



BANDITS & HEROES POETS & SAINTS

POPULAR ART OF THE NORTHEAST OF BRAZIL



AMARO FRANCISCO

Amaro Francisco Borges

Olinda, Pernambuco

Por Causa de Fome e Sede Dexei Meu Nordeste, n.d.

Because of Hunger and Thirst, I Left my Northeast

Woodblock print, 19 x 26"

The **sertão** (sehr-TOUN) is a desert-like, dry and sparsely populated place that comprises the interior of the Northeast of Brazil. It's also known as the backlands. Historically, fugitives from enslavement and later cattle-ranheres called the sertão home.

Survival is hard in this harsh environment. Often terrible droughts afflict the area and people and animals starve. During these droughts, many families were forced to leave their homes and move South to the large cities in search of work. They are known as **retirantes** (hey-chee-RAHN-tes). This woodcut print depicts retirantes leaving their homes.



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ADENOR GONDIM

Candomblé Ceremony with Yansan

Color Photograph, 11 x 16½"

Spirituality is central to the lives of the people of Northeast Brazil. One religion, *Candomblé* (pronounced kah-n-dom-BLAY), blends elements of traditional African religion, primarily Yoruba, with elements of Brazilian culture to create a distinctive Afro-Brazilian religion. Music, dance, and ecstatic ritual are utilized as means for Candomblé practitioners to enter into communication with the spiritual world.

This photograph takes the viewer inside of a Candomblé ceremony.



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ALFREDO CRUZ

Salvador, Bahia

Capoeira, 1994

Acrylic on canvas, 12 x 16¼"

Capoeira (kop-o-WAY-ra) is a form of martial art that was often masked as a dance. Capoeira focuses on the legs and feet and capoeiristas are forbidden from striking with their hands. Instead they employ handstands, leaps and kicks to better their opponents, while moving to the rhythm of the music. Capoeiristas do not exactly compete, but rather “play” and aim with their partner to produce the best performance possible.

This painting depicts two capoeiristas engaging each other within a circle accompanied by musicians playing a drum, tambourine, agogô, and a berimbau, a one-stringed instrument.



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GERAL CABUETA

Juazeiro do Norte, Ceará

Carranca, n.d.

Painted wood, height 32"

Historically, a *carranca* (ca-HAHN-ka) is a wooden carving attached to the front of a riverboat. In Portuguese, carranca means “scowl.” These figureheads are human or animal faces that traditionally have a scowl or menacing face to frighten away intruders. Carrancas were once found on the São Francisco River in the Northeast.

In addition to serving as guardians, carrancas also identified the different merchants travelling the waterway.



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ANONYMOUS

Juazeiro do Norte, Ceará

Ex-votos, n.d.

Wood

In Salvador the Church of the Bonfim is known as a place of miracles to both Catholics and practitioners of Candomblé. Thousands of ex-votos, some like the ones pictured here, hangs from the ceiling and are posted on the walls. Ex-votos are offerings (carved or wax representations of hands, feet, eyes or hearts) as well as handwritten notes or photographs left at a shrine or holy place as a prayer of thanksgiving or petition for healing.



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JOSÉ ADÁRIO
Salvador, Bahia
Exu, c. 1996
Iron symbol of the Exu
Forged iron, height 34"

These iron objects, called *ferramentas*, are abstract representations of spirits and are used in Candomblé. They are often found in shrines or altars. This iron work celebrates Exu, a messenger deity who opens doors and pathways – or closes them.



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ANTÔNIO NETO
Salvador, Bahia
Colored photograph

The people of the Northeast of Brazil are warm and welcoming, creative and joyous. The heritage and customs of the Northeast come from African, European and indigenous roots. This photograph captures the loving and welcoming spirit of the people there.



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J. BORGES

Bezerros, Pernambuco

O Monstro do Sertão, 2002

The Monster of the Backlands

Woodblock print, 26 x 19"

The title of this piece is translated “The Monster of the Sertão” and refers to the burning sun. The writing on the print says, “I am a beautiful thing made by the Creator. I heat and light the world. But I am the terror of the sertão, because I can destroy of the growth of the poor farmer.”

The woodcut is a Portuguese art form that was transplanted to Brazil. The method of printing involves carving an image into a flat piece of wood, then rolling ink over the raised surface and stamping it onto paper. Woodcut printing is a popular way of making covers for the little poetry books known as *literatura de cordel*.



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SOL BAHIA

José Claudio Cavalcante de Azevedo
Salvador, Bahia

Os Sem Terra, 2002

Movement of the Landless

Acrylic on canvas, 23 x 31"

Throughout the history of the northeast of Brazil, leaders and heroes have helped common people take action to better their lives. This painting shows a contemporary movement called the Movement of Those Without Land (*Movimento Sem Terra*), which has united landless people to claim and settle on unused land.



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MNW

Juazeiro do Norte, Ceará

Padre Cícero, n.d.

