

## Constraints and Adaptations of the Afro-Brazilian Museum at the Federal University of Bahia: Reflections on its Initial Project and Inaugural Exhibition<sup>1</sup>

*Marcelo da Cunha*

The Afro-Brazilian Museum of the Federal University of Bahia (MAFRO) was created from an agreement involving the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and of Education and Culture, the Government of the State of Bahia and the City Hall of Salvador, as part of a Cultural Cooperation Program between Brazil and African Countries. Among the planned activities were the organizing courses and seminars, publications, scholarships for African students, and the recruitment of teachers for educational and cultural missions in Africa. In sum, the Museum would be “composed of ethnological and artistic collections on African cultures and the main sectors of African influence in the life and culture of Brazil” (UFBA, Term, 1974: 2).

The collaboration between the various official bodies that founded the Museum provided for it through material and technical contributions, including the restoration of the building for the installation of the museum, subsidies for its activities, acquisition of the collection, etc., and it was established that the CEAO - Center for Afro-Oriental Studies<sup>2</sup> of UFBA, would be the Museum's managing body. In a letter to the Governor of the State of Bahia, in 1973, an ambassador from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Itamaraty) declared an interest in the preparations for the Museum:

... I return, with redoubled enthusiasm, to a project of common interest for Bahia and for Itamaraty: the Afro-Brazilian Museum [...] the Afro-Brazilian Museum is an enterprise to which I attribute the highest importance and that I would like to see implemented during the current government's term (Barboza 1973: 1).

In a document from this period, prepared by the UFBA, definitions of the concept and exhibitions are presented for the Museum, based on the proposal prepared by the photographer and ethnographer Pierre Verger:

... it will describe the African contribution to Brazilian cultural formation and [...] explain the various acculturative processes that have taken place in the different regions of the country, according to the ethnic predominance of its populations of African origin. It will present the ethnographic description of the various African peoples who came to Brazil, as well as [...] national syntheses derived from the contact of these peoples with others [...] including the artistic-ethnographic collections and the scientific activities of the Afro-Brazilian Museum, the anthropo-

<sup>1</sup> This text was adapted from a chapter in my dissertation entitled *The Afro-Brazilian Museum at the Federal University of Bahia - MAFRO: A Case Study in the Musealization of Afro-Brazilian Culture, 1999..*

<sup>2</sup> Created in 1959, by the Portuguese humanist Agostinho Silva, it is an organ linked to the Faculty of Philosophy and Human Sciences at the Federal University of Bahia, dedicated to study, research, and community action in the area of Afro-Brazilian studies and affirmative action in favor of Afro-Brazilian populations, as well as studies of African and Asian languages and civilizations.

logical description of African peoples not directly involved in the Brazilian cultural formation process [...] The collections to be exhibited should also cover the part of Africa above the Sahara, the so-called Arab Africa (UFBA, Guidelines, n.d., n.p.).

The same document indicated the types of materials and themes of its collection:

- a) Work tools, furniture, clothing and fabrics, musical instruments, adornments and jewelry, paintings, scarifications and body tattoos, etc.
- b) Creative expressions: production techniques, music, dance, sculpture, painting, etc.
- c) Social life manifestations: political organization of the nation, ethnic group, etc., religion, family and group organization (birth, marriage, death, etc.), social behavior of members of each ethnic group, etc.

Two divisions are indicated for the museum, as far as its exhibits are concerned:

**Static Museum** - Permanent exhibition rooms, addressing the following themes: Ethnic groups (geographic distribution); techniques (agriculture, fishing, boats, sculpture, basketry, weaving, pottery, foundry, etc.) showing technical movements, examples of tools, raw material, manufacturing phases, etc. Also the organization of man (memorial, social and political values); organization of the environment and cosmology (religious, educational, aesthetic, economic, syncretic, writing values); dance and music: audio-visual elements (costumes, ornaments, photographs, painted fabrics); everyday life: community, religious, domestic and habitat life.

**Dynamic Museum** - A space dedicated to temporary exhibits and multimedia activities, for exhibitions and artistic activities such as theater, for example.

The proposal for the museum was bold, daring, and modern, as in the case of the storage space open to visitors, with capacity to store 50,000 objects. Besides providing specialized deposits and maintenance areas, ateliers for assembling, carpentry and others, and laboratories (Central Laboratory, specialized in restoration and conservation; Technology Laboratory, specialized on weaving, pottery, carpentry, foundry; Ethnomusicology Laboratory, connected to the organology reserve (dance and music) with a small seminar room for 12 to 15 students, and associated with the sound archives and Linguistics Laboratory (University Phonetics Laboratory).

