

alberto pitta

nara roesler



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## 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 terreiro<sup>1</sup>. 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."

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### selected individual 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 coletive exhibitions

- *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)
- *Um Defeito de Cor*, Museu de Arte do Rio, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (2022)

### selected collections

- 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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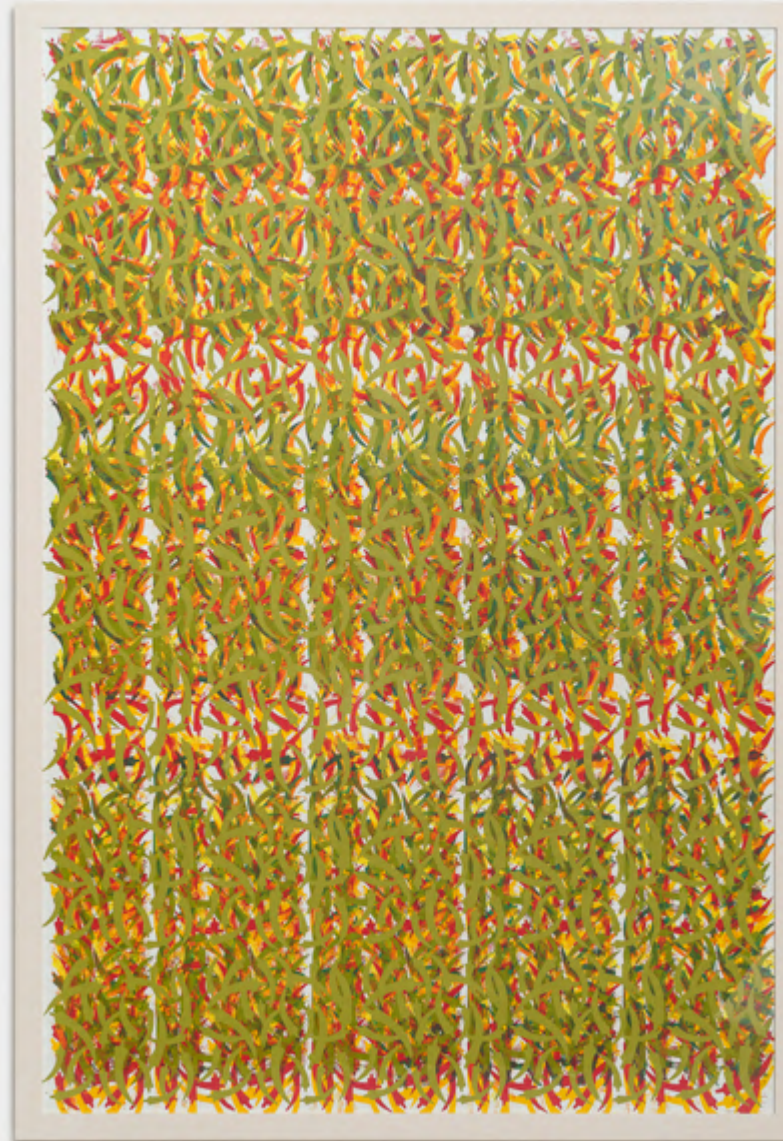
## blocos de índios

The key to understanding Alberto Pitta's poetics lies in his relationship with Salvador's carnival. The 1960s were a particularly significant period for the festival, as this was when the so-called *Blocos de Índios* emerged. In these groups, members paraded in costumes and with props that referenced indigenous cultures, and their drum sections were composed of former members of Bahia's samba schools.

Each *bloco* was associated with a specific locality or neighborhood in the city and brought with it two major influences: first, the representation of indigenous peoples from popular North American Western films, such as the *Apaches and Comanches*, which were highly popular in Salvador's cinemas. The second influence came from Rio de Janeiro's *bloco Cacique de Ramos*. "Carnival in Bahia was heavily influenced by Hollywood cinema, particularly Western films that featured various indigenous peoples like the Sioux, Apaches, and Cheyennes. Ironically, the cinemas screening these films were often named after native Brazilian peoples, such as *Cine Tupy* and *Cine Guarani*," explains Alberto Pitta. The costumes were largely inspired by the indigenous characters in these films, and the richness of detail in their design became a key inspiration for the artist's poetics.

