



GALLERIA CONTINUA

SAN GIMIGNANO BEIJING LES MOULINS HABANA

Via del Castello 11, San Gimignano (SI), Italia
tel. +390577943134 | info@galleriacontinua.com | www.galleriacontinua.com

KIKI SMITH Compass

Opening: Saturday 28th September 2019, Via del Castello 11, 6pm-midnight
Until 6th January 2020, Monday to Sunday, 10am-1pm / 2pm-7pm

Galleria Continua is delighted to present **Kiki Smith's** new solo exhibition, *Compass*. From the Eighties onward the artist has had an international presence in the discipline of figurative art.

In a geographical context of course, the word 'compass' indicates the instrument used for determining directions via the location of magnetic north; whilst in a geometric context the same word denotes the instrument used to draw and describe circles and arches. This exhibition of the same name brings together a selection of the artist's most recent works with previously unseen ones. Among them are drawings on Japanese rice paper (*kitikata*) and Nepalese paper, tapestries, bronze and aluminium sculptures, contact prints on silver gelatin photo paper, and gold-leafed cyanotypes. "*Last year, a student showed our class how to create cyanotypes. I was explaining to the students how to use an intaglio plate and combine it with the photographic process of the cyanotype,*" explains Kiki Smith, "*and this experience gave rise to a new group of works.*" It is one of these works that lends its name to the exhibition in San Gimignano.

After a phase characterised by works linked dramatically to the physicality of the body, from the end of the 90's Kiki Smith, turned her attention to the external world. Her highly imaginative universe is populated by animals and plants, with which – as the artist points out – we share a common destiny. The works of the most recent years comprise timeless chronicles, in which the register is intimate and poetic: Smith reflects on the vastness of the universe, and on both the female and animal soul as bearers of an early harmony that is nowadays lost, at least in part. She pushes herself to plumb the depths of the spiritual aspects of humanity, and to understand the experiences of the world and the cosmos. In so doing, she continues to draw upon an extremely broad range of source material: scientific treatises from the eighteenth century, the Christian medieval period with its fantastical bestiaries and stories of martyrs and heroines, the fable – locus par *excellence* of metamorphoses, transitions and transformations not to mention metaphor of fears, impulses and instincts of the human psyche.

For Kiki Smith, it is in drawing that image meets material in the most immediate and spontaneous way. In the drawings that she presents at San Gimignano women continue to be the undisputed protagonists. We find sketches of their mature faces, their luminous eyes like stars surfacing out of the intense blue background of the print, or drawn in pencil and ink on Nepalese paper, a paper

in which the long fibres of the Lokta bush from which it is made are clearly visible. The Lokta grows almost exclusively on the slopes of the Himalaya and is an extremely resilient form of vegetation, yet the paper produced from it has similarities – in its warm colour, diaphanous surface and delicate consistency – to human skin.

Disarmed and vulnerable is the female figure presented by *Congregation*, one of the tapestries on show. For Kiki Smith, the planning stage of a tapestry consists in creating a collage on the same scale, which after various steps is digitalised and printed. On this print the artist then continues to work with inks or watercolours until the desired result is achieved at which point the final pattern is transferred to the weaving workshop. The use of an electronic Jacquard frame allows the artist to transcribe extremely complex designs and work with a broad range of colours of varying intensity. Smith often works over the finished piece again, embellishing the fabric with inserts of gold and silver leaf or painting directly onto the tapestry to accentuate the chromatic effects.

In *Compass* the celestial universe meets the feminine, leaving us with the idea of a spiritual harmony that humanity, it is to be hoped, might one day rediscover.

Kiki Smith was born in Nuremberg, Germany in 1954. She lives and works in New York and in Hudson Valley and is adjunct professor at both Columbia and New York University. After exhibiting in collectives on the margins of the traditional gallery circuit, she began to participate in events at the most prestigious international institutions such as, in 1990: MoMA, New York; the Centre d'art contemporain, Geneva and the Institute of Contemporary Art, Amsterdam; and, later, amongst others, in 1993 at the Österreichisches Museum für Angewandte Kunst, Vienna. In 2005, her first retrospective was held at the Museum of Modern Art in San Francisco, from whence it travelled to the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; the Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York and the Colección Jumex, Mexico City. In 2008, the exhibition *Kiki Smith: Her Home* was presented at the Haus Esters Museum, Krefled; the Kunsthalle, Nuremberg; the Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona and the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art, Brooklyn Museum, New York. The artist has participated in numerous biennials, including the Whitney Biennial, New York (1991, 1993, 2002); the Florence Biennial (1996-1997, 1998) and the Venice Biennial (1993, 1999, 2005, 2009, 2011, 2017). Kiki Smith's works are included in more than fifty public collections worldwide. She has been awarded a great many international accolades: the International Sculpture Center's Lifetime Achievement Award (2017); the United States Art in Embassies Award (which she received from Hillary Clinton in 2013); the Theo Westenberger Women of Excellence Award (2010); the Nelson A. Rockefeller Award, Purchase College School of the Arts (2010); the Women in the Arts Award, Brooklyn Museum (2009); the 50th Edward MacDowell Medal (2009); the Medal Award, School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (2006); the Athena Award for Excellence in Printmaking, Rhode Island School of Design (2006) and the Skowhegan Medal for Sculpture (2000). In 2006, TIME magazine listed her as one of their TIME 100 – the most influential people in the world. The artist has been elected to membership of the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. In 2019, the Uffizi Gallery dedicated a monographic exhibition to the artist, making it the first public Italian museum to do so. Entitled *What I saw on the road*, the exhibition was staged in the Gallery of Modern Art at Palazzo Pitti in Florence and was curated by Eike Schmidt and Renata Pontus. The English version of the exhibition catalogue was realised in conjunction with Galleria Continua. From 18th October 2019 to 8th February 2020 Kiki Smith's first solo show at a public institution in Paris will be held at the 11 Conti Museum, housed by the Monnaie de Paris. "Procession", the artist's solo exhibition at the Belvedere Museum in Vienna, ended on 15th September 2019.

For further information about the exhibition and for photographs:
Silvia Pichini communications director press@galleriacontinua.com, mob. +39 347 45 36 136