

An abstract painting by Cícero Dias, featuring a complex composition of overlapping geometric shapes and vibrant colors. The palette includes shades of green, blue, red, yellow, and pink, set against a light, textured background. The forms are dynamic and layered, creating a sense of depth and movement. A prominent yellow circle is visible in the upper left, and a pink circle is in the center. The overall style is reminiscent of mid-20th-century abstract art.

# Cícero Dias

Art Basel Miami Beach 2017

## Art Basel Miami Beach 2017

Simões de Assis Galeria de Arte  
Sector Survey - booth S 01

### CÍCERO DIAS

The pioneer of abstract art in Brazil  
Paintings of 1940s and 1950s

opening  
thursday, 07.december 2017, 3 - 8 p.m

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## Border Crossing

Cícero Dias – who came to light at a historic exhibition in Rio de Janeiro in 1928 – was welcomed by the Brazilian Modernists who organized the 1922 Modern Art Week, among them painters Tarsila do Amaral, Ismael Nery, Lasar Segall and Di Cavalcanti, as well as by Brazilian poets and writers Mário de Andrade, Oswald de Andrade, Murilo Mendes and Manuel Bandeira. Dias joined the Anthropophagy Movement in Brazil.

In 1937 Dias left for Paris. He was led by a number of motives – among them the dictatorship period under Vargas, the search for new pathways for his art, and the encouragement on the part of Blaise Cendrars and Di Cavalcanti, who were living there.

“A year after his arrival in Paris, in 1938, Cícero Dias held an exhibition at Jeanne Castel Gallery. His painting was considered “sauvage”. André Salmon saw it as a riposte to surrealism. At the time, one exhibit was all a painter needed to be more than welcome in Paris.

Cendrars, Supervielle, Fargue, Péret and Lhote got acquainted with the newly arrived, and Picasso declared: “Dias is a great poet and a great painter.” To be an acquaintance of Picasso’s meant to have access to the most demanding world of art and poetry.

Paul Éluard wrote a poem on Dias’ painting and declared: “I met Cicero Dias, the Brazilian, at Pablo Picasso’s, the Spanish. It is Paris that keeps their lights, their reason for being: the light of Brazil, the light of Spain, the exuberance, the rigor.”

Then, World War II broke out. As in 1914, Brazil joined the Allies against Germany. Dias was made prisoner in 1942. He would be exchanged for Germans kept as prisoners in Brazil. He managed to reach the so-called free zone in occupied France.

In the Fall, Paul Éluard sent him the libretto ‘Poésie et Vérité’. That Goethian title may have misled censors: the work was freely published in Paris, but could not be sent to England. Dias had the mission to make it reach his friend Roland Penrose, in London. In Marseille, Dias hoped to be able to cross the border to reach Portugal, from where he would finally send it. That was how the poem *Liberté* was turned into a leaflet, with millions having been deployed by English aviators over occupied France. And so poetry covered grounds.

In Lisbon, Cícero Dias got to painting. He had just crossed the border. His art would cross another border. That is what has been called “border crossing”, which is to say, Dias left figurative style behind towards the abstraction he embraced in Portugal. Slowly, I do not believe he planned to cross that border. His painting demanded it: his traces demanded respect; his colors, their pure glow. Where does all that lead us? I believe he did not know himself. He was 37 then.

One day, in 1945, he received a book. Picasso had sent him a copy of his play *Le Plaisir Attrapé par la Queue* (*Desire Caught by the Tail*). The dedication said: ‘To Dias, whose presence in Paris is required.’ And, Cícero Dias returned to Paris.

At that point in time my generation got to know Cícero Dias. He came to us in a large myriad of artists, with whom he had collective exhibitions, in addition to poets and musicians from all over the world. The War destroyed men. Other men came to life. The young met the elder. Paris was again under a state of creation”.

**Pierre Descargues**

**Composition, 1947**  
80 x 100 cm, oil on canvas

**Exhibitions:**

Cícero Dias, Salon of Law School of Recife, preface by poet Paul Éluard, Brazil, 1948.

Temoignages pour L'Art Abstrait, Galerie La Hune, Paris, France, 1952.

Cícero Dias – A Poetic Journey, an itinerant retrospective exhibition at the Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil, in the cities of Brasília, São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 2017.

**Publications:**

Temoignages pour L'Art Abstrait, page 97, Leon Degan, Editions Art d'Aujourd'hui, Paris, France, 1952. In this catalog, reproduced on page 23.

Cícero Dias – A Poetic Journey, page 125, an itinerant retrospective exhibition at the Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil, in the cities of Brasília, São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 2017.





