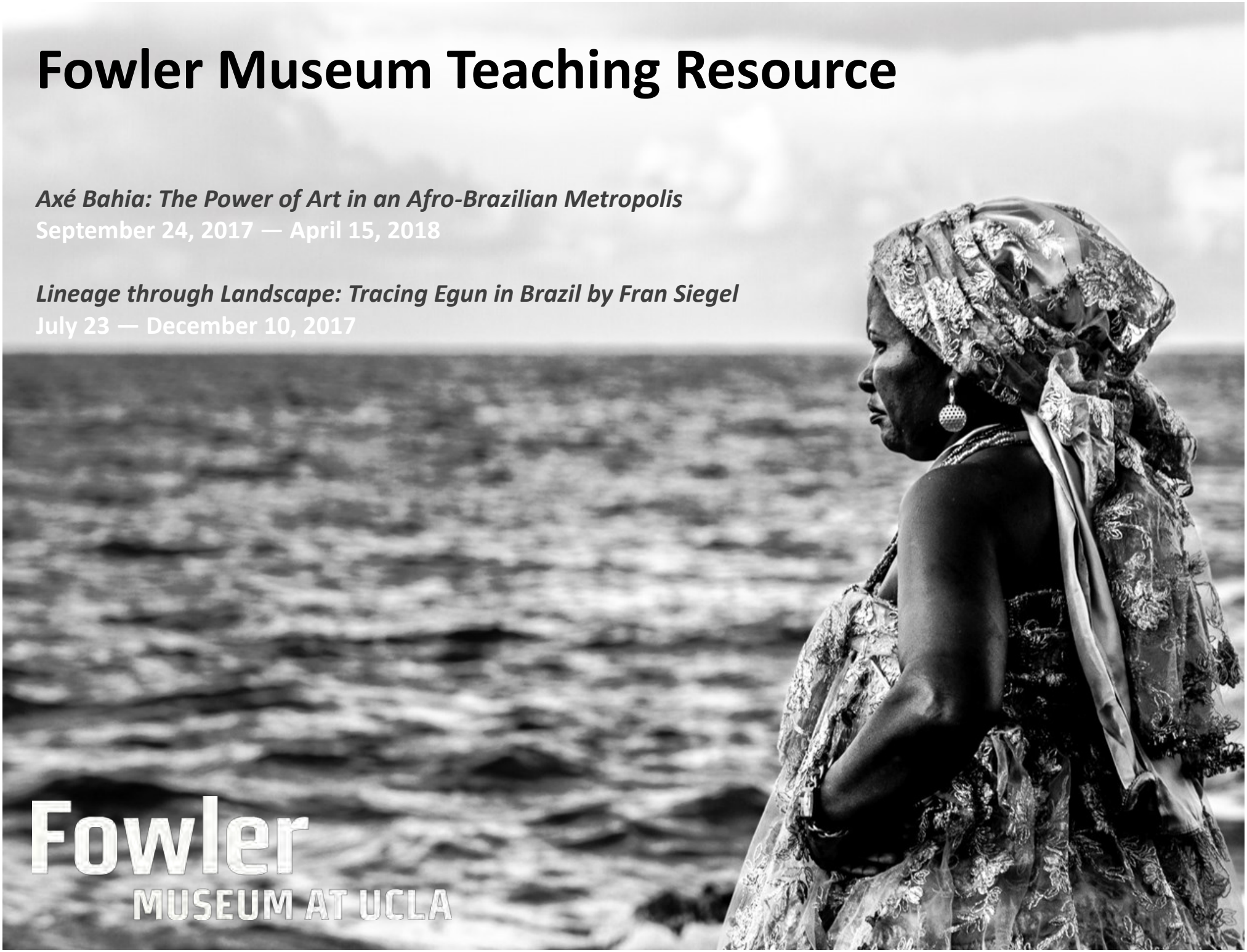
Fowler Museum Teaching Resource

Axé Bahia: The Power of Art in an Afro-Brazilian Metropolis
September 24, 2017 — April 15, 2018

Lineage through Landscape: Tracing Egun in Brazil by Fran Siegel
July 23 — December 10, 2017



