



# Nino [João Cosmo Felix]

ARTIST'S PORTFOLIO



## BIOGRAPHY

João Cosmo Félix (1920–2002), better known as Nino, is one of the most important figures for understanding Brazilian folk sculpture in the 20th century. He spent his entire life in Juazeiro do Norte, in the heart of Ceará's Cariri region, and developed a body of work deeply rooted in the everyday life of the sertão (backlands), yet elevated by the expressive power of his art to something universal.

Before becoming an artist, Nino worked as a sugarcane cutter and blacksmith. Self-taught and illiterate, he began sculpting by making wooden toys. In the 1970s, his work took a new direction with the appearance of his first large-scale animals — striking, otherworldly forms painted in earthy tones with bold black-and-white patterns.

By the 1980s, Nino had developed a mature and vigorous visual language: sculptures over a meter tall, carved from single blocks of wood and painted in vibrant colors. Human figures also became part of his repertoire, especially characters from *reisado* — a popular folk tradition deeply embedded in Northeastern Brazilian culture.

Always carved from whole tree trunks, his sculptures reveal an instinctive command of form and color. Fish, oxen, monkeys, elephants, and birds appear alongside everyday scenes and figures from popular culture, all marked by his distinctive and unconventional color combinations — one of the most unique features of his work. The monkey, in particular, was his favorite creature, which he carved over and over again with humor and affection.

### **Nino: The Essential in Its Raw State**

1920 - 2002, Juazeiro do Norte | CE - Brazil

## BIOGRAPHY

Nino once explained the link between material and invention in his creative process: “When I see the stump, I already know what’s in that piece of wood (...) I want people to think it’s beautiful.” This act of “knowing” — of recognizing the image already present in the wood — captures the poetic and intuitive force of his creation.

Though he lived in one of Brazil’s most emblematic cities of popular religiosity, defined by devotion to Padre Cícero, Nino’s work remained outside that sphere of influence. His was an independent, imaginative practice, rooted in his own sensory experience and the hands-on craft of working with wood.

He participated in landmark exhibitions such as the Mostra do Redescobrimento (São Paulo Biennial Foundation, 2000), and in 2001 his work was the subject of a solo show at the Pinacoteca de São Paulo — The Essential in Its Raw State — a title that perfectly captures the raw yet refined nature of his art.

Today, Nino’s work is part of major museum collections and private holdings in Brazil and abroad. Deeply Brazilian, his sculpture defies labels and easy classifications: it is art born from the soil of the sertão, yet open to the world — a practice that pulses between instinct and form, between dream and wood.

### **Nino: The Essential in Its Raw State**

1920 - 2002, Juazeiro do Norte | CE - Brazil



## SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- |      |   |
|------|---|
| 2016 | <b>Nino</b><br>Galeria Estação, São Paulo - SP, Brazil  |
| 2002 | <b>Nino, The Essential in Its Raw State</b><br>MCC - Memorial da Cultura Cearense, Fortaleza - CE, Brazil |
| 2001 | <b>Nino, The Essential in Its Raw State</b><br>Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo, São Paulo - SP, Brazil  |





## COLLECTIVE EXHIBITIONS

- 2025** In every corner: Casa Fiat de Cultura and Instituto Tomie Ohtake visit Vilma Eid Collection  
Casa Fiat de Cultura, Belo Horizonte - MG, Brazil
- 2025** Instituto Tomie Ohtake visits Vilma Eid Collection - In every where  
Instituto Tomie Ohtake, São Paulo - SP, Brazil
- 2024** Methamorfoses and Distances  
Galeria Estação, São Paulo – SP, Brazil
- 2023** Reverses and Transverses: artists beyond boundaries (and friends) at the biennials  
Galeria Estação, São Paulo – SP, Brazil
- 2021** They Were Already Here  
Galeria Base, São Paulo – SP, Brazil
- 2021** Baião de Dois  
Galeria Estação, São Paulo - SP, Brazil
- 2020** Que Mestre é Esse?  
CRAB - Centro Sebrae de Referência do Artesanato Brasileiro, Rio de Janeiro - RJ, Brazil



