



Miguel Bakun
May 30 — Jun 29, 2024

Mendes Wood DM is proud to present *Miguel Bakun*, a solo exhibition in Brussels showcasing a curated selection of landscape paintings the Brazilian artist produced in the first half of the 20th century.

Often referred to as an outsider painter, Miguel Bakun was a self-taught artist who dedicated 30 years of his brief but prolific life to art. Born in 1909 to Ukrainian parents in the southern state of Paraná, Brazil, Bakun dreamed of traveling the world and encountering sceneries beyond the fields of his inland hometown. Bakun's father imparted his son with the belief that to fulfill his dream, he would always need to be close to the sea. Following his father's advice, Bakun enlisted in the naval service at the young age of 17. During his navy stint, he began experimenting with drawing and painting in his free time, a passion he would pursue permanently when his dreams were cut short by an accident that prematurely brought his duty to an end.

Bakun's aesthetic configuration of the world stems from a series of unfulfilled expectations: Growing up in a provincial city in an emerging country, having to let go of his ambitions, and, most importantly, failing to achieve mainstream artistic recognition in his lifetime. Yet, despite the feeling of melancholy experienced at first glance through his paintings, such as in *Paisagem [Landscape]* (1950), overarching luminosity stands out in all his compositions. Further, Bakun was an artist who created with free rhythmic gestures of his brushstrokes, composing each painting from a direct process and without a preexisting drawing to guide each decision. Life, light, and movement were the predicates of his practice, proof of which emerges in the experience of *Paisagem com Araucárias [Landscape with Araucaria Tree]* (1950).

Another recurring aspect in Bakun's painting style is the absence of any clearly defined planes separating the composition and visual structure in his paintings. Instead, the artist created his own visually engaging language interweaving shape, color, and space. Within a critical framework, one can understand such achievements as a reflection of modernism in Brazil and in relation to its exponents including Alfredo Volpi, Iberê Camargo, and José Pancetti, the latter with whom Bakun liaised.

During his three-decade-long career, Bakun had the opportunity to participate in prominent group exhibitions and salons; and despite select examples of portraiture and still-life, landscapes significantly shaped his often-tumultuous artist career. Inhibited by financial limitations, Bakun worked almost exclusively with a moderate palette of browns, grays, and yellows – a limitation that further pushed the artist to take advantage of the process and not the means. Although widespread appreciation of Miguel Bakun emerged only after the artist's passing, the legacy of his work translates the experience of living as an outsider artist and continues to inspire new generations of painters to this day.

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Miguel Bakun (b. 1909, Mallet, Brazil — d. 1963, Curitiba).

Miguel Bakun has been the feature of numerous solo exhibitions, including at **Simões de Assis**, São Paulo (2019); **MON – Museu Oscar Niemeyer**, Curitiba (2010); **Casa Andrade Muricy**, Curitiba (2009); **Instituto de Arte Contemporânea – IAC**, São Paulo (2009). Additionally, his work has been presented in group exhibitions including at **ABERTO/02**, São Paulo (2023); **Instituto Tomie Ohtake**, São Paulo (2019); **Fundação Bienal de São Paulo**, São Paulo (2000). His work features in collections including **MON – Museu Oscar Niemeyer**, Curitiba; **Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo**, São Paulo; **MAC – Museu de Arte Contemporânea do Paraná**, Curitiba; **Museu Paranaense**, Curitiba.

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