

abraham palatnik

em movimento

galeria

nara roesler

A **Galeria Nara Roesler | Rio de Janeiro** is pleased to present *Em Movimento* [In Movement], exhibition that celebrates the Palatnik's 90th birthday and shows the full force of the world-renowned master of movement and light, presenting as a central work an unprecedented *Kinetic Object* in large dimensions completed in 2018.

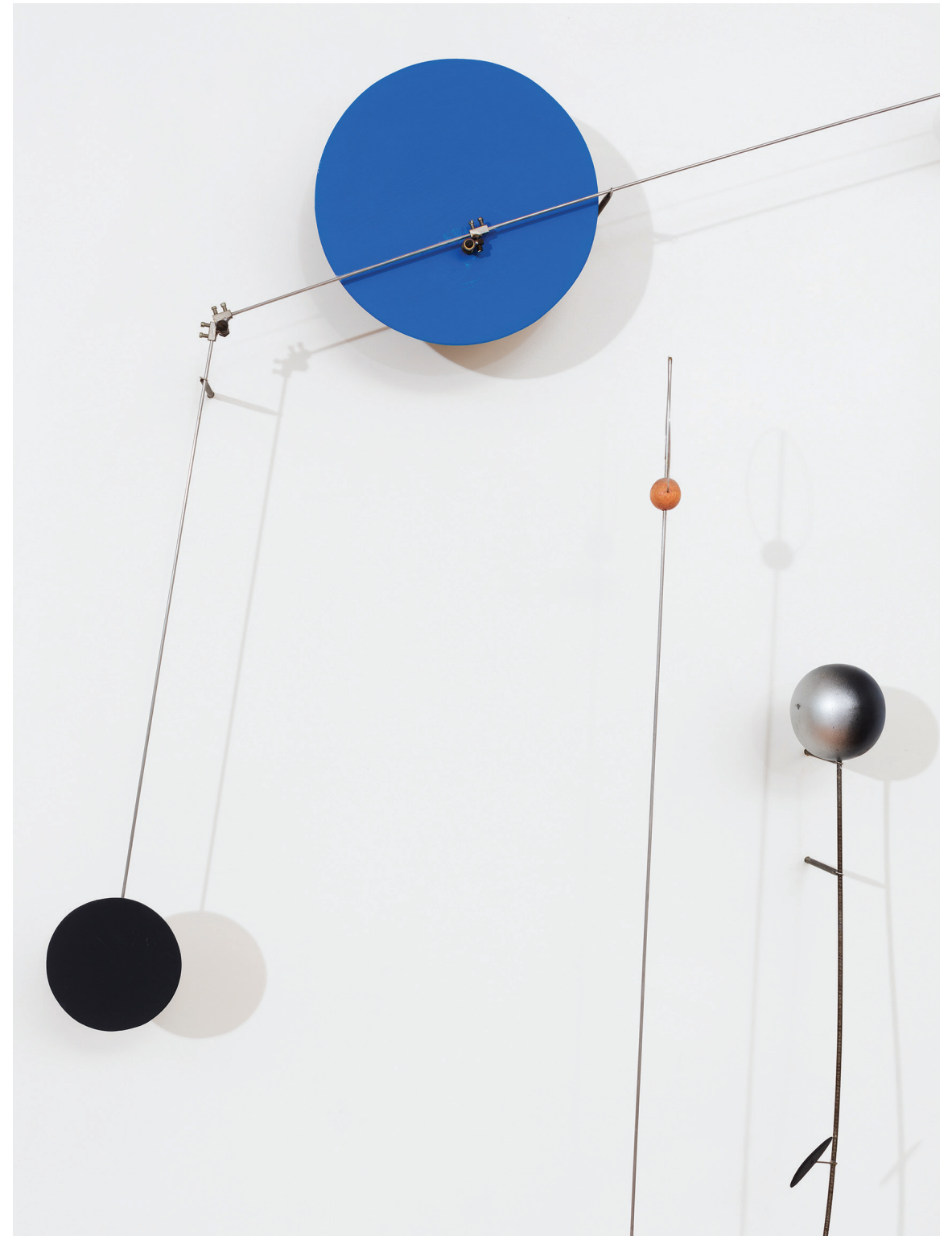
This outstanding work symbolizes the continuity of an extensive research that the artist dedicates throughout his career, becoming, after a much-deserved historical revisionism, a reference in the field of kinetic and optical art.

