

Alessandro Valeri

An Iron Ring

Curated by Fiorella Bassan and Giorgia Calò

MAXXI, Sala Carlo Scarpa, January 16-26, 2020
Opening Thursday January 16, 6:30pm

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From the 16th to the 26th of January 2020 the **MAXXI - Museo nazionale delle arti del XXI secolo** will host in the **Sala Carlo Scarpa, *An Iron Ring*** a project by Alessandro Valeri curated by Fiorella Bassan and Giorgia Calò.

An Iron Ring closes the loop on the artistic and personal journey Valeri embarked on 2011, when he firstly visited the orphanage of Tzipory, close to Nazareth. The institute, with the Catholic nuns and the Jewish, Muslims and Christians volunteers, appeared to Valeri an island of interreligious tolerance and collaboration. This experience impresses him profoundly: the foster house becomes for him a symbol, a “totem” of a “promise of happiness, which can exist beyond the current state of things. The photographic, video and audio notes he takes in his visits are the live materials from which emerges, in 2015, the exhibition *Sepphoris*, for the 56th Venice Biennale, at Molino Stucky. The exhibition marks also the beginning of the tangible commitment of the artist to bring about a change, through the donation of the artworks to the institute.

Later, the totem will originate other experiences: *Lasciami entrare* at MACRO Testaccio, in 2016, where the didactic workshops begin, and *Una sola possibilità*, at MACRO in Via Nizza, in 2017, where the prospect of change takes the character of dissent and creative rebellion.

An Iron Ring, designed by Valeri for the Sala Carlo Scarpa at MAXXI as a physical and mental laboratory for children and adults, is structured in four “movements”, linked by narrative loops which convey the story of the artistic journey in its complexity.

The first step is the video “*Sepphoris*”, in which the images, repeated in loop, create a strong clash, highlighted by the sound design, and a sense of suspense, of tension, which is never going to be released.

Below the video, a *site specific* installation, made of 80.000 broken pencils, on which the visitor is invited to walk, and reflect on the condition of suffering which many children in the world are forced to endure.

At the centre of the hall, we find the large photo-pictorial works on canvass, which were the protagonists of the Venetian exhibition. The images, on which the artist intervenes graphically with coloured touches, capture decontextualized elements of the environment, which could be anywhere, if it weren't for some pictures which give away important clues, like the closed door with the sign “miklat”, “shelter” in Hebrew, which reminds us that we are in a high risk zone.

The only image with a human presence is the one which portrays a group of children in line on the soccer field, as before the start of a match. The images invite visitors to ask themselves questions, they establish a dialogue, between observer and observed object, in which passivity is not allowed.

The invitation to reflect, and the provocation, continue in the recent work *Curiosa Cabinet*, a series of mini lightboxes in metal, sensitive to the passage of visitors, each of whom contains a picture printed on Apple sapphire glass. They are small *wunderkammer*, which stimulate a critical reflection on the success of the intangible, the immaterial, in social media consumerism. Next to these small screens, we find rubber casts of the index finger and the thumb of the artist's right hand. These are the fingers that are used to take a picture. But the index finger is also the one that we use when we give a warning, when we want to point out something to somebody. The denunciation is about the dematerialization not only of the image but also of the human relationships on which society is based.

The exhibition ends with the neon "parlami di te" ("tell me about yourself. For the visitor, who has seen, interacted and listened, now it's the turn to speak up. The neutrality of neon represents the non-judgmental position taken by the artist, almost to say: "I am not here to judge you, only to listen to what you will want to tell me about yourself".

An Iron Ring embodies the most mature expression of the intellectual and stylistic consistency in Valeri's work, based on the ability to catch, with a nomadic, prejudice-free gaze, the signs through which the world manifests itself, inviting the observers to take responsibility of their own gaze, of their own emotions, and in this way, of their own existence in the world.

Daily didactic workshops will be conducted by the artist for children of primary and secondary school.

Biographical Note

Alessandro Valeri lives in Rome and works between his studio at the Pastificio Cerere and various residencies, in creative nomadism.

He has studied at the State Institute for Cinematography and Television Roberto Rossellini in Rome and at the Experimental Cinematography Centre in Rome.

He has expressed his artistic inspiration also in advertising and social communication.

Working for major Italian and international brands, he has created campaigns which have won some of the most prestigious awards in the field.

He has established his studio within Pastificio Cerere, which is the cradle of the "Roman School".

His research has taken him on an journey based on different materials and techniques – installations, photography, videos, painting, drawing, writing etc., to explore realities with a critical attention. His work originates from a desire to invite creative participation and social engagement, to bring about a change, both in individual or collective conscience.

Among his main exhibitions: "apparato inconcreto" MACRO ASILO, Roma (2019), "Art in Progress" ARTCO gallery, Parma (2019), curated by Alice Pezzali; "Next Stop", Video Città, Roma (2018), curated by Barbara Martusciello; "Una sola possibilità", MACRO Museum, Rome (2017), curated by Barbara Martusciello; "The Uncertainty of Objects", Bologna Artefiera (2017), curated by Pietro Gaglianò; "Lasciami entrare", MACRO Museum, Rome, (2016), curated by Micol Veller Fornasa; "SEPPHORIS", 56th Biennale di Venezia (2015), curated by Raffaele Gavarro; "Stai con me", Medio Area Gallery (2014), curated by Domenico Parente; "Panorama", PAN Museum, Naples (2013), curated by Jonathan Turner/Francesca Procacci; "Circo", Il Ponte Contemporanea Gallery, Rome (2013), curated by Giuliano Matricardi; "Elettroshot, Cartiere Binda Milano", curated by Achille Bonito Oliva (2012/11); "Da

un'intuizione teorica", curated by Achille Bonito Oliva, Palazzo Reale, Milano (2011/12); "Progetto Oreste Cinema", 48th Biennale di Venezia (1999), curated by Mario Martone/Enrico Ghezzi; "Campagna d'Italia", Palazzo delle Esposizioni, Rome, curated by Achille Bonito Oliva (1995).

The event is sponsored by the Cultural Department of the Embassy of Israel in Italy and by the Italy-Israel Foundation for Culture and the Arts.

MAXXI Museo nazionale delle arti del XXI secolo – Sala Carlo Scarpa

Via Guido Reni 4a-8, 00196 Roma

Hours: Wednesdays, Thursdays, Sundays 11am – 7pm; Tuesdays, Fridays, Saturdays 11am – 8pm; closed on Mondays.

Last admission one hour before closing.

Tickets: regular €12; reduced € 9; "last hour" € 5 (Wed. Thu. Sun. from 5:30pm; Tue. Fri. Sat. from 6:30pm)

Press kit and images from the exhibition are downloadable from the link

<http://maxxi.art/area-stampa> password: areariservatamaxxi

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