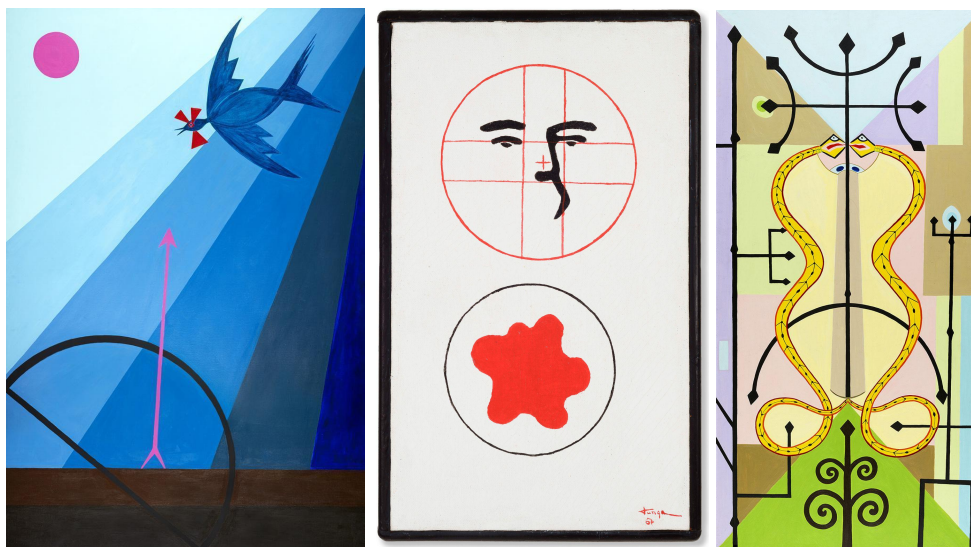


Press Release  
November/2021

### Inhotim to house the Museu de Arte Negra, envisioned by Abdias Nascimento

*Partnering with IPEAFRO, Inhotim will house another museum within its spaces, with exhibitions scheduled for the next two years. The first, scheduled to open in December, sparks a dialogue between the longtime friends Nascimento and Tunga.*



Abdias Nascimento, *Invocação noturna ao Poeta Gerardo Mello Mourão Oxóssi*, 1972 | Tunga, sem título, 1967, tinta plástica sobre tela. Work of art donated by the artist to the MAN collection when he was just 15 years old. Institute Inhotim Collection | Abdias Nascimento, *Exu Dambalah n.º 2*, 1973

Click [here](#) to access other artwork images from the exhibition

Poet, writer, playwright, curator, visual artist, university professor, pan-Africanist and parliamentarian, Abdias Nascimento (1914-2011), officially nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2010, had a long trajectory in activism and in the fight against racism. In 2021, the year that marks the tenth anniversary of the loss of this scholar, who was essential to Brazilian thought, Inhotim and IPEAFRO (Institute for Afro-Brazilian Research and Studies), an institution founded by Nascimento and which cares for his legacy, honor him with a long-term initiative, to be held from December 4, 2021 through December 2023.

In an unprecedented gesture, Inhotim hosts another museum within its space and, in partnership with IPEAFRO, brings to the public the Museu de Arte Negra (MAN) [Museum of Black Art], a project conceived by the Teatro Experimental do Negro [Black People's Experimental Theater], under the guidance of Abdias Nascimento, in the early 1950s. Devised to be a "future-oriented museum," the MAN emerged with the objective of "collecting and disseminating the work of black artists, without distinctions of gender, aesthetic school or trend, thus promoting the documentation of their creativity, stimulating their imagination and invention in the wide range of

visual expression,” as clearly explained by Abdias Nascimento in an interview with the now defunct newspaper *Correio da Manhã* (1968, IPEAFRO collection).

The initiative reflects Abdias Nascimento's desire to challenge current concepts about modern art, revealing its relationship with African aesthetics. In addition, it seeks to support and promote the output of black artists from the world over, and to confront racism in its aesthetic and institutional aspects.

