



Thiago Barbalho, *Compulsive Chewing*, 2020-2023. Oil, acrylic, coloured pencils, ballpoint pen, permanent marker and pencil on paper, 96 x 132.8 cm. Photograph: Richard Ivey. Courtesy of the Artist and Elizabeth Xi Bauer Gallery, London.

**Thiago Barbalho: *Chants*  
at Elizabeth Xi Bauer, Deptford**

16<sup>th</sup> May – 28<sup>th</sup> June 2025

Private View: 15<sup>th</sup> May 2025

**Elizabeth Xi Bauer** is delighted to present ***Chants***, a solo exhibition by artist **Thiago Barbalho**. Known for his intricate and evocative compositions, Barbalho's latest body of work delves into the complexities of language, symbolism, and the intersection of identities. In *Chants*, Barbalho invites viewers into an immersive encounter with his evolving visual language, exploring the relationship between spiritual practice, philosophical thought, and contemporary culture.

Barbalho's work, which spans a variety of materials and mediums, offers an array of symbols, motifs, and references that weave together fragmented narratives. These pieces prompt reflection on the tension between meaning and its visual representation. The *Chants* series operates like cryptic visual puzzles, each work acting as both an invocation and a meditation on the limitations of language. Here, Barbalho embraces a visual language—one that transcends traditional writing systems and evolves in constant dialogue with the cultural, spiritual, and philosophical undercurrents of our time.

The exhibition continues Barbalho's exploration of drawing as a form of visual writing. For the artist, drawing is an "ancestral technology" that bridges the mind and body, offering a unique space for exploring consciousness, imagination, and the physicality of creation. The works—

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often large-scale and meticulously detailed—combine vibrant colours and complex forms that create a hypnotic rhythm. This dynamic sense of unplanned chaos evokes a deeper, spiritual connection to themes of nature, the body, and the cosmos, and the complexities of human existence.

The exhibition takes its name from Barbalho's concept of the *Chant*—a form of visual prayer that evokes the act of seeking meaning through fleeting symbols and fragments. Barbalho's works are informed by his broader philosophical inquiry into the nature of language and the act of communication, which he views through an anthropological lens. In *Chants*, the artist reflects on the failure of traditional writing systems, but, crucially, does not abandon the desire to communicate. The work thus becomes a search for new ways to translate and express that which cannot be contained by conventional words.

Barbalho's artistic process involves an interplay of visual references, drawing from history, pop culture, and his academic background in philosophy, law, and anthropology. His compositions combine these influences to weave together complex, fragmented narratives. Viewed from a distance, the works vibrate with colour; upon closer inspection, a rich tapestry of layered images emerges, offering a multitude of interpretations.

*Chants* will also include book-format canvases, which are symbolic of Barbalho's critique of the modern "attention economy." In an age when art is often consumed quickly and discarded, these works demand sustained engagement and reflection. *Chants* challenges the transient nature of contemporary art reception, positioning itself as a testament to the endurance of meaning and the necessity of deeper, more sustained engagement with art and ideas. These "open book" canvases become spaces of self-authorship, where ideas float through visual fields like pollen or forest debris—simultaneously fragmentary and fertile.

In a cultural moment defined by intrusion, disposability, and digital hyper-consumption, these works resist immediacy. Each composition appears as a page seeking resonance over recognition. This exhibition, in its totality, becomes a meditation on how to construct meaning in a world saturated with noise. In a culture driven by distraction and digital saturation, Barbalho's works reject instant readability. Instead, they call for slow looking—inviting viewers to sit with uncertainty and engage deeply.

Barbalho's work is inspired by a broader cultural context, from the handcraft traditions of Brazil's Northeast, where vibrant light and colours mirror the intensity found in his art. The contrasts between international mass tourism and local cultures are woven into this exhibition's exploration further enriching the exhibition's layered meanings. In *Chants*, Barbalho reimagines drawing not as illustration but as invocation. Living close to the Atlantic Forest, his daily encounters with the rhythms of nature—birdsong, blooming trees, insects moving like cathedrals of light—inspire a visual lexicon that resists translation into words. These drawings are not static; they are events, offerings, and chants in themselves.