About this Teaching Resource

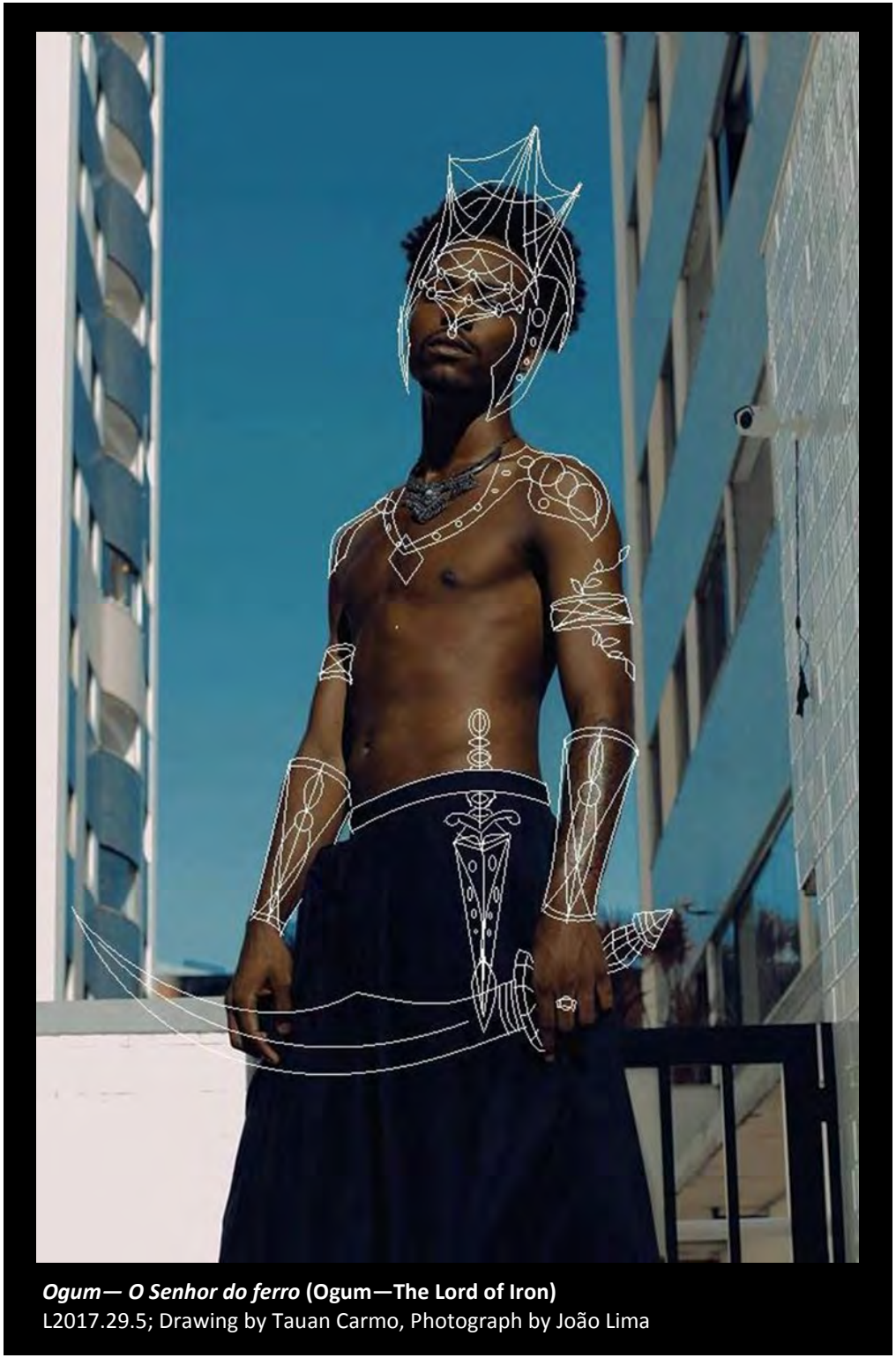
This packet features five works of art from the special exhibitions *Axé Bahia: The Power of Art in an Afro-Brazilian Metropolis* and *Lineage through Landscape: Tracing Egun in Brazil by Fran Siegel*. It is designed to help you look at art with fourth- to twelfth-grade students. You are encouraged to prepare for your inquiry-based discussions by reviewing the descriptions and background information provided. The sections "Talking About Art" are intended for you and your students to look closely, think critically, and respond to the artworks together. Continue your investigations with one or more of the suggested lesson extensions.

We would love to hear your teaching stories! If you use any of the following materials, please share your experience with us by emailing fowlereducation@arts.ucla.edu.

