

sheila hicks

autobiography of a thread

curated by luis pérez-oramas

nara roesler são paulo

opening august 29, 11am–3pm

exhibition aug 29 – oct 24, 2026

Sheila Hicks, *Crescendo*, 2026 [detalhe]

Nara Roesler São Paulo is pleased to present *Autobiography of a Thread*, an exhibition featuring recent and previously unseen works by Sheila Hicks (Hastings, Nebraska, 1934), one of the major figures in international contemporary art and a leading pioneer of textile art. The exhibition is curated by Luis Pérez-Oramas, Artistic Director of Nara Roesler, who has maintained a close relationship with the artist since 2012, when he invited her to present a special project at the 30th São Paulo Biennial the following year. On that occasion, which marked Hicks's first exhibition in Brazil, the artist occupied an area of approximately 400 square meters with an extensive group of works spanning different periods, personal documents, and a *site-specific* intervention.

With works held in the collections of major museums around the world, Sheila Hicks has been a leading figure in textile art for more than six decades. Her practice expands the possibilities of thread and fiber, bringing together abstraction, color, sculpture, painting, and architecture. Born in 1934 in Hastings, Nebraska, USA, and based in Paris since 1964, Sheila Hicks has developed her practice in constant dialogue with diverse cultures, embracing the global dimension of textile art traditions around the world, with significant stays in Asia, Africa, and Latin America since the 1950s. "Sheila Hicks was the first truly global textile artist, even before the term itself was coined. She was the first artist to research textiles across all five continents, with an awareness of all the ancestral

and contemporary languages of textile art. That is no small thing; it is something enormous,” says Pérez-Oramas.

At the same time, the Instituto Tomie Ohtake will present the monumental exhibition *O que que é isso?* centered on the work of Sheila Hicks, offering a historical survey of the artist’s career and its connections with pre-Columbian art and Latin America. The exhibition is curated by Ana Roman, Luis Pérez-Oramas, and Paulo Miyada. The two exhibitions will be accompanied by a joint publication by the Instituto Tomie Ohtake and Nara Roesler Books. Luis Pérez-Oramas, Artistic Director of Nara Roesler, and curator of the first presentation of Sheila Hicks’s work in Brazil, at the 30th São Paulo Biennial in 2012, is once again bringing the work of the major artist to the country, this time for her first solo exhibition at a Brazilian gallery. He has selected more than twenty recent and previously unseen works, produced since 2017, that reveal the different typologies within her practice.

Sheila Hicks’s solo exhibition at Nara Roesler São Paulo was originally scheduled for 2020, but the project was interrupted by the pandemic. In 2025, as Nara Roesler revisited the idea, Paulo Miyada—then Artistic Director of the Instituto Tomie Ohtake—and Ana Roman decided to invite Sheila Hicks to mount an exhibition. The coincidence of the schedules, a rare opening in the artist’s highly sought-after calendar, and the longstanding relationship between the two institutions—also marked by the friendship between Tomie Ohtake and Nara Roesler—made the moment particularly conducive to bringing the two exhibitions together. It thus became possible to join efforts around two autonomous projects, each conceived from its own curatorial perspective, while offering the public complementary dimensions of Sheila Hicks’s practice.

The two exhibitions devoted to Hicks in Brazil complete a circuit of exhibitions in Latin America that began at Museo Amparo (Puebla, Mexico, 2017) and continued at the Museo Precolombino (Santiago, Chile, 2019), with her presence in São Paulo representing a major return to the historical sources of her work as a textile artist.

“Latin America is inscribed in the original DNA of Sheila Hicks’s work,” says Pérez-Oramas. From her years at Yale, Hicks was deeply influenced by the teachings of pre-Columbian art historian George Kubler (1912–1996) and by her reading of Raoul

d’Harcourt’s classic book on the textile art of ancient Peru, which introduced her to the cultures of thread and weaving in Latin America. At Yale, Hicks inherited the modern legacy of the Bauhaus through her professor Josef Albers (1888–1976), who sent her to Chile in 1957 to teach in his place. This became the occasion for the artist’s first formative journey through Venezuela, Colombia, Peru, and Chile.

It was in Chile, in collaboration with the great photographer Sergio Larrain (1931–2012), that Sheila Hicks held her first institutional exhibition, as a painter, at the Palacio de Bellas Artes in Santiago. “In Caracas, she became involved with Spanish Republicans who were conspiring to overthrow the dictatorship of Marcos Pérez Jiménez, but also with fundamental Venezuelan artists such as Alejandro Otero and Gego. She visited the works in progress at the Ciudad Universitaria de Caracas with architect Carlos Raúl Villanueva, the Niemeyer of Venezuela.”

“Later, Sheila lived in Mexico, where she worked as a photographer and developed friendships and close relationships with key figures in Hispanic American art and architecture: Félix Candela, Luis Barragán, Ricardo Legorreta, Mathias Goeritz, Manuel Álvarez Bravo, Leonora Carrington, among others,” Pérez-Oramas recounts.

sheila hicks and nara roesler

Nara Roesler has represented the work of Sheila Hicks since 2017. In 2024, works by the artist were included in the group exhibition *Co/respondências* and were presented at several international art fairs, including Art Basel Miami Beach, The Armory Show, and TEFAF, among others. “For Sheila, this presence in Brazil is highly significant because it marks an opportunity to return to Latin America, where her life as an artist began,” says Pérez-Oramas of the two exhibitions opening in Brazil, her first since the 30th São Paulo Biennial.

