

# **I Can See It All Even With My Eyes Closed—A Virtual Seminar on the Life and Art of Madalena Santos Reinbolt**

**Sunday April 13**

**11:00 AM – 4:30 PM ET**

**Online**

**Interpretation in English and Portuguese available**

**11:00 AM – 11:30 AM ET**

**Madalena Santos Reinbolt at the American Folk Art Museum in New York**

Introduction by **Valérie Rousseau**, PhD Curatorial Chair and Senior Curator of 20th-Century & Contemporary Art, AFAM and **Mathilde Walker-Billaud**, Curator of Programs and Engagement

**11:30 AM – 1:30 PM ET**

**Madalena Santos Reinbolt: A Public Secret No More?**

Panel presentation and conversation featuring:

- **Amanda Carneiro & André Mesquita**, Curators, MASP, and co-curators of *Madalena Santos Reinbolt: A Head Full of Planets* presented at MASP, from November 25, 2022 to February 26, 2023,
- **Amanda Reis Tavares Pereira**, art scholar
- **Mariana Arantes**, art scholar

Introduced and moderated by **Dylan Blau Edelstein**, PhD Candidate, Princeton University's Spanish and Portuguese Department, and Curatorial Assistant of AFAM's *Madalena Santos Reinbolt: A Head Full of Planets*

In a 2022 essay on Santos Reinbolt, curator André Mesquita described the artist's career as a public secret—a legacy known only to a handful of researchers, curators, and

collectors. In this panel, speakers will present ongoing findings on Santos Reinbolt's life, work and process. By sharing new sources of information while acknowledging existing gaps in knowledge, this discussion offers an opportunity to reflect on how to recognize, reposition, and disseminate the work of an artist who operated outside traditional art circuits and academia.

### **Panelist Abstracts:**

#### **Amanda Carneiro and André Mesquita**

##### *Madalena Santos Reinbolt: A Head Full of Planets*

The exhibition *Madalena Santos Reinbolt: A Head Full of Planets* was presented at MASP in 2022 as part of the museum's biennial program *Brazilian Histories*, which critically reflected on the bicentennial of Brazil's independence. The show brought together 44 works produced between the 1950s and 1970s, including paintings and wool tapestries—known as *quadros de lã*—highlighting the complexity and richness of Madalena Santos Reinbolt's artistic output. By emphasizing her pioneering role in Brazilian art and challenging the hierarchies between so-called popular and erudite art, the exhibition centered on Reinbolt's work itself, rather than revisiting the labor conditions to which she was subjected. In doing so, it questioned the right to memory and the prevailing narratives of inclusion, and underscored the need to critically reassess the discourses surrounding such frameworks—an approach that will be the focus of these two presentations.

#### **Mariana Arantes**

##### *Ancestral worldviews in the trajectory of Madalena Santos Reinbolt*

This talk analyzes visual works by artist Madalena Santos Reinbolt through a multidisciplinary methodological framework, anchored in theories related to decolonial studies and the intersectionality of gender, race, and class. It concludes that it is necessary to valorize and make visible visual representations of ancestral worldviews that contribute to breaking down Eurocentric paradigms, which perpetuate unequal power relations between different social groups, especially women from traditional communities.

#### **Amanda Reis Tavares Pereira**

##### *Untitled: Madalena Santos Reinbolt*

Reinbolt's work is marked by absences in relation to her biographical data, her work and creative process. By researching her many “untitled” works, we propose a closer look at her career, her relationship with so-called “popular art” in Brazil, and how the artist weaves her own language into her embroidery.

**1:30 PM - 2:00 PM ET**

**BREAK**

**2:00 PM – 3:15 PM ET**

**Embellishing the Threads: Madalena Santos Reinbolt and Afro-Diasporic Textile Traditions**

Conversation with

**Kesiena Onosigho**, artist

**Julia Bryan-Wilson**, Professor of LGBTQ+ Art at Columbia and Curator-at-Large at MASP

Textile artist and natural dyer Kesiena Onosigho joins curator and art historian Julia Bryan-Wilson for a conversation on the intersections of art-making, textile traditions, and the African Diaspora. Drawing upon Bryan-Wilson's seminal essay on Santos Reinbolt's embroideries and paintings, and how these works engage with larger modernist narratives of embellishment, this program explores how craft practices—and the use of colors, threads, and patterns—reshape art histories, their centers and boundaries.