This Palatnik exhibit features other more recent pieces of his: reliefs on acrylic and on wood, from the W series, and on cardboard, with spray paint coatings on their surfaces. These two-dimensional pieces attain depth and dynamism thanks to rhythmic pattern compositions, created through sequential cuts, reminiscent of irregular waves – formal characteristics that hark back to the genealogy of Palatnik's output from the 1960s onwards.

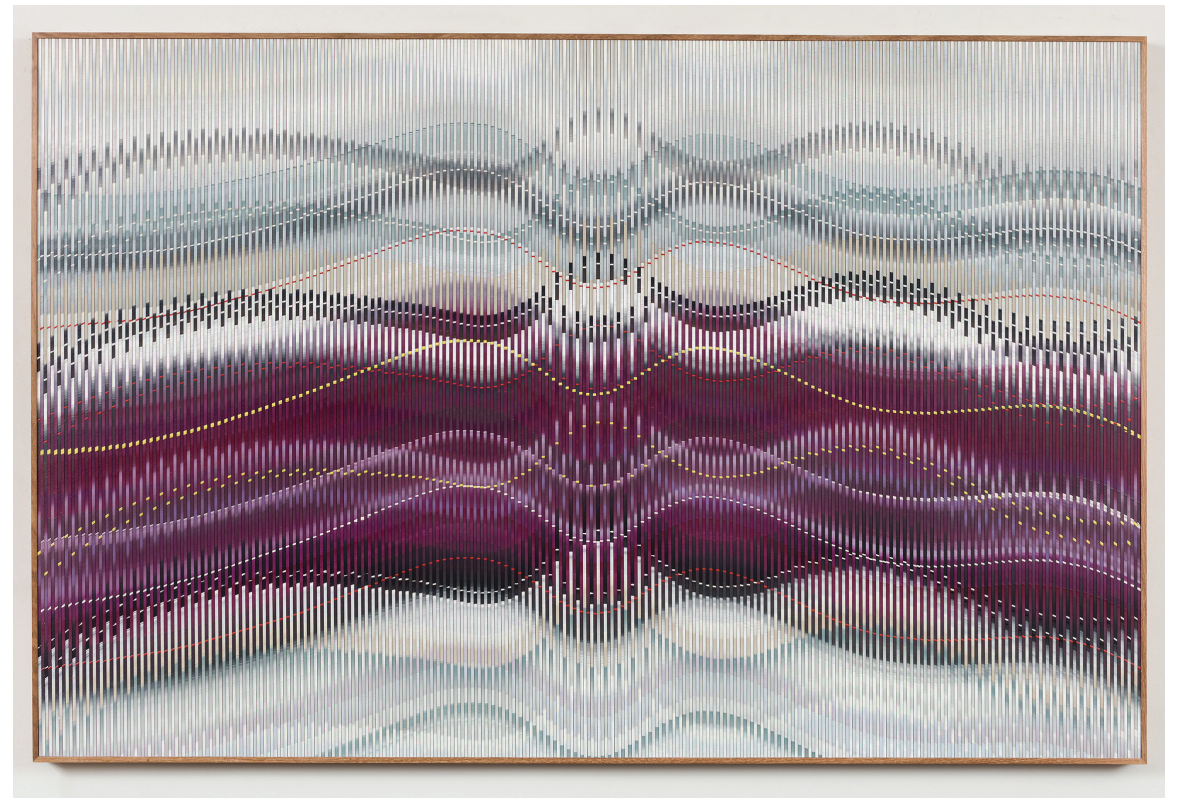


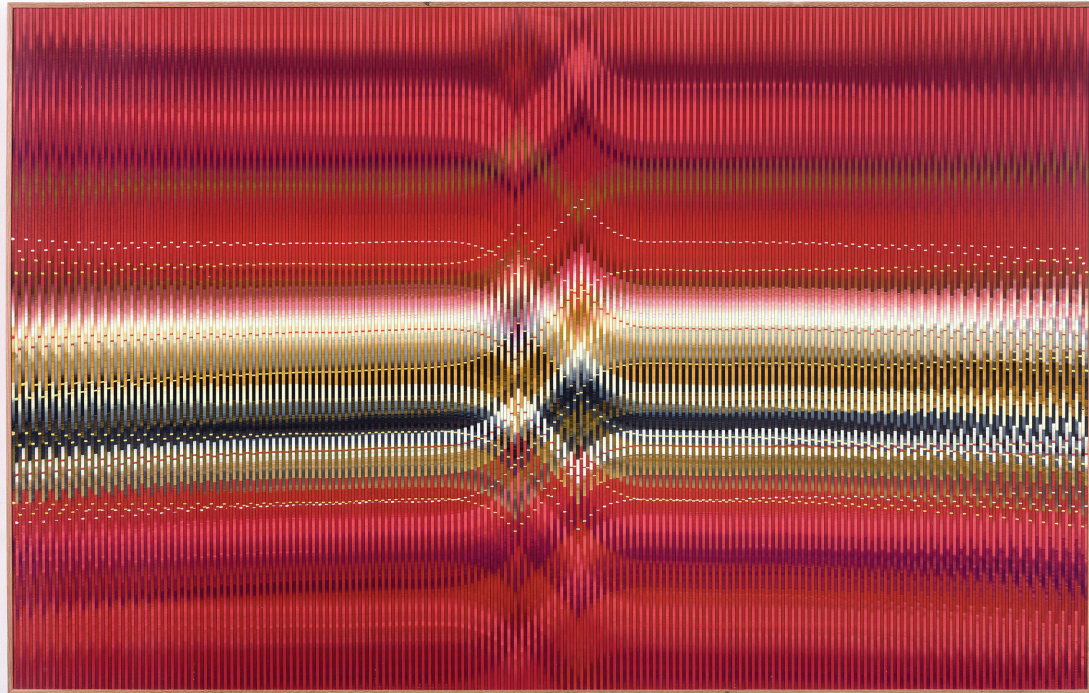
Kinetic object, 2006-2018
wood, formica, metal, acrylic, magnets and engine
80.7 x 89 x 15.7 in

Kinetic object, 2006-2018 [detail]



