

Platero, Mario.

“Pistoletto pays tribute to ‘Lavoro’ (Work) in New York”

Review Italy.

<http://reviewitaly.com/news/pistoletto-pays-tribute-to-lavoro-work-in-new-york>

ART

Pistoletto pays tribute to 'Lavoro' (Work) in New York

Mario Platero interviews the artist whose works will be on display at Luhring Augustine Gallery

Home » Almanac

Domenico Zappia

America24, 23 marzo 2012, 14:58



“Work means action, it means objects, machinery and people that work”.

With these words the Italian painter, action and object artist, and art theorist, Michelangelo Pistoletto explains his newest art exhibition “Lavoro”, on show from the 22nd to the 28th of April at New York’s Luhring Augustine Gallery.

“The project – continues the artist, interviewed by Mario Platero – is born from a very realistic restructuring of Cittadellarte, the foundation which I have created in Biella. It features workers, machinery. It’s a subject which I’m actually experiencing and that I have blocked. I’ve blocked these subjects and pinned them onto reflective surfaces”.

A group of workers, a green concrete mixer covered with rust, a white ladder. These are some of the objects portrayed by Pistoletto, that for this exhibition chose a current theme, especially in Italy where government and social forces are involved in a vicious debate on the overhaul of article 18 of the Workers’ Statute. The artist has a clear stance on this issue: “the trade unions have to lead workers towards an agreement with employers, because together they can overcome this global crisis”.

“Lavoro” is Pistoletto’s second exhibition at the Luhring Augustine Gallery. Particularly famous for his painted mirrors, the artist – a leading representative of the Arte Povera movement – came to America for the first time in 1958. “At the time, I made very material oeuvres. With the mirror paintings, that materiality vanished, it became mirror. And the gallery owner, which at the time was Galleria Tazzoli of Turin, was shocked”.

“So shocked – continues Pistoletto – that he was too embarrassed to show my work to Gianni Agnelli. That convinced me to move to Paris. I had the good fortune of meeting Ileana Sonnabend who was bringing, for the first time, Pop Art to the French capital. She bought all my works and bought out my contract with the Turin gallery”. It was her husband, Leo Castelli, brought Pistoletto’s works to New York.

“It was the first moments of Pop Art and not only was I the only Italian artist in Castell’s collection, but I was the only European as well”. Castelli was the first to notice the talent of artists such as Rosenquist, Jasper Johns,

Rauschenberg, Lichtenstein, Oldenburg and Warhol. “The United States were ready to welcome my work, Italy was not”.

“In the United States and in New York in particular, I felt a sense of belonging looking down onto the matrix of streets, so similar to the ones in Turin”, explains Pistoletto, “while looking upwards, I saw the realization of the European dream, of progress”. But the artist’s source of inspiration came “from Europe, from Italy and, in particular, from Byzantine art and its use of gold backgrounds. I just transformed that gold in mirror”.

Beginning in 1965, Pistoletto started to diverge from Pop Art, “in that period, in Italy, I produced a series of oeuvres titled “objects in less”, which eradicated all of the artist’s uniqueness and that were therefore in open contradiction with the art market. It was in that moment that Arte Povera was born”.

Today, Pistoletto’s works are on display in the most important modern and contemporary art museums around the world, including Moma and Guggenheim in New York, Beauborg in Paris, Reina Sophia in Madrid and Tate Modern of London.