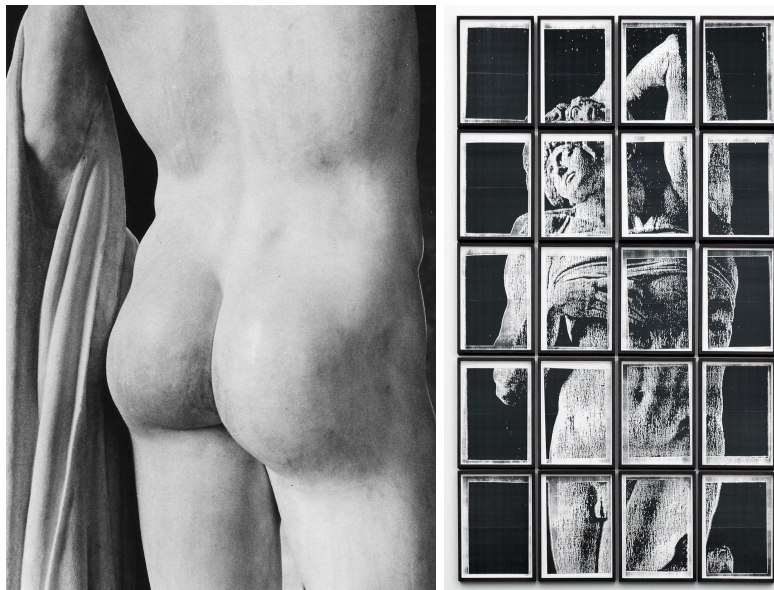


# Kupfer

## ***Let X=X: Alair Gomes and Hudinilson Jr.***

19 June - 17 July 2021



Kupfer is pleased to announce the exhibition *Let X=X*, featuring works by Brazilian artists Alair Gomes (1921-1992) and Hudinilson Jr. (1957-2013). Belonging to different generations, both artists produced groundbreaking and experimental works focusing on the male body during the repressive years of military dictatorship in Brazil. Gomes and Hudinilson's pioneering approach to homoeroticism and queerness within the largely heteronormative context of 1970s and 1980s Brazil had a lasting influence on the country's contemporary art scene.

Based in Rio de Janeiro, Alair Gomes had a career in engineering and philosophy of sciences before turning to photography in the mid to late 1960s. In the political climate that succeeded the 1964 military coup in Brazil, photojournalism focused on exposing the abuses of power perpetrated by the regime, while another significant branch of photography focused on issues of social exclusion and cultural identity. According to curator Paulo Herkenhoff, 'within the Brazilian heteronormative climate, Gomes was alone in the homoerotic tradition'.

The exhibition features works from Alair Gomes' most ambitious and thought-provoking series, *Symphony of Erotic Icons* (1966-1978). Composed exclusively with pictures of beautiful, young male bodies, the *Symphony* is composed of thousands of images detailing slight variations of the nude body, sometimes portrayed in unusual angles, creating almost choreographic sequences which evoke the rhythm of musical scores. These intimate pictures are above all an ode to the young male body, simultaneously achieving an extraordinary sense of proximity with the subject and a feeling of detachment through repetition.

By obsessively capturing his object of interest, Gomes creates a unique kind of work situated somewhere between photography and film, or still and moving image. More than thirty years after its making, *Symphony of Erotic Icons* remains a challenging work which still raises questions about the compability of art and prurience, about our relationship with our bodies, our views on sexuality, and the intricate societal codes that determine image-making today.

Hudinilson Jr. was one of the most important Brazilian artists of his generation, influencing the entire Brazilian artistic scene, not only through his personal work - produced between the 1970s and 2000s - but also because of his active role as a catalyzing personality of artist groups and experimental exhibitions. Hudinilson started to work with photocopy in the late 1970s, learning to operate the machine to its limit and exploring all its possible graphic possibilities. He enlarged details, made cut-outs, distorting the images of his body to the point where they become pure abstract texture. He said that this exercise meant losing oneself to seeing, an "exercise of seeing myself", as he would later name many of his series.

In his work, Hudinilson often included imagery of classical Greco-Roman sculpture as prime examples of the ideal of beauty, sensuality and sexuality that prevails in Western societies. *Let X=X* features an untitled polyptych formed by twenty framed photocopy prints that shows a particularly sensuous sculpted male figure seemingly captured in a moment of self-pleasure. The work is shown alongside a small photograph by Alair Gomes depicting the perfectly round marble buttocks of an unidentified classic sculpture; a work that is part of a late 1960s series titled *Journeys (Europe, Art)* which was motivated by the artist's wish to expand his personal collection of images of male nudes.

Other works by Hudinilson Jr. presented in the exhibition include *Xerox-Action* (1979-80) a set of five vintage photographs showing the naked artist performing different positions on top of the photocopier in a remarkable documentation of his artistic process. Also on view are some examples of Hudinilson's densely packed scrapbooks. Like Alair Gomes, Hudinilson was an avid collector of images cut out from books and magazines to compose what he called 'reference books'. These fascinating personal atlases provide further insight into the artist's methodology and interests, featuring the collision of art historical and pop imagery that becomes distilled in his work.