There were also proposed "scientific services" such as researchers' offices (15), cartography/conductor's library, photographic/filmographic library, sound archives or phonographic library (associated with the Museum's ethnomusicology laboratory and the University's phonetics laboratory), documentation center, magazine room, housing for researchers (5 to 6), conference room with an auditorium seating 200 people. There should also be a place "suitable for presenting, on an open-air theater stage, folk performances when circumstances allow: dance, music, the art of storytelling (including *literatura de cordel*), etc." Complementing this structure there would be a restaurant and cafeteria. Reading this document indicates that the project was characterized by its progressive, with a proposal to use cultural heritage for

learning. Its team would be formed by two curators (one ethnologist and one not defined), with no mention of a museologist, in addition to specialized personnel for the various sectors planned, and technical and support staff.

Regarding the effective participation of the partners involved in the Museum's creation, an analysis of the documentation found indicates the non-fulfillment of commitments. Correspondence from December 1975, from the Director of the CEAO, Guilherme Castro, addressed to the President of its Deliberative Council, reveals that the partners of the Agreement did not fulfill their obligations for the installation of the Museum, hindering its conclusion.

As for the creation and opening of the Museum, news appeared in the press from the very beginning of some problems that were encountered:

An 'Afro-Brazilian' museum will soon appear in Salvador, depending only on the signing of an agreement ... during the meeting there was evidence that a climate of tension and dispute will surround the creation of the museum, since there are many candidates for the position of director and few who are in a position to exercise it. Another issue under discussion before beginning the selection of the material that will cover all the areas of Black influence in the formation of Brazilian culture is the location of the museum. It was decided that the museum could be in three previously selected locations – Solar do Ferrão, Quinta dos Lázarus and a third location kept secret, so as not to cause controversy ("Disputa...", 1973: 8).

This comment revealed future problems relating to MAFRO being housed within the School of Medicine building on the Terreiro,<sup>3</sup> the "secret location" mentioned in the note. Once the location was revealed, the possible profile of the future director was also considered: "only a scholar of African culture in Brazil could hold the position ("Medicina abriga Afro-Brasileiro", 1973: 5).

There were suggestions that its collection was the result of loans of pieces from other museums, by transfer or acquisition.

The museum collection will be made up mainly of pieces that exist scattered around various museums across the country, which are related to African culture in Brazil and that, because they do not fit very well with the collection of those museums, are quite out of place. [...] The museum will also have private collections that exist in great number in Brazil and that may be donated. Finally, pieces may be obtained through the Brazilian embassies in African countries ("Onde vai ser o Museu", 1973: 6).

Several strategies were thought out to build the collection, as is revealed in the following note:

Some pieces from the collection of the Estácio de Lima Museum will be incorporated into the museum<sup>4</sup> [...] Other donations will be made by African countries

3 Terreiro: *Terreiro de Jesus* square, in Salvador's Historic Center, generically called Pelourinho.

4 About the Estácio de Lima Museum, see Marcelo da Cunha 2019, vol. 2: 107-145. [https://www.ipleiria.pt/esecc/wpcontent/uploads/sites/15/2020/01/museologiapatrimonio\\_volume2.pdf..](https://www.ipleiria.pt/esecc/wpcontent/uploads/sites/15/2020/01/museologiapatrimonio_volume2.pdf..)

through the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and by universities, institutions and museums of African studies, not only from Africa, but also from Europe and the United States [...]. Finally, noted the director of CEAO, the representative collection of Afro-Brazilian culture will be obtained through agreements with the various states of the Federation ("Museu Afro-Brasileiro ficará", 1974: 7).

To put together the Afro-Brazilian collection, a campaign was conducted among the Bahian community, with significant collaboration from the *povo-de-santo*,<sup>5</sup> *capoeira* groups and Afro-Brazilian *blocos*.<sup>6</sup>

Still on the choice of the location for the museum, soon after the announcement, there were reactions from the medical community, like the following:

The president of the Bahia Institute of Medical History (*Instituto Bahiano de História da Medicina*, in Portuguese), Mr. Raimundo de Almeida, telegraphed Minister Jarbas Passarinho, of the Ministry of Education and Culture as soon as he learned that the building that housed the first medical school in Brazil would be transformed into the Afro-Brazilian Museum, saying he was surprised by the news and making an appeal for the installation of a Museum of Medicine, transferring the Afro-Brazilian Museum, according to his suggestion, to a building to be chosen in Cruzeiro de São Francisco or in Pelourinho. [...] [He] made a point of declaring that the effort to bring the Museum to Bahia deserves only praise and applause. However, he added, "the choice of building does not seem right to me" ("Onde ficar o Museu", 1974: 5).

