



nara roesler

ao que vai nascer:  
isaac julien,  
elian almeida,  
virginia de medeiros  
nara roesler curatorial nucleus

nara roesler são paulo  
opening saturday, april 2  
exhibition apr 2 – may 21, 2022

The core of this exhibition is anchored in Isaac Julien's portrait-pictures from his landmark film installation *Lessons of the Hour*, centered around Frederick Douglass –the most prominent African-American abolitionist figure–, offering a first preview of the internationally acclaimed work to the Brazilian public.

These impressive and carefully staged portraits both recreate and re-fictionalize history around one of the most photographed subjects of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century in the Americas. Julien's *tableaux vivants* serve as monumental portraits that bring the urgency of Douglass' abolitionist legacy to the present, summarized in his famous speech of 1894, *Lessons of the Hour*. The characters' careful historical depictions appeal to the urgent challenge of achieving true emancipation from racism in a contemporary world, still stained with the original sin of white Western Culture.

'We speak in the presence of all languages,' famously asserted the great poet and thinker of

*Creolitude*, Edouard Glissant. One can seemingly say that racism and social injustice are still manifested in the presence of all racist and unjust acts, both in the global present and historically. Racism is as ubiquitous as social injustice. Yet, every geographical or cultural iteration of their disastrous effects is different. Representation becomes a political tool to rethink history and contribute to overcoming cultural subordination, either racially or socially.

Alongside Julien's exemplar form of memorial portraiture, therefore, the exhibition includes works by two Brazilian artists, whose works enhance the reflection on social, historical, and racial issues: Elian Almeida and Virginia de Medeiros.

Almeida is known for his painting portraits of African-Brazilian emblematic figures who had been the objects of complete erasure and oblivion by the dominant white-driven lettered elites in Brazil. Having been born in Rio, in *Cais do Valongo*, a main point of arrival for the trade of enslaved

people in Brazil, Almeida's most recent core of work stresses notions such as birth and journey, both individual and collective, in order to re-memorialize the history of slavery within the current political conversation in the country.

Finally, artist and social activist Virginia de Medeiros' series of works titled *Fábula do Olhar* (The Fable of the Gaze) adds a significant layer to the show by unfolding into the large social meaning of portraiture, and more specifically into the individual longing for self representation (notably by homeless persons from the economic fringes of Brazilian society). Her works present fragments of life stories entwined with how the specific individual desires to see themselves, and be seen by others. Not only focused on race issues, De Medeiros' work directly addresses the general will of seeing and projecting one's image into the world as a way of vindicating the wholeness of human dignity, as a ceaseless place for re-birth.



isaac julien





*Lessons of the Hour* is a poetic meditation on the life and times of Frederick Douglass, a visionary African American writer, abolitionist and a liberated slave, who was also the most photographed man of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The ten-screen film installation and the photographs propose a contemplative journey into Douglass' *zeitgeist* and its relationship to our times. The film includes excerpts of Douglass' most arresting speeches, such as *Lessons of the Hour*, *What to the Slave Is the 4<sup>th</sup> of July?* and *Lecture on Pictures*, and allusions to his private and public milieus, by depicting his interactions with other cultural icons of the time.

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Isaac Julien  
*J. P. Ball's Photographic Studio,  
Douglass/Apparatus (Lessons of the Hour)*, 2021  
photograph on matt archival  
paper mounted on aluminum  
edition of 6 + 1 AP  
120 × 80 cm | 47.2 × 31.5 in







