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Academic conventions dictate that it is preferable to write an article in the third person. That way, the subjectivity of what is being affirmed is reduced by the apparent neutrality of scientific discourse. Something that is subjective becomes a fact by something as simple as the choice and placement of pronouns: it is not I who believes; it is believed. The absence of the "I" behind the enunciation is so conventional that it goes unnoticed, and its use as a stylistic tool – to confer veracity and authority to arguments that would otherwise lack rhetorical power – is equally ignored<sup>1</sup>.

In *The Pleasure of the Text*, Roland Barthes makes a distinction between two types of texts: those related to pleasure and those related to bliss. Roughly put, the first would be that of traditional narratives, while the second would be the avant-garde text, one that is unspeakable, which pursues language while simultaneously breaking with it, which creates through destruction. Of the latter, he says:

This text is outside pleasure, outside criticism, unless it is reached through another text of bliss: you cannot speak 'on' such a text, you can only speak 'in' it, in its fashion, enter into a desperate plagiarism, hysterically affirm the void of bliss (and no longer obsessively repeat the letter of pleasure). (Barthes 1975, 22)

Writing on the work of Bruno Moreschi – sitting comfortably in my mystified throne of critic/curator who reads works of art with enlightened eyes and communicates<sup>2</sup>, interprets or translates them in a neutral manner through the all-powerful written word – would obliterate myself before a body of work that, more than anything, lends transparency and clarity to a

1. In a recent survey called "History of Art," a team of researchers headed by me examined 11 art history books commonly used in undergraduate visual arts course in Brazilian universities. In general, the authors of the books researched, such as Gombrich and Argon, use a strategy similar to this: the use of an unspecified subject or a generic subject ("it is known that," "art history," "Art," "field," "discipline," "human sciences," etc.). The strategy reveals the construction of a discourse that seems naturally true and conceals the identity of the author who constructs it – and, consequently, partially exempts he or she from the responsibility of what is affirmed.

2. A similar procedure occurs in the footnotes of this curatorial text: a space in which the exhibition's artist puts himself as a commentator of what is written about him. In the footnotes of the artistic works, the authorship is collective: of the curator and of the artist. It is important to emphasize that assuming a position of power does not necessarily imply minimizing the privileges that it holds. Often it is only a veiled (and, in a sense, even more perverse) way of perpetuating the status quo.

3. *They are: Art Now v.1, Art Now v. 2, Art Now v. 3; 100 Contemporary Artists; Vitamin 3-D; Vitamin D; Vitamin P; Vitamin PH; Rising - Young Artist to Keep An Eye On!; and Creamier.*

4. *To get an idea of their advertising character, one of the most well-known publications is called... Ice Cream. Another, Creamier. The notice here is less pompous than that of Vasari, a typical ice cream plate: several flavors, choose yours. Yes, the system in question and which has been parodied in Art Book is the fast food of the visual arts. Everything is fast and practical, as the title of one of them, Art Now, shows. This type of presentation which borders stupidity makes contemporary publications of this kind have a questionable authority; no one in their right mind would call them art history books. Their participation in the historiography of art is dubious and problematic. They are not respected books in academia, but they are not exactly portfolios of artists or advertisements for galleries and museums. A schizophrenic miscellanea defines them. The effect of a partial authority is produced based on a sort of pseudo-criticism that sells to the reader the image of an exquisite selection of artists (always in round numbers: 25, 50, 100) that is supposedly full of criteria (which are never in fact presented; after all, if these criteria even exist, they are from the art market and not from criticism).*

codified world. As an escape, I pour myself entirely onto these pages. To assume without modesty that I am in the first person, that I speak here from my partialities and idiosyncrasies, is my way of plagiarizing Bruno Moreschi, of writing in his work.

