



Herbert De Paz



Herbert De Paz (Santa Tecla, El Salvador, 1991) lives and works in Rio de Janeiro since 2013. He has a bachelor's degree in Visual Arts from UERJ (2018) and a master's degree in Art History from the same institution (2024); he studied at the Parque Lage School of Visual Arts in the Fundamentação (2013-2014) and Formação e Deformação (2019) courses. His first residency was at La Fábrica in El Salvador (2024), sponsored by Yes Contemporary. In 2022 he was nominated for the Cisneros Fontanals Foundation (CIFO) Grants and Commissions Program Award. His works are part of the collections of the Institute of Contemporary Art in Miami (ICA), the Rio Art Museum (MAR) and the Inhotim Institute and have been exhibited in El Salvador, Brazil, the United States and Mexico.

Artist Statement

My work is a practice that aims to question the hegemonic perspective of some of the facts about the colonization processes in the Americas and highlights ancestral practices, knowledge and culture. When we think about the colonial history of the territories in the American continent, we are induced to think that the “conquest” took place because of the superiority and generosity of the Europeans for bringing civility, bureaucracies, and progress, but it also was a process of erasure. It seems that our Mesoamerican and African roots and ways of living are part of the past and will have a smaller place in the future. My paintings evoke stories, characters and a sense of celebration through color as a form of resistance. As an artist, I believe in the power of images and I like to think that there are other possibilities to think about the past that we have been taught; in my practice I collect symbols and images from archeological records and archive images that can suggest other narratives in response to acculturation processes. I see my work as a practice of image archaeology that serves to think about other possibilities for the past, modifying the present and the future in the collective imagination using allegorical elements. Figuration is important in my practice because of its narrative power and this reinforces my interest in “excavate” stories. I am driven by a desire to think about a less colonized future and believe that the production of new images can help prefigure this different history.

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Back to the Roots # 8 Native Seed Corn (De regreso a las raíces #8, Elote de semilla nativa)

oil and acrylic on canvas

40 x 40 cm

Back to the Roots series

2024

In the series Back to the Roots, using elements of pre-Hispanic Mesoamerican mural painting, the artist creates new reinterpretations using the poetic resource of the hands, which are tools for preparing food and spiritual evocations. The artist searches for images of local foods that serve as triggers for memories in the collective imagination. The planting of native seeds in El Salvador is an ancestral practice that resists the monoculture business that promotes genetically modified seeds and pesticides that are harmful to the environment.

Photography: Vicente de Mello





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Reborn in the Cornfields (Renacer en la Milpa)

oil and acrylic on canvas

80 x 60 cm

2024

For us Mesoamericans, corn is our staple food. According to the traditions of ancient cultures, we are made of it. Milpa (in the Nahuatl language “Mil”) is a planting system developed by these peoples. It was domesticated around 10,000 years ago and continues to be our staple food. In 2024 I had the opportunity to spend three and a half months in my homeland being nourished by this food. I moved back to Brazil 7 months ago, but it feels like I’m only just getting back, going through a cycle of symbolic deaths and rebirths, like the cycle of corn kernels that, when planted, rot and are reborn to bring us the life that nourishes us. My grandfather Elías had a small milpa near his house on a plot of land where a mega highway now runs. I remember him taking me to pick corn and tomatoes, and I had a mini sickle that he had given me to help him. Now I understand that these trips to his milpa were journeys back in time where he taught me to love this food and the knowledge of our Nahua ancestors from Kuskatan. I am reborn.



Ainda Viva, Curated by Bruna Costa & Paula Borghi. Casa de Cultura do Parque, São Paulo, 2024. Photography: Raphaella Campano. Courtesy Casa de Cultura do Parque

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Expat #10 Shipetz Tuteku (Expatriado #10 Shipetz Tuteku)

oil and acrylic on woodcut, fruits, palms, clay objects, papel picado

290 x 140 x 80 cm

The Expatriates series

2024

This installation takes as a reference of Salvadoran syncretism called El Día de la Cruz, celebrated on May 3 and which evokes the abundance of the harvests. This tradition of Nahuatl origin fused with Christianity and holds a secret in one of its elements. The cross is the protagonist of this celebration, but it must be made from jiote wood which, due to its peeling characteristics, is associated with the Nahuatl god Shipetz Tuteku. The Nahuatl-Christian practice of placing an altar of fruit in front of a cross, fruits that will be eaten by the spectators. This image refers to a pre-Hispanic Nahuatl artifact that was found a place that was a ceremonial center for this god. This artifact was registered and was expatriated .

