

nara roesler

são paulo

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mônica ventura

before form, enchantment

curated by catarina duncan

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opening may 26

exhibition may 26 – aug 1, 2026

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The word “fetish” enters the vocabulary of art marked by historical violence. Its root goes back to the Latin *facticius*, that which is fabricated, artificial, made by human hands. In Portuguese, the term shifts toward *feitico* (spell), used in the colonial context to name objects venerated by populations of the Gold Coast in Africa and invested with spiritual power—objects regarded by the European gaze as superstition, exoticism, and unreason. Before becoming an aesthetic category, the fetish was an instrument of distortion: an attempt to reduce complex cosmologies to material curiosities.

To recover the root of the word and reassign its meanings is to dispute the symbols that constitute us. The so-called “fetish” reappears not as superstition, but as a symbolic system, a condensation of forces, a living object inseparable from community, ritual, and memory. The exhibition underscores that there is no neutral object: every form carries relations, temporalities, and ways of being in the world.

In the work of Mônica Ventura, we encounter a set of practices that bring together objects and ritual processes from diverse origins through art—not as historical illustration, but as practice, symbolic technology, transformative operation, and animated matter. Sculptures, paintings, and installations emerge as bodies that hold energy, as devices for exchange between the visible and the invisible. The exhibition thus proposes a shift from the colonial fetish to the ritual work—not as an ethnographic relic, but as an active presence.

The exhibition “*Before Form, Enchantment*” presents the artist’s research over the past ten years alongside new works and installations, proposing a world in which matter and spirit are not separate. Senegalese writer Léopold Sédar Senghor wrote that “emotion is Negro as reason

is Hellenic,” a formulation presented in *Ce que l’homme noir apporte* (1939) and revisited in later essays. Often debated, the phrase does not reduce to an essentialist opposition, but rather defends forms of sensorial knowledge historically dismissed by European modernity. Here, the sensorial does not oppose knowledge; it constitutes another mode of understanding matter.

The gourd runs throughout the exhibition as both formal and ancestral axis. For the artist, and within many Afro-Indigenous cosmologies, the fruit of *Lagenaria siceraria*—also known as *cua*, *igbá*, or *poronga*—is a matrix form of the world. Conceived as a ritual vessel and ancestral body, its curvilinear shape—simultaneously womb, container, and seed—unfolds across multiple languages. The gourd appears in gold, corten steel, charred wood, ceramic, and in its natural form, becoming a monument: a multiple body.

The artist works as an active researcher, investigating materials, cosmologies, construction techniques, liturgies, plants, essential oils, metals, pigments, and modes of making that traverse times and geographies. The exhibition conceives identity as a network in continuous movement, transforming the exhibition space into a laboratory, shelter, and altar. From alchemy and spagyrics to the construction of altars; from earthen building techniques to devotional geometries; from votive offerings to symbolic architectures spanning Hinduism and Candomblé. Essences, circulation, returns: everything turns like a wheel. Within this circuit, dynamic principles such as passages, exchanges, and renewals come into view.

If the colonial fetish sought to imprison the object within a fixed reading, Mônica Ventura restores to form its original instability. Each work is a spell that acts, transforms, and returns movement to the world.

Landscape for a black sun
(*The great lady series*), 2026
corten steel, gourd, and brass
edition of 3 + 1 AP
190 x 100 x 134 cm
74.8 x 39.4 x 52.8 in



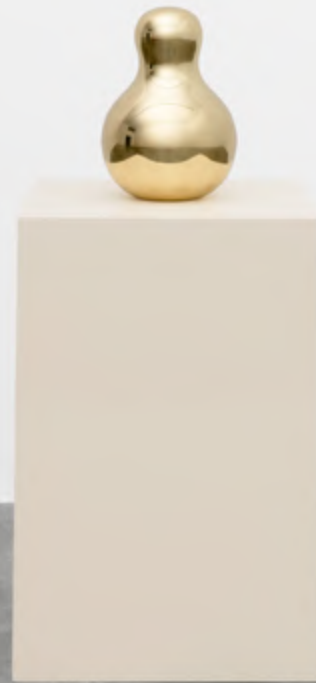


"Each piece is less a thread than
an event. A spell, in the most
precise sense, is that which does
not act to close, but to open.
The spell is a great portal."

—Mônica Ventura



The keeper of time, 2025
brass
edition of 5 + 1 AP
27 x Ø 17 cm
11.4 x Ø 7.9 in







exhibition view

O Sorriso de Acotirene na exposição
Histórias Feministas, MASP, 2019

left

Excorpóreo #01, 2026
charred wood and gold leaf
48 x 40 x 30 cm
18.9 x 15.7 x 11.8 in

middle

Excorpóreo #05, 2026
charred wood and gold leaf
50 x 29 x 30 cm
19.7 x 11.4 x 11.8 in

right

Excorpóreo #04, 2026
charred wood and gold leaf
49 x 36 x 35 cm
19.3 x 14.2 x 13.8 in



“When I bring in the gourd, it appears as an ancestral body, a sensitive technology. It is womb, vessel, world. And so form does not represent, but condenses, and within it we encounter both interior and exterior. It is like a matrix that not only organizes matter, but also guides ways of perceiving, containing, and offering.”