### THE EMPEROR HAS NO CLOTHES

*"For symbolic power is that invisible power which can be exercised only with the complicity of those who do not want to know that they are subject to it or even that they themselves exercise it."*  
(BOURDIEU 1991, 164)

Between 2012 and 2014, Bruno Moreschi dedicated himself to investigating ten international encyclopedias of contemporary art<sup>3</sup>. In them, as is usual with collections of any kind, an editorial board chooses an arbitrary but easily assimilated number of contemporary artists, considered by them to be the most relevant today. The selection criteria are freely stipulated by the editors, whose authority is endorsed by other institutions in the art market (such as museums and galleries, specialized media and art fairs), which in turn will use these same publications to base their future curatorial and marketing choices, creating a closed circuit that feeds itself.

Like many other mechanisms of consecration in the *art world*<sup>\*</sup>, these collections work in a similar way to the Catholic practice of selling indulgences, securing now what will come in the afterlife. In other words, they determine, through their authority, what is utterly unpredictable, for it is in the future - whether it is a place in heaven or in the intentionally fabricated narrative we call art history<sup>4</sup>.

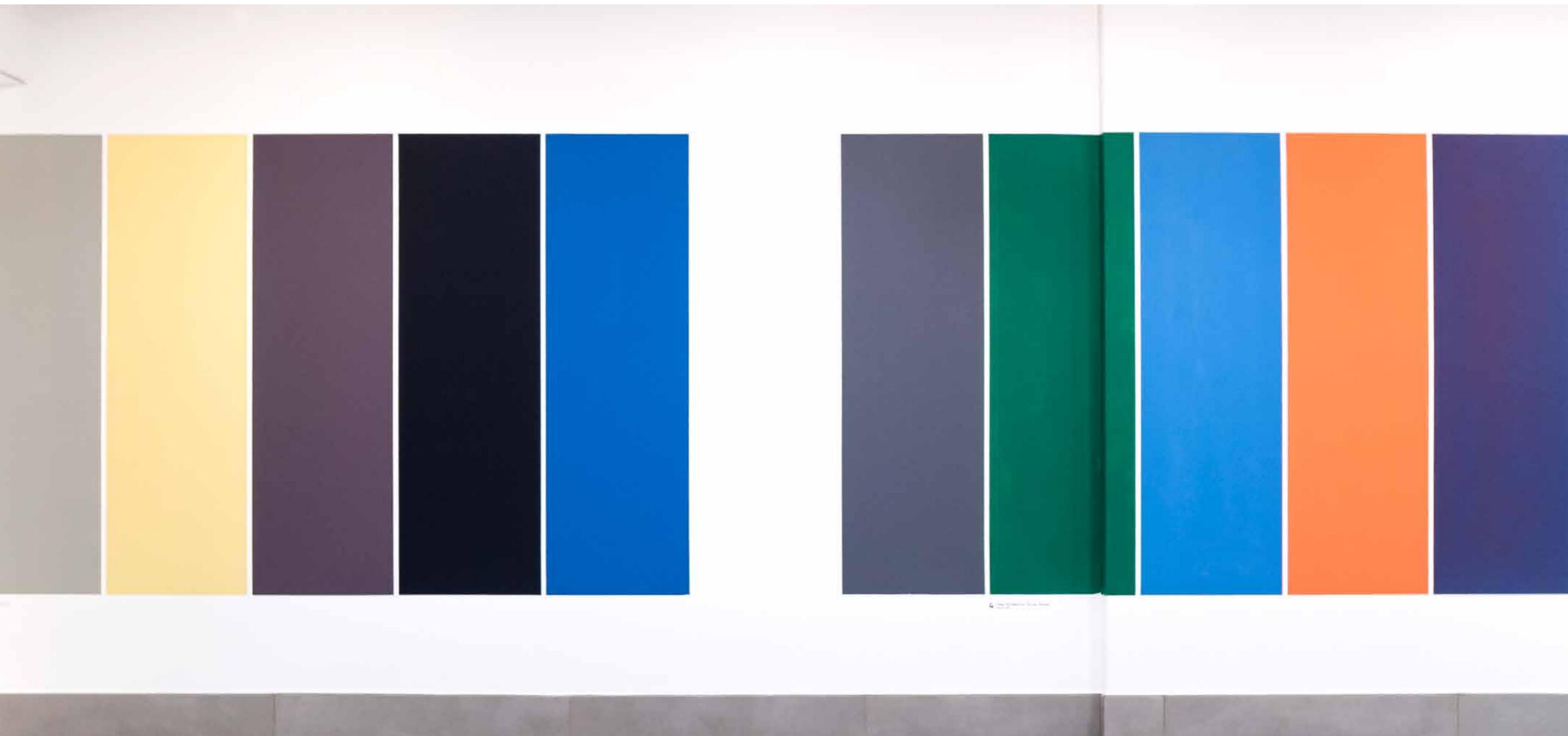
\* Author's Note: concept originally coined by philosopher Arthur Danto in "The Artworld" originally published in *The Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 61, no. 19, October 15, 1964.