**3:15 PM – 4:30 PM ET**

***Madalena Santos Reinbolt: Art As a Form of Saturation and Anachronistic Time***

Closing remarks by

**Lilia Moritz Schwarcz**, Full Professor in Anthropology at the University of São Paulo and Visiting Professor at Princeton University

The main goal of this presentation is to discuss temporality in Madalena Santos Reinbolt's art. Despite her vast and rich body of work, Santos Reinbolt was never included in the artistic canon of her time. She faced multiple structural barriers: she was Brazilian, Black, poor, and worked with embroidery—long considered to be devoid of artistic value. But Madalena's work is full of complexities, including another framework for understanding the past. Her work is not simple testimony, but rather it mixes memory with history. Here, we see a singular way of infusing the past with the sensory and the

affective—of reclaiming memory as a means of writing or drawing history. After all, the past is always as contentious as it is projective. And memory is that category of historical understanding that incorporates both individual and collective subjectivity as a means of measurement. Madalena's time is the “present of the past,” transforming what was before into what is now.

## SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

**Mariana Arantes** is a historian and professor with a Ph.D. in History from São Paulo State University. She was a researcher at the São Paulo Art Museum (MASP) and has been working in the areas of education and research for over fifteen years, with a focus on teaching, producing didactic materials, conducting research, and disseminating scientific knowledge. She has published books and scientific articles. In 2016, Arantes worked as a visiting research scholar at Temple University in Philadelphia, United States. She is also the founder of the *Mundo em conta - Accessibility and Inclusion* project, which was awarded the PROAC 2021 grant.

**Dylan Blau Edelstein** is a PhD Candidate at Princeton University in Spanish and Portuguese. His research broadly investigates marginalized centers of modernist production and the intersections of cultural, artistic, and psychiatric practices in 20th-century Brazil. His writings have appeared in academic journals in both Brazil and the United States, and he has presented his work at venues such as Weill Cornell Medicine's Richardson Seminar on the History of Psychiatry, Princeton's BrazilLAB, and UFRJ's Núcleo de Pensamento Social. Blau Edelstein teaches courses on language and culture at Princeton University and Rutgers University, and is currently a Curatorial Fellow at the American Folk Art Museum in New York, where he is Curatorial Assistant on the exhibition *Madalena Santos Reinbolt: A Head Full of Planets*.

**Julia Bryan-Wilson** (PhD, UC Berkeley, 2004) is Professor of Contemporary Art and LGBTQ+ Studies and core faculty in Columbia's Institute for the Study of Sexuality and Gender. Her research interests include feminist and queer theory, theories of artistic labor, performance and dance, production/fabrication, craft histories, photography, video, visual culture of the nuclear age, and collaborative practices. She is the author of four books: *Art Workers: Radical Practice in the Vietnam War Era* (University of California, 2009, named a best book of the year by the *New York Times* and *Artforum*); *Art in the Making: Artists and Their Materials from the Studio to Crowdsourcing* (with Glenn Adamson, Thames & Hudson, 2016); *Fray: Art and Textile Politics* (University of Chicago, 2017, a *New York Times* best art book of the year and winner of the Frank Jewett Mather Award, the Robert Motherwell Book Award, and the Association for the Study of the Arts of the Present Book Prize); and *Louise Nevelson's Sculpture: Drag, Color, Join, Face* (Yale, 2023). She is the editor of *OCTOBER Files: Robert Morris* (MIT Press, 2013), and co-editor of three journal special issues ("Amateurism," *Third*

*Text*, 2020; “Visual Activism,” *Journal of Visual Culture*, 2016; and “Time Zones: Durational Art in its Contexts,” *Representations*, 2016).

Bryan-Wilson is Curator-at-Large at the Museu de Arte de São Paulo (MASP), where she co-organized the major group exhibitions *Women’s Histories*, *Histories of Dance*, and *Queer Histories*. Her show *Louise Nevelson: Persistence*, was an official Collateral Event of the Venice Biennale in 2022; and with Andrea Andersson, she curated *Cecilia Vicuña: About to Happen*, which opened at the Contemporary Arts Center New Orleans in 2017 and traveled to the Berkeley Art Museum, the Henry Art Gallery, the ICA Philadelphia, and MOCA North Miami. In 2024 she served as the President of the International Jury of the 60<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale.

A widely published critic, Bryan-Wilson’s texts have been published in *Afterall*, *Art Bulletin*, *Art Journal*, *Artforum*, *Bookforum*, *differences*, *4Columns* *Grey Room*, *The London Review of Books*, *October*, *the Journal of Modern Craft*, *Oxford Art Journal*, *TDR: The Drama Review*, and many other venues. Her article “Invisible Products” received the 2013 *Art Journal* Award.

