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Miguel Bakun

Kabinett

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booth estande G02

november 30 - december 04, 2021
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thursday and friday, 11am - 7pm
saturday, 11am - 6pm

30 novembro - 04 dezembro 2021
terça e quarta, 11h - 20h
quinta e sexta, 11h - 19h
sábado, 11h - 18h

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Miguel Bakun, enlightened solitude

The son of Slavic immigrants, Miguel Bakun (1909-1963) is a singular artist in the history of modern art in Brazil. With no formal training, he learned to paint with other contemporary artists he knew – like José Pancetti (1902-1958) and Guido Viaro (1897-1971), who, nonetheless, encouraged him in his career rather than teaching him techniques – and by visiting museums and galleries between Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo and Curitiba, where he lived until the end of his life. His originality resides on not committing to any of the two trends that marked the first phase of Brazilian modernism (1922-1951), whether the cubist-constructive trend, or the expressionistic or socially engaged subjectivity. Just like Maria Martins (1894-1973) and Oswaldo Goeldi (1895-1961), among very few others who did not engage in this modernist dichotomy, his pictorial production, though developed on heavy amounts of matter and emotion, reveals an artist of an original imagery, an anguished spirit – between depression and mysticism –, who turned his work into a territory for confrontation and pacification between man, art and nature. His oeuvre constitutes something that is isolated, the product of a modern individual, an autonomous painting that is an affirmation of art's transformative power. Like the aforementioned artists, Bakun has been winning recognition and setting in motion an important historical revision, gaining the appreciation of historians, institutions and collectors.

Bakun took the reality of the gaze, the visual experience of nature, as the truth that guided his pursuit for understanding the human condition – loneliness and melancholy – and art as consciousness and possible redemption. His last pieces are marked by a mystical search before his suicide. Consequently, his paintings are almost like flat, confined spaces, built by the materiality of paint on the canvas, turning the pictorial plane into a battle field that documents poetic struggles among which there's no place for technical virtuosity, only for the free flow of energy and lyricism, light and color. The quality of this production, as Eliane Prolik indicated, resides precisely on "his formal ingenuity, with an uncommon sense of precariousness and characteristics of a spontaneous modernism" (1). His paintings and drawings are restless expressive and formal worlds and put us in contact with a deeply human experience, resonating the inexorable nature of existence.

Although he also painted portraits and still-lives, it was with his landscapes – seascapes, woods and mountains –, that Bakun explored the best of his talents, carving a place for his work as a painter. The paintings presented in this selection are perfect examples of the artist's unmatched style, addressing an agonizing nature, represented in a space in which the urban fabric slowly and gradually depletes and extrudes the vegetation. This explains the sense of urgency and immediacy present in his production: there's no prior order to the compositions, the shapes aren't outlined by drawings – they emerge during the act of painting, through the impregnation of different paints, through the energy of his gestures, through a handling of matter which is simultaneously vigorous and lyrical. His color palette is also economic, with a predominance of blues, greens, yellows and whites, and his preference for lowered and stained hues accentuates the planar aspect of painting, while "his entangled gestures free the image from a representational dimension" (2). His works reveal the permanent tension in the constitution of the painting's surfaces, not as a window to the world, but as a fragment of an enclosed, confined world searching for light.

Ivo Mesquita*

***Ivo Mesquita** is a Brazilian independent curator and historian. He was the Artistic Director of the Fundação Bienal de São Paulo between 1999 and 2000, and Artistic Director of the Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo – MAM, between 2001 and 2002. He was the Chief-Curator for the 28th Bienal de São Paulo, in 2008, and the Chief-Curator of the Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo between 2002 and 2012, as well as its Artistic Director between 2012 and 2015. He lives and works in São Paulo, Brazil.

(1) Eliane PROLIK (ed.) – Miguel Bakun: a natureza do destino. Curitiba: author's edition, 2009, p.9.

(2) Idem, p.11.