The exhibition will be divided into four acts. Each of them will be on view for about five months, and will draw on questions placed in the collection of the Museu de Arte Negra. The first, on view starting December 4, brings the dialogue between the work of Nascimento, Tunga and the MAN collection in a space that refers to the origins of Inhotim: the Galeria Mata, located next to the Galeria True Rouge, one of the first in the institution, and which permanently exposes Tunga's installation of the same name.

### **Act One - “Tunga, Abdias Nascimento and the Museu de Arte Negra”**

In an interview with the newspaper *Correio da Manhã* in 1968, Tunga, then 15 years old, stated that black art greatly informed his work. "For me, black art was the first to break the shackles of the saturated Renaissance images," said the young man who, at the time, was already donating works to the collection of the Museu de Arte Negra.

Tunga, one of the most emblematic artists in Inhotim's collection, grew up as a friend of Nascimento's. He was the son of Gerardo Mello Mourão, a poet who, in the 1930s, was part of the *Santa Hermandad Orquídea* alongside Abdias Nascimento and other writers. The group was as a sort of poetic alliance that sought to build a truly American poetry, and was fertile ground for the long-lasting friendship between the families of Nascimento and Mourão. It was the latter, in fact, who nominated Abdias Nascimento for the first time for the Nobel Peace Prize, in 1978. Abdias would be nominated once again, in 2004, by Brazilian civil society and leaders. The official nomination came in 2009.

### ARTE NEGRA SERVE DE PESQUISA PARA OS MINI-PINTORES

Dois pintores-alfarjes — Dunga e Bida — manifestaram-se, ontem, favoráveis à criação do Museu de Arte Negra, afirmando que sonham com “um centro em que possamos, ao mesmo tempo, pintar e pesquisar, fazer e aprender”.

Dunga, pernambucano de 15 anos, diz que a arte negra exerceu grande influência sobre ele, mas lamenta as limitações de meios para pesquisar-la. “Para mim, a arte negra foi a primeira a romper os grilhões das subterfúgios imagens renascentistas.”

#### PELO MUSEU

Dividindo o tempo entre a escola, a pintura e o violão, Dunga e Bida, até os 14 anos, estão sempre juntos. O mais velho, que faz o segundo científico no Colégio Padre Antônio Vieira, diz que procura, através da pesquisa, uma característica original, mas não esconde sua admiração por Picasso, Portinari, Salvador Dali, Azevedo, Martins, Antônio Dias e Nelson Nóbrega.

Para ele, o pintor deve ser livre sob todos os pontos de vista. “Deve até viver de outra profissão para não se sentir condicionado por interesses comerciais. Da mesma forma, desde 1964 tenho verdadeira loucura pela pintura, espero formar-me em arquitetura, embora nunca ‘quero’ em momento algum, abandonar o pincel.”

Autor de alguns trabalhos já desenhados no livro do Museu de Arte Negra, Dunga vai conhecer agora no Salão Essê de Reportagem. Para ele, o melhor quadro do Museu de Arte Negra é um trabalho de Rubens Gherchan. O que ele já tem, acha que ainda não dá para uma exposição individual. Bida vai estudar cultura no México, da Arte Moderna para aperfeiçoar seus conhecimentos.



Photo: Tunga (in the background) and Abdias Nascimento's son, Bida, experimenting with art. In the image, it is also possible to identify Tunga's painting, kept for more than 50 years by Abdias Nascimento, and which was part of the MAN collection. Note: the article that accompanies the photo refers to Tunga as "Dunga". Correio da Manhã, 1968. IPEAFRO Collection

The curatorship, in a partnership between Inhotim and IPEAFRO, brought together for this first act paintings, drawings, photographs and installations that show the dialogue and artistic connection between Tunga and Abdias.

