

DIANE DE POLIGNAC

# MARIA HELENA VIEIRA DA SILVA (1908-1992)

The Portuguese-French artist Maria Helena Vieira da Silva was one of the few women painters to be part of the post-war abstract movement. Her meticulously constructed works, in which space is broken into fragmented forms, are associated with “abstract landscape” painting.



## BIOGRAPHY

### MARIA HELENA VIEIRA DA SILVA'S EARLY LIFE: A CHILD EXPOSED TO THE ARTS

Maria Helena Vieira da Silva was born on 13 June 1908 in Lisbon, Portugal. Vieira da Silva's family was comfortably middle-class and well-educated. Her maternal grandfather was the founder of the most important newspaper in Lisbon: *O Século*. An only child, she grew up among adults.

Maria Helena Vieira da Silva travelled from an early age, visiting England, France and Switzerland with her parents. In fact, the artist revealed that her first childhood memories were of travelling, saying: "My first impressions were of Switzerland." When Vieira da Silva's father contracted tuberculosis, the family moved to a sanatorium in Leysin, Switzerland, where they stayed for six months. Her father sadly died in 1911 at the age of 35, his daughter not yet three years old. The young Maria Helena Vieira da Silva and her mother returned to Lisbon, where they settled for a time at the house of her maternal grandfather.

The only child at home, she immersed herself in books. Surrounded by the conversations of adults, she was also introduced to music by her family. Maria Helena Vieira da Silva spent her childhood watching, observing, listening... and imagining. She didn't attend school, taking lessons with a tutor at home instead, which isolated her even more from the world of children.

Vieira da Silva was naturally drawn to painting. Discussing her childhood, the artist said: "I think I just started painting as a child, it was as simple as that... [...] I was living in a world of youthful and entertaining grown-ups. I listened to their conversations. [...] I took refuge in the world of colours, the world of sounds... I think that all merged into one for me."

Towards the end of the summer of 1913, Vieira da Silva travelled to England for two months with her maternal grandmother and her aunt Beatriz. During her stay, she visited her first museums, which stirred powerful emotions in the young girl. She also attended Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at the Hastings Casino. The staging of the piece had a profound impact on her, nurturing her growing passion for theatre. It was during this period that she began experimenting with drawing.

During the First World War, Lisbon welcomed many artists. Even though Vieira da Silva's family was enduring financial difficulties at the time, it benefited from the cultural openness of the city. The young Vieira da Silva enjoyed the lively cultural scene, attending several performances of the Ballets Russes. Embracing music and reading in equal measure, she was profoundly affected by the *Book of Revelation*, which would prove decisive in shaping her character and her work.

### MARIA HELENA VIEIRA DA SILVA'S EARLY ARTISTIC TRAINING: CAUGHT BETWEEN DRAWING, PAINTING AND SCULPTURE

Vieira da Silva began her artistic training during the period from 1919 to 1927, alternating between drawing, painting and sculpture. She took courses in academic drawing with Emília Santos Braga—in which she copied casts—and studied painting at the Academia de Belas-Artes in Lisbon under Armando Lucena. Vieira da Silva painted her first works in oil at just 13 years old.

From 1924 to 1928, Vieira da Silva also practised sculpture, and during the 1926–1927 academic year, she attended anatomy classes at the Lisbon School of Medicine in order to perfect the construction of her drawings. She particularly appreciated ancient Greek sculpture, which she discovered through photographs, and Gothic sculpture, which she studied and admired at the Coimbra Museum in Lisbon.

### MARIA HELENA VIEIRA DA SILVA'S MOVE TO PARIS AND HER FULL EXPOSURE TO THE FRENCH CAPITAL'S VIBRANT ART SCENE

Driven by the rise of Fascism and a thirst for new artistic discoveries, Maria Helena Vieira da Silva decided to leave Portugal. She arrived in Paris, the capital of the arts, with her mother in January 1928. The artist said: "People used to set off from the port of Lisbon to discover the world and inhabit it. In Paris, you can discover the world right here at any moment through spiritual means. Paris, in return, inhabits the space with its creations."

On their arrival in Paris, Vieira da Silva and her mother settled in the 14<sup>th</sup> arrondissement, at the Médical Hôtel—an unusual place combining studios, clinic rooms and a boxing ring! Maria Helena Vieira da Silva was struck by the vibrant art scene causing a buzz in the French capital. "My first shock, as soon as I arrived in Paris," she said, "was the sight of a portrait by Picasso. That portrait gave me a more humane, more direct notion of painting. In those days, painting was in flux."

Still hesitating between painting and sculpture, Maria Helena Vieira da Silva enrolled in even more classes to develop her artistic training. First, she enrolled at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière, where she worked tirelessly in the studio of Antoine Bourdelle. It was at Bourdelle's studio that she met two of his assistants, with whom she became friends—Germaine Richier and Alberto Giacometti—and the painter Arpad Szenes, who became her husband.

After Bourdelle's death in 1929, Vieira da Silva left the Académie de la Grande Chaumière, enrolling instead at the Académie Scandinave. Studying under the sculptor Charles Despiau at first, she then devoted herself exclusively to painting with Charles Dufresne, Henry de Waroquier and Othon Friesz as her teachers. In parallel,

the young artist also tried her hand at printmaking, studying aquatint, etching and burin techniques at the Atelier 17 under Stanley William Hayter.

Maria Helena Vieira da Silva also attended classes the Académie Colarossi on an ad hoc basis and followed Fernand Léger's courses in applied arts, as well as Roger Bissière's more liberal instruction at the Académie Ranson. Her curiosity drove her to explore even more forms of training and artistic investigation, without ever becoming fixated on any particular theory or way of teaching.

