

PLEIN SOLEIL

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ADEL ABDESSEMED, AI WEIWEI, BARBANA BOJADZI
HANS OP DE BEECK, NIKHIL CHOPRA, MARTA SPAGNOLI
PASCALE MARTHINE TAYOU, NARI WARD, JOSÉ YAQUE

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GALLERIA CONTINUA is pleased to present the group show *Plein Soleil*, shown across its two Paris spaces, located respectively in the Marais and Matignon districts. The two exhibitions feature works by **Adel Abdessemed, Ai Weiwei, Juan Araujo, Barbana Bojadzi, Hans Op de Beeck, Yoan Capote, Loris Cecchini, Elizabet Cerviño, Nikhil Chopra, Berlinde De Bruyckere, Leandro Erlich, Subodh Gupta, JR, José Mesías, Giovanni Ozzola, Serse, Nedko Solakov, Marta Spagnoli, Pascale Marthine Tayou, Nari Ward, Sislej Xhafa and José Yaque.**

Bringing together artists from different generations and geographies, working across a range of practices, *Plein Soleil* sets out to evoke the sensations we typically associate with the summer season. Light becomes material, colors gain in intensity, while landscapes, bodies, and natural elements unfold in a surge of vitality and blossoming. Hovering between contemplation and celebration of the living, the works on view in both galleries evoke that time of year when time seems to stretch, the gaze relaxes, and the mind gives way to a renewed sense of lightness.

Color emerges as the exhibition's protagonist, infusing both spaces with a luminous, vibrant atmosphere. It calls to the mind, flowering trees, the colorful parasols of summer beaches, the bustle of tourist crowds, starlit nights, the discoveries of travel, and moments of leisure. Yet beneath this apparent carefree spirit, more complex questions surface. By evoking the imagery of holidays and leisure, the exhibition invites reflection on the privilege that the very possibility of travel and movement represents. It sheds light on the environmental stakes tied to tourist mass flows, while also evoking a more subtle layer of meaning: emigration, driven by harsh political, economic, or climatic realities.

This way, the imagery of mobility, discovery, and escape take on a more ambivalent dimension, revealing the inequalities that underpin our relationship to movement.

Taking its title from the cinematic masterpiece *Plein Soleil*, whose Mediterranean atmosphere, steeped in light, creates a striking contrast between the dazzling beauty of the landscapes and the moral darkness of the plot, the exhibition engages in a similar reflection. Unlike many noir films set in shadow, the crimes committed by the protagonist of the movie are concealed in broad daylight, beneath a light that nevertheless seems to reveal everything. In much the same way, *Plein Soleil* allows essential questions of our contemporary societies to surface behind a joyful, summery aesthetic. It thus invites the viewer to move beyond the immediate seduction of the works and interrogate the more complex issues they convey.

In *Politics of Drawing, Oiseau*, **Adel Abdessemed** chooses charcoal – an unstable, powdery medium – to capture the silhouette of a small bird perched on a branch, immediately evoking a long tradition of naturalist drawing. This drawing forms part of the artist's preparatory work around Olivier Messiaen's opera *Saint François d'Assise*, and in particular the scene of the *Sermon to the Birds*. Yet this apparent stillness is deceptive: the fragility of the line transforms the bird into a figure of precariousness, balanced on its branch as if on the edge of a void. It thus becomes a silent metaphor for the living being confronted with the violence of the world, at once present and threatened, free and vulnerable.

In this context, visitors are welcomed by **Ai Weiwei's** sculptural installation *Colored Vases*, in which three ancient Chinese jars, dating from the Neolithic period and the Han

dynasty, are coated in industrial paint. By masking their surfaces, the history of the vases is no longer immediately visible, yet it remains present beneath the dried layer of paint. Their original forms, now obscured, become the image of a history the artist describes as "invisible but always present." Ai Weiwei's iconoclasm thus invites us to question the values we take for granted in our relationship to the past.

This ambivalence is echoed in **Hans Op de Beeck's** sculpture *Fable*, where songbirds are frozen in an atmosphere of silence, contemplation, and darkness, as though suspended in a surrealist dream. The artist, known for works with a grey, muffled, timeless aesthetic, as if coated in a fine layer of dust, offers here a reading in which, behind the apparent gentleness suggested by the title, a darker image emerges: two birds stripped of their vitality, condemned to stillness.

The exhibition also explores the transformation of symbols and the repurposing of ordinary materials into artistic techniques. In his installation *Crying Form, Rising Symbol*, **Nari Ward** takes hold of one of iconography's most potent motifs, the star, and deflates its aura of glory through everyday elements such as shoelaces. The title itself expresses the dichotomy running through the work, where an appearance marked by decadence coexists with the star's enduring symbolic charge.

Finally, this reflection on the transformation of forms and natural forces continues with the diptych from **Marta Spagnoli's** *Armor* series, which establishes a visual dialogue around the notions of the wild and the primordial, in relation to the constant reconfiguration of landscapes through human intervention. Simple organic forms, such as seaweed, are overlaid and transformed by successive layers of paint and painterly gestures, echoing every form of environmental disruption. These elements appear to float, suspended in a collective, swirling movement, evoking a passage from chaos to order and the human propensity to dominate nature.

The exhibition unfolds the full complexity of contemporary society, its contradictions and persistent challenges, with the intention not of concealing or softening them, but of exposing them, in broad daylight.

About the Gallery:

GALLERIA CONTINUA is a contemporary art gallery founded in 1990 in San Gimignano by three friends—Mario Cristiani, Lorenzo Fiaschi, and Maurizio Rigillo—today it operates in San Gimignano, Rome, Beijing, Paris, Les Moulins, Havana and São Paulo.

GALLERIA CONTINUA represents a desire to create, through art, a continuity between eras, enhancing the connection between past, present, and future, with a commitment to

actively contributing to the writing of the contemporary art scene. Investing in unique, historically infused spaces, often far from conventional ideals, the gallery has developed a strong identity over more than thirty years of activity, embracing themes related to creation and cultural blending. Its various global locations spaces foster encounters and exchanges centered around works of art, presenting a vision of beauty that is pluralistic, joyful, cosmopolitan, and rich in diverse influences.

In 2024, the gallery inaugurates a third French space in the heart of Matignon, the historic epicenter of the art market and a lively neighborhood in western Paris where important international contemporary art galleries, modern art dealers, and iconic fashion, craft, and lifestyle houses come together, attracting visitors from all over the world.

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