

**madre**

**napoli**

**Darren Bader. (@mined\_oud)**

**Project room (ground floor), courtyard and second floor**

**October 14th 2017-April 2nd 2018**

**MADRE · museo d'arte contemporanea Donnaregina via Settembrini 79, Naples**

**Curated by Andrea Viliani, with Silvia Salvati and Anna Cuomo**

**Opening: Friday October 13th 2017, 7.00 pm**

(@mined\_oud) – which may or may not be the artist's email address backwards, creates an absurd type of synaesthesia between an oriental plant (oud or agarwood), the allusion to exhausted mine seams and the apparent creation of a potential palindrome – is the title of the first solo show to be held in an Italian public institution by the artist Darren Bader (Bridgeport, CT 1978), one of the most experimental international artists of recent generations.

At the Madre museum the artist plays with the traditional format of a solo show and turns it into multi-faceted analytical tool of models by which works of art are viewed and mediated within an institutional space-time framework. Bader's works and graphic interventions are displayed within the itinerary of the collection, constituting a veritable – albeit almost imperceptible – “exhibition within the exhibition“, formed by a series of concealed clues which, in its overall layout, expresses an elliptical perspective, full of ironic short circuits and linguistic games, the themes addressed, the communicative and educational logic underpinning the displays, the theoretical foundations of the collection and the identity of the contemporary art museum. The intricate, nuanced work of the artist is designed as a subtle game for the visitor. It also includes an invitation to exhibit addressed to a series of other artists, whose works will be presented, together with Bader's own and others that are part of the collection. A group of other works, which are frequently minimalist, of a transformative or performative nature, or targeted at a digital audience, will be as well presented.

Right from the very title of the work, with the apposition of the “@” symbol and the use of parentheses, Bader establishes a purely digital level of meaning and experience of the exhibition which, at a physical level, is scattered and integrated within the itinerary of the museum collection, thus rejecting a rigid focal point and avoiding immediate recognisability, in an attempt to establish a connection with the identities, practices and works of the artists in the collection. By exploring the mechanisms underpinning the workings of the contemporary collective imagination, from which colliding aesthetics surface, and by intervening in areas of the museum that are not directly connected with each other (Project room, ground floor; courtyard; second floor), Bader questions the very nature of “art”, “artworks”, “exhibitions” and the “museum”, challenging the values, criteria, mechanisms of thought and communicative logic of the contemporary art system.

Bader defines himself a “sculptor”; his practice consists in putting together complementary elements such as consumer goods, words, images, animals and people. These disparate elements of reality generate relationships that are simultaneously concrete and imaginary, real yet fictional.

As Luca Lo Pinto explains in the artist book that accompanies the exhibition, “[Bader] plans speed dates that sometimes turn into marriages. He causes love to bloom between two people who are unaware of being lovers. Rather than creating, he edits. Rather than producing, he selects. Rather than representing, he shows“. Bader removes meaning yet adds new levels of understanding and introspection to works, objects and (possible, or often impossible) descriptions and manages to lend an original twist to a practice whose meaning can be sought in the carefully arranged inclusion of all the components of the art system: the work, the artist, the gallery owner, the collector, the exhibition visitor and readers of art texts. In this sense, Bader’s work can be analysed in terms of “information technology” (as Andrea Norman Wilson writes in the new artist book): it separates and rejoins the inner system of the work (its aesthetic component) and the external structure, or “back end”, which runs and conditions it (the art system itself). In the fairly recent past, the “back end” of the artist’s work consisted, for example, in the artist’s capacity to grind the right powdered pigment to create the most suitable colour for capturing reality in a painting. However, over the last forty years, the “back end” has been transformed into the capacity of the art system to turn anything into an art work. Exploring a discourse which began with Marcel Duchamp’s seminal ready-mades and continued subsequently, during the sixties and seventies, with the criticisms of art system put forward by the Institutional Critique, Bader argues that the aspects of artistic production underlying those assumptions are now so obvious, thoroughly explored and artistically expressed, even in terms of deconstruction and direct repudiation, that the next step is no longer a question of criticising or keeping in check the art system, but instead acceptance, knowing incorporation and a shared narrative. Bader thus demonstrates that the joint participation of all the different players involved in the system cannot fail to generate, together with the additional inclusion of factors and ideas borrowed from the omnipresent media, an added value of art in the current era of the sharing economy.