W-, 2018
acrylic on wood
43.3 x 66.9 in

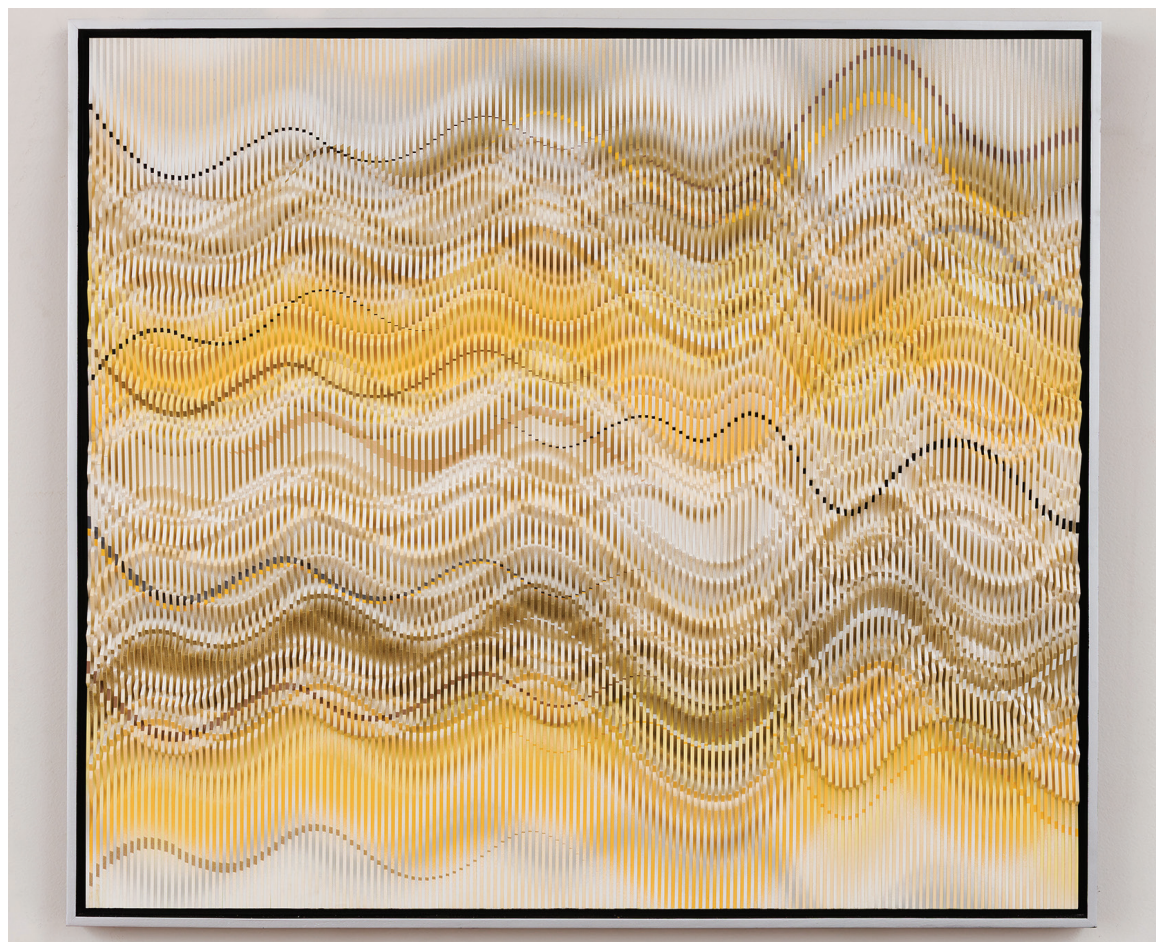




W-, 2018
acrylic on wood
43.3 x 66.9 in



Untitled, 2018
alkyd paint on acrylic
27.6 x 31.5 in



Untitled, 2018
alkyd paint on acrylic
27.6 x 31.5 in



*reference image: **Untitled**, 2015 -- progressive relief on duplex paperboard and wood -- 80 x 77,5 x 11,5 cm

Sem Título, 2017
progressive relief on duplex paperboard and wood
31.5 x 27.6 in

about **Abraham Palatnik**

Abraham Palatnik was born in Natal, Brazil, in 1928 and lives and works in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Palatnik is a seminal figure of Brazilian kinetic and optical art, whose inquiries into technology, mobility and light brought innovative developments to the study of visual phenomena in the country. He rose to prominence in the art scene after creating his first *Aparelho Cinecromático* (Kinechromatic Device, 1949), whereby he set out to reinvent painting practice by relying on light interplay to create kaleidoscopic images. Featured in the 1st Bienal de São Paulo (1951), his light installation was not included in the grand prize competition because it didn't fit any of the art categories then in existence, but its originality earned it an honorable mention from the international jury. His later series of progressions and reliefs, using assorted materials like wood, duplex cardboard and acrylic, likewise feature hypnotic optical effects, achieved through meticulous craftsmanship. The result is abstract compositions marked by rhythmic patterns reminiscent of the movement of irregular waves. Currently into his seventh decade of work, Palatnik continues to look into the relationships between motion, time and human perception. His work has been featured in numerous exhibitions in Brazil and elsewhere, including eight editions of the Bienal de São Paulo, Brazil (1951-1969), and the 32nd La Biennale di Venezia, Italy (1964). A recent, major career-spanning show of his, *Abraham Palatnik – A Reinvenção da Pintura* [Abraham Palatnik – The Reinvention of Painting], was featured in several Brazilian venues including: Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil Rio de Janeiro (CCBB-RJ), Rio de Janeiro, 2017; Fundação Iberê Camargo (FIC), Porto Alegre, 2015; Museu Oscar Niemeyer (MON), Curitiba, 2014; Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo (MAM-SP), São Paulo, 2014; and Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil Brasília (CCBB-DF), Brasília/DF, 2013. His works are included in important institutional collections, such as: Itaú Cultural, São Paulo, Brazil; Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro (MAM Rio), Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo (MAM-SP), São Paulo, Brazil; Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels, Belgium; The Adolpho Leirner Collection of Brazilian Constructive Art – Museum of Fine Arts Houston (MFAH), Houston, EUA; and The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York, USA.

