

ax-d. us. t
Adriano Costa

12 April – 13 July 2024

Emalin is pleased to present *ax-d. us. t*, Adriano Costa's first solo exhibition with the gallery. The artist's project draws on the context of the historical Clerk's House, where the exhibition unfolds, as well as the cemetery grounds of St Leonard's Church on which the house stands and whose tombstones are built into its walls. With this as his starting point, Costa engages the built and the historical with his sculptural vocabulary that makes tangible the transmutation of value into base material, of life into spirit and of body into dust.

The exhibition's title, *ax-d. us. t*, is a wordplay about the axis of distance between 'us' – you and I – contained within the word 'dust'. Costa's sculptural focus on detritus and passing is saturated with spirituality: he references the sacred books of Christianity, the biblical prophecy of the world turning from dust to dust, as seen in the churchyard outside. In his native São Paulo, he follows his spiritual guides of Candomblé to pay respect to the stuff from which we are made, the stuff into which we turn, the dead and the living, the trash and the gold, what they sell for and what we give to buy them.

Adriano Costa's practice mixes universals with trash. He will object to this – just as he would refute the existence of found objects, or site-specific exhibitions. Imbuing all of the material world with the same force of spiritual importance, he concludes that everything is found and everything is site specific. Taking this logic forward, his practice interrogates the alchemy of matter and value, driven by a desperate love for things discarded. Love's powerful logic spreads into his treatment of other universals and moves him to abolish the hierarchy of value between different materials. And so Costa wishes to redirect attention away from pedestals and grand gestures by placing his works on the floor, leaving them unguarded, easily mistaken for the trash he is so indebted to. The existential mistake of value stands to Costa for something of the tragic farce of the world – a spiritual kind of humour that unfolds in material objects.

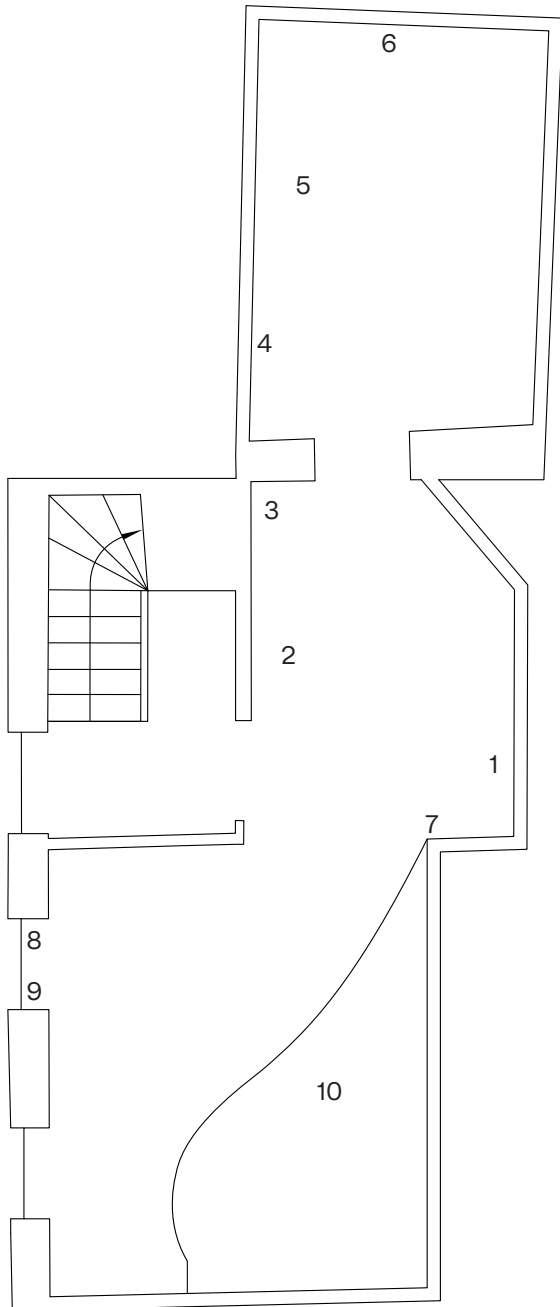
The bronze sculptures in the exhibition follow on from a series of sculptures cast from discarded moulds, retrieved from Costa's foundry. The foundry in São Paulo is important to the artist: he spends time there, he talks to the workers, makes mistakes with them and, beyond this, engages in a ritual of watching the fire. To Costa bronze is demanding. When working with it, you must follow its rhythm, you cannot be dictatorial, cannot decide the time it needs. You must respect it because it is not only stubborn but dangerous: it can take your hands. It demands reverence. But this reverence is not at its peak when the bronze is cast – is beautiful, stable, quiet even – but when it is at its most powerful and most wild: when it is in the fire of its birth. These libidinal bronze pieces are heavy with his fingerprints and crushed with a knife, one penetrating another, a reckless abandon of spirit.