*Chants* redefines the boundaries of drawing by exploring the interplay between form, narrative, and the shifting meanings of cultural symbols. Immersive and layered, the exhibition expands

what drawing can be—transforming it into a space for ritual, resistance, and the imaginative reinvention of language.

## Notes to Editors

**Thiago Barbalho (born 1984, Natal, Rio Grande do Norte) lives and works in São Paulo, Brazil.**

Barbalho holds a BA in Philosophy and an MA in History of Metaphysics from University Federal do Rio Grande do Norte, Brazil. In 2010, Barbalho also completed a degree in Law from University Federal do Rio Grande do Norte, Brazil. A writer and artist, Barbalho has published short stories, novels and poetry. Barbalho founded the independent press Edições Vira-lata. His artworks are featured across various publications including Phaidon's 2021 publication, *Vitamin D3, Today's best in contemporary drawing*. Barbalho's work is featured in *Dreams in the Sun – Mirages of Art in Latin America*, published 2024. The publication features around 140 artists showcasing Latin American creativity from 1900 to 2024.

Providing space for exchange, critical thinking and artistic experimentation, in 2017, Barbalho completed a residency at Pivô Arte e Pesquisa, São Paulo, Brazil.

In 2019, Barbalho was nominated for the PIPA Prize. The PIPA Prize recognises prominent Brazilian visual artists.

This year, Barbalho will participate in the Further On Air International Residency. Located in Long Island, this residency offers artists an opportunity to explore new creative processes while engaging with nature. It aims to support contemporary artists, providing them a space for reflection and the development of new works.

Barbalho's works have been exhibited in Portugal, The UK and across Brazil. Recently in 2024, the artist held two solo exhibitions. *Secrets and spells* at Nara Roesler, São Paulo, Brazil and *Cacimba Nova* at Casa de Cultura do Jardim do Seridó, Jardim do Seridó, Brazil. Further exhibitions of Barbalho's works include, *Once in Never Out*, Nara Roesler, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 2022; *Correspondence*, Marília Razuk Gallery, São Paulo, 2019, and *Thiago Barbalho*, Kupfer Project Space, London, UK, 2018. Group shows include *Mapa da estrada: Novas obras no acervo da Pinacoteca de São Paulo*, Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo, 2022; *Electric Dreams*, Nara Roesler, Rio de Janeiro, 2021; *Rocambole/Roly-Poly*, Kunsthalle Lissabon, Lisbon, Portugal, 2019; *Rocambole*, Pivô, São Paulo, 2018; *Voyage, Bergamin & Gomide*, São Paulo, 2017 and *AVAF*, Casa Triângulo, São Paulo, 2017. In 2022 and 2024 Barbalho's work was exhibited at The Armory Show by Nara Roesler. The gallery also presented his work at the 2023 edition of Art Basel Miami Beach.

In 2023, Elizabeth Xi Bauer presented *Phantom Dance*, an exhibition of new works by Thiago Barbalho and Theodore Ereira-Guyer. In 2025, Elizabeth Xi Bauer celebrated the opening of a second London location with its *Inaugural Exhibition*. The show featured a selection of works by both established and emerging artists who are integral to the gallery's identity, including Thiago Barbalho.

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Barbalho's works are in the collections of Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil and Instituto Inhotim, Brumadinho, Brazil.

*Thiago Barbalho: Chants* will run from 16th May – 28th June 2025, at Elizabeth Xi Bauer's Deptford location, open Wednesday through to Saturday, 12 – 6 pm or by appointment. A Private View will be held on 15th May 2025, 6 – 8 pm. The artist will be available for interviews.

Gallery locations:

Deptford: Fuel Tank, 8-12 Creekside, London, SE8 3DX

Exmouth Market: 20-22 Exmouth Market, London, EC1R 4QE (Current exhibition + *Days + Nights*, works by Abraham Kritzman and Philippe Van Snick, until 8th June 2025)

For further information, press inquiries, or to schedule a visit, contact Paige Ashley at [paige@lizxib.com](mailto:paige@lizxib.com)

A Dropbox with additional press material can be found here:

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/iqia0opyopsecssqwt307/AGpTN9Cjracl-Y3ojFnPoPE?rlkey=q5dkp77cxzt7tw8pcusgoi7tv&st=4b75q4lu&dl=0>

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