There is a lot in common between contexts that are essentially based on the production and circulation of symbolic power, be they religious systems or the art world. Regarding the metaphor, however, I feel obliged to make an essential distinction: it is easier to predict the future of an artist than that of his immortal soul. History is not something that happens; it is produced. In the case of art history, the agents in conflict for narrative hegemony, as well as the patterns of circulation of capital (financial and symbolic) among them, are well-known and mapped out. If the rules of the game and the space occupied by its agents remain inert, the exercise of futurology dispenses a crystal ball.

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The *a posteriori* narrative of any event is always accompanied by the risk of oversimplification (one of the advantages of looking at things in hindsight is finding clarity in what was chaos and movement when the past was still shaped as present). For *Art Book*, I present the process linearly, for exhibition purposes - a process which I believe to have been much less clear for the artist, who had to feel his way through the uncertainties of creation.

In his survey of the ten encyclopedias, Moreschi identified a series of repeated patterns used by different authors in publications that were intended to be distinct from one another, since they compete with each other. The first of which would be the exemplary character of the selected artists - who are not necessarily the best, but who, in some way, translate the essence of their time. Although guided by modern identity logic, these encyclopedias also operate based on the concept of representation. These artists would therefore be exceptional because



they are simultaneously identical to themselves and to a whole spectrum of alterities that they were editorially authorized to represent.

The second pattern identified seems to me to result from this characteristic, namely, the presence of stereotypes – types of artists present in all these publications. Names and practices differed among the books, but in all of them there were some standard places that were up to the editorial board to fill in however and with whomever suited them: the controversial performance-artist who violates his own body to problematize the barbaric conducts of his country; the painter who seeks the pure language of “art for art’s sake” and whose pictorial production deals only with itself; the photographers who are reinventing photography; the conceptual artist who defends the need to break from the boundaries between art and life and who creates art from everyday objects (not to be confused with minimalist artists who create sculptures from industrial objects, or with artists who use appropriation to question the idea of authorship); the female artist who uses her experience of abuse to denounce patriarchy (one of the few gender-determined stereotypes), and so on.

Based on the identification of these commonplaces, of those who occupied them and of how their occupants were presented, Moreschi continued his *Borgesian*<sup>5</sup> initiative and created 50 fictitious artists. He conferred on them nationalities and biographies consistent with those that filled the pages of the encyclopedias he examined and, in an effort that is perhaps the most impressive part of this process, produced the works that would later be reproduced in his *Art Book* (published by the fantastic Menard Editions, an irony that could not be overlooked).

5. In several texts, the Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges also seems preoccupied in search of that which is common to all, complicating the issue of signature. In *A History of Eternity*, for example, he argues that “Individuals and things exist insofar as they participate in the species that includes them, which is their permanent reality.” (BORGES 1999, 127). In this argument of there being groups, types, grouping of peers, the author reminds us (or does he make this up?) that poet John Keats “could believe that the nightingale enchanting him was the same one Ruth heard amid the alien corn of Bethlehem in Judah” (127). According to him, “The generic can be more intense than the concrete. There is no lack of examples to illustrate this. During the boyhood summers I spent in the north of the province of Buenos Aires, I was intrigued by the rounded plain and the men who were butchering in the kitchen, but awful indeed was my delight when I learned that the circular space was the “pampa” and those men “gauchos” (129).

