



nara roesler

àkùkò, eiyéle and
ekodidé a flock by
alberto pitta

curated by galciani neves

opening

september 2, 2025

exhibition

sep – dec, 2025

àkùkò, eiyéle e ekodidé a flock by alberto pitta galciani neves

It is because of the matter that makes life happen that we “will be able to,” “will burn,” and “will shine.” In spite of everything, “the force is brute,” and “affection is fire,” sings Gilberto Gil. To close the *Ré* trilogy, composed of the albums *Refazenda* (1975), *Refavela* (1975), and *Realce* (1979), Gil wanted, with the homonymous song, to celebrate both the effervescence of crowds and the boiling of subjectivities during moments of gathering, as well as to highlight the beauty that human beings can experience when the rights to dignity and to a “minimum wage of brilliance” are guaranteed. According to him, the prefix “Re” would fulfill the poetic and political task of restoring what informs us as people, of reconstituting the essences of life, of stepping back and revisiting the origins so that we may see ourselves with greater clarity in the present.

The flight of works by Alberto Pitta is inspired by, and at the same time emerges from, a place characterized, as Gil narrates in *Realce*, by a sense of collectivity, where people coexist and reaffirm themselves in their diversities, where they strengthen connections with one another and with the good things in life. It is important to note: in the contemporary context, much can be understood about an artist’s work by looking into their studio – the way they organize their materials, how the architecture is shaped to meet the needs of their languages, how the artist arranges their archives and references,

how the flow of participatory agents unfolds in their projects, how they choose devices to structure their processes, how the workspace interacts with the city and its immediate surroundings, and with which social, political, and cultural manifestations it relates.

Pitta’s work is created in a place where people nurture the vibrancy that constitutes life in community, where the maintenance of daily life is guided by dignity and freedom. Living this way makes the art produced there take on new contours: the plastic matter is infused with the vivacity of encounters and remains porous to the energy of the place. Pitta’s studio is a workplace immersed in an environment of resistance and joy, where art, education, spirituality, music, and culture converge as instruments and shared experiences, in a movement of exchange and blending: each activity carries the other, is moved by the specificities of the other, and thus all merge together. A possible analogy would be bell hooks’ description of a “democratic classroom”: a space that offers “support for life and expansion of the mind,” with practices that prioritize spirituality, love in education, and the confrontation of racism, whose intention is to make individuals more attentive in order to make choices critically and consciously.

Located in the neighborhood of Pirajá, in Salvador, Pitta’s studio shares the same space as the Instituto Oyá, founded by Mãe Santinha

de Oyá in 1990. The Terreiro Ilé Axé Oyá had already existed there for several years. The institute was born with an educational vocation, offering art-education programming and tutoring classes for neighborhood children. Pitta had already been working with visual creations printed on costumes for Carnival blocos since the late 1970s; in the 1980s, he began producing prints for Olodum. In 1998, when he created Cortejo Afro, the Institute gained even greater strength by diversifying its activities: sewing and tailoring courses, printmaking workshops, music and capoeira classes.

Pitta’s studio sprouted from the core of these activities and grew because everything happened together, animated by the energy of the people who attended and lived within this ecosystem. Today, Pitta’s studio holds an archive of Carnival costumes created by the artist for Cortejo Afro and other *blocos*. A library and works by other artists inhabit the Sala Regina Casé, alongside a collection of fabrics printed by him as well as many originating from African countries. In the midst of all this, Pitta develops projects, sketches, paints, and screen-prints. These are works made by many hands, with apprentices and artists deeply aligned in a collective practice. The children are in charge of the soundtrack: lively shouts, songs, the sounds of dancing and running feet, and playful noise fill the artist’s workplace. Surrounding it all, three *Casas de*

Santo (Oyá, Obaluaê, Oxalá) enchant the place. It is impossible not to feel joy while being there!

By articulating his production as inseparable from this multiplicity of activities, languages, and vital instances, by living alongside the people who attend and benefit from the institute's programs or who participate in his projects, and by acting with rigor and a deeply sensitive listening to processes of poetic experimentation, Pitta conceives of art, from its very root, as a kind of pedagogy of joy. The artist makes art because festivity pulses through his veins (or could it be the other way around?). This awareness must come from afar. As argued by Brazilian activist, professor, philosopher, and anthropologist Lélia Gonzalez, cultural manifestations and popular festivities such as Carnival are spheres in which Black communities recreate their cultural practices, which for so long were prohibited and oppressed in many social spaces. In doing so, they magnetize places of resistance, memory, and joy, forging identities and experiencing celebrations as an exercise that exalts the body in collectivity.

