

DEVOURING NATURE: ON BIOMORPHISM AND TRANSFORMATION IN THE WORKS OF TARSILA DO AMARAL

Devorar la naturaleza: biomorfismo y transformación en la obra de Tarsila do Amaral

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ABSTRACT:

Tarsila do Amaral's paintings of rural Brazilian landscapes present a natural world replete with vibrant colors, whimsical creatures, and luxuriant plant life. By co-opting aspects of surrealism's visual lexicon, particularly biomorphism, Amaral created timeless myths that in their strangeness and indecipherability conveyed the uncertainty of the moment. When she exhibited these paintings in Paris in 1928, Amaral's adoption of surrealist notions of transformation, ambiguity and uncertainty was on full display. Her landscapes of this period present dichotomies between the rational and the irrational, the natural and the artificial, order and chaos, thereby challenging Parisians' imagined construct of Brazil, and creating an original and enigmatic interpretation of the natural world.

KEYWORDS:

Tarsila do Amaral, Brazil, Paris, Surrealism, biomorphism, landscape.

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RESUMEN:

Las pinturas de Tarsila do Amaral sobre paisajes rurales brasileños presentan un mundo natural repleto de colores vibrantes, criaturas caprichosas y exuberante vegetación. Cooptando aspectos del léxico visual del surrealismo, en particular el biomorfismo, Amaral creó mitos atemporales que, en su extrañeza e indescifrabilidad, transmitían la incertidumbre del momento. Cuando expuso estos cuadros en París en 1928, Amaral hizo suyas las nociones surrealistas de transformación, ambigüedad e incertidumbre. Sus paisajes de este periodo presentan dicotomías entre lo racional y lo irracional, lo natural y lo artificial, el orden y el caos, desafiando así la construcción imaginada de Brasil por los parisinos y creando una interpretación original y enigmática del mundo natural.

PALABRAS CLAVE:

Tarsila do Amaral, Brasil, París, Surrealismo, biomorfismo, paisaje.

RESUMO:

As pinturas de paisagens rurais brasileiras de Tarsila do Amaral apresentam um mundo natural repleto de cores vibrantes, criaturas caprichosas e vegetação exuberante. Cooptando aspectos do léxico visual do surrealismo, em especial o biomorfismo, Amaral criou mitos atemporais que, em sua estranheza e indecifrábilidade, transmitiam a incerteza do momento. Quando expôs essas pinturas em Paris, em 1928, Amaral fez suas as noções surrealistas de transformação, ambiguidade e incerteza. Suas paisagens desse período apresentam dicotomias entre o racional e o irracional, o natural e o artificial, a ordem e o caos, desafiando assim a construção imaginária do Brasil pelos parisienses e criando uma interpretação original e enigmática do mundo natural.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE:

Tarsila do Amaral, Brasil, Paris, Surrealismo, biomorfismo, paisagem

Born to a wealthy coffee plantation-owning family, Brazilian artist Tarsila do Amaral's connection to the land arose from lived experience. Nearly half of the works in Amaral's oeuvre are landscapes, depicting both urban and rural scenes.¹ While her approach to landscape painting changed over the course of her career, she consistently looked to her environment as a source of inspiration. With the exception of her early impressionist renditions of the streets of Paris, nearly all of her landscape paintings depict aspects of Brazil's topography and urban spaces. Yet the audience for these images, at least initially, was made up of Parisian dealers, artists, collectors, and gallerygoers—Amaral's first two solo exhibitions were in Paris, in 1926 and 1928, and she did not hold an individual exhibition in Brazil until 1929.² Landscape thus served as a form of strategic cultural presentation in a context that had been mired in a long history of colonialist attitudes and primitivist expectations.³