## COLLECTIVE EXHIBITIONS

- |           |  |
|-----------|--|
| 2019      | Exposición Lina Bo Bardi Tupí or not tupí ?<br>Fundación Juan March, Madrid, Spain                   |
| 2016      | Entreolhares: poéticas d'alma brasileira<br>Museu Afro Brasil Emanoel Araújo, São Paulo - SP, Brazil |
| 2014      | Almost a figure, almost a shape<br>Galeria Estação, São Paulo – SP, Brazil                           |
| 2012      | Histoires de Voir - Show and Tell<br>Fondation Cartier pour l'Art Contemporain, Paris, France        |
| 2012      | Janete Costa "The gaze"<br>Museu Janete Costa de Arte Popular, Niterói - RJ, Brazil                  |
| 2012      | 4 Outsider artists<br>Museu Afro Brasil Emanoel Araújo, São Paulo - SP, Brazil                       |
| 2011      | O Brasil na Arte Popular<br>Acervo Museu Casa do Pontal, Brasília - DF, Brazil                       |
| 2008-2009 | Exposição Imaginário do Povo Brasileiro<br>Restaurante Antiquarius, São Paulo - SP, Brazil           |

## COLLECTIVE EXHIBITIONS

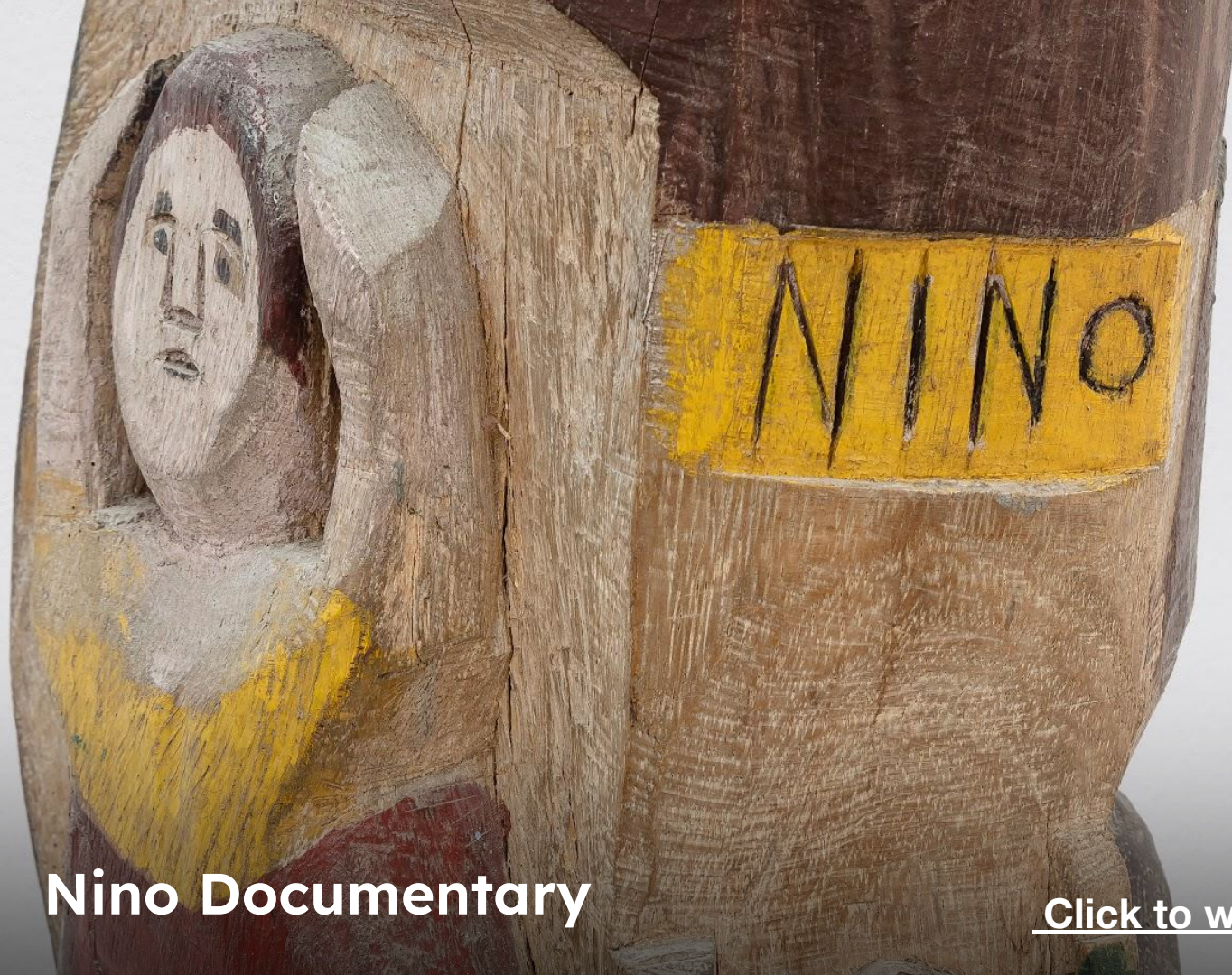
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- |           |  |
|-----------|--|
| 2007      | Do tamanho do Brasil - Mostra de Arte Popular<br>Sesc Paulista, São Paulo - SP, Brazil                           |
| 2006-2007 | Viva Cultura Viva do Povo Brasileiro<br>Museu Afro Brasil Emanuel Araújo, São Paulo - SP, Brazil                 |
| 2006      | SOMOS - a criação popular brasileira<br>Centro Cultural Santander, Porto Alegre - RS, Brazil                     |
