

Sonia Gomes

*1948 Caetanópolis, Brazil

Lives and works in São Paulo





Detail of *Memória*, 2004

Sonia Gomes weaves her work over the duration of time. The artist chooses materials that bring with them colors, textures, trims, and an indefinable set of memories. Each fabric, article of clothing, and accessory she uses has traveled its path, was dressed, stored, and altered before undergoing a final transformation in her studio.

By combining actions such as brushing, twisting, stretching, tensioning, suspending, and wrapping, Gomes turns sewing into a kind of drawing. Her gestures produce traces and set stages of fabric handling, linking, balancing, and associating pieces in a body that, as if growing, takes shape, establishing relationships with the surrounding space.

Born in Caetanópolis, Minas Gerais, in 1948, Sonia Gomes' relationship with art stemmed from a permanent need, which led her to produce a wide range of textile creations without having access to a circulation channel. The ambition to recreate the world around her through gestures of care, starting with the intimacy of the body, clothing, and home, inscribed her practice within contemporary art.



SELECTED
EXHIBITIONS

Detail of *Quando o sol nascer azul*, 2021



Sonia Gomes

35th Bienal de São Paulo

Fundação Bienal de São Paulo, Brazil

2023

The 35th Bienal de São Paulo presents dozens of works by the Minas Gerais artist, forming a robust and representative body of her poetics and trajectory. Wall works, hanging pieces, rods, and some pieces from the Torção [Torsion] series – Gomes' trademark – will comprise the space. As such, the condensed, tonic time and entangled memories of the millenary resistance of black women takes shape and manifests itself in the choreographies of the impossible.

– Juliana de Arruda Sampaio

translated from Portuguese by Philip Somervell

















Sonia Gomes

Sinfonia das Cores

Pinacoteca de São Paulo, Brazil

2023

“Sonia gomes: symphony of colors” is an unprecedented installation created for the Octógono Arte Contemporânea Project at Pinacoteca Luz, in which the artist faces an unprecedented challenge in her career; to conceive a work on a much larger scale than usual, without sacrificing the handcrafted and chromatic quality of its objects.

Sonia Gomes’ production includes 34 strings suspended at different heights, which make up a symphony of shapes and visualities. It is a reflection and a product of the way your own body reacts to fabrics, as it creates objects whose materiality connects to the stories of other people and whose scale corresponds to the reach of their limbs.









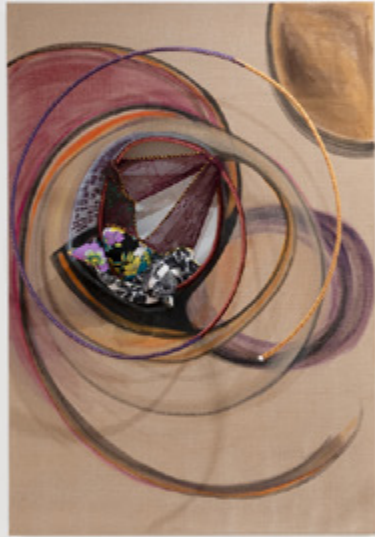
Sonia Gomes

O mais profundo é a pele (Skin is the deepest part)

