

Selected Texts and Press

Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato

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It's encouraging when an unknown painter is unearthed by younger artists. Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato, the Brazilian-born artist shown for the first time in Britain in this exhibition, was born in 1900 and lived to 95.

Towards the end of his life, he formed a relationship with a younger generation in Belo Horizonte, and one of them, the artist Rivane Neuenschwander, co-curated with Alexandre da Cunha two shows of Lorenzato's work in São Paulo in 2014.

His paintings are small and intense, often evoking landscapes but veering into abstraction. Some have the feel of the childlike language sought by European modernists, while others — the strongest, in my view — feature a visionary response to elemental phenomena: vivid suns and tumbling clouds over seas, hills, and headlands.

While the imagery differs, Lorenzato's handling of paint is consistent, applied with a fork or a comb. There's no attempt to find an equivalent in paint for the ephemeral effects of nature; rather, Lorenzato seems intent on turning them into solid form as a means of recording and preserving his emotional response.



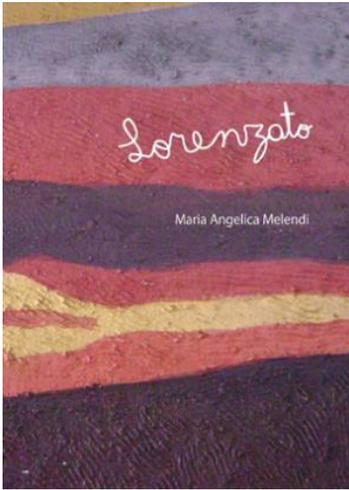
The Met Office recognises ten types of cloud. These, in turn, are divided into three groups based on their height above the ground. Artist Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato was mainly concerned with meteorological low-fliers, in particular cumulus and stratocumulus. Meaning: the ones that look like fluffy white sheep and the ones that look like stretched-out sausage dogs.

There's maybe a few autocumulus in there as well (I'm not a weatherman), but the point is these are happy clouds, the kind that bob and float but present no threat. Leave-your-umbrella-at-home clouds.

The Brazilian painter made a career out of capturing the everyday scenes of his hometown, Belo Horizonte, and this is the first solo exhibition of his art held outside of Brazil. Lorenzato, who travelled in Europe, took inspiration from artists such as Picasso and Matisse, and the Italian Renaissance (Leonardo and friends). To those tutored in Western art, there's an unmistakable 'traditionalism' to the collection on display. There's even an image of a bowl, complete with a pair of oranges and some perfunctory flowers, which looks sort of like what you'd bash out if asked to explain to a primary school group what the words 'still life' mean.

This isn't, then, an exhibition designed to set the world on fire. But don't dismiss it out of hand. Lorenzato is at his best when not taking things so literally. One of his more beguiling landscapes features the red dot of a setting sun reflected in a sea of salmon-pink blancmange.

His real talent, however, is for painting the sunlight and colours of a hot climate. In 'Praia da Costa', little figures float in the shallows of a baby blue ocean, while others bask on light muscovado sand. Weighed down by January, who doesn't want to be reminded what it feels like to soak up the heat of a day at the beach, cool water lapping and not a cloud in the sky?



*500 paintings and a new bike
To the ones who came in the boats.
I paint before anything else.*

– Clarice Lispector

Well, I don't know exactly what style it is. It's painting [...] some say it's primitive, others say it's naïve or surrealist... don't know... I just paint.

– Amadeo Lorenzato

Clarice, or the voice in *Água viva*, explains: “both in the painting and in the writing I try to see the present- not the past”; Useless attempt of trying to capture the moment of the feeling, always in the past, always in the blind gap between seeing and doing, always lost in the moment of looking back to the paper and the canvas. Amadeo Lorenzato also wants to paint what he sees, and once again he says that he does not make his paintings up. He goes out on the streets, sketches paints and draws what he sees. On the streets, he goes for a walk, rides a bike, explores and tries to see and predict what he has not seen yet: his pure painting.

The picture is old, it was taken somewhere in Europe, in the late 1920s. In the middle, two young men with long hair and beard, wear long coats among lots of men wearing hats. The tall, strong and blond one looks self-reliant. The other one with dark hair is thin and shy. In the picture it is written: *Studienreise dough Europa* and *Voyage d'études à travers l'Europe*. They look at the camera looking for a future in which they do not belong yet.

Foucault says that a tale is what deserves to be told. Until the XVII Century in the Occident, a regular life would only be taken into account if it had something extraordinary on it. It needed to have a mark of something impossible. That is where the indifference towards truth and fiction comes from because it is necessary to be able to persuade. But since that century a new art language has appeared. It aims to put on evidence something which cannot be evident. So, what is very tiny and do not deserve to be told, the inglorious-the infamous, will be able to join the discussion to unveil the darkest part of existence, the daily life.

Every tale or story starts in the search for blanks in memory, common things that do not deserve to be remembered. So does this one. We narrate to remember and so we believe in what we and the others write. Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato was a simple man, his parents were immigrants, and he worked with civil construction and was also a painter of Belo Horizonte beginning. He traveled to Europe, where he got married, lived, and worked. Later, he returned to Brazil, to the city where he was born, bringing his family with him. He took early retirement because of an accident, so he dedicated entirely to the painting. He left a unique work.

There is not much to narrate. There are few sources: some newspaper reviews, the book 'Lorenzato: depoimento' from Coleção Circuito Atelier, and the transcripts of the interviews in which this edition was based. It was nothing extraordinary, life like many others, in the XX Century, in South America.

The transcript of the interview given to Cláudia Gianetti and Thomas Nölle in June 1988 is very interesting. More than a formal interview, it is a recorded chat. The informality on it allows the blanks, repetition, and lack of continuity. The difficulty in the transcription names and places, according to the effort of matching the interviewees' languages to the simple speech of the artist, go beyond the factual data like stories of life, random trips and art present in this text.

Michel Foucault, in 'A vida dos homens infames', compiles an "anthology of existences". From the lettres de cachêt found in the French files, the author rescues pages of adventure, short lives found randomly in books and documents's common existences.