| 2006      | Brasil Imaginário<br>Galeria Estação, São Paulo - SP, Brazil   |
| 2004-2005 | Forma, Cor e Expressão: uma coleção de arte brasileira<br>Galeria Estação - São Paulo, SP, Brazil                |
| 2004      | Bienal Naifs do Brasil<br>Sesc, São Paulo - SP, Brazil   |
| 2000      | Mostra do Redescobrimento: arte popular<br>Fundação Bienal, São Paulo - SP, Brazil                               |
| 2002      | Pop Brasil: a arte popular e o popular na arte<br>CCBB - Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil, São Paulo - SP, Brazil |

## COLLECTIVE EXHIBITIONS

- |           |  |
|-----------|--|
| 2001      | Expressão Popular<br>Centro Cultural Light, Rio de Janeiro - RJ, Brazil  |
| 1998      | Jangrada<br>Museu Histórico do Ceará, Fortaleza - CE, Brazil   |
| 1995-1996 | Os Herdeiros da Noite: fragmentos do imaginário negro<br>Centro Cultural de Belo Horizonte, Belo Horizonte - MG, Brazil    |
| 1994-1995 | Os Herdeiros da Noite: fragmentos do imaginário negro<br>Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo, São Paulo - SP, Brazil         |
| 1994      | Os Herdeiros da Noite: fragmentos do imaginário<br>Espaço Cultural SOS Sul, Curitiba - PR, Brazil                          |
| 1992      | Brasilien: Entdeckung und Selbstentdeckung<br>Kunsthau Zürich, Zürich, Switzerland   |
| 1992      | Viva o Povo Brasileiro   Artesanato e arte popular<br>Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro - RJ, Brazil |

## **PUBLIC COLLECTIONS**

Fondation Cartier pour l'Art Contemporain  
Paris, France



**Nino Documentary**

[Click to watch](#)







## SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

- |      |  |
|------|--|
| 2018 | Arte Popular Brasileira: olhares contemporâneos, Vilma Eid e Germana Monte-Mór<br>Editora WMF Martins Fontes, São Paulo - SP, Brazil |
| 2016 | NINO, Vilma Eid e André Parente<br>Lis Gráfica, São Paulo - SP, Brazil   |
| 2014 | Almost a figure, almost a shape, Vilma Eid, Socorro de Andrade Lima e Lorenzo Mammì<br>Lis Gráfica, São Paulo - SP, Brazil           |
| 2012 | Histoires de Voir - Show and Tell, Fondation Cartier pour l'Art Contemporain<br>Editoriale Bortolazzi-Stein, Paris, France           |
| 2012 | Janete Costa "The Gaze", Mario Santos<br>Lis Gráfica, São Paulo - SP, Brazil   |
| 2007 | Do tamanho do Brasil - Mostra de arte popular<br>Sesc Paulista, São Paulo - SP, Brazil   |
| 2006 | Viva Cultura Viva do Povo Brasileiro<br>Museu Afro Brasil Emanuel Araújo, São Paulo - SP, Brazil                                     |
| 2004 | Bienal Naifs do Brasil<br>Sesc SP, São Paulo - SP, Brazil  |

## SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

2000

Mostra do Redescobrimento: arte popular, organizador Nelson Aguiar  
Fundação Bienal, São Paulo - SP, Brazil

2001

Nino | o essencial em estado bruto, Emanuel Araujo  
Pinacoteca de São Paulo, São Paulo - SP, Brazil

1995

Os Herdeiros da Noite  
Centro de cultura de Belo Horizonte, Belo Horizonte - MG, Brazil

1992

Catálogo Viva o Povo Brasileiro | Artesanato e arte popular  
Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro - RJ, Brazil

1980

O Reinado da lua- escultores populares do Nordeste  
editora Salamandra, Rio de Janeiro - RJ, Brazil



EXHIBITIONS



2024

## Nino (João Cosmo Felix)

Exposição Cotidiano, imaginação e paisagem, Galeria Estação 20 anos, Instituto Çare  
Photo©Ana Pigosso



2024

## Nino (João Cosmo Felix)

Exposição Cotidiano, imaginação e paisagem, Galeria Estação 20 anos, Instituto Çare  
Photo©Ana Pigosso



