cruz-Diez. A Floating Being" (Palais d'Iéna, Paris), "Mack. Spectrum" (Perrotin, Paris), "Soto. A Retrospective" (Musée Soulages, Rodez), "Kazuko Miyamoto" (Circuit Centre d'Art, Lausanne), "Post-Op. Perceptual gone painterly" and "Soto. Chronochrome" (Perrotin, Paris and New York), "Spectres" (Roesler Hotel, Sao Paulo), "DYNAMO" (Galleries Nationales du Grand Palais). He was the Scientific advisor of "Julio Le Parc" (Palais de Tokyo, Paris), "Eye Attack" (Louisiana Museum, Humlebæk) and "Lumière et Mouvement" (Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris). He was a guest curator of Pro Helvetia and The Danish Arts Foundation and is a member of IAAC and IKT. He was in charge of the art history column of *Le Quotidien de l'Art*. His writings were published by numerous publishers and museums including JRP Ringer/Kunstmuseum Lucerne, Musée Nicéphore Niépce/Xavier Barral, Deutscher Kunstverlag, Adam Biro, Dilecta, Diaphanes, Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Pompidou-Metz and Musée de Valence. He is currently preparing a retrospective and a monograph on Hans Hartung (Perrotin/Phaidon, Jan. 2018).

## About the Conseil Economique Social et Environnemental

For the CESE and all the organizations that serve it, opening its doors to art permit to recall how culture must occupy a privileged place in our society. In previous editions of the FIAC, the British Antony Gormley, the Italian Francesco Vezzoli and the Franco-Venezuelan Carlos Cruz-Diez had exhibited their sculptures at the CESE. The third constitutional assembly is keen to promote these cultural and artistic projects which contribute to enrich the dialogue between citizens within organized civil society.

**IMAGES AVAILABLE FOR PRESS**

1 - PIVOS CHICOS 3 © Everton Ballardin, courtesy of the artist Artur Lescher and Nara Roesler Gallery



2 - SEGULOT © Everton Ballardin, courtesy of the artist Artur Lescher and Nara Roesler Gallery



3 – GRANDE MARCO © Everton Ballardin, courtesy of the artist Artur Lescher and Nara Roesler Gallery



4 – GRANDE MARCO © Everton Ballardin, courtesy of the artist Artur Lescher and Nara Roesler Gallery





5 – APOLINÁRIO © Everton



6 - COPPER SALT © Courtesy of the artist Artur Lescher and Nara Roesler Gallery





7 - 3d renderings for the Palais d'Iéna exhibition © Artur Lescher studio and Rodrigo Carvalho Pereira



8 - 3d renderings for the Palais d'Iéna exhibition © Artur Lescher studio and Rodrigo Carvalho Pereira



9 - 3d renderings for the Palais d'Iéna exhibition © Artur Lescher studio and Rodrigo Carvalho Pereira



10 - 3d renderings for the Palais d'Iéna exhibition © Artur Lescher studio and Rodrigo Carvalho Pereira