Vieira da Silva's investigations also brought her into contact with the applied arts, working on carpet and fabric designs at around this time. She also started working with gouache for the first time, ordering the colours of her works through the use of small squares—a foreshadowing of her later work.

The year of her arrival in Paris, Vieira da Silva took part in her first group exhibition at the Grand Palais, the 1928 *Salon. Annual Fine Arts Exhibition, Société des Artistes français*. She exhibited a self-portrait in charcoal at the event.

Maria Helena Vieira da Silva was inspired in equal measure by the old masters and avant-garde artists. In the summer of 1928, Vieira da Silva went on a trip across Italy that had a profound effect on the artist. She was particularly struck by the works of Pietro Lorenzetti in Sienna, where she studied the painted tiles of his frescoes. Vieira da Silva said herself: "You know, it was classical art that opened me up to modern art." Impressed by the old masters at the Louvre, Vieira da Silva also developed a passion for Cézanne and his *Joueurs de cartes* [Card Players], which was on show at the museum in a small room dedicated to the Impressionists at the time. She was also struck by the works of Pierre Bonnard, particularly by his colourful chequered tablecloths, which she discovered in 1928 at an exhibition at the Galerie Bernheim-Jeune.

### THE EMERGENCE OF MARIA HELENA VIEIRA DA SILVA'S ARTISTIC STYLE

An exceptional observer, Vieira da Silva imbued her works with a synthesis of the great contributions of the avant-garde—cubism, geometric abstraction and futurism—to create her own artistic vocabulary and universe.

In the spring of 1931, a stay in Marseilles sparked a transformation Vieira da Silva's work. With a view of the old port from her hotel room, she observed the ferry bridge—no longer there—with fascination. Inspired by the metal architecture of the bridge and its dynamics in equal measure, she drew several studies on the spot and created a painting of the subject on her return to Paris.

For Vieira da Silva, it was a revelation, sparking a painting revival for the artist and pushing her a step closer to abstraction. Lydia Harambourg noted: "This is where her inner journey began, which may be compared to a reverie. Through a visual universe composed of silence and light, she developed a graphic architecture subject to the laws of gravity and to the three dimensions, in which space increased or decreased, and which only emphasised an attraction to emptiness."

Vieira da Silva created illusionary spaces that blurred the boundaries between representation and abstraction—labyrinths playing with perspective, made of intertwining imagery from memory and imagination. Indeed, the artist absorbed everything around her. "I watch the street, looking at the people walking or going by on different devices, at different speeds..." explained Vieira da Silva. "I imagine the invisible threads that are pulling them. They are not allowed to stop," she continued, "I don't see them anymore, I try to see the cogs that make them move. It seems to me that this is perhaps to some extent what I strive to paint." For Vieira da Silva, the city was an endless source of forms: from the tubular framework of scaffolding to the metallic architecture of its stations and railway tracks. She was particularly fond of the Paris Metro with its white earthenware tiles, underground corridors, platforms and posters.

Strongly influenced by Portuguese popular culture, Vieira da Silva developed a passion for azulejos, a form of multicoloured, decorative ceramic tilework. Just as squares would haunt her artistic universe, particularly in chequerboard form, bar-like lines were also used in her labyrinthine spaces. This time, it was the structure of the library that inspired the artist, who was an avid reader.

### ARPAD SZENES & MARIA HELENA VIEIRA DA SILVA: A PAINTER COUPLE

In February 1930, Maria Helena Vieira da Silva married the Hungarian painter Arpad Szenes, whom she had met at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière. The couple moved to 8 bis Villa des Camélias in the 14<sup>th</sup> arrondissement of Paris—a cul-de-sac that has since disappeared. Each of them set up their own studio at their new address: Szenes on the first floor, Vieira da Silva on the ground floor. In the year they were married, the couple left for three months to travel through Hungary and Transylvania. During the trip, they visited the cosmopolitan Romanian village of Baia Mare at the foot of the Carpathian Mountains, a melting pot of artists and gypsies.

With Fascism on the rise, the painters Vieira da Silva and Szenes took part in a number of intellectual meetings and joined *Les Amis de Monde*, without subscribing to communism, which was the prevailing political sentiment. They grew close to the Transylvanian painter Étienne Hajdú, among others, during this period. Similarly, during a long stay in Lisbon in 1936, the couple received

a large crowd of artists, writers, poets and musicians at their home and studio at 3 Alto de São Francisco.

In 1938, Szenes and Vieira da Silva moved to a new studio at 51 Boulevard Saint-Jacques in the 13<sup>th</sup> arrondissement of Paris, above a cardboard box and binder manufacturer. Constructed using wood and materials recovered from the demolished buildings of the World Fairs, the space was spartan, combining a private area and a studio space. The couple's neighbours included other artists such as Jean Degottex.

### **MARIA HELENA VIEIRA DA SILVA'S FIRST EXHIBITIONS AND RECOGNITION**

In May 1931, Vieira da Silva participated in two major art fairs in Paris: the Salon d'Automne and the Salon des Surindépendants.

The following year, the artist met the gallery owner Jeanne Bucher, who would play an important role in her life—both as a dealer and as a friend. A fan of Maria Helena Vieira da Silva's work, Jeanne Bucher was instrumental in promoting the artist to important institutions and collections, including MoMA in New York, which bought a painting by Vieira da Silva. Vieira da Silva's work was frequently presented at the Galerie Jeanne Bucher in numerous solo and group exhibitions. The artist's first exhibition at the Galerie Jeanne Bucher took place in 1933: the exhibition presented her sketches, stencil works and gouache works within the framework of her collaboration with the writer Pierre Guéguen for the illustrated book *Kô et Kô Les deux esquimaux*, which was published by the gallery.