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Isaac Julien

*To see ourselves as others see us*

(*Lessons of the Hour*), 2019

photograph on gloss inkjet

paper mounted on aluminum

edition of 6 + 1 AP

160 × 213,3 cm | 63 × 84 in



Through extensive use of Frederick Douglass' words Julien gives expression to the *zeitgeist* of Douglass' era, his legacy, and ways in which his story may be viewed today. The work was shot in Washington, DC, at The Frederick Douglass National Historic Site and where his house in Cedar Hill has been kept conserved, in Scotland, where Douglass was an active member of the "Send Back the Money" movement. His speeches have been restaged inside London's Royal Academy of Arts to an audience which includes both 19<sup>th</sup> century characters, and contemporary, real-life characters such as scholars and Royal Academicians. *Lessons of the Hour* has been widely exhibited internationally, including at Piccadilly Lights in London, organised by The Royal Academy of Arts, in partnership with Art of London (2021); at Los Angeles Contemporary Museum of Art (LACMA) (2021), in Los Angeles as part of the exhibition Black American Portraits; at McEvoy Foundation for the Arts (2020), in San Francisco; and at Metro Pictures (2019), in New York, amongst others. In 2019 *Lessons of the Hour* premiered at the Memorial Art Gallery in Rochester, where Frederick Douglass lived for twenty-five years.

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Isaac Julien  
*A Chattel Becomes a Man*  
(*Lessons of the Hour*), 2019  
photograph on matt archival  
paper mounted on aluminum  
edition of 6 + 1 AP  
110 × 73,3 cm | 43.3 × 28.9 in





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Isaac Julien  
*Lessons of The Hour*  
(*Lessons of The Hour*), 2019  
photograph on matt archival  
paper mounted on aluminum  
edition of 6 + 1 AP  
160 × 213,3 cm | 63 × 84 in



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Isaac Julien  
*Autoportrait Parlour*  
(*Lessons of the Hour*), 2019  
photograph on gloss inkjet  
paper mounted on aluminum  
edition of 6  
57 × 76 cm | 22.4 × 29.9 in





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Isaac Julien  
*A Star to a Seer*  
*(Lessons of the Hour)*, 2019  
photograph on matt archival  
paper mounted on aluminum  
edition of 6 + 1 AP  
103,9 × 138,5 cm | 40.9 × 54.5 in



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## isaac julien

b. 1960, London, United Kingdom, where he lives and works

Isaac Julien is one of the most important and influential British visual artists in the fields of installation and film. His work combines several disciplines, including cinema, photography, dance, music, theatre, painting and sculpture, which are captured in his audio-visual installations, documentaries and photographic pieces. The plurality of his work is not only present in the process of making, but also in the way in which it is exhibited, which includes several screens, with Julien being a pioneer in multiple-screen film installations.

The artist's works often emerge from in-depth investigations of historical personalities, including Langston Hughes, Frantz Fanon and Lina Bo Bardi, in a process that often aims to review history's official versions. Although films are the main form of his artistic production, photography also plays a fundamental role in Julien's oeuvre. In his photographs, he reinvents and redefines the aesthetics of his audio-visual production using techniques such as collage and digital photomontage.

His film *Young Soul Rebels* (1991) was awarded the Semaine de la Critique prize in the Cannes Film Festival. *Frantz Fanon: Black Skin, White Mask* (1996), which the artist co-directed with Mark Nash, received the Pratt and Whitney Canada Grand Prize. Julien was also awarded the McDermott Prize from MIT and The Golden Gate Persistence of Vision Prize (2014) during the San Francisco Film Festival. In 2015, Isaac Julien obtained the Kaino Prize for artistic excellence.

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### selected solo exhibitions

- *Lessons of the Hour*, Metro Pictures; Memorial Art Gallery (MAG), New York, USA (2019)
- *Western Union: Small Boats*, ARoS Aarhus Kunstmuseum, Aarhus, Denmark (2018)
- *To the End of the World*, Galerie Forsblom, Stockholm, Sweden (2018)
- *Ten Thousand Waves*, Museu de Arte Contemporânea de Niterói (MAC-Niterói), Niterói, Brazil (2016)

### selected group exhibitions

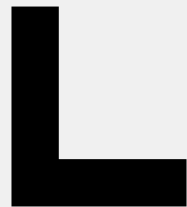
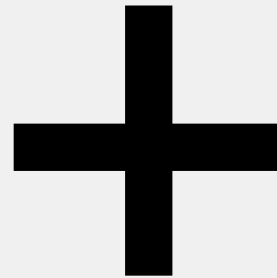
- 57<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale, Italy (2017)
- *Coming Out: Sexuality, Gender and Identity*, Walker Museum, Liverpool; Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, Birmingham, United Kingdom (2017)
- *The Shadow Never Lies*, Minsheng Museum, Shanghai, China (2016)
- Paris Triennial, França (2012)
- 7<sup>th</sup> Gwangju Biennial, South Korea (2008)

