**ASCONA (SWITZERLAND)**

**MUSEO COMUNALE D’ARTE MODERNA**

**JUNE 15 | OCTOBER 12, 2025**

**JOANA VASCONCELOS**

***FLOWERS OF MY DESIRE***

**A comprehensive retrospective dedicated to Joana Vasconcelos, one of contemporary art’s most influential voices, specifically designed for the spaces of the Swiss museum.**

**Featuring over thirty works—installations, wall sculptures, paintings, drawings, videos, and books—the exhibition covers key highlights from the Portuguese artist’s creative journey from the early 1990s to today.**

**Curated by Mara Folini and Alberto Fiz**

Throughout summer 2025, the picturesque town of **Ascona, nestled along Switzerland’s Lake Maggiore**, will host one of the year’s most anticipated art events.

**From June 15 through October 12, 2025, the Museo Comunale d’Arte Moderna will showcase Joana Vasconcelos’s first solo exhibition** at a Swiss public institution. Born in Lisbon in 1971, Vasconcelos is celebrated internationally, having participated in three editions of the Venice Biennale and exhibited in prominent venues worldwide. Notably, she is the first woman artist to present solo exhibitions at the Palace of Versailles and the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao.

This extensive retrospective, tailored specifically for the museum’s unique spaces and curated by Mara Folini and Alberto Fiz, **includes more than 30 significant works spanning installations, wall pieces, paintings, drawings, videos, and publications, tracing her artistic evolution over the last three decades**.

Renowned for monumental sculptures and immersive installations, Vasconcelos transforms ordinary objects, reshaping notions of art, craft, and design. She bridges private life and public spaces, blending popular culture with high art. With humor and subtlety, she explores femininity, consumer culture, and collective memory.

“Ascona’s Municipal Museum is the perfect venue for Joana Vasconcelos’s first public exhibition in Switzerland,” **states museum director Mara Folini**. “Her work deeply resonates with themes of femininity, aligning with our dedication to Marianne Werefkin, an influential early 20th-century European artist who anticipated Expressionism. Symbolically, Ascona now connects these two remarkable women artists, each defining her era.”

Curator **Alberto Fiz adds**, “The exhibition in Ascona merges spectacular visual elements with intimate and thought-provoking insights, enabling audiences to grasp the complexity of Vasconcelos’s approach. Her vibrant interaction with everyday objects presents an innovative stylistic language, navigating from the Baroque toward a dynamic new understanding of postmodernism, continually challenging conventional boundaries.”

Occupying both floors of the museum, the exhibition provides an immersive, comprehensive journey through Vasconcelos’s oeuvre. Visitors are invited to leave preconceptions behind and begin their experience with ***Wash and Go*** (1998), an installation reminiscent of a colorful car wash, symbolizing renewal. Immediately afterwards, visitors are faced with ***La Baronesa*** (2023), a monumental ten-meter-high textile sculpture arranged vertically that appears like a fluid deity and seems to envelop the entire building. The work is displayed differently depending on where it is exhibited. In this case, the Portuguese artist wanted to dedicate it to the “Baroness”, the name given to Marianne Werefkin, the Russian artist who founded Ascona’s museum, by her friends in reference to her noble lineage.

The exhibition shows the different sides of a multifaceted investigation spanning two decades of activity, where the artist creates a narrative that reflects the human soul in a progressive relationship between reason and emotion, between the Apollonian and the Dionysian. The rooms that can be visited in Ascona are secret rooms, linked by a thin red thread that allows visitors to follow a single storyline full of surprises.

On the first floor, visitors are greeted by the towering ***Red Independent Heart*** (2013), three meters high. Suspended on its axis, the artworkrotates in a circular motion evoking the cycles of life and eternal return, accompanied by the sound of three significant *Fado* songs, the Portuguese musical genre characterized by a poignant melancholy. The installation refers to the *Heart of Viana*, the traditional Portuguese sacred filigree jewel. However, in this case, upon closer inspection, the intricate pattern reveals red plastic forks, which become an alienating visual pattern, transforming everyday items into poetic visuals.

The intimate sphere with subtle erotic undertones is embodied in ***Flowers of My Desire***, created in 1996 and restored in 2010 that gives the exhibition its title. The flowers of desire are lilac-colored feather dusters arranged within an organic form. The welcoming and pleasant appearance is contradicted by the external structure of the installation, which appears much more threatening with a series of metal spikes protruding from the mesh framework of an improbable bed.