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*Amalá*, 2021  
printing on paper  
211 x 153 cm  
83.1 x 60.2 in



Trança'tlântico, 2024  
exhibition view  
MAM bahia



Trança'tlântico  
"Num trem  
prás estrelas  
depois dos  
navios  
negreiros  
outras  
correnteças  
meu nego"



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## ancestral codes

Alberto Pitta's artistic journey began in the 1970s when he started creating prints for smaller carnival groups in his São Caetano neighborhood, such as Obá Laye and Zâmbia Pombo. His interest in fabrics and prints was inherited from his mother, Ialorixá Mãe Santinha, an educator and embroiderer who specialized in the Richelieu stitch. Through her, Pitta learned that clothing and fabric were not merely utilitarian or decorative, but could also serve as vehicles for transmitting knowledge and as tools for fostering a sense of belonging.

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←  
exhibition view *Outros carnavais*,  
2024, Nara Roesler Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

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*Olodum: Filhos do Mar*, 1996  
collage, printing, ink  
and felt tip pen on paper  
145,5 x 99 cm  
39 x 57.3 in





*Fabulação*, 2020  
collage, printing, ink and  
felt tip pen on paper  
70 x 149,5 cm  
27.6 x 58.9 in





Alberto Pitta at the Sydney Biennale, 2024

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In Salvador and the Recôncavo region of Bahia, there is a strong presence of Yoruba culture, brought to the area in the 18th century by enslaved people from West Africa, specifically from present-day Nigeria and Benin. As this is an oral culture, the transmission of knowledge relies heavily on orality, emphasizing the profound influence of ancestors, who continue to exert power over the world of the living even after death. Yoruba culture, from which Candomblé emerges, is rich with signs and symbols, and it is precisely these visual elements that Alberto Pitta incorporates into his prints.

In this way, his prints become a means of visual communication and literacy, offering insight into an entire worldview. Since his poetics originally focused on carnival parades and performances, it naturally takes on a public and community-oriented dimension. As the artist Vik Muniz notes, "Iconography in his work is very important, and you learn it as you go. It's a booklet of meanings, many of them subtle, because Candomblé doesn't like to speak much, and Pitta releases things homeopathically."



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*Ave com Búzios*, 1987  
felt tip pen and  
collage on paper  
119,8 x 152,5 cm  
12.4 x 17.3 in

## carnival blocos and parades

Throughout his career, Alberto Pitta was well-known for his collaborations with various *blocos* in Bahia's capital. He began by creating prints for smaller *blocos*, particularly those in his São Caetano neighborhood, such as Zâmbia Pombo and Obá Laye. However, he later took on significant roles with major groups like Ara Ketu, Ilê Ayê, and Olodum, where he served as artistic director. Since 1998, he has had his own *bloco*, Cortejo Afro, for which he handles all aspects of visual production.

