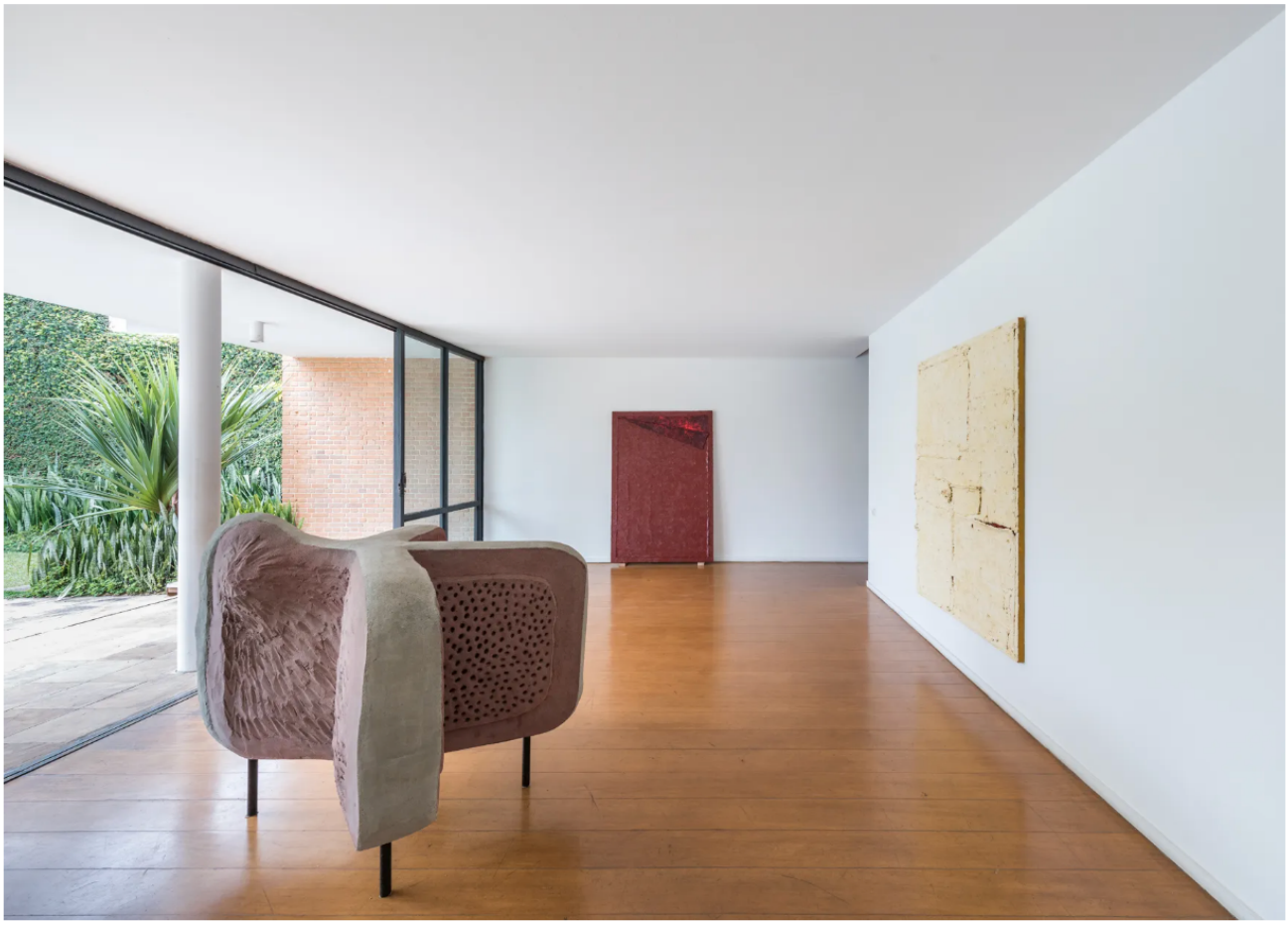
Medium Web
Author Mateus Nunes
Event Harmony Hammond and Ivens Machado
Web address https://www.artforum.com/events/harmony-hammond-ivens-machado-auroras-review-1234744533/

Publication ArtForum
Artist Ivens Machado

Harmony Hammond and Ivens Machado

auroras

By Mateus Nunes



View of "Harmony Hammond and Ivens Machado," 2025. From left: Ivens Machado, *Untitled*, 1983; Harmony Hammond, *Flesh Fold #2*, 2015; Harmony Hammond, *Bandaged Grid #7*, 2016–17. Photo: Ding Musa.

