

nara roesler

elian almeida





---

## elian almeida

b. 1994, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

lives and works between Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and Paris, France

Elian Almeida's practice is based on the convergence of different techniques, such as painting, photography, video, and installation, becoming an exponent of a new generation of artists whose objects and images advocate the protagonism of agents and bodies commonly marginalized in our society and art history. With a decolonial approach, his work focuses on the experience and performativity of the black body in contemporary society. For this, he recuperates—official and anecdotal—elements from the past, such as images, narratives, and characters, to contribute to the empowerment and dissemination of Afro-Brazilian historiography.

On the one hand, Almeida's research focuses on the biographies of black characters whose relevance has been erased through history, restoring their due importance. On the other hand, the artist turns to the violent ways police approach racialized bodies, revisiting the notions of privilege present in Brazilian culture and society and denouncing the myth of racial democracy. In his series *Vogue*, in which Almeida appropriates the visual identity and aesthetics of the famous fashion magazine to associate it with black bodies, we see the convergence of these different lines of work, leading us to question how these subjects have been represented and placed in circulation in Brazilian visual culture.

---

[click to see full cv](#)

### selected solo exhibitions

*Antes - agora - o que há de vir*, Nara Roesler, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (2021)

### selected group exhibitions

*Nova Vanguarda Carioca*, Cidade das Artes, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (2022)

*Enciclopédia negra*, Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil (2021)

*Amanhã há de ser outro dia / Demains sera um autre jour*, Studio Iván Argote e Espacio Temporal, Paris, France (2020)

*Esqueleto – 70 anos de UERJ*, Paço Imperial, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, (2019)

*Arte naïf – Nenhum museu a menos*, Escola de Artes Visuais do Parque Lage (EAV Parque Lage), Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (2019)

*Mostra memórias da resistência*, Centro Municipal de Arte Hélio Oiticica (CMAHO), Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (2018)

*Bela verão e Transnômade Opavivará*, Galpão Bela Maré, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (2018)

*Novas poéticas – Diálogos expandidos em arte contemporânea*, Museu do Futuro, Curitiba, Brazil (2016)

### selected institutional collections

Museu de Arte do Rio (MAR), Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil

---

<b>4</b>	aesthetic production, aesthetic being
<b>14</b>	restoring images, recreating identities
<b>33</b>	violence and privilege

---

---

**aesthetic production,  
aesthetic being**

“In my research, I am interested in thinking about aesthetic production as a way to reflect on the problems of our contemporary reality. However, directly linked to this scope is the racial perspective. It’s a natural gesture to examine some of the relationships that are dear to me. My color; my social status and how it relates to society; and the notion of otherness. With this, my production is marked by the aim to create frictions with certain themes, such as to disrupt and give new meaning to the idea of social performativity of the black body, state violence, and decoloniality as that still are, despite decades of discussions, pertinent and urgent issues, mainly in contemporary Brazil,” reveals Almeida.

---

*Les sussex (la famille royale)*, 2020  
acrylic and oil on canvas  
120 x 100 cm | 47.2 x 39.4 in  
Ana Cecilia Impellizieri  
Martins Collection  
Paris, France







O mais importante é inventar o Brasil  
que nós queremos, 2021  
acrylic and oil on canvas  
88 x 127 cm | 34.6 x 50 in









Almeida's practice is not separated from his own experience as a person of color in a structurally racist society. However, this doesn't indicate that his work takes on a subjective perspective, addressing the artist's particular traits and experiences. Still, it mainly engages in promoting and expanding an understanding of Afro-diasporic culture and its direct influence in Brazil. In this regard, Almeida is part of the group of artists who have contributed to the collective effort of challenging dominant narratives seeking to reintroduce and recognize personalities who were forgotten and obliterated through history. At the same time, he sees his own role and participation in the art scene and art market as demands for greater spaces of representation for black people.

*Conceição Evaristo à Académie  
Brésilienne des Lettres, 2020*  
acrylic, oil and pastel on canvas  
125 x 105 cm | 49.2 x 41.3  
Sandra Hegedus Collection  
Paris, France







One of the key elements in Almeida's work is the idea of mapping. This first emerged from the artist's experience of moving around Rio de Janeiro. Having lived most of his life in the region of Baixada Fluminense, the artist used to commute daily to the city center, an area with a large number of cultural centers, concentrating its access. These geographical movements through the city, which made him realize the discriminatory ways urban spaces function, also became temporal shifts, allowing anachronistic approaches in his work.