If all these collections were merely an effort to represent the whole through the individual, Moreschi would have done nothing but accomplish their mission. By abolishing identities and condensing into fictional characters the range of subjects and practices that were once represented by one person, Moreschi could have made obsolete the well-intentioned encyclopedic effort. However, as I said before, history does not happen, it is made, and “representation” is nothing more than a euphemism for “production” – of values, of identities and alterities, of borders and exclusion. What these characters represented was not the artistic practice of a time, but rather the discourse elaborated by enunciating agents interested in determining what should be valued as the artistic practice of a time (and consequently, what should be ignored).

By producing the works of these 50 made-up artists himself – works whose authorship could easily be attributed to many artists active nationally and internationally – Moreschi has shown that the contemporary art market comes with an instruction manual, and decoding it is like learning a new language. The artist did not need years in the studio and sole dedication to painting to produce works that, if signed by the right name and represented by the right gallery, could easily be sold for five or six digits. All he had to do was read the signs of the world, or rather, the narratives that currently produce what we understand as the “art world.”

The art circuit today is, above all, a codified world. What Bruno Moreschi did with his *Art Book* and with the other works in *Ordenamientos* was to identify these codes (and their mechanisms of expression) and to subtly act upon them. Due to the form in which systems work, even the slightest deviation can bring overwhelming consequences. In *Art Book*, Moreschi did



not work with any artist stereotype that could not be found in the encyclopedias he researched. Doing so would not only be unnecessary, but unreasonable. The critical potential of the work lies in learning and reproducing the codes of this language that, through the mimetic act of the artist, becomes accessible to everyone. It is as if, unlike the usual (and easy) finger-pointing, Moreschi had undressed himself in a public square in the presence of Hans Christian Andersen's vain monarch and his sycophant subjects, showing that the emperor, in fact, has no clothes.

Because I recognize my tendency toward grandiloquence, I would like to make one caveat: even if loaded with transforming potential, criticism of the system is somewhat expected and finds its place in the very system it criticizes<sup>6</sup>.

*6. It is no coincidence that, for some time, Act Book's subheading was: or it can make fun of your illusions, but reproduces its logic.*

No one is more connected to the specific past of the field, even in the subversive intention, itself also linked to a state of the field, than the avant-garde artists who (...) inevitably have to situate themselves in relation to all previous attempts to go beyond those that have been effected in the history of the field and in the space of the possible that the same field imposes to newcomers. What happens in the field is increasingly linked to the specific history of the field, and only to it, and is therefore increasingly difficult to deduce from the state of the social world at the moment it was considered. (Bourdieu 1989, 297-298)

## ORDINANCES

In the work of any author, it is possible to find elements that are repeated in several of their creations. It may be a recurring theme, an idiosyncratic use of technical support, an unusual linguis-

tic-formal approach, etc. If involuntary, faulty acts not sufficiently sifted through by the editorial practice become tics, awkward language vices; if they are the product of a conscious artistic choice, of a specific desire for experimentation, what could be a tic is transfigured into what makes the author recognizable, a signature that does without a name. If I chose to analyze the at length, it was for considering it exemplary of the creation process found in Bruno Moreschi's body of work up to the moment of curating this show, namely, the practice of cataloging and organizing a field as a starting point for critical action.

Moreschi's greatest merit is perhaps that of keeping his eyes open to the order of the world, which is no small task considering that one of the great trumps of power is its reification. We take something that is nothing more than a social construct as being a product of nature, destiny or divine plan. Devoid of its historic-temporal character, what is a contingency earns the status of necessity, in an ontological maneuver that serves to maintain the structure of the ruling power, whichever it may be. Moreschi starts with the organization of these same structures to bring out their artificiality and, in doing so, places them back in time.

