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**Title:** How does one consider the archive as a place of knowledge production, rather than solely of preservation of memory? *Archive and Fiction*: an experiment with artists at the Public Archive of the State of Bahia (3rd Bahia Biennale, Brazil, 2014).

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**Abstract**

This paper aims to examine the pressing need to find new models of use of archives, by means of their contact with art and of cooperation projects between cultural institutions. To this end, we will analyze an experiment with artists at the Public Archive of the State of Bahia, on occasion of the 3rd Bahia Biennale (2014). How does one make a public archive public? The project was built upon this inquiry, in a bid to discuss the invisibility of archives in Brazil.

Remembrance is evocation, and effective evocation is witchcraft.[1]

Ruth Klüger

The purpose of this paper is to contribute to the discussions focusing on the problematic of the archive in the field of culture, with contemporary art as a guiding thread. We will address the issue here by analyzing the project for the 3rd Bahia Biennale[2] (2014), an arts event held in Salvador from May 29 to September 7, and the experience of the *Arquivo e Ficção* (Archive and Fiction) exhibition, for which artists were brought to the Public Archive of the State of Bahia to conduct research and create artworks involving the collection of Estácio de Lima Anthropological and Ethnographical Museum.

The paper is divided into three sections: a short history of the Bahia Biennale, the problematics of archive in the contemporary art field, and the curatorial experience at the Public Archive of the State of Bahia.

Firstly, we will need to address the history of the Bahia Biennale and its relationship with the question of memory. The 3rd Bahia Biennale took place 46 years after its last edition, in 1968, was shut down by the dictatorial military government (1964-1985). Thus, in resuming the project of a biennial in Bahia, the need to constitute an archive became pressing. With the traumatic shutting down of the 2nd Biennale, the incarceration of its organizers, and the seizure and disappearance of artworks deemed subversive by the military regime, whatever documentation about the event was available at that time either disappeared or was forgotten.

*How does one build an archive that does not exist?* As the project of holding biennial exhibits in Bahia was revisited, the structuring mission of the 3rd Biennale became that of creating its own archive, which did not exist hitherto. Memories had to be dug up from amid newspaper scraps, oral accounts and scattered documents. The desire to recount the histories of the Biennale's first and second editions (1966 and

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[1] (Assmann 2011: 277). Translations by the author.
[2] Funded by the Bahia state government, The Biennial had a total budget of R$ 7,000,000.00 (roughly
[2] Funded by the Bahia state government, The Biennial had a total budget of R$ 7,000,000.00 (roughly USD 2,310,080.00), lasted 100 days, occupied 45 venues, spanned thirty two cities, and welcomed approximately 181,000 people. The author was one of the event's curators.

1968, respectively) drove the conception of the 2014 edition, in the year when the country rememorates[3] the fifty years of the military coup d'état.

*How does one speak of trauma?* The process of revisiting the histories of the Biennale allowed us to understand that the shutting down of the 2nd Bahia Biennale was possibly the biggest act of repression in Brazilian art history. The fact was very seldom studied and appears as a footnote not only in the history of national art, but also in academic research work devoted to producing a genealogy of the relationship between the military dictatorship and visual arts in Brazil.

Considering this state of affairs, I must note that the intention of the 3rd Bahia Biennale was to be a step in the process of building and rebuilding its own archive, in an action intended to reintegrate the state's biennial exhibitions with the history of Brazilian art. It is possible to identify a basic bibliography for the criticism of art exhibitions in Brazil (Spricigo 2011: 127). However, to situate the questions raised by the Bahia Biennale within the field of criticism of Brazilian art exhibitions is a task for a different context.

A key point when it came to the format of the 3rd Bahia Biennale was to occupy existing "places" in the city, including churches, monasteries, *candomblé* worshipping grounds, public archives, private collections, art, museums of ethnography and sacred art, artist studios, libraries, film clubs, and cultural centers. This operation leads to decentralization, moving away from a single venue capable of representing the whole and towards a diffuse network of small centers. The refusal to build fake walls, as a reaction to the notion of neutrality and the isolation of art, and the dispersal of artists' thinking, to encompass culture in connection with the history of the spaces, characterize the model proposed for this Biennale.