**Composition, 1940s**  
73 x 92 cm, oil on canvas

**Exhibitions:**

Cícero Dias, Salon of Law School of Recife, preface by poet Paul Éluard, Brazil, 1948.

Cícero Dias - Eight Decades of Painting, Museu Oscar Niemeyer, Curitiba, Brazil, 2006.

Color and Form, Brazilian Constructive Art, Simões de Assis Galeria de Arte, Curitiba, Brazil, 2010.

Cícero Dias – A Poetic Journey, an itinerant retrospective exhibition at the Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil, in the cities of Brasília, São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 2017.

**Publications:**

Cícero Dias - Eight Decades of Painting, pages 152 and 153, Museu Oscar Niemeyer/Simões de Assis, Curitiba, Brazil, 2006.

Color and Form, Brazilian Constructive Art, Simões de Assis Galeria de Arte, page 41, Curitiba, Brazil, 2010.

Cícero Dias – A Poetic Journey, page 126, an itinerant retrospective exhibition at the Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil, in the cities of Brasília, São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 2017.





Cícero Dias' atelier, 37, Villa D'Alesia, Montparnasse, with his Vegetal series, painted in Lisbon, Paris, 1945.

## Cícero Dias

The painter from Pernambuco did not jump to the abstractionism of his current phase. There is an intermediate period in which the subject loses importance until it disappears completely. Of the regional themes, only what was really of the plastic domain remained: some vegetal and architectural forms taken from the landscape of Pernambuco, especially Recife and some local colors, blue and yellow, that resist any light.

Some symbolic colors of the early days, an abuse of mauves and purples, some conventional roses, all thrown at the canvas, of a monotonous matter, without any interest, were set aside. His palette has been enriched by the most vivid colors that succeed each other on the canvas or through white or gray, or sometimes directly. He does not fear even the most symmetrically opposed complementary chords, such as green and red. He has showed me examples of this during our journeys on the roads that leave Recife.

They have remained in his visual memory forever. Hence the fidelity with which he has kept with him abroad the atmosphere of some Brazilian northeastern landscapes, the vigorous light, the singing colors among shapes that increasingly approach Kandinsky's triangles, circles and squares, elements of the abstractionism master and theorist.

The houses of Recife, the row of rectangular one-storey houses, here and there under tall and waving coconut trees, were essentialized on the current canvases to mere colored squares. The coconut trees, the banana trees, the cane fields, the leaves, the cashews, the coconuts, everything was reduced to the essential, to formal signs independent of any natural, direct suggestion.

Cícero left the Pernambuco society. He is no longer a melancholic country boy. Nothing more is related to the countryside in his art today. What he still has of Pernambuco is the earth and the air. He sees the earth from above, as if he was on top of a coconut tree. The white tropical light that remained on his Paris canvas comes from this angle of vision.

One can disagree or not with his painting, but its importance is evident for our pictorial evolution. He has received the universal lesson of Kandinsky and Picasso when he had already freed himself from childhood reminiscences, regional nostalgia and any poetic or picturesque sentimentality of early times. Cícero is a Brazilian artist, but he no longer knows what he is when he paints landscapes. Today his Pernambuco are colors, a luminous atmosphere, shapes that move into space.

They are the materials of his plastic language. To its communicative power, a sensibility defined by reflection and calculation is the reason, paradoxical in a contradictory and instinctive man such as Cícero Dias, who emigrated from Pernambuco forever, but with what is eternal: air, light, and colors.

## Mário Pedrosa - 1948



**Composition IV, 1943**  
130 x 97 cm, oil on canvas

**Exhibitions:**

Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo, Brazil, 1952.

Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 1952.

Cícero Dias - Eight Decades of Painting, Museu Oscar Niemeyer, Curitiba, Brazil, 2006.

**Publication:**

Cícero Dias - Eight Decades of Painting, page 162, Museu Oscar Niemeyer, Curitiba, Brazil, 2006.



**Untitled, 1940s**  
100 x 81 cm, oil on canvas

**Exhibitions:**  
Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo, Brazil, 1952.  
Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 1952.





In the confines of Figuration and Abstraction, then in pure Abstraction, Cícero Dias brings a spontaneous freshness of the most original, whether it be on a mural or an easel. The games of the composition and its chords of colors are inimitable. Dias is a rare example of incapable painters, whatever they do, of imitating one another. His obligation to be personal is involuntary, congenital. Being informed of his Brazilian origins, we should not imagine that he creates a "tropical painting". The plastic logic of his works is the pictorial projection very faithful to the common logic, an obstinate rigor under the appearance of fantasy.