Tarsila do Amaral's paintings of the Brazilian landscape present an imagined natural world replete with vibrant colors, whimsical creatures, and luxuriant plant life. Whereas Amaral composed many of the paintings for her 1926 exhibition in Paris, whether urban scenes or depictions of the Brazilian countryside, with densely packed geometric shapes and a smattering of figures, the following year she initiated a definitive shift in style. From this point forward Amaral simplified her compositions, often focusing on a single element, isolated in the center of the composition. Amaral only spent a short time in Paris before her second show opened on June 18, 1928. She arrived in March after having spent the previous eighteen months in Brazil preparing and left soon after the exhibition closed on July 2nd. This was a moment in Brazil when an emerging bourgeois class began challenging the prerogative of the agrarian aristocracy, to which she belonged.⁴ In the face of this shifting class structure, rather than continuing to depict urban vitality and rural charm—as can be seen in works such as *Central Railway of Brazil* (1924) or *The Papaya Tree* (1925)—she now began to co-opt aspects of surrealism's visual lexicon, particularly biomorphism, to create timeless myths that, in their strangeness and indecipherability, conveyed the uncertainty of the moment. Biomorphism here refers to the curvilinear or organic quality of shapes that, in surrealist practice, often derive from automatic drawing and suggest moments of transformation from one state to another. Landscapes played a major role in Amaral's new aesthetic vision, although these landscapes were populated with strange and exaggerated plant life and unidentifiable fluid shapes and bodies that evoke flora or fauna in their organic curvilinear forms, yet remain unclassifiable.

For surrealists such as Jean Arp or André Masson biomorphism served to elucidate the connection between the human unconscious and the natural world as a means to counter the rigid mechanical forms embraced by avant-garde

1. Of the 2,175 works listed in the catalogue raisonné, 897 are categorized as landscapes. A large percentage of those are drawings, but about 10 percent of them are paintings.

2. It is important to note, however, that a selection of her city paintings appeared in the Brazilian press in 1925. Assis Chateaubriand, "Como São Paulo está cultivando a arte moderna," *O Jornal*, May 30, 1925.

3. This introductory paragraph stems from Michele Greet, "For French Eyes: Tarsila do Amaral's Brazilian Landscapes," in *Tarsila do Amaral* (São Paulo: Museu de Arte de São Paulo Assis Chateaubriand, 2019), 117.

4. For a discussion of class structure in Brazil, see Iceia Maria Borsa Cattani, "Antropofagia y mitos. La pintura de Tarsila do Amaral/Myths and Anthropophagy: The Painting of Tarsila do Amaral," in *History and (in) movement/Historia y (en) movimiento*, edited by Annateresa Fabris et al. (São Paulo: Museu de Arte Moderna, 2008), volume 2, 64.

5. Aracy Amaral, "O surreal em Tarsila," *Mirante das artes* 3 (1967): 24-45. She owned two paintings by De Chirico, one of which was *L'Enigme d'une journée*, now in the Museu de Arte Contemporâneo de São Paulo. Juan Manuel Bonet, "A 'Quest' for Tarsila," in *Tarsila do Amaral* (Madrid: Fundación Juan March, 2009), 84. From October 1924 until April 1925 the surrealists ran the Central Bureau for Surrealist Research (Bureau Central de Recherches Surréalistes) at the Rue de Grenelle, where the public could go to find out about surrealism. While she never mentions visiting the bureau, Amaral was most likely aware of its existence (she was in Paris from September 1924 until February 1925).

6. "Em minha opinião os surrealistas [...] são os únicos que contam verdadeiramente." Interview with Blaise Cendrars and Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, "Conversando com Blaise Cendrars," *O Jornal*, September 23, 1927. Cited in Aracy Amaral (ed.), *Tarsila: sua obra e seu tempo* (São Paulo: EdUSP, 2003), 273. In her introduction to *Complete Postcards from the Americas* Monique Chefodor claims that Cendrars went to Brazil because he was disgruntled with the "dictatorial turn that literature took in Paris with emerging surrealism." Blaise Cendrars, *Complete Postcards from the Americas: Poems of Road and Sea* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 17. This is not at all the tone of his interview in Brazil, however. I am inclined to believe that Cendrars' disenchantment with surrealism emerged closer to 1929 and the publication of the second manifesto, with its thinning of the ranks, rather than before his trip to Brazil.

7. Later, according to Amaral, the surrealists would attack Cendrars, which may have influenced her decision to disavow any relationship to the trend in loyalty to her friend. Tarsila do Amaral, "Blaise Cendrars," *Diário de São Paulo*, July 28, 1943. Translated in *Tarsila do Amaral*, 37.