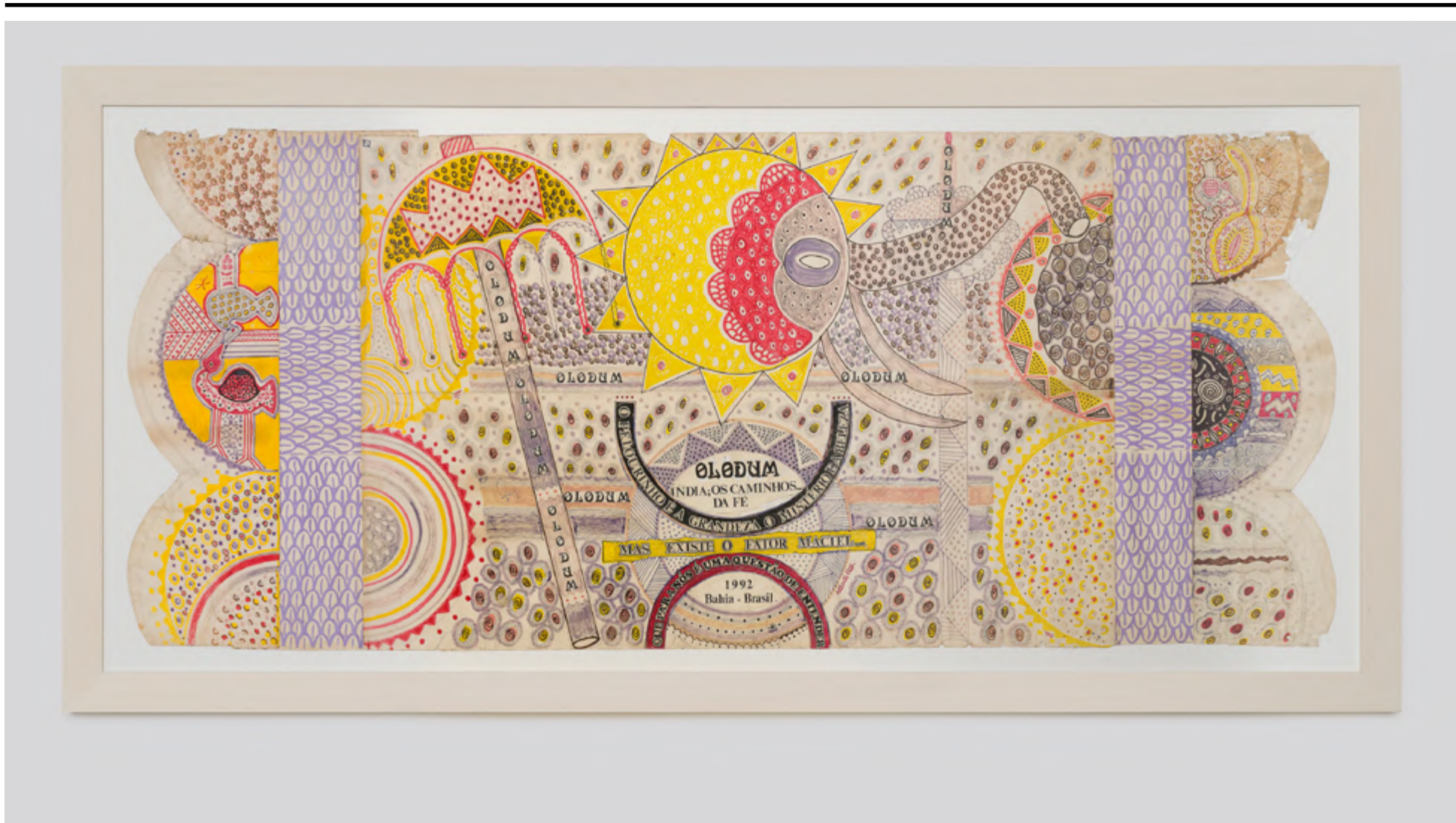


*Cortejo Afro: 50 anos de blocos Afros II, 2024*  
collage, printing, ink  
and felt tip pen on paper  
119,8 x 152,5 cm  
47.2 x 60 in



NÓS NÃO SOMOS  
HOSPEDEIROS DO  
OPRESSOR

CORTEJO AFRO  
A ANTÍTESE  
CARNAVALESCA  
DOS NAVIOS  
NEGREIROS



*Olodum: Índia*  
*Caminhos da Fé, 1992*  
collage, printing, ink and  
felt tip pen on paper  
66 x 152,5 cm  
26 x 60 in



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Alberto Pitta at the  
Sydney Biennale, 2024



*Olodum: Tropicalismo,  
o movimento, 1994*  
printing on fabric  
66 x 152,5 cm  
148.8 x 55.9 in



1966 - movimento O  
COCOA

LODUM  
opicalismo. O movimento - 1994

...VIVEMOS NA MELHOR CIDADE DA AMÉRICA DO SUL...







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Olodum: Tropicalismo,  
o movimento, 1994

→  
exhibition view  
*Outros carnavais*,  
2024, Nara Roesler  
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.





Experimento Sítio

Experimento Sítio

Raiz Afro Mãe

Para se lembrar do  
**PADAUE**  
30 milhas  
da Arte Negra  
Pela Arte

Capoeira



*Procissão*, 2021  
felt tip pen and gouache  
paint on paper  
40,5 x 29,7 cm  
15.9 x 11.7 in



*Expresso 2222*, 2021  
felt tip pen and gouache  
paint on paper  
40,5 x 29,7 cm  
15.9 x 11.7 in

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## other languages and recent work

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the artist saw public spaces—where his work is primarily showcased—severely restricted. As a result, he began to explore different mediums, creating works on canvas and expanding his use of screen printing.

One of his significant recent works is the *Trançatlântico* installation, a boat entirely covered in Afro braids made by 21 braiders from the Historic Center of Bahia's capital. According to the artist, these hairstyles were used as a means of escape during the period of slavery.