Wood carving, height 30"

Padre Cícero was a Catholic priest revered in the Northeast for his love for the poor. Though brought up in affluent surroundings, Padre Cícero left his comfortable home to work in Juazeiro do Norte – helping farmers, building churches and schools, and helping and counseling thousands. Today a large statue of Padre Cícero stands on the hill overlooking the city of Juazeiro. Every year pilgrimages are made in his honor; they attract hundreds of thousands of prayerful followers from all over the Northeast.



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GILVAN LIMA
Gilvan de Cruz Lima
Salvador, Bahia
Pelourinho, 1997
Acrylic on canvas, 27 x 19"

The Pelourinho (pel-oo=REEN-yo) is the historic center of the city of Salvador. Established in 1549, Salvador was the first capital of Brazil. Today the Pelourinho is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and contains the largest concentration of colonial architecture in the Americas.



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ORLANDO (JLF)

José Leite Fernandez

Aurora, Ceará

Banda de Pifanos, n.d.

Wood, height 19"

These five carved wooden statues celebrate a musical tradition in Brazil. The piece pays homage to the pifanos (or pifes), Brazilian flutes, which are a product of cultural fusion. They are made of bamboo, just like the instruments used by several native groups, but they have holes positioned like those in European flutes. Pifanos are very common in the Northeast of Brazil.



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SOL BAHIA

José Claudio Cavalcante de Azevedo

Salvador, Bahia

Revolta dos Malês – Estrada de Liberdade, 2004

The Muslim Revolt – Road of Liberty

Acrylic on canvas, 24 x 31"

Malês, from the Yoruba word imale for Muslim, were able to organize a number of slave revolts in Bahia because they were literate and, unlike the Portuguese slave-owners, could communicate by writing. The largest of these revolts was in 1835 when about 600 Africans, both enslaved and freedmen, were mobilized to rise up for freedom. However, their plan was betrayed and they were overcome by government forces within three hours. At least 70 rebels were killed and, in the trial that followed, sentences included execution, whippings, prison, and the deportation of freedmen back to Africa.



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ALFREDO CRUZ

Salvador, Bahia

Senzala, 1992

Slave Quarters

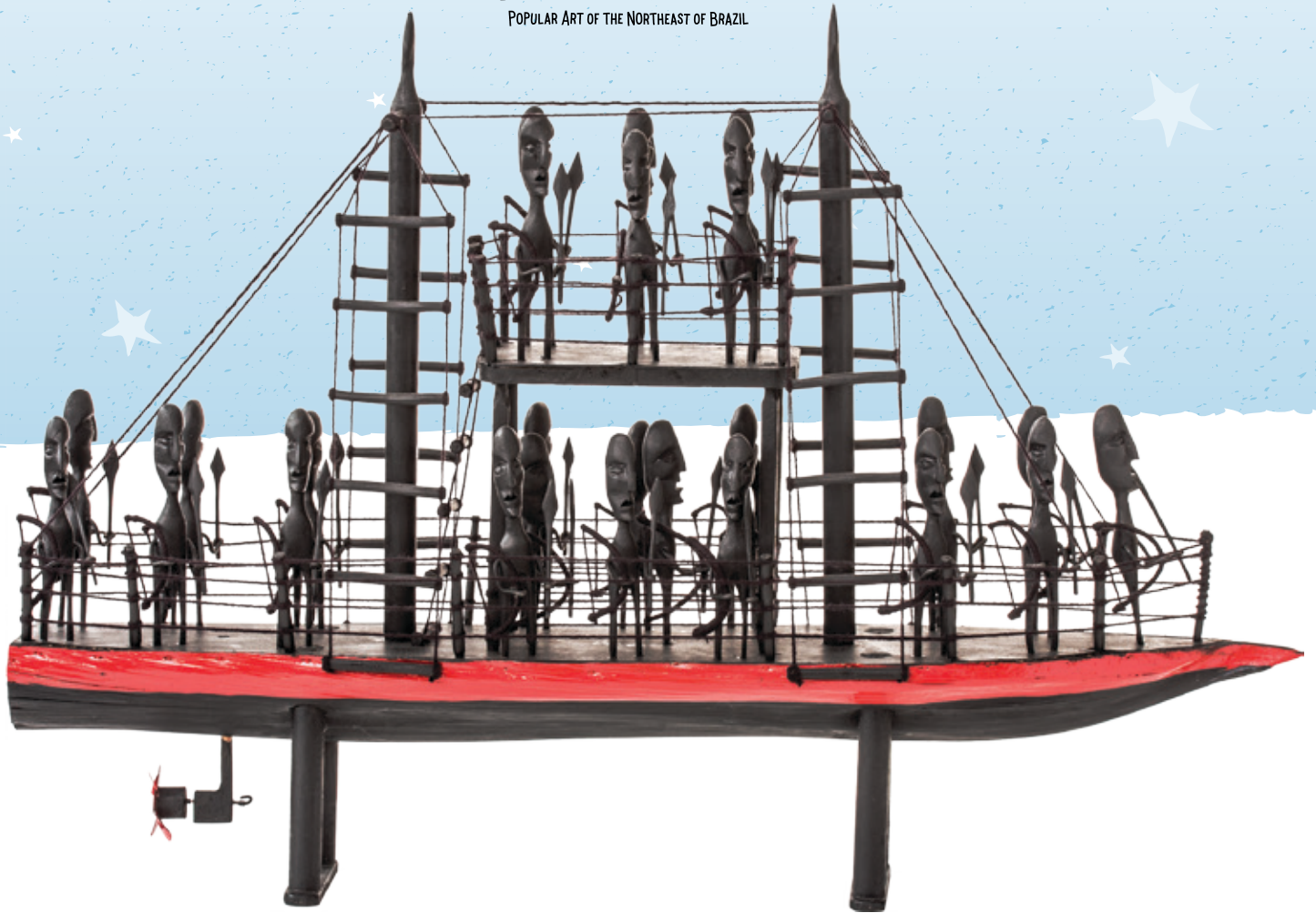
Acrylic on Canvas, 19 x 27"

