

Rosana Paulino
Bloom in the Sunlight, Dream in the Moonlight
Oct 19 – Dec 19, 2026

Rosana Paulino has consistently confronted the public with a central question: What does it mean to be a Black woman in Brazil?

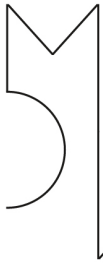
Over a decade ago Paulino, already engaged in research into spirituality, became interested in growing discourse around feminine power and goddesses. Wondering exactly what it encompassed and what kind of female archetypes it reflected, she carried out a search to find images of Black women as leading mystical figures in the available literature. She found none in bookshops, with many authors flat out refusing to engage with the abundant matriarchal cosmology of Afro-Brazilian rites and religions. This was a striking contrast to the profusion of images of Black women depicted in colonial attire or degrading roles that circulated widely across libraries, classrooms, and visual culture throughout the country. To counter this pattern and to actively contribute to a new visual cosmology, Paulino dedicated a significant part of her production to drawings, paintings, sculptures, and installations that reclaim the Black Brazilian woman from dominant representation. In her words: “If she doesn’t exist, what will happen if we create her? If we bring her into being?” That is, the aim was not appropriation, “not simply reproducing the orixás or claiming traditions like Candomblé, which I deeply respect but don’t practice – but opening another space, one for the subjectivity of Black women, for the archetypes that have remained unseen, unnamed.”

In the pursuit of new possibilities of representation, the artist has created one of her most influential series, *Senhora das plantas* [*Lady of the Plants*], an ongoing body of work which unfolds as drawings and paintings of female-like figures with limbs sprawling into tree roots, hair growing as leaves, or fingers blossoming into flowers. Archetypes, female bastions, goddesses, or guides have come to mark a practice that deals with the most traumatic period of Brazilian colonial history while proposing a new emancipatory framework to overcome its legacy. The *Senhora das plantas* have been exhibited widely across the globe, including at the São Paulo and Venice Biennials and as a large-scale mural commissioned for the High Line Art in New York. The latter, *The Creation of the Creatures of Day and Night*, on view outdoors from November 2024 to December 2025. Its two towering figures grow out as trees among flora and fauna, standing side by side in two contexts – day and night – reimagining the duality between life and death.

For Rosana Paulino’s first solo exhibition in Paris titled *Florescer a luz do Sol, sonhar a luz da lua* [*Bloom in the Sunlight, Dream in the Moonlight*] the artist continues this thematic exploration of creatures of night and day, bringing together a suite of new paintings and drawings from her celebrated series. Every element present on her canvas carries a symbolism steeped in tradition. The plants which adorn these figures are often referred to as *plantas de poder* (plants of power) for their widespread use as amulets of protection or in cleansing rituals rooted in Afro-Brazilian tradition and popular in Brazilian households. Many of these are known for their medicinal properties as much as their beauty such as the calming potential of *mulungu*, a Brazilian

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ornamental tree and medicinal plant which blossoms from the feet, breasts, and fingers of the placid sitting figure in *Mulungu* from the *Senhora das plantas* series (all works from 2026). Others, such as *trombeta de anjo* (angel's trumpet), are feared for a deceptive beauty that masks a potent poison, which is the subject of the eponymous nocturnal painting.

This communion with nature is essential to the artist's worldmaking, inseparable from the nature that overflows Brazil. In her studio, in the outskirts of the metropolis of São Paulo, Rosana Paulino often escapes to the nearby Jaraguá park for recreation, observing and cataloguing the abundant species from the Atlantic Forest which continue to resist there despite urban development. Paulino nods to this same capacity for adaptation in the lives of millions of Black women who survived colonial violence. Her figures are a testament to not only those who survived, but particularly those that continue to thrive. The daughters, sisters, mothers, grandmothers who persevere as "forest creatures, as if enchanted."