Costa chooses bronze because of its temperature and its history: a history imbued with love's logic of value. Why did they find this material thousands of years ago? How? It was the metal of ritual, jewellery, eating, for looking at, for selling. How did they find somewhere hot enough? They thought this extremity worthwhile. They thought bronze was endless, immovable, forever precious, capable of eternity. And so one might believe this of Costa's pieces – but this is a trick, a revealing of his logic. Because as with everything else, just as much as what we imagine to be trash, bronze is ephemeral – prone to deterioration and death. This mistake of bronze is our central mistake. What is precious is never endless. It changes, it dies. It returns to the fire.

This logic is continued by the exhibition's wood and plaster sculptures, which are made from misshapen wood used to support the bronze moulds, the cast-offs of sculpture making, the detritus of the foundry. When needed, they are integral: they support the weight of curves and extrusions, but afterward they suddenly turn useless. Costa was drawn to this sudden devaluation, and how they remained – lonely – in this space of creation, unpainted, untended, a support structure so vulnerable to collapse, eminently destructible, yet hard to remove. To Costa, this is beauty. He wanted to make a show of such beauty, not of beautiful things, and in its pursuit found that gutting his work was necessary. The exhibition is an aftermath of this gutting – fish, not fresh from the sea, but laid out before us like a deteriorated landscape.

Different types of architecture, elevated and found, shape the bronze, wood and plaster of his sculptures. Since his practice always draws upon Costa's surroundings, it is inevitable that the material politics of the place where he lives shape the work – the art historical, architectural and social characteristics of São Paulo appear in the landscape of his exhibitions in the same way that Tesco bags and receipts from the local shop will find their way into the assemblages made in London. Hélio Oiticica, the Tropicália, Lygia Clark and Lygia Pape make their appearances. Friends and lovers do. The material landscape of the Cracolândia area of São Paulo, too. The curved plinth made for the ground floor of The Clerk's House is based on the curvature of the facade of one of São Paulo's most iconic buildings: the modernist Edifício Copan by Oscar Niemeyer. Behind the building, seen from Costa's studio windows, are the mountains – elevations of the natural world that also find their way into his cityscapes.