Landscape with Cedars, 1940s
oil on canvas
22 5/8 x 18 1/8 in
óleo sobre tela
60 x 46 cm



Miguel Bakun, iluminada solidão

Filho de imigrantes eslavos, Miguel Bakun (1909-1963) é um artista singular na história da arte moderna no Brasil. Autodidata, aprendeu a prática da pintura na convivência com artistas contemporâneos seus como José Pancetti (1902-1958) e Guido Viaro (1897-1971) – que, entretanto, mais o estimularam na carreira do que lhe ensinaram uma técnica –, e na visita a museus e galerias de arte entre Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo e Curitiba, onde viveu até o fim da vida. A sua originalidade está em não se acomodar em nenhuma das duas tendências que marcaram a formação da primeira etapa do modernismo brasileiro (1922-1951), seja a tradição inaugurada pela razão cubo-construtivista, seja aquela da subjetividade expressionista ou do engajamento social. Como Maria Martins (1894-1973) e Oswaldo Goeldi (1895-1961), entre poucos outros fora desta dicotomia modernista, sua produção pictórica, ainda que construída com muita matéria e emoção, revela o artista de um imaginário original, um espírito angustiado, entre depressivo e místico, que fez do seu trabalho um território de enfrentamentos e pacificações entre homem, arte e natureza. Sua obra constitui algo isolado, produto de um sujeito moderno, uma pintura autônoma, afirmativa da potência transformadora da arte. Assim como os outros artistas já mencionados, Bakun vem ganhando visibilidade e pondo em movimento uma revisão histórica importante com o reconhecimento de historiadores, instituições e colecionadores.

Bakun tomou a realidade do olhar, a experiência visual da natureza, como a verdade que orienta sua busca pelo entendimento da condição humana – solidão e melancolia – e a arte como consciência e possibilidade de redenção dela. Suas últimas pinturas são marcadas pela busca mística antes do suicídio. Daí que suas pinturas, um espaço quase sem profundidade, enclausurado, construído pela materialidade da tinta sobre a tela, fazem do plano um campo de batalha, registrando embates poéticos nos quais não há lugar para virtuosismos técnicos senão que para o fluxo livre de energia e lirismo, de luz e cores. A qualidade desta produção, como apontou Eliane Prolík, reside justamente em “sua inventividade formal com um sentido incomum de precariedade e de características de um modernismo espontâneo.”⁽¹⁾ Suas pinturas e desenhos, inquietos mundos expressivos e formais, nos colocam em contato com uma experiência profundamente humana, ressoando a natureza inexorável da existência.

Embora tenha pintado retratos e naturezas mortas, foi nas paisagens – marinhas, matas e serras –, que Bakun logrou o melhor do seu talento e demarcou o lugar de sua obra como pintor. Os trabalhos apresentados nesta seleção são exemplares do estilo ímpar do artista, que fala de uma natureza agonizante, representada naquele espaço em que a cidade vai pouco a pouco secando e expulsando a vegetação. Isto explica certo sentido de urgência e imediatez desta produção: não há uma ordenação a priori na composição, as formas não se enunciam por um desenho, mas surgem no ato de pintar, com a impregnação das tintas, da energia dos gestos, num manejo da matéria simultaneamente entre enérgico e lírico. A paleta econômica – predominam o azul, verde, amarelo e branco – e a preferência pelos tons rebaixados e sujos acentuam o caráter planar da pintura, enquanto “os emaranhados de gestos liberam a imagem de sua natureza representacional.”⁽²⁾ Eles revelam a tensão permanente na constituição da superfície do quadro, não mais como uma janela para o mundo, mas como fragmento de um mundo enclausurado em busca de luz.

Ivo Mesquita*

***Ivo Mesquita** é um curador independente e historiador brasileiro. Diretor Artístico da Fundação Bienal de São Paulo, de 1999 a 2000; Diretor Artístico do Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo - MAM, de 2001 a 2002. Curador-chefe da 28ª Bienal de São Paulo, em 2008. Curador-chefe da Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo de 2002 a 2012 e seu diretor artístico de 2012 a 2015. Vive e trabalha em São Paulo, Brasil.