“We could say that the work also acts through traversability, breaking with the fixed notion of temporality and spatiality, making everything implicated in the experience of Corpus Infinitum, because at this moment what exists is a singular expression of each and every other existent. An artwork that allows Herbert De Paz’s ancestry to be reborn in the earth along with Kuskatan’s fields of corn, which in turn invites the audience to be part of this experience by bringing them to reference Shipetz Tuteku and to thank the fruit offered by the earth.”

Paula Borghi, Curator.





Ainda Viva, Curated by Bruna Costa & Paula Borghi. Casa de Cultura do Parque, São Paulo, 2024.



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Expat #6 Inca Kero, Jaguar Head (Expatriado #10 Kero Inca, Cabeça de Jaguar)

oil and acrylic on canvas

40 x 30 cm

The Expatriates series

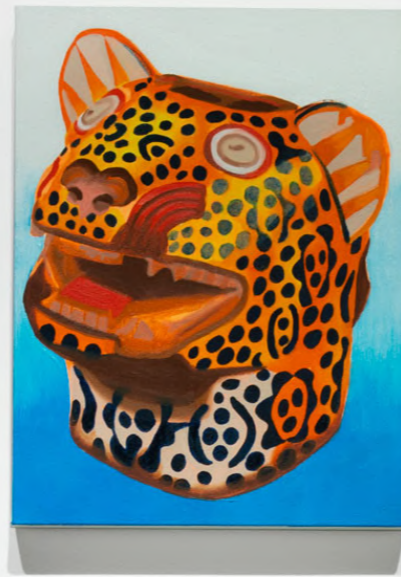
2023

The Expatriates series takes as a reference records of artifacts from both the Americas and Africa, which have been displaced from their territories of origin, and proposes a reflection on the agency of these objects on the part of the peoples to which they belong and the demand of the “luxury antiques” market in the global north, which makes them the protagonists of million-dollar transactions, opening up discussions on the agency and repatriation of cultural goods on the part of the peoples to which they belong. The image references for these paintings are taken from the main international auction houses.

“The masks, scenes, objects and personalities are not just images. The paintings do not remain still on the surface of the canvas. His work calls out, evokes, drags towards our eyes a practice of the certainty of other and multiple existences that come together and constitute themselves, beyond the linearity of destruction.”

Keyna Eleison, Curator.

Photography: Vicente de Mello



La Sangre Nunca Muere, Curated by Keyna Eleison. Cassia Bomeny Gallery, Rio de Janeiro, 2023. Photography: Vicente de Mello

