



1
54 Contemporary
African Art Fair

GUSTAVO NAZARENO
SOLO PROJECT

STAND S9 - SOUTH WING

12 — 15.10.2023

SOMERSET HOUSE
LONDON



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At this year's edition of **1-54 London Contemporary African Art Fair - London, Portas Vilaseca Galeria** is pleased to present "**Pequenos Contos de Fé**" [Little Tales of Faith], a solo project featuring the most recent production by Brazilian artist **Gustavo Nazareno**, which also represents a significant milestone in his career.

Between 2022 and 2023, the artist used a notebook to bring to life fables that would serve as the basis for the oil paintings that comprise his new body of work. Inspired by the religious traditions of Candomblé and Umbanda, Gustavo's works aim to promote reflection on the cultural and spiritual aspects that permeate these religions.

With their roots in the African diaspora, Candomblé and Umbanda are Afro-Brazilian religions that have distinct characteristics. Candomblé is known for its worship of the orixás, deities that represent natural elements and human aspects, with traditional rituals, dances and songs. On the other hand, Umbanda is syncretic, incorporating influences from spiritualism, Catholicism and indigenous traditions, with an emphasis on communication with spiritual entities, such as guides, caboclos and ancestors. Both religions play an important role in Brazilian culture and in the preservation of Afro-Brazilian traditions.

The paintings that the artist produced for this new series represent, basically, small fragments of the stories documented in his notebook. Each work functions as a window into a broader narrative, inviting viewers to analyze and interpret the religious and cultural elements present in these stories, guided by colors, movements, temperature, light and shadow, as well as the characters' clothing.

A distinct example is the painting "**Ewa se encontra com Oyá**" [Ewa meets Oyá], which depicts the celestial dance of the orixás Ewa and Oyá, suggesting a visual representation of a story in which a person, in a state of confusion, is guided by these two deities. Oyá is the goddess associated with winds and storms, while Ewa is revered for her connection to beauty and elegance. Both play central roles as orixás, spiritual entities revered both in Candomblé and Umbanda. The lines and color palette manifest a vivacity that coincides with the historical aura of the orixás. This painting not only celebrates the beauty of these deities, but also emphasizes the complexity of their natures, highlighting the harmony of opposites inherent in these entities.

Another remarkable work, "**Exu 2**", is inspired by the artist's recent trip to Cuba, where the black cat plays a prominent role in local traditions. This painting alludes to Afro-Cuban religions, especially *Santeria*, which often associates the black cat with spiritual entities, symbolizing dualities of luck and bad luck.

The representation of the black chicken in the painting "**Oferenda**" [Offering] evokes the use of this animal in sacrificial ceremonies in some religious traditions, while the horse in "**O Conquistador 2**" [The Conqueror 2] symbolizes *Exu*, a central figure in Afro-Brazilian religions, often portrayed as an intermediary deity between humans and orixás.

Recently, the artist decided to expand his artistic research by exploring the genre of landscape painting, an investigation that aims to further enrich and contextualize the narratives present in his work. This development does not in any way diminish the artist's central commitment to addressing the lack of representations of Brazilian Afro-religious images and the deconstruction of stereotypes surrounding the orixá *Exu*, but it also expands the expressive possibilities and depth of the messages it seeks to convey.

Inspired by great masters such as John Martin, Caspar David Friedrich and Estêvão Silva, Gustavo's research on landscape painting allows the artist to explore new stylistic and conceptual horizons. These landscapes are not simple settings, they are narrative elements in themselves, loaded with meaning and symbolism that contribute to the complexity of the stories the artist wants to tell.

By applying elements of fashion and art, Gustavo Nazareno seeks to create an innovative perspective that, in addition to a visual stimulus, also encourages critical reflection. His aim is to reshape the collective imagination, not only by strengthening aesthetics, but also by addressing deep questions of identity, belonging and spirituality. Through these means, the idea is to encourage a critical discussion about the representation and perception of Afro-Brazilian religions in contemporary society, highlighting cultural and spiritual nuances that, for a long time, remained obscured and neglected.



