

of dual heritages, deconstructing colonial and fetishising views. Members of the public are invited to interact with the installation by engraving messages or names on the roots — it helps transform the ‘still life’ into a living organism that represents memories, affection and self-expression.

There are countless ways to name, describe and understand gender non-conformity from non-Western perspectives. Tracing cross-cultural histories and creating safer spaces for exploration can be an invitation to connect with ancestors and develop kinship. *When its edges frayed and its middle thinned*, it was cut and redressed by Vijay Patel, who recycles a zari-embroidered chiffon sari and draws attention to the limited information available on the lives of those who defied Western notions of the gender binary. Vitória, a black woman kidnapped from the Kingdom of Benin and sold into slavery in the 1500s, was in Ponta Delgada, where she affirmed her female gender identity. She was arrested in Lisbon in 1556 and put on trial by the Portuguese Inquisition. We’re only aware of Vitória’s existence due to these inquisition court records. There were likely many other people and solidarity networks in the Azores over the centuries that existed and remain undocumented. The raised fist motif is inspired by an Emergency Poster by Navjot Altaf, who as a member of the left-wing Progressive Youth Movement, created screen-printed posters to be used for marches, sit-ins, rallies, and activists’ meetings. Words, symbols and patterns have the potential to open up thought and generate new perspectives. This banner will be used at pride parades after the exhibition.

In collaboration with AIPA – Association of Immigrants in the Azores, and led by Natasha Bulha Costa, InterStruct developed a collaborative workshop with first and second-generation immigrants from the island of São Miguel. The aim was to foster connections and encounters with the diversity of people living on the island, their unique stories, origins and concerns, and to explore their sense of belonging in relation to this territory. *The Archaeology of Memory* takes shape through a collection of personal objects and art pieces brought and created by participants during the collaborative sessions. These hold living memories and experiences that unfold into narratives, bringing us closer together and celebrating our individual diversity. Together, these objects form a symbolic and living archive.

The audio pieces that inhabit them give voice and personalize the act of listening, through each person’s will, freedom to speak, share and trust. The collective collection was created by: Alexandra dos Santos, Altina Pontífice, Cirila Fernandes, Cristina Borges, Jannette Benevides, Kateryna Kondratieva and her daughter Rada Kondratieva, Patrícia Monteiro, Sanyo Geraldo and Tatiana Tavares (in collaboration with x027).

What is preserved and what is erased? Who are the storytellers shaping these narratives? What might still be uncovered? What does it mean to engage with what is no longer, or perhaps never was, visible? How can we begin to heal from histories that remain unspoken?

Reimagining the Untold is a contribution to historical reparations and a way of thinking about the healing of erased and silenced histories, using imagination as a form of resistance.

30^{may} – 30^{aug}

EXHIBITION

Reimagining the Untold

Curated by InterStruct Collective

In this exhibition, *InterStruct Collective* engages critically with dominant historical narratives, focusing on the silences and absences that exist between them. Through speculative fiction, shared memory, and embodied knowledge, the collective reimagines what is missing, inviting the public to consider new ways of seeing and imagining new possibilities for the future. *Reimagining the Untold* explores colonial histories connected to the Azores, shaped by the artist’s experiences during an art residency on São Miguel Island. It delves into archival and institutional gaps, silenced legacies, and the politics of remembrance.

While the areas of interest for colonialism focused on the African territories, the Azores played a substantial, though indirect, role during the colonial period. Since the 15th century, enslaved labor from these territories was exploited to build the first settlements and to sustain agriculture. The archipelago served as a transit point in the Atlantic slave trade, with ships stopping en route between Africa, Europe, and the Americas. In a sense, the Azores were important strategic bases for Portugal’s colonial endeavours and closely integrated into the colonial economy.