⁽¹⁾ Eliane PROLIK (ed.) – Miguel Bakun: a natureza do destino. Curitiba: edição do autor, 2009, pg.9.

⁽²⁾ Idem, pg.11.

Flamboyant Tree with St. Benedict Church and
Parish Church of Paranagua on the Background, 1952
oil on canvas
17 5/8 x 21 5/8 in
óleo sobre tela
44 x 55 cm

Exhibitions Exposições

Learning from Miguel Bakun: Subtropical,
Instituto Tomie Ohtake, São Paulo, Brazil, 2019.
Miguel Bakun, Simões de Assis, São Paulo, Brazil, 2019.

Publications Publicações

Learning from Miguel Bakun: Subtropical, p. 91,
Instituto Tomie Ohtake, São Paulo, Brazil, 2019.
Miguel Bakun, p. 12 and 13, Simões de Assis,
São Paulo, Brazil, 2019.





Blooming Ipe, 1954
oil on canvas
19 x 14 1/8 in
óleo sobre tela
48,5 x 36,5 cm

Exhibition Exposição
Miguel Bakun, Simões de Assis, São Paulo, Brazil, 2019.

Publication Publicação
Miguel Bakun, p. 17, Simões de Assis, São Paulo, Brazil, 2019.



Untitled, 1950s
oil on canvas
36 x 27 cm
óleo sobre tela
36 x 27 cm

Exhibition Exposição
Miguel Bakun, Simões de Assis, São Paulo, Brazil, 2019.

Publication Publicação
Miguel Bakun, p. 57, Simões de Assis, São Paulo, Brazil, 2019.



Landscape with Trees and House, 1950s
oil on canvas
17 7/8 x 21 7/8 in
óleo sobre tela
45 x 55 cm

Exhibitions Exposições

Learning from Miguel Bakun: Subtropical,
Instituto Tomie Ohtake, São Paulo, Brazil 2019.
Miguel Bakun, Simões de Assis, São Paulo, Brazil, 2019.

Publications Publicações

Learning from Miguel Bakun: Subtropical, p. 47,
Instituto Tomie Ohtake, São Paulo, Brazil, 2019.
Miguel Bakun, p. 54 and 55, Simões de Assis,
São Paulo, Brazil, 2019.