Addressing consumerism and waste, Joana Vasconcelos presents ***Vista Interior*** (2000), a rectangular display case with white Venetian blinds containing an infinite number of dated objects, almost like a kiosk of memories, a contemporary Wunderkammer, in a progressive fetishistic and compulsive accumulation.

Also on display in Ascona are ***Cama Valium*** (1998), a large anti-anxiety bed made of Valium blister packs, and ***Brise*** (2001), a sofa where plastic flowers smell of mothballs, juxtaposing real and artificial elements. The olfactory element also characterizes ***Menu do Dia*** (2001), a particularly provocative work that denounces social issues. Perfumed furs with a pungent smell, alluding to the day’s meat-based menu, are arranged on the doors of old refrigerators, some dating back to the 1950s. The incongruous juxtaposition is striking: the cold of the refrigerators contrasts with the warmth of the furs that conceal the slaughter of animals.

Another theme often explored by Joana Vasconcelos is fashion, evident in ***Fashion Victims*** (2018), an installation in which two naked dolls with childlike faces and adolescent bodies are gradually covered with threads from spools activated by a motor. Little by little, the dolls’ faces disappear, their mouths are gagged and their legs tied to keep only their breasts and pubic areas visible. The video ***Portugal Offashion*** (2008) is also dedicated to fashion, in which the artist creates an ironic and original fashion show.

The artist’s works have the specific characteristic of interacting with space, blurring the boundaries between painting, sculpture, and architecture. This process also involved wall works, as can be seen in the series of rare compositions created between 1998 and 2003 in fiberglass and steel, which already developed three-dimensionality, expressing dissatisfaction with traditional abstraction. This led to the ***Crochet Painting*** series, which mixes textile art with sculpture and painting. Here, crochet work leaves the domestic sphere and becomes a powerful visual language loaded with meaning.

From this cycle, the exhibition features ***Miragem*** (2024), an impressive composition where shapes made of colored wool substitute traditional painting materials. Another highly ironic and provocative work is ***Big Booby*** (2018), which takes the form of a monumental wall sculpture. Made of crochet and padded fabric, it unmistakably depicts a large female breast, playing on voyeurism and innuendo.

An entire section of the exhibition is dedicated to ***Stupid Furniture*** (2021-2022), a project that involves repurposing outdated furniture or items destined to end up in attics. Joana Vasconcelos reactivates their energy by putting them back into circulation through a metamorphic process made possible by the insertion of colorful textile forms that envelop wooden or glass structures to create organic and multidimensional environments. The useless furniture emerges from its isolation to joyfully fill the space: these works have evocative, familiar, or sentimental titles such as ***La Sirenetta*, *Caldi Abbracci*, *Happy Hour*, *Acconciatura***, and ***Lollobrigida***, in homage to the Italian actress.

Many of Joana Vasconcelos’ works allow us to reinterpret objects in a totally innovative way. Duchampian ready-mades take on baroque forms, as in ***A Barroca*** (2014), which hides steel shower heads behind its opulent decorations. In another instance, a common sink is encased in an elegant, soft, and seductive plastic form that resembles something out of an 18th-century residence.

The exhibition is completed by a series of **drawings, projects, and notes kept by Joana Vasconcelos in her *Cahiers de Ma Vie***, which can be read as personal diaries offering insight into her creative process.

The exhibition in Ascona takes place on the occasion of the centenary celebrations of the Locarno Peace Conference (1925), which contributed to a brief period of détente and cooperation between European nations after the First World War and the Treaty of Versailles. Joana Vasconcelos’ exhibition, based on the unifying roots of peoples and the exchange of knowledge towards a culture that promotes peace, is therefore fully part of the programme of events planned in the Locarno region to commemorate this important historical event.

Throughout the exhibition, a series of events will be organized, including live music, dance performances, educational workshops for children and adults, conferences and a fashion show, in collaboration with organizations and associations based in the Ticino region, including the Compagnia di Teatro Tiziana Arnaboldi and its Teatro San Materno, the Monte Verità Foundation in Ascona, the Scuola Arti e Mestieri della Sartoria in Lugano, the Teatro del tempo by Mario Pagliarani, and the Museo in erba in Lugano for educational activities.

A bilingual (Italian-English) catalog published by **Allemandi** features curatorial essays and an exclusive interview with Joana Vasconcelos.

Ascona, April 2025

**JOANA VASCONCELOS. *Flowers of My Desire***

Ascona (Switzerland), Museo Comunale d’Arte Moderna

**June 15 – October 12, 2025**

Opening: Saturday, June 14, 2025

**Information:**

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