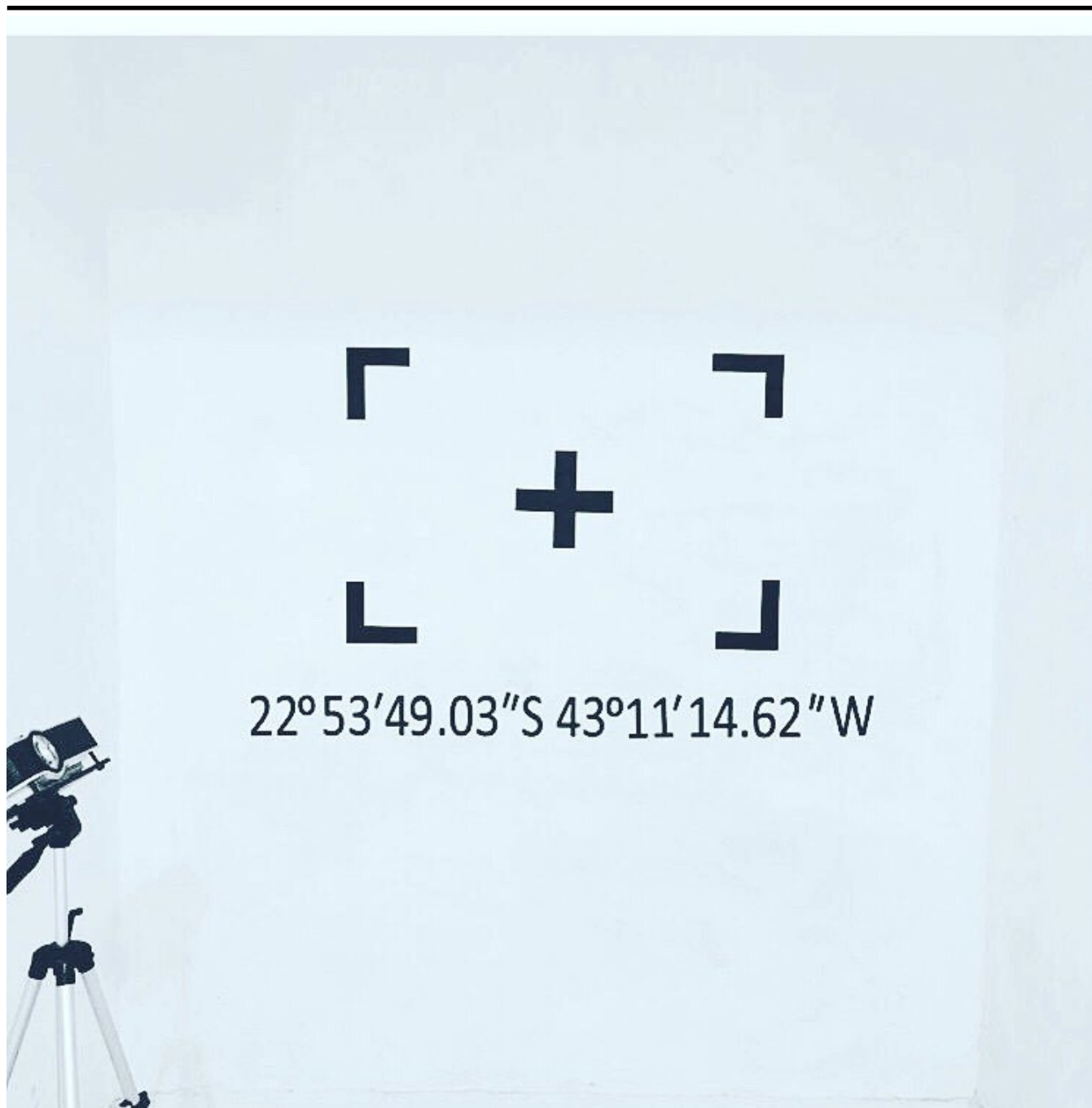


*Feijoada*, 2020  
acrylic and pastel on canvas  
105 x 125 cm | 49.2 x 41.3  
Soraya Chaar Collection  
Paris, France









