



GALLERIA CONTINUA

SAN GIMIGNANO BEIJING LES MOULINS HABANA

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NARI WARD

Down Doors

Opening Saturday 26th January 2019, via del Castello 11, 6pm-midnight
Until 7th April 2019, Monday to Sunday, 10am-1pm, 2-7pm

A leading figure of the international modern art scene, Nari Ward returns to Galleria Continua with the solo show entitled *'Down Doors'*.

The sculptures on show convey an almost animistic conception of discarded and used objects: born from the assembly of various narrative elements, they weave original stories – recounting situations, emotions, events and thoughts which transcend the world of pure representation and infuse the material with a new spirituality. *"The door is an object which, when in use, suggests a space of transition from one place to another"* explains the artist. *"The doors of 'Down Doors' must be viewed as borderless portals and also as repositories. Doors furnished with pockets full of feathers, the ones that are normally used to stuff winter coats and insulate the body. The correlation between body, heat, protection and flight joins the representation of an indistinct attachment to a place suggested by the presence of parachutes. These doors now belong to a space of anticipation or hope: their power lies as much in their vulnerability as in the sense of independence."*

The work of Nari Ward forms part of the long tradition of Afro-American culture for which he is one of the most eloquent mouthpieces. At the age of twelve, he left Jamaica for the United States, settling first in Brooklyn, then New Jersey, and finally in Harlem. Since the early Nineties, his artistic practice has developed via the realisation of large installations and sculptures in which he utilises everyday materials, discarded objects and leftover consumer goods. He recontextualises these found objects with juxtapositions that give rise to complex, metaphorical meanings, left intentionally open to a free and personal interpretation. The viewer is asked to go beyond an initially superficial reading: the multicoloured shoelaces that are fixed in small holes in the wall to form the profile of an image (a ladder, basket, star, flower or phrase) convey a broader meaning, as in one of his most famous works, *"We the People"*. The first three words of the United States Constitution are now also the title of a large retrospective exhibition of the artist's work, to be held in the New Museum, New York, from 13th February to 26th May 2019.

Ward's works begin with materials that are testimony to the economic, social and ritual life of entire communities. The artist completely frees the object from its enslavement to functionality: via the collection of commonly used goods, often those already destined for the rubbish heap, he evokes stories of fear, or atavistic feelings around life, death, joy and pain, and delves into the origin of the very reasons of existence. The vocabulary of his language takes man as its starting point, but ultimately touches the intrinsic parts of lived experience.

In his most recent work he tackles themes tied to the complex political and social realities of our time, observing the profound change brought to Harlem by gentrification and the ever more fragmented state of democracy in the United States and in the world. His artistic practice addresses issues such as racism, marginalisation, power, migration, national identity, rights of citizenship, the gap between rich and poor, and a sense of community and belonging.

Nari Ward was born in 1963 in St. Andrew, Jamaica and he currently lives and works in New York. Solo exhibitions of Ward's work have been organized at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston (2017); Socrates Sculpture Park, New York (2017); The Barnes Foundation, Philadelphia (2016); Savannah College of Art and Design Museum of Art, Savannah, GA (2015); Pérez Art Museum, Miami (2015); Louisiana State University Museum of Art, Baton Rouge, LA (2014); Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, North Adams, MA (2011); The Fabric Workshop and Museum, Philadelphia (2011); Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston (2002); and Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN (2001, 2000). His most important collective shows include: *Objects Like Us*, The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, Ridgefield, CT (2018); *UPTOWN: nastywomen / badhombres*, El Museo del Barrio, New York (2017); *La Grande Madre*, Fondazione Nicola Trussardi, Palazzo Reale, Milano (2015); *Black: Color, Material, Concept*, The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York (2015); *The Freedom Principle: Experiments in Art and Music, 1965 to now*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (2015); *NYC 1993: Experimental Jet Set, Trash and No Star*, New Museum, New York (2013); *Contemplating the Void: Interventions in the Guggenheim Rotunda*, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (2010); Whitney Biennial, New York (2006); *Landings*, Documenta XI, Kassel, Germany (2003). Ward's work is in numerous international public and private collections, including the Brooklyn Museum, New York; Baltimore Museum of Art, MD; Istanbul Modern, Istanbul; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Speed Art Museum, Louisville, KY; Nasher Museum of Art, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Pérez Art Museum, Miami; The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. He has received commissions from the United Nations and the World Health Organisation; numerous honours and recognitions such as the Joyce Award, The Joyce Foundation, Chicago (2015) and the Rome Prize, American Academy of Rome (2012); and awards from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York Foundation for the Arts, the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation and the Pollock-Krasner Foundation.