Herbert De Paz

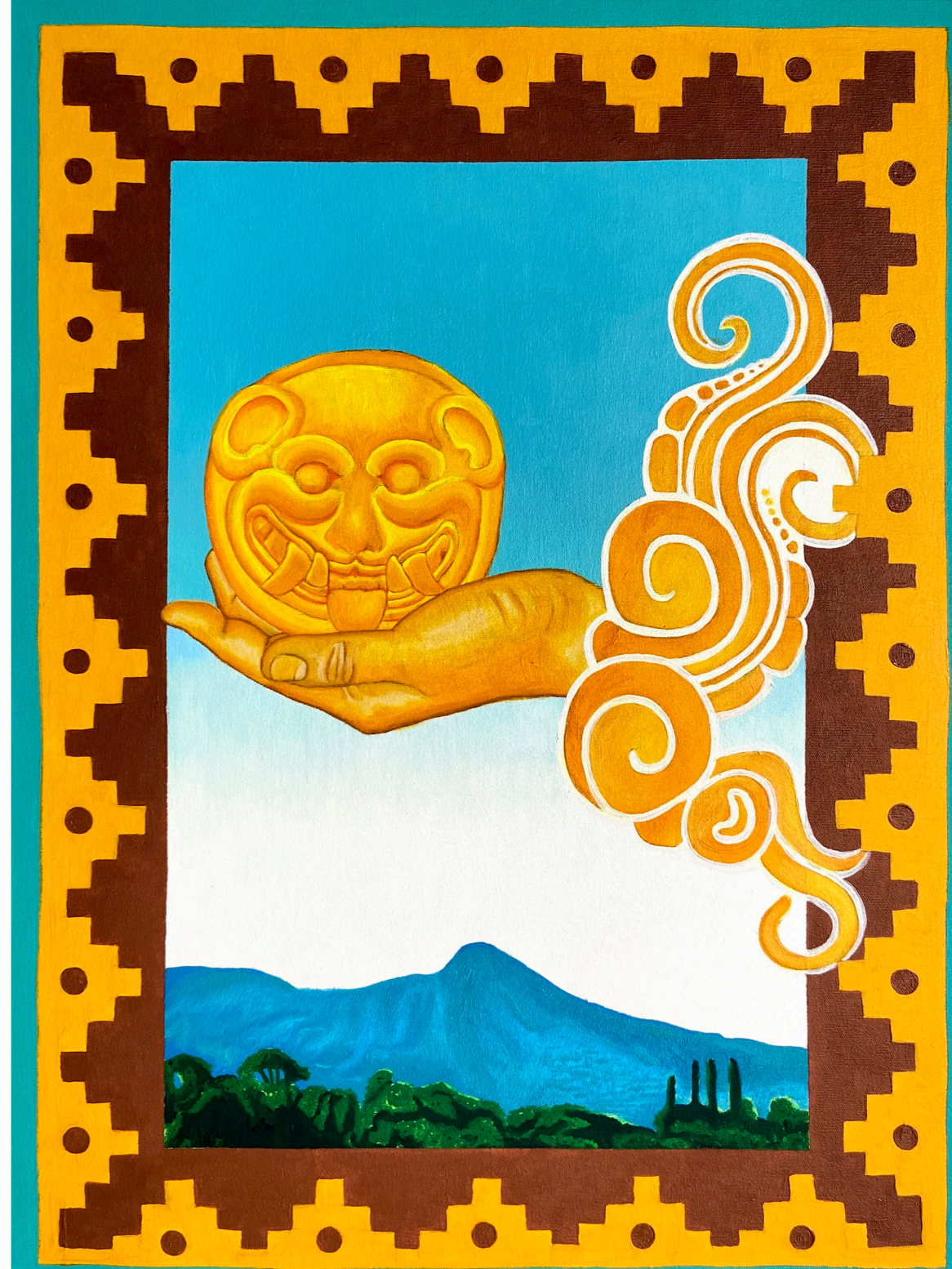
Kuskatan, Picacho's view (Kuskatan, vista del Picacho)

oil and acrylic on canvas

80 x 60 cm

2025

In my house in the neighborhood of La Sabana we had a view of the volcano and the Picacho but that view was eliminated with the construction of the Diego de Holguin highway, that view dominates the entire region of Santa Tecla and Merliot city, where I was raised. The Jaguar Disk was always present in the imaginary for having been the image of a bank, the truth is that this artifact of the Cotzumalhuapa culture, was strongly present in the imaginary of those who grew up in the 90s. I made this painting with all the love I feel for this territory that the ancestors called Kuskatan, which later was deformed to Cuzcatlan and then became the farce of a Republic of El Salvador. I do not believe in “patriotic symbols” but I do believe in our Nahua roots and all that Eurocentrism and Hispanophilia could not annihilate because it still pulses strong.



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Exodus 20:12 (Exodo 20:12)

oil and acrylic on canvas

1500 x 200 cm

La Sangre Nunca Muere series

2023



I wanted to give the painting this name because I was talking about ancestors, those originally from their territory who were forced to give up their beliefs and culture in order to praise the Catholic god, as well as those who were kidnapped and taken to distant lands, Nahua and Bantu people. This passage is in the book of Exodus, and in the painting I'm also talking about my journey. In the narrative I created in my head, the Time Magician appeared to mark my journey on his watch and validate my choice to be a traveler. At the top left, a portrait of me as a child and I also wanted to place the Jaguar Disc, an artifact from the Cotzumalhuapa culture found in the western region of El Salvador, and on it the Skull Kid playing his flute.

