

Sonia Gomes: *O mais profundo é a pele (Skin is the deepest part)*

November 4 – December 17, 2022
 540 West 25th Street
 New York



Left to right: Portrait of Sonia Gomes, courtesy Pace Gallery; Sonia Gomes, *Constelação II*, 2022 © Sonia Gomes, courtesy Pace Gallery

New York – Pace is pleased to present Sonia Gomes’s first-ever solo show in New York at its 540 West 25th Street gallery. Gomes, who is known for her use of textiles and everyday materials in her complex assemblages, brings physicality and movement to the fore of her work. On view from November 4 to December 17, this presentation, titled *O mais profundo é a pele (Skin is the deepest part)*, will also mark the artist’s first solo exhibition with Pace since she joined the gallery’s program in 2020.

Gomes, a largely self-taught artist, first gained international recognition when the late curator Okwui Enwezor included her work in the 2015 Venice Biennale. In 2018, she became the first living Afro-Brazilian woman artist to have a monographic show at the Museu de Arte de São Paulo (MASP), and in 2021 she participated in the 13th Gwangju Biennale in South Korea and the Liverpool Biennial in the UK. Born in 1948 in Caetanópolis—which is located in state of Minas Gerais in southeastern Brazil and was once a textile hub—the artist has cultivated a practice anchored by her deft and meticulous manipulation of varied materials. Featuring juxtaposing forms, colors, and media, Gomes’s abstract assemblages have pushed the boundaries of conventional sculpture, forging connections between memory and abstract imagery.

In her first exhibition with Pace in New York City, Gomes will present works from 2021 and 2022, including hanging, free-standing, and wall-mounted sculptures. The artist’s works often incorporate secondhand, gifted, and repurposed textiles; furniture; driftwood; wire; and other seemingly disparate materials. Through kneading, twisting, and stretching, she grapples with the stories and memories rooted in the fabrics, imbuing her resulting sculptures with personal and political resonances. In her laborious process for creating these multimedia works, Gomes considers sewing akin to drawing: a means to produce gestural marks and compositional balance.

Two vibrant new works from the artist’s *Torções (Twists)* sculpture series, which will be included in Pace’s exhibition, reflect her interest in interactions between fabric and iron that create volume. Three pieces in the new series *Entre Pérola e Vergalhão (Between Pearl and Rebar)*—featuring freshwater pearls amid clusters of different fabrics—evoke shells, cocoons, wombs, nests, and other natural incubators. Supported by rebars, these works stand between three and four feet tall, encouraging viewers to bend their bodies to fully experience their formal nuances.

Among the other highlights in the show is the light installation *Constelação II* (2022), which projects the intricate linear forms of its constituent bird cage and fabric components as shadows against the gallery wall. In the way of two-dimensional works, the exhibition will spotlight eight new pieces from the artist's Tela-Corpo (Canvas-Body) series, in which she experiments with curved arrangements of graphic media amid color fields. Two hanging sculptures from Gomes's Relíquia (Relic) series will be in the show—these works feature ornate abstractions comprising lace, buttons, various metals, zippers, and other combinations of materials.

A group of layered collages—depicting vibrantly colored natural forms—will also figure in the presentation. For these works, Gomes uses a wide range of materials, including Posca pens and watercolors, to make strokes, chromatic fields, arabesques, hatches, volutes, and stains. Utilizing papers of various textures, weights, and shades, the artist conjures new visual effects in each collage.

A section of the exhibition will be dedicated to new works on paper Gomes created as part of a collaboration with her studio assistant, Juliana dos Santos. These small-scale, lyrical works depict organic—yet otherworldly—forms rendered with watercolor, acrylic, cotton lace, and other materials. A film documenting Gomes and dos Santos's process and work in the artist's São Paulo studio will also be on view.

Gomes's work was recently acquired by the Guggenheim Museum in New York and Tate in London. She is represented in numerous collections around the world, including the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago; the Pérez Art Museum Miami; the Rubell Museum in Miami; the Minneapolis Institute of Art; the San Antonio Museum of Art in Texas; the Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo; the Museu de Arte de São Paulo; the Museu de Arte do Rio, Rio de Janeiro; the Instituto Inhotim in Brumadinho, Minas Gerais, Brazil; and the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi.

Sonia Gomes (b. 1948, Caetanópolis) combines secondhand textiles with everyday materials, such as furniture, driftwood, and wire, to create abstract sculptures that reclaim Afro-Brazilian traditions and feminized crafts from the margins of history. Juxtaposing tensile and slack forms, Gomes's contorted sculptures exude a corporeality and dynamism that she attributes to her love of popular Brazilian dances. Gomes uses found or gifted fabrics, which, according to her, "bring the history of the people that they belonged to." "I give a new significance to them," she adds. Her assemblages thus tie Brazil's historical trajectory to the long-disregarded narratives of women, people of color, and countless anonymous individuals.

Through its recycling of used fabric, Gomes's work also evinces a principle of thrift that is both a consequence of Brazil's rapid and uneven industrial development and a dissenting answer to its accompanying culture of wasteful consumption and environmental destruction. As a whole, her art is marked by a decolonizing impulse, providing oblique responses to the social inequities and ecological urgencies of present-day Brazil and, more broadly, a globalized world.

Pace is a leading international art gallery representing some of the most influential contemporary artists and estates from the past century, holding decades-long relationships with Alexander Calder, Jean Dubuffet, Barbara Hepworth, Agnes Martin, Louise Nevelson, and Mark Rothko. Pace enjoys a unique U.S. heritage spanning East and West coasts through its early support of artists central to the Abstract Expressionist and Light and Space movements.

Since its founding by Arne Glimcher in 1960, Pace has developed a distinguished legacy as an artist-first gallery that mounts seminal historical and contemporary exhibitions. Under the current leadership of President and CEO Marc Glimcher, Pace continues to support its artists and share their visionary work with audiences worldwide by remaining at the forefront of innovation. Now in its seventh decade, the gallery advances its mission through a robust global program—comprising exhibitions, artist projects, public installations, institutional collaborations, performances, and interdisciplinary projects. Pace has a legacy in art bookmaking and has published over five hundred titles in close collaboration with artists, with a focus on original scholarship and on introducing new voices to the art historical canon.

The gallery has also spearheaded explorations into the intersection of art and technology through its new business models, exhibition interpretation tools, and representation of artists cultivating advanced studio practices. As part of its commitment to technologically engaged artists within and beyond its program, Pace launched a hub for its web3 activity, Pace Verso, in November 2021.



Today, Pace has nine locations worldwide, including a European foothold in London and Geneva, and two galleries in New York—its headquarters at 540 West 25th Street, which welcomed almost 120,000 visitors and programmed 20 shows in its first six months, and an adjacent 8,000 sq. ft. exhibition space at 510 West 25th Street. Pace’s long and pioneering history in California includes a gallery in Palo Alto, which operated from 2016 to 2022. Pace’s engagement with Silicon Valley’s technology industry has had a lasting impact on the gallery at a global level, accelerating its initiatives connecting art and technology as well as its work with experiential artists. Pace consolidated its West Coast activity through its flagship in Los Angeles, which opened in 2022. Pace was one of the first international galleries to establish outposts in Asia, where it operates permanent gallery spaces in Hong Kong and Seoul, as well as an office and viewing room in Beijing. Pace’s satellite exhibition spaces in East Hampton and Palm Beach present continued programming on a seasonal basis.




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