In the same note, the CEAO director states that

[...] since the building of the first School of Medicine is the property of the Federal University of Bahia, the latter shall put it to the use that best suits the University's interests ("Onde ficar o Museu", 1974: 5).

With this note, a dispute was started that probably became the major and main factor responsible for the non-completion of the projects for the Museum in full and according to the original plan.

Regarding the installation of the Memorial of Medicine in the building, in counterpoint to the installation of the Afro Museum, we found a note from Professor José Silveira, Director of the Brazilian Institute of Thoracic Research, with the following considerations:

Long before any understanding had been made public, to the effect of installing the Afro-Brazilian Museum there, we launched the idea of using the facilities of the 1<sup>st</sup> School of Medicine of Brazil for related activities, with the establishment of all the medical associations of Bahia, as well as a museum, archive, library and everything else [...]. Opinions differ a bit regarding what should be done with the building: some want a museum, others something more complex. But no one

5 Persons belonging to a religious community of African origin.

6 On the formation of the Afro-Brazilian Collection, see my dissertation entitled *O Museu Afro-Brasileiro da Universidade Federal da Bahia e sua coleção de cultura material religiosa afro-brasileira*, authored by Juipurema Sandes, written for the Multidisciplinary Postgraduate Program in Ethnic and African Studies (PÓS-AFRO/UFBA). Link: <https://repositorio.ufba.br/ri/handle/ri/23895>.

admits what seems to have been specifically agreed: The Afro-Brazilian Museum at the *Terreiro de Jesus* College ("Museu Afro-Brasileiro provoca", 1974: 8).

What is taking shape in the comments in the press is ignorance allied to prejudice in the treatment of the issue. A situation that is revealed when one considers, for example, that the Museum should be installed in "a house in Pelourinho", as can be seen in the following excerpt:

The president of the institute [...] made a new appeal to the MEC, asking for the structure of the building not to be modified, and for the *Museu do Negro* to be installed in an old and historic colonial *sobrado* (a house of two or more stories) or *paço*, where the black slaves lived and suffered, which would make the institution more authentic ("Contra entidades médicas", 1974: 5).

We identify in this discourse, and in other texts, the idea that the Afro theme would not fit with the grandiosity of the eclectic architecture of the Medicine building and should be located in the colonial baroque architecture of other buildings in the Historic Center. In the midst of this climate of resistance it is possible to find dissenting and favorable voices, as in this note from 1974, in which the issue of the Museum gained prominence, dissenting from the unified chorus of the medical community:

[...] they decided to reserve the noble part of the old school [...] for the Museum of Medicine, assigning the rest of the school for the installation of the *Museu do Negro* or of Afro-Brazilian culture. It would be difficult to have a better communion, considering that in the old school of *Terreiro de Jesus* the studies of legal medicine, anthropology, ethnography, Africanism began with Nina Rodrigues [...]. And this solution is above all praiseworthy because it is in line with a better use of the large areas occupied by the old school, since the "noble part" referred to is sufficient to install and carry out, as we said [...] everything that, in the end, will constitute the oldest Cultural Center of National Medicine ("Vitoriosa a classe médica", 1974: 6).

In early 1976, the Museum had not yet been inaugurated, while the press announced the arrival of pieces for its collection from the African continent. Between September and October 1976, in order to exhibit the pieces already acquired, the CEAO decided to organize an exhibition, together with the Cultural Foundation of the State of Bahia, at the Solar do Unhão. The exhibition was widely publicized in the press, as a way to draw the city's attention to the museum and the need to inaugurate it soon, and to try to reduce pressures that were already rising from the fact that the collection had been boxed up and stored. The following year began with the news of the "return" of the *Terreiro* building to the medical community, generating speculation about backtracking on the decision to install the museum there.

The initiative of Dean Augusto Mascarenhas, who is a professor at the School of Medicine, pleased the entire medical class [...]. With the use to which the building of the School of Medicine at *Terreiro de Jesus* will be put, that which we published a few days ago about the *Museu do Negro* is confirmed, meaning that it will no longer be installed in that building ("Prédio histórico do Terreiro", 1977: 5).