“The blood that pulses in him and in his ideas and stories, brings to his hand a construction of a text of a culture that receives, moves and establishes itself without denying its violence, which is not only in the past and in the construction of the idea of nation, but in everyday life that insists on erasing the evident plural.”

Keyna Eleison, Curator.

Photography: Vicente de Mello





La Sangre Nunca Muere, Curated by Keyna Eleison. Cassia Bomeny Gallery, Rio de Janeiro, 2023. Photography: Vicente de Mello

Herbert De Paz

Who take care of me doesn't sleep (Quien me cuida no duerme)

oil and acrylic on canvas

90 x 120 cm

La Sangre Nunca Muere series

2024

Returning to El Salvador after 7 years without going made me realize the things that have changed and those that remain the same or worse. We can't really deny that urban environments are now spaces that can be used; the country sells itself as "the safest country in the world" and prides itself on its high tech maximum security prisons, but at what cost?

This painting is my reflection. Who takes care of us? Who takes care of them? Precarious work is what exists here, who put their armed bodies and are watching over this security? What is their skin color and origin? The consequences of the 1932 massacre against the indigenous people persist.

May that half of life that remained never stop pulsating and moving to question the power dynamics that frightened our grandmothers and grandfathers 500 years ago and that today condemn us to live in fear.

In the words of the poet Roque Dalton:

"We were all born half dead in 1932.

To be Salvadoran is to be half dead

that which moves

is half of the life that was left to us" (...)







Herbert De Paz

Blood Never Dies (La Sangre Nunca Muere)

oil and acrylic on canvas

100 x 80 cm

La Sangre Nunca Muere series

2023

My territory known as El Salvador, formerly Kuskatan, Nahuatl territory that during the first centuries of colonization was an Afro-diasporic and indigenous territory. The slave ships were mostly made up of African men of Bantu origin who were forced to work the land and, while there, had relationships with Nahuatl women, which ensured that their descendants were free from the logic of domination imposed by the Europeans.

"Blood never dies because it is a vehicle. A vehicle of metals like iron, which makes the color red and aligns what was lived when metals pierced bodies and made blood fertilize the soil. A vehicle of memories and technologies that prevent the structure from making us forget. Blood that marks doors, trajectories, experiences and people."

Keyna Eleison, Curator.

Photography: Vicente de Mello



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**Moctezuma told Hernan Cortes to leave
(Moctezuma le dijo a Hernán Cortés que se fuera)**

oil and acrylic on canvas

90 x 120 cm

La Sangre Nunca Muere series

2023

When the Spaniards arrived in the Mexica Empire, Moctezuma welcomed them with hospitality, offering banquets and comfortable palace rooms for the leaders. Little did he know that the Spaniards wanted to steal his gold, but when he realized this, he asked them to leave the palace. Dissatisfied, the Spaniards set up a plot against him and left him in a private prison inside the palace. This caused serious problems between the Mexicas and the Spanish. The Spanish then killed Moctezuma and tried to perpetuate the story that he was stoned by his own people. This was the beginning of Spanish colonization in the Americas.

“Digging up memories in many of the possibilities. The technology of memory can manifest itself and, in the same way, teach, from sound proposals that, even if not explicitly placed, invite us to listen to what each of the images that Herbert makes appear and make up his entire visual spectrum. We see and see again and again so that we can reach his gesture, on the canvas and today...”

Keyna Eleison, Curator.

Photography: Vicente de Mello







La Sangre Nunca Muere, Curated by Keyna Eleison. Cassia Bomeny Gallery, Rio de Janeiro, 2023. Photography: Vicente de Mello

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Benkos Biohó, Homage to San Basilio de Palenque (Benkos Biohó, homenaje a San Basilio de Palenque)

oil and acrylic on canvas

150 x 150 cm

2022

There are few records that tell the story of Benkos Biohó (also known as Domingos Biohó). He is said to have been an African prince and was responsible for organizing an uprising in Cartagena (formerly Nueva Granada) in the Colombian Caribbean along with other Africans who were taken there by the Spanish at the beginning of the 17th century. Benkos was originally from the islands of the Bijagós Archipelago (Biohó), which today form part of the territory that makes up Guinea-Bissau. The Bijagós men were warriors, excellent navigators and swimmers. Benkos and a group of Cimarrones fled from Cartagena through the Karibe River towards the Montes de María. On the way, they made alliances with the indigenous Zenu-Malibús and Chimilas, resisting the Spanish regime. Benkos Biohó and his companions founded Palenque de San Basilio, which today is inhabited by more than 4,000 people who maintain African traditions in the territory. He was captured in 1629 after a fight with the port guard and was murdered by the Spanish on March 16, 1621.