About the Exhibitions

Axé Bahia introduces visitors to the unique cultural role of the city of Salvador, the coastal capital of the Brazilian state of Bahia and Los Angeles's sister city. *Axé Bahia* features more than 100 works from the mid-20th century to the present, including a stunning array of sculpture, painting, photography, video, and installation art. While adding to popular understandings of core expressions of African heritage such as the religion Candomblé, the exhibition explores the complexities of race and cultural affiliation in Brazil, and the provocative ways in which artists have experienced and responded creatively to prevailing realities of Afro-Brazilian identity in Bahia.

Lineage through Landscape is a multifaceted drawing project developed during L.A.-based artist Fran Siegel's research residency in Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, and the island of Itaparica, a vibrant center of the Afro-Brazilian religion Candomblé. Finding inspiration in the worship of ancestral spirits, or Egun, in the natural environment associated with Candomblé practices on Itaparica and in the vexed history of colonialism and slavery in Brazil, Siegel's project can be read as a highly charged landscape of black Brazil, built from fragments that embrace its African roots.



***Ogum— O Senhor do ferro* (Ogum—The Lord of Iron)**
L2017.29.5; Drawing by Tauan Carmo, Photograph by João Lima

Description of *Omolú (Feeding the Head)*

Founded in 1549, Salvador is Brazil's third largest metropolis with a population of more than three million, the majority of whom have African ancestry. Often referred to simply as "Bahia," the city is widely regarded as the center of Afro-Brazilian culture and is celebrated for its African-inspired traditions ranging from cuisine and musical styles to the martial art form capoeira and the Candomblé religion.

In Salvador, the Yoruba-derived word *axé* (pronounced "ah-sheh") is frequently encountered. Whether printed on signage or used to describe a local music genre, it serves as a Bahian catchword. When vocalized, the term is a common way of saying "Blessings" or "Peace" and can also voice approval akin to saying "Let it be so!" or "Right on!" As understood in the theology of Afro-Brazilian Candomblé, *axé* is the intangible energy or vital force that infuses life and carries the potential for positive change in the world—a power that manifests most visibly in ritual and art.

A blending of ritual and theater presented through photography, *Bori* uses performers to represent twelve *orixás* and parallels the Candomblé ceremony in which participants' heads are covered or anointed with sacred foods. The head is where deities reside in the human body, and to feed it is to nourish the soul.

About the Artist

Ayrson Heráclito is an artist who experiments with elements of Afro-Brazilian culture in installation, performance, photography, and video. He often incorporates culinary elements with local significance to reference Bahia's regional history, as demonstrated in this artwork. Heráclito frequently draws from many of the familiar themes and symbols of the Afro-Brazilian religion Candomblé while taking a more conceptual approach to the subject matter.

Heráclito holds a M.A. in Visual Arts from the Universidade Federal da Bahia (UFBA), and a Ph.D. in Communication and Semiotics from the Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo (PUC-SP).

Talking About Art

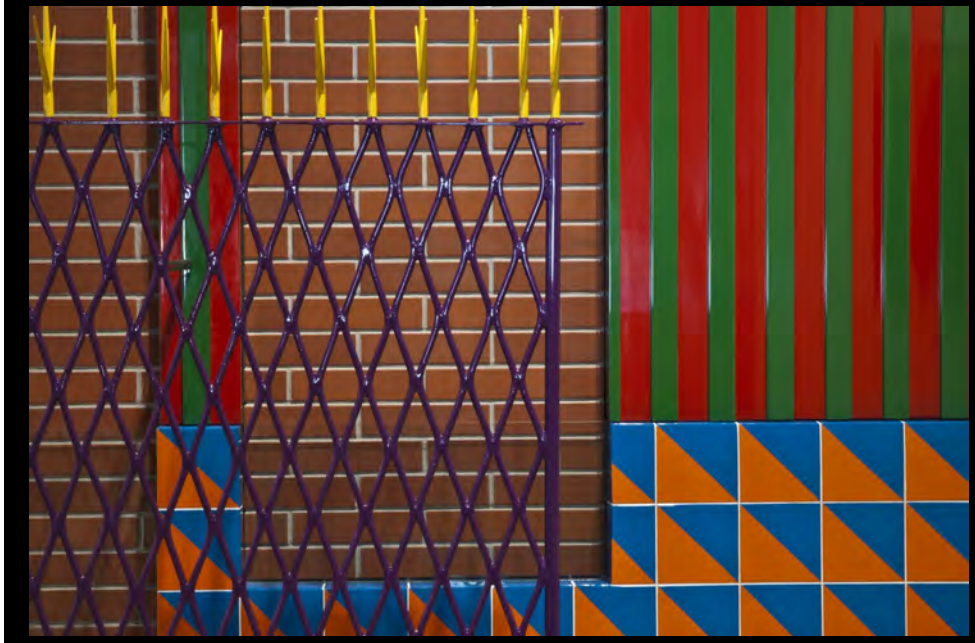
When someone takes a picture of you, what do you want them to see? Artists take great care to compose portraits, carefully selecting which items to include and how the person will be positioned.

