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39^o Panorama de Arte Brasileira
https://artafricamagazine.org/after-its-all-said-diane-lima-and-the-39th-panorama-of-brazilian-art/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=after-its-all-said-diane-lima-and-the-39th-panorama-of-brazilian-art

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After It's All Said: Diane Lima and the 39th Panorama of Brazilian Art.

INTERVIEW

At MAM São Paulo, Diane Lima considers what might emerge from the debates that have transformed contemporary Brazilian art – and what it means to build new artistic, institutional, and critical possibilities from the Global South.

11 AUGUST 2026

Since its inception in 1969, the Panorama of Brazilian Art has provided a recurring lens for considering the shifting contours of artistic production in Brazil. More than a survey, its successive editions have reflected changing ideas of representation, geography, identity and the very terms through which Brazilian art is encountered and understood.

For its 39th edition, 'After It's All Said', curator Diane Lima turns her attention to what might come after a period of profound transformation. The title opens onto a question rather than a conclusion: once certain histories have been articulated, structures have been challenged, and established narratives have been reconsidered, what becomes possible to imagine, make, and say differently?

Bringing together artists from different regions, generations, and disciplines, Lima approaches the Panorama not as an attempt to arrive at a definitive account of Brazilian contemporary art, but as a space where different positions and artistic languages can encounter one another. Research and sustained dialogue with artists are integral to this process, allowing the exhibition's proposition to develop through the practices it brings together rather than being imposed upon them.

The Panorama also arrives at a significant moment in Lima's own curatorial trajectory, following her curation of the Brazilian Pavilion at the 2026 Venice Biennale. Moving between these very different institutional contexts raises wider questions about where contemporary art is seen, how cultural value is produced, and where resources and attention are directed. As international recognition continues to carry considerable cultural capital, the development of audiences, institutions and critical discourse across the Global South presents an equally consequential horizon.

In conversation with Suzette Bell-Roberts for ART AFRICA, Lima discusses the thinking behind 'After It's All Said', the research and encounters that shaped the exhibition, her relationship to the history of the Panorama, and the questions that emerge when international visibility is considered alongside the longer work of building cultural infrastructures and audiences closer to home.

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Thaís Muniz, 'Me Leve Para a Terra Que Também É Minha' (2024). Photo credit to Antonello Veneri.

Suzette Bell-Roberts: The title “*After It’s All Said*” suggests an ending and a point of departure. How did Denise Ferreira da Silva’s proposition shape your curatorial framework, and what artistic possibilities emerge when representation becomes something to move beyond?

Diane Lima: Much has been said about how Denise’s work has become an indispensable landmark in racial studies—precisely because it intervenes not through sociology but by imploding the edifice of Western philosophy. When I say that Black feminist thought informs my curatorial practice, I am not referring to thematic issues but to form, intervention, method, modes of making, and strategies. This aligns with how I perceive curatorship as a performative utterance and how I always think through a language that makes my work possible, not only on a discursive level but also on a practical or structural level. How will what I am saying make us do something at the same time? In that sense, speaking broadly, Denise’s work informs mine as a philosophical and interventional foundation. It helps me navigate the challenges we face in the art-making system and allows us to understand how those ontoepistemological foundational texts that define notions of freedom, subject, aesthetic judgment, and reason produce raciality itself and ultimately, the production of value in the contemporary art economy. It happens because those same texts are completely entangled with Western aesthetic philosophy and determine and justify the racial hierarchy of the modern world. It is this post-Enlightenment version, under the figure of the Human or the transparent I, that is known nowadays as the only authority figure and the only one capable of properly exercising aesthetic, scientific, or ethical judgment. That figure has been governing the predominant ontoepistemological regime for approximately the last two hundred years, as well as the ways we produce knowledge and criticism in the art world. *After It’s All Said* opens a sharp debate with the figure of the appreciator, which is the figure of the I think. Not only does it read the scene of the refusal of some practices in resigning to the limits of the category and obeying the regime of representation, but it also creates a tool that allows us to read art as a confrontation. If we know that representation, in the Kantian version, is regulated by the categories of understanding, I guess that what we will experience in this Panorama is an experiment. An experiment that still produces meaning, but does that when it confronts and interrogates what we call Brazilian art: what we know about it, its past, our ways of looking at and describing it, and, above all, the artistic practices of future generations.

