

ENGLISH

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RADIANT OPACITY

Nari Ward

17/10/2021 - 26/12/2021

Opening: Sunday October 17th, 12pm to 6pm

Galleria Continua is pleased to host a new solo show by Nari Ward, « Radiant Opacity », which reveals a dialogue between recent and iconic works from the artist's career.

Radiant Opacity assembles works, often colossal and almost systematically made of recovered materials and discarded objects, that draw a frantic and lively path into le Moulin de Boissy and its industrial architecture while punctuating this ancient paper factory.

Tackling the main themes of Nari Ward's practice, the works assembled portray contemporary society with an acute sense of observation: its violence, its racism, its prejudices and stereotypes, as well as reflecting on power and the relativity of wealth and poverty in such a society. *Radiant Opacity* thus enables to catch in a glimpse, from these haphazard materials made into artworks, some existential metaphors in which humanity and its vulnerability remain central.

A hot air balloon made out of metal and bottles, shoelaces, electric heaters, milk boxes, tires and trampolines... Nari Ward often uses transformed, everyday and found objects and re-contextualizes them in his installations. The results of his creations appear both familiar and mysterious at the same time, despite their positioning towards domestic elements or those whose cultural origins can be easily imagined.

The trajectory of *Radiant Opacity* starts with *CrossWalk*, a familiar urban sign made out of shoelaces, which opens to a succession of discoveries with works that slowly make one dive into the artist's practice. Some iconic pieces punctuate the space such as *CarouSoul*, a mysterious playground made out of tires, shoes and laces; *Beyond*, a monumental replica of a toy in the shape of a hot air balloon which seems suspended by multiple strings and bottles, inside of which one can read the call « beyond » in multiple languages; or what appears to be a silent council of elders evoked with walking sticks, supporting glass bottles filled with various seeds, in *Stroller Sprouts*; *Domino Men*, which invites the visitor to wander into a life size game of domino - or at a closer look, could it be coffins randomly stacked on top of each other? *Breathing Vertical* slows the pace of the visit, inviting to reflect on the cultural symbol of copper and its physical and metaphorical properties, but also referring to the pain inflicted to the African-American population during slavery. As part of his iconic series of the *Breathing Panel*, the patterns on the surface evoke the holes drilled in the floor of Baptist churches to allow slaves to hide and breathe when they moved under the building.

Nari Ward also sheds light on the unseen history of places by exposing the realities of tourism in Jamaica, an economic lung for Ward's birthplace but also a source of tension, with Jacuzzi Bed and Door Hangers. Leading to the first floor, a more intimate dialogue with the works is staged, where their delicate materiality meets the light and nature that pervades the former offices of the factory. *Ballast of Miracles* carves a timeless place of celebration and meeting,

suspended by the light and transparency that come out of the balloons made of resin. Further on, the visitor steps under *Ladder Fan*, a fan constructed with a metal ladder, and arrives in Nari Ward's *TranStranger Café*, which highlights the new rituals of coffee drinking in internet coffees that reveal a unique type of vulnerability. From this room, the visitor can catch a glimpse of *Enchanted*, composed of Barack Obama's lying figure closely watched by cameras in the other corner of the room. With the same irony, Nari Ward portrays figures of *Immigrist*, a combination of an immigrant and a tourist, which, for the artist, becomes the symbolic result of an absurd society made out of contradictions, violence and injustice.

In total, *Radiant Opacity* brings together around fifty sculptures and installations. They occupy the vast exhibition space of le Moulin de Boissy, which provides an ideal setting to grasp Nari Ward's practice and strength. In this old mill transformed into a paper factory, which left a few architectural markers from its industrial past, the exhibition dares to go beyond the visible, to try and capture the invisible, and finally begin to perceive Nari Ward's radiant opacity.

Nari Ward (born in St. Andrew, Jamaica) lives and works in New York. His works have been shown in various solo exhibitions in the following venues: Nari Ward: Say Can You See, Jeffrey Deitch, Los Angeles, CA (2021); Museum of Contemporary Art, Denver, CO (2020); Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, Houston, TX (2019); New Museum, New York, NY (2019); DeCordova Museum & Sculpture Park, Lincoln, MA (2018); The Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston (2017); Socrates Sculpture Park, New York (2017); The Barnes Foundation, Philadelphia (2016); Pérez Art Museum Miami (2015); Savannah College of Art and Design Museum of Art, Savannah, GA (2015); Louisiana State University Museum of Art, Baton Rouge, LA (2014); The Fabric Workshop and Museum, Philadelphia (2011); Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, North Adams, MA (2011); Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston (2002); the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN (2001, 2000). Among his major group shows: Promise, Witness, Remembrance, Speed Art Museum, Louisville, KY (2021); Super Fusion: the 2021 Chengdu Biennale, Chengdu, China (2021); Grief and Grievance, New Museum, New York, NY (2021); The Dirty South: Contemporary Art, Material Culture, and the Sonic Impulse, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, VA (2021); Black Refractions: Highlights from The Studio Museum in Harlem, Smith College Museum of Art, Northampton, MA (2020); NGV Triennial, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia (2020); Objects Like Us, The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, Ridgefield, CT (2018-2019); UPTOWN: nastywomen / badhombres, El Museo del Barrio, New York

(2017); Black: Color, Material, Concept, The Studio Museum di Harlem, New York (2015); La Grande Madre, Fondazione Nicola Trussardi, Palazzo Reale, Milan (2015); The Freedom Principle: Experiments in Art and Music, 1965 to now, Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago (2015); NYC 1993: Experimental Jet Set, Trash and No Star, New Museum, New York (2013); Contemplating the Void: Interventions in the Guggenheim Rotunda, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (2010); Whitney Biennial, New York (2006); Landings, Documenta XI, Kassel, Germany (2003). His works are part of prestigious private and public collections: Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY; The Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore, MD; The Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, NY; Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, AR; GAM, Galleria Civica di Arte, Torino, Italy; The Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, Boston, MA; Istanbul Modern, Istanbul, Turkey; Musée d'Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean, Luxembourg City, Luxembourg; The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; The Nasher Museum of Art, Duke University, Durham, NC; National Gallery of Victoria, Southbank, Australia; New York Public Library, New York, NY; Pérez Art Museum Miami, Miami, FL; Richmond Center for Visual Arts, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI; Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.; Speed Art Museum, Louisville, KY; The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, NY; University Museum of Contemporary Art, University of Massachusetts Amherst, Amherst, MA Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, NY; The Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN; The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY; Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers University, Newark, NJ.