

VITRINE DE CURIOSIDADES



Porque devemos descolonizar?

Álamo Oliveira

Terceira Island, Azores, 1974

Ink drawing on paper

MAH.R.2013.0850

H. 30.5 × W. 43.3 cm

This month, the Cabinet of Curiosities highlights the drawing *Porque devemos descolonizar?* (Why Should We Decolonise?), part of the graphic work of Azorean writer and playwright Álamo Oliveira (1945–2025), a leading figure in contemporary Azorean literature and culture. Although best known for his literary work, Álamo also developed, alongside his writing, a distinctive visual practice characterised by social criticism, historical reflection and symbolic experimentation, themes that likewise permeate his literary output.

Executed in ink, this composition belongs to a period in which the artist explored themes related to the memory of Portuguese colonialism, the structural violence of colonial rule and the political imagination of the twentieth century. The work engages with debates that gained momentum following the decolonisation process initiated in 1974 and which continue to inspire critical reflection within both artistic and academic contexts.

The image presents a group of hybrid, skeletal figures arranged within a visual space fragmented by geometric patterns, dense textures and stylised architectural elements. Some of these figures are seated in positions of authority, while others gather in groups or adopt assertive gestures, evoking the different social roles found within colonial regimes: colonisers, administrators, military personnel, subjugated populations and agents of resistance.

The chequered floor and the repetition of geometric forms suggest an environment in which the colonial order is presented as a rigid, almost mechanical system, through which people and territories were administered according to external logics. At the same time, the fragmented composition and the juxtaposition of figures suggest a system in decline, pointing towards the disintegration and eventual collapse of the power structures that sustained the Portuguese metropole.

This drawing was donated to the Museum of Angra do Heroísmo by Álamo Oliveira on 25 May 1974. It is now part of the Museum's Graphic Documents Collection.

