

ENGLISH

GALLERIA CONTINUA

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NARI WARD

Prayer for the Living

07/02/2023 – 22/02/2023

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Galleria Continua is pleased to present a new solo show, "Prayer for the Living", by Jamaican born American artist, **Nari Ward**. Ward will exhibit an installation and a series of artworks that have a **spiritual dimension capable of transforming the visitor's perspective**.

The exhibition will take place for the first time in the gallery's spaces inside **Dubai's most iconic hotel**, Burj Al Arab Jumeirah. Galleria Continua now celebrates more than a year at the prestigious hotel, product of a collaborative and successful partnership for which the gallery hosts a **varied programme of exhibitions** by international contemporary artists.

The installation "Ballast of Miracles" takes up the central space of the gallery. The work is made up of looming balloons, enforced with a base made of KEU2001, a waste cement-like material from Santa Croce sull'Arno, an industrial manufacturing area in Tuscany, Italy where Ward has previously exhibited. This material comes from the sludge inerting tannery process and it is a remnant, renegade, by-product of preservation; a "new" material generated from waste. The choice of this material is deliberate as the artist wants to **revise the past energy of this "zero" material** and reveal the enigma of its

current form. This evokes a questioning of where the negative, discarded energy of this material has gone. The artist responds by suggesting that this **empty presence is correlated with devotion and faith**. This work encourages people to come together, to think about their relationship to mystery, God, faith and religion, and to what happens to energy that once existed when it has gone. There are three different components to this work: the **devotional component**, the **prayer component** and the **mystery component**. This **spirituality**, that **occurs in the face of the unknown**, is a theme that goes on to strongly develop throughout the rest of the exhibition.

Works like "HERE", "NOW", "TOGETHER", "WITH", are executed on patinated copper. The small, round, shadow-like shapes are reminiscent of scenes that the artist experienced **during the pandemic in New York**. When people could not gather nor meet indoors, many New Yorkers would meet in the streets to drink, the sidewalks filling up with **empty bottles**. At the same time, **prayer candles** appeared as little memorial set-ups outside houses where someone had died. Funeral homes were closed and people gathered on the streets, **coming together to mourn collectively**. The prayer candles were left in devotion and memory, a small light

of **hope in a dark time**. While the former was a gathering to celebrate life, the latter was a dedication, an attempt to memorialize what has been lost. The artist was interested by these two different manifestations of **need and emotions**. When their purpose had been served, he started collecting these used glass containers from the streets, re-inscribing them in a different frame, turning a **narrative of darkness and loss into hope**. These works, like their short titles, are a strong declaration of our ability to transform and renew, arriving once again at a hopeful place.

In the series of works titled "Prayer", the theme of **spirituality and devotion** is present not only in the title but also in the work itself through the shadowed presence of prayer beads and handprints marking the copper squares mounted on panels. A darkening patina gives the work its deep, nocturnal colours.

"Radiant Scans" are thermal images where instead of a camera capturing the radiation of light from objects, a thermic camera captures the infrared radiation or the heat waves which varies according to the objects' temperature. These everyday objects look as if they are floating, creating a **mysterious and ghostly still-life**, bringing up queries about the **visible and the invisible**. These images evoke many different references, from still-life in antique art, to religious offerings or shrines. For the viewer, the spiritual dimension subsequently **overrides the analytical characteristic of the image** taken by the machine.

We are delighted to mention that while Nari Ward's exhibition is on view at Galleria Continua / Dubai, he will also exhibit at Kalba Ice Factory, Khor Kalba, Emirate of Sharjah, as part of the **Sharjah Biennale**, curated by Hoor Al Qasimi, Director of Sharjah Art Foundation, from **7 February to 11 June 2023**.

Nari Ward (b. 1963, St. Andrew, Jamaica; lives and works in New York) is known for his sculptural installations composed of discarded material found and collected in his

neighborhood. He uses repurposed objects such as baby strollers, shopping carts, bottles, doors, television sets, cash registers and shoelaces, among other materials. Ward re-contextualizes found objects in thought-provoking juxtapositions that create complex, metaphorical meanings to confront social and political issues surrounding race, poverty, and consumer culture. He intentionally leaves the meaning of his work open, allowing the viewer to provide his or her own interpretation.

Nari Ward received a BA from City University of New York, Hunter College in 1989, and an MFA from City University of New York, Brooklyn College in 1992. Solo exhibitions have been hosted at the historic Piscina Romano, Milan, curated by Massimiliano Gioni, Fondazione Nicola Trussardi (2022); Museum of Contemporary Art in Denver (2020); the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, Houston, TX (2019); the New Museum, New York (2019); the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston (2017); Socrates Sculpture Park, New York (2017); The Barnes Foundation, Philadelphia (2016); Pérez Art Museum Miami (2015); Savannah College of Art and Design Museum of Art, Savannah, GA (2015); Louisiana State University Museum of Art, Baton Rouge, LA (2014); The Fabric Workshop and Museum, Philadelphia (2011); Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, North Adams, MA (2011); Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston (2002); and Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN (2001, 2000). Select group exhibitions featuring his work include Objects Like Us, The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, Ridgefield, CT (2018–2019); UPTOWN: nastywomen/badhombres, El Museo del Barrio, New York (2017); Black: Color, Material, Concept, The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York (2015); The Great Mother, the Fondazione Nicola Trussardi, Palazzo Reale, Milan (2015); The Freedom Principle: Experiments in Art and Music, 1965 to Now, the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago (2015); NYC 1993: Experimental Jet Set, Trash and No Star, New Museum, New York (2013); Contemplating the Void: Interventions in the Guggenheim Rotunda, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (2010); the Whitney Biennial, New York (2006); and Landings, Documenta XI, Kassel, Germany (2003).

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