The infamy-losing credit, honor-Foucault also considers it a lack of fame: "lives that seem never have existed." The infamous ones made terrible things and were discovered. That is why they are remembered. Their infamy comes from such dark origin, such as subordination, "not compared to any kind of glory" These people were not famous at all. They were simple invisible people who suddenly became the main characters' lives that were forgotten right after this single moment.

Lorenzato's "infamy" comes from his wonderful painting, and his perseverance in an action which defined him at the end. Although astonished by such strong light-the art of painting, it was a modest ray of light that appeared and became stronger until lightening everything the "infamy" became fame.

During my childhood, my grandparents and friends shared similar stories to Lorenzato's. All of them came to America from considerably populated cities from Europe. They were countrymen or workers who could make things with their hands: wine, tempered olives, delicate rams, delicate cuts in wood, ingenious toys, sandals from Marocco. When they were young, they had driven for long distances by motorcycles or bikes. They had even arrived until the Orient, some of them until the North of Africa. They never told me but I was sure that they had loved exotic women of black eyes under the stars and that they had silently ran away in the middle of the night as gypsies. Someday they returned to the village and got married to the ones who waited for them, had children and went to America. They lived calm lives in the outskirts of Buenos Aires, São Paulo and Belo Horizonte. They spoke many languages, used to drink wine, go to the theater, listen to operas and sing. They were happy and sometimes kept gazing. Sometimes I wonder where they have been.

In 1928, Amadeo Lorenzato and his Dutch friend Cornelius Keissman, left Rome to travel through the East of Europe to get to Turkey. The trip was made by bicycles which pulled trailers made by themselves with metal tubes and tin. During the trip they made some

money selling cards they painted of the cities landscapes. Each one follows his own way in Constantinople; the Dutchman goes to the Orient; Lorenzato returns to Rome and then goes to Brussels and Paris, where he works and as builder and painter. They never met again. he will keep the memory of this trip throughout the years, with an absence that is vivid in his biography.

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A photo of the '80s carefully preserved is a testimony of that. Its image will be painted in at least two undated paintings: 'Viagem pelo Leste da Europa', small oil on card paper, and 'Viagem de estudos através da Europa', oil on veneer of 105 x68 cm. In the smaller one, the trailers seem to float on the air, in front of a large number of heads using hats. In the other one there is a strongly triangular composition with highly defined details, in which the travelers are distinguished among the hats. On the first plane, bordered by their travel capsules in which is written 'Voyage d'études à travers / Europe e Studienreise durh Europa' as in the photo.

He met his fellow countryman Gino Severini in Paris, working as a construction worker in the assembly of the Paris Colonial Exhibition in 1931 at the Bois de Vincennes. Gino Severini, a futuristic painter, was responsible for the first posters of the event. The short period of time in which they keep in touch is enough to visit the fashionable cafés and observe aside some artists like Picasso and Matisse. Amadeo Lorenzato, painter, decorator, builder, worker, did not gather with the bohemian artists; he just watched them aside, aware of belonging to a lost tradition, being out of time and space.

The same will happen in Belo Horizonte, when he meets Guignard. He meets him once, listens to him, but for not being part of the same groups, they never become close to each other.

It is hard to picture Belo Horizonte in the 1950s, when Lorenzato sold his first painting. It had been more than ten years that Guignard lived in the city and it is very possible that the modernity had already touched the most civilized ones. In 1952, the Associação de Cultura Franco-Brasileira pays homage to the master Guignard with a special room in the Exposição Internacional de Arte, in the Edifício Dantes, in Belo Horizonte. Lorenzato remembers to have been in this exhibition and talked to Guignard.

I met Guignard in the exhibition at the Edifício Dantes. I was there and I saw a group of people looking at a painting that I did not know what was. A young woman told me: "Guignard is here, ask him" so she called him and he gave his opinion. It was when I saw him for the first time.

They never met again. Between the photos of that time, we find Gignard, the master, walking on the blooming alleys of the Parque Municipal; the beautiful girls wearing wasp-waisted dresses, round skirts, and cat glasses. Among the serious boys, we can find Amílcar de Castro and Jefferson Lodi, with their well-cut hair and wearing white duster coats.

But even at that distant time, the run of Belo Horizonte went beyond the Parque Municipal and the Afonso Pena Avenue with its lines of trees. Beyond the center, there were distant districts like the agricultural colony, where the immigrants who arrived in the city at the end of the XIX and XX centuries started settling. Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato grew up there, in Barreiro. His father, who had emigrated from Italy at the end of the XIX century, worked in the construction of the Palácio da Liberdade. The young Amadeo alternated between the agricultural colony and the center of the city where he lived with his grandparents on his mother's side to be able to go to the Escola Ítalo-Brasileira Dante Alighieri of the Italian community. And then his parents moved to Barro Preto and he learned the art of painting and decorating. A simple story, like many in that distant world: the first years of the new century in the capital of a Mediterranean province. His family returned to Italy during the epidemic of flu pandemic in which his mother got sick, looking for a better weather. Lorenzato works in the rebuilding of cities destroyed by the war, travels through Europe and returns to Brazil, where his work, provincial life, and painting wait for him...

Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato was born in Belo Horizonte, within the Italian community. His parents and grandparents spoke Italian, as well as his neighbors. He might have learnt Portuguese on the streets and at school. He could speak both languages since he was a child. On the other hand, he spent the years between wars in Italy, so as all European immigrants and their sons rose in America, he had to develop the capacity of living in different cultural systems.

William E. B. Dubois affirms that the people living in a foreign land developed a double awareness:

This peculiar sensation, this double awareness, this sense of always looking into yourself through somebody else's eyes, having his own soul measured by a world that looks at you with disregard and compassion... We always feel this duality, two opposite souls, two thoughts, two irreconcilable efforts, two ideas in a single body...

On the one hand, they are filled of their own culture, traditions, histories, language and knowledge. On the other hand, they have to deal with the culture and the society in which they might live. The immigrant, political or economical exiled always has to learn other abilities and lessons. The double awareness also indicates the critical incorporation of a hidden treasure of a suppressed identity, which hides behind the ritual and secret conservation of its own repertoire.

When they simultaneously take part of superimposed communities, they survive in an unstable identity. They are never completely inserted in the new models, never disconnected of the old ones! So, every foreigner has at least two identities, two languages and lives eternally translating one into the other.