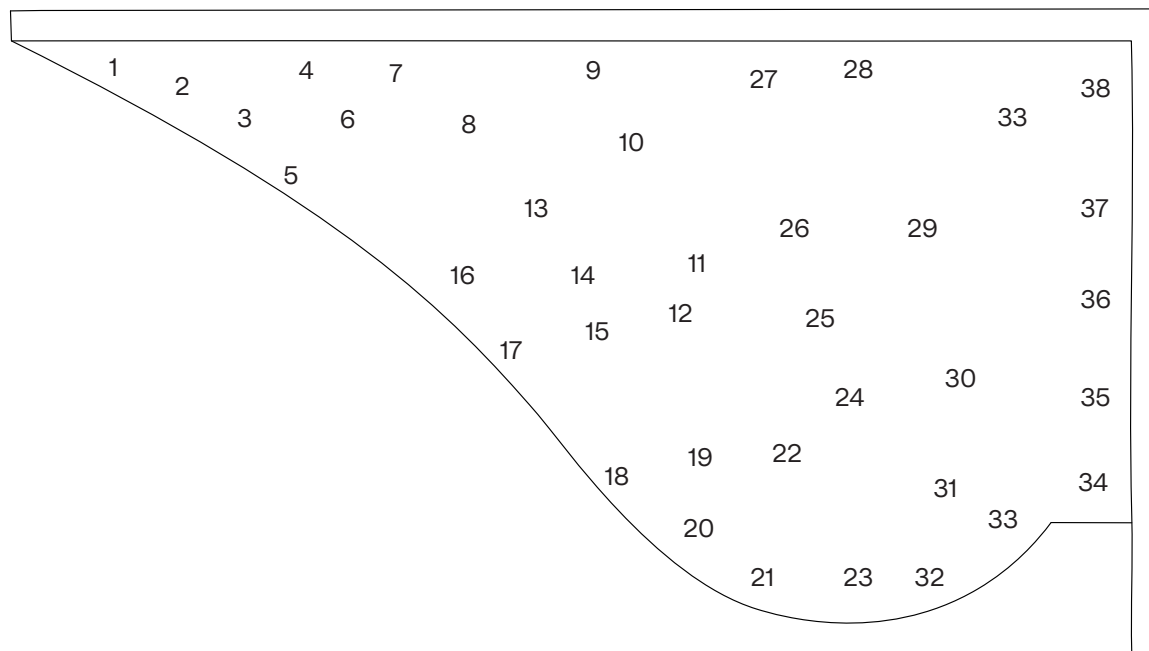
The modernists who erected pavilions and designed futurist furniture, like the plastic armchair around which Costa dances in his video, were also known to build churches in São Paulo. They were not religious – and there are no religious icons to be found inside, only space for spirit. Just as Costa's reverence for bronze lives in the fire of the foundry, their religiosity in denial lives in the concrete of churches. In the end, the plastered wood and the receipt for its purchase are agents of the same desperate love as the smoke of incense, the gold of the cross and the stones of the tombs.



GROUND FLOOR

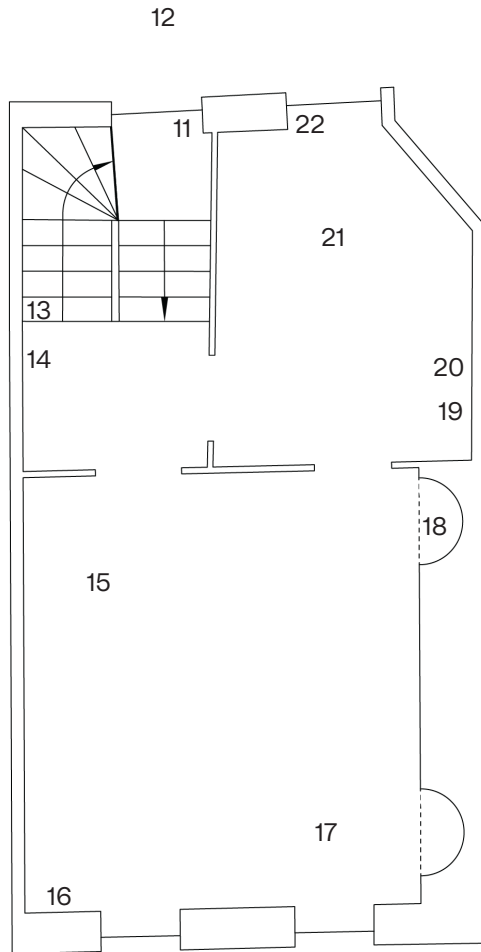
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|----|---|-----|---|
| 1. | <i>I'm going bananas</i> , 2024
fabric, gloves
31 × 30 cm
12 ³ / ₈ x 12 inches | 6. | <i>War</i> , 2024
bronze
27 × 19.5 × 2.5 cm
10 ⁵ / ₈ x 7 ⁵ / ₈ x 1 inches |
| 2. | <i>The way my grandma taught me how to kill a chicken (the future)</i> , 2024
paper, metal lid, tape, textile, video
35 × 41 cm
13 ⁵ / ₈ x 16 ¹ / ₈ inches
duration 27:35 min | 7. | <i>Uma montanha fodendo sua própria metade (A mountain fucking its own counterpart)</i> , 2024
bronze
26.5 × 28 × 24 cm
10 ³ / ₈ x 11 × 9 ¹ / ₂ inches |
| 3. | <i>MONTAGEM</i> , 2024
bronze
1 × 82 × 14.5 cm
³ / ₈ x 32 ¹ / ₄ x 5 ³ / ₄ inches | 8. | <i>HUG</i> , 2024
iron
12 × 29 × 21 cm
4 ³ / ₄ x 11 ³ / ₈ x 8 ¹ / ₄ inches |
| 4. | <i>Cat</i> , 2024
bronze
46 × 26 × 2.5 cm
18 ¹ / ₈ x 10 ¹ / ₄ x 1 inches | 9. | <i>Stop</i> , 2024
acrylic, terry towel
43 × 32 cm
16 ¹⁵ / ₁₆ x 12 ⁵ / ₈ inches |
| 5. | <i>Alcebiades</i> , 2024
iron, bronze
44 × 42 × 37 cm
17 ³ / ₈ x 16 ¹ / ₂ x 14 ⁵ / ₈ inches | 10. | Casas 2023 - 2024 |

