

ENGLISH

GALLERIA CONTINUA

SAN GIMIGNANO BEIJING LES MOULINS HABANA ROMA SAO PAULO PARIS DUBAI

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# MICHELANGELO PISTOLETTO

A GREAT EXHIBITION IN ALL 8 GALLERIA CONTINUA LOCATIONS

SAN GIMIGNANO - I QUADRI SPECCHIANTI

HABANA - AMAR LAS DIFERENCIAS

LES MOULINS - 60 ANS D'IDENTITÉS ET D'ALTÉRITÉS

ROMA - COLOR AND LIGHT: THE LATEST WORKS

PARIS - SEGNO ARTE

BEIJING - QR CODE POSSESSION

DUBAI - JUDGEMENT TIME

SAO PAULO - IL CASO

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## BEIJING

### QR CODE POSSESSION

16/11/2023 - 14/04/2024

Open from Tuesday to Sunday | 11.00 am - 6.00 pm

Galleria Continua Beijing is honoured to host Italian artist Michelangelo Pistoletto for his solo show *QR CODE POSSESSION*, the third Pistoletto exhibition the gallery presented in Beijing and the 7th stop of the gallery's global Pistoletto exhibition in all 8 of its locations, on the occasion of Pistoletto's 90th birthday. Named after one of the artist's famous mirror paintings, *QR Code Possession - Self-portrait* (2022), and taking his book *The Formula of Creation* released last December as a clue, the exhibition invites spectators to explore the painstaking efforts the artist made in his journey toward perfection.

After 22 years of repeated polishing and refining, in this

autobiographical piece, *The Formula of Creation*, Pistoletto takes his personal artistic discovery and practice as a starting point, radiating to all spheres of society. A comprehensive set of scientific research techniques and artistic creation approaches have been developed out of the experiments and practices covered in the book. Immediately following the launch of the book, the artist has held public talks with prominent figures in the fields of science, economics, politics and religion throughout Italy, all based on the corresponding research in *The Formula of Creation*, and each collision and fusion within different fields was recorded and turned into a work of art through a coloured QR code hand-drawn on a large canvas. The

gallery's monumental downstairs space will present 20 coloured QR code paintings, which can either be appreciated as abstract art or scanned and be "POSSESSED" by the stories behind them. *The Formula of Creation* is a book that is delivered through public speeches, linked to the Internet via QR codes, and then transformed back into paintings, which creates a perfect closed loop that connects society, technology, and art.

To help spectators better appreciate the connotation, the artist also presents a dozen of works in different media. From his first attempts at the art of photography in 1975 to this year's latest installation of mirrors, the spectators will be led deep into the maestro's artistic mind.

Pistoletto, who learned traditional painting restoration from his father in his early years, gained an incredible degree of freedom from modern art, because art in the 20th century has long since been freed from the task of serving religion, politics, and the public, and artists have gained unprecedented freedom. At the same time, however, Pistoletto believes that artists should also take social responsibilities. He set out to address the most basic and important issues of "existence" and "self-identity", regarding the recognized beginning of art history, that is, the handprints that prehistoric people left on the cave walls, as the starting point for humans to establish self-knowledge and open the door to the unknown.

In order to achieve his self-identity, Pistoletto took an essential element from traditional art: the self-portrait. However, rather than reproducing himself out of reality, his self-portrait takes the representation to the extreme using the mirror. The artist gradually turned the solid reflective canvas into a real mirror, which constantly reflected his image, first by painting his own image on it, and later by photographing himself. The image of the artist is fixed, but the mirror in front of him reflects

everything behind him, the two are in contrast to each other. In the front is the world in the mirror that represents transcendence and exploration of the unknown, while behind is the real, physical universe, and the artist in between becomes the pioneer of the infinite future and the forerunner of the entire universe who explores the universe with a double vision. This journey of existential exploration will eventually lead to an answer beyond our own, which is exactly the mission of scientists.

The vision in the "Mirror Painting" is completely open, encompassing everything, even time and space. The image on the mirror remains silent, an image of the moment that the artist captures and fixes on the mirror. However, the loss of the current moment is also reflected in the mirror as it reflects the changing reality that is happening in real time. The artist's "Mirror Painting", however, freezes the fleeting moments of the past with the image. Thus, the moment that was once in front of the mirror always follows the evolving present and the ever-changing space and time in the mirror, remaining as a memory of the past.

The mirror itself does not produce any image, it represents zero. It is precisely because it represents a zero image, and because of its perfect reflectivity, that it is able to contain all images. The simultaneous presence of "zero" and "infinity" as poles in a mirror reminds Pistoletto of the mathematical symbol for "infinity" ( $\infty$ ), a line of infinite self-intersections, the center of which is the infinity of intersections. However, Pistoletto's "Mirror Painting" contains not only the "infinite" but also the "finite" fixed in images, and he began to think about how to express the "finite" in the "Mirror Painting" in a clear and concrete way like the symbol " $\infty$ ", and the "Third Paradise" symbol was born: Pistoletto's natural idea was to dissect the center point and let the lines intersect twice, creating a third ring in the middle of the two existing infinite rings, representing the "finite", that is, life and even the existence

of all entities in the universe, while the rings on either side of the ring represent the development and movement of everything, which is developing indefinitely and at the same time generating the finite third one.

