

Torishichi
Mitsumasa

Using Walls,
Floors, and Ceilings
Beatriz Milhazes

About the Series

Using Walls, Floors, and Ceilings is a series of artist commissions at the Jewish Museum, initiated in 2013. Artists from around the globe have been invited to create new art or adapt a work for placement in the entrance lobby. The project builds upon *Using Walls*, a 1970 exhibition of commissioned artworks installed both within and beyond the gallery space of the museum's Warburg Mansion. That series, curated by Susan Tumarkin Goodman, began with the premise that the wall is not just a surface on which to display a work of art, but can be a component of it. Site specificity was crucial to many of the resulting projects. Among the participating artists were Sol LeWitt, Robert Ryman, Richard Tuttle, Mel Bochner, and Richard Artschwager.

Forty-four years later, the museum revisits this idea in *Using Walls, Floors, and Ceilings*, curated by Kelly Taxter, Assistant Curator, and Jens Hoffmann, Deputy Director, Exhibitions and Public Programs.

About the Artist

Beatriz Milhazes was born in 1960 in Rio de Janeiro. She represented Brazil at the 2003 Venice Biennale. Selected solo exhibitions include *Jardim Botânico*, Pérez Art Museum, Miami (2014–15); *Meu Bem*, Paço Imperial, Rio (2013); *Panamericano*, Museo de Arte Latinoamericano, Fundación Costantini, Buenos Aires (2012); *Beatriz Milhazes*, Fondation Beyeler, Basel (2011); *Beatriz Milhazes*, Fondation Cartier, Paris (2009); and *Beatriz Milhazes—Pinturas e Colagens*, a retrospective at the Estação Pinacoteca, Pinacoteca do Estado, São Paulo (2008). Milhazes lives and works in Rio.