**Léon Degand**

**Art d'Aujourd'hui – Paris, December 1951.**

**Untitled, 1951**

**100 x 81 cm, oil on canvas**



**Cícero Dias**  
**Universal and International Exhibition**  
**Brussels, Belgium, 1958**

Even though belonging to the Paris School for a long time, where he has regularly testified in favor of abstract art, the painter Cícero Dias is also one of the pioneers of modern art in Brazil, his native country, which has once again demonstrated the recognition public and national notoriety presenting an exhibition of his works in the Brazilian pavilion of the Brussels' World's Fair -1958.

Cícero Dias' recent paintings have confirmed for our eyes what we have known since his recognition in the great exhibitions in 1952 at the Museum of Modern Art of São Paulo and the Museum of Modern Art of Rio de Janeiro. We should see him as one of the most important abstract painters of South America.

We also recognize that he remains, among those who practice the new plastic language, the one that may present one of the most rigorous logic of this language.

On the other hand, Cícero Dias is able to avoid that the dynamism of his orientation of the surface is constrained by the strict determination of the geometric and chromatic economy imposed by his mural conception of painting.

He seems to refuse to his compositions the complacency of the slightest curved inflection, which allows in its animation only a slight inclination in the oblique of essential rectitude, and some measured compensations of the values in the chromatic play of the spatial divisions.

However, his painting still gets plastic concentration and a greater style.

Thus, the statements made by Mário Pedrosa about him in 1952 are now confirmed: Cícero Dias has developed even more "his new visual proposal" and still gives to modern Brazilian painting and at the same time to international art "the greatest works by design and by structural rigor".

**R. V. Gindertael**  
**Art d'Aujourd' hui - Paris, December 1958**

**Untitled, 1950s**  
**73 x 60 cm, oil on canvas**





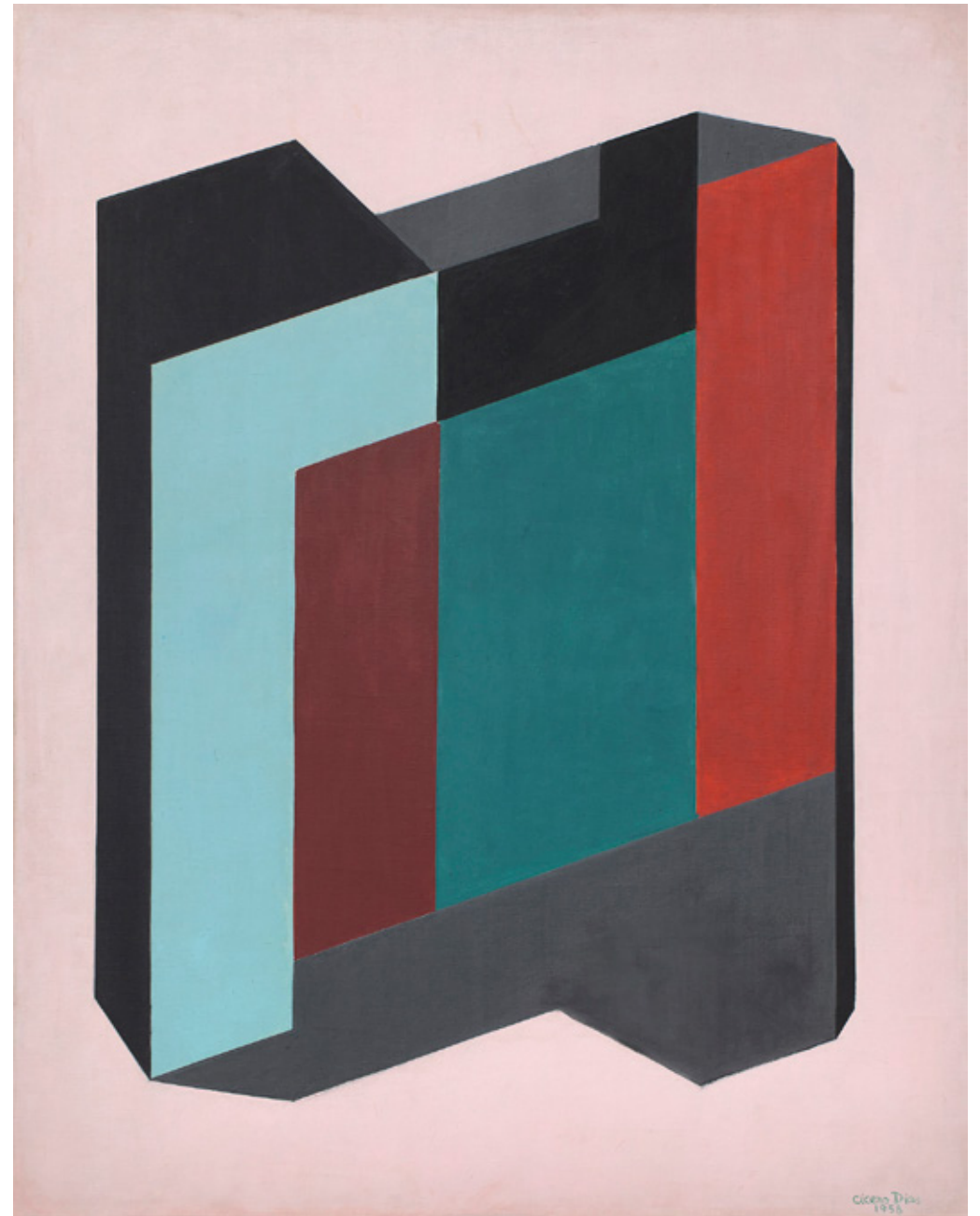
**Immobile, 1958**  
92 x 73 cm, oil on canvas

