

OPERA GALLERY



Gustavo Nazareno in his São Paulo, Brazil studio, © Courtesy of GUSN Studio

LONDON

Gustavo Nazareno *Orixás: Personal Tales on Portraiture*

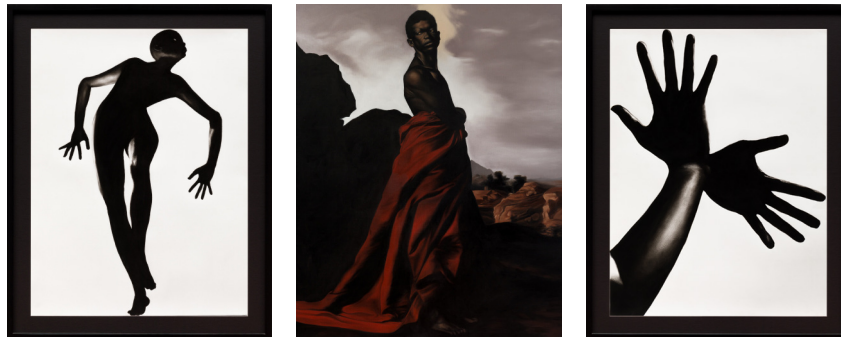
8 OCTOBER - 9 NOVEMBER, 2024

- Opera Gallery London announces exclusive representation of São Paulo, Brazil-based artist Gustavo Nazareno
- Nazareno's first solo show with Opera Gallery, 'Orixás: Personal Tales on Portraiture' will debut 08 October – 09 November 2024 during Frieze London in an exhibition curated by Samuele Visentin with a catalogue essay by Jonathan Michael Square
- Nazareno's new body of work, including paintings and charcoal drawings draw inspiration from Afro-Latin religions - notably the Brazilian Candomblé religion and its deities known as Orixás - to the aesthetics of fashion photography

July 2024—Opera Gallery London is pleased to present 'Orixás: Personal Tales on Portraiture', the inaugural solo exhibition with São Paulo, Brazil-based artist Gustavo Nazareno. Curated by Samuele Visentin, Nazareno's work is based upon fables that he writes, which draw inspiration from the pantheon of Orixás - a system of entities worshipped in religions in some parts of Africa and Latin America. Creating a new body of work for this exhibition, Nazareno's 16 paintings and 25 charcoal drawings incorporate wide-ranging influences, from the characteristics and traditions of Afro-Latin religions such as Candomblé, Santería and Voodoo, to the aesthetics of fashion photography.

Nazareno's process incorporates elements of textile arts and set design to create tableau vivants. He uses these as references to visually depict his fables, which explore the synchronicity between the human and the divine. His work examines the use of religious iconography, society's proclivity towards worship,

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(L-R) *Bará # 402*, 2019/2024, charcoal on paper, 66 x 50.2 cm; *Exu guiding a path*, 2024, oil on linen, 150 x 120 x 3.5 cm; *Bará # 401*, 2019/2024, charcoal on paper 66 x 50.2 cm

and the space between good and evil that the Candomblé religion's principles celebrate within human nature.

Nazareno often uses figuration to represent the protagonists that inhabit his visual universe. These imaginary figures resist fixed identities and transcend age and gender without adhering to binary categories. Wearing majestic dresses and ornamentation, these characters evoke the pageantry of fashion photography while embracing the chiaroscuro technique characteristic of Caravaggio and other Renaissance and Baroque Artists. Through a unique painting and drawing technique where Nazareno applies charcoal dust with his fingertips on paper in his dark studio lit by only candlelight, his works evoke a mysterious tenebrism in form and content. The anatomical poses struck by Nazareno's characters is contrasted with piercing gazes, engaging with the viewer as an act of sensual and provocative defiance.

"I have been manifesting this show since I started understanding my purpose in art – to elaborate my faith, my passions, and my universe" said Nazareno. "To exhibit in such a big and important city in my life, where most of my references were born, is a true celebration. The entire narrative of this show takes me back to 2018 when I first arrived in São Paulo. I had to study the Orixás for a commission, and in exchange, I received a studio to paint in. This show is based on that beginning, and it also represents a new beginning with Opera Gallery, both for me and for them."

Curator Samuele Visentin added "I first encountered Nazareno work in 2021, on the occasion of his first solo show outside of Brazil. I was drawn to the sharp contour of his matte charcoal shapes on smooth white paper, guided by a moon-glow shine that filtered through and revealed to me the outlines of his *Bará* series. In this new body of work, Gustavo reminds us of the importance of being found in a personal sense of divinity, giving shape to a pantheon of Orixás whose posture and presence embody and celebrate the visual syncretism of Candomblé. I believe that living in the shadow of today's world events calls for a growing need of spiritual grounding and Gustavo, in the privacy of his own studio, paints the return of the gaze to an inner dimension."

Opera Gallery CEO, Isabelle de La Bruyère, remarked, "The most exciting artists are the ones that draw on a complex web of influences, from the recognisable to the obscure, to create a new and distinctive visual language. Gustavo Nazareno does exactly this, incorporating elements from Afro-Brazilian religions, fashion photography and Renaissance paintings into his work. We are delighted to mark the beginning of his representation with Opera Gallery by presenting his biggest exhibition in London to date."

Gustavo Nazareno will have a future solo exhibition curated by Danny Dunson at The DuSable Black History Museum and Education Center in Chicago, Illinois, USA.

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About Gustavo Nazareno

Gustavo Nazareno was born in 1994 in Três Pontas, Brazil and currently lives and works in São Paulo, Brazil. His solo exhibitions include 'Bará' at Museu de Arte Moderna Aloisio Magalhães (2024), 'Bará' at Museu Afro Brasil Emanuel Araújo (2023), 'Fables on Exu' at Gallery 1957/1:54 Art Fair (2021) and was included in Gallery 1957's group exhibition 'Collective Reflections: Contemporary African & Diasporic Expressions of A New Vanguard' in Accra, Ghana (2020). A solo exhibition of Nazareno's work curated by Danny Dunson will be held at The DuSable Black History Museum and Education Center in Chicago, Illinois, USA.

About Samuele Visentin

Samuele Visentin is an independent contemporary art curator and art consultant based in London, UK. He has previously curated solo shows with William Brickel, Fabien Adele, Gabriel Mills, Patricia Ayres, Max Xeno Karnig, Sung Jik Yang and more. His mission through his consultancy is to advocate for artists through thoughtfully curated exhibitions and strategic placement of works in private collections.

About Opera Gallery

Founded in Singapore in 1994, Opera Gallery has forged, over its 30 years, a network of 16 galleries worldwide including London, Paris, New York, Geneva, Hong Kong, and Seoul, establishing itself as one of the leading global players within the international art market.

Headed by Gilles Dyan, Opera Gallery specialises in post-war French art, and in Modern and Contemporary European, American, and Asian art. In addition, the gallery represents international emerging artists such as Andy Denzler, Anthony James and Gustavo Nazareno, and more established contemporary artists such as Ron Arad, Manolo Valdés, and Anselm Reyle.

2024 marks Opera Gallery's 30th Anniversary and over the gallery's three decades, Opera Gallery's mission is to showcase the dynamic, innovative, and diverse expressions of modern and contemporary art through its ambitious yearly exhibition programming as well as to bring together institutions that shape the cultural landscape, often supporting private collections and leading public institutions.

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