Maria Helena Vieira da Silva discovered a number of other artists through the Galerie Jeanne Bucher, including the Uruguayan painter Joaquín Torres García. She was particularly struck by García's work, which was rigorously constructed using a grid pattern. It was at the gallery that she met Roger Bissière.

At around that time, Vieira da Silva met Georges Braque and Henri Matisse while working on a commission of reproductions of their paintings. At the request of Marie Cuttoli—an entrepreneur and designer of fashion and modern tapestries—Vieira da Silva and Szenes made copies of a painting by Matisse and a painting by Braque, to be reproduced in tapestry form.

### **ARPAD SZENES & MARIA HELENA VIEIRA DA SILVA'S EXILE IN BRAZIL**

Szenes and Vieira da Silva were on the Île de Ré in France with friends when the Second World War broke out. As Szenes was a Hungarian Jew, they decided to leave France for Lisbon to escape the war. They left their studio in the care of Jeanne Bucher—who used it to house artists in difficulty such as Nicolas de Staël.

During their stay in Lisbon, Szenes and Vieira da Silva were married in a religious ceremony at the Church of São Sebastião on 15 November 1939. Szenes converted to Catholicism and was baptised at the same time. After a year in Portugal and worried about the Nazi's expansion in Europe, they decided to go into exile in Brazil.

Szenes and Vieira da Silva moved to Rio de Janeiro, where they lived modestly and tried to sell their works. They received a few requests for portraits. Vieira da Silva diversified her materials, creating some paintings on glass, vases and plates, as well as designs for azulejos, in order to earn a living.

In Rio de Janeiro, the couple frequented many of the local intelligentsia, rubbing shoulders with artists, musicians, poets and writers, including Murilo Mendes and Cecília Meireles—with whom they became close friends. While the atmosphere around them was warm and friendly, Vieira da Silva's anguish about the war was ever-present.

And yet, her first successes were just around the corner. In 1942, the Museu Nacional de Belas Artes in Rio de Janeiro presented a special exhibition of Vieira da Silva's work—a move that was probably encouraged by Murilo Mendes. It was her the artist's first exhibition in a museum. The same year, Vieira da Silva was featured at the National Salon of Fine Arts in Rio de Janeiro.

It was during this period that Vieira da Silva came into contact with Joaquín Torres-García through the Uruguayan painter Carmelo Arden Quin. Torres-García greatly appreciated her work and wrote a laudatory article about it, which was published in the magazine *Alfar* in Montevideo in January 1943. The article was a source of great encouragement for Vieira da Silva.

In 1943, Vieira da Silva received an official commission for the College of Agriculture at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro—thanks to her friend Cecília Meireles—and created *Kilomètre 44*. Crafted from ceramic tiles in celebration of the Portuguese tradition, the work was commissioned to decorate the school's restaurant.

In 1944, the Galeria Askanazy in Rio de Janeiro presented a solo exhibition of Vieira da Silva's work. The artist was a pioneer of abstraction in Brazil at the time, but her work received a mixed reception.

While based in Brazil, Vieira da Silva also exhibited her work abroad: in 1945, she was featured for the first time at the Salon des Réalités Nouvelles in Paris, and in 1946, the Marian Williard Gallery in New York dedicated a solo exhibition to her work, which was organised through Jeanne Bucher. Mark Tobey, who bought one of her pieces at the solo exhibition in New York, subsequently became a friend of the couple.



## THE PAINTER MARIA HELENA VIEIRA DA SILVA'S RETURN TO FRANCE AND PROMINENCE

In 1947, the couple made their way back to France. Vieira da Silva returned with positive memories of Brazil, where she had developed wonderful friendships and explored a fascinating country—in some ways, an extension of Portugal with more intensity. Vieira da Silva and Szenes moved back to their studio on Boulevard Saint Jacques, where they stayed until 1953, often receiving painter friends such as Jean Bazaine.

In June 1947, the Galerie Jeanne Bucher presented an exhibition of Vieira da Silva's works from her Brazilian period. That same year, the art dealer Pierre Loeb—founder of the Galerie Pierre in Paris—met the painter Vieira da Silva at her studio. Greatly interested in her art, Loeb offered to promote her work and did so with great success. Although he was a difficult and temperamental man, as a dealer, he was committed to the artists that he represented. The Galerie Pierre was joined for a time by other artists, including Zao Wou-Ki and Jean-Paul Riopelle. In 1949, the Galerie Pierre presented a solo exhibition of Vieira da Silva's work in Paris.

The first monograph on the work of Vieira da Silva was published in 1949, written by Pierre Descargues and published by the Presses Littéraires in France.

At the turn of the 1950s, the couple Szenes and Vieira da Silva decided to delegate the management of their works and archives to their friend, the art critic Guy Weelen. As their agent and assistant, Weelen was of great help in promoting Vieira da Silva's work. By cataloguing the artist's works for a catalogue raisonné, Weelen enabled the publication of a compilation of her engraved works in 1977: *Les estampes 1929-1976*. He went on to write about Vieira da Silva's works on several other occasions, including a monograph published by Fernand Hazan as part of the «Peintres d'aujourd'hui» collection in 1960.