In short, thus far I have tried to expose the context that surrounded the project for resuming biennial shows in Bahia and the emphasis on memory as the articulatory operation for the proposed curatorial practice. Having said that, before we go into the action in the Public Archive of the State of Bahia, we will need to look into the issue of the archive in the field of contemporary art.

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[3] In 2011, the establishment of the National Commission for Truth was enacted, with the goal of investigating, interviewing, and collecting documentation about the traumatic memory of military dictatorship in Brazil. The final report of the Commission was completed in 2014.

**The Archive in art**

The issue of the archive has been discussed at length in the art field; artists and curators alike have turned to archives as a source of research and production. Art historians pore over numerous studies to gain a grasp of art's ability to produce artistic documents. The same holds true of the field of research and of the need for a bibliographical revision of document management methodologies for the cataloguing of contemporary art works.

The early 21st century saw a host of exhibits and publications devoted to art practices connected with the archive. I shall focus on some examples of events held in the past few years, such as *Voilà! Le monde dans la tête* (2000), a group exhibition organized by Suzanne Pagé, Béatrice Parent, and artists Christian Boltanski and Bertrand Lavier at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, featuring approximately sixty artists from several countries. *Voilà!* dealt with collective memory and personal stories through practices associated with accumulation, collection, archive, encyclopedia and inventory.

A while earlier, between 1998 and 1999, another exhibition was held called *Deep Storage: Collecting, Storing, and Archiving in Art*. Curated by Ingrid Shaffner and guest curators, it travelled to the Haus der Kunst in Munich, Germany and the P.S.1 in Long Island, United States, featuring roughly 100 productions, by more than forty artists, about the problematics of archive.

In 2008, the exhibition *Archive Fever: Uses of the Document in Contemporary Art*, curated by Okwui Enwezor at New York's International Center of Photography, set out to explore the different ways in which artists appropriate and interrogate the documents and institutional structures of archive. To this end, the show worked with the premises that films and photographs are the primary archival materials utilized by artists, and that these media are archival objects *a priori*.

More recently, the 30th São Paulo Art Biennial, curated by Luis Pérez-Oramas in 2012, featured a curatorial section on the "Poetics of archive/archive of poetics," featuring a set of artists who produced artworks based on archives, or on artworks that were archives unto themselves, among other forms. It is interesting to note the seminal importance ascribed by Oramas, as he curated the Biennial, to Aby

Warburg's Atlas Mnemosyne. In this project, Warburg creates an uncatalogued archive that groups images on the basis of their similarity or dissimilarity. (Pérez-Oramas 2012: 38).

In his paper on artist archives, produced for the International Seminar on Museum Archives and Research, organized by MAC-USP in 2009, the historian Bezerra de Meneses conducts a fundamental survey of studies on the matter, among which I highlight the bibliographical revision by the historian Victoria Scott (2008). One must note that the elaboration of a bibliographic revision in itself demonstrates the existence of a significant body of texts.

To Scott, the ascertainment (in the past few years, special attention has been dispensed to archives in curatorial and artistic production) is associated with the desire to politically charge and expose the discourse and classification systems of archives and their organizational structures.

In a different approach, Scott believes the critique of archives has proven excessive and underproductive, ultimately masking up a central problem of archive management today: the fact that archival practice in the contemporary art field has been grossly underdeveloped and relegated to a secondary position, I would add.

Despite concurring with Scott's commentary on the need to associate theoretical and artistic discussions with the practice of archivists, we must not underestimate the potency of articulations carried out in the art field, after all the archive has been incorporated into the agenda. There is no denying the valuable contribution made by curators through the organizing of exhibitions, colloquiums and publications on the subject. However, it is crucial to consider that a change in the way archives are organized will require a revision of the position archivists occupy in the contemporary art field.

Over the past decade, several museums and cultural institutions highlighted the issue of deterioration and the ephemerality of their collections[4], in projects such as *Matters in Media Art* (2003-2007), developed by the MoMA in New York, in partnership with Tate London, SFMOMA, and San Francisco's New Art Trust;

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[4] I refer to the preservation of contemporary artworks of a dynamic, unstable nature (such as installations, performances, videos and digital media), whose archival forms are still in the process of becoming consolidated.

