

## Sislej Xhafa

Sislej Xhafa (b.1970 Peja, Kosova) is known for works that could be described as 'actions' or conceptual strategies which challenge cultural stereotypes, preconceived prejudices and institutional structures. Often exploring the modes through which contemporary society functions, he investigates social, economic and political realities to ultimately critique consumerism and its driving mechanisms.

The artist once stated: 'Reality is stronger than art. As an artist I do not want to reflect a reality but I do want to question it. My social upbringing does not embrace rational linear actions. I approach the world and life with primal instinctive behaviour'.

Working in a variety of media from painting and drawing to sculpture and installation, his engagement with political dimensions is always indirect and implied, reflecting on social norms and strategies and the ways in which they are unconsciously manipulated.

Topics investigated by the artist include the processes of tourism, forced illegality, the deconstruction of mythologies, the concept of nationality and denial of the right to vote. Xhafa's works employ a conceptual language and are simultaneously ironic, humorous and subversive. Indeed, the tangible social results of economic theories are at the heart of Sislej Xhafa's artistic research, questioning the legal status of his country of origin, Kosovo.

In 1997, presenting himself as the Clandestine Pavilion at the Venice Biennale, the artist wandered around the gardens of the Biennale kicking a football, dressed as a member of the national Albanian team, carrying a small Albanian flag and a recorder that broadcast an Italy-Albania football match. One critic described how: 'It's a politics of interruption, upsetting the configuration of forces determining what is visible and what is not, what forms of speech are understood as discourse and which are only perceptible as noise, who is designated as a speaking subject and who is merely spoken to.'

Sislej Xhafa represented the Republic of Kosovo at the Venice Biennale 2017.

Recent solo exhibitions include: *shadow of curls*, Blain|Southern Berlin, DE (2017); *lost and found*, Venice Biennale, IT (2017); *Infermeria*, ZAC (Zona Arti Contemporanee), Zisa, Palermo, IT (2017); *Fireworks in My Closet*, Galleria Continua, San Gimignano, IT (2016); *BENVENUTO! SISLEJ XHAFKA*, MAXXI Museum, Rome, IT (2016); *asymmetric desir*, Blain|Southern London, UK (2013); *Unpoetic Bride*, Galleria Continua, Le Moulin, FR (2012); *Still Untitled*, MADRE Museum of Contemporary Art Donna Regina, Napoli, IT (2011).

Recent group show include: The Ludwig Museum, Budapest, Hungary, HU (2016); *Par tibi, Roma, nihil*, Nomas Foundation, Rome, IT (2016); *Creating Common Good*, Kunst Haus Wien, Vienna, AT (2015); *LA SOTTILE LINEA DEL TEMPO*, Fondazione Museo Miniscalchi-Erizzo, Verona, IT (2015); *Borderline: Collection Exhibition II*, 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art Kanzawa,

Kanazawa, JP (2013); *Vice Versa*, Italian Pavilion of the 55th Venice Biennale, curated by Bartolomeo Pietromarchi, IT (2013); *Sconfinamenti*, curated by Achille Bonito Oliva, Rocca Albornoz, Spoleto Festival of 2 Worlds, Spoleto, IT (2013); *Tell Me Whom You Haunt: Marcel Duchamp and the Contemporary Readymade*, Blain|Southern, London, UK (2013); *The World Belongs to You*, François Pinault Foundation, Palazzo Grassi, IT (2011).