

Martins&Montero
and Nara Roesler
presents

lydia okumura
immateriality
in everything

opening
june 8, 2024

exhibition
june 8 – august 3, 2024

nara roesler

**Martins
& Montero**

lydia okumura:
immateriality in everything

Martins&Montero and Nara Roesler are pleased to present *Immateriality in everything*, a panoramic exhibition by Japanese-Brazilian artist Lydia Okumura (São Paulo, 1948). The exhibition will take place simultaneously in both galleries, spanning three decades of Okumura's career, from the 1970s to the 1990s, and will feature around 30 works, including paintings, sculptures, and large-scale installations, some of which have never been seen before.

For more than fifty years, Okumura has employed geometric abstraction to investigate the understanding and experience of space, expanding its possibilities through form and color. Using materials such as string, wire, acrylic paint, glass, aluminium, charcoal, and graphite, Okumura creates site-specific installations that relate directly to the architecture of the exhibition space. In them, plane figures are painted on the corners of walls that are connected by wires, resulting in geometric shapes that project into the spatial field and create the illusion of three-dimensional objects. Although this practice can be framed in the minimalist tradition, op art is also at play. Through modest but ingenious interventions, Okumura questions the perception of our bodily presence in the environment.

In the field of painting and drawing, in practices that she adopted from the early 1970s onwards, Lydia remains faithful to her questions and continues to propose the same spatial issues. Her abstract compositions simulate geometric configurations in architectural spaces, where the use of color is crucial to suggest three-dimensionality through chromatic variations.

Lydia is part of a group of artists such as Tomie Ohtake, Lygia Clark, Lygia Pape, and Mira Schendel, who helped define conceptual art as we know it. Through paintings, installations, and sculptures produced with minimal resources, the artist's works challenge preconceived concepts of space. Given this relevance and reference status, Lydia's career justifies a major collaborative movement between two of the country's most prominent galleries, aimed at expanding her presence at a time that celebrates her career and contribution to art.

Regarding the collaboration in this project, the galleries share a very clear vision. "Collaboration between galleries is a very current trend and, in our view, a healthy and welcome development for our sector. For us, the union of powers represents opportunities to expand the presence of a seminal artist like Lydia," says Jaqueline Martins, founding partner of Martins&Montero.

"We believe that the work of an artist like Lydia Okumura can yield very interesting and prolific dialogues with the artists in our program. The partnership with Martins&Montero arose from our shared desire to ensure that Okumura's work can reach ever larger audiences in Brazil and abroad," adds Alexandre Roesler, partner and director of Nara Roesler.



Lydia Okumura, undated.
Photo: © Ding Musa

lydia okumura: *immateriality in everything* pontogor

This text uses some of Lydia Okumura's phrases taken from interviews. These quotes are marked in bold and italics.

I also quote the researcher Maria Continentino Freire, in her thesis "Pensar ver: Derrida and the deconstruction of the 'optical model' from the arts of the visible" from 2014, always in italics and in quotation marks.

I want to express immateriality in everything
Lydia Okumura

"The work is always that which looks at us from its absolute muteness, which appeals to our attention without, however, co-responding to our gaze, to our request for revelation. It is that which, by calling us, does not give itself to the relationship, laughs at any projection onto it and escapes."

Maria Continentino Freire

A large geometric shape seems to be detaching itself from one of the walls. It's coming out of it and merging into it, right in front of me. I can see some of its contours as if I were seeing a drawing on paper. But part of its strokes draw the space outside the wall, outside the paper. The gallery floor, which in other cases would have gone unnoticed by me, is now reinforced as a support for this drawing. I walk on the floor; I walk on the work. My movements twist and distort the enormous figure, which simply and economically presents me with ideas. **An idea, a truth, a fragment of knowledge catalyzes sentences.** Like the ones that are beginning to be drafted in this text.

If, at first, I perceive geometries as if they were cubes, then I can no longer say that. This bending of the contours in *Metamorphosys II* (1981) also occurs when I look at *Standing Within The Horizontal* (1978) and *One Is Three Within* (1982). The transformation of the spatial—**from three-dimensional surfaces to flat ones, with the multi-dimensions perceptible by the mind**—takes place in front of and next to me. But not only that: it also happens behind the vision.

