

[Lopes at Richard Saltoun Gallery](#)

[Lopes at Andrew Kreps Gallery](#)

[Lopes at AWARE](#)

In 1973, Lopes had her first solo exhibition in Portugal, held at the [Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian](#). The exhibition featured fifty paintings produced up until that point in her career.

Read a 2021 [article](#) by C-MAP Africa Fellow Nancy Dantas, “Tribute and The Modernist Constellations of Bertina Lopes,” published by the Museum of Modern Art.

Dantas writes: “Despite her work having been the object of two major exhibitions in Lisbon (in 1973 and 1979, respectively), Lopes was never represented by a Portuguese (or, for that matter Italian) commercial gallery—a reality that begs further engagement and unpacking—bearing the brunt of building and maintaining a career as a Black, “third-world” visual artist and mother, Against the odds, she harnessed her innermost energies to produce a singular oeuvre that contributes to our understanding of the emergence of modernism in Mozambique as a nationalist aspiration.”

[Richard Saltoun Gallery](#) produced a solo exhibition of Lopes’ work in 2022, marking the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the artist’s death and celebrating her 70-year-long career. Read a [review](#) of the exhibition by Ida Panicli in Artforum.



Lopes with the President of the Republic of Mozambique, 1976  
Photograph: Unknown

Lopes was included in the 2022-2023 exhibition *Action, Gesture, Paint: Women Artists and Global Abstraction 1940-70*. The exhibition originated at [Whitechapel Gallery](#) and traveled to the [Fondation Vincent van Gogh Arles](#) and the [Kunsthalle Bielefeld](#) in Germany. Read a review of the London installation in [The Guardian](#) by Adrian Searle.

[Bertina Lopes: I know the mystery that my mother suffers](#) was on display at Andrew Kreps Gallery in 2023. The exhibition spanned three decades of her painting career and was her first solo exhibition in New York.

According to Andrew Kreps Gallery: “While it was difficult for Lopes to gain recognition for her work in Italy, she became a vital figure within Rome, as a cultural attaché to Mozambique’s embassy. She would additionally represent her home country in important, international exhibitions, including two editions of the Venice Biennale. In spite of the barriers she faced, Lopes had several significant exhibitions of her work during her lifetime, including two exhibitions at the Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon, 1973 and 1979, an exhibition at National Museum of Modern Art of Baghdad, 1981, as well as major retrospectives in Rome at Palazzo Venezia, 1986, and Palazzo della Cancelleria Apostolica, 2002. Following her death in 2012, Archivio Bertina Lopes was founded in Rome to preserve her legacy, as well as her home and studio.



Lopes in her studio in Maputo, 1986  
Photograph: Archivio Bertina Lopes



Bertina Lopes (Mozambican-Italian, 1924-2012)

**Totem n. 1**, 1968

Oil on canvas

Private Collection, Los Angeles; L2023:65.1

Born to a Mozambican mother and Portuguese father, Bertina Lopes was raised in Southeastern Africa before moving to Lisbon to attend art school. In Portugal, she was greatly influenced by European Modernism and began infusing African iconography into these styles. In the early 1960s, Lopes's anti-colonial and anti-fascist work forced her to flee to Rome, where she remained for the rest of her life.

**Totem n. 1** was painted after the artist's move to Italy, when she became a cultural attaché to Mozambique's embassy and continued to engage with activist themes in her paintings and sculptures.

*On view September 20 – December 31, 2023*