Information on how many ships were involved in the colonial trade can only be obtained by researching and analysing the customs registers kept at the Regional Archive of Ponta Delgada, as well as the registered and presumed routes of the so-called Middle Passage, the violent crossing of millions of enslaved Africans to North, Central and South America. With fragmented evidence, there are questions around their cargoes, and the number of deaths during the crossing remains

unanswered: How many ships passed through the Azores? Where did they come from, and where were they travelling to? How many people were on the ships when they left, compared to the numbers on arrival? The expression of this presence in Portuguese and Azorean culture, written history, public space, or education is scarce.

The fact that the Azores were a colonial outpost and transit point in the transatlantic slave trade and its networks reflects the paradox inherent to insularity: geographically and politically peripheral, yet simultaneously and permanently connected to larger colonial and migratory networks. This demonstrates an in-between state, which also reflects the condition of “released” enslaved people on the island called “half freedmen”¹ during the 16th century — and resonates with some perceived condition of island life itself: a tension between isolation and connection, longing and confinement. The experience of being surrounded by the vastness of the Atlantic Ocean symbolises this duality: a horizon that evokes both *saudade* and the possibility of freedom.

During *Estado Novo* this paradox was reinforced through propaganda. The regime romanticized poverty, invented new symbols for a convenient Portuguese popular culture, preached the myth of the benevolent colonizer, and portrayed the archipelago as a natural paradise where little else seems to matter. The Azores were included in the imperialist imaginary as one of the pillars of the so-called *pluricontinental* nation², constituting a mythical entity that united the colonial empire under the banner of *Portugalidade*. It is within

UM PROJETO

ESTRUTURA FINANCIADA POR

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PONTA DELGADA
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¹ Rute Dias Gregório: *Africanos nos Açores: informes sobre uma presença quincentista*

² Fernando Rosas: *O Estado Novo 1926-1974*, 2009 / Miguel Bandeira Jerónimo: *O Império Colonial em Questão (séculos XIX e XX): Poderes, Saberes e Instituições*, 2012

this political fantasy, rooted in *Luso-Tropicalismo*³ ideology, that the legacies of Portuguese colonialism — with its violences, forced displacement, discrimination and structural asymmetries — are so often consigned to silence even today.

How have these historical contexts and roles shaped the way this territory views its colonial past? How does this view relate to social structures that perpetuate inequalities and discrimination to this day? How do these legacies affect the way we perceive racialized bodies, social class, gender, property, or work?

During their residency earlier this year, the collective sought to address urgent questions and concerns surrounding the silences and erasures within these colonial histories. Their research process included consulting historical documents, engaging with local associations, artists, institutions, as well as collaborative workshops with island immigrants and their families, an attempt to connect this information to the geography, history and culture of the Azores. This process drew on both individual and collective imaginaries, as well as the critical frameworks of decolonial thinking.

What emerged during this period of research was a pronounced presence of absences and gaps in the documentation of specific colonial episodes, a lack of structured critical perspectives, and limited academic or artistic engagement with these histories. In response to these silences, the collective turned to speculative fiction as a method of resistance and resilience/endurance — a tool to navigate and reimagine the voids left by historical omission.

For many members of the collective, these histories are both personal and political, entangled with familial and cultural memory. Through speculation and fictional reimagining, they reclaimed a sense of agency, transforming absence into a space of creative possibilities. Speculative fiction became the connective tissue that unites and shapes the narratives presented in *Reimagining the Untold*. This body of work offers alternative perspectives and reframes specific episodes of colonial history in the Azorean territory, revealing the underlying structures and systems of oppression that have often gone unchallenged.

The collective’s artistic process situates itself within the politics of remembrance. Memory is not treated as a fixed, linear sequence, but as a layered and relational phenomenon. Absence is not treated as mere emptiness, but as potential for a generative space of imagination, reclamation and resistance. By occupying these gaps through

storytelling, sound, image, and mixed media, the works invite the public to sit with these stories and reconsider what is remembered, how it is remembered, and by whom.

