

LASAR SEGALL: ALWAYS THE SAME MOON

The moon does not belong to a specific time or place: its wandering nature offers clarity without distinction, and its well-defined cycles have guided the cosmic and spiritual time of the Jewish calendar for millennia. The exhibition *Lasar Segall: Always the Same Moon* is based on the association between this image and the defining affection attributed by Segall to his Jewish identity: a “profound human feeling.”

Like a principle woven into the fabric of his childhood memories, this feeling accompanies him as he pursues his destiny, just as the moon transforms while remaining always the same. It’s in this sense that the exhibition gives the moon the poetic function of condensing, in Segall’s work, the universal horizon of his art—related to what is common to human experience, in any time or place.

The exhibition features sixty works – including paintings, prints, drawings, and watercolors – by one of the most important Brazilian artists of the 20th century. Born in 1889 in Vilnius, Segall grew up at the crossroads of religious orthodoxy and secular traditions. His father was a Torah scribe, a mystical and artisanal activity that became a structuring legacy both for his worldview and for sparking his interest in art.

Inserted in a context that associates figurative representation with idolatry, Segall’s decision to study art represented a break with a paradigm firmly established in his cultural milieu. Under the impact of expanding modernity, Segall developed his own language, nourished by his Russian Jewish ancestry, Eastern European culture, and the emotional intensity of the region’s

spiritual life. His closeness to the material plight of the poor, the wandering, and the sick resonates strongly in his work.

In 1923, Segall emigrated permanently to Brazil, becoming a key figure in the formation of Brazilian artistic modernity. In search of new relationships between form, color, and space, his painting expanded, continuing his previous formal investigations in a kind of “transcreation” of languages. Tropical tones began to coexist with the rich colors of his time in Germany, establishing links between distinct experiences.

In the 1930s, the outbreak of World War II rekindled the tragic dimension of the human condition. The pain of displacement, persecution, and loss reappears in earthy tones and opaque atmospheres. In Brazil, his status as a Russian and Jewish immigrant did not leave him immune to the prejudices that sustain and fuel violence. These tensions never ceased to haunt his life. During a major retrospective at the National Museum of Fine Arts in 1943, Vinicius de Moraes published an article defending Segall from the reactionary tone the artist had received from critics. At the end, the poet recalls, in a story told by Rubem Braga, the ritornello of a journey: “Once, while talking about the moon, Segall would have looked up at the sky and said, serenely, ‘That old moon, my friend, always the same...’”

PATRICIA WAGNER
curator

Among the many forces that shaped modern art in Brazil, migrations and the artists who transformed displacement into a creative gesture stand out. In this history, the painter, sculptor, and engraver Lasar Segall occupies a unique place – for the intensity with which he converted the experience of uprooting into a territory of expression.

Amidst the upheavals and ruptures of the 20th century, Segall, born in what is now Lithuania, educated in Germany, and settled in Brazil, made his trajectory a link between worlds. His work expresses a Jewishness that does not impose itself as a theme, but as an ethical foundation – a way of perceiving the human being in their dignity and vulnerability.

Since the opening of the Jewish Museum of São Paulo (MUJ), an exhibition dedicated to the artist seemed a natural destiny – and, at the same time, a dream to be built with rigor and sensitivity. *Lasar Segall: Always the Same Moon* is born from this recognition and an affective partnership with the Lasar Segall Museum, an institution that shares values with the MUJ: Jewish cultural heritage and Brazilian art as an echo of journeys. By adopting the moon as a poetic thread, curator Patricia Wagner illuminates the feeling of permanence and transformation that has accompanied the artist since childhood. Segall's moon symbolizes identities in motion—that reflect, reinvent themselves, and remain.

In presenting this exhibition, the Jewish Museum of São Paulo reaffirms its vocation: making visible the multiple forms that Jewish identity, so often erased, can assume, and creating connections between cultures, times, and experiences. Segall's art bears witness not only to the journey of one of the greatest Jewish artists of the 20th century, but also to the foreign gaze that becomes intimate when interpreting Brazil.