8. While Amaral returned to São Paulo in August 1926 and did not travel to Paris again until March 1928, given all her Parisian contacts and the transatlantic circulation of European publications it is almost certain that she had access to the journal. In 1925 the surrealist poet Benjamin Péret became chief editor of *La Révolution surréaliste*. Significantly, Péret had a direct connection to the Brazilian expatriate community in Paris: he was married to Elsie Houston, a Brazilian singer who frequently performed the works of the Brazilian avant-garde composer Heitor Villa Lobos; it was at Villa Lobos's Paris apartment that Amaral and Oswald de Andrade first met Péret; indeed, they all frequented the same circles in Paris. See Michele Greet, "Devouring Surrealism: Tarsila do Amaral's *Abaporu*," *Papers of Surrealism* 11 (2015): 1-39.

artists working in the years surrounding World War I. For Amaral, biomorphism was never tied to automatism; rather it was a precise and deliberate process that resulted in imagery more akin to Arp's clearly delineated forms than to Masson's flowing unrestrained designs. Whereas some surrealists practiced a sort of intuitive biomorphism, Amaral achieved her shapes through a protracted process of drawing and refining before executing a final image, as can be seen in her many exploratory drawings. Moreover, her images are never fully abstract, but rather deploy biomorphism as a means to transform recognizable features of the natural world into dreamlike creations.

Her embrace of surrealist sensibilities was certainly deliberate and stemmed from her contacts in Paris. She was friendly with Giorgio de Chirico, whom the surrealists greatly admired, and knew André Breton and Benjamin Péret, who later traveled to Brazil with his wife, the Brazilian singer Elsie Houston.⁵ Moreover, in 1927 Rio de Janeiro's *O Jornal* published an interview with Blaise Cendrars, an avant-garde poet and Amaral's good friend and confidant, where he singled out surrealism as the most important European avant-garde movement: "In my opinion the surrealists [...] are the only ones who really count."⁶ His proclaimed admiration for surrealism may also have influenced Amaral's decision to explore the visual manifestations of the movement as she prepared for her exhibition in Paris in 1928.⁷ The most striking evidence of her exploration of surrealism is the affinity between several works that she painted in early 1928 and images by Man Ray and Joan Miró reproduced in the surrealist journal *La Révolution surréaliste* in the October issue of 1927.⁸

The 1928 exhibition included only twelve paintings, all of which Amaral completed in 1927 and early 1928.⁹ With the exception of *Pastoral* and *Nude* (*Abaporu* was exhibited as *Nu* in Paris),¹⁰ there are no figures present in her paintings; in works such as *Manacá*, *The Moon*, and *The Lake* plants seem to take on an anthropomorphic quality to make up for the absence of people. For this exhibition Amaral eschewed the urban scene entirely, creating instead otherworldly landscapes in lush colors. In most of the paintings she focused on a single element, isolated in the center of the composition as in *Urutu*, *Sleep*, *The Bull*, and *The Toad*, which out of her works of the period most closely recalls the architectural spaces of De Chirico.¹¹ Her landscapes became almost completely imaginary, no longer an extrapolation or reconfiguration of a real place as can be seen in earlier works like *Central Railway of Brazil* (1924) or *The Railway Station* (1925).¹²

An example of her new approach to landscape is the painting *The Moon*, exhibited in Paris under the title *Landscape*. The painting depicts a nocturnal view of a lush green meadow against a backdrop of mountains and glowing white clouds.¹³ A crescent moon that hangs low on the horizon complicates the

reading of space, however, as it appears to be in front of the mountainous terrain, an impossible phenomenon in the natural world. Its golden yellow color also negates a reading of the moon as the means by which the bands of white clouds are illuminated, making the scene perplexing.¹⁴ Amaral's paintings of this period are characterized by perceptual ambiguity, often suggesting several possibilities but resisting definitive interpretation.¹⁵ The "figure" occupying the landscape emphasizes this sense of uncertainty, preventing a clear delineation between human and vegetal form. It is unclear whether the form represents a person or an anthropomorphic cactus and its purpose in the nocturnal landscape is ambiguous. Structurally, Amaral maintained the painterly clarity of her earlier work, with each shape clearly outlined and each color circumscribed by the boundaries of the form. She constructs the composition out of a series of repeating curves: the blue arc in the lower portion of the composition echoes the undulating clouds above, while the yellow moon repeats the curved form again in reverse. And yet the orderliness of the stacked forms contrasts with the sense of mystery and ambiguity that emanates from the scene.

