

# SIDE GALLERY

RUBEM VALENTIM



## Tapestry

Created by Rubem Valentim  
Brazil, 1970s  
Wool tapestry

## Measurements

80 cm x 133h cm  
31,5 in x 52,4h in

## Provenance

Private collection

## Edition

Unique Piece

## Literature

Valentim, Rubem. A síntese dos signos afro-brasileiros.  
Museu de Arte da Bahia, 1980.  
Cavalcanti, Lauro. Afro-Brazilian Symbols in Modern  
Art, MAM Rio de Janeiro, 1996.  
Sergio B. Martins, Modernity in Black and White: Art  
and Image, Race and Identity in Brazil, MIT Press, 2019.

## 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 tapestry by Rubem Valentim exemplifies his lifelong pursuit of a syncretic visual language, rooted in Afro-Brazilian cosmology and geometric abstraction. Woven in the 1970s, the composition features a constellation of bold, symbolic forms—arrows, chevrons, triangles, and circles—arranged along a central axis. These motifs draw directly from the ritual iconography of Candomblé and Umbanda, transformed here into a codified system of signs.

Valentim's tapestry is not merely decorative—it operates as a visual manifesto. The symmetrical and rhythmic arrangement of shapes evokes the liturgical structure of Afro-Brazilian religious practice, while the earthy palette of ochre, burgundy, and indigo lends the work both presence and solemnity. This piece echoes the artist's belief in the spiritual potential of abstraction, a concept he developed in tandem with his sculptural and pictorial works during the same period.

As with his paintings and reliefs, this textile functions as a "visual prayer", balancing order, transcendence, and cultural affirmation. It stands as a rare example of Valentim's experiments in textile—an extension of his broader project to reclaim and elevate African heritage within the canons of modern art.