

## SPRING NOTES

30.08.2025 – 11.10.2025

**GALLERIA CONTINUA** is pleased to announce *SPRING NOTES*, the first solo exhibition in Brazil by renowned Jamaican-American artist Nari Ward, taking place simultaneously with his participation in the 2025 São Paulo Biennial.

The exhibition presents a group of new works that reaffirm Ward's ongoing commitment to themes such as support, resilience, spirituality, and collective memory, using the poetic transformation of everyday objects as his central visual language.

At the heart of the exhibition are mattress springs, employed as visual metaphors for support and resistance. For Ward, these often invisible, hidden structural elements become powerful symbols of the human capacity to withstand, adapt, and regenerate. Their spiraled forms echo the resilient movement of the spirit – a recurring motif throughout his practice. Highlights include the works "Compass for Arthur Bispo do Rosário" and "Untitled Fig", both composed of shoelaces – simple, accessible objects that, in the artist's hands, take on new layers of meaning. Arranged into intricate wall drawings, the shoelaces form visual networks that evoke collectivity, diversity, and communal strength, recurring themes in Ward's work as he gives voice to historically marginalized communities.

Another key element in the exhibition is ironed cotton, a material steeped in historical significance tied to colonialism and enslaved labor. Through the careful act of smoothing the fabric, Ward performs a symbolic gesture of healing, memory, and transformation, operating between the domestic and the ritualistic.

Spirituality plays a fundamental role in *SPRING NOTES*, emerging through symbolic references such as the Kongo cosmogram – an ancestral African diagram representing the cycles of life, death, and rebirth. Through such references, Ward invites viewers to contemplate the unseen layers of human experience – the mysterious, the sacred, the transcendent.

*SPRING NOTES* enters into direct dialogue with Ward's installation *Spring Seed*, created for the 2025 São Paulo Biennial. This immersive audiovisual work explores the complex interconnections between Jamaica, Brazil, and Japan, articulated through the lenses of capital, migration, spirituality, and diasporic ties.

At the Biennial, Ward presents a large-scale installation composed of suspended bed slats, forming symbolic walls of containment and energy. At its core, a LED screen displays interwoven footage from Liberdade, São Paulo and Jamaica's Blue Mountains – two regions deeply marked by histories of resistance, agriculture, and spirituality. Sounds recorded in the Chapel of the Souls of the Afflicted (Capela das Almas dos Aflitos) in Liberdade resonate through speakers mounted on springs, producing a sonic environment charged with historical and emotional depth.

This same gesture – transforming ordinary materials into vessels of memory and spirituality – echoes throughout *SPRING NOTES*. The two exhibitions share material and symbolic elements: springs, cotton, sound, handcrafted labor, and the tension between historical weight and poetic lightness. While the Biennial work reflects the global ties of

diaspora and cultural evolution, the exhibition at GALLERIA CONTINUA turns inward, focusing on the intimate and the communal, deepening our understanding of what sustains us – individually and collectively.

A vital part of Ward's project in Brazil is his collaboration with the Capela das Almas dos Aflitos, a significant spiritual and historical site in the Liberdade neighborhood. Built in the 18th century on the grounds of the former Cemetery of the Afflicted, where enslaved and marginalized individuals were buried, the chapel endures as a symbol of resistance, faith, and collective memory.

As part of his residency in São Paulo, Ward created 20 new works directly related to the chapel, using everyday materials such as paper, wood, and paint. These pieces were conceived in dialogue with the architecture, history, and spirituality of the site, forming a visual narrative that moves through memory, devotion, and resistance.

A central focus of this body of work is the chapel's candle-lit prayer space (velário), located in what was once the holding cell for those condemned to death – including Francisco José das Chagas, known as Chaguinhas. This small room, where Chaguinhas is believed to have spent his final hours before his execution in 1821, has evolved over two centuries into a site of deep popular devotion.

Chaguinhas is remembered by many as a hero of a nativist revolt, a popular martyr, and potentially an unofficial Black saint. Ongoing reverence for his legacy – especially in a space shaped by historical exclusion, like the Cemetery of the Afflicted – has become part of a broader movement for recognition and historical repair.

Nari Ward's work in this context interlaces with this living memory. By incorporating simple materials and spiritual symbols, the artist creates pieces that honor the strength of popular devotion while illuminating silenced histories. His works function as contemporary offerings, expanding the ritual significance of the velário and paying tribute to the resilient faith of Afro-Brazilian communities.

The pieces created for the chapel connect organically with both *SPRING NOTES* and *Spring Seed*, forming an expanded body of work that reflects on spirituality, historical resistance, and diasporic identity.

About the artist:

**Nari Ward** (b. 1963) was born in Jamaica; he lives and works in New York. Ward creates thought-provoking sculptural installations using repurposed materials like baby strollers, shoelaces, and shopping carts to explore

themes of race, poverty, and consumer culture. Nari Ward received a BA from City University of New York, Hunter College in 1989, and an MFA from City University of New York, Brooklyn College in 1992. His work has been exhibited internationally at institutions such as the New Museum (2019), Pérez Art Museum Miami (2015), and Pirelli HangarBicocca, Milan (2024), and is held in major collections, including MoMA, the Brooklyn Museum, New York, Pérez Art Museum Miami, and the Whitney Museum of American Art. Ward has been the recipient of numerous awards, including the Rome Prize, American Academy of Rome (2012) and John Simon Guggenheim Foundation, and the Pollock-Krasner Foundation.

About the gallery:

Founded in 1990 in San Gimignano, Italy, GALLERIA CONTINUA has expanded its locations to Beijing, Les Moulins, Havana, São Paulo, Rome and Paris. Remaining faithful to the spirit of perpetual evolution, and committed to engaging the widest possible audiences in contemporary art, GALLERIA CONTINUA has built a strong identity through its bonds and experiences, thriving away from the conventional urban centres, in completely unexpected yet timeless locations.

**GALLERIA CONTINUA / São Paulo**

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Opens from Tuesday to Friday from 10AM to 6PM,  
and Saturday, 10 AM to 3 PM

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