## THE PAINTER MARIA HELENA VIEIRA DA SILVA'S ILLUSTRATED BOOKS

After her first collaboration for *Kô et Kô Les deux esquimaux*, Vieira da Silva continued to create work for illustrated books. She created gouache works, which were reproduced using stencilling, in 1951 to illustrate the book *Et puis voilà*—a collection of the stories that Marie-Catherine, Jean Bazaine's daughter, would tell to her dolls.

In 1959, Vieira da Silva illustrated René Char's collection of poems *L'incérence lointaine* with burin engravings. A close friend that Vieira da Silva had met through Yvonne Zervos, René Char wrote about the artist's work on a regular basis.

In 1972, the artist Vieira da Silva produced 39 drawings to accompany M. P. Boutang's new translation of Plato's *Symposium*, which was published by Éditions Hermann.

In 1978, she met the Senegalese president Léopold Sédar Senghor, who selected her to illustrate one of his *Élégies majeures*—the elegy for Georges Pompidou. Vieira da Silva produced a series of four coloured lithographs for the work. Hans Hartung, Alfred Manessier, Pierre Soulages, Étienne Hajdú and Zao Wou-Ki were selected to illustrate the other elegies in the collection.

At the request of the composer Pierre Boulez, Vieira da Silva illustrated the cover of his book *Penser la musique aujourd'hui* in 1987.

## THE PAINTER MARIA HELENA VIEIRA DA SILVA AND THE APPLIED ARTS

In 1963, Vieira da Silva tried out a new medium for a state commission following a proposal by Jacques Lassaigue: stained glass. She collaborated with the Jacques Simon workshop in Reims for the project. Vieira da Silva revisited the practice at the request of the master glassmaker Charles Marcq and his wife Brigitte Simon, with whom she worked to create eight stained glass windows for the Church of Saint Jacques in Reims. The stained glass windows were inaugurated between 1968 and 1976.

Vieira da Silva also explored tapestry work, winning a tapestry competition for the University of Basel in 1954. In 1965, the tapestry Manufacture in Beauvais produced a first tapestry based on one of her works, for which a collage was used as the model. In 1971, the Pinton workshop in Aubusson created the *Bibliothèque* tapestry for the Salle des Actes at the University of Bordeaux's Faculty of Letters, based on a sketch by Vieira da Silva. A second version was woven in 1975 using a revised colour palette.

## INSTITUTIONAL RECOGNITION AND INTERNATIONAL ACCLAIM FOR THE PAINTER MARIA HELENA VIEIRA DA SILVA

In 1948, the French government bought a work by Vieira da Silva for the first time. The piece, *La partie d'échecs* from 1943, was housed at the Musée National d'Art Moderne – Centre Pompidou in Paris. In 1953, the Museu de Arte Moderna in São Paulo bought a 1951 composition by the artist, entitled *Borboletas* [Butterflies].

Vieira da Silva's work was presented in a flurry of exhibitions in 1952, including a group exhibition in London at the Redfern Gallery, which bought all of her paintings. The artist also exhibited works at The Pittsburgh International Exhibition of Contemporary Painting at the Carnegie Institute and took part in the Salon de Mai in Paris for the first time.

In 1954, the artist's work was presented at the Kunsthalle in Basel alongside Roger Bissière, Raoul Ubac and Germaine Richier. She also exhibited for the second time in New York—at the Cadby Birch Gallery—and was presented as part of the French Pavilion at the 27<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale.

Following an exhibition of Sergio de Castro's *a tempera* paintings at the Galerie Pierre during the same period, Vieira da Silva was attracted by this new medium and began to produce works using tempera painting techniques.

Having lost Portuguese nationality when she married Szenes and not having taken the necessary steps to obtain Hungarian nationality, Vieira da Silva was stateless. Vieira da Silva and Arpad Szenes became naturalized French citizens in May 1956. They then moved to 34 Rue de l'Abbé-Carton in the 14<sup>th</sup> arrondissement of Paris, where they had a house built on a plot of land they had bought. They set up their studios in the new property. Vieira da Silva's mother would move to the property for a time at the end of her life.

Numerous exhibitions of Vieira da Silva's works were organised in 1956. In New York, an exhibition of the artist's works was presented at the Saidenberg Gallery, which was organised through Pierre Loeb. In Lisbon, the Galleria Pórtico exhibited her works for the first time since the war—the pieces on show came from Portuguese collections.

In 1956, a second monograph on Vieira da Silva's work, written by René de Solier, was published by Georges Fall as part of the "Le Musée de Poche" collection.

The first touring retrospective exhibition of the painter Vieira da Silva's work took place in 1958. Touring Germany, it travelled from the Kestner-Gesellschaft in Hanover to the Kunst-und Museumverein in Wuppertal and the Kunstverein in Bremen. The artist travelled to Hanover for the opening. In the same year, she was awarded two prizes: the annual Guggenheim Museum Prize and the Fourth Prize from the Carnegie Institute in Pittsburgh. The following year, Vieira da Silva exhibited at *II Documenta '59* in Kassel.

At the turn of the 1960s, the couple acquired and fitted out an old house in Yèvre-le-Châtel in the Loiret—La Maréchalerie—where they stayed on a regular basis and set up their studios.

In 1961, Vieira da Silva's work was very well represented on the other side of the Atlantic. Two exhibitions of her work were organised on the East Coast of the United States: at the Knoedler Gallery in New York and the Duncan Phillips

Collection in Washington. The couple travelled to the United States for the first time for the occasion. Vieira da Silva was particularly struck by the unconventional, vertical architecture that she discovered in New York, which she had often imagined prior to the visit.

The painter Vieira da Silva was also the guest of honour at the 6<sup>th</sup> São Paulo Biennale, where she presented ten works and was awarded the Biennale's International Grand Prize for Painting.