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*Logunedé*, 2021  
felt tip pen, print and  
gouache paint on paper  
40,5 x 29,7 cm  
15.9 x 11.7 in

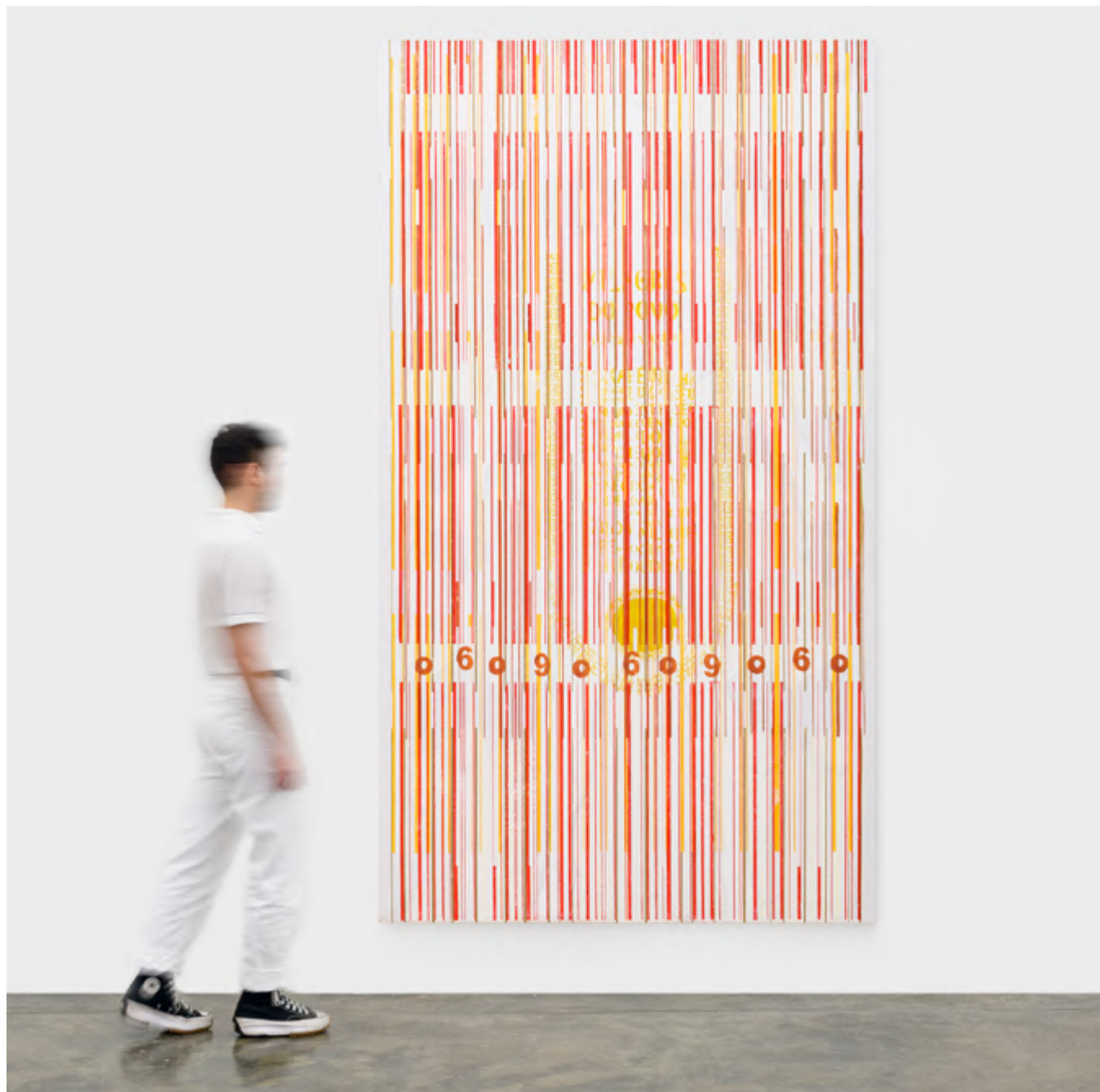
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exhibition view  
*Outros carnavais*,  
2024, Nara Roesler  
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