According to Julia Kristeva, the new culture appears like a mirage on an empty space, and the foreigner became a hostage of his mother tongue. In this case, the foreigner's voice rests in the strength of its pure rhetoric. It sometimes becomes silence. It appears as in intrinsic state of him. A silence that fills the mind and drowns it in the weakness...

The forging's voice, which is broken and conflictive, has several possibilities. On this sense, the effort made because of the double awareness becomes the source of new and ambivalent speeches.

The experience of displacement, absence, separation and difference, produce a strong and

nostalgic identification with the traditions, language and beliefs of a lost place and space. Although, the real wish of keeping a close contact with the place of origin is suppressed by the terrible necessity of getting used to the new home. For not being free of loves and feelings for friends, family and community, the common sense is lost and the things and ideas in which he believed turn into hallucination. "Nothing is clear. Nothing is eternal, obvious, necessary or indispensable. Nothing is natural."

Although Lorenzato was born in Belo Horizonte, he has always been a foreigner. He defines himself as a "straight shooter", the one who although trapped, watches and fights, without being part of any group or organization. As a son of immigrants, he could easily come and go from one continent to the other. The supposed availability to alternate between countries, languages and cultural registers protected the integrity of a constantly negotiated identity, by the certainty that belonging to his place of origin is always relative and fictional.

In Italy, they asked Lorenzato if he missed Brazil. He is not sure if he feels more Brazilian than Italian.

For sure, the place where we were born... well, so so, isn't it? I also like Italy because it is beautiful... I always had a good time there... only thinking of my work, and I always had work to do there, so it was good. I miss Italy, its landscapes, my friends and relatives...

In Brazil, he misses Italy; in Italy, he misses Brazil, a constant lack which does not let him be complete, wherever is. Maybe it is why Amadeo Lorenzato seems to be always in a strange marginality. He is omitted in Leila Coelho Frota's *Pequeno dicionário da arte do povo brasileiro*, which intend includes names like Arthur Bispo do Rosário and GTO, who are maybe in the edge of the paradigm. Adalgisa Arantes Cam-s to do a research about popular artists from Brazil, although it pos includes him in the chapter "Artistas populares de Belo Horizonte" from *Um século de história das artes plásticas em Belo Horizonte*, although she considers him "an erudite in development".

Lorenzato was born and grew up in Belo Horizonte, a modern city under construction; he spent his youth rebuilding wrecked cities in Europe; he traveled across the war and came back to his hometown. He moves anonymously among the mansions of the bourgeoisie, the houses of the new exhibitions of Paris an anonymous worker inserted in the vortex of the city.

His dualism of Brazilian/foreigner, central/peripheral, erudite/non-professional lets him free, floating unique in the contemporary Brazilian art.

If there was any possibility of comparison to Alfredo Volpi, it would be for their origins, professions, but the similarities work was slow and lonely. He was an urban man, isolated in a typically provincial capital that still resisted facing its metropolitan vocation.

There is a lost world for us, an unachievable world. The most we wish it, the less we can reach it without losses, nor mistakes – the lucid innocence, the vibrant confusions, and the shiny summary of the autodidact people's works. The one who studied this production had to go through the popular culture, the independent art and the one of the art system.

Alfred H. Barr says that each generation not only creates art but also discovers it. What the wide field of the primitive art has in common to it is just the fact of being aesthetically discovered and reevaluated in the last century, specifically in the last fifty years. Barr explains that the word "primitive" started gradually to include a large variety of productions: from

the sculptures of the Paleolithic period to the totem poles of Alaska; from the “primitive” Italians of the XIII century to the modern “primitive” ones; from the “popular” artists to the “non-professional” painters.

The use of this category starts at the end of the XIX century, when the occidental art started to incorporate, not without conflict, a group of images from other cultures and other cultural ambits. The leavings of the European materialism became visible in the Japanese engravings, the African sculptures, the Pre Colombian terracotta, and the Polynesian idols; in the psychiatric clinics, some doctors start to observe and collect the work of their patients.

In a few years time, a new ichnographic repertoire moved from the salons of the anthropological museums and the mental institutions to the collection of occidental art through the work of Degas, Van Gogh, Gauguin, Picasso, Ensor, and Dubuffet... When the art reached its highest level as intellectual activity, it was necessary to differentiate it from the official culture and believe in the creative spontaneity, as if it was affirming that the art could exist outside the hegemonic cultures and that this art would be efficient against them.

The modernists thought that his “primitive” art was ant academic and called it naif, rough, popular, naive. Giulio Carlo Argan defines Henri Rousseau, the first one of this type of art, not as uninstruced, but as an autodidact. He believed that for him there was a lack of above all the professional culture that was taught in the academies. Rousseau's case is inserted.

.. in a cultural situation already marked by the dislike of the industrial civilization. The beginning of the intellectual movement that happened in the first decade of the XX century with rupture movements like the cubism and the European vanguards.

The field of the naif, primitive and autodidact art was built throughout the XX century as an alternative space to what is considered the irreversible decline of the civilization. It was at first defined by the non erudition of its authors. Such art did not show only its primitivism, but the primitivism of a society that thinking about knowing everything, sinks more and more in the superstition of symbols, myths and magic”.

In this sense, Jane Kallir highlights that:

Our beliefs about the art of the non-professionals frequently tell us more about ourselves than the artists. Being Naif or Rough, this art has been a supplier of our favorite dreams since the XX century; when we feel the desperation for the civilization, justice, human soul; the non-professional artists are here to redeem them. The optimism appears from the vitality of the primitive artists, in a time in which the intellectual ones seem to cultivate the negativity.

Intellectualize until the limits the field of the arts to then value and exacerbate the spontaneity, the purity and the freedom of other manifestations, seems to be one of the various paradoxes of the modernity on its more nostalgic characteristic: the one that after using all the simplifications and abstractions wishes a return to the “simplicity”. They want the pure real characteristic which can only exist after eliminating the erudite culture.

