



# GALLERIA CONTINUA

SAN GIMIGNANO BEIJING LES MOULINS HABANA

Via del Castello 11, San Gimignano (SI), Italia

tel. +390577943134 | info@galleriacontinua.com | www.galleriacontinua.com

## CILDO MEIRELES & VARIOUS ARTISTS

### Q&A

Opening of the double-bill solo show: Friday September 25<sup>th</sup> 2015, Via del Castello 11, 6pm-midnight  
Until 09.01.2016, Monday-Saturday, 10am-1pm, 2-7pm

Galleria Continua is pleased to present – for the first time in its San Gimignano gallery space – a double bill of solo shows, entitled **Q&A**, by Cildo Meireles and Various Artists.

Cildo Meireles has contributed since the 1960s to shaping developments in the language of contemporary art. A pioneer in the field of installation, the artist occupies a key position on the Brazilian and international art scene. In the nucleus around which his work takes form, a poetic and symbolic reading of the real coexists with a pointed reflection on the strategies that regulate the processes of production, circulation and promotion of art. Various Artists is a collective comprising 24 fictitious artists and is conceived as an autonomous work, where all the participants concentrate on their own specific fields of inquiry and their own artistic practice, which are then brought together in installations or collective projects.

The two exhibition projects dialogue with each other, developing according to a dynamic that Meireles and Various Artists describe as **Q&A**, that is "Question/Answer". Four themes are explored in the course of this engagement: water, excrement, value and mathematics. The discussion shifts from the theoretical to the visual plane, leaving it up to the works to find suitable answers.

Meireles and VA share the view that water is destined to become the oil of the future. Water supplies are now widely privatized and concentrated in the hands of a few companies that manage it at a global level. There is a lack of legislation, and no one is taking responsibility for it. Water is an urgent and topical problem that will sorely test the global economic system and security. Finding possible solutions is the key to tackling other challenges relating to water, such as global warming, the scarcity of energy and food resources, demographic pressure, pollution, environmental deterioration, global epidemics and natural disasters. Meireles is showing *Chove Chuva* (*It Rains Rain*), a 1995–1997 installation presented here in a more interactive and technological

version conceived specifically for this exhibition. Four screens delineate a room at the centre of the stalls area. The viewer is invited to enter the space and spend time there. Drops of water fall from the ceiling, the walls show images of a storm, and on the floor there are large transparent cushions full of water. Inspired by Jorge Ben Jor's *Chove Chuva*, an iconic piece of Música Popular Brasileira, this installation recreates the showers of São Paulo. By an ironic twist of fate, the artist explains, the drops of water fall in the 'wrong' urban places, resulting in a period in which the city does not receive a sufficient supply of potable water. Various Artists responds with *Água Com Gás*, a work comprising a series of bonsai of different species and ages, submerged in aquariums. During a journey through southern Europe, Various Artists encountered landscapes completely modified by the construction of hydroelectric dams – projects funded by the EU to guarantee water supplies for industrial agriculture at the expense of the original flora, fauna and cultivation patterns of an ancient landscape. The drowning of the bonsai, VA affirms, recreates the image of drowned olive groves, prompting us to reflect upon the extreme impact that certain forms of cultivation can have on nature.

The theme of excrement leads both artists to engage with the cultural notion of aesthetics. Meireles presents *KU KKA KA KKA* (1990–1999) – two apparently identical greenhouses, one containing real flowers and fake excrement, the other plastic flowers and real faeces – while Various Artists shows *nn.pearls*, a collection of jewels accompanied by a short publication that reveals the ordinary process each individual pearl was subjected to before being set in the precious jewel.

Value is another of the themes that Meireles and VA address in the two shows. It is an issue that can be tackled from various points of view – monetary value, economic value, how to exhibit value, how to differentiate between exchange and use value and interpret the symbolic value. In this case, both artists focus on the representation of the value of art. Meireles and VA interact with the art object as if it were a luxury item, goods for

exchange, a category like any other that can be traded and exchanged, on which one can speculate and with which one can interact. The Brazilian artist explores the alchemy of gold in *Aquaurum* (2015), Various Artists the googolplex (10 to the power of 10 to the power of a 100), the expression of an infinite number whose transcription requires all the space of the universe and which the artist formalizes as a poem in multiple volumes.

The final theme of discussion between the two artists is mathematics. Various Artists and Cildo Meireles share a love for mathematics, though they use it differently in their work. Art and mathematics have a long historical link, they explain: the ancient Egyptians and the ancient Greeks were familiar with the Golden Section. Artists of every age have been inspired by mathematics, and mathematics has been studied as a means for adding to and completing their works; Renaissance painters like Piero della Francesca and Leonardo da Vinci drew on mathematics, including the Golden Section and the Fibonacci numbers.

In 1968 Meireles conceived the idea of working with as little material as possible, designing spatial situations with the simple use of a thread. This gave rise to his *Virtual Volumes*. These represent a critical vision of Euclidean geometry (three surfaces defining a space), which was accepted as a standard representation of space. With the *Virtual Volumes* Meireles created a mental concept of space instead of a fixed material idea. Over the years Virtual Artists has developed its own technique for realizing abstract works, called "human mathematics". This is an alternative/artistic design methodology which serves to produce mathematical/abstract art. Formal, factual or personal data are used for abstract information or for graphic elements. Subjective rules and arbitrariness perform an important role, and are influenced by time, space and by the socio-economic context. Various Artists devised a workshop to share this technique with other artists and students, and the exhibition features the pieces created during those workshops.

