

NARI WARD

Domino Men

Opening: Saturday 21 May 2011, Via del Castello 11, 6pm–12 midnight

Until 27 August 2011, Tuesday-Saturday, 2-7pm

Galleria Continua is pleased to present the first solo exhibition by Nari Ward in its San Gimignano gallery. For the occasion, and in response to the space, the Jamaican artist has realized a new project entitled *Domino Men*.

The poetics of ruin, cast-offs and the worn-out is the distinctive feature of Ward's work, in which there emerges an almost 'animistic' conception of detritus. His installations are realized with found objects: old bits of iron, shopping trolleys, children's buggies, pieces of paper, shoes, bottles and all kinds of other materials. The artist rummages around in the rubbish tip of indifference and, through a process of retrieval and assemblage, restores vitality and value to objects that seemed to have reached the end of their life and economic cycle. It is an artistic practice that acquires an intrinsic sense of redemption, also becoming a metaphor for entropic and evolutionary movements.

Moved by a deeply moral perspective, in his collecting of objects Ward evokes presences and stories associated with atavistic fears or feelings – life, death, passing away, pain, joy – going to the origin of the very reasons of existence. His installations weave new narrative webs, rehabilitating materials and giving them a new spirituality. The objects he uses are full of stories and memories, and express proximity, contingency and a profound sense of transitoriness.

Domino Men, the large installation that lends its name to the title of the exhibition, consists of 28 reproductions of domino tiles. Made from burnt wood, tyres and used clothes, the giant dominos are arranged in different compositions in the space – standing up, lying on the floor, turned over or facing upwards. They are rich in playful connotations, but are also inevitably evocative of corpses and imbued with a strong sense of the perishability of things. The ambiguity of the work triggers a mechanism that prompts the viewer to engage with these elements, and to reflect on their nature, on the interplay of the different parts and on the thin line between play, life and death. The human presence is evoked by the used clothes, with which Ward creates a kind of inner cavity that delimits the perimeter of the holes situated on the front surface of each sculpture. This formal elaboration makes the cavities resemble seeds, which brings us once again to the life/death metaphor but also to that of emptiness/fullness and presence/absence. The use of tyres, which is not new for the artist, suggests the idea of movement, and likewise of a contemporary society under the yoke of unbridled consumerism.

Domino Men is also an evident allusion to the "domino effect", that is, to a mechanical chain reaction. In the game: the fall of the first tile in the line that makes all the following ones fall as well suggests that creating, constructing and then destroying can be a metaphor of our behaviour as human beings. The domino effect is a concept that can be applied to any aspect or situation in life. We experience it at a personal, social, historic and political level.

Just think, for instance, of the wave of revolt that started in Tunisia and then spread to Egypt, Libya, Yemen and Syria, and which has rocked the foundations of the political order throughout North Africa and the Middle East. However, the reflection is also linked to the idea that small variations in initial conditions produce great variations in the long-term behaviour of a system. The union of many individuals creates a group that has the possibility to change things.

For this exhibition he also made *Enchanted*, an installation made of vinyl advertising banner, *Roshambo* a work made of shoe lace, scissor. *IAMAMAN* and *Era* are also made of drawings of shoe laces.

Nari Ward was born in St. Andrews, Jamaica. He moved to New York when he was a teenager, and still lives and works there today. Over the last twenty years his work has been shown in museums and institutions around the world, including: *Contemplating the Void: Interventions in the Guggenheim Rotunda*, Guggenheim Museum, New York, USA (2010); *Prospect 1 New Orleans*, New Orleans, USA (2008); *Dream and Trauma*, Kunsthalle Wien and Museum Moderner Kunst, Vienna, Austria (2007); *Whitney Biennial Exhibition*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, USA (2006); *Dirty Yoga: Taipei Biennial*, Taipei Museum, Taipei, Taiwan (2006); *Sharjah International Biennial 7*, Sharjah, Arab Emirates (2005); *Yokohama Triennial*, Yokohama, Japan (2005); *Landings*, Documenta XI, Kassel, Germany (2003). The artist has had solo shows at the New Museum of New York; at Le Magasin, Centre National d'Art Contemporain, in Grenoble; the Institute of Visual Arts, Milwaukee; GAM - Galleria Civica d'Arte Moderna, in Turin; at Palazzo delle Papesse - Centro Arte Contemporanea di Siena; and, this year, at MASS MoCA - Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art in North Adams. Nari Ward has also received commissions from the United Nations and the World Health Organization, and awards from the Academy of Arts and Letters, the Penny McCall Foundation, the Pollock Krasner Foundation, The National Endowment for the Arts and the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation.

For further information about the exhibition and for photographs:

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