Rather than catering to Parisian desires for typically Brazilian scenes, Amaral's paintings during this period became increasingly esoteric. Her dialogue with avant-garde intellectual and writer Mário de Andrade, who was working on his novel *Macunaíma*—published the same year as Amaral's exhibition—most likely contributed to her new approach and provided inspiration for paintings such as *The Moon*.¹⁶ In his story the protagonist, Macunaíma, falls in love with an Amazon named Ci, Mother of the Forest, who was living "on the shores of the lake called Espelho da Lua (Mirror of the Moon), fed by the river Nhamundá."¹⁷ Both the river and the lake described by Andrade are real locations, the river marking the northeastern boundary between the states of Amazonas and Pará. But Amaral does not paint any specific indicators of place; she instead co-opts the barren otherworldliness of surrealist landscapes to visualize descriptions from Andrade's novel. Indeed, in preparation for her second Paris exhibition Amaral seems to have abandoned references to real locations and scenarios almost completely, instead constructing an imaginary Brazil—perhaps to simulate the uncertainty that now prevailed in the region in response to emerging challenges to the aristocracy's extensive landownership.

French critics who reviewed the 1928 show noted Amaral's move toward the poetic and the imaginary in her work, and specifically commented on her tendency toward escapism. Alongside his review of Amaral's exhibition in *Comoedia*, André Warnod reproduced *The Moon*, noting the change in her style: "Then the painter evolved and moved away from depicting anecdotes. Tarsila sought a more stripped-down form of expression, more a synthesis of poetic, often very happy, sentiments. We note in her work a desire to escape, to climb

9. Paintings in the exhibition included: *Paysage, Manacá, Les Bateaux, Pastorale, Sommeil, Le Parc, La Voûte, Nu, Marine, L'Oeuf, Les Colonnes*, and *Lac*. Galerie Percier, *Tarsila, du 18 juin au 2 juillet 1928*, Paris, 1928 (exhibition catalog).

10. For an in-depth discussion of *Abaporu* see Greet, "Devouring Surrealism."

11. *Pastoral* and *Barcos em festa*, which were painted slightly earlier than the other works in the exhibition, reference recognizable people and places.

12. For a discussion of the specific location of *The Railway Station* see Greet, "For French Eyes," 125.

13. Flora Süssekind discussed the idea of the nocturne in her keynote address "Nocturnes: The Brazilian Reversals of Modernism," in *Beyond Anthropophagy: Cultural Modernities between Brazil and France*, Evanston, Northwestern University, 2017.

14. I have written more extensively on this painting in Greet, "For French Eyes," 127-128. See also Beverly Adams, *Tarsila do Amaral: The Moon* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2022).

15. I have discussed this phenomenon in depth in relation to *Abaporu* in Greet, "Devouring Surrealism."

16. Nádia Battella Gotlib claims that the protagonist, Macunaíma, inspired Amaral's work of the period. Nádia Battella Gotlib, *Tarsila do Amaral: a modernista* (São Paulo: Editora SENAC, 1998), 144.

17. Mário de Andrade, *Macunaíma* (New York: Random House, 1984), 16. Originally published in Portuguese in 1928.

higher [...].”¹⁸ And Raymond Cogniat, the art critic for *La Revue de l'Amérique Latine*, also registers the change:

She offered us, in the decorative way an artist does, a very picturesque place for her fantasy to take place. The evolution of the artist proceeded in this way: promises became certitudes and as her conception became more assured, the author felt more freedom, escaping without hesitation from reality. In this exhibition, most of the paintings are pure imagination; even if a detail is borrowed from reality (a tree, a plant, an animal), it is so stylized, reduced to its most basic shape, that it evokes a creation. All these elements are regrouped in a new order often evocative of a theatrical set and constituting a peculiar world with new connections, and unexpected perspectives.¹⁹

Cogniat's conclusion that Amaral's paintings, through a regrouping or rearrangement of familiar forms, create unexpected new worlds, describes one aspect of the surrealists' project. For these reviewers Amaral's creation of fantastic imaginary landscapes indicated the newfound freedom and self-assurance of a mature artist, but they did not necessarily recognize the contextual nuance and at times sardonic stance of her new approach.

