



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

Nino

Galeria Estação, São Paulo - SP, Brazil

2002

Nino, The Essential in Its Raw State

MCC - Memorial da Cultura Cearense, Fortaleza - CE, Brazil

2001

Nino, The Essential in Its Raw State

Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo, São Paulo - SP, Brazil

1989

Solo Exhibition

Galeria Pé de Boi, Rio de Janeiro - RJ, Brazil



COLLECTIVE EXHIBITIONS

-
- | | |
|------|---|
| 2026 | Visualidades Brasileiras – Funarte 50 Anos
Palácio Gustavo Capanema, Rio de Janeiro - RJ, Brazil |
| 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 |
| 2024 | Cotidiano, imaginação e paisagem: Galeria Estação, 20 anos
Instituto Çarê, 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 ?

Fundación Juan March, Madrid, Spain

2018

Arte Popular Brasileira, Galeria Pedro Moraleida – Palácio das Artes

Belo Horizonte - MG, Brazil

2016

Entreolhares: poéticas d'alma brasileira

Museu Afro Brasil Emanuel Araújo, São Paulo - SP, Brazil

2014

Luminaires da Arte Cearense

Sobrado Dr. José Lourenço, Fortaleza - CE, Brazil

2014

Almost a figure, almost a shape

Galeria Estação, São Paulo – SP, Brazil

2012

Histoires de Voir - Show and Tell

Fondation Cartier pour l'Art Contemporain, Paris, France

COLLECTIVE EXHIBITIONS

2012

Janete Costa "The gaze"

Museu Janete Costa de Arte Popular, Niterói - RJ, Brazil

2012

4 Outsider artists

Museu Afro Brasil Emanuel Araújo, São Paulo - SP, Brazil

2011

O Brasil na Arte Popular

Acervo Museu Casa do Pontal, Brasília - DF, Brazil

2008-2009

Exposição Imaginário do Povo Brasileiro

Restaurante Antiquarius, São Paulo - SP, Brazil

2007

Do tamanho do Brasil - Mostra de Arte Popular

Sesc Paulista, São Paulo - SP, Brazil

2006-2007

Viva Cultura Viva do Povo Brasileiro

Museu Afro Brasil Emanuel Araújo, São Paulo - SP, Brazil

2006

SOMOS - a criação popular brasileira

Centro Cultural Santander, Porto Alegre - RS, Brazil

COLLECTIVE EXHIBITIONS

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| 2006 | Brasil Imaginário
Galeria Estação, São Paulo - SP, Brazil |
| 2004-2005 | Forma, Cor e Expressão: uma coleção de arte brasileira
Galeria Estação - São Paulo, SP, Brazil |
| 2004 | Bienal Naifs do Brasil
Sesc, São Paulo - SP, Brazil |
| 2000 | Mostra do Redescobrimento: arte popular
Fundação Bienal, São Paulo - SP, Brazil |
| 2002 | Pop Brasil: a arte popular e o popular na arte
CCBB - Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil, São Paulo - SP, Brazil |
| 2001 | Expressão Popular
Centro Cultural Light, Rio de Janeiro - RJ, Brazil |
| 1998 | Jangrada
Museu Histórico do Ceará, Fortaleza - CE, Brazil |

COLLECTIVE EXHIBITIONS

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| 1995-1996 | Os Herdeiros da Noite: fragmentos do imaginário negro
Centro Cultural de Belo Horizonte, Belo Horizonte - MG, Brazil |
| 1994-1995 | Os Herdeiros da Noite: fragmentos do imaginário negro
Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo, São Paulo - SP, Brazil |
| 1994 | Os Herdeiros da Noite: fragmentos do imaginário
Espaço Cultural SOS Sul, Curitiba - PR, Brazil |
| 1992 | Brasilien: Entdeckung und Selbstentdeckung
Kunsthaus Zürich, Zürich, Switzerland |
| 1992 | Viva o Povo Brasileiro Artesanato e arte popular
Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro - RJ, Brazil |
| 1987 | Brésil, Arts Populaires
Grand Palais, Paris, França |
| 1984 | Artistas de Juazeiro do Norte, CE
Sala do Artista Popular – SAP 09, Rio de Janeiro - RJ, Brazil |

PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

Museu da Casa do Pontal

Rio de Janeiro - RJ, Brazil

Fondation Cartier pour l'Art Contemporain

Paris, France

Museu Afro Brasil Emanuel Araújo

São Paulo - SP, Brazil

Museu de Folclore Edison Carneiro – CNFCP

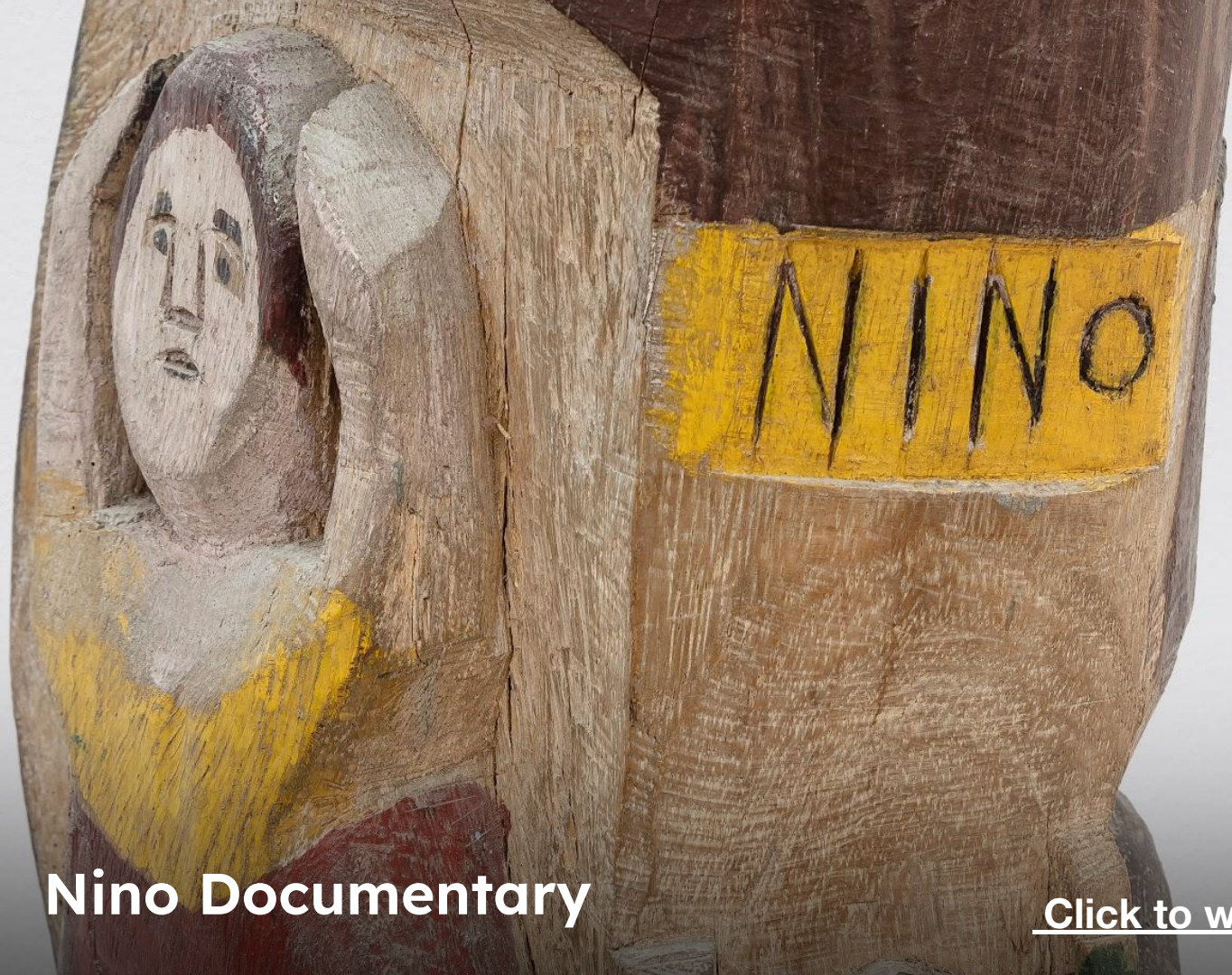
Rio de Janeiro - RJ, Brazil

Museu do Homem do Nordeste – Fundação Joaquim Nabuco

Recife - PE, Brazil

Coleção Museu da Cultura Cearense – Centro Dragão do Mar de Arte e Cultura

Fortaleza - CE, Brazil



Nino Documentary

[Click to watch](#)



SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

- | | |
|------|--|
| 2024 | Moderno Contemporâneo Popular Brasileiro The Vilma Eid gaze
Daniel Rangel, Germana Monte-Mór e Lorenzo Mammi, Editora WMF, São Paulo – SP, Brazil |
| 2018 | Arte Popular Brasileira: olhares contemporâneos, Vilma Eid e Germana Monte-Mór
Editora WMF Martins Fontes, São Paulo - SP, Brazil |
| 2016 | NINO, Vilma Eid e André Parente
Lis Gráfica, São Paulo - SP, Brazil |
| 2014 | Almost a figure, almost a shape, Vilma Eid, Socorro de Andrade Lima e Lorenzo Mammi
Lis Gráfica, São Paulo - SP, Brazil |
| 2012 | Histoires de Voir - Show and Tell, Fondation Cartier pour l'Art Contemporain
Editoriale Bortolazzi-Stein, Paris, France |
| 2012 | Janete Costa "The Gaze", Mario Santos
Lis Gráfica, São Paulo - SP, Brazil |
| 2007 | Do tamanho do Brasil - Mostra de arte popular
Sesc Paulista, São Paulo - SP, Brazil |

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

- | | |
|------|--|
| 2006 | Viva Cultura Viva do Povo Brasileiro