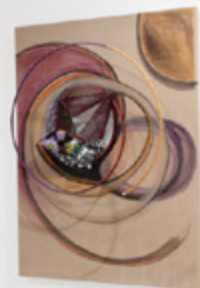
Pace Gallery New York, USA

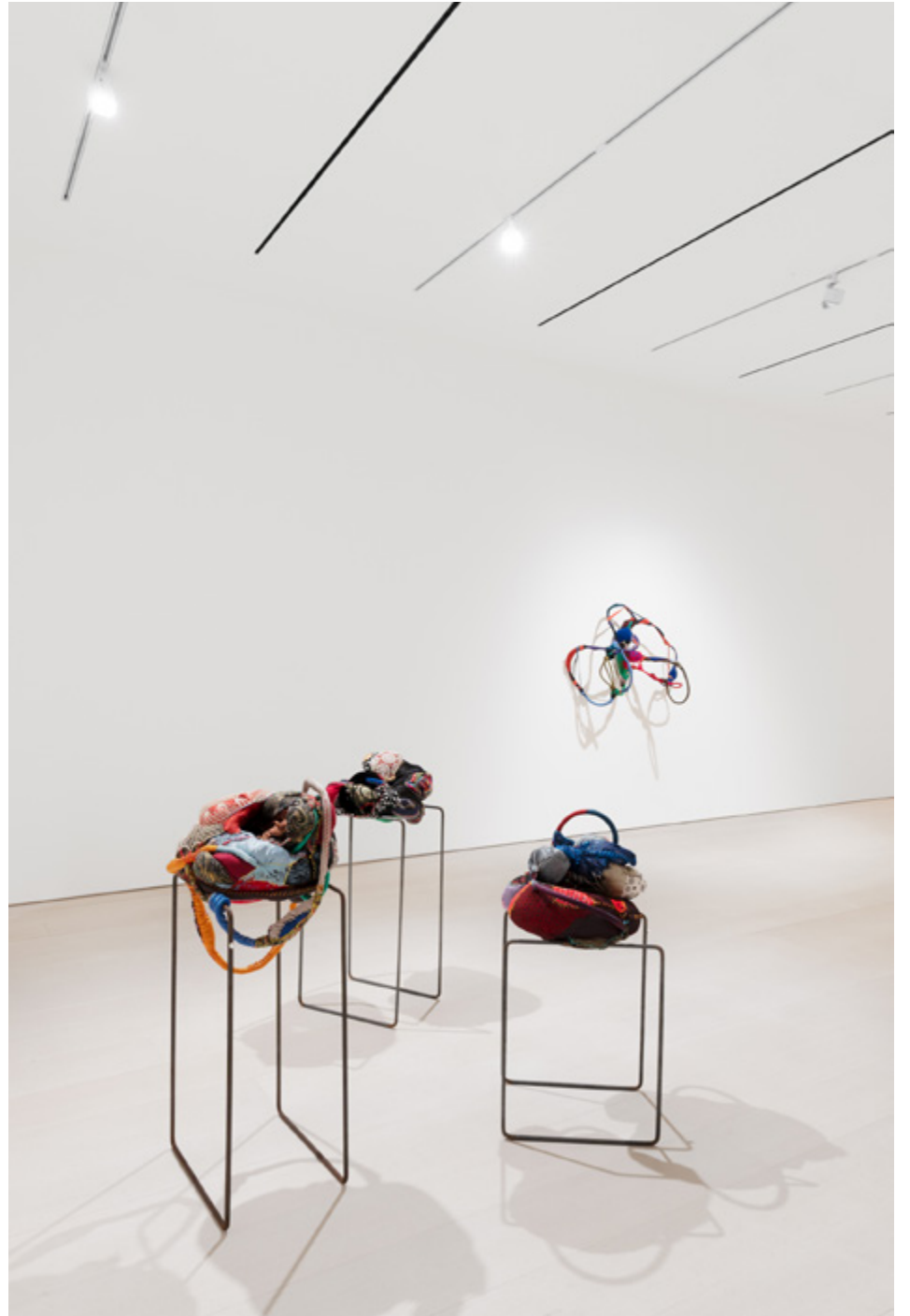
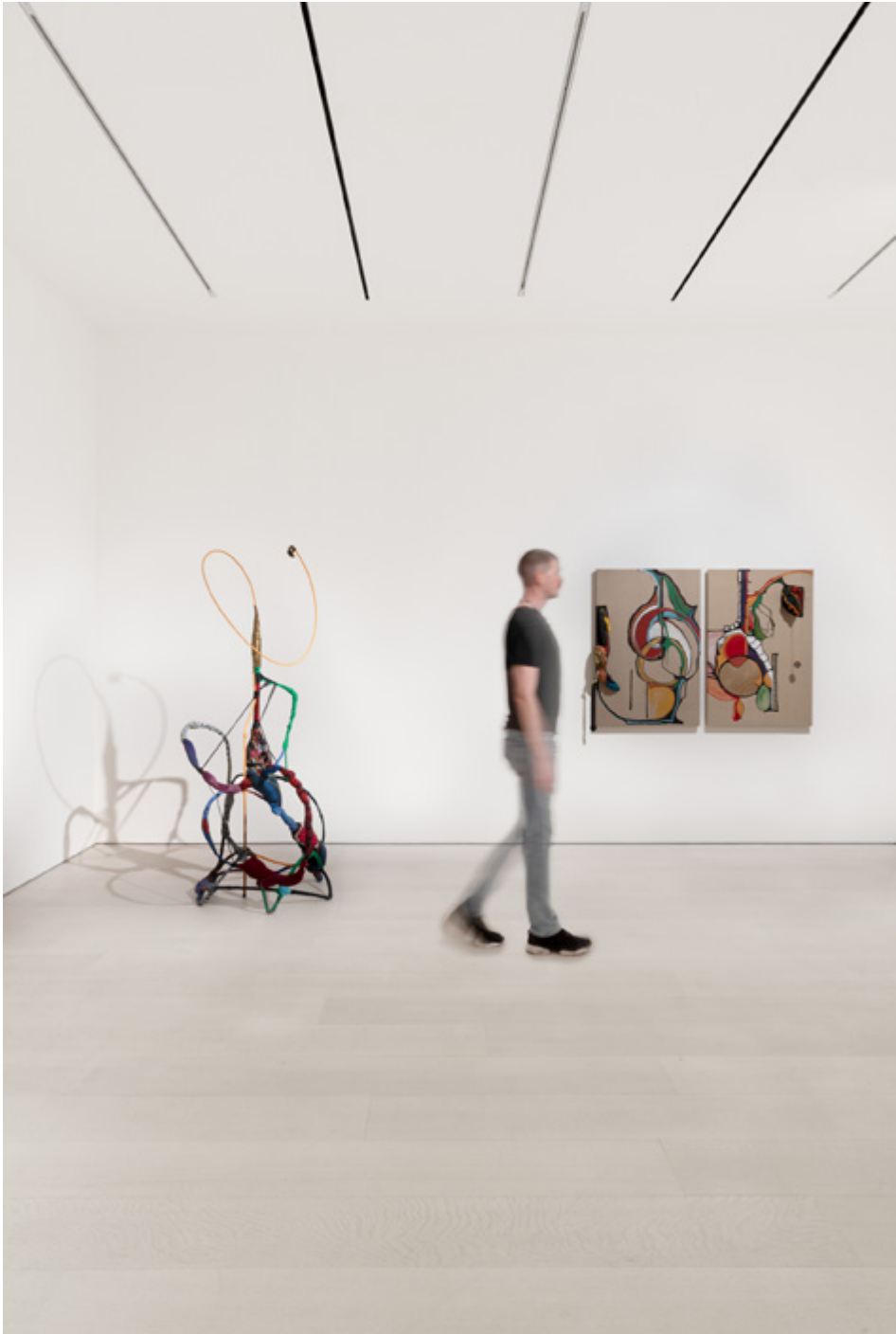
2022

