arts

Article

Multipla Gallery (1972–2011) and the History of Multiples in Brazil: An Affaire de Femmes †

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Abstract

This article examines the contribution of the Multipla Gallery—founded in 1972 by two women, Teresa Nazar and Edla Van Steen—to the introduction of a new artistic modality in Brazil: the multiples. The "motherhood" of this artistic modality was, at the time, attributed to a third woman: the French gallerist Denise René. This case reveals female presence and agency in the Brazilian art market during the 1970s, a period when women played a significant leading role. The feminization of the role of gallery owners is a topic that has yet to be thoroughly explored in Brazil from a historical and sociological perspective. The third part of the article also aims to discuss, based on the case of Teresa Nazar, the extent to which such female agency was not completely immune to gender inequalities.

Keywords: women art gallerists; Brazilian art history; multiples; contemporary art system; gender

1. Introduction

One of the most significant premises (and contributions) of the sociology of contemporary art concerns the notion that artistic creation is the product of collective work. It is present, under different prisms, in the perspectives of Worlds of Art defended by Howard Becker, Art fields by Pierre Bourdieu and/or Art Regimes by Nathalie Heinich.[1] These are concepts that, although they are not synonymous and carry with them somewhat different methodological proposals, agree on the idea that between the production of the work and its realization in front of its audience(s) a series of agents are necessary, which, in general, tend to be less recognized or rendered invisible as Nathalie Heinich points out (Heinich 1998, p. 28).

Among these intermediaries, art galleries have come to play an increasingly important role since the late nineteenth century. The crisis in the academic system—caused by an oversupply of aspiring artists and the inability of the state-run system (centered on the Salon) to absorb them—led to the emergence of a new artistic system: the "merchant–critic system" (White and White 1993). According to that, the mechanisms of recognition no longer depend on official endorsement, but rather on the appreciation of art critics active in the press, alongside the success achieved in exhibitions and sales of works organized by art galleries. Consequently, galleries became indispensable mediating institutions between artists and the public, fulfilling three functions: exhibiting, legitimizing, and commercializing works (Jeanpierre et al. 2012).

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Despite their importance, studies on galleries and their owners are less common than those devoted to artists, exhibitions, or works of art—perhaps due to what Julie Verlaine, paraphrasing Duret-Robert, calls the "curse of the intermediaries," that is, the mistrust surrounding art dealers and gallery owners, as if they were wrongdoers or manipulators (Verlaine 2012, p. 8). Alongside the unease caused by the economic aspect that permeates the art system, studies on gallery owners tend to focus particularly on commercial transactions, placing less emphasis on all the essential work they do to promote artists (Quemin 2021, p. 10).

In Brazil, there are few (though good) studies devoted to the history and role of art galleries, because, in addition to the reasons already noted, they are a relatively recent phenomenon here compared to France.[2] In Rio de Janeiro, then the federal capital, there were private exhibition spaces dedicated to temporary art displays, such as the De Wilde or Glace Elegant galleries operating during that period, both completely subordinate to the official system (which was based on the Imperial Academy of Fine Arts and the General Exhibitions it promoted). It was only in the late 1940s that a fully modern gallery, in the aforementioned sense, was opened. This was the *Galeria Domus*, founded in 1947 by a couple of Italian immigrants, Ana Maria Fiocca and Pasquale Fiocca. A pioneer in exhibiting modern Brazilian artists, it played a prominent role in introducing foreign names to emerging local collectors, even contributing to the formation of the collection for the first modern art museum in the city, the Museum of Modern Art (MAM-SP) (Durand [1989] 2009; Bueno 2005; Silva 2025). In 1958, businessman Ernesto Wolf opened the second gallery of this kind in São Paulo, the Galeria São Luís, and invited Ana Maria Fiocca to direct it. It is evident that from its very beginning, the art market had a female figure at its forefront, yet this phenomenon is only briefly alluded to by existing publications on the history of the art market in Brazil (Bueno 2005; Silva 2025), without receiving deeper attention.

The first to highlight the expressive female presence during this initial phase of true professionalization in the Brazilian art market, notably in gallerist positions, was José Carlos Durand in his book Arte, privilégio e distinção (Art, Privilege, and Distinction; our translation), first published in 1989. The author states:

> [. . .] Thus, it would not be an exaggeration to say that the era of the freelance art dealer was succeeded by the phase of the family business. The retail of art and luxury goods in general, requiring less economic capital than available time, aesthetic disposition, and social networking, began to attract a good number of women inclined to emphasize the symbolic rather than the economic profitability of their craft. (Durand [1989] 2009, p. 202, our translation)

According to his surveys, among the 21 primary galleries existing in the country in 1978, 16 were directed by women. This meant approximately two-thirds of the positions, which, notably, is the exact opposite ratio of what is seen in France, where, according to Julie Verlaine's studies, only one-third of galleries were directed by women (Verlaine 2012). Based on Durand's research, in 1977, the following galleries in the city of São Paulo had women among their partners or directors: Oca; Seta; Azulão; Mirante das Artes; Portal; Bonfiglioli; Documenta; Opus; Eucatexpo; Arte Aplicada; Vanguarda; Academus; Dan; Gabinete de Artes Gráficas; Arte Global; Domus; Associação de Artistas Plásticos da Praça da República; Um, meia, sete; Graphus; Luisa Strina; Bric-a-B-art; Emy Bonfim; Proarte; Projecto; Skultura; Veli; to which we would also clearly add Multipla. This means that among 47 institutions[3], 27 had women in important positions, and 7 of them (underlined) were exclusively run by female teams.

This reality contrasts sharply with the data published by the 1970 Brazilian census. According to the official document, in the commercial sector, among the small elite of employers, representing about 4.5% of the general population, women made up only

0.24%. Isolating just this category (business and commerce owners), comprised of 116,521 individuals, only 5.4% were women, whereas men constituted a vast majority with 94.6% of the total[4]. In other words, female leadership in the gallery sector, and consequently in the art market, appears to be something absolutely singular within the broader economic context of the period, signaling a still underexplored particularity regarding women's entry into the Brazilian workforce, particularly in leadership roles.