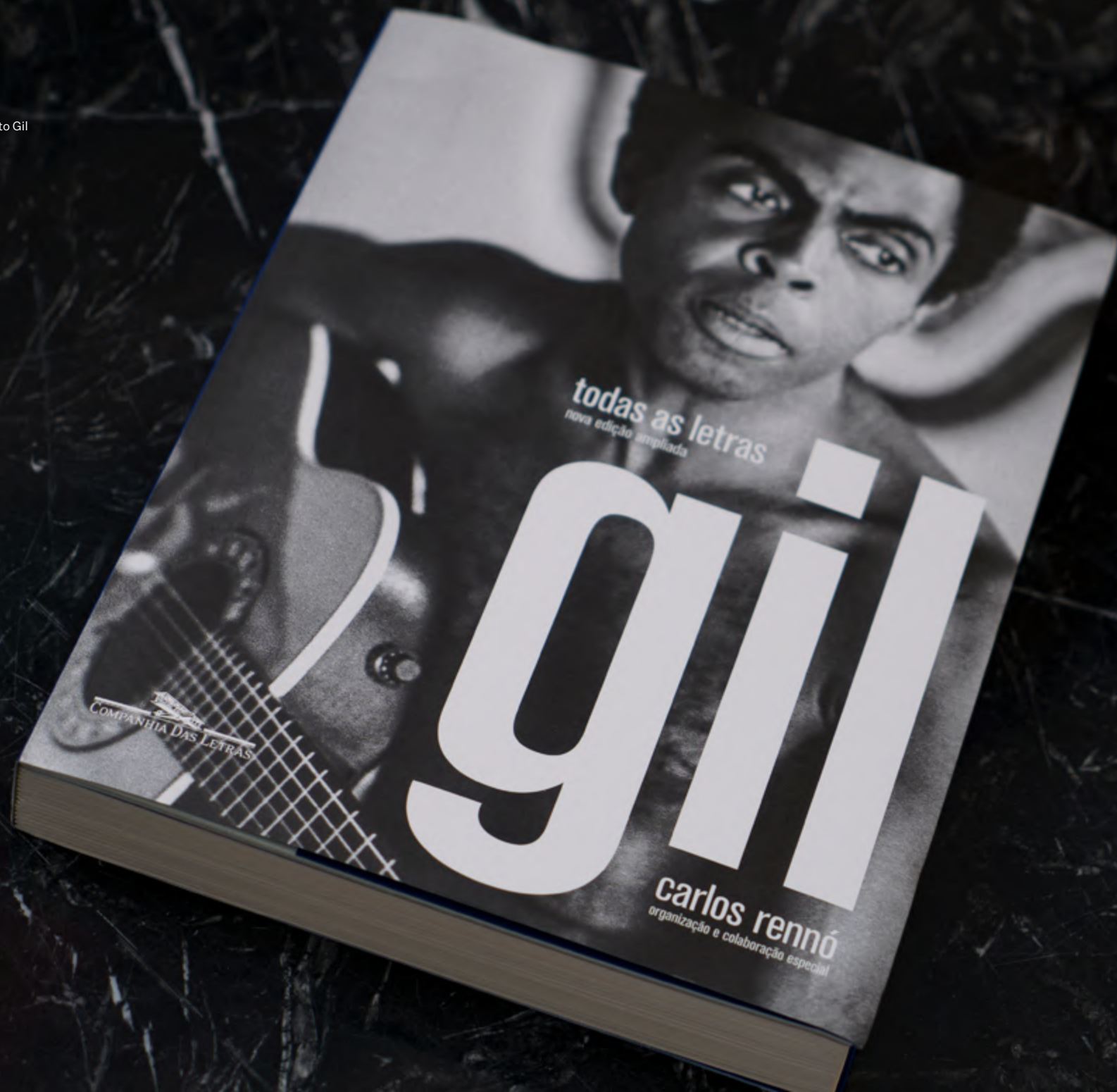




*Untitled*, 2020  
ink and print on canvas  
260 x 145 x 3,5 cm  
102.4 x 57.1 x 1.4 in