### selected institutional collections

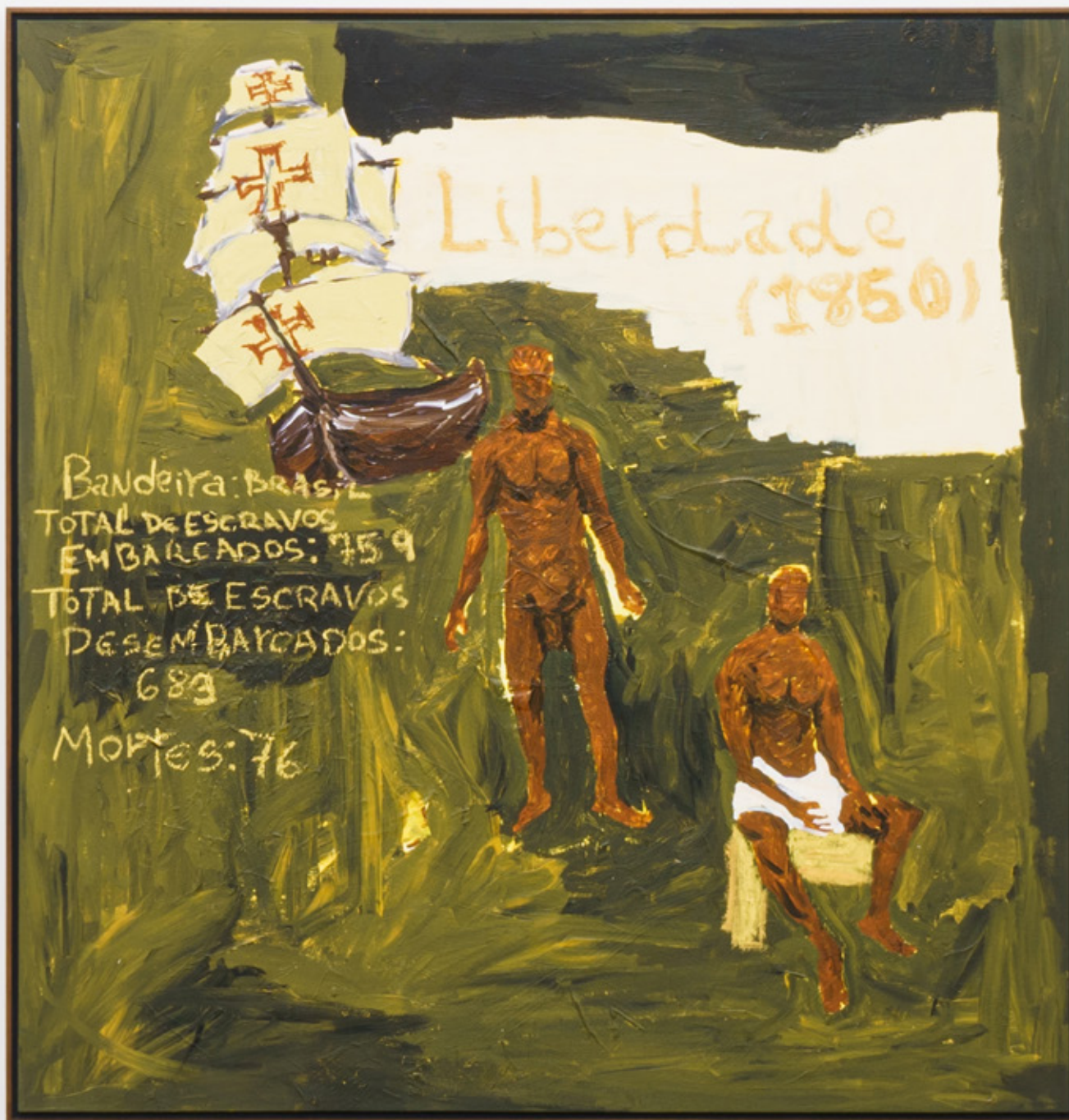
- Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, USA
- Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France
- Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York, USA
- Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, USA
- Tate Modern, London, USA



elian almeida



22°53'49.03"S 43°11'14.62"W



Elian Almeida presents the first act of his most recent project, titled *O ouro afunda no mar, madeira fica por cima*. The investigation is divided in three parts, with research that delves in the trafficking of the African people to the Americas, furthering his engagement with the archeology of historical memory.