The Foundation of the Historical and Cultural Heritage of the State, manifested about the paralysis of the works, informing that "We suspended the works [...] in order to determine whether the building will be occupied by the Afro-Brazilian Museum, since we need this definition in order to adapt the restoration work to the objectives that the building will serve ("Patrimônio espera definição", 1977: 5).

In June 1977, during a visit to the building, Governor Roberto Santos declared his interest in continuing the work. On this occasion, Dean Augusto Mascarenhas declared that

It has long been an ambition of the University to restore the building, but now it is being reconsidered and discussed. This way, the work, the plans, everything will be redone within a re-evaluation of the use of the space and only after all this is done will there be a definition of how it will be used ("Governo quer retomar", 1977: 5).

In August, there were already notes in the press about the threat to the Afro-Brazilian Museum, and it was also stated that the collection kept arriving from various places, with pieces in storage for some years. Among other things, a new justification for not having the Afro Museum in the building emerged:

This project was later abandoned because the area of 11,000 square meters is too large for a museum. A Cultural Center will probably be installed there, but this is still subject to studies by a commission created for this purpose by UFBA ("Indefinição sobre Museu", 1977: 6).

At that time, ironically, the Museum was in danger of losing the Terreiro building's space due to an alleged excess of space. It is evident in the note above that the problem faced for the installation of the Museum, besides being political and ideological, was also conceptual, for if the issue was the installation of a Cultural Center in the ample space available, why was it impossible to house an Afro Museum inside the Center? What were the elements that would compose this Center? Instead of considering the suitability of the Museum's design for the existing space, some people preferred to think about not installing the museum in the building. It seems to us that the question was not related to the size of the space or its planning, but rather who would occupy the space and how they would occupy it.

The impasse over the *Museu Afro* had repercussions in Brazil, with notes on the subject appearing in national newspapers, criticizing the actions against the Museum.

The problem that arose in Bahia with the Afro-Brazilian Museum and the Center for Afro-Oriental Studies and Research had been foreseen since 1974/75, due to the inexistence of agreements between the federal and Bahia governments to preserve and defend Afro-Asian institutions from colonialist, racist and fascist groups. For at least 20 years, black groups and scholars have been making efforts to organize this museum. When everything seems ready and a heritage has been gathered, having a building available - the former School of Medicine, in Salvador - Hitlers and Salazars appear from all sides to hinder its installation and operation. As the *cordel* literature said: "After all, who would have thought it?"

/ Hitler became a saint / and died in Bahia! Did he really die? Or is he loose on the slopes of Salvador, leading the campaign against the *Museu do Negro*?" (Sardella 1977: 10)

Finally, in March 1978, comes the definition published in the city's newspapers, like the one below.

After four years of marching and countermarching the CEAO - Center for Afro-Oriental Studies will see the installation of the Afro-Brazilian Museum. Not on the scale and with the spaces envisaged in the original design but sharing the building of the old School of Medicine, with the complex of cultural units of the State. ("Museu Afro-Brasileiro vai ser...", 1978: 5).

Despite the publication of the solution, almost a year later, at the beginning of 1979, we find news such as the following:

More than a thousand pieces reserved for the installation of the Afro-Brazilian museum are deteriorating. Accumulated in a ridiculous warehouse at the Center for Afro Oriental Studies, the precariousness of the material - mostly fabric, wood or plaster - makes corrosion pervasive. [...] at the moment no mention of the future location - or if at least there will be a location - is made by those responsible. It is only known that the building of the former School of Medicine in *Terreiro de Jesus*, where the museum was to be installed, will no longer serve this purpose. [...] The Director of the CEAO, Guilherme de Castro, responsible for the execution of the program, received a memorandum from the Historical Heritage Foundation, informing him that the old college will serve as a non-formal education center, with an exhibit room for African pieces. The room, however, does not have space to receive the fourth part of the Collection that has already been amassed. [...] Guilherme Castro added that the disregard for the installation of the museum is due to projects considered more important by the State and the municipality ("Acervo afro-brasileiro, 1979: 5).

In June 1979, the new Director of the CEAO, Nelson Araújo, announced the imminent opening, stating that "there will be more pieces than space when it starts working" ("Museu Afro-Brasileiro será ...", 1979: 5). A problem that occurred not exactly because the museum had amassed too many pieces in its collection, but because of the small space allotted to it when it finally opened in 1982.