To think with art, a singular entry for Alberto Pitta, would then mean producing from ethically strong relationships with the many questions and agents that cross him as an artist and as a human being; blending the autonomies of raw materials and moving forward with them in motion, absorbing and respecting their contexts of origin; creating narratives that re-fable those who embody ancestry and teach us about the continuity of life. Reiterating: his practice of thought and production stands out as a practice of creating with art. And this becomes evident in his studio and in the vigorous presence of his works.

Pitta creates because he is of axé, because the studio is always full of people, because children are always reminding us that life goes on. Pitta creates with divine fabulations, with the pulse of Instituto Oyá, with Carnival, with musicalities, with Afro-diasporic manifestations. His work permeates all these instances and simultaneously engages in the production of these happenings.

Thus, if the studio is a locus of many events, we can also think of Pitta's work as a territory where many visualities coexist. The artist, who creates installations and canvases through screen printing, painting, and drawing within the context of contemporary art, has taken part in important exhibitions in Brazil and abroad. Installations with fabrics and symbolic objects, chromatic compositions, textures, and overlapping drawings form a richly plural myriad. Colors invade the fabric and populate the compositions in different ways. And the spiritual formulations are visual translations that present the divinities, the *orixás* and their teachings. A compendium of symbols reinterpreted by the artist foregrounds the beauty of forms. The primordial stories told on the canvases identify figures who, in mythical times, took part in the events and who now appear as keys for an oracular deciphering of life. His production involves a way of seeing as an artist that rhymes with learning about life.

Many images begin as pencil sketches on paper. From there, they migrate to the canvas, almost always on a large scale. The process unfolds gradually: each added layer, each color reconfigures the pictorial space, enriching it with visual information. Pitta creates scenes through textures. These are not merely backgrounds,

but images that contextualize and receive the subjects and characters portrayed. When viewed from afar, the canvases seem to merge the characters and the backgrounds into a single landscape. Up close, their many small textures and patterns come to the fore. The superimposition of textures, the "neighboring" of forms, and the coexistence of colors constitute a highly complex totality, suggestive of distinct perceptions of the image. One can perceive the delicacy with which everything was conceived: a cowrie shell, a small filled circle, triangles in inverted orientations.

Pitta works in the details. Through repetition, patterning, and rhythm, the artist replaces the hierarchy among elements, so common in painting, with fluidity. The eye wanders and finds itself in a small frenzy of images. The postures of the characters also draw attention – beings, divinities, birds, animals, and plants. They are built in plenitude. At times anchored by sturdier blocks of color, at others by more subtle textures. Their bodily performativity is so forceful that we can imagine the functioning of the world through what they gaze at – beyond the canvas, toward us who face them.

Another aspect to highlight: Pitta's lines have a moving nature, they dance and promote dynamism. They resemble the modes of *richelieu* embroidery on fabric. An inside and outside, a through, a vibrant space that happens because of the line and with the line. Richelieu is deeply present in the artist's imagination. His mother practiced the craft, and Pitta grew up surrounded by clothes embroidered with *richelieu*.

For his solo exhibition at Nara Roesler São Paulo in September 2025, the artist revisited the archives of his most hidden drawings, some dating back more than thirty years. These are works that once integrated studies for books, inhabited graphic patterns, were made in fleeting moments of dispersion, printed on fabrics, and many others that had never been shown. They all rested in his drawers. Among these reserves, many birds emerged. Flying, landing, colorful, ancestral, with synthetic forms, with more elaborate lines, in vectorized drawings, in contemplative poses, alongside landscapes, staging events... They became a vivid and powerful subject in Pitta's canvases.

Birds are messenger beings; they traverse between humans and divinities, as they access the spiritual realm, and thus bring us good news and carry our messages. Also, due to their unrivaled prestige, in the broad Yoruba culture birds present themselves as divine beings, revered for their unique characteristics and abilities. Birds are guardians of communities, they evoke positive energy, and they guide people in adverse situations. This gathering of works thus reinvigorates the meaning of *revoada*: to fly in a flock, like birds of the same species; to choreograph a collectivity in the sky; to migrate together; to move toward a certain destiny.