In this project, Almeida is particularly interested in the names given to the boats that transported the people, which included Happiness, Hope, Equality, Freedom— notably presented in one of the paintings—, and Happy Destiny, for example, seeking to camouflage the violent nature of the trip and of what awaited them at their destination. Rather than illustrating the violence of the historical fact, the artist seeks to create images that help to face its consequences, emphasizing the traces that remain in our culture and society, as well as the pain that this past caused.

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Elian Almeida  
*Liberdade (1850)*, 2022  
acrylic paint and oil pastel on canvas  
138 × 133 cm | 54.3 × 52.4 in



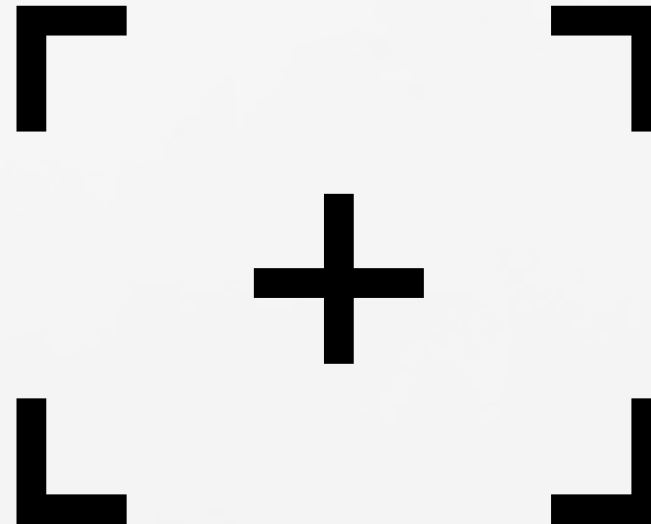


Liberdade  
(1850)

Pa: Brasil  
ESCRAVOS  
CADOS: 115 9



In *Ao que vai nascer* (2016), Almeida juxtaposes the coordinates of Cais do Valongo, a region by the Port of Rio de Janeiro, where the artist was born, and where many of the individuals abducted from the African continent arrived to during the XVIII and XIX centuries, before being commercialized as slaves. In this way, Almeida intertwines the present and the future, positing—through its title—a question about what is yet to come. The artist entwines macro and micro histories, inserting his own background into the records of events fundamental to national identity. In his work, the artist thus proposes a map that points to other spatial and temporal paths, touching upon a traditionally obscured ancestral heritage.



22°53'49.03"S 43°11'14.62"W

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*Ao que vai nascer*, 2016  
scotch tape  
variable dimensions



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Elian Almeida  
*Nossa Senhora  
da Boa Morte*, 2022  
acrylic paint and oil  
pastel on canvas  
128 × 108 cm | 50.4 × 42.5 in









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Elian Almeida  
*Bom caminho*, 2022  
acrylic paint on canvas  
117 × 145 cm | 46.1 × 57.1 in









Elían Almeida  
*Mônica (Vogue Brasil)*, 2022  
acrylic paint and oil pastel on canvas  
140 × 150 cm | 55.1 × 59.1 in









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## elian almeida

b. 1994, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, where he lives and works

Elian Almeida's practice is characterized by a convergence of different techniques, such as painting, photography, video and installation, functioning as part of a new generation of artists whose works revindicate protagonism to agents and bodies that have been traditionally marginalized in our society and in the history of art. His body of work addresses decolonialism, exploring the experience and performativity of the black body in contemporary Brazilian society, through a process of recuperating elements from the past—imagens, narratives, characters—as a means of contributing to the process of empowerment and dissemination of afro-brazilian historiography.