2016

## Nino (João Cosmo Felix)

Exposição Nino, Galeria Estação, São Paulo - SP | Brazil

Photo©Camila Selli Nogueira



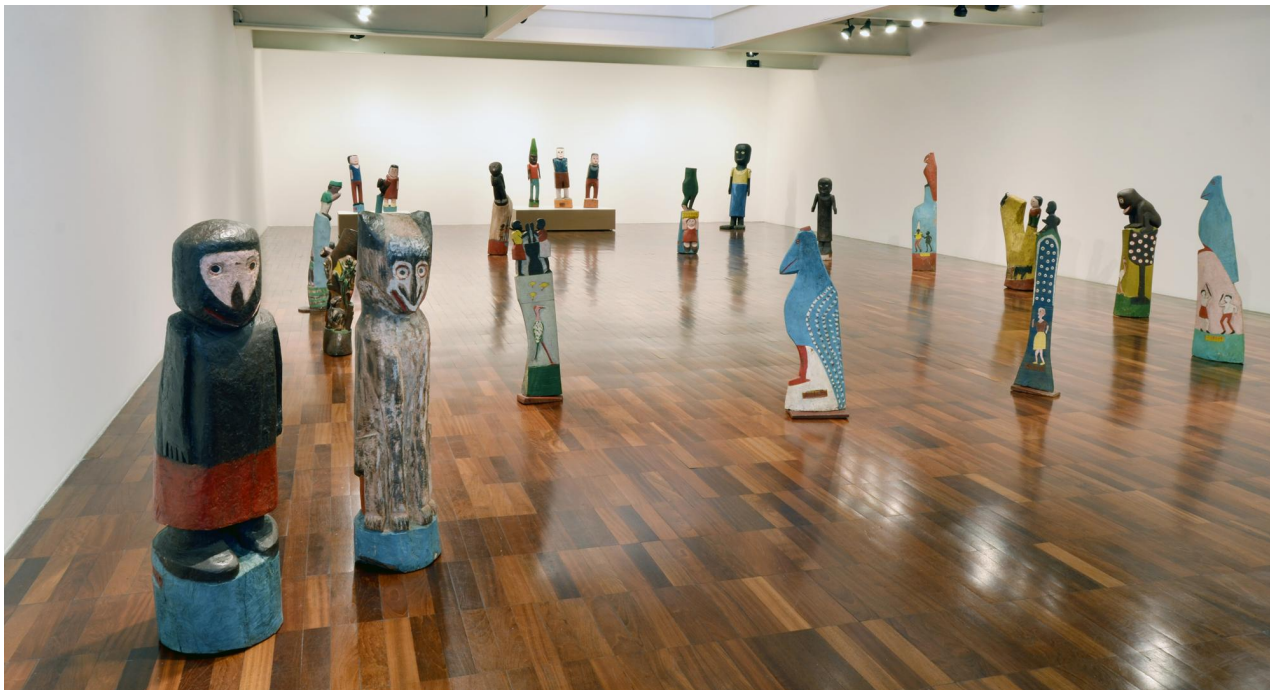


2016

## Nino (João Cosmo Felix)

Exposição Nino, Galeria Estação, São Paulo - SP | Brazil

Photo©Camila Selli Nogueira



2016

## Nino (João Cosmo Felix)

Exposição Nino, Galeria Estação, São Paulo - SP | Brazil

Photo©Camila Selli Nogueira



ARTWORK



**Nino (João Cosmo Felix)**  
**1920 - 2002, Juazeiro do Norte - CE, Brasil**

Macaw, Déc 70 | 70's Wooden Sculpture  
132 x 9 x 26 cm | 51.96 x 3.54 x 10.23 in

Photo credit: ©João Liberato



**Nino (João Cosmo Felix)**  
**1920 - 2002, Juazeiro do Norte - CE, Brasil**

Untitled, Déc 70 | 70's Carved and painted wood  
80 x 25 x 16 cm | 31.49 x 9.84 x 6.29 in

Photo credit: ©João Liberato



**Nino (João Cosmo Felix)**  
**1920 - 2002, Juazeiro do Norte - CE, Brasil**

Untitled, Déc 80 | 80's Carved and painted wood 130 x 25 x 15 cm |

Photo credit: ©Filipe Berndt





**Nino (João Cosmo Felix)**  
**1920 - 2002, Juazeiro do Norte - CE, Brasil**

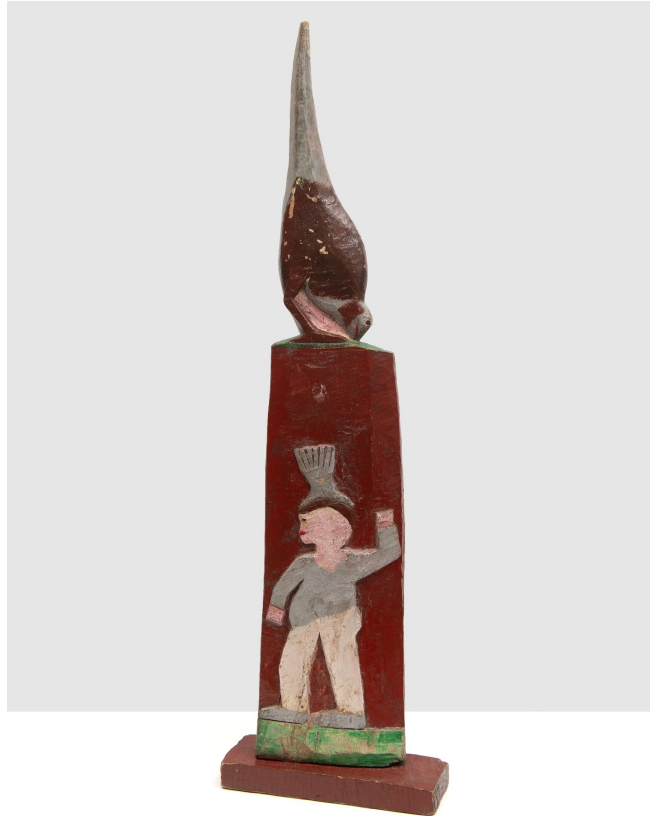
Untitled, Sem data | Undated Carved and painted wood  
73 x 15.5 x 40 cm | 28.74 x 5.90 x 15.74 in

