

Nottingham Contemporary Teacher / Group Leader Notes

Chico da Silva *And the soul is for the birds* Gallery 1

Augustas Serapinas *Physical Culture* Galleries 2 & 3

6 Jun – 6 Sep 2026

Featuring: Large-scale sculptural and sonic installation and paintings.



Chico da Silva (Francisco Domingos da Silva), *Animais Fantásticos*, 1973. Photo: Ding Musa. Courtesy Galatea

This season we present two exhibitions. In Gallery 1 are colourful, fantastical artworks by Chico da Silva. Chico's paintings are a glimpse into an immense cosmology fuelled by the artist's own imagination, folklore and the natural world.

Chico was an intuitive, self-taught artist who later taught friends and family to paint too. He formed a prolific community studio which was both celebrated by and challenged the artworld.

In Galleries 2 & 3 is an installation by Augustas Serapinas which functions as a working gym and art school. Augustas studied at the School of Art in Vilnius, where art education follows classical traditions rooted in the canons of Western art history and formal arts education. Here, he considers how the practice and repetition required to train your body is like the ways he was asked to train as an artist. Together, the exhibitions can be used to spark conversations about art and the artist.

Curriculum and themes:

Geography: Brazil and the Amazon Rainforest, habitats and biodiversity, local built environment

Citizenship: Community and collaboration, political and ecological activism, colonialism and Indigenous rights and culture

English: Mythology and folklore, storytelling and creative writing

PSHE: Creative imagination and freedoms, body positivity

Art: Painting, colour, pattern and symbols, sculpture, installation, mark making and drawing. Art education and collaborative art practices

PE: Exercise, repetition and sequences

Chico da Silva - Gallery 1

Known as Chico da Silva or simply 'Chico', his paintings depict sea creatures swimming on the currents of outer space, fantastical creatures in hallucinatory battles, and giant creatures consuming smaller ones, highlighting themes of co-existence, tension and the interconnectedness of things.



Chico da Silva (Francisco Domingos da Silva), *Sem título* [Untitled], c. 1950s. Photo: Ding Musa | Courtesy Galatea

Chico grew up surrounded by the Amazon rainforest in Alto Tejo and later lived within fishing communities in the north of Brazil. His artworks were inspired by the natural world he encountered and visions from his dreams. His paintings also give form to stories and mythologies from oral traditions embedded in Indigenous and Brazilian culture.

Chico first began drawing and painting by working onto the whitewashed walls of fisher people's houses with pieces of charcoal, bricks, leaves and other natural, found materials. For many years his work was unnoticed.

Later he met a famous art critic and dealer, Jean-Pierre Chabloz, who encouraged him to paint and to work onto canvas, so the work could be sold. Chico became celebrated and as the demand for his work increased, Jean-Pierre made money from his association with Chico.

Chico established a community studio, the *Pirambu School* to collaborate with fellow artists. The school inspired others in the community to begin painting and Chico trained them in his approach and style. Collectively, the studio created "Chico"



Chico da Silva (Francisco Domingos da Silva), *Sem título* [Untitled], 1978. Photo: Ding Musa. Courtesy Galatea

paintings that were signed and sold, creating wealth for the community. This collective approach sparks debate about authenticity and ownership. Chico is celebrated for his contribution and legacy to contemporary art practice in Brazil.

Augustas Serapinas - Galleries 2 and 3

Augustas lives and works in Vilnius, Lithuania. He uses art to reimagine public spaces and to highlight and question the assumptions around them. He asks us to think about the way that spaces and institutions work and how people interact with them. Augustas is interested in the ways that museums, art galleries and schools shape the artists and histories that become known and the ones that become overlooked.



Physical culture, installation view. Contemporary Art Centre (CAC) Vilnius, 2025. Photo: Jonas Balsevičius

Inspired by his experiences as an art student, Augustas has created a functioning gym, where conventional weights are replaced by jesmonite casts of classical sculptures used in drawing classes.

The curriculum at Augustas's traditional art school emphasised Classical and Western art and the development of art skills and techniques through repeated engagement with life drawing, painting and sculpture. His artwork playfully challenges us to question this dominant approach to art education by likening it to the discipline required to sculpt the body in the gym.



Physical Culture activated installation view. Contemporary Art Centre (CAC) Vilnius, 2025. Photo: Dovilė Markevičienė

The gallery spaces are connected by a running track with hurdles. On each hurdle are replicas of sculptural heads that decorate Nottingham Trent University's (NTU) Waverley Building, once the Nottingham School of Art.

The replicas feature art historical figures such as Raphael, Benvenuto Cellini and William Hogarth. By including these 'Old Masters' and 'Great Men of History', we are asked to think about Nottingham's own art education histories and consider who is excluded from the canon.

The exhibition will be activated by workout sessions, organised with local personal trainers and community groups and by drawing classes with Fine Art students at NTU.