The fact did not go unnoticed at the time. The newspaper Folha de S. Paulo published an article in 1976 titled "Artes 76, sob o poder feminino," which precisely pointed out the leading roles of names such as Sophia Tassinari, Teresa Nazar, Neide Bonfiglioli, Raquel Babenco (now Raquel Arnaud), and Malvina Galeni, among others in the art market sector (Figure 1).



Domingo, 26 de dezembro de 1976 FOLHA DE S. PAULO VIDA SOCIAL/ FEMININA — 3.º caderno — 35

Artes 76, sob o poder feminino

Há mulheres que vivem com arte. Algumas, no meio da arte.
Com muita garra, estas levam adiante, a cada ano, um trabalho sério e envolvente.

IVO ZANINI

De uma maneira geral, as mulheres continuaram comandando, em 1976, alguns dos principais locais de artes de São Paulo.

Se no início do desenvolvimento das atividades artísticas entre nós, por volta de 1950, quando eram grandes os preparativos para a instalação da 1.ª Bienal de São Paulo, as mulheres-executivas pouco apareciam, essa panorama transformar-se-ia completamente na década seguinte. E a partir de 1970, elas partiram para uma espécie de "invasão", dirigindo quase todas as novas galerias que foram surgindo.

Neyde Bonfiglioli, por exemplo, permanece firme na direção da Galeria Bonfiglioli, desde que foi criada. No local, mês a mês, sucederam-se exposições, algumas individuais como a que encerrou o ano, de Antonio Henrique do Amaral, outras reunindo três artistas, como aquela em que figuraram os jovens e bons valores Vera Amaral, Antonio Victor e Marcos Coelho Bom nível, a média geral.

Raquel Babenco e Mônica Figueiras buscaram mostras de nível em seu Gabinete de Artes. Uma delas, a de Sérvulo Esmeraldo. Sua preocupação: qualidade dos artistas, consagrados ou não, mas que tinham algo a informar, a comunicar. **Raquel** igualmente deu seu recado pela Global. Um deles: os trabalhos de Krajcberg.

Dinah Lopes Correa foi atividade incessante no Museu de Arte Moderna. A retrospectiva de Yolanda Mohalyi disse muito, muito mesmo. O "Panorama" não pode deixar de ser mencionado, nem de ser visto até fins de janeiro. A secretaria do MAM ainda promete oferecer mais em 1977.

Sophia Tassinari e **Emmy Bomfim** realizaram algumas exposições de destaque, mas alcançaram em suas galerias (a "Anúlio" e a "Emmy Bomfim") um destaque maior agora, no fim do ano, com suas tradicionais Feiras de Natal. Elas, mais a **Fanny**, da "Eucatexpo" e a "Galeria 167", todos os anos reúnem centenas, milhares de trabalhos de artistas firmados ou não. E a preços acessíveis, conseguem motivar colecionadores e interessados nas artes divulgando-as, fazendo-as chegar a um maior número de residências ou escritórios.

Malvina Gelleni, da Portal, fugiu do esquema de realizar individuais mensais ou até mesmo quinzenais. Agora, três ou quatro mostras por ano, boas, e basta. A última que realizou, é verdadeira homenagem ao casal uruguaio, Maria Freire e Costigliolo, considerados os pioneiros da arte abstracionista nas Américas. A geometria disciplinada comanda essa mostra.

Sabina Libman e Esther Engelberg, da Arte Aplicada não foram pródigas em exposições neste ano. Mas lavraram um gol de letra ao realizarem, no Museu de Arte de São Paulo, a mostra que resumia a integração da arte verdadeiramente aplicada. Expressivos nomes da nossa escultura e da criatividade de objetos lá expuseram seus trabalhos.

Tereza Nazar, mesmo com a saída da sócia Edla Van Steen, não interrompeu a caminhada da Multipla Galeria, lá na avenida Morumbi. Programou diversas exposições, sem descuidar da individual do escultor-marido, Nicolas Vlavianos, artista que teve seu nome realçado com a sua gigantesca peça de 8 toneladas na rua 24 de maio com D. José de Barros.

E Raquelita Calabrone, lado a lado com duas colecionadoras (Sarah Taub Tepperman e Clara Pascowitch), iniciou ou pelo menos habilitou uma área artística defasada em São Paulo: a escultura. A galeria que as três lançaram na alameda Lorena, a Skultura, veio socorrer colecionadores e arquitetos, estes na difícil missão, muitas vezes, de harmonizar e complementar sua obra imobiliária com a beleza e força das peças concebidas em ferro, bronze, aço, acrílico ou mármore.

A Arte Aplicada de Sabina e Esther: renovação e inovação

Sophia Tassinari: acervo e Feira de Natal são seus fortes

Na Múltipla Tereza Nazar também contribui para expandir a arte em São Paulo

Raquel Babenco, juntamente com Mônica Figueiras, buscou para o seu Gabinete de Artes exposições qualitativas.

Neyde Bonfiglioli, uma programação geralmente qualificada na galeria que leva o nome de seu pai, o Comendador Alberto Bonfiglioli.

Malvina Gelleni não pretende mudar o esquema: poucas e boas mostras durante o ano.

Figure 1. Newspaper article highlighting female presence in the gallery sector. Source: Ivo Zanini. "Artes 76, sob o poder feminino," Folha de S. Paulo, 26 December 1976 (Zanini 1976). Credit: Folhapress.

