

MICHELANGELO PISTOLETTO

23. 11. 07 – 26.01.08

Opening: Thursday 22nd November 6-8pm

Simon Lee Gallery is proud to announce the forthcoming exhibition of recent works by Michelangelo Pistoletto. Pistoletto is one of Arte Povera's most significant protagonists. His iconic mirror paintings and installations earned him rapid and lasting international recognition, representing the artist's dual interest in conceptualism and figurative representation. Throughout his work the human figure assumes a pivotal role. As the artist has said *"I feel it best suited to realising the need to express particular feelings and situations of the human condition, what for me is the most vital and burning issue of all time"*.¹

Since his first examination of the mirrored surface, Pistoletto has worked extensively on a range of projects across the world with the intention of bringing different disciplines and cultures together in a combined effort to develop a social conscience. His activity is rooted in a personal spirituality and the belief that the artist must assume the role of a social leader. Parallel to his exploration of the mirrored surface, he began to develop a varied approach, which extended beyond the creation of objects. His focus encompassed the foundation of physical spaces of contemplation and other alternative forms of creative expression. Examples of this are the *Cittadellarte* in Biella and the *Multiconfessional Place of Meditation and of Prayer* in Marseilles, where individuals of all beliefs can go to exchange ideas and work together on projects involving politics, economics, education, urban planning and the arts. This all-encompassing attitude to his art and his role as an artist has earned Pistoletto much success and recognition in the form of awards both from within and outside artistic circles.

Throughout his career the artist has kept a record of ideas for exhibitions and impulses for his various projects. In his most recent body of work Pistoletto returns to his iconic mirror paintings in which he represents his subjects on the threshold to another dimension. The works are active and come alive when the onlooker stands before them. The sitter in the work is drawn into the kaleidoscope of society just as the onlooker is involuntarily drawn into the picture, becomes an active protagonist of the piece as he/she stands in front of it. These works cannot exist without their participating audience, whose presence in the work inevitably causes them to reflect on their own identity and sense of self.

Born in Italy into a family of art restorers and schooled in advertising in the 40s and 50s, Pistoletto has exhibited extensively across Europe and the USA, with a current retrospective of his work at the Musée d'Art Moderne et d'Art Contemporain in Nice. His works feature in many public collections, among them Tate Britain, Guggenheim Museum, New York, Museo d'arte contemporanea, Castello di Rivoli, Turin, MACBA, Barcelona and MuHKA, Antwerp.

¹ Michelangelo Pistoletto, Exhibition Catalogue, Palazzo dell' Arengo, Rimini 1958

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