

GALLERIA CONTINUA

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MICHELANGELO PISTOLETTO

Oltre Lo Specchio

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Galleria Continua is pleased to welcome back Michelangelo Pistoletto, one of the leading artists on the international art scene, to its exhibition spaces. After his first show in Beijing in 2008, Pistoletto is returning to the space in the 798 district with some new and interesting projects that offer a number of fresh ideas while at the same time looking back to earlier works. The whole show is pervaded by an expressive coherence that is naturally articulated in the use of the mirror.

The mirror, which in sculptural form fills the first floor of the gallery, is structured in self-reflecting forms that replicate into multiples according to the angle between the two elements comprising it. Division and multiplication, accumulation and exclusion, understood as universal foundations for all organic development, are the fundamental themes of this type of work; already explored by the artist in 1977, here they have been realized on a larger scale for the large central entrance to the gallery.

On the second, floor visitors can admire some fine, new examples of mirror paintings with a specific autobiographical note, on public display for the first time. The artist has used the silkscreen technique to incorporate an image of himself into the mirror-polished stainless steel surface, inviting the viewer to become part of the scene by creating a fourth dimension of participation in the present. Pistoletto places his own figure to the fore, holding a wooden mallet, a symbol of generative destruction taken from his famous performances, such as the one he did for the Yokohama

triennale in 2008 (now part of the MOMA collection in New York) and then the following year at the Venice Biennale.

The third floor houses *Metrocubo d'infinito (Cubic Meter of Infinity)*, a work that seems to pick up on the essential concepts of Arte Povera: six mirrors assembled with a simple piece of rope delimit the empty space of a cubic metre. The viewer's curiosity and perception are stimulated in order to create a mental image of infinite and omnidirectional reflections inside a space that cannot effectively be used. The mirror, whose capacity to reflect remains even when it is not looked at by any eye, becomes the intermediary between the invisible and the visible, extending the capacity of the viewer's eye itself.



Michelangelo Pistoletto was born in Biella in 1933. He began to exhibit his work in 1955 and had his first solo show in 1960 with Galleria Galatea in Turin. His early work is characterized by an inquiry into self-portraiture. In the two year period from 1961-1962, the first *Mirror Paintings* were made, which incorporate the viewer and real time into the work directly, opening up perspective, and reversing Renaissance perspective that had been closed off by the twentieth century avant-garde. These works quickly brought Pistoletto international acclaim, leading to individual shows in important galleries and museums in Europe and the United States in the sixties. The *Mirror Paintings* provided the foundation of his subsequent artistic output and theoretical exploration. In 1965 and 1966, he produced a set of works entitled *Minus Objects*, considered fundamental to the birth of Arte Povera, an art movement for which Pistoletto was an animating force and key protagonist. In 1967, he began working outside traditional exhibition spaces, with the first instances of the “creative collaboration” he developed over the following decades by bringing together artists from different disciplines and diverse sectors of society. From 1975-1976, 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 known as “time continents”, others include *White Year* (1989) and *Happy Turtle* (1992). In 1978, in a show in Turin, Pistoletto defined two main directions for his future artistic production: “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 his creations 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 an honorary degree in Political Science. On that occasion, the artist announced 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 2011, he was the artistic director of “Evento 2011 – L’art pour une ré-évolution urbaine” in Bordeaux. In 2012, he started promoting the Rebirth-day, the first worldwide day of rebirth, celebrated every year on December 21st with initiatives taking place all over the world. In 2013, the Louvre in Paris hosted his personal exhibition “Michelangelo Pistoletto, année un – le paradis sur terre”. The same year, he received the Praemium Imperiale for painting, in Tokyo. In 2014, the symbol of the *Third Paradise* was installed in the hall of the headquarters of the Council of the European Union in Bruxelles for the duration of the Italian Presidency of the European Council. In May 2015, he received an honorary degree from the Universidad de las Artes of Havana in Cuba. In the same year, he realized a work of epic scale entitled *Rebirth*, situated in the park of the Palais des Nations in Geneva, headquarters of the UN. In 2016, he exhibited his works in Havana, Cuba, at the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, with a great retrospective exhibition which encompassed his entire artistic journey, from the paintings of the 1960s to the latest works on the *Third Paradise* and the Cuban *Mirror Paintings*, executed the previous year. In 2017, the artist participated in an auxiliary event of the 57th Venice Biennial with the exhibition “One and One Makes Three” at the San Giorgio Maggiore Abbey complex in Venice.