A second retrospective of Vieira da Silva's works of art was presented in Germany in 1962 at the Städtische Kunsthalle in Mannheim.

Two further Vieira da Silva retrospectives were organised in 1964: one at the Musée de Peintures et de Sculptures in Grenoble, the other at the Galleria Civica d'Arte Moderna at the Museo Civico in Turin, which resumed and expanded the exhibition presented in Grenoble.

Vieira da Silva travelled to New York for a second time with Szenes in 1966 for a new solo exhibition at the Knoedler Gallery. The couple took the opportunity to travel through the Arizona desert and even extended their trip to Mexico.

An extensive touring retrospective of Vieira da Silva's work took place between 1969 and 1970. The tour began at the Musée National d'Art Moderne in Paris, which looked back on 87 works from the period from 1935 to 1969. The exhibition then travelled to the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen in Rotterdam, and then on to the Kunstnernes Hus in Oslo and the Kunsthalle in Basel in 1970. The retrospective was significantly expanded when it reached the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon, which presented some two hundred works by the artist.

In 1969, the Galerie Jeanne Bucher exhibited a group of works by Vieira da Silva in an exhibition entitled *Les Irrésolutions Résolues*.

In 1971, the Musée Fabre in Montpellier presented a major retrospective of Vieira da Silva's works, paintings and prints. Georges Desmouliéz wrote the text for the exhibition catalogue. The following year, the Musée d'Unterlinden in Colmar held a retrospective exhibition dedicated to Vieira da Silva after presenting the work of Nicolas de Staël.

The couple met André Malraux during a lunch at their home in 1974. The meeting sparked the creation of five portraits of Malraux by Vieira da Silva: four sugar

aquatints and a copper burin engraving, which would illustrate a special limited-edition of the book *Malraux, celui qui vient* by Guy Suarès.

In the same year, the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Dijon presented the exhibition *Deux Volets de la Donation Granville. Jean-François Millet – Vieira da Silva*. The artist donated her largest painting, *Urbi et orbi*, created between 1963 and 1972, to the museum. In 1976, the Musée National d'Art Moderne – Centre Pompidou in Paris received an important donation of drawings from Szenes and Vieira da Silva.

In 1977, the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris presented the first exhibition dedicated solely to the painter's gouache works and tempera paintings—followed by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon.

In the same year, a new monograph on the works of Vieira da Silva—containing extensive examples of reproductions and archival material—was published by Polígrafa Editions in Barcelona, written by Jacques Lassaigne and Guy Weelen.

In 1980, Vieira da Silva's body of work—including paintings, engravings and tapestries—was exhibited at the French Cultural Centre in Dakar. At the inauguration, Senghor gave a laudatory speech on her work entitled *La leçon de Vieira da Silva ou puissance d'émotion et finesse d'expression*.

Vieira da Silva and Szenes' paintings were exhibited face to face for the first time in 1987 at the Musée Granet in Aix-en-Provence. The exhibition was later reprised by the Nouveau Théâtre in Angers and by the Town Hall of Cholet as part of a wider event on the presence of contemporary art in Anjou.

#### **THE PAINTER MARIA HELENA VIEIRA DA SILVA'S HONOURS AND PUBLIC COMMISSIONS**

In 1981, Vieira da Silva received a commission from the French Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to decorate the chapel adjoining the Palácio de Santos—the headquarters of the French Embassy in Lisbon. The commission included five painted panels for the sacristy and a tapestry to adorn the altar. The panels were inaugurated in 1983 and the tapestry was transferred to the Cultural Services department of the French Embassy—today located at the Institut Français in Lisbon.

In 1983, another major commission was awarded to Vieira da Silva when the Lisbon Metropolitan Company commissioned the artist to create the decorative tiles for

the Cidade Universitária metro station. At her request, the artist collaborated with her friend, the painter-ceramist Manuel Cargaleiro on the project. A gouache entitled *Le métro*, which dated from 1940, was used as a base and model for the design of the azulejos panels. The station's decorative tiles were inaugurated in October 1988.

An exhibition dedicated to the painter Vieira da Silva was organised in a tribute to her work in 1988 by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation's Centre for Modern Art in Lisbon and the Centre National des Arts Plastiques in Paris. The Lisbon exhibition was inaugurated on 13<sup>th</sup> June, the artist's birthday, by the President of the Portuguese Republic Mário Soares. The Paris exhibition was presented at the Grand Palais in the autumn of the same year.

Vieira da Silva's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday in 1988 was marked by a series of official tributes in recognition of her work: the Municipality of Lisbon awarded her its City Medal; the Royal Academy of London named her an Honorary Member; and Jack Lang, the French Minister for Culture, awarded her the Order of Merit. In 1991, the French President François Mitterrand promoted the artist to the rank of Officer of the Legion of Honour.

The following year, Vieira da Silva was made guest of honour at the 20<sup>th</sup> São Paulo Biennale, where an entire room was dedicated to her—with thirty of her works on show.

#### **ARPAD SZENES & MARIA HELENA VIEIRA DA SILVA'S WORKS: RECOGNITION AND POSTERITY**

Arpad Szenes died on 16 January 1985. The death of Szenes greatly affected Vieira da Silva, but the artist continued to live in communion with him through her paintings. The painter confided: "Painting is like a person, we watch it live."

In 1990, the Arpad Szenes – Vieira da Silva Foundation was created in Lisbon and a centre for documentation and research to promote the study and dissemination of the couple's works was established. A museum bringing together the works of Szenes and Vieira da Silva was also created in Lisbon.

