

GLADSTONE

Gladstone Debuts Jaider Esbell's First Exhibition in South Korea

Exhibition features paintings and works on paper from the later years of the Brazilian artist, curator, and activist's life

Gladstone presents the first solo exhibition in South Korea of indigenous artist, activist, and curator Jaider Esbell (b. 1979, Normandia—d. 2021, São Sebastião, Brazil). Comprising paintings on canvas and works on paper, spanning the artist's later years, the show highlights his distinctive visual language of vibrant contrasting patterns across saturated black backgrounds. Esbell's deep connection with nature, rooted in ecological activism and Macuxi cosmology, permeates every aspect of his work—from the use of plant-based dyes to the depiction of myths and environmental elements such as birds, trees, and cacti. Underscored by his belief in the interconnectedness of all living and natural forms, and the presence of mythological beings and spirits within our complex ecosystem, Esbell's artistic legacy mobilizes narratives of resistances and champions indigenous epistemologies.

Esbell challenged the boundaries between art and activism in a practice he named "artivism." As a key figure in Arte Indígena Contemporânea (Contemporary Indigenous Art), he used his platform to advocate for the recognition of indigenous rights and territories and to create spaces that highlight myriad decolonial perspectives that transcend Western art historical traditions. Driven by his activist efforts, this social movement uplifted artistic production by Afro-Brazilian communities, Indigenous peoples, and other historically marginalized populations. As Esbell's prominence in the art world grew, he became a critical voice and contributed to the larger community through the establishment of a gallery that served as an artistic and intellectual laboratory, prioritizing institutional collaborations, and curating exhibitions that center indigenous art.

Esbell's artistic practice weaves together activism and ecology to affirm Indigenous relationships with the land and urge environmental consciousness. This exhibition brings together paintings and works on paper that forefront narratives highlighting the relationship between living and non-living entities in the natural world through the lens of Macuxi cosmology. Esbell asserts indigenous worldviews and aesthetics through depictions of mythological beings and spirits including Makunaimi, the Macuxi creator of all nature. Works such as *Os cactos e jardins de Makunaimi 2* (2021) render vibrant gardens created by Makunaimi, while *A festa da chegada das chuvas* (2020) celebrates the arrival of rain, capturing the dynamic interplay of nature's rhythmic cycles. Recurring motifs such as serpents, birds, and cosmic elements function as both cultural signifiers and political metaphors, reflecting concerns towards the exploitative process of extractivism in the Amazon region. Forged through the intersectional dialogue between art, ancestry, and ecology, Esbell's "artivism" stands as an enduring testament to the importance of creating pathways for indigenous expression within contemporary art frameworks.

Exhibition Details

April 1 – May 17, 2025

Opening Reception: April 1

760, Samseong-ro, Gangnam-gu

Seoul, 06070, Republic of Korea

About Jaider Esbell:

Jaider Esbell (1979-2021) was born in Normandia, Roraima, Brazil, known today as the indigenous territory, Terra Indígena Raposa Serra do Sol. Esbell was a member of the Macuxi group and a central figure in the indigenous art movement in Brazil through his work as an artist, educator, writer, curator, and activist. The artist's multidisciplinary practice spanned painting, writing, drawing, installation and performance, engaging his artistic production as a means of ecological and political activism.

Originally trained as a geographer, Esbell turned fully to art in 2016 after several years of establishing himself as an educator and advocate for indigenous art and social movements through various curatorial projects and founding the Jaider Esbell Contemporary Indigenous Art Gallery in 2013. In 2021, Esbell's work was shown at the 34th Bienal de São Paulo titled *Though it's dark, still I sing*. That same year, he participated as both an artist and guest curator of the exhibition,

GLADSTONE

Moqué_m_Surari: Contemporary Indigenous Art, at the Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo (MAM São Paulo). In 2022, Esbell was highlighted prominently in the Arsenal of the 59th Venice Biennale, *The Milk of Dreams*, curated by Cecilia Alemani. The artist's work has been the subject of solo exhibitions including: Gladstone Gallery, New York (2025); *Apresentação: Ruku*, Millan, São Paulo (2021); *Piatai Datai*, Galeria Jaider Esbell de Arte Indígena Contemporânea e Sesc Centro, Boa Vista, Brazil (2019); and *Transmakunaima: o buraco é mais embaixo*, Memorial dos Povos Indígenas, Brasília, Brazil (2018). Esbell has also been included in group exhibitions at notable institutions including: 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa, Japan; Museu de Arte do Rio (MAR), Rio de Janeiro; Pina Contemporânea, São Paulo; Museu Brasileiro da Escultura e da Ecologia (MuBE), São Paulo; Museo de Arte Latinoamericano de Buenos Aires (MALBA), Buenos Aires; Museo Madre, Naples, Italy; Triennale Milano, Milan, Italy; and Weltmuseum Wien, Vienna, among others. Esbell was the recipient of the 2016 PIPA prize, one of Brazil's most esteemed contemporary art awards, and the Prêmio Funarte de Criação Literária in 2010. Esbell's works are held in the institutional collections of the Centre Pompidou, Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain, Museo de Arte Latinoamericano de Buenos Aires (MALBA), and Pinacoteca do Estado.

About Gladstone Gallery:

Gladstone Gallery is recognized for its embrace of experimentation and visionary practices. The gallery has long been an active partner with artists pursuing catalytic ideas and engaging with pressing issues. Headquartered in New York, Gladstone's impact extends globally with galleries in Brussels and Seoul, enabling it to present new bodies of work and evolve its program to advance the practices and reach of its artists through time. Alongside its work with contemporary artists, the gallery is a steward of the legacies of pivotal historical artists and an advocate for the enduring power of their work. Gladstone is led by a team of partners who spearhead its long-term vision and program, building on the values of its founder Barbara Gladstone.

Press Contact:

press@gladstonegallery.com