

Text: Mariana Pestana and Dele Adeyemo  
Translation and copy-editing: Susana Camanho  
Production: Pita Senra, Pedro Huet  
Assembly: Pita Senra, Pedro Huet, João Pedro Trindade, Hernâni Reis Baptista and Miguel Santos  
Design: Mlacedo Cannatà  
Public programme: Sara Rodrigues, Rodrigo Camacho  
Editorial programme: Maria João Mlacedo  
Acknowledgments: Helder Folgado, Capela da Boa Viagem — Núcleo Difusor de Arte e Cultura Contemporânea, Departamento de Cultura da Câmara Municipal do Funchal, Museu A Cidade do Açúcar, Museu de Arte Sacra do Funchal, Esther Céline Gwack, IPPBC KAMIT, Roberto Santos, Dori Nigro

Partnership:

**BOA VIAGEM**  
Núcleo Difusor de Arte e Cultura Contemporânea

Sismógrafo's team is composed by: Emídio Agra, Rodrigo Camacho, Susana Camanho, Pedro Huet, Maria João Mlacedo, Hernâni Reis Baptista, Sara Rodrigues, Pita Senra and João Pedro Trindade.

Sismógrafo has the support of:



**dgARTES**  
DIRECÇÃO-GERAL  
DAS ARTES



**rpac**  
Associação de Artistas Plásticos de Portugal

Apelo Criativo  
**Porto.**



**CIN**

# WALL-PAPER

Dele Adeyemo  
curated by Mariana Pestana  
4 November – 9 December 2023

1

Interview with Dele Adeyemo as part of the artistic residency held at Capela da Boa Viagem, Funchal, Madeira, 2023  
video, sound, colour, 12'

2

*Vela Negra* [Black Sail], 2023  
printed fabric, 10 x 2,80 m

*Diagram Cosmogony of (Racial) Capitalism*, 2020  
drawing, variable dimensions

3

*Ilha do Basalto* [Basalt Island], 2023  
black sand from the island of Madeira

*Cosmogony of (Racial) Capitalism*, 2020  
video, sound, colour, 14'

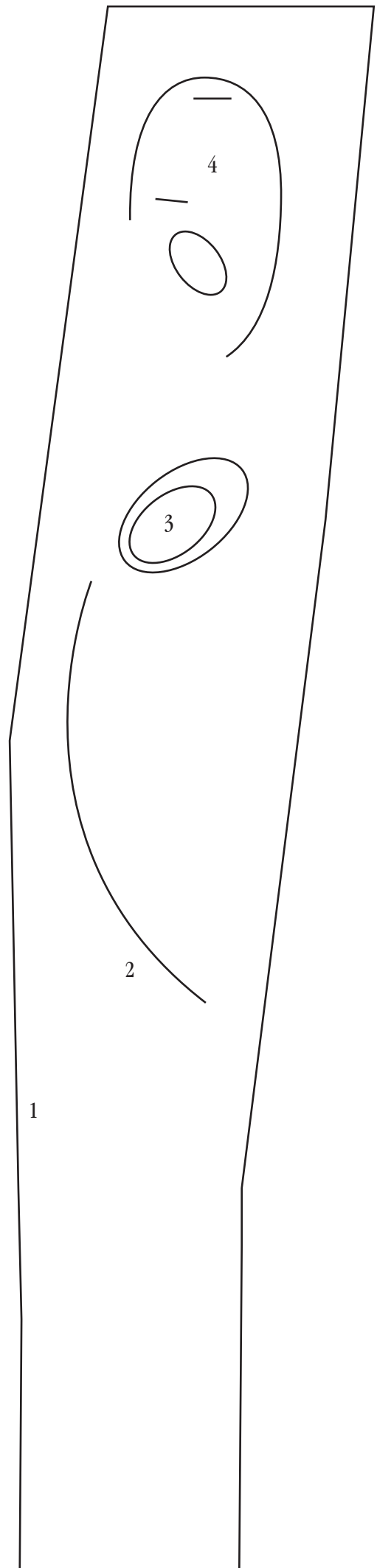
*Recording of Black Horizon performance in Lagos*, 2019  
video, sound, colour, 18'