Segall changed countries, colors, and discourses, but remained faithful to his artistic voice. His presence at the MUJ is a point of convergence between the work of an artist who transformed wandering into creation and the mission of a museum dedicated to preserving and reinterpreting these paths that, under the same moon, finally meet.

MARÍLIA NEUSTEIN
Executive Director
Jewish Museum of São Paulo

It was with great joy and motivation that the Lasar Segall Museum (MLS) received the invitation from the Jewish Museum of São Paulo to jointly hold an exhibition dedicated to Lasar Segall (1889-1957).

Despite the geographical proximity between the two institutions and the fact that they share converging themes—Lasar Segall was Jewish, the son of a Torah scribe – the cooperation represents a new opportunity.

This collaboration reaffirms the important work of both institutions in promoting art, which has the power to sensitize and humanize people's daily lives, thus counteracting the trivialization of everyday violence.

Opened to the public in 1973, conceived by Jenny Klabin Segall (1899-1967), the artist's widow, and materialized by her sons, Mauricio Segall (1926-2017) and Oscar Klabin Segall (1930-2002), the MLS systematically exhibits not only works from its collection in the long-term exhibition hall, but also attempts to relate them to the production of other artists in its temporary exhibition hall.

This exhibition, however, represents an opportunity for the MLS team to display Lasar Segall's work in a new space, outside its home, under the curatorial gaze of other professionals, highlighting aspects not previously addressed.

It's a win for the Lasar Segall Museum, for the Jewish Museum of São Paulo, and above all, for the public, to whom we wish a wonderful visit.

PAULO NASCIMENTO
Executive Director
Lasar Segall Museum

INTERIOR DE POBRES II [INTERIOR OF THE POOR II]

In *Interior de pobres II* (1921), Segall presents four figures in a diffuse composition that draws the observer into the scene, as if asking not only for contemplation but also compassion. The characters in a state of misery organize the space of the work as if the observer were tasked with witnessing an ethical realism, far removed from illustrative naturalism. Faced with this social drama, it is possible to suppose, through the lens of Jewish tradition, the addition of another dramatic layer. After the burial of a loved one, the mourners remain at home for seven days, seated in low chairs or backless benches. A symbolic gesture, equivalent to the idea of “sitting on the ground,” expressing humility, vulnerability, closeness to pain and to the dust of the earth.

ETERNOS CAMINHANTES [ETERNAL WANDERERS]

Painted shortly after the First World War, *Eternos caminantes* is one of Lasar Segall's most emblematic works. The canvas presents a compact group of ghostly human figures, with elongated masked faces and hollow eyes, who seem to walk disoriented on unstable ground. The palette employed here is the same as that present in several works from the period: yellow, muted violet, and dense blues that evoke both social oppression and the persistence of life, in the face of a recurring dynamic of pursuit and escape.

Acquired in 1920 by the Dresden City Museum, the painting was later confiscated by the Nazi regime along with 58 other works by Segall that were part of public collections in Germany. In 1937 it was exhibited in the *Degenerate Art* exhibition, initially organized in Munich to denounce the supposed decadence of modern art due to the "the infiltration of Jews and foreigners into its milieu". After the war, the work was recovered, acquired by the Segall family and incorporated into the collection of the Lasar Segall Museum.

POGROM, 1937

In the 1930s, both Germany and Brazil were experiencing the hardening of authoritarian regimes. Segall, already established in São Paulo, saw his art under suspicion, considered “degenerate” by Nazi Germany and “dangerous” by the surveillance agencies of the Estado Novo regime. In *Pogrom* (1937), this dual context resonates in an exemplary way. Jewish specificity expands in the representation of collective violence, fear, and fragility. The sparse color establishes an image of tension and silence, more devastating for its formal economy than for any excess. In this work, as throughout his career, Segall shows that the fate of a people can be a metaphor for human destiny – the same moon that illuminates local tragedies projects its light onto the common experience of humanity.

In his memoirs, Segall reflects on the moment of composition: “I felt that the forms of nature meant nothing to me, that only the forms of my universe mattered. I felt the urge to produce a composition, *Pogrom*. While I was working, I suddenly had an impulse to depict the houses crying. I felt that the houses, like the men, were witnesses to the Pogrom. I drew a street with crooked houses, and a man who was as tall as the three-story houses. I renounced all proportions and perspectives. All of that was superfluous. My experience was very strong, and I needed to break away from all rules and create freely.

