

FONDAZIONE PRADA PRESENTS TWO NEW PROJECTS BY THEASTER GATES AND NÁSTIO MOSQUITO IN MILAN, FROM 7 JULY TO 25 SEPTEMBER 2016

Milan, 4 July 2016 —Fondazione Prada will present the exhibitions “True Value” and “T.T.T.-Template Temples of Tenacity” from 7 July to 25 September 2016 by Theaster Gates and Nástio Mosquito respectively. Conceived by Elvira Dyangani Ose as independent projects, the two exhibitions include installations, site-specific works and projections, as well as collective experiences and musical events that will actively involve the public.

“True Value” —the first exhibition by Theaster Gates (Chicago, 1973) in Milan— brings together a selection of existing works and new commissions in two different spaces at Fondazione Prada. The Cisterna features works in which the artist explores habitual, everyday things, immersed in the most evocative Black aesthetics. Gates operates on the conviction that everyday objects convey a deep understanding, not only intrinsic to their material aspect, but reminiscent of the experiences in which they have been immersed. In that sense, discarded materials involving collective memories constitute the catalyst for a political and aesthetic reflection on cultural renewal and social activism. Fire hoses used against demonstrators during the US Civil Rights movements in the 1960s or gym floors from dozens high schools closed and fallen into oblivion, swept under an unbeatable neoliberal economic agenda, turned into artworks in which formalism is not just a mere visual factor. This transformative ethos, from which a symbolic universal value emanates, is key in Gates’s practice. These everyday objects, together with other items and elements referencing more ritualistic and spiritual experiences, shape the proposal offered to the public in the Cisterna.

On the first floor of the Podium, Gates hosts *True Value* (2016) —the installation after which the exhibition is named— which presents his rendition of an abandoned hardware store. *True Value* gathers materials, objects and tools removed from their original context and relocated in an art environment, deploying a framework to formulate a poetic and pragmatic space around objects of trade and human relationships those economic and labour exchanges create.

The exhibition is a further opportunity to explore certain nearby cultural and commercial entities, observing local stories, socio-political patterns, and economically and culturally under-explored communities in the hope of setting in motion a new cartography through which to visit and engage an overlooked Milan.

Lastly, in a space in the likes of an artist's studio or craftsman's workshop, artworks created throughout the duration of the show will be on display.

The exhibition spaces will host a series of public meetings, titled "True Value in conversation", by means of debates and readings. The first meeting will be held on the first floor of the Podium Thursday 7 July at 6 pm and will open with a gathering between Theaster Gates, Elvira Dyangani Ose and Thelma Golden, Director and Chief Curator of the Studio Museum in Harlem, New York. Notably known for exhibitions such as "Black Male: Representations of Masculinity in Contemporary American Art" (2014) and the 1993 edition of the Whitney Biennial, Thelma Golden will join the artist and the curator of the show "True Value" to discuss art and its capacity to transform institutions, history re-writing and social practice. Admission is free. Complimentary tickets can be collected at the ticket desk from 5.30 pm.

Gates's practice embraces a wide range of disciplines and a variety of artistic vocabularies – sculpture, painting, installation art, music and performance – as well as urban development and social practice. Starting on the South Side of Chicago, St Louis and Omaha where his first initiatives on art and social activism took place, Gates has subsequently advised individuals and organizations in other US cities (Detroit, Akron, and Gary, to name just a few) on how to conceive and carry out initiatives aiming to regenerate deprived urban areas by merging pragmatism and creativity, urban planning and "artistic gestures". Internationally, Gates has also reflected on the capacity of art to renew traditions, upraise connectivity among communities or set up dialogues and exchange cultural heritage among cities through his projects, such as those in Istanbul, Bristol or Kassel. Some of his propositions have generated solid institutions, such as the Rebuild Foundation. Gates holds a chair at the Department of Visual Arts at Chicago University where he supervises the Arts and Public Life program.

As Elvira Dyangani Ose says, "If there is a particular ethos that has characterized Theaster Gates's work in recent years, it is the formulation of the unimaginable as a common cause. It would be a misconception to believe that his attention to urban regeneration, social practice and blackness engages only the communities that his projects affect immediately. Instead, Gates's immaterial gestures – as much as the objects he produces and the experiences he generates – are essentially a 'call to arms', raising awareness of the need for what American theorist and poet Fred Moten calls the 'coalition', or the recognition that what affects those communities

subsequently affects the rest of us too; the acceptance that we are all in this together”.