Maria Helena Vieira da Silva died on 6 March 1992. She was buried in the cemetery in Yèvre-le-Châtel, France, alongside her mother and Arpad Szenes. Among the figures present at her funeral was Mário Soares, President of the Portuguese Republic. On 8 March 1993, the Avenue Maria-Helena Vieira da Silva was inaugurated in Lisbon.

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## SELECTED COLLECTIONS

Amsterdam, Stedelijk Museum  
Basel, Oeffentliche Kunstsammlung  
Cologne, Wallraf-Richartz Museum  
Dijon, Musée des Beaux-Arts  
Düsseldorf, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen  
Essen, Museum Folkwang  
Geneva, Fondation Gandur pour l'Art  
Helsinki, Ateneum Art Museum  
Lausanne, Musée Cantonal des Beaux-Arts  
Lille, Musée d'Art et d'Histoire  
Lisbon, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation  
London, The Tate Gallery  
Lyon, Musée des Beaux-Arts  
Mannheim (Germany), Städtische Kunsthalle  
Minneapolis, MN, Walker Art Center  
Mountainville, NY, Storm King Art Center  
New York, NY, The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum,  
Cincinnati, OH, Cincinnati Art Museum  
Paris, Centre National d'Art Contemporain  
Paris, Musée National d'Art Moderne  
Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen  
Rouen, Musée de Rouen  
Saint Louis, Washington University Gallery of Art  
San Francisco, CA, San Francisco Museum of Art  
São Paulo, São Paulo Museum  
Stuttgart, Staatsgalerie  
Toledo, OH, The Toledo Museum of Art  
Turin, Galleria Civica d'Arte Moderna  
Zurich, Kunsthaus

## SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

*Salon de 1928. Exposition annuelle des Beaux-Arts, Société des Artistes français*, Grand Palais, Paris, 1928  
*Salon des Surindépendants*, Paris, 1931  
*Salon d'Automne*, Paris, 1931  
*Kô et Kô, Les deux esquimaux, livre de Pierre Guéguen illustré par Vieira da Silva*, Galerie Jeanne Bucher, Paris, 1933  
*Exposição Maria Helena Vieira da Silva Szenes*, Galeria UP, Lisbon, 1935  
Solo exhibitions, Galerie Jeanne-Bucher, Paris, 1936, 1937, 1947, 1960, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1976, 1982, 1994, 1998, 2002, 2019  
*Vieira da Silva – Arpad Szenes, the two artists' studio*, Lisbon, 1936  
*Peintures de Szenes et Vieira da Silva – Sculptures de Hajdu*, Galerie Jeanne Bucher, Paris, 1939  
*Vieira da Silva*, Museu Nacional de Belas Artes, Rio de Janeiro, 1942  
*Vieira da Silva*, Galeria Askanazy, Rio de Janeiro, 1944  
*Salon des Réalités Nouvelles*, Paris, 1945, 1966  
*Vieira da Silva*, Marian Willard Gallery, New York, 1947  
Solo exhibitions, Galerie Pierre, Paris, 1949, 1951, 1955  
*Vieira da Silva, gouaches*, Librairie-Galerie La Hune, Paris, 1950

*Et puis Voilà. Histoire de Marie-Catherine, gouaches de Vieira da Silva*, Galerie Jeanne Bucher, Paris, 1951  
Group exhibition, Redfern Gallery, London, 1952  
*The Pittsburgh International Exhibition of Contemporary Painting*, Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, USA  
*Salon de Mai*, Paris, 1952  
*Vieira da Silva*, Cadby Birch, Gallery, New York, 1954  
Group exhibition, Kunsthalle, Basel, 1954  
*27<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale*, French Pavilion, Venice, 1954  
*Vieira da Silva – Germaine Richier*, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, 1955  
*Vieira da Silva*, Saldenberg Gallery, New York, 1956  
*Vieira da Silva, œuvres de 1946-1956*, Galerie d'Art Moderne Marie Suzanne Feigel, Basel, 1956  
*Vieira da Silva*, Galerie du Perron, Geneva, 1956  
Solo exhibition, Galerie d'Art Moderne, Basel, 1956  
*Vieira da Silva*, The Hanover Gallery, London, 1957  
*Vieira da Silva. Exposição de Obras existentes em Portugal*, Galeria Pórtico, Lisbon, 1957  
*Vieira da Silva*, touring exhibition in Germany: Kestnergesellschaft, Hanover; Kunst- und Museumverein, Wuppertal; Kunstverein, Bremen, 1958  
*Expo 58*, Brussels World Fair, Brussels, 1958  
*II. Documenta*, Kassel, 1959  
*Vieira da Silva*, Knoedler Galleries, New York, 1961  
*Vieira da Silva, peintures 1934-1960*, Die Städtische Kunsthalle, Mannheim (Germany), 1961  
*Vieira da Silva, paintings 1934-1936*, Phillips Art Gallery, Washington, 1961  
*Recent gouaches by Vieira da Silva*, M. Knoedler & Co., Inc., New York; Phillips Art Gallery, Washington, 1963  
*Vieira da Silva. Serigraphs, lithographs, etchings presented by the artist*, Bezalel National Museum, Jerusalem, 1963  
*Vieira da Silva*, Galleria Civica d'Arte Moderna, Turin, 1964  
*Vieira da Silva*, Musée de Peinture et Sculpture, Grenoble, 1964  
*Vieira da Silva*, Galerie Alice Pauli, Lausanne, 1964  
*32<sup>nd</sup> Venice Biennale*, French Pavilion, Venice, 1964  
Solo exhibition, Galerie Albert Loeb, New York, 1965  
*Presença de Vieira da Silva e Arpad Szenes no Brasil*, Galeria Verseau, Rio de Janeiro, 1965  
*Vieira da Silva*, Academia de Amadores de Música, Lisbon, 1966  
*Vieira da Silva, recent oil paintings*, M. Knoedler & Co., Inc., New York, 1966  
*Vieira da Silva, Schilderijen 1935-1969*, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, 1969  
*Vieira da Silva, gouaches 1945-1967*, Galerie Jacob, Paris, 1969  
*Vieira da Silva, Les Irrésolutions résolues suite de 30 huiles, gravures et fusains*, Galerie Jeanne Bucher, Paris, 1969  
*Vieira da Silva, peintures 1935-1969*, Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris, 1969  
*Vieira da Silva*, Comédie de la Loire, Tours, 1969  
*Vieira da Silva*, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisbon, 1970  
*Vieira da Silva*, Galeria São Mamede, Lisbon, 1970  
Solo exhibitions, Galeria 111, Lisbon, 1970, 1985  
*Vieira da Silva*, Kunsthalle, Basel, 1970  
*Vieira da Silva, Malerier 1935-1969*, Kunsternes Hus, Oslo, 1970  
*Vieira da Silva*, Musée Fabre et Galerie Frédéric Bazille, Montpellier, 1971



