PORTASVILASECA



LOOP 2026

17.11 – 19.11.2026

LOOP 2026

AYRSON HERÁCLITO
Born in Macaúbas, Bahia, Brazil, 1968
Live and works between Cachoeira and Salvador, Bahia, Brazil

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17.11 – 19.11.2026



Ayrson Heráclito
O Sacudimento da Casa da Torre e o Sacudimento da Maison des Esclaves em Gorée, 2015
[The Cleansing of Casa da Torre and the Cleansing of Maison des Esclaves in Gorée]
Two channel video installation, full HD, colour, sound, loop
8’ 38” (each)



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TECHNICAL INFO

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COLLECTIONS

MASP – Museum of Art of São Paulo Assis Chateaubriand, Brazil.
Andrea and José Olympio Pereira Collection, Brazil.
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, USA.
Fundación TBA21, Madrid, Spain.
Associação Cultural Videobrasil, Brazil.

AWARDS

Golden Lion for Best National Participation .
18th International Architecture Exhibition.
La Biennale di Venezia, 2023.
[Terra Pavillion]
Curated by: Gabriela de Matos and Paulo Tavares.

SYNOPSIS

In one of Heráclito's most widely exhibited works internationally, we witness the most direct gesture of African Atlantic relations. The artist separates purification herbs, which he calls "hot leaves" (gun), such as pepper tree leaves, snake plants (espada de Ògún, or Dracaena trifasciata, and espada de Iansã, or Dracaena trifasciata Laurentii), and mango leaves, adding local leaves from the places where the installation is held. He is accompanied by other performers.

Two initial actions launched the work, one performed on Gorée Island off the coast of Senegal, and the other at Casa da Torre de Garcia d'Avila in Mata de São João, Bahia, Brazil. In both cases the buildings were originally trans-Atlantic slave trading posts.

In Senegal, the action took place on two days, lasting some 20 hours. When conceiving the performance, the artist tells us that he was not interested in dealing with the "documental truth", since it "has always served a hegemonic narrative that silences, erases, and distorts black and indigenous peoples' experiences". On the contrary, Heráclito intensifies the symbolic nature of renewal, although the awareness constituting the trauma obviously remains activated: "What moves me is to shake this official history, to destabilize its foundations, and to claim an African-centered narrative that was denied to us by the Eurocentric perspectives," the artist states.

In the context of Candomblé, an African diasporic religion, these acts of healing are vital. The plants used in these rituals, with names like "path opener," "battle winner," and "knock it all down," are imbued with ancestral lore and resonate with universal themes of resistance, resilience, and renewal.

The act of bridging continents and histories becomes even more profound when the healing and reparation are carried out through the ancient practices of Yoruba culture. By performing sacred rituals to cleanse the detention castle on Gorée Island and the house in Bahia, this process symbolizes a collective acknowledgment of past atrocities and a commitment to healing. It not only honors the memory of those who suffered but also paves the way for a future rooted in justice, reconciliation, and the enduring strength of cultural memory.

Maison des Esclaves on Gorée Island in Senegal was a notorious site of immense suffering connected to colonial history and the transatlantic slave trade. Gorée Island, once a key departure point for enslaved Africans, symbolizes the brutal journey of the Middle Passage, where millions were forcibly transported to the Americas under horrific conditions.

Casa da Torre, in Bahia, Brazil, was once owned by a prominent landowner and enslaver of Indigenous peoples. Constructed of stone and lime as a colonial-era fortress, it stands not only as a monument to colonial architecture but also as a repository of a painful history of exploitation, enslavement, and oppression. Its legacy reflects the enduring impact of colonialism and slavery in the Americas.



Ayrson Heráclito: Yorùbáiano (2022)
Curated by Amanda Bonan, Ana Maria Maia, Marcelo Campos
Pinacoteca de São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil



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18th International Architecture Exhibition, *The Laboratory of the Future*, La Biennale di Venezia (2023)
Curated by Gabriela de Matos and Paulo Tavares
Terra [Earth] Pavillion, Venice, Italy



The Ecologies of Peace II (2024-2025)
Curated by Daniela Zyman
TBA21 + C3A Centro de Creación Contemporánea de Andalucía, Córdoba, Spain



