

# Rui Moreira

Sous le Soleil du Portugal

May 6 - June 25, 2019

Observatoire BHV Marais, Paris

*In collaboration with Jeanne Bucher Jaeger Gallery*



*The Machine of Entangling Landscapes VI*, 2011, gouache and gel pen on paper, 160 x 238 cm, Courtesy Jeanne Bucher Jaeger, Paris

A country of navigators and explorers, Portugal endowed native son Rui Moreira with a taste for far-flung expeditions— to India, to the Southern Moroccan desert, to the Amazon Forest - which became the primary sources of inspiration for his art. He returned to the desert of Morocco more than a dozen times, with its luminosity and its overwhelming heat, the meandering labyrinths of Far-Eastern cities and the near-absolute silence of the desert. In the Amazonian jungle, he encountered the freezing temperatures in the mountains at the source of the Ganges, the solitude and the extreme humidity. Drawing incessantly after returning from his journeys, the artist sets in motion a sort of mnemonic exercise, reviving, with his body and in a totally instinctive fashion, the natural cycle of these places and sensations, in order to feel them in all their details.

This intense feeling underlies the structure of Moreira's drawings, and the particular, dense atmospheres of each of these locations is visible in his work. Geometric abstractions invoke the detail of the infinitely small at the scale of a cosmography, organic landscapes mix desert dunes with Himalayan Mountains and Amazonian fern trees, and characters in the form of divinities in mythological landscapes integrate dance motives of *Katakali* and costumes of *Caretos de Podence* of the Tras-os-Montes region, in the North of Portugal.

In the corridor of the 5th floor of the BHV leading to the Espace Observatoire are located two of the artist's landscapes, situated to the left and the right, an invitation to immerse the viewer in the artistic and mental space of the artist. These two landscapes, *Golden Rain II* and *Untitled* from 2007, in India ink and gouache, black and gold, are an accumulation of signs— spiders, ancient symbols, masks, half moons and faraway stars— intermixed in an organic fashion where one follows the oscillations of the forms in an almost incessant metamorphosis placing the visitor at the heart of a landscape in perpetual movement.

Then appears this immense drawing of blue circles— one big and six small— entitled *The Machine of Entangling Landscapes VI*, whose title invokes the work of the great Portuguese poet Herbert Helder, considered to be the Fernando Pessoa of his time. His eponymous poem is composed of a verse from François Villon, a verse from Dante, a verse from Luis de Camoes, a verse from Genesis, another from the Book of Revelation, and a verse of Helder's. By using the same verse but changing its order and structure, Helder constructs imaginary, protean worlds. This work is also inspired by the 12 trips to Morocco that Moreira undertook, and also Islamic art and the desert, as well as the architecture of the city of Fez, which possesses one of the three largest labyrinths of streets in the world, 40,000 in total, equal to Cairo in Egypt and to Damascus in Syria, recently devastated by war. Nourished by cinematographic references, this work could be a snapshot of the universe or of several planets, taken from a spatial vessel or a celestial camera.

To the left and the right of this drawing, *The Holy Family III* as well as *Black Star III, IV* and *V* evoke laces, azulejos, Islamic Art and recognizable organic forms, reminding us that the Islamic influence lasted five and a half centuries in Portugal, a country geographically situated at the frontiers of Europe and the Orient.

On the other side of the Observatoire, *The Machine of Entangling Landscapes I* recalls both the scorching air above the Moroccan desert dunes and the desiccated landscapes of Portuguese Alentejo in the summer in much the same way that *Air du Matin II* evokes marine and ocean/desert landscapes. The ocean is also hidden in the desert, as the artist says, since one finds marine fossils and shells in the desert dunes. This sand desert was also the floor of a sea millions of years ago.

The originality and depth of Rui Moreira's work are striking. The monumentality of the ensemble is constructed in infinite, delicate detail, and the artist lives each of his drawings like an unfolding field of exploration, where he uses his body like an immense machine for creating his drawings, spending in between 4 and 8 months to complete them.



*The Machine of Entangling Landscapes I*, 2008-2009  
Gouache on paper  
120 x 160 cm  
Courtesy Jeanne Bucher Jaeger, Paris



*L'Air du Matin II*, 2012  
Gouache on paper  
120 x 160 cm  
Collection François Valette, Paris  
Courtesy Jeanne Bucher Jaeger, Paris