Different points of observation generate different realities. In the space of *Reimagining the Untold*, speculative fiction serves not only as a narrative device but as a political and poetic strategy. An approach that enables the reconfiguration of collective memory and the possibility of new futures born from the fragments of untold pasts. Crucially, the work does not seek to offer definitive answers, but rather to raise questions, provoke reflection, and open up space for dialogue around histories that have long been silenced or overlooked.

Is there truly such a thing as a neutral History?

In *Passagem do Meio*, a short film by Neuza Furtado, two young women walk along the coast and come across a handkerchief and a time-worn case. Inside, they discover a letter bearing the testimony of Mandy, an enslaved woman who, deemed unwanted cargo, was cast into the sea during the Middle Passage. On paper, her voice echoes across the centuries, the letter recounts her new reality as a “survivor,” her resignation to her condition. Mandy questions the values behind her captors’ decisions regarding her fate, exposing the harsh truths of life as an enslaved woman and her fears for the unborn child’s future, or lack thereof, affirming her belief in life beyond death. Siren songs and lost love in the world. Despite everything, she still holds on to the search for light. With a poetic and visceral approach, *Passagem do Meio* rescues a silenced history, intertwining past and present to reflect on memories that must not be forgotten: “So that my memories may live on after my passing...”.

In the sculpture *Vida Funda*, the artist materializes the end/beginning of Mandy’s life. The piece depicts the moment of revelation, the reaching of the light. “The calm of the depths gives me perspective on my existence; I see a better future.”.

In *Saudades da Terra*, Gaspar Frutuoso tells the story of a Guinean man enslaved by the Portuguese during the early years of settlement on the island of Santa Maria (1439-1444). “In summertime and without fog” the man escapes to the summit of a mountain in the north of the island “for some offense or fault he committed against his master.” Upon his return, he claims to have seen “a great land” to the north. Following this episode, and because the Portuguese had previously failed in their attempt to reach the island of São Miguel, a new expedition is sent, which this time manages to

land on the island. This episode, and the Guinean man at its center, are generally regarded as both implausible and historically irrelevant, since the island is easily visible from Santa Maria in clear weather conditions. But apparently, not by an enslaved man in the early years of its settlement. *Beneath the book lies the mountain’s peak*, a video-sculpture by Miguel F that prompts movement as a condition to see, proposing a reflection on the parallax effect in the construction of History and dominant political narratives. Through a lenticular structure that allows different images and words to be seen from different observation points, the work confronts antagonistic narratives: the mountain as a site of shelter or power; symbolic elements of various systems of oppression and networks of resistance; and fictional fragments of an audiovisual mapping of the territory of São Miguel. Who is looking at whom? How are they looking? From where are they looking?

The collage *Entangled Echoes of a Colonial Past* by Desirée Desmarattes is informed by photographs taken during the context of João Maria de Aguiar’s colonial military expedition in Angola, now held in the Arquivo Municipal de Ponta Delgada, and a hand-carved Chokwe throne from the same region and time period, currently stored at the Museum Carlos Machado. Though different in format and function and separated by their institutional framing, both objects are witnesses to a shared past. Their silence reflects the structural violence in archiving, ownership and displaying that continues to shape memory and representation. Through the medium of photo collage and embroidery, the work explores colonial entanglements through forgotten objects and submerged narratives. Reflecting on the belief that the Azores may be the mountain tops of the sunken city of Atlantis, these interwoven narratives resurface in a speculative Atlantis, a myth reimagined through the lens of *Black Atlantic*. The person depicted was likely part of a colonial expedition in southern Angola around the turn of the 20th century. The Kunene-Sambesi-Expedition (1899–1901), led by European officers including Pieter van der Kellen, aimed to explore and map the region while promoting imperial interests.⁴ Local carriers, guides, and laborers were generally not involved voluntarily. Travel reports note that some tried to escape or resist mistreatment.⁵ Their names and voices were largely omitted from colonial records. Embroidery emerges as a slow and tactile act of remembering, rethreading lost connections as a gesture of repair.