In 1980, in a ceremony attended by the School of Medicine and the Dean, recovered areas were returned to the School, to be used for Seminars, Conferences, etc., as well as the Frederico Edelweiss Library, with the rest of the area (part of what was intended for the Afro) under occupation study. He also confirmed that the project would be fulfilled according to that which had been established, with changes that are normal in any project.

At this time there had been a change of Dean at the Federal University of Bahia, with Professor Luiz Fernando Macedo Costa taking over the Dean's chair and guaranteeing that the museum would be in the building in *Terreiro*, but even though it was expected to open throughout 1980, the wait extended into 1981. It was sche-

duled to open in August, which would be anticipated with a special exhibition of Pierre Verger's photographs and Carybé's engravings. The inauguration would form part of the celebrations for UFBA's 35th anniversary. Finally, on December 30, 1981, the installations of the *Museu Afro-Brasileiro* were presented to the press by Professor Yeda Pessoa e Castro, Director of CEAO, with January 7, 1982, being announced for its inauguration, with a collection of about 800 pieces. Regarding the inauguration, the CEAO's director stated:

The truth is that things were moving very slowly, until Dean Macedo Costa took office. He sped up the work. He released the necessary funds, chose competent technicians, gave his full support and now the museum will be re-inaugurated. ("Museu Afro foi apresentado", 1981: 5).

There was a surprising full-page article by journalist José Augusto Berbert de Castro, physician, participant of the group against the installation of the Museum in the *Torreiro de Jesus* building, which stated that

Just the sight of what it will be makes us change our minds completely about the use of the old building, where I studied, and I have no doubt that it will mark the administration of the President Luiz Fernando Macedo Costa, even if he accomplished nothing else [...]. It excites by its beauty, by the positioning of the pieces, by the material that will be exhibited and by the good taste of everything that is there. It will be a dynamic museum, with permanently exhibited pieces and temporary exhibits [...]. The day we were there, there were a little more than 800 objects of Afro-Brazilian culture being assembled, but by the official opening, there will be at least double that number (Berbert, 1981: 5).

Amidst the news favorable to the inauguration of MAFRO, an outstanding one stands out, at the beginning of 1982:

A question that needs to be asked: why a "museum of the black man?" I remember visiting the 'Museum of Man' in Paris, without distinction of race. Is there not a bit of racism, even if unintentional, in this attitude? It is true that our anti-racism laws have given us exactly a "prejudiced anti-racism". From this has come the current tendency to assume one's own race, and blacks begin to be proud of being black, as whites are proud of being white. We then move to a "respectful racism", that is, the races aggregating, but respecting each other, each assuming its origins and cultural values. It is desirable that, by this means, one arrives at "respectful anti-racism", by which racial segregation is eliminated. In this thing of each one assuming their own race, the one who suffers is the mulatto, who is neither black nor white, or rather, is both, because they have European and African origins and cultures in their blood. This is because the prejudice hits them together with the black man, and they identify with the latter, as if they did not have their share of European chromosomes. In this way, it is as if the mulattos who, forced to assume a race, opt for the Black race, when, scientifically, they are equally white, have been amputated. Since Bahia is a land of blacks and whites and since the 'Black Museum' is being set up here, the 'White Museum' is obviously missing. Until this is done, it will look like Bahia is a community of whites, in which a museum has been built to preserve black culture, because it is



recognized as being under threat of extinction. We all know that this is not true, it suffices to look around to recognize the black presence in our customs, from clothing to cooking. Then a difficulty arises. If what is in the museum is found in society, why have a museum? If culture is not under threat of extinction, but in development, what is the museum for? For the anthropological study, it can be answered. In Santa Catarina, it would be a good answer. In Bahia, this study can be done in any corner, in any *Terreiro*, in the Mercado Modelo or at an *afoxé* rehearsal. And for this, all you have to do is take a bus for sixteen cruzeiros a ticket ("O Museu do Branco...", 1982: 5).

The note is rich in prejudiced references and misinformation, structured by someone who reveals ignorance as to what racial democracy is, even affirming a category: "respectful racism," in a succession of errors, of absurdities, being redundant to comment on some issues, but it is worth highlighting some of them. When complaining about the need for a 'White Museum,' the author forgot that, in principle, all the other museums in the city of Salvador were basically white museums, which talked about and preserved heritage referring to dominant memories and cultures, notably white ones. And even when dealing with minority issues, they were structured from the white viewpoint. And minimizing the importance of the existence of these museums, but our intention is to highlight that the heritage preserved in Brazil is that of the elites, and here, elite is synonymous with whiteness.

