

NANQUIM SOBRE PRETO FUNDO BRANCO

“There are still those who remember that João Ayres was the great artistic disruptor of Mozambique; he was the first who here vigorously announced and demonstrated visions of our time; he was the one who for years influenced and guided almost all those who then painted here.”
Pancho Guedes in *Jornal A Tribuna* a 5 de Maio de 1963

EXHIBITION ↑
CURATED BY NATXO CHECA

FROM OCTOBER 6 2022
TO JANUARY 7 2023
AT GALERIA ZÉ DOS BOIS

DRAWINGS/
/PAINTINGS
1947–1959

JOÃO AYRES

Between October 6, 2022 and January 7, 2023, Galeria Zé dos Bois presents *Nanquim Preto sobre Fundo Branco [Black Nankin on a White Background]*, a solo exhibition by João Ayres (1921–2001). Occupying the rooms on the second floor of the Gallery, this show is composed of a selection of paintings and drawings, produced between 1947 e 1959.

In recent years, ZDB's programming has focused essentially on individual exhibitions of contemporary artists, but also on shows of movements, currents, or authors who, in some way, intend to revisit and highlight, proposing a historical, aesthetic, political, social, or other approach.

Black Nanking on a White Background proposes a look at the first decade of the artistic production of João Ayres, restating its historical and artistic importance as a precursor of Modernism in Mozambique in the late 1940s and 1950s.

In 1944, João Ayres was part of the II salon "Independentes" (collective exhibition where, among others, Fernando Lanhas, Nadir Afonso and Júlio Rezende participated) at the Coliseu in Porto, and the annual exhibition of the National Society of Fine Arts in Lisbon. In 1946, encouraged by his father, the naturalist painter Frederico Ayres, he moved to Mozambique, where he worked as a painter, with regular exhibitions in South Africa and Brazil. At the same time, he teaches painting and drawing at the Núcleo de Arte in Maputo, influencing and interacting with artists such as Malangatana, José Júlio, António Bronze and Bertina Lopes.

It was during this period that he began his artistic practice more intensely and where his first major neo-realist canvases with a social theme that reflect surrealist influences. The group of works exhibited here defends the role of João Ayres as a pioneer, portraying the Mozambican reality through the neo-realist current, painting images of workers at the Maputo docks, the lamentation of the social condition, the berimbau player or the cultural manifestations, pointing out the social and cultural

differences prevailing at the time between the colonized and the colonizer, the latter being the protagonist of his paintings. His first solo show, in 1949, brought together a set of these large format canvases, some of which are shown in the present exhibition.

The second nucleus – and the one that gives the exhibition its title – is composed of a set of drawings, made between 1956 and 1957 after he came from Brazil where he presented a solo show at MASP (Museu de Arte de São Paulo), showing the concretist current in Ayres' work. Moving away from figuration, the artist began to explore forms, focusing on monochromatic geometric patterns.

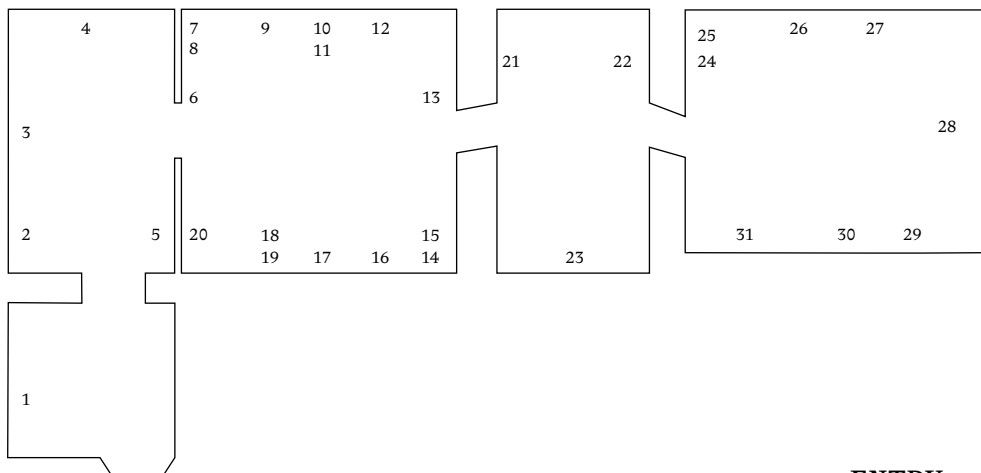
At the end of the 1950s, color enters his work, as well as a greater freedom in his lines, present in the selection of drawings and paintings gathered in the third group of the exhibition. In these works there are recognizable pattern traces in the hairstyles and scarifications of Maconde sculpture and also in wall masks from southern Mozambique.