SEGALL CENÓGRAFO [SEGALL AS SET DESIGNER]

Founded in December 1932, the Society for Modern Art (Sociedade Pró-Arte Moderna, SPAM) brought together artists, intellectuals, and some of the leading figures in art patronage in São Paulo, around an avant-garde project aimed at disseminating modern art. Its members intended to promote exhibitions, conferences, and events that integrated creation and sociability. However, the Society was short-lived; it was dissolved in 1935. The accusations against the participants referred to them as “foreigners of somewhat uncertain nationality,” “neo-Brazilians,” and “enemies of our traditions,” in addition to pressures stemming from the Brazilian Integralist Action (Ação Intergralista Brasileira, AIB).

One of Segall’s main contributions to SPAM events was as a set designer, notably for the “Carnival in the City of SPAM” (1933), and “Expedition to the Virgin Forests of Spamoland” (1934) balls. This interest reflects the artist’s cherished utopia of a total work of art, a modern *Gesamtkunstwerk*, capable of bringing together different languages and establishing a new relationship between art and the public. Along the same lines, he collaborated on the “Futurist Ball of the Automobile Club” (1924); the “Modern Art Pavilion” by Olívia Guedes Penteado (1925); and the play *O Mandarin Maravilhoso* [The Miraculous Mandarin] by Béla Bartók (1955).

In 1945, Segall was invited by the great actor and director Zygmunt Turkow to create the set design and costumes for the play *A Sorte Grande* [The Big Jackpot]. Staged by the theater group of the Sholem Aleichem Library, the performance was scheduled to take place at the Municipal Theater of Rio de

Janeiro, but the city hall, without further explanation, transferred it to the Teatro Ginástico. The production celebrated Yiddish-language culture and the library's thirty years of activity.

AS FLORESTAS DE SEGALL [SEGALL'S FORESTS]

From 1949 onwards, Segall dedicated himself to a series of works inspired by his time spent in Campos do Jordão. In these paintings, drawings, and watercolors, the Forest series becomes the connecting point between times and territories. The unusual framing suppresses the horizon, the sky, or the ground, concentrating on the verticality of juxtaposed trunks, whose density composes an almost abstract space. There are no signs of tropicality, but a neutrality that dissolves any geographical reference, making it impossible to locate the forest in Brazil or in the vicinity of Vilnius. The pictorial construction is achieved through chromatic contrasts, which replace perspective with the rhythm of color and light. The forest here is less a setting than an interior space. It is a place of silence and transcendence, which establishes a dialogue between distinct experiences as an extension of subjectivity and memory.

AS ERRADIAS [THE OUTCASTS]

In Germany or in Brazil, Lasar Segall turned to the representation of human life at its limits, conveying in marginalized figures a tragic dignity that endures even in the face of pain and exclusion.

In 1921, he published the album *Bubu*, inspired by the novel *Bubu de Montparnasse* by Charles-Louis Philippe, which tells the story of a young factory worker who, exploited by her lover, is driven into prostitution.

The following year, under the influence of the New Objectivity movement, he presented a typical scene of prostitution in Berlin on the canvas *Rua* [Street] (1922). In Brazil, between 1925 and 1929, Segall began the first drawings and studies for one of his most important series, published in 1943 in the album *Mangue* [Mangrove]. In this compilation, the artist brought together 44 drawings made at different times and using different techniques, with the prestigious collaboration of Jorge de Lima, Mário de Andrade, and Manuel Bandeira. With the same interest, Segall dedicates a series of paintings to the “erradias” [outcasts] – women who are socially “wrong” and “wanderers,” highlighting the dual condition of displacement and exclusion, as in the work *Rua de Erradias I* [Street of Outcasts I], from 1956. It is important to note that the tone given to these works is devoid of any sense of bohemianism or eroticism: in them, Segall identifies the overlapping identities and conditions that condemn women to poverty and abandonment, giving continuity and meaning to an investigation that reflects on expressions of humanity.