*Vieira da Silva: Paintings 1967-1971*, M. Knoedler & Co., In., New York, 1971

*Vieira da Silva*, Musée d'Unterlinden, Colmar, 1972

*Œuvres graphiques de Vieira da Silva*, touring exhibition: Musée des Beaux-Arts, Rouen; Musée Thomas-Henry, Cherbourg, 1972

*Vieira da Silva*, Musée d'Orléans-Hôtel Cabu, Orléans, 1973

*Vieira da Silva, œuvres graphiques*, Maison de la Culture, Orléans, 1973

*Vieira da Silva*, Centro Rizzoli, Milan, Italy, 1973

*Deux Volets de la Donation Granville. Jean-François Millet – Vieira da Silva*, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Dijon, 1974

*Œuvres graphiques de Vieira da Silva*, touring exhibition in Sweden, 1975

*Vieira da Silva gravuras*, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, Lisbon; Biblioteca – Museo Municipal, Vila Franca de Xira, 1975

*Vieira da Silva œuvres de 1931 à 1975*, Musée d'Etat, Luxembourg; Musée de Metz, Metz, 1976

*Les dessins d'Árpád Szenes et Vieira da Silva au Musée National d'Art Moderne*, Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris, 1976

*Vieira da Silva, estampes à l'occasion de la sortie du catalogue de l'œuvre gravé*, Galerie La Hune, Paris, 1977

*Vieira da Silva peintures a tempera, 1929-1977*, touring exhibition: Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, France; Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisbon, 1977

*Vieira da Silva, 1931-1976*, Kunsten Museum of Modern Art, Aalborg (Denmark), 1978

*L'œuvre gravé de Vieira da Silva*, Musée d'Agen, Agen, 1979

*Exposition Marie-Hélène Vieira da Silva*, French Cultural Centre, Dakar, 1980

*Vieira da Silva, Rétrospective de l'œuvre gravé*, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, 1981

*Vieira da Silva, Obra grafica*, Museu de Belas Artes, Bilbao, 1983

*Rencontres d'Art 83. Hommage à Vieira da Silva*, Musée Ingres, Montauban, 1983

*Vieira da Silva*, French Cultural Center, Rome, 1984

*Vieira da Silva nas Coleções portuguesas*, Museu de Arte, São Paulo, 1987

*Vieira da Silva – Árpád Szenes*, touring exhibition: Musée Granet, Aix-en-Provence; Nouveau Théâtre, Anger; Hôtel de Ville, Cholet, 1987

*Vieira da Silva, Tapeçarias*, Museu Nacional do Traje, Lisbon, 1988

*Vieira da Silva, Rétrospective*, touring exhibition: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisbon, Portugal; Grand Palais National Galleries, Paris, 1988

*Vieira da Silva, artista convidada, 20<sup>th</sup> International São Paulo Biennale*, São Paulo, 1989

*Vieira da Silva*, Maison des Princes, Pérouges, 1989

*20<sup>th</sup> International Biennale*, São Paulo, 1989

*Vieira da Silva – Árpád Szenes nas Coleções portuguesas*, Casa de Serralves, Porto, 1989

*Vieira da Silva dans les collections portugaises*, Europalia 91 Portugal, Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium – Modern Art Museum, Brussels, 1991

*Vieira da Silva*, Fundación Juan March, Madrid, 1991

*Hommage à Vieira da Silva*, Galerie Alice Pauli, Lausanne, 1992

*Vieira da Silva 1935-1984 – Paula Rego, 1959-1986*, Galeria Nasoni, Porto; Lisbon, 1992

*Présentation de la dation de Vieira da Silva*, touring exhibition: Musée National d'Art Moderne – Centre Pompidou, Paris; Musée Fabre, Montpellier; Musée des Beaux-Arts, Rouen, 1994

*Les malheurs de Sophie. Illustrações de Vieira da Silva*, Galerie Jeanne Bucher, Paris, 1994

*L'inclémence Lointaine, poems by René Char illustrated by Vieira da Silva*, Arpad Szenes – Vieira da Silva Foundation, Lisbon, 1995

*Vieira da Silva, Retrospective*, Mjellby Art Center, Halmstad (Sweden), 1995

*Gravuras*, touring exhibition, Museu Torres-García, Montevideo; Centro Cultural Borges, Buenos Aires, 1996