May 6–September 18, 2016

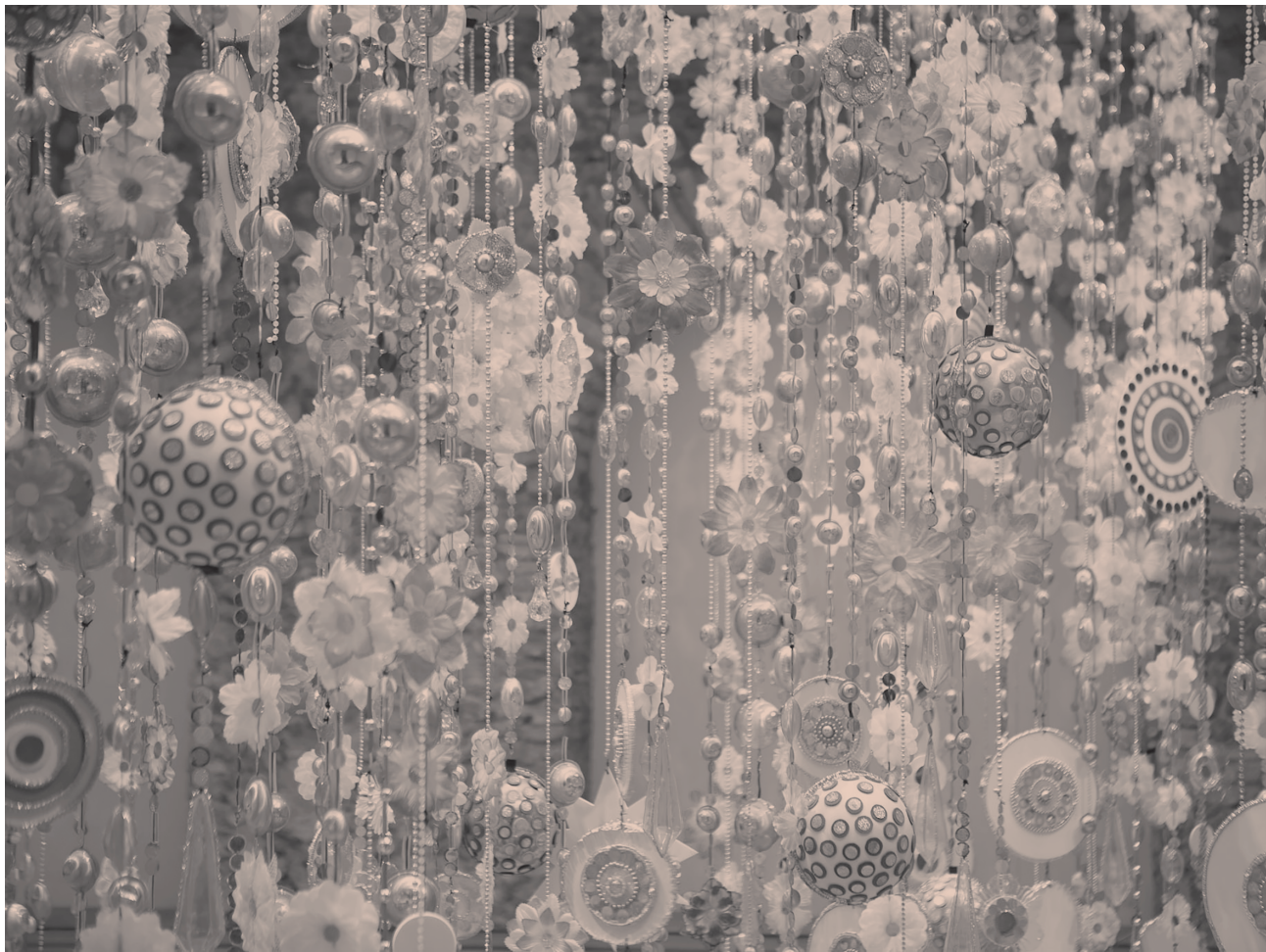
Beatriz Milhazes

Gamboa II

Gamboa II is a series of five hanging sculptures, which together create a vibrant canopy over the lobby of the Jewish Museum. These newly commissioned works are inspired by Carnival in the artist's native Brazil, particularly its elaborate parade floats.

Milhazes is known for her intensely hued and texturally rich paintings and sculptures. She works in colors at the hottest edges of the spectrum, and composes her canvases with interlocking geometric shapes overlaid with decorative flourishes such as flowers and arabesques. Each painting evolves from a hard edge or a grid, and is collaged together from an array of hand-painted decals, rather than direct brushwork.

In her chandelierlike sculptures, Milhazes intertwines visual references to Brazilian Baroque, popular, and folk traditions with modern artistic movements such as Constructivism and Tropicália. Brazilian landscape design,



Beatriz Milhazes
Gamboa II
 2013–15,
 detail
 Mixed media

- including Roberto Burle Marx's Op art-style pathways for Copacabana Beach, also has a felt presence in her work, as does the lush botanical garden near her own studio. She processes sensual and tactile elements through the language of European modernism, fluidly combining disparate forms and ideas in three dimensions.

The first iteration of *Gamboa II* was as a set design for *Tempo de Verão* (Summertime), a dance by the choreographer Marcia Milhazes, the artist's sister. Its hanging tendrils acted as both environment and dynamic objects, meant to be moved and touched by the dancers onstage. A connection to dance remains a vital aspect of the current artwork, which was created with the help of samba school float makers. Cidade do Samba (Samba City) is a neighborhood in Rio dense with samba schools, whose performers and craftspeople work year-round in giant warehouses, choreographing dances, creating costumes, and building elaborate floats. Colored plastic shapes, paper flowers, and other shiny trinkets are just some of the ephemeral materials they use, and that appear in *Gamboa II*.

This piece is inspired by a celebration, but it also recalls the social and political issues that underpin those festivities. During the long years of military dictatorship, from 1964 to 1985, when censorship and repression were the norm, Carnival parades were a subversive means for the Brazilian people and their samba schools to slyly express unsanctioned political opinions and to exercise unrestricted creativity. Milhazes came of age during those years; working in artistic isolation, she honed a distinct visual language. At the time, other Brazilian visual and performing artists—Lygia Clark and Cildo Meireles, to

name only two of many—also struggled to make work while navigating a dangerous and oppressive regime. A characteristic of artworks created in those decades is the prominence of found, ephemeral materials and ad hoc construction. Oftentimes, pieces of the period have a performative dimension as well, functioning in both aesthetic and sociopolitical terms. Discarded and disused objects can be charged with critique for a public once deprived of freedom. *Gamboa II*'s bits of shiny, candy-colored paper and plastic recall this history and act as a starting point for an artwork whose form may seem innocuous but whose content carries a strong message.

Using Walls, Floors, and Ceilings: Beatriz Milhazes is made possible by the generous support of Wendy Fisher and Toby Devan Lewis.

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Jewish Museum

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