MATERNIDADE [MOTHERHOOD]

When arriving in Brazil in 1923, Lasar Segall encounters a dizzying experience with color. The intensity of the light and tropical landscape transformed his palette: the dense tones of Europe gave way to reds, ochres, and oranges. In *Mulata com criança* [Mulatto woman with child] (1924) and *Morro Vermelho* [Red Hill] (1926), this chromatic revelation is associated with the search for a unique formal language, capable of responding to his new Brazilian reality.

Both works address the theme of motherhood, differing in their compositional solutions. In *Morro Vermelho*, the geometrization of space reveals the legacy of the dialogue between Cubism and German Expressionism, organizing the scene according to a rigorous balance. In *Mulata com criança*, the juxtaposition of planes and volumes is closer to the fragmented logic of Cubist collage. In common, the compositions refer to the Western Christian tradition of the *Madonna and Child* and acquire a new meaning here: the transposition to the Brazilian social context confers dignity and grandeur to black women from the peripheries. By depicting these women in their caring and affectionate relationship with their own children, Segall breaks with the dominant iconography of the time, which relegated them to the role of wet nurses, transforming everyday intimacy into a gesture of symbolic reparation. The investigation of motherhood occupies an important space in his production, extending to other works, such as the one presented here, *Maternidade* [Motherhood] (1931).

ORAÇÃO LUNAR [LUNAR PRAYER]

Vilnius was for centuries one of the most important centers of Jewish life in Eastern Europe, cultivating an environment of intense intellectual and spiritual life. Known as the “Jerusalem of the North,” it was also one of the main centers of the Haskalah, the Jewish Enlightenment, which found fertile ground to spread in the city, challenging Orthodox Judaism and incorporating the spirit of modernity.

During his time living in Germany, Segall returned to Vilnius several times, witnessing the devastating transformations brought about by the First World War. These visits had a decisive impact on his work, intensifying its connection with Jewish themes and expanding its symbolic dimension.

In *Oração lunar* [Moon prayer] (1917), figures with large oval heads and melancholic eyes float in a rarefied space. Segall finds in woodcut – a hallmark of Expressionism since its beginnings – a language capable of uniting form and transcendence. The moon, as an allegory of spiritual strength, hovers over the praying group. Symbolically, it guides the sequence of celebrations in the Jewish calendar, evoking the ideas of passage and renewal.

Feriado religioso [Religious holiday] (1920) is the work that graces the cover of the catalog for Segall’s first solo exhibition at the Folkwang Museum, an occasion on which the poet Theodor Däubler defined his work as a “Jewish cosmic art guided by the moon.” By deepening the spiritual character of his work, Segall shifts his production away from the nationalist attitude that marked part of Expressionism in the postwar period, reinforcing its singularity and affinity with a universal dimension of human experience.

1889

Lasar Segall is born on July 21st in Vilnius, the current capital of the Republic of Lithuania, which at that time was under the control of the Russian Empire.

His parents, Abel Guirchovitch Segall and Esther Godes Glaser Wulfovna, had eight children, Lasar being the sixth of them. Abel Segall, in addition to being a trader, held the position of sofer, a scribe of the Torah.

1905

He attends the art school in Vilnius.

1906

Segall sets off for Paris, but ends up staying in Berlin, where he attends the Kaiser Friedrich Museum and for six months the School of Applied Arts.

1907

He enters the Imperial Academy of Fine Arts in Berlin, where he studies for the next three years.

1910

He moves to Dresden, where he attends the Academy of Fine Arts.

1912

At the end of that year, Segall sets off for his first trip to Brazil, where he meets siblings Luba, Oscar, and Jacob.

1913

In São Paulo, with the support of patron José de Freitas Valle, he holds a solo exhibition. In June, he holds a second solo exhibition in Campinas. At the end of the year, he returns to Europe, leaving works in private Brazilian collections.

1914

With the outbreak of the First World War, Segall is expelled from the Academy for being Jewish and a Russian citizen. He is detained in Meissen until, with the help of friends, the confinement is relaxed and Segall is allowed to return to Dresden.

1916

Segall obtains permission to go to Vilnius and finds the city destroyed by the war.

He exhibits for the first time at the autumn show of the Dresden Artists Association.