Names Without Rest and the Journey Home...? by Claire Sivier is a short film and installation that imagines the untold story of one of the many

enslaved women who died in the Azores during the transatlantic slave trade — unnamed, but yet present. The spirit of a Black woman, occupying the *Capote e Capelo* traditionally worn by women throughout the Azores, and passed down from generation to generation. Drawing on death and baptism records from Terceira Island between 1583-1699⁶, which contain only names, dates, and perceived gender, the work reflects on the deep absence of personal and spiritual detail, aiming to make visible what history has largely erased. As a social researcher, and following the recent loss of her devout Christian grandmother in Jamaica, Sivier reflects on the blurred lines between Christian death rites and enduring West African spiritual traditions, both deeply entangled by colonial legacies. Inspired by W. E. B. Du Bois’s *Data Portraits: Visualizing Black America*, Sivier explores how numerical data can be transformed into visual acts of remembrance. An engraved mirror attempts to make these lives visible, visualising the number of black women who were recorded as baptised (695 women) and deceased (59 women), and imagines one of the many possible journeys these women take in the afterlife. Drawing from the artist’s Jamaican Nine Night death rituals, the work honours loss, memory, and agency. It raises questions of remembrance, presence, and return. And to where? We can only imagine.

When researching the so-called ‘exotic gardens’ of the Azores, especially those of São Miguel, which are celebrated for their mix of endemic flora and imported species, one cannot help but question the irony of how the ‘green mestizaje’ is so widely celebrated and valued for tourism purposes, while the local human ethno-racial diversity rarely receives the same recognition. Many of these ‘historic’ gardens, created out of ideals of ostentation and fetishisation of ‘exotic beauty’, were formed during the colonial period. This is a term with which artist Natasha Bulha Costa has been grappling since childhood, having been hypersexualised from an early age. As part of her ongoing efforts to decolonize her language, the artist is attempting to replace words such as ‘clarity’ with ‘lucidity’, and has created *Lucyro*: a work that offers a personal interpretation of the cultural and ecological complexity of ‘mestizaje’. Combining real historical data, memories, and utopias, this immersive art installation intertwines botany and hybrid identity, using real roots and living plant elements as metaphors for mestizaje, adaptation and resistance. These roots form a bodily, sensory space, a ‘nest’, ‘where questions about origin, belonging, and invisibility are raised. The work proposes a critical parallel between the ‘exotic beauty’ attributed to plants and people

³ Widely disseminated through the propaganda of the Estado Novo regime, luso-tropicalism is a concept by the Brazilian sociologist and anthropologist Gilberto Freyre (1900–1987)

⁴ Photographs from this expedition are now held in the archive’s section on Joao Maria de Aguiar, who conducted a military expedition through the same region a few years later (1904). This overlap demonstrates how colonial documents and images were often recirculated and reused strategically across imperial projects

