

## **Open letter to the G20**

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

AtlânticoFloresta is a piece of a broad initiative to take what we are discussing in our Brazilian curatorial and political agendas beyond both geographic and artistic borders. The ocean and the forest are the natural environments that bring together the planet's greatest urgencies. On the one hand, the forests encompass diverse biomes, vegetation, and wildlife; on the other, the ocean, which contains more than 90% of the planet's water, and covers vast areas of the planet's crust. However, as Ailton Krenak warns us, nature has often been treated as a mere "resource" in which our constitutions are expropriated. We are related to nature; it gave birth to us.

In the Americas, oceans and forests are treated differently by Indigenous peoples and people of African descent. From a young age, we are taught to respect and honor both the forests and the seas. We learn to make offerings to lemanjá in the sea, to celebrate the arrival of Jacy, the full moon, in rituals performed in forest clearings, practices that have been passed down through the ages.

When we present the AtlânticoFloresta, a collection of works by over 50 Black artists, descendants of Indigenous peoples, including the Pataxó, Ticuna, Juruna, Baniwa, Karajá, Suyá, Guajajara, Txukahamãe, among others, we offer the rightful stewards of this land technological leadership over the Atlantic and the forest. In this space, we find ourselves among shamans and ogans, religious leaders who carry profound teachings on all matters. We are descendants of those who crossed the Atlantic and of those who were already here when Brazil was invaded by Europeans. From the Atlantic came the ships, kidnapping Africans from various origins to force them into enslaved labor in Brazilian lands, planting, harvesting, tidying up, and cleaning "what the white man dirtied", as in the verses of Gilberto Gil's song. The forest was home to thousands of groups from different linguistic trunks. From the north to the south of Brazil, from the Munduruku to the Kaingang, our relatives understood that the mountain was not to be consumed, in what the poet called the "machination of the world". Rivers cannot be dredged. However, tractors, dredgers, mills, and rigs were used based on a misguided and devastating concept of productivity.

They believed that rain alone would not be “productive”, that rivers would obstruct city construction, and that mountains needed to be cut down to open central avenues. This mindset led to the destruction of the planet came about. Consequently, those who knew how to live organically with oceans and forests were disregarded and murdered.

Our relatives, speaking a diversity of languages, crossed the Atlantic. After all, it is crucial to remember that Africa is a continent, not a country. Therefore, we grew up in bilingual environments, among Bantu and Yoruba, cultures brought from what Paul Gilroy called the “Black Atlantic”. For this reason, much of what we consider Brazilian culture emerged from the heritages and memories of lives created, fabricated, invented, and rocked by the songs of enslaved people who attributed, named, and dreamed of their countries and cities of origin. They came from Angola and Luanda, from the Yoruba kingdom of Ketu, places that became overseas quilombos: Palmares, Providência, Maré, and Cabula. To prevent lives from succumbing to the policies of death decreed by the slavery process and its consequent racism, a lot of art was, and still is, established in our daily lives and those of our ancestors.

What we present here resulted in much reflection and survival. Art has led us follow, initiate, arrow, entangle, align and misalign, embroider, write, photograph, film, and praise. These are our verbs. That is why we need to redraw our maps, review and repair how our relatives were stigmatized by white Europeans, return to the ports from which our ancestors departed, preserve the forests as they are, praise the arrival of the full moon, understand the richness of corn and manioc, bring the boats into the hands of the goddesses of the sea, retell the stories we have heard, and search for infamous archives, those that have been hidden and silenced. With all of this, we imagine other Atlantics, other forests, which are, of course, the same ones reborn time and time again. We continue purify our waters, repair our institutions with new cosmoperceptions, without waiting for someone to come along and tell the precious story of our own history.

## **Signs of the Republic**

The construction of symbols and signs of the Republic brings together elements that aim to homogenize what we call Brazil while presupposing the aspiration for a democratic society. According to José Murilo de Carvalho, under the sign of the Republic, there was an attempt to “form souls”. However, the power, particularly aligned with capitalism interests, consolidated landmarks and monuments, flags, and coats of arms that excluded both the Indigenous peoples who inhabited the forests and those who were forcibly brought across the Atlantic.

The green and yellow, gold mining, and agribusiness that devastates forests continue to form a logic of exploitation that marginalizes broad sectors of society. In this context, the necessity of rethinking national heroes and heroines emerges, calling for new commemorative dates that do not reduce celebrations to the emptiness of national glories based on wars and conquests.

The Brazilian flag is recontextualized here to question its symbols and their racial implications, using everyday materials such as handmade fabrics. This approach reflects the historical gaps and violations left by slavery and Brazilian colonialism, highlighting Black resistance and its consequences. By revisiting figures, artifacts, and signs through visual and cinematic languages, the works reveal how the colonial past still influences the present, perpetuating structures of oppression. Thus, the critique of national symbols and signs underscores the persistence of racial inequality in history and in the construction of Brazilian identity.

## **Confluences, reclaiming, continuities**

Afro-Brazilian and Indigenous heritages intertwine in a visual confluence that encourages us to reflect deeply on collective memory, cultural resistance, and the legacy of the people who remain in a constant process of reclaiming and reaffirming themselves. Inspired by Antônio Bispo dos Santos, who sees ancestry as a living and pulsating presence, the exhibition is not about a distant past but about a continuous foundation that sustains and gives meaning to the present.

At the same time, the concept of “reclaiming”, as Ailton Krenak teaches us, goes beyond the physical territory: it is a movement to rescue values, knowledge, and ways of life that resist and recreate themselves in the gaps left by colonial impositions.