Take a moment to quietly look at this artwork. Look for details the artist included and, conversely, did not incorporate into this photograph.

Describe the figure's facial expression and pose. What do these things tell you about the figure? What question(s) would you like to ask this man?

Consider how knowing the artist's inspiration influences how you look at this artwork. Has your understanding of this artwork changed? Why or why not?

Ayrson Heráclito (b. 1968, Macaúbas, Bahia, Brazil)
Omolú, from the series *Bori* (Feeding the Head), 2008–2011
L2017.6.6; Photograph courtesy Ayrson Heráclito



Rommulo Vieira Conceição (b. 1968, Salvador, Bahia, Brazil)
A fragilidade dos negócios humanos pode ser um limite espacial incontestável (The Fragility of Human Affairs Can Be an Incontestable Spatial Boundary), 2015
Wood, metal, glass, automotive paint
L2017.43.1; Collection of the Artist

Top: Photograph of installation. *Bottom:* Photograph showing details of artwork.

Description of *The Fragility of Human Affairs*

Conceição explains that his title *The Fragility of Human Affairs* is drawn from political theorist Hanna Arendt who used the theme to address how members of societies are unable to disengage from systems of control that limit freedom. Employing vibrant colors but critically avoiding the exaltation of Afro-Bahian culture, the artist uses bricked-in doors and windows framed by spiked fences and glass barriers to incisively critique the more recent failures of modern architecture in terms of the long-standing tradition of segregating people, particularly those of African descent, in Salvador, as in other Brazilian cities.

About the Artist

Rommulo Vieira Conceição was born in Salvador, Bahia, and currently works as a researcher and professor at the Universidade Federal da Bahia (UFBA). He works in two main areas: geology and visual arts. Conceição holds a M.A. in Geology from UFBA, a Ph.D. in Geosciences from the Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul Canberra, and a visual arts degree from the Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul Canberra.

Talking About Art

Look closely at this artwork. What do you see?

What is a fence used for? Where might you find a fence like this?

If this fence is surrounding a city, is it protecting the people inside or preventing outsiders from coming in? Explain your answer.

Describe the colors used in this artwork. What do they communicate to you, the viewer?

How might this artwork be connected to past and current events in the United States?

Description of *Gorda Flor (Full Bloom)*

In Bahia, and more broadly in Brazilian popular culture, the Baiana is a key symbol of Salvador. Certain time-honored modes of female attire are closely associated with traditional Afro-Brazilian activities that serve as familiar archetypes, if not stereotypes, of black Bahian women and, by extension, of the region. These include the *baiana do Candomblé* (a practitioner of Afro-Brazilian religion) and the *baiana do Carnaval* (a popular theme for festive costume). All can be recognized by their colorful turban-like head wraps, white hoop skirts, lace blouses, luxurious shawls, and ornate jewelry; these derive from African-inspired creole styles of dress worn by free and enslaved women during the colonial period.

Because this is a ready and easily commoditized sign of Afro-Brazilianess, attendants at gift shops in the city's Pelourinho district (a UNESCO World Heritage site) often dress as "traditional" Baianas as do docents at the Memorial das Baianas, a museum dedicated to the cultural history of its namesakes. As *Gorda Flor* suggests, inheriting or assuming the role of the "Baiana"—Afro-Bahian almost by definition—can bind one to systems of racial classification and gender expectation that remain problematic. At the same time, it can be a crucial expression of identity and an important means of self-determination.

Helemozão (Helen Salomão da Silva e Silva; b. 1994, Salvador, Bahia, Brazil)
Gorda Flor (Full Bloom), 2016
L2017.51.2; Photograph; Courtesy Helemozão

This promotional photograph of Carmen Miranda was taken circa 1945. Image courtesy mptvimages.com.