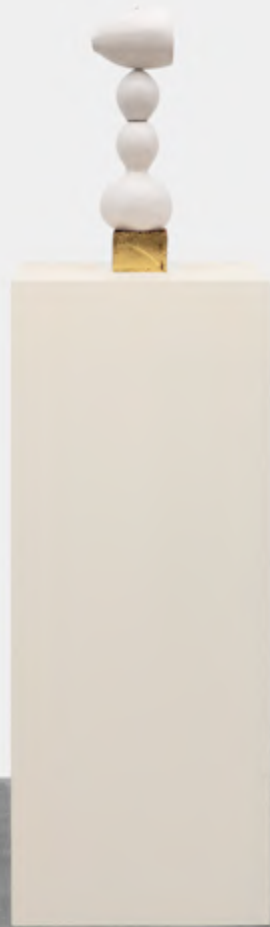
—Mônica Ventura





installation view
Daqui um Lugar, 2025
Pinacoteca do Estado
de São Paulo, Brazil

Passarinhas, 2026
porcelain, brass, wood and gold leaf
43 x 11 x 14,5 cm
16.9 x 4.3 x 5.7 in





Passarinhas, 2026
porcelain, brass, wood and gold leaf
53 x 15 x 11 cm
20.9 x 5.9 x 4.3 in





VIII (Alteia series), 2026
oil paint on canvas
198 x 198 cm
78 x 78 in







Mônica Ventura in the exhibition
*A Noite Suspensa/O que posso
aprender com o Silêncio*, 2023
Instituto Inhotim, Brumadinho, Brazil

The suspended night Union of opposites, 2026
soil, pigment and brass
edition of 5 + 1 PA
Ø 40,5 x 5 cm
Ø 15.9 x 2 in



"When I invoke the concept of the ancestral, I am not thinking of a distant past, but rather of a continuous presence that persists in the present. It is something that returns not as repetition, but as variation, deviation, reinvention. Time not as a line, but as a turning movement, perceived through layers that intersect."

—Mônica Ventura



The suspended night – Solar body, 2026
soil, pigment and brass
edition of 5 + 1 PA
30,5 x 34 x 5 cm
12 x 13.4 x 2 in





A Noite Suspensa/O que posso
aprender com o Silêncio, 2023
Instituto Inhotim, Brumadinho, Brazil



X (Alteia series), 2026
oil paint on canvas
198 x 205 x 3,5 cm
78 x 80.7 x 1.4 in





XI (Alteia series), 2026
oil paint on canvas
198 x 200 x 4 cm
78 x 78.7 x 1.6 in





De Amanhã para Ontem, 2021
Centro Cultural São Paulo,
São Paulo, Brazil



mônica ventura

b. 1985, São Paulo, Brazil

Lives and works in São Paulo, Brazil

Mônica Ventura is a visual artist and designer, holding a degree in Industrial Design from FAAP and a master's in Visual Poetics (PPGAV) from ECA-USP.

Her work investigates the complex intersections of femininity and race.

Through in-depth research, the artist rescues and reinterprets pre-colonial cultural elements, such as the architecture and manual techniques of Afro-Amerindian peoples. For Ventura, this immersion in ancestral knowledge is a means of personal reconnection. "Ancestrality is a key to remembering who we are and continuing to break away from the colonial framework that seeks to polish individuality," she explains.

Her multidisciplinary practice spans video, sculpture, and painting, allowing her to navigate between the spiritual and the tangible, giving voice to the multifaceted experiences of Black women. With an approach that merges strength and feminine delicacy, Ventura challenges aesthetic formalism, creating a "beautiful, organized noise" that invites the audience to reflect on identity, memory, and power.

selected solo exhibitions

- *Mônica Ventura: Daqui um Lugar*, Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil (2025)
- *A Noite Suspensa ou o que posso aprender com o Silêncio*, Instituto Inhotim, Brumadinho, Brazil (2023)
- *O Sorriso de Acotirene*, Centro Cultural São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil (2018)

selected group exhibitions

- *Padê – sentinela à porta da memória*, Museu Afro Brazil, São Paulo, Brazil (2026)
- *Dos Brasis: arte e pensamento negro*, SESC, São Paulo, Brazil (2023–2024)
- *Cantando Bajito: Incantations*, Ford Foundation, New York, USA (2024)
- *Encruzilhadas da Arte Afro-brasileira*, Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil (CCBB), São Paulo, Brazil (2023)
- *Brasil Futuro: Formas da Democracia*, Museu da República, Brasília, Brazil (2023)
- *Carolina Maria de Jesus: um Brasil para os brasileiros*, Instituto Moreira Salles (IMS), São Paulo, Brazil (2021)
- *Enciclopédia Negra*, Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil (2021)
- *Histórias Feministas*, Museu de Arte de São Paulo (MASP), São Paulo, Brazil (2019)

selected collections

- Instituto Inhotim, Brumadinho, Brazil
- Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil

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