**Exhibitions:**

Brazilian Pavilion, Brussels Universal and International Exhibition, Belgium, 1958.  
Cícero Dias - Retrospective Exhibition, Casa França-Brasil, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 1997.  
Color and Form, Brazilian Constructive Art, Simões de Assis Galeria de Arte, Curitiba, Brazil, 2012.  
Cícero Dias – A Poetic Journey, an itinerant retrospective exhibition at the Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil, in the cities of Brasília, São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 2017.

**Publications:**

Cícero Dias, page 153, Edition Jean Boghici/Icatu, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 1997.  
Color and Form, Brazilian Constructive Art, page 56, Simões de Assis Galeria de Arte, Curitiba, Brazil, 2012.  
Cícero Dias – A Poetic Journey, page 147, an itinerant retrospective exhibition at the Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil, in the cities of Brasília, São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 2017.



**Espace, 1953**  
**100 x 81 cm, oil on canvas**

**Exhibitions:**

Groupe Espace, Arp, Cícero Dias, Delaunay, Leger, Magnelli, Vasarely, Musée de Biot, France, 1954.

Color and Form, Brazilian Constructive Art, Simões de Assis Galeria de Arte, Curitiba, Brazil, 2010.

Cícero Dias – A Poetic Journey, an itinerant retrospective exhibition at the Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil, in the cities of Brasília, São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 2017.

**Publications:**

Color and Form, Brazilian Constructive Art, Simões de Assis Galeria de Arte, page 43, Curitiba, Brazil, 2010.

Cícero Dias – A Poetic Journey, page 144, an itinerant retrospective exhibition, at the Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil, in the cities of Brasília, São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 2017.





**Espace, 1950s**  
100 x 81 cm, oil on canvas

**Exhibitions:**

Color and Form, Brazilian Constructive Art, Simões de Assis Galeria de Arte, Curitiba, Brazil, 2010.

Cícero Dias – A Poetic Journey, an itinerant retrospective exhibition at the Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil, in the cities of Brasília, São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 2017.

**Publications:**

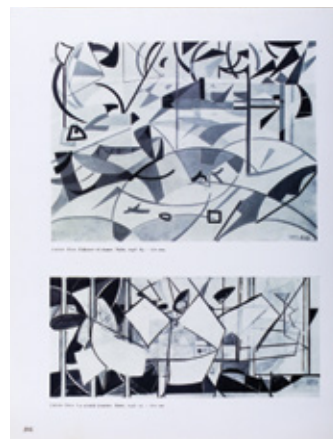
Color and Form, Brazilian Constructive Art, Simões de Assis Galeria de Arte, page 42, Curitiba, Brazil, 2010.

Cícero Dias – A Poetic Journey, page 145, an itinerant retrospective exhibition at the Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil, in the cities of Brasília, São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 2017.









Cahiers d'Art, article dedicated to Cícero Dias, A Painter of the Vegetal Form, by Charles Estienne, Paris, 1949.

## A Painter of the Vegetal Form

The pure form exists, of course, the perfect form, and we gladly conceive it like this: the form disconnected of everything, first of all, of life. If we realize today that Mondrian is so heroic that he refuses to remember the world, and even to imagine it, we will also realize that this asceticism was indispensable and that, after that, painting once again found the essential of what it had voluntarily lost, or rather, sacrificed. Mondrian's adventure had been classified as absurd. People used to say that abstract art - at least some form of abstract art - was incapable of imagining. However, at the end, or rather, with the current unfolding of the abstract adventure, we have realized that this adventure, if it leads anywhere, is at the heart of this world whose appearance has been stripped off like a dead skin. This reversal of the situation will be called paradoxical. Let us think that paradox exists only related to the rational, and that a vision, a poetic judgment of things gives us a fairer notion of them. We should then ask René Char for the decisive word; "Man," he writes, "is capable of doing what he cannot imagine. His head runs through the furrows of the galaxy of the absurd."