By articulating these aesthetics and worldviews, the exhibition becomes a space for amplifying voices and stories that have been systematically silenced, echoing Krenak's warnings about the urgency of reconfiguring our pact with the Earth. It is not merely a gesture of rescue; it is also, as Nêgo Bispo puts it, an active continuity – a living memory that inhabits the present and shapes the future, challenging the logic of oblivion. This symbolic encounter proposes new ways of understanding shared cultural heritages and encourages us to imagine alternative ways of being in the world while inviting us to reflect on identity, belonging, and the broad dimensions of coexistence.

## **Crossing**

The forced crossing of enslaved Africans to the Americas became a tragic symbol of cultural and spiritual rupture, a movement of displacement that separated millions of people from their roots and traditions. Over the centuries, Afro-descendant and Amerindian artists have traversed this painful memory, transforming the past into denunciation and resistance. Their creations transcend aesthetics by articulating political responses to the racist and colonial structures that persist today. Art, in this way, becomes a new crossing, a historical reconnection that marks the legacy of the African diaspora and highlights the connections between the scars of the past and contemporary struggles for justice and equity.

Inspired by remnants and scars of slavery, by African and Indigenous roots, the artistic production transcends time by symbolically reconstructing the resistance trajectories of these peoples. In dialog with Amerindian experiences, also marked by ruptures and expropriations, political art rescues subjugated identities and challenges colonial narratives. By incorporating cultural symbols, spiritualities, and rituals, these creations become crossings of rescue and recovery, which revaluing silenced histories and project them as a continuous claim for dignity and recognition for current and future generations.

## **Bill 1928/2024**

### Article 1

The exercise of the profession of visual artist throughout the national territory is free, subject to provisions of this law.

### Article 2

A visual artist is any individual who professionally develops aesthetic practices whose results are apprehended primarily through the sense of sight.

### Article 4

Sole paragraph: The professional registration of a visual artist is not dependent on any academic qualification.

### Article 5

Sole paragraph: The registered visual artists may be insured under the Social Security system, subject to the provisions of the regulations.

### Article 6

The rights of visual artists are:

I – the free artistic expression, as well as the right to the integrity of their work, being forbidden any modification or editing, without prior authorization;

II – non-discrimination in any way, such as gender, class, race, ethnicity, territory, among others, by any individual or legal entity, in the spaces indicated in item I of Article 4;

III – non-discrimination about visual artists with any type of disability;

IV – respect for cultural diversity, especially of Indigenous peoples, traditional and Afro-diasporic populations, in the spaces indicated in item I of Article 4;

V – to receive fair remuneration and recognition for their work, including the right of resale and other forms of compensation for the use and commercialization of their works, as established in contract or by applicable law;

VI – to be informed, by any of the spaces specified in item I of Article 4, about the circulation of their works for exhibitions and commercialization.

## Article 7

The duties of visual artists include:

- I – promoting diversity and inclusion in their works, avoiding any form of discrimination or reinforcement of historically pejorative imagery;
- II – contributing to the enrichment and cultural diversity of society through their artistic production, as well as through their critical reflections;
- III – ensuring the physical and mental well-being of the public when engaging with their works;
- IV – guaranteeing the conscious use of materials in the production of their works, about the preservation of the environment.

## Article 8

The activity of the visual artist will be the subject of specific public policies, which will have the following basic guidelines:

- I – the valorization of national identity and culture;
- II – the reduction of social and regional inequalities;
- III – the establishment of a special credit line for financing the commercialization of their artistic production, as well as for the acquisition of supplies and equipment necessary for the practice of the profession;
- IV – the integration of artistic activity with other sectors and economic and social development programs;
- V – the continuous professional development of artists and encouragement of the improvement of production methods and processes;
- VI – the valorization of the production, dissemination, and commercialization of visual arts;
- VII – the promotion of art education in school curricula, aimed at training professionals and enriching the cultural development of society;
- VIII – support for sociocultural projects involving the temporary occupation of vacant public or private buildings for artistic productions, subject to legal authorizations on the matter;
- IX – the commitment to the equity of collections in public and private institutions, respecting cultural diversity, especially of marginalized groups, such as women, the LGBTQIA+ population, Indigenous peoples, traditional populations, Afro-diasporic communities, and people with disabilities, among others.

## JUSTIFICATION

The regulation of the visual artist profession is essential to ensure the recognition of human labor, human dignity, and full employment (Article 170 of the Brazilian Constitution, CF/88). Furthermore, the protection of the rights of these professionals promotes economic development (Article 170 of CF/88) and the enhancement of the country's culture (Articles 215 and 216 of CF/88).

On the international level, Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights guarantees the right to participate in cultural life, especially through the enjoyment of the arts. The International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, in Article 15, guarantees the protection of the moral and material interests arising from all artistic productions of which the artist is the author.

It is worth emphasizing that the protection of visual arts activity is an expression of cultural diversity and serves to realize human rights, especially with a focus on ensuring cultural diversity, as established by the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.

From a conceptual standpoint, it is important to note that defining the field of visual arts has been the subject of sophisticated reflection and debate due to its vast scope and the philosophical issues it encompasses. It is necessary, before making any diagnosis, to redefine visual arts as a territory that now includes various forms of expression beyond conventional fine arts, such as painting, sculpture, drawing, printmaking, and objects.

In this context, it is evident that regulating the profession of visual artists is of utmost importance for the development of Brazilian society, contributing to the protection of human dignity, full employment, cultural development, and economic growth.

Therefore, this proposed law aims to establish clear guidelines for the practice of the visual artist profession, guarantee their rights, and encourage their artistic production, thus contributing to the building of a free, just, and supportive society.