

MICHELANGELO PISTOLETTO

Galleria Christian Stein
Milan, Corso Monforte 23
October 6, 2021 – January 8, 2022

Galleria Christian Stein is proud to present Michelangelo Pistoletto's new solo show of a recent series of mirror paintings, exhibited for the first time on this occasion. The common theme of this works, as shown by their titles – *Donna che guarda attraverso le sbarre*, 2018; *Uomo che guarda attraverso la gabbia*, 2018; *Uscire*, 2020; *Un passo dentro – giovane donna*, 2020 – is the cage, meant as a limit to be crossed. The works depict ordinary people in the act of crossing a threshold or communicating across a border, metaphorically they are the personification of the idea of hospitality, meeting and new future visions.

The iconography of the cage is a recurring theme in the artist's rich production. In the first mirror works it represents the habitat of imprisoned animals. Since 1974 it has been elevated to a political and social meaning with the work as *Gabbia*, made up of 29 large silk-screened steel plates with the motif of the bars, which become a prison for the viewer who looks in it. This work was made in a period in which Italian prisons were the site of violent inmates protests and riots, which in many cases led to tragic events. Sensitivity towards social and cultural changes and his always staying in touch with the present moment characterize all of Pistoletto's work and are sometimes configured as a foreshadowing of the future: some works created for the exhibition were created in 2018 and their subjects seem to foretell the isolation and the importance of social solidarity that have characterized the recent dramatic circumstances.

This group of works consists of eight of the artist's **Mirror Paintings**, which brought him international renown in the early 1960s and became the basis for his subsequent artistic research and parallel theoretical reflections. Through the inclusion in the work of the viewer and the surrounding environment, in the mirror paintings, time is not only represented but exists in the painting. The resulting images are changeable and potentially infinite, produced by the reflections of the space in which the work is placed, interacting directly with the photographic representation applied on the mirroring surface, activating a continuous communication between: art and life, past and present, static and dynamic, finite and infinite, surface and depth. The real subject of the Mirror Paintings are not the people or objects represented by the figure applied to the reflecting surface but the dialectic between the figure and the reflections generated that create a new logic of vision, representation and in a broader sense of human thought.

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Tuesday - Friday, 10 am-7 pm; Saturday, 10 am-1 pm / 3-7 pm
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Michelangelo Pistoletto was born in Biella in 1933. He began exhibiting in 1955 and in 1960 had his first solo show at the Galleria Galatea in Turin. His early pictorial work is characterized by an investigation of the self-portrait. During the two-year period 1961-62 he created his *Quadri specchianti* (*Mirror Paintings*), where the work directly includes the presence of the viewer, re-opening the point of view and reversing Renaissance perspective, moving in a direction that had been closed off by twentieth-century avant-garde movements. With these works Pistoletto soon received international recognition and success, leading, as early as the 'Sixties, to solo exhibitions in prestigious galleries and museums in Europe and the United States. The *Mirror Paintings* became the basis for his subsequent artistic production and theoretical ideas. Between 1965 and 1966 he produced a group of works entitled *Oggetti in meno* (*Minus Objects*), considered fundamental for the birth of Arte Povera, an art movement in which Pistoletto was a guiding light and leading figure. Beginning in 1967, working outside traditional exhibition spaces, he created actions that represent the first manifestations of a "creative collaboration" that he would develop over subsequent decades, in an interaction with artists coming from various disciplines and increasingly wide-ranging sectors of society. Between 1975 and 1976 he created *Le Stanze* (*The Rooms*), a series of twelve consecutive shows at the Galleria Stein in Turin, the first in a series of complex works articulated over the span of one year. Entitled "continents of time," these include *Anno Bianco* (*White Year*, 1989) and *Tartaruga Felice* (*Happy Tortoise*, 1992). In 1978 he held an exhibition where he presented two fundamental directions of his future research and artistic production: *Divisione e moltiplicazione dello specchio* (*Division and Multiplication of the Mirror*) and *L'arte assume la religione* (*Art Takes on Religion*). In the early 'Eighties he created a series of sculptures in rigid polyurethane, translated into marble for a 1984 solo show at Forte di Belvedere in Florence. From 1985 to 1989 he created a series of "dark" volumes called *Arte dello squallore* (*Art of Squalor*). During the 'Nineties, with the journal *Progetto Arte* and the creation, in Biella, of *Cittadellarte-Fondazione Pistoletto* and the *Università delle Idee*, he established an active relationship between art and various social realms, in order to inspire and produce a responsible transformation of society. In 2003 he was awarded the Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement at the Venice Biennale. In 2004 the University of Turin granted him an honorary degree in Political Science. On this occasion the artist announced what has become the most recent phase of his work, known as *Terzo Paradiso* (*Third Paradise*). In 2007 he received the Wolf Foundation Prize in Arts in Jerusalem, "for his constantly creative career as an artist, educator and activist, whose tireless intelligence has given rise to prophetic forms of art that contribute to a new comprehension of the world." In 2010 he wrote the essay *Il Terzo Paradiso*, 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 became the promoter of *Rebirth-day*, the first universal day of rebirth celebrated every year on December 21st, with events held throughout the world. In 2013 a solo show of his work, entitled *année un – le paradis sur terre*, opened at the Louvre Museum in Paris. That same year, in Tokyo, he received the *Praemium Imperiale* for painting. In 2014 the symbol of *Terzo Paradiso* was installed in the atrium of the headquarters of the Council of the European Union in Brussels, during the period when an Italian held the Presidency. In May 2015 the Universidad de las Artes in Havana awarded Pistoletto an honorary degree. Also in 2015, he created a large-scale work entitled *Rebirth*, located in the park of the Palais des Nations in Geneva, headquarters of the United Nations.

www.pistoletto.it

www.cittadellarte.com