



La Biennale di Venezia

57. Esposizione
Internazionale
d'Arte

Eventi Collaterali

MICHELANGELO PISTOLETTO

One and One makes Three

Collateral Event of the 57th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia

Exhibition curated by Lorenzo Fiaschi

Promoted by Associazione Arte Continua

in collaboration with Abbazia di San Giorgio Maggiore – Benedicti Claustra Onlus

with the support of

GALLERIA CONTINUA, San Gimignano / Beijing / Les Moulins / Habana

Basilica di San Giorgio, Isola di San Giorgio Maggiore, Venice

From 10 May to 26 November 2017

In the context of the Collateral Events of the 57th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia, the Associazione Arte Continua is pleased to present a show by one of Italy's most internationally representative artists, Michelangelo Pistoletto. The project has been realized with the support of Galleria Continua, in collaboration with Abbazia di San Giorgio Maggiore – Benedicti Claustra Onlus.

A key figure in the development of conceptual art and protagonist of the Arte Povera movement, Michelangelo Pistoletto wrote a chapter in the history of art in the second half of the twentieth century, helping to bring Italy to the centre of the creative scene. The exhibition, conceived for the basilica of San Giorgio Maggiore and for the adjoining spaces, the sacristy, the main choir, the Sala del Capitolo and the Officina dell'Arte Spirituale, is a reflection that directly addresses the destiny of humankind and the urgent need for a social change.

In *Love Difference*, the manifesto drawn up by the artist in 2002, we read: "*Love Difference encapsulates a concept which goes beyond a rational notion of 'tolerance' for what is diverse and penetrates directly into the sphere of feelings (...). The first thing to accept, in an open, sensitive and warm fashion, are the differences between people and social groups, in order to finally give meaning to the word 'humanity'.*"

In the centre of the basilica of San Giorgio Maggiore, Pistoletto presents *Suspended Perimeter – Love Difference*, an installation comprising a series of "suspended" mirrors that form a circular space. The work stands as a kind of opposite altar, with the mirrors mediating between the visible and the non-visible, extending vision beyond its normal faculties, expanding the features of the eye and the capacity of the mind, to the point of offering us a view of totality. Installed in a consecrated space devoted to prayer and worship, it acquires a renewed force, opening up reflection on the most delicate issues facing humankind in the contemporary world, such as the conflict between religions, the acceptance of

differences, multiculturalism, but also the role art can still play in creating common ground for mutual engagement.

According to Pistoletto, the evolution of human society has reached a point where it is necessary to assume the maximum responsibility and commitment. In *Il Tempo del Giudizio* (The Time of Judgment), on view in the Sala del Capitolo (chapter room), the four most widespread religions in the world – Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, Judaism – are each prompted to reflect upon themselves in a moment of radical self-confession. Each religion is represented by a symbolic element placed in front of a mirror: a statue of Buddha, a prayer mat facing Mecca, a kneeler. The exception is Judaism, presented as mirrors in the form of the tables of the law. "*Art takes on religion' means that art actively takes possession of those structures, such as religion, which rule thought; not with a view to replacing them itself, but in order to substitute them with a different interpretative system, a system intended to enhance people's capacity to exert the functions of their own thought*", declares the artist.

The exposition offers a summary of the artist's whole career from his earliest works to today. The selection of the works on view includes both the most representative historical works from the beginning of Pistoletto's artistic activity (1960) to the most recent (2017). Each of these works contains its own story and its own modernity in a space-time continuum that does not allow for splitting or sudden fractures. It begins with a series of self-portraits on canvas of his youthful period, where the artist asks himself about the search for his own dimension and own space. "*(...) Seeing Bacon, I perceived that my problem and my drama were already there, declared, by a man searching for his own dimension and his own space, a cage of impenetrable glass, in which the man lived in such a dramatic state as to be suffocated, to be without a voice or space. The man was blocked, hunted, sick, destroyed, anguished, splendidly painted but, in his state, terribly isolated (...). I continued my search, condensing my work on the man, but attempting to*

do the opposite of Bacon: to remove all expression and all movement from the figures, so as to cool down the dramatic effect'. Until he arrived at the mirror, which for the artist represented the search for his identity. "Who am I? What am I? How can I identify my existence through Art? Since I come from a totally figurative artistic culture, I took up my person as the image to identify. That is why I used the method of the self-portrait, which requires the use of the mirror. The image of myself, depicted life-sized, remains fixed in the painting, while the surrounding background has become a mirror. The world has entered the mirror transformed into a work of art and therefore my self-portrait has become the self-portrait of the world". Through himself, Michelangelo Pistoletto discovers what is different from himself. The identity of his own fixed image corresponds to the identity of any other person; the virtual space of the mirror surface opens a door that puts art in communication with life.

There is also a recent series of mirror paintings that depict Cuba and its people: "(...) starting from Cuba to develop a new idea of politics. This is my belief. From Cuba, at a time of global social pressure and crisis, we can start a new way of enacting our politics. Cuba must not capitulate to the sole model that guides the world, considering the current results. We can transform the world, starting from Cuba. It is a fertile land for experimentation, innovation and change. That is our purpose (...). A cultural, artistic and scientific platform has been consolidated in Cuba, upon which we can generate and help to grow a kind of politics that will lead to renewal of the whole society". (Michelangelo Pistoletto, May 2015, Havana, Cuba).

