

GALLERIA RAFFAELLA CORTESE

PRESS RELEASE

Kimsooja

To Breathe – The Flags

Kimsooja, *To Breathe – The Flags*
Mathilde Rosier, *Impersonal Empire, The Buds*

via a. stradella 1-4
via a. stradella 7

opening reception tuesday march 13th h. 7pm - 9pm

march 14th – may 5th 2018 | tuesday – saturday h. 10 am - 1pm / 3pm - 7.30 pm and by appointment

Galleria Raffaella Cortese is thrilled to present Kimsooja's fourth exhibition at the gallery since her first collaboration in 2004. It will run concurrently to her site specific installation *To Breathe* for the Cappella Portinari at the Basilica di Sant'Eustorgio in Milan (March 10th – June 15th).

Kimsooja is an internationally acclaimed conceptual multi-disciplinary South Korean artist who has always identified nomadism as an unavoidable condition of contemporary being, drawing on her continuous movements as an indispensable source of material for the creation of her works. Combining performance, video, photography, and installation, her research is focused on themes that investigate the dualistic and existential nature of philosophy such as the relationship between yin and yang, life and death, mobility and immobility, location and dislocation, developing her work around various fundamental issues of life, art and politics.

On the occasion of this exhibition Kimsooja presents two works that are strongly connected to each other: a video and an installation. The space at via Stradella 4 features the video *To Breathe – The Flags*, a transnational state of identity that merges two hundred forty-six national flags as indistinguishable cross-pollinating visual symbols, their purported intent—as symbols of state sovereignty and nationhood—emptied and reconfigured by layering and cross-fading. Since the images are semi-transparent, the colors and designs of multiple flags are intermixed. What results is a visual and symbolic breakdown of hierarchies, and transcendence of boundaries blurring the distinctions between different countries. The work also includes flags from nations that are not internationally recognized, such as Scotland or Tibet, as well as nations whose flags are forbidden in other countries, such as North Korea. In merging the flags without restriction, *To Breathe – The Flags* provides a representation of the new nations or non-nations within its compressed layers, briefly dissolving their discrepancies and blurring their national identities. In the first iteration of this work, which was commissioned by the IOC Olympic Museum for the London 2012 Summer Olympics, the artist layered flags of all the participating countries in a reflection of the unifying spirit of the games.

To Breathe – Zone of Nowhere is showed at the space at via Stradella 1 and translates video stills from *To Breathe – The Flags* into unitary images: visitors can walk through the installation of twelve moving flags as if they were also interweaving between and beyond the national boundaries. The visitor, moving across the gallery, constantly shifts their own point of view: once again Kimsooja's work shows a commitment to engage with the audience and inspire solidarity and respect for others by appealing to the sense of humanity we all possess.

The show is a wish for coexistence, bringing us closer to an ideal world in which individuals can unite in celebration of our distinctions and our common humanity. The work's effect transforms the ubiquitous national symbol of the flag into a more tentative object, one that is provisional and fluid, without hierarchy or political bias, putting all nations on the same level: a visual experience in which differences and conflicts between nations can fuse and blend together as one. As Kimsooja said "I see myself as a completely independent person, independent from any belief, country, or religious background. I want to stand as a free individual who is open to the world." It is in light of this philosophy that these flags, conceived in a kind of visual *medias res*, illustrate a state of perpetual becoming, frustrating the eye while accumulating in the mind. And this fluid state is what gives the work its power, suggesting a point of reference that is both nowhere and everywhere at the same time.

Kimsooja was born in Daegu, Korea, 1957. She lives and works in New York and Seoul. The artist has exhibited in many major museums and institutions: PICA Perth Institute of Contemporary Art (2018); Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein (2017); MMCA Seoul (2016); EMST National Museum of Contemporary Art, Athens, Greece (2016-2009-2005); Centre Pompidou Metz (2015); Guggenheim Museum Bilbao (2015); Collection Lambert en Avignon (2014); Vancouver Art Gallery (2013); Museum of Modern Art St. Etienne (2012); Kunsthal 44 Møen (2012); Perm Contemporary Art Museum (2012); Miami Art Museum (2012); Feldkirch Church and Kunstmuseum Lichtenstein (2010); National Museum of Contemporary Art Korea for the Yeong Gwang Nuclear Power Plant (2010); Atelier Hermes, Seoul (2009); Baltic Center for Contemporary Art, Gateshead, UK (2009); Hirshhorn Museum (2008); **Fondazione Bevilacqua La Masa & La Fenice Theatre, Venice (2006)**; Crystal Palace of Reina Sofia Museum, Madrid (2006); Kunsthalle Wien (2002); Kunsthalle Bern (2002); **Palazzo delle Poste, Trieste (2001)**; MoMA PS1 (2001). She has participated in Kassel Documenta 14: ANTIDORON - The EMST Collection (2017) and has taken part to a number of Biennials: Busan (2016), **Venice (2013, 2007, 2005, 2001, 1999)**, Gwangju (2012, 2001, 1995), Thessaloniki (2010), Moscow (2009) Whitney Biennial (2002), Lyon (2000), São Paulo (1997) and Istanbul (1997).

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