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“From Surface to Space”: Max Bill and Concrete Sculpture in Buenos Aires  
Curated by Francesca Ferrari

August 19–October 30, 2021

ISLAA  
50 East 78th Street  
New York, NY 10075

The Institute for Studies on Latin American Art (ISLAA) is delighted to announce the opening of *“From Surface to Space”: Max Bill and Concrete Sculpture in Buenos Aires*, curated by Francesca Ferrari. The first in a new series on Latin American modernism at ISLAA, this exhibition explores concurrent experiments in concrete sculpture amid the formative, transnational creative dialogue between the Swiss artist Max Bill and the Argentine avant-garde from 1946 to 1955. It is conceived as a complementary exhibition to *max bill global*, curated by Fabienne Eggelhöfer with assistance from Myriam Dössegger, at the Zentrum Paul Klee in Bern, Switzerland.

*“From Surface to Space”* brings together sculptures by Carmelo Arden Quin (Uruguayan, 1913–2010), Max Bill (Swiss, 1908–1994), Claudio Girola (Argentine, 1923–1994), Enio Iommi (Argentine, 1926–2013), and Gyula Kosice (Argentine, 1924–2016), as well as a series of drawings by Lidy Prati (Argentine, 1921–2008). As members of the groups Asociación Arte Concreto-Invención (AACI) and Madí, the Buenos Aires–based artists Arden Quin, Girola, Iommi, Kosice, and Prati circulated, revised, and expanded Bill’s notions of concretism in Latin America. This exhibition frames Bill’s relationship to his Argentine peers as one of reciprocal impact, revealing how artists in Argentina reacted to Bill’s theories while Bill reoriented his characterization of concrete art after encountering their work.

Taking its title from a 1951 essay in which Bill examines how artworks relate to the spaces they inhabit, the show highlights these artists’ shared aspirations to shape objects that activate their surroundings, using abstraction as a tool for animating environments. Focusing on sculpture, a medium that is less often centered in discussions of the Argentine avant-garde—which tend to privilege *marcos recortados*, or paintings with “broken frames”—this exhibition examines the role of sculpture in advancing artists’ determination to energize three-dimensional space. Despite their diversity of ideologies and approaches, the featured artists were united by a common, revolutionary goal: to invoke visual, tactile, and synesthetic responses in the viewer.

*“From Surface to Space”: Max Bill and Concrete Sculpture in Buenos Aires* is accompanied by a publication including an essay by curator Francesca Ferrari. Physical copies are available free of charge at ISLAA and for download online.

ISLAA is open from 2 to 5 PM on Tuesday and from 2 to 7 PM on Wednesday through Friday. Guests are required to wear masks while on-site. Although walk-ins are allowed, visitors are encouraged to make appointments through ISLAA's online scheduler.

For press inquiries, please email Olivia Casa, ISLAA's exhibition and curatorial manager, at [olivia.casa@islaa.org](mailto:olivia.casa@islaa.org).

## EXHIBITION TALKS

In conjunction with the exhibition, ISLAA is pleased to present a series of live online public programs and pre-recorded lectures that will examine Bill's broader legacy in Latin America and provide further insight into the featured artists' work. Co-organized with the Zentrum Paul Klee, the panel International Dialogues in Experimental Design on October 14 will explore the development of European and Latin American experimental design and pedagogical strategies inspired by the Bauhaus. A second panel on October 21 will be presented as part of the Latin American Forum at The Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, a platform proudly sponsored by ISLAA since 2013. This event, titled Recasting Concretism: New Looks at Max Bill in Latin America, will consider Bill's work in relation to concrete art in Argentina and Brazil. Alongside these live presentations, ISLAA will also publish two recorded video lectures by scholars María José Herrera and María Cristina Rossi on the work of Enio Iommi and Claudio Girola, respectively.

We invite our audiences to engage with our expanded streaming program by visiting our website. The Zoom registration links for the two online panels will be added in September.

## ABOUT THE CURATOR

Francesca Ferrari is a PhD candidate at The Institute of Fine Arts, New York University. She holds an MA in art history from the University of Pennsylvania and a BA in art history and English from the Université de Lausanne. Her research and publications focus on twentieth-century European and Latin American art. Her doctoral dissertation, tentatively titled "Animated Geometries," explores the convergence of geometric abstraction, the human body, and movement on a transnational scale during the 1920s. She has received fellowships from the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Stiftung Arp e.V., Berlin; and the Barnes Foundation, Philadelphia.

## ABOUT *MAX BILL GLOBAL* AT THE ZENTRUM PAUL KLEE, BERN

Max Bill created a multifaceted life's work. He was a painter, sculptor, architect, designer, graphic artist, and typographer as well as a theorist, collector, curator, publicist, teacher, politician, and activist. As a member of renowned artists' groups and a gifted networker, Bill cultivated contacts all over the world and championed international artistic dialogue—from the Bauhaus to the circles of the Parisian avant-garde, to Zurich and Ulm, where he founded the Ulm School of Design, to Latin America and the United States.

Curated by Fabienne Eggelhöfer with assistance from Myriam Dössegger, *max bill global* at the Zentrum Paul Klee in Bern, Switzerland, brings together some 150 works and design objects by the artist and his international circle of friends. The exhibition was created in close collaboration with the max bill georges vantongerloo foundation and will be on view from September 16, 2021, through January 9, 2022. For more information, please visit [zpk.org](http://zpk.org).

—Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern

## ABOUT ISLAA

The Institute for Studies on Latin American Art (ISLAA) was established in 2011 to advance research and public engagement with art from Latin America. ISLAA partners with universities and institutions to produce lectures and symposia with renowned scholars, contemporary artists, and graduate students. It supports publications spanning academic volumes, exhibition catalogues, and artists' books. ISLAA maintains an exhibition program at its New York City research center and gallery space. Through these diverse activities, ISLAA aims to preserve and disseminate the legacy of Latin American cultural production—a mission that also includes *270*, a series of short films and editioned objects based on interviews with artists. ISLAA is honored to serve as the steward of an extensive archive that includes the papers of Jaime Davidovich among other canonical figures. Loans from ISLAA's art collection appear regularly in museums and galleries in the US and internationally. In keeping with its mission to support original research and exhibitions, ISLAA welcomes scholars, curators, artists, and students to utilize its on-site library of books, periodicals, personal papers, and ephemera.

## ABOUT ISLAA'S EXHIBITIONS PROGRAM

Inaugurated in 2019, ISLAA's exhibitions program presents curatorial projects that expand existing narratives of modern and contemporary art by focusing on specific figures, movements, and topics in Latin American art. Curators are invited to draw from ISLAA's library, archive, and

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graphic arts collection to develop original research and produce new exhibitions for presentation at ISLAA's New York City space. The program seeks to foster innovation within the curatorial field and to offer scholars and arts professionals the opportunity to realize exceptional exhibitions that promote the visibility and study of Latin American art.