Finally, after a process that lasted eight years, since the signing of the Cooperation Agreement, the inauguration took place in a festive atmosphere, with various authorities - from the ambassadors of African countries, dressed in their typical costumes - and representatives of various segments of the Afro community and the wider population, such as the "*mães-de-santo*" of some *terreiros* that provided a moment of reunion with their African roots ("Museu Afro, uma volta...", 1982: 5).

After its inauguration, the board of the CEAO sought to stimulate its activities, organizing courses, exhibitions, book launches, shows, and the implementation of its Museum-School Integration Program, coordinated by Professor Graziela Amorim. The Museum became a mandatory stop-off point on official visits to Salvador, for instance, for ministers and heads of state, and in July 1982, it had already reached the mark of more than 500 students formally assisted. When it completed one year of existence, in January 1983, it reported 12,632 recorded visitors, and this number was surely higher due to those visitors who did not register their visit. Inaugurated.

However, the opening of the Museum did not mean that the medical bodies were willing to accept it remaining in the building. They continued to issue notes on the "problem", such as the one below. Once again, the tireless doctors, in the name of tradition and the long-standing cause of defending "their building", dared to make comments about Anthropology, Museology and other subjects, on which they were not qualified to issue an opinion. What, after all, would a sophisticated and stylized exhibition on African and Afro-Brazilian cultures be? In what sense did the newly opened museum's exhibits misrepresent the reality of those cultures? Was it the "nobility" of the materials used? Was it the careful museographic syste-

matization? What did medical staff understand a “Black Museum” to be? Another issue that was recurrent in the discussions was the idea that the Museum should occupy a loft in Pelourinho. Why this fixation? In what respect were such buildings more fitting for an Afro Museum than the monumental building of the Terreiro?

## Museographic Project for the Initial Module

In its initial proposal, the Afro-Brazilian Museum was to occupy a large part of the total area of the Terreiro building (more than 11,000 square meters of floor space). However, the final area occupied by the inaugurated Museum amounted to less than 1,000 square meters. The inaugurated space was presented as an Initial Module, with the expectation that it would be expanded by being transferred to a new location in the near future, or would expand its occupation of the Terreiro building.

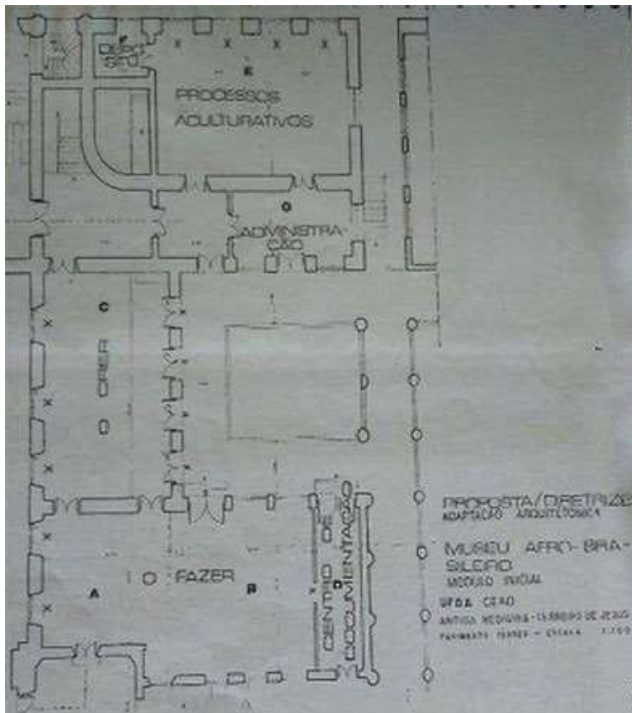


Fig. 1: Plan. Source: MAFRO. Blueprint of the initial proposal for the planning of the Museum space. With a need for adaptation, the Documentation Center gave way to the administration, the Administration Sector gave way to the Temporary Exhibition Room, and the Cultural Processes Sector gave way to the room for Carybé's panels.

