

Stephen Friedman Gallery

Kendell Geers

Geers describes himself as ‘AniMystikAKtivist’, weaving together diverse Afro-European traditions, from animism and activism to alchemy and mysticism. Employing diverse references — from the realms of art history, linguistics, poetry, protest, and play — his works question artistic value and mock notions of originality.

Geers was born in Germiston, South Africa and now lives and works in Brussels. At the age of fifteen, he ran away from home to join the Anti-Apartheid movement, eventually fleeing the country to London and then New York. At the 1993 Venice Biennale he officially changed his birth date to May 1968, a momentous year in world history for political protest and equality. This act represented Geers’ rejection of the cultural heritage that had shaped his upbringing and his rebirth as an artist and activist.

Spanning a wide range of media, Geers’ paintings, sculptures and interventions employ wordplay and densely layered motifs to expose ideological structures. His work reveals razor-sharp humour, combining the raw energy of punk with the spiritual philosophy of poets such as Arthur Rimbaud, William Blake, and William S. Burroughs. Eschewing categorisation, Geers’ practice is driven by the belief that that art can “change the world – One Perception at a time”.

Geers exhibited in the 2024 Malta Biennial; 2022 Setouchi Triennial, and the 2021 Bruges and Kortrijk Triennials in Belgium. ‘Love, By Any Means Necessary’, the sixth solo exhibition for the artist at Stephen Friedman Gallery, opened in February 2020. A major retrospective of his work curated by Okwui Enwezor was held at Haus der Kunst, Munich in 2013. He participated in Documenta 14 in 2017 and Documenta 11 in 2002 in Kassel, Germany. Geers’ work was included in the Venice Biennale in 2019, 2007 and 1993.

Notable solo exhibitions include those at Wilde Gallery, Basel, Switzerland (2024); Capital C, Amsterdam, The Netherlands (2021); Rua Red, Dublin, Ireland (2019); UnTubo, Siena, Italy (2014); Haus der Kunst, Munich, Germany (2013); La Maison Particulière, Brussels, Belgium (2013); Chateau Blandy-les-Tours, Melun, Paris, France (2012); CIAP, Hasselt, Belgium (2011); Saint Louis Art Museum, Missouri, USA (2009); Oficina Para Proyectos de Arte, Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico (2008); BPS22 Space for Contemporary Creation, Charleroi, Belgium (2007); Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati, Ohio and Aspen Art Museum, Colorado, USA (2005); Museo d’Arte Contemporanea Roma, Rome, Italy (2004); Centre Departemental d’Art Contemporain, Albi, France (2004); Castello di Ama per l’Arte Contemporanea Lecchi, Siena, Italy (2003); Centre for Contemporary Art, Kitakyushu Project Gallery, Fukuoka, Japan (2003); Migros Museum of Contemporary Art, Zürich, Switzerland (2003); Grand salle, Centre Pompidou, Paris, France (2003); Palais de Tokyo, Paris, France (2002); Delfina Project Space, London, England (2001); Württembergischer Kunstverein and Schloss Solitude, Stuttgart, Germany (2001); Museum of Applied Arts, Vienna, Austria (2000); Le Consortium, Dijon, France (2000); Inova, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA (2000); Association of Visual Artists Vienna Secession, Vienna, Austria (1999); South African National Art Gallery, Cape Town (1999); Fort Klapperkop, Pretoria, South Africa (1998); ArtPace, San Antonio, Texas (1998); Gallery in the Round, Grahamstown, South Africa (1998); Vleeshal Center for Contemporary Art, Middelburg, The Netherlands (1997); Villa Arson, Nice, France (1995); Michaelis Art Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa (1994); and University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa (1988).

His exhibition ‘Irrespectiv’ toured from Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst, Ghent, Belgium; BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead, UK; Musée d’Art Contemporain de Lyon, France; Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art of Trento and Rovereto, Trento, Italy; and DA2 Domus Artium 2002, Salamanca, Spain (2007–2009).

Geers’ works are held in the permanent collections of public institutions including Centre Pompidou, Paris, France; MAXXI, Rome, Italy; Magasin III Museum & Foundation for Contemporary Art, Stockholm, Sweden; Johannesburg Art Gallery, South Africa; Iziko South African National Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa; Art Institute of Chicago, Illinois, USA and ArtPace, Austin, Texas, USA.