⁵ Kunene-Sambesi-expedition, H. Baum, 1903, O. Warburg, 1903

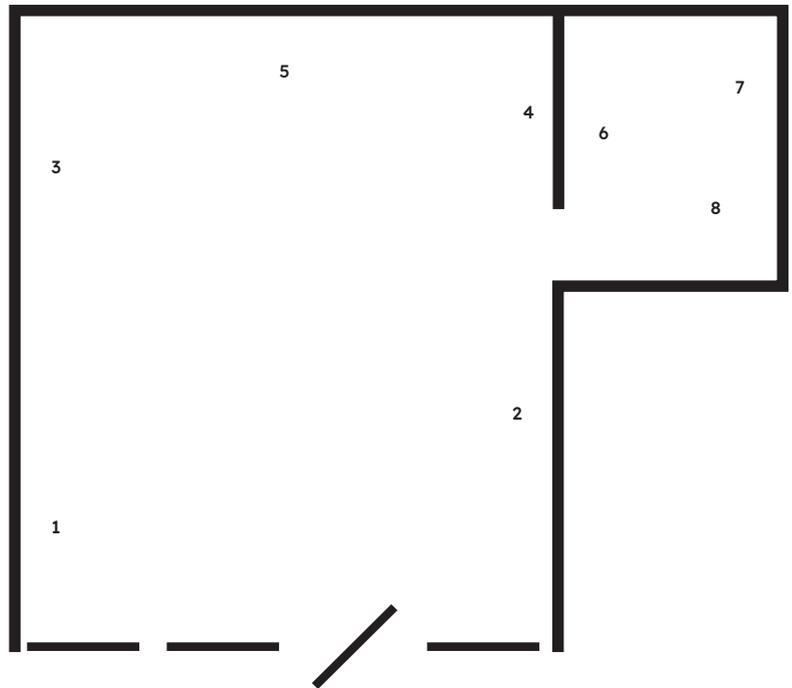
⁶ “Escravos em Angra no século XVII: uma abordagem a partir dos registos paroquiais”. Maria Herminia Morais Mesquita, 2005

InterStruct Collective

InterStruct aims to foster alternative narratives, providing a discursive platform where people from different cultural backgrounds can collaborate, propose interventions and create politically engaged projects through artistic practice. This forum values inclusivity and encourages empathy and self-reflection as a basis for challenging and dismantling adverse ideologies and stereotypes. The name InterStruct is composed of two elements: the prefix inter means “between”, and the root struere, in Latin, means *to build or to assemble*.

The collective was created in 2018 in Porto, whose social context is also the focus for many of its creations. InterStruct is constantly evolving and reformulating. Currently, the artistic collective is spread across Berlin, Lisbon, London, and Porto. There is no organizational hierarchy, as all decisions are taken collectively. This fluid approach allows for a greater symbiosis between individual and collective motivations.

The curatorial and artistic team for *Reimagining the Untold* consists of Claire Sivier, Desirée Desmarattes, Miguel F, Natasha Bulha Costa, Neuza Furtado, and Vijay Patel.



- 1 ***When its edges frayed and its middle thinned***
Vijay Patel
2025
mixed media,
105x105cm
- 2 ***Sob o livro está o cume da montanha***
Miguel F
2025
2 video channels,
stereo, 12' (loop),
madeira,
400x200x30 cm
- 3 ***Arqueologia da Memória***
Alexandra dos Santos,
Altina Pontífice,
Cirila Fernandes,
Cristina Borges,
Jannette Benevides,
Kateryna Kondratieva
e sua filha Rada
Kondratieva,
Patrícia Monteiro,
Sanyo Geraldo and
Tatiana Tavares (em
colaboração com x027)
2025
mixed media, variable
dimensions, sound, 30'
(loop)
- 4 ***Entangled Echoes of a Colonial Past***
Desirée Desmarattes
2025
mixed media,
100x70cm

IMAGE SOURCE
BPARPD. Expedição
Van-der-Kellen. 1901.
Planta de borracha,
entre Cuíto e Cuango.
Coleção João Maria
de Aguiar, cota 6.20.

BPARPD. Dande. As
Mabubas. Coleção
João Maria de Aguiar,
cota 3.1.15.

BPARPD. Carro
Boer passando o rio
[Neme]. Humpata.
Coleção João Maria
de Aguiar, cota 5.1.18.
- 5 ***Lucy10***
Natasha Bulha Costa
2025
roots, sound (loop),
variable dimensions
- 6 ***Names Without Rest and the Journey Home...?***
Claire Sivier
2025
video, sound, 4' (loop),
mirror, stones
- 7 ***Vida Funda***
Neuza Furtado
2025
stone, cement, fabric,
100x200cm
- 8 ***Passagem do Meio***
Neuza Furtado
2025
short film, 13' (loop)

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