

CAMPLE—LINE

**ANDERSON BORBA  
THE UNEARTHED  
21.03 - 31.05.26**



Anderson Borba: The Unearthed  
—Bernardo José de Souza

*'Some living things, in other words, are also artifacts.'*<sup>1</sup>  
William Balée

*They moved in silence through the woods, dragging their cloaks along the muddy path into the village. Oblivious to the outer world, these sentinels showed no sign of fear towards the humans lurking behind trees, lampposts and barricades. Oddly enough, their procession through town had the unsuspected effect of luring the crowds into a newly found sanctuary – a redbrick house where animate and inanimate creatures could share a common ground. If not verbally communicating, they addressed each other through a common tacit language: expressions of fear, lust, disdain, and even laughter gradually ceded place to a face-to-face encounter that had no other purpose than that of scrutinising each other's features in search of their common solitudes.*

Forests can grow spontaneously or, conversely, be devised by the ingenuity of human craft. What was once believed to be the Amazonian pristine wilderness is now acknowledged to have been the result of species manipulation by its indigenous population in the distant past, long before colonisation. Therefore, the Amazon could be understood as a cultural artefact, the result of centuries of soil management, cultivation and breeding. Historical narratives that sustained the former have been tainted with fiction as much as any religious belief, ancestral view of the cosmos or scientific concept, for that matter. Metaphorically speaking, one might well envisage the forest as a fictitious scenario, a space where entities and mythologies spring up as abundantly as its leaves, branches and trees.

In the woods of Brazilian artist Anderson Borba's imagination, sculptures emerge as bodies not only to be carved, cut and burnt but also to be invested with a secret life of their own. While acquiring the



shape of totemic figures, his vertical wooden pieces carry both the memory of times past, the latency of the present, and the prospect of figmental futures. Immersed in their very own open-ended fictional narratives – that can be fostered by the author or the public alike – they convey an otherworldly atmosphere to this exhibition at Cample Line, in the lowlands of Scotland, granting the visitor a fertile ground for sensorial experience and devious imagining.

Although it may appear that these carved totems belong to a religious liturgy, or a ritual of sorts, they in fact stem from Borba's relentless inner fabrications, seemingly communicating between themselves, and capable of conjuring a language of their own. It wouldn't be far-fetched to imply that assembling such stark, mutant figures together is somehow reminiscent of the artist's affection and connection with Umbanda – a syncretic religion of African origins, derived from Spiritism, whose rituals involve music, dance, trance, offerings, and the adoration of Orixás.<sup>2</sup>

By exuding a spiritual aura, albeit mundane, Borba's pagan creatures appear to summon the visitors to a ceremony that simultaneously involves empathy and resistance, adoration and fear, reservation and closeness. As totems for a civilisation yet to be, his sculptures are eloquent testimonials of a world in flux. In this sense, assigning identity to the unknown would seem like a rather forceful attempt at normalising the beauty and horror of what appears strange to us.

The body, be it biological, sculptural or fictional, is in constant transformation, responding to myriad forces that emanate from arbitrary cultural, social and political backgrounds. As a possible ode to an ever-changing world, this exhibition questions notions of being other, otherness and the ever-lurking prospect of human transcendence.

*The Unearthed* awakens our hidden nature, our dormant collective memory, our connection with the unbound. The entities assembled in the gallery space, seemingly gathering with a mysterious purpose, might as well have fled their sacred realm in the woods in order to confront humanity – their elongated figures defying supposed human authority, in a role reversal that demands the public respond to their enigmatic presences.

Sentinels of an ecology of wisdom, chimeras of a shared world between human and more-than-human entities, Borba's sculptures lure visitors into a narrative of survival. Cut out in uneven shapes, comprised of logs, scraps of wood, meticulously carved pieces of wood and bits of bronze, the artworks in this show happen to reveal a tortured nature, despite the constant grin on their visage – or would it be a grimace? At times disquieting, at others comforting, it is as if they were ushering us to a secret ceremony.

While showing a congregation of larger-than-life totemic creatures, Borba alludes to the unattained, to what remains to be grasped of our common existence in a world inhabited by living and non-living entities. His 'archaeological' practice of unearthing ever-fading connections between western civilisation and what lies beyond our eyes, instils in the audience a mixed sense of caring and strangeness towards what is deemed unknown.

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Born in Santos (1972), a seaside city near the cosmopolitan capital of São Paulo, in Brazil, Anderson Borba was raised in a working-class family, strange to contemporary art, though devoted to Umbanda: a totemic and animistic cult, whose rituals have unequivocally informed Borba's artistic practice. Much of the artist's inspiration could be attributed to his years of formation in London, at the Slade School of Fine Art. If, on the one hand his sculptures materialise as actual totems, on the other one may well argue that they resemble Barbara Hepworth's hollow pieces or owe their verticality to Brancusi's columns, to Giacometti's elongated bodies, and even to the inscrutable ancient sign of the Shigir Idol. Rather latent in his work, however, is the influence of anthropophagy as means to digest or even devour what is foreign, as implied in the *Anthropophagic Manifesto* (also referred to as the *Cannibal Manifesto*), written by Brazilian poet Oswald de Andrade in 1928. This highly politically charged literary tour-de-force would indelibly shape Brazilian modernism as a counter force to the grand European narratives: an all-encompassing, globally-overthrowing ideology, but one, it must be said, not fully devoid of its own underlying colonial impetuses – of progress, rationality, functionality, or even of the repudiation of tradition.