**Cildo Meireles** was born in 1948, in Rio de Janeiro, where he lives and works. In a career spanning almost fifty years, the artist has continued to stretch the boundaries of artistic definitions, creating an oeuvre that is both sensorial and philosophical in nature. Regarded as a pioneer of international conceptualism, he is actually a much more complex figure, and hard to classify. His work has been inspired by a constant desire to overcome the dichotomy between artist and visitor.

Meireles' work has been shown at some of the most important international art events, including the 37th, 50th, 51st and 53rd Venice Biennale, the 16th, 20th and 24th São Paulo Biennial, the 6th and 8th Istanbul Biennial, the 1st and the 6th Mercosul Biennial, the Lofoten International Art Festival in Norway in 2004, the Liverpool Biennial and Documenta in 1992 and in 2002.

Recent solo shows include ones at the Kunsthall 44 Moen in Denmark, the HangarBicocca in Milan, the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia in Madrid, the Museo

Serralves in Porto, the Itaú Cultural Center of São Paulo, the Museo Universitario de Arte Contemporáneo (MUAC) in Mexico City, the MACBA in Barcelona, the Tate Modern in London, the Estação Pinacoteca in São Paulo, the Museo Vale do Rio Doce in Espírito Santo, the Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil in Rio de Janeiro, the Portikus im Leinwandhaus in Frankfurt, the Kunstverein of Hamburg, the Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain in Strasbourg, the New Museum of New York, the Miami Art Museum in Miami. He has contributed to group shows at the Museu de Arte Moderna (MAM) in São Paulo, the Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA) in Chicago, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Tokyo and the MoMA in New York.

**Various Artists (VA)** was founded around 17 years ago in the aftermath of a Brussels arts lab called Plateau. Trudo Engels, the cofounder of the association, gradually developed a collective of 24 fictitious artists. In 2000 the centre was officially recognized and subsidized under the name of nadine. By 2008 VA had become a consolidated group of artists. As Engels was no longer producing works under his own name, in 2009 VA decided to replace him with "the Late Trudo Engels". This decision enabled the other 23 VA to carry on together his past and future work. All the data, curriculum vitae, portraits, works, workshops, stories and articles are contained in a database realized by Engels, which, since 2009, has been the point of reference for the "Being an Artist" sessions. These workshops were created to permit in-depth investigation but also to open the doors of VA to other "real" artists who, with "Being an Artist", have an opportunity to put themselves in the shoes of a VA and to temporarily free themselves from their own artistic practice. VA has thus become an open structure in which various artists can take part. Whether or not they are unreal, these projects are "staged" by real people. The creator of VA and the artists who have participated in the "Being an Artist" series can operate as if they are part of a collective action. The VA collective is made up of: Armin Turing, 1973, Munich, Germany; Innumerat Roselare, 1970, Du Bois, Pennsylvania, United States; Bernard Leroy, 1975, Mississauga, Canada; Johannes Korstjens, 1980, Haarlem, Holland; Lima Drib, 1961, Liverpool, England; n.e.b.u.s.i., 1968, Spitak, Armenia; Digi\_Shelf, Délia Sheehy, 1971, Limerick, Ireland; Willy Depoortere, 1979, Poperinge, Belgium; Aude Thensiau, 1975, Marseilles, France; Christl Coppens, 1986, Gent, Belgium; Martaque, Jamila Al Khawarizm, 1973, Cascais, Portugal; Steina Zooeydóttir, 1981, Bolungarvík, Iceland; Late Trudo Engels, 1962–2009, Roeselare, Belgium; Valereson da Silva, 1971, Pindamonhangaba, Brazil; Eraser, Ana Omandichana, 1984, Siroki Brijeg, Bosnia and Herzegovina; Cindy Janssens, 1985, Maastricht, Holland; Freddy Grant, 1952, Kilarrow, Scotland; Martn Coppens, 1986, Gent, Belgium; Robert Ingelbrec, 1982, Stockholm, Sweden; Diederick Dewaere, 1974, St-Etienne, France; Marcella.B, 1955, Arnhem, Holland; Morice de Lisle, 1955, Kinshasa, Congo; Sufferice, Albert Savereys, 1964, Petegem, Belgium; Hélène Thensiau, 1976, Marseilles, France.

At the beginning of the 90s, Various Artists won the Jeune Peinture Belge award with the installation Carmella Giansoldati. Other installations and performances realized by Various Artists are Barney Left (Kanal, Kortrijk), Nancy Turlington (Kanal, Kortrijk), Opera Secco (Kunstenfestivaldesarts, Brussels), Lettres d'Ixelles (nadine, Brussels), Le Château (Galeria Luisa Strina, São Paulo), Human Mathematics (Museo Textil, Oaxaca).

For further information about the exhibition and for photographs:

Silvia Pichini, Communication Manager [press@galleriacontinua.com](mailto:press@galleriacontinua.com), mob. + 39 3474536136