

alberto pitta and elian almeida

curated by luis pérez-oramas

nara roesler new york

opening october 30, 7–9pm

exhibition october 2025–january 2026



Elian Almeida. *The most important thing is to invent the Brazil we want IV*, 2025 [detail]



Alberto Pitta, *Oxalá Community (Mariwô series)*, 2025 [detail]

Nara Roesler is pleased to present an exhibition of two outstanding artists focusing on the diversity of the Afro-Brazilian cultural legacy: Alberto Pitta (b. 1961, Salvador, Brazil) and Elian Almeida (b. 1994, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil). Curated by Luis Pérez-Oramas, the show will propose two major counterpointing visual arguments bridging, on one hand, symbolic-religious Afro-Brazilian ornamental patterns on painted fabrics, signature of Alberto Pitta's production, and, on the other hand, historical-narrative painted scenes by Elian Almeida based on Afro-Brazilian identities and anecdotes.

Over the course of more than four decades, Alberto Pitta has developed a distinctive visual trajectory, characterized by a dialogue between Afro-Brazilian cultures, spirituality, and

graphic experimentation. His artistic practice is directly tied to his personal history, first as the son of Ialorixá Mãe Santinha de Oyá, an important religious leader who introduced him to fabrics—initially through intricate *richelieu* embroidery and later through the screen printing and textile patterns he began developing in the 1980s for the Carnival in Salvador, one of the biggest popular festivals in existence today and a vehicle for bold visual experimentation in which Alberto Pitta is a major, referential figure. A major presence in the recently inaugurated 36th São Paulo International Biennial, Alberto Pitta's production has never been the object of a full, embracing presentation in the U.S.

Alongside the works of Pitta, the show will feature a selection of paintings by Elian Almeida, an artist belonging to a new

generation of creators whose works reassert protagonism to agents and bodies that have been traditionally marginalized in our society and in the history of art. Elian Almeida addresses decolonialism, exploring the experience and performativity of the black body in contemporary Brazilian society, through a process of recuperating elements from the past – images, narratives, characters – as a means of contributing to the process of empowerment and dissemination of Afro-Brazilian historiography.

In the paintings chosen to be installed vis-à-vis Alberto Pitta's work, Almeida offers a fresh perspective on how these stories can be told, exploring memory and ancestry not merely as the past, but as present and living subjective dimensions. This conceptual approach seeks to uncover alternative meanings within the painting.

During a recent trip to Salvador, Bahia, Almeida visited Alberto Pitta's studio, where he was inspired to experiment with screen printing—a medium he had encountered in college but revisited under the guidance of the master of screen printing and textiles. The use of serigraphy and stencils allowed him to achieve volumes and textures that a brush alone could not produce.

about alberto pitta

Alberto Pitta's work is centered on textile printing and serigraphy, although he has also dedicated himself to painting and sculpture in recent years. With a career spanning more than four decades, Alberto Pitta's production is closely linked to popular festivities and in dialogue with other languages, such as fashion and dance, his work has a strong public dimension, having created prints for Afro carnival blocks such as Olodum, Filhos de Gandhi and his own, Cortejo Afro.

His print production began in the 1980s. They feature signs, shapes and strokes that evoke traditional African and Afro-diasporic elements, especially those from Yoruba mythology, which is very present in Salvador and the Bahian recôncavo. In the words of curator Renato Menezes: "In fact, signs, shapes and lines that evoke traditional African graphics have found, on their fabrics, a privileged place for educating the masses and telling stories that only make sense collectively. If the writing in

Pitta's work is organized in the set of patterns and colors that reinterpret the Yoruba worldview, the reading, on the other hand, concerns the relationship established in the contact between bodies in movement, when the city streets become a terreiro. Through the folds of the fabrics that cover the revellers runs an alphabet of letters and affections, mobilized by music and dance: it is in the body of the other that the text that completes us is read."

Alberto Pitta has participated in important exhibitions in Brazil and internationally. His solo shows include *Outros Carnavais*, at Nara Roesler Rio de Janeiro (2024), Brazil; *Mariwó*, at Paulo Darzé Galeria (2023), in Salvador, Brazil, and *Eternidade Soterrada*, organized by Carmo & Johnson Projects (2022) in São Paulo, Brazil. His group exhibitions notably include: *Joie Collective – Apprendre a flamboyer*, at Palais de Tokyo (2025), Paris, France; 24th Biennale of Sydney (2024); *Lélia em Nós: Festas Populares e Amefricanidade*, at Sesc Vila Mariana (2024), São Paulo, Brazil; *Stirring the Pot*, at Casa da Cultura da Comporta, Portugal; *O Quilombismo: Of Resisting and Insisting. Of Flight as Fight. Of Other Democratic Egalitarian Political Philosophies*, at Haus der Kulturen der Welt, in Berlin, Germany (2023); *Encruzilhada*, at the Salvador Museum of Modern Art (2022), in Salvador, Brazil, and *Um Defeito de Cor*, at the Rio Art Museum (2022), Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. His work is included in institutional collections such as: Museu de Arte do Rio, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil and Museu de Arte Moderna da Bahia, Salvador, Brazil.