1917

Segall becomes close to other artists, writers, and intellectuals in Dresden who, dissatisfied with the prevailing forms, found the short-lived *Neue Kreis* [New Circle]. Together, they hold exhibitions and conferences, but the group dissolves the following year.

1918

On a new trip to Vilnius, he contracts the Spanish flu and is forced to remain in the city for four months. It is likely that at this time he came into contact with the Russo-Jewish avant-garde, as well as with issues of Jewish artistic identity.

He publishes the album of lithographs *Die Sanfte* [A Gentle Creature], inspired by the eponymous short story by Fyodor Dostoevsky.

1919

In January, he founds the Dresdner Sezession Gruppe 1919 [Dresden Secession Group 1919] with other artists, becoming a central figure of the second generation of Dresden Expressionists.

First exhibition of the Dresdner Sezession at the Emil Richter Gallery.

He marries Margarete Quack.

1920

At the Folkwang Museum in Hagen, he holds his first solo exhibition: 15 paintings, 30 drawings, and 35 prints. Theodor Däubler and Will Grohmann write texts for the exhibition.

The modern art section of the Dresden State Museum is inaugurated with the acquisition of a work by Segall, the painting *Eternos caminantes* [Eternal Wanderers], from 1919.

Together with Otto Dix, Otto Lange, Constantin von Mitschke-Collande, and Eugen Hoffmann, he publishes the album of prints *Dresdner Sezession Gruppe*, with two of his prints.

1921

Segall publishes *Bubu*, an album of eight lithographs inspired by the novel *Bubu de Montparnasse*, by Charles Louis Philippe. The work includes an introductory text by Paul Ferdinand Schmidt.

He moves with Margarete to Berlin.

1922

He edits the album *Recordação de Vilnius* [Remembrance of Vilnius], with five drypoints. The work has a preface by Paul Ferdinand Schmidt.

1923

He illustrates the Yiddish short story *Maase-Bichl* [Small storybook], by writer David Bergelsohn, published by Wostock, in Berlin.

Segall decides to leave with his wife Margarete for Brazil.

1924

In São Paulo, he is welcomed by the modernist circle, which celebrates his arrival as a victory for the Brazilian avant-garde.

In March of the same year, he opens a solo exhibition.

In June, he promotes the lecture *On Art* at Villa Kyrial, the residence of Senator José de Freitas Valle.

Arrival in Brazil of Lasar's father, Abel Segall, and Lisa, his younger sister, with her family.

Margarete, unhappy with life in São Paulo, separates from Segall and returns to Germany.

He receives a commission to execute the decoration for the Futurist Ball at the Automobile Club.

1925

He decorates the Modern Art Pavilion of Olívia Guedes Penteado with mural paintings.

In June, Segall marries Jenny Klabin, daughter of Maurício Freeman Klabin and Berta Klabin. In December, the couple leaves for Europe.

1926

The couple's first child, Mauricio Segall, is born in Berlin. In October, the family returns to Brazil.

1927

Lasar Segall becomes a Brazilian citizen.

In February, the artist's father, Abel, dies in São Paulo. Segall makes some drawings of his father on his deathbed.

The painting *Autorretrato* [Self-portrait] (1927) is vandalized at a solo exhibition in São Paulo.

1928

In November, the Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo acquires the work *Bananal* [Banana farm].

In December, Segall returns to Europe, settling in Paris until 1932, where he begins his investigations in the field of sculpture. In the city, he also creates two important series of engravings, *Emigrantes* [Emigrants] and *Mangue* [Mangrove].

1930

The couple's second child, Oscar Segall, is born in Paris.

1931

His works are selected for the 38th General Exhibition of Fine Arts, known as the Revolutionary Salon. The exhibition is organized by Lúcio Costa, recently appointed director of the National School of Fine Arts in Rio de Janeiro.

In Paris, the first monograph on his work is published, authored by Waldemar George.

1932

Segall returns to Brazil and takes up residence on Afonso Celso Street, in the city of São Paulo, in a house designed by his brother-in-law, the architect Gregori Warchavchik.

He founds, with other artists, the Society for Modern Art (SPAM). To celebrate the new year, the "São Silvestre in Rags" costume ball is held at the temporary headquarters of SPAM.

