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not vital

a vida é um detalhe [life is a detail]

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opening november 26

exhibition nov 26, 2022 – feb, 2023



Not Vital, *A Plane, a Boat, a Car, a Sled*, 2009, stainless steel. Photo: Flávio Freire. Courtesy of the artist and Nara Roesler.

Nara Roesler São Paulo is pleased to announce *A vida é um detalhe [Life is a detail]*, Not Vital's second solo exhibition at the gallery, in which the renowned Swiss artist, known for his nomadic lifestyle and for building site-specific works around the world, presents his recent production in sculpture, painting, and works on paper. This is the first time Vital presents works

developed in his studio in Rio de Janeiro. The show opens to the public on November 26, 2022 and will be on view through January 21, 2023.

One can say that Not Vital's work emerges from encounters, which in other words, can be understood as emerging from movement. His own mobility is an important variable in Vital's ability to transform, decontextualize, reconfigure, and relocate cultural fragments and their symbols: Vital was born in 1948 in Sent, a small mountain village in Switzerland's Engadin valley. At the age of 18, he moved to Paris, then to Rome, and then to New York in 1976. Since then, the artist has been traveling uninterruptedly to all corners of the world, working and living periodically in Agadez, Niger, Lucca, Italy, Beijing, China, Patagonia, Chile, and Rio de Janeiro, as well as spending time in his hometown.

Vital is interested in difference, observed not from a distanced ethnographic point of view, but from the interaction established with communities, from the exchanges and the affections developed in each place. Several bodies of work were developed through his nomadic lifestyle, ranging from sculptures to works on paper, which correspond to or emerge from his itinerant experience. Thus, the present exhibition brings together works that originate from his most recent experience in Brazil.

In this solo presentation, Vital presents two stone sculptures that derive from his well-known *Houses to Watch the Sunset*. Since 2005, Vital has been building these 'houses' that originate from the encounter between sculpture and architecture, or SCARCH, a word in the artist's vocabulary that unites sculpture and architecture. SCARCHs have been created in several models and scales, built in different materials, and installed in different places around the world, such as Niger, the Sahara Desert, Chilean Patagonia, and the Amazon, besides a permanent installation at the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, in Denmark, amongst others. More recently, Not Vital built a version of his *Houses for watching the sunset* inside the Abbazia of San Giorgio Maggiore, as part of the program of the International Architecture Biennale in Venice in 2021.

The exhibition also features older sculptures brought over from Switzerland, such as *Double Lotus* (2010), made of stainless steel and measuring more than four meters tall. In these sculptures, the natural and artificial universes converge in a creation that takes plant and animal elements as inspiration, as is characteristic of Vital's practice. Examples of the *Lotus* series have already been exhibited in several of the artist's solo and group shows. This series in particular, was part of his first major exhibition in the United Kingdom, at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park in 2016, in which Vital created a trail with one hundred sculptures that make up the installation *Let One Hundred Flowers Bloom* (2008).

The show also includes a series of portraits, centered on the face, that were developed from encounters during his most recent stay in Rio de Janeiro, as well as a set of self-portraits that derive from his ongoing effort at self-presentation, which the artist defines as 'something so complicated that it could be a lifelong project.' These images, however, do not aim to be a faithful representation of the portrayed, but rather seek to reveal what is intimate, that which demands attention and concentration to be seen.

The last group of works, titled *Ice Paintings*, develops from the desire to portray the landscape experienced as a child in Engadina, where Vital grew up in an atmosphere of contemplative silence, so different from the atmosphere in Rio de Janeiro, where these works were conceived. 'In my land, half the year has four meters of snow and the eyes become sensitive to light. If I had been born in Brazil or India, my work would be much more colorful.'

Not Vital's practice articulates dichotomous concepts, such as dark and light, black and white, day and night, hot and cold, organic and inorganic, nature and culture, sculpture and architecture. *A vida é um detalhe* is an invitation to observe dualities not through the gaze of dichotomous antagonism, but through the understanding of otherness as allowing the coexistence of differences.

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Not Vital is best known for having developed a practice that is based on intense contact with nature and a nomadic lifestyle. His work seeks to provoke unusual experiences or viewpoints, either by displacing purely natural forms, or by extracting elements from remote regions, and re-contextualizing them into an artistic framework, often altering their scale or materials. Since the beginning of the 1980s, Not Vital has repeatedly collaborated with artisans in an endeavour to intertwine sculpture and the construction of space, frequently diluting the limits between art and architecture, and establishing an intimate relationship with the local cultural context. Indeed, his pieces work to alter our perception of the environment that they inhabit, either through their reflexive physicality or their unusual architectural structure.

Vital has also produced paintings and works on paper, which converse with the matters he addresses in his sculptures and architectural propositions. For these pieces, the artist employs a varied palette of materials that go from the simple and perishable—coffee, salt, eggs—to the most valuable and resistant—marble, silver and gold. Since the end of the 1990s, Not Vital has erected permanent installations in numerous locations, including Agadez (Niger), Chilean Patagonia (Chile) and Paraná do Mamori (Brazil). In addition, he has also built so-called habitats, such as the *House to Watch the Sunset*, amongst other schools, bridges or tunnels.

Not Vital was born in 1948 in Sent, Switzerland. He currently lives and works in Sent, Switzerland, Beijing, China and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Recent solo exhibitions include: *Not Vital: Scarch*, at Hauser & Wirth (2020), in Somerset, United Kingdom; *Let One Hundred Flowers Bloom*, at Galerie Andrea Caratsch (2019), in St. Mortiz, Switzerland, and at Ateneum (2018), in Helsinki, Finland; *Not Vital. Saudade*, at Galeria Nara Roesler (2018), in São Paulo, Brazil, and at Yorkshire Sculpture Park (2016), in Wakefield, United Kingdom. Recent group exhibitions include: *Passion: Bilder von der Jagd*, at Bündner Kunstmuseum Chur (2019), in Chur, Switzerland; *Surrealism Switzerland*, at Aargauer Kunsthhaus (2018), in Aarau, Switzerland; *Illumination*, at Louisiana Museum of Modern Art (2016), in Humlebæk, Denmark; *Simple Forms: Contemplating Beauty*, at Mori Art Museum, in Tokyo, Japan. His works are part of important institutional collections, such as: Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, France; Kunstmuseum Bern, Bern, Switzerland; The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York, USA; The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, USA; Toyota Municipal Museum of Art, Aichi, Japan, amongst others.

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