*Permanence through Change: The Variable Media Approach* (2003), by the Daniel Langlois Foundation and the Guggenheim Museum, in partnership with the Berkeley Art Museum/Pacific Film Archives and Rhizome.org; and *Inside Installations: Preservation and Presentation of Installation Art* (2004-2007), a project of the Netherlands Institute for Cultural Heritage (ICN) in partnership with Tate London, the Restaurierungszentrum der Landeshauptstadt in Düsseldorf, Stedelijk Museum in Gent, the Reina Sofía Museum in Madrid, and the Foundation for the Conservation of Modern Art, in the Netherlands[5]. These are emblematic initiatives in their attempt to put in place new contemporary art preservation strategies, besides creating and disseminating bibliography on the matter (Jones 2010).

Another key point is the pressing need to confront traditional archival practices with the current archival mechanisms of new collections, a need that has garnered new interest from institutions in broader and deeper debate. However, this need contrasts with the figure of the archivist, whose immediate task is to confront his own work procedures (Stringari 2003).

For this reason, reflection about archive-related artistic practices is needed in order to bring artists and 'archivists'[6] closer together and put them in conflict. Thus being, the proposal of occupation of the Public Archive of the State of Bahia during the Bahia Biennale was not limited to taking artists to the archive, but included proposals of situations that collaboration and clashes between practices and procedures from art and the human sciences, with the purpose of discussing the problematics of archive in the Brazilian context and, more specifically, in Bahia. Why are our archives in a risk situation? How to consider the archive as a place of knowledge production, rather than simply of memory preservation? How does one make the public archive public?

This is what the artist's work with the archive allows: a dialogue between archivists, historians, preservers, researchers, and the public. In effect, the exploration of the archive by the artist can prove rather fruitful in increasing the archive's cultural

[5] For more on these projects, please refer to www.tate.org.uk/about/projects/matters-media-art, www.inside-installations.org e variablemedia.net.
[6] For more on the notion of 'archivist,' please refer to a Michel de Certeau's paper "L'espace de l'archive ou la perversion du temps," "L'Archive," *Traverses*, 36. Paris: Editions du Centre Georges Pompidou, 1986.

value or even setting new criteria for organization and visibility of documents and images in the archive.

To this end, the archivist Yvon Lemay (2009) proposes a thorough examination of the "reutilization of the archive" proposed by the artists, as a means of endowing the archivist's practice with a more critical view. Whereas archivists describe and analyze documents for their testimonial and informational nature, for artists, the documents possess the additional ability to elicit emotion and problematize. The recognition of this quality, according to Lemay, reveals a dimension previously concealed from archiving, with the potential of creating paths for public access to archives.

To Lemay, archivists must support the undertaking of artist residency programs in archives, for such initiatives enable the professionals to observe, describe, and examine a new form of archive exploration, as well as develop a typology for these actions. In his words, encounters of this sort represent a prolific source of inquiries for archivism, as they incorporate new perspectives into both the archivist's practice and into the theoretical foundations of the discipline. In this sense, Lemay's proposal evinces the need to look for clues to the question of the archive from a global, transdisciplinary perspective.

With this theoretical groundwork in place, we will now move on to the Public Archive.



José Rufino, *Pulsatio*, 2014. Public Archive of the State of Bahia.
3rd Bahia Biennale. Image: Alfredo Mascarenhas

### Art in the Archive

The Public Archive of the State of Bahia[7] was established in 1890 and is considered the second most important archive in Brazil, after the National Archive (1838) in Rio de Janeiro. Apart from the value of the documentation it holds, the Public Archive is located in a historically relevant architectural facility, Solar Quinta do Tanque, a manor listed since 1949 by Brazil's Institute of National Historical Heritage.

The architecture of ancient houses and ruins in the city of Salvador is steeped in history. In 1552, Tomé de Souza (then the general governor of Brazil) donated a property for Society of Jesus to build Quinta do Tanque in. The Quinta housed a school, a long-term care facility and a Jesuit science lab for research on agricultural products and Saúva ants. In 1759, the Jesuits were expelled from Brazil and the Quinta was left abandoned. From 1784 to 1938, the place was converted into a leper hospital and became known as Quinta dos Lázaros. Afterwards, it was abandoned again and then restored in 1979; the following year, it began housing the Public Archive.

