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LAURENT GRASSO

Artificialis

Sean Kelly, New York

October 25 – December 21, 2024

Opening reception: Thursday, October 24, 6-8pm

Artist talk and book signing: Saturday, October 26, 11am

Sean Kelly is delighted to announce *Artificialis*, Laurent Grasso's sixth solo exhibition with the gallery. Grasso's oeuvre blurs the line between temporalities, combining historical references and futuristic anticipations to create new, ambiguous, realities. The exhibition features the US premiere of Grasso's films, *ARTIFICIALIS* and *Orchid Island*, along with two groups of new paintings related to each film. One of the series draws inspiration from the prominent 19th century American artist Frederic Edwin Church's evocative landscape paintings of the Hudson River Valley. The exhibition confronts the rapid changes and existential challenges of our world where human cultural impact on nature is now indelible; it places viewers in a realm where distinguishing between the real and the artificial is questioned. There will be an opening reception on Thursday, October 24, 6-8pm. The artist will be present.

The film *ARTIFICIALIS* originated from an invitation from the Musée d'Orsay, in Paris, France, asking Grasso to produce a large-scale work in response to the museum's exhibition centered around Darwin's legacy and the perception of nature. Both exhibitions were on view at the museum simultaneously in 2021, creating a dialogue between the historical and contemporary perspectives on exploration and our understanding of the natural world. Grasso's film examines how 21st-century explorers document the world using modern tools, merging real and virtual worlds to envision a post-Anthropocene future.

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Produced with advanced vision instruments like LIDAR scanners and hyperspectral cameras, *ARTIFICIALIS* generates images that blur reality, nature, and artifice. The film challenges the possibility of exploration in a hyperconnected world, mapped by satellites and compressed in space and time, questioning traditional notions of exoticism. Described by Grasso as a “film-machine,” it evolves like a code, drawing information from the world as a database to spotlight areas where nature has mutated due to human impact. Musician Warren Ellis composed the soundtrack while watching the film in real-time, adding a dynamic layer to the film, while graphic creations by M/M lend a futuristic dimension.

Part of Grasso’s process involves creating films that serve as the basis for other art forms, such as paintings and sculptures, resulting in a cohesive yet multifaceted oeuvre. New works from his *Future Herbarium* series, paintings of double-headed flowers, draw upon imagery from *ARTIFICIALIS* which are reproduced in oil and palladium leaf on wood. The mutations are transformations from a future that exists only in the artist’s imagination, creating “a sense of strangeness where beauty and anxiety intertwine,” states Grasso.

Orchid Island, 2023, examines the idealization of nature in art history juxtaposed with contemporary climate issues. Set against Taiwan’s seemingly pristine landscapes, the film introduces a mysterious, levitating black rectangle, which casts its shadow on the area over which it flies. The film questions Western representations of exotic, imaginary settings, oscillating between archive footage and futuristic projections. With this work Grasso seeks to “activate an altered state of consciousness similar to that of hypnosis.” The music, composed by Nicolas Godin, blends an ethereal melody with the subtle pulse of a synthesizer, casting a surreal and otherworldly tone over the film.

The accompanying paintings, part of Grasso’s series *Studies into the Past*, incorporate natural or supernatural phenomena – most often borrowed from his own films – into apparently historical canvases, creating an uncanny feeling of déjà-vu. Inspired by one of the most widely recognized painters of the Hudson River school, Frederic Edwin Church, Grasso’s paintings closely recall his idyllic nineteenth-century landscape paintings. Church was significantly influenced by the Prussian explorer and scientist Alexander von Humboldt, whose seminal work *Cosmos* articulated the interconnectedness of science, the natural world, and spiritual concerns. Humboldt’s dedication to landscape painting and his belief in the artist’s role in scientifically portraying nature, deeply impacted Church. This historical context aligns with Grasso’s interest in the sciences and his artistic exploration. By introducing a discordant element such as a large black rectangle into these idyllic landscapes, Grasso disrupts the traditional perception of nature. Without delivering a direct message, he invites the viewer to engage in a space for projection and reflection on our current fears. Grasso’s new *Studies into the Past* paintings also continue his long-established exploration of time travel and the viewer’s perception of reality.

Laurent Grasso is the recipient of the Meru Art*Science Award in Bergamo, Italy, the Chevalier de l’ordre des Arts et des Lettres, and the Marcel Duchamp Prize. Grasso’s work has been the subject of solo exhibitions at international institutions, including the Abbaye of Jumièges, in France, Tao Art in Taiwan, the Collège des Bernardins and the Musée d’Orsay in Paris, the Centre Pompidou x West Bund Museum in Shanghai, the Jeonnam Museum of Art in Gwangyang, South Korea, the Palais Fesch, Musée des Beaux-Arts in Ajaccio, France, the Hermès Foundation in Tokyo, the Kunsthau Baselland in Switzerland, the Musée d’Art Contemporain in Montréal, the Jeu de Paume and Palais de Tokyo in Paris, the

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Bass Museum of Art in Miami, and the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington D.C. amongst others. He has also participated in several international biennials, such as the 21st Sydney Biennale, Australia; EVA International, Ireland; the Kochi Biennale, India; the Gwangju and Busan Biennales, South Korea; Manifesta 8 Cartagena/Murcia, Spain; the Sharjah Biennial, UAE; and the Moscow Biennale, Russia. Laurent Grasso has recently created several permanent installations in public spaces including *Solar Wind* on the Paris ring road, and a group of sculptures entitled *Roots of the Future*, which was installed for the 2024 Paris Olympic Village. Grasso was also commissioned to create a permanent site-specific installation for the ceiling of the new train station in Châtillon-Montrouge, as part of the Grand Paris project.



Laurent Grasso: Time Travel

The book features a foreword by Laurence des Cars, President of the Musée du Louvre and texts by Denise Markonish, Chief Curator of MASS MoCA, and Arnaud Pierre, Professor of History of Contemporary Art at Sorbonne University.

Time Travel delves into Grasso's expansive oeuvre exploring science, natural phenomena, and contemporary mythologies, to present a visual journey of his avant-garde, conceptual work. Published in 2023 by Rizzoli Electa.

Exhibition Programming

Laurent Grasso in conversation with Sean Kelly
Saturday, October 26, 11am

Sean Kelly, New York



475 Tenth Ave, New York, NY 10018

On Saturday, October 26 at 11am Sean Kelly will be in conversation with Laurent Grasso at the gallery, followed by a signing of Grasso's new publication *Time Travel*.

For information on Laurent Grasso please visit [skny.com](https://www.skny.com)

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Image caption: Laurent Grasso, *ARTIFICIALIS* (still), 2020, HD film, 27 minutes, 33 seconds, © Laurent Grasso / ADAGP, Paris, Courtesy: the artist and Sean Kelly, New York/Los Angeles; Publication image, *Time Travel*; Photo Laurent Grasso Photography Chen You Wei