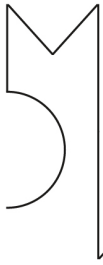
At the same time, Paulino understands nature as double-edged, as protective as it is threatening. She explores this through figures as they crawl, stand, kneel or crouch within nature's domain, each with a personality entirely her own. Nature's duality finds its epitome in *Comigo ninguém pode* (known as "dumb cane" in English/"Don't mess with me" in its common name in Brazil). Revered in Afro-Brazilian tradition for its protective, spiritual properties – and feared for its highly toxic leaves – the plant is the subject of an extended series of drawings and paintings in the exhibition. It also lends its name to the 2026 Venice Biennale exhibition at the Brazilian Pavilion, which Rosana Paulino was selected to co-represent, nodding to knowledge preserved within Afro-Brazilian customs.

The highlight of the exhibition is the experience of night and day which unfolds through new largescale paintings. From one perspective, diurnal scenes of tree-like figures emerge on a backdrop of an all-embracing, scorching light typical of the Southern hemisphere. *Dia: Estrela da Manhã* [Day: Morning Star] illustrates the myth of creation through the touch and care of a Black woman as the giver of life. At the bottom of the canvas, closer to the roots, there is a smaller female figure which accompanies the scene. Paulino resists logical explanations: "Sometimes I feel almost like a conduit, because each one has its own personality. They just emerge." In its nocturnal existence, the towering figure gains life, bringing with it the mystery and lyricism of darkness. In *Noite: Lua Cheia / Lua Crescente* [Night: Full Moon / Crescent Moon], the dark background created with layers of ink and acrylic paint offers the richness of a warm summer night – its beasts, tropical legends, two barn owls – under the spell of a full moon.

To create these paintings the artist utilizes her whole body, activating something which "flows through me." Working on the canvas lying flat, she resorts to makeshift tools such as twigs to bring texture and color to seemingly unreachable areas. Acrylic paint, washed down or purposefully left to smudge, creates a texture that is robust, tactile, and unique to each painting. In this exhibition, Rosana Paulino proposes a form of answer to her own enduring question: Black women, rooted in the ground their foremothers claimed, stand to create new emancipatory possibilities.

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Rosana Paulino (b. 1967, São Paulo, Brazil) lives and works in São Paulo

Her most recent exhibitions include *Diálogos do Dia e da Noite*, **Mendes Wood DM**, New York (2025); *Novas Raízes*, **Casa Museu Eva Klabin**, Rio de Janeiro (2024); *Amefricana*, **Museo de Arte Latinoamericano de Buenos Aires**, Buenos Aires (2024); *Nascituras*, **Mendes Wood DM**, São Paulo (2023); *Paraíso Tropical*, **Frank Museum of Art**, Otterbein University, Westerville (2019); *Rosana Paulino: A Costura da Memória*, **Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo**, São Paulo (2018); *Atlântico Vermelho, Padrão dos Descobrimentos*, **EGEAC**, Lisbon (2017); *Mulheres Negras – Obscure Beuauté Du Brésil*, **Espace Culturel Fort Griffon À Besançon**, Besançon (2014). Recent group exhibitions include *Comigo ninguém pode*, **61st International Biennale di Venezia**, Venice (2026); *Cartographies for after the end*, Centre Pompidou-Metz, Metz (2025); *Project a Black Planet: The Art and Culture of Panafrica*, **Art Institute of Chicago**, Chicago (2024); *Ancestral*, **Museu de Arte Brasileira / FAAP**, São Paulo (2024); **35th Bienal de São Paulo**, São Paulo (2023); *The Milk of Dreams*, **59th International Biennale di Venezia**, Venice (2022); *Afro-Atlantic Histories*, **National Gallery of Art**, Washington DC, (2022); *Global Positioning*, **Public Art Foundation**, New York, Boston (2022); *Brasilidade: Pós Modernismo*, **CCBB**, Brazil (2022); **22nd Biennial of Sydney**, Sydney (2020); *Carolina Maria de Jesus: um Brasil para os brasileiros*, **Instituto Moreira Salles**, São Paulo (2021); **21st Bienal SESC VideoBrazil**, SESC 24 de Maio, São Paulo (2019); *Slavery in the Hands of Harvard*, **Harvard University**, Cambridge (2019); *Histórias Afro-Atlânticas*, **Instituto Tomie Ohtake**, São Paulo (2018).

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