

MARIANE IBRAHIM

PRESS RELEASE

JOSÉ GAMARRA *SELVA COLOR DEL TIEMPO*

Mariane Ibrahim Mexico City
September 3 - December 19, 2026

Mariane Ibrahim is proud to present *Selva color del tiempo*, José Gamarra's first solo exhibition in Mexico. The exhibition takes its title from the text Édouard Glissant wrote for Gamarra's 1985 exhibition at Galerie Albert Loeb in Paris. A central figure in Caribbean thought and the *Poetics of Relation*, Glissant engaged with the artist's work for decades as a writer, collector, and friend. In the essay that lends the exhibition its title, Glissant identifies in Gamarra's painting a conception of the forest that exceeds the conventions of landscape. The forest emerges as a territory in which history remains inscribed and from which the experience of the Americas can be understood. Far from representing the Amazon as a remote or untouched space, Gamarra transforms it into an archive where conquest, colonization, the exploitation of natural resources, and their persistence in the present converge. Presented for the first time in Mexico, these works propose a continental reading in which the forest ceases to belong to any single country and becomes a place from which the shared history of the Americas can be read.

The exhibition brings together works made between 1966 and 2026, from the ink drawings that accompanied the transformation of Gamarra's pictorial language to *Fleuve de sang* (2026). Rather than a retrospective, the exhibition traces a sustained investigation across six decades, during which landscape becomes the ground for a reflection on the history of the continent.

Born in Tacuarembó, Uruguay, in 1934, Gamarra studied in Montevideo and lived in São Paulo between 1960 and 1963 before settling permanently in Paris. During these years, his painting shifted from abstraction toward landscape, a change shaped both by his experience in Brazil and by his readings of Horacio Quiroga and Claude Lévi-Strauss, as well as his study of painters such as Frans Post (1612-1680) and Claude Lorrain (1600-1682). The forest that began to appear in his work does not correspond to a specific place, nor does it derive from direct observation of the Amazon. It is a landscape constructed through historical, literary, and pictorial references, in which different temporalities enter into relation.

From the late 1960s onward, against the backdrop of successive military dictatorships in Latin America, Gamarra developed a body of painting shaped by foreign intervention, the exploitation of natural resources, and political violence. Over time, these events ceased to appear as explicit scenes and became absorbed into the

landscape. Sixteenth-century conquistadors, explorers, Indigenous communities, helicopters, extractive industries, and animals coexist within the same pictorial space. History is no longer organized as a sequence of events, but instead accumulates in layers across the territory.

Selva color del tiempo proposes that José Gamarra's painting be read through this accumulation of temporalities. The forest does not function as the backdrop to history, but as its archive: a place where conquest, colonization, capitalism, and environmental devastation remain visible, and where the landscape preserves the memory of the Americas.



José Gamarra, *Fleuve de sang*, 2026.
Courtesy of the artist and Mariane Ibrahim.

ABOUT JOSÉ GAMARRA

'El Maestro' Gamarra grew up in the Ferrocarril neighborhood of Tacuarembó, in a family environment shaped by discipline, domestic labor, and close contact with nature. The son of a military officer and a homemaker, his childhood memories of rivers, animals, and daily routines left a lasting visual and emotional imprint. From an early age, he was deeply drawn to cultural life, attending artistic events, concerts, and ballet performances that awakened his sensitivity to form, movement, and expression.

Gamarra's artistic practice emerged early as a way of observing and understanding the world. His education at experimental full-time schools encouraged exploration of materials, color, and perception, while teachers recognized and supported his artistic inclination. By the age of eleven, he was already producing portraits and drawings that demonstrated a clear commitment to the visual arts. His curiosity extended beyond the classroom, leading him to translate experiences—from the night sky to musical and theatrical performances—into images rooted in careful observation and emotional depth.

