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# THE SHED Press Release

THE **BLOOMBERG** BUILDING  
545 West 30th Street  
New York, NY 10001

**Maxwell Alexandre's First North American Solo Exhibition, *Pardo é Papel: The Glorious Victory and New Power*, October 26, 2022 – January 8, 2023 at The Shed, Celebrates Black Identity, Representation, and Empowerment  
Features New Works Commissioned by The Shed**

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*Bilionário escuro* [Dark Billionaire], 2018, from “Pardo é Papel: The Glorious Victory,” 2017 –. Latex, grease, henna, bitumen, dye, acrylic, vinyl, graphite, ballpoint pen, charcoal, oily stick and powdered chocolate wrapping paper on brown kraft paper. 126 x 187 3/8 inches. Artwork © Maxwell Alexandre. Photo: Gabi Carerra. Courtesy Instituto Inclusartiz and Museu de Arte do Rio – MAR.

**New York, New York, July 14, 2022** – Brazilian artist **Maxwell Alexandre** will have his first North American solo exhibition, *Pardo é Papel: The Glorious Victory and New Power*, at The Shed from October 26, 2022 through January 8, 2023, offering a sweeping introduction to the artist’s work addressing Black identity, representation, and empowerment. Organized by **Alessandra Gómez**, associate curator this exhibition debuts Alexandre’s monumental artworks on brown kraft paper from his ongoing series “Pardo é Papel” (2017 – ) that depict collective portraits celebrating the resilience, self-esteem and prosperity of Black people.

Alexandre divides the individual bodies of work within the *Pardo é Papel* series into albums and subseries, connecting some of his paintings to his influences from hip hop culture and rap music. The Shed exhibition features artwork from his earliest album, “The Glorious Victory,” inspired by Black musicians from Brazil, and newly commissioned paintings from “New Power,” which centers Black audiences contemplating art in gallery settings to draw attention to power dynamics in dominantly white, Western contemporary art spaces.

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Throughout the “Pardo é Papel” series, Alexandre paints Black subjects on brown kraft paper, commonly referred to in his native Portuguese as *pardo*. The series title roughly translates to “brown is paper,” though this phrasing fails to capture the colonial origins of the term *pardo*. Many activists involved with Black social movements in Brazil argue that the term *pardo* has historically been used to obscure or hide one’s Black identity, as it is an ambiguous racial category developed by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics as part of the 1950 census, based on one’s physical appearance rather than ancestry. For Alexandre, the act of painting Black subjects on pardo paper makes an empowering political and conceptual statement: “I created this series to talk about self-esteem and Black pride because the term pardo has historically been used for whitening in Brazil,” said Alexandre.

“By adapting kraft paper as the conceptual and material foundation of his paintings, Alexandre insists on the term pardo as a descriptor of paper, rather than a masking of Black identity within Brazilian society. Alexandre intentionally leaves sections of the kraft paper unpainted to underscore its conceptual significance, exposing all of its wrinkles, creases, and softer textural qualities,” said Alessandra Gómez, The Shed’s Associate Curator. “His exhibition at The Shed traces the evolution of his work over the past five years, especially through his self-referential subseries ‘New Power’ which reflects on contemporary art spaces and their power in legitimizing art historical narratives.”

By suspending his paintings throughout The Shed’s Level 4 Gallery, Alexandre constructs pathways and enclosures using the pardo paper, highlighting its materiality and the artist’s demarcation of space. Alexandre’s paintings also incorporate unconventional materials, such as bitumen, a dense, durable infrastructural mixture used for roofing and roads, and everyday cosmetic products such as brown liquid shoe polish and hair relaxer. Drawn from his memories living in one of the largest Brazilian favelas, Rocinha, Alexandre’s paintings present striking figurative scenes of communal leisure interspersed with recurring religious, art historical, and pop cultural symbols. These appear alongside well-known Black cultural icons, like Beyoncé, Nina Simone, and Elza

Soares, and commercial products from his childhood, such as popular blue plastic Capri pools, Danone yogurt, and the chocolate drink Toddynho. As part of his painting process, Alexandre translates rap lyrics, sometimes abstractly, sometimes figuratively, into his paintings. Many of his titles from “The Glorious Victory” reference specific songs by Brazilian rappers BK’, Djonga, and Baco Exu do Blues, who have influenced his work.

“We are thrilled to present Maxwell Alexandre’s first North American solo exhibition, *Pardo é Papel: The Glorious Victory and New Power*. Alexandre is an extraordinary artist with a highly compelling practice born from a multi-disciplinary context,” said **Alex Poots**, The Shed’s artistic director and CEO.