"I focus here on drawing, since in drawing, in the experience of drawing, the experience of the line is at stake. It is the experience of placing a limit between spaces, times, figures... but a limit that is both a condition of visibility and invisible."

When we think, we involuntarily try to put together the puzzle that surrounds us. It's almost an obsession to try to put the pieces together or fill in the gaps in the hope of creating images that are coherent and recognizable to us. But at the same time, as if in a reverse game, what we call perception seems to act by confusing our experience of our surroundings by creating illusory perspectives that are far removed from what is happening—or being drawn—there, making room for fantasy. And so we doubt.

In an effort to understand what surrounds us, we invent narratives, possibilities, and kinds of spaces. That's what I do here, as I write. When something deviates from the usual intellectual pattern, such as when a thread or string, stretched between two points, disguises itself or transmutes into a line drawn on the wall, and it's no longer possible to tell whether it's two or three-dimensional—our perception shifts, even breaks down, and we are forced to reinterpret the environment, now considering the strange novelty. This is the imponderable.

Lydia Okumura's work touches me through the spaces between the things my eyes can touch. Much of what we see in Lydia Okumura's drawings, paintings, and *situations* exhibited here takes place neither in the space between our eyes, nor

in the limits they reach, but behind them, in their blinking. In what could be a “between-vision”. Because the blink, the subtle movement of the eyelids, is not only what deprives us of sight, but also what allows us to see, “just as the meaning of the text also occurs in the whites of the writing”.

Then there are the volumes. In the installation *Relocation Of The Cube* (1972), the empty space of the grass fills up and advances, by mirroring, towards the void above the ground—depending on the point of view. Or rather, points of view.

The spectator’s experience is a consciousness reflecting itself, almost as in a mirror we are reflecting ourselves. What happens inside us is the experience, and that experience is also my work.

The air between the strings attached to the walls and floor of the gallery in *Untitled* (from the *Appearance* series) is filled with paint. The layers of paint are so thick that they create a massive, three-dimensional block. We can’t see it out of our eyes, but it’s there. Because what is not visible is precisely what gives the viewer their sight back, reminding them to look, to see, to think about seeing.

—

I try with one eye to see the works and with the other to see what I don’t see in them; what is there and what isn’t but constitutes it. Like a hole, which only exists because of what is around it. But “what is a hole?” a clown asked his compadre. Realizing the other’s embarrassment, he triumphantly declared: “a hole is an absence surrounded by a presence”, as René Daumal said in *The Pataphysics of Ghosts*. So it’s up to me—

up to us—to surround Lydia Okumura’s works, to walk along their edges and the boundaries they draw in space. To follow their threads.

In front of *Vertical/Horizontal* (1976), I am reminded that I see from a binocular viewpoint: when I cover one eye, I see something different from what I see when I cover the other. I have two points of view in one head. The angles of vision revealed to us by this polyptych lead us to mentally walk through a virtual space of possibilities. And it is Lydia’s drawings that project this walk.

It’s intriguing to realize that opening and closing spaces is no easy task. When we come across the corner in which *Metamorphosys II* is located, where the painting on the walls and part of the floor play with our spatial awareness, a portal is opened to places that didn’t exist before; a passage that leads us to reinterpret what surrounds us, transforming not only its architecture but also the possibilities of occupation for those who walk through it.

This text is an account, a point of view. I draw it up like this, “because writing about a work ends up revealing our projection onto it as a desire to appropriate what we don’t see, what escapes us”. And perhaps this explains the ambiguities inherent in my attempts to maintain a clear and objective path while writing. Because I write off the wall, off the paper.

What remains open?

What is completed?

What new spaces emerge when we are led by Lydia Okumura’s works and walk through them?