Adriano Costa was born in 1975 in Sao Paulo, Brazil, where he lives and works. His past solo exhibitions have been held at A Sud, Pescara, IT (2023); Mendes Wood DM, New York, US (2023); SALTS, Birsfelden, CH (2022); Mendes Wood DM, São Paulo, BR (2021); Nuno Centeno, Porto, PT (2019); Kölnischer Kunstverein, Cologne, DE (2018); Instituto Tomie Ohtake, São Paulo, BR (2018); David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles, US (2016); Supportico Lopez, Berlin, DE (2016); and Sadie Coles HQ, London, UK (2014). Costa's work has been included in group exhibitions held at Chi K11 Art Museum, Shanghai, CN (2021); Seattle Art Museum, Seattle, US (2017); Lothringer13 Halle, Munich, DE (2017); Guggenheim Museum, New York, US (2014); Astrup Fearnley Museet, Oslo, NO (2014); and Musee D'Art Contemporain de Lyon, FR (2014).



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| 1. <i>Nibelungo discourse</i> , 2023
acrylic on wood, found material
62 × 8 × 18.5 cm
24 3/8 × 3 1/8 × 7 1/4 inches | 8. <i>Tambor</i> , 2023
aluminium, bronze
18 × 17 × 21 cm
7 1/8 × 6 3/4 × 8 1/4 inches | 15. <i>Circus</i> , 2024
glass cups, acrylic paint, coffee pod,
aluminium can, plastic, water | 24. <i>The office</i> , 2024
electrostatic paint on aluminium |
| 2. <i>Gemini</i> , 2024
iron | 9. <i>tvc15</i> , 2024
bronze, iron, wood
88 × 59 × 16 cm
34 5/8 × 23 1/4 × 6 1/4 inches | 16. <i>Ghost ship</i> , 2024
marker, plastic | 25. <i>Juicy Couture - favela</i> , 2023
iron, acrylic on wood
26.3 × 11 × 10 cm
10 3/8 × 4 3/8 × 4 inches |
| 3. <i>Child</i> , 2024
plastic, aluminium foil | 10. <i>It's a man's world</i> , 2024
iron | 17. <i>Crow</i> , 2024
found object | 26. <i>Jac Leirner's playground</i> , 2024
sandpaper |
| 4. <i>Beach house</i> , 2024
iron, acrylic on wood, fabric, cardboard | 11. <i>Vampire - We all are</i> , 2023
aluminium, faux leather
17.5 × 30.5 × 10.5 cm
6 7/8 × 12 × 4 1/8 inches | 18. <i>Pipeline (kill time)</i> , 2024
acrylic on fabric | 27. <i>In memoriam - pardieiro (London)</i> , 2023
wood, cardboard
48 × 35 × 23 cm
18 7/8 × 13 3/4 × 9 inches |
| 5. <i>HEAD</i> , 2024
wood, plaster, paper
38.5 × 11.5 × 9.5 cm
15 1/8 × 4 1/2 × 3 3/4 inches | 12. <i>Victoria</i> , 2024
acrylic on cardboard | 19. <i>Public vendetta</i> , 2024
sandpaper | 28. <i>Dubai - CR7</i> , 2023
iron
44 × 34 × 11 cm
17 3/8 × 13 3/8 × 4 3/8 inches |
| 6. <i>2 (joão gostoso)</i> , 2024
wood, plaster
46 × 10 × 10 cm
18 1/8 × 4 × 4 inches | 13. <i>Grace & Oliver's sketches</i> , 2024
pen, pencil on paper | 20. <i>Odisséia marauhão</i> , 2024
candle, paper, flowers, cardboard | 29. <i>BIQUEIRA GLASTONBURY (Mystic Tent)</i> , 2024
electrostatic paint on iron, tarpaulin
35.5 × 76 × 50.5 cm
29 7/8 × 19 7/8 × 14 inches |
| 7. <i>3 (joão gostoso)</i> , 2024
wood, plaster
56 × 7 × 8 cm
22 × 2 3/4 × 3 1/8 inches | 14. <i>Power station</i> , 2023
plaster on plastic, found material
28 × 15 × 14.3 cm
11 × 5 7/8 × 5 5/8 inches | 21. <i>Sampa</i> , 2024
paper cup, screw | 30. <i>Milan - Tabapuã</i> , 2023
aluminium, fabric, plaster, cardboard
23 × 23 × 16.7 cm
9 × 9 × 6 5/8 inches |
| | | 22. <i>Denmark</i> , 2024
iron | 31. <i>Slum mania</i> , 2024
aluminium, iron, wood |
| | | 23. <i>Gropius</i> , 2024
electrostatic paint on aluminium, iron | 32. <i>St. Leonard's</i> , 2024
plastic, iron, earth |
| | | | 33. <i>Acropolis</i> , 2024
paper, plants |
| | | | 34. <i>Suzy Menkes</i> , 2024
soap, iron |
| | | | 35. <i>Anna Wintour</i> , 2024
t-shirt, chair |
| | | | 36. <i>Kim Kardashian</i> , 2024
fabric, hammer |
| | | | 37. <i>Kanye West 2</i> , 2024
glass bottle, towel, water, soap, coffee |
| | | | 38. <i>Nicole Kidman</i> , 2024
iron |
| | | | 39. <i>Giselle</i> , 2024
iron |

