



GALLERIA CONTINUA

SAN GIMIGNANO BEIJING **LES MOULINS** HABANA

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 Open from Wednesdays to Sundays from noon to 6pm and by appointment.

BERLINDE DE BRUYCKERE

Opening on Sunday, October 13, 2019, as from noon
 Exhibition until December 29, 2019

‘These trees lost their bark (their skin) a long time ago. Still standing in the same place where they were once planted, but for how long? They are dead, depleted to an extent that even when burned they wouldn’t produce enough warmth to provide some comfort. Their only use is to the woodpecker that pierces them and to an infinite amount of insects and vermin. Striped of their bark they look fleshy, human even. Like tendons and bones.’

From a letter written to J.M. Coetzee, November 12, 2012

Galleria Continua is pleased to welcome to Les Moulins, for the first time since 2010, a new solo exhibition by Berlinde de Bruyckere, one of the most important figures of contemporary art. The Belgian artist presents a series of recent works built from elements of places to live, places that are familiar, intimate. The objects on display refer to the bare necessities of human habitation – beds, wardrobes, or blankets – to which wax casts of broken trees have been integrated, evoking nature and its forces within a protected, domestic environment. Born from a pressing need for the artist to study the human condition in depth, these sculptures illustrate an archetypal pain by referring to such timeless human themes as vulnerability, mortality, loneliness, suffering, and memory.

De Bruyckere’s works compose a world of discomfort that has been leaving its mark on the international art world since the early 90s. From the very first phase of her career, the artist has been building shelters: precarious structures, stacks of blankets, rags and mattresses, reflecting the desperate, human search for refuge and protection, capable of embodying both comforting presence and suffocating nature. Her work is characterized by the exploration of opposites: life triumphing over death, the redemptive capacity of love in the face of violence and fear, of violent bodies that simultaneously reveal and hide themselves. Full of power and sensuality, her sculptures in wax and horse skin describe a world of destructiveness and cruelty, but also of human dignity, redemption, and love.

Invited in 2013 to represent Belgium at the 55th Venice Biennale, the artist invited the South African writer J.M. Coetzee, Nobel Prize winner for literature, to join her as a curator for a shared reflection on this particular condition that suddenly sees us dependent on others to meet our needs. De Bruyckere exhibited *Kreupelhout - Cripplewood*, an imposing wax mold of an uprooted elm, painted in the colors of human flesh and thus representing a human body: fallen, wounded, partially covered with bandages and carefully supported by pillows and blankets. The project slowly matured, weaving together memories of dead trees in a Burgundy forest and an uprooted elm bearing the iconography of Saint Sebastian, usually depicted attached to a tree and pierced with arrows. Berlinde De Bruyckere says that “this man, despite his wounds, remains a symbol of virility and beauty. We, like him, must accept our scars in order to survive (...). Each of my works contains both life and death – Eros and Thanatos are always present; but here, additionally, there is the idea of taking care.” The reference to the iconography of Saint Sebastian remains present here, with the two sculptures *San S.* and *San S. II*, with which the visit begins. These wax casts of bark from notched trees with its metal elements recall the mythical figure of the saint: his posture when pierced by arrows as well as his wounds healed by Irene.

In the works exhibited in the old factory, the tree is again presented as a very symbolic image, linked to life, but also as a powerful material element, changing, organic. Skinned trunks, hollowed out and remodeled by time, bruised and healed, finding themselves framed as a pictorial work, inserted as if by force into a domestic universe – in the precarious shelter of a large wardrobe or lying between bed sheets and blankets. Matter is then transformed and fragility becomes manifest, tangible in its continuous passage between strength and vulnerability, suffering and healing, negligence and comfort. A story made of extreme forms, always linked to the possibility of change and appeasement.

Berlinde De Bruyckere was born in 1964 in Ghent, Belgium, where she lives and works. She regularly exhibits in the most important international museums and institutions. Her most recent shows include: "It almost seemed a lily", Museum Hof Van Busleyden, Mechelen, 2019; "Il Mantello", Chiesa di Santa Venera sulle Mura della Pace, Palermo, 2018; "Berlinde De Bruyckere", Sara Hilden Museum, Tampere, 2018; "Embalmed", Kunsthall Aarhus, Aarhus, 2017; "Suture", Leopoldmuseum, Vienna, 2016; "The Embalmer", Kunsthhaus Bregenz – Kunstraum Dornbirn, 2015; "Berlinde De Bruyckere", Gemeentemuseum Den Haag, 2015; "Il me faut tout oublier", La Maison Rouge, Paris, 2014; "Berlinde De Bruyckere", SMAK, Ghent, 2014; "Kreupelhout - Cripplewood", Belgian Pavilion, 55th Venice Biennial, 2013; "In the Flesh" Kunsthhaus Graz, 2013; "We are all Flesh", ACCA, Melbourne, 2012; "The Wound", Arter, Istanbul, 2012; "Mysterium Leib. Berlinde De Bruyckere im Dialog mit Cranach und Pasolini", Kunstmuseum Moritzburg, Halle and Kunstmuseum, Bern, 2011; "Berlinde De Bruyckere", DHC / ART Foundation for Contemporary Art, Montreal, 2011. Many of her works can be found in the collections of MoMa, New York; Collezione Gori, Fattoria di Celle, Pistoia; Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin; Fondation Antoine de Galbert, Paris and the De Pont Foundation, the Netherlands.