In *O que vai nascer* [What Will Be Born] (2016), Almeida superimposes the geographic coordinates of the place where he was born and of Cais do Valongo (Valongo Wharf), a pier in the port area of Rio de Janeiro, where a large number of abducted people arrived from Africa to be traded as slaves during the 18th and 19th centuries. In this overlap, the artist connects past, present, and future and asks us what is yet to come—through the work's title. He makes us realize how past events and the slave trade still affect the marginalization of bodies and identities. Almeida also combines macro and micro stories as he interweaves his narrative with founding events of the Brazilian national identity. The artist then sees in his work a map that points out to other spatial and temporal paths to connect with an ancestral heritage that was often denied by tradition.

*O que vai nascer*, 2016  
acrylic and pastel on canvas  
variable dimensions  
artist's collection





---

## restoring images, recreating identities

Almeida explores a vast visual repertoire he assembled due to his curiosity and keen observational skills. In this regard, the artist not only makes use of images from art history, with which he deeply engaged as a student at the School of Visual Arts at the State University of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ), but he also challenges them by bringing back figures into a position of prominence in visual mediums.

To conceive his pieces, Almeida revisits works by artists, photographers, and other cultural producers, as well as images that circulate in magazines and on social media. He creates friction by bringing these different sources together to make fictional images of real characters. These are made-up images as most of the personalities the artist seeks to portray never had their images crystallized in history, except for written and oral reports. More than making images of black people, Almeida creates with them an Afro-Brazilian visual imagery that embodies what previously were just stories.

---

*Clementina de Jesus (TIME)*, 2021  
acrylic paint on canvas  
100 x 90 x 4 cm  
39.4 x 35.4 x 1.6 cm







---

The series *Vogue*, one of the most iconic in the artist's trajectory, emerged precisely from questions about the absence of black people in this magazine. Almeida applied paint on a cover of the magazine, creating an image that did not stick as the materiality of the medium seemed to repel the liquid character of the paint. There, Almeida sketched the first black figure, Tia Ciata, who was fundamental in the emergence of samba in Rio de Janeiro. The artist used biographical information and images of her to create this work.

Almeida then deepened his investigation, not only of biographical and pictorial references but also of materials. The artist delves into the characters' histories and life context to elaborate on the environments, clothing, and decorations of the times in which they lived. However, the lack of faces in his works indicates the absence of these individuals from official narratives while also proposing a sense of collectivity. In these figures, one can identify ancestral elements capable of making the viewer project not one but a myriad of possible faces of anonymous people who are still affected by racial prejudice.