Occupying two sunlit floors of a modernist house, this pairing of an American artist and a Brazilian one unfolded with striking clarity and spatial balance. Although contemporaries, the two artists never met, but their works converge across their distinct artistic and sociopolitical landscapes. Harmony Hammond, born in Chicago in 1944, was a pivotal figure in the emergent feminist discourse of early 1970s New York. Ivens Machado, who was born two years earlier in southern Brazil and died in Rio de Janeiro in 2015, confronted the vulnerability and brutality of both the human body and

Medium Web
Author Mateus Nunes
Event Harmony Hammond and Ivens Machado
Web address https://www.artforum.com/events/harmony-hammond-ivens-machado-auroras-review-1234744533/
Publication ArtForum
Artist Ivens Machado

glimpses of democracy. The exhibition emphasized how both practices, anchored in accumulation and repetition, address the desiring body and its defiance against oppressive political structures.

In Machado's forceful sculpture *Untitled*, 2006, fist-size stones wrapped in chicken wire and joined by cement and steel cables arc downward under the weight of gravity. A probing viewer might have seen resemblances between this piece and key early works from Hammond's oeuvre—for instance, *Girdle*, 1971, not in this exhibition, with its knotted acrylic-painted net bearing scraps of clothing donated by women friends. Suspended from two upper points, it sags into a parabola, just like Machado's structure. Incorporating garments laden with personal histories to fuse biography and the social field, Hammond's work resonates with Machado's *Untitled 20*, 1973–2018, a black-and-white photograph documenting a performance in which the artist bound his face and body with surgical gauze, manifesting political suffocation under Brazil's military dictatorship. The body impresses itself into material: The bandage both constricts and casts, like a mortuary mask.

Most of Machado's sculptures evoke bodies—often swollen, distended, or tonguelike—yet they are made from rigid, recalcitrant materials. A parallel dynamic operates in Hammond's work, which addresses the containment of desire and the patriarchal frameworks that seek to define what a woman is—for instance, in the most recent work in the exhibition, *Voices II*, 2023, a vertical canvas layered with weathered linoleum sourced from farm sites, scraped like a repeatedly repainted wall. On it, Hammond has inscribed Monique Wittig's question from the essay "Paradigm" (1979): WHAT HAVE YOU DONE WITH OUR DESIRE? It's a line to which Hammond has returned repeatedly since the 1990s, underscoring the poetic and political force of written language amid stratified memory.

Medium Web
Author Mateus Nunes
Event Harmony Hammond and Ivens Machado
Web address https://www.artforum.com/events/harmony-hammond-ivens-machado-auroras-review-1234744533/

Publication ArtForum
Artist Ivens Machado

The raw texture of bandages in Machado's photo-performances directly echoes works such as Hammond's *Marker II*, 2011–20, in which gauze is stretched over canvas and painted in a waxy pale yellow, its surface perforated by a grid with sculptural insistence: a summons to tactility, where every element appears exactingly constructed, layering time into frayed patinas. Facing it in a second-floor room, Machado's *Positivo Negativo*, 2007, implied perforation. Sharpened eucalyptus posts jutted from the wall in two clusters, one convex and one concave, nearly puncturing the space before them.

In Hammond's *Flesh Fold #2*, 2015—a scarlet painting resembling a full-scale bed seen from above—fabric folded at the upper-right corner forms two flayed triangles that open like an incision into living flesh. That visceral charge intersects with Machado's freestanding concrete sculpture *Untitled*, 1983. This volume, roughly cross-shaped in its footprint, with additions of red-pigmented cement in some areas of its rough-hewn surface, preserves the impression of the artist's fingers: material symptoms mirrored in Hammond's works, for instance in their worn-out edges. These works insist on corporeal physicality while refusing figuration. Both artists privileged visceral force over formal rigor, experimented with unconventional materials, and questioned the normative frameworks that surrounded them.

Their confrontational, at times anarchic impulses echo something Hammond said after visiting Agnes Martin in the late '90s: "She had to do what her voices told her to do, even if it seemed wrong. And sometimes they were wrong." Hammond and Machado also followed voices encouraging behaviors others deemed wrong: the siren calls of material risk, corporeal transposition, the unruly agency of matter, and the challenge to conventional boundaries—particularly regarding queerness. And thankfully, they listened.