Three birds take center stage in Pitta's canvases: *Àkùko*, *Eiyéle*, and *Ekodidé*. In the exhibition, they unfold through a chromatic organization of Nara Roesler's gallery space. They inhabit the first series of works, where compositions in black, white, red, and yellow predominate, as if welcoming the audience; then

they burst into vibrant colors and multicolored compositions, to enchant; and finally, they appear in the calmness of white canvases, where distinct shades of white compose the work. Accompanying the birds, the last room of the exhibition was staged with white *banderoles*. Important elements in Casas de santo, they represent the *Alá*, the white cloth of Oxalá. In the show, they appear as symbols of purity, lightness, and protection, serving as a "ceiling" for the works that surround us there. In these works, Pitta reinterprets the Yoruba worldview, and with *Àkùko*, *Eiyéle*, and *Ekodidé*, he weaves associations with the ancestors – important spiritual beings who once lived in the physical world but continue their journeys, impacting and guiding the lives of their descendants.

These birds carry significant symbolic meanings for spiritual rites and are fundamental to Yoruba culture. This is the case, for example, of the birds depicted from behind in some works. According to Pitta, all those in this posture refer to *Sankofa* – a look to the past to envision the future. *Àkùko* is another important bird in the context of the exhibition. It is often associated with a rooster – the messenger of time, announcing the day, explaining ancestry, and affirming the continuity of life. *Eiyéle* is the white dove, bringing peace, harmony, and blessedness. Due to its elegance and plumage, *Eiyéle* also symbolizes honor and prosperity. *Ekodidé* is the only red feather of a bird, or the parrot, a symbol of protection, vitality, and royalty. Its feather is a natural element and an essential presence in initiation rituals, used to ward off negative energies and consecrate objects.

Presenting these beings in the realm of art is to believe that their *flock* can be a breath of transformation, reanimating the air, reorganizing thoughts, renewing hopes, and remaking connections. Pitta's artistic and insurgent gesture – as the Brazilian poet, researcher, and playwright Leda Maria Martins tells us – is one of the most disruptive, as it challenges aesthetic images that are inscribed as unique and absolute. Therefore, it is a gesture that, by remaking narratives and presenting new ways of seeing the world, mobilizes us to live with hope ("o fermento da revolução" ["the yeast of the revolution"]), that which brings forth the new, according to the South Korean philosopher and professor Byung-Chul Han) and encourages us to claim spaces where we can celebrate, rejoice, and delight.



Alberto Pitta in his studio, 2025
Photo: Paula Plee



Alberto Pitta studio, 2025
Photo: Paula Plee

Great Humbi (Humbiumbi series), 2023
painting and
silkscreen on canvas
245 x 158 cm
96.5 x 62.2 in





Humbi seed (Humbiumbi series), 2023
painting and
silkscreen on canvas
128 x 168 cm
50.4 x 66.1 in







àkùkò, eiyéle e ekodidé

uma revoadá de alberto pitta



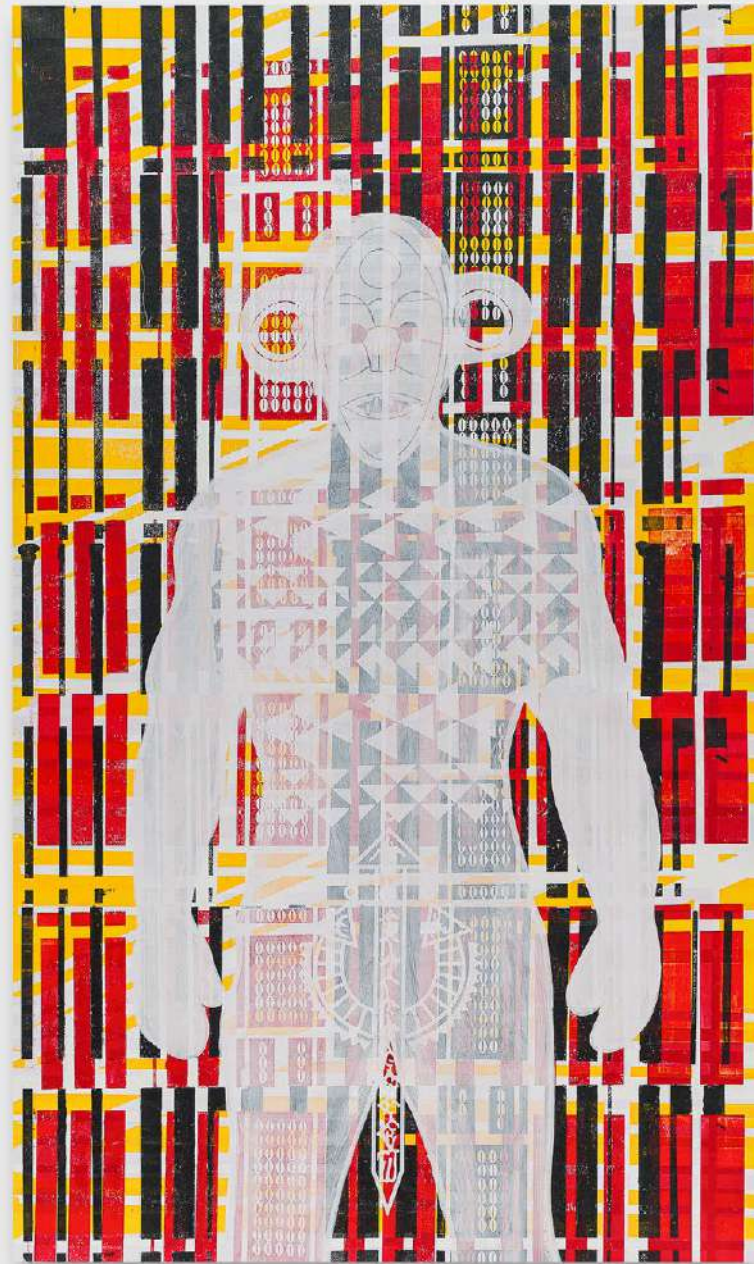
exhibition view *Àkùkò, Eiyéle e Ekodidé*,
A Flock by Alberto Pitta,
Nara Roesler São Paulo, 2025