about elian almeida

Elian Almeida's (n. 1994, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil) practice is characterized by a convergence of different techniques, such as painting, photography, video and installation, functioning as part of a new generation of artists whose works revindicate protagonism to agents and bodies that have been traditionally marginalized in our society and in the history of art. His body of work addresses decolonialism, exploring the experience and performativity of the black body in contemporary Brazilian society, through a process of recuperating elements from the past - imagens, narratives, characters - as a means of contributing to the process of empowerment and dissemination of afro-brazilian historiography.

são paulo

avenida europa 655,
jardim europa, 01449-001
são paulo, sp, brasil
t 55 (11) 3063 2344

rio de janeiro

rua redentor 241,
ipanema, 22421-030
rio de janeiro, rj, brasil
t 55 (21) 3591 0052

new york

511 west 21st street
new york, 10011 ny
usa
t 1 (212) 794 5038

info@nararoesler.art

www.nararoesler.art

On one hand, Almeida's research engages with the biographies of black personalities whose importance has been erased through history, striving to restore the notability that they deserve. On the other hand, the artist also addresses the violent ways in which police approach racialized bodies, exploring matters of privilege within Brazilian culture and society, while also denouncing the myth of racial democracy. In his series *Vogue*, Almeida appropriates the visual identity and aesthetics of the famous fashion magazine, integrating them into the composition of his portraits of black individuals. With this, the artist demonstrates the ways in which his different lines of work have come to converge as a means of encouraging the public to question the ways in which these subjects have been represented and circulated within Brazilian visual culture.

Elian Almeida lives and works in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. His first solo exhibition *Antes – agora – o que há de vir*, took place at Nara Roesler (2021), in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. His works have been exhibited in numerous group shows, including: *Atos de revolta*, at Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro (MAM Rio) (2022), in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; *Crônicas cariocas*, at Museu de Arte do Rio (MAR) (2021), in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; *Enciclopédia negra*, at Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo (2021), in São Paulo, Brazil; and at Museu de Arte do Rio (MAR) (2022), in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; *Amanhã há de ser outro dia / Demain sera un autre jour*, at Studio Iván Argote and at Espacio Temporal (2020), in Paris, France; *Esqueleto – 70 anos de UERJ*, at Paço Imperial (2019), in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; *Arte naïf – Nenhum museu a menos*, at Escola de Artes Visuais do Parque Lage (EAV Parque Lage) (2019), in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; *Mostra memórias da resistência*, at Centro Municipal de Arte Hélio Oiticica (CMAHO) (2018), in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; *Bela verão e Transnômade Opavivará*, at Galpão Bela Maré (2018), in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; *Novas poéticas – Diálogos expandidos em arte contemporânea*, at Museu do Futuro (2016), in Curitiba, Brazil; *amongst others*. His work is part of the Museu de Arte do Rio (MAR) collection, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

about nara roesler

Nara Roesler is a leading Brazilian contemporary art gallery, representing seminal Brazilian and international artists who emerged in the 1950s as well as preeminent mid-career and emerging artists who dialogue with the currents put forth by

these historical figures. Founded by Nara Roesler in 1989, the gallery has consistently fomented curatorial practice while upholding the utmost quality in art production. This has actively been put into practice through a select and rigorous exhibitions program created in close collaboration with its artists; the implementation and fostering of the Roesler Curatorial Project, a platform for curatorial projects; and continued support to artists beyond the gallery space, working with institutions and curators in offsite shows. In 2012, the gallery doubled its São Paulo exhibition space, in 2014 it expanded to Rio, and in 2015 it opened in New York City, continuing its mission to provide the best platform for its artists to show their work.

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press contact

paula plee

com.sp@nararoesler.art

são paulo

avenida europa 655,
jardim europa, 01449-001
são paulo, sp, brasil
t 55 (11) 3063 2344

rio de janeiro

rua redentor 241,
ipanema, 22421-030
rio de janeiro, rj, brasil
t 55 (21) 3591 0052

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new york, 10011 ny
usa
t 1 (212) 794 5038

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