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roesler hotel #23 // curated by tim goossens// dark paradise //

Curator **Tim Goossens** was invited for the twenty-third edition of **Roesler Hotel**, **Galeria Nara Roesler's** permanent program of partnerships with national and international curators.

Opening on June 15 in São Paulo, the group show **Dark paradise** gathers photographs, videos, paintings and collages both by prominent and emerging artists – which exemplifies contemporary discourse and storytelling through the canon of landscape imagery. The artists either engage physically with the landscape, or capture in a poetic – and only at first glance dark – traces of the past within fictitious, internal or political vistas and historically charged places.

The exhibition was originally created for the Clocktower Gallery in New York - alternative art space founded in 1972 by Alanna Heiss, legendary for its exhibitions, performances, long-term installations and site-specific works, and the artist residencies. In the 40 years of the gallery, important by artists such as Gordon Matta-Clark, Max Neuhaus, Lynda Benglis, Dennis Oppenheim, Vito Acconci, Nam June Paik, Charlotte Moorman, Laurie Anderson, David Tudor, Marina Abramovic and Christian Marclay were showed, among many others. Heiss is also the founder of PS1 Contemporary Art Center - and developed out of a fascination for tracing the



zipora fried
august 07, 2012
archival pigment print
145 x 280 cm
courtesy of the artist and on stellar rays
gallery

opening
15.06.2013 11h > 15h
exhibition
17.06 > 10.08
mon > fri 10h > 19h
sat 11h > 15h

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tradition of the sublime landscape in contemporary images, a genre that forcefully developed in painting in the late 18th century with masters such as Caspar David Friedrich, who coupled the sublime with awe and fear of nature, and from a search of finding these same emotions in more intimate, local, and poetic images created by artists working in a variety of media. Many of the works in the exhibition exclude human figures and, regardless of scale, evoke feelings of an undefined presence of the past or of a world still undiscovered. The presence of human representation in the chosen works is mostly of a darker nature, indicating a level of fear and personal or social combat.

The large painting-like photographs of New York-based artist **Zipora Fried** are a recent body of work created from a mix of photographs and hand-painted layers of color. Representing fictitious landscapes, they are contemporary interpretations of the historical sublime landscape genre and vibrate with potential: the dream and terror of the vast and undiscovered territory where anything is possible or the feeling of a divine presence can be felt in rays of light appearing behind the clouds.

The large-scale multiple panel photograph of Carioca artist **Marcos Chaves** was taken by the artist in the jungle near his home in Rio de Janeiro, where he has been going for walks every week since his childhood. The *Pedra da Gávea* – pulled to the foreground by lifting the middle panel – is a rock in the forest and a source of many legends for the locals. Whether it be a huge sculpture of an old man, or the myth of the Phoenician inscriptions that allegedly are up there, today this image is also a reflection on the landscape of this iconic “paradise” city finding itself in the eye of a gentrification storm while it prepares to host the upcoming major international sports events.

The selection of photographs by **Patti Smith** marks the artist's first time showing of her visual work in Brazil and includes a set of never-before-seen images taken during a 1981 trip to French Guiana, capturing the ruins of prisons and military buildings once built by the occupying leaders.

Overgrown in time by the jungle, the scenes still reflect the traces of their (colonial) past, photographed by Smith in her signature, often melancholic, poetic way, as seen in the interplay between the density of the leaves and the appearance of light. The past comes into play even more so in the other images included in the exhibition. The photographs in this group were taken in rural settings where the landscapes, seen through the artist's eyes, are both heavy with memories of artists of previous times – including Virginia Woolf and Arthur Rimbaud – and double as intimate homages to the artistic souls that have inspired Smith throughout her own career.

Joan Jonas's video *Merlo* is an early piece from the artist's career, in which she performs alone in several dramatic outdoor locations: a rocky gorge, a wind-tossed river, a balcony looking out over a valley. Cloaked in a dark, hooded robe, Jonas uses a long paper cone as a megaphone, singing melodies and keening, animal-like, into the landscape. The cone figure and the specific melodies Jonas uses are recurring motifs in her work, and their use here may be read against the fact that "merlo" is the Italian word for "blackbird".

Dark paradise is a particularly fitting theme for a video projection by São Paulo-based artist **Thiago Rocha Pitta**. In *O cúmplice secreto*, set in the sea near Rio de Janeiro, the viewer seems to be standing on a boat floating on the water while an unidentified object approaches slowly through the waves. Based on the famous passage in Jules Verne's *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*, in which an expedition is faced for the first time with the creature they were hunting, and it turns out to be the *Nautilus* submarine of Captain Nemo, the piece makes the viewer's perception shift from an idyllic tropical setting to an increasingly eerie visual. Unease takes over as one never truly discovers what is approaching the bark.