Description of *Banana da Terra*

Born in Portugal and raised in Rio de Janeiro, white singer Carmen Miranda first appeared on screen in her highly stereotypical and racially charged "Baiana" costume in this Brazilian film of 1939 by Ruy Costa. Here, she sings Dorival Caymmi's Samba tune "*O que é que a baiana tem?*" (What Is It That the Baiana Has?) of 1938, which was inspired by Bahian women of African descent.

About Carmen Miranda

Carmen Miranda was born on February 9, 1909 in Portugal. As a young woman, she designed hats in a boutique before recording her first album in 1929. Just one year later, in 1930, her recording of "*Taí*" (There) written by Brazilian composer Joubert de Carvalho catapulted her to stardom in Brazil as the foremost interpreter of samba. Miranda appeared in numerous Broadway performances, films, and television shows. She is often remembered by American audiences for her signature fruit hat outfit that she wore in films. At the age of 46, Miranda died in Beverly Hills, California, from a heart attack.

Talking About Art

Questions for Examining *Gorda Flor* and *Banana da Terra*

Look closely at these two artworks. In what ways are they similar? How are they different? Explain your response.

What do you notice about the materials used by each artist? Why might an artist choose to take a photograph rather than record a video?

Mimic Carmen Miranda's pose in *Banana da Terra*. How does this stance make you feel?

Compare Carmen Miranda's pose to the figures in *Gorda Flor* by mimicking the pose of the three women. How does it feel to position your body in this way?

How does Carmen Miranda's outfit compare to the clothes and accessories worn by the figures in *Gorda Flor*? Which outfit would you prefer to wear? Explain your answer.

Both artworks illustrate a Baiana, or Bahian woman. In Salvador, and more widely in Brazilian popular culture, there exist a set of traditional Bahian modes of female dress, adornment, and occupation that function as familiar archetypes and in some ways as stereotypes. These include the Baiana de Acarajé (a street vendor of deep-fried black-eyed pea fritters), the Baiana do Candomblé (a female practitioner of Afro-Brazilian religion), and the Baiana do Carnaval (a popular theme for festive costume). The attire of these uniquely intertwined personas is typified by colorful turban-like head wraps, white hoop skirts, lace blouses, luxurious shawls, and ornate jewelry. What connections to the Baiana do you see in these artworks?

The artist of *Gorda Flor*, Helemozão, photographed young women living in Salvador today, contrasting the traditional Bahian modes of female dress with urban style. What evidence of the modern Baiana do you see in this artwork? What changes, if any, would you make if you were to photograph people your own age in your community? Why?

Listening to *Banana da Terra*

In the video *Banana da Terra*, Carmen Miranda can be seen singing and pointing to different components of her outfit. The lyrics to *Banana da Terra* are provided below. Translation by Christopher Dunn.

What is it that the Baiana has?
What is it that the Baiana has?
She has a silk turban, yes
She has golden earrings, yes
A gold chain, yes
She has a woven shawl, yes
She has a lace blouse, yes
A gold bracelet, yes
And she has a starched skirt, yes
She has adorned sandals, yes
And has the most grace of them all!

What is it that the Baiana has?
How she shakes so fine
What is it that the Baiana has?
When you shake it
Fall on top of me
What is it that the Baiana has?
What is it that the Baiana has?

[repeat first verse]

Only those who have it go to Bonfim
Only those who have it go to Bonfim
A rosary of gold, a pendant like this
Oh, those who have no balangandãs [charm brooch]
Don't go to Bonfim
No, they don't go to Bonfim

