

“The Thoughts of Others” Research as Material in Corin Sworn’s *Silent Sticks*, 2015

Abstract of the catalogue text

“During her residency in Italy and the subsequent development of the *Silent Sticks* project, Sworn encountered the works of Flaminio Scala, famous 16th century actor and editor of one of the few printed collections of scenarios of *Commedia dell’Arte* plays, *Il Teatro delle Favole Rappresentative*, published in 1611. The book is considered ‘an anomaly, particularly when one reflects on the oral and improvisatory nature of the *Commedia dell’Arte* tradition, including one of the few extant accounts of objects used in public performances. Without describing the explicit usage of the objects in a specific play or performance, Scala’s list includes:

[...]

Identical beards

A pachet of letters

Chalatan’s wares

A pilgrim costume

Flasks of Wine

A slap stick

A large chest with a lid

Costumes for three rogues

A sign for the inn

A pair of shoes

A long stick

A long cord

Lanterns

Some gems, jewels

A potion

Nightshirts

A small table

A bundle of candles

Beggar’s costume

A bundle of sticks

A loaf of bread

A piece of cheese

A large mirror

A stool

Trumpet for the court

[...]

The list provided a basis for the development of props for her scenographic installation. Just as the performers on Sworn’s screens are not simply acting out the story of Martin Guerre, however, these theatrical objects are not simply leftovers of a past performance. Akin to an imposer, the objects claim a different identity than they possess. Objects become actors, playing a role on a stage and constantly pointing towards their own artificiality.”