



GALLERIACONTINUA

SAN GIMIGNANO BEIJING LES MOULINS

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ANISH KAPOOR

Descension

Opening: Saturday May 2nd 2015, Via del Castello 11, 6pm-midnight
Until 05.09.2015, Monday-Saturday, 10am-1pm, 2-7pm

Internationally acclaimed as one of the most significant contemporary artists, Anish Kapoor returns to Italy with *Descension*, an exhibition project conceived specially for the former cinema and theatre space of Galleria Continua in San Gimignano. The heart of the show is the installation in the stalls area, *Descension*, from which the exhibition takes its name.

Kapoor belongs to the line of artists who pose alchemical questions, and who also proceed by way of paradoxical concepts, producing works that push us beyond appearance in search of being. In so doing he makes us reflect on the latent state of the power of matter itself, of the energy contained within it, and for this reason a metaphor of the entire universe.

The work of Kapoor is distinguished by its boundless capacity to reinvent artistic language, in its monumental dimension as in its more intimate one. From his very first works through to the more recent and monumental installations in museums and public spaces, the themes of his inquiry, which is also, and first of all, philosophical inquiry, centre on the human being and self-awareness, on the mind and the experience of the things surrounding it, and on the universality of time and space.

Kapoor's work redefines and extends the concept of sculpture in art. His poetics implodes and at the same time intensifies and deepens binary relations, opposite energies, the antitheses constituting the visible world. Light and shadow, negative and positive, male and female, material and immaterial, internal and external, concave and convex, polished and opaque, smooth and rough, natural and artificial, rigid and soft, solid and liquid, active and inert, order and disorder, fullness and the void are just some of the polarities that Kapoor's work is capable of representing to spellbinding effect. Speaking of the relationship between fullness and the void, the artist affirms: *"I have always thought of it [the void] ... as a transitional space, an in-between space. It's very much to do with time. I have always been interested as an artist in that very first moment of creativity where everything is possible and nothing has actually happened. It's a space of becoming."*

Descension features a series of new sculptures in alabaster, in which Kapoor has carefully carved out a highly refined section. They invite the spectator to reflect upon the concept of the infinite and the mysteries of time buried within their form and substance. One of the most distinctive aspects of Kapoor's work, especially the ones in stone, is the sense of eternity they convey. Thanks to the translucent qualities of the material the

artist manages to reinforce the sense of the transition from painting to sculpture and from painting to aerial dissolution and through to becoming light. The intense red of some of these sculptures, as of other works in the show, is suggestive of something organic.

The work created by the artist on the stage of the gallery is a kind of echo of Mother Earth: *"... all my life I have reflected and worked on the concept that there is more space than can be seen, that there are void spaces, or, as it were, that there is a vaster horizon. The odd thing about removing content, in making space, is that we, as human beings, find it very hard to deal with the absence of content. It's the horror vacui. This Platonic concept lies at the origin of the myth of the cave, the one from which humans look towards the outside world. But here there is also a kind of Freudian opposite image, that of the back of the cave, which is the dark and empty back of being. Your greatest poet, Dante, also ventured into a place like that. It is the place of the void, which paradoxically is full – of fear, of darkness. Whether you represent it with a mirror or with a dark form, it is always the "back", the point that attracts my interest and triggers my creativity. (...) In dealing with the issue of the back of the cave, as I call it, one almost inevitably runs up against religion. It is literally a clash with a reality that brings out some fundamental questions about Being. It's inevitable. The purpose of abstract representation, for me as for many other artists, is to try to get to the bottom of these questions. And at the bottom of these questions there is consciousness, that is a dimension that science is unable to define, to fully grasp. Art is precisely the privileged path to consciousness."*

Descension, the installation realized by Kapoor in the stalls area of the cinema-theatre in San Gimignano, is a formal continuation of *Descent into limbo*, the work presented in 1992 at documenta IX; in Kassel, in the middle of a cube, a kind of apparently bottomless black hole opened

up in the floor, "dragging" the viewer into it. *Descension* destabilizes, undermines our perception of the earth as a solid element, and confirms Kapoor's interest in non-objects and self-generated forms. In its state of flux and movement, *Descension* presents us with a perpetual force, a thrust downwards and towards a totally unknowable interior.

Anish Kapoor was born in Bombay in 1954. In the 70s he moved to London, where he still lives and works today. Kapoor's artistic career consists of two complementary phases. Belonging to the first are the works of the early 80s: sculptural objects with forms lying between the abstract and the natural, completely covered with pure pigment, the intense colour of which conceals the manufactured origin and suggests the idea of a crossing of boundaries. In the 90s, on the other hand, he explored what can be recognized as the distinctive features of his output: increasingly monumental sculptures that represent his staging of the void, rendered tangible by a cavity that fills up or a material that empties out. In the last thirty years his work has been shown in some of the world's most important museums and galleries. He has had solo shows at the Kunsthalle in Basle, the Tate Gallery and Hayward Gallery in London, the Reina Sofia in Madrid, the CAPC in Bordeaux, the CCBB Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil in Brasilia, Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, and, more recently, at the Haus der Kunst in Munich and the Royal Academy of London. In 2010 he showed for the first time in India, with solo exhibitions at the National Gallery of Modern Art in New Delhi and at Mehboob Studios in Mumbai. The artist has also taken part in numerous group exhibitions in contexts such as the Serpentine Gallery in London, documenta IX in Kassel, the Moderna Museet in Stockholm, the Centre Georges Pompidou, Louvre and Grand Palais in Paris, the Guggenheim in Berlin, New York and Bilbao. Works by the artist are held in many public and private collections, including the MoMA in New York and the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam. Amongst the best known and most highly acclaimed public commissions realized by Kapoor in recent years, there are: *Marsyas* (Tate Modern Turbine Hall, London), *Cloud gate* (Millennium Park, Chicago), *Underground* (medieval tower of Sant'Agostino, Arte Continua, San Gimignano) and *Earth cinema* (Arte Pollino un altro sud con Arte Continua, Basilicata). Anish Kapoor received the Premio Duemila at the Venice Biennale in 1990, the Turner Prize in 1991, and was awarded an Honorary Fellowship at the London Institute in 1997. In 2003 he received a CBE. Since 2001 he has been an honorary member of the Royal Institute of British Architecture. Recent public commissions include: *Ark Nova*, Lucerne Festival, Matsushima, Japan (2013); *Orbit*, Olympic Games, London, in collaboration with Cecil Balmond (2012); *Leviathan*, Grand Palais, Paris; and *Monumenta 2011* (2011). A major retrospective devoted to the artist will be held at the Palace of Versailles from June to October.

For further information about the exhibition and for photographs:

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