Multifaceted artist Nástio Mosquito (Luanda, Angola, 1981) soon left behind his training as a television cameraman and film director to embrace an artistic practice that brings together music, video, installations and performance in unmistakably personal ways. Internationally acclaimed for his irreverent and provocative performances, Mosquito, more often than not, has adopted the role of an unpredictable showman, comprising the characters of a presenter, singer, actor and theatrical producer. Mosquito’s practice revolves around the theme of cultural inheritance, which, as a fusion of the past, present and future, runs counter to more static and limiting concepts like, tradition, identity and their futurity. Intrigued by the potential and specificities of different verbal, musical and visual forms of language, the artist creates engaging public performances in which politics and entertainment become complementary aspects in a unitary artistic program. His voice and his body, often at the center of his multimedia propositions, are, on the occasion of his project at Fondazione Prada, powerfully absent. This is a clear aesthetic twist in the work of an artist that has reached a solid mature stage in his career. “T.T.T.-Template Temples of Tenacity” represents Mosquito’s immersion in a collective idea of total art, inviting collaborators and audience to take part in a unique sensorial experience.

“T.T.T.-Template Temples of Tenacity” features three entirely new works by Mosquito and will take place on the ground floor of the Podium, the Cinema and the outside spaces of Fondazione Prada. The project comprises three distinctive elements for which Mosquito has collaborated with a group of international artists. *WEorNOT (Nastivicious’ Temple #1)* (2016) is a site-specific installation featured on the ground floor of the Podium, conceived and realized by Nastivicious —the collective that Mosquito and Spanish artist Vic Pereiró founded in 2008— in collaboration with illustrator Ada Diez. Through this collaboration, the Podium turns into a contemporary temple, a platform for collective communion, in which the glass surface of the façades, covered by caricature-like illustrations, are transformed into large-scale stained glass windows. A satirical reflection on the contemporary social and political panorama, *WEorNOT (Nastivicious’ Temple #1)* encourages the viewers to challenge their own convictions and to immerse themselves in a reflective experience. In a quest exploring language’s potential for transformation, visitors will be presented with a series of mottoes collected in a book that Nastivicious has

compiled as a critical and humorous misrepresentation of set phrases, proverbs and popular adages.

Mosquito has collaborated with musician Dijf Sanders, artist Chilala Moco, and choir The Golden Guys directed by Paola Milzani for the production of *I Make Love To You. You Make Love To Me. Let Love Have Sex With The Both Of Us (Part 1 – The Gregorian Gospel Vomit)* (2016), inspired by the Christian hymn *Jesus Loves Me* accredited to Anna B. Warner (1860). This performative experience will be held in the open courtyard of Fondazione Prada and will involve two choirs, each consisting of fifteen singers, that will approach one another creating a physical and sound fusion with unexpected outcomes. The first performances of *I Make Love To You. You Make Love To Me. Let Love Have Sex With The Both Of Us (Part 1 – The Gregorian Gospel Vomit)* will take place on Wednesday 6 July (during the public opening, from 6 to 9 pm), as well as on Thursday 7 and Friday 8 July 2016 (at 6.30pm and 7.30pm). Entry is free.

Mosquito will also present *Synchronicity Is My Bitch: The Cinematic Experience* (2016), to be hosted in September at Fondazione Prada. Perhaps his most personal work since *Nástia's Manifesto* (2008), it is an audiovisual work assembling the artist's latest album, *Gatuno, Emigrante & Pai de Família* (2016), with a number of visual and filmic references extracted from a series of African films, documentaries and forms of vernacular television from the past twenty years. The project draws inspiration from the multiple imaginaries around love—in all its possible meanings—as absorbed by Mosquito, who calls himself "a child of the Cold War", referencing his teenage years growing in the mist of Angola's Civil War (1975 – 2002). Reflections on human relationships, affection and alienation, as observed in different social and political settings, merge here with the sounds and waves of Mosquito's music. Screened in loop at Fondazione Prada's Cinema, the work will play in an informal and shared environment to create a sensorial event that goes beyond the usual cinematic experience.

As Elvira Dyangani Ose states, "Never before has Nástio Mosquito been so attentive to affection. Without abandoning his provocative propositions, the artist invites us to his most critical endeavor yet: entering a space and time where judgment and evaluation are suspended, where things do not necessarily need to make sense, where—if one is up to the challenge—we are encouraged to lose ourselves in our own innate sensitiveness. 'T.T.T.-Template Temples of Tenacity' is a collective multisensory project, in which one is exposed to transcend the limits of

one's convictions to embrace an unprecedented experience: the capacity of just being. Understanding the levels of risk, flirting with the possibility of failure, Mosquito offers us a template, a draft, a solid departure point from which to endure who we are, what we are, like never before".

"True Value" and "T.T.T.-Template Temples of Tenacity" will be accompanied by two illustrated publications in the Quaderni series, published by Fondazione Prada. *True Value* will consist of two interviews with Theaster Gates by curators Elvira Dyangani Ose and Niccolò Gravina. *T.T.T.-Template Temples of Tenacity* will feature a conversation between Nástio Mosquito, the exhibition curator and the scholar Henriette Gunkel.

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