---

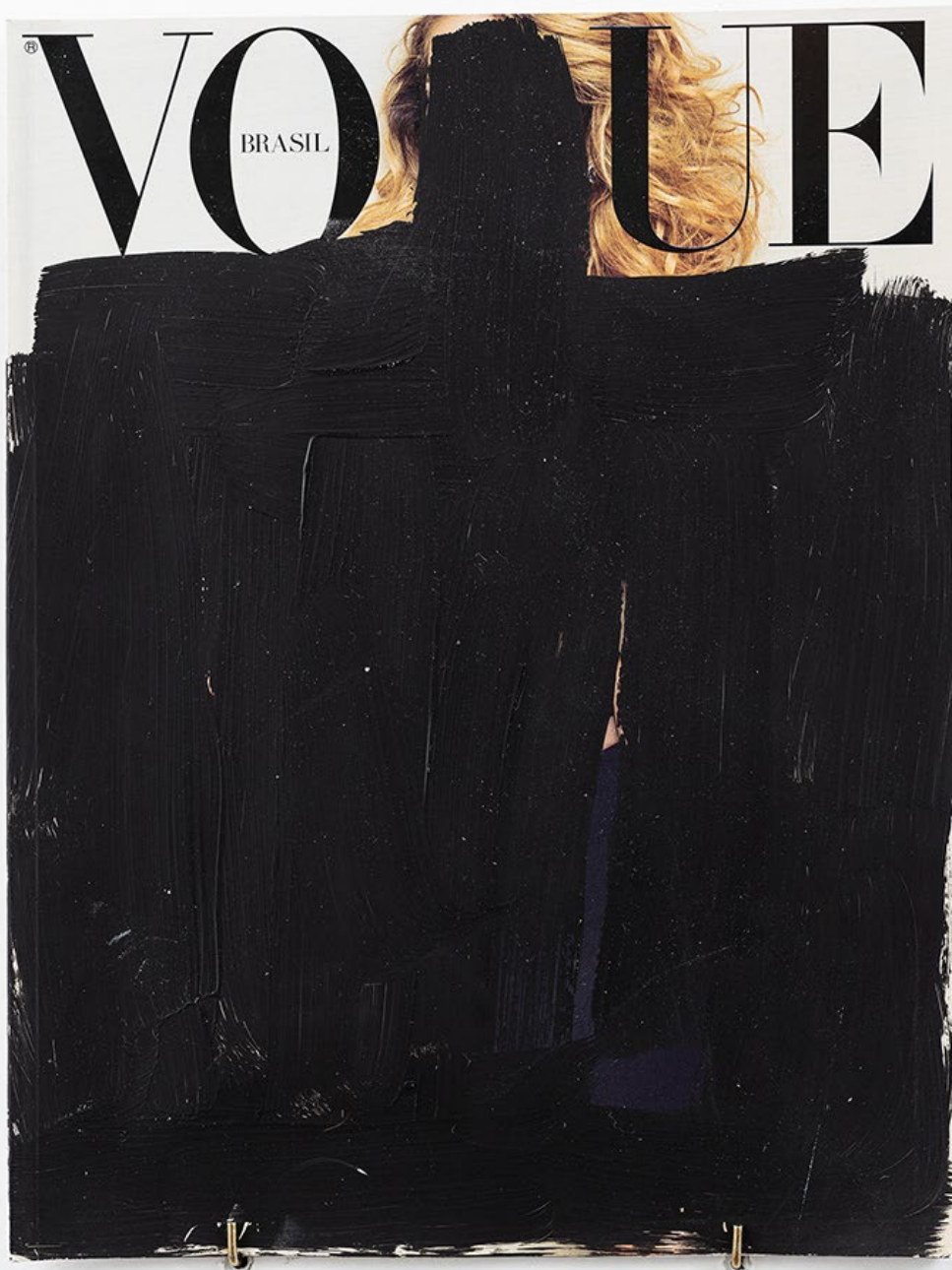
*Tia Ciata (Vogue)*, 2019  
acrylic and oil on canvas  
55 x 46 cm | 21.6 x 18.1 in  
Clarice O. Tavares Collection  
New York, USA












---

*Um defeito de cor (VOGUE)*, 2021  
 acrylic paint over  
 magazine copy  
 12 pieces of 28 x 21 x 5 cm  
 12 pieces of 11 x 8.3 x 2 in

---

*Um defeito de cor*  
*(VOGUE)* [detail], 2021  
 acrylic paint over  
 magazine copy  
 12 pieces of 28 x 21 x 5 cm  
 12 pieces of 11 x 8.3 x 2 in

---

installation view  
*Um defeito de cor (VOGUE)*, 2021  
 Galeria Nara Roesler  
 Rio de Janeiro, Brazil





Esperança Garcia  
Luisa Mahin  
Maria Firmina dos Reis









---

*Tia Maria do Jongo*  
(*Vogue Brasil*), 2021  
acrylic paint on canvas  
94 x 109 x 4 cm  
37 x 42.9 x 1.6 in









---

Esperança Garcia, Luísa Mahin  
e Maria Firmina dos Reis (*Vogue  
Brasil*), 2021  
acrylic paint on canvas  
109 x 91 x 4 cm  
37 x 42.9 x 1.6 in