*Itinerário*, Arpad Szenes – Vieira da Silva Foundation, Lisbon, 1997

*Estes Desenhos*, Arpad Szenes – Vieira da Silva Foundation, Lisbon, 1997

*Studies for stained glass windows – Church of Saint-Jacques de Reims*, Arpad Szenes – Vieira da Silva Foundation, Lisbon, 1997

*Grafika*, solo exhibition, International Cultural Centre, Krakow, 1998

*Árpád Szenes – Vieira da Silva dans les collections du Musée National d'Art Moderne*, Centre Pompidou, Paris, 1998

*Gravuras*, Galeria Municipal de Exposições do Palacio Quinta da Piedade, Povoia de Santa Iria, Vila Franca de Xira, 1999

*Vieira da Silva*, touring exhibition: Fondation Dina Vierny, Musée Maillol, Paris; Centre d'Art et Culture Campredon, L'Isle-sur-la-Sorgue, 1999

*Vieira da Silva*, Fundación Bilbao Bizkaia Kutxa, Bilbao, Spain, 2000

*Œuvre gravé*, Musée Rignault, Saint-Cirq-Lapopie, 2000

*Arpas Szenes e Vieira da Silva – período brasileiro*, Arpad Szenes – Vieira da Silva Foundation, Lisbon, 2000

*Árpád Szenes e Vieira da Silva – período brasileiro, Fondation Arpad Szenes – Vieira da Silva*, Fondation Casa França-Brasil, Rio de Janeiro, 2001

*Vieira da Silva Kô et Kô et autres histoires*, Arpad Szenes – Vieira da Silva Foundation, Lisbon, 2001

*Gravuras*, solo exhibition, Casa da Cultura, Estarreja (Portugal), 2001

*Vieira da Silva, The portraits*, Arpad Szenes – Vieira da Silva Foundation, Lisbon, 2002

*Cartazes de Vieira da Silva*, Arpad Szenes – Vieira da Silva Foundation, Lisbon, 2002

*Desenhos anatómicos (1926-1927)*, Arpad Szenes – Vieira da Silva Foundation, Lisbon, 2002

*Vieira da Silva, Il labirinto del tempo*, Palazzo Magnani, Reggio Emilia (Italy), 2003

*Gravures*, Galeria da Biblioteca Municipal, Azambuja (Portugal), 2003

*L'Envolée Lyrique, Paris 1945-1956*, Musée du Luxembourg, Paris, 2006

*Vieira da Silva, œuvres de la Fondation Árpád Szenes – Vieira da Silva et du centre d'Art Moderne José de Azeredo Perdigão*, Centre Cultural Calouste Gulbenkian, Paris, 2007

*Vieira da Silva, un élan de sublimation*, Arpad Szenes – Vieira da Silva Foundation, Lisbon, 2008

*Les Sujets de l'abstraction, Peinture non-figurative de la Seconde École de Paris (1946-1962)*, group exhibition, Fondation Gandur pour l'Art, Musée Rath, Geneva/Musée Fabre, Montpellier, 2011

*L'Art en guerre, France 1938-1947*, touring exhibition: Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris, 2012; Arte en guerra, Francia 1938-1947; Museo Guggenheim, Bilbao, 2013

*L'Espace en jeu*, Musée d'Art Moderne, Céret, 2015

*Au fil de l'Espace*, Arpad Szenes – Vieira da Silva Foundation, Lisbon, 2015

*Georges Pompidou et l'art : une aventure du regard*, Château de Chambord, Chambord, 2017

*Modern Couples*, Centre Pompidou-Metz, Metz, 2018

*Maria Helena Vieira da Silva*, Waddington Custot, London, 2019

*Maria Helena Vieira da Silva*, Di Donna Gallery, New York, 2019

*Galerie du XX<sup>e</sup> Siècle (France 1905-1970)*, Centre Pompidou, Paris, 2019

*Brincar diante de Deus – Arte e liturgia, Matisse, Lourdes Castro, Vieira da Silva*, Arpad Szenes – Vieira da Silva Foundation, Lisbon, 2019

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René de Solier, *Vieira da Silva*, Paris, Georges Fall, Le Musée de Poche, 1956

Guy Weelen, *Vieira da Silva*, Paris, Fernand Hazan, "Peintres d'Aujourd'hui" collection, 1960

René Char (text), *Vieira da Silva*, exhibition text, Paris, Galerie Jeanne Bucher, 1960

Pierre Descartes and Michel Butor (texts), *Les Irrésolutions Résolues*, exhibition catalogue, Paris, Galerie Jeanne Bucher, 1969

*Vieira da Silva: Peintures 1935-1969*, exhibition catalogue, Paris, Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris, CNAC, 1969

Jacques Lassaing and Guy Weelen, *Vieira da Silva*, Barcelona, Ediciones Poligrafa; Paris, Cercle d'Art, 1978

Jacques Lassaing and Guy Weelen, *Vieira da Silva*, monograph, Paris, Cercle d'Art, 1987

Virginie Duval and Diane Daval-Béran, *Vieira da Silva Catalogue raisonné de l'œuvre peint et dessiné*, Albert Skira, 1994

Guy Weelen and Jean-François Jaeger (texts), *catalogue raisonné*, Geneva, Éditions d'Art Albert Skira, 1994

Guy Weelen and Jean-François Jaeger, Jean-Luc Daval and Diane Daval-Béran (texts), *monograph*, Geneva, Éditions d'Art Albert Skira, 1994

Gisela Rosenthal, *Vieira da Silva*, Cologne, Taschen, 1998

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