In this perspective, there is the painting abstract and alive of Cícero Dias. Abstract in measure - and this word has never been better -, since it is based on the distribution and movement of forms on a given surface. It is alive by the strange, organic and natural ability of its forms, however geometrical, to liberate, concentrated on a kind of perfect crystallization, the essence of plant life. I should even write: the essence of vegetal form, since it would finally be life perceived without a shape, and would this form be sensible if it were more an abstract notion than a concrete essence? In fact, the plastic language of Cícero Dias is made of geometry. It is a precise game, lyrical, straight, curved, with ellipses, triangles, rectangles and trapezes...

These relations of lines and surfaces do not take their virtue from reason but from the spirit and the senses, and the abstract, in this case, only has the function of being the very heart of the concrete. Doing so, Dias simply lives and carries out this perpetual dialectic of concrete and abstract which is the difficulty, the anguish, but also the great chance of the so-called abstract art. His painting simply finds the living geometry that gives the number of gold and the series of Fibonacci as a secret reason and a vital measure to the perfume of a rose, the whirlwind of a nebula, the development of plant cells...

It does not matter then if such a picture is called "Afinidade dos Sólidos" ["Affinity of Solids"] and another "Palmeiras e Dunas" ["Palm Trees and Dunes"]. The purpose is always the same: beyond any exoticism, beyond the immediate traps of imagination, finding the essence of Brazilian tropical life, crystallizing the vegetal delirium that is the law and the form of this life. It does not matter too, from a strictly orthodox point of view, that this green, which he uses Days with predilection, is the vegetal color par excellence. For a painter today, indeed, if it is important to go beyond the picturesque of appearances, it is no less important not to refuse meetings which for me seem neither dishonorable, especially nor accidental. Refusing the Object, as both Kandinsky and, in the extreme, Mondrian did, it is not, as we begin to perceive, to refuse Life or Nature; it is refusing the accidental to find the essence. The originality of Cícero Dias is the search for this essence, for a certain essence: the vegetal form.

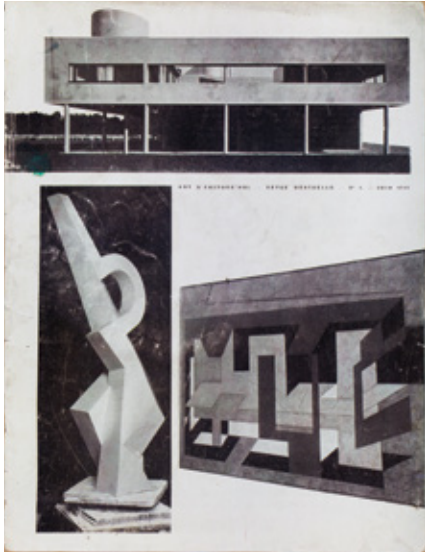
**Charles Estienne**  
**Cahiers d'Art - Paris, 1949**











The cover of the journal Art d'Aujourd'hui first issue, Paris, June 1949.

Sur un mur dont le revêtement s'éveille il est inutile de peindre : il s'illustre tout seul. Le pittoresque c'est cela même : ce qui s'effrite, ce qui change. Un cadavre en putréfaction est peut-être la chose la plus pittoresque du monde. N'y touchez pas, laissez-le faire. Il faut qu'il soit à l'aise, loin de l'homme rationnel, pour accomplir tous les stades de son cycle d'évolution dans la danse étonnante des éléments. Certains artistes imitent fort ingénieusement ce pittoresque de la désagrégation. Le cerceau est bon même à cela : son plus grand raffinement est de simuler les instincts déchainés (et cela ne cause rien).

Mais voici un mur fixe, pro-  
cant de sa rigide beauté. C'est cri-  
me d'y toucher, crime de n'y pas  
toucher. L'écrire ? Le traverser acro-  
matiquement ? Le rendre mol ?  
Le premier pas coûtera tout le  
reste.  
Lui apprendre l'amour, voilà ce  
qu'il faut faire.  
Le courir.  
Le rendre mûr.  
Le connaître dans toutes ses di-  
mensions et qualités. Le marier à sa  
destination.  
Le faire autrement beau.  
Tout combié de couleurs.  
Qu'il en rougisse à l'aise.

Michel Seuphor.