In a document dated April 23, 1981, months before the official opening, Guilherme Souza Castro, CEAO's director, stated that

[...] the use agreed upon by the University for the spaces currently available in the *Terreiro de Jesus* building does not allow us to be certain about the desirable and necessary future expansion of the Museum there. On the other hand, it seems right to us to see in the current arrangements for the installation of this 'module' in such a place and in the current conditions, a solution of circumstance intended to symbolically emphasize the interest of the UFBA in the project born from the agreement it signed [...] These conditions allow us to conclude that the definitive installation of the Afro-Brazilian Museum, properly speaking, in its own exclusive place, should be considered. [...] Due

to the breadth of its scope, the Afro-Brazilian Museum, in its specific area of interest, forms part, at the same time, of a line of renovation and preservation of traditional Brazilian heritage, and in the field of effective action in search of knowledge of the Brazilian and African socio-cultural reality of the past and the present (Castro, G. 1981: n.p.).

A detailed plan on how to set up the museum, by an unknown author, reveals strategies for reconciling space, collections, and the original conceptual proposal, which was adapted. This proposal and the development of the adapted proposal were headed by ethnolinguist Yeda Pessoa de Castro and Museologist Jacyra Oswald.

#### 1 - Guidelines and criteria adopted

The assembly of the Initial Module of the MAB required attention to a specific, special problem: the spirit of transitoriness: The solution to this problem should have economy of means according to the spatial characteristics of the area demanded by the UFBA. It should also correspond to current needs, with respect to the constitution of its collections. [The current collection, despite consisting of pieces of real value, does not correspond to the stated expectations, due to its few exhibits, therefore rendering impossible the geographic illustration of the African cultures here, as well as having few documents representing the processes of acculturation and its consequences, as developed here. The solution to the problem will be comparative thematic division with the presentation of analogies of cultural manifestations [...] the elements of assembly should have the necessary flexibility so that they can, at any time, be reformulated, with the addition of one or more objects, to complement the theme in question. The distribution of themes/areas will take into consideration the location - aiming at independence of use, with easy access - and dimensions of the existing physical spaces (Museu Afro, Plano, 1982: n.p.).

#### 2 - Architectural adaptation

The group of interconnected rooms - A, B, C - which are accessed through the main door of the building ... are dedicated to Practices and Beliefs. With 232, 35 m<sup>2</sup> [...] the small contiguous area - room D - with 46,50 m<sup>2</sup> for deployment of the Documentation Center. The set of rooms - E, F and G - with autonomous access... through the entrance situated next to the Metropolitan Cathedral, will be used to present: Acculturative Processes (E - 105,78m<sup>2</sup>), to house the warehouse (F - 9,50 m<sup>2</sup>) and to constitute the administration (room G - 29,52 m<sup>2</sup>), place for the operation of the office services of the entity. Room E measures 105,78 m<sup>2</sup> [...] room F (storeroom) measures 9,50m<sup>2</sup> (Museu Afro, Plano, 1982: n.p.).

In an article by Berbert de Castro, issues related to exhibition planning are presented:

Of its five rooms, the museum has the following spatial distribution: Rooms 1, 2, and 3, for permanent exhibitions; Rooms 4 and 5. Reserved for temporary exhibitions.

The permanent exhibits are distributed according to three distinct types of concern:

DOING - presenting the material aspects of African civilizations and of similar aspects of these cultures in Brazilian civilization, consisting of objects made through the transformation of various materials by applying different techniques; BELIEVING - showing the spiritual aspects in the above contexts through objects for ritual, utilitarian, or decorative use with ideological reference both in African cultures and in the sectors of Brazilian culture influenced by them; MEMORY - exhibiting objects and documentation that today attest to the historical continuity of the African influence in the cultural formation of Brazil.

The temporary exhibits seek to highlight the reciprocal influences occurring in various sectors of Brazilian and African cultures, displaying all sorts of pertinent documentation, photographs, musical instruments, written documents, popular or erudite works of art, etc., of African inspiration in Brazil and of Brazilian inspiration in Africa (Berbert 1981: ).



Figs. 2 and 3: Partial view of the Doing Room and the Memory Room. Source: MAFRO

A special room, dedicated to an exhibition of a set of twenty-seven wooden boards representing *orixás*, by the artist Carybé, was also planned, at the request of Dean Luiz Fernando Macêdo Costa, when the initial project had already been defined, justifying its inclusion as "the need to exhibit the set as a piece of great artistic and documental value, with dignity" (Oswald 1981: n.p.).