Encruzilhadas, 2023
painting and
silkscreen on canvas
250 x 158 cm
92.3 x 55.9 x 1.4 in





Exu Funfun, 2023
painting and
silkscreen on canvas
250 x 158 cm
93.1 x 56.5 x 1.4 in







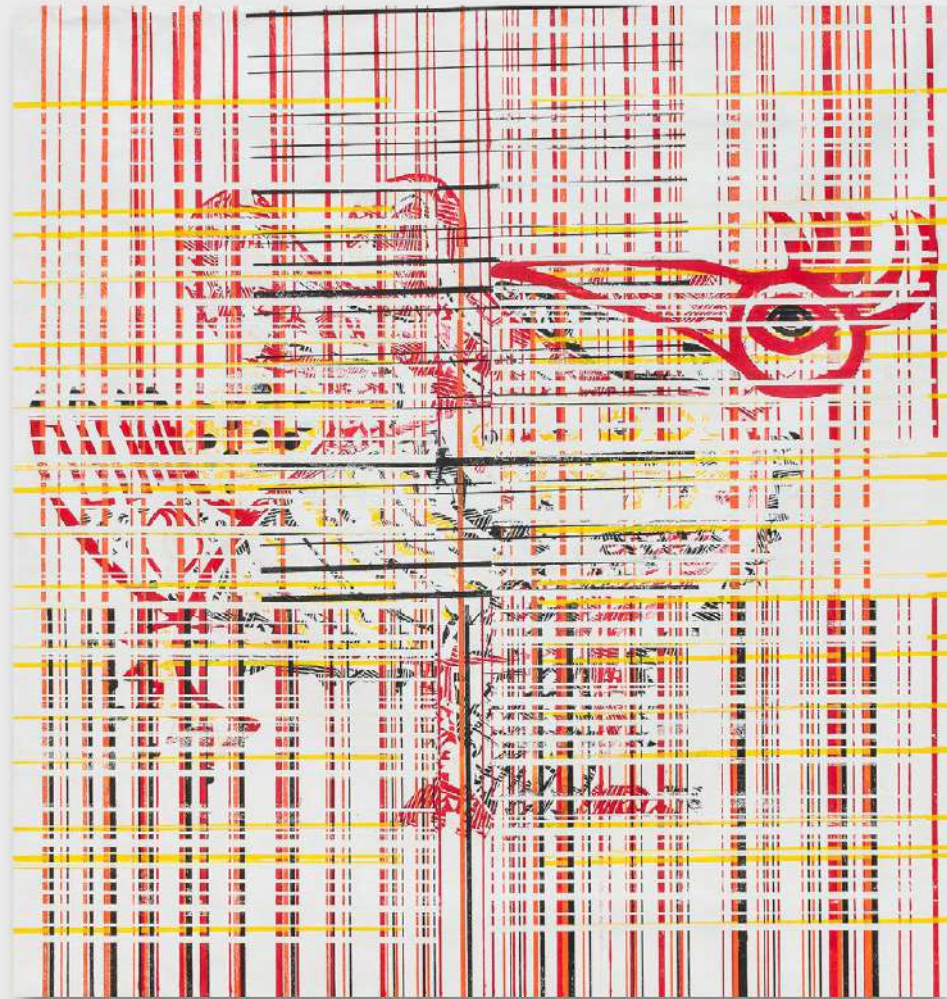
exhibition view *Àkùko, Eiyéle e Ekodidé*
A Flock by Alberto Pitta,
Nara Roesler São Paulo, 2025