Among the works presented are Tunga's painting made in 1967, when he was 15, for the MAN collection, *Invocação Noturna ao Poeta Gerardo Mello Mourão: Oxóssi* [Nocturnal Invocation of Poet Gerardo Mello Mourão: Oxóssi], (1972), a work by Nascimento in honor of his friend Mourão and of the memory of the poets of the *Santa Hermandad Orquídea*; and the installation *Toro Condensed; Toro Expanded* (1983-2012), in which Tunga explores the idea of continuous movement and alludes to metaphors of development, such as the cycle of life, which is part of Afro-Brazilian mythology.

“Longtime friends, Tunga and Nascimento give way for the Museu de Arte Negra, and for the project's following acts. Cosmogonies, tradition and ancestry lead the way in this meeting of worlds,” says Douglas de Freitas, curator at Inhotim.

### Museu de Arte Negra (Museum of Black Art)

Since the 1940s, Abdias Nascimento and his companions have laid the foundations for the foundation of the Museu de Arte Negra (MAN) based on the Teatro Experimental do Negro (TEN). With the proposal of social valorization of black people and Afro-Brazilian culture through art and education, the TEN sought to outline a new aesthetical and dramaturgical style.

It was the TEN which, in 1950, in Rio de Janeiro, organized the 1st Congress of the Brazilian Negro, which discussed the “aesthetics of blackness” and ways of making visible and valuing the production of black artists and those who addressed the representation of black culture in their works. In this sense, the plenary of the

Congress approved a resolution on the need for a museum of black art. The TEN took over the project, and thus MAN was born.

“At that time, still under the influence of the first modernist wave, which reaffirmed the myth of the ‘benefits of miscegenation’ of the three races (white, indigenous, and black) for the structuring of Brazilian society, the representation of black people in traditional museums was relegated to the margins, and mainly mediated by the perspective of white people. Thus, it was necessary to break with this representational system and make the wealth of black culture visible to the world in the field of Art,” explains Deri Andrade, assistant curator at Inhotim and lead researcher at the Projeto Afro—an Afro-Brazilian platform built to map and promote black artists.

The collection of the Museu de Arte Negra gradually took shape, comprising paintings, drawings, engravings, photographs, sculptures, among others, in a variety of media and techniques. “From the curatorship of this collection and the contact with the artist Sebastião Januário in a small apartment in the Copacabana neighborhood, in Rio de Janeiro, Abdias Nascimento’s ‘pictorial adventure’ emerged (as he referred to his own artistic production),” says Julio Menezes Silva, coordinator of the Museu de Arte Negra’s virtual environment project at IPEAFRO.

In 1955, the MAN project promoted a visual arts competition and an exhibition on the subject of the Black Christ. The first exhibition of the Museu de Arte Negra was held on May 6, 1968, at the Museu da Imagem e do Som in Rio de Janeiro. For this, the organizers took advantage of the commemoration of the 80th anniversary of the abolition of slavery, which took place in 1888. However, they were fully aware that the structures that supported the slave regime of violation of human rights and human dignity remained in the form of racism. Without such reparations as access to employment, culture and education, the abolition resulted in the social, economic, political and cultural exclusion of the newly-liberated black population.

In order to contest these absences, the creation of the TEN and the MAN by Abdias Nascimento was a way of giving visibility to black culture and its importance for the national formation. After the opening of the exhibition, Abdias Nascimento won a cultural exchange scholarship to the United States. The civil-military dictatorship was at its harshest stage. With the promulgation of Institutional Act No. 5 (AI-5) in December 1968, Nascimento, target of several Police-Military Inquiries, was prevented from returning to his home country.

“This misfortune was an obstacle for Nascimento’s return to Brazil. It limited the activities of the Museu de Arte Negra, but not those of the artist, who continued to produce and collect works during his exile,” reflects Elisa Larkin Nascimento, widow of Abdias Nascimento and co-founder of IPEAFRO. “Thus, currently a profusion of national and international artists are part of the MAN-IPEAFRO collection, contributing to the enrichment of curatorial narratives on the black artistic production,” she concludes.

#### **General Information:**

**Museu de Arte Negra - Primeiro ato: Abdias Nascimento e Tunga**

Opening: Saturday, December 4, 2021

Location: Galeria Mata | Instituto Inhotim



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