Art Brut (outsider art) was created by Jean Dubuffet, who by creating the term also created the field. Marcel Thévoz explains that according to Dubuffet the Art Brut has three essential characteristics: the authors are kept apart from society their works are made out of the context of the Fine Arts, and the subjects, techniques and figuration systems come from a private invention. Those artists are really devoted to their work, not worrying about having

an audience or being successful. They are usually discovered by researchers or marchands who insert them in the circle of the famous artists and make that their work becomes known by larger audiences. It seemed that in his work there was a love for the narrative and the detailed description; the images are usually followed by verses or comments functioning as notes or explanations.

Other definitions of the Art Brut were created, like Autodidact Art, and Unusual Art. Jane Kallir suggests that the field is not very homogeneous. While the Art Brut artists tend to exhibit their private views, the Naïves usually work among views of the surroundings of their houses. In Brazil, some theoreticians define the Unusual Art as a variation of the Art Brut. This designation was used in the XVI São Paulo Art Biennial, in 1981, to demarcate the area where the production of the mentally disabled” or the “people detached of the normal contexts of visuality” was exhibited.²⁴ In the exhibition ‘Brasil 500 Mostra do Redescobrimto’ the same artists were exhibiting in the module called ‘Imagens do Inconsciente’.

The North American tradition also gathers in the field of the autodidact art simple people; a wide group in which we can mention rural and urban workers, agricultures without land to cultivate, proletarians, unemployed people and people who generally do not have contact with the art school nor museums because of geographic or economical conditions.

The popular art seems to be fated to be loyal to an essence of truth and purity, without losing its true values or its main authenticity. On the other hand, the erudite art needed to be constantly reinvented. That is where the belief shared by many people that the popular art belonged to the past and would only survive as a relic of an archaic world, a distant memory of old times and places. The erudite art would be headed to the future. Through a more careful look we can check that the popular production is perfectly able to assimilate changes, make questions and produce answers according to its own needs and its own rhythm.

At least since the XVII century, the erudite art has a source in the popular art, and vice-versa, in a complex process of exchange, appropriation, theft and pillagings. So we can notice that the ordinary speech usually forgets or hides the fact that this modest and barely invisible event is able to contaminate, touch and broaden the action area of the big art.

All the art is produced nowadays in a field crossed by the erudite culture, the popular wisdom spread in an urban space, by the cultural industry and the market. If the popular art did not contribute, like Argan wanted, as an efficient tool gainst the hegemonic culture, it at least influenced with its images of resistance or indiscipline, even being maculated by the definitions of primitive or naive.

Néstor García Canclini states that we can find in the popular artists the same level of normal creativity and the search of meaning in the erudite ones. The entrance of these artists in the museums is related to this recognition, but does not solve the difficulties to define the specific, the popular and the erudite ones or interpreates the relations between each. For the author, the way to leave the stuck situation in which he is can be found in a new kind of investigation that could redefine the global exchanges of the symbolic market. It would be responsible by the intrinsic development of the popular and the cult arts, with their crossroads and convergences.

If the art has always been a bit Kantian, now its parallelism with the popular art forces it to think better about its similar processes in the contemporary societies, their disconnection and crossroads.

Amadeo Lorenzato is an autodidact artist, a wider and last restrictive classification then

popular artist, naive or brut, who was inserted in the artistic field of Belo Horizonte and Brazil by Sérgio Maldonado, Maristella Tristão, Palhano Jr, Manoel Macedo, and many others who admired his work, exhibited and discussed it.

What is the reach of this classification? How to understand its supposed transformation into erudite? I don not believe that it is a relevant discussion neither that it would shine some light on its work. Moreover, Lorenzato recognizes himself on the back of a painting in 1948 as an "autodidact painter and straight shooter."

Lorenzato makes fun with the characters of the community which he lives in- worker, urban, suburban, central or subaltern - according to a private aesthetic project and its creative interactions with cult urban items of the local artistic field. The views that support his works and the modernist innovations that he incorporates show how the artist surpasses the prototypes and postulates aesthetic and cultural views. He does not know much about the history of art, but he paid attention to the streets of Paris and the churches of Italy; his interest takes makes him have information about the modern and contemporary visual culture, although it is not systematically filled, it is manipulated with associative freedom, similar to every erudite artist.

In his interviews, he recalls the works of Masaccio, Cimabue, and his fascination with the first renaissance, and then Rafael, Leonardo, Michelangelo, and especially the Sistine Chapel. He is not afraid of expressing a certain dislike by Rafael's painting:

- I prefer Masaccio to Rafael.
- Masaccio?
- Yes, Rafael is very inexpressive.

The Auto-retrato de Lorenzato (1995), from the Márcio Teixeira collection, seems to evoke one of the medallions painted by Masaccio, in the XV century, in the Brancacci Chapel of Santa Maria del Carmine in Florence. The compositional structure is the same: the face is painted inside a circle inserted in a square frame which is inserted in a square. His admiration by the masters of the first renaissance incorporates the memory of the images seen years ago in Florence, probably unconsciously. The Masaccio's medallions are not part of the figural narrative. They are in the ornamental pylons of the pictorial group, between the frames of trompe l'ceil and false marbles. These details are only noticed by the painters, the ones whose views are not controlled by the big narratives, the ones who can see and analyze the minimum details and technical procedures.

Can someone not believe that Lorenzato's painting wishes to have the solemnity of the frescoes in the Italian churches? You just need to notice the technique used, which makes the pictorial surface more opaque giving a rougher and aspect to it. On the other hand, when he refers to Italy or Europe, it seems that he prefers the churches to the museums, friends and the landscape. Every time he is asked about the museums he visited the highlights the churches.

As a painter, Lorenzato is sure about his technique and the modest materials he uses. He draws on the packet of the cigarettes he smokes. His first paintings were sketches made of watercolor or gouache: all the production of Viagem de estudos ao Leste da Europa were made of Bristol board painted with gouache, with the same size of postcards. He prepares his paint himself by mixing the coloring matters with dextrin. Later, he uses the oil, but not traditionally: the author uses the pigment in Xadrez powder, used in civil construction and flax. He turns this paste into paint and then models with a tool. To work like this, he needs a surface which is not perforated by the metal tool. After several tries with materials

like a cardboard, a metal web, a canvas, he decides for a canvas stretched on veneer.

