

nara roesler

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mônica ventura

before form, enchantment

curated by catarina duncan

nara roesler são paulo

opening may 26, 6–8pm

exhibition may 26–august 1, 2026



Mônica Ventura, April 2026. Photo: Tatiana Mito

The Nara Roesler presents the exhibition *Before Form, Enchantment*, by Mônica Ventura, curated by Catarina Duncan. The show brings together works produced over the past ten years alongside new pieces, articulating a field of investigation in which matter, ritual, and form are intertwined as inseparable dimensions.

The word “fetish,” central to the vocabulary that runs through the exhibition, carries a history marked by displacements and distortions. Derived from the Latin *facticius*, the notion was appropriated in the colonial context to designate objects invested with spiritual power by populations of the Gold Coast,

in the African continent, reduced by the European gaze to the condition of superstition or exoticism. By recovering this genealogy, the exhibition proposes a critical inflection: the so-called “fetish” is reinscribed as a symbolic system, as a condensation of forces, and as a form inseparable from practices, rituals, and memories.

In this context, Mônica Ventura’s sculptures, paintings, and installations bring artistic procedures into proximity with diverse ritual technologies, mobilizing materials and processes as active agents. Here, form emerges as an

animated body, a device for exchange between the visible and the invisible, between presence and transformation.

The gourd, also known as *cuia*, *igbá*, or *poronga*, runs through the exhibition as both a formal and symbolic axis. Present in different Afro-Indigenous cosmologies as a matrix form, it appears in the works as womb, container, and seed. In versions ranging from gold to corten steel, from charred wood to ceramic and its natural form, the gourd unfolds into a multiple plastic vocabulary, operating as structure and organizing principle.

From this axis, the artist's practice expands into a broader material field. Plants, metals, pigments, oils, and transformative processes configure a domain in which matter is understood as a carrier of energy and memory, traversing different systems of knowledge and modes of making.

By bringing these elements together, the exhibition shifts the exhibition space into a hybrid condition between laboratory, shelter, and altar. In this environment, identities and forms are conceived as systems in circulation, permeated by passages, exchanges, and renewals.

If the colonial fetish sought to fix the object within a stable reading, Mônica Ventura's work refuses stability and insists on transformation, making matter a field in which forces condense and continuously reorganize.

about mônica ventura

Mônica Ventura (b. 1985, São Paulo, Brazil) 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, and to give voice to the multifaceted experiences of Black women, with an approach that merges strength and feminine delicacy. By challenging aesthetic formalism, Ventura creates a "beautiful organized noise" that invites the audience to reflect on identity, memory, and power.

Mônica Ventura lives and works in São Paulo, Brazil. Her solo exhibitions include: *Mônica Ventura: Daqui um Lugar*, at Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo (2025) in São Paulo, Brasil; *A Noite Suspensa ou o que posso aprender com o Silêncio* at Instituto Inhotim (2023), Brumadinho, Brazil, and *O Sorriso de Acotirene* at Centro Cultural São Paulo (2018), São Paulo, Brazil.

She has participated in major group exhibitions at museums and institutions, such as *Cantando Bajito (Incantations)* at the Ford Foundation (2024), New York, USA; *Encruzilhadas da Arte Afro-brasileira* at Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil (2023), São Paulo, Brazil; *Enciclopédia Negra* at Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo (2021), São Paulo, Brazil; and *Histórias Feministas* at Museu de Arte de São Paulo (2019), São Paulo, Brazil.

Her work is also part of the Instituto Inhotim collection, Brumadinho, Brazil and Pinacoteca de São Paulo, Brazil.

about nara roesler

Nara Roesler organized her first contemporary art exhibition in Recife in 1976 and moved to São Paulo in 1986, where she consolidated the gallery under her own name in 1989. Today, she is one of Brazil's leading gallerists, recognized for playing a key role in the promotion and internationalization of more than 50 artists. Based in São Paulo, the gallery expanded its program to Rio de Janeiro in 2014 and became the first Brazilian gallery to establish an international presence by opening a space in New York City in 2016, reinforcing its commitment to the global circulation of Brazilian art.

Consistently fostering curatorial practice and critical research, she created Roesler Hotel in 2002, a program that promoted

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exchanges between foreign and Brazilian curators and artists. In 2011, the gallery became the first contemporary art gallery in Brazil to establish a publishing house, Nara Roesler Books, which has published more than 30 titles to date.

Throughout its trajectory, the gallery has made a significant contribution to the development of its artists' careers, offering ongoing support and high-profile platforms for the presentation of their work, and facilitating their inclusion in major institutions as well as in important private collections in Brazil and abroad. Its program features established artists such as Abraham Palatnik, Amelia Toledo, Antonio Dias, Artur Lescher, Daniel Buren, Heinz Mack, Jac Leirner, Julio Le Parc, Lucia Koch, Tomie Ohtake, and Vik Muniz, as well as a new generation of established artists, including André Griffo, Bruno Dunley, Jaime Lauriano, Jonathas de Andrade, and JR.

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