Untitled, 1950s
oil on canvas
18 1/9 x 21 1/4 in
óleo sobre tela
46 x 54 cm

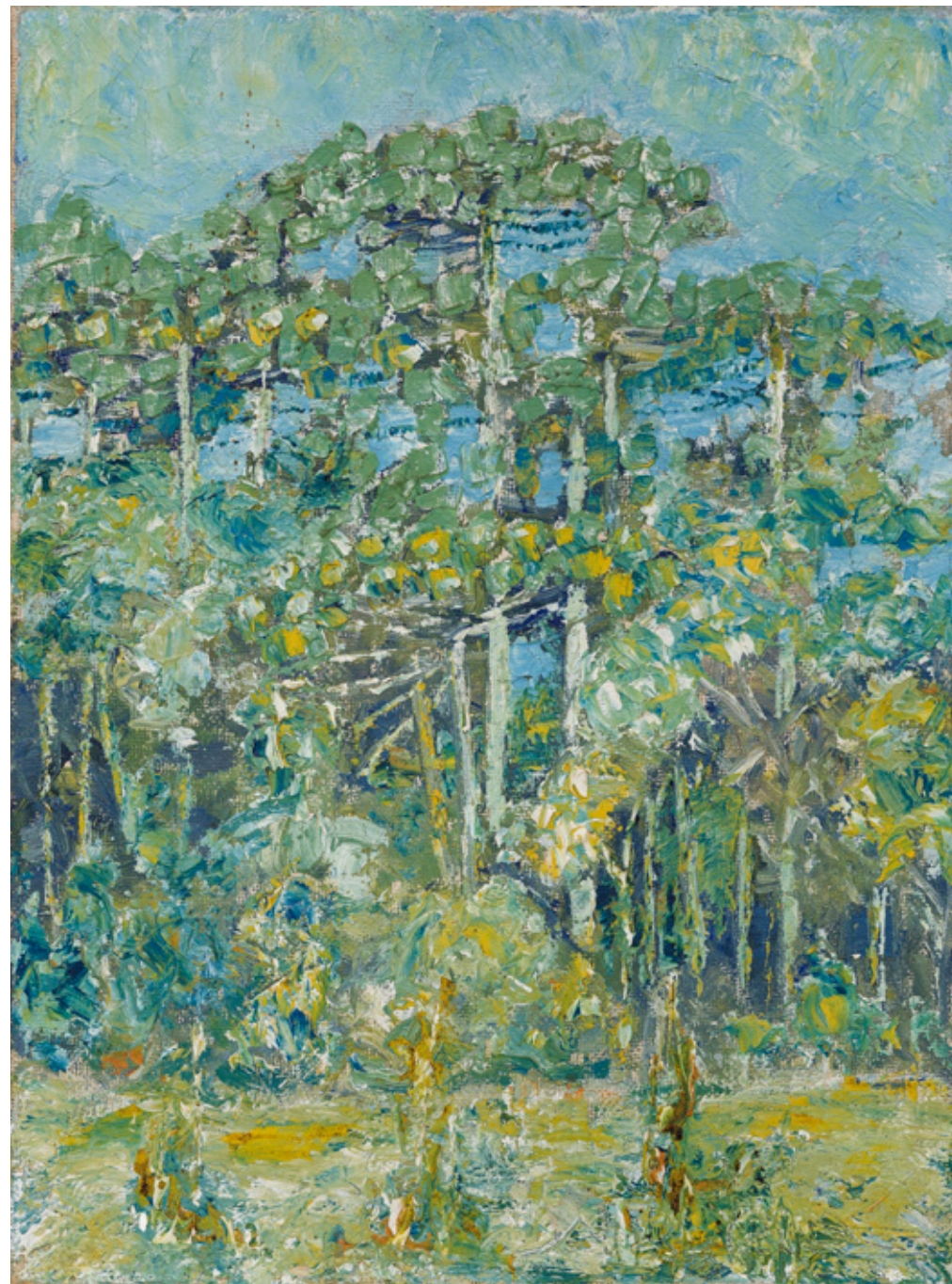
Exhibitions Exposições
Learning from Miguel Bakun: Subtropical,
Instituto Tomie Ohtake, São Paulo, Brazil 2019.
Miguel Bakun, Simões de Assis, São Paulo, Brazil, 2019.

Publications Publicações
Learning from Miguel Bakun: Subtropical, p. 81,
Instituto Tomie Ohtake, São Paulo, Brazil, 2019.
Miguel Bakun, p. 30 and 31, Simões de Assis,
São Paulo, Brazil, 2019.



Untitled, 1940s
oil on canvas
14 1/8 x 10 1/2 in
óleo sobre tela
36 x 26,7 cm

Exhibition Exposição
Miguel Bakun, Simões de Assis, São Paulo, Brazil, 2019.