New scientific discoveries are put to use, and so is the "Third Paradise" discovered by Pistoletto, for which he created the Cittadellarte in Biella. In fact, the name of the symbol is already an expression of the artist's strong social ambitions and responsibilities, reflecting the operation mechanism of this symbol in the course of human history: the first and second paradises are the natural and artificial worlds, and the "Third Paradise" of infinite possibilities is only possible by connecting the various spheres of the artificial world like natural elements.

Pistoletto's "Third Paradise" symbol also coincides with the latest research results on the birth of the universe, the rings on both sides determine the initial moment of the birth of the universe where all the possibilities are already contained, and the moment when the infinite possibilities are activated is the Big Bang. The matter-energy structure full of positive energy and the space-time structure full of negative energy are the first two initial elements to meet and connect with each other after the Big Bang, and the two put everything possible into reality in motion, accumulating new elements in the "finite" circle between the two rings and evolving the universe full of matter as it is today. Art and science have reached a wonderful harmony in a real sense as shown by the "Third Paradise" symbol. All the possibilities already exist, and it is for this reason that Pistoletto sees his creation as a "fermentation" of existing things, even the human civilization and the development of the universe to this day are fermentation of things. Pistoletto's art has since developed into a phenomenological art, a universal "formula of creation" that is linked closely to the concept of "creation" itself, guiding the world to plant the seeds of fermentation within themselves

and utilize their own initiative to create a new world that belongs to the "Third Paradise".

### Artist's Biography

Michelangelo Pistoletto was born in Biella in 1933. He began to exhibit his work in 1955 and in 1960 he had his first solo show at Galleria Galatea in Turin. An inquiry into self-portraiture characterizes his early work. In the two-year period 1961-1962 made the first *Mirror Paintings*, which directly include the viewer and real time in the work, and open up perspective, reversing the Renaissance perspective that had been closed by the twentieth-century avant-gardes. These works quickly brought Pistoletto international acclaim, leading, in the sixties, to one-man shows in important galleries and museums in Europe and the United States. The *Mirror Paintings* are the foundation of his subsequent artistic output and theoretical thought.

In 1965 and 1966 he produced a set of works entitled *Minus Objects*, considered fundamental to the birth of *Arte Povera*, an art movement of which Pistoletto was an animating force and a protagonist. In 1967 he began to work outside traditional exhibition spaces, with the first instances of that "creative collaboration" he developed over the following decades by bringing together artists from different disciplines and diverse sectors of society. In 1975-76 he presented a cycle of twelve consecutive exhibitions, *Le Stanze*, at the Stein Gallery in Turin. This was the first of a series of complex, year-long works called "time continents". Others are *White Year* (1989) and *Happy Turtle* (1992).

In 1978, in a show in Turin, Pistoletto defined two main directions his future artwork would take: *Division and Multiplication of the Mirror and Art Takes On Religion*. In the early eighties he made a series of sculptures in rigid polyurethane, translated into marble for his solo show in 1984 at Forte di Belvedere in Florence. From 1985 to 1989 he created the series of "dark" volumes called

Art of Squalor. During the nineties, with Project Art and with the creation in Biella of Cittadellarte - Fondazione Pistoletto and the University of Ideas, he brought art into active relation with diverse spheres of society with the aim of inspiring and producing responsible social change. In 2003 he won the Venice Biennale's Golden Lion for Lifelong Achievement. In 2004 the University of Turin awarded him a laurea honoris causa in Political Science. On that occasion the artist announced what has become the most recent phase of his work, Third Paradise. In 2007, in Jerusalem, he received the Wolf Foundation Prize in the Arts, "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 2010 he wrote the essay The Third Paradise, published in Italian, English, French and German. In 2012 he started promoting the Rebirth-day, first worldwide day of rebirth, celebrated every year on 21st December with initiatives taking place all around the world. In 2013 the Louvre in Paris hosted his personal exhibition Michelangelo Pistoletto, année un - le paradis sur terre. In this same year he received the Praemium Imperiale for painting, in Tokyo.

In May 2015 he received a degree honoris causa from the Universidad de las Artes of Havana in Cuba. In the same year he realizes a work of big dimensions, called Rebirth, situated in the park of the Palais des Nations in Geneva, headquarters of the UN.

In 2017 the text written by Michelangelo Pistoletto Ominitheism and Demopraxy. Manifesto for a regeneration of society was published.

In 2021 the Universario, an exhibition space in which the artist presents his most recent research, was inaugurated at Cittadellarte, and in December 2022 his latest book, La formula della creazione, in which he retraces the

fundamental steps and the evolution of his entire artistic career and theoretical reflection, was published.

For further information on the exhibition and photographic material:  
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