



Kendell Geers
#iPROtesttHEReforelam

06.04.2019 – 19.05.2019

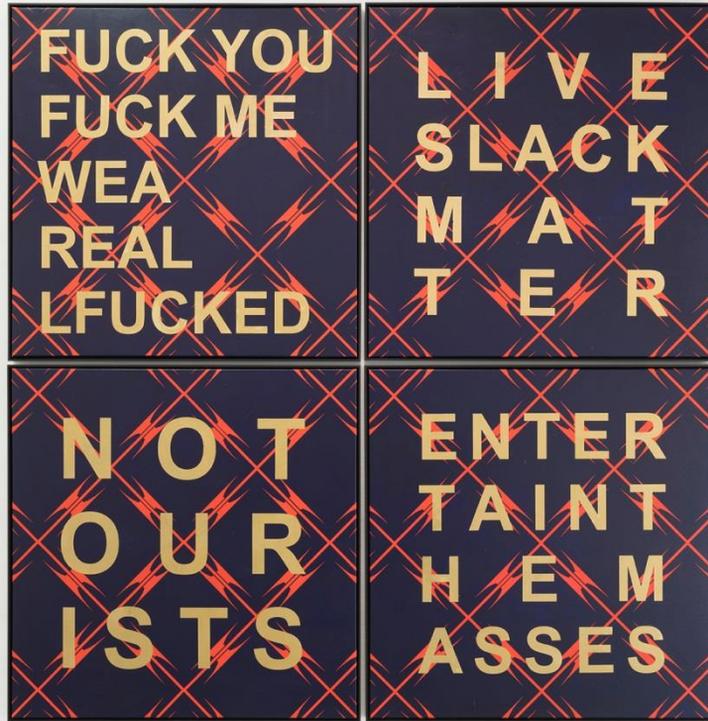
ADN Galeria presents *#iPROtesttHEReforelam*, a solo exhibition of South African born, Belgium artist, Kendell Geers who already back in 1993 changed his date of birth to May 1968, giving birth to himself as part of a worldwide social revolution.

The exhibition takes, as its starting point, the eponymous 1637 quote by René Descartes "I Think Therefore I am" recast into the logic of the contemporary moment. The Cartesian logic that once ruled the world has ever since fallen to the wasteland of newspeak, now dubbed fake news. Around the world politicians are capitulating in favour of the highest bidder, selling their souls for a quick fix while we are facing crises that require long-term solutions. The most striking example is global climate crisis: if we do not lower the temperature of the planet by 1,5 degrees Celsius in the next 12 years, climate change will accelerate beyond the point of no return.

Throwing Descartes to the hounds, Geers says Now is not the time to think – it's time to ProTest. His third solo exhibition at ADN Galeria is aptly called "I PROTEST THEREFOR I AM" and it' an artist's call to arms. A trickster and storyteller, artist and magician, Kendell Geers throws in a hashtag and rolls his tongue over the letters, smoothing them into a single invented word *#iPROtesttHEReforelam*. The artist argues: "The capital letters transform into signposts towards the contradictions of a protest exhibition in a commercial art gallery."

Hashtags, words, letters, memes and slogans fill the endless columns of Social Media, reduced to empty signifiers as everybody wears camouflage and everybody is a seasonal revolution. The small letter "i" that once referred to the individual, who thinks there she is, has been stolen from the consumer's hip pocket and branded as a corporate trademark.

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Kendell Geers, *#NEW Speak* (series), 2019

"I am because iPhone and I think therefore iPad and I have my GoPRO to prove it to my selfie!" We are all now addicted to technological devices with their promise of instant satisfaction through self broadcasting our egos to millions of hungry social mediacrats. We can never be satiated however because the virus of language is an addictive lie and the machine is nothing more than a junk dealer. William Burroughs explained, "The junk merchant doesn't sell his product to the consumer, he sells the consumer to his product. He does not improve and simplify his merchandise. He degrades and simplifies the client."

