



GALLERIA CONTINUA

SAN GIMIGNANO BEIJING LES MOULINS HABANA

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SISLEJ XHAFA

Fireworks in my Closet

Opening: Friday September 23rd 2016, Via del Castello 11, 6pm-midnight
Until 15.01.2017, Monday-Sunday, 10am-1pm, 2-7pm

After the solo in 2012 held at the French venue of Les Moulins, Galleria Continua is happy to host, for the first time in its exhibition space in San Gimignano, the works by Sislej Xhafa.

Fireworks in my Closet includes new works created by the artist for this event and conceived bearing in mind the space on the lower floor of the former cinema theatre: the stalls, the stage, the gallery, the garden. These works, that greatly differ from one another, ironically and light-heartedly address issues such as migration, identity, marginalisation, violence in politics and society, questioning the complexity, unity and diversity of our modern society.

Sislej Xhafa moved to Italy in 1993 and studied at the Florence Academy, then relocated to the United States, where he now lives. He left his homeland, devastated by dictatorship and war: he is a native of Kosovo, referred to by Albanians, the ethnic group he belongs to, as Kosova. Renowned internationally for his research within social, economic and political environments associated to the numerous complexities of

contemporary societies, Xhafa is interested in the phenomena of illegality and social strategies, and marks out the way in which they are unconsciously manipulated. The artist expresses himself by experimenting all media without partiality, from sculpture and drawing to photography, performance and video art.

Ironic and subversive, Sislej Xhafa always manages to draw inspiration from the complexity and contradictions of reality. It was he, indeed, who suggested a clandestine Albanian pavilion at the Venice Biennale, used the Ljubljana train station as an Exchange where people's dreams and hopes were sold instead of shares, decorated the waiting room of a police station in Ghent like a grand palace, offered a change in perspective to the visitors of the 2013 Venice Biennale, inviting them to perch on the branches of a tree to get their hair cut in a makeshift shop. The MAXXI in Rome is hosting until October a summa of a branch of his work that owes its title to the large installation created in the year 2000 in Tuscany with Arte Continua for *Art to Art*. On that occasion, Xhafa dug the earth on the hill facing Casole d'Elsa and wrote a giant "Benvenuto" (Welcome) on the ground. Emblematic of a nature which is

always on the move (the grass has grown and the writing has disappeared), this work is an invitation to openness and acceptance.

Xhafa is capable of transforming the banality of everyday life into something extraordinary. In this exhibition, the footprints of a tramp left on cement, or the truck covers make us ponder on dramatically contemporary issues, such as the redefinition of the concept of migrant, space, and border. Antennas and satellite dishes dwell on the sense of transience and lack of communication. Fireworks imprisoned in a closet are a metaphor for violence, and the holy cards of saints become emblems of religious power. And if the work placed in the garden transcends art to open onto the landscape, the one set up in the stalls area denotes a non-verifiable space, that fine line between what we know and what eludes us, that submerged map where legality and illegality are blurred.

Sislej Xhafa was born in Pejë, Kosova, in 1970. He lives and works in New York. He has held solo exhibitions in important venues: Galeria BWA Sokol, Nowy Sacz (2016); MAXXI National Museum of XXI Century Arts, Rome (2016); Center 42°, Cetinje, Montenegro (2012); MADRE Donna Regina Contemporary Art Museum, Naples (2011); GAMeC Modern and Contemporary Art Gallery, Bergamo (2007); 51st Venice Biennial, Albanian Pavilion, Venice (2005); La Caixa Foundation, Barcelona (2005); Deitch Projects, New York (2002); Kunsthalle Bern, Bern (2001), Olivetti Foundation, Rome (2000); 47th Venice Biennale, the clandestine Albanian Pavilion, Venice (1997). He has participated in collective exhibitions at the National Gallery of Art, Warsaw, (2016); Palazzo Reale, Milan (2015); Centquatre, Paris (2015); 55th Venice Biennale, Venice (2013); Riso Museum of Contemporary Art in Sicily (2012); Palazzo Grassi, François Pinault Collection, Venice (2011); Havana Biennial, Havana (2009); Gwangju Biennale, Gwangju (2008, 2002); Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt (2008); Museo Reina Sofía, Barcelona (2007); Istanbul Museum of Modern Art, Istanbul (2007); Mori Art Museum, Tokyo (2007), Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2002); PS1, New York (2001); Manifesta III, Ljubljana (2000); S.M.A.K., Ghent (2000), 59th Venice Biennale, Venice (1999).

For further information about the exhibition and for photographs:

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