On one hand, Almeida's research engages with the biographies of black personalities whose importance has been erased through history, striving to restore the notability that they deserve. On the other hand, the artist also addresses the violent ways in which police approach racialized bodies, exploring matters of privilege within Brazilian culture and society, while also denouncing the myth of racial democracy. In his series *Vogue*, Almeida appropriates the visual identity and aesthetics of the famous fashion magazine, integrating them into the composition of his portraits of black individuals. With this, the artist demonstrates the ways in which his different lines of work have come to converge as a means of encouraging the public to question the ways in which these subjects have been represented and circulated within Brazilian visual culture.

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## selected solo exhibitions

- *Antes - agora - o que há de vir*, Nara Roesler, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (2021)

## selected group exhibitions

- *Enciclopédia negra*, Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil (2021)
- *Amanhã há de ser outro dia / Demains sera um autre jour*, Studio Iván Argote e Espacio Temporal, Paris, France (2020)
- *Esqueleto – 70 anos de UERJ*, Paço Imperial, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (2019)
- *Arte naïf – Nenhum museu a menos*, Escola de Artes Visuais do Parque Lage (EAV Parque Lage), Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (2019)
- *Mostra memórias da resistência*, Centro Municipal de Arte Hélio Oiticica (CMAHO), Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (2018)
- *Bela verão e Transnômade Opavivará*, Galpão Bela Maré, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (2018)
- *Novas poéticas – Diálogos expandidos em arte contemporânea*, Museu do Futuro, Curitiba, Brazil (2016)

## selected institutional collections

- Museu de Arte do Rio (MAR), Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
- Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil

**virginia de medeiros**







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Virginia de Medeiros  
*Aline*, da série *Fábula do Olhar*, 2013  
digital photopainting on cotton  
paper, printed statement  
edition of 5 + 2 AP  
120 × 90 cm | 40 × 50,5 × 5 cm  
47.2 × 35.4 in | 15.7 × 19.9 × 2 in



Throughout a month and a half, Virginia de Medeiros set up a photographic studio in two cafeterias destined to help feed homeless individuals of the city of Fortaleza, Ceará. Medeiros developed relationships with the people frequenting the soup kitchens, and invited them to pose for her and share their personal stories. The encounters and ensuing dialogues followed a fundamental question, which the artist posed to each sitter: How would you like to see yourself or be seen by society?

The series *Fábula do olhar* (2012-2013) results from this intimate process, whereby the artist and the sitter got to know each other over time in an exercise that sought to respect personal trajectories, anxieties and traumas. De Medeiros portrayed 21 individuals, both photographically, and through their speeches, which were transcribed and recorded.

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Virginia de Medeiros  
*Andrade, da série Fábula do Olhar, 2013*  
 digital photopainting on cotton  
 paper, printed statement  
 edition of 5 + 2 AP  
 120 × 90 cm | 40 × 50,5 × 5 cm  
 47.2 × 35.4 in | 15.7 × 19.9 × 2 in



...ome é Alexandre, tenho 35 anos de idade e dois  
...das drogas depois que perdi minha mulher, lá en  
...cussão dela com uma outra mulher, em que o mar  
...a. Então saí de Parajuru pra cá, pra não ficar no  
...matado minha mulher. Quando eu cheguei na Ro  
...r e me deu vontade de conhecer sobre a 'pedra'. C  
...noite eu gastei 400 reais usando a famosa 'pedra',  
...documentos, tudinho. Passei 6 meses direto envo  
...e casa em casa, pedindo alimento e roupa para po  
...dre já passou por três clínicas de desintoxicação,  
...ado. "A maioria das clínicas que dizem que vão t

The final images were created by the photopainter Mestre Júlio dos Santos, who colored the portraits according to each individual's wishes in terms of how to be represented. The process resulted in a fable-like image that showcases an intertwinement between reality and imagination. Each photo-painting is accompanied by a text that narrates the sitter's life story.