In Motion

Felipe Scovino

Abraham Palatnik turns 90 while still putting out a heavily inventive, coherent oeuvre. Apart from having had his status as a kinetic art pioneer cemented in group and solo shows in Brazil and elsewhere and from being a landmark author in catalogs, specialized magazines and academic papers, especially over the past two decades, what strikes me is the commitment and joy with which Palatnik relates to his own output. There's this restless persistence which I guess is precisely what drives him to endlessly go on researching and unraveling new possibilities in his work. In this show, for instance, one can sense this intertwining of intelligence and sensibility, a case in point being his latest series of artworks, including his newest *Objeto Cinético* (Kinetic Object).

In his *Sem Título* (Untitled) series, initiated in 2016, the artist employs alkyd paint to create regimes of density and volume on acrylic. The viewer experiences a succession of sinuous, intertwine shapes that virtually advance towards space. The geometric representations wrought by the artwork change constantly as the viewer fixates their gaze upon the object. In attempting to unravel the science behind that composition, one is hurled into a process of image virtualization. What's flat becomes spatial, what's static becomes flux, what's acrylic becomes a tangle of lines, reliefs and topographies which acquire the status of a multiplying potency. And note that this research involving kineticism began around 1949-50, with the inception of his *Aparelhos Cinecromáticos* (Kinechromatic Devices). Upon plastic canvases that would cover the front portion of his artworks, the artist would project colors and shapes that would move, propelled by electric motors. As Frederico Morais put it, "through the use of motors and lamps," the Cinecromático "replaces pigment – its material dimension – with light refraction. A central control, comprised of electrical contacts, sets the speed and duration of each light focus."¹ Whereas, in *Cinecromáticos* and *Objetos Cinéticos*, motion and participation happen autonomously from the viewer, in *Sem Título*, *Relevos Progressivos* and the *W* series, the viewer's movements in front of the artworks prompt a resizing of the notions of motion and dynamics, and confront the rigidity that a painting supposedly would have.

