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Carpintaria

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Engraved into the body

*"So it is better to speak
remembering
we were never meant to survive."
Audre Lorde*

Founded in Rio de Janeiro in 1944, the Teatro Experimental do Negro, conceived by Abdias Nascimento, had as its central purpose to claim space for Black people in the theater of the time. However, if the initial strategy of TEN consisted in the appropriation of the theater as a space of power, its activities would prove to be manifold, sewing a complex web of events and agents in different fronts of action.

The company was a pioneer in organizing, for example, literacy courses, labor fronts and even beauty contests that claimed and praised Black culture in a deeply racist society, guided by the myth of "racial democracy". Although TEN's activities came to halt in 1961 -- due to Nascimento's exile as a result of the military dictatorship in Brazil --, its existence would continue to resound in the following decades and - why not? - even today.

Engraved into the body takes part of the company's photographic collection as a starting point and a point of diversion to discuss issues related to race, identity and the body. Would it be possible, therefore, to think of the theater based on traditional Black dynamics and practices? And art? Doing it together, collectively, has a Black character. This proposed "pagode" -- an epistemological union of body knowledge for communal enjoyment -- brings the conversation from the images and ideas of Abdias and TEN and gives us support for thinking about today's art and artists.

If the racist construction has torn the world into two chapters, let us look for possible stitches for writing history and stories. Other narratives, inhabited by unsuspected winners, destitute emperors and disfigured busts.

By bringing Audre Lorde into the fold, we evoke the body and thought of each person present here with their work, thinking and doing. This exhibition speaks of a possible art, which was only made possible by languages, ethics and aesthetics that walk the line of abundance. To see that we are here. Making and being art.

Keyna Eleison and Victor Gorgulho