This exposition, therefore, not only illustrates the genesis of Pistoletto's work and of the image as the phenomenal identification of space-time, but accompanies us to today, to the most recent works where, in addition to the image, Michelangelo Pistoletto continues to work with his imagination. Through it, the artist proposes to configure the scene that opens on the future, once again leaving open the "triple dynamic" flow that inevitably includes the past, the present and the future.

Michelangelo Pistoletto was born in Biella in 1933. In 1962 he produced his *Quadri Specchianti* (Mirror Paintings), which soon won him international acclaim. In 1965 and 1966 he created the *Oggetti in Meno* (Minus Objects), considered to be fundamental for the birth of Arte Povera. In the 1990s he founded *Cittadellarte-Fondazione Pistoletto* in Biella, placing art in an active relationship with the various spheres of the social fabric in order to inspire and bring about a responsible transformation of society. In 1996 he participated to the first edition of *Arte all'Arte*, a project conceived and organized by Arte Continua (San Gimignano). In 2003 he was awarded the Golden Lion for Career Achievement at the Venice Biennale. In 2004 he received an honorary degree in Political Science from the University of Turin, and announced the most recent phase of his *Third Paradise* work. In 2007 he received the Wolf Foundation Prize in Arts in Jerusalem "for his constantly inventive career as an artist, educator and activist, whose

restless intelligence has created prescient forms of art that contribute to fresh understanding of the world". In 2011 he was artistic director of *Evento 2011* in Bordeaux. In 2013 he had a solo show at the Louvre, entitled *Année 1 - le paradis sur terre*, and in the same year received the Praemium Imperiale for painting in Tokyo. In 2014 the symbol of the *Third Paradise* was installed in the entrance hall of the EU Council headquarters in Brussels during the semester of the Italian presidency. In 2015 he received an honorary degree from the Universidad de las Artes in Havana. In the same year he produced a large-scale work entitled *Rebirth*, which was placed in the park of the UN's office in Geneva, the Palace of Nations. In November 2016 he showed at the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes in Havana, with a major retrospective of his past and present work. Works by Pistoletto are held in the collections of many leading modern and contemporary art museums. The artist's official website is: www.pistoletto.it

Basilica di San Giorgio Maggiore

The San Giorgio monastic community was founded in AD 982, when the Doge Tribuno Memmo gave the island to the Benedictine monk Giovanni Morosini so a monastery dedicated to Saint George could be built there. In 1565 the Benedictine monks asked the famous architect Andrea Palladio to produce the model for a new church. The interior of the church is adorned with splendid sculptures and imposing works of art. The church of San Giorgio became a basilica following pressure from the patriarch of Venice, Giuseppe Sarto (later Pope Pius X), to celebrate the hundredth anniversary of the election of Pope Pius VII.

Abbazia di San Giorgio Maggiore - Benedicti Clastra Onlus arose out of the enterprising spirit and the clear and resolute will of the Benedictine monks to promote and support projects aimed at developing art and furthering artistic inquiry, which have always been privileged channels for evangelization and spiritual growth. The non-profit organization Benedicti Clastra Onlus conduct socially useful activities that involve planning, collaborating on and organizing cultural events. To that end, part of the ground floor of the abbey was converted into an exhibition space and given the name of *Officina dell'arte Spirituale*, or 'Workshop of Spiritual Art' (cfr. RB 4,78). www.abbaziasangiorgio.it

Galleria Continua was founded in San Gimignano in 1990, with the idea of giving birth to a new dialogue between unexpected geographies, creating continuity between ancient and contemporary art, with the aim of feeding the connection between the past and the future. The desire to overcome geographical and cultural boundaries leads Continua to look out at the world, succeeding to exhibit artists from the five continents and to open, in addition to the Italian one, headquarters in China, France and Cuba. www.galleriacontinua.com

Associazione Arte Continua was founded in San Gimignano in 1990, with the aim of realizing projects in collaboration with the public administration, projects focused on promoting new models of development and harmony in the fields of culture, production and environmental protection - such as: *Arte all'Arte*; *Arte, Architettura Paesaggio*; *Rinascimento Nascimento*; *Arte Pollino* - or also charity campaigns as *Arte x Vino = Acqua*. www.arteallarte.org

EXHIBITION DETAILS

Exhibition title: MICHELANGELO PISTOLETTO *One and One makes Three*

Curated by: Lorenzo Fiaschi

Promoter: Associazione Arte Continua in collaboration with Abbazia di San Giorgio Maggiore - Benedicti Clastra Onlus with the support of GALLERIA CONTINUA, San Gimignano / Beijing / Les Moulins / Habana

Open to the public: from 10 May to 26 November 2017

Venue and opening times: Abbazia di San Giorgio Maggiore and Officina dell'Arte Spirituale, Isola di San Giorgio Maggiore, Venice; 10/11/12 May 10am - 8pm. From 13 May Tue-Sat: 10am - 6pm | Sun: 2pm - 6pm. Linea Actv 2, stopping at San Giorgio, 3 minutes from S. Zaccaria Piazza S. Marco. Admission free

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