Past Present and Future 2, 2024
painting and
silkscreen on canvas
155 x 136 cm
61 x 53.5 in

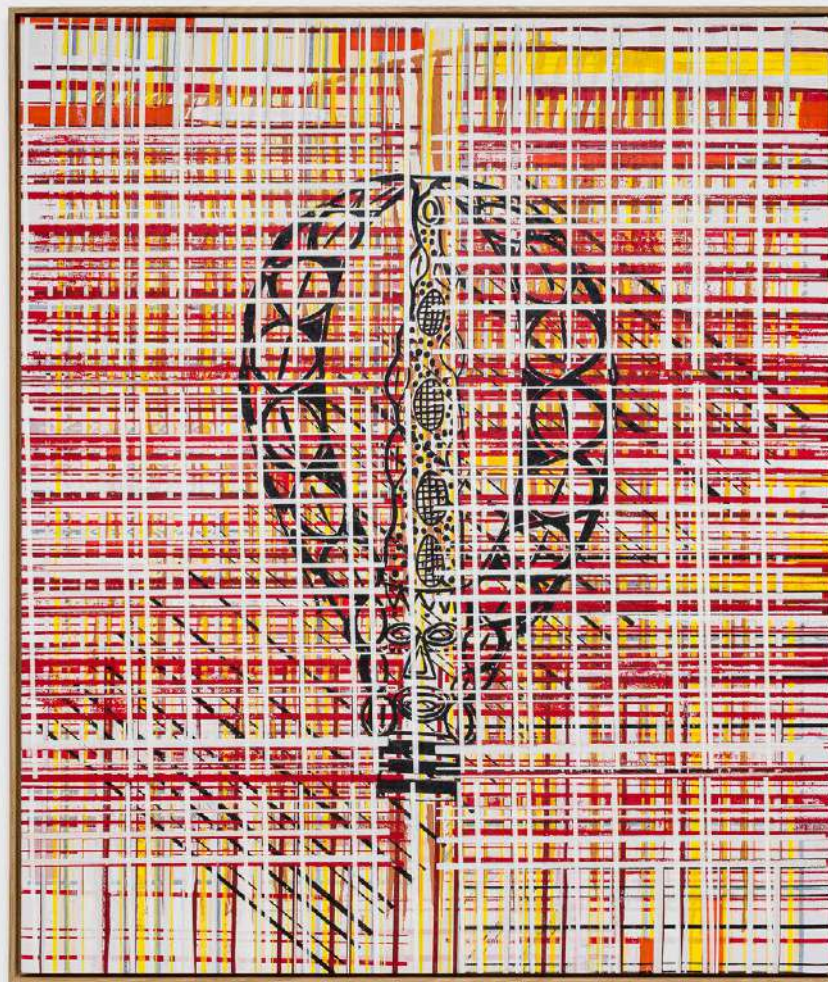




Sankofa, 2024
painting and
silkscreen on canvas
173 x 167 cm
64.4 x 61.4 in







The griot, 2024
painting and
silkscreen on canvas
190 x 158 cm
74.8 x 62.2 in

The rooster, 2025
painting and
silkscreen on canvas
233 x 147 x 3,5 cm
91.7 x 57.9 x 1.4 in





The bird and the tree, 2025
painting and
silkscreen on canvas
170 x 143,5 cm
66.9 x 56.5 in



Flock, 2025
painting and
silkscreen on canvas
179 x 141 cm
70.5 x 55.5 in





Casal de pavões, 2025
painting and
silkscreen on canvas
147 x 155 cm
57.9 x 61 in