Museu Afro Brasil Emanoel Araújo, São Paulo - SP, Brazil |
| 2004 | Bienal Naifs do Brasil
Sesc SP, São Paulo - SP, Brazil |
| 2002 | O Mundo da Arte Popular Brasileira
Angela Mascelani, Museu Casa do Pontal, Rio de Janeiro - RJ, Brazil |
| 2000 | Mostra do Redescobrimento: arte popular, organizador Nelson Aguiar
Fundação Bienal, São Paulo - SP, Brazil |
| 2001 | Nino o essencial em estado bruto, Emanoel 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 |
| 1988 | Artesanato Brasileiro: Madeira
FUNARTE / Instituto Nacional do Folclore, Rio de Janeiro - RJ, Brazil |
| 1980 | O Reinado da lua- escultores populares do Nordeste
editora Salamandra, Rio de Janeiro - RJ, Brazil |



EXHIBITIONS



Photo © Ruy Teixeira

2024

Instituto Tomie Ohtake visita Coleção Vilma Eid - Em cada canto

Instituto Tomie Ohtake, São Paulo - SP, Brazil



Photo © Ana Pigosso

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



2016

Photo © Camila Selli Nogueira

Nino (João Cosmo Felix)

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



2016

Nino (João Cosmo Felix)

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

Photo © Camila Selli Nogueira



2016

Photo © Camila Selli Nogueira

Nino (João Cosmo Felix)

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



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 and Zica Bergami.

The growing roster of contemporary artists include: Higo José, José Bezerra, Julio Villani, Rafael Pereira, Santídio Pereira, Cicero Alves dos Santos - Véio.

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