He knows the great Renaissance painting, reads Vasari, and reviews the images already seen. The memory of these works is vivid, because he has not seen them as a tourist or an affectionate, but as someone who knows the techniques of the mural painting.

He has the impressionists and post impressionists as reference, he knows Pancetti and Guignard. For him, the painting is a regular activity, almost natural. It's with him throughout his life, but as a way of spiritual survival.

That is why the artist always gives his works as presents. He does not want to sell them; they are a gift and might still be like that: their function is in their making.

- I was never interested... .in looking for a gallery, I used to make my living from the civil construction, I did not like to sell paintings.

In the European Christian tradition, something hard to understand nowadays, what is made by pleasure cannot be exchanged for money. "The art helps me to live,....oh, yes, while I am painting I forget everything." The work would not give satisfaction just to afford to comfort life. Even though, we work hard because it is written that "in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread". What we get with hard work is worthy because it comes from our tiredness and effort.

Another memory from the European time remains and is still repeated in Lorenzato's tale: the war, the bombardment, and the loss of his bicycle.

"I had worked in Germany and made some money there, so I bought a bicycle and within a month I lost it. I did not enjoy it at all."

The image of his ruined bicycle appears again. The bicycle I had just bought was totally ruined", it was the dream of the workers at the time, the main mean of transport. It must have been durable, but it did not last much, a bomb destroyed the roof of the hangar where it was, then the rain finished the work. With it he lost more than 500 drawings and paintings made of gouache on veneer. But the painter regrets the loss of his bicycle, a product of his hard work in heaths of Hamburg, in Germany.

- Does it mean that you lost 500 paintings? - asks the interviewer
- And the bicycle - answers the artist.

In the Saint Mark church, in Florence, Fra Angelico paints "one of his greatest and sublime works". Madonna fo the Shadows: the Virgin and the Boy surrounded by eight saints-Saint Dominic, Saints Cosmas and Damian, Saint Mark, Saint John, Saint Thomas of Aquin, Saint Lawrence, and Saint Peter. Georges Didi-Huberman states that such impressive painting has never been totally analyzed. The researches only took into account, and reproduced, the top part of 2,73 m x 1,95 m. They neglected almost half the piece: a colorful surface with red, green and yellow, divided in four divisions, each one delimited by dark red stripes and frames in trompe l'œil.

The wall of red frescos marked by random spots, produces something like a deflagration, a colorful firework in which is included its origin. The pigment was dropped from distance, as rain in an instant. Since then it was eternized as a stars constellation.

The historians only concerned about the top part of the fresco painted in the white walls of the church, which showed a religious scene, already registered and ichnographically

catalogued: the Madonna of the Shadows. The bottom part of the fresco, the wall that looks like marmo finto, a fake marble, was forgotten. Didi-Huberman concludes that it does not represent marble, but itself as it really is, "the pure and non fictitious painting".

So, there would be a pure and non fictitious painting, which is represented by itself, just the way it is; a painting that does not represent anything, which is just an index of the pictorial act. We might wonder if Amadeo Lorenzato's painting is close to it.

If we stick to the artists' speech, we have to accept that he defines himself as a landmarks painter. On Sunday afternoons he is attracted by the nature of the city, so he goes out sketching in the outskirts of Rome or Paris, or even in the slums of Belo Horizonte.

I used to go out on Sundays, around Engenho Nogueira, where there was only vegetation. It was there where I would make my sketches.

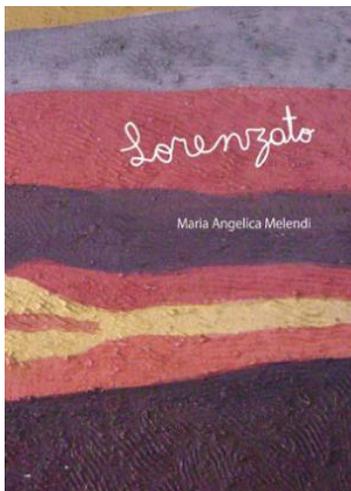
Then he goes back to his house and starts painting. "I paint how I can, since the sketches and the memory of everything I have seen". At the moment that the work starts getting shape on the rack, it is the painting that rules: Lorenzato follows them without hesitating. And so the benches bend windingly, the red clouds move on menacing skies, the fountain pours shiny stars and from the top of the slums, far away from the houses, against the firmament, the dark cypress trees of Rome stand up straight.

There is not mimesis pulse on those paintings, only the distant memory of things that we think we have already seen but do not know when or where. They are not paintings that exemplify or translate what is real, they are surfaces of imminence, states of temporary dismissal in which some flashes, some shades of possibilities can or cannot appear. In a process that

is opposite to Guignard's, whose last works start becoming diaphonic, transparent and light, Lorenzato's paintings are more and more opaque, severe and heavy.

He paints without ravishment, with complete detachment, and does not meet the market or the system demands. Completely absorbed in the real power of the image he creates, he paints in a state of vital contention. He does not paint images; he paints paintings; his technical uprightness has the same source of his fascination by the pictorial surfaces where differences and resemblances take place.

Concrete not for the concretism, but for the concreteness, solid, sometimes impenetrable, Lorenzato's paintings do not open windows to the outside world, they simply guide us - as dogs guide the blind people-through the dark world of pure painting.



Lorenzato and the emerging of a new capital

Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato is descendant of Italians who arrived in Brazil in the great wave of immigration in the last quarter of the XIX century and the decade of 1930. His father, Vitorio Lorenzato, came with three brothers in the decade of 1890. He worked in the deforestation of São Paulo, and as soon as he got to know about the building of the new capital of Minas Gerais he moved to Belo Horizonte, where he worked as a carpenter assistant building scaffolds to the buildings and houses under construction. His mother, Gema Terence Lorenzato, came when she was still a child with her family, as many others, to work in the coffee plantations. At the time of the construction of Belo Horizonte they moved to the city looking for new job opportunities.

Vitorio Lorenzato, after working as a carpenter assistant, received a land in the agricultural colony of Barreiro from the Secretaria de Estado de Agricultura de Minas Gerais, the region that supplied the new city with agricultural products at the time. In this area, Vitorio Lorenzato cultivated vegetables which were consumed by the market and the restaurants of the recently inaugurated Horizonte. He met his wife Gema in the market, and on 03/01/1900 his first son, Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato, was born.

