

Inhotim opens *Third Act: Sortilege*, an exhibition on the work of Abdias Nascimento as a Brazilian visual artist abroad

Co-organized with IPEAFRO, the exhibition features more than 180 works, including documents, books, and artworks by Nascimento and other artists, including Mestre Didi, Rubem Valentim, Melvin Edwards, Regina Vater, Emanuel Araujo, Hélio Oiticica and Anna Bella Geiger



◀ Abdias Nascimento, *Exu Black Power n. 2 (Tribute to Rubens Gerchman)*. New York, USA, 1969. Credit: IPEAFRO/Black Art Museum



[image gallery for dissemination](#)

Brumadinho, Minas Gerais – Over the course of more than two years (2021-2024), in partnership with the Afro-Brazilian Studies and Research Institute (IPEAFRO), Inhotim is hosting a museum on its premises: the **Museu de Arte Negra (Black Art Museum)**, conceived by Abdias Nascimento (1914-2011) in the early 1950s and now under the care of IPEAFRO. On **Saturday, March 18, 2023**, as part of this event, the exhibition *Terceiro Ato: Sortilégio (Third Act: Sortilege)*, will be inaugurated at Galeria Mata. *Sortilégio (Mistério Negro) (/Sortilege (Black Mystery))* is the name of the first play written by Abdias, in 195 a drama significantly marked by the linguistic and symbolic structures of Afro-Diasporic traditions. *Third Act: Sortilege* addresses the artist's period of exile, between 1968 and 1981, and the dissemination of Brazilian Black art and his own artistic production internationally.

As a playwright and later as a painter, Abdias Nascimento played a political and social role by enabling a paradigm shift for the reconstruction of an African epistemology, using language and symbols from the different Afro-Diasporic traditions. With this in mind, *Third Act: Sortilege* is organized into five thematic nuclei (*Contemporary Ritual Symbols*; *New York: Beginning of Exile*; *University Professor*; *Afro-Brazilian Artists*; and *Orixás: Conception of Life and Philosophy of the Universe*) concentrated on Nascimento's prolific production as a painter, which took place mostly outside Brazil.

"Nascimento maintained his interest in African ancestral traditions as the foundation for his artistic production. Thus, this constant connection to the knowledge systems of Afro-Diasporic religions is at the heart of his thinking as an intellectual and artist", says Deri Andrade, assistant curator at Inhotim.

Some of the works exhibited in the show are by Brazilian artists who were active in the international art scene, mainly in New York, while Abdias Nascimento was there, reflecting their experiences in a foreign land. The thematic nuclei of the exhibition seek to reaffirm the idea of the Black Art Museum as a collective museum, formed by artists with whom Abdias interacted during his lifetime. The video room shows the documentary *Exu Rei - Abdias Nascimento (King Exu - Abdias Nascimento)* (2017), by Bárbara Vento, which highlights Abdias Nascimento's traits of great expressiveness and communication, as well as his dynamism and activism, while dialoguing with the archetype of Exu as a figure of transformation and its influence on Black culture and Brazilian art.

Consisting of artworks on loan – the great majority from IPEAFRO's Black Art Museum collection -, and recent incorporations to Inhotim's collection, *Third Act: Sortilege* brings to the public more than 180 works, including works by Abdias Nascimento and other artists such as Mestre Didi, Rubem Valentim, Melvin Edwards, Regina Vater, Manuel Messias, Emanuel Araujo, Hélio Oiticica, Anna Bella Geiger, Anna Maria Maiolino, Iara Rosa, Romare Bearden, LeRoy Clarke, as well as books and research documents consulted by Abdias on Candomblé and the Orixás.



◀ Abdias Nascimento during the the play *Sortilege (Black Mystery)*, 1957. Photograph by José Medeiros

The exhibition features a thematic nucleus dedicated to Exu, the Orixá (deity) present in many of Nascimento's works. Exu is the Orixá of communication, guardian of paths. "Abdias thinks of the Orixás, ritual symbols, and ancestral languages as points of departure for a Pan-African endeavor. In his work, he recaptures the meaning of Candomblé as a conception of life and philosophy of the universe", explains Inhotim curator Douglas de Freitas.

In May 1968, during the celebrations of the 80th anniversary of the abolition of slavery, Teatro Experimental do Negro (Black Experimental Theater) held the inaugural exhibition of the Black Art Museum collection at the Museu da Imagem e do Som (Museum of Image and Sound) in Rio de Janeiro. Throughout that year, Abdias Nascimento had significant exchanges with national and international artists, and the Black Art Museum project gained prominence in the media, especially in *Correio da Manhã*, a newspaper that was opposed to the military regime. At the end of the same year, Abdias Nascimento received a cultural exchange scholarship to the United States. With the promulgation of Institutional Act No. 5, on December 13, 1968, Congress was closed and the most severe phase of violent political repression by the military dictatorship in Brazil began. Nascimento's political activism had already made him a target of several Military police inquiries, with the intensification of repression placed him at risk of further persecution.

Facing the risk of persecution, torture and murder by the Brazilian government, the artist found himself unable to return to his home country. This fact limited the activities of the Black Art Museum on Brazilian soil, but not those of its curator, who continued to produce and collect works during his exile. During this period, Abdias intensified his activity as a painter, in cities like New York, Middletown, and Buffalo, dialoguing with the landscapes and artistic circles of these places – in his work, we see representations of these geographies and tributes to figures with whom he interacted, like Rubens Gerchman. He also consolidated the presence of African religiosity in his work.