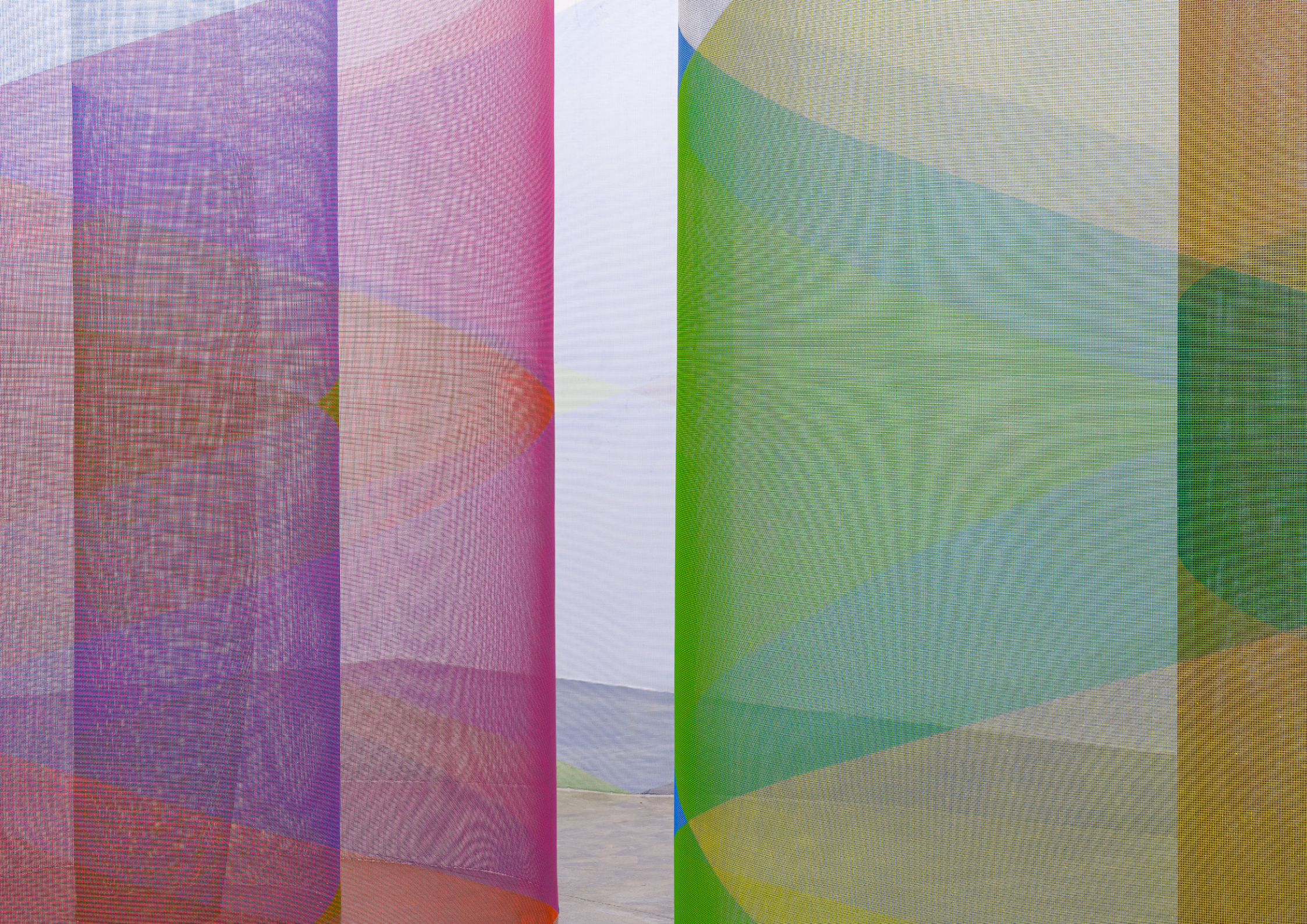


Lydia Okumura, undated.
Photo: © Paulo Di Giulio

Labyrinth (Variant II), 1984
stainless steel wire mesh
and acrylic paint
edition of 1 + 1 AP
variable dimensions