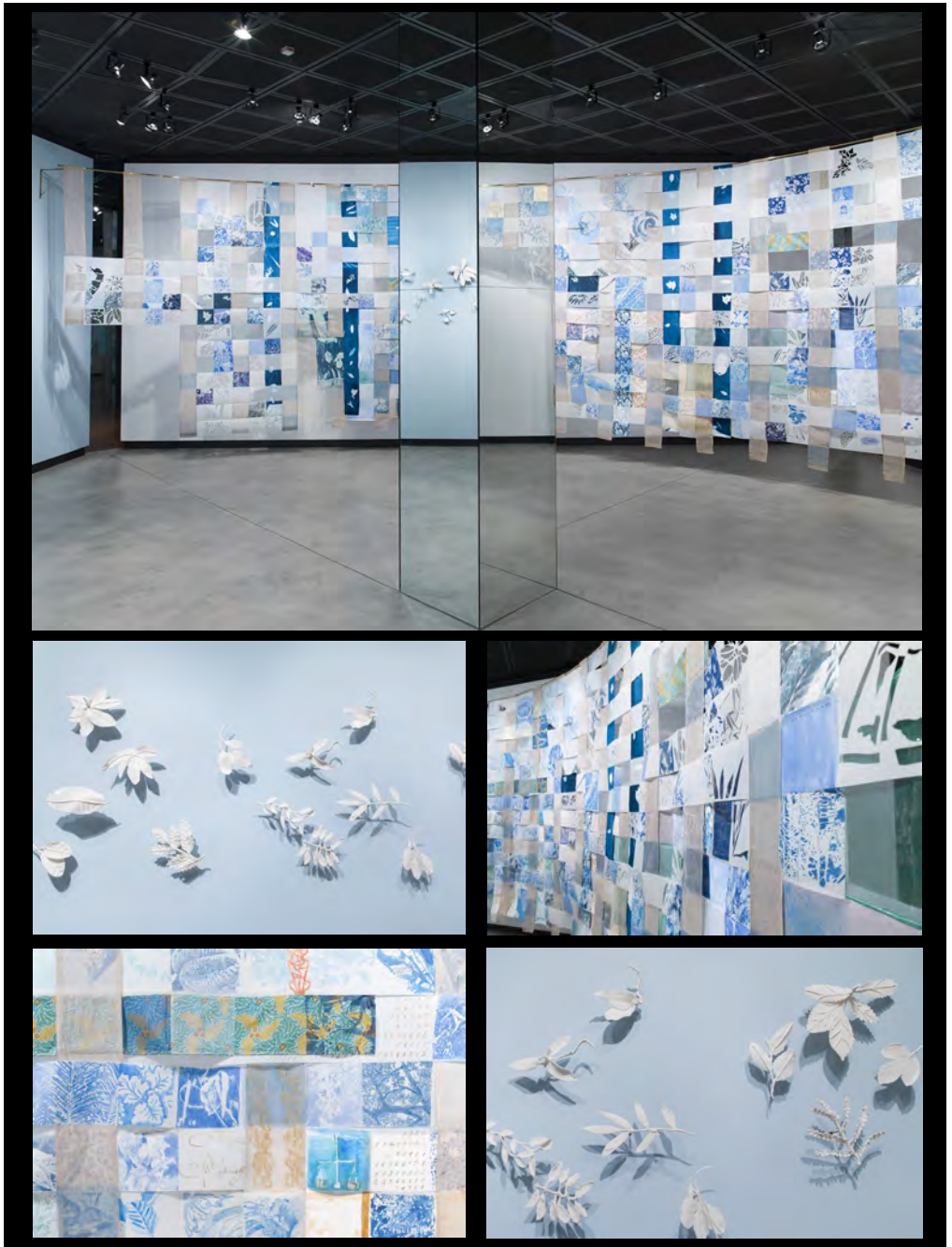
Description of *Lineage through Landscape*

A richly layered fabric ensemble viewed in the collection of the Fowler Museum inspired Fran Siegel to embark on an intensive research-based artist's project that led to her multifaceted drawing installation *Lineage through Landscape*. The ensemble in question was worn during the worship of Egun, or ancestral spirits within the Afro-Brazilian religion of Candomblé. This ensemble is constructed of many layers of fabric—rich red velvet, metallic synthetics, and floral-patterned cotton—which hang from head to foot so that they whirl and spread when the ancestral spirits visit the congregation and dance (see page 16). These movements expose the "flash and brilliance" of the costume's mirrors and reflective cloth and give voice to the ancestors through jingling bells and beaded strands. The central apron, which identifies the individual Egun, is imbued with sacred ingredients, including ritual herbs and leaves.

The Egun still serve as protectors of society, and ceremonies for them have been regularly held since 1820 in two Candomblé congregations on the island of Itaparica (located off the coast of the city of Salvador in the state of Bahia in northeastern Brazil). The roots of these practices can be traced to the Yoruba peoples of West Africa, who were among those enslaved by the Portuguese and transported to Salvador to work on sugar plantations and to mine gold in the country's interior.

