

PRESS RELEASE

ESCALA HUMANA

YOAN CAPOTE & MICHELANGELO PISTOLETTO

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 24TH, 2022

ARTE CONTINUA - ÁGUILA DE ORO, RAYO 108 BETWEEN ZANJA AND DRAGONES, BARRIO CHINO, CENTRO HABANA, CUBA

Arte Continua is pleased to present the exhibition ESCALA HUMANA (Human Scale), by Cuban artist Yoan Capote and Italian Master Michelangelo Pistoletto.

After the significant performance with the fishermen's boats in the Cuban sea, the great exhibition hosted in 2016 by the National Museum of Fine Arts, and other undertakings within the Cuban socio-cultural and artistic context, especially through the active venue of Tercer Paraíso, Pistoletto, who professes a deep and special affection for Cuba, returns. He does so to reframe some recurring themes or issues in his work, but this time stimulating a generational dialogue with Yoan Capote, one of the most important Cuban artists of the current art scene.

ESCALA HUMANA (Human Scale) brings together these two artists whose respective practices involve art, reality and the individual in a very particular way. These pieces show a very clear interest in redefining the viewer's aesthetic experience through a particular expressive power of the featured materials and objects. Any material transformed by their minds and human warmth invariably becomes poetry, energy or meaning, whether through the subtlety of a simple gesture or a meticulous elaboration.

In the case of Michelangelo Pistoletto, one of the greatest figures of Arte Povera, iconic pieces from different moments of his career are presented, among them *Caribbean Sea*, *Love Difference*, *Around the World* and a series of works made with mirrors. Some of these date back to 1976 and are an explicit statement of the conceptual nature of his artistic work. Also included in the exhibition is one of his best-known works, *Venus of the Rags*, created in 1967 and considered emblematic of Arte Povera. The juxtaposition of rags and the statue of Venus produces a dialectic correlation similar to the one characterizing his "Quadri specchianti" (Mirror Paintings). A fixed figure with its back turned –the statue representing an undying ideal of beauty passed on through the centuries– interacts with a myriad of potentially endless and ever-changing objects –the rags, symbolizing waste and degradation, but also consumerism, recycling, and social marginalization–.

Likewise, a NeoPovera sensibility can be appreciated in much of Yoan Capote's work, conditioned at the beginning of his career by the context and its difficulties regarding access to state-of-the-art technical solutions, but at the same time by his interest in always finding the most expressive side of materials, whether humble or industrial. However, there is a distinctive feature in the way Capote tries to turn the physical experience of these materials into a symbolic or emotional trigger. That is to say, there is in his works a visceral manner of analyzing weight, corrosion, fragility, balance, tactile experience, but also of synthesizing the way in which the viewer interacts with them.

Entering the exhibition, the first works we find in dialogue are *This Space Does Not Exist* (1967), one of Pistoletto's mirror paintings where, by including the viewer and the present time in the piece, he modifies and introduces a new notion of perspective, alongside Capote's *Family Portrait* (2022). The latter alludes to the lyrics of one of the most emblematic songs of the Cuban artist's generation, *Foto de familia* (Family Picture) by Carlos Varela, but it has been conceived especially for this exhibition and inspired by the use of the mirror in the work of the Italian master. Capote uses old house mirrors as a reference and the classic family photos that are displayed in our intimate spaces. With archaeological delicacy, he adds the quicksilver on the back, scraping and stripping it to reveal the transparency of the glass while engraving the image of the sea. Right at the horizon he has cut the glass and the area of the sky he inverts against the wall. The color of the quicksilver reminds us of the gray of the sky and at the same time speaks of those who are no longer with us.

Other dialogues are articulated throughout the exhibition: the texts of "Arrival" and "Departure" that present Pistoletto's idea of *Around the World*, *Caribbean Sea* occupying the center of the exhibition hall, and serving as a mediator between cultures, languages, political and religious visions, surrounded by the seas of Yoan Capote's *Islands* series, and his sculptures *Self-Portrait (a study of resistance)* and *On our Shoulders*. The latter evoke a direct allusion to the emotional weight and spiritual burden of our body. Both are works that dilute the representation of individual experience in a collective empathy, or social allusion. The former shows a meticulous study of balance; its visual fragility conveys a static tension in the face of gravity and an evocation of the vulnerability of our life and our body. Similarly, following the tradition of the classical bust, the second work shows us a visual analogy between the shoulders of a sculpture and the inverted shape of the heavy anvil. It is almost the ready-made quality of this object, whose weight and steel tenacity tell the story of countless blows received and its inner strength.

Love Difference, a phrase that stands out in red neon on the second floor of the gallery as an urgent call, is one of Pistoletto's works that define the discourse of this exhibition and its title, accentuated by works such as Capote's *Abstinence (tolerance)*. For these artists, art not only goes beyond the field of aesthetics and enters the field of ethics and ideas, but also assumes real and concrete responsibilities in all areas of human life. Art becomes a necessary driving force for interaction and dialogue.

Michelangelo Pistoletto was born in Biella in 1933. In 1962 he created the Mirror Paintings with which he quickly achieved international recognition. He is considered one of the precursors and protagonists of Arte Povera with his *Oggetti in meno* (1965-1966) and the *Venere degli stracci* (1967). Starting from 1967, outside traditional exhibition spaces, he conceived and created actions that constituted the first manifestations of the "creative collaboration" that he would go on to develop over the following decades, bringing together artists from different disciplines and increasingly wider sectors of society. In the nineties he founded Cittadellarte in Biella, placing art in relation to different areas of society in order to inspire and produce a responsible transformation of society. He has received countless international awards, including the Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement of the Venice Biennale in 2003 and in 2007 the Wolf Foundation Prize in Arts "for his constantly creative career as an artist, educator and activator, whose tireless intelligence has given way to premonitory art forms that contribute to a new understanding of the world". In 2017 his latest book edited by Actes Sud, *Hominithism and Demopraxy*, was released, a manifesto for a regeneration of society published by Chiarelettere. Works by him are present in major contemporary art museums. (Official site: www.pistoletto.it)

Yoan Capote was born in Pinar del Río, Cuba, in 1977. He graduated from the National School of Art in 1995 and from the Higher Institute of Art in Havana in 2001. He currently lives and works in Havana. He has received distinctions such as the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship (2006), the Pollock-Krasner Foundation Award (2006) and the Vermont Study Center Fellowship (2002). During the 7th Havana Biennial (2000), he received the UNESCO Prize, together with the DUPP artists' collective. His work was part of the group exhibition at the Cuban Pavilion of the 54th Venice Biennale (2011), as well as the Gwangju Biennale (2018), Chengdu Biennale (2021) and Biennale of Sydney (2022). A large-scale painting was exhibited in Art Basel Unlimited, 2022. His work is included in several collections, among them: Voorlinden Museum, Daros Latinamerica AG Collection, Zurich, Switzerland; National Museum of Fine Arts, Havana; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, USA; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, USA; Museum of Fine Arts, Montreal, Canada; Pérez Art Museum, Florida, USA; Farber Collection, Miami, USA; Peabody Essex Museum, Massachusetts, USA; North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh, USA; Beelden aan Zee Museum, The Hague, Netherlands; Ella Fontanels-Cisneros Collection, Miami, USA; among others.

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