

We are proud to present the first exhibition by Michelangelo Pistoletto at Galerie Mezzanin. Michelangelo Pistoletto, certainly one of the most significant and influential artists of our times, has produced a new series of his seminal mirror paintings specifically for Galerie Mezzanin, whose origin dates back to the early 1960s.

Being one of Arte Povera's protagonist, his iconic mirror paintings and installations earned him rapid and lasting international recognition. The vast resonance Pistoletto's installation and performance achieved during the last Venice Biennale, where he participated for the eleventh time, reflects the prevalence and brisance of his artistic practice.

In his most recent body of work Pistoletto returns to his mirror paintings, which have been exhibited for the first time in 1963. They are representative for the artist's dual interest in conceptualism and figurative representation. The dimension of time, the integration of the surrounding and the spectator in the work and the simultaneity of polarities (static/dynamic, surface/depth, absolute/relative) are constituted by the interaction between an image and the virtual space generated by its reflecting surface. These works cannot exist without their participating audience, whose presence in the work inevitably causes a reflection on one's identity and sense of self. In the mirror paintings Pistoletto is clearly concerned with the phenomenology of the perception in principle.

*I believe that man's first real figurative experience is the recognition of his own image in the mirror: the fiction which comes closest to reality. But it is not long before the reflection begins to send back the same unknowns, the same questions, the same problems, as reality itself: unknowns and questions which man is driven to re-propose in the form of pictures. (...) Aesthetics and reality may be mutually identified; but each remains within its own autonomous life. The one cannot replace the other unless one or the other gives up its need to exist. (Michelangelo Pistoletto, "Plexiglass", published in the cat. "Michelangelo Pistoletto", Torino, Galleria Sperone 1964)*

Through his project *Cittadellarte*, on the grounds of a former cotton-spinning mill in his hometown Biella, Pistoletto addresses a variety of fundamental questions concerning our contemporary society in a visionary manner. Marked by genuine interdisciplinarity, it is of great relevance for young and youngest art, willing to confront itself with the burning, the crucial questions of our time.

The exhibition at Galerie Mezzanin is the first Michelangelo Pistoletto show for over 15 years in Vienna - a city Pistoletto is particularly connected with, having been Professor at the Viennese Academy of Fine Arts from 1990 until 1999, as head of a now legendary class in sculpture.

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