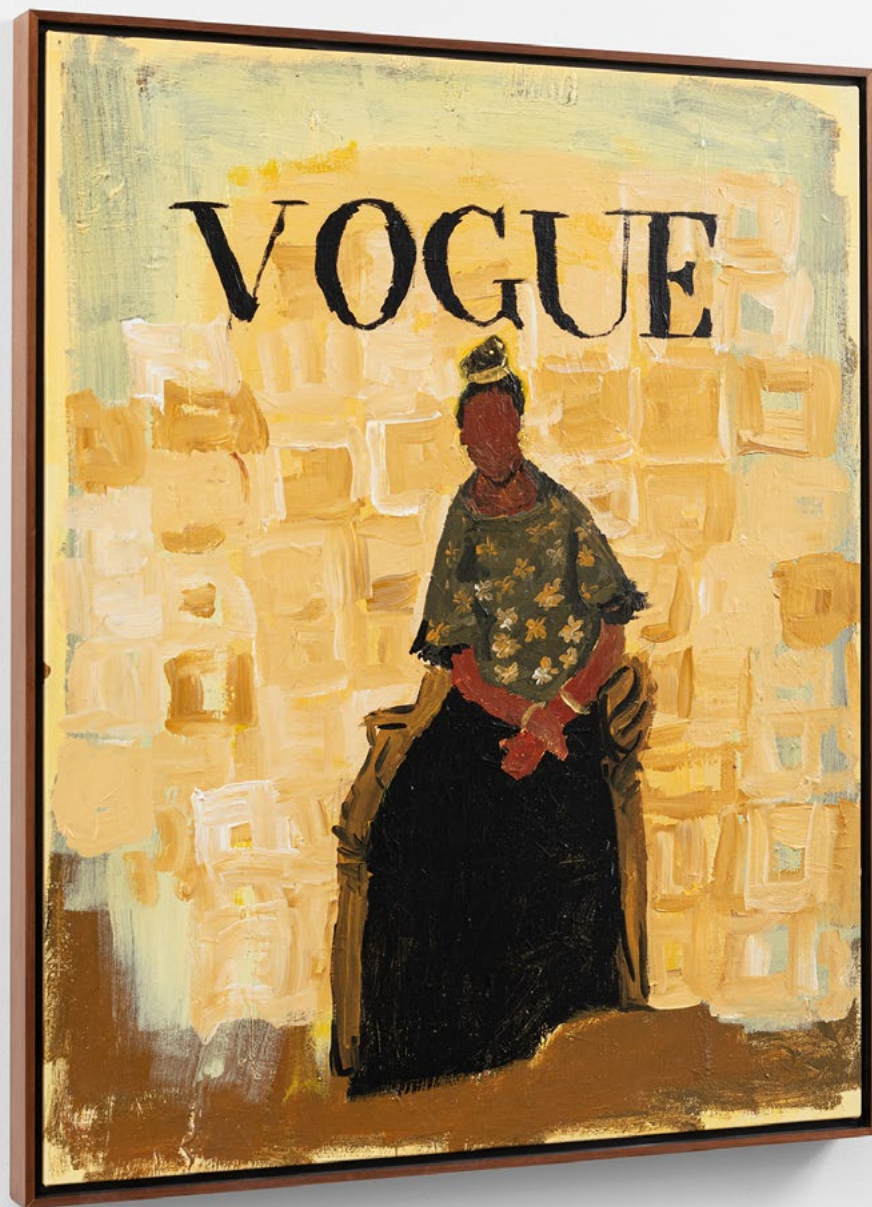


Tia Maria do Jongo



Esperança Garcia  
Luísa Mafro  
Maria Fátima dos Reis





It is not by chance that Almeida is one of the artists participating in *Enciclopédia Negra* (Black Encyclopedia), a monumental editorial project of Afro-Brazilian historiography organized by Flávio Gomes, Lília M. Schwarcz, and Jaime Lauriano. The book is not only a biographical survey of black figures that are fundamental to Brazilian history but also presents images of these characters created by black Brazilian artists.

Regarding technical aspects, Almeida's painting is marked by experimentalism. The artist uses different materials, such as oil and acrylic paint, pure pigments, and plaster, among others. These are often superimposed by the successive layers—that are overlapped and concealed—he applies to his works with quick brush strokes. In this process of maturing the canvas, the artist reveals that a painting also has its own temporality expressed by its underlying layers, which, although invisible, sustain the final image.