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**Gaspar Yanga, the first great liberator of the Americas
(Gaspar Yanga, el primer gran libertador de las Américas)**

oil and acrylic on canvas

150 x 150 cm

Museu de Arte do Rio (MAR) Collection

2022



Very little is known about the revolutionary Gaspar Yanga. From the historical records available, it is said that Yanga was a prince of the Bran (Bantu people), from the country that would become Gabon; in the middle of the 16th century he was taken to southern Mexico where the state of Veracruz is today. In 1570, Yanga fled the hacienda where he was working and organized a Quilombo, made up of Africans and indigenous Huasteca people, in the mountains of Veracruz, right on Orizaba Peak. His Quilombo remained there for more than 30 years, resisting the power of the Spanish. The story of Gaspar Yanga has stood the test of time and populates the imagination of Afromexicans. In 1871, he was declared a national hero of Mexico and “the first great liberator of the Americas”. The city of Yanga still exists today.







Sentido Comun, Curated by Bianca Bernardo. Anita Schwartz Gallery, Rio de Janeiro, 2022. Photography: Gabriela Carrera. Courtesy Anita Schwartz Gallery

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The Dance of the Historians (La Danza de los Historiantes)

oil and acrylic on canvas)

125 x 210 cm

La Danza de los Historiantes series

2021

The Dance of the Historians is part of Latin American tradition and was brought by the Spanish in 1500. Today, this popular manifestation is part of the cultural imagination of El Salvador, where the war between the Moors and Christians and the conflict of conversion to Christianity are represented. In this process, the indigenous people appropriated the custom and inserted new meanings that talk about their resistance to colonization.

“... An ode to non-standardized bodies that escape subjugation, through dance as an engine of freedom and insurrection. They also allude to a popular manifestation of the Americas, ordered by the representation of the conversion conflicts between Moors and Christians, the dance of the historians, a dance that was perpetuated by missionaries in the Americas, contributing to the imposition of Christianity as the only path short of annihilation....”

Aldones Nino, Curator.







Herbert De Paz

Herança (Heritage)
oil and acrylic on canvas
125 x 105 cm
2021

“In this sense, Leda Maria Martins proposes an understanding of the body as a portal of wisdom, where time is traversed through corporeal performance, so thinking about history beyond colonality requires attention to the transtemporal vehicles for maintaining life. In these works, we see overflows between evangelization and dance, based on episodes where the Americas, and the bodies that inhabited these lands, assert themselves as the pulsating movement of a dance in the midst of war. If the colonization undertaken by the State and the Clergy developed complex strategies of domination, the ibirapema, metamorphosed as a paintbrush, interrupts the continuity of the catechization of our imaginaries. In this sense, Herbert De Paz understands pictorial language as one of the possible axes of prefiguration of the world, affirming aesthetic proposals in opposition to images guided by interpretative methods and based on traumatic and violent spectres..”

Aldones Nino, Curator.

Photography: Pedro Agilson. Courtesy A Gentil Carioca



Herbert De Paz

Sighting (Avistamento)

oil and acrylic on canvas

100 x 160 cm

Instituto Inhotim Collection

2021



An engraving by Rugendas serves as the basis for this painting. What would the world be like if the Portuguese caravels had sunk before reaching our territory?

“Increasingly, the way in which canons are operated in the field of art history seeks possibilities for (re)elaborating pasts, through a critical positioning of the traditional regime of image circulation. In the research of Salvadoran artist Herbert De Paz, the colonial processes of artistic and cultural interpretation are dissolved in the decoupage of the rudiments of a Euro-Christian episteme. His paintings reveal insurgent silhouettes, representing a complex field of discursive dispute over socially generated ways of seeing and inhabiting the world.”

Aldones Nino, Curator.