# LE MUR

De mur de l'ÉCOLE

CICERO DIAS : Peinture murale à Pernambuco, Brésil

LE CORBUSIER : Peinture murale au Pyléon Sator de la Cité Universitaire, Paris

Photo Mappin

LE CORBUSIER

Dans votre œuvre, Monsieur, per-  
manence de voir, avant tout, une  
véritable unité, appliquée, non pas  
comme au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, au seul bâti-  
ment, mais à l'ensemble qui est la ville.  
C'est ce que vous vous proposez aux  
architectes du siècle prochain et  
répondez les grandes pensées de  
l'architecture au moment où elle  
se centre autour d'un seul et non  
un simple monument, mais rattaché  
avec les bâtiments utilitaires de la  
vie quotidienne.

Mais vous va, entre 1900 et la  
guerre de 1914, triompher au sein  
partout l'individualisme européen.  
Vous verrez va, au gré de son gé-  
nie et de la technique de chacun, le  
châlet suisse s'élever à côté de la  
ville industrielle; le château aux  
toits gothiques s'élève avec le pa-  
lais de l'Élysée; et les maisons les  
plus simples s'élèvent sans à se  
distinguer, un détail commun de  
style ne suffisant pas à contrôler  
l'unité. Vous avez compris, Mon-  
sieur, qu'une ville était un être  
vivant, dont les cellules dépendaient  
également les uns des autres.  
D'ailleurs qu'une ville devait être  
soumise à un plan spirituel. Voilà,  
me semble-t-il, le legs que vous  
avez livré de la tradition. Qu'est  
une civilisation qui régnerait dans  
l'architecture et l'urbanisme ? Le  
plan des maisons, la distribution  
des appartements, l'implantation des  
voies et jusqu'à la forme géo-  
métrique de la construction, vous avez  
vu le courage de penser que les  
ressorts de son langage per-  
manent de son centre. Vous avez  
été, avec nous, à chercher une  
situation à la fois nouvelle et à  
mesure, que le XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle n'a  
eu ni la possibilité ni la  
volonté de réaliser.

De ce que nous ne sommes pas  
la hardiesse de vos conceptions, il  
n'est que de voir les horizons des  
séquences dans vos divers travaux.  
Mais surtout c'est que de voir  
vous qui nous rendez, il me paraît  
de réaliser, dans cet ouvrage de  
carrière intérieure, un être  
nouveau, la volonté d'être  
et l'unité. Vous avez compris, en  
effet, que la peinture ne pouvait  
être séparée de l'architecture et que  
si leurs moyens étaient différents,  
ils, mêmes principes, de dire, la  
même chose, devant les hommes.  
Aussi croyez-vous que nous sommes  
ceux ?

L'architecture, architecte, peintre  
et sculpteur, ont un langage  
d'ensemble, ce langage d'une et  
éternellement, le langage de nos  
êtres humains. Mais depuis  
quelques années, les hommes  
ont été, non à l'architecture, mais  
les inférieurs réfléchis ou de  
même principe.

Alors, Monsieur, je vous prie de  
réviser, Monsieur de nous à Paris à  
l'occasion de l'inauguration de la  
nouvelle école de La Colombe

French journal Art d'Aujourd'hui, dedicates its first issue to the mural painting. Beside, reproduction of the article by Michel Seuphor; illustrated with murals by Kandinsky, Cícero Dias and Le Corbusier. Paris, June 1949.



**Cícero Dias**  
(1907, Pernambuco, Brazil – 2003, Paris)

Cícero Dias was born in 1907 at Jundiá Sugar Cane Mill, Escada, Pernambuco State, Brazil. He moved to Rio de Janeiro while still very young. In 1925 he started his Architecture course at the University, where he was a contemporary to architects Lúcio Costa and Oscar Niemeyer.

In 1928 he held his first exhibition in Rio de Janeiro, visited by a legion of prestigious painters and intellectuals. An icon of Brazilian Modern Art was born. Dias would stand out with Tarsila do Amaral, Ismael Nery, Lasar Segall and Di Cavalcanti, all members of the 1922 Modern Art Week.

In 1931 his panel *Eu Vi o Mundo... Ele Começava no Recife* (I saw the World... It Started in Recife) was exhibited at the Fine Arts National Exhibition Salon in Rio de Janeiro, raising high scandal and provoking many manifestations due to its surreal, sarcastic and erotic content.



Cícero Dias (wearing a beret) with the Brazilian painters Noêmia Mourão and Di Cavalcanti in front of Notre Dame Cathedral in his arrival in Paris, 1937.