EXHIBITION HISTORY

- 2015 – *Généalogie des Matières*. Curated by Koyo Kouoh. RAW Material Company, Dakar, Senegal.
- 2015 – *Novo Banco Photo 2015*. Jury: Adriano Pedrosa, Bisi Silva and Luís Silva.
  Berardo Collection Museum, Lisbon, Portugal.
- 2015 – *Arte Pará*. Museu do Estado do Pará. Curated by Paulo Herkenhoff. Belém, Pará, Brazil.
- 2015 – *Miroir-Effacement*. Curated by Gabriela Salgado. Imane Farès Gallery, Paris, France.
- 2017 – *57th Venice Biennale | Viva Arte Viva*. Curated by Christine Macel. Arsenale, Venice, Italy.
- 2017 – *Axé Bahia: the power of art in an Afro-Brazilian metropoli*s, part of the Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA. Curated by Patrick A. Polk, Randal Johnson, Roberto Conduru and Sabrina Gledhill. Fowler Museum, University of California in Los Angeles, Los Angeles, USA.
- 2017 – *Zwischen Erde und Meer: Transatlantische Kunst*. Curated by Mona Suhrbier and Jane de Hohenstein. Weltkulturen Museum, Frankfurt, Germany.
- 2018 – *Ecos do Atlântico Sul*. Curated by Uriel Bezerra and Ines Linke. Instituto Goethe, Salvador, Brazil.
- 2018 – *Acts of Passage*. Curated by Gabriela Salgado. Te Tuhi Contemporary Art, Auckland, New Zeland.
- 2018 – *Colonial Repercussions: Symposium I, "(Post-)Colonial Injustice and Legal Interventions"*.
  Akademie der Künste, Berlin, Germany.
- 2019 – *Ecos do Atlântico Sul*. Curated by Uriel Bezerra and Inês Linke. Pivô Space, São Paulo, Brazil.
- 2020 – *Sacudimentos*, Mostra Videobrasil online. Curated by Solange Farkas. Online.
- 2020 – *Songs froma a forgotten past: works from the British Council, LUX and Videobrasil Historical Collection*. Curated by Tendai John Mutambu and Luise Malmaceda.
  Tomie Ohtake Institute, São Paulo, Brazil.
- 2021 – *RESIST!* Museo Rautenstrauch-Joest, Cologne, Germany.
- 2021-2022 – *YORÙBÁIANO*. Curated by Marcelo Campos, Amanda Bonan and Ana Maria Maia.
  MAR – Museu de Arte do Rio, Rio de Janeiro, RJ, Brazil and Pinacoteca de São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil.
- 2022 – *Adjustable Monuments*. Sammlung Philara Museum, Düsseldorf, Germany.
- 2023 – *Um oceano para lavar as mãos*. Curated by Marcelo Campos and Filipe Graciano.
  Sesc Quitandinha, Petrópolis, Brazil.
- 2023 – *Agô*. Museu de Arte Contemporânea – MAC, Salvador, Brazil.
- 2023 – 18th International Architecture Exhibition, *The Laboratory of the Future*, La Biennale di Venezia – Terra [Earth] Pavillion. Curated by Gabriela de Matos and Paulo Tavares. Venice, Italy.
- 2023 – *EWÊ | OMÍ*. Curated by Catarina Duncan, Portas Vilaseca, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.
- 2024-2025 – *The Ecologies of Peace II*. Curated by Daniela Zyman.
  TBA21 + C3A Centro de Creación Contemporánea de Andalucía, Córdoba, Spain.





AYRSON HERÁCLITO

1968, Born in Macaúbas, BA, Brazil
Live and works between Cachoeira and Salvador, BA, Brazil

A visual artist, curator, and professor whose research focuses on Afro-Brazilian cultural elements and their connections to Africa and the African diaspora across the Americas. His multidisciplinary practice encompasses installation, performance, photography, and video. Engaging deeply with art history, he articulates a contemporary understanding of art's spiritual dimension, drawing on ancestral forces and exploring its relationship to the invisible.

Ayrson Heráclito's artistic practice is defined not as didactic, but as "initiatory," operating as a contemporary approach to rite that bridges the institutional art system with the sociability of the terreiro. This is most evident in his ambitious **Juntó** project (2020 – in progress), which explores the Afro-Brazilian concept of the duality of deities guiding an individual: the primary orixá and the complementary orixá. The project aims to eventually depict all 222 possible combinations of the sixteen most worshiped deities in Brazil. By navigating these sacred taxonomies, Heráclito constructs a "counter-colonial consciousness" that uses allegory to interrogate history and affirm the autonomous forms of Afro-diasporic thought.

Selected solo shows and biennials: 61ST Venice Biennale – In Minor Keys, curated by Koyo Kouoh (*in memoriam*), Venice, Italy (2026); Bienal Internacional de Arte de Antioquia y Medellín, Colombia (2025); 15TH Bienal de La Habana, Cuba (2025); 35TH Sao Paulo Biennial, curated by Diane Lima, Grada Kilomba, Hélio Menezes and Manuel Borja-Villel, São Paulo, Brazil (2023); Biennale Architettura 2023 – 18TH International Architecture Exhibition, curated by Gabriela de Matos and Paulo Tavares, Venice, Italy (2023); Yorùbáiano, Museu de Arte do Rio – MAR, Rio de Janeiro, and Pinacoteca de São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil (2021-2022); the 57TH Venice Biennale – Viva Arte Viva, curated by Christine Macel, Venice, Italy (2017).

[For CV, click here]



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