

Press kit

Antonio Obá

Rituals of Care

**November 16, 2024
– February 16, 2025**

**Opening:
Friday, November 15,
2024,
6 pm**

**Curated by
Andrea Bellini**



Antonio Obá, *Variação sobre Sankofa - Quem toma as rédeas abre caminhos* (Variation on Sankofa - Whosoever takes the reins opens the paths), 2021. Oil on canvas, 70 x 60 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Mendes Wood DM, São Paulo, Brussels, Paris, New York EstudioEmObra.

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Press release

The Centre d'Art Contemporain Genève is pleased to present *Rituals of Care*, the first mid-career survey in Europe dedicated to Brazilian artist Antonio Obá. The exhibition will run from November 16, 2024 until March 2nd, 2025.

Antonio Obá's multifaceted practice encompasses painting, sculpture, photography, installation, video, and performance. His œuvre interrogates and subverts historical representations, reappropriating spiritual practices and stigmas of racism. Obá endeavors to reclaim his African heritage in a societal framework that has historically sought to dilute Black culture. His works therefore confront the violence inflicted over centuries upon African-Brazilian traditions and communities with new narratives.

The body, often his own, is central in Antonio Obá's paintings and performances. He celebrates Black and nude bodies for their symbolic vulnerability while simultaneously depicting their inherent power. By reverting the traditional paradigms of Black representation in art history, Obá's work elevates these figures, portraying them as masters of their environments and destinies. Although the representation of bodies in his paintings evolves over time—reflecting personal experiences, historical narratives, societal influences, and childhood memories—they always remain central.

Spirituality is another fundamental aspect of Obá's practice and profoundly infuses his identity and works. On one hand, he seeks to highlight the oppression and injustices associated with religion. On the other, he harnesses the transformative power of rituals as forms of care and resistance.

Capoeira, one of the first subjects Antonio Obá depicted as a child, holds great importance to him. Originating among enslaved people as a form of resistance to slavery, the Afro-Brazilian martial art has been described by the artist as “a dance and a fight without touching.” Capoeira is one of the key ritualistic practices that allow Obá to connect with his heritage and cultural pride but also to understand the body's ability to be a tool for mutual connection and survival.

Andrea Bellini, director and curator of the show, said the following about the artist's work and upcoming exhibition: *“All of Antonio Obá's practice—be it painting, performance, installation, or drawing—is imbued with a mysterious atmosphere. And like any true mystery, it does not reveal itself but rather renews itself, placing each work at a crossroads of facts, memories, inventions, and meanings. For this artist, there is an evident relationship with the sacred, by which I mean the consciousness of a transcendental dimension of*

existence, of human life, and of the nature that shelters it. Personal memory, collective memory, redemption, and perhaps even forgiveness seem to deeply inspire all his extraordinary paintings. Thus the violent histories of the African diaspora, slavery, and colonialism do not form the basis for a melancholy elegy but are rather transformed into a celebration of the mystery of life and a hymn to existence and transcendence. Showing his work is a great honor for our institution.”

By bringing a vast selection of paintings as well as installations to Europe for the first time, the exhibition will offer visitors a unique opportunity to penetrate the enchantment of Obá's poetic vision of the world.

About the artist

Antonio Obá (b. 1983, Ceilândia, Brazil) lives and works in Brasília. He has held solo exhibitions at Pina Contemporânea, São Paulo (2023); Oude Kerk, Amsterdam (2022); and X Museum, Beijing (2022). His work has been included in group exhibitions at the 12th Liverpool Biennial, Liverpool (2023); Museum de Fundatie, Zwolle, Netherlands (2023); MASP, São Paulo (2022); Zeitz MOCAA, Cape Town (2022); IMS Paulista, São Paulo (2021); Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo, São Paulo (2021); Bourse de Commerce – Pinault Collection, Paris (2021); MO.CO, Montpellier, France (2020); Museu de Arte Moderna, São Paulo (2019); Museu de Arte do Rio, Rio de Janeiro (2018); Museu de Arte Moderna, Rio de Janeiro (2017); Casa da América Latina, Brasília (2016); and Museu Nacional da República, Brasília (2015).

This exhibition is possible thanks to the generous support of Mendes Wood DM and Flux Laboratory.

For further information or images, please contact our press office:

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