At that time, old convents, hospitals, forts, and prisons – with their colonial architecture of broad walls, few windows, and inner patios – were touted as ideal spaces in which to preserve documents in tropical countries. This was one of the subjects discussed in the fundamental Tropicology Seminar (1966-2001), organized by the sociologist Gilberto Freyre. The purpose of the Seminar was to create an intersection of scientific, humanistic, artistic and practical knowledge to produce knowledge about the Tropic, with an emphasis on the Brazilian context from a non-Eurocentric perspective. More specifically, regarding the subject of document preservation in the tropics:

> Modern archivism produced in Europe and the United States generally advises that ideal climate conditions be kept in the interiors of buildings that house archives, so as to control the high temperatures, relative humidity and excess lighting typical of tropical areas. We (in countries in

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[7] The documentation contained in the Public Archive spans from the 17th to the 20th century and is divided into five sections: Colonial-Provincial; Judicial Archives; Republican Archives; Finance-Customs; and Private Archives. It is particularly important due to three sets of documents which are part of Unesco's "Memory of the World" program, which identifies collections which are relevant to international memory, namely: "Tribuna da Relação do Brasil e da Bahia: 1652-1822," "Registros de Entrada de Passageiros no Porto de Salvador (Bahia): 1855-1964" and "Cartas Régias: 1648-1821."

tropical areas) are already sufficiently aware that this solution entails high costs and sophisticated implementation, operation and maintenance costs. (Freyre (org.) 1983: 135)[8]

We should thank our archivists who have not adhered to the modern archivism of wealthy countries because as the years passed, the conditions of Quinta do Tanque, and therefore of the documentation it houses, deteriorated from lack of maintenance. We found the Public Archive in an alarming state of decay, with the building threatening to collapse, at risk of a fire due to old electrical wiring, and full of ceiling leaks. The Public Archive team worked with no lighting for the past three years, and therefore part of them worked in the inner patio.[9]

These conditions, which at first sight could have ruled out the Archive as a place in which to store artworks, only fueled our desire even further to work under the same conditions imposed on the Archive's team and the documentation about Brazilian history. As a result, collaboration between the institutions and professionals involved became crucial, with the purpose of giving visibility to the Public Archive.

Considering this, it was not the project's task to denounce the neglect of historical heritage and of the professionals entrusted with managing this memory. Having said that, the Archive was not to be made into a "white cube" (Filipovi 2005), but rather understood as a space for action and cooperation between artists, archivists, curators, historians, students, and the general public.

Furthermore, the primary function of the Archive had to be *exposed*, as advocated by Angelika Menne-Haritz (2001):

> Archives do not store memory. But they offer the possibility to create memory. Their function is that of amnesia prevention. They allow us to construct memory, refine it, correct it or reassure it whenever it is needed. [...] The main service that archives offer to the emerging global societies is access to the raw material for memory, and thus they guarantee the capability to construct and shape memory in a way that helps us to understand the present problems and prepare us for the future. (Menne-Hartiz 2001: 59)

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[8] Transcript of the speech of Celina do Amaral Peixoto Moreira Franco, director of the National Public Archive.
[9] In July 2014, ten days before the launch of the exhibition at the Public Archive, emergency roof repair work at the building was approved.

Broadly speaking, each artist[10] was invited to produce an artwork for the "place" – the Public Archive –, exploring issues of their interest and familiarizing themselves with the daily routine of the Archive and its team. As one of these explorations unfolded, the project took an unexpected turn: while going over *candomblé* (an African-based religion) objects seized by police officers from the old Gambling and Customs department[11] in the first half of the 20th century, the Brazilian artist Eustáquio Neves discovered, at the Scientific Police Department of the State of Bahia, the collection of a closed museum.