GUSTAVO NAZARENO

Exploração dos filhos de Ogum, 2023

Oil on linen

100 x 100 cm









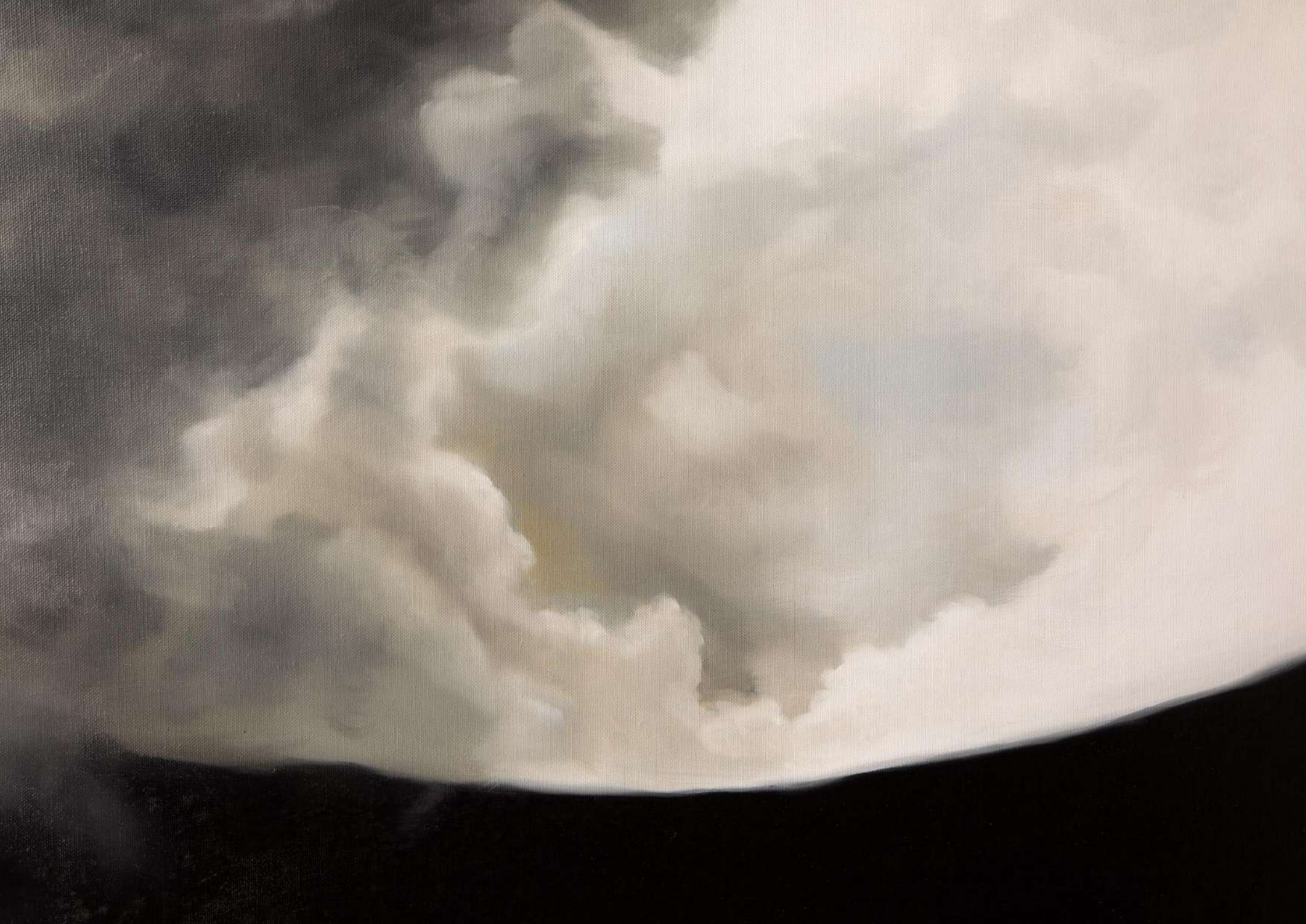
GUSTAVO NAZARENO

Próximo Passo, 2023

Oil on linen

200 x 170 cm











GUSTAVO NAZARENO

Exu, 2023

Oil on linen

170 x 170 cm





GUSTAVO NAZARENO

Encruzilhada, 2023

Oil on linen

50 x 50 cm







GUSTAVO NAZARENO
Conquista de todo céu, 2023
Oil on linen
50 x 50 cm







GUSTAVO NAZARENO

A casa da dúvida, 2023

Oil on linen

50 x 50 cm







GUSTAVO NAZARENO

Oferenda, 2023

Oil on linen

50 x 50 cm







GUSTAVO NAZARENO

Exu 2, 2023

Oil on linen

50 x 50 cm







GUSTAVO NAZARENO

Pequenos passos para dominar o sol, 2023

Oil on linen

50 x 50 cm







GUSTAVO NAZARENO

O Conquistador 2, 2023

Oil on linen

50 x 50 cm







GUSTAVO NAZARENO
Segunda às 21:00, 2023
Oil on linen
50 x 50 cm







GUSTAVO NAZARENO

Ewa se encontra com Oyá, 2023

Oil on linen

50 x 50 cm







GUSTAVO NAZARENO

Rafael de Bará, 2023

Oil on linen

50 x 50 cm







GUSTAVO NAZARENO

Ikú, 2023

Oil on linen

80 x 60 cm





GUSTAVO NAZARENO

1994, *Três Pontas*, MG, Brazil.

Lives and works in São Paulo, SP, Brazil.

The artistic practice of Gustavo Nazareno is guided by oil painting and charcoal drawing. His works emerge from a meticulous study of the human anatomy and from investigations on the poetics and politics of the body. His research is influenced by the Afro-Brazilian Yoruba pantheon, in particular *Exu* - the orisha of human qualities, who manifests itself with all its mythical power in the pictorial field. The artist's references range from the Renaissance and Baroque iconography to the history of fashion and its contemporary developments.