*Fábula do Olhar* has been exhibited both in Brazil and abroad, and is part of the permanent collections of Instituto Itaú Cultural, in São Paulo; and of Instituto Pipa, in Rio de Janeiro; amongst others.



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Virginia de Medeiros  
*Mariana, da série Fábula do Olhar*, 2013  
digital photopainting on cotton  
paper, printed statement  
edition of 5 + 2 AP  
120 × 90 cm | 40 × 50,5 × 5 cm  
47.2 × 35.4 in | 15.7 × 19.9 × 2 in








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Virginia de Medeiros  
*Angelika*, da série *Fábula do Olhar*, 2013  
 digital photopainting on cotton  
 paper, printed statement  
 edition of 5 + 2 AP  
 120 × 90 cm | 40 × 50,5 × 5 cm  
 47.2 × 35.4 in | 15.7 × 19.9 × 2 in



O na rua com a minha mãe e meus  
na rua. Eu não nasci na rua não, fui  
eu, meu tio ficou com a casa e a gente  
não ganhar uma casa e tirar a gente  
fazendo droga pra gente. Tem que fazer  
tem um lado bom da rua, os amigos  
e água de coco. Eu durmo no ciner  
Praça do Ferreira. Meu dia é assim: eu  
do Ferreira e vou pra Praça dos Le



Virginia de Medeiros  
 Zé Carlos, da série *Fábula do Olhar*, 2013  
 digital photopainting on cotton  
 paper, printed statement  
 edition of 5 + 2 AP  
 120 × 90 cm | 40 × 50,5 × 5 cm  
 47.2 × 35.4 in | 15.7 × 19.9 × 2 in







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## virginia de medeiros

b. 1973, Feira de Santana, Brazil

lives and works in São Paulo, Brazil

Virginia de Medeiros uses investigative processes to transgress hegemonic narratives as a means of giving voice and visibility to neglected, or marginalized histories. In order to do so, Medeiros employs methodologies that are common to both art and documentary work, including displacement, participation and fabulation.

In her work, Medeiros does not seek to capture or represent the *Other* but rather depicts punctual aspects of certain individuals, in order for their condition to become axiomatic. The artist has often employed photography and video to represent and showcase identities and existences that have historically been omitted, such as that of transgenders, transsexuals, women or the homeless. Her work emerges from an intense immersive process, where she familiarises herself and co-exists with her research subject in an attempt to free herself from an ethnographic approach, annulling possible underlying layers of prejudice, and allowing instead for intimacy and organic narratives to emerge.

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### selected solo exhibitions

- *Clamor*, Instituto Tomie Ohtake (ITO), São Paulo, Brazil (2019)
- 29ª Programa de exposições, Centro Cultural São Paulo (CCSP), São Paulo, Brazil (2019)
- *Studio Butterfly e outras fábulas*, Galeria Fayga Ostrower, Complexo Cultural Funarte, Brasília, Brazil (2018)
- *Jardim das Torturas*, Ateliê Aberto, Campinas, Brazil (2013)
- *Faille*, La Chambre Blanche, Montreal, Canada (2007)

### selected group exhibitions

- 11th Berlin Biennial, Germany (2020)
- *À Nordeste*, Sesc 24 de Maio, São Paulo, Brazil (2019)
- *Love and Ethnology*. The Colonial Dialectic of Sensitivity (after Hubert Fichte), Haus der Kulturen der Welt (HKW), Berlin, Germany (2019)
- *Histórias da sexualidade*, Museu de Arte de São Paulo (MASP), São Paulo, Brazil (2017)
- 14th Jogja Biennial, Indonesia (2017)
- 31th São Paulo Biennial, Brazil (2014)

### selected institutional collections

- Associação Cultural Videobrasil, São Paulo, Brazil
- Centro Cultural Dragão do Mar de Arte e Cultura, Fortaleza, Brazil
- Instituto de Arte Contemporânea de Inhotim, Brumadinho, Brazil
- Instituto Itaú Cultural, São Paulo, Brazil
- Museu de Arte do Rio (MAR), Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
- Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil



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