

Dona Romana

Natividade, TO, Brazil, 1942

Centro Bom Jesus de Nazaré, sítio Jacuba [Bom Jesus de Nazaré Center, Jacuba Ranch], Natividade, TO, since September, 1989

place of residence with works in stone, paper, fabrics, painting, wire, wood, and various objects

○ Photographic record: Emerson Silva

Dona Romana's magnetism transcends the Jacuba site where she lives, attracting people from around the world. Passing through the seven-pointed arch and entering the narrow gap in the low wall surrounding the site feels like entering another dimension: a sacred ground, a sanctuary. Stars, beings, inscriptions, and totems carved from canga stone and laterite emerge among the brownish rocky soil and the Cerrado vegetation, gleaming under the hot sky of an intense blue. The eruption of raw sculpture and essential forms, created with unusual materials and minimal gestures, reveals a distinctive style imbued with profound magic. Pieces in wire and details or motifs engraved like mosaics of various pebbles and other residues add to the hardness of cemented stones. The expressiveness of the images that populate the place carries the sensitivity of a creation engaged with greater revelations, attempting, through hands, to capture an indescribable beauty and power. These suns, stars, angels, antennas, crosses, birds, and other syncretic figures and symbols multiply without ever repeating. Each piece vibrates strongly in its own way, echoing their singular messages, yet forming a dense and cohesive constellation, fulfilling a fundamental role between supporting the ground and ascending to the heavens.

This mission is told through the life of mystic Romana: born and raised in one of the oldest cities in the state of Tocantins, at the foot of the Natividade mountain range, she decided to close her cachaça shop after having her first vision in 1974. Guided by her "three curators," she went to live in the rural area, where she learned the power of herbs and concoctions, beginning her practice as a prayer leader and healer and becoming known throughout the

region as “Mother,” seer, healer, prophetess, and spiritual leader. The stone works began in January 1990 and gradually incorporated details in color and other materials. Always guided by these voices, Romana created pieces and installations whose purpose is grounded in specific locations, often indicated by a light. Her production also unfolded in drawings on paper and paintings on the walls of buildings at her site, also known as the Bom Jesus de Nazaré Center. All of this integrates the same “foundation,” whose construction process Dona Romana completed in 2011, now awaiting “the great hour.” This grand and brilliant work seals a pact between worlds. It is an indivisible fusion of traditional powers and knowledge with messages translated by Dona Romana. It is a core of forces that holds the earth and connects different energy poles of the planet, also linking them to other dimensions, serving as a spiritual pillar through fascinating and extraordinary materiality.

For the 38th Panorama, Dona Romana participates with a photograph presented on a colossal panel, bringing an emblematic image of her sanctuary in Natividade (TO) into the exhibition. Her presence is further reinforced by an online repository containing an audio recording of her testimony and extensive photographic documentation of her work.