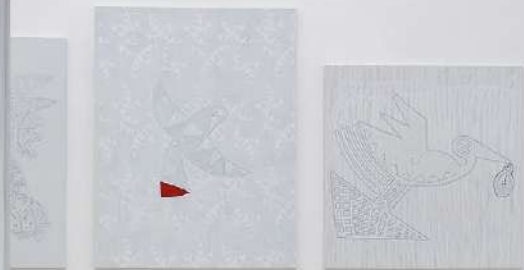


The rescue of the lost bird, 2025
painting and silkscreen on canvas
140 x 285 x 3,5 cm
55.1 x 112.2 x 1.4 in









exhibition view *Àkùko, Eiyéle e Ekodidé*
A Flock by Alberto Pitta,
Nara Roesler São Paulo, 2025

The rescue of the lost bird II, 2025
painting and silkscreen on canvas
140 x 282 x 3,5 cm
55.1 x 111 x 1.4 in







exhibition view *One Becomes Many*,
Pérez Art Museum Miami (PAMM), Miami, USA

O grande pássaro, 2025
painting and silkscreen on canvas
164 x 138 x 3,5 cm
64.6 x 54.3 x 1.4 in





Ekodidé, 2005
painting and
silkscreen on canvas
187 x 143 x 3,5 cm
73.6 x 56.3 x 1.4 in

Passarinho, 2025
painting and
silkscreen on canvas
185 x 141,5 x 3,5 cm
72.8 x 55.7 x 1.4 in







exhibition view *Àkùko, Eiyéle e Ekodidé*
A Flock by Alberto Pitta,
Nara Roesler São Paulo, 2025



*O pássaro que carrega
o sino de oxalá*, 2025
painting and
silkscreen on canvas
148 x 143 x 3,5 cm
58.3 x 56.3 x 1.4 in



Passado Presente Futuro, 2025
painting and
silkscreen on canvas
139,5 x 136,5 x 3,5 cm
54.9 x 53.7 x 1.4 in



Ode to the Waters, 2025
painting and
silkscreen on canvas
143,5 x 134 x 3,5 cm
56.5 x 52.8 x 1.4 in







exhibition view *Àkùko, Eiyéle e Ekodidé*
A Flock by Alberto Pitta,
Nara Roesler São Paulo, 2025

Casa de Oxalá II
(Cumeeirás series) , 2025
painting and
silkscreen on canvas
182 x 163 x 3,5 cm
71.7 x 64.2 x 1.4 in





Xangô e Yewá, 2025
painting and
silkscreen on canvas
233 x 147 x 3,5 cm
91.7 x 57.9 x 1.4 in





Cafezinho é Festa de Largo, 2025
wood, screen printing
ink and coffee bottles
90,5 x 123 x 51 cm
35.6 x 48.4 x 20.1 in