The new capital of Minas still reminded the old Curral del Rei when the little Amadeo helped his father to cultivate vegetables. When he went to school he moved to his grandparents on his mother's side house in the Rua Peçanha, in the center of the city. He stayed on weekdays at his grandparents' house and went home on foot at the weekends. In this period he went to the Escola Dante Alighieri, at the Casa da Itália, a cultural fraternity of the Italian community in Belo Horizonte.

The wall painter – 1910 - 1920

In the decade of 1910, his father stopped working with vegetables and decided to build a house at the Barro Preto district. At the time the district gathered the biggest part of the Italian colony in the city, and when the family moved, Amadeo Lorenzato began to study at the Grupo Escolar Silviano Brandão. "Realizing the talent of the little Lorenzato, a teacher warned his father. But the boy had to work to help in the family budget, so he starts painting walls.

He had the first notions of the job with the Italian painter Américo Grande, working in his own house. After these first steps, he became the assistant of the painter Camilo Caminhas, the only painting contractor in Belo Horizonte at the time.

We must remind that in the Belle Epoque the mural painting was not limited to the White of our time, demanding of the painter a knowledge that matched the handicraft and the recent industrial techniques like the use of flowered and geometrical stuccos, the imitation of marble and even the representation of landscapes, for example.

The young painter learned everything about mural painting by working with Caminhas until the end of the decade of 1910. At that period there was a big crisis in the sector of civil construction and Lorenzato temporarily abandoned got a job in a cloth shop at the old Praça do Mercado, where nowadays is Belo Horizonte's bus station.

During the decade of 1910, Lorenzato saw the small city become the new capital, enjoyed the walks in the Praça da Liberdade and the Parque Municipal; the jokes of the carnivalesque groups of dancers in their parades at Avenida Afonso Pena, Rua da Bahia, Rua dos Caetés and watched the westerns in the Cinema do Comércio, which narrative became even more thrilling when followed by the sound of the piano lively performed during the exhibitions.

The return to Italy – 1920 - 1926

In 1920, the city of Belo Horizonte suffered a serious epidemic of Spanish Flu. The artist's mother, infected with the disease, was advised by the doctors to leave the city because they said that the weather was not very suitable for her recovery. So the family decided to sell everything and return to Italy, Lorenzato was 20 at that time and anxiously waited for the day of the great trip. In his testimony, he described the experience:

I had never seen the sea or the train; until I was 20 years old I had just traveled by train once, was in a round trip to Santa Bárbara, from Belo Horizonte to Rio de Janeiro... remember that we took the train at 4:30 p.m. and arrived at Rio de Janeiro at 7:00 a.m.; then I saw the sea, the ships, and was all I wanted. The sea is a great thing that we cannot find everywhere, right?

They traveled in a ship named Princesa Mafalda. The whole family landed in Genoa and went to the North of Italy, to the small town of Arsiero, near Vicenza, the place of origin of his family on his father.

Arsiero had been bombarded during the First World War and was being rebuilt. Lorenzato, with all the experience acquired in Belo Horizonte about mural painting, got a job soon. Between 1920 and 1924 he worked in Arsiero, and in 1925 he moved to Vicenza, where for the first time he went to the arts school, the Royal Academy of Arts, in the Olympic Gallery, starting then his work as an easel painter.

Study trip through Europe-1926/1930

After studying at the Royal Academy of Arts, Lorenzato left his family in Vicenza and moved to Rome looking for a job. He arrived in 1926 and met the Dutch painter and caricaturist Cornelius Keesman. The affinity between the Brazilian and the Dutch became evident; the interest for art and the adventurous spirit were responsible for the emerging of a great friendship. They used to hang around together every weekend, to draw the landscapes of Rome, visit churches and palaces, getting to know the work of the great

masters.

In 1927, influenced by his Dutch friend, “he becomes Esperantist, what at the time was a kind of ‘hippie attitude as the one of the 1960s and 1970s. The photos of that time show his face and long hair with a look of the dream, conjecturing a utopia”. With Cornelius Keesman he began to plan his trip through the European East towards the Orient. They planned the journey for a year, which would be done by a bicycle connected with a trailer. During the day they worked as mural painters, and at night they worked on the trailer. In 1928, they started the trip that was named Voyage d'études à travers l'Europe. They left Italy, passing by Austria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria and Turkey. They introduced themselves as étudiants d'arts during the trip and painted small cards of landscapes, trees, roads, small houses with gouache, which were offered in the small towns and cities where they passed by.

“By living of these small gouaches and watercolors and printed cards with the image of them next to their vehicles”, they traveled during a year and two months. It was not so difficult because they could always count on “the generosity of the people from the cities that always received them well”. When they arrived in Istanbul, in Turkey, they intended to go to the Orient.

But although Lorenzato had an Italian passport, he could not keep traveling. The artist and his Dutch friend were separated. He went to Odessa, in the old Soviet Union, and then returned to Italy. However, he did not stay for long in this country. He soon left to Brussels in Belgium, where he worked during a year in the civil construction. When his contract finished, he traveled to Paris. He started working as a workman in the International Colonial Exhibition at that time.

In Paris, he visited all the museums, especially those dedicated to the work of the great impressionist artists. He met the Italian painter Gino Severini, who took him to the cafés of Montparnasse where the main artists at that time used to go, and where he saw Pablo Picasso and Henri Matisse.

The return to Brazil 1948-1956

On the 20th of April 1948, he landed in Rio de Janeiro. During the trip, he made friends with an Italian waiter that was hired by the Hotel Quitandinha, in Petrópolis. To help him as an interpreter, Lorenzato went with his new friend to the hotel. The Hotel Quitandinha had been a casino until 1946, and with the prohibition of the game in Brazil, it became a place to hold big events as the industry and commerce exhibitions.

