

MICHELANGELO PISTOLETTO
'Color and Light'

Palazzo Widmann Rezzonico
Palazzo Widmann 5403 Cannaregio, Venezia
09.05 - 15.07.2026

GALLERIA CONTINUA, in collaboration with Francesco Costa at Palazzo Widmann, is delighted to present a new group of works by **Michelangelo Pistoletto**, on the occasion of the 61st edition of the Venice Biennale of Art. The project draws inspiration from a group of four 17th-century paintings by Luca Giordano, once installed in the main hall of Ca' Rezzonico within Palazzo Widmann in Venice. The exhibition will run from May 5 to July 15, 2026, and is open to visitors by appointment only.

For over sixty years, Michelangelo Pistoletto has explored the relationship between art and life, placing the viewer at the center of the work through reflection, participation, and spatial awareness. This new body of work extends that investigation by engaging directly with a historical cycle that once defined a specific architectural and perceptual environment in Venice, now lost but partially reconstructed through archival research.

The four paintings that inspire the project formed a unified ensemble installed in the *portego*—the grand central hall—of the palace. Attributed to Luca Giordano and executed in the late seventeenth century, the cycle likely included two large horizontal compositions depicting *Sant'Andrea morto levato di Croce* and *Archimede ucciso da soldati*, alongside two vertical canvases representing female saints. Their shared height and coordinated formats suggest a single commission conceived in close relation to the architecture, combining narrative intensity with devotional presence. Remaining *in situ* until at least the mid-nineteenth century, the paintings were later dispersed, and their current whereabouts remain unknown.

Pistoletto's new works do not seek to reconstruct these lost paintings but rather to reinterpret their energy. Drawing on his longstanding use of mirrors, the artist translates the original cycle into a new spatial system in which reflection replaces representation. Where Giordano's canvases once staged scenes of martyrdom, knowledge, and devotion, Pistoletto introduces the viewer as an active participant whose presence completes and transforms the work in real time.

Central to the project is the notion of division and recomposition. The original paintings, conceived as a unified cycle and later dispersed, become a point of departure for a contemporary exploration of fragmentation. In Pistoletto's works, mirrored surfaces are interrupted, multiplied, or structured in relation to the architectural space, generating shifting perspectives that echo the original arrangement of horizontal and vertical compositions. The reflective surface

absorbs the surrounding environment, reactivating the relationship between artwork, viewer, and space that once defined the experience of the portego.

By engaging with this lost Baroque cycle, the artist establishes a dialogue across centuries, in which absence becomes a generative condition. The historical paintings, no longer visible, persist as a conceptual framework—translated into a contemporary language that replaces fixed imagery with living reflection. In this way, the project aligns with Pistoletto's ongoing investigation into the mirror as a threshold: a site where past and present, image and reality, and individual and collective experience converge.

About the artist:

Michelangelo Pistoletto was born in Biella in 1933. He began exhibiting in 1955, and between 1961 and 1962 he created his first *Quadri specchianti*, which quickly brought him international recognition. Engaged with the New York Pop Art scene and a pioneer of Arte Povera, between 1965 and 1966 he developed the *Oggetti in meno*, now considered fundamental to the emergence of the movement. From 1967 onward, he expanded his practice beyond traditional exhibition spaces, anticipating a form of "creative collaboration" that would, over time, involve artists from different disciplines as well as wider sectors of society. In the 1990s, he initiated *Progetto Arte* and founded *Cittadellarte – Fondazione Pistoletto* in Biella, with the aim of connecting art to the various spheres of the social fabric and fostering a responsible transformation of society. In 2003, he launched the Terzo Paradiso, which has since evolved into a large-scale, collective, and participatory work. In 2022, he published *The Formula of Creation*, retracing his artistic and theoretical journey. In 2023, he introduced a series of new works incorporating QR codes and artificial intelligence technologies, coining the term "meta-opera." In February 2025, he was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. Throughout his career, he has received numerous international awards and accolades, and his works are held in the permanent collections of major contemporary art museums worldwide.