

PRESS RELEASE

TRADITIONAL AFRICAN ART AT DIDIER CLAES INSPIRES THE CONTEMPORARY ARTIST KENDELL GEERS

During the Brussels Gallery Weekend from 7 to 10 September 2017, **didier Claes Gallery** and **Rodolphe Janssen Gallery** will team up to present new work by **Kendell Geers**, the South African artist established in Belgium. Inspired by both African Art (Lega, Songye and Grebo) and their influence on the European Avant Guard (Picasso, Leger, Malevich, Gauguin and Matisse) the artist has created a series of large scale bronzes, drawings and paintings for the exhibition AfroPunk. The exhibition is a joint effort featuring traditional and contemporary art, symbolising the importance of African Art on the European traditions. didier Claes Gallery recently moved from downtown to the upper part of the city, in the Avenue Louise district, a district that has become the home of the best modern and contemporary art galleries in Brussels, including Rodolphe Janssen Gallery. The contemporary work will be presented at Rodolphe Janssens Gallery, the traditional objects at didier Claes Gallery.

A dialogue between cultures

Didier Claes about his project : "I proposed Kendell Geers to look at some of the objects from my collection from his angle as an artist. I gave him 'carte blanche', he was free and there were no limitations. This selection of historical works reflects my personal aesthetics I try to transmit to the collectors who I propose my pieces to. I have three works by Kendell in my private collection. I was interested to see how he could get inspired and interact directly with these traditional, African objects. "

'AfroPunk' is an exhibition in two parts, a dialogue with history and tradition. New paintings, drawings and bronze sculptures will be exhibited alongside traditional works of art in both Rodolphe Janssen Gallery and didier Claes Gallery, a dealer specialising in classic African Art. Kendell Geers used cutting edge technology to scan and 3D print rare African masks that had been collected by Sablon artist-collector Willy Mestach. Geers asks the question, whether spirit can be transferred from one form into another, whether a 3D scan and print of an evocative Songye mask might hold the memory of the spirit of the original. For Geers, the most pressing issue that art faces today is the reanimation of spirit, to return art to its spiritual function, the intercessor between worlds.

Following the Punk and Dada traditions, Geers uses 3D scanning and printing like Hannah Hoch used her scissors to create her collages and the way Marcel Duchamp used objects he found in the material world to transform them into existential questions about ethics and aesthetics. The paintings and drawings are also made from scans and prints, worked, reworked and transformed. The result is neither African Art, not European Art, but a dialogue between cultures, a dialogue that is as much about Picasso as it is about Traditional African Art. 'AfroPunk' is a meditation on reading, an exorcism of subject, form

and tradition, images trapped at the border between our expectations and the boundaries of our experience.

Kendell Geers

Socially charged and politically engaged, Kendell Geers' work bears an unwavering faith in the power of art to effect true change. He speaks in a raw but poetic language to explore the boundaries of art and what's permissible, provoking intense feelings of desire and danger, seduction and repulsion. Often called political, Kendell Geers also plays with ethical, aesthetical and spiritual matters, and redefines concepts like power, language, identity and even the role of the artist. Seen as confrontational, he's been known to disrupt the peace by laying bare what hurts - oftentimes literally.

Rodolphe Janssen

The Rodolphe Janssen gallery, which has been based in Brussels since 1991, has gained quite a reputation in Belgium, with over 200 exhibitions to its name. For more than 25 years now, Rodolphe Janssen has committed to highlighting emerging European and American artists, while also exhibiting numerous renowned international artists in various styles in his space. In 2013, Janssen opened a second venue opposite his first gallery. Rodolphe's expertise has allowed him to develop close ties with gallery owners and art centres all over the world and to participate on an annual basis in larger international art fairs.

Didier Claes

Didier Claes is a Belgian gallery owner specialising in African art. Following his remarkable and atypical career, during which he very soon discovered some exceptional items, he is now among the world's best specialists in ancient African art. His gallery not only takes part in large Belgian gatherings (BRAFA, Bruneaf, Cultures), but in international ones as well that are related to his field of expertise. With a Belgian father and a Congolese mother, Didier Claes is particularly sensitive to all matters related to African heritage. He is quick to raise topics for reflection and to launch the debate on the creation of an ethical charter concerning the origin of African objects. The gallery has been based at the Sablon since 2002 and will be moving uptown in the Spring of 2017.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

DIDIER CLAES GALLERY

Rue de l'Abbaye 14
1050 Brussels

RODOLPHE JANSSEN GALLERY

Rue Livourne 35
1050 Brussels

DATES

7/09/2017 > 14/10/2017

CONTACT
didier Claes Gallery
+32 2 414 19 29

CONTACT PRESS
CaracasCOM - info@caracascom.com - +32 495 22 07 92