About the Artist

Fran Siegel is a contemporary artist who lives and works in Los Angeles. As a professor at California State University Long Beach, she was interested in embodying Egun in her work. Siegel began to study and explore the history and rituals of Afro-Brazilian Candomblé and the role and importance of the Egun on the island of Itaparica. She found aspects of Egun in the sacred leaves that grow in preserves on the island, many of which derive from or are cognates of those from Africa. The vast thirty-six-foot-long, woven drawing that is the centerpiece of her installation gives form to Siegel's layered and fragmented narrative concerning place and history, memory and heritage, spirit and its signifiers.



Fran Siegel (b. 1960, New York, NY)
Lineage through Landscape: Tracing Egun in Brazil, 2015-2017
Suspended drawing: pencil, pigment, gold leaf, string, and collage on cut drafting film, scrim, cyanotype, sewn and printed fabric
Leaves: porcelain
Commissioned by the Fowler Museum at UCLA; Collection of the Artist

Talking About Art

Look closely at this artwork. What do you see?

This drawing installation was created using several mark-making materials, including pencil and pigment. Artist Fran Siegel drew and layered images directly on strips of fabric that she then wove together. How does this weaving of fabric and images impact the way you look at this artwork? Explain your response.

In an interview with the Fowler Museum's Director, Marla Berns, Fran Siegel described the weaving process as an act of concealing and revealing:

> The idea of fracturing first came up when I went to Brazil a year before… 2014. I was inspired by the Portuguese tiles I saw inside churches, mostly in Salvador and later in Cachoiera. They were completely disjointed. The scenes they depicted were incomplete, and tiles that did not match had been inserted....The grid is a non-hierarchical format, and the process of weaving would be a simple way to reveal and conceal things in the drawings, just as the layers of the Egungun ensemble are not always revealed simultaneously.[1]

Take a moment to quietly examine the way in which Fran Siegel combined images in this artwork. How do the images relate to one another? What patterns or rhythms can you find in this artwork?

What colors do you see in this drawing installation? How do the colors contribute to the artwork's overall tone?

This artwork includes gold leaf applied to the surface of the fabric. Fran Siegel discussed her use of gold in the interview with Marla Berns, noting its importance in Salvador's history:

> I was interested in why Salvador lost its position as the Portuguese colonial capital to Rio [de Janeiro] in 1763. Rio asserted its power by building an overland route, the Strata Nova, to connect its port to Minas Gerais, the site where gold was mined. Enslaved Africans and gold could then be transported more directly from Rio than Salvador.[2]

This patched section of wall tiles is typical of those seen in churches in Salvador and Cachoiera. Photograph by Fran Siegel, Cachoiera, Bahia, Brazil, 2016.

How is gold leaf used to draw your attention to certain images in this artwork? Consider how the gold leaf is used in comparison to other materials and colors, such as the blue paper or beige cloth.

The California Gold Rush began in 1848, almost a century after Rio de Janeiro became Brazil's capital due to its newfound power and position from gold. What do you already know about the California Gold Rush? Does this artwork remind you of the California Gold Rush? Why or why not?

Like gold in Rio de Janeiro, the gold discovered in California reinvigorated the American economy and provided some gold-seekers with unimagined wealth. This power was not without a cost, however, as mining damaged the environment and also initiated the California Genocide, with approximately 100,000 Native Californians dying between 1848 and 1868.

What other symbols of power are you familiar with? How do these symbols impact local communities or people around the world?

Lesson Extensions and Classroom Activities

Looking Beyond the Selfie

Invite students to take a selfie of themselves using their personal electronic devices or to create a self-portrait of themselves using the materials of their choice. Instruct students to expand upon their image by layering additional lines, shapes, or images. What did you choose to include that you did not or could not in your original image? How do these additions support or detract from your self-portrait? Explain your responses.

Design Your World

After examining Rommulo Vieira Conceição's artwork *The Fragility of Human Affairs Can Be an Incontestable Spatial Boundary*, encourage students to imagine what their neighborhood would look like if they could redesign it. Use two- or three-dimensional materials to create neighborhoods that reflect the communities who live there. What colors would you use? How big are the buildings? What transportation options would people have? What would need to happen for your real neighborhood to look like your redesigned neighborhood?

Fashioning Your Identity

How does your outfit convey who you are as an individual? In what ways can clothing reveal your relationship to particular communities? Invite students to design a new outfit that captures who they are or who they would like to become. How are the newly designed outfits similar to or different from each other?

Writing, Research, and Analysis

Identify one work of art in the exhibitions and one text-based primary source (poem, essay, interview, song lyrics, letter, magazine or newspaper article, etc.) that document experiences of people involved in the Transatlantic Slave Trade. Use a graphic organizer to take notes on the similarities and differences between the artwork and the text. Use your local library, computer, or other trusted resource to research information about the artist and author. Write a short essay comparing and contrasting the artist's and author's different perspectives.