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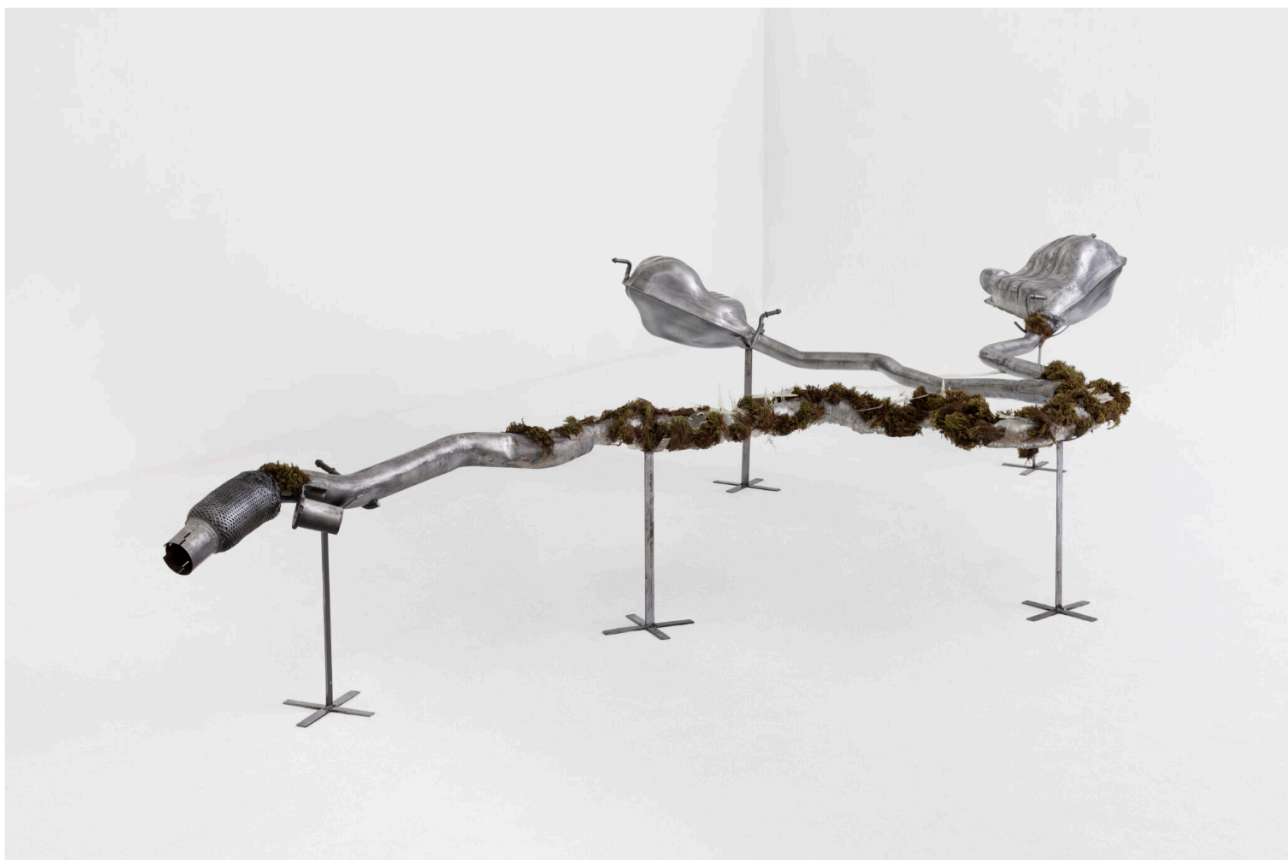
Ana Cláudia Almeida, '*Começo de festa*'. Photo credit to Eduardo Ortega

You describe this Panorama as responding to an “epistemological turnpoint” in Brazilian art over the past two decades. What shifts in artistic thinking or practice made you see this moment as requiring a different curatorial language?