Museum Estacio de Lima collection (Police Department). Museology team of MAM-BA
3rd Bahia Biennale. Image: Alfredo Mascarenhas

[10] The artists involved in the Project were: Eustáquio Neves, Gaio, Giselle Beiguelman, Ícaro Lira, José Rufino, Magdalena Campos-Pons & Neil Leonard, Omar Salomão, Paulo Bruscky, Paulo Nazareth and Rodrigo Matheus.
[11] The police department in charge of illegal gambling, vagrancy, prostitution, and games and fun, including sorcery, spiritism, fortune telling and any other activities liable to subjugate public beliefs. This was the department that cracked down on *candomblé* worshipping grounds. These Districts became extinct in the 1970s. The documentation is stored at the Public Archive's Public Security Secretariat section.

Museum Estacio de Lima collection (Police Department).
3$^{rd}$ Bahia Biennale. Image: Alfredo Mascarenhas

The discovery of the archives at Estácio de Lima Anthropological and Ethnographical museum led to a complete change in direction of the curatorial project and the research work of the artists involved. We had found almost 600 objects (including weapons, utensils and clothing from the Canudos War and the Cangaço movement in the Brazilian backcountry, popular art objects, cowboy apparel, *candomblé* items, Indian items, a painting by Di Cavalcanti, sculptures, portraits, drug samples, medical instruments, deformed fetuses and human remains in vitro, two mummies, one hundred skulls and assorted bones, register books, a small library, photographs, newspaper scraps – in short, a vast universe to explore). However, more than that, we were looking at a police museum and a history of pain, racism and violence against a poor, marginalized population.

**About the Museum**

Estácio de Lima Anthropological and Ethnographical Museum was inaugurated in 1958 in Salvador, with the goal of continuing the studies of the Nina Rodrigues, a physician who established, in the early 20$^{th}$ century, the Nina Rodrigues Museum, at the Bahia School of Medicine, designed to shelter a collection of objects connected with criminal anthropology. As Schwarcz explains (1993), from the perspective of medicine, the goal was to heal a sickened country, doomed by

miscegenation, using the antidote of a eugenics-based medical project intended to identify and extirpate the degenerate portion of the population.

> After all, at a time when the nation was being discovered, aboriginals, Africans and mestizos came to be regarded as obstacles preventing the country from reaching the splendor of civilization, a barrier to the formation of a true national identity. (Queiroz 1989: 32)

In 1905, a great fire at the School of Medicine destroyed part of the collection and the Museum was temporarily closed. In the 1950s, the Museum was reopened by Estácio de Lima, one of the disciples of Nina Rodrigues most dedicated to research. The Museum remained at the School for twenty years, becoming the most visited in the city. In Schwarcz's words:

> Race is a scientific and comparative piece of data for museums, and becomes the official discourse in end-of-century historical institutes; it is a concept that defines the nation's particularity for men of the law; a tenebrous index in the view of physicians. (Schwarcz 1993: 317)

The Nina Rodrigues Museum, later rechristened Estácio de Lima, was designed as a place of analysis of human behavior from the perspective of Legal Medicine and based on late 19th century racial theories. Nina Rodrigues, for her part, was a disciple of Italy's Cesari Lombroso, a criminologist and physician who championed the biology-based study of human behavior, and dedicated himself to the doctrine of phrenology and to encephalic index measurement research (technical craniology). In Bahia, race-oriented models of analysis became even more widespread. Racial crossbreeding is the foundation that explains criminality, madness, degeneration, economic and social ills (Schwarcz 1993; Pinho 2008).

In 1979, the Museum was transferred to Instituto Médico-Legal Nina Rodrigues (the Coroner's Office), at the Scientific Police Department of the State of Bahia. Although it carried anthropology and ethnography in its name, the Museum did not offer the public any information regarding the origin and history of the objects in its collection, whether they had been purchased or seized by police officers from the old Gambling and Customs Department; the only information available was in small identification plates beside each item. Regarding the use of silence as a rhetorical tool for building the discourse of Estácio de Lima Museum, Serra comments:

> Visitors were told nothing about the exhibition's composition and order: a tacit invitation screamed out that all it took was to look and see. No

justification whatsoever was given for the juxtaposition of three repertoires – monsters of nature, testimonies of crime and objects worshipped by black people. But then again, is there a more powerful ideological device than this – a resource that spoils, parodies and reifies evidence? (Serra 2006: 314)

In 1999, a court order forced Estácio de Lima Museum to remove its *candomblé* items from the public eye. In 2005, the Museum shut its doors and the nearly 600 pieces in its collection were packed up, stored in boxes and labelled. This was the condition in which we found, during the artists' research work, this museum-warehouse, in the room that used to house the Estácio de Lima Museum, at the Scientific Police Department, next to the coroner's office.