In the hotel, Lorenzato was hired as a builder of stands for exhibitions and stayed there for a year, saving money to the tickets of his wife and son. In this period, he painted a series and watercolors about the Serra de Petrópolis. In one of the paintings of this moment still preserved, the author wrote: **“Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato, autodidact painter and a straight shooter. He does not have schools. He does not follow tendencies. He does not belong to churches. He paints what comes to his mind. Amen.”**

After the arrival of his wife, he decided to return to Belo Horizonte. There, he met a lot of relatives again, and rented a house at the Carlos Prates district, where he lived for 12 years. He met a childhood friend again, who was a contractor and started to work with him. His return to his home town, almost 30 years later, was marked by the discovery of a new Belo Horizonte.

I remember that when I left in 1920, the highest building that existed was the Casa do Cartacho, in Caetés street, and it had three floors. When I came back in 1949, the Edifício Acaiaca and many other buildings already existed. I got really surprised with all the changes; in the place where nowadays we can find the Mercado Central, I thought that I would find the America soccer field. Where the Tamoios street is, next to the Arrudas, there was a hill that was leveled to join the Tamoios and Carijós streets. Where today is the Edifício Mesbla there was a lake, and when the river flooded everything became a bog. When I came back and saw the Edifício Mesbla built in that place I remembered that I used to fish there.

Between 1950 and 1955, he worked in the civil construction. In 1956, while He painted the outside of two apartments he fell down and broke his leg in many places. The serious injury made him stop the mural painting for good.

The painter's ways-1956-2004

After retiring soon, Lorenzato dedicated himself entirely to the artistic painting. The free time allowed him to walk for popular districts of the city looking for themes for his painting. By the way, it used to happen often until 1995: walking was part of the painting process. It was during his walks that he made drawings and sketches that lately transferred to the paintings. The everyday life, his favorite theme, showed him the simple and daily tasks that interested him so much.

After long walks with his pockets full of paper, the artist worked in his studio. He prepared his own paint and started to recreate the landscapes of the popular districts in canvases made of wire, cement plates or cardboard. He used to finish his work with tools from his time of a mural painter.

At the beginning of the 1960s, he built a house at Cabana. In this region, a popular agglomerate slowly appeared, where in the future it would become the slum Cabana do Pai Tomás. The structure of the slum caught the artist's eyes, which started to represent the theme often in his work. "The scenes represented the life in the slum: washer-women, clothes hanged like little flags, entrances surrounded by trees, small parks, mountains and woods crowd of butterflies and birds."

Until 1964 Lorenzato's work would be centered at the private making, only known by a limited group of family and friends. He had never taken part of an exhibition, but his interest for art made him go to the main exhibitions that took place in the city. In one of his visits to an exhibition at the Galeria Grupiara, he decided to show his work to the journalist and arts critic Sérgio Maldonado, who surprised by the discovery wrote:

At the beginning of the 1960's I worked at the Galeria Grupiara and was used to a difficult task: I was constantly contacted by artists who wanted to show their works that were basically weak and had almost no quality. One day, one man with his works wrapped in newspaper came. I agreed in seeing them even after seeing a series of pretentious bad works. It was the biggest surprise in my life. On those few paintings could see a whole world of beauty. The complete universe enchanted whatever was common. The reach parade of paintings, full of colors and shapes, an impatient world that was born and found the most appropriate language in the painting: the creativity connected with the dreams, so it was not necessary to make any effort to demonstrate any emotion.

After this encounter, he exhibited for the first time in collective exhibitions: Salão Jovem

(1965) and the Mostra Fim de Ano (1965), both at the Minas Tênis Clube, in Belo Horizonte. In 1967 he performed his first individual exhibition at the Minas Tênis Clube, organized by Palhano Júnior, in a promotion of the Sociedade das Amigas da Cultura.

On the catalogue of the exhibition, Mari' Stella Tristão wrote:

Lorenzato is a rare painter, experienced and tested, but simple by conditioning. He is an autodidact and his painting, as a result of such characteristics, is an almost indefinable mixture. It is the product of the relationship between the artist and the community in which he lives in. But before being like that, it is the reflex of the sensibility transmitted by a brush without erudition, but affable and authentic. It is the love for the things that seem to have been lost a long time ago. In Lorenzato's painting there is a dispossession of technical interests. But there is also a high interest in being simple but not primitive, good but not erudite. (..) He is not a primitive painter just because he painted slums. But it is not an intellectual painting as well. What emerges is a painting that makes us feel the happiness of the sad things, where the artificial effects insist, but the heat of the sun is more intense, the Green is more pure and the sky seems closer."

Between the end of the 1960's and the beginning of the 1970's, he took part in collective exhibitions in the Galeria Guignard, Galeria Minart, Minas Tênis Clube, Galeria Excelsior, in Belo Horizonte, and Grande Hotel de Araxá (MG). His works were also in the Semana do Folclore, in the Galeria Minart (1970), and Cinco Primitivos, in the Galeria Guignard (1970).

In 1971 he performed his second individual exhibition, at that time in the Galeria Chez Bastião, in Belo Horizonte. In 1973, he was chosen to represent Brazil in the 3rd Triennial of Bratislava, in Slovakiana. In that same year, the exhibition was seen in the Petit Palais, in Paris.

His third individual exhibition was in 1973, in the Galeria Arte Livro, in Belo Horizonte. In the exhibition, he presented a series of works in which works, Flor e Fauna Tropical, a group of Indians rests under one of the trees. They are full of flowers, butterflies, monkeys. A bit further, a monkey watches the scene. Another interesting one: some boyson a tree. The whole scene is hieratic, it reminds totem shapes. And finally, there are the sunsets. On them, his poetry in matching shapes reaches the limit. A few colorful spots define the painting. At first sight, it would be considered absurd because of the high schematization and synthesis. The clouds are not clouds anymore; the shadows are not shadows, being part of a weird print, although it has a wonderful harmony as a product.

With more than ten years of work and having joined national and international exhibitions, the artist part in these collective exhibitions in 1970: V Feira de Arte, Exposição do Acervo, Grandes Artistas Brasileiros, Leilão de Parede e Salão do Pequeno Quadro, na Galeria Guignard; Salão de Arte Instinto e Criatividade Popular, do Ministério da Educação e Cultura- MEC, in Rio de Janeiro; mostra de Artistas Populares na IV Festa do Folclore Brasileiro, Galeria Otto Cirne, in Belo Horizonte.