In her first solo exhibition in New York City, Gomes presented works from 2021 and 2022, including hanging, free-standing, and wall-mounted sculptures. The artist's works often incorporate secondhand, gifted, and repurposed textiles; furniture; driftwood; wire; and other seemingly disparate materials. In her laborious process for creating these multimedia works, Gomes considers sewing akin to drawing; a means to produce gestural marks and compositional balance.











Sonia Gomes

Lágrima

Mendes Wood DM São Paulo, Brazil

2021

The exhibition orbits around a work titled Lágrima [Tear], which was completed at the beginning of the 2020 pandemic. The blue fabric with white details is cut through by a body that is recurrent in Gomes' sculptures, made of different textures and forms on its surface. Known for her conflicting combinations, the artist builds a convergence point between all the different possibilities and combinations brought together by the memories that impregnate the fabrics. The works follow a process of destruction, and this is the first step in Gomes' method: she tears, wrinkles and breaks in order to build her bodies. This entropic movement is what feeds the artist's radicality, understood by her as fundamental. Losing control of the stories we experience is Gomes' claim for this exhibition; the materialization of the most visceral feelings in the shape of a tear.











Sonia Gomes

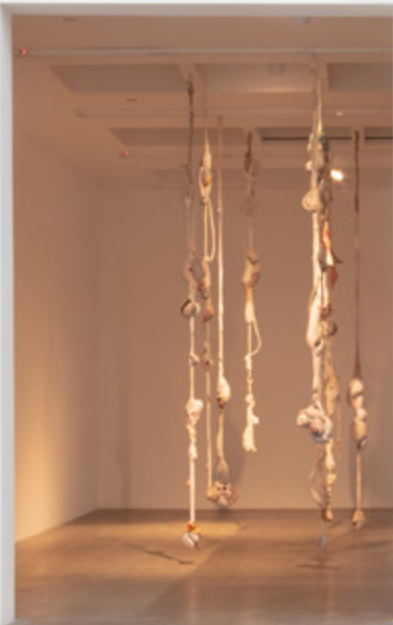
When the sun rises in blue

Blum & Poe, Los Angeles, USA

2021

This presentation served as an introduction to her practice, spanning key bodies of work integral to the artist's oeuvre, and a new site-specific installation produced over the course of a year and a half.