However, despite this impactful female presence, the history of women gallerists from this generation remains largely unknown. Since they constituted the majority in São Paulo at a time when the market was in full expansion and consolidation (1970'), I believe that studying them is in itself a contribution to the history of the country's art system. But it is important also take into account the specific nature of the role they played. As mentioned above, in the economic sphere in general, women occupied a negligible position as entrepreneurs or business owners, except in the art world, where they stood out as gallery owners. How was this possible? Why did women achieve such prominence specifically in the art market?[5] Such questions require answers that integrate microsociological dimensions (such as the life trajectories of these women, the capital at

their disposal, etc.) and macrosociological dimensions (the labor market, the education system, women's rights, etc.); this implies a combination of diverse methodologies, such as life histories, archival research, interviews, and quantitative data analysis. This is a work in progress, a collective biography yet to be constructed. This article constitutes a contribution to this larger, ongoing project, based on a case study: that of the Multipla gallery, which, despite its longevity of 40 years (1972–2011), its pioneering status in the field of multiples in Brazil and Latin America, and its relevance to the history of women in the Brazilian artistic system, has not received an in-depth study to date. Furthermore, this is a gallery whose archives are well-preserved and organized but have not yet been the subject of systematic studies.[6]

2. Multipla Gallery: An Affaire de Femmes

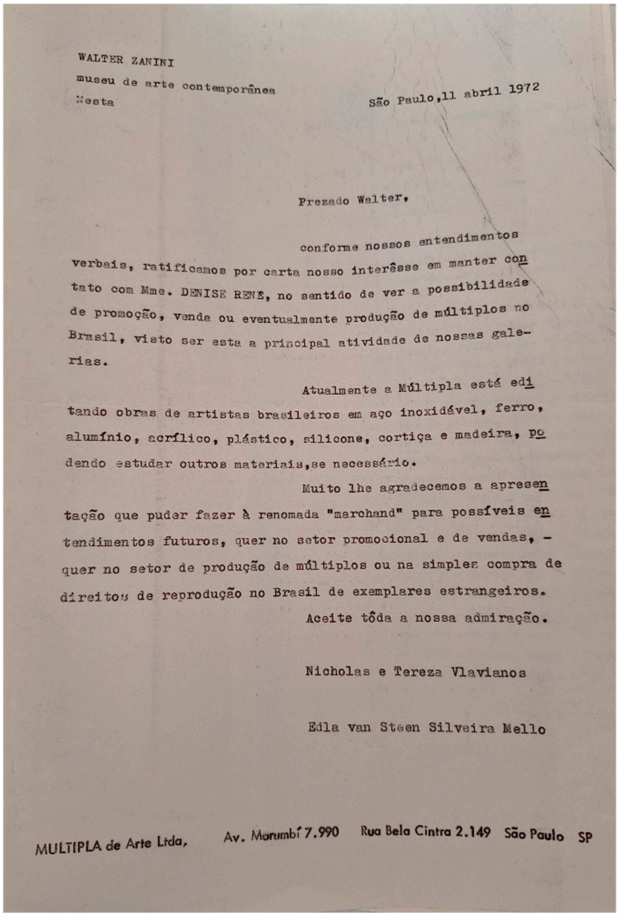
In June 1972, the Multipla gallery opened on Morumbi Avenue in São Paulo. It was the first gallery in Brazil (and possibly in Latin America) devoted to the representation, commercialization, and dissemination of artworks known as multiples, a concept we will soon address.[7] The gallery was the result of an initiative by two women: Teresa Nazar Vlavianos (Mendoza, Argentina, 1936–São Paulo, 2001), a visual artist of Argentine origin, and the writer and actress Edla Van Steen (Florianópolis, Brazil, 1932–São Paulo, 2018), who remained in the business until 1977.[8] According to Van Steen, the gallery was a spin-off of an earlier successful idea: based on her advice, sculptor Nicolas Vlavianos (Teresa's husband) produced 50 identical pieces to be distributed as corporate gifts by the company Eternit at the end of 1971 (A arte generosa 1972). From then on, both women identified the lack of a space dedicated to this type of artwork in the city of São Paulo, which could be an interesting novelty.

The history of promoting multiples in Brazil is associated with three female names: the two owners of the aforementioned gallery and the renowned French gallerist Denise René (Paris, 1913–2012). In a letter addressed to Walter Zanini, director of the Museum of Contemporary Art of São Paulo, they requested his mediation to be introduced to the "renowned art dealer," aiming for future partnerships (Figure 2).

The document acknowledges René's role as the "mother" of multiples. Born Denise Bleibtreu, the daughter of a collector, she grew up surrounded by paintings, particularly Cubist works. In 1944, she decided to open her first gallery in an apartment on the Rue de La Boétie, which was already famous in the Parisian art market (Centre Georges Pompidou 2001), See also: (Verlaine 2019). A tireless defender of abstract art, Denise René gained prominence in the French artistic scene, especially starting in 1955, with the exhibition "Le Mouvement," which marked her shift toward promoting kinetic art. The latter stood out for his vehement defense of abstract works that transcended easel painting; movement, he argued, should be incorporated into forms through the use of new technologies. It was expected that such productions would provoke complex sensory interactions with the public. In his *Manifeste Jaune* (Yellow Manifesto), published during the exhibition, Vasarely advocated for the end of the visual artwork that "resided, until today, in an artisanal process and the myth of the unique piece." To this end, he proposed "the conception of a possibility of RE-CREATION, MULTIPLICATION AND EXPANSION".[9] Thus, the text laid the theoretical groundwork for defining and defending multiples as a specific contemporary artistic modality.

Notably, since the late 19th and early 20th centuries, artists such as Marcel Duchamp with his readymades had already produced works that challenged the importance attributed to uniqueness and manual skill (the "magic touch of the artist") as criteria of value. Especially relevant was the pioneering initiative of multi-artist Daniel Spoerri concerning MAT (*Multiplication d'Art Transformable*), which aimed precisely at broadening access to

artworks through their multiplication. As Debora Laks states, it was both a political and an aesthetic project. As early as 1959, the first exhibition that Daniel Spoerri organized took place in Paris, at the Édouard Loeb Gallery. The show featured several artists represented by Denise René, to whom the project had originally been presented, but who had rejected it—perhaps anticipating it would be a commercial failure, which it indeed was (Laks 2019).



WALTER ZANINI
museu de arte contemporânea
Hoje

São Paulo,11 abril 1972

Prezado Walter,

conforme nossos entendimentos verbais, ratificamos por carta nosso interêsse em manter contato com Mme. DENISE RENÉ, no sentido de ver a possibilidade de promoção, venda ou eventualmente produção de múltiplos no Brasil, visto ser esta a principal atividade de nossas galerias.

Atualmente a Múltipla está editando obras de artistas brasileiros em aço inoxidável, ferro, alumínio, acrílico, plástico, silicone, cortiça e madeira, podendo estudar outros materiais,se necessário.

