

MICHELANGELO  
**PISTOLETTO**

BI2LOGELLO

MICHEGANGELO

- ENGLISH -

The Blueproject Foundation wants to thank their kindness to the artist Michelangelo Pistoletto and his wife Maria Pioppi and the staff of Galleria Continua.

# THE EXHIBITION

The Blueproject Foundation hosts the solo exhibition of Michelangelo Pistoletto, which can be seen in // *Salotto* from November 13<sup>th</sup> 2015 to March 27<sup>th</sup> 2016.

The exhibition features a selection of works by the famous Italian artist that comprise a career of almost forty years, from the mid-seventies until today, in which he reflects on the perception of the self and the society to which we belong through everyday objects like mirrors, used as an element of identification and turning them into artworks by themselves. These pieces are not only part of the history of a great creator but also the testimony of a key period in the history of contemporary art.

The exhibition "Michelangelo Pistoletto" goes along with two activities related to the show that were held the same opening day Friday November 13<sup>th</sup>.

On the one hand, the Blueproject Foundation presents "Terzo Paradiso", an unprecedented performance by Michelangelo Pistoletto in Ciutadella Park. Designed as a complement to the exhibition, "Terzo Paradiso" is framed within the reflection that the artist started in the 90s and developed through projects of Cittadellarte-Fondazione Pistoletto, which drives the relationship between art and various social areas social to promote a responsible transformation of society. The "third paradise" seeks to channel the artificial - that is, science, technology, art, culture and politics - to take back the alive to Earth, compromising to restore the principles shared by all and the ethical behavior. The performance is part of a mediation project developed by Transductores in collaboration with Espai d'inclusió i formació Casc Antic (Eicascantic), Casal de Barri Pou de la Figuera and Riborquestra, related to the

neighbourhood of La Ribera and El Born.

On the other hand, the Blueproject Foundation is proud to offer an exclusive and unique conference, with free admission, by the famous Italian artist held in the Auditorium of the Escola Massana on Friday November 13<sup>th</sup>. As a central element of the activities related to his solo exhibition, this conference is the perfect opportunity to better discover the thought and career of one of the most important living contemporary artists in the recent decades and precursor of the movement *Arte Povera*.

The conference is a perfect way for young art students, and the interested public, to delve into some of the central topics developed by the art of Pistoletto such as the self-portrait, infinity, mirrors or the perception of the self and the society to which we belong. The conference also helped the artist to present his latest thinking, his latest works and Cittadellarte-Fondazione Pistoletto, which promotes a new way of articulating art and social and economic agents in Western countries.

# BIOGRAPHY

Michelangelo Pistoletto was born in Biella in 1933. He began to exhibit his work in 1955 and in 1960 he had his first solo show at Galleria Galatea in Turin. An inquiry into self-portraiture characterizes his early work. In the two-year period 1961-1962 made the first *Mirror Paintings*, which directly include the viewer and real time in the work, and open up perspective, reversing the Renaissance perspective that had been closed by the twentieth-century avant-gardes. These works quickly brought Pistoletto international acclaim, leading, in the sixties, to one-man shows in important galleries and museums in Europe and the United States. The *Mirror Paintings* are the foundation of his subsequent artistic output and theoretical thought.

In 1965 and 1966 he produced a set of works entitled *Minus Objects*, considered fundamental to the birth of Arte Povera, an art movement of which Pistoletto was an animating force and a protagonist. In 1967 he began to work outside traditional exhibition spaces, with the first instances of that “creative collaboration” he developed over the following decades by bringing together artists from different disciplines and diverse sectors of society.

In 1975-76 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 called “time continents”. Others are “White Year” (1989) and “Happy Turtle” (1992).

In 1978, in a show in Turin, Pistoletto defined two main directions his future artwork would take: 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 with the creation 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 a laurea honoris causa in Political Science. On that occasion the artist announced what has become 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*, first worldwide day of rebirth, celebrated every year on 21st December with initiatives taking place all around the world.

In 2013 the Louvre in Paris hosted his personal exhibition “Michelangelo Pistoletto, année un – le paradis sur terre”. In this 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 period of the Italian Presidency of the European Council.

In May 2015 he received a degree honoris causa from the Universidad de las Artes of Havana in Cuba. In October of the same year he creates a monumental sculpture, *Rebirth*, in the park of of the Palais des Nations in Genève.