Autobiography of a Thread will feature works from the series of textile “monochromes,” “modern squares that undoubtedly resonate with the fact that [Josef] Albers and the legacy of the Bauhaus remain an inspiring presence for Hicks,” says Luis Pérez-Oramas. “But I am interested in developing the installation as a form of germination, from the minimal to the monumental, as an autobiography of threads,” the curator adds. Sheila Hicks’s *Minimes*, which will also be presented at

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Nara Roesler São Paulo, “are minimal cartographies for moving toward the theatrical, dramatic space of the viewers, allowing the intertwined threads to fall like waterfalls, saturating the spaces with woven comets and planets of color,” he notes.

The exhibition will also include works from the Boules series, which resemble large skeins and are made from textiles and threads in a variety of materials, including hand-dyed synthetic fibers shaped through the addition of cotton, linen, nylon, silk, and other materials. Hicks often incorporates personal objects into her textile works, creating hidden compartments that remain invisible to the viewer. The gesture engages with the legacy of artist Marcel Duchamp (1887–1968), transforming everyday objects into elements of the artwork while suggesting that the work itself can also contain invisible memories, histories, and meanings.

global interest in her work

Luis Pérez-Oramas emphasizes that Sheila Hicks’s participation in the Whitney Biennial in New York (2011), the São Paulo Biennial (2012), and the Venice Biennale (2013) marked a “global renewal of interest in her work.” Major acquisitions and institutional exhibitions at museums such as the Centre Pompidou in Paris, the MoMA and Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Hayward Gallery and Tate in London, and the West Bund Museum in Shanghai “brought, alongside increasingly significant recognition, a volume of commitments and commissions that had made it difficult, until now, to determine a date for a solo exhibition by the artist in Brazil.”

The presence of Sheila Hicks’s work in Brazil “**completes a circuit of return to the sources of her work, beginning in Mexico with her exhibition at Museo Amparo in 2017, continuing in Chile at the Museo Precolombino in 2019, and culminating in Brazil in 2026, at Nara Roesler São Paulo and the Instituto Tomie Ohtake,” he states.

about sheila hicks

Sheila Hicks (b. 1934, Hastings, USA) is one of the most important artists of late modernism in the West. A pioneer in the use of textile techniques in the production of artworks, she has maintained a prominent presence in the contemporary art scene since the 1960s. Her practice began in the late 1950s, after she completed her studies at the Yale Art School, where she came

into contact with the teachings of masters such as Josef Albers, Rico Lebrun, Bernard Chaet, and George Kubler. A global artist avant la lettre, Hicks undertook numerous journeys dedicated to studying the cultures and local practices of different places, with particular attention to those related to weaving and textile production in countries such as Mexico, Morocco, India, Korea, Japan, Peru, Israel, Sweden, and South Africa.

Her work is characterized by an investigation of scale, ranging from the minimal to the monumental, and frequently occupies a liminal space between art, design, craft, and architecture. Amid the multiplicity of her practice, Sheila Hicks consistently gives color a central role, evoking her early forays into painting. The artist understands weaving as an extension of painting—“a painter lost in a jungle of fibers looking for a way out,” she jokes when commenting on her relationship with textile techniques. Hicks has also become known for her use of a wide range of materials, from pieces of slate and yarn to nurses’ and military uniforms. More recently, she has begun experimenting with biodegradable materials which, although destined to physically disintegrate, do not quite disappear, since the artist seeks to evoke—or construct—memorable and enduring experiences.

about nara roesler

Nara Roesler organized her first contemporary art exhibition in Recife in 1976 and moved to São Paulo in 1986, where she consolidated the gallery under her own name in 1989. Today, she is one of Brazil’s leading gallerists, recognized for playing a key role in the promotion and internationalization of more than 50 artists. Based in São Paulo, the gallery expanded its program to Rio de Janeiro in 2014 and became the first Brazilian gallery to establish an international presence by opening a space in New York City in 2016, reinforcing its commitment to the global circulation of Brazilian art.

Consistently fostering curatorial practice and critical research, she created Roesler Hotel in 2002, a program that promoted exchanges between foreign and Brazilian curators and artists. In 2011, the gallery became the first contemporary art gallery in Brazil to establish a publishing house, Nara Roesler Books, which has published more than 30 titles to date.

Throughout its trajectory, the gallery has made a significant contribution to the development of its artists’ careers, offering ongoing support and high-profile platforms for the presentation of their work, and facilitating their inclusion in major institutions

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as well as in important private collections in Brazil and abroad. Its program features established artists such as Abraham Palatnik, Amelia Toledo, Antonio Dias, Artur Lescher, Daniel Buren, Heinz Mack, Jac Leirner, Julio Le Parc, Lucia Koch, Tomie Ohtake, and Vik Muniz, as well as a new generation of established artists, including André Griffo, Bruno Dunley, Jaime Lauriano, Jonathas de Andrade, and JR.

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