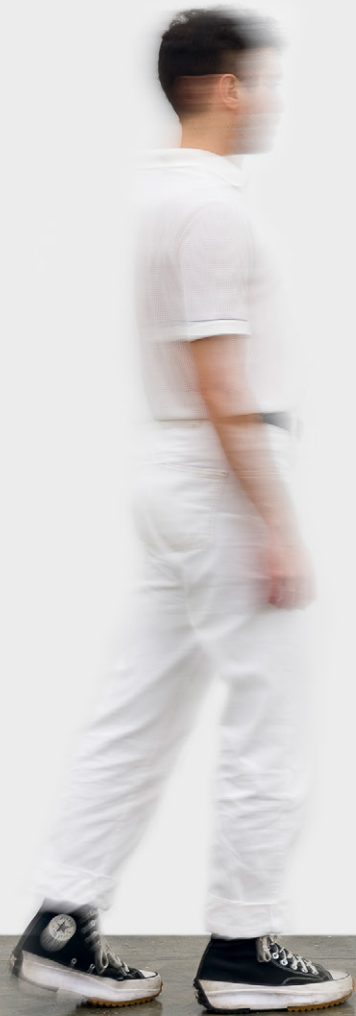
exhibition view. *Labyrinth* installation
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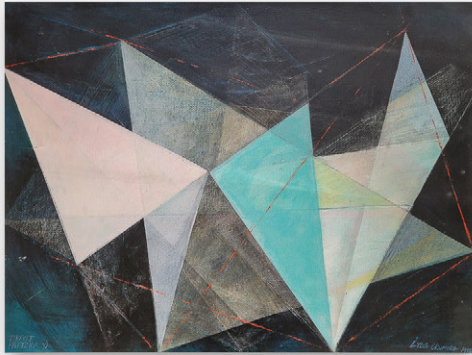
exhibition view. *Labyrinth* installation
© Hall Art Foundation
Photo: Roman März

Different dimensions E, NYC, 1990
acrylic paint on canvas
unique
102 x 142,5 x 3,5 cm
40.2 x 56.1 x 1.4 in





Thought Pattern T, 1986
acrylic paint on paper
unique
56 x 76 cm
22 x 29.9 in

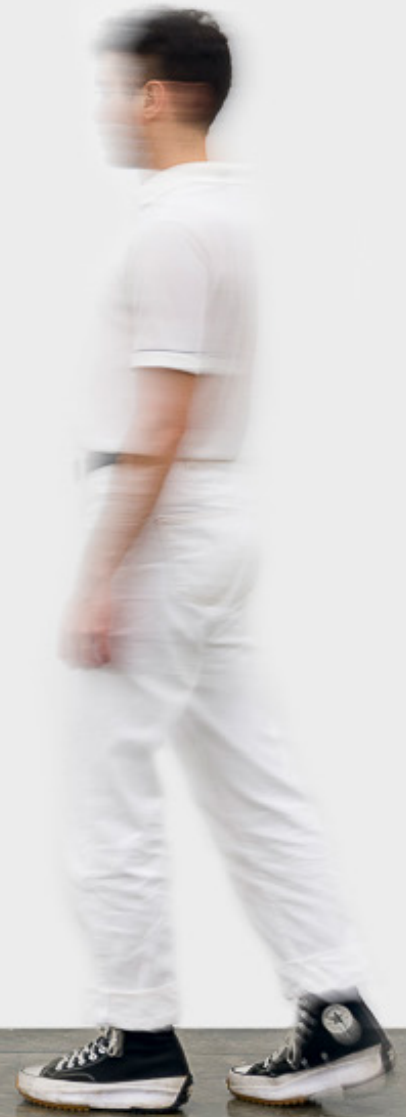




THOUGHT
PATTERN (T)



Downtown, Sao Paulo, 1985
acrylic paint on canvas
unique
170 x 170 cm
66.9 x 66.9 in