*Let X=X* is the first exhibition to bring together the work of Alair Gomes and Hudinilson Jr. While Gomes may be roughly described as the *voyeur* and Hudinilson as the *narcissist*, both artists

played a pioneering role in breaking with the prevailing heteronormativity in Brazilian art under a dictatorial regime at the same time as producing trailblazing experimental works that challenged existing modes of art-making. The exhibition is curated by Kiki Mazzucchelli.

The exhibition is organised in partnership with Galeria Jaqueline Martins, Renata Phoenix Collection and Galeria Almeida e Dale.

For press inquiries please contact [victoria@kupfer.co](mailto:victoria@kupfer.co)

## **ABOUT THE ARTISTS:**

### **ALAIR GOMES** (Valença, 1921 - Rio de Janeiro, 1992)

Born on December 20, 1921 in Valença, Alair de Oliveira Gomes obtained a degree in civil engineering in 1944 at the University of Brazil, Rio de Janeiro. The following year, he was appointed an engineer at the Brazilian Railway Company. He founded the literary review, MAGOG, with José Francisco Coelho and a few other friends in 1946. The same year, he underwent a profound religious crisis.

In 1948, he abandoned his profession as an engineer to devote himself to the study of modern physics, mathematics, and biology. In 1961, he received a philosophy grant from the Guggenheim Memorial Foundation. He spent one year in the United States (1962-1963), where he was invited to teach at Yale University. From 1964 to 1976, he participated in numerous international conferences on the philosophy of science. He became a professor of Philosophy of Science at the Biophysics Institute of the Federal University in Rio de Janeiro and a professor of contemporary art at the School of Visual Arts (Brazilian Ministry of Culture), and then, an advisor at the National Institute of Visual Arts (National Foundation for the Arts, Rio de Janeiro). From 1977, Gomes became more active in the fields of art criticism and photography. Between 1976 and 1984, he exhibited his photographs in New York, Paris, Rio de Janeiro, and Toronto.

He was murdered in 1992 in Rio de Janeiro.

In 2001, the Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain organised a major monographic exhibition of Alair Gomes, which was accompanied by a comprehensive catalogue. Since then, his work has gradually achieved international attention, having featured in the 30th São Paulo Biennial, curated by Luis Pérez-Oramas (2012) and *A New Sentimental Journey*, Maison Européenne de la Photographie (Paris, 2009). His work is now part of important collections including Fondation Cartier (Paris), Loewe Foundation (Madrid), and the MoMA (New York, USA).

### **HUDINILSON JR** (São Paulo, 1957 - 2013)

Working since the late 1970s, Sao Paulo-based Hudinilson Jr's practice shifted between autobiographical and diaristic collage, performative collaboration (with collaborative group 3Nós3, 1979–1982), small sculptures and Xerox works that track a little-known but expansive and rich life.

Addressing queer issues and sexuality, and the personal and political freedoms arising from the end of military rule in 1985, Hudinilson Jr formed a collection of collaged diaristic tomes, which are full of images collated from newspapers and magazines, photographs and letters and notes from friends. These books reveal that, despite an economy of means, Hudinilson Jr created a personal world which began with the politicized body. The 'diaries' juxtapose fragmentary imagery – monuments with youthful male bodies, casual notes and messages with self-portraits.

In recent years, the work of Hudinilson Jr has been presented at important collective exhibitions such as: Histories of Sexuality - MASP (São Paulo), Copyart in Brazil - 1970-1990 (University of San Diego, USA), The Matter of Photography in Americas (Stanford University, USA), Glasgow International Biennial (2014) and the 31st São Paulo Biennial. The artist also had his work recently presented in individual exhibitions at São Paulo Cultural Center, USP Museum of Contemporary Art (São Paulo) and Scrap Metal Gallery (Toronto).

His work is now part of important collections such as MoMA (New York, USA), Reina Sofia Museum (Madrid, Spain), Migros Museum (Zurich, Switzerland), MAGA Museo d'Arte (Gallarate, Italy), MALBA (Buenos Aires, Argentina), MASP (São Paulo, Brazil), Pinacoteca do Estado (São Paulo, Brazil), Museum of Modern Art (São Paulo, Brazil) and the USP Museum of Contemporary Art (São Paulo, Brazil).

## **FUNDRAISING INITIATIVE IN SUPPORT OF VULNERABLE TRANS PEOPLE IN SÃO PAULO**

### ***Hybrid Constellations - [Fort Magazine](#) and [Casa Chama](#)***

To coincide with the opening of *Let X=X: Alair Gomes and Hudinilson Jr*, Kupfer will launch a new limited edition series of fine art prints by Brazilian photographer Cássia Tabatini. The project is realised in partnership with Fort Magazine and Casa Chama, a nonprofit organisation founded and directed by transvestigender individuals to promote cultural activities and to provide legal, health, and financial support to vulnerable trans people. All profits from sales go to support Casa Chama's activities. More information available soon.