

INÈS BLUMENCWEIG (B.1930)

From Argentina and living in Rome, Inès Blumencweig is a virtuoso artist who creates artworks between painting and sculpture. Her great technical knowledge allows her to master various materials such as metal, wood and ribbons. Her work approaches Spatialism, kinetic art and Arte Programmata, while remaining fundamentally personal and original.

THE PAINTER INÈS BLUMENCWEIG'S ORIGINS AND TRAINING (1930-1948)

Born in Buenos Aires on 16 June 1930, Inès Blumencweig bears the family name of her Polish father, Leonardo Blumencweig, who arrived in Argentina at about fifteen years old. Inès' mother, Alberta, was also of Eastern European descent. Her family, the Peltzmans, settled in Argentina at the beginning of the 20th century, around the same time as the creation of the Jewish Colonisation Association. Established in London by Baron Maurice de Hirsch in 1891, the association was created to promote the emigration of European Jewish families to Argentina by creating agricultural colonies that would enable them to leave Europe in the face of rising anti-Semitism. These families became known as "Jewish gauchos".

In 1943, Inès Blumencweig enrolled at the Fernando Fader School of Decorative Arts in Buenos Aires. Inspired by the Bauhaus, the school offered courses in crafts and design. After completing her training at the age of 18, the young artist frequented the studios of Argentine surrealist painters Nélica Demichelis and Juan Batlle Planas (1911-1966). As a result, Blumencweig's early works were steeped in Surrealist influences. In Juan Batlle Planas' studio, she met the painters Roberto Aizenberg (1928-1996), Julio Silva (1930-2020) and Victor Chab (b. 1930), with whom she became close friends.



Inès Blumencweig, Rome, 1962
Photo: Alfio di Bella

1. The expression was coined by the writer Alberto Gerchunoff in his book *Los gauchos judíos* (1910).

THE 1950s: BETWEEN SURREALISM AND NON-FIGURATIVE PAINTING

In the 1950s, Blumencweig turned to non-figurative painting and became closely associated with the “Informalist” movement (Movimiento Informalista) that was founded by the Argentinian artists Kenneth Kemple (1923-1998), Luis Alberto Wells (1939-2023), Alberto Greco (1931-1965) and Mario Pucciarelli (1928-2014). In 1952, Blumencweig showed her work at an exhibition at the Museo de Artes Plásticas Eduardo Sívori in Buenos Aires. Two years later, she took part in an exhibition of young Surrealist painters at the Wilenski Gallery, also in Buenos Aires. Blumencweig’s work was also shown at the Galatea Gallery, the Plástica Gallery and the Rubbers Gallery in 1956, 1957 and 1958, respectively.

THE 1960s: TRAVEL TO THE UNITED STATES AND RELOCATION TO ITALY

Inès Blumencweig married Mario Pucciarelli in 1960. That same year, a solo exhibition devoted to the artist was presented at the Museo de Arte Moderno in Buenos Aires. Between 1960 and 1961, works by Inès Blumencweig were included in the travelling exhibition *Pintura Argentina contemporánea*, which presented Argentinian artists in contemporary art museums in Mexico City, Rio de Janeiro and Buenos Aires.

Mario Pucciarelli won the Torcuato Di Tella national painting award – named after the leading patron of Argentine avant-garde art at the time – and was awarded a scholarship to spend a year living in Rome. The award also meant that Pucciarelli was nominated for the Guggenheim Fellowship, an American prize awarded by the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation on an annual basis since 1925. This gave the couple the opportunity to travel to the United States in the autumn of 1960. They visited New York and Washington, where they discovered the Abstract Expressionism movement. It was a major turning point for Blumencweig, who returned from the trip with the desire to make a clean break from the past and approach painting in a completely different way. In this respect, she was perfectly in tune with the artistic trends of the early 1960s, which sought to break away from the painting styles of the previous decade. It was under that impulse that Blumencweig introduced metal into her work.