4

*Capela Doce* [Sweet Chapel], 2023  
hair extensions, sugar, painted mdf

photographic prints on mdf  
84 x 119 cm (x1 element)  
59,5 x 84 cm (x2 elements)

*Ascensão Kemet* [Rise of Kemet], 2023  
video, sound, colour, 20'



# Licor-Mãe

*Licor-Mãe* is the result of an ongoing investigation by the artist Dele Adeyemo into Portugal's role into what he calls the 'cosmogony of racial capitalism' — the series of violent material processes that centered on Atlantic slavery and sugar production from which the global capitalist economy emerged. This exhibition brings together his research and the results of a month-long residency, in July 2023, on the island of Madeira, promoted by Sismógrafo in partnership with Capela da Boa Viagem — Núcleo Difusor de Arte e Cultura Contemporânea.

For Dele Adeyemo, the process of purifying and whitening sugar is a material articulation of the ecological-racial hierarchies present in the structure of capitalism that placed whiteness at its peak. The stratification inherent in sugar production mirrors the stratification of the value attributed to bodies and land. White sugar came to represent the division of the world into, on the one hand, the human represented by the figure of the white European Man and, on the other hand, dehumanized matter, both corporeal (in the form of enslaved African people) and mineralogical (in the form of natural resources).

The process of extraction, distillation, filtration, and crystallization of refined white sugar was optimized on the island of Madeira for mass production of C12H22O11, the white gold. A production line was created that involved the extraction of enslaved labor from the West Coast of Africa; the island's geoengineering to filter water through *levadas* from the wetter north to the warmer farmlands in the south; and the brutal deforestation of the territory to use wood to supply the boiling vats in the sugarcane sap distillation process.

The viscous sugarcane syrup is known as mother liquor. From the mid-14th century, the technique of crushing sugar cane in roller mills and collecting the sap to be boiled into syrup developed. The resulting concentrate was removed and poured into inverted clay cones, with a small hole at the tip that allowed moisture and impurities to drain. Through a process known as sugar purging or purification, the mother liquor was left to dry in clay molds over the course of a month. Purged of its impurities, the syrup produced a solid, stratified sugar loaf, known as *arropa*, leaving the bright white granules of pure sugar on top and the thicker, darker particles, used for lower-value by-products, on the bottom.

The sugar cane plantations on Madeira Island were one of the first exercises in racial global capitalism, the context in which a transatlantic triangulation of economic expansion was attempted, uniting Africa, Europe, and America in the use of materials as resources and bodies as workforce. Devoid of social and affective relationships, bodies and materials are transformed in this process.

The first part of the exhibition tells the story of transatlantic trade from two perspectives simultaneously — the European perspective illustrated in maps and paintings, and the African perspective depicted in artefacts and sculptures created in the Yoruba kingdom of Benin. If the Cantino Planisphere demonstrates power relations based on an infrastructural logic of ports, towers and forts and represents nautical routes that testify to a European imagination of expansion, the so-called 'Bini-Portuguese' ivory, produced by artisans of the Edo ethnic group in

the Kingdom of Benin or the mask of Queen Mother Idia represent other worldviews based on alternative symbolism. The overlapping of the two results in a diagram (printed onto yellow fabric) and a film, projected onto black sand brought from the island, on the floor. The cosmogony of capitalism as a racializing social order emerges in this dialectical reflection on opposing material cultures.

The second part of the exhibition focuses on the contemporary territory of the island of Madeira and the effects of the by-products of the global racial capitalism that began there. A period of residence and research by Dele Adeyemo resulted in a film, here projected on white sugar, on a plinth that evokes the sugar loaf, the usual way in which refined sugar was produced and sold until the end of the 19th century. The film takes place in the beauty salon IPRBC KAMIT run by Cameroonian beauty therapist, Esther Céline Gwack, reflecting on the one hand on long term presence of black bodies in physical labor in the Portuguese territory, and on the other on the character of the salon as a safe community space that nourishes and offers comfort. The triptych evokes the Catholic religiosity of European cosmogony, and subverts it, celebrating the female characters in the beauty salon, represented as religious icons among what appear to be exotic African flowers but are in fact plants that have been brought to the continent by colonizers and labor objects such as the hairdryer or the UV mask. In a desire to reconfigure the black bodies that dance in the Cantino Planisphere, Dele Adeyemo repositions them in a spatiality that constitutes a new altar.