Photo credit: ©João Liberato

**Nino (João Cosmo Felix)**  
**1920 - 2002, Juazeiro do Norte - CE, Brasil**

Untitled, Déc 80 | 80's Carved and painted wood  
97 x 27,5 x 11 cm | 38.18 x 10.62 x 4.33 in

Photo credit: ©João Liberato





**Nino (João Cosmo Felix)**  
**1920 - 2002, Juazeiro do Norte - CE, Brasil**

Untitled, Sem data | Undated Carved and painted wood  
131 x 25 x 19 cm | 52.00 X 9.84 X 7.48 in

Photo credit: Filipe Berndt



**Nino (João Cosmo Felix)**  
**1920 - 2002, Juazeiro do Norte - CE, Brasil**

Untitled, Sem data | Undated Carved and painted wood  
62 X 18 X 22 cm | 24.40 X 7.08 | 8.66 in

Photo credit: Filipe Berndt



THE GALLERY

**Established in 2004 in São Paulo, Brazil, Galeria Estação inaugurated a curatorial program serving a wide-reaching community of noncanonical artistic voices. By creating trans-generational bridges between emerging contemporary and pioneering self-taught artists, Galeria Estação has inspired an integrative network of creative figures and makers from varied geographies and educational backgrounds.**

Since 2008, the gallery's innovative artistic program, housed in a state-of-the-art architectural building, has exhibited contemporary Brazilian artists whose cultural backgrounds and vernacular practices complement the primacy of self-taught art —examining the country's under represented artistic styles, working methods, and historical narratives and legacies.

Galeria Estação's artistic director and founder, Vilma Eid, in collaboration with a distinguished group of invited guest curators, have proposed unexpected dialogues in presentations that have transcended

traditional accounts of the development of abstract and figural genres in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, initiating the past and present of Brazilian art.

As a result, Galeria Estação is an institutional reference in Brazil, a force for preserving Latin American memories and narratives otherwise dismissed, marginalized, or overlooked in the historiographies of Brazilian art.

Galeria Estação advances its mission to provide unprecedented opportunities for viewers to experience expansive local and global visions of Brazilian art.

Galeria Estação exhibits a large stable of self-taught artists: Agnaldo dos Santos, Agostinho Batista de Freitas, Amadeo Luciano LORENZATO, Artur Pereira, Chico da Silva, Chico Tabibuia, Conceição dos Bugres, Elza O.S, Geraldo Teles Oliveira – G.T.O, Gilvan SAMICO, Itamar Julião, Izabel Mendes da Cunha, José Antonio da Silva, Madalena dos Santos Reinbolt, Maria Auxiliadora, Mirian Inêz da Silva, Sebastião Theodoro Paulino da Silva – RANCHINHO, Suanê e Zica Bergami.

The growing roster of contemporary artists include: Deni Lantz, Eduardo Ver, Higo José, José Bezerra, Julio Vilani, Rafael Pereira, Santídio Pereira, Cicero Alves dos Santos - Véio.



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