1933

With the collaboration of other artists, Segall creates the set design for the “Carnival in the City of SPAM” ball.

The first SPAM exhibition is organized in April.

1934

He carries out the second decorative project for the SPAM carnival ball, “Expedition to the virgin forests of Spamoland”.

1935

Closure of SPAM.

Mário de Andrade identifies affinities between the works of Segall and Lucy Citti Ferreira, and introduces the young woman to the artist. Lucy begins to work as Segall’s assistant and model.

1937

The Nazi German government confiscates approximately 16,000 works of art from museums across Germany, and 58 of them are by Lasar Segall. Eleven of them were exhibited in the *Degenerate Art* exhibition in Munich, and later toured other German cities.

1938

Segall represents Brazil at the International Congress of Independent Artists in Paris.

He creates the set design for the ballet *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, staged by Chinita Ullman's company at the Municipal Theater of São Paulo.

1940

He begins the series of 75 watercolor drawings collected in the sketchbook *Visões de guerra* [Visions of war].

1942

In April, the Library of Congress in Washington publishes in the *Handbook of Latin American Studies* an essay on the work of Lasar Segall, alongside analyses of the works of Candido Portinari and Maria Martins.

1943

Segall is honored with a large retrospective exhibition, held at the National Museum of Fine Arts in Rio de Janeiro. Critiques are published in the press accusing him of being degenerate and subversive.

The exhibition *Modern Brazilian Painting* opens at the Royal Academy of Art in London. Segall participates with a portrait of Lucy Citti Ferreira.

He publishes the album *Mangue* [Mangrove], in an edition of 135 copies, with engravings and drawings accompanied by texts by Jorge de Lima, Mário de Andrade, and Manuel Bandeira.

1944

A special issue of *Revista Acadêmica* dedicated entirely to Segall is released.

1945

Segall participates in the exhibition *Arte condenada pelo Terceiro Reich* [Art condemned by the Third Reich], at the Askanazy Gallery in Rio de Janeiro.

He creates set and costume designs for the play *A sorte grande* [The Big Jackpot], by Sholem Aleichem, at the Teatro Ginástico in Rio de Janeiro.

1947

Lucy Citti Ferreira moves to Europe, settling in Paris.

Lasar Segall illustrates the work *Poemas negros* [Black Poems], by Jorge de Lima, published by *Revista Acadêmica*.

1948

The painting *Êxodo* [Exodus], from 1947, is donated to the Jewish Museum in New York.

1949

He collaborates on the decoration of the “At the Quatz-Arts Beach, 1900” ball, at the Clubinho (Club of Modern Artists).

1951

A retrospective exhibition of his work at the São Paulo Museum of Art. At the 1st São Paulo Biennial, he is honored with a Special Room.

He meets Mira Perlov, who becomes the model for a series of works created in later years.

1952

He participates as a consultant in the first course in visual arts at the Institute of Contemporary Art of MASP.

Publication of Pietro Maria Bardi's book on the work of Lasar Segall.

1954

Marcos Margulies directs the short film *A esperança é eterna* [Hope is eternal], based on Lasar Segall's body of work. The film is presented with prominence in Cannes and Berlin.

The work *Eternos caminantes* [Eternal Wanderers], confiscated by the Nazi government, is found by an art dealer. After lengthy negotiations, it returns to the artist.

He creates the sets and costumes for the spectacle *Mandarim maravilhoso* [Wonderful Mandarin], staged by the Companhia de Balé do IV Centenário, with music by Béla Bartók and choreography by Aurelio Milloss.

1955

The 3rd São Paulo Biennial dedicates a Special Room to the artist.

1956

On August 16 he suffers his first heart attack.

1957

Segall dies on August 2nd, at his residence in Vila Mariana, São Paulo, a victim of a heart attack. In the following ten years, his widow Jenny Klabin undertakes an intense effort to document and preserve his work, already with the intention of founding a museum.

1957

On August 2nd, exactly ten years after her husband's death, Jenny Klabin Segall suffers the heart attack that would kill her three days later.

On September 21st, the Lasar Segall Museum is officially inaugurated.