Bandits & Heroes, Poets & Saints: Popular Art of the Northeast of Brazil - Did you know that ten times more Africans were brought in bondage into Brazil than into the United States? Did you know that the Northeast of Brazil has the largest population of those of African descent outside Africa? Do you know how deeply the African heritage has influenced the culture of present-day Brazil?

Bandits & Heroes, Poets & Saints explores how the ancient cultures of Africa blended with indigenous and colonial Portuguese traditions to form the vibrant and complex cultural mosaic of modern Brazil. Engaging photographs and works of popular art, including sculptures, paintings, prints, religious objects, toys, and booklets of poetry will draw visitors into the complex and vibrant culture of the Northeast of Brazil and introduce the festivals, heroes, and spiritual traditions that give shape and meaning to the daily lives of the Nordestinos, common people of Brazil’s Northeast. The exhibition explores how diverse traditions come together in the region and uses work by historical and contemporary artists to illuminate a fascinating history that reaches into modern Brazil. Throughout, the exhibition explores the resilience and vitality of modern-day descendants of Africa.

Bandits & Heroes, Poets & Saints is an exhibition in three parts:

“The Land & its People” presents the complicated history of sugar plantations and African slavery in colonial Brazil. It introduces the parched backlands of the sertão and the challenging life of the vaqueiros (cowboys), retirantes (migrant workers), and the heroes of the ordinary people of the Northeast.

“Expressions of Faith” presents the rich African-Brazilian religion of Candomblé, exploring its historic African roots and its intersection with Roman Catholicism. Photographs, paintings, and sacred objects show colorful processions, festivals, and pilgrimages of these two religious traditions. “Poetry, Celebration & Song” features literatura de cordel (literature on a string) produced by singing poets who “sell” their songs in small chapbooks in markets and fairs. Poetry, prints, and sculptures inspired by folk legends and current events signal the dynamic fusion of tradition and improvisation in the culture of the Northeast.

Throughout the exhibition, the design will make use of colorful immersive environments. Hands-on interactive, music, and video components will combine with large-scale photographs and original artifacts to show the complex history, religious devotion, and artistic expression that come together in the popular art of the Northeast of Brazil.
Curators: Barbara Cervenka and Marion Jackson, Directors, Con/Vida – Popular Arts of the Americas

Organized by: Con/Vida – Popular Arts of the Americas and the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History, Detroit, MI, in partnership with Mid-America Arts Alliance, Kansas City, MO

Content: The exhibition will feature several freestanding units focused on thematic areas; a collection of objects, artifacts, photographs, and paper ephemera; audio/video features; interactive elements; semi-immersive environment settings; and wall-mounted banners and graphics.

Rental fee: $1,000 for 7-week display

*All hosting venues are eligible for a $1,000 Educational and Public Programming Grant.

Support: On-site support is free to the opening venue for every new NEH on the Road exhibition and to first-time hosting venues on a limited basis.

Shipping expense: Each exhibitor is responsible for the first $1,000 of the outgoing shipping fee to the next venue; NEH on the Road covers the remainder.

Security: Limited

Sq.ft.: TBD

Number of Crates/Total Weight: TBD

Insurance: The exhibition is fully insured by NEH on the Road at no additional expense to you, both while installed and during transit.

Dates Available: Bandits & Heroes, Poets & Saints will tour September 2015 through August 2020. The exhibition will be awarded first to new venues, particularly those in states that have not yet hosted NEH on the Road exhibits: Alaska, District of Columbia, Hawaii, Maine, Nevada, North Dakota, Rhode Island, Vermont, and West Virginia. Dates are subject to change; please contact MoreArt@maaa.org or (800) 473-3872 for current availability.

THE EXHIBITION IN YOUR GALLERY

Mid-America Arts Alliance allows venues to customize the exhibition for your space. You may wish to enhance the exhibition content with additional objects from your collection or community resources. You may also wish to edit objects from the exhibition due to space restrictions or content. If your institution plans to augment or edit the exhibition you are hosting, please notify us of your changes so that we may better serve your needs.

SUPPORT MATERIALS AND SERVICES

When you host an NEH on the Road exhibition, you will receive a range of support materials to present the exhibition to your community.

THESE INCLUDE:

• A publicity packet with digital images and logos, as well as a sample press release, social media plan, and public service announcement.

• An educational programming guide with lesson plans for teachers, information for docents, and a bibliography of books, videotapes, CD-ROMs, and hands-on materials.

• Interpretive labeling, written and designed by Mid-America Arts Alliance, available in printable formats on disk.

• Catalogues, brochures or reproducible gallery guides, and text panels.

• A registrar’s packet with the final checklist, checklist receipt, packing list, and clear instructions for installing and de-installing the exhibition.

• A condition report with detailed photographs and descriptions.

• Custom-designed crates for easy handling and maximum protection, along with photographs and instructions for proper packing.