Group Show

Liverpool Biennial, United Kingdom
2021

Sonia Gomes presented four fabric sculptures at the Liverpool Cotton Exchange Building. Gomes constructs her structures using only materials that have been handed to her by others – taking on errant leftovers and combining them to create sites of intense encounter and entanglement. Mainly consisting of second-hand clothing and wires, Gomes’s transformation of disowned and unwanted materials gives them a new significance and life. The sculptures metaphorically bear the memories of the materials’ original owners, tying together their collective consciousness to create a knotty and guttural form. Gomes trusts that every material is imbued with latency of life, imagining her sculptures as bodies that absorb and retell the multiple memories of the ‘Other’.







Sonia Gomes

I Rise - I'm a Black Ocean, Leaping and Wide

Museum Frieder Burda, Baden, Germany

2019

The exhibition *I Rise - I'm a Black Ocean, Leaping and Wide* combined works from the early 2000s with Gomes' latest mixed-Media sculptures. The poetic title of the exhibition was inspired by passages from the eponymous poem by the Afro-American writer and civil rights activist Maya Angelou (1928-2014). Still *I Rise* is an anthemic protest against racism, sexual violence, the marginalization of black women and the history of slavery. The exhibition documents how Gomes uses traditional handcraft techniques to create objects that blend extreme physicality with the sacred and the transcendental. Her later works, especially, refer in multi-faceted way to oppression, violence and the eternal existential cycle of life and death.













Sonia Gomes

The Silence of Color

Mendes Wood DM Brussels, Belgium

2019

The Silence of Color traces the trajectory of Gomes' recent practice, showcasing colorful works from her latest institutional exhibitions in Brazil, *Still I Rise* at MASP (São Paulo, 2018) and *Casa de Vidro* (São Paulo, 2018), as well as a body of new works, from which this exhibition derives its title. Inspired by her work *Maria dos Anjos* (2017-2018), which Gomes made from pieces of a wedding dress that were sewn together with seams, moorings and various other fabrics, this new series of work marks the first in which white fabric is predominately incorporated. Despite using a wide and varied palette across her practice, the color white posed a challenge for Gomes - namely in that she viewed it as synonymous with silence. After bringing *Maria dos Anjos* to completion, Gomes decided on a hiatus from working with color in order to explore her aversion to using white fabric.











Sonia Gomes

Still I Rise

MASP and Casa de Vidro, São Paulo, Brazil
2018

The works were created especially for this show at MASP and Casa de Vidro, resulting from a partnership between the museum and the Bardi Institute. The two institutions have linked trajectories. It was at Casa de Vidro that the architect Lina Bo Bardi (1914-1992), responsible for the MASP project, and Pietro Maria Bardi (1900-1999), founding director of the museum, lived since 1951, the year in which the construction of the house was completed. Bo Bardi's design for Casa de Vidro has connections with the design of the MASP building, as both share the unique qualities of suspension and transparency that provide an open relationship with their surroundings. Gomes created her sculptures from the dialogue with these modernist buildings.



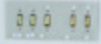




SONIA GOMES

SAIDA









Sonia Gomes

A vida renasce, sempre

MAC Niterói, Brazil

2018

The exhibition featured 40 works produced in the last 20 years by the artist. Her famous pendants and sculptures made of twisted cloth make up an exhibition accompanied by drawings on paper, fabric and wood, in addition to interventions in books, household and work objects. Her sculptures' techniques, shapes and prints refer to the artist's family memory and racial identity, included in an intimate and inviting universe.













Group Show

Revolution in the Making: Abstract Sculpture by Women,
1947 – 2016

Hauser Wirth & Schimmel, Los Angeles, USA
2016

Through nearly 100 works made by 34 artists over the past seventy years, this ambitious undertaking traced ways in which women have changed the course of art by deftly transforming the language of sculpture since the postwar period. Works on view reveal their makers inventing radically new forms and processes that privilege solo studio practice, tactility, and the idiosyncrasies of the artist's own hand. identity, included in an intimate and inviting universe.





Group Show

56th Biennale di Venezia

Venice, Italy

2015

With the exhibition curated by Okwui Enwezor La Biennale observes the relationship between art and the development of the human, social, and political world, as external forces and phenomena loom large over it. Our aim is to investigate how the tensions of the outside world act on the sensitivities and the vital and expressive energies of artists, on their desires and their inner song.









