

The Museum of Modern Art

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART ACQUIRES ITS FIRST PAINTING BY FOUNDATIONAL BRAZILIAN MODERNIST TARSILA DO AMARAL

NEW YORK, NY, February 27, 2019—The Museum of Modern Art has acquired *The Moon (A Lua)*, made in 1928 by Tarsila do Amaral (Brazilian, 1886–1973). With this acquisition, the Museum welcomes into the collection its first painting by Brazil’s most important early modernist.

Tarsila do Amaral is a foundational figure for modern art in Brazil, and a central protagonist in the transatlantic cultural exchanges that informed it. Her paintings from the 1920s ignited a radically new iconography of enduring influence in her native country, where today she is revered as simply “Tarsila.” Last spring, The Museum of Modern Art and The Art Institute of Chicago co-organized *Tarsila do Amaral: Inventing Modern Art in Brazil*, the first exhibition of her work ever presented in the United States.

Ann Temkin, The Marie-Josée and Henry Kravis Chief Curator of Painting and Sculpture at The Museum of Modern Art, said, “Last year’s exhibition, co-organized by Luis Pérez-Oramas and Stephanie D’Alessandro, confirmed our belief that a painting by Tarsila was essential to MoMA’s collection. However, we knew that finding such a work for us would be a major challenge. We feel extremely fortunate to add her work to the history we tell in our fifth-floor collection galleries.”

Born and raised in a prosperous family of coffee plantation owners in São Paulo, as a young girl do Amaral studied music and fine arts. In 1920 she moved to Paris for two years to study art, and over the course of the following decade she traveled frequently between São Paulo and Paris. In 1923 she fulfilled what she called her “military service in Cubism” in classes with André Lhote, Fernand Léger, and Albert Gleizes. She also became acquainted with many leading avant-garde figures, such as Constantin Brancusi, Jean Cocteau, Pablo Picasso, and Erik Satie, who deeply influenced her aspiration to become both a modernist and “the painter of my country.”

Do Amaral painted *The Moon* in early 1928; it debuted in June of that year in her second solo show at the Galerie Percier in Paris. It is an outstanding example of her newly invented signature style: sensuous, highly stylized compositions rendered in a rich palette of saturated color. In this fantastical moonlit scene, a lone cactus suggesting a human figure stands in the foreground. Wavy elements present throughout the canvas energize the scene with a dreamlike sense of flowing movement.

Do Amaral’s most significant paintings reside mainly in South American museum collections. The acquisition of *The Moon* represents a rare opportunity for a composition of this beauty,

scale, and poetic power to enter the Museum's collection, where it joins the 1930 drawing *Study for Composition (Lonely figure) III*.

The Moon will go on view in MoMA's fifth-floor collection galleries in March 2019.

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