Enslavement of African people in Brazil lasted for about 350 years and made about 5 million African forced laborers in Brazil. Plantation owners gained great wealth from their labors. Enslaved Africans lived in very simple compounds known as senzalas on the plantations; these were located a distance from the great houses of the landowners. This painting is a modern depiction of life in the senzala.



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JOSÉ ALVES DE OLINDA

Olinda, Pernambuco

Navio Negreiro, 2011

Slave Ship

Painted gourd, wood, tin and cord, 36 x 20"

This sculpture by a contemporary Brazilian artist represents the ships on which enslaved Africans were brought to the Americas. Between the years of 1530 and 1888 approximately 3½ to 5 million Africans were brought forcibly to Brazil to work on sugar plantations, build cities, and work as servants in the homes. During those years they also brought with them their culture and skills, and influenced the development of the country.



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ZÉ CELESTINO

José Celestino da Silva
Juazeiro do Norte, Ceará

O Greve, 2011

The Strike

Wood, 13 x 23 x 18"

The scene depicts a workers' strike. The people shown are ordinary people, called the *povo* (PO-voh). Clashes between the povo and the wealthy landowners and politicians often center around human rights and working conditions.

Woodcarving is one of the oldest of art forms and is still an important part of Brazilian popular culture.



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MOISES & MOISES

Salvador, Bahia

Trio Elétrico, 1996

Painted tin and wood, 30 x 68 x 14"

This model represents a special invention that comes from Salvador, Bahia. The trio-elétrico is a kind of truck with a high-power sound system and a group of musicians on the roof, playing for a crowd. It was created specifically for the celebration of Carnival. The name was coined in 1951 when two musicians invited a friend to perform with them. They decided to play on the back of a Chrysler pick-up and the "electric duo" became the "electric trio." Though the name was created for the little band, it quickly became associated with their invention. Since then the trio-elétrico has grown in size and popularity throughout Brazil and South America.



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ORLANDO (JLF)
José Leite Fernandes
Aurora, Ceará
Vaqueiro, 2007
Wood, height 30"

Vaqueiros (pronounced 'va-KEHR-ohs') are the cowboys of the dry backlands of the Northeast Brazil, an area known as the **sertão** ('sehr-TOUN') These cowboys often dressed in leather, drove cattle over large tracts of land, and had the responsibility of caring for them and ensuring their survival. The sertão is a very inhospitable environment and is prone to periods of extended drought called **secas** (SEH-kahs) when wells and even rivers dry up. Vaqueiros relied on their knowledge of the land and their own resourcefulness to survive.



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NILO DOS SANTOS

Salvador, Bahia

Yemanjá, n.d.

Woodblock print, 26 x 19"

In Candomblé the deities are known as *orixás* (o-ree-SHAS). The orixás can be viewed as deities as well as the different aspects of God. The orixás each have their own story, their own temperament, and their own symbols, such as fans, swords, bows and arrows.

Although enslaved Africans were forced to worship at Catholic Churches, many saw similarities between the saints and the orixás. Because Africans were determined to retain their own tradition and beliefs, eventually orixás became identified with certain saints.

This print commemorates Yemanjá, the divinity of the oceans and of motherhood.



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SOL BAHIA

José Claudio Cavalcante de Azevedo
Salvador, Bahia

Zumbi dos Palmares, 2004
Acrylic on canvas, 27 x 19½"

Zumbi, the subject of this painting, is a legendary hero among African Brazilians. Born in the *quilombo* (free African community) of Palmares in 1655, Zumbi was captured and raised by the Portuguese. As a teenager, he escaped and returned to Palmares and fought for its independence, becoming its final leader. Distrusting overtures of peaceful settlement from the Portuguese, Zumbi continued his fight for freedom, not just of Palmares, but of all Africans in Brazil. Palmares was destroyed by the Portuguese in 1695, and Zumbi was killed in battle in November of 1697. November 20th is known in Brazil as the Day of Black Consciousness and is a celebration in honor of Zumbi.