Woods, 1950s
oil on canvas
10 7/8 x 13 in
óleo sobre tela
26,5 x 33 cm

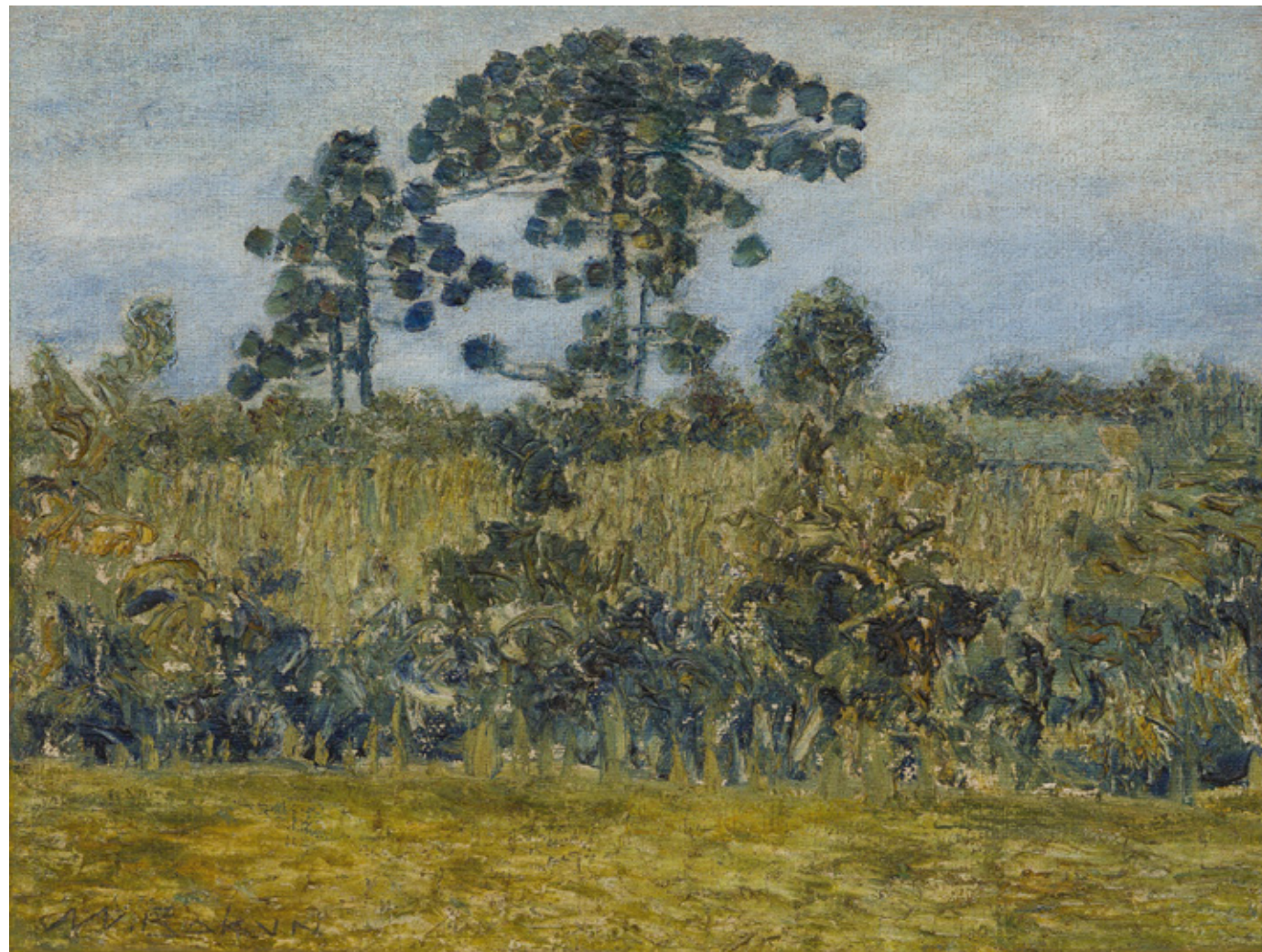
Exhibitions Exposições

Learning from Miguel Bakun: Subtropical,
Instituto Tomie Ohtake, São Paulo, Brazil 2019.
Miguel Bakun, Simões de Assis, São Paulo, Brazil, 2019.
Miguel Bakun Retrospective, BADEP Exhibition Hall,
Curitiba, Brazil, 1974.

Publications Publicações

Learning from Miguel Bakun: Subtropical, p. 95,
Instituto Tomie Ohtake, São Paulo, Brazil, 2019.
Miguel Bakun, p. 34 and 35, Simões de Assis,
São Paulo, Brazil, 2019.
Miguel Bakun Retrospective, nº 33,
BADEP Exhibition Hall, Curitiba, Brazil, 1974.