Such is the density, coherence, and transformation of an oeuvre which looks into the non-contradictory relationships between art, science, intuition and chaos. The exhibition amalgamates a range of features which Palatnik holds close to heart. Chief among them are craftsmanship, i.e. productions created by the artist himself, with very special care given and time spent; his use of cheap, fragile, widely accessible materials (string, paperboard, metal stems etc.); and, finally, the way he approaches the playful, participative character of his work, akin to the extroversion of fellow kinetic art pioneer Alexander Calder.

This show affords us the opportunity to view, for the first time, the largest *Objeto Cinético* ever created by the artist. Split into two juxtaposing modules, it showcases how delicately Palatnik seems to lay down miscellaneous geometric shapes and lines on space. While approximating the colors and abstract forms of Jean Arp, Miró and, of course, Calder – all masters in metaphorically rendering the weight of an industrial material light as a feather –, Palatnik, unlike them, carves up his own research field. His work creates a shape in space through motion and broadens painting-sculpture boundaries. There is a quality to this series that makes it quite special, setting Palatnik's work apart from that of other kinetic artists: the nearby – low, but intermittent – clock-like sound which demarcates the experience of enchantment which the objects arouse in viewers, and at the same time reveals the fluidity between mechanical-time and duration-time. In this case, it is the condition of potentiation of a playful-body to the detriment of a machine-body, of enjoyment to the detriment of function. This is an important point to the kinetic research of Brazilian artists which somehow sets it apart from the more pragmatic brands of kineticism, like its Swiss and German varieties.

Relevo Progressivo and *W* share commonalities and perpetuate the coherence of Palatnik's research. In the former series, the sequencing of cuts on the paperboard's surface, depending on their depth and placement, creates multiple layers. This action constitutes the piece's very dynamic. The use of paperboard is somewhat surprising, since the creation of reliefs leads to the execution of rhythms and curves of great visual impact. In this show, there's a new feature: the *Relevos* – which hitherto would not have generally undergone any chromatic interventions, because the artist used to be interested in, so-to-speak, the "raw" materiality and color of the paper – have been immersed in spray paint, endowing the artwork with a metallic character. Palatnik performed a similar procedure in 1979, when he used gold-plated metal instead of paper in a *Relevo Progressivo*. In the *W* series, of which two new pieces are featured, he relies on laser cuts to slice up vertical, homogeneous rulers from abstract paintings that served as templates. He then moves these "strips" around and "draws up" the future artwork until he is pleased and concludes the operation. A progressive, modular rhythm of shape gets built through an exploration of the expressive potential of wood. His entire oeuvre boasts the clarity of a research committed with the audience. We are agents of change upon the artwork, and at the same time it acts upon us. His work is committed to simplicity and delicacy, as one can tell from the way it is constructed and the way it places itself in the world. However, one must note that, unlike much contemporary art output, these operations take place without the artwork ever becoming a media spectacle.

Felipe Scovino is a professor at the School of Fine Arts of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro. He has curated shows like *Estética da gambiarra* (Cavaliariças, Parque Lage, Rio de Janeiro, 2012), *Diálogos com Palatnik* (MAM, São Paulo, 2014), *Narrativas em processo: Livros de artista na coleção Itaú Cultural* (Instituto Figueiredo Ferraz, Ribeirão Preto, 2016); Itaú Cultural, São Paulo, 2017; MON, Curitiba, 2018). Alongside Paulo Sergio Duarte, he curated *Lygia Clark: uma retrospectiva* (Itaú Cultural, São Paulo, 2012), which won the 2012 Best Retrospective Exhibition prize from APCA. From 2013 to 2017, with Pieter Tjabbes, he curated the career-spanning show *Abraham Palatnik: a reinvenção da pintura*. Winner of the Critical Production Stimulus Grant (Minc/Funarte) in 2008.

1. MORAIS, Frederico. Abraham Palatnik: um pioneiro da arte tecnológica. Niterói: MAC, 1999. Reeditado em OSORIO, Luiz Camillo. Abraham Palatnik. São Paulo: Cosac Naify, 2004, p. 164-65.

