



Creating contemporary Surrealist forms inspired by psychoanalysis, philosophy and alchemy, Tunga (1952-2016) embraced a multi-faceted practice spanning the various mediums of contemporary art. Born in Palmares, Pernambuco, Antônio José de Barros Carvalho e Mello Mourão (known mononymously as Tunga) came from a family of writers, artists and social activists. As a creative, intellectual group, Tunga's family were forced into exile in Chile by the Brazilian military dictatorship in the 1960s. Tunga later returned to Brazil where he pursued a degree in architecture while he developed his artistic practice, creating drawings and small-scale sculptures while editing magazines and contemporary poetry publications in Rio de Janeiro with fellow artists. Driven by research across many fields, his early works were marked by a deep interest in the symbolic and the mythological. From this beginning his practice evolved into complex installation-making in the 1980s with the incorporation of a wide range of materials including magnets, lightbulbs, electrical wires, copper, felt and rubber. The period also saw the emergence of the shapes and signs that would become iconic throughout his career, such as clubs, scalps, combs, bells, cauldrons, funnels and braids. Tunga's sculptural investigations into the energetic relationships between materials intensified in the 1990s, marked by the introduction of magnets into his works, and the integration of elements of his installations with instaurations – a word he coined to describe his works activated by performance. Further fusing diverse elements in order to imbue them with new values, Tunga continued to explore new materials until his passing in 2016: between 2000 and 2016, his work was characterised by the emergence of such diverse elements as bells, bottles, chalices, jewellery, teeth, wings, portals, lights, tripods, and thimbles.

Since 2016, the Instituto Tunga – founded and directed by the artist's son, Antônio Mourão – has worked to preserve, conserve, catalogue and disseminate his extensive work and memory. His work has been presented in major exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art of São Paulo, and Tate Modern, London, as well as the acquiring of Tunga's work by institutions worldwide, including the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Centre Pompidou in Paris, and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles.