Harper's BAZAAR

ANTONIO TARSIS EXPANDS THE MEANINGS OF MEMORY, POLITICS AND ART

His work explores the vestiges of everyday life and the possibilities of art revealing an artist in constant expansion of language.

By Leonardo Nones
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[Translated from the original Portuguese]

"If colonialism imposes an extractive and hierarchical logic, my practice seeks to interrogate these dynamics by displacing objects from their spheres of consumption and redefining their materialities and meanings." This is how Antonio Tarsis defines his distinctive artistic production, marked by self-education in response to a lack of opportunities, the reinvention of materials, and the investigation of social relations riddled with Brazil's colonial heritage. Growing up in Salvador, the artist found a vast repertoire of stories and forms in the city that became part of his research. "My relationship with art was kind of born on the street. I grew up far from the formal circuit, but immersed in a very strong culture," he reflects. Whether

Antonio Tarsis expands the senses of memory, politics and art – Photo: Disclosure

through the patient and careful layering of materials or through the possible relationships between their separation and cleavage, his work is not limited to a space of representation, but of transgression, recovery, and expansion of meanings. Mobilizing a vocabulary that harks back to renowned artistic movements of the last century, such as the large fields of color and textures of abstract expressionism, the assemblage procedures of neo-Dadaism, or the compositions of geometric abstraction, Tarsis appropriates the discarded packaging and industrialized graphic surfaces to compose a unique visual experience.

Between 2013 and 2015, Antonio Tarsis began creating works with matchboxes, addressing themes such as memory, the periphery, and Afro-Indigenous references in the urban context of Salvador. During this period, he also explored photographic self-portraits as a way to investigate his body and his Afro-diasporic identity. Over the years, the process of collecting materials—a defining act of his practice—transformed from a struggle with social precariousness to a sophisticated investigation into the history and circulation of objects. “The relationship with the materials has expanded, but the process of collecting remains central. Today, there is a shift in the meaning of the materials, a dialogue between their history, their physical structure, and the space they occupy in the composition.” Currently working in London, collage remains an

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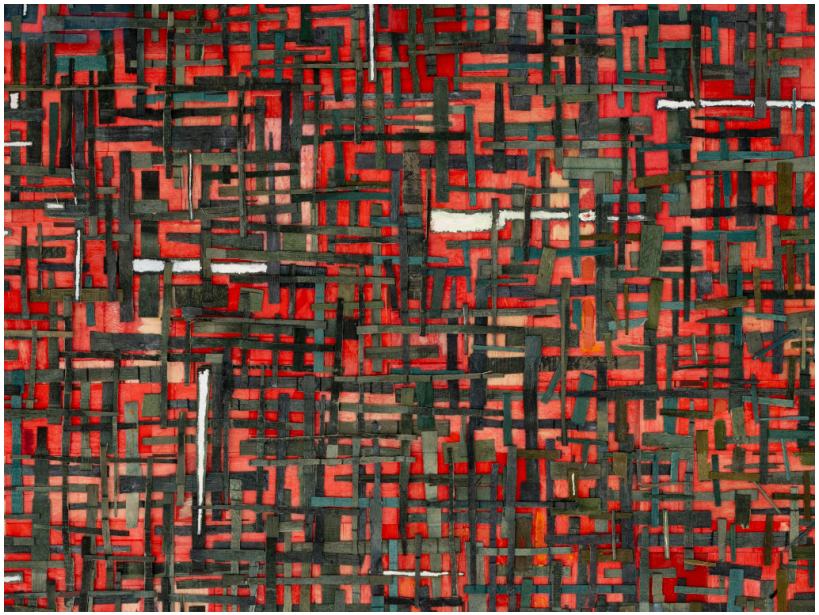

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essential procedure in his work, but the exploration of new components and procedures is expanding. "Rhythm and composition are increasingly evident elements, especially in the way I incorporate steam and sound." Tarsis also began to create three-dimensional structures and foster collaborations with other artists, such as the joint exhibition with Beatriz Milhazes and Tadáskía by the Fortes D'Aloia gallery for Frieze, an art fair that will take place in New York in May.

His work is a lucid exploration of the vestiges of everyday life and the possibilities of art in the present to re-articulate what has been historically marginalized—revealing an artist constantly expanding his language. From a practice born of necessity, he has established himself as one of the most intriguing names in contemporary art. He is currently preparing an installation for the Royal Academy of Arts – Summer Exhibition, a work for the Open Project at Le Corbusier House in Paris, and another for Dover Street Market, in addition to participating in a group show at Frieze NY.