Fig. 4: Partial view of the room of Carybé's panels. Source: MAFRO

About the exhibition project, Silva comments that

Jacyra found the solution, due to the quantity and quality of objects, to adopt an entirely new criterion, as she saw that she did not have enough material to illustrate Africa and Bahia (Brazil), including pieces that were valid in relation to the geographical criterion, as many of these areas of Africa were missing. Hence his best contribution: to adopt a separation into three levels of information: Doing (utilitarian realization of objects), Believing (religious, constituted of entities, cult of the Dead, of ancestors, of the living, of lands, of searches) and the processes and acculturative processes, or Africa in Brazil and Brazil in Africa. Also, what facilitated an assembly definition for Jacira was the physical space. There is an area with an entrance independent from the first levels, where the pieces that were permanent assets will be kept, and another area called temporary, which has another access through the Cathedral. This means that it can be opened at special times, with one part remaining closed while the other is open. Since the theme of the Afro-Brazilian Museum is "Orixás do Candomblé" (Orishas of Candomblé), the designer made a subdivision of themes. In the doing part, she separated musical instruments, weaving technique and painting processes of the farm and in the believing part, she formed places, as if they were orixás' houses, each one in its own environment, with its own color and shape. At the entrance of the museum, the opening is made by Exu messenger of the orixás, having red and black as symbol colors, and so on (Silva 1981: 10).



Fig 5: Partial view of the set of display cases dedicated to deities in the Room dedicated to Believing.  
Source: MAFRO

Jacyra Oswald gives further details about the museographic conception of the new museum:

To move away from the horrible static mannequin figures that give the impression of layered dead bodies, I created some transparent forms in fiberglass material, where the props are placed. This location of the props (bracelets, swords, etc.) where they would be on the human figure helps the viewer to understand their function: that there is a chest piece, a fan [...] without seeing a figure with them. With this, the imagination works, you can see the orixá, but he is not there (Oswald, 1981: n.p.).

About the "acculturative processes" sector, she states that

It gained a larger scale in an unexpected way, because the community reacted very well to the implementation of the museum when they started to donate wonderful things: then a room became a Memory. For me, it has a lot of emotional historical value. Our memory is there to be enlarged, and, in the acculturative processes, this first show that we are giving of the African influence happens with the carnival costumes (Oswald, 1981: n.p.).

Asked about the contrast between the materials in the collection and those that were used in the composition of the museum collection, she replies:

These window screens, which absorb heat and noise and let light through, have moving parts for air renewal when necessary. There is the clash of materials, since I also used blindex for security; all the handcrafted pieces are in showcases - thirty-four pieces over two meters long (Oswald, 1981: n.p.).

Besides the materials, another element that caught the eye were the colors and textures:

Another innovation that she introduced, since this is a new kind of museum, was the color of the earth, to also give an idea of the evocations. Each "saint" has its own color or colors that symbolize the orixás and their forms. The textures of the showcases are irregular to evoke the plaster of African houses. Cement, clay, and sand achieved that feat. The lighting is indirect but abundant (Berbert 1981: 5).

In November 1982, interventions were carried out in the museum's exhibition space, with the expansion and adaptation of the spaces for the inclusion of new pieces and modification of the modules.

This work concerns the fulfillment of the request from the CEAO's board of directors - to put a greater number of items on display. It consists in the removal of large objects that do not have small removable parts from the showcases; the resulting free space would be filled with new pieces and with the effective relocation of pieces. For this, a larger number of elements should be used (fixed suspended displays, adaptations of existing bases, as well as the expansion of the number of shelves/glasses, aiming at a new spatial distribution of the material, inside the showcases) (Ampliação da montagem, 1982: 6).

These space rearrangement issues were related to a problem that is not addressed in any of the documents we found: the lack of a Technical Reserve, a space designed for the systematic storage of the collections not on display. This fact meant that practically the entire collection was in the exhibition rooms.

One officially opened, the Museum followed its course, without the implementation of several proposals and plans contained in its 1974 plan, and without the propagated future expansion, by relocation or in the Terreiro building itself. Everything that was accomplished there, despite the effective operating conditions, was mainly due to the efforts of CEAO's successive administrations and the few staff of the Museum, as well as the support of the community.

In 1995, initiatives began aimed at restructuring the Afro-Brazilian Museum. The restructuring movement supported by the Dean's office and supported by external resources aroused the same speeches against it remaining in the building by representatives of Medicine, from inside and outside the university itself. This situation once again interfered with the schedule and deadline for reopening, which only occurred on November 18, 1999. Once again, despite the announcement and the expectation created around a new building for the Afro-Brazilian Museum, all attempts failed and the Museum never left the building of the School of Medicine at *Terreiro de Jesus*, where it remains to this day, completing 40 years open to the public this year, in 2022, and 48 years since its creation.

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