## HOW DID MICHELANGELO PISTOLETTO START WORKING WITH MIRRORS?

“In 1961 [...] Pistoletto conducted a series of experiments intended to achieve the **highest degree of objectivity—the kind of objectivity shown in the early mirror paintings**. [...] At last, in 1962, he perfected the technique of his subsequent mirror paintings: a sheet of mirror-finished stainless steel fitted with an image obtained by tracing a photograph, enlarged to life size, with the tip of a brush, on tissue paper. [...]

The mirror paintings are the foundation of Pistoletto’s oeuvre—both of the artworks he makes and of his theoretical reflection in which he constantly returns to them to study their meaning in depth and to develop their implications. The essential characteristics the artist identifies in them, are: the dimension of time (not just represented, but presented in reality); the inclusion in the work of the viewer and his/her surroundings (which make “the self-portrait of the world”); the joining of couples of opposite polarity (static/dynamic, surface/depth, absolute/relative, etc.), constituted and activated by the interaction between the photographic image and what goes on in the virtual space generated by the reflecting surface; the placement of the mirror paintings no longer at window height, as paintings are traditionally hung, but on the floor (which creates a passage through which the space in which they are shown continues in the virtual space of the work, a door that opens between art and life)”

Source: [www.pistoletto.it](http://www.pistoletto.it)

## COLOR AND LIGHT, 2014

jute, mirror, gilded wood  
4 elements: 180 x 120 cm each  
Unique Work

“What led me to the division of the mirror? At one time I identified with the mirror. I considered my eye, myself, to be the mirror: I had to, in order to make my self-portrait. I wondered, what tool might the mirror need in order to know itself? The mirror duplicates everything that exists, but it always stands before, or faces, the existent. It cannot acknowledge itself. Just as my eyes cannot acknowledge themselves as they look upon the world. Both follow the same principle, don’t they? The only difference is that our eyes are mirrors that convey images to the brain, which produces thought.

So, a mirror can’t know itself if it doesn’t have a mirror in which it can see itself. I had to find a solution if I was going to duplicate the mirror. So I cut it in two and, from then on, the mirror had its double. There was no longer a single mirror, there were two. I set out from the basic concept of the universal mirror that reflects a universal reality. The concept of the mirror, itself, became the principal character, and I divided the concept of the mirror into two parts. One of the mirrors sees itself in the other, and the two together give rise to a third mirror that can be seen in the first two. So this is procreation. The same thing occurs in biology, in cell division. [...]

It was very important for me, above all, to be able to find philosophical, mathematical, spiritual and biological reasons for all this. The phenomenology of the work pressed on.” Michelangelo Pistoletto

Source: [http://www.mamac-nice.org/francais/exposition\\_tempo/musee/pistoletto/anglais.html](http://www.mamac-nice.org/francais/exposition_tempo/musee/pistoletto/anglais.html)

## L'ALTO IN BASSO, IL BASSO IN ALTO, 1977

chair, wood, glass, wire  
about 350 cm  
Unique Work

“Man began to measure the universe in terms of his own direct experience of life and death, then went on to the great task of creating good and evil. In the light of the day he said “white” and in the darkness of the night he said “black”. And always remaining at the center of things he created perspective. The world was seen in terms of vanishing points and points of view with respect to the position of man’s eye at about five feet above ground level, and from that point he created high and low. Past and future, near and distant, profound and superficial, true and false, single and multiple, subjective and objective, static and dynamic. These are a few examples of the complex of antinomies that has grown up around the human being as the fruit of his mind. In constant expansion, the process began with the first man who walked the earth, and it has continued until today. The world that we daily inhabit both physically and mentally is made up of the conflict between the two extreme halves of every proposition and every judgment. When my need to understand things came to include the consideration of life itself, I instinctively understood all of the conflicts in the system of doubling all things of the universe. Looking at works of art, I felt the force with which I was compelled to oscillate between one dimension of experience that was abstract and mental and another dimension of experience that was concrete and physical. And it was in the fact of representation that I discovered the poles that were in simultaneous attraction and repulsion - my literal presence as proposed by the mirror, and my intellectual presence as proposed by my painting. These two presences of myself were the two lives that were simultaneously tearing me in two and calling me with urgency to the task of their unification.”