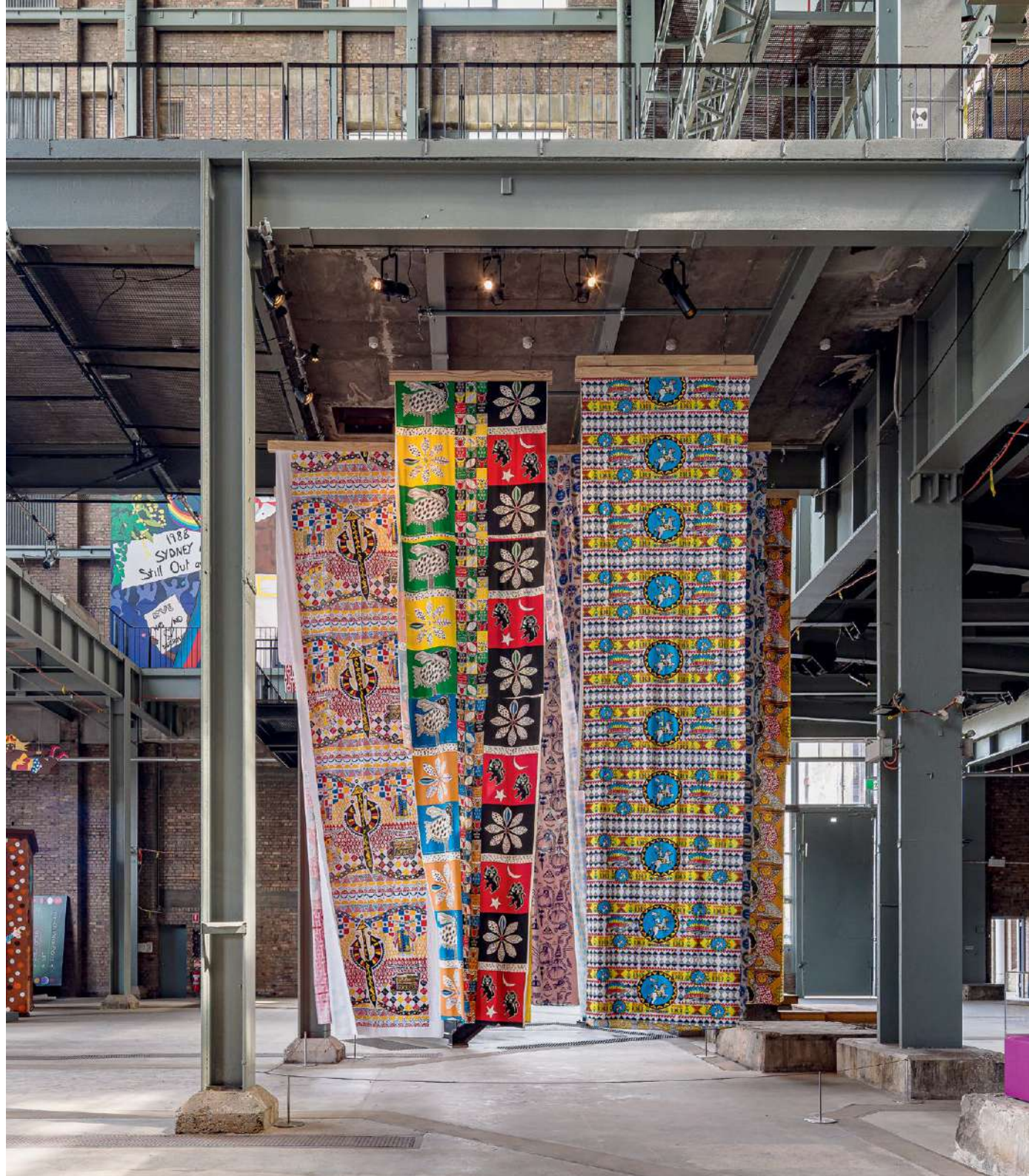


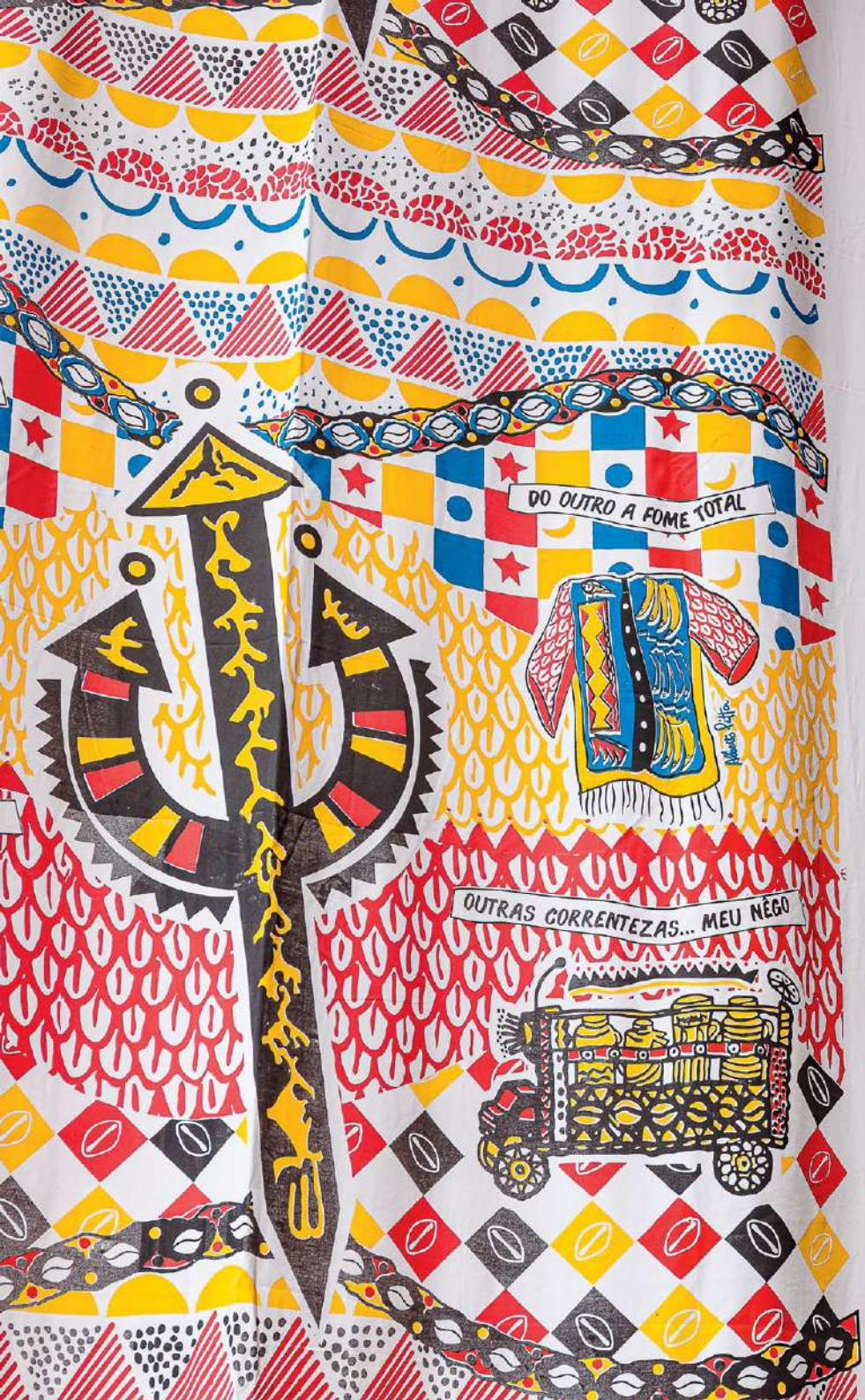
One of the coffee carts
presented in the exhibition
A quietude da Terra, 2000.
It already contained elements
recurring in the artist's work.