In 1937, he moved to Paris and approached the European avant-garde, among them Picasso, Calder, Miró, Léger and the poet Paul Éluard, who wrote about him: "I met Cicero Dias, the Brazilian, at Pablo Picasso's, the Spanish. It is Paris that keeps their lights, their reason for being: the light of Brazil, the light of Spain, the exuberance, the rigor."

In 1938 he had his first exhibition at the French Capital, at Galerie Jeanne Castel. In 1939 he participated in the Latin American Exhibition, at the Riverside Museum, New York, USA.

In Paris, Cícero Dias participated in the resistance against Nazi-Fascism. In 1942 he was made prisoner by the Germans and sent to Baden-Baden. He was released six months later and went back to France as a clandestine, where he was given the poem "Liberté" by Paul Éluard. The poem was taken to London, had millions of copies printed and was spread all over French territory by Royal Air Force airplanes.



Cícero Dias receives Paul Éluard's libretto with the poem "Liberté", with the mission to take it to Roland Penrose in London.

During the war – 1942 through 1945 – Dias settled in Lisbon, Portugal. In that time period his work underwent radical change: he simplified his drawing and used strong brushstrokes, intense shades and colors, which led him to bid farewell to figuration and led him towards abstraction. Dias' abstractionism is vibrant, ardent, luminous, bringing him close to Kandinsky.

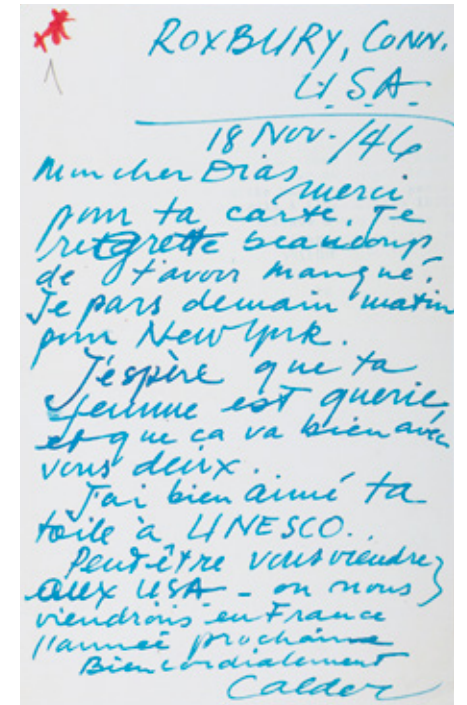
In 1944 he participated in the exhibition Modern Brazilian Painting at the Royal Academy of Arts, London.

In 1945, Dias was summoned by Picasso and went back to Paris to stay. Picasso had sent him a book with the dedication: To Dias, whose presence in Paris is required.



"For Dias, whose presence in Paris is necessary." - dedication of Picasso on his play "Pleasure caught by its tail" sent to Cícero Dias in Lisbon, 1945.

After the war Dias joined L'École de Paris and the Groupe Espace. He also joined the group of the newly inaugurated Galerie Denise René, where many of his exhibitions were held. "In Brazil, the constructivist movement did not start before late 1940. Its true and first pioneer was Cícero Dias, who, in 1946, already showed rigorously geometrical work in the French capital city". Antonio Bento, Brazilian critic, from the book *Arte Construtiva no Brasil*, by Aracy Amaral.



Letter from Calder sent to Cícero Dias in 1946.

In 1948 Cícero created the first abstract art murals in Latin America for the Secretary of Finance building in Recife, Pernambuco State, Brazil.



Participates in the exhibit Tendances de L'Art Abstrait at Denise René Galerie, Paris, 1948.

In 1949 he participated in the inauguration of the São Paulo Modern Art Museum with Arp, Calder, Delaunay, Kandinsky, Léger, Magnelli, Miró, Picabia, Poliakoff, Soulages and Vasarely. In Paris, the book "L'Art Abstrait, ses origines, ses premiers maîtres", by Michel Seuphor, was published and included Cícero Dias. He participated in the exhibition "Les grands courants de la peinture contemporaine", at the Musée de Lyon, France.



Willi Baumeister and Cícero Dias at the International Art Congress of the Altamira School in Santillana del Mar, Santander, Spain, 1950.

In 1950 he participated in the 25th Venice International Biennial and with Willi Baumeister and Miró at the International Art Congress of the Altamira School in Santillana del Mar, Santander, Spain.

In 1951 Dias participated in the São Paulo 1st International Biennial and in the May Salon at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris.



Cícero Dias visits Max Bill's atelier, Zurich, 1950.

