

Paulo Nazareth: *STROKE*

Paulo Nazareth travels on foot throughout the Americas and the African continent, cultivating relationships with the people he encounters. These journeys, which begin from Palmital in Minas Gerais, Brazil, where he lives and works, are foundational to his artmaking. He draws on the complex identity of Brazil, and specifically of the southeastern state of Minas Gerais, which are both marked by the legacies of colonialism and slavery, as well as the continuing exploitation of racialized peoples and the appropriation of their lands. During his travels, Nazareth traces the connections from the Brazilian context to transnational histories and global capitalism, expanding on western knowledge production through listening, bodily experience, and spirituality.

STROKE, Nazareth's first solo exhibition in Canada, presents a selection of long-term projects and a new body of work. The works highlight Nazareth's reflections on the lasting effects of the colonial construction of the "Other," or, in the artist's words, the construction of an "alien enemy" positioned outside of humanity, which stems from slavery and roots itself in structural racism, capitalist systems, and migration politics today. *STROKE* touches upon the effects of the shock caused by racial violence on the human psyche and body, and their relationship to the land.

STROKE is a place of encounters, which expands beyond the artworks and the exhibition space. During the first five weeks of the exhibition, Nazareth will be present in the gallery, where he will continuously produce works and engage with visitors. His departure from Toronto will coincide with the relocation of a selection of his large-scale sculptures from The Power Plant to different sites along the waterfront.

Paulo Nazareth, *DRY CUT [from BLACKS IN THE POOL – Tommie]*, 2018

Painted aluminum, MDF

Courtesy Mendes Wood DM, São Paulo/Brussels/New York

DRY CUT, a series of monumental sculptures created from a single sheet of metal propped up by a wooden structure, questions the social and political forces that underlie the decision to erect statues of certain figures. Further challenging these actions and narratives, Brazilian artist Paulo Nazareth employs aluminum to make his works rather than the commonly used bronze—a metal celebrated for its finished hue, durability, and ability to capture detail and consistency. The four depicted figures are intimately associated with their fight for equality for Black people in North America, building and bridging artistic, historical, ritualistic, and affective connections to the sites where they are displayed.

This statue represents Tommie Smith (b. 1944), a former track and field athlete and wide receiver in the American Football League. Smith was the gold medallist in the 200-

metre sprint at the 1968 Summer Olympics. During the medal ceremony, Smith, along with bronze medallist John Carlos, hung their heads and each raised a black-gloved fist when the US national anthem played. In response, the president of the International Olympic Committee at the time, Avery Brundage, also an American, banned Smith and Carlos from the Olympic Village, deeming the act a domestic political statement unfit for the apolitical, international, multi-sport event. The two athletes were eventually expelled from the US Olympic team and subsequently ostracized by the American sporting establishment for many years.

Paulo Nazareth, DRY CUT [from BLACKS IN THE POOL – *Rosa*], 2018

Painted aluminum, MDF

Courtesy the artist and Mendes Wood DM, São Paulo/Brussels/New York

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This statue represents Rosa Parks (1913–2005), an American activist in the civil rights movement best known for her pivotal role in the Montgomery bus boycott. On December 1, 1955, Parks refused to give up her seat to a white passenger—the driver, James F. Blake, had ordered her and three other Black people to vacate four rows of the “coloured” section of the bus because there was no room left in the white section. Parks was wrongfully arrested (as she was not breaking any laws) and bailed out of jail that evening. The event spurred the Montgomery bus boycott, organized by the Women’s Political Council, and the campaign lasted from December 5, 1955, to December 20, 1956.

Paulo Nazareth, DRY CUT [from BLACKS IN THE POOL – *Martin*], 2018

Painted aluminum, MDF

Courtesy the artist and Mendes Wood DM, São Paulo/Brussels/New York

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This statue represents Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929–1968), an American Baptist minister, an activist, and a prominent leader of the civil rights movement from 1955 until his assassination in 1968. King is most famously known for advancing civil rights for people of colour in the United States through non-violence and civil disobedience. He participated in and led marches for the right to vote, desegregation, labour rights, and other civil rights. Among many other notable events, King oversaw the 1955 Montgomery bus boycott and was one of the leaders of the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom in DC, where he delivered his “I Have a Dream” speech on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. On October 14, 1964, King won the Nobel Peace Prize for fighting against racial inequality through non-violent resistance.

Paulo Nazareth, *Untitled [Public Pool]*, 2022

Shipping container, acrylic paint, water, muriatic acid, ladder, sugar, salt

Commissioned by The Power Plant, 2022

Paulo Nazareth, *Buterfly*, 2022

Black-and-white film, 7:11

Courtesy the artist

Paulo Nazareth, *CA – white ethnography [acid – white only]*, 2022

Efun on photo printing on cotton paper, 23 photographs

Commissioned by The Power Plant, 2022

On June 18, 1964, Black and white integrationists jumped into the whites-only swimming pool at the Monson Motor Lodge in St. Augustine, Florida. To force them out, white motel owner James Brock poured a bottle of muriatic acid into the pool—a nefarious act that was captured on camera by Horace Cort. While the swim-in had been planned, it was also incited by Martin Luther King, Jr.’s arrest for trespassing when he had entered the motel’s segregated restaurant a week earlier. Reprinting these photographs on cotton paper, Nazareth intervenes by drawing efun circles—a sacred symbol of eternity from the Yoruba culture, drawn as an act of worship to God—on top of the images. The

circles are also a reference to Brazil's modernist concrete art movement, a style that focused on geometric abstraction but was heavily influenced by white European artists. Though the layered meanings of the white circle are intentionally muddled, the emphasis of "white only" in the title alludes to the domineering white narrative that persists today. These unframed works are placed near the recreated swimming pool, its water also tainted with muriatic acid, and left exposed to the accumulating humidity, producing the curling and warping of the paper throughout the duration of the exhibition.