The research carried out by the artist for the production of a work may involve discourses, concepts, practices, objects or professionals (such as the last policemen to use the practice of manually creating spoken portraits in Brazil; construction workers and wall painters at construction sites close to the exhibition space; photographers specialized in photographing art; and street artists who make a living producing academic paintings). What motivates each of these surveys and their subsequent activation is the realization that operating through them

or at their expense are mechanisms of mystification and consecration of the art system and other hegemonic narratives, as is the case of the history of Brazil seen through the eyes of São Paulo's elite, portrayed by Pedro Américo.

Moreschi's practice is centered around vision: the artist is one who sees and, in seeing, he creates situations that enable others to see. To achieve this, it is necessary for him to know how to step back and leave the doing to those who are accustomed to it. Sometimes they are agents of the art world, hidden backstage, like artwork photographers, wall painters, and art handlers. Other times, they are professionals ignored by a world that is arrogantly unaware of the interdependent relationship between all the parts that integrate a field and those excluded from it (such as those who create crafts that are not considered art), or the field's dependence on a broader social economy which, materially and symbolically, enables its existence (as in the case of *Errors: for Exhibition Use*).

Concepts such as "artist-author," "artist-editor" or "artist-etc.," seem to fall short in trying to encompass the scope of Moreschi's activity. If in order to make something intelligible we must give it a name, I would risk saying that he is, more than anything, an artist-translator. His works decode reified systems from the subtle intervention capable of exposing their historic-social character. In doing so, the artist educates us to see, since the clarity that comes from the revelation of something previously hidden has the transformative potential of a new way of seeing. We can always close our eyes in a bright environment, surely, but something of that light will leave its reddish mark on our retinas, despite the protection of our eyelids.

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#### **1. Pintores [Painters], 2014-2017 (page 19)**

Acrylic on wall

25 strips (9 measuring 65 x 60 cm and 16 measuring 185 x 60 cm)

To attain the neutrality of the exhibition space, a place removed from time that gives exhibited works the aura of historical importance, it is necessary not only to erase any hint of the outside world, but also the mechanisms and processes that constitute the white cube as a real space. In order for the supposed magic of eternity to occur, the countless workers involved in designing and setting up an exhibition are concealed, causing it to appear as the sole creative work of the artist, and sometimes of the curator. There is no room for the art handlers, producers, cleaning professionals, construction workers and wall painters in the room they helped create.

For *Pintores* [Painters], a site-specific and collaborative installation, exhibited for the first time in São Paulo (2014), the artist visits construction sites in the vicinity of the exhibition space and invites workers to collaborate on the creation of an artwork. For the installation in Brasília, the five painters who were invited were given six shades of paint, which could be mixed, to paint over the strips of wall assigned to them. The artist tried to interfere as little as possible in the choices of these professionals, who signed their work. One of them, Lourival Lima Oliveira (who had prepared the walls of Espaço Marcantonio Vilaça for the exhibition), chose not to paint over one of his strips, assuming it as part of his own work.

For the first time, in *Ordinances*, the painters' birthplace was added below their names, an important information for understanding, from the socioeconomic point of view, the invisibility of these professionals.

Painters:

Laudio Ramos de Lima (Santo Antonio da Descoberta, GO), Uerlio Moura da Silva (Corrente, PI), Lourival Lima Oliveira (Aldeias Altas, MA), José Arimatéia (Caxias, MA) e Luis Ribeiro de Assis (Carinhanha, BA).

#### **2. O Museu Está Fechado para Obras [The Museum is Closed for Renovations] (page 45)**

*Independência ou Morte (Versão Provisória 1)* [Independence or Death] (Temporary Version 1), 2014

Oil on fabric

185 x 380 cm

Marco Andrade Jr., Reginaldo Frazão, José Almeida, Bruno Moreschi

*Independência ou Morte (Povo 1)* [Independence or Death] (The People 1), 2014

Oil on fabric

150 x 100 cm

Carla Soares, Helena Trindade, Bruno Moreschi

*Independência ou Morte (Povo 2)* [Independence or Death] (The People 2), 2014

Oil on fabric

108 x 124 cm

Marco Andrade, José Almeida, Bruno Moreschi



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