Muito lhe agradecemos a apresentação que puder fazer à renomada "marchand" para possíveis entendimentos futuros, quer no setor promocional e de vendas, - quer no setor de produção de múltiplos ou na simples compra de direitos de reprodução no Brasil de exemplares estrangeiros.

Aceite tôda a nossa admiração.

Nicholas e Tereza Vlavianos

Edla van Steen Silveira Mello

MULTIPLA de Arte Ltda, Av. Morumbí 7.990 Rua Bela Cintra 2.149 São Paulo SP

Figure 2. Letter signed by Teresa and Nicolas Vlavianos, and Edla Van Steen, addressed to Walter Zanini, 11 April 1972. Multipla Collection, São Paulo-SP.

Faced with this myriad of possibilities—along with others that enjoyed a long intrinsic tradition of reproducibility, such as engravings—Denise René proposed a more precise definition of the term. *Multiples would be three-dimensional works, produced in a limited edition, executed under the artist's control, and signed*. Thus, the multiple is understood as an original work, intended to respond to the cultural aspirations of a broader public (Moulin 1969; Chicha 2008). This was precisely the concept she brought to fruition in her second gallery, "Denise René-Rive Gauche," inaugurated in 1966, the first in Europe dedicated exclusively to multiples.

If the on one hand this conception carries a critique of the fetish of the unique artwork, theoretically making it feasible to imagine price reductions and, consequently, a broader consumer base through reproducibility, on the other hand, there is no denying that it imposes significant limitations on the genre's potential. Opting for limited editions and maintaining the artist's signature are evidence of submission to the commercial logic of the art market, adopting the artificial production of rarity to guarantee control over supply and, thus, prices (Moulin 1969).

In this aspect, René distanced herself from the choices made by Victor Vasarely, later followed by other artists in the 1960s, who took more radical advantage of the unrestricted

possibilities of reproduction and the negation of authorship that multiples afforded. One example is the artist's project to promote "university" editions. He proposed silkscreen editions that would be neither numbered nor signed, sold for 60 francs, whereas they would normally cost 2000 francs. According to Céline Chicha, the project proved commercially unsuccessful: collectors despised large unsigned/unnumbered editions, and the general public showed no interest in starting to collect silkscreens (Chicha 2008).

The less bold conception—and the more realistic one from the standpoint of widespread acceptance—defended by Denise René was also the one that was best received in Brazil, being adopted by the Multipla gallery. Not only was the French gallerist credited with the initiative of multiples as an aesthetic project, but the strategy of producing limited editions signed by their creators was also adopted. Ultimately, like René, Teresa Nazar and Edla Van Steen believed that this modality would contribute to a greater democratization of art in the country, expanding its consumer audience as costs were reduced. The justifications used by the gallerists, frequently publicized in newspapers throughout the 1970s, leave no doubt about their belief in this project.

In a statement to Veja magazine, Edla Van Steen declared: "Our shop does not intend to cater to wealthy people. We have inexpensive products for those with good taste, and little money" (*Veja* Magazine, 21 June 1972, "A arte generosa"; our translation). Another article published that same year by the *Jornal da Tarde* deepened the reflection: "the unique piece will not lose its value in the art market, but the multiple is more generous, reaching a larger number of people. [. . .] my partner and I, and the artists who exhibit at Multipla, believe in the possibility of creating a fairer relationship between the artist and society [. . .]" (*Jornal da Tarde*, 10 July 1972; our translation—Figure 3).



Múltiplos, Múltipla

Múltiplo de Nicolas Vlavianos, em aço inoxidável, edição da **Múltipla**

"Não pretendo atender somente às pessoas ricas; na Múltipla encontram-se objetos baratos, para os que têm bom gosto e pouco dinheiro", diz Edla van Steen, explicando os objetivos de sua loja, na Avenida Morumbi, 7990, em São Paulo, recentemente inaugurada.

Múltipla também tem sido a atividade de Edla, ex-atriz do cinema brasileiro — prêmio de Melhor Atriz, no Festival de Veneza, por seu trabalho em A Garganta do Diabo — escritora e hoje ligada aos movimentos de artes plásticas.

A idéia da Múltipla surgiu no ano passado, quando o escultor Nicolas Vlavianos, por sugestão de Edla van Steen, fez cinquenta obras iguais, para serem distribuídas como brindes de Natal pela firma Eternit. Do sucesso, partiu a idéia de criar uma loja que editasse e vendesse múltiplos. "Como as gravuras", explica Edla, "são reproduções em número limitado, da mesma obra de arte." Para ela, "a peça única não deixará de ter o seu valor, no mercado de arte, mas o múltiplo é mais generoso, atingindo a um número maior de pessoas." Atualmente, 25 artistas brasileiros têm seus trabalhos na Múltipla. Além de Vlavianos, Carmen Bardy (prêmio de aquisição do Salão de Verão, Light-Jornal do Brasil), Cláudio Tozzi, Amélia Toledo e Amílcar de Castro, entre outros. A Múltipla compra os protótipos, paga royalties ao artista e encarrega-se da execução em várias firmas industriais, dependendo do material utilizado: vidro, poliéster, aço inox, lona acrílico, etc.

Conta Edla van Steen que, durante seis meses, trabalhou no planejamento da loja, juntamente com Tereza Nazar, sua sócia, artista plástica e professora da Fundação Armando Álvares Penteado "Reunimos, aos poucos, os artistas que concordavam em criar múltiplos vendê-los para a loja. Muitos artistas ainda resistem à idéia dos múltiplos. Essa resistência à reprodução de obras de arte é forte. Tem sua origem na idéia renascentista de que o artista é um indivíduo excepcional, que produz obras únicas. Mas eu, minha sócia e os artistas que expõem na Múltipla, acreditamos na possibilidade de criar-se uma relação mais justa entre o artista e a sociedade. Aliás, a idéia de uma obra de arte exclusiva parece absurda a Marcel Duchamp que procurava tornar suas obras indestrutíveis, facilitando ao máximo a reprodução delas."

Figure 3. "Múltiplos, Múltipla", Jornal da Tarde, 10 July 1972. Multipla Gallery Collection, São Paulo-SP ("Múltiplos, Múltipla" 1972).