Paulo Nazareth, *Produtos do Genocídios series (Products of Genocide)*

Resin, found objects, wood

Courtesy the artist and Mendes Wood DM, São Paulo/Brussels/New York

CA – *Produtos do Genocídios [Rapé y Sepé], 2017*

CA – *Produtos do Genocídios [Pajé y Anchieta], 2018*

CA – *Produtos do Genocídios [1500 y Colonial], 2018*

CA – *Produtos do Genocídios [Apache y Chileno], 2018*

In the series *Produtos do Genocídios (Products of Genocide)*, Nazareth freezes select store-bought products—namely ones whose product name appropriates the language of Indigenous communities or elements from oppressed communities—in resin and places these blocks on a stand built from a wooden pallet. In bestowing these everyday items with a heightened sense of importance by suspending them in the middle of the resin and presenting them on a pedestal, Nazareth not only challenges the meanings of art sculptures but also calls attention to the ongoing erasure and suppression of minority cultures and communities. His sculptures are a powerful reminder of present-day colonialism and racism.

Paulo Nazareth, *THE RED INSIDE series, 2018–ongoing*

Photo printing on cotton paper, Ford truck, watermelons, concrete

Courtesy the artist and Mendes Wood DM, São Paulo/Brussels/New York

Paulo Nazareth, *CA – Untitled [LIMITED], 2018*

Paulo Nazareth, *CA – Edmund Pettus Bridge, 2018*

Paulo Nazareth, *CA – Harriet Tubman's House, 2018*

Paulo Nazareth, *Untitled, 2018*

Paulo Nazareth, *Untitled [MONUMENT], 2018*

Paulo Nazareth, *Untitled [Bird Skyfall], 2017*

Paulo Nazareth, *WATERMELON WHITE HOUSE*, 2018

Paulo Nazareth, *Untitled [WATER MIRROR]*, 2018

Paulo Nazareth, *Untitled [BOLEA]*, 2018

Paulo Nazareth, *TUBMAN TUMB*, 2018

Paulo Nazareth, *Lorraine Motel*, 2018

Paulo Nazareth, *Untitled [Luna Game]*, 2017

Paulo Nazareth, *CA – WATERMELON FORD 100_1959*, 2018

Paulo Nazareth, *Untitled [Double Watermelon]*, 2017

Paulo Nazareth, *YOU DON'T HAVE SPEAK FRECH HERE*, 2016

Paulo Nazareth, *THE RED INSIDE*, 2018

1989 Ford Truck F150 Lariat – burgundy and white body colour with red interior, watermelons, concrete

Courtesy the artist and Mendes Wood DM, São Paulo/Brussels/New York

THE RED INSIDE project, which was first generated for Prospect New Orleans, involved following the route of the Underground Railroad all the way to Canada and casting watermelon sculptures using clay drawn from the Mississippi River. Along the route, which he followed in a Ford pickup truck (on display on the South Terrace), Nazareth stopped at specific sites related to the Underground Railroad and the civil rights movement and took photographs, including some as he held the concrete watermelons in his hands.

This summer fruit is layered in its meaning: not only is it a sacred fruit in certain African contexts, but it also played an essential role in aiding escaped, enslaved Black people who were pursuing the Railroad—the network of abolitionists working in the Railroad would drop watermelon seeds and plant the fruit as a sign of refuge. However, watermelons have also become a racist trope in the United States, especially after the abolition of slavery when the fruit became the vehicle of economic emancipation for some Black people, as well a symbol of their perceived undesirable qualities and unwanted public presence, particularly in the American South. Nazareth's use of watermelon as a motif goes against this trope and re-establishes the nurturing, life-giving qualities of this fruit.

Paulo Nazareth, *Casaco xadrez [Plaid coat]*, 2017

Sewing on jacket

Courtesy the artist and Mendes Wood DM, São Paulo/Brussels/New York

Paulo Nazareth, *Tunic [American Red Sea]*, 2011

Drawing and embroidery on Egyptian Muslim tunic

Courtesy the artist and Mendes Wood DM, São Paulo/Brussels/New York

Paulo Nazareth, *Vicious Circle*, 2011

Photograph, toy train, wooden pallet

Courtesy the artist and Mendes Wood DM, São Paulo/Brussels/New York

Paulo Nazareth, *Untitled [Verdade/Mentira] [Truth/Lie]*, 2007–08

Embroidery on fabric

Courtesy the artist

Paulo Nazareth, *Untitled [Truth/Lie]*, 2018

Embroidery on fabric

Courtesy the artist

Paulo Nazareth, *Cielo [Sky]*, 2010

Paint on TNT textile

Courtesy the artist

Paulo Nazareth, *Untitled [Sugar Bricks]*, 2022

Bricks

Commissioned by The Power Plant, 2022

Paulo Nazareth, *PRISON CAMP CONCENTRATION*, 2022

Charcoal on newsprint drawing paper

Commissioned by The Power Plant, 2022

Paulo Nazareth, *INDIGENOUS PRISON*, 2022

Charcoal on newsprint drawing paper

Commissioned by The Power Plant, 2022

Paulo Nazareth, *dry cut [miniment in honor Enith Brigitha], 2022*

Wood, carton paper, paint, brick

Commissioned by The Power Plant, 2022

Paulo Nazareth, *dry cut [miniment in honor Mahommah Baquaqua], 2022*

Wood, carton paper, paint, brick

Commissioned by The Power Plant, 2022