

ENGLISH

GALLERIA CONTINUA

SAN GIMIGNANO BEIJING LES MOULINS HABANA ROMA SAO PAULO PARIS

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IL EST ICI, JAMAIS AILLEURS

Leila Alaoui, Alejandro Campins, Nikhil Chopra, Berlinde De Bruyckere, Anish Kapoor, Carlos Martiel, Ornaghi & Prestinari, Susana Pilar, Kiki Smith, Marta Spagnoli, Pascale Marthine Tayou

26.06.2022 - 28.08.2022

GALLERIA CONTINUA / Les Moulins is pleased to present the group exhibition *Il est ici, jamais ailleurs* (It's here, never elsewhere), which explores, through the works of eleven heterogeneous artists, the body's capacity, both banal and fantastic, to project itself into utopian elsewhere.

GALLERIA CONTINUA is offering two thematic and complementary exhibitions in France: *Il est ici, jamais ailleurs* (It's here, never elsewhere) in Les Moulins from 26 June 2022 and *Il est ici, toujours ailleurs* (It's here, always elsewhere), in Paris from 7 July 2022.

The aim of these exhibitions is to question, through the work of the artists, the present linkages between the realms of the visible and the invisible. Whereas the visible seems traditionally associated with the very materiality of reality, being quantifiable and demonstrable, and so on the side of reason, the realm of the invisible, on the other hand, seems to be on the side of feeling, imagination - even superstition.

However, this vision of a very marked contradiction between the two realms of seeing is not unanimous. For some artists and thinkers, the paradoxical relationship between the two - rather than being a play of simple opposites - is often intimately symbiotic. The two exhibitions *Il est ici, jamais ailleurs* (It's here, never elsewhere) and *Il est ici, toujours ailleurs* (It's here, always elsewhere) consider the question from this perspective.

To do so, they refer to two short philosophical texts by Michel Foucault: *Le corps utopique* (The Utopian Body) and *Les Hétérotopies* (Heterotopias)¹, in which Foucault starts from the etymology of the word 'utopia' to develop his argument. While the Greek word consists of the root τόπος, *tópos* ('place') and the Greek

privative prefix οὐ-, *ou-*, thus signifying a place 'in a no place', which seems purely imaginary, Foucault undeniably connects them to our bodies. "Utopia is a place outside all places, but it is a place where I will have a body without a body"².

The exhibition in Les Moulins is divided into several chapters that take up the main ideas of the text *Le corps utopique* (The utopian body), in which Foucault proposes thinking of the body as a starting point from which all utopias emerge. In the body, the elsewhere and the here, the real and the possible, as well as the visible and the invisible, can all meet. The exhibition also gives pride of place to the emptiness of doubt - the fertile ground from which thoughts are formed and turned.

First, Foucault's definition of utopia is evoked through the painting series *Badlands* by Alejandro Campins. With their exemplary representations of mountains, these paintings strongly suggest the Arizona desert. The geological strata metaphorically echo the strata of painting, evoking the laying of superimposed eras. Deprived of any context other than atmospheric, these mountains stand out from the coloured backgrounds. They thereby become places that are at once immutable and floating, offering a reflection on pictorial space as purely utopian.

Berlinde De Bruyckere's *Aanéén* (To-one) presents us with the relationship between the body and the soul. In the artist's work, the animal skin evokes a recent morbidity. Influenced by religious iconography and the paintings of the great Flemish masters, where the most carnal elements become symbols of the spiritual, the great materiality of the piece presents us with a paradoxical view of the possibilities of elevation towards an elsewhere. The soul can be seen as the utopia conjuring up the whole 'utopia' of the body, - Foucault explains.

1. Michel Foucault, *Le corps utopique, Les Hétérotopies*, Éditions Lignes, 2019

2. Ibid., p.10.

Other works by Berlinde De Bruyckere, *Penis* and *Lelie*, show us how, when in love, the body can only be inscribed in the irremediably present time of desire - where everything else in the world is dismissed.

With the works of Kiki Smith and Ornaghi & Prestinari, we discover, by contrast, how the body can also disappear, escaping through the force of narrative. Thus, in Kiki Smith's *Dormir (Sleep)* it is no longer just the head that goes to the moon: the whole body follows it, as if placed in weightlessness, whereas in Ornaghi & Prestinari's *Prove di volo (Flight Tests)*, these are vases that, braving all dangers, are training to fly.

The works of Anish Kapoor contribute to creating an initial disturbance in this opposition between purely physical space and the space of the imagination. Kapoor gives us the opportunity to discover colours that are embodied by an affirmed materiality. In the rotogravures presented, the concave shapes so dear to the artist create a visual breakthrough, and suggest the volume of an imaginary space, in the undeniable flatness of the images.

Foucault notes that our bodies also have dark and mysterious places. Thus, behind the windows of our eyes, and as if just in the hollow of our heads, the inside and the outside of our bodies are mixed through vision; in places forgotten by all our consciousness, places both 'beyond and away', yet incredibly physical.

The works of Leila Alaoui, Nikhil Chopra and Pascale Marthine Tayou, for their part, allow us to discover that through social practices, even the bodily envelope - though very sensitive -, can bring the other and the elsewhere into the body. Traditional costumes, dresses and disguises clearly effect a visual but also an ontological change to the clothed being. The body here becomes the tool - but also the place - of all utopias.

In *Anexión Oculata (Hidden Annexation)*, the body of Susana Pilar, a performer, recalls the body of the dancer evoked by Foucault, which can become, through practice and mastery, the product of its creations. Here, the line between what this body shows to the outside world and inner intentionality is blurred by the artistic and physical work.

Nikhil Chopra's series of paintings on the first floor - depicting both real and dreamed landscapes - and Marta Spagnoli's *The Nest* invite us to approach the world through our bodies as utopian anchors. Through the body, we can let ourselves wander to explore the present in absolute subjectivity. Doubt, listening and emptiness hold a primary place here, allowing possibilities to arise, by giving the utopia we have discovered in our bodies the capacity to invest other places in its turn.

The works of Carlos Martiel and Pascale Marthine Tayou, shown on the first floor, invest these possibilities politically. For, if, as Foucault posits, each body constantly produces utopias, then these are the ideal vectors for enabling us to imagine new worlds.

GALLERIA CONTINUA invites you, through the works exhibited in *Il est ici, jamais ailleurs (It's here, never elsewhere)*, to explore the present through the prism of the visible and the invisible; the body and its multiple utopias.