---

exhibition view

*Antes – agora – o que há de vir*, 2021  
Galeria Nara Roesler  
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

---

*Ruth de Souza (Vogue Brasil)*, 2021  
acrylic paint on canvas  
95 x 78 x 4 cm  
37.4 x 30.7 x 1.6 in









exhibition view  
*Enciclopédia negra*, 2021  
Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo,  
São Paulo, Brazil





exhibition view  
*Enciclopédia negra*, 2021  
Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo,  
São Paulo, Brazil



---

*Mãe Beata de Iemanjá*  
(*Vogue Brasil*), 2021  
acrylic paint on canvas  
104 x 100 x 4 cm  
40.9 x 39.4 x 1.6 in











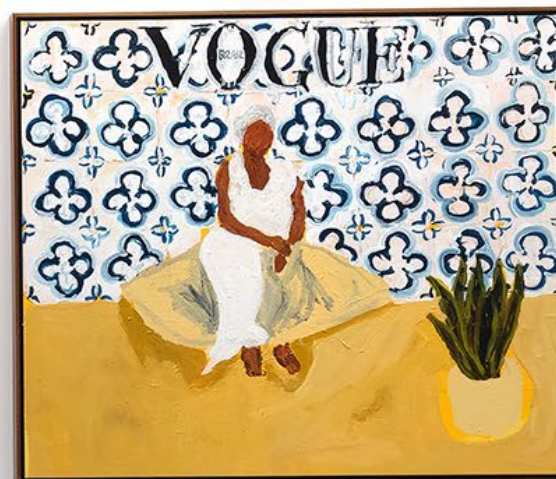
exhibition view  
*Antes – agora – o que há de vir*, 2021  
 Galeria Nara Roesler  
 Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

exhibition view  
*Antes – agora – o que há de vir*, 2021  
 Galeria Nara Roesler  
 Rio de Janeiro, Brazil





Mãe Beata de Iemanjá



Tia Maria do Jongo



## violence and privilege

Other recurring themes in Almeida's practice, which are often tangential, are violence and privilege. In this regard, one of the topics that calls his attention is how police approach black bodies. *Porte ilegal de artefato incendiário* ("Democracia racial") [Illegal Possession of an Incendiary Device ("Racial Democracy")] (2018), is exemplary on this subject. In this work, the artist recalls the case of Rafael Braga, a black man who was unfairly arrested during a series of protests in 2013 for carrying a bottle of Pine-Sol in his backpack. Almeida sees Braga as a symbol of the inequality present in Brazilian society and the judiciary and public security systems, which tend to criminalize people of color.



*Porte ilegal de artefato incendiário*  
("Democracia racial"), 2018  
acrylic and oil on canvas  
variable dimensions  
artist's collection





For Almeida, this series “is not only the work of a black artist analyzing social-political actions on black bodies in contemporary society but a work of a black artist calling attention to and challenging the relationships between privileged individuals and groups and aspirations for domination.” The sphere of political power does not escape the artist’s criticisms. In *O que é melhor, a gente discutir acordos políticos ou a cor dos políticos?* [What Would Be Better, to Discuss Political Agreements or the Color of Politicians?] (2020), Almeida portrays figures of power, highlighting their whiteness and showing that the debate about corruption is as fundamental as the one about the representation of black people in the spheres of influence. In his words, the artist reminds us that “it is urgent to think of a new Brazil and art has a fundamental role in this process,” and he has been working towards that.

In the poster *Arte contemporânea é Negra?* [Is Contemporary Art Black?] (2016), Almeida leads us to question the ways in which the art scene has incorporated Afro-Brazilian works, compelling us not only to understand how this heritage is embedded in our culture and art production but also to recognize and give more space to these artists.

---

*Arte contemporânea é negra?*, 2016  
acrylic and oil on canvas  
120 x 100 cm | 47.2 x 39.4 in  
Marcos Pavão Collection  
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil





*O que é melhor, a gente discutir  
acordos políticos ou a cor dos  
políticos?*, 2020  
acrylic and pastel paint on canvas  
170 x 130 cm | 66.9 x 51.2 in  
Sandra Hegedus Collection  
Paris, France



nara roesler

---

**são paulo**

avenida europa 655,  
jardim europa, 01449-001  
são paulo, sp, brasil  
t 55 (11) 2039 5454

---

**rio de janeiro**

rua redentor 241,  
ippanema, 22421-030  
rio de janeiro, rj, brasil  
t 55 (21) 3591 0052

---

**new york**

511 west 21<sup>st</sup> street  
new york, 10011 ny  
usa  
t 1 (212) 794 5038

---

info@nararoesler.art

www.nararoesler.art