Landscape, 1950s
oil on canvas
13 7/8 x 18 1/8 in
óleo sobre tela
35 x 46 cm

Landscape with Pines and House, 1950s
oil on canvas
14 1/8 x 18 1/2 in
óleo sobre tela
36,7 x 47,8 cm

Exhibition Exposições
Miguel Bakun 25 years later,
opening of the Miguel Bakun Room,
Museu de Arte do Paraná, Curitiba,
Brazil, 1989.

Publication Publicações
Miguel Bakun 25 years later,
opening of the Miguel Bakun Room,
nº 27B, Museu de Arte do Paraná,
Curitiba, Brazil, 1989.



Sailboat in Antonina Bay, 1950s

oil on canvas

21 ¼ x 17 ½ in

óleo sobre tela

55,5 x 44,5 cm

Exhibitions Exposições

Miguel Bakun, Simões de Assis, São Paulo, Brazil, 2019.

Miguel Bakun 25 years later, opening of the Miguel Bakun Room,
Museu de Arte do Paraná, Curitiba, Brazil, 1989.

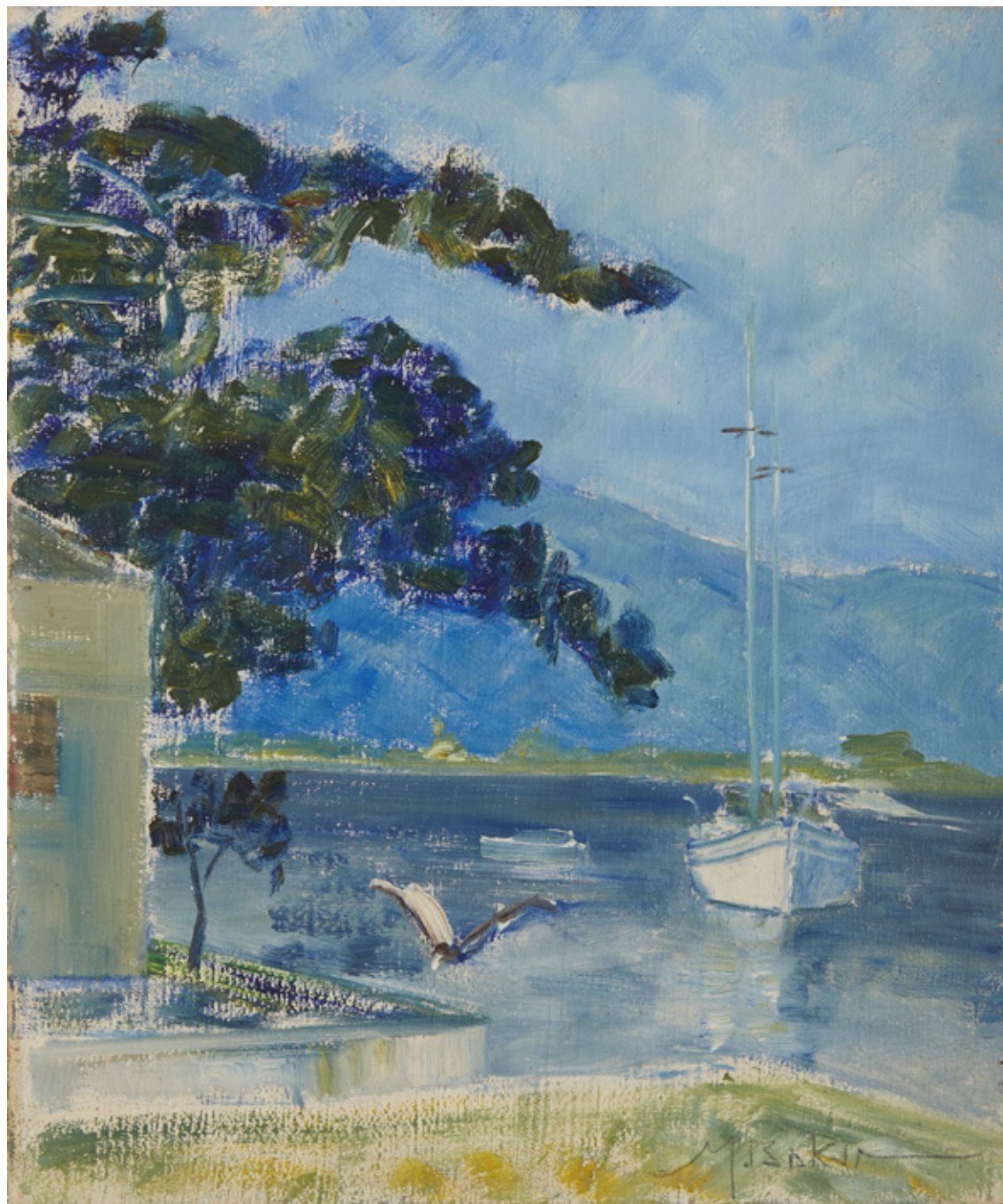
Miguel Bakun Retrospective, BADEP Exhibition Hall,
Curitiba, Brazil, 1974.