Thought Pattern B, 1986
acrylic paint on paper
unique
56 x 76 cm
22 x 29.9 in



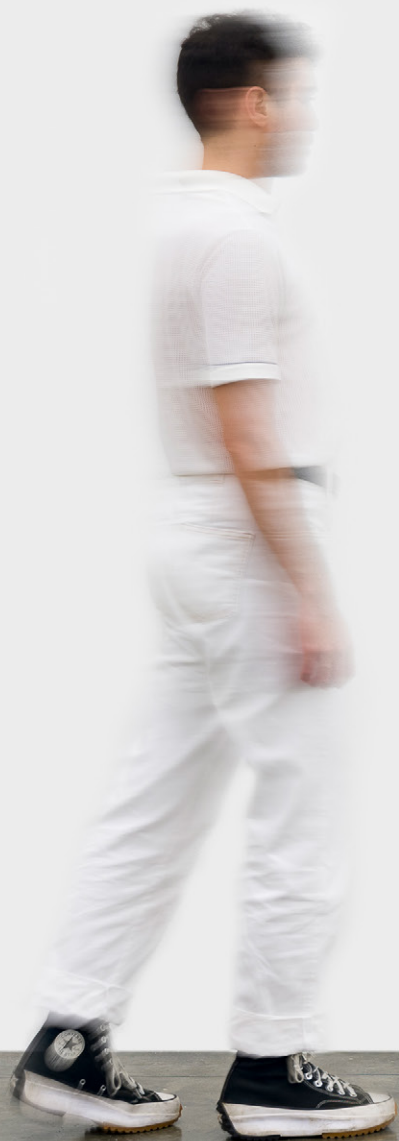


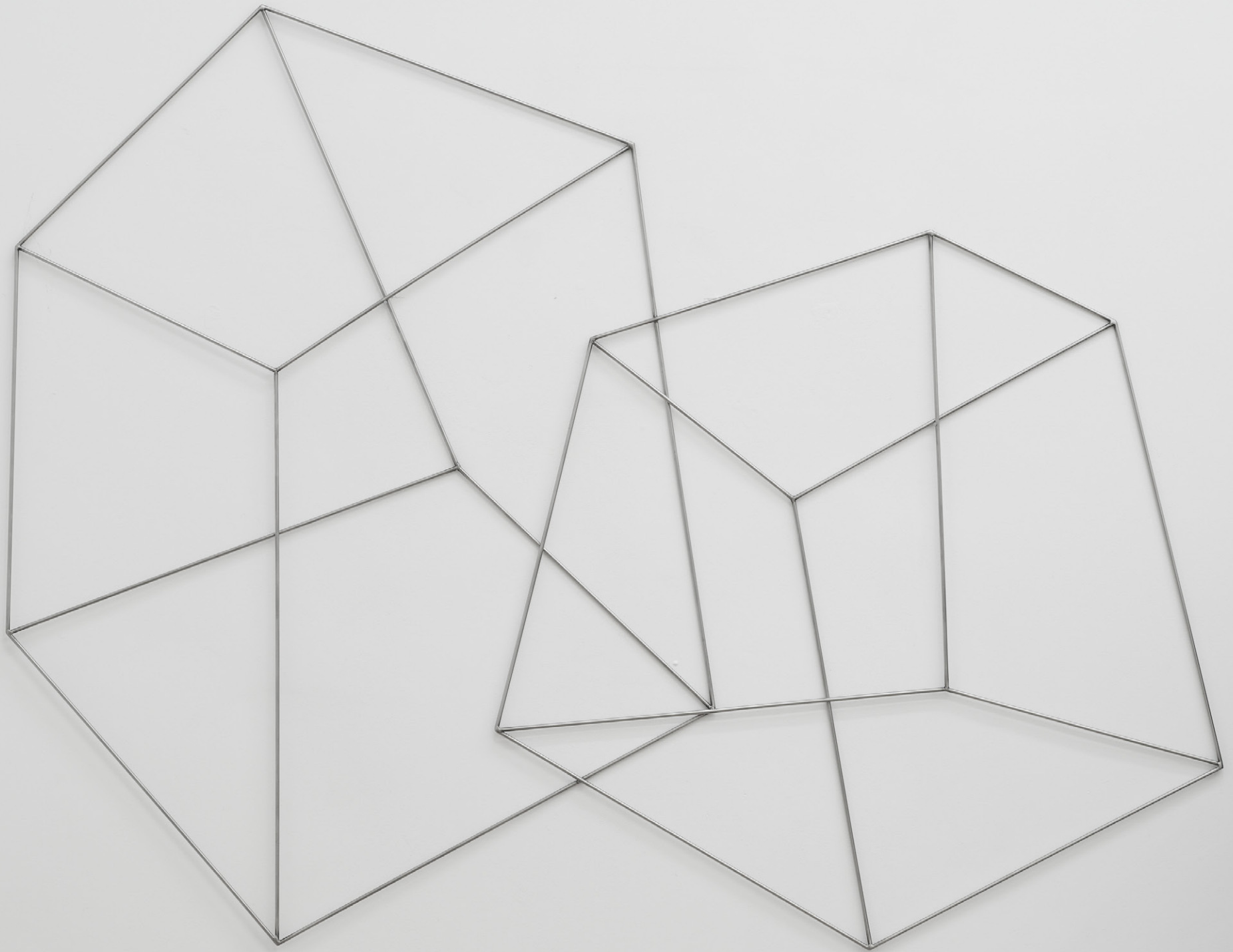
Untitled, undated
acrylic paint on paper
unique
56 x 76 cm
22 x 29.9 in