Nancy Holt's seminal 1975 *Pine Barrens* video was shot in the dry wilderness in South-Central New Jersey. The film documents the sandy landscape of the region and captures the feelings and myths of the local people. The most famous

of these myths recalls a creature known as The Jersey Devil, a being traditionally described as having hooves – its imprints can be seen in one of the stills – and allegedly born as the thirteenth child of a woman in the 18th century. The images in the video show us the lonely trees in the desolate scenery and the traces left behind by Holt as she meanders through the dunes.

Alice Miceli's *Chernobyl Project* consists of a radiographic series of images of the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone, depicting the most affected regions, located on the Belarusian side of the border: images that are imprinted by the very invisible radiation that has contaminated the area since the disaster in 1986. The result is ghostly impressions of an abandoned place – a technological utopia gone awry – yet filled by an invisible matter, apparent in the destruction traces it leaves behind.

Arid (1969) and *O bordo da noite* (1970), two paintings by renowned Brazilian artist **Antonio Dias**, are individual studies for the artist's larger paintings series *Project for an Artistic Attitude* (1970) created while living abroad in Italy. This period marks a radical change in Dias's oeuvre, where he moved towards a conceptual approach of the notion of painting: Dias is here thinking of painting as a desert, an empty terrain capable of complete absorption.

The intimate, small-scale collages and drawings by notorious reclusive Irish artist **Alex Rose** are created from mostly found images, and Rose describes the acts of collecting, assembling, and revealing by destruction as important parts of his process. The haunting images originate from the idea of perhaps removing a "bad" part; a metaphor for trying to protect the featured children from a destructive human presence and an attempt to restore dignity to an inner landscape of innocence, which the artist himself lost too early in life.

Painter, photographer, filmmaker, writer and activist **David Wojnarowicz** was a prominent figure in the New York art world of the late 1970s and '80s, and his work is here being shown for the first time in Brazil. Included in the exhibition is

the silent short film *A Fire in My Belly*, one of the artist's best-known video works: shot on Super 8, the video is a mix of street scenes in Mexico and recurring themes and symbols from his oeuvre such as ants, aggression, animal skulls and religion. Also included is a selection of the iconic portraits of men wearing an Arthur Rimbaud mask, around them and in the historical background the inner-city dystopia: a bankrupt, burned out and dangerous New York reconquered as the playground for the artists of his generation.

about the curator

Born and raised in Belgium, he moved to Paris and earned a Masters in art history at Paris IV- Sorbonne and a master cum laude in Museology at the Ecole du Louvre. He moved to New York in 2006 and was an assistant-curator at MoMA PS1 until 2010: at the museum he curated the group exhibition *Between Spaces* (2009), and collaborated on a great number of exhibitions including *Kenneth Anger* (2009) and *Greater New York* (2010) and co-launched the acclaimed performance-based series *Saturday Sessions*. As an independent curator he has curated various exhibitions including *Mary Beth Edelson* (Suzanne Geiss Company, New York, 2013), *Larger Than Love* (official exhibition as part of Berlin Biennale 2012), the major Belgian group show *Avec le Temps - In Temps* (Robert Miller Gallery, New York, 2009) and *RISD Expose* (RISD, Providence, 2010). Currently he is a Curator at The Clocktower Gallery, one of the oldest non-profit art spaces in New York where he has worked with Nancy Holt, Antony Hegarty, Nomi Ruiz and Joan Jonas and Patti Smith.

about roesler hotel

Devised in 2006, the project began as a network of exchange: an opportunity to invite artists and curators to develop projects and showcase their works. Up to now, there have been twenty-two editions, among them group shows such as *Buzz* (2012), curated by Vik Muniz, *Lo bueno y lo malo* (2012), curated by Patrick Charpenel, *Otras Flores* (2008), curated by José Roca, and solo shows by Sutapa Biswas (2008), Rosário

Lopez Parra (2008), José León Cerrillo (2007), Paul Ramirez Jonas (2011), Hamish Fulton (2013), and many others.

In 2012, with the expansion of Galeria Nara Roesler, the project Roesler Hotel became a permanent program, parallel to the gallery's, in which renowned curators from the contemporary art scene are invited to collaborate. This space intends to provoke new modes of thinking and making art, articulating an expanded network of artists, galleries, and curators.

about the gallery

For over 35 years, Nara Roesler has continuously promoted contemporary art to a local and international body of collectors, curators, and scholars. In 1989, she founded Galeria Nara Roesler in São Paulo, Brazil, as an arena to expand the boundaries of art practice, locally and abroad. Representing some of the most interesting contemporary artists, the gallery directs much of its interest towards apposing art practices from the late 1960s and its contemporary ramifications, representing historical names alongside a selected group of artists on the rise.