In a deal brokered by the Bahia Biennale, a partnership was entered into by the Secretariat for Culture and the Secretariat for Public Security of the State of Bahia to loan the pieces and documents from the old Museum for the *Arquivo e Ficção* exhibition to take place.

The Museum's archives are now available for consultation at the Public Archive. The documentation was given archival treatment during the Biennale, through a partnership between the Public Archive and the Biennale, coordinated by the team of archivists. As part of the curatorial proposal, the team of *Arquivo e Ficção* exhibition mediators participated in the mechanical cleaning, organization, and archival description of the Collection.

According to the inventorying carried out by the Public Archive team, the Estácio de Lima Museum Collection features nineteen dossiers containing textual documents (handwritten, typed and printed) and iconographic documents produced and collected by the Museum. The nineteen dossiers comprise four hundred and three textual documents, six hundred and ninety seven iconographic documents, and eight negatives. Below is a reproduction of an excerpt from the report. It is interesting to note the involvement of the Archive's team with the Collection that was found:

> The meaning and importance of the Collection contrasted with the fragility and wear-and-tear of the documents that composed it. This fact prompted the Bahia Biennale to seek alternatives to preserve and allow society access to the Collection.[12]

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[12] Estácio de Lima Museum Collection (CMEL, in the Portuguese acronym). Adriana Souza Silva, Archivist, Public Archive of the State of Bahia/FPC/SECULT.

Documents of the Museum Estacio de Lima collection organized and accessible for public consultation
Public Archive of the State of Bahia, 3rd Bahia Biennale. Image: Alfredo Mascarenhas

Here, the question *How does one speak of trauma?* reappears and takes on disturbing overtones. The artistic practices surrounding this pain-ridden Museum result in a collective action, of present activation, of healing processes. But can trauma be healed? Whereas memory is always discontinuous, with moments of non-presence, trauma is characterized as a pain that cannot be forgotten; it manifests itself as a corporal memory of scars that last years (Assmann 2011).

To Assmann, trauma cannot be overcome through monuments and memorials which, she claims, are attached to the past, and therefore would lead to a memory that covers up the original events, producing a false relationship of relief and forgetfulness that is unable to truly conquer trauma. The artistic operation carried out in the *Arquivo e Ficção* exhibition evinces two central issues of the project: the risk situation in which Brazilian memory finds itself (after all, the condition of the Public Archive is not a one-off situation) and racism as State policy, embodied by the Estácio de Lima Museum.

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The experience of the forms of violence that informed the ideological construction of Estácio de Lima Museum exposed the potential of this type of action connecting art and spaces designed to hold memory. In this sense, one could hypothesize that in order to rethink archives and their uses, we must strive to comprehend, as Burton proposes (2005), preexisting questions – what matter are archives made of? What is the history of the archives? How and why were they created?

One question that arises when it comes to this type of action, which straddles the line between art and history, is whether we are working with art or history. But then again, does this type of questioning make sense? Would not this be a novel way for us to tell the stories, or better yet to 'ambush' the archives? We must devise novel approaches if we are to make the public archive public.[13]



Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons & Neil Leonard, *Conversando a Situ/Acted*, 2014.
Public Archive of the State of Bahia, 3rd Bahia Biennale. Image: Alfredo Mascarenhas

However, the purpose is not to retrieve forgotten memory; after all, one can at best hope to retrieve the materials of memory (documents, photographs, objects, accounts etc.), but never the actual memories in a strict sense (Meneses 2007: 30). On the contrary, it is to evoke trauma into the present, not by fixating it in the past, but by updating it and endowing it with new meanings. This the goal of the model of action proposed by the 3rd Bahia Biennale.

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[13] The exhibition at the Public Archive lasted from July 17 to September 7 and welcomed roughly 3,000 visitors.

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