Photography: Vicente de Mello





Ibirapema: Pinturas de Herbert De Paz, Curated by Aldones Nino. A Gentil Carioca Gallery, Rio de Janeiro, 2021. Photography: Pedro Agilson. Courtesy A Gentil Carioca

Herbert De Paz

Remniscence (Reminiscença) and Posthumous Memoirs (Memórias Postumas) [below]

oil and acrylic on canvas

160 x 69 cm and 160 x 61 cm

Iconography of Shadows series

Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA) Miami Collection.

The series proposes a dive into the archive of images from the history of the colonization of Brazil and the Americas that were published in the Revista de História da Biblioteca Nacional (2005 - 2017) and seeks to discuss them from a perspective that questions the relationship and origin of the images themselves. I seek to reconstruct the collective memory marked by the erasures and violence that racialized people have suffered resulting in the annihilation of peoples who had been here for thousands of years and the kidnapping of millions of Africans who landed in these lands to serve the economy of the local elites.

A silhouette within the composition of the collage is chosen and enlarged to be filled, so who presents us with the narrative is a witness from the past who reminds us that none of these images is a self-representation. For a long time, these images were understood as documents faithful to reality; today it is recognized that they mix the real with fiction.





Photography: Rafael Salim. Courtesy Fortes D'Aloia & Gabriel



Escreto no Corpo, curated by Keyna Eleison & Victor Gorgulho, 2020, Carpintaria, Rio de Janeiro Photography: Eduardo Ortega. Courtesy Fortes D'Aloia & Gabriel

Herbert De Paz (b. 1991, Santa Tecla–El Salvador.)

Lives and works in Rio de Janeiro, Brasil.

Education

IART — Instituto de Arte, Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro (UERJ)

Bacharelado em Artes Visuais 2013–2018.

Mestrado em História da Arte 2020-2024, Programa de Pós Graduação em História da Arte (PPGHA).

EAV — Escola de Artes Visuais do Parque Lage

Programa Fundamentação 2013 – 2015

Programa Formação & Deformação 2018

Collections

Intituto Inhotim (Brasil)

Institute of Contemporary Art Miami (ICA)

Museu de Arte do Rio (MAR)

Residency

[2024] La Fabrica sponsored by Yes Contemporary. La Libertad, El Salvador,

Solo Exhibition

[2023] La Sangre Nunca Muere — Cassia Bomeny Gallery, Curated by Keyna Eleison. Rio de Janeiro.

[2021] Ibirapema: pinturas de Herbert De Paz — A Gentil Carioca Gallery. Curated by Aldones Nino. Rio de Janeiro.

Group exhibitions

[2025] Abraço Coletivo — Lanchonete-Lanchonete, Curated by Bruna Costa and Paula Borghi. Rio de Janeiro.

[2025] In the light that remains — Kates-Ferri Projects, Curated by Studio Lenca. New York.

[2025] Ramas y Raíces — Casa 510. Curated by Simón Vega, San Salvador.

[2024] Ainda Viva — Casa de Cultura do Parque. Curated by Bruna Costa e Paula Borghi, São Paulo.

[2024] Subasta Beneficiente SUMARTE — Museo de Arte de El Salvador, San Salvador.

2024] Subasta Beneficiente — Revista Terremoto, Ciudad de México,

[2024] Habitando No Lugares — La Fábrica. Curated by Simón Vega, La Libertad, El Salvador.

[2023] Lz Arte — LZ Studio. Curated by Ademar Britto. Rio de Janeiro.

[2023] Corpo Botânico — Parque da Catacumba/Arte Clube Jacaranda. Curated by Vicente de Mello. Rio de Janeiro.

[2023] Quadrantes da Miragem — Ateliê 31. Curadted by Shannon Botelho. Rio de Janeiro.

[2022] Arte como Oferenda — Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro. Curated by João Vergara. Rio de Janeiro.

[2022] Raio a Raio — Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro. Curated by Ariana Nuala. Rio de Janeiro.

[2022] Sentido Comum — Anita Schwartz Gallery. Curated by Bianca Bernardo. Rio de Janeiro.

[2021] Engraved into the Body — Tanya Bonakdar Gallery. Curated by Keyna Eleison & Victor Gorgulho. New York.

[2020] Escrito no Corpo — Carpintaria (Fortes D'Aloia & Gabriel). Curated by Keyna Eleison & Victor Gorgulho. Rio de Janeiro.

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