A selection of statuary – part of the private collection started by Frederico Ayres – that recreates folkloric, traditional and cultural references to the time in Mozambique, runs through the entire body of work.

The program complementing the exhibition includes two film sessions, including the film *João Ayres, Pintor Independente* (2022) by Diogo Varela Silva, as well as guided tours, and a lecture with Alda Costa, Mozambican contemporary art historian.

1ST FLOOR

1. *Oração*, 1949
Oil on canvas,
83 × 145 cm
2. Untitled (view
from Gorjão Pier),
1947, Oil on wood,
47 × 35 cm
3. *Cais do Gorjão*,
1948, Oil on wood,
122 × 165,5 cm
4. *Guincho*, 1947
Oil on wood,
98,5 × 121,5 cm
5. *Tocador*, 1949
Oil on wood,
117 × 101 cm
6. Untitled, 1957
Nankin on paper ,
51 × 73 cm
7. Untitled, 1956
Nankin on paper,
51 × 73 cm
8. Untitled, 1956
Nankin on paper,
51 × 73 cm
9. Untitled, 1956
Nankin on paper,
73 × 51 cm
10. Untitled, 1956
Nankin on paper,
51 × 73 cm
11. Untitled, 1956
Nankin on paper,
51 × 73 cm
12. Untitled, 1956
Nankin on paper,
51 × 73 cm
13. *O Muro*, 1951
Oil on canvas,
114 × 127 cm
14. Untitled, 1957
Nankin on paper,
51 × 73 cm
15. Untitled, 1957
Nankin on paper,
51 × 73 cm
16. *Sem título*, 1956
Nankin on paper,
51 × 73 cm
17. Untitled, 1957
Nankin on paper,
51 × 73 cm
18. Untitled, 1957
Nankin on paper,
51 × 73 cm
19. Untitled, 1957
Nankin on paper,
51 × 73 cm
20. Untitled, 1956
Nankin on paper,
51 × 73 cm
21. *Homem sentado*,
1954
Oil on wood,
113 × 92 cm
22. *Colóquio*, 1954
Oil on wood,
69 × 92 cm
23. Blackwood
figures (40's);
Masks from
southern
Mozambique
24. Untitled, 1958
Gouache on paper,
73 × 51 cm
25. Untitled, 1958
Gouache on paper,
73 × 51 cm
26. Untitled, 1959
Oil on canvas,
105 × 183 cm



ENTRY

27. Untitled, 1958
Gouache on paper,
51 × 73 cm

28. Untitled, 1957
Oil on wood,
95 × 145 × 10 cm

29. Untitled, 1956
Charcoal on paper,
51 × 73 cm

30. Untitled, 1956
Charcoal on paper,
73 × 51 cm

31. Untitled, 1958
Gouache on canvas,
88 × 74 cm

João Ayres
(1921-2001)

Was born in Lisbon in 1921. He studied architecture at the School of Fine Arts in Lisbon and Porto. In 1944 he was part of the II salon “Independents” (collective exhibition where, among others, participated Fernando Lanhas, Nadir Afonso and Júlio Rezende) at the Coliseu in Porto, and the annual exhibition of the National Society of Fine Arts in Lisbon.

He moved to Mozambique in 1946, where he began his artistic practice more intensely and where he taught drawing and painting at the Núcleo de Arte in Maputo. He exhibits for the first time, with his father, the painter Frederico Ayres, in 1947. In the following years he participated in various collective exhibitions and began to have contacts with Pancho Guedes, Cândido Portinari, Walter Battiss, and various South African and Rhodesian painters. He held his first solo exhibition in 1949, promoted by the Núcleo de Arte, where he exhibited his first neo-realist paintings.

He continued to exhibit collectively and individually in the following years, highlighting the solo exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art in São Paulo (1955); at Voster’s Gallery in Pretoria (1961); at the Left Bank Galleries in Johannesburg (1965); at the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon (1981).

João Ayres is represented in various national and international private and institutional collections, including the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, the Museum of Modern Art of São Paulo, the Brazilian National Pinoteca, and the Grão Vasco Museum in Viseu.

In 2022, Diogo Varela Silva directs the documentary *João Ayres, Independent Painter*.

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João Ayres

CURATED BY

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zedosbois.org

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Monday to Saturday

6pm – 10pm

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