Source: *Michelangelo Pistoletto. Divisione e moltiplicazione dello specchio - L'arte assume la religione*, Galleria Giorgio Persano, Torino, 1978.

## VORTICE-DITTICO, 2010-2013

mirror black and silver, gilded wood  
diptych: 203 x 143 cm each  
Unique work

“This diptych of the series of *Vortice-dittico* presents organic shapes designed in black and white mirrors, framed by gilded moldings. The tables have the same pattern but inverted both symmetrically and tonally. Each piece can be hung in a variety of positions as top and down, left and right, likely to switch. From this pair of mirrors there are born different combinations that offer every time a new image of the work. This systematic operation is not visible immediately: due to multiple inversions forms appear to develop randomly or continue from one table to another.

[...]

In *Vortice-dittico*, the alternation between light and dark is perfectly balanced to the point that the shapes that fit together evoke the ying and yang. As in chaos theory, the apparent disorder is in reality organized in an underlying order, the order of game on the development of symmetrie. It seems that the cosmological evocation of these parts concerne less the stellar space than the general order of nature. Indeed, these biomorphic forms that extend and invade mirroring surfaces evoke rather fractals or cell division, like the reliefs by Arp and Matisse’s paper cutouts. Thus these grounds offer an image of organic life that reflects the viewer completely, complementing this taxonomy.”

Source: Text by Aurélie Tiffreau in the catalogue “Michelangelo Pistoletto. Année 1. Le paradis sur terre” of Musée du Louvre in Paris.

# VORTICE-PENTITTICO (VORTEX QUINTIPTYQUE), 2010-2013

black and silver mirror, gilded wood  
5 elements: 201 x 141 cm each  
Unique Work

“We are in the mirror when we are here and when we are there.

I see myself, or perhaps not, while you see me in the mirror. We are not alone, however, and neither are those who are here, before it, now: those who are distant are also in the mirror. In fact we are in the mirror even when it is not here before us. No thing escapes the mirror. The great space is in the mirror, time is in the mirror, all time is already in the mirror and space has the dimension of time.

The mirror is at the bottom of the well and we can see it, but perhaps it is also under the furniture at home, in the trees, or behind our heads where we cannot see it: is that you who look at me from behind my back without my knowledge?

The eyes are mirror, the mind is the mirror of the eyes and actions are the mirror of the mind. [...]

In this mirror the order of Venus crosses the gaze in perfect harmony while the wear of custom dismembers, disintegrates and transforms every image. Conscience perceives the inexorable absolute in the relativity of existence, perpetual motion of the mirror that comes without pause to its own surface.”

Michelangelo Pistoletto. Catalogue of the exhibition of MAMAC de Nice.

# LOVE DIFFERENCE, 2002

acrylic enamel (aerlex varnish) on steel plate, polished mirror  
102 x 183 x 2.1 cm  
Unique work

“*Love Difference* is a name, a slogan, a programmatic announcement. The movement joins the universality of art to the idea of political transnationality and focuses its activity in the Mediterranean area because this area mirrors the problems of global society. On one hand the difference between ethnic groups, religions and cultures is the cause of terrible conflicts, today; on the other a dramatic situation has been created by the supremacy of powers that produce uniformity and the leveling of defenses.... Uniformity and difference are the two antagonistic terms that represent the greatest conflictual tension in the present planetary reality. A policy that leads one to “love differences” is vital to the development of new prospects in the entire social realm”.

Source: (Extract from *Manifiesto Love Difference* 2002, en el Diario 7, Cittadellarte, Biella 2002 , 47) [www.pistoletto.it](http://www.pistoletto.it)

## SENZA TITOLO 92, 1976

mirror, rags

environment dimensions

Artwork No. 92 from the yellow book "Cento mostre nel mese di ottobre",  
Torino 1976

