

thiago barbalho

secrets and spells

nara roesler são paulo

opening october 31, 6pm

exhibition october 31, 2024 – january 24, 2025



Plastic bag, 2024. [detail]

Nara Roesler São Paulo is pleased to present *Thiago Barbalho: Secrets and Spells*, the artist's first solo exhibition in the city. With drawing as the main axis of his poetic expression, Barbalho began his professional journey as a writer, and, according to him, "drawing emerged from the process of dissatisfaction with writing, from the fraying of that relationship." Gradually, Barbalho realized that through graphic forms and signs—often created accidentally—it was possible to elaborate on the vast majority of images and visual stimuli we encounter daily. For him, the visual stimuli of various natures that surround us, from religious symbols to advertising, provoke fascination and enchantment in those who observe them, as if enchanting us.

In his works, a profusion of organic, religious, and ancestral elements in vibrant colors intermingle with the abundant details presented in the compositions, where figure and background sometimes blend together. Another important aspect is the gestural quality and the different ways in which the artist manipulates colored pencils, pastels, pens, and markers, as well as acrylic and oil paints.

The exhibition brings together works in various formats, from large-scale pieces to drawings made in small notebooks. In these drawings, executed on small-format supports, the gestural

element of his production becomes particularly evident, especially since this type of work often serves as a foundational element for larger-scale productions, reinforcing its experimental character.

Just as the act of drawing for Barbalho once broke the limits of words, the artist understands that working with the three-dimensionality of sculptures expands the very language of drawing as he conceives it. In different dimensions, the sculptures produced primarily with 3D printing and resin intensify the symbols already present in the artist's two-dimensional works, connecting them. "They make me think of emojis and images of deities lost in a forest; Pokémon, alien cacti, offerings from civilizations—symbols that, in a WhatsApp conversation, allow us to abandon words," he adds.

Another highlight of the exhibition is a series of works created by the artist for an exhibition held earlier this year in Jardim do Seridó, a municipality in the interior of Rio Grande do Norte, his mother's homeland. In these works, Barbalho revisits characteristic elements of the region's culture, such as rock paintings found in local caves, the semi-arid landscape, and traditional textile production techniques. Also part of this collection is the tapestry *Futuro*. Developed for the same exhibition in collaboration with the collective Flor de Cantuta, the

work is composed of immigrant women weavers and inspired by a type of artisanal production widely present in the region. In his words: "I wanted to gather various references, from the dams and rivers of our land to the craftsmanship of Potiguar, with its tapestries and quilts. But I wanted to avoid the clichés associated with Northeastern art in general."

about thiago barbalho

As a writer and visual artist, Thiago Barbalho (b. 1984, Natal, Brazil) found in drawing a means of expression that allowed him to overcome a writer's block. Working in different dimensions and with different materials (colored pencils, graphite, spray, oil, oil pastel, and marker on paper), his compositions propose intricate universes of form, where shapes, references and colors intertwine to form somewhat psychedelic narratives that challenge the relation between figure and background. Barbalho understands drawing as an ancestral technology, which spans ages and cultures. The artist's visual research seeks to understand drawing as the sign of a presence and the relationship between the mind—imagination—and the body—gesture—, between consciousness and reality.

According to critic and curator Kiki Mazzucchelli, 'working essentially in drawing, Barbalho produces extremely intricate, but unplanned compositions, where the multiplicity of images, symbols and color fields merge to create uninterrupted vibrant surfaces.' The apparent chaos of his images arises from his gestures, which resist any formal logic. In fact, we encounter in his work an array of fragments, of references from different spheres that intertwine popular culture from the Brazilian Northeast, characters and cartoons, as well as signs and symbols of the consumerism and mass culture. Together with Barbalho's research and interpretations within the fields of philosophy, anthropology and the mysticism underlying relations between matter and thought, his drawings establish a visual universe that is in constant revolution.

Thiago Barbalho lives and works in São Roque, Brazil. Recent solo exhibitions include: *Depois que entra ninguém sai*, at Nara Roesler (2022), in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (2022); *Correspondência*, at Galeria Marília Razuk (2019), in São Paulo, Brazil; *Thiago Barbalho*, at Kupfer Project Space (2018), in London, United Kingdom (2018). Main group shows are: *Mapa da estrada: Novas obras no acervo da Pinacoteca de São Paulo*, at Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo (2022), in São Paulo, Brazil;

Electric Dreams, at Nara Roesler (2021), in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; *AVAF*, at Casa Triângulo (2018), in São Paulo, Brazil; *Rocamboles*, at Pivô (2018), in São Paulo, Brazil, and at Kunsthalle Lissabon (2019), in Lisbon, Portugal; *Voyage*, at Galeira Bergamin & Gomide (2017), in São Paulo, Brazil; *Shadows & Monsters*, at Gasworks (2017), in London, United Kingdom. His works are part of institutional collections such as Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo, Sao Paulo, Brazil.

about nara roesler

Nara Roesler is a leading Brazilian contemporary art gallery, representing seminal Brazilian and international artists who emerged in the 1950s as well as preeminent mid-career and emerging artists who dialogue with the currents put forth by these historical figures. Founded by Nara Roesler in 1989, the gallery has consistently fomented curatorial practice while upholding the utmost quality in art production. This has actively been put into practice through a select and rigorous exhibitions program created in close collaboration with its artists; the implementation and fostering of the Roesler Curatorial Project, a platform for curatorial projects; and continued support to artists beyond the gallery space, working with institutions and curators in offsite shows. In 2012, the gallery doubled its São Paulo exhibition space, in 2014 it expanded to Rio, and in 2015 it opened in New York City, continuing its mission to provide the best platform for its artists to show their work.

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