“It is in exile that Abdias Nascimento becomes internationally recognized not only as an artist, but mainly as one of the Brazilian personalities best prepared to confront racism in its aesthetic and structural dimensions. His accumulated experience, which includes his participation in the Frente Negra Brasileira (Brazilian Black Front), in the 1930s, the Black Experimental Theater, the *Quilombo* newspaper and the creation of the Black Art Museum project, contributed to the consolidation of a life-experience that led him, toward the end of his life, in 2009, to be officially nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize for his body of work”, says Julio Ricardo Menezes Silva, researcher at IPEAFRO and coordinator of IPEAFRO's Museu de Arte Negra virtual (Virtual Black Art Museum).

Third Act: Sortilege (continues the critical reappraisal of Nascimento's multiple legacies that have been presented in the preceding exhibitions, *Primeiro Ato: Abdias Nascimento, Tunga e o Museu de Arte Negra* (*First Act: Abdias Nascimento, Tunga and the Black Art Museum*) and *Segundo Ato: Dramas para negros e prólogo para brancos* (*Second Act: Dramas for Blacks and Prologue for Whites*). Each exhibition examined a particular aspect of his life's work and multiple contributions as a poet, writer, playwright, curator, visual artist, university professor, pan-Africanist and congressman with a long track record in activism and the fight against racism.

About the Black Art Museum

Since the 1940s, Abdias Nascimento and his colleagues at Black Experimental Theater (TEN) had been working towards the social valorization of Black people and Afro-Brazilian culture through art and education. TEN sought to outline a new aesthetic and theatrical style, and thus laid the foundation for the creation of the Black Art Museum project. It was TEN that, in 1950, in Rio de Janeiro, organized the First Congress of Brazilian Blacks, where the “aesthetics of Blackness” was discussed, as well as ways of giving visibility and value to the production of Black artists and those who dealt with Black culture in their works. The Congress plenary approved a resolution on the need for a Black art museum. TEN took on the project, and that's how the Black Art Museum project was born.

The Black Art Museum collection comprised by paintings, drawings, engravings, photographs, sculptures, among others, in a plurality of media and techniques, started to take shape with donations by artists in dialogue with TEN activists and intellectuals. In 1955, TEN promoted a plastic arts contest and an exhibition on the theme of the Black Christ. The inaugural exhibition of the Black Art Museum collection opened on May 6, 1968, at the Museum of Image and Sound in Rio de Janeiro. Nascimento seized the opportunity presented by commemoration of the 80th anniversary of the abolition of slavery, which occurred in Brazil in 1888, to make the exhibit happen. However, he and his team were fully aware that the underpinnings of the colonial slave-owning structures were perpetuated in the contemporary world through structural racism, veiled by the notion of racial democracy. Without reparatory measures such as access to employment, culture and education, abolition had resulted in the social, economic, political and cultural exclusion of the newly freed Black population.

Third Act: Sortilege is sponsored by Itaú Unibanco and Petrobras through the Federal Law of Incentive to Culture - Ministry of Culture and Federal Government, Union and Reconstruction. Through Petrobras, the project was contemplated in the Petrobras Cultural Multiples Expressions 2022 Call.

EXHIBITION

Third Act: Sortilege

Abdias Nascimento and the Black Art Museum

Opening: Saturday, March 18, 2023 at 9:30 a.m.

Dates: March 18 - August 6, 2023

Location: Galeria Mata, Instituto Inhotim

VISIT US

Visiting Hours: Wednesday to Friday, from 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.; Saturdays, Sundays and holidays, from 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Admission: R\$ 50.00 whole (half off for students with ID, seniors over 60 years old and their partners). Children up to 5 years old do not pay admission.

Location: Inhotim is located in the town of Brumadinho, 60 km from the city of Belo Horizonte, capital city of the state of Minas Gerais (a trip of approximately 1 hour and 15 minutes). Access through federal highway BR-381 at km 500 – direction Belo Horizonte/São Paulo. It is also possible to get to Inhotim through federal highway BR-040 (a trip of approximately 1 hour and 30 minutes from Belo Horizonte). Access through BR-040 - direction Belo Horizonte/Rio de Janeiro, at the Retiro do Chalé exit.

Transportation options:

Shuttle – Belvitur, Inhotim's official tourism and events agency, offers transportation on Saturdays, Sundays and holidays, departing from the Holiday Inn Belo Horizonte Savassi hotel (Rua Professor Moraes, 600, Funcionários, Belo Horizonte). You must be there 15 minutes before boarding time and voucher verification. See more information about the shuttle by [clicking here](#). Saritur Bus – departs from Belo Horizonte Bus Station from Tuesday to Sunday, at 8: 15 a.m. and returns at 4: 30 p.m. during the week; 5: 30 pm on weekends and holidays. R\$ 51.75 (one way), R\$ 46.05 (return), R\$ 97.80 (round trip).

Inhotim Design Store

The Inhotim store, located at the entrance of the Institute, offers decoration items, utilitarian objects, books, toys, ceramic pieces, vases, plants and typical regional food products, in addition to the institutional line of the Park. Products are also available for purchase on the [online store](#).

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