

PADË

SENTINEL AT MEMORY'S DOOR

ENGLISH

Exu is the zero and the one.

It is the open and closed cowrie shell of the oracle that reveals the multiple Odus.

It is the dialectical that dispenses with synthesis. It is the certain beginning, the suspended end, the path that is made by walking. Exu is the resulting force that breaks inertia. It is the principle of everything, the preamble to all acts. It is a tritone that resonates, sustaining the expectation of rest, without the promise of achieving it.

Each movement, each gesture is preceded by its temporality – the millisecond that precedes and succeeds the now. Its time is that particle of infinity in constant transmutation.

Long is the journey of this Orisha. From the creation of the world and living beings in the Yoruba cosmogony, through its different cults and nomenclatures, to its demonization and masculinization in the Western imagination colonized by Europe, Exu (male and female) survives, sows, and germinates with its gourds laden with axé. It is up to him to balance the vital forces of existence. That is why he is so feared and so powerful. The creative vigor that his energy imposes on the world cannot be stopped. It is necessary to resist at all costs, to dance at all costs, to live at all costs, to laugh at all costs. In a rebellious way, against the grain, Exu brings together what the colonizer dreamed of separating: theory and practice; feminine and masculine; ethics and aesthetics. He returns to the whole black body its place of protagonism, of memory, and of infinite beauty. Ìwà Pẹ̀lẹ̀.

Being, in everything, antecedent, it was to be expected that his axé would animate the Exhibition Program that the Afro-Brazilian Museum Emannel Araujo is inaugurating in 2026, with this Orisha as the guardian of Memory and Imagination. *Padê — Sentinel at Memory's Door* is an exercise in offering and establishing the founding energies of the museum, deepening knowledge about its collection, which comprises the majority of the works selected for this exhibition.

This exhibition presents a selection from the institution's extensive collection, bringing together sacred objects, sculptures, paintings, photographs, and works of African art that engage in dialogue with prominent contemporary artists on the national and international scenes. These are artists who think, produce, and feel in response to the transformative energy of Exu, even if indirectly, revealing multiple interpretations: respect for ancestry, appreciation for movement and communication, the exaltation of free sexualities, collectivity, and life. In this encounter, many fissures are also revealed, and these will serve as our guide.

With the permission of those who came before,

Laroyê!

Rosa Couto
Curator

LÁRÒYÈ, EXÚ.

"Take the step, and Exú will show you the way."

By walking, Exú makes ancestral technologies flourish, capable of building new worlds and offering solutions to the colonial violence prevalent in our daily lives, through his enchantments, which are only possible with movement. Within an Exuistic logic, knowledge is exchanged for movement, and Exú, with his wisdom and spells, doesn't mind assuming various forms, because standing, he is smaller than an ant, and sitting, his head hits the ceiling.

Exú has several names. Among the Yoruba of Nigeria and Benin, he is called È ù; among the Fon, or Jeje, he is known as Legbá. In Cuban Santería, he receives the names Eshu, Eleguá, and Lucero; In Haitian Vodou worship, he is Baron Samedi, Baron Cimetière, and Baron La Croix. In Candomblé and Umbanda, strictly Brazilian religions created in the diaspora, he is called Exú, Unjila, Bombojira... Even within the ethnic diversity of Africa and Afro-Brazilians, his ethics are the same: the one who regulates the paths, who sees and hears all, who transforms chaos into organization. Exú opens and closes the gates of the vast world in which we live based on what we offer and exchange in his marketplace, and makes it clear that whoever accesses him without offering anything is not exchanging, but rather, stealing.

Whether in sacred spaces, crossroads, or schools, Exu is the one ready to run the circle to transform the universe, opening paths and turning error into success, through the stone thrown yesterday to kill, today, the bird of certainties and stagnation that destroys futures, devouring it with its all-consuming mouth, bringing changes and re(orienting) systems. With his ogó, an enchanted tool in the shape of a phallus, he modifies the world with the magic contained in his gourds. Farofa, cachaça, palm oil, salt, indigo, plant sap, and ejé are constituent and activating elements of the propitiatory witchcraft for the deepest transformations offered by Exu in the construction of axé (spiritual energy). Among his votive animals, the goat represents strength, virility, and agility. At midnight, the rooster crows, announcing that Exu is casting spells in the folds of time.

Exu is the dynamic principle, and without him, nothing is done.

Mojubá!

**Du Kiddy Artist
Educator**

EXU: THE ART OF THE CROSSROADS

An exhibition where Exu becomes a concept is also an exercise in transforming art into offering (ebó), movement into exchange, and the persecuted into a teacher.

When founding the museum in 2004, Emanuel Araujo organized his long-term exhibition as a true crossroads of Afro-Brazilian art, repositioning the figure of Exu, detaching it from the devilish label that Christianity sought to attribute to it.

In doing so, Emanuel Araujo not only restores to the divinity the complexity that has been historically denied to it, but also inscribes Exu in the museum's own method of reading. The crossroads thus becomes an exhibition and conceptual principle: a place where paths intersect, narratives are intertwined, and different temporalities of the Afro-Brazilian experience converge.

In his curatorial proposal, Emanuel (re)presents, through art, this African deity of the Yoruba people as the one who catalyzes, transforms, and organizes everything around him. Exu appears not as a marginal figure but as a dynamic principle that sets the world in motion, mediating relationships, producing displacements, and opening possibilities.

This reading is close to the reflection of the babalorixá Sidnei Nogueira de Xangô, for whom Exu is the maestro of existential melody. He is the one who governs the exchanges between the sacred and the profane, the visible and the hidden, that which has been and that which will be. By escaping fixed definitions, Exu simply is. Based on this reflection, Babá Sidnei presents some themes that help to broaden the possibilities of reading the present exhibition entitled Padê - Sentinel at Memory's Door.

THE MUTABILITY

Exu is never incapable of choice or change. Therefore, some walk with him and others are left behind. This is also true in life: as with the Orisha Exu, some people remain with us and others follow other paths.

EXU'S MARKET

Those who don't know who they are—and who don't know what to bring to Exu's market—will not be able to make good exchanges. Those who allow themselves to be robbed or stolen from lose Exu's protection and end up imprisoning themselves.

FREEDOM

Exu is the diversity and multiplicity of crossroads. The straight line is a prison for Exu. Approaching him requires crossing paths, creating possibilities, and preparing fertile and moist soil.

"Take the step, and Exu will give you the path." It is necessary to take the step.

LOYALTY

Exu lies down beside the sick man and, while he cries tears of pain, Exu cries tears of blood. He lies down beside the woman who is on the verge of death and does not save her from death—because he cannot—but takes upon himself all her pain and suffering.

While exploring the Padê exhibition, visitors are invited to recognize that Exu is not merely a theme represented by the works, but a key to understanding the proposed journey itself. Like at a crossroads, each work opens possible paths, establishes unexpected relationships, and produces meanings that are not exhausted in a single direction.

If, as Sidnei Nogueira reminds us, Exu governs exchanges and sets the world in motion, Padê proposes a similar gesture: transforming the encounter with the works into an experience of passage, dialogue, and transformation. Between images, objects, and narratives, art becomes ebó—offering and exchange—and the museum, a crossroads where different histories of the Black experience in Brazil meet, clash, and continue in motion.

Guilherme Domingos
Educator



Produção



Secretaria da
Cultura, Economia e Indústria Criativas



SÃO PAULO
GOVERNO DO ESTADO
SÃO PAULO SÃO TODOS

Patrocínio



Realização

MINISTÉRIO DA
CULTURA

