

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 OF GALLERIA CONTINUA'S 8 LOCATIONS

SAN GIMIGNANO - I QUADRI SPECCHIANTI

HABANA - AMAR LAS DIFERENCIAS

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

ROMA - COLOR AND LIGHT

PARIGI - SEGNO ARTE

SAN PAOLO - IL CASO

BEIJING - QR CODE POSSESSION

DUBAI - IL TEMPO DEL GIUDIZIO

SAN GIMIGNANO I QUADRI SPECCHIANTI

27/05/2023 - 10/09/2023

Opening on Saturday 27 May 2023, piazza della Cisterna 26, 4-9pm.

The gallery is open from Monday to Sunday 10am - 1pm / 2pm - 7pm.

Galleria Continua is pleased to present in its spaces in San Gimignano ***I Quadri Specchianti***, a new exhibition by Michelangelo Pistoletto. **This solo show is the first stage of a major project that will cross the world, involving the eight Galleria Continua locations, each of which will host an exhibition by the artist throughout the whole of 2023, the year of the Maestro's 90th birthday. It is an intercontinental project, aimed at highlighting Pistoletto's art in all its forms, from its genesis to today. It will be the story of a journey through the ages: the highlights of his career and the long collaboration with the gallery. Galleria Continua celebrates him as one of**

the most important exponents of Arte Povera and of contemporary art with a succession of personal exhibitions on a worldwide scale: from 27 May at Galleria Continua / San Gimignano; from 27 May at Galleria Continua / Cuba; from 3 June at Galleria Continua / Les Moulins; from 22 June at Galleria Continua / Rome; from 23 June at Galleria Continua / Paris; from 28 October at Galleria Continua / São Paulo; from 15 November at Galleria Continua / Beijing and from 18 November at Galleria Continua / Dubai.

The exhibition ***I Quadri Specchianti*** covers more than sixty years of Michelangelo Pistoletto's career with a selection of

works ranging from the mid-1950s to more recent works. It is a journey through the exploration of painting and self-portrait using different media: from canvas, acrylic, plastic enamel, gold, silver, painted tissue paper on polished stainless steel, to screen printing on stainless steel supermirror.

Some works produced by Pistoletto between 1957 and 1958 on view in San Gimignano are of particular importance in the evolution of his practise. Among these *Sacerdote (1957)*: a frontal figure, geometrically stylized that recalls the pointed construction of a cathedral on a gold background typical of iconography.

In some works created during the 1960s, the person, depicted frontally, standing and life-size, dressed anonymously in a jacket and tie, takes on an increasingly immobile and inexpressive character like a prototype of an ordinary human being. The background, the development of which is the focus of the artist's attention, passes from the repetition of decorative signs to monochrome. *Autoritratto Oro* and *Autoritratto Argento* are examples of this; the latter is made up of two panels, placed side-by-side, on one panel the figure is painted on a silver background, while the other is entirely covered by a silver background, an empty space that seems to anticipate the metal surface of the future *Mirror Paintings* which would go on to receive the reflected images of the surrounding space.

The turning point that leads to the *Mirror Paintings* took place in 1961. After having spread a black background and a thick layer of transparent varnish on the canvas, the artist, preparing to paint his face on it, suddenly realises that he can see his reflection directly on the canvas, without needing to use the mirror to observe himself. Impressed by this discovery, during that year he created various works with this technique,

portraying himself in a sitting, standing, front and back position. These works can be grouped together by their title, *Il presente (The present)*, which indicates the instantaneous relationship that these works create between the viewer, his reflection and the painted figure.

The *Mirror Painting* is fundamental to the work of Michelangelo Pistoletto because in it we find the past and the present. What the spectator sees in front of him, he also sees simultaneously behind him and is therefore at the centre of a double perspective: towards the future, through the past; and the past penetrates the future. There is no longer a distinction between the work and the viewer, the entities involved multiply: there is the person outside the work, the person depicted on the surface, the person who is mirrored and exists in his multiplicity of reactions to the work; both exist together, opposite each other. The *Mirror Painting* is "a self-portrait of the world", it unites the observer and the environment, favours the meeting of opposites and offers a double perspective, showing what is ahead and what is behind, as well as creating a virtual space where art and life merge.

The exhibition concludes with one of the artist's most recent *Mirror Paintings*, *QR Code Possession - Self-portrait (2022)*, which depicts the artist covered in "tattoos" of a QR Code with a small symbol of the Third Paradise inside. Pistoletto defines the tattoo as "(...) an ancient method of communication that I use today as an artistic-technological means of communication. The self-portrait conveys my identity but also that of contemporary society within the framework of infinity that can be found in a *Mirror Painting*". The codes, once scanned, lead the user to a series of online materials and videos: from conferences and talks related to his recently published book *The Formula of Creation*, to his work at the Fondazione Pistoletto Cittadellarte in Biella, performances and much more.

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.

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