The cosmogony of Portuguese transatlantic expansion cannot be dissociated from its religious dimension. In the particular case of sugar, the precursor material of global racial capitalism, the names of conventual sweets — angel's belly, heaven's bacon, celestial eggs, dreams — carry ambivalence. Product of confined feminine labor, they allude to a light and fluffy religious idyllic universe, in contrast with the violent reality of the plantations of the essential matter and disguise it.

In *Sebastião José*, writer Agustina Bessa-Luís criticizes the Marquês de Pombal's out-of-fashion hairstyles and argues that the abolition of slavery he initiated on the mainland had no more reason than to fill the state's coffers, taxing all workers. In a more recent report on her arrival at Lisbon airport, journalist Clara Ferreira Alves reveals that service work in Portuguese territory is now largely carried out by migrant and racialized bodies. In the sweet affection of combing and other gestures of care, *Licor-Mãe* rescues a European subconscious from the residue, from the impurity, from the bottom of the sugar loaf cone. It uses the very lexicon of sweetness, of tenderness, to remember that there is another way of imagining the world, that cosmogonies are born from the gestures that make them.

**DELE ADEYEMO** is a Scottish/Nigerian artist, architect and urban theorist (1985) based in London (UK) and Lagos (Nigeria, Gulf of Guinea). In his artistic practice, research and pedagogy, Adeyemo interrogates the processes of racialization incorporated in the creation of space. Through drawing, film and installation, her work employs a transdisciplinary Black aesthetic that explores embedded cultures of movement and circulation to celebrate the spatial imaginaries of everyday Black life in Africa and the diaspora. Dele's projects have been presented internationally, including the 13th and 14th Venice Architecture Biennales, the 5th Istanbul Design Biennale and the 2nd edition of the Lagos Biennale. In July 2022, he opened his first solo exhibition, *Wey Dey Move: Imagining New Worlds Through Dance and Masquerade*, at Het Nieuwe Instituut, in Rotterdam. From him he received the JAE Fellowship and Canadian Center for Architecture & Andrew Mellon Fellowship and a Het Nieuwe Instituut Research Fellowship. He is completing a CHASE-AHRC funded PhD entitled "Last Dark Continent" at the Center for Research Architecture at Goldsmiths, University of London, and teaches Architecture at the Royal College of Art in London.

**MARIANA PESTANA** (1982) lives and works in Lisbon. She is an architect, curator and researcher. PhD in Architecture from Bartlett School of Architecture (2019), she creates cultural programs such as exhibitions, events and installations and among them *The Future Starts Here* (V&A, 2018) and *Eco Visionaries* (Maat, Royal Academy and Matadero, 2018-19) or the 5th Istanbul Design Biennial (2020-21). She is co-founder and director of the interdisciplinary studio *The Decorators* and Guest Assistant Professor at Instituto Superior Técnico in Lisbon.

## DJ Set Pati Sol

Saturday, 4 November 2023  
19:00–21:00

## Activity Poetic Crossways Dori Nigro

Saturday, 2 December 2023  
15:00–18:00

Free participation

Limited registrations: [publicos@sismografo.org](mailto:publicos@sismografo.org)

Departing from Dele Adeyemo's exhibition, and after a guided tour, artist and educator Dori Nigro leads us through *Poetic Crossways*. This theoretical and practical workshop asks us to critically reflect on colonialism and coloniality, focusing on the slave plantation as one of the key themes problematized in Adeyemo's work. Borrowing from the idea of the rhizome and Yoruba cosmogony, we will reflect on de-colonial art practices as pedagogical ways of resistance, making roots grow in infertile ground. From the concrete present, we will look into the past to question possible futures, weaving relationships with contemporary creations that inscribe new narratives.

Dori Nigro is a performer and educator. Born in Pernambuco, Brazil, he became involved in the arts through community amateur theater, and accessed his studies through racial quota policies. He is currently doing research for his PhD in contemporary art at the University of Coimbra. He holds a master's degree in contemporary art practices, a specialization in art education, a bachelor's degree in social communication, and a degree in pedagogy. He is member of *Tuia de Artíficos* collective and of *União Negra das Artes* (UNA).