This question is absolutely key to explaining why I see a shift in the politics and poetics of representation in the Brazilian art scene. When the opportunity came to submit a project to the 39th Panorama, I started to think about the attempt to grasp our present as a way of creating a historical understanding of place that poses questions around where we are, where we have arrived, what we have done, and where we want to go. Particularly because I felt the need to look at all the changes that have taken place and analyse what we, collectively, have created and demanded with such force that they have completely transformed the face of Brazilian art and institutions today. I do not think our work has been sufficiently recognised as the motor and main driving force behind these changes, especially in comparison with the hypervisible ways in which institutions have promoted themselves under the labels of diversity and decolonisation. We know that these changes were made through struggle. Artworks themselves have embraced forms of denunciation and other modes of expression that, by becoming visible, have challenged erasure. At the same time, it is important to note that we are far from a monolithic, immutable culture, meaning that we are no longer in the same place. I cannot say that justice has been fully achieved because, as we know, that is an impossible feat. But we cannot say that nothing has changed. Through this attempt, and by studying how to make decolonisation a practice, we have learned that decolonisation is an incommensurable achievement, and that the only way it could be fully realised, as Denise says, would be through the complete return of the expropriated value of captive bodies and native lands. In trying to make that happen, we have arrived at another place that, while not decolonised, exists along a gradient. This practice of refusal is an intrinsic part of the debate and part of the strategies used by many artists both as practice and methodology. That is why, in this

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Panorama, I felt it was urgent to centre Black feminism and the Black women's movement within the transformation we are living through now. I also wanted to think about how these theories and forms of thought made it possible for artists and curators to push their practices closer to this (always incomplete) idea of liberation. And in the midst of the way, we found, and we are finding our ways. From the concept of the Unpayable Debt, we learned that decolonisation is materially impossible, but ethically has a value that is essential to drive our responsibilities and decisions on how to attempt to mitigate the effects of this debt.



Emer Freire, '*Mecanismo Íntimo*' (2024). Photo credits to Estúdio.

The exhibition resists reducing artists' practices to predetermined identity categories while remaining attentive to race, history, and social transformation. How do you navigate this tension without diminishing political urgency or artistic complexity?

If all the questions that we are raising in this show push our assumptions a bit further, I will already be grateful. I'm not seeking to deliver any specific or final answer; what I'm doing is documenting and inscribing a process of transformation on a historical platform that never was vocal about addressing a Black feminist approach in a country that was transformed by black women and the Black feminist movement. Over the past two decades, we have undergone a crucial epistemological shift, which has allowed us to refine, deepen, and complicate our approaches to creating and expressing art through perspectives of refusal and confrontation. What is particularly intriguing is that this change is emerging from one of the largest racial laboratories in the world. While much attention has been paid to the personalities who dominate institutional spaces of power in Brazilian art—often the same figures who are central to the reproduction of violence—little has been said about the racialised figures who

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made possible what underpins the very definition of social movements: making institutions act. The Brazil I experienced while participating in the 35th São Paulo Bienal – *Choreographies of the Impossible* is no longer the same. It was a remarkable moment when we were the first, as it marked the significant involvement of Black and Indigenous curators and artists in one of the world's most important and oldest exhibitions, in a country where more than 50% of the population identifies as Black. And five years after the Bienal's research was first gathered, I think what changed most was our need to challenge the limits of representation. Another important point is that I am also interested in how affirmative action has impacted not only Black people but also society as a whole. If we believe in the work and the ruptures that our work creates, or is intended to create, we must believe that change is possible. I know that sometimes we are very pessimistic, but sometimes we are strengthened. If any essentialist explanation helps, it is that I am completely absorbed by the idea of movement, which was the main concept behind feminism. I am also always looking through this gradient and this perception of movement. That is why I like to think through these oceanic, porous, and monstrous forms, because they complicate the idea of Brazil and, in doing so, complicate the ideas of Black people, the Black diaspora, queer bodies, the Americas, and the Global South.