The catalogue for Amaral's 1928 exhibition reproduced three paintings, two of which, *Sleep* and *The Bull*, were landscapes (in addition to *Nu* [*Abaporu*]).²⁰ A kind of reprise of *Landscape with Bull I* from her 1926 show, *The Bull* transforms the rural landscape into an entirely imaginary one. Significantly, the title of the painting was listed as *The Columns* for the Paris show, directing the viewer's attention to the tubular pillars surrounding the bull, rather than to the bull itself. The bull stands in a “forest” of seven uniformly sized tubular columns that extend from the earth beyond the limits of the frame. While the tubular structures could perhaps be interpreted as tree trunks, their lack of foliage, uniformity, and predominantly blue color indicate that they were made by humans and could perhaps be a cage or a labyrinth. The myth of the Minotaur in the labyrinth was a recurrent theme in the work of European avant-garde artists, and in the 1930s it became particularly significant to the surrealists with the publication of the journal *Minotaure. Revue artistique et littéraire* (1933-1939). The bull in Amaral's picture is now black, much larger, with immense curved horns whose shape is reminiscent of *The Moon's* crescent. These changes make the animal dangerous or threatening, and its large white eyes with no pupils make it appear phantasmagoric. While the ghost-like bull sparks anxiety in the viewer, it is perhaps as a satire aimed at European constructs of the primitive that this image functions best. With Amaral's painting, French viewers got what amounted to a caricature of their own primitivist fantasies of wild imaginary creatures in a fabricated forest.

18. André Warnod, “Tarsila,” *Comoedia*, June 24, 1928. “Depuis le peintre a évolué et repousse tout ce qui est anecdote. Tarsilla [*sic*] cherche l'expression plus dépouillée, plus synthétique des sentiments poétiques souvent très heureux. On sent chez elle le désir de s'évader, de monter plus haut [...].”

19. “Elle offrait au sens décoratif de l'artiste un moyen plein de pittoresque dans lequel sa fantaisie se trouvait plus à son aise. L'évolution de l'artiste s'est faite en ce sens, les promesses sont devenues des certitudes et à mesure que la conception devenait plus assurée, l'auteur, se sentant plus libre, échappait sans cesse un peu plus à la réalité. À l'exposition actuelle, la plupart des toiles sont de pure imagination; même si'il en emprunte un détail à la réalité (un arbre, une plante, un animal), celui-ci est tellement stylisé, ramené à sa valeur de simple volume, que cela équivalait à une création. Tous ces éléments sont alors regroupés dans un ordre nouveau assez souvent évocateur de décors de théâtre et constituant un monde particulier avec des rapports nouveaux, des perspectives inattendues.” Raymond Cogniat, “La vie artistique. Deux peintres brésiliens: Mme Tarsila, M Monteiro,” *Revue de l'Amérique Latine* 16, n° 80 (1928): 158. An article on the Tupi-Guarani Indians of Brazil directly preceded Cogniat's review.

20. *Tarsila “du 18 juin au 2 juillet 1928.”* Paris: Galerie Percier 38, rue de la Boétie, 1928.

Like surrealism's reshuffled cultural hierarchies, Amaral sought a de-centred perspective that critiqued European ethnocentrism. While the surrealists frequently deployed parody and uncanny juxtapositions as a means to undermine bourgeois values, Amaral's work appropriates the surrealist penchant for satire to mimic and thereby reformulate conventional constructions of primitivism.

One of Amaral's most direct references to biomorphic surrealist practices is her painting *Sleep*. The surrealists were fascinated with dream imagery, and artists such as Salvador Dalí, Max Ernst, and Yves Tanguy created strange dreamscapes of imagined internal worlds. Amaral's dreamworlds are similarly ominous, yet more pared down in style. In *Sleep*, a tubular palm tree and a repeating amorphous form—painted in opposing pictorial syntaxes—occupy a barren landscape, reminiscent of the desolate plains in paintings by Dalí or Tanguy. The shape in the foreground resembles a cut-out of a line drawing of an inverted vase, but it is clearly not an object from the natural world. By inverting the shape, Amaral makes it seem precarious, balanced on its narrow end; additionally, its proximity to the palm tree forces the viewer to perceive it as similar in scale. The form is entirely flat, painted in a matte ivory tone with a thick black outline. Behind the first shape the same form repeats, on a somewhat thicker base, until it disappears past the edge of the frame, creating the illusion of infinite duplication in time and space. While the shapes' recession in the distance establishes a sense of deep space, their lack of volume undermines this perception of depth. Indeed, the conflicting visual languages employed create a dramatic tension between flatness and volume, between wakefulness and sleep, and clarity and obscurity. In the foreground Amaral has painted a strange arch that can be read as a body of water or, perhaps, an architectural structure. If it is a built structure through which we see the sky, the forms above hover in mid-air unsupported; but similarly, if it is a body of water, the forms rest on the water without sinking. The space, therefore, does not conform to the laws of the physical world, and by defying those rules the painting creates a sense of foreboding or precariousness. The repeating forms evoke the repetitive or invasive thoughts that occur on the verge of sleep. Amaral's biomorphism also plays a suggestive role, alluding to an organic presence without allowing it to be fully realized, an ambiguity that was also a characteristic of the dreams or unconscious or semi-conscious states that fascinated the surrealists.

