

LISSON

DALTON PAULA

BIOGRAPHY



Dalton Paula is an artist, researcher and educator who represents the Afro-Brazilian experience, either by invoking the lives of undocumented figures whose contributions to society have been lost, or by working to impart a lasting cultural legacy through the continuation of communities and bodies of wisdom that have been forgotten or hidden over time. Just as the personages he depicts were excised from official narratives or documentation due to their actions in opposition to slavery or other forms of injustice, Paula uses collage, paint, film and photography, as well as the symbols and traditions of studio portraiture, in order to stitch the memory of their existence back into the fabric of history. He also works to elevate and commemorate these portrayals through the use of regal attire, highlights of gold leaf and the aura of reverence usually reserved for subjects of high or noble rank.

In addition to his individual and groupings of portrait busts and full-length portraits – created through meticulous archival research and, where necessary, equal parts critical fabulation – Paula has produced vast installations and series in ceramics and textile on the residues and tolls left behind by the human labour used in the tobacco and cotton industries in Brazil and further across the Global South.

As further evidence of his uniquely transformative and postcolonial practice, Paula has established his own centre for knowledge transference in the central state of Goiás, not far from his birthplace in the capital of Brasília. Known as Sertão Negro, this art school, residency, studio, garden and kitchen complex hosts classes, workshops and study groups to explore creativity and the possibilities of the surrounding

ecosystem, so mirroring the collective activities of former quilombos, sites of refuge originally formed by African slaves in Diaspora.

Dalton Paula (born in Brasília, Brazil, 1982) lives and works in Goiânia, Brazil, where he graduated from the Visual Arts programme at the Federal University of Goiás (UFG). He was awarded the Chanel Next Prize in 2024 and the Marcantonio Vilaça Award in 2019. His recent solo exhibitions include: Museu de Arte de São Paulo (MASP) and Pinacoteca de São Paulo, Brazil (2022-23); Museu de Arte Contemporânea, Centro Cultural Oscar Niemeyer, Goiânia (2014); Museu de Arte Contemporânea, Sala Samuel Costa, Goiânia, Brazil (2010). Major group exhibitions include: 'Foreigners Everywhere', Venice Biennale, Italy (2024); 'Afro-Atlantic Histories', touring from Museu de Arte de São Paulo and the Instituto Tomie Ohtake in Brazil (2018) to the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; and the Dallas Museum of Art, USA (2021-24); 'Compositions for Insurgent Times', Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (2021-22); 'Critical Fabulations', Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York, USA (2021-23); 'Songs for Sabotage', New Museum Triennial, New York, USA (2018); 'O Triângulo do Atlântico', 11th Bienal do Mercosul, Porto Alegre, Brazil (2018); 'The Atlantic Triangle', Goethe-Institut, Lagos, Nigeria (2018) and 'Incerteza Viva', 32nd Bienal de São Paulo, Brazil (2016).