Resources for Teachers

Axé Bahia: The Power of Art in an Afro-Brazilian Metropolis

www.fowler.ucla.edu/exhibitions/axe-bahia/

In this forthcoming catalogue of the exhibition *Axé Bahia: The Power of Art in an Afro-Brazilian Metropolis* by the Fowler Museum, scholars from a variety of academic backgrounds examine the role of art in Salvador.

PBS *History Detectives Special Investigations*

www.pbs.org/opb/historydetectives/educators/lessonplan/bakers-gold/

In each hour-long episode of PBS's *History Detectives Special Investigations*, historians explore a single iconic mystery from America's past. In this lesson, students learn about the California Gold Rush of 1849 through miners' letters and art and/or photos. Students then research the role of the "invisibles"—minority groups and immigrants—and write letters from their point of view.

Facing History and Ourselves

www.facinghistory.org/reconstruction-era

Facing History and Ourselves is a nonprofit international educational and profession development organization. They have produced a series of videos and accompanying lessons that introduce students to the United States' Reconstruction era and address questions of freedom, justice, equality, and citizenship.

This packet was conceived and created by Allison Clark, Education Manager, utilizing information in the exhibitions and from the artworks by Marla C. Berns, Patrick A. Polk, Roberto Conduru, Sabrina Gledhill, Randal Johnson, and Fran Siegel.

NOTES

1. Fran Siegel, "An Interview with Fran Siegel," *Lineage through Landscape: Tracing Egun in Brazil by Fran Siegel* (2017).
2. Ibid.

COVER IMAGE

Tacun Lecy (b. 1977, Salvador, Bahia, Brazil)
Festa de Yemonjá (The Iemanjá Festival), February 2, 2014
L2017.23.3; Photograph; Courtesy Tacun Lecy

SUBSEQUENT IMAGES

Ayrson Heráclito (b. 1968, Macaúbas, Bahia, Brazil)
Omolú, from the series *Bori* (Feeding the Head), 2008–2011
L2017.6.6; Photograph courtesy Ayrson Heráclito

Rommulo Vieira Conceição (b. 1968, Salvador, Bahia, Brazil)
A fragilidade dos negócios humanos pode ser um limite espacial incontestável (The Fragility of Human Affairs Can Be an Incontestable Spatial Boundary), 2015
Wood, metal, glass, automotive paint
L2017.43.1; Collection of the Artist

Helemozão (Helen Salomão da Silva e Silva; b. 1994, Salvador, Bahia, Brazil)
Gorda Flor (Full Bloom), 2016
L2017.51.2; Photograph; Courtesy Helemozão

Artist Unknown
Promotional image of Carmen Miranda, c. 1945
Image courtesy mptvimages.com

Fran Siegel (b. 1960, New York, NY)
Lineage through Landscape: Tracing Egun in Brazil , 2015-2017
Suspended drawing: pencil, pigment, gold leaf, string, and collage on cut drafting film, scrim, cyanotype, sewn and printed fabric. Leaves: porcelain.
Commissioned by the Fowler Museum at UCLA; Collection of the Artist

Artist Unknown
Egungun masquerade ensemble representing an Egun (ancestral spirit) called Baba Xango
Itaparica, Bahia, Brazil, early 20th century
Cloth, beads, cowrie shells, mirrors
L: 1.5 m
Gift of Mrs. Thomas Davis, X82.1359; Fowler Museum at UCLA

About Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA

Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA is a far-reaching and ambitious exploration of Latin American and Latino art in dialogue with Los Angeles. Supported by grants from the Getty Foundation, Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA takes place at more than 70 cultural institutions across Southern California. Pacific Standard Time is an initiative of the Getty. The presenting sponsor is Bank of America.

Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA
Latin American & Latino Art in LA

Presenting Sponsors
The Getty
Bank of America

Major support is provided through grants from the Getty Foundation.

The Getty Foundation

Additional support for is provided by The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts. Public programs and educational outreach activities are made possible in part by the Ralph M. Parsons Foundation. Travel support is provided in part by the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs through the Consulate General in Los Angeles.

The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts

ART WORKS.
National Endowment for the Arts
arts.gov

Fowler
MUSEUM AT UCLA

HSTG.