Kendell Geers proTESTS our sense of reading, understanding, semantics and symbols, freely plucking the fruits from the forest of every ripening protest. His statement reads "Art Changes the World - ONE PERCEPTION AT A TIME" and that is exactly what the exhibition will do to the viewer who takes the time to give space.

Describing himself as an 'AniMystikAKtivist', he takes a syncretic approach to art that weaves together diverse Afro-European traditions, including animism, alchemy, mysticism, ritual and a socio-political activism, and it is laced with

black humor, irony and cultural contradiction. In the spirit of the archetypal trickster, Geers uses his experiences as a white African like a skeleton key to unlock our understanding of history, culture and identity. His work locates itself between tradition and the contemporary, a white African as deeply influenced by the powerful legacy of traditional African art as he is by the European avant-garde movements, from Dada and Surrealism to punk and the Situationist International. Spiritually charged, politically poignant and socially engaged, the work of Kendell Geers cannot be categorized as either European or African, but is rather a prolonged metaphysical dialogue between cultures, archetypal signs and sacred symbols.

The unique visual language that Kendell Geers had developed during his career is taking place in the new series presented on this occasion. Geometrical structured paintings with gold lettering remains to traditional representation of sacred, and creates contrast with the message, ironic and sarcastic, formed by the letters. The lines at the background of the image, which represented the razor wire used by the army in order to avoid transit, delimit the distance between abstract and tangible. Thus, these paintings question the notion of frontier from both sides. As the artist himself states: "There are no borders in nature and every fence that keeps immigrants or refugees out, also makes you a prisoner."

Geers' iconographic universe is full of defence elements which are at the same time lethal weapons as truncheons, broken glass and, most especially, the razor wire, which has become the signature of the artist. An example of this is the installation with truncheons conforming the



Kendell Geers, *Confession of the Flesh 7682*, 2019

shape of a star on the entrance wall. The work revolves around State violence, and the way in which defence systems turned into attack systems in reality.

That set of works is followed by a group of paintings on paper in which, despite appearing to be abstract paintings, elements clearly

recognisable are shown. Effectively, we may see human motifs: womanly figures standing in suggestive poses. The counterpoint in these figures is in their faces that seem to show traditional African masques. As a final result it is an unexpected dialog between sacred and profane, a common thread in Geers' practice.

Lastly, the artist invites us to enter inside a space charged by tension. At the back room colour and

reflective forms on walls alternate with hanging pieces from the ceiling by invading the circulation space. Standing in front these works our image is transformed into a light and shadow mosaic by means of a rhythmic deconstruction and reconstruction exercise. They are suggestion of entertainment and violence as well; the same contradiction which Kendell Geers warns is hidden in every digital revolution.



Kendell Geers, *#PROtesttHEReforelam*, ADN Galeria, 2019

Kendell Geers (Johannesburg, South Africa, 1968)

Kendell Geers appeared on the international art scene at the end of the 1980s and since then his work has been presented at biennials and institutions from around the world. He was one of the artists who represented South Africa at the Venice Biennial in 1993, the first multiracial and multicultural international exhibition to mark the end of the Apartheid era. He presented his work in both Okwui Enwezor's Documenta 11 as well as the most recent Documenta 14. He has presented work on the Taipei, Havana, Venice, Johannesburg, Kwang Ju, Sao Paulo, Shanghai, Istanbul and many other Biennials around the world.

The current show assumes continuity in the relationship of Kendell Geers with the Spanish panorama in general and with ADN Galeria in particular, where he began exhibiting in 2011 with *Hellraiser*, followed by *ProPagandaDa* in 2016. You can extend the information on the exhibition and the artist, as well as the ADN Galeria program, on the web site of the gallery www.adngaleria.com

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c/ Enrique Granados, 49, 08008, Barcelona. T. (+34) 93 451 0064, info@adngaleria.com <http://www.adngaleria.com>