Initially, the proposal's reception was viewed favorably by the press. It highlighted the virtual expansion of the consumer audience that the cost reduction made possible by reproducing the works promised, echoing the gallerists' discourse. Casa e Jardim magazine, a reference for interior decoration during the period (Pulici 2026), stated:

> Multiplying the number of works means softening the barrier that has always existed between the artist and the general public. It puts an end to the formula according to which 'beautiful' necessarily means 'expensive', and quality is only possible in a unique object. Integrating art and industry, the multiple exercises a demystifying role and constitutes a democratization factor for the artwork [. . .] (Casa e Jardim, A arte multiplicada 1972)

If multiplication was the guarantee of democratization, it is important to know the number of copies made. Speaking to the press at the time, Edla Van Steen stated that editions were usually around 30, but could vary between 10 and 100, depending on the artist's choice (Interview with Harry Laus, "Múltipla: a criação multiplicada" 1972, n.p. Multipla Gallery Collection).

The gallery's inaugural show catalog provides more precise figures, indicating that the quantities fluctuated between 10 and 50 versions. It also features detailed information about materials and dimensions. The prevalence of three-dimensional works[10] in small sizes (rarely exceeding 60 cm) is clear, utilizing primarily technological or industrial materials such as latex, acrylic, aluminum, and stainless steel. The images below are examples of these first multiples produced and exhibited in Brazil (Figures 4–8).[11]



Figure 4. Carmen Bardy. "Postes". A total of 6 acrylic boxes, 30 × 28 cm, 50 copies. Photo: Multipla Gallery Collection.

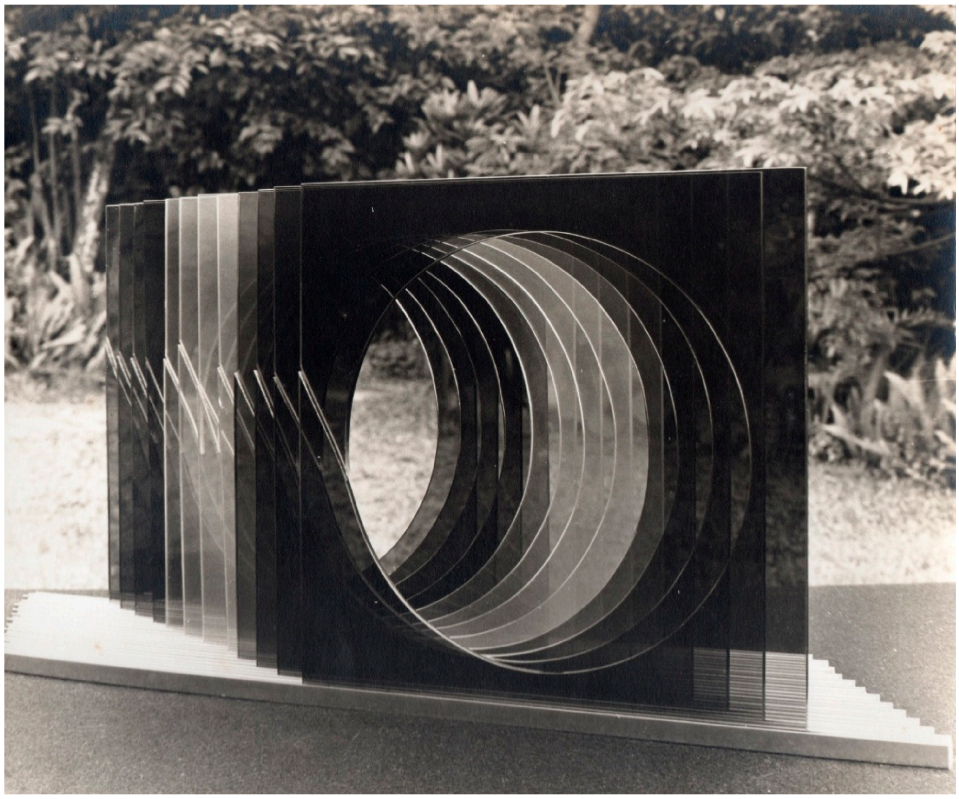


Figure 5. Lucia Fleury. "Lunático". Acrylic and aluminum, 68 × 30 cm, 20 copies. Photo: Multipla Gallery Collection.

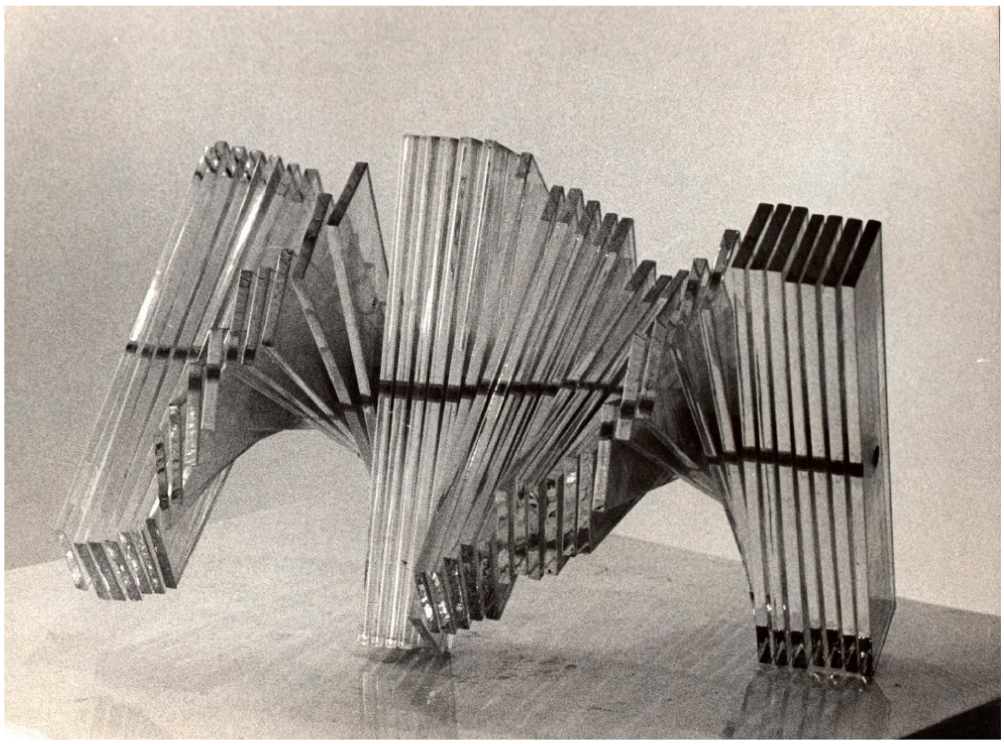


Figure 6. Edo Rocha. "Helicoidal", acrylic, 20 × 29 cm, 50 copies. Photo: Multipla Gallery Collection.