Bader’s practice is based on the inclusion and sharing of the work, which often becomes a multi-author creation or a form of “collective intelligence”. For this reason, as well as the presentation of his own work, Bader’s intervention at the Madre comprises linguistic interventions on several wall captions of works in the collection, whose contents are reinvented by the artist, and the invitation to form part of the exhibition design aimed at a series of other artists, whose works will be presented in the collection, forming a veritable “collection within the collection“: Lucas Ajemian, Kai Althoff, Francesco Arena, John Armleder, Darren Bader, Eli Begen, Nina Beier, Monica Bonvicini, Gregorio Botta, Paolo Bresciani, Sol Calero, Antoine Catala, Maurizio Cattelan, Matthew Cerletty, Maria Adele Del Vecchio, Eugenio della Croce, Amelia Diacono, J.W. Dibbi, Alberto Di Fabio, Gerardo Di Fiore, Roe Ethridge, Pierpaolo Falone, Sergio Fermariello, Ilaria Fincantieri, Urs Fischer, Anselm Fuchs, Ganzbrot Kollektiv, Jef Geys, Eugenio Giliberti, Judith Goudsmit, Leila Heidari, Corin Hewitt, KAYA (Kerstin Brätsch-Debo Eilers-Kaya Serene), Barbara Kasten, Marc Kokopeli, Runo Lagomarsino, Greta Lauber, Mark Leckey, Sherrie Levine, Pietro Lista, Emilio Mazzerano, John McCracken, Alessandro Mendini, Aurelie Messerin, Jonathan Monk, Alvisè Monserrato, Anca Munteanu Rimnic, Marcella Musacchi, Katharina Sieverding, Michael E Smith, Heji Shin, Martine Syms, Rosemarie Trockel, Elio Washimps, John Wesley, Christopher Williams, Micheal Zahn.

Bader’s practice also includes immaterial works, marked by the production of certificates that describe the features of the work that the visitor is free to create by following the instructions provided by the artist. These works, which embody Bader’s work procedure that is constantly open to dialogue, will be “displayed” in a dual form at the Madre which comes together in a real-time dialogue between both physical and digital visitors to the museum:

Several immaterial works will be made by students of the Fine Arts Academy of Naples (Accademia di Belle Arti) both for the opening of the exhibition and the months during which it is open to the public. A distinctive feature of the exhibition is collaboration, and the students are invited by the artist to become co-authors of the exhibition, producing works whose documentation will become part of the Madre collection, triggering a synergistic connection and blurring the distinction between institutions such as the museum, on the one hand, and research and training institutions on the other.

A further selection of immaterial works will be available for followers of the Madre on the museum’s social networks (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram), through a dedicated publicity campaign that will involve a digital audience, inviting them to create their own “Darren Bader”, and sharing the creative phases of their own art work.

Lastly, a series of performative actions complete the carefully organised staging of the identity of the museum and its collection as envisaged in the museum:

The inner courtyard of the Madre is turned into a life-size chessboard available to the public for the entire duration of the exhibition: the museum thus becomes a public source of entertainment and a meeting place where not only the variety of the forms of play, most commonly associated both iconographically and conceptually with the artistic avant-garde, vary according to the wishes of the viewer, but make it possible for anyone to physically enter the work, highlighting once again the extent to which the limit between works, visitors and display spaces is highly unstable and can be a fundamental part of the practice of an artist such as Bader. While the classic pawns can be replaced by the same number of pairs of shoes (available at the museum entrance) or by personal objects to be sacrificed or gained, the visitors themselves can also join in becoming bishops, queens and knights to give rise to a moment of joint physical, mental and emotional participation in a work which can only become such if activated by the public and their desire to give up individuality and form a “winning team”.

Various performative moments took place during the evening of the exhibition opening, including a performance Sound Study, 2017, that was carried out by the students of the Conservatory of Music San Pietro a Majella. Antonio Troncone, Jacopo Verde, Vincenzo Vuolo and Maurizio Conte, students from the Overall Music class, led the performance that consists in making some kernels of corn, to pop with the sound waves produced by a quartet of wind instruments. Felice Cutolo tried the same with his zampogna. The performance took place at 7.15; 7.45; 8.15; 8.45; 9.15, 9.45 pm. And also, a special tasting of oysters and peanut butter started a reflection on the pairing, the double and interchanging roles, functions and meanings that distinguish the evolution of the concept of contemporary art during our era of sharing economy.

Finally on Monday, October the 16th, 2017, at 5.30 pm, the public was able to attend to the production process of Sculpture #3.85 by Darren Bader. Sculpture #3.85 is a work produced by Bader for his solo exhibition at Madre, (@mined\_oud). It is the latest in a series of sculptures that uses existing or forged artworks or artifacts as receptacles for relics and garbage. Four of the six elements of Sculpture #3.85, were filled with material collected from waste baskets around the museum. Once the four elements (all made of bronze) are filled, they were welded shut by Fonderia Nolana del Giudice, which supported the production of the project. Once Fonderia Nolana del Giudice welds the four elements shut, the six elements will remain on museum grounds for the duration of Bader’ solo exhibition. Bader kindly asks all museum visitors “not to take any part of Sculpture #3.85 home with them”.