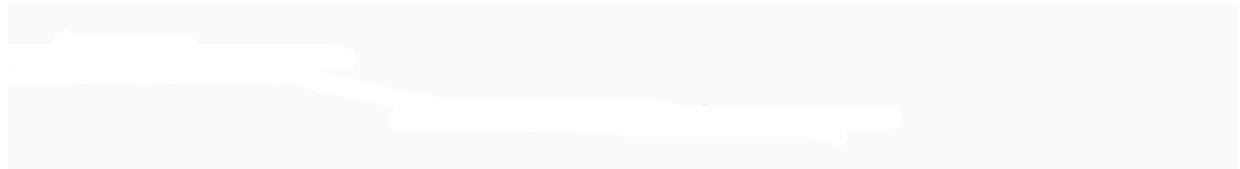


Mendes Wood DM São Paulo is pleased to present 'Nascituras' by Rosana Paulino, opening this Saturday

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*Nascituras*

**Rosana Paulino**

November 25 - January 27, 2024

**Preview:** Saturday, November 25, 2–7pm

**Mendes Wood DM São Paulo**

Rua Barra Funda, 216



Image: Rosana Paulino, *Nascituras*, 2023. Courtesy of the artist and Mendes Wood DM, São Paulo, Brussels, Paris, New York.

*Nascituras*: someone or something yet to be born. The decision to name the exhibition of an artist as prominent as Rosana Paulino *Nascituras* (nascencies) may seem strange. After all, what could this concept refer to in light of one of the most substantial, striking careers in so-called Brazilian art? A career based on 30 years of daily labor in the realms of her *métier*. A career that is characterized by recurrent engagement with pivotal exhibitions in contemporary art, as seen in the last two editions of the Venice and São Paulo Biennales.

Here, several nascencies, breeding grounds, and birthgivings unfold. In one visit – one of many throughout the years – to Rosana’s atelier, I was able to witness a moment that revealed much of the creative thinking underpinning Paulino’s artistic production. I step in and come across a large table. Laying on it are many sheets of paper containing the studies that would evolve into the *Nascituras* series exhibited here. Rosana tells me that when arranged side by side in that manner, she is able to visualize each of the drawings as if she had a large notebook laid open before her. One of many moments of a continuous state of becoming, which imposes itself in the workshops of artists deeply dedicated to their formal explorations.

At the moment, some of the prominent features pervading her work come to the fore: the drawing, which has been developed over a long time, invades thousands of pages belonging to the different momentums that form Rosana Paulino's archive. This drawing, characterized with its own language, is where the line, a commonplace element of expression in Paulino's arsenal, emerges in between areas of watery colors.

In these works, the very definition of drawing expands, seeking to come close to what, at first, flirts with concepts more frequently associated with painting. But, according to the artist, we are still standing in front of a drawing. On these sheets of paper, on a second visit, I could already encounter them – these entity-women, women of various times and natures.

A significant detail demands the attention of those who now see them exhibited. Pay attention, they do not represent the sequence of a single character. It is not about a general typification that repeats itself. Come closer! Note how each woman bears a distinctive elan. Each woman is distinct, yet all share the same temporal and worldly space. Each one of the ten seems to reveal herself, though they never completely relinquish being with themselves in their world. One of them is particularly moving with her eyes closed, red branches along her arms and head, and lines (Rosana's line) trailing down from her mouth. This figure, in full breath of emergence, both affable and touching, springs to life from a bromeliad. It is not a random bromeliad, but one found through the artist's encounters with the plants of Jaraguá Park, the reserve located next to the atelier.

Another of these women in a nascent state appears in one of my notes as the "lady of the plants." This woman, with her hands placed beneath her breasts, appears to pose as the realization of inner serenity, expanding through her eyes and taking roots similar to those found in Paulino's works from the 90s. Notice how this formal element is reborn in this series, carrying new meaning and expanding its scope.

These women sometimes appear monumental, like the Twins (Gêmeas, from the Jatobás series), results of the artist's experimentations on a different scale. These arborescent women become inescapable, either through their silent gentleness or their sexes, tongues, and battle poses, as seen in the woman-entity – fury – that, not coincidentally, emerges between *Jansã's Swords* (Snake Plants).



Image: Rosana Paulino, *Nascituras*, 2023. Courtesy of the artist and Mendes Wood DM, São Paulo, Brussels, Paris, New York.

This vegetal existence beckons us toward a becoming necessary for our own time. Something of the knowledge of Black women in their yards and kitchens, something that reverberates (or should) with the thought of the Italian Stefano Mancuso (2019): The notion of plants as examples of forms of life. Life that urges to be born in times of alteration to the earth's surface. A possible life through another relationship with bodies, without hierarchies between humans and the rest of the natural world. This is the opposite of what we have been doing in the name of modernity, which, it seems, will extinguish us through extreme heat or cold. Another policy of life.

A policy that crosses the feminine so present in Rosana Paulino's poetics. A vast, political, and racialized feminine, as found in the installation *Leite de Pedra* (Blood From a Stone), in which organic shapes in soapstone, spotted by Rosana like remnants of a sculpture workshop, lie on small wooden troughs. They are wrapped in glass beads and ribbons that lend them another field of meaning, by mastering the material and its possibilities for poetic reappearance. The remnants, the wooden trough, and the ribbon are joined to bring ancestral breasts to light. Amidst gushes of milk, a new birth.

Undoubtedly, Rosana Paulino stands on the threshold of a new understanding of what constitutes Brazilian art. The series *Geometria à Brasileira* (Brazilian-style Geometry) is a testimony to this confrontation regarding the beliefs of an excluding artistic canon that is constantly importing forms, foreign to its context. It is not just about a canvas, a series. This is, first of all, a political act in defense of our art. After all, this “ours,” so distinctly ours, is what Rosana Paulino delves into. Her plants and species encompass everything from colonial pseudosciences to the embrace of a colossal Brazil. Colossal in looking at its own nature, including the harshest and most difficult elements. A Brazil that lives beyond the exotic. In fact, the best definition of the exotic within her artistic production comes from a conversation with Rosana. She tells me that in one of her trips to Rio de Janeiro when passing through Campo de Santana with a group of postgraduates and some college professors, they came across a large group of agoutis that lived nearby. Rosana could visualize the entire series right there. The agoutis were crossing a French-inspired garden, a result of European aspirations, which in turn, echoed the very concept of the garden as the dominion of human (European) genius over nature. Rosana asks me: What is exotic in this landscape? Certainly, it’s not the animals. How about in the *Brazilian Nature* series? Where is the exotic?

For these and many other reasons, the production of this artist, so central to Brazilian, Latin-American, and Atlantic art is revealed in the notion of nascence itself. That which is about to be born comes through so much of what we see in this exhibition.

– Igor Simões

Curator, art historian, researcher of the artist’s work

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