Inès Blumencweig and Mario Pucciarelli moved to Rome in 1961, where, thanks to Pucciarelli’s award, they were able to get a studio in the heart of the city, on Via del Babuino. The couple began to sell their works and Blumencweig also earned a living as a journalist writing for art magazines. They decided to settle in Rome for good.

The 1960s was a frenetic, vibrant decade for the art scene in Italy, marked by movements ranging from Germano Celant’s Arte Povera and the Arte

Programmata movement – the Italian branch of kinetic art – to Lucio Fontana’s Spatialism. The Pucciarelli-Blumencweig couple were in contact with a whole community of artists, including Lucio Fontana (also Argentinian), Mimmo Rotella (1918-2006) and Carla Accardi (1924-2014), Antonio Sanfilippo (1923-1980), Umberto Mastroianni (1910-1998), Achille Perilli (1927-2021), Piero Dorazio (1927-2005), Afro Basaldella (1912-1976), Aldemir Martins (1922-2006) and Joaquín Roca Rey (1923-2004).

Blumencweig made a contribution to avant-garde Italian movements by creating canvas works pierced with metal blades. As such, she introduced concepts of rhythm, space and optics to her works, playing on the ambivalent relationship between painting and sculpture. Blumencweig demonstrated great technical virtuosity in her mastery of such materials thanks to her prior training in the decorative arts. The artist called these metal works *Structures Sensibles*. In 1963, the Miami Museum of Modern Art presented a solo exhibition dedicated to the artist’s work. From 1964 onwards, her work was shown at a number of galleries in Rome, including the Galleria Pogliani and the Galleria P21, as well as the Galleria La Metopa in Bari.

While continuing her artistic investigations, Blumencweig worked as an art journalist for the Agenzia Nazionale Stampa Associata (ANSA) – the leading news agency in Italy and the fifth largest in the world, founded in Rome in 1945 – between 1965 and 1990. In that role, she wrote commentaries on Italian cultural life and kept a close eye on the latest advances in the arts. Blumencweig also made contributions to Latin American magazines from Rome.

WORKS IN WOOD AND NYLON

Towards the end of the 1960s, Blumencweig replaced the metal in her works with wooden bases, which she cut, drilled and painted with acrylic paint. The wooden base took on all different kinds of geometric forms, freeing the artist from the traditional rectangular form. Blumencweig then added coloured nylon ribbons that she would stretch, twist and coil on the base, their contortions reminiscent of the coloured bands in kinetic works.

In 1980, the Galleria P21 in Rome organised what would be Inès Blumencweig’s last solo exhibition for 42 years – until the recent solo exhibition dedicated to her work at the Maison de l’Amérique Latine in 2022. Blumencweig lived in France, between Paris and Nice, from 1981 to 1987. She had several exhibitions in galleries in France, where she continued her work with wood and nylon ribbons before finally returning to Rome.

Although, as an artist, Inès Blumencweig has always been firmly rooted in the artistic explorations of her times, her work remains relatively unknown. She is often presented as a “foreign artist” in Italy, even though her work has been exhibited there on numerous occasions.

REDISCOVERING THE WORK OF INÈS BLUMENCWEIG

Inès Blumencweig's work was rediscovered in 2020 when a study was conducted into her husband's work by the Institute for Studies on Latin American Art (ISLAA). Founded in 2011 and based in New York, the ISLAA is dedicated to enriching knowledge of modern and contemporary Latin American art through a programme of exhibitions, publications and conferences open to the public, students and researchers.

Jordi Ballart, project director at the ISLAA and exhibition curator, met Inès Blumencweig at her studio in Rome. He then organised an exhibition at the Maison de l'Amérique Latine in Paris in 2022-2023 entitled Inès Blumencweig, *Structures Sensibles*. The exhibition paid tribute to the artist through a series of eleven significant works created between 1961 and 1978, on loan from the ISLAA's collection in New York. As Inès Blumencweig's first solo show since 1980, the exhibition highlighted her contribution to the Italian art movements of the 1960s and 1970s, notably Spatialism, Arte Povera and Arte Programmata.