In 1952 he had individual exhibitions at the Modern Art Museums in São Paulo and in Rio de Janeiro. "Cícero Dias has just had his exhibition in São Paulo. I was thrilled. I see him as the greatest painter of all times. Yes, I will say that again and again. Cícero Dias reached the synthesis of my anthropophagy philosophy" ... Oswald de Andrade, *Jornal das Letras*, Rio de Janeiro, December, 1952. He participated in the 26th Venice International Biennial.

The book "Temoignages pour L'Art Abstrait" was published, in Paris, by *Art D'Aujourd'hui*, and critic Leon Degan dedicated a chapter to Cícero Dias, along with relevant international abstract artists.

In 1953 Cícero Dias borrowed Picasso's panel *Guernica* to be displayed at the 2nd São Paulo International Biennial.

In 1954, exhibition by Groupe Espace in Biot, France. With artists from L'École de Paris, Dias held an exhibition at the São Paulo Modern Art Museum and at the Buenos Aires Art Museum.



Cícero Dias and his daughter Sylvia with Picasso in Vallauris, France, 1951.

In 1955 he participated in the International Contemporary Painting Exhibition, Modern Art Museum, Pittsburgh, USA

In 1958, a Special Hall was dedicated to Cícero Dias at the Universal and International Exhibition, Brazilian Pavilion, Brussels.



Reproduction of the article by R. V. Gindertael in the *Art d'Aujourd'hui*; about Cícero Dias participation at the Brazilian Pavilion at Universal and International Exhibition, Brussels.

In 1959 Dias held his exhibition at the May Salon, at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, as well as at the Brasilianischer Künstles, Haus der Kunst, Munich, Germany.

In 1960, at the Brazilian Arts Exhibition, Cícero Dias had a Special Hall at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris.

Along his career, Cícero Dias' work was exhibited at biennials and at Brazilian and international museums. Major Brazilian museums held extensive retrospective exhibitions.

Dies in Paris on January 28th 2003, and is buried in the cemetery of Montparnasse. In 2017, Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil held an extensive retrospective exhibition that travelled to Brasília, São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro.

### Cícero Dias' main collections

- Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, USA.
- Fundación Cisneros – Colección Patricia Phelps de Cisneros, New York, USA.
- Musée André Malraux, Le Havre, France.
- Claude Picasso Collection, Paris, France.
- Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid, Spain.
- Museo de Arte Latinoamericano de Buenos Aires, Argentina.
- Museu Nacional de Belas Artes, Rio de Janeiro.
- Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro.
- Museu do Ingá, Niteroi, Rio de Janeiro.
- Roberto Marinho Foundation, Rio de Janeiro.
- Gilberto Chateaubriand Collection, Rio de Janeiro.
- Luís Antonio Almeida Braga Collection, Rio de Janeiro.
- Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo.
- Museu de Arte Contemporânea, São Paulo.
- Museu de Arte Brasileira, FAAP, São Paulo.
- Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo, São Paulo.
- Itaú Cultural Collection, São Paulo.
- Brigadeiro Subway Station Mural, São Paulo.
- Museu Oscar Niemeyer, Curitiba.
- Museu de Arte Moderna da Bahia, Salvador.
- Museu do Estado do Pernambuco, Recife.
- Pernambuco State Secretary of Finance Murals, Recife.
- Pernambuco Modern Art Museum, Recife.





## The Pioneer of Abstract Art in Brazil

Cícero Dias, icon of Brazilian modernism, revealed in 1928 in his first exhibition in Rio de Janeiro, stood out alongside Tarsila do Amaral and Di Cavalcanti, members of the 1922 Modern Art Week.

In 1937, he moved to Paris and got involved with Picasso, Calder, Léger, Miró and the poet Paul Éluard, who wrote about him: "I met Cicero Dias, the Brazilian, at Pablo Picasso's, the Spanish. It is Paris that keeps their lights, their reason for being: the light of Brazil, the light of Spain, the exuberance, the rigor."

Due the war, he settled in Lisbon, and his work goes for a radical change. He simplifies the drawing, uses strong strokes and intense colors that lead him to give a farewell to figuration on the way to abstraction. His works are warm and luminous, close to Kandinsky.

In 1945, after the war Dias returned to Paris and joined L'École de Paris and the Groupe Espace. He also joined the group of the newly inaugurated Galerie Denise René, in 1947, where many of his exhibitions were held.

"In Brazil, the constructivist movement began only at the end of the 1940s. Its true pioneer was Cícero Dias, who in 1946, in the French capital, began painting rigorously geometric canvases", said the critic Antonio Bento.

In 1948, he painted, in Brazil, the first abstract art murals in Latin America. From the 1950s onwards, he had an intense international participation, like Venice and São Paulo biennials and museums exhibitions in Paris, Washington, New York, São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and Buenos Aires.

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