The catalog records yet another piece of information relevant to this text: the gender of the represented artists. Among 28 creators, 18 were male (64.3% of the total) and 10 were female (35.7%). It is noticeable that women were strongly represented, especially for the time. Although Teresa and Edla never claimed any alignment with feminism—which was

forcefully rising in the artistic systems of countries like the United States, France, England, and Mexico—the gallery heavily promoted several female artists from its inception. It is important to recall that the political (and cultural) context in the country was highly unfavorable to any explicit feminist alignment. The civil–military coup of 1964, deepened by the AI-5 in 1968, suppressed political associations or gatherings of groups that could "threaten the social order," which included feminist groups (Sarti 2004). This, however, did not imply an absence of *female agency*, starting with the two women's leadership over the venture, but also through the practice of exhibiting, publicizing, and promoting female artists, whether in collective or solo shows from the gallery's early days.

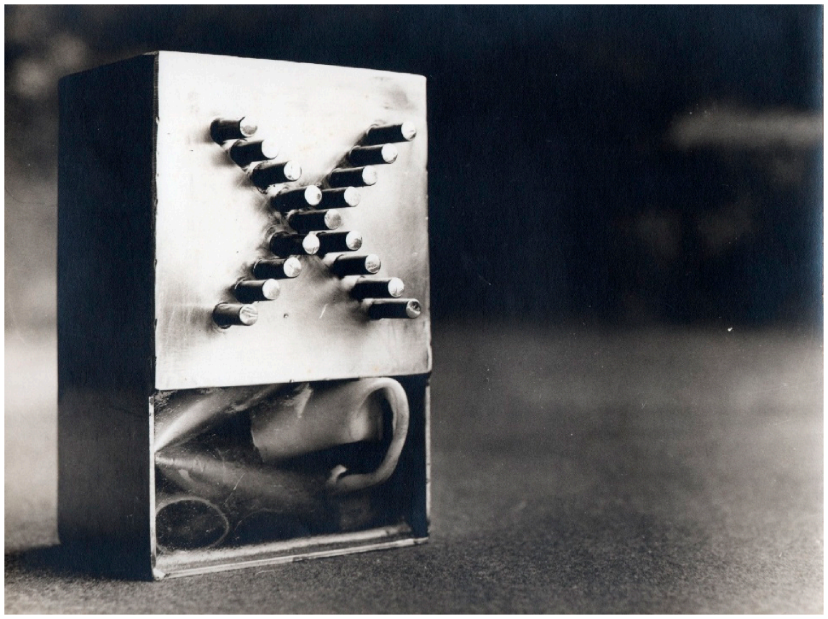


Figure 7. Nicolas Vlavianos. "Caixas", stainless steel and resin, 20 × 12 × 8. 10 copies. Photo: Multipla Gallery Collection.

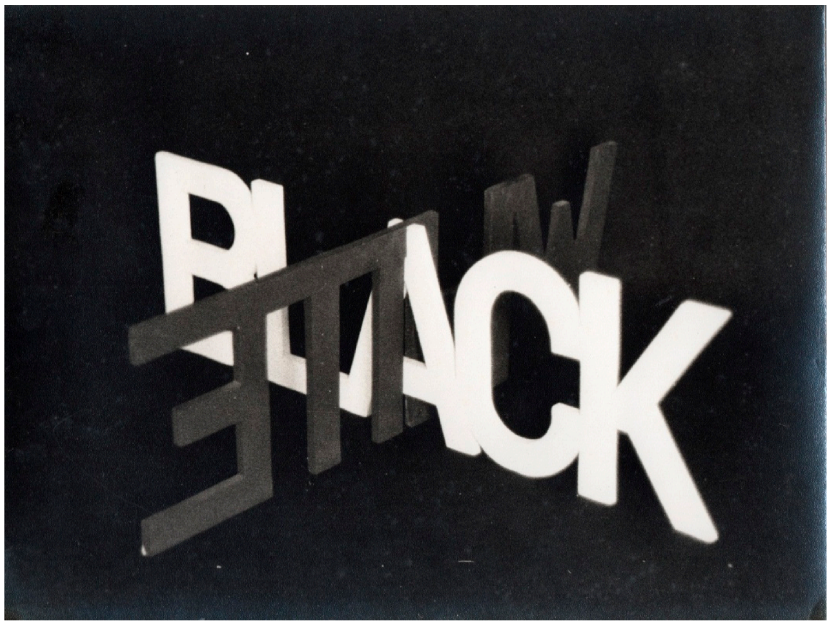


Figure 8. Rubens Gerchman. "Black/White", aluminum, 60 × 20 cm, 20 copies. Photo: Multipla Gallery Collection.

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3. From Artist (And Artist's Wife) to Gallerist: Notes on the Trajectory of Teresa Nazar

Recognizing the agency of such female gallerists in an adverse context does not mean denying the existence of gender inequalities, including in the artistic field, a subject already explored by various authors (Tvardovskas 2015; Barros 2016; Trizoli 2018; Simioni and Silva 2023; Curi 2024). Nor does it assert that these women, despite being successful and recognized in life, did not somehow experience the vicissitudes of normative social expectations placed upon the women of their generation. Teresa Nazar's case can be taken as indicative of how we can verify the extent to which gender asymmetries existed and impacted her trajectory, even if this should not be viewed exclusively under the lens of exclusion or total victimization.

