

SIDE GALLERY

RUBEM VALENTIM



Tapestry 02

Created by Rubem Valentim
Brazil, 1970s
Wool tapestry

Measurements

69 cm x 120h cm
27,2 in x 47,2h in

Provenance

Private collection, Brazil

Edition

Unique piece

Literature

Rubem Valentim, A síntese dos signos afro-brasileiros,
Museu de Arte da Bahia, 1980.
Sergio B. Martins, Modernity in Black and White,
MIT Press, 2019.
Afro-Atlantic Histories, MASP / Instituto Tomie Ohtake,
2018.

Biography

Rubem Valentim (1922–1991) was a Brazilian artist whose work fused Afro-Brazilian spiritual symbolism with modernist abstraction. Born in Salvador, Bahia, Valentim developed a distinct visual language rooted in Candomblé and Umbanda, translating ritual emblems into geometric compositions. Rejecting both folkloric and formalist conventions, he created a symbolic system that bridges sacred traditions and contemporary design. A key figure in Brazil's mid-20th-century art scene, his work spans painting, sculpture, and architectural reliefs, and is held in major institutions including MoMA, Centre Pompidou, and MASP.

About

This untitled wool tapestry by Rubem Valentim, woven in the 1970s, embodies the artist's deep commitment to a symbolic, Afro-Brazilian visual language. Structured along a vertical axis, the composition features a sequence of stacked geometric forms—rectangles, chevrons, and arrows—that echo religious totems and ceremonial staffs. The chromatic contrast between indigo blue, mustard yellow, and touches of off-white and black evokes both mysticism and clarity. Valentim's use of symmetry and repetition conveys ritual order, while the minimalism of the design heightens its spiritual intensity. The tapestry resonates with the artist's broader project of integrating African diasporic iconography into modernist aesthetics. As in his paintings and sculptures, Valentim uses abstraction not as a formal exercise but as a medium for cultural affirmation and sacred meaning. This textile stands as a meditative work—part visual code, part votive object—reflecting Valentim's enduring belief in the transformative power of art grounded in ancestry and identity.