View of the fabric installation
of Alberto Pitta on the 24th
Biennale of Sydney, 2024

→
Detail of the fabrics that reiterate the themes worked on by
the artist throughout his career, such as the print with the
theme “Alegria e resistência” (2024), created especially for the
Biennale of Sydney, which features a coffee cart, and the 1996
print created for the Muzenza block, which features the same
bird that is the theme of Galciani Neves’ text.





alberto pitta

b. 1961, Salvador, Brazil

lives and works in Salvador, Brazil

The artist Alberto Pitta has textile printing and serigraphy as a central element of his work, although he has also dedicated himself to painting and sculpture in recent years. With a career spanning more than four decades, Pitta's production is closely linked to popular festivities and in dialogue with other languages, such as clothing, his work has a strong public dimension, having created prints for Afro Carnival blocks such as Olodum, Filhos de Gandhi and his own, Cortejo Afro.

His print production began in the 1980s. They feature signs, shapes, and strokes that evoke traditional African and Afro-diasporic elements, especially those from Yoruba mythology, which is very present in Salvador and the Bahian recôncavo. In the words of curator Renato Menezes: "In fact, signs, shapes, and lines that evoke traditional African graphics have found, on their fabrics, a privileged place for educating the masses and telling stories that only make sense collectively. If the writing in Pitta's work is organized in the set of patterns and colors that reinterpret the Yoruba worldview, the reading, on the other hand, concerns the relationship established in the contact between bodies in movement, when the city streets become a terreiro¹. Through the folds of the fabrics that cover the revelers runs an alphabet of letters and affections, mobilized by music and dance: it is in the body of the other that the text that completes us is read."

selected solo exhibitions

- *Outros Carnavais*, Nara Roesler, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (2024)
- *Mariwó*, Paulo Darzé Galeria, Salvador, Brazil (2023)
- *Eternidade Soterrada*, Carmo & Johnson Projects, São Paulo, Brazil (2022)
- *Homens de Ferro*, Galeria Solar do Ferrão, Salvador, Brazil (2013)

selected group exhibitions

- *Joie Collective – Apprendre a flamboyer*, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, France (2025)
- *Artistas do Vestir: Uma Costura dos Afetos*, Itaú Cultural, São Paulo, Brazil (2024)
- *Stirring the Pot*, Casa da Cultura da Comporta, Comporta, Portugal (2024)
- 24th Sydney Biennale, Sydney, Australia (2024)
- *O Quilombismo*, Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin, Germany (2023)
- *Political Philosophies*, Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin, Alemanha (2023)
- *Encruzilhada*, Museu de Arte Moderna de Salvador, Salvador, Brazil (2022)

selected collections

- Perez Art Museum Miami (PAMM), Miami, USA
- Instituto Inhotim, Brumadinho, Brazil
- Museu de Arte Moderna de Salvador, Salvador, Brazil
- Museu de Arte do Rio, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

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