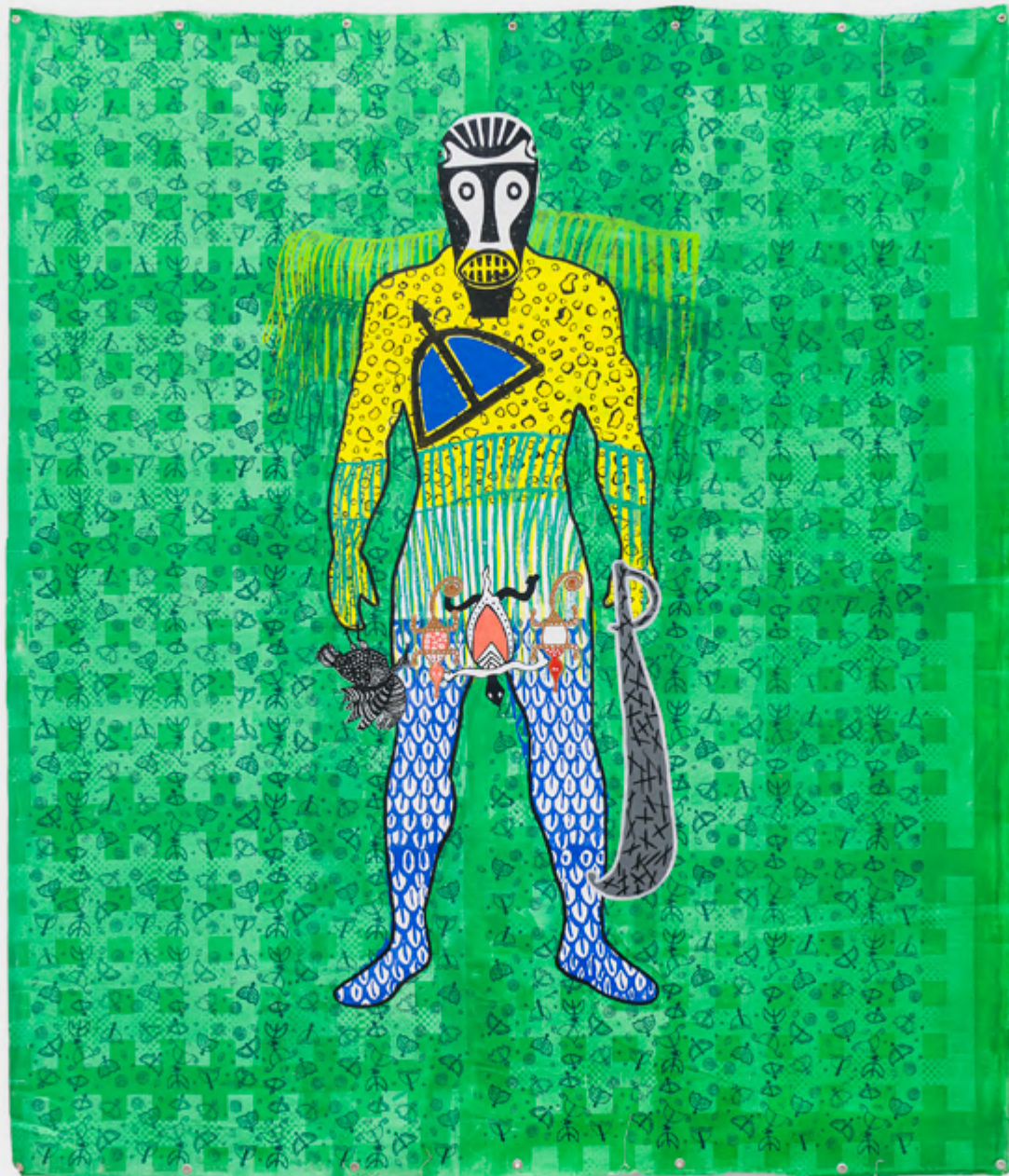
Book cover  
todas as letras Gilberto Gil





Haus der Kulturen der Welt, 2023  
exhibition view  
Berlin, Germany





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*Olode: senhor dos  
caçadores, 2023*  
ink and print on canvas  
351 x 303 cm  
138.2 x 119.3 in