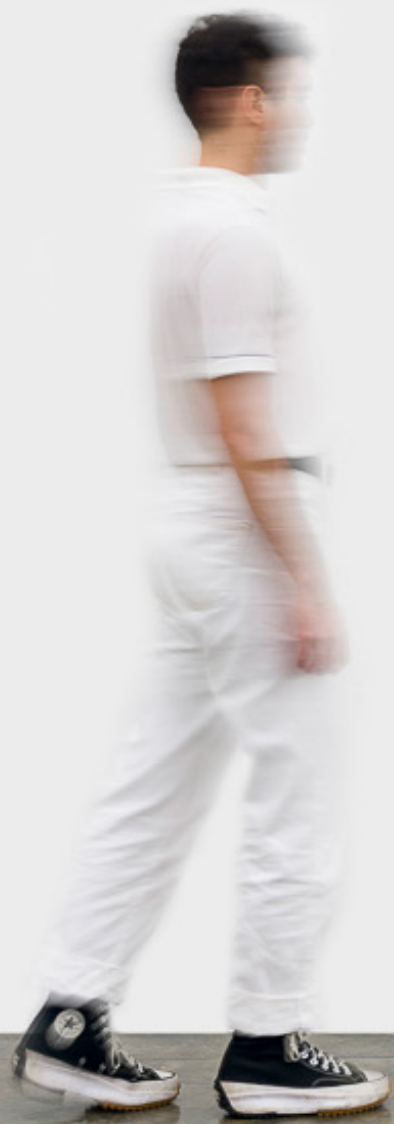


Double, 1984
stainless steel bars
edition of 3 + 1 AP
110 x 150 cm
43.3 x 59.1 in





Untitled, São Paulo, 1982
acrylic paint on canvas
unique
170 x 170 x 3 cm
66.9 x 66.9 x 1.2 in