In 1976, he performed an individual exhibition in the Galeria Guignard and in the following year he performed another one in the Galeria Memória Cooperativa de Arte, both in Belo Horizonte. In the last one, the artist exhibited works in which the ecological concern became evident:

The trees have lost their leaves, their trunks and branches were crossed, forming tortuous mazes. The roads are surrounded with cut benches that stretch irregularly upwards, from

where endless walks to nowhere arise, always looking for something that is not found. The branches do not have tops, and the ones that have them are detached from the trunks of the trees, superimposed in a random and detached way. Tops and sky mix in a convulsive movement obtained by the use of a metal tool used only in little areas of the painting in which the artist wants to give more movement. (...) That is the artist concerned about his time, revealing the power of the pure souls and the fear that afflicts us.

When he was 81, he performed an individual exhibition with the paulista painter Dalva in the Galeria Brasileira, in São Paulo. During the 1980's, his works were part of the following collective exhibitions: Primitivos Mineiros, in the Mandala Galeria de Arte (1980); Exposição de Arte Popular e Artesanato, in the Shopping Center (1981); Primeira Mostra Nacional de Pintura Popular, in the Galeria de Arte SESC Bauru, in São Paulo (1982), and /Salão de Artes Visuais da Fundação Clóvis Salgado, in the Palácio das Artes (1984).

In 1984, he exhibited individually in the Galeria Casa dos Contos, in Belo Horizonte. Maria Amélia Fialho, wrote in the catalogue:

A man of a vigorous agility, he is rigorous and delicate. He has been giving the highest simplification to the shapes in his work. His art, apparently simple, is full of pulse and movement. He is neither primitive nor primitivistic. He has all this private language, which appears in a pure and folkloric way, full of strength and communication power. In his spatial technique, he uses brushes, tools and paint made by himself. He recreates the natural color of the marines, slums, flowers, roads, dark and sunny places.

In 1986, he performed another individual exhibition during the launch of the culture space in the Galeria Asal, in Belo Horizonte. In 1988, he exhibited in the Projeto de Intercâmbio Cultural Brasil-Itália in Rome. In the same year he performed an individual exhibition in the Manoel Macedo Galeria de Arte, in Belo Horizonte.

In 1990, Lorenzato celebrated his 90 years old with a great individual exhibition in the Manoel Macedo Galeria de Arte. In 1991, he exhibited individually in the Itaúgaleria, with the introduction text by the journalist Walter Sebastião.

During the 1990's his works were present in the following collective exhibitions: Poteiro, Lorenzato e Rodelnégio, in the Manoel Macedo Galeria de Arte (1992); Salão de Arte Popular, organized by MEC, in Rio de Janeiro (1994); V Feira de Arte e Grandes Artistas Brasileiros, in the Galeria Guignard, in Belo Horizonte (1994).

In January 1995, he performed his great retrospective: Lorenzato e as Cores do Cotidiano, in the Museu de Arte da Pampulha, with the curatorship of Paulo Rossi and text by Cristina Ávila. The exhibition presented more than 100 works produced throughout his professional way, since the 1940s until the recent works, allowing a wide view of his work. In the same year, Lorenzato passed, victim of a heart attack.

In 1996, his works were presented in the exhibition Artistas Populares de Belo Horizonte, organized by the historian Adalgisa Arantes Campos, in the Centro Cultural da UFMG. The exhibition joined the project Um Século de História das Artes Plásticas em Belo Horizonte. As a posthumous homage, the exhibitions 100 Anos de Amadeo Lorenzato, in the Casa dos Contos (2000), organized by Palhano Júnior; 100 Anos de Lorenzato, in the Galeria da Escola Guignard (2001), organized by the curatory staff of the Escola Guignard, and the exhibitions Lorenzatices, in the Pace Galeria de Arte (2001), project by Antônio Carlos Figueiredo, Leila Pace and Telma Kalil were done.

Lorenzato's work has always been related to the popular universe, themes like slums, old habitations, and the simple life in the popular districts of the city have contributed to an understanding that used to identify his work mistakenly with a naïf art. But as the historian Adalgisa Arantes Campos highlights in the study she did about the painter in 1997, Lorenzato's work incorporates the artistic erudite language as it was always motivated by the research, the plastic thought, the balance in the shapes and the intentional choice of his themes according to the critical view of the reality that surrounded him.

His themes are constantly chosen in the everyday reality. They are not showy structures like Henri Rousseau's or the paintings of the French painter. They create a phantasmal and illusory world, in which the symbolism studied comfortably sets in. (...) Lorenzato reproduces the images from the direct visual experience collected through the sketches he makes during his walks in the outskirts where he lives, or through landscapes, portraits of friends and acquaintances, through dead nature, flowers and leaves, or even in the caption of any scene he watches on the television. All these true themes are filtered by his retina and the abstracted and transferred to his paintings. (...) Lorenzato's work does not follow rules, nor fits in elaborated techniques or a certain style. Its great value is exactly in being a spontaneous creation, in which all the pictorial, thematic, formal or material elements naturally mix up and intuitively transformed by the hand of the painter through artistic manifestations.

Everything is taken to the limit of a code indicating a basically visual view of the circumstances of his author, perfectly recognized in the world around him. Lorenzato does not reproduce this environment, he elicits excuses and translates them through painting in what he has of more essential. In Lorenzato, before the existence of the images' presentation, there is the suggestion of a contemporary and astonishingly remote arch image, a fundament of perception that could be in the base of all the historical series, although it does not lose its 'sociological specificity: the emerging of the first house, a street, a district, the birth of the village. Meanwhile, it is about the establishment of constant things and identifying what it is common to all the projects, without losing sight of essential differences like a point of view, a personal history, the use of a sign.

So, when we see in his paintings the impulse of the geometrization, the composing order built, the questions about the Renaissance's perspective, the sublimation of the color, the search for 'non artistic' and the use of radical techniques, we are sure of being in front of a modern artist. And why not a popular modern artist? In this way, Lorenzato's work points to a series of dichotomies that increase his power of investigation even more. He uses what is old and what is new, richness and poverty, erudite and popular sources, the Old and the New Worlds, simplicity and complexity, and then it goes. They are edges that delimit his work and appear on it with a rare synthesis power, even among many of the most celebrated modern artists we have.