Recent solo exhibitions include: "*Bará*", Museu Afro Brasil Emanuel Araújo, São Paulo, Brazil (2023); "*Pombajira*", Selma Feriani Gallery, Tunis, Tunisia (2023); "*Personal Notes of Faith*", Cassina Projects, Milan, Italy (2022); and "*Fables on Exu*", Gallery 1957, London, United Kingdom (2021).

Recent group exhibitions include: "*Dos Brasis - Arte e Pensamento Negro*", Sesc Belenzinho, São Paulo, Brazil (2023); "*Quilombo: vida, problemas e aspirações do negro*", Galeria Lago, Inhotim, Brumadinho, Brazil (2022); "*Between Nothingness and Infinity*", Cornell Biennial at Johnson Museum of Art – University of Cornell, Ithaca, NY, USA (2022); "*Outros Ensaios para o Tempo*", Galeria Nara Roesler - in partnership with Portas Vilaseca Galeria, São Paulo, Brazil (2021); "*Eye of the Collector*", Gallery 1957, Art Fair London, London, UK (2021) and "*Collective Reflections: Contemporary African & Diasporic Expressions Of A New Vanguard*", Gallery 1957, Accra, Ghana (2020).

In 2021, Gustavo was shortlisted for the *EFG Latin America Art Award*, an acquisition award organized by ArtNexus and EFG Bank. More recently, in 2023, he was nominated for the Pipa Prize, a reference award in the field of Brazilian contemporary art. Also in 2023, the artist has launched his first publication - "*Bará*" - simultaneously with his solo exhibition of the same name, held at the Museu Afro Brasil Emanuel Araújo, in São Paulo, Brazil.



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