

cássio vasconcellos

dryads and fauns

opening march 4, 2020 | exhibition march 5 – may 30, 2020



Cássio Vasconcellos. Left: **Dryads # 15**, 2019. Inkjet print on cotton paper. 150 x 100 cm/ 59.1 x 39.4 in. Right: **Dryads # 17**, 2019. Inkjet print on cotton paper. 220 x 150 cm/ 86.6 x 59.1 in. Courtesy of the artist and Galeria Nara Roesler.

Galeria Nara Roesler | Rio de Janeiro is pleased to inaugurate its 2020 program with *Dryads and Fauns*, a solo show by photographer Cássio Vasconcellos from São Paulo. The exhibition will be the artist's first presentation at the gallery since it started representing him in 2019. The photographer will be showcasing his most recent work, addressing both the expressive potency of nature, as well as the relationship between painting and photography.

Dryads and Fauns (2019-2020) is both the title of the exhibition and that of the series, which the artist derived from research he began undertaking in 2015 for the project *Viagem pitoresca pelo Brasil [Picturesque Voyage through Brazil]* (2015-present). The research is based on a series of artistic and scientific expeditions that took place in the country during the nineteenth-century. These ventures brought together artists and scientists with a variety of specialties, to wander through and take in the country's still then very much unknown territories, in order to explore, record and map them.

Interestingly, the 1825 Langsdorff expedition included in its committee the Botanist Ludwig Riedel, who also happens to have been Vasconcellos' great-great-grandfather. One can therefore trace the fascination for the mystery of nature back several generations. The family history may have therefore triggered the photographer to become intrigued by the possible impressions and awes that the scientists and artists of the time must have felt before the country's immensely vast forests. Rather than attempting to create the same type of images produced at that time, the artist seeks a similar effect in his photography by altering the camera's sensitivity and exposition, as well as editing the images digitally.

Cássio Vasconcellos' works captures the exuberance of Brazilian forests, especially that of the Atlantic Forest, which spreads across the Brazilian east coast and the southeast region. The exhibition will present landscapes and sceneries from the city of Rio de Janeiro and its surroundings, including that of the Floresta da Tijuca, the Serra dos Órgãos and the Parque Nacional do Itatiaia amongst others. Many of the artist's trips were done along with his friend and botanist, Ricardo Cardim who, in fact, was the one to suggest the term *Dryads* as the series began to emerge last year.

The title originates from Greek mythology, where dryads designate divinities that are born with trees, and then live in or around them. The life of both entities is said to be intertwined so that if the tree were to die, so would the dryad. When looking at Vasconcellos' landscapes, Cardim discovered the artist had included nude female figures also living in harmony with nature and soon recalled the Greek myth. As he began to include male figures as well, Vasconcellos chose to add another term from the same imaginary lexicon, *Fauns*.

The human figures that feature in Vasconcellos' idyllic sceneries were taken from paintings from the nineteenth century created by masters such as Jacques Louis David, William Adolphe Bouguereau and Jean-Baptiste Camille Corot. It is the first time that the photographer has re-appropriated imagery from other artists as a means of creating his own. Through this act, Vasconcellos re-emphasizes the intertwining between painting and photography: it is not only the photograph that resembles the painting, with its edits, but also the figures taken from the paintings that come to bear resemblance with photographs.

The nudes were selected for their timeless representation of the body, lacking clothes that could indicate a certain time or social class. Vasconcellos seeks to create a space suspended in time where the individuals' relationship to nature and the search for harmonious equilibrium between both could become the focus point. Though his images evoke romantic atmospheres, they simultaneously and indirectly raise questions about the human ecological footprint, considering the series of natural catastrophes which we are currently facing.

opening

march 4, 2019 | thursday, 7pm

exhibition

march 5 – may 30, 2020

monday to friday, from 10am to 7pm

saturday, from 11am to 3pm

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Cássio Vasconcellos was born in 1965 in São Paulo, Brazil, where he lives and works. He began his career as a photographer at the beginning of the 1980s. Though he previously gathered extensive experience as a photojournalist, his artistic work is characterized by fictional imagery, which he derives from elements of reality. His work blurs the boundaries of photography as a genre, creating, instead, an imaginary iconographic vocabulary geared towards a critique of contemporary society. Notably, the artist's use of aerial photography allows for the manipulation of scale and image, which he uses to challenge the viewer's perception of reality. Vasconcellos has published several monographs of his work, including *Brasil visto do céu* [Brazil seen from the sky], Editora Brasileira, 2017; *Panorâmicas*, DBA, 2012 and *Nocturnos São Paulo* [Nocturnes São Paulo], 2002.

Cássio Vasconcellos' photography highlights our society's excessive consumerism, the abundance of products that flood our everyday-life, the uniformity of architectural structures that surround us and the elements that have become emblematic of our culture. Alternatively, his work also explores the magnificence of nature with landscape images like those from the series *Viagem pitoresca pelo Brasil* (2015), with which he joins the long-standing tradition of artists who have attempted to capture the grandiosity of Brazilian flora. His works embody the mysticism of the country's sublime, untamed jungles, creating images that confront the spectator with a reality that is too large for us to comprehend.

selected collections

- Museu de Arte de São Paulo (MASP), São Paulo, Brazil
- Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Buenos Aires, Argentina
- Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, France
- Museum of Fine Arts Houston (MFAH), Houston, USA

selected solo exhibitions and projects

- *Collectives*, St Georges's Gate (Castle of Ioannina), Ioannina, Greece, 2019
- *Viagem pitoresca pelo Brasil*, Pequena Galeria 18, São Paulo, Brazil, 2015
- *Aéreas do Brasil*, Paço das Artes, São Paulo, Brazil, 2014
- *Coletivos*, Today Art Museum (TAM), Beijing, China, 2019; Art + Shanghai Gallery, Shanghai, China, 2013

selected recent group exhibitions

- *Trees*, Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain, Paris, France, 2019
- *Civilization: The Way We Live Now*, National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art (MMCA), Seoul, South Korea, 2018
- *Past/Future/Present: Contemporary Brazilian Art from the Museum of Modern Art of São Paulo*, Phoenix Art Museum, Phoenix, USA, 2017
- *Aquí nos vemos - Fotografía en América Latina 2000-2015*, Centro Cultural Kirchner, Buenos Aires, Argentina, 2015

Galeria Nara Roesler is a leading Brazilian contemporary art gallery, which represents established and prominent emerging Brazilian and international artists, with headquarters in São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, and New York. Founded by Nara Roesler in 1989, the gallery has fomented the development and the diffusion of its artists' work through a consistent exhibition program, solid institutional partnerships and constant dialogue with leading curators in the contemporary art scene.

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press

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