Helô Sanvoy, 'Fazendo ausências, (Lucidez difusa)' 2026. Photo credits to Diego Bresani.

Throughout your curatorial writing, you speak of “oceanic, porous, and monstrous forms” as ways of understanding contemporary artistic practice. How do these concepts function in the exhibition, and what do they reveal about changing conditions of art-making in Brazil?

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The Birth of Form: Oceanic, Porous, and Monstrous is a text I wrote in 2022 in which I narrate the search, on the part of a group of artists, to escape the limits of representation—and how my work as a curator focused primarily on creating the conditions so that what is trying to take shape in the world can achieve its significance, which I ultimately named oceanic, porous, and monstrous forms. Looking back, it was a poethical way to help me name something that was fundamentally confrontational and disobedient, and was precisely breaking what I call the norm theme-figure. An attempt to escape the utilitarian use of language, and to move beyond what has become hypervisible and transparent in the relationship between art and politics. Has been interesting to encounter and be in dialogue with so many artists, most of whom I have never worked with before. Each one of them disrupts, in some way, our expectations about the equation of region, origin, materiality, and what they were supposed to be or express, particularly given the legacies and traditions of this restless debate about the nativity of Brazilian art within modern art. I think they can be a bit ironic, ungraspable, spine-chilling, homeless, or watery. I was reading a beautiful text by a theoretical physicist named Pedro Lisbão. He says that when the age of the universe in seconds is written with more than 40 zeros after the comma, we cannot make affirmations that accurately describe the structure of time and space. I immediately thought that the works in this Panorama may invite us to confront a similar exercise.



Nazas (Thays Chaves), série *Faixas*, 2025. Photo Credit to Jô Santos.

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Bringing together 33 artists from every region of Brazil creates an expansive portrait of contemporary practice. Rather than pursuing representation through geography alone, what conversations, frictions, or shared sensibilities did you hope would emerge across generations, materials, and lived experiences?

There is a lightning, sound, and chromatic experience in the space we designed together that hits us as energy. There is a material, physical presence that enchants me so much. And there are still works that were made for other aims beyond being consumed by consumption. And I think this capacity for imagination is what means beauty; they are not naifs.



Jota Mombaça, *'Ghost 25 if you can't be free'* (2026). Manif d'Art – The Quebec City Biennial. Photo credit to Pedro Yared Lima.

Black feminist thought forms an important conceptual foundation for this Panorama, particularly through your engagement with Denise Ferreira da Silva's work. How has this framework transformed the exhibition's themes and your understanding of curatorial practice?

I think this show is not thematically feminist; we are not illustrating Black feminism, but it raises a philosophical feminist question. It is simply a historical reminder of the moment we live in within Brazilian Art and how it became global, built by Black women. It was my way to make a historical intervention to honour those who did the work that made mine finally possible. I cannot develop my practice without being the impossible I became. And a Black feminist approach is the tool and strategy that allows nothing but inhabiting the impossible. Even when the representation of Black feminism in my project is completely unseen, opaque, or undetectable – porous, oceanic, or monstrous.

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Artwork by Kuenan Mayu. Photo credit to Kuenan Mayu.

The Panorama returns to MAM São Paulo's renovated home while revisiting one of Brazil's longest-running contemporary art exhibitions. How did you approach this institutional history while insisting on a vision that refuses nostalgia and imagines new futures?

I realised that what I have been doing is all "basic things". Things that embrace justice and reparation, that had to be done but still remain. That is precisely why the idea of negative accumulation and the unpayable debt is so effective: it draws on quantum physics to propose an interpretation of expropriation that emphasises how what was previously extracted is part of the composition of what came into being. It persists in the material makeup of the elements of what exists today and of what will come. Our seeking to achieve liberation will always be an exercise of radical imagination, and I totally could be in dialogue with the historic panorama of Brazilian art, but only if I could research and closely look at this redecomposition process that makes, in every single thing we do, this fractal time appear.

This Exhibition will be on view at Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo from 12 September 2026 until 26 January 2027.