She was a 2019 Guggenheim Fellow, and her research has been supported by grants and fellowships from the Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts at the National Gallery; the Center for Craft, Creativity, and Design; the Clark Art Institute; the Georgia O’Keeffe Museum Research Center; the Getty Research Institute; the Henry Moore Institute; the International Center for Writing and Translation; the Mellon Foundation; the National Endowment for the Humanities; the Smithsonian Archives of American Art; the Terra Foundation; and the Townsend Center for the Humanities, among others. She was an inaugural recipient of the Creative Capital/Andy Warhol Foundation Arts Writers Grant, and has won several awards for her teaching and mentoring. She was the Terra Foundation Visiting Professor of American Art at the Courtauld Institute of Art in Spring 2014; in 2018-19 she was the Robert Sterling Clark Visiting Professor at Williams College; and in 2023-24 she was a Phi Beta Kappa Visiting Scholar.

**Amanda Carneiro** is a curator at the Museu de Arte de São Paulo and artistic organizer of the 60th La Biennale di Venezia, 2024. She has co-organized the exhibitions and catalogs of *Serigrafistas Queer*, *Abdias Nascimento*, *Leonor Antunes*, and *Sonia Gomes* at MASP, among others. Previously, she worked at Museu Afro Brasil, a museum dedicated to the history and art of the African diaspora, and as a researcher for *Art and Decolonization*, a long-term project and critical forum for cultural theorists, curators, and

artists to raise questions and formulate proposals for the reinterpretation of exhibitions and museum collections in non-canonical ways.

**André Mesquita** is a curator and head of mediation and public programs at the São Paulo Museum of Art Assis Chateaubriand (MASP). He holds a PhD in Social History from the University of São Paulo (2014). Since 2009, he has been a member of the Red Conceptualismos del Sur. His research focuses on the relationships between art, politics, and activism, as well as themes such as the theory of secrecy, state violence, social movements, counter-cartography, music, art and decolonization. At MASP, he curated and co-curated the exhibitions and catalogs of Trisha Brown, Erika Verzutti, Sheroanawe Hakihiwe, Gran Fury and others. Mesquita is also an editor and organizer of publications, as well as the author of several books, articles, catalogs, and anthologies.

**Kesiena Onosigho** is a mixed-media textile artist, natural dyer, and educator based in Fort Greene, Brooklyn. She engages in a range of mediums including textiles, painting, jewelry, and botanical pigment making. Onosigho earned a BFA from Parsons School of Design, where she began her exploration of fine art, design, and sustainable materials. She has cultivated a deep awareness of fiber and textiles through her travels to Asia, Europe, and across the U.S. In her work, Onosigho intuitively explores textiles and a range of media to create atmospheric abstractions. She weaves together artistic and ecological approaches, engaging in themes of social and environmental justice. By using environmentally-minded methods and foraged items, she intertwines sustainable materials rooted in studies of ecology, historical research across the African diaspora, and natural fibers to form layered abstract compositions. Her work embodies her deep fascination with research, materiality, and process, and comes to life through her innovative studio practice where she develops her own methods and tools.

**Valérie Rousseau**, Ph.D., is Curatorial Chair & Senior Curator at the American Folk Art Museum, New York. She overviewed critically acclaimed exhibitions, notably *Willem van Genk: Mind Traffic* (2014), *When the Curtain Never Comes Down* (AAMC award, 2015), *Art Brut in America: The Incursion of Jean Dubuffet* (2015), *Photo|Brut* (2021), *Morris Hirshfield Rediscovered* (2022), as well as projects on the legacy of Francesc Tosquelles, the concomitance of psychiatric and artistic avant-gardes (FACE Foundation Curatorial Fellowship “Étant Donnés,” 2019), neurodiversity (IMLS, 2023–2025), art brut literature, art environments, and artists like William Edmondson, Eugen Gabritschewsky, and Madalena Santos Reinbolt. She authored *Bill Traylor* (FILAF award, 2018), “Regarder par les failles de ce monde: Intersections de l’art brut et de l’art populaire” (*Les cahiers du Musée national d’art moderne*, 2024), and guest edited the

issue “The Fate of Self-Taught Art” (*The Brooklyn Rail*, 2018). In 2022, she participated in the seminar “Showing/Searching: art brut and its archival impulse” of the Bibliothèque Kandinsky Summer University (Centre Pompidou, Paris).

