## [Pedro Varela](http://artforum.com/picks/id%3D54812)

### [MDM GALLERY](http://artforum.com/guide/country%3DFR%26place%3Dparis%26jump%3D13668#location13668)

**6 rue Notre-Dame de Nazareth
September 5, 2015–October 10, 2015**

**Pedro Varela, untitled, 2015,** acrylic and pigmented pen on cut paper and pins, 24 x 16".

Brazilian artist [Pedro Varela](http://artforum.com/search/search%3D%22Pedro%20Varela%22) approaches painting with a sketchbook sensibility, which is fitting since his last show at this gallery featured images drawn in blue Bic pen. The exhibition’s title alludes to *Nuremberg Chronicle*, an illustrated tome from 1493 on world history that muddled biblical tales with facts. Varela himself references common stereotypes ascribed to New World “exoticism” and enmeshes them with both accurate and imagined characterizations.

A selection of his recent paintings is divided into two rooms: one focusing on color, the other mostly black and white. The former room includes three paintings (all works untitled, 2015) with psychedelic Technicolor palettes in midnight-blue and acid-pink tones. Delicate petals and lush vegetation are depicted in fine brushwork over watery background washes. The flora has an enchanted forest quality, intercut with geometric shards. The latter room includes mainly small canvases, from a tiny vanitas skull out of which branches grow to a portrait of Cunhambebe, a chief of the cannibalistic Tupinambá tribe thought to have feasted upon sixty Portuguese colonists. Two of Varela’s works implement dimensional collage techniques: cut geometric paper forms are delicately pinned to the canvas, akin to taxidermied insects in a curiosity cabinet. Totems like the Brazilian Urubu, or black vulture, make an appearance, as do other dark symbols of violence, like guerrilla warriors, disembodied limbs, or the face of journalist Vladimir Herzog, who was tortured to death by military police under the Brazilian dictatorship. These references lie discretely couched, however, among compositions of trees, hills, and caves. Cumulatively, the works create a vibrant universe, shifting between geometry and landscape, still life and abstraction, history and fantasy.

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