



Matt Anderson, Curator of History
712-224-5001

For Immediate Release
May 24, 2019

The Sioux City Public Museum opens *Bandits & Heroes, Poets & Saints: Popular Art of the Northeast of Brazil*

The traveling exhibit, *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. Exploring the resilience and vitality of modern-day descendants of Africa, *Bandits & Heroes, Poets & Saints* and opens May 25 at the Sioux City Public Museum.

Among the questions the exhibit raises are: "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 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.

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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.

At more than 2,000 sq. feet, *Bandits & Heroes, Poets & Saints* is one of the most extensive exhibits featuring original artwork to be showcased in the Museum's downtown location. The Museum will offer a variety of activities in conjunction with the exhibit:

Tuesday, June 25

***Moro No Brasil* Film Excerpts & Discussion**

6:30 p.m. at the Sioux City Public Museum

Thursday, July 11

Tastes and Sounds of Brazil

6:00 – 8:00 p.m. at the Blue Café, 1301 Pierce St.

Tuesday, July 23

***The War of the Saints* Book Discussion**

6:30 p.m. at the Sioux City Public Museum

Thursday, August 8

Exhibit Tour with Matt Anderson

12:05 p.m. at the Sioux City Public Museum

On display through August 11, this exhibition has been made possible through NEH on the Road, a special initiative of the National Endowment for the Humanities. It is brought to Sioux City by Mid-America Arts Alliance. *Bandits & Heroes, Poets & Saints: Popular Art of the Northeast of Brazil* was curated by Marion E. Jackson, Ph.D. and Barbara Cervenka, O.P., Curators, Con/Vida–Popular Arts of the Americas, and organized by Con/Vida–Popular Arts of the Americas and the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History, Detroit, MI, in partnership with NEH on the Road/Mid-America Arts Alliance, Kansas City, MO.

About NEH on the Road

NEH on the Road (NEHOTR) is a fully funded initiative of the National Endowment for the Humanities, designed to create wider national access to the ideas, themes, and stories explored in major grant-funded NEH exhibitions. Mid-America Arts Alliance has provided the curatorial adaptation, design, production, and tour management of the NEHOTR program since 2002. Each exhibition is designed to fit within 2,000 square feet and features abundant artifacts, integrated didactic panels, banners, and other supporting materials that best reflect the content and scholarship of the original large-scale exhibitions. Learn more at www.nehontheroad.org.



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About the National Endowment for the Humanities

Created in 1965 as an independent federal agency, the National Endowment for the Humanities supports research and learning in history, literature, philosophy, and other areas of the humanities by funding selected, peer-reviewed proposals from around the nation. Additional information about the National Endowment for the Humanities and its grant programs is available at: www.neh.gov.



About Mid-America Arts Alliance

Mid-America Arts Alliance (M-AAA) strengthens and supports artists, cultural organizations, and communities throughout our region and beyond. We achieve this primarily through our national traveling exhibition programs, innovative leadership development, and strategic grant making. We are especially committed to enriching the cultural life of historically underserved communities by providing high quality, meaningful, and accessible arts and culture programs and services. Each year M-AAA's programs, on average, reach one million people. We believe in more art for more people. Additional information about M-AAA is available at www.maaa.org.



The Sioux City Public Museum is located at 607 4th Street in downtown Sioux City. Hours are Tuesday through Saturday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday 1 to 5 p.m. Admission is free. For more information, call 712-279-6174 or visit www.siouxcitymuseum.org.

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