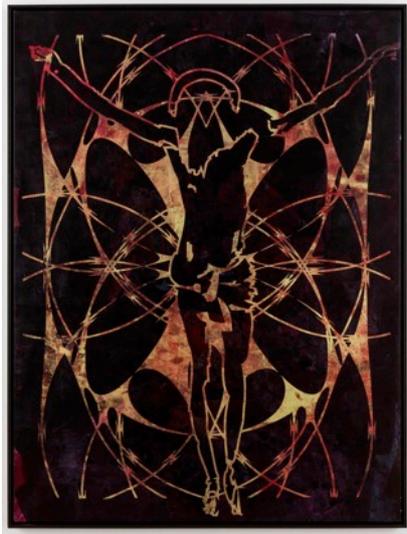


STEPHEN FRIEDMAN GALLERY



Kendell Geers **Crossing the Line**

9 September – 4 October 2014

Private View Saturday 6 September 5-7pm

Stephen Friedman Gallery is pleased to present Kendell Geers' fifth exhibition at the gallery which follows his recent major retrospective at the Haus der Kunst in Munich, Germany. Born in South Africa and now living in Belgium, the show's title 'Crossing the Line' recalls both the journey of the artist's cultural heritage crossing the equator and his recent move into painting.

Born into a white working-class Afrikaans family in the height of apartheid, Geers ran away from home at 15 and later changed his name and date of birth, rejecting his roots and reclaiming his identity. While Geers' career has long been defined by the provocative and the political, his more recent works interweave the poetic and address the personal salvation he has found in art. Through painting and sculpture, Geers crosses the borders of media, design, politics and history and transforms the experiences and emblems of his youth into powerful transcendental symbols.

Presented in the exhibition is a new body of work which features the instantly recognisable shapes of razor wire. Geers describes the barrier as 'the sign of my childhood, the symbol of my nation, the curse of my ancestors'. A new series of paintings feature lines which cross through intricate layers of paint and reveal classical iconography. Inspired by the Siennese painters of the thirteenth to fifteenth century, Geers interweaves the barbed motif into traditional forms of the crucifix, Madonna and Buddha as well as abstract motifs. The end result, a product of a year's development in the studio, is a meditation on the sacred space of art. This combining of the sacred and the profane, the fierce and the serene, recurs throughout Geers' works and relates back to the idea of crossing borders and boundaries.

In the painting 'Ligne de Fuite 7487', the crucifixion is rendered in swathing red and gold lines. While seemingly abstract, the imagery is immediately recognisable and surrounded by swirling shapes marked by the curls of razor wire. Its lines draw a visual and metaphorical link to the thorns of Christ's crown while the blood-like pigment mixes with an alluring gold suggestive of rusting metal and alchemy. In its fierce beauty the painting raises questions about the sources and excuses for violence, and thus the cause of it. In this series of works, Geers explores a personal quest for the spiritual which broadens more widely into the power of art in today's world. The paintings take their title from philosopher Gilles Deleuze's concept 'Ligne de Fuite' developed with Felix Guattari, which related to the act of fleeing, flowing or disappearing into the distance. As such, the lines scarred in the painting question notions of space, borders, imprisonment and gateways.

A hanging sculpture features an infinite looping representation of razor wire, highly polished in stainless steel and elevated from its fierce undertone. The work relates to Geers' earlier installations using actual razor wire such as 'T.W. Exported' from 1993 which split the gallery space in two with a full-length fence. With the material sourced directly from a South African security

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company, 'T.W. Exported' was explicitly political and confrontational. This new work characterises a renewed state of mind for the artist, offering a more contemplative outlook on the hallmarks of his work.

Geers' unique visual language is continued in a new series entitled 'Foiled'. These wall mounted works feature the imprint of a devotional object rendered in tin foil. The end result is a fragile and beautiful capturing of the empty space once taken by the spiritual icon. Despite being an everyday and disposable material, tin is one of the seven metals of alchemy and has held a traditional and historical relevance since the Bronze Age. By using a seemingly modest material in lieu of a devotional object, Geers continues his inquisition into spiritualism as well as materialism.

Also presented in the exhibition is a small group of mirrored reliefs featuring four letter words carved into scorched wood. In the negative space now taken by the ashen wood, words such as 'give' and 'love' are formed and refracted. Standing in front of the reflective surface, one's image becomes fragmented. The mirrored imaging recalls the sense of a labyrinth and an opening to other worlds, a recurring motif in Geers' work. In one room, a hanging sculpture made of polished stainless steel, 'Monument to the F Word X', is presented above a mirrored floor. Walking into the space, images are shattered and re-built.

'Crossing the Line' is an important exhibition showing a powerful and poetic new direction. Simultaneously familiar, comforting, teasing and unnerving, Geers' work continues to push the boundaries and question our preconceptions.

Kendell Geers (b. May 1968) lives and works in Brussels, Belgium. Recent solo exhibitions include 'Kendell Geers 1988-2012', Haus der Kunst, Munich, Germany (2013), 'Endgame', Galleria Continua / Le Moulin, Boissy-le-Châtel, France (2013); 'The Marriage of Heaven and Hell', Chateau Blandy-les-Tours, Melun, Paris, France (2012); 'Songs of Innocence and of Experience', Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa (2012); 'No Government, No Cry', CIAP, Hasselt, Belgium (2011); 'Kendell Geers', National Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa (2010); 'Up in the Air', Magasin 3 Stockholm Konsthall, Stockholm; touring to FRAC Montpellier, France Contemporary Art Project Murcia, Spain (2010); 'GUEST + A HOST = A GHOST', Stephen Friedman Gallery, London, England (2009); and 'Irrespektiv', Museo di arte Moderna e Contemporanea di Trento e Rovereto (2009) touring to; Musée d'Art Contemporain de Lyon, France (2008) Da2, Salamanca, Spain (2008); S.M.A.K., Gent, Belgium (2007); BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, Newcastle, UK (2007).

Recent group shows include 'INSERT 2014: a cultural exploration of Delhi as a landscape for creativity and transformation', Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, India (2014); 'Ruffneck Constructivists', ICA, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA (2014); 'Sex, Money and Power', Maison Particulière, Brussels, Belgium (2013); 'The Rainbow Nation', Contemporary South African Sculpture, Museum Beelden aan Zee, El Den Haag- Scheveningen, The Netherlands (2012); 'All that Glisters', Stephen Friedman Gallery, London, England (2011); 'Contemplating the Void', Guggenheim Museum, New York, USA (2010); 'Signals in the Dark: Art in the Shadow of War', Model Arts and Niland Gallery, Sligo, Ireland, UK (2009); 'Wall Rockets: Contemporary Artists and Ed Ruscha', The FLAG Art Foundation, New York, USA (2008) and 'Global Cities', Turbine Hall, Tate Modern, London (2007). Geers was included in the 29th Bienal de São Paulo, Brazil (2010) and exhibited in the 'African Pavilion' as part of the 52nd Biennale di Venezia, Venice, Italy (2007).

Gallery hours are: Tuesday to Friday, 10am - 6pm and Saturday, 11am - 5pm

Forthcoming exhibition: 'Tom Friedman', 14 October - 22 November 2014.

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