SELECTED
WORKS

Detail of *Chuva de ouro* (tela-corpo series), 2023



Sonia Gomes

Chuva de ouro (tela-corpo series)

2023

vinyl and acrylic on jute,
various fabrics, iron and
pearl

145 × 100 × 24 cm

MW.SGM.453



Detail of *Velatura*, 2022



Sonia Gomes

Velatura

2022

galvanized iron, different
fabrics, laces and crochet

123 × 101 × 45 cm

MW.SGM.405



Detail of *Untitled* (from *Torção* series), 2022



Sonia Gomes

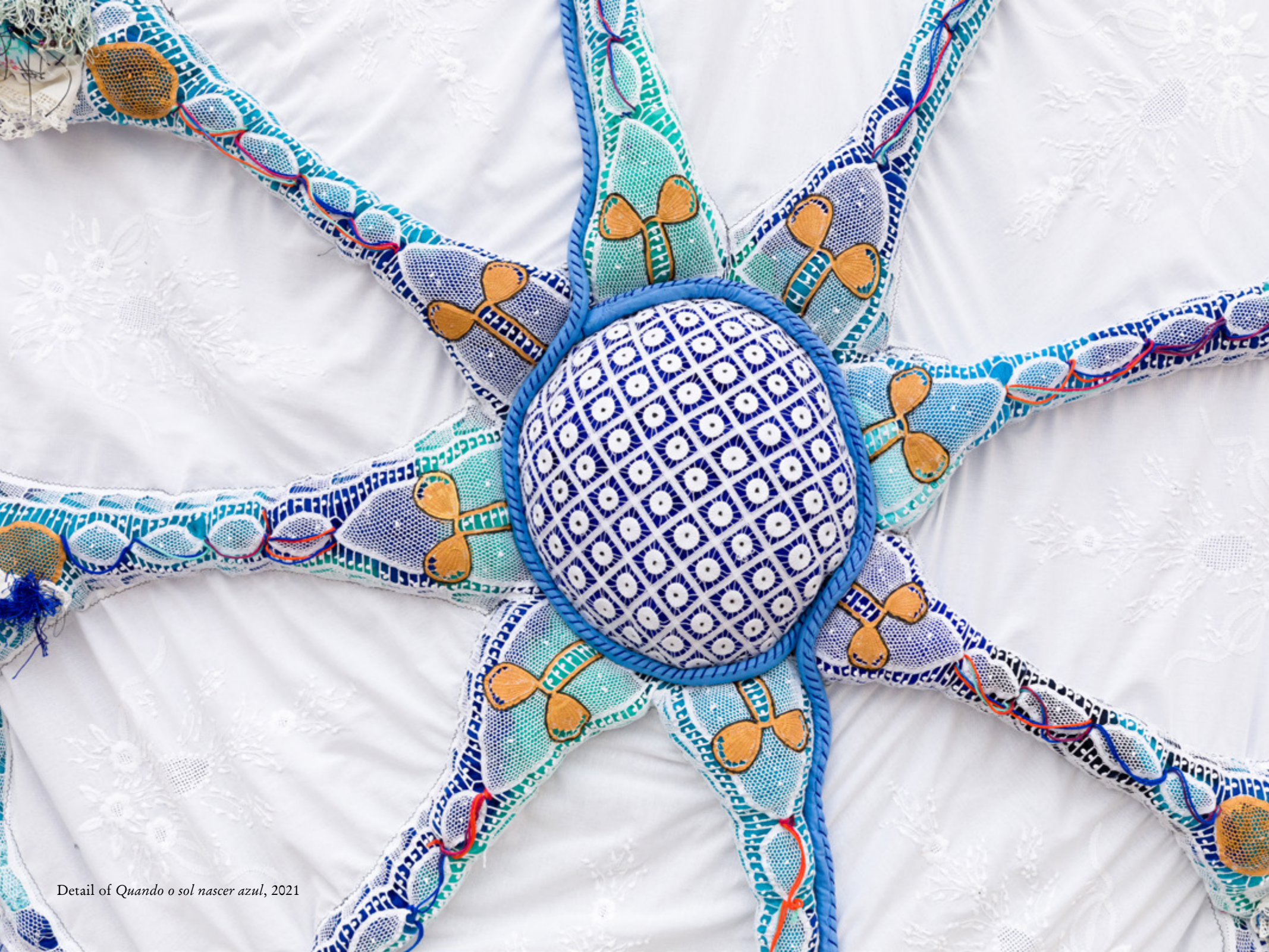
Untitled (from Torção series)