Cave Head  
(detail), 2026

Be that as it may, whether derived from modern western culture or ancestral belief systems, Borba's sculptural practice – or imagined cosmology, if you will – is as much about the past as it is about the present or the future. The artist resorts to organic matter – materials that have either borne a soul (once pulsed with purpose or spirit) or been stripped of their function in the world. He will then burn, carve, glue, paint, and reshape the wood to the point of granting it with eloquent features, thus enticing our senses beyond the constraints of material culture secluded to its western contemporary boundaries.

Entangled into one another, corrupted in an organic-inorganic ballet, almost promiscuous in the blatant exhibition of inner parts, the gathering of sculptures in this gallery space speaks about endurance; something irrevocable has been lost. The original form, or identity, has been unmade, flawed, irreparably altered. This transformation of structural matter invites the public to congregate with these other beings, other entities which are strange to the discursivity of human language.'

*Bernardo José de Souza makes exhibitions, writes, and investigates contemporary art. Former Artistic Director of Fundação Iberê Camargo (2017/19), in Porto Alegre Brazil, he now works as an independent curator living in Madrid.*

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1. William Balée, *Cultural Forests of the Amazon: A Historical Ecology of People and Their Landscapes*, University of Alabama Press, 2013

2. In Brazil, Orixás are deities closely linked with Candomblé, which historically were also associated with Catholic saints; Candomblé and Catholicism being two religions brought together by force of Portuguese colonisation.



Griot (detail), 2026







Cloak (detail), 2026

## List of works

- Clinghug, 2026**  
Wood, paper, faux leather belt, oil pastel, linseed oil, lacquer  
87 x 38 x 15 cm
- Veins, 2020-26**  
Frottage with paper, charcoal, chalk, pastel, fire, linseed, oil pigments  
Dimensions variable
- Boombox, 2026**  
Wood, paper, oil pastel, wood stain, linseed oil, lacquer  
94 x 75 x 5 cm
- Mosquito, 2025**  
Wood, paper, oil pastel, wood stain, linseed oil, lacquer, shoe polish  
191 x 9 x 10 cm
- Awakening: The Rite of Spring 2026**  
Wood, bronze, wood stain, oil pastel, oil paint, sawdust, shoe polish  
20 x 203 x 20 cm
- Griot, 2026**  
Wood, paper, bronze, stones, wood stain, shoe polish, oil pastel, lacquer  
184 x 17 x 15 cm
- Dragonfly, 2026**  
Wood, paper, bronze, oil pastel, wood stain, lacquer  
20 x 191 x 12 cm
- Cloak, 2026**  
Wood, paper, unfired clay, stones, wire, wood stain, oil pastel, lacquer  
204 x 34 x 7 cm
- Balancing Act, 2024**  
Wood, paper, wax, oil pastel, gilt cream, wood dye  
164 x 11 x 10 cm
- Wisp, 2025**  
Wood, paper, pigment, oil pastel, sawdust, cayenne pepper, shellac  
161 x 19 x 25 cm
- Line Body, 2025**  
Wood, stone, paper, pigment, oil pastel, spray paint, sawdust, cayenne pepper, shellac  
171 x 26 x 14 cm
- Selfie, 2024**  
Wood, wood stain, wood paint, paper, oil stick, oil paint, lacquer, wax, gilt cream  
95 x 27 x 76 cm
- Maskulinity, 2026**  
Wood, paper, varnish, shoe polish, oil pastels, lacquer  
194 x 14 x 14 cm
- Cave Head, 2026**  
Wood, paper, stone, bronze, oil pastel, shoe polish, wood stain, lacquer  
160 x 20 x 19 cm
- Lucho's Eggs, 2026**  
Wood, wood stain, shoe polish  
25 x 30 x 20 cm / 17 x 26 x 16 cm
- Belted Bent, 2026**  
Wood, bark, stone, sawdust, oil pastel, linseed oil  
182 x 11 x 11 cm

*Dimensions are given H x W x D*



**Anderson Borba** (b. 1972, Santos, Brazil) lives and works in both London, UK, and São Paulo, Brazil. He is represented by The approach, London and Fortes D'Aloia & Gabriel, São Paulo.

Recent solo and two person exhibitions include: *Secret Ceremony*, The approach, London, UK (2025), *Harvest* (with Marta Jakobovits), Elizabeth Xi Bauer, London, UK (2025); *Thinking Hands* (with Gokula Stoffel), Francois Ghebally, New York, USA; *Anderson Borba + Dudi Maia Rosa*, auroras, São Paulo, Brazil (2024); *Anderson Borba + Erika Verzutti*, Pivô, São Paulo, Brazil (2023).

Group exhibitions include: *Quebracorpo*, Fortes D'Aloia & Gabriel, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (2025); *Passages | 10th Anniversary Exhibition*, Encounter, Lisbon, Portugal; *Eu não confio*, Galeria Cavalo, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; *Ghosts in Sunlight*, Thirsk Hall, North Yorkshire, UK; *On feeling*, The approach, London, UK; *Woodworks*, Lamb Gallery, London, UK (all 2024).



Published on the occasion of  
Anderson Borba  
The Unearthed  
CAMPLE LINE  
21 March – 31 May 2026

Text: Bernardo José de Souza  
Layout: Briony Anderson and Tina Fiske  
Artwork photography: Mike Bolam  
978-1-0687092-9-6

CAMPLE LINE is a registered Scottish Charity no. SC047031  
CAMPLE LINE, Dumfriesshire, Scotland, UK, DG3 5HD  
[www.campleline.org.uk](http://www.campleline.org.uk)

Printed on recycled paper by Solway Print, Dumfries, Scotland, UK



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Anderson Borba, Joshua Fisher, Harriet Eyres, Jo Harrison, Emma Robertson, Jake Miller and Mike Allen at The approach, Cristiana Katagiri, De Rodrigues, Rodrigo Orratia, Victor Bock, Kevin Reid, Mike Bolam, and all at Solway Print

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