

GALLERIA CONTINUA

SAN GIMIGNANO BEIJING **LES MOULINS** HABANA

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 Open from Wednesdays to Sundays from noon to 6pm and by appointment.

KAN XUAN

Light

Opening on Sunday, October 16, as from noon

Galleria Continua is proud to present for the first time in its Moulins spaces a solo show by Chinese artist Kan Xuan. For this exhibition, entitled *Light*, Kan has chosen a selection of video works made between 1999 and 2009, in which a series of familiar, trivial elements have been filmed without pretension but with a pertinence and an exactitude that play with their possible meanings, unveiling with a light touch a world of everyday feelings and sensations that we experience without always noticing them.

Kan Xuan's work first burst onto the Chinese arts scene in 1999, after she had been living in Beijing for a year. This was the year she made the video *Kan Xuan! Ai!*, in which she can be seen rushing through the packed crowds in the subway calling out her own name and answering herself. Apparently looking for herself, fighting against an overwhelming human tide, the artist turns herself into the heroine of an existentialist game with political overtones.

A different perspective on identity, this time oriented towards the body, is given shape through the more amusing

premise of *Looking, looking, looking for...* (2002). In this video, the viewer follows the path taken by a spider as it makes its way across two naked bodies, those of a man and a woman. The strange nursery rhyme that one hears chanted in the video seems to be enjoying the mixed feelings that the images provoke, somewhere between aversion and curiosity, fear and lasciviousness, watching the unfolding details of these bodies as they are traversed by a creature who in fact is looking for nothing but a place to hide.

The uncovering and the representation of naked bodies and their exploration can also be seen as a condemnation of the secrecy and hypocrisy weighing upon Chinese society and its authoritarian government. The innocence of the quiet voice singing alongside the spider echoes *A happy girl* and *In the spring*, two videos from 2002, not long after the artist first arrived in Europe, in Amsterdam. Kan Xuan appears in the videos dancing naked in green surroundings, very simply expressing the joy of freedom, of excitement at being able to travel and discover new horizons, not without revealing the artist's cheerful character at the same time.

If, thanks to her generosity, Kan

Xuan knows how to give a rather mischievous turn to her works, a kind of uneasiness about the future of contemporary society also shows through in certain pieces. The unchanging presence of the police uniforms appearing before the camera with each movement of *One by one* (2004) is one instance. The videos *A Persimmon* and *Garbage*, both made in 1999 and here exhibited next to one another, are also closely related in a formal sense.

In the first, a ripe fruit appears in the hands of the artist, who transforms it into juicy pulp with her fingers, titillating our taste buds while at the same time arousing a certain cruelty. *Garbage* shows the hands of the artist playing with garbage. Wrapping, mouldy fruit peels and other trash come together here in an inventory of residues, formulating the artist's worry about the state of the world, in particular the economic impact of globalisation.

The installation *Island* (2006–2009) is also a response to this concern. It consists of four monitors placed on blocks found in the immediate vicinity of the Sainte-Marie factory, each showing images of banal, colourful, at times very superfluous objects, each one accompanied by coins negligently placed beside them, like a call to question the value of things.

Born in China in Anhui province in 1972, Kan Xuan studied between 1993 and 1997 at the Chinese Art Academy in Hangzhou, where she was able to follow the development of the very first video art in China.

She participated in an artistic residency programme from 2002 to 2003 at the Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten in Amsterdam, where she has lived ever since, dividing her time between the Netherlands and China. She participated in another residency programme at Yorkshire ArtSpace Society in Sheffield in England from 2007 to 2008. Her solo shows have included Kan Xuan (IKON Gallery, Birmingham, England, 2016), Millet Mounds (Ullens Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing, China, 2012), and Kanxuan!

Ai! (Galleria Continua, San Gimignano, Italy, 2008). She has also participated in numerous group exhibitions, including Face to Time (Real Jardín Botánico, Madrid, Spain, 2011), the 8th Gwanju Biennale (Republic of Korea, 2010), China Power Station (Pinacoteca Agnelli, Turin, Italy), The State of Things (BOZAR, Brussels, Belgium, 2010), and Everyday Miracles (Extended) (SF Art Institute, San Francisco, USA, 2009).

Kan Xuan has received awards from the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture, and Sciences (2002), and the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2003), and was awarded the Rome Prize in 2005.