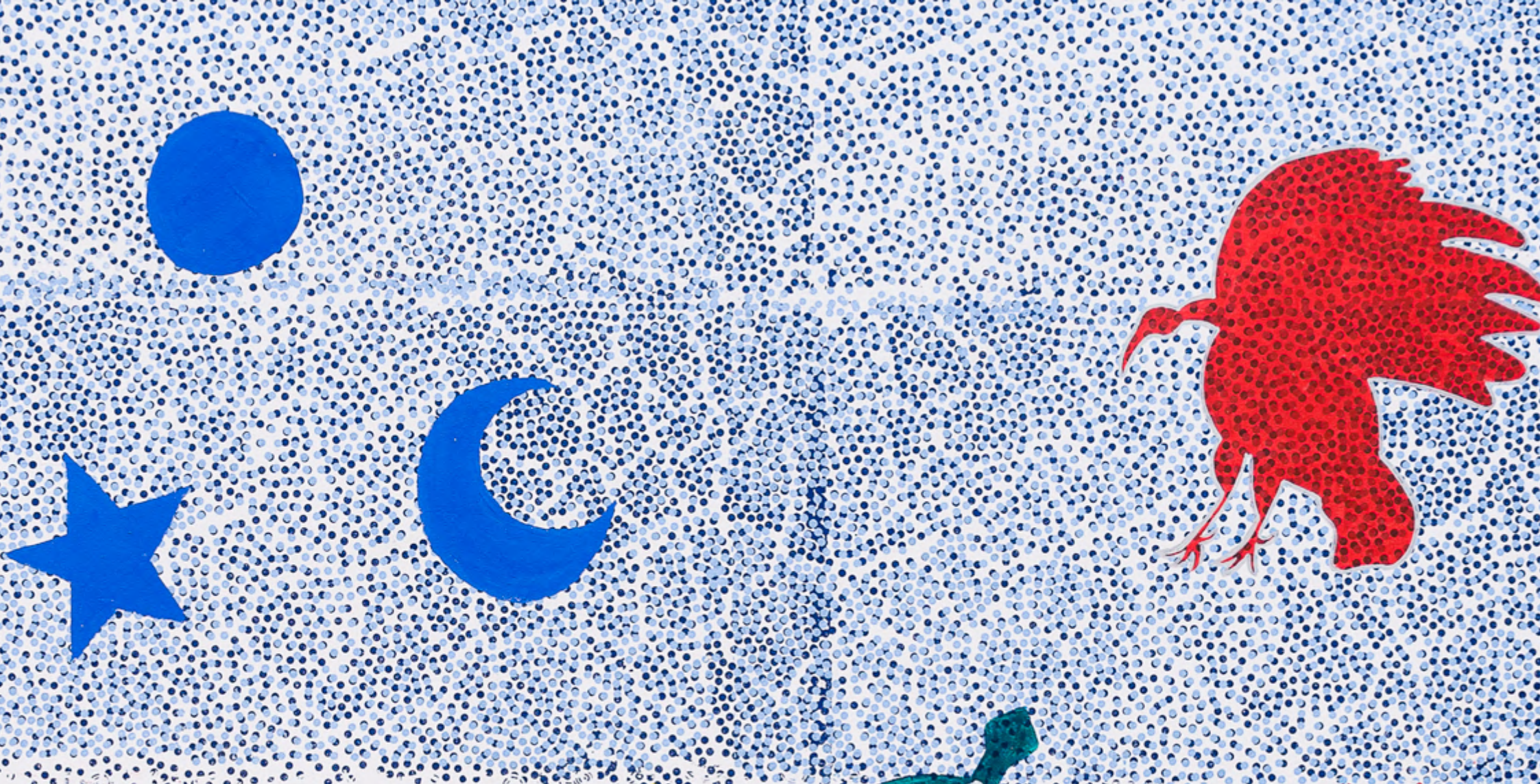


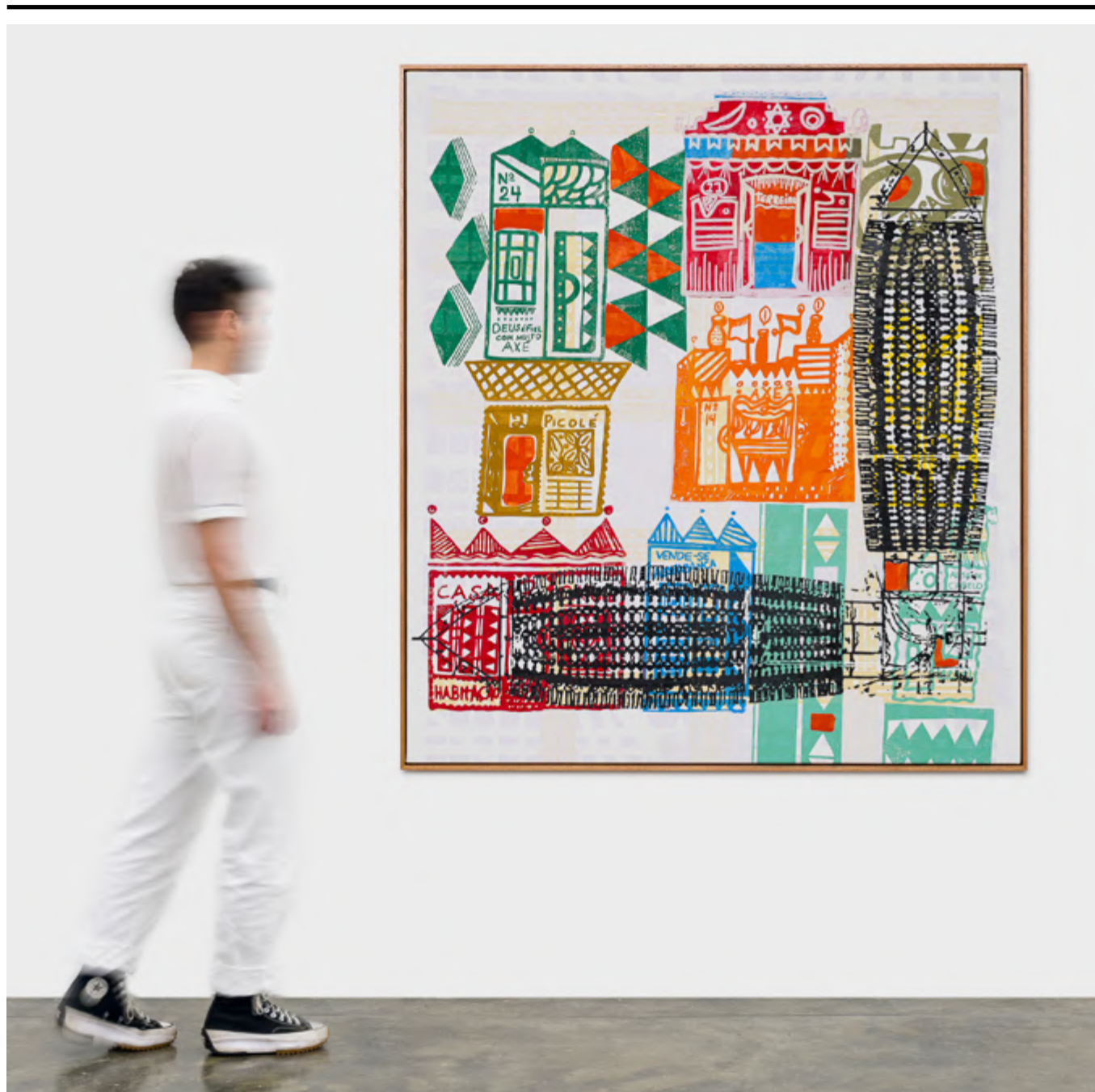


*Fartura*, 2023  
ink and print on canvas  
338 x 315 cm  
133.1 x 124 in



*A Eleye que Pousou no  
Palácio de Oduduwa, 2023*  
ink and print on canvas  
332 x 314 cm  
130.7 x 123.6 in





*Atlântico (Série Moradismo)*, 2023  
ink and print on canvas  
166 x 147 cm  
65.4 x 57.9 in



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*Bàbá Alapalá 2 (Série Mariwô), 2024*  
ink and print on canvas  
163,5 x 135,5 x 3,5 cm  
64.4 x 53.3 x 1.4 in

Stirring the Pot, 2023  
exhibition view  
Casa da Cultura da  
Comporta, Portugal







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*Namorados*, 2020  
ink and print on canvas  
156 x 171 cm  
61.4 x 67.3 in



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*Homem de Oxalá*, 2024  
ink and print on canvas  
173 x 158 cm  
64.2 x 58.3 x 1.4 in

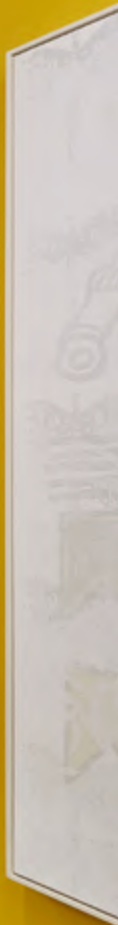


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Opaxarô, 2024  
ink and print on canvas  
205,5 x 143 cm  
80.9 x 56.3 in

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exhibition view  
*Outros carnavais*,  
2024, Nara Roesler  
Rio de Janeiro, Brasil.



nara roesler

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