The Shed’s multidisciplinary commissioning program is conceived by Artistic Director and CEO Alex Poots with the senior program team, including Andria Hickey, Chief Curator; Tamara McCaw, Chief Civic Program Officer; Madani Younis, Chief Executive Producer; and Hans Ulrich Obrist, Senior Program Advisor.

### **Publication**

As part of the exhibition, there will be a fully illustrated publication designed by Normal Studio (Chicago, IL), with new essays from the exhibition’s curator, Alessandra Gómez, and scholar Tina M. Campt, an interview with Hans Ulrich Obrist, and writing by Alexandre. Co-published by The Shed and Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther und Franz König, the book will be available for purchase through international distributors, and available to purchase at The Shed and [TheShed.org/Publications](https://www.theshed.org/publications).

### **Ticketing**

Tickets for *Pardo é Papel: The Glorious Victory and New Power* will be available at [theshed.org](https://www.theshed.org) or (646) 455-3494. The exhibition is on view Thursday to Sunday from 11 am to 6 pm. Additional information on The Shed’s health and safety policies and how to plan a visit is available at [Theshed.org/visit](https://www.theshed.org/visit)

### **About the artist**

**Maxwell Alexandre** was born in 1990 in Rio de Janeiro. Raised in an evangelical home, the artist served in the army and was a professional street inline skater for 12 years. He graduated with a degree in design from PUC-RJ (Pontifícia Universidade Católica of Rio de Janeiro) in 2016. In 2018, he received an award from the Arquidiocese of Rio de Janeiro and received the São Sebastião Culture Prize. Alexandre was elected artist of the year by Deutsche Bank as part of their “Artist of the Year” series and is one of the 35 artists worldwide included on Artsy’s Vanguard list. His work figures in the collections of various prestigious institutions, including the Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo, the Museu de Arte de São Paulo, the Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro, the Museu de Arte do Rio, the Musée d’Art Contemporain de Lyon, Perez Art Museum Miami, and Guggenheim Abu Dhabi. Alexandre considers his works prayers and his studio a temple.

### **About the curator**

**Alessandra Gómez** is a writer and curator specializing in modern and contemporary art and performance. She is currently an associate curator at The Shed, where she is organizing Maxwell Alexandre's first North American solo exhibition *Pardo é Papel: The Glorious Victory and New Power* (2022). She previously organized *HEADLESS: The Demonstration* (2022), three nights of fashion, music, and performance by Anonymous Club, the creative studio led by Shayne Oliver. She was an assistant curator on *Tomás Saraceno: Particular Matter(s)* (2022), *Ian Cheng: Life After BOB* (2021), *Open Call* (2021), and curatorial assistant on *Manual Override* (2019) and *Open Call* (2019). Her independent curatorial projects include *As If You Me* (2017) and *Ember Ground* (2018) at the Center for Performance Research, *Material Witness Witness Material* (2018) at Knockdown Center and *Public Setting* (2017) as part of the Queens Museum partnership with Bulova Center. She received her MA from Columbia University's Modern and Contemporary Art: Critical and Curatorial Studies program and was a curatorial fellow at Columbia's Wallach Art Gallery. She organized and conceived the gallery's first performance program, *Into Darkness* (2019), with commissions by artists Trajal Harrell, Dean Moss, and Eiko Otake & DonChristian Jones. She was part of the editorial collective for *Women & Performance: a journal of feminist theory* and previously held curatorial positions at Ambient Church, The Kitchen, and Queens Museum.

### **Support**

The creation of new work at The Shed is generously supported by the Lizzie and Jonathan Tisch Commissioning Fund and the Shed Commissioners.

Major funding for this show is provided by Frances Reynolds and Instituto Inclusartiz. This exhibition is also supported in part by Elaine Goldman and John Benis and the Consulate General of Brazil in New York.

### **About The Shed**

The Shed is a new cultural institution of and for the 21st century. We produce and welcome innovative art and ideas, across all forms of creativity, to build a shared understanding of our rapidly changing world and a more equitable society. In our highly adaptable building on Manhattan's west side, The Shed brings together established and emerging artists to create new work in fields ranging from pop to classical music, painting to digital media, theater to literature, and sculpture to dance. We seek opportunities to collaborate with cultural peers and community organizations, work with like-minded partners, and provide unique spaces for private events. As an independent nonprofit that values invention, equity, and generosity, we are committed to advancing art forms, addressing the urgent issues of our time, and making our work impactful, sustainable, and relevant to the local community, the cultural sector, New York City, and beyond.