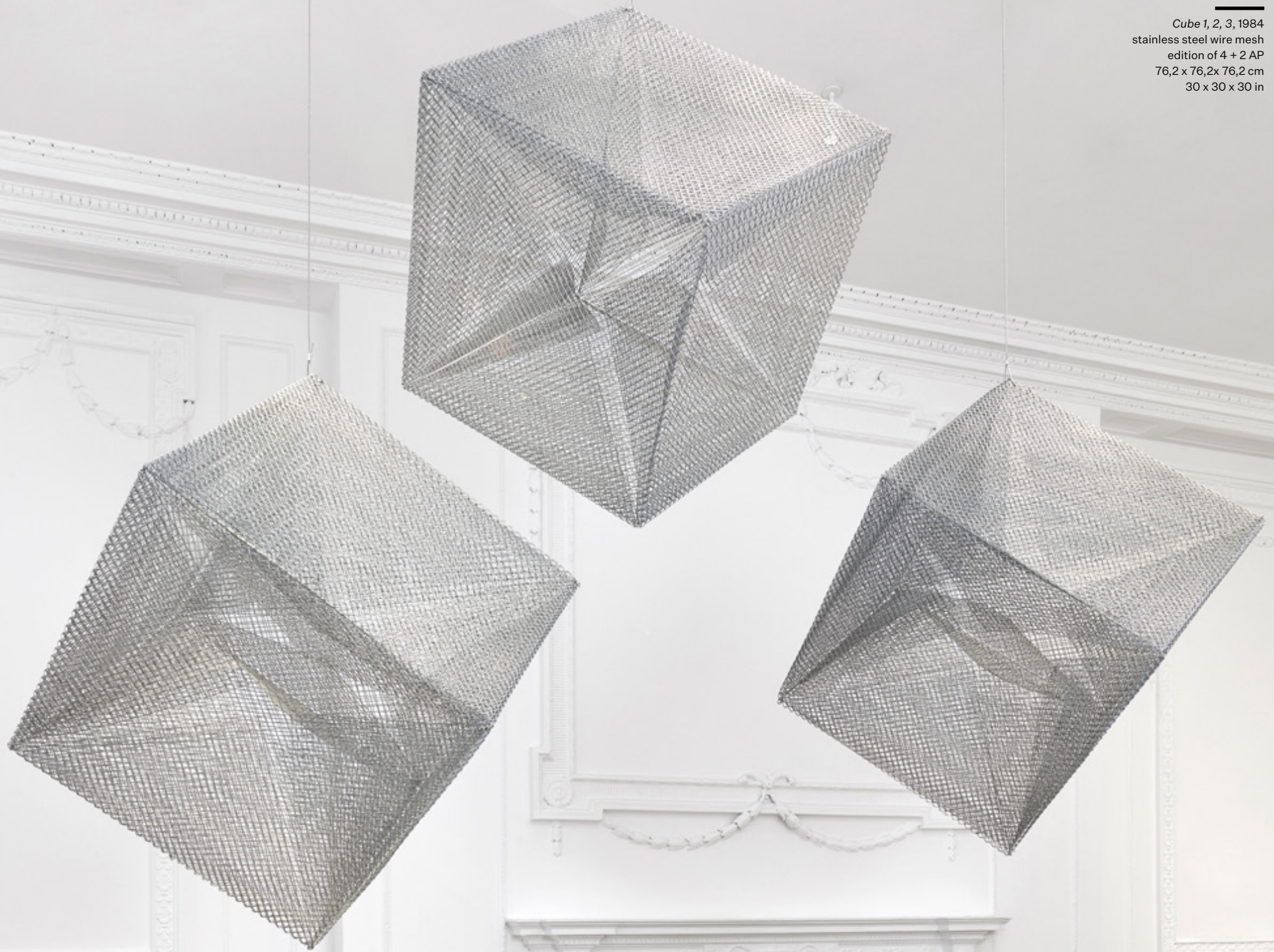






exhibition view Thaddaeus Ropac

Cube 1, 2, 3, 1984
stainless steel wire mesh
edition of 4 + 2 AP
76,2 x 76,2 x 76,2 cm
30 x 30 x 30 in



lydia okumura

b. 1948, Osvaldo Cruz, Brazil

lives and works in New York

Lydia Okumura began her artistic career in the 1970s. Initially interested in ceramics, she studied fine arts at the Armando Álvares Penteado Foundation (FAAP) between 1970 and 1973, where she was introduced not only in the legacy of Brazilian geometric abstraction, but also in international art movements that were contemporary to her, such as Conceptual Art, which was increasingly strong in Brazil, and Minimalism. These investigations gave rise to works in different media, such as drawing, serigraphy, lithography and woodcut, with a particular emphasis on site-specific installation works, which form a highly expressive part of his poetics. Together with Genilson Soares and Francisco Inarra, between 1970 and 1974, he was part of the Equipe3 group, through which he carried out works and actions, as well as taking part in the 12th São Paulo International Biennial (1973).

With a visual research based on essential abstract elements: planes, lines and colors, the artist studies the relationships established between them, but taking into account an extra and crucial component in her work: the exhibition space. Using materials such as ropes, iron sheets, pencils and charcoal, she creates works that move between the two- and three-dimensional, projecting from the wall into the exhibition space.

selected solo exhibitions

- *Lydia Okumura*, Hall Art Foundation, Hildesheim, Germany (2022)
- *Lydia Okumura*, Galeria Jaqueline Martins, São Paulo, Brazil (2021)
- *Volume 84*, Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, London, UK (2019)
- *Situations*, Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art, Scottsdale, USA (2018)
- *Five Sides and Other Dimensions*, Broadway 1602, Nova York, USA (2017)
- *Situations*, UB Art Galleries, Buffalo, USA (2016)

selected group exhibitions

- *This Must be the Place*, Americas Society, Nova York, USA (2021)
- *Dimensions of Reality: Female Minimal*, Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, Paris, France (2020)
- *The Women Geometers*, Atchugarry Art Center, Miami, USA (2019)
- *Light, Line, Color and Space*, UB Art Galleries, University of Buffalo, USA (2018)

selected collections

- Metropolitan Museum of Art, Nova York, USA
- Museum of Modern Art, Nova York, USA
- The University of New York, UB Anderson Gallery, Buffalo, USA
- Akron Museum of Art, Ohio, USA
- Museo Reina Sofia, Madrid, Spain
- The Hall Art Foundation, Derneburg, Germany
- The Hara Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo, Japan
- Guggenheim Museum, Dubai, UAE

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