Unique work

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"Pistoletto is considered one of the leading figures of *Arte Povera*. First of all because of his works—from the *Minus Objects*, which precede the official birth of the movement, to those that constitute almost its emblem, like the pieces (for instance, *Venus of the Rags*, 1967) containing the rags that were initially used by Pistoletto for cleaning the mirror paintings and later in several actions by The Zoo. No less important is his role as a catalyst (played since the beginning of the sixties) of the group of Turin artists—and as a bridge between them and those in Rome—which gave birth to *Arte Povera*. The theorist of *Arte Povera*, Germano Celant, who met Pistoletto during the exhibition of the *Minus Objects* in the artist's studio, acknowledges this role to him: "As an intellectual his role was that of weaving a European network of contacts among artists, facilitating the exhibition of Pino Pascali's Weapons [in January 1966 in Turin] and improving knowledge of Italian art, by creating the Deposito d'Arte Presente (Warehouse of Present Art) and, subsequently, an artist's collection, as well as making possible the dialogue among galleries, particularly Ileana Sonnabend and Gian Enzo Sperone, which started off the circulation of Pop Art in Italy and of *Arte Povera* in France, Germany and the United States." (Germano Celant, in *Un'avventura internazionale*, Charta, Turin 1993,14). The collection to which Celant refers is that of *Arte Povera* exhibited by Pistoletto in his home during 1971 and now on display at Cittadellarte."

Source: [www.pistoletto.it](http://www.pistoletto.it)

## SPECCHIO DI TAGLIO, 1976

wooden easel, mirror

225 x 232 x 60 cm

Artwork No. 73 from the yellow book "Cento mostre nel mese di ottobre",  
Torino 1976

Unique Work

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"From *The Rooms* (which ended the previous month), with its dilation of the exhibition event, Pistoletto moved on to the highly concentrated One Hundred Shows in the Month of October. This little square yellow book, published by Galleria Giorgio Persano, contained 100 ideas for 100 shows, all thought up and described in the month of October, in keeping with a process, based on 'contingent necessity', similar to that which had produced the *Minus Objects*. One Hundred Shows was a sort of recipe book of exhibitions and works, many of which were later carried out; these include the video *Who Are You?* (1976), *Overtured Furniture* (1976), *The Hoof* (1979), *Segno Arte* (from 1993 on) and *Free Space* (1999)."

Source: [www.pistoletto.it](http://www.pistoletto.it)

Description of the work n° 73

In the book *Cento mostre nel mese di ottobre*. Turin, 1976

"An artist's easel 50 centimeters from the wall, turned toward the opposite wall, holds a mirror edgewise, so that it crosses the room and sticks into the wall opposite the easel. Upon entering you see only the back of the mirror with its randomly chosen color".

Source: [www.pistoletto.it](http://www.pistoletto.it)



# TERZO PARADISO

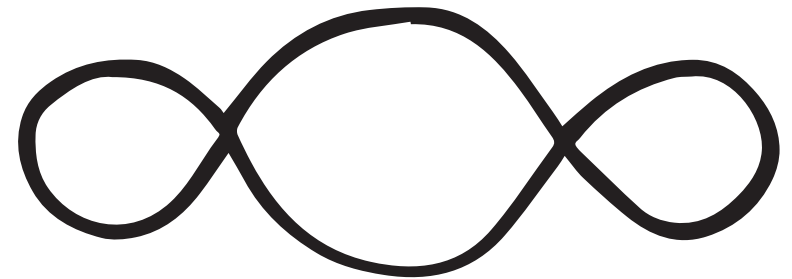
“What is the Third Paradise? It is the fusion between the first and the second paradise. The first is the paradise in which human beings were totally integrated into nature. The second is the artificial paradise, developed by human intelligence through a process that has now acquired globalizing proportions. This paradise is made up of artificial needs, artificial products, artificial comforts, artificial pleasures and every other form of artifice. An authentically artificial world has been created, which, exponentially and parallel to its beneficial effects, is generating irreversible processes of decline on a planetary scale. The danger of a tragic collision between the natural sphere and the artificial one has now been announced in every way.

The idea behind the Third Paradise project is to lead artifice – that is, science, technology, art, culture and politics – to restore life to the Earth. At the same time it is committed to re-establishing shared principles and ethical behaviour, because it is on these that the success of the undertaking depends.

The Third Paradise involves the transition to a new level of planetary civilization, essential to the survival of humankind.

The Third Paradise is the new myth that prompts everyone to take personal responsibility in what is an epoch-making phase.

The Third Paradise is symbolically represented by a re-configuration of the mathematical sign for infinity. The “New Infinity Sign” is formed by three circles: the two opposite circles signify nature and artifice, while the middle one joins the two and represents the generative womb of the Third Paradise.”



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