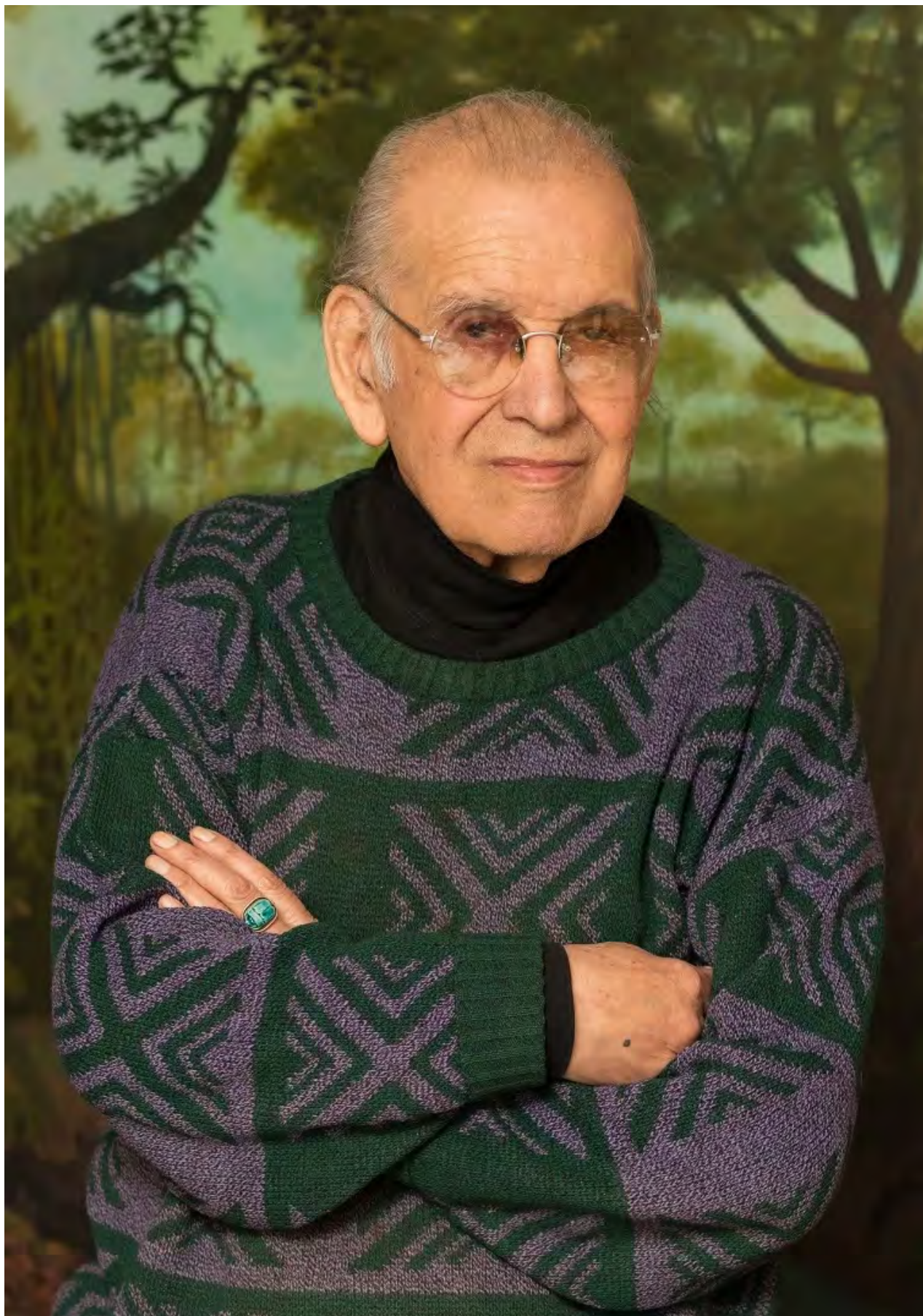
His first exhibitions took place in the mid-1940s in Montevideo, marking the beginning of a steadily expanding career. In 1959, he received the Itamaraty Scholarship to study engraving in Rio de Janeiro, followed by a period in São Paulo, where he taught painting at the Penteado Foundation. In 1962, his participation in the Biennials of Young Painters in Montevideo and Paris resulted in the Painting Prize and a French government scholarship, prompting his move to Paris in 1963, where he decided to settle permanently.

In France, Gamarra developed his well-known oil paintings of Amazonian landscapes, which would become central to his mature work. Over the course of his career, he has held more than sixty solo exhibitions and participated in numerous group exhibitions worldwide. During Uruguay's military dictatorship, he remained in exile, returning only in 1985 after the restoration of democracy.

His works are held in numerous international collections, including the Museum of Modern Art (New York, United States), the Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York, United States), the Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris (Paris, France), the Museo de Arte Moderno (Buenos Aires, Argentina), the Instituto de Bellas Artes (Mexico City, Mexico), the Rockefeller Foundation (New York, United States), the Fundación Mario Benedetti (Montevideo, Uruguay), the Museo Extremeño e Iberoamericano de Arte Contemporáneo (Badajoz, Spain), and the Musée International Art Against Apartheid (itinerant; Assemblée Nationale, Cape Town, South Africa). Recognized as one of Uruguay's most internationally prominent artists, Gamarra's career reflects a sustained commitment to art as a poetic and critical engagement with memory, landscape, and history.

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Artist Portrait of José Gamarra, 2019.
Photo by Pascal Milhavet. Arcueil, France.



José Gamarra, *Unos minutos antes*, 2025. Courtesy of the artist and Mariane Ibrahim.

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