Teresa Nazar graduated from the National University of Cuyo (Mendoza, Argentina) in 1958, which housed a Higher School of Fine Arts. For three years, she also worked as a teacher at the institution, indicating her recognition and insertion in the local field. In 1961, the university granted her a scholarship to study in Brazil, more specifically, lithography with Marcelo Grassmann and Darel Valença at the Fundação Armando Álvares Penteado (FAAP). Initially, she set up her studio in the Aclimação neighborhood, soon moving to a collective studio located on Maria Antônia Street, which was then a crucial meeting point for progressive artists and intellectuals. This space was shared with other artists such as Tomoshigue Kusuno, Alexandre Wollner, José Roberto Aguilar, Donato Ferrari, and art critics Mario Schenberg, among others. An interest in muralism united Teresa, Tomoshigue, Monique Cornell, and Nicolas Vlavianos, who soon became her affective and professional partner. The building, known as the "*Kremilinzinho*" (Little Kremlin), was closed following the 1964 Military Coup. From then on, Teresa and Vlavianos started sharing a studio, marrying the following year (Antelo 2025) (Figure 9).



Figure 9. Teresa Nazar and Nicolas Vlavianos in their studio, 1964. Photo: Multipla Collection.

In her first years in Brazil, Teresa created works, generally two-dimensional, exploring the incorporation of diverse materials into paints, such as fabrics, iron, scrap metal, steel wool, and remnants of industrial materials. She gained recognition, especially around the VIII São Paulo Biennial, in which she participated, drawing the attention of critics like Frederico Moraes and Harry Laus, who highlighted her unusual use of materials, as well as original themes considered to be "anti-conformist" (Spinelli 2023). Her first solo exhibition in the country took place in 1963 at Selearte gallery, owned by the important Italian art dealer Giuseppe Baccaro. She also participated in the São Paulo Art Biennials of 1965 and 1967. We can see that her career was fully on the rise when, in 1972, she decided to open the gallery.

At that moment, with two small children, Teresa Nazar sought to dedicate herself to an activity that would allow her more stable financial returns than those generated by her visual production. Moreover, she assumed the management of her husband's career at a time when he was emerging as a recognized artist, acquiring various public and private commissions (Aquino 2015).[12] As her daughter, Myrine Vlavianos, rightly points out, this change in her career was not immune to the logic of the patriarchy, in which "women tend to yield."[13] Indeed, as has been extensively studied in research on artist couples, frequently one member of the pair is led to abandon or minimize investment in their career to facilitate or maintain the life of the couple (and the family). And, due to social, moral, and cultural reasons associated with a long tradition rooted in gender inequity, it is women who are forced to make this "choice," perhaps precisely due to a lack of choices (Chadwick and Courtivron 1995; Mirkin 2013; Simioni et al. 2014; Souza 2025). Teresa even participated as an artist in the first exhibition promoted by Multipla; it was only 3 years later that she definitively interrupted her artistic production, entirely dedicating herself to the life of a gallerist, which also stands as proof of the (economic and symbolic) success of the enterprise (Figure 10).



Figure 10. Teresa Nazar in her office at the Multipla gallery, 1980s. Photo: Multipla Gallery Collection.

But it is important to emphasize that this abandonment of her career had paradoxical effects. Her primary condition as an artist—and her recognition as such by her peers—allowed her to build a solid network of friendships and contacts, which was fundamental

to the gallery's success. Multipla was frequented by several artists who were, according to Myrine Vlavianos, lifelong friends, such as Fernando Lemos, Maria Bonomi, Renina Katz, among others. This spirit of "*camaraderie*" is noticeable in certain vintage photographs (Figure 11).



Figure 11. Group of artists gathered in front of the Multipla gallery. From left to right: Marcelo Nitsche, Teresa Nazar, Luís Baravelli; seated: Maria Bonomi, Norberto Nicola, Antonio Peticov. Photo: Multipla Gallery Collection.

Printmaker Maria Bonomi, pictured at the center of the image above, stated: "*As strange as it may seem, we only trust those who resemble us*" (our translation). By this, she meant that Teresa Nazar, originally an artist and the wife of an artist deeply respected in the art world, could be seen first and foremost as a peer; that is, her status as an art dealer came only secondarily. This contributed to making the gallery attractive, alongside, of course, the very intellectual project the gallery defended. She says:

The empathy this couple felt with the intellectual crowd of the moment was devastating. The writer and actress Edla Van Steen partnered with them until 1977. Why not go around the corner and open a space to be experienced by those with a questioning spirit, by the most probing artists, art critics, journalists of different origins, above all thinkers active in various areas of the country who wanted to reach the public differently, untethered from the romantic concept of a unique work, but involved with the idea of a multiple: authors of original works produced in identical editions? Clearly, the title of "gallery" always appears afterward or is sometimes only faintly remembered in Multipla's case (Bonomi 2002, manuscript. Multipla archives).

Thus, Teresa being an artist was something crucial to the success of Teresa the gallerist. However, as the gallery became her main occupation, her name and recognition as an agent in the art system were gradually eclipsed. The artist Teresa Nazar practically disappeared from the field, rarely remembered in history books and absent from exhibitions. Yet, she

actively participated in the system, not only as a gallerist, as addressed here, but also as a professor in the Art department at FAAP (Faculdade Armando Álvares Penteado), from 1962 to 2001, an important center for artists' education in the city of São Paulo. Recently, her artistic output has been recovered and re-evaluated, and her contribution to Brazilian pop art highlighted. In this regard, it is worth pointing out initiatives such as the exhibitions Mulheres na Nova Figuração: corpo e posicionamento, held in 2023 at Galeria Superfície (São Paulo) and, particularly, the major show Pop Brasil: Vanguarda e Nova Figuração 1960–70, carried out by the Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo, which was later presented at MALBA (Buenos Aires). In these exhibitions, certain works by the artist that had been kept in her house by her children since the 1970s were finally shown to a wider audience. As a result of this renewed visibility, the canvas Astronautas (1966) entered the collection of the Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo in 2026, sixty years after its completion.

