

SIDE GALLERY

JOAQUIM TENREIRO



Wood Sculpture

Created by Joaquim Tenreiro
Brazil, N.D.
Wood

Measurements

95,5 x 20 x 100,5h cm
37,6 x 7,9 x 39,6h in

Provenance

Private Collection, Sao Paulo

About

This untitled wood sculpture by Joaquim Tenreiro features a rhythmic arrangement of undulating vertical planes, carved with architectural precision. The relief-like composition creates a dynamic interplay of shadow and depth, articulating a sculptural language that transcends decoration and enters the realm of pure form.

Although the work is undated, its formal qualities and execution suggest it was created in the late 1960s to early 1970s—during a transitional period in Tenreiro's career when he began shifting away from furniture design to focus on autonomous sculptural expression. This piece belongs to a mature phase in his oeuvre, reflecting a deepening interest in abstraction and formal reduction.

Carved from laminated tropical hardwood, likely jacarandá, a material Tenreiro frequently used in his furniture and artistic production, the sculpture's tonal richness and variation enhance its tactile and visual presence—emphasizing both natural beauty and structural complexity. The work aligns with the aesthetics of Brazilian Constructivism and international abstraction, and bears formal affinities with contemporaries such as Amílcar de Castro and Sérgio Camargo. Its modular rhythm, geometric discipline, and sculptural play of light and surface place it firmly within the lineage of postwar modernism in Latin America.

Biography

Joaquim Tenreiro (b. Melo Guarda, Portugal 1906 - d. Itapira Sao Paulo 1992) was a sculptor, painter, engraver and designer. Born into a family of joiners, at the age of two, his family emigrated to Brazil, settling in Niterói, Rio de Janeiro. In 1914 he returned to Portugal. He helped his father with woodwork projects and began painting classes. He returned to live in Brazil between 1925 and 1927. In 1928, he moved to Rio de Janeiro permanently. He studied drawing at the Portuguese Literary Lyceum and enrolled in the Liceu de Artes e Ofícios. In 1931, he joined the Bernardelli Nucleus, a group created in opposition to the academic teaching of the National School of Fine Arts - Enba.

After some years of dabbling in as a painter, Joaquim traversed his talents and went back to wood, "I stuck with painting up to a point, but gave it up because I could not stay away from the wood-working shop...what kept me going was furniture" (Soraia Cals, Tenreiro, Rio de Janeiro, 1998, p. 190). He designed for Laubish & Hirth, Leandro Martins, and Francisco Gomes, specializing in French, Italian, and Portuguese furniture. A decade later, he founded Langenbach & Tenreiro, which would become renowned for its modern furniture designs.