**Amanda Reis Tavares Pereira** holds a postdoctoral degree in Arts from the State University of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ - 2019). She earned a Ph.D. in History and Criticism of Art from the Graduate Program in Arts at the same institution (2017), completed with the support of the Institutional Program for Sandwich Doctorate Abroad (PDSE) at the Nova University of Lisbon, between July and November 2015. She holds a Master's in Literary Theory and History from the State University of Campinas (UNICAMP - 2008) and a Bachelor's degree in Language and Literature (Portuguese Language and Brazilian and Portuguese Literature) from the Federal University of Juiz de Fora (UFJF - 2004). She was a PIBIC scholarship recipient in the scientific initiation projects *Tempos de Murilo Mendes II* and *Tempos de Murilo Mendes III*, working on the Brazilian poet Murilo Mendes (1901-1975) and the Portuguese visual artist Maria Helena Vieira da Silva (1908-1992).

**Lilia Moritz Schwarcz** is Full Professor in Anthropology at the University of São Paulo and Visiting Professor at Princeton. Her main interests are History of the Slaves, Racial Theories, History of the Brazilian Empire, Academic and contemporary Art, History of Anthropology. She published several books, such as *Retrato em branco e negro* (1987) [Portrait in White and Black], *A longa viagem da biblioteca dos reis* (2002) [The long journey of the king's library], *O sol do Brasil* (2008) [The Sun of Brazil]; *Um Enigma chamado Brasil -- with Andre Botelho --* [One enigma called Brazil] (2013), *A Batalha do Avaí -- with Lucia Stumpf and Carlos Lima*, (2014) [The Avaí Battle] (2014); *Black Encyclopedia* (com Flávio Gomes e Jaime Lauriano) (2022), *Dalton Paula the kidnapper of souls* (2022), *Images of whiteness the presence of absence* (2024), among them three in English: *Spectacle of Races: Scientists, Institutions and Racial Theories in Brazil at the End of the XIXth Century* (Farrar Strauss and Giroux, 1999) and *The Emperors beard: D. Pedro II a tropical king*, (Farrar Strauss and Giroux, 2004), *Brazil: a biography -- with Heloisa Starling* (Farrar Strauss and Giroux and Penguin UK, to be published in 2017) and *Authoritarian Brazil* (Princeton University Press, 2021). She was a curator of some exhibitions like: *The great travel of the king's Library* (2006, Rio de Janeiro), and *Nicolas-Antoine Taunay: a French translation of the tropics* (2008, São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro), *A history of Brazil an interpretation by photographs*, (with Boris Kossoy, 2013, São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Brasília, Curitiba, Belo Horizonte), *Mestizo Histories* (with Adriano Pedrosa, 2014, São Paulo), *Childhood histories* (2016, São Paulo), *Afro Brazilian histories* (2019), *Women History* (2021), *Histórias brasileiras* (2021), *As foras*



da democracia (2022) . In 2017 she is going to publish, with James Green, Brazil Reader (Duque University Press). She also edited a volume of the collection *History of Brazilian Life in Brazil* (Companhia das Letras, 2008), and was chief editor of *História do Brasil Nação: 1808-2010* (Fundação Mapfre/ Objetiva) a six volumes series on Brazilian History.

She won seven Jabuti Prizes – Brazil's leading literary prize --for *The Emperors beard ; History of private life; The Sun of Brazil; An enigma called Brazil*, and *Mestizo Histories* (the catalogue), Black Encyclopedia and Color glasses. She also won, together with Lucia Stumpf and Carlos Lima, the Brazilian Academy of Letters prize for *The Avai Battle*.

She was fellow at the Guggenheim Foundation (2006/ 2007), at the John Carter Brown Library (2007) and Humboldt Prize (2022); was a visiting professor at Oxford, Leiden, Princeton, Écoles de Hautes études, Frei Universitat and Brown Universities, a Tinker Professor at Columbia University (2008), and since 2011 is Global Professor at Princeton. She was a Member of the Advisor Group for the Harvard Brazilian Office, from 2006 to 2012. She holds a Commend of the Brazilian Order of Scientific Merit presented by the Presidency of the Republic (2010) and is a member of Brazilian Academy of Letters. She writes regularly for Brazilian newspapers such as: *Folha de S Paulo, Estado de S. Paulo, Nexo*. From 2015 to 2023 she was co-curator (for History) at MASP (Museum of Modern Art of São Paulo)