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jonathas de andrade
permanent lightning strike
curated by josé esparza chong cuy

nara roesler são paulo
opening september 2, 6–9pm
exhibition september – december, 2025



Jangada Sailors and roleiros, 2025 (still)

In Jonathas de Andrade: *Permanência Relâmpago* [*Permanent Lightning Strike*], Jonathas De Andrade's (b. 1982, Maceió, Brazil) first solo exhibition at Nara Roesler São Paulo, the artist presents a new body of works centered on the Jangada Sailors and canoeists of Alagoas – figures whose lives and labor are intertwined with the sea along the coast and the São Francisco River, in the hinterlands – and their relationship to the colors and abstraction found in sails and boats.

Curated by José Esparza Chong Cuy, executive director and chief curator at Storefront for Art and Architecture in New York, *Permanência Relâmpago* [*Permanent Lightning Strike*] encompasses three sets of works within this universe that Jonathas de Andrade has been devoting himself to in recent months. Among them are pieces developed from the artist's ongoing research for a commission for the Victoria and Albert

Museum in London, invited by Catherine Troiano, curator of the institution's photography department. In November 2025, the works produced in this research will be exhibited at the V&A, where they will also be included to the museum's collection.

The exhibition's title refers to the name of one of the jangadas photographed by the artist, which poetically translates aspects of the lives of Jangada Sailors and canoeists, while also touching upon life more broadly. "This title speaks about something that is fleeting and at the same time permanent, which is life, about being very brief and yet everlasting. 'Permanência relâmpago' [*Permanent Lightning Strike*] is also about touching, in some way, the abstract feelings of life," says Jonathas de Andrade.

Throughout his career, Jonathas de Andrade has questioned the transforming systems that shape identity, labor, and

memory. His installations, films, and conceptual works act as living archives, reactivating oral histories, marginalized knowledge, and artisanal traditions. In the works that comprise *Permanência Relâmpago* [Permanent Lightning Strike], the artist focuses on two navigational cultures present in Northeastern Brazil: the Jangada Sailors of Pajuçara beach, in Maceió, who sail wooden rafts with traditional sails, taking tourists to natural pools; and the canoeists of the São Francisco River, in the hinterlands of Alagoas, who use large-scale double square-sailed canoes, strikingly graphic, in a circuit of competitions along the river, both recreational and sporting. Both practices represent centuries-old nautical traditions passed down from father to son, maintained by communities of fishermen and boatmen, revealing a cultural interplay that intimately tensions tradition, heritage, tourism, and economy.

The exhibition is structured in three axes. In the series *Alagoan Jangada Sailors*, Jonathas de Andrade uses original sails from maritime rafts, employed on Pajuçara beach in Maceió, marked by sun and wear. Each season, they are replaced with new ones. The artist began collecting these discarded large-scale colorful sails, which also bear hand-painted advertisements of various brands, serving as supplementary income for the Jangada Sailors in the highly disputed shoreline of Alagoas' elite.

Leaving only traces of these advertisements, Jonathas de Andrade overlays them with monochromatic silkscreens of portraits of the *Jangada Sailors and roleiros* (those who push the boats in and out of the sea), key figures in this coastal circuit. By doing so, the artist seeks to challenge "the traditional place of advertising that occupies that space, replacing it with the faces of the protagonists, often rendered invisible." In this way, he subverts the space traditionally dedicated to advertising messages, which now display faces, "leaving the original messages fragmented and disconnected." In the silkscreens, the workers' images are rendered in halftones, perceptible only when viewed up close.

The colorful sails, each three meters tall, are presented in a stretcher system that, by framing the portraits printed onto them, also fragments and obstructs the legibility of the advertisements that once dominated those surfaces. The leftover fabric after framing behaves differently in each work:

sometimes folded behind the stretcher, sometimes assuming a sculptural character, with folds, ropes, and volumes spilling from the wall down to the floor. Each work bears the name of the person photographed, such as in *Roleiro Maurício and the green sail*.

In the second series, *Neoconcrete Canoeists*, Jonathas de Andrade draws from the bold graphic patterns of sails used by canoeists on the São Francisco River, near Ilha do Ferro, a landscape imbued with histories of drought, migration and survival in the hinterlands. The series includes *Metaesquema-canoeiros*, inspired by Hélio Oiticica's *Metaesquemas*, and other compositions based on the chromatic and formal universe of the Rio de Janeiro artist Ivan Serpa. These works blend color fields with halftone silkscreen photography, where images of the boat and its sailors are immersed in aspects of Neoconcrete painting, merging popular design with modernist abstraction.