Among the other paintings in the 1928 exhibition, *The Lake* also exemplifies Amaral's practice of biomorphism. While the subject of the painting is clearly a lake surrounded by tropical vegetation, the plants depicted do not represent any known species. Instead, Amaral has painted imaginary varieties; the three "flowers" on the lower left seem to have been inverted, with their pink petals becoming spindly legs and a pointed appendage at the top that reads as a sort

of head. These inverted, uprooted plants therefore take on the quality of an insect or crustacean scuttling over the grass. Similarly, a tree on the left, topped with pink bulbous blooms that resemble a head of curly hair, has two branches with fingerlike protrusions that suggest arms, again creating a connection between plant life and humanoid forms. Even the mountains morph into impossible formations, creating the illusion of a head and shoulders being embraced by an exploding succulent with a glowing orange center, a plant too large for its apparent position in the distant mountains. This disavowal of expectations of scale serves to conflate the perspectival planes in the image, thereby adding to the otherworldly quality of the scene. The entire landscape is punctuated with smaller plant-like formations that are precariously balanced on the edges of landmasses. Color, too, is an important signifier in Amaral's paintings. By reducing her palette to blues and greens, the entire image assumes an aquatic quality, yet splashes of warm pink and a single bright orange spot create an interplay between warm and cool tones that highlights the distinction between the plant and animal world. These biomorphic landscapes evoke tropical fantasies of exotic locales, but they are also a form of escapism. While the saturated colors, rapid growth, and succulent leaves are all characteristic of tropical flora, Amaral exaggerates these traits to create otherworldly scenes. They disavow modern São Paulo and its emerging class tensions, replacing it with a timeless tropical dreamworld that hides an unstable modern reality. These images counter the rational orderly compositions of her Pau-Brasil period and instead seem more like the inner meditations of a surrealist mind.

After her 1928 Paris exhibition Amaral continued to paint in this biomorphic surrealist vein for the next year or so, creating images such as *Forest*, *Distance*, and *Setting Sun*. She also employed biomorphic lines in her drawings from the period, where extreme simplicity went hand in hand with formal exaggeration. In these images, the conventions of academic perspective no longer determine scale or proximity in space. Amaral was not interested in rendering local flora and fauna, but instead in evoking a fantasy of the tropics through vibrant colors, imaginary animals, and sinuously rendered plant-like forms in desolate landscapes. While these paintings may have appealed to European primitivist desires, Amaral did not have another European exhibition planned and instead seems to have been responding to her local circumstances. In these late pictures, such as *Distance* and *Setting Sun*, there is a pulsating energy, conveyed through the use of concentric rings, and phallic forms projecting from the ground preside over fanciful aquatic creatures. In *Forest*, the plants are ripe, succulent, and verdant. But strangely, what at first appear to be tree trunks have transformed into rectangular pillars, and the tree in the foreground seems to be guarding a cache of pink eggs. It is therefore impossible to determine the classificatory boundaries

between vegetal, animal, and inanimate forms. Rather, in Amaral's landscapes objects seem to exude the immanent possibility of transformation.

In conclusion, in 1928 Amaral began to retreat from representations of the city, instead devouring the natural landscape of Brazil as a site of creativity and modernist exploration. Biomorphism played a major role in Amaral's project of conceptualizing her homeland. When she exhibited these paintings in Paris, Amaral's adoption of a surrealist sensibility was on full display, as was her embrace of ambiguity and uncertainty in her portrayal of the land. Her landscapes of this period present dichotomies between the rational and the irrational, the natural and the artificial, order and chaos. In so doing, her images simultaneously exaggerate and undermine preconceived notions of place. Through her presentation of the Brazilian landscape Amaral challenged Parisians' imagined construct of Brazil and created a more original and enigmatic interpretation of the natural world.



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