

MARIAN GOODMAN GALLERY

For immediate release

Anri Sala

Time No Longer

7 September – 26 October 2024

Opening reception: Saturday, 7 September, 5-7 pm

Marian Goodman Gallery is delighted to present the first exhibition of Anri Sala in Los Angeles as well as the West Coast debut and gallery premiere of his immersive video, sound, and light installation, *Time No Longer*, 2021. Since the late 1990s, Sala has worked primarily with time-based media, often looking at the performance of music to narrate and interpret various histories of culture and politics. Within this exhibition, we find Sala engaging two seemingly disparate art forms that are united as condensations of time that embrace the past and the future, respectively, in fresco painting and computer-generated imagery.

Temporal elements are also fused within the historical, musical and visual aspects of the work, *Time No Longer*, wherein a weathered record player is portrayed floating in a space station. While spinning in zero gravity, the turntable plays a new arrangement of French composer Olivier Messiaen's 1941 work, "Quartet for the End of Time," perhaps one of the most searingly haunting and memorable works composed in incarceration. During the Second World War, Messiaen (1908–1992) was captured at Verdun and incarcerated at a German prisoner-of-war camp. While imprisoned, he composed "Quartet for the End of Time," performing with three fellow musician prisoners before an audience of captives and guards, using only the instruments they knew how to play and had available.

In Messiaen's elegiac piece of chamber music, Sala recognized a sense of overwhelming loneliness and despair within an insurmountable crisis, along with the need to bring something, however fragile and soft-spoken, into that numbness. Within the composition, Sala extracted "The Abyss of the Birds," the only solo movement, written for a clarinet, for use in *Time No Longer*. The abyss, to Messiaen, represented time, "with its sadness and tediums," while "birds are the opposite of Time; they are our desire for light...". Further, Messiaen's concept of time can be interpreted beyond our conventional understanding of past and future, a chronometry resembling an eternal rhythm that exists and extends beyond linearity.

The isolated clarinet, the compositional title and its meaning tie the work to another remarkable musical event: the story of Ronald McNair and his saxophone. In 1986, McNair, one of the first Black astronauts to have reached space, was also a professional saxophonist who had planned to play and record a solo performance on the Challenger space shuttle. This would have been the first original piece of music recorded in space, had the mission not ended tragically; the spacecraft disintegrated seconds after takeoff, killing everyone on board. *Time No Longer* was commissioned in 2021 by the Buffalo Bayou Partnership in Houston, where the Challenger disaster occurred 35 years earlier.

Sala envisioned that composing a saxophone element for "The Abyss of the Birds" would underscore the vast loneliness that connects McNair and Messiaen, respectively, as experienced through outer space and incarceration. The saxophone, performed by André Vida, emerges in *Time No Longer* only when the needle lifts from the vinyl, granting McNair his forsaken performance, refracted into space alongside the original Messiaen score, performed by clarinetist Raphaël Sévère. Further, the connection forms a duet between two instrumental voices, intertwined through circumstance.

The vast, eerie stillness, coupled with the absence of humanity as conveyed in *Time No Longer* evokes the aftermath of a catastrophe — with the turntable serving as a custodian of that absent humanity. With its own acrobatic intelligence, the player's tonearm moves across the record, its needle intermittently touching down, lifting off, resuming and then halting the music. In a manner that seems not entirely subject to weightlessness, it perpetually conducts itself, witnessing sixteen earthly sunrises and sunsets each day from its vantage point in space.

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The fortuity of time figuratively extends into an adjacent gallery, where Sala presents selections from his new series of frescoes. Here, Sala returns to the *al fresco* technique that he first learned about in the 1990s while studying art in his native Albania. This ancient method unfolds ambiguously over time, demanding precise temporal awareness. Each composition is divided into *giornatas*, the portions of work that can be completed in a single day while the medium, known as *intonaco*, remains fresh. Once it dries, the layers of pigments are permanently bonded to the surface, making any further alterations impossible.

One group of works, titled *Surface to Air*, originated from snapshots of clouds that the artist took from an airplane window. In this series, the gesture imprints the surface through three intertwined temporalities, creating a contemporary archaeology. The ephemeral moments of the clouds, echoing the passage of time, are captured by the photograph. The marble, formed by accumulated sedimentary layers, serves as a solid and frozen representation of bygone period, imparting a new sense of chronology to the works. Finally, the fresco technique, governed by the rhythm of the *giornatas*, evokes the structured flow of time.

The second body of works, *Noli Me Tangere Inversa*, is based on a famous fresco from 1425-30 by Italian Renaissance artist Fra Angelico, which depicts Jesus Christ and Mary Magdalene at the Garden Tomb after his resurrection. Sala painted these frescoes using an innovative approach that enables him to transpose the modern process of colorimetric negatives, typically found in photography, onto fragments of a Quattrocento masterpiece. The viewer's gaze is met with the tension arising from the intersection of two contrasting techniques.

The frescoes serve as literal time capsules, presenting multiple and nuanced temporalities, however frozen and eternal. In contrast, the sapphire stylus on the vinyl in *Time No Longer*, intermittently jumping from one groove to the other or remaining suspended in space, subject to the vagaries of weightlessness, challenges the linearity of time, which becomes synonymous with rupture and unpredictability.

Recent solo shows have been at the Winsing Art Place, Taipei, Taiwan; Bourse de Commerce, Fondation Pinault, Paris; and GAMEC, Bergamo, Italy (all 2022); Kunsthau Bregenz, Austria (2021); Buffalo Bayou Park Cistern, Houston (2021); MUDAM, Luxembourg (2019); Castello di Rivoli, Turin, Italy (2019); Fundación Botín, Santander, Spain (2019); the Garage, Moscow, Russia (2018); Instituto Moreira Salles, Sao Paulo, Brazil; (2017-2018); Museo Tamayo, Mexico City (2017); Kaldor Public Art Projects, Sydney, Australia (2017); The New Museum (2016); Instituto Moreira Salles, Rio de Janeiro (2016); Teshima Seawall House, Benesse Art Site Naoshima, Teshima Island, Japan (2016); Haus der Kunst, Munich (2014); the French Pavilion at the 55th Venice Biennale (2013); the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris (2012); The Serpentine Gallery, London (2011); The Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati (2009); The Museum of Contemporary Art, North Miami (2008); and the Fondazione Nicola Trussardi, Milan (2005); among other venues.

Sala has received the Vincent Award (2014), the 10th Benesse Prize (2013), the Absolut Art Award (2011), and the Young Artist Prize at the Venice Biennale (2001). He has taken part in many group exhibitions and biennials, including the 12th Havana Biennial (2015), the Sharjah Biennial 11 (2013), representing France at the 55th Venice Biennale, Italy (2013), the 9th Gwangju Biennale (2012), documenta (13) (2012), the 29th São Paulo Biennial (2010), the 2nd Moscow International Biennale of Contemporary Art (2007), and the 4th Berlin Biennial (2006).

Please join us at the opening reception in Los Angeles on Saturday, 7 September, from 5-7 pm at 1120 Seward Street in Los Angeles, CA 90038.

For further information, please visit our website: mariangoodman.com, or contact Linda Pellegrini, Head of Communications and Events, at linda@mariangoodman.com or (212) 977-7160.