2022

various fabrics, galvanized
wire on industrial iron
rebar

208 × 126 × 97 cm

MW.SGM.421



Detail of *Quando o sol nascer azul*, 2021



Sonia Gomes

Quando o sol nascer azul

2021

different fabrics,
'Renascença' lace,
Richelieu lace, acrylic
paint, nylon threads, metal
e different fragments

322 × 283 × 30 cm

MW.SGM.376



Detail of *Intervalo*, 2020 - 2021



Sonia Gomes

Intervalo

2020 - 2021

acrylic, gouache, acrylic
marker, threads, different
fabrics on canvas and
different fabrics and rope

219 × 80 × 20 cm

(painting)

340 × 20 × 20 cm

(pending)

MW.SGM.372

Detail of *Untitled* (from "A vida não me assusta" series), 2020





Sonia Gomes

Untitled, from "A vida não me assusta" series

2020

wire, fabric, threads and stone

22.5 × 20.5 × 21.5 cm

MW.SGM.339



Detail of *Acordes Naturais*, 2018



Sonia Gomes

Acordes Naturais

2018

stitching, bindings,
different fabrics and laces

variable dimensions

MW.SGM.247



Detail of *Untitled* (from *Raiz series*), 2018



Sonia Gomes

Untitled (from Raiz series)

2018

stitching, bindings,
different fabrics and laces
on wire and wood

64 × 100 × 75 cm

MW.SGM.251



Detail of *Correnteza* (from *Raiz* series), 2018



Sonia Gomes

Correnteza (from Raiz series)

2018

stitching, bindings,
different fabrics and laces
on wood

90 × 260 × 80 cm

MW.SGM.255



Sonia Gomes and detail of *Maria dos Anjos*, 2017 - 2018



Sonia Gomes
Maria dos Anjos
2017 - 2018
stitching, bindings,
different fabrics and laces
variable dimensions
MW.SGM.231



Detail of *Cordão dos Mentecaptos*, 2016



Sonia Gomes

Cordão dos Mentecaptos

2016

stitching, bindings,
different fabrics and laces

variable dimensions

MW.SGM.S.162



Detail of *Magia*, 2014



Sonia Gomes

Magia

2014

stitching, moorings and
different fabrics

240 × 215 cm

MW.SGM.S.094



Detail of *Pano*, 2012



Sonia Gomes

Pano

2012

stitching, bindings,
different fabrics and laces

137 × 104 × 7 cm

MW.SGM.S.135

Detail of *Mãos de ouro*, 2008





Sonia Gomes

Mãos de ouro

2005

graphite, pen, stitching,
moorings, different fabrics
and laces on paper

47 × 37 cm

MW.SGM.O.012

Detail of *Untitled*, 2005





Sonia Gomes

Untitled

2005

stitching, bindings,
different fabrics and laces
on wire

103 × 167 × 30 cm

MW.SGM.233



Detail of *Untitled*, 2004



Sonia Gomes

Untitled

2004

ewing, binding and various
fabrics on wire

90 × 110 × 18 cm

MW.SGM.233



Detail of *Memória*, 2004



Sonia Gomes

Memória

2004

stitching, knots, different
fabrics, laces and fragments

140 × 270 cm

MW.SGM.S.003

Detail of *Ciranda*, 1999





Sonia Gomes
Ciranda
1999
fabric and string
24 cm ø
MW.SGM.237



Sonia Gomes in her studio, São Paulo, 2021

#ELE



Sonia Gomes in her studio, São Paulo, 2021

It took Ms. Gomes most of her life to realize that she had always been an artist. As a young girl growing up in Caetanópolis, a small town once known as a manufacturing hub for textiles, she liked to deconstruct her clothes and turn them into something different, using leftover fabric and found materials to make her own jewelry.

“It’s part of this rebelliousness that I’ve always had,” she said. “I still don’t like things that are predetermined, that say you have to do things or wear things a certain way.”

She was 45 when she left behind a career as a lawyer to attend the Guignard School, an art school in her home state of Minas Gerais. There she discovered that “not everything is art, but art can be anything,” she said, giving her the confidence to move forward with her work, which reclaims the Afro-Brazilian experience and culture, which continue to be diminished and appropriated in the last country in the Western world to abolish slavery.

— Jill Langlois, *Fabrics With Powerful Stories to Tell*, The New York Times, 2020

Sonia Gomes - video for *Still I Rise*, solo exhibition at MASP, 2018 ([click to watch the video](#)).



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