Publications Publicações

Miguel Bakun, p. 43, Simões de Assis, São Paulo, Brazil, 2019.

Miguel Bakun 25 years later, opening of the Miguel Bakun Room,
nº 28A, Museu de Arte do Paraná, Curitiba, Brazil, 1989.

Miguel Bakun Retrospective, nº 80,
BADEP Exhibition Hall, Curitiba, Brazil, 1974.







Miguel Bakun

(1909 Mallet, Brazil - 1963 Curitiba, Brazil)

Miguel Bakun was the son of Slavic immigrants, born in Mallet, a town in the south of Paraná, Brazil, on October 28, 1909. In his youth, he enlisted as a naval apprentice in the port city of Paranaguá, in 1926, before transferring to train as a cabin boy in Rio de Janeiro. There, he made his first pencil sketches, observation drawings, portraits, caricatures and landscapes – as did his classmate José Pancetti.

He had an accident in 1930 and left the Navy, moving then to Curitiba. Despite lacking formal training in Fine Arts, Bakun set up a home-studio that he kept with his earnings as a roving box-camera street photographer. By the 1940s, he was sharing a studio with other artists in a downtown building allocated by the city government. It was a promising decade for him, showing his works for the first time and winning awards at the Paraná Salon of Fine Arts and two iterations of the National Salon of Fine Arts, hosted in Rio de Janeiro. Critics noticed his work too: in the most emblematic essay of this period, the artist and professor Guido Viaro wrote about the artist: “taking air out of landscapes as if conducting a physics experiment”.

During his most prolific period, in the 1950s, Bakun painted portraits, still-lives, seascapes and, particularly, landscapes, as well as murals for state governor Moysés Lupion's residence, now known as Castelo do Batel. His late-1950s pieces featured animistic allusions in which allegorical figures blended into landscape contours.

Despite occasionally winning awards and befriending art-circuit agents, Bakun never fully belonged to the incipient local art system, nor was he able to make a living from painting. By the time he had emerged as an artist, academic painting was gradually modernizing its repertoire and his assertive expressiveness seemed out of place – it was too experimental or subjective. But then, a new generation of artists took the lead in Curitiba and placed abstract art front and center, thus dimming the visibility of Bakun's work – he was way too figurative.

His work is part of some of the most important private and institutional collections in Brazil, including the Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo; the Museu Oscar Niemeyer, the Museu de Arte Contemporânea do Paraná, and the Museu Paranaense, in Curitiba; and the Coleção Luís Antonio de Almeida Braga, in Rio de Janeiro.

Bakun's latter period saw him sorely affected by his precarious economic situation and treated for severe depression. He took his own life on February 14, 1963.

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