Benjamin de Roubaix & Mathilde Gubanski
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With the participation of Jordi Ballart
Institute for Studies on Latin American Art (ISLAA)



Inès Blumencweig & Mario Pucciarelli, Rome, 1962

SELECTED COLLECTIONS

Buenos Aires (Argentina), Buenos Aires Museum of modern art
Buenos Aires (Argentina), Arte de la Argentina Association
Calasetta (Italy), MACC - Calasetta Museum of contemporary art
Miami, FL (USA), Museum of modern art
Montevideo (Uruguay), Museum of modern art
New York, NY (USA), Institute for Studies on Latin American Art, ISLAA
Paris (France), Fonds d'art contemporain – Paris Collections

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

Solo show, Museo de Artes Plásticas Eduardo Sívori, Buenos Aires, 1952
Group show, *6 surrealist painters*, Wilenski Gallery, Buenos Aires, 1954
Group show, *4 surrealist painters*, Club Cuatro Vientos, Buenos Aires, 1955
Group show, *First modern art fair of Mar del Plata*, 1956
Solo show, Galatea Gallery, Buenos Aires, 1956
Solo show, Plastica Gallery, Buenos Aires, 1957
Solo show, Rubbers Gallery, Buenos Aires, 1958, 1961, 1964
Group show, *Arte moderno des Rio de la Plata*, Museo Sívori, Buenos Aires, 1959
Solo show, Galerie Yumar, Buenos Aires, 1960
Solo show, Museo de Arte Moderno, Buenos Aires, 1960
Travelling group show, *Pintura Argentina contemporánea*, presenting Argentin artists in contemporary art museums of Mexico city, Rio de Janeiro and Buenos Aires, between 1960 et 1961
Group show, Barsasky Gallery, Rio de Janeiro, 1961
Group show, *8 pintores y escultores*, Il corso Gallery, Milan, 1961
Solo show, Museum of modern art of Miami, Miami FL, 1963
Group show, *Argentina en el Mundo*, Fundacion Torquato Di Tella, Buenos Aires, 1963
Solo show, Pogliani Gallery, Rome, 1964
Solo show, La Metopa Gallery, Bari, 1965
Group show, *Suono-movimento-colore*, Il obelisco Gallery, Rome, 1966
Group show, *Immagini di spazio*, Feltrinelli Gallery, Rome, 1966
Group show, Romana e del Lazio Biennale, Rome, 1967
Group show, *4th Metal Art Biennale*, Gubbio, 1967
Group show, Meduse Gallery, Rome, 1967
Group show, Participation at the Salvi Price, Sassoferrato, 1968
Group show, *Vision 12* (with Lucio Fontana, Juan Rocca, Rey among others), Italo Latin American Institute, Rome, 1969
Group show, *10th Quadriennale of Rome*, 1977
Group show, *First Biennale of italo latin american graphic technics*, Italo latin american Institute, Rome, 1979
Solo show, P21 Gallery, Rome, 1980
Rio de Janeiro Museum of modern art, 1981
Group show, Salon d'automne, Grand Palais, Paris, 1981

Group show, Salon des Grands et Jeunes d'aujourd'hui, Grand Palais, Paris, 1982, 1983

Group show, Art+Objet, Grand Palais, Paris, 1984

Solo show, *Inès Blumencweig, Structures sensibles*, Maison de l'Amérique Latine with ISLAA, Paris, from October 13, 2022 to January 7 2023

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Maria Laura San Martin, *Pintura Argentina Contemporánea*, Editorial La Mandrágora, Buenos Aires, 1961
Filiberto Menna, *Blumencweig*, Pogliani Gallery, Rome, 1964
Enrico Crispolti, *Blumencweig*, Nuova Foglia, Macerata, Italy (panorama of modern art collection– graphics), 1971
Córdova Iturburu, *Ochenta Años de Pintura Argentina*, Editorial Librería de la Ciudad, Buenos Aires, 1978