RACISM AND CITIZENSHIP
OUTLINES FOR AN EXHIBITION

The exhibition displays two interlinking realities, RACISM, a prejudice relating to ethnic origin combined with discriminatory action, and CITIZENSHIP, the right to residence, work and political participation in a particular country, equally involving duties and responsibilities.

TENSION BETWEEN EXCLUSION AND INTEGRATION

The first part of the proposed itinerary focuses on the 16th-18th centuries, on stereotypical images of Moors and Jews, replicated once they had converted to Christianity. It then moves on to display images of enslaved populations of African origin and natives from America and Asia. This part concludes with the theory of races, that is, a hierarchical vision of the world’s peoples assuming European supremacy.

The colonial world opens the second part, exhibiting images of slavery and forced work, and the dehumanisation and inferiorisation of Africans. The difficulty in the representations becomes clear, especially when confronted with the recognition of non-Christian religions. Finally, contemporary art appropriates the colonial memory and reflects on a more inclusive vision of citizenship.
The forced conversion of Jews in 1497 in Portugal and its overseas territories triggered tensions leading to eventual competition in the context of a successful integration. The conversos, Jews known as New Christians, were excluded from Crown integration. The converted Jews, known as Mouroiscos and Church institutions by the blood purity statutes, were abolished only in 1775. The New Christians would also be the main victims of the Inquisition. The Christian conquest of the Iberian Peninsula (from the 8th to the 15th century) viewed Muslims as the main enemy, a perception transferred to Africa and Asia with the Portuguese expansion (15th to 18th centuries). The Muslims were expelled in 1496, but forced conversions took place to emphasise the infamy of their origins, with the converted labelled Moriscos. Like the Jews, they were subject to the blood purity statutes. In Portugal, legally, until the beginning of the 19th century, Jews and Muslims were only admitted for diplomatic reasons, while they were accepted in the colonies under certain restrictions.

In Portugal, legally, until the beginning of the 19th century, they were subject to the blood purity statutes. Moreover, until the beginning of the 19th century, and the series of abdication legislation from 1832 to 1877 proved to be difficult to apply. At that time, the idea of slavery was replaced with that of forced work. Yet, the true nature of this change of label was as an anchor as it was always linked to a social inferiority. Slaves were set free by which forced work was imposed. For this reason, there continued to be Africans shackled or imprisoned from the wars to occupy Africa, demonstrating the prolongation of this attitude. This is why African workers were recruited for forced work continued to be documented or photographed, even in the first half of the 20th century.

Simultaneously innocent and demonic, native Americans were seen as open to conversion but permanent wanderings. In Portuguese art, contradictory representations of Brazilian Indians are evident. At times, they could be portrayed as one of the Three Wise Men, and at others, as the Devil. Yet, it was the relationship with cannibalism which most significantly shaped and characterised Native Americans in Europe until the 18th century. The representation of Africans is initially linked to slavery and colonialism. Images of slaves at work in Brazilian plantations are displayed alongside images of black people in the midst of nature or of slaves as accessories to human lives. Indeed, the punishment of slaves was only beginning to be documented by artists, who were not Portuguese but who were involved in and fascinated by the movement to abolish slavery.

In the colonies, slavery continued throughout the 19th century, and the series of abdication legislation from 1832 to 1877 proved to be difficult to apply. At that time, the idea of slavery was replaced with that of forced work. Yet, the true nature of this change of label was as an anchor as it was always linked to a social inferiority. Slaves were set free by which forced work was imposed. For this reason, there continued to be Africans shackled or imprisoned from the wars to occupy Africa, demonstrating the prolongation of this attitude. This is why African workers were recruited for forced work continued to be documented or photographed, even in the first half of the 20th century.

The post-colonial period has seen significant activity by African artists, who explore their identity in a process of interrogation of institutionalised and Eurocentric images, contrasting them with the memory of different peoples. Meanwhile, Portuguese artists originating from the former colonies or who have absorbed the culture of African populations have used these experiences to reflect on a new world, exempt from racism and with citizenship.