FIRST FLOOR



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|-----|---|-----|---|
| 11. | <i>Design Destiny</i> , 2024
electrostatic paint on iron
43.5 × 25 × 23 cm
17 ⅞ × 9 ⅞ × 9 inches | 19. | <i>The Conference of the Birds (preto 2)</i> , 2024
bronze
43 × 19 × 3 cm
16 ⅞ × 7 ½ × 1 ⅞ inches |
| 12. | <i>Arts and Entertainment</i> , 2014
rug
152 × 196 × 2 cm
59 ⅞ × 77 ⅞ × ¾ inches | 20. | <i>The Conference of the Birds (preto 1)</i> , 2024
bronze
35.5 × 27 × 2.5 cm
14 × 10 ⅝ × 1 inches |
| 13. | <i>Sit (Soleil Noir)</i> , 2024
bronze
24 × 11.5 × 9 cm
9 ½ × 4 ½ × 3 ½ inches | 21. | <i>FRANGO ASSADO (You Will Always Be My Baby I Won't Tell Anyone)</i> , 2024
bronze
31 × 26 × 24 cm
12 ¼ × 10 ¼ × 9 ½ inches |
| 14. | <i>Tutuguri</i> , 2024
bronze
16.5 × 61 × 42 cm
6 ½ × 24 × 16 ½ inches | 22. | <i>Embryo</i> , 2024
feather
25 × 2.5 cm
9 ¾ × 1 inches |
| 15. | <i>Centripetal Force (AUTORAMA)</i> , 2024
iron, bronze
23 × 41.5 ø cm
9 × 16 ⅜ ø inches | | |
| 16. | Alex Kurunis
<i>Police cadets visiting Christ the Redeemer (Rio de Janeiro)</i> , 2022
hand printed C-Type
25 × 30 cm
9 ¾ × 11 ¾ inches | | |
| 17. | <i>Chorus</i> , 2024
wood, plaster, bronze
42 × 56 × 50 cm
16 ½ × 22 × 19 ¾ inches | | |
| 18. | <i>Cordilheira</i> , 2024
bronze
5.5 × 43 × 29 cm
2 ⅞ × 16 ⅞ × 11 ⅞ inches | | |