

SERVET KOÇYİĞİT - WHEN THE LION COMES OUT OF THE SHADE

Opening: January 17, 2019
January 17 – March 9, 2019
curated by Silvia Cirelli



From January 17th to March 9th 2019, Officine dell'Immagine in Milan hosts the second Italian one-man exhibition of Servet Koçyiğit (Kaman, 1971), one of the most interesting artists on the contemporary Turkish scene.

Curated by Silvia Cirelli, the exhibition entitled *When the Lion Comes Out of the Shade* explores the recent artistic journey of this multifaceted interpreter, collecting a selection of works - including photographs, installations and collages - never before exhibited in Italy.

Distinguished in recent years with exhibitions in prestigious international museums such as La Triennale in Milan, the Israel Museum in Jerusalem, the Istanbul Modern Museum, the Centre of Contemporary Art in Torun (Poland), or at the 27th Sao Paulo Biennial, Servet Koçyiğit also won the prestigious "Shpilman International Prize for Excellence in Photography" in 2016 with his latest photographic project *My Heart is not made from stone*, presented as an Italian exclusive in this exhibition.

Always attentive to confronting socio-cultural, identity, behavioural and geopolitical issues that affect not only the Turkish situation - to which he is certainly linked - but which generally affect today's cultural history, Koçyiğit rediscovers the contaminations in art of very topical issues, such as the experience of emigration, the sense of uprooting, the balances between individual and community, and the vulnerability of humankind. With a lexical sophistication closely connected to an authentic emotional essentiality, the artist translates the wounds of a society that appears to struggle to find its own equilibrium, perhaps too weakened by a fragmentary identity forced by coercive situations such as the abandonment of one's land due to wars, abuses or the phantom of colonialism.

In this fragile emotional see-saw, the great historical sensitivity of Servet Koçyiğit becomes basic for understand the value of the earth as repository and custodian of cultural memory.

To restore the evolutionary concept of the migratory condition and transcultural identity - in both a physical but also, and above all, emotional sense - Servet Koçyiğit chooses the symbolism of the map as the main expressive vehicle. But his are maps that are far from wanting to faithfully reproduce geopolitical configuration; on the contrary, they represent elaborations that lead to new perspectives, to awareness of a visual mapping defined by people, by communities, and not simply by inhabited places.

As well as the choice of the type of fabrics used for these multiform compositions, the predilection for aesthetic contributions highlighting a migratory correspondence - most often a consequence of violent colonialism - is also a constant in Koçyiğit's stylistic grammar. The artist focuses on the wounds of colonialism and the consequent cultural uprooting still visible today in many parts of the world, particularly in Africa. Thus, the occasion of the South African experience during the "Joburg Now" residency which lasted a couple of months, encouraged the artist not only in the recovery of the materials used in the respective "imaginary" maps, but also in the development of the complex photographic series *My Heart is not made from stone*, where re-evocation of those places consumed and abused by the colonialist past is central. The protagonists of the shots show, in fact, ancient maps - found by the artist in some Dutch markets and taken to Johannesburg - on which the same precious stones for which those lands were destroyed were drawn. A sad abuse that is unfortunately common in many of the world's nature settings.

In a journey that becomes a silent metaphor of lost existences and places, Servet Koçyiğit fully exemplifies the fresco of a multifaceted legacy that crosses the complexity of a syncretism that is both cultural and of identity, unmasked by the participation of a pain that must be shared.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Servet Koçyiğit, who was born in Kaman (Turkey) in 1971, currently lives and works between Amsterdam and Istanbul. He graduated in 1997 from the Gerrit Rietveld Academy in Amsterdam.

He has had numerous exhibitions in major foreign museums, such as La Triennale in Milano, the MuCEM Museum in Marseille, the HOK Henie Onstad Kunstsenter in Oslo, the Istanbul Modern Museum, the Palais Des Beaux Arts De Lille in France, the Smart Project Space in Amsterdam, the Haifa Museum of Art in Israel, the Israel Museum in Jerusalem, the MuHKA-Media in Antwerp, the De Appel Centre for Contemporary Art in Amsterdam and the Wilhelm Lehmbruck Museum in Duisburg, Germany; he has also participated in festivals and biennials, such as the Lianzhou Foto Festival in China (2012), the Cuvée Biennale in Linz (2008), the Sao Paulo Biennial (2006) and the Istanbul Biennial (2005). In 2016 he also won the prestigious "Shpilman International Prize for Excellence in Photography".