In *Pure Torpor of the Sun Trance*, the graphic sails of the boats on the São Francisco River inspire abstract compositions made with automotive paint, "giving sculptural and object-like volume to the color fields that cut across the river, in the races of the canoes and their giant sails," comments the artist. These works, silkscreened on sheets of sucupira wood, are accompanied by poetic texts, written by the artist himself, and engraved on acrylic plaques.

The third axis of the exhibition is the premiere of the film *Jangada Sailors and Canoeists* (2025, 15'), which will have a dedicated screening room. In the film, Jonathas de Andrade weaves together the universe and daily lives of the protagonists of these two distinct contexts – the sea of Maceió and the São Francisco River – proposing a narrative thread based on their relationship to colors and forms, in a dialogue between popular practices and chromatic and affective universes.

The artist deploys his particular balance between documentary proximity and fictional touches, breaking down gestures and bodily movements repeated over centuries, while cataloguing the colors present in the rafts and canoes, as well as in the lives and memories of the protagonists, through fragments of conversations with them. Focusing on bodily gestures and the collective effort of pushing the raft in and out of the sea – the

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work contrasts these scenes with the idyllic images often used to promote the region, evoking the anonymity and resilience of lives shaped by Brazil's colonial legacy. In this way, the film sketches a kind of chromatic-emotional palette of the Jangada Sailors, the Maceió shoreline, the canoes, the sails, and the canoeists of the São Francisco sertão.

The soundtrack is by Homero Basílio, prolific percussionist and music producer who has collaborated on several of Jonathas de Andrade's films. It is also worth mentioning that, in 2024, Jonathas de Andrade's artistic process was documented by filmmaker Maria Augusta Ramos, who directed the short documentary *Northern Winds* (17'), produced by the Dutch foundation Ammodo as part of a series on artists. The short film follows and records the beginnings of the research that culminated in the film *Jangada Sailors and Canoeists*, which debuts in this exhibition.

This year, Jonathas de Andrade held two solo exhibitions in France: *Tropical Hangover and Other Stories*, at Jeu de Paume, Tours, and *L'art de ne pas être vorace*, at Commanderie de Peyrassol. He is the only Brazilian artist participating in the major exhibition *30th Anniversary of the Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo (MOT)*, which opened on August 22 in Tokyo. Also in Japan, until September, his work is featured in *Minebane! Contemporary Art!* at the Akita Museum of Art. In November, he will participate in a group show at the Victoria & Albert Museum in London. In December, Jonathas de Andrade will have a solo exhibition at the Vatican, as part of the Jubilee 2025.

Rooted in Northeastern Brazil yet in dialogue with global concerns, Jonathas de Andrade's practice navigates the intersections between personal narratives and systemic histories, from postcolonial structures and regional economies to the shifting value of manual labor. The artist engages with cultural resistance and the practices of making, confronting tradition and resilience in tension with gentrification and predatory capitalism. Within this context, the nautical culture of the seashores and riverbanks of the Northeast, the universe of boatmen, canoeists, roleiros, and fishermen, emerges as both craft and resistance, sustained by knowledge passed down through generations.

about jonathas de andrade

Jonathas de Andrade's (b. 1982, Maceió, Brazil) artistic practice is mainly centered in photography, film, and installation. By often involving local communities in the construction of his work, the artist is able to expand the reach of constantly marginalized voices. De Andrade's work seeks to continuously rewrite historical narratives by intertwining fiction and documentary, creating allegories and poetic approaches that operate as potent tools for questioning gender, class, and race constructs rooted in Brazilian socio-cultural paradigms.

Jonathas de Andrade lives and works in Recife, Brazil. Solo exhibitions include: *L'art de ne pas être vorace*, Commanderie de Peyrassol, Flassans-sur-Issole, France (2025); *Le syndicat des olympiades*, La Galerie – Centre d'Art Contemporain de Noisy-le-Sec, Noisy-le-Sec, France (2024); *Olho-Faísca*, Museu de Arte, Arquitetura e Tecnologia (MAAT), Lisbon, Portugal (2023); *O rebote do bote*, Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil (2022); *Staging Resistance*, Fotografiemuseum Amsterdam (Foam), Amsterdam, The Netherlands (2022); *Jonathas de Andrade: One to One*, Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago (MCA), Chicago, USA (2019); *Visões do Nordeste*, Museo Jumex, Mexico City, Mexico (2017); *O peixe*, New Museum, New York, USA (2017); *Convocatória para um mobiliário nacional*, Museu de Arte de São Paulo (MASP), São Paulo, Brazil (2016); and *Museu do Homem do Nordeste*, Museu de Arte do Rio (MAR), Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (2014).

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,

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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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