

GALLERIA CONTINUA / Le Moulin

KENDELL GEERS

Endgame

Opening : Saturday 22 of June
From June 23 to September 29, 2013

GALLERIA CONTINUA / Le Moulin is delighted to present *Endgame*, an exhibition of the South African artist Kendell Geers in France, that has previously seen the light as *Fin de Partie* at GALLERIA CONTINUA in Beijing in 2011.

Endgame is not only a tribute to Samuel Beckett's homonymous play but is also a reference to the end of a game of chess, when only very few pieces are left and each movement may provide the opponent with the opportunity for checkmate leading to the end of the game.

According to Kendell Geers, the party is over in every sense. We live in a world today where all institutions have failed us and we remain leftover people, the surplus of the grand utopian ideologies of the past. We loathe ourselves, overconsume to cover up all that makes us natural beings; we are oblivious to every consequence of every action we undertake, and have long forgotten the true meaning of revolution.

And so it is with an unwavering faith in art and the role of the artist; and with political, linguistic and spiritual references, that Kendell Geers has shown through his works presented at *Fin de Partie*, a reflection on the evolution and (lack of) revolution we are going through.

The exhibition of oil barrels in China as a reference to the forbidden prayer wheels of tibetan monks, the juxtaposition of gold leafed police batons on a papal purple wall, the wordplay in the title of a work (*EMPTY V*) all hold within them the power to intrigue, interrogate and inform the viewer at the same time.

Since immemorial time artists, shamans and priests have been drawn to the spiritual and healing properties of resins in their work. The natural resins like Myrrh and Oliban (Frankincense) favored by the ancients have since given way to synthetic resins as the needs of industrialization and global consumption have eclipsed the need to respect our environment. "Flesh of the Shadow Spirit" is the embodiment of the demon of the synthetic age, the spirit of fossil fuels, the oil slick of the contemporary present.

An extraordinary event took place shortly after the start of the solo exhibition *Fin de Partie* by Kendell Geers in Beijing— on 3rd April 2011, the Chinese artist Ai Weiwei was arrested by the police and disappeared for 81 days. Kendell Geers, indignant, wanted to support him by means of a symbolic gesture and requested that the gallery would close its doors in protest. To avoid that the staff could suffer bad consequences from this act, this artist tried to find another way to out his feelings about the detention. He folded bright red Chinese flags into blindfolds and covered the eyes of his black resin sculptures, "Flesh of the Shadow Spirits".

The blindfolded figures were a humble protest in which Kendell Geers' art was transformed into the victims of a state violence, the state that wishes to silence artists by shooting them in their imagination by firing squads of conformity. The red flags, made known to all Kendell Geers' political support, made known that all were not blind of self to see and were an expression of his uncompromising and neverending belief in the power of art and artists.

The protest was not advertised at the time. The presentation of *Endgame* in France thus forms an opportunity to, in retrospect, present the protest to the public as Ai Weiwei remains on conditional release and does not have the permission to leave Chinese soil.

« One billion blindfolds will never stop the truth from being seen once it has been spoken by artists.

Kendell Geers was born in Johannesburg (South Africa) into a family belonging to the Afrikaner community, with a Calvinist religious background descending from the Dutch colonists that settled in South Africa between the 17th and the 18th century. His childhood was marked profoundly by the segregation and injustice of apartheid (literally "separation" in the Afrikaans language), which divided not only the white and the black communities, but also whites of British and of Dutch origin, triggering a spiral of violence destined to continue until the middle of the 90s.

In 1988, together with another 168 people, he refused to serve in the South African Defence Force, a crime punishable with up to six years in prison; before his arrest he managed to escape to the United States, where he stayed, working as an assistant to the artist Richard Prince, until 1990, when Mandela was released and he was able to return to Johannesburg. In 1993, he decided to place his date of birth in May 1968, a historical moment that was packed with events for his artistic and personal growth: the students' revolts, the death of Marcel Duchamp, the murder of Martin Luther King.

This identification between collective history and personal life would become one of the pivots of his future artistic output, and is perfectly exemplified in his on-going work, *T.W. (cv)*, a *curriculum vitae* that includes the major dates and corresponding events which have influenced Kendell Geers as a person and as an artist. He currently lives and works in Brussels (Belgium). In his career he has developed polymorphic work making use of expressive means of different nature: ready-mades, installations, video, photography, performance, etc. He questions codes of behaviour, moral principles, and ideological, political and social systems (including the art world itself).

His work has been shown in numerous international group exhibitions, including the African Pavilion at the 52nd Venice Biennale (2007) and Documenta 11 in Kassel (2002). Recently, his solo show *Irrespektiv* travelled to a number of prominent European museums: the SMAK (Ghent, Belgium) and the Baltic (Gateshead, UK) in 2007; the DA2 (Salamanca, Spain) and the MAC (Lyon, France) in 2008 the MART (Rovereto, Italy) in 2009. Recently, Kendell Geers' solo exhibitions took place in Château Blandy-les-Tours in 2012 and in 2013 the Haus der Kunst presented an important retrospective.

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