Traces of a Recreated Reality: Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro’s busts of Pai Paulino

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Abstract
Putting the main focus on a dimension of Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro’s work, it can be observed that he made clay the raw material of his sculptures, represented as social mirror, with intelligence, sensibility and creativity. The plasticity of the material and the associated technique allowed him to emphasise facial traits, to caricature gestures and features, and to fill with life the depiction of several figures of his time. He sculpted busts of distinguished persons, and immortalised street characters and popular, picturesque or iconic figures of Portuguese society, either anonymous or not. In such a collection, we will find the representation of some black people, among them the former slave Pai Paulino, a popular figure of the 19th century Lisbon.

Keywords: Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro, Pai Paulino, creativity, slavery, colonialism, Berlin Conference, British Ultimatum, artistic representations of black people, caricature, art/testimony Garner, Pat O’Shea, Susan Cooper