



# HENRIQUE OLIVEIRA TAPUMES

26 March – 9 May 2009

In Portuguese, the language of Henrique Oliveira's native Brazil, *tapumes* can mean "fencing," "boarding," or "enclosure." The term, which Oliveira chooses as a title for many of his large-scale installations, makes reference to the temporary wooden construction fences seen throughout the city of São Paulo where he lives. It also refers to the weathered wood Oliveira uses to make his installations. Early in his career, Oliveira experimented with the surfaces of his paintings by gluing newspaper onto the canvas and scraping it, or mixing sand with the paint. A breakthrough occurred while he was a student at the University of São Paulo, where for two years the view from his studio window was a wooden construction fence. Over time Oliveira came to see the deterioration of the wood and its separation into multiple layers and colors as similar to the process of painting. One week before his final student show opened, the construction was completed and the worn out plywood fence was discarded. Oliveira collected the wood and used it in his first installation. >

Oliveira's installations, which he refers to as "tridimensionals," have evolved into massive, spatial constructions that combine painting, architecture, and sculpture. For *Tapumes*, his new installation at Rice Gallery, Oliveira uses the gallery walls and flexible plywood as supports against which he arranges thousands of pieces of painted wood into a gestural abstract "painting" that spills off the wall into the viewer's space. When he saw Rice Gallery's large front glass wall, Oliveira knew he could create a situation where from afar the individual strips of colored wood would merge and resolve into a whole image. When viewed up close, the character of each strip can be seen, similar to the way the surface of an impressionist painting reveals itself to be made of thousands of brushstrokes.

To create *Tapumes* on site, Oliveira shipped wood he had collected in São Paulo. Over the course of his two-week residency in Houston, Oliveira used both the salvaged wood from Brazil and purchased pieces of flexible plywood to construct his installation. Working intuitively and borrowing from his experience as a painter, Oliveira laid the individual strips of salvaged wood on the gallery floor and painted each with a thin wash of acrylic paint to change the wood's color yet retain its natural texture. Then, Oliveira began, as he describes it, "the drawing stage" of the process. Using a rough sketch of the basic shapes he wished to create, Oliveira bent strips of the flexible plywood and attached them to the back wall of the gallery creating an elaborate armature of interwoven, curving lines that protruded from the wall. Next, he began the second and final stage of his process, what he calls the "painting" stage. He stapled the painted strips of salvaged wood to the underlying armature, reacting to each strip's unique color, texture, and flexibility to create the final forms.

*Tapumes* is a burst of subtle color and form. Oliveira is inspired by painters like American artist Willem de Kooning (1904-97) and British artist Frank Auerbach (b.1931), who use an impasto painting technique in which thick, gestural strokes of paint are layered and juxtaposed to create a dense, three-dimensional painting surface. Oliveira transforms and enlarges the texture and shape of a single brushstroke into large, gestural forms that take on an architectural quality which a viewer can peer into and almost enter. As Oliveira states, "It's an idea of a painting that is not just to see, but a painting to live. A painting that goes into the space."

Photos: *Tapumes* in progress; Nash Baker © nashbaker.com



#### ABOUT THE ARTIST

Henrique Oliveira was born in Ourinhos, Brazil in 1973. He received a BFA in painting in 2004 and a Masters in Visual Poetics in 2007 from the University of São Paulo, Brazil. Oliveira has exhibited in numerous solo and group exhibitions in Brazil and in 2008 participated in *Something from Nothing*, an invitational exhibition organized by the Contemporary Arts Center, New Orleans, Louisiana. *Tapumes* at Rice Gallery is Oliveira's first solo exhibition in the United States. He was awarded the 2009/10 Cni Sesi Marcantonio Vilaça Prize in Fine Arts, a prestigious award for young Brazilian artists. Oliveira lives and works in São Paulo.

For additional information, visit [www.henriqueoliveira.com](http://www.henriqueoliveira.com).

#### SUPPORT AND SPONSORSHIP

Gail and Louis Adler provided support for Henrique Oliveira's Houston residency.

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#### HOURS

Tuesday - Saturday, 11:00 - 5:00  
Thursday, 11:00 - 7:00  
Sunday, Noon - 5:00  
Closed Mondays, university holidays,  
and Easter weekend, April 11 and 12.

## Rice Gallery

[ricegallery.org](http://ricegallery.org) 713.348.6069