

Shortly after the end of the successful large-scale exhibition at the Louvre in Paris, Michelangelo Pistoletto is once again showing in Italy with a new project for the Galleria Continua: recent works, a site-specific installation conceived for the stalls area and a substantial number of new pieces realized specially for this exhibition, which draw on *Cento mostre nel mese di ottobre* (One Hundred Exhibitions in the Month of October). In what is a kind of recipe book of exhibitions and works, published by the Galleria Giorgio Persano in 1976 and containing 100 ideas for a similar number of shows, all conceived and described in the October of that year, the artist wrote: “These exhibitions are planned in the same way as the *Oggetti in meno* (Minus Objects) of 1966, where every single element is the immediate result of a contingent need. The eventual full-scale execution, though it may seem to be at odds with the logic of the contingency, obeys the logic of the planning, which in my process occupies but one place in a hundred. Indeed, the last exhibition is reserved for the stimulus produced by actual presence on the spot. This truth is capable of absorbing, one by one, all the other 99 truths, except for that of the planning.”

The exhibition opens with a series of works from the *Vortice* (Vortex) cycle: organic or geometric forms cut into black and white mirrors and presented in gilt frames. Positive and negative, full and empty, light and dark lie in opposition to each other, conferring on these works a physical and metaphysical dimension. In Pistoletto’s work the mirror is an image of the world, of human beings and society as of cosmic space. The reflecting pictures form the foundations of the artist’s work, both of his subsequent output and artistic activity, and of the theoretical reflection to which he returns constantly in order to explore their meaning and to tease out the implications. Pistoletto produced his first *Quadri Specchianti* (Mirror Paintings) in 1962. In the show at San Gimignano are two new mirror paintings, images of people observed by the artist in the halls of the Louvre during the *Année 1 - Le Paradis sur Terre* exhibition.

Mirrors also appear in some of the works realized from *One Hundred Exhibitions in the Month of October* – suspended from the ceiling and oscillating to create the effect of a swing, crossing a room supported by an artist’s easel, reflecting writing on the wall. The mirroring effect of the mica powder is also found in the restoration of the old paintings on display on the ground floor of the gallery.

*La camera ardente* (The Mortuary Chapel), described in the book as follows: “In the middle of the exhibition space stands a smaller room that can be taken in at a glance upon entering. This little room ought to be made of polystyrene of a thickness that allows light through. Inside this room is a lit candle. The entrance to this small room is opposite that of the gallery, which should be in darkness.”

In 2003 Pistoletto wrote the Terzo Paradiso (Third Paradise) manifesto and designed the symbol, consisting of the reconfiguration of the mathematical sign for infinity. Inserted between the two opposite circles, which have the acquired meaning of nature and artifice, is a third circle representing the generative womb of the Third Paradise. For the artist, this symbol represents the shift away from the opposite pairs of nature and artifice, feminine and male, towards a new matrix of thought, in order to imagine other relations between humans and society, and likewise another economy of the world. In 2004 Pistoletto publicly announced the Third Paradise as the next phase in his work. From then on, for the artist and for Cittadellarte, the Third Paradise was to be the main line of inquiry of work conducted by weaving together a dense network of relations and collaborative projects with innumerable partners: individuals, associations, bodies and institutions, active not only in the art world but in the most varied sectors of society. Two themes addressed with particular commitment and regularity in the ambit of the Third Paradise are recycling and environmental sustainability. There is no copyright for this sign, the artist tells us – everyone can make it their own. As the photographs on display in the gallery testify, the Third Paradise has been the focus of a wide range of works in various places and with different materials: drawn on the sand, traced out on the ground on the island of San Servolo in Venice during the 2005 Biennale, built in recycled aluminium and coloured cardboard modules by some one hundred children this year in the Tuileries Garden in Paris, to give just a few examples. After having worked with jazz musician Enrico Rava in the context of Creative Collaboration, and, more recently, with Gianna Nannini, creating spaces where the Third Paradise has taken the form of a multimedia work in progress, Pistoletto perhaps has new interactions with music in mind with his realization, in the stalls area of the gallery's cinema and theatre space, of the Third Paradise symbol with hundreds of cymbals of different diameters, profiles, thicknesses and forms.

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