This article sought to highlight the significant presence of women in the Brazilian art market at the height of its consolidation (the 1970s). In addition to constituting the numerical majority, the case of the Multipla gallery, discussed here, allows us to recognize its relevance in introducing an artistic form then viewed as innovative: the multiples. These, in turn, were understood as the result of the initiative of another woman, the French gallery owner Denise René. It is, therefore, a network of connections and dialogues with strong female agency—a true "affair de femmes." Although these women were recognized at the time, they are rarely remembered today when discussing the structuring of the art system in Brazil. As we seek to explore through the case of Teresa Nazar, embracing a career as a gallery owner—so fundamental to making artists' careers possible and visible—entailed her own invisibility, a reality that has recently begun to be questioned and transformed. This text aims to contribute to that process.

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Notes

1 On the notion of the art world read: (Becker 1982); on the notion of the artistic field: (Bourdieu 1996); and (Bourdieu 2023); on artistic regimes: (Heinich 1998); on artistic systems: (Bulhões et al. 2014).

2 The main analytical studies on the importance of art galleries in the Brazilian art scene are: (Durand [1989] 2009); (Bueno 2005); (Bueno 2012); (Fialho 2015); (Fialho 2017); (Fialho 2019). From a historical perspective, the following books are essential: (Silva 2017); (Silva 2025). Recently, some galleries have been investing in in-depth research to reconstruct their history. This is the case with two key galleries in Brazil—those run by Raquel Arnaud and Luisa Strina—which have been led by women since the 1970s: (Mazzucchelli and Basciano 2024) and (Visconti and Schiesari 2024).

3 An article published by the newspaper O Estado de S. Paulo in the same year stated there were 55 important galleries in the city of São Paulo. See: (Pequenas histórias de nossa arte comercializada 1977).

4 The data were tallied by the author based on the 1970 Census. (Instituto Brasileiro de Estatística 1970).

5 To that end, the article draws on recent studies that specifically address the topic of female gallery owners: (Verlaine 2012); (Verlaine 2013); (Verlaine 2019); (Ensabella et al. 2024); (Chagnon-Burke and Toschi 2024).

6 The gallery's archives have been preserved and organized by Myrine Vlavianos, the daughter of Teresa Nazar, over the past few decades. The collection consists of dozens of boxes containing newspaper articles, catalogs of organized exhibitions, letters, contracts, and photographs of openings and artworks. It is one of the rare cases of archives from closed galleries that have

been preserved. Despite its richness, it has not yet been studied. Therefore, this article presents original research based on this remarkable collection. I would like to thank Myrine Vlavianos for all her support in this research.

[7] The concept of the "artist's multiple", which became widespread in the late 1950s and early 1960s, has its historical roots in works such as Duchamp's ready-mades. However, it came to be recognized as a distinct concept with the initiatives of Edition MAT, founded in 1959 by Daniel Spoerri. In 1962, Denise René opened a gallery, as mentioned, dedicated to the genre. And in 1965, another woman, the gallerist Marian Goodman, opened Multiple Inc., a space dedicated to this artistic form in New York.

[8] The two gallerists were friends who came from the cultural field. Edla Van Steen, then 40 years old, married to architect Ennes Silveira Mello and a mother of three children, had built a career as a radio broadcaster and journalist (working at the Diario do Paraná) and had previously owned a gallery in the city of Curitiba. Her main passion was literary writing, an activity she fully devoted herself to after 1977. However, what truly made her well-known was her performance as an actress in Walter Hugo Khouri's film A Garganta do Diabo (1960)—an experience she claimed not to have enjoyed, despite receiving an award for her acting (Muldaur 1974). Nevertheless, it undeniably brought her a level of fame that helped attract media attention during the gallery's early years, a time when she was virtually the only one interviewed, often featured in society columns. Teresa Nazar, on the other hand, was 36 when she entered the business. Married to Greek sculptor Nicolas Vlavianos and a mother of two, she had a highly active background as a visual artist. In her case, as I will attempt to discuss at the end of this article, an affective–creative partnership, combined with economic contingencies, pushed her to carry out a conversion of capital (Bourdieu 2007) from the artistic field, transitioning from the position of artist to that of gallerist.

[9] The manifesto can be consulted at this link: https://zkm.de/en/artworks/manifest-jaune and also here: https://www.collection-lemanifeste.com/en/the-yellow-manifesto.html (accessed on 20 June 2026).

[10] In subsequent exhibitions, however, several artists created two-dimensional works; silkscreen printing, in particular, was heavily driven by Multipla.

[11] The exhibition took place in June 1972 and brought together the following artists: Aloisio Magalhães, Anésia Pacheco Chaves, Anna Bella Geiger, Amélia Toledo, Amilcar de Castro, Carmen Bardy, Claudio Tozzi, Dolly Moreno, Edo Rocha, Flávio Império, Haroldo Barroso, Lothar Charoux, Lucia Fleury, Luis Paulo Baravelli, Mai Amato, Manoel Mattos, Marcia Barroso do Amaral, Marilia Kranz, Mario Cravo Neto, Nelson Leirner, Nelson Alvim, Nicolas Vlavianos, Paulo Becker Rubens, Paulo Roberto Leal, Rubens Breitman, Rubens Gerchman, Teresa Nazar, Xico Stockinger.

[12] During this period, Vlavianos was on the rise. He was awarded in several exhibitions, such as the 7th São Paulo International Biennial in 1963; the Bahia Biennial, where he received the special prize; and also the Prize at the III International Biennial of Small Sculpture in Budapest, Hungary. He also participated in multiple editions of the Panorama of Current Brazilian Art, at MAM-SP. It was then that he also started receiving public and private commissions. In 1973, the City of São Paulo commissioned him to make a piece titled *Progresso*, installed in 1976 at the corner of 24 de Maio and D. José de Barros streets in the city center. A few years later, in 1978, he was one of the artists selected to create public works for Praça da Sé, in what became known as the Garden of Sculptures, for which he produced *Nuvens sobre a cidade*. From then on, there were several public and private works, many large in scale, requiring more time to execute. In 1969, he became a professor at FAAP, where he remained for decades. He was also honored with the São Paulo Association of Art Critics (APCA) Award in 1974, 2001, and 2017. https://enciclopedia.itaucultural.org.br/pessoas/2563-nicolas-vlavianos (accessed on 20 June 2026).

[13] Interview conducted with Myrine Vlavianos by the author, 31 March 2026.

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